

Message from Swanage Medical Practice, Dr Jason Clark, Senior Partner

TO ALL PATIENTS, STAFF AND FRIENDS OF SWANAGE MEDICAL PRACTICE

We are now 10 weeks into the Coronavirus pandemic and, thanks to the whole country's massive effort in social distancing, the number of cases, hospital admissions and deaths are reducing. However, there is still no vaccine nor effective treatment. There is nothing to stop a resurgence of the virus if social distancing were to be significantly relaxed, therefore we must all keep alert. The recent relaxation rules seem to have been chosen to enable people to get out and about more in a way that keeps risks of transmission between households as low as possible.

It has now been shown that young children do not have many of the virus receptors in their lungs so are less likely to catch it or pass it on. The virus is mostly spread by droplets, from breathing and especially coughing, but these all fall to the ground within 2 meters. The surface they land on is then contaminated. The virus only persists for up to 3 days on ideal, damp, cool, smooth surfaces. Sunlight speeds its deactivation and outside the virus disperses much more quickly with the wind. Sunlight is also needed for vitamin D production; low vitamin D levels seem to cause a susceptibility to the virus. For those who haven't been out very much vitamin D supplements are advised and are available from the chemists.

All this means that going outside and passing others at more than 2 meters without touching any surfaces is going to be low risk. Spending time inside with a group of others even if 2 meters apart is going to be a greater risk, especially once you start touching lots of surfaces. This is when you need to use your mask and ensure you wash your hands every hour.

The latest Bank Holiday has shown us that the rest of the country has decided to make use of our beautiful beach and countryside. Given the lack of overseas holidays, I can see this is rapidly going to increase as rules are relaxed.

For those who have been staying in up till now, but not shielding, I think now is the time to start going out to exercise, but choose a route and a time that avoids as many other people and visitors as possible. Early morning and after 5 pm seem to be quieter in Swanage. The sea front and town centre at mid-day are not the places to be.

GOOD NEWS

Testing for anyone with symptoms of coronavirus is now available via the GOV.uk website so as soon as you have symptoms, start isolating and contact them for testing. This is a swab test to see if you actually have the virus at the time they do the test. The test is very good at proving you have Covid19 if it comes back positive but isn't good enough to absolutely prove you have not got it or have just had it. Today Covid19 antibody tests are being started for staff and patients at Poole hospital and are going to be made available to other NHS and care staff soon, followed by other patients later. This is a blood test. The scientists have finally decided that the tests now purchased for the NHS do accurately reflect that you have had the Covid19 virus rather than the common cold which is in the same family. So, by the time of my next letter, we may have a better idea whether those who thought they had had Covid19 in Swanage did so and whether others have had it without knowing.

The hope is that, if you are shown to have antibodies, then you may be immune from catching it again. This is not yet known, so whatever the result, social distancing and isolating will still be needed, in case immunity is only short lived. The more antibody testing that is done, the sooner we will know what level of immunity is gained and for how long after an infection with Covid19.

THANK YOU

I would like to give great thanks for the significant support both in actions and messages we have received over the last 10 weeks, it is most appreciated and significantly helps our work.

I would particularly like to thank all the staff and my colleagues at the health centre. The cleaners, admin team, secretaries, receptionists, health care assistants, phlebotomists, Practice nurses, Paramedics, District nurses and our Manager have all gone the extra mile to keep your service running. I am extremely grateful to them for their willingness to take on new ways of working and provide the best service we can for the Town and our patients.

I would like to thank everyone's hard work at staying at home and **socially distancing**. I feel that without all the effort Swanage has put into this we would be have been struggling to maintain our service at the Health Centre.

RESET AND RECOVERY

Inside the surgery we have seen a gradual rise in the number of patients booking appointments of one sort or another. We are starting to bring more patients along to be seen when online, phone, or video consultations are not appropriate.

15% of all our patients are now signed up for electronic repeat dispensing so neither they nor their chemist have to put requests in for prescriptions each month. Please ensure you check with the chemist each time you collect a prescription that you need all the items issued and let them know of any irregular items you will need next time.

More patients are taking up online prescription requesting, putting you in even better control of your medication.

Despite us seeing more patients at the Health Centre, we have no reception facilities available from the front counter, so please do not just drop in in the hope of booking an appointment. Please continue to use other channels to keep both you and our staff safe.

We have an intercom on the front door for our staff to let in those with pre booked appointments. We ask patients to approach this up the slope from the Station Roadside and observe the social distance markings up that slope when having to wait for access, and to leave the surgery via the slope towards the Co-op car park.

To keep you all informed, in addition to our web site, we have now set up "The Swanage Medical Practice" Facebook page.

This year we have 2 more doctors retiring and are still actively trying to recruit to fill their positions with either new General Practice Partners, Salaried Doctors, Nurse practitioners or Paramedics. If you have any contacts, you think may be interested please let us and them know.

EXERCISE SOCIALISING

As suggested above given our current good weather and the expectation that the town is likely to continue to get busier, now is the time to get the legs moving a bit more. If you have older relatives or neighbours who are not shielding, start to help them get out in a safe way. If you have a nice garden, then inviting them to walk round to sit in it and chat keeping a 2-meter distance may transform their day.

SUMMARY

Continue to stay at home and Socially Distance

Isolate and get tested if have symptoms (swab)

Get tested (antibody) if you must do a high-risk job and think you may have had it.

Use NHS 111, E- consultations, Telephone and video Consultations.

Use Electronic Repeat Dispensing or Online Prescription requesting

Support the Very High-Risk group to shield

Use our New NHS to keep you well.

Help everyone to exercise

Keep in contact on Facebook or the website.

With thanks for your continued efforts,

Yours sincerely,

Dr Jason Clark

30 /5/2020