

Healthwise. SVUH

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Hospital Challenge Day 2009 - 'The Way of Health' Treasure Hunt

The annual **Hospital Challenge Day** event, which promotes active living, will this year take you back to your childhood...*A Treasure Hunt!* The treasure won't be a crock of gold or the winning lotto ticket for Saturday nights draw, but it will be something you can enjoy...So come on, get those walking shoes on and see if you can follow the clues.

Hospital Challenge Day involves getting as many people as possible to do at least 15 minutes of physical activity on that day. We are conscious that many staff members who would like to take part may not be in the hospital on that one particular day, for one reason or another. So you can complete your 15 minute Treasure Hunt on any day from 31st August to the 9th September. Pick a day and time to suit yourself. Consider doing it with some colleagues or friends. Perhaps you can have an interdepartmental event or competition. The choice is yours.

How does it work?

On page 4 you will find a list of clues. You will need to bring this list with you when you are doing the Treasure Hunt. If you have any queries, please email Irene Gilroy at i.gilroy@svuh.ie or phone on ext 3693.

Where do I start?

Start at the Slí na Slaínte map outside the main hospital entrance and follow the clues from there. Complete the answers as you go and return your completed list to the Dept. Preventive Medicine and Health Promotion by internal mail.

We must receive all entries by 3pm on Wednesday 9th September. All entries received will be entered into a draw for a "One 4 All" voucher worth €100. The draw will take place on Thursday 10th September.

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Physical Activity and Health

In order to gain significant health benefits, you need at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on five or more days a week. Moderate physical activity is any activity that causes an increase in your heart rate and breathing, while still being able to talk e.g. normal to brisk walk. This target can be achieved through a variety of activities. Choose an activity that you enjoy. Get the family involved...the options are endless.

Walking is a great way to get active. It is a type of activity that can easily fit into your lifestyle; it can be preformed by a large percentage of the population; it does not require any special equipment besides a good pair of walking shoes. The important thing is to start gently and gradually build up the speed and distance that you walk over time.

The benefits of physical activity include:

- Reduced risk of heart disease
- Reduced risk of developing diabetes
- Helps build and maintain healthy bones, muscles and joints.
- Helps control weight
- Promotes psychological well being
- Helps build social networks
- And many more...

Walk
for Heart

Irish Heart Week

21st – 27th September

For more
information
contact the Irish
Heart Foundation

www.irishheart.ie

Every year, many patients with literacy difficulties come in contact with the health service in Ireland. For most of them, their anxiety about their health condition is compounded by their inability to fully understand health information and their awkwardness about their literacy difficulties, which in turn affect their self-confidence and ability to communicate effectively.

In a health context, literacy means using the skills of reading, writing, listening, spelling and numeracy to understand health information and confidently ask questions in case of uncertainty. But according to the International Adult Literacy Survey from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, one in four Irish adults has a significant literacy difficulty. This means they may not be able to understand and fill in consent forms or follow written or verbal advice and instructions.

A survey completed by the National Adult Literacy Agency and Merck Sharp & Dohme Ireland (Human Health) Ltd. revealed that 1 in 5 Irish people are not fully confident that they understand all of the information they receive from their healthcare professional. Forty three percent said they would only sometimes ask for clarification if they did not understand something their healthcare professional said to them.

Further results of the survey found that 60% of the Irish population did not fully understand the word "prognosis", a common term used by healthcare professionals in consultation with patients. Two thirds of respondents also admitted to having difficulty understanding signs and directions in Irish hospitals some of the time, with one in five stating they have difficulty most of the time. Twenty percent were not able to correctly identify which part of the body "Cardiology Department" related to, which is surprising given that over a third of all deaths in Ireland are heart related.



But the prognosis isn't all bad. One way to avoid sometimes unsatisfactory health consultations is to use plain English in written and verbal information. As its focus is on everyday language, plain English helps to reduce the mystery and anxiety that surround certain health conditions. This naturally benefits all patients, not just those with literacy difficulties.

Various hospitals and projects within the HSE have already taken this on board. Many have contacted the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) for advice, editing and our Plain English Mark, a logo that is only given after a thorough review of a document to verify that it meets international plain language standards.

What is plain English?

Plain English is a style of presenting information that the intended reader can understand and act on after a single reading. Shorter sentences, everyday words, a direct and personal tone and well-known images and symbols can contribute to clearer communication to everyone.

