

Drs Ngan and Partners Practice

Coronavirus FAQs

PLEASE NOTE THIS IS UP TO DATE AS OF 20/04/2020

INFORMATION IS CONSTANTLY BEING UPATED

Please click on the triangle to the left of the question to open the answer

Where can I find the most up to date information about Covid-19?

The NHS website has the most relevant information:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Because of the fast changing nature of Covid-19 guidance – it is important to read the most up to date advice from NHS England.

We ask that any patient with a chesty, cough, temperature, cold or flu like symptoms or any other Covid-19 related queries to read the NHS guidance FIRST before contacting the surgery or 111.

I need advice about work and self-isolation policies

Please consult the Public Health England and gov website for more information on self isolation:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-advice/>

more detailed information on staying at home:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

For vulnerable patients, the latest guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

The guidance on work with some guidance about benefits that may be available to those having to work from home:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-guidance-for-employees>

We will NOT be issuing advice about workplace and isolation policies. Our priority is clinical care during a very busy time.

I need a note for work to prove I am self-isolating due to symptoms of Covid-19 or due to a family member having symptoms of Covid-19

You can provide a note through the official government website:

<https://111.nhs.uk/isolation-note/>

The practice will not be offering additional sick notes or doctors notes for self isolation as the government guidance to employers is very clear that the note above will be sufficient.

[I have received a letter about “shielding”. What is this and why have I been included?](#)

Public Health England has advised that any patient who is vulnerable to serious illness from Covid-19 should try and stay at home for at least 12 weeks for their own safety.

Please note this is different from patients who should be self isolating. These are very different terms. Shielding is for VERY high risk patients.

Shielding patients are from several categories:

1. directly from NHS England (some patients who are on active cancer, transplant and other very high risk categories)
2. High risk groups directly identified by hospitals (eg patients undergoing high risk treatment or having immune system suppressing medications)
3. Patients identified as high risk by the GP practice

There are many patients who feel they have a condition which places them in the high risk category – eg asthma, diabetes and so on. However most patients with well controlled conditions like asthma and diabetes DO NOT need to be shielded. Our shielding patient identification is based on our knowledge of patients, as well as guidance from national specialist colleges.

If you are on the shielding list you will receive a call, text message or a letter from the practice or NHS England directly. Please follow the current government guidance which is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

if you are a relative of a person who is shielding, the guidance is currently that you should not be shielding or self isolating but should assess this risk by contacting your employer.

[What if I do not agree with the shielding list \(I should be on / I should not be on the list\)](#)

There are also some patients who are healthy and do not feel they should be on the list – this usually includes patients identified by the hospital or NHS England due to a coding error. We are happy to discuss these with the patient. The most common error so far is for patients coded as “sickle cell traits” (carrier of sickle cell anaemia) should not be on the shield list, whereas patients who are “sickle cell” SHOULD be on the shield list.

If you are NOT on the list of shielding patients but feel you have a higher risk due to Covid, eg well controlled diabetes, it is the responsibility of your employer to risk assess your condition and to try and minimise your risk of Covid. Unfortunately we cannot take on this work as a practice, as this is an assessment of your workplace.

[How has the practice changed its way of working to deal with Covid-19?](#)

We have made several changes to the way patients can access the GP surgery. These are on the whole temporary and we will review these once Covid settles.

- 1. No more online booking for appointments**

2. **Triage only to access appointments** – this means that any request for an appointment will be dealt with by a doctor over the phone first. If an appointment is deemed necessary, it will be offered by the doctor.
3. **New telephone system – please also note our new phone number**
4. **New online consultation systems** (including video consultations)
5. **Layout changes** – we are placing a buzzer for the reception area to reduce the risk to our staff of Covid and blocking the door to the clinical rooms.
6. Our clinical staff will be wearing **protective equipment**, such as surgical scrubs, masks, aprons and gloves – please do not be alarmed by this, as these are precautions taken to protect both staff AND patients.
7. If a face to face appointment is deemed necessary, they are now given at **set times** in the day (usually around 12-1 lunchtime and 4-5pm) to minimise the traffic into the practice.

Can I still register with the practice?

Yes – we are still open for new patient registrations. However, we are asking patients to **ONLY** register using our online website.

Normally we require proof of identity to be brought in but we are temporarily suspending this requirement until the Covid19 epidemic has passed.

Should I still attend routine appointments?

We have already contacted all patients with **booked doctors appointments**. For these appointments we will offer a telephone consultation instead. Patients can also choose to cancel the appointment. Any patient who still wants to be seen face to face will be triaged by a doctor on the morning of the appointment.

For any new request for appointments or clinical queries, we will place your request on a list that will then be triaged by a doctor. We will try and deal with every query on the day.

Given the extreme demand we are now under, we **cannot** guarantee the doctor who speaks to you will be the doctor of your choice, although we will try our best to match your request.

We are still seeing patients face to face, however this can only be booked by a doctor after triage. We have appointments at set times in the morning and evening.

Are telephone appointments safe?

