

Healthwatch Portsmouth is providing some information to help answer some of the **'frequently asked questions'** relating to COVID-19.

We hope that the information is useful to you.

You can find links to the latest official guidance and useful information via our Healthwatch Portsmouth [website](#) .

If you are looking for information about practical support **Portsmouth City Council** website has lots of useful information about services during this period. [Portsmouth City Council COVID-19 pages](#)

HIVE Portsmouth is co-ordinating the community sector response. You can find out about what they are able to help with here [HIVE Portsmouth support during COVID-19](#) or phone them on **023 9261 6709** (Mon– Fri 9am- 5pm)

For accessible information on COVID-19

Easy Read Formats:

- Government publications can be accessed [here](#)
- Public Health England information can be accessed [here](#)

Sign Language:

- Information produced by SignHealth is available [here](#)
- To access the NHS 111 British Sign Language online service click [here](#)

Different Languages:

- Click [here](#) for information produced by Doctors of the World
- Guidance on using [Interpreting and Translation Services](#)
- Guidance published by Public Health England is available [here](#)

Your Pharmacy and Prescriptions

Find your local pharmacy

You can find the contact details of your local pharmacy [here](#)

Why are we having to queue outside and only be let in one at a time?

Many pharmacies are relatively small and have confined space. To maintain consistent 2m distancing, customers and patients may be asked to wait

outside, with only one customer being let in at a time. This is for the protection of both customers and staff.

What happens if a pharmacy closes?

Many pharmacies will have made changes to their opening times, often opening an hour later than usual, and will be closed at lunchtime. This is to give them time to catch up with the increased demand for prescriptions.

A pharmacy may also have to close at short notice, for example if the only pharmacist on site is unwell. **Many community pharmacies are posting their opening hours onto their Facebook pages to keep local people informed.**

All efforts will be made by the pharmacy to re-open as soon as possible, however this can take time, as they will need to identify alternative staff and manage extra travel time.

If longer term closures (more than a few hours/rest of the day), become necessary, patients will be directed to another pharmacy or alternative arrangements will be made for the supply of medicines in the pharmacy.



What is happening to the price of paracetamol and hand sanitiser?

Where there is a sudden increase in demand for something, prices tend to rise. This can be due to the need to change supply routes and an increase in manufacturing.

Pharmacies are already seeing increased wholesale prices and unfortunately will need to pass these on to the customer.

How can I order my prescription now?

Patients who need to obtain prescriptions are encouraged to do this online by ordering directly with the [NHS Electronic Prescription Service](#)

and their local Electronic Repeat Dispensing Service provided by their GP surgery.

Online ordering – Many GPs offer the ordering of prescriptions online. Please check whether you have already registered for this service or not. If not, you will need to check whether your GP practice offers this and how you can sign-up during the pandemic.

Why can't I have three months' supply or order my prescriptions early?

Supplying increased quantities will cause the same problems with medicines that we have seen with panic buying in the supermarkets. There is no shortage, but one will be created by changes in supply patterns. So there is no need to stock up on your supply. Please order as you would have normally done so.

I'm struggling to find someone to help collect my prescription?

Contact HIVE Portsmouth by clicking on this link [HIVE Portsmouth support during COVID-19](#) or phone **023 9261 6709**


Supporting friends, neighbours and volunteers when collecting medication

Here is a useful leaflet created by Healthwatch to support anyone who is informally collecting medication for others.


Collecting a prescription for someone else?

healthwatch


Credit: adapted from an idea by Mike Hewitson




Go to the right pharmacy




Know the name and address of the person you are collecting for




It may save time in the pharmacy if you know what medicine(s) you are expecting



Please don't be offended if the pharmacist asks for ID or cannot hand over some items



Ask the patient if they pay for their prescription - it's £9.15 per prescription item



If the patient doesn't pay, ask them which 'exemption' applies to them

- Avoid pharmacies if you are showing symptoms of COVID-19
- If a patient pays for their prescription, they could phone the pharmacy to pay in advance by credit/debit card. Not all can do this
- Do not open the prescription package
- There is no need to stockpile medicines
- Ask the pharmacist for advice if you are not sure about anything

Can I still see my GP?

You can still see a GP but during this challenging time practice staff and GPs must protect themselves and others and you *should not visit your surgery in person unless you are given an ‘in-person consultation appointment’*.

