



HEALTH AND WELLBEING

ABDOMINAL AORTIC ANEURYSM (AAA) SCREENING

An AAA is a swelling in the abdominal aorta, which is the main artery that supplies blood to your body. As the AAA grows, the wall of the aorta stretches and becomes weaker, which can eventually lead to a significant risk of a ruptured AAA. This is often fatal. The aim of the AAA screening programme is to reduce AAA-related mortality by providing a systematic, population-based screening programme.

Men will automatically be invited for screening in their 65th year, while men aged over 65 can request a scan through the central screening office. For more information on the programme talk to your GP or call the AAA central screening office on **028 9063 1828**.

ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

If you are concerned about your own or someone else's drinking habits there are a number of people or organisations that you can go to for advice and support. These include:

- Your GP who may refer you to a specialist working within Community Addiction Teams in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. Addiction NI offers a specialist service for older people aged 55+ who are abusing alcohol and/or drugs. Telephone **028 9066 4434** for more information.
- Alcoholics Anonymous telephone: **028 9043 4848**



- Al Anon (for family and friends of alcoholics) telephone: **028 9068 2368**
- Dunlewy Substance Advice Centre telephone: **028 9061 1162**
- Falls Community Council telephone: 028 9020 2030
- FASA (Forum for Action on Substance Abuse) telephone: **028 9080 3040**
- Rosemount House telephone: **028 9077 9740**

ALZHEIMER'S/DEMENTIA

The Alzheimer's Society is one of the key organisations in Northern Ireland that support people who have Alzheimer's/dementia including their carers, family and friends. Services include:

- A telephone helpline where you can get advice on: diagnosis and assessment of Alzheimer's; your rights as a carer; social services support you can get; and benefits you may be entitled to
- An outreach service where advisors can visit you in your home
- Support groups/befriending scheme
- Information and education programmes/fact sheets.

For more information telephone **0845 300 0336** or visit their website: www.alzheimers.org.uk

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust provide a Community Mental Health Team for older people. They offer assessment, education, advice and support to individuals over the age of 65 who are experiencing a mental illness



and individuals of any age who are experiencing or have concerns about Early Stage Dementia. Referrals to the team can be made by yourself or through your GP or psychiatrist.

To request further information contact the Community Mental Health Team (older people) **028 9056 4961**

ARTHRITIS

Arthritis Care is a charitable organisation that acts on behalf of people who are affected by arthritis. Arthritis Care Northern Ireland offers the following services:

- Information on arthritis
- Campaigning
- Self management courses to help people cope with arthritis
- Family and youth work/events
- Local groups providing support to people with arthritis

They also support volunteers who help with sharing information, campaigning, fund raising, and events.

For more information on services available through Arthritis Care or to become a volunteer contact their free helpline number on **0808 800 4050** or their Belfast office: **028 9078 2940**

Website: www.arthritiscare.org.uk

Arthritis Research UK is a charitable organisation based in England that provides information free to the general public on arthritis. Arthritis Research UK is also involved in research into the cause and treatment of arthritis.



For more information contact Arthritis Research UK on **0300 790 0400** Website: www.arc.org.uk For more information contact Arthritis Research UK on **0300 790 0400**, Website: www.arthritisresearchuk.org

BEREAVEMENT

Bereavement is something that will affect us all at some point in our lives. You can prepare yourself for death in a number of ways. Make a will so that the people you leave behind know your wishes. If you are preparing for the death of a partner you may want to discuss funeral arrangements including their wishes with them and sort out finances.

Practical things that need to be done if there is a death include:

- If someone dies at home you must call a doctor. They can sign a death certificate if the death was expected. If the death was sudden/ unexpected then the doctor will have to talk to the police who will report it to the coroner. A post mortem examination may be carried out
- When someone dies in hospital the doctor will give you a medical certificate which you must take to the registry office and register the death within five days (**Telephone: 028 9027 0274**). The registrar will issue a death certificate and notification of disposal which should be given to the funeral director. Make a few copies of the death certificate. You may need these for pension and insurance purposes
- A funeral director can be chosen before or after you have registered the death (see yellow pages for a list). He or



she can make all the necessary arrangements for the funeral including putting a death notice in the local or national papers

- Contact your local social security office to arrange pension and other entitlements. You may be eligible for funeral payment or widow's payment. (There are guides to your entitlements available from your local social security office)
- Inform the tax office about your change in circumstances
- If there is a will the executors will make sure it is carried out. Contact the solicitor. If there is no will contact the Probate Registry for an application to administer the 'estate'. Your local Citizens' Advice Bureau can help you if you are not sure.

SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS

CRUSE Bereavement Care enables anyone bereaved by death to understand their grief and cope with their loss.

