

JULY 2021

UPPER TOOTING

SURGERY



Dear reader,

I write this newsletter 2 weeks before July 19th, the date that Covid restrictions are likely to end.

Covid Vaccination Programme

The vaccination programme is thankfully decreasing transmission rates and breaking the link between Covid, hospitalisations and death, and our vaccination site at Trevelyan House continues. We have now contacted all patients over 18 to offer them the first vaccination, and are getting through the second doses ahead of schedule.



The number of cases of the Delta variant of Covid, which is significantly more infectious than the original virus, are increasing. However cases are milder, with fewer patients becoming unwell or needing hospital admission. It is worth noting that symptoms are more likely to include a runny nose, headache, and sore throat than a cough or loss of smell, so may seem more like a cold or flu.

If you have previously declined the vaccine, it is not too late to opt-in. Please contact us, or book online for one of the mass vaccination sites – some of which are also offering walk-in sessions. The nearest sites are Centre Court Shopping Centre, Wimbledon Football Stadium & Queen Mary's.

Later in July, we plan to add some walk-in slots at Trevelyan House, and use our Instagram @graftonmedicalpartners, along with SMS messages and our website to advertise this.

For up to date information, visit <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/>

It looks likely that proof of being fully vaccinated will help to open up travel and loosen quarantine restrictions.

We encourage all patients to apply for online access to their records. This is the easiest way to prove your status, and links with the well-publicised NHS app.

In addition, this facility allows you to request prescriptions and see test results. Please ask at reception or apply via the website. N.B. This app is distinct from the Track and Trace app.

Contact Details

It has become clear that many patients who are still 'active' and using our services need to update their contact details. Many move locally or change telephone numbers and, quite understandably, do not immediately think to let us know.

Please try to ensure your contact details are always up to date, so you do not miss out if we need to contact you.

Covid Booster Programme

The Joint Committee on Vaccination has now advised a Covid booster programme in autumn. This will ideally start in September and be delivered alongside the flu vaccine. Details are being worked out, but current plans are to roll this out in two stages.

Stage 1

- Adults 16+ who are immunosuppressed
- Those living in residential care for older adults
- All adults over 70
- Adults 16+ considered clinically extremely vulnerable
- Frontline health and social care workers

Stage 2

- All adults over 50
- Adults 16-49 who are in influenza or Covid-19 at-risk group, for example, diabetics, those with heart, renal, or liver disease
- Adult contacts of immunosuppressed individuals

General practice is expected to deliver a significant proportion of booster vaccinations. There are also plans for community vaccination centres and pharmacy sites to help complete this quickly.

Every year this newsletter references flu vaccinations, and I make no excuse for bringing it up earlier than usual.

Last year, due to Covid and less social interaction, cases of flu and other respiratory viruses were very low.

We have seen in Australia and the USA that flu, RSV (respiratory syncytial virus), coughs, and colds have increased post-Covid. We can anticipate a similar experience in the UK, particularly in children.

This is because many children have missed out on normal exposure to RSV due to lockdown measures including school closures.

While there are no vaccines for many viruses out there, there is one for flu. So please, especially this year, take up the offer if you or your child are invited for a flu vaccination.



Chronic Conditions Checks

We will be calling in those who are due Diabetic, Asthma, BP checks, and medication reviews. If you are asked to come in, we will endeavour to do all of your checks at the same appointment and assure you that you will be safe.

Cervical Screening

We have increased cervical smear screening slots on Saturdays at our Trevelyan House site, and encourage everyone to book an appointment if invited by us. Cervical screening detects early changes which can lead to cancer and saves lives.

Obesity

Obesity still is a significant risk factor for complications from Covid. We encourage all our patients to access help to address this problem. Please see our website for local resources, where there are also useful tools to work out your diabetes risk.

In the UK obesity is responsible for more than 30,000 deaths annually and, on average, deprives an individual of nine years of life. This effect was increased by Covid.

Last year the number of hospital admissions linked to obesity topped one million for the first time, an increase of 17% on the previous year.

Since 1975 the global rate of obesity has tripled. Britain has the highest rate of obesity in Europe with the exception of the small island of Malta. Whilst smoking remains the biggest cause of preventable death, we estimate that obesity will soon overtake it. Obesity-related hospitalisations increased almost tenfold in the last decade, placing a huge burden on all health care.

Coming out of the pandemic we all need to look at our life styles and diet and we encourage all of our patients to see our websites for details of local resources for help.

Our social prescriber Sarah has an interest in health and fitness and it is possible to book an appointment directly with her.

Our Team

Our team has worked incredibly hard under quite difficult circumstances for 18 months. The majority of our patients have been so kind and supportive, but sadly there seems to be a minority who feel no shame in being outright rude and abusive to our staff who are doing their best to deal with the significant and sustained increase in demand. We are not alone – this is unfortunately seen in most GP practices at present.

Lee LMC has produced a short video that I would encourage everyone to watch. It is on our website – which shows what many staff have to deal with on a daily basis.

I am sure you, like me, will be shocked by this but sadly it illustrates what many reception teams across the country have to put up with, albeit from a very small minority of patients. View the video at the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hAM3fSDq9kA>

Please note all of our calls are monitored and recorded and abusive behaviour will not be tolerated. All the team appreciate positive feedback when it is appropriate.

We have increased the number of appointments we offer across the board to try to cope with this demand. Not all conditions need GP input. **We encourage you to consider using the local high street pharmacists for advice on minor conditions.**

- **MECS – for minor eye conditions.**
<https://primaryeyecare.co.uk/find-a-practice/>
- **IAPT – for anxiety and depression.**
<https://www.mertonuplift.nhs.uk/iapt>
- **Our FCPs (first contact practitioners) are trained physiotherapists.** For musculoskeletal problems, for example neck and back pain or sports injuries please book to see them.
- **In practice pharmacist – for medication queries and medication reviews.** Our team in the surgery can help with a range of medication related issues.

We are delighted to announce that Dr Harry Gunn who is currently working with us as a registrar will join our permanent Gp team in August.

We welcome two new pharmacists to our in-house team, Mohammad Azizyan and Sarah Gaffar.

We move cautiously but optimistically into the summer months. Next winter is likely to be very challenging for all of the Health Service, but thanks to the excellent vaccine progress we go forward with hope and will build on some of the positives which have come out of the last 18 months. We will continue to offer telephone and video consultations, as well as webinars and group consultations to complement traditional general practice.

Wishing everyone a healthy and happy summer

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Happy 73rd Birthday to the NHS on July 5th!

Penelope E Smith

Penny Smith Senior Partner