Even before the Covid-19 issues, most practices dealt with many things over the phone. As experienced GPs, we are confident that we can manage most problems over the phone safely and quickly. If there is a case that needs to be seen in person we still can offer that appointment.

Whilst telephone consultations are never going to be as good as face to face for quality, we also have to consider that we need to reduce the Covid-19 risk of attending the practice.

We are also starting to use video consultations, which aids with certain types of consultations such as skin rashes. We are also using a text messaging service which allows you to upload pictures to our doctors directly on demand. We also allow pictures to be sent via our website if you have any queries.

Nurse appointments

As with doctors appointments, nurses will now stop seeing routine appointments.

Any currently booked appointments will be triaged by nursing and medical staff, and may still go ahead, be cancelled or offered to be dealt with over the phone.

Any urgent requests will be triaged according to needs versus risk.

We will NOT be offering routine checkups, annual chronic disease clinics such as asthma, diabetes, high blood pressure and so on.

We will still be offering some monitoring of **essential** tests – for example those on rheumatic arthritis medications which needs regular blood monitoring.

Baby checks and routine vaccinations

Current NHS England advice is that routine children's vaccinations **should** still go ahead. The main reason is that we do not want an outbreak of childhood diseases like measles after the Covid situation finishes.

Baby checks are less important and we do not feel these are absolutely essential. We will offer these once a month at the practice because of the current guidance. However, our view is that if the baby is developing well and there are no concerns from the parents, it may be worth delaying the check until after the Covid situation has finished.

Injections and other procedures

We are currently assessing the common treatments we normally would offer based on how necessary it is and whether it can be delayed. Here is a list of common procedures we offer and what patients should expect with them:

1. B12 injections – are NOT considered essential. B12 can stay in the bloodstream for up to 2 years so a short delay will NOT be dangerous in any way. We are offering B12 tablets instead for the period of time coronavirus will be a problem.
2. Steroid injections – NOT essential. Can be useful for joint pains and so on but the pain can be dealt with in other ways, such as exercises at home, rest or painkillers.
3. Prostaglandin or Zoladex injections – SHOULD go ahead – if they are used to prevent prostate or other forms of cancer.
4. HPV catch up – are NOT essential and can be rescheduled safely, even if you have had vaccinations already.
5. Cryotherapy is being cancelled
6. Sexual health – **coils, implants and removal** of such items are now being suspended temporarily. Implants can be safely left in and will be effective for an extra year (normally licensed for 3 years but is proven to be effective up to 4 years). We can offer pill forms of contraception temporarily over the phone if needed.
7. Annual review blood tests – eg diabetes etc. These are by definition not urgent and so can be safely delayed for a few months.

Home visits

As with the above, we are trying to reduce the amount of contact we have with patients to reduce the risk of Covid-19 to the most vulnerable patients.

Home visits are ONLY for housebound patients. We will triage all requests for visits as per usual and may choose to deal with the request over the phone whenever possible.

If you are **self-isolating** due to symptoms of Covid-19, this does NOT entitle you to a visit. You will still be assessed and dealt and a visit would only be available if you are truly housebound and the

issue could not be dealt with over the phone. If a face to face appointment is absolutely essential, we will offer you a time to attend the practice, at a time and location to minimise risk to staff and to you.

If you are **SHIELDING**, visits may be necessary **ONLY** if there are no realistic other options. Due to the high risk nature of shielding patients, ANY clinical contact is a risk and so we will try and deal with most queries remotely via telephone or video consultations. If the patient is unwell and on the shielding list they may need a direct admission to the hospital. We may also rely on other healthcare teams who are actively seeing patients already at home to help with visiting as well, eg district nurses, active case managers and so on.

We ask our patients to be sensible in requesting visits at all times, but especially during this very difficult time for the NHS.

Should I request more medications?

Please do not change the way you request medications. There are no immediate shortages of medications at the moment above what is normally available. There have been reports of panic buying medications such as paracetamol which is exactly the situation we want to avoid. Please note a prescription does not mean that medications that are out of stock will become available.

We are now **REFUSING** any requests for anything but the regular amounts of medications as this would only cause unnecessary panic ordering and create additional workload for the practice when we are at our busiest. Please do not contact the practice requesting more than normal.

I need advice on travel

The Foreign office has now advised against all essential travel:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus>

Given current situations, we cannot offer routine travel advice, nor routine travel clinic services.

I need a letter or proof that I'm Covid19 free to travel

We are aware of some countries (eg Thailand) are imposing a requirement to prove that you are Covid19 free 24 within 24 hours of travel.

Covid19 testing is **currently not available in primary care** and at present only people affected by symptoms are tested for this in hospitals. The UK has a limited capacity to test for Covid19 and priority will always be for patients who have symptoms and are in need of testing.

It is therefore currently impossible for GPs to obtain proof of Covid19 free status so please do not request this.

Please note there are private providers offering this test but we cannot speak to the quality, reliability and cost of these tests. It is likely you will have to pay for this.