

How to access your GP Practice Team

Guidance on when and how to make an
appointment at your GP practice



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This document has been created in February 2025.

There are links and QR codes throughout this document. You can use these to get more information about where to access services in Barnsley. You can click the links and scan the QR codes with a smart phone camera.

If you require this document in an alternative format, please get in touch with us using the details on the back page.

Introduction

Healthwatch Barnsley is an independent voice for the people of Barnsley. We are here to listen to their experiences and give them a stronger say in influencing how local health and social care services are provided.

Knowing how and when to make an appointment at your GP practice is important to help you stay healthy. This guide aims to help you:

- Decide when to make a GP practice appointment
- Choose how to make your appointment
- Understand the role of different health professionals at GP practices
- Different ways to access your GP surgery.



Which service should I use?



Self Care

Caring for yourself at home

Cough and cold remedies | minor bruises
minor cuts and grazes | minor sprains



Pharmacy

Local expert advice

Bites and stings | minor illnesses
stomach upsets | minor headaches

If your local pharmacy has signed up to 'Pharmacy First' they'll now be able to treat seven common conditions. Read more about this on page 10.



NHS 111

Non-emergency help

If you have an urgent but not life-threatening health problem, you can contact NHS 111 either online or by telephone.



GP advice

When your GP is closed, visit NHS 111 online

Chronic pain | long term conditions
new prescriptions | persistent symptoms



Accident & Emergency or 999

For emergencies only

Breathing difficulties | chest pain | severe allergic reactions
severe bleeding that cannot be stopped

How can I make an appointment?

There are many ways to make an appointment at your GP practice. Read through the different ways below. Your GP practice might not offer all of these options.



By telephone

Some people prefer to contact their GP practice by telephone to book an appointment. Phone lines can be extremely busy.

Your GP practice may have set times when you can book to get an on-the-day appointment. For some practices this will be in a morning. For others they may have a time to call in the morning and in the afternoon.

When you call your GP practice, you will usually have to wait in a queue to book an appointment.

The staff who answer the calls at your GP practice are trained to ask questions which will help them work out the best way of treating you.

Most practices will offer an initial telephone appointment where a healthcare professional will either be able to provide you with advice or organise treatment. They may also book you a face-to-face appointment.

If you don't need an urgent appointment, it might be better to call later in the day when their phone lines may be less busy. Some GP practices will send a text message to confirm your appointment.



In person

You can go to your GP practice and speak to the reception staff who will be able to help with your query. Reception staff are trained to ask certain questions, to help you get seen by the right person.



Online health services

All GP practices will have online access, but different practices will use different systems.

Online systems allow you to book, cancel and review appointments. Online services are generally for people who do not need urgent appointments.

You will need access to a computer, tablet, or smartphone for digital healthcare access. You will also need an NHS login for some of the systems. Further information about how to create an NHS log in can be found on the [**NHS 'About login' website.**](#)

NHS App

The NHS App can be accessed on your smart phone or tablet. You do not need to request an account through your GP practice.

You can download the app to your phone or tablet using the Apple App Store or Google Play.

The NHS App gives a patient access to their medical records, allows them to manage appointments and medications and provides information and advice. Further information about the NHS App can be found on this [**YouTube video.**](#)

Online triage systems

Online triage is an online system that take the patient or their carer through a series of questions. The questions are about the patient's symptoms or conditions. The answers are then sent directly to the GP practice. The GP practice will review this information and respond accordingly.

There are a few different online consultation systems that are used by GP practices in Barnsley. Some of them do the same thing as the NHS App.

Watch this video that explains more about [**eConsult and how it works.**](#) Further information can also be found on the [**e-consult website**](#)

Online appointment booking, repeat prescriptions and health records

Each GP practise will have there own online booking system. This tool can also be used to order repeat prescriptions and gain access to your full health record. You will need to tell the practice reception team that you would like to use it. The practice will then generate a username and password for you to log in.

Things to consider



All practices will give you a face-to-face appointment when your health condition needs assessing, and there is an appointment available.



If a face-to-face appointment means you're able to communicate better or if you would prefer to see your GP in person, tell the practice team.



If you can no longer attend your appointment, or no longer need it make sure you contact the practice to cancel the appointment

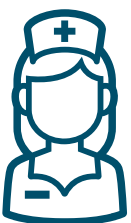
Who are the people who work at my GP practice?

You may be seen at your GP practice by someone other than a doctor. Each member of staff at your GP practice is highly trained. They are there to help you get the best care as quickly as possible.

Groups of GP practices decide what additional staff they need to help their patients. These staff members are often shared between GP practices. This means there will be more choice of health care professionals that you can access.

It can also mean you may be offered an appointment at a different location from your usual surgery. Not all roles will be available at all GP practices.

NHS South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (NHS South Yorkshire ICB) has information about different professionals at GP practices. This can be found on their web page: [GP explains different roles in in primary care and how they can help you](#)



Advanced Practitioners

Advanced Practitioners are healthcare professionals that have had additional training in diagnosing the most common conditions. They have a lot of skills and knowledge that increases the support your GP practice can give to its patients.



