



SEEING OUR PATIENTS SOONER



This practice has joined a new scheme that makes it easier for patients to see the doctor and other staff who provide them with care. This leaflet explains how it works.

The purpose of the scheme is to help you to see a doctor, nurse or other member of staff more quickly when you request an appointment.

However, if you are feeling very ill or facing an emergency, the practice will naturally always try and help you immediately.

HOW THE SCHEME WORKS – GETTING AN APPOINTMENT

If you need to see someone soon for clinical advice or treatment, you will be able to have an appointment with a doctor or nurse on request, either that same day or before 6.00 pm on the next normal working day. For instance, if you are in some pain or distress, have an infection – or have an existing illness that gets suddenly worse – such as cancer, diabetes, asthma or a heart problem.

So, for example, if you phone on a Monday we will offer you an appointment by Tuesday evening.

You may be asked to speak to a doctor or nurse when making the appointment so they can decide if anything else should be done to help you.

For all other patients requiring appointments for clinical advice or treatment, we will offer an appointment within the next two working days from the day you call, **if you ask for it.**

For example, if you phone on a Monday the practice will offer you an appointment by Wednesday evening. You must ask for an appointment within the next two working days – if you don't you may be offered an appointment several days or more from the time you call.

SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Can I arrange an appointment for further in the future?

Yes.

Can I use the scheme to get a sickness certificate or to see the doctor to sign a form for me?

No - the objective of the scheme is to help you to see the doctor or a nurse **about your health.**

Does the scheme apply every day?

The scheme is in operation during working hours i.e. between 8.30am and 6pm except for the usual public holidays and regular staff training. Please ask your practice for details.

Can I see my usual doctor or a particular staff member?

Yes – but you may have to wait longer.

When I ring my practice what can I expect?

Your practice phone lines will be open between 8.30am and 6.00pm each day. Sometimes getting through can be a problem and it is hoped this scheme will improve the situation. If you find it difficult to get through you should tell the practice straightaway. You will usually speak to a receptionist who will help you with enquiries and explain how to ask for different things such as the times when you can phone and speak to a doctor, or how to obtain results of tests. These details are also included in the practice leaflet.

It can help practice staff if patients with more routine requests – such as those seeking repeat prescriptions – can telephone outside of busy periods e.g. practices are usually busiest first thing in the morning and at the end of morning surgeries.

Help us to help you

The purpose of this scheme is to ensure that patients who need urgent clinical advice or treatment can get this as soon as possible. Many minor medical conditions can wait a few days without any serious risk to the patient. The aim is

to ensure that all patients can receive the service they need.

Remember that you too can help all the practice staff by:

- Keeping any appointment made on your behalf - and informing the practice in good time if you have to postpone it.
- Remembering that serious health problems that arise at times when the surgery is closed should be taken up with the nearest GP Out-of-Hours medical centre. The addresses and telephone nos. for the Out-of-Hours medical centres are listed at the end of this leaflet.

What if I have problems getting an appointment?

If you are having difficulty getting an appointment, discuss it first with the receptionist or practice manager. They will be pleased to speak to you about the appointments system and to try and resolve any problems you may have.

However, if you are still unhappy with the way appointments are made available you can consider contacting the Eastern Health and Social Services Board. The contact details for the Board are given at the end of this leaflet. You will need to provide your name and address, the name of the practice, and details about the situation when you tried to get an appointment but were

unable to do so. The Board will ask the practice to consider the information you provide with a view to assisting them with planning their service.

However it is important to bear in mind that the Board cannot arrange individual appointments for patients.



Picture by John Birdsall Photography

Further information and advice

The following contact points may be helpful:

Out of Hours medical centres within the Eastern Board area are based at the following locations:

1. North & West Trust OOH Centre (BELDOC)
The Old Casualty - Mater Informorum Hospital
Crumlin Road – Belfast – BT14 6AB
Tel: 028 90744447
2. Down & Lisburn Trust OOH Centre (DOWNDOC)
Down Hospital Site – Pound Lane – Downpatrick
Tel: 02838346066
3. Ulster Community Hospitals Trust OOH Centre (NDADOC)
Balloo TRC – 94 Newtownards Road –
Bangor – BT19 1XZ
Tel: 028 91275511

4. South & East Trust OOH Centre (SEBDOC)
The Bungalow – Forster Green Hospital
Saintfield Road – Belfast – BT8 4GR
Tel: 028 90796154

5. Down & Lisburn Community Trust OOH Centre (Lagandoc)
Lisburn Health Centre – Linenhall Street –
Lisburn – BT28 1LU Tel: 028 92665181

The Eastern Health and Social Services Board
12-22 Linenhall Street
Belfast BT2 8BS
Telephone: 028 90553728
E-mail: gpunit@ehssb.n-i.nhs.uk

This leaflet is also available in larger print and other formats. On request, it can also be translated into a range of minority languages to meet the needs of those people who are not fluent in English. Please contact the practice if you need a copy in an alternative format.



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