



**Solihull  
Healthcare  
Partnership**

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## Online Consult patient FAQs

We have recently made some changes to the way patients can contact us by introducing a new system called online consult. Online Consult allows you to get in touch with us, day or night, without the hassle of waiting for an appointment. The online consult system allows you to securely message our practice to ask for medical advice. You may not even need to come in for an appointment.

### **Why are we changing things?**

It is a priority for us to ensure that we are responding quickly to the most urgent need, which is a big challenge when dealing with high levels of demand. We have also recently audited our clinician appointment use, and identified that a high proportion of appointments could have been dealt with more effectively in another way, which may be another type of clinician, or without even the need for the patient to attend the practice.

Getting this right means a more efficient use of services, and also a smoother journey for the patient. We want to help patients see the 'right person, in the right place, at the right time'.

We have a wide range of clinicians including GPs, clinical pharmacists and practice nurses, advance nurse practitioners, specialist nurses, social prescribers, so using a triage process enables us to make sure that we can book you in with the most appropriate clinician.

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### **GP Partners**

Dr M Ali Dr N Behl Gupta Dr M Caughey-Rogers Dr B J Dickinson Dr M Font Dr B Gandhi  
Dr S L Green Dr S Kotecha Dr K Lad Dr J Lawley Dr A Lupoli Dr R Pal Dr B Patel  
Dr N Patel Dr M Reynolds Dr J Russell Dr M Sterry Dr E L Stokes Dr M Webb

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During the coronavirus pandemic, our clinicians are doing a lot of clinical triage by telephone. We know that our patients often struggle to get through to us on the telephone during our busy periods. We are confident that our new online system will be much faster for our patients to seek medical advice than telephoning us.

Online consult will enable our practice to offer online consultations to our patients. It allows patients to provide their symptoms and histories in their own time and at their own convenience, electronically, with the knowledge that our clinicians will be responding by the end of the next working day at the latest.

### **What does this mean for patients?**

The online consult system allows patients to complete a template, which guides the patient through a number of questions before they can submit this to their practice. Your online consult will be reviewed by one of our clinicians and will be responded to by the end of the next working day. We encourage our patients to select the most appropriate presenting complaint from the list to ensure that the questions are tailored appropriately to your complaint. Sometimes there is not a specific template available in which case the nearest can be selected or you can select 'request general advice'. You are also able to use the online consult system for administrative (non-clinical) queries.

### **How do patient access the online consult system?**

We have a banner with 4 options on our homepage which looks like the below photo. Please choose one of the options to proceed:



### **What can you expect when submitting an online consult?**

Online Consults are designed to highlight important 'red flag' medical symptoms – these are alerted to us as we read them, and our clinicians use this information to prioritise the most urgent queries to respond to. We have a triage process throughout the day, led by our clinicians, to ensure that all online consults requiring an urgent same day response are processed within the same day. Otherwise our aim is to reply to all online consults submitted by the next working day. In reality we often respond much sooner than the end of the next working day, but due to varying demand we cannot guarantee this.

Please be reassured that we actively triage all online consults received before we finish the working day, so any requiring an urgent response will be actioned the same day. Patients are able to submit an online consult request, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Any online consults submitted after 4pm on a Friday (or over the weekend) may not receive a response until the next working day. We receive all online consult requests as soon as we open at 8am, Monday to Friday.

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If a clinician is able to manage your online consult with a text message response, this will be sent to you directly. This message may contain links to other sources of help or advice, and clinicians may issue prescriptions to your nearest pharmacy for you to collect.

