

**Letter to GP Practices
regarding COVID-19 and
patients with long-term
conditions**

This letter pack is for GPs across Derby and Derbyshire in regards to managing their patients with long-term conditions and COVID-19. We are aware that the rapid developments in the recent days have led to a significant change in routine practice in addition to managing and treating patients face-to-face.

This pack covers guidance around updates to:

- General
- Shielded Patients
- Respiratory
- Diabetes
- Cardiovascular Disease
- Gastroenterology

General

[Derby and Derbyshire Red Hub Pathway](#)

Shielded Patients

[A guide to staying active at home during the coronavirus pandemic | information for patients](#)

Respiratory

Letter from NHS Arden and Gem | Priyanka Shinde

Hi All,

Thanks for those who have requested oxygen to support the GP Hot Hubs in their regions.

A kind reminder for everyone to consider the speed of oxygen delivery of the GP Hot Hub requests. If they request urgent oxygen, it will be charged as such which is a cost significantly higher than the normal delivery costs. I would encourage your GP Hot Hubs to consider the delivery speed as appropriate. I believe there is no such need for a 4-hour urgent delivery. If you wish to get oxygen as soon as possible, I would suggest a next day delivery should suffice considering the model for Hot Hubs we are working with.

To summarise, can you encourage your GP Hot Hubs to request oxygen delivery either as a next day or a normal 3 day delivery.

Many Thanks.

Priya

Regards,

Priyanka Shinde

Regional Lead Home Oxygen Services – East Midlands

Collaborative Contracting

NHS Arden and Greater East Midlands Commissioning Support Unit-

Respiratory Support for GPs Available

Chesterfield Royal Hospital (North Derbyshire GPs)

North Derbyshire GPs can access the CRH respiratory line for general respiratory advice and guidance by calling their unique Consultant Connect Dial-In Number shown on their practice poster or use the free [Consultant Connect App](#) to call (the app can be downloaded from either the [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#)). The app is the quickest and easiest way to speak to a consultant. Also embedded below is the GP start up guide. If GPs have any queries regarding using Consultant Connect, contact Grace Housden at Consultant Connect on the following email: grace.housden@consultantconnect.org.uk

[Consultant connect GP start-up guide](#)

Impact+ (Community Respiratory Service (South Derbyshire GPs)

GPs in South Derbyshire and Erewash areas can also contact the Lung Line at Impact+ for general advice and support with respiratory patients – Tel 01332 788225 (select Option 1 or Option 4 if Option 1 is busy).

[British Thoracic Society Guidance on Respiratory Follow Up of Patients with a Clinico-Radiological Diagnosis of COVID-19 Pneumonia](#)

Diabetes

Care homes and Diabetes

Please see [this guidance](#) for care homes during the COVID-19 pandemic to support them in managing residents with diabetes. Most of it is excellent sensible advice, but we would just like to add some advice from a Derbyshire perspective:

- The guidance suggests aiming for blood glucose levels 7-12, but if a patient is not on insulin or sulphonylureas such as gliclazide, then 4-12 is fine.
- We would recommend glucagon and ketone meters and strips for any resident with type 1 diabetes.
- Residents with type 2 diabetes on insulin or sulphonylureas are at increased of severe hypos and do need access to blood glucose testing. Glucagon could

be considered for a patient with particular concerns but only if there is a nurse trained in administering it.

- We would not advise that every care home needs glucagon or ketone meters as standard. If a resident with type 2 diabetes is on an SGLT2i (eg empagliflozin) and is unwell then the visiting care home clinician should have access to a ketone meter.

Here is a guide on [how to get hold of ketone meters](#) and how to use them for your information.

Frequently asked questions:

1. What diabetes care can I safely offer to my patients during the pandemic?

The BMA/RCGP advice is to prioritise people with HbA1c of 75 or more, or with a history of DKA in the past year. View the [RCGP Guidance on workload prioritisation during COVID-19](#).

The key principles of care currently are

- Offer all care virtually where possible
- Only invite people into the practice for bloods when the benefit to their diabetes management outweighs the small risk of encountering infection
- Choose a cut off that is workable for your practice eg inviting people with diabetes to have a blood test if their last HbA1c is 75 (9%) or more. If staffing allows, some practices are inviting patients with last HbA1c over 64 (8%). For these patients bloods and a telephone review would improve their health outcomes and better diabetes control means better outcomes in the event of Covid-19 infection
- Encourage home monitoring of weight and BP
- Routine foot checks and ACRs are not recommended during the pandemic.
- If we offer no diabetes care for the duration of the pandemic, we are unlikely to easily catch up and these appointments will be lost, so it is important to continue some care.

2. What additional assessment do patients with diabetes need if seen re Covid-19?

Advise anyone who has blood glucose or ketone testing meters at home to test and record in their notes before bringing them to a red hub site or your practice.

Most patients do not have blood glucose testing at home and will need a blood glucose test on arrival, and if blood glucose over 12 then they need a blood ketone

check. See attached guidance re ketone testing. The second document is a printable guide you may want to attach to your blood glucose and ketone meters.

