

For immediate release

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Separate clinics for patients with and without coronavirus symptoms help people to continue accessing care and treatment

People needing GP services across Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire will soon be advised to visit a specific clinic depending on whether or not they are showing symptoms of coronavirus.

With more people expected to develop coronavirus in the coming weeks, coupled with the need to continue providing regular, everyday healthcare, practices across the region have introduced a new system that will see dedicated sections of specific surgeries only open to people with coronavirus-like symptoms.

These practices, referred to by healthcare professionals as hot clinics, will be safely staffed by teams who have been trained to care for coronavirus patients needing further attention.

Under this system, patients will be given an initial assessment via video or telephone, and only those requiring face-to-face examination will be seen in the hot clinics.

On the other hand, people not displaying symptoms of coronavirus, such as a persistent cough or high temperature, nor have been in recent contact with someone who has such symptoms, but still in need of healthcare, will be directed to a cold clinic, which is one that will continue to provide routine GP services.

Dr Andrew Girdher, Clinical Chair, Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group, said: "Although tackling coronavirus remains at the very top of our agenda, we're fully aware that people still need care and treatment for the conditions that were here before coronavirus and will still be here afterwards.

"By separating practices into hot and cold clinics, we are able to continue providing care where it's needed and, perhaps most importantly, in a way that does not put people at risk of potentially catching coronavirus.

"This new system does mean that some patients may not be seen in their usual practice and that they may need to travel to a different location.

"However, such instances are likely to be few and far between as, in line with government advice on social distancing, we are still carrying out the majority of consultations remotely, either by phone or video."

Patients will not be able to self-refer to either the hot or cold clinics and will need to, in the first instance, continue contacting their usual GP practice by phone.

Additionally, the hot and cold clinics will only be available for patients whose conditions cannot be assessed and diagnosed remotely.

Only at this time will a person be invited to attend either of the clinics in person.

For more information on coronavirus, including its symptoms, visit www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19.