

## Changes to Urgent Appointments

Last year we formed a Patient Reference Group to help us improve our service to patients. We conducted a survey to find out what you wanted us to do.

You told us your priorities were to:

- Make it easier to contact the surgery by phone
- Improve the availability of appointments



Both of these could be improved if we could manage our urgent appointments better. So, from mid October we will be operating a new system.

When you call us to book an appointment, you will be offered our next available routine appointment. If you have an urgent medical condition, and need to be seen before this routine appointment is available, the receptionist will take the your details and pass them to the duty doctor.

The duty doctor will assess each request, and may call you to give advice, or find out more about the problem. If not, he will give an instruction to the duty receptionist, who will call you to arrange an appropriate appointment, or to give other advice. We have recruited an extra receptionist to ensure this can be done promptly.

This simpler system will ensure patients are always given an appointment that meets their medical needs. It will simplify the booking of appointments, allowing our receptionists to answer more calls and making it easier to contact the surgery by phone. It will reduce the number of wasted appointments, which will improve the availability of appointments for all patients. It will also ensure that very urgent cases can be prioritised and seen more quickly.

We hope you will support us in implementing this new procedure and be assured that every request for an urgent appointment will be considered by a GP and not a receptionist. As always, we appreciate your feedback and if you have any concerns, please speak to Claire Houlihan, patient Services Manager or email her on [claire.houlihan@gp-e82022.nhs.uk](mailto:claire.houlihan@gp-e82022.nhs.uk)

## Whooping Cough –The Facts

Whooping cough is a serious illness and highly contagious, but can be prevented by ensuring your child is fully immunised.

If you have an unvaccinated child that has a cough and cold lasting more than 2 weeks, which progresses to intense bouts of coughing that stop and start, followed by a the distinctive 'whoop' sound, then contact your GP.

In the UK, children are vaccinated against whooping cough at two, three and four months of age, and again before starting school at about three years and four months of age.

Whooping cough lasts for around two or three months, and is sometimes called the '100 day cough'.

## Pregnant women to be offered whooping cough vaccine

All pregnant women are to be offered the whooping cough vaccine when they are between 28-38 weeks pregnant. The recommendation comes following the recent rise in whooping cough cases across the UK.



Whooping cough is a serious illness and babies who get it can develop severe complications. Babies are not vaccinated against whooping cough until they are 2 months old, so those too young to be vaccinated are at greatest risk.

Vaccinating women in the later stages of pregnancy offers the best chance of your baby receiving as many anti-whooping cough antibodies as possible across the placenta. Your baby will still need to be vaccinated at two, three and four months old.

The vaccine is NOT 'live', so will not give you whooping cough. Even if you were vaccinated as a child or in previous pregnancies, you should still get vaccinated.

If you are already between 28-38 weeks pregnant the vaccine will be given by a nurse when you attend for your flu vaccine appointment. All other pregnant women should make an appointment with a nurse once they reach 28-38 in pregnancy. For more information go to:

<http://immunisation.dh.gov.uk/pertussis-pregnant/>

## Antibiotics and Winter Illnesses

Antibiotics don't work on the common cold, coughs and flu as they are usually caused by viruses. Antibiotics fight bacteria-related illnesses, so they won't do you any good. However they can do you harm. Taking antibiotics when they are not needed can lead to antibiotic resistance. This is when antibiotics no longer kills the bacteria, causing the infection to be more difficult to treat and can leave you more vulnerable to superbug infections (which can be fatal in elderly patients).



Viral illnesses usually get better by themselves and this process is not speeded up by antibiotics.

If you are suffering with cold and flu symptoms or a sore throat you should rest, take plenty of fluids and speak to your pharmacist who will advise you on over the counter remedies that are available. If you have a cough that lasts more than two weeks then see your GP.



## Urgent Prescriptions

Urgent prescription requests will now only be processed in exceptional circumstances and only for medically essential items. You will need to complete an urgent request form (available from a receptionist) and the duty doctor on the day will consider your request. If your request is medically urgent, you may only be issued with sufficient allowance to last until your repeat has been processed (normally two working days). Your prescription will be ready to collect at 6.15pm at the end of surgery.

