



What is Triage?

Triage is the process of prioritising sick or injured people for treatment according to the seriousness of the condition or injury.

In General Practice, frontline staff play a vital role in determining the priority of need for each patient, whether in person or on the telephone. Reception staff in particular must be aware of triage procedures in the Practice, and be able to obtain medical advice from a GP or Nurse where necessary.

All Staff shall be able to triage patients into one of the following categories:

- Emergency
- Urgent
- Non-urgent

Where telephone triage is required, any staff dealing with the call should:

- Ask if it is the patient calling or a representative of the patient
- Obtain an address and a telephone number
- Ascertain the nature and severity of symptoms
- Decide whether the case is an emergency, urgent or non-urgent
- Act and advise according to the practice protocol

It is not appropriate for a Receptionist to place a patient on hold before asking the patient if he or she may do so.

All non-medical staff members need to be trained to recognise urgent medical matters if they are expected to triage emergency patients. If the Practice staff members are not adequately trained, a question of negligence could be raised in the event that inappropriate triaging results in harm to a patient.

Ideally the Practice induction/orientation program should include training in the triage process, including how to effectively use the system. All staff will regularly update their CPR and other first aid skills. Practice meetings could be used for such training, with the use of role plays or actual scenarios that have happened.