



Minor Eye Conditions Practices Guidance



Primary
Ophthalmic
Solutions

Primary Eye Care

BEXLEY, BROMLEY AND GREENWICH

For latest updates see our website www.mecs-sel.co.uk

MECS Plan for Optometrists offering Emergency appts

Please remember that throughout the Covid19 crisis, the health and safety of our MECS practitioners, the staff in their practices, their loved ones and that of our patients is the highest priority.

We are in tricky times and our local communities and hospital eye departments need our help.

We are a well equipped and knowledgeable workforce and by working together we can help reduce sight loss across SE London during this time.

We can also reduce cross infection, by listening to the Government's advice and keeping away if we feel poorly. If we have any signs and symptoms of Covid19 we need to self-isolate for 2 weeks. As individuals we need to be fit and healthy so we can support each other.

What we as the Directors of Primary Ophthalmic solutions have produced is sensible guidance with health and safety as the key feature. We have input from GSTT, and the local CCGs. Further guidance and information will be added as and when it is produced.

As stated, this is guidance and it your choice what you take from it.

We suggest that in this time of uncertainty that you make your own decisions by reading all the relevant information. At the end of this document there are useful links which you may find beneficial.

We understand that it is a worrying time for everyone. We all have the same concerns and fear of the unknown, but remember we are all in it together and we will get through this time together as a team.

If you have any concerns during this time, please contact us.

MECS Protocol during Covid19

The new guidance announced Monday 23rd March 2020, by the Prime Minister said that people should stay at home, however they can attend medical appointments.

The current guidance from the Optical bodies is that we can see emergencies.

What constitutes an emergency is open to interpretation, however under these circumstances we would advise the following is a sensible place to start from:

- Sudden blurred vision
- Sudden double vision
- Severe headaches/Eye pain
- New floaters
- Flashes of lights
- Sudden loss of vision
- New red eyes with discomfort (advised not to see any form of conjunctivitis)
- Foreign body sensation
- Ocular injury

MECS is changing and becoming a telephone/virtual based consultation.

Patients will only be offered face to face appointments if deemed clinically necessary.

ALL patients being considered for a face to face appointment and/or you feel they need to be seen within the HES as an emergency must complete the Covid 19 Questionnaire to determine their risk of being infected.
(Document 1 below)

Telephone/Virtual MECS

Patient access

Patients may call your practice directly or come through the single point of access (SPA) telephone number to book an appointment for MECS.

The SPA can be contacted on **0203 859 2385**

During Covid19 – ALL patients should be telephone triaged prior to any face to face appointment being made.

Document 2 is a guidance for Telephone Consultation

**If a patient calls your practice, avoiding the SPA,
we suggest you still follow the guidance below**

**ALL MECS patients are to receive a MECS Consultation virtually/over the phone.
Please use Pharmoutcomes to record your virtual/telephone consultation.**

Scenario 1

Patient has non-sight threatening or life threatening symptoms – advice and guidance over the phone. Also advised to call back if symptoms worse.

Scenario 2

Patient has signs and symptoms which warrant further investigation in practice.

**Patient completes the
Covid 19 Questionnaire**

Covid19 flagged

Optom to decide if patient can wait 2 weeks and offered an appt after the symptoms have passed. If not Optom to contact the HES (email address and telephone numbers to be provided) and HES will decide upon bringing patient in for an appt

Covid 19 negative

Patient seen in practice, Optom has appropriate PPE and does the necessary examinations only

**HES appt
required**

**No onward
referral required.**
Patient discharged
with advice

Urgent

(this would usually have fallen into the 2 week wait and would have been emailed to the appropriate hospital) – Contact the HES - see emergency contacts document, with complete referral – include ALL relevant history, all the findings of the examination, email any additional info such as OCT, field plots etc. Also include your Covid19 risk assessment. The HES will contact the patient with an appt.

Same day emergency

Call the hospital that you would like to send the patient to.
Discuss with appropriate medic and refer on as they direct.

All the emergency contact details are at the end of this document (Document 3)

If you are unsure about referral you can discuss with consultants using the PANDO app. You do need to sign up with an nhs.net email account.

We are currently being added to it, and will send out details as we have them.

Your safety and your staff

Stay away – only way to prevent

If you, anyone in your household, anyone you have had close contact with or anyone in work has any symptoms of Covid19 then you should step away and self-isolate for 14days. Even if you feel fine, you could be a carrier and the implications of passing this virus on can be fatal. You need to be strict with yourself and others as the only way we can stop this from spreading is to stay at home. We understand that our places of work need us, however in the circumstances, it is better for everyone that if you feel even slightly unwell to stay at home to prevent further infection.

