



Barnoldswick Medical Centre

Newsletter – December 2022

Dear Patients,

Thank you for bearing with us during these hugely stressful times for everyone. We have been touched by the many kind messages of support whilst we have strived to provide you with the best service we can.

As many of you may know, General Practice has seen unprecedented pressures throughout and following the pandemic, and this continues to increase. 'Unprecedented' has probably been one of the most overused words in the last few years, but it has genuinely been the most challenging times in General Practice.

INCREASED CONTACT AT EARLIEST ONSET ON MINOR SYMPTOMS

We are finding that many patients are contacting us in the very earliest stages of their condition, hoping for an immediate cure. Often self-care is the most appropriate action – if you are unsure, NHS 111, our website resources page and your local pharmacy can help.

We have patients contacting us within a few hours of developing a sore throat, or an earache that developed the night before, or tiredness since waking up that morning or having vomited or having had diarrhea just the once. People respond to illness differently, but please consider self-care first.

We are not in any way suggesting that if you are seriously ill, or if you have a red flag symptom, that you need to wait to get worse before getting in touch with us. We're talking about people who are still very well in themselves, carrying on with all usual activities, going to work, out to the shops and so on but with very short-lived minor illness symptoms and who have not tried anything at all to help themselves, or waited to see if things improve.

With self-care and due attention, most cases of minor illness do resolve without ever needing treatment from the GP.

MULTIPLE PROBLEMS PRESENTED WITHIN ONE APPOINTMENT SLOT

Since so many people are desperate to see or speak to the GP, we are finding that many people are presenting lists of multiple problems to us; we can best manage these if you tell the receptionist so that enough time is allocated to your needs.

GP SURGERY BEING CONTACTED FOR HOSPITAL-RELATED ISSUES

Hospitals are facing their own challenges and waiting times have increased significantly. We realise many patients are having to wait a long time for appointments, but would ask that you direct any queries about your hospital appointment or hospital test results to the relevant hospital department in the first instance

RELIANCE ON GP TO DIRECT AND SIGNPOST FIRST

You may feel that phrases like 'self-care', 'self-help' and 'signposting' are just about fobbing patients off and stopping them from contacting us or seeing us. This really is not the case and these concepts are not new – although they become increasingly important as we get busier and busier.

Despite the government's promise to deliver 5,000 additional GPs, numbers have actually decreased since 2015 relative to patient numbers, so there are fewer and fewer GPs left seeing more and more patients.

You may also have noticed that GP surgeries now work in neighbourhood networks, called PCNs, which stands for Primary Care Networks. Barnoldswick Medical Centre is part of Pendle East Primary Care Network.

The aim of these networks is to share good practice and do things in a more collaborative way. PCNs have additional resources, but the extra staff employed by PCNs are not GPs. They are practice pharmacists, paramedics, mental health workers, first contact physios, physician assistants, social prescribers and health and wellbeing coaches; because there are now fewer GPs and for that matter, also fewer nurses, the presence of these new workers will complement and strengthen the existing teams.

So, in future, if you have a back or joint problem, our reception staff may book you an appointment with the first contact physio. If you had a medication issue, you may be put in touch with the practice pharmacist. If your issue is mainly social, you can receive help from the social prescriber and so on.

This represents a massive change which most patients are still not aware of (and indeed many other NHS staff too), and this change will take a lot of getting used to; but we must all start to overcome the idea of '*needing to see my GP*' for every condition, all of the time. We really value continuity of care and enjoy seeing people regularly; we want to maintain this for complex ongoing patients, but it will not always be possible for more minor acute conditions.

AGGRESSION AND ABUSE

We recognise that it can be very frustrating getting through to us at the moment.

Sadly, there is a small but significant minority of our patients who are being aggressive and abusive to our staff. There seems to be a belief that shouting the loudest and refusing to take no for an answer will produce their desired results. Our staff work hard and do their best. They do not deserve abuse or aggression from any of our patients and we have a zero-tolerance policy against this. We will continue to act against patients who continue to behave in this way. Again, time spent comforting tearful staff, listening to phone calls and composing letters to abusive patients is time that could be better spent looking after you.

Urgency must always be determined on a clinical (medical) basis, and not determined based on convenience, prior engagements, eagerness or any other reason.

If you push in, it means you have pushed someone else out, someone who could be quite vulnerable and in need, and the next time this happens, that person might be you. This is a safety issue that has an impact upon anybody who truly needs to be assessed quickly by a GP.

