



**Dr R Harding, Dr T Strefford,
Dr NK Luty, Dr R Singleton**

Broadway, Barton, Northwich, Cheshire CW8 4LF
Appointments: Tel. 01606 544241, Emergencies/Home Visits: Tel 01606 544240

Patient Update – Coronavirus Pandemic 2020

Thank you!

Over the last few months staff and patients at Oakwood Medical Centre have had to adapt to new ways of delivering and receiving healthcare in light of the Coronavirus pandemic. We feel that we have all managed to do this well, with minimal disruption to services and we would like to thank our patients for their support during this testing time.

Sadly Covid-19 doesn't appear to be going away any time soon and so we are looking at how we can continue to deliver high quality healthcare to our patients whilst also maintaining their safety, and the safety of our staff.

Next Steps:

Appointments

Over the next few weeks and months we will gradually be reintroducing services that were temporarily stopped as a result of the pandemic, as well as implementing new ways of working. This is so that we can protect the most vulnerable patients at higher risk of developing complications from Covid-19, whilst still providing treatment and diagnostics for more common health issues.

Appointments do not have to be on the day requests but can be for routine (within the next 2 weeks) or Soon (within the same week) issues.

GPs may choose to assess your query and text you with an outcome or update. Please be reassured that this is to release time to deal with the increased workload, and many patients find this very efficient. If you specifically want to speak to a GP please ensure you detail the reason why so that it is not misunderstood.

Online consultation / Triage System

We have found that patients have taken to electronic methods of communication like ducks to water and so we have an online consultation service on our website and available to access via a text message link. You can access this tool via the homepage of our website – www.oakwoodmedicalcentre.nhs.uk – and use it for the following things: - Ask about common health problems, including where to access help and how to self-care - Requesting things like sick notes, letters or enquiring after test results - Asking general queries of our surgery team

AccuRx / E-consult has the option for you to add photographs to your enquiry, something we have been encouraging patients to do by email up till now, which has really helped the GP team deal with lots of queries around skin conditions, eye problems etc. remotely.

Any query you submit is added to your medical record and a member of our team will respond to you within 72-48 hours. If an appointment is deemed necessary, we will contact you to arrange this.

We really want to encourage use of this system as it helps to relieve pressure on the telephone system and appointment availability, and ensures we capture as much information from you as possible. If you would like to use this system but feel you need support in learning how to access it, please make contact with us and we can look at support for you.

Telephone Initial Calls

We started telephone triage during the lockdown period and we are going to retain this model for all GP appointments.

This means that patients will be reviewed over the phone *in the first instance*. During the pandemic we have found that many health issues can be dealt with quite safely over the phone, and we are supplementing this with video consultations where patients have a



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smartphone enabled. This again reduces the need for patients to attend surgery and allows us to implement social distancing more easily.

Telephone and video consultations will be used more widely and will extend to not only GP appointments but also some annual reviews of certain long term conditions with our nursing team, and support from our social prescriber.

However this doesn't mean that face-to-face appointments will not be available. They certainly will, and in some circumstances are absolutely necessary. However these requests will still need to be triaged before an appointment is made. So please do not be offended if our Reception team ask that you have a telephone appointment in the first instance as this is our new procedure.

Online booking of appointments

We are working towards opening up the telephone triage appointments for online booking in the future. Some nursing and blood clinic appointments will go online soon. We have to ensure the practice remains a safe space for patients and staff, therefore we are only releasing online appointments once we can be sure they will be booked **appropriately and safely**.

Contraception & Coil/Implant Appointments

We re-started these appointments a few months ago and are working our way through the waiting list. If you are unsure whether you are on the waiting list please contact us.

If you want to discuss contraception in general please contact us and request a telephone consultation with Dr Strefford or Dr Harding.

If you want to discuss the contraceptive coil please ask to speak to Dr Strefford.

If you want to discuss the contraceptive implant please ask to speak to Dr Harding.

Please be aware that while we work through these lists and schedule the specific clinics there may be a wait for your face to face appointment.

Minor Operations

We will be re-starting essential minor operations over the next couple of months. The GPs will triage all existing waiting list patients and you will be contacted directly.

If you feel you have an issue requiring a minor operation please contact us to book for a telephone triage appointment.

Chaperones and Translation Services

If you need a chaperone to attend with you to your appointment please let one of the reception team know when booking. It gives us time to ensure we have the right people available.

Also, if you need a translator or other communication support please let us know when booking or we can put an alert on your record to ensure you get the service you need when contacting us.

Next Steps:

Prescriptions

Whilst the lockdown measures have been in place we have also seen a massive increase in the number of patients using the Electronic Prescribing Service (EPS). This has meant that patients have been able to easily request repeat prescriptions via Patient Access, or via email (vrccg.oakwoodmcprescriptions@nhs.net) and we have been able to send their prescription straight onto their nominated pharmacy.



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This has saved patients many unnecessary trips to the surgery to drop off and collect paper prescriptions. We are keen to continue this process and ask all patients to request their repeat medication in this way going forward. Please continue to allow 48 hours for us to process your request, and be mindful that your chosen chemist may also request an extended timeframe to do their bit as well.

If you do not want to order electronically there will be post boxes situated in the main foyer clearly labelled for prescription requests and letters/queries. These should be up and running in the next couple of weeks. Prior to that, please use the post box next to the reception window.

Next Steps: Main Foyer / Clinical Rooms

We are working hard to ensure we can re-open our main reception area safely. Please continue to use the window at main reception until further notice.

Please note that when we re-open there will be strict social distancing measures in place and a small one-way system.

The clinical rooms will continue to be around the back entrance to the building and we will ensure there is clear signage to direct you. This means there will not be a main 'waiting area' for health and safety reasons and when you attend for appointments please ensure you are not too early. We have requested a shelter but it was refused, therefore please ensure in this winter weather that if you have a short wait outside you are dressed appropriately or have an umbrella!

We would also encourage patients not to "pop in" with a query or request if they can help it. The online contact service and our telephone lines are there to deal with general enquiries remotely. As most of you are aware, it only takes a few people to create a "queue out the door" in our small foyer, so please avoid coming in to ensure we can keep the reception area safe.

Boxes for sample drop off and paper prescription requests will be set up in the front foyer for patients to drop items off in without having to come into the building.

We have a QR code that patients should use when they are entering the building. This will be on display prominently. Please ensure you use this.

It is a new world we are heading into, but please be advised that these measures are being put in place to protect patients and staff and enable us to continue to provide high quality medical care to all of you. Please bear with us during the next few weeks and months as we look to embed these new measures. Feedback is always welcome and can be emailed to vrccg.oakwoodmanagers@nhs.net

With thanks for all your support during these last few months,

**Dr Harding, Dr Strefford, Dr Luty, Dr Singleton
Partners, Oakwood Medical Centre**