

# The Crookes Practice

## Coronavirus - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

27<sup>th</sup> March 2020

This was correct at the time of writing. For the most up to date advice and guidance, always look at the gov.uk, and NHS/111 websites.

### What are the symptoms of Coronavirus?

Stay at home if you have coronavirus symptoms which are 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 three or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual).

### What do I do if I have symptoms?

Do not go to a GP Surgery, Pharmacy or Hospital. In the first instance use the NHS111 Coronavirus advice service online - <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19> Only telephone 111 if you cannot get help online.

If you have symptoms of coronavirus you will need to stay at home for **7 days**.

If you live with someone who has symptoms, you will need to stay at home for **14 days** from the day the first person in the home started having symptoms or for 7 days from when you develop coronavirus symptoms if this happens in the 14 day isolation period.

If you live with someone who is 70 or over, has a long-term condition, is pregnant or has a weakened immune system, try to find somewhere else for them to stay for 14 days. If you do have to stay at home together, try to keep away from each other as much as possible. Read the advice about staying at home by following the link - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-advice/>

In the event that your symptoms are deteriorating quickly with severe shortness of breath or any other symptoms which normally require a 999 call you must continue to use the emergency service – it is essential you mention to the 999 team that you think you might also have corona virus.

## **What can I do if I don't have symptoms to minimize the risk?**

We are advising those who are at increased risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19) to be particularly stringent in following social distancing measures. This group includes those who are:

- aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions)
- under 70 with an underlying health condition listed below (ie anyone instructed to get a flu jab as an adult each year on medical grounds):
- chronic (long-term) respiratory diseases, such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema or bronchitis
- chronic heart disease, such as heart failure
- chronic kidney disease
- chronic liver disease, such as hepatitis
- chronic neurological conditions, such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis (MS), a learning disability or cerebral palsy
- diabetes
- problems with your spleen – for example, sickle cell disease or if you have had your spleen removed
- a weakened immune system as the result of conditions such as HIV and AIDS, or medicines such as steroid tablets or chemotherapy
- being seriously overweight (a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or above)
- those who are pregnant

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults>

### **Extremely Vulnerable Group**

There are some clinical conditions which put people at even higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19. If you are in this category the NHS in England will directly contact you with advice about the more stringent measures you should take in order to keep yourself and others safe. For now, you should rigorously follow the social distancing advice.

People falling into this group are those who may be at particular risk due to complex health problems such as:

- people who have received an organ transplant and remain on ongoing immunosuppression medication
- people with cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy or radiotherapy
- people with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia who are at any stage of treatment
- people with severe chest conditions such as cystic fibrosis or severe asthma (requiring hospital admissions or courses of steroid tablets)
- people with severe diseases of body systems, such as severe kidney disease (dialysis)

## **When will I receive notification that I am in the extremely vulnerable group?**

Patients who are in the extremely vulnerable groups will be receiving a letter advising them to implement "Shielding" for 12 weeks. We are receiving a considerable amount of calls asking when a letter will be received. These letters will not be sent from the Practice but centrally and therefore we currently cannot tell you when you will receive yours. If you feel you fall into this category and have not received a letter by 1<sup>st</sup> April please contact us.

## **Is the Practice Still Open?**

Yes the Practice is still open. We are running on reduced staffing due to staff isolation and distancing, however, we have now moved to telephone triage appointments first rather than you coming into the surgery in the first instance. The reason for us not seeing you straightaway is to ensure we limit the spread of the virus; we all use the coordinated process of managing corona virus suspected patients in the same way across the country to ensure we protect our clinical team as much as possible so that we remain able to work and provide care. If you feel that your problem is urgent and you need to be seen, please call the surgery as you normally would.

Please be aware that when clinicians return your telephone call this will probably be from a hidden number and therefore you should answer the call. Our clinicians are experiencing a lot of patients not being available or answering a telephone call when

these are returned. We will try to contact you on you during a morning or afternoon session but can't always offer precise times. Please be patient we are all trying to do our best.

We may also give you the option of participating in a video consultation. This will be via a secure link to your smartphone.

## **Can I still telephone the Practice?**

Yes but only if absolutely necessary. As you can imagine we are dealing with a significant increase in telephone calls which means it is likely to take longer than usual to get through to a receptionist. Please only ring for issues which cannot wait ; examples of these include needing to consult with a GP, advanced nurse practitioner or nurse, request a home visit or organizing more urgent blood tests (eg DMARDs or INR bloods). We are still doing baby immunizations at the moment although this may change at short notice. If you have a chronic disease such as diabetes, asthma or COPD which has not been well controlled we may contact you to organize a review either face to face or via the telephone/video. If you are worried about your chronic condition and do not think it can wait until later in the summer then please call us so we can get the relevant health care professional to call you.

