

Home Visiting Policy

Introduction

Our home visiting policy is based on RCGP guidelines. You cannot insist that a GP visits you at home.

Due to increasing demands, GP's can no longer automatically visit any patient who requests a home visit. All visits must now undergo an element of triage and be dealt with according to clinical need.

A GP will only visit you at home if they think your medical condition requires it. A GP will also decide how urgently any visit is needed.

GP's are better able to assess patients at the surgery where they have access to your full medical record including allergies, medications, results etc. as well as specialist equipment, good lighting and examination facilities and therefore the surgery is always the preferable site for any consultation.

GP's who are having to visit inappropriate house calls are delayed from visiting those patients who are in genuine need of a home visit and therefore this poses an unacceptable clinical risk.

GP's are not obliged to visit a patient if they have assessed the patients' clinical need on the telephone and found them to be suitable for an alternative method of healthcare. As long as a GP or appropriate healthcare professional has provided a plan for a patient (which may be an appointment the same day, a future day, telephone advice or attendance at another healthcare site) the partners of the surgery will support the decision made.

We would like to bring to your attention the following points:

- Home visits must be requested before 11:00 between Monday and Friday;
- Home visits are reserved for patients who are genuinely housebound and who do not leave the house for **any** reason; including those in nursing and residential homes;
- The GP will only visit if the patients clinical condition prevents them from travelling to the surgery and that they have a medical condition that necessitates an urgent medical opinion;
- Age is not a criterion for a home visit. The criteria applies to both older and younger people;
- Home visits will not be undertaken for social / transport reasons;
- The GP / Clinician may refuse a visit to the patient and offer an urgent appointment at the surgery if they feel that is more appropriate

Patients should dial 999 in the case of a genuine life threatening emergency. For life threatening emergencies, requesting a home visit from a GP can delay life-saving treatment.

Examples of such situations include:

- ***Myocardial Infarction (heart attack)***
- ***Severe shortness of breath***
- ***Severe haemorrhage***
- ***Suspected stroke***

Criteria for home visits

GP home visiting makes clinical sense and is the best way of giving a medical opinion in cases involving:

- Terminal illness
- The truly bed bound patient for whom travel to the surgery premises would cause a deterioration to their medical condition or unacceptable discomfort

A GP may visit for the following reason:

- Those who are not usually bed bound but have a clinical condition that prevents them from being mobile

GP's will not visit for these conditions or circumstances and it is expected that the patient will attend the surgery to be seen:

- Common symptoms of childhood fevers, cough, cold, earache, headache, diarrhoea / vomiting, and most cases of abdominal pain. Patients with these symptoms are usually well enough to travel by car. It is not harmful to take a child with a fever outside. These children may not be fit to travel by bus or walk but car transport is available from friends, relatives or taxi firms;
- Adults with common problems such as a cough, sore throat, influenza, back pain, abdominal pain, are also transportable by car to the premises;
- Common problems in the elderly, such as poor mobility, joint pain and general malaise are best treated by consultation at the surgery premises where facilities are available for full examination and investigation. The exception to this would be the truly bed bound patient;

All patients, relatives and carers should note the following:

- The practice is not responsible for arranging transport to the surgery
- If a patient has difficulty arranging child care whilst attending appointments, patients are welcome to bring their children to the surgery
- The practice is not responsible for care homes who don't have enough staff to bring patients to the surgery for an appointment
- Our GP's will not visit for convenience
- Wherever possible patients requiring a consultation will be asked to attend the surgery
- At the surgery the GP has access to the patients full clinical record and access to support staff such as practice nurses, phlebotomists, pharmacists and healthcare assistants and therefore the consultation will be of a better quality with regards to governance issues
- Home visits are not an efficient or effective use of pressured GP time
- If you request a home visit you may initially receive a telephone consultation from a clinician who will discuss your symptoms with you. You may be asked to attend the surgery as a result of this consultation if clinically appropriate. The Doctor will decide on the most suitable place and time for your condition to be assessed.