



The Villa Medical Centre Newsletter

Autumn 2026

Welcome to our autumn newsletter! As we enjoy the last of the sunshine and look ahead to autumn, we want to keep you up to date with the latest news from the surgery. Inside, you'll find updates on our services, important reminders, and information about upcoming seasonal campaigns. As always, we're here to support your health and wellbeing.

Included in this newsletter is information on:

- Protected Learning Time (PLT)
- Flu / COVID Clinics
- NHS App
- Repeat Prescriptions
- Medicines waste
- Mounjaro and weight management services
- Cervical Smears
- Childhood immunisations
- Measles Outbreak
- Health Fair
- Eco Wellbeing Course
- Community Walks
- Community Information

Protected Learning Time (Practice closures)

The Practice will be closed for training at the following times. Please contact NHS 111 if you require medical assistance during this time.

- Thursday 10th September 2026 (1pm – 6:30pm)
- Wednesday 14th October 2026 (1pm – 6:30pm)
- Wednesday 18th November 2026 (1pm – 6:30pm)

Flu / COVID-19 Clinics

Protect yourself this winter. Both the **Flu** and **COVID-19** vaccines help reduce your risk of becoming seriously unwell. If you are eligible for both vaccines, they can usually be given during the same appointment.

This year, vaccination appointments at the surgery can also be booked online for your convenience. Eligible patients will receive an invitation by **SMS text message or email** containing a booking link.

This year's flu & covid clinics will be held on:

- ❖ Thursday 1st October 2026
- ❖ Friday 2nd October 2026
- ❖ Thursday 8th October 2026
- ❖ Friday 9th October 2026
- ❖ Thursday 15th October 2026

The practice loses much needed income from patients choosing to have their vaccines at pharmacies instead of here at the surgery. Support us in keeping vital funds in Practice, which helps us to employ staff, pay the increasing gas, electric, waste disposal, cleaning and many other costs. Our funding is decreasing every year and to keep running such a high standard of service, we need to keep as much funding in house as possible.

You are eligible for the annual flu vaccination if you are:

- Pregnant
- Aged 2 or 3 years old on 31st August 2026
- Aged 65 years or older
- 6 months to 65 years old in an 'at risk' group
- A carer
- A resident in a care or nursing home

NHS App

Using the NHS App is the best way to manage your healthcare efficiently and securely. It allows you to order repeat prescriptions, access your medical records, and receive important health updates all in one place.

The app saves time, reduces the need for waiting in phone call queues or visiting reception, and gives you more control over your health, anytime and anywhere. If you experience problems when registering with the NHS App, or do not have photo ID, please let us know.



Repeat Prescriptions

Please do not contact the GP surgery by telephone to order repeat prescriptions. To help us process requests efficiently and reduce phone line congestion, please request prescriptions via the NHS, or if you are unable to do this, via email or a prescription slip.

Items which do not appear on your prescription list may be short-term items only, or there may be supply issues. You can still request this medication via email or prescription slip.

Under no circumstances are pharmacies allowed to order medication on your behalf, unless we have given prior agreement for this.

Prescriptions ordered before 12noon will normally be sent to the pharmacy after 12pm the next day. If requested after 12 noon, they will be available after 48 hours.

If you are requesting medication early due to holiday travel, please record this on your request. Please be aware that electronic prescriptions can be sent to most pharmacies within the UK.

If you need assistance, feel free to ask at reception or via email. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

Help Reduce Medication Waste

Only order the medicines that you need

- Unless arranged with us directly, we do not permit pharmacies to order on your behalf, only you know what you need
- Please let us know if you've stopped taking any of your medicines
- Check what medicines you still have at home before re-ordering
- Discuss your medication with your GP or Pharmacist on a regular basis
- Think carefully before ticking all the boxes on your repeat prescription forms and only tick those you really need
- If you don't need the medicine, please don't order it! If you need the medicine in the future, you can still request it
- If you need to go into hospital, please remember to take all your medicines with you in a clearly marked bag
- Please also remember that your medicines are prescribed only for you; it's not safe to share them with anyone else

Remember that unused medicines cannot be recycled

- Even if you never open them, once medicines have left the Pharmacy, they cannot be recycled or used by anyone else.
- Please bring your unused medicines to the Pharmacy for safe disposal.
- NEVER dispose of your unused or unwanted medicines down the toilet

Unused medicines are a safety risk

- Return out of date medicines to your pharmacy or dispensary for safe disposal
- If your medicines change - return your old medicines to the pharmacy for safe disposal to avoid mixing them up with your new medicines
- Don't stockpile medication - it is a safety risk for children and others who might take them
- Store medicines in an appropriate place out of reach of children

Repeat prescriptions?