Blood glucose and ketones can be done on the same meter, but this has led to SEAs where the clinician put in the wrong strip and then acted on the wrong result. At UHDB and my own practice, we now always use different meters. However, when advising a person with type 1 to have a blood ketone meter at home, we would suggest they check BG and ketones on the same meter for convenience.

[Derbyshire Ketone meter guide](#)

[Blood glucose and ketone meters](#)

[Red hub guide](#)

3. How do I interpret blood ketone results?

- Less than 0.6 mmol/L is normal
- 0.6 to 1.5 mmol/L – person is at risk of developing DKA so test again after 2 hours if at home or arrange review with safety netting in primary care. Ensure a person with type 1 diabetes has access to and understands sick day rules. Phone for urgent advice if in any doubt.
- 1.6 to 2.9 mmol/L- person is at risk of DKA and should contact their diabetes team as soon as possible, or health care professional can seek advice on their behalf. They will need to follow the sick day rules.
- 3 mmol/L or higher- person is at high risk of DKA:

If Ketones > 3.0, but well, and able to eat and drink, follow sick day rules - contact the advice line immediately, aim to manage at home

If ketones > 3.0 and ill, especially abdominal pain / vomiting- needs urgent admission

If ketones > 3.0 and if in doubt /unsure of sick day rules / can't access advice- needs urgent admission

4. Latest update on SGLT2i drugs "flozins"

People with type 2 diabetes can safely continue these drugs unless they become unwell, and then they need to stop them immediately and be seen in practice for a blood ketone check.

A small number of people with type 1 diabetes are prescribed them under specialist supervision, and the advice is now to stop them for the duration of the pandemic as they can mask the symptoms of Covid-19.

Most patients will have been contacted already by their specialist team, but if you find a patient in this situation, please ask them to stop the SGLT2i tablet and phone their specialist nurse for advice on adjusting their insulin.

5. How can I arrange bloods for patients?

Practices who usually provide a phlebotomy service are continuing to do so when a blood test is needed. Please see this [helpful guide](#) as to where community clinics are still running in South Derbyshire.

6. How can I get urgent advice for a patient with diabetes?

South Derbyshire and Erewash: Advice line for health professionals regarding any patient with diabetes and this can also be given out to people with type 1 diabetes: 01332 787671 from 8am-6pm.

Same-day advice in hours is available at dhft.diabetesteam@nhs.net

North Derbyshire: the advice line for health professionals and people with Type 1 diabetes is 07880 147785 available Mon-Fri 8am-5pm. DSNs at CRH also can be bleeped on 781 or in-patient nurses on 013 or 172.

Out of hours: CRH on call medical team.

7. How can I get non urgent advice in managing complex patients with diabetes?

North Derbyshire: you can still email for advice on

DCHST.Communitydiabetesnurses@nhs.net or phone 01629 817878 or task your DSN.

South Derbyshire and Erewash: most DSNs have been redeployed so cannot answer tasks. Please email dhft.ids@nhs.net or send a task (linked to a patient whose share has been released) to the admin group at IDS/EDS asking for advice.

8. How can I advise patients with diabetes who are fasting during Ramadan?

Please see the links here and the attached guide with education resources both for health professionals and people with diabetes.

[For clinicians](#)

[For people with diabetes](#)

[Diabetes and Ramadan information](#)

9. How can I get a blood glucose meter to a patient?

The Derbyshire formulary recommended meters are listed [here](#).

People with type 1 diabetes all need access to blood ketone testing strips and need a category B meter from the formulary above. All the companies are happy to send the meter directly to the patient so you just need to give the phone number to the patient:

Type 1: Glucomen Areo on 0800 243667 or Caresens Dual on 0800 881 5423.

Type 2: Wavesense Jazz on 0800 093 1812 or Tee2+ on 0800 881 5423

People with type 2 diabetes only need blood glucose testing strips on repeat long term if they are on hypo causing medications such as insulin or sulphonylureas or taking steroids. They can be useful short term if a patient is symptomatic or has a new high HbA1c > 75 and you are supporting a patient remotely. Most meters get delivered with 25 free strips, and an extra 50 can be prescribed as an acute script if clinically needed.

10. What footcare is available in Derbyshire currently?

Routine foot checks are not recommended during the pandemic.

There is still a community podiatry service for symptomatic patients who do not have a break in the skin.

For a patient with an ulcer or other break in the skin on the foot, please refer urgently to the foot clinics which are running in Chesterfield and London Road Community Hospital using your usual referral pathways.

11. Is there any diabetes structured education available currently?

Patients who want face to face groups can be referred and join a waiting list for when groups can restart. In the meantime, if people have time to spare, these are great resources which are free:

The Diabetes UK Learning Zone tailors the education for type 1 or type 2 and what treatment the person takes:

<https://learningzone.diabetes.org.uk/>

Bertie online is specifically for people with type 1 and has good modules on carb counting:

<https://www.bertieonline.org.uk/>

[Kriss Owen 24.4.20. Karissa.owen@nhs.net](mailto:Kriss.Owen.24.4.20@nhs.net)

<https://www.diabetes.org.uk/professionals/resources/coronavirus-clinical-guidance#inpatient-guidance>

Cardiovascular Disease

<https://www.bhf.org.uk/informationsupport/support/cardiac-rehabilitation-at-home>

Gastroenterology

No further updates this week for diabetes.