

# Tadley Medical Newsletter October 2023



## People News

Dr Sunil Bhanot will be retiring at the end of October. He has been in the Practice for 32 years and for the last few years was our Senior Partner leading us through the challenging times of Covid, reduced funding and increased demand. An old-fashioned GP, with continuity and patient care as his foundation, he is also a staunch advocate of high-quality GP training within practice and the state of General Practice within changing political landscapes.

We all wish him a happy and stimulating retirement with whatever challenges come his way.

Dr David Newman will take the helm as Senior Partner.

## Message from Dr David Newman

One of our biggest and constant challenges is how to meet the ever-increasing demand to deal with patient concerns and problems. Covid showed us that much could be done over the telephone or using e-consults. Just going back to our old system pre Covid will just not meet need, expectation or demands. More face-to-face appointments and direct booking into appropriate appointments have been trialled and we are now ready to introduce a new appointment system which we hope will help meet the demand whilst making the best use of our resources.

I do hope you will have seen a big improvement in getting through on the phone to us. The call back option is very popular and prevents those long waits on hold.

It was gratifying to see so many of you at our (PPG) Patient Participation Group's annual meeting in July. Thanks for all the constructive suggestions and feedback. We are very grateful to our PPG Committee who give us a really good steer, honest debate and ideas.

In our new NHS world, the Practice is going to be increasingly assessed using your feedback. It can be a pain, but if you are asked for feedback and you reflect on any contacts with the Practice, both good and bad, please respond. This gives us a more accurate picture of how we are doing and how you feel. All feedback is gratefully received.

The Autumn Covid Booster programme is underway, and we have started our flu vaccinations this month. Many of you have already been seen in one of our Saturday or mid week clinics.

A massive thank you to Karen Simmons and Ali Smith for their time and effort in organising the Programme and to Carleen Monger, who along with Ali and Joy Murphy are visiting our housebound patients.

## **New Appointment System**

From October all routine medical and administrative queries and requests will have to be made online via our website [Contact Us Online](#). Patients who do not have internet access or who would generally struggle need not worry; our Reception staff will complete the form on your behalf.

All the medical requests will be looked at by a clinician and assessed for priority and the most appropriate course of action. This might be an option to book a telephone or face to face appointment, an immediate telephone call from a clinician or the patient will be signposted to the best source of help.

To ensure that all patients have equal access to our services we will require all patients to complete a form – even those who come into the surgery rather than contacting us by telephone.

Occasionally we have patients presenting in Reception who really should have gone to A&E or even requested an ambulance. Whilst we will do all we can in a real medical emergency we are not a “Walk In” service.

## **Urgent Medical Needs**

You will need to call us on the day but please look at our [website](#) first for guidance.

## **Administrative Queries**

These too will need to be submitted to us via a form. There will no longer be a Secretarial Option when you telephone or come in. Our Reception team will be there to help if you do not have internet access.

## **Covid and Flu Immunisation**

This year there are no local vaccination centres so we are running clinics most Saturdays and can offer flu and covid protection. These appointments are filling up quickly, but some local pharmacies are offering both vaccines. You can book online and check your eligibility with [Covid19 services](#) or by calling 119.

## **Covid Infections**

Numbers seem to be on the rise locally and we have had quite a few staff affected. Apologies if this means we have kept you waiting for your call to be answered or have had to change your appointment at the last minute, to keep everyone safe we are asking patients with respiratory symptoms to wear a mask if they are coming to the surgeries.

## **Stoptober**

October is the month that all smokers are encouraged to try and quit support and information is available through [smokefreeHampshire](#).

Stopping smoking is not easy but Smokefree Hampshire are able to help you every step of the way.

## **Waiting Areas and changes to Holmwood Health Centre**

We are pleased to tell you that the Patient Call In Screens will soon be up and running at both surgeries. You will be able to check yourself in if you have an appointment and you will be called in by an announcement on a screen in the waiting area. To make life simpler for everyone we will be changing the numbering system of the clinical rooms at Holmwood. There will be new signs and we will all be on the lookout for lost patients.

## **Changes to Non-Emergency Patient Transport Service (NEPTS)**

South Central Ambulance Service provide hospital transport for eligible patients who have a medical reason that means they are not able to travel for treatment by another method. With effect from 1 November 2023 we will no longer have access to the booking system and patients will have to organise their own transport.

You, your relatives and carers can access [the Passenger Zone](#) to manage bookings from end to end.

If this is the first time you have needed to book Patient Transport (NEPTS) you will need call one of the numbers below and create your record. After that you can do everything online. When you make that first call you will be asked for your date of birth and NHS Number.

If you have used Patient Transport before you can go directly online

You can book via the online method up to 20 days in advance but no later than 2 working days before the appointment.

If you don't have access to the internet, you can use these numbers:

Hampshire Patients – 0300 123 9833

Thames Valley Patients – 0300 100 0015

## **Cancer Screening**

There are 3 national cancer screening programmes in England and we **strongly encourage** all eligible patients to take up the offer. Screening can pick up abnormalities before you have any symptoms.

### **Cervical Screening**

The NHS cervical screening programme in England is offered to women with a cervix aged from 25 to 64. Routine screening is offered every three years up to 49 years of age and every five years from 50 to 64 years of age. Depending on the result of the screen, people may be recalled earlier than these routine intervals.

