

# The Leys Health Centre

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## Dear Patient,

Many patients have told us how frustrated they are about how long it takes to get a routine GP appointment. We are sorry about this and would like to take this opportunity to explain why you may be waiting several weeks. We do understand how difficult this can be. This article also tells you what we are doing to try and reduce waiting times.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Why do I have to wait for a routine appointment?

Demand for appointments has increased significantly over the years and it has not been possible to match this with resources. Three doctors also left the practice in late 2014. One was a planned retirement, the other two were due to unexpected family circumstances. Despite multiple rounds of recruitment, the practice is still the equivalent of a full-time GP down.

### Why are you struggling to recruit GPs?

There is a national shortage of 10,000 GPs. Many other practices in Oxford are facing recruitment difficulties:

- 3 in 10 GP training places are empty.
- Many GPs are retiring early or working part-time because of workload stress.

### What else have you tried if you can't recruit more GPs?

We have increased capacity in all other staffing areas to try and ease workload on GPs to ensure they are as available as possible for phone and surgery appointments:

- We have advertised for a pharmacist. However, after thorough investigation, we decided that this option was not going to work for our practice.
- We have changed the way we work, for example, making sure that diabetes and asthma reviews are booked with specialist nurses and not a doctor.
- We have employed a nurse administrator in order to enable nurses to increase the number of Minor Illness appointments.
- We have recruited a new member of staff to run extra blood clinics. This relieves pressure on nurse and health care assistant appointments.
- We have increased the number of bookable phone calls to make it easier to speak to your doctor.

Despite all these measures, appointment capacity is still not enough to meet demand.

### What are you planning to do next?

- We are trying to recruit another nurse to increase the number of Minor Illness appointments.
- We are continuing to advertise for another GP to join the team.
- We are looking into using other health professionals, such as a physiotherapist, to see if this would help free up more GP appointments.

### Why are you taking on new patients when I have to wait for a routine appointment?

- In fact, total patient numbers have remained the same for several years. Closing our list is an option that we can consider but it is a big step. It isn't something we want to do if we can avoid it.

### When I have an urgent problem why do I still have to wait weeks for an appointment?

- **The simple answer is that you don't.** If you feel that you have an urgent problem, please ask to be put on the Duty Doctor's list of calls. We have 'urgent' appointments available every day, which are under the doctors' control. **If it is medically urgent for you to be seen, you will be.**

### Why isn't the phone answered more quickly when I call the practice?

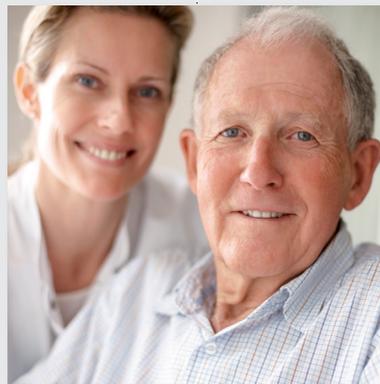
- Our receptionists always try to answer your calls as soon as possible but, unfortunately, with nearly 11,000 patients there will be times when you may have to wait for your call to be answered. Early morning and lunchtimes can be particularly busy. However, while you are waiting your call is moving up the queue. Please bear with us.
- We are seeking patient views on the phone message as part of our next survey.
- We will review cover during busy periods.

### How can I help?

- 1 in 9 (11%) of appointments are wasted by patients not attending their appointment and not letting us know in advance. **Please cancel an appointment if you no longer need it**, giving as much notice as you can.
- If you have access to the internet, using **our online appointment booking and prescription request system is quick and easy**. Please ask reception if you need an access code, or if yours is not working.
- **Please nominate a pharmacy** to receive your prescriptions electronically. This saves your time queuing at the reception desk.
- If you have a cough/cold or 'minor ailment', such as diarrhoea, **please consider speaking to your local pharmacist** (chemist) first. They can often give you good advice about medication that doesn't require a prescription and tell you when you need to see a doctor.
- **Please use the 'Minor Ailments Scheme'** if you are entitled to free prescriptions. This allows you to get medications that are available without a prescription for free (e.g. hayfever medication, paracetamol, head lice treatment etc.). Ask at reception for details.
- **Tell your MP** how much you value the services provided by GP surgeries – we need the government to continue to understand the pressures general practice is under and that more needs to be done.
- Our staff are facing significant challenges and are working as hard as they can to manage the current situation, so your patience with them is greatly appreciated.

### How can I give you feedback?

- We will be launching a patient survey by the end of June. This will focus on the current appointment system. We will tell as many of you as possible about it when it's ready. Please spare a few minutes to complete it so we can get as much feedback as possible.
- If you don't want to wait for the survey, there are other ways to feedback:
  - Friends and Family Test (comment cards) are available in reception or you may be invited to comment by text message after your appointment.
  - Join the Patient Participation Group which meets quarterly and is a forum for feedback and communication with the practice.
  - If you have specific ideas or concerns please email [leyshealthcentre@nhs.net](mailto:leyshealthcentre@nhs.net) or write to us via our Practice Manager, Susan Renn.



The Leys Health Centre doctors and staff thank you for your continued support. In particular we thank those patients who have taken the trouble to make positive or supportive comments during this ongoing time of challenge for the surgery and for the NHS as a whole.

Yours faithfully,

**Dr Louise Gardner, Dr Orlagh Bradley, Dr Mel Phillips,  
Dr Andrew Valentine, Dr Eleri Shellens, Dr Kathryn Brown,  
Dr Bridget Greer, Dr Christine Brown**