

IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM YOUR GP SURGERY TEAM (MERTON MEDICAL) – 1st May 2025

Dear patients, relatives and carers,

From **14th May 2025**, Merton Medical Practice will be **changing the way we offer appointments** in line with national guidance. We will be encouraging patients to use an online form (known as AccuRx form on our website/NHS app) for both medical and administrative requests to be submitted – this will be reviewed by our team (all clinical requests will be reviewed by a GP) and an outcome shared with you. If you are unable to complete a form online, then you can still call our practice phone or attend in-person and our reception team will ask you the same questions and complete the form for you. We hope this will help us to **improve our access** for our local population.

SUMMARY REQUEST FOR PATIENTS/RELATIVES/CARERS

- 1. If able to, please use our webpage (or NHS App) and complete AccuRx online form for any appointment requests. You can also use the form for any admin queries (e.g. unfit notes).**
- 2. If you are not able to complete the online form for any reason, call the surgery or attend in-person. The same brief 5 questions as on the online form will be asked by the reception team. The answers will then be shared with the GP (for clinical queries) or admin lead (for admin queries) who will be in touch with you shortly with a plan.**
- 3. The form is only accessible during opening hours (starts from 7.45am). Any urgent clinical queries that cannot wait a couple of hours should either be dealt with by calling the practice on the phone or reaching out to 111/999 as appropriate.**
- 4. A specific request: please ensure your up-to-date email address is shared with us as we may use this occasionally for our communication. Email and NHS App are increasingly being used more nationally for patient communication – having your updated details will therefore be of great help.**

The above system will ensure we see patients based on their clinical need rather than on a first-come-first-serve basis. We will endeavour to answer all medical requests on the **same day** – subject to capacity (e.g. unforeseen staff illness) or high levels of demand (e.g. resulting in potential unsafe working). **If your issue is so urgent that you cannot wait a few hours for the practice to contact you, please contact 111/999 or attend the local hospital Accident & Emergency department.**

We would greatly value your patience as we make this change in the weeks ahead – our hope is to provide equitable, safe and high-quality care to our registered patients with this new way of working. We would value any feedback you may have during this time – do share this with us via our email: swlicb.mertonmedical@nhs.net (please note this email is not monitored by clinicians and clinical queries are not reviewed on this mailbox). We are sharing some FAQs below which we hope will be of help:

What and how should I use this online form?

You can use this form for medical requests (e.g. for making appointments with GP/nurse to discuss health concerns) or administration queries like requesting an unfit note. We encourage you continue to use the online NHS app or Patient Access, if able to, for your repeat prescription requests.

Please see this short video which shows how to use the form:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4EDwg-feeUI>

Please note that the submitted forms will only be read during office hours (8am to 6pm). The forms will not be read outside these times, on the weekends (Saturdays and Sundays) or on bank holidays. If you need urgent help outside of the above office hours then please contact 111 or 999 if it is urgent.

What questions will I be asked on the form?

The form is easy-to-fill and has only a few short questions. If you have a medical query, you'll be asked to describe it, how long it's been going on for, and what you're worried about. We request you only use this for one presentation and provide sufficient detail, as far as possible, for the GP to be able to appropriately manage your request. For administrative queries, you can request unfit notes, referrals or a doctor's letter amongst other requests. Please do not make medical requests via administrative forms as this can result in unsafe and delayed care.

What details do I need to be able to fill in the form?

You'll be asked for your name, date of birth, postcode and your contact number. If you have your mobile phone to hand, then you can choose to receive a code via text message to enter into the website. This allows the staff at the practice to locate your record faster.

How long will the form take to complete?

The form should only take a few minutes to complete. If you have any issues or cannot fill the form then please contact the surgery and we will be able to help you to complete your request.

Why are we making this change?

This change should make it easier to submit requests to the practice and ensure that requests are seen by the most appropriate member of staff and dealt with in an appropriate timeframe as per national guidance. Appointments will be prioritised according to need, rather than who gets to the appointments first. The benefits of using such a system are:

- Easy to access - it should only take a couple of minutes to fill out your form
- Reception team able to complete form for you if unable to – access to appointments based purely on clinical need irrespective of submitting query online/phone/in-person
- Prompt clinical review of clinical queries

- Your GP might be able to help more quickly and easily, for example with a phone call, or by signposting you to a service which might be best suited to help e.g. physiotherapy/counselling/pharmacy/urgent eyecare service.

How do I book an appointment?

Appointment requests (routine and urgent) will be made by completing the medical form. For same day emergency appointments you will be contacted by one of the team (usually via telephone). As we face significant demand, it can take a few hours to be contacted. If you feel too unwell to wait please contact an emergency healthcare service such as 111/Accident and Emergency.

For less urgent appointment requests you will be sent a self-booking text message link. This allows you to book your own appointment at a time that suits you. If after having received a self-booking link, you feel you need to be seen earlier than the availability, please call the reception to discuss.

What's happening with the existing online booking?

Online direct booking via patient access will no longer be available for most appointment slots. There may be limited availability for non-doctor appointments such as smear tests.

Will my data be safe?

Yes. The NHS and government set standards to make sure all organisations using health data keep it safe and use it ethically. The online form is provided by AccuRx, which is an NHS Digital approved supplier, and an organisation we already use for our text-messaging service. All data is encrypted when stored and when being sent. This makes sure the only people who can access it are you and your health professionals.

Will my request be saved to my record?

Any request you submit about a medical issue will be saved to your record so that whoever calls you or sees you about your problem has your information to hand. If you send us a question about an administrative issue we will only save this to your record if we think it would be helpful to do so (or if you ask us to).

Will this disadvantage me or my vulnerable relative?

For those with access to a mobile phone or internet, the new online form will be a more convenient way to contact the practice, which should free up our phone lines for those who really need it – especially those who cannot access the internet. If you or your relative cannot use the form please contact us on the phone as you normally would (or attend in-person to reception if you prefer) and our reception team will gather the relevant medical information from you to allow our GP to review your request.

Can I request an appointment on behalf of someone else?

Yes, you can submit the form on behalf of the patient (although please write on the form that you are doing so **AND** ensure they are registered with our practice) and can put the contact number that we should either contact the patient or their representative on. Please note that due to patient confidentiality we cannot discuss anything about our registered patients with a third party unless they have explicitly given permission for us to do so.

What happens to a request that I send overnight, at the weekend or on a bank holiday?

The form is not available during evenings and weekends for patient safety. You can seek medical help via 111/999/local A&E department outside hours for urgent matters. The forms can only be reviewed during opening hours so should your clinical situation change/worsen or is causing you concern then please contact 111/999 out-of-hours to seek urgent review.