

FROM THE HEART

The power of connection

Real life stories

**How to look after your
bone health**

**The bittersweet truth
about sugar**

Chest
Heart &
Stroke

Welcome to this edition of From the Heart.

As I am writing this, I am looking out the window to a street where the trees are rapidly losing, or have lost, their leaves. The seasons have turned, and we can look forward to shorter days which can bring their own joy. What is the best way to embrace this time of year? In my own family we have turned to the experts in Scandinavia who have a lot more experience in making the most of the colder months. We try to embrace the concept of 'Hygge' which means developing a cozy and contented mood evoked by comfort and conviviality. Hygge for us means to keep warm, make healthy food that goes with the seasons and most importantly, to keep connected. This edition explores some of the ways we might like to try to find our own ways of doing this.

Inside you will find a focus on connection and how important this is after an illness with some stories from our clients. Staying socially active as much as possible, especially during these months when it can be a bit more difficult to get across the door, has huge benefits. Our NICHHS services are a great place to begin!

There are some super recipes inside and a piece regarding seasonal eating. It seems to be the right time to dust off the slow cooker and start making stews that can bubble away while you get on with your day. These of course can include, or be paired with, great heart healthy veg.

Running through this edition of the magazine you will see the importance of the connection between body and mind. You will find articles on bone health and the power of positive thinking. Addressing both the physical and emotional effects after an illness carries an equal weight for a fuller recovery.

Staying connected is so vital to overall wellbeing and I hope this edition inspires you over the months to come to take any opportunities you find.

Take care for now.

Mark Dyer

NICHHS Head of Respiratory Services

The Power of Connection After Illness

When you have experienced a serious health event like a stroke, heart attack, or respiratory illness, recovery can feel like a long and lonely road. The focus often falls on physical healing, medications, appointments, exercise, and rest, but there is another part of recovery that is just as important- staying connected.

It is natural to feel isolated after a major health event. You may be less able to get out and about, or feel anxious about joining in with things you used to enjoy. Friends and family might not fully understand how much things have changed for you.

Loneliness is more than just a sad feeling; it can have real effects on your body. Research shows that being socially connected helps boost mood, whilst building confidence and contributing to recovery.

After an illness, your body may need movement and rest, but your mind also needs companionship and understanding. When you talk, laugh, or share a moment with someone, your body releases hormones that reduce stress and inflammation, helping you function better.

Staying socially active can:

- Lift your spirits and reduce anxiety or low mood.
- Encourage healthy habits, such as taking medication or exercising.
- Help you learn from others who are facing similar challenges.
- Give you purpose and motivation, reminding you that you are more than your condition.

One of the most effective ways to rebuild connection is through peer support, linking up with people who have been through similar experiences.



Whether you join a local group, attend an online session, or meet someone for coffee, talking with others who truly 'get it' can make a world of difference.

At NICHHS support groups people often describe meeting others on a similar journey as a turning point in their recovery. Sharing stories, setbacks, and small victories helps you realise you are not alone and that life after illness can still be fulfilling.

If you have been feeling lonely or are unsure where to start, try one small step at a time:

- Join a local NICHHS support group or attend one of our education programmes.
- Ask your healthcare team about groups and programmes in your area.

- Reach out to friends or neighbours, even a short chat can brighten your day.
- Volunteer with NICHHS. Helping someone else can boost your confidence and sense of purpose.

Recovery isn't just about getting back to where you were, it's about discovering new strength and connection along the way. The friendships and peer networks you build can be as powerful as any treatment, reminding you that you are part of a community that understands, supports, and celebrates your progress.

You have already shown resilience by coming this far. Reaching out to others is the next step, not just for your health, but for your happiness. Because when we connect, we heal together.

Northern Ireland Chest Heart & Stroke

Leave a lasting legacy.

Hope is the best gift you could leave in your will to **support Stroke survivors in Northern Ireland.**

Your gift could give hope to regain independence, mobility and rebuild lives after stroke through our Post Rehab Exercise Programme (PREP).

Please consider leaving a gift to NICHHS in your will. After caring for family and friends, you could make a profound difference by ensuring we can be there for those who need us today, tomorrow and in the years to come.



