

Adapted from Which News article by Joanna Pearl, published 30/08/2017

How to get the best out of your GP Surgery

Reception Team:

Think of them as air traffic controllers, directing people in the right direction. By telling the receptionist what your appointment is for, they can ensure there are fewer wasted appointments and that you can see the right person for your needs eg pharmacy for over the counter treatments, Health Care Assistant for an NHS health check. Certain GP's have extra skills eg joint injections, minor surgery. They can ensure that you see the right doctor for your particular problem. When receptionists ask, 'Is it urgent?' they do not expect you to assess your own medical condition. They are trying to ascertain if you could wait for the time it takes to get a non-urgent appointment.

If you have complex or ongoing health problems, it is often useful to see the same GP every time. This saves time as the GP already knows your background. If you are generally healthy and have a new problem, is it less important to see the same GP. It may be helpful to indicate this to the receptionist.

GP:

Most GP surgeries run on the "one appointment, one patient, one problem" rule. If you have more than one thing to discuss with your GP, please tell them this at the beginning of the consultation. It may not be possible to address everything in one consultation but that helps the GP to prioritise the most serious problems first.

It may help if you rehearse what you want to tell the GP and work out before-hand how long your symptoms have been going on. This helps your GP with their assessment.

Tell the GP what you're hoping to get from the consultation eg reassurance, a certain medication, a private referral? Also mention it if you're worried you may have something serious.

While GP's make every effort to familiarise themselves with your medical history before seeing you, it is helpful if you sum up why you have come in today eg "I was feeling tired and so the doctor arranged some blood tests. I have come for my test results."

If you know you are asking about a certain part of the body, try to make it accessible eg wear loose fitting trousers or a skirt if you need the doctor to look at your knee. Take off coats in the waiting room to assist with this.

If you have heard about a new medication or treatment that you want to discuss, please feel free to mention it. It is possible that it may be something the doctor is not familiar with or something that may not be available on the NHS but please ask.

Sometimes it helps to summarise what has been discussed to ensure that you and your GP have the same understanding of the plan going forwards. You should also know what to do should your symptoms change or get worse; that is the GP's job to make sure you do.

If you are not happy after your consultation, we would rather you asked for a second appointment to see a different GP. This may not be possible on the same day however. You can also feed back to the practice via the "Praises" "Suggestions" and "Moans" sheets in the waiting areas. If you would like to speak to the Practice Manager, this can usually be arranged. If your concerns have still not been addressed, a formal complaint can be made to the practice.