

Bridge & Monkseaton Medical Practice

Patient Newsletter

Spring 2024

**Spring into action! Winter is gone! Spring into action...
summer come on!**

This edition we aim to update you on the following

- What do you say about us?
- Merger update
- Teaching kids to swallow pills
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Vitamin D
- Hayfever: time to get prepared, quick reminder
- Bridge Medical book exchange



What do you say about us?



The PPG meets 3 times per year for an hour. Members are involved in some of the practice campaigns, such as Flu Clinic and our annual Christmas Hamper campaign organised with the local school. If you are interested in joining, please contact our Deputy Practice Manager, Janet Pallace, who will be happy to give you more information.



Important Update: Merger

The practices are merging: what does this mean?

NHSE and the ICB have approved our application to merge MMC and BM. The contract merge happened on 1st April 2024.

The practice phone numbers remain the same and website addresses will lead to one merged practice website at a later date.

Our new name is **Bridge and Monkseaton Medical Practice**.

This will mean there is one contract but both sites remain open with same clinical staff and same GP services already in place at both sites.

We will be sending out information digitally and by letter to update patients of changes as they happen.

You can find more information, including FAQs, on our practice website: monkseatonmedical.nhs.uk/proposed-merger-of-monkseaton-medical-centre-and-bridge-medical/

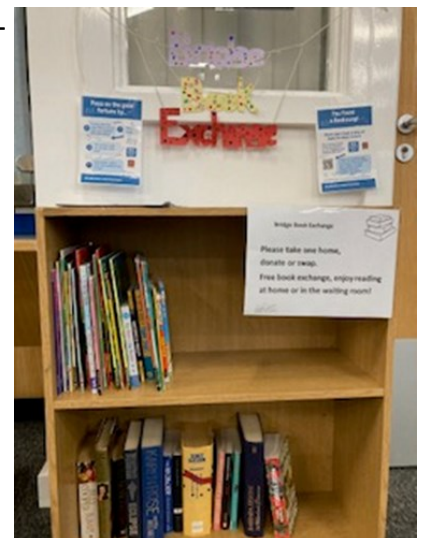


Book Exchange

We now have a book exchange within the Bridge waiting room! We hope to allow for the community to share books and encourage families to read and enjoy books.

It is a **free** book exchange, so you can enjoy reading at home or in the waiting room! You are welcome to borrow them and bring them back to swap for another, or bring back a different book. We encourage you to donate any books you can, particularly children's books.

The book exchange is located on the right of the Bridge Medical reception desk within the Shiremoor resource centre waiting area.



KidzMed: Teaching Children to Swallow Pills

KidzMed is a guide designed by a team at the Great North Children's Hospital to help carers teach children and young people to swallow pills using an easy six-step technique.

Why is it better to swallow pills instead of liquids?

There are a number of reasons why swallowing pills is better for you, your children, and for us:

For you:

Pills do not need to be kept in the fridge, have a longer shelf-life, and are easier to carry around.

For children & young people:

Many children do not like the taste of liquid medicines, children who can swallow pills have fewer problems taking their medicines, and pills contain less sugar than liquid medicines.

For us:

The pharmacy are more likely to stock pills, liquid medicines are more expensive and have a greater negative impact on the environment.



Pill swallowing: a guide for carers



Resources Available:

You can find the KidzMed resources by following the link below. This contains a **useful guide and short animated video with six simple steps** to help teach a child or young person to swallow pills safely.

There are plenty of tips to help if you are struggling and a certificate to give your child once you have been successful.

The resources are available in 14 different languages, and if you would like to know more, they have a longer video and a series of podcasts as well.

You can find out more by visiting [nenc-healthiertogether.nhs.uk](https://www.nenc-healthiertogether.nhs.uk)

Mental Health & Wellbeing

We would like to take this opportunity to introduce our new Mental Health and Wellbeing Coordinator Eve Morton who, alongside Beth Houghton will be available for appointments at the surgery to help you with your wellbeing. Eve is originally from East Yorkshire but moved to Newcastle in 2013 to study psychology at Northumbria University. She has been a part of our administration team for the past year. In her time outside of work she loves all things performing arts, as well as getting outside in the sun!