Visit nichs.org.uk/giftsinwills to find out more, call us on **028 90 266 743** or email supportercare@nichs.org.uk

**Chest
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Give the Gift of Hope this Christmas

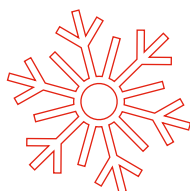
This year, our Christmas appeal tells Gillian's story. Gillian's life changed in an instant when she suffered a massive brainstem stroke at just 30 years old. Gillian underwent brain surgery and spent weeks in a coma. At one stage, doctors even talked about turning off her life support. When Gillian came out of her coma, she describes it as waking up to a nightmare. The impact of the stroke was massive- she couldn't walk and struggled to speak.

Gillian spent months in hospital and was then placed in a care home. Imagine how that felt, at just 30 years old, to be in a care home? Finally, over a year after her stroke, Gillian was able to go home. But life was far from how it had been when she left. She was in a wheelchair, still dealing with speech issues, fatigue, and weakness in her left hand and right leg. Then, we came into her life.

You have probably noticed our Christmas themed envelope along with your newsletter. Inside it, you'll find Gillian's inspirational story. If you would like to support this year's appeal, you can use the enclosed response form and pre-paid envelope or if you prefer, you can go online to our website and donate there - www.nichs.org.uk/make-a-donation



Gillian (left)
with **Lynne McIlroy**



Almost 90% of our income comes from donations, so it's only thanks to our generous supporters that the NICHS Care team can be here to help people like Gillian. Thank you in advance for any support you may be able to give, and Happy Christmas!



I never thought stroke could happen to me – I thought it was something that only happened to older people. But at just 30 years old, my life changed in an instant.”



Health Benefits of Positive Thinking

In recent years, the so-called power of positive thinking has gained a great deal of attention thanks to self-help books such as *The Secret*. These books often promote positive thinking or philosophies like the law of attraction as a sort of psychological answer, often oversimplifying and exaggerating the effects.

However, research has found many very real health benefits linked to positive thinking and optimistic attitudes. Some of these benefits include:

- Better stress management and coping skills
- Enhanced psychological health
- Greater resistance to the common cold
- Increased physical well-being
- Longer life span
- Lower rates of depression
- Reduced risk of cardiovascular disease-related death

A 2018 study published in the *Journal of Aging Research* found that having a positive mental attitude was linked to decreased mortality over a 35-year period. People who had a more positive outlook were also more likely to get regular physical exercise, avoid smoking, eat a healthier diet, and get more quality sleep.

How to Practice Positive Thinking

There are strategies that you can use to become a more positive thinker. Practicing these strategies regularly can help you get in the habit of maintaining a more positive outlook on life.

- **Notice your thoughts** - start paying attention to the type of thoughts you have each day. If you notice that many of them are negative, make a conscious effort to reframe how you are thinking in a more positive way.
- **Write in a gratitude diary** - practicing gratitude can have a range of positive benefits, including helping you develop a better outlook. Experiencing grateful thoughts helps people feel more optimistic. Spend a few moments each day writing about the things you are thankful for in a gratitude diary.
- **Use positive self-talk** - how you talk to yourself can play a significant role in shaping your outlook. Studies have shown that shifting to more positive self-talk can have a positive impact on your emotions and how you respond to stress.



Chest
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Recipes

Stew

Ingredients

- 2 onions
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 450g carrots
- 25g butter
- 3 tsp mild/medium curry powder
- 500g quality steak pieces
- 1 cooking apple
- 25g cornflour
- 1 tbsp cranberry sauce
- 200ml beef stock



Method

1. Preheat the oven to 160°C.
2. Finely slice the onions. Melt the butter in a heavy based pan or casserole dish and sauté the onions until soft and starting to brown. Add in the crushed garlic and cook for a few more minutes.
3. Add the curry powder and cook for a few minutes, stirring regularly.
4. Peel and chop the apple. Peel and cut the carrots into batons and set aside until required.
5. Add the meat to the pan and coat in the curried onion paste until sealed and starting to brown.
6. Add the cornflour and stir with all the cooking juices to make a thick paste.
7. Add in the carrots, apples and cranberry sauce.
8. Slowly add the beef stock, stirring to a thin paste.
9. Place the pan or casserole dish with a lid into the oven. Stir occasionally during cooking. If the stew is becoming too dry add a little water. Cook until tender.
10. Serve with baked or mashed potatoes.

