

April 2022 update from the surgery

After a fabulous Easter weekend that seemed to bring a completely fresh feel to the year, we then get the flurry of hay fever sufferers. The pollens start with the trees and weeds then get supplemented by the grasses. For those suffering a couple of days a week with runny nose and watery eyes then you can either use intra-nasal antihistamines or oral antihistamines, however, oral ones take up to 8 hours longer to have the full effect. For those suffering for 4 days or more a week then regular intra-nasal steroids are indicated for the full duration of the pollen season possibly with regular oral antihistamines in addition. The CCG encourage people to buy these products over the counter where possible.

By properly treating the nose most eye symptoms will settle but on occasion eye drops are useful. Wearing sunglasses can also help reduce eye symptoms. The best advice is to try and avoid the peak pollen times and reduce exposure as much as possible. For a really debilitating attack oral steroids are used for a short period of time. "In the old days..." a steroid injection would be given at the start of the year and lots of people found it really effective, however it is not considered good practice now and very few doctors will do it.

Furthermore, Asthma gets triggered by all the atmospheric changes and allergens. Since 2019 the guidance has steered very strongly away from use of the "blue" inhaler (salbutamol) as regular use of this short-acting reliever promotes unstable airways that can be more susceptible to spasm causing wheeze. On the whole specialists in Asthma would like to see no more than one salbutamol inhaler being prescribed a year. The promotion for good Asthma control lies now with regular use of the "brown" steroid inhaler or the various colours of combination inhalers that have both steroid and a long-acting version of salbutamol.

The last few months have been pretty tough as the world is trying to ease out of Covid and yet March saw one of the highest rates of infection so far. I thought I'd take a look at the stats on the computer and was really staggered that in March we had 2933 appointments of which 63% were face-to-face which compares to 1824 in the same month in 2019 (82% face-to-face). The dispensary team have been up against it too with Covid and Brexit causing all manner of medication shortages and recalls. Despite the difficulties they have dispensed 11,766 items in March compared to 9001 in 2019. Wrapping around all of that, the reception and admin teams are fielding the increasing work load. It would be lovely to hit the "Pause" button but I can't find one...

Covid 4<sup>th</sup> Jab at the Surgery - Please call to book in to one of our clinics that we are putting on starting with the 14<sup>th</sup> May. You need to be over 75 years old or have a serious problem affecting your immunity and have had your last jab at least 3 months ago. It seems a lot of our proactive patients have already had a 4<sup>th</sup> jab so we are not sure how many clinics we will need to put on to cater to demand. As always, please let us know if you are housebound and will need a visit instead.

We are all looking forward to a summer that I suspect will be a great lift for the whole of Woodchurch and beyond. Best wishes on behalf of the Surgery - Jack Hickey, GP