



GUTSY GROUP

Articles:

- Alternative medicine
- Answers to your questions
- HELPLINE
- Information sources
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- News from Worcester

The patients, surgeons, dieticians and medical team look forward to welcoming you to our meetings

Next meetings:

**Rossett Hall Hotel, Rossett
Mon 17 June, 2-4pm**

**Fownes Hotel, Worcester
Sun 18 Aug, 10am-12pm**



GUTSY news!

The GUTSY group goes from strength to strength.

The inclusion of our associated group in Worcester now means that we can benefit from the contents of their meetings in our newsletter as well as sharing/stealing each other's ideas. They follow a similar format to our own gatherings and their latest question and answer session is included in this newsletter. (Worcester will also receive copies).

You may be aware that the restructuring of significant parts of the health service throughout the UK means that resources and budgets are being stretched. More use is to be made of volunteers and voluntary organisations such as us and Macmillan - This is certainly not a drawback as it give the users of the service a greater say in how it is run!

It is likely that the GUTSY group will become entirely managed by the patients in the future, but in no way will lose the involvement from the clinical teams who are 100% behind our group and the benefits it brings. In fact it gives us a chance to strengthen our ties with all of the professional staff because of the additional involvement. As we are a group closely affiliated to the hospital service, the clinical teams (from Wrexham and Worcester) will contribute to our website and the newsletter and help ensure all information is technically and clinically accurate.



Alternative medicine



*GUTSY volunteers with
cons surgeon Mr Pye*

The subject of alternative therapies raises its head from time to time within our group, as it does with many people seeking an answer to their cancers. Care should be taken to differentiate between **alternative therapies** which claim to provide an unproven cure for the disease (quack medicine!) and **complimentary therapies**, which although not claiming to cure a disease will provide some relief from the effects, both physical and psychological.

For those who may feel tempted to look at any of the numerous websites on alternative therapies we can do no more than recommend the website Sense about Science (www.senseaboutscience.org/). Their leaflet "I've got nothing to lose by trying it" can be accessed by [clicking here](#) or is available at our meeting. It discusses and warns against the use of techniques and remedies not supported by valid clinical trials.

Complimentary therapies however, can be of great help although some may be more or less effective than others. It is suggested you discuss them with your physician before trying any of them. The Macmillan website discusses many of the options available including: mind/body, massage, physical, diet and psychological therapies, although a good walk in the countryside is as good as anything!

At our last meeting taking peach and apricot kernels was discussed. Thanks go to the Macmillan site for the following advice on these products:



*"A strong positive
mental attitude
will create more
miracles than any
wonder drug"*

Patricia Neal

Amygdalin (Laetrile®, Vitamin B17)

Amygdalin is a compound found in bitter almonds, and in peach and apricot stones. A synthetic form of it is marketed as Laetrile®. It is also sometimes called vitamin B17, although it isn't actually a vitamin.

Laetrile has been marketed since the 1970s. Many websites that sell it claim it can slow or stop the growth of cancer. They sometimes also claim that Laetrile is able to selectively poison cancer cells without damaging normal cells and tissues. But there's no evidence to support the theory this is based on. A review of studies looking at the outcomes for people with cancer taking Laetrile found no evidence that it can control or cure cancer.

Possible problems and side effects

Laetrile can have serious side effects. Some people have had cyanide poisoning while taking it, and a few people have died as a result. The sale of Laetrile has been banned by the European Commission and by the Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) in the USA. Unlike conventional medicines, the manufacture of Laetrile isn't controlled. So if you buy Laetrile there isn't any way of knowing what it contains or if it's contaminated with other substances.

If you're thinking of taking Laetrile, it is best to discuss this with your cancer specialist.



*Am I using
the right
medicines?*

Patients' questions and answers



Q It is 2 months following my operation and I'm having difficulty getting liquids down, food is ok.

A It may be fear, it takes time for things to recover following surgery. Suggest you try 'little and often'.

Q I became diabetic during chemotherapy, I have heard that I should avoid tuna.

A Tuna is a good source of protein and healthy fat so it is fine to eat if you are diabetic.

Q I have difficulty eating rice, what do you suggest?

A Risotto is often fine as it has absorbed lots of water (or wine!) and doesn't swell when you are eating it.

Q I suffer with a dry mouth at night.

A Try keeping a drink of water on your bedside table. There is also liquid saliva called bio-extra that you can get from the chemist.

Q I struggle with bread following the surgery

A Try Weight Watchers bread, some people find this much easier to eat as it is less doughy and has a more 'dissolvable' consistency

Q I find I can't eat foods with preservatives as I get a burning sensation.