Sweet Potato and Butternut Squash Soup

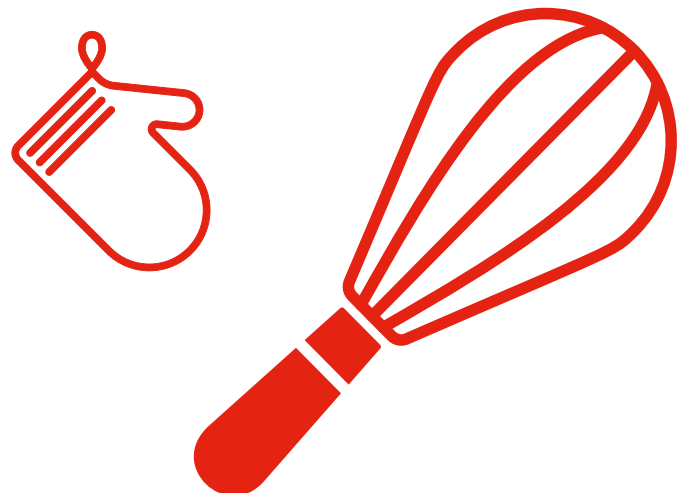
Ingredients

- 700g butternut squash and sweet potato
- 1 red onion
- 1 carrot
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp ground nutmeg
- 1 tsp chilli powder
- 75g smoked bacon lardons
- 750ml ham stock
- 200ml milk



Method

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C. Line a large baking tray with greaseproof paper.
2. Roughly chop all the vegetables into chunks and place on the baking tray. Drizzle with the olive oil, nutmeg, chilli powder and some black pepper and mix through. Lay the bacon lardons on top of the vegetables.
3. Roast in the oven for 45 minutes, tossing the mixture occasionally.
4. Place the ham stock in a pot or food processor and add the roasted vegetables. Blitz until everything is smooth, adding the milk until the desired consistency is achieved.
5. Serve and enjoy!



The Comforting Colours of the Season on Your Plate

There is something deeply comforting about the colours of autumn and winter. The warm golds, deep reds and earthy browns that fill the fields and gardens around us. As the trees change, so too do the colours on our plates. This is the season of richly hued vegetables- orange pumpkins and carrots, deep-green kale and broccoli, purple beetroot and creamy parsnips. These natural colours don't just look beautiful, they reflect the abundance of vitamins, minerals and antioxidants our bodies need as the weather cools.

Eating seasonally means enjoying vegetables at their freshest and most nourishing. Autumn crops like Brussels sprouts, leeks, cabbage and beetroot are full of fibre and essential nutrients that support heart and circulatory health, helping to maintain healthy blood pressure, cholesterol levels and overall wellbeing. They are also satisfying and warming, perfect for soups, stews and roasts that bring comfort on darker evenings.

Then there are mushrooms - an understated star! With their earthy tones and savoury flavour, they not only add depth to your dishes but also a wealth of nutritional benefits.

Mushrooms are naturally low in fat and calories, yet high in potassium and fibre, nutrients that help regulate blood pressure and support cardiovascular health. Some varieties are also one of the few non-animal sources of vitamin D, something we all need a little more of as the days grow shorter.

As autumn and winter paint the world in warm tones, let your kitchen reflect that same comfort.

Fill your plate with the colours of the season and enjoy meals that are not only good for the soul, but kind to your heart.

Strong Bones, Steady Steps: How to Stay Healthy and Independent

As we get older, looking after our bones and balance becomes more important than ever. Healthy bones help us stay active, steady on our feet, and independent in daily life. But did you know that the choices we make each day- how much we move, what kinds of activities we do, and how long we sit- can make a significant difference to our bone strength and stability?

