

Advice for women during Covid-19

Accessing sexual and reproductive
healthcare as lockdown eases

Introduction

As lockdown eases, we want to ensure that everyone who needs contraception, abortion and other types of sexual and reproductive healthcare stays informed about changes to services.

This page sets out what kinds of care you can access, and how you might expect to access it, over the coming weeks and months. It is based on advice from experienced healthcare professionals.

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Now that society is beginning to normalise from the Covid-19 lockdown, what care can I expect?

As we move into next phase of the pandemic, it is likely that sexual and reproductive health services will begin to offer access to a wider range of care than in the early stages of the pandemic. However, different forms of social distancing will remain in place for a number of months to come.

FSRH has recommended to healthcare professionals that the need for you to access care should be balanced with the continuing need to protect you as a patient, and the NHS, from risk of Covid-19 infection. This means that for some types of non-essential care, whether and how you can access them will still vary depending on your local services, as well as on your own situation.

As ever, it's important that you do access urgent care if you need it. You don't have to wait until the pandemic is over – staff will make sure you can access care in a way that is safe and carries minimal risk of infection. If you are worried about accessing care, discuss your concerns with your care provider.

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"It's important that you do access urgent care if you need it."

Who should I contact if I need access to care?

Your first port of call should be the place you usually access care for your sexual or reproductive health – that could be your GP practice, or your local sexual health or family planning clinic.

You should still not attend a clinic in person, but make initial contact by telephone or email instead. If they are not able to help you, they should direct you to other services that can.

What should I expect from my healthcare service provider?

Most service providers will first ask you to participate in a telephone or video consultation to discuss your needs. This is to minimise the potential spread of Covid-19 and to avoid you having to travel unnecessarily.

If your service provider feels that further examination is required, a face-to-face appointment may be arranged.

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What types of care can I expect to access?

The following types of care have been classified as essential, meaning that you should always be able to access them:

- **Contraception.** Contraception is still available free on the NHS. However, depending on what type of contraception you are using, you may be asked to switch to another type temporarily. If you are due for a long-acting reversible contraceptive (LARC) replacement, some services may ask you to delay the replacement.
- **Emergency contraception.** You can access the emergency contraceptive pill from your GP practice, a sexual and reproductive health clinic or a pharmacy near you. However, not all services are currently able to offer fitting of intrauterine devices for emergency contraception.
- **Abortion care.** How to access abortion varies depending on where you live in the UK. You can find contact details for your local provider in the **'Useful Links'** section at the end of this leaflet.
- **Sexual assault care.** If you have been a victim of sexual assault, you should receive care as a matter of priority. You can find contact details for your local provider in the **'Useful Links'** section at the end of this leaflet.
- **Emergency removal of LARCs.** An 'emergency removal' is when your contraceptive is causing you pain or other severe side effects. Many clinics and surgeries are now offering this service or can direct you to find help elsewhere.

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"Contraception is still available free on the NHS."

What if I am seeking other types of care?

Some types of care are still classed as non-essential. In each case, we have advised healthcare professionals to prioritise where possible when the benefit to you outweighs your risk of getting Covid-19, and when services have capacity to provide the care.

This is true for the following types of care:

- **Provision of LARC (injections, implants, IUDs and the intrauterine system)**
- **Psychosexual care.**

For more information on these types of care, please see our [practical guide for women](#).

We know that many patients are anxious to access non-emergency fittings or removals of LARCs. These services are restarting, although the exact time will vary depending on the service provider.

"We know that many patients are anxious to access non-emergency fittings or removals of LARCs."



How will I get any medication that I need?

Your GP or service provider will tell you how you can collect any necessary medication. GPs can send an electronic prescription to the pharmacy of your choice for you to collect.

Sexual health clinics can leave supplies of contraception and condoms at their reception for you to collect or, in some instances, may be able to arrange delivery.



"Your GP or service provider will tell you how you can collect any necessary medication."

Useful links



The following links may be useful:

Abortion services

Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, Royal College of Midwives, Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare and British Society of Abortion Care Providers: Information for women seeking an abortion

Sexual health services

FSRH position on restoration of SRH services during Covid-19 and beyond (June 2020)

FSRH position on sexual and reproductive health essentials (March 2020)

FSRH clinical advice to support provision of effective contraception during Covid-19 pandemic

Brook Covid-19 advice

HIV services

Terrence Higgins Trust Covid-19 blog

Patient information

FPA 'Sexwise' resource

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Useful links



If you live in England

[NHS sexual health advice](#)

[Marie Stopes Covid-19 statement and FAQs](#)

[bpas Covid-19 advice](#)

[Rape Crisis England and Wales](#)

If you live in Wales

[NHS sexual health service finder](#)

[Rape Crisis England and Wales](#)

Welsh Health Board abortion self-referral numbers

- Aneurin Bevan 01633 431743
- Betsi Cadwaladr 03457 304030
- Cardiff and Vale 02920 742638
- Cwm Taf 01685 728497
- Hywel Dda 01267 248674
- Swansea Bay 01792 200303

Useful links



If you live in Scotland

Sexual Health Scotland – service finder and information line

Find your local sexual health clinic:

- www.sandyford.scot (Greater Glasgow)
- www.centalsexualhealth.org (Forth Valley)
- www.sexualhealthtayside.org (Tayside)
- www.sexualhealthfife.scot.nhs.uk (Fife)
- www.lothiansexualhealth.scot (Lothian)
- www.sexualhealthdg.co.uk (Dumfries and Galloway)
- www.shayr.com (Ayrshire and Arran)
- www.borderssexualhealth.org.uk (Borders)
- www.highlandsexualhealth.co.uk (Highland)
- www.ohb.scot.nhs.uk/you-health/sexual-health-and-bbv (Orkney)
- Grampian – please phone 0345 3379900
- Lanarkshire – 03003030251 or ranoutofpills@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk

HIV Scotland

Waverley Care

Rape Crisis Scotland

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Useful links



If you live in Northern Ireland

Sexual Health NI

Informing Choices NI – use link or phone 0289 0316100

bpas abortion support for women in Northern Ireland

Rape Crisis Northern Ireland

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Our vision

High-quality sexual and reproductive
healthcare at every stage of our lives.

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