

DoctorLine Frequently Asked Questions

Who will I speak to when I call?

Callers will first speak to a specially trained operator who takes some details and arranges for a GP to call back at a convenient time. If calling for a webcam (video) consultation the operator will ask for an email address.

Who are HealthHero?

HealthHero, who were known as Medical Solutions, have been providing their service since 1998 and have been a supplier to Westfield Health since 2005. They are the most experienced provider of private GP services in the UK and Republic of Ireland, serving approximately 4 million people.

Their aim is to 'support their clients and their members, keeping them healthy by providing convenient, simple access to primary care solutions whenever they need it and wherever they are.'

They are headquartered in Berkshire. They select GPs who are experienced, practising NHS GPs who are General Medical Council Registered/Licensed, on the NHS England Performers list and GP Register.

Full terms and conditions of the service are on HealthHero website here

<https://www.healthhero.com/terms-and-conditions/>

Scope of Service

The Telephone Consultation Service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; the Video Consultation Service is available from 8.00am to 10:00pm, UK time, 7 days a week, excluding Christmas Day.

You must not use the service for emergencies or urgent conditions as this may delay necessary treatment.

If you believe that you are in an emergency or life-threatening situation you should contact your local Emergency Services immediately, especially if someone:

- Has difficulty or is not breathing
- You believe someone is having a heart attack or stroke
- Has severe chest pain
- Has severe bleeding and it can't be stopped
- Has lost consciousness
- Is in acute confused states and/or having fits which aren't stopping

Only residents and/or nationals of the United Kingdom (UK) or Republic of Ireland are eligible to use our services. By using the service, you are confirming that you are a UK or Republic of Ireland resident and/or national.

The service is not a replacement for your own GP. You may still need to see your own GP or contact the emergency services if the clinician feels it is necessary.

The clinician reserves the right to terminate the consultation in the event of any inappropriate behaviour.

Preparing for the consultation

At the time of your consultation, you should ensure you are somewhere private. Where possible, it's recommended that you use a land line for a telephone consultation as mobile reception quality is often variable. If you have call barring set up on your phone, the recommendation is to use a different line as it is possible that your service provider could block the clinician's call to you.

When a video appointment is confirmed, you will be sent an email with a link to access the service. Very occasionally, email systems can experience delays. If you have not received your email you should call before the consultation is due to commence. Should a video consultation not be possible for any reason, the clinician will initiate or attempt to continue the consultation over the telephone. The availability of the online service cannot be guaranteed as mobile data and internet connections are controlled by third parties with whom HealthHero UK Ltd has no direct relationship or contract.

Can I choose to speak to a male or female doctor?

Yes, where possible, HealthHero will always try to accommodate a patient's preference to speak to a male or female doctor. All their GPs are friendly, experienced, NHS practising GPs, with the same qualifications as your own NHS GP.

What sort of things can I ask about?

Anything you would normally ask your own GP, for example, about any travel vaccinations, sensitive or confidential concerns, explanations of diagnosis or treatment, aches and pains or any other health-related query you might have.

Will I still need to see a GP?

Most patients receive the advice, reassurance and, where appropriate, diagnosis they need from the doctors. The doctors can assist with most health concerns, but if a patient's symptoms require a physical examination, or need a repeat prescription, they may be referred to their own GP.

If I wanted to speak to a GP as soon as possible how long would I usually wait?

Depending on the time of day, typically appointments are available within 6-7 hours. This is often sooner in quiet periods such as evenings, overnight and weekends. However, appointment times can be extended if demand is higher than forecast particularly in the busiest period of 9am-5pm.

Patients can request a specific time, during a lunch break or an evening for example, otherwise they will be offered the next available appointment. Where HealthHero are unable to provide an appointment at the specified time, they will use reasonable endeavours to offer the patient a time as near to it as possible.

How will the GP service communicate with my own GP?

Where the doctor feels it is appropriate (especially where a prescription is issued), he/she will ask for the patient's permission to send a copy of the consultation notes to their NHS GP. Communication is by secure email, fax or post depending on the surgery.

Can the GPs issue a prescription?

Yes, GPs can arrange and electronically authorise private prescription medication. The online pharmacy will then contact the patient to arrange delivery of the medication to a nominated UK address. The pharmacy will take payment via credit or debit card.

Private prescription medication is subject to a full consultation with the GP taking into consideration presented symptoms, medical history, and any current medication. Medication will only be issued where the GP believes it is clinically appropriate, on a case by case basis. Where appropriate, and as advised by the GP, prescriptions can be collected at a local pharmacy nominated by the patient.

