

Holbrook Surgery Patient Participation Group [PPG] HOLBROOK SURGERY NEWSLETTER

23rd Edition

January 2026

Happy New Year! All best wishes from everyone at the Surgery and Holbrook PPG Committee. Winter is a very busy time for the Surgery so in this issue we have started with a few simple ways to stay well, use the right service and keep up to date with vaccinations and screening.

Stay Well This Winter – Self Care and '**Pharmacy First'**

Cold weather can worsen existing conditions and increase the risks of falls.

Simple Steps for Winter Wellness

- **Keep Warm** – Aim to heat your home to at least 18°C [65°F]. Layer your clothing and have warm drinks.
- **Eat Well** – A balanced diet helps keep your immune system strong. Try to include plenty of fruit, vegetables and hot meals.
- **Stay Active** – Gentle movement, even indoors, can boost circulation and mood. Getting out in the sunshine [when we get it] is beneficial to our physical and mental health.
- **Get your vaccines** – It is not too late to get your flu and Covid-19 vaccine. Contact the Surgery to get your flu vaccine. For Covid-19 you will need to book through the national booking system online or by calling NHS 111. You need hurry however as the last date to get your Covid – 19 vaccine is 31st Jan. Online booking closes on 30th Jan. To obtain these vaccinations there are tight eligibility criteria.
- **Make sure you order repeat prescriptions in time** – If you are concerned about going out to collect your prescription it is possible to arrange to have these delivered to your home.

For further information about keeping well and eligibility criteria for vaccinations see <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/seasonal-health/keep-warm-keep-well/>

'**Pharmacy First'** – Help without a GP appointment

Your local pharmacy can now offer expert help for many common illnesses such as:

- Coughs, colds, and sore throats
- Earache
- Sinus infections
- Urinary tract infections [UTIs] for women under 65
- Insect bites, skin rashes, and minor problems

Under the '**Pharmacy First'** Scheme, trained pharmacists can give advice, treatment, and can supply certain medicines all without needing to see your GP. This means faster care for you and less strain on the Surgery. The pharmacists are also experts in over-the-counter remedies and will know whether they are safe to take with your normal medication.

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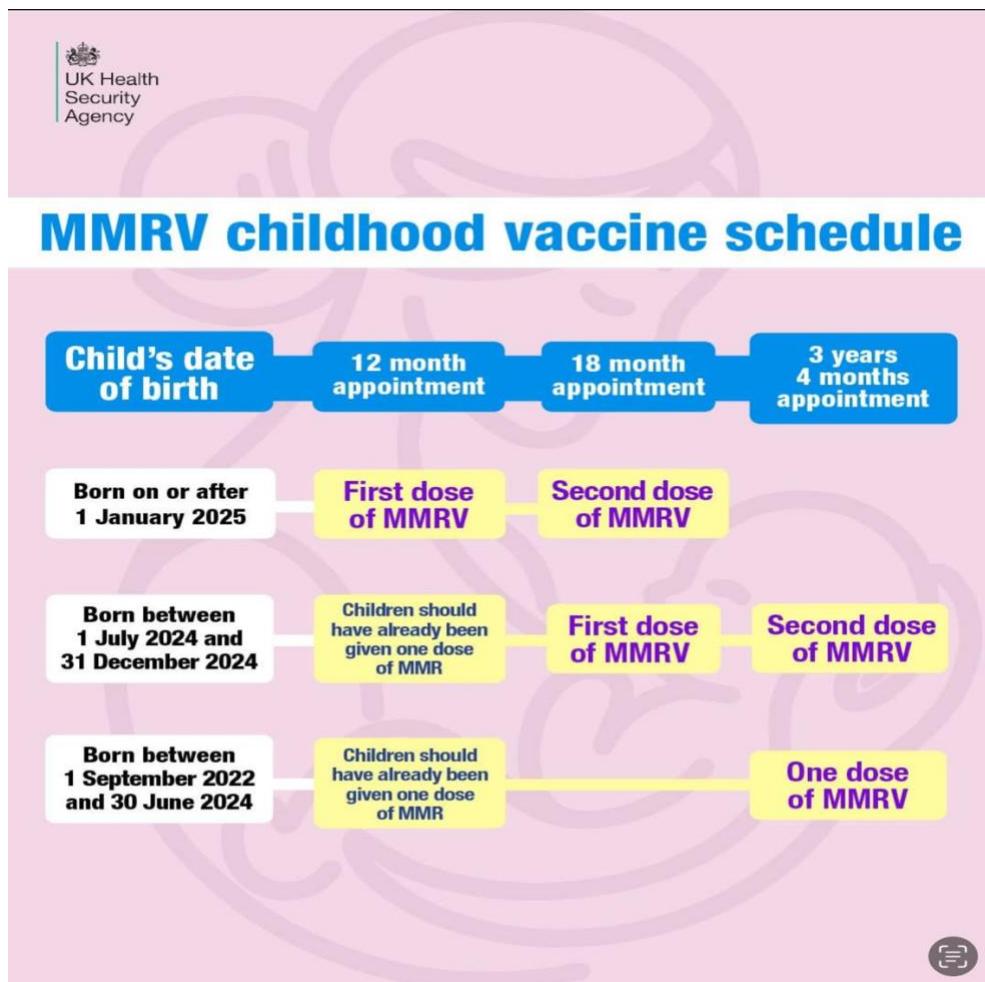
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Children now offered protection against chickenpox

For most children, chickenpox can be mild, but for others it can be serious and lead to complications and hospitalisation.

