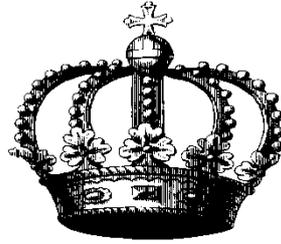


Dr D M Carr (Partner)  
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## **PATIENT NEWSLETTER** **WINTER EDITION 2020**

### **APPOINTMENTS WITH YOUR GP**

We know there's been a lot of discussion in the news about GPs providing face-to-face appointments. We wanted to reassure patients that NHS Digital have confirmed that in July over 50% of the 22.8 million appointments carried out were in fact face to face. <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-inf...al/appointments-in-general-practice/july-2020>

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we've remained open to patients. We've offered appointments using new ways of working and new technology. We've worked hard to make sure we've remained available to speak to, and to offer appointments to anyone who's needed them.

We know that patients sometimes prefer to see a GP face to face, but there are reasons why we've offered additional online or telephone consultations, and government guidance has played a big part in this. It's remained the case that if we've needed to see a patient face to face, or felt it was important for their care, we've asked those patients to come in to see us.

Offering new ways of working has helped some patients to access appointments that wouldn't normally be able to due to other commitments, such as their work or caring responsibilities.

The cleaning required between patients during the pandemic means that if all patients were to come into the surgery, we wouldn't be able to offer the same number of appointments because of the amount of time that cleaning between each patient takes. However, we'll always see patients face to face who need to be seen face to face.

Changing PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) between each patient adds additional time to the end of each appointment. The difficulty in obtaining PPE has also meant that we've needed to be more cautious than normal about the way we use scarce resources. We continue to work hard daily to source the PPE we need.

We understand that some patients are reluctant to come and see us in the surgery as they're worried. We're making sure that social distancing is as good as it possibly can be and that we maintain a 'COVID-secure' environment. Some of the things we take into account when we're considering this are: the waiting rooms, the number of people who pass each other in the corridors, and the toilet facilities that are available.

Our staff are people too, and some may have ethnicity or health issues that make them more vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19. As caring employers, we need to ensure that we keep our staff safe as well. We take the necessary precautions to keep both our staff and our patients safe.

We have many elderly and vulnerable patients with health conditions that make them more vulnerable to coronavirus than most. We also know that there are young and healthy people who have been seriously affected by COVID-19, so it isn't just the elderly or infirm we need to protect.

Increasing the number of patients in the surgery would mean that we'd increase the risk for everyone – particularly if some of those people had symptoms of COVID-19 and were unwell enough to need to be seen. For this reason, we'll keep a balance of the types of appointments we have available.

There's nothing we'd like to see more than a return to 'normal' life and the easy face-to-face care we've always provided, but at the moment offering fewer face-to-face appointments keeps patients safe and provides the maximum number of appointments we can.

We're available to talk to, and we always want to hear from, patients who need us. While we understand patients' frustrations with the current situation, we hope you'll continue to help and support us, as you've always supported the NHS, so that we can go on providing you with care and support in the coming weeks and months.

### **GP WORKING DAYS**

At The Crown Surgery, we have always advocated seeing the same doctor for continuity of care. Continuity of care happens when a patient and a doctor consult with each other repeatedly and get to know each other. This leads to better communication, patient satisfaction, greater adherence to medical advice and much lower use of hospital services. We would therefore encourage you to consult with the same doctor for your ongoing care. Our doctors normal working days will be:-

- Dr David Carr – Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday
- Dr Lucy Jones – Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday
- Dr Sarah Brookes – Monday, Thursday, Friday
- Dr Alison Shelley – Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday (and one Friday per month)
- Dr Harriet Pearce – Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday

Some of our doctors work part-time and as such have slightly longer waiting times for routine pre-booked consultations. In addition, our doctors rotate the duty doctor role each day. Therefore when your usual doctor is on-call, they will have less pre-bookable consultations as they will be busy managing the patients who are acutely unwell and requiring urgent attention. All our doctors also have non-clinical time each week to manage their administrative workload. Please can we ask that you bear this in mind when booking appointments. Please also remember that you can visit your local chemist for advice on many conditions that don't need a prescription or a referral for further care. This allows us to keep GP consultations free for those who really need to speak to a doctor.

