

Update 17 August 2020

Recovering from the Coronavirus pandemic: Information for the public about NHS services

To ensure that both our patients and staff remain safe while using NHS services as we recover from the Coronavirus pandemic, you will notice some changes.

Services are reopening slowly with some being offered virtually, by telephone or video call. At the peak of the covid-19 outbreak, non-emergency elective services in hospitals were suspended, but they are now being reintroduced.

The NHS is here for you: please seek help if you need it. If you need medical help with any condition please call your GP or 111 in the first instance, they will be able to direct you to the right place for help – please do not turn up at the GP practice, urgent treatment centre or hospital without calling your GP or 111 first.

In a life threatening emergency call 999.

If you think you have Covid-19 symptoms **do not attend any health service, stay at home and** use the [NHS 111 online service](#) for advice, or if you cannot get online, telephone NHS 111.

GP services

Please contact your GP if you need medical advice. You may be offered a telephone, video or online consultation, as they are now all available across North West London practices. We may ask you to send us pictures. If you are called in for a face to face consultation, please follow the guidance your practice will provide, so that your care is as safe as we can make it.

NHS premises are safe. If you are called for an appointment, please make sure you attend. We have put in place rigorous infection control measures to keep patients and staff safe.

We have learnt a lot from these new ways of working and they will be a part of how you access your GP in the future. You can help us by supporting everyone in your family to use the technology.

If you think you have covid-19 symptoms, you should always use the NHS 111 online service for advice. If you cannot get online, telephone NHS 111. Do not go to your GP surgery as this may lead to the virus spreading further, including to practice staff. If you need a GP appointment about another matter, you should stay at home and call the practice in the first instance.



Special GP-run clinics have been set up in Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster for patients who are experiencing symptoms of Coronavirus and need to see a doctor. If your doctor thinks you need to be seen at one of these locations, they will book an appointment for you.

So our GPs can help as many patients as possible, practices are working together in networks to support each other. It is possible that if you need to see or speak to a GP, you may be given an appointment with a different doctor or practice to the one you usually see.

If you are attending an appointment at the GP practice, you must wear a face covering. Your face covering must cover both your mouth and nose. Please use hand sanitiser as you enter the building and only bring a relative or carer if clinically necessary. Government advice can be found at www.gov.uk.

Flu

Preparations for the annual flu season are well underway. All GP practices have ordered their flu vaccine and are developing plans so that the flu jab can be delivered in a Covid-safe way.

We have sufficient vaccine available in North West London so that all those eligible for the vaccine can receive it. The majority of patients will be asked to visit their own GP practice to receive their flu immunisation but some may be asked to go elsewhere.

Please note that people in the 50-64-year old age group will **not** be vaccinated until November and December, providing there is sufficient vaccine, and no appointments for flu vaccination will be offered for this age group until then. This is to ensure that those who are most at risk are vaccinated first.

If you are 50-64 and you are in one of the other groups which is eligible for the flu vaccination, for example you have a health condition which puts you at risk from the flu, you will be invited earlier.

Cancer

If you get an invitation for a screening appointment, please attend. These appointments are being done by staff wearing the right levels of personal protective equipment to keep patients as safe as possible. Screening is an important way to detect possible cancer symptoms early, when they can be treated more successfully.

If you have a symptom that you are worried might be cancer, you need to contact your GP. Chances are it's nothing serious, but finding it early makes it more treatable. So if you notice something out of the ordinary, tell your doctor.



Talk to your doctor if you have concerns about your cancer treatment and coronavirus.

Cervical screening

Routine cervical screening letters and text reminders are now being issued. Screening is one of the best ways to protect yourself from cervical cancer. When you receive an invitation, it is important that you call your surgery to make an appointment.

Hospitals

Our hospitals are still treating people who have coronavirus, but with fewer patients now in hospital with coronavirus our hospitals are working together to look at how some services can be reopened where it is safe to do so for both patients and staff.

All of our hospitals have put in place rigorous infection control measures to keep patients and staff safe. This includes having covid-secure areas and sites, so that we keep people who may have covid-19 separate from those who we know do not.

Should you be asked to attend hospital for an appointment, you will be given clear instructions from your hospital on what you need to do. National guidelines have changed: patients who have an appointment for surgery at a hospital no longer need to self-isolate for 7 or 14 days prior to their procedure or surgery.

All patients will still need to have a swab test for COVID19 a few days before their surgery and follow self-isolation guidelines after this test until they arrive at hospital for surgery. Patients must complete the 'coming into hospital' checklist on the day of their surgery. The checklist is provided when the appointment is booked.

All patients attending hospitals need to follow guidance on wearing a face mask, social distancing and hand washing. NHS premises are safe and this change in guidance will ensure more patients who need operations will be able to have them.

If you are called for an appointment, please make sure you attend. We have put in place rigorous infection control measures to keep patients and staff safe.

Hospital visitors

For now most of our hospitals are still only considering visitors in exceptional circumstances, including:

- For a patient at end of life
- one regular carer for a patient with additional needs, such as a patient with dementia
- one parent/guardian for a child



- one birth partner.

Some of our services are now able to allow visitors, where social distancing rules can be followed. Please ensure you either call the hospital or visit the website to see if visitors are able to come in – please do not travel to the hospital without checking

All visitors must wear a face covering when coming to the hospital. Your face covering must cover your mouth and nose.

Emergency care for patients who do not have covid-19 symptoms

Emergency care for patients whose condition is serious but not related to covid-19 continues as normal. In a life threatening emergency, you should call 999 as usual.

Urgent Treatment Centres

If you think you need urgent treatment please call 111. They will make sure you are directed to the right service for the treatment you need. Please do not go to the urgent treatment centre without calling 111 first.

In a life threatening emergency please call 999.

Outpatients

To reduce the numbers of people visiting our hospitals we are not offering outpatient appointments except in the most urgent cases. The hospital will contact patients and some follow-up appointments may be by telephone.

If you are attending an outpatient appointment, you must wear a face covering when you come to the hospital. Your face covering must cover your mouth and nose.

How can you help?

We are grateful for your understanding of the pressures on the NHS as our services recover during this difficult period. The best way in which you can help is to use the telephone and online services if you need medical help. It is important that you do call your GP or NHS 111 if you have a medical concern, and in a life threatening emergency call 999.

It is also important for pregnant mothers and those with small children to continue to keep routine appointments and appointments for vaccinations.

Please also continue to follow the public health advice visit www.gov.uk and if you have symptoms of covid-19, you must stay at home for at least seven days. If a member of your household has been infected but you have not been, you should stay at home for 14 days.



You should continue to act responsibly: follow the national guidance on social distancing, wash your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds and wear a face covering in public places.