

Aylesbury Surgery

Health & Engagement

Forum

Date: September 2025

Issue: 37

OUR HEALTH IN CHALLENGING TIMES

If you've turned on the news recently, you'll have seen the headlines dominate by the cost of living crisis and significant pressures on the NHS. These are not just abstract national issues; they directly impact our community's health and wellbeing. At such times, the relationship between you and your surgery becomes more important than ever.

Recent headlines about the cost of living and NHS pressures are more than just news—they affect our community's wellbeing. We know these challenges can impact your health, from making difficult choices to feeling anxious about seeking care.

The Link Between National Pressures and Your Health

Financial strain and anxiety about accessing services are more than just stressors; they are health issues. We understand that:

- Choosing between heating and eating can lead to poor nutrition and make chronic conditions harder to manage.
- Worry about prescription costs might mean some delay seeking essential treatment.
- Stories of long waiting lists can be discouraging, making you hesitant to even bring a concern to us.

Please know: we see these challenges, and we are here to help, not to judge. Your health is our absolute priority.



Mr Rajash Mehta—Practice Manager and forum chairman



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Our Health in Challenging Times	1
Flu Vaccinations	2–3
Veteran Friendly.....	4–5
The III Approach	6–7
Dealing with Bereavement	8–10
Health & Lifestyle	11
Hypertension	12 –14
Partnership	15–16



Flu Vaccination: Protect Yourself and Others This Winter

THE IMPORTANCE OF FLU VACCINATIONS: PROTECTING PATIENTS AND THE NHS THIS WINTER

As we approach the colder months, flu season once again poses a serious challenge to public health and the NHS. For surgical patients and healthcare staff alike, flu vaccination is a vital tool in reducing illness, preventing complications, and easing pressure on services.

WHAT IS FLU & WHY IS IT DANGEROUS?

Flu is not the same as a common cold. It comes on suddenly and can cause:

- ◆ High fever and chills
- ◆ Severe fatigue
- ◆ Headaches and muscle aches
- ◆ Cough and sore throat



While most healthy people recover in 2–7 days, flu can lead to pneumonia, bronchitis, or worsening of chronic conditions. In severe cases, it can cause hospitalisation or death.

WHY THE FLU VACCINE IS IMPORTANT

- **PROTECT YOURSELF AND LOVED ONES** – Vaccination stops you spreading flu to vulnerable people.

- **REDUCES RISK OF SERIOUS ILLNESS** – flu can lead to Pneumonia, Hospital stays and worsened chronic conditions.
- **SUPPORT THE NHS** – Vaccines help reduce pressure on hospitals and GP Services in Winter.
- **SAFE AND EFFECTIVE** – Updated yearly to match current flu strains.

HOW DOES THE FLU VACCINE WORK ?

The flu vaccine introduces a tiny amount of inactive virus (or a weakened live virus in nasal sprays for children) to stimulate your immune system. Your body produces antibodies, which means if you encounter the real virus later, you can fight it off quickly.

Injected vaccines: Inactive virus, cannot cause flu

Nasal spray: Live but weakened virus, safe for children. The vaccine takes about 14 days to provide full protection.

WHY THE FLU VACCINE IS IMPORTANT

Flu is not just a bad cold—it's a highly infectious disease that can lead to severe complications, hospitalisation, and even death, particularly among vulnerable groups

WHO SHOULD GET VACCINATED?

The NHS recommends flu vaccination for:

- **Everyone aged 65+**
- **Pregnant women**
- **People with long-term conditions (e.g., asthma, diabetes, heart disease)**
- **Children aged 2–3 (nasal spray available)**
- **Carers, health & social care workers**
- **Anyone with a weakened immune system**



SUPPORTING THE NHS

Every flu jab given helps reduce GP consultations, A&E visits, and hospital admissions. This is especially crucial during winter when NHS services are under increased pressure

Getting your flu jab is quick, simple, and your best protection this winter.

MAKING OUR SURGERY VETERAN FRIENDLY: SUPPORTING THOSE WHO SERVED

At Aylesbury Surgery, we are proud to be part of the **Veteran Friendly GP Accreditation Programme**, developed by the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) in partnership with NHS England. This initiative ensures that veterans and their families receive the care and support they deserve, in line with the **Armed Forces Covenant**.

