



PIGEON POST


Keeping you informed & involved


January/February 2024





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Happy New Year to you all and welcome to the first Pigeon Post of 2024.

We're kicking off the year with our Try Something New campaign and want to encourage as many of you as possible to join.

I'm completely out of my comfort zone, busy training for a 10k run in April, which will be the

furthest I've ever run! Other Age UK Barnet staff members are trying a range of activities including pottery, everyday Spanish and the piano.

There's solid scientific evidence that learning new things boosts our brain power and can protect against memory loss - so why not give something a go.

Art, cookery, book group, walking football.... find out more in our What's on guide to Age UK Barnet activities as well as our Age-Friendly guide to activities around the borough run by other organisations too.

Enjoy the issue!

Helen Newman
Chief Executive
Age UK Barnet

'Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul
And sings the tune without the words
And never stops
At all
- Emily Dickinson





The new year offers a fresh opportunity to think about how we eat, drink and move to help us age well. The British Dietetic Association has just released new guidelines which set out specific recommendations for over 65s, as this age group needs higher amounts of some nutrients than younger people. Each issue, cookery volunteer and trainee dietitian Kato will discuss each of these nutrients; this time we'll look at protein.

'People over 65 need to eat about a third more protein than they did when they were younger,' says Kato. 'So, if you weigh 55kg (8 stone 9lbs) you used to need 44g a day, but now you will need at least 66g, and if you weigh 75kg (11stone 12lbs) you used to need 60g a day, but now you will need at least 90g.' Eating this amount of protein can be hard if you have a small appetite, struggle with cooking, or have chewing or swallowing issues. Although most foods contain some protein, one way to make sure you get enough is to include foods that are high in protein in every meal, especially breakfast and snacks. Here are some ideas for high protein foods and meals to try out.

Breakfast:



Two slices of toast contain around 10g of protein. For more protein, add one or two eggs (any way you like); baked beans with melted cheese; or peanut butter. A generous two-egg omelette with a large spinach filling has 20g of protein. Or what about a ham and cheese toastie with grilled tomato?

A cup of Greek yoghurt also contains around 10g of protein. For more protein, add some chopped nuts, chia seeds (soaked overnight in the yoghurt), oats or muesli. And what about a boiled egg on the side?

Most cereals contain very little protein – a portion of Bran Flakes and Weetabix will give you at most 5g a portion. If this is your routine breakfast of choice, you may want to

switch to some of the higher protein breakfast ideas a few days a week.



Lunch:

Keep some leftover roast/grilled chicken or ham in the fridge, and add this to your vegetable soups or sandwiches. Try out soups with higher protein foods such as meat, beans, peas and cheese – a portion of pea and ham soup contains a whopping 13g of protein! Cheddar and other hard cheeses are excellent sources of protein – try different types of cheese sandwiches, or

sprinkle a generous dollop of grated cheese in your soups. Try toast or baked (sweet) potato topped with canned mackerel, sardines, salmon or tuna. Or an egg mayonnaise sandwich.

Dinner:

A portion of meat or fish, or a soy-based meat alternative alone will provide about a third of your daily protein. Add lentils, chickpeas, or other beans to soups, casseroles and stews for extra protein. If you do not eat meat regularly or at all, try out dishes with edamame beans (young soybeans) and soy-based products – both are delicious in fried rice – as these are the plant foods with the highest protein content. And don't forget about peas – a portion provides 5g of protein, the highest of all of the vegetables.



Snacks:

Try to swap biscuits for a handful of unsalted or lightly salted peanuts (mixed with raisins or other nuts), or a dollop of peanut butter on bread or apple slices a few times a week – for a 5g protein snack. If you enjoy milk and fruit smoothies, add a tablespoon of skimmed milk powder and/or peanut butter to the smoothie - each provides a whopping extra 5g of protein. Or try crackers with cottage/hard cheese, boiled egg, or peanut butter.



SCAM ALERT

FAKE EMAILS AND LETTERS!

Each month our Scams Awareness Team lets you know about a common scam to watch out for.

Thames Water scam letters. Scam letters are circulating impersonating Thames Water, according to Which? magazine. These letters inform you that you're eligible for a reduced bill or free water and include a link to a copycat Thames Water website and a QR code.

