

Practice Update: Medical Triage from 3rd June 2024

General Practice across the country is experiencing the highest patient demand ever before seen in its history and as such services are struggling to keep up. Unlike large corporate companies, General Practice has never been set up to provide immediate patient care at the click of a button but due to increasing demand for appointments and a national drive to improve GP access we need to change the way we manage some of your requests to try and keep up. At Watership Down Heath, we want to keep our personalised approach and the important relationship that we have with our patients and to do this we need to continually review the way we work to keep both patients and staff safe.

Please continue to contact the practice as you always have done but be aware that from the 3rd June 2024 you may be asked to provide *additional* clinical information so that your request can be triaged and dealt with by the clinical team more effectively. 'Triage' means assessing the needs of a patient to understand the urgency of their need for treatment and nature of the treatment needed. By triaging requests, studies have shown that patient satisfaction improves as clinical queries are dealt with more effectively and efficiently, often avoiding longer waits for clinical advice.

By triaging some of our patient demand we will enable the practice to work toward implementing the [BMA's Safe working in General Practice guidance](#), to provide patient appointments more flexibly, direct patients to the most appropriate provider of care and prioritise care for those most in need, whilst keeping our clinical teams safe.

In the first instance, please ask our dedicated Reception team for an appointment as needed. This can be your choice of telephone or face to face. If you are calling about an on-going or long-term problem, then an appointment with your Registered GP is likely to be more appropriate and may incur a wait of up to 4 weeks.

Same day Urgent care will continue to run in the same way but please be aware that only acute issues will be dealt with by the urgent care team. You may be redirected to a more suitable service or appointment type if your need is not immediate. Triage is being introduced to our service provision at this point. If deemed more appropriate, our dedicated Reception team will send you a link to provide clinical information for the triaging team. Please provide as much detail as possible. If you do not feel able to complete an online form, then a member of Reception staff will do this for you.

We believe access at Watership Down Heath is very good as we pride ourselves on offering face to face appointments with doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, mental health practitioners and pharmacists all within a reasonable time frame. We hope that over the coming months we can improve our access further to ensure our patients are seen by the right clinician, in the right place, at the right time. Please bear with us while we open up our appointment book with a steady flow to allow this to happen.

Please see the flow chart below for how to effectively use our service.

DO YOU **NEED** TO BE SEEN BY A CLINICIAN TODAY?

Same day appointments will be prioritised for those patients with the greatest medical need.

Consider visiting your local pharmacy for minor ailments.

If you have an unwell child please visit: [Home :: Healthier Together \(what0-18.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/what0-18)

Yes

No

**Phone the surgery between
08:00-11:30 or 14:00-17:30.
Home visit requests before 11:30**

Our specially trained team will:
Ask you questions about your problem to direct you to the most appropriate clinician.
If you do not want to give details directly, or the receptionist thinks it is more appropriate, you will be sent a text link to provide the information yourself, directly to the urgent care team.
You may also be asked to provide photographs.

Urgent Patient Triage:
The urgent care team will triage your request and either provide you with advice via text, email or phone call.

If a call back is deemed appropriate the clinician will discuss your problem with you and action your needs.
Is a Face to Face appointment required?

No.
Treatment plan will be given or next steps advised.

Yes.
An appointment will be booked by the clinician. Please make sure you are available to attend at the time given.
Morning call - appointment before 12:30.
Afternoon call - appointment before 18:00.
Home visits are made 12:30 – 14:30.

**Phone between 08:00 – 18:30 OR
Message the surgery online anytime:**
Our specially trained team can assist you with:
Routine GP or nurse appointments *
Results
Referral Queries
Administration support

Routine appointments:
Your choice of an appointment, telephone or face to face, will be offered within 2-4 weeks, depending on clinician availability.
For continuity of care please try to book with your Registered GP or usual nurse.
Exceptions:
Skin lesions, joint injections, minor surgery, contraception, HRT.

Patient Triage:
For lots of conditions, routine reviews and follow ups, a waiting time of 2-4 weeks is entirely suitable.
If you feel your problem needs to be dealt with sooner and an appointment is not available our dedicated team will ask you to provide more information for the clinical team to review.
Your request will be triaged and you will be provided with a response via text, email or phone in order to action your request more efficiently.