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## MILL ROAD SURGERY

# NEWSLETTER

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Compiled by the Patients Participation Group (PPG)

### Surgery News

**Dr Clair Carpenter's retirement from Mill Road Surgery marks the end of a remarkable chapter in Colchester's healthcare community. For many years, she has been a trusted, compassionate presence, offering care and guidance that touched countless lives. The Patient Participation Group would like to extend a heartfelt thank you for her dedication, professionalism, and kindness. Her commitment to patients and the wider community has left a lasting legacy, and she will be remembered with deep gratitude and warm wishes for the future.**

### Staffing

We can confirm that Dr Hein Leonhardt will take the role of senior Partner of Mill Road Surgery from February 2026, and we are pleased to confirm we have recruited a new GP who will be joining us in spring.

We are also saying goodbye to Jan, our receptionist, who retired in November after 8 years with Mill Road Surgery

### AccuRx Triage system

Following the increased availability of our AccuRx Triage System from 1<sup>st</sup> October, we have seen a substantial rise in the number of online requests being submitted. While this is a positive step in improving accessibility, it has also resulted in a significant increase in demand. As a result, patients may experience longer waiting times after the initial clinical review, particularly for non-urgent issues. To help managing a demand and ensure patients are directed to the most appropriate form of care, we strongly encourage individuals to consider alternative NHS services when suitable. Many minor illnesses

and common conditions can be effectively managed outside of the GP surgery,

Pharmacy first services are available locally and can provide direct advice and treatment for a range of conditions, including earache, soar throat, and urinary tract infections.

Patients may also find support through NHS 111 which is available online and by phone 24/7 for urgent advice when the GP surgery is closed or when patients are unsure of the best place to seek help, in addition, many areas provide community services such as physiotherapy, mental health support, and social prescribing, which may be accepted which may be accessed without needing to see a GP.

### Covid / Flu Vaccinations

The majority of the Autumn We are pleased to confirm that, thanks to the continued support of the PPG and surgery staff, we have successfully completed the majority of our autumn COVID and Flu vaccination campaign. COVID vaccinations are no longer available: however, flu vaccinations will continue to be offered at the surgery until March 2026. If you wish to book a flu vaccination, please contact our reception team.

## APPOINTMENTS

**DNA's (Did not Attend)**

**Last Quarter**

**(AUGUST - SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER)**

# 743

If you are unable to keep your appointment Please cancel by phone, as this leaves a space for other patients, IN TURN, if other patients cancel their appointment, this will leave a space for YOU.



Experts have shared how this year the seasonal flu virus could be worse than seen before, as it beats our immune system. The virus mutated over the summer and appears to escape some of the immunity barriers our bodies have set up. The flu season has started a month earlier than usual this year and the message comes just days after the NHS issued an "urgent SOS" warning with flu cases already on the rise.

Children heading back to school after half term, with the days and nights starting to get colder, saw a major rise in flu cases in the UK. Weekly infection data, released by the UK Health Security Agency, confirmed a surge driven by kids - which experts fear could now move up through older populations.

Professor Lewis warned the current mutation and the H3N2 group of the influenza virus was a particularly bad one with a potentially dangerous impact for some people. The expert said: "H3 is always a hotter virus, it's a nastier virus, it's more impactful on the population."

The NHS has urged the public to get vaccinated in a worrying "flu jab SOS", warning the public Britain could face its worst flu season on record this winter.

Dr Mary Ramsay, Director of Public Health Prog at UKHSA, said: "While it is still early in the season and difficult to predict with certainty which flu strains may dominate, early data on the strains circulating to date suggest that a 'drifted' H3N2 subtype may become dominant, as has been reported in other countries.

**DON'T WAIT  
VACCINATE**

### Preparing for snow and winter weather

Take these steps before winter arrives, or when snow and cold temperatures are forecast:

Do your shopping early and stock up. Make sure you have food and other essentials like a first aid kit, batteries, and a torch.

Check on vulnerable people. Neighbours, family, and friends may need extra support.

Invest in a snow shovel or a supply of gritting salt. If heavy snow is forecast, you can use them to make paths and driveways safe. Sand or cat litter can be used instead of gritting salt.

Get your heating system checked. A plumber can carry out a service and give you advice on how to get your heating working efficiently. Cold air can be bad for your health, and the NHS advises heating your home to at least 18 degrees.

Draft-proof your home. Use draft excluders on doorways and check for gaps around your windows to stop heat escaping. If they're small, you can seal up gaps yourself using caulking, or if you are unsure contact a professional.

Regularly check your boiler pressure. On most boilers your pressure gauge should be between one and two bars. A service before winter arrives will help too.

Make sure radiators are on to prevent pipes freezing. Frozen pipes can leave your home without water and cause flooding and damage. Every room should be at least 7 degrees with the ones you're using 18 degrees or over.

Plan. Snow and ice can make travelling dangerous or stop you from leaving the house, so be prepared to stay put for a few days.



## Local Community Groups

If you'd like help finding more local support, please reach out to our social prescriber.

**Hartbeeps** – Tuesdays at Myland Parish Church Hall. Book online: <http://www.hartbeeps.com> (cost attached)

## Essex Family and Wellbeing Service –

Locations across Colchester. Visit <http://www.essexfamilywellbeing.co.uk>. After baby weighing, enjoy free stay-and-play sessions (no booking required)

**Mer-mummies** – Classes across Colchester, from baby massage to aqua fit for new mums. Book online: <http://www.mermummies.com> (cost attached)

## Looking After Yourself

I didn't realise just how important it was to care for myself in those early days. For me, the shower became sacred—a moment to reset and breathe. It might be something different for you, but try to find a small pocket of time each day to check in with yourself.

After coming home from hospital, I felt completely upside down. It was easy to focus on everything that felt hard—crying, wind, sleepless nights (the list goes on). I started a simple habit: at the end of each day, I'd think of three things that went well. Sometimes it was just having a shower, stacking the dishwasher, or grabbing a 10-minute nap while my baby slept. These small wins helped me stay grounded.

People often say “make the most of them being so young,” but when you're exhausted and overwhelmed, that's easier said than done.

## Your Six Week appointment

Every birth is different, and during pregnancy I heard my fair share of horror stories. If you feel the need to reflect or ask questions, please do raise them with your GP at your six-week check-up.

My GP was kind, informative, and sympathetic. We even laughed about how smartly I'd dressed my son—he could tell I was a first-time mum! I arrived with a bad back and my brother-in-law was assisting by holding the baby, and the GP took time to focus on both of us. It was a great opportunity

to check in and discuss practical things like birth control (which might feel odd at the time, but it's helpful to know your options).

After this appointment, you can get your baby weighed at clinics across North Essex. I visited different ones to switch up the scenery and get some fresh air.

Please book your 6-week check-up online on the Mill Road Surgery website.

I wanted to write this article to offer a real, yet reassuring perspective on being a new mum. Here are my top three tips I share with anyone who asks:

**Get a RADAR key** – These open disabled toilets across the UK, where baby changing facilities are usually located. You can buy a pack of 3 online for around £5.

**Check in with yourself daily** – It's okay not to feel like you're in a “new-born bubble” all the time. Talk to someone about how you're feeling.

**Take a walk each day** – Whether it's 5 minutes or an hour, fresh air can really help when your days and nights start to blur together.

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**Patient Participation Group**

**ARE YOU INTERESTED IN JOINING THE PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP (PPG)**

Please see our PPG noticeboard in the waiting room or contact us via the online form on our website

<https://www.millroad-surgery.co.uk>

Any comments or queries or if you would like to receive future copies by email, send to Mill Road Surgery Patient Participation Group at

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