



## A word from our Chair

Welcome to 'Healthier Together'. In this edition you can find out more about keeping yourself and your family well and healthy this Spring.

Spring time brings the unpleasant symptoms of hay fever for many people. Fortunately for most, hay fever can be controlled and if symptoms are mild to moderate there are some things that sufferers can do to help themselves. If you suffer from hay fever, do read the tips and advice on how to manage and prevent your symptoms.

As we approach Ramadan, we are once again providing advice for our local people who will be fasting. This includes taking precautions, managing medication and eating a healthy balanced diet during non-fasting hours.

This edition also highlights the importance of routine vaccinations. Vaccination protects children and adults from serious illness and complications of vaccine-preventable diseases. Please remember that you can protect yourself and your family by ensuring immunisations are kept up to date.

Dr Prakash Chandra



## Vaccination protects health at every stage of life

Every child deserves an equal opportunity to lead a healthy life, and vaccination is one of the vital first steps to support this. Children under the age of five are particularly at risk of developing serious complications or even death from vaccine-preventable diseases.

A parent's responsibility starts at the point of pregnancy. After a women's 20 weeks scan, she is offered the whooping cough vaccine. Getting vaccinated while pregnant is highly effective in protecting a baby from developing whooping cough in the first few weeks of their life.

Babies and children are offered the following routine vaccinations:

- 8 weeks: Diphtheria, tetanus, pertusis (whooping cough), polio, haemophilus influenza B (DTAP/IPV/ Hib), pneumococcal (PCV), meningococcus (Men B), rotavirus
- 12 weeks: Boosters for DTAP/ IPV/Hib and rotavirus to reinforce the immune system
- 16 weeks: DTAP/IPV/Hib, Men B, PCV to toughen the immune system further
- 1 year: Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR), Hib/MenC, PCV, Men B
- 3 years and 4 months: DTAP/IPV, MMR
- 2 and 7 years: Flu vaccine is offered to children, as well as other vulnerable groups, between September and January each year
- 12 to 13 years: Girls are offered the human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccine to protect against cervical cancer
- 14 years: All secondary school children are offered meningococcal ACWY vaccine, as well as a booster of tetanus, diphtheria and polio (Td/IPV).

Dr Babu Sathyajith, Clinical Lead for Immunisation at NHS Newham Clinical Commissioning Group said:

"Vaccination isn't just important for children – immunisation continues into adolescence to provide protection for the future. The protection provided by some vaccines, for example tetanus, wanes over time, so booster doses are needed to ensure life-long protection. Staying up-to-date with vaccinations protects the individual, but also family, friends and others around them, from serious and potentially fatal diseases.

"As a child continues their journey into adulthood, the baton of responsibility is passed to them. They should ensure their vaccinations are up to date and may one day need to protect their own children.

"For the over 65s, a booster of pneumococcal (PCV) is required along with the yearly seasonal influenza vaccine.

"By protecting ourselves, we also protect others. If we are successful in getting over 95% of our children vaccinated, the population gets protected by 'herd immunity' – a term used to describe the resistance to the spread of contagious diseases within a population.

"Your family doctor and the hospital team may offer you other vaccinations under the selective immunisation programme if your circumstances are exceptional.

"Next time you get advice from your family doctors or their team, or a letter reminding you to book an appointment for vaccinating your child, please understand that we have your family's best interest at heart."

[Find out more about when to have vaccinations](#)



## Managing hay fever

This spring many of us are welcoming the start of warmer weather and longer days, but this time of year can also see a rise in the number of people suffering from hay fever.

It's estimated that one in five people living in the UK suffer from some form of hay fever, and you are more likely to be affected if there is a family history of allergies, particularly asthma or eczema. Hay fever is an allergic reaction to pollen which can cause symptoms such as a runny nose, itchy eyes, sneezing or wheezing.

For some people, these symptoms can affect their everyday activities and social plans. Thankfully though, there are steps that you can take to reduce your exposure to pollen and control symptoms of hay fever.

For those with mild symptoms, your pharmacist can offer expert advice. Often over the counter remedies are effective and relatively inexpensive. For those with more severe or persistent symptoms, it may be worth visiting your GP, as you might need regular preventative medication.

Some simple precautions you can take to help prevent the symptoms of hay fever include wearing wraparound sunglasses when you're outside to prevent eye irritation and taking a shower and changing your clothes after being outdoors to remove the pollen on your body. Applying a small amount of Vaseline around your nostrils can also help to trap pollen grains.

