



# Heart to Heart

*Northway Medical Centre's PPG News Bulletin*

Our Patients Participation Group (PPG) Newsletters aim to keep you informed about what's going on with health care services at Northway Medical Centre, and within the Dudley CCG overall.

A number of patients have contacted me recently to ask about why the surgery doors are locked, how to put in request for repeat prescriptions, should they go to hospitals for blood tests and x-rays and whether routine non urgent medical appointments will still be happening?

Here's what I know after speaking to Dr Pritchard today (25/03/2020) and I thought it would be useful to capture this in a News Bulletin ...

*Karen Hindley*  
Chair – Northway PPG



## Restricted access to the surgery premises

Last week the GPs at the surgery decided to restrict patient access to the surgery premises in the interests of safety – both to staff and patients. So the doors are locked, but patients who have an appointment will see the medical team at the surgery and will be allowed to enter, but the external doors will remain locked to prevent others from entering the building.

All routine appointments with nurses and doctors have been cancelled (suspended) until further notice. Routine appointments are for example health checks, medication reviews, cervical smear tests, blood pressure monitoring, ear syringing, and such like.

If you have symptoms of coughs, colds, flu, fever – you should **STAY AT HOME** and follow the guidance issued by NHS England about looking after yourself/someone in your family and monitor progress. The advice from NHS England is replicated at the end of this bulletin.

There is no point in your asking to see a doctor here at the Practice – they will only refer you to the NHS 111 procedure and service to determine the next course of action appropriate for you.

If you have other illness that is unlikely to be related to coughs, colds, flu and potentially COVID-19, NHS England still recommend that you refer yourself through the 111 helpline. The helpline is however being inundated with calls and doctors at the practice are willing to speak with patients who have other medical concerns. You will need to contact the surgery as follows:

Telephone: 01902 885180 or 01902 880825

Email: [northway.medicalpractice@nhs.net](mailto:northway.medicalpractice@nhs.net)

In either case, there will be an initial triage\* of your symptoms

(\**triage = the assignment of degrees of urgency to wounds or illnesses to decide the order of treatment of a large number of patients or casualties*).

If it is appropriate, you will be given an appointment to see a doctor or nurse at the surgery.

## Please do not be abusive to staff

Whilst people may be frustrated when they feel ill and they are unable to get appointments to see GPs at short notice, it is not appropriate to be rude and abusive to the receptionists and other staff at the surgery. Everyone is working flat-out to meet demands for medical assistance and the team at the surgery may have worries and concerns about their own health and the health of their families.

The reception staff have to ask questions to help complete the initial triage and they can only offer the appointments that are available. If you are not happy with the information that you are given, you should ask for your concern to be noted and passed to the Practice Manager who will review and respond to the issue as appropriate.

## Repeat prescription requests

The majority of patients registered at the surgery already obtain repeat prescriptions electronically – either through registration at a convenient pharmacy, or via Dudley's Prescription Ordering Direct call centre, or through the on-line Patient Access system.

Patients will not be able to bring handwritten requests for repeat prescriptions into the surgery as the surgery doors are locked and only patients with appointments are being admitted.

To reiterate – ways to request your repeat prescriptions:

1. **Prescription Ordering Direct [POD] 01384 465303 -**  
*telephone lines open between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.*



POD is essentially a centralised call centre handling repeat prescription requests on behalf of GP surgeries for those patients who prefer to telephone rather than use online Patient Access/EMIS system for re-ordering. The POD approach brings benefit to patients and to GPs as well as saving valuable money for the NHS by reducing waste in prescriptions for medicines that are not being used.

- The POD service diverts calls away from the surgery so that the telephone lines are more accessible for patients wishing to make appointments or contact the surgery on other matters;
- The POD Service helps to free up GP time as the repeat prescription requests are handled by fully trained prescribing clerks and clinical members of the Medicines Management Team of Dudley CCG who have access to all repeat prescription records as well as access to your GP practice, should they need to check anything with your doctor for you.

If you have a nominated pharmacy where you usually collect your prescription from, or have it delivered to your home, once the POD team has authorised your prescription it will be sent to your nominated pharmacy.

*More information on this service can be found at*

<https://psnc.org.uk/dudley-lpc/essential-services-3/pharmacy-ordering-direct-pod/>

## 2. **Electronic Prescription Services**

Register with your local Pharmacy for electronic prescription services. Complete the registration form and they will order repeat prescriptions for you directly with your GP, as and when you ask them to do this for you.

