



Food & health

The NHS is 60 on 5 July, and it's vastly different from when doctor and matron knew best. But even today, having your say in this complex organisation is a challenge

Power to the NHS patient

HEALTHCARE

Marathon-running pensioner Buster Martin remembers when it cost more than his weekly salary to have a stomach wound stitched.

He welcomed free NHS care, which came in 1948, but says: 'Doctors didn't involve you. They gave an opinion and that was it. Now they wait for you to say what's wrong.'

These days patient involvement means that you should be consulted on decisions about your treatment and be able to influence how health services are run.

In England, Wales and Scotland, NHS organisations must consult the public

before making decisions – and similar rights are planned for Northern Ireland.

But there's been scepticism about the success of involving patients.

Our Impatient for Change campaign has found that patients often feel unable to raise views about their treatment, and we're concerned that patient ideas for change are rarely acted on.

There's also criticism that involvement organisations have been continually reinvented, particularly in England. Others have said that involving lay people in decision-making can be a token gesture.

Which? health campaigner Clare Corbett says: 'Gordon Brown recently



Muriel James (right) chairs her surgery's patient group

committed to "put more power" in patients' hands, which is welcome, but the detailed plans must deliver on that promise.'

Organisations might learn from the head and neck cancer service at Luton and Dunstable Hospital. It made 43 changes to services after collecting patients' views – including a new appointment system that reduced waiting times and a redesigned waiting area that stopped overcrowding. The hospital also gives patients electronic devices so they can log their experiences.

'It's about the community looking after itself'

GET INVOLVED IN YOUR HEALTHCARE SERVICES

Each country operates in different ways, but all offer opportunities to have your say. Speak to staff and sign up for newsletters to find out what you can do

At your surgery

■ You could join a patient participation group at your general practice – or set one up. Go to www.napp.org.uk for advice.

In hospitals

■ Hospitals should offer plenty of opportunities to influence decisions through places on their committees. Look for patient involvement sections on websites or call hospitals to find out more.
■ In England, if your hospital is a foundation trust, you could become a member and vote in governor elections, or even stand yourself.

With local health services

■ In England, primary care trusts may offer chances to take part in committees and groups that put forward patients' views.
■ In Scotland, community health and care partnerships offer similar opportunities through public partnership forums.
■ Health boards and trusts in Wales offer public appointments on their committees. Go to the public appointments section at <http://new.wales.gov.uk> for more.
■ In Northern Ireland, health and social care trusts have lay members on committees.

Through local health monitors

■ Local involvement networks, which oversee health and social services, are spreading across England. Go to www.nhscentreforinvolvement.nhs.uk for more.
■ See www.scottishhealthcouncil.org for similar groups in Scotland.
■ In Wales, go to www.patienthelp.wales.nhs.uk to contact community health councils.
■ In Northern Ireland, visit www.hscni.net for details of health and social services councils.

Through national organisations

■ Independent national



organisations develop NHS guidance, and inspect and monitor healthcare standards.

■ For instance, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, which develops NHS guidance, has lay people on its committees. Go to www.nice.org.uk for more.



73%

Hellmann's share of UK's £97m mayonnaise market

MINTEL



72%

HP's share of UK's £42m brown sauce market

IRI



Buster likes today's more open NHS

Patient involvement can also include carers, such as Muriel James, 71, who has helped make health services more accessible in her Northampton community.

After becoming a full-time carer for her late husband, Muriel was asked to help produce a leaflet for newer carers. Now she chairs her surgery's patient participation group. An average day might see Muriel running a 'waist management' session or helping disadvantaged parents prepare nutritious family meals.

Muriel says: 'It's about the community looking after itself. We saw 120 people at the waist management day, which is good as people don't like discussing obesity. Some signed up to exercise schemes and we found some with higher blood-sugar levels.'

Using patient information

■ Visit the NHS choices website – at www.nhs.org.uk – for a range of government information on health.

■ Charities can involve patients in several ways, from surveys to inviting you to sit on management boards. For instance, Macmillan Cancer Voices – via www.macmillan.org.uk – allows patients and carers to find out about local and national opportunities. Visit www.patient.co.uk/selfhelp.asp for details of other organisations.

■ And don't forget that Which? can help – at www.which.co.uk/hospitalstandards – and see our 'Patient choice' report, February, p26, for useful tips and contacts.

We check how unhealthy sauces for your favourite BBQ burgers and sausages can be

Sauce showdown

NUTRITION

Barbecue season is upon us, which means stocking up on burgers and a range of sauces.

You might think about buying burgers low in fat and/or salt – but have you thought about how much fat, sugar or salt is in the the sauces that we put on them?

Our shopping trip revealed high levels of sugar, salt and fat in some brands of five popular sauces. The values may look small, but even sticking to recommended servings can take up much of your guideline daily allowance of these nutrients.

Out of the sauces, mayonnaise has the highest fat content, while others, such as tomato sauce, are high in sugar – often a teaspoon per typical serving.

The worst culprits for sugar are sweet chilli sauces, which are

around 50% sugar.

Sauces are also generally high in salt. An adult's recommended maximum daily intake is 6g. For children, the recommended maximum is 2g for one to three-year-olds, 3g for four to six-year-olds and 5g for seven to ten-year-olds. But just one 20g serving of Heinz's ketchup, for example, gives 30% of the recommended maximum daily salt intake for a three-year-old. And we know how some children won't eat anything unless it's smothered in ketchup.

Working out nutrients in sauces can be a challenge. Some brands give values per 100g, some per serving, while others, such as Wilkin & Sons Tiptree sauces don't have nutrition information on labels, so we had to contact the company.

Here we focus on the nation's



Find out what's in your preferred sauce online

favourite, tomato sauce. But check out our online report at www.which.co.uk/sauces – from 1 July – for details about mayonnaise as well as barbecue, brown and sweet dipping sauces.

Where possible you could opt for brands with reduced fat, sugar and salt, and try to use smaller amounts.

See 'King of the grill', p74.

Tomato sauce

Recommended serving 20g

Heinz ketchup – the leading brand of the UK's biggest-selling table sauce – is the saltiest of our tomato sauce selection. A 20g serving contains 10% of an adult's recommended maximum daily intake of salt.

The Tiptree sauce is the highest in sugar and a 20g serving of both this and the Levi Roots brand contains more than 5g – one teaspoon – of sugar, which is around 5% of an adult's guideline daily allowance.



Heinz Tomato Ketchup
342g
£0.62



Levi Roots Love Apple Tomato Sauce
295g
£1.49



Tiptree Tomato Sauce
310g
£1.75

Sugar
(per 20g)

4.7g

5.1g

7.4g

Salt
(per 20g)

0.6g

0.2g

0.5g