

COVID-19 Vaccine Update and Boosters

Vaccines Administered in 2021

We have participated in the national COVID-19 vaccination roll-out since mid-March of this year.

By 23 November we had administered a total of 12,249 vaccines including 5,805 first doses and 6,297 second doses. We have also administered 147 third dose vaccines to our immunocompromised patients.

We are proud to have contributed to the outstanding achievement of over 90% double vaccinated in New South Wales and want to thank our staff for their flexibility and hard work throughout the year.

We are also delighted to have welcomed over 1500 new patients to the practice, many of whom initially attended to receive their COVID vaccines.

Booster Vaccines

The **Australian Government Department of Health** recommends the booster vaccination to everyone over 18 years to provide maximum protection against COVID-19. A booster dose will make sure the protection from the previous dose is even stronger and longer lasting, and should help prevent spread of the virus.

Australia's medicines regulator, the **Therapeutic Goods Association**, has approved the use of the Pfizer vaccine for booster doses even if you had the Astra Zeneca vaccine initially.

We are contacting all patients via phone or text to let them know when they are due for their Booster vaccine (6 months after 2nd dose) and we are already taking bookings into the New Year. You can book online by selecting the Covid-19 Vaccine Pfizer, and then Covid-19 Vaccine Third Dose Pfizer.

Nursing Home Vaccinations

We have attended several residential aged care facilities in the northern Illawarra providing over 50 vaccinations. Facilities include the nursing homes we usually visit (Marco Polo, IRT and Eileen Armstrong House) as well as Kennett Homes in Stanwell Park.

We were also able to vaccinate a large number of residential aged care facility staff who were having difficulty accessing vaccinations. This helped them to ensure they met the deadline for mandatory vaccination.

In-home Vaccinations

We were approached by **COORDINARE** (South Eastern NSW Primary Health Network) to assist with a small cohort of vulnerable people who were unable to access COVID-19 vaccines in the Wollongong LGA.

Our Clinical Services Manager was provided with initial information and our Practice Nurse liaised with each person, their carers and their usual doctor to gain detailed information and informed consent.

Dr Jeffrey Hall and Practice Nurse Alexandria undertook home visits to each patient to provide the vaccinations and will follow-up with subsequent doses as required.

We are glad to assist with vaccinations of these vulnerable people in our community and we've received positive feedback regarding this service.

Reducing Vaccine Waste

In mid-November, we worked with The Department of Health to help minimise wastage and ensure as many COVID-19 vaccines could be used as possible.

Our excess doses of AstraZeneca were collected and will be transferred to another site within Australia or sent overseas.



Wishing all our patients and their families a happy festive season and best wishes for a healthy year in 2022.

Travel in the Time of COVID

By Dr Julie Blaze

Double vaccinated Australians can now travel overseas without an exemption. **SmartTraveller** have updated advice levels for 177 destinations based on the latest assessment of risk, both COVID-19 and other threats to safety and security.

You will need to acquaint yourself with the entry requirements for each country you intend to visit. You will need an International Covid-19 Vaccination Certificate and a recent negative Covid test prior to departure (more information below). You may be required to quarantine upon entry.

Currently, travellers returning to Australia may only enter and travel between NSW, Victoria and the ACT without quarantining. If you wish to travel on to another state or territory you may not be allowed to enter, or may be subject to a quarantine period.

Covid Testing Prior to Departure

Testing requirements change rapidly and will vary depending on where you plan to travel. **Southern. IML Pathology** performs real-time RT-PCR (COVID testing – swab) and IgM antibody screening (COVID serology testing – blood test) for international travellers at their testing sites.

All travellers needing a COVID-19 test must have a pathology request form for testing.

Other Travel Health Considerations

Due to the devastating effect of Covid 19, public health programs of many developing countries to eliminate illnesses such as malaria, TB, polio and typhoid have been disrupted. The monitoring and reporting of these illnesses have also been affected, as countries divert their resources to treating Covid illness and delivering Covid vaccines.

We offer a comprehensive travel medicine service and can advise you on vaccinations and preventative measures such as malaria prophylaxis depending on your medical circumstances and the details of your planned trip. It is important to make sure that routine vaccinations such as tetanus, measles, polio and influenza are up to date prior to travel. We stock the full range of travel vaccinations including Yellow Fever, Rabies, Japanese Encephalitis, Typhoid, cholera and Hepatitis A and B.

Travel Insurance

When making travel plans, consider how your intended destination is managing the Covid pandemic and how stretched the health infrastructure is. You may face difficulties accessing health care if you become ill or have an accident while overseas. Travel insurance will need to be closely scrutinised.

SmartTraveller has partnered with **Choice** to give advice for buying travel insurance including cover for travelling during the Covid pandemic.

Dr Julie Blaze has over 25 years experience in travel medicine and a Certificate in Travel Health from the International Society of Travel Medicine.

GP Availability Summer 2022

The table (right) is a guide to which doctor works on which days. This may help when scheduling your next appointment. Note:

The roster changes regularly and doctors take holidays from time to time. Your best guide to availability is via online booking (via our website) or call us on **4284 4622**. Please note:

- Dr Michael Hanson works alternate Mondays and Fridays every second week.
- Dr Jeffrey Hall works Mondays every second week.
- Dr Anna Putnis works alternate Thursdays and Fridays every second week.
- Dr Ben Bartlett is on extended leave.
- Dr Hayley Glasson is on maternity leave.
- Doctors alternate on Saturdays as part of a roster. Please check via Facebook or ask at reception.

