



Welcome to our autumn newsletter!

With many patients attending with colds, we move our clinical feature to the front page with hints and advice on how to avoid catching the common cold. There is an update on this year's flu campaign and clarification around electronic prescriptions which many of you are talking to us about.

We also include the background to medication changes that are affecting some patients and the services offered to our patients by the Norfolk Deaf Association. We report on the increasing trend in the number of patients that are failing to keep their appointments and finally extend thanks for recent donations made to the Practice equipment fund.

The common cold – useful advice



The common cold is a mild viral infection of the nose, throat, sinuses and upper airways. It is very common and usually clears up on its own within a week or two. The main symptoms of a cold include a sore throat, a blocked or runny nose, sneezing and a cough. More severe symptoms include a high temperature, headache and muscle ache.

There is no cure for a cold but you can look after yourself by resting, drinking plenty of fluids and continuing to eat healthily. Medication that you can obtain from a local chemist, pharmacy or shop, without a prescription, such as paracetamol or ibuprofen, can help reduce fever or discomfort. Decongestant sprays can also help relieve a blocked nose but any medication taken should be in line with the information provided with the item.

Usually with a cold there is no need to see the doctor or a nurse. You should only really make an appointment when your symptoms persist for more than three weeks, you have difficulty with breathing, you develop chest pain, cough up blood or your symptoms get worse over a very short period of time. If, however, you suffer from a respiratory condition, such as asthma or COPD, it may be a good idea to see one of the clinicians sooner.

Generally people become contagious a few days before their symptoms begin through until they have gone. You can catch the virus from inhaling tiny droplets of fluid that contain the cold virus that are launched into the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. You can also catch a cold by touching the skin of someone who has the droplets on their own skin and then touching your mouth. The virus can also spread by touching an object or surface contaminated by the droplets.

There are some simple steps to help prevent the spread of a cold and these include washing your hands regularly, to try and always sneeze into tissues, clean surfaces regularly to keep them free of germs, use your own cup, plate and cutlery and don't share towels with someone who has a cold. We hope this advice helps you remain cold free this autumn and winter.

Medication changes affecting you



Some of you will have recently received letters from the Practice or South Norfolk Clinical Commissioning Group about some medication changes that we have made.

South Norfolk Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is the NHS organisation locally that has responsibility for deciding which health services are required for patients living in its catchment area. They then contract different organisations to deliver the services. This includes the services that are provided by the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital and the local Mental Health Care Trust.

Whilst they are not directly responsible for the services we provide in the Practice, they are accountable to NHS England for the money we spend on medication.

With the CCG facing financial pressure at the moment, to prevent other services coming under threat, we have been asked to see if we can reduce the amount we spend on some medication; particularly where a less expensive alternative is available. We have agreed to help the CCG with this review but only where we feel there is no clinical risk to your well-being.

A good example of this is one form of medication we use for patients that are depressed. If we write a prescription for this medication in capsule form this costs the NHS £22.08 for a 28 day supply. If we change the prescription to tablets, the cost reduces to £11.20. Likewise with a certain brand of inhaler, there is a cost to the NHS of £59.48 but an alternative (containing the same drugs) costs the NHS £43.99.

We hope you can see why we have supported the CCG in making these changes, which, repeated across all the

Practices in South Norfolk, will help with the financial challenge the NHS in South Norfolk is facing.

We appreciate that one of the more controversial decisions made by the CCG is to no longer provide gluten free products on prescription. This has recently featured in the local press and the team at the CCG has been in consultation with local coeliac groups about the rationale behind this.

As we have explained in the letters to patients affected, any views on the changes being made should be directed to the CCG on 01603 595857.

Your prescription



Some of you have advised us that you have been approached by the pharmacies or chemists that you visit to sign up to a

new scheme that will see your regular prescription sent to them electronically and have been unsure how this affects you.

Electronic transfer of prescriptions (ETP) is a scheme that is still being piloted in some parts of the country, including Norfolk, where you will make a choice that sees your prescription sent to the same location electronically each time you order a repeat prescription from us.

We are aware that some pharmacies are asking patients to sign up to the scheme now, which they are entitled to do but, like many Practices, we have chosen to review the outcome of the pilots before we start this. If you are approached to sign up to this or any other scheme by your local pharmacy, please ensure you are given the full information and your questions are answered in full. This new scheme does not affect the current agreement we have with many patients allowing the Well pharmacy in Poringland to collect your prescription from us.

