



## Frithwood Surgery

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## FRITHWOOD SURGERY PPG NEWSLETTER

## SUMMER 2018



### SELF HEALTH EVENING

More than 40 people made the most of the opportunity to attend the first 'self health' evening, organised by Frithwood Surgery's Patient Participation Group.

Speakers passed on top tips and advice on a variety of subjects, including the benefits of exercise and things to bear in mind to avoid holiday sickness. See inside for Sister Annette Marsh's wise words on avoiding diarrhoea,

The self health event also showcased ways in which we can all be more active, such as the PPG Health Walks led by Dr Tim Crouch and Harry Joyce.

**Inside: why choosing HRT is like looking for the right little black dress. Dr Dawn talks about the Menopause**



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### THANK YOU DR BURKE

Popular GP Dr Ken Burke is stepping down as a full time doctor at Frithwood Surgery, although he'll be returning occasionally as a locum. Over the past decade patients have valued his depth of knowledge and particular expertise in dermatology. Consistently helpful and friendly, he's always kept the best interests of patients and the practice at heart – and he's by far and away the fastest rider in the Frithwood bike peloton! We wish Ken and his family well. Dr Ruth Kelly and Dr Debbie Vest are returning to Frithwood this summer.

**FEEDBACK** - We would love to hear from you on any aspects of the Newsletters or the services you receive from the surgery. If you have questions or ideas that could benefit our readership, please use the 'Suggestion Box' at the surgery reception or 'e' mail [frithwood.enquiries@nhs.net](mailto:frithwood.enquiries@nhs.net) or call 01453 882868.

## THE MENOPAUSE – WHAT TO EXPECT with Dr Dawn Harper

Twenty years ago I was the only female partner in a practice, so, unsurprisingly, I did a lot of women's health. I couldn't do a surgery without seeing a lady wanting to discuss menopausal symptoms and hormone replacement therapy (HRT).

Then came the scary headlines about HRT and, almost overnight, I stopped seeing menopausal women. Thousands were left so frightened of HRT that they stayed at home suffering in silence; a real shame on two counts. HRT is not the devil incarnate: yes, there are risks, but they are not as great as portrayed in the tabloids. And it's not HRT or nothing, as there are several other things to try. The pendulum seems to be swinging back a little, but there's still confusion.

### What is the menopause?

Menopause means the cessation of periods, so it's a diagnosis we can only make in retrospect. When we refer to the menopause, what most people really mean is the peri-menopause. The average age in the UK is 51, family histories of early menopauses (less than 45) make it more likely that the change will be sooner. Around three quarters of women experience symptoms during this early stage – these commonly include hot flushes, night sweats, sleep disturbances and mood swings. The intensity and duration of these symptoms is variable: some have a few sweats for a few months and others have debilitating symptoms lasting years, and there's everything in between.

Unfortunately, we have no way of predicting how long symptoms will last, so decisions on treatment programmes have to be made on a very individual basis.

### Can the menopause be managed naturally?

I'm a great fan of trying to tackle menopausal symptoms with lifestyle measures if possible. It's possible to reduce sweats by wearing clothing made of natural fibres rather than man-made fabrics and dressing in layers that can be removed and replaced throughout the day may help. The same goes for bed linen.

Caffeine and alcohol cause blood vessels to dilate so can trigger more sweats and flushes. Cutting back on these and spicy foods may reduce symptoms. Overweight women and those who smoke often experience worse symptoms, so, if that's you, think about using your menopause as a time to start a new healthy you regime. And remember – women who exercise regularly seem to have fewer flushes and mood swings and sleep better.

### The truth about HRT

Menopausal symptoms occur as a result of falling oestrogen levels, and HRT is precisely what it says on the tin – replacing those lost hormones. It comes in various forms, tablets, patches, gels and even a nasal spray. If you are considering HRT, your doctor will advise you on which form is best for you. I liken choosing HRT to choosing the little black dress. It certainly isn't one size fits all and what works brilliantly for one woman, just doesn't suit another. There is no doubt that HRT is very effective at managing hot flushes and night sweats. In fact many of my patients have noticed a real difference within days. Mood swings may take longer to respond.

