

Exercise and Nutrition



The key to having a long and happy retirement can start with your overall physical and mental wellbeing.

As we get older, eating healthily and taking regular exercise can be even more beneficial, a balanced diet can keep your body fit and healthy. There is also the benefit of your immune system being better equipped to fight off illness and infection.

Regular exercise can boost your sense of wellbeing as well as your physical health. Exercise can help to build your self-esteem as well as reduce anxiety and improve your mood. When you exercise, your brains release endorphins which help to make us feel energised, happier and less stressed. This could be as simple as a walk, dancing around the kitchen or even some gardening.

Our physical and mental health and undeniably linked, so it's important to stay active.

Exercise

Staying physically active improves your health and quality of life and may lead to a longer life. It's never too late to start being more active. A little activity every day can make a big difference, but it is advised to be active for 2 hours each week.

Exercise is also a great social activity and it may lead you to make new friends, whether this is going for a swim, attending a gym class, playing golf or just walking the dog. The best type of activity is one that gets your heart pumping faster than usual and this could be an everyday task such as cleaning the house or gardening.



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Activity can reduce your chances of developing conditions such as, heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis obesity and related health problems and some cancers.

To stay healthy, adults should try to be active every day and aim to achieve at least 150 minutes of physical activity each week or 10,000 steps per day through a variety of activities.

If you would like to improve your fitness level then you may need to increase this amount and also include some stretching and strengthening exercises into your routine. For any type of activity to benefit your health, you need to be moving quick enough to raise your heart rate, breathing faster and feeling warmer.

If you haven't done exercise for a while, it's always a good idea to start gently and build up gradually and increase this over time. Please talk to your GP before starting your new exercise regime.



You don't need to be at the gym seven days a week to improve your mood. Here are some ideas to help you incorporate activity into your daily life:

Don't do it alone - If you're committed to doing exercise with a friend, you're less likely to back out. This may be yoga, dance or a walk in the local countryside or park.



Enjoy it - Most importantly, you need to discover a physical activity you enjoy and that suits your level of mobility and fitness. If the exercise you choose is enjoyable you are more likely to stick with it. There are so many different ways of exercising you just need to find the one that works for the time you have and that you enjoy.



Go outdoors - Fresh air, natural light and exercise combined are great for our mental health. Whatever the weather it's great to get outside, it may be for a quick stroll around the block, a longer walk with the dog or a cycle ride. You could also invite a friend for a catch up.

Set yourself a challenge - Give yourself a goal to work towards, start small and get bigger as you get more confident and fitter. This could just be to walk every day and could then evolve to walk 10miles a week or 1000 miles a year. You could even try the NHS 9 week programme, couch to 5k challenge, for more details click [here](#).

Log it - In order to monitor your progress, keep a record of your activity. This could include the time and distance of your walk, ride or workout, but you may also want to include how you feel, in order to track your mood.



By staying physically active, you're also more likely to stay independent for longer and have an improved confidence and self-esteem. Exercise also helps with depression and anxiety and other forms of emotional distress.

Nutrition

Poor nutrition and obesity are common in the UK and according to Public Health England nearly 2/3rds of adults in England are classed as being overweight with more men likely to be in this category than women.

Being overweight can cause various health concerns and according to Cancer Research UK, overweight and obesity is the 2nd biggest cause of cancer. Keeping a healthy weight reduces the risk of 13 different types of cancer. Diabetes and heart disease are also other conditions that you have a higher chance of developing if you are obese. It is therefore important to ensure you are eating a balanced diet.

A healthy diet can also benefit your brain and nervous system. Foods high in saturated fats, like cakes, biscuits or sausages, can speed mental decline. Other foods, like oranges and green leafy vegetables, oily fish or soya, are good for the brain.

How can you improve your eating and drinking habits?

Eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables each day (this can include frozen & dried). This will not only improve your nutritional intake, but also many fruits and non-starchy vegetables such as grapes, watermelons, tomatoes, and lettuce, contain a lot of water and can help keep you hydrated as well.



When eating carbohydrates, choose whole grains and high fibre versions with less added fat, salt and sugar and more vitamins. Eating whole grains instead of highly refined grains can help reduce the risk of heart disease and diabetes and help keep the digestive system.



Ensure you are getting a good source of protein like lean meats, fish, eggs, dairy products, soya, seeds and nuts and beans and pulses. Reduce the amount of processed meat you are eating, these include sausages, bacon, cured ham, corned beef and smoked meat. Try to eat 2 portions of fish per week, at least one of which is oily.



