

WELLINGTON ROAD FAMILY PRACTICE

PATIENT NEWSLETTER SPRING / SUMMER 2021



Easter Opening Arrangements

All the staff and you our patients have all endured a difficult and stressful start to 2021 as we try to manage the COVID pandemic while arranging and providing vaccinations in line with the Government's priority guidance. Looking forward hopefully to better times as the year progresses, the doctors, nurses and staff here at Wellington Road Family Practice would like to wish all our patients a very happy Easter.

Our surgery will be closed on Friday 2nd April and Monday 5th April. We will close by 1.30pm on Thursday 1st April so please ensure that you collect any prescriptions, by the end of the day on Wednesday 31st March, and order medication by Monday 29th March if needed before Easter.

Changes to Your Contact Details



If you change your name or your mobile or landline telephone numbers or you change your address or email address, please let the surgery know your new contact details. This is in case we ever need to contact you urgently; with up to date details we can make sure that we minimise any possible delays. This has been

particularly relevant as we have tried to contact patients to give details of COVID vaccination appointments. If you have never given us your email address or your mobile telephone number we would really appreciate it if you would share that information with us. This information will be kept confidentially as part of your medical records. Thanks for your help in keeping yours and our records accurate.

NHS Prescription Charges

The NHS Prescription charge in England from 1st April 2021 rises from £9.15 to £9.35 for each medicine or appliance.

Prescriptions are free for patients who are:

- Children under the age of 16
- Full time students aged 16, 17 and 18 in full time education and
- People aged 60 or over

Prescriptions are also free for patients who have:

- A valid cancer patient exemption certificate
- A valid maternity exemption certificate
- A valid medical exemption certificate
- A valid prescription prepayment certificate
- A valid war pension exemption certificate
- A valid NHS tax credit exemption certificate
- A valid HC2 certificate
- Been prescribed free of charge contraceptives.

If you receive Income Support or Income Related Employment and Support Allowance, Income based Jobseekers Allowance (depending on certain criteria) or Pension Credit Guarantee Credit, your prescriptions are also free.

Please be aware that the prescription charge is a contribution to the NHS; it is not a payment to the Practice and it bears no relation to the cost of the item of medication.

A Prescription Prepayment Certificate (PPC) may save you some money. The three month PPC will rise from £29.65 to £30.25 and the twelve month PPC rises from £105.90 to £108.10 which means if you need 4 or more items in 3 months or 13 or more items in 12 months, a PPC is a cheaper way to pay for your medication. You can also pay for a 12 month PPC by direct debit in 10 monthly instalments. You can buy a PPC online at www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/ppc or telephone 0845 850 0030 for the form you need to complete.

Well Aware – Health and Wellbeing Information

Well Aware is part of the Bristol based charity the Care Forum and is a free service for people living in Bristol and South Gloucestershire, providing information on health, wellbeing, support and community resources. You can use Well Aware to find support for yourself or for a



relative, friend or neighbour. Whether it is personal health services, a lunch club or social group, help around the home, dentistry, advice, counselling or any other form of support, Well Aware will have information on it. Search their website for support for carers or for people with

specific health problems and disabilities as well as culturally specific services. The website is www.wellaware.org.uk and their email address is infoservices@thecareforum.org.uk If you do not have internet access or email then please use the Freephone number 0808 808 5252 which is open Monday to Friday from 9.00am until 4.30pm.

Practice News

New Staff Members

We are pleased to have five new members of staff working with us to support high quality care to our patients. Anthony Cavallini is an experienced physiotherapist who is able to see a range of conditions relating to joint and muscle problems. He can provide a thorough assessment for our patients who are experiencing ongoing problems and we hope this will help reduce the number of long-term joint concerns our patients suffer from. Alongside Anthony we have launched a new app service for joint conditions available for free on our website called Get U Better. Not only does this show you some helpful exercises, it also (when we are all allowed) directs to local services that help with muscle and joint problems.

Antigoni Gerantzi is our new clinical pharmacist who will offer excellent support to patients with concern over their medications, ranging from dose changes, concerns over mixing medications, supply issues or recent changes to treatments. We would thoroughly recommend a discussion with Antigoni to help you if you have any of these concerns.

