

PLEA FOR PATIENCE

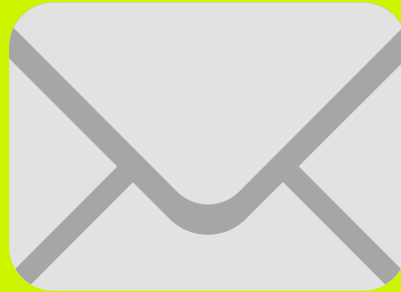
We all know and understand the strain and distress that the pandemic has caused. However, the NHS has seen an increase in the amount of verbal abuse, property damage and threatening behaviour that staff have received in response to being told to follow the guidelines, not only for our safety but yours and your loved ones' too.

We have been fortunate enough here to not have experienced incidents which have affected other parts of Devon. Most of our patients have continued to be understanding, polite and patient, and we appreciate this greatly.

We would just like to remind everyone that the pandemic is not over. The Omicron strain risks worsening the situation and we can't let that happen.

Please understand, these guidelines that we have in place are to prevent the spread and protect you.

Thank you.



A LETTER FROM US

Over the last couple of years we have seen a massive change in the way we run our surgery. In 2020 primary care commissioners (the CCG and NHS England) pushed for GP surgeries to use a more digital triage model within general practice, accelerated by the COVID pandemic. This was put in place to protect vulnerable patients and safeguard staff and therefore we have continued and been encouraged to carry on using this model throughout 2021.

This new system that we, along with many other surgeries in the UK, have undertaken has made some people feel as though they can't see a GP. The recent media coverage on this issue hasn't helped. The media tends to highlight the difficulties and very rarely shares information about the millions of patient contacts that have happened despite the extreme and unfamiliar pressures that we have been under.

With the online and telephone first system playing a massive part in the way we run, we have really invested in our multi-disciplinary team over the last year. It has grown and expanded in ways we never imagined, and we have gained and developed an amazing group of professionals such as advanced clinical practitioners, pharmacists, paramedics, physician associates and prescribing nurses; all of whom are qualified and trained to help and provide you with the care you need at the time that you need it.

By having such a team, it enables us to manage patients' health concerns in a more timely, convenient and effective manner. If we relied only on GP face to face appointments for all health concerns, we would be unable to provide the large scale and breadth of health services that we do. With this being said, if one of our clinicians feel you need a face-to-face appointment, you will be offered one.

Along with our day to day primary care work we have also played a huge part in providing the covid & flu vaccinations for our local community, which has taken up a lot of our time and effort. It's been a difficult time for us all with the pandemic and we have really tried to carry on providing you with the same quality of care throughout. We would just like to say a massive thank you for all your patience and kindness over the last couple of years. Here's to a better 2022.

KEEPING WELL THIS WINTER

THE COLD WEATHER IS REALLY STARTING TO SET IN NOW AND WITH THE COLDEST MONTHS STILL AHEAD OF US WE ALL NEED TO BE THINKING ABOUT HOW WE CAN KEEP WELL THIS WINTER. THE COLD WEATHER CAN MAKE HEALTH CONDITIONS WORSE ESPECIALLY FOR THOSE WHO ARE OVER 65 OR FOR ANYONE WHO HAS A LONG TERM HEALTH CONDITION. SO HOW CAN WE KEEP OURSELVES WELL OVER THIS WINTRY PERIOD?

Heat your home.

Remember to keep your home properly heated- we recommend around 18 degrees C

Get your winter vaccines.

The flu jab & COVID vaccine will help to keep you well. You may also be eligible for the Pneumonia, and the Shingles vaccine.

Wrap up well.

If you have to head out in the cold, make sure to wear extra layers.

Stop the spread of germs.

Regularly washing your hands with soap and water is one of the best ways to stop germs spreading.

Check on each other.

Especially the older neighbours and relatives, and those with heart or breathing (respiratory) problems

Keep active if you can.

Try not to sit still for more than an hour at a time. Even a little bit of activity now and then can help you maintain strength and mobility.

Eat well.

Have at least one hot meal a day, and remember to eat regularly.

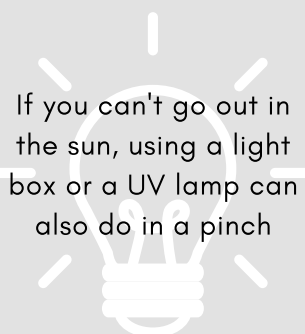
Stay stocked up.

Make sure you have got enough of your regular medication to keep you going. And it might be worth stocking up on cold & cough remedies too.

SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER (SAD)

WITH THE COLDER WEATHER AND SHORTER DAYS SOME OF YOU MAY FIND THAT YOU BECOME MORE AWARE OF HAVING A LOW MOOD OR HEIGHTEN SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION. YOU'RE NOT ALONE. AROUND 3 IN 100 PEOPLE ARE AFFECTED NEGATIVELY BY THE LACK OF SUNLIGHT WHEN IT COMES TO THE WINTER MONTHS - THIS FORM OF LOW MOOD/DEPRESSION CAN BE DIAGNOSED AS SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER OR SAD. IF YOU FEEL THAT YOU MAY BE SUFFERING FROM THIS HERE IS SOME OF OUR ADVICE TO HELP YOU COPE:

Try to get as much natural light as possible- even something as simple as going out for a walk during the day may be an affective way to help this.



SOME USEFUL CONTACTS:

- Samaritans: 116 123
- MIND.org: 0300 123 3393
- Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM): 0800 58 58 58
- depressionuk.org
- nice.org.uk
- NHS UK
- Rethink Mental Illness: 0808 801 0525
- sane.org.uk

Exposure to fresh air is also good for treating SAD, so go outside if you can.

Remember, depression is commonly tied to SAD. If you know you struggle from it, contact your GP about treatment

WHO'S WHO - A WARM WELCOME

IF YOU HAVE BEEN IN CONTACT WITH US RECENTLY YOU MAY HAVE COME ACROSS SOME UNFAMILIAR JOB TITLES. OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS WE HAVE GAINED AND DEVELOPED AN AMAZING GROUP OF PROFESSIONALS. WE ALREADY HAVE STAFF QUALIFIED IN THESE POSITIONS BUT SOME ARE UNDERGOING TRAINING TO BECOME ONE OF THE BELOW.

WE ASKED THEM WHAT THEIR ROLES ARE, HOW THEY HELP THE MEDICAL CENTRE RUN SMOOTHLY AND MOST IMPORTANTLY HOW THEY CAN HELP YOU.

ADVANCED CLINICAL PRACTITIONER

ACPs are experienced, trained specialist nurses that come from a variety of professional backgrounds who have undertaken additional education in order to provide advanced nursing/medical care. They can assess, diagnose, plan, implement and evaluate treatments/interventions. They can also provide treatment and advice for many problems for which you may have seen a doctor for in the past.

CARE COORDINATOR

Care coordinators proactively identify and work with people including mental health, frail/elderly and those with long-term conditions. They coordinate, facilitate and integrate treatment, care and support, which is tailored to meet the specific need of the individual. They help develop a care plan with you and help you work & navigate care and support across health and care.

PRIMARY CARE PARAMEDIC

Primary Care Paramedics normally come from a background of first responders/ambulance crew. They assess and manage patients presenting with acute illness and those with long-term conditions on our same-day triage. They also work within the minor injuries unit and carry out home visits. They are able to signpost and refer patients to appropriate services and other healthcare professionals.

PHYSICIAN ASSOCIATE

Physician Associates support doctors in the diagnosis and management of patients. They have direct contact with patients and carry out follow up appointments for patients with ongoing issues. If you are in need of a physical examination or any diagnostic and therapeutic procedures then they will be able to provide you with these. They are here to help improve the clinical continuity and provide more patient-focused care.

PHARMACY TECHNICIAN

Pharmacy Technicians work under the supervision of pharmacists. They work with you to reach the best possible care for you, advising you on your health, how to take your medication and give you advice on how best to manage your medicines. They are also there to provide you with your medication, info on potential side-effects and medication reviews.

NURSE ASSOCIATE

Nursing associates are the stepping stone between Healthcare Assistants and Registered Nurses. This means that they are qualified to do certain things a Healthcare Assistant isn't, such as giving immunisations and information on contraceptives. Mostly, they are there to work alongside and assist Registered Nurses, with many becoming practice nurses down the line

COULD YOU BE ENTITLED TO USE OUR DISPENSARY?

Did you know that you may be able to order and collect your medication from our dispensary here at the Medical Centre?

If you **live at least a mile away** from your nearest pharmacy, you could be able to use our dispensary for medication ordering and collection.

Do you find yourself struggling to collect your prescriptions or are you housebound?

As long as you live at least a mile away from your nearest pharmacy, then you could qualify for having your medication delivered to you for free by our dispensary medication courier.

To find out if you qualify or for more info call our dispensary team on 01837 52233 ext 3 (2pm-5pm) or fill in an admin eConsult via our website or NHS app.

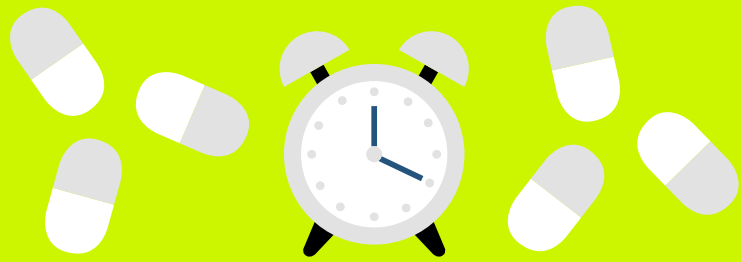
PLEASE ACCOUNT FOR OUR MEDICATION TURNOVER

Remember: the dispensary needs at least 72 hours' notice to process your prescriptions. We understand you might be worried that you won't get your medication on time - but that's why it's a good idea to keep an eye on when you will run out and don't leave it until you have completely run out to order your medication.

