

Hindon Surgery's Advice for patients about Telephone Appointments

In our patient surveys some of you have said that we could do better when you try to get through on the telephone and that you are sometimes kept a long time in the waiting room before your appointment.

Because of this we have bought a new telephone system (and updated this again in 2012) and upgraded our computer making it possible for all staff to have access to a telephone and the computer system including making appointments all of the time.

This means that we are now able to offer an expanded telephone appointment service.

Telephone appointments work just like traditional face to face consultations but are over the telephone. Often you may just need to discuss your problem with the doctor or nurse but don't need to be in the same room to do this. Examples include discussing results of tests, getting general health advice, or reviewing a long-term condition. Anything where you are unlikely to need an examination or procedure done during the consultation. In the past the only way to have this conversation was by booking an appointment.

Modern technology means that we can offer these consultations without the inconvenience of coming to the surgery and waiting in our waiting room.

These appointments may be especially useful for working patients.

When you ask for an appointment if you feel it is something that can be dealt with on the telephone please ask for a telephone appointment. Give us your contact number (preferably a land line and if the number has changed recently ask us to check your notes have the right number). The receptionist will give you an approximate time when the doctor or nurse will telephone you back. We book these appointments for ten minutes, the same duration as our face to face consultations. If it seems that you need to be seen face to face then this appointment can be made during your telephone call (often for later on in the same surgery).

Sometimes the problem will need some tests done and the doctor can organise these with you on the telephone, book appointments for the tests and arrange a review appointment.

As well as having appointments during normal surgery times we have set aside times when a call to the surgery is very likely to be put through to a GP immediately or returned very quickly. These are between 0800 and 0830 every morning (with many calls taken by the GP) and after the surgeries are finished around 12 noon and 6 pm on days with evening surgeries.

Telephone Prescription Requests

If you are ringing to ask for a prescription you will be asked to put this in writing or to speak to a GP as other staff are not allowed to take telephoned requests.

This is a safety issue to reduce prescription errors and follows national good practice.

For a prescription that is not on the list of authorised repeats any issue must follow a clinical assessment and these can only be done by a GP.

Email consultations and text messages

We are looking at using text messages to remind patients about appointments or services like the annual 'flu clinics or screening tests. This is now possible on our computer system but will involve staff training and also having up to date mobile telephone numbers.

We are also looking at how to expand the use of the internet and emails. Nationally there are concerns about confidentiality as most emails are not secure. These have been solved before we can expand the present service. Again this will depend on having up to date email addresses.

In preparation for these changes it is helpful if you inform the surgery of any changes in your contact details. There are forms available at reception or you can drop off a note with the changes.