

## May 2021 Patient Newsletter

Welcome to the May edition of our patient newsletter. In this issue:

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### Helios Medical Practice Merge with Mendip Vale Medical Group

Like many other practices across the country, Helios Surgery in North Bristol faced an increasing number of challenges in the delivery of NHS services. Currently, Mendip Vale Medical Group looks after 45,000 patients across 6 sites in North Somerset and 8,000 patients at Monks Park Surgery in North Bristol. They have merged 6 different practices in the last few years and now have considerable experience both in merger and in working at scale. Together with new partners at Mendip Vale Medical Group, Helios have a shared belief in making a continued positive difference for patients and thought it was the right time to combine efforts and build upon successes to date.



"We are delighted to be on board with Mendip Vale Medical Group and look forward to a positive future in partnership with the group".

### Healthy Weight

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/>

It's important for children and adults to maintain a healthy weight for their age, sex and height. If you are overweight or obese, you could be putting yourself at risk of developing serious physical health problems.

Being overweight is a very common problem in the UK but putting on excess weight doesn't happen overnight. It happens gradually over time, and can be as a result of poor diet and lifestyle choices.



## Covid Vaccination Programme Update

By the 9<sup>th</sup> May the practice will have given around 40,000 Covid vaccinations, a mix of both 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> doses. We are working our way through the cohorts, with those patients in their 40's now being vaccinated. To reduce the impact on our day to day activities where possible we stand up vaccination clinics on a Saturday and Sunday. There are occasions, when due to deliveries, we need to have vaccination clinics on a weekday but try to minimise disruption to services.

Currently supplies are Pfizer and Astra Zeneca. As Moderna comes online to the practice we will look to offer all approved vaccines to our patients. We have been incredibly fortunate to have been given so many cards, biscuits, fruit and chocolate from patients attending the clinics so on behalf of all the team at Mendip Vale a massive thank you to our patients for their generous gifts.

We look to ensure patients are given their 2<sup>nd</sup> vaccination by the 12<sup>th</sup> week and we use a number of methods to contact patients to book this such as text and of course calling. If you have changed any of your contact details please let us know via e-Consult (see link below)

<https://www.mendipvale.nhs.uk/patient-services/online-services/> and you can provide us with any updates.

Please remember not to phone the surgery with vaccination queries as our Patient Co-Ordinators will not be able to answer your questions. If you do have a query please send it to us via eConsult as described above and our Covid Team will process it for you.

## Update From Secondary Care

Our hospitals have been doing their utmost to resume routine services and referrals to hospital specialists for non-urgent conditions have now re-opened. Patients who have been waiting a long time are currently being reviewed, and those in most urgent need are being prioritised. Hospital clinical teams are reviewing all outpatient appointments to see whether they need to go ahead at the planned time. If the appointment does need to go ahead, patients will be contacted and offered a telephone, video or face-to-face appointment. If they don't hear from their hospital, they should be assured that they remain on the appointments list, and will be contacted as soon as services fully return to normal.

Patients waiting for urgent operations or treatment are being seen within three months. However, due to the backlog, patients may have to wait more than 12 months for routine care, particularly if they require a procedure, and hospital choices offered may be limited.

Cancer referrals (Two Week Waits) and Hot clinic referrals are being processed as usual. However, initial contact with patients referred via the Two Week Wait pathway is sometimes being made remotely, and normal access to diagnostic tests may currently be delayed.

Should you be concerned about your referral, you can contact the local Referral Service on 0117 900 2566, or via e-mail [bnssg.referral.service@nhs.net](mailto:bnssg.referral.service@nhs.net), who can check it for you.

If your symptoms worsen whilst waiting to be seen, you should contact your GP or NHS 111 for advice.

There is a wide range of useful information on services, organisations and groups to help manage your condition and wellbeing whilst waiting for a routine operation or treatment, which can be found on the NHS BNSSG CCG website. Patient support and advice can also be obtained from the Trust's Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS):

Bristol Hospitals: 0117 342 1050 [psct@uhbw.nhs.uk](mailto:psct@uhbw.nhs.uk)  
North Bristol: 0117 414 4569 [pals@nbt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@nbt.nhs.uk)  
Weston General Hospital: 01934 647216 [wnt-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:wnt-tr.pals@nhs.net)

## Easing of Lockdown Restrictions

With the lockdown now easing, this is to update our patients on how we will be working over the coming months.