Baby News

Congratulations to Dr Hayley Glasson and her husband Prakash on the birth of their daughter. Ruanah Harriet arrived on 22/11/21. Mother and baby are doing very well.

Congratulations also to Dr Emily (pictured below) whose baby girl, Pia, was born mid September.



Other Practice News

- Welcome Ashleigh Walsh and Amy Jordan to our administration team.
- Christmas/New Year opening hours are detailed on the back page of this newsletter.

	MONDAY		TUESDAY		WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY		SAT
	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM
Dr Julie Blaze		✓			✓	✓	✓				✓
Dr John Deady			✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Dr Hayley Glasson	currently on maternity leave										
Dr Rebecca Goodman	✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Dr Saroja Gunasekera			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Dr Jeff Hall	✓			✓	✓	✓			✓		✓
Dr Michael Hanson	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Dr Amy Harkness					✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Dr Helen Maclean	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓			✓
Dr Berlinda Png	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Dr Anna Putnis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Share the Beach Safely this Summer

By Dr Helen Maclean

As summer approaches and the warm weather sets in, millions of Australians will take to the water for a recreation break. The boating tragedy in Bulli last month affected many people living in the Northern Illawarra, including the brave first responders and surf-lifescapers from Bulli, Sandon Point, Woonona and Thirroul SLSCs.

The local surfers and surf-lifescapers who helped to rescue the men must be commended for their quick thinking and bravery. This terrible incident provides a timely reminder of the importance of water safety on our beaches and in our backyards this summer.

According to the Australian Water Safety Council, there were 968 drowning incidents (294 fatal; 674 non-fatal) in Australian waterways in 2020 - 21. Most drowning deaths (80%) were male which is a continuing trend and 61% of drowning deaths occur outside of major cities.

According to Royal Lifesaving Australia, last summer almost 60% of the drownings happened at beaches, about 30% in inland waterways, and 10% in public and home swimming pools.

There may be a perception that drownings in the Illawarra are mostly visitors to the region who may not have grown up on the beach or with an understanding of the potential dangers. As a community we must remain vigilant and continue to help visitors by warning them when we see potential hazards, or unsafe behaviours.

Important water safety tips

Here are some important tips to keep yourself and others safe around water this summer:

- Don't swim beyond your abilities, particularly in unfamiliar waters
- Swim at patrolled beaches and keep within the red and yellow flags
- Always supervise children in or near water
- Ensure your pool fence meets safety standards and the pool gate is securely closed
- Don't drink or take drugs and go swimming or participate in water-based activities
- Learn swimming, water safety and lifesaving skills
- Wear a lifejacket when boating, rock fishing or paddling no matter how benign the weather conditions seem.



Fees Policy

Bulli Medical Practice is not a bulk billing practice. It is our policy that payment for consultation is made at the time of your appointment.

Please see our website or ask at reception for our full fee schedule. The out of pocket expense for a standard Level B consultation (15 minutes) is \$46.90.

We have EFTPOS facilities (debit and credit card: Visa & Mastercard but NOT American Express).

Medicare rebates will be sent online directly to Medicare and you will receive your rebate via direct deposit into your nominated bank account.

If payment cannot be made on the day, an account can be issued incurring an administration fee of \$15 which is not Medicare rebatable.

Privacy & Medical Records

Your medical record is a confidential document.

It is the policy of the practice to maintain security of personal health information at all times and to ensure that this information is only available to authorised members of staff.

The Practice adheres to the national privacy principles. A copy of our privacy policy is available at reception and on our website.

Bulli Medical Practice

74 Park Road, Bulli NSW 2516

Monday to Friday 8am - 6pm

Saturdays 8am - 12 noon

Closed Sundays.

If you need to see a doctor outside of hours, call:

Wollongong Radio Doctors 4228 5522
or the GP Helpline 1800 022 222.

In an emergency call 000.

New patients always welcome!

Book online today:

**bullimedicalpractice.com.au
or call 4284 4622.**

 **Bullimedicalpractice**

Christmas/New Year Opening

- Friday 24th December 8am - 1pm
- Saturday 25th December closed
- Sunday 26th December closed
- Monday 27th December closed
- Tuesday 28th December closed
- Wednesday 29th December 8am - 6pm
- Thursday 30th December 8am - 6pm
- Friday 31st December 8am - 1pm
- Saturday 1st December closed
- Sunday 2nd January closed
- Monday 3rd January closed
- Tuesday 4th January resume normal hours

Reminders, Recalls & Results

Please telephone the Practice after 10am weekdays to find out the results of any tests that have been ordered by our doctors.

Patients that require immediate action in relation to test results will be contacted by the Practice to arrange a consultation so that they can discuss the test results with a doctor.

We are committed to providing preventative health care and participate in government reminder systems and registers.

We offer a SMS reminder system. If you would like to receive SMS reminders please inform reception and ensure they have your current mobile telephone number. If you do not wish to be a part of this system, please notify reception.

Feedback & Continuous Improvement

We value your feedback and encourage you to complete a general feedback form (which you can deposit in the secure box at reception) or by emailing feedback@bullimedicalpractice.com.au.

We endeavour to respond to your suggestions as soon as possible and to continuously improve our service. From time to time we might also ask you to complete a confidential evaluation as part of AGPAL accreditation.

If you are unhappy with any aspect of the care that you receive then please let us know. Talk to either your doctor or reception staff and we will try our best to help. We believe problems are best resolved within the Practice as this helps us to continuously improve.

If however, the problem is not resolved, you may wish to contact the NSW state government authority for dealing with medical complaints.

The address is:
Health Care Complaints Commission
Locked Bag 18, Strawberry Hills NSW 2012.