

Health &  
Well-being

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## Dr Gill's Blog



Let's talk about Diabetes!

It is an epidemic in the UK and much of it is due to poor lifestyle.

It leads to an enormous healthcare spend and an enormous human cost. I have written a lot about the impact of diet on health and it is one illness where that could not be more relevant. Landmark research has just been published in the Lancet Journal and the findings need to be as public as possible.

There are 3.6 million people diagnosed with diabetes in the UK of an estimated 4.5 million who have it. 90% are Type 2. It affects organs, blood vessels and nerves and the consequences include loss of vision, loss of limbs, heart disease and stroke, kidney disease, loss of sexual function. Damage to all organs in the body.

It is an illness so prevalent and so serious a treatment that offers a 50% chance of reversing the process and putting the patient into remission, has to be nothing short of a miracle. And....the treatment is cheap, simple and safe. What could be better! Almost nothing in medicine today meets those criteria.

The trial study is called DiRECT (Diabetes Remission Clinical Trial) and was undertaken in Tyneside and Scotland. 306 people took part in the study with half allocated to current best practice care and half to intensive weight loss using a liquid diet 800 calories per day with care to ensure adequate nutrients. Remission of diabetes was achieved in 46% of the diet group and only 4% in the conventional care group. Those people in remission were no longer classified as diabetic, did not need any medication and had restored the ability of their own pancreas to manage their blood glucose.

46%.

Nearly half!

If those people regain the weight then of course they will slip back into diabetes.

This is a compelling study which shows that diabetes can effectively be reversed through diet. I have often written about obesity, healthy diet, gut microbiome and the effect of lifestyle on health and longevity. Many overweight type 2 diabetics will struggle with this programme, we need to put effort into offering them access and support to put their health in good order. Let's not forget the cost implications on an NHS and care sector unable to cope with the cost of chronic illness in an aging population. Investing in reversing diabetes is good health and good economics.



Check your risk. Measure your waist - get your HbA1c blood test to track your blood sugar.

## Looking after your Lifestyle

Tum-thing wrong?

The first of December marks the national promotion of Crohn's and Colitis Awareness Week.

Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) is the umbrella term used when describing conditions such as these, which involve the chronic inflammation of your digestive tract.



Crohn's disease and Ulcerative colitis (UC), of which the signs and symptoms that are common to both include:

- Diarrhoea
- Cramping pains in the abdomen
- Tiredness and fatigue
- Feeling generally unwell or feverish
- Loss of appetite and weight loss
- Anaemia (a reduced level of red blood cells).

Crohn's disease. – caused by inflammation of the lining of your digestive system or gut, which often spreads deep into affected tissues. The most common area affected by the disease is the last part of the small intestine (end of the ileum) or the colon.

Ulcerative colitis (UC). – causes long-lasting inflammation and sores (ulcers) in the

innermost lining of your large intestine (colon) and rectum.

Crohn's disease and UC affect at least 300,000 people (combined) in the UK and millions of people globally. Interestingly, Crohn's disease is more common in females than males and also in those who are smokers. UC affects females and males equally and non-smokers/ex-smokers than in smokers.

Although there has been lots of research, unfortunately the cause of either condition is still unknown. There isn't a cure but a lot can be done to treat the conditions, such as medication and surgery may be necessary if symptoms are particularly bad.

If you experience a prolonged change in your bowel habits or have any signs or symptoms of IBD please contact your Doctor for further advice. You can also visit [HCA UK's London Digestive Centre](#) based at the Princess Grace Hospital for information on services.

Learn more about [Crohn's and Colitis Awareness Week](#). And get involved in [#MakingTheInvisibleVisible](#)

For more information on how we can support your employee wellbeing programme, please contact our [Client Relations Team](#)

## Doctors Corner

Dear Doctor,

I am prone to developing cold symptoms as winter approaches. What is the best way to manage symptoms? Do you recommend antibiotics? My GP is often reluctant to prescribe them.

