



**Children's  
Health Scotland**

# THE GP SERVICE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

## #myhealthmyrights

As more and more care is provided closer to home in the community, the General Practitioner (GP) is often the first point of contact when you or a child in your care is unwell. This guide will answer some of the questions you may have and is designed to be used with any information you receive from your local GP.



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# THE GENERAL PRACTITIONER (GP) SERVICE

## What can I expect?

Your GP and the staff at the practice are members of a primary health care team which includes a health visitor, practice nurse and other health professionals. Your GP's practice provides a range of health services for you and your child such as:

- immunisations
- health advice
- examinations and treatment
- prescriptions for medicines
- referrals to hospital care and other health services



## How do I register a child with a GP?

If you do not have a GP, find your nearest GP practice, and ask to be registered with them. You can find your local practice from:

- Your local NHS website
- NHS inform [www.nhs24.scot](http://www.nhs24.scot) or by calling **0800 22 44 88**
- Your local library or Citizens Advice Bureau [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)



# THE GENERAL PRACTITIONER (GP) SERVICE

## How do I register a child with a GP?

If you already have a GP, you can register your child with them, or they can register with their own GP if they prefer. The practice you choose will ask you to complete an application form and they may ask you for proof of identity with a photo and address. If you can't do this, talk to the receptionist or ask to speak to the practice manager.

A GP practice can refuse to register you if you live too far away or if their list is full for example. If they refuse to register you, they must write to you with the reason why. You may have to ask them to do so.



Did you know you can get an interpreter or information in a different format (like Easy Read, audio or sign language) to ensure you can speak to a GP, use a health service or get the health information you need? Staff at the GP practice will arrange this for you.

# THE GENERAL PRACTITIONER (GP) SERVICE

## What should I look for in a GP?

All practices have information about the services they provide and the qualifications of their staff. You can also ask to meet the GP before you register.

Here are some questions to help decide which GP practice is best for you:

- Is the practice easy to get to?
- Is it open at times that suit you?
- Do you want a male or female GP?
- What services does the practice provide?
- Is there a GP who speaks your language?
- Can you speak to the GP by phone if you are unable to get to the practice?
- Is the waiting area child-friendly with books and toys?
- Do the GPs have child health qualifications, an interest in child health or hold children's clinics?
- Are staff friendly, helpful, and welcoming?



# THE GENERAL PRACTITIONER (GP) SERVICE

## Can I change my GP?

Yes, at any time. Go to another practice and ask to become a patient there. You do not have to give a reason to the new practice or to the one you are leaving.

## Can a GP remove patients from their practice?

Yes, under certain circumstances. This can happen at any time, and they don't have to give a reason, although this is very rare.

If you have a problem with your practice, speak to your GP or the Practice Manager. Many problems arise from poor communication and can be resolved easily.



## How can I get an immediate appointment for a child?

When you make the appointment, tell the receptionist it is for a child. If you are worried about the child, ask to be seen as soon as possible. Some receptionists may ask for information about the child's symptoms. You do not need to discuss personal matters with them, but it can help.

# SEEING THE GP IN THE PRACTICE

## How can I make best use of our consultation time?

Appointment slots are usually 10 minutes long. If you think you need more time to talk about the child's health, ask for a double appointment. This may save you coming back.

Quick tips for a satisfactory visit:

- Write down the questions you want to ask your GP before your appointment.
- Take a friend or partner with you if you need support.
- Take the child's Personal Child Health Record also called the Red Book with you. Ask for it to be filled in.
- Make sure an interpreter is available for your visit, if you need one. Practice staff can arrange this free service for you. Remember to let them know when you make your appointment.





# SEEING THE GP IN THE PRACTICE

## How can I make best use of our consultation time?

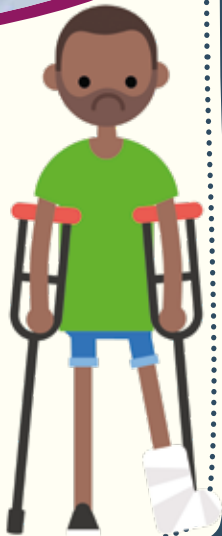
- Ask for information in the way you can understand it. Ask if you do not understand.
- Take notes of instructions, how and when to take medicines, any staff names and contact details. Always ask for an explanation of anything you do not understand. If you need help to write this down, tell the GP.
- Ask for written information on the child's health concern, and details of local self-help groups.
- Ask for another appointment if you have more questions to ask.



