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Scleroderma

support group

newsletter

Second anniversary of the support group

It may be young, compared with some other long-established groups of its kind but, from small beginnings two years ago at a meeting in the Hutt valley, the Scleroderma Support Group has grown to a membership of around forty.

This newsletter circulates to all members and a quick look at the spread of addresses shows them living from Auckland to Bluff.

August's meeting wasn't well attended but those who were there discussed whether the group should have a more formal structure. At present, there are no office holders,

rather, just tasks that have been assumed by various members.

The consensus was that establishing formal positions meant a load of work would rest on a few. The casual way it is being run at the moment means that the work can be shared around. However, to avoid one or two members paying for all group expenses, we agreed that a gold coin donation at each meeting would be appropriate.

If members have opinions on a formal structure versus the current, casual arrangement, feel free to send your thoughts in and we can publish a range next issue.



Spring

Hi everyone this is our second to last newsletter before Christmas. Hope you all got through winter ok. It was very cold wasn't it? It was a novelty to see the snow here in Wellington. Never before have we seen it on the ground in the suburbs - it was always far away on the Tararua Mountains. Perhaps some of you down south are a bit more accustomed to it. This newsletter is a small one due to 'no news' from our readers. Our next meeting is on the 12th November and will be a Christmas theme. Looking forward to seeing you all there and bring your Christmas spirit with you.

Group finances

Funding the group's activities

August's meeting discussed group finances, amongst other things.

At present, a couple of members pay for most services, such as hall hire, an appreciation present for guest speakers, domain name and web hosting fees.

We agreed that the gold coin donation at each meeting should go towards reimbursing at least the hall hire and the presentation to guests. The gift can cost around \$50 and while hall hire has been more expensive, the Citizen's Advice Bureau rooms in Lower Hutt have proved inexpensive at \$12 per meeting.

So the small donation from each attendee should help to balance these costs which have largely been met by Dianne and Gordon for the past two years.

We agreed that there is no need for a president and while Dianne has in effect been acting as group secretary, there was no enthusiasm for formalising this and she is happy if some members want to share the workload.

Barbara will continue to sponsor the website and



The Citizen's Advice Bureau rooms in Central Lower Hutt, venue for August's and future meetings. The hall hire, at \$12 for each meeting, is less than a third of our previous meeting place. The hall has been rebooked for November's meeting.

domain name charges.

So, no formal hierarchy is proposed, just an acknowledgement that keeping the group functioning does take a little effort and a small amount of money and contributions of time from members are always welcome.

Winter might gone but it will return - a tip to fight it



Winter plays with cold hands like a medieval torturer. You can't stop the season's return but you can resist it.

Group member, Val, thinks she has found the answer to the annual finger freeze.

She found a way to deal to an Australian pest and keep her fingers warm at the same time when her daughter bought her a possum skin at the Evan's Bay, Wellington sheepskin shop.

By turning the skin inside out, sewing it into a comfortable wrapper and wearing it whenever she goes out she found it held out against the cold.

In the old days, muffs, as these devices were called, were common.



Hypertension

Extracted from an extremely useful medical website: www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/medlineplus.html

Hypertension is the term used to describe high blood pressure.

Blood pressure is a measurement of the force against the walls of your arteries as your heart pumps blood through your body.

Blood pressure readings are usually given as two numbers -- for example, 120 over 80 (written as 120/80 mmHg). One or both of these numbers can be too high.

The top number is called the systolic blood pressure, and the bottom number is called the diastolic blood pressure.

- Normal blood pressure is when your blood pressure is lower than 120/80 mmHg most of the time.
- High blood pressure (hypertension) is when your blood pressure is 140/90 mmHg or above most of the time.
- If your blood pressure numbers are 120/80 or higher, but below 140/90, it is called pre-hypertension.

If you have pre-hypertension, you are more likely to develop high blood pressure.

Causes

Many factors can affect blood pressure, including:

- How much water and salt you have in your body
- The condition of your kidneys, nervous system, or blood vessels
- The levels of different body hormones

High blood pressure increases your chance of having a stroke, heart attack, heart failure, kidney disease, and early death.