Thames Water says it will never ask for personal or financial details, access to your online account, direct payments, or pressure you to make an urgent decision.

Fake Netflix email. An email telling you that your Netflix 'membership has expired' uses the streaming platform's branding to get you to follow a phishing (fake) link.

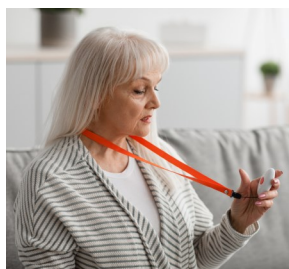
The email tells you that although your membership has expired, you can extend it for 90 days for free due to being part of Netflix's 'loyalty program'.

Clicking the link leads you to a fake site where you'll be asked for your personal data.

Age UK Barnet's scams prevention and support programme is there for all over 55s in Barnet. Please get in touch with us on 020 8203 5040 if you would like to know more about protecting yourself from a scam or if you have fallen for a scam and need some support or advice.



THE DEVICE THAT COULD SAVE YOUR LIFE!



Personal alarms allow people to call for assistance as and when needed in case of an accident or a fall at home. They are simple to use and can help you feel safe, and to remain independent for longer. These potentially lifesaving devices can also offer peace of mind to family and friends.

There are a wide variety of alarms to choose from all designed in slightly different ways to

keep you safe in your own home. They are all connected to a 24/7 emergency response centre who will work out what kind of assistance someone needs while others can be connected to a pager which will alert a designated person that assistance is required.

Inside the home, sensors can be worn or installed which can detect movement including falls, gas leaks, flooding from over running baths and sinks, reminders to prompt you to take scheduled medication and alerting the personal alarm company if you leave your front door open.

There are plenty of private companies offering personal alarms and Barnet Council offers an alarm service through Medequip Connect. This costs from £19.99 (excludes VAT) per month but this might be subsidised or free for those assessed as having eligible needs. To find out if you are eligible, contact Social Care Direct on 020 8359 5000.

The Medequip Connect team can talk you through the options at no obligation to help you to choose the solution that works best for you, if a solution is chosen our team will arrange an install with you at a time that suits you. Our technician will install and test the new equipment and ensure that you and your loved ones are shown how to use the equipment during the same visit. If your needs change over time our team can adapt your equipment to ensure you have everything you need.

You can call Medequip Connect on 0800 910 1390 to arrange an obligation free assessment. Age UK also supplies alarms through TakingCare. For more information, call 0800 085 7371

'My alarm saved my life'

85 year old Shirley received a free wrist falls monitor from Barnet Council after a fall a few years ago. Then a few months ago she had heart attack in the middle of the night...

I woke up at 3am and felt like I had bad flu. I got up to make a cup of tea and halfway down the stairs I blacked out. This must have set off the falls monitor. Anyway, I came to, and went downstairs, feeling a bit faint but with no idea anything serious had happened. The next minute, the ambulance team came through the hallway and took me to the hospital. Then I remember waking up in hospital with a black arm where the stent was put in. It was only then that I found out what had happened. That I'd had a heart attack! I'd had no history of heart problems and without this device letting the call centre know that I'd fallen, no one would have known. This falls monitor saved my life – 100 per cent!

POETRY CORNER

If you have any poetry or funny stories you would like us to include, put pen to paper and send it to us at **Age UK Barnet Letters Page, Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane, East Finchley N2 8LT**. Or call Teresa on 07502 989 403 or 0208 432 1421.



“SMILE” by Spike Milligan



Smiling is infectious,
you catch it like the flu,
When someone smiled at me today,
I started smiling too.
I passed around the corner
and someone saw my grin.
When he smiled I realized
I'd passed it on to him.
I thought about that smile,
then I realized its worth.
A single smile, just like mine
could travel round the earth.
So, if you feel a smile begin,
don't leave it undetected.
Let's start an epidemic quick,
and get the world infected!



HANDYPERSON Q&A - How to get rid of mould in the home

According to Mick from our handyman team, you first need to identify and address the source of moisture. 'Mould thrives in damp environments, so fixing leaks, clearing blocked gutters, improving ventilation, and reducing humidity are crucial steps,' he says. 'Thoroughly inspect your home for water leaks, especially in basements, attics, and around windows or roofs and repair any leaks promptly.'

