

BETSI CADWALADR UNIVERSITY HEALTH BOARD CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PARTNERS UPDATE

Correct as of 19 March 2020

Latest information and advice from BCUHB

Dear colleagues,

We are now entering into very challenging times for our communities across North Wales and we are working as hard as possible to meet the challenge posed by COVID-19.

We continue to work closely with partner agencies including Public Health Wales, North Wales Police, local authorities and the third sector on our planned response to protect the health of the population of North Wales.



We would very much welcome your support in sharing official advice and information as we work to contain the spread of the virus. This briefing document contains up-to-date information about what is being done in North Wales as we co-ordinate our response to the rapidly developing situation. Please share as appropriate.

We will continue to provide you with regular updates as the situation changes.

Mark Polin
Chairman

Simon Dean
Interim Chief Executive



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Change to public health advice

The updated guidance from Public Health Wales is:

People who live with others should stay at home for 14 days if they, or anyone in their household, has either a high temperature or a new and continuous cough

People who live alone should stay at home for seven days if they develop a high temperature or a new and continuous cough

Everyone should avoid non-essential contact with others and unnecessary travel

Everyone is being asked to work from home where they possibly can, and avoid pubs, clubs, theatres and social venues

People over 70, and vulnerable groups of any age are asked to follow the 'social distancing' advice on the Public Health Wales website. Written information is being sent by the Welsh Government to affected individuals soon.

**For the full guidance, visit the Public Health Wales website:
phw.nhs.wales**



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Delays getting through to NHS 111

The 111 service provided by our colleagues in the Welsh Ambulance Service Trust has been extremely busy and there may be a wait for people's calls to be answered.

Our advice to the public is to please remain patient and keep trying. **Do not** hang up and re-dial 999, as we need to save this for people with an immediately life-threatening emergency.



Do not visit your GP, hospital or pharmacy. Only call 111 if you feel you cannot cope with your symptoms at home.



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Changes to hospital visiting times

From Wednesday, 18 March, visits to most patients will be restricted to 15 minutes in all of our hospitals. Visits will be restricted to between 2pm – 4pm and 6pm – 7.30pm.

Only one visitor per patient will be allowed, and children under the age of 16 will no longer be able to visit the ward areas.

Visits to our children's wards will also be restricted to one parent or carer at a time. Visiting to our labour wards will be restricted to one birthing partner per expectant mother. Similarly, family and friends visiting newborn babies will also be restricted to one person at a time.

Visitor guidance rules may be relaxed for end of life care, mental health, critically ill patients, and patients with dementia.

Most importantly, you must not visit if you are unwell with flu-like symptoms including a high temperature or new continuous cough currently or within the last 7 days. In addition, if you have any symptoms relating to a stomach upset, including diarrhoea and/or vomiting do not come to the hospital. Please do not visit patients who have or are suspected to have COVID-19.

We understand that family care and involvement could be a key part of a loved one's recovery, and ask that you discuss any specific visiting needs with your ward sister or charge nurse.

We are also encouraging family and friends of patients under our care to consider alternative ways of keeping in touch, including the use of our hospitals' free WiFi to use FaceTime or video calling.

“We understand the importance of patients staying in contact with their loved ones. But the safety of our patients and staff is paramount, and it is crucial that we take all reasonable steps to minimise the risk of infection in our hospitals.”



Gill Harris, Executive Director of Nursing and Midwifery



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Non-urgent outpatient appointments and operations postponed as part of plan to manage COVID-19 outbreak

We have taken the difficult decision to postpone many non-urgent operations, procedures, and outpatient appointments, to focus resources on caring for an expected increase in COVID-19 patients who need hospital care.

Postponements across North Wales will begin from Thursday 19 March.

The Health Board will contact every patient whose planned care procedure or appointment has been postponed. We ask that patients do not contact our hospitals or departments to find out if their procedure has been postponed. This will ensure our staff can focus on preparations to care for an expected increase in patients with COVID-19.

