

The PPG is about
PARTICIPATION
your participation



Why not come along and join us
next event and have your say

HELP US HELP YOU

AN APPEAL FROM THE PRACTICE

THINK:

Do I really need to book an appointment to see a doctor? Would a pharmacist, an optician, a physiotherapist, a counsellor or a nurse be able to help me? I am not sure if my condition is serious or not, what should I do?

THINK: Is my condition **acute** (severe and sudden – e.g. an accident or asthma attack) or **chronic** (long-standing e.g. arthritis or back pain)?

If you are still concerned about your condition, the best action is as follows:

TELEPHONE the surgery and when prompted select either **Option 1** (request a same-day appointment for an urgent acute problem) or **Option 2** (request a routine appointment for a less-urgent but chronic or routine problem).

If you choose **Option 1** the receptionist will take immediate action – unless the problem is clearly not urgent.

If you choose **Option 2** a duty doctor will ring you back later to discuss your problem and give you advice, make an appointment for you, or direct you to an appropriate service.

A PROBLEM WITH MEDICATION?

If you have a problem regarding your medication please choose **Option 2** and ask to speak to Pamela, VMC's in-house clinical pharmacist.

Alternatively: You can come into the surgery and a receptionist will go through the same routine. If your problem is acute it will be dealt with on the same day according to need and a doctor will call you back. Less urgent problems and minor ailments can now be looked after by our specially trained Advanced Nurse Practitioner. You can also book a routine appointment up to six weeks in advance.

Alternatively: You can book an appointment online. Go to the VMC website homepage and click on BOOK AN APPOINTMENT (note that you have to register with the practice to show that you are entitled to access VMC's online services. Reception can give you a personal username and password) and choose a slot.

Alternatively: For an online consultation concerning a non-urgent medical problem, go to the VMC website, scroll down to ONLINE CONSULTATION and follow the links to 'A MEDICAL PROBLEM'. Leave a message and a VMC clinician will contact you.

NOTE A standard appointment with a GP is only 10 minutes long so when you see a doctor please prioritise your most important problems. Long waiting times are caused by consultations over-running. Please help us to help you.

PPG

Patient Participation Group

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Medical
Centre

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Spring 2019



news

Dear VMC and LPMC Patients,

We are all aware that NHS resources are stretched at the moment and that GP appointments are scarce. Your PPG committee knows just how frustrating it can be, and how hard the practice has tried to keep abreast of the situation. The good news is that they have secured more than 120 additional doctor appointments every week from this summer. This is an appeal to patients to be thoughtful and use them responsibly.

It should be a concern to all of us that there is a small minority of patients who push themselves to the front of the queue for routine problems and clog up the system to the disadvantage of others with really urgent needs. There are also patients who genuinely do not fully understand how the system works. So would you please read the back page of this newsletter for a clarification of the current system and the various options open to patients. Please THINK – do I really need a face-to-face appointment with a doctor?

If you telephone the surgery for an appointment, please give the receptionist a brief explanation of your problem so you get the right help you need. They are all trained to handle the information you provide confidentially. Because some patients are declining to inform the receptionist by saying it is a private

matter, currently their calls are being treated as urgent even though they may be for a routine query, thus pushing themselves to the front of the queue and abusing the system.

Think again! In future, if you decline to give details your call will be diverted to one of the practice nurses who will direct you to the correct service. Equally, if you attend the surgery for a routine problem without making a prior appointment you will be asked to go home and wait for a call from either the Advanced Nurse Practitioner or a duty doctor.

Personally, I find the new telephone system extremely helpful. With one telephone call you can select whether your problem is urgent or routine. A genuinely urgent problem will be dealt with straight away, or one of the duty doctors will ring you back within a few hours and direct you to the right service. Whatever the problem, it is reassuring to speak to someone properly qualified to deal with it.

Mary Orr
Chairman, VMC PPG

NEXT PPG EVENT
Painkillers and Their Alternatives
date to be announced

NEWS FROM THE PRACTICE

STAFF MATTERS and CLINICS

Doctors

Dr Rankine is taking four months sabbatical leave from 1 April. We wish her bon voyage and a well-earned rest. Her absence will be partly covered by Dr Jeni Ferrie.

Dr Thaxter is staying on until August as a GP registrar.

Dr Thakore has been granted another five years to be a GP trainer.

Dr Sunali Dasgupta is a new arrival.

Nurses

Lead nurse Narinda Sinclair has recently qualified as an Advanced Nurse Practitioner triaging urgent same-day requests from April. Congratulations Narinda.

We confirm that Celia Franco, VMC's new affiliated Care Navigator, will be absorbing work formerly done by Alex Johnston, who was our Link worker for the Elderly.

