

YOUR VOICE, YOUR NEWS

Patients' Participation Group for the Sid Valley Practice

In this issue:

- I need to see a doctor!
- Emergencies
- Getting there
- NHS app
- Exercise in the menopause

A note from the Chair



We are now well into winter with summer a distant memory. The seasonal flu vaccine programme has been a great success and autumn Covid boosters are still available at Greendale. Keep an eye open for the walk-in Covid vaccine clinics that are also being held in the town.

In this edition we look at the pressures facing GP practices—Sid Valley Practice is no exception and I'm sure you have seen the news coverage about staffing shortages. This newsletter focuses on what we can do as patients to help the Practice in these challenging times. There are lots of ways that you can help yourself before reaching straight for the phone. And when you do reach for the phone, who should you call? See pages 2 and 3 for more information.

You can also help look after your health by taking exercise. This edition introduces a new regular columnist—Lauren Clapp, a local qualified PT instructor—who looks at exercise benefits at different ages. This time she focuses on the menopause.

Your PPG volunteers have been doing their bit to support the Practice, with a team of us at the surgery booking flu vaccines. In all we rang hundreds of patients and the clinics held so far have been a huge success, with around 1200 patients vaccinated.

If we all work together, it will work better!



"On behalf of the entire Sid Valley Practice

staff I would like to thank all our patients for their huge support and understanding in what are currently very difficult times in General Practice."

Joe Stych

Practice Partner

where you see a [blue](#) word, you can click for more information.

All views expressed are those of the author or the Patient Participation Group, not the NHS or Clinical Commissioning Group.



APPOINTMENTS

Book appointments using an automated telephone system.

Call **01395 200 743**

Or ring the surgery and select option 4

Phone booking

The Practice has a new automated booking system

You can phone to book an appointment to see a GP or have a blood test 24 hours a day 7 days a week without waiting for Reception to answer a call.

When you ring, follow the instructions. Enter your date of birth when asked using the 8 digit format. For example, 1 January 1980 is 01011980.

If you request an appointment with your usual GP and they are not readily available, the system will give you an appointment with a GP who is free.

Don't worry—all the GPs can see previous treatment and advice on your record.

If you have signed up for online services you can also book appointments through the [website](#).

If you find you need to change or cancel your appointment, you can do this through the phone system.

I need to see a doctor!

A guide to managing your health



Practice Manager Andy talks about how to get the best from your health services by making sure you know who to contact when. It's easy to reach for the phone when you don't feel great, and the medical reception staff will always try to find you an appointment. But there are lots of occasions when there is an alternative.

First up is **Self Help**. For day to day ailments, there's often not a lot the doctor can do. 10 of the most minor ailments seen by GPs can also be treated by you at home. You could save a trip to the surgery and free up time for the GPs to see patients with more serious health problems.

[Click this link](#) for more information on the Practice website. You can also [ask your Pharmacist](#) for advice. You should make sure your [home first aid kit](#) is properly stocked and up to date.

What about emergencies?

The GP surgery is here to help you manage your health. It is the “front door” of the NHS, offering day-to-day healthcare and the first place to go when you need health advice or treatment that you can't treat yourself or by talking to a Pharmacist. It isn't an emergency care service. Have a look at the article on the [next page](#) for what to do in an emergency.

Most appointments are “routine”. This means you don't need to be seen immediately. This could be a phone consultation or a face to face appointment. It helps if you provide as much information as possible when booking the appointment. For example, if you have a skin rash, you can send in a photograph. Ask the receptionist.

The surgery gets a lot of calls asking for **same day appointments**. There is a **Duty Team** on every day which often deals with more than 70 requests. This service is for urgent medical issues but not emergencies, which should go to 111 or 999. Please try and ring as early as possible in the day – and note that you may receive a phone call from either a health-care assistant, a nurse or a doctor. Several of our nurses are advanced nurse practitioners and are qualified to prescribe medication.

