

Public Health Bulletin. 9th January 2018

Produced by NHS libraries in Thames Valley and Wessex

Please find below a list of news items from the past fortnight that may be of interest to those involved in public health. This Bulletin provides topical news and reports of relevance to public health teams, community health practitioners and anyone with an interest in health promotion. All content and links are provided for information only and we do not sponsor, endorse or otherwise approve of any mentioned website or the contents of the news items. Please refer to the terms and conditions of the relevant website should you wish to reproduce any of the information.

Details of alternative current awareness services which cover more academic/specialist sources of information can be found in the section *Other Bulletins*. Your local NHS library service can assist you in accessing other current awareness services/tailored alerts, locating peer reviewed journal articles and answer any other queries you may have regarding finding information.

The information about each news item only gives a brief overview so we recommend you view the original source by clicking on the title (or Ctrl+Click in the word document).

Please contact your local NHS library service if you no longer wish to receive this Bulletin, or if you know of anyone else who would like to join the mailing list. The Bulletins are also available on the Thames Valley Public Health Network at: <http://www.oxsph.org/bulletins.html> and the Wessex Public Health Network at: <http://www.wessexphnetwork.org.uk/resources/public-health-updates.aspx>

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Alcohol misuse

[Why a booze-free month may be the perfect start to 2018](#)

2 January 2018

Source: BBC news <http://www.bbc.co.uk/>

After the excesses of Christmas, many people decide to give up booze for the month of January in the hope that it will do them some good. According to Alcohol Concern, five million Britons took part in Dry January last year. So what are the benefits that experts say it can bring?

[Drunk tanks may become norm, NHS boss warns 'selfish' revelers](#)

29 December 2017

Source: BBC News: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

Drunk tanks may have to become the norm in towns and cities to keep "selfish" revellers out of A&E, the head of the NHS in England says. Simon Stevens said he would be closely monitoring how the mobile units cope on New Year's Eve before deciding whether they should become a regular feature

Chronic conditions

[Crohn's 'felt like I'd eaten knives'](#)

29 December 2017

Source: BBC News: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

Crohn's disease is thought to affect at least 115,000 people in the UK, according to Crohn's and Colitis UK. The condition causes inflammation of the digestive system or gut.

Communicable diseases

[What is 'Aussie' flu and should we be worried?](#)

8 January 2018

Source: BBC News: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/>

The NHS is preparing itself for a bad flu season. One of the strains circulating this year - H3N2 - has been dubbed Aussie flu because it is the same strain that recently caused big problems for Australia. Australia's 2017 flu season was the worst the country had experienced in nearly a decade. Experts are waiting to see if similar will happen in the UK, after a recent rise in cases.

[GP data shows increased flu presentations across England](#)

5 January 2018

Source: RCGP: <http://www.rcgp.org.uk/>

Professor Helen Stokes-Lampard, Chair of the Royal College of GPs, said: "The latest data from our Research and Surveillance Centre (until 31 December 2017) is showing that more patients are presenting to GP practices with flu-like symptoms than earlier in 2017. Whilst this is currently within seasonally-expected levels, we are also hearing anecdotal reports of increased demand at surgeries this week. The entire NHS is currently facing intense winter pressures and NHS staff in all areas of the service are working incredibly hard to deliver the best care possible for their patients."

[Myanmar Rohingya crisis: UK medics to help tackle diphtheria](#)

28 December 2017

Source: BBC news: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

A team of British medical staff is travelling to Bangladesh to help tackle an outbreak of diphtheria affecting Rohingya Muslim refugee camps. The first of more than 40 doctors, nurses and firefighters are on their way to Cox's Bazar - at the request of the World Health Organization.

Winter flu: Should we expect the worst?

23 December 2017

Source: BBC News: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

Now the flu season is upon us, should we expect the worst? If speculation based on the recent flu outbreak in Australia is to be believed, then yes. But are these fears unfounded? Australia has witnessed its worst flu outbreak for over a decade - more than twice the usual level. In most people, seasonal flu infection is unpleasant but relatively harmless. But for some - the elderly, very young and those with asthma, diabetes or heart disease - flu can prove fatal.

Diet & nutrition

Is coconut oil a superfood?

9 January 2018

Source: BBC News: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/>

Sales of coconut oil are rocketing, propelled by celebrity endorsements and claims that drinking the stuff will cure everything from bad breath to digestive disorders. So is coconut oil a cholesterol-busting wonder food, as some claim, or is this all dangerous hype?

