

THE ARLINGTON ROAD MEDICAL PRACTICE NEWSLETTER



December 2020 version 2

Surgery Christmas Opening Hours

Friday 25th - Monday 28th inclusive - Closed
Friday 1st January - Closed.

We will be open at our usual times on all other **weekdays** over the Christmas period.

To contact the Out of Hours GP Service, for urgent problems that will not wait until we are next open, please call NHS 111 by dialling 111 on your telephone keypad.

Please remember to order your prescriptions in plenty of time before we close for Christmas

We take this opportunity to wish all of our patients a Merry Christmas and a Happier & Healthier New Year!

Pharmacy Christmas Opening Hours

Arlington Road Pharmacy will be closed on the following dates over the Christmas and New Year period...

**Friday 25th - Monday 28th
inclusive
Friday 1st January**

On all other days they will be open at their usual opening hours which are...

**Mon - Fri: 8.30am–6.30pm
Saturday: 09.00am-1.00pm
Sunday: Closed**



What's in this edition...

- * Covid 19 Vaccine
- * Flu Vaccine Update
- * General Practice - Open for Business
- * Engage Consult Suspended
- * NHS Early Cancer Diagnosis
- * Registrars Comings & Goings
- * Dr Williams Update
- * Eastbourne Foodbank
- * Christmas Jumper Day



Prescription Requests

Please remember to order your prescriptions that will be due around Christmas in plenty of time. Also ensure you have enough of all of your medications to cover the Christmas Period.

1 in 4 calls to the GP Out of Hours Service is for medication – please save this service for genuine urgent treatment and advice that you cannot plan for.



Covid 19 Vaccinations



Key messages

- A vaccine is now available
- The first vaccines will be given to patients aged 80 and over.
- **THE NHS WILL CONTACT YOU** when it is your turn to receive the vaccine. **PLEASE DO NOT CONTACT THE PRACTICE IN THE MEANTIME** regarding when and where the vaccine will be available, as this puts unnecessary strain on our, already, very busy telephone lines and our staff will not be able to advise you.

We are delighted to tell you the Practice is enrolled in the national plans to roll out coronavirus immunisations. You will know from all the stories in the media that there are some logistical problems still to solve because of the way that the vaccine has to be transported and stored, but we are working these out. It is a monumental task to roll out such a big programme. In Sussex alone we will be giving 12 million vaccines in the coming months.

Initially the vaccine will be delivered to the hospital, and they will be giving the first batch to hospital patients aged 80 and above, along with care home staff, and some hospital staff.

In the next few weeks, other sites will open in the community, probably in early January. We are working with four other practices in a Primary Care Network.

Eligibility for the vaccine will be prioritised by the Government's Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, based on the latest evidence of vaccine effectiveness and clinical characteristics. A national system is being developed to send invitations and to coordinate all the vaccine centres so that they all work together efficiently. We are making plans with other healthcare partners to reach people who are housebound or living in Care Homes.

As soon as vaccine is available locally we expect invitations will start to go out, but if you are aged below 80 then it could be some weeks before you are offered an appointment.

Please consider others before deciding to ring the Practice or the Hospital for information about the vaccination programme. We are already getting many calls every day and this makes it harder to manage emergency calls, prescriptions, and appointment requests.

More information will become available on the NHS website as plans are agreed, and as other vaccines come on line.

Flu Vaccine Update: 50-64 year olds Now Eligible for Flu Jab

Over 65 or under 65 and in an at risk group?

Are you aged over 65 or in one of the at risk groups that makes you eligible for a flu vaccine and not yet booked an appointment? If so, please contact the Surgery as soon as possible to book an appointment.

50-64 years old?

As you will have no doubt seen in the media, patients aged 50-64 years who were not previously considered to be in at risk group, and therefore not eligible for an NHS flu vaccination, are now eligible this season.

Continued overleaf...

If you fall into this category and would like a flu vaccination, please make a note in your diary that our **BOOKING LINE WILL OPEN TUESDAY 6TH JANUARY** to book an appointment for our **ONE DAY VACCINATION CLINIC ON SATURDAY 16TH JANUARY**. If you are unable to attend on Saturday 16th January but would like a vaccine, please contact your local pharmacy who will be able to offer this vaccine to you **FREE OF CHARGE** as you are now eligible for an NHS Flu Vaccination this season.



