

THE PRACTICE INSIDER

Keeping you safe - how you can help

Your safety is always our priority and, as such, we have been making sure that everyone who visits our practice is protected from the risk of catching COVID-19.

Some of you will have seen that our receptionists ask a string of questions at the door and scan temperatures before allowing you into the building, and that our waiting rooms are socially distanced. You may also have seen that our staff all wear face coverings and that those patients who are able to, do the same.

What you won't have seen, and what you may not know, is that *every one* of our staff is performing twice-weekly Lateral Flow Tests for COVID-19 to identify if they have the virus and could be unwittingly spreading it. We have been doing this for almost 6-months (since it became available to the GP staff) without exception and will continue for as long as is necessary to ensure your safety.

All of these actions are with the sole focus of ensuring that, when you visit our practices, you can be safe in the knowledge that we have done everything we can to ensure that you are not put at risk of catching COVID-19.

But, what can you do to help us?

Simply answering honestly to the questions that you are asked by the Reception team is obvious, but did you know that you can now have **lateral flow tests**, too? Order yours from www.gov.uk

Doing these tests will give you peace of mind that you are not spreading the illness, particularly when you have an appointment or are meeting friends. These are only to be used if you **do not have symptoms** of COVID-19.

The best thing you can do to help us keep you safe: **GET THE VACCINE**. If you haven't already, book your vaccine by calling 119 or visiting the www.nhs.uk website and following the links to the Coronavirus pages.

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Important Changes

The Pandemic has changed life for all of us. Here at The Three Chequers Medical Practice we have been required, under strict Government Guidance, to dramatically alter the way we deliver patient care, for the safety of our patients and our staff. One of the biggest changes we have had to embrace is the shift towards more remote triage which was actively encouraged by NHS England at the start of the pandemic.

This led to a dramatic increase in the workload of our Clinicians. With over 23,000 patients, we expect significantly higher demand than your “average” GP surgery, however, to put the numbers into perspective: on an average telephone call list in March 2019, each of our Duty clinicians was making 35 phone calls on triage per morning or afternoon session. In March 2021 this had gone up to 75, sometimes 90, phone calls per clinician, per session.

Whilst we appreciate that some of these calls are necessary, equally, some could be more effectively managed with self-care, with support from allied health professionals, a member of our administrative team, or could wait for more routine follow up with a usual GP.

With the country emerging from the Pandemic, the challenges facing the wider NHS and General Practice have never been greater. Waiting times for many hospital services have climbed and patients presenting with potential cancers have dropped. This is balanced against a workforce that has not stopped working during the pandemic and is at risk of burnout, and many are considering leaving the NHS entirely.

We need to ensure that the telephone calls that get put onto clinician triage are those that need to be dealt with urgently (within 4 hours) or on that day. Added to the need to protect the health and wellbeing of our staff, the Practice will be making changes to pivot to more face to face appointments but at the same time keep clinician triage for those truly urgent cases. On 1st July we will be introducing the following changes:

- Online booking for certain appointments. Initially patients will be able to book online for:
 - Blood test appointments
 - Smear appointments
 - Blood Pressure appointments
 - NHS Health checks



- Clinician GP triage (please note, that you will have to leave some details for the reason of the appointment and if felt non urgent the call may be moved to a more appropriate slot)

Please note; bookings via this method will be audited to ensure that all patients are using this facility fairly. Patients booking excessively or inappropriately via these methods will have their ability to book via these routes revoked.

- Receptionists will now ask more questions for them to correctly identify which of member of our clinical team is best able to help you, and how quickly. They may also inform you if there is a more suitable alternative for your situation, for instance, visiting the pharmacy or dentist.
- Patients emailing us with clinical queries or requests for appointments will not be accepted. There is neither the clinical time nor administrative backroom staff to be able to manage this demand safely. We will therefore not be accepting requests for appointments via this route . Emails will only be forwarded to a clinician where this information has been specifically requested by a clinician such as a copy of a letter from the hospital, requests for photographs etc.

The methods which patients can use to access a clinician's advice are:

- By calling and being added to the clinician triage list for urgent problems
- By calling and making a routine clinician appointment
- Using online booking

Due to ongoing requirements for social distancing, whilst our reception areas are open, they are only to be used for those with an appointment inside the building. Please do not use our reception areas to try to book an appointment - thank you.

As a practice we are committed to providing safe, high quality medical care. We know that change can, sometimes, be difficult to adapt to, but we feel that these changes are necessary to protect the wellbeing of staff and, in turn, our patients.

We are still, very much, here for you and we will continue striving to provide the high quality care that is expected of us.

Thank you for your support and cooperation.



Carer's Corner

Are you a Carer?

Carers come in many forms; sometimes, people don't even *know* they are a Carer.

Do you care for a friend or relative who would not always be able to cope without your support?

Are you doing this without form of payment in return?

The person you're caring for might have a physical disability, a long-term health condition, mental health issue or a problem with substance misuse.

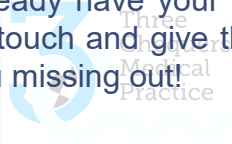
If this sounds like you, you might well be a carer. Get in touch with our Carer's Team by contacting the Practice and one of our excellent team will be able to give you more information on support available to Carers.

Carers' Events

It has been such a long time since we were able to host events for our patient population of Carers! We know that many of you have missed popping along to one of our events and socialising with a cup of something hot and a slice of something delicious. We have missed seeing and chatting to you all and we cannot wait until we can all catch up again!

We are hoping to be able to restart our events for Carers as soon COVID restrictions, issued by the Government, allow.

