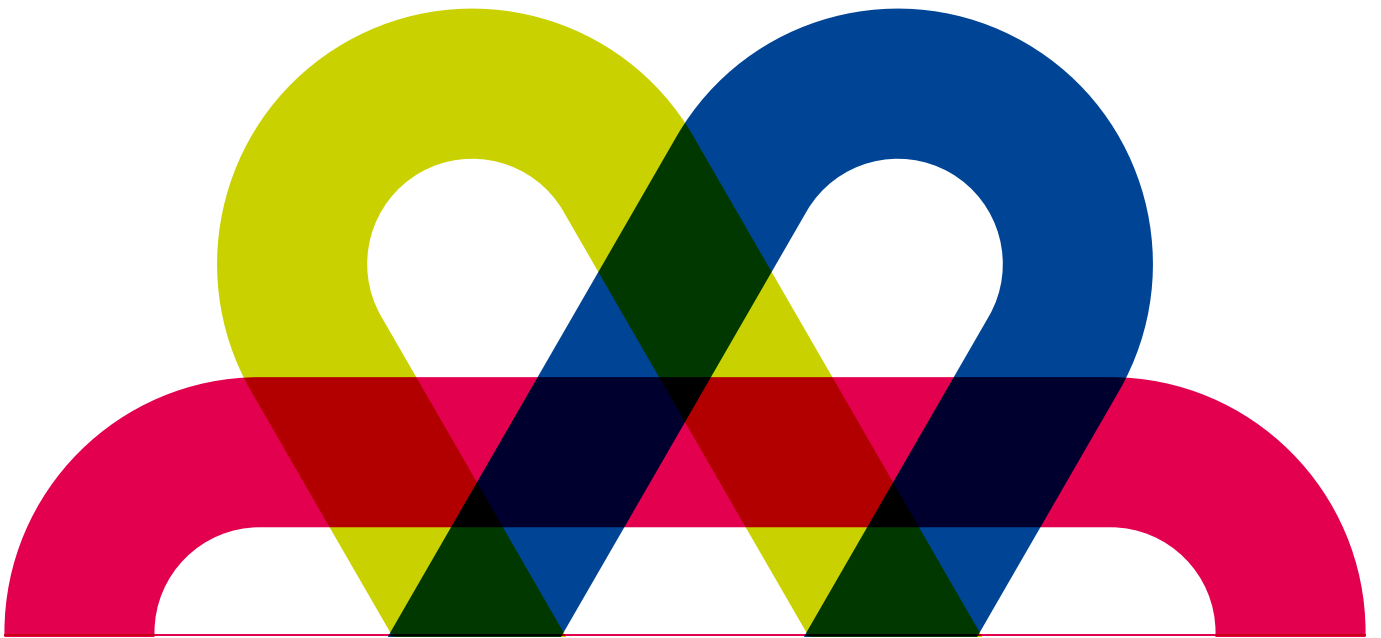




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Health Matters

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'I wish I'd lost weight years ago, it's been a real confidence boost'



SLIMMING

Losing weight led to a whole new lifestyle for Denise Booth. TANIA STEERE finds out she lost five stone

GREAT grandmother Denise Booth used to have to take four pills a day to combat health problems caused by her weight.

The 66-year-old has diabetes, struggled walking and would avoid going anywhere where she would have to walk. But now Denise's health has dramatically improved after losing five stone in a year. She no longer takes pills, her diabetes is under control, and she can walk without struggling.

The delighted mum-of-three, who can now spend more time playing with her great-granddaughter and her grandchildren, now wants to spread the word in the hope that other people will be inspired to beat the bulge. Denise said: "I wanted to lose weight to be more healthy and to be able to do more things. "I remember looking at a photograph and realising I needed to lose it. It has given me more self confidence and it's given my health a big boost. I feel so much better in myself. I had been overweight for about 16 years. It got out of control when I had a desk job."

Denise of Ashbourne Drive, Silverdale, is retired but used to work as a database accounts administrator and an accounts clerk. She said: "You need to make sure you don't just sit at your desk all day and that you actually get up and do some exercise. I get to do things that I wouldn't have been able to before and I see so much more."

