

Updated Rycote Practice Policy on Infection Control during the Sars CoV-2 Pandemic

July 19 2021 (to be reviewed no sooner than Aug 16, 2021)

Summary:

We appreciate the compliance of our patients to **wear face masks** whilst in the surgery building. We will continue to make this mandatory behaviour after July 19.

Also, after July 19 our patients should **not come to the reception desk** to make appointments, or come to the reception desk for queries (unless specified by another member of staff).

FAQ's

Why do I have to wear a face mask?

Face masks protect patients and staff.

People can be asymptomatic with COVID 19 infection and spread the virus even after having had two COVID vaccinations. The U.K. is currently in the midst of a third wave of COVID19 infection. GP surgeries and other healthcare settings have obligations to protect patients who are vulnerable to COVID19. There are often individuals in the waiting rooms and corridors who have complex health problems for whom the consequences of COVID19 infection (even after vaccination) would be very serious.

Vulnerable people (elderly, individuals with chronic disease or immunosuppression) are vaccinated now so it should be okay?

The COVID Vaccine is not 100% protective.

The vaccine has been shown to dramatically reduce rates of hospitalisation and death from contracting COVID19. However, people can still contract COVID19 despite having had two vaccinations. This is not theoretical, there are local patients who have recently become unwell having contracted COVID19 several weeks following their second COVID vaccination.

The government says that I don't have to wear a mask.

This is not strictly correct.

The Prime Minister has said that the legal requirement for wearing a mask is set to be removed from 19 July, however he also added that 'guidance will suggest where you might choose to do so'. Public Health England's Infection, Prevention and Control Guidance (which has been in place during the pandemic) will not change on July 19. This guidance emphasises the use of face masks and social distancing to protect patients and staff. Chief Medical Officer Professor Chris Whitty has also outlined three scenarios where he would advise people to wear a face mask after July 19. Firstly, he would wear a face mask indoors or in crowded situations 'because masks help protect other people'. Another trigger for wearing a mask would be when asked to do so 'by any competent authority', or lastly if it makes others feel less uncomfortable.

What will happen if I present to the surgery without a face mask?

You will not be able to access healthcare as expected.

We will offer you a face mask and reiterate our position. We may need to re-arrange your appointment. Our staff will need to consult line-managers and access FFP3 masks as additional protection for their own health. We will continue to operate a policy of zero tolerance to anyone who is abusive to any of our team.

Surely, we need to just live with the virus in our communities and get back to normal?

We agree.

We support the easing of restrictions and welcome the normalisation of reality, when feasible. We are acutely aware of the negative consequences of the pandemic on mental health, elderly care, delayed cancer diagnosis and chronic disease management. Our current policy to reduce unnecessary footfall in the surgery and to ensure that everyone in the practice is wearing a face mask does not undermine our efforts to manage these serious health challenges which have been building during the pandemic. The Rycote Practice aspires to eventually increase the number face-to-face contacts (including consultations) between staff and patients, but only when it is safe to do so.