

Ashburton Surgery Coronavirus update - Important information regarding changes to our practice operations

We wanted to update you regarding GP services. These are unprecedented times and as frontline NHS healthcare workers we are all going above and beyond to support our patients, and this does mean significant changes to the way we operate. We know these are worrying times for everyone and we are sorry that we have had to introduce these measures. The decisions regarding the changes to our usual operations have not been made lightly. All of the measures we have put in place are following guidance from Public Health England and are being implemented across many GP practices in the UK. They are designed to keep our patients and staff safe, minimising exposure to patients with COVID-19 symptoms and protecting the most vulnerable people in our community.

We are working with all our neighbouring practice across South Devon and Torbay and it is likely that GP services will continue to evolve further over the coming weeks. As the outbreak continues to peak patients may be required to travel between different surgeries and towns to be seen.

Thank you to all our supportive patients that have thanked our team and recognise how hard our whole team has been working to deal with the extra workload at this time. It does really help keep our spirits up. Demand for our services has increased significantly over the past few weeks, whilst at the same time we have fewer staff to deal with the work. We ask that all of our patients are kind and patient with our team. They are all working hard to look after you and they deserve your respect.

Stay Home, Protect the NHS and Save Lives

What if I have COVID-19 symptoms?

If you have symptoms, a temperature above 37.8c AND/OR a persistent cough then you should go online to www.111.nhs.uk/covid-19. Please only call 111 if you cannot get online. Please do not call or come to the GP surgery. You should follow the online guidance around self-isolation. We do not receive any further or additional advice than is available here so please do not call the surgery to ask us our opinion on whether you should isolate or not.

The practice has been inundated with patient queries and questions. It is vital that our services are available for the unwell patients in our community who need our support. Please read this newsletter and follow the guidance before you contact us.

WHAT DO THESE CHANGES MEAN FOR YOU

Access:

If you need our support, please call us on 01364 652731. Our doors will now be locked; this is to allow us to control the flow of patients through the practice and minimise risk to patients and staff. If you have an appointment, please ring the doorbell by the front door. For all other enquiries, please go to the back door and ring the doorbell there.

We would ask that you are mindful of the continued need to ensure a minimum distance of 2 metres is kept between yourself and any other person wherever possible. If you are asked to enter the building, then please ensure that you allow time for the member of our Reception team who opens the door to move back before you enter.

Contact:

If you need to contact us, then we ask that you do so online where possible. You can contact us for non-urgent medical and general advice and prescription requests by:

- Email: ashburton.surgery@nhs.net
- SystemOnline for medication requests: <https://systmonline.tpp-uk.com/>
- eConsult: <https://ashburtonsurgery.webgp.com/>

- The NHS App – download the app on your smartphone or tablet and you can order prescriptions, check your symptoms, view your medical record and more <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/the-nhs-app/>

If you have forgotten your login details for your online services account or you would like to set up a new account then please contact us.

If you need to book an appointment or contact us urgently, please call 01364 652731.

Your contact details

To support us in looking after you, it's really important that we have up to date contact details for you. Your email address and mobile phone number are particularly useful. You can update your contact details via Systmonline <https://systmonline.tpp-uk.com/> or when you speak to one of our Reception staff.

Appointments:

All appointment requests for our GPs are now being triaged. You can access appointments by calling 01364 652731. If you need to speak to a clinician you will be given a telephone consultation at some point during the day. If the clinician decides to see you they will give you an allocated time to come to the practice. When you arrive please enter the premises and take a seat in the waiting room, there is no need to check yourself in. Please leave space between yourself and other patients while you are waiting. Patient appointment times are now specifically staggered to reduce numbers of people in the waiting room at one given time.

We may ask you to complete a questionnaire before your appointment. You can action questionnaires on your online services account <https://systmonline.tpp-uk.com/> by going to Records and then Questionnaires and then selecting the relevant questionnaire. If you are asked to submit a questionnaire, then please ensure that you have completed it and submitted it prior to your appointment.