Telephone: **028 9023 2695** or visit their website at www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk

CARING FOR SOMEONE WHO IS DYING

When a person is dying, care is provided through a range of professionals and organisations, who work closely together to co-ordinate services to ensure the needs of the person and carers are met. The majority of formal care is provided by district nurses who can provide: wound care; pain control; continence care; general advice and support and provision of equipment as needed. The district nurse will also



coordinate other services that are required and evaluate the needs of the patient on a regular basis. There are a number of other organisations that can provide support and assistance at this difficult time. These include Cancer Focus NI, Action Cancer, Macmillan Cancer Support, Marie Curie Cancer Care, NI Hospice and Hospice at Home (see full details under Cancer services).

CANCER

Accessing Benefits

If you do develop cancer there are special rules for people with a terminal illness to help them get disability related benefits quickly. If a patient is told that their illness is terminal they need to ask their GP to complete a DS1500 form. On receipt of this form the benefit branch fast track the application to ensure the benefit is paid as quickly as possible. For more information contact your local benefits/social security office.

Skin cancer: Most skin cancers are linked to excessive exposure to sunlight. Beware that taking certain medicines can make your skin more sensitive to sunlight. Seek the advice of your GP if you notice any unusual skin lesions or change in size (larger than 6mm growing or shrinking), shape (ragged or irregular outline) or changing colour of freckles/blemishes/moles on your skin. Most skin cancers are curable if treated early.



Breast cancer can develop any time but is more common in women over 50. Women aged 50-64 are invited for screening – if you are over 65 however you can still make an appointment through your local screening centre or GP. In the Belfast area the screening centre is located at 12-22 Linenhall St, Belfast (Telephone: **028 9033 3700**). Screening is free of charge and picks up one third of breast cancers in Northern Ireland every year. You should check your breasts every month and visit your GP immediately if you notice any changes in your breasts that isn't normal for you.

Cervical cancer: Between the ages of 20-65 it is recommended that you have a cervical smear test at least once every five years. However regardless of age if you have any bleeding after having sex or after the change of life, or if you have any abnormal vaginal discharge you should discuss this with your doctor.

Prostate cancer: 9 out of 10 cases of prostate cancer occur in men over the age of 60. You should visit your doctor if you are experiencing any of the following: difficulty or pain in passing urine; frequent visits to the toilet, especially at night; starting and stopping while urinating; dribbling urine; a feeling of not having emptied the bladder fully.

Testicular cancer is the most common cancer found in men aged 15-45. You should check yourself monthly to look for lumps. It is unusual to develop cancer in both testicles at the same time so you can often compare one testicle with the other to see if it is abnormal. If you detect a lump contact your GP immediately.



Bowel cancer, also known as colorectal cancer is cancer of the large bowel (colon) and the rectum (back passage). If you notice any change in your normal bowel habits that lasts for more than six weeks you should visit your doctor. Other symptoms to look out for include: persistent bleeding from the rectum (back passage); the feeling of still having to go to the toilet even after having emptied the bowels; pain or discomfort in the stomach area (colicky pain, cramps or tenderness); unexplained weight loss; extreme tiredness or a lump in the abdomen.

Bowel cancer screening

All men and women aged 60 to 71 years are currently invited for bowel cancer screening every two years. They will also receive the life-saving Faecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT) kit which is sent to the address patients have registered with their GP. It is therefore important that your GP has your most up to date address and correct date of birth or you may miss the chance to be screened. Anyone who has received the test kit and has questions about how to use it please call the Freephone Helpline number **0800 015 2514**.

Cancer Focus NI has produced a number of leaflets that provide further information on the following cancers:

- Skin cancer; Breast cancer; Prostate cancer; Testicular cancer and Bowel (Colorectal) cancer

For more information telephone: **028 9066 3281**



Coping with Cancer: Services Available

Cancer Focus NI

Services provided include: cancer support groups; freephone cancer helpline; cancer information and support services; counselling services; patient befriending service; fitting service; patient advocacy group; art therapy; creative writing; reminiscence group; love your life course; family support services; community cancer education programmes; occupational cancer programmes; tobacco control activities and smoking cessation programmes.

To make use of any of these services contact Cancer Focus NI Freephone helpline on **0800 783 3339** or **028 9066 3281**

Cancer Focus NI Support Groups

Cancer Focus NI run a number of support groups throughout Northern Ireland for people suffering from the following cancers: breast, laryngeal, lymphoma, myeloma, and prostate.