Why Bone Health Matters

Bones naturally become thinner and weaker with age. This can lead to conditions like osteoporosis, which makes bones more fragile and increases the risk of fractures. Weak bones and poor balance can also increase the chance of falling, a common cause of injury among older adults.

The good news is that regular movement can help keep bones strong, muscles powerful, and balance sharp, allowing you to stay well and live independently for longer.

Four Types of Activities to Keep You Strong and Steady

Experts recommend a mix of four types of physical activity to support healthy ageing- aerobic activity, muscle strengthening, balance activities, and limiting time spent being still.



1 Aerobic Activity Keep Your Heart and Bones Moving

Aerobic activity, also called endurance activity, gets your heart pumping and your body moving. This type of exercise helps maintain bone density, supports joint flexibility, and improves heart and lung health.

Examples include:

- Brisk walking
- Dancing
- Cycling
- Swimming or water aerobics
- Gardening

Aim for about 150 minutes of moderate activity each week, for example, 30 minutes on most days. You can break this into shorter sessions if that is easier.



2 Muscle-Strengthening Activities Build Power and Protect Your Bones

Strong muscles act as a protective shield for your bones and joints. They help you stay steady, lift groceries, climb stairs, and get up from a chair more easily.

Try to include muscle-strengthening exercises at least twice a week.

Examples include:

- Lifting light weights or using resistance bands
- Bodyweight exercises, like sit-to-stand from a chair
- Carrying shopping bags
- Wall push-ups or arm curls with tins or bottles



3 Balance Activities **Stay Steady and Prevent Falls**

Balance exercises train your body to stay upright and coordinated, reducing the risk of slips and falls.

Examples include:

- Standing on one leg
- Heel-to-toe walking, like walking on a tightrope
- Tai Chi or gentle yoga
- Slow marching in place

Try to do balance activities on most days, even a few minutes daily can make a difference.

4 Limit Time Spent Being Still **Move More, Sit Less**

Even if you exercise regularly, spending lengthy periods sitting still can slow your metabolism and weaken your muscles.

Tips to move more throughout the day:

- Stand up during TV adverts
- Walk around while talking on the phone
- Stretch or march on the spot every hour
- Do light chores, like dusting or watering plants

Small bursts of movement add up and help keep your bones and muscles active.



Staying Safe While You Stay Active

Before starting any new exercise routine, check with your doctor or physiotherapist, especially if you have joint problems, heart conditions, or balance issues. Start slowly, wear supportive shoes, and use a chair or wall for support if needed.

Remember, every bit of movement counts. The more you move, the stronger, steadier, and more independent you will be.

The Bottom Line

Keeping your bones and balance strong is one of the best ways to stay healthy, independent, and confident as you age. By combining aerobic, strength, and balance exercises, and by limiting the time you spend sitting, you are giving your body the best chance to stay well for longer and reduce your risk of falls.

Strong bones mean strong independence.
Start moving today- your future self will thank you.

**Chest
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Lyla's Story

Lyla Hynds, from Portadown, suffered a stroke in September 2024 at the age of 91. Lyla recalls being at home on a quiet Sunday evening, going about things as usual. Everything seemed normal until she tried to pick up her mug and suddenly noticed that her fingers felt locked together. Concerned, Lyla ran her hands under water, hoping it was just a temporary stiffness. When she managed to lift the mug to her mouth, she found that she could not drink from it, she realised something was seriously wrong.

Trusting her instincts, Lyla immediately phoned 999 for help, a quick decision that proved crucial in getting her the urgent care she needed. While on the phone to 999, Lyla said it felt as though her throat was closing. She became increasingly frightened and confused, not understanding what was happening to her. Lyla was rushed to Craigavon Area Hospital, where she underwent a series of tests. The following morning, she was informed that she had suffered a stroke. She recalled feeling scared but also eager to learn as much as possible about her condition. Following her discharge, Lyla engaged with the Community Stroke Team and was referred to us for further support. Lyla says;



Where NICHS came into the picture was when I tried to get answers to my many questions. It was such a scary time, and I knew I needed to find out how to cope with something I knew nothing about. Lynne, one of the Care Services Co-ordinators, contacted me and arranged a home visit."



