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Dear Patients,

As some of you may be aware, the NHS GP Contract states that from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025, online consulting must be available for all routine appointment requests during core hours.

This means we have no choice, but to change our appointment system and the way we work; not only to abide by our contract but also to ensure patient care isn't compromised and maintain a safe working environment.

We have suspected this was coming for some time and a lot of surgeries have already adopted the process however, due to previous patient feedback we have managed to hold off, until now.

We have attended meetings with the Surrey Heartlands ICB, other GP practices and done general research of what options and processes are used and what would work best for our patients.

Although it is a big change for all of us, we have been able to see the positives and are hopeful that you will too. We want patients to have appropriate appointments, encouraging continuity of care and better access.

To avoid having to take a Doctor or possibly two, away from seeing patients to review and triage the online forms, we have decided to go with a system provider called Rapid Health.

Rapid Health is an online facility that allows patients to book appointments, without needing to phone the practice.

Patients will be presented with a series of questions about their problem. From here, patients will be provided with a choice of appointments with the most appropriate clinician(s), in the most appropriate timeframe, based on their clinical need.

This should result in shorter waiting times, especially for more urgent medical issues, and focuses on "getting it right first time" – seeing the most appropriate member of the team for your medical issue. It will also prevent the 8am rush and long waits on the telephones.

The new platform also allows patients to raise admin requests (such as sick/fit notes, doctor's letters, and more) and find trusted self-care information for a wide range of symptoms and health conditions.

For those who are able to do so, we will ask from **1<sup>st</sup> October 2025**, all contacts with the surgery come through Rapid Health, which will be accessed via our practice website, [www.sheppertonmedicalpractice.nhs.uk](http://www.sheppertonmedicalpractice.nhs.uk).

If you are unable to use the website, please phone the surgery on 01932220524 and press option 4. Our reception team will then complete the form on your behalf, inputting the details of your medical issue/concern.

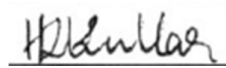
In preparation for the switch over to this new system we are asking patients to provide their email addresses if we do not already have them. We are also having to limit the pre-booking of appointments. We are aware that this is frustrating, and we are working to try and increase the number of appointments available to clear the backlog.

We understand, as with any new system or process, there may be teething issues, whilst both staff and patients learn and adapt to the new process. We are grateful to have your feedback and suggestions however, we kindly request that you allow the system to be in place for a few months before doing so, so we all have a chance to get used to it. We will be monitoring and reviewing the system continually so we can implement any changes that may be needed and iron out any problems.

Thank you for all your continued support and we are hopeful that you will see the benefits, as we can.

Yours sincerely,

Dr H S Kullar



Dr D S Sidhu



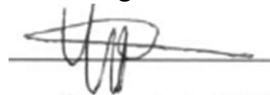
Dr J Turvey



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Dr Y Youssef



# Rapid Health FAQ

## **What is Rapid Health?**

Rapid health is an AI driven triage tool approved by the NHS which allows you to book appointments quickly and offers more patient choice and availability by offering you the right appointment with the right clinician first time.

## **How do I book an appointment?**

The link to access Rapid Health will be posted on our website. There will also be posters in the practice with the link and a QR code.

However, we understand that not everyone can use online services, and our reception team will still be available on the phone and in person. The team will take some details from you and pass these through to our clinical team, who will then triage your request and offer you a suitable appointment.

## **Can I use Rapid Health through my NHS App?**

Not at the moment. However, this is currently in development so keep an eye out for further updates.

## **Will I still be able to book appointments via Patient Access and NHS App?**

You won't be able to book GP appointments through these apps anymore, however, you can still book appointments for our nursing team, dietician and pharmacists and be able to view your medical records and test results, and order repeat medication.

## **What do I do if I want to see a specific GP?**

When you are booking an appointment, the GP's with available appointments will be shown. We would encourage you where possible to book with your usual GP.

## **What do I do if I want to pre-book an appointment?**

All our appointments will be available. After completing the Rapid Health questions an appointment will be offered within an appropriate timeframe.

## **Will all Clinicians be on Rapid Health?**

Rapid Health is primarily used for the booking of GP appointments, however depending on your presenting complaint you may be offered an appointment with our Physicians Assistant.

## **Why have I been offered an appointment with this Clinician?**

Patients will be offered an appointment with the most appropriate clinician based on their clinical need.

## **I was not offered an appointment, what do I do?**

Once you have completed our triage questionnaire we will offer an appointment in the most appropriate time frame. If you have not received an appointment, reception will be informed, and your issue will be triaged by the duty doctor. Reception will be in contact within 48 working hours.

## **My problem is personal, and I only want to tell a GP.**

The information which you provide is saved to your medical records and is reviewed by the clinician during your appointment. If you require our assistance when booking an appointment but want the reason to remain confidential, please attend the practice with your phone and our reception can assist you when needed whilst you complete the form. Every employee at the practice adheres to our confidentiality policy.

