

## 65 roses in bloom

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When GAA panellist Joe Brolly recently made an appearance on 'The Late Late Show' on RTE, it was difficult not to be moved by his discussion on cystic fibrosis (CF).

With Ireland being the country most affected by the condition in the world, Brolly spoke about how the disease affected its sufferers. This was ahead of Cystic Fibrosis Week which will run from 8-15 April with a '65 Roses Day' on Friday 15 April.

The term 65 roses was originally used for children to first learn how to say cystic fibrosis.

He asked the audience to participate in an experiment to do with their breathing, which is one of the main issues sufferers have to deal with. Brolly described it as "breathing through a straw".

Australian rugby player Nathan Charles is living with the condition but, such is the severity of cystic fibrosis, that not many people have lived into adulthood, with life expectancy before just 13 and a half years old.

Ireland has some of the



Chief Executive of Cystic Fibrosis Ireland (CFI), Philip Watt. PHOTO: CYSTIC FIBROSIS IRELAND

awareness, with events held nationwide.

"The organisation was set up in 1963 by parents. We fundraise to improve and invest in cystic fibrosis hospitals across the country," said Phillip.

"We've invested €7.5m in the last few years alone. We also spend money on support grants. Fitness is a very big part of battling CF, a lot of our members said they spend three hours each day looking after themselves between exercising, medicating and physiotherapy.

"We've spent half a million euro in grants over the past two years. We also like to provide information to sufferers, we have a magazine called Spectrum which we publish four times a year. Health and fitness are critical, the digestive system is one of the main areas affected by the disease, malnourishment was a huge cause of death in the past," says Mr Watt.

Such has the progress been in modern times that the life expectancy has doubled, with many members living normal lives and having family. Two new medications have also come on the

market; Watt described Kalydeco and Orkambi as game-changers which could reduce hospitalisations by up to 50 per cent.

"Over 25 per cent of sufferers in the Cork and Kerry region have Kalydeco available, which is the highest percentage in the world. It's a very effective drug which has a profound impact on sufferers' lives," he adds.

He also stressed the importance of lung transplantation, which is a critical part of dealing with the disease. Ireland has in the last few years risen to number three in Europe when it comes to lung transplants. This year's VHI Women's Mini Marathon will also aim to raise over €100,000 this June in aid of the disease.

The charity is aiming to recruit one thousand women from all over the country to take part and help raise €100,000 for Cystic Fibrosis.

**Participants are urged to register for the VHI Women's Mini-Marathon and then sign up with CFI for a fundraising pack. For more information, visit cfiireland.ie.**

most severe types of CF and the most cases per head of population in the world, with more than 1,200 people living with the condition in Ireland; an average of 30 new cases diagnosed each year.

The awareness of the

condition has risen dramatically in the last two decades but so too has the medication.

Chief Executive of Cystic Fibrosis Ireland (CFI), Philip Watt said that it is critical both in terms of fundraising and raising

## Asthma initiative to raise awareness

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The Asthma Society of Ireland (ASI) is set to launch a new initiative to help asthma sufferers in primary and secondary schools.

With almost 19,000 children in Cork suffering from the condition, the ASI has developed a programme called the Asthma Friendly School Award for Irish schools, with the ultimate aim being to recognise the prominence of asthma (one in five school children suffer from asthma and they miss an average of ten school days a year), while also encouraging schools to better support

their pupils.

Pheena Kenny, Head of Health Promotion with the ASI says the seriousness of the condition is not always acknowledged. "Asthma is not always taken seriously however it can have a significant impact on individuals, families and communities with one person a week dying as a result of asthma in Ireland," said Ms Kenny.

"Schools play an important role in supporting students with asthma. The Asthma Friendly School Award programme offers a wide range of asthma supports and educational resources. The programme provides opportunities for students to learn more about asthma and it en-



courages schools to create a supportive environment allowing pupils with

asthma to participate fully in school activities. "The programme enables students, teachers and families to work together to implement strategies to raise awareness and improve knowledge around asthma management. We want to see more schools better equipped to support students with asthma by creating a safe and healthy environment for them," Ms Kenny added.

**The Asthma Society will be holding the first ever Asthma Friendly School Award Ceremony in May 2016. To register your interest in becoming an asthma friendly school or to find out more please call 01-8178886 or email aisling.doherty@asthma.ie.**

## Reduce premenstrual syndrome (PMS) naturally

If you're a woman, especially in your late 20s, 30s and 40s, some of these symptoms may be all too familiar to you each month: reduced energy, irritability, tension, depression, headache, altered sex drive, breast pain, abdominal bloating, backache, joint pain, change in appetite (usually carbohydrate or sugar cravings), swelling fingers and ankles and there are many more.

Premenstrual syndrome (PMS) is believed to affect about 85 per cent of women at some level during their monthly cycles. About 10 per cent - 20 per cent of these women experience symptoms that meet the definition of PMS, or more severe PMDD (premenstrual dysphoric disorder).

While a number of medications are commonly prescribed for PMS - the oral contraceptive pill to reduce breast pain, bloating and acne, antidepressants (to increase serotonin levels) for severe PMS, anti-anxiety medication, diuretics for fluid retention as well as hormonal therapy; these are not without side effects and fail to address the underlying cause of PMS and have only varying degrees of effectiveness.

### Diet and key nutrients to reduce PMS:

It is now accepted that a woman's diet may be a significant factor in developing PMS and severity of symptoms. In particular, higher levels of the following nutrients are associated with reduced symptoms of PMS: Calcium and vitamin D. Often lower in women with PMS, by increasing levels of these nutrients through diet or supplementation, PMS symptoms can be significantly reduced.

Calcium-rich foods including dairy (organic a better choice for hormonal health), dark green leafy veg (especially broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, brussel sprouts for hormone metabolism), nuts, grain, beans, tinned sardines or salmon (with bones).

Vitamin D rich foods - oily fish, mushrooms, eggs, fortified foods.

B vitamins. B vitamins play a vital role in how well the body functions on every level but are also essential for nervous system functioning and the metabolism of neurotransmitters like serotonin and GABA (our calming neurotransmitter). In particular, vitamin B6 is directly involved in the production of tryptophan which is a precursor to serotonin.

Vitamin B rich foods - oily fish, poultry, lean meat, wholegrains, avocados, baked potato (with skins), bananas and nuts.

Magnesium (our calming mineral that may help to improve mood, insomnia and other PMS symptoms).

Magnesium rich foods - dark green leafy veg, nuts, seeds, fish, beans, legumes (chickpeas, lentils), avocados, wholegrains. Eat a varied, wholefood, unprocessed diet paying special attention to:

Reduce or avoid PMS triggers such as sugary foods and drinks, caffeine, alcohol.

Exercise moderately. Reduce stress.

When effective dietary and lifestyle changes are made, it may take two-three cycles for the body to adapt and for you to begin to experience fewer symptoms - but your improved diet and lifestyle will have profound effects on your overall health as well as PMS - so start making those changes now!

*This information has been brought to you by Cork based Nutritional Therapist and College of Naturopathic Medicine graduate Sharon O'Dwyer. If you would like to find out how you can train at CNM Cork on an exciting new career in Naturopathic Nutrition. Join us on our next free open evening on Wednesday 6 April, 7pm - 9pm. Reserve your free place online at [www.naturopathy.ie](http://www.naturopathy.ie).*

