

What you can expect when booking an appointment at the GP Surgery

Not all surgeries run in exactly the same way and the information contained in this leaflet represents the minimum standards in operation in the Primary Care Trust locality. Individual surgeries may offer even greater flexibility.

You can expect that:

- Your call will be answered as soon as possible (at peak times there may be a delay).
- Receptionists will be polite and helpful.
- If necessary you will be seen on the day you ring by a doctor and/or nurse (this consultation may not be with your own doctor).
- Surgeries try to offer all patients an appointment with a doctor or nurse within 48 hours.
- If you have special needs, such as caring responsibilities or disabilities, we do our best to accommodate these.
- You will be able to book ahead if advised to do so by a doctor for a follow-up appointment (we ask you to try to avoid booking appointments for Mondays or Fridays wherever possible).
- Appointments are released at least a week in advance if you need to pre-book.
- We constantly keep the level of demand under review so that we can respond to changes.

How can you help?

- Please arrive on time for your appointment.
- Explain your needs for an appointment clearly.
- Be polite.
- Unless you wish to book an appointment for the same day please phone after 10.00 a.m. if at all possible.
- Always ring to cancel your appointment as early as possible if you can no longer attend. This frees up appointments for other patients.
- Appointments are for the named patient only.
- Consider whether you need to see a doctor at all.

Do you need to see a Doctor?

There are many different staff in the surgery and also other services which may be able to help you, without needing a doctor's appointment.

- For **Repeat prescription queries** please see surgery booklet for details.
- For **queries about hospital appointments and referrals** please contact surgery administration staff.
- For **medication queries** -your local pharmacist can help .
- For **medical advice** - you can contact NHS DIRECT a 24 hour nurse-led service on 0845 4647

Some Frequently Asked Questions

All surgeries have pre-bookable appointments available. These are for planned routine care i.e. it is not urgent for today. Please help your surgery by using these appropriately. Occasionally patients use pre-bookable slots in anticipation that they may still be feeling ill in a few days time. You do not need to do this, as you will be able to book on the day if you need to.

Why is the phone always engaged? This can happen during the peak morning times. During this period as many staff as possible are assigned to phone duties. The PCT continues to work with practices to find ways of improving telephone access, both through staffing and technical solutions.

Why couldn't I get the Pre-bookable time I wanted? Most surgeries keep the first few appointments every day available for patients to pre-book. They will then have a range of other pre-bookable slots throughout the day (very often in the afternoon as this is generally a quieter time).

Does the practice change its system? At very busy times, for example the days following a bank holiday, the practice may make short term temporary changes to ensure that all urgent patients are seen.

Why can't I see my own doctor? In the majority of cases you will be able to see your own doctor. However if you need to be seen on the same day, your doctor may not be available and you will be offered an appointment with someone else. Practices will always make sure that you get an appointment with a doctor and/or nurse if you need to be seen.

What if I am a Carer? If you are the main carer for another person (for example someone who is infirm/elderly or a disabled child) we will try to meet your appointment needs. Every practice holds a carers register, on which you can request to be included. This will help surgery staff to recognise your needs.

What if I have Special Needs? If you have learning difficulties, hearing, sight or mobility problems we will try to meet your needs. Please tell the receptionist so that they can give you the right advice.

Why was I offered a nurse appointment? Some practices offer a service (triage) run by highly qualified nurse practitioners who can assess your problem and in most cases deal with it. If you do then need to see a doctor this will be arranged. This is a very efficient way of making sure that your problem is dealt with quickly and that you are offered appropriate treatment. Nurse appointments can be booked in the same way as doctor's appointments.

Why was I offered a telephone appointment? Some practices (although not all) may offer you the option of a telephone appointment with the doctor or nurse practitioner. This will be your choice. Many patients have found these very useful as the doctor or nurse has been able to give advice and reassurance over the phone.

What if I am not happy with the service offered. Please contact the Practice Manager to discuss your concerns. Alternatively you can contact PALS (Patient Advice Liaison Service) on 01403 223300/01

If you would like this information on tape, in Braille or translated into another language please contact the Public Involvement & Partnerships Team on 01403 223294
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