

## Patient Update – 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Last night the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, announced stricter rules on staying at home and away from others to help prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). These rules are being enforced for the next three weeks. The full details can be found here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/874714/Full\\_guidance\\_on\\_staying\\_at\\_home\\_and\\_away\\_from\\_others.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874714/Full_guidance_on_staying_at_home_and_away_from_others.pdf)

It is extremely important that everyone does follow this guidance as you can be carrying the virus without showing any symptoms and although for most this virus is not deadly for those with complex health conditions classed as Extremely Vulnerable it can be life threatening. Those most at risk are being sent letters from their healthcare providers to inform them they should be Shielding for 12 weeks. Full Guidance on who is at risk and advice on Shielding can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

Where possible everyone should be staying at home for the next 3 weeks and only going to work if you absolutely cannot do it from home or you are a Critical Worker. Those people should be vigilant for signs they may have the virus and self-isolate for 7 days, or until they no longer have a high temperature and feel well enough. The cough may continue for a longer period, but you are safe to return to your normal routine. Members of their household need to self-isolate for 14 days in case they start showing symptoms, if they do then they can return to their normal routine after 7 days, or when they no longer have a high temperature and feel well enough to do so.

The most common symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are recent onset of:

- new continuous cough and/or
- high temperature

For most people, coronavirus (COVID-19) will be a mild illness.

You DO NOT need to contact your GP or 111 unless your symptoms worsen and you cannot cope at home. Then you should follow the guidance on 111 online. You should still contact 999 in an emergency.

Full details for households with possible coronavirus can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

Top tips for preventing the spread of the virus:

- wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
- use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards
- only go outside for food, health reasons or essential work
- stay 2 metres (3 steps) away from other people, if you need to go outside
- do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean

For those of you who are social distancing, shielding or self-isolating this may be very stressful, and several people may find it difficult and that it affects their mental wellbeing. Please visit Mind's website

for advice on how to look after yourself during isolation, shielding or social distancing:

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

Employers may be having to make some difficult decisions that could be affecting you. If you need advice about this the links below may be helpful:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-guidance-for-employees>

<https://www.gov.uk/how-to-claim-universal-credit>

<https://www.acas.org.uk/advice>

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/health/coronavirus-what-it-means-for-you/>

### **What Cricketfield Surgery is Doing**

We are still providing primary health care to our patients but we are following national guidance to offer a reduced service at present and try to manage more remotely. This includes:

- eConsults which will now be responded to within 1 full working day
- Telephone consultations with GPs and Nurses
- Video consultations with GPs and Nurses
- Prescriptions being received online, via eConsult or over the telephone then being sent to the pharmacies electronically. We cannot accept paper scripts during this time.

We are still inviting people in for prioritised nursing care such as dressings and blood tests as well as bringing people in to see a GP, if absolutely necessary.

Our front doors are locked to help protect our staff and patients and we will only let in those who have been invited in for an appointment. Please arrive on time for your appointment and only come to the front door and ring the bell just before your appointment time. You should only come to the surgery if you have been invited for an appointment.

We are also structuring our day to minimise risk for patients:

- From 8:30am to 11am appointments offered will only be for babies and those in the Extremely Vulnerable categories with no symptoms of coronavirus in their households.
- From 11am to 4pm we will be inviting in patients for routine work and follow-up care that are not in these vulnerable groups. We will also bring in patients we have triaged that day that we could not manage their care via remote methods.
- Between 4pm to 6pm we will be seeing more complex patients.

We are cleaning rooms between every consultation and the public spaces are being cleaned several times throughout the day. Our staff may wear PPE for both your protection as well as their own.

We are still offering home visits for those who really need it, but we will try to manage via remote means first. If you think you may need a visit at home please try and call in before 10.30am. Our staff will be wearing PPE on their home visits.

Our workforce is affected by self-isolation and shielding but we are all committed to supporting our patients in these unprecedented times. Please keep checking our website for updates, key information and use the internet to find other national guidance and if you do need to contact us use eConsult where possible. We really appreciate your understanding and support to help our community stay safe.