

Chalmers HIV Service

Information for patients

How the HIV service works

Our clinics for people living with HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) take place on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday afternoons.

Each clinic day has its own team, and we will therefore offer you an appointment on the same day each time you come to clinic. So if you are with the Monday Team your appointments will always be on a Monday.

This is to ensure you are looked after by the same small group of people who will know about you and your specific requirements.

You will not always be seen by the same person when you come to clinic, but you will be seen by someone from your team. This may be the doctor nurse or pharmacist.

Appointments

If you are newly diagnosed as living with HIV, we will see you several times in the first few weeks while we get you stabilised on treatment and to answer any questions or concerns you may have. Once you are established on medication you will only need to come to the clinic every 6-12 months.

Most patients will only need to have blood tests done once per year. Sometimes you will need extra blood tests 6 months later. If you do not require blood tests at your next appointment it is often possible to have a phone appointment if this works for you, or you can still come into the clinic for an in person appointment if you prefer that. We do need to make contact with you every 6 months so we can prescribe your medication.

We will book you a follow up appointment before you leave the clinic. It will be with the member of the team who we feel is most appropriate.

We understand that you may not know what you will be doing in 6 months time. If you find that the appointment we have given you will no longer work for you please let us know as soon as possible so we can help you reorganise your appointment before you run out of medication. We have a limited number of appointments available each week and we are therefore unlikely to be able to offer you a last minute appointment unless someone else has cancelled their appointment with us.

We will always supply you with enough medication to last until your next appointment. If for any reason you have 2 weeks or less of medication and no appointment scheduled within this time period, please contact the HIV Pharmacy team **now** on 0131 536 1606. The pharmacy at Chalmers is not staffed every weekday so we cannot always dispense medication on the same day.

Please attend your appointment on the day and time booked. If you know that you are unable to attend and you inform us on 0131 536 2097/2098 we can offer your appointment to another patient and we can ensure you have a new appointment organised so that you do not run out of medication. The more notice that you give us the easier it is to offer this appointment to another patient.

There is an answer machine on this number - please leave us a message and we will get back to you. The answer machine is checked every day.

Not attending appointments costs the NHS money.

We cannot always see you for an appointment if you are running significantly late. Please arrive at least 10 minutes before your appointment. We will check your weight and blood pressure before you go to the waiting room. Remember it can be very difficult to find a parking spot near Chalmers. If you are more than 10 minutes late for your appointment, we may need to ask you to reschedule and come back on another day. If we see patients who arrive late this means patients with appointments after you will have to wait longer for their appointment which is unfair on them.

Please inform us if you are moving away from Edinburgh/the Lothians and no longer require HIV care from us.

Medication

Homecare is a service which delivers your medication to your home or work address every 6 months. Using Homecare will usually save the NHS a significant amount of money. If you do not want homecare, then you will collect your medication from the Chalmers Pharmacy after your clinic review. We can supply a maximum of 6 months medication after each appointment.

Mental Health Support

Your social, emotional and psychological wellbeing is as important as your physical health.

The HIV team includes psychologists who can help if you are having a difficult time adjusting to your HIV diagnosis and/or medication, or if you have existing or new mental health difficulties that impact on how you live with HIV. The psychologist can work with you to make sense of your difficulties, help you make changes to support your wellbeing and/or direct you to other services that may be able to help you with your needs. If you think you would benefit from a psychology review, however recent or long ago your diagnosis was, please ask your doctor or nurse about this at your next clinic appointment visit.

GP Contact

We will communicate with your GP and ensure that your medical records in Lothian are updated with information about your care. This is to ensure that any other health care providers you may see in Lothian are aware of the HIV medication and care you are receiving – so that you can be offered the very best holistic care throughout all NHS services. It is important that other services know what medication you are prescribed by us – to allow them to prescribe safely for any other health issues they may be seeing you for. We will ask for your consent before we share this information.

Contact numbers

For any issues related to HIV medication please contact:

HIV Pharmacy - 0131 536 1606

For any issues related to rescheduling appointments or queries about your care please contact:

HIV Secretarial Team - 0131 536 2097/2098