Many of the essential clinics, such as baby and child immunisations are still running.

You must not visit your surgery if you have or suspect you have [symptoms of coronavirus](#).

If you have symptoms and are concerned that they are worsening or have been going on for longer than 7 days, you can use the [NHS 111 online](#) service to find out more, and what to do.

Getting an appointment

All local GP practices have suspended their online appointments booking and have moved to a telephone triage system. If you need medical help from your GP surgery, please call the usual GP surgery appointment number.

You may be offered a telephone consultation or a video consultation with a healthcare professional within the practice. **(please see video consultation help sheet on the next page)**

Support for patients with special needs

GP practices are making alternative arrangements to ensure patients from the **deaf** community, people with **learning disabilities**, people whose **first language is not English** and people who **do not have access to a telephone**, can access appointments. Please check with your individual GP practice.

VIDEO CONSULTATIONS IN PRIMARY CARE 4: A guide for patients on consulting by video

Decide if video is right for you

- If you just need general information and self-care tips, use a website (e.g. put 'NHS coronavirus advice' into Google)
- You don't need a video consultation if a phone call will do
- Video consultations provide more visual information and can be more reassuring if you're anxious
- Your doctor or nurse may be self-isolating and working by video
- Check your GP practice's website to see what is on offer

Get set up technically

- A good internet connection
- A quiet place where you won't be disturbed
- A computer, tablet or smartpone with a built-in camera and microphone
- Test your audio and video connection and adjust the settings so you can see and hear well (or get someone to do this for you)
- Check your practice website for what else you need to do (different video platforms have slightly different set-up steps)

Booking and connecting

- Make a video appointment by following instructions from your GP practice (on the practice website or answering machine)
- Just before your appointment time, click the connection
- Say hello or wave when you see the doctor or nurse (you may both have to fiddle a bit to get the sound and picture working well)
- Make sure the doctor or nurse knows your phone number so they can call you back if the connection fails

Having your consultation

- Look at the screen (there's no need to look directly at the camera)
- If all goes well, the call will feel like a face to face appointment
- Use the screen camera to show things (e.g. a rash)
- If you get cut off and can't reconnect, wait for a phone call
- Write down any advice or instructions, and make sure you understand the next steps (e.g. where to leave a specimen)
- When you've both said goodbye, disconnect

Future changes in Portsmouth GP Practices

Special surgeries, exclusively for patients who have suspected coronavirus, are being organised in Portsmouth. These surgeries will be for patients who need to see a doctor face to face. Here is some more detail we have recently received from Portsmouth Clinical Commissioning Group:

Plans are being made by the NHS for GP surgeries to help support patients during the Coronavirus period, described as moving to a “*hot and cold*” model.

People with COVID-19 related symptoms are to be cared for at one site while other patients needing general primary health care appointments will go to different GP surgery sites.

Each GP practice website in Portsmouth will be updated with the specific details that their own patients need. When any changes take place the GP practices will be contact those patients registered with them to inform them.

The statement below from the NHS is issued to clarify the changes:

An NHS spokesperson said:

“It is essential that all parts of the NHS respond to the current situation, to ensure that new ways of working can be found that allow those in greatest need to receive the best, safest care as quickly as possible. We thank everyone for their understanding, and for adapting to these new systems.

“To limit the spread of Covid-19, we know that we need to reduce footfall through practices by using online consultation systems like e-consult, telephone appointments and video consultations. That helps us to give people the care they need, safely.

“At the current time, when people contact their surgery for an appointment they will receive an initial assessment through an online consultation or by telephone, by a suitably trained clinician. If anyone suspects they have Covid-19 symptoms and are assessed as requiring a face-to-face appointment, this will be arranged at a designated surgery, which has been specifically set up to better meet the patient’s needs.

“In the same way, if someone requires a face-to-face appointment which isn’t related to Covid-19, then they will be directed to a different surgery.

“We thank everyone for their understanding. Whilst we realise such arrangements may be inconvenient, we think it is important to keep people safe, reduce the spread of Covid-19 and get the maximum benefit from the healthcare resources which will be available.”