For more information contact the Care Services Coordinator at the Cancer Focus NI on **028 9066 3281** or visit their website: www.ulstercancer.org

Action Cancer

Action Cancer is a Northern Ireland Cancer Charity offering early detection and support services to people who have or have been affected by cancer. Services offered include:



- Mobile Resource Centre (nicknamed the 'BIG BUS'). Services provided include: digital breast screening for women aged 40-49 and 65+; health promotion and health checks for men and women; as well as the Listening Ear Service, and complementary therapies. The bus is fully accessible for people with disabilities by means of a wheelchair lift
- Specific information for men
- Complementary therapy
- Health promotion factsheets
- Counselling - appointments can be made by phoning Action Cancer House on 028 9080 3344.
- Listening Ear Service (LES) – this service is designed to offer support and signposting to other local services to help with issues such as childcare, financial assistance and transport issues among many others.

For more information telephone: **028 9080 3344**

Macmillan Cancer Support have a number of support centres where people can talk through issues and concerns with their staff and trained volunteers. These centres have booklets, leaflets, videos and other sources of information about cancer. They can also give you advice on benefits and can help fill in forms. For people living in Belfast the main centre is based at Belfast City Hospital. This centre offers additional services such as self help and support groups, and complementary therapies.



To obtain the services of a Macmillan nurse, you must be referred by your GP, your hospital consultant, a district nurse or a hospital ward sister.

To speak to a specialist Macmillan cancer nurse or for information on cancer support groups in your local area call freephone **0808 808 0000** (9am to 8pm) or visit their website on www.macmillan.org.uk

Marie Curie Cancer Care provides specialist support to people with cancer and other illnesses at no cost to individuals or their families. The Marie Curie Nursing Service provides care during the day but more usually at night, spending eight or nine hours in the patient's home allowing carers to rest. If you feel you would like a Marie Curie Nurse you should contact your District Nurse, who will decide whether it is appropriate to request a Marie Curie Nurse.

For patient information and advice, you can phone one of Marie Curie's trained advisers on **0800 071 6146** (freephone) 7 days a week, 9am - 10.30pm.

For information online: www.mariecurie.org.uk/patientsandcarers

Marie Curie Hospices offer a range of services including day services, in-patient care and respite care. To access this service you need to go through your GP. In Belfast, the Marie Curie Hospice is located in Kensington Road (East Belfast).



For more information on the Marie Curie Hospice in Belfast call **028 9088 2000** and ask for a copy of the Belfast Hospice Brochure. Alternatively it can be downloaded from their website: **www.hospicebelfast.mariecurie.org.uk**

Northern Ireland Hospice Care is a local charity in Northern Ireland providing specialist palliative care for adults and children with life limiting and life threatening illnesses. Northern Ireland Hospice Care provides a full range of services both in the adult hospice and at home. These include: inpatient care; day hospice; care in the community (offering nursing services during the day or night depending on need); spiritual care; family support and bereavement care; advice and information and complementary therapies. There is no charge for Northern Ireland Hospice Care services.

Referrals are made via the patient's GP using a Northern Ireland Hospice Care referral form which is available on request by telephoning: 028 9078 1836

In Belfast there are two NI Hospice Community Teams covering North & West and South & East Belfast. To contact the N+W Belfast team telephone: **028 9078 1836**
To contact the S+E Belfast team telephone:
028 9079 6466

For information on care homes go to the Housing section (page 61)



CARERS

A carer is someone who provides help and support to a friend, neighbour or relative who could not manage otherwise, because of frailty, illness or disability.

Belfast Carers Centre is an independent organisation providing support to Carers. Services offered include: information and advice; help to access health and social care services; support groups and a range of social activities; someone to talk to; and advocacy work on behalf of carers.

They can also help with claiming benefits such as the **Carers Allowance** which is the main benefit for carers. It is intended to replace the income you might otherwise earn from a job if you were not caring. Entitlement to it does not depend on your record of paying National Insurance Contributions and you do not have to live with the person you care for.

For more information telephone Belfast Carers Centre on: **028 9073 0173**. Website: www.carerscentre.org

Carers Northern Ireland (NI) is part of Carers UK. It is a membership organisation run by carers, for carers across NI providing information on all matters relating to caring. They can help with: financial advice; help with caring; supporting you in your work and your rights; research, policy and practice and training.

For more information contact Carers NI on **028 9043 9843** or **0808 808 7777**. Website: www.carersni.org



The **Belfast Health and Social Care Trust** provides a range of supports for carers, including: information and advice; carers groups; training; complementary therapies; carer away days; and breaks from caring.

If you would like to receive more information on carer support or to be referred for a carer's needs assessment, please contact the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust carer's coordinator on Telephone **028 9056 4937** if you live in North and West Belfast and **028 9063 6819** if you live in South/East Belfast/Castlereagh.

CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY (AIRWAYS) DISEASE (COPD)

If you have COPD or any other lung condition and would like more information on managing symptoms you should talk to your GP or practice nurse in your GP surgery.

Further information booklets are available from the British Lung Foundation which are available to order by telephoning British Lung Foundation's helpline on **0141 248 0050** Or you can download information free from their website: northern.ireland@blf.org.uk

Rehabilitation Programmes for COPD

Pulmonary Rehabilitation programmes are currently run by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust in both hospital and community settings. If you are interested in this programme speak to your GP.



COPD Support Groups

Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke (NICHS) run a number of respiratory support groups in Belfast.

For more information on these support groups contact NICHS on **028 9032 0184**

COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES

Complementary therapies such as acupuncture, aromatherapy, homeopathy, osteopathy, chiropractic therapy etc, have become increasingly popular and more available in the last decade.

If you intend using a complementary therapist ensure they are properly trained. You may find that your GP has a complementary therapy qualification and/or offers some treatments through the surgery. If not, he or she may be able to give you a referral.

Herbal medicines are also becoming more widely known and used. Generally speaking many herbal remedies are reasonably safe to use, however **medical advice should always be sought before using herbal medicines** especially if you are also taking prescribed medicines due to the risk of interactions and side effects that can occur if both are taken together.



Useful Website addresses

Complementary Medical Association	www.the-cma.org.uk
Internet Health Library	www.internethealthlibrary.com
Institute for Complementary and Natural Medicine	www.icnm.org.uk
British Medical Acupuncture Society	www.medical-acupuncture.co.uk
HerbMed	www.herbmed.org/
Medicdirect (UK)	www.medicdirect.co.uk/
British Homeopathic Association Trust Homeopathy	www.trusthomeopathy.org/
General Osteopathic Council	www.osteopathy.org.uk/
British Complementary Medicine Association (BCMA)	www.bcma.co.uk/

CONTINENCE CARE

If you experience any problems with either your bladder or bowel you should discuss this with your GP who may refer you to the Continence Service who will offer advice, assessment and treatment for your problem. Alternately you can self refer to the Community Continence Service (part of Belfast Health and Social Care Trust) via either of the Call Management Centre numbers opposite:



South and East Belfast **028 9056 5565**

North and West Belfast **0845 606 6593**

The Continence Foundation (UK) is a charity which offers advice and support to those suffering from incontinence.

For more information telephone: **020 7700 7035.**

Website: www.continence-foundation.org.uk

The **Disabled Living Foundation** (UK) also has factsheets on “Clothing for continence and incontinence” and “toilet equipment and accessories” which can be downloaded free from their website:www.dlf.org.uk

DENTAL HEALTH

To prevent dental decay and gum disease you should take the following advice.

- Brush your teeth and gums twice a day with Fluoride toothpaste for at least two minutes
- Avoid consumption of sweetened snacks and drinks between meals and especially at bedtime
- When cleaning partial dentures pay particular attention to cleaning around the clips holding the dentures in place
- If you have full dentures remember to brush daily your gums, tongue and palate with a soft bristle brush. Use water, soap or a denture cleaner to clean dentures as toothpaste is abrasive and can damage them
- Your mouth is likely to need a rest from wearing dentures. Ideally they should be left out of your mouth (usually at night) for at least four to eight hours everyday



- To prevent warping always leave dentures immersed in cold water
- If your dentures feel loose or painful you should discuss this with your dentist.

You should see the dentist at least once a year for a check up, whether you have your own teeth or not. To keep on the dentist's register you need to attend the dentist every 15 months. If you are not registered with a dentist you will have difficulty getting emergency treatment.

Accessing a Dentist

If you are having difficulty finding a **National Health Service (NHS)** dentist in your area, the Eastern Health and Social Services Board (EHSSB) can provide you with this information. All dentists are required to produce, and make available, a Patient Information Leaflet (PIL) with details of services provided by their practice including the cost of services.

If you are on benefits you may be eligible to apply for help with the cost of dental treatment. You must complete an HC1 Form which can be obtained from your local Benefits Agency/Social Security offices or possibly from a dental surgery and return it to your local social security office.

For more information download the HC11: Help with Health Costs booklet from the Department of Health website: www.dhsspsni.gov.uk or you can obtain it from your local Benefits Agency/Social Security office who can also help with filling out HC forms.



Regardless of your circumstances, if you go to a **private dentist** you will have to pay for all treatment provided. Before any private treatment is started you should ensure that you fully understand what the cost is going to be. If you require a **dentist out of hours** the EHSSB provides a Relief of Dental Pain Service available to anyone who requires emergency dental care.

