



HONITON SURGERY NEWSLETTER

Spring 2009



www.honitonsurgery.org

The Build

After a sterling effort over the weekend by numerous staff led by our Project Manager Paul Fitzhenry the transfer to the Phase 1 extension was achieved in time to open the new doors on Monday 19 January. The first week saw staff and patients alike wandering around in awe at the new spacious facilities and getting thoroughly lost trying to find the old treatment room!

The new administrative teams and front desk team have taken awhile to settle into new working practices and innovations are occurring on a daily basis. Thankfully the information technology and telecommunications have worked very well which is amazing considering the complexity of networking so many new computers and telephones.

So far we have gained 4 new clinic rooms but as Phase 2a progresses we have lost all the rooms on the Haydons Park side of the building. Consequently we will need to keep operating from Honiton Hospital until the end of Phase 2a probably in mid-May. At that point we should have gained 3 new clinic rooms in the old pharmacy wing and a block of 4 new treatment rooms in the old waiting room and reception area plus the refurbished corridor rooms. At that point we should be able to move all our staff back into the surgery whilst the final Phase 2b proceeds. This involves refurbishing the old treatment room and the rooms on the Honiton Hospital side and completing the car park and landscaping. The final date of completion is likely to be in late July/early August.

The feedback so far from patients and visitors to Phase 1 has been very positive. The waiting room is a revelation with a good ambience. The plasma TV screen supplied by the League of Friends is proving a hit and we are working on content displayed on the screen aiming to get a balance between health messages and relaxing pictures and music. The League of Friends has also helped in the purchase of two specialist electric couches for the new treatment rooms and the practice is very grateful for the League's continuing support.

Once again we would like to acknowledge the forbearance of our neighbours in Haydons Park and also our appreciation of the workmanship and professionalism of our builders Setters and Saunders and the subcontractors. Thank you again to our patients and staff who have all helped to get us nearly to the finishing line.

Improving Practice Questionnaire

We have recently received the results of the patient survey which was completed in February 2009.

In general we continue to achieve high levels of satisfaction.

Our telephone access continues to be a problem. We have during the last few months increased our reception hours which we hope will help in this area. Regular monitoring of our system will continue via the Practice Manager.

Over the last 6 months we have increased our staff meetings to monthly events incorporating some training and are hopeful that positive change will continue.

Comments were received about the length of time waiting to see your doctor of choice and we would ask you to read the section on 'extended hours' within this newsletter. We believe this may help free up appointments at other times and relieve the pressure on our appointments system.

We also received feedback regarding car parking and the waiting room (children's area, drafts when the front doors open and the tannoy system) all of which we are trying to address.

Finally we would like to thank members of the patient group for helping us administer the survey.

Hay Fever

Spring has arrived, t-shirts and shorts are coming out of the cupboard and summer can't be far away. Great news for most of us but possibly not if you suffer from hay fever.

Hay Fever, or seasonal allergic rhinitis as it is sometimes called, is a very common condition causing symptoms such as a runny, itchy nose, sneezing, and itchy and watery eyes. It is usually caused by an allergy to grass or hay, although some people also experience problems with allergies to tree pollens. Symptoms start around May and continue through to July, recurring each year at roughly the same time. All ages may be affected although often symptoms subside a little as you get older.

Unfortunately if you are a sufferer you can't avoid exposure to pollens altogether. However, the pollen count is often announced on TV or radio weather reports, and when the count is high it can be advisable to stay indoors as much as possible and to avoid things like gardening or picnics and trips to the countryside.

If you do have hay fever, there are lots of effective treatments available and a trip to discuss your symptoms with your local pharmacist can be very helpful. Commonly used treatments include nasal sprays, either containing antihistamines or a mild steroid; antihistamine tablets which can be taken as required or on a regular basis and eye drops. These treatments can be used separately or together depending on your symptoms. Occasionally people with severe hay fever will require additional treatment from their Doctor and if you have asthma, you may find that your asthma symptoms worsen during the hay fever season, which may also mean you require extra treatment from your Doctor.

It's always wise to be prepared so if you think you may be a hay fever sufferer, or you are uncertain about what treatment is best for you, why not go and seek some help from your local pharmacist or contact NHS direct for further advice (www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk or tel 0845 46 47)

Appointments

Please can you inform us if you are unable to make your appointment.

Over a 3 month period (1st January 2009 to 31st March 2009) **16,518** appointments were made available for patients to see their GPs, Treatment Room Nurse or an appointment for a blood test, **930** of these appointments were lost due to patients not attending for their appointment, these are broken down as follows:-

	Appts Offered	Appts Missed
GP	11118	493
Treatment Room	1974	189
Blood Tests	3426	189

Please can you inform us if you are unable to keep the appointment that you have booked.