It is important to remember that all colds and the majority of upper respiratory tract infections are caused by viruses. A number of different viruses can cause a cold so it's possible to have one infection after another, as each one may be caused by a different virus. These infections do not respond to antibiotics.



If a GP diagnoses you with a cold they will usually offer self-care advice to manage symptoms in the first instance. This will help you to look after yourself as you recover naturally. The common cold can last up to 2 weeks and a viral cough can last up to three weeks.

Typically your GP will recommend rest, fluids and simple analgesic medication such as Paracetamol or Ibuprofen. Decongestant sprays may be helpful to relieve a blocked nose. These medications can be bought over the counter at your local chemist. You should always read the patient information leaflet that comes with your medicine before taking it, and follow the recommended dosage instructions.

If you're not sure which treatments are suitable you can discuss this with the pharmacist. Some people find warm drinks, cough sweets and gargling with salt water helpful in relieving a sore throat and blocked nose. Zinc supplements taken at the onset of your cold may help to speed up recovery and reduce the severity of symptoms.

Your GP may opt to give you a back-up antibiotic prescription. This will be accompanied with clear instructions to use after a set period of time, if symptoms develop that are suggestive of a bacterial infection. However if you feel your condition is deteriorating it is very important that you visit a doctor for further advice. More serious signs may include severe headache, difficulty in breathing, coughing up blood, cold blue skin or feeling much worse.

It is important to avoid spreading your infection to others by washing your hands well, sneezing and coughing into tissues (these should always be thrown away) and using hygienic hand rub. You should also avoid sharing cups and utensils. Viral infections can be spread through droplet inhalation and coming into contact with the skin of an infected person or by touching a surface that is carrying the virus.



Antibiotics are used to treat infections caused by bacteria. Your doctor will only prescribe and dispense antibiotics when they are needed, according to current guidelines. If you are prescribed antibiotics it is important that you complete the full course to eradicate the infection completely and prevent resistance developing in the bacteria that are left. You should never share or use leftover antibiotics.



Antibiotic resistance occurs when bacteria change in response to the use of these medicines. A growing number of infections are becoming harder to treat as the antibiotics used to treat them become less effective. Antibiotics are required for serious infections such as pneumonia, meningitis and kidney infections.

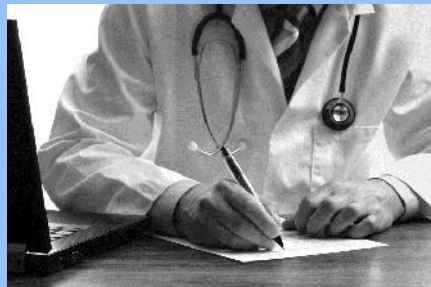
It is important that we slow down the development of widespread resistance so that antibiotics work when we really need them. This is a global health issue and can affect any individual of any age in any country. It is everyone's responsibility to use antibiotics wisely and to follow the guidance of a qualified professional.

As winter arrives it is common to start feeling more fatigued and run down. This in turn may make us more susceptible to catching coughs and colds. You may want to look at your lifestyle and think of how best to maximise your own health and wellbeing.

You should aim to maintain a sensible work /life balance, avoid burning the candle at both ends and ensure adequate time for relaxation and sleep. It is vital to maintain a nutritious diet and limit alcohol intake, which may impair immunity as the festive season begins. Getting outdoors into natural daylight when possible will help. A daily Vitamin D supplement may also be supportive as our exposure to sunshine reduces in winter months. Finally make sure you stay active. Your regime may change from summer to winter but regular exercise will help to maintain fitness levels, boost energy and promote positivity throughout the colder months.

(World Antibiotic Awareness Week runs from 13-19 November 2017. This year's theme: Seek advice from a qualified healthcare professional before taking antibiotics. Antibiotics are a precious resource, so it is important to get the right advice before taking them.)

This months Doctor's Corner was provided by Roodlane GP Dr Millie Saha



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