Writing for Health

Last year there we had great feedback from the creative writing group 'Writing for Health' ran for our patients by Amanda . These sessions are delivered in 5 weekly blocks at Shiremoor Library right next to Bridge Medical. If you think you might want to come along to one of these sessions, meet new people and discover the benefits of writing for mental health, then please contact Beth or Eve who can refer you for this. course.

The next course will be starting in the Spring.



Getting Outdoors

There are many benefits of getting outdoors this spring. Not only can it help your physical health by being more active, it can also improve your overall wellbeing by getting some fresh air.

WinG Outdoor Activities through Living Well North Tyneside – this service provides a range of wellbeing activities which involve getting outside in the fresh air, meeting new people and taking up a new interest of hobby. This includes canoeing, walking, cycling, rock climbing, bushcraft sessions and more.

The service provides transportation, professional instruction and any equipment you may need.

You can visit their website for more information:

www.wingoutdooractivities.org

Telephone 07506176888


WinG
Outdoor Activities



Mental Health & Wellbeing

Walking Group

Beth and Eve restarted their Wellbeing Walking Group on 12th March 2024 after the success of last years walks. With the lighter nights and (hopefully) better weather now is a great time to start walking in the fresh air, get some steps in and help improve your physical and mental health. You also get to meet new people and have fun at the same time!



North Tyneside Walking Groups

There are other walking groups in North Tyneside if you would like to get active, join a club and meet new people!

Active North Tyneside

This is a group which mainly walks around North Tyneside with different options of starting points. The groups are all free and give you an opportunity to meet new people. For further details call Active North Tyneside on 0191 643 7171 or visit: www.activenorthtyneside.org.uk/wellbeing-walks

Red Kite Ramblers

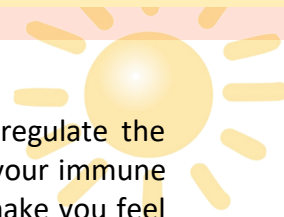
This is a group that regularly walk and go on scenic routes around North Tyneside and the North East of England. They have a full timetable available on their website: www.redkite-ramblers.org.uk

Whitley Bay Park Run

The Park Run is not just for runners, there are also people who walk the 5km every Saturday at 9am as a great way to get some fresh air, take in our lovely coastal views and get your steps in. This is also free to join but you need to sign up online beforehand through the website: www.parkrun.org.uk/whitleybay



Vitamin D: A Guide to a Healthier YOU!



Why is Vitamin D Important?

Vitamin D (also known as colecalciferol or ergocalciferol) is a vital nutrient that helps to regulate the amount of calcium and phosphate in the body. From supporting strong bones, to bolstering your immune system, vitamin D is a vital nutrient in your overall wellbeing. Low levels of Vitamin D may make you feel tired or have aches and pains. However, very low levels of Vitamin D (also known as vitamin D deficiency) can cause rickets in children and osteomalacia in adults.

<u>Lots of Vitamin D:</u>	<u>Lack of Vitamin D:</u>
Strong bones	Feeling tired
Strong teeth	Muscles aches and pains.
Keeps muscles healthy	Bones become softer and weaker; osteomalacia
Improves the immune system	Can affect bone development in children; rickets
Improves mood	

Sources of Vitamin D

Vitamin D is primarily made in the skin by safe sunlight exposure. One of the best ways to increase vitamin D levels is by spending time outdoors and in the sun. However, be careful not to burn and take good care of your skin especially during the summer.

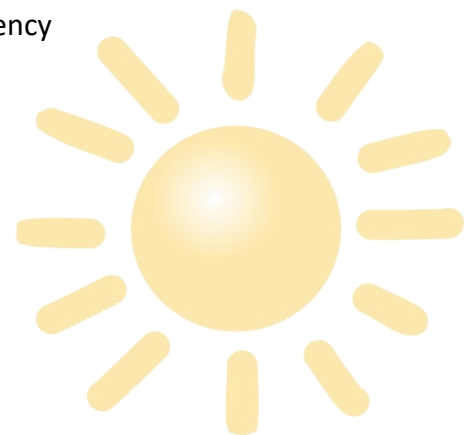
Vitamin D can also be found in certain foods like oily fish (such as salmon and sardines), egg yolks, red meat, mushrooms and fortified foods such as cereals. Its important to try and eat these foods as part of a healthy and balanced diet.

Who Needs to Take Vitamin D Supplements?

It is recommended that people who are at risk of vitamin D deficiency take a maintenance dose of Vitamin D to prevent this.

