



Kensington Group Practice

DONEGALL ROAD AND FINAGHY
Medical Centre

Spring Newsletter

4TH APRIL, 2023

Please note we will be closed for Easter on Monday 10th and Tuesday 11th April 2023. Other upcoming bank holidays when we will be closed are Monday 1st May, and Monday 29th May 2023. We also expect we will likely be closed for the King's Coronation on Monday 8th May.

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.

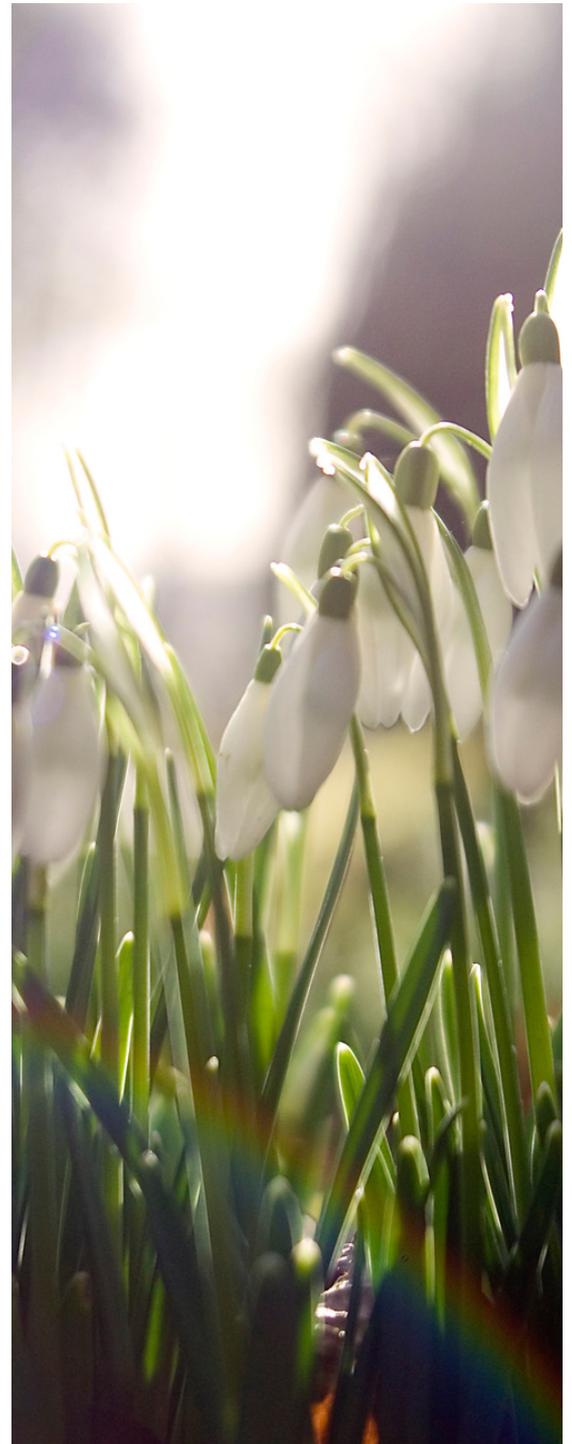
The GP Out Of Hours Service provides care for people in Belfast when their normal GP surgery is closed. It is not intended to replace normal GP services, but deals with urgent problems that cannot wait until your own GP is available. You should therefore only use this service if you are suddenly ill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



Spring Covid Booster clinics are coming soon for those eligible

You will shortly be offered an additional COVID-19 booster, as part of the Spring booster programme, if you have completed your primary course (ie at least two vaccines), at least three months have passed since your most recent dose, and if you are:

- aged 75 and over (born on or before 31 March 1948)
- a resident in a care home
- aged five to 75 who are immunosuppressed

Appointments are available to book now **FOR THOSE ELIGIBLE ONLY**, our clinics will begin from Tuesday 25th April 2023 onwards.

For those aged five to 18 whom we are aware are immunosuppressed, we will write to you, explaining how they can receive their vaccination in a Trust clinic.

