

WELCOME TO OUR

Monthly Newsletter

FEBRUARY 2025



IN THIS ISSUE:

- January Statistics
- Stay Well this Winter - advice from Public Health
- Adding an Online Triage
- Sicklines after Hospital Care

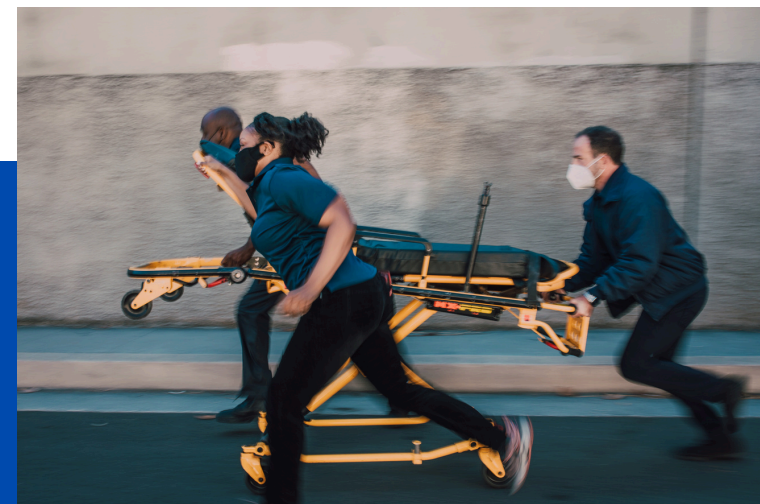
If you're going to the Emergency Department

You can check on the current waiting times for your local A+E department at <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/emergency-department-average-waiting-times>

Not sure if you need the Emergency Department?

Ring Phone First and speak to a healthcare professional for advice on where to get treatment.

For more information, go to <https://online.hscni.net/our-work/no-more-silos/phone-first-faqs/>



STAY WELL THIS WINTER

ADVICE FROM THE PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY

Winter conditions can be seriously bad for our health, especially for people aged 65 or older and people with long-term health conditions such as heart or kidney disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (including emphysema and chronic bronchitis), asthma or diabetes.

Being cold can raise the risk of increased blood pressure, heart attacks and strokes. The cold, damp weather, ice, snow and high winds can all aggravate any existing health problems, increase the risk of a fall, and make us more vulnerable to respiratory winter illnesses. But there are lots of things you can do to stay well this winter.

During the colder winter months when people stay indoors for longer (often in larger groups) there is an increase in the number of people experiencing coughs, colds and flu-like illnesses. Most people with flu and COVID-19 recover at home, but these viruses can make some people seriously ill.

It's important to get vaccinated if you are eligible, even if you have had previous flu and COVID-19 vaccinations or have had one or both of the viruses, as protection will fade and both viruses can change over time. Find out more about the flu and COVID-19 vaccines and who can get them for free at www.nidirect.gov.uk/winter-vaccines Pregnant women and adults aged from 75-79 years can get vaccinated against Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV). People aged 80 years old and over can get the vaccine up to and including 31 August 2025.



For most people RSV causes a mild respiratory illness with cold-like symptoms, but for babies under one year and older adults there is a significant risk of severe infection, which could result in being taken to hospital. To find out more about the RSV vaccine and how to get it, visit www.nidirect.gov.uk/rsv/older-adult or www.nidirect.gov.uk/rsv-pregnancy Also, don't forget that if you're aged 65 or over, or have certain health conditions, you are eligible for the pneumococcal vaccine, which will help protect you from pneumococcal diseases such as pneumonia. For more information, contact your local GP surgery or visit www.nidirect.gov.uk/conditions/pneumonia



Common illnesses	Most people are better by
Earache (middle ear infection)	8 days
Sore throat	7 - 8 days
Sinusitis (adults only)	14 - 21 days
Common cold	14 days
Cough or bronchitis	21 days
Norovirus (winter vomiting)	2-3 days

CHECK YOUR SYMPTOMS AND PRACTICE SELF CARE

You can check your symptoms and find out more about a range of conditions by searching online for 'nidirect health conditions A-Z'

If you are not starting to improve by these guide times, CONTACT YOUR GP!

