

Surgery News

The flu jab season is pretty well over now and we have given a record number this winter. It is always difficult to gauge how successful a campaign has been, but we don't seem to hear of a huge number of patients suffering at the moment, despite reports that there is a lot of flu around in Colchester. We now have to decide how many jabs to order for next winter, which is always a bit of a difficult calculation, and we then keep our fingers crossed that we don't experience the same supply failure that we've had to contend with this year.

Don't roll your sleeves down just yet, as we haven't finished inviting people in for jabs. Our continuing campaign this spring is to get as many eligible patients as possible vaccinated against pneumococcal disease, which includes a range of illnesses from mild, middle-ear infections to pneumonia, as well as life-threatening infections of the bloodstream and central nervous system.

Broadly speaking, the same people who are entitled to a flu jab also qualify for a pneumococcal jab:

- Patients aged 65 or over
- People with chronic heart, chest, kidney or liver disease
- Anyone suffering from diabetes
- Patients with suppressed immunity because of disease or medical treatment, including those with no spleen
- People with cochlear implants.

If you get an invitation, please take us up on it. If you think you qualify and haven't yet had the vaccination, you don't have to wait to be invited; just check with us and we'll book you an appointment if it's appropriate.

Unfortunately, low rates of flu haven't stopped us being exceptionally busy since the beginning of the year and I know that we've struggled to see everyone as quickly as we would want. Please accept my apologies if you have had to wait for a routine review appointment. Poorly patients have been taking priority recently and to cope with demand the doctors and nurses have been seeing several "extras" at the end of virtually every surgery. Normal service will be resumed as soon as possible.

Things are also still pretty hectic in the prescription room, even though we now have staff working in there for more hours than ever before. Please could you help them out – and the local pharmacies – by stating clearly on your repeat request:

- The day *and date* upon which you want your medication
- Where you will be collecting it from, or
- That you want it delivered to your home.

If you just want the paper prescription, please also make that clear. The clearer the instructions are, the easier our job becomes.

Whilst on the subject of prescriptions, Sarah at the Green Pharmacy has asked if their Repeat Dispensing customers could try to e-mail requests for fresh supplies of medication rather than telephoning them through, as their 'phones are being overwhelmed. The e-mail address there is thegreenpharmacy@intrapharm.com and I am assured that the account is checked every morning for messages. **When telling your pharmacy that you want a new batch of medication, please remember to say if there is anything that you *don't* need that month.** That will help in the on-going battle against wastage which is still a major problem throughout the NHS.

Hugh Cronin
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