More information: click on this link, and the picture below:

[Get a COVID-19 vaccination in Northern Ireland | nidirect](#)



People aged 75 years and older, residents in care homes for older people, and those aged 5 years and over with a weakened immune system will be offered a booster of COVID-19 (coronavirus) vaccine this spring.

Shingles vaccines remain available for those eligible

Shingles can be very painful and tends to affect people more commonly as they get older. For some, the pain caused by shingles can last for many years. Shingles can really affect your life, stopping you from doing all the things you usually enjoy. The vaccine is currently offered to people in the year they turn 70, and can be given at any time before they turn 80. Of note, a vaccine is now available that can be given to those who are immunocompromised. If you've previously been invited, but not yet attended, we encourage you to consider booking in. More info: <https://kensingtonp.uk/Shingles>



Pneumococcal vaccines remain available for those eligible.

Please click the picture on the left to find out more about why people over 65 and those with particular health conditions should get their pneumococcal vaccine. For most individuals, this is only needed once, although a small number may need to repeat after five years or so. If you've previously been invited, but haven't yet attended, we'd encourage you to give this your consideration.

<https://kensingtonp.uk/pneumo-vac>



Further information - click on the picture



Look after your eyes

Regular eye tests
Screen time breaks
Safety goggles
Sports goggles
Sunglasses

Be active
Stop smoking
Eat healthily
Family history

Tips to help keep your eyes in good shape

HSC Public Health Agency



★★★★★

Active fun for everyone

Improving activity in children and young people with physical disabilities

HSC Public Health Agency



Swallow Aware

Do you have eating, drinking or swallowing difficulties?

Advice for people living with swallowing difficulties (dysphagia) and their carers

HSC Public Health Agency

We are further expanding our Prebookable face-to-face GP appointments

We are all very much aware that currently demand for all NHS services, including general practice, remains at historically high and unprecedented levels, ***and this is certainly not an issue unique to Kensington Group Practice.***

In recent times, we had expanded the number of face-to-face appointments available, and in doing so, reduced the proportion of the day spent managing telephone consultations.

To further improve patient access, we have made some changes to how we structure our appointments, ***in that further face-to-face appointments have been made available, and that telephone consultations, will, in general, be by exception,*** and returning our arrangements to something more similar to before Covid. These new arrangements will begin Monday 17th April 2023.

Around half of our GP appointment capacity will be available to book in advance, and you can do so online. It is intended that these would be for more routine issues, or management of longer term conditions.

The other half of the capacity will be set aside for more urgent or "on-the-day" issues. These appointments will be released every morning, so if you have an urgent query that arises, this is likely what you be offered in the first instance.

Why are we doing this?

- We hope that this will reduce pressure on our telephones, especially early on in the day, and reduce double handling.
- Most of our patients would appear to prefer face-to-face assessment.
- On many days our GPs find ourselves being asked to work well beyond safe capacity - their capacity is finite so needs to be used in the most productive way, and primarily this is due to additional telephone contacts. We hope that with additional face-to-face capacity, there will be less need for these additional telephone contacts.

These face to face appointments are available to book online, and we'd encourage you to do so if you can. All appointments are at Donegall Road.

 GP pm face2face	Dr Scott Killiner (more)	Kensington Group Practice
 GP pm face2face	Dr Conway Kmc (more)	Kensington Group Practice

Why can't you just add more capacity?

That is an understandable question, and a fair one, and one we would be asked from time to time. We can fully understand where it comes from!

If we were in the fortunate position that the budget we received from the Department from Health was unlimited, there is only a finite number of GPs available in Northern Ireland for us to potentially recruit from, and indeed there are some areas of Northern Ireland that are finding recruitment exceptionally challenging, and this has been covered in the media. There is however a concerted effort being made centrally to increase the number of future GPs being trained, both in terms of increased funding for training, and more GP practices themselves getting involved in delivering this training; *as a practice we are playing our part* and you may have observed students in with us from time to time.

Our current reality is though that funding is finite - and is not keeping pace with rising costs. At this point in time, we have the maximum amount of GP sessions provided that our budget can cover the costs of.

The capacity that each of our GPs have in any given day is finite, and whilst this can be stretched a little if something more urgent presents - it can only be stretched so much before the quality of care provided is compromised.

