

# Patient Newsletter

Spring 2010

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## The Team

We were sorry to have to announce the retirement of Dr David Gover and Dr Shirley Gover from the practice at the end of March, after many years of service to the patients of Watchet and Williton. I am sure they will both be greatly missed by many.

Dr David Lonsdale-Eccles and Dr Cristina Cooper will also be leaving the practice at the end of March and we would like to wish them every success with their futures.

We will also be saying goodbye to Sister Anna Morgan from the permanent team, although Anna will continue to do some work for the practice on an adhoc basis.

On a happier note we would like to welcome Dr Vanita Moorthy to the practice partnership on a permanent basis following her work with the practice as a salaried GP.

Dr Rachel Charles will also be joining the team in March on a temporary contract.

## Whole Practice Training Days

The surgery in Williton will be closed on the following dates for staff training:

17 March 2010 – 1.30 pm to 5.00 pm  
21 April 2010 – 1.30 pm to 5.00 pm  
18 May 2010 – 1.30 pm to 5.00 pm

Once again we apologise for any inconvenience caused to our patients and thank you for your support in this matter.

## Appointment System

We have recently made some changes to our appointment system with a view to improving same day access to patients needing appointments urgently.

We continually battle to make sufficient appointments available to meet demand. Help us to help you by understanding how to get the most out of our system.

Please pick up a copy of our special edition newsletter which gives you lots of information about how our appointment system works.

## Hay Fever & Allergies

**Symptoms:** blocked or itchy nose, sore, streaming and watery eyes, blocked ears, sneezing, sinus pain, tickly throat and/or itchy palate, blisters or skin rashes.

Hay fever and allergies happen when you come into contact with a substance that your body is unusually sensitive to. With hay fever it is the pollen in the air, but allergies can be caused by any substance – from specific kinds of foods to animal fur and dander. These substances are called allergens and they can stimulate the release of histamine from cells in the skin. This causes a reaction such as swelling.



**Common allergies include:** pollen, house dust mite, moulds, pets, insect bites, industrial and household chemicals, some medicines and foods. Less common allergens include nuts, fruit and latex. Certain drugs such as penicillin can cause allergic reactions.

How can I avoid and treat hay fever and allergies?

- When you have an allergic reaction, try to identify what causes it and avoid coming into contact with the substance or situation in the future.
- If you get hay fever, look out for the pollen count, which is published in many newspapers and is often on TV weather forecasts.
- Ask your pharmacist for advice, there are a range of remedies available to treat hay fever and allergies (especially if taken early) like antihistamines, nasal anti-inflammatories (which reduce inflammation and swelling in the nose), decongestants and eye drops. Make sure you tell your pharmacist if you have high blood pressure – as some medicines may not suit you.

Where to get advice

- If you experience recurring allergic symptoms, tightness of chest, wheezing or shortness of breath contact your GP surgery or call **NHS Direct** on 0845 4647.
- A more serious, but relatively rare type of allergic reaction is anaphylaxis or anaphylactic shock. People known to be at risk must see a GP for advice and treatment and carry a pack of emergency medicines at all times.
- An organisation called **MedicAlert** can help to provide emergency identification for people with allergies. Call 020 7833 3034 or go to [www.medicalert.org.uk](http://www.medicalert.org.uk)

## Weight Loss Clinic

With media attention focusing more and more on the importance of healthy eating and a healthier lifestyle, it would appear that our patients here in Watchet

and Williton are at least getting the message.



For those who are determined to lose weight and adopt a healthier lifestyle, the clinics offer support and guidance on how to achieve the balance of good health. Support can make all the difference to your success in the quest to lose weight.

If you would like more information about the support we offer, or would like to make an appointment for either surgery, please contact Kim at Williton and she will be happy to advise you.

## Spots

Spots are caused by the skin producing extra grease, which blocks the pores, causing bacteria to be trapped beneath the surface.

Spots can happen because of hormonal changes such as during adolescence, or during (or just before) menstruation and can also appear because of stress.

Acne is a more severe and prolonged amount of spots, usually on the face and neck, and often happens during puberty and adolescence. Acne can be distressing and may need medical treatment.

How can I treat spots?

- Wash the affected area twice a day with water or a mild product – avoid strong soaps.
- Avoid greasy, heavy make-up and cleanse the skin thoroughly every night.
- Squeezing or picking your spots may only make them worse and could cause scarring.