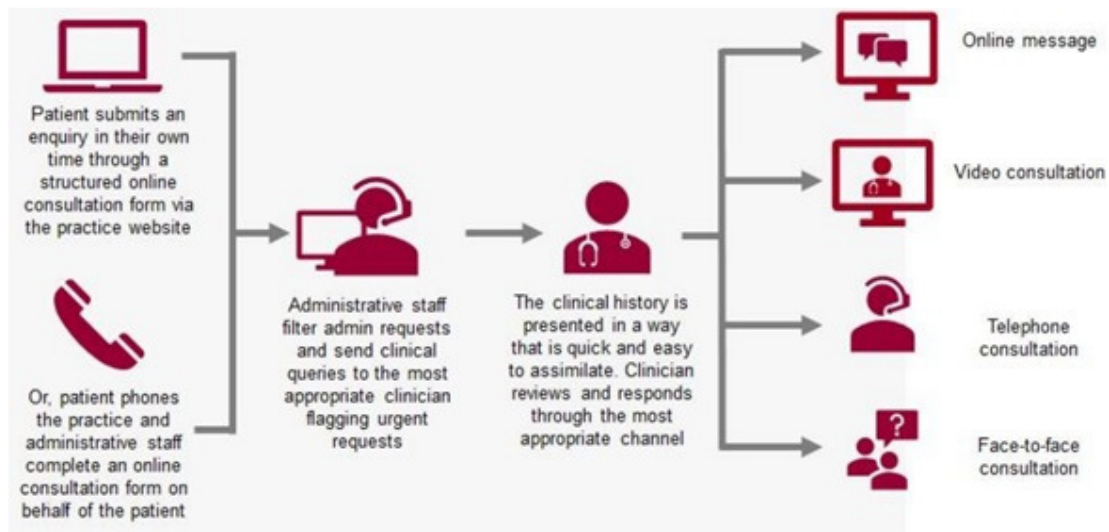
In order to manage your problem a clinician may need to call you to gather more information or to discuss options. They will do so via the mobile number we have for you, and please be aware this call may appear as an unknown/withheld number. If we can't reach you we will try once more or send you a text message response with suggested next steps. The clinician may also suggest a video consultation with you, or ask you to take a photo of the affected area and send it to us.

If an appointment is necessary, our care navigation team will attempt to call you to arrange a suitable appointment. If we cannot reach you we will send you a message to contact our reception team to book an appointment and let you know who to book this with (e.g. GP, emergency nurse practitioner, clinical pharmacist, etc). When you ring our reception team they will be able to see from your records that an appointment is needed and agree a time and date suitable for you.

### What are we now offering?

We are proposing that from the 3<sup>rd</sup> August, every patient contacting the practice will be asked to complete an online form so that these can be triaged first by one of our clinicians before making an appointment.

One of our clinicians will review all the medical queries and requests for appointments and will then decide upon the most appropriate next step for you, whether it is a telephone call, video call, text message or an appointment with the most appropriate clinician at the right time. We encourage all of our patients to use online consult for any contact with the practice, urgent and routine, clinical and non-clinical; these will always be responded to by the end of the next working day.



We know that with the implementation of any new system, there may be a few teething issues. We are very keen to make this process as smooth as we possibly can for our patients, so please do feedback to us any issues that you experience so that we can learn from these and make changes to ensure that these issues do not occur again.

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### **“The end of the next working day”? What if my problem is urgent?**

In reality we often respond much sooner than the end of the next working day, but to ensure that urgent problems are dealt with promptly, we have a rapid-triage system at key points in the day to ensure those problems are made a priority. In addition, online consult has a built in safety net to flag up critical medical problems, and in certain cases will advise the user to dial 111 or 999. If however your medical problem is urgent, we would ask you to contact us via our telephone system.

### **What about patients who can't use the internet. Aren't you being exclusive?**

We are aware that this system won't suit all of our patients. For any patients who do not have internet access (either at home or via a smartphone) or are struggling to fill in the online consult form, you will still be able to call us on 0121-705-1105. They will either fill in the online consult form for you there and then, or we might need to put you on a holding list so that a member of our staff can call you back and complete this for you over the telephone.

We also propose to have an interview room in our reception area so that any patient can visit our practice to fill in an online consult form, **once we are out of lockdown**.

### **What if the practice has asked me to make an appointment?**

If we have asked you to make an appointment with us, for example, for a routine review of your chronic disease, a blood test or for a child immunisation, our call and recall team will contact you and arrange an appointment that is convenient with you.

### **What are the online consult top tips for patients?**

- Please try to give as much information as possible and answer the template in full.
- Select the most appropriate template for your query-otherwise you will be asked questions that may not apply to you.
- Please try to avoid using the 'general advice template' unless there is not another suitable template for you.
- If you have an administrative query or a follow-up query or individual piece of information to pass on to us from a previous consultation please select the "Request sick notes and GP letters, or ask about recent tests" button.

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