

Salisbury District Hospital - Present State

Covid-19 Prevalence - The good news is that the level of Covid-19 infection remains much lower in the area served by Salisbury District Hospital than in many parts of the country. As a result the proportion of beds occupied by patients testing positive for the disease is the second lowest of all district general hospitals nationwide.

However, the number of people testing positive for Covid-19 continues to increase across the country including in the South and South West. The rate of increase has slowed following the present period of lockdown highlighting the need for all of us to remain vigilant.

Hospital activity - The hospital has maintained a high state of readiness in order to manage the expected number of people being admitted with the disease. Alongside this managers and clinicians have worked to increase the number of patients with other conditions who can be treated. This includes patients whose treatment was deferred and those waiting for planned surgery. All patients known to the hospital and newly referred patients are being offered appointments and where necessary prioritised according to clinical need.

Unintended Consequences of the Covid-19 Pandemic. - In some specialities the number of patients contacting their GP and being referred to hospital remains low when compared with the expected number of referrals. Additionally the number of people declining or deferring their hospital appointments has increased. Hence, it is likely that some treatable conditions are being left undiagnosed or avoidable delays are occurring. Either way for some people disease will progress leading to a poorer outcome.

This is a concern. The hospital wants to reassure all patients that their safety remains its priority. Patients are encouraged to keep their appointments. Equally, anyone worried about their health or experiencing new or persistent symptoms is encouraged not to delay seeking medical advice via their doctor or the NHS 111 helpline.

Patients with Covid-19 - The increase in the number of covid-19 infections in the community is reflected in the number of people being admitted with Covid-19 to hospital. The numbers are low but increasing. Presently there are 13 inpatients. The good news is that with much better knowledge of the disease and more effective treatments most patients are recovering more quickly and there have been far fewer deaths in the second wave.

Attending Hospital - Patients attending the hospital will see a number of changes. The trust is undertaking some building work to improve how it safely manages minor injuries in A&E. A new modular building is being constructed to increase outpatient capacity. This new building is expected to be completed in the new year. The capacity to conduct remote consultations via phone and video link also has been increased. All patients admitted to hospital are tested for covid-19 and the frequency of routine testing of all frontline staff is being increased.

Flu Immunisation - Every year the NHS undertakes a huge flu vaccination programme to protect staff and patients. This work is even more important than ever to minimise any further pressure on the hospital.

In the community many people eligible for a free flu immunisation choose not to be vaccinated. Having the flu immunisation is an important means to protect yourself, your family and others in your community. It will also help your local hospital ensure it retains capacity to treat all patients.

What We Can Do - With positive news about the success of vaccines that are awaiting regulatory approval the end to present restrictions is in sight. Until then compliance with Covid-19 guidance and restrictions will ensure that the risk of a local outbreak of Covid-19 remains low.

Flu is potentially as serious and life threatening a condition as Covid-19 especially for people in a higher risk group. People eligible for free flu vaccination who have not been vaccinated should make an appointment with their GP surgery to ensure they are protected.

Keep any hospital appointment offered. Anyone concerned about their health or experiencing new or persistent symptoms should not put off seeking professional advice.

John Mangan

Lead Governor Salisbury Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
and Governor for the New Forest