



Kensington Group Practice

DONEGALL ROAD AND FINAGHY
Medical Centre

Coronavirus update 1st June 2020

Looking towards a new normal?

We would be very keen to emphasise we remain available to provide support about medical concerns during the Covid-19 situation.

As we move on, General Practice, and the medical professional as whole, is gaining more experience in delivering their services in a different way than we did before. Whilst none of us would have chosen the circumstances as to why these changes have been necessary, as we look forward, it gives us a chance to reflect on whether some of these arrangements that have worked well, could potentially be carried forward when the current restrictions recede, and also taking note of the fact that social-distancing restrictions and precautions are likely to be with us, for a significant period of time to come. So this newsletter will explore some of these themes.



Testing for Coronavirus is available for symptomatic individuals; please click the picture above for more information, which includes when you should seek medical advice.



Contact tracing is an established method to help prevent the further spread of infections such as COVID-19, to target potential clusters which could spark new outbreaks.

Find out more:

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/testing-and-tracing-covid-19/contact-tracing>



Testing for all symptomatic individuals in Northern Ireland can be booked at www.nhs.uk/ask-for-a-coronavirus-test

This is an interactive newsletter. Please click the pictures and links for further information.

How do we maintain the ability to offer same day access for URGENT problems, whilst managing social distancing?

Previously, our open surgery at Donegall Road gave us an avenue to address urgent issues, and enabled us to assess patients on a same day basis.

We would have had issues where on occasion, the open surgery would have been used primarily due to its convenience, rather than because of clinical urgency.

Subsequently, some mornings could have been very busy. This then meant the waiting room at times could have become quite full. Also, some patients, especially if they had booked in a little later in the morning, and hence were towards the end of the Appointments list, could have been waiting for some time - although balanced against enjoying the benefit of same day access - this should have been considered a minor inconvenience.

You will be aware that in recent times, and in common with all other GP surgeries, following expert guidance, we have moved to a primarily telephone led service, where we will try to resolve your issue over the phone, or by Zoom teleconferencing, and inviting you to the surgery if necessary, for example for further examination. This approach has been absolutely vital in reducing footfall in the surgery, which protects both our patients and staff.

Going forward, we would anticipate seeing more patients as restrictions are relaxed - **however if social distancing precautions are to be effectively maintained, attendance at the surgery will still need to follow an initial telephone consultation with the Doctor. This is to ensure patients only attend the surgery if they really need to, but importantly, it means we can preserve the same day access for urgent access which we previously offered through our open surgery, whilst reducing crowding within the building,** whilst also avoiding the longer wait times that were sometimes associated with the open surgery.

If you feel you need to speak to the Doctor, please phone us as early in the day as you can, ideally before 11am in the morning. This then gives us the best opportunity to plan the day's work.

After 4pm, the Doctor will only be able to return a call within the same day if it is an urgent matter, otherwise it will be added to the list for the next working day.

The Doctor's have asked our receptionists to gather some preliminary information when you call. Please be assured this is to help our GPs prioritize appropriately, and deliver best possible care. All our staff are bound by strict rules regarding confidentiality.

What else do you need to know before attending the surgery?

If you have a face-mask, or face-covering that you can wear when attending the surgery, please wear it.

Please do not lean over the reception bench.

Please do not wear latex gloves when visiting the surgery; whilst we appreciate this may make some people feel safer, there is the risk that wearing these gloves outside their intended, single-use clinical purpose - may contribute to unintended spread of the virus.

To reduce crowding in the surgery, please attend alone if you can; if unavoidable, for example if the patient is a child, or needing other assistance - with one other person maximum.

When in the surgery building, please ensure you remain 2 meters apart from other patients and staff if at all possible.

Please use our hand-sanitiser on arrival.

How else can we minimise footfall within the surgery?

At this time, we would ideally ask patients to order their prescription online, if this is not possible please order by phone, rather than dropping in a written request for your medication.

Please sign up to our online services for prescription ordering

(appointments booking will be restored once Covid-19 restrictions are lifted)

If you have not already nominated a local pharmacy to collect your prescription on your behalf, please do this - this means you may only have to take one trip, instead of two.

