

News release

Tuesday November 29, 2011

For immediate release

How to make best use of your GP practice

GPs in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland are endorsing a national guide which helps patients get the most out of their doctors' appointment.

The Patient Guide to GP Services has been produced by the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) and is available to download from NHS Choices website. It provides a range of useful information; from choosing and registering with a surgery and understanding the different services that are available, through to making appointments and getting the most from your consultation.

Your GP (General Practitioner) is your family doctor and is generally your first point of contact to help you to manage your health and prevent illness, help with dealing with common medical problems, through to helping you to live with long term conditions such as diabetes and asthma. Some also carry out practical procedures such as minor surgery or refer you on to specialist services if you need more specific tests and support

Your GP surgery often offers more than GP appointments. Many Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland GP surgeries offer repeat prescription services that don't require a doctor's appointment and some surgeries offer online appointment booking and cancellation options so you don't always need to call the receptionist. Appointments with the nurse are also available. Don't forget you can also find a wealth of information on your GP practice website. Pharmacists are also a very useful source of information if you have a query about medication.

Dr Tim Davies, deputy director of public health speaking on behalf of the PCT Cluster, said: "Getting on well with your doctor can make a positive difference to your health. The average time for a GP to talk to each patient is only eight minutes so it is important that you make the most of this time so that you get the outcomes you need".

The Guide recommends a number of hints and tips to support the most effective ways to talk to your GP:

- **Write down the key questions you wish to ask** before you visit the practice and think about what you want to get from the appointment – is it reassurance, or some medication?
- If you are already receiving medication **write down the medicines and pills** or take them to the appointment with you.
- **Make a note of when you started to feel unwell**, your symptoms and any other contributing factors such as a recent holiday or injury.
- **Ask a friend or family member to come with you** if you are worried or nervous about your appointment or explaining any symptoms to the GP
- **Make sure you share all information with your GP.** Sometimes it is the small details that help inform the doctor about your possible condition.

- **Be as open and honest as you can** and don't be embarrassed. GPs are trained to deal with the intimate and uncomfortable conditions, the chances are you're not the first patient to talk about the issue with them so try not to worry.
- **Do not be afraid to ask the GP to repeat what she or he has told you** and repeat back your understanding of what has been said to avoid any misunderstandings.
- **Expect your GP to ask you about your lifestyle** including things like how much alcohol you drink and if you smoke, our lifestyle can have a major affect on our health and play a part in many illnesses, from high blood pressure, through to some forms of cancer so its important that this is covered in your consultation.
- **Ask your GP to write down anything you don't understand** and make a note of the consultation after the appointment.
- Make sure you fully understand what the next steps are before you leave the room. If you are feeling ill, you will need to leave with an idea of how long you should expect to feel this way, or how long it takes for any medicine to start working. If you are informed, you won't worry unnecessarily or expect to get better too quickly and end up going back to your doctor again.

For more information on how to register with a GP if you don't have one, to getting the best from your GP, go to www.northamptonshire.nhs.uk or contact your local surgery. The website also includes a wealth of information under the 'Choose well' section on the range of services available locally, including pharmacies, out of hours services and minor injury units.

ENDS

For interviews or more information please contact media officer Liz Thomas on 0116 295 7677 or liz.thomas@leicestercity.nhs.uk or senior media officer Caroline Higgs on 0116 295 7663 or caroline.higgs@lcr.nhs.uk.

Notes to editor:

In October 2010 NHS Leicester City and NHS Leicestershire County and Rutland joined forces to form a 'cluster', in line with the requirements of the Department of Health. Although we share one Cluster Board and our staff work across the city and county boundaries, we have not legally merged, and retain our separate statutory duties. Together we serve a population of more than a million people. Cluster formation is an interim stage in the reform of the NHS, involving on-going transfer of most local commissioning functions to GP-led clinical commissioning groups, in line with the Health and Social Care Bill, now before Parliament and the House of Lords.

Who's Who?

General Practitioner (GP)

A General Practitioner (GP) is your family doctor and is the main point of contact for general healthcare for NHS patients. They help you to manage your health and prevent illness and are trained in all aspects of general medicine. GPs assess, diagnose, treat and manage illness. They carry out screening for some cancers and promote general health and wellbeing. A locum or sessional doctor is a fully qualified GP who works at the practice on a temporary basis to cover the regular doctors when they are away from the practice, for example on holiday or on maternity leave.

Practice Managers

Generally, practice managers are involved in managing all of the business aspects of the practice such as making sure that the right systems are in place to provide a high quality of patient care, human resources, finance, patient safety, premises and equipment and information technology. They support GPs and other medical professionals with delivering patient services.

Practice Nurses

Practice nurses are qualified and registered nurses. They can help with health issues such as family planning, healthy living advice, blood pressure checks and dressings. Practice nurses usually run clinics for long-term health conditions such as asthma or diabetes.

Healthcare Assistants

Healthcare assistants support practice nurses with their daily work and carry out tasks such as phlebotomy (drawing blood), blood pressure measurement and new patient checks. They may act as a chaperone when a patient or doctor requests one.

Receptionists

Receptionists provide an important link for patients with the practice and are your initial contact point for general enquiries. They can provide basic information on services and results and direct you to the right person depending on your health issue or query. Receptionists make most of the patient appointments with the GPs and nurses. They also perform other important tasks such as issuing repeat prescriptions and dealing with prescription enquiries, dealing with financial claims, dealing with patient records and carrying out searches and practice audits.

Health Visitors

A health visitor is a registered nurse who has received training particularly related to babies, children and pregnant women. Their role is to provide families with children under five years old with support and advice around the general aspects of mental, physical and social wellbeing.