We will be prioritising those patients across North Wales who are in need of the most urgent care, for example people in need of cancer treatment.

Dr David Fearnley, Executive Medical Director said: "We know that there are many people expecting to undergo a procedure or examination over the coming weeks, who in some cases have already waited a long time.

"We are extremely sorry for any disruption, anxiety or discomfort this decision may cause. We will be doing all we can to prioritise patients in the most urgent need of care.

"We want to thank people across North Wales for their continued support and understanding of the unprecedented challenges we face in tackling COVID-19."



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GP Surgery arrangements

To try to limit the spread of COVID-19, each of our managed practices (GP practices run by the Health Board) have temporarily changed the way in which they are providing services for our patients.

If you are registered at one of the surgeries listed below, and would like an appointment then please telephone your surgery first. If possible DO NOT attend the surgery to make an appointment.

You will be asked a series of questions relating to your symptoms. Guidance will be provided to you by either a receptionist and/or a GP/Nurse and an appointment will be made for you at the surgery if required.

Do not go to the GP surgery if you have high temperature/fever and/or new continuous cough. Self-isolate for 7 days. Only ring 111 if symptoms worsen.

For all other GP practices please check their websites, social media feeds, or phone them for guidance on how they are managing appointment requests.

Our full list of managed practices is:

Blaenau Ffestiniog – Canolfan Goffa Ffestiniog

Colwyn Bay - Rysseldene

Connah's Quay – St Mark's Dee View Surgery

Conwy – Llys Meddyg

Conwy – Meddygfa Gyffin

Criccieth – Health Centre

Holyhead – Cambria Surgery

Holyhead - Longford House Surgery

Holywell – Panton Surgery

Porthmadog – Porthmadog Health Centre

Prestatyn– Healthy Prestatyn Iach

Wrexham – Pen y Maes Health Centre

Wrexham – Borrass Park Surgery

Wrexham (Ruabon) – The Medical Centre

Wrexham (Hightown) - Beechley Medical Centre

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Testing units established to diagnose Novel Coronavirus in North Wales NHS staff

New drive through testing units have been established at three locations across North Wales to support the response to tackling COVID-19.

At this stage, Welsh Government have directed that the testing units will only be providing priority testing for identified NHS workers directly involved in the response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

This will reduce the risk of NHS staff infecting other patients, or having to take time off work to self-isolate if they developed symptoms, without confirmation of whether they have the virus or not.

Testing of certain staff groups who are symptomatic of COVID-19 is being implemented as part of guidance from the Chief Medical Officer. Based on a careful risk assessment, currently only healthcare workers who are symptomatic and work in Acute Medical Assessment Units, Emergency Departments, Critical Care/Intensive Care Units and Primary Care will be considered for testing.

The testing units are located at Ysbyty Alltwn, Tremadog; Bryn y Neuadd Hospital, Llanfairfechan; and on the grounds of Wrexham Maelor Hospital.

The new units are not operating a walk in service and will not provide testing to NHS staff without a prior appointment. There is no additional risk to people living in the immediate vicinity of these units.

A range of precautions and infection prevention measures have been considered and put in place, including strict clinical protocols and the use of Personal Protective Equipment.



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Help us keep people informed on social media

To help ensure that general public are aware of the most up to date official advice, please share the latest Coronavirus posts from BCUHB and Public Health Wales on social media.



@BetsiCadwaladr and @PublicHealthW



Search for 'Betsi Cadwaladr' and 'Public Health Wales'

We are also urging people to not share unhelpful speculation on social media which could cause confusion or unnecessary distress.

Useful websites



Public Health Wales: phw.nhs.wales



Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board: www.bcuhb.nhs.wales



NHS Direct Wales online symptom checker: www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/COVID19/



Welsh Government Coronavirus information: <https://gov.wales/coronavirus-covid19>



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