

JULY 2022

LAMBTON ROAD

MEDICAL PRACTICE



Dear reader,

It seems extraordinary to be writing this newsletter virtually one year after the end of COVID restrictions in July 2021. Looking back at last Summer's newsletter, COVID news dominated and we were ploughing ahead with second doses of the vaccine.

One year later there appears to be a new Summer spike of COVID with increasing cases due to new variants and waning immunity. The good news is that rates of severe illness/ITU admissions and deaths are very low, which is testament to the success of the vaccine in breaking the link between infection and severe COVID. In addition natural 'herd' immunity has increased.

Autumn COVID Booster Programme 2022

This Autumn there will be a further COVID vaccination programme to boost immunity again. We plan to reopen a Merton GP led vaccination site at The Wilson Hospital in September, with the possibility of more local West Merton pop-up sites opening. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has now decided that all over 50s will be offered the booster.



In addition, these groups are also eligible for a further dose:

- those aged 5 to 49 years in a clinical risk group, including pregnant women
- those aged 5 to 49 years who are household contacts of people with immunosuppression
- those aged 16 to 49 who are Carers
- frontline health and social care workers
- residents in a care home for older adults and staff working in care homes for older adults

We are aware that there are some patients who have not yet had a 'Spring booster'.

Anyone who has **not** been vaccinated/boosted after 31st March 2022 may be eligible - please see the NHS website for more information:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/how-to-get-a-coronavirus-vaccine/how-to-get-a-booster-dose/

For information on local centres and pharmacies continuing to offer the Spring booster over the Summer, please see the South West London CCG website:

www.southwestlondon.icb.nhs.uk/covid-19/

Carers

If you are a Carer please confirm that our records have been updated to reflect this, as this ensures you are contacted in a timely manner for vaccinations.

What is a Carer?

A carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support.

Our social prescriber Sarah can be a great source of information for Carers, as well as our website:

www.lambtonroadmedical.nhs.uk/digitalpractice/wellbeing-centre/carers/

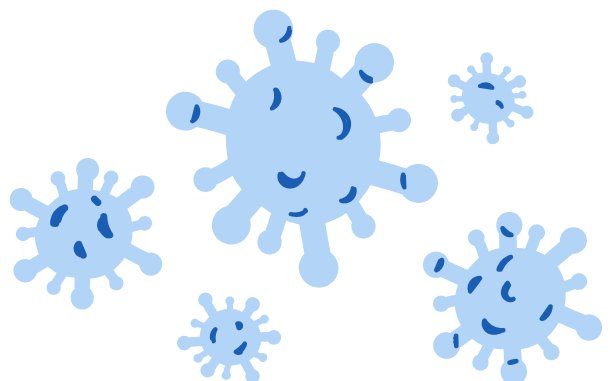
Carers Support Merton

www.csmerton.org/

Flu

We know from Australia and New Zealand, currently in their Winter season, that we should expect flu levels to be high in the UK this Winter. UK levels often mirror theirs so we must be prepared for high flu levels this Winter.

Last week the Government overturned their decision to scrap the expanded flu campaign, so this year all over 50s will be included, although patients felt to be at greater risk will be given priority for the first vaccines ahead of 'healthy' over 50s.



The following groups are eligible for free flu vaccination:

- all children aged 2 or 3 on 31st August 2022
- all primary school aged children (from reception to Year 6)
- those aged 6 months to under 65 in clinical risk groups
- pregnant women
- those aged 65 years and over
- those in long stay residential care homes
- carers
- close contacts of immunocompromised individuals
- frontline staff employed by social care and health care

Later in the season, these groups will be also be offered a free flu vaccine:

- those aged 50 to 64 years
- secondary school children in Years 7 to 11 (between 11 and 15 years of age on 31st August 2022)

Please note the children's flu vaccine is a simple intranasal spray **NOT** an injection. Children are 'super spreaders' of all germs so please protect all of your family and do not ignore your flu invitation this year.

Face coverings

Current guidelines are that wearing face coverings in GP surgeries is **not** mandatory, however anyone with respiratory symptoms is asked to wear one. Patients and clinicians will still be able to choose to wear a face covering if they feel more comfortable doing so.

In some areas, hospitals are reintroducing mask wearing so please check if you are required to do so before attending a hospital appointment.

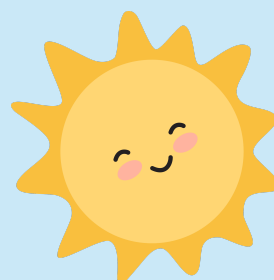
If you suspect you have COVID, please think of others and do not come directly to the surgery. If you need medical help, please initially speak to a clinician. They can decide on the best management plan and if you need to be seen face to face, please arrange appropriate PPE (personal protective equipment) and isolation on arrival.

Hot weather

I write on what is anticipated to be the hottest day of the year, with heat warnings in place. Those who are elderly, or suffering from heart or lung conditions are more vulnerable, as their bodies have to work harder to cope with the heat. Common sense should prevail. Please check on elderly relatives or neighbours, ensuring those more at risk drink plenty of water and try to stay cool.