Denise has been travelling the country with her husband in their camper van. They have been to Scotland and Wales. "I wouldn't have gone somewhere before if it involved a lot of walking. Now I feel like I get to see a lot more and enjoy more." Denise has used Slimming World to lose weight. She said: "Their recipes are really good and the whole family can eat them. It's more



FAT FILE

Name: Denise Booth
Lives: Silverdale
Occupation: Retired
Weight before: 17st 1 lb
Weight after: 12st
Dress size before: 22-24
Dress size after: 14
Total weight loss: 5st

Denise Booth's health has dramatically improved after she lost five stone. Inset, Denise pictured in 2011. Pictures: Nick Hands

about learning what is healthy and how to make it. "It amazed me how much you can eat on the plan. It's not about starving yourself, it's about the type of food." Denise used to be a size 22-24 but is now a 14. She said: "It's such a difference. I have thrown all my bigger clothes away and have been able to go shopping and buy the clothes I like. I wish I lost all the weight years ago, it's such a confidence boost." Denise, who has eight

grandchildren and one great-granddaughter, added: "My family has definitely noticed the difference. It's great to feel young again and to be able to play with my great-granddaughter Daisy who will be one in December." Denise began losing weight in November 2011 and had lost five stone by last December. She said: "I didn't feel like there was any point at which it was too hard, I felt like I could do it the whole time and I actually enjoyed the food." Denise's husband of 48 years, Douglas, aged 67, said: "I support her as much as I can, by getting my head around the recipes and doing the cooking. She's a good walker now, she's even faster than me. It just goes to show what you can do if you put your mind to it."

MY 3 TOP TIPS:

1. Don't sit at your desk all day, go out for a walk and try and get some exercise in your break
2. Use Slimming World's recipes - they're really tasty and the whole family try them
3. Do it - I wish I'd done it years ago, it's great to feel young again.

READ HOW SAVVY SLIMMER DROPPED FIVE DRESS SIZES
Log on to thesentinel.co.uk

'Patients will by their own

YOUR HEALTH

A new campaign has been launched by the North Staffordshire Clinical Commissioning Group to advise patients of the best alternatives to A&E. CLAIRE SMYTH finds out more

WINTER is traditionally the time of year when hospital staff will be under the most pressure. The accident and emergency department at the University Hospital of North Staffordshire normally sees up to 350 patients a day. But these figures can drastically increase as temperatures drop, putting the most vulnerable at risk. Today, NHS bosses are urging people to think twice about where the best place for them to receive treatment is, after it emerged one in ten patients treated at A&E are not classed as an emergency.

Patients have told the body responsible for buying health services they are confused about where they should go when they fall ill. So the North Staffordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) has launched a campaign to signpost people to the most suitable place to receive treatment. Mary Woodhead, lay member of the CCG, added: "I think people don't know what the services do and where to go. They might know there's a walk-in centre, but they won't know what it does. "There's also confusion around what to do when their doctor's surgery is closed." Dr Stephen Fawcett, clinical director of planned care for NHS Stoke-on-Trent, said: "Accident and emergency is for emergencies and serious illnesses, not for the every day. "We all know what sort of pressure the staff there are under, and we need to make sure they are seeing the patients they need to see. "It's about trying to get patients to go to the right place for their ailments.



CLINIC: Marie Mansell rarely visits A&E as her surgery has a walk-in clinic. Picture: Malcolm Hart

"Over the years new services have become available, and new ways of working, which can be very confusing for patients. "For example, a child with earache has occasionally turned up at casualty. People with earache shouldn't go there. It's often because parents don't know where to go." Dr Fawcett said more credit should be given to pharmacists who can offer free advice, without the need for an appointment or the waiting times associated with visiting a GP. He said: "Try your pharmacy first because people don't

realise they are clinicians in their own right. There are more of them around in terms of people available to get hold of. If the pharmacy can't handle it, then by all means contact your GP." He admitted the collapse of the 111 out of hours number previously operated by NHS Direct might affect patients' confidence in the medical advice they can obtain when their doctor's surgery is closed. The new provider of the service has not yet been revealed, but a pilot scheme should be soon running across the city, Dr Fawcett added. He advised people to contact

'DOUBLE MASTECTOMY HAS LEFT ME FEELING SO EMPOWERED'

Read Michelle's inspiring story at thesentinel.co.uk



Stoke-on-Trent Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and The Sentinel working together to create a healthy community

be seen quicker doctor than A&E'



their GP surgery if they need medical advice during evenings or at weekends. They will automatically be transferred to the on-call doctor, who can offer support over the telephone or arrange for a face-to-face consultation. Dr Fawcett added: "This is not about putting people off going to casualty. If they are in constant pain or severe abdominal pain, then go there. But if they are not in that category, they need to pause and reflect. "Without doubt, patients will be seen much quicker at their own doctor's than they will at A&E. "A&E will see patients within

four hours, but most doctors will see their patients within 90 minutes." When Marie Mansell returned to her hometown after 13 years living in North Lincolnshire, one of her first tasks was to find a new doctor. The 54-year-old Blurton resident said: "The good thing about my surgery is it has a walk-in clinic every morning, so unless it's really serious I don't think I would bother A&E. I would come here. "I've never known that before. Normally I have to wait a fortnight before getting an appointment." Stoke-on-Trent also benefits from a number of clinics

operated by district nurses. Around 50,000 people use the Haywood Community Hospital in Burslem each year. Open until 10pm seven days a week, the minor injury unit's nurses can treat all forms of fractures, sprains and cuts. Marlene Tatton, of Cherry Grove in Blurton, admitted she had never heard of the unit. The 66-year-old said: "I have never been. I do not know where it is and I do not know what services it has with not going." This is something Ms

Woodhead is hoping will change with the CCG's campaign. Posters advising people of what services are available outside A&E will be put up in GP surgeries and community centres. The group will also be hosting two information days early next year when people can meet those responsible for buying health services for the city. Ms Woodhead added: "It is important to us to have the appropriate services in the right place at the right time, when the patient most needs them."

