

SMTC Medical Branch & HM3 Wayne Caron Clinic

Frequently Asked Questions and Fact Sheet

*What you need to know about utilizing the
SMTC Medical Staff and the HM3 Wayne Caron Clinic*

What is the Duty Corpsman for?

***Duty Corpsman: (910) 376-1426**

The duty corpsman is primarily for responding to after-hours medical issues that result in a trip to the Emergency Room. Members needing to visit the Emergency Room after hours are required at their earliest convenience to call the duty corpsman. In addition to calling the duty corpsman, members must also call their immediate supervisor and the OOD.

The duty corpsman may also be used if a member cannot locate USCG medical personnel at the Caron Clinic or medical trailer. The duty corpsman is not responsible for making medical appointments, updating information in CGBI, or any other administrative, non-emergent purpose. Members should limit duty corpsman calls to after-hours medical issues or finding a corpsman on site during the work day if they have already checked in the clinic and medical trailer for a corpsman.

How does sick call work? What is appropriate for sick call?

***Sick Call hours: 0700-0900, Monday-Friday, Caron Clinic**

Members with an acute illness/injury that requires them to report to sick call **MUST** show up before 0930. If a member shows up after 0930 on a busy morning where appointment slots have already been filled by other Courthouse Bay personnel attached to the clinic (RECON Marines, Tracks Marines, USCG etc.) and symptoms are not acute enough to merit immediate care, the member will be asked to return the next morning.

If a member has been sick for less than 48 hours, is suffering from cold or sinus symptoms, does not have a fever and has not tried treating symptoms with anything, the member may be sent to the medical trailer to utilize the Over-the-Counter (OTC) program before returning to the clinic for sick call.

If an injury occurs after 0930, for example a finger laceration while working, the member will be seen because the event causing injury occurred after 0930 and the member could not have come in during sick call hours. If a member suddenly comes to the clinic with shortness of breath and/or experiences sudden chest pain, her or she will be seen and attended to by a corpsman after sick call hours until an ambulance arrives to transport the member to the Naval Hospital.

If a member has been sick since waking up, or sick since the night before, etc. then there is no reason for the member to show up outside of sick call hours. Likewise, if for example a member has hurt his or her knee playing football the day before after work, there is no reason for the member not to show up at 0730 the next day for sick call. If a supervisor tells a member that he or she cannot go to sick call during sick call hours when the member is sick or injured, that member should take the issue to the Command Master Chief or the Medical Branch Chief

about placing a complaint with the XO. It is not acceptable for a supervisor to tell a member that they are not allowed to utilize medical during the appropriate hours.

How do I utilize the OTC program here at SMTC?

***OTC (Over-the-Counter) Medication Program**

Many times it is appropriate to try conservative treatments for symptoms such as head ache, congestion, seasonal allergies, muscle pain, etc. before reporting to the clinic for sick call. If a member is experiencing cold symptoms for example, the member may easily go to the medical trailer and sign out a box of Sudafed, a bottle of Tylenol, and some throat lozenges. If symptoms worsen or continue, and the member reports to sick call, member may then tell the corpsman, "I have tried the following OTCs for this period of time without relief." The medical branch encourages members to utilize this program because when members report to sick call for complaints, they will usually be prescribed conservative OTC treatments.

Every so often, the medical branch may be awaiting shipment of medications and be out of stock on some items, but generally speaking, the OTC program at SMTC is underutilized.

What are regularly scheduled appointments for? How do I make one?

***Regularly Scheduled Appointments at the Caron Clinic: (910) 440-7338 x200**

Regularly scheduled appointments are for chronic issues or non-sick call complaints. Appointments allow members the benefit of face time with the provider to discuss issues, versus sick call where the member will mostly be dealing with a corpsman and may only see the provider for a short period of time. Appointment reasons may include the following examples:

"I have had knee pain for more than 2 weeks."

"I have had lower back pain for the past year."

"I have acne and would like to see a dermatologist."

"I need a physical/overseas screening/administrative exam."

"I need a medication refill."

"I am out of visits on my referral and I need more visits with my specialist."

Appointment slots are shared with the four other Courthouse Bay units attached to the clinic; availability is limited. These appointments are simple to make, and occur in the afternoon after lunch hours. To make an appointment, members must call the front desk at (910) 440-7338 x200 to reach the front desk personnel. A member will be given the first available appointment they have that matches the member's need and schedule. The same number is to be used to cancel or reschedule an appointment.

Canceling your appointment on the same day is frowned upon, and the XO has requested to be notified of all same-day appointment cancellations and no-shows.

NO SHOWS: If a member does not show up to an appointment and did not call to cancel, it is considered a no show and will be reported to the XO. For all appointments, no matter the facility (Caron Clinic, Naval Hospital, a civilian provider), it is common courtesy to show up 15 minutes early for an appointment. If a member is not at an appointment 15 minutes early, on time, or within 15 minutes after the appointment time, then the appointment will

be marked a NO SHOW unless the provider agrees to see the member late; these will also be reported to the XO. If a member repeatedly shows up late or cancels appointments on short notice, this will also be reported to the XO.