I try to give as low a dose as possible for as short a period as needed because to be fair, those scary headlines weren't without basis and prolonged use of HRT does increase the risk of blood clots and breast and ovarian cancer.

### Are there alternatives?

Absolutely there are. Plant oestrogens (phytoestrogens) found in soya, whole grains, seeds and pulses can help some women with flushes, so increasing your dietary intake of these foods may help. I find women respond very differently and one theory for this is that absorption of these products varies depending on the individual's gut flora, so I usually advise women to also take a good quality probiotic on a daily basis.

Other herbal remedies such as black cohosh and red clover have also been very popular among my patients.

If mood swings are a major issue St John's Wort may help and the herbal remedy valerian can be good for sleep problems. If you do decide to go down this route, please tell your doctor as some herbal remedies can interact with conventional medicines.

So, even if you are fairly sure that HRT is not for you, please don't suffer in silence. Make an appointment to see your GP to discuss your options. There is something for everyone.



Traveller's diarrhoea is the most common illness that you will be exposed to abroad and there is NO vaccine against it. Sufferers often experience stomach pain, cramps and vomiting alongside the inevitable need to visit the toilet.

Diarrhoea is caused by food and drinks contaminated by bacteria, viruses or parasites. It usually lasts between two and four days and, while not a life threatening illness, it can disrupt your trip for several days. The main danger of the illness is dehydration, and this, if very severe, can kill if not treated. Treatment is therefore rehydration.

A good tip is to take oral rehydration solutions with you. These can be bought over the pharmacy counter. Take care regarding their use in very small children and seek medical advice where necessary.

Anti-diarrhoeal tablets can be used for adults but should NEVER be used in children under four years, and only on prescription for children aged four to 12 years. Ask your pharmacist for advice. None of these tablets should ever be used if the person has a high temperature or blood in the stool.

Do contact medical help if the affected person has:-

- A high temperature
- Blood in the diarrhoea
- Diarrhoea for more than 48 hours (or 24 hours in children)
- Becomes confused

You can help prevent travellers' diarrhoea by following a few easy guidelines regarding food, water and personal hygiene.

#### **PERSONAL HYGIENE**

Many diseases are transmitted by what is known as the 'faecal-oral' route. To help prevent this, always wash your hands with soap and clean water after going to the toilet, before eating and before handling food. Using hand gel is another sensible option.

## **DON'T LET THE RUNS SPOIL YOUR HOLIDAY – advice from Sister Annette Marsh**



#### **WATER**

Diseases can be caught from drinking contaminated water, or swimming in it. This includes water used to make ice cubes in drinks and water for cleaning your teeth

#### **SWIMMING**

It is safer to swim in water that is well chlorinated. If you are travelling to Africa, South America or some parts of the Caribbean, avoid swimming in fresh water lakes and streams as you can catch parasitic diseases from such places. It is also wise never to go barefoot, but to wear protective footwear when out, even on the beach.



**Enjoy your holiday!**

#### **FOOD**

Contaminated food is the commonest source of diseases abroad. You can help prevent illness by following these guidelines for advice on consuming food and beverages:

##### **Safe Drinks:**

- Carbonated soft drinks /water
- Water that's boiled or purified with iodine or chlorine.

##### **Probably Safe Drinks:**

- Fresh citrus juices
- Bottled water
- Packaged (machine made) ice

##### **Unsafe Drinks:**

- Tap water
- Chipped ice
- Unpasteurised milk

##### **Safe foods:**

- Hot – thoroughly grilled/boiled
- Processed and packaged
- Cooked vegetables and peeled fruits eg bananas.

##### **Probably Safe Foods:**

- Dry items
- Jams and syrups
- Washed vegetables and fruit

##### **Unsafe foods:**

- Salads
- Sauces and salsa
- Uncooked seafood
- Raw or poorly-cooked meats
- Unpeeled fruits eg strawberries
- Unpasteurised dairy products
- Cold desserts

Look for recommended restaurants -think carefully about using street vendors

#### **Cheers?**

Watch how much alcohol you consume: If you drink to excess, alcohol could lead you to become carefree and ignore these precautions.