'Raw water': A dangerous new health craze?

8 January 2018

Source: BBC News: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/>

Start-ups in the US have started selling untreated water, taken straight from wild springs, for £4 per litre. But according to experts, drinking "raw water" can be dangerous unless it is boiled first.

Does drinking fizz make you fat?

3 January 2018

Source: BBC News: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/>

We all know that sugary, fizzy drinks are full of calories - with the equivalent of about seven teaspoons of sugar in a standard can of cola. But is it only the sugar in the drink that swells our waists, or could it also be the bubbles?

Limit children's snacks to 100 calories, health body says

2 January 2018

Source: BBC News: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

Half of the sugar young children in England consume comes from unhealthy snacks and sweet drinks, figures show. On average, primary school children have at least three sugary snacks a day, Public Health England found. This means they can easily consume three times more sugar than the recommended maximum. PHE has launched a campaign to encourage parents to look for healthier snacks of no more than 100 calories - and to limit them to two a day.

[Eating leafy greens may help prevent memory loss](#)

22 December 2017

Source: NHS Choices: <https://www.nhs.uk/news/>

"A salad a day keeps brains 11 years younger," the Mail Online reports. This oddly specific headline was prompted by new research into whether eating a diet high in leafy green vegetables protects against age-related memory loss and decline in thinking skills (cognitive abilities).

Disability

[Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome: Woman starts hospital navigation website](#)

27 December 2017

Source: BBC News: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

A woman has started a website to help disabled people navigate hospitals and flag up the facilities they have. Liz Owen, who has Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome that affects the skin and joints, set up the site after realising the anxiety it caused not knowing what facilities different hospitals had to help people like her.

Health promotion

[Breakthroughs put diseases on the back foot](#)

24 December 2017

Source: BBC News: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

It has been a remarkable year of promise in medical science. Incurable diseases from sickle cell to haemophilia now look as though they can be treated. These are the highlights.

Health services administration

[NHS winter crisis should prompt government to fully fund social care, warn councils](#)

4 January 2018

Source: Local Government Association:
<https://www.local.gov.uk/>

This year's winter health crisis should incentivise government to fully fund our social care system, council leaders urged today. The Local Government Association, which represents 370 councils in England and Wales, said there cannot be a sustainable NHS without a sustainable social care system. Urgent new funding to address the annual social care funding gap, which will reach £2.3 billion by 2020, is needed to avoid an all-year round NHS crisis, it is warning today.

[NHS parking charges: Hospitals made £174m in a year](#)

28 December 2017

Source: BBC News: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

Hospitals in England made a record £174m last year in charging for parking, an investigation has found. The figure for 2016-17 was 6% up on the previous financial year, data collected by the Press Association under the Freedom of Information Act showed.

HIV & AIDS

Vending machines call for STI and HIV test kits

22 December 2017

Source: BBC News: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

Free test kits for sexually transmitted infections and HIV should be available in shops and vending machines to help encourage more people to get themselves tested, a charity has said. Terrence Higgins Trust Cymru wants to "normalise" testing and reduce the stigma of getting checked out.

Infant & child health

Apple investors urge action on 'smartphone addiction'

8 January 2018

Source: BBC News: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/>

Big investors have called on Apple to develop software that limits how long children can use its smartphones. The call came from two investment groups that hold \$2bn (£1.48bn) of Apple stock between them. A letter calling for the digital locks, signed by Jana Partners and a California teachers' pension fund, was sent to the iPhone maker this weekend. The call for better controls was welcomed by academics studying youngsters' use of technology.

Sugary fruit juices and drinks linked to childhood asthma

20 December 2017

Source: NHS Choices: <https://www.nhs.uk/news/>

Researchers in the US say children whose mothers drank more sugary drinks while pregnant, and children who drink a lot of fruit juice in early childhood, are more likely to be diagnosed with asthma by mid-childhood (around age 7 to 8).

Why spending time outdoors could help your child's eyesight

28 December 2017

Source: BBC News: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

While there isn't much research out there yet about the impact of screens on eyesight - after all the iPhone was first unveiled by Apple in only 2007 - experts are concerned about growing levels of short-sightedness in children. And they suggest the best thing parents can do to prevent it is to encourage youngsters to spend more time outdoors in the sunlight.

