

Participant newsletter  
December 2023



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Welcome to our [ATHENA study December newsletter](#)



**Seasons Greetings from the  
ATHENA Study Team**



Dear Participant,

We have written this newsletter to update you on the study, thank you for your continuing support and to send you very warm wishes for the festive season!

By participating in ATHENA, you are helping us find out if low dose

amitriptyline can prevent long term nerve pain from shingles (post-herpetic neuralgia).

Whether it's completing questionnaires or speaking to research staff, all your contributions are vital to the outcome of the study.

THANK YOU for choosing to be part of this research.

Best wishes from the ATHENA Study Team!



## Study Recap and Update

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We are delighted to tell you that we have been awarded an extension to the study which means we can now continue recruiting until September 2024 with the study finishing in October 2025. Around this time we will be able to let you know whether you were given placebo or amitriptyline.

Since the start we have recruited 546 participants and aim to recruit our target of 846 by the end of September next year.

We have surgeries recruiting within ten UK regions:

- West of England

- Wessex
- Thames Valley/South Midlands
- South West Peninsula
- North West London
- North West Coast
- Greater Manchester
- Kent, Surrey and Sussex
- West Midlands
- Yorkshire and Humber

You can view the location of recruiting surgeries in these regions via our interactive [map](#).



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## Questionnaires

The 90 and 360 day questionnaires are slightly longer and we will send you a £10 voucher when you complete each of these.

To be able to find out whether low dose amitriptyline is effective in preventing long term pain after shingles, we need you to continue to complete your questionnaires.

They are sent to you 30, 60, 90, 120, 180 and 360 days after your rash appeared. Please try and complete them as soon as you can.

The 90 day questionnaire asks a few additional questions to check how you are at an important timepoint, soon after you have stopped taking your medication.

### Remember...

- ...to continue to complete the questionnaires even if you stop taking the medication so we can find out how you have been getting on and answer the research question properly.
- ...to look out for the emailed questionnaires (check your "spam" folder) if you are completing them online, or in the post, if you are completing them on paper.
- ...to help us to answer the research question by completing as many questions as you can.
- ... you will receive an email (or phone call) when it is time to stop taking your study medication. You may wish to dispose of any unused study medication at your local pharmacy.
- ..you can contact us by email at any point if you have any queries or questions. You can find our email address at the bottom of this newsletter.

THANK YOU!



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## **Low dose amitriptyline works for IBS and is safe**

Some of you may have participated in the ATLANTIS trial which aimed to find out whether a low dose of amitriptyline helps people with irritable bowel syndrome when other treatments, such as changes to diet, have not worked.

You may be interested to know that the results of the trial were published in October in [The Lancet](#).

The study found that patients taking amitriptyline were almost twice as likely to report an overall improvement in symptoms as those taking a placebo.

Amitriptyline was found to improve a range of IBS symptoms but did not change symptoms of anxiety or depression, or participant's ability to work.

Both GPs and participants said that low-dose amitriptyline is likely to be acceptable, and welcomed, as an IBS treatment and the trial showed that amitriptyline is more effective than a placebo tablet and is safe.



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### **Christmas and New Year arrangements**

Our office is closed Friday 22 December - Tuesday 2 January inclusive but there will be skeleton cover for urgent queries via the ATHENA study mailbox: [athena-study@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:athena-study@bristol.ac.uk).

If you have an urgent medical query during this time, you are advised to contact your GP or 111 as you would usually.

Remember to also update us if your email address changes in the future as this is how we will continue to contact you over the coming months.

You can also stay up to date with us on Twitter: @AthenaStudy or keep yourself informed about study updates on our website: [www.athena-study.bristol.ac.uk](http://www.athena-study.bristol.ac.uk).





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A happy festive season to our participants.  
The hard work goes on as a result of your support!



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### Who we are

**Trial Manager:** Siân Wells

**Administrator:** Zoë Wilkins

**Qualitative Researcher:** Dr Sophie Rees

**Research Nurses:** Anna Gilbertson, Gill Kirkup, Amy Herbert

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**For further information or help:**

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**Twitter:** @AthenaStudy

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