**Changes to GP services**

GP services have been given a mandate from the NHS to reorganise their services to ensure that patients continue to receive a service. Patients may already have noticed that practices are no longer offering pre-bookable face to face appointments. Instead, a phone call or video consultation takes place first. If necessary patients will then be asked to attend for a face to face appointment.

GP services are being reorganised so that patients who may have COVID-19 are kept separate from patients who don’t. For example, practices are continuing to provide childhood immunisations and it is important this takes place in an environment as free from contamination as possible.

As a result of these changes, patients who need a face to face appointment may need to attend a surgery location which is different from their usual registered practice. We recognise this may cause some inconvenience to patients and we are grateful for your patience as the NHS grapples with the challenge of COVID-19.

**Changes to examination practice**

From now on, if you need a chest or heart examination, this will be carried out from behind you rather than in front of you. This is based on current clinical guidance to protect you and our clinicians.

The latest guidance advises that throats should not be examined and they should be treated on symptoms only. Please note that our GPs and nurses will no longer be examining anyone’s throat.

**Rescue packs**

We have been made aware of some inaccurate information circulating regarding special ‘rescue packs’ for patients with pre-existing respiratory conditions such as asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

Please do not contact your GP practice for a rescue pack unless this is something you usually have and require one. You should continue to manage your condition in the usual way and if you feel you have symptoms of COVID-19, go to https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19 before doing anything else.

**Shielding at home**

Some people will receive a letter from the NHS to say they should take extra steps to protect (or 'shield') themselves because of an underlying health condition. This is for people who are at very high risk of severe illness from coronavirus.

If you think you or someone you care is likely to fall into this category please wait for a letter. Although the national guidance says that most people should receive their letters by Sunday 29 March 2020 please note that it is more than likely that it will take a few days longer for letters to arrive at people’s homes.

So please wait until Friday 03 April 2020. If you have not received a letter by then or been contacted by your GP, please call us for advice.

**Medication**

Please order medicines as normal. There is no need to stockpile medicines. Ordering extra prescriptions and buying more over-the-counter medicines than you need will contribute to disruption to the medicines supply chain, which is otherwise robust.