

Health Triangle

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UK Health Radio



Health Focus: Lymphoedema

MAKE 2025 DIFFERENT:

The Secrets to
Sticking with Your
New Year's Goals
by **Danielle Sax**

NAVIGATING SLEEP DURING MENOPAUSE

**SEASONAL
EATING GUIDE:**
Winter Foods &
Festive Recipes

Winter Wellbeing:
A Holistic Approach to
Health and Vitality
by **Janey Lee Grace**

Talk Thyroid

Young Adults
living with
Thyroid
conditions

**BREAKING
NEWS**
Obesity is a
BIG problem



“New year, new beginnings – embrace the challenges, chase your dreams, and let every day be a step closer to your best self.”

– UK Health Radio –



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Health
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Editor's Note:

This Month ▲

"GOODBYE 2024. HELLO 2025!"

As this year comes to a close, it's natural to look back and take stock, before looking forward to the New Year, 2025.

December starts with HIV AIDS Day and the whole of January is dedicated to raising awareness of the preventability of Cervical Cancer.

Breaking News also focuses on a global problem, which is also totally preventable - obesity.

Not but two of the features in this final edition of Health Triangle in 2024 look at how to improve the success rate of personal goals and New Year Resolutions, where the failure rate may be as high as 90%!

Attaching objectives to real personal values rather than vague wishes is strongly recommended. SMART objectives and Self-Leadership provide the most promising bases for success! Find out more in this issue.

In a turbulent world, there are still unchanging constants - the gifts of nature that never stop giving, the incredible power of the mind, the priceless value of a balanced lifestyle, one that includes a good diet and regular exercise. Sounds simple doesn't it? It can be!

We cannot change a single moment of the past. We can change every moment of the future.

Thank you for all your attention in 2024. All good wishes for the unknown year ahead!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Reg Starkey".

Reg Starkey
Editor





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LYMPHOEDEMA

Lymphoedema is a long-term [chronic] condition that causes swelling in the body's tissues. It can affect any part of the body, but usually develops in the arms or legs.

It develops when the lymphatic system does not work properly. The lymphatic system is a network of channels and glands throughout the body that helps fight infection and remove excess fluid.

It's important that lymphoedema is identified and treated as soon as possible. If it is not treated, it can get worse.

SYMPTOMS OF LYMPHOEDEMA

The main symptom of lymphoedema is swelling in all or part of a limb or another part of the body. It can be difficult to fit into clothes, and jewellery and watches can feel tight.

At first, the swelling may be soft and easy to push in, leaving a dent, and may come and go. It may get worse during the day and go down overnight. Without treatment, it will usually become more severe and persistent.

Other symptoms in an affected body part can include:

- **an aching, heavy feeling**
- **difficulty with movement**
- **repeated skin infections**
- **developing hard, tight or thickened skin**
- **folds developing in the skin**
- **wart-like growths developing on the skin**
- **fluid leaking through the skin**

Signs of lymphoedema in the head and neck may include swelling or heaviness in the face, mouth or throat, and problems with swallowing and speech.

WHAT CAUSES LYMPHOEDEMA?

Lymphoedema is caused by a problem with the lymphatic system, a network of vessels and glands spread throughout the body. The main functions of the lymphatic system are helping fight infection and draining excess fluid from tissues.

There are 2 main types of lymphoedema:

- **PRIMARY LYMPHOEDEMA** – caused by faulty genes that affect the development of the lymphatic system; it can develop at any age, but usually starts during infancy, adolescence, or early adulthood
- **SECONDARY LYMPHOEDEMA** – caused by damage to the lymphatic system or problems with the movement and drainage of fluid in the lymphatic system; it can be the result of a cancer treatment, an infection, injury, inflammation of the limb, or a lack of limb movement

WHO'S AFFECTED

Lymphoedema is thought to affect more than 200,000 people in the UK. Primary lymphoedema is rare and secondary lymphoedema is much more common.