The Dental Pain Clinic operates at the Dental Out-patients Department on the Ground Floor of the Belfast City Hospital Tower Block (Monday – Friday 7-8.30pm and Saturday/Sunday 10-11.30am, 2.30-4pm and 7-8.30pm). For more information telephone Belfast City Hospital on **028 9026 3992**

Community Dental Services

Some people find it difficult accessing dental care from within the general dental services, for example people who are housebound or have special needs, or people in residential or nursing homes. For such people the Community Dental Service offers a specialised service targeted to address their specific needs. To avail of the Community Dental Service you can be referred through your GP, or other health care professional or you can self refer. Contact details for your local community dental clinic can be obtained from the Health and Social Care Board.

If you have difficulty accessing NHS dental services or need more information on the Community Dental Service contact the dental department within the Health and Social Care Board on on: **028 9055 3774**



DIABETES

Diabetes is a condition where blood glucose (sugar) levels are high. In type 1 diabetes the body does not produce any insulin. In type 2 diabetes the body does not produce enough insulin or the insulin does not work properly. Symptoms of diabetes include: extreme tiredness; blurred vision; frequently passing urine especially at night; excessive thirst; weight loss; genital itching; regular episodes of thrush; and slow healing of wounds. If you have any of the above symptoms discuss these with your doctor.

If you have diabetes it is important that you attend clinic appointments at your GP surgery or hospital to ensure your condition is managed and any complications detected early.

Diabetes UK is a charity which aims to support people living with the condition.

For more information contact Diabetes UK (Northern Ireland branch) on Telephone: **028 9066 6646**, or visit their website www.diabetes.org.uk

ELDER ABUSE

Elder abuse occurs when an older man or woman is harmed, mistreated or neglected – usually by someone they should be able to trust. Abuse can happen in a person's own home, in the community or in institutions and can take many forms; physical, sexual, financial, psychological or neglect.



If you are worried that you or someone you know is being abused or for further information contact **Belfast Health and Social Care Trust** on **028 9096 0099** or contact **Age NI Advice & Advocacy Services**, Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm on Freephone **0808 808 7575**

EXERCISE

Regular exercise is vital for good health. Walking is one of the easiest ways to exercise. Aim to walk briskly for 30 minutes on most days – this will give you most benefit. Brisk walking will: give you more energy; make you feel good; help you sleep better; help you cope with stress; tone your muscles; burn up calories; lower blood pressure and reduce cholesterol levels; protect your bones from osteoporosis (bone thinning); and improve your mobility.

For more information on leisure facilities and activities and day centres go to the Learning and Leisure section (Page 42)

EYE CARE AND VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

As you grow older you may notice changes in your sight. If you currently wear glasses or you feel your sight is deteriorating, it is important to get your eyes tested regularly (at least every two years). Everyone over the age of 60 is entitled to a free eye test. Regular eye tests with your optometrist/ optician can catch any problems at an early stage.



RNIB (Royal National Institute of the Blind) in Northern Ireland provides people recently diagnosed with loss of sight with support to help them adapt to difficult circumstances, retain confidence and quickly regain their independence. They have a number of Eye Clinic Liaison Officers – one based at the Royal Group of Hospitals.

For more information contact their Helpline on **028 9032 9373** or visit their website: www.rnib.org.uk

The **Guide Dogs for the Blind Association** which is a UK charity, have a branch in Belfast. Services offered include: provision of guide dogs and appropriate training; information on sight loss and other services; rehabilitation services; and support from a rehabilitation officer at the Low Vision Clinic at the Royal Group of Hospitals.

For more information contact telephone: **028 9047 1453**

Belfast Central Library offers specific services to people who are blind or partially sighted. Services offered include: talking newspaper service; magazines in Braille; talking books; and full access to the music department.

For more information call Belfast Central Library on **028 9050 9150**

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust has teams of people working specifically to help people who are blind or have diminished vision. These teams are known as “Sensory



Support Teams”. They provide a range of services including: providing information about your sight loss; making the best use of the sight you have; help you manage safely in your own home and outdoors; arranging for appropriate aids and providing information about other services which can help. You can self referral or be referred to the sensory support team through your GP, hospital consultant, health visitor, social worker or voluntary agency.

To contact the sensory support team for more information
Telephone **028 9056 6000**

FOOT CARE

If you cannot manage to care for your feet you should visit a registered podiatrist or chiropodist, particularly people on steroids, people who heal slowly or have problems with ulcers, or people with diabetes. You can access the Podiatry/ Chiropody service run by Belfast Health and Social Care Trust by ringing one of the following clinics:

North Belfast

- Carisle Centre, telephone 0845 300 6650
- Grove Wellbeing Clinic, telephone 028 9063 6800

East Belfast

- Arches Centre, telephone 028 9056 3200

South Belfast

- Bradbury Centre, telephone 028 9091 2100

West Belfast

- Beech Hall Centre, telephone 028 9504 0043
- Shankill Centre, telephone 028 9004 0043

Castlereagh

- Knockbreda Clinic, telephone 028 9063 1200



Priority will be given to people who have diabetes or circulation problems.

