

Feel Well

Women's Health - Developing self-knowledge

“Above all – Know thyself” Socrates suggested. By focussing on developing an improved awareness and knowledge of their own body and health status, women can access screening and enable early treatment of conditions which can make a significant difference to overall health and longevity.



Early detection is key to successful treatment

In 1900, a woman's life span was about 50 years. Now, well into a new millennium, average life expectancy for a woman in the UK is around 82 years and continues to rise with a better quality of life throughout their years. It is essential that women become more aware of the specific health issues that may affect them and understand how to manage and optimise their overall wellbeing.

Screening

The early detection of certain health issues can significantly help improve recovery rates and overall wellbeing. Many conditions can be prevented or successfully treated by early diagnosis through some simple and widely available screening procedures.

Furthermore, by raising awareness of possible issues as early as possible, positive and preventative lifestyle changes can be adopted to further reduce potential risk.

Improved self-knowledge

Gynaecology is the primary branch of medical science concerned with women's health issues. The word 'gynaecology' consists of 'gynaeco' meaning 'woman', and 'logic' meaning 'knowledge'.

It is important that every woman has access to knowledge related to the spectrum of women's health issues, not only about the female reproductive system but also about all aspects of female health including cancer awareness specific to women and expected life changes during the menopause.

Taking care of our health and wellbeing is a personal responsibility. The way we live our lives is our choice, but the choices we make can be surprisingly influential in our longer-term health and wellbeing.

Never too late or too early

Starting good habits at a young age is helpful and can contribute to more 'quality of life years' once we get older.

The more we understand about our bodies and how they are working, the more targeted we can be in making choices which will serve our bodies well.

The NHS will provide a free health check for you, once over 40 years old, every 5 years. This will help with recognising risk factors for heart disease, diabetes, kidney disease and stroke and provide you with some feedback about your own risk profile.

Often we 'bury our heads in the sand' and avoid information or accessing medical care when we actually feel we should be engaging with healthcare professionals. That can leave us feeling reliant on fate, and as though we don't have any control.

There are certainly factors which affect our health which we can't change such as our age, ethnicity and family medical history, however there is a lot we can work to change including our exercise levels, diet, smoking habits, alcohol intake, social activities and perhaps our sleep habits. We do have the ability to have some control over our health outcomes; in fact, quite a lot of control!

A large scale study has shown you can reduce our risk of developing diabetes by 93%, having a heart attack by 81%, stroke by 51% and cancer by at least 36% if you are able to keep your Body Mass Index (BMI) below 30 (or ideally 25!), don't smoke, take 3 and a 1/2 hours of exercise a week and eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables and wholegrains but low in fats and sugar.

Choose a healthy lifestyle

Concentrating on a small number of lifestyle factors can make a huge difference to our health.

By focussing on developing an improved awareness and knowledge of their own body and health status, women can access screening and treat conditions which can make a significant difference to overall health and longevity.

Medicine and science advance daily and its essential to stay ahead of the game. An improved knowledge and understanding of 'the self' will help towards encouraging women to start to develop new health habits and perhaps more importantly, drop the unhealthy ones!