Remember to allow a little extra time for your pharmacy to process your script.

Zoom teleconferencing offers us the opportunity to have at least a degree of face-to-face contact, without having to physically attend the surgery.

We are increasingly using Zoom teleconferencing within the surgery in recent times, so that face-to-face consultations can be undertaken without having to travel to the surgery. Whilst there will always be some types of consultation that would be better served by a face-to-face consultation, we have found this facility invaluable in these recent times, and one we would like to maintain beyond the lifting of our current restrictions. For example, we have been able to engage with patients who are housebound that would otherwise have found it difficult to attend, or those who struggle to attend due to work commitments.

Below is a short video from NHS England - we should point out that their Videoconferencing solutions are a little more integrated and advanced stage than here in Northern Ireland, so not all the content is fully applicable to us here - at least not yet, but the key themes are still applicable, and we have given some helpful hints for Zoom, which we think you may find useful if engaging in this way. There are also a range of helpful resources on the Internet.



Zoom is available from the App Store for Apple devices, and also Google Play, for Android devices.



We are primarily using Zoom in two ways. When the Doctors are making their telephone calls to review our patients' medical queries, it may be useful to use Zoom, if practical; for example, if we need to examine a rash. It may not be necessary for all telephone consultations. Or we will organise a Zoom appointment in advance, for example for a routine review such as Diabetes or Asthma, and give you an idea of approximately when to expect receive a call to receive your credentials, and undertake the review.

Your device will need a camera and a microphone. Most modern smartphones and laptops will have these; if you have a desktop computer that does not have these, you can obtain and plug in a webcam.

If using an internet browser to access Zoom, Google Chrome is recommended for the smoothest experience.

We will give you two identifiers, both of which are unique to each consultation, for your security. You will need to open the app or website, and select "Join meeting" - then input the 11 digit number. You will then be asked for a password - this is shorter, and maybe be all numbers, or a mix of letters and numbers. It is case-specific (ie. capital and small letters).

You will then be admitted to a virtual "waiting room".

Once in the meeting, it will ask how you are joining audio. The default will be to "Join Audio by Computer". You will need to make sure your computer has both speakers and a microphone. The second option is to "Join Audio by Phone". This option will list phone numbers that you can call in to get the audio portion.

Once joined to audio, you will now be able to see and hear the Doctor, Nurse or Pharmacist, and they will be able to see and hear you. When the meeting is over, you may click "Leave Meeting" to end the session.

Understanding Covid-19: Viewpoints from the Public Health Agency



Kindness and compassion during the COVID-19 pandemic

Geraldine Hamilton, HSCB, and Fiona Teague, PHA discuss the important role of kindness and compassion during the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 and the wider determinants of wellbeing

Brendan Bonner, Assistant Director at the Public Health Agency, explores the determinants of wellbeing and the protective role they can play against the virus and its effects on communities.

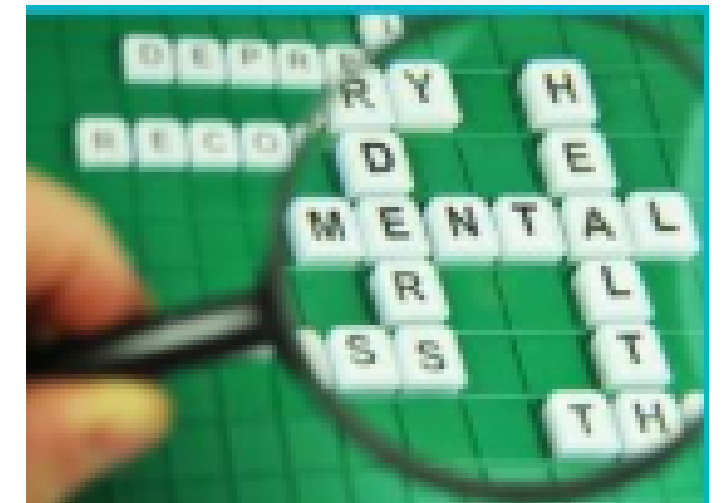


Please click on the logo on the left for the PHA's complete series of Covid-19 blogs.



