

Frequently asked questions

“I’m young and usually healthy – do I need continuity of care?”

Younger, healthier people who rarely visit their doctor are less likely to experience the benefits of continuity. However, if a doctor gets to know you while you are young and healthy this may be useful later if you develop an on-going health problem.

“Surely the practice records have all my details anyway?”

Although doctors do their best to write the important facts, it isn’t possible to include the whole of a consultation in the notes. Some things such as how a patient normally looks or talks, can’t be fully recorded but doctors may remember if they see the patient again.

“Wouldn’t it be better to see any doctor rather than wait for an appointment with my own doctor?”

Sometimes, if you need urgent care and your doctor is not available. However, if possible try to see your own doctor as they will know you better and be able to provide better care.

“Why is the NHS not making continuity a priority?”

Current policies favour making it easier to see any GP over continuity, partially because this is what patients have asked for. However the evidence for benefits of good continuity is stronger than for improved access to any GP.



Continuity of care in general practice

Produced by
St Leonard's Research Practice, Exeter

www.continuitycounts.com

A Guide
for patients

What is continuity of care?

Continuity of care describes the continuing working relationship between doctor and patient.

It means seeing the same doctor for as many of your appointments as possible and having a doctor who takes overall responsibility for your care.



What are the benefits?

- Not having to repeat your story to different doctors. This saves time and means things are less likely to be missed.
- Having a doctor you know and trust.
- There is also scientific evidence of several benefits from continuity of care.

What is the evidence?

Research shows that with good continuity of care patients are:

- More satisfied
- More likely to have a good relationship with their doctor
- Less likely to have to go to A&E or be admitted to hospital
- More likely to agree with the advice given
- More likely to take positive steps to look after their own health
- More likely to receive good quality of care
- More likely to live longer



Any drawbacks?

You may need to wait a little longer to see your own doctor rather than any doctor.

Sometimes seeing a different doctor may be helpful as they have a “fresh pair of eyes”.

You may not get on with your doctor.

What can I do?

- If your registered doctor does not suit you at all, discuss with your practice whether you can change doctor.
- Book as many of your doctor appointments as possible with one doctor.
- Help your doctor to understand you as a person by giving them full information.

