

## **Automated bookings at Green Street Clinic - Frequently asked Questions**

### **Why do you have an automated system, why can't I just talk to Reception?**

The automated system was introduced to offer an alternative to patients who find it difficult to ring first thing in the morning due to school runs or work commitments. We also wanted to be able to offer greater flexibility for patients who work and need to book appointments on their day off (hence advance bookings) and also give patients the option of cancelling appointments when we are closed which would free up more appointments available on the day.

The automated system offers on the day appointments or advance bookings for all GPs. On the day appointments become available from 5.30am but appointments for future days are available up to 3 weeks in advance. The GPs have 20 appointments in the morning (7 of these are available to advance book) and 12 appointments in the afternoon (4 of these are available to advance book). The GPs also have extra appointments added to their morning sessions for emergency patients and a Duty Doctor is available every afternoon to deal with any urgent problems that can't wait for the next routine appointment with their own GP.

### **Why can't more appointments be made available for on the day bookings?**

This is because we have to keep a balance and by making more appointments available on the day we would have to reduce the number of advance bookings. The advance bookings are convenient for patients who work and need to arrange time off of work. We regularly review demand for on the day and advance booking requests to make sure we are offering the right balance

### **Why can't you just add in more appointments for the Doctor?**

Unfortunately this is because they are also busy with lots of paperwork. They have test results and letters to read, prescriptions to sign, patients who have to be visited at home as well as other clinics that need to be run. The GPs work under intense pressure often finishing surgery at midday or later only to start a list of telephone queries straight afterwards. After this they sign prescriptions (all of which have to be checked), then it's off to do home visits and then back for afternoon surgery. Surgery and telephone calls finish between 5pm – 6pm and after that there's just the paperwork.....this is either done at the surgery after closing or from their home PC via a secure link, this can sometimes be a further 1.5 to 2 hours work.

### **Why am I sometimes offered an appointment 10 days away?**

This is probably because your GP is on annual leave or away training. In these cases you have the choice of either booking for when your GP returns or phoning when the surgery opens at 8.30 am to see someone else. There is no option to book with an alternative GP as the menu choices would become too complicated and we also have to protect other GPs appointments for their own patients. For continuity of care it is always

better to see your own Doctor and if your need is urgent you will always be offered an appointment if you ring us when we open at 8.30am.

Following Bank Holidays we know that demand will be high and so on these occasions we also reduce the number of appointments available to book using the automated system. This is both to protect the GPs and to make sure that any patients with urgent problems are seen without delay.

### **How do I book an appointment for my day off?**

One of the menu options asks if you would like an appointment on a particular day. This option was added two years ago following an earlier survey which patients suggested would be helpful. You need to enter the date of your day off and the system will only look for appointments on that day for you.

### **Why are there so many menu options?**

We started with a very simple option list but have tried to respond to patient requests in order to give you the options you have asked for. The current options are for Morning, Afternoon or Specific Day appointments. If the time offered doesn't suit you are asked if you want to go to the next appointment time.

### **When is the best time to ring for the appointment I want?**

As a rule of thumb if you need to be seen on the day the best time to ring is after 5.30am on the day you want to be seen. If your need is not urgent or you want to book for a specific day in the future (within the next 3 weeks) you are better to ring during the afternoon or evening when all of the appointments for that day have gone and you will only be offered future day appointments.

### **Why didn't the system recognise my details?**

This usually means that some of the information we hold on the system may be out of date. Have you changed your phone number recently?

We would make a plea to all patients who have not been able to successfully make an appointment using the system to let reception know. We can check your details and make sure you are able to use the system successfully next time. We appreciate it can be extremely frustrating but we want to make the system work for everyone so please spare a couple of minutes next time you are in to check your details are up to date.

### **Why won't the automated system let me book with another GP if mine is on holiday?**

As well as menu options becoming too complicated the GPs would always prefer to see their own patients for ongoing matters as this is always better for continuity of care

If a GP is away we try as much as possible to protect other GPs appointments so that they are available for their own patients should they need them. We book Locum GP's to cover absence for holidays and if your GP is on holiday we would always offer you the choice of the Locum or to wait until the return of your own GP if your need is not urgent.

GP sickness is rare but does happen – we have a small number of regular locums that we can contact at short notice to try to minimise the inconvenience for everyone. If we are unable to book a locum we have to be a little stricter about who can book appointments and in this case we would hold all appointments so that no automated bookings are possible.

In these cases you may be asked if your need is urgent or if it can wait for another day. We appreciate this is frustrating but it is the only way we can make sure that urgent problems are dealt with quickly.

### **When is my GP available?**

Drs Brennan, Gaffney, Hawkins and Koka are full time and are here everyday. Throughout the week they will all have a half day and will all take a turn of being Duty Doctor which will reduce their availability for routine appointments on a further afternoon as they will only see Emergencies.

Dr Daggett is part time and works Monday, Tuesday & Thursday, working 2 afternoons on 1 week and 1 afternoon the next. Dr Daggett also takes a turn of being Duty Doctor so we try to arrange this on a two afternoon week to offer as much availability as possible. Dr Daggett also fits intra-uterine devices (coils) on the days she is here.

Dr Penge is part time and works Monday, Wednesday and Friday and works the same pattern as Dr Daggett above. Dr Penge also takes a turn of being Duty Doctor so we try to arrange this on a two afternoon week to offer as much availability as possible.

Dr Hawkins and Dr Penge run alternate weekly diabetic clinics and Dr Penge also initiates and monitors patients on Warfarin therapy.

Once or twice a month the GPs also take a turn providing the Cryotherapy clinic for warts and verrucas.

All GPs\* start clinics on Wednesday mornings at 7.40 am and once a week two GPs are in the late clinic until 8pm on either a Tuesday or Wednesday evening, again by rota.

Dr Daggett does not currently participate in early or late clinics at the surgery.