Medical and business jargon	Plain English
Analgesic	Painkiller
Ascertain	Find out
Catheter	Tube
Commence	Begin
Optimum	Best
Particulars	Details
Suture	Stitch

The importance of plain English in written information is just one part of the puzzle. Although time constraints can prevent lengthy consultations, even a few minutes spent talking to patients (or their guardians) through leaflets, consent forms and dosage instructions can make a significant difference. One mother who took part in NALA research on health literacy in 2003 described an ideal experience of a nurse showing her how to manage her child's asthma condition. She was shown pictures of lungs to explain what happens during an asthma attack and was asked to breathe out and then try to speak so that she could experience the sensation of an attack.

Patients and health professionals have a joint responsibility to discuss health conditions and manage and improve health. It may be expected that patients will know what to ask, take action and follow instructions to the letter, but some patients, such as those with literacy difficulties, need assistance with this.

The Askme3 questions initiative urges patients to ask three questions of their healthcare professional so they clearly understand their problem and what they should do about it. The questions are **What is my problem? What do I need to do? and Why is it important for me to do this?**

"International research has shown that patients who are better informed about their health have more effective consultations with their health care provider and are better informed about the medicines they are prescribed. They are also more likely to comply with their medication and as a result have improved health outcomes. We would encourage people to ask these three questions of their doctor with confidence so they are clear about their diagnosis and their treatment options." said Ms. Inez Bailey, Director, NALA.

Top Ten Tips

Communicating with people who have communication difficulties

1. Face to face – 55% of our communication is conveyed by our body language
2. Eye contact – look directly at the person you are speaking to and maintain good eye contact
3. Gesture – adds extra valuable information
4. Intonation – 38% of communication is conveyed by tone
5. Clear speech & concise language – take your time and use meaningful words
6. Say it, don't shout it! – a person with a communication difficulty has difficulty with processing the language not their hearing
7. Repeat yourself if asked or say it another way
8. Use your environment - point to it
9. Write it down – some people have difficulty with understanding the spoken word but understand the same words if written
10. Bed or wheelchair –where possible talk to the person at their level

Remember only 7% of our communication is conveyed by the words

Further advice and information is available from the Speech and Language Therapy Department located in the Allied Therapy Suite on the first floor

Seasonal Influenza and Pandemic Influenza vaccine

by Ann O'Reilly, Occupational Health

Influenza is a highly contagious infection of the respiratory tract caused by a myxovirus and transmitted by airborne droplet infection (Anderson, et al, 1994).

Influenza A (H1N1) virus is a subtype of influenza virus A and the most common cause of influenza (flu) in humans. Some strains of H1N1 are endemic in humans and cause a small fraction of all influenza-like illness and a large fraction of all seasonal influenza.

Pandemic: A disease epidemic occurs when there are more cases of that disease than normal. A pandemic is a worldwide epidemic of a disease. Influenza pandemic may occur when a new influenza virus appears against which the human population has no immunity. With the increase in global transport, as well as urbanisation and overcrowded conditions in some areas, epidemics due to a new influenza virus are likely to take hold around the world, and become a pandemic faster than before (WHO 2009)

Ireland is currently suffering an Influenza pandemic caused by H1N1 virus. Currently there are vaccines in production world wide. When available they will be distributed throughout the HSE. Healthcare workers will be prioritised for vaccination. Information relating to the availability and timetables for this vaccine and the seasonal "flu" vaccine will be displayed by the Occupational Health Department to all staff via notice boards throughout the hospital. For more information contact the Health Protection Surveillance Centre. Free phone 1899 94 11 00 -hpsc@hse.ie or www.hpsc.ie

Respiratory Hygiene and Cough Etiquette



When coughing or sneezing

- Turn your head away from others
- Use a tissue to cover your nose and mouth



Dispose of the tissue afterwards in a waste bin



Decontaminate your hands after discarding tissue using soap and water or alcohol gel for at least 15 seconds

These steps will help prevent the spread of all respiratory infections



Reference—Siegel JD, Rhinehart D, Jackson M, Chiarello L; the Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee. 2007 guideline for isolation precautions: preventing transmission of infectious agents in healthcare settings. *Am J Infect Control* 2007;35(10 Suppl 2):S65–164



"There is no greater joy nor greater reward than to make a fundamental difference in someone's life" Sister Mary Rose McGeedy

