

Monthly Patient Newsletter



Happy New Year from Mendip Vale!

As we welcome 2025, we want to take a moment to express our gratitude for the trust and support you've shown us throughout the past year. We are excited to continue serving you in the year ahead and are committed to providing the best possible care and support.

The New Year is a time for new beginnings, and we encourage you to set health and wellness goals that inspire you. Whether it's taking small steps toward a healthier lifestyle or staying on top of your routine check-ups, we're here to guide you every step of the way.

Wishing you a year filled with good health, happiness, and success in 2025.

Hospitals Reintroduce Masks Amid Rise in Flu Cases - Including Southmead Hospital

Article by Sarah Turnnidge, January 8th 2025

Read the Article here:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c3rqrdgvd5xo>

Hospital bosses have urged patients, staff and visitors to wear surgical face masks to combat a surge in flu cases.

A spokesperson for Southmead Hospital in north Bristol said they have seen a "sharp rise" in flu and respiratory illness – particularly since the start of the year.

To limit the spread, health chiefs urged people visiting and working in the "emergency zone" to wear face masks provided on site.

In this newsletter you can expect:

Hospitals reintroduce masks amid rise in flu cases

Healthy Habits for a Happier, Healthier You

Protect Your Health, Prevent Cervical Cancer

Updates to Our Communication Systems

There's still time to grab your flu vaccination!

Stay Well This Winter

This zone covers the emergency department, acute medical unit, acute frailty unit and the same day emergency care team.

Hospital bosses said the measures would remain in force only "for as long as they are strictly necessary".

People with respiratory symptoms such as coughs and colds have also been asked to avoid visiting family and friends in hospital, and to contact the relevant ward team to discuss alternatives.

Elsewhere, NHS Gloucestershire has warned this morning that emergency departments in Cheltenham and Gloucester are "very busy" with "sick patients who need specialist care".

They said only those with life-threatening conditions or serious injuries should go to the hospital – others should use the online service ASAP Glos NHS or call 111.

'Extreme pressure'

Somerset NHS Trust has said it is experiencing "extreme pressure" on its services, urging people who can attend hospital alone due to limited space in waiting areas.



A statement published by the trust also warned that some non-urgent, planned treatments and appointments may need to be postponed, but urged people to attend their existing appointments.

Dr Paul Foster, director of Yeovil District Hospital, told BBC Radio Somerset: "If you're visiting vulnerable members of your family, then [wearing a mask] might be a very sensible thing to do.

"Certainly, if you've got any mild symptoms yourself you should really limit your contact with other people, especially with more vulnerable people."

At Salisbury District Hospital in Wiltshire, mask-wearing is being mandated only in the wards where patients with flu are being treated.

The hospital says it is seeing around 180 to 200 patients each day in the emergency department, up 10% on last year, and of the 49 respiratory patients being treated 30 have flu.



"The average number of flu patients in hospital in England in the last week of December was 4,469 – four times the level it was a month previously, according to NHS data, with officials warning cases are "rising at a very concerning rate".

It is expected that this week's data, to be published on Thursday, will show another increase in flu admissions.

NHS England's national medical director, Professor Sir Stephen Powis, said: "Frontline NHS staff are under significant pressure and the demand is showing no signs of letting up."

He said flu cases had "skyrocketed" to more than 5,000 and trusts across the country were declaring incidents to help them to manage the additional strain.

Gill May, chief nurse Officer for the Swindon, Wiltshire and Bath NHS Integrated Care Board (ICB), warns the illness could become debilitating.

"This year, what we have seen is the prevalence of people needing to go to hospital because of flu," she said.

"It's more than we had expected, and people are sicker because of it, despite being taking up the vaccination. Some people are really, really poorly and need to be hospitalised."

Ms May advised patients to expect long wait times of up to four hours "or an awful lot longer" to be seen.

"If you get 100 people through your front door, you need at least 100 to go out of the building, so it's trying constantly to get that balance right," she added.

A spokesperson for Great Western Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust said 17% of patients - around 100 people - are currently occupying beds that are ready for discharge.

