

# fact sheet

## WHAT TO EXPECT AT YOUR FIRST APPOINTMENT



What to expect at first app 21.05.21

**It is normal to have anxiety about your first session with a psychologist or counsellor. It can be overwhelming, and you may not know what to expect. You don't need to be nervous, but we understand if you are!**

### MAKING AN APPOINTMENT

After a warm welcome by our administrative team and all the paperwork, completed by you and your GP, has been received, a session will be arranged for you with one of our perinatal specialists.

As we support expectant and new parents Australia-wide, this appointment will either be face-to-face at one of our Gidget House locations or via a video call, whereby all the details will be sent to you. You will also receive a few reminder text messages from us and a confirmation text as well. Please ensure you reply so our Clinicians know you are attending the session.

### THE INITIAL SESSION

The Clinician will:

- Outline a bit about the counselling process e.g. how records are kept, rights and responsibilities, session length, bulk billing arrangements, cancellation policy and other housekeeping notes.
- Introduce themselves and tell you a bit about who they are and how they work.
- Talk with you about what brought you to the appointment, your background/culture/beliefs etc.
- Listen to your concerns, current stresses and symptoms and gauge how much your life is impacted by these.
- Ask questions about your general health and family history.
- Get to know you and give you time to ask questions as well.
- Ask you to complete two screening tools (EPDS and DASS 21).

- Inquire about your existing coping skills and support system with a view to improve them.
- Explore your counselling goals and collaboratively plan how to work towards those agreed outcomes.
- Work together to prioritise what needs to be the first areas of focus.
- May also talk with other health professionals or members of your family if need be, with your permission, to gain a more comprehensive understanding.

There are many reasons people come to Gidget Foundation Australia for counselling. It could be due to some PNDA or after a traumatic birth, miscarriage, or even stillbirth or an IVF-related issue. Our Clinicians, as well as listening, provide information about whatever your particular reason is for attending our service. We call this psychoeducation.

It may take a few appointments to formulate a treatment plan with you. All treatment plans are individual, and our Clinicians are trained to offer compassionate, evidence-based approaches and are able to deliver these in a timely, collaborative, professional and thoughtful way.

It may be useful to write down some questions before your appointment, or think about what you would like help with.

You can bring someone with you, and of course your baby if you have one or two!

### CONFIDENTIALITY

Anything you discuss with your Clinician is confidential. At times they may be required to talk to other health professionals, family members or by law to other organisations, though generally this will be discussed with you first. →



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### SUBSEQUENT APPOINTMENTS

The course of therapy is varied. You and your Clinician can work out priorities and map it out together. Sometimes a Clinician will steer the work a certain way and at other times you decide the direction. It is usually a two-way process. If for any reason you think that the counselling is not being helpful, which does happen from time to time, please discuss with your Clinician and/or the administrative team so we can continue to support you.

If you have a partner or other supports, they are always welcome to join the sessions if that would be useful for you.

Check-ups are encouraged with your GP and occasionally a referral is made to a Perinatal Psychiatrist for a second opinion or a medication review.

Regular sessions are advised at first and over time they can be spaced out once you and your Clinician discuss what's best. Our Clinicians have extensive knowledge of perinatal issues and other resources which may be helpful too.

Treatment is often multi-faceted and involves many approaches to help you manage your symptoms, enhance your coping skills and supports, build resilience and help you deal with the often very vulnerable time of the perinatal period.

Remember, 1 in 5 mums and 1 in 10 dads develop some degree of PNDA in the first year, so it's very common. PNDA is temporary, treatable and the earlier you or someone you are close to seeks help, the better. 🌸



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Gidget Foundation Australia exists to support the emotional wellbeing of expectant and new parents to ensure they receive timely, appropriate and specialist care.