- Keep warm
- Get plenty of rest until you feel better
- Drink plenty of fluids (your pee should be light yellow or clear)
- Have a least one hot meal a day to keep your energy levels up

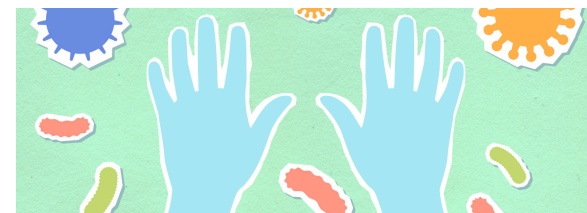
Many over-the-counter medicines (including paracetamol and ibuprofen) are available to relieve symptoms of common winter ailments such as colds, sore throat, cough, sinusitis or painful middle ear infection (earache).

It's a good idea to ask your pharmacist what medicines should be in your cabinet to help get you and your family through the winter season. Before going to your GP, it is also worth speaking to your pharmacist. They are qualified to give advice about different health matters, including minor illnesses. If your symptoms suggest it's something more serious, pharmacists can tell you if you need to see a GP or go to the Emergency Department.

PRACTICE GOOD HYGIENE

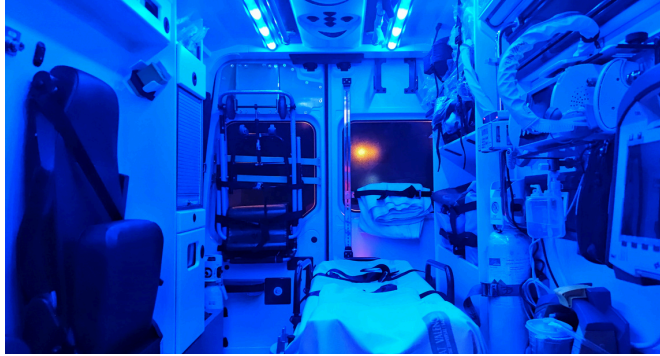


Washing your hands with soap and water is one of the easiest ways to protect yourself and others from catching many viruses. Hand washing is particularly important when you're visiting someone in hospital or another healthcare setting



Washing your hands properly removes dirt, viruses and bacteria to stop them spreading to other people and objects, and can help stop the spread of common winter infections. If you do not have immediate access to soap and water, then use alcohol-based hand sanitiser.

SERIOUS ILLNESS

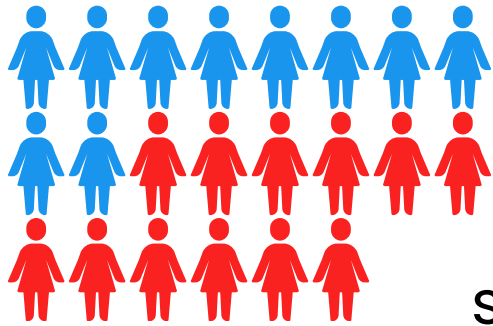


THESE SYMPTOMS ARE POSSIBLE SIGNS OF SERIOUS ILLNESS AND SHOULD BE ASSESSED BY A HEALTH PROFESSIONAL URGENTLY

- If your skin is very cold or has a strange colour or you develop an unusual rash
- If you feel confused or have slurred speech or are very drowsy.
- If you have difficulty breathing, including breathing quickly, turning blue around the lips and the skin below the mouth, skin between or above the ribs getting sucked or pulled in with every breath.
- If you develop a severe headache and are sick.
- If you develop chest pain
- if you have difficulty swallowing or drooling
- if you cough up blood
- if you are feeling a lot worse

If you, your child or someone you know has any of these symptoms, are getting worse or are sicker than you would expect (even if your/ their temperature falls), trust your instincts and seek medical advice urgently from your GP. If a child under the age of five has any of symptoms 1–3, go to the Emergency Department immediately or call 999.

MEADOWBRIDGE ONLINE STATISTICS



636
Newsletter
subscriptions

21
NEW
newsletter
subscriptions
in January



ADDING AN ONLINE TRIAGE

NEXT >>>

01

Have your message ready prior to 8.30am.