Kerry Templar is our new treatment room nurse. Kerry comes with a lot of experience of working as a nurse within the community. Our nursing clinics have increased in order to manage demand for appointments. We are now providing a nurse clinic every day of the week.

Becky Jones is a new receptionist and also a phlebotomist. Becky joined the team in November 2020. As well as reception, Becky will also assist with covering phlebotomy when Jayne is on annual leave. This will ensure that we are able to offer a seamless service across the whole year.

Dr Aisha Davies will be joining us from 6th April. Dr Davies is a partner from Cadbury Heath Health care who is returning from maternity leave. Dr Davies will be here on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

Staff Leavers

Dr Sarah Patrickson has been with us since early December 20 on a fixed term contract. It is with regret that her contract comes to an end at the end of March. Dr Patrickson has been a valued member of the team; we thank her for all her hard work. We will be really sorry to see her go but wish her well for the future.

Covid 19

Our staff are continuing to work hard to deliver the Covid vaccine to our practice population going through the appropriate groupings of patients in order. These are done either at the West Walk surgery alongside other practices within our Primary Care Network or at Wellington Road. This has been a great success locally and nationally and we thank our team for their ongoing dedication to this vital cause.

Telephone System

We recognise that due to covid, our model for seeing a doctor has changed from an open access same day service to a telephone triage system first. This has put a strain on the practice team and the telephone system as we are now receiving double the number of calls compared to this time last year. We are therefore looking to increase the number of staff able to answer the telephone during our busiest times.

Intercom system

Again, as a result of covid, we have had to keep our front door locked and have a one way system of entering the building via the front door but leaving by the back door. Patients currently ring on the doorbell and a member of staff has to answer the door. This is taking a member of staff away from answering the phones so we are looking to have an intercom system installed. This would enable patients to press the intercom for attention. We will ensure that we have several members of the team who will be able to answer the intercom from their desks and release the door to those that need to enter. Once the door is released, there will be a hand sanitiser dispenser just inside the front door and patients will be asked to ensure they use this and have their mask on before reporting to reception. It will also enable the team to instruct patients to put things through the letterbox that do not require immediate attention.

High Blood Pressure

It is important to know if you have high blood pressure. High blood pressure is often symptomless but it can increase your risk of heart attack and stroke. You may hear the word 'hypertension'; this is another name for high blood pressure. There's more information about high blood pressure on the British Heart Foundation website

www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/risk-factors/high-blood-pressure

Adopting a healthy lifestyle can help reduce blood pressure.

Unfortunately high blood pressure can run in families and it can also increase as we grow older. However there are some lifestyle changes which can contribute to lowering blood pressure; these include;

- Maintaining a healthy body weight (a body mass index (BMI) of between 18.5 and 24.9. To check your BMI go to the NHS website www.nhs.uk and put BMI into Search at the top of the page

- Aerobic exercise for 30 minutes a day five times a week, again see the NHS website and type exercise into Search
- Keeping alcohol within recommended limits, again see the NHS website and type alcohol into Search
- Reducing salt intake
- Not smoking
- Adopting a Mediterranean style diet like the DASH diet.

There's also local support information about adopting a healthier lifestyle on the One You South Gloucestershire page

<https://oneyou.southglos.gov.uk/for-your-body>

If your blood pressure remains high, you may be recommended some medication to treat and manage high blood pressure; this would be particularly true if

- Your blood pressure is too high and needs to be lowered quickly
- Lifestyle changes don't reduce your blood pressure enough
- Your overall risk for a heart attack or a stroke is too high; the factors that will determine your overall risk include your current blood pressure, your cholesterol level, weight, if you smoke, age, gender, and if you have other health issues such as diabetes.

There are a number of medicines which can treat high blood pressure and your GP, Practice Nurse or Pharmacist will discuss with you which might be best for you. Again there is information on the British Heart Foundation website www.bhf.org.uk .

You can check your blood pressure at home; there are a number of different blood pressure monitors available; it is probably best to take advice from a pharmacy as to the most appropriate type of blood pressure monitor to buy and use.

Stroke

A stroke happens when blood supply to a part of the brain gets cut off. If the brain is damaged, it can affect how the body works, how you think and how you feel. Strokes are a medical emergency and urgent treatment is essential; the sooner a person receives treatment, the less damage is likely to happen. So if you suspect you or someone else is having a stroke, phone 999 at once and ask for an ambulance.

