

Dr Sarah Dalziel Dr Neil Poskitt Dr Andrew McMEnamin Dr Sally Hoskins Dr Robyn Parker Dr Ron Vail Dr Rachel Lynskey

Practice news

February has been a busy month and the shortened weeks due to statutory holidays hasn't helped. If you are sick and need to be seen, we will always endeavour to get you in to see a Doctor. We have the urgent drop-in clinic for this purpose each morning between 8.30am and 11.00am. Otherwise, please talk to one of our nurses who will triage you on the phone and arrange an appointment for you to be seen.

For regular medication reviews, drivers licence renewal and medical certificates it helps if you can plan in advance so that you are seen by your preferred Doctor on a day and at a time that suits you.

Locum Doctors: We have Dr John Feist in the practice at the moment covering for Dr McMEnamin who is having a much needed break. In April, we will see the return of Dr Thom Reynolds for a period of 3 weeks to help cover for Dr Ron Vail and other Dr's as they take some days off over the school holidays.

New reception staff: We are having a change around of our administration staff, partially due to the additional requirement put upon us by the Ministry of Health, Michelle who has been with us for the last two years is taking a break to help her mum (who happens to live in Wales). Maureen, who has been with us from many years, and has just had a significant birthday, is also reducing her hours. The two new faces are Ariana and Dianne, and we look forward to having them both as part of our team—they have lots to learn!

Whooping cough outbreak

The Ministry of Health has announced that New Zealand is in the early stages of a national outbreak of whooping cough (Pertussis)—what does this mean? Pertussis is a highly contagious respiratory disease. It causes severe bouts of coughing, which may be accompanied by vomiting and a whooping sound. We sometimes call it the 'hundred day cough', as it can last up to three months.

In older adolescents, adults and older people, pertussis often goes unrecognised and is under reported. Up to a third of adolescents and young adults with a persistent cough have evidence of recent pertussis infection.

What can you do? Prevention is always the best and for infants the best possible protection is for their mother to be vaccinated during pregnancy. A booster dose of a whooping cough vaccine (Boostrix®) is recommended for every pregnancy and is free for women between 28-38 weeks of pregnancy. Followed by on-time immunisations for the infant at 6 weeks, 3 months and 5 months. Further protection is recommended with the booster vaccines at 4 years and 11 years of age,

We also recommend that close family contacts of young infants, such as grandparents and fathers have a booster dose of pertussis vaccine to reduce spread of the disease. Older siblings should be up-to-date with their immunisations.

If you haven't had a booster in the last 10 years you could consider a booster vaccine, Boostrix. This vaccine boosts immunity against whooping cough, diphtheria and tetanus. For further advice, please call the surgery and speak with one of the nurses.

Arthem Alert Safety Information

Medsafe, New Zealand Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Authority issued this warning in February.

Arthem— potential risk of harm to the liver – statement under section 98 of the Medicines Act 1981

Arthem is marketed as a natural dietary supplement for maintaining and supporting joint health and mobility. Arthem soft gel capsules contain 150 mg of Artemisia annua extract in grape seed oil. The Centre for Adverse Reactions Monitoring (CARM) has received 14 reports of liver toxicity associated with the use of Arthem. To date all the reports of harm to the liver have involved patients taking Arthem specifically. Since the chemical composition of the Artemisia annua extract is not disclosed it is not clear if other products containing Artemisia annua extract have similar effects.

Consumers should be aware of a potential risk of harm to the liver when taking these products.

Accession, our patient portal

More and more patients are signing up to use our portal. If interested, please contact the administration team who will enrol you. The portal allows you to book appointments, order prescriptions and look at your results, all at your leisure. If you have problems logging on or finding your way around, the admin staff are more than happy to show you.

Patient fees

Patients often ask us why our fee structure is higher than some other practices in town.

At present there are two different levels of funding available to Primary Care; one is called Very Low Cost Access (VLCA). To receive VLCA funding there is an application process to the Ministry of Health based on the percentage of high needs patients enrolled in the practice – the practice needs to have more than 50% high needs patients to qualify, and Te Ngae Medical does not meet this requirement. This is why it is significantly cheaper to attend some practices than others.

Our fees are comparable and with other practices in town who, like us, are unable to receive the VLCA funding and significantly cheaper than visiting a GP in other areas around NZ, who all receive the same funding as we do.

It has been indicated that the new Government may look at addressing this inequity and that additional funding may be made available to those on lower incomes, regardless of the practice they attend. Here at Te Ngae Medical we would very much like to see the funding follow the patient so that everyone is able to attend their local GP and receive a level of subsidised healthcare that would enable them to seek medical advice as needed. If you are having difficulty paying your account, we ask that you talk to us.



Influenza vaccinations and funded shingles vaccine are coming

We haven't to date had an update as to when the influenza vaccines will arrive—we are assuming late March at this stage.

As soon as we have them on-site we will send out an email, update the patient portal and advertise in the rooms.

As of the 1st April, the shingles vaccine, Zostavax will be funded at age 65. Herpes zoster (shingles) is a localised, blistering and painful rash caused by reactivation of varicella zoster virus (VZV), this is the virus that causes chickenpox. If you would like to know more about the vaccine please ring the practice and talk to one of our nurses.