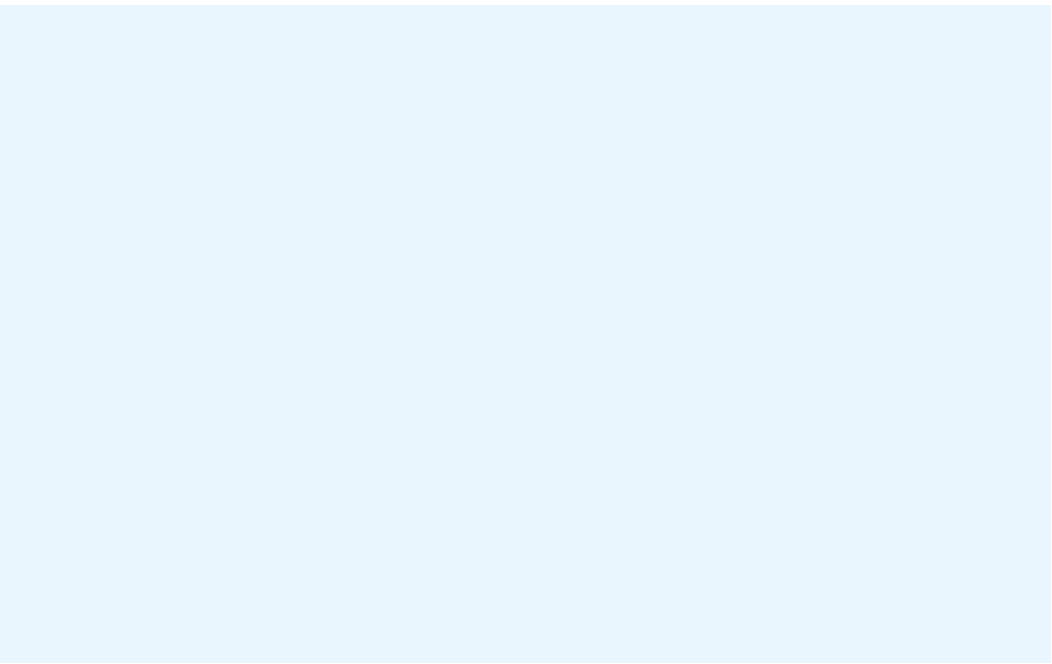


Looking after yourself physically and mentally



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What this guide is about

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The changes you want or need to make will be specific to you, as they depend on your starting point aedvT

to find out the number of people who are able to provide a lot of the support and services mentioned in this guide.

My local council phone number is:

Getting active

If you're just getting started

If you're ready to take the next step

Adding more physical activity to your day-to-day routine can help you do more and keep you active for longer.

Being more active shouldn't feel like a chore, so it's important to find something you enjoy. You might want to take up a new hobby or revisit something you used to do. Finding something enjoyable can make it much easier to stick with.

You might want to try:

- things in your own home, such as gentle chair-based exercises
- doing some gardening or heading out for a walk
- cycling, jogging or swimming
- sports such as tennis, squash or walking football

Eating and drinking

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Maintaining a weight that's right for you

If you've noticed you've gained some excess weight, you might decide to eat a bit less and move a bit more. If you've noticed yourself losing weight without meaning to, it's important to eat more.

An unexpected change in your weight can be a sign there's something else going on. If you've gained or lost weight and you're worried about it, talk to a health care professional such as your doctor or practice nurse.

Good to know

Calories tell us how much energy there is in food and drink. If we consume more calories than we use, our bodies store the excess as fat, which over time can mean we put on weight. If we use more energy than we take in, we can lose weight. The number of calories needed to maintain a healthy weight depends on age, sex and how active someone is.

If you've lost weight unexpectedly

There are lots of reasons you might lose weight without

If you follow a certain diet

Lots of people follow a certain diet for various reasons. Whatever your preferences, it's important to make sure that you're still getting the nutrients you need to stay well.

Vegetarian and vegan diets

These days, there are plenty of plant-based options and meat

Drinking

It's important to drink enough to avoid dehydration and make sure your body functions as it should.

It's recommended that you aim to drink 6-8 cups of fluid a day – that's about 1.5 litres or 2.5 pints. It can be of any hot or cold drink – for example, tea and coffee, juice, soup and smoothies all count. When the weather's hot, you might need to drink more to stay hydrated.

If you feel like you're not drinking enough

- Drink little and often. This can be easier than trying to drink a whole glass at once.
- Have drinks at certain times of the day – such as with meals or when you sit down to watch TV.
- Eat foods with more water in them – such as fruit and veg, soup, jelly or yoghurt.
- Find a way to drink that works for you. This might mean using a straw, a bottle, or a cup with handles – whatever you prefer.

If you feel like you're drinking too much alcohol

- Try a few alcohol-free days during the week. It's sensible to spread what you do drink over the other days, rather than drinking a lot of alcohol in a single day. You shouldn't regularly drink more than 14 units of alcohol a week. Drinkaware (page 36) has a handy guide to units and measures.
- Consider alternatives. You can get alcohol-free versions of lots of drinks, such as beer – or you could try a new soft drink.
- Talk to someone. This might be a friend or family member, a healthcare professional, or one of the organisations listed at the back of this guide (pages 35-38).