We are aware through comments in the media, social media and made directly to us that there is a gross misconception about the availability of General Practice as we continue to work through the pandemic.

General Practice is 'open for business'. Yes the way we deliver our services is different but we are still here for you and your family.

Historically we are all used to consulting a doctor in a face to face situation and traditionally that is what we all know as an 'appointment'. However, the restrictions placed on the world at large in the last year, has seen businesses, big and small, adapting and using various technologies to be able to continue to offer their services in a safe and effective method. The NHS is no exception to this.

It is essential that we continue to strive to keep the Practice Covid Safe both in terms of protecting our staff, to enable our services to continue, and also our patients whose diagnosis or condition can only be managed with a face to face consultation with a doctor or nurse.

How do you get an 'appointment' with a doctor?

Essentially how you access our services from the frontline has not changed dramatically from a patient perspective. You telephone the surgery, speak to one of our receptionists who will take your details, will advise if there is a more appropriate service that might be useful to you or they will book a telephone appointment with your own GP if he or she is available. If your own GP is not available another GP will be offered.

The doctor will call you back and take the time to listen to your concerns and conduct the conversation very much in the same way as they would if you were in their consulting room. Our doctors deal with every telephone consultation as 'an appointment'. It is in their interest, as well as yours, for the consultation to be as helpful and complete as a face to face consultation would have been. Naturally, if the doctor needs to physically examine you, they will arrange a time for you to attend the surgery. However, the doctors find the vast majority of consultations do not require a physical examination. This protects you, themselves and other patients by reducing the number of patients attending the practice in person.

This way of working has also meant that some doctors, who would not have otherwise been able to work during the pandemic due to their own health or family situations, have been able to fully integrate with the in house team and carry out their share of the workload from home.

We would ask patients to carefully consider, before flippantly stating they are unable to get a doctor's appointment and criticising general practice on social media, to really think about whether the outcome of their appointment would have been any different if they had been sitting in the same room face to face with a doctor than the outcome was over the telephone.

How are we managing patients with Chronic Diseases?

At the beginning of the Pandemic we did temporarily hold back on chronic disease monitoring, whilst we assessed and planned how to work our way through a challenge such as we have never faced before. However, we are now catching up with chronic disease reviews starting with our patients who have the most complex needs.

Diabetes

We have identified our most complex diabetics, who are at greatest risk, and have restored the usual annual reviews. If you have not yet heard when your annual review appointment will be, please be reassured that you haven't been forgotten and we will reappoint you as soon as we are able to. We have several hundred patients to re-book and Alison, Diabetes Secretary, will be in touch with you in due course.

Diabetes reviews are currently consisting of the usual face to face appointment with a Healthcare Assistant, followed by a review to discuss your results with one of the Diabetic Team (Dr Frisby, Dr Ahmad, Nurse Deborah or Nurse Loraine) – the review with a member of the Diabetic Team will be a telephone consultation.

Asthma

Practice Nurse Loraine is looking after our Asthma Register, which consists of approximately 1000 patients, and has been contacting the most complex cases – such as those whose respiratory condition often requires hospital admission or steroid treatment.

Unfortunately, the nature of Asthma reviews and the use of peak flow and spirometry carry too great a risk to be carried out in face to face appointment. Loraine is therefore carrying out these reviews by telephone. We would encourage patients to monitor their own peak flow and submit their readings to the practice. This will help us to identify any patients who need to be reviewed more urgently. Unfortunately, we have had to suspend the use of Engage Consult at the current time, but please submit your readings by post, whilst we look into other alternative methods of submitting information to the Practice.

Hypertension (High Blood Pressure)

We have around 2000 patients on treatment for high blood pressure which requires a blood pressure check and blood test twice a year to ensure an accurate medication management review can take place. To help us monitor this large group we would encourage patients to purchase their own home blood pressure monitor. Machines are available from a number of retailers, including chemists for around £20. If this is an option for you, it would be really helpful if you could monitor your own blood pressure for two weeks and submit your results to the Practice by post. Again this will help us to identify any patients who require urgent review.

