

THE BLACKDOWN PRACTICE NEWSLETTER

September 2010

Changes to Telephone Triage

Over the past 6 months, the Practice has been trialling different ways of managing telephone calls and requests for appointments. This is due to a number of reasons, the main ones being:

- We found that we were offering a lot of 'same day' and routine appointments but feedback from patients showed that we could struggle, particularly at busy times, to accommodate requests for appointments that were neither urgent nor routine.
- Patients would come to see their Doctor when they had not realised that they needed blood tests taken by a Healthcare Assistant or a review with a Practice Nurse first so all results were ready before their Doctor's appointment. This meant the Doctor couldn't complete their review and the patient sometimes needed to come back.
- Some patients didn't need to see the Doctor at all; if they had spoken to their Doctor on the telephone they could have been referred directly by the Doctor to another service or clinic.
- The role of the Practice Nurse is developing and expanding; Nurses should be taking over more of the review and monitoring of patients with long term conditions such as asthma, diabetes or heart disease. This would free up doctor appointments.

We also carried out a telephone audit earlier in the year where we looked at the number of telephone calls received each day, when they were received and when an appointment was requested.

This helped us to identify what type of appointment patients are asking for e.g. on the day, routine or "soon", when the busiest times are and how we needed to change the system.

So from mid September the system has changed...

When you telephone the surgery, you will now be asked whether you need an appointment or telephone advice and whether this is something that can be dealt with by a Nurse or a Doctor.

The receptionist will need to ask you for a bit more information about your reason for calling. This is to make sure you get the right appointment with the Doctor or Nurse.

It will also help us to manage the total number of requests for appointments that we receive during the day.

Doctor appointments

If you need to speak to a doctor because you:

- need advice on your symptoms
- you think you may need to be seen that day or before the next routine appointment is available

then we will arrange for a doctor to telephone you.

It is intended that it will be your usual Doctor that will telephone you back, if they are working that day. However, if they do not work on the day that you telephone or there are so many telephone calls that day that their telephone slots have been filled then you will be telephoned by another doctor in the Practice.

Queries

If you are telephoning about test results, you are returning a call from your doctor, you have a query about a referral or your medication or you are requesting a sick note, the receptionist will take a message and pass this onto your usual Doctor or the Doctor covering them.

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Nurse appointments

Our Nurses have different skills and specialise in different areas. Some are specifically trained to treat acute illnesses and can provide advice over the telephone or arrange a suitable appointment.

There will be a Nurse Acute Illness Clinic running each morning at Hemyock. This will have appointment slots for telephone advice and when a patient needs to be seen the same day or perhaps the next morning.

Our Nurses can provide advice over the telephone about the following conditions:

- Childhood infectious diseases.
- Worms
- Head lice
- Travel health
- Colds and flu
- Hay fever
- Upper respiratory tract infections
- Diarrhoea and vomiting
- Back pain
- Urinary tract infections in women (not pregnant women)
- Vaginal thrush in adults

Contacting the surgery

If you need a telephone call from a Doctor or Nurse because you need advice on your symptoms or you think you need an appointment please try to telephone your surgery before 10:00am.

If you are telephoning for other reasons that can be left until later in the day, please telephone after 11:00am. This is so there are enough telephone lines available first thing in the morning.

If you have any comments you would like to make about the services we offer, good or bad, please do not hesitate to contact Karen Button, Practice Manager.

Patients over 5 years of age with the following conditions can be seen in the daily Practice Nurse Acute Illness Clinic:

- Sore throat
- Earache
- Sinusitis
- Cough
- Asthma
- Fever
- Sore eyes
- Styes
- Minor rashes
- Fungal infections
- Boils
- Infected wounds
- Insect bites and stings
- Sunburn
- Vaginal discharge
- Missed pills
- Emergency contraception
- Minor injuries

Flu Clinics

It is the time of year when we are inviting certain patients to have a flu vaccination. This year is more straightforward than last year as there is a swine flu component already in the annual flu vaccine so the majority of patients will just need one vaccine.

Dates of the flu clinics:

- **Saturday 16 October** – at Churchinford Surgery in the morning and at Dunkeswell Surgery in the afternoon.
- **Saturday 6 November** – at Hemyock Surgery all day