Please be aware that some of our clinicians may be calling from withheld numbers. Please answer the phone if you are expecting a call. If you have set your phone up to reject withheld numbers then you may need to alter this to accept phone calls from us.

Our clinicians may ask you to agree to a video call. If this is the case then they will talk to you at the same appointment and explain how you do this.

If the Clinician you speak to decides they would like to see you they may, in some circumstances, suggest that when you arrive you wait in your car with your mobile phone. The GP will then call you when they are able to see you and you will be met at either the front door.

Our staff may be wearing personal protective equipment if they see you face to face. This will include a mask, gloves and an apron. Please do not be alarmed. We ask that you follow the instructions given at all times.

Do not bring additional family members to your appointments unless absolutely necessary. They will be refused entry and asked to leave.

Please do not attend the practice for any reason unless you have an allocated appointment or are collecting medication. Any attempt to enter the building without a prior appointment or to collect medication will be refused.

We are following guidelines from Public Health England, local hospital trusts, NHS England and the CCG regarding what essential services should be prioritised at this time, and what measures we should put in place to protect patients and continue providing an effective service. We are following this guidance to ensure that essential services including warfarin monitoring, urgent bloods tests (for things like oncology, drug monitoring and hospital requests), vaccinations, complex dressings, and 6 or 12 monthly cervical screening continue.

Samples:

If you are asked to collect a sample pot these are allocated on a table to the right of the front door desk as you enter either the practice. The sample containers come with a sealed bag. When you return a sample, please ensure you have added your details to the label on the container. It is vital that your full name and date of birth are on the container when you return it. Any samples must be returned by 2pm. Please do not use your own containers for samples.

Clearly labelled samples should be returned through the letterbox at the rear of the building in the sealed bag.

Forms/Paperwork:

If you have forms of any type that need collecting, please do not attend to collect, we will email these to you.

Work and Sick notes:

If you have any queries relating to work, please refer to www.gov.uk/coronavirus. It is not for your doctor to determine whether you should go to work because of COVID-19. Your employer should follow government guidelines and complete any necessary risk assessments and make any adjustments required.

If you are self-isolating and you require a sick note, please do not contact the practice for this. Isolation notes are accessed via 111 online (call 111 if you are unable to get online) and a digital note will be sent to you electronically. <https://111.nhs.uk/isolation-note/>

Prescriptions:

If we do not dispense medication for you and you have not already done so, then you must nominate a pharmacy of your choice so that we can send your prescription electronically. If you are doing this by email then you should include the postcode of the pharmacy as well as the name. If we dispense medication to you, then you do not need to do this.

This is a busy time and it may take up to 5 working days to get your prescription sent and dispensed. Patients will not be able to drop their repeat prescription requests off at the surgery. We would encourage everyone to try and order their repeat prescriptions using either their online account (SystemOnline) or using the NHS App. You can also order via email to ashburton.surgery@nhs.net. If you are unable to order via your online account, the NHS App or email, then we are now temporarily taking prescription requests over the telephone.

Please do not contact us unless your prescription is due to be ordered within the next 10 days, we cannot issue it any earlier. The pharmacies have just enough for everyone and you having more would leave others without. Please do not request medication that you have not had for some time as a "just in case" precaution. If the time comes and you need the item prescribing this will be arranged for you.

Patients with asthma and COPD:

Please continue to manage your asthma or COPD according to your management plan. This will involve escalating your inhaler therapy if your symptoms increase.

For some patients their plan also involves the use of courses of oral steroids and/or antibiotics. Please ensure that you have sensible supplies of the medications indicated in your plan. Do not stock pile or over order. Please do not request an oral steroid and antibiotic "rescue pack" in anticipation if they are not indicated on your Asthma or COPD care plan and you have never used a rescue pack before please do not request one.

If you have symptoms suggestive of COVID (fever and/or a continuous dry cough) then isolate and stay at home. If you need further clinical support to manage your Covid symptoms then please contact 111 online on www.111.nhs.uk/covid-19.

If you still have symptoms suggestive of deteriorating Asthma or COPD despite following your escalation plan, or if you have markers of a severe exacerbation, but not COVID, please contact the practice via email ashburton.surgery@nhs.net or call 01364 652731.

