



Welcome to our Spring PPG Newsletter. I'm sure like me you are welcoming the lighter evenings and the spring bulbs everywhere. The last months have been challenging for all GP practices. High patient demand, NHS bureaucracy, and difficulties in recruiting staff are problems facing all GP surgeries at present. Our surgery's systems, processes and people are having to constantly evolve and adapt to the 'new normal'. It is good to be able to report that the new services e.g. physiotherapy and mental health facilities are being well used. The Push Doctor system has, however, been less popular than expected, as people seem to prefer traditional consultations.

FAQs: Why do I have to wait 3 weeks for an appointment?

I'm pleased to say that I have had many positive comments about the Newsletter and patients are pleased to be kept in the loop. However, a number of people have expressed concern about the length of time they have to wait before being able to speak to a health care professional. This is not a problem that is unique to Empingham, but we understand your concerns, and the issue was discussed at the recent PPG meeting. We heard that the practice has been looking at ways of improving the service and has introduced the following measures to try to help:

- More face to face appointments on the day for patients who are acutely unwell
- Some reserved appointment slots within the week ahead
- Opportunities to be referred to the Corby Urgent Care facility or Oakham if Empingham appointments have all been filled.

If I feel unwell, what should I consider to be urgent?

Coughs, sore throats or mild urine infections would not usually be considered to be urgent, and you may well be able to get over the counter medication from a chemist. Routine appointments e.g. to discuss an on-going condition, may still have up to a 3 week wait. However, chest pain, unexplained bleeding, blackouts, wheezing and severe pain are among the issues that would suggest the need for an urgent appointment.

Are masks still needed at the surgery?

Although the national requirements for mask wearing have been relaxed, nothing has changed for health care staff. They are still testing twice a week, and have to isolate if positive. To protect them and your fellow patients please continue to wear a mask. Let the practice know if you have an appointment but have respiratory symptoms, as staff may need to wear additional PPE to see you. COVID hasn't gone away, and several staff have in fact had positive tests recently. This resulted in many appointments having to be rearranged. It is thanks to the long hours put in by the Practice Operations Manager over the weekend, that no appointments had to be cancelled.

The whole team is committed to giving the best service they can - in often difficult circumstances.

Any ideas, thoughts or comments? The PPG is waiting to hear from you.

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