We are finding DNAs - "Do not attends" are increasing slightly - please let us know at the earliest opportunity that you cannot make your appointment, or by replying appropriately to the reminder text, if you get one. With a little bit of notice, we can then make your slot available to someone else, who may indeed be very grateful for it.

We continue to explore and expand the roles our pharmacists, and nursing team can play in your care, and in previous newsletters, we have discussed at length about the many other places and resources you can also get care, to complement the care provided by your GP. We also continue to explore all possible internal efficiencies to maximise our capacity.

In terms of our administrative team, again we have the maximum number employed that our budget will allow for. It is important to note that answering phones is only one part of their role. We need to explore all avenues to reduce pressure on our phones, as we fully know this is a significant frustration across all GP practices, *not just ours. You can help.*

Is there anything I can do to help?

We had read the following quote, in one of our professional journals, reflecting upon the difficulties many are having, across the UK, regarding getting through to their surgery on the phone.

"The obvious truth is that the telephone system is not the reason patients can't access general practice. It's because there are not enough GPs.

It's like blaming poverty on the lack of high street banks."

This might be a bit of an oversimplification of a nuanced situation, and one with no immediate straightforward solution, but as discussed above, the gentleman making this quote has a point - if there was twice as many staff answering the phone, and twice as many lines, it may be that the available capacity may fill twice as quickly?

We do recognize though the frustration, and there are many other reasons a patient may need to contact the surgery. With enhancing the number of face-to-face appointments we have available, we hope will alleviate some of the phone pressures in the busy early part of the day. You, our patient body, can also do a lot to help manage these difficulties, and make the best of time and energy our admin and clinical teams do have.

To help relieve pressures on phones, we would kindly ask:

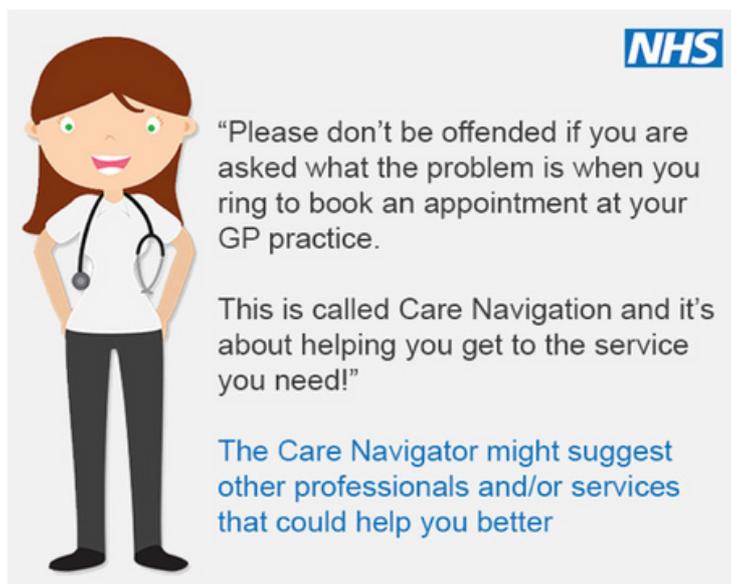
- If you are able to order your prescription online, or book your appointment online, please do so (around 60% of our calls are to order prescriptions or book an appointment). Alternatively, written requests can be dropped into the red postbox in the porch of our Donegall Road site, if this is helpful.
- Please do not phone prior to 11 o'clock in the morning to order prescriptions, or collect blood results, if at all possible - this is because this is by far the busiest time of the day for our telephones, and dealing with large numbers of calls makes it more difficult for the most urgent calls to get through.
- Please be patient with our staff - they do understand the frustrations we all face at this very busy time - we are all patients too. Clearly explaining what your concern is can help us to prioritize, but if it is not possible to meet your request immediately - as capacity is finite, this may be the case for less immediately urgent issues - please do not take your frustrations out on our staff - who are doing their best at a challenging time.
- Our phones are typically less busy in the later parts of the morning, and afternoon. If your query is less urgent, and you cannot get through, please do try again.
- Please visit the ["Services"](#) area of our website so you are familiar with the various other types of support and advice that are available to you, who may also be able to help you.

What is Care Navigation?

