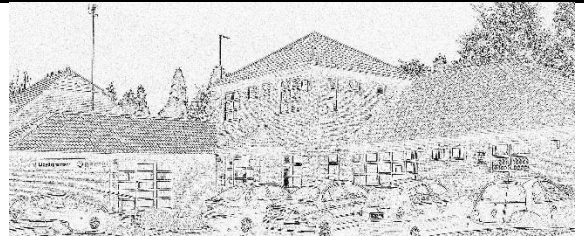


YOUR HEALTH NEWS

THE RIDGEWAY SURGERY AND RIDGEWAY SURGERY PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP NEWSLETTER

Spring Edition 2024



***** Welcome to the fourth edition of The Ridgeway Surgery Newsletter *****

(If you need this Newsletter in LARGER PRINT or an ALTERNATIVE LANGUAGE, please advise Reception).

A copy of this Newsletter will appear on the website : www.ridgewaysurgery.co.uk.

Please feel free to take a copy of this Newsletter home with you. There are feedback forms on the Website and in Reception. Do keep Reception updated with any changes to your contact details.

COVID SPRING BOOSTER UPDATE

We have recently received notification of the spring 2024 booster campaign. This will commence 22nd April and end 30th June. Eligible patients are adults 75 years and over, care home patients and immunosuppressed patients aged 6 months and over. Patients will be sent an invitation nationally and we will also be contacting them.

NEW TELEPHONE SYSTEM

Patients may have already noticed that our phone system has changed recently. All GP practices nationally have had to upgrade to a cloud-based phone system this year, one that allows a call-back feature, a queuing feature and the ability to run reports. The new system also records all calls, unless a patient asks us not to. As changes go, it has been pretty smooth and we hope our patients like the new system. If patients would like to feedback on their experiences of the new system they can email us at ridgewaysurgery@nhs.net or complete a feedback form on our website or at reception.

MEASLES

There has been an outbreak of measles in the West Midlands and almost half the children contracting it have had to be hospitalised. We have been proactively contacting patients due an MMR vaccination, sending texts to parents of all children who have not had the required 2 lots of the vaccine. We have also searched for those under 26 years that also need vaccinating and we have vaccinated anyone that has direct patient contact needing vaccination. We have also publicised the MMR pop up clinics held locally

ABDOMINAL AORTIC ANEURYSM SCREENING

An abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) is a 'bulge' or 'blowout' of the main artery in the body that travels from the heart down the centre of the body. An AAA is caused by weakness or disease of this artery.

If an AAA develops then it may be silent and cause no symptoms at all until it ruptures or leaks. This can cause a sudden life threatening event from which 8 out of 10 men will die before they can get to hospital. Such a catastrophic event can mostly be prevented if the AAA is diagnosed early, so the NHS is offering all men over the

age of 64 the opportunity to be screened to see if they may be developing an AAA. Only men are offered screening as they are 6x more likely to develop an AAA than women.

If an AAA is picked up early then it can be monitored with further scans and if it is enlarging to the point when rupture might occur, then planned surgery can be offered and the AAA repaired. This is much safer than any emergency procedure. Screening is a simple painless ultrasound procedure of the abdomen, similar to the ultrasound pregnant women have. The scan only takes a few minutes but could save your life.

AAA Screening is now offered to all men after the age of 64. The invitation will be sent to the patient and the screening scan does not normally need to be requested. If an AAA is found then planned surgery will be offered if the AAA becomes larger than 5.4cm across. At this size the AAA is at risk of rupturing. Smaller aneurysms will be monitored with further routine scans.

Those at greatest risk of AAA are:

- Older men
- Obese men
- Smokers
- Men with a family history of AAA
- Men with high cholesterol
- Men with hypertension

OTHER HEALTH ISSUES

Shingles vaccinations

The shingles vaccine helps protect against shingles, a common condition that causes a painful rash. It can sometimes lead to serious problems such as long-lasting pain, hearing loss or blindness. You are more likely to get shingles, and it's more likely to cause serious problems, as you get older. It is possible to have shingles more than once so if offered a shingles vaccination, it is important to take it.

People eligible to have a shingles vaccination are

- People who turn 65 on or after 1 September 2023
- People ages 70 to 79
- People aged 50 plus with a severely weakened immune system – in this case the vaccine will be different.

Vitamin D

Various sources, and the Government according to the NHS website, recommend taking a Vitamin D supplement between October and March when there isn't so much sunlight or opportunity to be outside.

Sunshine helps the body make vitamin D which is good for bones, muscles and teeth. Vitamin D supplements are available over the counter. The NHS website indicates that a sensible daily dosage is 10 micrograms per day (400 IUs) for adults and children over 4. Please note that people at high risk from a deficiency of vitamin D (eg people with darker skin or those who don't get outdoors) can benefit from taking a supplement throughout the year.

Also, please note that if you are already on medication for bone strength then take advice before taking a daily Vitamin D supplement. Dietary Vitamin D sources include oily fish such as salmon, eggs, red meat and liver.

Danger of broken bones from falls and the increased likelihood of falls with frailty

As we get older and more frail the negative impact on us from broken bones increases. It may affect mobility, ability to live independently, confidence and mental health. It may mean hospitalisation. Recovery takes longer and the prognosis may not be good. It is important that we do as much as possible to help ourselves to prevent falls and minimise the risk of bone fractures. This not only includes taking action to remove trip hazards at home (for example, taking up loose rugs) but doing what we can to improve our balance and muscle strength. The NHS has some suggestions for simple exercises to do at home to boost muscle strength and improve balance. Search "strength exercises" at www.nhs.uk to find some examples.

Dudley has a Falls Prevention Team who can give help and advice. Telephone 0300 555 0055 or email fallsspa@dudley.gov.uk