This change is necessary due to the high volume of requests that were being made, causing GPs' clinics to run late and also to ensure the correct safety checks can be carried out.

Please remember to allow two working days to process your regular prescriptions and longer for weekends and bank holiday/Christmas. Please note that we DO NOT take prescription requests over the telephone.

## The role of a nurse practitioner

Nicola Johnson is Fernville's nurse practitioner. A nurse practitioner is different to a practice nurse, because they can diagnose certain diseases and provide appropriate treatment for patients, including prescribing select medications. Before making an appointment with a GP, take a look at the list of conditions Nicola is able to deal with. If you have an ongoing medical problem, then continue to see your GP. Nurse practitioners are unable to see babies under 6 months old.

- Abdominal pain
- Asthma checks / COPD checks
- Back pain or difficulty mobilising
- Chest problems
- Cold and flu symptoms
- Diarrhoea and vomiting, constipation
- Ear problems
- Exacerbation of asthma
- Eye problems
- Gynaecology, vaginal discharge, abnormal menstrual bleeding, missed pill
- Hay fever
- Headaches
- HRT (repeat)
- Infections
- Neck pain
- Nose problems
- Oral contraception
- Period problems
- Sexual Health problems
- Sinus problems
- Skin problems (infected spots, wounds, grazes, rashes, eczema)
- STD checks
- Throat problems
- Urinary tract infections (we may need a urine sample)



## Congratulations!

We congratulate Dr Rebecca Asquith on the safe arrival of her baby boy, Arthur. Mother and baby are both happy and well.



## In Focus....Dr. Matthew West

Originally from a village in the Chilterns, with a working family background and no prior experiences of university, Dr. West realised that his ability to relate to a wide variety of people would fit well with medicine. Inspired by this, a desire to help others and a practical mind, he realised medicine was his calling.

He studied at St Georges Hospital Medical School and then St. Bartholomew's; after 8 years in London he undertook hospital and GP training posts in Stevenage and Watford— completing training earlier this year with Fernville Surgery.

He enjoys reading and writing, a wide variety of sports, including competitive athletics, travelling and particularly being together with his young family.



### 2 Minute Q&A with Dr. West

**Q. Why choose General Practice?**

A. Working in a busy hospital, there is limited time spent with actual patients with other members of the health team having more continuity of patient contact. General Practice is much more varied and unpredictable, where I am kept on my toes but above all, able to interact with my patients. It is fascinating seeing people from all ages, from the unborn right through to the end of life and a privilege to see the many special developments the body goes through and how it changes over time.

**Q. What has surprised you most about medicine?**

A. I was surprised that for many patients the impact of your time, advice and reassurance are as powerful a healing force as a drug or particular treatment.

**Q. Do you have any interests in a particular area?**

A. I remain fascinated by the functions of the brain and its ability to keep learning lifelong, the complexity of the human body and our psychological interactions—but really too many to mention! I enjoy writing and research and have been able to write articles and some guidelines. It is healthy that interests can only grow more over time, so watch this space!

## Winter Flu Campaign 2012



Fernville Surgery is launching its annual influenza campaign again this autumn.

This year we will be writing to eligible patients, with an allocated time/date slot. If you receive a letter from us, there is no need to call us to confirm, unless you wish to change or cancel your appointment.

We have made this change to reduce the number of incoming telephone calls to the Practice, so we can provide a better service for patients who are acutely ill.

Some of the people who fall in the 'at-risk' groups include people over 65, pregnant women, people with diabetes and also patients with chronic chest, liver and heart conditions.

If you are unsure if you are at-risk, leaflets are available from reception with further information. Alternatively, go to <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/winterhealth/Pages/Fluandthefluvaccine.aspx>

## Why wait until New Year? Quit Now!

Did you know only 20 percent of the population smoke now?  
Are you thinking of quitting?

Don't wait until New Year, start feeling the benefits now!

