

Friendly GP

Frequently asked questions



National Friendly

Booking a consultation

Who will I speak to when I call?

One of our specially trained operators will answer your call, take some details and arrange a convenient time for a GP to call you back, or email you a link to join if you requested a video consultation.

Is there a limit on the number of consultations I can have?

No, you can contact the GP advice line as often as needed. As there is no limit to the number of phone, video or message consultations, you can book a separate consultation for each individual presenting issue you have.

Will I still need to see a GP?

Most patients receive the advice, reassurance and, where appropriate, diagnosis they need from our doctors, however, if your symptoms require a physical examination, or a repeat prescription, you may be referred to your own GP. The service is not a replacement for your own GP.

Can I choose to speak to a male or female doctor?

Yes. Where possible, we will always try to accommodate a patient's preference to speak to a male or female doctor.



Can I call in emergencies?

You must not use the service for emergencies or urgent conditions as this may delay necessary treatment. If you believe that you are in an emergency or life-threatening situation you should contact your local emergency services immediately, especially if someone:

- Has difficulty or is not breathing
- You believe someone is having a heart attack or stroke
- Has severe chest pain
- Has severe abdominal pain
- Has severe bleeding and it can't be stopped
- Has lost consciousness
- Is in an acute confused state and/or is having fits which aren't stopping

You may still need to see your own GP or contact the emergency services if the clinician you speak with feels it is necessary.

What sort of things can I ask about?

Anything you would ask your own GP, for example, stomach issues, ears, nose and throat complaints, dermatological conditions, aches and pains and explanations or second opinions on diagnosis or treatment.

We recommend booking a separate consultation for each individual presenting issue you have.

Can I have a consultation for my children too?

Dependants are eligible to use the GP advice line. Where a patient is under the age of 16, the patient/legal guardian must book the appointment on behalf of their dependant and must also attend the consultation.

Who can use the service?

You must be a resident and/or national of the United Kingdom, its Crown Dependencies or the Republic of Ireland to be eligible to use our services. By accessing and using our services, you are confirming that you are eligible.

Can I have a translator?

If you require translation services for your GP consultation, you will need to call to book your appointment. Ask your Customer Service Team Member at the point of booking. We can offer a translator to join your consultation at no extra charge with more than 240 languages available.

Prescriptions

Please see our Terms and Conditions for a full description of our prescription services.

Can the GPs issue a prescription?

Where the GP believes it is clinically appropriate, they can issue prescriptions. The medication can either be collected from a nominated pharmacy or delivered to a nominated address. While there is no charge to issue prescriptions, as these are private prescriptions the pharmacy will charge for the medication. For delivery, there is a charge for postage and packaging and the online pharmacy will contact you directly to take payment. We cannot issue prescriptions if the consultation is conducted using the translation service.

Can the GPs issue repeat prescriptions?

In line with clinical best practice guidelines for remote prescribing, our GPs are unable to issue long term, repeat medication. Should you require repeat prescription medication, it is in your best interests to be seen by your regular GP. Our GP scan offer advice on medication you are taking and may be able to offer short course medication depending on the symptoms presented.

Can I have my medication delivered abroad?

In the United Kingdom:

If you are in the UK, we will endeavour to provide you with a GMC registered GP at the time of your consultation, and if they believe a prescription is in your best interests, they will securely sign and send a paperless prescription. Within two hours, you'll be notified that your prescription is ready. You can collect your prescriptions from most

independent and large pharmacies in the UK with your prescription ID code. Alternatively, you'll be offered the choice to have the medication delivered to you in the United Kingdom.

Inside the European Union:

If you are in an EU country other than the Republic of Ireland at the time of your consultation, and the GP believes you would benefit from medication, they will explore alternative treatment options such as over the counter medicines from a local pharmacy as a first consideration.

If over the counter medicines are not suitable and you are nearing the end of your stay, it may be more convenient to collect your medication from your local pharmacy on your return. If the duration of your stay abroad is longer, and at our sole discretion, we may offer to send you a digitally secure electronic 'cross-border' prescription for a nominated pharmacy. You must present this prescription to your nominated pharmacy, acting as the intermediary between us and them. Fulfilling an electronic prescription is at the sole discretion of the dispensing pharmacist you present it to, and we are not responsible for any refusal to dispense. Where a private prescription is issued, please be aware that we will have no knowledge or control over the pharmacy fulfilment charges. We are unable to electronically prescribe any controlled medications outside of Ireland or the UK.

Outside the EU:

Due to pharmaceutical laws and regulations we are unable to prescribe if you are outside of the EU, United Kingdom or its Crown Dependencies at the time of your consultation.

What are the prescription medication delivery charges and how long does it take?

If the patient is in the UK or a Crown Dependency at the time of their consultation and is offered a prescription then, provided it is in stock and the prescription is raised before 4pm (UK time), it can be delivered to an address of their choice as soon as the next working day.

Our pharmacy partner will contact them by telephone shortly after the consultation. A range of delivery speeds are available which they will discuss at the time. The total cost will depend on the destination and chosen delivery option. Next day delivery to a Crown Dependency cannot be guaranteed and may be affected by local customs regulations.

Whilst the cost of medication varies, there is a minimum charge of £6.50 per item for postage.

