

Time off for medical appointments

There's no legal right to time off work for a medical appointment.

However, employers have a 'duty of care'. This means they must do all they reasonably can to protect their employees' health, safety and wellbeing at work.

Most employers will allow time off if an employee cannot rearrange their appointment. The time off might be unpaid.

Medical appointments can include:

- doctors
- hospital
- dentist
- appointments for mental health – for example counselling

Working out how to take time off

To find out if they can take time off for a medical appointment and whether that time is paid, employees should check:

- their contract
- any relevant policies their employer has

If there's nothing in their contract or any policies, employees should speak to their employer. They might know where to find the information or be able to make a one-off arrangement.

To be able to attend their appointment, employees could consider:

- using holiday entitlement
- using breaks
- making up the time they take off later
- rearranging an appointment to be outside of work hours

Employers should be flexible about time off for appointments where they can be. It can improve staff wellbeing and help reduce sickness absence.

Employers should also keep in mind that some types of medical appointments are difficult to rearrange.

Giving proof of a medical appointment

There's no legal requirement for employees to give their employer proof of a medical appointment.

However, if an employee is happy to provide it, proof can be helpful. It can help everyone agree how the employee can take the time they need for the appointment.

Proof could be a hospital letter or a text message confirming a GP appointment.

An employer might ask for proof of an appointment because they suspect an employee is not telling the truth. However, employers should keep in mind that appointments might be for sensitive reasons that an employee would not want to share.

If an employer has concerns about their employee's absence, they should speak to them about this.

If an employer wants to take further action, they should follow a [fair investigation process](#).

Pregnancy-related appointments

By law, pregnant employees are entitled to a 'reasonable' amount of paid time off for antenatal appointments.

[Find out more about time off for antenatal appointments](#)

Appointments related to a disability

Employers must make [reasonable adjustments](#) for disabled employees.

If an employee has a number of absences related to their disability, or they're likely to, they might need reasonable adjustments.

Absences could include planned or unexpected medical appointments.

[Find out more about disability-related absence](#)

Appointments related to gender reassignment

An employee who is transitioning might need time off for things like:

- counselling
- hormone treatment
- voice therapy
- hair removal
- surgery

An employer must not discriminate against an employee for taking time off related to gender reassignment.

An employer should not assume that surgery related to gender reassignment is elective or cosmetic. Being able to have relevant surgery can be important for an employee's physical and mental health.

[Find out more about gender reassignment discrimination](#)

Time off for an operation

If an employee's operation is medically required, the usual rules for [sickness absence](#) and pay apply.

There's no legal right to time off if an employee's operation is purely elective or cosmetic.

Employees should check their contract and any relevant policy to find out if their employer allows time off for elective surgery.

Employers should take into account that elective or cosmetic surgery can still be medically advised.

For example, cosmetic surgery on someone's nose might be medically advised to improve their breathing.

To find out if an employee's operation is purely elective, an employer can [ask for a doctor's report about an employee's health](#).

Employers should make clear in any relevant absence policy what the organisation's rules are around time off for elective surgery.

Taking a family member to an appointment

Employees are entitled to 'time off for dependants'. They can take time off to help a family member or someone who depends on them when there's an emergency.

To use this type of time off to take a family member to an appointment, the appointment would need to be an unexpected problem or emergency.

Appointments or operations that are known about in advance are unlikely to be emergencies. Time off for dependants is unlikely to apply. However, this depends on the circumstances.

For example, time off for dependants is unlikely to apply for a diabetes clinic that has been booked 4 months in advance. However, it might apply for an urgent cancer scan arranged with 1 week's notice.

If time off for dependants does not apply, employees should talk to their employer about other ways to take time off. For example to:

- check if their employer has any special leave policies that would apply
- make a one-off arrangement

[Find out more about time off for dependants](#)