

APPOINTMENTS WITH YOUR DOCTOR

Grange Road is a comparatively small practice, with only one full-time and two part-time Doctors, so we don't enjoy the flexibility available to practices with three or four full time GPs. Most of the time this isn't a problem; with a bit of forethought and organisation we can offer all of the services you might expect from a much larger practice. One area in which problems can arise is in the arranging of appointments; we can't offer you an appointment unless a Doctor is available to see you! We have therefore put together a system which helps us to make the best possible use of the resources we have.

Our system allows patients to book appointments up to 13 weeks in advance, or to book on the day the appointment is required. You can make bookings in person or by telephone, and we also offer a facility for on-line booking of a limited number of available appointments – but because we are a fairly small practice, this flexibility can only be offered if we stick to a few simple rules.

Two in every five available appointments (40%) can be pre-booked. They become available three months (13 weeks) in advance, and are generally for appointment slots in the early morning and early afternoon. The exact number of pre-bookable appointments on a given day depends entirely upon the availability of doctors. Once the available slots have been filled, no further pre-bookings can be taken for that day unless, exceptionally, one of our doctors decides that the matter is urgent.

The rest of the appointments are made available from 8.00am on the day; they can be booked in person or by telephone, but sometimes every available appointment is taken very quickly. We appreciate that the system isn't perfect, but it offers the greatest flexibility we can achieve within the limits of our resources. As explained, the total number of appointments is limited, and it may not be possible to accept all appointments requested on a given day, but we will assess all **urgent** requests even after all appointments have been booked.

Whether booking an appointment in advance or on the day, remember that if your regular doctor is not available, you can choose to see one of the other doctors in the practice.

Please help to keep the system working effectively by keeping to these simple rules -

If you make an appointment, keep it! If you decide you no longer need it, or are unable to attend at the time arranged, please contact Reception as soon as you can, so that the appointment can be offered to someone else.

Appointments should be used only for clinical matters. If you need non-clinical help – such as a letter, or to sort out problems with health transport – please contact Reception and one of the team will deal with the matter for you.

Please be punctual. The slot for a GP appointment allows up to 12 minutes, and the GPs do try to keep to schedule. If they are running late, we'll do our best to keep you informed. If you arrive late, you may be asked to wait until the end of surgery or, in some circumstances, to make another booking.

If we all work together, we'll be able to deliver the best possible service for every one of our 3506 patients!

CAR PARK

If you are attending the surgery please feel free to use our car park facility at any time. You may however find that the car park is especially busy on Wednesday afternoons because of the Warfarin Clinic held in the building next door to our surgery. If you can't avoid parking at the roadside, please be careful to avoid obstructing access to neighbouring properties.

RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

If you are suffering from Rheumatoid Arthritis, you can find a lot of useful information on the website of the National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society. Just go to - <http://www.nras.org.uk/> and either browse the whole site, or select the button marked 'Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA)' to go straight to the main information page.

SURGERY UPDATES

The surgery will be closed all day on the following dates:

Friday 29 March (Good Friday)

Monday 3 April (Easter Monday)

Monday 6 May (May Day Holiday)

Monday 27 May (Spring Bank Holiday)

and will be closed for staff training from 12.30.pm. on the following dates:

Thursday 14 March

Tuesday 14 May

Wednesday 12 June

In an emergency please contact the Out of Hours Service on **111** (note the new number) or, if necessary, call 999.

DEALING WITH SPRAINS

Where bones meet at a joint, they are held in place by ligaments – strong, broad bands of tissue around the joint. A sprain occurs when one or more of these ligaments is stretched, twisted or torn; this is normally the result of excessive force on the joint caused by a fall or similar unexpected movement. Ankles, knees, wrists and thumbs are especially susceptible. A sprained joint becomes painful, swollen and inflamed and can't be moved freely.

Most sprains are self-healing, so the best approach is to treat the symptoms. Start by covering the joint with a cold compress – containing ice, if possible – and keep it in place for 15 to 30 minutes. This should help to reduce the swelling. After removing the compress, bind the joint fairly firmly with a crepe bandage and rest it – raised a little if possible – until all discomfort has subsided. Ease the pain with paracetamol or ibuprofen; always consult the pack for the appropriate dosage and check for possible contraindications – circumstances in which these drugs should be avoided.

Trying to use the joint too quickly may cause even more damage, but it helps to move it gently while resting. If the injury is not getting better or is becoming even more painful, or if you think you may have fractured a bone, visit Blaydon Minor Injuries Unit.

CHILDREN'S ASTHMA REVIEWS

Asthma is a variable, but long-term condition affecting the bronchial passages carrying air to and from the lungs. It's difficult to diagnose in young children because the symptoms tend to come and go. Signs to watch out for include –

- ❖ Wheezing and coughing first thing in the morning,
- ❖ Waking at night due to wheezing or coughing, or
- ❖ If asthma has already been diagnosed, the reliever inhaler isn't relieving symptoms after use.

If your child is diagnosed as asthmatic, attending for **regular** asthma reviews will help to control the symptoms and to ensure that they receive the correct and appropriate medication. If you're unsure how often your child should be reviewed, check with the Practice Nurse.

KEEP YOUR MEDICINES SAFE

Keep **ALL** medicines and chemicals well out of reach and out of sight of young children - you could use a high cupboard or a cupboard fitted with a child resistant catch, or a lockable medicine cabinet – but don't forget to keep it locked! In particular, **don't keep them in the fridge** - 'Keep Cool' usually means 'keep away from warm places near radiators or in direct sunlight'. If a medicine does need to be kept in the fridge it will tell you on the label. If so, keep it high up and as well hidden as possible. Stick to these simple rules:

- ❖ Look for bottles with child resistant caps when you buy medicines. Keep caps on bottles and put medicines away immediately after use.
- ❖ Keep all medicines in their original containers.
- ❖ Remember that tablets that are brightly coloured or in packs are especially tempting to children.
- ❖ Don't count out your tablets for the day and then leave them lying around.
- ❖ Don't take your medicine when children are around, so they don't try to copy you.
- ❖ Teach children about the safe use of medicines and **never** pretend they are sweets.
- ❖ Take left over medicines to your local chemist for them to be disposed of safely.
- ❖ Be especially careful when taking children to visit relatives or friends - they may not follow your safety rules.
- ❖ Even if no children live in your house, follow these rules if children sometimes visit you.

X-RAYS AT BLAYDON

The X-Ray facility at Blaydon Minor Injuries Unit is not available 'on demand'. If you visit the Unit immediately after suffering an injury, you may be offered an X-ray if this is considered necessary. Apart from that situation, if you think you need an X-ray you should in the first instance consult your GP, who will refer you if appropriate. You can at that time ask to have the X-Ray procedure carried out at Blaydon if you wish.

GRANGE ROAD HEALTH TIP No. 12

Dry skin is a common condition and is often worse during the winter when the environmental humidity is low. If you're a sufferer, it's essential to use a moisturiser during the winter months. Contrary to popular belief moisturising creams and lotions aren't absorbed by the skin. Instead, they act as a sealant to stop the skin's natural moisture from evaporating away, so the best time to apply moisturiser is after a bath or shower while your skin is still moist, with another application at bedtime. Warm baths are better than hot showers, because water that is too hot makes the skin feel drier and more itchy.