

Total Triage FAQ

What is total triage?

A total triage model ensures that all incoming medical requests received by a surgery (both online and via the phone) enter a central inbox which is fully integrated with our medical records system. In our case, this system is called Accurx which is widely used across Primary Care as a tool to communicate with patients and the current tool we use to allow patients to submit their requests online.

All requests are then reviewed by a member of the Clinical team and assigned to the correct person or team to action within a **clinically appropriate timeframe**. Patients are then contacted by the appropriate member of the surgery team with an outcome to their request. This could be a resolution of the issue; provide signposting information or to book an appointment for a later time/date with the most appropriate clinician.

Why are you changing?

We believe that this change of model will lead to several benefits for both patients and staff, including:

- Moving to a model where requests are triaged by a clinician will help to ensure that all patients get the **right care from the right person within the right timeframe**.
- Moving to a total triage model will take us away from an effective “first come, first served” approach and **remove the need for patients to contact the surgery first thing in the morning and wait in long phone queues**.
- This also ensures that all **patient’s requests are dealt with fairly and equitably**, enabling urgent requests to be prioritised and actioned more quickly.
- Centralising all requests in one inbox will allow our team to **better manage demand and capacity, contributing to a safer environment** for both our patients and staff both now and in the future.

What is Accurx?

Accurx is an NHS-approved software supplier. The Meadows Surgery uses Accurx to manage patient requests, request additional information from you and send you messages about your care. Accurx is also set up for patients to submit their requests online with no log in required. For more information on Accurx visit: <https://www accurx.com/patient>

Does this mean I have to contact you online now?

No, although we do encourage you to submit your requests online as the quickest and easiest way to contact us if you are able to.

Rest assured that our reception team are still available to take your call and submit your request on your behalf – to enable this our receptionists will follow the same question set that is available to patients online.

You can also visit the practice in person to submit a request although we encourage you to use the online or phone routes for confidentiality reasons as our reception team would still need to ask you the same questions and would not be able to book you an appointment directly at the desk.

What questions will I be asked?

Whether you submit your request online or by speaking to one of our reception team, you will be asked the same six questions. Please answer these questions with as much detail as possible to support our clinical team in triaging your request. The questions are as follows:

1. Please describe the medical problem (you can also upload photos online if appropriate)
2. How long has this been going on for? Is it getting better or worse?
3. Have you tried anything to help?
4. Is there anything you are particularly worried about
5. How would you like us to help?
6. Please tell us the best times to contact you

How do I access Accurx to submit an online request?

You can access Accurx via our homepage:

www.summervalesurgery.co.uk

once you have accessed the web page, please click on the bright red box “submit an eConsult online consultation” (the top left box of all the brightly coloured boxes)

You can also click on this link [Contact us about your request - Accurx Patient Portal](#)

Accurx does not require any log in details, but you will need to input your personal information.

You can also do this via the NHS app which saves you having to input your personal information.

How do I sign up for the NHS app

For help and guidance on the how to sign up for the NHS App, you can visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-app/>

How long will I have to wait to hear back from the surgery? What does clinically appropriate timeframe mean?

In a total triage model, a clinician will review every request that is received both online and via the phones and prioritise them based on clinical need and urgency. This may mean that in some cases where a request is identified as more routine, there may be a slightly longer wait.

That said, we do expect this new model to improve access for all patients and ensure that all requests are assigned to the right person at the right time.

I don't want to share lots of detail with the receptionist, what can I do?

Our reception team are an integral part of our wider surgery team and are there to help and support you. To do this they will ask you the questions detailed above regarding your medical issue. We encourage our patients to share as much information as possible to support clinicians when triaging and getting patients the right help at the right time.

We would like to reassure patients that all our staff are subject to our strict confidentiality agreements when it comes to patient data. An alternative method of submitting your request is by following the same question set online – your request will then be delivered directly to the triaging clinician.

Is there any change to the way in which you process or share my data?

Our Data Privacy Notice will be updated to reflect this change. To access our most current Data Privacy Notice, please navigate to the bottom of any page on our website and click the Data Privacy Notice.

We would like to reassure all our patients that Accurx is an NHS accredited supplier and is subject to stringent standards which are set by the NHS and Government. For more information, please visit Accurx's website at: <https://www.accurx.com/security-for-patients>

How will the surgery respond?

When you contact the surgery, we will ask you how you would like to be contacted by us when responding to your request. All patient requests will then be reviewed by a GP led triage team, who will decide what the best course of action is and get back to you the same day using the preferred communication method identified on your request.