Once a member makes a regularly scheduled appointment to see the Medical Provider at the clinic, it is the member's responsibility to show up to the appointment. It is appropriate to reschedule an appointment if a legitimate circumstance prevents the member from showing up, but reasons of "I forgot" or "my supervisor wouldn't let me go" are not acceptable reasons for no shows. The member is responsible for giving his or her supervisor notice of a scheduled appointment immediately upon making the appointment. A supervisor cannot tell a member that he or she cannot go to a medical appointment, but a member may face disciplinary action from the supervisor if the member did not inform the supervisor of the medical appointment. The medical branch is not responsible for reminding members of appointments!

What if I am too sick to work?

***Sick in Quarters/Limited Duty Status**

A member has two options if he or she is too sick to be at work: 1) call their supervisor, or 2) report to sick call. If a member feels too ill to drive to work and does not have someone who can drive (i.e. a spouse or coworker) and it is a non-emergent illness, the member must call their supervisor. The supervisor has the authority to tell the member to stay home (SIQ).

If a member calls in sick to their supervisor and feels better the next day, he or she is still required to follow up with medical at sick call. It is not appropriate to call the duty corpsman in an effort to be SIQed via telephone; again only the supervisor or the command has the authority to tell the member to stay home if he or she had not been seen by medical. If the member has been seen by medical, the duty status has come due, and the member cannot report to follow up with medical due to continued illness, then the member shall call the duty corpsman for instruction. The Duty may instruct the member to stay home, or someone from the command may come to get the member at home so that he or she may follow up with medical in person. These situations will be handled on a case by case basis.

If a member is in a limited duty status, that member has been directly ordered to abide by certain limitations per his or her chit. If the member is instructed not to play sports or physically train and that member is found to be going to the gym for example, then that member could face disciplinary action from the command for disobeying a direct order.

Members are responsible for providing supervisors with a copy of their Sick in Quarters or Limited Duty status chit and following up with medical. In some instances, a member may call his or her supervisor and tell them that medical SIQed them and they can follow up with medical, however this is only advised in certain instances. Generally, the best action is to personally give the chit to the supervisor so that the member will avoid any miscommunication about his or her duty status.

When can I get a dental exam? How do I make an appointment?

***Dental Clinic: (910) 440-7338, ext 233**

Dental exams are conducted on a walk-in basis starting at 0700 Monday through Friday. Appointments are given on a first-come, first-served basis. If no appointments are available, members must come back the next day to check for availability. There is a sick call for dental specific issues such as tooth pain starting at 0700 Monday through Friday.

Members must bring their dental records to all dental appointments!

How do I stay in the green with my PHA?

***Periodic Health Assessment (PHA)**

All members are responsible for their own PHA status whether it be green or red. SMTC members complete PHAs out in town per SMTCINST 6120, SMTC Periodic Health Assessment Instruction. A PHA must be completed within a month of the member's birthday; as in a month before, during, or within a month after. If a PHA is done outside of this timeline, then the PHA may come due again prematurely.

What if I need a referral?

***Referral Management: (910) 450-3099, Mr. Pankey**

If a member is referred out for specialty care by the Caron Clinic, the member will be given instructions on how to make the appointment when care is rendered. The number for Mr. Pankey at referral management is (910) 450-3099. If a member speaks with Mr. Pankey and he does not see a referral in the system for the member, then the member shall touch base with the staff corpsman so that that can ensure that another is referral in inputted. There will be an issue with about one in ten referrals having nothing to do with Caron Clinic or TRICARE; sometimes the computer system just kicks them out. SMTC corpsmen can easily fix this problem, but they not personally follow up on member referrals, and will not know it's an issue if the member doesn't communicate the issue to the corpsmen. It is the member's responsibility to follow up with referral management, make his or her appointment, and keep SMTC medical aware of changes in his or her duty status dealing with specialty care.

Member must understand that it can take 48-72 hours for a referral to process. If a referral is input on Monday, then the member should call Mr. Pankey on Wednesday to ensure that the referral is in the system. If the referral is sent out in town, then it will take a full 72 hours before the member can call referral management, and Mr. Pankey will give the member instructions on what number to call to find out where he or she will be going and their provider's contact information. As long as a member is given an appointment within 30 days, this is considered an acceptable turnaround time by TRICARE.

You do not need a referral to make an appointment with optometry for an eye exam; call **(910) 450-HELP** and choose the optometry option to make your appointment.

What do I do if I was receiving specialty care at my last unit?

***Continuity of Care**

If a member has newly reported to SMTC, received specialty care at their previous unit, and requires continued oversight by that specialty, then that member must make a regularly scheduled appointment upon checking into medical. It is important to have an initial appointment as soon as possible with the new primary care manager (PCM) to input necessary referrals and discuss chronic issues.

If a member waits until chronic health problem start occurring before coming to see medical about initiating a referral, a member may still have to wait up to 30 days after the referral is processed to be seen by a specialist. This creates a negative situation for both the member and the medical staff, so please see medical about chronic issues immediately upon checking in and not three months down the road.

