

Applications for connecting to GP online services – a brief review.

Introduction

There are a number of applications available to enable patients to access their GP's online services, such as ordering repeat prescriptions, and it can be confusing trying to decide which one is best for you. This review attempts to provide enough information to enable you to identify one or two applications which might meet your needs. This review was undertaken in March 2021 by Rothschild House Group Patient Participation Group (PPG) and it is not necessarily endorsed by the practice. Also bear in mind that software is constantly updated, and applications listed as missing some features, may have them in subsequent updates. Please provide any feedback to rhsppg@gmail.com of your own experience using these applications or apps, for future editions of this document. **Please note**, neither we nor the practice can provide technical support for these applications, you should contact the developer in the first instance.

GP Services Available Online

The main GP services available online are:

- Ordering repeat prescriptions
- Reviewing your medical record, including details of consultations, medication, test results and immunisations
- Making appointments (these are currently disabled by request of NHS England)
- Online consultations – this a form-based questionnaire to determine if a health issue requires a GP, other health consultation, or can be answered by online advice or a visit to a pharmacist. Only one application, Patient Access, integrates online consultations into the same system as used for repeat prescriptions etc. However, online consultations can also be accessed directly from links on the practice website.

Some applications are only available as mobile apps (usually for both Apple and Android devices), some also offer access through any web browser. In addition, many only offer one of the available online services, ordering repeat prescriptions. If you are likely to want to use other online GP services in future, you should probably consider an application covering these as well.

Signing up for GP online services

If you haven't already requested access to online services from the practice, this is the first step you should take. Once your request is received, they will provide a "linking" code to enable you sign up with your chosen provider. An alternative is to register for an NHS login, which some apps like Evergreen allow you to use to register. You can request an NHS login at this website - <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/online-services/nhs-log-in/> . *NHS login makes it easier and quicker for you to securely access digital health and care services with one username and password. The first time you set up your NHS login, you will need to prove who you are. This is so we can connect you to your NHS record and protect your health information. When you have proved who you are, you will be able to use your NHS login to access websites and apps wherever you see 'NHS login'.*

Reviewing the applications

It hasn't been possible to try all the available applications on every device or platform, so I have relied on the developer's website to provide an assessment. On the next page I have summarised each application's main features, in two sections, multiple functionality and those only able to order repeat prescriptions. Read this document in conjunction with user reviews on the application stores.

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1. Multifunction applications (repeat prescriptions, booking appointments, viewing your medical record etc).

There are only five applications I have found which offer multifunctionality: -

- a) Evergreen Life - <https://e-life.co.uk/> (can register using your NHS login)
- b) Medloop - <https://medloop.co.uk-app/#/patient> (Requires a linkage code from the practice, doesn't support NHS Login)
- c) myGP - <https://www.mygp.com/user/> (seems to be many complaints about the registration and login process in the Google Playstore)
- d) NHS App - <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/online-services/nhs-app/>
- e) Patient Access - <https://www.patientaccess.com>

Of these only the NHS App, Evergreen and Patient Access appear to offer the option of accessing them from a browser, as well as Apple and Android mobile apps. Of these I have personally used the NHS App, Patient Access and Evergreen Life (only on Android tablet, phone and Windows PC). All offer access using fingerprint recognition on their apps, avoiding remembering passwords once registered. This works well on Android devices for Patient Access and Evergreen Life apps, in my experience. However, I have been unable to make the NHS App work on my Android device with fingerprint recognition, it always crashes. In addition, I have had reports that Patient Access only works intermittently with fingerprint recognition on Apple devices. The NHS App is owned and run by the NHS and is "a simple and secure way to access a range of NHS services on your smartphone or tablet." It offers additional services to other apps. However, in my experience the login process is overly complex. In future it is likely that new NHS services will be offered first on the NHS App, so it is worth registering to use it. Having used Patient Access successfully for many years for multiple household members, I have switched allegiance to Evergreen Life. It has several additional features, including various health and wellbeing self-assessment questionnaires including an optional Covid questionnaire. I find the menu layouts clear and the access to surgery online services laid out.

2. Single Function Applications (Ordering repeat prescriptions)

There are five single function apps I have found which provide an ability to order repeat prescriptions and nothing else. All offer mobile apps, except Boots, which only appears to offer access from a browser. Healthera only offers mobile apps. I have no personal experience of any of these or feedback from other users (but read your App Store reviews). Note that all except Healthera deliver your medication directly to your home, so you have no opportunity to discuss your medication dosage or other issues directly with the dispensing pharmacist.

- a) Boots UK - <https://boots.com/nhs> (note this requires a separate signup to Boots general website. Medication delivered by Boots)
- b) Co-op Health - <https://www.coop.co.uk/myhealth> (you can sign up using the NHS login. Medication delivered by Co-Op Pharmacy)
- c) Echo Pharmacy (Lloyds) - <https://echo.co.uk/signup> (not clear whether you need a GP linkage code or can use an NHS login, medication delivered by Lloyds))
- d) Healthera Ltd - <https://healthera.co.uk> (Probably uses NHS login. Medication collected from your local pharmacy)
- e) Pharmacy2U Ltd - <https://www.pharmacy2u.co.uk/> (Not clear if NHS login supported. Medication delivered by Royal Mail)

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