

SPECIAL EDITION

CREATING A CLEARER VIEW OF YOUR BODY AND MIND

# focussed

on Health & Wellbeing



In conjunction with the

**NHS**

This special edition of **'Focussed on Health and Wellbeing'** is a collection of past articles, that have featured in **'Focussed on Corby'** magazine over the past 5+ years, that makes a great guide to your body and mind.

A special thanks to **Dr Jo Watt** and her team for keeping the community up-to-date with valuable health & wellbeing information through the years.



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I have been a GP in Corby for the last 11 years working at Great Oakley Medical Centre, and have wanted to be a GP since I started training to be a doctor twenty five years ago. As a GP it is important to be able to work as part of a team as we look after our population, together with their families and carers. We all aim to care for our patients' physical and mental health and also try to promote their sense of wellbeing. Modern GPs work closely with other practice staff such as nurses and nurse practitioners, and community and mental health practitioners in order to try to offer the best possible care for our patients. We are also putting our patients in touch with the voluntary sector and with our social care colleagues, as well as working with our borough council to encourage our population to make changes in their lifestyle such as stopping smoking and doing more exercise.

I have been the Clinical Chair of Corby Clinical Commissioning Group (Corby CCG) for the last 18 months. Corby CCG oversees most of the money spent on NHS health services for the people who live in and around Corby. This includes the cost of hospital outpatient appointments, hospital inpatient stays and operations, prescribed medicines, investigations, GP practice appointments and care, GP out of hours services, Corby Urgent Care Centre, community and mental health services, and many other services. It is really important that all local residents register with a local GP, so please register if you have not already done so. Please do not wait until you are ill, since you will miss out on important prevention services and health checks which can detect diseases such as diabetes and cancer at an early stage. This includes everyone who is planning to live in the area for more than a few months, particularly if you may require regular prescriptions for medication or other items.

We are in the fortunate position of having 5 GP practices in Corby, which have all been given a 'good' rating by the inspectors at CQC. The surgeries are Great Oakley Medical Centre, Lakeside Healthcare, Studfall Medical Centre, Studfall Partnership and Woodsend Medical Centre.

If you need to register with a local GP surgery please contact your preferred surgery. Please visit our website if you want to know more about local healthcare at

[www.corbyccg.nhs.uk](http://www.corbyccg.nhs.uk)

Dr Joanne Watt  
Great Oakley Medical Centre  
Clinical Chair Corby CCG



**Corby Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)** has been engaging with the people of Corby to find out how aware they are of the challenges facing the NHS locally. We have a limited amount of money to spend and want to make sure we get the best deal for the people of Corby.

We also asked people for their views on primary care. Primary care is where most people go to first for healthcare, usually your GP surgery. As a CCG we wanted to strengthen our connections with local support groups, faith groups, charities, the voluntary sector and the organisations we work with to help keep people healthy and happy – such as the local councils and other NHS organisations.

To do this we started to build a contact list of the groups and organisations in Corby that are involved in health and wellbeing or represent different areas of this community. So far we have over 250 contacts on this list and we are still adding to it.

Then, in February and March this year we ran a public survey. This was available online and at GP surgeries where the Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) at each of the surgeries asked people to complete the survey. With this valuable support from the PPGs, we received nearly 700 responses. If you were one of the people that took the time to complete the survey, thank you.

We also ran three workshops and invited people from our contact list to attend.

### So what did we find out?

Many of you (but not all) have concerns about difficulties in getting access to primary care. Most people who responded accepted there needs to be changes to services – however a significant number of people are undecided on this.

Service quality and accessibility were considered the most important criteria that we as a CCG should consider when looking at change.

We were interested to find out that many of you still do not feel that mental health is given enough priority. And you also told us that you want better access to primary care and a wider range of health and wellbeing services to be located in the same place.

More recently the results of the national GP survey have been published, and you can look up how patient from your surgery have responded at <https://gp-patient.co.uk/> We will be working with our 5 GP surgeries to understand these results and try to further improve patient care.

As a CCG we will be continuing to listen to the people of Corby to get your views on health services locally. We will be using your feedback and experiences to help us make decisions about these services. We need to make sure that we look after all the needs of the people of Corby and their carers. This includes physical and mental healthcare, routine and urgent care, maternity services and paediatrics, cancer diagnosis and treatment, preventing future disease and coordinating long term conditions and medication. If you want to know more, our annual report for the year 2016/17 is available on the Corby CCG website. You can also download more about our engagement results so far at [www.corbyccg.nhs.uk/current-consultations](http://www.corbyccg.nhs.uk/current-consultations).

**Dr Joanne Watt**  
Great Oakley Medical Centre  
Clinical Chair Corby CCG





# 10 GP Top Tips

**1.** Please take the time to look after your body and mind by making sure that you get enough sleep, eat a balanced and varied diet, and take the time to exercise now that we have more options available to us. Exercise on Referral is back and will be able to help you with weight and mood as well as building confidence, and your GP surgery will be able to arrange this for you if needed. Think about how much alcohol you are drinking and get it back to below 14 units a week if you have been drinking more. Consider stopping smoking or switching to e-cigarettes and the smoking cessation services will be able to help you with this.

**2.** Please remember that Community Pharmacies can provide you with useful information and medication without a prescription. Simple painkillers and hay-fever treatments are among the wide range of products that are available.

**3.** Please remember to order your regular medications from your GP surgery in plenty of time and ideally at least 3 working days before you run out. If you are going on holiday please request them early, and order extra if necessary and do not leave it to the last minute.

**4.** Monday is usually the busiest day of the week in most GP surgeries, if you do not need to contact them on a Monday consider making contact on another day of the week when you may find it easier to get through.

**5.** GP surgeries are now doing reviews of long-term health conditions and other check-ups, some of these were postponed due to the peaks in Covid infection and are important to catch up on. If your GP surgery contacts you to have a routine check please make sure you know what you need to do before the check such as blood tests, bringing a urine sample or keeping a diary. Please attend immunisation appointments when you are invited. If you have not had a dental check or an optician check-up recently this is a good time to make an appointment.

**6.** When you contact your GP surgery please give information to the receptionist so that they can help to make sure you get the right help, the GPs have asked them to do this and they can be trusted keep your information confidential. Please be kind and polite to the receptionist who will help to get you to the right care more quickly.

**7.** Many GP practices now have First Contact Physiotherapists who you can talk to directly if you have a new problem with your muscles, joints or back. There are Practice Pharmacists who you can help you with medication concerns and queries and can review your medication with you. There are also Social Prescribing Link Workers who can help to connect you with things going on in our area and increase your social contact. Your GP receptionist will be able to book you an appointment to speak to them if this is appropriate for you.

**8.** When you are talking to a health professional please mention the most important problem first otherwise you

may run out of time to talk about the thing that really matters to you. Taking the time to talk about an important problem is usually more important than an examination when trying to decide what needs to be done next. If you have a list of items please let them know since you may need to find another time to be able to discuss other issues.

**9.** When a health professional orders a test the results go back to the team that requested them, this means that you should contact the hospital team directly via the departmental secretary if you are waiting for a result from a test they requested or awaiting a follow up appointment. If you do not get the result you need it is worth remembering that all hospital and community trusts in England have a Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) that you can contact directly via switchboard to get the information you need about their services.

**10.** There are a number of services you can use for Self-referral without speaking to a health professional first. These include NHS 111 (by phone and online at 111.nhs.uk) and The Mental Health Hub (0800 448 0828) and you can look at the MIDOS site ([portal.midosweb.co.uk](http://portal.midosweb.co.uk)) to find out about more services.

Your Covid vaccination proof is now available on the NHS App or by calling 119. There will also be more information about local services on your GP practice website.

Dr  
**Joanne Watt**

GP Chair Northamptonshire CCG  
& Great Oakley Medical Centre



Northamptonshire General Practices currently offer about 17,000 appointments each day and there will be times that the demand for appointments may sometimes be more than the capacity available, we know this can be frustrating. Most health professionals would like to spend more time with each patient, and need to balance this with how many appointments they can offer to their patients each day. Northamptonshire GPs and General Practice teams have been working hard for their patients throughout the Covid pandemic offering vaccinations, screening, long term conditions checks, providing medication prescriptions and supporting patients who have needed to shield as well as those who reside in care homes. During the pandemic we know that many people have struggled with mental health problems as well as Covid and Long-Covid, and practices have also supported the people who are on waiting lists for appointments or procedures.

Telephone, video and online appointments became the first point of contact with health care professionals in all practices in the UK in July 2020; this instruction from the government was put in place to help to keep vulnerable patients safe and to reduce the risk of Covid infection happening in GP waiting rooms. Many practices adapted their premises with screens and one way systems to further improve safety, as well as their staff wearing PPE for face to face appointments. GP practices are also required to offer online consultations as well as face to face appointments when they are needed. If your initial appointment is remote using phone or video, a face to face appointment can be arranged by the clinician if needed. You still need to wear a face covering when entering any healthcare settings to protect other patients as well to protect the staff caring for you, Covid has not yet gone away and some of the people attending the surgery may be vulnerable. Consider doing a lateral flow test before going into a GP surgery building to reduce the risk of Covid even more.

You may be offered a consultation with a range of professionals when you contact your GP practice. The GP partners have asked the reception team to ask a range of questions to work out who the best team-member is to help you, and to help

## Top Tips and information to support you to get the most out of your consultation



GP Chair Northamptonshire CCG  
& Great Oakley Medical Centre

to prioritise your need. Your GP has been there throughout the pandemic to support all of the team members as well as to see or speak to those patients who need them.

GP surgeries have a range of professionals working as part of the team in addition to the GPs, Advanced Nurse Practitioners, Nurses and Health Care Assistants that have worked at practices for many years, not all surgeries will have all of these team members. Sometimes the person you need to help you may not be based in your practice. There may be other team members that the receptionist can direct to you to such as Coaches, Care Coordinators and trainee health professionals once they know what problem is.

### Practice Pharmacists

They help you with queries about medications and possible side effects and to review your medication, some pharmacists will offer a minor illness service.

### Physiotherapists

They help you if you have problems with your bones, joints or muscles and can both diagnose and treat many problems. They will be able to talk to other team members about investigations or referrals if they think these are needed.

