DoctorLine Frequently Asked Questions

Who will I speak to when I call?

Callers will first speak to a specially trained operator who will take some basic details and arrange for a GP to call back at a convenient time. For webcam (video) consultations the operator will also ask for an email address so that the consultation link can be sent in advance.

How will I book a consultation?

You can book a consultation via the My HealthHero App or the HealthHero Web App - https://my.healthhero.com. Once you book a consultation, you will receive a booking confirmation via SMS and Email.

Who are HealthHero?

HealthHero (formerly Medical Solutions) has been delivering healthcare services since 1998 and has been a supplier to Westfield Health since 2005. As one of the most established providers of private GP services in the UK and Republic of Ireland, HealthHero supports approximately 4 million people.

Their mission is to help clients and members stay healthy by providing convenient and straightforward access to primary care services whenever and wherever they are needed.

Headquartered in Berkshire, HealthHero selects experienced practising NHS GPs who are registered and licensed by the General Medical Council, listed on the NHS England Performers List, and included on the GP Register.

Full terms and conditions for the service can be found on the HealthHero Terms and Conditions page

Scope of Service

The Virtual 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, Including Christmas Day.

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

If you believe that you or someone else is experiencing a medical emergency or life-threatening situation, you should contact your local Emergency Services immediately. This is particularly important if someone:

- Is experiencing a mental health crisis or having suicidal thoughts
- Is having difficulty or has stopped breathing
- May be having a heart attack or stroke
- Has severe chest pain
- Has severe bleeding that cannot be stopped
- Has lost consciousness
- Is experiencing acute confusion and /or seizures that are not 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.

Is there a limit on the number of consultations I can have?

No, there is no limit to the number of consultations. As there is no limit, we recommend you book a separate appointment for each issue you wish to discuss.

Preparing for the consultation

At the time of your consultation, you should ensure that you are in a private and safe location. Please note that consultations cannot take place while a patient is driving. Where possible, it's recommended that you use a land line for a telephone consultation as mobile reception can sometimes be unreliable. If you have call barring enabled on your phone, you may wish to use an alternative number, as your service provider could prevent the clinician's call from reaching you.

Once a video consultation has been confirmed, you will receive an email containing a link to access the service. While uncommon, email delivery can occasionally be delayed. If you have not received the email before your appointment is due to begin, please contact the service for assistance. 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 discuss with your own GP, such as advice about an infection, injury or illness, travel vaccinations, sensitive or confidential concerns, explanations of a diagnosis or treatment, aches and pains or any other health-related query you might have.

We recommend booking a separate consultation for each individual presenting issue.

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, a repeat prescription, or further investigations they may be referred to their own GP. Conditions that require longer term management such as diabetes, asthma, copd are best managed by the patient's NHS GP team.

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

Typically access to support is fast and efficient. However, during peak demand - particularly between 9 am and 5pm - waiting times may be longer if demand exceeds forecast levels. Appointment times can be extended if demand is higher than forecast particularly in the busiest period of 9am-5pm.

Patients may request a specific appointment time, for example during a lunch break or in the evening. Otherwise, they will be offered the next available appointment. Where HealthHero is 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, they will ask for the patient's permission to send a copy of the consultation notes to their NHS GP. Communication is by secure email or post depending on the surgery. It is standard practice to share information with the NHS GP when a prescription, referral or sick note has been issued.

Can the GPs issue a prescription?

Yes, GPs can arrange and electronically authorise private prescription medication.

Private prescription medication is issued only following a full consultation with the GP taking into consideration presented symptoms, medical history, and any current medication. Prescriptions are provided only where the GP deems them clinically appropriate, on a case-by-case basis.

How do I get my prescription?

In the United Kingdom: In the UK, patients will receive an email and text from SignatureRX which can be taken to any UK pharmacy to obtain their prescription or used to arrange home delivery where available.

Inside the ROI: If you are in the ROI and if it is clinically appropriate, the clinician will send the prescription directly to the patient's nominated pharmacy for collection.

If not in the UK or ROI, see question 'Can I have my medication delivered abroad?'.

Where a private prescription is issued, please be aware that we will have no knowledge or control over the pharmacy fulfilment charges.
Prescriptions for controlled drugs cannot be sent outside of the UK or ROI.

What types of medications can be prescribed?

Where clinically indicated the GP can offer patients a private prescription. Commonly prescribed medications include short courses of antibiotics, anti-inflammatory medication and pain relief.