There is no P&P for collection of prescription medication at local pharmacies. Medication charges may vary between pharmacies.

How is the medication packaged?

It depends on the size and type of medication, but most smaller items are sent in cushioned, securely sealed packets. Packets or boxes are discrete with no markings.

What safeguarding measures are in place for prescriptions?

Experienced, qualified, practising GPs:

All our GPs are practising doctors and adhere to the best guidelines on remote prescribing.

Checked by multiple, qualified physicians:

The GP raises the prescription, it is then checked by a qualified pharmacist prior to being dispensed.

A full medical history is taken:

During the consultation, the GP takes a full medical history including any current medication and dosages, allergies, etc. This details remains on the patient management system, including data relating to any medication prescribed by our doctor, so in future consultations, doctors can see previous prescribing history.

Consultation notes are sent to the patient's own GP:

When a prescription is issued, the consultation notes are sent to the patient's own GP with patient consent. In the rare case that there is a safeguarding or emergency issue, patient data can be shared without consent.

What happens if I don't have internet, can I still have a private prescription issued over the phone?

Yes, our telephone consultation service provides 24/7 telephone access to a GP, and should the doctor feel it is necessary, they can remotely issue private prescription medication and open referrals.

Private fit notes and referrals

Can the GPs issue fit notes?

If it is clinically appropriate and if the service is available to you, the clinician can issue a private fit note. We do not charge for issuing private fit notes, but you will need to check with your employer to confirm that they will accept one. Private fit notes cannot be used to access state funded sick pay or benefits.

Fit notes are issued at the discretion of the clinician.

For acute problems that the patient is consulting about, the clinician may, at their discretion, issue a fit note for up to 14 days from the date of consultation (in exceptional cases up to 21 days).

We do not issue extensions of fit notes, whether these were initiated by our clinician or any other clinician. Extensions, if needed, will need to come from the patient's usual GP. In exceptional cases a short bridging extension may be issued while the patient waits to consult their usual GP.

Under limited circumstances fit notes can be backdated.

Can the GPs issue referrals to specialists?

Should the GP feel that you would benefit from seeing a consultant or specialist, they can provide you with an open private referral letter. This referral letter cannot be used to access NHS services in the UK. Referral letters can be posted or emailed directly according to your preference.

If you have private medical insurance you will need to contact your insurer before engaging a consultant or specialist, or accessing any diagnostic or treatment services, unless you are self-funding. The referral letter is not a private medical insurance claims authorisation.

Data protection and confidentiality

How are data and records stored?

All patient data and records are stored on our patient management system, in a secure data centre which is only accessible with multi-factor authentication by authorised personnel.

Is the service confidential?

Yes. Patient confidentiality is very important, any records remain confidential. Our doctors follow clear guidelines about sharing clinical notes with the patient's own GPs; when appropriate and with patient's explicit consent, we send any relevant medical notes, including consultations notes for any prescriptions or referrals issued, to the patient's own GP.

How long will my personal data be held on the systems?

Clinical records are held in accordance with the NHS recommended retention periods for general practice and telemedicine records. In all cases, records would be maintained for a minimum of ten years.

Our GPs and quality control

How do you recruit your GPs? What qualifications do the doctors have?

Our doctors are recruited via a rigorous two-stage interview process with our Chief Medical Officer and HR vetting procedures, which ensure that GPs are qualified, experienced, and knowledgeable to an equivalent standard to your own GP. Our minimum criteria requires that our GPs:

- Are currently practising in the NHS as a GP and have at least 2 years' experience
- Are on The GMC register
- Have a Bachelor of Medicine Degree, those who qualified after 2007 must be Members of the Royal College of GPs
- Are on the National Performers List for England
- Complete an annual NHS appraisal
- Have an enhanced DBS background check
- Provide complete document evidence that they are suitably qualified
- Provide at least 2 references to support their skills and experiences

How do you ensure the GPs are vetted on an ongoing basis?

Once recruited, the GPs are continuously monitored to ensure they maintain their skills to the highest standards.

All our GPs complete an annual NHS appraisal to review their practise and performance. Our Quality Management System incorporates policies and procedures, consistent with best NHS practice, and each GP's performance is

continually audited. This auditing includes reviewing key documents to ensure all GPs' knowledge, skills and registration are up to date.

We hold bi-annual doctor meetings with our clinical team to maintain good engagement, share best practice and help to continually raise our standards of care and service. In addition to ongoing internal auditing, our GPs' clinical notes are also reviewed by an independent external organisation called Clinical Guardian.

Does Friendly GP meet Clinical Quality Commission standards?

Yes, our service is regulated by the Care Quality Commission for the delivery of medical services, in the "Digital Healthcare" category.

Our most recent CQC inspection took place in October 2022. The inspection was conducted by a GP, Clinical Pharmacist and CQC Registered Inspector who provided an overall rating of "Good".

What is the CQC?

The Care Quality Commission monitors, inspects and regulates hospitals, care homes, GP surgeries, dental practices, and other care services to make sure they meet fundamental standards of quality and safety.

To get to the heart of patients' experiences of care and treatment, CQC evaluates service providers across five categories relating to safety, effectiveness, caring, responsiveness to patient need and leadership.