

The GP Service for Children and Young People



Helping sick children and young people meet their healthcare needs,
in partnership with parents, carers and professionals

Action for Sick Children (Scotland) (ASC(S)) is the only Scottish charity which promotes the needs of all sick children and young people in our healthcare system. We work for improved standards and quality of care for children and young people when they are ill in hospital, at home or in the community. We aim to represent their needs and those of their families and ensure that their voices influence health policy, planning and practice. We do this in partnership with parents, carers, professionals and children and young people themselves.

As more and more care is provided closer to home in the community, the GP is often the first point of contact when you or a child in your care is unwell. When the child is affected by a long term condition or rare disorder you may have more visits to your GP who can often act as a central contact point to help co-ordinate the other services involved.

ASC(S) is member of the European Association for Children in Hospital (EACH) which has produced the EACH charter. This sets out 10 standards for children and young people's healthcare at times of illness. NHS Health Boards are in the process of working towards these standards.

The General Practitioner (GP) Service

What can I expect?

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

- ▶ immunisations
- ▶ arranging hospital consultations
- ▶ advice on health problems
- ▶ examinations and treatment
- ▶ prescriptions for medicines
- ▶ referrals to other health services



How do I register a child with a GP?

Most people prefer to register their child with their own GP or within the same practice. The practice you choose will tell you what form you need to complete. You may also be asked for proof of identity with a photo and address.

A GP practice can only refuse to register you if you live too far away or if their list is full. If the practice refuses they must have reasonable grounds for doing so and tell you why in writing. You may have to ask for the reasons in writing.

If you do not have a GP or are unable to register with your chosen practice, you can ask at the surgery where you can find a GP. You can also get a list of local GPs in your nearest public library, from your local health board, or Citizens Advice Bureau or visit the Scotland's Health on the Web (SHOW) website: www.show.scot.nhs.uk

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 consider when looking for a GP:

- ▶ Can you get to the surgery easily?
- ▶ Are their surgery times convenient?
- ▶ 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 over the phone and get advice?
- ▶ Is the waiting area child-friendly with books and toys?
- ▶ Does any GP have qualifications for child health, a paediatric interest or hold children's clinics?
- ▶ Are staff helpful in answering your questions?



Can I change my GP?

Yes, at any time by taking your medical card along to another practice and asking to become a patient there. You don't have to give a reason to the new practice or your old GP. Under certain circumstances, GPs can also remove a patient from their practice list at any time without giving a reason, although this is very rare.

If you have a problem with your practice, it is often worth discussing it with your GP or the Practice Manager, as many problems arise from poor communication and may be resolved easily.

How can I get an immediate appointment for a child?

When you make the appointment, make sure the receptionist knows it is for a child. If you feel the child needs to be seen sooner than the appointment offered, tell the receptionist. Some receptionists may ask for details and whilst you don't have to discuss personal matters with them, it can help.

Seeing the GP in the surgery

How can I make best use of our consultation time?

Appointment slots are usually for 10 minutes, so it may help to ask for a double appointment if there are many problems to address or if you have a lot of questions. This will save you coming back again for another appointment.

Quick tips for a satisfactory visit:

- ▶ Write your questions down and bring them with you
- ▶ Take notes of any instructions, names of medicines you're given and staff names and ask for clearer explanations when you don't understand
- ▶ If you think you'll have language difficulties, ask in advance for an interpreter
- ▶ Ask for written information on the problem, or details of local self-help groups
- ▶ Ask for another meeting if you have more questions to ask
- ▶ Take a friend or partner with you if you need support
- ▶ Take the child's Personal Child Health Record or Red Book with you and ask for it to be filled in



Can I refuse recommended treatment for a child if I think it's unnecessary?

Yes, there are often different ways of treating a condition and your GP should explain the choices open to you.

When your GP recommends treatment or prescribes medicine, you can ask for more information and more time to think about it.

Discuss it with the child, family and/or social worker. Even small children have views about treatment and you should always ask them what they think. It's both your and the child's right to decide about treatment and medicines.

Useful questions to ask:

- ▶ What is each drug (or treatment) for?
- ▶ How is it given?
- ▶ How long should the medicine be taken (or will the treatment last)?
- ▶ What are the side effects and what signs should you look out for?
- ▶ When is the child likely to start feeling better?
- ▶ What alternatives are available?

Can I ask if my child can be referred to a specialist?

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

Seeing the GP out of the surgery

Can I get advice over the phone?

Most GPs are happy to do so. Ask the receptionist if the practice has a special time when patients can ring and talk to the doctor. Your GP or nurse will usually call back if they are not available when you phone. Your health visitor can also advise you and you can ask the surgery for her number.

