

Surgery Response to the Coronavirus Outbreak (COVID-19)

Please note, that the most reliable and up to date information regarding the Coronavirus is available on the NHS website www.nhs.uk. Further advice is available on the www.gov.uk website.

The NHS 111 Online service is available if you think you have symptoms of coronavirus.

At the Surgery we have a responsibility to our Patients and Staff to help slow the spread of the Coronavirus in our community.

As a place which cares for the most vulnerable and at-risk patients, as well as somewhere potentially symptomatic patients may come, two groups we do not want to mix, our message is in keeping with the national campaign – “If you think you have the symptoms of Coronavirus, do not attend the Surgery.”

We are working with three main principles in mind.

- Identify possible cases as soon as possible
- Isolate or cohort to prevent transmission to other patients and staff
- Appropriate use of personal protective equipment

There are some simple, practical measures we can put in place, many of which involve reducing footfall at the surgery, and therefore limit contact between people.

Changes to the appointment systems

Daily telephone triage – We are screening all appointments at the surgery. Anyone who would like an appointment should call the surgery as usual, but please expect a call from a GP or other clinician before a face to face appointment is offered. If we are able, we will try to help you over the phone and avoid a visit to the surgery.

Increased use of telephone appointments - We are encouraging patients to consider whether or not their problem requires a physical examination or a face to face discussion, and if not, we would be able to book a telephone appointment. Anyone with a currently prebooked appointment will be converted to a telephone consultation and after consultation will be determined if the need to be seen face to face.

Online appointment booking changes– Unfortunately, due to the risk of a symptomatic patient booking an appointment without speaking with us first we have temporarily suspended online appointment booking for face to face appointments.

Explore other ways of working – We are exploring other ways of caring for our patients, including online consultations and video calls.

Medication/chronic disease reviews and routine investigations – We are relaxing our medication review requirements and on a case by case basis weighing up the risk of bringing patients to the surgery for reviews etc against postponing this until a later date.

Other footfall

On entry to building – We are installing a buzzer in the reception so that we can stop patient entering unless they absolutely need to. Those patients we can manage by passing prescriptions or

medication we will aim to do through a window if possible. Public Health England are encouraging any patients with a cough, fever or shortness of breath not to attend the practice (and to access healthcare via [NHS 111 Online](#)). If anyone with these symptoms does enter the building, we may have to briefly close for a deep clean, so would rather avoid this disruption. We will call back via telephone any patients who attend with these symptoms.

Prescription collection and ordering – We have alternative methods of ordering and collection of prescriptions rather than attending the surgery. These are potentially more convenient for patients, and we have been promoting them for some time. We are now strongly encouraging patients to register for our online services or the NHS App to order prescriptions, and nominate a pharmacy (by either speaking with our reception team, or the community pharmacy) so that your prescription can be sent electronically.

Letters and non-urgent private services – There may be some delay in non-urgent matters, such as insurance forms and other letters as we deal with acute medical problems. With regards to holiday cancellations and insurance forms, information is available on the [gov.uk](#) website, and you should not require a letter from your GP. Information about MED3 Fit notes (sick notes) for your employer is also on the [gov.uk](#) site.

Screening coronavirus symptoms

It may be necessary for us to see patients with respiratory symptoms at the practice (after speaking with a doctor). We already have robust infection control procedures and are well prepared for circumstances such as this. We have allocated an entrance away from the main reception area and have a designated room to contain potential infection.

We will of course treat any patient with Coronavirus symptoms in confidence and with dignity, but still will need to wear the appropriate personal protective equipment when assessing these patients and clean to rigorous standards after each consultation.

Preparing for staff shortages

As a business like any other, we need to prepare for our staff to become ill, self-isolate, or allow time off to care for loved ones if necessary. We have robust business continuity plans in place already to manage staff absence, and will limit the impact on our services as much as we can.

We have, and are developing, contingencies in place with local surgeries to support local primary care colleagues maintain a safe service for our community.

What can you do to help?

You can register for the NHS App - so that you can book a triage call back with a GP, and order your prescriptions online, rather than coming to the surgery.

Please avoid the surgery if at all possible. As I'm sure you can appreciate, we are extremely busy, so please avoid routine queries, particularly calling for results. We will contact patients with abnormal results to arrange follow up.

It is important not to panic, take a common sense approach, and keep checking the official websites listed above for reliable and regularly updated information. Bear in mind that the virus will be mild for the majority of people. If you think you have symptoms visit the NHS 111 website and avoid attending the surgery without speaking with a GP first.

Thank you.