

Communications to patients and how to protect practice staff

- Sample practice telephone message
- Sample practice SMS text
- Sample practice website info
- Sample practice online booking info
- Staff protection
- ICO and GMC pandemic guidance
- What's Next...

1. Sample practice telephone message:

Please do not book a GP appointment or attend your GP Practice if you have symptoms associated with coronavirus, including a new continuous cough or a high temperature.

You are advised to stay at home for 7 days.

If your symptoms are serious, or get worse, NHS 111 has an online coronavirus service that can tell you if you need further medical help and advise you what to do.

Only call 111 direct, if you cannot go online, or are advised to do so by the online service.

For the latest Covid-19 advice please visit www.nhs.uk/coronavirus.

Our senior clinical team will be triaging all appointments.

Thank you for your patience.

2. Sample online booking message:

If you have symptoms associated with coronavirus, including a new continuous cough or a high temperature, you are advised to stay at home for 7 days. Do not book a GP appointment or attend your GP Practice.

If your symptoms are serious, or get worse, NHS 111 has an online coronavirus service that can tell you if you need further medical help and advise you what to do.

Only call 111 direct if you cannot go online or are advised to do so by the online service.

We will triage all online bookings to ensure they follow this advice.

For the latest Covid-19 advice please visit www.nhs.uk/coronavirus.

3. Sample SMS message to all patients: (296 characters)

For the latest Covid-19 advice please visit www.nhs.uk/coronavirus.

Coronavirus advice: if you have a new persistent cough or a high temperature, please stay at home for 7 days.

Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital.

If symptoms are serious, or get worse, visit the NHS111 online service.

4. Sample message for your practice home page:

Important information about the coronavirus (COVID-19)

The NHS will be better prepared for outbreaks of new infectious diseases, if the public follows Public Health England advice.

The NHS has put in place measures to ensure the safety of patients and staff which may mean your patient experience is subject to change.

The Chief Medical Officer announced on Friday 13 March that the country is moving into the 'Delay' stage of the response to coronavirus (Covid-19).

The new advice issued by the Chief Medical Officer is to stay at home for 7 days if you have either:

- a high temperature or
- a new continuous cough

Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or a hospital. You do not need to contact 111 to tell them you're staying at home.

Use the NHS 111 online coronavirus service if:

- you feel you cannot cope with your symptoms at home
- your condition gets worse
- your symptoms do not get better after 7 days

Only call 111 if you cannot get help online.

Stay At Home advice can be found [here](#).

- Everyone is being reminded to follow Public Health England advice to:
- Always carry tissues with you and use them to catch your cough or sneeze. Then bin the tissue, and wash your hands, or use a sanitiser gel.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after using public transport. Use a sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are unwell.

Information remains subject to regular change and updates. More information can be found on the NHS website [here](#).

5. Staff Protection

An individual practice risk assessment should be undertaken for staff with comorbidities that place them at higher risk from COVID19 (usually asthma, COPD, smokers, any autoimmune condition, anyone taking potentially immunosuppressive medication. If possible, these staff may be able to work from home or in a non-clinical area or with non-COVID19 patients.

We recommend you try to do everything you can to reduce surgery footfall. Practice a 'doctor first' triage system. Keep face to face consultations at a minimum. Prioritise the health of yourself and your staff.

Patients will either be well enough to stay at home and be managed remotely, or unwell enough to need assessment +/- testing elsewhere.

The grey area will be those patients who don't fit into a category. They may have urgent medical need which is not Covid-19 related. They will need to be assessed and followed up in an appropriately protective environment in the community, or a home visit where the clinician has proper PPE.

More, and better PPE is being procured centrally. If you are without, then focus on what you can do remotely.

If a patient walks in with a persistent cough and a pyrexia, and visibly needs urgent attention - if you choose to see them- ensure you have a 'hot' isolation room where they can be seen with a clinician wearing scrubs and PPE. No PPE, no see.

You are within your rights to signpost your patient back to their vehicle and speak with them/their carer on the phone. (Arguably if they have driven themselves, they can drive home again and look at 111 online).

The most appropriate management plan may be to signpost them home and to call 111, or to discuss admission with your local Acute trust rather than exposing yourself/your staff to a face to face consultation at this stage of the pandemic.

Be pragmatic. Consider issuing longer prescription periods where appropriate and the use of repeat dispensing. Consider deferring non-essential appointments e.g. cervical cytology with no dyskaryotic history. Continue vaccinations for now. All MED3s can be emailed.

Be (partially) reassured by the communication that came out from [GMC et al](#) and pleasantly surprised by the information that came out from the [ICO](#)

- Reception staff should stay 1 metre away from all patients unless absolutely necessary
- Reception staff **do not** need to wear protective clothing or masks for routine tasks
- All staff should regularly hand wash after handling anything they receive from a patient (samples etc)

We expect many routine outpatient appointments to be cancelled and patients to be telephoned instead. Hopefully our Acute Trusts will be liaising with our CCG to ensure we have joined up comms.

6. What's Next?

We are expecting central information and guidance tomorrow, and later this week, around:

- PPE provision in general practice
- QOF/DES payments & potential suspensions
- CQC potential suspensions
- Occupational health provisions for primary care staff
- Appraisal and revalidation emergency provisions
- Fingerprick 20-minute testing kits for frontline staff

- Death in service contractual solutions for peripatetic locum GPs

But for now, we don't.

So be sensible and be safe. Keep calm, be professional, and know you are covered by the state clinical negligence scheme for taking legitimate decisions in your patients' best interest that are not usual practise.

Your LMC is working hard behind the scenes at a local and national level to support you and your practice.