

## Coronavirus update 21/05/2020

### \*\*\*IMPORTANT NOTICE REGARDING CHANGES TO OUR PRACTICE OPERATIONS – PLEASE READ\*\*\*

Throughout April, we prepared the practice for dealing with an increase of COVID symptomatic patients by zoning the practice and stopping all routine work. Luckily in the South West, particularly Devon, we have continued to see very few COVID symptomatic patients and, thankfully, the initial predicted numbers they were expecting have not materialised.

This means that the lockdown and social distancing measures have worked and it appears as though we have come through the initial peak. Sadly, the coronavirus looks set to be with us for some time to come - possibly into next year or beyond. We are advised there may be future peaks, particularly as the lockdown is relaxed and potentially around October when flu season starts.

This means that we have to plan to work in a different way for the longer term whilst introducing back in some routine care where safe and appropriate to do so. This update covers changes we are implementing from 1<sup>st</sup> June. Previous communications regarding our current operations can be found on our website <https://compasshousemedical.com/coronavirus-info>

### How will we operate from 1<sup>st</sup> June?

The principle of all appointments being a remote consult (via telephone, e-consult or video consultation) remains, unless in-person care is absolutely required. This also applies to any long term condition reviews we carry out.

Please be aware that **telephone appointments are only 10 minutes long** so clinicians are only able to discuss one problem and we cannot make a commitment to call back at a certain time or that it will be the requested GP.

Our practice zones remain in place, with all patients being screened prior to attending an appointment. Any COVID symptomatic patients that need to be seen are invited into our red zone only which is accessed via a separate entrance and seen in a separate wing of the practice.

All patients attending the practice are asked to wear a face covering. If you do not have a face mask then you can cover your face with a scarf or similar.

Staff and patients' temperatures are checked with a scanner before being admitted into any of our buildings. If your temperature is high, you will be asked to wait outside and the temp will be retaken in 10 minutes. If it's still high, you will not be allowed to enter the building and attend your appointment and will be sent home to isolate per government guidelines.

Work being reintroduced includes women's health clinics and joint injections where it is safe to do so. We will not be calling patients in for their routine annual bloods yet. However, if you are in the practice for another reason we will do this at the same time.

For now, we are still unable to carry out health checks, minor surgery, ear syringing, routine annual bloods and ear checks.



### **Galmpton Surgery**

From 1<sup>st</sup> June, we are opening our Galmpton surgery to become a shielded site for our most vulnerable patients only. Like King Street, Galmpton will be a locked site with access controlled via our Patient Care Advisors (PCA) for those with booked appointments only.

When invited to Galmpton for an appointment, please arrive 10 minutes before your appointment time and wait in your car in the car park. Our PCAs will call your mobile when the clinician is ready to see you and you will be able to go straight in to see them without having to wait in the surgery. This minimises your time in the building, your contact with other people and your risk. After your appointment, please leave the surgery immediately. The clinician will clean down the room and change PPE whilst the PCA phones and lets in the next patient.

Shielded patients will be seen in the morning at Galmpton. Late mornings and afternoons will be used for long term condition reviews such as COPD, asthma and diabetes where patients need to come into the practice to be seen. These patients fall into the “moderate risk” category so we are taking enhanced measures to protect them along with our shielded patients.

We appreciate that some patients have a preference to the surgery they are seen at for convenience but unfortunately we cannot accommodate choice of location at this time. The location you are seen at is determined by your risk category and the type of your appointment. This is following guidance from NHS England and all GP practices are making these changes to separate out their work for patient safety. At Compass House, we have more than one site which enables us to do this as a practice. For other GP practices that have only one site, it will involve patients travelling to a different GP practice in potentially different towns for appointments.

### **Flu immunisation programme 2020/2021**

It is more important than ever that we have effective plans in place for the 2020/21 flu season to protect those at risk, prevent ill-health and minimise further impact on the NHS and social care. We have already ordered flu vaccines for our patients that fall into the “at risk” category and are currently making plans for the upcoming flu season that will start in September 2020. The groups eligible for the NHS funded flu vaccination programme are the same as last year, although this may change if the programme is expanded centrally. The immunisation process will look different this year as we need to look at ways to maintain social distancing whilst delivering the vaccine and we will share these plans once confirmed.

### **Current guidance around Coronavirus symptoms, self-isolation and testing**

On 18<sup>th</sup> May the Chief Medical Officers for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have issued updated advice on coronavirus symptoms.

Self-isolate if you develop any of the following:

- a new continuous cough
- fever
- loss/change in your normal sense of smell or taste

More info: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>



## Shielded Patients

Over the past few weeks, we have been calling our patients that fall into the “shielded category” to check they are OK, that they have support with prescriptions and shopping and providing details of how to get extra help. This has been a huge task for the team as involves calls to 470+ patients but we felt it was important to speak to all of our most vulnerable patients at this time.

For those patients in this shielded category, the government advice remains the same which is to continue to shield until the end of June. We expect this will be reviewed closer to the current end date but meanwhile it’s important to continue with the shielding.

## Bank Holiday Monday 25<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Please note that this is now a normal bank holiday Monday and we will not be open on this day. If you require help that cannot wait until we are open on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> May, please call 111.

## What next?

As a practice we continue to monitor the latest guidelines and information to ensure we keep our patients and staff as safe as possible during this time whilst still remaining here to look after and care for you in the best way we can. We are closely following the number of COVID-19 cases circulating in our community. If a further peak happens it may be necessary to pull back for another period on some of the routine work we are now starting to do.

We remain extremely busy at this time and whilst we are physically seeing less patients, we are actually consulting with more patients than we usually do. Appointments also take longer as we have to space them out to ensure social distancing is maintained in the waiting rooms. It also takes time to clean down the rooms between each patient and change PPE.

When a staff member has COVID-19 symptoms, we have to observe the same isolation rules as everyone else. Combined with the extra protection we have in place for our “moderate risk” staff members, this means we are operating with fewer staff and those numbers fluctuate beyond our control.

Please do bear with us if things take longer or if our service is different to what you would like during this period. We are restricted in choice of clinician, location and appointment times during the pandemic but we are all working hard to deliver as many services as possible during these exceptional times.

With thanks,

The Compass House Team

For more information on health at home and how to access NHS services online visit [www.nhs.uk/health-at-home/](https://www.nhs.uk/health-at-home/)