

## Top Tips for Patients

We all know that the NHS is under a lot of pressure right now and it is taking longer to get an appointment. There is a national shortage of GP's, and with a minimum 10 years training, this situation is not going to get better soon, so we all need to get the most from our appointment.

**Ask yourself:** How important is it that I'm seen quickly, or would I be better waiting for an appointment with a particular doctor? If you have a long-term condition, you'll probably benefit from a doctor who knows you. Do I really need to see the GP or could the nurse or pharmacist help me?

**Don't be put off by a GP or nurse who runs late:** they will be spending needed time with patients. One day, you may appreciate them running late for you.

**It's tempting to bring a list of unrelated problems:** but consider what's achievable in 10 minutes. 4 problems in 10 minutes – that's 150 seconds each. It's often better to come back again and spend more time on a problem rather than squeeze as many as you can into one ten-minute appointment.

**Before you see the doctor:** work out in your own mind what you're worried about, and highlight any particular concerns. Consider preparing short notes, including how you would describe your symptoms.

**Get to the point:** don't beat about the bush and don't keep important issues until the end.

**Wear accessible clothing:** if you're likely to need to undress for examination

**Make sure you understand what happens next:** If you are not sure, ask to go through the plan again.

**Home visits:** are reserved for terminal and truly bed-bound patients only. Using it for your convenience is an abuse of the NHS and deprives other patients of scarce resources. Residential homes are expected to provide transport for their residents.

**When booking:** if you can, give the receptionist an idea or just headline of what the consultation is about. It could help the doctor prepare for the appointment.

**Use the phone:** simple queries can often be sorted on a telephone consultation. They're usually at the beginning of a morning or afternoon surgery and you just phone in at the appointment time. It could save you a trip.

**Have your say and get your views heard:** join our Patient Participation Group.