

Welcome to our **AUTUMN** Newsletter!

COVID-19

We are all aware that we are living in difficult, challenging time with changes happening almost on a daily basis because of COVID-19. We understand that this is a strange and uncertain time for everyone, and very different from how life has ever been before.

The surgery also seems very unfamiliar because of additional safety measures in place to keep you safe, such as having to queue outside the surgery because of limited space in the waiting room due to social distancing. Please be assured we will be introducing sheltering for patients waiting outside during the winter months. Our main job will be to continue focus on the care of our patients. Some will have medical problems that have nothing to do with Covid-19, because these things won't go away while we fight this crisis. All the usual serious problems like heart problems, depression, strokes and cancer won't stop and we will need to keep treating these as well as Covid-19

Under the instruction of NHS England all our appointments are triaged. There will be **NO** facility to book directly into a face to face appointment.

Why must we do this?

Firstly, we need to comply with national policy. Secondly, because anyone walking into the building that doesn't need to, poses a risk to themselves, other patients and our staff. We have an obligation to protect our staff and patients from harm. Please be assured we are still here and are still working!

Personal appointments are offered on need and **if we determine that you need to be seen then you will be seen.** It is far from satisfactory for us to have to limit face to face appointments. We miss the personal contact!



COVID - How to get tested

Go online - (www.gov.uk) or call **119**, You can book for a testing centre or order a home testing kit which should arrive by post the following day.

Order a home testing kit **in the first four days of having symptoms**



We ask that all patients visiting the surgery wear a face mask – for their safety and that of our patients and staff.



The NHS was founded on the principles of fairness and that all patients regardless of their background should be cared for equally. Yet these principles are not a reality for many who work in our health service and the patients we care for.

The brutal death of George Floyd at the hands of a police officer in America has shown inequality, racism and discrimination still scar black peoples' lives across the world. For the black community it is a painful reminder of the parallels in the systemic racism here in the UK.

Black lives should matter to every individual and every medical professional.

Racism and discrimination breeds health inequalities impacting on our patients and adversely affecting our colleagues.

We stand in solidarity with black healthcare workers and the black communities in the UK, America and around the world and we are committed to bring about the change needed to eradicate racism and discrimination.



The flu season is upon us again. To be eligible for an NHS flu jab, you will have met the following criteria and will soon be **receiving a letter** inviting you to book an appointment for this.

You are eligible if:

- You are 65 years or over
- Are pregnant
- Have certain medical conditions
 - Long term respiratory conditions
 - Diabetes
 - Morbidly Obese (BMI 40+)
 - Problems with your spleen (Sickle Cell)
 - Chronic Kidney Disease
 - A weakened immune system as the result of HIV or chemotherapy
 - Chronic Liver Disease
 - Chronic Neurological Conditions (Parkinson's, Multiple Sclerosis etc)
- Live in a long stay residential care home or other long stay care facility
- Receive a Carer's Allowance, or you are the main carer for an elderly or disabled person whose welfare maybe at risk if you fall ill.
- Aged 2-3 years old

Children aged 4-9 years are NOT eligible unless they are in one of the above 'at risk' groups. They will be vaccinated in school.

Please ask at Reception for details of flu clinic dates.

Due to COVID-19 we are being advised to also vaccinate 50-65 years and Year 11's. We will aim to do this once we have vaccinated the age groups as detailed above.

YOUR GP WILL NOT PRESCRIBE ANTIBIOTICS FOR THE FLU VIRUS

NHS Choices recommendations on how to treat flu yourself are:

- Rest and sleep
- Keep warm
- Take paracetamol or ibuprofen to lower your temperature and treat aches and pains
- Drink plenty of water
- Consult your pharmacist – they can give treatment, advice and recommend flu remedies.

Take advice from your pharmacist on using flu remedies if you are already taking paracetamol/ibuprofen.



Are you a carer or a young carer?

Are you responsible for looking after your partner, a parent, a family member or a neighbour? If so, and you would like help or advice, please mention this to a receptionist who can put you in touch with Jake Ponsillo, our Carers Lead. Jake can provide further information on support available to you.

Face Masks

Please note there is no need to carry an exemption letter for the very few people that can't wear face coverings. The vast majority of people – even those with asthma, COPD etc – are able to wear face masks. Exceptions are listed on the Gov.UK website. In accordance with British Medical Association advice we will not provide letters of exemption for face masks.

