**GP PRACTICE UPDATE**

Family doctors in the [British Medical Association](https://www.standard.co.uk/topic/british-medical-association) (BMA) voted overwhelmingly in favour of collective action in a ballot of 8,500 members, with 98.3 per cent backing action.

[Doctors have been told they can “pick and choose”](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/health/gps-strike-doctors-bma-industrial-action-ballot-nhs-disruption-b1174162.html) from measures including a limit on the number of patients they see to 25 a day, which could [force patients to use A&E or call 111.](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/health/gp-strike-nhs-standstill-bma-b1173345.html) The BMA says that [GPs](https://www.standard.co.uk/topic/gps) have an average of 37 patient contacts per day.

Actions may include refusing to share patient data unless it’s in the best interests of a patient, referring patients directly to specialist care rather than following longer and more complex [NHS](https://www.standard.co.uk/topic/nhs) processes and switching off NHS software which tries to cut prescribing costs.

The BMA have said that any measures taken could remain in place until the Government agrees on a new contract with GPs.

But when are the strikes happening and how will you be affected? Here is everything we know.

**Why are GPs going on strike?**

GPs say that they are at the “end of their tether”, being asked to see too many patients in a day and being unable to give them adequate care.

Staffing levels are also an issue that has been raised, with GPs collectively saying the job of being a family doctor is slowly being destroyed.

Dr Katie Bramall-Stainer, chair of BMA's GP committee for England (GPCE), said: “We had a huge response to this ballot, and the results are clear – GPs are at the end of their tether. This is an act of desperation. For too long, we’ve been unable to provide the care we want to. We are witnessing general practice being broken. The era of the family doctor has been wiped out by recent consecutive Governments and our patients are suffering as a result.”

He added that GP practices were “struggling to keep the lights on” and could not afford to hire GPs and other staff.

**When are they going on strike?**

The short answer is we don’t know yet. The vote to take action was this, with the unions now ironing out how they will take their action.

As part of the action, the BMA is encouraging GP surgeries to choose from a list of 10 actions, with practices able to choose how many they implement.

* Limit the daily patient contacts to a maximum of 25 people per clinician and divert patients to urgent care once that limit has been reached.
* Stop engaging with e-Referral advice and guidance pathways unless in the patient's best interests.
* Serve notice on any voluntary services that plug local gaps.
* End the rationing of referrals, investigations and admissions.
* Switch off the software that allows third-party entry into GP clinical records.
* Withdraw permission for data sharing agreements that use data for secondary purposes beyond care.
* Freeze the sign-up of any new data-sharing agreements.
* Switch off NHS software embedded by the local Integrated Care Board which tries to cut costs and/or rationing.
* Refuse to share data from phone calls and keep online triage tools switched off during core practice opening hours.
* Defer making any decision to accept local or national NHS England pilot programmes.

The action is expected to be a “slow burn”, so surgeries will stay open but will be limited.

GPs will be able to take whichever actions they choose from Thursday (August 8), without giving their patients any notice