They added: "For many people, flu-like symptoms such as headaches, fevers and sore throats can be easily managed at home through a combination of resting, staying hydrated and safely making use of common medicine box items, such as paracetamol and ibuprofen."

Stay Well This Winter

Winter is a magical season, but it can also be challenging for our health and wellbeing. Colder weather can worsen existing health conditions, increase the risk of falls, and make us more vulnerable to winter respiratory illnesses — especially for those aged 65 or older or those with long-term health conditions like heart disease, asthma, or diabetes.

Additionally, the cost of living pressures, such as higher heating bills during the colder months, can increase stress and anxiety, affecting mental wellbeing.

Fortunately, there is plenty of support available from health, council, and voluntary sector services across Bristol, North Somerset, and South Gloucestershire (BNSSG). Visit the ICB BNSSG website for advice and links to organisations that can help you and your family stay well this winter.

[Explore ICB BNSSG website for helpful advice](#)

Do more with the NHS App!

- 🔗 Order repeat prescriptions
- 📅 Book appointments
- 👁️ View your records
- And much more...



Stay Connected with the NHS App!

Did you know that NHS App offers a simple way to manage your health? You can:

- Book and manage appointments
- Order repeat prescriptions
- View your medical records
- Access trusted health information

If you haven't downloaded the NHS App yet, now is a great time to give it a try! . For more information regarding the NHS go to www.nhs.uk/nhs-app

There's Still Time to Grab Your Flu Vaccination with Mendip Vale!

If you're eligible, getting your winter flu vaccination is one of the most effective ways to protect yourself. Annual flu vaccines help boost your immunity and reduce the risk of severe illness.

Flu vaccines are available for:

- Adults aged 65 and over (including those turning 65 by 31 March 2025).
- People with certain health conditions.
- Pregnant individuals.
- Residents in long-stay care facilities.
- Carers and those living with someone who has a weakened immune system.
- Frontline health and social care workers.
- Children aged 2 or 3 years, as well as school-aged children (Reception to Year 11).

Children's Flu Vaccine

Children aged 2 to 3 years, school-aged children (Reception to Year 11), and those with certain long-term health conditions are offered a nasal spray flu vaccine. The nasal spray is quick, painless, and administered in each nostril.

For children who cannot have the nasal spray, a flu vaccine injection will be offered, typically in the upper arm or thigh. Some children with specific long-term health conditions who have not previously been vaccinated may require a second dose four weeks later.

More information can be found on the NHS website: [Children's Flu Vaccine - NHS](#)

Grab a Jab at Your Local Mendip Vale Surgery

Booking your flu vaccine at your GP surgery is quick and straightforward. If you're eligible, don't wait — schedule your appointment today to lower your risk of severe illness this winter.

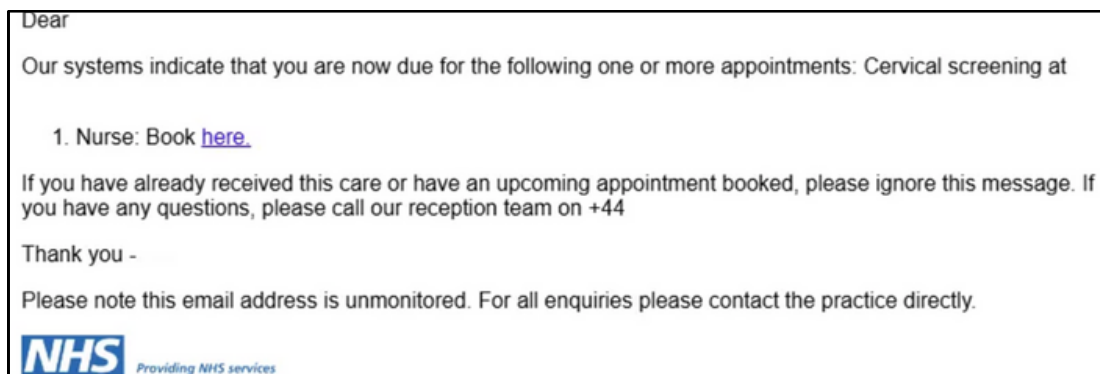
By getting vaccinated, you can reduce the impact of flu symptoms, speed up recovery, and help protect those around you. Flu vaccines are available until the end of March, so act now!