WHY THIS MATTERS

There are around **2.4 million veterans in Great Britain**, many of whom face unique health challenges. While most veterans enjoy good health, some experience conditions linked to their service, such as:

- **Physical injuries and rehabilitation needs** (e.g., musculoskeletal problems, arthritis, chronic pain).
- **Mental health issues** including PTSD, depression, and anxiety.
- **Hearing loss** and other sensory impairments.

Family and social reintegration challenges after leaving the Armed Forces.

Veterans should receive **priority treatment for service-related conditions**, subject to clinical need, and care from professionals who understand military culture.

HOW WE'RE RAISING AWARENESS

To make it easier for veterans to identify and access support:

- **Posters and leaflets** are available in our waiting areas.
- Our **website** we will aim to include a dedicated section for veterans' health.
- We encourage patients to **tell us if they have served in the Armed Forces** so we can code this in their records and tailor care appropriately.

SPECIALIST SUPPORT AND REFERRALS

If you are a veteran, we can signpost or refer you to specialist NHS services, such as:

- **Op COURAGE** – The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service.
- **Op RESTORE** – For physical health and rehabilitation needs.
- **Veterans' Gateway** – A one-stop service for advice and support.

OUR COMMITMENT

- We have a **Veterans' Clinical Lead** in the practice who stays up to date with the latest developments in veteran healthcare.
- We **review our approach annually** and provide staff training to ensure we continue to meet the needs of our veteran community.



VETERAN FRIENDLY GP PRACTICE

Are You a Veteran? Let Us Know!

Tell our reception team



AWARENESS OF VETERANS' NEEDS

Staff are trained to understand the specific needs of veterans.



VETERAN FRIENDLY ACCREDITATION

Accredited by the Royal College of General Practitioners



SERVICES FOR VETERANS

Dedicated support available for veterans and their families



SIGNPOSTING TO HELP AND SUPPORT

Assistance with accessing local and national veteran services

The 111 Approach's Guide To Managing Stress this Summer

Summer is often associated with sunshine, social gatherings, and a sense of ease. But for many people, the warmer months can also bring unique challenges—changes in routine, increased temperatures, family commitments, or feelings of loneliness if loved ones are away on holiday.

Managing stress is important for both mental and physical health, no matter what your age.

Here are some straightforward, effective ways to reduce stress and enjoy a calmer, healthier summer:

1. Stay Cool and Comfortable

High temperatures can make us feel tired and irritable.

- **Keep your home cool** by closing curtains during the hottest part of the day and using fans if needed.
- **Dress in light, loose clothing** and drink good quality water regularly, even if you don't feel thirsty.

Wear UV protected sunglasses and SPF to protect your skin and eyes from the sun rays.

2. Keep a Gentle Routine

Having a daily routine can bring comfort and lower anxiety.

- Try to wake up, eat, and go to bed at **similar times each day** even though it's tempting to stay up later due to the brighter evenings.
- Allow yourself flexibility for enjoyable summer activities, but don't feel pressured to fill every day with plans – **slowing down and meditating** is also very important for resting our eyes and minds.

3. Take a One-Minute Breather

Short, simple relaxation exercises can work wonders.

- Sit quietly and **focus on your breathing** for one minute.



- Slowly inhale through your nose, then **exhale gently through your mouth**.

Notice the feeling of your breath and **let any tension melt away**. Remember NOTHING is more important than your inner peace!

4. Stay Connected



Social interaction is **vital** for emotional wellbeing.

- **Visit** friends, neighbours, or family—even a brief chat can lift your mood.

If you can't meet in person, try a friendly **phone call or video chat**.

5. Enjoy Nature Safely

Spending time outdoors can boost your mood, but take care in the heat.

- Go for a **gentle walk** in the early morning or late evening when it's cooler.

Find a **shady spot to sit** and enjoy a garden, park, or even a balcony.

6. Limit News and Screen Time

It's easy to feel overwhelmed by constant news or social



media updates.

- Set specific times to check the news and **set a limit** for screens including your phones.
- Focus on **positive stories** or hobbies that bring you joy.

7. Ask for Support

If stress or low mood is affecting your daily life, **don't hesitate to reach out**.

- **Speak to your GP** or a member of their team.
- **Local community groups and charities** also offer friendly support and activities.

Find a **holistic therapist** who can help reduce stress and

anxiety – The 111 Approach uses Intuitive Reiki Energy Healing that can be done online or in person and will help you feel better in just 15 minutes!



