



An Apple A Day

Newsletter for patients registered at GP Surgeries in Hitchin and Whitwell

HWPCN

**Hitchin & Whitwell
Primary Care Network**

Welcome to the seventh newsletter from HWPCN!

The practices of Hitchin and Whitwell PCN would like to wish you all a happy and peaceful festive season. In this issue you will find a reminder of the NHS services available, information on the Carers' Café, Extended Access appointments and more!

REMINDER OF NHS SERVICES AVAILABLE

It's a very busy time for everyone and there are lots of illnesses around during the peak winter pressures, so here is a reminder of what services are available and when to access them.

ENHANCED ACCESS

Did you know that appointments are available every weekday evening from 6.30-8pm and Saturdays 9am-5pm? These are held at Portmill Surgery but are available for **ALL Hitchin and Whitwell registered patients.**

There is always a GP on site and there is a mix of other clinical staff.

A wide variety of your usual primary services are available including cervical smears, ECGs and long term condition reviews. Ask your receptionist for availability!

AND REMEMBER



	Minor cuts and grazes Bruises and minor sprains Coughs and colds	Self Care Stock your medicine cabinet
	Minor illnesses Headache Stomach upsets Bites and stings	Pharmacy
	Feeling unwell? Unsure? Anxious? Need help?	NHS 111
	Persistent symptoms Chronic pain Long term conditions	GP Advice Out of Hours call 111
	Choking Chest pain Blacking out Serious blood loss	A&E or 999 Emergencies only





ANTIBIOTICS DON'T WORK FOR COLD OR FLU

Antibiotics don't work for colds or flu because they're viral infections, so ask your pharmacist for the best treatment for you. Taking antibiotics when you don't need them encourages dangerous bacteria that live inside you to become resistant. That means that antibiotics may not work when you next need them most. This puts you and your family at serious risk.

When it comes to antibiotics, take your doctor's advice.

Search: NHS Antibiotics

Keep Antibiotics Working

CARERS' CAFE

Are you a carer? Make sure to let your practice know even if you are an "informal" carer looking after a friend or relative. They can then help you access support.

Our Carers' Café has been hugely successful, with exceptionally good feedback from carers and patients who have attended in large numbers! Representatives from Carers in Herts and Crossroads, as well as other organisations, have provided invaluable advice; we've offered blood pressure checks and flu/ covid vaccinations. The Positive Movement exercise class has been very popular and Hitchin Tilehouse Rotary Club have kept everyone fed and watered!

All carers and the person for whom they care are welcome every Friday morning 10am – 12noon at St Mary's Church Hall, Hitchin.



We'll be having a Christmas themed café on Friday 15th December – do come along!

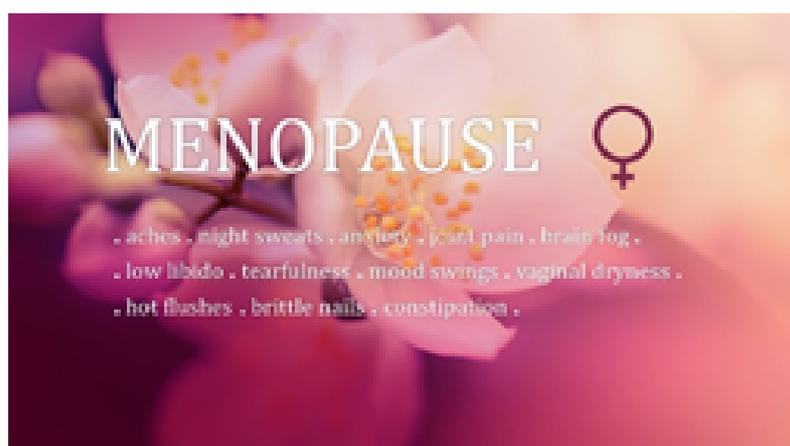


MENOPAUSE MEETINGS

Our first menopause meeting was so popular that we ran a second and the free tickets "sold out" within 45 minutes! The evening meetings were held in Hitchin Town Hall's Lucas Room, with 60 spaces available each time.

Huge thanks to our speaker, Dr Anna Mallott, from Bancroft Medical Centre, for providing an informative and entertaining event with plenty of time for questions from the audience. We were delighted to have so much interest although a little disappointed that only half of those who had registered actually turned up on the night.

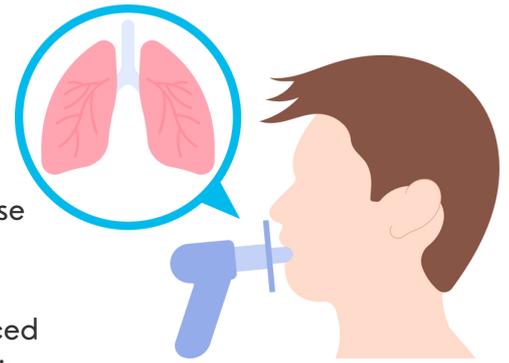
We are keen to have your ideas for other subjects which you'd like to hear about! Please email hwpcn.admin@nhs.net with your thoughts.



RESPIRATORY SERVICES

During covid, some of our respiratory services were limited due to safety concerns.

We're pleased to let you know that spirometry, which helps diagnose breathing issues such as asthma and COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, sometimes called bronchitis or emphysema), is now available for all practices to access on Saturdays during Enhanced Access. Your own practice respiratory nurse may also be offering this service.



PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP MEETING (PPG)

We held an evening on-line PPG meeting for the primary care network on 23rd November and, in response to participants' suggestions, we're planning to meet PPG representatives from a large and successful PPG in Harpenden. The aims of their PPG are:

- Influence decision making which affects patients
- Improve service quality
- Improve communication between staff and patients.



The Harpenden PPG is chaired by a patient representative and organises educational webinars, with recordings available to access via their website, as well as fund raising for equipment and practice resources.

Any patients who would like to join our PPG, please do email hwpcn.admin@nhs.net to be added to our mailing list! We plan to have another meeting in February 2024.

NEW CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONER

We are delighted to let you know that, in partnership with Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust, we have appointed an experienced Children and Young Person's Mental Health Practitioner, Martha Dzenga.

Martha is currently working with us to develop pathways for our young people who are suffering with mental health problems and we will have more details of this service in the New Year.



BLOOD PRESSURE CHECKS

Did you know that high blood pressure can have no symptoms but be silently causing damage to your health?

Anyone over 40 who has not already been diagnosed with high blood pressure can have a free blood pressure check at participating pharmacies: [Find a pharmacy that offers free blood pressure checks - NHS](#) (www.nhs.uk).

If your GP has sent you a letter or text asking you to get your blood pressure checked for any reason, these pharmacies can also offer you a blood pressure check. You may need to book an appointment.

Do you know the risks of high blood pressure?

