



Solihull Heart Support Group

Heart Line News

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Winter 2011

Contacts

Address: Mike & Tricia Lines:
66 Pear Tree Crescent, Shirley, B90 1LD
Tel: **0121 430 3502**
Web site: www.solihullheartsupport.org.uk
General enquiries: heartline@solihullheartsupport.org.uk
Membership/Ex.classes: secretary@solihullheartsupport.org.uk
News items: heartlinenews@solihullheartsupport.org.uk

Winter Meetings

We have a line up worth coming out in the cold for. **7.15 to 9.00 pm**, at the SIMTR Conference Centre (Spire Parkway Hospital), 1A Damson Parkway, Solihull.

January 25th: Advanced Motorists by one of our own members Keith Adams

February 29th: Cardiology Centre of Excellence ;Cardiologist Name to be announced

March 28th: Pharmacist update your knowledge on what is available now.

COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

Committee vacancies; There are still a number of SHSG unfilled committee positions. At the moment Mike and Tricia are covering these between them but pressures of work mean that they desperately need some help.

Treasurer: David Laband, one of our previous treasurers set up a simple computer system to cover all the requirements of the post, Mike would be happy for someone to shadow him doing the job for a couple of months.

Public Relations: this is primarily to keep our name in the public eye and ensure that the local papers have details of our monthly meetings

Speaker Secretary: To arrange the speakers for 9 evening meetings in the year, we do not meet in August or December and have a walk in July. Tricia would be happy to pass on all her contact details, pro-forma booking letters

Travel Insurance

We know that obtaining Travel Insurance can be a problem when you have a heart condition to declare. We now have a list of 7 insurance companies which some people have found sympathetic when seeking cover. Please contact us (see above) for details and let us know of your experiences getting insurance. Roger Willis, our Welfare officer, is keeping the list updated and would be delighted to have any further information from members

KEEP WARM THIS WINTER

Have a cup of warming cocoa

Researchers at the University of California, San Francisco, have found that the flavanols in cocoa can make the heart healthier too. Their study showed that cocoa decreases blood pressure and improves blood vessel health in patients with heart disease. To keep the calorie count low use skimmed milk with cocoa powder and a little sweetener. If you find some hot chocolates too sweet, try the Fairtrade San Cristobal Drinking Chocolate from the Dominican Republic which has a more intense chocolate flavour (available from the Co-op).

WHEN TO TAKE YOUR XMAS DECORATIONS DOWN?

Most people say that decorations should come down on Twelfth Night and mean January 6th, the twelfth day after Xmas. However in Shakespearean England, Twelfth Night was the eve of the Twelfth day, January 5th. But to follow the tradition used into the mid c19th, leave your decorations up to Candlemass on 2 February.

KEEP WARM: KEEP WELL

A special Solihull Winter Warmth helpline is once again open for business on **0121 704 8080** for people who need urgent help this winter. Advisors are available Monday to Friday from 10am – 4pm to support local residents who need urgent help.

Cabinet Member for Healthier Communities, Councillor Bob Sleigh said: *"We want people to know that they are not alone this winter and there is help on offer to make sure that they can stay warm and healthy in their homes. I would urge anyone with concerns to phone our helpline and I would also ask other residents for their help in keeping an eye on their older and vulnerable friends or neighbours this winter."*

The Winter Warmth Helpline provides help and advice on:

- Finding a tradesperson for emergency repairs;
- Help with an emergency heater if the central heating system breaks down;
- An electric blanket if unable to afford to heat their bedroom;
- Warm clothing if they are struggling to afford it;
- Emergency food supplies; and
- Debt advice and assistance to pay bills.

Top tips for all of us in keeping warm this winter are:

- Keep internal doors closed to stop draughts;
- Have at least one hot meal and hot drinks throughout the day;
- Layer up - many layers of clothing are best;
- Close curtains at dusk;
- Ensure your heating is 21 °C in your home;
- Keep your heating on overnight;
- Ensure your home is well insulated and boiler serviced; and
- Contact your energy supplier about Social Tariffs or Priority Register Schemes.

The Winter Warmth leaflet can be downloaded from www.solihull.gov.uk for more information.

BHF SANTA JOG 2011

This took place on Sunday December 4th in Breuton/Malvern Parks. SHSG was represented by Mike and Tricia Lines and Fiona Wyatt, our secretary, accompanied by her dog Conker. The weather stayed dry until 10 mins after the end of the jog/walk and the occasion was enjoyed by all the participants.

GROUP MEETING REPORTS

September 2011

Safe Exercise, by Elaine Smith and Gay Donovan

Elaine is the Rehab. sister at Solihull Hospital and Gay is an Exercise Physiologist. They discussed how physical activity can play its part in helping to prevent some of the 94,000 deaths per annum from CHD. At present twice as many men as women are affected by CHD, although it is rapidly becoming more common in women. In order to prevent this we need to control our weight, and reduce our diabetes risk and high blood pressure and control our cholesterol levels.

