

## GP Appointments and Bookings

The way we access GP services has changed. Below are some frequently asked questions that may help you understand these changes:

### Why can't I walk into my GP practice?

The coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic has required us all to work differently to help slow down the spread of the virus. All healthcare settings are taking special measures to protect you, the public and their staff. GP practices are working as hard as ever, but are working differently. Where possible we want to avoid patients coming into close contact within practices and sitting in waiting rooms together, as we know this increases the risk of the virus spreading. Like hospitals and dentists, we have also had to change how we offer our services to you. If you do need to come in, then we can ensure there are a minimal number of people in the practice and we can maintain social distancing and keep patients and staff safe.

### How do I get an appointment?

The easiest and most effective method is to use eConsult through the practice website. If you are unsure how to use eConsult or do not have access to the internet, please call us and we can help you. If your eConsult is submitted before 3:30pm on a working day, you will receive a same day response. Your eConsult will be reviewed by a GP and directed to the most appropriate clinician or team. A member of the team will then contact you either by phone, via text message, or if needed and you have the available technology, through a video consultation.

### Why can't I book a face-to-face appointment?

We have adapted the way in which you can get an appointment quickly and safely. Most patients' health concerns can be managed over the phone or via video consultation. This is why we are providing you with either an initial phone call or video consultation to decide what would be the best way to help. If we can support you without needing you to come into the practice then we reduce the need for you to travel and reduce the risk of the virus spreading. If you do need a face-to-face appointment, you will be invited to attend the practice. If we can ensure there are a minimal number of people in the practice, we can maintain social distancing and keep patients and staff safe.

### What is eConsult?

You can access eConsult via the practice website. It enables patients to consult with their own NHS GP online by completing a form which is reviewed by a GP in the practice. After reviewing your query, you will then be directed to the most appropriate help. This might be advice on self-help, pharmacy advice, an appointment with one of the practice clinical team or another service. Your data is secure at all times – including during a video consultation or telephone call.

### **What if I do not have access to a smartphone or web camera?**

While technology has evolved and supports us all in many different ways in our day-to-day lives, we appreciate not everyone will have access to a smartphone or web camera for a video consultation. We can still talk to you on your mobile phone or landline.

### **Will I need to wear a face mask if I come into my practice for an appointment?**

To help limit the spread of the virus, we are asking all patients aged 12 and over to wear a face covering when they come to the practice. This doesn't have to be a face mask, but a cloth covering which covers your mouth and nose while allowing you to breathe comfortably. It can be as simple as a scarf or bandana that ties behind the head. You can find additional information by visiting:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-facecovering/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering>

### **How do I get a repeat prescription?**

The easiest way to request your repeat prescription is via the NHS App. The app can be used by any patient over the age of 13. It can be downloaded from the Apple Store or Google Play.

More information is available from <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/the-nhs-app/>

You don't need any information from the surgery to download the NHS App, but please send us an eConsult to tell us you are using it so we can make sure you have access to your prescriptions. If you are unable to access the NHS App and have previously used Patient Access, you can continue to use this service. We will still accept written requests for repeat prescriptions which they can be put in the letter boxes outside our surgeries.

### **How do I cancel or move a booked appointment?**

Please call us to cancel or move a booked appointment. We have a dedicated cancellation line that enables patients to leave a message to cancel future appointments that are not booked for that day. To re-book an appointment, please submit an eConsult via our website.

### **How do I see a GP during the evening and weekends?**

For evening and weekend access to GPs please either visit [111.nhs.uk](http://111.nhs.uk) or call NHS 111.

### **What if I am not registered with a GP practice?**

You can call any GP surgery to get emergency treatment for up to 14 days if you are not registered with a GP or are away from home. If your treatment will last longer than 14 days, you'll have to register as a temporary or permanent resident. You can find more information about this via [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) and search 'how to register with a GP practice'.

If you are a resident in the area and need to register with a practice, then it's best to look at practices nearby, where your home falls within the practice's geographical boundaries. You can check a GP practice boundary by visiting their website. Once you have selected which practice you

would like to register with, make contact with them either by calling or visiting their website. You will be asked to fill out a registration form and once it is completed and returned, NHS England will transfer your medical records to your new practice. They will also write to you to confirm your registration with your chosen practice.

## **What do I do if I think I have coronavirus (Covid-19)?**

The main symptoms of coronavirus are:

- high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back
- new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal.

If you are experiencing one or more of these symptoms then DO NOT visit your GP practice. You should visit [111.nhs.uk/covid-19](https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19) or call NHS 111 if you cannot get help online.

You must self-isolate for ten days from when your symptoms started. Anyone you live with, or in your support bubble, who does not have symptoms must self-isolate for 14 days from when the first person started having symptoms.

You must also ask for a test as soon as you start showing symptoms. You can do this online by visiting [www.nhs.uk/ask-for-a-coronavirus-test](https://www.nhs.uk/ask-for-a-coronavirus-test)