

PRACTICE NEWSLETTER 25TH JUNE 2021



<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/covid-19-vaccination-programme-northern-ireland>

[Updated NI vaccination programme - key questions answered](#)

At time of writing, anyone who is aged over 18 years, but less than 40 (between 1st April 1981 and 31 July 2003) can book their COVID-19 vaccination appointments at one of Northern Ireland's regional vaccination centres, including the SSE arena. Additional slots for all Trust vaccination centres will be released every Thursday morning.

<https://covid-19.hscni.net/get-vaccinated/>

At time of writing, for those aged over 40 years old, who have not yet had their vaccine, all these individuals should book through participating pharmacies (born on or before 1st April 1981) with some exclusions (including those who are pregnant - contact 0300 200 7813 in this instance). There is also some very limited capacity to receive at our surgery. Please note only the Astra Zenica vaccine can be supplied through community pharmacy or the GP surgery.

You can also phone 0300 200 7813 if you do not have internet access to book online. Please note these booking methods are for the regional Trust Vaccination centres only and not for GP surgery bookings. Please do not contact this number because you cannot find any suitable appointments; the telephone line does not have access to additional appointments.



***Missed your second dose
appointment?
Or not booked it yet?***

With the newer "Delta" variant circulating - it is really important to get both doses. Contact the body who gave you your first vaccine to arrange at your earliest convenience.



For latest travel advice relating to Northern Ireland, please click on the picture above, or link below.

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-travel-advice>

What about vaccine passports?

At this time, methods of securely demonstrating vaccination status - whether this be an electronic vaccine passport app, or some kind of secure printed certification are being actively developed. As a practice we do not know at this point what form these will take, but these will most likely be issued centrally, perhaps by the Department of Health, or Public health agency.

In the absence of these, at this time, for Northern Ireland, we would hope your blue vaccine card, should suffice although we cannot guarantee this. If you have specific concerns, you should contact your travel provider.

It should be noted that neither GPs, nor other HSC organisations, nor the Vaccine Management team are able to issue letters to the agreed standard for travel purposes.



Initial query about any of these symptoms? You maybe able to obtain advice and treatment from a participating pharmacist without having to wait to speak to a doctor.

The pharmacist will discuss your concern with you, and may be able to provide treatment free of charge, if appropriate; if they feel you would be better speaking to the GP, they will let you know.

Click on the picture for more information.

***Acne Vulgaris
Athlete's foot
Diarrhoea
Haemorrhoids
Headlice
Groin Area Infection
Threadworms
Vaginal Thrush
Ear Wax
Mouth Ulcers
Oral Thrush
Scabies
Verrucae***

Click on the pictures for further information.



[Heatwave - how to cope in hot weather](#)



[Sunscreen and sun safety](#)



[Sunlight and Vitamin D](#)



[Covid-19 - advice for Carers](#)



[Belfast Bikes](#)



[Walk NI Find a walk](#)



[Hayfever advice](#)



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["Addressing drugs and alcohol together"](#)



[Using barbeques safely - avoid accidents](#)



[Food safety tips when barbequing](#)



[Dementia help and support](#)

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Breast awareness
Looking out for changes



Breast Screening

Northern Ireland breast screening
Helping you decide



Breast Screening

Abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) screening



Things you need to know



A quick, free and painless scan for men aged 65 and over



The Pregnancy Book 2021

HSC Health and Social Care
Your complete guide to:
A healthy pregnancy
Labour and childbirth
The first weeks with your new baby



Birth to five 2021

HSC Health and Social Care
This book gives you information on:
Becoming a parent
Taking care of yourself and your child
Finding practical help and support



If you are in distress or despair, you can contact **Lifeline** using the HSCNI Remote Interpreting Service for British & Irish Sign Language (BSL & ISL) Users



INTERPRETERNOW



Lifeline
0808 808 8000

Lifeline
0808 808 8000

Painkillers - handle with care

In the interests of safe and effective prescribing, we continue to review our prescribing of painkillers, as in many instances, there may be more suitable therapies available for you, which carry less risk, and we may be able to help you reduce your dose, or even stop altogether.

We continue to closely look at our prescribing of "opioid-type" medicines such as Tramadol, Co-codamol, codeine, dihydrocodeine, morphine, oxycontin, and other related medicines.

Why are we doing this? Opioids are very good painkillers for acute (ie. short term) pain, and pain at the end of life but there is little evidence that they are helpful for long-term non-cancer pain. And there is a greater understanding of both the short, and longer term risks.

