**Is everything back to normal now? **

As restrictions begin to be eased around the country, the perception of a lot of people is that things are “back to normal”. However, this is not the case.

The Covid-19 virus is still circulating, and people are as much at risk of catching it now as they were during the strict lock down phase.

As a result, there is some confusion and misinformation, and we wanted to clarify a number of things for you.

**Why is the surgery asking me to wear a face covering?**

Our clinical staff will always wear a face covering during your consultation. Although it is not mandatory to wear a face covering in public, it is advisable. We are asking you to wear face coverings because our clinical staff are coming into close physical contact with you and we want to protect both you and our staff.

**Why aren’t all of the surgery staff wearing face coverings?**

Face coverings are being used by all clinical staff as they are coming into close physical contact with you. Most non-clinical staff do not come into close contact with you. The receptionist on the front door will be wearing a face covering. We have installed a screen on the reception desk to act as a barrier to prevent infection.

**I don’t have a face mask.**

You don’t have to use a face mask. Any form of covering over your mouth and nose is sufficient. This can be a scarf.

**Does everyone need to have a face covering?**

It is not advisable to cover the mouths and noses of young children. We also would not ask someone to wear a face covering if it was going to cause them significant stress or anxiety, for example a patient who was unable to understand why this was necessary.

**Why can’t I book an appointment like normal?**

The best way to reduce the spread of Covid-19 is to reduce contact with other people. The surgery will only ask you to come in, if we are unable to care for you remotely. For example if you need a dressing or urgent blood test, or a physical examination that is essential in treating you. If none of these things apply, we will not ask you to come to the surgery. This is to protect you.

**How can I pre-book an appointment with the doctor?**

Surgeries are being advised that they should manage patients remotely as much as possible. As the progression of the virus pattern is still emerging it is unwise for us to organise pre-booked appointments as things can change at a very rapid pace. We currently ask you to call us on the day that is convenient for you, and a member of the clinical team will carry out a telephone consultation with you. If appropriate, they may then carry out a video consultation as well.

**Why are you offering some types of appointment but not others?**

We are providing essential services at present, but this does not include the full range of procedures that we would have been able to provide pre-Covid-19. The list of essential services has been drawn up by the RCGP (Royal College of General Practitioners), and is regularly reviewed and updated.

**I’m shielding and I’m concerned about coming in for my essential treatment. What are my options?**

We are currently in the process of setting up a “Shielded Cold Zone”. This will be used exclusively for Shielded patients to ensure we minimise their exposure to anyone else. If you need to be seen in this part of the surgery, you will use a separate entrance to the building, and a separate waiting area. If you would rather we carried out your consultation in the carpark with you still in your car, we are happy to do so. Please mention this to the receptionist when you book your appointment.