

NEWSLETTER



BIRCHWOOD
SURGERY

COLOUR COPY AVAILABLE THROUGH WEBSITE!

ISSUE 7: JULY-SEPTEMBER 2018



SUMMER AT THE SURGERY!

Despite the snow, wind and rain that has hit us in the last couple of months, it finally looks like the summer months are starting to creep up on us!

Some well needed sun and a chance to relax can do us all some good. In this July, August and September issue we want to keep you informed on how to spend your time out in the sun safely, how to avoid hay fever ruining your well-deserved hiatus and if you're jetting off on holiday, we are going to give you some tips on how to get any vaccinations you might need!

Along with some important notices, we are also going to be talking about some changes with our staffing, a new look at our diabetes clinics and our freshly designed cancer awareness boards, as well as much more!

Whether you're planning a summer holiday on a sandy beach or a cosy break in the back garden we hope you have a fantastic, stress free and safe summer and we'll be back for our next issue in autumn!



LUNCH TIME CLOSURE

A reminder to our patients that since Monday the 19th of February, 2018 we now close our surgery between 12:30pm and 1:30pm for lunch every day.

Our phone lines are also closed during this time for non-urgent enquires.

However if you need a home visit or urgent medical advice, our emergency desk is still manned during this time. Just call our surgery and follow the instructions on the recorded phone message.

Should you need any medical advice during this time, please call NHS 111.

Should you require any emergency medical attention during this time, please call 999.

NEW PATIENTS

Since 1st August 2017, the surgery has not been registering new patients, after receiving approval from NHS England to close our list. We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause and hope to be open again soon to new patients.

BIRCHWOOD TEAM Doctors

Dr C A Brooks – Senior Partner

Dr R J O Graham – Partner

Update on ordering medication PRESCRIPTION REQUEST & COLLECTION

Prescription request handed in:	Prescription ready by:
Monday	Thursday <u>AFTER 3PM</u>
Tuesday	Friday <u>AFTER 3PM</u>
Wednesday	Monday <u>AFTER 3PM</u>
Thursday	Tuesday <u>AFTER 3PM</u>
Friday	Wednesday <u>AFTER 3PM</u>

PLEASE TAKE BANK HOLIDAYS INTO ACCOUNT AND ALLOW US AN EXTRA 48 HOURS WHEN REQUESTING YOUR PRESCRIPTION

OPENING HOURS

Monday – 8:30am – 6pm
Tuesday – 8:30am – 8pm
Wednesday – 7am – 6pm
Thursday – 8:30am – 6pm
Friday – 8:30am – 6pm
Saturday – Closed
Sunday – Closed

Remember appointment booking is only available from 8:30am each morning

HOURS TELEPHONE NUMBER

If you require urgent medical

WHEN TO CALL BIRCHWOOD

If you are looking to book an appointment, a reminder that we only book **emergency appointments** on the day and **routine appointments for two weeks ahead**.

These appointments become available at 8:30am each morning.

We ask that if you are calling for prescription queries, general enquires etc you call from 10:00am onwards as between 8:30am – 10:30am is a very busy time for us. If you are waiting for test results, please call after 2pm.



ONLINE SERVICES

Did you know that you can sign up to use our online services? It is a que free, paperless and simple way to be able to order your prescriptions, ask our Doctors and nurses questions and see your own medical record!

To sign up for this all you have to do is pop into the surgery with a form of identification (a driving license, debit card etc) and we can issue you a username and a password. It's as simple as that!

MINOR ILLNESS NURSES

Our Minor Illness Nurses are available to help with acute problems and illnesses and can prescribe medication where appropriate.

Conditions where seeing a doctor/minor illness nurse is **NOT** usually necessary:

- Diarrhoea and vomiting
- Conjunctivitis
- Most sore throats
- Coughs and colds
- Emergency contraception
- Insect bites within first 72 hours
- Chicken pox
- Hayfever
- Backache
- Scabies/lice/worms
- Mild joint pain/soft tissue injury

The Doctor's advice for these conditions is to seek self-care advice from www.patient.co.uk or your local pharmacist.

Patients who **CAN** be booked in the Minor Illness Clinic:

- Breathing problems
- Mild to moderate abdominal pain
- Sore throat (for more than 5 days)
- Ear pain (for more than 5-7 days)
- Prolonged/worsening coughs especially asthma/COPD patients
- Severe back/joint pain
- UTI's
- Unwell with a rash

Anything ongoing or previously prescribed for is not appropriate to be in minor illness clinic and will need to be seen by a Doctor.