Only order what you need



10% of medicines
prescribed nationally
are not needed



In Cheshire and
Merseyside large amounts
of **medicines are wasted**



Speak to your **pharmacy
team** about only ordering
what you need



Take your medications
when you go into hospital
for **safe, seamless care**

Find out more about our medicine waste
campaign at:

cheshireandmerseyside.nhs.uk/medicines-waste

Mounjaro and weight management services

The new weight management medication 'Tirzepatide' (brand name Mounjaro®) is shortly being made available to some NHS patients to support weight loss.

NHS Cheshire and Merseyside are currently in the process of establishing new community-based weight management services, which is set to launch this summer. They are working as quickly as possible to make these services available across Cheshire and Merseyside. We will be in touch shortly with those patients who fit the very strict criteria.

Cervical Smears

Cervical screening is not a test for cancer; it's a test to help prevent cancer.

It is important you attend for your screening when invited. You'll get an invitation through the NHS App, by text or by letter asking you to make an appointment.

Appointments for smear tests are available at:

- **Pre-booked appointments at the surgery with our Practice Nurse.**
- **Pre-booked appointments via Sexual Health Wirral (online booking).**
- **Brighter Birkenhead PCN smear drop-in clinics (see below).**

SMEAR TEST DROP-IN CLINIC

**at St Catherine's Surgery, 2nd floor St
Catherine's Health Centre
every Wednesday 2pm-6pm**

We can provide advice and support for you to have
your smear test.

NO APPOINTMENT NEEDED.

Cervical Screening Saves Lives #DontFearThe Smear



This clinic is provided by Brighter Birkenhead PCN and is for Devaney MC, Hamilton MC, St Catherine's Surgery, Riverside Surgery, The Villa MC and Whetstone MC patients only

Childhood Immunisations

Vaccination is the most important thing we can do to protect ourselves and our children against ill health. They prevent millions of deaths worldwide every year. If people stop having vaccines, it's possible for infectious diseases to quickly spread again.

Childhood vaccinations are usually given at 8 weeks, 12 weeks, 16 weeks, 1 year and 18 months old.

Please contact the surgery to book an appointment with our Practice Nurse if your child is due or has missed any vaccinations.

For more information about immunisations and when to have them, please visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/nhs-vaccinations-and-when-to-have-them/>

Measles outbreak

There has been a rise in measles cases across the UK, in North Merseyside, and more recently in Wirral **with the majority of cases in unvaccinated children aged 10 years and under.**

Measles is a virus that spreads easily from person to person through coughs and sneezes. It can make people feel very unwell and, in some cases, lead to more serious illness. Babies, young children, pregnant women and people with weaker immune systems are more at risk of complications.

The best protection against measles is the MMR vaccine (measles, mumps and rubella) or the newer MMRV (measles, mumps, rubella and varicella) vaccine, depending on age.

The vaccine is free on the NHS for everyone, whatever your age.

If you or your child has missed a dose, you can still catch up at any time by contacting your GP practice.

Parents can check their child's vaccination record in their Red Book or ask the surgery if they are unsure. Adults who are not sure if they've had both doses can also contact their GP to check and book a catch-up if needed.

Symptoms to look out for:

Measles usually starts with cold like symptoms, including:

- a high temperature
- a runny or blocked nose
- sneezing
- a cough
- red, sore, watery eyes
- small white spots may appear inside the mouth
- a rash appears, usually starting on the face and behind the ears before spreading to the rest of the body

If you think you or your child might have measles:

- Stay at home if you can
- Call your GP or NHS 111 for advice
- Do not visit a GP surgery or A&E without calling first

This helps stop the infection spreading to others.

Sadly, to date in 2026, there have been 2 measles deaths in children in England.

Health Secretary James Murray said:

“These deaths are a heartbreaking reminder that measles is not a harmless childhood illness.

Measles can lead to serious complications that can be fatal, and the MMR vaccine, which has saved countless lives, remains the best protection we have against this highly infectious disease.

I urge all parents and carers to check that their children are up to date with their vaccinations as it is never too late to catch up – even if you miss a dose. By ensuring our children are vaccinated, we not only protect them but also help safeguard the most vulnerable in our communities”

For more information, please visit

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/latest-measles-figures-published-as-two-deaths-confirmed-in-2026>

What diseases do vaccines protect against?