Dispensary:

Our dispensary is experiencing an extremely high volume of requests at the moment whilst running on limited staff due to team members being unwell or in self-isolation. If you pay for your prescription then you will need to pay with debit card via the card machine, preferably contactless; we will no longer be accepting cash transactions.

Delivery of medication

Support is available with the delivery of your medication :

If you need support with delivery of medication from our Dispensary please call us on 01364 652731.

If you normally collect your medication from Lloyds Chemist or any other location and you need support with delivery, please call 01364 255919

High Risk Patients

Patients that fall into the extremely high risk category have been written to by the government with further guidance and advice about shielding and protecting themselves. Please note that we do not have any further information we can give patients beyond that contained in the letter.

Enhanced Summary Care Records

A Summary Care Record enables healthcare professionals, authorised with NHS smartcards i.e. Hospital A&E Departments and GP 'Out of Hours' health services, to view relevant information extracted from the GP record, limited to allergies and medication. The intention of the SCR is to help clinicians to give you safe, timely and effective treatment. Clinicians are only allowed to access your SCR record if they are authorised to do so and, even then, only if you give your express permission. Your SCR contains important information about any medicines you are taking, any allergies you suffer from and any bad reactions to medicines that you have previously experienced. You may want other details about your care to be added to your SCR; this would give you an Enhanced Summary Care Record.

An Enhanced Summary Care Record includes the Summary Care Record information and a summary of the information recorded by your GP practice about you and will include the following (when this is present in your GP health record):

- Your long term health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart problems or rare medical conditions.
- Your relevant medical history – clinical procedures that you have had, why you need a particular medicine, the care you are currently receiving and clinical advice to support your future care.
- Your health care preferences – you may have your own care preferences which will make caring for you more in line with your needs, such as special dietary requirements.
- Your personal preferences – you may have personal preferences, such as religious beliefs or legal decisions that you would like to be known.
- Immunisations – details of previous vaccinations, such as tetanus and routine childhood jabs.

An Enhanced Summary Care Record can help to ensure a clinician can give you the best possible care.

You can set your own preferences for your Summary Care Record:

Login to your Online Services account <https://systmonline.tpp-uk.com/> Then select 'Questionnaires' under the 'Your Records' section. Then select the 'Information Sharing' questionnaire in the 'Information Sharing' section and complete it.

Alternatively, you can email us on ashburton.surgery@nhs.net from the verified email address on your record, including your name and date of birth, to confirm your choice.

Mental Health

Taking care of your mind as well as your body is really important while staying at home because of coronavirus (COVID-19). You may feel bored, frustrated or lonely. You may also be low, worried or anxious, or concerned about your finances, your health or those close to you.

It's important to remember that it is OK to feel this way and that everyone reacts differently. Remember, this situation is temporary and, for most of us, these difficult feelings will pass. Staying at home may be difficult, but you are helping to protect yourself and others by doing it.

The tips and advice here are things you can do now to help you keep on top of your mental wellbeing and cope with how you may feel while staying at home. Make sure you get further support if you feel you need it.

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-at-home-tips/>

Community Support

The Ashburton Community Covid Response Team is working with the town council, local organisations and volunteers to make sure that as a community, we are able to provide for those in need of support and to communicate important messages so that we can help you remain safe throughout this crisis.

If you have no other means of support, please call the help line number:

01364 255919

If you would like to volunteer to help with the food bank, medicine deliveries or answer phone calls please fill out our volunteer form at the following link www.bit.ly/ashburtonvolunteer

If you have any difficulties and need support filling out the form please contact Karen Turner on 07896 855541

Alternatively, email us, ashburton.surgery@nhs.net, and we can put you in touch with our social prescribing link worker.

NHS Volunteer Responders

You can sign up to be a Community Response Volunteer, Patient Transport Volunteer, NHS Transport Volunteer or Check-in and Chat Volunteer by following this link www.goodsamapp.org/nhs

With Kind Regards

Ashburton Surgery