At higher doses, the risks increase, but the benefits do not.

Equally, using multiple opioid-type painkillers - (eg. co-codamol and tramadol together) is not considered optimum practice at this time.

Why would we encourage our patients to consider reducing their dose of "opioid-type" painkillers, if at all possible?

To prevent accidental death

To prevent the worsening of pain

So you can drive and work safely (some painkillers can cause cognitive impairment, and it can be an offence to drive if affected in this way)

To reverse opioid tolerance

To reduce "mental fog"

To reduce hormonal changes/sexual dysfunction

To reduce the risk of falls/further injuries.

Please have a look at the below videos, to help understand a little bit more about pain. Please arrange to speak to the GP if you, or your family member, would like to arrange a holistic review.

You should NOT stop regular medications abruptly without speaking to the GP first,

however if you are using these types of medications on a "when required" basis - as many would do with co-codamol, for example, this may give you the flexibility to slowly reduce your dose - for example, by only using when the pain is severe.



[Understanding pain in less than 5 minutes](#)



[Stopping opioids - as no longer recommended in long-term non-cancer pain](#)



[What next? Transitioning to an evidence based approach.](#)

Safety of medicines

The practice would like to remind that is our policy that we do not replace lost or stolen prescriptions or medications. It is *your* responsibility to keep your prescriptions, and medication, safe.

As people travel on holidays we occasionally receive requests to replace medicine that has been lost or left behind on holiday/in the caravan etc.

We cannot emphasise enough that misplaced medicines can create great risk to others if they are subsequently found and taken.

Please treat your medicines as securely you would your passport or money, if not more so.

Calling in for your results

The practice would like to remind our patients that after you have had blood/urine tests undertaken, or X-rays/Ultrasounds undertaken on behalf of the practice,

it is your responsibility to phone in for these results, after 11am, Monday to Friday.

Whilst there are arrangements for promptly communicating the most urgent results - and also "*mopping up*" those who do not contact us for their results (this might be by phoning you after several weeks, ***in the main, you should contact us a few days after your tests, to find out your next steps*** (some tests can take a little longer to come back); this could be adjusting your treatment, discussing with the GP or some other action; ***but not doing so promptly may delay these next steps being taken. Do not wait for us to call you.***

Hence it is in your interests to contact us to find out your next steps at an early opportunity.

You can now drop in written prescription requests at our Donegall Road site.

To help ease pressures on our phones, we would continue to encourage our Online ordering portal to be used as a first preference, however,

you can now also drop off your written prescription requests again, at our Donegall Road site only. Please make sure you clearly mark your name, address, date of birth, and the medication you require.

Please drop your requests into the Red Post box in the lobby of our main site, being sure to maintain social distancing while you do so, and make sure to sanitize your hands, using the provided foot-operated dispenser, before touching the red box.



What about Finaghy Health Centre?

At the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis, it was necessary for us to withdraw our GP and administrative presence in Finaghy Health Centre, although the Treatment Room Services, provided by Belfast Trust, continue to tend to our patients on our behalf, by appointment only.

There were primarily two necessary reasons for this at the time, and this point in time, these reasons remain: Due to the layout of the building, including relatively narrow corridors, and the fact that it is shared with a much larger and busier practice, the Irwin practice - this makes the necessary social-distancing arrangements very difficult. The practice needed to consolidate all its staff, both clinical and administrative to one site, to provide resilience, and enable the surgery to continue to function (in some form) if we had to contend with heavy staff absences; this continues to remain a threat and a possibility for every type of workplace.

With the increasing prevalence of the new "Delta" Coronavirus variant, it still does not appear social distancing restrictions will be relaxed imminently, and Covid-19 remains a significant risk in our communities (and hence also a likely cause of staff absence), thence it is not possible to resume our previous services in Finaghy at this point in time, and must remain under review for now.

Please note we will be closed for the July Bank Holiday on Monday 12th July.

Please ensure you order any medication that you require over the Bank Holiday, in good time.

If you have an urgent problem that cannot wait until we reopen at 8.30am the following day, you can contact GP Out of hours.

The GP Out Of Hours Service provides care for people in Belfast when their normal GP surgery is closed. It is not intended to replace normal GP services, but deals with urgent problems that cannot wait until your own GP is available. You should therefore only use this service if you are suddenly ill and you cannot wait until your GP's surgery is open.

South and East Belfast - 02890 796220

North and West Belfast - 02890 744447

Lisburn area - 02892 602204

Call 999 in an emergency.

Chest pains and / or shortness of breath constitute an emergency.