### Social prescribing link workers

(also called social prescribers or link workers)

They will help to connect you to different groups and activities that are available near to where you live.

### Physician associates

They will be able to look after minor illnesses and some simple conditions.

### Here are some more tips to support and empower you to get the most out of appointments:

**1.** Please be aware that appointments may be offered by telephone, video, or online. If your consultation is remote try to find somewhere quiet and private with not too many distractions and use headphones if possible. Make sure you keep your phone with you, and notify the health professional if you will not be available at a particular time. Make sure your phone is fully charged and plug in your device if needed, and check that your wi-fi is working if that is required and consider using hand free. Ask someone if you need help to set up the technology

**2.** Consider keeping any hospital or GP letters with you, have a pen and paper with you to write notes if you are worried that you will forget important facts. Take the time to write down what you want to get from the consultation, the symptoms and how serious you think they are, the questions you want answered, and the concerns on your mind. At the end of the call repeat what has been agreed if the clinician does not. Let the clinician know if you feel they have not answered your questions.

**3.** Find out how long the appointment is and consider discussing the most important thing that you are worried about first if you have more than one problem, so that you do not run out of time to discuss it. You will usually be asked how long a problem has been present so you may wish to think about the answer to this question in advance.

**4.** Consider asking someone to be with you for support, they can join you remotely if you have a video call if they cannot be with you in person at the time of the consultation. Please notify the reception team if you need an interpreter. Sometimes interpretation will be via a telephone translation service.

**Thank you for being polite and kind to our receptionists and the whole General Practice team, they having been working hard throughout Covid and are trying to do their best to help you. Thank you to our patients and our public for supporting your local GP surgeries.**





# Be Please Kind

This is a difficult time when Covid has affected everyone in our community in some way. You may know someone who has been infected, or has been affected by the pandemic restrictions and lockdowns we have all experienced over recent months. When you wear a face covering or keep your distance from people, you are being kind to your community and protecting them from the Covid infection, that you may not realise you have. Please do self-isolate when you are advised to do so, and that will reduce the risk of other people catching Covid.

Avoiding close contacts with large numbers of people and washing your hands to protect other people is an important way to be kind to other people and will keep them safe. It can be difficult to know how challenging other people are finding it to live their lives during the Covid Pandemic, if you can find a way to make other people happy you may make this difficult time just a little easier. This may be something as simple as saying a kind comment to someone in a shop, or thanking someone who has helped you. There may be people for whom a text message, phone call or a video call may be the sort of kindness that they need from you at this time.

Health and care services are still available for those who need them and have been working throughout the pandemic, although they may look a little different to you. Many of your contacts with these important services will be remote via telephone or digital methods especially to start with.

GP surgeries have been caring for patients in this way throughout the pandemic and have been able to see those patients face to face who needed to be examined. This remote working is in place to keep you and the staff as safe from Covid as possible while providing you with the care you need. Some services are under more pressure than they were a year ago and staff will do their best to help you, although you may find that there are delays and appointments may be rearranged. This change to services may be frustrating, and the health or care staff are trying to do their best to be kind to you in difficult and uncomfortable circumstances.

Some of the health and care workers will have their own health conditions and may be working remotely to protect their own health. They may also have vulnerable family members who they need to protect and have often worked like this for many months while putting their own lives at risk when they see the people they care for. Please be kind to the health and care staff that you speak to including reception and administrative staff and it will be really appreciated. If you continue to be kind to frontline workers they will do their best to help you despite the difficult and frustrating situation we all find ourselves in at the moment.

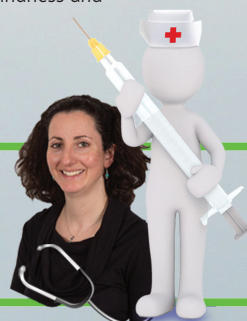
For many of us 2020 has not been the year that we were expecting. Most of us have been separated from family and friends, and we may have loved-ones who have died from Covid or other conditions and may be struggling to grieve.

Please take some time to be kind to yourself and forgive yourself for not being perfect. While it is natural to focus on the things we cannot do at the moment and the aspects of our lives that we are missing, it is also helpful to focus on the things we have and the positive aspects of our lives however small they may be.

This is a good time to look at eating well, trying to exercise and getting some fresh air. You may wish to take the time to make meaningful connections with other people even if it is at a distance. You may just want to take the time to read a book or chat to a friend or family member. Your GP surgery will have employed social prescribing link workers who can give you more information about groups and support in your area, and you can ask to speak to them by contacting your registered GP surgery. You may need some support to help you to do this and if you are struggling with your mental health you may wish to call the **mental health hub on 0800 4480828**. This has been a difficult year and we need to remain hopeful for the future, we can support each other and get through this by considering others and treating them and ourselves with kindness and understanding.

Dr  
**Joanne  
Watt**

Great Oakley Medical Centre  
Clinical Chair Corby CCG



# Mental Health & Wellbeing

in Northamptonshire in the time of Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant effect on the mental health of our nation, and some people will be at greater risk of worsening mental health. This includes those with previous mental health problems, physical disability, people who have been advised to shield over recent months, and those from Black and Minority and Ethnic groups where the disease has been more common and many people have been more severely affected by Covid-19. We recognise that there have been particular challenges for many people around home education of their children, many young people feel disconnected from their peers and are uncertain about their future options, and some people have struggled with bereavement at this difficult time.

There are lots of things you can do to look after your mental health that will help you and your family and friends to get through this and prevent some of the more serious mental health problems. Try to focus on aspects of your life that you can control such as improving your diet, increasing the amount of exercise that you do and taking notice of the good things that are around you. Be aware of your surroundings and pleasant physical sensations such as eating good food, notice what you are doing during the day and what you can hear around you. Find something that will give you focus such as a hobby or project that will give you satisfaction. It is ok to acknowledge that you are going through a hard time or feeling anxious and think about what you can do to change that. Try to think about how you can be kind and caring to yourself or others, and how you can support your loved ones and the wider community. Can you find a way to make life better for someone else while observing social distancing, maybe via a phone call or making some food for someone? It is important to work on supportive relationships with those around you even if you cannot be physically near. For those people who have continued to work through the last few months as key workers or other roles, it is important to remember to take your annual leave and get support from your employers to help you to stay well or support you if you are feeling the strain.

If you feel that your mental health is deteriorating, recognise that this is your opportunity to do something about it.

Many people are staying away from asking for help until they reach a crisis, and if you act early you can prevent more serious mental health consequences. Some people will have turned to alcohol, illegal substances or smoking and it is important to recognise that if this applies to you that this may not be helping. This is your opportunity to show your body some kindness and make some changes to stop smoking and reduce your alcohol intake.

Mental health problems are not a sign of weakness, if you are starting to struggle please seek help and don't try to pretend things are not going wrong. Everyone has had a different experience of lockdown, most people are feeling more anxious and this may include worries about the future, and concerns about finances and employment, lack of ability to go out or fear of going out. Some may be worried about household relationships, LGBT related issues, physical health, home schooling pressures, and some may be afraid of domestic abuse. This situation affects all ages from children to older people, especially if you had problems with your mental health before Covid-19, although it also affects those who had no mental health problems in the past. We are aware that reduced vision, hand problems and hearing impairment may also make it difficult for some people to communicate using digital and remote methods. Some have chosen to isolate to try to keep themselves safe from the virus and will need to work out how to reintroduce themselves to their community while keeping themselves as safe as possible.

Once you have recognised that your mental health has become affected it is important that you take action and do something to help you to get better. There has been an increase demand locally for help with emotional and wellbeing problems, as well as those who need support with severe mental illness, psychosis and PTSD. Mental health services and support organisations have responded by increasing their capacity and are working differently to keep everyone safe which means lots of telephone calls and sometimes video consultations, and they are still able to see people face to face when necessary. Crisis cafes and youth counselling are still functioning. GP surgeries are still open and their staff have been consulting with patients throughout lockdown, and are there to support you.

We have lots of local services and here are some that may be useful:

**Northamptonshire NHS Mental Health Hub**  
0300 330 1011

We have a number of directories that can help you to find the support organisations that will best suit your needs and this includes information about charities and voluntary organisations:

**Access Corby -**  
[www.accesscorby.org.uk](http://www.accesscorby.org.uk)

Northamptonshire Health and Care Partnership directory of services – (MiDoS)  
<https://northamptonshirehpc.co.uk/directory/>

The national directory of NHS approved organisations -  
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mental-health-helpline/>

Young people aged 11-18:  
<https://www.youthworksnorthamptonshire.org.uk/Pages/home.aspx>

Domestic abuse - **Sunflower Centre: 01604 888 211**

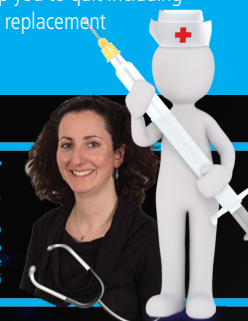
National Domestic Abuse Helpline  
**0808 2000 247.**

Addiction to alcohol or other substances you can contact S2S at <https://www.changegrowlive.org/substance-to-solution-northamptonshire/corby>

You can call the county's stop smoking team on: **0300 126 5700** and they will support you through a 12 week programme to help you to quit including supplying nicotine replacement or vape supplies.

Dr  
**Joanne  
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Great Oakley Medical Centre  
Clinical Chair Corby CCG





# Book a Life-Saving COVID-19 Jab

When You Are Invited by Your Local NHS

## What is in the vaccine?

A vaccine contains a small part of the coating of the virus but cannot cause infection. A vaccine stimulates your immune system to protect you against the virus, exactly like it would if you were exposed to the disease. After getting vaccinated, you develop protection against the disease a few weeks later, without having to get the disease first. There are different licensed vaccines and they all give very good protection. The vaccine is given as injection in your upper arm and you may have an uncomfortable arm for a few days after the injection.

Since the first COVID-19 vaccination in the county was administered on 8 December 2020, more than 250,000 doses of the vaccine have been administered to local people across Northamptonshire. The COVID-19 vaccine is safe and effective, and it gives you the best protection against coronavirus. The NHS is offering the COVID-19 vaccine to those most at risk from coronavirus, starting with the most clinically vulnerable.

