



Ringmead Medical Practice

August Newsletter

www.ringmeadmedicalpractice.org.uk

Since the coronavirus (COVID19) crisis started you may have seen some of the changes we have had to make at Ringmead Medical Practice. All of these changes have been thought through carefully, and have been made to ensure we have sufficient staff to provide a safe service and minimise the risk to both patients and staff. We also wish to reassure our elderly and more vulnerable patients that everything is still being done to ensure you will continue to be supported, as always, by the practice.

It is highly likely that many of the changes we have had to make will become permanent, and be the new way of working for Ringmead Medical Practice, as they will for many others. We hope this newsletter will explain these changes to you.

Please do not come to the surgery if you display any symptoms of Coronavirus or live with someone that does, or if you should be self-isolating e.g. just returned from Spain (correct as at July 2020).

Appointments

No face to face appointment will be made until a telephone discussion has been had with the clinician. In some cases a video consultation will follow this. You may also be asked to send in photos of your health complaint if it is appropriate. These should be sent to the practice using our secure eConsult service available on our website or in response to a secure text from the practice.

You will only be invited into the surgery if the GP, Nurse, Clinical Pharmacist or Practice Paramedic feel they need to see you; if it is possible to help you without a visit to the surgery then that is what will happen. If you are asked to come in to see the clinician then you may find appointment durations are shorter than they have been in the past. This is because they will have already spoken to you on the telephone and have collected important information. It is also important for safety reasons to minimise the length of time you are in the surgery.

If you have symptoms of Coronavirus but need to be seen for another reason, we have access to appointments provided by the federation of local GPs. There has been a recent change to this service and from 1st August 2020 any patient that needs to be seen will be visited at home rather than attending at Boundary House.

Appointments for patients without COVID symptoms will now be available again at the extended hours clinics – 7 days a week including Sunday mornings – at Boundary House.

Face coverings

If you are visiting the surgery you will need to wear a face covering or mask before entering the surgery. If you are attending for an appointment the clinician you will see will be wearing a mask, apron and gloves too.

A face covering helps protect you and us. Information on how to make one can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering>

Visiting the surgery

Even if you feel well, please do not come to the practice unless you have been given instructions on when and how to attend safely. In line with guidance, we have moved to remote care where possible. This means you will receive a phone or video call from the practice instead of being seen face to face. You can submit an electronic request for care using our e Consult service - simply follow the links on our website. You do not need a log in for this service.

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When visiting you will find the doors locked but the practice **remains open** between 8:00am and 6:30pm, Monday to Friday. You should wear a face covering, and upon arrival you will have been asked to wait in your car/outside. The clinician will call you when they are ready and will come to the door to escort you into the building. Please only use the intercom at the front door to speak to the receptionist if you are waiting 15 minutes beyond your appointment time. When you enter you must use the hand gel available to disinfect your hands.

Contacting us

We would like you to avoid visiting the surgery unless you are invited in for an appointment. Instead, please contact us by:

- Telephone: 01344 20 80 60 for all three sites
- eConsult: via our website – you can send a secure message to the practice – you do not need to create an account for this service but you must be registered with the practice.
- Online services for repeat prescriptions and booking appointments
- Website: www.ringmeadmedicalpractice.org.uk
- Repeat Prescription requests through Online Services or email: ringmead.patientprescriptions@nhs.net
- Email: baccg.ringmead.reception@nhs.net

These options allow us to help you with most things that you would need to contact the practice for.

AccuRx

It has been a year since we started to send texts via “AccuRx Chain SMS”. We have been much more proactive about some communications, messaging you quickly and securely, so you are not waiting to hear from us. Some examples of how we have used this are:

- Reminders of notifications (e.g. prescription ready)
- Responding to simple queries (e.g. if you had a quick question about your medication)
- Letting you know we have tried to call
- Sending you advice at the end of a consultation
- Video Consultations

Since the COVID lockdown, AccuRx have added more functionality and now we can text you links to paperwork from us such as your medical certificates and your referral appointment letters. If we request it you can also reply to us, even sending us photographs if needed, and we have been using this to send questionnaires to patients with booked appointments to check that they do not have COVID symptoms.

