

An Apple A Day

Newsletter for patients registered at GP Surgeries in
Hitchin and Whitwell



@hitchinandwhitwellpcn

HWPCN

**Hitchin & Whitwell
Primary Care Network**

Welcome to the latest edition of the Hitchin and Whitwell Primary Care Network (PCN) newsletter, your local update on healthcare services, events, and initiatives in our community.

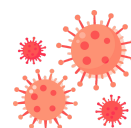
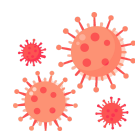
Apologies that there was no summer newsletter!

2026/2027 Flu season

The long, hot summer is over and we're starting the annual flu campaign. This year, children over the age of 2 will be offered the flu jab in September, as children tend to get flu earlier in the season than adults, and their immunity lasts longer. Over 65 year olds and at-risk patients over 18 will be offered their flu jab in October. It's also recommended for all pregnant women, care home residents, close contacts of immunosuppressed patients, healthcare staff and, this year, those experiencing homelessness. If you're invited, please do have you flu jab to protect yourself and your friends and neighbours!

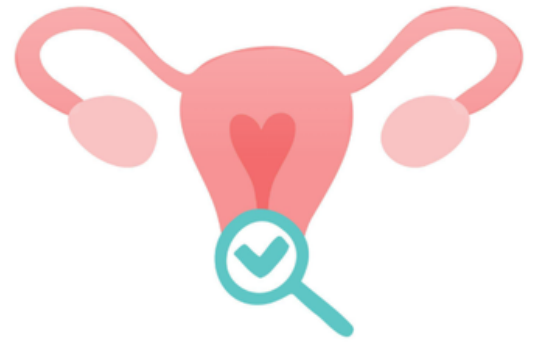
Flu mythbusters:

- **Can you catch flu from the flu jab? No.** The vaccine in the injections is not alive. You might get flu-type symptoms as your immune system works to make antibodies.
- **Is it worth having if I'm fit and healthy? Yes.** Even healthy people can catch flu and it can have serious consequences, including pneumonia and bronchitis.
- **Can I have it if I'm allergic to eggs? Yes.** This year, guidance has changed as it's been shown to be perfectly safe, even in people with serious egg allergy.



NEW NHS HPV TESTING

We are delighted that most eligible women in Hitchin and Whitwell attend for their regular smear test, which looks for pre-cancerous changes of the cervix. This type of cancer is associated with HPV (human papilloma virus).



For those women who have not attended screening, NHS England is starting to roll out self-testing kits. This contains a swab, similar to a long cotton bud, with which a sample is taken from the vagina, and posted back to the NHS for free. While this doesn't allow the cervix to be visualised, it can detect HPV and therefore identify women who may be at risk of cervical cancer.

We were overwhelmed with interest in our short notice "walk-in" Saturday smear clinic recently and would like to apologise to those who were unable to get a slot. We hope to offer this again in future with more availability!



CARERS' CAFÉ IS 3!



Our fabulous Carers' Café will be celebrating its third birthday on Friday 9th October!

Join us from 10 am-12 noon at St Mary's Parish Church Hall, Church House, Churchyard, Hitchin SG5 1HP



There will be cake and refreshments served by the wonderful members of Hitchin Tilehouse Rotary, and, as well as celebrating our birthday, we'll have the usual support available for carers and their loved ones, from our member practices and partner organisations.



DEMENTIA DISCO

We welcome
EVERYONE
to our

DEMENTIA DISCO

Taking place on

Friday 2 October, 2.00pm-4.00pm

at The Broadhall Suite, Stevenage Borough Football Club.

Free to attend to all those living with dementia and their carers, family and friends.