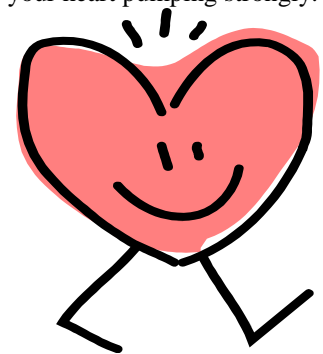
- If you get a sudden bout of spots it could be an allergic reaction.
- Ask your Pharmacist for more advice. There are many treatments available such as creams, face-washes, cleansers and abrasives (although excessive use can make things worse).
- Drinking plenty of water and eating a healthy balanced diet may help you have healthy skin.

Where to get advice

- Ask your Pharmacist who can recommend the best treatment and give advice for spots.
- If you are still worried visit a GP who may prescribe antibiotics or refer you to a specialist.
- If you also have a headache, pain, high temperature or other symptoms ask your Pharmacist, a GP or call **NHS Direct** on 0845 4647 for advice as it could be an infection such as chickenpox.

## Steps to a Happy Heart

**Take more exercise.** Do at least 30 minutes of activity five times a week or more. Even moderate daily exercise like digging the garden, mowing the lawn or walking up stairs rather than using the lift makes a big difference. Any aerobic exercise, like swimming, jogging, walking, cycling or even dancing will improve circulation and keep your heart pumping strongly.



**Eat a healthy diet** rich in fresh fruit, vegetables, carbohydrates and a small amount of protein. Cut down on red and fatty meat and avoid fry-ups and

fish and chips. Cut down on full-fat milk, cream, full-fat cheese and butter. Eat at least five portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables a day and have oily fish like tuna or mackerel once or twice a week – they contain omega-3 oils, which help protect the linings of the arteries.

**Cut down alcohol** to two small glasses of wine (maximum two to three units) a day. Too much alcohol raises your blood pressure and puts you at greater risk of heart attack and stroke.

**Chill out.** If you have a stressful job or are juggling home, family and work, take a look at your lifestyle and work out how you can reduce the stress in your life. Physical activity combined with relaxation techniques like deep breathing can help relieve your stress symptoms.

**Lose Weight.** Being overweight increases your chance of heart disease. Ask the nurse at your doctor's surgery to work out your body mass index (BMI) and if it's between 25 and 30 you're overweight. If it's over 30 you're obese. If you have too much weight around your middle, often called an 'apple shape', this can also be a risk factor, even if you're not generally overweight.

**Cut out Cigarettes.** No matter how old you are it's never too late to stop smoking. Five years after you give up, the risk of getting coronary heart disease is the same as for someone who's never smoked.

**Get a Check-up.** Every man over 50 should have regular check-ups, particularly for blood pressure and cholesterol levels. High blood pressure is a key risk factor for heart disease (the normal range of blood pressure readings is from 120/80 to 140/90). Remember also that being overweight is an added risk for heart disease.

## Travel Clinics

Are you lucky enough to be planning your summer holiday abroad?

If so, please make sure that you contact the surgery in sufficient time to complete any course of necessary travel vaccinations that you may require.

This is extremely important if you are travelling somewhere more exotic this year. Please speak to a receptionist for further information.



## On-line Repeat Prescriptions

If you are experiencing difficulties in phoning the surgery at peak times to order repeat medication, then the practice website may be a useful facility. As well as providing detailed information about the practice, it allows you to **ORDER REPEAT MEDICATION** on line.

Why not make a note of the website address which is:

[www.westsomersethealthcare.co.uk](http://www.westsomersethealthcare.co.uk)

The surgery has peak periods when it is more difficult to get through and we would recommend that you do not try to contact us during these times unless you have to. Monday is obviously the busiest day of the week in general but we also experience very high volumes of calls each morning up until about 11.00 am. We feel sure that our on line prescription service will be beneficial to patients.

Please take a few minutes to visit our website as it not only holds a great deal of information about the surgery but other detailed sections of useful information such as facts about common ailments and health issues.

## Indigestion

Many of us are familiar with that feeling of bloating, discomfort or even pain after we've overdone it with food or drink. It is not a pleasant experience. Indigestion, also known as **heartburn** or dyspepsia, is any symptom or collection of symptoms caused by disruption of the body's digestive system. Some people will have symptoms every day and others only occasionally.