Hospital Care

Visiting Restrictions

Local hospitals have made the difficult, but essential, decision to restrict visiting. Generally, the only visitors who will be allowed into the hospitals will be:

- A single birth partner for a woman in labour
- A single parent/carer for a child in paediatrics (no siblings allowed)
- A single parent/carer for a baby in hospital neonatal units
- In children's units only one parent/carer is permitted, no siblings
- Carers with a carer's passport or a carer's card

Visitors for an end-of-life patient.

To ensure compassion while delivering safe care the number of visitors permitted at this time will be at the hospital ward manager's discretion. Please always contact and check with the individual ward manager before visiting as information can change quickly.

No children under the age of 12 should visit.

Please think about ways of keeping in touch before you or the patient leaves to go into hospital – take in mobile phones/tablets to keep in touch, please remember CHARGERS (as you may not be able to have these brought in later.)

Information on the **Portsmouth Hospital Trust** website about the current visiting restrictions – please check before planning to visit as the information may change quickly:

[QA Hospital visiting restrictions during COVID-19 period](#)

Here is where you can [view ward contacts](#) for Queen Alexandra Hospital to find out about visiting on a particular ward.

Attending the Accident & Emergency department in hospital

Hospital A&E's are open to deal with **medical emergencies**, such as:

- Major trauma such as road traffic accidents
- Stroke
- Chest pain

- Loss of consciousness
- Acute confused state and fits that are not stopping
- Breathing difficulties
- Severe bleeding that cannot be stopped
- Severe allergic reactions
- Severe burns or scalds

You should not visit A&E if you have [symptoms of coronavirus](#).

If you are worried that you may have coronavirus (COVID- 19) please stay at home and follow the [guidance for staying at home](#).

Do I really need A&E?

If you have a non-life threatening health need, that is not related to COVID-19, there are other places you can go for treatment:

- *Book an appointment with your GP*
- *Visit a pharmacist*
- *Use the out-of-hours NHS 111 service: Call 111 if you urgently need medical help or advice but it's not a life-threatening situation*
- *Visit [NHS Choices](#) to find a minor injuries unit or urgent treatment centre near you*
- *Use the [Health Help Now app](#)*

Urgent dental treatment

Whilst dentists have had to stop offering face-to-face dental care in order to comply with the Governments social distancing requirement, all dentists (both NHS and private) can and should be offering phone advice, and be able to prescribe medication (for pain relief or treatment of an infection) - even if the caller is not normally a patient of their dental surgery.

In the first instance contact your normal dentist. People who are not registered with a dentist should telephone 111 or click on this link 111.nhs.uk

What happens when I call a dentist?

Anybody contacting a dentist will go through a telephone triage assessment.

The dentist will be able to offer advice, a prescription for pain relief or treatment of infections. There is no charge for the triage call, but any prescriptions will be charged in the normal way.

If the dentist decides you need a face-to-face appointment, this may be at another location and at one of **Portsmouth's Urgent Dental Care Hubs** that have been set up. Face-to-face appointments are subject to normal charges – starting from £22.70 for Band 1 treatment with the usual exemptions.

If you are shielding or self-isolating (due to being over 70, pregnant or vulnerable through a long-term condition) and need to be urgently seen for a dental treatment the dentist will discuss options available which may mean you will be referred to one of the Urgent Dental Care Hubs.

The Urgent Dental Care Hubs can utilise the NHS Volunteer Responder scheme to support people who need help in getting to one of the hubs.

Sarah Macdonald, NHS England and NHS Improvement Director of Primary Care, South East said:

“It is important that people can access urgent dental care when they need it, so we have been working hard with local dental practices to put in place the new hubs.

“In order to keep people safe and make sure that those who need treatment are able to get it, it is also important that patients with an urgent or emergency dental condition should not attend any clinics unless they have been asked to do so by a dentist following an assessment.

This system will ensure that they are provided with the most appropriate treatment and if they need to be seen face-to-face that they visit the hub best able to treat them.”

The hubs allow appropriate separation and treatment of patients who may have COVID-19 symptoms or those living in their household, patients who are shielded and at most significant risk from COVID-19, those who are vulnerable and other people who do not fit into one of these categories.

NHS England information about [Urgent Dental Care Hubs in the South East](#)

Residential (Care and Nursing) Homes

Care Homes have taken the difficult decision to suspend all visits, including those from family and friends, to protect their vulnerable residents. It may be necessary for healthcare professionals to visit a home for exceptional reasons and this should be agreed with the home's manager in advance.



