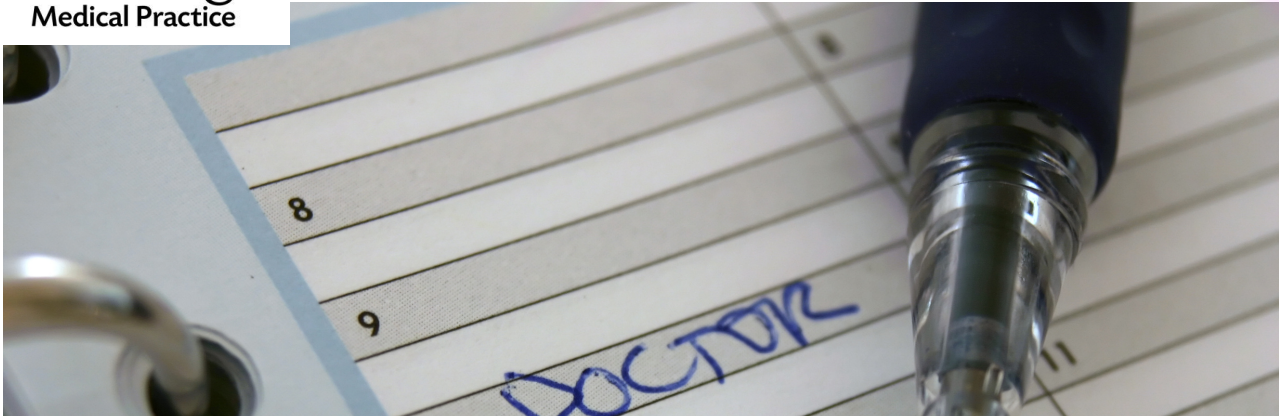




The Bridges
Medical Practice

The Bridges Newsletter

Extra Edition



Over the last few months we have seen a greater demand for appointments. The reasons for this include -

- Some of you have understandably been waiting until cases of Covid have fallen before contacting us and therefore have multiple problems waiting to be dealt with.
- The pandemic has caused an increase in anxiety and mental health problems.
- As the hospital has such long waiting lists, we are managing more of your care than we normally would.
- We have tried to keep as many services as possible running throughout the pandemic but there is an element of us catching up on routine reviews.

At the start of the pandemic we had to radically change the way we work for your and our safety, moving to total triage. Because workload was at a manageable level, we were able to deal with the majority of calls the same day. However, this is no longer the case - we cannot deal with every phone call or EConsult the same day due to the huge volumes we are receiving each. All of the staff are working extremely hard but we can only speak to, or see, a certain number of patients per day (which for the Doctors is always at least a 10 hour day).

We also want to ensure we have capacity to see patients face to face where needed and have already moved to ensure we can see all the patients who need to be seen face to face. Many patients are happy to have a telephone or video call, and we will continue to offer this much more than we did a year ago, because many of you have told us you are happy with this, it's convenient and you don't have to travel to the surgery. We commit to finding the right balance for you.

We therefore need your help to ensure you are seen at the right time by the right person.

1. Routine appointments and continuity: Having continuity with your Doctor or nurse is better for you and for us. You don't have to repeat your symptoms to someone new and they know what the treatment plan is. We therefore kindly request that, wherever possible, you have routine appointments with your usual GP for ongoing or non-urgent appointments. It is absolutely not what we want to do, but this could mean that you may have to wait several weeks for a routine appointment, although we will of course try to minimise this wait and are looking all the time at how we can improve the appointment system.

2. Urgent problems: Please be patient with the receptionists. They are not deliberately being obstructive but are working with the system they have been asked to. They will ask you if your problem is urgent or non-urgent and a rough explanation of the problem. This is not to be nosy but to ensure you have an urgent appointment if needed and are booked with the right clinician. Urgent problems will almost always be triaged first with a telephone call so that we can be sure you see the right clinician in the quickest possible way. Many urgent complaints can be dealt with safely over the phone, blood tests arranged if needed, prescriptions issued, or the right appointment will be made for you there and then.

We have a skilled team of Nurse Practitioners, Paramedics, Pharmacists and First Contact Physios who may be best placed to help you instead of a Doctor in the first instance. The doctors will always be available for advice for these staff if needed and of course to see patients as they always have done. You can directly book to speak to our First Contact Physiotherapists for any joint or musculoskeletal problem such as back pain, tennis elbow, knee pain etc

3. Non -medical problems: If you are struggling with more social issues (as opposed to medical) then we can refer you to Social Prescribing Link Workers or the Citizens Advice Bureau team who work from our building.

4. Other health services: There are also some services you can self-refer to, such as Steps 2 Wellbeing for management of anxiety and depression and other mental health services, Physiotherapy and the Midwives.



Consider asking your pharmacist ..

for help for minor ailments and medicine queries. There is also much information available about many conditions on www.nhs.uk

5. Medicines and results: you can order all repeat prescriptions online or through the [NHS app](#) and we recommend that you download this app as you can also see your Covid vaccination record here. If you have on-line access at the surgery, you can also view your test results and comments made by the doctors. Doctors are increasingly using text messaging to communicate simple messages.

Worrying symptoms- if you have been putting off coming to see us and are concerned you may have a symptom that could suggest a cancer, please do not delay in making an appointment. Our triage system is there to ensure we will direct you into the right appointment

Please bear with us as we recover from the worst of the Covid pandemic. Many of our staff have also been giving up their weekends and days off to support the Covid vaccination programme, and many have been working well beyond any usual hours for the local community, and of course, staff also need to have some holiday breaks to recharge and be refreshed and this always puts pressure on the capacity within our practice, especially during the summer holiday season.

Please click on images for helpful information



Musculoskeletal Matters

steps2wellbeing
Southampton & Dorset