02

Log into the patient services account for the patient prior to 8.30am.

03

Add patient details using a 'Triage Symptoms' slot.

04

Call back from a member of the practice team.



Points to Remember when adding an online triage



EMAIL RECEPTION.Z00382@GP.HSCNI.NET TO REQUEST A REGISTRATION TOKEN FOR YOURSELF OR A FAMILY MEMBER

A SPECIFIC NUMBER OF SLOTS ARE RELEASED AT 8.30AM IN LINE WITH GP CAPACITY



LOGGING IN

- Remember to log in to the account of the patient in question
- Select an appointment slot with the name "Triage Symptoms"
- Please have your message pre typed prior to 8.30am logging in as the appointments fill up very quickly

APPOINTMENT INFO

- Ensure you're contact number is included
- Please give a brief summary of your symptoms
- Please state if you are able to attend on the day of appointment

GENERAL POINTS

- The time of your booking is NOT an appointment time
- Triage is an ALL DAY call back service
- Ensure to keep your line free to allow a member of the practice team to call you back

SICKLINES AFTER HOSPITAL CARE

FACTS AND MYTHS

If you are likely to need a sickline (AKA a Med3) when you come out of hospital or following an Outpatient attendance, please ask the consultant treating you in hospital to provide you with one before you leave. Here are some myths and facts about this issue



MYTHS

- "Consultants and junior doctors don't write fit notes"
- "Fit notes are the GP's job"
- "The hospital can only issue a fit note for 2 weeks max"
- "The hospital can't issue a fit note when you've only been seen in outpatients"

FACTS

- The doctor who is treating you at the time has a statutory obligation to provide you with a fit note if you need one. This includes all hospital doctors.
- The doctor who is treating you should sign you off for the appropriate period according to the condition you have been treated for.
- Each fit note in first six months of an illness can only have a maximum duration of 3 months.
- Many patients will not need that length of med3 and a note is not required to go back to work sooner than the duration
- Both private and NHS doctor can issue Fit Notes

ACTION

- For more information, go to <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fit-note>
- If you encounter difficulty, please contact:
 - Belfast Trust 028) 9504 8000 complaints@belfasttrust.hscni.net
 - Northern Trust 028 9442 4655 user.feedback@northerntrust.hscni.net
 - Southern Trust 028 3756 4600 serviceuserfeedback@southerntrust.hscni.net
 - South Eastern Trust 028 9056 1427 complaints@setrust.hscni.net
 - Western Trust 028 7161 1226 complaints.department@westerntrust.hscni.net
 - Ulster Independent Clinic 028 9066 1212 <https://ulsterindependentclinic.com/contact/>
 - Kingsbridge 028 90 667 878 governance@kingsbridgehealthcaregroup.com

Why is this important? Why doesn't the GP just do it?

Thousands of appointments and telephone calls with GPs are taken up each year by patients requesting fit notes when they could have been issued by Hospital Drs and Healthcare Professionals. This has a direct effect on how other patients can access the GP. Please help us to keep our appointments free for patients who have genuine clinical need rather than administrative paperwork that could easily have been dealt with by others at the end of your hospital visit or stay.



Testicular Torsion

The typical symptom of torsion of the testicle (testis) is severe pain that develops quickly – within a few hours, often much more quickly.

The pain might be in the lower abdomen (tummy). This is because the testis and the tummy share a nerve supply. Any boy or young man with abdominal pain that came on quickly and severely should have their testes checked.

Testicular torsion pain often starts during sport or physical activity. Alternatively symptoms may start in the night and the pain wakes you from sleep. Nausea and vomiting often also occur.

Note: easing pain is not necessarily a good sign because pain also eases as the testis starts to die. Occasionally, the symptoms are milder.

Twisting (torsion) of the testicle (testis) is an emergency. If the blood supply to your testis is cut off for more than about six hours then permanent damage is likely to occur. An emergency operation is usually done so go straight to an emergency Department for assessment.