Healthcare Assistant

Claudette Rhodes joins us as our new healthcare assistant.

Reception

Cattia Charan, Fahad Ali, Maria Santana and Leanne Whitcombe have all joined the reception team.

Minor Surgery Clinic

Monday's clinic is being supported by Shital Patel in the morning and Claudette Rhodes in the afternoon.

The HRT/Menopause Clinic

This clinic will not be covered when Dr Rankine is away. Most patients will be able to get enough medication to cover them for this period and new patients can book-in in August or make an appointment with another suitable GP for advice.

VMC and LPMC SERVICES

ONLINE SERVICES

Statistics indicate that on average 30% of time is saved by using online medical requests to contact GPs first compared with pre-booked, face-to-face consultations. The saving comes from patients providing a history of their symptoms in their own time. This information is invaluable in speeding up the most suitable treatment options. See step-by-step guide to VMC's online services on the facing page.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Good news – our ground-breaking ATLAS male stress and distress service based at Lees Place MC has had its funding renewed for another year. Any patient wishing to access this service that uses targeted counselling and acupuncture, please ask one of the GPs to refer you. Waiting times are only 1–2 weeks.

BLADDER or BOWEL PROBLEMS?

We recommend that patients contact one of the following specialist services either online or by phone for information, expert advice, support and help.

Bladder and Bowel UK – confidential helpline. Call 0161 607 8219 or see website: <https://www.bbuk.org.uk>

Westminster Community Continence

Service – advice and treatment for a range of conditions. Adult patients can be referred by their GP or other healthcare professional, or self-refer to the service. Website:

[Continence information - Central London Community Healthcare](#)

Squeezy – the physiotherapy app for Pelvic Floor muscle exercises that helps women improve their pelvic floor health.

ONLINE SERVICES

There has recently been a proliferation of unregulated healthcare apps for mobile phones, some of which are not to be trusted. VMC recommends that patients use just two online healthcare services:

1. VMC online services, which can be found at www.victoriamedicalcentre.com, are exclusively for VMC patients, and enable you to make **e-consultations** and **electronic requests**. The services are backed up by staff you know from the practice. Starting on the home page of the VMC website, scroll down and click on: ONLINE CONSULTATION and select the appropriate option:

Request Help From Surgery
Repeat Prescription Online
Self Help
Urgent Eye Problem.

This service is being expanded and more options will be added over the next few months.

2. The NHS Central London 'Health Help Now' app, is a free app for mobile phones that patients can download from their app store. There is a blue card in reception that tells patients how to get 'Health Help Now' on their devices. The app lists common symptoms and offers advice to help patients find the right treatment.

GP at Hand

You may have heard or read about 'GP at Hand', a new service run by Babylon Healthcare Service Ltd, that offers email and video consultations. As it is an NHS service, you have to register to use it, which means you will be automatically de-registered from VMC and you will no longer be able to use the practice's services. While GP At Hand does accept most patients, it may not be suitable for people with on-going physical or mental health issues, frail elderly people, pregnant women, or anyone not confident using digital technology.

FREE AND DISCOUNTED TRANSPORT SERVICES FOR HANDICAPPED RESIDENTS

Westminster Council offers a range of free and discounted patient transport services for handicapped residents. You can see the whole range online at: Travel Alternatives London Borough of Westminster. Here are some of the services on offer:

1. **Disabled person's Freedom Pass** – entitles older and disabled residents to free travel on almost all public transport in London:

contact 020 7823 4567 (choose option 3 'Permits and Disabled Badges')

2. **Disabled Person's Railcard** – costs £20 a year for an individual and a companion and provides one-third off most rail travel.

contact 0845 605 0525 or www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk

3. **Westminster Taxi Card** – travel in licensed London taxis at a reduced rate:

contact 020 7934 9791 for application form or Email taxicardviews@westminster.gov.uk

4. **Dial-a-Ride** a free door-to-door service for shopping and recreation (not hospital appointments or going to school or work) if you are disabled and cannot use public transport:

contact 020 7309 8900

5. **Community transport** – a door-to-door service for Westminster residents:

a) Volunteer Cars (mileage fee):
call 020 8964 1114

b) Shopper Service (free):
call 020 8960 9020 (note: Lines are open 1pm to 4 pm to book either a) or b).

NOTE Age UK Westminster can also offer you advice and assistance:
call 020 3004 5610 for details.

Contact Victoria MC and Lees Place MC by e-mail: CLCCG.VMC@nhs.net
Contact the Patient Participation Group by e-mail (on PPG matters only).
Not to be used for clinical or practice matters) vmcpgg@live.co.uk