



Attending your GP practice, hospital and getting prescriptions during the COVID-19 pandemic

The correct name for the virus is SARS-coronavirus-2 and the disease it causes is Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). SARS means Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome. Throughout the document this new (novel) disease will be referred to as [COVID-19](#).

This document is intended to provide general information and is not intended to replace medical advice. Prostate Scotland **cannot give individual advice or recommend which treatments might be suitable for an individual or recommend individual medical care or health professionals** – patients should always check with their urologist, oncologist, CNS or GP regarding treatments. As the following is general information, guidance and procedures for each health board may be slightly different. If you have been given specific advice from your urologist, oncologist, CNS or GP then you should always follow their advice.

We have compiled this information for men with [prostate cancer](#) who attend GP practices, hospital appointments and who may require repeat prescriptions as [COVID-19](#) will undoubtedly affect these services. This has been done to the best of our knowledge and understanding at the present time. As the situation is constantly changing, almost on a daily basis, and as more knowledge and information become available, this information and guidance may change. We will try to keep you as up to date as possible.

Routine operations have been cancelled, but **some** cancer surgery is continuing. However, there are differences between health boards depending on availability of resources. The situation is constantly changing, and it is best to contact your urologist, oncologist or CNS who can advise on what is happening in your area

Your cancer treatment plan is individual to you. In all cases, it is important to think about the risks and benefits. Some cancer treatments make it more difficult to fight infection so there is a potential increased risk of infection with COVID-19.

Some men with [prostate cancer](#), due to age ie those over 70 and those with additional conditions such as diabetes, heart disease maybe more at risk of severe symptoms if they catch [COVID-19](#).

Your urologist and GP may want to [review your treatment plan](#) with you to ensure it still best suits your needs and discuss any changes that may be appropriate. This will only ever be done to reduce overall risk and harm.

Your urologist and GP will try to minimise the amount of time you spend in hospital departments and at the GP practice; for example, arranging telephone consultations and offering blood tests at a different NHS site. Make sure everyone involved in your care and treatment has your up-to-date contact details.

Certain treatments for cancer can affect how well the immune system works. In particular, this may be the case for those men having [chemotherapy](#) treatments for their [prostate cancer](#). Their immune system may be affected and not work so well during their treatment and for a number of weeks or months afterwards. Those having treatment(s) over a number of months may be at a greater risk of developing more severe complications if they contract [COVID-19](#) (or indeed colds, 'flu or tummy bugs) during their treatment.

Some people with specific cancers are on the 'very vulnerable list' (those who are shielding) should receive a letter from NHS Scotland outlining more specific advice to keep themselves safe. <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-shielding>

Who can I contact?

Potentially your best point of contact for information in your particular circumstances will be your Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS). As you will understand, NHS staff are under a great deal of pressure at the moment and you may not get through to speak to the CNS straight away. You may be asked to leave your name and telephone number so a member of staff can call you back or they may advise on an email address that you can reach the person on.

If you attend your GP practice for follow-up and treatments for your prostate cancer, then the GP or Practice Nurse may be the best person to contact. Again, you may be asked to leave your name and telephone number so a member of staff can call you back.

If your urologist, oncologist, CNS, GP or someone from the NHS is trying to get in touch with you, this may show on your phone as 'number withheld'. It may be best to answer 'number withheld' calls in this current situation, especially if you have left your name and number for a call back. They will let you know straight away who is calling.

You may receive a text from NHSNoReply. These are usually texts to give you information and don't allow you to get back in touch.

Another very helpful source of information is this leaflet produced by the Scottish Government: <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2020/03/coronavirus-covid-19-tailored-advice-for-those-who-live-with-specific-medical-conditions/documents/cancer/cancer/govscot%3Adocument/Cancer%2BPatient%2BInfo%2Bguidance%2B-%2B090420.pdf>

What is the policy about treatment currently?

NHS Scotland and the Scottish Government have stated that the NHS will continue to provide vital cancer treatments, and emergency and urgent care for all patients. If it becomes necessary, it will **prioritise** some patients for treatment based on need.

If you are being treated for [prostate cancer](#) individual [decisions](#) based on the benefits and risks of treatment may have to be made with you as the rate of [COVID-19](#) infection in the community rises. Different therapy options involving fewer visits to the GP Practice or hospital may be offered to you. A lot of surgical procedures may now carry far greater risks due to [COVID-19](#). Because of this, other treatment plans may be proposed and [discussed](#) with you.

