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Hounslow mums have a new BFF

**Out and about and need to feed
your little one?**

**Meet the Baby Feeding Friendly
(BFF) network**

Launched in 2023, the BFF network is a collection of venues across Hounslow that identify themselves as baby feeding friendly.

The right to breastfeed in any public place is protected by law, meaning you should never be asked to leave when feeding. Venues in the BFF network offer a comfortable and welcoming environment. From local businesses to libraries and leisure centres, you will never have to stress about looking for a place to feed. Plus, some locations may also be happy to warm up milk or water if needed.

Look for the Hounslow BFF posters and know you're in a supportive space. No more feelings of awkwardness, being uncomfortable or hiding away. You can now confidently enjoy your day out and keep your baby happy and well-fed.

All libraries and leisure centres across Hounslow are included in this network as well as the Health Outreach Team shop in the Treaty Centre on Hounslow High Street. Scan the QR code to find the full list of venues.



Women working
together to

CANCEL CERVICAL CANCER



The thought of cervical cancer can be scary, but the good news is that it's one of the most preventable cancers. Women and girls in Hounslow have got the illness on the run by attending regular cervical screening and taking the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine. It's as easy as getting in touch with your GP and making an appointment. Let's all keep ourselves safe and help the NHS eliminate cervical cancer by 2040.

HPV vaccine: Game-changer

Schools now offer the HPV vaccine to girls in Years 8 and 9. This has led to a dramatic drop in cervical cancer rates among young women. A major Lancet study showed that cervical cancer incidence fell by 87% in women who are vaccinated when 12 or 13. The vaccine offers protection against HPV.

And lastly on the cervical cancer story, after this paragraph: It's ok if you have any worries about the screening. You

can always contact your GP surgery beforehand and discuss your concerns. You can also specifically request a female nurse or doctor to do the test.

Missed a dose? No worries! Women and girls under the age of 25 can still get the HPV vaccine for free through their GP.

Since the routine HPV vaccine programme was introduced, it has led to a dramatic drop in cervical cancer rates among young women. It's truly a game-changer, so why not protect yourself and your children by getting vaccinated?

Don't ignore your screening invite

Double up on prevention by regularly attending your cervical cancer screening appointment, even if you're vaccinated. All women aged 25 to 64 are invited by letter to cervical screening to check the health of their cervix.

It's ok if you have any worries about the screening. You can always contact your GP surgery beforehand and discuss your concerns. You can also specifically request a female nurse or doctor to do the test. You might also consider booking a double appointment so you don't feel rushed, bringing a friend or loved one for support, and wearing a skirt or dress if it makes you feel more comfortable. For more tips to help make your screening appointment more relaxed, visit: eveappeal.org.uk/tips-for-cervical-screening/

During the screening, a sample of cells from your cervix is collected and then checked for types of HPV that causes abnormal changes. If these changes are found, they can be treated before they can turn into cancer.

Find out more at www.nhs.uk/conditions/cervical-cancer

**Cervical cancer is
one illness we can
beat for good, so
let's get to work**

Reminder

**Book your Cervical
Screening**

Later

Now

UNDERSTANDING MENOPAUSE:

Q&A with Ms Archana Dixit

Ms Archana Dixit MD DNB FRCOG is a Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist at The West Middlesex University Hospital where she is the Lead for Antenatal Clinic Services. She is a passionate champion for women's health in the local community.

What is menopause?

Menopause is when a woman stops having periods due to low levels of the female hormone oestrogen. It is a natural part of ageing for women and usually occurs between the ages of 45 – 55, with the average age in the UK being 51. There is ethnic variation within this, for example for South Asian women the average age for menopause is around 47.

What are the stages of menopause?

There are three different stages of menopause.

The first is perimenopause, these are the years leading up to menopause. At this stage, many women will start experiencing symptoms but still get their periods, although they are often irregular or late. For some women, periods may be more frequent and heavier.

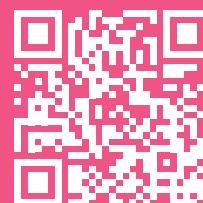
The next stage is the actual menopause. This is when you have not had a period for 12 months.

The third stage is post-menopause, these are the years after menopause. You may not experience the classical symptoms anymore but changes in hormone levels may continue to affect your health, particularly your bone and heart health.

What are the physical symptoms?

The physical symptoms are mainly related to the drop in oestrogen levels which starts in the perimenopause and is more pronounced during menopause. The most common physical symptoms are hot flushes, where a flush rises from the chest and can make your face go red, and night sweats. These can be extremely distressing and cause problems with sleeping.

Check out Women's Health Concern for online help and resources, including a tool to find a menopause specialist.





“A woman's health shapes a healthy family, and in turn, a healthy society.”

Vaginal dryness or discomfort due to the lack of oestrogen is also a sign of menopause. Unexplained joint aches and pains, weight gain, changes in body shape especially around the abdomen, and reduced sex drive are all symptoms of menopause.

Not all women will experience each of these symptoms. For some, the symptoms might not be very noticeable, while for others they can have a big impact on their day-to-day life.

