

Advice for women seeking contraception, abortion and other sexual and reproductive healthcare during the third lockdown and beyond

Introduction

As COVID-19 infection rates remain high in the UK, 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 document sets out what kinds of care you can access, and how you can 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 the UK has gone into lockdown again, what care can I expect?

During and beyond the third lockdown, we have advised that healthcare services should take a flexible and realistic approach to providing contraception and other types of sexual and reproductive healthcare.

With infection rates currently high in the UK, healthcare professionals have to balance the need for care with the risk of spreading the virus. This means that different service providers may offer different types of care depending on the infection rate in your area, their workforce capacity and Government advice.

Even if you live in an area where the COVID-19 infection risk is high, there are some essential services which you should always be able to access.

These services are outlined on [page 5](#) of this guide.

As ever, it's important that you do access care if you need it.

You don't have to wait until the current wave 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 service provider.

"Service provision may vary considerably depending on where you live. You should contact your GP or sexual and reproductive healthcare service for more information."

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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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"Most service providers will first ask you to participate in a telephone or video consultation to discuss your needs."




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 including oral contraception and the copper intrauterine device (IUD).** Remember, you can access the emergency contraceptive pill from a pharmacy near you, as well as from your GP or sexual and reproductive health clinic.
- **Abortion care.** How to access abortion care varies depending on where you live in the UK. You can find contact details for your local provider in the **'Useful Links'** section.
- **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 local care providers in the **'Useful Links'** section.

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"Contraception is still available for free through the NHS."

What types of care can I expect to access?

- **Emergency removal of LARCs.** An 'emergency removal' is when your contraception is causing you pain or other severe side effects. Many clinics and surgeries are offering this service or can direct you to find help elsewhere.
- **Electronic prescriptions of Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) for menopause care.** We have recommended that remote prescribing for HRT should continue. However, other menopause care is classed as non-essential care, meaning services may be less likely to offer it.


What if I am seeking other types of care?

Some types of care are 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:

- **Non-emergency LARC fittings and removals.** However, if you are reaching the end of an extension period for your LARC, we have advised to healthcare workers that your care should be prioritised.
- **Menopause care, apart from remote HRT prescriptions.**
- **Psychosexual care.**

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




"Even if you live in an area where the COVID-19 infection risk is high, you can still access essential contraceptive services."

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 and reproductive 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.

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

Useful links



The following links and telephone numbers 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 and reproductive health services

[FSRH guidance on essential SRH services during the third COVID-19 lockdown in the UK and beyond \(January 2021\)](#)

[FSRH statement on provision of contraception during the COVID-19 pandemic \(October 2020\)](#)

[Brook COVID-19 advice](#)

HIV services

[Terrence Higgins Trust advice](#)

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

Frisky 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

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Useful links



If you live in Scotland

Find your local sexual and reproductive 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 – 0300 3030251 or email ranoutofpills@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk

Rape Crisis Scotland

Women's Aid Scotland

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Useful links



If you live in Northern Ireland

Sexual Health NI

Informing Choices NI Tel: 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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