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COVID-19: Information for our 13-19 year old patients

The NHS has been writing to all those patients who are at high risk of hospital admission should they contract the Coronavirus (or COVID-19 if you want to be technical). Thankfully, for the majority of you who remain fit, healthy and strong, you will not receive this letter nor have to therefore fully isolate yourself for a minimum of 12 weeks.

However, I am sure you are aware that COVID-19 can infect and affect anyone, of any age and in any state of fitness or health, sometimes with serious consequences.

As a practice, we wanted to take this opportunity to write to you to be able to advise you that we are still here, able and willing to support you and provide services for your on-going or developing medical needs.

We are trying to become as IT savvy as many of you already are, mainly doing telephone / video consultations and starting to use texts and e-mails. We are starting to update and develop our practice website www.valleymedicalcentre.org.uk and even use social media platforms to provide messaging and support. www.facebook.com/Valley-Medical-Centre-Stocksbridge

We are also able to still see you face to face but only if this is essential. Currently, we will need to speak / video consult with you first as the best way to keep you safe and maintain your health.

We would also like to provide you with some additional information by answering some questions from young people on their healthcare and about COVID-19. We hope that our answers may help you cope with the restrictions that lockdown or self-isolation may have on your overall well-being.

Q1. Is it OK to be worried about what's happening?

These are truly extra-ordinary times where information and issues are changing extremely rapidly. It is not surprising that each day can feel totally different to the next and this is unsettling. What's happening in the world right now can feel daunting, unable to make plans even for the immediate future - it's very normal to feel anxious and unsure about things.

Maybe your exams have been cancelled, or your first year at university has come to a sudden halt, or school has been closed for the foreseeable future? Whether you're feeling overwhelmed, unproductive, anxious or hopeless, your feelings are justified – you are not alone in feeling this way.

Q2. Can I call to speak to a doctor if I am worried about my health?

If you are feeling very overwhelmed and are struggling to function normally, there is help available. Please contact us – we are still open for business. Calls may take a little longer to answer on our

switchboard but we will endeavour to manage and direct your call to the most appropriate person to help with your medical query / need. **0114 3217510**

Q3. Will my contact I make be confidential?

As a registered patient of ours, you are entitled to receive medical support, care and assistance from our staff. You do not need permission from your parents or guardian to make an appointment or chat to one of our doctors or nurses. Please be reassured that contact and discussions with any of our staff is treated with confidence, as will the opportunity to speak or consult with one of our clinical staff.

Q4. I have read that I could e-mail the doctor with a question, is this possible?

As of April 1st, we are operating 'e-consult.' This means you can send us a question or concern and we will get back to you, on the same day, with a response. This is new for us and you will need to register to be able to use the service. If you are under 16, your parents will need to register on your behalf, but then you will be able to send a request yourself, and receive a reply back to your given e-mail.

Q5. Will you have a record of my mobile or e-mail address if you need to contact me?

With the increased role of technology in all we do now, it is very important that we have a current mobile and e-mail address for you, so that, with your permission, we can text or contact you directly. We may have an old contact or a parent's mobile number attached to your records so to update your details would help us ensure we can keep in contact with you appropriately and directly when you need advice or support.

Could you telephone the Practice with your current contact details and giving your consent (permission) for us to be able to contact you by this means if you are happy for us to do so. Our staff will then update your records.

Q6: I am a young carer, should I let you know about this?

Absolutely - yes please. Whether you have been a carer of others in your family for a while or just recently because of COVID-19 please contact the surgery so we can make a note of this. If you are struggling or having difficulties with your caring responsibilities or if you have any questions, we would be happy to try and help.

Q7. Social Media is giving me mixed messages and confusing me, how do I know what is true and what is false?