Possible outcomes could include:

- A same day face to face or telephone appointment with a member of our clinical team
- A pre-bookable (within 7 days or more than 7 days) face to face or telephone appointment with a member of our clinical team, or our Care Coordinator if you are on our cancer, palliative or carers register
- A booking link for a Practice Nurse, Healthcare Assistant, Phlebotomy, Pharmacist or First Contact Practitioner appointment
- A reply from the triage team with self-care advice

- Signposting or referral to a more appropriate service, for example a local pharmacy

Who might I be asked to see?

Not every health problem requires a GP and over the last three years we have significantly expanded our clinical team.

- Advanced Practitioners - our Advanced Practitioners can perform a range of complex clinical tasks, including diagnosing, prescribing, and treating patients. They often act as a first point of contact for both minor and chronic conditions and their role include clinical examinations, making referrals, performing procedures, and leading teams to improve patient outcomes and healthcare services.

- Pharmacists - we have two highly trained Clinical Pharmacists and a Pharmacy Technician at the practice who manage all medication related issues, as well supporting patients with hypertension management, lipid management and long-term conditions

- First Contact Practitioner (FCP) - our FCP sees and assesses most patients with musculoskeletal problems and comes up with a plan. This may include further tests and referrals.

- Social Prescriber - our Social Prescriber helps patient where they may have a social problem or health problems linked with social situations.

- Practice Nurses - our experienced nursing team manages many chronic and acute conditions.

- Community Pharmacy - a new service called 'Pharmacy First' has been set up to treat several minor conditions and they can prescribe antibiotics where appropriate.

- Self-care - many conditions can be managed with advice and support.

- Self-referral - to MSK, Health in Mind, smoking cessation etc.

Can I choose what time I come for an appointment?

For routine planned appointments, we will be as flexibility as possible (subject to availability). For urgent appointments, we expect patients to be flexible and you will likely be asked to attend at any time between 8am - 6pm, subject to what we can offer.

Can I walk into the surgery to make an appointment?

We strongly encourage patients to submit their appointment request via the surgery's website rather than over the phone or by walking into the surgery. However, we appreciate that this may not be possible for some patients. If you do not have access to the internet or a smartphone, please phone us or come into the surgery and a receptionist will complete the form on your behalf. However, please be aware that this will not speed up your appointment request. It will be treated the same as online requests, with your request form being passed to the triage team.

Do all appointment requests have to be booked this way?

No, the introduction of Total Triage does not affect Practice Nurse, Healthcare Assistant, Phlebotomy or Pharmacist appointments, which will continue to be booked in the normal way, either over the phone or in practice. This will be particularly relevant for annual reviews, blood tests and wound management.

Why Can't I just book an appointment like I used to?

Nationally, GP capacity can no longer meet the demand and so we must put systems in place to ensure our patients get the most appropriate safe care. Health care is evolving, and we need to embrace this.

Is this new system going to alienate certain patient demographics such as the elderly, vulnerable patients or those with special needs?

Many of our more senior patients have access to the internet or smartphones and are quite capable of using our simple online system. Our care navigation team will support anyone who needs a bit of extra help.

We work hard to identify those patients who may need extra help and flag this on their medical records, ensuring the team are aware of any additional requirements. If someone is struggling to navigate the system, we will support in any way we can.

Why can't I submit a request when the surgery is closed?

Primary Care remains a Monday to Friday, 8am - 6.30pm service and we must manage patient demand. Our practice team work hard, but they also need to work within safe working conditions. There are other services available for urgent problems outside of our opening times.

Can I choose the GP I want to manage my problem?

(We have carried out a lot of work around identifying those patients whose healthcare needs require them to have continuity of care and this is flagged on their medical records) However, it will depend on which clinicians are working that day and it will be subject to appointment availability. We will do our best to accommodate requests however, there may be a more appropriate clinician for your problem. We will endeavour to keep continuity of care for ongoing issues.

Will this mean shorter wait times on the phone?

We hope that as more patients use the online system, telephone waiting times will be significantly reduced for those patients who need to call for other reasons.

How does the new appointment system benefit me?

We are confident that Total Triage will bring many benefits to our patients.

- It has been shown to reduce waiting times, and it will enable us to attend to our patients' medical needs more promptly and based on clinical need and urgency
- Using digital communication will mean that you can engage with us from the comfort of your home or workplace
- It will address the increasing demand for appointments and reduce the frustration of having to call and be in a long queue at 8am