

February 2023

UPPER TOOTING

SURGERY



Dear Reader,

An update on Appointment Booking

During the COVID pandemic we were forced to triage all requests for appointments to ensure that we kept our staff and patients safe.

This involved speaking to all those requesting an appointment.

Inevitably, telephone waiting times increased despite us recruiting more reception and administration staff to answer calls.

Online booking has been reinstated over the last year but the automated booking system had to be switched off.

We have reviewed and remodelled our appointment booking system. We have significantly increased our online slots. Appointments are released for each doctor in a gradual fashion (e.g. some 2 weeks before, some 10 days before, some 5 days before and some on the day, importantly from 7am).

We hope that patients will consider checking whether there are any suitable online slots (including on the day) before calling us to avoid waiting in the phone queue and increasing waiting times for all.

These slots are face-to-face by default but if you prefer a telephone call, please write this in the booking notes.

(We encourage all our patients to apply for online booking as it allows you to book appointments, view results and immunisations, order repeat medication and more. Please ask at reception or see our website for further details.)

Our phone lines are open from 8am until 6:30pm for appointment bookings or to speak to our team. They are closed from 6:30pm to 8am and on weekends. However, the option to cancel an existing appointment works at all times, as does online booking.

Online Consultation Tool

Another option which some patients find works well is the online consultation tool, which can also be accessed at any time. Please note: I say 'some' patients!

Many local practices are moving towards using this as the sole means of booking appointments.

Our population is diverse and we feel one size does not fit all. So, whilst it is an option, we currently have no plans to move to this system completely.

All online consults are dealt with within 48 hours. Many do not need a face-to-face appointment and are passed to the most appropriate member of our team.

Data

There is a lot of media interest in GP appointments and stories of difficulty in making GP appointments.

NHS England extracts data from all practices and has increased the reporting since October 2022.

Grafton Medical Partners sites in Tooting (i.e. Trevelyan House, Macmillan Way and Upper Tooting) offered:

- 17848 appointments in October 2022
- 18121 appointments in November 2022
- 15211 appointments in December 2022

According to the latest data, on average, 71.5% of these appointments were face-to-face.

We are reviewing our available appointments, and our teams, and offering more appointments than pre-pandemic for all team members.

The Primary Care team has expanded significantly in the last three years.

Please consider making an appointment with our First Contact Practitioner (a senior physiotherapist) for neck, back, joint problems or sports injuries. They can organise tests, x-rays and scans and can advise on treatment and refer on to secondary care. These slots can also be booked online. Their Saturday morning slots are at Trevelyan House.

Our Low Mood Service, run by an experienced in-house counsellor, continues and should be considered.

Please see our website for more information and other local resources or ask at reception to book a slot.

<https://uppertootingsurgery.nhs.uk/digitalpractice/wellbeing-centre/mental-health/>

Our pharmacist team can advise on medications, perform medication reviews, arrange monitoring blood tests and advise on minor illness. We are working on introducing a system to directly book with them, either as a telephone slot or face-to-face, using a text message link. We hope to launch this soon.

If invited for a smear or blood test, online slots are also available, so please consider booking this way.

Masks

Masks are no longer mandatory in health care setting but please consider others and wear a mask if suffering from any respiratory symptoms.

Health Checks

We are rapidly catching up with the backlog of routine work which was affected by the pandemic.

If you are called for breast screening, bowel or cervical screening, **please** engage. Screening does save lives.

All over 40s are offered an NHS Health Check every 5 years. If invited, please take up the offer. Your blood pressure, weight and bloods (including cholesterol) will be checked. As the threshold for giving statins is to prevent strokes and lower heart attacks, NHS health checks are an important way to pick up those who may benefit from these drugs.

If you are diabetic, please ensure you attend when invited for your annual bloods, blood pressure and foot check.

Diabetic eye screening services have also resumed and you should be invited by the eye screening service annually. If you have not been called, please contact them directly on 0333 456 0223.

We know many cases of high blood pressure are undetected.

We also have a machine in the waiting room where you can check your blood pressure. This reading will be coded into your notes.

Many local pharmacies are also offering BP checks (to those not known to have high blood pressure) and, if raised, they will notify us and/or also arrange a 24 hour blood pressure test for you.

In the next few months, we will be reviewing the notes of all our patients who have ever had a raised blood pressure reading recorded in their notes. For many, this is a one-off (e.g. taken when stressed) but we plan to try to recheck and review notes of all we identify. If you are contacted, please engage with us.

Prevention of illness must be the way forward.

On that note, Wandsworth sadly has one of the highest smoking rates, driving up lung disease and cancer. It is never too late to quit.

See resources on our website:

<https://uppertootingsurgery.nhs.uk/digitalpractice/wellbeing-centre/stop-smoking/>

Likewise, we know that obesity is linked to many diseases including heart disease, diabetes and cancer. Please visit our website and the Wandsworth Council website for more information about local weight management resources:

<https://uppertootingsurgery.nhs.uk/digitalpractice/wellbeing-centre/weight-management-2/>

https://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/public-health/your-health/healthy_lifestyle/

Immunisations

Please ensure your children are fully immunised.

Please book a slot with our nursing team if your child has missed any vaccines. Please do not ignore invites from our Care Co-ordinators, who can also advise you on the local immunisation schedules.

Spring Time

We anticipate a spring COVID booster campaign for the most vulnerable but as yet have no further details.



Moving forward, COVID levels are currently decreasing, however, flu and adenovirus are still circulating. We are busy, but here to help and ask patients to use all NHS resources appropriately.

To contact us, please use:

<https://uppertootingsurgery.nhs.uk/navigator/contact-the-practice/>

With best wishes,
Dr Penelope Smith

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Senior Partner

