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ST HELENS, ISLE OF WIGHT PPG

NEWSLETTER

WINTER

❄ Keeping Warm and Well

Winter has well and truly arrived in England! The mornings are frosty, the evenings come early, and the smell of wood smoke is back in the air. It's that time of year for cosy jumpers, hot drinks, and hearty meals shared with family and friends.

While we all enjoy the sparkle of the season, it's also a good time to look after our health. The colder weather can make us more prone to colds and flu, so remember to wrap up warm, eat well, and keep moving — even a short daily walk can work wonders for your mood and energy.

Don’t forget to check in on any elderly neighbours or relatives who might appreciate a friendly call or visit.
Here at St Helens Medical Centre, we are always here to support you. Whether you need health advice, help managing a long-term condition, or just some reassurance during the darker months, please don’t hesitate to get in touch.
Let’s make the most of winter — stay warm, stay well, and look out for one another. Spring will be here before we know it!

🥦 Eat Well This Winter: Foods to Boost Your Immune System

As winter sets in, a balanced diet rich in immune-supporting foods can help your body stay resilient against colds, flu, and seasonal bugs. Here are some simple, affordable ways to strengthen your defences naturally:

🥕 1. Colourful Fruit & Veg

Aim for **five portions of fruit and vegetables a day**. The more colour, the better — each colour provides different antioxidants and vitamins.

- **Vitamin C:** found in oranges, kiwi, peppers, broccoli, and Brussels sprouts.
- **Beta-carotene:** in carrots, sweet potatoes, and squash — converted by your body into vitamin A, vital for healthy mucous membranes that trap germs.

🐟 2. Oily Fish for Vitamin D

During winter, sunlight is limited — and so is vitamin D production. Try to eat **oily fish** like salmon, mackerel, or sardines twice a week.

- Vitamin D helps regulate immune responses and keeps bones strong.
- The NHS also recommends a **vitamin D supplement (10 micrograms daily)** during autumn and winter.

🧄 3. Garlic, Onions & Ginger

These add flavour and contain natural compounds that have mild antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory effects. Try adding fresh garlic or grated ginger to soups, curries, and stews.

🥜 4. Nuts, Seeds & Wholegrains

Packed with **zinc**, **selenium**, and **vitamin E**, these nutrients help immune cells function properly. A small handful of almonds, walnuts, or pumpkin seeds makes a healthy snack.

🥛 5. Live Yoghurt & Fermented Foods

A healthy gut means a stronger immune system. Try **live yoghurt, kefir, sauerkraut, or kimchi** — they contain friendly bacteria that support gut health.

💧 6. Stay Hydrated

Even mild dehydration can affect how your body fights infection. Aim for **6–8 glasses of fluid a day** — water, herbal tea, or soups all count.

💤 7. Don't Forget Lifestyle

A good diet works best alongside:

- Regular physical activity (even gentle walks).
- Good sleep.
- Limiting alcohol and stopping smoking.
- Managing stress — your immune system feels it when you do.

Tip from your local team:
If you're struggling with appetite, weight loss, or low energy this winter, speak with one of our nurses or GPs. We can help check for vitamin deficiencies or offer dietary advice.

Age UK is the UK's largest charity dedicated to supporting older people. Formed in 2009 by the merger of Help the Aged and Age Concern England, it sets out to create "a world where every older person feels included and valued". Wikipedia+2Age UK+2

What Age UK does

The charity's work spans advice, practical support, campaigning and community services:

- **Advice & information**: They provide a national helpline open every day of the year to older people needing help with benefits, health and social care. Age UK+1
- **Local services**: Through a network of local Age UK organisations (about 130 in England alone) they deliver services tailored to community needs — befriending, day centres, outreach. Sky Cares+1
- **Charity shops**: Their shops recycle donated goods (clothing, books, homeware) and generate funds from local people's contributions. The shops also support sustainability by reducing waste. Age UK
- **Campaigning & research**: Age UK monitors, highlights and campaigns on issues affecting later life — poverty, isolation, health, social care. They aim to influence policy and public awareness.

Vision & Strategy

Their vision: "A world where everyone can love later life

The strategy for 2024–2029 emphasises inclusion and value for older people: not just supporting need, but changing how society views ageing.

W**hy it matters**

In the UK the population is ageing, with more people living longer and many facing challenges: loneliness, health issues, financial insecurity. Age UK's role is vital: ensuring practical help, enabling connections, giving older people a voice. Their network brings local knowledge combined with national reach.