Adult flu vaccination

Thank you to the many patients that attended our Flu vaccination events at both the Poringland Community Centre and Rockland St Mary Surgery in October. Over 1,000 vaccinations were given during the morning, which was great!

We appreciate there may have been a little wait for vaccination at some times during the events but we received many more compliments on how well the sessions ran compared to the odd grumble!

There were a few learnings for next year which we will take on board.

In the meantime, if you were unable to attend and are eligible for a flu vaccination, please contact our reception team for an appointment in one of our remaining clinics.



We are also now pleased to advise that we have a further supply of nasal flu vaccinations for children aged 2, 3 and 4.

If you have children that were these ages on 31st August 2015, then they qualify for vaccination and you can book an appointment for them in one of our designated clinics.

Children in certain year groups at primary school will receive invitations for vaccination at school from the school nurse.



Please can we ask that patients using our Rockland St Mary Surgery respect the access to private property and garages when parking at the surgery. Thank you.

Donations

We would like to pass on our sincere thanks to the family and friends of two former patients, who have made kind donations to the Practice equipment fund in memory of these gentlemen.

Roy Lockwood of Rockland St Mary passed away peacefully in June this year and Ronald Farrow of Bergh Apton in July.

The relatives of both gentlemen chose the Practice to benefit from donations, with which we have purchased a new spirometer. This up to date piece of equipment will be used to help in the diagnosis and management of patients with respiratory problems.

The Partners and staff would publicly like to thank the family for choosing the Practice as beneficiary of these donations.



'Everything Stops For Tea' is a charity cookbook which is raising money for Marie Curie whilst promoting the very best of Norfolk produce, growers, food creators, food outlets and restaurants.

Featuring many mouth-watering recipes from over 80 contributors, including Norfolk celebrities and chefs, it includes everything needed to create the perfect afternoon tea!

The book features one of our patients who is a Marie Curie worker and explains the valuable role the charity plays in supporting patients through illness.

The book is available from many recognised book shops in Norfolk and from www.norfolksowncookbook.com

The Norfolk Deaf Association is a registered charity dedicated to improving the lives of people in Norfolk with all degrees of hearing loss.

This is achieved by providing hearing aid maintenance, assistive listening devices and communication methods along with support and information on hearing loss and other related conditions.

Details of the full range of services they provide are available on their website www.norfolkdeaf.org.uk. Their mobile clinic reaches many towns and villages in South Norfolk and is open to the general public without the need for an appointment. The volunteers at these clinics are able to clean, check and retube hearing aid moulds and check the operation of your device.

The mobile clinic visits Poringland regularly and is next at the Budgens supermarket, next to the surgery, between 1pm and 3pm on 16th December.

Missed Appointments

In our last newsletter we highlighted an increasing trend in the number of appointments that are not kept by patients, without telling us they are not required.



This trend is both worrying and frustrating! In October 173 patients did not keep their appointments and that equates to 28 hours of doctor and nurse time that was lost.

When these appointments are not kept and patients realise, we are very often placed under pressure to then find another appointment very quickly so they can be seen, which is a hard call for our reception

team as these patients that have already missed an appointment are effectively requesting prioritisation.

We have also in the past, received feedback about the wait for appointments with some clinicians and, whilst accepting there are times when we all genuinely forget things or there has been a mix up over dates and times, we still feel that if the proportion that are not required were cancelled, these could be taken by other patients and waiting times reduced.

So what can be done to help improve the situation? Our Reception team will now ask, where we have a mobile telephone number recorded, whether patients would like a text message confirming their appointment, which will hopefully act as a prompt. They will also confirm at the end of every call or face to face discussion, the date, time and name of the clinician with whom the appointment has been booked.

Last month, for the first time, we wrote to those patients that have become regular offenders in not keeping their appointment explaining that if they continue to miss appointments, we may have to ask them to re-register with another surgery.

We really wish to try and avoid this and hope you will work with us to see this increasing trend reduce over the traditionally busier winter period that is ahead.

Treatment of ear wax

There is increasing consensus amongst health professionals that syringing wax from ears with water can be traumatic and often lead to complications and/or stress for the patient.

In view of this we are currently reviewing our protocol for ear syringing and looking to ask patients to initially use ear drops more frequently to keep their ears clear of wax. Once finalised, more information on our plans will be available on our website.