Photos

We would like to say a very big thank you to Alison Phelps-Loman for the lovely wildlife photos that she has taken and given to us to use on the plasma TV screen in the waiting room.

Extended Hours

The surgery is now offering early morning and late evening appointments for those patients that work or are unable to attend at normal surgery times. These extra surgeries are as follows:-

Monday	- 07.30 - 08.00 (at the surgery)
Monday	- 18.30 - 20.00 (at the hospital)
Tuesday	- 18.30 - 20.00 (at the hospital)
Wednesday	- 18.30 - 20.00 (at the hospital)
Thursday	- 18.30 - 20.00 (at the hospital)

Privacy

If you need to speak to a receptionist in private you may request this at the reception desk. There is a room next to reception which a member of staff is able to use for a private consultation with you.

New Car Park

An update of car parking for patients:

The building of our extension is still ongoing and during this process we have tried to provide some car parking. The car park is by no means finished as additional car spaces will be provided within what is actually the builders compound area at the present time.

A drop off zone / disabled parking will be provided during the final phase. The 'walk way' for patients runs through the middle of the car park, and for safety reasons we have been advised to keep traffic movement to a minimum. Consequently we have designated the area nearest our entrance for medical staff as their cars will be parked usually for the whole morning or afternoon thus not having so many cars moving around this area when patients are walking up to the surgery.

It should also be noted that part of our planning permission was to look at ways of encouraging us all to find alternative modes of transport when coming to see the doctor. In the waiting room we have provided bus time tables and contact numbers for both taxis and TRIP and a cycle rack has also been provided outside the main entrance.

Please Note

Please can patients be careful when dialling the surgery as we have had local business advise us that they are having several calls a day causing them great inconvenience. The surgery number is **01404 548544**. If you are dialling directly to one of the appointment desk please ensure that you dial **5400** followed by the **correct 2 digits** at the end.

Please allow time for repeat prescriptions!

When you request an item from your repeat prescription list, please allow two working days for us to produce the prescription and send this to the chemist. This time is necessary so that this routine work can be fitted into a day which is often full of urgent or emergency cases. We can produce these scripts faster in cases of genuine emergency, but this does cause extra work for surgery staff which can cause delay elsewhere. So to get the best out of the system please be organised and order ahead in good time before you run out.

After we produce the prescription and send it to the chemist, they then need time to package and label the drug. Please be aware that they would usually need one working day. One of the pharmacists recently told us that they have wasted a lot of time looking for prescriptions which patients believed had been lost but which were in fact in the process of being dispensed in the pharmacy.

This three-day turnaround period does sound lengthy but remember it applies to people on regular medications where you have time to plan ahead, and with several hundred prescriptions going through the system each week extreme care is needed to avoid medication errors-this is not a process which can be rushed. Both the surgery and the pharmacies can do prescriptions much faster than this in urgent cases but this will delay everyone else's routine care and increase the chance of mistakes.

Patient Calling System

The patient intercom call system will continue to be monitored to ensure we have the best results possible. For those of you that are hard of hearing please turn your hearing aids to the 'T' position as we do have a loop system installed within our new waiting room. At the present time we will not be investing in a visual call system as it would need to interact with our clinical computer system and at present this is not possible.

Swine Flu in Honiton

The Honiton Surgery staff are preparing a response to a possible outbreak of swine flu. If and when it arrives there may be large numbers of ill people. Of course, just how many people and how ill they will be is unknown currently- it could be no more severe than our usual winter flu or it could be worse.

We are taking advice from the Health Protection Agency and planning responses for a range of possible scenarios. In some of these we may need to cancel routine care to cope with flu sufferers until the epidemic subsides. Any disruption will be minimised.

In order to try to limit the spread of the illness, if an epidemic occurs we would ask you to phone first rather than attend the surgery. If possible it will be best to stay at home to avoid spreading it about. If coughing or sneezing in a public place do so into a tissue then bin the tissue and wash your hands. If a serious epidemic occurs the government will be running a National Flu Line Service which can be called to provide advice, help and possibly antiviral drugs. Currently it is planned for any antiviral treatment such as Tamiflu to be given out from a distribution centre separate from the surgery. We will not hold stocks here or be able to prescribe it in the event of an epidemic.

If you do attend the surgery we will try to keep flu sufferers separate from those with other complaints, so we may set up a dedicated flu hotline to direct you to the right venue.

Symptoms of flu are similar to those of a cold but are more severe with an abrupt onset of fever dry cough sore throat headache muscle ache and feeling rotten. Self care involves taking plenty of fluids, rest and paracetamol. After the first week or so there is a risk of a chest infection particularly for the elderly or for those with a pre existing medical problem such as heart or lung disease or problems with the immune system, so any worsening particularly of the breathing should be discussed with **NHS direct on 0845 4647**.

More information about swine flu is available on 0800 1 513 513 or www.direct.gov.uk/swineflu