Dates for your February diary

1st: Dignity Action Day

3–9th: Children's Mental Health Week

3–9th: Sexual Abuse and Sexual Violence Awareness Week

4th: World Cancer Day

5–11th: National HIV Testing Week

6th: International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM

6th: Time to Talk Day

11th: Safer Internet Day

20th: World Day of Social Justice

23rd: Helplines Awareness Day

24–2nd Mar: Eating Disorders Awareness Week

28th: Rare Disease Day

HEART MONTH

February is Heart Month and this year The British Heart Foundation is urging people to take at least 10 minutes a day to help improve their heart health as well as support their annual fundraiser, Wear it. Beat it.

TAKE 10 MINUTES TO CHANGE YOUR LIFE THIS HEART MONTH

There are currently seven million people in the UK living with cardiovascular disease, which includes heart attack and stroke. However, in many cases people can reduce their risk of these conditions by improving their diet, doing more physical activity and quitting smoking.

New statistics we're releasing today show that less than a third (30%) of adults in England eat five pieces of fruit and vegetables a day, and 33% of men and nearly half (45%) of women do not do the recommended 150 minutes of physical activity a week. To better understand these trends, we carried out a survey that showed a lack of time and motivation are top of the list in terms of barriers that are preventing people being as healthy as they would like. The survey found that almost a quarter (23%) of people said their family or work commitments get in the way of them leading a healthier lifestyle, with 20% saying losing motivation is the biggest barrier currently preventing them from leading a healthier lifestyle.

For more information on heart health, go to <https://www.bhf.org.uk/>

JANUARY STATISTICS

An outlook of work output throughout the month of January by all practice staff.

MEADOWBRIDGE SURGERY | 2025

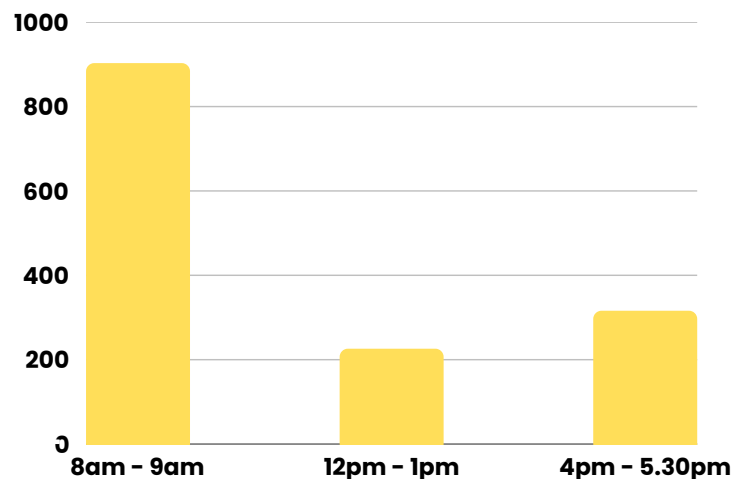
TELEPHONE STATISTICS

3,283

Incoming Telephone Calls to the Practice



AVERAGE CALLS RECEIVED HOURLY



**Average Patient Wait Time
once in the queue**

2 minutes 57 seconds

DAILY TRIAGE AREAS



49

Patient Home
Visits by a GP



3,538

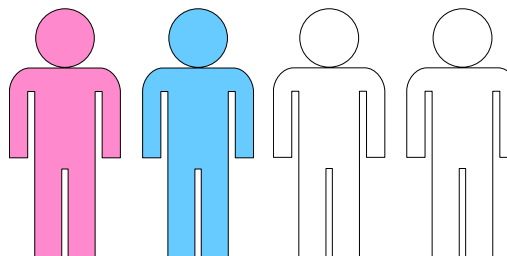
Face to Face
Appointments



748

Triage call back to
Patients

APPOINTMENTS BOOKED AND NOT ATTENDED



165

These are
appointments that have
been wasted and could
have been offered to
another patient.

ADMINISTRATION TASKS



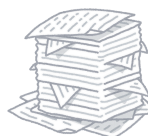
1,870

Hospital letters
actioned by Practice staff



5,666

Prescriptions
Issued



21,466

General Admin
Tasks by Clinical and Admin Team



2,360

Patient Results
Reviewed