



Thursday 26th March, 2020

We are writing again to update our patients in this fast developing situation as we face unprecedented demands on communities and health care services. This newsletter includes information about patient groups most at risk, how you can help yourselves as well as use our services with a particular mention about ordering repeat medication.

Previous newsletters can be seen on our website, in the "[news](#)" section.

Firstly, we hope you will be aware of **new restrictions for everyone to follow introduced by the government** on Monday evening; we should all stay at home except:

- Shopping for "basic necessities", as infrequently as possible.
- Medical reasons, to provide care, or to help a vulnerable person
- To take exercise, e.g. a run, cycle or walk up to once per day
- Travelling to and from work, but only if it is "absolutely necessary"

People should not meet friends or family members who do not live with them. When you are in public remain **at least** 2m from others.

These measures are intended to slow the spread of the virus and so help both communities and the health service cope with the new pressures. There's a helpful video about why this is important on the BBC website: "[Why does staying at home stop coronavirus](#)".

As we explained in our previous update, **we have changed the way we work in the surgery** increasingly using telephone and other indirect methods to communicate with patients. For the time being, we will see patients when a doctor deems it necessary, but **no one should come to any of our premises without agreeing to do so by telephone** beforehand. We do not offer any walk-in appointments and only see patients face to face at the surgery if absolutely necessary. This is very important to the surgery as our staff are vulnerable too and we want to make sure as many of us as possible can come to work to keep the practice open. An unexpected visit by someone who may have COVID-19 risks passing on the virus to our staff and other, potentially vulnerable patients with consequences for the community at large and to the ability of the practice to keep working. Please be patient with these new arrangements. Please note we have no access to testing for COVID-19 and the [NHS 111 on-line coronavirus service](#) has the expertise needed to support those with symptoms.

The only exception is for **patients collecting prescriptions from our Pelynt dispensary** who should use the staff door to the left of the main entrance – please knock and step back to be given your medication.

To order prescriptions please use one of the pharmacies' ordering services (Looe Pharmacy, Boots or Roberts in Polperro) or our on-line service (see our [website](#)). If these are impossible, please email your request to oldbridgesurgery.looe@nhs.net or pop the right hand side of your prescription form, marking the items needed, in the post to us. Please do not telephone or use the mailbox at the surgery.

Unless you use our Pelynt dispensary, however you order, **please nominate a pharmacy** as the one you will routinely use to collect your medication from so that we can ensure your prescription is sent straight there; this avoids the need for staff at the surgery and in the pharmacy to handle paper. Also, **please do not order in advance**; we will be working through prescriptions in the order they are due and early requests will be held until they are due.

GP practices cannot provide “**isolation notes**” as evidence to your employer that you are off work for that reason, these are available on-line using a service developed by the NHS and the Department for Work and Pensions; please go to the [NHS website](#) for this.

It is important for all our sakes that we **take care of ourselves**. Some groups are more vulnerable to the effects of infection, so should take greater care. Those most at risk are being written to this week, with the advice that their safest course of action is to stay at home at all times and avoid all face-to-face contact for at least twelve weeks from today, except from carers and healthcare workers who must be seen as part of medical care. This will protect this group by stopping them from coming into contact with the virus.

Those considered most at risk by NHS England, who are being sent letters, are:

1. People who have had a solid organ transplant
2. People with specific cancers
 - a. People with cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy or radical radiotherapy for lung cancer
 - b. People with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
 - c. People having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
 - d. People having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
 - e. People who have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs
3. People with severe respiratory conditions including all cystic fibrosis, severe asthma and severe COPD
4. People with rare diseases and inborn errors of metabolism that significantly increase the risk of infections (such as SCID, homozygous sickle cell)
5. People on immunosuppression therapies sufficient to significantly increase risk of infection
6. People who are pregnant with significant heart disease, congenital or acquired
7. A small group of additional people with multiple medical conditions that we have identified from the surgery records

Other patients who should **take particular care** to apply “social distancing” include those who are aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions) or under 70 with an underlying health condition such as anyone instructed to get a flu jab as an adult each year on medical grounds – see our [previous newsletter](#), 23rd March, for the full list and guidance on how to protect yourself.

In addition, we are writing to our patients with asthma giving them specific advice.

If you have symptoms of COVID-19 which are either:

- a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature) or
- a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)

then whilst staying strictly at home, drink plenty to remain hydrated and take paracetamol, not exceeding the recommended dose, to ease your symptoms. Use the NHS 111 on-line service to seek extra advice or support.

For all of us, the NHS recommends how we can help stay well, mentally and physically, whilst at home:

- stay in touch with family and friends over the phone or on social media
- try to keep yourself busy – you could try activities like cooking, reading, online learning and watching films
- do light exercise at home, or outside once a day

Other sources of help and advice:

Please use reputable websites for advice:

- [NHS](#)
- [NHS 111-online](#)
- [HM Government](#)
- [Old Bridge Surgery](#)

The Looe Coronavirus Support Group - For patients who are self-isolating, following stringent social distancing and/or are reliant on the regular support of others who may also be self-isolating, including picking up shopping and medications, our wonderful community has rallied around and brought together a team of amazing volunteers to help. You can reach them by calling **01503 804099**, 7 days a week between 8am-8pm. Alternatively, you can email support@looetowncouncil.gov.uk.

Alternatively, [Volunteer Cornwall](#) offer various forms of support and welcome volunteers too, if you are able to offer any time during this difficult period.

If you have no family or friends to help and you are unable to use the Looe support group there is also a government point of contact: www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable.

Old Bridge Surgery, Looe
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