'Other tips include wiping off condensation from windows, window frames, sills and walls every morning, closing the kitchen door when cooking and opening windows after having a shower to let air into the room,' says Mick. 'You should also dry washing outside, if possible - or in the bathroom with the door closed. And move any furniture very close to an outside wall forward by 3 to 4 inches.'



Once you've addressed the moisture issue, clean existing mould with a mixture of white vinegar and water. Apply the solution to the affected areas and scrub gently with a brush. Wear protective gear like gloves and a mask to avoid exposure to mould spores.

For stubborn mould or larger areas, consider using commercial mould removers or fungicides. Cillit Bang black mould remover works well.

'To prevent future mould growth, maintain good ventilation in your home, use dehumidifiers in damp areas, and clean regularly to prevent dust build-up,' says Mick. 'It might be worth investing in mould-resistant paint for areas prone to moisture.'

If mould issues persist or covers a large area, it might be worth consulting a professional mould specialist.

Remember, rising damp is different from household damp and mould and will need damp proofing.

The Handyman team can carry out essential jobs in the home. Some jobs such as changing a lightbulb are free of charge. Phone 020 8150 0963.



YOUR LIVES, YOUR STORIES!



Each issue former journalist Ed Newman has a lovely chat with a Barnet resident and shares their story with the rest of us. This time Ed speaks to former nurse Nila Patel, a pillar of the Barnet community who works hard to improve the lives of people around the borough.

If you want a job done, ask a busy person. Nila Patel is a very busy person and invariably gets the job done – whichever of her many hats she happens to be wearing.

Whether as a trustee of the Barnet Asian Women's Association, the chair of Barnet Seniors Association until it ceased operating recently, working for the Diabetes UK group in Barnet or being the voice for a variety of local groups and initiatives, Nila is a force of nature with her passion to support her community. That instinct to care for others is something she believes was instilled in her during her many years working as a nurse.

'If you like working with people, like people, then you will always make connections,' says Nila. 'Enthusiasm for people is at the heart of everything I do.'

'As a nurse, I organised diabetes clinics and that's how I got involved with the Barnet group and eventually became chair. There used to be a lot of concern and stigma around diabetes amongst the Asian communities because it can be hereditary. Thankfully, a better understanding of health, nutrition and diet has seen a big improvement in the rates of diabetes in these groups.'

'Prevention is very important in public health. For instance, I think vaping is a major concern at the moment because we just don't know enough about the long-term effects.'

'I often visited the Barnet Asian Women's Association for health promotion events and that's how I got to know people there. Once I retired, they told me I should come more often and eventually they asked me to become a trustee. It's a wonderful group and when members' daughters retire, they become members themselves. Things change with every generation and fewer young people speak Hindi and Gujarati than in the past. I can speak those languages but my siblings can't.'

Nila, her parents, her two brothers and her sister moved to London from Nairobi in the 1970s. It was quite a change from life in the Kenyan capital as they adjusted to their new existence, but the family soon discovered there was much to enjoy.

'It was October time when we first arrived,' Nila tells Pigeon Post. 'Soon after, it started to snow and we loved it. My mum was like a child in a sweet shop. She wanted to buy everything for Christmas and put-up lots of decorations. These days we celebrate Christmas as much as Diwali, as do many people of Indian heritage, particularly the younger ones.'

'I don't have many relatives in India now. There are actually more in the United States, and I've travelled to Florida, New Jersey, Boston and Texas to see family. I love to travel, in fact, I've always worked to be able to take such trips.'

'I grew up in Nairobi though. I did go back there after forty years for a funeral but I couldn't recognise the city and I wouldn't want to live there now. It's all security and gated communities.'

Barnet is definitely the place Nila calls home. She remains a proud advocate for her community and spends a lot of time working with Barnet councillors to improve the lives of different people throughout the borough. She retired when lockdown started and what happened next showed her just how lonely and isolated people could become.

'We've got members at BAWA whose families still won't let them out now, three years on from the first covid outbreak,' Nila continues. 'As a result, people are very lonely. So, I felt as if I could volunteer myself as a voice for the community. I started attending council meetings in the public gallery and got to know some of the councillors. I did stand for election myself and, although it was frustrating not to get elected, I knew I could still speak out for people.'