FIRST AID AWARENESS

St Johns Ambulance is the leading first aid training provider in Northern Ireland. Services they offer include:

- First aid at major public events
- A range of courses for the general public; the workplace; health and safety courses and moving and handling courses
- Availability of first aid manuals and kits to buy
- Advice on: life saving procedures; heart attack and shock; wounds and bleeding; burns and scalds; first aid for asthma, fractures, sunburn, poisons, and hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar)

For more information contact the NI branch of St Johns Ambulance on **0780 243 5648** or visit their website: www.sja.org.uk where you can download first aid advice

The **Red Cross** in Northern Ireland provide first aid training for the public and groups. Their courses vary in length from 2 to 28 hours. They can also provide first aid at major events.

To book a course or first aid help at an event ring Red Cross on **028 9073 5350**

HEALTHY EATING/FOOD SAFETY

A healthy and varied diet can help to maintain a healthy body weight, enhance general wellbeing and reduce the risk



of a number of diseases including heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes and osteoporosis.

Specific Dietary Advice for over 50's:

- Eat no more than 6g (teaspoon) of salt a day
- Eat plenty of fibre
- Cut down on fat and go for unsaturated fat instead of saturated
- Eat oily fish e. g. salmon, mackerel, trout and sardines
- Eat plenty of iron rich foods e. g. red meat, pulses (such as peas, beans and lentils), oily fish, bread, green vegetables and fortified breakfast cereals
- Eat calcium rich foods e. g. milk; cheese; yoghurt; green leafy vegetables; bread and fortified breakfast cereals; sardines; nuts, and soya beans
- Eat food rich in vitamin D e. g. oily fish, eggs, and foods with added vitamins. We get most of our vitamin D from the effects of the sun on our skin
- Don't have too much vitamin A (more than 1. 5mg/day from food and/or supplements) as it might increase the risk of bone fractures. Liver is high in vitamin A so avoid or only eat once a week
- Eat dark green vegetables e. g. broccoli, spinach and brussels sprouts.

The **Food Standards Agency** has a leaflet called "The Good Life" which gives nutritional advice for men and women over the age of 50. The leaflet can be downloaded from the following website: www.food.gov.uk/about-us/publications/#branch8



EMERGENCY FOOD STORE CUPBOARD

A good idea especially during bad weather or in case of illness, is to have an emergency food store cupboard. Things to include in it are:

- Tinned meat and/or fish
- Tinned/packet soup
- Instant potatoes
- Pulses e. g. baked beans, dried peas or lentils
- Dried or tinned vegetables
- Breakfast cereals, porridge oats, pasta or rice
- Biscuits or crackers
- Dried milk or UHT long life milk
- Tinned milk puddings e. g. custard or rice pudding
- Tinned fruit in natural juice
- Cartons of fruit juice (with added vitamin C)
- Drinking chocolate or malt drinks.

FOOD SAFETY

The Food and Drink Federation have produced a leaflet on food safety which can be downloaded from their website (www.foodlink.org.uk). They suggest there are four key things you need to consider – cleanliness, cooking, chilling and cross-contamination.

- Cleanliness – ensuring hands and surfaces are clean and washed between handling raw food and after visiting the toilet
- Cooking – ensure food is thoroughly cooked, avoiding reheating food more than once, don't leave food such as meat and chicken at room temperature for more than two hours



- Chilling – never re-freeze food once it has started to thaw, and only thaw food in the microwave if cooking it immediately
- Cross contamination – keep raw meat and food away from cooked foods, never wash chicken before cooking and avoid touching your nose, teeth, ears and hair when handling food.

Always check date codes on food and don't buy or eat out of date food. 'Use by' dates are seen on food that goes off quickly. If you freeze it on the day of purchase this will extend its life beyond the 'use by' date, otherwise do not eat it after the 'use by' date. 'Best before' dates tell you more about quality than safety, so when the date runs out it might begin to lose its flavour and texture. You should never eat eggs after the 'best before' date.

For further information or advice on food safety contact Belfast City Council's Environmental Health Department on **028 9032 0202**

HEARING IMPAIRMENT AND DEAFNESS

Coping with diminished hearing or total loss of hearing can be a challenge. In Belfast the two main sources of help are the Action of Hearing Loss and Belfast Health and Social Care Trust who have dedicated teams to work with people who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Action on Hearing Loss provides a range of services for people who are deaf or hard of hearing and provide



information and support on all aspects of deafness, hearing loss and tinnitus.

