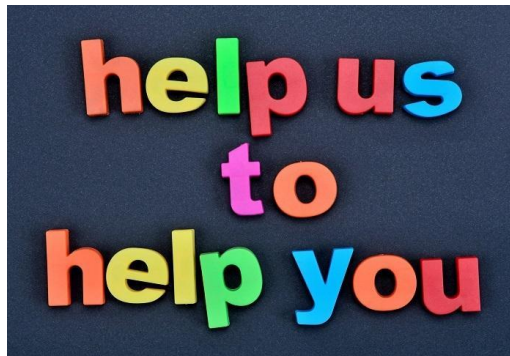




Spring 2024

Dear Patient,

The NHS is experiencing some of the most severe pressures in its 75-year history and this includes General Practice. There is a record demand for appointments which is causing unsustainable system pressures. As a practice we are doing our very best to continue to deliver a quality service with the resources that we have available to us. To help us continue to deliver a quality service there are things that our patients can do to “help us to help you”.



A lot of appointments are used by people re-attending with persisting symptoms of cough, sore throat, earache, and sinusitis that haven't resolved within a few days or persist after a course of antibiotics.

Public Health England advise that:

1. Middle ear infections typically settle within 8 days.
2. Sore throats typically settle within 7-8 days.
3. Acute sinusitis typically settles within 14-21 days.
4. The common cold typically settles within 14 days.
5. Cough or bronchitis typically settles 21 days.



NICE guidance advises that after pneumonia/chest infections it takes:

1. 1 week for fever to resolve.
2. 4 weeks for chest pain and sputum production to substantially reduce.
3. 6 weeks for cough and breathlessness to substantially reduce.
4. 3 months for most symptoms to resolve, but fatigue may still be present.
5. 6 months for most people to feel back to normal.

Within these timeframes, unless there is a significant deterioration in your symptoms, please give them time to resolve rather than attending the surgery.

Pharmacy First

This is a new service that allows pharmacists to supply prescription- only medicines and antivirals where clinically appropriate, to treat seven common health conditions as follows:

- Sinusitis – 12 years and over
- Sore throat – 5 years and over
- Earache – 1 – 17 years
- infected insect bite – 1 year and over
- impetigo – 1 year and over
- shingles – 18 years and over
- uncomplicated urinary tract infections in women – 16 – 64 years

If you contact the practice with any of the above conditions our Care Navigators in most cases can make you a direct referral to a pharmacy of your choice which takes them seconds to complete.

Once the referral has been made to the pharmacy

you will be provided with the contact number of your chosen pharmacy who you then can call to book a consultation.

In some cases, the pharmacist will complete the consultation over the telephone, if this is not the case, then a face-to-face consultation will be booked on the same day. This service can be more convenient for patients as they will not have to wait for an appointment at their practice and helps free up appointments for those patients who need to be seen by a GP or nurse.

You can find out more about Pharmacy First here [How pharmacies can help - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk) and [Find Pharmacy Services - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)



The poster features the NHS logo and HM Government text at the top. The main title is 'PHARMACY FIRST' in large white letters on a dark green background, followed by 'services available without a prescription' in smaller white text. Below this, a dark green box lists eligible conditions and age ranges in two columns. The background of the poster shows a pharmacy interior with shelves of medicine.

For patients in eligible age ranges	
Earache 1 to 17 years	Sinusitis 12 years and over
Impetigo 1 year and over	Sore throat 5 years and over
Infected insect bites 1 year and over	Uncomplicated urinary tract infections Women 16-64 years
Shingles 18 years and over	

Urine Samples

We are changing the way we manage urine samples handed in to the surgery.

We would ask that you only submit a sample if you have been asked to by your clinician (doctor/nurse etc).

If you suspect you have a urinary tract infection (UTI i.e. “cystitis”) you may need an appointment (complete a Patches or speak to Reception).

If you have a history of Recurrent UTIs (i.e. at least 2 UTIs in six months or at least 3 UTIs in one year) or if you are on long term antibiotics to prevent a UTI -then you may submit a sample; but you will still need an appointment with a GP (telephone appointments may be fine).

