

Media release

For immediate release

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Local NHS assures patients health services are open and accessible

The NHS in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) is urging patients to continue accessing health services for symptoms and conditions requiring medical care.

Patients requiring medical attention for serious conditions must seek treatment immediately.

Parents of sick children should also seek advice and treatment by phoning their GP practice in the first instance, NHS111 or in the case of an emergency, by accessing emergency services.

The local NHS has organised its resources and services to protect and effectively care for patients according to their symptoms, which may or may not be, coronavirus related.

GP surgeries in LLR have quickly responded to the coronavirus pandemic by changing the way in which they deliver GP services to protect patients from the spread of infection. Most routine face to face appointments have been cancelled although the most vulnerable patients and urgent cases may still be seen in person.

Patients should access GP services by phoning their practice or checking their practice website for further information on how to access care. Patients will be triaged on the telephone or via video link by a health professional and in some cases, patients will be asked to attend their practice. However, patients should not attend their practice without an appointment.

Specific clinics have been established to help support patients with coronavirus symptoms that require a face to face consultation. Patients should always contact their GP in the first instance by phone and seek advice and if after consultation, the GP determines a follow-up is required, the GP will book the patient into one of the clinics in LLR where they will be seen by an experienced GP or Advanced Practitioner.

People who need to access urgent care services or a Minor Injury Unit should also book an appointment through their practice or NHS 111, rather than walk-in. This will ensure that they can access the best possible services whilst protecting themselves and others.

People needing emergency care can still access it, night or day at Leicester Royal Infirmary. To encourage social distancing and keep patients and staff safe over the coming weeks, patients will notice that the children and adult departments have been temporarily split into “blue” and “red” zones. The colours will enable staff to keep patients with similar needs and symptoms together. Patients will still be assessed by a hospital clinician on entry and then directed to the appropriate area for their needs.

Visiting restrictions are still in place at all UHL (University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust) and LPT (Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust) hospital sites, but carers and parents are encouraged to attend with patients aged under 18 and vulnerable adults. People can read more about the changes on Leicester's Hospitals' website and LPT's website.

At LPT, alongside increased capacity and new wards at the community hospitals, new referrals pathways and support have been created for mental health patients with UHL, reducing the need to attend the Emergency Department at Leicester Royal Infirmary. In addition, a new Central Access Point for mental health is being launched to provide a direct number 24/7 to referrers and service users for mental health support. Visit www.leicspart.nhs.uk for more.

Healthy Together (health visiting and school nursing) services at LPT are also being delivered differently at this time. Most contacts are now provided over the phone, with face-to-face visits offered only where absolutely necessary. All new parents registered with a GP will automatically be invited for their routine health visitor appointments.

Parents and carers, as well as young people, can continue to access the confidential secure text messaging service, ChatHealth. The service operates Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm, excluding bank holidays. During these times, all texts will be responded to by a health visitor/school nurse within 24 hours. Specific information and advice relating to COVID-19 has been added to all of Healthy Together's public health websites: [Health for Under 5s](#), [Health for Kids](#) (including the 'Grown-ups' section) and [Health for Teens](#).

Dr Ursula Montgomery, GP and Clinical Chair of East Leicestershire and Rutland CCG: "I would like to thank patients in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland for their understanding and reassure them that GP practice teams are doing their best to provide GP services whilst protecting the most vulnerable patients.

"Practice teams are assessing every single person who contacts them to establish if a visit to the practice is required and our teams will continue to provide the safest advice and treatment.

"People can stay up to date with the latest advice by accessing their practice's website or by accessing the NHS website and App. These sites provide more information and advice on how you can protect yourself and the NHS."

People can also continue playing their part by following these simple tips:

- Order prescriptions online wherever possible.
- If you are unwell and need to collect a prescription, ask a friend or relative to collect it for you.
- Get NHS help online by going to www.nhs.uk/health-at-home
- Download and use the [NHS App](#) to access NHS services using a smartphone or tablet.
- Use the NHS 111 [online coronavirus service](#) for advice on what to do if you have Coronavirus symptoms. Only call NHS 111 direct if advised to do so by the online service or if you do not have access to the online service.

- Stay updated on latest advice about Coronavirus using the [NHS.uk](https://www.nhs.uk) website.

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