

GRAFTON
MEDICAL PARTNERS

Grafton Medical Partners

Upper Tooting Surgery

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One year into the pandemic, COVID 19 is still the main subject of our March newsletter, which hopefully now contains some more positive news. I write this newsletter the day after a record 1,156 first doses of COVID vaccine were given by our amazing team at our main site, Trevelyan House Surgery.

We believe that we have now contacted, and offered the vaccine, to patients in groups 1-6, i.e. over 60s or those who are 18 and above in clinically vulnerable groups, at the three Tooting Grafton Medical Partners' Surgeries.

While there have been some patients who have declined the vaccine, as the data on the safety and efficacy of the vaccine emerges and exceeds all our hopes, we want to make it very clear that all previous 'decliners' can change their mind and contact us to arrange a vaccination.

Contact details

During this vaccination campaign we have texted and telephoned patients, but sadly find there are still many incorrect numbers on our system, as patients have not updated their contact details. We would like to remind all of our patients how important it is to update your details, so we can contact you swiftly when you are due your vaccine. Please use the link on our website <https://www.upper-tootingsurgery.nhs.uk/navigator/change-of-personal-details/>, or call/write to us.

We are aware that there have sadly been scam messages sent or shared by others during this pandemic. Any text message from us is prefixed by 'NHSNoReply'.

As we move to larger cohorts of eligible patients, we hope to switch to more online booking for COVID vaccination slots. This will be done by sending eligible patients an invite and a link to the online booking portal via text message. We would like to emphasise that this is a personal message, and is not to be shared.

Sadly, much time is wasted when patients who are ineligible for the vaccine, or who are not registered with us, present at the vaccination clinics. This is often as a result of our patients (luckily a small minority) 'inviting' their friends or extended family by forwarding these texts. We now run a computer search to ensure all online bookings are eligible patients, so please do not try to claim a vaccine intended for someone else. We are moving rapidly through the cohorts and feel confident that we will have all of our adult population vaccinated by July, so your turn will come very soon.

GP vaccination clinics have now been given the option to stand down after administering the first and second doses to those over the age of 50. Mass sites are opening at Queen Mary's hospital, and Battersea Arts Centre in Wandsworth, and Plough Lane Football Stadium in Merton. These sites will be accessible to all of our patients in groups 10-12 i.e 18 to 50 year olds. The mass sites are likely to be sending out invites by text message, and appointments will also be bookable via the NHS website.

We feel quite strongly that we should continue to offer a local service at Trevelyan House Surgery; so will continue vaccinating until all adults at our surgeries have had 2 doses of vaccine. We have your full records and thus feel that we are best placed to offer this locally. Vaccinating our patients keeps all of us safe both in the surgeries and their local area.

When your time comes, please do not turn the opportunity down. The vaccine is safe and efficacious and will allow all of us to get our lives back to normal.

Second doses

The vaccine delivery schedule is often only announced a few days ahead of the actual delivery, which has made organising clinics challenging.

We anticipate our second doses of the Pfizer vaccine will arrive in the weeks beginning March 22nd and March 30th. We will contact all patients due their second doses to book appointments, but will only receive sufficient vaccine for those who had their first dose with us.

Oxford (Astra Zeneca) second doses will also be due after 12 weeks. As this vaccine is easier to store and transport, second doses of AZ will start after Easter as supplies arrive. Again, we will contact you to book an appointment.

Please bring your vaccine record card with you to your second appointment. Please try to come alone (unless you need to bring a Carer) and on time, to help minimise footfall in the surgery.

Volunteers

No mention of the COVID vaccination clinic can omit a huge thank you from all of us, to our amazing group of volunteers, who have been key to enabling us to deliver this speedy vaccination programme.

They have helped with booking appointments, directing patients, organising queues, filling out vaccine cards and so much more. We owe you all a huge thank you, as do all of our patients.

"Normal" Work

COVID has taken over much of our lives for an entire year, yet General Practice continues. We have modified our working practices with more triage and virtual consultations, and nearly 100% of prescriptions are now sent electronically to local pharmacies. Our current plan is not to fully reopen online booking until early May. Please bear with us. This is to keep all of us safe, it makes our phones and staff busier but ensures all patients are triaged to be booked appropriately and safely.

If we ask you to attend our surgeries, please be assured that it is safe. You can view a video on our website to explain the changes you will see to our in-person consultation process. It is essential that child immunisations and smears continue, so if invited please attend. Chronic disease monitoring and medication reviews are also all ongoing, so please do not ignore your recall.

Mental health is a huge concern for us as we move forward. We recognise the impact COVID has had on many of us. Please consider using IAPT, or our low mood service.

Local resources can be viewed on our website. <https://www.uppertootingsurgery.nhs.uk/digitalpractice/wellbeing-centre/mental-health/>

Staff

We are delighted to welcome Maria Paukkeri, our new social prescriber. Maria is a nurse by training, but can help with many social problems; for example benefits, anxiety, social isolation, getting more active and helping you to find a way to achieve your life goals.

She also has a health coaching qualification and can help with diet and weight loss.

Other local resources to help with weight loss: <https://www.uppertootingsurgery.nhs.uk/digitalpractice/wellbeing-centre/weight-management/>

Sadly, obesity is emerging as a key factor increasing the risk of a severe COVID infection and hospitalisation. Many of us have put on weight in the last year and this is important to address now!

We sincerely feel that life is getting back to normal, but wish to emphasise that we should all maintain a cautious approach by continuing to socially distance and wash our hands. Vaccination is our main pathway out of the pandemic.

So, if there is just one last message we want to give all of our patients, it is to please take the vaccine when your turn comes!

With

Best Wishes,

Happy Easter!

Dr Penelope Smith