We fully understand that some of you might be anxious about having a “smear test” or feel embarrassed but we want to reassure you that the doctor or nurse taking the sample is more than likely had to have the same test themselves at various times and is fully understanding of how you are feeling.

### **Breast Screening**

Breast screening is offered to women aged 50 to their 71st birthday in England. You'll first be invited for screening within three years of your 50th birthday.

There is also currently a trial to examine the effectiveness of offering some women one extra screen between the ages of 47 and 49, and one between the ages of 71 and 73.

You may be eligible for breast screening before the age of 50 if you have a very high risk of developing breast cancer.

If for any reason you were unable to attend your screening when invited, you can re-arrange by contacting [Hampshire Hospitals Breast Screening](#). There are mobile units at Morrisons in Basingstoke and Sainsburys at Kempshott.



## Bowel Cancer Screening

As part of the NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme, men and women aged 60-74 are sent a home testing kit every two years to collect a small sample of poo to be checked for tiny amounts of blood which could be caused by cancer. The programme is expanding and will be offered gradually to everyone aged 50 to 59. If you need a replacement test kit for any reason, please call the national helpline on 0800 707 6060. You can also request a test kit every two years if you are 75 or over by calling the same number.

If caught early, more than 90% of bowel cancer cases can be treated successfully.

## Blood Pressure Readings

We often ask for blood pressure readings especially if you are over 40 or taking medication. It is important that you respond to these requests.

High blood pressure (hypertension) rarely has noticeable symptoms. But if untreated, it increases the risk of serious problems such as heart attacks and strokes. Around 1 in 3 adults in the UK have high blood pressure but many will not realise it.

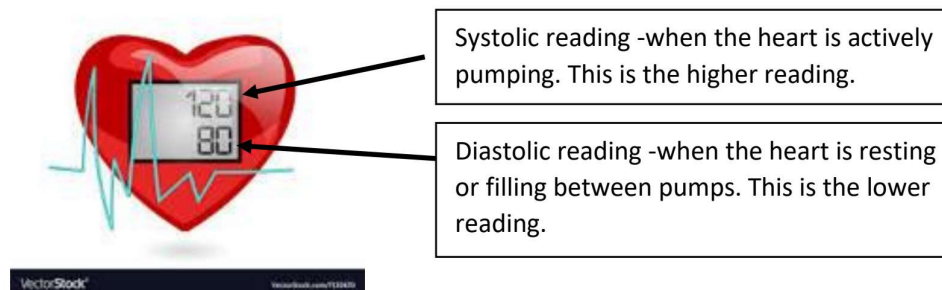
Blood pressure fluctuates so we prefer to take the average from several readings. It will often be higher first thing in the morning, after exercise, caffeine, if you're feeling stressed, anxious, or unwell and even if you have a full bladder or the weather is cold!

If you have raised blood pressure, we would advise you to buy a home monitor that takes measurements from your upper arm. [The British Heart Foundation](#) recommends approved monitors. You do not need to spend a lot of money, a basic machine is fine. It is important that you have the **correct cuff size** as it will not give you accurate readings if it does not fit properly.

If you don't have your own monitor:

- You can borrow a monitor from a friend or family member. Ideally it should be less than 4 years old to guarantee accuracy.
- We can loan blood pressure monitors from the surgery for patients who have been asked to monitor at home.
- We have blood pressure monitors in the waiting room at both surgery sites.
- Many pharmacies can take a blood pressure reading for you.

[How to check your blood pressure](#)



You can send us your readings:

- online, via our [website](#)
- by responding to a text that we have sent you
- or by writing down and handing in to reception.

In general, you have high blood pressure (hypertension) if your average readings are 140/90 or above although it is important to remember that some people will have different targets depending on their age or medical history. You need to meet the target for both numbers -if only one is raised it still counts!

If your blood pressure is raised, your risk of having a heart attack or stroke is also raised. We will suggest you make healthy lifestyle changes and perhaps take medication. See the websites below for more information.

[British Heart Foundation](#)

[NICE \(National Institute for Health and Care Excellence\)](#)

## **Rural West Primary Care Network (PCN)**

Since the NHS was created in 1948, the population has grown and people are living longer. Many people are living with long term conditions (e.g., diabetes and heart disease) or suffer with mental health issues and may need to access their local health services more often.

To meet these needs and as part of the NHS long-term plan, GP practices are working together with other services (for example community, mental health, social care, pharmacy, hospital, and voluntary services) in their local areas, in groups of practices known as primary care networks (PCNs). Working as Rural West PCN has allowed us to join with Watership Down Health to work at scale, and our PCN is providing services for just under 40,000 patients.

Building on existing primary care services, the purpose of a PCN is to enable greater provision of proactive, personalised, co-ordinated and more integrated health and social care for people, close to home. The main aim is to change from reactively providing appointments to proactively caring for our patients and communities. All PCNs are providing services within a set of national service specifications; we are expected to provide a wider range of primary care services to our patients, involving a wider set of staff roles than might be feasible in individual practices, e.g., Social Prescribers, Health & Wellbeing Coaches and Care Co-ordinators.

As a PCN, we also think about the wider health of our population, and we are taking a proactive approach to managing population health and assessing the needs of our local population to identify people who may benefit from targeted, proactive support.

## **Bereavement**

We tragically lost a very valued and loved staff member earlier this month. We would like to thank all of you who offered your condolences and respected our privacy at this very sad time.