

Dear Thornton and Denholme patients

Covid 19 and Your Practice

The last few months have seen unprecedented changes and impact for everyone as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Firstly, we would like to thank you for your patience and understanding as we have worked through this difficult time, always striving to support you with any health needs but ensuring the safety of our staff in line with NHS best practice.

We wanted to take time to update you on what has been happening in your practice and also set out what we think the coming months will look like.

Despite the challenges being faced by everyone in our community, we are still here for you and whilst the way we consult with you as patients has had to change, we are still helping you with any concerns, conditions and treatment plans.

Many queries we receive from you relate to the current Covid pandemic and we want to let our patients know that this information is easily available on the national websites of www.gov.uk and www.nhs.uk which are constantly being updated with the latest guidance and information. If you do need support from one of our team then please do contact us – we are here to help.

The NHS App is also a great way for you to get advice about coronavirus, order repeat prescriptions and check your symptoms or view your medical record. You can download the app from Google Play or Apple App Store for free.

Covid-19 has meant that it is high risk for any patient and our practice teams to see patients in the surgery and therefore are mainly telephone consultations with patients being asked to visit the surgery only if deemed absolutely necessary by a clinician. During Covid, in a typical week our clinicians are undertaking over 3,500 consultations across our practices, the vast majority of which are over the telephone with some via video consultation. We have also been able to maintain the majority of our nurse and planned care appointments for our patients.

To keep patients and colleagues safe, we have carried out full risk assessments in all of our surgeries and each one is rated as 'Covid Secure', making it a safe place for our teams to work in and where appropriate, for us to bring those patients that need to be seen by a clinician.

Face Coverings

As you will have seen in the national press, face coverings are now required in all of our buildings. If you are asked to come to the surgery for an appointment, please make sure you have a face covering with you and you respect the 2m social distancing. We have also purchased a number of additional hand sanitiser stations in our practices. These important steps will help keep us all safe.

Prescriptions

You can still drop your requests into the letterbox outside the main entrance but, to help patients manage their prescriptions we have also been working hard to promote the NHS electronic prescription service. This means we can get your prescription to your preferred pharmacy without you having to collect a paper prescription - it's safer and quicker too! You, as patients, have been really supportive of this change and nearly 70% are now signed up to electronic prescriptions. If you haven't done so, please tell us your preferred pharmacy and we will update your records for you.

Your Practice

We really appreciate your patience and support with the changes we have had to make at both Thornton and Denholme. We have had to make key decisions to make sure we can offer as many of our face to face services, in a safe environment. As a result, our Denholme site has closed temporarily for face to face appointments and our Thornton practice is being used as a base for our nursing teams to deliver planned care. We know it is not ideal to have a site closed but we are still taking calls over the telephone for all our patients. You can still access care when you need it and if the clinician decides that they need to see you then you will be seen in person at our Willows practice in Queensbury.

We will be re-opening Denholme just as soon as we can but at the time of writing, we are unable to give you a date for this. As soon as we can reopen for face to face appointments we will let you know.

Future Changes at Your Practice

Although lockdown is gradually being lifted for members of the public, that is not the case in health care premises. The consequences of someone who is positive for the COVID 19 virus coming into a GP surgery are far reaching. Not only would there be a potential risk to other vulnerable patients, but the risk to staff is also high. Even if the infection is not passed on, staff would need to self-isolate for two weeks, which would have a big impact on our ability to provide services for you and other patients.

COVID 19 has not gone away and is very likely to be here for a long time. We are in no doubt that this will mean that the way we provide health care services in the future will not go back to the way we worked prior to the pandemic. We will need to continue adapting to provide safe services for our patients and a safe place of work for all of our people and hope that you will support us in making these changes and keeping everyone safe.

We are grateful for our Patient Council members who have helped us throughout this time and are working with us to help develop our services. If you are interested in becoming involved in the Patient Participation Group then please speak to one of our team and we will pass your details across to the PPG.

Finally, we wanted to say thank you. We are so thankful to all of our patients for the understanding and support you have given us during these challenging times and our commitment will always be to provide every patient with care, compassion and support.

Keep Safe

The Thornton and Denholme Practice Team