READ ABOUT PLANS TO TREAT PATIENTS BY VIDEO AT thesentinel.co.uk

'She's using me to cover up her affair'

RELATIONSHIPS

Every Tuesday, agony aunt ALISON COOPER offers her advice on your problems. This week: A woman is concerned about her best friend having an affair



Although we are both married, when my best friend and I go out to clubs, we have always done a bit of harmless flirting with guys, just as part of the whole night out thing. But it has never gone further than that until my friend met someone she really liked and arranged to see again. Now she is involved in a full-blown affair and using me as her cover to her husband when she goes out. It is putting a real strain on our friendship. She admits she has got feelings for this guy and doesn't want to stop seeing him, but doesn't know where it is going either. I don't want to let her down or lose our friendship, but I don't feel I can carry on anymore.

Your friend is rather abusing your friendship here and I can understand your concerns. Your friend has crossed a line and is embroiling you in something that, should it become known to her husband, will implicate you. You could threaten to tell her husband, but that will definitely jeopardise your friendship. You can only tell her how badly you feel being involved in this deceit and appeal to her not to use you as a cover anymore. Warn her that invariably affairs get found out and, if that happens, is she prepared for the consequences? You can only hope that she sees the wisdom of what you're saying.

I've been going out with my boyfriend for nearly three years and I love him loads. We are both in our late twenties. I want to settle down, get a house together and marry and I think he wants the same thing. But he blows hot and cold. Sometimes he talks about living together, having kids and building a life together and then when I say anything about getting engaged or looking for a house, he becomes really dismissive and tells me there's plenty of time for all that. I've started to worry whether it will ever happen. He did say when I first met him that he doubted relationships can last. He always believed his parents had a very happy marriage until his mum had an affair and left his dad when he was 15. I don't want to sound selfish but, as much as I love him, I don't want to be waiting around for something that is never going to happen and miss

out on the chance of having what I want. Should I end it? This may be a case where he very much wants to believe in a future with you, having a home and children, but the reality frightens him. Coming from a home where he watched his parents separate could well have scarred him. Whether he understands this on a conscious level or not is debatable. I would suggest you talk to him. Tell him you want to know if there is going to be a future for you both and don't let him avoid the conversation. If he does, it is a sign he is dodging the whole topic. Ultimately, you have to put a time frame in for yourself and say, if by so and so you are no further forward and he is still not committing, then you have to make a decision that feels right for you, which may mean ending the relationship.

I've ended my relationship with my girlfriend so many times, I have lost count. But somehow, we always seem to get back together. It's great for a while and then I suppose we slip back in to old ways and, as we are both stubborn, get into an argument. Generally, one of us storms off and I call it a day because I can't stand the stress. Ideally, I would like us to be together as I don't think I will ever meet anyone who I will love as much, but I want this roller coaster to end. We have talked about going to Relate and wondered whether you think counselling would help?

I think counselling would be most helpful. It will help you identify the pattern you fall into and give you the tools to break that pattern once and for all. Poor communication is often a key factor. Gaining an understanding of what you are trying to say through your rows. Why you won't give in? What makes it difficult for you to reach a compromise? Being stubborn and holding out to win gets you what ultimately? If your relationship is more than just a comfort blanket for you both, which you just keep returning to when there is nothing else on the horizon, then changing it for the better can only be a good thing.

I FEEL PRESSURED INTO HAVING SEX! Read more from Alison at thesentinel.co.uk

You should only attend A&E for serious and life-threatening conditions that need immediate medical attention

www.stokeccg.nhs.uk

<p>SORE THROAT, COUGH/COLD/FLU</p> <p>SELF-CARE</p>	<p>ACHES, ALLERGIES, MEDICATION QUERIES</p> <p>PHARMACY</p>	<p>STOMACH PAIN OR VOMITING?</p> <p>GP SURGERY EVENINGS & WEEKEND DOCTORS</p>	<p>MINOR INJURIES MINOR AILMENTS</p> <p>WALK-IN CENTRE</p>	<p>SEVERE CHEST PAIN</p> <p>ACCIDENT & EMERGENCY</p>
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KNOW YOUR NHS

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SORE THROAT, COUGH/ COLD/FLU

Most minor injuries or illnesses can be better treated at home



SELF-CARE

ACHES, ALLERGIES, MEDICATION QUERIES

Visit your local pharmacy for advice



PHARMACY

ASTHMA, STOMACH PAIN OR VOMITING?