Please visit the gov.uk website for tips on how to stay safe in hot weather:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/heatwave-plan-for-england/beat-the-heat-staying-safe-in-hot-weather



BBQs

Please take care when enjoying barbecues - it is at this time of year that we see more cases of food poisoning. Outdoor grills may not kill bugs lurking in raw meat.

Particular care should be taken with barbecued chicken as the meat is most likely to carry a bacteria called campylobacter, which can be serious.

Finish cooking meat in the oven if you are worried, keep raw meat away from other foods, and most importantly, keep washing your hands!

Dermatology clinics

Every Summer we see more skin lesions as we expose more of our skin and notice changes.

Our dermatology clinics at Lambton Road, run by Dr Matt French continue to be extremely popular. We encourage you to see us for any worrying moles.

For more information about moles, please visit: www.nhs.uk/conditions/moles/

Most moles are harmless, however if the mole:

- has changed colour or has more than 2 colours
- is itching, crusting, flaking or bleeding
- changes shape/increases in size or is more raised

Please come to see your regular GP or book into one of the dermatology slots with Dr Matt French.

Hay Fever

Pollen levels are really high this year, but you do not need to see a GP for this. Local pharmacists can advise and recommend eye drops, nose sprays and antihistamines.

Please note fexofenadine (a stronger antihistamine) can now be purchased over the counter.

For more advice on hay fever, please see our website:

www.lambtonroadmedical.nhs.uk/practice-information/hay-fever/

Repeat medication

We encourage all patients to request any repeat medication using online access. If you do not have this, please speak to reception on **02038835900** or request via our **website**:

www.lambtonroadmedical.nhs.uk/navigator/register-for-online-services/

Online access will be increasingly useful when patient access to full medical records is finally introduced. This has been pushed back several times by NHS England but seems likely to be in place by November 2022.

It will be a fantastic service, allowing for patients to check results of blood tests, for example.

We strongly encourage all patients over 18 to apply for this.

Health Visitors

Please find below the contact details for the Health Visitors.

Telephone: 0330 053 9264

Email: clcht.hcpadminmerton@nhs.net

Children's' vaccinations

In late June the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) declared a national incident after detecting samples of poliovirus at a London water site.

Polio mainly affects the under 5s, attacking the nervous system and causing paralysis in up to 1 in 100 cases. It can be fatal - there is no cure. Many children in England are sadly unvaccinated and more than a third of unprotected 5 year olds live in London. 95% of UK children have had the correct number of polio doses by age 2, but in London this falls to 90%. This is even worse for preschool boosters, as only 71% of children in London are protected.

All GPs and nurses at the surgery have fully vaccinated their children and we encourage all of patients to do the same, and to encourage their friends and family. We feel social media has had a huge influence by spreading anti-vax messages but we urge all parents to ensure their children's vaccines are up to date.

Our Care Coordinators will continue to call those with outstanding vaccinations. It would be tragic if low vaccine rates led to a resurgence of polio in 2022.

Cervical smears

One of the consequences of COVID was a temporary halt to Cervical Smear Screening. To try to make up for this we have introduced additional Saturday morning clinics. We will invite you when your smear is due. Smears can be booked online directly - please look for 'Cervical smear slot only' when booking.

Appointments

Life is getting back to normal. We continue to offer the option of telephone and video consultations, in addition to increasing face-to-face appointments.

Our phone lines are very busy so please consider booking online if possible or using the website or online consultations to contact us for non-urgent issues. We aim to reinstate our automated telephone booking service in September.

Our list cannot be 'closed' and continues to grow so we are recruiting to our team. If you feel you can help, please see '**Vacancies**' on our website - www.lambtonroadmedical.nhs.uk/practice-information/vacancies/

Blue Star Relaunch

We plan to relaunch our additional telephone line called our 'Blue Star' line.

This line goes directly to one of our Care Coordinators who can help with booking appointments and non-urgent queries. It bypasses queues in our main telephone system.

A letter with more details about the service is sent to all over 80s, Carers and other patients we feel would benefit from this.

Blood tests

We have introduced some online booking slots for routine blood tests. If you have been asked to have a test by your clinician, you can book directly. Please note, phlebotomists cannot 'order' tests themselves, so the request from a clinician needs to be clear on your records to use this service.

Online consultations

On our website, you will now see an option (for non-urgent problems) to use the online facility for GP or nurse consultations. There is an option in 'Consulting Room' and on the left-hand side of the homepage, as shown in the image beside this text.

We use Accurx software for our online consultations. Your request goes directly to your notes and a GP can see this. It is useful for non-urgent issues i.e. requesting blood tests, results or simple problems.

The screenshot shows a website interface with a dark blue header containing three icons: a telephone for 'Phone', a location pin for 'Location', and an envelope for 'Message'. Below the header, it states 'A member of the West Merton Primary Care Network'. A CQC inspection rating is displayed as 'Good' in a green box. Below this, it says 'We are currently open.' and provides a link to 'View all opening hours'. A red banner indicates 'You have an unread news item (1) >'. Below that is a link for 'Practice Information >'. A red-bordered box highlights the 'Contact us online' section, which includes a teal button labeled 'Submit a new request' and the text: 'If you need help with a non-urgent medical or admin request, you can now contact us online.'

We wish all of our patients a great Summer - make sure to top up the Vitamin D, but stay cool and stay safe.

With best wishes,

Penny Smith

Senior Partner

