



Grafton Medical Partners Macmillan Way

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I write this Newsletter as 2020 draws to a close, having been one of the most challenging years any of us have experienced.

COVID-19 has altered the way General Practice works – yet many changes which may have taken years to implement are likely to remain after this pandemic passes and we return to more normal working patterns.

Hopefully, new initiatives like video consultations, interactive text messaging, and a greater use of online prescribing and repeat dispensing of medicines will improve the services we offer to all of our patients moving forward.

COVID-19 Vaccines

At Grafton Medical Partner we close the year on an optimistic note. We have elected for our Trevelyan House site to become a local vaccination centre against COVID-19 for all of our Tooting patients. We do not underestimate this task which brings with it many logistical issues to overcome, but feel confident that the vaccine will help us to regain our freedom and way of life in 2021.

The information changes daily, but currently we anticipate our first clinics will run from early January 2021, and possibly even sooner!

Prioritisation groups are currently anticipated to be:

1. Residents in a care home for older adults. Staff working in a care home for older adults.
2. All those 80 years and over and health and social care workers
3. all those 75 years of age and over
4. all those 70 years of age and over. Clinically extremely vulnerable individuals (not including pregnant women and those under 18 years of age.
5. all those 65 years of age and over
6. adults aged 18 to 65 years of age in an at risk group.
7. all those 60 years of age and over
8. all those 55 years of age and over
9. all those 50 years of age and over

Public Health England has posted a video talking about these prioritisation groups. Watch the video [here](https://tinyurl.com/yyc9gxnr) [<https://tinyurl.com/yyc9gxnr>] for more information.

The vaccination requires administration of two doses and, depending upon which vaccine we receive, these doses will need to be administered either 21 or 28 days apart. We are still not certain which vaccine we will receive. Local authorities are also intending to set up mass vaccination centres early next year.

Flu Vaccination

It is essential that our flu vaccination programme is completed as soon as possible this year. Every year those over 65 and in the following 'at risk' groups are invited to have a flu vaccination.

- Diabetes
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease
- Coronary Heart Disease
- A compromised immune system
- A BMI of 40 or above
- Pregnant women

If you are in one of the groups traditionally offered the flu vaccine and have not yet been vaccinated, please book as soon as possible, as the flu vaccination needs to be given at least 7 days - and ideally 28 days - before a COVID-19 vaccination and cannot be given once the COVID-19 programme has been started.

This year, having recognised the huge risks should a patient catch the flu in combination with COVID-19, (and in order to ensure that our hospitals are not overwhelmed, as the flu causes significant admissions and deaths every year) the Government has procured additional vaccines for the over 50s. We are able to offer this on a first-come-first-served basis from 1.12.2020. There are limited stocks available so please book early. The flu vaccine is a killed, safe, and proven vaccine.

All of our flu clinics will be run safely with social distancing, by staff wearing PPE. Please take advantage of this free vaccination.

Routine Vaccinations and Smears

It is extremely important that we catch up with routine vaccinations and smears. If you or a family member are asked to come in for a smear or vaccination, please be assured that you will be safe.

COVID-19

If you think that you may have COVID-19, please book a test on the NHS website or by calling NHS 119. Do **not** come to the surgery.

Long COVID-19

COVID-19 can, unfortunately, cause some patients to feel unwell beyond the acute phase.

['Your COVID Recovery'](https://www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk/) [<https://www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk/>] is a new website created by the NHS which offers support and information to help you to look after yourself.

We understand that COVID may cause anxiety and depression for many patients. As a result, we wish to signpost our [Wellbeing/Low-Mood service](https://tinyurl.com/y4vr9mtu) [<https://tinyurl.com/y4vr9mtu>] and [IAPT self-referral](https://www.talkwandsworth.nhs.uk/) for counselling [<https://www.talkwandsworth.nhs.uk/>] which is on offer for all patients. See our website for further details.

Vitamin D

I make no apology in highlighting Vitamin D supplements in yet another newsletter. In the UK, approximately 22% of people have a Vitamin D deficiency, which is higher than many other countries in Europe, for example 13.8% in Germany and 12.4% in Ireland. With the lockdown depriving many of us of sunlight and long, sunny, summer holidays, Vitamin D levels are likely to be even lower as Vitamin D is produced when the skin is exposed to sunshine.

The COVIDENCE UK study is ongoing but early work shows that vitamin D deficiency is more common in several groups most at risk of severe COVID-19 – such as the elderly and those from BAME groups. A Spanish study published earlier this month suggested that more than 80% of hospitalised COVID patients have a Vitamin D deficiency. We know Vitamin D protects against respiratory infections generally so this year, more than ever, we recommend a supplement of 1000iu per day.

Your high street pharmacist can offer you advice.

On 28th of November, the Department of Health announced that 2.7 million clinically extremely vulnerable individuals and Care Home residents are set to receive deliveries of free supplies from January to May. Care Homes will automatically receive provisions but those considered extremely vulnerable to COVID will be sent invitations to 'opt in' for a supply to be delivered directly to their homes.

New Guidance for Accessing A&E

NHS 111 First has launched in Merton and Wandsworth. The NHS wants to make it easier for patients to get the right treatment at the right time, and to try and prevent crowding in the waiting rooms of emergency departments. This is to reduce the risk to patients and hospital staff of catching coronavirus this winter.

Across Merton and Wandsworth, we are now asking patients with an urgent, but not life-threatening, health problem to contact NHS 111 **first** if they think they need to go to St George's Emergency department or any other A&E.

Using 111 first will ensure all patients get quicker, safer care in the best place for them. Your local A&E will still accept walk in patients, but please only go to A&E if you or someone with you needs immediate care for something very serious. This includes breathing difficulties, chest pain, life threatening injuries or a loss of consciousness.

NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

To get help you can:

- Go to 111.nhs.net
- Call 111 for free from a landline or mobile phone

If your health concern is urgent but not life threatening, please call NHS 111 **first**.

Read the answers of some commonly asked questions about NHS 111 First [here](#).

[<https://tinyurl.com/y23tyuup>]

We thank all of our patients for their support and understanding this year. Our staff have been amazing and worked so hard throughout this pandemic and we want to say a big thank you to every single member of our team.

We wish everyone a happy, healthy, and safe Christmas, as we move into 2021 on a more optimistic note.

With Season's Greetings
and
Best wishes

Dr Penelope Smith
(Senior Partner)