## Can I refuse suggested treatment for a child if I think it is unnecessary?

Yes, there are often different ways to treat a condition and your GP should explain the choices that are available.

When your GP recommends treatment or prescribes medicine, you can ask for more information and time to think about it. You do not have to decide this immediately.



# SEEING THE GP IN THE PRACTICE

Discuss the recommendations with the child, family and/or social worker. Even young children have views about treatment, and you should ask them what they think. Both you and your child have a right to decide about treatment and medicines.

Useful questions to ask:

- What is each medicine (or treatment) for?
- How is it taken?
- How long should the child take it for (or how long will the treatment last)?
- What are the side effects; what signs should I look out for?
- When is the child likely to feel better?
- What other options are available?

## Can I ask the GP to refer my child to a specialist?

You must have a letter of referral from a GP to see a specialist, and it is up to your GP to decide if this is necessary. If your GP won't provide one, you can ask for a second medical opinion.

## Can I choose which specialist I want my child to see?

Your GP will normally refer a child to the nearest hospital that specialises in their condition. You can ask to be referred to another specialist, but you cannot ask for a particular specialist, although you can give a preference.



# GETTING GP SUPPORT OUTSIDE OF THE PRACTICE

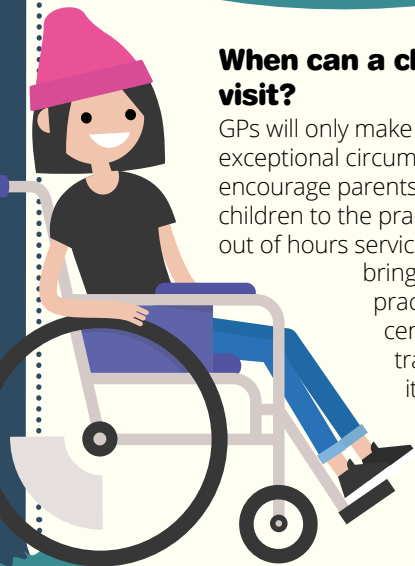
## Can I get advice over the phone?

Most GPs are happy to do so. Ask the receptionist if there is a time when patients can ring and talk to the doctor. Your GP or nurse will usually call back if they are unavailable when you phone. Your health visitor can also help you; ask the practice for their contact details.



## When can a child get a home visit?

GPs will only make home visits in exceptional circumstances. Most practices encourage parents and carers to bring children to the practice if possible. Most out of hours services will insist that you bring your child to the practice or out of hours centre and will provide transport if you need it. It is much better to see patients in the practice where there is appropriate equipment and back up.



# GETTING GP SUPPORT OUTSIDE OF THE PRACTICE

## What do I do when a GP practice is closed?

(This is known as the out of hours arrangements).

Each practice should have an answering machine message telling you what to do when the practice is closed.

Call NHS 24 on **111** or go to the website **www.nhs24.scot** for advice and information.

For simple childhood illnesses and conditions local pharmacists will also provide advice and treatment.



## How do I cope in an emergency?

It's a good idea for all parents and carers to know how to recognise and deal with children's minor illnesses and injuries. Ask your GP or health visitor for more information. They may give you a leaflet or a website to visit.

For major injuries and illnesses, call NHS 24 on **111**.

You will be asked about the child's symptoms and how long they have been ill. You will be given advice and told what to do.

If your child needs immediate medical attention go to the hospital's Accident and Emergency Department.

In life threatening circumstances call **999**.

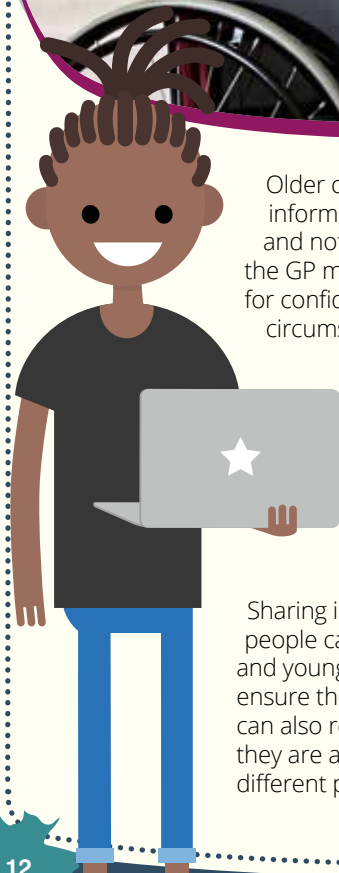
# GPs AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Parents usually bring younger children to the practice and information is routinely shared with parents.