For more information contact Action on Hearing Loss:

Telephone: **028 9023 9619**

Text phone: **028 9024 9462**

Fax: 028 9031 2033

Basic hearing test: **0845 600 5555**

Website: www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust's Sensory Support

Team specifically work to help people who are deaf and hard of hearing as well as people with problems with their sight. They provide a range of services including: home visits; support and counselling for individuals and families; listening aids and an interpreting service.

You can self refer or be referred to the sensory support team through your GP, hospital consultant, health visitor, social worker or voluntary agency.

To contact the sensory support team for more information

Telephone **028 9091 2190**

A number of the large opticians (e.g. Specsavers and Boots) also offer a free hearing test carried out by professional Hearing Aid Audiologists, as well as free fitting of a range of digital hearing aids. Ask at your local opticians to see if they offer this service.



HEART DISEASE

Two of the main contributing factors that can lead to a heart attack or a stroke are high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

Blood Pressure: if you are aged 30 and over you should have your blood pressure measured every 2 years. If you have a family history of high blood pressure you should have your blood pressure measured once a year.

Cholesterol: your total cholesterol should be less than 5. Ommol/l. A healthy lifestyle will help to reduce cholesterol. This will include a low-fat diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables, weight reduction if necessary, and regular exercise. Many people with high cholesterol will also require medication to reduce cholesterol.

Support Groups

A number of hospitals in the Belfast area run cardiac support groups which are patient led and meet regularly.

For more information on these support groups contact Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke on

028 9032 0184

HOSPITAL AND AFTER CARE: PATIENT RIGHTS

All patients have the right to be treated politely with respect for privacy and dignity. This applies to care given in hospital or in the community. When you need to go into hospital for treatment:



- Your consultant will put your name on a waiting list
- Your GP can give you information on waiting times for each hospital and consultant
- When you receive your admission date you should also receive a copy of the hospital information booklet
- You should be introduced to the nurse who is responsible for organising your care while you are in hospital
- If your operation is cancelled you should receive another appointment within a month and your operation should not be cancelled on the day your surgery is re-arranged for
- You have the right to read your medical notes written after 29 May 1994
- If you are not satisfied with the care you have received you can: discuss the problem with your consultant, your named nurse or the person in charge or contact the complaints officer.

Advice on your rights

The Patient Client Council is an independent body who seeks to represent the views of the public in all areas of health and social services. They provide information about health and social services including information on patient rights, as well as assistance in making a complaint.

Comments and Complaints

The Patient Client Council does not investigate complaints but will give you accurate and impartial advice on the options open to you including how to make a complaint, who to complain to, and help with making a complaint.



If you would like more information on your rights as a patient or how to make a comment or complaint contact the Patient Client Council on their freephone number **0800 917 0222** or visit their website: www.patientclientcouncil.hscni.net

For information on managing medication go to the Safety in the Home section (page 85)

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

The MS Society is the leading charity providing support and information to people affected by Multiple Sclerosis in Northern Ireland.

For more information telephone **028 9080 2802** or visit their website: www.mssociety.org.uk/near-me/national-offices

OSTEOPOROSIS

Osteoporosis occurs when the inner part of bones becomes thin making them more fragile and prone to fracture. The food we eat plays a part in helping reduce the risk of osteoporosis. Calcium as well as other vitamins are important to strengthen bones. Foods rich in these include, milk and dairy products as well as plenty of fruit and vegetables (baked beans and spinach in particular are high in calcium), bread and cereals and meat and fish, will help provide the nutrients to strengthen bones. Weight bearing exercise is also beneficial to strengthening your bones. Exercise classes or simply climbing stairs can help.

The National Osteoporosis Society (NOS) run a helpline service that can provide you with information on drug



treatments; managing pain; diagnosis; and general information on osteoporosis.

For information, advice or to obtain a copy of their free information leaflets contact NOS Helpline: **0845 450 0230** or visit their website: www.nos.org.uk

PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Parkinson's UK is the leading UK charity supporting all people affected by Parkinson's.

For more information telephone: **028 9092 3370** or contact the UK helpline on Freephone **0808 800 0303**

POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH

Having good mental health means feeling positive about yourself, being able to cope with everyday pressures and being able to form and maintain relationships. If you feel you cannot cope or are depressed, your GP is the best person to talk to in the first instance. They will have information about local services which may be able to help. The practice nurse or social worker will also be able to signpost you to help available. The following organisations may also be useful.