Sometimes feeling stressed or anxious can be related to seeing lots of media coverage and new stories about the impact of COVID-19. At the moment, there is a lot of coverage from all media and although it is important to stay informed, consider taking a break if you feel things are getting on top of you. **Maybe you should stop looking at twitter?** A horrendous thing to suggest, I know. However some days, social media might be your only source of news and information. While some of what you read is trustworthy, a lot of it isn't, and it's put out there to scare and confuse you. Consuming so much of this information at once can be damaging to an already anxious brain and it's important to know when to give yourself a break from it. Social media can also be fantastic, try to use it for positive and upbeat interactions with friends and family.

Q8: So where should I get my advice and information about about COVID-19?

Gwyneth Paltrow and Kourtney Kardashian will have you believing that a shot of apple cider vinegar every morning and a \$200 face mask will cure coronavirus. Donald Trump stated that the USA would have sorted Coronavirus out by Easter. These are unrealistic, not scientifically proven and just not true. Only take advice from trusted government and health service websites. These have all the latest facts and figures to give consistent advice on how to prevent spreading, catching it and what to do if

you think you have the Coronavirus.

Q9: How can I occupy myself to avoid boredom and feeling even worse about things?

Despite the loss of normal routine and activities, try to develop and implement a new routine that provides a balance of several different activities and interactions with others. At times like these, it can be easy to fall into unhealthy patterns of behaviour, which can make you feel worse. Simple things you can do to stay mentally and physically active during this time include:

- ❖ Wake up relatively early – (annoying but it does help). Lying in bed until early afternoon will drain your energy levels and crush productivity. Set a nice alarm to wake up to and allow yourself more time to get ready and start the day properly.
- ❖ Stay connected to your friends and family via skype, email, video-calling and telephone / texting. Don't rely just on texting though, as an audio-visual catch up is much more rewarding.
- ❖ Social media can be an excellent way to keep in touch with your friends and family. However, you should be mindful of your use of social media. Use it to promote positive interactions, and put your device away if it starts to negatively affect your mood. Many smartphones allow you to set time limits for certain apps such as Facebook or Instagram.
- ❖ It is important to maintain, where possible, some sort of daily routine. You should vary what you put into your routine to keep things different and interesting but try and include key elements consistently.
- ❖ Make a to do list (or schedule / rota) with reasonable and specific things included. Finalise your schedule / rota the night before so you are ready and prepared for the day ahead. Include spending time doing things you enjoy as well as things you need to do.
 - *Time to eat (breakfast, lunch and inner)*
 - *Time to network chat and socialise, social media / gaming (IT based)*
 - *Time to do work, study, homework, coursework, learn, research*
 - *Time for exercise*
 - *Time for relaxing, personal downtime (non IT based)*
 - *Time to spend with family*
 - *Time to spend doing something fun / different / activity based*
- ❖ Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, drink enough water, and try to avoid smoking, alcohol and recreational drugs
- ❖ If needing to socially isolate, spend time with the windows open to let in fresh air, arranging space to sit with a nice view if possible and get some natural sunlight. Get out into the garden or sit on your doorstep if you can, keeping a distance of at least 2 metres from others.
- ❖ If you don't need to isolate, you should try and get out of the house to do your daily exercise (walk, jog, run or bike-ride) for an hour, keeping your social distance to at least 2 metres when outside.
- ❖ Look to introduce fun activities for you and the family
 - *Themed meals*
 - *Special movie / Netflix nights*
 - *Quizzes and competitions*
 - *Kitchen dancing / Karaoke*
 - *Skype/FT friends other family to involve them too*

- ❖ Getting a good night's sleep is crucial for feeling emotionally healthy the next day. We all feel better after a good night's sleep.

Q10: What is out there to help me cope with this pandemic?

Here are some young person friendly websites, apps and resources focused on helping you navigate through these uncertain times as well as supporting your emotional and physical well-being.

