

Swanlow Times

Welcome to our Autumn newsletter.

We are interested in ideas for inclusion in future journals,
If you have any suggestions or ideas please write them down and hand them into Reception.

Lung cancer

Lung cancer is one of the most common and serious types of cancer. Symptoms of lung cancer can include coughing, unexplained weight loss, shortness of breath or chest pain

How common is lung cancer?

Lung cancer is the second most common cancer (after breast cancer) in England and Wales, with an estimated 31,000 new cases diagnosed every year. Lung cancer is the most common cause of cancer-related death in both men and women. Lung cancer primarily affects older people. Cases are rare in people who are under 40 years old, but the rates of lung cancer rise sharply with age. The most common age range that lung cancer is diagnosed is 70-74.

How can you prevent Lung cancer ?

Smoking is the single biggest risk factor for lung cancer, accounting for an estimated 85-90% of cases. People who smoke more than 20 cigarettes a day are 20 times more likely to develop lung cancer than non-smokers. If you are a smoker, the best way to prevent lung cancer, plus other serious conditions, is to stop smoking as soon as possible. However long you have been smoking, it is always worth quitting. Every year that you do not smoke, your risk of getting serious illnesses, such as lung cancer, will start to decrease. After 10 years of not smoking, your chances of developing lung cancer falls to half that of a smoker.

Research suggests that eating a low fat, high fibre diet, including plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables (at least five portions a day) and whole grains, can help to reduce the risk of lung cancer, and other types of cancer, plus heart disease.

Regular exercise can lower the risk of developing lung cancer as well as other types of cancer. A minimum of 30 minutes of vigorous exercise a day, at least five times a week, is recommended. The exercise should be strenuous enough to leave your heart beating faster, and you should feel slightly out of breath afterwards. Examples of vigorous exercise include going for a brisk walk and walking up a hill.

Health benefits of giving up smoking

Smoking's bad for your health, but exactly how does quitting make life better?

Better breathing

People breathe more easily and cough less when they give up smoking because their lung capacity improves

Longer life

Half of all long-term smokers die early from smoking-related diseases, including heart disease, lung cancer and chronic bronchitis.

Less stress

Scientific studies show that people's stress levels are lower after they stop smoking.

Improved senses

Kicking the smoking habit gives your senses of smell and taste a boost.

More energy

Within 2 to 12 weeks of stopping smoking, the circulation improves. This makes all physical activity much easier. Quitting boosts the immune system, making it easier to fight off colds and flu

Healthier loved ones

By stopping smoking you'll be protecting the health of your non-smoking friends and family.

If you would like to give up smoking ask reception staff about the Smoking Cessation Clinic held here at Swanlow Surgery

You can also find more information at smokefree.nhs.uk or call Smokefree: 0800 022 4 332

COPD

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease is the name for a collection of lung diseases including chronic bronchitis, emphysema and chronic obstructive airways disease. People with COPD have trouble breathing in and out, known as airflow obstruction. Their lungs become inflamed due to irritation.

How common is COPD?

COPD is one of the most common respiratory diseases in the UK. It usually affects people over the age of 35.

Around 835,000 people in the UK have been diagnosed with COPD, but it is thought that there are about 2 million people living with the disease who have not been diagnosed. This is because many people who develop the symptoms of COPD do not get medical help because they often dismiss their symptoms as a 'smoker's cough'.

The main cause of COPD is smoking and can cause breathing difficulties and long-term damage to the lungs.. The likelihood of developing COPD increases the more you smoke and the longer you've been smoking.

The effects of COPD

Over many years, the inflammation leads to permanent changes in the lung. The walls of the airways get thicker in response to the inflammation and more mucus is produced. Damage to the walls of the air sacs in the lungs means they lose their normal elasticity. It becomes much harder to breathe, especially when you exert yourself.

Although any damage that has already occurred to your lungs cannot be reversed, you can prevent COPD from developing or getting worse by making lifestyle changes.

Treatment for COPD usually involves relieving the symptoms, for example by using an inhaler to make breathing easier.

Diagnosing COPD

You will be asked about your symptoms and maybe have a lung function test called a spirometry.

Spirometry

You will be asked to breathe into a machine called a spirometer. This machine takes two measurements: the volume of air you can breathe out and the total amount of air you breathe out. You may be asked to breathe out a few times to get a consistent reading. The readings are compared with normal measurements for your age, which can show if your airways are obstructed. Some people may need more tests. The tests may confirm the diagnosis or indicate the severity of your COPD. This will help you and your doctor plan your treatment.