The practice name will always be at the bottom of the message. You won't be able to reply to them. Please help us to help you by keeping your number up to date. If you don't want us to contact you in this way please let us know.

Blood tests

We have made temporary changes to our phlebotomy (blood taking) service as a result of the effects of coronavirus (Covid-19).

Blood tests will still be provided where there is an essential need and by appointment only. 'Essential' is defined as those blood tests which are essential to guide management decisions for certain ongoing conditions, and which cannot be postponed without causing, or potentially causing, significant harm to the patient. This includes essential blood monitoring for medicines such as Warfarin (INR) or DMARDs. Well patients who are not showing Covid-19 symptoms, and would normally access blood tests at the practice, will need to attend either:

Berkshire Primary Care Extended Hours Service (appointment only service)
Heatherwood Hospital (walk-in clinic)
Wexham Park Hospital (walk-in clinic)

Repeat prescriptions

Repeat prescription services have not been disrupted but all repeat prescriptions are now sent electronically to your chosen pharmacy. If you haven't already done so, please let us know which this is. We would ask that you do not bring paper repeat requests to the surgery but instead, if you can, please make any request for a repeat prescription via online access, if you are already signed up, or you can use our temporary email address ringmead.patientprescriptions@nhs.net Please include your name, date of birth and the repeat medication you are requesting. For more information about online access and how you can sign up please visit our website www.ringmeadmedicalpractice.org.uk

Travel services

We are no longer providing travel advice or travel vaccinations while our services are impacted by the coronavirus (COVID19) crisis.

Travel services are not an essential service and are considered an additional service under the NHS. As it is not compulsory that they are provided we have taken the decision to suspend these in order to continue to safely provide as many essential services as we can. It may be some time before our travel services restart and we would advise our patients to seek another provider for their travel needs.

Personal Protective Equipment

If you are asked to come to the practice, you should expect to see our staff wearing a visor or goggles, mask, apron or gown and gloves. This can be unnerving, especially for small children. Please be prepared for this and be assured this is done for your and our safety.

Referrals

The surgery is now able to refer patients to hospitals again for further investigation and opinion. While we will make your referral without delay we are unable to manage the waiting time once the referral has been made. You may need to allow longer than normal for your appointment with a specialist.

Cancer screening

NHS cancer screening services are still being provided and if you are invited to take part in bowel, breast or cervical screening it is important you attend for your appointment.

Medical reviews

If you have a long term condition, for example diabetes or COPD, it is important that we still undertake your review. Our teams will contact you for this, and as much as possible will do the review by telephone or Video Consult. Where it is not possible to do this, we will ask you to attend for an appointment.

Patient's responsibility

Throughout this crisis that we are all finding challenging, difficult to understand and that is increasing our anxieties, we have been delighted by the support we have received from our patients.

The biggest demonstration of this is how you have accepted all the changes that have been made and how you have only contacted the surgery when you have needed to. We cannot thank you enough for this.

These changes are likely to be with us for a lot longer yet, and we may never see Ringmead Medical Practice as it was. Some of that may be good and some of that we may find difficult. It is so important our patients continue to help us. You can do this by:

- Accepting these changes, and the requests we make, in order to keep everyone, staff and patients, safe
- Following the important social distancing and hand washing guidance.
- Contacting the surgery only when you need to. You can visit our website for information about self-care, or submit an eConsult.
- Staying up to date with Government guidance on Coronavirus www.nhs.uk/coronavirus

Please do not put off contacting us

While our doors may be locked, Ringmead Medical Practice remains very much open. If you are worried about any changes in your health, notice any changes in an existing condition or new symptoms, please contact us without delay. Although many services have been impacted, referrals to investigate suspected cancer are still being dealt with as a priority.

Flu Clinics starting 12th September 2020

It is more important than ever that you attend for your flu vaccine. If you are eligible for an NHS flu vaccine then we have already RESERVED a vaccine for YOU. To keep you safe this year our usual walk-in clinics will be by appointment and will be held at locations near to the surgery. We are in negotiations with local schools and the scout hut next to Birch Hill. These larger venues will enable us to provide your vaccination to you safely because we can enable social distancing for the larger numbers of people we can expect. There will be more information on our website in the next couple of weeks

Please do follow us on Facebook and Twitter – we are trying to keep you up to date throughout this pandemic.

