

## **The 2025 Flu Season**

The surgery has reminded us that flu vaccines are still available to you if qualify but haven't yet had one. **It's important to get the flu vaccine if you are advised to** – it will help you and the NHS. Those who qualify are

♦ aged 65 or over (or will be 65 by 31 March 2025) ♦ have certain long-term health conditions ♦ are pregnant ♦ live in a care home ♦ are the main carer for an older or disabled person, or receive a carer's allowance ♦ live with someone who has a weakened immune system ♦ frontline health and social care workers can also get a flu vaccine through their employer.

This year's variant of flu is particularly horrible and hospitals and doctors surgeries are already feeling the pressure from so many ill patients – there has been a 21% increase in cases in the UK in the last week alone.

Because of the flu and other respiratory bugs around this winter, please wear a face mask in the surgery if you suspect you have, one of them. Masks are available at the doorway of the surgery if you don't have one you can bring from home. But even better, stay away from the surgery if you can – the practice will be very happy to consult with you by text or phone, so please only go down there if you absolutely need to.

Your grandmother may have told you the old adage, 'You can treat a cold and it will go in a week, you can ignore a cold and it will go in seven days' and she was right – there are no antibiotics or other medicines that will cure a cold or flu.

### **A useful link**

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/common-cold/>

### **AccuRx online consult is extra useful during winter**

With the cold and icy weather, remember you do not have to make the journey into the Surgery – this is the ideal time of year to take advantage of text or phone consultations. And don't be worried, if any of the clinical staff feel they need to see you, they will always offer you a face-to-face appointment.

<https://www.bearstedmedicalpractice.nhs.uk/online-services/>

### **Parking for the surgery**

If you do need to go into the Surgery, do allow extra time to get there, particularly if driving as the car park is likely to chock-a-block. Anyone who has used the car park beside the surgery will know that it always seems to be full these days.

Because of parking problems, patients are often arriving late, or even missing their appointments. The surgery, however much they would like to be able to, simply cannot just slot people into the existing schedule. If you can walk, cycle or use public transport to get to the surgery - or park elsewhere - then it would be very helpful.

### **Staff News**

Doctor Lisa Dolman retired from the practice in November after a phenomenal 30 years of service to the surgery, the PPG and the wider Bearsted community. We would like to express our many and sincere thanks to her for her years of service and wish her all the best in what we hope is a stimulating, fun-filled retirement.

We welcome Dr Jonathan Hogg to replace her. He has moved down here from Nottinghamshire – so might be relieved to have missed the recent flooding up there – and will be working the days that Dr Dolman used to work – Monday, Tuesday and Thursday.

Mrs Hayley Mercer has also recently arrived. She is a phlebotomist whose role is solely to carry out blood tests. You can now have your blood test much more quickly.

### **The Patient Participation Group**

The PPG is a link between the surgery and its patients. While there is a committee that runs the group, being a member of the group does not come with any responsibilities or duties – the most that will be asked of you is to complete any surveys etc., that we issue. Send you name and details to the link below if you want to

- be kept informed about surgery news and services,
- feed back your views and experiences to the practice – which could make a real difference to the provision of surgery services
- be kept up to date with information that could save you a phone call to the surgery

<https://www.bearstedmedicalpractice.nhs.uk/join-bearsted-ppg/>

### **The Annual PPG Quiz Night**

And don't miss our Quiz Night on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2025 in the Memorial Hall. Further details will be available soon.