Lyla remembers the visit clearly,

"Lynne came out and gave me lots of useful information and told me about the Post Rehab Exercise Programme (PREP). I attended PREP, led by Suzanne, initially for six weeks and enjoyed it so much that I returned for another six weeks. I found the programme very beneficial, both for the exercise and the education component. It was great to meet and speak to others who had also experienced a stroke. I enjoyed it because everyone was so friendly and shared their experiences."

Lyla continues to do PREP exercises regularly at home to this day.

After completing PREP Lyla was eager to continue her progress and went on to attend our Taking Control Self-Management Programme. This programme provides participants with a range of skills to help them manage their condition more effectively and build confidence. Lyla says; "This was so brilliantly tutored and led by Suzanne and Hannah, two very dedicated, caring, and pleasant members of staff who treated everyone equally."

“Attending the programme was so enjoyable. We knew that if we asked a question, it would always be answered and explained clearly, and we were able to learn so much. It really made me think – you get out of it what you put into it. It helped me see things differently, and I loved the social element and chatting with others. It was such a respectful and supportive environment.”

“I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to NICHHS for their incredible support throughout my recovery. From the moment they contacted me, their team has been a constant source of strength, not just physically, but emotionally as well. The care, guidance, and encouragement they provided have played a pivotal role in my journey, and I can't say how much it has meant to me. Their commitment to not only improving physical health but also supporting mental well-being has made all the difference, helping me feel understood and motivated during some of my most challenging moments.”

Lyla's story is a powerful reminder that, with the right support, recovery and hope are possible at any age. She concludes :“A big thank you to NICHHS. I'm so glad to say that I am now enjoying a much better way of living.” Lyla approached her recovery with a positive, attitude that inspired everyone around her. Her zest for life continues to fuel her determination to overcome challenges and embrace each new day with hope and energy.

Lyla's life advice comes in the form of a metaphor, she says;

“You should never sit still for more than an hour or so, because humans are like honey. If a jar of honey is left sitting, it will crystallize and harden over time, just as humans need movement to stay active.”

Lyla's tips to anyone who has experienced a stroke are:

- It's important to get out of the house, even when you don't want to
- Speak to others who have gone through the same thing
- Take support when offered
- It is up to you to be determined

For more advice and useful tips, check out our new Life after Stroke leaflet.



We worked with our service users to create this leaflet and share their advice for adjusting to life after a stroke. The leaflet has practical tips on things like making personal care easier, tackling household tasks, strategies for dealing with fatigue, and ways to cope with the mental impact of stroke, amongst much more.

You can find this on our website at www.nichs.org.uk/leaflets or ask your Care Services Co-ordinator for a copy.

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The Bittersweet Truth: Sugar's Impact on Your Diet

Sugar, which was once rationed and considered a luxury, has now become an enemy in a modern world where we seem to be grappling with a sugar consumption crisis. In the UK after World War 2 rationing ended sugar consumption quickly doubled, leading to higher rates of type 2 diabetes and hypertension in subsequent generations, according to some studies.

The average adult and child in NI consumes above the recommended daily intake so it's essential to understand the impact of sugar on our health and explore ways to manage what some might say is an addiction. Sugar stimulates the brain's reward centre and produces dopamine, 'the feel good' effect that other addictions do. People can develop tolerances to sugar, as to other substances, which can lead to increasing intake to feed the need. The government however recommends that an adult should have no more than 30g of added/free sugars per day. This is the equivalent of 7 sugar cubes or approximately 7 teaspoons.

Free sugars are those that are added to food or drinks in the manufacturing process plus sugars found naturally in honey, syrups, and fruit and vegetable juices. They are described as free as they do not exist within the cells of the food and have no nutritional value unlike sugars in whole fruits and vegetables for example which contain fibre. Consuming above the advisory 30g per day can contribute to weight gain and increase risk of heart diseases, high cholesterol, some cancers and diabetes amongst other health conditions.

Does the human body need sugar to survive?

The body absolutely needs glucose, a simple sugar, to survive but we do not need it from refined sugar products or those foods high in added sugar. Nearly every cellular process, including brain function, relies on this glucose as it is the body's primary energy supply, but it can get it from other sources.

