

## **UPDATE in light of the new COVID Variant (Omicron)**

***(DECEMBER 2021)***

As part of our response to COVID-19 and in light of the increased transmissibility of the new variant, Omicron, we have made some key changes to how we are currently working. The measures described below are in line with national guidance and ensures we can continue to provide care whilst keeping our patients and staff safe.

All appointments will now be telephone or video based first, with face-to-face appointments offered where there is a clinical need to do so. This helps to ensure that patients are only attending the practice in person if absolutely necessary, keeping everyone as safe as possible.

When you call to book an appointment, you may be asked a series of questions around what you're calling for. This will be to ensure you are directed to the most appropriate service or health professional for your condition, so please do provide as much detail as you can.

For those who are invited to attend our practice in person, please be assured that we are continuing to follow strict infection control and social distancing measures to keep you as safe as possible. As part of this, we ask that you wear a face covering at all times whilst in the practice. If you have any COVID-19 symptoms, have received a positive PCR test result or if you meet the criteria for self-isolation, please do not attend.

Given the significant demand our services are currently experiencing, and following the national ask to clinically prioritise the most urgent services such as vaccines, urgent care, immunisations, cancer and high risk patients, some of our routine services may not be available as quickly as you are used to. We apologise for any inconvenience but assure you that we are working hard to provide care in the safest and most effective ways.

Don't forget, you can download the NHS App or use online services for things like prescriptions or other healthcare needs. You can also use [111.nhs.uk](https://111.nhs.uk) or call 111 for urgent but non-life threatening concerns. Your local pharmacy is also available to support with minor conditions or to provide further advice.

For vaccine or COVID testing queries, you can call 119 where a trained call handler will be able to support you to book vaccine appointments, including boosters, or get a

free PCR or lateral flow test. For more information on the services 119 provides visit the [When to call 119 - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk) or for more information on vaccination clinics near you, visit the [Birmingham & Solihull NHS COVID-19 Vaccination Service – Birmingham & Solihull NHS COVID-19 Vaccination Service \(birminghamandsolihullcovidvaccine.nhs.uk\)](https://birminghamandsolihullcovidvaccine.nhs.uk).

These measures will be reviewed on a regular basis and as soon as it is safe to do so, we will return to offering more face-to-face appointments. We thank you for your patience.