

Coronavirus - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

26th March 2020

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).
- **Loss or change to your sense of smell or taste** – You cannot taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal.

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.

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 coronavirus.

Many of our patients and clinical staff will contract the virus. Some will have a mild case of flu like symptoms, some will be very ill with high temperatures and incessant cough and sadly some will be severely unwell requiring medical intervention.

As GPs we advise that you regularly wash your hands with soap and water (please note special, expensive soaps are not needed), keep your household surfaces clean, avoid overcrowded environments, maintain social distancing and seek medical advice early on if you have clinical symptoms.

Viruses do not respond to antibiotics and hence no acute treatment to get rid of the virus is available. The main symptoms of high temperature and sometimes a headache are best treated with paracetamol within the recommended dosage on the packaging.

There is a huge amount of information available online. Some of this is useful but some information is both incorrect and causing panic and fear. As clinicians we are committed to minimising any fear that this virus causes. With this in mind we will produce updates for you as things move forward.

What can I do if I don't have symptoms to minimise 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

Note: there are some clinical conditions which put people at even higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19. If you are in this category, in the next couple of weeks 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 in full, outlined below.

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 my At Risk Letter?

As advertised in the media, patients who are acknowledged to be in designated At Risk groups will be receiving a letter indicating their need to self-isolate for 12 weeks, this is also known as 'Shielding'. We are having a considerable amount of calls asking when a letter will be received. These letters will be out to patients as soon as possible and anticipated within the next two weeks.

What is Social Distancing?

This is a changing situation but general rules are:

Stay at home and only go out:

- to get essentials like food and medicine, no more than you absolutely need to
- to do a form of exercise once a day
- for any medical need
- to support a vulnerable person
- to go to work, only if it is essential.

Continue to wash your hands often, with soap and water. Don't touch your face if your hands aren't clean. And use tissues to wipe your nose or catch a sneeze, and bin them straight away.

What is Shielding (Isolation) ?

Stay at home at all times and avoid any face to face contact for at least **12 weeks**.

Is the Practice Still Open?

Yes the Practice is still open. We are running on reduced staffing due to staff isolation and distancing, however you can continue to contact us on askmyGP. If you have not already registered, you can do this via our website: <https://wrmc.org.uk/>. If you do not have internet access then you can contact us by phone and you will be asked a series of questions by our clinical support team. If you do not give this information we cannot process your request.

The clinician will deal with your request as appropriate, you will only be offered a face to face appointment if there is an urgent clinical need, otherwise you will be offered a phone/video consultation to minimise the risk of cross-infection to enable our health care team to continue to work and support you.

Can I still telephone the Practice?

As you can imagine we are dealing with an inordinate amount of telephone calls which means there may well be a wait for your call to be answered.

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, but please bear with us.

Can I still order my medications from the surgery?

Yes but, we would prefer if you did this online, via Patient Access or via askmyGP or if for repeat medication, then from your nominated pharmacy is an ideal.

If you have handed in a **paper request** for medication, please expect a call from one of our clinical support team asking you to nominate a pharmacy. This is how we will process your prescription from now on. If you do not nominate a pharmacy then we will nominate a local one for you. If you refuse then we may be unable to process your request. This is because we are protecting our team and you from a) coming out to drop your script off at the surgery and b) our staff handling paper from outside the surgery.

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 or extended periods of medication outside of the current 28 days that we provide on a repeat prescription basis.

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.

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 (brittle) asthma or severe COPD who are under follow up by a Specialist Respiratory Team.

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 COVID isolation will not be issued by the practice.

12 weeks

If you receive a letter from NHS asking you to isolate for 12 weeks, that will be sufficient for your employer.

7-14 days

If you have to self-isolate and you need a note for your employer, then you can obtain this via the NHS website: <https://111.nhs.uk/isolation-note/>

For non-coronavirus sick notes, please contact the practice via askmyGP.

Can I come in and pick up my correspondence from the Doctor?

Please do not attend the practice. We will use a method of choice by you or post out correspondence to patients during this time.

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

Unfortunately not. Insurers and travel companies will issue refunds on advice from Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and Public Health England, not letters from a GP. We cannot issue holiday cancellation letters for patients choosing not to travel due to the outbreak.