

# IMPORTANT PATIENT INFORMATION

**Our appointment system is changing on  
Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

## What are the changes to the appointment system and why?

In response to patient feedback about telephone waiting times and appointment availability, we are updating our existing appointment system to a Modern General Practice Access [MGPA] model. Our aim is to improve patient experience and maximise appointment capacity.

eConsult will become the **MAIN** way for patients to contact us, whether this is to request an appointment, obtain medical advice or request administrative help such as a fit note extension. It is an online system that prompts you to answer questions; the form will only take a few minutes to complete, and information will be used to prioritise and direct your care. Please try to provide as much information as possible to support this.

Housebound patients who do not have internet access can contact the reception team and complete an eConsult form over the telephone. Patients without internet access who are able to attend the surgery can collect an eConsult form at Reception.

eConsult is available from the practice website <http://www.nortonmedicalcentre.nhs.uk/appointments.html> on the front page. You do not need to register to use this service, it is available to all patients, just click on the GET STARTED button and follow the instructions.

## When is eConsult available?

From **Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023** eConsult will be available Monday to Friday from 8am up to 4pm, or until maximum safe capacity is reached; if we receive an extremely high volume of eConsult requests before 4pm we may switch this off earlier, but it will be available again from 8am the next working day.

## How will eConsult improve my experience of contacting the GP surgery?

Many patients already use eConsult regularly and feedback has been positive. As all patients with internet access will be asked to use eConsult to contact the Surgery, there will be no need to wait in a telephone call queue; this should in turn improve experience of contacting the Surgery for those who rely on telephone contact, such as housebound patients.

Regardless of how you contact the Surgery, your request will be dealt with in the same way. eConsult requests are reviewed by a **GP** who will triage your request and advise the admin team the most suitable outcome, which enables us to maximise appointment capacity by utilising the multidisciplinary team and reducing avoidable appointments.

You can be reassured that your request is being reviewed by a medical professional and will be dealt with appropriately.

## How will my request be dealt with?

We will aim to review eConsult requests for medical advice by the end of the next working day or sooner; this response may be:

- A telephone or face to face appointment, either same-day or future-booked as needed
  - o Should face-to-face consultation be required a member of the reception team will contact you to arrange an appropriate day and time based on the GP decision. Where requested, we will try to arrange with the GP of your choice.
- If your problem does not require a consultation, we may send a reply by email or text message which will provide further information and advice/or treatment recommendations.
- We may refer you directly to hospital for further investigations of your symptoms.
- We may advise you to contact another healthcare professional or service outside of the surgery, as they may be best placed to offer the advice or support needed. This could include a local pharmacy for minor illness.
- We may offer advice on how you can look after yourself.

## Can I see the clinician of my choice?

If you want to see or speak to a particular clinician, please include this in your request and we will do our best to ensure continuity of care is achieved.

## What do we hope to achieve by changing the appointment system?

- Provide a fair and equal service to all patients.
- Ensure consultations are booked in the correct timescales based on clinical need.
- Improve access for all patients and reduce wait times on the telephone.
- Provide care to patients who have a medical problem which needs to be reviewed the same day.
- Facilitate 'continuity of care' by having sufficient appointments available to allow patients to be booked in advance with the clinician of their choice where appropriate and available.
- Manage demand and improve efficiency.
- Reduce the number of patients who fail to attend appointments.

## What if you are unable to use the eConsult service?

For those of you who are **unable** to use eConsult, our reception team will be available to complete an eConsult health questionnaire with you over the telephone. Please telephone the surgery on the usual telephone number (01642 745350).

If you attend the surgery in person, one of our reception team will provide a paper version of the eConsult health questionnaire for you to complete and submit.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information and for your support in helping us to create a new appointment system, designed to improve access to healthcare and your overall experience.

Best wishes, Norton Medical Centre