

HARTSHILL MEDICAL CENTRE

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Dear Patients,

It has been extremely touching to have received so many supportive messages from you as we all face the coronavirus pandemic together - as a surgery, as a community and as a nation. The next few weeks and months will be a challenging time for all of us. Thank you so much for your lovely comments as they boost our surgery team's morale more than you can imagine!

However, these are unprecedented times and things will unfortunately get worse before they get better. The pandemic is predicted to fully hit Stoke-on-Trent soon in the upcoming weeks and, as the NHS comes under immense pressure, we fear that it will be harder for us to continue to provide the highest level of care that we always strive for. Our staff may have to go off sick, and many more people than usual will be requesting advice from us. With this in mind, here are some suggestions we have come up with as to how you can support us so we can help you:

1. Our reception team is working flat-out, with almost daily changes being made as to how our surgery does things. They are the backbone of our surgery and without them our clinical staff would not be able to cope.

Our reception staff are human beings and, like many of you, are also feeling worried and stressed at the moment. Please support them and us by treating them kindly.

2. Consider if your problem truly needs our advice at this time. A longstanding, mild concern should probably wait.

Please make use of resources like the [NHS website](#) if you aren't sure.

For parents with children, the "[When Should I Worry?](#)" booklet is very useful.

3. If you have a fever or a new cough (or worse than your usual cough), then please use the [NHS 111 online coronavirus service](#), rather than call us.

This service has been specifically designed to deal with these symptoms, and can arrange review by a healthcare professional if needed.

4. If you are coming for an appointment at the surgery, then come alone. This will minimise the number of people our staff are exposed to, and reduce our staff illness rate.

This will also minimise exposure to our vulnerable patients.

If a child or vulnerable patient is attending, then one carer only should attend.

5. If you have a booked telephone triage appointment with a GP, please understand that the time



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given may not be exact - our GPs will be working through a long list of patients and have to prioritise more urgent cases first.

Please also be aware that we are making good use of video consultations via smartphones. Ideally, you should be connected to a Wi-fi connection or have a good data allowance.

6. We cannot provide letters or “Fit Notes” for work if they are purely for the purposes of self-isolation, social distancing or shielding.

However, we will still continue to issue Fit Notes if we would advise you are not able to work because of other health conditions.

“Isolation Notes” for time spent off with coronavirus symptoms (or if someone you live with has been ill) can be obtained online from [NHS 111](#) website.

Some high risk or vulnerable patients will have received a letter from the NHS stating they should protect themselves or ‘shield’ and stay at home for 12 weeks as they are at higher risk of developing severe illness from coronavirus. This letter should be evidence for your employer and your employer should support staff following shielding guidelines.

People with health concerns regarding their jobs should discuss this with their employer and their Occupational Health department.

You may find [this letter from our website](#) helpful to show them.

7. But most of all, please follow the government guidelines to the letter. By making unnecessary trips out, you increase the chance of making yourself ill, and everybody you come into close contact with.

You can get the latest information from the government about coronavirus from:

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

Thank you in advance for your co-operation and together we will get through this challenging time. Keep safe.

Best wishes,
The Hartshill Medical Centre Team

Stay at Home.
Protect the NHS.
Save Lives.



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