

# Swanlow Times

Welcome to our Winter 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.

## Alcohol and the Risk of drinking Too Much

There's no guaranteed safe level of drinking, but if you drink below recommended daily limits, the risks of harming your health are low.

Most people who have alcohol-related health problems aren't alcoholics. They're simply people who have regularly drunk more than the recommended levels for some years.

Alcohol's hidden harms usually only emerge after a number of years and by then serious health problems can already have developed.

### Long-term benefits of reducing your alcohol intake

**Mood-** There's a strong link between heavy drinking and depression, and hangovers often make you feel anxious and low. If you already feel anxious or sad, drinking can exaggerate this, so cutting down may put you in a better mood generally.

**Sleep-** Drinking can affect your sleep. Although it can help some people fall asleep quickly, it can disrupt your sleep patterns and stop you from sleeping deeply. So cutting down on alcohol should help you feel more rested when you wake up.

**Behaviour-** Drinking can affect your judgment and behaviour. You may behave irrationally or aggressively when you're drunk. Memory loss can be a problem during drinking and in the long-term for regular heavy drinkers.

**Heart-** Long-term heavy drinking can lead to your heart becoming enlarged. This is a serious condition that can't be completely reversed, but stopping drinking is an important part of preventing it getting worse.

### **Immune system**

Regular drinking can affect your immune system. Heavy drinkers tend to catch more infectious diseases.



### What's your limit ?

If you drink double these recommendations in one session, this is classed as binge drinking and doing this regularly can have a serious impact on your health and safety.

Everyone should aim to have at least two 'alcohol' free days every week

If you do have 'too' much; give your body at least 48 hours to recover.

### **Don't forget one drink is not always one unit**

1 pint of beer / lager 5% = 3 units

1 bottle of Wine (75cl) 13% = 10 units

1 glass (175ml) Wine 13% = 2.3 units

1 bottle (275ml) of Alcopop 5% = 1.4 units

1 single measure of spirits ( 35ml) 40% = 1.4 units

- Men should not drink more than 3-4 units of alcohol a day.
- Women should not drink more than 2-3 units a day.
- Pregnant women or women trying to conceive should not drink alcohol. Alcohol can seriously affect your baby's development

# HIV and Aids

**An estimated 83,000 people aged over 15 in the UK are living with HIV. Learn how you can protect yourself against infection**

HIV stands for human immunodeficiency virus. The virus weakens your ability to fight infections and disease, such as cancer. AIDS is the final stage of HIV infection, when your body can no longer fight life-threatening infections. There is no cure for HIV, but there are treatments to enable most people with the virus to live a long and healthy life.

## How is HIV spread?

HIV is found in the body fluids of an infected person, which includes semen and vaginal fluids, blood, inside the anus and breast milk. However, it is not spread easily compared to other viruses, like colds or flu.

The most common ways of getting HIV in the UK are :- having unprotected sex, including vaginal, oral and anal sex ,using a contaminated needle or syringe to inject drugs , from mother to baby, before or during birth, or by breastfeeding

The virus enters the bloodstream, often through cuts and sores, and attacks the immune system, which protects the body against infection.

## Getting tested

Many people newly infected with HIV have no signs or symptoms at all. If you think you might be at risk of HIV, you should have a test immediately. The earlier HIV is detected, the more likely it is that treatment will be successful. It can take several weeks after infection before the virus is picked up in testing, so after your initial test you will be advised to have another one a few weeks later.

There are a number of places you can get an HIV test, including your GP surgery or sexual health clinics. If your test is positive you will be referred to a specialist HIV clinic where you'll have more blood tests to show what effect HIV is having on your immune system and be able to discuss treatment options.

**Living with HIV** Although there is no cure for HIV, treatments are much more successful than they used to be, enabling people with HIV to lead as normal a life as possible.

You will be encouraged to take regular exercise, eat a healthy diet, stop smoking and have yearly flu jabs and five-yearly pneumococcal vaccinations to minimise the risk of getting serious illnesses.

Someone with HIV is said to have AIDS when tests show their immune system has stopped working and they develop life-threatening illnesses such as cancer.

