

**There might be  
more to your GP  
practice than  
you think.**



**Get in the Know about your GP  
practice and get the right care  
as quickly as possible.**

A proud partner in the:



**Leicester, Leicestershire  
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Health and Wellbeing Partnership



[www.GetInTheKnow.co.uk](http://www.GetInTheKnow.co.uk)

# Get in the know

## about your GP practice

A GP practice is a team of health professionals, who oversee all aspects of your physical and mental health care, throughout your life. You should contact them for medical advice and treatment for conditions you can't treat yourself or aren't getting better.

Through your GP practice you can receive a wide range of services, which may include:

- Consultations and advice about your health
- Prescriptions for medicines
- Tests to help diagnose what is wrong with you
- A referral to a specialist service
- Monitoring and care for any long term health problems
- Screening, vaccinations and advice to help prevent health problems or diagnosing them as early as possible

In this guide we describe the care you can receive in a GP practice, how to get the care you need as quickly as possible, and how a GP practice works alongside other services.

All GP practices work in very different ways nowadays to make sure everyone gets the care they need from a suitably qualified healthcare professional, as quickly as possible.

### Get in the know

**Find out how things work in your practice before you need them, so you can get help for your medical problem quickly. Visit your practice's website for more information.**

## Top tips

### for using your GP practice

We understand that it is not always easy to get an appointment at your GP practice. Practices are making lots of changes to make it easier.

You can also help them make sure everyone gets the care they need by following these top tips

**1** If you have a minor illness or injury, you may be able to treat this yourself. See page 5.

You can refer yourself to some services without needing an appointment at your practice first, for example talking therapies. Visit [GetInTheKnow.co.uk](http://GetInTheKnow.co.uk) for details.

**2** If you still need help, never delay contacting your practice if you have a health concern and you need their help.

This includes attending routine appointments for blood tests, long term condition checks and screening, e.g. cervical smear test.

**3** Online or telephone?

- Consider whether you could contact your practice using an online service rather than by telephone. See page 8.
- If you need to contact your practice but you don't need an appointment, if possible, try ringing outside of the busier times - avoid calling first thing in the morning.
- If you no longer need your appointment, please cancel it so it can be made available to other patients. If you no longer need your appointment, contact your practice. If you use online services at your practice, you can cancel appointments online.
- It might be more convenient for you to have a telephone, video or online consultation rather than face-to-face. See page 6.

**4** There are a wide range of health professionals in the practice team who can help you. See page 9.

- When you contact your GP practice for an appointment, the receptionist might ask you to tell them a bit more about why you are calling. This is so they can make an appointment for you with the most appropriate person.
- Receptionists are trained to arrange an appointment with the most appropriate member of the practice team to ensure you are seen in a timely manner.
- Members of the practice team work closely together so you may not need to see a GP.
- You will not usually need to see the same GP each time, because your medical record can be seen by every professional in your GP practice. If you really need to see a particular GP, it might take longer before you can get an appointment with them.

**5** Getting worse?

If you have an appointment but it is some time away and your condition has worsened, don't wait - get back in touch with your practice.

**6** Repeat prescriptions.

If you are taking regular medication, allow plenty of time for your practice to process repeat prescriptions - at least 48 hours. Plan ahead, particularly if you are going on holiday or there is a bank holiday, so you don't run out and need to request your prescription in an emergency.

# Registering with a GP practice

You need to register with a GP practice to be able to use it. If you are not yet registered with one, you should do so as soon as possible to ensure that you can receive medical treatment when you need it. Don't wait until you are unwell.



## How to register:

1

Find a GP practice that you would like to register with in your local area and contact them to ask permission. You will need to live within their catchment area if you want to benefit from all their services, for example home visits. Information about the catchment area will be on the practice's website.

2

The practice will usually ask you to complete a form giving details such as:

- Your name and address
- Your date of birth
- Your NHS number (if you know it)
- Other information, such as the name and address of your previous GP practice

3

In many practices you can fill in the form online or you can fill in a paper form and take it into your chosen GP practice. Some GP practices will also ask to see proof of your identity, but this is not essential.

4

Your medical records will then be transferred to your new practice.

