

Close Farm Surgery Patient Newsletter



New Year Edition 2022

47 Victoria Road, North Common
Nr Warmley, Bristol BS30 5JZ
Tel: 0117 9322108
www.closefarmsurgery.co.uk

Practice News

I think we will all agree that 2021 was another challenging year and for us in General Practice it certainly was busy! As a Network we delivered over 100,000 Covid vaccines for first, second, third and booster jabs. Our staff and volunteers rose to the challenge and worked tirelessly including weekends, bank holidays and late nights and we are extremely proud of what we have achieved and the part we have played in the success of the vaccine programme.

Our practice continues to offer appointments with our GPs on a same day telephone-first model which means all patients requiring clinical input are triaged over the phone in the first instance. In medical training, it is said that 90% of the assessment of a patient comprises the history and only 10% comprises the examination and investigation. Medicine is therefore mainly about having conversations with patients. In telephone appointments, because they are working without the benefit of the patient in front of them, which would ordinarily allow a doctor to assess a range of range of non-verbal clues to easily gauge conditions, behaviours or reactions, a doctor must make extra effort to ask a wider range of questions and to safety-net to ensure that all bases are covered. Therefore, rather than being unsafe or simply lazy, as widely portrayed in the media, telephone appointments represent good history taking which is one of the main principles of medical care. If a GP feels it necessary to see a patient for examination, they will arrange an appointment the same afternoon when we have fewer patients in the building. Our reception team have been instructed by our clinical team to operate our appointment system this way. Therefore, when they ask patients the reason for their call, it is important that patients are honest so the receptionist can direct them to the most appropriate service or highlight to a doctor the urgency of the call.

Please can we ask that if you are attending the surgery for an appointment you wear a face covering at all times while on practice premises. Could we ask patients do not arrive early for their appointments - our waiting room is quite compact, and we can only have a small number sat inside at any one time. If you arrive early and the clinician is running late you may be asked to wait outside until a safe space becomes available.

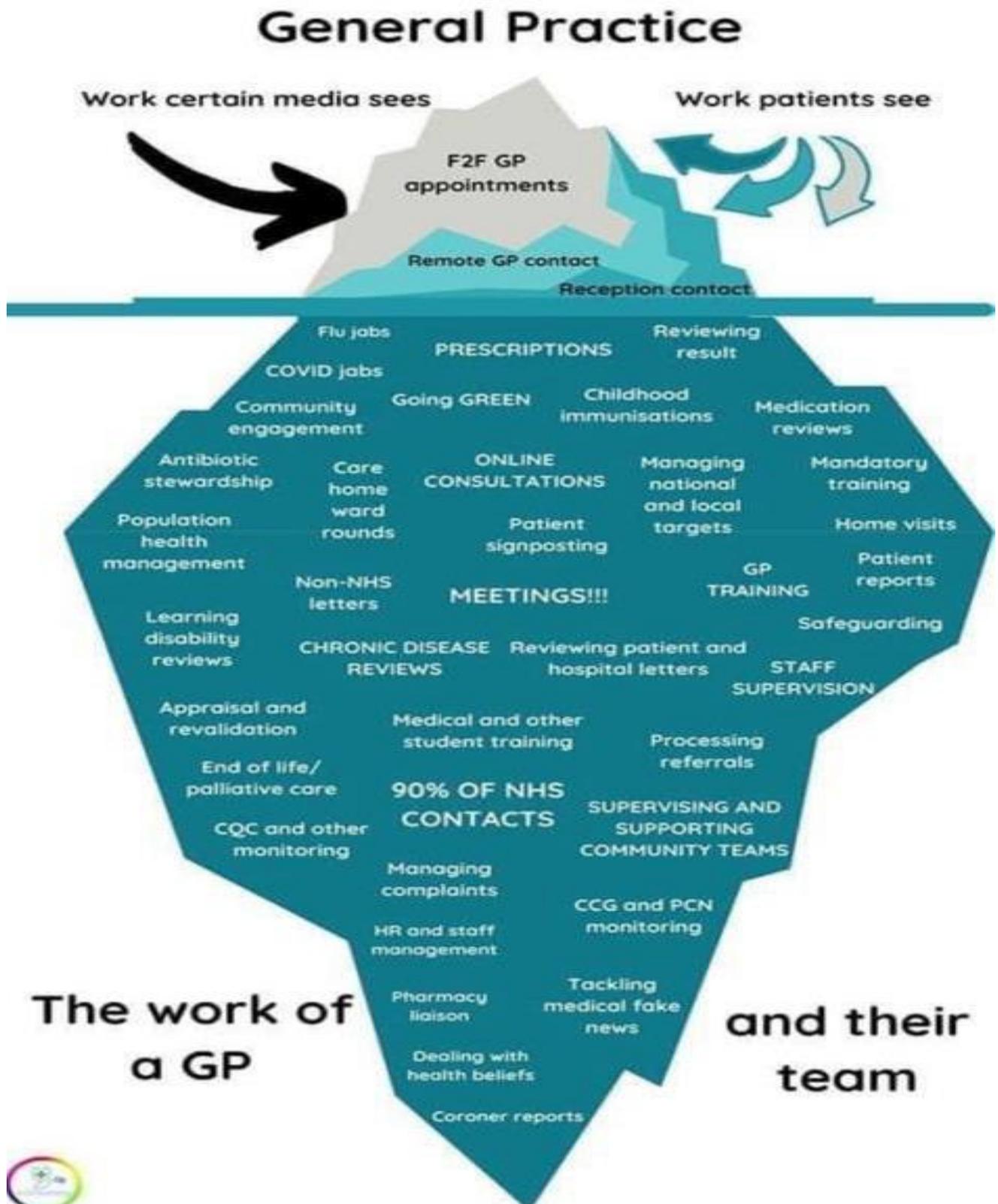
Please can we also ask that you do not attend the surgery if you are suffering with Covid symptoms. Stay at home and ring the surgery and a clinician will telephone you back. If they feel you need to be seen, they will arrange for you to attend the surgery using our special isolation room so you do not come into contact with vulnerable staff and patients and the risk of spread can be reduced. They will also ensure they are wearing the correct personal protective equipment (PPE) to ensure their safety as well as your own. Additionally, please do not attend if you are awaiting the results of a Covid PCR test or should you be self-isolating.

