

Useful contacts

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A guide for women with autism

This is one of a series of leaflets aimed at providing practical support for women and girls with autism.

It outlines some common challenges experienced when engaging with health professionals and suggests some potentially helpful strategies.

We hope you find it useful and we would highly value your feedback.

We know that experiences of being on the autism spectrum vary widely and would appreciate your ideas and advice. Please note, there are different ways to contact us, including email, online and telephone.



A guide for women with autism when engaging with health professionals

**Advice to help you get
the most from
your appointment
with a GP or consultant**



Produced by SWAN,
Scottish Women with Autism Network, under the
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Who we are

Scottish Women with Autism Network (SWAN) was established in August 2012 with the aim of raising awareness and sharing information.

We are passionate about providing practical support to females who are diagnosed as being on the autism spectrum, those who may be in the process of seeking diagnosis and those who identify with many of the traits, behaviours and modes of thinking experienced by those with autism.

This leaflet summarises some of the key issues around attending health-care appointments for women with autism.



Important note:

Remember that women and girls with autism are entitled to full and appropriate care. If you feel this is something you haven't received from your healthcare provider, then do seek further advice or a second opinion.

If you are a girl or woman with autism, or you experience similar challenges, you may:

- **Find visiting a GP** or other health professional very stressful
- **Find it difficult to talk to people** you don't know well or at all, especially about personal issues
- **Find it difficult to describe how you are feeling** or the symptoms you are experiencing.
- **Find new and unpredictable situations difficult** to cope with; knowing both what to expect and what is expected of you, is important.
- **Find it hard to process what is being said to you** especially when in an unfamiliar or pressured situation
- **Respond to information literally;** you need people to be clear and direct
- **Feel you need additional help to understand new situations,** to be able to give informed consent, or to follow treatment instructions
- **Experience low self-esteem** and lack self confidence

You may want to consider doing the following:

- **If possible arrange a set appointment** rather than using 'drop-in' arrangements
 - **Make a double or extended appointment** to reduce time pressure
 - **Plan well beforehand** what you wish to communicate; make short notes to take with you as prompts
 - **Do what puts you in the best frame of mind** prior to any appointment (e.g. relaxation techniques/exercise); try to schedule it for a time when you are at your best e.g. morning or afternoon
 - **Ensure the professional is informed** before your appointment about the nature of your challenges
 - **Take someone along with you** to support you, ensure you have understood what has been said and note the next steps required for you
- Or
- **Note down the main points,** repeat back to the health professional what has been said & ask them to confirm you have understood correctly