



**Do you have a learning disability?**  
**Don't miss out: get better healthcare now.**

# Did you know that you can get extra support when going to the doctor?

All you need to do is add your name to the learning disability register. This guide explains how you can do this and why it's so important.

## Why you might need extra support

Going to the doctor is not always easy if you have a learning disability. It can be difficult to:

- make an appointment
- understand what the doctor is telling you
- explain how you are feeling.

That's why you need to make sure your name is on the learning disability register. If it's not, you could be missing out on healthcare that meets your individual needs.

## Tell your doctor that you have a learning disability

Tell your doctor you have a learning disability and they can check if you are on the learning disability register. If you are not, they can arrange for your name to be added.

This means you will be offered extra support to make things a bit easier. And, importantly, you could get an Annual Health Check. This information can be shared with other doctors and nurses, so they can make things easier for you too.



## What is the learning disability register?

This is a list of people with a learning disability who use the GP surgery, which helps doctors make adjustments to their care.

## How does it help me?

Telling your doctor that you have a learning disability means you will receive care that meets your individual needs, including:

- extra time and support during your appointment
- easy read/accessible information
- appointments that suit you.

You could also get a free health check every year. This is called an Annual Health Check. There are other adjustments than can be made too – just ask your GP for more information.

Making things easier also means giving you clear, accessible information that you can understand. The government have made this the law – it's called the Accessible Information Standard. For more information, read our guide to Accessible Information Standard, which you can download at [www.mencap.org.uk/dontmissout](http://www.mencap.org.uk/dontmissout), or just give us a call on **0808 808 1111**.

## Who can join the learning disability register?

You can be **any age** and have **any level of disability** to join the learning disability register and get extra support. Even if you have a mild learning disability and you live independently, you can still join.

It is a good idea for children to join the learning disability register at a young age. This means adjustments and support are put in place before they start using adult services.

## How do I join?

Go to your doctor's surgery and ask the receptionist if you are on the learning disability register. If you are not on the register, you will need to make an appointment with your doctor to tell them that you have a learning disability.

“The power of the learning disability register and the Annual Health Check is that they improve the relationships between people with a learning disability and their health centre team. Ultimately, this benefits everyone involved, leading to better healthcare.”

**Dr Guy Bradley-Smith GP, clinical lead for learning disability for NEW Devon CCG**



## Letter to take to your doctor

We have written a letter for you to take to your doctor if that makes things easier. Download it here: [www.mencap.org/dontmissout](http://www.mencap.org/dontmissout), or give us a call on **0808 808 111**.

## What is an Annual Health Check?

An Annual Health Check is done by your doctor once a year. They will take a closer look at how you are doing – making sure you're healthy.

- It is available for people aged 14 and older at GP surgeries that offer the service.

You can have an AHC in full if you have been assessed as having

- > a moderate or severe learning disability
- > profound learning disabilities
- > a mild learning disability and possibly other health needs

- You don't need to be ill to get an Annual Health Check, but you can ask your doctor about anything that is hurting or worrying you.
- It is a good way to get to know your doctor better, and for them to find out more about you.
- Your doctor will tell you if you are able to have an Annual Health Check.

“Doing the Annual Health Checks allows me to build a long-term, trusting relationship with patients who have a learning disability. This means I can do the necessary examinations, such as blood tests. At the same time, I learn more about the person and can make reasonable adjustments to their care.”

**Dr Matt Hoghton, GP**



“My GP phones me to remind me about my health check, because sometimes I forget. I'm happy with my health centre. I didn't realise I was low on vitamin B12 until I had my Annual Health Check, so now I take vitamins to correct that. If I didn't have the check I may have been ill and not realised it.” **Youssef**



## Why should you have an Annual Health Check?

Getting an Annual Health Check is really important because it keeps you healthy and happy. There are lots of other reasons too, including:

- not always knowing if you are unwell – the doctor can spot signs that you might miss,
- getting better treatment – for example new medication,
- talking to your doctor about anything worrying you,
- getting advice on lifestyle choices, such as your diet,
- being more in control of your health and your body.



## What happens during an Annual Health Check?

An Annual Health Check normally lasts for one hour. You can bring someone with you to the appointment. During the check, the doctor or nurse will:

- check your body, for example weight, heart, and blood pressure
- take blood and wee samples (if you are happy to)
- talk about your medicines, and your life. For example, they might ask about what food you eat, and how you feel.

Remember:

- You can take your time
- You don't have to do anything you do not want to do.

“At my Annual Health Check, my doctor talks to me about exercise and asks if I eat a healthy diet, like fruit and veg. Now, I want to be more healthy. I've started running and I feel much better. I did a 10k last year, and I am proud of that.” **Lorraine**



“It's very helpful to have an Annual Health Check, because it helps me discuss concerns with the doctor, and make sure I am really well.” **Harry**



## Top tips for your Annual Health Check

- Think about anything you want to ask the doctor at your Annual Health Check – you may want to talk to a family member or support worker about this.
- Ask the doctor to explain anything you do not understand.
- Be honest when you answer the questions – it helps the doctor to give you the best support they can.
- Give your doctor permission (consent) to share your information – this means other doctors and nurses will be able to offer you better treatment too.
- Your doctor is there to help you, so you do not need to be worried or embarrassed.
- Make sure your doctor gives you a health action plan – this includes goals for you and your doctor to work towards together.

## Tell the doctor more about you

When you visit the doctor, they save information about your health on the computer. This is called a Summary Care Record. This will help medical staff to make better and safer choices about how best to treat you. It's important because you may need to be treated by a doctor or nurse who does not know you. If you are ill, they can look at your record on the computer to find out more about you.

You can ask the doctor to put more information on your Summary Care Record, such as:

- how you would like to be treated
- what extra support you need
- who to contact to find out more about you, such as a parent or carer.

This extra information will help medical staff to treat you better when you go to different health centres or hospitals. It will make sure you always get the support you need.

The doctor can show you what is on your record already. You can tell them what extra information you are happy to share.

## Remember...

It's simple: all you need to do is tell your doctor that you have a learning disability. If it helps, take this information guide and the letter we have prepared for you to the doctors, and they will take care of the rest.

**Be happy. Be healthy. Don't miss out.**