

PRESS RELEASE

Heartburn Cancer UK – 10/09/19

For immediate release

Is your heartburn just the Brussel sprouts?

Heartburn isn't unusual over the festive season. But a leading specialist cancer charity is asking people to question – and not ignore - any enduring discomfort they feel in their chest this Christmas. The answer could save lives.

Heartburn Cancer UK (HCUK), a charity based in Basingstoke, wants people to have a fantastic time, and even over indulge (a little) this Christmas. But they also want people to be aware that ongoing, or reoccurring, heartburn can be a sign of a serious problem, and should be checked out and not dismissed or ignored.

“Many of us are likely to suffer from heartburn. In fact, 40% of people will in fact have heartburn at some point in their life. It's especially common when you've eaten too much rich food,” said Tim Underwood, Professor of Gastrointestinal Surgery and Head of Cancer Sciences Academic Unit at the University of Southampton, and clinical trustee with HCUK.

“But the questions we want people to ask themselves is: were you suffering persistently from heartburn before Christmas started or has it lasted for a lot longer than the leftovers? Has heartburn been a problem for you or someone you know every day for three weeks or more? Have you been taking over the counter remedies like Rennie's or Gaviscon for more than three weeks?

“If the answer is yes – we urge you to make it your new year resolution to get it checked out by your GP so you can rule out that it isn't a sign of something much more serious such as oesophageal cancer. Persistent or reoccurring heartburn is a common early warning sign,” explained the specialist.

Despite medical advances, the UK still has the highest levels of oesophageal cancer in the world. Every year some 8,000 people die in the UK from the disease – one a day in Hampshire. It is also the 4th biggest cause of cancer deaths among males.

Tim Underwood said: “Don't ignore possible early symptoms. Don't wait until you are having difficulty swallowing before you go for help.”

“Medicine to alleviate heartburn is so easy to buy over the counter, people don't realise if you are suffering for more than three weeks or taking self-help remedies all the time, it's time to get things checked. Getting seen earlier can make such a big difference if there is something more seriously wrong.”

Heartburn Cancer UK are currently running an awareness campaign right across north and central Hampshire entitled 'The Burning Question'.

The campaign includes large scale adverts at the regions train stations and on the bus network. It encourages people in Winchester, Andover, Fleet and Alton and beyond to question the condition to prevent deaths from the disease by spotting the early warning signs.

There's also a new information booklet to support people which can be downloaded from the HCUK website at www.heartburncanceruk.org

Date 10/12/19

Editor's Note

For more information contact Fiona Labrooy on 01256 338668 or 07939088680

Interviews

We can arrange for interviews to be set up with Professor Tim Underwood, Mimi McCord our Chairman or one of our trustees.

More about the campaign

To broaden awareness and education to the general public of the danger of persistent heartburn (3 weeks or more) and the link between Barrett's Oesophagus and Oesophageal Cancer (Adenocarcinoma). Highlighting the importance of seeking medical advice for further investigation as early diagnosis can help save lives. 500,000 will be unaware that they have the precursory condition of Barrett's oesophagus. Although 90% of these people will not develop Oesophageal Cancer - 50,000 will. Often diagnosis will be too late to save them.

Increase awareness through GP Surgeries and in Pharmacies.

Activities including Radio Campaign, Press Launch, bus and rail station advertising, hard hitting video. Pilot launched in Basingstoke and North Hampshire (including Winchester, Andover, Fleet, Alton)

A growing and increased presence and awareness campaign across social media including twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn. This will also provide other supporting information, research progress, education and information about support groups.

The opportunity to set up new groups that support sufferers as we expand the awareness campaign.

Engage more volunteers and fundraisers

To engage the press, media and radio to support the campaign and share our message

Photos/Media

Attached our radio advert and below examples of a couple of our campaign posters, our new information booklet and our campaign video.



<https://vimeo.com/342950927/418137451c>

More about Heartburn Cancer UK (HCUK)

Heartburn Cancer UK is a national charity, originally called the McCord Oesophageal Cancer Fund, which was founded in memory of Michael McCord who died from oesophageal cancer in 2002. Michael's death was preventable had he been aware of the danger of long term persistent heartburn and had appropriate investigations. He is one of thousands who die each year unnecessarily.

Advice on how to avoid oesophageal cancer

See your Doctor if you regularly experience any of the following symptoms:

Persistent burning feeling

Food sticking/difficulty in swallowing

Pain under breastbone or in chest

Acid taste in mouth

Hoarse voice

Coughing

Regurgitation