

Healthy ageing.

As modern medicine and treatment is transforming lives we are living – and working- for longer. Yet while our life expectancy continues to rise, our 'healthy' life expectancy is struggling to keep pace. So how do we maximise our chances of staying as healthy as possible, for as long as possible?



Keep active.

Many people find that their energy levels and ability to remain active reduces as they age. Keeping active doesn't have to be taxing. Try to keep moving throughout the day as its healthy for your heart and can boost your mood, increase feelings of satisfaction and help you to make healthier choices in the future.

Exercising can also give you more energy, improve your sleep quality, bone density, balance, flexibility, build muscle tone and relieve joint pain.

Your goal is 30 minutes of activity every day. If you find it easier, this can be made up in short periods throughout the day, for example: 3 x 10 minutes or 2 x 15 minutes.

The activity needs to be at an exertion level that makes you feel slightly out of breath and a little warmer, but at an intensity where you can still hold a conversation.

Some simple tips:

- Walk whenever you can – up the stairs, to the shops
- Get outdoors regularly
- Get support – invite a friend or relative to join you
- If you miss a day, don't feel guilty but try and get active as soon as possible – the longer you leave it the harder it gets!

You should consult your GP if you have any concerns about being active.

Watch your weight.

If you are overweight or obese, losing weight can reduce your risk of potentially serious health issues such as high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and more. Being underweight can also detrimentally affect your health as it can make it difficult for your body to fight infections and illness, and puts you at risk of fracturing bones if you fall.

Most people who need to lose weight can get health benefits from losing even a small amount (about 5%) of their weight if they can keep it off.

Cut down on alcohol.

Alcohol can increase your risk of 7 types of cancer. The more you drink, the greater the risk. Giving up alcohol will also help your liver and reduce the chances of developing liver disease.

- There are no specific recommendations for an older person, but the Department of Health advise not to drink more than 14 units a week on a regular basis.
- Spread your drinking over three or more days if you regularly drink as much as 14 units a week
- Try to have several drink free days each week

As we age, we become more sensitive to the effects of alcohol. If you're concerned you may be drinking too much, speak to your GP.

Quit smoking.

Smoking speeds up the biological ageing process, causing premature skin ageing and increasing the risk of eye damage and poor gum health. Smoking is the biggest cause of deaths in England, accounting for 80,000 deaths each year. Half of all long term smokers die early from smoking-related diseases, including heart disease, lung cancer and chronic bronchitis.

It's never too late to quit – being smoke free not only adds years to your life but also improves your chances of a disease free, mobile and happier old age.

Look after your eyes.

An eye test is not just good for checking whether your glasses are up to date. It's also a vital check on the health of your eyes and can pick up eye diseases such as glaucoma and cataracts, as well as general health problems including diabetes and high blood pressure.

Eye muscles start to weaken from the age of 45 and almost all of us will need to wear glasses or contact lenses by the time we're 65.

If you have regular eye tests, wear the right lenses and look after your eyes, there's a better chance your sight will remain clear.

Check your hearing.

Hearing impairment can cause difficulties in communication and lead to frustration, withdrawal and isolation. It's really important to diagnose any hearing loss early as treatment is likely to be more effective. The solution to restoring hearing could be as simple as removing earwax!

Action on Hearing Loss offer a hearing check you can do before speaking to your GP. Call 0844 800 3838 (charges apply) or visit www.actionhearingloss.org.uk