UK information websites on COVID-19

NHS (nhs.uk) website COVID-19 advice

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

Government (gov.uk) website COVID-19 advice

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do>

Young Scot website COVID-19 advice

- <https://young.scot/campaigns/national/coronavirus>

COVID-19 Sleep tips from Evelina Children's Hospital

- <https://www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/our-services/hospital/sleep-medicine-department/coronavirus-sleep-tips.aspx>

COVID-19 Sleep tips from the PHSE Association

- <https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/sleep-factor---home-learning-lesson-plans-healthy>

Resources to manage COVID-19 for Children & Young People

- <https://young.scot/campaigns/national/coronavirushttps://cypmedtech.nihr.ac.uk/2020/04/06/covid-19-resources-for-children-young-people-and-families/>

Websites offering links to a number of Young People friendly resources

Anna Freud (Links to number of wellbeing resources, list of sources of help for those with urgent needs)

- <https://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind>

Childline (Help and advice on a wide range of issues)

- <https://www.childline.org.uk/>

Footsteps Teeside (Coping with isolation, mental health & wellbeing. Resources peer reviewed by student Hollie Smith)

- <https://footstepsteesside.co.uk/covid-19/>

Health for Young People (Good links to advice & information on sexual health, mental health and long term conditions)

- <https://what0-18.nhs.uk/health-for-young-people>

Healthy Young Minds (Herts based, Has links to local and national advice and sources)

- <https://healthyyoungmindsinherts.org.uk/parents-and-carers/advice-parents-during-covid-19-outbreak>

The Mix (Advice and support for the Under 25's)

- <https://www.themix.org.uk>

Young People's Health.org (Wide range of links to valuable resources)

- <https://www.youngpeopleshealth.org.uk/covid-19>

Websites offering advice on keeping fit, at home

Free 30 day Yoga course

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-jhKVdZOJM>

Herts sports partnership (workout from home)

- <https://sportinherts.org.uk/workoutfromhome/>

NHS Physical active guidelines for children and young people

- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/physical-activity-guidelines-children-and-young-people/?tabname=how-much-exercise>

SuperBetter (Builds personal resilience and boosts physical and emotional wellbeing)

- <https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/smiling-mind/id560442518>

The Football Association (Staying fit at home)

- <http://www.thefa.com/get-involved/footballs-staying-home>

21 best home exercises for men (workout from home)

- <https://www.menshealth.com/uk/building-muscle/a754099/the-15-best-beginners-exercises-to-do-at-home/>

Young people friendly websites offering advice, applications and Resources on mental health and well-being

Calmharm (UK charity on children & young people's mental health)

- <https://calmharm.co.uk>

Clearfear (Free app to help with managing anxiety)

- <https://www.clearfear.co.uk>

DistrACT (Provides help around self harm and suicidal thoughts)

- <https://www.themix.org.uk>

Headspace (Guidance & training in mindfulness, free extended access during COVID=19)

- <https://www.headspace.com/>

Kooth (Anonymous online support for young people)

- <https://kooth.com>

MeeTwo (Helps teenagers to talk about difficult things)

- <https://www.meetwo.co.uk>

MindfulGnats (Helps young people develop mindfulness and relaxation skills)

- <https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/mindful-gnats/id973919092>

MindShift (Canadian app with advice managing anxiety and depression)

- <https://www.anxietycanada.com/articles/new-mindshift-cbt-app-gives-canadians-free-anxiety-relief/>

MoodGym (Interactive program to help with low mood)

- <https://moodgym.com.au>

Recharge-move well, sleep well, be well (Program to help improve mood and energy levels)

- <https://apps.apple.com/au/app/recharge-move-well-sleep-well-be-well/id878026126>

Sleepio (online sleep improvement programme)

- <https://www.sleepio.com>

Smiling minds (Australian app-based meditation programme)

- <https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/smiling-mind/id560442518>

Young Minds (Children & young people's mental health)

- <https://youngminds.org.uk>

Top tips for parents to help their young person (by Author Dr Dominique Thompson)

- <https://buzzconsulting.co.uk/docs/PDF-Top-tips-for-parents-of-locked-down-teens.pdf>

Please keep safe and healthy

Yours sincerely

The Doctors and Staff at Valley Medical Centre

Ms Megan Burack, *Medical student at Queens Medical Centre,
University of Nottingham and NHS Volunteer*

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