

April 2022 Newsletter

COVID-19: This is not over even though media reporting is down. Infection rates are amongst the highest since the pandemic started and this is impacting on all aspects of the NHS. Please continue to wear a mask when entering the building or if you have requested a home visit. Please do not attend the surgery if waiting for a PCR result or if you have had a positive LFT result within the last 10 days (unless you have tested negative since). If you have tested positive and need to be seen we would rather see you in the car-park or at home (depending on the problem) to protect staff and vulnerable patients from the risk of infection.

Accessing Primary Care: With Covid-19 and increasing demand, there are now a number of alternative options open to you to access care. Not all primary care has to be GP. Accepting alternative options where suitable would greatly ease pressure on the practice and facilitate prompt care for those that need it.

1. NHS Care at the Chemist – covers a wide range of minor ailments. If you do not pay for scripts, you do not pay for the medication issued. Usually, no appointment is necessary.
2. NHS Community Pharmacy Service – this is an appointment service again for minor illnesses and can be accessed through reception. The receptionist takes details and sends across a referral to a chemist of your choice and the pharmacist will contact you – usually within 2 hours. OTC products available free through Care at Chemist; chargeable otherwise.
3. Enhanced Access – additional GP appointments on offer daily for St.Helens patients, usually held in the Urgent Treatment Centre and accessed through reception. You should be able to see/speak to a doctor. Appointments available same day.
4. Urgent treatment clinics – available at St.Helens rota and accessed through reception. Appointments usually held in Albion Street and could be GP or advanced nurse practitioner.
5. Urgent eye care service (formally known as CUES – covid urgent eye care service) – for acute eye conditions. Go to primaryeyecare.co.uk/find-a-practice. You will be offered a triage appointment first and then an appointment at the optician usually within 24 hours.

Telephone Triage: Due to some patients booking F2F appointments inappropriately (attending with active covid-19 ahead of their result, for example) and the need to limit numbers in the waiting room, we are moving back to telephone first with some exceptions. We aim to do as much by telephone as possible so that when asked to attend you are quickly in and out of the building. 1 in 15 in the population currently have Covid. A lot of NHS staff have been affected. Please be assured that if a F2F appointment is necessary, you will get one in a timely manner.

Please do not use e-consult as an alternative to telephone triage – this doubles the workload and delays your appointment further. If you feel it is urgent, please make reception aware.

Highest risk patients can still access lateral flow tests but not PCR tests. Positive results must be submitted to www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result or 119 in order to enable referral to a covid medicines delivery unit for assessment and potential treatment. In the event of a positive test you must contact GP, 111 or consultant for an onward CMDU referral.