What types of medications can be prescribed?

The GP can offer a private prescription where they feel that prescription medication could assist the patient in treating their symptoms.

Private prescriptions will only be raised:

- At the sole discretion of the clinician
- During a telephone or video consultation
- If it is safe, clinically appropriate and in the patient's best interests
- If it complies with HealthHero prescribing policy

HealthHero follows GMC (General Medical Council) best practice guidelines for remote prescribing. Please be aware that some medications cannot be prescribed remotely, and the clinician will advise if they are unable to do so.

In the absence of possession and knowledge of the patient's medical records and follow up care, except for the contraceptive pill in Ireland, the service is not suitable for issuing repeat prescriptions.

If the patient is unable to satisfactorily answer the clinician's questions, then they may not be able to raise a private prescription. Common medicines prescribed are short courses of antibiotics, anti-inflammatory and pain relief.

Clinicians have full access to the British National Formulary. However, many drugs in this Formulary would not be appropriate to prescribe remotely. HealthHero prescribing policy provides the framework for the clinical decision-making process and stipulates limitations on the quantities of controlled medications. Schedule 1, 2 and 3 controlled drugs cannot be prescribed at all. The maximum quantities of a controlled drugs vary by type, a medication containing codeine, for example, would be limited to maximum of 40 tablets (or equivalent) for a maximum of five days' supply. HealthHero follows the South Central Antimicrobial Network guidelines which are based on national guidelines and against which, all doctors are audited.

What are the prescription medication delivery charges?

If you are in the UK, Crown Dependencies or EU at the time of your consultation and are offered a prescription, then provided it is in stock and the prescription is raised before 3pm (UK time), it can be delivered to an address of your choice as soon as the next working day.

The pharmacy will contact you by telephone shortly after your consultation. A range of delivery speeds are available which they will discuss with you at the time. The total cost will depend on your location and chosen delivery option. Next day delivery to the Crown Dependencies or EU destinations cannot be guaranteed and may be affected by local customs regulations.

Whilst the cost of medication varies, there is a minimum charge of £6.50 per item for postage. There is no postage and packaging charge for collection of prescription medication at local pharmacies. Medication charges will vary between pharmacies.

Can the GPs issue repeat prescriptions?

In line with clinical best practice guidelines for remote prescribing, the GPs are unable to issue long term, repeat medication. Should a patient require repeat prescription medication, it is in their best interests to be seen by their regular GP who can provide the ongoing monitoring, medical record and follow up care such prescriptions may require. GPs can offer advice on medication you are taking and may be able to offer short course medication depending on the symptoms presented.

Can I have my medication delivered abroad?

Inside the European Union: If you are in an EU country other than the Republic of Ireland at the time of your consultation and the GP believes you would benefit from medication, they will explore alternative treatment options such as over the counter medicines from a local pharmacy as a first consideration.

If over the counter medicines are not suitable and the duration of your stay abroad allows for the medication to be delivered to you safely, it can be delivered to a nominated overseas address. However, if you are nearing the end of your stay abroad, it may be more convenient to have the medication delivered to your home address on your return.

Please note, the cost of overseas postage will be higher than UK delivery, therefore seeing a local GP may be the preferred option.

Outside the EU: Due to pharmaceutical laws and regulations we are unable to prescribe if you are outside of the United Kingdom, Crown Dependencies, or the EU at the time of your consultation.

How is the medication packaged?

It depends on the size and type of medication, but most smaller items are sent in cushioned, securely sealed packets. Packets or boxes are plain with no markings.

Are there any limits as to what the doctor can prescribe?

Some medications cannot be prescribed remotely, and the clinician will advise if they are unable to do so. The service follows GMC (General Medical Council) best practice guidelines for remote prescribing. Typically, a prescription would be raised for a short course of medication to treat an acute condition. The service is not designed to provide repeat prescriptions or ongoing treatment for chronic conditions. The doctor will discuss the available options with the patient at the time of the consultation, but it is sometimes in their best interests to be referred to their own GP.

Can I collect the medication from a local pharmacy?

Local Pharmacy Collection is an option if it is made available to the patient by the clinician. This would be for patients in the UK or in the Republic of Ireland. You would be asked to nominate a local pharmacy to fulfil the prescription. The private prescription would be sent directly to the pharmacy, and they would contact you to advise when it is ready for collection. When choosing the collection service, please be aware that HealthHero will have no knowledge or control over the pharmacy charges for fulfilling the private prescription.