We understand that these are difficult and worrying times and we are genuinely sorry if you are inconvenienced by having to wait a bit longer on the phone than you usually would. Our workforce is also predicted to be significantly affected during this pandemic. This will also have an impact on the service we can offer.

If we have cancelled a routine review or appointment we request that you ring/contact us to re-book these when our services start to get back to normal or slightly later than that if it can wait. We are sorry but we will not have the systems/staff available to proactively contact patients to deal with the large backlog which is inevitable later in the year.

## **What are you classing as non-urgent routine consultations?**

The Practice has made a decision not to undertake any non-urgent work as the clinicians try to deal with patients affected by the outbreak and those patients requiring urgent assistance that is not virus related. This includes:

- Routine blood tests
- Routine Health Checks
- Coil checks or changes
- Nexplanon fittings, removals or changes
- Contraceptive depot injections (please ask for a telephone consultation to discuss your options)
- B12 injections (please ask for a telephone consultation to discuss your options)
- Routine smear tests (we will do our best to accommodate ones which have been asked to be repeated early)
- Ring pessaries
- Minor Surgery
- Travel vaccinations
- Insurance Reports
- Medicals
- DVLA/HGV Medical Examinations
- Non-urgent paperwork

## **Can I still order my medications from the surgery reception?**

Not at present. We would prefer if you did this online as it does make it easier to plan our workload. Please only use the medication line when ordering your repeat order. They also are experiencing a huge number of calls so please be patient.

asking whether medications are ready for collection and requesting a call back.

## **Can I have extra medications as I am self-isolating or just in case I get sick?**

Please **do not** ask for medications that you have not taken for many years e.g. inhalers or for an early supply of your repeat prescriptions. These are likely to be refused. We will assess your clinical need for medication at the time it is needed. Stockpiling, just in case, will be detrimental to the provision of all medications at a time when we need to ensure patients receive their medications as they need them.

## **Should I stop taking my anti-inflammatory medications?**

We are aware that concerns have been raised in France about the use of anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs). Some of these such as Ibuprofen and Aspirin are available over the counter. Others such as Naproxen, Diclofenac, Indometacin, Mefenamic Acid, Meloxicam, Ketoprofen and Celecoxib etc require a prescription.

There appears to be no evidence that NSAIDs increase the chance of acquiring coronavirus but concerns have been raised that taking them whilst you have a coronavirus infection may increase the complications or slow the recovery.

The Government has asked the National Institute for Care and Health Excellence and part of the Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Agency to review the evidence.

In the interim, patients who have confirmed coronavirus or believe they have coronavirus should use Paracetamol in preference to an NSAID.

## **There are shortages in the supermarkets so can I order my paracetamol from the Practice?**

The demand for paracetamol on prescription has also increased since the outbreak of Coronavirus. Paracetamol is available over the counter. If you have not been prescribed paracetamol by the Practice for pain or other reason recently then your clinical need will need to be reviewed and a decision made on this basis.

## **I've seen on social media that there is an Asthma Rescue Pack available. Can I have one?**

We are aware of social media posts circulating that asthmatics (and even those that aren't), will be issued with Rescue Packs of Amoxicillin and steroids if you call the Practice. This suggestion is incorrect and the decision to use rescue packs is only

made after careful evaluation for people with severe asthma or severe COPD who are often under follow up by a Specialist Respiratory Team.

Oral steroids are powerful systemic drugs that can have an immunosuppressant effect (thus potentially increasing the severity of an infection and the risk of you passing the infection on to other people) and thus the decision to use them would rarely be delegated to a patient without careful evaluation..

Please do not contact us asking for rescue packs unless this is something that has previously been agreed with your medical team and careful instruction how to use and when has been provided. That would normally still involve discussion with the medical team where possible before starting.

Asthma UK do not recommend use of rescue packs as a blanket policy for people with asthma during the pandemic.

### **Can you provide me with a sick note for my employer?**

Sick notes for coronavirus symptoms or self-isolation if a family member is ill can be downloaded from the 11-online service. This can be accessed via the links below. We will not usually accept telephone consultation requests for patients who only require these notes or advice around their individual employment situations. This should be assessed with current government advice via the gov.uk website and your Employer or Occupational Health Department.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-advice/>  
<https://111.nhs.uk/isolation-note/>

### **Can I come in and pick up prescriptions, letters, reports and sick notes from reception?**

Not currently. We have taken the decision to post out correspondence to patients during this time. In some circumstances we may be able to send out certain documents electronically.

### **Can you provide me with a letter for my insurers to cancel my travel arrangements?**

Only in very exceptional circumstances and there is likely to be a long delay in completing these as we do not anticipate that we will have the capacity to carry out this work .Insurers and travel companies should be basing their decisions to offer refunds and change travel on advice from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Public Health England. Patients with specific vulnerabilities will generally be able to offer evidence if needed from their online medical notes or repeat prescriptions or official shielding letter.

