
NEWSLETTER

Welcome to our fourth edition of the Lincoln House Surgery Newsletter. The aim of the newsletter is to keep patients up to date with events and new developments at the surgery.



Welcome Dr Jaffer

We are delighted to welcome Dr Wajeeha Jaffer to our team. Some of you may have already had the pleasure of seeing her. Dr Jaffer is our new Salaried GP and joined the Surgery in November 2014, after completing her GP VTS training in Watford and Berkhamsted. She will be available on Mondays and Tuesdays.

Medication Reviews

We would like to remind all patients on regular or repeat medications to book an appointment with the GP when their medication review is due. The medication reviews are usually set 6 monthly or yearly depending on the medical problems you have or the type of medication you are on. It is important that you attend the medication reviews so we can monitor your clinical condition, perform tests and investigations such as blood pressure, spirometry, blood tests etc, and discuss any side effects of medications.

Patient Participation Group

Did you know that Lincoln House has its own PPG? We would like to use this Spring Newsletter to remind our patients, and customers, of the opportunity to understand more about what it does and how you can participate, to ensure all the Surgery Patients continue to receive the high level of service we currently enjoy.

The Lincoln House PPG is fairly new and open to any Patient to join. The PPG was instigated and driven by the surgery GPs to reflect a need to involve Patients in the way the surgery operates and performs. Regular meetings are now being led by a patient representative and meet some four times each year and last for a couple of hours and although minutes are kept the meetings are conducted in a friendly, informal manner.

The aim of the PPG is to strengthen the relationship between the Practice & its Patients and to assist the Practice in continuing to improve its provision of healthcare whilst ensuring that Patients are at the heart of decision making.

To help us develop we have signed on to a recent initiative to share best practices with other Dacorum PPGs. This is going to be channelled through the Herts Valley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). The CCG works with patients and healthcare professionals and are responsible for arranging emergency and urgent care services and for commissioning services. All GP practices are linked to a clinical commissioning group.

Do you have a view on how Lincoln House performs? If you would like to share that view and help us achieve our aim please get involved. All you need is a willingness to join us and ideally an email address but we are very happy to accept your ideas on paper should that suit you better. Even if you are unable to attend the meetings we will distribute information to you and welcome your comments.

So, contact us now at lincolnhouseppg@gmail.com.

Support your PPG and help your local National Health Service

Article by Christopher Cook (PPG Chair)

Access to your Summary Care Record

You can now see your summary care record via Patient Access which is available online or as a mobile phone or tablet app. This will show your significant medical problems, medications, allergies and adverse reactions. Patient Access also allows you to book routine appointments and order repeat prescriptions at a time and place convenient to you without having to wait to get through on the phone.

Attention any CARERS

Do you look after an adult or child who is ill, frail, disabled, has mental health problems, or misuses drugs or alcohol? We are working in partnership with Carers in Hertfordshire to offer support for those who have caring responsibilities. We have a CARER'S CHAMPION at our Surgery and are keen to identify people registered at this practise who are carers. If you are carer this is an opportunity to let the practise know so that we can update our records. There is a Carer Identification form available for this purpose which can be obtained, and handed in, at reception.

Making Carer's Count

Volunteers play an invaluable role in our hospitals doing a huge number of jobs for which we are extremely grateful. The Carer Support Team is a new team of volunteers who aim to give practical support to the 2,000 carers who pass through the Starfish Ward each year (our children's ward in Watford Hospital)

Starfish cares for children up to 16 years old and most admissions to the ward are unplanned. Carers often lack a 24/7 support network and are usually very stressed as they face sitting beside their sick child, often for indeterminable periods of time.

Volunteers from the carer support team may sit with the child while the carer takes a shower or help the carer compile questions to ask their child's consultant. The team also distribute information sheets and work closely with the nurses on the ward to make the time families spend on Starfish ward a bit easier. The carer support team was started by a mum whose child has spent a lot of time on starfish ward. She has since recruited 10 additional volunteers and secured funding for the team through a variety of different bodies including The Hertfordshire Community Foundation, John Lewis, Watford Council, Mosaic Hair Studio in St. Albans and MD Pharmacy on Whippendell Road. Funding helps to cover costs of volunteer training courses, handbooks, uniforms and the compilation and distribution of information sheets.

If you know of anyone who is interested in volunteering and joining our carer support team, please contact Chadwick Livingstone, Volunteer Services Co-ordinator at wherts-tr.volunteers@nhs.net or 01923 217 307

(contributed by Sally Malyon - PPG member)

Hypertension

High blood pressure is the biggest known cause of disability and premature death in the UK through stroke, heart attack and heart disease. One in three adults in the UK has high blood pressure and every day 350 people have a preventable stroke or heart attack caused by the condition.

What is blood pressure?