Gaye talked about the FITT principal:

- F = frequency: ideally 5 or more days per week.
- I = Intensity: how hard you can work (you can tell this by whether you can carry on a conversation whilst exercising. Listen to your body and stop if you start feeling hot and sweaty or feel dizzy and very short of breath.
- T = time: the length of time spent exercising. Ideally it should be 30 – 45 minutes daily which can be broken up into smaller segments of 10 – 15 minutes.
- T = type of exercise: it should be structured so that it exercises the large muscle groups and includes a warm-up and cool down.

Exercise includes walking, gardening, physical housework as well as what people tend to think of as exercise. Always exercise safely – not on a full or empty stomach; not in extreme temperatures; wear loose, comfortable clothing; don't exercise if you don't feel well; and take medication before exercising if recommended. Elaine and Gaye gave us a very informative and interesting talk which they followed by answering our questions.

October 2011

Air Ambulance Trust

We were very pleased to welcome Louise who gave an excellent talk about the West Midlands Air Ambulance Trust and showed a DVD illustrating its work. The Trust started in 1993. The Air Ambulance Service now has 6 helicopters, helipods and infrastructure based at RAF Cosford, Strensham services and Tettenhall to ensure good coverage of the West Midlands, allowing for speed, accessibility and smoothness.

From our area it takes 6 minutes by helicopter to the Children's Hospital compared to nearly an hour by road in the rush hour. The great benefit of using a helicopter is the speed which means treatment starts much earlier and lives are saved. It is particularly valuable in the West Midlands because of the proximity of the motorways and their scope for accidents (M5, M6, M42, M40). Calls fall into three categories; Primary – for 999 calls, Secondary – requests from road ambulance crews for air assistance, Tertiary-hospital requests for speedy transfer to specialist units.

The West Midlands Air Ambulance costs £1.8 million per year to run - £25 per minute flying time using 245 litres of diesel per hour – and relies on operating grants, donations and their Daisy Chain charity shop. Each helicopter has a pilot and either 2 paramedics or a doctor, together with the latest full life support equipment. We were happy to support the fundraising efforts with a donation from our

funds and personal donations from many members. Long may their good work continue.

November 2011

Citizens Advice Bureau

Kerry Turner is the West Midlands Chief Executive of CAB having started as a volunteer over 16 years ago. She gave us a rundown of the work of CAB in the Solihull area and all the services it offers.

As well a small base of full-time paid staff, the bureau relies on its 100 plus volunteers to keep the work of its 3 offices running smoothly. In addition to the 5 day a week service in Shirley, Solihull, and Chelmsley Wood, clients can access its services through some doctors' surgeries and also through home visits (particularly useful for carers who find it difficult to leave home for long)

After a brief run through of the type of work covered, Kerry was joined by our own Welfare Officer, Roger Willis (a volunteer advisor for CAB), to answer members' questions. One of the really useful pieces of advice was for people who wish to claim attendance allowance (or other benefits) to use the services of the bureau to help fill in the forms - they may seem relatively straight forward but the exact wording used can mean all the difference as to whether you are awarded the benefit or not. CAB can also help in appealing against decisions and has a very good success rate.

STOP WINTER COLDS IN THEIR TRACK

Beef: is a good source of the immunity bolstering zinc that helps your body develop white blood cells which recognise and destroy bacteria, viruses and other invaders.

Chicken soup: University of Nebraska researchers found that even store bought chicken soup blocked the migration of inflammatory white cells and helped keep mucus thin.

Fish: salmon & herring are rich in Omega 3 which help reduce inflammation and protect against respiratory infections.

Garlic: contains the compound Allicin which fights infection and bacteria. One study found that garlic takers were 2/3 less likely to catch a cold.

Mushrooms: shiitake, maitake and reishi reputedly pack the biggest immunity punch

Oats and barley: contain beta-glucan, a fibre with anti-microbial and anti-oxidant properties, which can help boost immunity and speed healing.

Shell Fish: contain selenium which helps white blood cells develop proteins that help clear out flu viruses.

Sweet potatoes: are rich in beta-carotene which is a good source of vitamin A which helps keep skin strong and bacteria and viruses out.

Tea: a Harvard study found that people who drank 5 cups of black tea for 2 weeks had 10 times more virus fighting interferon (from an amino acid in black and green tea) in their blood than non tea drinkers

Yoghurt with probiotics: a recent Swedish study showed that those who drank a daily probiotic supplement took 33% fewer sick days than those given a placebo.

'In the depth of Winter, I finally learned that within me lay an invincible summer' Albert Camus (1913-1960)