Peak flow test

To confirm that you have COPD and not asthma, your doctor might ask you to take regular measurements of your breathing using a peak flow meter, at different times over several days. The peak flow meter measures how fast you can breathe out.

Other breathing tests

If your symptoms seem worse than would be expected from your spirometry results, your doctor may decide you need more detailed lung function tests. You may be referred to a hospital specialist for these tests.

Remember to have your flu Jab if you are 65 years old or over, pregnant or have a Chronic long term disease such Asthma or COPD, Chronic Heart Disease, Diabetes or have a Weakened Immune system

Coughs

Most people with a cough have an upper respiratory tract infection caused by a virus which means the virus has affected your throat or windpipe and can be caused by the common cold, influenza or laryngitis

If your cough is caused by a lower respiratory tract infection the virus has infected your airways lower down, or your lungs such as bronchitis or pneumonia (although this is rare)

Common causes of a persistent cough in adults are: smoking, postnasal drip (mucus dripping down the throat from the back of the nose, caused by a condition such as rhinitis)

Treating a cough

There's no quick way of getting rid of a cough that's caused by a viral infection. It will usually clear up after your immune system has fought off the virus. The simplest and cheapest way to treat a short-term cough may be a homemade cough remedy containing honey and lemon. The honey coats the throat and relieves the irritation that causes coughing.

Cough medicines

There's little evidence to suggest that cough medicines actually work, although some of the ingredients may help to treat symptoms that are associated with a cough, such as a blocked nose or fever. Cough medicines should never be taken for more than two weeks. They can be used for any type of cough and are generally safe. Expectorants help bring phlegm up so that coughing is easier, which may help chesty coughs.

Antibiotics

Antibiotics are not used to treat coughs because they are only effective in killing bacteria, not viruses. Therefore, unless you develop a secondary bacterial infection, such as pneumonia, antibiotics will not usually be advised.

Colds

The first symptom of a cold is usually a sore or irritated throat. This is then followed by other symptoms, including: a blocked nose, nasal pain and sneezing, a runny nose, a hoarse voice and a general sense of feeling unwell

The symptoms of a cold are usually at their worst during the first two to three days of the infection before they gradually start to improve. In adults and older children, the cold usually lasts for about a week. Colds tend to last longer in younger children who are under five. Their symptoms typically last between 10-14 days.

Treating a common cold

In most cases, you will be able to treat the symptoms of cold yourself at home by using a number of self-care techniques.

Drink plenty of fluids and have plenty of rest. Painkillers such as ibuprofen or paracetamol also help reduce a fever. Gargling with salt water can sometimes help to relieve the symptoms of a sore throat. Vapour rubs can help to soothe the symptoms of a cold. Sucking a menthol sweet can help to relieve the symptom of a sore throat.

Many children will lose their appetite when they have a cold. However, this is perfectly normal and it should only last for a few days.

The use of antibiotics to treat a cold is not recommended. As almost all cases of cold are caused by a viral infection, antibiotics won't have any benefit.



Stress Awareness

Stress is not itself an illness but it can cause serious illness if not tackled. Symptoms of stress often build up gradually before you start noticing them. Stress is the feeling of being under too much mental or emotional pressure

Stress can affect how you feel, how you think, how you behave and how your body works. Sleeping problems, sweating, loss of appetite and difficulty concentrating are common signs of stress.

Spotting the early signs of stress will also help prevent it worsening and potentially causing serious complications, such as high blood pressure, anxiety and depression. While there is little you can do to prevent stress, there are many things you can do to manage stress more effectively, such as learning how to relax, taking regular exercise and adopting good time management techniques.

If you've tried self-help techniques and they aren't working, make an appointment to see your GP.

Spotlight on staff

Mel (Practice Nurse)

Favorite food: Chinese

Favorite film: The 6th Sense (Bruce Willis)

Last book I read: The Twits (to the children)

Snow or beach: Beach

Favorite song : Shine (Take That)

Time spent at Swanlow : Such a rewarding job with lovely patients



Diane (Smoking Cessation Advisor)

Favorite food: Curries

Favorite film: Hangover

Last book I read: Dawn French

Snow or beach: Beach

Favorite song : Poker Face (Lady GaGa)

Time spent at Swanlow : Friendly place to work with lovely staff



Do you use Skype - would you consider a consultation with a GP using Skype. Please let us know as it is something we are considering.