

CORBRIDGE MEDICAL GROUP

A GUIDE TO GP APPOINTMENTS

The demands on our service are currently at unprecedented levels and whilst we do our best to accommodate our patients' needs we have devised this guide to ensure all patients are aware of the systems in place and the ways in which you can help us to help you.

Our appointments system is designed to be flexible to help patients in different ways:

- If you are **acutely unwell** and need to be seen at short notice, we will try to accommodate you on the same day. We have a mixture of telephone and face to face appointments which unblock each morning at 8am and others which unblock at 12:30 for the afternoon. Once these have all been booked, if your problem is urgent, you will be offered a call back from our Duty Doctor who will assess how best to deal with your urgent problem.
- For a **follow-up appointment** or review with a doctor who is already dealing with you please try to book ahead in order to ensure that your GP is available. We have a number of appointments with each GP which unblock 7 days ahead at 8am in the morning. These will be offered to patients ringing in each morning but will also be available for online booking and we recommend patients to use the online service to reduce call volumes at this busy time of day. However, for some GPs you may have to wait up to a month so please plan ahead.
- We work together with our neighbouring practices to provide the **Hadrian Extra Care Hub** in the evenings (here at Corbridge) and on Saturdays (now at Hexham, Prudhoe and Bellingham) where appointments are available with GPs, Nurses and Healthcare Assistants. Our receptionists will routinely offer these appointments alongside our own and these are usually available within 7 days.

Some days are busier than others, with Mondays and Fridays having the highest demand for urgent appointments. We try to balance these requirements in the way we offer appointments and the proportions of urgent and pre-bookable slots.

Please do not ask our GPs to give you **'a quick call back'** - any contact with the GP needs to be scheduled into their day and therefore needs an appointment slot. Our receptionists can pass information on to the GP but cannot guarantee that you will receive a response unless you have a booked appointment. Our GPs provide face-to-face appointments, telephone consultations and home visits. They also deal with large numbers of test results, prescriptions requests and hospital letters each day. And there simply is no scope in the working day to squeeze in extra telephone calls.

Our **eConsult** service is available if you want to pass on a query or request medical advice. This service can be accessed 24 hours a day from our website home page (corbridge.gpsurgery.net) by using the banner which says **'Contact your doctors online'**. These requests come into a secure admin mailbox and are processed each day by reception staff who will either book an appropriate appointment for you or pass on your request. You will receive a text message from us to confirm what will happen next.

Our **face to face appointments** with GPs are now 15 minutes long. Although we do try to keep to time, many appointments do take longer, meaning that we can run behind schedule. We will always try our very best to manage time appropriately but the unpredictable nature of our work can make this very difficult. The receptionist on duty can let you know how many patients are waiting ahead of you on arrival so you have an idea of the likely wait.

Onward management. Be clear before you leave the consultation what follow-up arrangements have been agreed. If a second appointment is required, please book this on your way out to ensure you can be seen by the same GP in the agreed timescale.

It is no longer our policy to retain patients on our registered list if they have moved out of our catchment area and we have been working over the last 12 months to contact those patients who need to register elsewhere. If you have moved out of the area, even on a temporary basis, please ensure that you register with your local practice.

Do you actually need to see the GP?

We have always offered telephone appointments with our GPs, which may be quicker and more convenient for issues which do not require an examination. During the pandemic these became the norm but we **no longer** require you to speak to a GP first before booking a face to face appointment. If you are uncertain about whether a face to face appointment is required, or how urgently you should be seen, our receptionists can advise you. For some conditions photographs can be sent in advance via secure text message so the GP can assess the images before your telephone call.

If you have a musculo-skeletal problem please ask for an appointment with our **First Contact Physio**, Helen Mathie, who has appointments here every Monday. She will ring to assess your problem and offer onward management or referral if required.

If you require a home visit you will be assessed by the Duty Dr and you may be visited by a **Paramedic** who can see you much more quickly for initial assessment and who will liaise with the Duty Dr to decide how best to manage your problem.

For queries about medication or minor illnesses, a **Community Pharmacist** may be able to help.

For some services you can self-refer without needing to speak to a GP first.

- For physio please contact the **JMAPS** service on 03301 244 652.
- For help with mental health contact **Talking Matters** on 0300 3030900
- For assistance with non-medical matters such as housing issues, benefits, legal advice please contact our **Living Well Co-ordinators** on 01434 600599.
- For families with young children we recommend you use the **Healthier Together App** which provides advice on a range of childhood illnesses and when to contact a health professional
- If you are newly pregnant you can refer yourself to **maternity services** by ringing 0191 2932545
- We no longer provide private medicals for HGV or Taxi licences or assessments for sporting activities such as diving or travel advice etc. These are private services which we can no longer fit alongside our NHS work. Alternative providers can be found online.

For prescription requests, insurance reports and sick note renewals just ask the receptionist for guidance – many queries and administrative tasks can be passed on to the GP without patients having to be seen in an appointment. If in doubt—please use the **eConsult** service and we will address your issue in the most appropriate and timely manner.

For patients with **Long Term Conditions** such as diabetes, hypertension or asthma we will review your medical condition on at least an annual basis in the month of your birthday. Please respond to our invitation letter or text message so that your condition can be monitored by our practice nurses who have specialist training in these conditions and who will ensure that your medications are reviewed and reauthorised for the coming year.

Are you registered for online services?

During the Covid Pandemic hundreds of patients registered for the NHS App in order to access their Covid passport. However, the NHS App can provide so much more and we encourage our patients to use it for other NHS Services.

Our **appointments** are bookable through the NHS App

Repeat Prescription requests can be made through the NHS App

Access to your **online medical record** is now available and provides a much more responsive service if you want to check blood results, your immunisations history, your problem titles and information about your recent consultations or letters.

Many patients will have been using Patient.co.uk which works in exactly the same way and will also provide these features. If you have had online access in the past but stopped using it just click forgotten password to reset your login or contact reception if you need to re-register and we will send you a new PIN.