There are three types of stroke:

- Where there is bleeding in or around the brain (haemorrhage)
- Blockage, usually a small blood clot cutting off the blood supply to part of the brain
- A mini stroke (TIA) is similar to a stroke but symptoms only last a short time and there is full recovery. But this must be investigated to prevent it happening again, or a full stroke may occur.

As we grow older, our major blood vessels, the arteries, can become harder and narrower; certain medical conditions and lifestyle factors can speed up this process. All strokes are different. The effects can be minor

and may not last long; others may cause medium and long term problems. That is why it is so important to be able to recognize symptoms and summon medical help as quickly as possible.

So what are the signs of stroke?

THINK FAST

F Face, can the person smile? Has one side of the face dropped?

A Arms, can the person raise both arms and keep them raised?

S Speech, can the person speak clearly and understand what you are saying? Is speech slurred?

T Time. If you see any of these signs it is time to call 999.

Treating a stroke will depend on the type of stroke. That is why it is so important, even in times when COVID-19 is dominating the health headlines, that the response to stroke symptoms happens as quickly as possible. Recovery from a stroke can take a long time. Physiotherapy, occupational, speech and psychological therapies are all part of the reablement services that people recovering from stroke may need. Preventing stroke is something to consider and you can significantly reduce the risk of having a stroke by:

- Eating a healthy diet
- Taking regular exercise
- Moderating alcohol intake
- Not smoking

If you have high blood pressure and/or high cholesterol, taking prescribed medication to counteract these, will reduce stroke risk. The NHS website, www.nhs.uk, the Stroke Association website www.stroke.org.uk and the Bristol After Stroke website www.bristolafterstroke.org.uk may be helpful.

Back Pain

Back pain is a very common problem and it is something that will affect many of us during the course of our lives. The good news is that in the majority of cases, back pain is not a serious problem and might be caused by a simple strain to a muscle or ligament. Pain in the lower back is particularly common. As far as possible, continuing normal everyday activity and keeping mobile is the most effective way forward.

The spine is a very strong part of the body; it gives us both flexibility and strength. The spine is made up of 24 bones called vertebrae and they sit on top of one another. In between these bones are discs with many strong ligaments and muscles that support the whole structure. The spinal cord passes inside the vertebrae and connects the brain to the rest of the body by numerous nerves. As we age, spinal structures, joints and discs also age; it is not unusual for your back to stiffen as you get older.

Back pain does not always have a simple cause. It can result from poor posture, lack of exercise or muscle weakness. It is important to remember that severe pain does not necessarily mean a serious problem. Other causes of back pain include conditions like arthritis, bone density problems like osteoporosis, as well as infections or inflammations. Most back pain can be managed without needing to see a doctor; however if pain becomes really bad or lasts for a long time i.e. many weeks, stops you working or continuing daily activities, or is severe and getting worse, that should be the time to make an appointment to see your GP.

Ideas for managing back pain symptoms identified by both the NHS and several back pain organisations include:

- Stay as active as possible and continuing normal daily activities as best as you can, to retain mobility,
- Avoid long periods of rest as immobility can make pain worse rather than better,
- Try exercises and stretches; activities such as walking, swimming, yoga and pilates are all suggested
- Use hot or cold compression pads, or perhaps a hot water bottle for temporary relief
- Take advice about painkillers from a pharmacist
- Seek advice from a physiotherapist or similar practitioner about your posture, how to lift safely and manage diet and nutrition

Useful websites include the NHS website www.nhs.uk , Versus Arthritis website www.versusarthritis.org , and the National Back Pain Association website <https://backcare.org.uk> .

The Local Recovery App

The Local Recovery App which you can see on the front page of our Practice website, is aimed at helping people with new or recurrent muscle or joint problems. The GetUBetter app is free of charge to patients registered with Wellington Road Family Practice.

It can be accessed on a smartphone or on the internet and it guides patients through a sequence of exercises and tips to help you get better from a range of both new and recurring musculo-skeletal conditions which include;

- Lower back pain
- Back and leg pain
- Neck pain
- Shoulder pain
- Ankle and or knee pain
- Lower limb soft tissue pain.

You can be referred to the App by your GP or physiotherapist or you can self-register. For more details please visit the front page of our website.