Call your GP or use the online booking system to secure your appointment. Let's work together to keep our communities healthy and safe this winter.

Updates to Our Communication Systems

We have recently updated our digital communication system to better manage long-term conditions and routine health checks, such as diabetes, hypertension, and cervical smears. As a result, you may notice that emails and text messages from us look slightly different. These messages will now include a link, giving you the convenience of self-booking your appointments.

Example of a message:



This new system helps us identify your healthcare needs and enables us to send tailored appointment invitations through your preferred method of contact.

If you prefer, you always have the option to call us directly to request your appointments and if you are every in doubt whether the message is a scam, phone your surgery directly for confirmation.

Join Our Patient Participation Group (PPG) – Make a Difference at Your Practice!

Have you ever thought about how you can contribute to improving healthcare in your community? By joining our Patient Participation Group (PPG), you can make your voice heard and help shape the services that matter most to patients like you.

Why Join the PPG?

- **Be Heard:** Share your experiences, opinions, and ideas to influence decisions.
- **Stay Informed:** Gain insights into changes in healthcare services and new initiatives in our practice.
- **Make an Impact:** Work with practice to enhance the patient experience and improve care for everyone.

What is the PPG?

The Patient Participation Group is a volunteer group of patients, and practice staff working together to:

- Discuss patient needs and priorities.
- Develop new ways to improve services.
- Create stronger links between the practice and the community.



The Corkill Award
WINNERS 2024

How You Can Help

- Attend meetings
- Share feedback and suggestions from your perspective as a patient.
- Contribute to discussions and initiatives aimed at improving our practice.

No Special Skills Required!

You don't need any prior experience—just a passion for improving healthcare and a willingness to get involved.

Ready to Join?

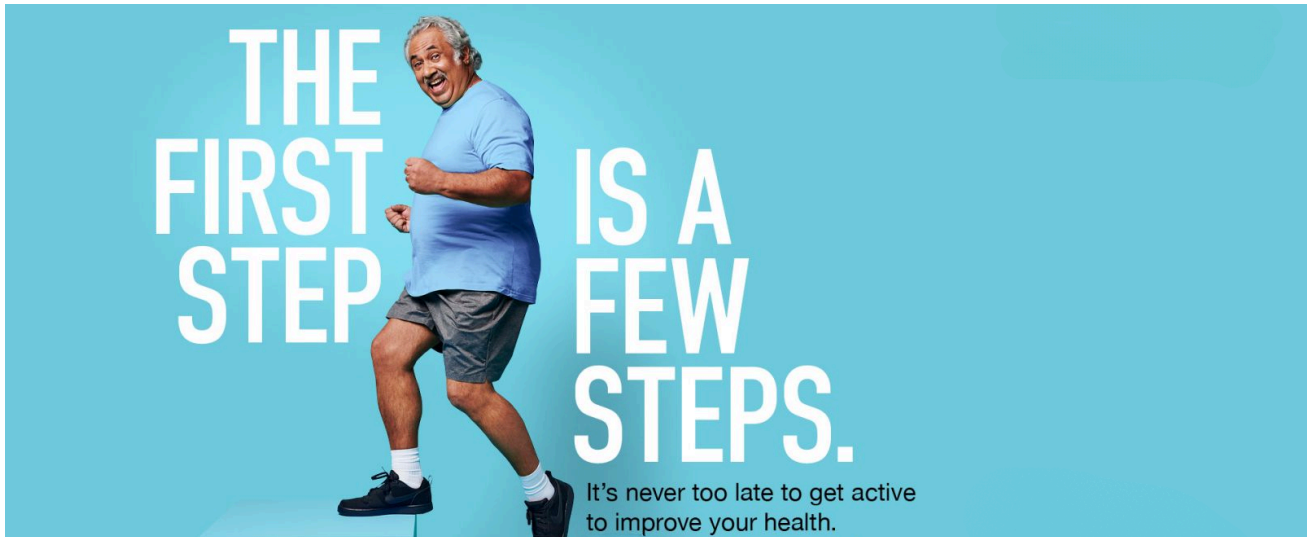
Registering your interest is easy!