The homes may have arrangements in place for people to stay in touch with residents. This may include using digital face-to-face interactions. You may find some free to print [cue cards](#) to help with the communication.

Many homes are welcoming other forms of contact from the outside world, such as postcards and activity gifts. If you want to volunteer to write to residents, offer drawings etc, please contact your local home directly.

“ I got a lovely response to one of the postcards I'd sent to my local care home. This really brought a smile to my face. ”

Bereavement

The Government has [published](#) a bereavement support leaflet to help those who have lost a loved one. The leaflet shares information to help the bereaved make important decisions during the national emergency, sets out what to expect next and signposts the extra help and support that is available.

National charity, 'At a Loss' has [released](#) a website directory of local and national bereavement support adapted to current restrictions.

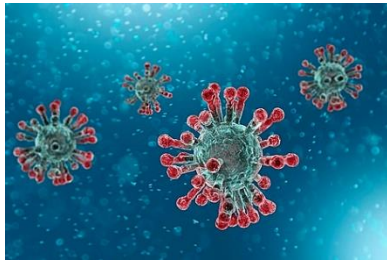
We are busy producing a comprehensive guide on bereavement support which will also be available shortly

Your personal safety

Do not let anyone into your home, unless you have confirmation that they are a registered professional or representative of a recognised Voluntary / Community sector organisation. Be cautious and curious and ask volunteers for proof of ID.

Other forms of support

Portsmouth City Council's priority is to ensure critical local services to Portsmouth residents (living within the post code areas of PO1 – PO6) are maintained and that people are signposted to the most up-to-date official sources of information and advice. [Portsmouth City Council COVID-19 pages](#)



Citizens Advice Portsmouth provides a free, impartial advice service to people in Portsmouth.

Here is current information about how to receive support from them. [current opening hours for Citizens Advice Portsmouth](#)

Portsmouth Carers Centre

The Carers Centre in Portsmouth is providing their support to carers in the city through online and telephone support, following the closure of the Carers Centre premises during the coronavirus outbreak. The Carers Centre report that they are in touch with clients who have requested weekly or fortnightly welfare telephone calls to them by a Carers Centre staff member. Please **contact the Carers Centre on 023 9285 1864 for support**. Healthwatch Portsmouth and the Carers Centre are working together to alert each other to relevant health and care issues as they arise and can take action on them.

Domestic Abuse

If you think you are at risk of, or experiencing, **domestic abuse**, you should contact the Stop Domestic Abuse, formerly **Southern Domestic Abuse Service**, <https://www.saferportsmouth.org.uk/domestic-abuse/>

Stop Domestic Abuse, formerly Southern Domestic Abuse Service (SDAS), run the Outreach and Refuge services in Portsmouth.

The specialist team is on hand to discuss concerns and needs. Call: **023 9206 5494**
9am – 9pm Monday to Friday
10am – 6pm weekends and bank holidays.

If you, or anyone else is in danger call 999

For information about how Stop Domestic Abuse is providing support during the COVID-19 pandemic click on this link [domestic violence advice to families during coronavirus period](#)

For information about children's safeguarding services during the COVID-19 pandemic please see [Temporary-changes-to-working-arrangements-covid-19/](#)

Information, advice and help is also available via the [Government's domestic abuse](#) webpages.

Mental Health

Every Mind Matters – contains some advice to improve mental wellbeing during the current crisis has been created by NHS England. See [here](#) for details

For mental health crisis support please see the link below for information about services available during the COVID-19 pandemic

[mental-health-crisis-support-during-covid-19-pandemic](#)



Here to help you on the next step of your health and social care journey

Healthwatch Portsmouth is here to make care better

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services. We're here to find out what matters to people and help make sure their views shape the support they need.

We also help people find the information they need about services in Portsmouth.

We have the power to make sure that the government and those in charge of services hear people's voices. As well as seeking the public's views ourselves, we also encourage services to involve people in decisions that affect them.

You can review how we performed and how we report on what we have done by visiting our website www.healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk

Contact us

Healthwatch Portsmouth works with Help & Care to provide its statutory activities.



023 9354 1510



info@healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk



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