

LIVING WITH COVID

FAQ's

Why can't I see my GP or Practice Nurse?

With the onset and now living with the COVID19 Pandemic, the way we offer and provide services from general practice is very different to what you were used to. We have had to adapt and change for your safety. With this in mind, we cannot see the same number of patients in the surgery or have them waiting in areas due to infection control. We have introduced different systems to allow patients to access the right person to deal with their enquiry. Your practice may be using some or all of the following:

- E- Consult

This allows you to access this at any time to submit a form and can help signpost you to the correct avenue for assistance whether this is self help or clinical assistance. When this is submitted, it is reviewed and followed up by one of the practice team – allowing you access to the right person at the right time. These forms have been created with a lot of clinical input so that an informed decision can be made to assist you. E-Consult can also be used to support and manage patients with long term conditions.

- Telephone

Your phone call may be answered by a Practice Advisor who may ask some questions to allow them to direct you to the right person to deal with your enquiry. All our receptionist work under a strict confidentiality contract and giving information allows the clinician to make a good informed decision around how best to treat you.

This may be someone in the practice, the physiotherapist or nurse or it could be someone external such as the Dentist, Optician or Community Pharmacy as they may be the most appropriate place for you to seek assistance.

It may be that the clinical member of staff feels it would be appropriate to engage with you over a video consultation without the need for you to attend the health centre. Grampian has led the way with this initiative and it is now used widely across Scotland.

Near Me/Video option is suitable for many consultations, there will be occasions when the health professional may require to examine you and then a short face to face appointment can be arranged.

- Face To Face Appointments

There will still be a requirement at times for patients to be seen by a clinical member of staff and this will be arranged at a time when social distancing can be adhered to and that there is minimal amount of patients attending at any one time.

If I am asked to attend a health care setting, do I have to wear a face covering?

Yes - face coverings should be worn unless you are exempt.

Why do I have to speak to someone or fill out a form online before I can get an appointment/home visit?

As detailed above. If your enquiry can be dealt with by reducing the number of people who attend the surgery, it reduces the risk of the virus spreading. To reduce the spread of infection and to make sure you are seen by the most appropriate clinician, all practices encourage practices not to attend without prior contact with a team member.

What are the GPs and Nursing Team doing?

The practice team are as busy as ever, more so with the different ways that you can access services. These all need clinical input along with prescription processing, reviewing blood results, hospital correspondence and attending to patients in our community hospitals. Longer appointments are needed when patients attend the surgery to ensure all health and safety measures are undertaken including the cleansing of equipment, surgery and the changing of personal protective equipment between patients.

Why is the practice closed?

Your practice has been open throughout the pandemic. The door to your surgery may be locked or have an intercom system installed. This is to protect both you and our staff, ensuring social distancing is adhered to and minimising at all time the risk of spread of the virus.

Why can't I hand in prescription order/paperwork or collect sick notes, insurance forms and prescriptions from my practice?

We are discouraging the exchange of paperwork, again to reduce the risk of spread of the virus which may be present on the paper or you may be a carrier and you don't know, therefore we have to minimise the risks as far as possible by putting in these precautions. This also prevents patients congregating at the door who do not have a planned reason to attend.

I don't want to complete an online form, speak on the phone or have a video consultation – how can I see my GP?

To be assessed an online form or speaking to someone on the phone is required as we have encouraged total triage. This will enable you to see the right person at the right time. The practice team have a wealth of different skills and expertise and it's not always the GP who is the best person to deal with you. For example we have First Contact Physios who have a wealth of knowledge around joint problems and it is better for you to see them and gain the right treatment. We have pharmacists who can deal with prescription issues and concerns. This is why it is good to have an indication first of all what assistance you require so that we can direct you to the right person.

Why does it take so long for my call to be answered?

With us adapting this different way of working, there is more demand on the phone lines and at peak times, the phones can be very busy as we deal with more enquiries through this way. As more patients use the online forms, this will reduce the length of wait.

When are services such as podiatry, chronic disease management clinics starting up again?

Across all health settings we working through the stages of re-setting and re-building our services we can offer you, in a planned safe way. Each health care setting layout is very different and each practice will re-start services when they can ensure it is a safe

workplace for our staff to work in and for patients to attend. Some of these services have started based on the highest clinical need.

Why are procedures such as nebulisation/ ear syringing, coil/pessary change, not available?

There are some procedures that produce more leakage or aerosol creation which means there is a higher risk of the virus being airborne and more infectious. We need to limit the time that the clinician and patient spend together, therefore lengthy appointments are not commencing. Some procedures that are regarded as higher priority such as screening programmes are restarting as appropriate.

When will practices get back to normal?

All of us are looking forward to returning to something closer to normal as the pandemic allows. There has been a lot of learning from this and we expect that our new normal will embrace some of these new ways of working.

Can I get my flu vaccine at the practice as normal?

The aspiration of the Scottish Government through the new GP Contract is for a vaccination service to be the responsibility of the Health and Social Care Partnerships and NHS Boards and therefore this is no longer the responsibility of your practice to deliver this. With the added pressure of the pandemic we need to do things differently. If you are eligible for the flu vaccination, you will receive a letter inviting you to attend a clinic which may be in a school, village or church hall which will possibly be different for you this year. If you haven't received a letter of invite by the end of October, you should call 0345 337 9899 or visit the website for more information www.fluvaxgrampian.com There may be circumstances when you are in the practice for another procedure and you may be offered an opportunistic immunisation.

Am I at higher risk of COVID?

Those that are at higher risk would have been asked to shield in the earlier stages of this pandemic and should take extra precautions. Each complication of COVID increases with each decade of life.