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Please read this important update from Dr Kieran Tunnicliff:-

From the 2nd of February the Witterings Medical Centre will be running a total triage system which will be accessed via the practice website or the NHS App. In summary, ALL requests for medical appointments (both routine and urgent), and all administrative requests will need to be made via the online request form.

Of course, patients who are unable to do this will **not** be excluded and they can still speak to reception who will complete the relevant online request form with them. Requests for medical appointments will be reviewed by the duty doctor within 24 hours and the appropriate best next step will be communicated back to the patient (this might be an appointment, advice regarding self care, signposting to another service such as NHS Pharmacy First) etc etc. Administrative requests will be managed by the appropriate administrative team in the surgery.

Nurse and blood test appointments will still need to be booked via the phone.

There are some advantages to this system for both patients and the practice but, needless to say, we cannot pretend that we can cope with unlimited demand from our population and we will, for the safety of our patients, and the wellbeing and retainment of our staff, have to cap the number of requests that we receive if they are overwhelming. That said, the way in which we have designed the process will free up over 60 GP appointments each week. We will urge patients to use the system appropriately and have created a "fair usage" policy; repeated unnecessary requests and threatening or abusive language will not be tolerated.

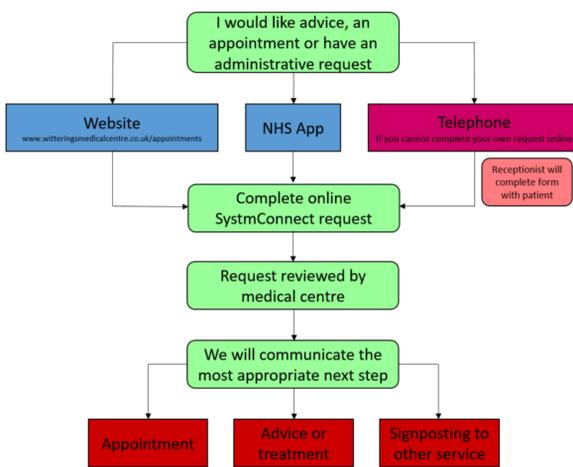
The website will be updated with clear information and we will be sending out more communications and a user guide.

We do appreciate that any change causes some concern in the community but the aim of these changes (which are not really significant) will mean we can provide faster, fairer and safer care.

Thank you,

Kieran

Dr Kieran Tunnicliffe
The Witterings Medical Centre
GMC 6143264



IMPORTANT UPDATE APPOINTMENT BOOKING



The way you request GP appointments is evolving

From Monday 2nd February, in order to align with the government's contractual changes for general practices, the way you contact the surgery for **ALL** medical and administrative requests is changing. We will be moving to a total triage system using an online platform called SystemConnect. This will enable us to make sure patients receive the right care as quickly and safely as possible.

The new system offers improved functionality and a more user-friendly interface. Our goal is to make online consultations quicker, safer, and more convenient for patients and staff alike. The new system has enabled us to increase the number of requests that we can safely process. We have also managed to increase the number of GP appointments by at least 60 per week.

This will enhance our ability to provide timely and effective care to our patients. It will help prevent you making unnecessary trips and lengthy phone calls to the surgery and be a more convenient way of accessing our services.

What does actually this mean for you?

If you want to contact the medical centre we would encourage you to complete an online form. These forms can be used for all routine appointment requests, urgent appointment requests and all administrative requests.

Medical requests will be reviewed by a doctor within 24 hours. We then contact you with the best next step, which may be:

- a phone call
- a face-to-face appointment with a member of the clinical team – this might be a doctor, advanced pare practitioner, nurse, pharmacist, physiotherapist etc
- advice or treatment without needing an appointment
- referral or signposting to another appropriate NHS service

Administrative requests will be actioned by an appropriate member of the administrative team.

The system opens at 8am Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays) and will close if we reach our safe working capacity for that day.

How do you make an online request?

- Via our website: www.witteringsmedicalcentre.co.uk/appointments
- Via the NHS app

What if I cannot use the internet?

If you cannot use the internet you can continue to call the medical centre on 01243 671833 and a receptionist will ask you the necessary questions required to complete the request on your behalf. Your request will then be managed in the same way as those that have been by patients requested online. Friends and family can also submit requests on behalf of patients who are not able to do this by themselves.

There will be no advantage in phoning the medical centre or attending reception.

What if my problem is urgent?

General practice is **not** an emergency service. If you think you have an immediate medical need then visiting accident & emergency or calling 999 is the safe and appropriate thing to do. NHS 111 can also offer urgent advice.

If you have a problem that you think needs the attention of the medical centre within 72 hours, then complete an online request which will be reviewed by a doctor before deciding the most appropriate outcome. **You no longer need to telephone the surgery to make urgent requests.**

You may be signposted to another service, such as the NHS Pharmacy First scheme (<https://www.england.nhs.uk/primary-care/pharmacy/pharmacy-services/pharmacy-first/>), which has been commissioned to enable community pharmacies to manage many common conditions without GP involvement.

There is a limit to the number of urgent requests we can safely manage. If we reach our safe working capacity the system will direct you to contact 111, 999 or to attend A&E.

What about nurse and blood test appointments?

Please continue to telephone the medical centre to book these appointments.

We are here to help

We know that change can cause concern and it may take time for patients and staff to get used to but please be assured that:

- you will still be treated with care and respect
- help is available if you need support
- this system is designed to make access faster, fairer and safer - not make it harder

Thank you for your patience and understanding while we introduce this new way of working.

