

Understanding What's Going On at Priory Surgery during the Covid-19 Pandemic

On behalf of the team at Priory Surgery, we would like to give you some information to help you and your family in these challenging times. This leaflet explains how things have changed at the surgery and how to deal with medical problems that you might need help with in the coming weeks-months.

We understand that this is a strange and scary time for everyone and different from how life has ever been before.

Your GP surgery is also going to seem strange and different. We may not have the staff or the time to do many of the things we normally do. Our main job will be to focus on the most unwell patients: to work out which of those need hospitalisation and those we can help in the community. Many of them will have medical problems that have nothing to do with Covid-19, because these things won't go away while we fight this crisis. All the usual serious problems like heart problems, depression, strokes and cancer won't stop, and we will need to keep treating these as well.

So how can you help us?

Firstly, please **do not come into the surgery**. Even if it is tricky to get through on the phone (and we know it will be) please **do not come in unless you have been specifically asked to by one of the staff**. This will help to protect you, us, and other vulnerable patients.

If you think you may have coronavirus, current guidance is to **look at 111 online for advice** - <https://111.nhs.uk/>. At present there is not much we can do in general practice to help the symptoms of coronavirus beyond the advice to drink enough water and get enough rest. Paracetamol can help you feel a bit better but it won't affect how quickly you recover or how poorly you get, so don't worry if you do not have any.

If you feel you are becoming so unwell that you may need to go into hospital, the current advice is to **call 111** (this may change over time). **In these circumstances, this is your best and quickest source of advice - please persevere if there are delays getting through.**

If you think you need to phone the surgery, take a moment to have a think about why you are calling:

Think: can this problem wait and if so...how long? If it can wait until the end of the crisis, especially if you take some steps yourself to try to improve the symptoms, then don't call us. Have a look on www.nhs.uk or <https://111.nhs.uk/> or www.patient.info to see if you can find out more about your problem: it might give you some self-care tips you should try first.

Our website also contains useful self-care information: www.priorysurgerybristol.co.uk.

There is no point calling to ask for a referral for a routine outpatient clinic or operation, as these have all been suspended until the crisis is over.

To keep you and us as safe as possible **we are now telephone triaging all our appointments**. This means a clinician will speak to you on the phone, to work out if your problem can be managed that way, or if we need to see you face to face. The more things we can sort out over the phone, the lower our chances of catching Covid-19 from you, or you catching it from someone at the surgery, or on your journey here.

We know it can feel strange not being able to see your doctor in person and not being examined. But did you know that 80% of diagnoses are made from the story of your symptoms alone?

We can also now send information via secure text messaging, and do some video consultations via your mobile phone. If we want to do a video consultation we will text you a link to click on to set up the consultation system. This is new technology for all of us, so please bear with us as we all adapt.

If we do ask you to come into the surgery we may ask you to wait in the car until we call you in, or even see you in your car. We will try to make this plan clear when we speak on the phone. If you are called in to the building, **please use the hand sanitiser when you enter and leave.**

Some things we do face to face at the surgery are currently carrying on: for example, **we are still giving children their vaccinations** (especially as mumps and measles are also going round in the UK at the moment), we are still

dressing ulcers and wounds, and doing the blood tests that are too important to wait - including medication monitoring.

However, we need to minimise face to face contact to reduce risk of spread of the virus. We are therefore deferring the following until after the crisis (even if you have already booked an appointment for this):

We are cancelling:

- Travel advice and injections
- NHS health checks and routine medication reviews
- Minor surgery and injections
- Spirometry
- Routine blood tests that can safely wait

This is in line with advice from the Government and what other surgeries will also be doing. This may change; this list is up-to-date at the time of publication, we will try to post updates about this on our website.

Thank you for all your support and understanding already in these challenging circumstances.

There are some more things you can do to help us in this fight.

1. Order your prescriptions online if possible, or via your nominated pharmacy, or by email to priory.surgery@nhs.net, and expect them to take longer than usual. They will go electronically straight to the chemist, so make sure you nominate a pharmacy if you haven't already got one. Please allow **7 days before collecting from the pharmacy**. Do not come to surgery to collect them. **We cannot change the pharmacy that your prescription has been sent to**. Once issued, **your prescription must be collected from your "nominated" pharmacy**, even if there is a queue there.
2. Please don't over-order medications, especially inhalers or paracetamol. If you don't normally need an inhaler but fancy getting one just in case you get Covid - **don't**. Wait and see if you need it: if you do, you can call us and we can get an urgent prescription for you. The supply of inhalers is already running short - make sure those people who need an inhaler every day of their normal life can still get hold of them.
3. **Please do still "bother us" if something feels important or worrying to you!** For example, if you are worried your symptoms may fit with the red flags for cancer we want to hear from you. The 111 website can also be helpful to decide if you should call a GP about your problem.
4. If you need to call 111 or go into hospital, they may not have access to your GP medical notes, so think about writing down your medications and past medical problems somewhere, as well as any allergies that you have.
5. Have a think about what you want to do if you get very sick. Tell your relatives, and consider writing this down somewhere it would be easy for paramedics to find (some people put this in the fridge, as paramedics always check in there for medications!). Get paperwork organised, and think about if anyone should have a spare key to your house.
6. **If you are isolated or alone, we want to hear from you!** If you do not have relatives who can help you, we want to know! There are lots of people out there who can help you if you are on your own, and they will be careful not to invade your privacy. But a bit of care and a regular supply of food can make the world of difference. So if you need some support or a helping hand, **please contact reception who can make contact with our social prescriber for you.**

Remember, your GPs, nurses, health care assistants, admin staff, receptionists, pharmacists and dispensers are all under stress at this time. They may be working longer hours while juggling worries about relatives, working in different ways from usual and knowing they have an increased risk of picking up Covid themselves. Everything we are used to is changing on a daily basis at the moment.

Please be patient with us, like you would with anyone else right now.

Look after each other. Protect the vulnerable. Work as a community. Look after yourselves.

Thank you.