Shielding – what is it, why is it essential and the recent change to this guidance

Please note. You can see the latest Scottish Government guidance on '[shielding](#)' You can also download the 2 page PDF route map on shielding.

On the 23rd July 2020, the Scottish Government announced that [shielding](#) is to be paused from **1.8.20**. You should receive a letter or SMS text message confirming the latest changes announced and that shielding is to be paused.

Some additional changes have now been announced to the original guidance on [shielding](#)

[As from 24.7.20](#) a number of changes were announced to the guidance on [shielding](#).

This includes being able to meet with up to **8** people from **2** other households each day **indoors**, being able to meet **outdoors** with up to **15** people from **4** other households, travel in a car with someone you don't live with, use public transport, go to pubs and restaurants staying in the outdoor areas, go to shops and indoor markets, go to the barbers or hairdresser and visit indoor attractions and if you live alone you can form an extended household with one other household. You should wear a face covering if you can't physically distance and face coverings are compulsory on public transport and in shops.

Continue to wash your hands with soap and water regularly especially when you get home if you've been out and about,

You can see more details in our 'Info Guidance' page on shielding [here](#).

You can also watch a video about shielding [here](#).

Further guidance about going out and about has been produced by the government:

1. A guide to help you understand what activities are safer than others can be found [here](#)
2. A tool to help you protect yourself during daily activities can be found [here](#)

A [workplace risk assessment tool](#) to help people consider their individual risk when returning to work is also available.

If you have not already registered with the SMS text service, then it may be worth considering doing so. A COVID-19 forecasting service for shielding is being developed and people who have been [shielding](#) will be informed through the SMS text service about the risk of being exposed to COVID-19 in their local area.

In the future, the Government is looking at other ways that shielding might change. As the situation changes and as more knowledge and information become available, guidance on shielding will change. We will try to keep you as up to date as possible with these changes.

For those people who are at very high risk of severe illness additional protection measures are advised which involves minimising all interaction between them and others (called shielding).

Those who are extremely vulnerable should:

- not leave their homes (please see guidance above as this has been updated)
- minimise all non-essential contact with other members of their household

For more information on shielding go to <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-shielding>

People who fall into this category will be contacted by the NHS by letter or email. Some people may find that they receive more than one letter if they have multiple 'shielding' conditions. 'Shielding' applies to men who are being treated by chemotherapy for their prostate cancer.

If you discover that you are not on the "very vulnerable" list and don't receive a letter, but think you should be, you should contact your GP, or you can register via the NHS111 website to receive a letter. Having this letter might be helpful in terms of getting priority for home deliveries etc.

New national service

A new national helpline has been set up (as from 15.4.20) to provide vital help to those people who don't have a network of support (such friends, family, neighbours) but who are at **high risk** of contracting [COVID-19](#).

The helpline number is 0800 111 4000. The helpline is currently available from 9.00am to 5pm but there are plans to increase the number of hours the helpline will be available each day.

The service will offer help to those who do not have family/friends/other support, those who cannot get online, those who are over 70, those who are disabled, those who require the support of mental health services, or receive a 'flu jab for health reasons. This service is in addition to the support already available for people who have received letters advising them to [shield](#) themselves.

People who call this helpline (0800 111 4000) will be put through to their local authority who will help them get the service they need, such as:

- essential food and medication
- links to local social work services for vulnerable children or adults
- emotional support
- contact with local volunteer groups.

Thank you to our NHS

We would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank **all** NHS staff throughout Scotland who are doing a wonderful job in extremely challenging, difficult and unprecedented circumstances who have been working tirelessly to support all patients.

Although the weekly Thursday night 'Clap for our Carers' has come to an end, join the nation on **Thursday 25th March 2021 at 8pm** to celebrate our carers in the '[Clap for our Carers Day](#)' – a date to put in your diary now.

GP practices

Over the next few weeks and months GPs and the NHS in general will be under a great deal of pressure with the anticipated large number of patients with [COVID-19](#) and systems may have to change further as the rate of [COVID-19](#) infection in the community rises.

If you have been attending your GP practice for [tests](#) for suspected [prostate cancer](#) (eg [PSA and DRE](#)) and your GP has concerns about the test results you will still be referred to the urology department in hospital under the '[Urgent suspicion of cancer guidelines](#)'.

You will most likely find that your GP consultation will be very different from before.

You should not go to your GP practice unless you have arranged an appointment to see a GP.

