

Patient Handbook

Advice for navigating the health care system in South Georgian Bay



ONTARIO HEALTH TEAM

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Introduction

Welcome to the South Georgian Bay Ontario Health Team's Patient Handbook! This handbook was designed to help support you through your healthcare journey in South Georgian Bay. In this handbook you will find tips on booking, preparing for and attending appointments, as well as advice on how to prepare for testing, procedures, new medication, and hospital stays. The South Georgian Bay Ontario Health Team is committed to co-designing the best possible care for our region as we strive to be the healthiest community in Canada. We hope this handbook is useful to you as you navigate the healthcare system.

To receive regular updates from the South Georgian Bay Ontario Health Team, subscribe to our newsletter at the bottom of our [website](#) or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) or [LinkedIn](#)

Acknowledgements

This handbook was co-designed with our Patient Family Advisory Council (PFAC) and is based on extensive research and consultation. We would like to thank our PFAC for all their contributions to this handbook. Additionally, we would like to thank the Greater Hamilton Health Network for sharing their patient handbook for reference.

Disclaimer

This handbook is for educational purposes only. It was not designed to replace medical advice. Please note that not all suggestions in this handbook will be appropriate for all healthcare appointments.

The term “health care provider” is used throughout the handbook to refer to anyone who provides you care, including your physician, nurse practitioner, registered nurse, pharmacist, respiratory therapist, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, dietitian, optometrist, dentist, chiropractor, and/or specialist.

Booking an Appointment

Online Booking

Online booking is now available in South Georgian Bay! The South Georgian Bay Ontario Health Team is supporting local family doctors in offering online booking to their patients through OceanMD.

To learn more about online booking and to see if your family doctor is currently offering this service, please visit <https://southgeorgianbayoht.ca/online-bookings/>

If you need assistance with online booking, you can dial 2-1-1 (24/7 bilingual helpline) for support.

Patients without a primary care provider

Residents of the Town of Blue Mountains, Collingwood, Wasaga Beach, and Clearview Township who do not have a family doctor or nurse practitioner can be seen by a nurse practitioner or mental health counsellor at the Wasaga Beach Medical Clinic. To learn more about this clinic or to book an appointment [click here](#).

Patients without a primary care provider are also encouraged to fill out our [contact form](#) to join our local waitlist for a family doctor.

Additional Resources

To find mental health and addictions resources, visit <https://mentalhealthandaddictions.cioc.ca/> (local resources) or <https://www.connexontario.ca/en-ca/> (provincial resources). To search for community resources by location, keyword or service type, visit <https://simcoecounty.cioc.ca/>.



Navigation Services

There are many different navigation services available to help you find resources and supports in our community. Dial 2-1-1 to connect to confidential and free 24/7, bilingual, non-emergency community, social and government services. Dial 8-1-1 to receive health advice from qualified health professionals, locate local health services and find trusted health information. Dial 9-8-8 to talk to a trained mental health responder if you or someone you know is thinking about suicide. Or [click here](#) to fill out our contact form and our navigator will be in touch to assist you.

Looking for help in your community?



DIAL:

If this is an emergency, please call 911

211

to connect to confidential and free, 24/7, non-emergency community, social and government services

811

to receive health advice from qualified health professionals, locate local health services, and find trusted health information

988

to talk to a trained mental health responder if you or someone you know is thinking about suicide

Still need help?

**Fill out our
contact form:**



Preparing for your Appointment

First Appointment

If this is your first appointment with the health care provider,

- Prepare an overview of your medical history and your family's medical history.
- Bring a list of your current medications and supplements and the dose you take.
- Let your provider know if you have any accessibility needs (i.e. impaired vision, mobility, or hearing, learning disabilities, etc.).
- Bring a list of symptoms, concerns, and questions you wish to address during your appointment.

Follow-up Appointments

If you have seen the health care provider previously,

- Bring a list of symptoms, concerns and questions that have come up since your previous visit.
- Let them know if your medical history, medications, or accessibility needs have changed since your previous visit.

Appointments for filling out forms

Your family physician may be able to help you fill out forms required for the Ontario Disability Support Program, Ontario Works and Functional Abilities Form for teaching staff. Prior to attending your appointment, please complete as much of the form as possible. If you need assistance filling out a form, please call 2-1-1 before attending your appointment.

If you are applying for the Disability Tax Credit, please complete the eligibility criteria checklist prior to booking an appointment with your health care provider to certify your impairment.

List of Items to Bring to Every Health Care Appointment

- Valid Ontario health card
- List of current medications and supplements
- Pen and paper for taking notes
- “Questions to ask your health care provider” print out
- Name of your current pharmacy
- A caregiver or trusted loved one to help take notes or ask questions (optional)

During Your Appointment

During your appointment you may have a very limited amount of time to talk to your health care provider. It is important to plan out what you would like to talk about so you can use your time effectively.

