

## Swanswell Medical Centre

### Home Visit Policy

Home visits are extremely time consuming for healthcare professionals, as only 1-2 patients can be seen per hour in a home setting (with fewer assessment and treatment options), compared with 6 or more at the surgery. While we will not decline visits to patients who are genuinely too ill to travel by themselves it is advisable to keep these to a minimum to make best use of clinical time. It is difficult to provide high quality modern health care outside the surgery.

By attending surgery patients can access timely and appropriate investigations. At the surgery Doctors have equipment to make thorough assessments; we have ECG machines, nebulisers, pulse oximeter, nurses can do blood tests and dressings as required. A Doctor does not carry these with him/her. Consultations outside of the surgery carry a higher risk of medical errors.

#### **Definition of housebound**

A patient is deemed to be housebound when they are unable to leave their home environment through a physical or psychological illness. A patient is not considered housebound if he or she is able to leave their home with minimal assistance or support. For example unassisted/assisted visit to the Doctor, dentist, hairdresser, supermarket, social events or hospital outpatients.

Some patients may not be housebound permanently but rather are housebound temporarily as a consequence of an episode of illness. Minimal assistance would be described as a person who can leave their own home and travel to a clinical appointment in a vehicle such as a personal car, taxi or public transport adapted for their use or not and with or without the use of a wheel chair either by themselves or with an escort.

To avoid confusion any person who requires a specialist vehicle (Ambulance) or a two person escort would be regarded as house bound. To avoid further confusion a person will not be regarded as housebound because they do not personally have a companion to escort them to a clinical appointment.

Reasons other than being medically unfit do not constitute a reason to perform a home visit. For example:

- **Transport issues for the patient**

It is not the GP practice's responsibility to arrange transport, or to perform home visits because the patient has difficulty arranging transport. In these circumstances patients should seek transport help from relatives, friends, or taxi firms.

- **Childcare issues for a patient**

If a patient has difficulty arranging for someone to care for their children whilst attending appointments, the patients are welcome to bring their children to the surgery.

- **Poor mobility**

Whilst it is understood that having poor mobility is inconvenient and unpleasant, GP surgeries are designed to cater for patients with restricted mobility. If patients are able to attend appointments at other healthcare settings, then they should also be expected to attend appointments in GP surgeries.

- **The unwell child**

Children with a fever will not be made worse by transporting a child to a place of care. It is in the best interest of the child to attend the surgery where they can be properly assessed and treated.

If a parent believes that the child is too unwell to travel to a surgery, then it would be advisable for them to seek help from the emergency services by calling 999. If the GP feels that attending the child at home, based on the clinical history, may prevent delay in treatment because of distance from available ambulance services, then they should attempt to do so.

- **Residents of care homes**

Care home residents are no different to patients in their own homes. The need to visit should be based upon clinical need, not the availability of transport or staff to attend the surgery. It is the responsibility of care facilities to make transport available for residents so that they can get to medical and non-medical appointments.

All requests for home visits should ideally be made by 10.30am. The emergency on-call doctor that day will telephone the patient/carer and triage the need for the home visit. If the triage assessment indicates that a visit is necessary, it will be scheduled with one of the visiting GP's that day. No guarantee should be given as to which GP will attend. Most visits are performed between morning and afternoon surgeries. If the triaging GP feels that more urgent attention is required, patients/carers will be instructed to call 999 or the surgery will do so.