- Go to the Mendip Vale website to complete the online registration form

[Click Here to register your interest](#)

- Ask at reception during your next visit to the practice.

Together, we can ensure that healthcare services are patient-centered and responsive to the needs of our community. Join us today and help us make a difference!



Start the Year Off Right: Healthy Habits for a Happier, Healthier You

As we step into the new year, it's the perfect time to focus on building healthy habits that can help you feel your best, both physically and mentally. While many of us set ambitious New Year's resolutions, starting with small, sustainable changes can have a lasting impact. Here are some simple yet effective habits you can adopt to create a healthier and happier year ahead.

1 NUTRITION - WHAT YOU EAT MATTERS...

The food you eat plays a significant role in how you feel and supports your body's overall function. Start the year by focusing on nourishing your body with a variety of whole foods, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats. Consuming a balanced diet rich in nutrients, vitamins, and minerals can enhance your energy levels, strengthen your immune system, and promote a healthy weight. Try to reduce processed foods, excessive sugar, and refined carbs, and aim to drink plenty of water throughout the day to stay hydrated. By prioritizing a wholesome diet, you'll feel your best and support your long-term health.

2 MAKE EXERCISE A REGULAR PART OF YOUR ROUTINE

Regular physical activity is essential for maintaining a healthy body and mind. Whether it's going for a walk, doing yoga, or engaging in strength training, aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week. Starting small with activities you enjoy can make exercise feel less like a chore and more like a fun part of your daily routine. The key is consistency.

3 GET ENOUGH SLEEP

Good quality sleep is like hitting the reset button for your mind and body—it's absolutely crucial for overall health. Sleep affects everything from mood and concentration to immune function and productivity. Aim for 7–9 hours of quality sleep each night to recharge and support your well-being. Establish a calming bedtime routine, avoid screens before bed, and maintain a regular sleep schedule to help your body reset. Quality sleep doesn't just restore energy; it's vital for your health and daily performance.

4 PRACTICE MINDFULNESS AND STRESS MANAGEMENT

Stress is something many of us experience, and believe it or not, sometimes a little stress can be a good thing, pushing us to achieve our goals. However, when stress starts to interfere with our day-to-day lives, it's time to act. Incorporating mindfulness practices, such as meditation, deep breathing, or journaling, can help you stay grounded and reduce stress. Set aside a few minutes each day to clear your mind, focus on the present, and check in with your emotions. Managing stress effectively can improve your mental health and overall well-being.

Go to the Mendip Vale website for more information on nutrition, exercise, sleep and stress. Including useful tools such as NHS Eatwell, the different ways you can move in the community, in nature, in a leisure centre or at home, we should sit less, benefits of exercise, sleep guidance and 10 stress busters. [Health and Wellbeing Coaching](#).

Encouraging Cervical Screening: Protect Your Health, Prevent Cervical Cancer

We are conducting a major drive to encourage women and people with a cervix, aged 25 to 49, to attend their cervical screening appointments. This age group has shown a lower attendance rate, and we want to ensure everyone has access to this vital preventative healthcare service. Cervical screening, also known as the smear test, is a critical test that helps check the health of the cervix and prevent cervical cancer. Regular screening is one of the best ways to protect yourself against cervical cancer by detecting potential issues early.

What is Cervical Screening?

The cervix is the opening to the womb from the vagina, and cervical screening is not a test for cancer itself but rather a preventative test. During your screening appointment, a small sample of cells will be taken from your cervix. This sample is then checked for certain types of human papillomavirus (HPV), known as "high-risk" HPV types, which can cause changes to the cervical cells.

If high-risk HPV is not detected, no further tests are needed. However, if these types of HPV are found, the sample is further analysed for any cell changes. These changes, if present, can be treated to prevent them from developing into cervical cancer.

Go to the NHS website to watch an illustration on someone having a cervical screening: [What is cervical screening? - NHS](#)



Why is Cervical Screening Important?

Cervical screening plays a crucial role in reducing the risk of cervical cancer. By identifying and addressing potential issues early, it provides a powerful tool for prevention. The process is quick, usually taking less than 10 minutes, and results are typically sent out within a few weeks.

