

THE ARLINGTON ROAD MEDICAL PRACTICE NEWSLETTER



April-May 2015

New Appointments System From 11th May we will start trialling a new appointments system which will enable patients to pre-book GP appointments. Whilst our book-on-the day appointments system, with limited pre-booking, has worked well for many years, the changing landscape of General Practice in recent months/years has meant that this system has outgrown itself. With a greater focus on preventative medicine and the need for patients to pre-book health reviews of varying sorts with their GP, we have found that our old book-on-the-day system does not really cater for this, leading to frustration for patients, doctors and receptionists alike.

In a bid to improve the experience for our patients and better manage our GP's workload we are freeing up more appointments for pre-booking, enabling you to plan when you come to see the GP and hopefully making it easier for us to get the right balance between the number of appointments needed for the review of long-term conditions and non-urgent problems against the number of appointments needed for urgent problems that have arisen on the day.

As the majority of our appointments will be pre-bookable we need to ensure we have provision each day for patients who feel they need to be seen urgently. To help us manage this category we are introducing a 'Triage Doctor' system, whereby when all our routine appointments are booked for the day, requests for urgent appointments will be passed to the Triage Dr who will telephone you back. The triage doctor will then be able to decide how best to deal with your problem. That may be by giving telephone advice or by booking you an appointment with either your GP or him or herself if that is deemed appropriate.

We understand and regret that our current system has become a gamble for patients, sometimes calling back day after day trying to get an appointment with their own GP, when perhaps somebody who has phoned for the first time has got in ahead of them and been able to book an appointment. We hope that our new system will both cut down on the number of phone calls we deal with each day, given that we hope to be able to book an appointment for most patients the first time they call, and provide a fairer, first-come first-served service to patients who wish to pre-book with their own GP.

Some days your GP may be acting as a 'reserve doctor' this will mean that whilst we cannot pre-book you an appointment for that day, you may be advised that it will be worth calling on the day to be able to see him/her. The reserve doctor is part of our management plan to deal with one of the pitfalls of majority pre-booking such as doctor sickness absence.

Another pitfall of majority pre-booking is sadly the increased number of wasted appointments by patients who fail to attend. We did find that our book-on-the-day system helped to eliminate this quite a lot, however, you may be surprised that some people still fail to attend an appointment even when they have booked it the same day. This is very frustrating when so many people are needing appointments and we would urge every one of you to try to remember to cancel your appointment if you no longer require it. Our new online appointment booking service should assist patients in remembering their appointments as, if you are registered for the service, you will receive a confirmation email of your booking and a reminder email 2 days before your appointment. The email is generated automatically and will be sent regardless of whether you book the appointment online or at the Surgery. You can also cancel and change your appointments online. Patients who fail to attend 3 or more appointments will automatically have their online access to appointments disabled. For more information about online appointments, please see the separate article – Patient Online Services on pages 2 and 3 of this newsletter.

In summary we hope that the changes we plan to make will have a positive impact on your experience at the Surgery and thank you all for your constructive feed-back when completing the Friends and Family Test.

Patient Online Services—A New Service for You



What is Patient Online?

Patient Online services will give you the option to:

- Make appointments online
- Order repeat prescriptions online
- View your medical record online, this is called Summary Access (at the moment this consists only of repeat prescriptions, allergies and adverse reactions)

You will be able to complete these actions using a computer, tablet or smartphone rather than having to phone or visit the practice.

What are the benefits of online services?

Online services will allow you to book and cancel appointments or request repeat prescriptions at a time that is convenient to you – day or night (although there are times when the system may be unavailable due to maintenance). It can also mean not having to travel to the surgery and can free up phone lines for people without access to a computer.

Why are we introducing Patient Online?

Primarily because we are contractually obliged to do so. However, with our automated telephone appointment booking service becoming less and less reliable we hope that the online appointment booking service will be a superior alternative. The automated telephone booking service has now ceased to be available.

How can I get access to Patient Online?

