Advice & tips for a healthier lifestyle

Healthy Women
Breast Awareness

Breast awareness is knowing your breasts and being aware what is normal for you at all times of your monthly cycle. Regularly check your breasts...

- look carefully from every angle
- feel every part including up into the armpit and behind the nipple
- check for changes in size or outline of the breast
- flattening, puckering or dimpling of the skin
- lumps
- unusual appearance of the nipple including discharge

Most breast changes are harmless but should be checked by your C.P. Remember to attend free breast screening three yearly, if aged fifty or over. Your practice nurse can help you become breast aware.
Cervical Smear Test/Heavy Periods

Cervical cancer can often be prevented if detected early. Cervical screening is a test to check the health of the cervix, which is the lower part of the womb. It is important for all women to have a regular smear test but particularly if you:

- first had sex at an early age
- smoke
- do not use condoms
- have had several sexual partners

It is still important to be tested after the menopause. Ask your G.P. if you have had a hysterectomy, are over the age of 65 or have never had sex to check if you still need a test. Cervical screening saves over a thousand lives in the U.K. each year so it is important to attend for a regular smear test.

Heavy periods – you don’t have to put up with them! Speak to your Practice Nurse for more information and possible treatment. If your period pattern changes seek medical advice from your G.P.
Pre-menstrual Syndrome

Pre-menstrual syndrome (also known as PMT – pre-menstrual tension) is the hormonal, physical and emotional changes which some women experience between two and fourteen days before a period and which are relieved when the period starts. Symptoms to look out for are:

- mood swings and irritability
- cravings for sugary/sweet foods
- lack of concentration
- awkwardness
- headaches
- weight gain and feeling bloated
- skin blemishes

How to help yourself:

- learn how to relax
- exercise regularly
- try to keep your blood sugar levels even by eating healthy foods at regular intervals no longer than three hours apart

If symptoms are affecting your life seek further medical advice from your G.P.
Pregnancy

Women who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy should take special care. It is important for you and your baby to remain as healthy as possible. To give your baby the best start in life, try to:

- Give up smoking – by stopping you will benefit from less morning sickness, fewer complications, and less chance of a low birth weight baby
- Think about alcohol – excessive drinking can affect the baby’s health and weight at birth. Drink no more than one or two units of alcohol once or twice a week.
- Eat healthily – it is important to have a balanced diet, which includes folic acid. Foods to avoid are: liver and liver products, unpasteurised soft cheeses, raw eggs, shark, swordfish and marlin. Limit the amount of tuna eaten.

Remember it is important to attend ante-natal appointments. For help and support in giving up smoking call the NHS Pregnancy Smoking Helpline 0800 169 9 169
Self-Esteem and Body Image

Women are often under tremendous pressure about the way they look. Try to keep this in perspective. The fact that we are all different makes us unique. Being able to accept and enjoy our natural body shape means liking ourselves the way we are. Feel good about yourself and develop a positive attitude. Try to:

- respect yourself
- take time out for a treat
- plan something to look forward to
- learn to relax
- keep a sense a humour
- talk – friendships are important
- exercise – this gives you a natural sense of well-being

A sense of good self-esteem is about feeling worthwhile, living life to the full and not being afraid to make choices or decisions. If you have worries or concerns that are affecting your daily life seek professional help.
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How to make your lifestyle healthier

By making a few simple lifestyle changes you can improve your health now and for the future.

Start slowly and make small changes and in time these will become part of your daily routine.

Moving to a healthier lifestyle doesn’t mean changing everything all at once – try one or two suggestions that you would find easy and practical and then gradually build more changes into your every day life.

Looking after your body and mind will help you to keep fit, healthy and active.

Remember to be breast aware and to keep regular screening appointments.

If you are worried about your health don’t delay, see your G.P. or Practice Nurse for more information and advice.