



# Lambton Road Medical Practice

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## **The last month has been an extraordinary time in general practice due to COVID-19.**

At Lambton Road, we moved to a total triage system at the outset to keep our patients and staff safe. Currently, any request for a GP or nurse opinion is dealt with initially as a telephone call. Online booking and automated booking are suspended. Many problems can be sorted out by a telephone or video call but there are some patients we need to see face-to-face.

Due to the level of COVID-19 in the general population, we must be vigilant at all times and recognise that any of us could be incubating the virus and be asymptomatic, so all staff will wear PPE for any interactions, and will aim to ensure anyone attending spends the minimum time in the practice.

We will, for example, explain vaccination advice or take an antenatal history over the phone ahead of any face-to-face appointments.

We will ensure any appointments are spaced out to minimise contact with anyone other than the clinician.

It is essential that all childhood vaccinations and vaccination of pregnant women for whooping cough continue. After COVID-19, we cannot risk a measles epidemic or similar, so PLEASE do not ignore any vaccination invite.

Some blood tests will continue (e.g. for high-risk drug monitoring) but routine NHS Health Checks and smears are suspended.

We continue to accept new registrations via our online registration facility on our website, so PLEASE use this to register any newborns to ensure that they have vaccinations at the appropriate time.

We have had our challenges with staff becoming unwell or having to isolate due to family illness but we are open as usual, albeit operating a full triage system.

In Merton, we have opened a 'hot site' at Wide Way Medical Centre, where any patient with suspected COVID-19 needing further assessment can be seen with staff and clinicians in full PPE. A second site nearer to us in the HARI department at the Nelson Medical Centre has been held up due to IT issues. So, temporarily, a transport service has been arranged to take those with no access to a car, to the Wide Way hub if, after triage, one

of our GPs feels a face-to-face consultation is needed.

In addition, we have set up a scheme where it is possible to deliver an oxygen saturation monitor to a patient for additional reassurance in COVID cases. We are grateful to volunteers who are helping to organise this.

There is some concern that parents in the UK are presenting late with unwell children with less positive outcomes, as are adults with chest pain or non-COVID-related acute illness (e.g. cancer).

We are open as usual and A&E departments are too, with clear separated channels for suspected COVID and non-COVID cases. We were open over the Easter Bank Holiday and are also open over the May Bank Holiday.

Many of our patients will have received letters from the government advising 'shielding' due to their medical problems. This group was identified by a central search and assessed against strict government criteria. Last week, GPs were asked to identify others who we felt should be shielded (i.e. having no contact with others).

If, however, you feel that you or someone you know should be 'shielded', please let us know.

In addition, our admin teams and social prescriber have been contacting our elderly and 'at-risk' patients to ensure those who need help get it.

If you are vulnerable or 'at-risk' and need help collecting shopping, medication or other essential supplies, you may also call the Royal Voluntary Service on 0808 196 3646 (8am to 8pm). Merton residents can also contact the MVSC Volunteer Task Force on 020 8685 2272.

## Medication

In the same way that some started to over-order food, drugs were unfortunately over-requested by a small minority at the onset of COVID-19.

This further depleted stocks which were already low owing to the fact that so many drugs are manufactured in China and India and supply chains have been interrupted.

As a result, NHSE has asked all practices to move to 'repeat dispensing' for all prescriptions.

Under this system, your pharmacist will dispense medication monthly - your GP will have authorised this over a 3 or 6 month period. We understand that this can be inconvenient for some but hope everyone understands that this will ensure that there are sufficient drugs available for everyone.

Whilst there is currently no GP testing for coronavirus, or treatment available in primary care, the surgery has signed up to participate in the PRINCIPLE trial. For more details, please see our website. Essentially, this is open to those aged 50-65 with pre-existing health conditions (e.g. diabetes or heart disease) or those over 65 with no illness and we hope and trust that this initiative will benefit our patients and lead to better understanding of COVID-19.

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In the last few weeks, GP connections have moved forward hugely with better data sharing between primary and secondary care, possibilities of home working and video consultations. We thank all of our patients for their messages of support and understanding over this unusual time. Our local hospitals are coping well and we are all cautiously optimistic that whilst COVID-19 will feature in all of our lives for some time to come, the peak of infections may now be over.

Our message now is very simple. The lockdown has worked. Please continue to respect it. Keep patient, keep safe and continue to stay at home and save lives.

We are open and we are here for you.

Best wishes  
**Dr Penelope Smith**  
 (Senior Partner)