



Information about the NHS Direct Healthlines Service

Welcome to the NHS Direct Healthlines Service. This document provides information about what the service can offer you. If you have any questions after reading it, please ask the NHS Direct Healthlines Service team. A Healthlines Advisor will be contacting you by phone within the next couple of weeks.

What is the NHS Direct Healthlines Service?

The NHS Direct Healthlines Service is a new service designed and run by NHS Direct. The service aims to provide people with support and encouragement to increase their well-being and live more healthily.

The NHS Direct Healthlines Service has been set up as part of a research project involving NHS Direct and researchers at the Universities of Bristol, Sheffield, Southampton and Manchester. The research has been designed to find out if the NHS Direct Healthlines Service is helpful and whether it would be cost-effective for the NHS to provide. These are important questions to answer, as the number of people who need support with their health is increasing.

A member of the NHS Direct Healthlines Service team will contact you regularly by phone. The team can also provide you with access to other forms of support and information using the Internet or phone.

Why have I been offered the NHS Direct Healthlines Service?

As part of the Healthlines Study research project, the NHS Direct Healthlines Service is being offered to people who are feeling low or depressed. Because you have been feeling this way recently you were invited to take part in the research project.

What will the NHS Direct Healthlines Service involve for me?

First, a Healthlines Advisor will contact you by phone. They will ask you about your current health and the kind of support you would like to receive. They will also talk through some different options with you, and you will decide together what support you would like. The options available will include:

- Access to a course of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) either online or using a workbook.
- Information and advice about antidepressant medicines and help to develop strategies to remember to take medicines regularly.
- Access to an online support community called “The Big White Wall”.
- Information and advice about exercise and alcohol use.

After this first phone call, the NHS Direct Healthlines Service team will arrange to contact you regularly. Each time they call you, they will discuss different options that could help you improve your health and well-being. Between the phone calls, you can then try to put some of the options into action. The Healthlines Advisors will provide you with help and encouragement to do this.

When is the NHS Direct Healthlines Service available?

The opening hours of the NHS Direct Healthlines Service are:

Monday to Friday: 10am – 8pm
Saturday: 10am – 2pm

The service is closed on Sundays and Bank Holidays.

The NHS Direct Healthlines Service also provides a secure website which you can access at any time. The website contains further support and information which you may find helpful. The website address is:

<https://services.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/healthlines>

Further details about how to log in to the website will be sent to you by email before you have your first call with the NHS Direct Healthlines Advisor. We encourage you to log in and take a look. If you have not received this information within a couple of weeks, please contact the service (see the ‘How can I contact the NHS Direct Healthlines Service?’ section below)

How often will the NHS Direct Healthlines Service team contact me?

As part of the study, you will be in regular contact with the NHS Direct Healthlines Service team for up to 12 months. How often the Healthlines Advisor

contacts you during this time will vary. For example, at the beginning, contact might be more frequent, perhaps once every two weeks. Later, they may contact you less often, perhaps once every couple of months.

Your contact with the Healthlines Advisors will be by phone. The Advisor will arrange an appointment time with you and contact you at that time. Each phone call will last around 15 - 20 minutes. At the end of each call, the Healthlines Advisor will discuss when the best time to contact you again is. The Healthlines Advisor may also send you additional information by email.

How can I contact the NHS Direct Healthlines Service?

If you need to change the time of a phone appointment or have a query between appointments, you can request a call back from the Healthlines Advisors:

- by leaving a message on the answer phone service at [REDACTED], or
- through the NHS Direct Healthlines Service website <https://services.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/healthlines> (log in and click on 'Request a call back').

After you have left a message or contacted us via the website, a member of the team will aim to contact you by phone within two working days.

Dial 999 in an emergency. Please do not contact the NHS Direct Healthlines Service team if you have an urgent health problem or in an emergency.

Will my GP be told about my treatment?

Yes. We will keep your GP informed about the treatment options you are receiving and how your health is changing during your time with the NHS Direct Healthlines Service. The service aims to work well alongside the support you already receive from doctors and nurses at your GP surgery. By keeping your GP informed, we can work together to give you an overall package of care that is co-ordinated and meets your needs.

It is important to understand that the NHS Direct Healthlines Service does not replace the help you receive from your GP surgery.

How will the NHS Direct Healthlines Service benefit me?

Getting support on the phone and using the Internet makes it easier to fit around your day-to-day life. You can get support in your own home at a time convenient for you, rather than needing to go to your GP surgery. We also hope you will gain information and skills to help you feel more confident about looking after your health in the future.

Past research projects have shown that patients can improve their health when they use the kind of support being offered by the NHS Direct Healthlines Service. The research has also shown that patients value the ability to access healthcare when and where they need it most. They tend to report high levels of satisfaction with this kind of phone and Internet health support.

The Healthlines Study aims to assess whether co-ordinating access to support like this, along with regular follow-up by phone, will result in even greater benefits than those already shown.

Does the NHS Direct Healthlines Service have any disadvantages?

Changing how you feel is challenging when you are feeling low or unwell. It can sometimes be difficult to find the time and energy needed. We hope that regular support from the Healthlines Advisors will help you with this.

Some people worry about receiving support over the phone because they cannot see the person who is helping them. However, research has shown that these worries can reduce after a patient speaks to the health professional and starts to build a relationship with them. Many patients do develop close relationships with health professionals over the phone, and some prefer the sense of anonymity created by this kind of contact when discussing personal issues.

People also have concerns about the confidentiality and security of information they provide by phone and on the Internet. Both the research team and NHS Direct are committed to ensuring a safe and secure service, and security procedures are in place (please see page 4). If you would like to discuss these or any other concerns you have about the NHS Direct Healthlines Service, please contact the Healthlines Study Manager at the University of Bristol by phone [REDACTED] or email [REDACTED]

Will what I say be kept confidential?

Yes. What you say to the Healthlines Advisors or researchers will be kept in strict confidence, except in very rare circumstances, if we think there is any risk of serious harm to yourself or others. Even in these circumstances, we would normally try to speak to you first before contacting anyone else.

We will tell your GP that you are participating in this study. We will send your GP a summary of your initial and follow-up assessments. We will also keep your GP informed about your health and well-being throughout the study. If your symptoms become too severe, we will notify your GP.

Will my information be kept securely?

All information collected about you during the research will be stored securely in a locked cabinet at the University. Information will be stored electronically on the University or NHS Direct secure databases. These databases are password protected and firewalled.

After you have signed up to take part in the research study, the researchers will pass contact details and the health information they have gathered to the NHS Direct Healthlines Service. A special email system with Government-accredited RESTRICTED status that has been specially designed for the NHS to transmit patient information securely will be used. This email system will also be used when the Healthlines Advisors need to communicate with your GP surgery.

The only people who will have access to data about patients in the study will be the research team, NHS Direct, and people authorised to check the conduct of research in the NHS. You will not be identifiable in any published report from this study. When the results of the study are analysed, the data will be anonymised (all personal information removed) and stored securely at the University of Bristol for five years. It will not be possible to identify you from this data.

What can I do if I'm not happy with the service?

If you are not happy with the service you have received, we would ask that you first speak to the Healthlines Advisors (see the 'How do I contact the NHS Direct Healthlines Service? Section above), or if you would like to speak to the National Complaints Team at NHS Direct, please call the NHS

Direct National Clinical Governance Team (NCGT) on [REDACTED]

Alternatively you can contact your local Healthlines research team (contact details can be found on the participant information sheet you were sent when you were first invited to take part in the study) or the Healthlines Study Manager at the University of Bristol ([REDACTED] or [REDACTED]).