A **Duty Team appointment** is not a walk in service—you must phone first. The receptionist will ask you for a brief description of your medical issue and this information will be used by the triage team to contact people in an appropriate order.

If you have an ongoing medical condition that you feel can't wait for the next available routine appointment, please give our reception team as much information as possible to help the Practice find the most suitable solution for you.

Home visits are generally only available for patients where their GP has agreed that they are housebound. Requests for home visits should be made before 11am.

Minor Injuries

A [Minor Injury Service \(MIS\)](#) is there to help you if you have had an injury within the last 48 hours but it is not critical or life threatening. They are led by local GP surgeries and usually run by highly qualified nurse practitioners who can deal with a wide range of injuries like minor burns and cuts that you can't treat at home or minor eye injuries. Our closest MIS is the [Beacon Medical Centre in Sidmouth](#) (8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays—subject to available staffing) This is a sit and wait service.

A **Minor Injury Unit (MIU)** can also help with an injury within the last 48 hours and can usually deal with a wider range of injuries, including uncomplicated fractures to arms or lower legs. Our closest MIU is [Honiton Community Hospital](#) (8am to 8pm, 7 days a week).

It is important to understand that these services (MIS and MIU) are for injuries, not minor illnesses.

An **Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC)** will see anyone who does not require an ambulance or a visit to an Emergency Department but whose complaint is too urgent for a routine GP appointment. They also have X-ray facilities and can deal with broken bones. UTCs can deal with minor illnesses as well as minor injuries. Our nearest UTC is [Tiverton](#) (8am to 8pm, 7 days a week including bank holidays). UTCs are staffed by nurses and GPs.



Joe Stych, Practice Partner, gave us his perspective on the challenges of getting access to the right appointments, within the NHS and the Sid Valley Practice in particular.

“We have lost many doctors recently due to our heavy workload. We continue to struggle with recruitment of doctors so need to work in new ways - we need patients to embrace new sustainable ways of working. Fewer doctors means longer waits to see a doctor, we know that. Routine waits are going up - and it's tempting to use Duty Team, MIS, MIU and UTC services to get seen sooner. Our Duty Team is here to deal with problems which cannot wait to be seen, due to clinical need - like infections/pain/suicidal thoughts/psychotic episodes/fever. The NHS is in a crisis and needs patients to understand this and be patient/kind to us so we can help them as best we can. The Duty Team can only deal with genuine urgent cases. Please think before ringing to ask for a same day appointment for a non urgent problem.”

What to do in an emergency

A guide to where to go and who to call

A banner with a pink background. At the top, it says "Get the care you need No matter what the problem" in white text. The NHS logo is in the top right corner. Below the text is a row of six circular icons: a person with a lightning bolt (allergy), a bee (insect bite), a hand with a flame (burns), a person with a pulse line (heart problems), a person in a wheelchair (mobility issues), and a person with a cane (vision/hearing issues). At the bottom, there is a yellow section with a large pink arrow pointing right, the text "Just Think 111 First", and information about contacting NHS 111 for urgent, non-life-threatening medical care. A small red box says "Click or call first" and "help us help you".

**Get the care you need
No matter what the problem**

NHS

**Just Think
111 First**

For urgent, non-life-threatening medical care, contact NHS online at 111.nhs.uk or **111** by phone.

Click or call first help us help you

Not sure who to call? [NHS 111](#) can help if you have an urgent medical problem and you're not sure what to do. This is available either on-line or by phone, 24 hours a day 7 days a week. Depending on the situation you will:

- find out what local service can help you
- be connected to a nurse, emergency dentist, pharmacist or GP
- get a face-to-face appointment if you need one
- be given an arrival time if you need to go to A&E which may mean you spend less time in A&E—get to A&E if you can without an ambulance. Arriving in an ambulance will not get you seen faster.
- be told how to get any medicine you need
- get self-care advice

Life-threatening emergencies

Call 999 in a medical or mental health emergency. This is when someone is seriously ill or injured and their life is at risk. These emergencies can include:

- loss of consciousness
- a sudden confused state
- fits that are not stopping
- breathing difficulties
- severe bleeding that cannot be stopped
- severe [burns or scalds](#)
- someone has seriously injured themselves or taken an overdose

Call 999 immediately if you think you or someone else is having a [heart attack](#) or [stroke](#). Every second counts with these conditions. Also call 999 if you think someone has had a major trauma, such as after a serious road traffic accident, a stabbing, a shooting, a fall from height, or a serious [head injury](#).