Some guidance for you

- You should not stop any of your medications unless specifically advised to do so by your GP, someone from the urology team at hospital or the oncology team at hospital or if you are on a clinical trial then someone from the trial team.
- Consultations with the GP may be carried out remotely by a telephone call or video call to minimise the number of people going to the practice.
- You may find that online booking of appointments will be suspended.
- You may receive a text from your local GP practice giving guidance on going into the surgery, **not** going into the surgery, repeat blood tests and how to order repeat prescriptions.
- There may be additional requests for GPs to make home visits. These requests will be very carefully assessed possibly through initial telephone

calls. This is to prevent the spread of the [COVID-19](#) infection, especially to those in the 'very vulnerable group' and those who are shielding.

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-shielding>

The GP may choose to wear PPE (personal protection equipment) if he/she considers there to be a potential risk within the household; do not be alarmed in these circumstances.

- If you have to attend your GP, you may find that you will need to practice safe hand washing guidance or use the sanitising gel as directed.
- You will most likely be asked not to arrive early for your appointment and may be asked to wait in your car until you receive a text from the practice to go in.
- If you are attending a face-to-face appointment at your GP practice you may be asked to undergo some additional checks before the appointment.
- You will most likely be asked to attend on your own unless it is **absolutely necessary** to have someone with you.
- You may also find that entrances to your practice may be changed for different purposes. This is to minimise the risk of spreading the infection
- You may find that as staff go down with [COVID-19](#) themselves, practices may have to 'buddy up' so you may be seen at a different practice from the one you normally attend.
- If you call the GP practice, there may be a standard message asking you not to come into the surgery especially if you have any coronavirus symptoms and you may be directed to NHS Inform and 111 service.

At this very difficult time, there may be unavoidable delays in having some tests, scans, some treatments, obtaining test results and in some cases, these may have to be postponed.

Part of these delays may be to ensure that any equipment used eg CT scanners will be cleansed and disinfected to prevent any contamination of the equipment by [COVID-19](#). Test results may be delayed as laboratories will be under pressure with the many additional samples, they are dealing with because of [COVID-19](#).

If your GP, urologist, oncologist, CNS, or someone from the NHS is trying to get in touch with you, this may show on your phone as 'number withheld'. It may be best to answer 'number withheld' calls in this current situation, especially if you have left your name and number for a call back. They will let you know straight away who is calling.

You may receive a text from NHSNoReply. These are usually texts to give you information and don't support you getting back in touch.

Prescription services

You should be able to obtain repeat prescriptions through the normal system used in your health care practice – whether this is by telephone calls or ordered electronically. You may find more advice about ordering repeat prescriptions on your GP practice website. It has been stated that there are medications available and that people should avoid stockpiling or 'saving up' medications.

To prevent long journeys or journeys to the GP practice pharmacy, your prescription may be sent to a pharmacy of your choosing nearer your home to ease the collection and minimise footfall within the surgery. Please remember that you shouldn't stop any of your medications unless specifically advised to do so by your GP, someone from the urology team at hospital or the oncology team at hospital.

For those people who have been or may have been exposed to the virus and are self-isolating and for those who are in the 'very vulnerable groups', they should make alternative arrangements for collection of their prescriptions. For example, asking a friend or family member to collect prescriptions on your behalf.

Many pharmacies also provide a home delivery service, allowing you to sign up and have medications brought to you directly. You can check with your local pharmacy about the service. Because of the current crisis some pharmacies may waive delivery charges for prescriptions. You may find that prescriptions will be delivered to your door by volunteers. Folks who deliver prescriptions may knock the door, put the prescription down on the floor/step then stand back to allow you to collect the prescription.

Guidance on hospital clinics, prostate cancer treatment and being in hospital.

It is a very worrying time for everyone with information and guidance changing from day to day. This may be even more so if you are undergoing tests for [prostate cancer](#), have just been diagnosed with or are undergoing treatment for [prostate cancer](#).

You may find the following patient information on the British Association of Urologists very helpful.

https://www.baus.org.uk/patients/covid19_patient_information.aspx

Who should I contact if I become unwell or develop side-effects while on treatment for cancer?

If you have chest pain, significant bleeding or you need immediate medical attention call 999.

If you have a temperature or shivering or 'flu-like symptoms while you are on treatment for cancer, or for any side-effects of drug treatment, call your local cancer treatment helpline, or the national Cancer Treatment Helpline on 0800

917 7711. They will ask a series of questions and will give advice or arrange for you to have a medical review at your nearest hospital.

About this information

The information contained in this leaflet has been developed by Prostate Scotland and reviewed by members of our advisory group, [PAGES](#).

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