

GREYSTOKE GAZETTE

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We wish you a Happy, Healthy 2016

New Year Resolutions

If these include stopping smoking, losing weight or getting fitter our nurses and doctors would be very happy to guide and support you. We are all human and know how our willpower can dwindle after the first few weeks. Our practice nurses have a lot of experience and success with **smoking cessation**. They will give you useful advice and can prescribe nicotine products and medication to help you succeed. Our healthcare assistants (Kate and Sarah) run our **weight management programme** where you are seen regularly, weighed and given advice. These are appointments for yourself alone and not a group session. We can refer patients who are significantly overweight, or have medical illnesses which would benefit from exercise, to an **exercise programme** at The Leisure Centre called Healthstart. Specially trained staff help patients to begin exercising in a safe environment and supervise their progress. Do not hesitate to make an appointment with a nurse for these or any advice you need on leading a healthier life.



DRY JANUARY

For all of you who took up the challenge of Dry January and are succeeding — well done. If you are concerned about your alcohol intake and would like help please make an appointment with one of our GPs.

Dangerous diet pills not the answer to New Year's resolutions

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) are warning anyone looking to lose weight in the New Year to be aware of the dangers of buying diet pills online. During 2015 MHRA enforcement officers seized more than 240,000 doses of pills claiming to be for weight loss/slimming. A number of the products seized were marketed as 'all herbal' or natural when, in fact, they were found to contain the synthetic medicine sibutramine. Sibutramine was withdrawn across Europe and the US in 2010 due to an increased risk of heart attacks and strokes associated with its use. Since 2005, MHRA officials have found hundreds of examples of medicines claiming to contain herbal ingredients but after analysis were found to be adulterated with pharmaceutical ingredients. When considering whether to buy a product that describes itself as herbal or natural, consumers are advised to look for products that display the Traditional Herbal Registration (THR) logo and a THR/PL number. These products have been assessed by the MHRA and consumers can be confident that the quality is assured and that the information for consumers about the product and how to use it safely is correct.

MHRA senior policy advisor, Lynda Scammell said: The Internet has access to a vast number of websites offering a wide range of products marketed as "slimming" or "diet" pills. Many make attractive claims and offer "quick-fix" solutions but be aware that "natural" does not mean "safe. There is no miracle cure. The reality is that many of these pills are not authorised medicines and therefore their contents are unknown. Chances are they simply will not work and may contain dangerous unknown ingredients. The consequences can be devastating. Our advice is not to purchase slimming pills online without having consulted a doctor or pharmacist first. If you have concerns about your weight, consult your GP or another healthcare professional. Be safe and put your health first. It's just not worth the risk.



Antibacterial soap

A recent research paper in the BMJ showed that anti-bacterial soaps are no more effective than ordinary soap at reducing bacterial contamination on hands in real life. So we can all save money and the environment by buying ordinary soap.
BMJ 2015;351:h4936



healthwatch

10 top tips to get the most out of your GP appointment

Healthwatch report that from conversations with the public some patients feel rushed during appointments and struggle to make themselves heard. As appointment times can be limited Healthwatch are promoting tips that could help you get the most out of visiting your GP:

- **Is your issue urgent? Do you need to see a specific GP?** Is it important you are seen quickly or would you rather wait for an appointment with a particular GP?
- **Take notes to help you.** Before you see your GP, be clear in your own mind what you want to say. Make a note of your symptoms, worries and any questions that you would like to ask.
- **Many problems? See if you can book a double appointment.** If you have a number of issues that you would like to discuss with your GP, see whether it is possible to book a double appointment to give you more time to talk them through.
- **Take a list of your medicines – prescribed or otherwise.** Bring a list of any medication you are taking, including over-the-counter and/or alternative medicines, or anything prescribed after a hospital visit. This includes tablets, liquids or creams.
- **Discuss important things first and stick to the point.** Make sure you tell the doctor about the important things first and try to get to the point. Do not leave your main concern to the end.
- **Not clear on treatment plan? Ask again.** Make sure you fully understand the next steps before you leave the room. If you don't, then don't be afraid of asking your GP to go through the plan again.
- **Ask who to contact if you have any more questions.** You may think of questions that you would like to ask after your appointment. Find out who you can contact to ask questions, as well as any support groups that can provide reliable information.
- **If you need support, take a relative, carer or friend.** If you feel your situation needs it, take a relative or friend for support. They can help you understand or explain.
- **Unhappy? Ask to see another GP.** If you're not happy, you can ask to see another GP in the practice. You can also change GP practices, but you should as a first step always discuss your concerns with a practice staff member first.
- **Could the practice nurse deal with your problem?** In many cases, a practice nurse could deal with your concern, so consider this as an alternative to making an appointment with a GP. The surgery may also run special clinics such as asthma and diabetes, so make sure you find out.

Creative Age at the Baltic

On Mondays, Baltic artists run friendly, creative and inclusive sessions for older adults exploring contemporary art in a dementia friendly environment. Inspired by our current exhibitions, these Creative Age sessions use a variety of materials and explore creativity using the 'Imagination Model'. The Imagination Model focuses on giving people the opportunity to explore their creativity instead of relying on memory based activities. There is a growing understanding that creativity remains strong for people living with dementia.

These free sessions take place at the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead on Mondays from 10.30am - 12.30pm. Booking is essential and you are welcome to discuss any questions you have or find out more information by getting in touch.

Please contact Douglas at Equal Arts by e-mail:
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Or Tel: 0191 477 5775.

**equal
arts**

**Improving older people's
lives through creativity**