

Bridge Medical Patient Newsletter

May 2020



Chris Coady, Chairperson, Patient Partnership Group

"Dear Patients,

During this challenging period, our excellent teams of doctors, medical staff and highly skilled administrative and support teams are all available to assist you with your continuing health care needs.

A phone call to the surgery will bring you any help and support that you may require. For any concerns you have, make that call and do not delay.

To protect staff and patients there is currently no walk in service at the surgery. Please make that phone call instead.

Bridge Medical Services are here for you. Please follow the government advice on staying safe from Covid-19.

Every good wish."

Three things to remember

01. Use your GP wherever appropriate

02. Look after yourself and your loved ones using the resources provided

03. Tend to your mental health and wellbeing

Your GP is still here for you

During these uncertain and worrying times Bridge Medical remains open as normal, 08:00-18:00 Monday to Friday. We have put together this newsletter to give you some information that may help you in the event you are unsure about how things are working in the current climate.

To protect patients and staff, please do not come into the surgery to see us for any reason unless you have been invited. Always call us first. Currently our telephone lines may be busy at certain times of the day. If you call us and get cut off, this means that all of our lines are currently in use. Please do not give up, and try again in ten minute intervals.

If you call for a GP appointment you will initially be offered a triage call from a doctor. They can then decide whether they need to see you face-to-face.

The first part of the day at the surgery is set aside for our most vulnerable patients. At this time, the building has been cleaned most recently and no other patients have entered the building so far. Patients who are over 70 or who are shielding will be invited for appointments before 09:30. For patients not in these categories, we still have all appointment types available later in the morning and in the afternoon.

If you can, please order your prescription online. If you do not have online access, please feel free to call the surgery for your prescription. Please continue all of your prescriptions as normal unless advised not to by your doctor.

How to contact us:

Phone

0191 253 2578

Email

da87023@nhs.net

Website

bridgemedical.nhs.uk

Bridge Medical Patient Newsletter

May 2020

"Your local community is here to support you and your family during this worrying time."



If you want to help...

There are safe ways to help provide essential support to vulnerable people who are in isolation. You can help by phoning or keeping in touch on social media, picking up food for others and collecting medicines. Find out how to help others safely at [gov.uk/safehelp](https://www.gov.uk/safehelp).

Useful Contacts for Support

In our local area we are very lucky that there are many groups and organisations willing to lend a helping hand to the vulnerable in this time. The services available include food deliveries to people on the Extremely Vulnerable List, shopping collections for people who have ordered online and wellbeing pack deliveries which can include puzzle books, mental health information, activities and craft packs.

A (non-exhaustive) list of some useful contacts is shown below:

- **Helping Hands, 0345 200 102**, supporting adults maintaining their independence at home.
- **Carers UK Helpline, 0808 808 7777**, advice and support for carers and the cared-for.
- **Sliverline, 0800 47 8090**, information, friendship and advice for older people.
- **Age UK North Tyneside, 0191 280 8484**, offering friendly chats and other services to the elderly.
- **Post Office helpline, 0845 722 344**
- **State pension helpline, 0800 470 8090**
- **Ability Prop Service, 0191 295 1335**
- **Dog walking group, 07583 744696**
- **Gardening services, 0191 643 7897**

Bridge Medical Patient Newsletter

May 2020

High Risk Letters

NHS England (not the GP surgery) is sending out letters to patients who are high risk. This is for a small number of patients (1.3%) so you are unlikely to receive this letter. The GP surgery is checking the list from NHS England and making sure none of the high risk practice patients have been missed.



Advice on work

Please work from home where possible. If you are unable to work from home, the advice is to go to work. Please contact your employer for advice on this matter, rather than contacting your GP surgery.

You can self-certify your illness for seven days. If you are advised to self isolate for 14 days we expect your employer to be sympathetic. You may also be able contact NHS 111 to obtain an e-mail confirmation of Coronavirus diagnosis to show your employer if needed.

Coronavirus FAQs

At Bridge Medical, we understand that you may be concerned about how you should be using your GP at the moment. We are aware that there is some confusion surrounding the general government guidelines and we appreciate how difficult it can be to know what to do. Based on questions our patients have asked us, we have compiled a list of FAQs which you can use to advise you on how to use your GP.

What should I do if I have symptoms of a cough or fever?

If you have a cough or fever, do not visit your GP surgery or book an appointment. There is no need to call the surgery. You should self-isolate for seven days. Anyone you live with should self-isolate for 14 days.

Can I still attend the GP surgery for my appointment?

We are trying to keep appointments for priority patients at this time. We are also trying to reduce the number of patients in the practice at any one time to reduce the risk to patients and staff. Please help us to do this.