A This may be due to the acidity of the food. Try re-visiting foods as things sometimes change. It may well be trial and error.

Q Why did I have chemotherapy before surgery?

A Clinical trials have shown that having chemotherapy before surgery can help prevent the cancer from returning and shrinks the tumour.

Q Should I exercise before my operation?

A If you feel well enough then keeping fit is a good idea, it may well help you cope better with the operation. Having a daily brisk walk may also help you cope with the anaesthetic.

Q I seem to form a 'plug' of mucous overnight, what can I do to help with this?

A This can be a difficult one to manage, try having more fluids to make the secretions less 'sticky'

Questions and answers were from the last GUTSY meeting in Worcester with the surgeon and dietician supplying answers.

The chairman forgot to take notes for the Q&A session at the last Wrexham meeting (sorry!)



What foods can I eat?

Recipe: Risotto for 2

In answer to the Q&A session earlier - how to cook the perfect risotto:

The secret of a soft creamy perfect risotto is to use the correct rice and bash it around in the pan for most of the cooking time to break down the hard outer coat and almost massage the starch out of the rice. This therapeutic process demands the whole of your care and attention throughout the cooking but is easy. The final standing stage is also important. Risotto must be cooked and eaten immediately. Cook a new batch if you want another portion later!



Approx 3 cups chicken broth or vegetable stock
 10g pancetta or smoked ham, cut into ¼ - inch cubes or chop if using rashers
 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil and a knob of butter
 1 chopped leek (white & light green part only)
 1 chopped shallot or ½ onion
 1 clove garlic, crushed and chopped
 1 medium sized cup Arborio, carnaroli or other posh Italian “risotto” rice
 ¼ teaspoon salt
 Small glass dry white wine or Noilly Prat
 ½ cup freshly and finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese
 Freshly ground pepper to taste

1. Bring broth or vegetable stock (See NOTE) to a simmer in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat so the liquid remains steaming, but is not simmering.
2. Cook pancetta in a small pan over medium heat, stirring, until crispy, about 5 minutes. Drain on a paper- towel while you prepare the rest of the risotto.
3. Heat oil and butter in a medium size saucepan over medium-low heat. Add leeks, shallots (or onion) and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 5 minutes (don't brown). Add garlic and cook, stirring, until fragrant but again don't brown, about 30 seconds. Add rice and stir to coat. The rice will now begin to lightly fry, so keep stirring it. After a minute it will look slightly translucent. Add the Noilly Prat or wine and keep stirring – it will smell fantastic. Any harsh alcohol flavours will evaporate and leave the rice with a tasty essence.
4. Stir ½ cup of the hot broth into the rice. Cook, stirring frequently, until the liquid has been absorbed. Continue to cook on medium-low, adding the liquid in ½ - cup at a time, and stirring frequently after each addition, until most of the liquid is absorbed. The risotto is done when the rice is creamy and just tender but with a slight bite, 25 to 35 minutes total. Feel free to add more liquid if necessary and continue stirring until you reach your preferred texture.
5. Remove from the heat; stir in most of the cheese, a knob of butter and pepper. Add salt if necessary at this stage. **IMPORTANT:** Cover with a lid and allow to stand for 2 minutes.

Serve sprinkled with the crispy pancetta and the remaining cheese. Enjoy!

NOTE: You can use hot water and add a small pinch of a vegetable or chicken stock cube at the beginning of the cooking instead.

Sautéed mushrooms or cooked asparagus cut into 1cm lengths can be added in place of/as well as the pancetta.



GUTSY GROUP



GUTSY helpline

Having or recovering from surgery for oesophageal or stomach cancer?

Call the GUTSY helpline now if you would like to speak directly to a patient who has had treatment and/or surgery



0800 707 6907
(Freephone)

*Patient support
helpline
0800 707 6907*

About GUTSY...

We are a support group for people diagnosed with or recovering from oesophageal and gastric cancers along with their friends and family.

The aim of the group is to provide support and information and to share our experiences

with anyone visiting the website or attending our meetings.

We hold meetings four times a year and provide telephone and email support continuously.

We're on the Web!