This time last year GP practices nationally and healthcare services generally had to change rapidly in terms of how we were able to continue to deliver services to our patients. It is likely that we will continue to work in this way for the foreseeable future. Therefore, our phone-first model will continue, but be reassured that if the doctor decides you need to be seen face to face, we will make arrangements for this to happen.

Please remember only attend the surgery for pre-booked appointments. In order to continue to keep footfall to an absolute minimum, our Patient Co-Ordinators will not be able to book appointments or arrange prescription requests at our reception desks.

If you do come into our surgery buildings, please wear a mask (unless medically exempt), use hand gel and maintain a 2 metre distance from other people. We have reinstated the use of touchscreens in our receptions and hand gel is provided for patients to use. Please continue to help us keep you safe and follow these instructions.

## Our Patient Participation Group

The Patient Participation Group (PPG) at Mendip Vale is a particularly active group of patients. It works closely with the whole of the practice team and represents patient views on a wide range of subjects that affect our medical care.

There are 20 members of the PPG with five from each of our main hubs in North Somerset – Langford, Yatton/Congresbury, St Georges/Riverbank, and Sunnyside in Clevedon. They meet every two months, normally on a Wednesday afternoon for around two hours, but are active between meetings in providing patient feedback to Mendip Vale on all aspects of the relationship with the practice.

In addition there are over 40 more patients who regularly receive minutes of the meetings, and who also provide input on issues that are being discussed. Some of these have expressed an interest in joining the group when there are vacancies in their hub. The minutes of the meetings are posted for all to see on the Mendip Vale website [www.mendipvale.nhs.uk](http://www.mendipvale.nhs.uk).

## Patient Feedback

The PPG are always interested in hearing about your experience when you contact the practice and you can do this in different ways. You can contact one of the PPG members from your hub – names of these can be found on the MV website. Or you can get in touch via the main practice email address [mendipvale.scanners@nhs.net](mailto:mendipvale.scanners@nhs.net) for the attention of the PPG. The PPG has set up a working party specifically to discuss patient communication and feedback and would be very interested to hear your views. Please remember any medical queries or comments should go direct to the practice.

## PPG Vacancy

At the PPG April meeting one member of the PPG from Yatton/Congresbury and one from Sunnyside stood down after a number of years of active involvement. Details of the vacancies will be circulated directly to those who receive the minutes of our meetings, but if you are interested in being considered for membership of the PPG either now or in the future please send your details for the attention of the Communications Officer at Mendip Vale via [mendipvale.scanners@nhs.net](mailto:mendipvale.scanners@nhs.net)

Geoff Matthews

Chairman, Mendip Vale PPG

## Alcohol Consumption

With restrictions easing and pubs and restaurants now open, it's important to remember about safe levels of drinking.

To keep health risks from alcohol to a low level if you drink most weeks:

- Men and women are advised not to drink more than 14 units a week on a regular basis.
- 14 units is the equivalent to 6 pints of average strength beer or 10 small glasses of low strength wine.
- Spread your drinking over 3 or more days if you regularly drink as much as 14 units a week.
- If you want to cut down try to have several drink free days each week.

Click below for more guidance on units of alcohol:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-support/calculating-alcohol-units/>

For local help and support with alcohol for you or a loved one:

<https://bnssgccg.nhs.uk/health-advice-and-support/drugs-and-alcohol/>

<https://www.wearewithyou.org.uk/services/north-somerset/>

<https://www.dhi-online.org.uk/get-help/adult-drug-alcohol-treatment/bristol-roads>

## eConsult Update

You may notice that the eConsult banner now no longer pops up on our website home page. This is because both of our Bristol practices' patients are now using the main website and there was a need to navigate patients to the correct eConsult service. Patients can navigate to the correct eConsult service by clicking the prompt on the home page of our website, or by scrolling to the footer of any page on the website and selecting the appropriate eConsult service. Please remember to select the eConsult service for the practice you are registered with – North Somerset, Monks Park Surgery or Helios Surgery – or your query may experience a slight delay.

