

Staunton & Corse Surgery Patient Group Newsletter

(www.stauntonsurgery.co.uk)

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Well autumn seems to be well and truly here resulting in many of us reaching for the heating controls! Keeping warm is just one of the many things that you can do to help you stay well this winter, as is taking advantage of the flu vaccination that is offered free to those who are most at risk. The surgery has already held its '65 and over clinics', but Sarah Bryant reports that the practice has yet to receive further vaccines for the under 65s age group. **At the moment she anticipates the first delivery mid-late October and states the Practice will publicise arrangements on the website and in the surgery waiting room as soon as the vaccine becomes available. Posters will also appear on village notice boards throughout the catchment area.**

In the previous edition of this newsletter I highlighted the links to the various self-referral services that can be accessed via the Staunton and Corse Surgery website <https://www.stauntonsurgery.co.uk/2019/02/05/self-referrals/>. Self-referral provides you with access to a range of healthcare professionals and treatments without having to first see your GP. In this edition I will introduce the NHS **Stay Well This Winter Campaign**, designed to provide advice and information on the signs and symptoms of winter ailments and how we can help ourselves to get better.

Stay Well This Winter: Each year as we move in to winter, the media report on how the NHS struggles to deal with the huge number of patients queuing at A&E departments and seeking GP appointments for treatment of winter ailments. In many cases the individual can treat themselves before the situation worsens to the point where they have to turn to their doctor or local hospital for treatment. This is where the **Stay Well This Winter** website can help: accessed via <https://www.nhs.uk/staywell> the site provides information on a range of winter ailments detailing how long you can expect your symptoms to last, what you can do to treat yourself and what signs to look for which mean you may need to seek professional help.

Catching a cold, coughing and sore throat can be relieved to a certain extent by simple home remedies, such as a mug of hot water with the addition of a teaspoon of honey and the juice from a lemon. In most cases a consultation with your local pharmacist may be all that is required, they may recommend the use of paracetamol or other 'cold and flu' medicines and would be able to advise as to whether any longstanding health conditions you may have put you at greater risk of complications and warrant a trip to see your doctor.

Many of our winter ailments are caused by viruses and viruses do not respond to antibiotics which only work against bacteria. If you do have a cold or flu, the virus is very infectious and will be spread by coughs and sneezes; remember the phrase **Catch it. Bin it. Kill it!** To reduce the risk of spreading the virus;

- Use tissues to trap the virus particles when you cough or sneeze
- Bin used tissues as quickly as possible

Microbiologists use the term fomite (what a wonderful word!) to describe any inanimate object that can transmit infectious disease from one person to another. Typical fomites are door handles, money, books, toys, dishes, clothing and towels. You will have noticed that many public buildings have alcohol based hand gel dispensers sited at the entrance and exit to their premises; this is where the '**Kill It**' part of the phrase comes in to play. Use the gel to clean your hands as you enter and leave the building, this helps prevent you from either depositing or picking up live virus particles from the door handles. If you are handling items in a public place or even at home, remember to wash your hands often with warm water and soap, using paper towels to dry your hands which is much more hygienic than using cloth towels. There is no need to become paranoid about it, but washing your hands is the most effective way of controlling the spread of infection.

I hope that this has sparked an interest in what you can do to treat yourself better this winter. Amongst other things, stay warm, keep active, get plenty of rest and eat & drink healthily. Most of all **stay informed, visit <https://www.nhs.uk/staywell> to find out more.**

The Clinical Pharmacist: Mina Patel is the new Clinical Pharmacist and has taken up her post at the Practice and if you are taking four or more different medicines then you should soon receive an invitation to attend a consultation with her, if you haven't previously had one with Jackie Aberdeen. The purpose of the consultation is to enable the two of you to discuss the detail of your prescriptions, for instance, how you take your medicines, whether you have any problems with the medication and a final check to insure that all the medicines are compatible with each other.

It was not that long ago that prescription medicines were still being dispensed in glass and plastic containers with tamper/child proof lids. Often, the only dosing information provided was that on the sticky label on the container stating, for example, that eg. 'one tablet should be taken twice daily before food'. Now we have our prescription medicines dispensed in sealed boxes containing **Patient Information Leaflets** with the instruction **“Read all of this leaflet carefully before you start taking this medicine.....”** The leaflet is usually on a par with the 'small print' we are used to seeing when signing up to a new broadband provider or smart phone contract. However, whilst you might just 'tick the box' to say you have read and understood the contractual detail for these services, you ignore the **Patient Information Leaflet** at your peril! Many patients are either panicked by what they read, or feel that it is better not to know all the ins and outs of the possible side effects; after all they are already unwell and the medicine has been prescribed by the doctor to deal with this, so lets just get on and follow the dosing instruction on the label the dispensing pharmacist stuck on the box.

Your doctor will always talk to you about how any medicine they prescribe should be taken and cross check for possible allergies and interactions with other medicines you are taking. They will consider what other ailments you have and whether these preclude the prescribing of the new medication and also ask if you have any questions about the medication before you leave the consultation. Over the years it is typical for patients to be diagnosed with a variety of conditions, resulting in them taking a number of different medicines and this is referred to as 'polypharmacy'. In a modern medical practice it is common for these conditions to be managed and prescribed for by different healthcare professionals and this is where the Clinical Pharmacist plays an important role, as they can look at all medication and conditions and ensure that medication being taken for one condition is not exacerbating or causing another condition. An example of this might be an older person taking four or more medicines who is experiencing frequent falls, dizzy spells or impaired memory. Medicines that might cause these symptoms include medicines to help urinary symptoms, diabetes, pain and blood pressure. The Clinical Pharmacist can review whether the medication and dose is still relevant as the body's metabolism of drugs changes with age and declining kidney and liver function.

They will also highlight particular strategies such as which medicines need to be taken on an empty stomach, what foods to avoid when taking the medicine, do you need to consider increasing your fluid intake, what vitamin supplements you can and cannot take. When discussing your medicines it is particularly important to be honest about what herbal remedies or other complimentary or alternative medicines you are buying and taking. Many people believe that these are 'safe' and 'without side effects' and assume that they will not impact on prescribed medicines, when in fact the opposite may be true. They can be just as potent or harmful as mixing prescription medicines without first checking that they are compatible. So, to summarise, an invitation to discuss your medication with the practice pharmacist is an important appointment and it should not be dismissed as an unnecessary complication and ignored.

Contact Us: If you have any suggestions about how our practice might improve patient services, you can pass these to the Patient Group for consideration. Either drop a note in our Suggestion Box which is situated in the foyer at the surgery or send an email to us at sandc.ppg@nhs.net. **E-Newsletter:** If you would like to receive our newsletter by email, please let us know at sandc.ppg@nhs.net. (Note: All websites last accessed 03/10/19).

