

The Elms Family Medical Centre

Quarterly Newsletter

Keeping you in touch with developments at our Medical Centre

www.theelms.com.au

Winter 2023

With winter upon us, it is not too late to reduce the chances of becoming unwell with influenza and Covid-19. We encourage everyone to consider having the annual 'flu injection which is provided free for people who are over 65 years of age, pregnant women, children aged 6 months to less than 5 years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 6 months and over, and anyone with a chronic medical condition aged 6 months and over. For everyone outside of these eligible groups, we provide the 'flu injection privately for \$15. Please speak with reception to book an appointment with our nurse.

Although The Elms does not provide the Covid-19 immunisation, we still suggest that people consider having a 'winter booster' if it has been at least 6 months since their last Covid-19 injection or at least 6 months after a confirmed infection with Covid-19. For many, this would be their 5th Covid-19 injection. The booster is free and is recommended for people over the age of 65 years, or people aged over 18 years with a chronic medical condition. People aged over 18 years without any chronic medical conditions may choose to have the booster, but it is not recommended for those under 18 years unless they have a chronic medical condition.

Patients requiring appointments at short notice

It is not always possible to know ahead of time when an appointment with a doctor is needed. In such instances, patients may ring the clinic early in the morning (our receptionists start at 8am) and ask to be placed on the cancellation waiting list. Depending on how heavily booked we are, and whether there are any last-minute cancellations, our receptionists will try to accommodate appointment requests as best as they can.

There will be times when it is advisable for a patient to attend the Bacchus Marsh Hospital Urgent Care Centre or to call an ambulance. Our reception staff will indicate whether this is the case if they are able to obtain some information about the patient's medical situation. Medical conditions like chest pain, breathlessness, loss of consciousness, sudden weakness or paralysis, and significant injuries require hospital care and warrant calling an ambulance. Attending the clinic for these types of conditions is not appropriate.

Online booking of appointments

As an alternative to ringing reception for an appointment, patients can use our online booking portal. This is provided through Auto Med Systems (AMS). Patients can access appointment bookings via a link on our clinic website, or through the AMS Connect mobile application. Scan the following QR codes to download the AMS Connect application relevant to your mobile device:



◀ Scan this for Apple devices



Scan this for Android devices ▶

Referrals for cosmetic surgery

From 1st July 2023, patients seeking to have cosmetic surgical procedures will require a referral from their GP. This was introduced as a safety measure to ensure that patients have a discussion with their GP when contemplating cosmetic surgery, and to cover any relevant medical considerations. The referral would include information about the patient's health, medications, and allergies. This requirement was developed by the Medical Board of Australia after their investigation into the cosmetic surgery industry found that there was a serious lack of regulation and oversight. A GP referral is not required for Botox injections, dermal fillers, skin surface laser or cosmetic skin peels.

Follow up of test results

Patients may have tests requested by their doctor to help diagnose a set of symptoms or as part of preventative care to screen for common conditions. When the doctor requests a test, it is usual to discuss how the results will be communicated to the patient. This may be through a follow up appointment, a telephone call or by letter, depending on the urgency and nature of the test. If the patient does not receive the result as pre-arranged, it is very important for the patient to notify reception. Sometimes a result does not return to the doctor and so they will be unaware that action is required. Patients should not assume 'no news is good news' in relation to test results.

Eligibility for Medicare-rebated telehealth consultations

Since early in the Coronavirus pandemic, the Australian Government has provided patients with Medicare rebates for telehealth consultations. These rebates are only available to patients if they have had a face-to-face appointment in the clinic within the previous 12 months. Patients may still choose to have a telehealth consultation outside of the 12-month limit but they will not receive the rebate. The convenience of telehealth consultations needs to be balanced against the reduced opportunity to physically review the patient.

Keeping your contact details up to date

It is important that patient details are kept up to date so that reminders and other types of contact from the clinic may be communicated. Other personal details such as Medicare and concession card numbers and expiry dates also need to be current in order to access rebate payments and reduced fees. We recommend that a street address is recorded even if the preferred postal address is a post office box in case emergency services are required to attend the patient's location. Reception staff may occasionally ask to verify details if the patient record indicates an outdated entry.

After-hours care

There are several options available to patients if they require medical assistance outside of normal clinic hours. In emergencies, calling for an ambulance on triple zero (000) is the recommended course of action. For urgent but non-life-threatening conditions, patients may attend the Bacchus Marsh Hospital Urgent Care Centre located on Clarinda Street, Bacchus Marsh. This is staffed 24 hours a day, every day. Free telephone advice is available 24 hours a day through both the GP Helpline on 1800-022-222 and Nurse-On-Call on 1300-606-024. For less urgent conditions, patients may book the first available clinic appointment using our online portal via the practice website or using the mobile application. This is accessible 24 hours a day.

Another option to consider is the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department which is a free telehealth service provided by Northern Health. Patients may access a video consultation with an emergency department doctor or nurse following a simple online registration process. The only requirements are that the patient is located within Victoria and they have a device capable of making video calls. To use this free service, go to www.vved.org.au using your device's internet browser.

“Complete ongoing care for you and your family”