Find us at:

www.guttsy-group.org.uk

Useful sources of information

Macmillan Cancer Support
Tel. 0808 808 0000 www.Macmillan.org.uk

Oesophageal Patients Association
Tel. 0121 704 9860 www.opa.org.uk

Cancer Research UK
www.cancerresearchuk.org

North Wales Cancer Network
www.wales.nhs.uk/sites3/home.cfm?orgid=456

FORT (fighting oesophageal reflux together)
www.refluxhelp.org

Financial and holiday insurance advice
www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk

NHS Direct
Tel 111
www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/

NHS direct (Wales)
Tel 0845 4647
www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/

NEWS from Wrexham

The GUTSY group (Wrexham)

Service user team,
Betsi Cadwaladr
University Health Board,
Ysbyty Maelor,
IM&T Building,
Croesnewydd Road,
Wrexham, LL13 7ZH

Phone:

01978-727164

E-Mail :

info@gutsy-group.org.uk

Patient support helpline

0800 707 6907

Many thanks to Linda Valance whose fantastic cakes raised £49 for the GUTSY funds at the last meeting. Funding for the group relies entirely on voluntary donations and the GUTSY helpline thrives on a grant received from Macmillan.



GUTSY meetings are held in the pleasant surroundings of Rossett Hall Hotel

The hotel is on the B5445, 6 miles south of Chester and 6 miles north of Wrexham

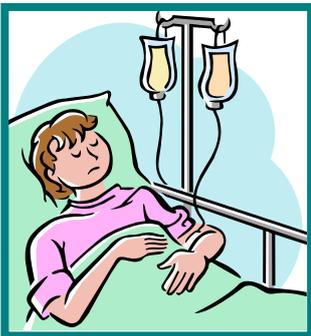
Next meeting: Mon 17 June, 2pm to 4pm

Contacts (N Wales)

We're on the Web!

Find us at:

www.gutsy-group.org.uk



*What will my
operation be like?*

Jane McGrath
T:01978 291100 bleep 5976

Macmillan Clinical Nurse specialist
E: jane.mcgrath@wales.nhs.uk

Stella Davies
T:01978 726273 bleep 5005

Upper GI nurse specialist
E: stella.davies@wales.nhs.uk

Michelle Curtis
T:01978 726273 bleep 5264

Upper GI nurse practitioner
E: michelle.curtis@wales.nhs.uk

Kate Skinner
T: 01244 363210

Upper GI nurse specialist
E: kateskinner@nhs.net

Brian Lewin
T:0800 7076907

GUTSY volunteer
E: brian@gutsy-group.org.uk

Pam Wedley
T: 01978 726188

Macmillan Shooting Star Information Centre
E: macmillan.shootingstar@wales.nhs.uk

Liz Taylor
T: 01244364948

Macmillan Centre, Countess of Chester
E: elizabeth.taylor18@nhs.net

Diane Henderson
T:01978 727164

Service user team (General enquiries)
E: diane.henderson@wales.nhs.uk



GUTSY Worcs

The GUTSY group
(Worcester)
Elizabeth Pearce,
Upper GI Clinical Nurse
Specialist
Worcestershire Royal
Hospital
Charles Hastings Way,
Worcester
WR5 1DD

Phone:
01905 733615 bleep 365
lizzy@gutsy-group.org.uk

**Patient support
helpline
0800 707 6907**

We're on the Web!

Find us at:

www.gutsy-group.org.uk

NEWS from Worcester

Meeting 18 April

Again, the meeting was very well supported – with over 30 people attending. The theme of the meeting was managing your new diet, and Sarah Pritchard, dietician from Worcester answered a variety of questions. We found that our patients felt passionate about the need for more advice on diet. As a result of this meeting, we will be sending out a questionnaire to all our patients to find out more about what is needed. We are hoping this will help in our bid to have a dedicated upper gastro intestinal dietician.

We were delighted to welcome a new patient coming before her operation. Both she and her husband found the support she received from the group really helpful in allaying some of the pre-operative nerves.



Cherry Carlton (left) who had an oesophagectomy 8 years ago with Mr and Mrs Smith. Mr Smith is about to undergo the op.

GUTSY meetings Worcester



GUTSY meetings are held in the Fownes Hotel, City Walls Road, Worcester, WR1 2AP

Next Worcester meeting: Sun 18 August, 10am - 12pm

Worcester contacts

Lizzy Pearce, Upper G I Clinical Nurse Specialist
01905 733615/ bleep 365 Email: Elizabeth.pearce@worcsacute.nhs.uk.

Michelle Judge, Macmillan G I Nurse Specialist
01905 760758/bleep 483 Email: Michelle.judge@worcsacute.nhs.uk

Kay Tandy, Macmillan cancer information centre
01905 733837/mob 079180133068 Email: Kay.tandy@worcsacute.nhs.uk



Some other support groups in the UK

OOSO Oxfordshire Oesophageal and Stomach Organisation - patients help group similar to GUTSY
www.ooso.org.uk

Oesophagoose - NE UK support group
www.oesophagoose.org/

Humberside oesophageal support group
www.hosg.org

