



ADHD & Medical Appointments

Why GP and hospital appointments feel overwhelming – and how to make them easier, safer and more accessible for your brain

For many ADHD adults, medical settings are some of the hardest places to speak up. Appointments are fast, full of information, high-pressure and unpredictable. You're expected to remember everything, explain yourself clearly and respond quickly- all while trying to stay regulated.

This is not easy for an ADHD nervous system. And it's not your fault.

This guide will help you understand why appointments feel difficult, what happens in your brain, and how to advocate for yourself without shame.

Why ADHD Brains Struggle in Medical Settings

GP and hospital appointments often clash with ADHD neurology. You may find them hard because:

Information is given too quickly

Medical conversations move fast, with long explanations and multiple steps – which overwhelm ADHD processing.

You're expected to answer immediately

Quick responses are difficult when your brain needs time to organise thoughts, regulate emotion or find the right words.

Working memory drops under pressure

Stress makes it harder to remember symptoms, timelines, or what you meant to say.

Fear of being dismissed or misunderstood

Many ADHD adults have experienced being told “you’re fine”, “you’re overthinking”, or “that’s normal”, creating shame and silence.

Emotional overwhelm affects speech

ADHD emotions rise fast — making it harder to communicate calmly and clearly.

Sensory load makes thinking harder

Busy waiting rooms, bright lights or noise can lead to overload before the appointment even begins.

Being put on the spot can trigger freeze responses

Your mind can go completely blank when the doctor asks, “So what brings you in today?”

None of these are character flaws. These are neurological responses.

What ADHD Difficulties in Appointments Can Look Like

Every ADHD adult is different, but you might notice:

- forgetting symptoms when asked
- talking too fast because you’re nervous
- shutting down during long explanations
- struggling to describe pain or feelings
- saying “it’s fine” even when it’s not
- losing your words mid-sentence
- agreeing to things you don’t understand
- leaving the room unsure what was said
- feeling like you didn’t get what you needed
- walking away overwhelmed or embarrassed

You deserve a healthcare experience that works with your brain, not against it.

How to Prepare for Appointments (ADHD-Friendly)

Preparation helps reduce overwhelm and keeps your thoughts steady.

Write things down

Short notes help:

- symptoms
- when they started
- what makes them worse/better
- questions you need answered
- anything you usually forget when stressed

Use bullet points instead of long explanations

ADHD brains work well with simple prompts.

Bring a supporter if it helps

A friend, partner or advocate can:

- take notes
- remind you of questions
- help regulate your anxiety
- slow down the pace

Decide your “one main point”

If everything goes blank, you can fall back on:

“The main reason I’m here today is...”

Plan a script for the start

Examples:

- “I struggle to remember things when I’m anxious, so I’ve written notes.”
- “I get overwhelmed easily — could we go through things slowly?”

Scripts lower pressure.

How to Advocate for Yourself During the Appointment

Here are ADHD-friendly phrases that make speaking up easier.

If you need the pace slowed down:

- “Could you go through that more slowly?”

- “I need this in smaller steps.”

If you’re confused:

- “I don’t fully understand — can you explain that differently?”

If you’re overloaded:

- “I need a moment to think.”
- “Can we pause? My brain is trying to catch up.”

If your words disappear:

- “I’ve gone blank — this happens when I’m overwhelmed.”
- “Can I read from my notes?”

If you need clarity:

- “What is the first thing I need to do?”
- “Which part is most urgent?”

If you need information in writing:

- “Could you write that down please?”
- “Can you send a summary through the NHS app?”

What Helps After the Appointment

Post-appointment overwhelm is REAL for ADHD adults.

Here’s how to reduce it:

1. Look over any notes your supporter took

Seeing it in writing makes everything clearer.

2. Write down the plan immediately

Steps, meds, referrals — get them out of your head.

3. If something doesn’t make sense later, you can message your GP

You haven’t “missed your chance”.

4. Use reminders

Set alarms for medication, follow-ups or next steps.

5. If you didn’t feel heard — it’s okay to book again

You are allowed to try again, to bring support, and to ask for clarity.

What Healthcare Professionals Can Do to Support ADHD Patients

(You can share this section with your GP)

Helpful:

- slowing down
- using simple language
- giving written notes
- asking one question at a time
- allowing pauses
- offering follow-up messages
- asking “Would it help if I broke this down?”

Unhelpful:

- rushing
- dismissing symptoms
- long explanations with no breaks
- assuming you understand
- expecting instant answers
- minimising your overwhelm

Good care is accessible care.

Takeaways

- You’re not “bad at appointments”.
 - Your brain needs a different pace, format and environment.
 - Speaking up is easier when things are slowed down and broken into steps.
 - You are allowed to ask for written information and extra time.
 - Your healthcare needs — and communication needs — are valid.
 - You deserve to feel safe, supported and understood when accessing medical care.
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You Deserve Understanding, Not Pressure

If appointments feel hard, it doesn’t mean there’s something wrong with you. You’re allowed to take your time, ask for clarity, or return later with questions. These are accessibility needs, not weaknesses.

Unmasked is here if you need help preparing for appointments, advocating for yourself or understanding your needs.

You don't have to do this alone.

CONTACT US

Unmasked Neurodiversity Network CIC

A lived-experience-led community organisation supporting neurodivergent adults and families across East Leeds and West Yorkshire.

If you need support, information, counselling, advocacy or a safe, neuro-affirming space, we're here for you.

Email Us

For general enquiries, referrals, appointments or support:

info@unmaskednn.org

Follow Us on Social Media

Stay updated with groups, events, workshops, blogs, and resources:

- **Facebook Page:** Unmasked Neurodiversity Network CIC
- **Facebook Community Group:** Unmasked Neurodiversity Network CIC
- **Instagram:** @unmasked_nn_cic
- **LinkedIn:** Unmasked Neurodiversity Network CIC

Phone Contact

If you need help getting in touch or cannot email, you can request a call-back via email or through our website contact form.

How We Work

Unmasked is led by trained neurodivergent counsellors and facilitators.

We offer:

- Low-cost and funded counselling
- Support groups and peer spaces
- Creative workshops and community cafés
- Advocacy and guidance (including Access to Work, benefits, workplace support and more)

- Training for organisations and professionals
- Resources designed by and for neurodivergent adults

All profits are reinvested into helping our community.

Accessibility

We are committed to making our services accessible — including communication support, written information, pacing, sensory consideration, and advocacy assistance. If you need adjustments, let us know and we'll do our best to meet them.

Final Note

You are welcome here — exactly as you are.

If you need support, guidance or just a safe place to talk, Unmasked is here for you.

Love Toni & Sarah x