**Questions and Answers about our New Appointment System**

**This new system only applies to appointments with a doctor. Appointments with one of our Nurses or Health Care Assistants will continue to be booked as normal.**

**Why are we changing our appointment system?**

Many of you have said you are happy with our current system and that you don’t have any problems with it so why are we changing? However, not all patients would agree otherwise our patient survey results would show a much higher than average satisfaction level. Currently patients book an appointment until we have no more appointments available to book on the day and are then either offered an appointment on another day or to speak with a doctor if they feel they need to be seen that day. In this way we try and ensure that patients are not just told that they can’t have an appointment. However it does mean that these patients then have to be assessed and fitted in as extra’s to the doctors list. The incidence of this happening has been steadily increasing to the point where the doctors are overwhelmed with the number of patient contacts each day. There have been occasions where this workload has started to feel unsafe. We absolutely do not want a situation where patients are receiving a less satisfactory experience when seeing or speaking to their doctor because the doctors are under too much pressure. Employing more doctors is, unfortunately not a financially viable option and so we have to look at how we work and see if we can find a more efficient way of managing our workload whilst ensuring that our patients continue to get as good a service, if not better, from the practice.

**Why move to a Doctor Triage System?**

This is a system which is used in GP surgeries around the country and works very well, for more information you can look at [www.**patient**-**access**.org.uk/](http://www.patient-access.org.uk/) . We have visited a couple of practices locally who use this system, one of which has been using it for many years and finds that it is very well accepted by their patients. We believe it offers sufficient flexibility to meet the needs of our patients, whilst allowing us to manage our workload more efficiently and effectively.

**How will it work?**

If you ring to make an appointment with a doctor you will be put onto a list for the doctor to call back (unless it is possible to put you straight through). You won’t need to ring at 8:30 to be sure of getting an appointment that day as the system will operate all day long. You can ask for the doctor to call back around a particular time if you will not be able to take a call immediately. The doctor will call you back as soon as possible (or as close to the time requested), we aim for this to be within an hour but expect it to be much sooner than this. The doctor will then have a brief discussion with you about your reason for needing an appointment and will book an appointment for you that day if appropriate.

**Will this stop me from seeing my doctor?**

That is absolutely not the objective and the decision as to whether patients need an appointment will be made between the patient and the doctor. However, some patients may be very happy not to have to come in to the surgery and to be able to just discuss their problem and get advice or treatment over the telephone. Sometimes in speaking to the doctor first may result in fewer visits to the practice as the doctor may decide from speaking to you that it would be helpful to have blood tests first and then see the doctor with the results. It will also allow the doctor to assess and book a longer time for your appointment when needed. This will reduce patients waiting time as surgeries are more likely to run on time.

**Will I be able to see the doctor of my choice?**

The triage doctor will book you an appointment with the doctor of your choice. This may not be on the same day if your preferred doctor is not working that day.

**What if I need to plan my doctor’s appointment?**

We recognise that some people will need to plan their appointment because they work, or need to arrange transport or childcare for example. If you ring and speak to the doctor the day before you will be given an appointment for the following day at a time convenient to you.

**What if I can’t hang around all day waiting for the doctor to call me back?**

You can ask for a call back at a time when you will be able to take the call. We aim to call back within an hour and hopefully much sooner than this. Sometimes you may be put straight through to the doctor.

**Will we still have a Late Evening Surgery**

Yes we will still have a late evening doctors surgery and nurses surgery one evening a week on a Monday, Tuesday or Thursday. You can ring and speak to the triage doctor who will be able to book you a doctor’s appointment in a late surgery. Reception will still be able to book a late evening nurse appointment for you.

**Will I still be able to book an appointment online?**

You will still be able to book a nurses appointment online and will be able to book a triage appointment, for the doctor to call you at a convenient time. The triage appointments will be available to book from the day before so that you can book your telephone call in advance.

**If you have concerns please do let us know about these so that we can reassure you or find a solution.**