



INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS SEEKING URGENT OR NON-URGENT (ROUTINE) APPOINTMENTS

Since June 2021 Alchester Medical Group and the other GP practices in Bicester have been using some new methods to improve their service to patients and often reducing the need for patients to visit the surgery buildings.

We now run a 'call on the day' system for both urgent and non-urgent (routine) problems. This has already allowed us to reduce our standard waiting time for a non-urgent (routine) appointment from 4 to 6 weeks to a usual 'on the day' service - in most cases.

However, there are times when we must ask patients to wait a few days for non-urgent appointments. This happens, for example, when a patient's usual GP is on leave or the GPs appointment list is already full for that day.

To further explain, your GP has an allocated number of appointments for any given day, which can vary depending on other commitments. Sometimes your GP's list may also become full before the cut off times for appointment booking – you can see these booking times detailed on our website.

We advise all patients to contact us as early in the day as possible, and not to wait until near the cut off time, to have the best chance possible to get onto their GP's list for the day. Once this time has passed, or when your GP's list is full, we will only be able to deal with urgent problems. Patients with non-urgent issues will therefore be asked to call back at another time.

URGENT MEDICAL ISSUES THAT CANNOT WAIT

Please be assured that we do always reserve extra capacity for medically urgent problems that cannot wait until someone's usual GP is next working.

To appropriately allocate these appointments, making them available only for patients who have medically urgent needs, our patient co-ordinator team will ask more questions about the reason you are calling. This is to enable our GPs to ensure the matter really does require URGENT, on the day care. Please answer these questions. The Patient Co-ordinators are a vital and integral part of our system, and only by answering their questions can we provide the best possible service for you.

If you are asked to call back another time, as the GP feels the matter is not urgent, please respect this decision. Our clinical team will always provide urgent care for those who need it, but these crucially important appointment slots should not be abused, for example to fit in with when someone may have a half-day off work and has time to see a doctor but the need is non-urgent.

Please now read on for further information on what is urgent, call-backs and patient requests....

EXAMPLES OF URGENT NEED APPOINTMENTS

Urgent need appointments are for patients that have symptoms that may require hospital admission or need urgent treatment starting that day. For example:

- **Chest pain, new onset, or change in patients with known heart problems.**
- **Shortness of breath, new onset, or worsening.**
- **New onset abdominal pain.**
- **Fever in children.**
- **New onset infections- e.g. skin infection, ear infection.**
- **Severe mental health concerns e.g. suicidal feelings.**

The list shown here is not all-inclusive but is provided as a patients' guide to the type of matters that are deemed medically urgent.

REQUESTS FOR GP CALL-BACKS AT SET TIMES AND OTHER MATTERS

We are now seeing an increase in patients asking for calls back from a GP at a certain time. While we will attempt to call you in the requested time frame, no guarantee can be made that we will be able to do so. We ask that all patients have their phone available all day when possible and, if necessary, request that their employer is sympathetic to the need for you to do so in order to receive your GP's call. Please be aware that requests for calls back only after 17:00 are usually very unlikely to be met.

If you are intending to call the practice team only to seek some of your test results then these are usually available online for you via Patient Access and we do urge you to use this facility if possible.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

Alchester Medical Group

6th June 2021