**GET TESTED,  
GET VACCINATED,  
GET BACK TO  
NORMAL**

You should have received an invitation for the vaccination if you are:

- **Aged 50 and over**
- **Clinically extremely vulnerable (You will have received a shielding letter from the NHS)**
- **Someone who lives or works in a care home**
- **A health or social care worker**
- **Someone who has a condition that puts you at higher risk (This is also called clinically vulnerable, and you will be contacted if you have a condition that makes you eligible)**
- **Someone who has a learning disability**
- **The main carer for someone at high risk from coronavirus, and are registered with the council or your GP surgery**

People in these groups have the choice about where they wish to be vaccinated so if you have received a letter or text you can choose to be vaccinated at a local GP site, the vaccination centre at Moulton Park or one of the

pharmacy sites. You may need to wait until the next vaccine delivery date to book your appointment. Please only book a vaccination at one site, and cancel the appointment if you cannot attend.

You will need to have a second COVID-19 vaccine at the same site as your first one, this will usually be 12 weeks later. Please make sure you also attend for your second vaccination to make sure you get maximum protection against coronavirus. After your vaccination you still need to observe social distancing and the other national guidelines.

If you fall into one of the groups listed above but have not yet received a letter or text or communication from your GP practice, please visit [www.nhs.uk/covidvaccination](http://www.nhs.uk/covidvaccination) any time or call 119, free of charge between 7am and 11pm, seven days a week to book an appointment at the vaccination centre or a pharmacy site only. If you would prefer to be vaccinated at a local GP practice, please call your own GP practice directly to make an appointment.

Find out more about who can get the COVID-19 Vaccine.

**Dr Joanne Watt**  
GP Chair Northamptonshire CCG & Great Oakley Medical Centre



## A Guide to Long Covid Recovery

**Dr Joanne Watt**

GP Chair Northamptonshire CCG & Great Oakley Medical Centre



Most infections with Covid make people feel unwell for less than 10 days and you get back to normal within the first 4 weeks. "Long Covid" is an informal term that is commonly used to describe signs and symptoms that continue or develop after an acute infection of Covid.

If you have been unwell with Covid for longer than 12 weeks it can also be called Post-Covid syndrome.

If you are concerned about any of your symptoms and it has been 4 weeks or more since you became unwell with Covid, contact your GP practice and ask them about "Long Covid" – they should offer you an initial consultation, provide access to any further assessments or care, and advise you on sources of further support. They might refer you to a specialist Post Covid clinic, a specialist with expertise for your specific problem, or a rehabilitation service. You may wish to visit the websites below and also recommend them to friends, family and employers to help them to understand what you are going through.

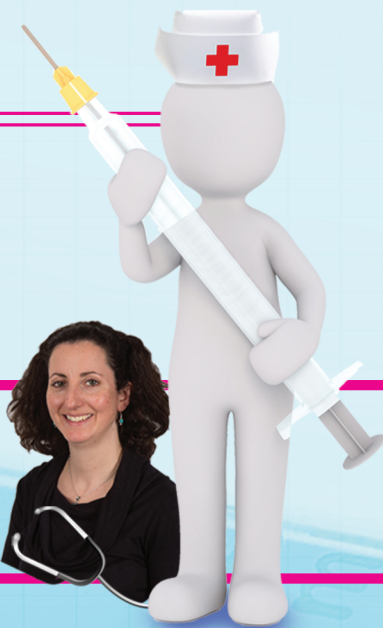
[www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk](http://www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk) || [www.northamptonshireccg.nhs.uk/COVID-19-advice.htm](http://www.northamptonshireccg.nhs.uk/COVID-19-advice.htm)

Here are some of the common Long Covid symptoms and tips for dealing with them after diagnosis:

Symptom	How you can help your recovery
Breathlessness may make it difficult to walk or go up/down stairs. You may have a cough that continues too.	It's not harmful to get out of breath when you are physically active, this is normal. Try to increase your activity levels slowly and take breaks. If you are too breathless to speak, slow down until your breathing improves. Try the breathing exercises on <a href="http://www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk">www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk</a>
Fatigue and energy levels that may vary from day to day. You may also have aches and pains.	Being ill in hospital or at home with Covid can lead to lower muscle strength, particularly in your legs and is mainly due to inactivity. You need to gradually increase your levels of activity. Yoga and Tai Chi are good ways to increase your flexibility and can also help with relaxation. Try to increase your strength by walking or climbing stairs. Use simple pain relief and discuss your medication options with a pharmacist. If you are finding it difficult at work talk to your line manager who may be able to help you to adapt your role. If your pains keep you awake, if they get worse or if you have a hot/swollen joint please contact your GP surgery since there may be something else going on.
Managing your Oxygen levels	If you have had oxygen equipment supplied make sure you know how it works and who to call if you have a problem with it. Check what level of saturation you are aiming for and when to call for help. Do not smoke if you have oxygen in your house since due to risk of fire.
Headache	Try to avoid triggers for your headache and avoid alcohol which may make it worse. Talk to your pharmacist about pain relief and try to avoid taking painkillers every day.
Taste and Smell, and difficulty eating	You may find your taste changes during and following Covid. However it is important to eat and remain well-hydrated. Keep your mouth clean and healthy by brushing your teeth twice a day. Try different flavours, textures and temperatures of food, you may find stronger/sharp flavours and spices make food taste better.
Chest pain can be caused by muscles or the other organs in the chest such as heart/lungs.	Get chest pains checked to make sure they are not due to serious problems with your heart or lungs. Once you have been checked call 999 if you have any new chest pain lasting longer than 15 minutes. Discuss any changes in ongoing chest pains with your GP.
Dry skin and tender swellings in fingers/toes	Use a moisturiser to keep skin healthy, swellings in your fingers and toes will go with time.
Fear and Anxiety, mood changes and sleep disturbance Chest pain can be caused by muscles or the other organs in the chest such as heart/lungs.	Feeling anxious or low in mood is very normal when recovering from Covid. You can discuss this with your family and friends and call the mental health hub on 0800 448 0828. This help is also available for your family or carers, who may have anxiety, depression or acute stress reactions following your diagnosis and recovery of Covid. Avoid watching too much news or social media if it is making you feel anxious, try limiting yourself to looking at the news once a day. Try to do activities that you find enjoyable and relaxing. Don't be too hard on yourself if there are some things that you are finding harder to do, remind yourself that recovery takes time.
Memory and concentration	When you've been seriously ill, you may not want to do things you used to enjoy. Try to reduce distractions and take regular breaks, and vary the tasks that you need to do. Use a diary or calendar to write things down that you need to do or have already done. Try to keep a regular routine and break down problems into small and easy steps. Your concentration will get better and your memory will usually improve with time.
Palpitations (being aware of your heart beating)	Try to avoid caffeine and try to relax. Contact your GP surgery if they are getting worse, if you have dizziness/blackouts or if you have a history of heart problems



# Why should you and your family get... vaccinated?



**Dr Joanne Watt**

Great Oakley Medical Centre  
Clinical Chair Corby CCG

Vaccinations are given to help prevent people from getting particular infections. A vaccine usually has a small dose of the inactive form of the bug or the poison made by the bug. A few vaccines contain live but non-harmful bugs. A vaccine does not cause the infection but it causes your body to make substances called antibodies that help your body to fight the particular infection if you meet it, and this is called immunity.

Some vaccinations are routine and offered to everyone who is in a particular group, others may be required if you are travelling to a country where those infections are more common. Most vaccinations are given as an injection in an arm in an adult, or an injection in a baby's thigh.

When we think about routine vaccinations it is important to protect as many people in our community as possible. The more people who are protected means that there are less people who can spread the disease to others. Making sure that as many people as possible are vaccinated also protects those who cannot be vaccinated, such as people who are receiving chemotherapy who may not be able to be vaccinated.

The infections that our NHS vaccinations protect against are now much less common, and high levels of vaccination continue to save lives and protect our community. However, we should not forget how serious some of the infections are and that some of them can lead to long term disability and can be life-threatening.

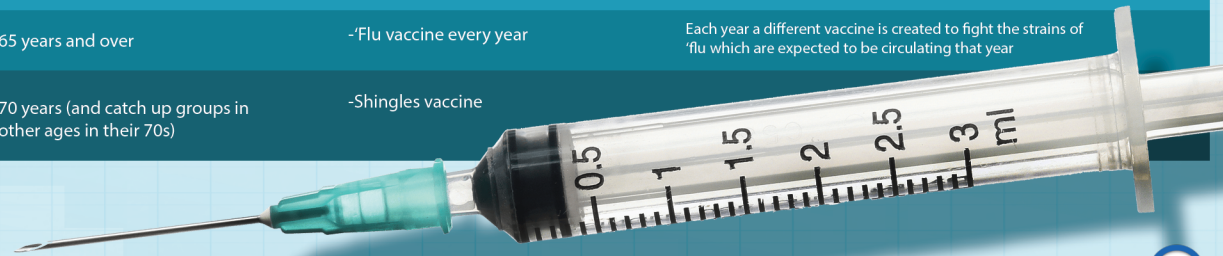
Before travelling outside the UK it is important to check whether there are any vaccinations available which could protect you. You can do this by making a travel planning appointment at your GP surgery, and your practice receptionist will be able to guide you how to do this. There are also several websites which aim to offer up-to-date, country-specific advice on vaccinations and on disease patterns. You may be able to get vaccinations for Hepatitis A, Cholera and Typhoid on the NHS, although there may be a charge for some other travel vaccinations.

Vaccination courses need to be planned well in advance. Some vaccinations involve a course of injections at specified intervals and it can take up to six months to complete a course. Some vaccinations can't be given together.

