Welcome to the new issue of our Newsletter; designed to keep you up-to-date with developments in the Practice.

Staffing

Sarah Marshall, our Prescribing Nurse is moving on to pastures new in the middle of September. She has been running our Minor Ailments Clinic for over a year now and we wish her well in her new post. We will be suspending the Minor Ailments Service for the time-being but I will keep you posted on this front.

We are still looking to fill our vacant GP sessions and will continue to do so and once again we praise you all for your understanding and patience - many, many thanks. Again, I will update you as the situation changes.

Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programme 2017-18

It’s almost that time of year again! Our first ‘Flu Clinic will be held on Saturday, 7 October 2017. You are eligible for the free ‘flu jab if you are:

Anyone who suffers from a health condition, who is pregnant, who is 65 or over or those who work in healthcare, should get the ‘flu vaccine.

If you have a health condition, ‘flu can hit you hardest. The vaccine is the safest and most effective way of protecting yourself.

Conditions and diseases which can make ‘flu much more dangerous include:

- asthma
- bronchitis
- emphysema
- cystic fibrosis
- chronic heart disease
- chronic kidney failure
- multiple sclerosis
- liver problems (such as cirrhosis/hepatitis)
- diabetes
- asplenia or dysfunction of the spleen
- being very overweight
- HIV infection

Reception staff have a more detailed list of eligibility – please ask if you are unsure if you are entitled to this vaccination.

If you are pregnant, you are at greater risk of complications from ‘flu. Having the vaccine now could help you avoid catching flu and protect your baby.
If you have children who suffer from any of the conditions above, they should be immunised too.

Anyone undergoing chemotherapy or radiotherapy treatment should also get immunised.

Unpaid carers of any age, including young carers, are also eligible for the ‘flu vaccine.

If you are a healthcare worker (anyone who works in health and social care) it is recommended you have the flu vaccine too.

The vaccine takes around 10 days to work and should protect you from ‘flu for around a year. You have to get immunised annually because the virus changes constantly and your immunity reduces over time. Last year’s vaccine won’t necessarily protect you from this year’s ‘flu viruses. The flu vaccine can’t give you ‘flu, but it can stop you catching it. For the maximum protection possible, make sure you get immunised every year.

Anyone who falls under one of the eligible groups will be offered a free ‘flu immunisation. Those aged 16 or over, who are not eligible for free immunisation, can get the vaccine in many high street pharmacies for a small fee.

Healthy people who catch the ‘flu are likely to feel very unwell for up to a week but will normally recover. You can help stop the spread of ‘flu by catching a sneeze in a tissue and washing your hands regularly. If you think you have the ‘flu you can seek advice from a Pharmacist, through NHS 24 or from ourselves.

From September 2017, we will be organising our Seasonal ‘Flu Clinics. There will be posters displayed throughout the Surgery with dates – if you are eligible for the ‘flu vaccination, just ask at Reception and an appointment will be made for you. We aim to have the ‘Flu Clinics on a Saturday morning; this allows us to maintain our level of surgeries throughout the week and concentrate purely on ‘flu vaccinations at the designated clinic.

Also, pre-school children aged 2-5 years and all primary school children in P1-7 will be offered immunisation against ‘flu this autumn. The ‘flu vaccine will then be offered every year to continue to protect your child against ‘flu viruses. Pre-school children will be given the vaccine in the Surgery but primary school children will be given this at school.

Most children will be able to receive the ‘flu vaccine as a painless nasal spray. However, the nasal spray will not be offered to babies and young children under 2 years of age because it has not been approved for this age group. But if children are immunised then the chances of it spreading to younger children will be reduced. Alternative forms of the ‘flu vaccine are available for children with underlying medical conditions from 6 months of age.

Continuing from last year also, is the shingles vaccination. This year, it is being offered to 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 76, 77, 78 and 79 year olds.

Unlike other infectious illnesses, you can’t catch shingles from someone else. Instead, if you’ve ever had chickenpox, the virus that causes shingles lies inactive in your body and can become active again later in life.

Shingles (also known as herpes zoster) can be very painful and is more common among older people. And the older you are, the worse it can be. For some people, the pain can last for many years.

But this vaccination can reduce your risk of getting shingles, or, if you do get shingles, it can reduce how serious the symptoms will be.
The shingle vaccination will be offered, this year, to:

all people aged 70 who were born between 2 September 1946 and 1 September 1947
all people aged 71 who were born between 2 September 1945 and 1 September 1946
all people aged 72 who were born between 2 September 1944 and 1 September 1945
all people aged 73 who were born between 2 September 1943 and 1 September 1944
all people aged 74 who were born between 2 September 1942 and 1 September 1943
all people aged 76 who were born between 2 September 1940 and 1 September 1941
all people aged 77 who were born between 2 September 1939 and 1 September 1940
all people aged 78 who were born between 2 September 1938 and 1 September 1939
all people aged 79 who were born between 2 September 1937 and 1 September 1938

Again, we have more information in the surgery, just ask at Reception or speak to the Doctor or Nurse.

Spotlight on Self-Treatment of Ear Wax

Patients often ask for appointments to have their ears syringed, however, this can be done by patients themselves. Below are questions and answers that will help you to do this.

