

GP appointments and bookings

FAQ document

The way we access GP services has changed. Below are some frequently asked questions that may help you understand these changes:

Why can't I walk into my GP practice?

The coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic has forced us all to work differently to help slow down the spread of the virus. All healthcare settings are taking special measures to protect you, the public and their staff. GP practices are working as hard as ever, but differently.

Where possible we want to avoid people having to wait inside a waiting room together, as we know this increases the risk of the virus spreading. Like hospitals and dentists, we have also had to change how we offer our services to you.

If you do need to come in, then we can ensure there are a minimal number of people in the practice, we can maintain social distancing and keep patients and staff safe.

How do I get an appointment?

The easiest and most effective method is to use e-Consult through the practice website, or you can telephone. You will then be contacted by a clinician to talk through your symptoms either over the phone or if needed and you have the available technology, through a video consultation.

Nurse appointments are also being triaged over the telephone. However, as we are able to reinstate services some of these (but not all) will start to be able to be booked via the Reception and Admin team.

Why can't I book a face-to-face appointment?

We have adapted the way in which you can get an appointment quickly and safely.

Most patient's health concerns can be managed over the phone or via video consultation. This is why we are providing you with either an initial phone call or video consultation to decide what would be the best way to help. If we can support you without needing you to come into the practice then we reduce the need for you to travel, and reduce the risk of the virus spreading.

If you do need a face-to-face appointment, you will be invited to attend the practice. Please remember that if you are offered an appointment you will need to wait in your car and call the number provided to let reception know you have arrived and what car you are waiting in. If you do not travel by car please be aware you may be asked to wait outside whatever the weather.

If we can ensure there are a minimal number of people in the practice, we can maintain social distancing and keep patients and staff safe.

What is e-Consult?

You can access e-Consult via the practice website (www.bishopswalthamsurgery@nhs.uk). It lets patients consult with their own NHS GP online by completing a quick form which is reviewed by the practice. After reviewing your query, you will then be directed toward the most appropriate help. This might be some advice on self-help, pharmacy advice, an appointment with one of the practice clinical team or another service. Your data is secure at all times – including during a video consultation or telephone call.

What if I do not have access to a smartphone or web camera?

While technology has evolved and supports us all in many different ways in our day- to-day lives, we appreciate not everyone will have access to a smartphone or web camera for a video consultation.

We can still talk to you on your mobile phone or landline.

Will I need to wear a face mask if I come into my practice for an appointment?

To help limit the spread of the virus, we are asking for all patients aged 12 and over to wear a face covering when they come the practice. This doesn't have to be a face mask, but a cloth covering which covers your mouth and nose while allowing you to breathe comfortably. It can be as simple as a scarf or bandana that ties behind the head. You can find additional information by visiting <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering>

How do I get a repeat prescription?

If you are a dispensing patient and not eligible for the delivery service you can collect your prescriptions from the dispensary in the normal way. *(Please note the dispensary is currently closed daily from 1pm to 2pm).*

If you are collecting a paper prescription we would appreciate you nominating a pharmacy this can then be sent to electronically. This will help in decreasing the footfall within the surgery.

If you are still sending or bringing your paper repeat prescription request slip to the surgery have you considered requesting this electronically? Please see our website on how to register for the NHS App or Patient Access. These options allow you to order your repeat medication at your convenience from wherever you may be.

How do I cancel or move a booked appointment?

Currently via the telephone or via email whccg.bwsurgery@nhs.net *(Please do not use email if cancelling at short notice).*

How do I see a GP during the evening and weekends?

For evening and weekend access to GPs please either visit 111.nhs.uk or call NHS 111.

What if I am not registered with a GP practice?

You can call any GP surgery to get emergency treatment for up to 14 days if you are not registered with a GP or are away from home.

If your treatment will last longer than 14 days, you'll have to register as a temporary or permanent resident. You can find more information about this via www.nhs.uk and search 'how to register with a GP practice'.

If you are a resident in the area and need to register with a practice, then it's best to look at practices where your home falls within its geographical boundaries. You can check a GP practice boundary by visiting their website.

Once you have selected which practice you would like to register with, make contact with them either by calling or visiting their website.

You will be asked to fill out a registration form and once it is completed and returned, NHS England will transfer your medical records to your new practice. They will also write to you to confirm your registration with your chosen practice.

What do I do if I think I have coronavirus (Covid-19)?

The main symptoms of coronavirus are:

- high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back
- new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

If you are experiencing one or more of these symptoms then **DO NOT** visit your GP practice. You should visit 111.nhs.uk/covid-19 or call NHS 111 if you cannot get help online.

You must self-isolate for seven days from when your symptoms started. Anyone you live with, or in your support bubble, who does not have symptoms must self-isolate for 14 days from when the first person started having symptoms.

You must also ask for a test as soon as you start showing symptoms. You can do this online – visit www.nhs.uk/ask-for-a-coronavirus-test or calling 119.