



Patient Group

bpspatientgroup@gmail.com

PATIENT GROUP BULLETIN ISSUE 13, MARCH 2025

Unusually, this newsletter is given over almost entirely to a single issue: measles and the importance of vaccination. This is because there has been an alarming decline in the take-up of measles vaccination worldwide. The number of measles cases in the European region doubled last year to reach the highest level in 25 years. There is a local angle because Wandsworth is one of the three areas in the UK with the lowest vaccination rate. Dr Macmichael tells us more about the dangers of measles. Not only is it vital for parents to ensure that young children are fully vaccinated, but older adults should check their own vaccination status.

Measles affects adults as well as children

The reason for this article is that, very sadly, one of our patients in their 50s caught measles last summer and developed encephalitis (a swelling of the brain). Tragically, our patient has been left severely and permanently disabled, and her family are keen to share the message that measles affects adults too. She did not know she had no immunity to measles.

London has a higher than average number of measles infections, 1,300 cases last year, 260 in adults. Wandsworth alone had 152 cases and there have been several outbreaks in local nursery schools. Measles is usually a childhood illness, but adults are also vulnerable. This may be due to waning immunity as people get older, immunosuppressant treatment and/or not having had either measles infection or vaccination as a child. Measles is an infection most people recover from, but there can be complications which can be severe, including pneumonia, ear infections, dehydration and encephalitis. 1 in 1000 people with measles develop encephalitis, of these 25% die, 25% are left permanently disabled and 50% recover.

What you can do

If you are aged 25 to 35 you may not have been fully immunised as one of the Wakefield generation of children. Andrew Wakefield's now completely discredited research linking the MMR vaccine to autism led to a sharp decline in vaccination rates in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The vaccine wasn't available before 1968 so if you are in your 50s, you may have no immunity to measles unless you had measles as a child. Check your medical record. If you have no history of having had measles, or are not fully immunised (2 doses MMR) and would like to be protected, please contact the practice to express your interest in having a vaccination. This is especially important if you work with children in any capacity and may be exposed to measles.

If your child has not yet been vaccinated, please take up the offer of the MMR vaccine for them; it's never too late to protect them from this nasty illness.

Why we can't rely on Herd Immunity

Readers may remember this concept from the Covid-19 pandemic, when scientists explained that a large enough proportion of people in a group or area need to have achieved immunity (protection) against a virus or other infection, either through having been infected or by vaccination, to make it very difficult for the infection to spread. As measles is highly contagious, around 95% protection is needed and sadly



vaccination rates have fallen below this. The best way to make sure that you don't get measles is to be vaccinated yourself.

Surgery News

The reception area has been repainted and staff are wearing new uniforms with the Surgery logo.

Patient Group News We are sorry to say goodbye to Harry Meade who is moving out of London. Harry joined the patient group after the 2023 Open Forum and has made a valuable contribution, particularly in advocating for blind patients. His feedback on Accurx, the online booking system, and his involvement in staff training have helped improve accessibility at the practice. His departure leaves a significant gap, and we would welcome anyone interested in continuing his important work in representing disability needs. We wish Harry and Susan happiness in their new life.

Our AGM will take place on 10 April (via Zoom) – do check in to follow our discussion.

Q & A SECTION – Patients' questions answered by BPS staff

Q: My son is away at school and isn't permanently registered at Balham Park Surgery. Over Christmas, I struggled to get emergency care for him. How can I ensure he gets help when home?

A: As medical records are held at the primary residence (e.g. school or university) patients can't be registered at multiple GP surgeries. However, when he's home, you or he can request temporary registration via Accurx or by speaking to a care navigator at the surgery.

Q: I arrived on time for a blood test but I was irritated to be turned away as I had to queue at reception and was therefore late. Why is this, when patients are often kept waiting?

A: Blood test clinics run on a strict schedule. To ensure everyone is seen, we ask patients to arrive **five minutes early** to check in. We have improved our messaging to ensure this is clearly communicated.

Q: I'm confused about online booking. How do Accurx and the NHS App replace EMIS? I'm also uncomfortable with two-step verification via text when using the NHS App.

A: EMIS is no longer in use – bookings now go through Accurx or the NHS App. Two-step verification on the NHS app is a security measure to protect your medical data. If you have concerns or need help, our IT team is available to assist. Many patients find it reassuring once they get used to it. For more information, visit our website or speak to a member of our team in reception.

Reading and Podcast suggestions The much-loved television series *Call the Midwife* reminds us of the fight to eradicate measles in the 1960s. Watch [Call The Midwife Season 8 Episode 3](#) here. We share Roald Dahl's moving plea urging parents to get their children vaccinated, as relevant today as when it was written some years after the death of his 7 year old daughter, Olivia. [click here](#) to read it.

Quote of the day: "Measles is back, and it's a wake-up call," Hans Henri Kluge, WHO regional director for Europe, said. "Without high vaccination rates, there is no health security."

The Patient Group (PG) is here to represent you and we look forward to hearing from you. Do get in touch with your comments on this Bulletin, with suggestions for improvements to health care and requests for information about the Patient Group by emailing us at bpspatientgroup@gmail.com

Any patient registered with BPS can attend PG meetings held on the second Thursday of the month at 6pm (except August and December). Meetings take place via Zoom; join us by using [this recurring link](#)

EVERYONE IS VERY WELCOME. NOTE THE AGM ON 10 APRIL AT 6PM. NO NEED TO BOOK