You will need to complete a registration form (please read and consider the accompanying information leaflet before signing up). Please bring the registration form and proof of your identity (there is a limited list of ID that can be accepted as proof of identity – again see information leaflet attached to the registration form) to the Surgery for verification by a member of reception staff. You will then be provided with details on how to access the service and you will create your username and password – these will be sent to you via email.

If you also request to register for Summary Access (medical records online), then your request will need to be passed to your GP for authorisation and you will be advised if this has been authorised as this is not automatically enabled without a GP's consent. At the present time, Summary Information access will only include your repeat medications, any allergies you have and any adverse reactions you have had.

Please note Patient Online Services is only available for patients over the age of 16 who can register in their own right and with their own unique email address.

How can I be certain that no one else can get access to information from my GP record?

Only you will be given access to your record. When you sign up to Patient Online you will use a secure log-in name and a password. These details are unique to you and along with your personal information will not be shared with anybody unless you choose to let them see it. This is not different to how you would access other online services, for example online banking.

You will need an email address to register for Online Services and this email address must not be a shared email address, but be unique to you only. The reason for this is that confidential emails regarding appointments/booking reminders will be sent to this email address. If you do not currently have an email address, you can easily set up a free email account to be used for the purpose of using Online Services.

If I don't have a computer, tablet or smartphone what will it mean for me?

Online services are an extra option for those who wish to use them and **will not replace other ways of contacting the practice, such as by phone or in person**. By freeing up phone lines and reducing the need for people to visit in person, it is hoped that patients who don't have a computer or simply prefer to speak to a receptionist will find it easier to contact the practice.

Once you have completed the registration form we will endeavour to email your registration details to

you within 5-7 working days after receiving your registration form, however during busy periods this may take up to 10 working days. Please note that we have to obtain authorisation from your GP if you have requested Summary Access, if your GP is away on annual leave we will have to wait for their return.

Once registered how do I access these services?

When you have received your registration details from the Practice you can access these services via www.myvisiononline.co.uk. If you are having trouble working your way through the registration process, you will find a Step-by-Step Guide to Registering for Online Services on our website at the end of the Patient Online Services section.

I manage prescription requests and book appointments for other members of my family. Can I do this online?

Whilst you cannot register for patient online services by proxy, there are alternatives for managing prescriptions and appointments for other family members.

Prescriptions - we are not disabling our current prescription ordering service via our own website. You will still be able to request prescriptions on other people's behalf using this service.

Appointments – If your family members are registered with the same GP as yourself, you are more than welcome to book an appointment in your name online and then inform the receptionist when you attend who the appointment is actually for. We would ask that you do not abuse this system if other family members are not registered with your GP. **Remember you can still phone the Surgery and book an appointment with a receptionist.**

Have you claimed your child's free¹ gift worth £583.42²?!

We always want to give our children the best chance in life and protect them whenever we can. This can often be expensive – for example the A rated car seat that offers the best side impact protection, the most comfortable pram for those trips out in all weathers, the baby monitor that you can hear with perfect clarity all around the house... and it doesn't stop as they get older, the helmet, knee and elbow pads for the first pair of roller blades, the mobile phone when they first go off to school on their own... the list is endless. We try to provide everything we can to keep our children safe, even when the cost hurts our pocket almost as much as the graze without the knee pads. But what about those hidden dangers to your child's health?

Diphtheria, Tetanus, Whooping Cough, Polio, Haemophilus influenzae type b (known as Hib – a bacterial infection that can cause severe pneumonia or meningitis in young children)? Oh and then there's Pneumococcal infections, Rotavirus, Meningitis C, Measles, Mumps and Rubella.

These illnesses are all lurking out there and the more children who are denied the opportunity to be vaccinated, the higher the risk becomes of an unvaccinated child becoming infected.

You can protect your child from 11, at best unpleasant and at the worst fatal, illnesses. The vaccinations against these illnesses cost the NHS a total of £359.97² per child between birth and the age of one year. The boosters they receive between the age of 3 and 15 cost an additional £223.45² for girls and £50.45² for boys, giving a total cost to the NHS of £583.42² and £410.42² respectively. But it doesn't cost you a penny. It's not often you can give your child something so valuable without it costing you anything.

