

Frequently Asked Questions

Received via Aneurin Bevan University Health Board's Social Media Platform

Why can't I get through to my GP? They never answer the phone!

Practices are experiencing very high demand for their services and telephone lines are very busy. We appreciate that this is frustrating and are looking at ways to improve this situation. Many practices also offer alternative ways in which to contact the practice such as e-consult, My Health Online and email.

Why do I have to tell the receptionist everything before I can get an appointment?

Reception staff are trained Care Navigators and so providing them with information will allow them to ensure that you are seen by the most appropriate health care professional who can best address your needs in a timely manner. A GP is not the only person who may be able to help you and many practices have other staff as part of a multi-disciplinary team, such as Advanced Nurse Practitioners and Pharmacists that may be more suited to deal with your needs. If you do not wish to share these details, please let the receptionist know.

When I do get through to the GP surgery there are no same day appointments left.

There is a shortage of GPs across Wales and the UK which unfortunately will have an impact on the number of appointments. If your issue is urgent, please explain that to the receptionist so that it can be addressed appropriately.

Why are appointments still being conducted over the phone?

Practices have adopted a blended approach to patient consultations, offering both face-to-face and remote consultations, as appropriate, based on clinical and patient needs.

I don't want to see a nurse or other member of staff; I want to see a GP. Why can't I?

Since before the pandemic, the traditional GP practice model has been evolving, with practices expanding their teams, so that patients see the most appropriate health care professional to meet their needs at that time. Many GP practices will have established a multi-disciplinary practice team, which includes extended roles such as Advanced Nurse Practitioners, Pharmacists, Physiotherapists, Paramedics, Mental Health Practitioners and Occupational Therapists. Patients do not always need to see a GP and the practice will have systems in place to navigate patients to the appropriate health care professional or service best placed to treat them. This enables GPs to be able to see the most complex of patients in the most need.

When should I ring 111?

111 telephone service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and can be used for urgent health advice on what services to access or how to manage an illness or condition and to access urgent primary care out of hours.

What is 'e-consult'?

There are various platforms available to facilitate and support remote consultations; *Attend Anywhere*, *AccuRX* and *e-consult* are the leading examples.

e-Consult is an online system that allows patients to seek advice and source self-help information.

When will GP Surgeries be operating as normal?

GP surgeries continue to open, as normal, between 8.00am - 6.30pm and provide a range of services. Practices are experiencing very high demand for their services and are trying their best to meet the needs of their patients.

I can't get a face-to-face appointment with my GP.

GPs, along with the whole of the NHS, are under significant pressure. Initial telephone triage with a face-to-face appointment offered if necessary is an efficient way of addressing the needs of as many people as possible.

If GPs were seeing patients properly then people wouldn't end up going to the Emergency Department with minor issues.

GPs are fully open and providing the services that they were pre-pandemic. The whole of the NHS is under significant pressure at the moment.

Why don't GP surgeries open longer hours (evenings/weekends) to meet the demand?

There is a shortage of GPs across Wales and the UK, so Practices do not have the ability to open safely, for longer hours. The GP Out of Hours Service means you can access a GP 24 hours a day, 7 days a week all year around.

GPs are sending people to The Grange University Hospital unnecessarily – sometimes without even seeing them first.

There are occasions when this is the appropriate thing to do if someone is having a heart attack or stroke for example. Otherwise, GPs are assessing patients in the community before admission.

I haven't had a dental check-up in 2 years.

In line with much of general NHS patient care, there may be a backlog of NHS care at your dentist at present. Dentists are prioritising patients' needs according to guidance from Welsh Government and will be able to see you for your routine check-up in due course as part of their recovery. If you have any urgent dental problem, please contact your practice for further advice.

In the meantime, you can continue looking after your mouth at home by avoiding sugary food and drinks in between meals and brushing your teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste.

There are no places with NHS dentists, so what can I do?

Following advice from Welsh Government, dental practices are currently working hard with Health Boards to offer NHS care to new patients and reduce the waiting time to be seen. Many practices hold a patient waiting list, to which patients seeking regular care will be added until the practice is able to offer an appointment. Please do not be worried if you do not hear from the dental practice for several months, the practice will contact you when an appointment can be offered. In the meantime, if you require urgent dental treatment, please contact Aneurin Bevan Dental Helpline on 01633 744387 or email abb.dental.helpline@wales.nhs.uk