We currently have short-term staffing shortages in dispensary and due to the sheer volume of requests that we receive in the lead up to Christmas, we are sure you will understand the pressure we are under.

Giving us enough time to process your requests really helps reduce that pressure.

Thank you for your patience and understanding.

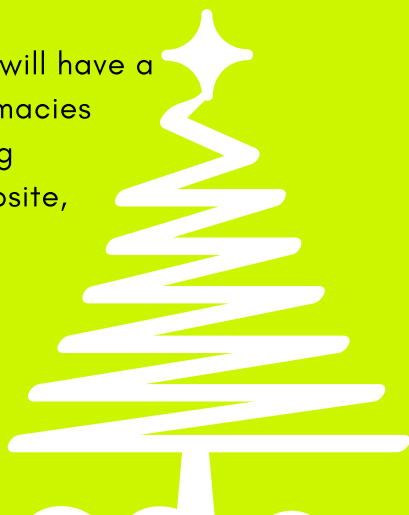


GET YOUR PRESCRIPTIONS IN BEFORE CHRISTMAS!

Please note that the deadline for prescription requests is December 17th. If you need medication over Christmas, you will need to order on or before then to guarantee you will get it on time.

But don't worry, if you need urgent medication over the

Christmas period - we will have a list of alternative pharmacies that will be open during this time up on our website, social media page & displayed in our dispensary.



NEED HELP WITH DIGITAL SKILLS / ONLINE CONFIDENCE?

Since the pandemic, most everyday tasks have been digitalised, which can be alienating for anyone who didn't grow up learning to use these technologies.

Fortunately, Wellmoor are partnering with Devon Communities Together and others in a funded project to combat digital exclusion across Devon. They are offering one on one help with digital skills and online confidence for anyone who may live in isolated areas, as well as an upgrade/replacement scheme for clients' devices if needed.

If you are interested please call 01647 440775 or email:

Katie Taylor, Wellmoor: katie@wellmoor.org.uk

STOP COVID HANGING AROUND THIS CHRISTMAS

Well, it's that time of year again, where families huddle around the open fire and celebrate Christmas. And with last year's being all but cancelled by lockdowns and restrictions, we know that many of us will be more than ready to bring on the festive cheer.

But wait one minute and think about how COVID spreads: the answer is, of course, through close contact and a lack of ventilation. If we're not careful, the virus will spread again bringing us back to square one.

We all need to do our part to fight it. Keep 2 meters from others when you can. If you can wear a face covering, keep it on when in public indoor spaces, and make sure the windows are open for ventilation.

Let's all do our bit and **stop COVID hanging around.**



BIG CHANGES IN THE WAY YOU CAN BOOK YOUR COVID VACCINE

Since Friday 10th December, we have moved onto the National Booking System for COVID vaccination bookings and queries.

This means that anyone over the age of 18, whether a patient of ours or not, can now select Okehampton Medical Centre as their chosen vaccination site.

The direct booking line at the medical centre has been disabled so anyone who needs to book their vaccine will need to call 119 or go to the NHS website. If you have any questions please direct these to 119 or <https://bit.ly/3E0QNyn>

Unfortunately, we cannot offer this service to under 18s as of yet. If you or someone you know under 18 and eligible for their vaccine then they will need to go through the National Booking System and their closest vaccination site.

Those aged between 12-15, should be getting vaccinated through their school's immunisation team or they can book via the NBS.

If the situation regarding vaccination of under 18s changes we will update our website, social media and telephone message.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR MANAGEMENT PARTNER, MISS KIRAN BAKHSHI

"We have been vaccinating for 12 months now and the workload and pressure on staff has been huge - we desperately wanted to keep providing a covid vaccination service to our local community, and felt the best way to do this would be by going onto the National Booking System, which would release our admin and patient services staff back into doing other work to support the clinical team and our patients. We would encourage everyone to get jabbed - whether it is your first, second, third (if eligible) or booster. We would also like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas, Happy New Year and we all hope you and your loved ones are able to stay safe and well this winter"

STOP THE PRESS: ADDITIONAL VACCINATION CAPACITY IS BEING ADDED THROUGHOUT DECEMBER.

PLEASE CHECK THE NBS FOR AVAILABILITY.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!

To our patients, we want to say thank you for your patience and understanding. As you can imagine, this year has been tough for us all and your co-operation hasn't gone unnoticed.

And to our volunteers we'd like to extend an extra thank you for your support and assistance during this period. It's because of you that we're able to operate the clinics so smoothly.

We hope you'll keep supporting us into the New Year!

COMING UP IN NEXT ISSUE

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- What's 2022 got install for us?
- The Importance of Nutrition
- Cancer Awareness - Things you should know

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



**MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM ALL OF US AT
THE MEDICAL CENTRE!**