

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the whole NHS is really under strain. In order to manage the high numbers of unwell patients, and for your safety, most 'non-urgent' hospital services have been paused to allow staff to be moved to look after very sick patients and create new intensive care units.

This means there are longer waiting times for most conditions (life threatening emergencies and cancer care has been protected). All patients referred to the hospital or on a waiting list have had their cases assessed by their consultant to see if their appointment needed to be brought forward despite the delays, or if, based on what the consultant knows about you, they feel it is safe for you to wait. They've also tried to work out who they could speak to via telephone or video appointment to reduce the delays.

If, since you were last seen by your consultant, or you are yet to receive your first appointment, and your symptoms have worsened, you can contact the hospital team directly on 01539 716998, check out their website: <https://www.uhmb.nhs.uk/visiting-our-hospitals/coronavirus-information/covid-19-faqs>; or contact your consultant's secretary.

Unfortunately we, as your GPs, do not have a great influence on these waiting times. If you're sure your symptoms or condition has significantly worsened, we would like to support you to get the care you need.

Did you know that you can get great advice on managing your condition via the NHS website, www.patient.info, your local pharmacy, NHS 111, or by speaking to one of our experienced Reception Team to guide you to the right clinician in our team?

If you do feel that the only course of action is a letter to the hospital, please help us by writing a short note to your registered GP and tell them why you feel that you need to be seen sooner than planned.

- What is it about your symptoms or condition that has got worse?
- Have you had a change in circumstances making your situation more urgent?
- Have you tried to speak to your specialist team and not managed to sort things out?

Your GP will review your letter to see how best we can help. They will either arrange to discuss this with you or pass your letter to your specialist or send a summary depending on the information given.

If this is not possible, for any reason, please let the Reception team know and will endeavour to support in the said letter if we can.

Please do not put off seeking help if you feel your symptoms or condition needs on-the-day treatment – you can ring NHS 111 any time, and our Urgent Care team is available from 8.30am to 6.30pm Monday to Friday, or if you think it is an emergency, 999.

Thank you for your understanding

Best regards,

LMP GPs