You can still book an appointment directly with the practice for some things that should not be postponed. Please do this by phone or online. If you feel you need to see a GP, we will arrange a telephone consultation. If the GP feels that they need to see you in person they will arrange to do this. You can also contact your doctor using the E-Consult service on this website. Please follow self-isolation advice if you are over 70 or received a high risk patient letter and do not come to the surgery.

If you have a hospital appointment please contact your specialist's secretary or hospital (the phone number will be on the letter with the appointment).

Should I still attend for my annual health check?

If you have an annual health check for a long-term condition, our nursing team will contact you to update you regarding this. Some patients may not need to come into the surgery for their health check. If you are over 70 or have received a shielding letter, you should not attend your annual health check to reduce your risk of infection.

If your annual health check is cancelled, you will be added to a waiting list and once the operation of the surgery returns to normal, you will be asked to attend your health check.

Should I order extra medication?

You should order your medication as normal, which is every 2 months. If you are on medication that needs monitoring, the pharmacy team will be looking to check if your monitoring tests have been stable in the past. If you do need monitoring the practice will be in touch.

Please order your prescriptions online whenever possible to free up telephone lines for staff to speak to patients.

Bridge Medical Patient Newsletter

May 2020

"The coronavirus pandemic is having a huge impact on our mental health. All of us are worried about coronavirus and how it will affect us and those we love."

Mind UK



A personalised mental health plan

Now, more than ever, it's important to look after your mental health. For simple steps on how to look after your mental wellbeing and to get a personal COVID-19 Mind Plan visit www.everymindmatters.co.uk.

Beating Corona Anxiety

The coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak means that life is changing for all of us for a while. It may cause you to feel anxious, stressed, worried, sad, bored, lonely or frustrated.

It's important to remember 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.

There are some simple things you can do to help you take care of your mental health and wellbeing during times of uncertainty. Doing so will help you think clearly, and make sure you are able to look after yourself and those you care about. Follow our top tips.

1. **Limit your news coverage.** Avoid constantly checking the news - it only makes your anxiety grow stronger. Limit yourself to 30 minutes a day or particular broadcasts.
2. **Concentrate on the facts.** Use reputable sources for news, advice and opinion such as the BBC. Be cautious of social media.
3. **Focus on what you can control.** We can't control the Covid-19 crisis but we can control our own responses and behaviours to it. Think ahead, make plans for what you'll do in the coming days and weeks.
4. **Distract yourself.** Our minds struggle to hold two thoughts at one time. Distract yourself with exercise, games, books, movies or other activities.
5. **Connect with others.** Reach out and connect with friends and family, in safe ways. Share your fears or talk about nothing in particular
6. **Be nice to yourself.** Add extra time for stress relief in your day. Treat yourself whenever you need to do things you enjoy, within the limits of existing restrictions.
7. **Hold on to hope.** Keep the big picture in mind. The crisis will end, and we will get through this.

Bridge Medical Patient Newsletter

May 2020

"The COVID-19 pandemic means that many of us are staying at home and doing less in terms of social interactions and exercise. This can have a negative effect on your physical and mental health."

World Health Organisation

Three things to remember

01. Use your GP wherever appropriate

02. Look after yourself and your loved ones using the resources provided

03. Tend to your mental health and wellbeing

Looking after your health

Our physical health has a big impact on how we feel. At times like these, it can be easy to fall into unhealthy patterns of behaviour that end up making you feel worse.

Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, drink enough water and exercise regularly. Avoid smoking or drugs, and try not to drink too much alcohol.

You can leave your house, alone or with members of your household, for exercise like a walk, run or bike ride. But make sure you keep a safe 2-metre distance from others. Alternatively you could try one of the many home workouts available online.

Some top health tips from the doctors at our surgery are:



"If you are staying indoors try Vitamin D supplements. It's good to make sure you have enough Vitamin D, and we usually get this from sunlight." - **Dr H Coundon**



"Alcohol is a depressant. Too much alcohol will affect your general health and mood. No more than 14 units a week is advised" - **Dr S Hartley**



"Look after your sleep cycle. Try to have a regular bed time, avoid caffeine and alcohol, and limit your screen time before bed." - **Dr R Salam**



"Weight gain occurs when you regularly eat and drink more calories than you burn through bodily functions and physical activity. This will apply to many of us at the minute! Be careful to maintain a healthy lifestyle." - **Dr R Arthur**



"Keep taking your medication. Don't stop or change your medication without consulting a medical professional. Be wary of scare-stories about medication." - **Dr M Griffiths**

You can visit our website for further advice on maintaining your health. Visit bridgemedical.nhs.uk/self-help/ and use the Self Care menu to navigate.