

COOMBE MEDICAL PRACTICE

WINTER NEWSLETTER 2014

*Merry Christmas and
Happy New Year
to all my patients!*

Emergency contact

Some patients have tried to contact me via the pager during office hours or when I am not on call. **Please always call the landline (0208 605 0044) first.** The message will inform you who is on call and the appropriate number to call. Colleague doctors may be on call.

Recently patients have been calling me 'out of hours' (including weekends) in order to prebook a routine appointment for the day/days ahead. Some have called at 6am to book a routine appointment. This is an inappropriate use of the emergency pager. Tired doctors are not good doctors! The office opens at 9am – do please try and call us then.

A fee is charged for missed appointments, and for those cancelled less than six hours. Details on our website.

Meningitis B

We now offer the new vaccine (Bexsero) to protect against Meningitis B. Since the first meningitis vaccine was introduced in 1992, many kinds of meningitis have been reduced to a mere handful of cases. Thanks to vaccines against Hib, Meningitis C and Pneumococcal disease, thousands of children are alive today who would

otherwise have died from these deadly diseases. There is now a vaccine against Meningitis B which remains a serious threat to children and young adults. The vaccine will help protect against meningococcal meningitis and septicaemia. It is a course of vaccinations, depending on age.

Flu vaccines

We have a small supply left. Please book an appointment whilst stocks last!

Coughs and colds

Winter is here and with it the viruses that cause coughs and colds. A diet rich in vitamin C – so lemons, oranges etc will boost the immune system. Or vitamin C supplements. A low vitamin D level impairs our ability to fight viruses: with less sunlight over winter it might be sensible to take a vitamin D supplement. This is especially important in children – the best is the DLux vitamin D spray.

Antibiotics

There has been a lot in the press recently about inappropriate prescribing of antibiotics. Antibiotics are an essential part of treatment but it is important that the right one is used at the right time. It is important for a doctor to prescribe antibiotics wisely if we are to avoid bacterial resistance. We don't want to get to a situation where antibiotics just don't work anymore because their misuse has led to resistance. Indeed the World Health Organisation and the Royal College of GPs have flagged increasing bacterial resistance as a major global threat. The General Medical Council – the regulatory authority for doctors in the UK – produces directives that as a doctor I am expected to follow. New GMC regulations came into force in February this year. They require that a doctor must accurately assess a patient before an antibiotic is prescribed. This effectively prevents me from issuing 'reserve' supplies of antibiotics - for example to take on holiday. I am broadly in agreement with this guidance. It's not a matter of 'one size

fits all? – each condition has a specific antibiotic which is ideal to treat it. And the best person to decide that is a doctor. So if you fall ill on holiday far better to see a local doctor and get the best treatment rather than trying to ‘second guess’ which drug to take from your own supply with potentially disastrous consequences.

Prescriptions

A number of patients contact us having run out of repeat medication altogether. We then get a phone call from the patient to say they are waiting in the pharmacy and could we fax a prescription immediately! This is not good medical practice. When a repeat prescription is required for on-going medication, it is appreciated if at least five days’ notice is given. I need to check the medical records to see whether the medication is intended to be repeated; whether a blood pressure or blood test is required; and to ensure safe clinical monitoring. This also allows enough time for us to post the prescription to you.

Schools

Schools strive to reduce the number of children attending with infections. If your child is ill – say with a fever or a virus – please do not send them to school. Best to stay at home and if symptoms are not improving then seek medical advice. On this note, it is difficult for us when parents telephone us wanting an afternoon appointment for a sick child but who has been sent into school. It is not fair on the other children in the class and not fair on us as not every child can be seen after school!

Travel health

Summer holidays may seem a distant dream at present, but don’t forget to plan ahead when it comes to travel jabs. Some need to be given a few weeks before travel to be effective. We stock all the required immunisations and are a recognised Yellow Fever Vaccination Centre. Call Roopal with your travel itinerary and she will advise which jabs (and antimalarial tablets) are necessary.

Referral

A number of patients pre-book an appointment with a specialist and then contact me requesting a referral letter. This is poor clinical practice – I insist on seeing a patient first to ensure that the correct diagnosis is made and the appropriate specialist is then chosen. Insurers insist that the referral has been sanctioned by the GP – this should be *prior* to the appointment. Notice is required - especially for lengthy referral letters.

Fees

It is appreciated when accounts are settled promptly. Interest will be charged to accounts outstanding by more than two weeks. As stated at the foot of each invoice, payment can be made by BACS.

*I wish you all a happy and healthy
Christmas and New Year.
Dr Michael Barrie*