**Patient choice of GP practices**



From January 5 2015, all GP practices in England are free to register new patients who live outside their practice boundary area.This means that you are able to register with practices in more convenient locations, such as a practice near your work or closer to your children’s schools. This will provide you with greater choice and aims to improve the quality of access to GP services. Use the [Services near you](http://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/GP/LocationSearch/4) facility to find out what people say about a GP practice.



These new arrangements are voluntary for GP practices. If the practice has no capacity at the time, or feels it is not clinically appropriate or practical for you to be registered so far away from home, then they can still refuse registration. The practice should explain their reason for refusing your registration to you.

**How to register with a GP practice further away**

You may wish to join a GP near work or re-register with your old GP following a move. The new arrangements make this possible; however, there are a few things to consider.

* Research your options in the area that you want to register with a GP practice to ensure that you choose a practice that is right for you.
* Compare GP surgeries  according to facilities, services or performance before you decide. Ask friends, relatives and others you trust for their thoughts and recommendations.
* Contact the practice and ask if it is accepting registrations from out-of-area patients.
* If the practice is accepting registrations, ask for a registration form.

The practice will decide, following a review of your completed registration form, whether to accept you as a regular patient or accept you without home visiting duties (if it is clinically appropriate and practical for you to be registered away from home).

Because of the greater distance to your home, the GP you register with is under no obligation to offer you a home visit. If you are not well enough to go to the practice yourself then other arrangements will be made. [NHS England](http://www.england.nhs.uk/) (the body responsible for buying GP services) ensures that there is access to a service either near your home or at home (if required). When you register with a practice away from home you will be given information about what you should do in those circumstances.

However, if you are too ill to attend the practice in person, or the practice is unable to help you over the phone, [call NHS 111](http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/AboutNHSservices/Emergencyandurgentcareservices/Pages/NHS-111.aspx). The NHS 111 service will be able to tell you about access to local services or, where necessary, arrange a home visit.

* [Patient information leaflet – Patient choice of GP practice (PDF, 28kb)](http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/AboutNHSservices/doctors/Documents/141230-patient-information-choice-of-gp-practice.pdf)

Registering with a practice further away from home can affect decisions about referrals for hospital tests and treatment, or access to community health services. Speak to the GP about your options.

You should also read the sections about:

* [How to choose a GP](http://www.nhs.uk/choiceintheNHS/Yourchoices/GPchoice/Pages/ChoosingaGP.aspx)
* [Making a GP appointment](http://www.nhs.uk/choiceintheNHS/Yourchoices/GPchoice/Pages/GPappointments.aspx)
* [General information on what to expect from your GP](http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/AboutNHSservices/doctors/Pages/NHSGPs.aspx)

**Outer practice boundaries**

In 2012, all GP practices were asked to agree an outer practice boundary. Outer practice boundaries are an expansion of a GP's original catchment area. Whereas in the past you may have had to register with a new GP even after only moving a few streets away, these outer boundaries can be a way to stay registered with your old GP. You’ll still have to speak with your GP first and, if appropriate, the GP may keep you on the register. For example, a GP may refuse to keep you on the register if you require frequent home visits but don’t live close to the GP practice. If the GP covers a large area and the travel distance to your home is too long to justify regular home visits, then the GP can suggest that you register with a practice closer to your home. However, if the GP decides you can stay registered, then you will continue to receive the full range of services, including clinically necessary home visits.