

## **15<sup>th</sup> January 2021 - Update from Dr Jason Clark Senior Partner - Swanage Medical Practice**

In December it seemed harsh that we had just come out of a National lockdown in Tier 2 having gone in to Tier 1. Since then, after a brief spell in Tier 3, we now find ourselves in another national lockdown that is likely to continue even longer than the one in March 20

The November lockdown had got us back down to less than 5 active cases in Swanage at any one time. By December the 31<sup>st</sup> this was between 10 and 20 and a staggering jump to between 40 and 80 by January 7<sup>th</sup>. If this continues to rise this means that 1 in 100 are likely to be infected at any one time. We are now in the top half of the country by prevalence rather than near the bottom.

This associated with our older population, co-morbidities and care homes means we all need to heed and exceed the current lockdown recommendations, as removing all opportunities for the virus to spread from one person to the next is the only short term way of getting the rate down

Local hospitals are becoming stretched as in other areas of the country, with up to 200 cases now being monitored by the covid home pulse oximetry service at any time.

A rise over Christmas was expected but when we came out of lockdown in December the new variant had only just been described and its effect was difficult to predict. Studies have since shown that for the same level of lockdown, when previously each person only infected 0.7 others, this new variant infects 1.3. It is that much more infectious but seems to cause the same degree of illness. So the measures that were suppressing it will no longer do so.

The weather has also been cold which helps preserve the virus and forces us indoors that may encourage further spread. It will be a long time until the hot weather in May or June may help suppress it again.

All the more reason why we all need to continue to practice "Hand Face and Space" as well as staying at home. Those who were advised to shield last time should by now have received another letter asking them to do so again.

At the beginning of December vaccines started to be delivered and we arranged for the practice to help with this. The original batches went to hospital sites and those areas with the combination of elderly patients and deprivation. Now those sites have been provided for we finally heard on Friday the 8<sup>th</sup> January that Purbeck would be getting its first batch of 975 Pfizer doses and an unknown number of AstraZeneca ones. Thanks to a Churchillian effort by the Purbeck Primary Care Network and our Practice teams, most of the over 80s have now been booked in for their vaccination.

Unexpectedly we have now heard we will be getting further supplies from the 18<sup>th</sup> January to complete our over 80s vaccinations.

Swanage Surgery will be posting out pre-defined appointments letters to eligible patients. We have a fantastic community spirit in Swanage, with a community that really pulls together in time of need. We ask our community to please support our elderly patients, be they family, friends or neighbours, as they will be receiving these invites at very short notice and some will most likely be worried, so please help them by making sure they can get to Wareham Hospital for their vaccine. Please reassure them, particularly those with mobility problems, that the Wareham clinic is very well organised with lots of volunteers and clinical staff offering support & guidance as soon as they arrive.

We ask that patients only contact the surgery if they are physically unable to leave their home or if they wish to decline their appointment. We cannot make changes to appointment times or dates, as alluded to above, we have pre-defined number of appointments slots allocated to Swanage patients and all slots will have been allocated.

Some patients might also receive a general invitation to book a vaccination at the BIC (Bournemouth) mass vaccination site, we would ask that patients please keep their Wareham appointment otherwise the valuable vaccination we have put aside for you might be wasted.

With the additional strain of staff absences due to covid, increased contacts due to the virus and now the booking and giving of the vaccine, Practice staff are now extremely busy. So please do not call us to try and book a vaccine or ask when you will get it or why X had it but Y has not or which vaccine you will get as this will be preventing us booking people in or organising other care.

I have today visited the vaccination centre in Wareham and would like to thank all those that have worked so hard to get us to this vital point of rolling the vaccine out to the Swanage and Purbeck residents and look forward to meeting some of them on the first day .

Thank you for your ongoing support.

**Remember: "HANDS (wash), FACE (mask), SPACE (2m)"**

**Dr Jason Clark, Senior Partner**

Swanage Medical Practice website: [www.swanagemedical.org](http://www.swanagemedical.org).