

The Practice

Stoke Road Surgery Newsletter

Delivering quality primary care

In association with the PPG

**Questions from the PPG (Patients Participation group)
with responses by Dr K J Whybrew**

Is it possible to have different vaccine as a second dose?

At the fire station, there is no choice on which vaccine you have for your first dose, (you get what they are giving on that session). Your second dose should be the same vaccine as the first – this is automatically arranged for second doses at the fire station. The mass vaccination centres (eg Malvern) and pharmacy sites, which are booked through a completely separate system, only have Astra Zeneca vaccine available to them. There are a very few cases where the second dose needs to be different from the first – but these are exceptional circumstances (eg where someone has become bedbound since having a first dose of Pfizer and needs the second dose to be given in their own home. Because Pfizer cannot be transported to their home, they would have to have Astra Zeneca for their second dose).

It I have had my first dose at an NHS HUB can I have my second at the fire station?

Unfortunately, not. Each of the sites has been allocated doses so that they have a second dose available for each first dose given. If we gave second doses at the fire station to people who had had first doses elsewhere, we would not have enough second doses for the people who had first doses at the fire station.

I have just discovered I am pregnant, should I have the vaccine? Will it harm my baby?

Trials are ongoing on vaccinating pregnant women. As far as we know, the vaccine is safe in pregnancy, and the only pregnant women currently being offered the vaccine are those who are at risk from covid for other reasons. At the moment, this is a

decision best made on an individual basis, but the answer is usually that the benefits of the vaccine outweigh any risks. There are several other vaccines that we offer in pregnancy because of the benefits to pregnant women, and we have no reason to think that covid vaccine would be any less safe in pregnancy than flu vaccine, which has been routine in pregnancy for some years now.

Do you have road map out of the pandemic for the surgery?

For the moment, we will continue to triage all requests for a face-to-face GP appointment. This triage may be done by phone, or by econsult, or by other message formats. It is making things very much easier to make sure that appointments are used wisely, that investigations can be done so people are seen with results of blood tests, for example, rather than both before and after. Many people find the ability to have video consultations much more convenient than taking time off work to come to the surgery. But we will still be offering face to face appointments, as we always have been throughout the pandemic, to those who need them, and this of course includes those who cannot manage the tech for whatever reason. We are likely to retain the option to wait in the waiting room or the car park for the foreseeable future – many of our patients feel safer that way. We are also keen to minimise the numbers of people turning up to the surgery to talk to reception about things and will continue to encourage them to do this by phone, or via the website in the first instance. This will give reception a better chance to be available for those who do need to come down in person.

Will the surgery ever go back to what we are used to?

I think that there are many ways in which the world has changed, and we have to change with it. I don't think covid is ever going to go away completely, although I think its impact will be much less in a year or two's time, and it will become something we live with, like flu, where we have vaccinations and accept a small amount of risk.

Some of the changes that we had to introduce very quickly, such as the text messaging service, and being able to send in photos, have been extremely popular and will stay. Some of the other changes will probably also stay. We had been getting to the point anyway where we were struggling to manage the requests for appointments, some of which could have been dealt with in other ways, and so some of the triage changes may well stay long term. (Total triage may even become contractual for GPs).

But the thing that will never change is that we will always see people face to face who need to be seen face to face, and we will always prefer talking to people where we can – we are human too!

Will virtual calls continue?

Yes, this has proved a popular option and is a condition of the contract for all GP surgeries to provide.

Can I ask for a face-to-face consultation?

Yes, you can ask for a face-to-face consultation, but you need to be prepared to have a chat with us on the phone first, or to give enough information for us to be able to work out who it is best for you to see, and how urgently you need to be seen. We have been offering face to face consultations for people who need them throughout the pandemic.

Can I ask to speak to a specific GP?

You can certainly ask to speak to a specific GP, but you do need to be aware that none of us work at the surgery on all 5 days of the week, so your chosen GP may not be available. You may have to wait longer to speak to the GP of your choice. If you have a particular reason for wanting a particular GP, it may be helpful to state what that reason is (eg this doctor has been dealing with this problem already). We do sometimes get people requesting a certain GP because of their reputation for expertise in a certain area, where the problem is something that any GP can manage, and this can cause problems for that GP having time available for following up their own patients.

Is it safe to bring my baby to the surgery for their vaccinations?

Yes, we have several procedures in place to make sure that everyone is safe, and feels safe, when coming to the surgery.

Is it possible to ask for a second opinion from another GP at the surgery?

Yes, this has always been the case.