

## Covid-19 – Plan for West Calder Medical Practice

To our patients

I'm sure you're all aware of the developing public health crisis that coronavirus presents. This will create a very challenging time for our medical staff, and I appreciate a very anxious time for you. We too share your anxieties. We need to develop an adaptable plan to get through the next few months as best and as safely we can.

**We have decided to cease all booked face to face patient appointments.** The reason for this is to reduce the number of people attending the medical practice, and hence limit the opportunity for coronavirus to spread. This will reduce the chance of you becoming unwell, of medical staff having to take time off to self-isolate, and of us unwittingly passing the virus onto high risk patients. This approach can save lives.

Of course, you will still have many reasons other than covid-19 to contact your GP. Our intention such requests that cannot be answered by our reception staff, will be added to a list for our medical staff to call you back where capacity allows. Unfortunately, we cannot guarantee to call you back on the day you make your request. If we decide a face to face medical assessment is required, this will be arranged.

In addition, we will endeavour to deal with all urgent requests for medical attention by phone on the same day, be it for covid-19 or another acute medical issue. As the weeks of this crisis continue, the number of these acute requests are likely to increase, limiting our ability to deal with the routine requests.

We need your help with this. Please think carefully before seeking a callback from a GP. Use the NHSINFORM website, or your pharmacist, and try to call us only when necessary. Perhaps our receptionist can help you so you don't need to speak to the GP.

In the meantime, we wish you all well. The current medical advice if you do develop a dry cough or fever you and your household should self-isolate for 14 days (see NHSINFORM for more details). If any household members develop a fever or cough during the 14 day isolation period, they should self isolate for a further 7 days even if this takes them over the 14 days period. After the isolation period you can return to normal activities if you have improved and have not felt feverish for at least 2 days. You may still have a cough, but you are not thought to at risk of passing on infection at this stage. At no point in this process do you need to contact us – only do so if you are more unwell, for example very breathless, and we will call you back to decide if you may need a hospital admission. Remember UK government policy is not to swab people who self-isolate, so we will not know whether you have actually had covid-19. Therefore, if develop a further cough or fever you will need to self-isolate again.

Lastly you will have seen reports that older people and those with other long-term health conditions are most at risk. The government will soon be asking this group of people to self-isolate for their own protection. This is our group of patients who can already suffer from loneliness and a sense of isolation, and will understandably feel anxious at the prospect of long periods of self-isolation. Now is the time to make contact with those local friends, neighbours and relatives to ask how they will cope and whether there's anything you can do to help them through it.

The next few months are going to be challenging for us all, but as a community we can do our best to get through it.

Best Wishes and Keep Well.

And remember keep washing your hands and avoid touching your face.

West Calder Medical Centre