## Preventing HIV

The best way to prevent HIV is to practice safe sex and use a condom, or if you inject drugs, do not share needles.

HIV can affect anybody. In the UK most people with HIV come from two groups; gay men and people of black African origin. However, there is still a high risk among heterosexual and non-African populations. Infection rates among heterosexuals in the UK rose from 740 in 2004 to 1,130 in 2008.

## You cannot catch HIV from:

- kissing
- contact with unbroken, healthy skin
- being sneezed on
- sharing baths, towels or cutlery
- using the same toilets and swimming pools
- mouth-to-mouth resuscitation
- contact with animals or insects such as mosquitoes

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

# Childhood cancer awareness

When a child is diagnosed with cancer it can seem like normal life stops and a different journey begins. It's a journey that tests families physically, emotionally, socially and financially. To be told that a child has cancer comes as a terrible shock. Yet to know that seven out of 10 children now survive cancer may offer some kind of comfort and reassurance to families. Thanks to research into treatment and causes, the outlook is now one of hope, forward thinking and positive outcomes.

## Types of childhood cancer

In the UK around 1,500-1,700 new cases of childhood cancer are diagnosed each year in children 0-15 years. The most common childhood cancer is leukaemia which affects 35% of children diagnosed. A further 24% are diagnosed with brain or spinal tumours.

## What causes childhood cancer?

Children's cancers are very different to adult cancers. They occur in different parts of the body, and respond differently to treatment. Cancer is not infectious and most are not inherited. It is not thought to be caused by something a parent has, or has not done. Certain genetic conditions such as down's syndrome can increase the risk of getting leukaemia, and retinoblastoma, a rare form of eye cancer is known to be inherited in 40% of cases. Children with the inherited form of retinoblastoma are at a slightly higher risk of developing other tumours later in life. Cancers such as bone tumours in teenagers and young people may be related to periods of fast growth when the cells are dividing rapidly, but the exact cause is not known.

## How is cancer diagnosed?

When a child has been diagnosed with cancer or a cancer is suspected, they will undergo a series of tests to find out what is happening inside their body. The tests may feel like an unnecessary delay causing a worrying wait but by having accurate information about the type and stage of the child's illness, the Consultant can plan the best individual treatment for them. The tests will also find out about the child's general health, which may also influence what type of treatment they receive.

These are some of the most common tests that are used to diagnose cancer:- Biopsy , Blood tests ,Lumbar puncture, CT (computerised tomography) scan , MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) scan , Ultrasound scan or Bone scan

## How is cancer treated?

There is no 'one fits all' therapy for treating cancer.

A child's individual treatment plan is based upon: their condition ,stage of their illness and general health. The plan may consist of a combination of treatments - for example surgery and chemotherapy.

## Before treatment

The doctor will outline the benefits, risks and potential side-effects of the treatment. The doctor will also be happy to answer any questions and will repeat information as many times as is needed.

The three main ways to treat cancer are through surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

When a child is receiving treatment it is best not to give them any other medicines without first talking to their Consultant.

## Beyond treatment

Though treatment may last for many months or years, for most children it is successful and they recover from their illness. However, the rigorous nature of the treatment can leave them with long-term side-effects..



## Anger Awareness

**Anger is a feeling that affects us all. But for some, anger can get out of control and cause problems with relationships, work and even the law.**

Things that can make us feel angry include .....a threat to us or people close to us , a blow to our self-esteem or social standing in a group , being treated unfairly and feeling unable to change this or being verbally or physically assaulted

### Learning to control your anger

- Healthy mind - Exercise will help clear the mind and often, remove you from the immediate and often chaotic environment
- Keep perspective - Remember who and what is important at times of intense stress. The moment will pass and you'll find comfort in letting it do so without the build up of emotion.
- Avoid excess - Alcohol is responsible for many an argument as drinking lowers your defences and can change your mood.
- Find some calm - If you find yourself getting angry, remove yourself from the situation.
- Learn to listen - Listen carefully to the other person is saying and show your understand their point of view – even if you don't agree with it.
- Relax - Don't give yourself a hard time

Merry Christmas &  
A Happy New year  
From all at  
Swanlow Surgery

