

GREYSTOKE GAZETTE

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Greystoke Patient Participation Group News

The group has now elected a patient chair person and he is John Walton. John is currently leading the group to look at three main areas of focus :

1/ The group are trying to apply pressure on the County Council to take some action on the T junction at the exit out from The Mount onto Dark lane . The Group consider that the junction is very dangerous and some road alterations need to take place at the earliest opportunity to avoid a serious accident happening. The NHS were required to put £160,000 into a pot for the development of the junction as part of the planning permission for the new building being granted. The group feels that this now needs to be spent to upgrade the junction urgently. If you have any anecdotal evidence of dangerous incidents then please let John know on jh.walton@btinternet.com

2/ The Group will be drawing up the topics to cover in this years patient survey to gain views form patient within the practice on aspects of the service offered in the new building, again if you have any ideas please contact John.

3/ The Group has also organised a Patient Health Education session on Psoriasis on the evening of July 14th 6.30 PM at the surgery. The session is designed to help and inform sufferers from this condition and there will be some education videos shown and a specialist dermatology nurse will be available to give advice on the application of creams and other remedies. If you would like to attend this event please contact Jonathan Bradley at the surgery or on jh.bradley@nhs.net and he will reserve you a place.

Please also remember the group is looking for younger members to join the group especially parents with young children who can represent the views of these patients within the group



talking sense about sex

My Contraception Tool

The Family Planning Association have produced a very good interactive decision aid to help you make more effective decisions about the most suitable contraceptive for you. You can add your preferences and it shows you the options which most closely match your needs. Visit www.fpa.org.uk and go to the My Contraception Tool.

St John's Wort

St John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum* L.) is an herbal medicine used to relieve low mood and anxiety. It interacts with the contraceptive pill (combined and progesterone only) and reduces the effectiveness of it. Unplanned pregnancies have resulted from this. We recommend you read the patient information sheet supplied with all prescribed medicines before taking herbal and other alternative remedies.



In the hope we have a better summer than last year here are some sunshine tips!

Your eyes and the sun

Many people are aware that ultraviolet (UV) light is harmful to the eye and may lead to cataracts and other eye problems. Light-coloured eyes (blue, grey or green) need more protection. Children's eyes are more vulnerable than those of adults. Wearing a hat with a brim or a peaked cap could shield you from as much as 50 per cent of the sun's UV rays. But wearing a pair of good quality sunglasses can block between 99 and 100 per cent of UV radiation.

Sunglasses should carry the CE mark and have a label stating they block 99-100% of both UV-A and UV-B rays. Wraparounds prevent UV light getting in at the sides. Brown and amber lenses are the best as they reduce the amount of blue light getting through. Dark sunglasses are not necessarily better, it is the coating on the surface that makes them safe.

Stay cool this summer

Hot weather can be very dangerous and even kill. In one hot spell in August 2003 in England, deaths in those aged 75 and over rose by 60% with 2000 total extra deaths than would normally be expected. Staying hydrated and out of the sun are the best actions to take. If you need to be outdoors wear a hat and take a drink with you. Some people are particularly vulnerable like: the elderly, babies and young children, those with chronic heart and breathing conditions, physically active people like roofers, builders, gardeners, manual workers, athletes and people on certain medications.

Sunscreens

Recent guidance from NICE suggested sunscreens with an SPF of 15 were adequate for most people in the UK. However, this assumes we apply it as the manufacturers advise at 2mg/cm², which requires 35ml every 2 hours for an adult, and is more than double what is applied in reality. It is, therefore, recommended that most people should use a cream with an SPF of at least 30.

SPF relates to protection from UVB only. It is also important to have protection from UVA which is equally implicated in the risk of skin cancer. Sunscreens have a 5 star rating for UVA protection in addition to the SPF number and we recommend star 4 or 5.

But please do not forget your vitamin D levels, SPF 15 stops 99% of vitamin D production. You do need to have some unprotected sun exposure (without burning) to build up your stores for the winter. We recommend a weekly total of 60 minutes broken down into short spells of unprotected sun to your face and arms on fair skin, longer on darker skins.

Sleep is good for you.

A growing number of studies have linked sleep loss to obesity, chronic illness e.g. diabetes and premature death. Hormones released in the brain as a result of sleep loss result in an increased appetite and affect preferences for unhealthy food, thereby, raising calorie intake. Last year, a study found that men who regularly lost out on a full night's sleep during the week reduced their risk of diabetes by sleeping for several extra hours over the weekend. In the fast, stimulating world we and our children live in we must ensure the whole family get enough good quality sleep to stay healthy.

Hypertension

Everyone is probably aware that reducing salt intake in food lowers blood pressure. A 6g a day reduction reduces the systolic (top figure) blood pressure by 10mmHg in under 4 weeks. Even reducing by 1g a day makes a difference. 80% of salt is hidden in processed food e.g. bread, breakfast cereals, table sauces, processed food. Effervescent tablets are very high in salt.

You may not be aware that increasing your potassium intake also reduces blood pressure. High potassium foods include fruit, coffee, pulses, beans, vegetables, oily fish and chicken. It is also the main ingredient of Lo-salt the alternative to normal table salt.