## HERE'S A CHECKLIST OF THE VACCINES THAT ARE ROUTINELY OFFERED TO EVERYONE IN THE UK FREE OF CHARGE ON THE NHS AND THE TIMES AT WHICH THEY SHOULD IDEALLY BE GIVEN:

Age at Vaccination or Group who can receive vaccination	Vaccine given	What else do you need to know?
8 weeks old	-6 in 1 vaccine, including protection against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio, Hib (Haemophilus influenza type b), hepatitis B -Pneumococcal vaccine -Rotavirus vaccine -Meningitis B vaccine	These diseases can cause pneumonia, meningitis and other life threatening diseases
12 weeks old	-6 in 1 vaccination -Rotavirus vaccine	
16 weeks old	-6 in 1 vaccination -Pneumococcal vaccine -Meningitis B vaccine	
1 year	-Hib/MenC vaccine, given as a single jab containing vaccines against meningitis C and Hib -Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine -Pneumococcal (PCV) vaccine, -Meningitis B vaccine,	The MMR vaccine is safe and protects against illnesses which have the potential to lead to complications which can be very serious. Cases of measles are increasing, and the vaccination provides effective protection if enough people receive it. Meningitis can result in disability and death.
2-8 years	-Children's 'flu vaccine	This is usually given as a nasal squirt every autumn, since the 'flu viruses each year are slightly different and so is the vaccination. Children who are school age are usually given their vaccinations at school.
3 years 4 months	-MMR -4 in 1 pre-school booster, which protects against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough and polio	MMR gives further protection against measles, mumps and rubella.
12-13 years –girls only at the moment	-HPV vaccine, 2 injections 6 months apart	Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a common cause of infection but usually causes no symptoms. Infection with some types of HPV can cause cancer of the neck of the womb (cervix). Cervical cancer takes many years to develop after the infection with HPV. Genital warts are also caused by HPV. Immunisation against HPV should dramatically reduce cervical cancer cases in the future and lead to fewer cases of genital warts. It may also reduce other cancers thought to be sometimes due to HPV. Immunisation against HPV was introduced in the UK for girls in 2008. Women are still advised to attend for cervical screening tests, even if they have been immunised against HPV. This vaccination is usually given at school, and there are catch up sessions at Willowbrook Health Centre for those who have missed their vaccinations at school.

Age at Vaccination or Group who can receive vaccination	Vaccine given	What else do you need to know?
14 years	-3 in 1 booster, including diphtheria, tetanus, polio -Meningitis ACWY	This vaccine is usually given at school, although your GP surgery can give the meningitis vaccine if it was missed at school.
University entrants	-Meningitis ACWY	This is given to all those attending university for the first time if they did not get vaccinated aged 14.
People at higher risk of Hepatitis B, including those who have close contact with someone who is infected, men who have sex with men, people who have been sexually assaulted, people having kidney dialysis, and those who have had a needle-stick injury with a dirty needle	-Hepatitis B vaccination	This is a course of 4 vaccinations which gives protection against this infectious virus which is carried in most body fluids.
Pregnant women	-Whooping cough -Flu vaccination	The 'flu vaccination is given to any woman who is pregnant during the vaccination season which is in the autumn of each year. The whooping cough vaccine is given once the woman is more than 16 weeks pregnant. These infections are dangerous to both the mother and baby, and the vaccinations are safe in pregnancy and reduce the risk of miscarriage.
People with long term health conditions, including those who are overweight with a BMI over 40.	-Flu vaccination	The 'flu vaccine is offered every autumn and changes according to which viruses are around that year. It is important to receive the vaccine every year to receive maximum protection.
Carers and health workers	-Flu vaccination	People who care and who are paid or unpaid are now eligible to be vaccinated each autumn, which protects them and the people they care for.
65 years	-Pneumococcal vaccine	
65 years and over	-Flu vaccine every year	Each year a different vaccine is created to fight the strains of 'flu which are expected to be circulating that year
70 years (and catch up groups in other ages in their 70s)	-Shingles vaccine	





# Protect and Respect- Living with Covid

We have now been dealing with the Covid pandemic for over a year, living through waves of infection, and have had times when we have felt optimistic and times when we have felt less so. Some of us have lost loved ones during this time, and we have all been affected in some way. As we go into the second summer of this pandemic it is still really important that we do everything we can to protect each other and respect that the freedoms offered to some may result in additional restrictions and worries for others.

Many of our family and friends have long term conditions that make them particularly vulnerable to Covid, and it is helpful to make sure that we support them to be vaccinated with both doses if they have not already done this. Some of our community will need a Covid vaccine booster in the autumn too. Some people may not have a physical health condition that makes them vulnerable but may be feeling understandably worried about Covid infection for other reasons, including caring about vulnerable family and friends that they have contact with.

You may wish to make sure that people close to you, who are worried about Covid infection, are comfortable with the changes in Covid restrictions that you might want to make. Perhaps you could bear this in mind and be more cautious when they are around. This could include offering to meet them outdoors, making sure that everyone does a lateral flow test just before meeting up and making sure that everyone washes their hands. You may wish to do regular lateral flow tests to protect those around you, and these are available from 119 or lots of other local venues. If you are feeling unwell, please stay away and self-isolate from other people and make sure that you

request a PCR covid test by calling 119. This is the best way to keep others safe.

When we are in a public place we do not always know who needs additional protection from Covid, and who may be feeling uncomfortable about some of the changes. People who have problems with their immune system or conditions like diabetes or high blood pressure do not look any different and you would not know if you were near a person who is vulnerable in a public place. Some people might be caring for a vulnerable family member or friend and want to take extra precautions to protect the person they care for.

Wearing a face covering in crowded indoor public places, on public transport or where there is poor ventilation shows your consideration for the people around you who may be feeling anxious about their risk of Covid infection. Many shops will also wish to protect their customers and staff by continuing to mandate face coverings, hand sanitising and distancing because they respect their customers and staff. It is also particularly important to continue to wear a face covering in all healthcare settings, since there will be a higher number of vulnerable people in those environments. We all want to minimise the risk to those patients as well as the staff who continue to care for them. This means that many of the aspects of healthcare that have kept people safe so far will continue to be used, including wearing face coverings, and remote and telephone consultations. When you are asked to wear a face covering or to sanitise your hands in a particular environment doing this is your opportunity to show your respect for others and your willingness to protect them from Covid, since you may not know that you have it.

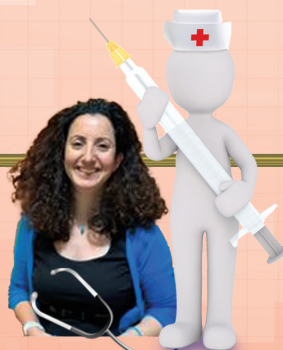
If you are feeling ready to reconnect with activities but are not sure what is going on locally or what you might fancy doing, then you can speak to a **Social Prescribing Link Worker (Social Prescriber)** who will be attached to your registered GP surgery. They will be able to talk to you about how to make the most of the local opportunities and be able to put you in touch with activities that you will enjoy and where you can connect with like-minded people. They can also help you to make some positive changes in your life including getting more active, dealing with unhelpful habits and supporting you to make future plans.

We all have different attitudes to risk, and it is important to recognise this in conversations with friends and family when you are planning activities and events, so that everyone feels comfortable and can enjoy their social contact. This means that continuing some of the adaptations that we have become used to over the last year may make an event feel more comfortable for others. It is important not to pressurise people into reducing their restrictions if they do not feel it is safe to do so. Communicating about our feelings is very important, and showing a willingness to adapt and take a considerate approach is usually much appreciated by those worried about infection. We all want to protect our community, and by being flexible and understanding these are some of the ways you can show those around you that you respect their feelings and concerns.

Thank you.

Dr  
**Joanne Watt**

GP Chair Northamptonshire CCG & Great Oakley Medical Centre



An important issue in Northamptonshire is Musculo-skeletal conditions, and this means everything that affects bones, muscles and joints and that stops them from working properly. This includes problems such as arthritis, broken bones, back pain and joint pain. There are things you can do to keep active and healthy and by being more active you can often prevent long-term problems with your bones muscles and joints as well as helping the rest of your body including your heart, lungs and helping your mental health.

**Exercise:** Corby has some wonderful facilities including gyms and our beautiful swimming pool as well as parks and cycle routes. There are special offers and dedicated classes for people with a range of physical and mental health problems such as dementia friendly swimming sessions and seated exercise classes at Glebe park. The Corby Borough Council website has lots more information about the wide range of services we have on offer locally. If you have a long term condition such as heart or lung conditions, are overweight or have anxiety or depression, most people benefit from being more active and you can get a referral from your GP surgery for a 12 week reduced price 'Activity on Referral' where you are supported to get active and motivated. You may not need to see a GP to get this referral since other practice staff can also complete the forms. Ideally everyone should be doing 30 minutes of exercise at least three times a week where you get a bit warm and sweaty, although it is good for your physical and mental health to be as active as possible even if you cannot do this much.

**Physiotherapy:** We now have an NHS service called First Contact Physiotherapy (FCP) here in Corby. This is a service where you can see a physiotherapist for an assessment and advice without seeing a GP first. This is ideal for people who have had joint or back pain for a few weeks that is not going away with simple pain relief that has been bought from a

# Keeping Active in Corby

supermarket or pharmacy. These FCP Physiotherapists are based in the Diagnostic and at Woodsend Medical Centre on Gainsborough Road. If you would like to see a First Contact Physiotherapist please contact your own registered GP surgery and the receptionists have all been trained to book people into these appointments directly, and they are usually available in just a few days without needing to see a GP.

**Occupational Therapy and Disabled Facilities Grant:** The Occupational Therapy service available via the County Council website [www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/adult-social-care/living-at-home/Pages/equipment.aspx](http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/adult-social-care/living-at-home/Pages/equipment.aspx) and the Disabled Facilities Grant is available via the Corby Borough Council website <https://www.corby.gov.uk/home/environmental-services/private-sector-housing-information/disabled-facilities-grant-residents>. These services help people with mobility problems to adapt their homes and the way they function in order to stay as active and independent as possible.

**Podiatry:** Podiatrists look after feet and try to improve their function, the podiatry services on the NHS are limited although they are still useful professionals to involve on a private basis if your feet problems are limiting your mobility. If you have diabetes and feet problems your practice nurse will refer you to the NHS podiatry service. Try to wear appropriate supportive footwear if you are walking long distances or if you have mobility problems.

