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|  | **ST ALBANS MEDICAL GROUP**  **NEWSLETTER**  **www.stalbansmedicalgroup.nhs.uk** |  |
| **Winter 2017** |

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| **Thank you for taking time to read our latest newsletter. The seasonal newsletter is one of the areas identified for improvement by our patient representatives to help keep you informed of practice matters.**  **Patients are invited to make contributions to the surgery newsletter. If you have anything you would like to contribute that will be of interest to other patients, please put it in writing and send for the attention of the reception supervisors.**  **For all the latest news about the practice please take a look at our new website: www.stalbansmedicalgroup.nhs.uk** |
| **Surgey News ……………………….**  ***Dr James Taylor*** joined the practice in September 2016.  Nurse Practitoner ***Sandra Sowiack*** joined the practice in October 2016.  Nurse Practitoner **Laura Hare** joined the practice in October 2016  Dr ***Maria Fitzgibbon*** returned to the practice following maternity leave and has joined the practice partnership in January 2017 |

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| **Date for you diary -** Practice Half Day Closing. The practice will be closed at 12.30pm on the following days for the Gateshead wide half day training and development.  **23/02/2017**  **08/03/2017**  **26/04/2017**  **18/05/2017**  **12/07/2017**  **20/09/2017**  **11/10/2017**  **16/11/2017** |

**Online Access**

Many of our patients are using Online Access to book/cancel appointments, order repeat medication. This has now been extended to enable online access to your medical record.

If you would like to apply for online access please collect an application form from the surgery, or download a form from the practice website: www.stalbansmedicalgroup.nhs.uk

Because of the importance of keeping your personal information secure, we will need to verify your identity and explain the risks involved before providing online access to your medical record.

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| **National Screening Programme**  **Aortic Aneurysm Screening -**  http://aaa.screening.nhs.uk  In some people, as they get older, the wall of the aorta in the abdomen can become weak. It can then start to expand and form what is called an abdominal aortic aneurysm. The condition is most common in men aged 65 and above.  AAA screening is a free national screening programme that screens men aged 65 plus to check if they have an abdominal aortic aneurysm. The screening is by invitation and uses an ultra sound scan. If you are a man aged over 65 you are more likely to have an abdominal aortic aneurysm that any other demographic so this is why you will be invited for screening.  **Breast Screening**  All women who are aged 50-70 and registered with a GP are automatically invited for breast cancer screening every three years.  In the meantime, if you are worried about [breast cancer symptoms](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Cancer-of-the-breast-female/Pages/Symptoms.aspx), such as a lump or area of thickened tissue in a breast, don't wait to be offered screening – see your GP.  **Bowel Screening**  All patients between the ages of 60 to 74 are routinely invited for bowel screening. If you are over the age of 74 you will not be routinely invited but can make further enquires about screening.  **Cervical Screening**  NHS **cervical screening** programme is available to women aged 25 to 64 in **England**. All eligible women who are registered with a GP automatically receive an invitation by mail. ... Women aged 50 to 64 receive invitations every 5 years. |
| **Text Reminders**  **The surgery would like to resume text message reminders please ensure we have the correct mobile number for you.** |

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| **Fit notes and proof of sickness**  Self-certification – employers can ask you to complete a form SC2 if you have been off work for 4 or more days in a row. They should provide you with this form or you can download one from the [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) website.  Employees only need a Fit Note (previously called a ‘sick note’) from a doctor if you have been off sick for more than 7 days in a row (including non-working days). If you have been in hospital they should provide this for you when you are discharged.  The fit note will say that you are either ‘not fit for work’ or ‘may be fit for work’ with adjustments – your employer should then discuss with you any changes that might help you to make an earlier return to work (eg different hours or tasks).  If you are unable to return to work by the end of your fit note we will not be able to issue another one until the previous one has expired. |

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| **Appointments**  **We are currently making some changes to the appointment system. Please bear with us whilst we implement this and make further changes as necessary.**  A range of accessible clinical appointments are available at the surgery, some are available to book on the day for problems that won’t wait until the first available routine appointment, some up to a week in advance and others currently up to a month in advance.  You may also be offered a phone call if you feel this is appropriate.  There is also an option of being seen at the extra care hub, by the pharmacist or you may choose to call 111 for medical advice.  Please remember that five of the doctors work part-time in the practice due to commitments elsewhere therefore it will not always be possible to see them within one week. If you would like a review appointment with a named GP please book well in advance. |

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| **Electronic Prescriptions**  It is now possible for prescriptions to be sent to a nominated pharmacy electronically.  In order for us to do this we need you to let us know which pharmacy you would like your prescriptions to go to and that you are happy for them to be sent electronically. You may have already signed up to do this via your preferred chemist  There are some medications (such as controlled drugs) that we cannot send by electronic prescription so this facility will not be suitable for all patients.  Please remember if you ever choose a different chemist your next prescription will go to that chemist unless you inform us otherwise  Our prescription line is available 24/7 please call on 0191 438 36 76  It takes us two working days to generate your prescription and a further 24 hours for the chemist to dispense therefore consider this when ordering your medication.  The practice has a new policy in place where we will only prescribe certain medication when you have run out therefore it is in everyone’s interest to make sure you are ordering in time.  If you are disorganised like me set a monthly reminder on your mobile phone or contact Tracey Groves at the practice to discuss repeat dispensing. |

**Medical Exemption Certificates**

We would like to make patients who have a medical exemption certificate aware that that the NHS Business Services Authority have been issuing fines to people who have not renewed their certificate. A rule change means that these certificates must be renewed every 5 years but many holders do not realise this and have not been sent a reminder. For more information about this go to [www.nhsbas.nhs.uk/HealthCosts](http://www.nhsbas.nhs.uk/HealthCosts)

or ring 0300 330 1341.

**Check in on arrival**

When you arrive at the surgery, please make sure that you check in before you take a seat so that the doctor or nurse knows that you are waiting. You can use the touch screen to let us know that you have arrived – this can be quicker for you when the receptionist is busy dealing with other patients.

If you don’t want to use the touchscreen please see the receptionist to let her know that you have arrived.

If you do not check in on arrival you may miss your appointment and have to wait until the end of surgery.

**Pharmacy First**

The Pharmacy First scheme is available to adults who are entitled to free prescriptions on the grounds of low income & to their children. People over 60 are also entitled to use the scheme.

Free advice & treatment is available for all sorts of minor health conditions such as bites, stings, chicken pox, colds, colic, cold sores, conjunctivitis, constipation, coughs, cystitis, dermatitis, eczema, diarrhoea, ear wax, fungal & yeast infections, muscular aches & pains, genital thrush, hay fever, head lice, heartburn & indigestion, mouth ulcers, nappy rash, oral thrush, threadworms, warts & verrucae.

Contact your local pharmacy for more information.

**Private medicals for HGV or PSV Licenses**

There have been changes to the medical examination forms for renewal of these licenses and we strongly recommend that patients see an optician to get the first part of the form completed before seeing a doctor to complete the medical.

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| **Friends and Family test**  The NHS Friends and Family Test (FFT) is a feedback tool which gives people who use NHS services the opportunity to provide feedback on their experience. The FFT question asks if people would recommend the services they have used to their friends & family and offers a range of responses.  Please use the FFT cards provided in reception or by using the link on the practice website to give us your feedback. |