## Everyone has the right to register

- You don't need to provide a fixed address
- Identification is not mandatory
- Anyone can use a GP practice, even if you are visiting the country

## Finding a GP practice

You can find your nearest GP practice online by visiting <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-gp> Alternatively use NHS 111 online or by phone.

Healthwatch can also help you to find out about the choices available to you. Find out more using:

<https://healthwatchll.com/>

<https://www.healthwatchrutland.co.uk/>

# Get in the know about minor ailments

If you are generally in good health, you can look after minor ailments yourself. In most cases the illness will get better by itself and so you don't need to use your GP practice or another NHS service.

## Antibiotics

Taking antibiotics when you do not need them can mean they will not work for you in the future. Antibiotics do not work for viral infections such as colds and flu, and most coughs and sore throats and so an appointment at your GP practice for a prescription for such illnesses will be unnecessary.

## Where to get support to look after minor ailments

### Useful websites

- Your practice website
- NHS website - Visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/>
- NHS Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland - Visit: [www.GetInTheKnow.co.uk](http://www.GetInTheKnow.co.uk) for local sources of minor ailment advice, including support for your mental health.

### NHS app

The NHS App is a simple and secure way for people to access a range of NHS services on their smartphone or tablet, including getting health advice. It is available to download on iOS and Android devices.

### NHS 111 online

Visit [111.nhs.uk](https://111.nhs.uk) to find out where to get help for your specific symptoms or general health information and advice.

### Pharmacy

Pharmacists are qualified health professionals and are the right people to see if you need advice or over-the-counter medicines.

They are trained in dealing with many illnesses, they can check your symptoms and recommend the best treatment, or just reassure you. Some of the problems they can help with are: coughs, colds, sore throats, earache, toothache and emergency contraception. They can also tell you when you need to see a doctor or nurse.

Many of us live near a pharmacy and you don't need an appointment to see them. They are often open in the evenings and at weekends, so they offer fast, convenient support.

Most of them also have a private consultation room, so you can have a conversation where other people can't hear you.

Visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/pharmacy/find-a-pharmacy>

[www.GetInTheKnow.co.uk](http://www.GetInTheKnow.co.uk)

# Appointments

If you do need to use your GP practice, in most cases you will need to book an appointment. There are three ways to do this:

- 1 Book an appointment online or via the NHS app
- 2 Telephone the practice
- 3 Visit the practice in person if you can't use any other methods

Practices can get very busy on the telephone, particularly when they first open in the morning. So if it isn't urgent, you are advised to try calling later in the day if you can.

Standard practice opening times at 8am to 6:30pm Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays. Appointments may also be available up to 8pm in the evening Monday to Friday and between 9am and 5pm on Saturdays. The arrangements for evenings and weekends will vary from practice to practice.

Where your appointment takes place in person, it could be at your own practice, another practice in the same group of practices or at another location in the local community.

Where it is appropriate for your particular health problem, you can also request or you will be offered a telephone, secure video or online consultation. These might be more convenient than going to the practice in person and what's best for many people. For example, to make it easier to fit in your appointment around work or family commitments.

It is worth finding out how it works at your GP practice, as there may be additional or alternative options available.

## If you no longer need your appointment

If you find you no longer need your appointment contact your practice as soon as possible to let them know. You can do this by telephone, but ideally not first thing in the morning when practices are at their busiest. Even better would be to register at your practice for online services so you will be able to book and cancel appointments online at any time. You can also use the NHS app.



# Appointments at other locations

Your GP practice may book an appointment for you at another location rather than seeing you themselves. This is to help everyone get the right care for their particular health problems, as quickly as possible.

## Primary care network

All practices work closely with other practices in a group known as a primary care network. There are over 20 such groups in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. By working together they can make resources go further and provide care in better ways. You may be asked to attend your appointment at another practice in your group, or you may receive your care in your own practice but from a team member from another practice.

## Community Pharmacy Consultation Service

Community pharmacists have the training and skills to advise on many minor ailments, for which people used to need to see a GP practice. Examples of the conditions they can help with include bites and stings, swelling and pain, skin conditions, colds, coughs, earache and gastric problems.

A member of the GP practice team, usually a receptionist, can refer you directly to a community pharmacy for appropriate health problems. This is known as the Community Pharmacy Consultation Service.

