**Alpine House Surgery**

**NEWSLETTER**

**October 2021**

**Introduction:**

As a surgery, we are aware of the current media interest in the availability of GP appointments, particularly face-to-face, and we wanted to communicate to our patients how we are currently working, why we are doing this and how you can access the surgery. We are also aware of some misinformation circulating in the village and we would like to take this opportunity to explain our current processes. Please feel free to share and distribute this newsletter to family and friends.

**We Are Open:**

The Surgery IS open, we have remained open and available throughout the pandemic, however, we have had to make adjustments in order to keep our patients and our staff safe. As an employer we must protect our staff and as a service provider we must offer a safe service for our users. We are proud of the measures we have taken and so far, have had no outbreaks of covid at the Surgery.

**Access to the Surgery:**

We continue to monitor and control access into the building by requesting that you use the back electronic doors and press the bell in the foyer to gain entry, we are then asking Covid19 screening questions and taking temperatures. Once this is done, you are welcome to wait in the waiting room for your appointment. However, if you prefer to wait outside or in your car, please advise our reception staff. We have limited space in the waiting room in order to maintain social distancing and we try to stagger our face-to-face appointments

as best we can to accommodate this. If you attend for a **routine** appointment and have any symptoms of Covid19 you will be asked to leave the practice, seek a PCR test, and rebook your appointment.

If your clinician or our reception team advise you to have a PCR test, you do not have to wait for results before making an appointment with us, but this will be via telephone in the first instance. Our aim is to reduce risk to patients and staff, never to deny care.

**Patients who are Covid Positive:**

Patients who are positive for covid and are either experiencing symptoms or have another unrelated condition which needs medical attention, will be assessed first via telephone and if deemed clinically necessary to be seen, will be invited to be seen in the isolation room, you will NEVER be refused an appointment or treatment because you have Covid19.

**Face Coverings:**

As health care providers the rules around face coverings are different to the wider public. In a health care setting, we must all continue to wear masks and must ask that all patients visiting the surgery also wear a mask. If you are exempt or refuse to wear a mask, we can make reasonable adjustments to see you, this will involve seeing you in our isolation room. This room is accessed from the rear of the building and will allow us to limit your contact with staff and other patients, this is for your safety and theirs. Our isolation room is also used for patients who present with any suspected contagious illness including but not limited to Covid19.

**Our Appointment System:**

In terms of our appointment system, we are currently following the advice and guidance of NHS England and have implemented a telephone consultation model. This means that all our GP and Paramedic appointments are by telephone in the first instance.

Although this model was introduced as part of the pandemic response, it was already an emerging and successful model. It was thought to be more convenient than the old model and was either in the process of being implemented or had already been implemented at a number of local practices with excellent feedback from patients.

It is unlikely that we, or any other GP practice will return to the pre-pandemic model of majority face-to-face appointments. It is widely recognised that a waiting room full of ill and contagious people is not in the best interests of any of our patients and we hope that you agree.

**Face-to-Face Appointments:**

With regards to face-to-face appointments, we have been seeing our patients face-to-face throughout the pandemic for both acute and routine matters. We are also aware of the media criticism of GPs “hiding” during the pandemic, this is simply not true. Our GPs and Paramedics are working incredibly hard but are more likely to be seeing patients who are seeking advice with an acute/contagious illness. It is therefore in the best interests of our staff and other patients for these to be dealt with over the telephone in the first instance. However, to reiterate, regardless of your presenting symptoms, if you need to be examined, you will be invited to the surgery for a face-to-face appointment.

Our Nursing and HCA teams do see the majority of their patients face-to-face, the reason for this is that they are seeing generally well people for routine matters.

You can pre-book a face-to-face appointment with our nursing team and HCAs (Health Care Assistants) for a range of routine matters.

Our GPs and Paramedics all offer telephone consultations in the first instance and will always offer a face-to-face appointment if this is clinically necessary. This will be discussed with you during your telephone consultation and you will be invited to the surgery, usually on the same day or on a day that is suitable for you.

Please be assured that ALL patients who NEED to be seen face-to-face WILL be seen. However not all patients will need to be seen face-to-face. Your GP will always act in your best interests.

Our GPs and Paramedics will also have a look at their clinic list in advance of your appointment and if it is obvious that you will need an examination, will contact you to let you know to attend in person. This is why it is so important for you to give a brief reason to our reception team for your appointment. However, the choice to give a reason always remains with you as the patient and you do not have to divulge any information if you do not wish to.

**Prescriptions:**

If you are advised during your consultation that your clinician will be issuing you with an acute prescription (a prescription which is not on repeat), please be aware that we will endeavour to get this to the pharmacy as quickly as we can. However, please bear in mind that our protocol is to make sure that prescriptions issued during our morning session are at the pharmacy by 1.00pm and Prescriptions issued during our afternoon session are at the Pharmacy by 6.00pm.

