



TELEPHONING THE SURGERY

The surgery's Patient Participation Group recently looked at the results of this year's patient survey and noted a number of comments about difficulties getting through to the surgery. We discussed this at length and they asked us to produce this short note for patients.

Like many surgeries, we experience a high volume of telephone calls, particularly in the early morning when the surgery first opens. Patients may wish to consider the following:

- We do not like automated telephone systems where you are placed on hold, have to listen to recorded messages or are required to ring us at specific times for specific purposes. If you ring us the person answering the phone will try to resolve whatever issue you have. Patient feedback is telling us you think this too.
- We are a small surgery and we don't have the means or the space to accommodate extra staff to answer the phone. So the receptionists answer telephone queries, deal with repeat medication requests, communicate with doctors, book in patients arriving for their appointments, etc. **This is particularly demanding first thing in the morning as patients start to arrive in the surgery and the phones start ringing. So anything we can do to reduce this loading at the busiest time means we can give a better service.**
- We do appreciate **that patients with a new or urgent medical need to see a doctor that day should call the surgery first thing in the morning to make an appointment.**
- Many of our early morning calls are for routine requests such as ordering repeat medication or making appointments within a day or two. We feel many of these could wait until later in the day when the initial "rush" is over.
- **Unless you really need to ring us urgently, it would be better to avoid the 0830-0930 period.** Instead, we suggest you ring in the afternoon for lab results or non-urgent enquires
- **Online Appointments.** Remember that all of our GP appointments can be booked online which saves a telephone call. Of course if you need a same day appointment, or an early appointment with a specific doctor, it is probably better to telephone. But if you can accept any doctor, or are booking an appointment for a routine appointment some days or weeks ahead, it could save you time to book online. All you need to do is ask at reception for your online username and password.
- We suggest you use our **self check-in screen** which is directly linked to our clinical system so the doctor or nurse can see immediately that you have arrived. Reception staff are happy to book you into the surgery but you can save yourself time if you use the check-in screen and you will also release the receptionist for other tasks, particularly first thing in the morning.

Thank you.

Malcolm Smith
Practice Manager