*More information on this service can be found at*

<https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/pharmacies/electronic-prescription-service/>

## 3. **Patient Access**

### **Online internet service to order repeat prescriptions**

Patient Access is the online medical information system available to all GP patients in Dudley. Around a third of the patients at Northway Surgery have registered for this online access. It's really great for ordering repeat prescriptions - some patients have told us that they like it because they can log-in immediately they realise that they need a repeat prescription – whatever the time of day (or night!) – they don't need to wait for the surgery to open, and 48 hours later they just collect the items from the pharmacy. The benefits for the Practice are that if more patients use the online services, it frees up the phone lines and it frees up more time for the surgery staff to do other medical work.

- If you have access to the internet and would like **to register for online services**, you will need to complete an EMIS registration form (available from reception) and bring in three forms of identity – the reception staff will be happy to talk you through the process.

*More information on this service can be found at* <https://www.patientaccess.com/>

For all of these services, you either telephone or place your request online and then either collect your prescription from your nominated Pharmacy or they deliver to your door if you have registered for that service.

## **Hospital non-urgent services suspended**

The Hospital Trust have cancelled all non-urgent services at Russells Hall Hospital, Corbett Hospital and Guest Hospital. This means that non-urgent appointments and operations have been cancelled until further notice and diagnostic services – such as blood tests, x-rays and scans are also closed for all non-urgent cases.

There are numerous sources of information and instructions about how to cope with the Covid-19 virus: the latest information from NHS England is replicated below.

# Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Information and instructions from NHS England

COVID-19 is a new illness that can affect your lungs and airways. It's caused by a virus called coronavirus.

## Stay at home to stop coronavirus spreading

*Everyone must stay at home to help stop the spread of coronavirus.*

*This includes people of all ages – even if you do not have any symptoms or other health conditions.*

You can only leave your home:

- to shop for basic essentials – only when you really need to
- to do one form of exercise a day – such as a run, walk or cycle, alone or with other people you live with
- for any medical need – for example, to visit a pharmacy or deliver essential supplies to a vulnerable person
- to travel to and from work – but only where this is absolutely necessary

## What to do if you have coronavirus symptoms

Continue to stay at home if you have either:

- a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)

To protect others, do not go to places like a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital. Stay at home. Use the 111 online coronavirus service to find out what to do. Use the 111 coronavirus service

## What to do if you need medical help for another reason

If you need medical help not related to coronavirus, **do not go to places like a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital.**

- For health information and advice, use the NHS website or check your GP surgery website.
- For urgent medical help, use the NHS 111 online service. Only call 111 if you're unable to get help online
- For life-threatening emergencies, call 999 for an ambulance.

## Advice for people at high risk

If you're at high risk of getting seriously ill from coronavirus, there are extra things you should do to avoid catching it. These include:

- not leaving your home – you should not go out to do shopping, visit friends or family, or attend any gatherings
- avoiding close contact with other people in your home as much as possible

## Who is at high risk?

You may be at high risk from coronavirus if you:

- have had an organ transplant
- are having certain types of cancer treatment
- have blood or bone marrow cancer, such as leukaemia
- have a severe lung condition, such as cystic fibrosis or severe asthma
- have a condition that makes you much more likely to get infections
- are taking medicine that weakens your immune system
- are pregnant and have a serious heart condition

**If you're at high risk, you will be contacted by the NHS by Sunday 29 March 2020.**

Do not contact your GP or healthcare team at this stage – wait to be contacted.

## Other things you can do to stop the infection spreading

Do:

- wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
- use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards
- stay 2 metres (3 steps) away from other people, if you need to go outside
- do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean

## Pregnancy advice

If you're pregnant and worried about coronavirus, you can get advice about coronavirus and pregnancy from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

## Treatment for coronavirus

There is currently no specific treatment for coronavirus. **Antibiotics do not help** as they do not work against viruses. Treatment aims to relieve the symptoms while your body fights the illness. You'll need to stay in isolation, away from other people, until you have recovered.

## Get an isolation note to give to your employer

If you live with someone who has symptoms of coronavirus, you can get an isolation note to send to your employer as proof you need to stay off work.

You do not need to get a note from a GP. Click the link below if you need one <https://111.nhs.uk/isolation-note/>

*Further PPG News Bulletins will be produced by the Patients Participation Group as and when there is other information to share with you from the surgery.*

*Please do your bit to help contain the spread of the virus – stay at home and maintain the recommended social isolation.*