Connect with others

Spending time with others can help you feel more grounded and less anxious. Being with family or friends can remind you of happy memories – while meeting new people gives you the chance to share thoughts and ideas and discover interests.

You could consider joining a local club or volunteering in your community. Think about what you like doing, or what you've always wanted to try. If you can't do some of the things you used to, why not go for something totally new?

Connecting with others online is an option too. You could try video-calling friends or family, or chatting on social media or online forums. There's a forum for pretty much anything you might be interested in – whether that's sport, gardening, politics or photography – so you'll definitely find like-minded people to chat to.

If you aren't confident using the internet, your local Age UK might be able to help you or direct you to a computer class in your area. In Wales, contact your local Age Cymru.

If you're feeling down

If you're feeling low, anxious or out of sorts, the best thing you can do to start feeling better is to talk to someone about it. Talking about these things can be easier said than done – but

After Ron's wife died, he found it hard to take an interest in anything.

Ron, 75,

.

'When my wife Joan was alive, we used to play golf every week.



'She said I wasn't unusual in finding it difficult to go back to places and activities that we had always gone to together.

'My blood pressure was still OK but I'd put a bit of weight on since last time. She suggested I was missing the exercise and perhaps the company too – so why not try something different?

'I'd heard my neighbour, Ken, talking about the local bowls club so I thought I'd go along with him and give it a go. It was the best thing I could have done. They're a really nice group, my technique has improved, and I feel healthier. Life seems better.'

Other ways to keep healthy

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Quitting smoking

Even if you've smoked for years, it's never too late to stop. Regardless of your age and how long you've been smoking for, you'll notice a lot of positive changes to your health if you quit.

You're likely to:

- breathe more easily
- reduce your risk of developing heart and lung problems – or making them worse
- reduce your risk of smoking-related cancers or a stroke
- reduce your risk of eyesight problems
- recover more quickly after operations
- feel better overall and live longer.

Lots of people find it difficult to give up, even when they know how unhealthy smoking is. Ask your doctor or community pharmacist for help – they'll be able to tell you about medication or local support that can help you stop.

Good to know

NHS Smokefree has tips on stopping and details of local services that can help (page 37). In Wales, contact Help Me Quit and in Northern Ireland, contact Stop Smoking NI (both page 37).

Looking after your eyesight

It's important to have your eyes tested regularly so that any problems – such as cataracts, glaucoma or age-related macular degeneration – are picked up early. If you're over 60, you can

Looking after your hearing

As you get older, you might notice that you have to turn up the volume on the TV or radio, or that you find it more difficult to hear what's being said around you. While some hearing loss can be normal, it's important to speak to your doctor if you're having trouble with hearing things or being able to communicate.

Some hearing aids and batteries are available for free on the NHS. If you think you have tinnitus (a condition that causes you to hear ringing or humming noises), let your doctor know.

You can also try the free hearing check on the RNID website (page 37), which will let you know if you should see your doctor.

Caring for your feet

It's important to keep a close eye on your feet and contact your healthcare professional if you notice any changes – especially if you have a long-term health condition such as arthritis or diabetes.

As you get older, your feet lose some of their natural cushioning and blood flow may decrease. This can mean blisters or sores take much longer to heal, but there are things you can do to look after your feet, such as:

- wear well-fitting, supportive shoes that are comfy to walk in
- avoid wearing the same shoes every day
- keep toenails short and smooth
- have a regular diabetic foot check
- dry your feet carefully after a shower or bath, especially between your toes
- avoid soaking your feet for too long, as this can cause dry skin
- avoid talcum powder on your feet, as it can cause friction
- apply foot cream containing glycerol to keep your feet hydrated (avoid applying it between your toes). It's best to apply it when you go to bed to avoid slipping on the stairs.

Good to know

If you find it difficult to cut your toenails, Age Cymru may offer a nail care service. We may be able to help you find one near you.

Sleeping well

Sleeping patterns often change with age, and it's natural to not get as much sleep as you used to. But with the right routines, environment and diet, you can still get enough.

To improve your sleeping patterns, you can:

- try to be more active during the day
- go to bed at the same time each night
- avoid eating a lot or drinking alcohol too close to going to bed
- reduce the amount of caffeine you have during the day (you might like to switch to decaf tea or coffee, for instance)

• cut down on daytime caffeine

Health checks

Routine health checks can catch problems at an early stage when they're easier to treat. Are you due for any of the below?

Blood pressure

Your pharmacist, practice nurse or doctor can check this for you. They can offer advice if it's too high or too low.

Cholesterol

You can have your cholesterol level measured at the pharmacy or doctor's surgery. If it's too high, you can make changes to lower it – such as adjusting your diet.

Abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA)

Tests for AAA are offered to men in the year they turn 65 – as it's most common in men over this age. But even if you're not offered a test, you can ask for one if you think you need it.

Cancer

There are NHS screening tests for bowel, breast and cervical cancer which are offered to different groups at different ages.

General health

You'll be invited for a free NHS Health Check every 5 years if you're between 40 and 74 years of age and don't already have certain health conditions.

Vaccinations

Get enough sleep

NHS Smokefree

Provides information on stopping smoking and details of

Help us be there for someone else

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Give your views on guides like this

Our Readers' Panel helps make sure the information we produce is right for older people and their families. We'd love you to join. Go to

[www.ageuk.org.uk/our-panels](#)



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Campaign with us

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ID205487 07/24