### **Appointments**

**The Crown Surgery are not able to see any patients with symptoms or who have tested positive for Covid-19.** Any patient who needs to be seen will be offered an appointment at the local 'Hot Hub Clinic' in Rugeley which is managed by the Cannock Chase Clinical Alliance.

Practice waiting rooms are currently closed to ensure the ongoing safety of patients to protect them from the risk of contracting Covid. If the GP arranges a face to face appointment with you please do not arrive early as you will be asked to either wait in your car or wait outside and the clinician will collect patients and escort them through to their clinical room. Patients can also be seen in their car where possible. Patients who enter the building by agreement with a clinician, will be asked to hand sanitise and must wear a face covering at all times. We are currently offering the following type of telephone consultations;

- **Routine** – these can be booked up to 2 weeks in advance. If your appointment is not urgent please avoid calling on a Monday.
- **Same day / Urgent** – these are intended for urgent problems which need to be dealt with as a matter of medical urgency on the day. If you request a 'same day' appointment we will always try to give you one but it may not be with your preferred clinician.

- **Extended Hours** – we are still offering appointments outside of practice hours, evenings between 6.30pm & 8.00pm and weekends on a Saturday 9.00am – 1.00pm and Sundays 10.00 – 12 noon. These are pre-bookable appointments for patients who may find it difficult to consult with a GP during normal opening hours.
- **Home Visits** – given the time needed to attend patients in their own homes and the need for additional PPE, also taking into account our geographical area, visits are restricted to patients whose medical condition renders them housebound.

### **Making an Appointment**

Our phone lines are open as normal at 8.00am and close at 6.30pm. Phone lines are currently very busy most of the day and we thank you in advance for waiting for us to answer your call. Our team answer all calls as quickly as possible ensuring they give each patient the time they need.

Please be aware that it can be more difficult than usual to get through as a high number of appointments with a GP are via telephone consult. We are trialling different ways of working, including GP's working from home in order to help free up telephone lines, we also try and use mobile phones where we can but unfortunately the network signal is very weak and some mobiles do not work in the building. We are also looking at ways to enhance our current telephone system to increase the number of lines, but we ask patients to be tolerant whilst we review this.

### **Fit (Sick) Notes**

If you require a fit (sick) note you do not always need to consult with a doctor to obtain this. It is recommended that you request these either via the NHS App (which is different to the NHS Covid App) where you can request one via the Online Consult option or if you have Patient Access, you can request one via the Health Advice option and arrange to receive it via email. Alternatively you can contact our Reception team who will take the details of the dates and medical condition and a note will be sent to the doctor. Fit (sick) notes are usually available within 48 hours but please check with reception first before collecting. If the doctor feels he needs to speak to you or see you they will ask reception to arrange an appointment with you.

### **Annual Reviews**

We are starting to call our patients in for their annual reviews. You may receive a text message (if we have your mobile number) or a telephone call from the practice, asking you to book an appointment with one of our clinicians. The aim of the annual reviews is to ensure patients are receiving adequate levels of treatment to control their symptoms, are aware of measures they can take to help manage their condition and are being prescribed the most up to date and effective medication.

### **Flu Vaccines**

Flu Vaccination clinics have started and will be a mixture of walk-through and drive-through clinics. Eligible patients are:

- Any patient over 65 years old – we are currently awaiting additional stock
- Those aged from 6 months to less than 65 in a clinical risk group
- Pregnant ladies
- Carers
- All children aged 2 to 11 (on or before 31 August 2020)
- People living in a long-stay residential care home or other long-stay care facilities (this does not include prisons, university halls of residence or boarding schools).

We would encourage those who have one of the following medical conditions to have the flu vaccination:-

- Asthma (only if taking regular inhaled steroids)
- COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)

- Heart failure or ischaemic heart disease (angina or previous heart attack)
- Chronic kidney disease or chronic liver disease
- Diabetes, Stroke or TIA's (transient ischaemic attacks)
- Immunosuppressed patients and their families
- Learning Disability
- Neurological disease

This year, the flu vaccination will also be offered to the following:-

- Household contacts of those on the NHS shielded patient list.
- Children of school year 7 age in secondary schools (those aged 11 on 31 August 2020)
- Anyone working in health and social care
- Those aged 50 – 64 years (subject to vaccine supply).

The flu vaccination is the best protection we have against an unpredictable virus which can be very unpleasant. If eligible, you may also be offered the shingles and pneumococcal vaccination. When we have taken delivery of our stock, eligible patients will receive a text message or telephone call and offered to book an appointment into one of our clinics.

