

# NEWSLETTER

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September for some means ....

### **Starting School**

Starting school is a huge new step for both parent and child. It is natural for you to feel anxious. This is a new chapter in your child's life. Try not to let your child sense your concern, it may unsettle her. You could help your child through the first few days by preparing her beforehand. Talk your child about going to school and take her to the school to look around if you have not already done so. It is important that the child understands that she will be going everyday shortly after starting. Try to encourage friendships with other children who will be starting the same school at the same time. It will be helpful for her to see familiar faces in her class. Ensure that the child understands that you or his carer will be there to collect her at the end of the day

## APPOINTMENT SYSTEM AUDIT

During the months of May and June 2001 our staff carried out an audit of our appointment system.

The results of the audit showed that overall, the number of available appointments was greater than the number of appointments requested by patients during each week of the six-week audit period. However the demand for appointments was not necessarily greatest on the days when most appointments

were available.

We have used this information to make minor adjustments so that in future appointment availability can more closely match demand. We are also happy to report that the practice exceeds the NHS framework target relating to accessing a GP.

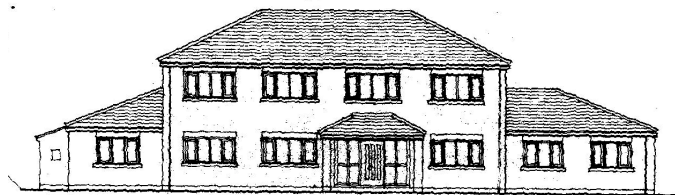
Please note though that although patients can usually be offered an appointment when they need one, the particular

doctor of their choice might not always be available at that time.

During periods of high demand these high standards may drop temporarily.

We ask our patients to help in our quest for constant improvement to our services. Please can you make every effort to cancel an appointment if you are unable to attend. Your appointment can then be offered to another patient.

## NEW SURGERY—UPDATE



We have been informed that building work is due to commence on site on 10th September 2001 and that a completion date of 15th March 2002 is anticipated. Lets hope that the British winter is kind to the construction team.

### **Medical Equipment Fund**

At present all donations received are being put towards the purchase of a hydraulic examination couch for the treatment room in the new surgery.

### Practice List size

We are pleased to report that since June 1999, our practice lists size has continued to grow at a steady rate of just over 1% per month. Current rules dictate that the practice can apply for Dr Christmas to become a full time partner once the list size is above 4100 patients. Until that time, the whole team will be working at 110% capacity to absorb the increasing workload that goes hand in hand with increased numbers of patients. We must ensure that standards do not slip.

## WHAT IS A COLD?

A cold is a mild viral illness affecting the mucous membranes (soft lining) of the nose and throat. Most people will catch between two and four colds a year.

What are the symptoms of a cold?

Common symptoms include: a sore or itchy throat, sneezing, a runny nose, coughing, feeling unwell, and a raised temperature. Later, the discharge from the nose becomes thicker and yellow in colour.

How is a cold treated?

There is no effective treatment for a cold. It will clear up on its own within a few days. However, the following may help relieve the symptoms:

- Keep warm.
- Go to bed if you feel really unwell.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Take paracetamol if neces-

sary.

· Take over-the-counter cold remedies. Many of these also contain painkillers, so take them instead of, not as well as painkillers.

· Many people find home-made hot lemon and honey drinks soothing.

· Steam or menthol inhalations may ease a blocked nose.

Are there any complications?

Colds are common and usually no more than a nuisance, but some people are troubled by a complication such as sinusitis. Children, in particular, may get an infection of the middle ear. If you know you always get a complication following a cold, you may find it helpful to take preventative measures early on. For example, if you are an asthmatic, you may need to 'double up' your treatment at the first sign of a cold. Using decon-

gestants may reduce the risk of sinusitis.

Is there any way to stop getting a cold?

Some people believe that taking one gram of vitamin C daily will prevent colds, but there is little evidence that this works. It has also been suggested that zinc supplements may help, but studies on this have been inconclusive.

Washing your hands, and avoiding touching your nose or eyes after coming into contact with someone with a cold will help stop you getting a cold.

If you have a cold, washing your hands frequently, especially after blowing your nose, will help prevent it spreading. Use paper tissues, rather than cloth handkerchiefs, and throw them away after use.



### ***Flu Vaccine 2001***

*Delivery expected early October*

*appointments will be posted out as usual*

## HEARING SCREENING FOR NEWBORN BABIES IN FOREST OF DEAN AREA

About one baby in every thousand is born with congenital hearing problems. If the baby is unable to hear clearly, he or she will not be able to learn and interpret sounds or develop speech.

There is much that can be done to help deaf babies and the earlier the help is received, the more effective the treatment will be. The difficulty has been identifying the babies who need help.

The standard way of testing babies' hearing is the

so-called "Distraction Test" done at seven months of age. This tests the baby's ability to turn to sounds of different frequency. Unfortunately, by that age vital time has been lost. We need to find out much earlier which babies are not able to hear.

Recently, a new electronic method of testing called Oto-acoustic Emissions (Echocheck) has become available. Allowing the testing of young babies very shortly after birth. Health Visitors

working in Lydney have piloted the Echocheck method at the Health Centre and have recently extended this to testing babies in their own home. The procedure for testing is painless. A probe placed in the external ear canal sends out a signal, which is transmitted through the middle ear to the cochlea, an organ in the inner ear. This converts the sound into a nervous impulse. This impulse forms a signal, which travels to the brain. If the cochlear is working

correctly, it sends back a small echo. The echo is detected as the Oto-Acoustic Emission.

The machine used by the Health Visitor was funded through the pilot project. The pilot was such a success that Echocheck is now being used on babies throughout the rest of the Forest of Dean and Health Visitors are to share the equipment. We hope that one day funding will become available to purchase one of these machines for each practice.