Be aware of your sugar intake. Eating too much sugar can cause weight gain and tooth decay, so moderation is key. Some studies believe that sugar can be incredibly addictive, so keep track of how much sugar you are adding to your food and drinks. Look at information on nutrition labels and ingredients lists to help reduce your intake of sugar. High sugar intake is linked to numerous ailments, including obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and many forms of cancer.

A lot of products have been choosing to replace their sugar usage with sweeteners and this is where diet drinks have come from. Sweeteners are a minimum of 200 times sweeter than sugar and can be as much as 700 times sweeter. This means that less can be used in foods, therefore we consume less product overall. Sweeteners are much better for you from a dental health perspective. However, the research around obesity and weight gain is not clear. It is therefore best that sweeteners included in your diet are used in moderation.



We all know that it's important to keep hydrated and to drink more water. Water is good for your health, drinking 8 glasses of water each day is recommended to maintain good health, which is around 1.5 to 2 litres.

When choosing what to drink, consider the nutritional benefits. Sugary drinks can often be your biggest source of sugar intake. The soft drinks industry levy or sugar tax was introduced in April 2018 as a key part of a government strategy to tackle childhood obesity.

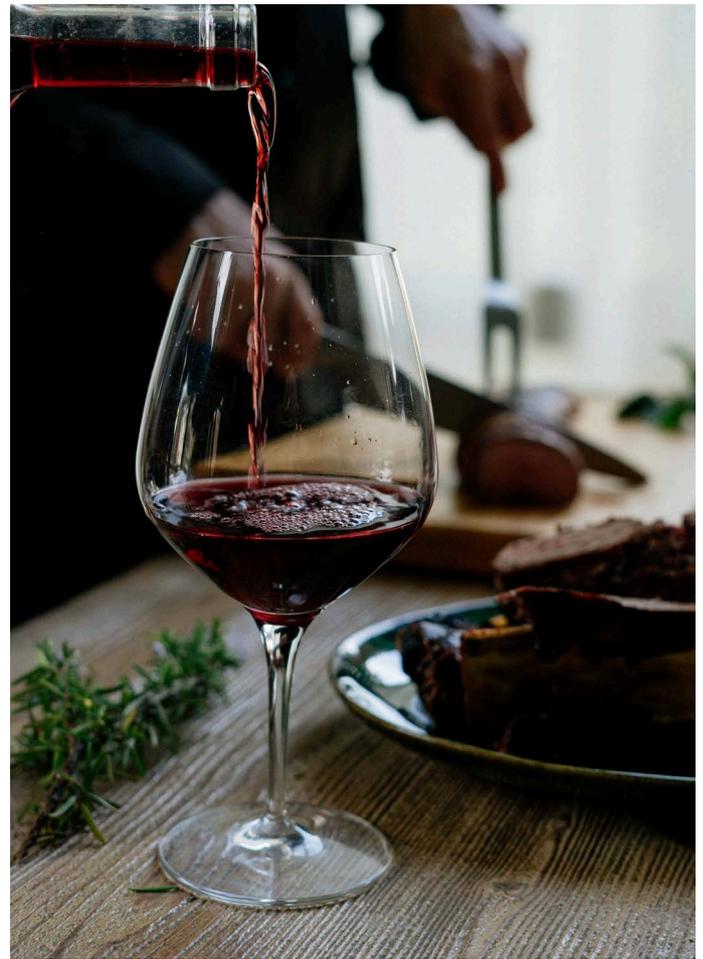


Flavoured water is often promoted as a healthier alternative to fizzy drinks but that's not always the case. Even though they are zero or low calories, these drinks can be loaded with sugar, artificial sweeteners, artificial colouring, preservatives and other unnatural ingredients. One easy way to ensure tasty water that's naturally flavoured is to make it yourself.

DIY infused drinks add nutrients to your diet that can strengthen your immune system, boost your energy, kick start your metabolism and help you maintain a healthy, hydrated body. You could try using cucumber, lemon, lime, mint, ginger, basil or even a cinnamon stick.

Swap caffeine and alcohol with water. Caffeine and alcohol are both diuretics, meaning that they cause your body to remove fluids from your blood at a much quicker rate than other liquids. This results in the body becoming dehydrated.

Alcohol supplies almost twice as many calories as protein and carbs. Alcoholic drinks also contain calories from other sources, which add to overall caloric intake, eg. Cocktails, mixers, spirits. Alcohol loosens the inhibitions and therefore you are more likely to indulge on unhealthy foods. If you're drinking and then you don't feel well the next day, you're going to be less likely to be physically active. When you drink your body is more focused on breaking down alcohol rather than burning fat.



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