

GET YOUR FLU JAB

Flu season is just around the corner so to protect yourself and others get the flu jab. If you are eligible for a flu vaccination you will have received an invite from us, however if you still haven't heard from us don't worry, as long as you fall within one of the groups below then you can book yourself in for your flu jab.

- All patients 50 & over
- Patients under 50 with chronic illnesses such as; heart failure, diabetes, respiratory problem (asthma & COPD)
- Patients who are immuno-suppressed or those who are in close contact with immuno-compromised individuals

- If you are pregnant
- If you are a carer or work in health & social care

- 2 & 3 year olds

We are strongly advising that you have the flu vaccine this year if you fall in the categories above. The NHS is still under strain due to COVID and by protecting yourself from seasonal flu it will help reduce the demand on the NHS.

WAYS WE'RE IMPROVING

IN OUR LAST NEWSLETTER WE MENTIONED AREAS WHERE WE'RE DOING WELL. IN THIS ISSUE WE WOULD LIKE TO FOCUS ON THE AREAS WE, AND YOU, FEEL WE COULD IMPROVE UPON AND THE WAYS IN WHICH WE ARE WORKING HARD TO BRING ABOUT POSITIVE CHANGE IN THE PRACTICE.

PHONES AND MAKING APPOINTMENTS

We know that getting through to us on the phones can at times be difficult so with this in mind we have spent time looking into ways in which we make this experience better.

- We have reviewed and streamlined the workload of the Patient Service Advisors (PSA) so that we are able to have more PSAs on the phones to take your calls.
- We have created dedicated telephone lines for certain things (such as the COVID booking line), which prevents all call queries coming into the one main line, reducing waiting times.
- We know there has been an issue with waiting times if staff have not been logged off the phones properly. We have put systems in place to prevent this happening.
- We also have other systems in place that you can use to do things such as make appointments, view test results & request fit notes. These include eConsult, the NHS app and Patient Access.

APPOINTMENT TIMES

Many of you may struggle to attend GP appointments within the normal GP opening hours. That is why we have:

- evening and weekend appointments. We are currently holding COVID & flu vaccination clinics in the evening and at weekends and once we are able to we will offer other appointments again during these times.
- a range of appointment types such as face to face, telephone and video consultations and using tools such as eConsult and text messages, enables you to have the care you need but with a bit more flexibility and ease. For example, not having to take time out of work or take your child out of school to attend a GP appointment because it's already been resolved via another method.



CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION

Two of our wonderful nurses Janet Graburn and Fiona Cook have both been awarded a certificate of recognition from the University of Plymouth, School of Nursing & Midwifery as they have both been nominated for their outstanding contribution to the support of practice learning.

Also, a well done to all the team at the medical centre who were nominated for a Certificate of Recognition by pre-registration Nursing & Midwifery students, in recognition of their outstanding contribution to the support of practice learning

Congratulations all!



SECONDARY CARE BLOODS



Many of you come to us for a blood test that a hospital clinician or consultant has requested you to have.

Due to the pressures that GP surgeries are under the RD&E has set up a blood test (phlebotomy) clinic at Okehampton Community Hospital for you to have your blood tests, rather than coming to the surgery. By using the hospital this way will help protect its future use for healthcare services.

When it comes to you having your secondary care blood test, from now on, your hospital clinician or consultant will provide you with a letter with booking information about the appointment they have organised for you with the local phlebotomy service.

If you have any queries about how secondary care bloods will now be taken please contact the Community Phlebotomy Service on 01395 519922.

YOUR VIEWS ABOUT LOCAL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Okehampton Medical Centre along with Chagford, Moretonhampstead and Black Torrington (Blake House) surgeries are part of the North Dartmoor Primary Care Network. We, along with health and social care partners and other community partners in other statutory and voluntary sector organisations, would like to know your view about local and Devonwide mental health

services. This is any service that you can access, or have accessed, around mental health, or that a friend or family member of any age have accessed, either online or in person from the statutory services (NHS) or voluntary sector. This will inform our plans of how to deliver local mental health services for the future. To do this we need to understand what could be done better,

what is done well, what we need more of and what is missing.

To let us know your views either visit <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/NDPCNMentalHealth> or scan the QR code below.



KNOWING YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE

KEEPING YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE WITHIN A HEALTHY RANGE IS VITAL TO REDUCING YOUR CHANCES OF DEVELOPING HEALTH COMPLICATIONS. BLOOD PRESSURE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR DELIVERING BLOOD THROUGHOUT THE BODY AND RETURNING IT TO THE HEART.

What do the readings mean?

A blood pressure reading has two numbers. The top number is called the systolic reading, this is the pressure in the arteries when the heart contracts (each beat). The bottom number is called the diastolic reading, this is the pressure in the arteries when the heart is resting in between beats.

Are there any symptoms of high or low blood pressure?

High blood pressure rarely has noticeable symptoms. When the blood pressure is too high or too low, this can place extra stress on the heart and sometimes even the brain.

