

# Why is my GP working differently?

**NHS**

**Bolton**

Clinical Commissioning Group

## Is my GP practice open?

GP Practices are open but they are working differently to protect patients and staff. They have worked hard to provide a service throughout lockdown and continue to deal with Covid and non-Covid issues, as well as delivering vaccinations.

GP practices can often be very limited on space, so they can't have lots of people in the waiting room AND comply with social distancing and infection control measures. This is to protect you and staff.

## Does that mean they aren't as busy?

GP practices are busier than ever and sadly, losing staff at a drastic rate. People are living longer, so have more health issues. Plus some people have been putting off contacting their GP during the pandemic. People have even more ways of contacting their GP now, such as via online forms. It takes time to sort through these forms and find those that are most urgent. Many issues could easily be dealt with at home first. A practice can have 25 Online Consults ready to action on a Monday morning. This equates to a full day of a clinician's time – and this is before the phone starts ringing!

## I need to contact my GP practice – what should I do?

You can fill out an Online Consult form or phone your practice and you will be assessed (triaged) over the phone. After this, you may need either a telephone or video consultation, a face to face appointment or help from your local pharmacy.

This is the safest way for patients and ensures that those who need it most, get treated first. Many cases can be dealt with over the phone and this prevents you from travelling to the surgery unnecessarily. If you do need to go in for an examination, you will be given an appointment.



## Why do reception staff ask so many questions?

GP reception staff are a vital part of the team at your practice and they treat all information as confidential.

They have to ask questions to ensure you get the right help, at the right time. They are trained to ensure patients are matched to the most appropriate person in the practice and that those with the highest need are dealt with first.

## Why am I seeing someone who isn't my GP?

Many GP practices have teams of specialists working alongside GPs. These teams can include advanced nurse practitioners, health care assistants, mental health specialists, pharmacists, practice nurses, paramedics and musculoskeletal practitioners (MSK).

All are highly trained professionals and they enable you to be treated by the most appropriate member of the practice team.

## Where else can I get help?

Your local pharmacy can help with lots of minor issues. If you need urgent help, visit [111.nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk) or dial 111. You can also visit [www.nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk) for advice on common symptoms.

## What about emergencies?

If you have a serious injury or life-threatening emergency, dial 999 or attend the Emergency Department (A&E). If you need urgent help in the evening or at weekends, you can still contact your GP practice for out-of-hours help – you'll be asked to call another number for assessment.

## Please be patient and kind

All our health services are under enormous pressure and our staff are working hard to help you in the best way they can. We are open and here if you need us. Please support us to ensure you get the right care at the right time and by the right people. Our staff are here to help you, and don't deserve to receive abuse, so please be kind.