



Providing NHS services

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Dear Patients,

From Monday 19th July, the Government is relaxing a number of public health measures which have been in place since early in the pandemic.

Due to the rising numbers of Covid-19 cases and the need to keep safe our staff and all our patients (particularly those with weakened immune systems), **we will be continuing to ask any patients visiting the surgery to wear face coverings (unless they have a valid exemption) and to use hand sanitizer and keep more than 2m away from others.** Our reception staff have been asked to ensure these safeguards remain in place and we thank you for your co-operation.

We will also be continuing with the **"telephone triage first"** approach that NHS England have advised all practices to follow since March last year. This means the receptionist will offer a telephone consultation with a GP first. The receptionist is unable to book a face-to-face appointment with a GP until the problem has been triaged to ensure a face-to-face encounter is necessary and safe to proceed with.

We (and indeed the rest of the NHS) continue to experience high levels of demand for care, with the result that our telephone lines can be very busy at peak times. We are aware that it can be frustrating for patients trying repeatedly to get through. We sympathise and apologise for the inconvenience involved. The NHS has a limited pool of staff and resources and when demand outstrips supply, it is extremely challenging for both staff and patients alike. We are employing extra locum doctors to increase the number of available appointments and will continue to look at ways to improve access for patients where possible into the Autumn and Winter.

Please try to self-care for your symptoms when you can, particularly for common minor ailments. If you have long term health conditions please take your medications correctly as prescribed and attend for your review appointments when asked to.

Make use of the NHS111 online service if you are unsure what you should do about your symptoms:
<https://111.nhs.uk>

We are anticipating a surge in childhood respiratory viral illness over the next few months. Here is a guide for parents on when to worry about potentially serious illness in your child: <https://www.rcgp.org.uk/-/media/B9466CCBE2D4480BB3855077123F4BF7.ashx>

We do hope and intend to get back to a more "normal" way of working once it is safe and we are able to relax the strict infection control procedures that we have been necessarily following. We will let you know when this time comes.

Thank you.

The Cofton Team