Someone's collapsed? A [defibrillator](#) should be used when a person is in cardiac arrest. CPR should be done until you can get a defibrillator. If you see someone you think may be having a cardiac arrest, call 999, start CPR and get someone to find a defibrillator. The emergency operator can advise you if you can't find one. Once you get the defibrillator, turn it on and continue CPR until the device tells you to stop.

How to use a defibrillator

If you're on your own, don't interrupt CPR to go and find a defibrillator. If it's possible, send someone else to find one. When you call 999, the operator can tell you if there's a public access defibrillator nearby.

To use a defibrillator, follow these simple steps:

Step 1: Turn the defibrillator on by pressing the green button and follow its instructions.

Step 2: Peel off the sticky pads and attach them to the patient's skin, one on each side of the chest, as shown in the picture on the defibrillator.

Step 3: Once the pads have been attached, stop CPR and don't touch the patient. The defibrillator will then check the patient's heart rhythm.

Step 4: The defibrillator will decide whether a shock is needed and if so, it will tell you to press the shock button. An automatic defibrillator will shock the patient without prompt. Don't touch the patient while they are being shocked.

Step 5: The defibrillator will tell you when the shock has been delivered and whether you need to continue CPR.

Step 6: Continue with chest compressions until the patient shows signs of life or the defibrillator tells you to stop so it can analyse the heartbeat again.

Anyone can use a defibrillator and you don't need training. Once you turn it on, it will give clear instructions on how to attach the defibrillator pads. The device checks the heart rhythm and will only tell you to shock if it's needed. You can't shock someone accidentally.

[Watch this video](#) to see how to use a defibrillator.

[Click this link](#) to see where the registered defibrillators are in Sidmouth.

GETTING THERE

WAYS TO GET TO YOUR APPOINTMENT

It's not always that easy to get to your medical appointment, so we thought we would tell you about some different options that you may not be aware of.....



RD&E encourage patients and visitors to use the Sowton Park & Ride facility as parking on site is limited. But this may not always be viable for you.

You may be eligible for [NHS Supported Patient Transport](#) if...

- You are currently too unwell to use a car or public or community transport
- You need skilled help to leave your home
- You require extra support on the journey

How to book

You can call the Patient Transport Advice Service on 0345 155 1009* Local rate call charges apply.

- Patients are encouraged to book between 2 weeks and 48 hours ahead of their appointment.
- Patients will be asked a set of questions to assess their eligibility each time they book.

If appointments are cancelled or changed make sure travel plans are also changed.



We asked Sidmouth Voluntary Services to tell us a bit about their minibus and volunteer drivers and the service they can offer to Sidmouth residents.

As well as shopping and social activities, they might be able to [help you get to medical appointments](#).

Sidmouth Voluntary Services (SVS) offers a car service for medical appointments for the elderly and disabled in the Sid Valley. Our team of volunteer drivers use their own cars to transport you to medical appointments, including Covid-19 Vaccination, doctor, dentist and hospital appointments in and around the Sid Valley area and as far as Axminster, Exeter, or beyond if required. Journeys do need to be paid for but rates are very competitive, e.g. a journey to an appointment at the RD & E Hospital with a wait time of no more than 3 hours would cost £28 return.

In addition, they offer Minibus shopping trips to Waitrose and Lidl in Sidmouth for £4 return, as well as a door-to-door Lunch Club minibus service which brings people into SVS to eat a yummy home-cooked three-course lunch for a cost of £10 to include the transport and the lunch. They also take people out on trips both near and far.