Impact & achievements

- They state they help **more than 7 million people each year**.
- Through their shops, each bag of donated goods is claimed to be worth around £20 in value for supporting services.

How you can get involved

- **Donate**: Either financially, or by giving good-quality items to their shops.
- **Volunteer**: Age UK offers roles such as telephone befriending (just 30 minutes a week) to support someone who may be lonely.
- **Campaign/share**: Helping raise awareness of older people's issues, and advocating for better services.
- **Shop**: Using their charity shops supports the cause and can be more sustainable.

St Helens Health Walks 2025/26

Walking is a type of cardiovascular physical activity, which increases your heart rate. This improves blood flow and can lower blood pressure. It helps to boost energy levels by releasing certain hormones like endorphins and delivering oxygen throughout the body.
Spring is a season of change and growth, so it's the perfect opportunity to make a positive change in your life.

• St Helens Health Walks take place every Wednesday from 10am and usually ends around 1pm
• Walkers meet by the sports pavilion on St Helens Green
• The varied walks take place around the St Helens, Seaview, Bembridge and Brading areas and the distance is normally between 4 and 8 miles
• A shorter walk for those requiring one is offered
• The aim of the friendly walks is to help provide opportunities for physical exercise as well as positive social opportunities
• The walks have a leader and a back marker to provide support for walkers
• If you need further information, please contact Maurice Dix Tel: 07854 368 419 or by email at maurice.dix@btinternet.com

What is the Friends and Family Test?

The Friends and Family Test (FFT) launched in 2013 and is an important feedback tool that enables people who use NHS services to provide feedback on their experience. It is open to all patients, users of services, their carers and loved ones, allowing them to anonymously share their honest views on the treatment and care they have received.

It consists of two questions; one asking you to rate your overall experience of the service you received, and a free text box to allow you to share why you have given this rating, if you wish.

The Practice reviews the FFT feedback monthly, using it to identify what is working well, what can be improved, and how. The feedback patients provide is a valuable opportunity for quality improvement and is shared with the whole Practice team, as well as being submitted to NHS England.

The Practice is keen to encourage more of its patients to share their experiences, good and bad, at each visit, so that they can motivate and inspire the team to provide the best service possible for our community and ensure that opportunities for development and learning are not missed.

FFT forms can be found in all patient waiting areas at both the St Helens and Bembridge sites, and can also be completed online by visiting the Practice website.

For more information on how the data from the FTT is used, please see the NHS England website: https://www.england.nhs.uk/fft/

Christmas Message from Dr Cooney

As we come to the close of another year, on behalf of St Helens Medical Centre I would like to take a moment to wish all our patients and their families a Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year. It has been our privilege to care for you and your families throughout the past year, and we are grateful for the trust you place in our team and service.

The Christmas season offers a special opportunity to pause and appreciate the connections that support us—family, friends, and the wider community. In healthcare, we are reminded daily that these connections play an essential role in strengthening both physical and emotional wellbeing. Whether you are celebrating with loved ones or enjoying a quiet moment of rest, we hope this season brings you joy.

This year, our Practice has continued to grow and evolve. We have expanded our clinical team and strengthened our focus on patient-centred care. We remain committed to delivering accessible, compassionate, and high-quality healthcare to every person who walks through our doors.

As we look ahead to the New Year, we aim to continue supporting you and our community. We encourage you to take time during the festive season to prioritise your wellbeing—whether that means staying active, connecting with others, or simply taking a moment to rest and reflect.

From all of us at St Helens Medical Centre, thank you for being an important part of our community. We wish you a safe, joyful, and healthy Christmas, and a New Year filled with hope, happiness, and good health.

Patient Participation Group Members

Chairman - Keith Bradford - keithbradford18@yahoo.com
Vice Chair - Patricia Jepson - triciajepson@gmail.com
Susan Atwell
Maurice Dix – maurice.dix@btinernet.com
Gay Allen – gayallen@outlook.com
Diana Tuson – dianatuson52@hotmail.com
Derek Burt
George Weech
Pam Hogg – pamhogg57@gmail.com
Peter Dodds – peterdodds46@gmail.com
Christine Townsend – Mrs.ct@outlook.com
Practice Manager – Summer Gomm
Business Manager – Charlotte Morrison
Secretary – Jolie Hurst