Private prescriptions will only be raised:

- At the sole discretion of the clinician
- When it is safe, clinically appropriate and in the patient's best interests
- When it complies with HealthHero prescribing policy

HealthHero follows General Medical Council (GMC) & Irish 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 access to a patient's full medical records and ongoing follow-up care, the service is generally not suitable for issuing repeat prescriptions. There are a small number of exceptions where longer-term prescribing may be appropriate, such as for contraception, Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) and certain long-term or intermittent conditions including acne, hay fever, indigestion.

Clinicians have full access to the British National Formulary (BNF). However, many medicines listed within it are not appropriate for remote prescribing. HealthHero's prescribing policy provides a framework for clinical decision-making and sets out clear limitations on the prescribing of controlled medications.

Schedule 1, 2 and 3 controlled drugs cannot be prescribed under this service. Where controlled medicines may be prescribed, strict limits apply to quantity and duration. 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 National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines which are based on national standards. All clinicians are audited against these standards to ensure safe and appropriate prescribing.

What are the prescription medication delivery charges?

If the patient is in the UK at the time of their consultation and is offered a prescription then, provided it is in stock and the prescription is raised before 4pm (UK time), it can be delivered to an address of their choice as soon as the next working day. There is no charge for delivery.

Our pharmacy partner will send a text message shortly after delivery has been selected. The estimated delivery date will be confirmed before payment for the medication is taken.

There is no charge to issue prescriptions. However, patients will need to pay for the Medication itself. As prescriptions are private, medication costs may vary.
There are no postage or packaging charges for collection of prescription medication from local pharmacies. Medication prices may vary between pharmacies.

Can the GPs issue repeat prescriptions?

HealthHero remains primarily an episodic care service, and standard repeat prescribing is generally outside the scope of remote consultations. However, in selected low-risk situations and where clinically appropriate, limited follow-up, repeat, or extended prescribing may be appropriate within the telemedicine setting.

Currently approved medications for repeat, back-to-back, or extended prescribing include contraceptive pills and patches, vaginal oestrogen, systemic hormone replacement therapy (HRT), acne treatments, migraine treatments, eczema treatments, erectile dysfunction medications, hay fever treatments, proton pump inhibitors (PPIs), and laxatives.

Can I have my medication delivered abroad?

ROI service: Prescriptions may be issued to patients to present at pharmacies within EU countries. This applies to all medications except controlled drugs. It remains at the discretion of the dispensing pharmacy whether the prescription is accepted.

UK service: Prescriptions can be issued for dispensing in the Republic of Ireland via our Irish team. However, prescriptions are otherwise not generally valid outside the UK, with the exception of Spain. 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.

Where a prescription cannot be sent abroad, but the GP considers that medication may be appropriate, alternative treatment options will be explored first, such as recommending suitable over-the-counter medicines available locally. Where appropriate, the GP may also provide a copy of the consultation notes outlining the treatment they would have recommended, which can be shared with a local pharmacy to determine whether an over-the-counter alternative is available.

Controlled drugs are not prescribed outside the UK or Republic of Ireland under any circumstances.

Where over-the-counter options are not suitable and the patient's stay abroad allows sufficient time for safe delivery, medication may be sent to a nominated overseas address. However, if the patient is nearing the end of their stay, it may be more appropriate for medication to be delivered to a UK address upon return.

Please note that international postage costs will be higher than standard UK delivery. In some cases, consulting a local GP may be the more practical option.

Controlled drugs are not prescribed outside of ROI and UK in any circumstances.

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 to what the doctor can prescribe?

Some medications cannot be prescribed remotely, and the clinician will advise where this is the case. The service follows General Medical Council (GMC) and the Irish Medical Council (IMC) best practice guidelines for remote prescribing. Typically, prescriptions are issued for short courses of medication to treat acute conditions. The service is not generally designed to provide repeat prescriptions or ongoing treatment for chronic conditions, apart from the exceptions outlined above.

The clinician will discuss available treatment options with the patient during the consultation; however, in some cases it may be in the patient's best interest to be referred back to their own GP for ongoing care

Can I collect the medication from a local pharmacy?

UK: A prescription code is issued directly to the patient and can be presented at a UK pharmacy of their choice.

Republic of Ireland (ROI): A prescription can be sent directly via Healthmail to a nominated pharmacy of the patient's choice within the Republic of Ireland.

Can I have an electronic prescription?

Within the UK service, prescriptions are issued electronically via our pharmacy partner, SignatureRx. Prescriptions can then be collected from a pharmacy of the patient's choice or delivered to the patient's home address. We do not issue prescriptions directly to patients.

