

Appointment system - Policy

Our practice's appointment system allows patients with urgent, non-urgent, complex, planned chronic care and preventive health care to be accommodated.

Procedure

Preferred practitioner:

To support continuity of care, patients need to be able to request their preferred GP when making an appointment or attending our practice, and as a result, staff ensure that patients have the opportunity to request their preferred GP and accommodate this in the appointment schedule.

This principle also applies to practices that employ general practice nurses and/or allied health professionals as part of the practice team.

If patients are unable to obtain an appointment with the GP of their choice they must be advised of the availability of other GPs at this time.

Appropriate appointment type:

The practice team are able to allocate the appropriate length of time for a consultation.

New staff are taught such skills during their induction as well as receiving ongoing education and training with other staff members.

Clinician requesting change of appointment for the patient:

On occasions a clinician will require a patient's appointment to be changed.

Use these guidelines:

- Understand from the clinician why the appointment is being changed, e.g. pathology results not back, clinician on unexpected leave.
- Have alternative appointment times available in preparation for the conversation.
- Respect that the patient may be frustrated by the change.
- Record the request for change in the patient file.

Walk ins

Walk in patients are triaged as appropriate. Non-urgent walk in patients are accepted if there is an available appointment, or scheduled to when there is an appointment.

Booking an Appointment

Our practice procedure for booking appointments is as follows:

1. Ask the patient when they would like an appointment. Determine if the appointment is urgent or non-urgent
2. Ask the patient which GP they would like to see or who they normally see

3. Ask the patient if they have more than one issue to discuss and how long they feel they would need with the GP. Outline the different types of appointments available and their length
4. Advise the patient that one appointment will be allocated per person if they have multiple family members
5. Provide the nearest available time for the patient to see their preferred GP
6. Ask if another GP would be suitable if the patient's preferred GP is not available. If non-urgent, planned chronic care or preventative health care, ask if they would prefer another time and date
7. Provide the patient with a time and date for the appointment
8. Record the patient surname and given name in the agreed timeslot
9. Inform new patients of practice location, parking, costs, including reference to out of pocket expenses and payment methods (if applicable). Obtain phone number and record other demographics as able.
10. Reconfirm the appointment time and date and the patient's phone number
11. Encourage the patient to call ½ hour prior to their appointment to see if the GP is running on time. Practice staff must note on the Appointment screen details of patients who call to monitor waiting times.

Urgent Access

There are times when patients require urgent access to a GP.

To accommodate patients with urgent medical needs, our practice reserves a number of unbooked appointment times each day and triages according to our Triage and medical emergencies.

As first point of contact, staff must constantly review the Triage Support Guide (<https://www.gptriage.info/triage-chart.html>) ensure they are correctly assessing patients' needs and concerns.

Consultation Length

Patients need to be encouraged to ask for a longer consultation and that this is accommodated if they consider it necessary. Methods include asking the patient if they have more than one issue to discuss with the GP and outlining the different types of appointments and their length. Another method is including such information in the practice information and website

At our practice, we offer the following types of appointments:

Appointment	Types of issues	Length (minutes)
Short	Renewed prescriptions and ongoing referral letters	10/15 minutes
Normal	Routine care, preventive care, chronic care, referral letters to new specialists	up to 20 minutes
Long	New patients, excisions, complex conditions	20-40 minutes
Prolonged	Full medical check-ups, counselling, patient's carer or translator is present	40+ minutes
Practice nurse	Referred by the practitioner, immunisations, care plans	