

Information to Patients regarding Coronavirus (COVID-19)

In response to the current out-break of Coronavirus (COVID-19) we wanted to assure you that we are doing everything we can to follow the Governments and the Trusts guidelines to help with the delay phase of the epidemic.

There have been no indications from the Government that the Nation is to be placed in quarantine at this stage, but advice has been given for people to self-isolate for 7 days if they show any signs of symptoms which include a new continuous cough and/or a high temperature.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>

Up to this point we have received no instructions to make any changes to our usual services on offer, however if you do attend the clinic for any reason can you please ensure you are regularly washing your hands and following other guidance on good hygiene, and avoid attending the clinic at all if you are unwell. This will help us to ensure the safety of our patients, staff and the wider local community whilst also ensuring the clinic continues to operate now and for the future.

We ask that you understand the ever-moving situation we are in and your patience and support is greatly appreciated.

Information for patients with Human Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV)

The British HIV Association has recently updated all Sexual Health clinics about the impact of COVID-19 on people with HIV.

At present there is no evidence to determine whether people with HIV are at greater risk of infection with COVID-19 coronavirus or a more severe form of it. The main risk factors to date are older age and other medical conditions such as kidney disease, cardio-vascular/lung disease and diabetes. Some other patient groups with relatively lower immunity such as the very young and pregnant women do not appear to be at higher risk of complications, although the numbers analysed are so far still small.

Public Health England (PHE) and The British HIV Association have advised that all patients with HIV should ensure they have received their seasonal influenza vaccination and pneumococcal vaccination in line with current recommendations for HIV care in the UK. The pneumococcal vaccination is usually given shortly after an HIV positive diagnosis at either your GP surgery, the clinic or in hospital, but may also be given as part of a routine vaccination program at your GP surgery.

You may have read some reports that the HIV drug Lopinavir/Ritonavir (Kaletra) is being studied as a possible treatment for COVID-19 but this is based on very limited evidence for similar strains of coronavirus. So far there is no good evidence that lopinavir/ritonavir is beneficial, and there is no evidence that other HIV drugs will help. For anyone taking HIV medication for treatment or prevention of HIV we strongly recommend you continue to take treatment as prescribed, and not increase the dose or switch to another medication unless otherwise requested to by a specialist in HIV. We also advise that you keep at least 30-days medication supply available to allow for any possible travel restrictions or quarantine in the coming months. However, as medication stocks can be fragile at times anyway, we advise against requesting longer than usual medication supplies to help us manage capacity during this difficult time.

If you have any concerns or queries regarding your medication please contact the clinic to arrange to discuss it with one of our HIV specialist Doctors, Pharmacists or Nurses.

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Information updated: 16th March 2020