**Minor injuries:** If you injure a bone or joint you may need to be seen by a health professional, especially if you are worried that something may be broken. Corby Urgent Care Centre has X-ray facilities and a team of clinical staff who assess and diagnose people with minor injuries, and are happy to see you if the injury has occurred within the previous 48 hours. If you injure an arm or leg and nothing is broken you will often be advised to rest it for a few days, put a cold compress on it for the first 24 hours to reduce swelling, wear a compression bandage and keep it elevated to reduce

swelling. If you are worried that your injury is more serious then you should call 111 for advice about whether you need to attend the accident and emergency department at Kettering General Hospital, and if you have heavy bleeding that will not stop then you should call an ambulance by calling 999.

**X-rays and scans:** A doctor, nurse or physiotherapist will request an X-ray or scan if it will make a difference to managing your problem, and will often be able to diagnose you without an X-ray by listening to your story and examining you. X-rays of an injured joint or limb can show the bone positions and any fractures or deformities, although they will not give very much information about soft tissues such as muscles and cartilage. MRI scans give more information about these soft tissues and are useful if an operation is planned, but will not always change the plans if an operation is unnecessary or unsuitable. MRI scans are not recommended for back pain unless pain has been present for over 6 weeks and your health professional is suspecting a trapped nerve that may need spine surgery to release it. If you have back pain and rapidly lose the ability to control your bladder and bowels this may indicate more serious damage to your spinal cord and you should also call 111 for advice since you may need to attend the accident and emergency department. Most back pain gets better with pain relief and gentle exercise and may need support from a physiotherapist.

For more information about musculoskeletal conditions visit [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk), [www.versusarthritis.org](http://www.versusarthritis.org) or [www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk).

Dr  
**Joanne Watt**

Great Oakley Medical Centre  
Clinical Chair Corby CCG





# Looking after your lungs

Our lungs are designed to absorb oxygen from the air we breathe, so that it can be used by our bodies to give us energy. There are some common long term conditions which affect the lungs and respiratory system which mean your lungs do not work as well as they should. This can result in you feeling short of breath, having a tight chest, having a cough, hearing a wheezing noise on breathing out, or the production of sputum and all this can affect your daily activities.

- Asthma is a condition where the small airways constrict which usually produces a wheeze. Asthma can affect children and adults and is more common in people who have allergies or where there is a family history of Asthma.
- COPD occurs most commonly in smokers and ex smokers and usually results in a cough, increased sputum production and frequent chest infections.
- Bronchiectasis is a condition where the lungs accumulate sputum and the person usually gets frequent chest infections.

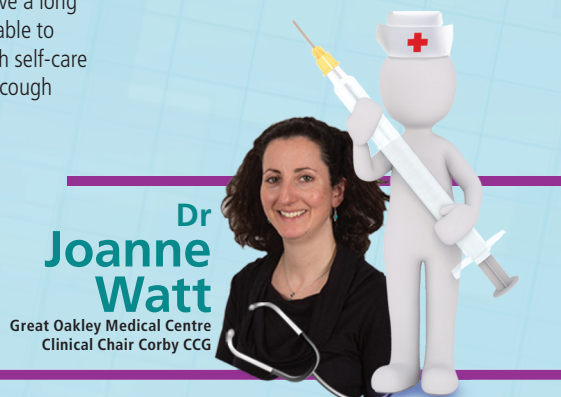
- Babies and small children sometimes develop a temporary wheezy chest when they have viral infections. Each winter there is usually an outbreak of Bronchiolitis which is a type of viral infection which usually affects smaller children or babies. Children with a wheeze occurring during and after viral infections such as Bronchiolitis may require inhalers and other respiratory medications when they are small, although many children will grow out of this problem by the time they are at school and may not develop Asthma as an older child or adult.

Most people who do not have a long term lung condition will be able to manage their symptoms with self-care if they have a few days of a cough or a cold, and you can buy cheap simple remedies such as paracetamol in a supermarket or at a pharmacy. Sometimes breathing problems can become more serious. If you or someone close to you is having difficulty breathing seeing any

of these the signs mean that you need to call a 999 ambulance:

- 1) being so short of breath that you are unable to talk in sentences,
- 2) turning blue around the mouth,
- 3) drooling and being unable to swallow due to breathing problems,
- 4) finding you are so exhausted by the effort of breathing that it is making you sleepy.

If you have a long term respiratory condition make sure you attend your GP practice for your annual check and remember to order your regular medication in good time.



**Dr Joanne Watt**  
Great Oakley Medical Centre  
Clinical Chair Corby CCG

Your healthcare professional will help you to understand how to best manage your lung condition, and may prescribe inhalers and other medications. It is important that you know when and how to take the medication, since some inhalers need to be used regularly where others are to be used only when you are short of breath. You will be given advice about when to call for help if you have problems with your breathing. You may be given antibiotics or steroids to keep at home so that you can treat yourself promptly. If you are under the care of the Rocket respiratory outreach team, make sure you follow their advice including knowing when to contact them. If you have a long term lung/breathing condition is important for you get your flu jab, and pneumonia jab if eligible. These important vaccinations will be available in your GP practice from the middle of September.

If you have been coughing for more than 3 weeks or have coughed up

blood, particularly if you are a smoker, make an appointment at your GP practice since this may need investigating even if you do

not have a diagnosis of a long term respiratory condition. They will want to do checks to look for infection, lung cancer and other lung conditions.

You can keep your lungs as healthy as possible by a few simple measures. Avoiding cigarette smoke is really important, vaping is probably safer for your lungs than smoking but can still be addictive. It really helps your breathing if you can exercise regularly, play a wind instrument (if you can) and sing whenever you get a chance either along with the radio or you may prefer to sing with a group. A group we have in Corby specifically for people (and their Carers) with respiratory conditions such as asthma and COPD is Singing4 breathing:

<https://singing4breathing.wordpress.com/>

People with COPD and their carers can also be supported at Breathing space: <https://www.northamptonshire-carers.org/Event/breathing-space-corby-aug302018>

Lakelands hospice also runs a support group for COPD that you can be referred to: <https://www.accesscorby.org.uk/service-categories/adult-services/show/lakelands-living-with-copd-programme>

If you do smoke and can manage to stop it can prevent your lungs from deteriorating, if you need help to quit smoking a pharmacist can help you. Stopping smoking is particularly important if you have one or more long term health conditions. Long term conditions can be managed better if you are in control, so ask your general practice team how you can best look after your own health and stay as well as possible.

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# Coughs, Colds and Sore Throats in Children

Dr Joanne Watt  
GP Chair Northamptonshire CCG & Great Oakley Medical Centre



Coughs, colds and sore throats are very common in young children and are to be expected at this time of year. Many of the young children in the UK did not have as many infections last year due to Covid restrictions and have started to experience winter infections such as bronchiolitis a little earlier this year. Many of the things we have been doing over the last 20 months to prevent Covid will also protect us against other viral infections during this coming winter. This means all of us continuing to wash our hands regularly, using a tissue to catch coughs or sneezes and washing your hands afterwards, and staying away from others if you or your household are feeling unwell.

For the majority of children, these illnesses will not be serious and they will soon recover following rest and plenty of fluids. Most children will not need antibiotics for these conditions. Make sure that you have a thermometer in your home for checking for fever and that it is suitable for the ages of the children living with you, a pharmacist can help you to decide which thermometer to buy. Please remember to buy some simple remedies from the pharmacy such as liquid paracetamol to have at home to treat these common illnesses.

Fever associated with common, simple viral infections such as a cold typically rises and falls over a total of 12-48 hours. Children often complain of feeling cold at the start of a fever. They may feel shivery, although they will feel hot and dry to the touch. Later they often say they feel hot, and will be sweaty and flushed. Make sure that you also remember to arrange a Covid PCR test (by calling 119) for your child if they are unwell with a fever or any respiratory symptoms, a lateral flow test is not accurate enough to test for Covid in people who have symptoms.

Children under two are at risk of more severe infections from common seasonal illnesses including bronchiolitis. Fever in babies aged 3-6 months has a higher chance of being serious, and you should seek medical advice if the temperature is 39°C or more in this age-group. Fever in a baby aged less than 3 months is unusual and is more worrying, you should seek medical advice if the temperature is 38°C or more in this age-group.

Other signs that may suggest more severe infection in a child of any age and that indicate that you need to seek more advice for an infection include:

-a child who is pale or who has mottled skin

-a child who does not respond normally or who cannot wake up

-a child who has difficulty breathing especially if the skin is being sucked in between each rib on every breath or if they have grunting when breathing

-a child who is unable to feed normally due to breathing difficulties or coughing

-a child who is not passing the normal amount of urine

-a child who has a dry mouth, tongue or lips

-a child who has a rash that doesn't fade if you put pressure on it or who has neck stiffness (call 999 if you notice this since the child may have meningitis)

It is not necessary to go to A&E departments if children have simple coughs, sore throats and colds. For very young children and babies, you can call the health visitors at the 0-19 Hub on 0800 170 7055 (option 4), Monday to Friday between 8am and 5pm or the Weekend Health Visitor helpline between 8.30am and 12.30pm on 07598 235094 if you have any concerns about feeding and minor illnesses. You can also seek advice using NHS 111, talk to a Pharmacist, or contact your GP surgery. If your child needs to be examined the health professional might direct you to attend a site that is not your own GP surgery, especially if it is overnight or at the weekend.

The NHS App and website ([www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)) also have lots of useful information about other common childhood conditions and advice on when to call for additional support.