In the Republic of Ireland, prescriptions are sent electronically via Healthmail.

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

All HealthHero GPs prescribe only where is safe and clinically appropriate to do so. They are experienced practising clinicians who issue prescriptions following a thorough consultation, taking into account the patient's medical history, allergies, current medication and presenting symptoms. As in their NHS practice, they adhere to General Medical Council (GMC) or Irish Medical Council (IMC) guidelines on prescribing following remote consultations. The patient management system is informed by the British National Formulary (BNF), including approved medicines and dosage guidelines. When issuing a prescription, the GP reviews it prior to authorisation, and it is subsequently checked by a qualified pharmacist before dispensing.

A full clinical history is recorded during consultations, including current medications, dosages, and allergies. This information is stored securely on the patient management system, along with details of any medication previously prescribed by HealthHero clinicians, allowing continuity of care across consultations. With patient consent, consultation notes are shared with the patient's own GP.

All prescribing clinicians are audited monthly, and the HealthHero compliance team, led by the Medical Director Team, provides ongoing feedback and support to the clinical team, promoting best clinical practice.

What safeguarding measures are in place for prescriptions?

HealthHero has a range of safeguarding measures in place to ensure safe prescribing practices. All prescribing activity is subject to monthly clinical audits, which focus on higher-risk conditions and medications, controlled drugs, repeat prescription requests, and overall compliance with both internal policies and national guidelines. These audits also help identify patterns of concern in both prescribing behaviour and consultation trends.

Antibiotic prescribing is closely monitored, with a strong focus on appropriate use and antimicrobial stewardship. Feedback, guidance, and best practice updates are regularly issued both to individual clinicians and across the wider clinical team.

The patient management system is designed to support safe prescribing by prompting clinicians to record and review current medications, check for potential drug interactions, and confirm allergies. Relevant clinical data is retained between consultations to support continuity of care.

In addition, consultation notes are shared with the patient's NHS GP (with patient consent) when a prescription is issued, ensuring appropriate clinical oversight and continuity between services.

What happens if the doctor misses something?

All GPs are practising NHS clinicians working in primary care. In over 80% of cases, they are able to provide a clear management plan without the need for the patient to see another healthcare professional.

Where a clinician is unable to safely determine the appropriate course of treatment during a remote consultation, they will refer the patient to their own GP for a physical examination or further investigations, or, where necessary, advise contact with emergency services if urgent or high-priority care is required.

The GP telephone consultation service is available for unlimited use. If symptoms do not improve, or if the patient later recalls additional relevant information, they can contact the service at any time to speak with a doctor 24/7 to discuss ongoing concerns.

Can the GPs issue fit notes?

Where clinically appropriate and subject to service availability, a GP may issue a private fit note. HealthHero does not charge for issuing private fit notes; however, patients should check with their employer to confirm whether these will be accepted. Private fit notes cannot be used to access statutory sick pay or state benefits.

Fit notes are issued at the discretion of the clinician. For acute conditions being managed during the consultation, a fit note may be issued for up to 7 days from the date of consultation, and in exceptional circumstances up to 14 days.

The service does not routinely provide extensions to fit notes, whether originally issued by a HealthHero clinician or another healthcare professional. Any extensions are generally expected to be provided by the patient's usual GP. In exceptional cases, a short bridging extension may be issued while the patient awaits review by their registered GP.

Fit notes may be backdated in limited circumstances, where clinically appropriate and supported by sufficient information, and the clinician may request evidence of previous illness when considering this.

Please note that acceptance of private fit notes is ultimately at the discretion of the employer, who may require documentation from the patient's own GP practice.

Can the GPs issue referrals to specialists?

Where a GP considers that a patient would benefit from specialist assessment or further treatment, they may issue an open private referral letter. This referral is for private medical care only and cannot be used for NHS services or as part of a Westfield Health plan.

Referral letters can be sent to the patient by post or email, depending on their preference.

Please note that a private referral letter does not constitute claims authorisation and cannot be used to access benefits under a Westfield Health plan, including therapy treatments, consultations, private health insurance benefits, or any other services requiring a GP referral.

Where a referral is required for such purposes, it must be issued by the patient's registered GP at their home practice.

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

Yes, our telephone consultation service provides telephone access to a clinician 7 days a week 8am to 10pm, and should the clinician feel it is necessary, they can remotely issue private prescription medication, sick notes and open referrals.

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.

Will my calls be charged?

