

The Elms Medical Practice Summer Newsletter

Editors Note

A slightly belated Summer Newsletter.

So much is happening within the NHS and in each practice. We hear such frightening news where GP surgeries are unable to afford to keep their surgeries open and patients are suddenly losing their continuation of care and possibly having to travel far and wide to find an alternative practice. It is a fact across the country that the number of patients needing to see their GP is continuing to increase, yet investment in General Practice has reached an historical low. There are thankfully campaigns underway calling for long term government investment to support GP services. We need to maintain good access to high quality general practitioners, as this leads to better and more cost effective care, keeping our patients healthier for longer, enabling more of our patients to successfully manage their conditions in the community and avoid unnecessary hospital admissions. You can read more about these campaigns on the following website link: <http://bma.org.uk/working-for-change/your-gp-cares>. Thank you for your support.

Flu Vaccination

I just can't believe I am discussing flu in August but it's a fact and we have just opened our booking for the Saturday Flu clinics! To help access these appointments we have made them available to book on line. If you haven't already signed up for this service all you need to do is register to get your individual login details. This can be done either by ringing the surgery or directly through our website, following the simple instructions.

Remember! Free flu vaccination for all patients **over 65** and **for all ages with:**

- Chronic respiratory disease including asthma & COPD
- Chronic heart disease
- Chronic renal disease
- Chronic kidney disease
- Chronic liver disease
- Immunosuppression due to disease or treatment
- Diabetes
- Stroke or mini stroke
- In long-stay residential and nursing homes
- Carers
- Pregnant women
- Healthy children aged 2,3 & 4 (Nasal Fluenz available)

Shingles

A reminder that if you were aged 70 or 79 on 1st September 2013 you only have until the 1st September 2014 to have the Shingles vaccination. Book now!

Appointments On Line

This service allows all our patients, who have internet access, to book their GP appointments on line. Since our last newsletter we have had huge numbers of patients sign up and have had very positive feedback. At some point in the future you will be able to access parts of your medical record on line but at this stage we don't know when that will be available.

Did you Know?

- All our clinical and non-clinical staff are trained in basic life support
- The surgery has trained chaperones should you wish someone present during a consultation. Just ask reception when you make your appointment.
- In the first 6 months of this year a staggering **27,438** patients had an appointment at The Elms and were seen by a clinician.
- Did you know we have a blood pressure machine in the waiting room? You don't need to see a nurse or GP just hand the result to the reception team.
- Any patient aged 40 - 74 can have a free NHS Health Check. Book now!

NEW!!!! Texting!

SMS Appointment Reminders

This new service is an SMS messaging system that allows text messages to be sent to our patients to confirm an appointment that they have just made, and also to remind our patients of it near the time.

The need for this service originated from your feedback. It was our patient participation group survey that expressed the usefulness of such a service and that it could potentially reduce the number of patients who do not show up for their booked appointment. It was felt that patients would be more inclined to cancel an unwanted appointment if sent a reminder thus opening up that appointment for someone else in need.

How do you enrol for this service?

You don't have to do anything. When you make your next appointment you will be asked if you wish to participate. You can say yes or no and you will not be asked again. You can of course at any time change your mind, so please let us know if that is the case.

We hope to also use the same SMS messaging system to invite our patients in for things like flu vaccinations, health checks and specialist clinics.

It has already significantly reduced our DNA rate. We had over 600 DNA's (did not attend) in a 3 month period prior to the introduction of texting and just over 400 in the same time frame since the texting began. This is encouraging as we have only just started this service so very early days with only 20% of our patients signed up for it thus far.

We hope you find this service beneficial.

New Phone System

Once again this has come from our patient feedback. It was obvious that our access needed improving and our archaic phone system just wasn't up to the task. Staff have been retrained, not just in how to use the new phones but how to answer quickly and courteously. We hope this new system improves your telephone experience when ringing the surgery, maximising efficiency and improving patient access.

CQC

You will have seen this or heard about this in every paper and news item since 2013. The CQC is responsible for ensuring that GP's hospitals, care homes and dental surgeries provide people with safe, effective, compassionate and high quality care. The clinicians, staff and myself have been working hard to make sure all standards are met and although there is some trepidation at the thought of being inspected we look at their visit as a very positive thing. Under the new inspection scheme the national GP surgery visits will start taking place from October this year. The inspection takes place over a full working day so if you are booked in for an appointment on that day we will let you know and also ask if you would like to speak to the inspectors.

Named GP

As part of the commitment to more personalised care, particularly for patients with long term conditions, all patients **aged 75 and over** will have a named accountable GP. The Named GP will have overall responsibility for the care and support that the surgery provides them. We hope this will provide and promote a greater continuity of care and co-ordination of treatment.

All our patients aged 75 and over should have had an email or letter by now informing them of their named GP. Please contact the surgery if this is not the case.

Get Walking!!

They say forget those running shoes and get walking, apparently it's the best way to keep your body and mind in shape. It's a much cheaper option than the gym! It's a perfect gentle, low impact exercise and suitable for most people. You can burn up the following calories too:

- 2mph (slow pace) - 170 calories per hour
- 3mph (moderate pace) - 224 calories per hour
- 4mph (brisk pace) - 340 calories per hour
- 5mph (speed walking) - 544 calories per hour

Other reasons why walking is great:

- Helps delay dementia - dementia can affect 1 in 14 people over 65. According to Age UK, walking 6 miles or more per week could help towards brain shrinkage and preserve memory.
- Helps prevent Osteoporosis - stimulates bones & increases their density as well as maintaining healthy joints.
- Boosts Vitamin D levels - this year we have thankfully seen the sun but often this nutrient can play hard to get. It's not easy to find in food but exposing yourself to a little sunshine (without burning) helps you produce sufficient Vitamin D.
- Tones the body - a good walk really strengthens and shapes the legs, thighs, calves and not forgetting the Gluteus Maximus!

Why not join the St Albans, Harpenden & Villages Health Walks Programme, supported by the Herts County Council. It's part of a countrywide programme of free, led walks, helping everyone get outdoors and reap the benefits. For more information contact:

www.hertfordshirehealthwalks.org

Email: Healthwalks.cms@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Telephone: 01992 588433

Sad Goodbyes

Our lovely long standing GP locum Dr Aidie Garner has sadly decided to hang up her stethoscope and retire. Dr Garner is known and loved by many of you who seek a GP over the summer months. We are all going to miss her very much and I know many patients and families she has served over the many years will feel the same.

As always we welcome your feedback and thank you for your continued support.