



# Swallowfield Medical Practice Newsletter Winter 2017



Welcome to the winter newsletter from Swallowfield Medical Practice.  
This newsletter is produced jointly by the Practice and the Patient Participation Group.  
Our aim is to improve communication and keep you informed.

## Surgery Christmas Opening Hours

Wednesday 13th December	8.00am – 12 noon & 2.00pm – 6.30pm
Saturday 23 <sup>rd</sup> December	CLOSED
Christmas Day (Monday 25 <sup>th</sup> December)	CLOSED
Boxing Day (Tuesday 26 <sup>th</sup> December)	CLOSED
New Year's Day (Monday 1 <sup>st</sup> January)	CLOSED



Cover will be provided on 13th December 12 – 2pm. Please phone our main number: 0118 9883134.

Except for these times the surgery will be open as normal.

## GP Services – Out of Hours

If you need urgent GP Services when the Practice is closed, then please phone 111 and you will be connected to the 'NHS 111' Service. 'NHS 111' is available at any time of the day or night and is free from all landlines and mobiles.

You may be directed to 2 local nurse-led units (see below) which offer advice and treatment for injuries which aren't life threatening and don't need a visit to A&E. Please phone NHS 111 and they will be able to direct you to the most appropriate place.

- Bracknell Urgent Care Centre,  
Brants Bridge, Bracknell RG12 9BG  
Open every day 8am – 8pm Telephone: 01344 551100
- Newbury Minor Injuries Unit,  
West Berkshire Community Hospital, London Road, Benham Hill,  
Thatcham RG18 3AS  
Open every day 8am – 10pm  
Open 10am – 6pm only on Christmas Day Telephone: 01635 273508

In the event of a life-threatening medical emergency dial 999 and ask for 'Ambulance'.

## Prescriptions and Medicines

Do make sure that you have sufficient prescription medicines to last you through the festive period. This is a very busy time of the year so it is important that you order repeat prescriptions in plenty of time. Please help our Dispensing Team by giving as much notice as possible in December – as this will help to avoid the seasonal rush.



Don't forget to check that your usual 'Home Remedies and Medicines' Cupboard is also stocked for the holiday period.

## Local Pharmacy Services – (Duty Pharmacist/Prescription Dispensing)

Opening times for the Emergency Chemist's Duty Rota for the Christmas period can be found on the Practice door/window and on the practice website.

[www.swallowfieldmedicalpractice.co.uk](http://www.swallowfieldmedicalpractice.co.uk)

Note: the Asda Pharmacy at Lower Earley is open every day throughout the holiday period except for Christmas Day – Sunday 25th December: Telephone: 0118 9870310

We wish all our patients a Merry Christmas and a Happy, Healthy New Year.

## Appointments



Dr Beacham writes: - 'Due to the increasing pressures in general practice, we are trying to provide a more diverse health care team at the practice. This means that along with the doctors, we have specialist nurses and, in the future will have pharmacists, providing different clinical service for patients. To allow us to ensure that you see the most appropriate member of staff for your health needs, the reception team will need to ask greater detail about why you need to attend the surgery. We hope that you understand that they are doing this to ensure you have the best service from the practice team.'

**During July to September this year 382 appointments were lost to non-attenders. This equates to over 63 hours of clinical time being wasted. Please do let us know if you can't attend so that we can re-allocate your appointment.**

## Staff Update

In November we were pleased to welcome 2 new members of staff to the Practice. Chloe Martin joined us as a trainee dispenser and Sharon Weller joined the nursing team as a Practice Nurse. Sharon has lots of experience in both asthma and diabetes and will be a great asset to us in managing patients with these long term conditions. We hope they will both enjoy working with both us and you, our patients.

## New Swallowfield Website

We are introducing our new website during January and we hope you will like its new design. This is an interactive website which will allow you to book appointments, order your prescriptions, do some health reviews and lots more.

Why not take a look at [www.swallowfieldmedicalpractice.co.uk](http://www.swallowfieldmedicalpractice.co.uk)



## Flu Jabs - have you had yours?

If you haven't had your flu jab yet there's still time! If you're 65 or over or in a clinical risk group you can get a free flu vaccination. To get yours please phone the surgery to book an appointment with an HCA.



## Is this you?

'Is this you?' is a series of articles focusing on the most common acute and chronic clinical conditions that affect our patients. This is the second in the series, written by Dr Aamir Ansari, whose specialist area of interest is respiratory disease.