### **Staff Training Afternoon**

The Practice and Dispensary will be closed on the first Thursday afternoon each month from 1.00pm to undertake various training.

### **NHS 111 Service**

Did you know that the NHS 111 service is a useful source of information for medical queries? The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. Calls are free from both a landline and mobile telephone. Not only can they direct you to appropriate services when we are closed, but they can also advise you on the best place to seek treatment when we are open too!

### **Staffing**

We would like to confirm that Dr Bill Davies has now left The Crown Surgery. Dr Y Sukkersudha, who has provided temporary locum cover for the last 12 months, finished at the end of September. We wish them both all the best for the future.

We are very pleased to confirm that Dr Sarah Brookes is now a GP Partner as from 1 September, previously working with us as a salaried GP for the last couple of years.

Dr Alison Shelley started at the beginning of September and Dr Harriet Pearce started on 6 October as a part-time salaried GP's.

### **DISPENSARY NEWS**

We thought we would cover some frequent questions asked of our clinical and dispensary team:-

1. **What is the difference between brands and generics?** – *Medicines will often have more than one name; a generic name which is the ingredient of the medicine (e.g. Ibuprofen). Often generic medicines are made by a number of manufacturers. A brand is the name of the manufacturer or pharmaceutical company gives to the medicine (e.g. Nurofen). Only that manufacturer can make that brand. If your doctor prescribes using a generic name we can supply any manufacturer's generic product. Generic versions will be the same as the branded medicine because they contain the same ingredients and are used more often by the NHS because they are just as effective but cost far less.*
2. **What can I do to help?** – *Order your medication in plenty of time (but no more than 7 days before it is due). Only order what you require. If you have unused medicines in the*

*cupboard use these first (remember to check the expiry date). Our Dispensary is trying really hard to source these items so please bear with them if they are having difficulty getting medicines for you.*

3. **Can you help your local NHS tackle the problem of medicine waste? – Yes you can!** *Medicine waste is a serious and growing problem within the NHS. Sometimes patients or their carers continue to request more repeat medicines than needed and stockpile them at home. This wastes millions of pounds and huge quantities of medicines. You can help by;*
  - a. *Checking what medicines you have at home before ordering more and only order what you need*
  - b. *If you need to go to hospital please take all your medicines with you*
  - c. *Please check your prescription is correct before leaving the Dispensary as once the medicine has left the building they are not allowed to accept it back and will have to dispose of it.*
  
4. **Why can't I have more than 28 days? – NHS prescription charges and costs of an exemption certificate are based around 28 day prescription interval.** *Some patients mistakenly think that the prescription charges are kept by the practice, but we simply collect these for the Government and each month we forward on the fees. Some patients have medication that is being changed every month (e.g. blood pressure, epilepsy or diabetes) and we need to treat everybody equally. 28 day prescriptions also minimise the waste that would result with longer prescription intervals and have helped make us a very cost-effective GP practice for prescribing.*
  
5. **Why can't I always be given antibiotics? – Antibiotics are important medicines for treating bacterial infections.** *However, bacteria can adapt and find ways to survive the effects of an antibiotic. This means antibiotics are losing their effectiveness at an increasing rate. The more we use antibiotics, the greater the chance bacteria will become resistant to them and they can no longer be used to treat infections. Antibiotic resistance is one of the most significant threats to patient safety. It is driven by overusing antibiotics and taking them inappropriately. To slow down the development of antibiotic resistance, it is important to use antibiotics in the right way. Antibiotics should be taken as prescribed and never saved for later or shared with others.*

### **On-line Medication Requests**

Did you know that you can request medication on-line rather than dropping off your counterfoil at the surgery? To access this service patients must register for Patient Services which also allows you to view your medical record on-line. If you are a parent to a child under 11 or are a carer you can also arrange Proxy Access in order to enable you to do this on behalf of your child or the person you are caring for. To register for Patient Services, for security reasons you must prove your identity to the reception staff who will then supply a registration document with a personalised access code.

You can only apply in person and we require two forms of ID, one photographic (e.g. Passport or Driving Licence) and another with proof of address (e.g. utility bill). Once a patient reaches their 11th Birthday they will be assessed and may be required to register themselves for an access code, to comply with confidentiality regulations.

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