



Autumn Newsletter 2016 - New Appointment System

We are redesigning our appointment system to help patients who want to book **routine same day appointments**. In a recent survey, patients said one of things they value most from their GP surgery is being able to access a doctor or nurse when they want to, particularly where they have long-term health conditions or acute illnesses.

From Monday, 5 September the appointment booking system will change to make access to same day appointments more effective and convenient. Currently, if all the available routine same day GP appointments have been booked, patients have to ring, go on-line or come in to book appointment on another day.

We appreciate how frustrating this can be, so from September, if all the routine same day appointments have been booked, other patients who want to be seen that day will be offered a telephone triage appointment with the Doctor on Call, usually within an hour, during which the doctor will assess their medical condition.

Please note you will still be able to pre-book a routine GP appointment on another day if you wish to do so, up to a month in advance, and appointments can be booked at reception, by 'phone and on-line.

If all the available routine, same day appointments have been booked by other patients, the new appointment system offers telephone triage appointments with the Doctor on Call to any patient requesting a same day routine appointment

To access this system:

- simply ring on the day you wish to see a doctor, at any time before 3pm
- please ring the surgery, rather than to come in to the reception desk, as we will be able to deal 'phone requests more quickly
- requests received by 'phone will be prioritised over patients presenting at the reception desk as the Doctor On Call will speak to patients who ring in immediately, or ring them back within an identified timeframe, so please ring to avoid the inconvenience of a lengthy wait at reception
- if you are requesting a same day appointment, a receptionist will ask you for brief details of the reasons for your request
- all the receptionists are bound by the terms of medical confidentiality and have been asked by the doctors to ask this question to help them to deal with your request effectively and efficiently, and ensure that you are seen by the best person to meet your needs
- please let the receptionist know if you would rather not discuss aspects of your medical condition with them, but note this may make it more difficult to prioritise your call appropriately

- the receptionist will put you through to the Doctor On Call, or if s/he is already speaking to another patient, they will take your name and contact number and give you a time slot, usually within an hour, during which the doctor will call you back
- the call back may be shown as a “blocked” or “withheld” number, so if you don’t usually accept these calls, please ensure that you answer the call and that you’re available to answer the call within the timeframe the receptionist has given you, as the doctor will only try twice to ring you back on the same day, usually within the hour
- the doctor will discuss your concerns with you, and will book an appointment for that morning or that afternoon with themselves **if s/he feels it is medically indicated**
- In our experience, many of the concerns can be resolved on the ‘phone during the triage consultation with the doctor, without the need for the patient to visit the surgery

We hope the new system will mean that our same day appointments will be more accessible and convenient for patients with routine medical problems. Changing the system enables us to make more efficient use of our doctors’ time, and patients have the reassurance of knowing they will always be able to speak to, and if medically indicated, to see a doctor on the same day as they request an appointment.

Arrangements for pre-booking appointments with GPs and Practice Nurses, and for blood tests, minor operations, medication reviews, coil fittings, dressings, immunisations, diabetic clinics and COPD clinics, will remain the same, and can be booked at reception, by ‘phone in advance, and for GP appointments, on line.

Please note the Nurse Triage Service will be unaffected and will run between 8.45 am and 10 am, and 4 pm and 4.30 pm daily.

We believe that the new system will result in a much better patient experience and improved access to routine appointments on the same day.

The system will be evaluated before the end of the year, and if the feedback we receive from patients is that they are happy with the new service, it will be made permanent.

We really do hope that this new system will make booking a same day appointment easier for all our patients, and will offer the reassurance of same day access to medical assistance from a doctor. Some frequently asked questions follow which may be helpful.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Why is the surgery offering telephone triage appointments?

You have told us that sometimes you find it difficult to get a same day appointment. By offering telephone appointments with a GP who will book a consultation if clinically indicated, we can make sure that every patient is able speak to, or see a doctor on same the day that they call the surgery.

Many people don't need to come into the surgery to be seen at all; their medical problem can be dealt with by a doctor by telephone. This gives your doctor more time to see those people that need appointments in the surgery; because your doctor is booking the appointments directly with patients, s/he can judge how much time you might need and give you a long or a short appointment. This helps appointments to run to time and means you're more likely to be seen on time.

2. What if I do not have a telephone?

If you are unable to access a telephone you can come to the surgery and wait to be seen. The receptionist will add your name to the GP call back list and add a note to say that you are in the surgery.

3. I am hard of hearing and unable to communicate using the telephone.

If you are hard of hearing you are welcome to come to the surgery to access your GP. You may have to wait a little while but the GP will endeavour to see you as soon as possible. In some individual cases, we will make an exception to the Call back system.

4. What if I do not wish to share brief details of my problem with the Receptionist?

Any information provided to our Reception team is confidential but we understand that some patients may not wish to share even the briefest details. This will not prevent you from accessing your GP. Please explain to the receptionist that your condition is "personal" and your name will be added to the call-back list. The only reason we ask for brief details is to assist the GP in identifying any calls that may need to take priority.

5. What if I am unable to wait in for a call-back?

Please let the Receptionist know if you are genuinely unable to wait around for a call-back and you will be offered the option of waiting on the line until the Duty Doctor can take your call (but this could be a long wait). Alternatively, the receptionist can add a note for the GP asking them to call you back at a particular time.

6. What if I am unable to take private calls?

If you are able to take a private call at some point in the day let the Receptionist know what time that is so the doctor can ring you then. If you are unable to take private calls at all just tell let your doctor know and they will book you a mutually convenient face-to-face appointment.

Remember you can choose to hold the line and wait for the Duty Doctor to become available rather than book a call-back with the Receptionist.

7. Are telephone triage appointments safe?

During your call with the doctor, s/he will ask questions to help them make a decision about whether you need to be seen in person or not. For example, if your doctor needs to look at something or examine you, you will be asked to come into the surgery for the appointment. If your doctor thinks you need to be seen, he or she will always ask you to come in to the surgery.

8. Will I be seen quicker if I come into the surgery?

Unless your problem is an emergency, you won't be seen more quickly if you come into the surgery to make an appointment. The receptionist will ask for your contact details and add your name to the doctor's call-back list. The doctor will then call you back in order of clinical priority. You will also be given the option to sit and wait for the doctor to see you. However, your wait may be very lengthy as the doctor will still see patients in the order that they feel is most clinically urgent. Receptionists will be unable to advise you how long your wait will be as this completely depends upon how many patients are on the doctor's call-back list, and the nature of their presenting complaint.