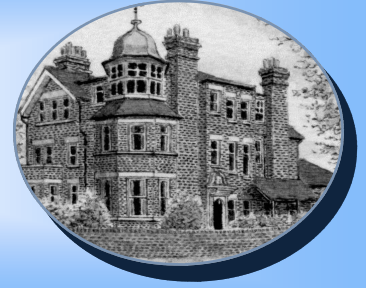


THE ARLINGTON ROAD MEDICAL PRACTICE NEWSLETTER



January 2018

Temporary Change to our Appointment System to meet Current Demand

As you will have undoubtedly heard in the media, the NHS is under considerable strain at the moment with an escalation in winter viruses, including H3N2 Virus, commonly known as Australian Flu.

In the past few days we have seen a massive increase in the number of home visit requests for elderly and vulnerable patients in the community, who have sadly fallen victim to the current outbreak of Influenza and other flu-like illnesses. It is vital that we manage our own resources effectively to ensure that not only do these vulnerable cases receive the care that they need but that we also ensure we do our part to avoid unnecessary hospital admissions to relieve the strain on secondary care at a time when the whole system is stretched.

You may have received a text message from the Practice on Monday 8th January, stating that due to the current situation we have taken the decision to stop pre-booking routine GP appointments on a temporary basis and only book 'urgent' problems on the day. This has thrown up a number of questions and we felt an article in our newsletter would better explain our decision, how the system will work and answer some of your questions.

Why has the system changed without warning?

A quick decision needed to be made after home visit requests reached an unsustainable level at the end of last week. We felt it prudent to ensure we can manage our patients' needs in the likely event that this situation should continue, or escalate further. Whilst we would normally advertise changes to our system in advance, we had to take a 'slam on the brakes' approach to prevent a 'crash'.

Who decides what is urgent?

You do. 'Urgent' can often be confused with 'an emergency'. When we ask you if your problem is urgent, we mean 'do you feel you have a problem that requires attention today and cannot wait?' We **do not** mean, 'is your problem life threatening?' You will be asked by the receptionist if you feel your problem is urgent and whether you feel you need to see a doctor or whether telephone advice would suffice. The receptionist will book you accordingly.

My problem is not 'urgent' but I can't wait indefinitely. What do I do?

As we are trying to manage each individual day's demand, we would be grateful if you would phone when you feel you really need to be seen. For example, today you may feel it's not

urgent but if you haven't improved in a couple of days you would want to be seen. In those circumstances it would be appreciated if you would leave contacting us for a couple of days. You may find you improve in that time and therefore no longer need an appointment, or if you are no better you can justify saying your problem is urgent and we will book you in.

I'm not sure if I need to see a doctor or not?

Some conditions, especially colds and viruses, can be treated with over the counter medication and a Pharmacist will be able to advise what you can take. Remember to take a list of your medication with you when talking to the Pharmacist to ensure that what they advise will not interact with your current regular medication. After listening to your symptoms and how long you have had them, the Pharmacist will be able to advise whether or not you should visit your GP.

For other problems, that may not be appropriate to discuss with a Pharmacist, we can book you a telephone consultation to discuss your problem with a doctor who can then decide whether you need to be seen or whether advice over the phone will suffice.

If home visits are the problem, why is it affecting the appointments you see in Surgery?

It is a case of managing our workforce and ensuring we have enough appointments both in Surgery and sufficient Clinicians out in the community visiting the elderly and vulnerable. By not pre-booking our appointments we can manage this as demand changes on a daily basis. Demand is also high in the Surgery for appointments with flu-like illnesses that are not rendering patients housebound.

Are you cancelling routine appointments that are already booked?

No, thankfully by putting measures in place to manage our workload going forward, so far this has not been necessary. If however, you have a routine appointment booked that you feel can wait until the current rise in winter illnesses has subsided and we have been able to return to a normal service, then of course any cancellations you make of your own accord will generally help the system.

I am due a routine health check, what should I do?

Routine health checks are not considered urgent and we are not currently booking these. If you are due a blood pressure check before being issued with further medication, please book in with one of the Nursing team who will be able to do this for you and report back to your GP if there are any concerns.

Are you refusing to see patients?

No, most definitely not. We are simply asking our patients to consider how urgent their problem is or if there is another way of managing their condition. If you feel you need to be seen we will accommodate your request. Please be aware, however, that if you misuse the system and book unnecessary appointments the GP may mention this or advise how your appointment could have been dealt with differently.

REMEMBER – we are still seeing all urgent problems. Please **DO NOT** use A&E or wait for the Out of Hours Service to open for problems that you would normally consult your GP about.

Some useful guidance on the treatment of cold and flu can be found at www.nhs.uk and links to specific useful pages have been added to the home page of our website at www.arlingtonroadsurgery.nhs.uk.

Continued overleaf

This may not have answered all of your questions but hopefully helps you to understand why we have taken the measures that we have and gives you some guidance on how to use the system at the current time.

Please treat our receptionists with respect, they are working with a system that we, the doctors, have put in place to ensure that care reaches those who need it most in a safe and timely fashion. We will be reviewing the system on a daily basis and will return to our normal booking system as soon as the current health climate allows us to safely do so.

Thank you for your understanding and co-operation at this time.

Forthcoming Surgery Closure

We will be closed for Staff Training...

Between 12.50 – 2.10pm
on Monday 15th January 2018.

Should you require urgent treatment or advice during the Staff Training Events, please telephone 727531.

Thank you!

We would like to thank all of you who kindly gave Christmas gifts to the Doctors and Surgery staff, it is very much appreciated.

We wish you all health and happiness for 2018.

New Registrar joining us this month

Dr Carmen Bilcea will be joining us on Monday 15th January and will be supervised by Dr Peter Williams. Dr Bilcea is in her final year of training and will be with us for six months. We welcome her to the Practice team.

Friends and Family Summary for 2017

Thank you to all of you who completed the Friends and Family Test throughout 2017. We really do value your feedback.

We publish monthly reports which can be viewed online at www.arlingtonroadsurgery.nhs.uk and where you have given permission for your comments to be published these are published in the report and displayed on our TV screens.

The chart opposite collates the data for the whole year and shows that an overwhelming percentage of our patients feel they would recommend us to their family or friends.