The Public Health Agency (PHA) is reminding parents to be kind to themselves during the COVID-19 pandemic, and in turn they will be helping to protect their infant's mental health.

Mental health and emotional support is available during pandemic.



What does the Public Health Agency have to say about Face Coverings?

It is recommended that you should think about using face coverings in particular circumstances - short periods in enclosed spaces where social distancing is not possible.

In practice, these circumstances will largely mean on public transport and in shops.

The use of face coverings will not be mandatory.

Crucially, do not get a false sense of security about the level of protection provided by wearing a face covering.

It is essential that everyone continues to:

**practise social distancing as much as humanly possible
wash their hands thoroughly throughout the day
'catch it, kill it, bin it' when they sneeze or cough**

That's still the best way to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.

If you have a mask, please wear it when visiting the surgery, as it is more difficult to maintain social distancing within clinical rooms, especially when an examination is being carried out.



The Public Health Agency (PHA) is reminding everyone of the dangers associated with the misuse of illicit and prescription drugs, particularly given some of the challenges which the lockdown presents, and is asking anyone who misuses drugs to take steps to reduce their risk.



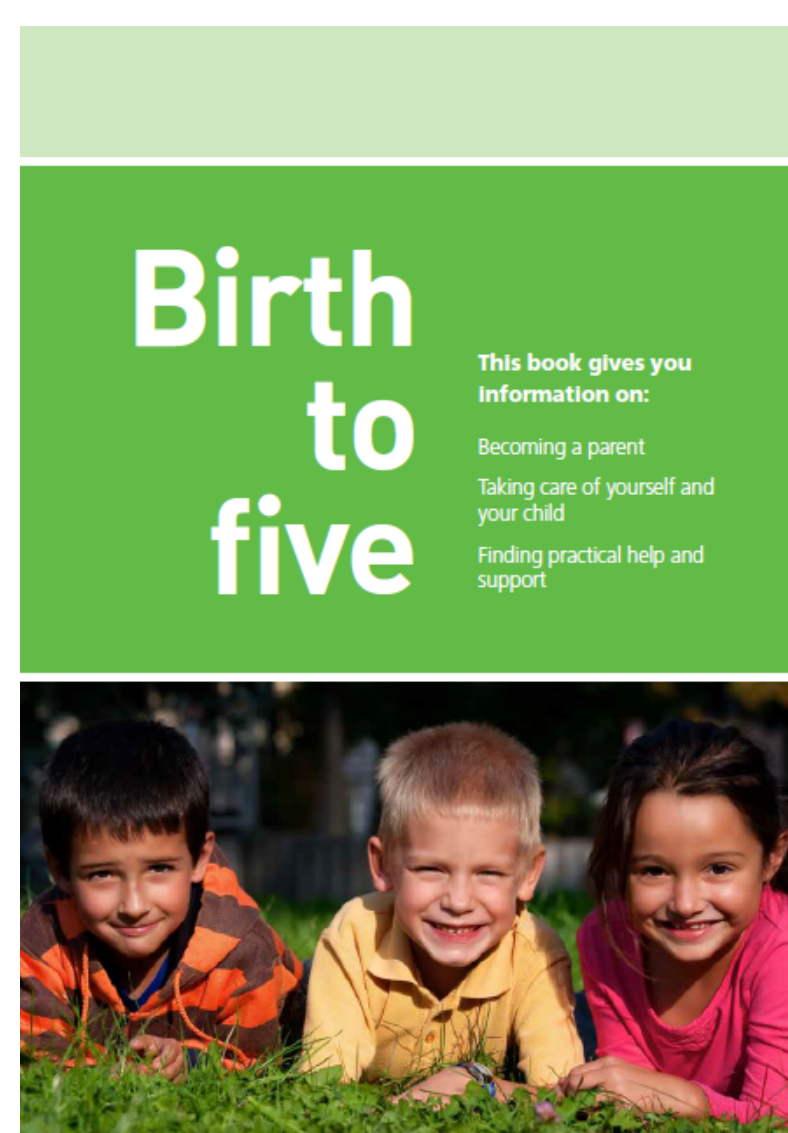