When booking an appointment the admin staff have been trained to triage you to ensure you are booked into the appropriate appointment and will seek medical advice from both the doctors and nurses on duty that day.

ELECTRONIC PRESCRIBING (EPS)
HELLO!

To recap for those of you who may not have read our last issue of the newsletter, the electronic prescription service (EPS) allows prescribers to safely and securely send your prescription electronically to your local/usual pharmacy online. This means less paper waste, less time waiting in ques and is efficient and convenient for both yourself and our staff. In the future, EPS will become the default option for the prescribing, dispensing and reimbursement of prescriptions in primary care in England.

You don't need a computer to start using EPS, as long as both your GP surgery and the pharmacy (or other dispensing appliance contractor) offers the service



then it is available to you!

You can nominate any pharmacy, whether it is the one closest to your home, on your route to work or where you shop – and you are able to change this any time!

All you need to do is pop into the pharmacy you wish to collect your prescriptions in and nominate them as your designated pharmacy and we'll do all the work from there, simple!

If you wish to change or cancel this service at any time then all you have to do is make your pharmacy aware that you wish to move or cancel the service and it will be done for you.

We are happy to welcome
Dr Clarke to Birchwood

Surgery! Dr Clarke will be covering Dr Whelan while she is on maternity leave. Dr Clarke has been a huge help to us and is fitting in with us very nicely!

We are delighted to welcome Linda Farmer to the team as well! Linda is a specialist diabetic nurse who will be focused on running the reviews within our diabetes clinics.

We would like to say a warm welcome back to Dr Papp! She will be returning to us after being on maternity leave and having her beautiful baby girl. Dr Papp will be returning in September and be working 3 days a week.

We are excited to welcome back Dr Parhar to the surgery! Dr Parhar has been a locum Doctor with us on and off over the years and is returning in September as a locum for 3 days a week.

GOODBYE!

We say a rather emotional goodbye to Dr Raymond in July! After being with us here at Birchwood for almost 20 years and been practicing for many more Dr Raymond will be retiring. We wish him all the best and he will be very deeply missed by us here at Birchwood and many of our patients. All of our patients who are registered under Dr Raymond will be transferred to another partner – you will receive a letter in the post regarding this. Diabetic patients under Dr Raymond, there will be a change in the way the clinic works and other members of staff will be helping with the diabetic clinic (more details further in the newsletter).

CONGRATULATIONS!

A huge congratulations to Dr Whelan and her family for the birth of a beautiful, happy and healthy little boy!

A massive congratulations to Dr Khan who we have just welcomed as our newest partner! After working with us as a locum we are so pleased to have her as a permanent member of staff.

An enormous congratulations to Dr Papp on not only the birth of her wonderful daughter but she left as a salaried GP and will be returning as a partner here at Birchwood!



PATIENT TRANSPORT SERVICE

The East of England
Ambulance Service

SUN AWARENESS



With the warm weather heading our way we know everyone wants to get outside to enjoy it, but we want to make sure everyone is safe this summer!

Whatever your age, the best way to enjoy the sun safely and protect your skin from sunburn is to use a combination of shade, clothing and sun cream. Children and teenagers might need a reminder or a helping hand, but setting a good example yourself is a great way to help them learn and get into good habits.

A few tips to remember are:

- **Spend time in the shade!** We understand that everyone wants to be out catching some rays but between 11am and 3 pm is when the sun is at its strongest and most powerful and could potentially do the most harm
- **Cover up!** Covering your skin is significantly going to help with avoiding any sun damage. You can by lightweight clothing so you don't have to overheat in the sun. Also, try putting on a hat to protect your head or sun glasses to help your delicate eyes – remember, never look directly at the sun!
- **Always use sun cream!** Use a sun cream with a protection level of at least SPF15 and 4 stars – use it generously and reapply regularly. Keep an eye out as you can now get waterproof sun cream, sun cream specifically designed for children, for faces and many more

There is no excuse not to be safe and protected this summer!

**THE SUN'S UV RAYS ARE STRONGEST WHEN...
...YOUR SHADOW IS SHORTER THAN YOU**



SKIN CANCER

May 2018 is the skin cancer and sun awareness month and we wanted to provide you with some information to keep you safe and sun ready!