What You Can Do

If you're between the ages of 25 and 49 and due for your cervical screening, we strongly encourage you to book your appointment. It's a small step that can make a big difference in protecting your health. If you have questions or concerns, our team is here to support you and provide information to make the experience as comfortable as possible.

Your health matters. Don't delay—schedule your cervical screening today and take control of your well-being.

A purple poster from NHS Public Health England. The text reads: "Cervical screening can stop cancer before it starts". Below this, it says "Don't ignore your cervical screening invite. If you missed your last cervical screening, book an appointment with us today." There is a yellow sticky note graphic that says "Remember to book cervical screening!". In the bottom right corner, there is a logo that says "CERVICAL SCREENING SAVES LIVES". The NHS logo is in the top right corner, and the Public Health England logo is in the top left corner.

Public Health England

NHS

Cervical screening can stop cancer before it starts

Don't ignore your cervical screening invite. If you missed your last cervical screening, **book an appointment with us today.**

Remember to book cervical screening!

CERVICAL SCREENING SAVES LIVES

CS00P-179

Choosing the Right NHS Service: Your Guide to Getting the Care You Need

Navigating NHS services can sometimes feel overwhelming, especially when deciding where to go for the care you need. To help you make the best choice, the Integrated Care Board (ICB) has an easy-to-use online resource that explains which NHS service is right for you based on your symptoms.

Why It's Important to Choose the Right Service
By choosing the right NHS service, you can:
Get the most appropriate care for your condition.
Avoid unnecessary trips to A&E or GP services.
Reduce waiting times by directing you to the quickest and most effective care option.

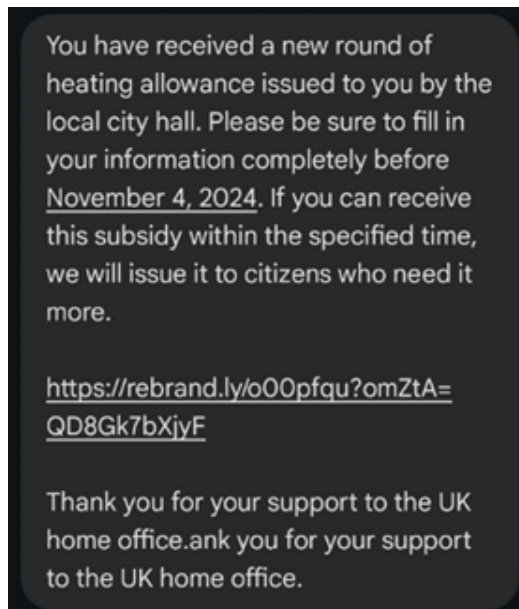
Taking the time to learn about the right NHS services can save you time and ensure you receive the care you need promptly. Visit the ICB website or download the leaflet to have this guidance at your fingertips, in the language that suits you best.

Go to the ICB BNSSG Website: [Which NHS service should I use? - NHS BNSSG ICB.](#)

Download your leaflet: [Feeling Unwell and Need Advice Leaflet](#)

Fraud Awareness Message by Avon and Somerset Police: Winter Fuel Allowance Text

Have you received any texts like this?



Avon and Somerset Police are warning the public of text messages linked to winter allowances and fuel payments. Criminals keep an eye on the the news too and send out fraudulent messages linked with current events. With recent headlines about winter fuel allowances and the ongoing cost of living crisis, the above messages are two examples of such messages.

If you receive a text message like this, do not click on the link, as fraudsters can steal your personal and financial data to commit identity fraud and take your money. Even by clicking the link and not entering any information could result in malware being downloaded onto your device.

Take your time reading any unexpected messages. There are some signs which indicate that the messages are fraudulent, such as spelling and grammar errors and/or strange use of language. Remember to 'Stop! Think Fraud' whenever you receive unsolicited contact.

Phishing messages can be reported by forwarding to 7726, which spells 'SPAM' on your keypad. If you have become a victim of a phishing text scam, report this to your bank immediately, which can be done by calling 159, and report to Action Fraud.