Avoid being outside in the early morning and evening when the pollen count is highest, keep windows closed late afternoon when the pollen count rises and drive with your car windows closed.

You may wish to take hay fever medications before developing symptoms as a preventative measure, particularly during peak season when there is likely to be a high pollen count.

All these tips can help prevent or minimise symptoms. Many people may also find their symptoms lessen as they grow older, and in 10–20% of cases, they disappear completely.

For information on the local pollen count, visit the [Met Office](#) website.



## Preparing for Ramadan?

This year, Ramadan, the month of fasting for Muslims, will start on or around 27 May, depending on the sighting of the new moon.

As Ramadan takes place during the summer the period of fasting is longer, meaning that it's even more important to be aware of your health. Dr Prakash Chandra, a local GP and chair of NHS Newham Clinical Commissioning Group, gives his top tips on looking after yourself and staying healthy while fasting.

### Take precautions

Longer, warmer days can increase the risk of dehydration, causing body aches, cramps, dizziness and exhaustion. Dehydration can particularly effect people with existing medical problems such as diabetes or high blood pressure. Take precautions and try to avoid long periods of time in the sun. We also encourage people to rehydrate well during non-fasting hours and to cut back on all types of caffeinated drinks.

### Manage your medication

It's really important that people who take regular medication, such as for diabetes or high blood pressure, continue to take this as prescribed until they've spoken to their GP.

Some medicines can be taken during Ramadan including injections, ear drops, eye drops or patches where the medicine is absorbed through the skin. If you have diabetes, you should continue to monitor your blood glucose levels. Your GP may also be able to change your prescription so that you don't have to take your medication during fasting hours. If you think there is a problem, please don't hesitate to seek medical help.

### Eat a healthy balanced diet

Eating a balanced diet during the non-fasting hours helps to keep your body functioning properly during the day. Foods that release energy slowly, including carbohydrates and protein, will help to maintain energy levels. The [NHS Live Well](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/) website is a good tool for meal ideas that include ingredients from all five major food groups.

### Stop smoking

For smokers, Ramadan could be a great opportunity to quit for good. It might seem daunting, but the NHS is here to help. Visit [www.nhs.uk/smokefree](https://www.nhs.uk/smokefree) or visit [www.newham.gov.uk/stopsmoking](https://www.newham.gov.uk/stopsmoking) to find your local Newham Stop Smoking service where you can receive up to 12 weeks of free one-to-one support from a trained stop smoking advisor.



## Raising awareness of TB

Newham Council, NHS Newham Clinical Commissioning Group and Barts Health NHS Trust called on residents to help them continue fighting back against the levels of tuberculosis (TB) in the borough on World TB day on 24 March.

TB is a fully treatable disease and TB control can prevent further cases through prompt diagnosis, treatment completion and contact tracing. TB can either be latent or active. It is a bacterial infection spread by breathing in tiny droplets from the coughs or sneezes of someone with active TB. People have to spend prolonged periods, normally over eight hours of close contact, with someone with active TB to catch the infection.

If you have lived in a country where TB is common there is about a 1 in 4 chance that you have breathed in TB bacteria which are now 'asleep' in your body. These sleeping TB bacteria, known as latent TB, can 'wake-up' at any time and make you ill. The good news is that latent TB can be treated with antibiotics before this happens.

You can still develop latent or active TB after you had a BCG vaccination. Chest x-rays cannot see latent TB so you could have latent TB even if you had a clear chest x-ray.

Those most at risk of catching TB are those who:

- live in, come from, or have spent time – for example on holiday or business – in a country or area with high levels of TB. According to the World Health Organisation 60 per cent of TB cases worldwide occurred in six countries in 2015 – China; India; Pakistan, Nigeria, South Africa; Indonesia
- have prolonged close contact with someone who is infected
- live in crowded conditions – with multiple people sleeping in one room
- have a condition that weakens the immune system, or are very young or very old
- are receiving treatments that weaken the immune system, such as corticosteroids or chemotherapy
- in poor health or with a poor diet because of lifestyle and other problems, such as drug misuse, alcohol misuse, or homelessness.

The most effective way to prevent the spread of TB is by diagnosing people as soon as possible and making sure they have a full course of correct treatment.

Patients are advised to speak to their GP receptionist if they want to find out more about latent TB screening or have any concerns. GP services are free and confidential.



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