

**Howick Health Medical Centre Newsletter May 2020**

We hope you have been keeping well in these challenging times! We certainly have experienced changes in the last seven weeks that have been unlike any other period in our lives! In this newsletter we would like to touch upon a few common questions that have popped up over the past seven weeks. Our website will be updated regularly to help answer your questions.

**Covid cases**

We have had no COVID-19 cases reported in our patients or staff. We have not yet eliminated COVID-19 from our community so it is important you report any cold symptoms at the time of booking so we can take the usual precautions. Possible symptoms can be seen at this link: <https://covid19.govt.nz/covid-19/about-covid-19/covid-19-symptoms/>

**Level 2**

We are open for business. As COVID-19 remain a possibility in the community until a vaccine is available we will continue to offer virtual consultations (telephone and video consultations) as well as in person consultations. We are continuing preventive screening, immunisations, contraceptive services and acute care.

**Consulting**

We have still been seeing patients in person though the majority of the consultations over the past seven weeks have either been phone or video consults. Under lockdown level 2 the proportion of in person consultations will increase.

We have experienced a significant reduction in the number of patients booking for consultations and are concerned many are delaying seeing the doctor. All doctors are available for consultations and we would encourage you to see your doctor if you are feeling unwell.

We will be expecting a surge in patient bookings but would urge that you respect the usual 10-13 minutes consultation time frame. This is to allow your doctor to deal with 1 item and 2-5 minutes of paperwork time (ie writing in the patient records, sending scripts/lab forms, writing referrals etc). If you have more than 1 item to discuss please book extra time (see our website for costs or ask reception).

If you have a photo of your medical complaint, it would be helpful that you email howickreception@outlook.com at least 4 hours PRIOR to your virtual consultation ie a skin complaint, sore throat etc.

**In Person Consultations**

You can still call for an in person consultation however this will be preceded by a phone triage or phone call. If you do have a mask we would encourage you to use this. When you arrive please call reception with the car park number.

As many cold symptoms may resemble COVID-19 we are still triaging ALL patients who may present for an in person consultations. Your doctor will determine after taking your history if an examination is essential. So it is possible you will not see your doctor if you have booked for an in patient appointment.

For the safety of our vulnerable patients and staff if you do have any cold symptoms on the day of your appointment, have travelled from overseas in the prior 14 days or have been in contact with someone with COVID-19 PLEASE DO NOT COME IN THE PRACTICE and you must inform reception prior to your appointment.

**Phone Consultations**

Currently the majority of consults are via phone. You can either book online or call us and please state which contact number the doctor should call. You do not need to call us at the time of the appointment.

**Video Consultations**

When you book online you will receive email confirmation of your appointment with a link that will take you to your doctor’s ‘virtual waiting room’. These can also be seen on our website [www.howickhealth.co.nz](http://www.howickhealth.co.nz) on the staff page.

**Flu vaccines**

We currently have flu vaccines that are now available for the general public. These are administered in the rear car park. You can book for this online with the nurse (please ignore the phone or video consult instructions when booking online) or call.

**Prescriptions**

If you are due to see your doctor we will be advising you to have a consultation. As a general rule you will need to see the doctor for every 2nd prescription if you are well and every 3 months if you have multiple medical conditions/medications. Under level 2 you are now able to pick up your prescription from the practice but please practice safe social distancing (2 metres).

**Patient portal**

Go to our website on the home page and scroll to ‘Patient Portal’ to sign up. A consent form is located under this. This will enable you to do many things online such as order prescriptions, make appointments, see your lab results and any view outstanding recalls. There is no fee to join the portal.

**Dr Vallings**

Dr. Vallings will now be consulting by either phone or video.

She will not be available for in person consultations.

**Update your contact information**

Please update us if you have changed your contact numbers, email address or address. Your details are important to us if we are trying to contact you of any future important changes in our practice.

**Thank you!**

Lastly we would like to say thank you to for your support, words of encouragement, the odd treat to brighten up our day and patience you have shown us during what has been a challenging and changing world for us and you! We remain committed in providing a service to all our loyal patients! Take care and stay safe!

*From all the staff at Howick Health and Medical Centre*

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