Fernville Surgery offer a FREE stop smoking service to all of our patients.

- Receive free expert advice and a personal quit plan
- Prescription stop smoking treatments to help beat cravings
- Ongoing support from an NHS trained advisor

You don't need a referral from your GP, simply visit/telephone reception to make an appointment. We currently run 3 clinics a week, covering lunchtimes,



We recently took part in the worlds biggest coffee morning in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support. We raised an amazing £112.50,

helping to improve the lives of people living with cancer in the UK.

## Advice for the elderly

Keeping warm over the winter months can help prevent colds, flu or more serious health problems like pneumonia. In very cold weather, set the heating to come on earlier, rather than turn the thermostat up. This means you won't be cold while you wait for your home to heat up. If you're receiving certain benefits, during very cold weather, you may qualify for a Cold Weather Payment.

**To be put in touch with an Age UK group near you, call Age UK's freephone advice line on 0800 169 6565.**

**Other tips to keep you well this winter:** Eat well, get your annual flu jab, dress warmly (layers), keep your house warm during the day and night and keep an eye on elderly neighbours.

## Our Usual Opening Hours

Monday	8am—6.30pm
Tuesday	8am—8pm
Wednesday	8am—6.30pm
Thursday	8am—8pm
Friday	8am—6.30pm
Saturday	8am—1200*

\*For booked routine appointments only.



## Christmas Opening Hours

Xmas Eve Mon 24th  
December: **8am—6.30pm**

Xmas Day Tue 25th  
December: **Closed**

Boxing Day Wed 26th  
December: **Closed**

New Years Eve Mon 31st  
December: **8am—6.30pm**

New Years Day Tue 1st  
January: **Closed**

## What can you buy for £100?

Last year, the NHS gave us just £98.33 for each patient on our list. This has to pay for all the necessary appointments with our doctors and nurses, and all the associated administrative work, as well as the cost of operating and maintaining the surgery.

This is a significant sum of money, but it doesn't buy a great deal on the High Street these days.

We do everything we can to provide a good and efficient service. But this is very much an effort to make a little money go a long way. We appreciate everything our patients do to help us, by using our services properly, and helping us to avoid waste.

**287**

**DNA'S**

(did not attend)

In one month alone, the number of patients who failed to keep or cancel nurse/GP appointments grew to 287. Autumn and winter is notoriously a busy time in doctors surgeries, so if you are unable to attend an appointment, please remember to cancel it, enabling other patients to be seen. (Even at short notice we can often rebook.)

We do monitor DNA'S (did not attends) and patients who repeatedly don't show up for their appointments may be asked to register elsewhere. We thank you for your cooperation.

## Useful Telephone Numbers

Herts Urgent Care Centre: 03000 33 33 33

Herts Urgent Dental Care: 03000 33 32 24

NHS Direct: 0845 4647

<http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/>

P U T I N F L U E N Z A  
Y R N E R Y A U N S G G  
A E E X G G N C Z T K A  
I T M S H A T A E O U B  
R N T Q C V I L G P E N  
E I N I X R B R G S G P  
T W I C H R I S T M A S  
C C O U G H O P A O H X  
A F P K K Z T Z T K M R  
B H P H H A I W R I C F  
P H A R M A C Y U N O S  
K X X Y N R S U G G D N

## Waiting room WORDSEARCH:

ANTIBIOTICS	STOPSMOKING
TRIAGE	INFLUENZA
PHARMACY	COUGH
WINTER	PRESCRIPTION
BACTERIA	AGEUK
CHRISTMAS	APPOINTMENT

## Have you changed your mobile recently?

Please don't forget to let us know if you change your mobile number or any other contact details. From time to time we may need to contact you with test results or with a change to your appointment.



## Doctor, Doctor.....

'Doctor, doctor,' says a patient. 'I can't stop singing, "The Green, Green Grass of Home"'. 'That sounds like Tom Jones Syndrome,' says the doctor. 'Is it common?' asks the patient. The doctor replies, 'It's not unusual.'