Skin cancer can go unnoticed for so long due to the subtleness of the symptoms, here is a little list of what to look for if you are concerned:

- **A spot or sore**

You need to have a spot checked if you are concerned about it. This could be because the spot is new, doesn't go away or looks unusual. Spots and sores are common. But if you have one that doesn't heal within 4 weeks, get it checked. Also, look out for a spot or sore that hurts, is itchy, crusty, scabs over or bleeds for more than 4 weeks. The colour of the spot could be red or dark, but this isn't always the case

- **Ulcer**

Look out for an area of skin that's broken down and doesn't heal within 4 weeks, and you can't think of a reason for this change

- **A lump**

This might be small, slow growing, shiny and pink or red

- **Red patches on your skin**

These red patches could also be itchy. This could be due to other non-cancerous skin conditions. You should get it checked to make sure



SKIN DAMAGE. ALSO AVAILABLE IN THE UK.

You don't have to go to a sunny country to damage your skin. Wherever you are, enjoy the sun safely and reduce your risk of skin cancer with shade, clothes, and sunscreen.

Find out more at cruk.org.uk/sun

LET'S BEAT CANCER SOONER

April 2015. Cancer Research UK is a registered charity in England and Wales (208946), Scotland (SC045586) and the Isle of Man (1005)



Skin cancer can affect anyone of any age and can come in many forms and show many symptoms, the people most at risk are fair skinned, have birthmarks, have pre-existing skin conditions and weakened immune system. Also, if you use sunbeds frequently, have had past skin damage or cancer or work outside so are constantly exposed to the sun, you should be careful as well. We just need to check our bodies for symptoms regularly and make sure we are safe in the sun whether it is abroad or at home – and remember, if you have any concerns you can speak to your Doctor!



HAYFEVER



Hayfever is a common condition, sometimes known as seasonal allergic rhinitis and affects around 1 in 5 people in the UK. It often runs in families and is more likely to affect people who suffer from asthma and eczema.



It is an allergic condition where the body's immune system overreacts to substances that are usually harmless, for example pollen from grass, flowers, weeds or trees. The pollen causes the release of a chemical called histamine from cells in the nose, eyes and airways, which cause inflammation. Some people suffer symptoms all year round – they can be allergic to indoor allergens such as house dust mites, pets and indoor moulds. This is called perennial allergic rhinitis.



The severity of symptoms can vary, some people need medication to manage their symptoms and others can manage their condition by avoiding triggers. If treatment is needed a wide range of medications can be purchased from community pharmacies without seeing a Doctor.

Symptoms include:

- Sneezing
- Itchy, blocked or runny nose
- Red, itchy, puffy or watery eyes
- Itchy throat
- Headaches and sinus pain
- Fatigue



How is Hayfever treated?

- Antihistamine tablets and syrups
- Nasal sprays
- Eye drops
- Pain relief
- Throat lozenges
- Decongestant tablets



When you should see a GP:

- If you experience wheezing breathlessness or tightness in the chest
- If you are pregnant/breastfeeding
- If your symptoms are not relieved in the combination with measures to reduce your exposure to pollen



**Think
Pharmacist**

NHS



- Ask your pharmacist first for advice about treating minor conditions
- Pharmacists are qualified health professionals
- You can get helpful advice or buy a treatment for your condition, saving you time and helping you start to feel better quicker.

- Pharmacies are accessible and convenient and many are open late nights and weekends
- No need for an appointment; just pop in any time and they will be happy to help you.
- If you can't get to your local pharmacy yourself, 'phone or ask someone to go for you.

Find your local pharmacy and opening times at www.nhs.uk/chemist



Remember, you do not always need an appointment with your Doctor to discuss your hayfever. Your local pharmacy will be able to offer you help and advice with your hayfever issues.





CANCER BOARDS

As some of observant patients might have noticed, at the front of our surgery as you walk in there is a board that we dedicate to raising awareness to different cancers each month.

One of our members of staff has recently taken on the responsibility of creating the informative and eye catching boards. We have enjoyed the fresh new displays and hope you do too! With each new board we put out new leaflets full of information and advice for those who need it.

Bowel cancer was for April, skin cancer and sun awareness was for May and cervical cancer for June.

Keep an eye out for what is next!



DIABETIC CLINIC

As previously mentioned, Dr Raymond will be leaving us in June which means his diabetic clinic will be changing. We have enlisted the help of Linda Farmer who is a specialist diabetic nurse to help us smoothly transition over to our new appointment system.

The appointment process will be that you come in for 2 appointments. One appointment will be with a health care assistant and the other one of the appointments will be with a nurse.

In the appointment with the health care assistants they will be monitoring your blood pressure and doing the relevant checks on your feet.

