

# Swanlow Times

Welcome to our Autumn newsletter.

This month we will be giving information about the Flu season in preparation for the clinics in October. Also included .... Help Your Heart, Know Your Numbers, Getting ready for school and How to get help with your Sexual Health  
We welcome your feedback !!!

## Healthy Living

### Help your heart - Control your cholesterol

If you have too much cholesterol in your blood it could form a clot, which can cause a stroke or heart attack.

#### How to lower your cholesterol levels-

The best way to help control your cholesterol levels is to eat more “helpful” fats and fewer “unhelpful” ones.

**Saturated fats-** Avoid eating too much saturated fat, as this will raise your cholesterol. It is usually found in cheese, red meats, butter, palm oil or ghee.

**Unsaturated fats-**In contrast, polyunsaturated fats and monounsaturated fats will help to lower your cholesterol level. They can be found in olive oil, rapeseed oil or sunflower oil. Oily fish, such as tuna, are a good source of helpful unsaturated fats

**Strike a balance to lower your cholesterol-**To get the best balance, try choosing chicken meals instead of red meats and having fish at least twice a week (one of which should be an oily fish).

## Blood Pressure

### What is blood pressure?

When your heart beats, it pumps blood round your body to give it the energy and oxygen it needs. As the blood moves, it pushes against the sides of the blood vessels. The strength of this pushing is your blood pressure. If your blood pressure is too high, it puts extra strain on your arteries (and your heart) and this may lead to heart attacks and strokes.

### How you can tell if you have high blood pressure

Having high blood pressure (hypertension) is not usually something that you feel or notice. It does not tend to produce obvious signs or symptoms. The only way to know what your blood pressure is, is to have it measured.

Blood pressure is measured in ‘millimetres of mercury’ (mmHg) and is written as two numbers. For example, if your reading is 120/80mmHg, your blood pressure is ‘120 over 80’.

### What do the numbers mean?

Every blood pressure reading consists of two numbers or levels. They are shown as one number on top of the other.

The first (or top) number is your systolic blood pressure. It is the highest level your blood pressure reaches when your heart beats.

The second (or bottom) number is your diastolic blood pressure. It is the lowest level your blood pressure reaches as your heart relaxes between beats.

### Keep your blood pressure low

Even if you do not have high blood pressure at the moment, it is important to keep your blood pressure as low as you can. The higher your blood pressure, the higher your risk of health problems. For example, a blood pressure of 135 over 85 may be “normal” but someone with this reading is twice as likely to have a heart attack or stroke as someone with a reading of 115 over 75.

# Influenza?

Influenza or 'flu' is a viral infection that mainly affects the nose, throat and the lungs. Flu symptoms include the abrupt onset of fever, shivering, headache, cough, sore throat, aching muscles and joints. Flu symptoms are different from a cold as a cold is often limited to a runny nose, sneezing, watery eyes and throat irritation. The symptoms usually occur gradually and do not cause a fever or body aches.

## **Who catches influenza?**

Anyone can catch flu. Most influenza infections occur during the winter months. Some influenza viruses cause more severe illness than others. Hence in some winters people may be more unwell with flu than in other years.

Pandemics of influenza occur from time to time and the impact of these can vary enormously. The most recent pandemic caused by H1N1 (2009) in 2009 was relatively mild,

## **How do you catch influenza?**

Influenza is mostly caught by breathing in air containing the virus when an infected person coughs/sneezes or by touching a surface where the virus has landed and then touching your mouth or nose.

## **How infectious is influenza?**

Influenza is infectious and can spread rapidly from person to person. Some strains of virus are more infectious than others, or cause more severe illness.

## **What is influenza like?**

Influenza is worse than an ordinary cold. It usually starts suddenly with a high fever over 38.0°C which can last for 3-4 days. A dry cough, headaches and chills are common as are general muscle aches and pains. A stuffy nose, sneezing and a sore throat can also be present. The fever tends to decrease after the second day when a stuffy nose and a sore throat become more noticeable.

## **Can you prevent influenza?**

Vaccine is available to protect against flu. Each year a new vaccine has to be produced to protect against the flu viruses expected to be in circulation that winter and to boost the immune response. The vaccine is very safe and side effects are uncommon and usually mild.

The vaccine is given in the autumn before the flu season begins. It is advisable for those likely to be more seriously affected by influenza. This includes: people of any age with chronic heart, lung, metabolic disorders (including severe asthma and diabetes), kidney problems or a lowered immune system due to treatment or disease, pregnant women and everyone aged 65 years and over.

## **How can you reduce the risk of influenza?**

Wash hands frequently with soap and water and dry thoroughly. Avoid touching surfaces (such as door handles) and then the face. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and dispose of used/dirty tissues in a bin - "Catch it, Bin it, Kill it"

## **How can you treat someone with influenza?**

Most people with the flu need no special treatment. Influenza is caused by a virus so antibiotics do not help unless there is a complication. Someone who is ill with flu should keep warm, rest and drink lots of fluids to prevent dehydration. Paracetamol can reduce the fever;

It is best to stay at home while feeling ill with influenza as this reduces the chance of spreading the infection to others.