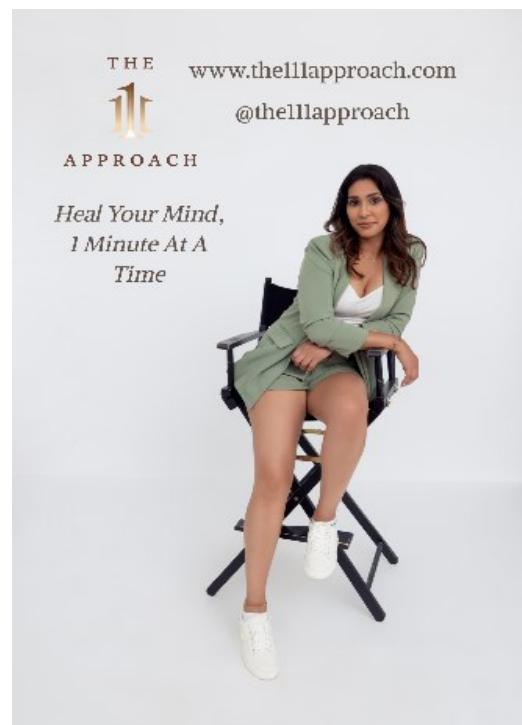
Remember:

It's normal to feel stressed from time to time, especially with the changes summer can bring. Small daily habits—like staying cool and hydrated, connecting with others, and taking moments for yourself—can make a big difference.

If you'd like more advice or support, feel free to contact The 111 Approach and book in a 15 minute Energy Assessment Call. Wishing you a peaceful and enjoyable summer!

Sending Love ☺ Light ☺ and Blessings ☺

Lakhmi The 1 Minute Healer



Navigating the Waves of Grief: A Guide to Healing in Your Own Time

Grief is a universal human experience, yet it remains one of the most personal and isolating journeys we can face. Whether you've lost a loved one, a pet, a relationship, or a way of life, the pain of loss is real and valid. We offer a gentle guide to understanding grief and finding a path forward, at your own pace.

Understanding Grief

First and foremost, it's important to know that there is no "right" way to grieve. Grief is not a linear process with a set of stages to check off. Instead, it's often described as a series of waves. Some days the water is calm, and you can feel moments of peace. Other days, a wave can knock you off your feet without warning.

Common feelings include:

Emotional reaction

- **Sadness and yearning:** A profound sense of emptiness and longing.
- **Anger:** Frustration at the situation, at others, or even at the person you lost.
- **Guilt:** "What if" thoughts and regrets about things said or unsaid.
- **Numbness:** A feeling of being disconnect-

ed from the world around you.

- **Physical symptoms:** Fatigue, changes in appetite, trouble sleeping, or a weakened immune system.

Physical Reactions:

- * **Tightness in the chest or throat**
- * **Difficulty breathing or sleeping**
- * **Fatigue and exhaustion**
- * **Changes in appetite**
- * **Aches and pains**
- * **Dry mouth or oversensitivity to noise**

These symptoms may come and go, and grief can feel chaotic. But with time and support, these feelings often become more manageable

All of these are normal. Your mind and body are processing a significant event.

Caring for Yourself While You Grieve

While you can't avoid the pain of loss, you can support yourself through it with compassion and patience.

1. **Feel Your Feelings:** Give yourself permission to feel whatever arises without judgment. Cry if you need to. Scream into a pillow. Sit in silence. Trying to suppress emotions often only prolongs the healing process.
2. **Talk It Out:** Share your memories and feelings with trusted friends, family, or a support group. Sometimes, saying things

aloud helps to process them. If you're not ready to talk to someone you know, consider speaking with a therapist or grief counselor who is trained to guide you through this terrain.

3. **Establish Routines:** In a world that feels shattered, small routines can provide an anchor. A simple morning coffee, a short walk, or watering a plant can create moments of stability
4. **Honour Your Loss:** Find a way to keep the memory of your loved one alive. This could be through a photo album, a dedicated piece of jewellery, planting a tree, writing them a letter, or donating to a cause they cared about.
5. **Be Patient with Yourself:** Healing takes time. There is no schedule or short cut for grief. Don't pressure yourself to "get over it" or "move on" according to anyone else's timeline.

How to Support Someone Who Is Grieving

If someone in your life is grieving, your support can be a lifeline. Here's how to help:

- **Show Up:** Simply be present. You don't need to have the right words—often, there aren't any. A hug, a listening ear, or just sitting together in silence can mean more than a perfectly crafted speech.
- **Offer Specific Help:** Instead of "Let me know if you need anything," try "I'm going to the store, what can I pick up for you?" or "I made a casserole, can I drop it

by this afternoon?" Specific offers are easier to accept.

