

10/11/2020

Dear All,

I am sure everyone will agree that 2020 has been a challenging year so far. A significant number of us have not lived through a worldwide pandemic before and it has been a steep learning curve. We are fully aware that many in the village have been struggling with both physical and mental health concerns during this time. We know that many will continue to have difficulties going forward and, although we hope a vaccine will be coming soon, are aware that the consequences of Covid are far from over.

The surgery in the village is open and has been providing a service to all its patients throughout the pandemic. There have been times where we have had to have – due to national directives – a reduction in chronic disease management, routine cancer screening services and preventative medicine – but all our other urgent general practice duties have been maintained. We are delivering services in a different way, and are obliged to triage each patient first before they come into the surgery for a face to face consultation. However if we feel that we need a face to face consultation, then we are offering those appointments to all who need them. This is done to make sure that the surgery is covid free so the very physically vulnerable patients are safe to come down and also reduce the risk to the staff so we can keep providing a service.

It takes us longer to do things - due to social distancing and increased cleaning so although 80 % of our services are now up and running there are still some services we have been unable to resume for the time being.

You may have noticed that we now have a portakabin in the car park - this is for seeing our 'hot' (possible covid) patients. Therefore if you or your child has a cough, a fever or a loss of taste or smell and need to be seen by a Dr you will be seen in there.

We have had a very high demand for our flu jabs this year and have managed to secure some extra vaccine stock from NHS England. We are still currently giving flu jabs to our over 65's, our under 65 at risks and our pre-school children. As soon as the government tells us we can call for the over 50's who are not otherwise at risk and provide the vaccine we will contact you.

We had to start using new technology as soon as we went into lockdown - this has developed as the year has gone on. We have e-consult where you can email us through our practice website; Accurx - a text messaging service where we can ask you

to attach pictures or have text conversations with us; we can video call you if we need to and you are always welcome to use the push doctor video service available to our patients. Our extended access service run by WACA is available every evening and weekends - some phone, some face to face. We also have restarted our physio service - this is initially a phone triage or video service but if needed you will be seen face to face.

We are still asking patients to ring the doorbell before we let them in - this is because our waiting room is small and we are unable to have patients waiting close together therefore please don't turn up early for your appointment and you are welcome to wait in your car once you have checked in and the doctor or nurse will come and find you.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have concerns for your health. We will always deal with emergency problems, we are able to refer into suspected cancer services and, although both our main hospitals have recently stopped routine surgeries again, they are still accepting routine referrals from primary care - although I suspect waits will be long for some time.

This winter will be long and difficult. The staff at the surgery are quite exhausted - we have had to change very quickly and make changes multiple times over the last 9 months. We are suffering from staff shortages as staff have to self-isolate and some of our staff have their own underlying health problems so are unable to see patients they may have seen before. Please be patient with us we are trying our best. Rest assured that if you have a medical problem we will see you which includes a face to face consultation if necessary.

We thank you for all the support you have always given us in the past. We hope that in the New Year we may be able to offer a covid vaccine but that will be a huge operational challenge which will be organised by NHS England so please be patient.

With best wishes

The Doctor's at Grange Park Surgery