

# A Picture of Health

## In focus this month: Women's Health

Picture of Health is produced by Tameside's Population Health Team. We're here to research and understand the big health matters that affect our borough. Our goal is to find ways to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of the people living here, to give them happier, healthier and longer lives. But enough about us. You are the most important person in your health, so read on to see what you can do for yourself and your family to stay fit and well.

### 1 Mother's Day, International Women's Day, March is all about the ladies.

When it comes to health, there's no escaping biology, there are certain conditions and illnesses that only affect women. Knowing how to spot the signs and symptoms of female cancers is really important, as is going for screening checks. Sadly the uptake of cervical screening is at a 20 year low, and some of the women being called for smear tests now are too young to remember who Jade Goody was, let alone the phenomenal impact her passing had on cancer screening rates. Cervical screening can stop cancer before it starts. It's 5 minutes that could save your life, so next time you're invited don't ignore it. If you missed your last test call your GP practice now to make an appointment. If you're nervous or worried about what to expect click the link.

**CERVICAL SCREENING SAVES LIVES**



**2 Whilst losing a parent is terribly hard, it somehow follows the natural order of things.** The loss of a child on the other hand is a bereavement that brings crushing sadness for many more reasons. As well as coping with the pain of losing a child, Mums who are without their child may also feel like they have lost a part of themselves, as their role as a parent changes with remaining siblings, or is taken away completely. The Compassionate Friends Charity offers gentle advice for grieving parents. If you are Mum (or Dad, Grandparent or sibling) who is struggling to come to terms with the loss of a child, read on for help.



**THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS**



**3 1 in 3 women who get breast cancer is over 70,** so if your mum (or any female friend or relative) has hit that particular milestone make sure she knows that she still needs to check her boobs. She's not past it yet! Early diagnosis means you're more likely to recover from breast cancer, so knowing the signs and symptoms is really important. It's not just about finding a lump. A thickening in your breast or armpit, change to the skin, shape or size of your breast, nipple changes or discharge, pain in your breast and any other unusual or persistent changes to your breast can all be signs that you need to see your GP without delay. Click the link for some advice.



**4 There are five types of gynaecological cancers that affect women: cervical, womb, ovarian, vaginal and vulval.** Around 21,000 cases are diagnosed nationwide every year. As with all cancers, spotting the signs and symptoms early is key to increasing chances of survival, and yet many of us would struggle to know what to look for in these less-than-talked-about areas. The Eve Appeal is a national charity that raises awareness of these types of cancer, and also does some fun work to help fund research. Make Time for Tea is your chance to raise awareness and enjoy cake and a cuppa with friends. Read on to find out how you can play your part this March



### 5 Are you dying of embarrassment?

The rate of women attending cervical screening in Tameside has fallen to 73%. A survey by the charity Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust showed embarrassment is causing a third of women to delay getting a smear test. Cervical screening saves 5,000 lives a year nationally, so for the sake of a moment's embarrassment, it could be your life that's saved next. Cervical cancer is the most common cancer in women under 35 and the test can prevent 75 per cent of cervical cancers. To keep those Mother's Day cards coming for many more years, don't skip your smears. For more info see the link



**6 Breastmilk helps babies stay healthy for life, but did you know that it protects mum too?** It lowers the risk of ovarian and breast cancer, cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis and obesity. Despite this, just 1% of women in the UK are still breastfeeding at 6 months. Breastfeeding can be hard, but the rewards for persevering are plentiful. It releases hormones that produce loving feelings, and protectiveness in mum. This, along with cuddles, helps form a close bond with baby that can't be replicated. There's lots of help for mums in Tameside who wish to breastfeed. Our Health Visiting Service, supported by Children's Centres, holds the Unicef Baby Friendly accolade. Together with trained HomeStart Peer Supporters mums and babies can get the best help to 'keep on boobin'.

**Home START**



**7 Becoming a mum can be a stressful, sleepless and wonderful time.** Around 50% of women will experience the 'baby blues' in the days after the birth of their baby. As hormones drop, feeling exhausted, anxious, tearful, disillusioned and even angry is common. For most mums these feelings will pass, but around 10% of women in Tameside go on to develop postnatal depression (PND). PND is a sort of emotional loneliness, which can be helped by confiding in a partner, family member, friend or health professional. Specialist advice is available through the Health Visiting Team. They are there to listen without judgement, and to support mums to form a loving bond with their baby.

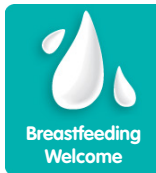


**8 So mum, the world doesn't stop when you have a baby right?** Juggling a baby, bags, car keys, and a toddler, whilst washing up and walking the dog all at the same time is multi-tasking you might not quite relish. Going hands free with baby in a sling makes life easier for mum (or Dad!) and keeps baby snuggled into your warm body, building their sense of security. Ikea in Ashton is an accredited 'Baby Welcome' venue, where breastfeeding is positively encouraged, it's also home to a weekly NCT Sling Library where you can try out a range of baby wearing options, and chat to other mums, over a free tea or coffee (with an Ikea Family card). For additional hands free help ask Amazon's Alexa voice service about Start4Life's Breastfeeding help.



### 9 Whilst nursing mums have a legal right to feed their baby in public it doesn't necessarily mean they feel confident or comfortable doing it.

A study by Start4Life found that a third of nursing mums shied away from feeding in public and 1 in 10 women choose not to breastfeed their baby because of worries about onlookers' opinions. To our shame, this is a negative aspect of British culture that accounts for us having the lowest breastfeeding rates in the world. Next time you see a mum feeding in public, remember that she might be nervous and self-conscious; so be kind. Mums, you can feed anywhere, and it's illegal for anyone to ask you to cover up or stop. If you're just starting out though, look out for the 'Breastfeeding Welcome' sign in the windows of cafes in Tameside. These places have pledged to actively support nursing mums.



**10 Maternity Leave can be a lonely time.** The social lives that included late nights and wine can seem a lifetime away as friends without children party on. Life in a bubble with a baby, away from work and adult conversation can lead to feelings of isolation. This, compounded by tiredness can put a real downer on what should be a happy time. Making new connections through groups and clubs is a way to keep the loneliness at bay. Time for Rhyme, and other baby friendly activities take place every week in libraries. Plus there's the bonus of taking books out by the dozen. Keep your eyes peeled for other events offered in conjunction with our local Arts and Events team, like plays and craft sessions. See where your nearest TFR is at the link.



### 11 Children's Centres are another place to find like-minded mums, but don't be discouraged if you meet Supermum and perfect child.

Two thirds of mums on Netmums said they deliberately give other mums the impression they're doing better than they really felt, and felt that other mums were doing better than them. Remember that all mums have days when leaving the house at all is a monumental achievement. As well as stay and play sessions, there are weekly breastfeeding support groups, low cost vitamins, toothbrushes and toothpaste, and a range of information and advice on local services for families of young children. Click the link to find your nearest Children's Centre



**12 Around 400 women in Tameside each year are still smoking by the time they give birth.** It's important not to judge mums who struggle to stop, but offering every opportunity possible to make quitting achievable is a must. There are now more options than ever to ditch the habit. Vaping, for example, is now known to be 95% less harmful than cigarettes and the most popular method of quitting smoking in England. All pregnant women who smoke will be offered a referral to specialist stop smoking services by their midwife that will give personalised support to help mum quit, and give baby the best start in life. It's never too late to quit. For free NHS 1-2-1 support ring Be Well Tameside on 0161 716 2000. For information about a stop smoking helpline and mobile apps for quitting, click the link.

