

## **Billingshurst Surgery - Frequently Asked Questions Related to Prescriptions**

### ***Why does it take 3 days for my repeat prescription to be processed?***

The surgery prints on average 1600 prescriptions a week. These have to be signed by a doctor before the medication can be dispensed. For some prescriptions the initiating GP needs to confirm that it is appropriate for the medication requested to continue, and that GP may not be in the surgery on the day the request comes in. Once the prescription has been signed it is passed to our dispensary or sent to the relevant pharmacy (local pharmacies collect these from the surgery 1- 2 times a day). On occasions the medication may not be in stock and will need to be ordered, with delivery taking 24-48 hours.

To improve the safety of our checking process and to avoid any inconvenience for patients attending to collect medications which are not yet ready we have therefore changed to 3 days for prescription processing in line with many other local practices.

We recommend that patients order their medication when they have 7 day's supply left.

### ***How do I order a repeat prescription? Why can I no longer do this by phone?***

A repeat prescription can be ordered in 4 ways:

- Online using Patient Access. To register for this service, please telephone us or speak to our Reception team. They will print a registration letter which you will need to collect from the surgery on presentation of photo ID. The letter details a unique username and password for you to use when registering for this service. Once registered, you will be able to order repeat prescriptions, book appointments, review and amend your personal details and view some elements of your clinical records, all online. As of May 2015, over 5000 patients have registered for this and we have received very positive feedback on its ease of use.
- Tick the required medication on the right hand side of your prescription and leave it in the box at Reception or post it to us. If you have misplaced this sheet or the item you require is not listed, you can add the medication or detail this on a blank piece of paper along with your name and date of birth.
- If we dispense for you, you may find it more convenient to hand over your request for next month when you collect your medication.
- Both Arun Valley and Lloyds pharmacies offer a repeat prescription service. Simply complete their repeats form and they will automatically request these for you each month. Please note if you decide on this option it is your responsibility to inform the pharmacy of any changes to your medications.

Please note that we no longer accept prescription requests by telephone due to patient safety. Many medications can be hard to pronounce or sound very similar and so this method of requesting can result in errors. It also makes it much harder to trace a request which has not been received.

***Why can't I collect my medication from the dispensary at the surgery and other patients can?***

There are strict rules governing dispensing practices, and we are only able to dispense medications for those patients who live more than 1 mile from a pharmacy (as the crow flies).

If you believe that you fulfil the criteria and we are not currently dispensing your prescriptions for you, please speak to the admin staff who will be able to check for whether you are eligible for this service.

***The hospital has given me a prescription for their pharmacy; can I take it to the dispensary or a community pharmacy?***

Unless issued on a green FP10 prescription, a prescription given by the hospital can only be issued by the hospital. If the hospital pharmacy is closed or you are unable to wait to collect it the same day, you will need to bring the prescription to the surgery for it to be converted to a normal prescription. We need written confirmation from the hospital of the exact treatment proposed.

As with all prescriptions this will take **3 working days** before it is ready for collection.

If this treatment needs to be started immediately, please inform our reception staff and we will try to expedite the request so as not to delay your treatment. Please note that it may be quicker for the prescription to be processed at the issuing hospital.

***A NHS hospital consultant has advised I have a particular medication but the GP has said they are unable to provide the prescription, why is that?***

The BMA General Practitioners Committee website has clear guidance on "Prescribing in General Practice":

"The doctor who signs the prescription is legally liable for the prescribing and any subsequent complications. Some medications may be very familiar to the specialist consultants but can be very potent drugs which a GP will have little experience of, or in very rare situations there may be some disagreement on the necessity of the drug.

If a consultant feels a particular medication is appropriate there is no reason why they cannot prescribe it themselves; they can also post a prescription to you". [1] However many hospitals place restrictions on their doctors issuing the green FP10 prescriptions and will encourage their consultants to only issue hospital pharmacy prescriptions which cannot be used in outside pharmacies.

Even for medications which are less potent there are formulary guidelines set by each commissioning group (CCG) instructing GP's in that area as to which medications are permitted to be prescribed in General practice and in their affiliated hospitals. We are members of the Coastal West Sussex commissioning group who work with Western Sussex Hospitals (St Richards and Worthing). These guidelines vary in different areas so particularly if you are seen in a different hospital their consultants may not be aware the guidelines in West Sussex are different, or even in Western Sussex the consultants may not have realised the coding of a particular drug.

If you find yourself in this situation your GP will alert you as soon as possible to the difficulty and reason for it and will make contact with your specialist to try and resolve the situation to limit any delay in your treatment.

***I've been seen by a private specialist. Can the prescription they have given me be changed into an NHS prescription?***

Just like the situation above with the NHS consultant prescriptions the GP needs to be satisfied they have the expertise to take over the prescribing of the medication and that it is within the CCG NHS formulary for them to prescribe. If it is a medication which ordinarily would be provided on the NHS for that indication then they should be able to change to prescription to a green FP10 for you. As above this will take **3 working days** to process.

If the medication is not on the NHS list or is being prescribed in a more unusual, specialist way which may not be licensed by the manufacturers then the GP will not be able to prescribe the medication and you will need to continue to get private prescriptions from your specialist.

Please note private prescriptions costs are very variable as you pay the full cost of the drug as well as a processing fee by the pharmacy/dispensary. Private prescription costs are not capped like NHS prescriptions are.

***I live abroad for several months of the year, why has my GP refused to give me a prescription?***

Again there is very clear guidance within the BMA prescribing in General Practice guidelines. "The NHS accepts responsibility for supplying ongoing medications for temporary periods abroad of **up to 3 months**. If a person is going to be abroad for more than 3 months then all that the patient is entitled to at NHS expense is a sufficient supply of his/her regular medication to get to the to the destination and find an alternative supply of that medication." [1]

As well as the NHS not being in a position to be able to fund medications for those not living in the UK, this restriction is also in place to ensure that patients are not taking medications in an unsafe way by not having regular reviews and monitoring.

The exception to the 3 month restriction is prescriptions for contraception, as these routinely can be prescribed at longer intervals to reduce the risk of an unwanted pregnancy caused by running out of the medication.

***I am taking several different medications, is there a way of reducing how much I pay for prescriptions?***

3 monthly and 12 monthly pre-payment certificates (PPC) are available and further information can be found on the NHS choices websites [2] – see references below.

These are cost effective if you require more than 1 item a month, for example:

- If you need two items each month you can save over £90 with a 12 month PPC
- If you need three items each month you can save over £190 with a 12 month PPC
- If you need four items each month you can save over £285 with a 12 month PPC

There are several payment options available. If you choose the 12 month PPC then you can pay for this with 10 monthly direct debit payments to help spread the cost.

If you would like to purchase a PPC It is quickest to buy it online at:

<http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcosts/Pages/PPC.aspx>

The PPC will start from the day you submit your application, unless you request a different start date. However, the start date must be within one month before or after the date of your application.

If you prefer talking to someone, you can call the PPC order line on **0300 330 1341**. Again, your certificate is valid from the day you make the phone call unless you request otherwise

Alternatively you can collect an information leaflet from your local pharmacy or the dispensary.

References:

[1] BMA General Practitioners Committee Prescribing in General Practice – May 2013. (From page 5 onwards there is a Question and Answer section written for the general public.) Document accessible from:

<http://bma.org.uk/practical-support-at-work/gp-practices/service-provision/prescribing>

[2] <http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcosts/Pages/Prescriptioncosts.aspx>

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