You have a higher risk of high blood pressure if you:

- Are obese
- Are often stressed or anxious
- Drink too much alcohol (more than one drink per day for women and more than two drinks per day for men)
- Eat too much salt in your diet
- Have a family history of high blood pressure
- Have diabetes

- Smoke

Symptoms

Most of the time, there are no symptoms. For most patients, high blood pressure is found when they visit their health care provider or have it checked elsewhere.

Because there are no symptoms, people can develop heart disease and kidney problems without knowing they have high blood pressure.

Exams and Tests

Your health care provider will check your blood pressure several times before diagnosing you with high blood pressure. It is normal for your blood pressure to be different depending on the time of day.

Blood pressure readings taken at home may be a better measure of your current blood pressure than those taken at your doctor's office. Make sure you get a good quality, well-fitting home device. It should have the proper sized cuff and a digital readout.

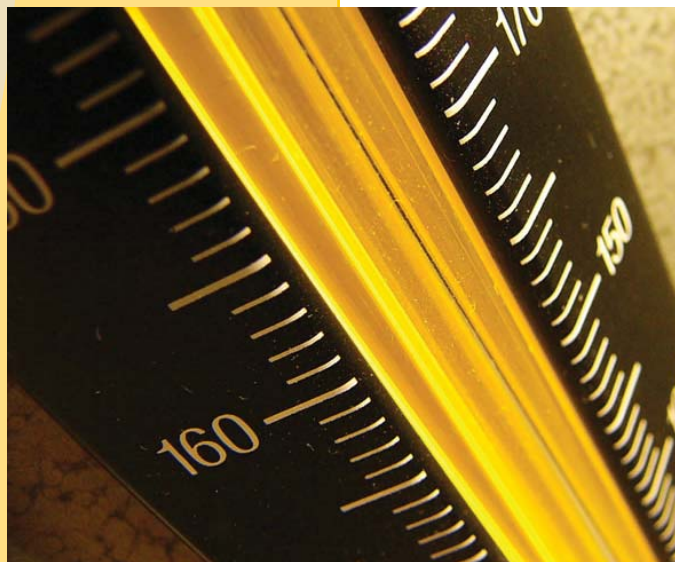
Treatment

The goal of treatment is to reduce blood pressure so that you have a lower risk of complications. You and your health care provider should set a blood pressure goal for you.

If you have pre-hypertension, your health care provider will recommend lifestyle changes to bring your blood pressure down to a normal range. Medicines are rarely used for pre-hypertension.

You can do many things to help control your blood pressure, including:

- Eat a heart-healthy diet, including potassium and fiber, and drink plenty of water.
- Exercise regularly -- at least 30 minutes of aerobic exercise a day.
- If you smoke, quit.
- Limit how much alcohol you drink -- one drink a day for women, two a day for men.
- Limit the amount of sodium (salt) you eat -- aim for less than 1,500 mg per day.
- Reduce stress -- try to avoid things that cause you stress. You can also try meditation or yoga.
- Stay at a healthy body weight -- find a weight-loss program to help you, if you need it.





Next Meeting 12th November 1.30pm

Christmas comes but once a year
Come together and enjoy some cheer
At the rooms of Citizens Advice Bureau
Cnr Laings Rd and Myrtle Street
The Te Awakairangi Building Lower Hutt
Bring a plate
Of food to share
And a \$2 gift for each person attending
Look forward to seeing you then

Recipe: Christmas Mince

225 grams raisins
225 grams currants
225 grams sultanas
225 grams grated apple
120 grams shreddo
1tsp mixed spice
pinch salt
grated rind and juice of 1 lemon & 1 orange

- mince fruit and mix all ingredients together.
- Add a wine glass of sherry. (optional)
- Seal in bottles and refrigerate
- Use sweet short pastry and bake 180° C 20min approx

If you make this early it will macerate



CONTACTS

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Links: www.arthritis.org.nz | www.scleroderma.org.nz | www.sjogrensnewzealand.co.nz