



Statement from the NHS in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight

COVID-19: The way that general practice is changing

Over the last couple of weeks, you are likely to have noticed a marked difference in the way things are being done in general practice as we manage Covid-19. Thank you for adapting so quickly to these new ways of working.

To limit the spread of Covid-19, we have worked to reduce footfall through practices by using online consultation systems like e-consult, telephone appointments and video consultations to ensure we continue providing you with the care you need.

Our top priority is to keep our patients and staff safe whilst ensuring patients get the care they need. Keeping our staff healthy is crucial so that they can continue to care for everybody, therefore GPs and their staff have been working together with other local surgeries to develop a system which will be able to meet these changing needs.

From now on, when you contact your surgery for an appointment you will receive an initial assessment on the telephone or if you prefer through e-consult (on the practice website) by a suitably trained clinician. It is essential that you give an accurate and detailed description of your symptoms when asked. This will allow us to provide you with the most appropriate treatment.

If you have suspected Covid-19 symptoms and, following a telephone assessment, need to have a further face-to-face appointment, this may not take place at your usual GP surgery. Instead you may be directed to another local site that has been specifically set up to better deal with your needs.

If you need to have a non-Covid-19 related face to face appointment and do not have any Covid-19 symptoms, you may still be able to access your usual surgery. However, please be aware that this may change. Services may need to be provided from a smaller number of practices if staff become unwell.

If, over the course of the next few weeks, you do have to go to a different surgery to the one you are used to, you might also see a doctor or nurse who you are not familiar with. Whilst we realise this could be inconvenient, we think it is important to keep people safe, reduce the spread of Covid-19 and get the maximum benefit from the healthcare resources which will be available. Your records will still be accessible securely to you and to them, ensuring they are able to provide you with the best possible care. A home visiting service, for patients who are housebound, will be provided but increasingly through practices working together.

Our clinical colleagues and support staff will be **working flexibly** in order make these new arrangements work and, when circumstances change to make it possible, GP surgeries across the area will resume a normal service.