- Diphtheria
- Hepatitis b
- Hib (Haemophilus influenzae type b)
- Polio
- Tetanus
- Whooping cough (pertussis)
- Rotavirus
- Meningitis
- Pneumococcus
- Rotavirus
- Measles
- Mumps
- Rubella
- Flu
- HPV

Is it safe for children to have several vaccines at once?

Yes. Children come into contact with many bacteria and viruses every day. Their immune systems are very able to respond to multiple vaccines at once. If you spread these vaccines out rather than giving them together, your child is left unprotected for longer.



What does this mean for your children?

If children aren't vaccinated, this means they are at greater risk of getting ill and dying from infectious diseases. Protect your children by ensuring they are vaccinated.



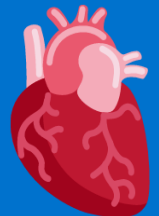
Meningitis



Meningitis is a life threatening disease. It is the leading cause of death in early childhood from any infection. The bug (bacteria) that causes the infection is called 'Meningococcus'. It is a type of bacteria which can cause meningitis, an infection of the linings of the brain and spine. Meningococcus infection can also cause overwhelming blood poisoning (called sepsis), brain damage and fits (epilepsy). It can even lead to children losing their arms and legs due to tissue death. We also vaccinate babies and children against another bug called Haemophilus influenzae. This bug can cause meningitis, upper airway obstruction ('epiglottitis') and sepsis, and can lead to long term effects including deafness, fits and brain damage.

Rubella

To look after your child's future, it is imperative to vaccinate against Rubella (also known as German Measles). Rubella causes most damage to the baby growing in the womb, where it can cause miscarriage, blindness, deafness, heart defects and damage the developing brain. Infection with rubella in the first eight to ten weeks of pregnancy damages up to 90% of surviving children. If children catch rubella, they can develop a high temperature, pink spotty rash, coughs, headaches and swollen lymph nodes/ 'glands'.



Whooping cough



Whooping cough can give children severe lung infections (pneumonia). Young children develop a characteristic cough (a 'whoop') and vomiting. The breathing difficulties can damage the lungs, and reduce blood reaching the brain and cause brain damage and even death.

Tetanus

Tetanus is a bug commonly found in areas that children are known to be around such as soil. It can enter the body through cuts, e.g. from rusty nails. Inside the body, tetanus releases a toxin which can damage nerves. This can cause stiffness in your jaw muscles (lockjaw), making it difficult to open your mouth. It can also lead to painful muscle spasms, making it difficult to breathe and swallow, and can lead to death.



Will my child be protected by herd immunity if I don't get them vaccinated?



No. Lower vaccination rates mean herd immunity is not as strong. If your child isn't vaccinated, they can then also pass infection to others who aren't able to get protected yet, like young babies and pregnant women, who can then get very ill and die.

For advice on vaccines and when to have them, visit:

<https://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/nhs-vaccinations-and-when-to-have-them/>

For more answers to common questions around vaccinations, visit:

<https://vaccineknowledge.ox.ac.uk/faqs-about-vaccines>

Will catching the disease make my child's immune system stronger?



If your child is infected, their immune system learns how to better defend against that same infection if they are infected again. The body does this by making 'memory immune cells'. Catching the infection though, means your child can get very ill and die, so getting vaccinated stops that risk.

vaccinations teach your child's immune system to make a ready-made defence against infection called antibodies, in case they meet the infection in future-so they don't get infected and don't get ill.



Is the MMR linked with autism?



No. There is no link between the MMR and autism. MMR does not cause or increase the risk of your child developing autism. This has been shown in studies of hundreds of thousands of children. For details of these studies, please [see this webpage by the Oxford Vaccine Group at Oxford University.](#)



Join Us for a HEALTH FAIR



ADVICE
SUPPORT
WELLBEING

Your
Health
Our
Community

INFORMATION • SUPPORT • COMMUNITY • WELLBEING



We will be hosting a
health fair for our
patients and the wider
local community during
one of our **flu clinics**.



Come along, have a chat, get helpful advice and support your health and wellbeing!