- **Listen Without Judging:** Let them share stories and feelings, even if they repeat themselves. Avoid clichés like "They're in a better place" or "Everything happens for a reason." A simple "I'm so sorry" or "This must be so hard for you" is often enough.
- **Remember and Acknowledge:** Say the name of the person who died. Share a fond memory you have of them. Those grieving often fear their loved one will be forgotten.

Grief is not a problem to be solved, but a process to be lived through. It's the natural consequence of love and connection. Be gentle with your heart, and remember, it's okay to not be okay. Most importantly remember: You are not alone.

Grief is a deeply personal journey that touches everyone at some point in life. Whether it's the loss of a loved one, a friend, or a colleague, the emotional and physical impact can be profound. In our West Midlands community, there are compassionate services available to help individuals and families navigate these difficult times.

Local Bereavement Support Services

Here are some trusted organisations offering free or low-cost support in Birmingham, Solihull, and the wider West Midlands: Please see next page.

Grief and Bereavement

Common Reactions to Grief

Emotional Reactions

- Shock and numbness – being in a daze
- Overwhelming sadness and crying
- Anxiety and panic
- Depression
- Anger
- Guilt
- Dry mouth or oversensitivity to noise



Local Bereavement Support Services



Edward's Trust

Specialist support for bereaved parents, children, and young people

0121 454 1705

www.edwardstrust.org.uk



Cruse Bereavement

Support Birmingham

Confidential counseling

0121 687 8010

www.cruse.org.uk



Cruse Bereavement Counselling Service

Confidential counseling

0121 424 5103

www.solihullbereavement.co



Marie Curie Hospice

West Midlands

Support for those

grieving after terminal

illnaricurie.org.uk

Find national and local bereavement services to suit your needs



Discover Our Health & Lifestyle YouTube Channel ☀✨

Looking to take simple steps toward a healthier, happier lifestyle? Our ****Dr Saab Health & Lifestyle YouTube Channel**** is designed to help you do just that! From practical health advice to everyday wellbeing tips, our videos are packed with easy-to-follow guidance.

WHAT YOU'LL FIND ON THE CHANNEL:

- * **Health Tips** – Trusted advice on common health concerns, prevention, and healthy living.
- * **Lifestyle Guidance** – Simple changes to boost your energy, mood, and overall wellbeing.
- * **Nutrition & Recipes** – Quick, healthy meal ideas and facts about balanced diets.
- * **Fitness & Movement** – Easy exercises to keep active at home or on the go.
- * **Community Support** – Positive, encouraging content designed to motivate and inspire.

WHY SUBSCRIBE?

By subscribing, you'll always have access to reliable and practical health information — all in one place, and at your convenience. Our aim is to empower you to make informed choices and enjoy a healthier way of life.

- Subscribe today and join us on the journey to better health and well-being!**
- Scan the QR code or visit our channel to Subscribe Now!**

[http://www.youtube.com/
@drsaabhealthlifestyleadvic3792](http://www.youtube.com/@drsaabhealthlifestyleadvic3792)



UNDERSTANDING HYPERTENSION AND THE POWER OF A SIMPLE CHECK

You tune up your car, you get your teeth cleaned, and you might even service your furnace. But when was the last time you had your blood pressure checked? Often called the "silent killer," hypertension (high blood pressure) is a common condition with serious consequences, yet it frequently goes unnoticed because it has no obvious symptoms.

The good news? It's incredibly easy to detect and manage. This month, we're focusing on why knowing your numbers is one of the simplest and most important things you can do for your long-term health.

What Exactly is Blood Pressure?

Think of your blood vessels as a garden hose and your heart as the pump. Blood pressure is the measure of the force of blood pushing against the walls of your arteries (the hose) as your heart pumps it.