### Asthma: Is this you?

That is a question, isn't it? Most of us have heard of asthma. Many of us have it. But when you first hear the name, what is the first image in your mind? Most people imagine a wheezy little kid who can't do sports puffing on his inhaler. It really isn't normally like that, but why let that little detail get in the way? There are many fit and healthy people out there with asthma but we don't really see or hear much about them, which is a shame because one of the most common barriers to getting help is the stigma that comes with it.

Even David Beckham had asthma. He would often be seen taking his inhaler before running on to the pitch. But it certainly wasn't part of his sexy image, was it?

Other famous asthmatics include Frank Lampard, Eminem, Jessica Alba, Bono, Dennis Rodman and John F Kennedy. Asthma hasn't held them back. It shouldn't stop you or anyone else: More on that point later.

There are 5.4 million asthmatics in the in the UK. That's one in every 11 people. 250,000 of them have severe asthma. It is a common condition, especially in children. Sometimes it runs in families. The key fact here is that it is also very treatable.



### So what is it?

Asthma is a condition that can cause narrowing of the small tubes that make up a large part of the lungs. They get smaller and smaller until they form microscopic sacs that let oxygen into the blood. "So what?" I hear you say? Well the whole oxygen thing is quite important really. Without it we don't do very well at all.

In asthma, the airways can be squeezed shut by their own muscles, blocked by mucus (a form of snot) or both. Either way, it becomes harder to breathe and often causes a wheezing sound as air whistles through the narrowed airways. There is often a cough as well. Sometimes these effects are mild, and almost go unnoticed. Other times they can be severe and strike fast. This is known as an asthma attack and can be fatal. In fact, every day three people die from asthma in the UK. Every 10 seconds someone has an asthma attack and every 8 minutes an asthmatic is admitted to hospital. That's a lot of people. Millions more can be suffering from asthmatic symptoms that affect their quality of life at any time.

Interestingly, there are some typical triggers that set off asthma. Dust, common colds, exercise, changes in temperature, pollens, stress, chemicals, smoke and certain drugs.

So when I ask, "Is this you?" I wonder if you might find yourself getting a tight chest, or wheezing, or having a persistent cough? Perhaps you have a trigger for this? If you think it might be, or if you're just not sure, then a chat with your GP might be a good idea. There are a few potential causes for these symptoms and we would want to assess you properly. What does that mean? Normally we would want to discuss your symptoms, consider the appropriate examinations such as listening to your chest and then consider options to confirm or exclude the diagnosis. These can include a trial of treatment or breathing tests. Occasionally we might consider an x-ray.

### **What happens if you do have asthma?**

The good news is that there are many treatments available. In fact, the NHS spends £1 billion a year on such treatments. And most of these are very well tolerated and can make a significant improvement to your quality of life. In fact, as I mentioned above it really ought not to hold you or your loved ones back at all.



Most of the time an asthmatic will take an inhaler a couple of times a day. This would be what we call a "preventer". Taking this inhaler would hopefully prevent any further asthma symptoms or attacks. We would often also give asthmatics another inhaler – a blue one – that can be used in case this does not happen and we need to ease some more acute symptoms like an asthma attack. Occasionally one might be prescribed tablets to help in the long term. Importantly, as asthma, like most illnesses, has a unique effect on all individuals we would aim to create a personal plan for you. That way you would know what to do to control the asthma on a day to day basis and also in the (hopefully unlikely) event of an asthma attack. It is important then to get your asthma reviewed regularly.

This seems a good point to mention the potential outcomes if asthma is not well controlled. All too often I hear people say "colds always go to my/their chest". That's because as sensitive lungs become congested with mucus they can create places for germs to prosper. Sometimes sleep is disturbed leading to fatigue or performance in one's job or in sports. Children might not grow as well as they could or need time off from school and all of these can cause fatigue and tiredness. Most importantly there is the risk of the asthma attack where one struggles for breath, with a tight chest and persistent cough. Compared to that list, taking an inhaler a couple of times a day seems a good trade off!

### **Handy Hints for Asthmatics**

A lot of what we have talked about hasn't really focused on people with a diagnosis of asthma. I'm often asked whether I have any useful advice or tips that can help... so here goes...