CHOICE OF CLINICIAN

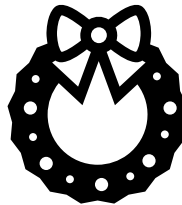
A Doctor's time is limited and their job involves more than just seeing patients; they have their own learning and development to maintain; they are supervising the other clinical staff in the practice and the PCN; they are teaching new doctors; they are involved in leadership; and our partners also have all the responsibilities that come with being an employer. We value continuity, but it is not always possible to see the doctor of your choice on the day you get an appointment. We ask that you remain flexible and give our reception team the information they require to ascertain if a different clinician or doctor can suitably manage your problem.

“TRIAGE LIST HAS REACHED CAPACITY”

Even in the midst of the pressures we’ve outlined above, general practice is never closed. Even when our building is closed, there is a locally commissioned out of hours service funded to provide general practice. During our working hours, despite delivering 37% more appointments, we are never “closed”. Even when a GP or two is off sick, the calls do not stop coming in.

We set a safe capacity limit for our telephone triage list, but this is not absolute. When the capacity has been reached, the receptionist will continue to take information from all patients requesting a triage appointment. They will continue to signpost patients if appropriate, but if the patient feels the problem is urgent then a discussion with the on-call doctor will take place. There is a tricky balance to strike here. We are concerned about operating beyond our safe limit – just like you wouldn’t want to fly with an exhausted pilot, you shouldn’t want to see an exhausted overworked doctor about your potential infection or cancer – but put patient safety first.

We hope that this update has highlighted some of the pressures general practice is facing.



Over the festive season, our practice will be closed for weekends and bank holidays. If you need assistance when the practice is closed, you can contact 111 or 999 in the event of an emergency.

Friday 23rd December – 08.00 - 18.30

Saturday 24th December – CLOSED

Sunday 25th December – CLOSED

Monday 26th December – CLOSED

Tuesday 27th December – CLOSED

Wednesday 28th December – 08.00 – 18.30

Thursday 29th December – 08.00 – 18.30

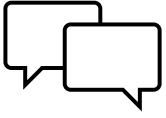
Friday 30th December – 08.00 – 18.30

Saturday 31st December – CLOSED

Sunday 1st January – CLOSED

Monday 2nd January – CLOSED

Tuesday 3rd January – 08.00 – 18.30



Mental Health

The winter months can seem long and dark, and for many people, this leads to feeling low. Season Affective Disorder affects around 2 million people in the UK.

You can reduce the effect of Seasonal Affective Disorder and improve your mental health by taking some simple steps such as making sure you get enough daylight and enough exercise during the winter.

If you are struggling with your mental health, we're here to help you. Please ask to speak to one of our team so we can get the right support in place for you.

If the practice isn't open, or you don't feel able to speak to a member of our team, Samaritans is a non-judgemental listening service, available 24/7 if you feel you need to talk. Call for free 116 123. <https://www.samaritans.org>

If you feel in urgent need of help with your mental health, you can find out how to access support here. <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/mental-health-services/get-urgent-help-for-mental-health/>

Other useful websites:

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/seasonal-affective-disorder-sad/overview>

[Every Mind Matters - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

Are you a barber or a hairdresser? Have you heard of "Barber Talk" or the Lions Barber Collective?

Many clients open up in the chair about their lives, and BarberTalk aims to harness that by supporting you to signpost organisations that can help with mental health.

<https://www.thelionsbarbercollective.com/about-us/>

Domestic abuse

If you're experiencing domestic abuse, Refuge has lots of information to help and support you, with a quick exit button if you need to hide what you're looking at hurriedly. <https://refuge.org.uk>

The National Domestic Abuse Helpline offers support if you are experiencing domestic abuse. Domestic abuse includes coercive control, financial and verbal abuse, as well as violent behaviour. You can call for support any time, day or night. <https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk>

If you're at risk of violence, knowing how to make a silent 999 call might help save your life. When connected to 999, press "55" so they know the call isn't accidental. <https://www.met.police.uk/contact/how-to-make-a-silent-999-call/>

[The Men's Advice Line 0808 801 0327](http://www.menadviceline.org.uk)

More useful information can be found on <https://www.lancashire.police.uk/help-advice/personal-safety/domestic-abuse/>

Grief Awareness

In the last few years, many of us have lost people we care about. In many cases, we have been unable to mark their loss in the way we might want. It's important to recognise the impact of grief in our lives. <https://www.thegoodgrieftrust.org/ngaw/>

We hear about the seven stages of grief, but what we hear less about is that we might move backwards and forwards through these stages as we navigate the "firsts" that happen without our loved ones. <https://www.coop.co.uk/funeralcare/advice/do-the-seven-stages-of-grief-exist>

Cruse supports people who are bereaved and have lost someone that they care about. The right support can help you to find your way in a world that has changed for you. <https://www.cruse.org.uk>



Some children can receive free school meals. If you haven't checked whether you are entitled to them, you can find out more here.

