

# **The Wycliffe Medical Practice**

## **How to get an Appointment with a Doctor**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **How does the appointments system work?**

When you ring up for an appointment with the Doctor, our receptionist will ask you for a brief description of your medical problem. They then add you on to one of the Doctors' lists with the details of the problem. The Doctors will generally call in the order patients are added to the list, however they will aim to prioritise those patients whose symptoms seem more urgent. This is the reason they ask the receptionists to ask for a brief description of your medical problem and why, unfortunately, we can't give you any more than a very general idea of the time the Doctor may call you.

The Doctor will discuss your symptoms over the phone and if they feel it necessary they'll ask you to come in. This appointment will usually be with a Doctor or an Urgent Care Practitioner. Urgent Care Practitioners work alongside the Doctors seeing patients. They can diagnose, order tests and x-rays, refer you to hospital, do ECGs and print prescriptions which the Doctor will check and sign for them. If necessary they'll ask the Duty Doctor to pop in and see you too.

If you can't make an appointment on the same day, you'll be offered another day. We'll do our best to find an appointment to suit you but sometimes this might not be possible and we'll ask you to fit your plans around the appointments we have available.

#### **What happens when our Doctors are full for the day?**

Patients are added to Doctors' lists on a first come first served basis and unfortunately we often find that demand exceeds supply as there are more patients wishing to be seen than we have appointment slots. Once we are full, if you feel that your condition can't wait until another day, our receptionist will message the duty Doctor with the symptoms you give. The Doctor then advises whether you can be added to the list or suggest an alternative such as home remedies or consulting a community pharmacy or the NHS Choices web site.

#### **Why do you ask for my symptoms?**

The Doctors have asked the receptionists to ask for a brief description of your medical problem so that they can prioritise their phone calls and it is helpful for the Doctor to know if you're ringing with a new or ongoing problem.

#### **Why is the surgery offering telephone appointments?**

You have told us that sometimes you find it difficult to get the appointment you need, when you need it. By offering telephone appointments and giving advice this way we can make sure that everyone is able to speak to, or see, their Doctor on the day that they call or on the day that they choose. Some people don't need to come into the surgery to be seen at all; their problem can be dealt with by telephone. Also, by speaking to you, your Doctor will be able to decide if it is advisable for you to have any blood tests before they examine you as this will help with their diagnosis.

This gives your Doctor more time to see those people that need an appointment in the surgery. And, because your Doctor is the one making the appointments, he or she 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. We also know that when people make an appointment close to the date that they call, they are more likely to keep the appointment.

**What happens if I am unable to communicate using the telephone?**

If you are unable to communicate by telephone please tell us in advance. We will note this on your records and make special arrangements when you require medical assistance.

**How do I access my GP of choice?**

If you have a preference for which GP you see face to face please tell the Doctor who calls you and they will endeavour to accommodate your request.

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

The reason we ask for brief details is to assist the GP in identifying any calls that may need to take priority, for example a small child with a fever and a rash that could potentially be meningitis as opposed to an adult with flu like symptoms. The 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 but will prevent your request form being prioritised for urgency. Just tell the receptionist that you do not wish to give this information and your name will be added to the call-back list. If all of the call back slots are filled for that day, not providing details of your problem will prevent the Duty Doctor from providing appropriate advice.

**What if I am unable to wait in for a call-back or can't take private calls at work?**

Please let the Receptionist know if you are genuinely unable to take calls at a particular time The Receptionist can add a note for the GP asking them to call you back at a particular time. We are happy to call you on your mobile if that is more convenient for you. Please note that we will be calling from a withheld number, so please make sure you provide us with a telephone number that will accept those types of calls. If you are only able to take a private call at certain points in the working day, please let the Receptionist know what time that is so the Doctor can aim to call you then.

**Are telephone appointments safe?**

Yes, during your call with the Doctor, he or she 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 they will arrange an appointment for you with a GP or a Healthcare Professional.

**What if the Doctor doesn't offer me a face to face consultation but I am dissatisfied with this outcome?**

If you are not happy with the type of appointment that is offered please let your GP know and they will reconsider. Similarly, if you put the telephone down but feel you have unanswered questions or generally feel unhappy with the outcome please ring back and ask to speak to your Doctor again.

**Can I still book an appointment for next week or next month?**

Yes, you can still book your appointments in advance. When speaking to the GP you can book your appointment at a mutually convenient date and time. The Reception Team will not be able to book your appointment unless the GP has specifically instructed them to do this, so please do not ask them to. If you need to book ahead you will still have a call back from a Doctor first.

**Will I be seen quicker if I come into the surgery?**

No, unless your problem is a life threatening 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 not receive a call back any quicker, so it is much better to stay at home and call us.

**What do I do if I need an emergency appointment?**

Telephone the main surgery number and tell the Receptionist that your health problem is urgent and provide brief details of your symptoms. The Receptionist will make the Doctor aware of your request and the Doctor will contact you.

**What happens when I have a blood test and how do I get the results?**

If the Doctor asks you to come for a blood test, this will be done by one of our Nursing Team. The blood sample is sent to the laboratory where it will be analysed over the next few days. The results are sent back to our Doctors. The Doctors review the tests and make comments on the test with regard to whether it is a normal result or you need something additional as a result of the test. We ask you to call us after 7 working days for the results, please call between 10am and 6pm Monday - Friday excluding bank holidays. Your Doctor will have reviewed the results and have left a message for the Receptionist Team to read to you. The exception to this is if the result requires urgent action the Doctor will ask the receptionist to contact you to make a further appointment.

**If the Doctor wants to see me, why can't I see them straightaway?**

When the Doctor asks reception to contact you to make another appointment, they'll tell reception how urgent it is. If it isn't urgent you may have to wait up to 4- 6 weeks for your appointment. However rest assured that the Doctor will see you sooner if they feel it's necessary. Therefore please don't worry if you have to wait.

**What do I do if I want to find out about tests my consultant has arranged for me?**

If you want to know the results of a test a hospital consultant arranged for you, or you want to clarify something told to you at a hospital appointment, you need to speak to the hospital not your GP, so please do not call us with these queries. If you cannot get an answer for the department you have been referred to, please contact the hospital's Patient Information and Liaison Services; often referred to as PALS or PILS or Customer Services. The numbers of the local PALS can be found on our website.

**How do I obtain an extension to my fit (sick) note?**

If your Doctor or hospital consultant has signed you off work and you require your sick note to be extended, please give the details to the Receptionist who will ask your Doctor to provide a further sick note within 48 hours. Your Doctor may call you to discuss your ongoing problem.