

Henfield Medical Practice

22nd October 2021

Dear Patients

READ TO THE BOTTOM FOR COVID BOOSTER NEWS!

Henfield Medical Practice wishes to thank all of you for the fantastic support you continue to give us during such unprecedented and difficult times.

Over the last 18 months, with your help, Henfield Medical Practice has been able to deliver services that would have been unimaginable prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the pandemic has evolved, and infection control guidance changed, we too have changed the way we work. Initially, we increased the number of telephone and video contacts, only seeing those patients face to face who needed to be physically examined. Many patients love the flexibility of a telephone consultation and now you can choose which consultation is most appropriate for your problem. We introduced the “e-consult” on the website allowing us to assess the urgency of patient queries and deal with them appropriately. We also took our turn to staff the “Hot hub” in Storrington to assess sick Covid cases.

For the last six months or more, demand for GP appointments has been higher than ever before. This has coincided with the phenomenal vaccination program that we have been running with your help. Thankfully our GPs have only been vaccinating in their own time, alongside other volunteers, so as not to impact on the normal GP appointments that we have on offer.

The number of COVID-19 cases in the village is currently higher than it has ever been. We urge the small percentage of patients who have not yet been vaccinated to come forward while we are still offering the vaccination. It is particularly important to get vaccinated if you are pregnant.

We have started running clinics for the COVID-19 booster. On current evidence, we strongly recommend this. We are giving Pfizer to everyone. You become eligible for the booster 6 months after your second dose. We will contact you when you are eligible. You can check when you had your second dose on your vaccination card or on the NHS App.

If your child is 12-15 years and not in the at risk category, then they will receive a COVID-19 vaccination in the school setting. We are not licensed to administer the COVID-19 vaccine to them at this site.

We appreciate our phones are extremely busy at present. Our incoming call volume is far exceeding pre-pandemic levels and we have also had staff shortages through illness or isolation. We continue to audit the system.

As I am sure you are aware, there is a lot of media coverage surrounding the debate about how general practice can best serve its registered patient population. It is at the forefront of our minds and discussed daily. We have noticed patients being angry and sarcastic about access to appointments, when in fact we are offering more appointments than ever before. We are doing face-to-face appointments in large numbers, as well as telephone appointments and home visits when required. There are not enough GPs nationally and we have been one GP short in Henfield since May. We have a new GP starting in November. We are trying to find the right balance of face-to-face and telephone consultations, to minimize infection risk for vulnerable patients and also to ensure that the appointments go to those most in need. We continue to ask you to wear a mask in the surgery and at present, while infection rates are high, I would recommend a mask in all crowded locations.

Thank you for supporting your local surgery and the NHS.

Karen Crawford Clarke
Senior Partner
Henfield Medical Practice

A gentle reminder about testing;

Lateral flow tests are for use only if you are asymptomatic (no symptoms). If you develop "a cough or fever/temperature or loss of sense of taste or smell" ie **symptoms of Covid** (even if you are vaccinated) **you should do a PCR Covid test.** These are more accurate and can be booked usually on the day through NHS 111. You can also then follow Government guidance on what else is needed for you to do regarding self-isolation. See NHS 111 if clarification is needed.