The pharmacy will contact the you to arrange for a face-to-face, phone or video consultation. The outcome of this is reported back to the GP practice so they can see exactly what has been recommended, any treatment given and it all goes on your patient record.

If you need more support than the pharmacy can provide or you require a prescription, the GP practice resumes contact with you and arranges for you to be seen by a member of the practice team. This saves you having to make multiple calls for support.

It's often much quicker and easier than waiting for a GP appointment and they can assess you in a private area where you cannot be overheard. Because so many pharmacies are part of the scheme, you can usually choose which pharmacy you are referred to, so you can be seen in a location that suits you.



# Online services

All GP practices are now able to offer you a range of online services to provide more choice and convenience for routine requests and appointments.

By signing up you'll be able to use the NHS website or the NHS app to:

- 1 Get health advice
- 2 Book or cancel appointments online
- 3 Order repeat prescriptions online
- 4 View parts of your GP record, including information about medication, allergies, vaccinations, previous illnesses and test results
- 5 View clinical correspondence such as hospital discharge summaries, outpatient appointment letters and referral letters
- 6 Contact your practice for advice or support
- 7 Get your COVID pass

The service is free and available to everyone who is registered with a GP practice.

Online services have the added benefit of helping to improve the service you receive from your practice in other areas, such as reducing the volume of calls to the practice reception so you can speak to someone when you need to more quickly.

You can start using online services by creating an NHS account online or through the NHS app. Visit [www.nhs.uk/nhs-app](http://www.nhs.uk/nhs-app) to find out more. It is available to download on iOS and Android devices.

Your practice may also offer additional online services, for example for contacting the practice, consulting with a health professional or getting advice. Visit your practice website to find out what is available.



# Practice roles

The GP practice team used to consist mainly of GPs supported by nurses or advanced nurse practitioners. Nowadays, the GP practice team is now made up of a much wider mix of health professionals, led by GPs, who work together to look after people's health and wellbeing. They are all highly skilled in their own areas of expertise. The exact combination of roles may vary from practice to practice.

So that everyone is seen as quickly as possible, it is important patients are matched with the most appropriate health professional for their particular medical problem and that staff members make use of the full extent of their training and experience.

GPs will always care for the most seriously ill patients in the practice or those with more complicated illnesses. It is not the best use of their time and expertise if they see patients that other members of the practice team are qualified and experienced to be able to deal with. If a patient is seen by one professional, such as a nurse, but then needs to be seen by someone else, such as a doctor, this will happen safely and seamlessly.

## Care Coordinators / Reception Team / GP Assistants

Care Coordinators working in practice reception teams are specially trained to know about the care and services available to you at your practice and in your area. While the name of this role may differ in your practice, they'll listen and talk to you in confidence about your health problem, to understand your needs so they can book you an appointment with the right healthcare professional or service.

They can help you:

- Get seen as soon as possible
- Know whether self-referral is available for certain services at your practice or in your area
- Make appointments for new kinds of care or new services you may not be aware of
- Get an appointment with the appropriate healthcare professional

## General Practitioners (GPs)

GPs oversee all aspects of patient care. They are here to deal with complex medical problems or where a patient has more than one health condition. They meet regularly with other members of the practice team to plan joint approaches to coordinate a patient's care. All other members of the practice team work under the supervision of a GP.

They can help with:

- Diagnosing and treating a health condition
- Ordering tests and interpreting results
- Prescribing medication where necessary
- Referring you to hospital and other medical services for urgent and specialist treatment

## Advanced Clinical / Nurse Practitioners

Advanced Clinical Practitioners come from a range of clinical backgrounds such as nursing, pharmacy, physiotherapy and paramedics. They are highly trained and have the knowledge and skills to manage all aspects of patient care.

They can help with:

- Diagnosing and treating health conditions
- Ordering tests and interpreting results
- Prescribing medication
- Making referrals to a specialist

## Mental Health Therapists and Practitioners

Mental health professionals in general practice may also be known as Psychological Wellbeing Practitioners, High Intensity Therapists or Cognitive Behavioural Therapists.

They specialise in mental health and use a range of talking therapies to help people with common mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression or post-traumatic stress disorders. Sessions are usually one-on-one but can also be in couple or group settings, by phone or online. Referral can be via your GP practice or directly via a local psychological therapies service.

