

Well, we don't **Always** run late with our surgeries. Quite often patients are seen on time and even seen early. Surgeries can, however, run late especially towards the end, which can be a big inconvenience for patients **and** Doctors. This article talks about why it happens and how you may be able to help.

Arriving late: In the morning, all the Doctors are in the building by 08:15, or shortly after, to be ready to take the first patient at 08:30. The surgery doors open for patients at 08:00.

If, for example, the first patient is late (busier traffic than expected seems to be the most common reason) and arrives say at 08:40, when the Doctor is taking the 08:40 patient, they are already running at least 10 minutes late before they have hardly started. We will not see a patient who 10 minutes, or more, late.

Emergencies: Some events cannot be planned for, e.g. the Doctor getting called out on **an emergency visit** just at the start of, or during, emergency surgery. Such a visit can, on occasion, take up to an hour but thankfully this does not happen too often. This event will obviously set things back considerably.

10 Minute Intervals: Patients are booked at 10 minute intervals but this does not necessarily mean that you, the patient, have 10 minutes face-to-face with the Doctor. During that 10 minutes the Doctor listens to your problem, asks you questions that will help in forming a diagnosis, examines you if needed (with a chaperone if required), a prescription supplied and advice given, perhaps with arrangements for a follow-up visit. Sometimes there will be discussion about the need to be referred to see a hospital specialist. When the patient leaves the room the Doctor needs at least 2-3 minutes to type a full record of the consultation. So, in any 10 minute appointment, if the Doctor is to keep to time, there are only **approximately 7 minutes** with the Doctor.

Probably the **2 most common reasons** for the Doctor running late are when patients bring

either a particularly **complicated problem** or when they bring **more than one problem**:

- **Complex problem:** Sometimes the medical needs of the patient requires more than 10minutes.
- **One Problem, One Appointment:** Bringing more than one problem, which you want the Doctor to deal with will invariably cause the Doctor to run late. Some patients bring in a list of problems. If the Doctor deals with every problem on the list, that patient will be content but it means that subsequent patients in the surgery will be seen late. It is easily seen, therefore, that it only takes 2-3 patients with either a complex problem or with more than one problem, for the last few patients in the surgery to be seen up to an hour late. Also, if the first or subsequent patients have also turned up late, this can add to the wait.

We hope that you will see that, for the greater good of all patients, the Doctors will now be asking patients who come along with more than one problem to select the one they want dealt with that day and to come back another time with the other problem(s).

What can YOU do to help?

- Book one 10 minute appointment for one problem for one patient.
- **Turn up on time:** if there is a queue at reception, why not try the computerised check-in system on the wall to the right of the reception desk?
- **Before you see the Doctor:** think about your symptom(s) and what you will tell him/her, e.g. how long have you had it, how severe is it, does it come and go, what makes it worse or better.
- **If the Doctor or Nurse is running late:** please be patient and understanding... they may have been dealing with or called out to a seriously ill patient.