





The Covid-19 pandemic has brought the question of immunity into sharp focus. The immune system is a network of processes that protects us from disease. It detects and responds to a wide variety of pathogens, such as viruses, bacteria and parasites, as well as cancer cells and objects such as splinters.

The main components of the immune system are the white blood cells, antibodies, lymphatic system and spleen. There is also a complicated network of proteins known as ‘the complement system’ that “complements” the immune system

As with all parts of our makeup, the immune system can go wrong. For example, it may recognise everyday things such as pollen and animal fur as harmful, causing allergy, asthma and hay fever. The immune system may even recognise our tissues as foreign, causing autoimmune disease. An example of this is rheumatoid arthritis, caused by the membranes lining joints. HIV, the human immunodeficiency virus, damages the immune system and thus increases susceptibility to infection and cancer.

Vaccines are a way to artificially produce antibodies to a pathogen. Mostly a vaccine is a weakened or inactive part of a pathogen that triggers antibody production. Newer vaccines contain the blueprint to produce the antigen rather than the antigen itself. The rapid development of Covid vaccines has been the success story of the pandemic, enabling millions to acquire immunity in this way and the importance of receiving the vaccine cannot be underestimated. If for any reason you have not been vaccinated, please just do it.

Herd immunity is something of which you will have heard - no pun intended! This is a form of indirect protection from infectious disease, which occurs when a sufficient percentage of a population has become immune to an infection, either through vaccination or exposure to the disease allowing naturally acquired antibodies to form, thereby reducing the likelihood of infection for individuals who lack immunity.

It is possible to boost your immune system to complement immunity that’s acquired through vaccination, and it will come as no surprise to hear that it is all to do with healthy lifestyle. Sadly, the older we get, the less effective our immune system becomes. So although the following advice applies to all age groups, the over-fifties should pay particular attention. The usual mantra applies: exercise, lose weight, eat protein from whatever source you prefer, get outside to boost vitamin D production, get a good night’s sleep and please, please cut the fags and booze. **Dr Tim Crouch.**

Frithwood Patient Participation Group is keen to collect patient views about the services provided by the surgery so that we can help identify ways to improve the outcomes and experiences of our community. We are currently planning how we may be able to improve services for patients suffering from a long term condition, but all views and experiences are invited and welcomed. Please access the survey at <https://bit.ly/3EjI0Ji> or ask for a paper copy at reception.



Each year we run a monthly 100 Club draw that raises vital funds for surgery equipment AND gives you the real chance of a win, with odds much better than the National Lottery! In 2022 we hope to be able to kit out a new clinical room so that more patient appointments can be offered. The annual membership fee is £24, with 50% of all fees going into the prize fund! If a 100 Club isn’t for you, Frithwood Surgery PPG is always delighted to accept donations. Please make cheques payable to: Frithwood Surgery Patients Participation Group. To join the 100 Club - visit: <https://sites.google.com/view/frithwood100club/home>. Cheques for the 100 Club should be made payable to: Frithwood Surgery PPG Lottery Account.