

December 2023

# UPPER TOOTING SURGERY



**Dear Reader**

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## **COVID**

As Christmas approaches, the COVID Autumn Booster clinics at our Hub, Trevelyan House, have ceased but the national vaccination sites (including some local pharmacies) will run until mid-December.

If you are over 65 or in an 'at risk' group (e.g. diabetic, immunosuppressed, pregnant or suffering from a chronic disease such as heart, liver, kidney, lung or long-term neurological disease) please take up the offer of a COVID booster to maintain your protection.

To find your nearest participating site, please visit [www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/covid-19-services/covid-19-vaccination-services/find-a-walk-in-covid-19-vaccination-site](https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/covid-19-services/covid-19-vaccination-services/find-a-walk-in-covid-19-vaccination-site) or speak to our reception team.

## Flu

Flu is starting to circulate and, as families come together at this time of year, it spreads so much more quickly. If you have not had your flu vaccine, please do not delay. We still have stocks at surgery and recommend this for all over 65s and those in 'at risk' groups.

It is possible to have both COVID and flu vaccines at the same time and there is no evidence of decreased efficacy or increased side effects.

Children are recognised as 'super spreaders' of flu. Those aged 2 to 3 will have received an invite from the surgery for a nasal flu vaccine. Please note, this is not an injection. If your child is not vaccinated, please consider booking in before mixing with others, particularly more vulnerable grandparents over Christmas. Children aged 4 onwards will have received their flu vaccine invites from school.

## Childhood Illness

At this time of year, coughs and colds are common. There is concern regarding increasing levels of children missing valuable schooling due to illness. Please refer to this useful information leaflet for clear guidance as to when it is appropriate to keep a child from school:

[www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school)

Locally and nationally, child immunisation rates have decreased over the last few years. We make no apology for chasing those due and overdue for vaccination as some childhood illnesses such as measles are reappearing and cause severe illness and long-term harm to children. Please protect your child and book their immunisations when due. For the immunisation schedule, please visit [www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/nhs-vaccinations-and-when-to-have-them](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/nhs-vaccinations-and-when-to-have-them).

Sadly, childhood obesity levels are soaring. Locally, 20% of schoolchildren in Wandsworth are now obese. A recent study suggested that only 1% of packed lunches meet healthy eating standards, which is quite a sobering fact. Please see our website for local resources to help. Our nurses and doctors are also happy to advise if you think your child may need help.

## Online Access

We encourage all of our patients to apply for online access and link it to the NHS App. Since 31/10/2023, all patients with this access can view their GP consultations, test results and documents. We obviously need to ensure that the person seeing the record is the registered patient, so will request ID before granting this. This facility links to the Electronic Prescribing Service (EPS), enabling you to order repeat medication so much more efficiently.

## PCN Clinics

As our own Primary Care Network (PCN), Grafton is able to provide specialist dermatology clinics run by Drs Popov and Ahmad at Trevelyan House, Dr Roberts at Upper Tooting and Dr Ahmad at Macmillan Way.

We offer a regular HRT Menopause clinic run by Dr Reihill at Trevelyan and, from early 2024, are hopeful that we can restart Long-Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC)/Coil clinics as we are aware that there is quite a long wait at local sexual health clinics.

## Appointments

It is possible to book - and **cancel** - appointments online. I highlight 'cancel' as, sadly, there are increasing numbers of patients who do not think of others and cancel their booked slot when they cannot attend. Our phone lines also have the option to cancel a slot (this facility is available 24 hours a day, every day) so please consider others if you cannot attend.

The majority of online-bookable slots are face-to-face. If you feel you want a telephone consultation only, appropriate slots for this are marked accordingly.

Slots for the First Contact Physiotherapist (FCP) are all directly bookable online. The FCP is a Senior Physiotherapist who can treat sports injuries, back, neck and joint pains and organise onward referral and x-rays and scans, if required. We now host FCP sessions all day on Saturdays at Trevelyan House to improve access for those unable to attend in the week.

Our Social Prescriber, Wioletta, can help with problems including with housing or homelessness, financial worries, unemployment and loneliness and can connect you to local services and organisations. To book a slot to see her face-to-face, or for a telephone consultation, please speak to reception.

## Minor Eye Conditions Service

This is an excellent service which is run by specially-trained opticians and should be the first port of call for some eye problems. For participating opticians, please visit [www.primaryeyecare.co.uk/find-a-practice](http://www.primaryeyecare.co.uk/find-a-practice).

They can refer directly to secondary care (e.g. Moorfields at St George's Hospital) and prescribe eye drops, if required. The nearest participating opticians are Wheeler & Kirk at 8 Tooting High Street (SW17 0RG)

## Our Pharmacists

Our in-house pharmacists can help with all medication queries. Recently, there have been shortages of many drugs (particularly some HRT and ADHD preparations) and they can help with such queries.

