

Balmoral Surgery Newsletter 2024

Practice Changes

We are very sad to say goodbye to Dr Osondu. He has now left the practice to work closer to home. We will miss him at Balmoral and wish him all the best at his new practice. We currently have an advert out to replace his sessions.

New staff members

We are pleased to introduce Sarah Claydon. Sarah is a very knowledgeable and experienced Advanced Clinical Practitioner. Sarah is part of our Minor Illness Clinic and will see patients suffering with acute minor illness such as UTIs, Coughs etc. She can prescribe medications without a doctor.

Another new member at Balmoral is Hollie Childs. Hollie is a Paramedic, and like Sarah, will be part of the Minor Illness team at Balmoral. Hollie will be supervised by one of the GPs at Balmoral. Hollie will see patients who are suffering from minor illnesses such as UTIs, coughs etc. Hollie will also assist the GPs with home visits.

We also have two Clinical Pharmacists providing regular clinics at Balmoral Surgery. They are with us all day Monday & Wednesdays and on a Friday morning.

Appointment requests

As we now have a Minor Illness team at Balmoral, we are keen to ensure that patients see the right person at the right time. Therefore, from 1st April, when a patient requests an appointment, they will be asked by the receptionist for some brief information on what the appointment is for. The reason for this is to ascertain what can be dealt with by the Minor Illness Team, the Pharmacy Services or what needs a GP. As you all know, demand always exceeds capacity, but we are keen to try our best to make sure that patients who need to see a GP do get to see one.

Why Receptionists cannot simply pass a message to a Dr.

We know that patients get very frustrated that the Receptionists cannot pass a message to a doctor. They have been asked not to do this by GP Partners. We cannot do this because we have circa 12,000 patients. Although your message may seem a "quick message" it may take the GP the same length of time as an appointment (10 mins), and there is simply no capacity in their day to take these messages, as they could get several in day, in addition to their booked work.

NHS 111

At Balmoral Surgery, we are working to the BMA's Safe Working Guidelines, to protect our GPs from burn out. This means that once all of our appointments have gone, you may be told to call NHS 111. Whilst it may be frustrating to call 111, the questions that are asked are designed to get you to the best place to get help for your symptoms. The questions are also designed to flag symptoms that they would consider a medical emergency.

Contraceptive Services

Contraceptive Coils (IUS or IUD systems). A contraception counselling session with Dr Eastbrook is required to discuss suitability before booking a coil insertion appointment.

Coil removals are available at the practice, this can be booked with Dr Eastbrook or with Petrina, our Practice Nurse.

Dr Camm is now providing the Contraceptive Implant at Balmoral Surgery. An appointment before the implant's administration must be booked with Dr Camm to discuss suitability.

Pharmacy First

Community pharmacists are now able supply prescription-only medicines, including antibiotics and antivirals where clinically appropriate, to treat seven common health conditions without the need to visit a GP.

- Sinusitis
- Sore throat
- Earache
- Infected insect bite
- Impetigo (a bacterial skin infection)
- Shingles
- Uncomplicated urinary tract infections in women

You can get treatment for these conditions by walking into the pharmacy or contacting them virtually. GP receptionists, NHS 111 and providers of emergency care will also be able to direct patients to pharmacies that offer the service, if contacted.

Patients can still choose to visit a GP if they wish to. Pharmacy First offers alternative access for these seven conditions and we encourage people to make the most of this service and to consult the highly trained professions in their local pharmacy.

Patient Forum Group

Balmoral Surgery has a patient forum which always welcomes new members. The Forum usually meets three times a year and aims to give our patients the opportunity to have their say about the services the surgery provides and to keep members up-to-date with new developments etc. The minutes of the forum meetings are available on our website and if you are interested in joining, please contact the Assistant Practice Manager. Our next meeting is on **Monday 10.06.24 at 1.15pm**

Ordering Prescriptions

Please note we do not have the capacity to take prescriptions over the telephone. Patients can either drop in their repeat prescription slip, order via the NHS App or Patient Access, or order through their usual chemist. Please note that Paydens will no longer order prescriptions for patients. As far as we know, the other local chemists are continuing to offer this service.

NHS App updates

Less than half of our patients have signed up to the NHS App. This is a very useful app as patients are able to order their medication and make an appointment using this.

Patients in England can use the NHS App to generate a barcode for medication collection.

While you are awaiting your hospital appointment or treatment, you can now use the NHS App to get information while you wait to be seen.

A new NHS App feature has been launched for patients to view an estimated waiting time for your hospital treatment. You will know you are on waiting list and how long you may have to wait for treatment.

DNAs (did not attend appointment)

We are having a significant amount of patients not attend their booked appointments. There is always considerable pressure on our nurses and doctors for appointments and missed appointments mean that time is wasted and not available to other patients who may need it. We would be grateful if you could make every effort to attend or let the practice know in advance if you cannot come to your appointments.

DNAs in the last 90 days = 287

Planned Closures

Please note that Balmoral Surgery is closed from 1pm on some days once a month to allow the doctors and staff to have protected learning time. These sessions are arranged by the Kent & Medway Clinical Commissioning Group and offer the opportunity for the Surgery teams in our locality to get together for training purposes. These sessions are on a Wednesday or Thursday afternoon once a month and at present are scheduled to take place as follows:

- **21/03/2024**
- **17/04/2024**
- **22/05/2024**
- **20/06/2024**
- **24/07/2024**