

# **Patient Online**

Frequently asked questions – Patients



## What is Patient Online?

Patient Online means that you can choose to:

- Book and cancel appointments with your GP or nurse online.
- Order repeat prescriptions online.
- Look at some of the information in your GP online record online. From April 2016, you will be able to see more information as your surgery's computer system becomes ready.

You will be able to do this on a website or an app, using a computer, a tablet or a smartphone.

Online services are free to use and are just another way of contacting your surgery. You can still ring them or go to your surgery in person like you do now.

## Why should I use Patient Online services?

- You can book and cancel appointments with your doctor or nurse online, when it suits you. Your surgery will choose which appointments can be booked online.
- Some patients have found that they save money and time as they don't need to make a special trip to their surgery to order repeat prescriptions.
- You can look at your online records whenever you want, even from the comfort of your home, and find answers to questions you may have without ringing your doctor.
- Having access to your GP online record helps you to be more in control of your health and well-being.
- People who have long term conditions, for example diabetes, hypertension or coronary heart disease, have found that looking at their test results online helps them make positive changes to improve their health. They can see if their condition is improving or getting worse by looking at past test results.

## Why are you offering Patient Online services?

The NHS has listened to patients over the last four years and many patients have said that they want to see their records so they can be more involved in their own care. Patients have also said they wish to be involved in deciding how they can best be treated and cared for.

Patient Online services are a part of making this happen.

## How can I get access to my GP online record?

You will need to fill in a short form at your GP surgery to let them know that you would like to start using online services. You will also need to prove your identity to your GP surgery. This is so that the surgery can be sure that you are who you say you are. You will need photo ID and proof of address, for example a driving licence and a bank statement. Your surgery will advise you on what ID you need to provide.

Once all the checks have been completed, your surgery will give you a username and a password.

If you do not have any ID and are well known to the surgery, a member of staff may be able to confirm your identity.

If you are not well known to the surgery, they may ask you questions about the information in your GP record to confirm the record is really yours.

Your surgery can refuse or withdraw access to records if they think it is not in your best interest to use GP online services. If this happens, they will discuss their reasons with you.

## **How can I make sure no one else can see the information in my GP online record?**

Only you, and anyone you give permission to, will be able to see your online record. This can be a family member, a friend or a carer.

When you sign up for GP online services, you will be given a secure username and a password. These details are unique to you and, along with your personal information, will not be shared with anybody else unless you choose to share them.

## **Where is my information kept?**

Your information is kept within the computer system your GP surgery uses. In many cases, older information will be held in paper records. When you use GP online services you will only be able to see the information your surgery holds about you on their computer system. If you wish to see the information in your paper records, your surgery will be able to advise you.

## **Will my carer be able to see my online record?**

If you want your carer to see your GP online record, your surgery will be able to help. You will need to give your surgery permission for your carer to see your GP online records. Ask your surgery what you need to do in order to set this up.

Please note that although some surgeries are not offering this service yet, they will do so from April 2016.

## **If I allow another person access to my GP online record, can I choose what they see?**

You can ask your GP surgery to allow a family member, friend or carer access to some of your online information. For example, you can select what your chosen person can see such as, only online appointments or just some of the information in your records.

## **How will you make sure that patients are not forced to share their GP online information?**

When you ask your surgery to register you for GP online services they will look at your request and do everything they can to make sure you are choosing online services and that you are not being forced.

If you choose to let another person see your GP online record, your surgery will look at your request and do what they can to check if your chosen person should be allowed to see your GP online record.

## **If I don't have a computer, tablet or smart phone what will it mean for me?**

Online services are an extra option for those who wish to use them and will not replace other ways of contacting your surgery such as by phone or in person.

By freeing up phone lines and reducing the need for people to visit in person, some GP surgeries have found that patients who do not have a computer find it easier and quicker to contact their GP surgery.

## **Is there any help in getting started on the internet?**

There are a number of different services for people who want to use the internet. Many are provided by local authorities, colleges and charities. The best place to start would be your local library.

NHS England is also working with the Tinder Foundation to support people who want to make better use of the health information that is available on the internet. You can find out more at: [www.tinderfoundation.org/what-we-do/uk-online-centres](http://www.tinderfoundation.org/what-we-do/uk-online-centres).

## **What will I see in my GP online record?**

Some GP surgeries already allow their patients to see everything in their GP online records. At the moment, your surgery is only required to let you see your summary record. This includes medications and allergies.

## **What is the minimum age to start using online services?**

While there is no official minimum age limit for using online services, children under the age of 11 would not be given access as they would usually be considered too young to fully understand their records.

If a young person aged between 11 and 16 years asks to use online services, the GP will do a test to check if the young person is ready to use these services. This test or assessment is known as Gillick or Fraser competence.

Once a young person reaches the age of 16, they are considered able to understand how to use GP online services and will in most cases be given access. If the surgery has any concerns, they will discuss these with the young person.

## **If my GP only allows me to see some of the information in my GP record, what can I do?**

Not all GP surgery computers are ready to allow patients to see all the information in their online records. All computer systems should be ready to allow you to see more information by April 2016.

You can speak to your surgery about this.

## **Do I have to use Patient Online services?**

No, you can choose not to use GP online services. You can still ring or go to your surgery in person like you do now.

## **Which appointments will I be able to book online?**

Your surgery will decide which appointments can be booked online. If you are already registered for online services, you will see which appointments you can book online. In most cases, if you require an emergency appointment, you will need to ring your surgery.

## **How far back will my GP online records go?**

You should be able to see all the information that your GP surgery is required to make available online.

For further information about Patient Online, go to: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/pe/patient-online/>.