Organisation	Support offered	Contact details
CAUSE	Provides practical and emotional support to relatives and carers of people with serious mental illness	Telephone: 028 9056 5450 Helpline: 0845 6030291 (open 9am - 9pm) Website: www.cause.org.uk



CRUSE Bereavement Care	Supports people recently bereaved to understand their grief and cope with their loss	Telephone: 028 9023 2695 www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk
Aware Defeat Depression	Provides support and information for all those affected by depressive illnesses across Northern Ireland	Telephone: 028 9032 1734 Helpline: 0845 1202961 (10am - 4pm) www.aware-ni.org
Relate	Provides a confidential relationship counselling service for those who have relationship or marital problems	Telephone: 028 9032 3454 www.relateni.org/
Samaritans	Provides support for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those which could lead to suicide	Telephone: 028 9066 4422 Helpline: 08457 909090 www.samaritans.org



Praxis Care	Provider of services for adults and children with a learning disability, mental ill health, acquired brain injury and for older people, including people with dementia	Telephone: 028 9023 4555 www. praxisprovides.com
No Panic	National (UK based) self-help organisation for phobias, anxiety and panic	Help-line: 0800 138 8889 Office: 01952 590005
Men to Men	Provides counselling on issues relating to: stress; alcohol problems; domestic violence; abuse; anger management; relationship difficulties	Telephone: 028 9024 7027 www.mentomen.org

The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust provides a range of community mental health services which are targeted at those with severe mental illness and their carers, while



supporting GP's in their management of minor/moderate conditions. Normally referrals are made through the GP or psychiatrist to the mental health teams working in the Belfast area.

SEXUAL HEALTH

As people grow older, they are more likely to experience disabling conditions and illnesses that may affect how they respond sexually. Talk to your GP if you find that illness is preventing you from enjoying sex with your partner. They may be able to help and offer solutions or put you in touch with a therapist. There are a number of other voluntary organisations that can offer support/ counselling relating to sexual health and relationship problems. These include:

Name	Brief role	Contact details
Relate NI	Services include: confidential relationship and family counselling services and sex therapists	Telephone: 028 9032 3454 Website: www.relateni.org
College of Sexual and Relationship Therapists (CORST)	Their website contains a list of psychosexual therapists accredited and working throughout the UK including Northern Ireland	Telephone: 020 8549 2707 Website: www.cosrt.org.uk



Sexual Dysfunction
Association

Helps sufferers of
male and female
sexual problems

Telephone:
020 7486 7262
Website:
www.sda.uk.net/

Sexual Health Services offered by **Belfast Health and Social Care Trust** include a GUM (Genito Urinary Medicine) Clinic which provides help in dealing with all sexual health problems. Walk in service is no longer available. Telephone **028 9063 4050** to arrange an appointment or speak to your GP who can refer you.

The Genito Urinary Medicine Clinic is located at Level 3 Outpatients Department, Royal Group Hospitals. Telephone: **028 9063 4050**

SMOKING

Smoking dramatically increases your risk of heart disease, lung cancer, strokes and many other health problems. One in two smokers will die because of their smoking. It's never too late to stop smoking.

For support to stop smoking telephone the NI Smokers Helpline on **0808 812 8008**. The Ulster Cancer Foundation also provides information and advice, telephone: **028 9066 3281**

Belfast is a smoke free city meaning that it is against the law to smoke in most enclosed workplaces and public places.



For more information contact the Environmental Health Department within Belfast City Council on **028 9032 0202**

STROKE

Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke aims to improve the quality of life of the people of Northern Ireland by preventing and alleviating chest, heart and stroke illnesses.

For more information, or to receive a copy of any of their leaflets, telephone **028 9032 0184**. Leaflets can also be downloaded free from their website: www.nichs.org.uk

TEST RESULTS

If you get blood tests taken at your **GP practice** you will normally be asked to ring the surgery for the results. The length of time taken for results to come back will vary depending on the blood test – routine tests will generally only take a few days, however some blood tests needing to be analysed at a specialist hospital may take several weeks. The nurse should inform you of this when taking your blood. It is helpful if you ask the nurse for a list of the names of the blood tests that the GP has requested, to help you when you ring up looking the results.

If your GP has referred you to **hospital** for tests, once these have been carried out you will probably not get the results of these straight away. The hospital will send the results of tests back to your GP – this can take anything from a few days to two weeks. To obtain the results of these tests you will need to make an appointment with your GP



- it may be best however firstly to ask the receptionist to check if your test results have come back before making the GP appointment to save a wasted journey. If your GP has referred you to a specialist/consultant within the hospital and further tests are carried out on their request, the consultant will generally bring you back to the out-patients clinic to discuss the test results. The GP will also be informed of the results.

For information on help with travelling to the hospital or health and well being centres go to the Transport section. (page 135)