

GP Practices have implemented new ways of working as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. In time, as the restrictions on Lockdown ease some of the changes practices have made will continue, this is to protect patients and front line NHS staff. Patients will still be able to obtain a face to face appointment where clinically necessary; however they should consider other ways of communicating with their GP Practice.

If you need an NHS service, try to do it online first. If you cannot get what you need this way or do not have internet access, try asking a friend or family member to help you, or speak to your GP surgery on the phone. **Please do not attend your GP Surgery in person without first contacting them in this way, as social distancing rules still apply and your concern can be addressed much more quickly by these methods.**

Most GP surgeries can be contacted online. You will be able to tell your GP about your health using an online form or by speaking to someone online. This is called an On-Line Consultation.

You can also make requests and ask for information. Visit your GP surgery website to find out how to do this.

Most appointments with a GP, nurse or other healthcare professional will now be via phone call, or by a video call using your smartphone, tablet or computer if they need to see you.

If you have not had a video call before or are unsure how it works, it is an easy process and there is nothing to worry about

On-line consultation

To get advice, help or support, go to your GP surgery website and fill in the secure online form, to give your GP the information they might need to help you.

This is known as an online consultation, or an online assessment, and helps the practice decide how they need to help you. Where possible your online consultation will be passed to your regular GP or member of the team.

After you complete an online consultation, you will get a response from your surgery. This could be an online message, such as an email or a text message, or a phone or video call. This is for routine problems only. GP practices aim to respond within 2 working days, but are often quicker than that.

Video or telephone consultation

If a GP, surgery nurse or other member of staff need to speak to you about your online consultation, they will contact you.

You might be asked to have a telephone conversation with your GP or most appropriate person in the practice team. Or they may ask you to use a link, which they will send to you, to join a video consultation at a specific time.

Please ensure that your GP practice has the most up to date phone number for you. It is your responsibility to make sure that your GP practice has your most up to date details.

Video consultation

During your video consultation you can speak to your doctor or nurse, in a private setting, as if you were both in the same room.

You will need:

- an internet connection
- a well-lit, quiet and private space – you can also have a family member with you, if you would like to
- a computer, tablet or smartphone

You will need to allow microphone and camera access for the video consultation to work, making sure the built-in camera, microphone and volume are switched on.

Some video consultation systems let you test it is working before you start the call.

If you need to show the doctor or nurse your problem, you can use the video camera. If it's a place that is hard to reach, such as an injury to the back of your head, you may find it easier to take a good-quality photo or recording of the problem beforehand, so it can be shared.

You can ask the same questions you would if this was a face-to-face appointment at the GP surgery, and it is a good idea to write down any advice or next steps they give you.

Whilst the video consultation will not be recorded, the doctor or nurse will make notes in your GP record in the usual way.

If something goes wrong during your video consultation, such as the connection being interrupted, your healthcare professional will call you back.

Online consultations should not be used if you need very urgent or emergency care.

Call 999 if someone is seriously ill or injured and their life is at risk.

If you need urgent medical help, use the NHS 111 online service. Only call 111 if you are unable to get help online.

The following video will help you to understand how this process might work
<https://youtu.be/FO1LRq5FZpE>

Face to Face appointments

If the doctor or nurse feels you need to be seen in person, they will arrange a face-to-face appointment for you or a home visit.

If you are invited to attend the surgery for a face to face appointment or need to attend the surgery for any other reason, please cover your face, to protect you and protect the practice teams. Practices may turn you away if you have not done this, in order to protect you and the practice team and may not have enough PPE (personal protective equipment) to give you a medical grade face mask. You can make your own face mask by following the following link:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>

Ordering repeat prescriptions

Did you know you can order repeat prescriptions online, without needing to go to a GP surgery or pharmacy?

You can also ask your pharmacy about getting your medicine delivered to your home, rather than needing to collect it.

You can order repeat prescriptions using:

- [The NHS App](#)
- [GP online services](#)

The NHS App also allows you to set and change which pharmacy your prescription is sent to.

You can pick one near where you live or choose one that will deliver your medicine to help cut down on travel while staying at home.

Ways to manage long-term conditions

Over the next few weeks your GP will be reintroducing some of the routine clinics that had to be restricted due to the pandemic. These will need to be adapted to incorporate social distancing and some may be carried out remotely as described above. The Practice will contact you regarding how this will work in the coming weeks. However, if you have any concerns about any health condition please contact your Surgery online or by telephone if that is not possible.

While staying at home, it's important to keep managing any physical or mental health conditions you may have.

The NHS Apps Library has a wide variety of apps and online tools that can help with this, covering different conditions and categories like [diabetes](#), pregnancy and maternity, and mental wellbeing.

The apps have all been assessed as safe to use.

<https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/>

Contact Cares

First point of contact for help and advice on health and social care needs, this service is open 8am – 10pm: 365 days a year. For more information visit www.sthelenscares.co.uk or call 01744 676767

Health information and advice

The NHS website has information and advice on:

- [coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [medical conditions and symptoms](#)
- [common medicines](#)
- [healthy lifestyle](#)