

DUTY DOCTOR AND TELEPHONE TRIAGE

If a patient contacts Blackthorn Health Centre for an urgent medical problem that they feel has should be dealt with on the day they will be placed into a telephone triage system where the Duty Doctor team will telephone the patient and organise appropriate management.

Telephone triage is a means by which medical teams can assess patients over the telephone to determine the urgency of their problem and allow for appropriate onward management. Clearly, if somebody is acutely unwell they will be seen as quickly as possible. Some problems may be determined to be more of a routine nature and the patient can then be booked into a routine surgery slot. Triage has been in existence for many years and has been used with great success throughout the medical community in all urgent care situations (including Accident & Emergency).

We have implemented this system to allow us to manage the demand for urgent care and allow for patients to be seen appropriately and in a timely fashion. Indeed, many medical problems do not require a face to face consultation and can be dealt with over the phone, often with some simple advice.

When a patient telephones reception and states that they would like an urgent assessment the receptionist will take a telephone number and some brief details regarding the condition. The doctor will then telephone the patient back at the next available opportunity (this may well be immediately but depending on the number of calls and patients to be seen it could take some time). A patient can then be assessed on the telephone and appropriate management can be initiated.

Appropriate management includes:

Telephone advice – this is by far the most common outcome as most conditions are self limiting (i.e. they get better on their own) and some simple advice is all that is required.

A prescription may be issued – there are some conditions where it is quite clear that some medication may be required without necessarily seeing the patient and this can be arranged over the telephone. The prescription can be left at the reception desk.

The patient may be offered a routine appointment – if the problem turns out to be a long standing or routine issue or something that can wait until a more appropriate appointment can be given, an appointment can be made by the Duty Doctor; this is often the case for long term conditions and actually affords the patient more time in the consultation and allows for appropriate management of these conditions.

Dr Goodison & Partners

The patient may be offered an urgent appointment on that day for assessment. If the condition is such that requires a medical assessment on the day then the patient will be asked to come in and be seen by the Duty Doctor.

The Duty Doctor surgery times are as follows:

The Duty Doctor is in surgery between 8am-11.30am to receive calls and to see patients. After this time the Duty Doctor is dealing with home visits and any requests for Duty Doctor assessment will be put on the afternoon list unless there is a medical emergency which will be assessed straight away by the Duty Doctor.

In the afternoon the Duty Doctor will start making phone calls and seeing patients from approximately 2.30pm until the close of surgery at 6.30pm.

Please note that we do not operate a walk-in service. Unfortunately we are unable to provide the facilities to operate a walk-in service for patients. We are always happy to assess patients on the telephone and put them into an appropriate appointment slot.

For life threatening emergencies it is appropriate for patients to dial 999 and ask for the ambulance service.

A useful alternative resource for patients with simple conditions are the local pharmacies where there is a Pharmacist on hand to offer advice on most self limiting conditions including the issuing of over the counter medication.

We are not allowed to treat any dental condition and ask patients to contact their own dentist for any problems with their teeth or gums. If they do not have a regular NHS dentist, they can contact [NHS 111](#) who can give them details of emergency dental services in our area.

An additional on-line resource is the website www.patient.co.uk This is an excellent website full of up to date information regarding minor and long term conditions and self management.

Our aim with telephone triage is to ensure that our large population of patients has access to urgent assessment as quickly as possible and then onward appropriate management. We remain committed to providing the best quality care to our patients and we believe that this system currently helps us to achieve that.