**Use the Right Service**

 <b>Self Care</b>	<b>Care for yourself at home</b> Minor cuts and grazes Minor bruises Minor sprains Coughs and colds
 <b>Pharmacy</b>	<b>Local expert advice</b> Minor illnesses Headaches Stomach upsets Bites and stings
 <b>NHS 111</b>	<b>Non-emergency help</b> Feeling unwell? Unsure? Anxious? Need help? Visit <a href="http://111.nhs.uk">111.nhs.uk</a>
 <b>General Practice</b>	<b>Out of hours: Call NHS 111</b> Persistent symptoms Chronic pain Long term conditions New prescriptions
 <b>UTCs</b>	<b>Urgent Treatment Centres</b> Breaks and sprains X-rays Cuts and grazes Fever and rashes

# Your Heart



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Great Oakley Medical Centre  
Clinical Chair Corby CCG



The movement of blood around the body, pumped by the heart, is called circulation. Your heart, blood and blood vessels together make up your cardiovascular system (or heart and circulatory system). Your body contains about five litres (eight pints) of blood, which your heart is continuously circulating. Cardiovascular disease (CVD) includes all the diseases of the heart and circulation including coronary heart disease, angina, heart attack, congenital heart disease and stroke. It's also known as heart and circulatory disease, and is very common in people who live in and around Corby. Coronary Heart Disease and stroke are usually caused by the same problem, called atherosclerosis. This is when your arteries become narrowed by a gradual build-up of fatty material (called atheroma) within their walls. In time, your arteries may become so narrow that they cannot deliver enough oxygen-rich blood to your heart. This can cause angina which is a pain or discomfort in your chest. If a piece of the atheroma in your arteries breaks away it may cause a blood clot to form. If the blood clot blocks your coronary artery and cuts off the supply of oxygen-rich blood to your heart muscle, your heart muscle may become permanently damaged. This is known as a heart attack or myocardial infarction.

When a blood clot blocks an artery that carries blood to your brain, it can cut off the blood supply to part of your brain. This is called a stroke. Some people have problems with their circulation to their legs, and will have pain that starts in the calf when walking that comes on at the same distance each time. The pain will usually go away when the person stops walking. The person's feet may always feel cold to touch, but give them a burning sensation at times especially at rest. If you have noticed these problems please make an appointment at your GP surgery since you may have peripheral vascular disease.

Some of the aspects of your life may increase the risk of cardiovascular disease, these are called risk factors and are listed below:

**-SMOKING-** more Corby people smoke than the national average, currently about 26% of local people smoke. Pharmacies and First for Wellbeing advisers can help you to stop if you want support.

**-HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE-** it is estimated that there are almost 7,000 people with undiagnosed hypertension in Corby and the surrounding villages. Most pharmacists will be happy to check your blood pressure, you could use a home blood pressure cuff or use a machine in your GP surgery waiting room if there is one. If your blood pressure is above 150/90 make an appointment at your registered GP surgery to talk about what you can do about it.

**-RAISED HARMFUL FATS IN YOUR BLOOD-** this includes high cholesterol and these problems can run in families or may be due to your diet. If you are over 40 you can ask for an NHS health-check at your GP surgery to see if this is something you need to sort.

**-BEING PHYSICALLY INACTIVE OR OVERWEIGHT-** you can be referred for activity schemes so ask your GP surgery if you are eligible for this.

**-DIABETES-** an NHS health-check can also check you for this if you are over 40, you are also at higher risk of this if you are overweight.

**-FAMILY HISTORY OF HEART DISEASE OR STROKE.**

**-ETHNIC BACKGROUND-** particularly if you or your relatives are from Scottish, African/Caribbean or South Asian families.

**-SEX-** men are more likely to develop CVD at an earlier age than women.

**-AGE-** the older you are, the more likely you are to develop CVD. The more risk factors you have, the higher your risk of developing CVD.

Even though you can't change all your risk factors, there is plenty you can do to reduce your risk and help to protect your heart and circulation, and this will include reducing your risk of a stroke or heart attack.

Even if you manage to alter some of these risk factors, you may still experience a heart attack or stroke and it is important to know how to recognise it and what to do.

Most people having a heart attack experience chest pain or tightness, and the pain can travel to the jaw, neck, arms and back. Some people also feel short of breath and may feel weak or lightheaded. Some people feel anxious and sweaty and their skin may become pale and clammy. If you or a family member starts to experience these symptoms and it lasts longer than 10 minutes this is a medical emergency, and you must call 999 and ask for an ambulance. If you are alone make sure you unlock your door after calling the ambulance in case you become unconscious, and then call someone to be with you (if possible) until the ambulance arrives. This call will be a priority for the ambulance service. Do not try to drive anywhere or attempt to see a Corby health professional; you will be taken by the 999 ambulance to specialist Cardiology care at Kettering General Hospital where any blockage in the arteries of the heart can often be sorted out without any delay.

If you or a family member is having a stroke you may notice that one side of the face droops, an arm and/or leg may become suddenly weak, and speech may become unclear. This is a medical emergency and you must call 999 and ask for an ambulance. Do not try to get yourself to health services in Corby since acting quickly is really important, and this diversion will delay you from getting to specialist hospital services. The 999 ambulance will take you directly from where you are to the specialist stroke unit at Northampton General Hospital where it may be possible to quickly restore brain circulation.

Both heart attacks and strokes are medical emergencies, where fast action and specialist care at hospital results in the best possible outcome. If you suspect these conditions call 999 for an ambulance straight away.

Consider learning basic life support (CPR), so that if anyone near you has a heart attack leading to cardiac arrest then you will know what to do. You may be able to save their life.

If you have already had a heart attack or stroke you will be offered rehabilitation and may be advised to make some lifestyle changes. If you follow the advice you may be able to reduce the chance of having another heart attack or stroke. The British Heart Foundation has lots more information on their website [www.bhf.org.uk](http://www.bhf.org.uk), and Corby Stroke association can give you and your loved ones support. More details about Corby Stroke association can be found at

[www.accesscorby.org.uk](http://www.accesscorby.org.uk)



# Living well in the last years of life

Most of us hope for long happy healthy lives, and during our later years many people will develop one or more long term health conditions. These conditions may include COPD, arthritis, cancer, diabetes, heart disease and failure, kidney disease, neurological conditions and dementia. It is never too early to think about the future that we want for ourselves and our loved ones and it is important to talk to friends and family about our wishes. These wishes can be recorded in an advanced directive which is also known as a living will <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/end-of-life-care/advance-decision-to-refuse-treatment/>. This will often include preferences for where you want to be at the end of your life such as at home or in a nursing home, and a wish to die naturally and with dignity when the time comes without attempts at resuscitation. This information should be shared with your GP surgery and any health teams caring for you. You may also have preferences for funeral arrangements and it is often a comfort to bereaved families if they know they have been able to fulfil the final wishes of their loved one. <https://www.corby.gov.uk/home/environmental-services/deaths-funerals-cemeteries/advice-support> It is helpful to write a will if you have money or possessions that you wish to leave to friends, family or charities after you die. You may also wish to consider telling your family if you want to donate your organs or tissues to someone who is in need. [www.organdonation.nhs.uk](http://www.organdonation.nhs.uk)

While you are still well you may want to consider drawing up a lasting power of attorney (LPA) document so that a friend or family member can make decisions if you lose the capacity to do so yourself.

Be aware that having LPA for managing finances does not entitle you to make health decisions for your loved one, and to do this you would also need LPA for health and welfare. <https://www.gov.uk/lasting-power-attorney-duties/health-welfare>

Most people want to stay as independent as possible while living their later years in their home. If reduced mobility is an issue for you or a loved one you may wish to consider installing a key safe on the outside of the property so that trusted friends and family can unlock the door. Please consider giving the key safe number to your GP surgery to store securely in your medical notes to be used if a district nurse or GP needs to visit. Corby Borough Council can also talk to you about a home assessment and arrange fitting of home adaptations to maintain independence including grab rails and devices to make using the toilet and bathing safer. <https://www.corby.gov.uk/home/environmental-services/private-sector-housing-information/disabled-facilities-grant-residents> Northamptonshire carers can also support you to make sure that anyone you care for is getting the financial and practical support needed, including arranging an assessment of your care needs and exploring how they can be funded. <https://www.northamptonshire-carers.org/>

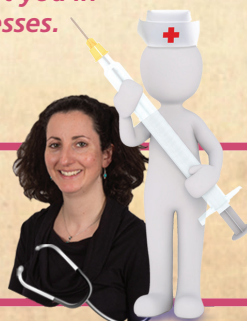
We are fortunate to have a wide range of charitable and voluntary organisations in Corby, most of them have details on the Access Corby website <https://www.accesscorby.org.uk> and the countywide

<https://www.northamptonshirehpc.co.uk/directory/> directory. Many of them run befriending services and support groups, that keep people active, connect them socially and share useful information. You can ask your GP surgery receptionist how to access a new (social prescribing) link worker who will help you to find the best support for your situation. At the end of life the Hospice at Home service run by Lakelands hospice <https://www.lakelandshospice.org.uk/> provides nursing care for patients and their families in their own home. We also have Marie Curie nurses and GPs (including the out of hours GP service) to support patients during their final days, and they can be contacted via your registered GP surgery or by calling 111 when your surgery is closed. If someone is expected to die a GP will often prescribe "Just In Case" medications that can be kept at home and given to ease pain, sickness or agitation during the final days. Lakelands hospice also runs a bereavement support group that can support you in your grief even if your loved one was not cared for by them.

*It can be very difficult to talk about how you want things to be in your final days, months and years. However, if you share your wishes with your family and friends in plenty of time they will be better able to support you in your final illnesses.*

Dr  
**Joanne  
Watt**

Great Oakley Medical Centre  
Clinical Chair Corby CCG



During the last few months Covid has been the condition that many of us have been thinking about, however other medical conditions have not gone away.

Our local cancer screening programmes are still running and these include Smear tests at your GP practice, Bowel screening kits sent to your home and Breast screening at hospital or on community sites. When you get an invite to one of these services it is still recommended to take part and these tests gives you the best chance of a full recovery by detecting early changes.

These services are run in a Covid-secure way with staff wearing protective equipment, and the room and equipment will be cleaned between each person. If you have been told to isolate or have been given a Covid diagnosis within the last few days please rebook your appointment for after the end of this time. You can still attend these screening appointments if you have been shielding, please notify the team who have called you so that they can take additional precautions to protect you.



