

Culcheth Medical Centre - Newsletter – January 2010



Welcome to the latest edition of our Newsletter. The aim of this is to be informative about the Practice and any new health issues that may affect you. We would like to take this opportunity to wish all our patients a
“Very Happy and Healthy 2010!”

We also would like to thank you again for all the cards and gifts that you have given us; they are very much appreciated by the Doctors Nurses and Staff.

* * * * * **NEW APPOINTMENT SYSTEM** * * * * *

We are pleased to announce that we have launched a new ‘open’ appointments system!! You can book an appointment with a Dr or nurse for a routine appointment at any available time up to a month in advance. Appointments are also available daily for urgent or emergency problems. Our staff aim to be courteous and helpful and have been trained to ascertain the nature of the problem when making the appointment to ensure you are directed to the most appropriate Dr or nurse and that you are given an adequate time allocation. Please be assured that patient confidentiality and discretion is of the utmost importance to us. At busy times, it may be necessary to ask you to speak to the doctor on the telephone for queries, advice or re-assurance. We hope these changes will provide you, the patient, with a better choice of appointment times and easier access to your preferred GP. Please note: queuing at the surgery at 8.30am will now **not be necessary** to obtain an appointment.

Missed Appointments

The number of patients not attending appointments (DNA’s) in the month of December was **79**.

THE SNOW !!!!

We hope that you are all coping in these extreme weather conditions. It’s times like these when we need to be even better neighbours. If you have any elderly neighbours, why not help them by clearing their path of snow/ice or offering to do some shopping for them. It’s always a good idea to keep an eye on the elderly, even to just to make sure their curtains are drawn as a sign that they are up and about. We have had wonderful offers of help here at the surgery including the picking up of prescriptions and a special thank you to Denis who very generously drove to Liverpool to pick-up our ‘stranded’ Dr Ghosh !!

Also, the partners would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff for their continued commitment in getting to work in such adverse conditions of the past weeks. I’m sure as patients, you appreciate the superb effort the staff made to ensure the surgery was ‘business as usual’ - everything from, manning extra phone lines, giving patients re-assurance that they could still see a doctor and have home visits, and that there would not be any delay with their prescriptions; to, path gritting and even helping push patients out of snowy ditches !! (these girls are stronger than they look, you know!!) Thanks and well done to all !!

Early Diagnosis Saves Lives!

Have you got any of the following symptoms?

- 1.A persistant cough that wont go away?
- 2.A hoarse voice for longer than 6weeks?
- 3.Bleeding from the bottom?
- 4.An unusual lump?
- 5.A change in bowel habit or weight loss?
- 6.Shortness of breath or chest pain when you exert yourself?

If you have any of these then do make come and see the Doctor to get it checked out.

Saturday Morning Surgeries

Just to remind you all that we do offer a Saturday morning surgery between 9am and 12 noon. These appointments can be booked in advance, however we do try to give priority to patients that due to work commitments are unable to get into surgery within normal opening hours. Please be aware that this is a routine surgery and does not offer an emergency/walk-in service. Should you need emergency/urgent attention please ring the **GP Out of Hours Service on 01925 650999**

Telephone Advice

Please make sure that if you have rang us during the day requesting some advice via the telephone that we have your current **CORRECT** number both land line and mobile. Also increasingly patients are asking us to ring them back for advice, only for us to find their phone switched off or not answered. This is frustrating for all concerned and wastes time. Please be prepared for a call and so help us prevent unnecessary ring backs.

Generic Prescribing

What is this exactly and how will it affect my prescription? As most of you will know who get monthly repeat prescriptions the name of your medicine is the "proper name" or generic name rather than the brand name. For example, paracetamol rather than Calpol. This can save the health authority £1,000's each year for each surgery. This money can then be spent on other essential services such as new hospitals, more out-patient clinics, and heart surgery etc.

How can prescribing "generically" save money? Well, because we don't prescribe by brand name the chemist may give you a different brand of **EXACTLY** the same medicine manufactured by a different company at a reduced cost. Although the packaging and tablet may look different it is still **EXACTLY** the same as you had before and will do **EXACTLY** the same job in the same way. So if you notice the next time you order a repeat prescription one of the names has changed to a "generic" name, you will know why. We will let you know when this happens so that you will be aware of the name change. We very much appreciate your understanding and help in this very important matter.

Glucosamine. What is it? Does it do any good? Should I be taking it?

Glucosamine is a naturally occurring amino acid found in cartilage and sinovial fluid. It's action in osteoarthritis is not clearly understood. Glucosamine is a supplement that is extracted from shellfish, so if you are **allergic** to **shellfish** you should not be taking it.

It is not safe if you are **pregnant**, breast feeding or on **WARFARIN**.

Common side effects, occurring in 1-10% of people taking it are:

Nausea, abdominal pain, indigestion, altered bowel habit, headache and tiredness.

So does it do any good? That's a very good question and recent studies have shown little or **NO** benefit in taking it over a 2 year period.

This has caused **NICE** the National Institute for Clinical Excellence to recommend to all doctors that they should not be prescribing it to patients with osteoarthritis.

If you are taking it either from us on prescription or buying it over the counter, we would ask you to think if it's made any difference at all. Most people who I have asked recently have said 'no', so therefore have stopped it, or are more than happy to reduce the number of tablets they are taking each day.

So, we will be contacting all who are taking this to discuss this at your next review with your doctor.

Do I need antibiotics???

At this time of year especially we all get our fair share of coughs, colds, runny noses, sneezes and sore throats. They can make us feel unwell for a week or so, but our own bodies are incredible things and we have our own immune system that generally fights all these off without resorting to antibiotics. This is because the **VAST** majority of these simple infections are caused by **VIRUSES** and antibiotics do not treat these germs, only bacteria. So don't be surprised when you come to see us that we say it's just going to take time and to take simple remedies like paracetamol and warm fluids.

Remember it's better to try and fight it off than take antibiotics, which may cause unwanted side effects like thrush etc. Obviously if you have an underlying chronic illness like COPD, asthma, heart disease, or on chemotherapy etc, you may be more at risk and need antibiotics in case of a bacterial infection.