Simply put, when you call in to organise a consultation, with the GP, our GPs have asked our staff to gather some information. This is to help us prioritise things, and also identify what other support may be available to you, from either within the surgery, or with other trusted local partners, such as pharmacy, our colleagues in the Belfast Trust, and many others; often you won't need to speak to the GP first in order to access these services.

This is care navigation.

- By asking our receptionists to gather a little more information about the nature of our patients concern, means we can keep an eye for "red-flags" - things that might be better dealt with by A&E, or a 999 call, for example; rather than waiting on a GP callback.
- It helps us create capacity in a busy system, by pointing you in the best direction of who can help you, and help you get care at right place, at the right time. Not in every case of course, but in some instances, someone other than the GP, may be able to help you get the care you need, quicker.
- It can help our patients feel more empowered with their health and wellbeing, by being better aware of the range of supports available to them.
- We have summarised some of the partners and services we most often refer to, or are asked about, on the "[Services](#)" area of our website; any new services, either within our surgery, or our locality, will be added there. Also, keep an eye on our newsletters.



Some helpful tips to help get the best from our online services

- We are aware from time to time some of our patients have had difficulty accessing our patient services; we have been robustly holding our clinical systems supplier to account about this matter, and continue to do so. Ultimately the more widely used our online services are used for booking appointments, and ordering prescriptions, the more pressure we can take off our phones. If you have difficulties accessing the services, it is helpful when we raise these issues with our clinical systems supplier, that we can tell them the problem you are having. If you have time, if you'd be so kind as to let us know, by email to reception.z00145@gp.hscni.net give your name, when you'd tried to access the systems, details of any "error message" you may have got, and what device you were using (eg. Iphone, laptop, and browser eg. Chrome, Edge etc if you know this). This means we can collate the difficulties are patients are having, and present them to our clinical systems supplier to try to resolve, and improve their services.
- When you go to book an appointment, one of the first options you'll be presented with is a "date range" - it defaults to two weeks.

Appointment Search Filter

When?

Today This Week Next Week This Month Next Month Pick a date...

From 04/04/2023 To 18/04/2023

- There are certain types of appointments which are in very high demand, where there may not always be an available appointment in this two week period - for example, at the time of writing, the first routine GP face to face appointment is in 16 days time. If you do not see the type of appointment you are looking for, you can change the date search period to look ahead further.
- What types of appointments are currently available?
 - **Face to face with GP (Donegall Road)**
GP pm face2face Dr Conway Kmc (more) Kensington Group Practice
 - **Diabetic review (specify either face at face Donegall Rd, or telephone)**
Diabetes review. Specify if face to face telephone or Zoom Maurice Murphy (more) Kensington Group Practice
 - **Asthma review (specify either face at face Donegall Rd, or telephone)**
Asthma review. Specify if face to face telephone or Zoom Alan Erwin (more) Kensington Group Practice
 - **COPD review (face to face only)**
COPD face to face review Maurice Murphy (more) Kensington Group Practice

○ **Smear test with the nurse (Donegall Road)**

SMEAR KMC Ms Victoria Hutchinson (more) Kensington Group Practice

○ **Blood test or blood pressure check (Donegall Rd)**

Blood Test/BP D/rd Kmc Hca (more) Kensington Group Practice

○ **Blood test of blood pressure check (Finaghy Treatment Room)**

Blood Test/BP FIN Finaghy Blood Tests Only (more) Finaghy Branch Surgery

○ **Covid Spring booster vaccine (Donegall Road)**

COVID VACC Kmc Covid Clinic 1 (more) Kensington Group Practice

- Please take care when choosing the type of appointment you are booking, and don't just choose the first one that you see! For example, if you book in to one of our blood test, but were expecting to see the GP, it likely won't be possible to facilitate this, as they may be busy with other clinics! This would happen from time to time.

Breast Screening Programme

In recent months, invitations to patients eligible for Breast Screening have been sent out. For anyone contacted, who hasn't had the opportunity to attend just yet, we would encourage patients to take up this offer. This can be done by contacting the Screening Service Please click on the picture to the below, which will explain about how this service will be running.

More information:

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/directorate-public-health/service-development-and-screening/breast-screening> and also by clicking on the pictures below.