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals>

Maintaining healthy eating

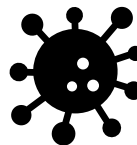
Eating well gives us the best chance of staying healthy over time. You can find out about a healthy diet here. <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/>

You can eat healthily on a budget. Some of the healthiest food options are cheap to buy. <https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/heart-matters-magazine/nutrition/eat-well-on-a-budget>

This year Asda have said that they will provide a meal for children for £1 in their cafes, with no minimum adult spend. This is available 7 days a week and may help some families. <https://www.asda.com/good-living/article/children-can-eat-for-just-1-at-asda>

Cold, flu, or covid?

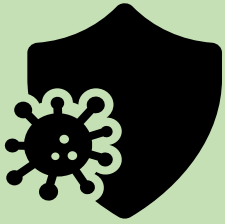
While Covid vaccination has made a significant impact on the pandemic, we are still dealing with a virus that can cause serious illness. This chart can help you establish whether it's a cold, flu or Covid you're likely suffering from. <https://www.boots.com/health/cold-and-flu/difference-between-cold-and-flu>



Are you aged over 65 and still need your flu vaccine?

We have a limited number of flu vaccines still available at the surgery.

Please call our reception team on 01282 811911 or call into the surgery to book an appointment.

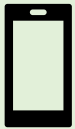


Norovirus is also known as the “winter vomiting bug”. It can be very unpleasant, but generally only last a couple of days.

If you, or a family member is suffering from vomiting or diarrhoea, there are some ways to make managing this at home easier. Make sure you drink plenty of fluids, so you do not get dehydrated.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/norovirus>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/diarrhoea-and-vomiting/>



Have you updated your mobile number or moved house recently?

If any of your personal details change, please let us know as soon as possible so we can keep your records up to date.

Thank you

Please arrive for your appointment on time & ensure that you check in with reception or at the check-in machine, located in the main waiting area.

If you are late to your appointment, you may be asked to re-arrange.

Do you or someone you care for needs more help and support?

If you look after someone else, whether because they are older, or disabled, or due to ill health, it's important to make sure you get the help you need.

There are ways you can get the support you need. Depending on the situation, care may be provided by the local authority, NHS or a private care organisation.

You may also be able to get access to some support and respite. It's important to make sure you take the support offered so you can continue in your caring role.

Please visit the below websites for more information

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/introduction-to-care-and-support/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/support-and-benefits-for-carers/>

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/care/helping-a-loved-one/>

Do you need to ring the surgery?

Our telephone lines are often incredibly busy, and we are aware that patients sometimes struggling to get through.

Some of the calls our reception team take could be dealt with elsewhere.

Think before you call, is the surgery the most appropriate place to deal with your query?



Is your query relating to a hospital appointment? We do not have access to the hospitals appointment systems and cannot help with this. Please contact the hospital directly.

Are you ringing to book a covid booster? We don't have access to the booking system. Please contact 119 or visit the national booking system online.

Are you ringing to see if your medication is ready? We do not know when your medication will be ready to collect from the chemist. We send your prescription to the chemist within 48 working hours of receiving your request, however the chemist have their own processing times. Please contact the chemist directly.

Do you have toothache? Or are you ringing for a dental issue? The doctors are unable to treat dental problems. Please contact your dentist or 111 if you are not registered with a dentist.

If you have a prescription that is due over Christmas and New Year, please allow extra time for us and the chemist to process your request. Please submit your request at your earliest convenience.



Unfortunately, as of late, we have had a lot of patients not attending the appointments they have booked.

We understand that sometimes you may not always be able to attend your appointment.

However, we kindly ask that if this is the case, that you contact our team to let us know so that your appointment can be offered to another patient.



If you have requested a prescription at the surgery, please contact the chemist to check when it might be ready.

Unfortunately, we are unable to respond to each request we receive due to the high volume of prescriptions our team process daily.

If there is an issue with your request, our prescription team will contact you.

We are also unable to accept prescription requests over the telephone. Our preferred method of request is the via patient access or MyGP apps. Please contact our reception team for more information on this.

Alternatively, you can email your request to us or drop a written request into the surgery.

Thank you

Surgery Contact Details

Telephone – 01282 811911

Email –
reception.barnoldswickmedicalcentre@nhs.net

Opening Hours – Monday to Friday
08.00-18.30