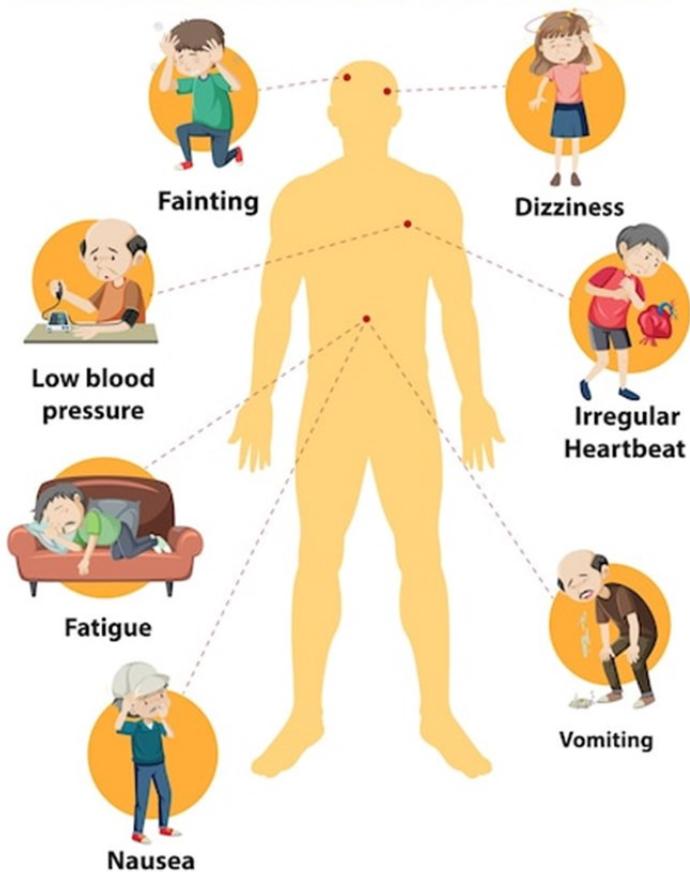
The reading comes as two numbers:

- **Systolic (top number):** The

pressure when your heart beats and pumps blood out.

- **Diastolic (bottom number):** The pressure when your

HYPERTENSION SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS



heart is resting between beats.

A normal reading is typically less than 120/80 mmHg. When these numbers are consistently too high, it is diagnosed as hypertension.

Why is High Blood Pressure So Dangerous?

The "silent" part of the "silent killer" nickname is what makes hypertension dangerous. It can lead to heart disease, stroke, and other serious health problems.

sion so dangerous. You can feel perfectly fine for years while the increased force of blood is quietly damaging your arteries and vital organs. Over time, this can lead to:

- **Heart Attack and Heart Disease:** High pressure damages artery walls, making them prone to plaque buildup (atherosclerosis), which can block blood flow to the heart.
- **Stroke:** Damaged arteries in the brain can burst or become blocked, leading to a stroke.
- **Kidney Damage:** Kidneys filter waste from your blood. Hyperten-

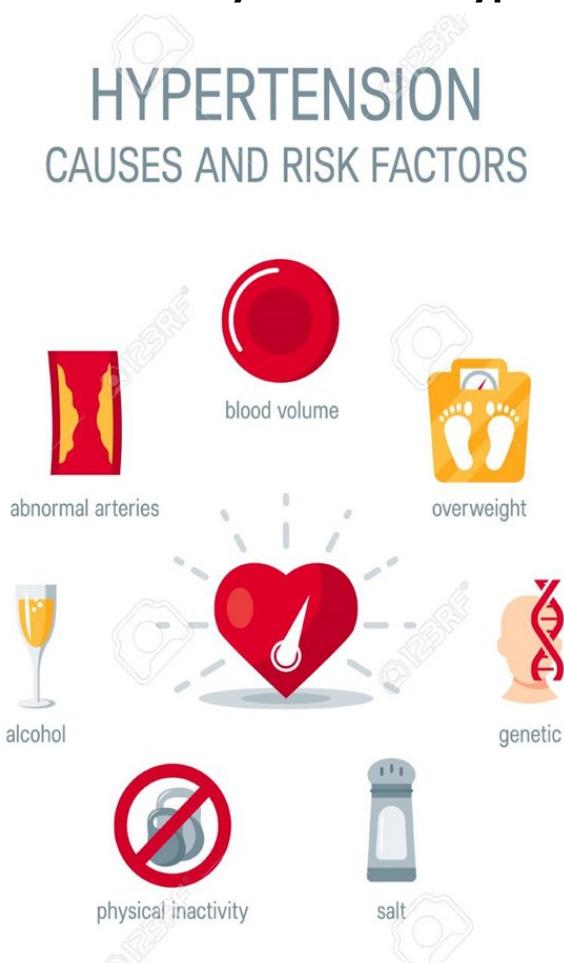
sion can damage the delicate blood vessels in the kidneys, leading to kidney failure.

- **Vision Loss:** It can strain and damage the tiny blood vessels in your eyes.
- **Cognitive Decline:** Studies link high blood pressure to an increased risk of dementia later in life.

