

CONSENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY

HELPING VICTORIA'S YOUNG PEOPLE ACCESS HEALTH CARE

The Victorian Government is making sure young people are receiving the health support, advice and treatment they need to reach their full potential.

The \$43.8 million Doctors in Secondary Schools initiative is delivering on the Government's election commitment to fund general practitioners (GPs) to attend 100 of Victoria's schools to provide medical advice and health care to those students most in need. This initiative will also provide for modern, fit-for-purpose rooms where required.

This brochure provides answers to commonly asked questions about access to this program.

AM I ALLOWED TO GO THE GP BY MYSELF?

Yes, there is no law in Victoria that says you have to be a certain age before you can visit a general practitioner (GP) on your own. In most circumstances, you can make an appointment to visit a GP via the Doctors in Secondary Schools Program on your own. If you go alone, your GP will need to make sure you are mature enough and able to understand any medical advice or information they give you during the appointment.

The GP will chat to you about why you are there and decide if you are able to consent to treatment yourself, or if they think your parents or carers should be involved. Sometimes the GP will want to talk to your parents or carers so they can better understand what is going on in your life and how they can help.

WHEN CAN I CONSENT TO MEDICAL TREATMENT?

There is no fixed age at which you can consent to medical treatment on your own. It always depends on what kind of medical treatment you need, and whether your GP thinks you fully understand what is involved. When your GP decides whether to give you medical treatment, he or she will consider:

- Your age and maturity

- Your independence – whether you live at home with a parent or carer, or support yourself
- The seriousness of the treatment
- Whether you understand why the treatment is needed, what it involves, and things that might go wrong (like side effects from drugs, or other complications).

You can consent to the treatment if the GP thinks you understand the advantages and risks of the treatment.

If, after considering these things, your GP believes you are able to weigh up the advantages and risks of the treatment and then make a decision, you will be able to give consent.

If the GP determines that:

- you do not have the maturity to see him or her alone, and
- you are unable to make your own decisions about the health issue you are seeing them about

the GP will get your parent's or carer's consent before continuing with your treatment.

They will usually talk with you first about how they will have that discussion with your parents or carers.

WILL YOU TELL MY MUM AND DAD OR CARER ABOUT THE MEDICAL ADVICE AND TREATMENT?

If the GP decides you are mature enough to see them alone, make your own decisions and consent to any treatment, he or she is usually not allowed to tell your parents or carers that you saw them or anything that was talked about during your visit, without your consent. This is called confidentiality. They are also not allowed to say anything about your medical appointment even if your parents or carers ask for information. However, if you are under 14 years of age and listed on your parents' Medicare card or have a duplicate Medicare card, your parents will be able to access information from Medicare (online, on the phone and via mail) about your appointments. For example, they will be able to access information showing the date of your appointments and the name of the medical practitioner that you have seen. If you are

concerned about your appointment being kept confidential, you should talk to the GP about this at the start of the consultation.

In some situations, the GP may want you to involve your parents or carers or teachers, and they will discuss why this is important with you, and may encourage you, or help you to talk with them. This will be discussed as needed on a case by case basis.

Also in some cases, your GP might be worried about your health and safety, or that of others, and may be required to tell your mum, dad, carer or another person. These include:

- If you intend to harm yourself
- If you intend to harm someone else
- If someone is harming you.

However, in most of these cases the GP will talk with you first about whom they need to tell.

WILL YOU TELL MY MUM AND DAD IF I HAVE MADE AN APPOINTMENT?

We will only tell your mum and dad if you have consented to us doing this or if we think you are not mature enough

to make decisions about your own health information. We will talk to you first, if your parent has called requesting this information. We will also remind you that if you are under 14, through Medicare, your parents will be able to access information about your appointments.

CAN I BRING A FRIEND TO THE APPOINTMENT?

Yes, if you feel more comfortable going with a friend, parent or carer, that is okay.

HOW DO I GET A MEDICARE CARD?

Usually you are listed on your parents' Medicare card. If you are 15 years or older, you can get your own Medicare card by applying to Medicare Australia. Information about how to do this will be available through the GP at your school.

For more information please visit:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/pages/doctors-secondary-schools.aspx>

or email Doctors in Secondary Schools at:

doctors.in.schools@edumail.vic.gov.au with any questions.