Older children may ask for their information to be kept confidential and not shared with their parent; the GP must respect their wish for confidentiality. In exceptional circumstances confidentiality is broken if it is in the child's best interests to do so. However, in such cases the GP will explain to the child why it is important to share their information with other professionals.

Sharing information with the right people can help to protect children and young people from harm and ensure they get the help they need. It can also reduce the number of times they are asked the same questions by different professionals.



# ACCESS TO MEDICAL RECORDS

## Can I see what is written in a child's GP records?

Yes, you can ask to see a child's GP records if the child has agreed to this or if they are too young or otherwise unable to give consent. Older children can ask to see their own records and can refuse access to a parent or carer.



Children with capacity have the legal right to access their own health records and can allow or prevent access by others, including their parents or carers. In Scotland, anyone aged 12 or over is legally presumed to have capacity. A child might of course achieve capacity earlier or later. In any case a GP will let a child access their own health records unless they consider it would be harmful to them and not in their best interests.

Parents should be allowed access to their child's medical records if the child or young person consents, or lacks capacity, and it does not go against the child's best interests. If the records contain information given by the child or young person in confidence, the GP should not normally disclose the information without their consent.



# ACCESS TO MEDICAL RECORDS

## Can I see what is written in a child's GP records?

Divorce or separation does not affect parental responsibility and both parents should be allowed reasonable access to their child's health records.

If you want to view or copy the health records there may be a charge.

Find out more at: [www.nhsinform.scot](http://www.nhsinform.scot)



## If I am not the child's birth parent, can I access the child's records?

You need to be the child's registered parent, guardian or have parental rights and responsibilities to access their records.

If the child is in care with you, you may also be able to access their records under certain sections of the Children in Scotland Act, 1995. You should take advice about this (see Helpful organisations/information listed).

# ACCESS TO MEDICAL RECORDS

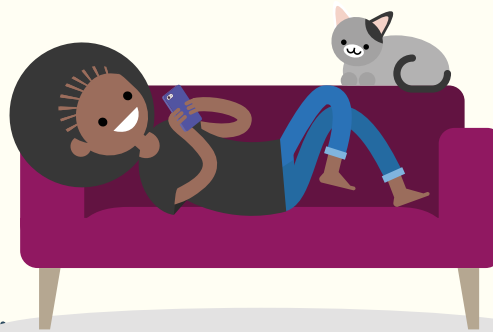
## Will I be told if a child visits the GP on their own?

No. Children under the age of 16 have the right to the same degree of confidentiality as anyone else, although staff will usually encourage children under 16 to tell their parent or carer. However, GPs can break a child's confidentiality if they believe this to be in the child's best interests. Everyone working at your practice must keep patient information confidential, this includes seeing your child at the practice.



## Giving consent or refusing treatment

Under 16s may consent to their own medical treatment if the GP believes they understand why it is needed, and what impact the treatment will have. Equally, they have a right to refuse treatment if the GP is confident they understand the impact of this decision on their health.





# CHILDREN'S HEALTH SCOTLAND

We are the only charity in Scotland dedicated to informing, promoting, and campaigning on behalf of the healthcare needs and rights of all children and young people. We provide a range of services, expertise, information, and leaflets focused on the health and wellbeing of children and young people, and their families.

As a well-established charity we are very proud of the services we provide. However, we never forget that our achievements are only possible thanks to the generosity of trusts, supporters, and volunteers. This help is always necessary to help fund our work, so that every child and young person can exercise their right to the best possible health. If you would like to help fund our work, then please go online and make a donation at **[www.childrenshealthscotland.org](http://www.childrenshealthscotland.org)**. If you would like to get involved with our fundraising efforts please email **[fundraising@childrenshealthscotland.org](mailto:fundraising@childrenshealthscotland.org)**.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

For more specific information about the GP service and helpful organisations visit our website **[www.childrenshealthscotland.org](http://www.childrenshealthscotland.org)**, or give us a call on **0131 553 6553**.



 0131 553 6553

 [www.childrenshealthscotland.org](http://www.childrenshealthscotland.org)

 [enquiries@childrenshealthscotland.org](mailto:enquiries@childrenshealthscotland.org)



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