People are at risk of a vitamin D deficiency if they:

- Are not outdoors enough
- Wear clothes that cover up most their skin
- Have darker skin tones
- Have a diet restricted to certain foods (e.g. vegans)



What dose of Vitamin D do I need?

It is recommended that **all adults during the autumn and winter** should take a maintenance dose of vitamin D as there is too little sun during these months.

Adults are recommended to take a maintenance dose of 10 micrograms (mcg) a day to help prevent a vitamin D deficiency. Sometimes micrograms are expressed as μg . The amount of vitamin D can also be expressed in International Units (IU). 1 microgram is the same as 40 IU. Therefore, 10mcg is the same as 400IU.

Where can I buy Vitamin D supplements?

Vitamin D (commonly sold as colecalciferol) can be purchased at a low price from pharmacies and supermarkets. However, if your vitamin D levels are very low you may be prescribed a treatment course to help boost your vitamin D levels. You will then need to buy the maintenance dose to prevent the levels from falling again.

Hay Fever

Hay fever is a common condition that affects around 1 in 5 people in the UK. People who suffer from asthma or eczema are more likely to have hay fever.

When the body is exposed to certain substances it can trigger the immune system to overreact by releasing histamine in the nose, eyes and airways which then cause inflammation. These triggers can be pollen (from weeds, trees, and flowers), dust mites and fur from pets. Symptoms can be either all year round or seasonal.

Symptoms include:

Sneezing
 Red, itchy, puffy, or watery eyes
 Headaches and sinus pain
 Itchy, blocked or runny nose
 Itchy throat
 Fatigue

Treatment depends on how severe the symptoms are and what is being affected (nose, eyes). Sometimes symptoms are manageable without treatment but sometimes treatment is required with either topical treatments (nose sprays or eye drops) or oral tablets.

Hayfever can be self-treated by going to the pharmacy and the medicines are often cheaper to buy than on a prescription.

Anti-allergic medicines can also be bought from supermarkets.

Some medicines must be taken or used regularly for full effect whereas other medicines can be taken on a 'when required' basis.

For more information about this, please ask at the pharmacy.

If you take any prescribed medicines please ask at the pharmacy if there are any interactions with hay fever medicines.

USEFUL TIPS

Keep house and car windows closed, especially when the pollen count is high (early morning between 7am to 9am and evenings between 5pm and 7pm).

Avoid large grassy areas, woodland, cutting the grass, pollutants and car fumes

Wear wrap-around sunglasses

When you get in from outside wash your hands, face, hair, rinse your eyes and change your clothes

If possible, stay indoors when the pollen count is high

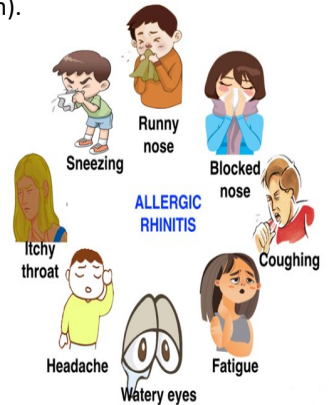
Use petroleum jelly inside your nose to block inhalation of pollen

Keep your house clean and wear a mask and glasses when doing housework

Don't dry damp washing outside to avoid pollen sticking to your clothes

You could buy a pollen filter for the air vents in the car

Listen to weather forecasts which include pollen counts so you are aware when the pollen count is high



Symptoms	Medicine available	Information
Eye symptoms e.g., watery, itchy, red eyes	Eye drops such as sodium cromoglicate 2%	This can be used alongside nasal spray or oral tablets if symptoms are not fully managed by eyedrops.
Nasal symptoms e.g., itchy, runny or blocked nose	Nasal spray such as Beconase	Steroid nasal spray can reduce inflammation and allergic reaction. It can take a few weeks to see the maximum effect.
Generalised symptoms	Oral tablet such as cetirizine, loratadine, fexofenadine, chlorphenamine.	Chlorphenamine can cause drowsiness Cetirizine and loratadine cause less drowsiness Fexofenadine is the strongest antihistamine – it has only recently become available to buy over the counter

When should I seek for further help?

If you are experiencing persistence wheezing, breathlessness, or tightness in the chest

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, medicines over the counter are unlicensed to sell to pregnant ladies.

If your symptoms are not relieved by over-the-counter treatments in combination with measures to reduce your exposure to pollen