Please remember that if you are a female between the age of 16 and 64 your UTI can be dealt with (including issuing antibiotics if appropriate) by your Community Pharmacist via the “Pharmacy First” programme. Our Reception Staff are trained as Care Navigators and can refer you to the Pharmacist if need be.

Please remember all requested samples are to be handed in before 11am and must be passed directly to a member of our team (rather than left on the desk).



Dental problems

We know it is often hard to see a dentist, but we do not have the expertise to manage dental problems and we are advised that we should not prescribe antibiotics for dental problems. Instead, please see your dentist, or contact 111 for an emergency dental appointment.

Acute injuries

We are not permitted to request x-rays for injuries that are less than 2 weeks old. This is because x-rays are indicated if a fracture is suspected and if that is the case then the x-ray needs to be reviewed immediately so appropriate treatment can be provided. It takes up to 10 days for us to receive an x-ray report whereas the images can be reviewed immediately in a Minor Injuries Walk-in Centre or A&E. If you have an injury and are concerned you may have a fracture, please attend a Minor Injuries Walk-in Centre or A&E where you can receive the assessment and treatment you need.



Referrals

When we refer a patient to hospital it is because we require the opinion of a specialist in how to manage your symptoms, or an investigation or treatment that we are unable to provide ourselves. If you have been referred for a hospital appointment, please wait for that appointment. We understand the wait for hospital appointments can be very long, unfortunately, this is a reflection on the pressure on the NHS as a whole and is the same for everyone. As a practice we have no control over hospital waiting lists and therefore we cannot speed up your hospital appointment, and booking an appointment to ask us to do so only adds to the pressure on our appointment availability. You can check the status of your referral via the appointments section of the NHS app.

The urgency with which someone is seen in hospital is defined by the clinical need and not the length of time that they are prepared to wait to be seen. When we refer, we do specify whether a patient's symptoms require an urgent appointment or not. If your symptoms deteriorate significantly while waiting for a hospital appointment, then please book an appointment with a doctor to reassess them. If your symptoms remain the same, then please wait for your hospital appointment.

If you have been seen by a specialist in the hospital and referred for investigations, please be aware that these results are not sent back to us. Your results will be returned to the hospital doctor who will arrange follow up as appropriate. It is difficult for the GP to comment on results requested by the hospital as they do not have the clinical information required to interpret these.

Weight Loss Injections

We receive lots of requests from patients asking the practice to prescribe weight loss injections. We are not able to prescribe this medication to patients, without the medication being initiated by the tier 3 weight loss management service. This is an NHS service that supports patients to lose weight via a structured exercise and dietary programme.

Patients who do not wish to be referred to the tier 3 weight management service, can self-fund this medication via a private service.

Children – When you should worry.

Having an ill child can be a very scary experience for parents. However, if you understand more about the illness, it can help you to feel more in control.



- 1) Fever** - Fever is a normal response that may even help fight infections. To lower their temperature, you may want to try giving them paracetamol and/or ibuprofen as well as removing all outer clothing. Don't wrap your child up if they have a fever. Sponging your child with water can make matters worse as they can begin to shiver raising temperature more, however if sponging with lukewarm water doesn't upset your child, it may help a little.
- 2) Chesty coughs/colds** – Coughs and colds are frequent occurrences in children, most colds and coughs don't last long. 50% of children with a cough or cold will have recovered within 10 days and 90% recover within 15-25 days. One third of children who see a GP will still be coughing 2 weeks later, this doesn't mean they need further treatment. Antibiotics do not help with common infections such as coughs/colds.
- 3) Sore throat** – A sore throat doesn't need treatment to go away, it will heal by itself. 60% of children who see a GP with a sore throat will recover within 3 days. Large tonsils alone aren't something to be concerned about. If your child seems very unwell or has a sore throat and temperature, but no cough for more than 3 days, he or she should see a doctor or nurse. Furthermore, if your child is having difficulty breathing or seems very unwell, you should see a doctor urgently. 13 out of 14 children who take antibiotics for a sore throat will get better just as quickly as if they had not taken them.
- 4) Earache** – You should only contact the surgery about earache if your child is having hearing problems or the ear is draining. Most ear infections in children resolve themselves within a week. Antibiotics generally don't help symptoms, they only help in children under 2 with earache in both ears, and those with an ear infection that is draining.
- 5) Not Eating/Drinking** – Children often eat and drink less when they are unwell. Encourage them to drink plenty of water (not sugary drinks). Most will start to drink before dehydration. However, you should watch for signs of dehydration such as drowsiness, dry eyes/mouth and decreased urination. This is especially important in children under 1 and those who are vomiting.

