



Catherines Well, Milton Abbas, Blandford Forum, Dorset DT11 0AT

A Letter from the Partners:

We wanted to take a moment to update you all on the effects COVID has had, and continues to have, on the way we deliver healthcare to you all.

How has COVID affected the Surgery?

Firstly, this is an incredibly difficult time for us all. We understand everyone is feeling the stress, worry, anxiety and fear associated with this brutal illness and we'd like to remind our patients that the staff at the surgery of course feel the same way. We all have families and loved ones who, like you, we haven't seen or hugged for months. We all have the same fears and concerns for ourselves and our loved ones, and in some areas, these are heightened by the increased risk associated with our roles. Please be respectful to our team, who are working incredibly hard in difficult circumstances; there really is no excuse for rudeness at a time when we should all be pulling together.

As we are sure you are all aware, Milton Abbas Surgery is part of The Mid Dorset Primary Care Network. There are nine surgeries in the Network from the local area, who have united to provide a Covid Vaccination service from The Atrium in Dorchester. These clinics are run on the good will of the teams from all nine practices, including Milton Abbas, who are working additional hours during the evenings, weekdays and at the weekends, on top of their normal working weeks. Did you know the surgeries are only given approximately 1 week's notification of a vaccine delivery, sometimes less? In that short space of time between notification and the delivery of the vaccines, the clinics must be set up, a staff rota created for volunteers from the practices, patients invited, contingency plans agreed - it is a huge undertaking, all in addition to the running of our practices.

How can we work together to make life easier for everyone?

Due to Covid-19 we are having to telephone triage all GP appointments and the reception team will only be able to book a telephone appointment to speak with a doctor. These telephone appointments are booked into timed slots on our clinical system - the reception team can't just ask the GPs to give you a quick ring, each consultation involves looking at past history and must be documented, which takes time.

Urgent appointments will of course continue to be 'same day' as always, but please be aware that telephone appointments may not exactly run to time. For urgent appointments, there is NO choice of GP, it will simply be whoever is doing the urgent clinic. If your appointment is truly urgent for that day you must be prepared to see any of our GPs.

Though you will be given an approximate time for your telephone appointment, the clinicians may not be able to contact you at the exact time, depending on how their clinics are running, and therefore we ask you make sure you have your phone close to hand around the appointment time so as not to miss the call.

When you phone to make an appointment, please give the receptionist as much detail as you feel you are able to. It really helps us to judge the urgency of the appointment and ensures we get the correct clinician for your problem.

Let us take this opportunity to introduce our new team member, Clare Rushton, who will be joining us as a First Contact Physiotherapist. Clare is an extremely experienced physio who will be the first (and best) point of contact for musculoskeletal problems, for example, all soft tissue injuries, sprain, strains and sports injuries; arthritis; muscular, tendon or ligament problems including carpal tunnel syndrome, tennis elbow; any spinal or neck problems; spinal related pains in arms or legs including nerve symptoms, pins and needles etc. Clare will be a huge asset to the team and will be working with us on Wednesdays.

We completely understand there are many of you still waiting to receive an invitation for your first Covid vaccination. Please understand invitations are subject to availability and distribution of the vaccines from NHS England. We will be inviting everyone in due course. If you would like more information, please see our website or Facebook page. Please don't contact the surgery as we will be unable to give you an exact date for your vaccine.

Again, please treat the team with respect - we may take a little longer to answer the phone; your prescription delivery may be a little slower, and you may have to wait a little longer for that routine appointment. As a team we strive to continue to provide you with the standards that you have been used to pre Covid, and whilst we are eager for the vaccination programme to be rolled out, this on top of our normal daily work has led to increased work pressures.

Final note of thanks...

It has been great to see so many of you at the vaccination clinic. We have had a massive uptake from our patients, well above the national average. So, thank you to you all - it is a huge step in controlling and defeating this virus, and allowing us some return to normality.

Your health and the provision of care we supply is paramount in our daily planning. So please, remember that we are open. Don't put off ringing or coming to see us - if you think it is important, then it is, so pick up the phone and call us. But please bear with us; we are all trying our best in difficult and challenging circumstances.

We thank you for your continued patience and co-operation in these matters.

Dr Longley, Dr Rees and Dr Dean

08th March 2021