

DENTON MEDICAL PRACTICE

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Why do Doctors run late?

Quite often patients are seen on time, and even seen early. Surgeries can however run late, especially towards the end, which can be an 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, a GP is in the building by 08:45 or shortly after, to be ready to take the first patient at 9:00. If, for example, the first patient is late (busier traffic than expected seems to be the commonest reason) and arrives say at 9:10 for a 9:00 appointment. Then the GP is already running at least 10 minutes late before they have started with the first patient.

10 minute intervals:

For surgeries, 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 GP.

During those 10 minutes, the GP listens to your problem and asks you questions. This will help in forming a diagnosis. The GP examines you if needed (with a chaperone if required). A prescription may be 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 minutes appointment, if the GP is to keep to time, there are only approximately 7 minutes with the doctor.

Probably the 2 commonest reasons for the GP running late are when patients bring either a particularly complicated problem or when they bring more than one problem.

- (a) **Complex Problem:** sometimes the complaint the patient brings requires more than 10 minutes.
- (b) **More than One Problem:** bringing more than 1 problem which you want the GP to deal with will invariably cause the GP to run late. Some patients bring in a list of problems. If the GP 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 needs 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.

What can YOU do to help?

- 1) Turn up on time and use the computerised check in system on the wall.
- 2) Book one 10 minute appointment for one problem.
- 3) Before you see the GP, think about your symptoms and what you will tell him/her, e.g. how long have you had them, how severe is it, does it come and go, what makes it worse or better.
- 4) If the GP (or nurse) is running late, please be patient and understanding.