

INFORMATION SHEET



making a difference
to the lives of people with
severe learning disabilities

Routine health care during the COVID-19 crisis

It is understandable to be concerned about the idea of visiting a GP surgery, going to the dentist or having to attend a hospital appointment at this time but it's really important that you do seek medical attention if you or your family member need it.

There has been a lot of media coverage about the NHS delaying treatment for patients with non-COVID-19 related conditions, such as delaying surgery for Cancer or starting Chemotherapy. Many hospitals are also reporting a dramatic drop in patients attending A&E for some serious conditions or people waiting too long to seek emergency help so that the condition has become very much worse than it might have.

Getting good health care for someone with a severe learning disability/autism who displays behaviour that challenges

We know that people with a learning disability may experience barriers to getting good health care. Please read the advice and tips [here](#) on ways to overcome these.

It may also be helpful to know who to contact if you need support to manage your family members health and wellbeing and how these services may be delivered whilst there are Covid-19 restrictions in place. The Learning Disability Senate has produced some helpful guidance [here](#) to explain how different health professionals, such as Community Learning Disability nurses can carry out their roles during the Covid-19 crisis.

NHS staff are very busy with the COVID-19 crisis so it's especially important to be prepared for any health intervention that your family member may need. Here are some tips to ensure that they get the best possible health care:

- 1) Update or create their hospital/health care passport - (Example hospital passport templates are available to download from [MyCompass](#), [Mencap](#), [Include Me Too](#) and the CBF Covid 19 Information and resources page [here](#)).
- 2) Update or create a communication passport, examples of which you can find on our [Covid 19 Information Page](#)
- 3) Think about the 'reasonable adjustments' that your family member may need to help them to access good health care and ensure these are documented in their passport. e.g. what steps health staff need to take to successfully take blood/take blood pressure.
- 4) Make sure that any medication changes/allergies/adverse reactions to medication are recorded in the hospital/health passport.
- 5) Make sure that other family members and support staff know how to access these documents/have copies just in case you become unwell/need to self-isolate or cannot attend a health appointment with them because of your own health risks.
- 6) Read our advice on 'Going into Hospital with COVID-19' [here](#).

What to do if your family member needs non-emergency health care

If your family member needs help with something that is not a medical emergency, you should call your GP when the practice is open or the NHS 111 service if out of hours in the usual way.

Most GP practices will take down the details and ask a practice nurse or doctor to call you back and assess the situation. Things like a consultation about medication may easily take place in this way.

Some GPs are able to set up a video call with their patients so the medical consultation can take place 'face to face' or refer to a hospital doctor who can do the same, so you won't necessarily have to take your family member in to any health facility.

However, if the health condition needs further investigations such as a blood tests, an X-ray or a scan for example, it is important that your family member still attends these. The GP/hospital will give you clear advice to follow to help keep your family member and those attending with them as safe as possible.

Remember! It's really important that you report any possible symptoms of COVID-19 prior to going to the GP surgery or hospital. [See the NHS advice here.](#)

What do to if your family member needs emergency health care

If your family needs emergency care call 999. All ambulance crews will be ready to deal with any health emergencies and be fully equipped and trained to manage the risk of COVID-19 whilst doing so.

Remember that failing to call 999 if someone has urgent health care needs can be far more dangerous for them if you do not seek help because of a fear of COVID-19.

Keeping healthy

- See the CBF [handwashing and temperature information](#)
- Exercise at home and outdoors (the government have allowed extra trips out for people with learning disabilities and autism and the CBF have produced [a card for going out](#))
- Try to keep a routine around mealtimes and get a balanced diet

For more information or to discuss any concerns, contact the CBF family support service on 0300 666 0126 or support@theCBF.org.uk

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