A child's immune system is very powerful and will clear up most common infections by itself. You can help them by making sure they drink plenty of water, get lots of rest and offering them healthy foods like fruit. For most common illnesses, paracetamol and/or ibuprofen can be given but be sure not to give them more than the maximum recommended dose of either.

If you are concerned about your child's mental health, concentration, or behaviours, then please discuss these concerns with the school as they can provide counselling and assessments for Autistic Spectrum Disorders and ADHD. Where we are asked to refer children with these conditions, we do so through the School Nursing Team in the same way that the school does.

The links below provide some very useful information that will help parents manage their children's health.

http://www.whenshouldiworry.com/resources/When%20should%20I%20worry-Booklet_England-with%2011%20service_2016.pdf

[Healthier Together \(what0-18.nhs.uk\)](http://www.healthier-together.nhs.uk)

NHS App

Have you downloaded the NHS app yet? Did you know with the NHS app you can:

- ✓ Order medication
- ✓ Check appointments
- ✓ Cancel appointments
- ✓ Get your test results
- ✓ Check your medical record
- ✓ Look at health advice
- ✓ Contact the practice via Patches
- ✓ Check the status of hospital referrals



Registering for the NHS app is quick and easy and can be done via smart phone or PC. You can register for this service via the link below. If you require any assistance in registering for this service, then please do not hesitate to ask a member of our staff for help.

[NHS App and your NHS account - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

Prescriptions

Spital Surgery issued over 8400 prescription items in the last month! Dealing with such a high volume of prescription requests is time consuming for staff. There are ways in which you can help to reduce the amount of time our staff have to spend dealing with prescription requests:

- 1) We ask that you do not order your repeat prescription on the day that you run out of medication, as prescription requests can take up to 48hrs to process. Please place your order when you have 7 days' supply left. Pharmacies are also extremely busy so it may take an extra day for the pharmacy to prepare your medication after we have processed your prescription. Remember to allow extra time for weekends and bank holidays.
- 2) Ordering your repeat prescription electronically via the NHS App saves time for both patients and the practice, as prescriptions that are ordered in this way are automatically sent to a GP inbox for signing. This is safer as this eliminates room for human error and will also help reduce the amount of time that our staff spend processing prescriptions. Only repeat medications appear on your app. If you have a new medication it may need to be reviewed by the doctor before it can be moved to your repeat list.
We cannot accept prescription requests over the telephone, this is due to potential safety issues when transcribing the request. This method is also very time consuming.
- 3) Because the NHS app is the safest way to order your prescriptions, our prescription email account will be ceasing to operate in the next couple of months. If you usually order via email, we ask that you download the NHS app in the meantime, so you are ready for this change.

Anyone who can not access online services is welcome to continue using the prescription box in reception.

Access to medical records via the NHS app

Patients who have the NHS app will now automatically have access to all medical information which has been added to their record after 4th October 2023. This includes consultation information, clinical letters, and results. If you do not already have online access, we would recommend downloading the NHS app. The NHS app allows you to verify your identity without coming into the surgery with proof of ID.

Telephone calls

Each week we receive 550-650 calls in to reception so our phone lines can get very busy. The busiest time for incoming calls is between 8am and 9am, and Mondays are particularly busy. We kindly ask that you only call us before 10am if you are in need of an urgent appointment so we can free up the phone lines for those who really need it. If you need to check your test results you can help us by checking them online via the **NHS app** rather than calling us, or if you are unable to use online services, leaving it until the afternoon to call when our phone lines are a bit quieter.

Patches

Another way you can help us by reducing phone calls into the practice is to contact us using Patches. This is an online platform which you can access via the Home page of our website or via the NHS app.