Can I remove ear wax myself? - Yes, with a bulb syringe, instructions below. These can be purchased from pharmacies or from the internet.

When should a bulb syringe be used? - An ear bulb syringe should be used when one or both ears are blocked with wax. This is called wax impaction. The ears are usually self-cleaning as the skin cells of the ear drum and ear canal are constantly migrating outwards and most people do not need to interfere with their ears at all. Some people make more wax or their ears do not clean the wax as effectively as others. In these cases, wax can build up inside the ear sometimes causing a blockage sensation and reduced hearing.

You can treat earwax impaction with eardrops in the first instance. Olive oil eardrops or sodium bicarbonate can be put into the ear daily. This should be done for 2-3 weeks and can treat the earwax blockage without the need for a bulb syringe. Both these drops can be bought over the counter in the pharmacy. If this is unsuccessful then the bulb syringe can be used.

Should I use cotton buds in my ears? - Never use cotton buds in your ears!! – This pushes wax further into the ear making it worse. It can also cause ear infections and damage the eardrum.

Cotton buds should NEVER be put inside the ear.
What are the benefits of the bulb syringe? - The main benefit of the bulb syringe is that you can use it yourself without needing to make an appointment with your practice nurse or GP. It is cheap to buy and can be re-used.

How effective is the bulb syringe? - A study on the use of the bulb syringe showed that half of patients who use it are successfully treated. Ear syringing by a practice nurse has been proven to be slightly more effective but it may be sensible to try the ear bulb syringe first.

Is it safe and what are the risks of using a bulb syringe? - The use of the bulb syringe is commonly used in the USA and Europe. Two studies have shown the bulb syringe to be a safe treatment. The risks of using the bulb syringe include ear infection, failure to remove the wax and eardrum perforation. These risks are low.

When should a bulb syringe not be used? - Do not use a bulb syringe in the following circumstances:

- Pain in the ear
- A history of ear drum perforation in the affected ear
- A recent history of an ear infection in the affected ear.
- Symptoms of Infection in the ear – usually pain or a smelly discharge
- If you have an offensive discharge from the ear – this may mean you have an infection in the ear.
- If you only have one hearing ear which is the affected ear.
- Previous ear surgery on the affected ear

In the above circumstances make an appointment to see your practice nurse or GP have your ears examined and appropriately treated.

What if my ears are still blocked with wax after using the bulb syringe? - The procedure can be repeated but if it fails, make an appointment with your practice nurse to examine your ears and try syringing. If this fails you may be referred for micro suction of the ears.

Do I have to treat ear wax impaction (blocked ears from wax)? - No. If your ears being blocked with wax do not particularly trouble you do not have to treat it. You can use olive oil or sodium bicarbonate drops daily and this will help the ears to clear themselves. You can get these drops over the counter in any pharmacy.

How do I use the bulb syringe?
The bulb syringe will most likely come with instructions but below is some advice on how to use the bulb syringe:

1. Firstly, use olive oil or sodium bicarbonate ear drops in the ear daily for 2-3 weeks. Apply a generous amount twice daily into the ear leaving the ear uppermost for 5 to 10 minutes after applying. If this does not clear the wax then the bulb syringe can be used.

2. Put some clean warm (not hot) water in a bowl. Squirt the bulb syringe in the water a few times to fill it up with the warm water.

3. Hold your head to one side so the affected ear is facing upwards. You can do this in the shower or bath or lie on the bed with a towel underneath your head.

4. If you experience any pain during or before this procedure stop immediately and see your practice nurse or GP for a review.

5. Gently pull your ear in an upward and outwards direction so that the water gets better access to the ear canal. Hold the nozzle inside the ear canal (not too deeply) and GENTLY squirt the water from the bulb syringe into the ear. You can gently squirt more bulb syringes into the ear if required. Leave the water in your ear for 1-3 minutes to soften the wax.

6. Now tilt your head over the sink so the water can fall out. Wiggle the outer part of the ear to help the water and wax come out. You can repeat the procedure if required.

7. Repeat for the other ear if both ears are affected.

8. If you get any pain or if the procedure is unsuccessful, see your practice nurse or doctor.

Dates for your Diary

The surgery will be closed on the following afternoon to allow for staff training:

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<tr>
<th>Wednesday, 8 November 2017</th>
<th>Wednesday, 7 February 2018</th>
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<td>Wednesday, 7 March 2018</td>
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The Out-of-Hours service will be covering when the practice is closed. This service can be contacted on telephone number 111.

Public Holidays:

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<th>Monday, 18 September 2017 – Autumn Public Holiday</th>
<th>Monday, 25 December 2017, Christmas Day</th>
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<td>Tuesday, 26 December 2017 – Boxing Day</td>
<td>Monday 1 January 2018 – Public Holiday</td>
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<td>Tuesday 2 January 2018 – Public Holiday</td>
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Please ensure you have medication to last over the holiday periods.

**Remember that NHS24 can also provide routine medical advice during the day, even when the practice is not on holiday.**

**Finally, do** you have any suggestions for items you would like to be included in the newsletter? We appreciate any contact, whether you like something or whether you have suggestions for change – drop a note to the Practice Manager, Dorothy Conn.