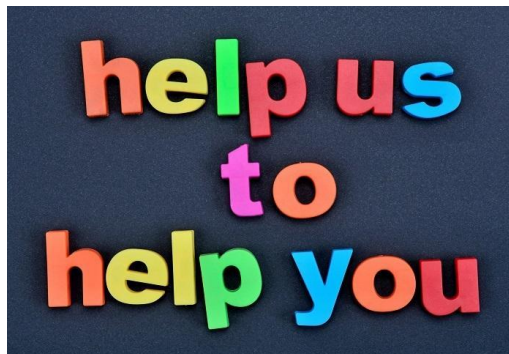


November 2023

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 fever 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.

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. If you have dental problems, 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 Walk-in Centre or A&E. If you have an injury and are concerned you may have a fracture, please attend a Walk-in Centre or A&E where you can receive the assessment and treatment you need.



Joint injections.

We receive many requests for joint injections. These are frequently not clinically appropriate, when compared to the NICE guidelines on managing Osteoarthritis and Chronic Pain.

Joint injections are not recommended for long term pain syndromes. They are only recommended for osteoarthritis when other standard pain relief has not provided benefit, and to support therapeutic exercise (physiotherapy). This means that joint injections should only be considered once someone has tried standard pain relief and physiotherapy, and not as an alternative to these.

While joint injections can be repeated up to twice a year in any joint, there is no recommendation that any patient needs, or should automatically have regular injections. When your pain returns following an injection, this needs to be reassessed clinically and all treatment options considered at a routine face to face appointment with any doctor or Advanced Nurse Practitioner, rather than automatically requesting further injections.

Joint injections are not part of our core contract. They are an additional service that we try to provide for the benefit of our patients. This means that at times of high demand on the service we are unable to prioritise them above other appointments that we are contractually obliged to provide. There are always other ways of managing joint pain, via analgesia and/or referral to the Musculoskeletal Clinic for patients who are struggling with pain while waiting for a joint injection.



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 therefore booking an appointment to ask us to do so only adds to the pressure on our appointment availability.

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.

Testosterone as Part of HRT

In the UK testosterone is not licensed for use by women and therefore cannot be initiated by a GP. Women may be able to access this medication via private menopause clinic.

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 used 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)

Prescriptions

Civic medical Centre issued over 19,000 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.
- 2) Ordering your 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.
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.

Registering for this service 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)

- 3) If you are on up to 3 regular medications a month you might be suitable for automated 'batch' prescriptions (repeat dispensing). For further information please click on the link below:

[eRD leaflet A5 \(V3\) \(Local\) 12.2018 \(healthinnovationyh.org.uk\)](http://healthinnovationyh.org.uk)

Access to medical records via the NHS app

Patients who have the NHS app or another online app will now automatically have access to all prospective medical information. 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.

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 patient's 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 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 GP's in the practice work between 4 and 6 clinical sessions per week. Some of these sessions will involve supervision and mentorship of our training GP's, 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.

Zero tolerance

The Practice supports the governments "Zero Tolerance" policy for Health Care Staff. This states that GP's 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 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 were possible are making changes to try and meet the needs of our patients.

Missed Appointments

In October alone, there were a total of 184 missed appointments. 40 of which were GP/prescribing clinician appointments which amounts to 6.83 hours of clinical time. The other 144 missed appointments were nurse appointments which amounts to 24 hours of clinical time wasted.

Over 1 day a month is currently lost due to missed appointments. We urge patients to please attend appointments that they have booked or call the surgery to cancel so that the appointment can be offered to another someone else.

Kind regards,

Civic Medical Centre