Visit your GP Surgery or call Evening & Weekend Doctors if out-of-hours



**GP SURGERY
EVENING & WEEKEND
DOCTORS**

MINOR INJURIES, MINOR AILMENTS

Go straight to your local Walk-in Centre



**WALK-IN
CENTRE**

SEVERE CHEST PAIN?

Call 999 or visit Accident & Emergency immediately



**ACCIDENT &
EMERGENCY**

You should only attend A&E for serious and life-threatening conditions that need immediate medical attention

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PHARMACY

“

I see the pharmacist as my friend and first port of call. They keep a record of my previous prescriptions and therefore know which medicine will suit me best.

I don't need an appointment to see my pharmacist so I can get treated straight away.

Recently I went to see Raj at Millers Pharmacy in Dresden with a minor ailment and he prescribed me with an anti-biotic eye drop, which saved me from visiting my GP.”

Brian Jones
Aged 71 from Meir

Please use your nearest pharmacy for:
Aches & pains
Skin conditions
Allergies & rashes
Medication queries

Your local pharmacy can offer advice on common problems such as coughs, colds, aches and pains, as well as healthy eating and stop smoking. They can also help you decide whether you need to see a doctor.

Pharmacists dispense your prescriptions and other medicines, offer testing and screening for common conditions and can advise on minor ailments.

Most pharmacies now have a private consultation area where patients can discuss issues with pharmacy staff without being overheard.

You should only attend A&E for serious and life-threatening conditions that need immediate medical attention.

KNOW YOUR
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PHARMACY

“

Use your local pharmacy as a first port of call for all your health needs. From recommending over the counter medicines for minor ailments such as coughs, colds, eye infections and thrush to giving advice on prescribed drugs, helping you to stop smoking, preventing an unplanned pregnancy and even supplying drugs on a minor ailments scheme.

Your pharmacist is a highly trained health care professional and is at the heart of your community. You don't even need an appointment.

So, go and speak to your pharmacist and I promise you will be taking good advice.”

Raj Morjaria

Millers Pharmacy, Dresden, Stoke-on-Trent

Please use your nearest pharmacy for:
Aches & pains
Skin conditions
Allergies & rashes
Medication queries

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GP SURGERY

“

It is a good idea to take a little time to understand how your doctors works, so that you can get the best out of their services.

Ask your practice what their appointment system is and how it works. If you understand it better, it will help you get seen by the right person when you need it’.”

Reg Latham

Aged 72 from Sandford Hill, Longton

Please visit your GP Surgery for:

Asthma
Vomiting
Ear pain
Stomach ache
Back pain
Infections

The above is a guide only, if in doubt please contact your GP.

Think about what you want from your time with the Doctor or Nurse and don't leave your problem that is most important to you to the end of the appointment time. Make a list of the things that you want to say (so that you don't forget important bits if you get a bit flustered). Get the most out of your appointment.

You should only attend A&E for serious and life-threatening conditions that need immediate medical attention.

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GP SURGERY

“

Your GP and their team are here to help you keep well. Come and talk to us about any part of your health which has changed or is concerning you.

Don't be embarrassed or worried about what your doctor or nurse will say as they are experienced in dealing with every sort of health problem.”

Dr Mamta Chada
Willow Bank Surgery, Longton

Please visit your GP Surgery for:

**Asthma
Vomiting
Ear pain
Stomach ache
Back pain
Infections**

The above is a guide only, if in doubt please contact your GP.

GPs and their teams look after the health of people in their local community. Together they deal with the whole range of health problems. If you are worried about anything to do with your health please make an appointment at your local surgery. If you are unsure about who is best placed to deal with your problem at your surgery ask a member of the reception team to signpost you to the right person.

You should only attend A&E for serious and life-threatening conditions that need immediate medical attention.

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EVENING & WEEKEND DOCTORS

“

I had an occasion to have the assistance of the Out of hours service. Without going in to medical details the praise I have for them, especially Dr Salim, is second to none.

Life could be very different for me now if it had not been for their help. Never before have I used the service but would not hesitate in doing so again especially if it avoids long waits at A&E.”

Pat Watson
Aged 65 from Catchems Corner

**Please visit your
GP Surgery for:**

**Asthma
Vomiting
Ear pain
Stomach ache
Back pain
Infections**

The above is a guide only, if in doubt please contact your GP.

Outside normal surgery hours you can still phone your GP surgery, but you'll usually be directed to an out-of-hours service.

You should only attend A&E for serious and life-threatening conditions that need immediate medical attention.

KNOW YOUR

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EVENING & WEEKEND DOCTORS

“

I have been a GP in Stoke-on-Trent and the surrounding area for over 10 years.

Our priority is that we have an Out of Hours GP led service focused on providing healthcare locally people can trust - a service delivered by local people for local people.”