We are key health workers and our job is to prevent sight loss, to allow our patients to maintain their independence and enjoy the world they can see and to remain healthy – it is going to be very difficult to offer the eye service we are used to in these times, however we will endeavour to do the best that we can.

Protection of staff and patients in waiting areas/optical premises

Suggestions within the general practice and waiting areas:

- Maintaining a safe distance from all – at least 2m (3m if possible)
- To only be in close contact for 15-30 seconds at a time
- No physical contact with patients
- Advised not to share toilet facilities with patients where possible
- Complete the Covid19 questionnaire with all patients before they attend
- If they bring a family member or friend also ask them to complete Covid19 Questionnaire and if possible, wait outside rather than in the practice (copy below)
- Avoid using air conditioning devices in the test room, keep room well ventilated instead.
- Lock practice doors and see patients by appointment only (including the collection of spectacles/contact lenses)
- Call patients before they attend to check all is well and they are still showing as negative on Covid19 questionnaire and they their household members are too.
- Space appointments out to limit the numbers of people in the practice at any one time and maintain social distancing.
- Space chairs out in the waiting area to help patients maintain a 2m distance between each other.
- Ask patients to sanitise their hands on entering the practice.
- Wipe clinical equipment and door handles after every patient, as well as other surfaces that may have been contaminated with body fluids using a suitable disinfectant such as an alcohol wipe. All surfaces must be clean before they are disinfected.

- Advise where possible split staff into groups who always work together on the same days and create new shift patterns – i.e Staff group 1 work with Optom A on Monday to Wednesday. Then Staff group 2 Thursday to Saturday work with Optom B

Suggestions before patient enters the practice

- Take any case history, symptoms, relevant health and previous ocular history over the phone or via video call before a patient attends – try to minimise discussion in the testing room – any discussions to be at a distance
- Make sure you have all correct communication methods for patients – address, telephone numbers, email address. If you can communicate and give advice and guidance over a different medium, then do. (If patients give you that info freely it is GDPR compliant to contact them using that platform. I.E email)
- Any advice etc, suggest either given via video link or emailed to patient afterwards and if further clarification required to discuss over the phone.
- Call patients back in a few days and check how they are doing. If a referral becomes necessary, follow the appropriate steps as directed in the Covid19 referral guidance.

Ways to Video Calling

We recommend that you use: <https://clinic.co/>

This is a free to join and you must use your nhs.net email address to join. This is because it is fully compliant with GDPR.

or <https://fleming accurx.com/login>

If the patient has trouble with either of the above, then you can try one of the below but please document it on the notes and write if the patient has given verbal consent to do so.

- Facetime – apple to apple phone
- WhatsApp video call
- Zoom – free app (need an email address to log in)
- Facebook messenger
- Skype
- Google hangout

If unable to video call please take as many details as possible over the phone and if possible, use email with images – where possible use nhs.net

Suggestions within the testing room

- To only be in close contact for 15-30seconds at a time
- No physical contact with patients
- Do NOT allow patients in the practice who have any form of infective conjunctivitis –so to protect yourselves and staff, do not see these patients face to face – give ocular advice and advise to call 111 if they have Covid19 symptoms that worsen and require further medical attention.
- To wear protective face-mask during examination
- Keep examination as brief as possible
- Avoid using air conditioning devices in the test room, keep room well ventilated instead
- Where possible, avoid touching patients. For example, when using SL-BIO, ask the patient to open their eyes wide when they are looking down so you can examine the inferior fundus without having to lift their upper lids. If you need to lift the lids to examine the fundus you may wish to use a cotton bud to do this to avoid touching the patient.

- If you need to touch the patient, ensure you practise appropriate hand hygiene before and after contact.
- Maintain social distancing where possible. For example, by taking symptoms and history and giving advice on your findings from a safe distance (the government recommends two metres).
- Limit the number of people in the practice and consulting room at any one time.
- Use a cough guard on your slit lamp if possible. The Royal College of Ophthalmologists has advice on how you can make a temporary cough guard.
- Sanitise frames before patients try them on. This can be done using a suitable disinfectant, such as an alcohol wipe. All surfaces must be clean before they are disinfected.
- Do not use Alger brushes, as they may generate aerosols. If you need to remove a rust ring, use a needle instead.
- Where possible, avoid the use of air-puff tonometry, particularly if it means you need to get close to the patient, as this may also generate aerosols, which may be a source of infection. If you normally use air-puff tonometry, you should consider whether you need to do tonometry at this time. For example, if the patient has normal discs and visual fields, do you really need to measure their IOP at every visit?
- Please try and avoid using automated perimetry where possible and do gross visual field testing.

We have requested PPE and will update you when we know more

Transport in case of emergency

If a patient has to be sent direct to the HES, then where possible they will travel in a car with something in their household.

If not, hospital transport may be very hard to come by. We are currently investigating local taxi firms/black cabs on how they may be able to help transport patients who still require attending Hospital appointments.

