

## How to use your GP surgery well

The healthcare provided by our National Health Service (NHS) in the UK is important to all of us. This page is about how to access a GP (or doctor's) surgery, to make sure you get the healthcare you need.



### Did you know?

- we all support our NHS through paying taxes. This means health care is free of charge to everyone who is eligible
- only use the service when you need it. There are pharmacies that can help you too
- GP surgeries will make sure you are seen as soon as possible after assessing your needs
- some GP surgeries offer telephone consultations with a doctor. [You can also use E consult on their website or register for a patient online service](#)
- it is very important that you do not miss appointments and that you let the GP know as soon as possible if you cannot attend
- you can see a pharmacist in private for common conditions and minor injuries; the pharmacist is an expert on medication to ease symptoms



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## How to use your GP surgery in a way that works best for everyone

- everyone should register with a GP surgery
- GP surgeries are made up of receptionists, nurses, doctors (GPs) and other health professionals
- you can see a nurse or doctor. Ask at reception about who is the best person to meet your need
- nurses and doctors are trained to a high standard and are experts in diagnosing illness and supporting people to manage their conditions. If needed, they can make appointments for people to see a specialist
- you will be asked for personal information when you register
- all the personal information you give to the doctor or nurse is confidential. This means that your health care won't be discussed with anyone, including your family, without your permission
- the only time when a doctor or nurse is unable to keep your information private is in the unusual situation, for instance they may hear about a child or adult being in danger or at risk of serious harm
- tell reception if you need support to use the surgery. For example, wheelchair access or if you need an interpreter

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## You must make an appointment to see a GP or other professional

- book your appointment by phone, website or at reception
- you may have to wait for a non-urgent appointment. If you think you need to see someone urgently, tell reception, and if needed you will be seen the same day. If needed, home visits can be arranged
- make best use of your appointment by deciding on your main concern. Ask about the benefits and risks of treatment choices and what these mean to you, so you feel part of any decisions
- don't forget your support needs (e.g. wheelchair, interpreter)
- you can ask for a double appointment if you feel that you need more time for discussion.

Book in advance.



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## If you are given a prescription (green paper with details of medicines)

- take the prescription to a pharmacy (chemist)
- tell the pharmacist if you need support
- the pharmacist will give you your medication and will be able to answer your questions
- the pharmacist can explain about taking medication on time and side effects
- the pharmacist will check if you need to pay for prescriptions or if you can get them free

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## Your GP will 'refer you' to see a specialist if needed

You may need to go to a hospital to see a specialist. Sometimes you might have to wait for an appointment. People who need to be seen urgently are seen first.

Information about your appointment will be sent to you. If you find this information difficult to understand, go back to your GP surgery. It is very important not to miss an appointment.

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## Other Useful Information

[Your Doctor or GP](#) article on Information NOW has more details on how to find a GP surgery close to you and how to register.

## Accessible Information Standard

If you have a sensory loss or disability you are entitled by law to accessible information about your healthcare and support from the NHS, as well as, other publicly funded social care services. For example this could include large print or a professional BSL interpreter at medical appointments.

## Services must:

- find out your information needs
- record them in a set way
- highlight them in your records so that staff meet your needs every time you use services
- share your information needs with other services e.g. if you give details to your GP then these can be shared with any hospital service you maybe referred to
- make sure you get support the way you need including when your needs vary. For example you may need to receive short letters in large print but need longer documents on audio.
- ask on a regular basis if your needs have changed

Remember – tell services it is your right to have your needs addressed and they have to do this by law ([section 250 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012](#))

Read more from NHS England about the [Accessible Information Standard](#).

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## Other Useful Organisations

[NHS 111](#) is a free phone helpline which can help you find healthcare close to you.

[NHS.UK](#) is a website providing health and medical advice, an online symptom checker and a facility for searching for services near you.

[Connected Voice Advocacy](#) can offer support to patients at GP appointments.

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This information was produced by [Connected Voice Advocacy](#) and [HAREF](#) in partnership with Newcastle upon Tyne primary care.



[Connected Voice Advocacy](#) supports people to have a voice about their rights and choices.



**Connected Voice HAREF** is a network focused on reducing health inequalities for people in black and minority ethnic communities.

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## Useful Organisations

### Connected Voice Advocacy

**Email:** [advocacy@cvsnewcastle.org.uk](mailto:advocacy@cvsnewcastle.org.uk)

**Website:** [www.advocacycentrenorth.org.uk](http://www.advocacycentrenorth.org.uk)

**Telephone:** 0191 235 7013

**Address:** Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service, NE1 8AF

### NHS

**Website:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

**Telephone:** 0191 235 7013

### NHS 111

**Website:** [www.nhs.uk/111](http://www.nhs.uk/111)

**Telephone:** 0191 235 7013

### Connected Voice – Haref

**Email:** [haref@connectedvoice.org.uk](mailto:haref@connectedvoice.org.uk)

**Website:** <https://www.cvsnewcastle.org.uk/our-services/haref>

**Telephone:** 0191 232 7445

**Address:** Higham House, NE1 8AF

## Extended GP Access at Lemington Resource Centre

**Telephone:** 0191 232 7445

**Address:** Lemington Resource Centre, NE15 8RZ

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### Related Articles

[10 Tips for good health](#)

[How to complain about health services](#)

[Your Doctor or GP](#)

[Opticians](#)

[Getting to hospital](#)

[Interpreting and translation](#)

[Walk-in centres \(Urgent Treatment Centres\)](#)

[Urgent medical help from NHS 111](#)