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St Martins Blogs – Virtual Group Consultations (VGC)

Healthcare is changing to become more accessible, supportive, and patient-centred. One of the most effective ways this is being delivered across the NHS is through Virtual Group Consultations (VGCs).

At St Martins Medical Centre, we are introducing VGCs to give patients the opportunity not only to access high-quality clinical care but also to connect with each other, build support networks, and create a sense of community around shared health goals and experiences.

Whether you are managing a long-term condition, looking to improve your general wellbeing, or simply want more time with a clinician, VGCs provide a modern and supportive way to care for yourself and to meet like-minded patients who can support you along the way.

What is a VGC?

A Virtual Group Consultation is a clinical appointment delivered online to a small group of patients with similar health needs.

It combines:

- A one-to-one consultation with your clinician
- Education and advice about your condition
- The opportunity to learn from others with similar experiences

Group consultations have been used within the NHS for many years to support patients with a wide range of conditions including:

- High blood pressure
- Diabetes prevention
- Diabetic reviews
- Respiratory conditions
- Chronic pain
- Menopause support
- Weight management
- General health and wellbeing



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Sessions usually last 60 minutes and include around 6–15 patients, subject to the consultation topic, led by a trained facilitator and a clinician such as a GP, nurse, pharmacist or appropriate clinician.

Unlike traditional 10-minute appointments, VGCs give you more time, more support, and more understanding of your condition.

Why are VGC's important?

VGCs are designed to improve overall patient health and experience, not just treat illness.

They help patients to:

- Better understand their health and lifestyle choices
- Build confidence in self-management
- Feel supported and less isolated
- Access care more quickly and conveniently
- Meet other patients with similar challenges to build support networks and community connections

Many patients find that sharing experiences with others helps them learn new strategies, feel motivated, and reduce feelings of isolation.

What happens during a VGC session?

The session usually starts with the clinician sharing an educational presentation. This covers practical advice on general health, wellbeing, and self-care strategies. It's a chance to pick up tips, hear evidence-based guidance, and think about how it applies to your own life.

While the presentation is running, the clinician will also gather some basic health information, including:

- Height and weight
- Blood pressure
- Smoking status
- Exercise levels
- Other relevant health questions

Don't worry - your **information stays completely private**. Only the clinician can see it, so you can answer honestly and confidently.

The session is split into two parts:

1. Education and consultation: Learn, reflect, and share health information with the clinician



2. Questions and guidance: The clinician answers any queries, offers advice, and helps you plan next steps.

Benefits of Virtual Group Consultations

Patients who attend VGCs often report:

- More time and better access

Sessions are longer than traditional 10-minute appointments.

- Peer support and community building

You gain reassurance from others with similar experiences and can start to build your own health support network.

- Improved understanding

You receive education and advice in a clear, supportive format.

- Convenience

Attend from home without travel or waiting rooms.

- Empowerment

You feel more in control of your own health and wellbeing.

Is it safe and confidential?

Yes - VGCs follow strict confidentiality and data protection standards in line with the NHS.

All patients:

- Agree to keep discussions confidential
- Join from a private space
- Must not record the session

Secure platforms such as Microsoft Teams are used to ensure privacy and safety.
