

Looking after yourself and your NHS – the NHS Constitution

The NHS Constitution brings together in one place what staff, patients and public can expect from the NHS. It sets out the purpose, principles and values of the NHS and explains a number of rights, pledges and responsibilities for staff and patients alike.



Did you know...?

- **If your GP refers you for treatment, you have the right for any non-emergency treatment to start within a maximum of 18 weeks**, or for the NHS to take reasonable steps to offer you a range of alternatives if this is not possible. You also have the right to be seen by a specialist within a maximum of two weeks from GP referral for urgent referrals where cancer is suspected and your GP thinks it's necessary.
- **If your GP refers you to see a consultant, you generally have a choice of a number of hospitals.** You might want to choose a hospital that has better results for your treatment than others, or one near family that live in another part of the country, or one that has shorter waiting times.
- **You can view your personal health records.** You don't have to give a reason to see them; just ask at your GP surgery and make an appointment to go in.
- **You should always be treated with dignity and respect, in accordance with your human rights.** This means, for example, that your right to privacy should be respected. You should not have to share sleeping or bathroom facilities with members of the opposite sex, except on the rare occasions where you need very specialised or urgent care.
- You have the right to have any complaint you make about the NHS dealt with efficiently and have it investigated properly. If you're not sure where to start or how to get in touch with an NHS organisation, our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) can help.

The promises the NHS makes to you

The NHS also makes certain pledges to you, which it is committed to achieving. These go above and beyond your legal rights and are a commitment to provide high-quality services.

Did you know...?

- **The NHS is working hard to make sure that you are seen as soon as possible, at a time that is convenient to you.** While the NHS is making it easier for you to get a hospital appointment more quickly, it's also giving you more opportunity to see a GP at a time that suits you. Nearly two-thirds of GP surgeries now offer extended opening hours so you can book

appointments before or after work. Each area is also establishing new GP-led health centres offering walk-in and bookable GP appointments from 8am to 8pm, seven days a week. You'll be able to use the service regardless of which local GP surgery you're registered with.

- **The NHS commits to inform you about the healthcare services available to you, locally and nationally.** NHS Choices, for example, is a service intended to help you make choices about your health, from lifestyle decisions about things like smoking, drinking and exercise, through to the practical aspects of finding and using NHS services in England.
- **The NHS commits to ensure that services are provided in a clean and safe environment that is fit for purpose, based on national best practice.** Tell the provider of your care of any concerns about your healthcare facilities and participate in the regular surveys of patient experience that the NHS uses to improve its care.

What the NHS needs from you in return

The NHS is a vital resource and we can all help it work effectively, and ensure resources are used responsibly. The NHS Constitution explains the ways in which you can do this, including:

- Recognising that you can make a significant contribution to your own, and your family's good health and wellbeing, and taking some personal responsibility for it
- Registering with a GP practice
- Following courses of treatment you've agreed to
- Always treating NHS staff and other patients with respect
- Keeping GP and hospital appointments – or if you have to cancel, doing so in good time
- Giving feedback – both positive and negative – about treatment you've received

Did you know...?

- An article from the BBC said "Studies have shown that patients who fail to attend appointments cost the NHS approximately £700m a year, with up to six million appointment slots wasted annually." March, 2012.
- Approximately £5 million is wasted on unused medicines every year –
 - Only order what you need for a month
 - Only order what you are going to take
 - Take your medicines in accordance with the prescriber's directions
 - Unused medicines can be dangerous
 - Money wasted on unused medicines could be better used within the NHS

For more information on the NHS Constitution, visit:

<http://www.neessexccg.nhs.uk/Your%20NHS.html>