

# Newsletter – Summer 2007

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## Summer Health Advice

Whether you're travelling abroad during the summer or staying at home and hoping that the rain stops and the sun finally comes out, please consider the following advice:

Don't forget to protect yourself (and especially any children in your care) against the harmful rays of the sun.

Wear a sun-blocking cream and avoid the strong midday sun. A tan may look good, but be warned - it can cause permanent damage to your skin, in the worst cases resulting in skin cancer and at the very least, causing premature wrinkles!

Make sure you have adequate supplies of repeat medication before you go!

If you are going abroad - check your vaccination status and arrange to see the nurse for advice/vaccination if you are unsure

Holiday tummy – more an inconvenience than an illness! Take plenty of sugary drinks to avoid dehydration and eat only bland food until it settles. Over-the-counter preparations can be bought at the chemist to speed recovery, but these problems usually clear up without treatment. If it persists you should seek medical advice.

Enjoy yourself and have fun!!

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## Role of a Health Care Assistant

Our Health Care Assistant, Sue Weatherall, is fully trained to deal with a number of different conditions and you can book an appointment with her through Reception.

Examples of the clinical areas covered by a Health Care Assistant (HCA) are given below:

Taking and recording blood pressure, performing ECGs and liaising with GPs over the results, carrying out spirometry tests and 24 hour blood pressure monitoring. She also performs dressings, is a smoking cessation advisor and removes sutures and clips and can administer influenza and pneumococcal vaccinations.

When you first register with the practice you will be asked to make an appointment with the HCA for a New Patient Check.

In addition to this our HCA also runs a booked blood test clinic on a Monday and Wednesday – in response to demand from our patients for more blood test availability.

The HCA is a valuable member of the practice team and supports our Practice Nurses and GPs in many areas – such as stock ordering for clinical items and drugs, performing urinalysis, sterilising equipment and complying with health and safety regulations and preparing clinic rooms for specialised appointments.

If you require an appointment for any of these areas please book it with the HCA.

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## Appointments System

As we mentioned in our last newsletter, we have recently set up an Appointments Group to look at how our system is working and how we can most effectively meet your needs. We have already put a number of changes in place and are constantly monitoring these:

The ratio of pre-bookable: on-the-day appointments have been adjusted

A triage system has been introduced

A new telephone system has been installed to minimise patient holding on time.

A suggestion box has been put in reception.

Blood test waiting times would also be looked into with a view to keeping this below 30 minutes.

Appointments can now be booked up to one month in advance.

We are planning to offer lunchtime clinics on certain days from the Autumn and will provide more information on these in our next newsletter.

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We are piloting a repeat dispensing service with a local pharmacy. Patients who are on stable medication may receive up to six months prescriptions, supplied in monthly batches.

These will then either be held by the pharmacy or by you and the medication can be collected from the pharmacy when they are due.

This will save you from needing to request repeat prescriptions monthly, as is currently the case.

If you would like to take advantage of this service, please pick up a leaflet and fill in a consent form at Reception.

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## Regular issues

### Home visits

Whilst it may seem a little hard sometimes, to be asked to attend the surgery when you have requested a home visit, please be assured that we have your best interests at heart.

The doctor on duty can see about four or five patients at the surgery in the time it takes to do one home visit, so it really does make more sense for everyone if the patient can be brought to us, if at all possible.

Of course we will always visit where there is a genuine need, but please forgive us for asking you to bring your sick child/relative to the surgery if you have transport and they are not seriously ill.

### Private referrals

We would like to remind patients that when they request a referral to a consultant on a private basis, the GP will prepare a referral letter, but the patient will then be responsible for collecting that letter from the surgery and arranging their own appointment.

As with all referrals, matters which are *medically urgent* will be dealt with appropriately and a letter prepared with the minimum delay, but for routine referrals, please allow a week for letters to be dictated and typed.

### Repeat Prescriptions (see also the article at the top of this page)

If you are on regular medication, you can order repeat prescriptions by writing or faxing a request.

The side slip on your prescription can be used for this or you can write a brief note. However, please always give 48 hours notice, as it is not always possible to guarantee having your prescription ready sooner. Also, please note that every few months the doctor will review your medication and may ask to see you before issuing another repeat. This is for your own protection, as: certain drugs need to be regularly monitored; the dose may need adjusting; they may cause side effects which can be avoided by altering your medication; they may be superseded by a new drug which is more effective, etc.

Repeat prescriptions available to you are normally shown on the side slip attached to your prescription. This list does NOT include medication which may have been issued to you previously on a one-off basis.

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### Baby boom at Acorn Group Practice!

Congratulations to our Practice Manager, Michele Hawksworth, who has just returned from maternity leave after having baby Kayla and to our summarisers Sharique and Atifa who have just had a baby boy. And congratulations also to Emma Jones, our Practice Nurse who has just had a baby boy.

Welcome to Amy Evens Gilham, who has is covering Emma's leave.

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**REMEMBER:** If you need a Doctor when the surgery is not open, ring 8891 0073/8892 4519, and you will be given a number to ring. Please listen carefully to the message and have a pen and paper handy.