How can I treat indigestion symptoms?

- Eat sensibly and avoid spicy, fatty and/or rich meals, especially just before bedtime.
- Try to eat slowly and chew well.
- Try to cut down on alcohol.
- If you smoke, stop. If you struggle to stop, try cutting down.
- Put an extra pillow under your head at night as it is harder for the acid to flow uphill.
- Get active as it helps your digestion.
- Try not to get stressed as this can trigger indigestion.

Where to get advice:

- Ask your pharmacist to advise you on the range of indigestion remedies available to treat symptoms like heartburn, excess acid, feeling bloated or trapped wind.
- Speak to a GP or call **NHS Direct** on 0845 4647 for more advice if:
- Symptoms suddenly get worse, are not relieved by medication, go on for longer than one week or come back when you stop taking your medicine.
- You are under 16 or over 45 years old
- You have any other symptoms such as weight loss, vomiting, blood in your motions (poo) or they are very dark or black
- You find it difficult to swallow or it feels like food sticks in your throat when you swallow
- You are short of breath, wheezing or coughing

- You have a severe pain in your back, throat, ear, chest or neck
- You have ever had surgery on your stomach, a stomach ulcer, bleeding in your stomach or intestine, or you have anemia.

## Patient Group

The Patient Group is an advisory group of patients whose members work voluntarily with the surgery, acting as 'critical friends' to help the practice improve services for the patient population.

The practice feels it is extremely beneficial to have patient involvement and that the group's constructive and challenging views help the surgery to better understand the patient perspective and be more responsive in their service delivery.

The delivery of general practice is changing under the new NHS and the practice continues to face a variety of challenging government objectives and priorities, which are continually changing. General practice is the most commonly used point of access in the NHS. 90% of those who use general practice services will be diagnosed and treated without being referred for further specialist treatment. Current government policy therefore aims to improve both access to services locally and patient choice.

The group provides a forum to work with the practice on a variety of areas, including such issues as:

- Considering service suggestions which could benefit groups of patients or individuals, providing a patient perspective
- Assisting in evaluating and prioritising demands on our resources
- Determining responses to patient satisfaction questionnaires and forming suitable action plans to address patient concerns
- Acting as a sounding board for future surgery plans

- Improving communication between patients and the surgery
- Considering specific operational issues as raised from time to time
- Acting as a forum to discuss complaint trends, to seek improvements or to determine appropriate courses of action
- Acting as patient support for specific events

The practice works in partnership with the group and it is hoped that this approach will help to influence the provision of health and social care locally within the wider health community.

Watch out for information on the Patient Group display boards that will let you know what work is currently being undertaken by the group.

The group is not a forum for individual agendas or personal complaints. Complaints must be made directly to the practice to comply with the standardised NHS Complaints Procedure and be handled under a strict code of confidentiality.

If you have a complaint, please either speak to one of the practice team or pick up the practice information leaflet on complaints.

### MEMBERSHIP

Members of the group are selected to provide a cross section of users. Announcements will be placed on the Patient Group Notice Board when new members are required. If however, you have a specific interest in becoming involved now then please contact the Group Chairman.

### OFFICERS

Chairman	Mr Peter Rowe
Vice Chair	Mrs Sheila Sadler
Secretary	Mrs Gail Thomas

If you would like to contact the group with a suggestion or to request further information about their role, you can write to the either the Group Chairman

or Secretary at the address below or email them directly on [patient.group@willitonsurgery.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.group@willitonsurgery.nhs.uk)

## Recipe

An easy microwave recipe for the kids to make during the school holidays.

### CHOCOLATE CRUNCH

**Makes about 16 slices**

180g butter  
 1 cup cornflakes  
 1 cup desiccated coconut  
 ¾ cup caster sugar  
 1 cup self-raising flour  
 2 tablespoons cocoa



Method:

1. Put butter in small bowl. Cover with paper towel and microwave it on medium (50%) for 2 ½ minutes, until it melts.
2. Put cornflakes, coconut and sugar in a bowl.
3. Sift in flour and cocoa. Add melted butter. Mix well.
4. Press firmly into greased 20cm square dish then microwave on medium high (90%) for five minutes.
5. Ice with chocolate icing while still warm.

WE ONCE AGAIN THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO READ OUR NEWSLETTER, WE HOPE YOU FOUND IT INFORMATIVE.