

## Surgery News

It's Christmas time again! No long weekend this year, which we hope means that we don't get that one really awful day here at the surgery when we have been closed for a few days and it seems that everyone needs us. Having a more fragmented couple of weeks may be bad from a hangover and digestion point of view, but it will probably mean a little less stress for those of us who are working.

As you will have gathered, after working normally on Christmas Eve, we will be closed for Christmas and Boxing Days, then back for the Thursday and Friday as usual. The following week will be normal, apart from being closed on New Year's Day, which is the Tuesday. I believe that the pharmacy will be following the same pattern.

The big hope at this time of year, totally unrealistic I know, is that nobody will get ill or injured and need urgent medical treatment over the holiday period. If you are one of the unlucky ones, please try to avoid the A&E Department at Colchester Hospital unless your problem is a genuinely serious emergency. The staff there will be at full stretch looking after people with life-threatening – or at least life-changing – illnesses or injuries. Waiting times, especially for things that could easily be dealt with by the Out of Hours Doctor service are likely to be long, and anyway, who wants to sit listening to a bunch of over-done Christmas revellers squabbling and feeling sorry for themselves while they wait to be patched up?

If you do need urgent medical assistance whilst we are closed, there is a range of options:

- You can get expert advice from NHS Direct by ringing 0845 4647.
- You can contact the Harmoni Out of Hours service by ringing the normal surgery number.
- The GP-led walk-in surgery service at Colchester Primary Care Centre (tel. 01206 314015) on Turner Road will be available from 7.00am-10.00pm each day.
- Treatment for minor injuries, including fractures, will be available at the Minor Injuries units at Clacton Hospital (tel. 01255 201594) from 9.00am-9.00pm each day and at Harwich Hospital (01255 201226) from 9.00am-5.00pm each day.
- The A&E Department at Colchester General is available for critical or life-threatening situations requiring medical attention, such as loss of consciousness, heavy blood loss, persistent chest pain, difficulty breathing, overdoses, ingestion or poisoning. If you think immediate treatment by paramedics is needed, call 999 for an emergency ambulance.

It always seems that I am putting a terrible damper on the festive season by giving these details, but that is not what is intended at all. Everyone here at the surgery wishes all of you a truly Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy 2013. In the nicest possible way, we hope that you don't give us a thought over the holiday and that we don't see too much of you over the coming year.

As at this time every year, we are now seeing an increasing number of people with coughs and colds. Just a reminder that the vast majority of these seasonal ailments are viral and we really can't do anything to help. Please don't bring your germs to the surgery where they will just be passed on to other patients, or to the doctors and other staff here. It is far better to stay at home, keep warm, take plenty of fluids and use over the counter medication to treat your symptoms. Antibiotics don't work on colds or flu, and treatment for the symptoms, together with expert advice, is available at your local pharmacy.

Like all surgeries, we are now bracing ourselves for yet another year of change in the NHS. Whatever the government might say, funding of GP surgeries is being squeezed and we are having to work harder and more imaginatively to make severely limited resources go further. There are a few simple things you can do that will really help us. Please always cancel appointments that you can't keep; don't order medicines that you won't use; try to contact us at off-peak times so that work is spread more evenly throughout the day and always give us some idea of why you are requesting appointments so that we

can ensure that you end up seeing the right clinician. If you follow those four New Year Resolutions, you will help us to work more efficiently and effectively, and enable us to look after you better during 2013.

Hugh Cronin

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