

CREATING A YOUTH FRIENDLY PRACTICE

Young people are more likely to use a service if it has a 'youth friendly' environment. The most important factors identified by adolescents in using GP services are:

- Confidentiality and privacy
- Staff attitudes and communication
- Convenience of access
- The physical environment of the service – reception area and waiting room
- Costs and billing procedures

Making Your Practice Youth Friendly

You can improve young people's access by addressing the following aspects of your practice:

1. PRACTICE STAFF

Provide information and training on the developmental and health needs of adolescents so that practice staff and receptionists:

- adopt a friendly and non-judgemental approach
- are sensitive to adolescents' concerns about privacy and confidentiality, and take steps to safeguard their confidentiality
- are sensitive to the needs of young people from culturally diverse backgrounds
- explain to young people why they have to wait, if there is a long waiting time – as they may not understand the process of medical consultation
- understand young peoples' health rights and explain Medicare procedures to all young people who present alone
- consult the young person on the best way to contact them for follow-up, test results, etc – in order to protect their confidentiality

2. RECEPTION / WAITING AREA

- Create a relaxed and welcoming environment for young people
- Have adolescent-specific posters, pamphlets and other reading material available on subjects such as substance use; mental and sexual health
- Provide a range of youth-oriented magazines
- Display posters and resources aimed at specific cultural groups – e.g. NESB; gay and lesbian; indigenous young people
- Display information about the practice's confidentiality policy