## Awareness Days

*Stroke Awareness Month* – this campaign aims to raise awareness of strokes and their impact on sufferers and their friends and families <https://www.stroke.org.uk/fundraising/stroke-awareness-month>

*National Walking Month* – why not celebrate national walking month by organising your own walk this May? Click this link – there are some very interesting walks featured! <https://www.bristolwalkfest.com/>

*Skin Cancer Awareness Month* – with the summer months nearly upon us, skin cancer awareness month aims to raise the awareness of the dangers of unprotected sun exposure and help inform us about the best ways to help prevent skin cancer <https://www.melanomauk.org.uk/>

*8 May – World Ovarian Cancer Day* – use your voice to increase awareness of ovarian cancer. Awareness leads to action which can in turn save the lives of the women we love <https://targetovariancancer.org.uk/>

*9 May - National Schizophrenia Awareness Day* – shines a light on the challenges faced by people living with a diagnosis of schizophrenia in the UK, and helps to break down the stigma and discrimination surrounding this much misunderstood illness. <https://www.rethink.org/get-involved/awareness-days-and-events/schizophrenia-awareness-day/>

*May 10 to 16 is Mental Health Awareness Week* and is about starting conversations about mental health and the things in our daily lives that can affect it. <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/mental-health-awareness-week>

**11 May Somerset Day!!!!** Did you know 11 May is Somerset Day, a day to celebrate Somerset as a place to live, work and play! Click here for more information: <https://www.somersetday.com/somerset-day/>

*17-23 May Dementia Action Week* – click the link to find out how you can take action to improve the lives of people affected by dementia <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-involved/dementia-action-week>

## Surgery Volunteers Our Unsung Heroes!

Dr David and Mrs Phillippa Portas have helped the surgery immeasurably in phoning patients to invite them for their vaccinations. They joined us in January, usually for two days each week, initially phoning patients to invite them for their first vaccinations and more recently inviting patients for their second vaccinations. As a retired GP, David is on hand to answer any medical queries that patients may have about the vaccinations while Phillippa, a retired social worker, makes the appointment bookings. Their teamwork has really made our dream work "it's been so rewarding to us to be able to contribute in a small way to the practice vaccination programme which has been such a success!"



## Churchill and Langford Mutual Aid

This group was set up swiftly at the start of the first lockdown last year as an amalgamation of Churchill Minibus Society, Churchill and Langford Village Fund, and Churchill and Langford Parish Council. They initially responded to community aid by delivering meals and medication to patients who were shielding and unable to get out. They helped patients with shopping and later started helping patients attend hospital appointments. During this time, they made approximately 800 medication deliveries, 200 shopping trips and 800 lunch deliveries! Now they are helping us with bringing our patients who have no transport to their Covid vaccination appointments at our Langford vaccination hub. This is provided by their team of amazing volunteer drivers who have made over 100 transport trips for our patients to enable them to be vaccinated.



## Covid Vaccination Data Input

Dr Charles Tricks, retired partner at Wrington Vale Medical Practice, has been leading a team of retired doctors and administrators to input Covid vaccination data on the NHS database. A member of the team has commented "it is a really strong part of your whole surgery's focussed and successful response to COVID and the vaccination programme that you've been able to use the skills and time of so many who've been more than willing to help. We've both been delighted to be part of your Surgery's extended team over this time".

**We are so very grateful to all of our volunteers who have been integral in our delivery of such a successful Covid vaccination programme. We're sure all of our patients will join us in saying a great big THANK YOU!!**

## Eating a Healthy Diet

Eating a healthy balanced diet is an important part of maintaining good health, and can help you feel your best. This means eating a wide variety of foods in the right proportions and consuming the right amount of food and drink to achieve and maintain a healthy body weight. Click this link for more information

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/>



*Eat at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables a day*



## Mobile Library Churchill

### Your Mobile Library



Visits Churchill fortnightly on Thursdays:

2021	Thursday
May	E, 20
June	3, 17
July	1, 15, 29

H – public holiday = vehicle off road M – maintenance = vehicle off road  
E = vehicle in use as a polling station

#### Stops at:

Churchill	Doctor's Surgery car park (Pudding Pie Lane)	4-4:45pm
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Please note that stops and timings may be subject to change during the currency of this timetable.

Please note the dates and times the mobile library will be visiting Churchill between May and July 2021. Click the link below for the full mobile library timetable.

