

**Patient Newsletter**  
**October 2012**

**Flu Vaccinations**

Influenza, or 'flu', is a highly contagious acute viral infection that affects people of all ages. Most people recover in a week or two, but flu can cause serious illness and death, especially in the very young and the elderly. The aim of the national flu immunisation programme is to protect those most at risk of serious illness or death should they catch flu. In the UK, the Department of Health recommends annual flu vaccination for adults aged 65 and over, pregnant women, those living in long-stay residential care homes, healthcare workers and carers, and all those aged six months and over with any of the following conditions:

- Serious heart disease
- Chest problems including certain asthmatics on steroid inhalers or steroid tablets, those with chronic bronchitis and emphysema
- Serious kidney disease
- Diabetes
- Lowered immunity due to disease such as cancer or an absent or dysfunctional spleen and treatment with chemotherapy or high doses of steroids
- Serious liver disease
- Anyone who has ever had a stroke or a mini-stroke
- Those who have cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis and related or similar conditions or hereditary and degenerative diseases of the nervous system or muscles or severe neurological disability should be assessed individually by their GP

Please ask at Reception to book into one of Hall Green Health's flu clinics which are held on Wednesday afternoons and Saturday mornings.

**Whooping Cough Vaccinations Offered to Pregnant Patients**

Whooping cough is a serious illness; babies who get it can develop severe complications such as pneumonia and brain damage. Following a sharp rise in the number of whooping cough cases in the UK, women who are 28 to 38 weeks pregnant are being offered whooping cough vaccine to protect newborns during the early weeks after birth when the risk of whooping cough is greatest. The immunity you get from the vaccine will pass to your baby through the placenta. Getting vaccinated while you're pregnant may help to protect your baby from developing whooping cough in his or her first few weeks of life, as babies are not vaccinated against whooping cough until they are two months old.

For more information or to book an appointment, please contact reception

**Zero Tolerance of Abuse or Violent Behaviour**

Unfortunately we have been witnessing an increasing number of patients being abusive to staff. However, the Partners and Management of Hall Green Health value their staff and have a zero tolerance policy against violent, threatening, intimidating or abusive. Therefore such actions towards any member of staff or other patients will not be tolerated and may result in removal from our practice list. Your cooperation in enforcing this policy is appreciated.

## **Growth in Demand**

Over the last year Hall Green Health has experienced a 20% increase in demand for appointments. Therefore we are changing some of the ways we work to ensure there are more appointments available for those patients who need them.

The new triage system, which has been operating for a number of weeks now, has proved very beneficial in assisting patients who do not necessarily require an urgent appointment, to get telephone advice from a GP. This in turns helps the practice to manage demand and ensure that patients are signposted to the most appropriate appointment or alternative way of managing their concerns.

To create additional capacity a new partner is also being recruited to join other clinicians here at Hall Green Hospital. Initial interviews are taking place for this additional doctor on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2012.

## **Patient Information**

As an outcome of last year's patient survey, recommendations to increase the number of plasma screens in the surgery to provide additional information to patients are being taken forward. It is anticipated that an additional 4 plasma screens will shortly be installed.

In addition, the practice's website and leaflet are being revised to provide more accurate and up to date information for patients.

## **New Telephone System**

Thank you to everyone who has provided feedback about the difficulties patients are experiencing in getting through to the surgery on the telephone. Following discussions with our telephone system supplier, it has become clear that our system is no longer fit for future use and a new system has been ordered.

The new system, which will be installed at both Hall Green Health and Shirley Rd surgery over the coming weeks, will offer many enhanced features including:

- Call management software to monitor call traffic and time to answer the phone call
- Multi-layered attendant system to provide greetings, announcements and options
- Enhanced queuing system with call positioning to inform patients how many calls are in front of them and likely time to answer
- Call recording
- Facility for cancelled appointments to be notified and stored in a mailbox until they can be addressed; with cancelled appointments released to other patients
- Facility for additional staff to log in and answer calls during busy periods
- PA tannoy system with announcements through the telephone handset to call patients into appointments, wherever they are in the building