Every face to face appointment that we do carry out takes longer due to changes of PPE and cleaning between patients and we do not currently have the capacity to carry out annual cholesterol checks or general health checks for patients who are asymptomatic.

If you normally undergo some kind of annual review with the Practice, you are feeling well and have no concerns, please wait until we contact you regarding your review. If however, you are waiting for your annual review to discuss a deterioration in your condition or any concerns that you might have, please do not hesitate to contact the Practice for a telephone appointment with a GP in the interim.

Engage Consult...



It is with regret that we have had to suspend the use of Engage Consult. When we first introduced the online platform for patients to submit images, administrative queries and ask for medical advice via our website, the system worked well.

However, now that we have hit the very busy winter period, it isn't working so well and we are concerned that patients might not always be getting the right care through it.

We have therefore, regrettably, had to take the decision to suspend the service, pending a review early in the new year. We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause to patients who were finding the service helpful.

NHS Early Cancer Diagnosis

The NHS as a whole aims to do all in its power to encourage patients to contact their GP with any concerns they may have about cancer related symptoms. In the early stages of the pandemic we saw a worrying trend of fewer suspected cancer referrals going through the system, suggesting that patients were putting off contacting their doctor. We are pleased to report that suspected cancer referrals are now back to pre-pandemic levels.

As a Practice we are keeping a close eye on all suspected cancer referrals that we make, to ensure they are being followed up in the expected timeframe.

Symptoms you shouldn't ignore...

- Blood in your pee
- Blood in your poo
- Vaginal bleeding after the menopause
- A cough that persists for more than 3 weeks
- Unexplained weight loss
- Lumps
- New moles or moles that are bleeding or painful

Remember that the earlier cancer is diagnosed the easier it is to treat.



JUST SPEAK
TO YOUR GP

Your NHS is here
to see you, safely.

Clear on
cancer help us
help you

Registrars' Comings and Goings

Dr George Saw has now finished his current training with us, we thank him for his input into the team and wish him well in his future training and career.

Dr Amber Khan and Bikram Suwal continue their training with us and Dr Conor Fee (ST2) and Dr Alex Simpson (FY2) have now joined the Practice team for the next four months.

Dr Williams Update

Dr Williams remains on sick leave having had investigations and then surgery in London on 23rd October for liver cancer.

He reports great progress in his recovery with increasing strength and stamina and hopes to be back at work sometime in early 2021, depending on the results of blood tests and a CT scan that are due in January.



Emergency food for local people in crisis.

A project seeded by the Trussell Trust. Registered Charity No. 1149902.

As many of you will know, for several years Arlington Road has been a collection point for the Eastbourne Foodbank. Whilst we haven't been able to collect food during the pandemic, we have continued to support the cause.

Sadly foodbanks will be needed more than ever this year as the effects of the pandemic push thousands more into financial hardship. As we cannot take in your generous donations at the Practice, we would encourage you to use the donation baskets found in the supermarkets, as we are sure many of you do already. To check which items are most needed by the Foodbank at the current time visit eastbourne.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-food



This year, instead of exchanging personal Christmas cards amongst our colleagues at the Surgery we have agreed to donate to the Eastbourne Foodbank via our own 'go fund me' page, where we can wish each other a Merry Christmas at the same time as reaching out to those in need.





Save the Children

CHRISTMAS JUMPER DAY

At Arlington Road Dr Frisby always leads us in his enthusiasm for Christmas Jumper Day, which combines good fun with raising money for Save the Children. Dr Frisby usually has several sweater changes throughout the day to ensure his vast array of festive attire gets an equal opportunity on the Christmas Jumper Catwalk!

Dr Frisby and a number of our staff are having to work remotely throughout the pandemic but this hasn't dampened our enthusiasm and we would love you to join with us in supporting Save the Children.

Participating staff will be sporting their best Christmas Sweater (under their PPE where necessary!) and will donate by texting **TEAMARLIROAD** to **70050**. You can donate in the same way with or without the sweater! Texts cost your donation plus your usual network rate.

