

## **Dr. Georgia Ballem - Clinic Policies**

(June 2023)

Thank you for taking the time to read through our clinic policies to ensure we all start out on the same page. These policies are liable to change; we will do our best to keep you informed. An up-to-date version of these will be kept current on our website.

If you have any questions, these can be addressed with your physician at your initial welcome appointment.

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### **APPOINTMENT POLICIES**

When booking an appointment, please identify the reason for your visit as accurately as possible.

If your child or family member requires an appointment as well, please make a separate booking for them. Each patient requires their own appointment to allow adequate time to address individual issues.

We book non-urgent appointments up to two weeks in advance; this allows us to minimize the amount of rescheduling that may happen. We have some appointments set aside every day for same day or urgent appointments (see below).

#### **Online booking:**

**Appointment booking is all online and easily accessed through the patient portal or website link.** At this time the clinic does not have a receptionist so phone calls will be limited. If the patient is not sure what kind of appointment to book, please email Dr. Ballem to clarify.

If unable to use the online booking system, please contact Dr. Ballem for special exemptions/options.

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#### **Virtual (phone/video) appointments.**

These are best used for review of new problems that do not require physical exam, known (already examined) problems, medication renewals, mental health follow ups or reviewing results/consults.

You may be asked to book a second in person appointment if a physical exam is required for the problem you are requesting help with. Generally forms require in person visits.

This practice follows BC guidelines and rules around virtual health are subject to change, we will do our best to update our patients if there are any changes that will affect how we provide this service.

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### **Same Day Access:**

If you require a same-day appointment for an urgent concern we will be doing our best to keep some appointment spots available in the afternoon to be booked only on the same day. We encourage you to try booking an appointment with us before visiting a walk-in clinic as we believe continuity of care is important but understand that may not always be feasible.

You can access same day urgent appointments through patient portal booking. If there are no appointments available and you want us to try and fit you in you can email at [cancellation@ballemedical.com](mailto:cancellation@ballemedical.com) and I will do my best to find some time to fit you in.

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### **Late arrival policy**

We recognize that your time is valuable and endeavour to run on time as much as possible.

In order to do this, we ask that you show up at least 10 minutes before the start time of your appointment. Patients who arrive 10 minutes or later past the start time of their appointment may not be seen.

Patients who arrive more than 15 minutes past the start time of their appointment are considered “no-shows” and the associated fee may be charged.

Late arrivals compromise your care, as well as the care of other patients in the practice. As such, recurrent late arrivals may result in dismissal from the practice.

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### **No-show & late cancellation fees (< 24hrs)**

In an effort to reduce wait times and improve access to our clinic we will be enforcing a no show and late cancellation fee of **\$50**. We kindly ask that you give us at least 24 hours notice if you will not be able to attend your appointment so that we can open the space for another patient.

For virtual visits we will try to connect with you twice before considering it a no-show. **Please ensure your ringer is on and you have saved our number if you have booked a virtual visit.**

If a patient does not show for an appointment on three occasions or two or more consecutive appointments we may discharge you from the practice due to lack of continuity of care and to open the panel spot up for another patient.

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## **COMMUNICATION**

**\*Please also review and sign the virtual communication agreement**

### **Reviewing Results & the “Patient Portal”.**

Dr. Ballem sends notifications via a secure messaging platform called the “patient portal” to inform patients about lab/document/consults. Email is not a secure method of communication for sensitive health information and is discouraged unless required for non-medical administration concerns. Urgent tests/results/consults will be communicated directly by phone or in a scheduled appointment. This is in accordance with privacy guidelines expected by the CPSBC.

Patients are requested to review the messaging platform within a reasonable time frame to ensure important communications are not missed. You should have notifications turned on to let you know when you have received a new communication.

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### **Email Use.**

Email is not considered a secure method of communication for sensitive health information and is discouraged unless required for non-medical administration concerns.

No medical advice will be given over email.

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## **MEDICATION POLICIES**

### **Refills require an appointment, virtual or in-person.**

Faxed requests from pharmacies and/or email requests may be rejected and redirected to book an appointment as many medications require monitoring.

If we do grant a faxed refill request from the pharmacy there will be a fee of \$25 dollars which must be paid and no more than 3 months will be prescribed at Dr. Ballem’s discretion.

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**Controlled Substance (Opioid, Benzodiazepine, Sedative sleeping pill, and Stimulant) prescriptions are monitored carefully and subject to change as per Dr. Ballem's clinical judgment and clinical guidelines.**

Recent medical evidence now shows that medications that used to be prescribed routinely are more harmful than we once recognized. Prescribing these medications, in particular opioids / narcotics, benzodiazepines and other prescription sleep aids, must be done carefully and thoughtfully.

In keeping with current guidelines controlled substance contracts, limited dispensing, random urine screens and weaning of long term medications on a fixed weaning schedule may be indicated as per Dr. Ballem's clinical judgment and best practice guidelines.

Dr. Ballem does not generally prescribe opioids for chronic non-cancer pain or uninvestigated chronic pain syndromes but will help you wean off these safely if you have previously been prescribed them.

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## **VACCINATIONS**

**Dr. Ballem is an advocate for all vaccinations, including COVID-19 vaccines.**

Patients will be asked about their immunization, open communication and respectful dialogue around vaccinations will be expected. Vaccinations are not mandatory to be a patient.

Pediatric vaccines are not currently provided in the practice but Dr. Ballem will help direct you to the appropriate public health clinic.

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## **UNINSURED FEES**

Some services are not covered by the BC MSP Insurance Plan and therefore require a privately paid cost. Dr. Ballem will be able to discuss any anticipated costs for these services ahead of time and the balance must be paid prior to services rendered. Our fees align with the doctors of BC recommended fee schedule.

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## ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY

**Rude, aggressive, threatening, racist, sexist and/or other inappropriate behaviour is not tolerated towards Dr. Ballem or any other clinic staff member.** If this behaviour occurs, Dr. Ballem will terminate the patient-doctor relationship with this patient immediately with no additional warnings.

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## REQUESTING TESTS

**Requesting tests suggested by other practitioners (Chiropractor, Naturopath, Alternative Medicine Practitioner) are not guaranteed.** Dr. Ballem practices evidence based medicine; she will not order tests requested by other practitioners without discussion and using evidence based principles. Tests ordered by Dr. Ballem must be within her scope of practice as she will be responsible for interpreting the results.

Naturopaths may order blood work but as they are not an insured service and not regulated by the same college as Dr. Ballem the bloodwork they order is not covered by MSP.

**Altering of requisitions, orders, forms, or prescriptions** is considered medical fraud and is grounds for loss of trust and dismissal from doctor Ballem's medical practice without warning. If you notice an error or a test missing that we discussed please let Dr. Ballem know so she can correct the form.

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## MOVING OUT OF CATCHMENT

Dr. Ballem is only able to provide care for patients in Vancouver as she needs to be able to examine you in person when medically indicated as per CPSBC guidelines. If you are moving you are encouraged to try and find a local physician as soon as possible and let us know. We will provide temporary coverage with virtual care as well as reasonable medication refills and will help you transfer your charts to your new physician.

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**I understand that these policies may be updated but I will be notified of any changes.**

**Patient Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Patient Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_