Men's health

Middle-aged can reverse heart risk with exercise, study suggests

8 January 2018

Source: BBC News: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/>

The new year is a time when many plan to shape up after the excesses of the festive period. Now there is good news for those who fear it might be too late in life to improve their fitness. People into late middle age can reverse or reduce the risk of heart failure caused by decades of sedentary living by exercising, a study has found. But there is a catch - it takes two years of aerobic exercise, four to five days a week, researchers said.

Mental health

[Singing 'speeds up' recovery from post-natal depression](#)

9 January 2018

Source: BBC News: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/>

Researchers found that women who took part in group singing sessions with their babies experienced a much faster improvement in their symptoms than those who did not.

[Teenagers turn to wrestling to help with mental health](#)

7 January 2018

Source: BBC News: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/>

A wrestling club has helped youngsters to manage challenging conditions such as autism and anger issues. A coach at the World Association of Wrestling gym in Norwich said it gives teenagers something to focus on and that she has seen "insane results".

[Research reveals over half of young Scots who feel lonely also experience depression](#)

3 January 2018

Source: The Mental Health Foundation

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/>

The Mental Health Foundation has warned that loneliness is creating mental health problems among tens of thousands of young people across Scotland. New research by the charity has found that more than half of 18-24 year olds experience depression when they feel lonely, with 42% saying it leads to anxiety. 67% say their mental health worsens as a result of feeling lonely.

[Turkey blunder 'a potential dementia sign'](#)

23 December 2017

Source: BBC News: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

Forgetting to turn on the oven for the Christmas turkey could be a sign of early dementia in a loved one, says the NHS's top dementia expert. Prof Alistair Burns said becoming confused in a strange house and forgetting relatives' names may also be early signs of the disease.

[New tool to help young people when visiting loved ones with dementia](#)

21 December 2017

Source: ESRC: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/>

Young people who have difficulty talking to older relatives or friends with dementia can now be helped by a smartphone app called Ticket to Talk designed by researchers at Newcastle University as part of a collaboration funded by the ESRC Impact Acceleration Account (IAA) and EPSRC.

[Community singing 'improves mental health and helps recovery'](#)

21 December 2017

Source: BBC News: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

Singing in groups can help people recover from mental illness, making them feel valued and increasing their confidence, according to research.

Obesity

[Are surgery weight restrictions on the rise?](#)

26 December 2017

Source: BBC News: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

Most overweight patients in England face being denied surgery, even when this goes against national guidelines on clinical best practice.

Physical activity

[Could these apps help you lose weight for good this year?](#)

9 January 2018

Source: BBC News <http://www.bbc.co.uk/>

January is a peak time for downloading health and fitness apps and putting those Christmas present fitness trackers to work. But do they actually help you stay motivated?

Screening

[Researchers call for routine mental health screening during pregnancy](#)

5 January 2018

Source: NHS Choices: <https://www.nhs.uk/news/>

"One in four mothers-to-be have mental health issues before birth," is today's headline from the Mail Online – leading us to suspect that it misunderstood the point of the study. The fact that 1 in 4 pregnant women have mental health issues isn't that surprising given previous research has shown that 1 in 6 of all adults in the UK are affected by mental health issues at any given time. A rise above this average could be explained by the extra stresses of being pregnant. But the study in question wasn't a survey of mental health problems in pregnant women. The researchers actually wanted to see how accurate a simple screening tool for depression was in correctly identifying women with mental health issues.

Social & economic issues

[New Migration Leadership Team will help academics speak to a broader community about migration](#)

9 January 2018

Source: ESRC: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/>

The complex topic of migration could be better understood if several academic disciplines worked together to explain it, according to the leader of a new research team, jointly funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).

Statistics

[Shingles vaccine 'has cut cases by a third' in England](#)

22 December 2017

Source: BBC News <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>

Cases of shingles have reduced by 35% in England since a vaccine was offered to 70-year-olds, Public Health England says. But it is urging more people in their 70s to get their free injection against the painful condition.

Women's health

Heart attack care dangerously unequal for women, study finds

8 January 2018

Source: BBC News <http://www.bbc.co.uk/>

Fewer women who suffer a heart attack would die if they were given the same treatments as men, according to researchers. They analysed the outcomes of 180,368 Swedish patients who suffered a heart attack over a 10-year period. Women were two times more likely to die from the most serious type of heart attack than men in the year after having one. Researchers believe it is due to differences in the care given.

Abortion clinics to be given star ratings by Care Quality Commission

3 January 2018

Source: BBC news <http://www.bbc.co.uk/>

Abortion clinics are among a new group of healthcare services which will have to publicly display official ratings from the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

Local news: []

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Other Bulletins
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