From 1st January 2026, children will now be offered protection against chickenpox as part of the NHS routine childhood schedule from 12 months old.

Children who were born between 1st January 2020 and 31st August 2022 will be offered a single dose of MMRV from November 2026 as part of a catch up. For children over the age of 6 years old, it is likely that they have already had chickenpox and are eligible for their MMR vaccine.



Childhood Immunisation Schedule

In our next Newsletter we will provide details on the vaccination of babies and younger children, however if you need information about this now please see <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/>

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Mammograms for Women aged over 71 – A patient's experience

When women reach the age of 71, they are no longer called for a three-yearly mammogram, but you can request one by calling the West Sussex Breast Care Centre.

One of our patients, who is 84 years old, heard about this so requested one. Following her scan, she was informed that something had shown up based on a comparison with her previous scans. It was at Stage 2, and no lump was able to be felt because of its position. By the time she could have felt it the tumour would have been much more advanced. A biopsy was arranged and for her to then have day surgery to remove the tumour. The time from the scan to her surgery was all within three months. The patient concerned is so pleased that she had a mammogram. She says that 'we are very lucky to have such an excellent specialist centre so near to us'. She also said that "the staff were very caring and kind." She recommends that women over 71 should consider having a regular mammogram and should make this a priority for the New Year.

The West Sussex Breast Care Centre is situated behind Worthing Hospital Tel no 01903 239757

'Pharmacy First' – More about this and progress so far

This initiative was launched in January 2024 and allows community pharmacists to diagnose and supply prescription-only medicines for seven common conditions. It is understood that in its first 12 months five million people had used this service.

Healthwatch conducted a survey to see how this initiative is progressing and found that 86% of respondents reported a positive experience of visiting the pharmacy for support with the conditions covered by the scheme. Results vary of course and a lot of people were unaware of the fact that pharmacists could treat these conditions without involving the GP.

The underlying message was that Pharmacy First is proving valuable in speeding up treatment and relieving pressure on GP surgeries but still has some way to go.

We have listed the seven conditions for which pharmacists can offer advice and prescription medicines in previous Newsletters and also referred to them in the first item, but it is worth repeating them

- Impetigo [aged 1 year and over]
- Infected insect bites [aged 1 year and over]
- Earache [aged 1- 17 years]
- Sore throat [aged 5 years and over]
- Sinusitis [aged 12 years and over]
- Urinary tract infections [UTIs] [women aged 16 to 64 years]
- Shingles [aged 18 years and over]

If you or a member of your family is suffering any of these conditions, please consider a visit to your pharmacist for advice and treatment.

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Weight Loss Medication

This has received a lot of public attention. This can be prescribed by a GP but only in a few cases. To be eligible you must have a BMI of 40 or higher and have at least four of the following conditions: -

- ⇒ Hypertension
- ⇒ Dyslipidaemia
- ⇒ Obstructive sleep apnoea
- ⇒ Atherosclerotic Cardiovascular Disease [ASCVD]
- ⇒ Type 2 diabetes mellitus

For further information <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/obesity/treatment/>

Your PPG Committee – New members

As a result of an item in the last Newsletter we are very pleased to report that we have recruited three new Committee members. They are Natasha Long, a mother of 9-year-old twins who works as a consultant in the pharmaceutical industry; Cinzia D'Amico who is a translator and linguist and also a representative on various public bodies; and Catrina Flook who is a RGN nurse, health visitor and now works as a Digital Clinical Lead for the Healthy Child Programme covering West Sussex, and Brighton and Hove. They all have a great deal to contribute and importantly are all younger patients! We now feel we have the opportunity to be more representative of all patients.

YOUR VIEWS ARE IMPORTANT

We are always very keen to hear your views and to know what issues you feel are important. Are we covering the right things in our Newsletters? In our last Newsletter we mentioned the new Health Check Kiosk and that the GPs were now using *Heidi Health* to help them record patient consultations. We would be very interested to hear if you have had any experiences of these new developments. If you have any feedback, please email us on holbrookppg@gmail.com

STOP PRESS

COVID-19 vaccinations – There is going to be a Spring Covid Booster, and the Surgery has decided that it will offer this rather than patients having to go to a vaccination centre via the national booking system. This is great news for patients. The Spring Booster will be for over 75s and those who are immunosuppressed. No details yet as to when the clinics will be held.

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