Dr Raju Valasapalli

GP at the Meir Primary Care Centre and
Out of Hours regional clinical director at
Staffordshire Doctors Urgent Care

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GP Surgery for:

Asthma
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SORE THROAT, COUGH/COLD/FLU

Most minor injuries or illnesses can be better treated at home



SELF-CARE

You should only attend A&E for serious and life-threatening conditions that

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SORE THROAT, COUGH/COLD/FLU

Most minor injuries or illnesses can be better treated at home

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Reveal North Stafford staff neglect the flu

DOCTORS and nurses have been criticised for a record which shows staff neglecting



Stoke-on-Trent City Council tenants to be banned from dog breeding as puppy farming soars

COUNCIL tenants are to be stopped from breeding dogs as part of a crackdown on puppy farms.

4 comments

HAVE YOUR SAY

Anger as war tribes snatch





SELF-CARE

You should only attend A&E for serious and life-threatening conditions that need immediate medical attention



ACHES, ALLERGIES, MEDICATION QUERIES

Visit your local pharmacy for advice



PHARMACY

You should only attend A&E for serious and life-threatening conditions that

ed: The
ndshire NHS
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job
d nurses at a health trust criticised for an 'appalling' has seen hundreds of g to have the flu jab.

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£30k-£35k basic, OTE £40K

YOUR SAY
s thieves
Royal Doulton's
oute

WALK-IN CENTRE

“

I attended the Hanley Health & Wellbeing Centre recently, I was seen by a nurse practitioner within 10 minutes of arriving and I was given advice on my medical problem.

I would have no hesitation in using the Walk-in Centre if needed in the future.”

Jade Young
Aged 14 from Fenton

Please visit your nearest Walk-in Centre for:

Minor injuries
Minor ailments
Minor illnesses
Non-emergency medical problems

The above is a guide only, if in doubt please contact your GP.

The walk-in facility allows you to see a Nurse Practitioner or a GP if appropriate without booking an appointment 365 days per year.

Hanley Health & Wellbeing Centre (Open daily 8am-8pm)

Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent **0300 123 6759**

Haywood Walk-in Centre (Open Mon to Fri 7am-10pm, Sat & Sun 9am-10pm)

Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent **01782 673500**

You should only attend A&E for serious and life-threatening conditions that need immediate medical attention.

KNOW YOUR

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WALK-IN CENTRE

“

Our priority is to provide high standards of patient care, all staff are highly qualified to treat minor injuries and illnesses that patients cannot manage themselves at home.

We provide services to walk-in patients who may be registered with other GP practices as well as to those who are not registered with any GP - we work hard at ensuring all patients are seen quickly and efficiently.”

Patsy O'Reilly

Aged 31, Senior Nurse Practitioner,
Hanley Health & Wellbeing Centre

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Minor ailments
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KNOW YOUR

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ACCIDENT & EMERGENCY

“

We recently took our daughter to A&E with breathing difficulties and she received urgent medical attention.

The doctors and nurses listened to our concerns and examined her thoroughly, resulting in her being diagnosed with a life threatening illness.

We feel that the care our daughter received at A&E was excellent and ultimately saved her life!”

Paul, Lauren & Lottie Weaver
Aged 36, 32 & 5 months from Baddeley Green

Please call 999 or visit A&E for:

**Unconsciousness
Fits that are not stopping
Chest pain
Breathing difficulties
Severe bleeding**

The above is a guide only, if in doubt please contact your GP.

A&E and the 999 ambulance service should only be used in a critical or life-threatening situation. Major A&E departments offer access 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. At A&E a doctor or nurse will assess your condition and decide on further action. For illnesses that are not life threatening you should first contact your GP surgery.

You should only attend A&E for serious and life-threatening conditions that need immediate medical attention.

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ACCIDENT & EMERGENCY

“

Your Emergency Department team are here to help you in your accident or emergency. Our A&E clinicians assess and treat patients with serious injuries or illnesses.

The dedicated team offer a high quality, safe service for the people of North Staffordshire and beyond. We're committed to giving you the care you need in the right environment at the right time.”

Dr Ann Marie Morris
Emergency Medicine Consultant,
University Hospital of North Staffordshire

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Health Matters

Slimmer tastes success after ditching his love of oatcakes

SLIMMING

An impending wedding and dream honeymoon inspired James Dundas to shed the stones. **EVE COMMANDER** finds out more

JAMES Dundas decided to lose weight so that he looked in svelte shape for his honeymoon in January. However, the father of twin boys, from Packmoor, has managed to get 'beach ready' well in advance of his winter deadline.