THE FOLLOWING ORGANISATIONS (AND POSSIBLY A FEW MORE)
WILL BE ON HAND TO CHAT AND PROVIDE SOME **FREE AND HELPFUL ADVICE**:



WIRRAL FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

The Fire and Rescue Service support our communities by providing advice on many topics including:

- ✓ Arson reduction
- ✓ Road safety
- ✓ Water and boat safety
- ✓ Firework/sparkler, bonfire safety and sky lanterns safety
- ✓ General home advice including: smoke alarms, cooking and smoking, candle safety, carbon monoxide, electrical (including eBike) safety, barbeque and garden safety, and what to do after an incident.

www.merseyfire.gov.uk



WIRRAL WIRED CARERS SERVICE

Wired are a service who provide training and support for carers in our local community.

- ♥ Advice about carers health and wellbeing
- ♥ Activities for carers
- ♥ Information on what support you are entitled to

www.wired.me.uk



WIRRAL FOREST WELLBEING WALKS

Wirral Forest: Wellbeing CIC is a community-led organisation providing free, inclusive, nature-based wellbeing walks across Wirral.

They exist because many people experience anxiety, isolation, grief, caring pressures, long-term health conditions, financial stress, or low confidence without feeling able to access traditional support services.

www.wirralforest.com



FALLS PREVENTION SERVICE

All people are at risk of falling and there are many reasons why people fall; however, falls are not an inevitable part of ageing. There are positive steps you can take to reduce falls risks and promote active ageing.

The Falls Prevention Service are a small friendly team comprised of health care professionals and exercise instructors commissioned by Public Health. We work with non-housebound older people who may be noticing a decline in balance, strength and confidence.

www.wirralinfobank.co.uk/Services/2151/Wirral-Falls-Prevent

*We hope
to see you
there!*



The Villa Medical Centre
1-2 Roman Road, Prenton,
CH43 3DB

*Looking after
your health
together*



ECO WELLBEING COURSE

Volunteer Resilience Across the Wirral

Walk, Connect, Thrive...

A FREE 6-WEEK OUTDOOR WELLBEING PROGRAMME

For volunteers, community connectors and anyone supporting others across Wirral.

Strengthen your own wellbeing while continuing to give to others.



Guided
walks in
nature



Nature-
based
activities



Mindfulness
& relaxation
tools



Supportive
peer
conversation

Grounded in the NHS Five Ways to Wellbeing

WHAT YOU'LL GAIN

- ✓ Practical tools to manage stress and prevent burnout
- ✓ Space to reflect and reconnect
- ✓ A simple personal wellbeing plan
- ✓ Stronger connection to community and place



Starting Saturday
26th September 2026
for 6 weeks



10.30am – 12.30pm



Prenton Rugby Club
Prenton Dell Road,
Prenton, Birkenhead
CH43 3BS



wirralforest@gmail.com



07718 282960



www.wirralforest.com



A WALK IS A WALK, OR IS IT?



*Change your assumptions about what a walk can be.
What do you have to lose? It's FREE!!*

- Prenton Community Centre

Dickens Avenue, Prenton Dell, CH43 0TQ

Wednesdays at 13:30

- Birkenhead Park Visitor's Centre

Asheville Road, Birkenhead, CH41 4HY

Thursdays at 13:30

- Indigo Venue

Bedford Road, Rock Ferry, CH42 2AS

Fridays at 14:00

*Our walks are safe, community-focused, and
suitable for everyone.*

Led by our welcoming community walk leaders.

**This is NOT a hike, just a gentle
walk to enjoy the outdoors.**

07718282960



Wirral Forest CIC

wirralforest@gmail.com

Community Information

We are proud to support the Prenton Tenants and Residential Association (PTRA) request for food bank donations. You can help by **leaving non-perishable food donations at our reception in the nominated basket**, every contribution makes a difference to local families in need.

‘Prenton Community Walks’ start from the Community Centre (next to the Post Office) at 1:30pm each Wednesday. Come along for a relaxed walk around the local area, enjoying nature and the many wellbeing benefits it brings. It’s a great opportunity to get some fresh air, connect with others, and boost both physical and mental health. Our staff regularly attend these walks, everyone is welcome!



Our Patient Participation Group (PPG) is helping raise funds for a new defibrillator at the surgery. Defibrillators are life-saving machines which can correct dangerous heart rhythms. **You can help support this cause by browsing the books for sale on the bookshelf in reception.**

Reading regularly can reduce stress, boost your memory, and improve your concentration. It can also inspire creativity, expand your knowledge, and even support your emotional wellbeing. Pick up a book today — your mind will thank you and even small contributions help keep our community safe!

If you would like to join our Patient Participation Group, please contact the surgery via email us at **cmicb-wi.thevillamedicalcentre@nhs.net**