- Share your list of questions/symptoms with your health care provider.
- Start the appointment with your most important concern.
- Take notes to help you remember what was said.
- Repeat the information given to you back to your provider to make sure you are both on the same page.
- Use the poster below “Questions to ask your health care practitioner” to help guide you.

Questions to Ask Your Health Care Practitioner or Pharmacist

1

What is my health problem?
Please explain it in language
that makes sense to me.



2

What do I need to do
to fix/manage it?



3

What will it do to
help me?



4

What resources are
available to help me?

Medications, Tests and Procedures

During your health care appointment, your provider may prescribe medications, tests or procedures to help reach a diagnosis or as part of your treatment plan. Asking your provider questions about these new medications, tests or procedures will help you better understand their benefits and how to prepare for them.

Questions to ask your provider about new medications

1. What is the name of the medication?
2. What is this medication suppose to do?
3. What are common side effects of this medication? Are their any side effects I should seek medical attention for?
4. How should I take this medication?
5. Do I need to avoid anything when taking this medication (i.e. driving, operating heavy machinery, alcohol, cannabis or illegal substances, other medications)?

Questions to ask your health care provider about tests and procedures

1. Can you explain this test or procedure in non-medical language?
2. Is there anything I need to do to prepare for this test or procedure (ie. Fasting, medication)
3. What are the side effect or risks of this test or procedure?
4. Do I need to bring anything to this test or procedure?
5. How long is the recovery from this test or procedure?
6. Is it covered by my health card (OHIP)? If it is not covered how much will it cost?
7. Do I need someone need to pick me up from this test or procedure?
8. How long will it take to get results and how will I be notified?

After Your Appointment

- Review the notes you made during your appointment.
- Pick up any medications prescribed to you during your appointment and begin treatment as directed by your health care provider/pharmacist.
- Update any caregivers on changes to your care that were made during the appointment.
- Monitor any changes in symptoms and book a follow-up appointment if needed.

Advocating for yourself or others in the health care system

While navigating the health care system as a patient/client, friend, family member, or caregiver, you are an advocate for your health care or the health care of someone else. If you are bringing a caregiver or trusted loved one to your health care appointment, share the following information with them so they are prepared to advocate for you!

WHY BE AN ADVOCATE?



it improves understanding of the patient/client's goals and wishes



it creates a better experience



it increases knowledge and preparedness for the patient/client and healthcare provider



Advocating improves patient safety by creating a better health experience and result

Use the following steps to help advocate for yourself or others!

1 Take the first step, don't wait to be approached

2 Be prepared with information

3 Don't be afraid to ask questions and take notes

4 Check in with yourself to see how you're feeling

5 Address any cultural differences or issues that arise

6 Follow up if you do not hear back in a reasonable amount of time

7 Learn about moving through the health, community and social systems to overcome challenges in getting care and treatment

8 Practice self-care. You cannot help others if you are not rested, informed, and calm about what is happening

www.southgeorgianbayoht.ca

[Click here](#) to print off these steps.



Hospital Stay

Preparing for a hospital stay

Before you enter the hospital, make sure you know,

- What you need to bring with you.
- If there is anything you need to do to prepare (ie. Fasting, medication).
- What time you need arrive.
- Where to register.
- If a caregiver or trusted loved one should come with you.

For more information on preparing for a hospital stay, visit the Collingwood General and Marine Hospital's [patient webpage](#).

Going home after a hospital stay

Leaving the hospital can be a major change. To make your transition more successful, it is important to prepare yourself and your caregiver. Before leaving the hospital make sure you know,

- Who will follow up with you (ie. your primary care provider, a specialist).
- Who you should contact if an issue arises.
- Your at-home treatment plan (ie. medications, exercises, therapies, follow up tests/procedures).
- If you need any equipment or supplies at home and where you should get them from (ie. Mobility aids, at home monitors, etc.).
- How you will get home. If you need help arranging transportation, talk to your care team before your discharge date.
- Who will care for you when you get home and what care they need to provide.

About the South Georgian Bay Ontario Health Team



The SGB OHT is a new model of organizing and delivering health care that better connects patients and providers in their communities to improve patient outcomes. We are comprised of eleven anchor partners and a strong network of supporting community organizations. SGB OHT members collaborate with patients, families, caregivers, and the community to co-design the best possible care for our region.

To learn more about SGB OHT please visit www.southgeorgianbayoht.ca, contact us at info@southgeorgianbayoht.ca, subscribe to our newsletter at the bottom of our website or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

Want to help shape the future of health and social service care in South Georgian Bay? Join our Patient Family Advisory Council (PFAC) to provide input on critical decisions and help guide our work! [Click here](#) to learn more.

The South Georgian Bay Ontario Health Team is supported by funding from the Government of Ontario.