# When to think about Cancer

There are other body changes and common symptoms that you may notice that should prompt you to contact your GP practice:

**-Cough or breathlessness for more than 3 weeks especially if you have a negative Covid test and have been a smoker, coughing up blood and chest pain alongside these symptoms, a hoarse or croaky voice for longer than 3 weeks**

**-Difficulty swallowing, persistent or unusual heartburn or indigestion, appetite loss or bloating**

**-Blood in your poo, change in your bowel habit such as loose stool, pooing more often or constipation**

**-A breast lump or skin changes to your nipples**

**-Unexplained vaginal bleeding including after sex, between periods or after the menopause**

**-Blood in your pee, problems peeing, testicular lump**

**-A new mole or one that changes colour or shape, especially if it starts to crust itch hurt bleed or ooze.**

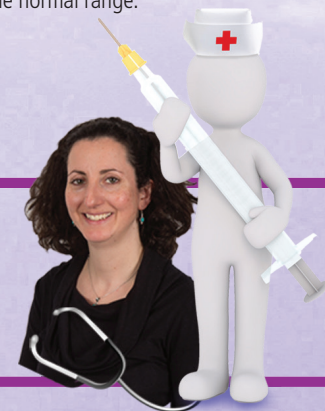
**-Unexplained weight loss, bloating, drenching night sweats, a lump or ulcer that has been present for more than 3 weeks.**

Although there may be another cause for these symptoms, it is still important to rule out cancer. Cancer is a usually much easier to treat when it is found at an early stage. All of the cancer detection and treatment services are still running despite the Covid pandemic.

If you are worried you may have cancer please talk to your primary care team. Many GP practices will have an online form that you can fill in to describe your symptoms, and there will also be phone calls available where you can talk to a health professional about what you are experiencing. For some conditions you may be asked to submit a photograph, particularly of skin lesions and this photo may then be sent directly to a specialist if needed. If you need to be examined in a face-to-face appointment, a health professional will arrange for you to be seen. If you are referred to a specialist you will usually have contact with them within 2 weeks. If you do have cancer it is usually better to know so that you can have early treatment and better care, and if you do not have cancer you should be able to find out quickly. There are also things that we can all do to reduce the chance of having cancer including stopping smoking, drinking less than 14 units of alcohol a week, keeping active and trying to keep your weight in the normal range.

Dr  
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& Great Oakley Medical Centre





# Hay Fever

Hay fever is a seasonal condition where you are allergic to one or more types of pollen. Different plants blossom at different times from early spring until late summer, so you may find that you are affected by allergies to different pollens for all of this time or just part of it. Common symptoms of hay fever include itchy or watering eyes, runny or congested nose or sneezing, and a dry cough or wheeze. You may have just one of these symptoms or a combination. These symptoms make it particularly difficult to function normally if you have exams or need to work and can disturb your sleep. Most people with hay fever find that the sunny weather affects the severity of their symptoms, and you may choose to keep your home and car windows shut and stay inside as much as possible when the pollen count is high. You may wish to wear sun glasses when you go out at these times and it may help to shower and wash your hair when you come back in. Hay fever affects about 1 in 5 people in the UK and tends to run in families, it is also more common if you also have eczema or asthma.

If you have nose symptoms there are really effective products that can be bought from a pharmacy, and these cost less than a prescription. Nasal sprays containing a mild steroids such as Beclomethasone can work really well although they take a few days to reduce inflammation and stop your nose from running. There are also a variety of anti-histamine nasal sprays available from supermarkets and pharmacies which can quickly reduce your allergic reaction. Some people find benefit from using nasal washes and your pharmacist can give you information about which equipment to buy to do this. Decongestant nasal sprays can be suitable for some people but should only be used for a few days.

If you have itchy or watery eyes you can buy eye drops containing Sodium Cromoglicate or Nedcromil or various

anti-histamine eye drops from supermarkets and pharmacies. These work really well for most people and do not cause many side effects. You may need to use them a few times each day in order to get the best control.

If you have a cough or wheeze you may have some benefit from the nasal sprays, although you will probably need something else too. You can buy once-daily non-drowsy antihistamine containing Cetirizine, Loratadine or Acrivastine from most supermarkets and all pharmacies. These non-drowsy medications are a particularly good choice if you need to be alert at work or school, and also come in a liquid form for those unable to swallow tablets. For pregnant women, or for those people where drowsiness would not be a problem you can buy Chlorpheniramine tablets or liquid which is also an anti-histamine. Chlorpheniramine does not last as long as the once-daily antihistamines and so you may need to take it multiple times each day to ease symptoms. It may also cause drowsiness so if Chlorpheniramine affects you in this way please do not drive or operate dangerous machinery. Antihistamines can be bought from supermarkets and pharmacies for children who are over the age of 2 years. If you find that your hay fever cough is making it difficult to breathe despite taking an antihistamine, especially if you also have asthma, then you need to make an appointment at your GP surgery to see if you need an inhaler or other treatments. If your breathing is so bad that you cannot speak please call 999.

Corby GP practices no longer routinely prescribe the hay fever medications which can be bought in supermarkets, pharmacies and other shops. This means that if you have hay fever then you do not need to wait for an appointment at your GP

practice to get treatment, and this also frees up time and NHS resources for other patients with more serious conditions. GPs no longer use steroid injections for hay fever since finding out that they created some serious long term side effects. Sometimes a GP or practice nurse will prescribe prescription-only medications for hay fever such as inhalers, steroids, anti-allergy tablets or alternative antihistamines if the self-care medications that have been tried have not worked.

Many people with hay fever will find that they need to take a combination of different medications to manage the different symptoms that they have at any time. It is safe to take a nasal spray with eye drops and an anti-histamine all together if that is what you need to control your symptoms. It is cheapest and equally effective to buy own-brand products, and if you are not sure which ones to choose then speak to a pharmacist who will be able to guide you by giving you expert advice. Seeing a pharmacist is usually quicker and easier than making an appointment at your GP practice, and they will be able to advise if you need to make an appointment. You may need to take your preferred medication combination for a few months until your symptoms settle. This should help you to enjoy the summer and control any hay fever symptoms.

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## 1. What are tears?

Tears are made up of water, oil and mucous and these elements work together to make a film that covers the surface of the eye when you blink. Tears protect your eyes from dust and infections and reduce irritation. Tears are made by glands above your eyes and then drain into tear ducts near the inner corner of your eye, tears run down the tear duct to drain into your nose which is why your nose runs when you cry.

## 2. Why are my eyes watering?

Watery eyes are more common in babies and older people and are commonly caused by a blocked tear duct. There are other causes including irritants, infections, allergies and eye injuries. The treatment depends on the cause.

If a baby has a blocked tear duct it will usually improve by the time your baby is 1 year old, and often resolves without treatment although you may be advised to massage the tear duct to help drainage. You should talk to a community pharmacist or your GP practice if the eye becomes inflamed or red or if your baby seems in discomfort especially if light bothers your baby. If your baby's eyelids start to look different you should also seek further advice.

In older people the tear ducts can get narrow and stop draining normally which makes eyes water. Sometimes eyelids can turn start to turn inwards or outwards which can make it very uncomfortable and watery, this may need surgery to correct the problem

## 3. What happens when you do not have enough tears?

Dry eyes are more common if you are a woman or aged over 65 and makes your eyes feel gritty, and irritated and can even makes your eyes water. Artificial tears are very helpful and your local community pharmacist can advise you about which ones to buy and you do not need a prescription for them. If the glands that produce the oily part of your tears get blocked this may cause blepharitis, which is treated by eyelid cleansing and warm compresses to help to unblock the glands.

# Body Fluid Facts- Useful information about Tears and Keeping Your Eyes Healthy

## 4. What do I do if I get a Stye or Chalazion?

A stye is a painful red lump on the eyelid where a gland is blocked and is filled with pus and usually only affects one eye. A chalazion is where the eyelid lump is filled with clear fluid rather than pus. These conditions are more common in people who have blepharitis. You can treat a stye or chalazion by using a flannel soaked in warm water as a compress held against the stye for 5-10 minutes 3-4 times a day. This will help the blocked gland to drain, do not try to burst it in any other way. If a stye is still there after 2-3 weeks then contact your GP practice since you may need to have it treated, a chalazion may take up to 6 months to resolve. During this time don't share towels or flannels and avoid wearing eye make-up.

## 5. What tips are there for contact lens wearers?

Make sure your hands are clean before touching your eyes or lenses. Switch to wearing glasses if you have any problems with your eyes. Change your lenses when advised to do so by your optometrist. Have check ups with your optometrist when they advise you to or if you are having problems. If your eye is red seek advice from your optometrist, local community pharmacy or GP surgery that day. Do not use tap water or saliva to wet your lenses or go swimming in your lenses

## 6. What do I do about conjunctivitis?

In conjunctivitis the white area of the eye usually looks inflamed, the eyelids may be inflamed and there may be discharge, however vision should not be affected and if it is you need to talk to a health professional since this may mean there is a different more serious cause. Conjunctivitis can be caused by allergies such as hayfever as well as bacterial or viral infections. Infections usually settle within a week without treatment, if it is not settling at this point discuss this with

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your local community pharmacist, or with your GP practice if your child is under the age of 2 years.

## 7. How do I manage my eyes if they are affected by hayfever?

Use an eye wash bought from your local community pharmacy to remove pollen from your eyes. A cold compress or eye drops kept in the fridge can also be soothing. Talk to your local community pharmacy about anti-allergy eye drops which can be bought without a prescription, and you may also find that nasal sprays and antihistamines help your eye symptoms. Wear sunglasses when you are outside, and switch to wearing glasses if you usually wear contact lenses. When pollen counts are high keep windows closed and stay indoors.

## 8. How do I keep my eyes healthy?

Make sure you protect your eyes from bright sunlight by wearing sunglasses with UV protection. Tobacco contains toxins that are bad for your eyes as well as other parts of your body, so this is another good reason to stop smoking. Try to eat plenty of colourful fruit and vegetable containing nutrients that are good for your eyes especially kale, spinach, peppers, raspberries, blueberries, broccoli, kiwi, squash, courgette, grapes and orange juice. Oily fish contain fatty acids which are really helpful for dry eyes or you can take a fish oil supplement. Most people need eye examinations every 2 years, check with your optometrist if you need to have more frequent checks than this. Regular checks with an optometrist will also check your general eye health and spot problems early.



