

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information about seeing a GP

Should you have any questions or require further information please contact us by email: office@healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk

Seeing a GP

This guide provides some information about seeing a GP at this current time.

- ✓ Patients can still make appointments with a Doctor, Nurse, Healthcare Assistant or Social Prescriber.
- ✓ GPs are still able to make referrals and you should not delay contacting your GP if you have health concerns. Cancer referrals are still being made.
- ✓ Many GPs continue to limit their face to face contact with patients and are conducting appointments via telephone or video consultation. However, some practices are resuming face to face appointments on a limited basis. You should contact your GP to find out more.
- ✓ GPs have implemented arrangements for certain groups of patients, such as the deaf community, people with learning disabilities, people whose first language is not English and people who do not have access to the telephone.
- ✓ GPs have been resumed many services and vaccinations, including offering the COVID vaccine at a number of sites, click here for more information about the [vaccine roll-out](#)

Visiting a GP

- During this time, you can still see a GP but in order to protect others you should not visit your GP surgery unless this is absolutely necessary and only if you have been told to attend. You must not visit your GP if you have [symptoms of coronavirus](#), however mild.
- The majority of essential clinics such as blood taking, wound dressing and baby and child immunisations are still running.
- Many practices have resumed the following services: routine medication reviews, over-75 health checks, clinical reviews of frailty, shingles vaccination programme.
- Practices will be working through any backlogs built up during the lockdowns.

Telephone and online consultations

- You should call your GP practice, or check their website, to find out the best way to speak with a GP. All GPs practices should have updated their websites with COVID-19 related information.
- Most GPs are continuing to offer alternatives to face-to-face consultations such as a telephone or online consultations. These alternatives are easy



to use, but you should always request the option you most prefer or is easiest for you.

- An online consultation can be conducted on a computer, tablet or mobile phone. Your GP will tell you which online service they use. Many GP surgeries use a questionnaire or an online form to support the process. The NHS has produced a simple guide to how these work which is available [here](#), and guide for getting the most out of telephone consultations is [here](#).
- As with any appointment you should ensure that you have a private space in which to discuss your concerns.
- After your assessment you may not be seen at your usual surgery and may be directed to a specific site locally to best deal with your health needs in the safest way. Your GP will explain this to you.

e-consult

- Your GP Practice may be offering a service called e-consult. You can access this on your GP's website if they are offering it. The service enables you to complete an online form with your concerns, questions or requests and submit these electronically to your GP who will then review this information and contact you. This service is particularly useful for those who find it harder to schedule a phone call or video appointment with their GP. The service is free for all NHS patients and supported by the NHS.
- More information about econsult is available [here](#)
- The [Healthwatch report The Doctor Will Zoom You Now is a useful resource to help support patients.](#)

Support for certain groups

- GP practices have made alternative arrangements to ensure patients from the deaf community, people with learning disabilities, people whose first language is not English and people who do not have access to the telephone, can access appointments. You should contact your GP practice to find out what arrangements they have in place.
- Deaf people in Brighton and Hove and East Sussex can benefit from a Video Relay Service (VRS), which has gone live in all GP practices and offers telephone access and consultations to British Sign Language (BSL) users. The new, improved service will see GP practices being able to offer the consultations with support from Signlive. [Download the SignLive app](#), register your details, and search for NHS Brighton and Hove in the Community Directory. An interpreter will join you on the call before the call is put through to the engagement team.
- The service means deaf patients across Brighton and Hove and East Sussex are able to call their registered practice for free, using the standard telephone number, speak with receptionists and book a telephone appointment with a GP, just as a hearing person can.



- An NHS 111 British Sign Language (BSL) Service is also available. This is a free service where a BSL interpreter telephones an NHS 111 adviser and relays their conversation with them. You can [click here](#) for more information about how this service works.

Registering with a GP

- Anyone can continue to register at a GP Practice provided it has capacity to take on new patients, and you live within the practice boundary. All the information you need to register can be found [here](#) and you can find surgeries near you by clicking [here](#)
- Practices will continue to register all patients, including those with no fixed address, asylum seekers, refugees and those who do not have photo ID.
- If you are temporarily resident in Brighton and Hove, you can seek emergency treatment from your nearest GP practice for up to 14 days without registering. After that you will have to register as a temporary resident or permanent patient.

Obtaining prescriptions

- You should only request repeat medicines from your GP when you are running low (e.g. one week's supply left). It can however take between 5 and 7 days from ordering a repeat prescription from a GP to it being ready to collect at the pharmacy so do take this into account.
- Healthwatch has produced a guide which contains more information for arranging the collection of your prescriptions which you can access by clicking [here](#)

For COVID-19 patients

- You should not attend your GP practice if you have symptoms of COVID-19 or suspect that you may have someone into contact with someone who may have COVID-19. You should always call up your GP before attending.
- Some GPs will see patients without symptoms, and also patients with COVID-19 symptoms who will be separated into special zones so that they are kept isolated from other patients. This will be undertaken in a safe way for patients and staff, and includes the introduction of dedicated hot consultation rooms, with separate entrances and exits to maintain isolation.
- Existing GP premises will also be dedicated for treatment of those without any COVID-19 symptoms or acute illness, to allow their management in a way that minimises risk of contact with any potentially ill patients. Patients will be screened for any fever or cough symptoms, so only those who are considered well can enter. The facility will be arranged to maintain social distancing measures and limit patient number on site at any one time.

Please stay 2 metres apart

SAVE LIVES

2 metres (6ft or 3 steps)

Coronavirus - COVID-19
Stay at home. Protect the
NHS. Save lives!

healthwatch
Brighton and Hove

COVID-19 symptoms

- If you are concerned about whether you have symptoms of coronavirus you can use the [NHS 111 online](#) service to find out what to do. You can also find more advice about getting medical help from home by clicking [here](#).

GP referrals

Advice

- Your GP is still able to refer you on for diagnostic tests or to see a specialist consultant as normal. However, referrals may be kept on file until the pressure on the NHS lessens, meaning you might not receive an appointment for some time. All referrals will however be looked at by a clinician and reviewed for urgency.
- In due course, you will hear directly from the hospital about your appointment; you do not need to go back to your GP unless your condition deteriorates.