****A note on orthopedic complaints (back, knees, shoulders, etc.)***

If an injury occurs, then a member may be seen during sick call for an orthopedic complaint such as back pain or shoulder pain, however many individuals experience this pain on a chronic basis unrelated to a specific

recent trauma and require a regularly scheduled appointment. Often, a patient is seen initially, an XRAY is completed, and the results are normal. The patient often feels that the next step should be an MRI or a referral to ORTHO, however onboard Camp Lejeune, the standing operating procedure for many of these complaints is a referral to physical therapy before an MRI or referral is input. So a patient with lower back pain for two years with a normal XRAY may be sent to Sports Medicine for up to six weeks before following up with the PCM to discuss an MRI. If the results of the MRI are abnormal in some way (arthritis of the spine, specific muscular/ligament tear, etc.), the patient will be referred to ORTHO. The timeline from initially being seen for an orthopedic complaint and receiving “specialty” care for the complaint can be as long as three months depending on how quickly an MRI can be scheduled. A thirty-day turn around on an MRI or specialty appointment is considered reasonable by TRICARE.

For example: Patient X is initially seen for knee pain after two years of chronic pain; they walk normally but complain of pain with running and weight lifting. The provider refers them to Sports Medicine for six weeks of physical therapy. Patient X returns after six weeks of physical therapy with continued knee pain, so the provider inputs an MRI. Patient X is scheduled for an MRI in 30 days. The MRI is abnormal and requires a referral to Orthopedics and the patient schedules his appointment for 30 days later. In this example, the patient waited a full ***three months*** before seeing an orthopedic specialist for their knee pain; this is COMPLETELY NORMAL. The medical branch fields most orthopedic complaints in situations that mirror the above described example. Orthopedic complaints such as these are not something that SMTC corpsman or Caron Clinic Medical Providers have control over; this is the procedure put in place per the Naval Hospital in conjunction with TRICARE.

SMTC medical understands that at other USCG units where there is not an military treatment facility (MTF), that the turnaround for an MRI and specialty appointment “out in town” rarely takes more than a month. However, SMTC is aboard a DOD installation with an MTF, and is required to adhere to the installation SOPs for these types of issues. SMTC medical will work with each member on a case by case basis and do the best to get the member a referral out in town as appropriate, but at the end of the day it comes down to what will be approved by TRICARE. Legitimate complaints about medical care will be handled appropriately by the command, however, non-constructive comments regarding having to wait for a specialty appointment when there is no conceivable way for the staff to expedite care will not be tolerated.

What constitutes an emergent condition?

***Use of the Emergency Room**

At no point may anyone tell a member they cannot go to the Emergency Room. However, if a member does go, TRICARE may not cover the bill for an Emergency Room visit for a non-emergent condition. For example, if a member has had a sore throat since Wednesday and waits until 0200 Sunday morning to decide they need emergency room care, then that member as a patient is at fault for not utilizing medical care appropriately. If a member has an afterhours medical issue that is not emergent (a threat to life or limb) that member may either wait until the morning to go to sick call, or if it is the weekend, there are urgent care facilities out in town that may be accessed. Again, if a member feels they need Emergency Medical Services, then that member is entitled to the use of the Emergency Room, but please use this resource responsibly.

If a member is seen at the ER, he or she is **REQUIRED** to follow up with medical the next day or at the earliest possible time. For instance, if the ER has SIQed a member for two days, the member would follow up in two days and **BRING THE EMERGENCY ROOM CHIT** stating the member was SIQed until that date to medical upon follow up. The member is also required to inform both the duty HS and the member’s supervisor of his or her ER visit as soon as possible. The duty corpsman is responsible for picking up the phone, so if a member went to the ER at 0200 and has the opportunity to call the duty corpsman at 0230, which is when the member needs to call the duty corpsman. Informing medical at a later time that “I did not want to wake anyone up” is not an acceptable excuse because it is the duty’s job to answer the phone.

If a member misuses the ER, does not contact the appropriate people, does not follow up with primary care at the clinic after the fact, or does not provide the proper paperwork from the ER, the command will hold the member responsible. The member is authorized to use an ER other than the Naval Hospital, however this should only be in the case where the member doesn't think he or she can make it to the Naval ER, (may be the case if the member lives in Wilmington for example). Regardless, the member is still responsible for getting the appropriate duty status documentation from the civilian provider. If the provider tells the member that he or she needs to stay home for two days, it is the member's responsibility to get that from the provider in writing and provide that documentation to SMTC medical.

How do I contact Medical?

The following are the extensions for the offices most often occupied by SMTC corpsman at the clinic: (910) 440-7338 ext 211 or 204

If there are questions about items not addressed in this document, such as readiness/CGBI questions or other admin questions, please feel free to contact an SMTC corpsman. There is often a corpsman at the clinic and almost always someone at the medical trailer. SMTC members may contact medical by phone, email, or in person and the corpsmen will assist members to the best of their ability.