# all about pee Urine

Every day your two kidneys filter your blood many times, they keep essential chemicals and blood cells inside your body while getting rid of your waste products; these waste products go into your urine together with some water filtered from your blood. Uncontrolled high blood pressure can damage kidneys, as can smoking, some medications especially anti-inflammatories, being dehydrated or having uncontrolled diabetes. As you get older kidneys often don't work as well as they used to and this is called Chronic Kidney Disease or CKD, and you might not know you have this until you have a blood test. Most people with CKD still have kidneys that work well enough to allow them to live normal lives. Most people's kidneys manage to keep good enough function to last a lifetime, but some will deteriorate to the point of needing regular specialist filtering by a machine during dialysis, and eventually a few people may require a kidney transplant.

You can protect your kidneys by staying well hydrated, and a good guide is to look at the colour of your pee. If your wee is the colour of apple juice or lighter then that usually means you are well hydrated, if it is darker it may mean that you need to drink a little more fluid. Ideally you should make sure that most of your drinks do not contain caffeine, alcohol or sugar, and water is the ideal drink for keeping you hydrated. If your urine is smelly or stings or burns when you pee you may have an infection. Urine infections are not that unusual in women and can be simply treated with medications available from pharmacies or from your GP surgery team.

Urine infections in men and small babies may need more investigation and your GP will be able to tell you if you need further investigation via a specialist clinic.

As men get older their prostate gland grows and this can make it difficult to start to urinate, cause poor flow of urine, make the urine slowly dribble at the end of urinating and cause men to get up many times at night to pee. The prostate gland is found just inside the back passage and may need to be examined by your GP if you are getting these symptoms, in addition some people need to have a blood test for prostate specific antigen (PSA). At this point we do not recommend that all men have their PSA checked as a routine unless they have urinary symptoms or a family history of prostate cancer, or are of black African or Caribbean ethnicity.

As women get older they may find their urine leaks when they cough or sneeze and this is called Stress Incontinence, and is particularly common when a woman has given birth to large babies. This can be treated and prevented by being an ideal body weight and doing regular pelvic floor exercises. If symptoms do not respond to these measures and are getting in the way of life your GP surgery team may be able to advise you about ways to support your bladder including devices that are put in the vagina to support your bladder called pessaries, and some people may need surgery if everything else tried does not work.

If a person cannot control when they pass urine or if they are not able to pee at all they may need a

drainage tube called a catheter. Fitting a catheter involves a narrow tube being put into the bladder and this usually drains urine via their usual route into an external bag that is usually attached to their leg or a stand. Some catheters can also be fitted via a small hole in the front of the abdominal wall. Urine in catheter bags is often smelly, but this does not usually mean there is an infection if the person is otherwise well.

If you notice that there is blood in your urine you need to make an appointment at your GP surgery. It can be embarrassing to say the reason for your appointment, but if you tell the receptionists what you need the appointment for they will understand the urgency and make you the appointment with the best person. Blood in your pee can be a sign of infection, kidney stones or bladder stones or cancer and it is always a good idea to get it checked out.

If you have an appointment at your GP surgery to talk about a problem with your urine it is really helpful if you take a sample of your urine. You can collect this in a clean container at home or ask the receptionists at your surgery for a pot. Don't forget to take the sample in with you!

**Dr Joanne Watt**  
Great Oakley Medical Centre  
Clinical Chair Corby CCG



## 1. What is urine?

Your blood all goes through the kidneys every day where it is filtered. Your two kidneys make sure that most of the water and some of the other useful substances in blood go back into the bloodstream, while the waste and other chemicals that the body wants to get rid of are filtered out and make up your urine. The urine goes from each kidney to the bladder via a tube called a ureter. Urine is stored in the bladder and when you are ready to pass urine it leaves the body via another tube called a urethra.

## 2. How do you know if your kidneys are working?

Kidney function is checked by a blood test for estimated glomerular filtration rate (eGFR); and if the eGFR is reduced or if you have diabetes then you may be asked to give a urine sample to check the level of protein in your urine.

Increased protein in the urine and decreased eGFR can mean that you have progressive chronic kidney disease (CKD). About 1 in 10 people have CKD and this gets more common as you get older. For most people this will just require yearly checks organised by your GP practice to make sure it is not getting worse. Treating high blood pressure and controlling diabetes is also very important in CKD as well as avoiding medications that will put additional strain on your kidneys.

## 3. How do I keep my urinary system healthy?

It is important to drink enough fluids to avoid dehydration. Urine should usually be lighter in colour than apple juice, and if it is darker you may need to drink more. Too much Caffeine (in tea, coffee, cola and energy drinks) stimulates the muscle of the bladder making it more irritable, causing symptoms such as urinary frequency and urgency. Passing urine more frequently can also be a symptom of diabetes,

# Body Fluid Facts- Useful information about Urine

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so you may wish to ask at your GP practice for this to be checked particularly if you have this and are over 40, have a family history of diabetes or are overweight.

## 4. What do I do if my urine is leaking (incontinence)?

If urine leaks when you cough or sneeze it is called stress incontinence and is more common in women who have had children. It often improves with pelvic floor exercises, and if it does not you may wish to talk to a doctor or nurse at your GP practice. If your urine leaks when your bladder is filling it's called urge incontinence and you should then talk to your GP practice since this may need investigation or medications.

## 5. What is a urine infection?

Common symptoms of a urine infection include burning/stinging when passing urine, passing frequent small amounts of urine and smelly urine. If these symptoms last more than a few hours you will probably need antibiotic treatment. Men who have had their first proven urine infection, or children with multiple infections (especially if they are aged under 6 months) will usually require further investigations once the infection has gone. Anyone over 60 years old with recurrent or persistent unexplained urine infections may need referral to a specialist to see if they have a bladder cancer.

Girls and women can prevent urine infections by always wiping from front to back after going to the toilet. This stops bacteria from around the back passage ending up in the urinary tract where they can cause infection. Women who experience lots of urine infections after the menopause may benefit from vaginal oestrogen treatments, especially if they are also experiencing vaginal dryness. Women should also pass urine before and after sex to prevent urine infections.

## 6. What does blood in urine mean?

Please talk to your GP if you see blood in your urine. It is important to always investigate visible (or invisible blood detected on a dip stick) in urine especially if you are over 45 years old when you will usually be referred urgently to hospital to make sure you do not have bladder or kidney cancer. If you have a urine infection you may have blood in your urine, but if this continues after any urine infection has gone this needs investigating. Men with blood in urine will also usually have a check on their prostate to make sure they don't have prostate cancer.

## 7. When should men have a prostate check?

Prostates get larger as men get older and can make men get up more times at night to pass urine, increase urinary frequency, make it difficult to start or stop passing urine, reduce urine flow or sometimes even stop men from passing urine at all. If you are experiencing these symptoms then you should have a check-up at your GP practice which will involve a PSA blood test and an examination of your prostate (which is just inside your back passage). Most men will have a benign enlargement of their prostate called Benign Prostatic Hypertrophy (BPH) which may respond to medication or may need surgery. Some men with these symptoms will have prostate cancer that requires referral to a specialist and cancer is more likely if you have a family history of prostate cancer, are over 50 or if you are of Afro-Caribbean ethnicity, some prostate cancers can be slow-growing and may not need active treatment.



During the winter months there are lots of things you can do to keep yourself well and avoid some of the common medical problems.

First for wellbeing are a really helpful Northamptonshire public health organisation and they have a website which has lots of useful information at:

[www.firstforwellbeing.co.uk](http://www.firstforwellbeing.co.uk)

In the colder weather you may need to wrap up warm, and be careful on icy roads and pavements. Wear sensible shoes to avoid slips, trips and falls so that you can still go outside. Try to make time to exercise, which will make you feel better emotionally and physically. Even a short walk can help you to feel better. In the winter months it can be difficult to spend enough time outdoors and the lack of sunlight may result in reduced levels of vitamin D. Consider buying a vitamin D supplement to take during the winter months, particularly if you have darker skin. If you are eligible for an NHS 'Flu jab and have not yet been vaccinated please contact your registered GP surgery since there are still plenty of vaccinations in stock. This includes making sure that children aged 2-4 get their nasal squirt vaccinations at their GP surgery, and older children who are eligible will be vaccinated at school. If you have a long term health condition you may also be eligible to be vaccinated against 'Flu so contact your GP surgery to find out if you can be vaccinated.

For some people the festive period can be lonely, and it may be particularly difficult if someone close to you has died in the previous year. Consider contacting people who you know who may be lonely or alone to see if they want or need company, particularly if they are elderly or disabled. If you are struggling with money and debt contact [www.firstforwellbeing.co.uk](http://www.firstforwellbeing.co.uk) who can help to guide you to the best place to help you with money worries. If you are a carer and look after someone who depends on you, and you need support yourself please contact Northamptonshire Carers at: <https://www.northamptonshire-carers.org/contact>

Some people find the winter months emotionally difficult, particularly if they struggle with anxiety and depression. If your mood is low try to get some exercise, eat and sleep properly and seek help if your mental health is getting worse. We have a mental health crisis café at the Sanctuary which is there to support you and has already helped people in the Corby area: <https://www3.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/health/health-and-wellbeing-board/Documents/New%20Sanctuary%20Poster.pdf>

If you are going to social events over the festive period be careful about how much alcohol you are drinking. Alcohol can make you more likely to fall over, and you may make choices that you would not make sober and later regret them. Be careful about how much alcohol you are drinking and never drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Remember to use a condom to prevent unwanted pregnancies and infections which may result from sexual encounters. Make sure you get enough sleep, particularly if you have been up late on other nights.

If you are feeling unwell remember that pharmacists can help you to treat minor illness and guide you as to whether you need to see a GP or other health professional. If you take regular medication remember to order extra supplies this winter so that you do not run out, all the GP surgeries in town will let you order your prescriptions early during the festive season.

Many people eat and drink a little more over the festive period, including more sweet treats. Make sure you look after your teeth and encourage children to brush their teeth since sugar will increase the risk of dental decay. Try to moderate your intake of food and drink to make it easier when it comes to New Year's resolutions, consider starting some of them before Christmas. Many people look forward to a traditional Festive dinner, so please remember to cook Turkey properly and avoid food poisoning.

**Stay well this winter!**

**Dr Joanne Watt**

Great Oakley Medical Centre  
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