

Heathgate Herald

The Newsletter from Heathgate Medical Practice – January 2024

www.heathgatemedicalpractice.co.uk



Welcome to our January 2024 edition of the Herald. Happy New Year! In this update we share with you our plans to help manage winter pressures and we explain a little more about the growing team at the Practice who are here to help support you. Several of you will have already met members of the wider healthcare team.



Winter pressures on the NHS

This is a term which you may have heard before when the press report pressures within the NHS. Very often news about winter pressures focuses on hospitals, including waiting times at Accident and Emergency Departments and ambulance delays. These are important considerations for any health care system to manage and we hope the early plans our local health commissioners and managers have made this year will see improvements on previous years.



However, just as important is the planning in the surgery to help manage winter pressures. Very often at this time of year, there is a spike in respiratory conditions, coughs, colds, flu like symptoms along with other illness related to the colder months. We plan for these.

We always see an increased demand in patients requesting a same day response (some refer to as urgent need) in the winter. In many cases there is a need for same day intervention such as where a bacterial infection requires treatment with antibiotics, or an exacerbation of a patient's asthma brought on by the colder temperatures requires a course of steroids. However, at other times, some people's perception of what they feel is urgent can add to the pressures in surgery.

At this time of year, we make daily provision to support patients with their same day need and those who contact us each day reporting such are, in the majority of cases, assessed by our clinical team on the telephone. This leads to a plan being agreed with them, which could involve treatment through the telephone assessment, a face-to-face appointment later that day or a routine appointment in the future as the need is not deemed urgent for that day.

With the higher number of requests for same day care and support, to prepare for this, we have to adjust the number of bookable appointments in advance. This is a hard decision to make at times, but we have to ensure our clinicians are able to manage their day with safe clinical care. We do counter this by using locum GPs where possible to provide additional appointments.

Our receptionists do an excellent job! They help signpost patients to the appropriate service both within and outside the Practice. The Doctors have asked them to enquire about patients' needs so they can be directed to the appropriate member of the team. That could be one of our growing team of clinicians or the wider health care team here at Heathgate now including:

**First Contact
Physiotherapists**

**Primary Care Mental
Health Practitioners**

Social Prescriber

**Enhanced Recovery
Worker**

**Pharmacist and
Pharmacy Technician**

**Hospital Midwife and
Diabetes Nurse**

The **First Contact Physiotherapists** are practitioners who can assess, diagnose, and treat patients with musculoskeletal problems. They can help patients with low back pain, neck or joint pain and advise on recovery plans for sports injuries. Where necessary, the physiotherapist can request X-rays and scans and make referrals to orthopaedic specialists.

There is an increasing demand on NHS Mental Health Care Services and we now have a **Primary Care Mental Health Practitioner** in Practice to see patients face to face who are presenting with a mild to moderate mental health care need. The Mental Health Practitioner has access to wider psychological support for patients and liaises with the Doctors on any medication need.

Our **Enhanced Recovery Worker** is here each week to support patients with life changing events, such as bereavement, retirement or becoming a parent. Perhaps it's social isolation or loneliness that are troubling you. If so, an appointment can be booked with the Enhanced Recovery Worker.

Very often health issues can arise or deteriorate when patients have social matters that are of concern. Our **Social Prescriber**, who works for South Norfolk Council, has access to information for patients on things such as housing, debt management and benefits. She has details of local voluntary organisations which may be of help to patients and their carers.

Many people still believe that Pharmacists are people who prepare your medication. In some settings they are, but our **Medicines Team comprising of a Pharmacist and Pharmacy Technician** are here to support patients with their broader medication queries, new medication or changes that may have been introduced or recommended by our hospital colleagues. Our Pharmacy Technician is also supporting with some of our respiratory investigations. The Pharmacist and Pharmacy Technician work closely with the Doctors and the Dispensary Team.

The hospital **Midwife** and **Diabetes Specialist Nurse** visit the surgery regularly. Patients with an antenatal need and our poorer controlled diabetics are booked with them.

Self-help!



Not all health conditions require input from the clinical team at the surgery. The NHS website

at www.nhs.uk has a vast array of information on medical conditions which can be managed by patients themselves using over the counter remedies and medication or using their local Pharmacy for advice too.

You can search for help using the 'Health A to Z' directory. As well as providing information on symptoms associated with a condition, there is also information on managing the situation. The web pages also provide details on the signs, when after the self-management of a condition, the support of a health care professional is recommended.

Take a look at www.nhs.uk

NHS App



The NHS App allows you to access a range of NHS services. It allows patients to order their repeat medications, book and manage appointments with the surgery and view your GP health record. It also now allows you to register an organ donation decision and choose how the NHS uses your personal data.

The App can be downloaded to your phone and then we can arrange to link your GP record with the App to populate it with your GP record.

Talk to us about the benefits of the App.