A normal blood pressure for a typical healthy person would be 120/80. Having low blood pressure isn't necessarily dangerous however when blood pressure dips too low some may experience symptoms such as:

- Light-headedness/Dizziness
- Nausea
- Fatigue
- Lack of concentration

There is no defined range for low blood pressure. If your systolic reading falls below 100 then further investigation will need to take place especially if you are experiencing the symptoms above.

High blood pressure (hypertension) is defined when either your systolic reading is above 140 or you diastolic is above 90. If either of these are high and you are not known to have hypertension then we will do what is called a hypertension workup to see if there is an underlying cause as to why your blood pressure is raised. Consistently high blood pressure can lead to heart, brain and kidney damage so that why it is so important for us and you to help maintain a healthy blood pressure.

How to maintain a healthy blood pressure range

There are many ways in which you can maintain a healthy blood pressure:

- Eat a well-rounded diet
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Reduce salt intake
- Exercise regularly
- Quit smoking
- Get the sleep you need
- Limit alcohol
- Find ways to manage stress

If you are known to have hypertension then you will most likely have to start some form of medication to help you maintain a healthy blood pressure range.

To be able to understand and maintain a healthy blood pressure range, you will regularly need to check you blood pressure. Many of you may already be doing this yourself by purchasing a blood pressure monitor and that is what we encourage all our patients to do. However, if you are concerned or haven't had your blood pressure taken in a while you can always contact the surgery to arrange an appointment. By keeping an eye on your blood pressure it makes it easier to identify a trend and possibly prevent any future health complications.

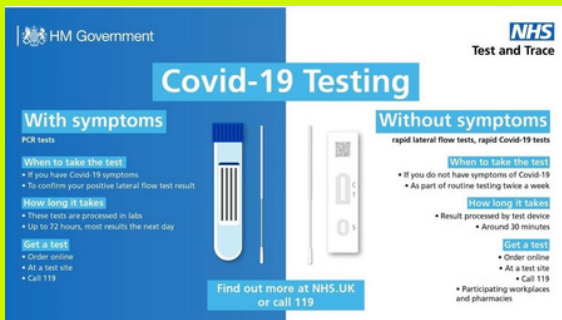
WHICH COVID TEST SHOULD I TAKE?

What's the difference between lateral flow test and a PCR? Should I be testing regularly? I have symptoms of COVID, what test should I take? These are just some of the questions we get asked, so we're here to clear up the confusion.

There are two main types of tests a PCR and Lateral Flow.

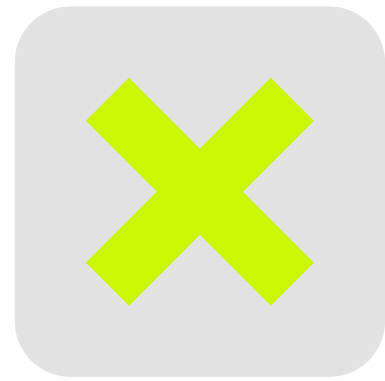
- PCR: this test is mainly for people who have symptoms of COVID. They are sent to the lab to be checked. You will normally have to go to a testing centre to have this test. Other reasons why you may take a PCR test is you've done a rapid lateral flow test and has a positive result or you had a PCR test and your test sample could not be read.
- Lateral Flow: these tests are only for people who do not have symptoms, they give a quick result using a device similar to a pregnancy test. Around 1 in 3 people with COVID-19 do not have symptoms but can still infect other that's why it is strongly advised that you do a rapid test twice a week to check if you have the virus.

Both types of tests are free. You can visit gov.uk on info on how to receive these tests.



YOUR COVID BOOSTERS

We have already started giving the COVID boosters to those of you who are due. The recommended time between your second dose and your COVID booster is a minimum of 6 months. If you have received an invitation from the NHS to book your COVID booster we can offer you an appointment. Contact us directly to book in on 01837 52233, option 4 – Mon-Fri 9am – 5pm. Please be patient when calling in and please do not come to the surgery to book in, as this is impacting on our Patient Services Advisors' ability to help other patients.



INCORRECT OR MISSING COVID-19 DATA

If you believe that you have missing or incorrect COVID-19 vaccination data then you will need to call 119 rather than your GP surgery.

When you speak with one of the call agents you need to ask them to make a referral to the Vaccination Data Resolution Service (VDRS) team on your behalf. The CDRS team will look into your enquiry and will get back to you within 5 working days.

Please note: 119 and CDRS call agents are not able to provide clinical advice and cannot assist at this time with queries related to vaccinations received overseas.

If your personal information is incorrect on your patient record (eg. name, address), then please contact us to update this information.

COMING UP IN NEXT ISSUE

- Staying safe this winter
- Why can't I see a GP?
- A warm welcome

WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR YOUR COMMENTS ON OUR NEWSLETTER AND ANY ARTICLE YOU COULD CONTRIBUTE, SO FEEL FREE TO WRITE IN AT ANY TIME TO D-CCG.OMC-COMMS@NHS.NET IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE AN ONLINE VERSION OF OUR NEWSLETTER PLEASE EMAIL THE ABOVE ADDRESS