You can contact us via Patches for clinical queries including requesting a GP appointment, on weekdays (excluding bank holidays) from 6am-10am and for admin queries such as requesting a sick note from 6am-6.30pm. You just need to complete a few details about your issue and you will receive a response within 2 working days. Please do not call us to check if your Patches request has been received by the practice- you will receive a notification letting you know this.

Anyone who can not access or use online services can continue to call in the usual way.

Routine appointments

Due to the demand on our services, we are currently booking several weeks in advance for routine appointments. Please be assured that the clinicians are aware of this and if you have received a text or letter to make a routine appointment, this instruction has been sent by the clinician who has reviewed your results and deemed that this is appropriate to wait.

We often have requests for same day appointments to discuss results that should have been booked into a routine appointment. This means that we have fewer on the day appointments for patients who are unwell and need to be seen on the same day. We appreciate that you may be feeling anxious about results, but the clinicians will always indicate the urgency when reviewing your test results.

Please be kind to our reception team as they are here to help you.

Whilst the majority of our patients are courteous and understanding when calling to book appointments, our receptionists often bear the brunt of patients' frustrations when they can't see their preferred GP or when there is a wait for appointments. The receptionists have no control over this and can only offer what is available and appropriate. When our receptionists ask for details of the problem, this is so they can book you in as soon as possible with the most appropriate clinician.

We appreciate that you may not always be able to see your preferred GP when you call to book an appointment. The GPs in the practice work between 3 and 8 clinical sessions per week. Some of these sessions will involve supervision and mentorship of our training GPs, planned care home reviews and on the day emergency clinics so routine pre bookable appointments may be limited. The clinicians record comprehensive notes on your records so if you do need to see another Doctor, they will be aware of previous discussions and plan. If you have a problem that does require follow up with the same clinician, they will book this in. We ask that you don't call on the day to request an emergency appointment to see a specific GP as this appointment should be available to patients who are unwell and need to be seen on the day.

Care Navigation

We don't have just receptionists in General Practice anymore, we have a team of highly skilled care navigators who will help patients to get the care that they need, at the time and place they need, with the person that they need. This ensures that they get the right care first time.

To be seen by the right healthcare professional, patients need to share details of their request with the teams on the front desk so we can work with them to get the right care. This isn't always going to be with a GP. We have a team of additional healthcare professionals working with the practice who we may navigate you to. This includes Clinical Pharmacists, Mental Health Care Coordinators, Health Coaches, Wellbeing Practitioners and Learning Disability Nurse. These additional roles enable patients to be seen by an appropriate professional and allows our GPs to see more patients for acute problems.

Zero tolerance

The Practice supports the government's "Zero Tolerance" policy for Health Care Staff. This states that GPs and their staff have the right to care for others without fear of being attacked or abused. We therefore ask that you treat our staff with courtesy and respect. Aggressive behaviour, whether that be violent or abusive will not be tolerated and may result in you being removed from the practice list, and in extreme cases the police will be contacted.

The NHS are experiencing system pressures, and that includes General Practice. As a practice we are doing our very best to maintain a quality service, and we appreciate that at times the service we offer may not live up to patient expectations. Please rest assured that we are constantly reviewing the likes of appointment data and listening to patient feedback and where possible are making changes to try and meet the needs of our patients.

Missed Appointments

In March alone, there were a total of 41 missed appointments. 23 of which were GP appointments which amounts to 5.75 hours of clinical time. The other 18 missed appointments were nurse appointments which amounts to 5.83 hours of clinical nursing time wasted.

We urge patients to please attend appointments that they have booked or to cancel so that the appointment can be offered to someone else. You can cancel your appointment by calling the surgery, replying CANCEL to your reminder text or you can cancel via the NHS app.

Thankyou!

We would like to thank our patients for your cooperation and patience through these difficult times. We are always trying to improve our service to you and we monitor your feedback closely. So please let us know how we are doing by completing the Friends & Family Test feedback questionnaire about your most recent experience with us here [Friends and Family Test Form « Spital Surgery](#)

Kind regards,

Spital Surgery