One black cab driver has offered to share this idea with approx. 700 other black cab drivers to see how they may be able to help.

One recent article praised the Black Cabs as there is a divide between the driver and passenger which may help reduce risk of infection. Also, they have the disabled access for wheelchairs.

Useful links

Please see emergency contacts as below.

Additional documents:

- 1. Covid19 Questionnaire**
- 2. Phone triage**
- 3. Emergency contacts list**

Covid Questionnaire



If you have decided that a patient has eye symptoms that warrant assessment face to face, before booking an appointment, please ask them all the following questions.

- If they decline to answer, then you may refuse to see them.
- The safety of all the staff is paramount.
- If they answer yes to any of the below, it is advisable not to see the patient face to face. If you feel that they do have symptoms of Covid19 and have a sight threatening condition, please contact your local eye department via email/ telephone who will advise accordingly. Details of all emergency contact details are within the guidance pack.

Please answer yes or no to the following questions, even of mild.

1. Do you have any of the following symptoms of Covid19?

Symptom

Yes

No

Dry cough

Fever

Sore throat

Tiredness

Headache

Muscle aches

Flu like symptoms

Nausea and diarrhoea

Shortness of breath

Any loss of sense of smell and/or taste

2. When did the symptoms start?



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3. Does anyone in your close family (same household) have any of the following symptoms?

Symptom	Yes	No
Dry cough		
Fever		
Sore throat		
Tiredness		
Headache		
Muscle aches		
Flu like symptoms		
Nausea and diarrhoea		
Shortness of breath		
Any loss of sense of smell and/or taste		

4. Have you had any recent travel, or recently returned from any of the infected areas?

If Yes, where have you been and travelled through.

5. Has anyone who you live with or been in close contact with, in the last 7days had symptoms and or returned from any of the infected areas?

If Yes, where have they been and travelled through?

6. Are you currently self-isolating?

Yes No

7. If yes, how long have you been isolating for?



8. Do you fall into any of the vulnerable categories? E.g. Elderly with co-morbid conditions.

9. If you do not have any symptoms of Covid19, is there any reason why you cannot stay at home?

Key worker Caring for a vulnerable person

I agree that the information that I have given above is correct and I am aware that by having examinations on my eyes, the Optometrist will be within 1m of me, and unable to safely social distance.

SignatureDate

For office use only

Patient surname

NHS number if known

DOB.....

Post Code



Additional Document 2

Phone triage for MECS patients

During the Covid19 situation, there will be many patients who require access to eye emergencies. As the Hospitals will be incredibly busy looking after patients, they also need to reduce further contamination from patients entering the HES.

Within the community we can play a part in this and help reduce sight loss in our communities during this time.

MECS optometrists are ideally placed to offer help and support and examinations if required.

We are suggesting that all patients are triaged over the phone before entering any Optical practice and before they attend any Hospital site.

Key information required:

1. Name
2. Address
3. Date of birth
4. Hospital/NHS numbers if known
5. Other contact details such as email and telephone numbers
6. Next of kin or another contact of required
7. Any additional needs such as translator/mobility needs
8. GH/meds/FH/Allergies

Nature of the problem

1. Description of the problem
2. Which eye?
3. Is this pre-existing?
4. Sight loss/vision loss?
5. Pain?
6. Trauma etc
7. Any other relevant info
8. Classify the enquiry into the clinical sub-speciality and High / Medium/ Low risk as per Ophthalmology Escalation Policy 160320 v1.0

Assessing vision virtually

You can ask the patient to describe their vision, i.e. if you look at your partner, is their face blurred – can you see features such as their nose and are they smiling at you. You can also if likes appear straight – is the edge of your TV straight or wavy. Please take time and gather as much info as you can.

There are some websites and apps that you patients can look at, to check their vision which will help your virtual consultation.

Please have a look at www.essilor.com/en/vision-tests/test-your-vision

And www.openoptometry.com/home/

Please familiarise yourself with these sites so that you can explain to your patients.

Possible Outcomes

Scenario 1

Patient given advice over the phone and advised to call back if symptoms worsen. Record the advice given, clinical outcome and any additional notes.

Scenario 2

Patient needs to be seen in MECS – no Covid19 symptoms etc – however in a vulnerable group – make an appt ideally where the practice is quiet and there will be minimal staff and or patients in the practice. Use social distancing and all good hygiene procedures.

Exam as appropriate and record all results. Use personal protection face mask for slit lamp examination, and ensure slit lamps have a barrier or face shield. There is a universal shortage of masks so it may have to use the same mask for a whole session, and take extra care when removing the mask not to touch anything that had contact with the face, remove by releasing the ties and putting straight into a clinical disposal bin. Wash hands before, and after every patient. Do not touch your face or eyes.

