



Three Shires Medical Practice **Colerne, Marshfield, Pucklechurch and** **Wick Surgeries**

Practice Newsletter Autumn 2021

Once again with our Autumn 2021 newsletter, we aim to bring you up to date with any changes to our services and our progress locally through the COVID pandemic.

The COVID vaccination programme has continued successfully, however we would still like to emphasise to anyone who has not had a first or second COVID jab, that it is important that you accept the invitation to have a COVID jab when it is offered. If you missed the opportunity for a jab or have changed your mind and would now like to have the COVID jab, it is not too late, please let us know and we'll help you to make the necessary arrangements.

While many of the restrictions that we have lived under for the past 18 months have been lifted, at all four of our surgeries, we continue to exercise the greatest possible care to keep you, our patients, as safe as we can and at the same time minimise risk to staff members. We are still asking patients to continue to wear masks, wash hands and distance from others on our premises unless medically exempt.

Many of our patients, who receive text message reminders from us, will have had a recent text explaining that we've had a high level of COVID-19 amongst our patients, staff and their families during July and August. It has meant that both GP's and staff have had to self-isolate which reduced the number of face to face appointments we could offer.

So, once again, we would like to say a huge thank you to you for your continued patience and understanding towards all the clinicians and staff over the past 18 difficult months. Please continue to be patient and understanding and please continue the kindness and appreciation that you are showing to all our staff.

THANK YOU

Practice News and Staff Changes

This has been a challenging year, as we move into the second autumn of the Pandemic. Despite the challenges and changes in the situation, we have had an amazing response from patients, volunteers and staff which we are grateful for. The vaccination campaign has enabled over 90% of all our patients over 50, and just under 80% of other age groups down to age 18 double vaccinated. We are now vaccinating our 16 and 17 year olds, and awaiting guidance on 12-15 year olds.

At the time of writing we have still not had final go-ahead on who will receive Covid boosters, and when. This is frustrating as we have to make provisional plans based on "best guess" policy, as things can be launched or pulled at little notice.

We have advanced plans to set up a combined Flu and Covid Booster clinic in Marshfield Community Centre, which will run on Wednesday afternoons using a staff drawn from our Primary Care Network (PCN) pool. This will give additional options for patients in Colerne and Marshfield to get themselves vaccinated this autumn and winter. We plan (subject to vaccine deliveries) to run large Flu Vaccination Clinics at Pucklechurch on Saturday mornings in October. A separate team of vaccinators is being set up to cover housebound and care home patients. We will then run additional smaller clinics at all of our surgeries for those unable to get to the above.

For all of these clinics, patients will be invited by SMS, letter or phone call once we have definite dates with real vaccine to give out! So please be patient, these will come. Please see below for this year's flu vaccine eligibility.

Demand on the practice has been very high, with levels increasing into June, July and August which is unusual, but reflected national unlocking. We had just under 14,000 patient contacts with doctors' nurses or HCAs in the last 3 months, with the majority of these being with GPs. We are seeing increasing numbers of patients face to face, but are continuing to triage the majority of incoming calls first. This is enabling us to see most patients within days of their contact (most same /next day), and not allowing long waiting lists to build.

We have a significant backlog of patients requiring Blood Pressure checks, blood tests and other routine reviews, which we are working our way through. We welcome Amy Sparrow as a new healthcare assistant (HCA) to our team, and are recruiting a second additional HCA for Marshfield and Colerne who will help us to achieve this.

Dr Richard Greenway
Managing Partner

Flu Vaccinations 2021/22

Influenza vaccination is going to be a very important priority this autumn. Due to all the hand washing, mask wearing, social distancing and much reduced travel in the past 18 months, the number of influenza infections through 2020 and 2021 have been remarkably few. As a result, it is expected that there will be a lower level of flu immunity in 2021/22, particularly as social mixing and social contact is going back towards pre COVID times. Our coming winter will be the first when seasonal flu and COVID are likely to circulate alongside each other. The potential therefore is to add to the winter pressures experienced by the NHS and social care and there is an expectation that there will be a 50% increase in influenza this winter.



So influenza vaccination this autumn is vital to prevent severe illnesses and unnecessary deaths and thereby it will reduce the number of people needing hospital care.

The expanded flu vaccination programme of 2020/21 will continue this year meaning that 50-64 year olds will be eligible; secondary school pupils in years 7 to 11 will also be eligible.

People eligible for NHS flu vaccination are as follows:

- All children aged 2-15 (but not 16 or over) on 31.8.21
- Children aged from 6 months to adults aged 50 in clinical risk groups
- Pregnant women

- People aged 50 and over
- People in long stay residential / nursing care
- Carers
- Close contacts of immunocompromised individuals
- Front line health and social care staff employed by a registered residential or nursing home, a registered domiciliary care provider, a voluntary managed hospice provider or a person providing care under direct payments or health budgets.

Clinical at risk groups include people with

- Chronic respiratory disease e.g. asthma
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease
- Chronic heart disease
- Chronic liver disease
- Chronic neurological disease e.g. Motor Neurone Disease, Parkinson's, Multiple Sclerosis
- Diabetes
- A weakened immune system due to disease or treatment.

Planning for flu vaccinations in the Practice is underway. HM Government are indicating that they want COVID booster jabs to be offered in the early autumn but as mentioned earlier, at this stage we do not know when those vaccinations will be available.

We will keep our Practice website updated with information and will ask our Patient Participation Group to distribute notices in local shops and public noticeboards to keep everyone as up to date as possible about how we will deliver both flu and COVID booster vaccinations.

Another Scam Alert

A number of people have received fake emails purporting to come from the NHS, claiming to provide digital passports that prove that you have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19. These emails are totally fake and the links in them lead you to what look like genuine websites where your personal and financial information can be stolen. So please **BEWARE**

Really Well Being Success: The Evidence!



