

August 2024

# UPPER TOOTING



# SURGERY



## Dear Reader

---

As I write this newsletter, the sun is shining and it seems very premature to be reminding everyone of the upcoming Autumn vaccination campaign, but there are significant changes we want to make everyone aware of.

### **RSV vaccine**

RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus) causes significant illness every Winter and recently cases have been increasing across the year.

Starting in September, there will be a **NEW** vaccine which is extremely safe. Initially, the vaccine will be offered to:

- Individuals aged 75 to 79 years on 1st September 2024 – eligible until the day before their 80th birthday.
- Pregnant women over 28 weeks.

RSV causes bronchiolitis in small babies which can be extremely distressing and lead to hospital admission for supportive oxygen and feeding. Every year, this virus accounts for 30,000 hospitalisations in under 5s and is responsible for 20 to 30 deaths in the UK. By vaccinating pregnant women, the antibodies they produce will cross the placenta and protect their babies. This gives us hope that rates of bronchiolitis may fall this winter. Older adults are more at risk of complications from any respiratory illness so are included in this offer.

Our first clinic will be held on Saturday 7th September at Trevelyan House. We will send out invites via text but if you believe you are eligible, you can also book directly via reception.

## **Pneumococcal vaccine**

All individuals with underlying lung issues aged 2 to 64 years, or anyone aged over 65 years are encouraged to book a pneumococcal vaccine, which protects against pneumonia.

Most people aged over 65 years will only need one dose of the vaccine to help protect them for life.

## **Flu vaccine**

This year flu jabs start in October and the following groups are eligible:

- Aged 65 years or over
- Pregnant women
- Those with certain health conditions – diabetes, COPD, chronic kidney disease, chronic heart problems

We will invite those in eligible groups for their vaccine.

## COVID

Once again, Trevelyan House will be a COVID vaccination site. It is possible to co-administer the COVID vaccine with the flu vaccine. At present, the details of the cohort to be invited have not been released but we anticipate it will be similar to previous years.

## Whooping Cough

Whooping cough is sadly circulating again due to declining overall vaccination rates.

All GPs at Upper Tooting have vaccinated their children and encourage all our patients to do the same. Pregnant women should protect their babies by having a whooping cough booster between 16 and 32 weeks of pregnancy.

So far this year, 29 babies have died of whooping cough and in 23 of those cases, the mother had chosen not to be vaccinated. Whooping cough is wholly preventable with vaccination, so we encourage all eligible groups to have a vaccine.

## Moles

We consistently advise those with new or changing moles to seek our advice as this may be a sign of skin cancer/melanoma.

At Upper Tooting, we are fortunate to work with Dr Judy Roberts, who has a special interest in dermatology. You can book an appointment with her in our dedicated dermatology clinics.

Normal moles are usually small, round with smooth edges, and evenly coloured, but melanoma tends to be bigger, often more than 6mm wide. Other signs to look out for are moles that are:

- Swollen and sore
- Bleeding
- Itchy

Most skin lesions we see are benign (non-cancerous) but finding melanoma as early as possible can make it easier to treat.

The NHS website has more information about moles (with illustrations):

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/moles/>.

# Antidepressants

As a practice, we strongly believe antidepressant medication needs regular reviews. After feeling well for 3-6 months, it may be appropriate to wean off medication. Whilst some surgeries are happy to add these drugs to repeat medication lists, we prefer to review patients.

Recently we have introduced a system where stable patients who do not feel they need an appointment can fill in an online questionnaire and depression assessment tool, PHQ-9, to aid us in our decision regarding continuing a prescription for antidepressants.

Once this is submitted, it is looked at by the clinical team and leads to either an issue of the prescription, a telephone consultation, or a request to see the patient face-to-face.

We hope this will improve patient care and overall prescribing safety.

## How to avoid telephone queues!

We have worked very hard to try to reduce our call waiting times but inevitably, especially during early mornings, call volumes can be high so there are longer waiting times.

Please consider other options.

1. Can your condition be managed by one of our local community pharmacy colleagues?

NHS England has increased the number of conditions they can see and prescribe for:

- Earache
- Impetigo
- Insect bites
- Shingles
- Sinusitis
- Sore throat
- Urinary tract infections (UTIs) – women aged 16 to 64 years

You can find a local community pharmacy by visiting our website and typing in your postcode: <https://www.uppertootingsurgery.nhs.uk/local-pharmacies/>.

**2. Do you have an eye issue?**

If so, consider the Minor Eye Conditions Service (MECS). They can see a variety of eye conditions:

- Red eye or eyelids
- Dry, gritty, or uncomfortable eyes
- Eye irritation and inflammation
- A lot of recent discharge from the eye or watery eye
- Recently occurring flashes or floaters
- Painful eye
- Ingrowing lashes
- Recent and sudden loss of vision
- Foreign body in the eye

The nearest MECS practices to Upper Tooting are:

**Specsavers Opticians (Tooting)**

24C Mitcham Road SW17 9NA  
020 8682 3333

**Boots Opticians (Tooting)**

46 Tooting High Street SW17 0RG  
020 8767 8292

**3. Do you have a dental problem?**

If so, do not ring the surgery as GPs cannot help with dental issues. Instead, ring NHS 111 or visit their website: <https://111.nhs.uk/>

**4. Do you have back, neck or joint pain or a sports injury?**

Consider seeing one of our First Contact Practitioners (FCPs), a senior physiotherapist who works at the surgery. Check that there are no online slots to book into before calling us on the phone. Our FCPs can order X-rays and scans and can refer you to secondary care if necessary.

**5. Are you experiencing any social or housing issues?**

Please ask to book an appointment with our social prescriber, Wioletta Tomialojc.

**6. Are you looking for a same-day face-to-face appointment with a GP?**

If so, consider using our automated Babble Telephone booking system by pressing option 1. Slots are offered in order of availability, starting from the earliest available appointment on the day. Slots are released at 8am daily (Monday – Friday), so it can be a great option on a busy weekday during early mornings.

## **7. Is your request non-urgent?**

For non-urgent, simple requests, it is possible to submit an online consultation form. We will respond to you within 2 working days. Please see our website for more details.

## **8. Reason for an appointment**

When requesting an appointment, it is helpful to give our reception team an idea of the reason for your appointment so they can direct you to the most appropriate clinical team member. We recognise the importance of continuity of care so if you are booking an appointment to review results or a follow-up appointment, please make this clear to the person taking your call and request for a specific clinician.

## **9. Online slots**

These are mainly face-to-face appointments. We feel most of our patients use the slots appropriately, so we have no plans to remove them, as some practices move to embrace 'total triage'!

Lastly, please value GP appointments. If you cannot attend an appointment:

- Cancel online if using the online booking facility.
- Select option 1 if using our automated Babble Telephone booking system – you can cancel appointments 24hrs a day.

Our telephone lines are open 8am - 6.30pm, Monday – Friday for new bookings and queries. Before calling, please check to see if there are any online slots available.

# Hellos and Goodbyes

We say goodbye to Dr Andrew Wiggam, our recent registrar, and Dr Madeline Witcomb, our recent F2 doctor, who will be returning to their hospital posts.

We welcome our new F2 doctor, Dr Gurdev Singh and our new registrar, Dr Samuel Somers, who will start working with us in August.

---

Everyone at Upper Tooting wishes you a happy and healthy Summer Holiday!

**With all best wishes**

**Dr Penelope Smith**

*Penelope E Smith*

**Senior Partner and Clinical Director, Grafton PCN**

