

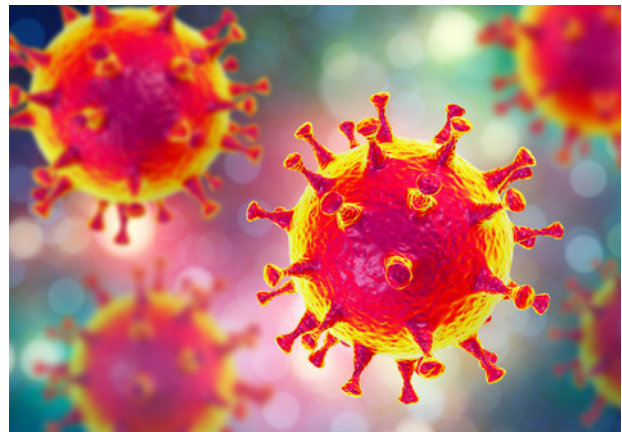


Updated Practice and Coronavirus information

Dear Palace Gate Practice Patient

Due to the increase in Covid-19 cases and the resulting increase in hospital admissions, the government has had to resort to a further nationwide lockdown in order to try to reduce the likely future pressure on the NHS and intensive care beds. It is hoped that the lockdown will reduce transmission rates (The R rate). Please refer to www.gov.uk/coronavirus to view what restrictions are in place.

To put things into perspective, the majority of people with a coronavirus infection have a mild and self-limiting illness. People can have the infection without any symptoms. It is true, however, that some people are at increased risk of developing complications of a Covid-19 infection such as the elderly and those with pre-existing medical conditions such as heart disease and diabetes and those from certain ethnic backgrounds (BAME). It is also recognised that some can have more persistent troublesome symptoms (Long Covid).



What is happening at The Palace Gate Practice.

As during the first lockdown, the practice remains fully open and we are available to help you with any medical problems and help guide you or your family if you have concerns about Covid-19. The government restrictions allow anyone to see their doctor and attend a medical appointment.

It is very important that you do ask for an appointment if you have a medical concern. Sadly, the management of the Coronavirus pandemic has meant that some people with cancer have not been diagnosed and have presented late. The same goes for cardiovascular disease with people not presenting with heart attacks and strokes where early diagnosis and treatment is fundamental. We therefore would ask that you contact us if you are worried about any symptoms such as unexplained fatigue, cough, weight loss, change in bowel habit, unexplained bleeding or the presence of a new lump.

We encourage you to continue to attend for your health check-ups.

We encourage you to have a flu vaccination and possibly a pneumonia vaccination. There is a shortage of flu vaccinations nationwide so do let us know if you have not had one and we will add you to our waiting list.

Opening Hours

We remain open 0830 to 1800 Monday to Friday with out of hours medical support at all other times. All five of our doctors see patients for face to face consultations as well as video/telephone consultations. Due to the adoption of safe practices, the staggering of appointment times and social distancing, there maybe less availability every day to see the doctor of your choice. Please bear with us if you are offered alternative appointments. You may initially be offered a telephone or video appointment.

Your safety

All patients are triaged before appointments are confirmed and patients are seen at the practice. You will be telephoned and asked some questions concerning Coronavirus symptoms and any recent exposure. Please wear a mask and attend on time for your appointment. We will keep your waiting to a minimum and at a safe distance from other patients.

Reception staff and doctors all wear hospital scrubs and face masks and the doctors will wear full protective equipment (PPE) for examinations. The premises including waiting rooms and toilets are regularly cleaned with approved anti-viral disinfectants and consulting rooms cleaned between patients.

We regard your safety and the safety of our staff of the highest priority.

Testing

We continue to offer approved and validated Covid-19 antigen PCR swab testing. The turn around time for results has improved and is less than 48 hours and often 24 hours.

There are many rapid and lateral flow Covid-19 tests being offered with results in under an hour and often minutes. Many of these tests have been reviewed and are considered unreliable. We are waiting to receive fully accredited and validated rapid point of care Covid-19 testing kits and we will keep you informed when this happens.

Covid-19 vaccines

The UK National Vaccination program began last week with the Pfizer BioNtec vaccine. It is planned to also offer other vaccines including the Oxford/Astra Zeneca and the Moderna vaccines when they have been through the final regulatory process.

We believe that the Pfizer vaccine is safe and effective. The vaccination programme is being rolled out by the NHS and the vaccine is currently not available in the private sector. The vaccine is being rolled out according to priority groups starting with the over 80's and front line hospital and care workers. Subsequent priority groups will be vaccinated in the New Year. **We therefore advise all of our patients to register with a NHS GP practice in order to ensure that you are called to have this vaccine at the appropriate time.** We will obviously inform all our patients if and when any of the leading Covid-19 vaccines become available in the private sector.

We wish you well and please keep safe. It is certainly going to be a challenging time over the winter and in to the spring.

Best wishes from The Palace Gate Practice Team.