How does menopause affect mental health?

Menopause can significantly impact your mental and emotional wellbeing, sometimes as a direct result of the physically distressing symptoms. Aside from that, many women may experience mental health symptoms due to hormonal fluctuation. Mood swings, irritability, low mood, depression, anxiety and panic attacks are all known symptoms of menopause. You may have trouble remembering things or are unable to stay focused. This is known as ‘brain fog’ and is a common menopausal symptom.

These symptoms can be quite distressing. Being aware of them and understanding that they are treatable to a certain extent will help to reduce the stigma and encourage more women to seek support.

What are some ways to manage the symptoms?

There are a variety of ways to help manage the symptoms of menopause. Lifestyle changes can be made such as regular exercise, eating a balanced diet, reducing alcohol and caffeine intake and managing stress. Mindfulness is also helpful, so things like doing meditation and yoga. Talking to other women going through menopause and sharing your experiences helps to manage some of the emotional and mental health symptoms.

The standard medical treatment is hormone replacement therapy (HRT) with supplemental oestrogen and progesterone. It is one of the most effective treatments for relieving the physical symptoms of hot flushes, night sweats and vaginal dryness but also helps with the mental health symptoms.

Hormone therapy protects against the longer-term health risks of menopause, particularly bone and heart health. Women are more protected from cardiovascular diseases such as heart attacks before menopause compared to men. The oestrogen hormone is responsible for this protection but after menopause, due to the low levels of the hormone,

that protection is lowered. Oestrogen is also needed for healthy bones. Hormone replacement therapy can reduce the risk of developing heart disease and osteoporosis.

In terms of non-hormonal medications, low dose antidepressants are available as well as cognitive behavioural therapy to help with low mood and feelings of anxiety.

It's important to consult with a healthcare professional to explore all your options for managing symptoms, especially if you're considering alternative therapies such as acupuncture and herbal supplements.

When should you see a GP or specialist nurse about menopause?

You should see a health professional if your symptoms are really starting to affect your quality of life. For example, erratic, more frequent or heavier periods can lead to anaemia and impact day-to-day life.

Speak to your GP if you want to know more about hormone replacement therapy or are considering starting it. Your GP will be able to advise you best on the risks and benefits of the different treatment options.

It's a good idea to prepare in advance by making notes of what your symptoms are, when they started and how they're affecting your daily life. If it makes you more comfortable, you can bring a friend or family member to your appointment to advocate for you.

More GPs are becoming menopause aware and being trained to have these conversations, so don't hesitate to ask questions and discuss the treatment options that are available.

What support is available outside of clinical care?

The NHS website has clear information on symptoms and treatments. There are also a lot of resources available on the British Menopause Society website and its patient arm, Women's Health Concern. There is also an app called Balance, which was developed by a menopause specialist. It offers symptom tracking and personalised advice.

In terms of local support and community groups, the Hounslow Wellbeing Network, the Women's Project and the SHEWISE Health Hubs are some groups based in Hounslow. Talking to peers within the community is always a great idea because you will find that you're not alone and there are others who are going through a similar journey.

LET'S CHAT *health*

Are you or your child 11-19 years old and looking for health advice?

Maybe you have questions about mental health, stress, anxiety, bullying, peer pressure, relationships or general health concern? ChatHealth is a brilliant text messaging service, connecting young people with a school nurse so you can get advice and support from a trusted professional. Simply drop a message to

07507 333 176 and get clarity on your issue within one working day. Don't worry, the service is anonymous and confidential, so your messages are not shared with parents or teachers!

Or maybe you're a parent or carer worried about your child's health and wellbeing, development, or behaviour and need some advice. It's no secret that parenting is full of ups and downs, and sometimes you just need someone to talk to and get some guidance. Put your mind at ease by sending a message to the Hounslow 5-19 ParentLine at **07312 263 080** and hear back from a qualified school nurse.

Find out more by visiting
chathealth.nhs.uk



FEEL GOOD FRIDAYS



LADIES, LET'S GET MOVING!

**Been putting off going to the gym?
Want to get healthier, stronger and fitter
without having to fuss around with fees?**

Then look no further than
Lampton Leisure's
exercise on referral
programme!



Wise up on all things health and wellbeing at the weekly Women and Girls' Wellbeing Hub

Hosted by local charity SHEWISE, the sessions are a safe and welcoming space for you to learn more about your physical, mental and emotional health. Throughout the year, a range of guest speakers are invited to talk about and provide advice on women and girls' health issues.

From topics such as understanding periods and menopause to healthy eating and heart disease, the aim is to help you understand different aspects of your health so you can be confident in speaking up about your health needs. It's also a great way to socialise and make new connections.



The hub is open to women and girls aged 16 and over. Bilingual staff members (Urdu, Hindi and Arabic) are also available to help you make the most of the sessions.

So, why not drop by on Friday mornings (10am to 12pm) at Feltham Library and take advantage of this free opportunity to learn all about your health? Find out more by heading to www.shewise.org/mental-wellness



(above) - Hounslow women who attended a Wellbeing Hub session.

