

Culcheth Medical Centre - Newsletter - November '09



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. So here goes : The clocks have gone back and its darker at night but just for a short time lighter in the mornings. Roll on Spring!!! It will be soon time to think about New Years resolutions, like **stopping smoking** and **getting fitter**. Why wait till January, talk to the practice nurse or the Doctor for some practical advice.

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

We are pleased to announce that we are launching 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

From the 1st October we will be monitoring our patients that "do not attend" {DNA} their appointment. Persistent offenders will be contacted by letter. We appreciate that sometimes due to circumstances beyond our control, appointments cannot be kept. However we do ask that you let us know as soon as you know you cannot attend so that we can offer that appointment to someone else. The number of DNA's in the month of October is 82 (equivalent to 3 days of doctor's appointments).

Swine Flu Clinics

We can now inform you of our Swine Flu Vaccination Clinics. They are :

Tuesday 24 th November	PM
Wednesday 25 th November	PM
Thursday 26 th November (Pregnant Ladies only)	PM
Friday 27 th November	PM
Saturday 28 th November	AM

The limited number of vaccines we have been sent will be offered to the following priority groups :

- (1) – Those with long-term chronic health conditions, who would normally be eligible for the seasonal flu jab (ie Diabetes, lung, heart, kidney and liver diseases and neurological diseases);
- (2) – Pregnant ladies (at any stage);
- (3) - Household contacts of those who are immunocompromised;

If you are over 65, but do not fall into the groups above, you are not currently eligible for the swine flu vaccination (even if you usually have the seasonal flu vaccine).

Should you need any further information, a leaflet is available from surgery or www.direct.gov.uk/swineflu.

Wear it PINK!!!

A BIG THANKS to all who gave generously in support of Breast Cancer during the 'Wear it PINK' day on Friday 30th October. I think the staff enjoyed it very much although pink seemed to suit some better than others mentioning no names---Dr Ghosh!!! All monies raised will be sent to 'Breast Cancer Campaign'.

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**

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. The reason for this is to stop wasting money and to stay within our prescribing budget. 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.

Information Update

We are always keen to ensure that your information on our system is up-to-date, especially phone numbers. We will shortly be giving out an “Information update” form to all our patients to complete and return to us. It is imperative that this information is correct should the doctor need to contact you or visit. Your assistance in this is very much appreciated.

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.