## **Pregnancy and Treatment for Flu**

### **How risky is catching the flu for me?**

Pregnant women are considered a high-risk group for severe disease from influenza infection especially in the 3rd trimester and up to 2 weeks post-partum.

### **What symptoms am I likely to have if I have got flu?**

Most people who are diagnosed with flu have most of the following symptoms: headache, cough, sore throat and fever. Most will have an uneventful recovery. It is important to remember, however, that flu can present with other symptoms including diarrhoea and/or vomiting, muscle and joint inflammation.

### **Is it safe to take antiviral drugs if I am pregnant?**

If flu is present then an antiviral may be offered and can be safely prescribed to women in pregnancy.

### **What is the best way of protecting me and my baby from influenza?**

The seasonal influenza vaccine is recommended for pregnancy in the UK. It is important that any woman who is pregnant should take up the offer of flu vaccination. This is the best way of protecting you and your child from influenza infection and the serious complications that may arise.

We are now tweeting on Twitter.

We can be found at:

[www.twitter.com/swanlowsurgery](http://www.twitter.com/swanlowsurgery)

## **How to get help with your sexual health**

There are lots of services that can help with your sexual health. This includes help and advice about: contraception, sexually transmitted infections, if you're planning to become pregnant or if you are pregnant and are not sure you want to have a baby. If you're having problems with your sex life or if you have been sexually assaulted.

Advice can be found from your GP surgery. Sexual health clinics, Sexually transmitted infection testing clinics (genitourinary medicine (GUM) clinics) and Pharmacies.

Sexual health clinics are clinics that provide contraception and infection testing services.

### **How can I find where my nearest service is?**

- More information can be found from **sexual health direct**, run by FPA, on 0845 122 8690.
- **NHS Direct** on 0845 46 47 or [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) .
- You can get details of young people's services from **Brook** on 0808 802 1234 [www.brook.org.uk](http://www.brook.org.uk).

### **Are these services confidential?**

These services are confidential. Any personal information, about you, your visit, the tests and treatments that you've had will not be shared with anyone outside that service without your permission. Health professionals may need to involve other services if they believe you, or another person, to be at significant risk of harm (such as physical or sexual abuse).

### **What will happen when I go to one of these services?**

This will depend on which service you use but may include the following:

You will be asked to fill in a form if it's the first time you've used the service. You may be asked questions about your medical and sexual history. You may need to have an internal examination, or offered a test for sexually transmitted infections. If you are diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection, support will be available to help you. Abortion services will help you decide which method of abortion to have.

More information can be found at: [www.fpa.org.uk](http://www.fpa.org.uk)

# Getting ready for school.....



Is your child up to date with their Childhood vaccinations ?

Lots of children get head lice, regardless of whether their hair is clean or dirty. Children catch head lice by coming into contact with another child who already has them. When heads touch, the lice walk from one head to the other. They can't jump or fly.

## Head Lice

- Check your child's hair regularly, and always check if there's an outbreak at the nursery or school.
- Always treat your child as soon as you discover head lice.
- If your child has head lice, check the whole family and treat them if necessary.
- Brush and comb your child's hair often. This may stop head lice taking hold.

### Signs your child may have head lice

- A rash on the scalp.
- Lice droppings (a black powder, like fine pepper) may be seen on pillowcases.
- An itchy head. This is not always the first sign. Lice will usually have been on the scalp for three or four months before the head starts to itch, or they may not cause itching at all.
- You may also spot eggs or the lice themselves.

### How to treat head lice

- Wash the hair normally using your usual shampoo.
- Using plenty of hair conditioner and while the hair is very wet, comb through from the roots with a fine-tooth comb. Make sure the teeth of the comb slot into the hair at the roots with every stroke.
- Clear the comb of lice between each stroke with a tissue or paper towel.
- Wet lice find it difficult to escape, and the conditioner makes the hair slippery and harder for them to grip on to, so they're easier to remove.
- Repeat this routine every three to four days for two weeks so that any lice emerging from the eggs are removed before they can spread.

Treatments and lotions can also be obtained from your local pharmacy. Ask the pharmacist for more advice

## Why your child's weight matters

Evidence shows that overweight children are more likely to become overweight adults, who are at increased risk of serious health problems

If you make sure your children stay at a healthy weight you help them to get the best start in life. In adults, being overweight is linked to health problems such as type 2 diabetes and increased risk of heart disease and certain cancers.

As a parent, it can sometimes be difficult to identify that your child is overweight. You may notice signs, such as your child getting breathless easily during physical activity.

If your child is overweight, then achieving a healthy weight can bring significant health benefits. And as a parent, you can do a lot to help your child achieve a healthy weight. Children learn by example. One of the best ways to teach your children to eat well and get active is to do so yourself.

You can find further information and advice on helping your child to move more and eat better at [Change4Life](http://Change4Life).