For Medical Cars there is no need to become a Friend of Twyford. However for all their other Transport services, you would first need to become a Friend of Twyford which involves completing an application form, available from SVS, and paying a one off membership fee of £20.

Transport can be arranged by contacting the Transport Office on 01395 512221 between 9am and 11am, Monday to Friday or you can leave a message outside these hours. If you wish to become a Friend of Twyford then please contact the SVS Team on 01395 515063.

SVS are in need of more volunteer minibus drivers and helpers and drivers using their own car to take clients for medical appointments or to deliver lunches.

If this appeals, you can find out more by emailing their Volunteer Coordinator (sidmouthsvs.ttl@gmail.com) or phoning the Transport Office on 01395 512221 for an initial chat about how you might be able to help. They are grateful for any offer of help no matter how small. All prices are correct at time of issue - September 2022.

We look forward to hearing from you - Team SVS

If you can't attend your appointment —cancel it! [15.4 million](#) Practice appointments are wasted through “no shows” each year in the UK! It's not just the money, it's more delays for other patients who could have taken your slot.

BEAT THE QUEUES

Fed up with waiting on the phone or in a line? If you can, go on-line!

Access your information fast and leave the phone lines to people who need them!

OK—it's not for everyone, but if you have a smart phone or other mobile device, it's easy to get on-line with your doctor.



Need an appointment?
Book it with the App.

Change your Pharmacy?
Choose and click.

Had a blood test?
See the full results. (Remember—the Practice will only contact you if the doctor needs to discuss your test. So if you register on-line, you can set your mind at rest.)

Re-order a prescription?
Click to request.

Check your records?
It's all there.

Want to access family records?
If you have consent, you can link their records too.

Sounds great doesn't it?

Your PPG members are planning to link up with the Practice staff to kick off a text, email and on-line enrolment programme. We are hoping to run a phone campaign to help people to get started. Can't wait? Make a start by [signing up](#) through the Practice website.

Want the NHS app?



After you register for on-line services you can download the NHS app if you are over 13. Click the logo to download.



New columnist **Lauren Clapp** will be looking at the benefits and types of exercise at different ages. Today she looks at **the female menopause**.

Menopause is a stage in life that all females will go through, usually hitting between the ages of 40 and 60 (however, this can vary from person to person).

During menopause, your body will go through many changes and exercising is an important factor in not just keeping you physically fit and healthy but mentally too. Symptoms are wide-ranging but often can include difficulties managing weight, joint aches and pains, and losing some control of your bladder. After the menopause, as your oestrogen levels drop, your bones can become weaker and you are more likely get osteoporosis.

This is where exercises comes in, and why you should be doing it before, during and after the menopause. Exercise will play a huge part in not only helping manage weight but will help increase strength in both muscles and bones. It will also help release endorphins (aka the happy chemical) into the body and help boost your mood.

So, what exercises should you be doing? Really you should be incorporating a variety of different elements into your workouts.

- 1- Cardiovascular training, this can be as simple as walking or cycling. You should be aiming for at least 150 minutes per week of moderate aerobic exercise.
- 2- Strength training. This is, in my opinion, one of the most important training styles you should be doing. Why? Firstly, gaining muscle helps our bodies to burn calories more efficiently, this will help with weight management. Secondly, increasing strength will not only have massive beneficial effects on our muscles but also on our bones, which is highly important in the menopause to help prevent osteoporosis from occurring.
- 3- Stretching/yoga. This should be something that you should incorporate into your daily life. Research shows that yoga not only can help ease joint pains, increase flexibility, strength and balance making you less prone to injury but also lower stress levels.

What to take away from this?

Make sure you are getting in at least 20 minutes of cardiovascular exercise daily, something as simple as going for a brisk walk.

If you haven't already, start strength training 2 to 3 times per week. This can be using light weights, resistance bands and even bodyweight exercises.

Stretch daily!

If you are new to exercise start gently and ask a professional for advice if needed. If you have a long term health condition, check with your doctor.