Secondary lymphoedema often affects people with cancers that involve the lymph system or who've had treatment to the lymph nodes, such as breast cancer, vulval cancer, penile cancer, and head and neck cancer. People who have treatment for skin cancer [melanoma] in the lymph nodes in the groin can also get lymphoedema.

"... Lymphoedema is thought to affect more than 200,000 people in the UK. Primary lymphoedema is rare..."

“... Talking to other people with lymphoedema can be reassuring and decrease feelings of isolation, stress and anxiety...”

Your treatment team will let you know if you're at risk of getting lymphoedema from your cancer or cancer treatment. Any planned treatment you have will try to avoid causing damage to your lymph nodes.

DIAGNOSING LYMPHOEDEMA

See a GP if you experience the typical symptoms of lymphoedema, such as swelling in your arms and legs. They may refer you to a specialist lymphoedema treatment centre for further assessment.

In many cases, lymphoedema can be diagnosed from your symptoms and medical history, and by examining the affected body part and measuring the distance around it to see if it's enlarged.

Occasionally, further tests may be necessary to assess and monitor your condition.

If you're being treated for cancer and are at risk of developing lymphoedema, you'll be monitored for it afterwards.

TREATING LYMPHOEDEMA

There's no cure for lymphoedema, but it's usually possible to control the main symptoms using techniques to minimise fluid build-up and stimulate the flow of fluid through the lymphatic system.

These include wearing compression garments, taking good care of your skin, moving and exercising regularly, having a healthy diet and lifestyle, and using specialised massage techniques.

COMPLICATIONS

Cellulitis is the most common complication of lymphoedema. It can also have a significant psychological impact. It can be serious if it's not treated quickly.

CELLULITIS

If you have lymphoedema, the build-up of fluid in your tissues makes you more vulnerable to infection.

Cellulitis is a bacterial infection of the deep layer of skin [dermis] that often affects people with lymphoedema. Cellulitis can also sometimes cause lymphoedema.

Symptoms of cellulitis can include:

- redness and a feeling of heat in the skin – this may be harder to see on brown and black skin
- pain and increased swelling in the affected area
- a high temperature
- chills

Antibiotics taken by mouth [orally] can usually be used to treat cellulitis, although severe cases may need to be treated in hospital with antibiotics given directly into a vein [intravenously].

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT

Living with a long-term condition that affects your appearance can cause a great deal of distress and lead to periods of depression.

You may be depressed if you've been feeling down for the past few months and no longer find pleasure in things you usually enjoy.

If this is the case, talk to a GP or a member of your lymphoedema treatment team. Effective treatments are available for depression.

Talking to other people with lymphoedema can be reassuring and decrease feelings of isolation, stress and anxiety.

Visit the **Lymphoedema Support Network** website for information and advice. They can also put you in touch with a support group in your area.

If you continue with your treatment plan, your symptoms should eventually become less noticeable.

www.nhs.uk



It was mid-January last year when Lisa found herself staring at the gym membership card on her desk. She had enthusiastically signed up for a new fitness routine on January 1st, fueled by the universal promise of a "New Year, New Me." Fast forward three weeks, and she was already feeling the weight of unmet resolutions, guilt creeping in with every glance at the untouched card. Sound familiar?

As we approach the end of another year, countless people will make promises to themselves—exercise more, save money, learn a new skill, or simply be kinder to themselves. The enthusiasm for change surges as the clock strikes midnight on December 31st. But research by the University of Scranton suggests that only 9% of people actually keep their resolutions. What happens in the gap between intention and reality? ...

2025
2024

The Year-End Reflection: New Year's Resolutions, Self-Leadership, and Empowerment

by Anabel Ternès von Hattburg

December & January

Seasonal tips and tasks to keep your
garden thriving through winter

As the year winds down and winter takes hold, gardens enter a quiet, reflective phase. While December and January may seem like months of dormancy, they're actually a crucial time for preparation, maintenance, and forward planning. With the right care and a little foresight, you can keep your garden healthy through winter and set the stage for a flourishing spring.

