



16 July 2021

Dear Patient

Covid 19 – precautions and safeguards at your GP Surgery

The Government has announced that the legal enforcement on wearing of face coverings will end on 19 July. The Prime Minister and Health Minister colleagues have noted that Covid 19 is still with us and poses a threat - the new variant (delta) is particularly infectious.

Public Health England's infection prevention control guidelines and hospital visiting guidance will remain in place. across all health services including hospitals, GP practices, dental practices, optometrists, and pharmacies to ensure patients and staff are protected.

Staff, patients, and visitors will be expected to continue to follow social distancing rules when visiting any care setting as well as using face coverings, mask and other personal protection equipment.(1)

Your GP(s) will continue to ask patients to wear coverings and to maintain social distancing when attending surgery. This is to maintain the protection of particularly vulnerable patients who may be present and to keep the infection risk to practice staff at a minimal level. It is hoped that patients will understand the need for continuing safeguards and keep surgeries and other patients as safe as possible from Covid 19.

During the tight lockdown phases of the pandemic GPs were instructed by Health Ministers to introduce remote triaging of patients and to use video consulting whenever possible. The widespread take up of this has substantially helped to stop practices having to close because of Covid infection getting into the premises and striking down the practice team.

GPs are now steadily increasing the number of face-to-face appointments for patients and more than 65% of patients contacting their Practice go on to be seen in person . There is still a need for telephone/online triaging , video consulting and restrictions on access to practice premises., and this will continue until the risk to vulnerable patients and staff becomes negligible and open 'walk in' access to GP premises can once again become normal.

Presently the demand to see a GP is high. Same or next day appointments have increased by almost 2.75 million (21%) over the March 2020 level and by more than 3 million (25%) on March 2019. This is the result of having to catch up with patients who have deferred contacting their surgery because of the pandemic, the need to see those with covid related complications as well as trying to return to normal level of service to patients.

On behalf of your GP, we thank you for your forbearance with the continuing necessary safeguards.

DR David Smith

Chairman

Mr Joe Chattin

Honorary Secretary

Sefton LMC

The Local Medical Committee is the representative body of GPs in the Borough and advises on regulations, Health policies and contractual matters. If you have a query about this notice you can contact the LMC SeftonLmc@seftonlmc.co.uk

1 NHS England » NHS Patients, staff and visitors must continue to wear face coverings in healthcare settings