The truth is most of us get more than enough natural sugars, in the form of carbohydrates, from our diets. Carbohydrates are so important to our diet as they provide energy, however it is important to carefully consider the type of carbs that we choose. Carbs break down to glucose but not all in the same manner. Those described as simple carbs, which we find in sugary drinks, cakes, chocolate and so on, break down fast into glucose which will cause our blood glucose and energy levels to spike. The body will then release insulin to lower these sugar levels and you experience a slump which may bring lethargy, low mood, anxiety, low motivation, feelings of hunger and those sugar cravings may sneak up once again. This can easily become a vicious cycle.

If you choose a wholegrain carb, or complex carb, which is high in fibre like vegetables, nuts, seeds, and fruit then the glucose will be released much more slowly and will enter the bloodstream in a more orderly fashion, not bringing about that spike, allowing levels to remain more stable. This in turn can help you feel fuller for longer and help maintain energy levels and more upbeat moods.

The body also stores glycogen in the liver and muscles which can be released as glucose when additional supplies are needed. Another clever process in the body is gluconeogenesis which occurs where the body can produce glucose from fat and amino acids.



Diabetes occurs when the body cannot control blood sugar properly. The body is producing glucose, but type 1 diabetes occurs when the body cannot produce enough insulin, the hormone needed to move sugar from the blood into the body's cells. With type 2 diabetes, the insulin the body produces is not used properly, known as insulin resistance, leading to sugar build up in the blood. Insulin resistance can occur where a diet is high in sugar and cells become less responsive increasing the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

High levels of sugar in the blood can also cause serious health problems involving the eyes, heart, kidneys, feet, and nerves. There are also short-term complications which include hyperglycaemia when blood sugar levels are too high. We don't always feel this, yet our pancreas is working hard to try to bring blood sugar down by manufacturing and secreting insulin. Hypoglycaemia is when blood sugar levels are too low. This is often described as 'feeling hangry' which can look like anxiety, irritability, excessive sweating, weakness, shakiness and headaches.

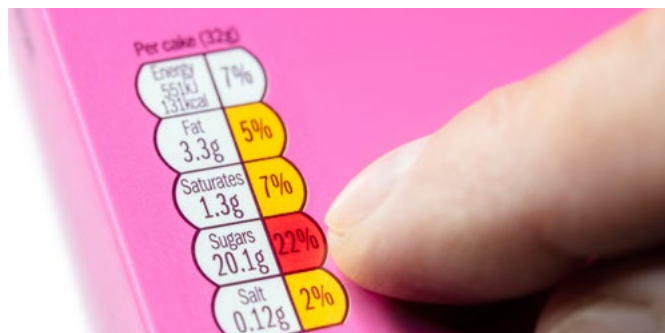
How to spot sugar

Even if you know the guidelines and are doing your best to cut down on sugar it can be a challenge as it's hidden everywhere, from bread to beans to fortified cereals to tomato soup.

Manufacturers know that sugar is a cheap way to make products taste good and last longer, so they are clever in camouflaging the sugars contained in food by using less common names on the ingredients list. Some major clues that an ingredient is an added sugar include:

- it has syrup e.g. corn syrup, rice syrup
- the word ends in 'ose' e.g. fructose, sucrose, maltose, dextrose
- sugar is in the name e.g. raw sugar, cane sugar, brown sugar, confectionary sugar
- other examples of added sugar include fruit nectars, concentrates of juices, honey, agave and molasses

Labels that include colour coding allow you to see at a glance if a food has a high, medium or low amount of sugars:



Red = High

more than 15g of sugar per 100g

Amber = Medium

more than 5g but less than 15g per 100g

Green = Low

less than or equal to 5g of sugar per 100g

Some labels on the front of packaging will display the amount of sugar in the food as a percentage of the Reference Intake (RI). RIs are guidelines for the approximate amount of particular nutrients and energy required in a day for a healthy diet.

The Take Home Message

- **Glucose is essential** but the body can produce it from other sources
- **Added sugars are unnecessary** and can be detrimental to health in excess
- **Natural sources of food are best.** Fruits, vegetables and wholegrains provide necessary nutrients and fibre.

