**NHS services are still 'open for business' across North Tyneside**

Health officials in North Tyneside are reminding people that the NHS is still ‘open for business’ after concerns that patients may be putting off using health services for illnesses not related to Coronavirus.

Despite mounting pressures across the UK, health chiefs are urging patients to continue to contact their local health services if they need medical help.

Dr Ruth Evans, Medical Director at NHS North Tyneside Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) said: “Coronavirus is having a huge effect across the whole country, but it has not taken away other health care needs and people should not ignore symptoms and hope they will go away or put off essential care such as childhood immunisations.

“The quicker people seek help the better their outcome is likely to be.

“It might not exactly be ‘business as usual’, but it is extremely important that people continue to seek treatment for their ongoing health care needs.”

GP services, pharmacies, NHS 111, out-of-hours services and emergency departments are still available to patients with all NHS staff following strict infection control measures.

If you have a persistent cough and high temperature please call NHS 111 for guidance on how to access specialist services for patients with suspected COVID symptoms. If you do not have any of these symptoms and have a medical need please contact your GP practice first before going to the surgery.

GP practices have introduced safety measures to protect all patients and staff, with initial telephone ‘triage’ assessments to enable practices to prioritise appointments for those most in need and allow health professionals to provide the most appropriate treatment in the most appropriate place.

Doctors are using telephone, online and in some cases video consultation appointments to ensure that continued care is provided to patients and health advice is also available by completing an online (eConsult) form on practice websites.

Repeat prescriptions can be requested online, or by using the NHS App. People without internet access should contact their surgery, who will advise them how to order their medication. Patients are being asked to plan ahead by not leaving it until the last minute to order repeat prescriptions to help ease pressure on community pharmacies.

For urgent medical help people are asked to make use of their local minor injuries unit or urgent care centre where there are likely to be shorter waits but patients should still continue to dial 999 in the event of a life threatening emergency.

“The NHS is here for everyone,” added Dr Evans.

“It is essential that we respond to the current situation by adapting to new ways of working, to allow those in greatest need to continue to receive the best, safest care as quickly as possible.”

For further advice on how to best use the NHS, and ordering medicines online, visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/>

For the latest advice on coronavirus including the symptoms and government restrictions visit [www.nhs.uk/coronavirus](http://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus)