

Bridge Cottage Surgery

Latest News – OCTOBER 2020

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Bridge Cottage Surgery has remained open to patients, this included opening during Bank holidays in the peak of the pandemic. We have had to offer appointments using new ways of working and new technology. We have worked hard to make sure we are available to speak to, and to offer appointments to anyone who has a clinical need for them.

We realise that some of our patients will sometimes prefer to see a GP face to face. Due to Government guidance regarding Covid-19, we have had to implement a telephone triage system for patients in order to comply with safety regulations. In order to help with the demand for access to a clinician, we have offered additional online (eConsult) or telephone consultations. It has remained the case that if we have needed to see a patient face to face, or felt it was important for their care, we have asked those patients to come in to see us.

The social distancing requirements and cleaning required between patients during the pandemic means that if all patients were to come into the surgery, we would not be able to offer the same number of appointments.

Offering new ways of working has helped some patients to access appointments who would not normally be able to due to other commitments, such as their work or caring responsibilities.

When you call the surgery for an appointment, you will be asked by our reception team to give a brief description of the nature of the issue you wish to discuss. This will help us to get you to the right person in the right time frame. We do still ask that you call at 8am for a morning call back and 12 noon for an afternoon one. If the clinician decides you need to be seen face to face, they will arrange to see you. Many issues can be dealt with quickly and safely over the phone, saving you an unnecessary trip to the surgery and reducing the risk of spreading Covid-19 to you and our staff.

Please remember we are not an urgent treatment centre and we are not an A&E.

We are currently facing a very high volume of phone calls – please accept our apologies if the phone queue is longer than usual. We have implemented new telephone systems in order to help with the increased demand of telephone calls. Our reception team are working extremely hard to answer all of the calls as quickly as possible. Please be considerate and support them, they are frontline to our practice and deserve to be treated with respect.

In addition to contacting the Surgery by telephone, patients can also complete an eConsult which is accessible on our website and is processed at our Welwyn Surgery. Not only does it act as another way to communicate with us, it also provides clinical information and guidance which will always be available to you. eConsults submitted to the Surgery will be responded to by the end of the next working day by text, email or phone.

Bridge Cottage Surgery is open for patients to be able to collect any relevant paperwork that has been instructed by a clinician. We would ask you to continue to drop any samples or paperwork off to us via the black front letter box rather than bringing to the reception desk. This will protect both patients and staff of Bridge Cottage Surgery against unnecessary exposure to the virus. Please try to avoid coming to the surgery before 8.30am.

In September we started offering routine Nurse Appointments that can be booked in advance. The clinical team have provided reception with a comprehensive list of what can be booked without the need to telephone triage. We would ask you to ensure you are symptom free on this day and that only you arrive for the appointment and that you call us from the front door to announce yourself. Please note the main symptoms of Coronavirus are: a high temperature, a new continuous cough and/or a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste. Your clinician will collect you from this door and take your temperature. Please let reception know at the time of arrival if you are unable to stand for a period of time and we will do our best to find you an inside space to wait for your appointment.

Please also note that if you do need to come into the surgery a mask must be worn.

From 12th October, we will be using Spring House hot hub, with Kimpton Surgery for any surge capacity, to see patients who are COVID positive or likely to have COVID. It is important we separate patients who have/ potentially have COVID from those who do not to enable us to protect all patients of Bridge Cottage Surgery. This will help support the COVID response by preventing transmission of the disease.

We understand that some patients are reluctant to come and see us in the surgery as they are worried. We are making sure that social distancing is as good as it possibly can be and that we maintain a 'COVID-secure' environment. Some of the things we take into account when we are considering this are: the number of people in the waiting room, the number of people who pass each other in the corridors. Patient toilet facilities are not currently available.

Our staff here are people too, and some may have ethnicity or health issues that make them more vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19. As caring employers, we need to ensure that we keep our staff safe as well. We take the necessary precautions to keep both our staff and our patients safe.

COVID-19 has presented the NHS with the greatest challenge it has faced since its creation. During this pandemic, demand on NHS services have increased and capacity has been reduced by the need for staff to go into self-isolation or when staff have become unwell and we could still be faced with these challenges in the future.

We are available to talk to and we always want to hear from patients who need us. While we understand patients' frustrations with the current situation, we hope you will continue to help and support us as you have always supported the NHS, so that we can go on providing you with care and support in the coming weeks and months.

Flu Update

Following a very successful first flu clinic a few weeks ago all of the letters have now been sent out inviting patients to the forthcoming clinics. The next one is 15th October which covers patients who were shielding, patients who are of high risk and pregnant woman. We will be running one further clinic on 7th November. Please attend at the times you have been allocated as we are trying to manage foot flow and ensure we have no queues. Please only attend if you have received an invitation letter. If you have not received a letter, or if you are housebound, please contact the surgery.

Seeking Information about Corona virus

We know that NHS England have taken steps to work with search engines to help manage fake news around the corona virus and have provided a variety of reputable website links below where you can look at the same guidance we would use in the practice to get up to date and authoritative advice:

111: <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19>

NHS England: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Public health: <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/news>

East and North Herts CCG: <https://www.enhertscg.nhs.uk/news>

Herts County Council: <https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/emergencies/coronavirus>

Booking a COVID test: <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>

Please note if you do not have access to the internet then you can contact 119 who are there to support you with the booking of a test. This new number is to be used in any COVID related instance as this forms part of the track and trace that the government have implemented. This also alleviates the pressure from the normal 111 service.

We would ask that you consult these websites if you have queries and then get in contact with us by phone if you need further support.

Changes to Bridge Cottage Surgery Team

After many valuable years of service to Bridge Cottage Surgery, Dr Dansie decided to take retirement back in April. We are sure you as a community along with us would wish him a very happy and relaxing future.

In May, we welcomed Dr Mya Khan to the team as a GP Associate.

Online Booking

All online booking services continue to be suspended.

You can still request repeat prescriptions online and we would urge you to do this. If you are not set up for this service please call the surgery and we will be happy to help you set it up to support you managing your repeat medication remotely.

NEW Bridge Cottage Surgery Website

<https://www.bridgecottagesurgery.nhs.uk>

Please visit our NEW designed website. Many queries can be answered via our website, while we are all working together to minimise unnecessary contact you may find answers to queries on the site. You can also use the website to submit queries or forms to avoid coming into the surgery. Please do take a look at the site before you call us.