



# Forest Practice Newsletter



## Spring /Summer 2021

With the Covid 19 vaccination programme well under way and an outline Road map out of restrictions having been shared by the government we thought it a good time to update you again on arrangements within the practice.



### Covid 19 Vaccination

The Loughton, Buckhurst Hill and Chigwell GP practices continue to offer vaccination at Buckhurst Way Clinic. We are currently working through Group 6 of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and immunisation schedule and are sending out text messages and contacting patients as soon as we are notified that vaccine will be available.

There has been some negative press coverage in the last week or so regarding the Oxford Astra-Zeneca vaccine and reports of it being linked to blood clots and as a result its' use has been halted in several European countries. We understand this may cause concern for patients who have had or are due to have the vaccine and would like to draw your attention to the following:

*Blood clots can occur naturally and are not uncommon. More than 11 million doses of the COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca vaccine have now been administered across the UK. Reports of blood clots received so far are not greater than the number that would have occurred naturally in the vaccinated population.*

*"The MHRA (The UK regulatory agency for managing drug safety and use) states this is a **precautionary** measure taken by some European authorities. It has **not** been confirmed that the reports of blood clot was caused by AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine. The European Medicines Agency (The equivalent of the MHRA in Europe) states there is currently no indication that vaccination has caused these conditions; its safety committee is reviewing this issue.*

*The safety of the public will always come first. The MHRA are keeping this issue under close review but available evidence **does not** confirm that the vaccine is the cause. As such, people should still go and get their COVID-19 vaccine when asked to do so."*



### Requests for appointments

Like you we have been advised to continue with all the current infection control measures until the government advises us otherwise and so we continue to triage all requests for Doctor appointments and arrange face to face reviews only when clinically necessary.

Please do not come to the surgery to request an appointment as the reception team will not be able to help you. We have an intercom that is only intended for patients attending pre-booked appointments or who have items to collect.



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We are expanding our use of Accurx which allows us to send and receive information and will be using this to enhance our Chronic Disease reviews as well as continuing to use it to receive patient photographs and to set up video calls.

Please respond if you receive a phone message requesting information such as your Blood pressure, weight, Asthma symptoms review etc as we need this data to make sure your prescription is safe and appropriate. Monitoring blood tests can be arranged at St Margaret's in Epping (by appointment only to ensure social distancing –please see the tests and results tab on our website for more details). Forest Medical Centre is currently closed due to flood damage.

As the restrictions ease we are expecting new Standard Operating Procedure guidance from NHS England and we will update the website as our arrangements change. It is likely that we will maintain a blended approach for appointments as many patients have found remote consulting preferable to having to attend the surgery in person.



## **Pressure on our phone lines**

We continue to receive a large volume of calls, many relating to the Covid 19 vaccination. While we appreciate that many of you are keen to receive your jab please refer to the NHS information about priority groups and also the section on our website to stay up to date with arrangements. We will contact you according to your priority group and the availability of vaccine. A National vaccination centre is opening in Murray Hall in Loughton and we hope that if vaccine supplies increase as has been predicted this will increase the rate of immunisation significantly.

Here are some ways you can help reduce pressure on the phone lines:

- If your query is not urgent please avoid calling on Monday and Friday as these are the busiest days of the week
- If you need a result and do not have on-line access to view it please call between 10am-12.30pm and press 2 for results.
- If you are waiting for the result of a test arranged by your specialist or hospital team please call the team who requested the test as the result will go back to them and they are responsible for advising you. Reception will not be able to chase this result for you. If your specialist writes to us asking us to take any action based on a test result we will contact you.
- Please consider registering for DoctorLink which allows you to submit a description of your symptoms and then directs you to appropriate advice or is sent on to us to arrange a Doctor telephone appointment as appropriate.

Please bear with us while you are waiting on the phone. We do understand how stressful it can be when you have a health worry and need to speak to someone but all our Reception team are answering the phones as quickly as they can. When you do get through please help them to manage your request as efficiently as possible as this will help the overall waiting time.





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## **Nursing appointments**

General nursing appointments continue to be bookable through reception.

These include:

- Smears – please contact us if your smear is due/over due
- Baby and Childhood immunisations
- Contraceptive injections
- Dressings
- Specialist injections arranged through your specialist eg as part of cancer treatment
- B12 injection
- Suture removal

The following services remain unavailable at the practice:

- Ear Syringing
- Steroid injections
- Minor Surgery
- Contraceptive coils and implants – these are available through Essex Sexual Health Service on 0300 003 1212 or [www.essexsexualhealthservice.org.uk](http://www.essexsexualhealthservice.org.uk)



## **Other sources of advice and support**

We continue to review the information available on our website including links to services and reputable websites for information and advice.

Sections include:

- Useful links during lockdown
- Mental Health Resources for children, young people and adults
- Antenatal and postnatal care

Thank you for taking the time to read this, we hope it has been useful and we will provide updated information as we all move towards the new normal!

**The Team at Forest Practice**