If patient required onward referral to the HES – please call HES, discuss and arrange patient appt as directed by the HES.

If patient doesn't require onward referral give advice and guidance and to call back if symptoms worsen

PPE has been requested. We will update when we know more

Scenario 3

Patient calls, feel they need an appointment; however, they may have Covid19 (symptoms but not confirmed)

Take all details and symptoms etc and contact the HES. HES can decide if patient needs to be seen and make necessary arrangements to minimise risk of infection etc.

Please remember if you are unsure, ask another Optometrist, post details of the problem on the WhatsApp group (no px details) and if needed ask the consultants. We are all here to help one another.

All the emergency contact details are in Document 3 below

Emergency Contact Details during Covid19 this is for when you feel a patient has a sight or life-threatening condition

Hospital	Contact Details	Protocol
Kings, Denmark Hill	020 3299 9000 (Switchboard for out of hours: Ask for on-call ophthalmologist) 020 3299 3878 (Ophthalmology dept) kch-tr.ED@nhs.net	During Covid 19 all referrals will need to be discussed with the Ophthalmology Department before onward referral. Please call the appropriate number, discuss the case and then refer as necessary and send all the relevant referral letters, scans and the Covid19 questionnaire.
Kings, Queen Mary's	020 8302 2678 ext 4029	
St Thomas	020 7188 4336 (Eye casualty advice/guidance) 020 7188 8871 (Ophthalmology) gst-tr.gsttophthalmologymedicalsecretaries@nhs.net	
Moorfields City Road	020 7521 4682 (A&E named clinician) 020 7253 3411 (Switchboard)	
Western Eye	020 3312 5791(Ophthalmology advice/guidance) 020 3312 6666 (Switchboard)	
Royal Free	020 7794 0500	
Moorfields at St Georges	0208 266 6115 0208 266 6114	
Moorfields at Croydon	Moorfields at Croydon 07525800834 moorfields.croydonurgentcare@nhs.net	

Wet AMD pathway contact details:

Hospital	Email Address	Telephone Contact	Procedure
Kings, Denmark Hill	kch-tr.earlyreferralservice@nhs.net	020 3299 3878	Send referral letter and Covid19 questionnaire via NHS mail include patient NHS number.
Kings, Queen Marys	kch-tr.Urgenteyesqms-referrals@nhs.net	020 8302 2678 Ext 4029	
Kings, PRU	Kch-tr.br-referrals@nhs.net	01689 865 720	HES will contact patient directly.
St Thomas	eyeappointments@gstt.nhs.uk	020 7188 4336	Give px HES contact telephone number and advise px to call HES if not heard after 1 week.
Moorfields City Road	meh-tr.moorfieldscityroad@nhs.net	020 7566 2311	

Useful links

Guys and St Thomas

Adult eye conditions leaflet

<https://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/our-services/eye/patients/eye-patient-leaflets.aspx>

Children's eye conditions leaflets

<https://www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/our-services/hospital/eye/patient-leaflets.aspx>

Royal college of Ophthalmologists:

<https://rcophth.ac.uk/2020/03/covid-19-update-and-resources-for-ophthalmologists/>

Slit Lamp shields

<https://www.daybreakmedical.co.uk/>

This company is kindly donating its profits to a charity (to be decided) when the Corona Virus pandemic is in decline. Please visit You Tube to make your own slit lamp guard

College of Optometrists:

<https://www.college-optometrists.org/>

General Optical Council

<https://www.optical.org/>

Association of Optometrists

<https://www.aop.org.uk/>

LOCSU

<https://www.locsu.co.uk/>

BBG LOC

<https://www.bbgloc.co.uk/>

LSL LOC

<https://lsloc.org/>

NHS England Primary Care

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/primary-care/eye-health/>

Looking after your own health and well-being

This is a very stressful time for all. We are all in the same situation and share the same concerns and worries. Within this group of MECS practices and practitioners there is a wealth of support, however if needed these are some links that you may find beneficial for your own well-being.

<https://www.mind.org.uk/>

<https://www.samaritans.org/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mindfulness/>

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/m/mindfulness>

<https://yourstylefitness.co.uk>

These are just a few – if you have any recommendations please share or email jo.cashell@nhs.net and any suggestions can be added anonymously.

Financial worries

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> - on the government website is the latest advice about how they are helping business and also what you may be able to apply for as business, as individuals and also there will be advice for your staff.

Be Kind

If you feel there is anything else to add or other useful suggestion please contact us and we will happily take on board any comments.

Remember we are all in this together as a team and if you need any help or support please ask.

Thank you

**Primary Ophthalmic Solutions
and Primary Eye Care Bexley, Bromley & Greenwich**



For latest updates see our website www.mecs-sel.co.uk