## DRUG WATCH: PRESCRIPTION DRUG ADDICTION

Prescription drugs have legitimate medical purposes; illicit drugs do not. That is where the difference starts and stops because both may become addictive.

People often make the mistake of believing that prescription drugs are less addictive than illegal drugs and in many cases this is so, but there are several categories of prescription drugs that can easily lead to addiction.

These can include:

- Pain Killers
- Sleeping pills
- Ant-anxiety medication.

Codeine is a constituent of many commonly prescribed pain killers. When codeine enters the brain it causes the release of neurotransmitters that stimulate the reward centre of the brain with subsequent feelings of pleasure and well-being. This can lead to both psychological and physical dependence. Codeine is one of the less concentrated narcotics, and for those who develop addictions to it then it's a short step to using more powerful drugs, such as heroin.

Anti-anxiety and sleeping pills have many similarities. Benzodiazepines, such as diazepam are used to treat anxiety and work by affecting the way certain neurotransmitters transmit messages to certain brain cells. This has a calming effect on various brain functions. The so-called Z drugs such as zopiclone and zolpidem work in a similar way to benzodiazepines and are used to induce sleep in insomnia.

Both drugs are intended for short term use of up to one month to help with a crisis. Longer term use can lead to tolerance, and thus a need to increase the dose, and dependence.

During our lifetime we will all suffer severe pain and life crises that cause great anxiety and insomnia.

Medication to relieve this is good. But warnings about duration of treatment must be heeded as not to do so risks a new problem, that of addiction. The problem is further complicated by the fact that many of these drugs can be sourced online thereby bypassing the prescription.

### PPG HEALTH WALKS

Join the next health walk on Wednesday July 18, starting from Frithwood Surgery at 2pm. It will last about 45 minutes and the route is mainly flat.

Health walks are open to all and designed for those who need to improve their mobility, people recovering from an illness or surgery and those who just want to get out in a group and get some fresh air.

Tea, coffee and the opportunity to have a chat will be available at the Chalford Parish Rooms afterwards.

Future walks taking place: August 1, 15 and 29; September 12 and 26.

**Dr Camilla Skene** will be taking maternity leave over the summer. We wish Camilla and her new baby well.

## TIM'S LEAP OF FAITH



Tim Crouch is preparing to jump out of a perfectly good aeroplane and hurtle earthwards attached to someone who, with luck, will know what he is doing: that is to say, take part in a tandem skydive. On the back of this madness he hopes to raise some cash for the Frithwood Surgery PPG Equipment Fund.

If you would like to make a donation to stiffen Tim's resolve as the countdown to his jump on September 21 approaches, look for the 'Just Giving' website, which should become available in the next few weeks and will be publicised at the surgery, on the website and on Facebook. Alternatively, speak to reception. All donations will go entirely to the fund. Thank you for considering this.

### INTERESTING APPS

Free mobile phone apps are being embraced by some as a great way to monitor their health and fitness. Check out 'Health Data' and 'myfitnesspal', both of which can be accessed through the App Store. Ask mobile phone shop staff to help if you've not downloaded apps before.

  
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 A better life for carers



## Free Courses For Carers - Stroud

Join us for our **FREE** one off sessions in 2018.  
Every Tuesday for 3 weeks, or choose those relevant for you.

14th August 2018	Helping People Move Safely
21st August 2018	Dealing with Health Emergencies
28th August 2018	Promoting Continence

Where: Stroud Fire Station Community Room,  
Paganhill Lane, Stroud GL5 4JT

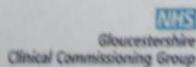
10.00am—1.00pm

To book please call:  
**01452 500885**

Or Email:  
**positivecaring@carersgloucestershire.org.uk**

Replacement care and transport are available upon request. Please call us to discuss.


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