

KNEBWORTH AND MARYMEAD MEDICAL PRACTICE

PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP NEWSLETTER

May 2021

Covid Vaccinations – How are we Doing

The Practice, together with the Stevenage South Primary Care Network, is continuing with its very successful Covid vaccination programme. Clinics have been, and are continuing to be, held on a regular basis at the Roebuck Surgery, and the feedback from patients has been very complimentary. Virtually all vulnerable patients and those over the age of 50 have received their first dose; many of these patients have already had their second vaccination and before the end of June it is expected that the remainder will have received their follow-up dose and this part of the programme will be essentially complete.

Patients in the next three groups – the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) Cohorts 10 to 12 (ages 40-49, 30-39 and 18-29) - will successively receive letters from the NHS advising them that they should contact one of their local community vaccination centres, such as Robertson House, for their first dose and will then be scheduled for their follow-up dose later at the same location.

It is important to remember that you will be vaccinated in line with these guidelines and priorities. Please do not phone the surgery to try and get around these guidelines. The Practice has to work to them and must follow the guidelines that have been issued by the JCVI.

Covid Vaccination “Passport”

Provided that you have had both doses of the Covid vaccine, there are two ways in which you can obtain a recognised version of your “Passport” for foreign travel.

1. Download the NHS app, the new update of which contains a feature that displays your Covid vaccination status. It is advised that you register to use the app at least two weeks before travelling.

Please note, this NHS app is separate from the NHS Covid-19 app.

2. Call 119 and ask for a letter to be sent by post. You must have had your second dose of the vaccine at least five days prior to calling 119 and the letter can take five days to arrive.

Please note, this letter cannot be obtained from the Practice.

eConsult

For more than a year now, patients in our Practice have been able to contact their doctor online by using a service called eConsult. You just complete the form and submit it online; it is then triaged within 48 hours and an appropriate clinician will contact you within 5 working days. The process can also direct you to suitable self-help, pharmacy advice and local self-referral services.

This service has proved very useful in allowing patients to get advice and help from their doctor without the need for a face-to-face appointment. It can be accessed from our website <https://www.knebworthandmarymeaddr.co.uk>. Please think about using eConsult instead of trying to get an appointment via Reception.

AccuRX

This year has seen the Practice move to a more online and digital form of communicating to patients. One element that has proved hugely successful is a system called AccuRX. It allows the surgery to send a text message with a link that a patient can respond to. This has proved to be an extremely useful resource, in particular when patients send in photographs as it decreases the administration time taken to add these to a patient's records. We are also using this for getting up-to-date information from patients to ensure we are offering the right level of care. The data are secure and encrypted, this means that no external organisation can see it. AccuRX has been approved by both the NHS and the Government.

If you would like to know more, it can be assessed at <https://www accurx.com/security-and-privacy/for-patients>

Bowel Cancer Screening

The NHS bowel cancer screening programme in England and Wales has been extended and now includes people in their fifties and it will use a new, easier to use, testing kit. The faecal immunochemical test (FIT) is a huge advance on the previous version, not least because instead of requiring three stool samples, it needs only one. So as well as being easier to do, it is more accurate and won't give false positives. The revised programme has already started and everyone in the 50 to 74 age range will be invited to send in a FIT test every two years and you will be informed of the result by post.

The screening is organised centrally by the NHS and is independent of your GP, although they will be kept informed of the results. For more details of the programme visit bowelcanceruk.org.uk.

Hopefully, there will be a talk on bowel cancer at one of our monthly PPG Meetings later in the year.

Different Types of Prescriptions

Gone are the days when the only way that your prescription was presented was on a small form - known as an FP10 - with the doctor's name and address printed at the top and the name and dosage of the medicine handwritten (sometimes almost illegibly!) in the middle of the form. That has all changed and most, but not all, prescriptions are now produced electronically. Not only is this a more efficient process but it is also much safer because the printed details of your medication are unlikely to be misread or misinterpreted by the dispensing pharmacist. There are other advantages of prescriptions produced in this way – for example, they can be sent electronically to your nominated pharmacy and can be dispensed there more efficiently.

All prescriptions are now generated electronically and there are different ways in which they can be actioned. For example, if you have a doctor's appointment and the GP prescribes you a new medication, the prescription may be sent electronically to your usual nominated pharmacy, or it can be sent as a one-off to a different pharmacy of your choice. If you then change your mind, the pharmacy can return the script to you and give you a barcode or token to take elsewhere.

However, if you are on a particular drug or on a series of medications that you take at a regular, unchanging dosage, there is a prescription process known as **Pathfinder** where a six-month or yearly batch of prescriptions is sent electronically to your nominated pharmacy, for them to dispense and for you to collect at monthly or two-monthly intervals without having to go to the surgery each time.

Please note, Pathfinders can also be known as electronic repeat dispensing, or batch prescriptions.

For your Pathfinder to be renewed, you then only need to have your medication reviewed half-yearly or annually by our Clinical Pharmacist or by the GP. This is a very efficient system but, however, it is not suitable for some drugs, such as warfarin or methotrexate, where the dosage regime can be quite variable over short periods. Also, Pathfinder cannot, as yet, be used for Controlled Drugs, such as powerful analgesics.

If for any reason Pathfinder is not a suitable procedure for you, then there is still the simple repeat prescription process where each month, or more frequently, either you or the pharmacy can request a prescription for you. We ask that these requests are done online or by email (knebworth.surgery@nhs.net). If you do not yet have an online login, please request this from reception.

If you have any questions about your prescriptions and how they are or may be processed, don't hesitate to ask to have a word with Lisa, the Clinical Pharmacist, or either of the Prescription Clerks (Debbie and Sharon).

A Walk in the Park?

Plans are afoot (no pun intended!) for the Knebworth Health Walks to restart on Tuesday, 1st June and then to be held every alternate week thereafter – 15th June, 29th June, 13th July, 27th July etc.

As before, they will start at 10.30 am outside the pavilion in Knebworth Recreation Grounds. There will be two walks: First Steps (short) and Grade I (medium.). Hopefully, as things progress, we plan to reinstate the long walk as well.

If you have already walked with us before, you should receive information from Herts Health Walks (HHW) about signing in for the walks. For now, you will need to telephone in advance to book your place.

If you have not already registered with HHW, please do so online before trying to book in. Go to [Herts Health Walks register for walkers](#) and follow the link. The website is being constantly updated, so we recommend that all walkers check it out for up-to-date information.

Our rotas are ready and the leaders agreed for the walks. Fingers crossed now, that we will be given the go ahead!

Joy Hall

Forthcoming PPG Meeting

The next PPG Meeting is at 7.00 pm on Tuesday, 15th June, which will again take place via Zoom. If you would like to join this online event, please notify one of the PPG Officers (contact details below) so that you can receive the Zoom joining details. We are hoping that there will be a presentation on the very important subject of prostate cancer at this Meeting.

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