(left) - Sheba Shamsher (SHEWISE) leading a hub session on managing neurodiversity.

Partnered with Healthy Hounslow, Lampton Leisure offers a free tailored programme with personalised workout plans and expert guidance to address your specific health needs. You might be eligible for the programme if you live in Hounslow, are 18+ and have any of the following conditions: obesity, diabetes (type 1 or 2), high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease (CVD), depression, osteoporosis, arthritis or a neurological condition.

Prefer women-only or family sessions? Lampton Leisure has your back here too! Some of the activities on offer include family swimming, women-only swimming, women's basketball sessions, women's sport sessions, parent and toddler sessions, and more.

No more excuses, it's time to get up and get moving. Speak to your GP or a health professional to get a referral for this programme.

Visit healthyhounslow.co.uk/physical-activity to find out more.



Lampton
Leisure

Healthy
Hounslow

PEDAL AWAY WITH THE CYCLE SISTERS



Cycle Sisters is an award-winning charity all about creating accessible and empowering spaces for Muslim women (but all women are welcome to join!) to get out and about on their bikes and be more confident, healthy and connected.

They run weekly group rides on Sunday mornings from Osterley Park, as well as the first and third Wednesday of every month from Hanworth Air Park Leisure Centre and Heston Cycle Hub. You don't have to own a bike to join as there is an option to borrow a bike for free when booking.

Meetup for all rides is at 9.45am to start at 10am and finish around 12.30pm - with a café stop to mingle and enjoy some tea and cake.

The rides are generally at intermediate level but there are also two beginner-friendly rides each month. Whatever your cycling ability, join in on the fun by dropping an email to

hounslow@cyclesisters.org.uk to find out more.



Riders enjoying the Cycle Sisters Hounslow group ride.

Heart to Heart

How well do you know your heart?

It's useful to know of any health or lifestyle factors that might influence your heart health in the future so you can take action now. The fewer risk factors you have, the less likely you are to develop heart disease. Speak to your GP if you have any concerns.

Take the Quiz!

In the meantime, take this quiz and see what's what. If you answer yes to any of the questions below, head to [healthyhounslow.co.uk](https://www.healthyhounslow.co.uk) to see the free support you can get for your heart health – from help to stop smoking to weight loss and exercise programmes, there's something for everyone.



Have you been told by a doctor that you have high blood pressure?

☐

Yes

☐

No

High blood pressure occurs when the pressure inside your arteries is always higher than it should be. This means your heart is working harder to pump blood around your body.

High blood pressure can be managed at home by reducing salt intake, being more active and maintaining a healthy weight.

Have you been told by a doctor that you have high cholesterol?

☐

Yes

☐

No

High cholesterol causes a buildup of fats in your blood vessels making them narrower. This increases the risk of a heart attack or stroke.

Lifestyle changes such as quitting smoking, cutting down alcohol and eating less saturated fats can help prevent high cholesterol.

Have you previously been diagnosed with gestational diabetes?

☐

Yes

☐

No

Gestational diabetes can develop during pregnancy, usually in the second or third trimester. It usually goes away after birth, but having gestational diabetes increases your risk of developing type 2 diabetes in the future.

Do you have Type 2 diabetes?

☐

Yes

☐

No

High levels of sugar in your blood can damage your arteries and over time this can cause heart disease.

Type 2 diabetes is usually treated with medicines along with lifestyle changes such as eating healthy balanced meals and doing regular exercise.

Do you smoke?

☐

Yes

☐

No

Smoking is extremely harmful for heart health. The chemicals in cigarettes lead to fatty materials building up and clogging your arteries.

Quitting smoking is one of the best things you can do for your health. You will start to notice the benefits within as little as 72 hours.

Have you previously been diagnosed with pre-eclampsia?

☐

Yes

☐

No

Women with pre-eclampsia have high blood pressure and high levels of protein in their urine during pregnancy.

If you've had pre-eclampsia in the past, you are at an increased risk for developing heart disease.

Have you gone through menopause or are you experiencing menopausal symptoms?

☐

Yes

☐

No

The risk for heart disease increases significantly for women once they have reached menopause. This is because of hormonal changes that lead to increased cholesterol levels and high blood pressure.

Maintaining a healthy weight and eating balanced meals can help reduce the risk of developing heart disease post-menopause.

Do you have a body mass index (BMI) score of 25 or more?

☐

Yes

☐

No

A BMI of more than 25 is classed as overweight and a BMI of more than 30 is classed as obese.

Being overweight or obese can increase your blood pressure, raise your blood cholesterol levels and increase the risk of developing type 2 diabetes. All of these contribute to an increased risk for heart disease.

Is there a history of heart disease in your family?

☐

Yes

☐

No

You're considered to have a family history if your father or brother was under the age of 55 OR if your mother or sister was under the age of 65 when diagnosed with a heart disease.

You can reduce your risk of developing heart disease by managing the other risk factors - blood pressure, cholesterol levels, smoking etc.

Check your score!

Scan the QR code

