

FOCHABERS MEDICAL PRACTICE NEWSLETTER

WHY NO ANTIBIOTICS?

With Autumn most definitely upon us, and winter on its way, our GPs and nurses can be overwhelmed with the pressure of seeing patients suffering from a range of common viral infections eg of the nose, throat, ears and chest.

Many flu-like illnesses are also caused by viruses. Diarrhoea and/or being sick (vomiting) are often due to a viral infection of the gut. If you are normally well, your defence (immune) system is good at fighting off many types of viral infection. An antibiotic medicine is not needed if a virus is causing an infection.

This is because:

- Antibiotics do not kill viruses.
- Antibiotics only kill germs called bacteria.



- Antibiotics may cause side-effects such as diarrhoea, rashes, feeling sick, etc.
- Overuse of antibiotics, when they have not been necessary, has led to some bacteria becoming resistant to them. This means that some antibiotics might not be as effective when they are really needed.

More information/advice on this subject is available at the surgery.

Flu Clinics

Who would believe that flu season has come round again so quickly?

Those of you who are **over 65 years of age**, may have already received your invitation letter from NHS Grampian. Those who are **eligible and under 65 years of age**, should have been/will be noti-

fied via a letter from the practice.

Please book your appointment at reception, or give us a ring on **820247**.

It is recommended to have the vaccination as early in the season as possible, to give you the best protection. In recent years the campaign

has been extended to include 2-5 year olds and primary school children. All primary school children will be offered the vaccine in the school setting, in clinics run by the school nursing team. Parents/guardians of children in the 2-5 category will receive letters about upcoming clinics over the next few weeks.

AUTUMN 2016

Volume 10

Appointments missed during August 2016!

Some of our patients have expressed concern at the length of time they have to wait to get a routine appointment with a GP or nurse, and we constantly monitor this situation.

However, during the month of August alone, **99 appointments were wasted** due to failure to attend! This equates to almost 16 hours of consulting time!

We cannot stress enough the importance of informing the practice as soon as possible, if you can no longer attend/no longer need a booked appointment. This enables us to give that appointment to someone else!



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INCREASED DEMAND FOR APPOINTMENTS

We have reported in previous newsletters that the demand for both GP and nurse appointments has been growing substantially in recent times. This demand has continued to grow over the past 12 months.

It is clear that we are not alone in this problem. Workload in Primary Care has increased dramatically, with many additional pressures on GPs and practice staff. There are many reasons for this, but perhaps the main one is the growing frail/elderly population, a problem most certainly not unique to Fochabers.

In order for us to cope with the demand, we need to ensure that we can

prioritise between patients who need an urgent appointment or home-visit, those who can wait, or be seen by another health professional and those for whom a quick telephone call may suffice.

For this reason, we are currently experimenting with new ways of running our appointment system, and we would ask you to be patient with us. Our aim is to improve access for our patients, and relieve stress amongst our clinicians.

It can be necessary for the administrative staff to ask you a few questions, to establish what your symptoms are.

Please understand that they are not prying. They have been asked to gather certain information, as this will assist the GPs in prioritising their workload, and ensure that the patients in most need are treated first. Consultations can be as follows:

- Home visit
- Emergency appointment
- Routine appointment
- Minor Illness appointment (Nurse)
- Telephone Consultation

Home-visits should only be requested if a patient is too ill to attend the surgery. It is hugely time-consuming, as well as being clinically less reliable, to examine a patient in their own home, without the appropriate equipment, lighting, etc. The doctor can see three or four patients in the surgery in the time it takes to do a home visit.

Home-visits obviously impact on workload, and limit the time GPs have to see patients in the surgery, deal with results, etc. When a home-visit is requested, you may be visited by a member of our community team in the first instance, who will make an initial assessment of your needs.

Shingles Vaccination

A vaccine against shingles is being offered again this year to patients in certain age categories between 70-79 years.

You may have already received a letter from us inviting you to book an appointment for this, or you may yet receive one.

