

Last updated: 21 May

Access to primary care services

Context

During the COVID-19 pandemic, primary care services are working in a different way to prevent the spread of the disease and protect patients and staff, while still providing essential services. Where patients are advised that a face-to-face appointment is necessary, services have taken measures to minimise risk to patients and staff.

This script provides a single, consistent source of information to clearly set out to the public how primary care services are operating.

If you or someone you live with HAS coronavirus symptoms (new continuous cough OR fever OR loss of/ change in smell or taste)

- Stay at home.
- If your symptoms worsen or you feel that you cannot manage at home, please refer to the NHS111 [online coronavirus service](#).
- Please do not go to your GP practice, community pharmacy, dental practice or optician.

If you, or people you live, with DON'T HAVE coronavirus symptoms and you think you need primary care help and advice, don't delay:

General practice

- GP practices are there to help you get the care and advice you need.
- To protect you from coronavirus, your GP practice will try to help you remotely as much as possible:
 - Contact the practice, either online, by an app or by phone to be assessed. Find out more here: <https://www.nhs.uk/health-at-home/>
 - You will be assessed and as far as possible you will receive advice or care via a video consultation, or over the phone.
 - If a face-to-face appointment is necessary, you will be advised on what to do. GP practices have measures in place to minimise any risk from coronavirus.

Please do not enter the practice unless you've been advised to. This will ensure they can continue to provide essential care safely.

Public facing materials to support GP practices can be [downloaded here](#).

Community pharmacy

Pharmacists and their teams are an essential part of the NHS and need your help and support during the coronavirus pandemic. Always treat staff with respect, they are doing their best to provide you with the medicines and advice you need.

Important information on prescriptions during the COVID-19 pandemic

1. Order repeat prescriptions in your usual quantities at the usual time. Over ordering of your medicines may mean someone else has to go without their medicines.
2. Order your usual prescription online or via an app. Do not go to your GP practice or pharmacy to order prescriptions and only phone them if you cannot order online or via an app. You can order repeat prescriptions on the NHS App and through your GP surgery or pharmacy's online service, where available. You can find out about ordering medicines online at www.nhs.uk
3. If you have a prescription to collect:
 - If you are 70 or over, have a long-term health condition or are pregnant you should arrange collection by a relative or friend, or ask your pharmacy for advice about delivery
 - Ask any relatives and friends who are delivering your medicines to make sure they have seen you pick up the bag
 - If your medicines are being delivered make sure you keep a safe distance when you receive them.
4. For everyone else, if you are going into a pharmacy in person, follow social distancing rules and the rules put in place by the pharmacy to protect you and their staff
5. Pharmacies may have altered opening times to manage their workload
6. Sales of some medicines may be restricted in quantity by pharmacies to ensure that there is enough for everyone.

Public-facing materials for pharmacies can be [downloaded here](#).

Dental practices

If you think you need urgent dental treatment:

- call your dentist
- if you cannot contact your dentist, or you do not have one, use the [NHS 111 online service](#)
- if a clinical appointment is necessary, this will be arranged at an urgent dental care centre.

Eye care and opticians

Anyone with a regular optician should as a first step call their practice/store. Please do not visit the practice/store.

The Optometrist will assess your situation over the phone, give advice and, if needed, issue spectacles or contact lenses if these have been supplied before. These can be collected from or delivered by a local optician.

If you require spectacles to function with essential tasks such as work or driving as a key worker and it is not possible to dispense spectacles based on a previous prescription, then the Optometrist is able to arrange a face to face consultation at the practice. This is subject to the Optometrist's clinical view of:

- COVID-19 risk for both patient and practice team
- The patient's essential need for spectacles and/or contact lenses

Anyone without a regular optician can find details of local practices via:
<https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/>.

If the Optometrist thinks that urgent or emergency eye care is needed, they will refer you into the local urgent or emergency eye care service so that any necessary treatment can be carried out. This may be carried out by the same optical practice or another local practice.

For eye care problems, please contact your Optician first. Please do not visit A&E, your GP practice or Pharmacy.

Supporting materials

Supporting materials are available on the Campaign Resources website:

- [NHS Materials for Hospitals, GPs, Pharmacies and other NHS Settings](#)
- [#HelpUsHelpYou campaign materials](#)