Care Coordinators

Care Coordinators work within GP practices as part of the Community Support Team. They work with health care and social care staff, and other professionals. They arrange the care of patients who are at high risk of their health becoming worse. It could help these patients to have support from a team of healthcare professionals.



Dietitians

Dietitians are healthcare professionals who can assess, diagnose, and treat patients who have problems caused by what they are eating. For example, dietitians work with patients of all ages to help them live with diabetes, food allergies, and coeliac disease.



First Contact Physiotherapists

First Contact Physiotherapists can assess, diagnose, and treat muscle and joint problems.



General Practice Assistants

General Practice Assistants carry out administration tasks. For example managing the patients and the appointment system. In some practices they can also carry out basic clinical roles such as taking a patient's blood pressure. Their focus is on managing patients and providing administrative support to the GPs.



General Practitioners (GPs)

GPs treat all common medical conditions and refer patients to hospitals and other medical services for urgent and specialist treatment.



GP Reception Team

The GP reception team is trained to use the information you provide to help you see which health professional or local service is best to help you. Any information that you discuss with the reception team will remain confidential.



Health and Wellbeing Coach

Health and Wellbeing Coaches help patients to achieve the goals that are set out in their personalised health and care plan. They can also refer patients to other health professionals in the GP practice.



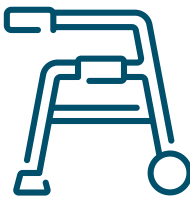
Mental Health Practitioners

Mental Health Practitioners help adults to make decisions about their care and help them to get treatment. They can also help children and young people with mental health issues. They will act as a bridge between primary care and secondary mental health services. They can also refer people to a range of services to help.



Nursing Associates

A Nursing Associate's role includes carrying out and recording the results of tests done on a patient. These can be tests such as taking a patient's blood pressure, temperature, and pulse.



Occupational Therapists

Occupational Therapists help patients to develop and improve the skills they need for daily living and working. They also help patients to get important equipment they need to help them live and look after themselves in their own homes.



Paramedics

Paramedics are trained to deal with lots of different types of illness and injury. They can sometimes do home visits and can help assess patients on the phone to help people get the right care.



Pharmacy Technicians

Pharmacy Technicians work with pharmacists. They speak to patients and give advice to help them manage their medications.



Practice Pharmacists

Practice Pharmacists work in GP practices to help patients understand their medication. They work with the staff at the GP practice and take responsibility for patients with chronic diseases. Some pharmacists can also prescribe and manage prescriptions.



Practice Manager

A Practice Manager oversees the day-to-day running of the GP practice. They make sure that patients are at the centre of all activity.



Physician Associates

Physician Associates work alongside GPs. They cannot prescribe medication but they can prepare prescriptions for GPs to sign. They see patients from their first appointment through to diagnosis, treatment, and ongoing care.



Podiatrists

Podiatrists treat leg, foot and ankle conditions. They provide assessment, evaluation, and care for a wide range of patients. They help to improve the mobility, independence and quality of life for their patients.



Social Prescribing Link Workers

Social Prescribing Link Workers connect people to groups in the community. They help patients to improve their wellbeing, health, and welfare.

Information about the additional roles available at your GP practice should be on the practice's website or available by speaking to the reception team.

For services local to you in Barnsley, please follow the link to the NHS website and enter your postcode to see what is available: [Find services near you](#). You can also call NHS 111 or visit your local pharmacy for advice.

Further Information

When to use NHS 111

Visit [NHS 111 information web page](#), or scan the QR code with your smartphone camera.



Accident and Emergency

Learn more about Barnsley Hospitals Accident and Emergency by visiting [Barnsley Hospitals Services web page](#). Or you can scan the QR code. Here you will find information on:

- Should I attend A&E?
- Minor Injuries Service
- Contact details



Pharmacy First

In Barnsley the Pharmacy First service can support you with these seven common illnesses without a GP appointment:

1 Sinusitis (swollen nasal passages)

Adults and children aged 12 years and over

2 Sore throat

Adults and children aged five years and over

3 Earache in children

Children and young adults aged one year to 17 years

4 Infected insect bite

Adults and children aged one year and over

5 Impetigo (a bacterial skin infection)

Adults and children aged one year and over

6 Shingles

Adults aged 18 years and over

7 Uncomplicated urinary tract infections (water infection)

Women only aged 16 to 64 years



* NHS prescription charges apply where medicine is provided.

Talk to your pharmacist for more information.

Blood pressure checks

Did you know your pharmacist can also check your blood pressure? If you're over 40 you can get your blood pressure checked for free at most pharmacies. Find pharmacies offering the service by searching online for: 'pharmacy blood pressure check near me'. Or scan this QR code.



Contraception

Some pharmacists can also prescribe the contraceptive pill. You can get the contraceptive pill without seeing a GP first. Find pharmacies offering the service by searching online for: 'NHS pharmacy contraception service'. Or scan this QR code.



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