Here's your week-by-week guide to ensuring your garden stays in top shape over the winter months...

NHS

Examining the NHS: What Needs to be Done?

The National Health Service (NHS) is one of the great aspects of living in the UK, giving free healthcare to the public. However, the NHS is also in a [bad state](#) with a number of challenges that pose a real threat to the organization and public healthcare in the UK. This post will explore the main challenges facing the NHS and what needs to be done to repair the healthcare system in the UK.

ADDRESSING WORKFORCE SHORTAGES

One of the primary issues affecting the NHS is staff shortages. Staff shortages create a host of issues in a healthcare system, including increased ...

"Many people have experienced lengthy waiting times for treatments & consultations..."

Cervical Health

Awareness Month

A Call to Action in January

Every January, **Cervical Health Awareness Month** shines a spotlight on the importance of cervical health, prevention of cervical cancer, and the vital role of early detection. This observance is dedicated to educating individuals, particularly women, about ways to protect themselves against cervical cancer and other cervical health issues. With advancements in screening and vaccination, cervical cancer is largely preventable, making awareness and action even more crucial. As communities and organisations come together during this month, the goal is clear: to empower individuals with knowledge, reduce stigma around cervical health, and improve access to preventive healthcare...

CARING FOR CARERS AT CHRISTMAS

by Niki Cassar

None of us begin our lives imagining that one day we will become a carer for a parent, spouse, partner or even one of our own children. For some people, the role is one they take on gradually, as with elderly parents becoming frail or suffering from memory loss. For others it can happen suddenly, even dramatically, due to a serious illness, accident or the birth of a child with physical or mental health issues. As the person requiring care becomes increasingly dependent, there is often little respite for the carer who then gets stuck in an apparently never-ending cycle of care, often 24/7, whilst experiencing guilt about taking time off. External support in the form of medical appointments and social services is almost exclusively centred around the person with the illness or disability, and the carer becomes increasingly isolated and lonely. Prior to the World Wars, families mostly lived within the same communities, and care was willingly shared. The big change in demographics and reduced size of families, with grown up children moving to other parts of the world, has had a huge impact on family life, with increased reliance on friends and paid carers. Often, the voluntary carer has to give up their paid job, leading to a big drop in income and further isolation...

CHAGA: THE KING OF ANTI-CANCER MUSHROOMS

by Dr Sam Watts MCMA, Dip.Ayu, MSc, BSc (Hons), PhD
– Principal: Mind-Body Medical

Early in the 20th century, medical anthropologists travelled to the wilds of Siberia, having been tipped off that the indigenous communities there were practising a form of herbal medicine the like of which had never been seen in the West. The anthropologists subsequently went on to live among these indigenous communities for many years and during this time they documented in great detail the herbal medicines, remedies and tonics their herbalists used to keep their communities healthy, and to treat them when they fell ill. And as the months and years went by, the anthropologists observed something profound: during the entire duration of their studies they never saw a single person diagnosed with or die from cancer. Indeed, the village herbalists didn't have a word for such a disease in their language. And yet, just a few hundred miles away across the Ural mountains, the prevalence of cancer was much, much higher, being akin to the rates commonly found in the West.

This finding fascinated the anthropologists who became obsessed with delineating the mechanisms that might be responsible for the almost total absence of cancer in these Siberian indigenous communities compared to their relations living further West across the Urals. And when they began to compare and contrast the lifestyle, diet and practices between these two communities, a stark difference emerged almost immediately: the indigenous Siberians who were still living the ...

"... the anti-cancer actions of Chaga has reached fever pitch, and is generating real excitement in the arena of integrative cancer care...."



*Happy
Holidays*

— and a —
JOYFUL NEW YEAR

from the Health Triangle and
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to all our readers and listeners.
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