As a practice, we feel repeat prescriptions for antidepressants are not appropriate for the majority of patients and prefer to review patients when reissuing prescriptions to ensure they are well, on the correct dose and also to advise when to try to wean off such medication.

Our experienced pharmacists help us with this area of our work, as well as conducting medication reviews, drug monitoring for certain drugs, and chronic disease monitoring (e.g. asthma and high blood pressure).

It is possible to directly book into one of their slots online, either face-to-face or for a telephone consultation.

## Loneliness and Low Mood

At this time of year, there is much excitement regarding the upcoming festivities for the majority of us. For some, however, this reinforces feelings of loneliness. The negative impact of loneliness was particularly highlighted in the pandemic and is now established as a significant driver of ill health, equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

For others, the shorter, darker days of winter contribute to low mood. We have a whole section with helpful resources in the 'Wellbeing' section of our website and we feel this is a significant issue affecting many of our community.

Reengage is a national charity committed to bringing older people together into social groups at a time in their lives when their social circles are decreasing ([info@reengage.org.uk](mailto:info@reengage.org.uk) / 0800 716 543).

The Silver Line offers free telephone support for older people 24 hours a day ([www.thesilverline.org.uk](http://www.thesilverline.org.uk) / 0800 470 8090).

Wandsworth Wellbeing Hub provides a directory of useful local community and mental health services as well as courses, classes and groups in Wandsworth to support your health and wellbeing. For more information, please call 020 3880 0308.

If you, or a family member or neighbour, feel affected by loneliness, these groups are there to help. Please reach out or encourage others to do so.

At Christmas, a number of organisations offer company and Christmas dinners.

The Alexandra Pub (33 Wimbledon Hill Road, London SW19 7NE) is again opening its doors at Christmas for anyone who would otherwise be alone on Christmas Day. It is completely free and runs between 12pm and 3pm on Christmas Day. Everyone is welcome.

The Rotary Club of Battersea Park will again host its annual Christmas Day party for elderly people of Wandsworth who would otherwise be alone. For more information, visit [www.rotarychristmasday.org](http://www.rotarychristmasday.org) or call 020 7223 8005. Their website also has links for those more fortunate to volunteer to help or send a small donation, however small.

If you need help, please speak to our reception team who can help you access these wonderful opportunities with great food and great company.

## **Wellbeing and Low Mood Service**

It is possible to make an appointment directly with a highly-trained in-house counsellor who can help you decide the best course of action for low mood, anxiety or depression. Please see our website for more details.

We encourage those interested in the service to complete a short confidential questionnaire prior to the first appointment. This is helpful to our counsellors but NOT mandatory. Slots can be booked by submitting an online request or speaking to the reception team.

Our websites also give details of other local resources, including the 24-hour Mental Health Crisis Line (available to all residents of South West London on 0800 028 8000).

NHS Wandsworth Talking Therapies also accepts direct referrals – you do not need to see a GP to access their help. Trained counsellors offer support for stress, anxiety, depression, sleep difficulties, anger issues and phobias.

Please see their website ([www.talkwandsworth.nhs.uk](http://www.talkwandsworth.nhs.uk)) or email [talkwandsworth@swlstg.nhs.uk](mailto:talkwandsworth@swlstg.nhs.uk) for more information.

The 'Wellbeing' section on our website gives details of other local services, including IESO Online Therapy, which is free Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) for Wandsworth patients who can self-refer using the link [www.iesohealth.com/areas/wandsworth](http://www.iesohealth.com/areas/wandsworth). IESO Online Therapy is entirely online with appointments offered 7 days per week from 6am-11pm. It will, of course, not suit all patients, but it is a valuable resource and many of our patients have found it extremely helpful.

There is also an excellent reading list on our website in the 'Wellbeing' section with some very useful reading suggestions.

The surgeries will be closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day holidays which fall on Monday 25th December, Tuesday 26th December and Monday 1st January respectively.

When the surgeries are closed, there is a local pharmacist rota which will be published on our websites. High street pharmacists can help with medication issues and advise on minor illnesses (e.g. coughs, colds and sore throats). NHS 111 can help with more serious problems and arrange telephone advice, a Hub appointment, GP home visit or transfer to hospital. This is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and calls are free from landlines and mobiles. A&E will be very busy at this time of year, so this is for broken bones and serious illness (e.g. chest pain, bleeding, loss of consciousness etc.). Please use all medical services appropriately.

For mental health problems and emergencies, please call the Mental Health Support Line on 0800 028 8000. The Coral Mental Health Crisis Hub, based at Springfield Hospital, is an alternative place of safety for mental health emergencies.

**We wish all of our patients and colleagues a very merry festive season and a healthy, prosperous and happy 2024.**

**With all best wishes**



**Dr Penelope Smith  
Senior Partner and Clinical Director, Grafton PCN**