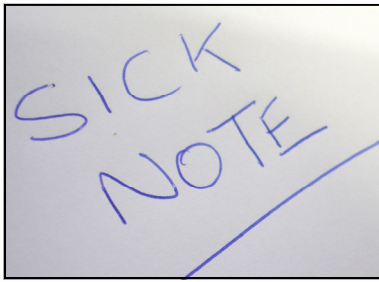


## PATIENT INFORMATION ON SHORT TERM SICKNESS CERTIFICATION



Patients often ask questions about the issuing of sickness certification (MED3) for under 7 days (including weekends) and patients' entitlements to sick notes on the NHS despite the present system having been in place since 1984. GPs are often pressured by patients to give a MED3 for short term certification as "the employer won't accept a self certificate".

The Family Doctor Association has decided to offer the following guidance to patients, employers and GP practices.

**GPs are not required to issue sickness certification for periods of less than 7 consecutive days as part of their contractual obligations within the NHS.** Patients can take this guidance note to their employer to explain this.

### SICKNESS ABSENCE OF LESS THAN TWO CONSECUTIVE DAYS

No sick note of any type required. GPs are not required to issue sickness certification for periods of less than 7 days as part of their contractual obligations within the NHS.

### SICKNESS ABSENCE OF 3-7 CONSECUTIVE DAYS

Self-certification only (SC2 for employees, SC1 for unemployed or self-employed). The only circumstance in which patients may be eligible for a Med3 is if the patient is claiming incapacity benefit and has had short absences totalling 7 days or more in the previous 8 consecutive weeks.

### PRIVATE SICK NOTES

GPs are under no contractual obligation to issue these. If an employer requires such a short term certificate, the GP may provide one if s/he wishes to do so and may charge an appropriate fee for this service.

### NOTES FOR SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

NHS GP practices have no responsibility for policing truancy and therefore no requirement to issue sick notes/off games notes etc. to schools.

### NOTES FOR EXAMINATION BOARDS

A doctor's certificate of illness is NOT required by examination boards. Providing such certification is not part of nGMS contracted work and is unnecessary as was clarified in February 2010, by OFQUAL (the agency that controls examination boards) in a letter to the British Medical Association. (*Available on our website*)

### EXCESSIVE SHORT TERM SICKNESS ABSENCE

Most responsible employers accept that excessive short term sickness absence is a management problem rather than a medical one. Management solutions are required, often with the input of an Occupational Health Department. It is therefore extremely wasteful of scarce NHS resources for an employee to attend a GP for every minor illness for the sole purpose of trying to obtain a sickness certificate for their employer. GPs have no contractual requirement to provide occupational health services for their patients. Some GPs may be prepared to negotiate a contract with an employer to offer a range of private Occupational Health Services to the company's employees.

A useful web site is: [www.managingabsence.org.uk](http://www.managingabsence.org.uk).

**Did you know?** In 2002 it was estimated that 2.4 million unnecessary GP appointments, plus an additional 37,000 hours of GP time each year, were wasted in the United Kingdom on this task.

**Possession of this guidance note does not indicate that any medical consultation has occurred.**

The Family Doctor Association is a registered educational charity no. 299871 founded in 1985 to further improve the quality of care provided for patients in family doctor practices. The FDA thanks the Wessex LMCs for their help in producing this guidance note. (Feb 2010)

[www.family-doctor.org.uk](http://www.family-doctor.org.uk)