When your heart beats, it pumps blood round your body to give it the energy and oxygen it needs. As the blood moves it pushes against the sides of the blood vessels. The strength of this pushing is your blood pressure. Blood pressure is not usually something that you feel or notice. The only way to know what your blood pressure is, is to have it measured. Blood pressure is measured in 'millimetres of mercury' (mmHg). When your blood pressure is measured it will be written as two numbers. For example, if your reading is 120/80mmHg, your blood pressure is '120 over 80'.

What is high blood pressure?

If your reading is consistently 140 over 90, or higher, over a number of weeks you probably have high blood pressure. Your blood pressure may also be high if just one of the numbers is higher than it should be. High blood pressure usually has no signs or symptoms, so the only way to know if you have high blood pressure is to have yours measured. However, a single high reading does not necessarily mean you have high blood pressure. Many things can affect your blood pressure through the day, so you will need to see that it stays high over time.

Why is high blood pressure important?

If your blood pressure is too high, it puts extra strain on your heart and blood vessels. Over time, this extra strain can damage your body's organs, which puts you at risk of health problems. If you have high blood pressure and do not control it, this raises your risk of a heart attack or stroke. High blood pressure can also cause heart and kidney disease, and is closely connected to some forms of dementia.

What causes high blood pressure?

For most people, there may be no single cause for their high blood pressure. We do not know exactly what causes high blood pressure. We do know that your lifestyle can affect your risk of developing it. You are at a higher risk if: you don't eat enough fruit and vegetables; you eat too much salt; you are not active enough; you are overweight; you drink too much alcohol.

Some people may have high blood pressure that is linked to another medical condition, such as kidney problems. For these people, treating the medical problem can lower their blood pressure back to normal.

Some other things that can affect your blood pressure Age: as you get older, the effects of an unhealthy lifestyle can build up and your blood pressure can increase. Ethnic origin: people from African-Caribbean and South Asian communities are at greater risk than other people of high blood pressure. Family history: you are at greater risk if other members of your family have, or have had, high blood pressure.

A healthy lifestyle to lower your blood pressure

If your blood pressure is too high, you can make healthy changes to your lifestyle to help bring it down. The following changes to your diet and activity can have a real effect on your blood pressure.

1. Eat less salt

Too much salt raises your blood pressure, so it is important to eat as little as possible. Most of the salt you eat is not what you add to your food, but is in prepared foods like bread, breakfast cereals and ready meals. Don't add salt to food when cooking or at the table. When shopping for food, check the labels and choose low-salt options when you can.

2. Eat more fruit and vegetables

Eating more fruit and vegetables helps to lower your blood pressure. Adults should eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day. A portion is 80 grams, or roughly the size of your fist. Try to eat a range of different fruits and vegetables. Dried, frozen and tinned are fine, but watch out for added salt, sugar or fats.

3. Drink less alcohol

If you drink too much alcohol, this will raise your blood pressure over time. The current recommended limits are 21 units of alcohol a week for men, and 14 units a week for women. A unit is roughly half a pint of beer or cider, a small glass of wine, or a single pub measure of spirits. If you keep to the recommended alcohol limits, this should help keep your blood pressure down.

4. Keep to a healthy weight

Losing weight, if you need to, will help lower your blood pressure and reduce your risk of health problems. The best way to lose weight is to choose more low-fat and low-calorie foods, and increase your physical activity. Set yourself realistic goals. Make small changes in your diet and activity levels that you can keep to for life.

5. *Get more active*

30 minutes of moderate exercise five times a week can keep your heart healthy, and can lower your blood pressure. If you can't find 30 minutes in your day, increasing your activity by even a small amount can help. Think about how you can be more active in your daily life. Any activity that leaves you feeling warm and slightly out of breath is ideal.

Medicines for high blood pressure

There is a wide range of medicines available for high blood pressure. Most of these are grouped under four main types of medicine:

ACE inhibitors

Angiotensin receptor blockers

Calcium channel blockers

Thiazide diuretics

There are other types of medicines available, but these four types are most commonly used today. Finding the right medicines for every person is different, and some types of medicine work better in different types of people. What works well for a friend or relative may not work so well for you. Many people find that one medicine alone will not lower their blood pressure enough. Each type of medicine works in different ways in your body, so taking more than one should have more of an effect on your blood pressure.

Getting the most from your medicines

High blood pressure cannot be cured, and if you need to take medicines, you will probably need to keep taking them for life. If you stop, your blood pressure will rise back up again. It is very important to keep taking your medicines, even if you don't feel unwell. By keeping your blood pressure low you are protecting your heart and blood vessels from damage and disease.

Working with your doctor or nurse

Your doctor or nurse will want to see you again relatively soon after you start a new medicine. This will be to make sure that it is working well for you, and that you are not feeling any side effects. If you begin to feel different after you start a new medicine, you can check the list of side effects on the leaflet that comes with it. But it may be more useful to speak to your doctor or nurse, or your pharmacist. They are experts in medicines and can advise you. If you are having side effects from a medicine, your doctor or nurse can change your dose, or try a different medicine which may work better for you.

Article from the Blood Pressure Association - Introducing high blood pressure