Prescription Requests



We are no longer taking prescription requests over the phone as we did previously during lockdown (at the height of the Covid pandemic), however there are a number of other options for requesting prescriptions:

- a. By email to the practice at bnssg.montpelierprescriptions@nhs.net
- b. By post to Montpelier Health Centre, Bath Buildings, Bristol BS6 5PT
- c. Asking your pharmacy to request medication on the patient's behalf
- d. Request via eConsult which you can find on the Montpelier Health Centre website in a large blue banner and then select "administrative help". No passwords or account is required for this - www.montpelierhealthcentre.co.uk
- e. Request via patient access app, (which you will need passwords for). In order to obtain these you will have to come to the surgery with photo ID so we can print them out.
- f. Come to the surgery and fill out a prescription request form.



Wednesday Lunchtime Closure

A reminder that the Practice is closed to patients between 12.30pm and 2.0pm every Wednesday. You are still able to access the surgery by telephone.



The NHS cervical screening programme is available to women and trans men aged 25 to 64 in England. All eligible women who are registered with a GP automatically receive an invitation by mail. If you have received a letter then please ask at Reception about booking your appointment with either a doctor or nurse. Women aged 25 to 49 receive invitations every 3 years. Women aged 50 to 64 receive an invitation every 5 years.

If your smear is overdue, please phone the surgery or request via e consult. We would like to be able to offer an appointment to all patients requiring a smear. Please ask for any extra support you might need, eg. Easy read information, braille or another language.

Street Link

Street Link exists to help end rough sleeping by enabling members of the public to connect people sleeping rough with the local services that can support them.

If you are concerned about someone sleeping rough in Bristol (or anywhere else in England or Wales), you can use this website to send an alert to Street Link

www.streetlink.org.uk



Contacting the surgery

We apologise if you are experiencing delays in your calls being answered. We have a team of experienced call handlers working in our call centre at all times. Our level of incoming calls is always high and the call handlers are aware of the number of calls that are waiting to be answered.

We receive over 3000 telephone calls a week and we always endeavour to answer calls promptly. However, it is not always possible to deal with each patient quickly, as each call needs to be carefully navigated to the correct clinician or other health professional. We will answer your call as soon as possible.

You can also contact us via eConsult (not to request appointments) which you can find on the Montpelier Health Centre website in a large blue banner and then select "administrative help". No passwords or account is required for this - www.montpelierhealthcentre.co.uk



We understand that it is a stressful time for us all. However we have recently been experiencing high levels of verbal abuse towards our staff. This is both upsetting and unacceptable. We operate a Zero Tolerance Policy and patients displaying such behaviour will be removed from our list and asked to register elsewhere.

Thank you to those patients who remain polite and respectful during such challenging times for us all.



Blood Tests

We are unable to offer blood tests in our Open Surgery sessions unless your GP has written in your notes that this is an URGENT request. We offer **ROUTINE** blood tests, usually within two to three weeks.



If you, or a member of your family, are afraid of someone at home, or are in a violent relationship, you can talk to doctors, nurses and other staff here, in private. Just ask at Reception. You can also call the Next Link Domestic Abuse Services

COVID-19 – WE ARE STILL OPEN Because of Coronavirus our office hours are changing to 10am to 4pm. The out of hours service will be available outside of these hours. **All our services are up and running and our Live Chat is now open from 10am to 4pm.** If you are concerned about your safety and need help and support, please contact us and we can help



Next Link domestic abuse telephone help lines are **open 10am – 4pm Monday to Friday 0800 470 0280**

Help is also available **24 hours a day, 7 days a week** on the **National Domestic Violence Helpline – Freephone 0808 2000 247**



Please be aware that Montpelier Health Centre will **NOT** tolerate incidents of discrimination or abuse, be them based on:

Under the Equality Act, there are nine protected characteristics:

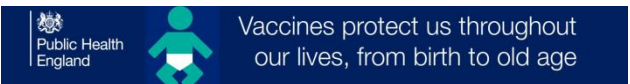
- * age.
- * disability.
- * gender reassignment.
- * marriage and civil partnership.
- * pregnancy and maternity.
- * race.
- * religion or belief.
- * sex.

If you should see it, report it

Citizens Advice Bureau

We are currently unable to book face to face appointments at the surgery due to COVID-19. However we can arrange a call back from a CAB Adviser. Please enquire further at Reception.

We are changing the way we run our Baby Clinic



To help with maintaining social distancing and to ensure the safety of our patients and staff, we are moving away from a 'drop in' Baby Clinic on a Thursday afternoon and having booked appointments only.



If you require a post-natal check, 8 week baby check, baby or child immunisations, please call us to arrange an appointment.