## Other Local Services Information

Many of you will already be aware of the local services that you may be directed to. They are a great resource and mean patients get more appropriate appointments and a quicker assessment/treatment for minor illnesses. For those of you that don't know about these services or want more clarify, they are summarised below:

**NHS Pharmacy First** - Patients that meet have the minor illnesses and meet the criteria outline below, should attend a community pharmacy in the first instance.

Urinary tract infection	Shingles*	Impetigo	Infected insect bites	Acute sore throat	Acute sinusitis	Acute otitis media
A UTI is an infection in any part of the urinary system.	Shingles is an infection that causes a painful rash	Impetigo is a common infection of the skin. It is contagious, which means it can be passed on by touching.	Insect bites and stings can become infected or cause a reaction.	Sore throat is a symptom resulting from inflammation of the upper respiratory tract	Sinusitis is swelling of the sinuses, usually caused by an infection. The sinuses are small, empty spaces behind your cheekbones and forehead that connect to the inside of the nose.	An infection of the middle ear.
<b>Inclusion:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Female</li> <li>Aged between 16 - 64</li> <li>Suspected lower UTI</li> </ul>	<b>Inclusion:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>18 years and over</li> <li>Suspected case of shingles.</li> <li>Rash appeared within the last 72 hours - 7 days</li> </ul>	<b>Inclusion:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 year and over</li> <li>Signs and symptoms of impetigo</li> <li>Localised (4 or fewer lesions/clusters present)</li> </ul>	<b>Inclusion:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 year and over</li> <li>Infection that is present or worsening at least 48 hours after the initial bite(s) or sting(s)</li> </ul>	<b>Inclusion:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 years and over</li> <li>Suspected sore throat</li> </ul>	<b>Inclusion:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12 years and over</li> <li>Suspected signs and symptoms of sinusitis</li> <li>Symptom duration of 10 days or more</li> </ul>	<b>Inclusion:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aged between 1 – 17</li> <li>Suspected signs and symptoms of acute otitis media</li> </ul>
<b>Exclusion:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Male</li> <li>&lt;16 or &gt;64</li> <li>Pregnant</li> <li>Breastfeeding</li> <li>Recurrent UTI (2 in last 6 months or 3 in last 12 months)</li> <li>Catheter</li> <li>Type 1 or 2 Diabetic</li> </ul>	<b>Exclusion:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&lt; under the age of 18</li> <li>Pregnant or suspected pregnancy</li> <li>Breastfeeding with shingle sores on the breasts</li> <li>Shingles rash onset over 7 days ago</li> </ul>	<b>Exclusion:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&lt; under 1 year of age</li> <li>Pregnancy or suspected pregnancy in individuals under 16 years of age</li> <li>Breastfeeding with impetigo lesion(s) present on the breast</li> <li>Recurrent impetigo (2 or more episodes in the same year)</li> <li>Widespread lesions/clusters present</li> <li>Systemically unwell</li> </ul>	<b>Exclusion:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&lt; under 1 year of age</li> <li>Pregnancy or suspected pregnancy in individuals under 16 years of age</li> <li>Systemically unwell</li> <li>Bite or sting occurred while travelling outside the UK</li> </ul>	<b>Exclusion:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals under 5 years of age</li> <li>Pregnancy or suspected pregnancy in individuals under 16 years of age</li> <li>Recurrent sore throat/tonsillitis (7 or more significant episodes in the preceding 12 months or 5+ in each of the preceding 2 years, or 3+ in the preceding three years)</li> <li>Previous tonsillectomy</li> </ul>	<b>Exclusion:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals under 12 years of age</li> <li>Pregnancy or suspected pregnancy in individuals under 16 years of age</li> <li>Symptom duration of less than 10 days</li> <li>Recurrent sinusitis ((4 or more annual episodes of sinusitis)</li> </ul>	<b>Exclusion:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals under 1 year of age or over 18 years of age</li> <li>Pregnancy or suspected pregnancy in individuals under 16</li> <li>Recurrent infection (3+ episodes in preceding 6 months, or 4+ episodes in the preceding 12 months with at least one episode in the past 6 months.)</li> </ul>

**Acute Illness Clinic** - These are timed GP appointments for acute conditions at Ashford Hospital. All appointments are booked through the GP practice

**Urgent Treatment Centre** - Located at St Peters Hospital, they see both walk in patients and appointments booked via 111 and are equipped to diagnose and manage many of the most common conditions people attend A&E for including:

- trauma wounds
- burns and scalds
- strains and sprains
- bites and stings
- suspected fractures
- foreign bodies
- coughs and chest infections
- ear, nose and throat infections
- skin problems and rashes
- stomach pains
- urinary infections
- minor head injuries
- eye conditions/infections

**(Please note this is not to be used for any major or life threatening injuries or illnesses and is not a replacement for a GP appointment)**

**Walk-in Centre** - Located at Ashford Hospital are a nurse-led clinic that will provide you with treatment for minor illnesses and injuries (X-ray facilities also available).

**First Contact Physio** - Allows you to see a licensed Physiotherapist directly without being referred to a hospital by a GP. All appointment are booked through your GP practice.

**111** - Can direct you to the best place to get help if you cannot contact your GP during the day, or when your GP is closed (out-of-hours).