Lateral flow tests can be collected from local chemists or ordered on-line via the Government website <https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests> If you are attending the surgery for a face to face appointment, please can we ask that you test before you arrive to ensure the safety of our staff. Thank you for your co-operation.

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Our teams continue to work extremely hard, and we thought it was useful for patients to see the work which goes on behind the scenes in General Practice which patients do not often realise. This chart shows the work which patients see and the additional work of GP's and their teams which we hope will be an interesting read!



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Self-care

Below is a list of conditions that can be managed via self-care, by contacting NHS-111 for advice or by visiting a community pharmacy.

Acne	Athletes foot	Back pain (less than 6 wks)
Chickenpox	Colds	Cold sores
Conjunctivitis (less than 3 wks)	Constipation	Emergency contraception
Diarrhoea & or vomiting	Croup	Eczema
Flu	Earache	Hayfever/allergies
Headaches	Haemorrhoids	Insect bites/stings
Menstrual problems	Head lice	Threadworm
Stye's	Rashes	Viral illnesses
Thrush	Sun burn	Mouth ulcers
Warts and verruca	Nail issues	Heartburn/indigestion

Hospital waiting times

More patients are now waiting for outpatient appointments or operations at any time since records began. We are finding many patients are coming to us with the expectation that we can resolve their difficulties or reduce their wait. Unfortunately, we have no influence on hospital waiting times and how the hospital is managing its workload at this difficult time. We do get requests from patients to send letters to consultants to expedite appointments, however this can do little to change matters as a huge number of patients are already on the waiting list and out of necessity the hospitals are already managing their services so that urgent care is given priority. We will of course do our best to help out and our secretaries work hard to maintain good relationships with our hospital colleagues and that our patients are seen as appropriate.

Staffing update

Dr Jody Craft started her maternity leave in the Spring and after careful consideration has decided not to return to the practice. She has returned to Pembrokeshire to be closer to her family and wish her well for the future. We are actively recruiting for a replacement for Dr Craft, but sadly the shortage of GP's is well known. As such, some of our GP's will be temporarily increasing their sessions to help out when needed. Dr Wallace now works permanently on a Monday morning.

Dr Degens has reduced her sessions and now works on a Wednesday afternoon and a Friday morning. We have appointed a new GP to replace her and Dr Lucy Radmore joined us in September working on a Monday and Wednesday morning and will be looking after some of Dr Degens patients.

We appointed a new HCA last summer and Kirstie McLaughlin works with us on a Wednesday morning providing extra capacity in our phlebotomy team.

We also have Ellie Gardiner who is a physiotherapist who works with us on a Tuesday and will see patients with any musculoskeletal problem. Her appointments can be booked up to 2 weeks in advance. Reception may offer patients an appointment with her in the first instance if they present with conditions appropriate for her to see.

Close Farm Surgery Patient Newsletter



Managing your diabetes is of utmost importance

Help your healthcare team to work alongside you to make a plan that can work for you to learn how to make wise choices for your diabetes care each day. Please can we ask that you book in for your diabetes blood tests and review appointments 6 monthly unless otherwise advised by your GP or Nurse. A large number of patients with a diagnosis of diabetes are not attending for regular reviews. This is essential in order that your condition can be well managed both with medications and lifestyle. Patients with a diagnosis of diabetes who do not attend regularly for diabetes management have an increased chance of long-term complications.

