

## JANUARY 2016 NEWSLETTER

Happy New Year to all our patients and we hope you have had a wonderful Christmas. Many thanks for all your good wishes and biscuits and chocolates brought into the practice in December. Thanks to your amazing generosity we will all have to start the year with a health kick. If any patients want help with making lifestyle changes, please look at the website or book in to discuss stopping smoking etc.

### NHS Sustainability

In an attempt to balance the CCG budget, we may be asking some patients whether they would be willing to defer any non-urgent referrals for 6 weeks. By reducing non-urgent routine care it will help secondary care with the additional urgent workload they face over the winter months. We will not be delaying any suspected cancer referrals, children's referrals, vulnerable patients referrals – or any patient who does not agree to a delayed referral.

### St.Helens Rota

St.Helens Rota provides the out of hours service for the practice and is currently facing unprecedented demand – a lot of which happens on weekdays between 6.30 and 7.30pm. One possible explanation for this is that patients are waiting for the on-call service to start before they ring for help. Please make every effort to be seen in the practice within working hours and only use the on-call service for genuine emergencies that arise or get significantly worse out of hours. We see all patients who claim emergency on the same day and I am not therefore certain whether our patients do wait until we are closed to phone (we will try not to take this personally!) but I would respectfully ask patients to use the out of hours service appropriately. Don't forget about the walk in centre and pharmacists as you may not actually need to see a GP at all. I do not wish to deter any patient who genuinely feels they need to be seen from contacting rota – but please base this on clinical need and not your convenience.

### Ask My Doctor

Still working on an email consultation that might free up some appointments and therefore improve access – watch this space!

### Bowel Screening

Please note the bowel screening for those aged between 60 and 70 has been increased to those aged 60-74 years of age. Please take the opportunity to get screened as the screening has identified many patients with benign polyps that have the potential to become cancerous. Treatment of such polyps could greatly reduce future cancer risk and is well worth the embarrassment of having a sigmoidoscopy.

### Repeat Prescriptions

A number of patients have reported difficulty in ordering repeat prescriptions as they are not registered for on-line access or who do not have computer access. This is NOT compulsory. You can still request repeat prescriptions through the practice in person, by request slip, by fax or by telephone (the latter only if housebound). I understand some pharmacists are insisting that patients have to be registered for on-line access. This is not the case and I will be taking this up with Medicines Management.

Wishing you all a very happy and healthy 2016.