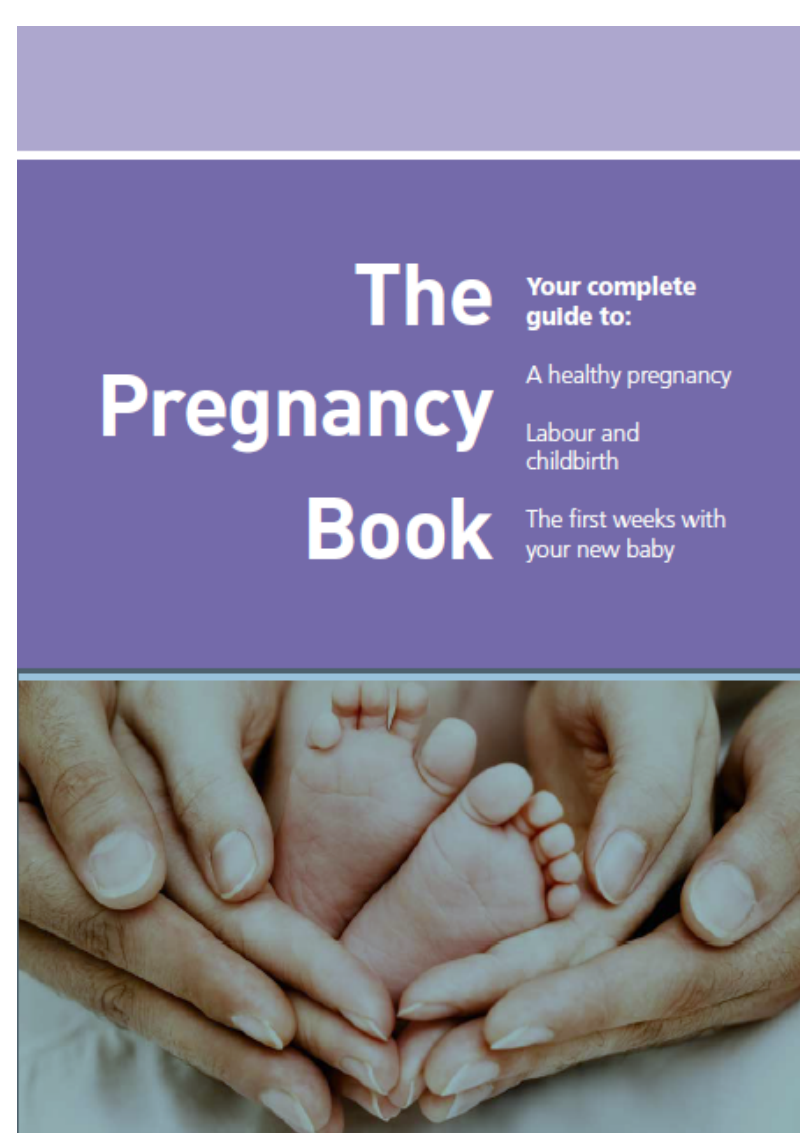
@DrClaireMarie <https://twitter.com/drclairemarie> has prepared a very informative video as to why it is so important for routine childhood vaccination to continue, at this time.

The Pregnancy Book provides information on many aspects of pregnancy and a list of useful organisations.

We are continuing to offer Pertussis in pregnancy (whooping cough) vaccinations to expectant mothers at this time.

The Birth to Five book provides information on caring for children up to five years old and contact details for useful organisations.

Please note these books were prepared before the COVID-19 pandemic and should be read along with the guidance at www.pha.site/coronavirus and www.ni-maternity.com



With World No Tobacco Day approaching (31 May) the Public Health Agency (PHA) is encouraging people to consider quitting smoking to improve their health.



“Giving up smoking is one of the best things you can do for yourself, with benefits for your health, your appearance and your finances,” said Brendan Bonner, Assistant Director of Public Health, (Health Improvement) with the PHA.

Visit
www.stopsmokingni.info
support remains available

“Now more than ever we know that looking after your health is critical to your wellbeing and ability to fight off infections. Stopping smoking will have a positive impact on your health. For example in the context of coronavirus, if you smoke, your fingers are in contact with your lips, increasing the possibility of transmission of diseases such as COVID-19 from hand to mouth.”