To cut sugar cravings, eat balanced meals with protein and fibre, stay hydrated, and choose naturally sweet snacks like fruit, nuts, or yogurt. Also, manage stress, get enough sleep, and be mindful of triggers, as emotional factors can drive cravings.

Chest
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Our Recent FAST Campaign

Over the past ten years there has been a 23% increase here in the number of people registered with their GP as having had a stroke or Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA)¹, often referred to as a mini stroke. This increase is hugely worrying for us, and we recently ran a campaign to raise awareness of stroke symptoms and remind the public to act FAST if they spot any symptom of stroke:

- F** **FACE** - is it drooping on one side?
- A** **ARMS** - is there arm weakness? Can they be raised?
- S** **SPEECH** - is it slurred?
- T** **TIME** - to get to hospital as soon as possible.

Our campaign garnered the support of former Ireland and Ulster rugby star Kathryn Dane, who had a stroke at the astonishingly young age of 26. Kathryn's story shows how stroke can affect anyone at any age, no matter their level of fitness and state of health. It also highlights how important it is to recovery to seek medical attention as soon as possible if any symptom of stroke starts.

Kathryn was at the pinnacle of health and fitness and was just a few weeks into her new life as a professional rugby player when she suddenly became ill during a training session. She recalls;

"I felt a massive pain behind my right eye, in the back of my head. My coach, Ed Slattery, noticed straight away that my face had dropped. I wasn't aware of that but didn't feel well. The stroke took its hold incredibly quickly- immediately I had left-sided weakness. Ed got the team doctor, and they knew straight away that I had had a stroke of some description."



"I was fortunate in a way I had my stroke where I did because the gym is so close to the hospital and within fifteen minutes, I was in Connolly Hospital in Dublin, where it was discovered I had suffered a brain haemorrhage, and I received immediate treatment. With these things, time is everything and if I'd had my stroke somewhere else and Ed hadn't recognised the symptoms, I would have had a totally different outcome."

Kathryn continues;

"That's why I support Northern Ireland Chest Heart & Stroke's campaign, to make people aware of the FAST acronym and highlight that if they experience, or see in others, any symptom of stroke, to get to hospital as soon as they possibly can. The quicker you get treatment, the better the outcome is likely to be."

"Thankfully, I have recovered well. Eighteen months after my stroke I was back playing rugby for Ulster, and I was the first female Ulster player to be included in a Barbarians squad for a match in 2024. I completed my PhD at Trinity College Dublin last year and am now a Postdoctoral Associate at the University of Calgary in Canada. My stroke is a chapter in my life story that I've fought back from and have overcome."



For more information about our FAST campaign, visit www.nichs.org.uk/FAST

¹ Prevalence statistics, Department of Health - <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/prevalence-statistics>

Leading the Fight Against NI's Youth Vaping Problem

We are delighted to have recently launched our new vaping education resource, You and Me Northern Ireland Vape-Free, which has been developed in conjunction with Stanford University's REACH Lab.

We work tirelessly to bring messages about the dangers of vaping to young people. Our Schools Team deliver Well Talks as part of our prevention work and in 2024/25 80% of our Well Talks focused on vaping, reaching over 19,000 students, teachers, parents, and youth workers. We recognised the need however for a dedicated educational resource on vaping for teachers.

We began exploring options to fill this educational gap and connected with Stanford University's REACH Lab led by world-renowned vaping expert Dr. Bonnie Halpern-Felsher, Professor of Paediatrics/Adolescent Medicine.

The lab has a US curriculum, You and Me, Together Vape-Free, and we have worked with them, alongside local schools, pupils, teachers, and parents to adapt this for Northern Ireland and ensure it is relevant and impactful for local young people.

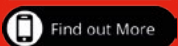
For more information about the resource, visit nichs.org.uk/yamnivf



Northern Ireland Chest Heart & Stroke

Give a regular donation – make a lasting impact

Help us to be here **supporting local people and families living with life-changing illnesses** - today, tomorrow and for years to come.



Visit www.nichs.org.uk/regulardonation

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