

# Accessing Your GP Service



SOUTHERN HEALTH &  
SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD



**The SHSSB Access Scheme**

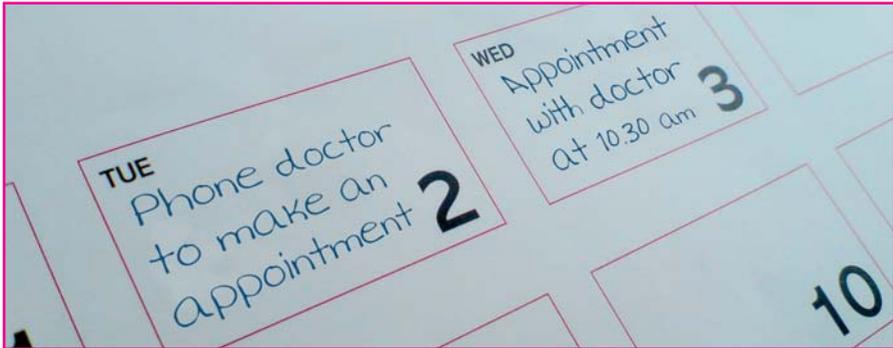
## What this scheme does

Your practice is taking part in a scheme to enable you to see a doctor or nurse as soon as possible when you phone for an appointment.

If you are seriously ill your GP practice will always try and respond quickly.

If your condition is critical or life threatening, go to your nearest Accident and Emergency (A&E) Department or telephone 999 for an ambulance.

## How the scheme works



**1** If you are unwell with a new medical problem or a problem you already have is getting worse, your practice will try to give you an appointment to see a doctor or nurse either that same day or before 6pm the next normal working day. So, for example, if you phone on a Monday the practice should be able to offer you an appointment by Tuesday evening. You may be asked to speak to a doctor or nurse when requesting an appointment so they can decide if anything else should be done to help you. This might happen if you are in pain or distress, if you have an infection which isn't getting better or if you have an existing illness which gets unexpectedly worse.

**2** For any other medical condition where you need to see a doctor or nurse the practice will aim to offer you an appointment within the next two working days from the day you call. For example if you phone on a Monday the practice will aim to offer you an appointment by Wednesday evening.

**3** This scheme does not apply when you need to see a doctor to sign a sickness certificate, benefit form or other routine forms.



**4** If you wish to see a specific doctor or nurse, this scheme does not apply and you may have to wait longer than the above times but the practice will try to accommodate your request as best it can.

**5** Patients should also be able to book appointments ahead -this might be appropriate for routine medical enquiries and checks or treatment of minor ailments.

**6** Sometimes getting through on the telephone to practices can be a problem. It is hoped this scheme will improve this situation. Please make yourself aware of the telephone arrangements for your practice. Some practices have specific numbers or times for ordering prescriptions, for speaking to a doctor or nurse, or for getting results of tests.

## What to do if you have a problem making an appointment

If you are having difficulty getting seen by a doctor or nurse at your practice, discuss it first with the receptionist or practice manager at the practice. They may be able to give you some helpful advice on their appointment system and how they deal with patients requesting early appointments.

If after that you are still not happy with the availability of appointments in your practice you may telephone, write or e mail the Southern Health and Social Services Board. Contact:

Telephone free on 0800 015 0303

Email: [access@shssb.n-i.nhs.uk](mailto:access@shssb.n-i.nhs.uk)

Fax: 028 3741 4551

Write to:

The Director of Primary Care  
Southern Health & Social Services  
Board, Tower Hill  
Armagh, BT61 9DR

You will need to provide your name and contact details, the name of the practice you are registered with and details about the situation when you tried to get an appointment but were unable to do so. We will contact the practice involved to investigate the incident and provide information back to your practice to assist them in planning their services. It is important to understand that the Board will not be arranging individual appointments for patients.

## Help us to help you

The purpose of this scheme is to ensure that patients who need urgent medical advice or treatment to prevent their illness getting worse, can receive that care. Many minor medical conditions can wait a few days without any serious risk to the patient. The aim is to ensure that all patients can receive the service they need.

Please keep your appointment or inform the practice in good time if you are unable to keep an appointment.

Remember that the GP Out of Hours service is for dealing with urgent medical conditions. Routine medical care is best delivered from your local GP Practice.

Remember also that your local pharmacist can provide a range of medication for minor ailments.

Your practice also has a complaints system and any issues which you are concerned about should still be addressed using this system. Details of this and other information about your practice will be found in the practice leaflet.

Practice staff will aim to be helpful and courteous in helping you arrange your appointment - we would ask that patients should also be courteous at all times.



**Southern Health & Social Services Board**  
Tower Hill, Armagh BT61 9DR

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