Blood Tests and Test Results

Blood tests have a wide range of uses and are a common type of medical test. Amongst many other important uses, they can offer an assessment of your general state of health, show the presence of both bacterial and viral infections and see how well particular organs like the kidneys or the liver are working.

A blood test usually involves a phlebotomist taking a blood sample from a blood vessel in your arm normally the elbow or possibly the wrist. Blood samples from children are more usually taken from the back of the hand which will have been numbed with a special cream before the sample is taken. Once the blood test has been taken, it is sent off for laboratory analysis.

Whether it is for a blood test or any other test, you will be advised how long you need to wait for results. Wherever possible please phone your surgery **after** 12 or 5pm. Reception staff are not qualified to comment on results; they can only give you the information that medical staff have given them. It is then up to you to make a follow up appointment with your doctor if necessary. Test results can only be given to the person they relate to unless that person has given prior permission (e.g. through a Lasting Power of Attorney Health and Welfare) or the person the results relate to, is not capable of understanding them. Wellington Road Family Practice has a strict policy on confidentiality and data protection.

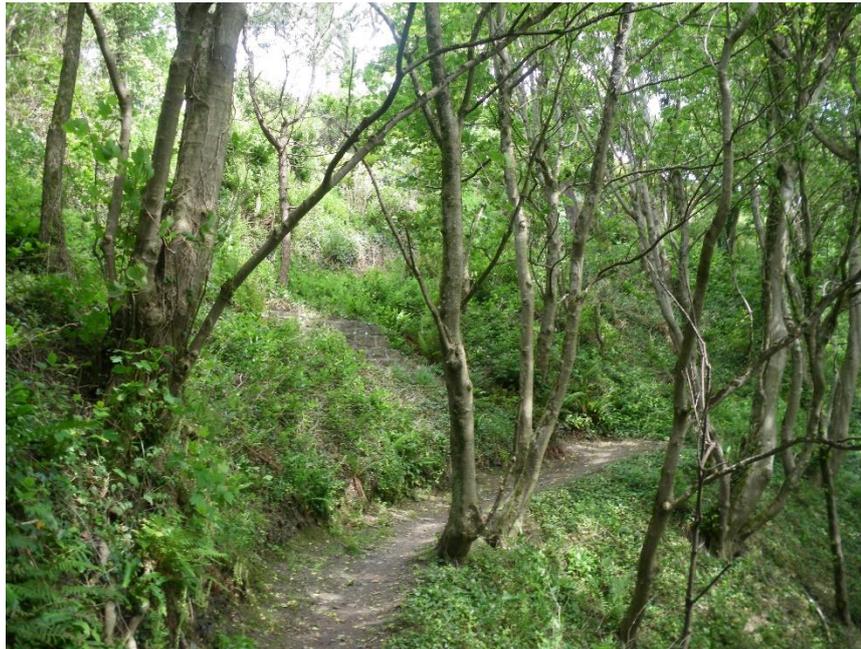
Sexual Health for Teenagers

Sexual health can be a subject that many young people in their teenage years, find hard to talk about with parents or any trusted adult. Sexual health has both physical, mental and emotional elements. The NHS can provide help and support with these. But if as a teenager you are worried about something to do with your sexual health but are too scared or worried to talk with someone you know, there are other possibilities. You should never be too embarrassed or afraid to discuss your health with someone. To find out more information about sexual health and where to go for advice it might be worth looking at the NHS Health for Teens website, <https://www.healthforteens.co.uk/sexual-health/>

Health Benefits of Green and Blue Spaces

Research studies consistently show that spending time in parks or other green spaces, has a significant positive impact on both our physical and mental health. Visiting local neighbourhood green spaces has shown high health benefits not only for adults but also for children. Some of those health benefits include:

- Improved mental health
- Reduction in depressive symptoms
- Weight loss
- Improved sleep
- Reduced prevalence of type 2 diabetes



Green spaces can be any outdoor area, a park, countryside, woods, copses, heathland and nature reserves. Blue spaces include any area around water, sea, lake, river, stream, canal, and you don't need to be in the water to benefit from it!

For more information, go to the Practice website and see on our information page, 'Social Prescribing comes to Wellington Road Family Practice' where you will find information guides and a link to more details about local green and blue spaces!