[Mobile library | North Somerset Council \(n-somerset.gov.uk\)](https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/mobile-library/)

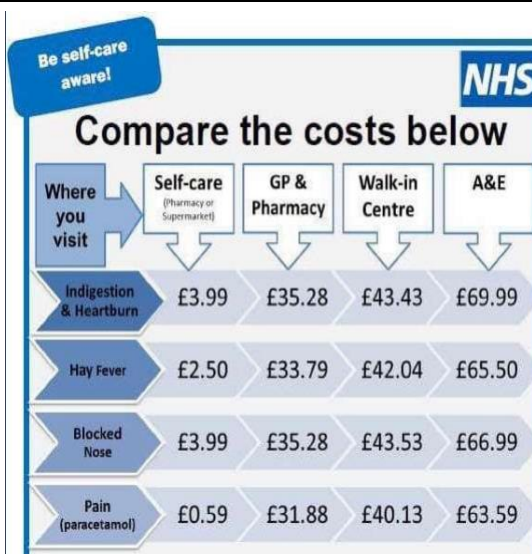
## Prescribing Over The Counter Medication

At this time of year with the hayfever season upon us, (we do hope you're not suffering too much!) our doctors do tend to get increased requests for over the counter medication and products that can be easily obtained from a local pharmacy or supermarket.

In March 2018, NHS England published [new prescribing guidance](#) covering over-the-counter (OTC) medicines. The regulations around this form part of our contractual agreement with NHS England and we are therefore obliged to prescribe accordingly.

In line with this guidance, your GP, nurse or pharmacist will not generally give you a prescription for medications that are easily obtained over the counter. This includes treatment for minor illness and self limiting conditions and complementary medicines or other health products (such as vitamin tablets, homeopathic treatments and herbal medicines). The team of health professionals at your local pharmacy can offer help and clinical advice to manage minor health concerns and if your symptoms suggest it's more serious, they'll ensure you get the care you need. This applies even if you qualify for free prescriptions.

Please help the NHS to use resources sensibly.



## Telephone Calls to the Surgery

According to the Royal College of General Practitioners, practices in England delivered around 784,000 more appointments in a 10-week period at the start of 2021 and over 5.5m more items of clinical admin work - such as referrals, prescriptions and messages to patients - compared with the same period last year. The workload at Mendip Vale has far outstripped pre-pandemic level as we deliver COVID-19 jabs on top of a 34% increase in consultation requests. This has meant calls into the surgery are taking longer to answer. We apologise for any delays in answering your calls, our team is committed to reduce wait times and deal with queries in a safe and effective way.

Discussions have been taking place with the Patient Participation Group over the past few months, and a number of actions have been taken. In November we increased our line capacity from 30 to 50 lines, however there will still be occasions particularly at busy times when demand exceeds the line capacity and you may get an engaged tone. We have increased the number of Patient Co-ordinators answering calls to our highest ever, and they answer around 5,000 calls each week. We are continuing to look at other ways of reducing waiting times while coping with the phase 2 Covid vaccinations (18 to 49 year olds) as quickly as possible to make patients as safe as we can from Covid.

## Paperless Prescribing

From 1 June 2021 Mendip Vale Medical Group is implementing **paperless prescriptions**. If you receive medication via repeat prescription, you can order your prescription through the NHS App, Patient Access or you can order directly through your pharmacy saving you time and saving NHS money.



**OPTION 1** The quickest and easiest way to get your medication is to sign up to the NHS App. Available in the App store (Apple or Android). It's easy to use and you can order medication quickly and see when it has been approved by a GP. For more information and instructions on setting up the NHS App go to [www.nhs.uk/nhsapp](http://www.nhs.uk/nhsapp)

**OPTION 2** Patient Access allows you to order your repeat medication, view your medical records and see your booked appointments. Go to [www.patientaccess.com/](http://www.patientaccess.com/)



**OPTION 3** Sign up with your preferred local pharmacy for their repeat medication service.

## We want to hear from you!

We would very much like to involve our patients in this newsletter – after all, it's written for you and for your benefit! Please send us your suggestions for future topics and also any feedback on how we're doing.

**By email:** [mendipvale.scanners@nhs.net](mailto:mendipvale.scanners@nhs.net)  
**By phone:** 01934 839820  
 (or 01275 873588 if you live in the Clevedon area)  
**By post:**  
 Mendip Vale Medical Group,  
 Pudding Pie Lane,  
 Langford, Bristol BS40 5EL

