

## Getting the most out of your consultation

The average GP consultation in the UK is about 7 minutes long. At Branch End we provide longer appointments at 10 minute intervals, with catch up longer appointments also added to the surgeries. We would very much like to offer longer appointments but this would affect the number of people that could be seen in a surgery. In an effort to maximise what can be achieved in your consultation, we put forward these suggestions:

### 1. Be Prepared!

It can be helpful to make a list of any questions / problems you wish to discuss before hand:

- Any ideas about what you think may be causing your symptoms will help the doctor to see things from your perspective,
- Any worries or concerns that you have (however trivial or embarrassing they might seem!) are best expressed – often little unanswered worries can grow into larger problems and sharing them often yields a reassuring answer.
- Put forward any ‘expectations’ that you have from the appointment eg were you wanting to be referred to hospital, or having been listened to and examined, did you want to manage things yourself rather than be prescribed something. We’d rather you speak up now rather than go home frustrated that you didn’t get your point across!

Take a pen & paper as you may want to note down important points.

Be prepared to tell your doctor of any non-prescription medicines or supplements you are taking, or of any over the counter tablets that have not suited you in the past.

Please feel free to bring someone with you for support. We really don’t mind this at all – we appreciate that coming to see the doctor can be a daunting experience. A relative or friend can also help you to remember what the doctor has said.

### 2. During The Appointment:

Don't be afraid to ask questions!

If you don't understand, ask your doctor to repeat it or write it down.

If you are prescribed a drug, make sure you know why it has been given to you, how long to take it for, and what to do if you experience any side-effects.

Remember pharmacists are experts in medication and a very useful source of advice.

### 3. One problem at a time, please!

If you have several problems, it is usually more effective in the long run to concentrate on just one problem at a time rather than to try to rush through a list of problems in a single consultation.

Please be prepared to make another appointment so that each problem can be given the time it needs to be properly sorted out.

Bringing lists of problems will obviously have a knock on effect on the late running of the rest of the surgery.

Make a separate appointment for each member of the family – at least mention if you have more than one family member poorly to the receptionist when booking the appointment, rather than all just turning up please!

### 4. Medication requests and reviews:

Requests for repeat medications are best made via reception before or after the consultation, either over the 'phone or in person at the front desk. Otherwise valuable doctor-patient time is lost while the printer prints etc.

People who have batches of prescriptions sent to the chemist should make a separate appointment for a 'medication review', as this process needs considerable time to safely review and repeat.

### 5. Potentially sensitive situations

- Please accompany under 14 year olds. If however, a young person strongly wishes to be treated without his/her parent's involvement, his/her confidentiality will be respected.
- If you have a problem that you find embarrassing or difficult to talk about, don't leave it to the end of the appointment before mentioning it. Remember your problem is likely to be a common one for your GP, who is there to help you. Writing the problem down and handing the note to the doctor at the start of the appointment can help.
- Intimate examinations.

If you have a problem which might necessitate an examination, please consider your preference (regarding seeing a male or female doctor) when making the appointment. You may prefer to wait to see your choice of doctor – if in doubt the receptionist should be able to help you. The doctor may offer a chaperone to be present for certain examinations. The situation should never arise but please do not allow yourself to be examined if you are not comfortable with arrangements.