Brought to you by Everyone Active and the Stevenage FC Foundation

To register your **YOUR PARAGRAPH TEXT** please email us at:
stevenageactivecommunities@everyoneactive.com

Stevenage Arts & Leisure Centre
Lytton Way, Stevenage, SG1 1LZ
01438 576658



www.everyoneactive.com



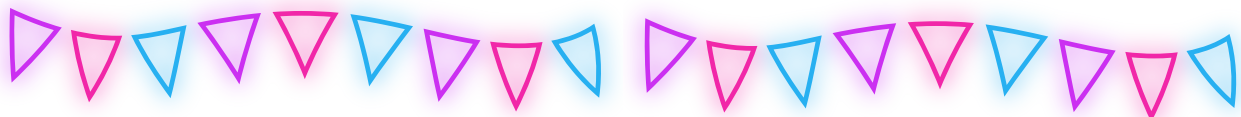
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PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUPS

Would you like to get involved?

HWPCN has a quarterly, on-line Patient Participation Group and we'd love to have more attendees! We would like to hear your feedback, ideas and thoughts about service delivery. We'll also give you updates on what's happening in the PCN and the wider healthcare system. Just email hwpcn.admin@nhs.net to be added to the mailing list!



You may not be aware, but forthcoming legislation will remove Healthwatch, the independent Health and Care champion. Local volunteers have come together to set up a Patient Engagement Platform:



Welcome to the Patient Engagement Platform



Welcome to the website that supports patients, PPGs, Hospital Patient Panels, and community based Patient Healthcare Groups.

Our members come from all over Herts and West Essex and many have a long history of working with the regional ICB to ensure the patient voice is heard by the NHS decision makers.



THE PATIENT ENGAGEMENT PLATFORM | EMPOWER PATIENT VOICES NOW
<https://www.thepatientengagementplatform.org.uk/>



JOIN A VOLUNTEER-LED HEALTH WALK!

Hertfordshire Health Walks

Hitchin Timetable — September to December 2026

Enjoy the countryside and local green spaces with **FREE Hertfordshire Health Walks** led by friendly trained volunteers. All walks are free, and no pre-booking is required. Please arrive 15 minutes early on your first walk to register, or register online beforehand.

HITCHIN WALK SCHEDULE

Walk & Meeting Point	Day / Time	Dates (2026)	Grade & Info
The Orange Tree PH Stevenage Road, Hitchin, SG4 9DR <i>Meet in the back car park.</i>	Alternate Mondays 10.30am	Aug: 10, 24 Sep: 7, 21 Oct: 5, 19 Nov: 2, 16, 30 Dec: 14, 28	Grade 4 Faster pace and hills
Millstream PH Cambridge Road, Hitchin, SG4 0JH <i>Join us for a cuppa afterwards in the pub.</i>	Tuesdays 11.00am	Every Tuesday	First Steps / Grade 1 Gentle walk suitable for recovery. Dementia Friendly.
Three Moorhens PH Hitchin Hill, Hitchin, SG4 9AJ <i>Meet in top car park.</i>	Tuesdays 2.00pm	Every Tuesday	Grade 3 Steep hills on route
North Hertfordshire Museum 14 Brand Street, Hitchin, SG5 1JE <i>Join us for a cuppa afterwards in the museum café.</i>	Wednesdays 2.00pm	Every Wednesday	Grade 1 - 2 Some hills
Oughtonhead Common Bedford Road / Redhill Road, Hitchin <i>Meet at entrance to The Angel's Bedford Rd car park. (Redhill Rd car park used during pub refurb).</i>	Fridays 10.30am	Every Friday (Excl. Bank Holidays)	Grade 4
The Windmill PH Charlton near Hitchin, SG5 2AE <i>Progression Health Walk</i>	Alternate Mondays 10.00am	Sep: 14, 28 Oct: 12, 26 Nov: 9, 23 Dec: 7, 21	Grade 4+ Approx. up to 120 mins. Steep inclines.

Walk Grades & Guidance

Walks range from gentle First Steps (20 to 30 mins) up to Grade 4+ (up to 120 mins). Walking times are for guidance and depend on group fitness and weather conditions.

Contact Us: Email: healthwalks.cms@hertfordshire.gov.uk | Phone: 01992 555888 | Web: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/healthwalks

Volunteer with us! We are looking for volunteers to lead Health Walks in Hitchin. If you'd like to share the joy of walking in your community, please get in touch!

We would love to hear your thoughts! If you would like to give feedback about our newsletter please contact: hwpcn.admin@nhs.net

Thank you