Can I have an electronic prescription?

If you are outside of the Republic of Ireland, you may be offered a digitally secure electronic prescription for a nominated pharmacy. Controlled medications cannot be electronically prescribed outside of the UK.

You must present this to your nominated pharmacy, acting as the intermediary between HealthHero and them, unaltered and with the instructions included in the email you receive with the prescription.

Fulfilling an electronic prescription is at the sole discretion of the dispensing pharmacist you present it to, and HealthHero is not responsible for any refusal to dispense. When choosing to receive an electronic prescription, please be aware that HealthHero will have no knowledge or control over the pharmacy fulfilment charges.

Isn't it dangerous for doctors with no records to give prescriptions?

All HealthHero's GPs will only prescribe when it is safe to do so. They are experienced practising GPs, and they will only prescribe following a thorough consultation, which takes account of medical history, allergies, current medication and presented symptoms. As in their NHS role, they will adhere to the GMC (General Medical Council) guidelines on prescribing following a remote consultation.

The patient management system uses the British National Formulary and its approved drugs and dosage levels for medication. When raising a prescription, the GP must review it prior to authorising, and it will be checked again by a qualified pharmacist before dispensing.

As the GPs take a full history from the patient including any current medication and dosages, allergies, etc. This detail remains on the patient management system, including data relating to any medication prescribed by the HealthHero doctor, so in future consultations, doctors can see previous prescribing history. When a prescription is issued, the consultation notes are sent to the patient's own GP with patient consent.

Every prescribing doctor is audited monthly and HealthHero compliance team, led by their Chief Medical Officer, provides feedback and support to the clinical team, promoting best clinical practice.

What happens if the doctor misses something?

All the GPs are NHS practising GPs working in primary care. In over 80% of cases the doctors are able to provide a clear course of action where the patient doesn't need to see another medical professional. If the doctor doesn't feel able to conclude on the best course of treatment over the phone, they will refer the patient to their own GP for a physical examination or further testing, or if necessary, to the emergency services if they believe high priority treatment might be necessary.

The GP telephone consultation service is available for unlimited use; if a patient's symptoms are not improving, or they later remember something which may be relevant, they can contact the service and speak to a doctor 24/7 to discuss any concerns.

Can the GPs issue fit notes?

No, this is not something that is available as part of Westfield's DoctorLine service.

Can the GPs issue referrals to specialists?

Should the GP feel that a patient would benefit from a specialist assessment or further treatment they can provide an open private referral letter. This referral is for Private Medical Care only but cannot be used on a Westfield Health plan and will not be accepted for services in the NHS. Referral letters can be posted or emailed directly according to patient preference.

Please note the private referral is not a claims authorisation. It cannot be used as a referral for benefits you may use on a Westfield health plan. It cannot be used as a referral for Therapy Treatments, Consultation or Private Health Insurance, or any other benefits on Westfield plans that require a GP referral. A GP referral if it is needed must come from your own GP, the one you are registered with at your home address.

What happens if I don't have internet, can I still have a private prescription over the phone?

Yes, the service doesn't require an internet connection to access to a GP. The telephone consultation service provides 24/7 telephone access to a GP, and should the doctor feel it was necessary, they can issue private prescription medication and open referrals, remotely.

Is there a limit to the number of calls?

No. Patients can contact the GP advice line as often as needed, there is no limit to phone or webcam consultations.

How are their GPs recruited? What qualifications do the doctors have?

The doctors are recruited via a rigorous two stage interview process with HealthHero Chief Medical Officer and HR vetting procedures, which ensure that GPs are qualified, experienced, and knowledgeable to an equivalent standard to your own GP. The minimum criteria require that the GPs:

- Are currently practising in the NHS as a GP and have at least 2 years' experience
- Are on the GMC register
- Have a Bachelor of Medicine Degree, those who qualified after 2007 must be Members of the Royal College of GPs
- Are on the National Performers List for England
- Complete an annual NHS appraisal
- Have an enhanced DBS background check
- Provide complete document evidence that they are suitably qualified
- Provide at least 2 references to support their skills and experiences

How is it ensured the GPs are vetted on an ongoing basis?

Once recruited, the GPs are continuously monitored to ensure they maintain their skills to the highest standards. All the GPs complete an annual NHS appraisal to review their practise and performance.

