

PPG MATTERS

" How to Look After Your Lungs in Winter"

Report of the PPG event held on Thursday 16 November in the Group Room at VMC

A panel of speakers gave advice about the actions we need to take to avoid becoming acutely ill with seasonal bacterial or viral infections.

The panel:

BELINDA UDUOBORIE VMC Advanced Nurse Practitioner

JOHN BOLDERSON VMC Clinical Pharmacist

SUKHVIR BASRA. Pharmacist. Owner of Clinichem Pharmacy, Committee member of the Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster Local Pharmaceutical Committee. Sukhi is also a board member of the National Pharmacy Association.

KAPIL TYAGI From the charity Open Age, which champions an active life for the over-50s. Kapil is a senior clinical exercise specialist responsible for all Open Age clinical health sessions.

TESSA JELEN VMC PPG Committee Member and Chair of Asthma and Lung UK Breathe Easy Support Group for people with respiratory conditions.

Also present were AZIZ PANDOR, VMC Practice Manager and Partner, and HANNAH MUNNS Open Age Senior Centre co-ordinator, South Westminster.

Sukhi and Belinda kicked off the event by advising patients to review and revise their life-style to give themselves the best chance of living a longer, healthier life. Giving up smoking is obviously important, but so is a balanced diet, avoiding processed foods, salt and sugar. Too much salt and sugar will inevitably lead to higher blood pressure, weight gain, diabetes, and an increased risk of heart attack and stroke. If you sit down to a colourful plate including plenty of vegetables then you are on the right track.

Get your vaccinations: Covid, Flu, Streptococcal Pneumonia and Shingles. Vaccinations are life-saving.

Sukhi reminded the meeting that pharmacists are fully qualified to prescribe medicines. Rather than waiting for an appointment to see a GP you can be sure to get sensible, reliable advice if you simply describe your symptoms to your pharmacist. Instead of wasting money on expensive supplements you should focus on two inexpensive ways of protecting your immune system in winter:

1. Multi-vitamins. Some vitamins, particularly Vitamin D, are scientifically known to be beneficial. Taking one or two Vitamin D tablets a day makes up for the lack of natural daylight in winter but taking at least some outside activity every day will also help.

2. Water. Hydration is very important. Our bodies are 70% water and react against lack of water by protective measures such as a cough. In reply to a question on whether it is really necessary to drink 2 litres a day, the advice was to keep a glass of water handy. A small drink of water every hour is more effective than 2 or 3 long drinks a day, and you will soon find that 2 litres is easily achievable.

3 Antibiotics. There are two main kinds of infections, VIRAL and BACTERIAL. Antibiotics have no effect on viral infections. Consult your pharmacist before self-diagnosing and demanding antibiotics.

John Bolderson encouraged patients to consult their pharmacist if they are in doubt about how or when to take their medicine and why it has been prescribed. If it involves, for instance, an inhaler the pharmacist will be able to explain exactly how it should be used.

Kapil Tyagi is responsible for the Steady and Stable falls prevention, Osteopathy and Healthy Lungs sessions organised by Open Age in South Westminster. His aim is to improve older people's well-being through exercise so that they feel healthier in their daily lives. Open Age already has a Steady and Stable session at VMC on Monday mornings. They are now proposing an additional session on Healthy Lungs to continue the gains made by the local Pulmonary Rehab team. The sessions will be free but patients will need to get a referral from their GP. More information will be circulated shortly.

Hannah Munns encouraged the audience to enrol into Open Age to see all the various activities they could enjoy in and around South Westminster. For anyone unable to access the internet or take part in online activities, Open Age offers free laptops and instructions in order to participate in a particular event, and if proved beneficial the possibility of keeping the laptop for free in the long term.

During the open discussion at the end of the evening Tessa Jelen and John Bolderson answered questions relating to the issue of indoor pollution that can be aggravated by the use of incense and candles, and problems relating to acute asthma inhalers, rhinitis, bronchioecstasis and lack of diagnostic follow-ups.

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