Calls to 01 and 03 telephone numbers from UK landlines and mobiles are usually included in free plan minutes if available; otherwise calls to 03 numbers cost the same as calls to 01/02 prefix numbers. Calls to 0800 numbers are free from consumers' mobiles and landlines in the UK.

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

GPs are typically recommended to the service by current GPs working within the HealthHero clinical team.

All doctors undergo a rigorous two-stage interview process with the HealthHero Medical Director team, supported by HR vetting procedures. This ensures that clinicians are appropriately qualified, experienced, and operate to standards equivalent to those expected in NHS general practice.

The minimum criteria require that GPs:
- Are currently practising as NHS GPs with at least 2 years' experience
- Are registered with the General Medical Council (GMC)
- Hold a Bachelor of Medicine degree; those qualified after 2007 are typically Members of the Royal College of General Practitioners (MRCGP)
- Are listed on the National Performers List for England
- Complete annual NHS appraisals
- Hold an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check
- Provide full documentary evidence of their qualifications and eligibility to practise
- Provide at least two professional references verifying their skills and experience

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

Once recruited, the GPs are continuously monitored to ensure they maintain the highest professional standards. All clinicians complete annual NHS appraisals, which review their practise and performance.

HealthHero operates a Quality Management System incorporating policies and procedures aligned with best NHS practise, and each GP's performance is subject to ongoing audit. This includes regular review of key documentation to ensure clinicians' knowledge, skills and registrations remain current and compliant.

Annual clinical meetings are held with the GP team to support engagement, share best practice and continuously improve standards of care and service. In addition, monthly updates are provided to keep clinicians informed of changes to clinical guidelines, policies and prescribing trends.

Alongside the regular internal governance processes, GP clinical notes are also reviewed by the consultation analysis team to provide additional oversight and assurance of clinical quality.

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 within a secure data centre, accessible only to authorised personnel via multi-factor authentication.

HealthHero believes it is important for patients to have their medical information appropriately consolidated. Therefore, where appropriate and with patient consent, relevant consultation notes, including details of any prescriptions or referrals issued are shared with the patient's registered NHS GP to support continuity of care.

What about confidentiality?

Patient confidentiality is of the utmost importance. All patient records are kept strictly confidential and will not be shared with third parties without the patient's consent, except where required by law or in exceptional circumstances.

Where appropriate and with the patient's permission, information may be shared with third parties such as the patient's NHS GP or a specialist to support continuity of care.

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 16, the patient/legal guardian must book the appointment on behalf of their dependant and must also attend the consultation.

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?

Patients may use the service while abroad or in a Crown Dependency; however, prescribing can present limitations in these circumstances.

Prescriptions in the Isle of Man and Channel Islands can only formally be issued by practitioners registered within those jurisdictions. In practice, we have found that SignatureRx may be able to post prescriptions to these locations, and some pharmacies on the islands may accept SignatureRx prescriptions, although acceptance cannot be guaranteed. Please note that delivery costs to these regions are likely to be higher than standard UK delivery.

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

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 to UK, Spain or ROI (or EU if ROI service).

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.languageline.com) who provide translation and interpretation services from trained, professional translators and interpreters with more than 240 languages available. Language Line will not retain any call scripts, and your personal data will be processed live for the purposes of translating the call.

The interpreters are independent contractors and any translation given to you by an interpreter is the sole responsibility of the interpreter and may not be entirely accurate in all cases. In the circumstances, and to the extent permitted by law, we do not warrant or make any representation as to the interpretation by an interpreter and disclaim any liability for the acts or omissions of such interpreter.

The interpreter is only present to facilitate communication during the consultation. They should not be asked to undertake any other duties during the consultation time. Prescriptions are not available whilst using this service.

The service is available from 8am to 10pm, 7 days a week; as 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.

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.

To request a Language Line translator, you will need to call our Customer Support team on the telephone number you have been given to access the service. We may not be able to arrange this service if your appointment is within the next 3 hours.

If you have already booked your consultation online, you will still need to call our Customer Support team to request a translator.

Can people in the Republic of Ireland get a Medical Certificate free of charge?

HealthHero can issue Medical Certificates to patients living in the ROI free of charge, where clinically appropriate.

A Medical Certificate is issued by a GP to confirm that an employee is unfit for work due to illness and is typically the document required by employers as evidence of sickness absence.

An IB1 form, is different and is used to apply for Illness Benefit from the Department of Social Protection. As this is a state benefit application form rather than a medical certificate for employment purposes HealthHero can issue IB1 forms, up to 2 weeks max, for acute illnesses only, when clinically appropriate.

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.