In just 12 weeks, the 37-year-old has managed to lose more than four stones, dropping from 17st 5lbs to 13st 4lbs, and slashing nine inches off his waist size in the process. "I knew I needed to lose some weight," James admitted. "I travel a lot in my car as I commute 140 miles to Coventry and back each day for work and I had started to experience back pains. "I started the diet in September after trying to lose some weight earlier in the year. This time I've really been able to sustain my weight loss."

James, who will marry fiancé Philippa, 35, at Stone Moat House in Acton Trussel in January, puts his success down to the Cambridge Weight Loss Plan. The diet replaces meals with specially designed food, which he specifically chose with his diet consultant.

James explained: "I would be given my four meals each day. This could be porridge, with cinnamon and apple in the morning, a special bar for lunch, and a soup for dinner, followed by a protein shake. "My consultant, Kate Moran, weighed me every week. We'd decide what foods I would like for that week and then she'd get them delivered to me."

He added: "What's nice is that it's one-on-one. You don't have that exposed feeling of getting weighed in front of everyone, or someone judging how much you have or haven't managed to lose that week."

Starting on the strictest diet the plan offers, James began by consuming just 450-550 calories a day. He said: "The food is actually really tasty. My favourite protein shake was strawberry mousse and chocolate. One was chocolate and butterscotch flavoured, so it was just like angel delight. "As you go along, you reintroduce more 'normal' food back into your diet. I also started running again and doing exercise."

The senior commercial manager at a mobile logistics company says that he was a



FAT FILE

Name: James Dundas
Weight before: 17st 5lbs
Weight after: 13st 4lbs
Waist size before: 42 inch
Waist size after: 33 inch

TRANSFORMATION: Above is James Dundas after shedding the stones, and below, before embarking on the weight-loss plan.

big snack eater. His main food vice was a local speciality: "I love oatcakes, especially with bacon and cheese," he said. "I moved to

Warwickshire for a while and, after returning to Stoke this year, I re-found my childhood love. "I now eat more healthily. My fiancé has been amazing, especially as she would have to eat completely separate meals from me whenever we had dinner."

He added: "One of the best benefits is that I now fit my old clothes. I now basically have a new wardrobe without

MY 3 TOP TIPS:

1. Don't do it on your own. It's so much easier when you have support.
2. Stick to simple, planned meals so you don't eat unhealthily while out and about.
3. Try the Cambridge Weight Loss Plan if you want a one-on-one weight loss.



spending a penny." Kate Moran, who lives in Tunstall, was always on hand to call or text James. The 33-year-old said: "James' transformation has been absolutely amazing. He came in to be weighed in shorts and T-shirt the other day, which he'd have never done before. "The weight has just shed from his face and body. I'm so proud." If you want to try the Cambridge Weight Loss Plan, contact Kate on 07786 434648.

Simple tips heat off the

YOUR HEALTH

SENIOR clinicians are urging people to take early advice on potential health problems this winter in a bid to ease seasonal increased pressures on hospital A&E departments. **MICHELLE CHOW** finds out more

ALTERNATIVES: Longton Hall Surgery practice manager Mike Sheldon promotes the "Know your NHS" scheme.

A REPORT conducted by Stoke-on-Trent Clinical Commissioning Group has revealed many of the pressures faced by the NHS over the winter occur because of the rise in the number of patients attending A&E departments who need to be admitted to hospital. Now the group has launched a campaign to signpost people to the most suitable place to receive treatment. The NHS funding body is also encouraging people to keep warm this winter in a bid to stay well. Mike Sheldon, practice manager at Longton Hall Surgery in Blurton, said the surgery sees a 30 per cent increase in the number of patients attending during the winter period. He said: "We see about 500 patients on a typical week, but come winter, this often rises to about 650."

"This is why we are urging people to stay warm this winter because more patients put a strain on our resources. "We have been telling elderly or vulnerable patients not to go outside if it is really cold. "If they need to see a doctor, they could call us over the



telephone. "The whole of the NHS gets busier over the winter period and, at times, some service providers may struggle to

Anne Mould, aged 92, has a flu jab every year.

meet this extra demand. "So we are trying to make sure the demand isn't just focused in one area. "Most people go to their A&E or GP surgery if they are feeling unwell, but there are many other services they can use." "This is why we are urging patients to use the correct service at the correct time."



FACTFILE: Winter bugs

A recent paper suggests that a combination of factors influence the seasonal pattern of influenza virus infections - factors that have also been implicated in the deadly norovirus spread. As the weather becomes more inclement, people huddle together, contact becomes more frequent and viruses such as these can

spread more readily. Decreased temperature and humidity also make it easier for the virus to spread. It might even be that seasonal fluctuations weaken our own defences. Decreased daylight hours lower vitamin D levels - which is essential for a properly functioning immune system. Current vaccines

protect against the most prevalent strains of Influenza A and B - but not new pandemic strains. The last pandemic, in 2009, saw the emergence of a new virus from swine. Whatever the reason, every winter a wave of nausea ripples through communities. When they infect, norovirus and flu replicate at an incredible rate,

producing billions of new viruses every day. And as the viruses replicate, they mutate. Each new virus harbours small but often advantageous changes in its genes, and these accumulate as the virus passes from one person to the next. It is this continual process of genetic drift which gives rise to the seasonal epidemics of flu and norovirus.