HealthHero has a Quality Management System that incorporates policies and procedures, consistent with best NHS practise, and each GP's performance is continually audited. This auditing includes reviewing key documents to ensure all GP's knowledge, skills and registration are up to date.

Bi-annual doctor meetings are held the clinical team to maintain good engagement, share best practice and help to continually raise our standards of care and service. In addition to ongoing internal auditing, the GPs' clinical notes are also reviewed by an independent external organisation called Clinical Guardian.

How are data and records stored and can my own doctor access it?

All patient data and records are stored on the HealthHero secure patient management system, in a secure data centre which is only accessible with dual-factor authentication by authorised personnel. Medical Solution believe it is important to have all your medical records in one place, therefore, when appropriate and with permission, they send any relevant consultation notes, including notes for any prescriptions or referrals issued, to the patient's own NHS GP.

What about confidentiality?

Patient confidentiality is very important, any records remain confidential unless patients provide permission to share it with a third party such as their own NHS GP or a specialist.

How long will my personal data be held on a system?

As a healthcare provider based in the UK and regulated by the Care Quality Commission in England, HealthHero follow the current guidance issued by the NHS and British Medical Association on retention of healthcare records.

The current guidance is that GP records are retained for a minimum of 10 years after death, but that Electronic Health Records (EHRs) must not be destroyed or deleted. This includes any video or audio recordings.

The IT systems HealthHero have been accredited by Cyber Essentials.

Can I have a consultation and prescription for my children too?

Dependents are eligible to use the GP advice line, but where a member, or dependent, requiring GP services is under the age of 18, their legal guardian must call on their behalf.

Does HealthHero meet CQC standards?

Yes, HealthHero is regulated by the Care Quality Commission for the delivery of medical services, and they are rated GOOD.

Can people in the Republic of Ireland, Isle of Man and Channel Islands use the service? Is anything different?

The service operates in the same way. The only differences are around prescriptions.

The way the prescription service operates in Isle of Man and Channel Islands is the same as in the UK. The medication can either be collected from a nominated pharmacy or delivered to the patient's address. Please note, in the Isle of Man and Channel Islands, delivery costs are likely to be higher.

In the Republic of Ireland, prescriptions are sent directly to the patient's chosen pharmacy.

If I have an employee living outside the UK, say in the USA, can they use the service? Does it make a difference if they aren't a British citizen?

You must be a resident and/or national of the United Kingdom (UK), its Crown Dependencies or the Republic of Ireland to be eligible to use the services. Eligible users can access the service worldwide for

advice. The prescribing service is only available when the patient accesses the service from within the EU. Foreign nationals, normally resident and working abroad are not eligible to use the services.

How can a hearing-impaired patient access the service?

Yes, HealthHero can provide the service to hearing impaired patients if they have access to a text relay service. Consultations can be booked using this service.

Patients who have a hearing impairment are recommended to book a video consultation appointment with one of the experienced GPs. The web-based video consultation platform has chat functionality that enables patients to send instant messages to the GP. The patient and GP benefit from enhanced visual communication and enable the patient to share any visual symptoms such as a rash or swelling with the GP. It may also be possible to arrange to undertake the consultation with a British Language Signor (BLS).

If I don't speak English, how do I access the service?

For patients who don't speak English there is a translation services for over 200 languages. HealthHero has partnered with Language Line Solutions (www.language-line.com) who provide translation and interpretation services from trained, professional translators and interpreters with more than 240 languages available.

The service is available from 8am to 10pm, 7 days a week. The consultation must take place via a video consultation, so the patient will need to be able to access their email and the device they are using for the consultation at the time booked. This is in order so the GP can see the patient and benefit from enhanced visual communication.

Before the consultation begins, the doctor will call the Language Line translation service, speak to the operator, and request a translator in the relevant language, then transfer the doctor to the translator and the translator will then ring the patient.

Prescriptions are not available with this service. Language Line will not retain any call scripts and your personal data will be processed live for the purposes of translating the call.

To book a consultation using the language line solution, the booking must be made by someone who does speak English, so that the instructions on how the service works can be communicated to the patient.

Calling on behalf of someone else

HealthHero will only book appointments for the caller or a dependent child of theirs. For instance, you wouldn't be able to book in a consultation for a parent if you are calling on their behalf. There have been occasions where callers will book an appointment using their details, but during the consultation will try to seek advice for someone else; the consultation and record have to be for the patient booked so in this scenario the GP would not conduct the consultation.