- Take your preventers! It makes more sense to prevent an asthma attack than to try to experience or treat one.
- Keep a blue inhaler with or near you. Make sure that children have a spare at school and that this is easily accessible.
- Be aware of your asthma triggers.
- Make sure you know your plan for an asthma attack.
- Stay fit.
- If you are overweight then address this. It is proven to help.
- Tell your boss. If they don't know they can't offer any support. It probably won't be needed but it is best to be prepared.
- Get your asthma reviewed regularly, at least annually. If your symptoms are stable you can now submit your own review via our new-look website which will save you

having to book an appointment with our asthma nurse. Go to [www.swallowfieldmedicalpractice.co.uk](http://www.swallowfieldmedicalpractice.co.uk) and click on the Health Review and Assessment Clinic button.

There is also useful information to be found at the following websites:

[www.asthma.org.uk](http://www.asthma.org.uk)

<https://patient.info/health/asthma-leaflet>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/asthma/>

## Measles

Measles is a highly infectious viral illness that can be very unpleasant and can sometimes lead to serious complications. Since the MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine was introduced in 1988 it is rare for children in the UK to develop these serious conditions. However, outbreaks happen and since September there have been 41 reported cases of measles in areas surrounding the Thames Valley region. It is therefore very important to ensure that you and your children are up to date with the MMR vaccination.

## Health Coach Service

We have a new service up and running in the surgery, and they have started to see their first patients. The Health Coaches work together as a team of two, offering support to patients with **Type 2 Diabetes**, **Cardiac Conditions** and **Breathlessness**. Their aim is to work with patients to improve quality of life when living with a physical health condition, helping to manage wellbeing, symptoms of stress, worry and low mood/down days. If you would like to find out more please speak to reception or call 0300 365 2000 and you can be booked in for a welcome appointment or one of our health coaches can contact you to give you more information.



### Medical Dictionary:

**Antibiotics:** Are medicines used to treat or prevent some types of bacterial infection. They work by killing *bacteria* or preventing them from reproducing and spreading. Antibiotics **aren't** effective against viral infections (caused by a *virus*) such as the common cold, flu, most coughs and sore throats.

## Community Ultrasound Service at Swallowfield Medical Practice

Swallowfield Medical Practice has partnered with Physiological Measurements Ltd (PML) to offer NHS Ultrasound Services at the practice. This means any patients in the local area who have been referred for an ultrasound scan now have the convenience of being seen at Swallowfield Medical Practice rather than travelling to Royal Berkshire Hospital, Basingstoke Hospital or Frimley Park Hospital.

### Who are Physiological Measurements Ltd (PML)?

PML are an established NHS business partner for over 10 years and work seamlessly with the NHS and the local area to provide ultrasound diagnostics close to your home in the



community. PML are very proud of the quality services they provide and are thrilled that 99% of patients who access their service recommend them.

## What is an Ultrasound Scan?

An ultrasound scan is an examination that involves taking pictures of the body using sound waves. It is one of the most commonly requested tests. Ultrasound can be used to look at all soft tissue structures and blood vessels. Pulses of ultrasound are sent through the skin into your body which then echo (bounce back), creating an image. The scan is carried out by a sonographer and the images are recorded and interpreted to make a diagnosis. There are no side effects from having an ultrasound.

## How do I get referred?

Once your GP has identified what Ultrasound test you require, your GP will refer you directly for your test. You may want to discuss with your GP where you would like to have your test and request you are seen by PML at Swallowfield Medical Practice if appropriate. Once you have been referred to PML you will then be contacted by their patient management centre on 01691 676496 to arrange an appointment.

Once your ultrasound scan has been completed by the sonographer, a report will be sent directly to your GP within 5 days. Only certain aspects of the examination may be discussed at the time of the scan with you. Any further examinations and clinical treatments will be discussed between you and your GP.

## Extension Update

The building work started on 2 October and so far progress has been swift – thanks to favourable weather conditions. Fingers crossed this holds for the duration! The shell of the new building is up and we're hoping to break through into the extension early in the New Year. The next phase is more complicated for us and will involve lots of moving of staff, equipment and records so that the internal reconfiguration can start. We hope that this won't impact on patients too much. Our continued thanks go to Wayne and Dawn at The Crown and to Swallowfield Parish Council for allowing the staff to park in their car parks whilst the building work is ongoing.



## Samples/Specimens

To avoid any confusion and minimise the risk of any errors in the lab, if you bring any samples into the surgery for testing please, please remember to write your name and date of birth on the container. Thank you.

### Useful Numbers and Contact details

Main Line	0118 9883134	Appointments:	0118 9883473
24hr Automated System:	0118 9769606	Dispensary:	0118 9883459
Fax:	0118 9885759	Website:	<a href="http://www.swallowfieldmedicalpractice.co.uk">www.swallowfieldmedicalpractice.co.uk</a>