

Combe Down Surgery

A Guide to our Appointments System

There are about 8000 patients registered at Combe Down Surgery, between 5 doctors.

In the last year there were 22,624 appointments with doctors and 13,446 appointments with nurses.

With such large numbers there will always be some degree of pressure on our appointments. We endeavour to provide an efficient service and hope to make the appointment system as convenient as possible.

Sometimes it can be difficult to get an appointment with a doctor exactly when you want to. Our system is set up with a variety of options to make things as easy as possible:

Option 1: **Book on the Day Appointments**

These help you see a doctor as fast as possible when you are ill.

The majority of our appointment slots can only be booked on the same day. Telephone lines open at 8 am and appointments can be booked by calling 837171.

Often the lines are very busy between 8 and 8.30 but usually there are appointments free until mid morning.

Our standard appointment length is 10 minutes.

Option 2: **Advance Bookings**

1. *You can pre-book to see any doctor in one of their early morning slots between 8.30 and 9.00am.*

We realise that some people need to book ahead. We have a number of doctors' appointments that are bookable up to 3 weeks in advance.

2. *Some people need to book to see a doctor after work*

Most days one of the doctors will be doing a late surgery with pre-bookable appointments between 5.30 and 5.50. These are particularly intended for people who are working, so they can see a doctor on the way home.

3. *We realise that some people have particular circumstances that make it hard for them to use the **Book on the Day** appointments (for example older patients with mobility problems who may need to organise a carer to bring them in).*

If you are one of these patients, we also have a small number of mid afternoon slots available to book in advance.

Please explain to the receptionist your situation when requesting one of these appointments. Please be aware that we do have to be fairly strict about their allocation so they don't get overbooked.

Option 3: Open Surgeries

In order to provide you with a greater number of appointments, each day we run an "open" surgery every afternoon. This runs between 3 and 5 pm.

Appointments in Open Surgery are ideal for simpler problems such as minor infections, rashes, simple medication reviews and minor injuries.

During Open Surgery we aim to see a large number of people. For this reason appointment lengths are only 5 minutes long and are therefore not suitable for addressing complex or longstanding medical issues where more time is required.

Please be aware:

- as time is limited, we are only able to deal with ONE problem at a time
- you will need to book in by telephone to check that there is a slot available for you
- we do not book specific appointment times but see people on a first come first served basis if you arrive between 3 and 5 pm
- we are unable to guarantee in advance which doctor will be doing the open surgery.

Option 4: Telephone Appointments

If you feel a telephone call may be suitable to address your enquiry then you can arrange a telephone consultation with a doctor.

Phone the surgery as if you were going to make a normal appointment and ask for a telephone appointment. You will be asked to leave a contact phone number and a time when you can be called back. The doctor will try to call you back as close to that time as possible.

Nurse Appointments

Nurses' appointments use a different system and can be booked up to 5 weeks ahead.

Cancellations

If you are unable to attend an appointment you have booked PLEASE ring us to cancel it.

In the last six months 1728 appointment slots were wasted by people not attending.

Even if you cancel with a short amount of time to go there is a good chance someone else will take your slot so please let us know.

Emergencies

If there is a genuine medical emergency or concern we will of course see anyone at short notice.

If all our appointments are full or you have a really urgent problem that needs attention before the next available appointment, please make it clear to the receptionist that you feel there is a potential emergency. The receptionist may ask a doctor to call you back straight away to decide the best course of action.

Frequently asked questions

Why do you use the “Book on the Day” system?

We changed over from a more traditional system about 4 years ago, as did many surgeries in the NHS, partly in response to a government initiative to ensure all patients were seen within 48 hours.

Previously, when most appointments were bookable in advance, all the spaces were taken up 3-4 weeks ahead meaning it was very hard to get an appointment quickly. The new system allows appointments to be made more easily when you really need them.

Since the change to the new system we have done annual surveys of patients at Combe Down and overall satisfaction seems higher.

In addition, far fewer people forget to turn up for their appointments, saving a lot of wasted time.

Why can't you do a few more Pre-bookable appointments?

We know that the disadvantage of this system is that it's harder to plan ahead. As explained, we do have some advance bookings available but we have to limit their number. If we booked any more ahead there would be fewer available at the start of each day and the “Book on the Day” system wouldn't work.