In the appointment with the nurse, you will be discussing your diabetes and any issues that have been raised within your appointment with the health care assistant. You will be discussing medication, diet, any worries and the plan going forward – this is exactly the same as how you would have done with Dr Raymond in the past.

If you do have any more questions or worries, do not be afraid to ask our reception team who will be able to get you an answer.

MISSED APPOINTMENTS

A reminder from early in the year – between the 1st of January 2018 to the 31st of March 2018, we recorded that **252 appointments were missed**. This equates to **3,300 minutes worth of appointment time which was not fully utilised**. This is a big difference from the 1st of January 2017 to the 31st of March 2017, where we recorded that **674 appointments had been missed**. That equated to **9,433 minutes worth of appointment time which was not fully utilised**. We want to say a big thank you for the huge improvement and remind you that if you wish to cancel an appointment you can call us, write to us online, use our automatic voice message on our phone line or sign up to our SMS service and when you get a reminder for an appointment you no longer need, you can just reply 'CANCEL' and we will cancel it for you. Thank you for your ongoing co-operation!

CHLAMYDIA TESTING KITS

If you are concerned that you may have Chlamydia, testing kits are available for patients aged 15-24 years through your

GP surgery. Patients that fall outside of this age group will need to contact a sexual health clinic.

Bedford Road Health Centre

Hitchin
Hertfordshire
SG5 1HF
01462 427 130

Any age appointments
Tuesdays 6.30pm-08.30pm

Under 25's only walk in
Mondays 3.30pm-5.30pm

Southgate Health Centre

Stevenage
Hertfordshire
SG1 1HB
0300 008 5522

Any age walk in
Monday 9.00am-4.00pm
Tuesday 09.00am-12.00pm
Wednesday 1.30pm-4.00pm
Thursday 9.00am-12.00pm
Friday 9.00am-12.00pm

Under 25's walk
Tuesday 5.00pm-7.00pm

CERVICAL CANCER



FLU

June is cervical cancer awareness month and as well as having our designated cancer board devoted to the subject, we thought we would add some information into our newsletter as well!

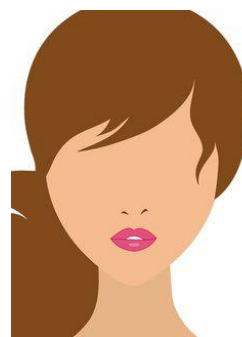
Cervical cancer is a cancer arising from the cervix. It is due to the abnormal growth of cells that have the ability to invade or spread to other parts of the body. Early on, typically no symptoms are seen. Later symptoms may include abnormal vaginal bleeding, pelvic pain, or pain during sexual intercourse.

A cervical screening (previously known as smear test) is a method of detecting any abnormal cells in the cervix. This will only take a couple of minutes but potentially could be lifesaving!

It is possible for women of all ages to develop cervical cancer, although the condition mainly affects sexually active women aged 30 to 45 years old. The condition is very rare in women under 25 years old.

Remember

- Screening is a personal choice and you have the right not to attend
- Each year around 5 million women in the UK are invited to attend a cervical screening
- Cervical screening saves 5,000 lives a year in the UK
- Cervical screen is free and you should receive your invitation to attend for regular screening from your GP surgery



NHS

Don't wait. Attend cervical screening when invited.

Cervical Cancer Prevention Week

What is Flu?

As we approach the flu season it is important for those eligible to ensure that they have received their flu jab. It is also important to recognise the signs of flu and what to do should you think you have it.

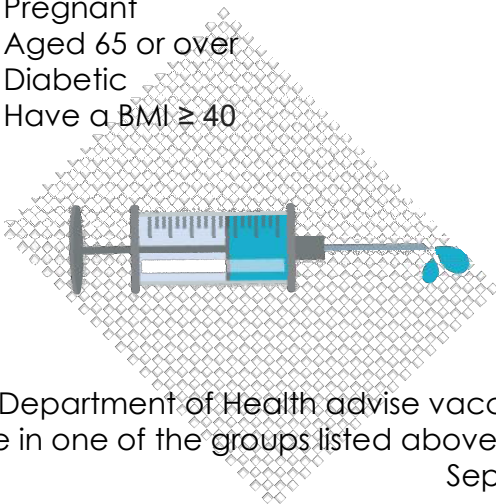


Flu is a highly infectious disease with symptoms such as fever, chills, aches and pains in the joint or muscles, headaches and extreme tiredness. Flu is actually worse than a bad cold and you may need to spend a few days in bed recovering. Although serious infections are less common in healthy adults, they can sometimes lead to hospitalisations, permanent disability and even death.

