

## WEST BAR SURGERY APPOINTMENT GUIDE

How to get the  
appointment you need.

Organising an appointment system is very tricky. Demand for appointments (across the country not just in Banbury) is at an all time high and GPs are already seeing millions more patients per year than they were just a few years ago.

BUT, the percentage of NHS funding going to GPs has dropped; and GPs are becoming harder to find. So, unfortunately there comes a point where the demand for appointments is greater than the possible supply.

This means it becomes harder to get the GP appointment you want, at the time you want it.

### How is West Bar Tackling This

#### Appointment Challenge?

As the GPs in this practice we aim to provide excellent, safe and sustainable medical care for **ALL** our patients. This means we need to have an appointment system that can deal expertly with **All Urgent cases on the same day** and one where less urgent cases can also be dealt with in a safe and effective way.

We would also like patients to have their care coordinated by their 'usual' GP so that they can develop an excellent working relationship together over time. We know that this is good for both the patients and the doctors. If you have a 'simple' medical problem then seeing any GP is absolutely fine; but for ongoing conditions it often helps to see the same person.

**Remember;** there are many problems that our expert team can deal with without the doctors. Our excellent nurses and nurse practitioners are specially trained to deal with many medical problems. Lots of other problems (medication, sick notes, letters) are actually better sorted by members of our extremely experienced administration team. Our reception team keep all patient information confidential; so if you feel able to tell them the problem they may actually be able to deal with it straight away.

**CANCELLATIONS/DNAs:** We still have very large numbers of appointments 'lost' every week due to people who miss their appointment. These are really valuable appointments that someone else could have used. Please cancel any appointment you cannot attend; we will usually be able to fill them again even at really short notice.

Over the years we have tried many different appointment systems. At the moment we feel we have the best system (with the resources available to us) to make sure everyone has safe and sustainable medical care; but we are always open to suggestions so please let us know your ideas.

### How do I get a SAME DAY appointment to see a doctor?

Every day there are 'same day' appointments available to see all the doctors that are working that day. They become available to book at 8.30am. Of course, they can get booked up very quickly. Try to see your 'usual' GP if possible.

After they are booked you can be offered an 'urgent' 5 minute appointment; which may also be possible with your usual GP. Use this if you have a problem that needs sorting that day.

After they are all booked then you will be asked if it is 'urgent' for a same day appointment. If it does need sorting that day then please do tell the receptionist that. They will put you down on a list of patients to be telephoned back by the 'duty doctor'. If you give the receptionist a brief idea of the problem then they can deal with it more efficiently, and make sure really urgent cases are put first. The 'duty doctor' will telephone you back – so please keep your phone near you.

**WE ARE COMMITTED TO DEALING WITH ALL URGENT PROBLEMS THE SAME DAY** so they **WILL** make you an appointment if it is clinically needed.

If it turns out that the problem needs seeing within 2-3 days rather than straight away, then the duty doctor will also sort that for you.

## How do I get a Future appointment to see a doctor?

We keep the appointment diary up to 6 weeks ahead. If you are able to book well in advance then please do so. Getting an appointment between 1-3 weeks is a real challenge for our appointment system. At the moment, as soon as an appointment is released or cancelled it gets booked.

This is why we introduced the **Monday walk in surgery**. That way, we can guarantee that you are able to see a doctor within the week. As long as your own GP is in the surgery and not the 'duty doctor' you can also ask to see them, although that may mean you wait a bit longer. Remember there will be a wait; so come prepared. As long as you arrive between 8.30 and 10.30 the doctor will see you; and will take the time needed to sort out your medical problem.

If you cannot make the Monday walk-in then we would encourage you to book the first available GP appointment. Many medical problems that can wait 2 weeks can also wait 4. If you feel it cannot wait that long; and you have tried to get a same day appointment and they are all gone; then please ask the reception team to send a message to your own GP with your contact number. The GP will contact you within 7 working days to discuss the problem and then can deal with it for you, booking a sooner appointment if needed. **We do not want anyone with a serious medical problem to wait more than a week** and remember; if you feel it becomes more **Urgent** you can always call back to be dealt with the **Same Day**.

## Here are some Frequently Asked Questions:

### Why does the receptionist want to know my problem?

Our expert reception team will always keep patient confidentiality. If they know a little about your problem they can direct you to the best person to solve it. They can make sure urgent problems are dealt with the same day. Often they can actually help you with the problem themselves; especially if it is about a test result, or letter, or sick note etc.

### Why is the Monday walk in so busy?

20 years ago many surgeries had morning walk-ins. Over the years we moved to booked appointments but the disadvantage is that they are less flexible to changes in demand for appointments. On a Monday we often see more than 100 patients in 4 hours. That is more than A&E see in a whole 24 hours.

There will be many GPs working but we want to give each patient the time they need; so inevitably there will be a wait. Please come prepared.



## Why can't I easily get an appointment in 2 weeks time at the time that suits me?

Over the years we have tried many different appointment systems but have never found one that allows this to happen for everyone.

As soon as an appointment becomes free it tends to get 'snapped up'. The doctors and nurses at this surgery are all working incredibly hard to create as many appointments as are safely possible.

You can help too by making sure you think about who else could help you with your medical problem -such as your pharmacist, dentist or optician; and who else could help in the surgery – such as the nurses, health care assistants, admin team etc.

