

The Centre Practice

PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP (PPG)

NEWSLETTER - Spring, 2025 (issue 5)

In this edition of the PPG Newsletter, we are going to explore:

1. The role of the Social Prescribing service
2. Self-referral options
3. You Said – We Did
4. Hay fever & treatments
5. Use of sun cream
6. Dealing with insect bites
7. Joining the PPG



Social Prescribing is a service provided by the NHS, in addition to standard GP functions, and is available through the practice. Social Prescribing aims to support people to improve their health and wellbeing through non-medical support.

The Fareham & Portchester PCN Social Prescribers cover four surgeries, Centre Practice at Fareham Health Centre, Gudgeheath Lane surgery, Portchester Health Centre and Westland's Medical Centre.

Referrals can be made via the surgery reception, by any professional, or by self-referrals from patients. Email hiowicb-hsi.social.prescribers@nhs.net.

1
If you would like help and support with weight loss, reducing your alcohol intake, or you are trying to give up smoking, the social prescriber can provide a variety of help and support. They can help you to find out about non-medical support and services to improve your mental and physical health, sense of wellness and independence.

The Social Prescriber can either provide support directly or put you in touch with other services which can provide the help needed. In addition to the above, a social prescriber can also look for services in the community such as -

- Befriending, counselling and support groups
- Volunteering, training and employment opportunities
- Accessing specialist services and support
- Opportunities for education and learning

If you are looking to lead a healthier and more active lifestyle get in touch with the social prescriber today!

For full details, and information on regular local where no appointment is needed follow the link here

<https://farehamandportchesterpcn.gpweb.org.uk/pcn-services/social-prescribing-service>

2. Self-referral options

Did you know there are a number of services that enable a patient to self-refer directly to a pharmacy, rather than seek treatment by the traditional route of a GP referral. These include-

- Cold or Flu symptoms
- Sore throat
- Cough
- Diarrhoea
- Skin / Rash issues
- Hay Fever

Pharmacists are qualified healthcare professionals and can offer clinical advice and medicines for all sorts of minor ailments, with a same day consultation at a time that suits you.

Here is the link to see if your condition is appropriate for self-referral.

<https://farehamcentrepractice.co.uk/digital-triage-for-minor-illnesses>

If you do not have access to the online website please visit or phone reception.

For all these issues contact, or visit your pharmacy in the first instance, prior to using the self-referral option. With the Pharmacy First scheme, your local pharmacy is equipped to provide you with initial advice - <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/pharmacies/how-pharmacies-can-help/>

3. You said - we did

You requested a Newsletter; we are now on issue 5 and this can be requested via the website, or you can pick up a copy in the Practice, or in the very near future in the Fareham Leisure Centre, Fareham Library and FB Fareham Matters.

You said that you find it difficult to get through to the secretaries at the surgery by telephone as the lines are very busy. We understand that there is currently no option to leave a message, or request to be put on hold, and the only option is to redial and go through the process of reaching the secretaries again. You have told us that after repeated calls you are still having problems getting through.

We have raised this issue with the practice manager, who is reviewing options including the possibility of having a queue process, similar to when you are told what number you are in the queue when you first call the practice. The practice manager is also reviewing a new telephone system.

We will feedback on the results of this in our next newsletter, so please sign up and stay tuned.

4. Hay-fever & Treatments

Hay fever is a common allergy that causes sneezing, coughing and itchy eyes. You cannot cure it, but there are things you can do to help your symptoms, or medicines you can take to help. Symptoms include sneezing and coughing, a runny or blocked nose, itchy, red or watery eyes, itchy throat, mouth, nose and ears, loss of smell, pain around the sides of your head and your forehead, headache, feeling tired.

Symptoms are usually worse between late March and September, especially when it's warm, humid and windy. This is when the pollen count is at its highest. Hay fever can last for weeks or months, unlike a cold, which usually goes away after 1 to 2 weeks. A pharmacist can help with hay fever, such as providing: antihistamine tablets, eye drops for eye symptoms or nose spray for nasal symptoms. Each treatment takes at least 3 days to be effective and can take up to 2 weeks.

Some antihistamines can make you sleepy, so speak to your pharmacist about non-drowsy antihistamines if you need to. Further information is on the following NHS site:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/hay-fever/> , and also Allergy UK has a fact sheet here - <https://www.allergyuk.org/resources/allergic-rhinitis-and-hay-fever-fact-sheet/>

5. Use of Sun Cream

We need the sun to enable us to get vitamin D, but we need to be sun safe because sunburn increases your risk of skin cancer. Sunburn does not just happen on holiday. You can burn in the UK, even when it's cloudy.

There's no safe or healthy way to get a tan. A tan does not protect your skin from the sun's harmful effects. Aim to strike a balance between protecting yourself and getting enough vitamin D from the sunlight. Make sure you:

- spend time in the shade between 11am and 3pm (March to October)
- never burn
- cover up with suitable clothing and sunglasses
- take extra care with children
- use at least factor 30 sunscreen

Sunscreen, what to look for:

- a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30 to protect against UVB
- at least 4-star UVA protection. UVA protection can also be indicated by the letters "UVA" in a circle, which indicates that it meets the EU standard.

Make sure the sunscreen is not past its expiry date. Do not spend any longer in the sun than you would without sunscreen. For further information go to the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/seasonal-health/sunscreen-and-sun-safety/>

6. Dealing with insect bites & stings

Insect bites or stings are not usually serious and get better in a few days. Sometimes they can become infected or cause a serious allergic reaction. Bites from some insects can also cause illnesses, such as Lyme disease from ticks, scabies from mites, and malaria from mosquitoes in certain parts of the world. With Lymes disease one of the main warning signs is a circular or oval shape rash around a tick bite. The rash may look like a bullseye on a dartboard.

The main symptoms of an insect bite or sting are pain where you were bitten or stung and/or a small swollen lump on the skin that may look red. There may be a mark on the skin where you were bitten, sometimes bites are together in a group. A pharmacist can advise you about medicines that can help ease the symptoms of a bite or sting (for ages 1+). They can also provide other treatments if you need them.

You may have a mild allergic reaction, where the skin becomes itchy around the bite or sting and may become swollen. Sometimes the edges of the rash may feel slightly raised if you've been bitten by a tick or visited an area in the past 3 months where infected ticks could be.

Easing your symptoms. If there's nothing in your skin, or you've removed it, wash your skin with soap and water to help lower the chance of infection. Put an ice pack wrapped in a cloth or a clean cloth soaked in cold water on the bite or sting for at least 20 minutes, if it's swollen

- keep the area raised if you can
- take painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen if the sting is painful
- use antihistamines to relieve any itching (but do not use antihistamine cream if you have caterpillar hairs on your skin)
- use a hydrocortisone cream to reduce itching and swelling

Avoid

- do not scratch the bite or sting, as it could get infected
- do not use home remedies such as bicarbonate of soda to treat the bite or sting

If your symptoms get worse or you start to feel unwell contact your GP or 111. For further information please click on the link: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/insect-bites-and-stings/>

7. Join the PPG

Your feedback is very important to us. If you have any improvement ideas to help enhance the service you receive, or concerns about the surgery that you would like to be discussed by the members, please email tracy.carter6@nhs.net or write a letter for the attention of the PPG Chair at the Centre Practice, or ask at reception.

The PPG meet every 3 months at the surgery, and you can give as little or as much time beyond this as you like.

For more details take a look at our section on the website –

<https://www.farehamcentrepractice.co.uk/patient-participation-group>

We look forward to hearing from you!