Shingles can be very painful, and is more common among older

people. For some people the pain can last for years. The vaccine will reduce your chances of developing shingles by more than a third. If you do go on to have shingles, the symptoms will be milder and will not last as long as they would have if you had not been immunised.

If you have received an invitation, please book your appoint-

Aggression towards staff

We would like to remind patients that the practice follows the NHS "zero tolerance" policy with regard to violence and aggression towards staff. We understand that when patients come into the surgery they are often worried and concerned about their health. We do try to deal with this as sensitively as possible.

However, it is never acceptable for our staff to be shouted and sworn at. Please remember that reception

staff can only give out appointments if they are available, and are not qualified to give out any clinical information or medication, unless under instruction of the GPs.

If you do have a genuine complaint or grievance, we do have a complaints procedure. Staff will be happy to help direct you with this.

Thank you for your co-operation.

"Our aim is to improve access for our patients, and relieve stress amongst our clinicians."



Why GPs sometimes charge fees

Surely the doctor is being paid anyway?

It is important to understand that our GPs are not employed by the NHS.

They are self-employed and they have to cover their costs - staff, buildings, heating, lighting, etc - in the same way as any small business. The NHS covers these costs for NHS work, but for non-NHS work, the fees charged by GPs contribute towards their costs.

What is covered by the NHS and what is not?

The Government's contract with GPs covers medical services to NHS patients, including the provision of ongoing medical treatment.

In recent years, however, more and more organisations have been involving doctors in a whole range of non-medical work.

Sometimes the only reason that GPs are asked is because they are in a position of trust in the community, or because an insurance company or employer wants to ensure that information provided to them is true and accurate.

Examples of non-NHS services for which GPs can charge their own NHS patients:

- accident or sickness certificates for insurance purposes
- school fee and holiday insurance certificates
- reports for health clubs to certify that patients are fit to exercise

Examples of non-NHS services

for which GPs can charge other institutions:

- life assurance and income protection reports for insurance companies
- reports for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in connection with disability living allowance and attendance allowance
- medical reports for local authorities in connection with adoption and fostering

Do GPs have to do non-NHS work for their patients?

With certain limited exceptions, for example a GP confirming that one of their patients is not fit for jury service, GPs do not have to carry out non-NHS work on behalf of their patients.

Whilst GPs will always attempt to assist their patients with the completion of forms, for example for insurance purposes, they are not required to do such non-NHS work.

Why does it sometimes take my GP a long time to complete my form?

Time spent completing forms and preparing reports takes the GP away from the medical care of his or her patients.

Most GPs have a very heavy workload and paperwork takes up an increasing amount of their time, so many GPs find they have to take some paperwork home at night and weekends.

I only need the doctor's signa-

“Time spent completing forms and preparing reports takes the GP away from the medical care of his or her patients.”

ture - what is the problem?

When a doctor signs a certificate or completes a report, it is a condition of remaining on the Medical Register that they only sign what they know to be true.

In order to complete even the simplest of forms, therefore, the doctor might have to check the patient's entire medical record. Carelessness or an inaccurate report can have serious consequences for the doctor with the General Medical Council (the doctors' regulatory body) or even the Police.

What will I be charged?

It is up to individual doctors to decide how much they will charge, but we produce lists of suggested fees which many doctors use. Surgeries often have lists of fees on the waiting room wall based on these suggested fees.

What can I do to help?

- If you have several forms requiring completion, present them all at once and ask your GP if he or she is prepared to complete them at the same time to speed up the process.
- Do not expect your GP to process forms overnight. Urgent requests may mean that a doctor has to make special arrangements to process the form quickly, and this will cost more. (Source BMA)



Fochabers Medical Practice

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.Please note the change to our fax number and also to the telephone numbers for the Community Nurses and the Health Visitor.

COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

If you have any suggestions for our next newsletter, please hand them in to reception, or send them in to *Lynn Ross, Practice Manager*. We look forward to hearing your news/views.