Has your child been given this protection? Claim your child's free gift of a healthier childhood worth £583.42² and bring them along to a Wednesday morning clinic between 9.15 and 11.00am with Nurse Sue, where no appointment is necessary. Wednesday morning's difficult for you? Speak to our receptionists who will be happy to arrange an appointment at a more convenient time for you and your child.

¹At no additional cost to any contribution you make to the NHS via taxes, regardless of whether or not you take up this immunisation offer.

²This is the cost of the vaccine itself only and does not include any Practice Nurse or administrative costs. The vaccination schedule for girls is more costly due to the inclusion of the HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) Vaccination at the age of 12-13. This vaccine protects against cervical cancer.

Antibiotics We can often be disappointed when our GP decides that antibiotics are not necessary to treat our symptoms. As patients we sometimes see them as a quick fix to getting better when we're feeling really poorly with a flu-like illness, rotten cold, sore throat, earache or hacking cough. However, often these illnesses are simply viruses which antibiotics will have no effect on. They can be managed with over the counter medicines such as paracetamol, cough linctus, steam inhalations etc. Your pharmacist will be able to advise the best course of treatment. When symptoms persist it can often be wise to visit your GP to make sure you are not missing the signs of a bacterial infection and often your GP will be able to reassure you by checking you over, listening to your chest, checking your ears and throat etc.

Antibiotics are of course a wonderful and often life-saving provision when you are suffering from a bacterial infection and your GP is best able to assess when they are required. However, over and inappropriate use of antibiotics can mean the germs build up a resistance to them, known as Antimicrobial Resistance. A recent report published by Professor Dame Sally Davies, England's Chief Medical Officer, states

"Antimicrobial resistance poses a catastrophic threat. If we don't act now, any one of us could go into hospital in 20 years for minor surgery and die because of an ordinary infection that can't be treated by antibiotics. And routine operations like hip replacements or organ transplants could be deadly because of the risk of infection."

Her report calls for more innovation in the development of new antibiotics but also for the responsible use of antibiotics amongst clinicians. Many clinicians in the UK take this responsibility seriously and this is evident in the reduced number of resistant strains here compared to some of our neighbours in Europe. So remember when your GP diagnoses a virus rather than a bacterial infection as the cause of your symptoms and therefore deems antibiotic treatment unnecessary, this is in your best interest. Over and inappropriate use of antibiotics now could have life-threatening consequences for you in the future.

Dr Iftikhar Ahmad has joined the Partnership

We are delighted to announce that after joining the Practice in 2012 as a Salaried GP, Dr Ahmad has now joined the Partnership. His knowledge, expertise and good nature are an asset to the team.

Trainer's Corner

a word from Dr Mark Jones

Following the hectic start to the year I am now settling in to the Programme Director role. We have been enhancing our practice development afternoons to great response from everybody. The trainees have stepped up to the plate here, all preparing educational presentations to us all. Some of the sessions have provoked a very positive, proactive approach to our work. Stimulating good discussion and developing progress within the practice.

We welcome Dr. Vaughan a GP trainee in her 2nd year of her GP training. We also welcome Dr. Haddadin who is in his second year out of med school (FY2). Both are with us for the next 4 months.

Automated System

The automated telephone appointment booking system has now ceased and been replaced with Patient Online Services—see pages 2 and 3 of this newsletter.

night to
REMEMBER
2015 MIDNIGHT WALK
Night to Remember 2015 is a ladies only 4 or 10 mile midnight walk along Eastbourne's streets and seafront. This will take place on Saturday 16 May 2015 to raise money for Chestnut Tree House Children's Hospice

The Surgery have a team of staff, pharmacy staff and friends who are participating in the 10 mile walk. If you would like to sponsor the Arlington Angels and help to raise money for this worthy cause you can either donate at Surgery, via their JustGiving page at <https://www.justgiving.com/ArlingtonAngels> or by texting ARLA99 with the amount £? to 70070.

Last year two of the girls raised £265, so we hope to quadruple that this year!