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# Grafton Medical Partners Trevelyan House

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(ALSO AVAILABLE IN LARGE PRINT)

## Flu

### It is that time of year again!

Our adult flu vaccines have now arrived and we strongly urge those over 65, those who are Carers, pregnant or in an 'at-risk' group to take up our offer of a free flu vaccination as soon as possible. Flu can cause serious illness and kills up to 30,000 Britons a year.

The 'at-risk' groups include patients with:

- Heart disease
- Chronic renal disease
- Chronic obstructive airways disease
- Asthma
- Chronic liver disease
- Immunosuppression

Those with chronic health problems are more likely to develop pneumonia and other complications. Adults with asthma are seven times more likely than non-asthmatics to die if they catch flu and, for those with heart disease, the risk is 11 times higher. If you have liver disease the risk rises almost 50-fold.

Age weakens immunity which is why the elderly are more vulnerable to complications, while changes to the immune system, heart and lungs in pregnancy put mothers-to-be at extra risk.

Flu is also dangerous for the unborn baby and can lead to miscarriage, premature birth or stillbirth.

Under-5s are more likely to be admitted to hospital with flu than any other group and are 'super-spreaders' of the virus. Children have a simple nasal spray vaccine (NOT another injection). Our children's vaccines should arrive by the beginning of November. Preschool children will be invited by the surgery – other children will be immunised at school.

Last year the vaccine was not as effective as in previous years. The main reason why the vaccine does not protect everyone is that there are numerous strains of flu and the jab only protects against up to four. The vaccine is reformulated each year to protect against the particular strains likely to be circulating in the forthcoming winter; strains causing

illness in Australia provide a guide as to what might hit the UK a few months later. The predictions are not always correct as, occasionally, the virus mutates to a new strain not covered by the vaccine. This year's epidemic in Australia, which started earlier than usual, has been the worst on record.

That does not necessarily mean we will have a bad outbreak here but it would seem sensible to try to protect yourself if a flu vaccine is on offer.

**Please book a flu vaccination appointment.** These slots are also available for online booking. We have slots throughout the week and in extended hours with all of our practice team. If in doubt, please ask at reception to check if you are eligible.



## MMR

I make no apologies for returning to decreasing national MMR vaccination rates. I covered this in our summer newsletter and this month our national newspapers are highlighting falling rates. One suggestion is lack of GP and nurse appointments – which we do not recognise at Grafton. We will fit in anyone non-immunised as soon as we can and actively call and text those with the vaccination outstanding.

To help us understand some of the issues, we have produced a short survey. It would help us hugely if as many parents as possible could complete this for us. It is available at reception or online on our website.

Children need two doses of MMR to be fully covered. A single dose provides 78% immunity but two doses provide 88%. We have had cases of measles locally this autumn. Measles is a horrible illness which can kill or cause lasting neurological problems. Last week newspapers reported the death of a 17 year old from mumps.

All the doctors and nurses at Grafton have vaccinated their children. Please do not be complacent and ensure that your children are fully protected.

## Low Mood Services

Our new **Wellbeing Service** has proved very successful. It is now possible to book directly to see one of our experienced counsellors who can help to direct you to the best source of help. Please see our website for details.

It is also possible for you to self-refer to see an NHS counsellor at The Awareness Centre in Tooting Broadway.

Please visit [www.theawarenesscentre.com/nhs-counselling-service/nhs-wandsworth/](http://www.theawarenesscentre.com/nhs-counselling-service/nhs-wandsworth/) for details of some excellent small group workshops which take place near Tooting Broadway station, covering topics including anxiety, stress, depression, anger management, bereavement and loss.

## First Contact Physiotherapy

After a successful pilot earlier in the year, we will be offering the opportunity to book a slot directly with an experienced physiotherapist as from the beginning of November. Our aim is to divert patients from GPs to a more appropriate team member. They can arrange investigations and referrals and advise on medication.

They will offer some evening and Saturday slots as well as daily slots throughout the week. Please consider this option for back, neck, shoulder and knee pain as well as sports injuries.

## Our Pharmacist Team

Our pharmacist team welcomes Angeli Parekh this month. All of our pharmacists can help with minor illness management, including drug advice, prescription queries, medication reviews and chronic disease monitoring.

## Online & Automated Booking

Every day we arrive to a queue of patients waiting outside needing to be seen 'on the day'.

We want to encourage everyone who wants an on-the-day slot and does not mind who they see to consider using our automated telephone appointment booking system or online booking.

Every day some slots open at 07:30 – long before our phone lines open at 08:00 – and some on-the-day 'urgent' online slots are released. Please consider using this option before queueing in the cold!

If you have a non-urgent query, please consider using our website to ask us as question or call later in the day (avoiding the peak call time between 08:00-09:30).

## Breast Awareness Month

Patients at Grafton are usually recalled for breast screening from October to December. Every minute, somewhere in the world, a woman dies from breast cancer. Sadly, screening rates for breast cancer are also declining.

**Early diagnosis saves lives. Please do not ignore your invitation.**

You can expect to be invited every three years if you are 50-70. If you have not been invited and think you should be, please contact The Rose Centre at St George's Hospital (0208 725 4868) and they will arrange an appointment.

On Friday 18<sup>th</sup> October our staff will be wearing pink to support Breast Awareness. We are also hoping to host our regular Macmillan Cake Sale at Trevelyan House in November. Details will be published on our website shortly.

Best wishes  
**Dr Penelope Smith (Senior Partner)**  
 Grafton Medical Partners