Why Regular Checks are Your First Line of Defense

You can't feel high blood pressure. The only way to know if you have it is to get it checked. Regular monitoring is crucial because:

- **It Catches the Silent Threat Early:** A quick and painless test can reveal a problem long before it causes any damage. Early detection is the key to prevention.
- **It Tracks Your Health Trends:** A single high reading doesn't always mean you have hypertension. Regular checks help you and your doctor see a pattern over time.
- **It Empowers You to Take Action:** Knowing your numbers is the first step toward managing them. Whether through lifestyle changes



or medication, you can take control.

How Often Should You Get Checked?

- **For Adults:** If your blood pressure is normal (<120/80), you should get it checked at least once every two years.
- If your numbers are elevated or you have risk factors (like family history, being overweight, smoking, or a sedentary lifestyle), your doctor will likely recommend checking it at least once a year, or more frequently.

Many pharmacies have free-to-use blood pressure kiosks, and you can also purchase a home monitor for easy tracking. Always ensure you are relaxed and seated correctly for an accurate reading.

Taking Control: Prevention and Management

The best way to deal with hypertension is to prevent it. Even if you already have it, these lifestyle changes are powerful tools for management:

- **Eat a Heart-Healthy Diet:** Reduce sodium (salt), increase potassium (found in fruits and veggies), and

follow diets like DASH or Mediterranean.

- **Get Moving:** Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise (like brisk walking) most days of the week.
- **Maintain a Healthy Weight:** Losing even a small amount of weight can help significantly lower blood pressure.
- **Limit Alcohol and Quit Smoking:** Both are major contributors to high blood pressure and heart disease.
- **Manage Stress:** Find healthy outlets like meditation, deep breathing, or hobbies to help manage stress levels.

Your blood pressure reading is more than just two numbers—it's a vital sign of your overall health. Taking a few minutes to get it checked could save you from a world of complications down the road. It's a simple, quick, and potentially life-saving habit.



It's a Partnership

Your relationship with your GP is a partnership. These regular visits build trust and open communication. When your doctor knows you and your health history, they are much better equipped to help you quickly and effectively if you do get sick.

You are the expert on how you feel; your GP is the expert on medicine. Together, you form the best team for managing your health.



Building a Strong GP–Patient Partnership at Aylesbury Surgery

At Aylesbury Surgery, we believe that the relationship between patients and their GP team is at the heart of good healthcare. A strong partnership ensures that care is not only safe and effective but also personal and supportive.

What Do We Mean by GP–Patient Partnership?

A GP–Patient Partnership is a two-way relationship based on mutual respect, trust, and open communication. Patients are encouraged to take an active role in their healthcare, while our team is committed to providing guidance, support, and high-quality medical care.

How Patients Can Play Their Part

- Be Informed** – Ask questions, understand your treatment options, and take an interest in your health.
- Keep Appointments** – Attend your booked appointments or let us know if you cannot attend, so we can offer the slot to another patient.
- Share Information** – Tell your GP about any changes in your health, medication, or lifestyle that may affect your care.

Work in Partnership – Follow agreed treatment plans and discuss any concerns openly with your GP.

Your health is the foundation of everything you do. Prioritising a regular check-up is an act of self-care that pays dividends in longevity, quality of life, and peace of mind. It's a small commitment with a potentially life-saving return.

Aylesbury Surgery
Health & Engagement
Forum
Warren Farm Road
Kingstanding
Birmingham
B44 0DX
West Midlands

**Sign up for our
newsletter**

Tel: 0747479195

E-Mail:

ashiforum@outlook.co
m

Facebook:

Aylesbury Surgery
Health &
Engagement
Forum

Twitter:

@rajashmehta



IT'S A PARTNERSHIP

Don't wait for a symptom to make the call. Pick up the phone or go online today and book that appointment. Your future self will thank you for it.

How the Surgery Supports Patients

Listening to You – We value your feedback to improve services and care.

- ◆ **Clear Communication – Providing information in a way that is easy to understand.**
- ◆ **Respect and Compassion – Treating every patient with dignity and understanding.**
- ◆ **Accessible Care – Offering different ways to contact us, including online services, telephone consultations, and face-to-face appointments.**

Why It Matters

When patients and GPs work together, it leads to:

- **Better health outcomes**
- **A more positive patient experience**
- **Efficient use of NHS resources**

Together, we can ensure the very best care for our community.

Mr Rajash Mehta—Practice Manager and Forum chairman