YOUR GUIDE TO HEALTH, WELLBEING AND RELATIONSHIPS

to help take the
NHS this winter

Some of the tips given by the Stoke on Trent Clinical Commissioning Group include:

- Keep your home warm. Your main living room should be between around 18-21C (65-70F) and the rest of the house at a minimum of 16C (61F).
- You can also use a hot-water bottle or electric blanket (but not both at the same time) to keep warm while you're in bed.
- Eat well. Food is a vital source of energy, which helps to keep your body warm. Try to make sure that you have hot meals and drinks regularly throughout the day and keep active in the home if you can.

- Wrap up warm, inside and out. Layer your clothing to stay warm and wear shoes with a good grip if you need to go outside.
- If possible, stay inside during a very cold period if you have heart or respiratory problems.
- Check on older neighbours or relatives to make sure they're safe and well. Make sure they're warm enough, especially at night, and have stocks of food and medicines so they don't need to go out during very cold weather.

Pensioner Anne Mould said she does regular exercise to keep herself fit to ward off the infections.

The 92-year-old, of Blurton, said: "I used to go dancing three times a week to keep myself healthy. "When you are old, you are more prone to infections so it is important to look after yourself. "I keep the heating on all day in winter so I don't get cold. "I don't worry too much about bills because I always put a bit of money aside each year to make sure I have enough to pay the bills. "I also have the flu jab each year and I had the pneumonia jab two years ago, which means I don't have to take it again for another 10 years." Thomas Ellis, aged 68, of

Fenton, said: "I do wear extra layers in winter if I go outside. "Every year, I stock up on cold medicine around this time in case I get ill. "I think it is a good idea for the NHS to tell people where they can go for help because a lot of people don't seem to know about the different services. "I don't understand why people go to the doctors if they have a cold because you can just treat it yourself at home. "If it gets worse, you can always give your surgery a ring to ask them for advice. "People who go to A&E unnecessarily are just wasting resources."

'He makes very little effort to please me'

RELATIONSHIPS

Every Tuesday, agony aunt ALISON COOPER offers her advice on your problems. This week: A woman's dreams after having an affair to fail to match reality



I have dreamed of the day my lover would move in with me for the past 18 years. He always said he would leave his wife for me, but never did until she died last year. Now he has, it's not as I expected at all. He makes very little effort to please me and he is so untidy and unhelpful around the house. I'm 48 and he is 59, I feel I have spent years longing for something, sacrificing so much, including having children of my own, and it was all for nothing.

Affairs are seldom a true sense of the reality of a relationship. Often snatched moments are always special times, without the reality of the routine of every day life to contend with. But having invested so much of your life in to it, I can understand why you feel so disappointed. This is about loss. Grieving for what you thought you would have, and the loss of those things you sacrificed in order to continue the affair. Before ending this relationship, consider whether have you allowed enough time for you both to adjust to this new situation. Additionally, your partner has very recently lost his wife and, despite his infidelity, I am assuming they had a long marriage, which he is very likely to feel some grief for. Discuss with him your concerns and your expectations for the relationship, now that you live together. If it cannot be worked on, then you may decide, sadly, to call it a day.

I have been having an affair with a man at work for five months and am pregnant. I am worried sick. We have used precautions, but something must have gone wrong. I am so frightened because I have not had sex with my husband for ages and he can really lose his temper. I have told the man at work, and he doesn't want me to have the baby. He said he thought we were just having a bit of fun. He doesn't want his wife to find out. I don't really agree with having an abortion, but I can't see any other way out of this because I don't have this man's support, and my husband will throw me out if he knew.

You are in a very difficult position here and sound quite alone. If

you have no family or friends you can trust and confide in initially, I would suggest you see your GP immediately and discuss your concerns with him. As your lover won't stand by you and you appear very fearful of your husband, you need to reach a decision that is right for you. You haven't said how far along in the pregnancy you are, but obviously that is a major factor in terms of considering your options. Please contact your GP and obtain the support you need right now. It might also be an appropriate time to assess your marriage, why you had the affair, and the fact that you are fearful of your husband.

My ex-wife and I split up eight years ago. It was an extremely acrimonious time and we have never been able to reconcile our differences. We have two children who are often used as messengers between the two of us, and they are unhappy about that. Attending parents evenings and other school events has to be arranged separately, and sometimes

means one of us misses out on attending something. I would very much like to improve our relationship and put all the bad feeling behind us if possible. I haven't suggested this to my ex as yet as I would first like to know whether Relate could help in this sort of situation.