Why take care of your diabetes?

Taking care of yourself and your diabetes can help you feel good today and in the future. When your blood glucose is close to normal you have less chance of having health issues which can be caused by diabetes such as: -

- Heart attack or stroke
- Eye problems that could lead to blindness
- Pain, tingling or numbness in hands and feet caused by nerve damage
- Limb amputation
- Kidney problems that can cause your kidneys to function poorly
- Teeth and gum problems

Coping with diabetes

Stress can raise your blood sugar levels. Learn ways to manage your stress such as meditation, deep breathing, yoga, walking, hobbies and listening to music. Ask for help if you feel down.

Eat well

Make a meal plan. Choose foods that are lower in calories, carbohydrates, fats, sugar and salt. Choose foods with more fibre such as wholegrain cereal, bread, rice and pasta. Drink water and zero sugar drinks. Avoid large volumes of milky or sweetened drinks. Monitor your body weight regularly.

Increase physical activity

This could be in the form of structured exercise such as attending a gym or swimming pool. It could be walking a little further outside. It could even be being a little more active around your house

Smoking

This leads to insulin resistance as well as other medical conditions. If you are a smoker, NHS stop smoking services are available for support

Alcohol

Alcohol intake should be limited to 14 units weekly for both men and women.

Half a pint of normal strength beer = 1 unit

Half a pint of strong beer = 2 units

125ml (small) glass of wine = 1.5 units

A bottle of wine = 9 units

Single spirit shot = 1 unit

Close Farm Surgery Patient Newsletter



What is long Covid?

Long Covid is a condition which affects people in various ways. We are still at an early stage of understanding the impact of long Covid and how best to treat it.

Long Covid basically describes a set of symptoms that affect peoples' daily lives which persist for more than twelve weeks after an initial Covid infection and cannot be explained by another illness. The chances of having long term symptoms doesn't seem to depend on how unwell you were with the original COVID infection so people who have had mild symptoms can also have long term problems.

Symptoms of long Covid include, amongst many others:

- Extreme tiredness
- Shortness of breath
- Tightness in the chest and heart palpitations
- Memory and concentrations problems (brain fog)
- Dizziness
- Joint pain
- Depression and anxiety
- Sleep disturbance

At present it seems that long Covid tends to affect more women than men and affects people who were already over-stressed, either physically or emotionally pre Covid (e.g. marathon runners, NHS staff). Recovery tends to be slow and variable, people being gradually but not necessarily consistently able to do more.

The wider impact of long Covid includes social consequences for individuals and families such as a sense of loss and guilt, the inability to get back to work causing financial difficulties, or the inability to continue caring responsibilities.

The golden rules to help recovery are:

- Never push through the fatigue barrier
- Pace your activities by breaking them up into small bites with rest in between
- Increase your activities only when you have discovered your baseline that makes you symptom-free, and then increase activity slowly, by about 10% every 2 weeks

Locally Sirona Care and Health runs a specialist service for people with long COVID living in Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. The team includes physiotherapists and occupational therapists experienced in rehabilitation and long-term management. The service can be accessed through GP referral.

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Our doctor team and their normal working days

- Dr Lesley Haynes – Monday, Wednesday & Friday (temporary change)
- Dr Ash Singh – Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday
- Dr Jennie Wallace – Monday (morning), Wednesday & Thursday
- Dr Luke Parker – Monday, Tuesday & Thursday (temporary change)
- Dr Gill Degens – Wednesday (afternoon) & Friday (morning)
- Dr Pam Curtis – Tuesday & Friday
- Dr Lucy Radmore – Monday (morning) & Wednesday (morning)

Our doctors rotate the on-call clinician and our partners offer extended hours surgeries

When the surgery is closed, out of hours cover is provided by the NHS-111 service. Calls to the NHS-111 service are free from both a landline and mobile phone.

Useful telephone numbers to help you

South Glos Council	01454 868009
Adult Social Care	01454 868007
Benefits	01454 868002
Children and young people	01454 868008
Council tax	01454 868003
Environmental health	01454 868001
Housing	01454 868005
Leisure centres	03003 330300
Libraries	01454 868006
Merlin Housing Association	0300 1232222
Planning and transport	01454 868004
Refuse and recycling	01454 868000
Street care	01454 868000
Trading Standards	01454 868001
First Group – bus enquiries	0117 9558211
Wessex Buses	0117 3213190
Childline	0800 1111
Crimestoppers	0800 555 111
Floodline	0345 988 1188
Gas leak emergency	0800 111 999
NSPCC helpline	0808 8005000
Police – non urgent	101
NHS Direct	111
Yate West Gate Centre	01454 315355
Southmead Hospital	0117 9505050
Cossham Hospital	0117 3408400
Dept for Work and Pensions	0800 169 0109
Yate Citizens Advice Bureau	03444 111444
South Glos Citizens Advice Bureau	01454 334961

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