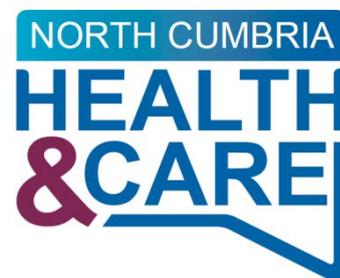


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The NHS is here for you as we go back into 'lockdown'

Local health services are reminding patients that services will still be here for them during lockdown, and are sharing some helpful advice to ensure people continue to manage health conditions and seek assistance when needed.

Health services never stopped helping people during the previous lockdown, and they will continue to be here when patients need them this time too.

- NHS services are here for you
- If you have an appointment – please keep it
- Services may look and feel different – please be patient with staff
- Please wear a face covering, wash your hands regularly and follow social distancing guidelines in health premises
- Please seek help early if you are worried
- If you have the symptoms of coronavirus please don't attend in person but contact NHS 111 for advice

Dr Colin Patterson, Lead GP at NHS North Cumbria CCG, said: "GP Practices and hospitals have adapted well to ensure they can continue to provide safe and effective services during the pandemic.

"Many patients are now being offered appointments with their GP or hospital consultant via telephone or video where possible, in order to reduce the number of people entering healthcare buildings, and to ensure social distancing.

"If patients are asked to visit their GP Practice or hospital for an appointment, there are systems in place to protect both them and staff. For example, appointments are scheduled in a way that reduces an unnecessary number of patients coming in at one time, and patients are being encouraged to attend appointments on their own where they can, to reduce the amount of family members or carers that are coming into healthcare settings."

Patients are also required to wear a face covering when entering buildings (unless they're unable to due to a health condition), and staff will be wearing protective equipment such as face masks, aprons and gloves, where appropriate. In some cases, services have provisional COVID questions that they ask, to screen patients before they enter a healthcare building, and the staff may take patients' temperatures before they enter a location.

In most places there will be one way systems in place, and hand sanitiser for patients to use upon entering buildings, along with clear signage for social distancing, and in some cases there are colour coded areas to reduce the risk of people mixing. Patients are being urged to ensure they attend any planned appointments – including maternity appointments.

If patients think they have coronavirus they are asked not to attend their GP Practice, pharmacy, hospital or health centre and should seek advice at: [nhs.uk/coronavirus](https://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus) or 111.nhs.uk

Dr Rod Harpin Medical Director for North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust said: “Our services are open and it’s important that you seek help if you need it and that you attend appointments if you are invited. We have clear red, amber and green zones in place for managing patients with COVID and non COVID and we are working hard to make sure that the highest levels of infection prevention are in place to keep our patients safe.

“You can do your bit by coming to your appointments on your own – unless you require support or are accompanying a partner for a scan – wearing your face mask, using the hand sanitisers as you enter and leave our buildings and maintaining social distance. We also need your support in using services wisely - A&E is for serious or life threatening injuries so we can treat those who urgently need our help as quickly as possible.”

John Lawlor, Chief Executive of Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust, said: “We know that many people are understandably worried about catching or spreading the virus. People are also worried about being a ‘burden’ on the NHS system. But the NHS is here to support your mental health during the coronavirus pandemic, as well as your physical health.

“You shouldn’t put off seeing a doctor about a physical health condition, and the same goes for your mental health: the earlier you seek help, the better.”

“It is understandable if you feel you need more mental health support at the moment. Lots of people are facing stress and anxiety about their own health and the health of friends and family; bereavements; financial insecurity, and changes to how they must live and work. Mental health services are still open to provide advice, support and, where needed, care and treatment from our expert professionals. Please speak to your GP or Care Coordinator if you feel you need more support.”

NHS leaders are also urging people to be vigilant to signs and symptoms of cancer.

Dr Patterson added: “The NHS is working hard to ensure emergency and urgent treatments including cancer continue. If you’re invited for an appointment please make sure you go, unless you are showing symptoms of COVID-19.

“We’re continuing to encourage people to be vigilant to the signs and symptoms for potential cancer, and if you’re concerned your symptoms may be cancer, please contact your GP immediately.”

Some signs and symptoms of cancer include:

- Getting out of breath more easily
- Blood in your pee or poo
- Changes in your breasts
- Changes in your skin, such as moles
- A pain that doesn't go away

Health leaders are also encouraging people who rely on carers to have their own plan ready in case they become unwell this winter, as this can help them to be prepared, and can help those around them to help them too.

People that rely on someone to help or care for them are recommended to write a plan and leave it in a place that people know about, telling them where their medication is kept, contact details for their family and friends, and details of regular things that happen in their week, such as newspaper or milk deliveries, or if they have a pet that would need looked after if they needed to go into hospital. Carers Support Cumbria can help you to write a plan, as well as support you with other issues. If you call 08443 843230 you can speak to someone or leave a message and get a call back the next working day.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

For media enquiries please contact the Communications Team on: Communications.Team@northcumbriaccg.nhs.uk

Please see attached social media slide – please share.

The North Cumbria Health and Care System is made up of health and care commissioners and providers – NHS England, NHS North Cumbria Clinical Commissioning Group, North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust, NHS Improvement, North West Ambulance Service, primary care – working in partnership with Cumbria County Council and third sector organisations.

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