

SUMMER NEWSLETTER

www.rainfordhealthcentre.co.uk

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DRS LOWCOCK & VELTKAMP



Don't forget the bank holidays in May have changed. The bank holidays are Friday 8th May and Monday 25th May. If you need medical advice please ring the above number.

Covid-19 update

In recent weeks, practices have had to adapt new ways of working to reduce the number of people entering the Health Centre at a given time (called footfall) but also to ensure that the ongoing medical needs of patients are still being dealt with safely.

For GPs, this involves considering not only their own areas of responsibility but also that of work typically carried out by other healthcare professionals, such as district nurses, treatment room services and pharmacists, as well as other healthcare organisations.

Total triage

In March, like most GP practices, we took steps to move towards a 'total triage system', whereby every patient contacting the practice is first triaged before making an appointment. Patients are then managed remotely (online, phone or video) where possible to minimise practice footfall. We do offer face-to-face appointments where clinical need is justified. As a reassurance to patients our staff will always follow the most recent Health Protection Agency (HPA) guidance available and wear the recommended personal protective equipment (PPE).

You may find that some of our activities will be postponed until further notice. The British Medical Association has compiled a list of such non-urgent work. Examples are; coil checks/changes, travel vaccinations, insurance reports, medicals, non urgent paperwork, DVLA medicals, routine smears, joint injections etc

Also, some routine referrals to secondary care may also be postponed to ensure capacity is available at the hospitals for more urgent cases. These will be followed-up when lockdown measures are eased. Urgent or 2 week cancer referrals will still go ahead.

What else are we doing?

As a practice we are actively identifying patients who will require close monitoring and follow-up. This approach can help to pick up patients who might not otherwise contact the practice – for example those requiring repeat blood samples in order to monitor previous abnormal test results. Specific conditions or treatments, such as diabetes or warfarin therapy, will still require close monitoring. At this current point in time, if we contact you and ask you to attend for a blood test then please be assured that this is because we feel that it is essential for your care. Please note that these urgent blood tests are undertaken at Lowe House Resource Centre. Monday to Friday 9am to 12.30pm

We are continuing to and have considered whether alternative approaches might be trialed, or how we can undertake certain tasks safely and with minimal personal contact. Examples are you may be asked to stay in your car in the car park and a clinician will come to you to give you an injection or you may receive a phone call from one of our health professionals asking you to undertake home blood pressure readings or height and weight details.

In respect of potential Covid-19 patients our commissioning group has established a centre called a “Hot Hub” where patients with covid-19 or household members of someone with covid-19 will be referred to for any face to face interventions. Be prepared to travel to Albion Street Medical Centre for this. Cold cases ie., patients with no covid-19 symptoms will be seen here at the Health Centre after being triaged. This is to ensure that we do not cross contaminate patients or infect our staff here at the Health Centre.

GP practices are also having to manage a significant increase in home visiting due to the implementation of public health social distancing measures. We have access to a home visiting team, specially set up to offer home visits during the current crisis. The demand may increase as patients in high-risk categories are instructed to remain at home, and with the expected increase in patients being discharged from hospitals. Again be assured that there is a “hot car” and a “cold car” to ensure no cross contamination.

Prescribing

Another challenging area is prescription monitoring. Electronic prescribing should be the default position. Patients without a nominated pharmacy will be required to nominate one.

Patients will naturally be concerned about access to medication but overprescribing or early requests will not be accepted as this could adversely affect the supply chain and possibly lead to shortages. Patients are requested to order when they have 7 days medication left. This gives the surgery time to process the prescription and the nominated pharmacy time to dispense it.

Changes to X-ray services

If you have NO Covid-19 symptoms and your GP has requested that you have an x-ray (ie hands, feet, chest x-ray) during the coronavirus pandemic, you can still have your x-ray done.

Please attend one of the following sites ONLY - no appointment is necessary:

St Helens Hospital X-ray Department

9am - 7.30pm Monday and Tuesday

9am - 4.30pm Wednesday – Friday

Millennium Centre X-ray Department

9am - 6.30pm Monday – Friday

9am - 4.30pm Sat & Sunday

If you do have Covid-19 symptoms (high temperature, new, continuous cough) please do not attend for an x-ray. You should follow national guidance and isolate for 14 days before attending. If you are concerned or have any questions please ring 0151 676 5756.

If you are on the UK government's shielding list then please ring the X-ray Department on 0151 676 5756 before attending.

If your GP has requested an US scan, MR scan or CT scan, the department will be in touch to discuss a suitable appointment time.

Communicating with patients Since the middle of March, the pace of change in service delivery has been exceptional. We will continue to promote and advertise important changes via our practice website and using text messaging or emails if you prefer.

Moving forward, the public must be reassured that, despite this crisis, GPs are still here to provide routine care as required, even if access is being managed very differently.