

## Sexual Health Dorset provision during the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a significant impact on all our lives. It will be some time before anything returns to normal. To continue protecting yourself and others from COVID-19 infection, it is important that you follow [national guidance](#) to reduce the risk of catching the virus. In particular, continue physical distancing, wearing of face coverings where physical distancing is not possible, and hand hygiene.

If you are eligible to have a free **flu vaccine**, we urge you to take up this offer. Vaccines are incredibly safe and have saved millions of lives. They basically expose you to proteins from dead bacteria or viruses (which is much safer than being exposed to live bacteria or viruses). These stimulate your immune system to produce antibodies which protect you from infection.

Sexual Health Dorset has remained open for business throughout lockdown. However in response to the COVID-19 pandemic we have had to make some changes to the way we provide some of our services.

If you don't have symptoms but just want a sexual health check, you don't need to book an appointment. Sexual Health Dorset has partnered with SH:24 to enable Dorset residents to have **free access to home kits for HIV and STI testing**. Following an online consultation, you may also be able to provide some types of **oral contraceptive pills** by post. Visit the [SH:24](#) website for more information.

Our capacity for face to face consultations is reduced considerably due to physical distancing and cleaning requirements. Anyone phoning for an appointment or advice (0300 303 1948) will be called back by a nurse, usually within 24 hours, to see whether or not they need to be seen face to face. Unless you have an urgent problem, you may have to wait a few weeks for a face to face appointment.

If you have a face to face appointment booked, you will be asked to attend alone, at the arranged time, and to wear a face covering. You will be asked if you have any symptoms suggesting COVID-19 infection, and will have your temperature checked on arrival at the clinic. See [Advice for patients attending Sexual Health Dorset during COVID-19](#).

We are able to manage many conditions through a telephone consultation. If medication is needed following a telephone appointment, we can either arrange for you to pick it up from a clinic, or post a prescription for you to collect from your local pharmacy. If endorsed, FP10 prescriptions from a sexual health clinic will be provided free of charge.

There are no walk in services at any of our clinics in Dorset. Please note the team from The Junction and the Sexual Health and HIV team from Royal Bournemouth Hospital have moved to new premises at 66-68 Palmerston Road, Bournemouth, BH1 4JT. Our community clinics were closed during lockdown, but we are gradually re-opening them. Please check the website for details.

Our HIV clinics are running as usual, but for those who are well and whose infection is well controlled, we may reduce your face to face attendance at the clinic to just once a year. If you are living with **HIV**, please see [Terence Higgins Trust](#) or [British HIV Association](#) for further advice.

Our sexual problems clinics are not routinely conducting face to face consultations. We are able to offer consultations by telephone or video, but recognise that this may not be suitable for everyone. Please call 0300 303 1948 to discuss all options.

Some people may be living in fear, with abusive partners or other family members. [You First](#) provide support to anyone affected by **domestic violence or abuse**. You can call them on 0800 032 5204. If you feel you are in immediate danger, call 999 then either dial 55 or just give a cough, and the police will attend.