Dr Ashish Bhatia has been running Really Well Being Groups since January 2019 and has been invited to present the successful results to the European Congress of Integrative Medicine 2021. He regularly contributes to this patient newsletter offering advice to improve physical and mental health through lifestyle and habit change as well as running a sleep support service for Three Shires Practice patients.

The Really Well Being groups were clinician guided sessions taking place in a GP surgery and online with the aim of empowering people to develop healthier lifestyles. As two group members have said, "This is life changing stuff" and "positive sessions which encourage people to examine uncomfortable situations in a safe setting". "The classes are very well put together". "Thank you for creating a safe space for us all to simply 'Be'."

Evidence for the success comes from the results of people who attended Really Well Being Groups. Each group contained ten people who met together once a week for four weeks. The hour-long group sessions explored the science and simple art of living well, which Dr Bhatia has been teaching in Bristol medical school for many years. "My aim is to help people bring out their best by making what's meaningful easier and fun".

Every participant completed sleep and well-being questionnaires at the start and end of the four sessions and were invited to offer anonymised feedback on their experience of the course. "All the tips on sleep and stress have really helped". "This has been an amazing learning experience for me. "The results from the group participant feedback are extremely encouraging, "wonderful, open and honest sometimes hard hitting reality!" "Remarkable comfort and hope given."



Participants express a major improvement in their sense of well-being and a 100% found improvement in their sleep scores.

While the feasibility of Really Well Being groups needs further research, there are clear indications of their use in empowering people to optimise their habits and their health. "I have really appreciated the chance to be part of something amazing; I feel more positive and accepting than I have in years."

Contact the practice to find out more about the free sleep support service or express an interest in attending Really Well Being groups in 2022.

Patient Participation Group (PPG) Update

Your Patient Participation Group has continued to meet virtually on Zoom and members of the PPG have continued to be actively involved in the COVID vaccination programme at the Christchurch surgery in Downend, both vaccinating, directing and supporting people in the surgery, booking patients in, and stewarding in the car park.

Looking into the future we've been very conscious of the distances that people have had to travel to get to a COVID vaccination centre particularly if you are living in Colerne and Marshfield and the surrounding areas. We've been trying to investigate any possibilities for a more localised solution for the COVID booster jabs. As mentioned earlier, plans are now being made to use Marshfield Community Centre.

As the COVID restrictions on social contact are lifted, the PPG has begun to look at possible new supports to the work of the Practice. Health awareness sessions were one of the suggestions in the survey we undertook back in 2019 before COVID struck. Another idea that we have been asked to look into, is the development of a memory café for the Practice; more of this elsewhere in the newsletter. Something that we would like to resume is bereavement support. We will follow up these possibilities in the next few months. If you have any ideas or could help with any of these support ideas, please contact us on our PPG email 4patientparticipation@gmail.com or leave a message for the Patient Group at your surgery.

Let's Talk Cancer?

Throughout the pandemic there have been many ways in which our health may have suffered. One issue of national concern has been the reduction in cancer detection rates. Cancer has not gone away just because COVID has been at the front of the news. If you are called as part of the national screening programme for such as bowel, breast or cervical screening then please make sure you take up the opportunity to be screened; and please don't forget if you have been having your PSA checked for prostate issues then please continue to have the blood tests that your GP has suggested. Screening is vitally important for the early asymptomatic detection of cancers. The NHS advice is that if you experience breast, bowel, bladder, mouth or skin changes, problems with or after eating that persist, neurological, fatigue issues that persist, bleeding or bruising, coughing or hoarseness which persists, swelling or lumps or unreasonable weight loss, you would be well advised to contact your surgery to discuss the symptoms with your GP.

The Power of Positive Thinking

Is your cup half full or half empty? Whatever your answer, that answer is likely to represent your view of the world. If your glass is half full you are likely to have a more positive viewpoint. Negative attitudes and feelings can lead to stress, anxiety and depression which upsets the body's hormone balance and can damage the immune system. Chronic stress can have an impact on lifespan.

There are several ways that positive thinking can improve your health if you can retrain yourself to try to think more positively.

Positive thinking can

- Improve the immune system,
- Decrease blood pressure,
- Increase resilience particularly improving the immune system and healing after any medical setback,
- Contributes to longevity,
- Increase pain tolerance,
- Increase self-esteem and confidence,
- Lead to a happier and more enjoyable life.

A Memory Café for Three Shires?

We are currently investigating the possibility of setting up a memory café in our Practice area. Memory cafés are aimed at people living with a dementia or caring for someone living with a dementia or simply worried about their own or someone else's memory. There are twelve memory cafés currently in South Gloucestershire, the closest for Three Shires patients being in Emerson's Green and Yate.

Memory cafés offer safe and supportive places to discuss how dementia and memory problems are affecting all members of the family; they can give opportunities for thinking through what to do, how to manage and plan for the future while meeting other people in similar situations. A memory café should aim to offer stimulation to people with memory problems and an opportunity for carers and family members to exchange experiences and information. However it is important to stress that a memory café is not a formal day care service.

Every café develops its own informal style; many enjoy a variety of activities like craft, games and singing. Most cafés are run and supported by volunteers.



If we are to go ahead with a memory café for Three Shires patients and their carers and families, we will need some volunteer support to take this forward; one of the tasks will be to find a suitable venue or venues and given the size of the rural area covered by Three Shires, should we develop a café that operates in two locations.

Would you be interested in helping with a memory café in the Practice? If so please let us know by contacting us on our PPG email 4patientparticipation@gmail.com or ask your surgery reception to pass your contact details to the Patient Participation Group. We will hope to let you know if or how we are progressing with a Three Shires memory café in the winter edition of this newsletter.