We will soon be sending another issue of our dedicated Carer's Newsletter and, hopefully, invites to our next event. If you're a carer and we don't already have your email address or mobile number, please get in touch and give this to us as soon as you can. We don't want you missing out!



POWOW

Partners or Widows or Widowers

Much like our Carer's events, our POWOW meetings have, unfortunately, been "on hold" for the past 15 months.

We had made plans to re-start our coffee mornings on 1st July, however, the move to stage 4 of the government's roadmap has been delayed and, sadly, this means we will also be postponing this event. As soon as government guidance allows, we will be re-starting these events.

POWOW Coffee Mornings are an informal gathering over a "Cuppa" and cake for anyone who has lost their wife, husband or partner. Refreshments are free but a donation to St Thomas' Church would be most welcome.

St Thomas' Church is accessible for those with limited mobility and wheelchair users with accessible WC facilities.

Dates for our POWOW meetings will be on our website as soon as they're organised and, if you've lost someone, you are welcome to come along and meet other people who might be in the same situation as you, there's no need to book.

Trussell Trust donation

At the Practice, we wholeheartedly support the work of this magnificent charity. For a few years, one of our Reception Leads has been extremely proactive in spearheading our collection efforts.

We have just had a representative of the Trussell Trust collect one of our most substantial donations yet, 1 large crate and a box full of essential supplies - all donated willingly by our staff.

It makes us incredibly proud that our staff continue to support the community in a way that is beyond their job descriptions. It is just one of the many reasons we have to be thankful for each and every one of them!

The practice would like to say "Thank you" to Mrs Joan Boucher for her generous donation to the Porton & Old Sarum Surgery in memory of her late husband, Mr Peter Edmund Boucher, who sadly passed away in April, aged 90.

COVID-19 advice

Boris' announcement on the 14th June sadly, put paid to any lingering hopes of 21st June being our collective "release date" from almost 18 months of restrictions.

Wiltshire, by and large, has stayed relatively low in case-numbers throughout the pandemic but, by no means, has escaped unscathed. In the week prior to writing this article, there was 1,200% increase in COVID-19 cases in 1 district of Salisbury and a 150% increase over the whole county.

We encourage every patient, vaccinated or otherwise, to remain within the confines of the law and the guidance.

We are yet to see the long-term effects that this pandemic will have on society and socialising in the future but we can all do something **now** to make a difference.

If you meet up with friends for a meal - take a lateral flow test before-hand. They are free, take just 30 minutes and will let you know if **you** could be putting them at risk. It is so simple, yet surprisingly few people are taking advantage of this quick and easy safeguard.

The advice if you have symptoms or have been in contact with someone with COVID-19 remains unchanged.

If you have a:

- New, continuous cough
- High temperature
- Loss of taste or smell

Book a COVID test online or by calling 119 (do not use a lateral flow test) and begin isolating immediately - do not attend the practice.

If you have other issues that require medical attention during your isolation period, please still contact the practice. You must inform us that you are self-isolating so that, if needed, we can arrange for you to be treated in our "hot Site" to reduce the risk of you transmitting the virus to our other patients.

More guidance can be found online at:

www.gov.uk/coronavirus

Vaccinations at Leaden Hall and Salisbury Cathedral

After nearly 5 months of vaccinations at the GP-led clinics hosted at Leaden Hall and Salisbury Cathedral, on Saturday 12th June we waved farewell to the sites as we administered our last vaccines. There can be no argument (we think!) that Salisbury Cathedral was the best vaccination venue, certainly in the UK, perhaps worldwide!

It has been an incredible effort by all involved and we want to thank all of our colleagues from Salisbury Medical Practice, Harcourt Medical Centre, Downton Surgery & Whiteparish Surgery - as well as the huge army of volunteers.

It has been a unique opportunity for our teams to work together and it has certainly been a memorable experience - one which we know has significant importance in helping us all take a step towards the end of this difficult time.

What we have achieved:

- 48,803 vaccines given to the people of Salisbury - this is the equivalent of 3,885 hours of vaccinating!
- 167 GP Practice staff involved
- 33 Military Staff from Tidworth
- 33 National Military Staff
- 76 Volunteers
- 32 Care homes visited, staff + residents vaccinated.

We are sure you will agree that these numbers are quite astounding.

Lastly, we want to pay tribute to our staff, who have been amazing. Many staff have done numerous clinics but, a few of them have been stalwarts of the service and have done the majority of the clinics. All of this alongside their normal jobs - we are sure you agree that their efforts have been remarkable. It is a huge blessing to have such wonderful staff.

Coming Soon...

We are always striving to make improvements to our Practice; whether this is to the appearance of our premises (Winterslow and the Porton & Old Sarum Surgery have been the main beneficiaries so far) or to bettering our process and the ways in which our services can be accessed.

There is lots going on in the background, but we have a couple of plans in progress that we want you to know about:

Additional Remote Clinical space

Contractors are currently converting an under-utilised storage space into a brand-new “remote-only” clinical space for our Doctors to make triage calls, perform video consultations and administrative tasks. Whilst this may not seem like “Big news” for our patients, this means that a Clinical room which can be used for face-to-face appointments will be freed up, potentially creating more appointments. Of course, this extra room also increases the practice’s overall capacity for Clinicians - which can only be a good thing. *This will be completed in early July 2021.*

Online Medication Reviews

We review medication on Repeat Prescriptions annually and, wherever possible, our Clinicians will do this without the need for you to attend the surgery.

Soon, this process will become so much quicker and more simple for you!

If you have been told that your medication review is due shortly (or it is the month of your birth), you will be able to complete an online form (accessible through our website) to kick-start the medication review process.

We are still ironing out the details...

Watch this space!