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**Ellon Group Practice Spring/Summer 2024 Update**



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| **Useful Telephone Numbers**  **Ellon Group Practice**  0345 337 1150 – Monday - Friday  Option 1 – Emergency Line (8-6)  Option2 – Appointments (8.30-6)  Option 3 – Results/Enquiries (11-5)  Option 4 – Repeat Prescriptions (11-5)  **NHS 24 Out of Hours – 111 (after 6pm weekdays & all weekend)** |

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| Dear all,  We recognise the changes in accessing your local GP services has changed significantly from a few short years ago. We hope this update explains the current situation & how these changes have affected Ellon Group Practice.  Primary Care Services are under immense pressure throughout the UK but this is particularly problematic in Aberdeenshire. There has been an increasing reduction in the number of GPs & GP practices over recent years. This means that whilst patients are living longer, local towns are expanding, families are growing etc, there are in reality fewer GPs to look after everyone’s needs at a time when services are underfunded & stretched to capacity on a daily basis.  The number of patient contacts per GP per day in Ellon regularly exceeds the BMA Guidance on Safe Workload recommendations. We are sure most patients can therefore understand that when appointment demand frequently outstrips appointment capacity, triaging all requests for consultations remains the only safe way for clinicians to ensure that they are able to help the patients who are in the most clinical need. The Right Time, Right Care, Right Place strategy by NHS Scotland is to encourage the use of triage & signposting, to counter the myth that everything needs to be seen by a GP. This is why specialist services such as Community Pharmacy, Dentists, Opticians & Physiotherapists are recommended for concerns which fall under their area of expertise.  Changes resulting from the 2018 GP contract introduced by the Scottish Government has seen the practice Phlebotomy service being outsourced to NHS Grampian CTAC service (Community & Treatment Care). The CTAC Team are based in the practice so familiarity remains for patients & they work alongside our own Practice Nurse team. Unfortunately due to Health Board budget pressures, the CTAC service is not at the staffing level required for almost 16000 patients & this is outwith our control.  We are continuing to participate in Grampian-wide work on seeking to address the challenges facing General Practice. As a teaching & training practice, we are encouraging medical students & young doctors to become the GPs of the future. |
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**Most Frequently Asked Questions by patients:**

**Q. Why can’t I book an appointment in advance or make my own face to face appointment?**

**A. All appointment requests are by telephone triage initially. This is necessary as appointment demand frequently outstrips appointment capacity, meaning patients who need to be assessed & seen are arranged by the clinicians themselves following a telephone consultation. We do have some pre - bookable telephone appointments for the following working day which are released once our capacity for routine calls that day has been reached. We also have named GP telephone call appointments bookable up to 2 weeks in advance for continuity of care for pts with ongoing conditions.**

**We appreciate this is a change from when patients could call & request a GP for any issue. GP Practices are now comprised of a Multi-Disciplinary Team of clinicians, ensuring patients receive advice/care from the most appropriate healthcare professional for their clinical need at the time, unlike in the past when GPs were the main contact for all health concerns.**

**We appreciate there is no appointment system which will suit all of the varying needs of our practice population & continue to review this as staffing allows.**

**Q. Why is it difficult to get through on the telephone?**

**At 08.30am, we have 4 telephone lines available for incoming calls .When the telephone message states that it has not been possible to take your call, it means that the queue limit has been reached for the incoming lines at that time but as each call ends another will join the queue. The automated message replaces what was previously an engaged tone. We encourage our staff on the telephone lines to answer each call as courteously & efficiently as possible but understandably some calls take longer than others. The lines are busiest at 8.30am, however our telephone system shows that call volumes reduce significantly from 9am onwards.**

**Staffing Changes**

We have successfully recruited a part time salaried GP, Dr Turner in the wake of Dr Brown’s retirement. In addition, a new part-time Practice Pharmacist & a Practice Healthcare Support Worker have recently joined the team.

We are currently shortlisting for a Practice Nurse post as well Admin vacancies.

**Repeat Prescriptions -** may be requested in the following ways:

* **Online** - Register for repeat online prescriptions. Please complete a registration form found on the Practice Website under Prescriptions tab. The completed form can be handed into reception or emailed to: [**gram.ellonadministrator@nhs.scot**](mailto:gram.ellonadministrator@nhs.scot). You will then be sent login details to use this service.
* **In person** – Complete re-order form from your prescription & place in locked prescription box in reception area.
* **By telephone** - on 0345 **337 1150**, Option 4 between 11.00 and 17:00 Monday to Friday.
* **Chemist**- Drop off your repeat slip and the chemist will deliver it to the Health Centre reception.

The practice has 72 working hours to process your prescription request. Prescriptions can be collected from Reception or can be sent to either of the two local chemists in Ellon or the Balmedie chemist.