Relate would indeed be an option for you, and if you could encourage your ex to join you, I think it would be the first step in healing the rift between you. Children do often get caught up in the adults' fights, which often tests their loyalty and creates feelings of guilt for them, as they love both parents and don't want to feel like they have to take sides. I think if you do access counselling, it is important that you intend to look to the future, how best you can co-operate with one another for the children. My advice would be for you each to take responsibility for your part in the breakdown of the relationship, apologise for that, and then move on to the question of the children.

SHOPPERS ADVISED OF CANCER SIGNS
thesentinel.co.uk

You should only attend A&E for serious and life-threatening conditions that need immediate medical attention

www.stokeccg.nhs.uk

SORE THROAT, COUGH/COLD/FLU

Most minor injuries or illnesses can be better treated at home

SELF-CARE

ACHES, ALLERGIES, MEDICATION QUERIES

Visit your local pharmacy for advice

PHARMACY

ASTHMA, STOMACH PAIN OR VOMITING?

Visit your GP Surgery or call Evening & Weekend Doctors if out-of-hours

GP SURGERY EVENING & WEEKEND DOCTORS

MINOR INJURIES, MINOR AILMENTS

Go straight to your local Walk-in Centre

WALK-IN CENTRE

SEVERE CHEST PAIN?

Call 999 or visit Accident & Emergency immediately

ACCIDENT & EMERGENCY

KNOW YOUR
NHS

**KNOW
YOUR**

NHS

**SORE
THROAT,
COUGH/
COLD/FLU**

Most minor
injuries or
illnesses can be
better treated
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**ACHES,
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**ASTHMA,
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Visit your GP
Surgery or
call Evening &
Weekend Doctors
if out-of-hours

**MINOR
INJURIES,
MINOR
AILMENTS**

Go straight to
your local
Walk-in Centre

**SEVERE
CHEST
PAIN?**

Call 999 or
visit Accident
& Emergency
immediately



SELF-CARE

PHARMACY

**GP SURGERY
EVENING & WEEKEND
DOCTORS**

**WALK-IN
CENTRE**

**ACCIDENT &
EMERGENCY**

You should only attend A&E for serious and life-threatening conditions that need immediate medical attention

www.stokeccg.nhs.uk

SELF-CARE

Sore throat
Cough / cold / flu
Grazes
Hangover

Most minor injuries or illnesses can be treated better at home with a well-stocked medicines cabinet and plenty of rest. Some self-care essentials are: paracetamol, anti-diarrhoea medicines, re-hydration mixtures, indigestion remedies, plasters and a thermometer.

PHARMACY

Aches & pains
Skin conditions
Allergies & rashes
Medication queries

Your local Pharmacy can provide confidential, expert advice and treatment for a range of common illnesses and complaints, without having to wait for a GP appointment or go to A&E. Pharmacists are experts on medications and can offer advice and answer queries.

DENTISTS

Dental Advice Line
0300 123 0981

Severe toothache
Dental abscess
Knocked-out teeth

Try your usual dentist for advice. If they are closed then contact the Dental Advice Line on 0300 123 0981 (Monday to Friday 8am-5pm) however outside of these hours you can call 111, your call will be triaged and if necessary you will be seen at a local health centre.

GP SURGERY EVENING & WEEKEND DOCTORS

SDUC
0300 7900 246

Asthma
Vomiting
Ear pain
Stomach ache
Back pain
Infections

If you have an illness or injury that won't go away or is getting worse make an appointment with your GP.

During evenings, weekends and bank holiday periods when your practice is closed and you require medical assistance you can call your local evening and weekend SDUC - Staffordshire Doctors Urgent Care on 0300 7900 246. This service is staffed by local GPs to ensure that all registered patients have 24/7 medical cover.

WALK-IN CENTRE

Haywood
01782 673500
Hanley
0300 123 6759
Midway
01782 663757

Minor injuries
Minor ailments

Minor illnesses
Non-emergency
medical problems

Haywood Walk-in Centre
High Lane, Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent, ST6 7AG
01782 673500 (No appointment required)
Open Mon-Fri 7am-10pm, Sat-Sun 9am-10pm

Hanley Health & Wellbeing Centre
69-71 Stafford Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 1LW
0300 123 6759 (No appointment required)
Open daily 8am-8pm

Midway Medical & Walk-in Centre
Morston House, Newcastle-under-Lyme, ST5 1QG
01782 663757 (Ring for an appointment)
Open daily 8am-8pm

ACCIDENT & EMERGENCY

Chest pain
Severe blood loss
Choking
Unconsciousness
Fractures

To only be used for critical or life threatening situations. The department provides immediate clinical care for people who are seriously ill or injured. Think twice before going to A&E.

Emergencies ONLY

A&E or 999

The above is a guide only, if in doubt please contact your GP.

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¹ (Jicreg May 2013) ² (Omniure June 2013)