Each year the NHS prepares for the unpredictability of flu. For most healthy people, the flu is unpleasant but usually self-limiting with recovery generally within a week.

However, there is a particular risk of severe illness from catching flu for those who are:

- Pregnant
- Aged 65 or over
- Diabetic
- Have a BMI ≥ 40



Or if you have a long-term condition of the:

- Lungs, e.g. Asthma or COPD
- Heart
- Brain or nervous system
- Kidneys
- Liver
- Immune system
- No spleen

The Department of Health advise vaccination to be your best option for protection so if you're in one of the groups listed above, don't underestimate the flu – book your jab from September 2018.

What should you do before you get your flu vaccination?

Inform your surgery if:

- You have ever had a reaction to a previous flu vaccination
- You are feeling unwell or have a raised temperature
- You are allergic to hen's eggs

Please arrive in good time for your appointment. You can also help the clinic run smoothly by taking off your coat and rolling up your sleeve (on the arm

you don't write with) before you are called for your vaccination.



Flu season will start in September and each year the surgery plans to vaccinate as many

of our 6000 entitled patients as possible.
Your pharmacist can also give you a flu jab, however unlike your surgery they will not give you other vaccinations that you may be eligible for (for example, pneumococcal or shingles).

Patients aged 70-76 (born after 01/09/1942) and 78 – 79 are entitled to a shingles vaccination. This helps protect against this painful infectious disease which can have long term effects.

We also offer pregnant women the whooping cough vaccination alongside flu which your pharmacy will not. Having the whooping cough vaccination boosts immunity in women so that the whooping cough antibodies are passed from mother and baby to protect infants in the first few months of life.

Letters + SMS invites will start to go out from September to eligible patients. If you have not received an invite and feel you may be eligible then please ask at reception.

Who is eligible?

Children Aged 4,5,6,7,9 + 9yrs - Will be vaccinated at school

Children 6m-3yrs and 10-17yrs - Will be invited by the surgery for vaccination

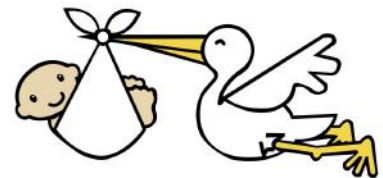
Adults 18-65+ - Will be invited by the surgery for vaccination

Housebound patients will be contacted and visited by a doctor or nurse throughout the flu season.

Pregnancy

Why is flu more serious in pregnancy?

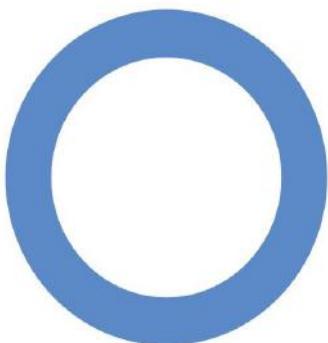
During pregnancy, a woman's natural immunity to infections reduced in order for your baby to grow. This therefore means pregnant women are more susceptible to getting flu and the serious complications associated with it, such as pneumonia which can follow on.



Diabetes

Why is flu more serious for people who have diabetes?

Diabetes can have an effect on the immune system which leaves diabetics more susceptible to infections. In diabetics flu can cause blood sugars to become deranged which can lead to hospital admissions and even death.

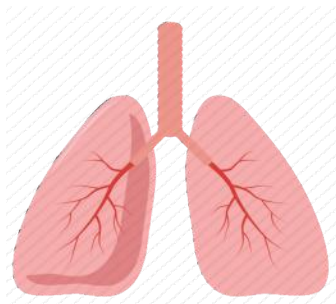


65 and over

Why is flu serious if you're aged 65 or over?

With age the immune system weakens, leaving older people more susceptible to flu and then develop complications such as pneumonia.

65+



Asthma & COPD

Why is flu serious for people with Asthma or COPD?

Patients with lung problems like Asthma or COPD are more likely to catch flu. Flu can be more serious in people with these conditions as it is possible they will go on to develop pneumonia.

Children

Why is flu serious for children?

For most people, flu is limited to being an unpleasant disease. However, for the very young the flu can be serious.

The virus can be contracted at nursery, school or at home and it can spread easily.

By vaccinating your child against the flu you help to protect them, and make it much harder for the flu virus to spread.

For most children under the age of 18 their flu vaccination is a painless but tickly nasal spray!

