

The Elms Medical Practice Winter Newsletter

Editors Note

A very Happy New Year to you all!

I have many friends who love Winter, they feel energised and actually enjoying walks in the icy cold and snow! For possibly others like me, winter makes you want to hibernate, reducing activity to a bare minimal. This, I believe, is a very natural route to take as it gives you time to rest and renew resources for the coming spring. All well and good but like all things it is best to have a balanced outlook. So before plummeting into a depression because we have all forgotten what the sun looks like, take a leaf out of some of my friends book - eat, sleep, exercise and live well!

Winter Tips

- Eat hearty soups made of root vegetables, squashes, potatoes, winter greens which are all rich warm healthy foods for this time of year. Eating or drinking hot foods and drinks a little bit and often will help keep you warm.
- If you are over 65 or have any clinical at risk health issues such as Diabetes, Asthma or Heart problems, have you had your flu vaccination? If not book now!
- Go onto the NHS Choices website for loads of information:
<http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/winterhealth/Pages/Winterhealthhome.aspx>
- If you can, drink more milk! Not everyone can do dairy but apparently it's a great way to help boost your immune system.
- We all know it but exercise really does help. Exercise releases endorphins which will get rid of those winter blues and build the needed immune system to resist those winter cold bugs.

Spread the Warmth

'Winter wrapped up' is a useful guide to keeping warm and well over the winter months, and is part of 'Age UK's' Spread the Warmth Campaign. You can either go on line:
<http://www.ageuk.org.uk/health-wellbeing/keeping-your-body-healthy/winter-wrapped-up/>

or ring 'Age UK' on 0800 169 65 65 and they will send you a copy of the guide whether it's for you or a family member.

10 Ways to Soothe a Sore Throat

- Take anti - inflammatory pain relief such as Ibuprofen. (Check with the pharmacist first if not taken before)
- Saltwater gargle - ½ tea-spoon in a glass of water & don't swallow!

- Over the counter Lozenges & Sprays (some have a numbing effect - remember to read the labels)
- Cough Syrup - even though you don't have a cough they coat the throat and can help pain relief.
- Stay Hydrated! Keep drinking fluids (preferably water), they keep the mucous membrane moist which in turn combats bacteria.
- Have a cuppa! Drink herbal teas, most herbal teas have antioxidants which ward off infection and builds your immunity.
- Chicken Soup - not so good for vegetarians but the sodium in a chicken broth is known to have anti-inflammatory properties
- Marshmallows??? The jury is out on this one but I guess soft gelatine will coat the throat and is very gentle going down.
- REST. Rest will allow your body time to heal.
- Sometimes a sore throat can be bacterial and antibiotics may help however if viral antibiotics will have no effect.

Flu Vaccination

So far we have vaccinated **2844** of our patients. This year we had our usual 3 Saturday clinics, 3 evening surgeries, home visits by our GPs to those who are house bound and continue with the nurse flu clinics every day. We have however reached that time where we now need to really encourage those who are at risk and have yet to have the jab. For some reason this year Asthma patients are reluctant to come in so this is a plea to those who haven't had one yet to please make an appointment as soon as possible.

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

Appointments On Line

At long last you can book your appointments through the internet. This has all come about from the patient access survey you all kindly responded to. Be assured you can still ring the surgery to make an appointment but this is an additional new service for our patients. 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.

An added benefit is that your login also gives you the secure facility of being able to reorder your repeat prescriptions. This service enables you to see what prescriptions you have on your records available to order. Sometimes you may find that a certain prescribing item is not available, this usually means that you have run out of your allotted number of repeats and this will have to be reauthorized by a GP. This can be done by making a telephone consultation with your GP.

New Telephone System!

An important part of a busy practice is that it runs smoothly, this ensures our patients receive the best service possible and the staff can focus on their main responsibility of patient care. Our surgery survey results have shown that access to the practice has often been difficult. We are therefore about to have a new telephone system installed which is set to improve your telephone experience when ringing the surgery, maximising efficiency and improve patient access.

Did Not Attend Statistics Oct-Dec 2013

Our latest DNA (Did Not Attend) rates continue to be a cause for concern. For example, in the last 3 months **607** people did not attend for their clinical appointments. The reception team will ring patients if we know they were medically urgent and they did not turn up for their appointment but this is not possible for all routine appointments.

We are still asking all patients to ring or use the easy cancellation facilities on our website if their appointment is no longer needed so that it can be offered to other patients.

Another initiative to help with this problem will be texting patient appointment reminders. We hope to do this later in the year (basically to spread the costs).

Patient Information Extraction (GPES)

This is a new governmental initiative to be used under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 by the Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) and managed centrally by the General Practice Extraction Service to collect and share confidential information from medical records by extracting GP data each month.

One of the first changes of this initiative is the launch of the ‘data.care service’.

Through GPES information will be collected from all providers of NHS care, including hospitals, GP surgeries and social care. The identifiers extracted will be date of birth, NHS number, postcode and gender. Then only coded data will be extracted e.g. referrals, prescriptions and clinical data but no free text can be extracted.

What will the extracted information be used for?

GPES has the potential to improve patient care by collecting and coordinating vital information from across general practice clinical systems in England. By making this information available to the NHS and other approved organisations, GPES can support a diverse range of improvements in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of illnesses.

Potential patient benefits could include:

- Improving the screening of patients for serious conditions and therefore enabling treatments to be delivered quicker and more efficiently.
- Better patient safety
- Better visibility of major public health issues (e.g. enabling the NHS to monitor flu outbreaks and deliver services where they are needed)
- A greater insight into the uptake of vital medicines.

YOU HAVE A CHOICE

Very soon all patients across the country will receive information on this new data service through a governmental national campaign so look out for this in your post.

It is a difficult situation for GP Practices as we are lawfully obliged under the Health and Social Act to send data to HSCIC but under the Data Protection Act we have an obligation to protect patient data.

As you probably know, earlier this year Jeremy Hunt (Health Secretary) stated that patients could object and opt out of this data extraction. If a patient objects we have been asked to add a particular code to a patients record which will in turn prevent a patients data extraction taking place.

Please inform the practice if you do not want to share your information in any way, we will then add the appropriate code declining your consent.

For further information visit www.england.nhs.uk/caredata

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

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