When is a child entitled to a home visit?

GPs will make home visits but these are only done in exceptional circumstances and usually for elderly or housebound patients (a few children fit into the latter category). Most practices encourage parents and carers to bring children to the surgery when at all possible. Most out of hours services will now insist children are brought to the surgery or out of hours centre and will provide transport if that is a problem. It is much better to see patients in the surgery where there is appropriate equipment and back up.



What do I do when a GP surgery is closed?

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

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

Contact NHS 24 on 08454 24 24 24. Your surgery will have a leaflet explaining NHS24.

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. Your GP or health visitor should be able to give you a leaflet about this. For major injuries and illnesses contact NHS 24 or go straight to the hospital's Accident and Emergency Department.

GPs and Confidentiality

Younger children are usually brought into the surgery by their parents and in these cases information is routinely shared with parents. Older children may ask for information not to be shared with their parents and the GP must respect their wish for confidentiality. In some exceptional circumstances confidentiality is broken if it is in the child's best interests to do so. However, in such cases the GP will usually try to explain why it is important to share information with other professionals.

Sharing information with the right people can help to protect children and young people from harm and ensure that 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 by children, young people and their parents

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

Yes, you can ask to see a child's GP records under certain conditions that is if the child has agreed to this or they are too young or otherwise unable to give consent. Older children can apply for access on their own behalf and can refuse access to a parent or guardian.

Young people with capacity have the legal right to access their own health records and can allow or prevent access by others, including their parents. In Scotland, anyone aged 12 or over is legally presumed to have such capacity. A child might of course achieve capacity earlier or later. In any event the GP should usually let children access their own health records unless it is felt that access to the information would cause them serious harm.

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.

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

If I am not the child's natural 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.

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

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

People under the age of 16 have the right to the same degree of confidentiality as any other person although staff will normally try to persuade children under 16 to tell their parents/carers. However GPs can only break a child's confidentiality in exceptional circumstances, if they believe this to be in the child's best interests.

Giving consent or refusing treatment

Under 16s may consent to medical treatment if the GP believes they understand the nature and the consequences of any treatment. Equally, they have a right to refuse treatment as long as the GP thinks they are capable of understanding the impact this could have on their health.



Helpful organisations/information

NHS 24

www.nhs24.com

Tel: 0845 242424

Action for Sick Children (Scotland)

www.ascscotland.org.uk

Tel: 0131 553 6553

General Medical Council

www.gmc-uk.org/guidance/ethical_guidance/children_guidance/index.asp

Tel: 0845 357 6999, 0131 525 8700

Scottish Child Law Centre

www.sclc.org.uk

Information helpline: 0131 667 6333

Freephone number 0800 328 8970 (for people under 18)

CLAN (Community Law Advice Network)

www.clanchildlaw.org

Tel: 075 275 66682

Walk the Talk NHS Health Scotland

www.walk-the-talk.org.uk

Tel: 0131 536 5569

Health Rights Information Scotland

www.hris.org.uk

Tel: 0141 226 5261

Leaflets for children and young people under 16, explaining their rights when they go to see the GP on:

- ▶ Confidentiality – your rights
- ▶ Consent – it's your decision
- ▶ Have your say! – your right to be heard

Children (Scotland) Act 1995

www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1995/Ukpga_19950036_en_1.htm

Action for Sick Children (Scotland) is the only charity in Scotland dedicated to informing, promoting and campaigning on behalf of the needs of ALL sick children and young people within our healthcare system.

For information in your language phone 0131 553 6553.

للحصول على معلومات بلغتك التي تتحدث بها، الرجاء الإتصال على هاتف رقم:
0131 553 6553

اپنی زبان میں معلومات حاصل کرنے کیلئے فون 0131 553 6553 پر رابطہ کیجئے۔

अपनी भाषा में जानकारी लेने के लिए फोन करें 0131 553 6553

ਆਪਣੀ ਜ਼ਬਾਨ ਵਿਚ ਹੋਰ ਜ਼ਿਆਦਾ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਲੈਣ ਲਈ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ 0131 553 6553

欲想索取閣下所操之語文資料，請致電 0131 553 6553。

Aby uzyskać informacje w Waszym języku, prosimy o kontakt pod numerem telefonu 01315536553.

For a full list of publications please go to the Action for Sick Children (Scotland) website at www.ascscotland.org.uk

For all other information please contact:



Action for Sick Children (Scotland)

22 Laurie Street, Edinburgh EH6 7AB

Tel: 0131 553 6553

Website: www.ascscotland.org.uk

Email: enquiries@ascscotland.org.uk