They can help with:

- Talking therapies
- Tools and techniques to manage symptoms
- Support for those experiencing the psychological effects of managing long-term conditions, such as diabetes

## Healthcare Assistants

Healthcare Assistants work under the guidance of a nurse or another healthcare professional. They help with routine health checks and provide patients with general health and wellbeing advice.

They can help with:

- Health checks, such as blood pressure monitoring or taking blood samples
- Vaccinations and injections
- Healthy living advice, e.g. stopping smoking and weight loss
- Dressings and stitch removal

## Clinical Pharmacists

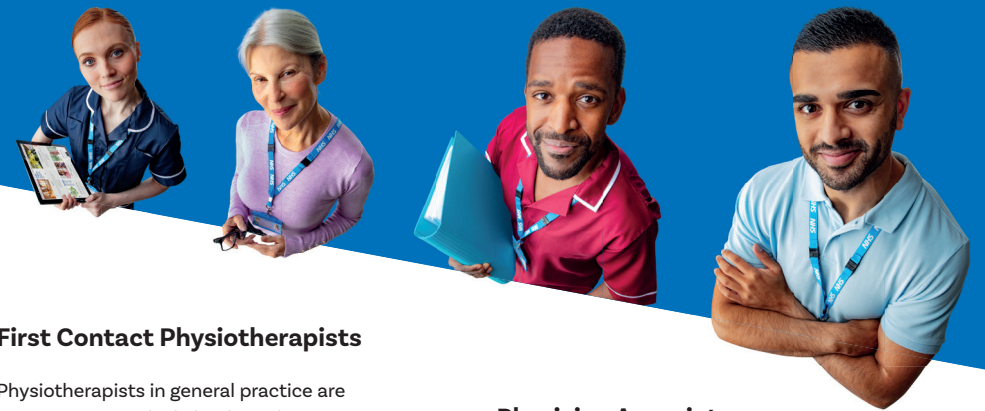
Clinical Pharmacists are experts in medicines and can help people stay as well as possible. They support those with long-term conditions like asthma, diabetes and high blood pressure or anyone taking multiple medicines to make sure their medication is working. They work with GPs, local pharmacies and hospitals to ensure that medicine services are joined up. Some Clinical Pharmacists can also prescribe medicines.

They can help with:

- In-depth reviews of your medicines if you have a long-term condition
- Agreeing and making changes to your prescription
- Advice about medicines and side effects

## Pharmacy Technicians

Pharmacy Technicians support and advise patients about how to take medication and can recommend other methods and services that can help them to manage their health condition.



## First Contact Physiotherapists

Physiotherapists in general practice are experts in musculoskeletal conditions. They are able to assess, diagnose and treat a range of complex muscle and joint conditions, preventing the need for referrals to hospital. They can arrange swift access to further treatment, investigations and specialists when needed.

They can help with:

- Diagnosing and treating muscular and joint conditions
- Advising on how to manage your condition
- Referrals on to specialist services

## Paramedics

Paramedics work in a variety of roles within a general practice. Their background in pre-hospital care means that they are used to working with people with a variety of health conditions from coughs and minor injuries to more serious conditions such as asthma and heart attacks. They work alongside GPs and help manage routine or urgent appointments, telephone triage (assessment of urgency of illness or injury) and home visits. Some can prescribe medication.

They can help with:

- Diagnosing and treating health conditions
- Ordering tests and interpreting results
- Supporting people with long-term conditions such as arthritis and diabetes

## Physician Associates

Physician Associates are trained and qualified to diagnose and treat a wide range of health conditions. They work alongside GPs to provide care to people, particularly those with long-term conditions who often benefit from being able to see the same healthcare professional.

They can help with:

- Diagnosing and treating health conditions
- Arranging tests and analysing results
- Performing physical examinations

## Phlebotomists

Phlebotomists are responsible for taking blood samples from patients and ensuring their safe delivery to the laboratory for testing.

## Podiatrists

Podiatrists are trained to diagnose and treat foot and lower limb conditions, often related to health conditions such as diabetes, rheumatism, cerebral palsy, peripheral arterial disease and peripheral nerve damage.

