

Dear Patients,

Forest Health Group is well prepared for the biggest global pandemic we have witnessed in our lifetime. We want to reassure our patients that we will do our best to keep services running as smoothly as possible whilst doing everything we can to protect you and us and allow us to keep functioning.

We need your help and co-operation to do this. You can help by keeping up to date with government guidance which can be found at <http://111.nhs.uk/covid-19>.

If you or any of your household contacts have a **high temperature, shortness of breath or a cough** you can help by **not attending the surgery** or other healthcare settings and self-isolating. If you feel that your symptoms are more than you feel safely able to cope with at home, you can contact the 111 service.

We will need to change the way we work, in line with national, regional and local guidance. We will keep you updated with information on our plans, we will try and do this in as timely a manner as possible but please bear with us, as this is a rapidly changing situation.

What changes will you notice?

1) The doors are locked

- a. This is vital for your and our protection.
- b. All patients attending will have to complete a screening questionnaire before attending, you will no longer be able to walk in to the surgery without prior notice.
- c. Samples can still be dropped off at the surgery but we will only accept samples that have been requested by a nurse or doctor, have been labelled with name, date of birth and address and have been placed into a plastic bag which will be available at the surgery site. Samples will only be accepted at Boundary House or the Sainsbury's site.

2) Consultations are **mostly on the phone or online**.

- a. **We will aim for 90% of all consultations and transactions to be done online and on the phone**, but when you have to come in we will aim to have as few people in the waiting room as possible with enough space to keep your distance.
- b. We are in a **great position to meet the challenges presented by COVID-19 due to the introduction of 'AskmyGP'**. We recognise that we have had some complaints regarding our new online system but the large majority of responses have been positive and it is a powerful tool to help us continue to deliver healthcare to you remotely.
- c. We will try to do as much as possible "hands off". I.e. **sick notes will be sent via text message** or AskMyGP.

- d. You will also notice **increased use of our text messaging system** to interact with you. This is a well developed system and all our staff are familiar with its use.
- 3) We will ask you to wash your hands
- a. Whenever you see us we will ask you to wash your hands before you see a doctor, nurse, midwife or physiotherapist.
 - b. To protect other patients, we will ask you to avoid direct contact with surfaces if possible and only use the toilet facilities if absolutely necessary.
 - c. You may be asked to wear a mask if you are coughing or sneezing a lot.
- 4) All prescriptions will be online
- a. From 17th March 2020 we will no longer accept any paper requests for prescriptions and will no longer issue paper prescriptions. For any patients unable to order prescriptions online we will temporarily allow you to order repeat prescriptions over the phone.
- 5) We will keep our staff safe
- a. We have introduced measures to protect our staff as well as our patients. We need our staff to remain healthy in order to continue to provide you, our patients, with a service.
 - b. Sick staff will self-isolate in line with national guidance. If staff are well enough but still isolated, they will be asked to help with provision of telephone and online services, from home, where possible.
 - c. The doctor or nurse who sees you may be dressed differently. They might be wearing scrubs (blue or green top and trousers), an apron, a mask, goggles and gloves. This is to protect you as much as them.
- 6) Some routine services will be cancelled
- a. Some non vital reviews will be stopped for a while i.e. stable blood pressure reviews, routine spirometry and similar.
 - b. Some routine procedures will be stopped for a while.
- 7) We will keep the show on the road!

We recognise that these are uncertain and anxious times for many, but we want to reassure you that we are doing everything we can to help you feel safe and looked after by us.