**The Team:**

We are committed to providing you with the best possible health care for your needs and we are proud of our diverse and highly skilled clinical team.  Alongside our traditional GP appointments, you can consult with our Paramedic team who are trained to deal with a wide variety of problems and can prescribe independently or will have access to a GP for prescriptions if required.

There are a number of ways you can contact the surgery: -

* By telephone on 0116 216 9947. Please bear in mind, that unless you require a same day appointment, you can call any time between 8am and 6pm. If your query or appointment request is routine, it’s always best to call after 10am.
* Our website has recently been upgraded and you can find us at: [www.alpinehousesurgery.co.uk](http://www.alpinehousesurgery.co.uk)
* You can also follow us on Twitter: @AlpineSurgery
* Or find us on Facebook.
* We also now offer an Online Consultation Service. You can ask clinical or administrative queries. These are for routine; non-urgent requests and you will receive a reply in up to 5 working days. Therefore, please do not send any urgent queries.

To access this service, visit our website for the link or type the following into a search engine:

[**https://florey.accurx.com/p/C82095**](https://florey.accurx.com/p/C82095)

**Accessing and Using Our Appointments System:**

**All of the information seen here is available on our website.**

**If you have a life-threatening condition, always call 999.**

For out of hours advice for routine and non-life-threatening conditions you can call 111.

**Doctors Consulting Hours**

08:30 until 17:50

**Opening hours:** are Monday to Friday 08:15 – 18:30.

**Telephone bookings:** for appointments for all clinical teams are taken from 08:00 – 18:00.

**GP and Paramedic Appointments:**

* All appointments are booked on the day.
* Due to NHSE pandemic requirements, we are currently operating a telephone-based consultation appointment service for all patients with our GP and Paramedic teams.
* There are a limited number of Paramedic telephone appointments that can now be pre-booked, please ask reception.
* Following your initial telephone consultation and after covid screening questions, if you and your clinician feel a face-to-face appointment is required, this will be arranged for you, usually on the same day. However your clinician will take your needs and preference into account if you cannot attend the surgery on the same day.

**Extended Access Telephone Appointments:**

* 07:00 to 08:00 are also available on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and some Friday’s. These telephone appointments can be booked in advance, please contact reception to book.

**Nurse/HCA Consulting Hours**

* The Nursing and HCA team are in surgery Monday to Friday from 08:00 until 13:00 and then again from 14:00 until 17:30.

**Home Visits**

* A home visit will only be arranged if we feel it is clinically necessary.
* Please **call the receptionists before 10 am** and be ready to give your name, address, telephone number and brief details of the problem.
* Your request will be assessed and if one of our clinicians feels you need to be seen face to face for an examination and you are unable to attend the surgery due to very ill health or a disability, then we may arrange a home visit.

**Pharmacist Appointments**:

We also offer pharmacist appointments; they can prescribe independently and can help you get the most out of your medication reviews.

* These appointments are telephone only and can be booked in advance, please speak to reception to request an appointment with our pharmacists.

**Nurse Appointments:**

* Our nursing team are here to help with routine care, including routine injections and vaccinations, children’s immunisations, cervical smear tests, long term condition advice and minor illness. They are also able to prescribe for certain conditions or will have access to a GP for prescriptions if required.
* Nurse appointments can be booked in advance.
* Nurse appointments are a mix of face-to-face and telephone consultation.
* Reception will advise you if your appointment is face-to-face or a telephone consultation.

**HCA (Health Care Assistant) Appointments:**

Our HCA and Phlebotomy team are here to offer blood test appointments, simple wound care and stitch/clip removal, routine ear care, ECG, BP monitoring, simple injections, and seasonal flu vaccinations.

* HCA and Phlebotomy appointments can be booked in advance.
* The majority of HCA and Phlebotomy appointments will be face-to-face.
* Some simple reviews may be done by telephone consultation.
* Reception will advise you if your appointment is face-ro-face or a telephone consultation.

Our reception staff may ask you questions about the reason for your call. You do not have to divulge any information but please bear in mind this will help to direct you to the most appropriate clinical team member.

To allow our clinical staff to prioritise urgency and patient need, you will be advised your call with the GP or Paramedic will be in the morning or the afternoon.  You will not be given a specific time but you will be advised of the time span.  If you are having difficulties with your employer allowing you time to make and take a call, with your permission, we are happy to discuss and explain our current system to them. Facilitating appointments during your working time will be dependent on your employee/employers’ contracts and protocols, you will need to discuss this with them.

**Minor Surgery**:

Many different types of minor surgery are undertaken at Alpine House, from ingrowing toenails to skin biopsies and excision of lumps and bumps. In addition, we also offer a wide range of joint injections for conditions relating to arthritis, carpal tunnel, tennis/golfers elbow and wrist tendinitis. You will need to be referred to our in-house GPs Dr. Ellison and Dr. Spencer, who carry out this service.