They can help with:

- Diagnosing and treating foot and lower limb conditions

## Nursing associates

Nursing associates provide a range of health checks and routine care to patients, as well as patient education and support. They would escalate any issues to a nurse who they work alongside.

They can help with:

- Monitoring blood pressure, temperature, pulse, respirations and blood glucose
- Blood tests
- Carrying out ECGs
- Patient advice and support

## General Practice Nurses

Nurses in general practice undertake a wide range of roles and are involved in almost every aspect of a patient's care, assessing, screening and treating people of all ages. They can treat many health conditions and arrange any necessary tests. In addition to providing traditional aspects of nursing care such as wound care, immunisations and administration of medicines, they run health checks and clinics for those with long-term conditions such as asthma, heart disease and diabetes.

They can help with:

- Vaccinations and injections
- Supporting people with long-term conditions such as asthma and diabetes
- Healthy living advice, e.g. stopping smoking and weight loss
- Family planning and sexual health advice, including smear tests

## Dietitians

Dietitians are healthcare professionals that diagnose and treat diet and nutritional problems. They support changes to food intake to address health conditions such as diabetes, food allergies, coeliac disease, and metabolic diseases. They also provide practical guidance to enable people to make appropriate lifestyle and food choices.

They can help with:

- Addressing health conditions and allergies through diet
- Advising on lifestyle and food choices

## Admiral Nurses

Admiral nurses are specialist dementia nurses who support families and health professionals to improve the quality of life for the person with dementia and their families.

They can help with:

- Understanding the diagnosis and managing symptoms
- Anticipating changes in personality and behaviours and putting in place coping mechanisms
- Helping to manage the patient's other health conditions alongside their dementia
- Coordinating health and care services to ensure the best care for the person with dementia and best support for the family
- Supporting carers and families



## Health and Wellbeing Coaches

Health and wellbeing coaches support people to develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to reach their health and wellbeing goals, including helping them identify their needs, set goals, and implement their personalised health and care plan.

They may help educate people on managing their long-term condition, peer support and social prescribing.

They can help with:

- Setting health and wellbeing goals
- Developing a health and care plan to reach those goals
- Managing long term conditions
- Referring to supporting services

## Social Prescribing Link Workers

Social prescribing involves helping people to improve their health and wellbeing by connecting them to activities and services in the community. Link Workers connect those feeling lonely, overwhelmed or in need of help to a range of local support, from community and activity groups to work, debt or housing advice.

They can help with:

- Getting people to focus on their own priorities and the things that affect their wellbeing
- Supporting people to take more control of their health
- Introducing people to groups and activities in their community

## Occupational Therapist

Occupational therapists support people of all ages with problems resulting from physical, mental, social, or development difficulties. They help people find ways to continue with everyday activities that are important to them. This could involve learning new ways to do things or making changes to their environment to make things easier.

They can help with:

- Living with chronic physical or mental health conditions
- Managing anxiety or depression
- Advice about returning to or remaining in work
- Rehabilitation to continue daily activities

# Get in the Know

## about getting urgent help.

NHS 111 online is the first place to go for urgent care advice and is the easiest way to get the right care, in the right place, as quickly as possible.

NHS 111 can help if you have an urgent medical problem and you're not sure what to do. They can help you online or over the phone, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They can advise you how to treat minor problems yourself at home or, if needed, they can connect you to a medical expert, arrange a face-to-face appointment at a local service or tell you how to get any medication that has been prescribed for you.

### Get in the know

#### NHS 111 online can also:

- Tell you where to get help for your symptoms
- Direct you to urgent treatment centres/ walk in centres, GPs, pharmacies, emergency dental services, or other more appropriate local services
- Help you get emergency supplies of your prescribed medicines, and provide general health information and advice

If you or your loved one have an urgent but not-life-threatening medical need, make sure you visit NHS 111 online first before using other NHS services. But for life-threatening illnesses or injuries, then you should always dial 999.

If you do not have access to a computer or smartphone, you can call NHS 111 where a fully trained adviser will advise on the best course of action.

If you have hearing loss, are deaf or have difficulties communicating you can also use NHS 111 by textphone on 18001 111. British Sign Language (BSL) users can use the NHS 111 BSL interpreter service.

Visit NHS111 Online at [111.nhs.uk](https://111.nhs.uk)







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