

# A GUIDE TO QUESTIONS TO TAKE TO YOUR FIRST SPECIALIST APPOINTMENT



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If you or a family member have been diagnosed with a pituitary condition, you may feel overwhelmed and wonder what's next. This is completely normal.

After your diagnosis you will most likely be referred to an endocrinologist. An endocrinologist is a doctor who specialises in conditions affecting the glands and hormones of the body (the endocrine system), including the pituitary gland.

If your child has been diagnosed with a pituitary condition, you may be referred to a paediatric endocrinologist.

## WHAT TO EXPECT AT YOUR FIRST APPOINTMENT

You may feel worried before visiting the specialist for the first time. This is understandable. However, knowing what to expect can help you feel more relaxed.

To see an endocrinologist in Australia, you need a referral either from your General Practitioner (GP) or another specialist. This will usually contain details of any test results such as blood tests or brain scans. It's common for endocrinologists to ask for the referral before your appointment, but they may ask you to bring the referral with you to the appointment. Make sure to bring copies of any relevant blood tests, vision testing and brain scans.

## MEDICAL HISTORY REVIEW

Your endocrinologist will review the referral from your GP and your medical history.

### They may ask you about:

- your symptoms – when they started and how they affect you
- if you have ever been diagnosed with any other endocrine conditions
- medications you currently take
- any allergies you have
- family history of endocrine disorders.

### Physical examination

Your specialist may also do a physical examination such as:

- checking your vital such as height, weight, blood pressure
- assessing for any visible signs of hormone imbalances

They may also order extra blood tests or imaging tests.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR SPECIALIST

At your appointment you will also have a chance to ask your specialist some questions. It can be hard to think of these while you're at your appointment, so we have put together a list. You can take this sheet with you or write the questions you have on a separate piece of paper.

- What type of pituitary condition do I have?
- Do you know what has caused my condition?
- If I have a tumour, has it spread beyond the pituitary gland?
- Does this condition run in families?
- Do I need extra tests?
- How will this condition affect my daily life?
- Will my condition cause any other health issues?
- How is my condition treated? What do you recommend and why?
- If I need medication, will I need to take it for the rest of my life?
- How much will medication cost?
- Will I need surgery, and if so, will surgery cure my condition?
- What are the potential risks and side effects of the recommended treatments?
- How will we know if treatment is working?
- What symptoms should I watch for that may indicate my condition is getting worse?
- Will I need time off work to manage my condition?
- Will this condition or its treatment affect my chances of having a family?
- Do you recommend I take any kind of supplement for this condition?
- Are there any types of medication or supplements I shouldn't take?
- Are there any lifestyle changes or dietary restrictions I should follow?
- How often will I need follow-up appointments and testing?
- Should I see any other specialists or medical professionals as part of my care?
- Are there any support groups or resources you recommend for patients with my condition?
- What is your experience in treating this specific pituitary condition?

## EXTRA QUESTIONS IF YOUR CHILD HAS BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH A PITUITARY CONDITION

- How will this condition affect my child's growth and development?
- Will this condition affect my child's ability to learn?
- What kind of treatment will they need, and will I have to administer it?
- Can you provide a care plan that we can give the school?
- What kind of symptoms do we need to be concerned about?
- How can I support my child's emotional wellbeing during treatment?
- What support is available for children and families who have this condition?

Don't be afraid to ask questions. Doing so can help you understand your condition better and the things you need to do to manage it effectively.

If you don't understand something the specialist says it's okay to ask them to explain it in more simple terms. You could also ask them if they have any patient information you can take home.

It may also be helpful to bring a family member or friend with you who can take notes, especially if you're feeling overwhelmed or anxious.

## MORE INFORMATION

The Australian Pituitary Foundation provides social support for patients and carers, and has published a range of patient resources on pituitary conditions and treatments.

**For more information, please visit our website: [www.pituitary.asn.au](http://www.pituitary.asn.au)**

**Email: [support@pituitary.asn.au](mailto:support@pituitary.asn.au)**

**Phone: 1300 331 807**

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