'Communication is so important between the council and local residents. Too many people are being left out and I want to do something about it.'



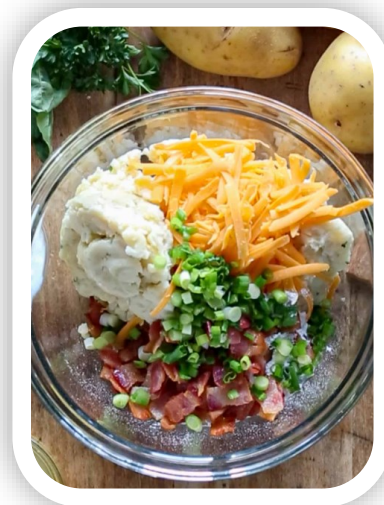
Nila (bottom right) with Pippa Mannerings – Age UK Barnet, Helen Newman CEO Age UK Barnet, Older People's Champion - Councillor Gill Sargeant

RECIPE TIME

POTATO CAKE PATTIES

Ingredients

6 strips bacon
50g diced white onion chopped (or 25g green onion)
2 cloves garlic chopped
200g cold mashed potatoes
100g shredded cheese such as cheddar
1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon pepper
2 tablespoons fresh basil chopped, or ½ teaspoon dried
2 tablespoons fresh parsley chopped, or 1 teaspoon dried
2 eggs
100g flour
Oil or spray oil for frying



Method

Fry bacon until crispy. Drain on paper towels and, once cooled, shred.

In a large pan, reserve 2 tablespoons of bacon in the frying pan. Cook the onion and garlic over medium heat until translucent. (If using green onion, no need to precook).

In a medium bowl, combine crumbled bacon, mashed potatoes, cooked onion, grated cheese, basil, parsley, eggs, salt & pepper. Mix well and add flour a bit at a time until the potato cakes hold together. You may not need all of the flour.

Add oil to pan over a medium heat and using an ice cream scoop size amount of the potato mixture, form it into a ball. Place it in the hot pan and flatten it with a spatula until it's about ½ – ¾" thick. Repeat with remaining potato cakes (cooking in batches if needed).

Fry for about 3 to 4 minutes on each side, until the potato patties are golden brown.

For best results, serve immediately, while hot and crispy.

Top with green onions, sour cream or ketchup





BREATHING FOR HEALTH

Many of us never give much of a thought to something so automatic as breathing, says former physiotherapist Gillian Jordan – unless we have a problem that impacts on our breathing effectiveness, of course, such as asthma, bronchitis or even a cough and cold. But here we are looking at breathing exercises that we can all do that will contribute to our general wellbeing.

First of all, a few facts... 'We breathe on average 16 times a minute,' says Gillian. 'That means that we breathe about 960 breaths an hour, 23,040 breaths a day, 8,409,600 a year and by the age of 80 672,68,000 breaths!'

There are many benefits to regular breathing exercises and how well we breathe can affect our strength, stamina, sleep and mood. 'Deep breathing can activate the body's relaxation response, increase our lung capacity by promoting better oxygen exchange and exercising our rib cage movements and muscles,' says Gillian. 'Healthy breathing before bed can relax both mind and body and encourage better sleep.'

The following breathing exercises should reap benefits right away – perform one or two exercises throughout the day whenever you have a quiet moment or before bed. And repeat the exercise three times.

'For each exercise, don't take more than three deep breaths before stopping and reverting to normal, shallow breaths – sometimes too many deep breaths can make you feel dizzy, soon remedied by taking little breaths!', says Gillian.

1. Complete breathing

- Sit up straight and breathe out, closing your eyes so you can focus on your breathing
- Start breathing in and relax your stomach muscles
- Feel your tummy and ribs expand as your lungs fill with air
- Hold your breath briefly and then
- Slowly let all the air out, pulling your tummy in to feel the last bit of air leave your lungs



2. Pursed-lip breathing (slows breathing to improve lung function)



- Sit up straight and stretch, take a deep, slow breath in through your nose
- Hold your breath for a count of 3
- Purse your lips as if you were going to blow out a candle
- Breathe out slowly through your pursed lips for a count of four.

3. Humming Breathing (a yoga exercise)

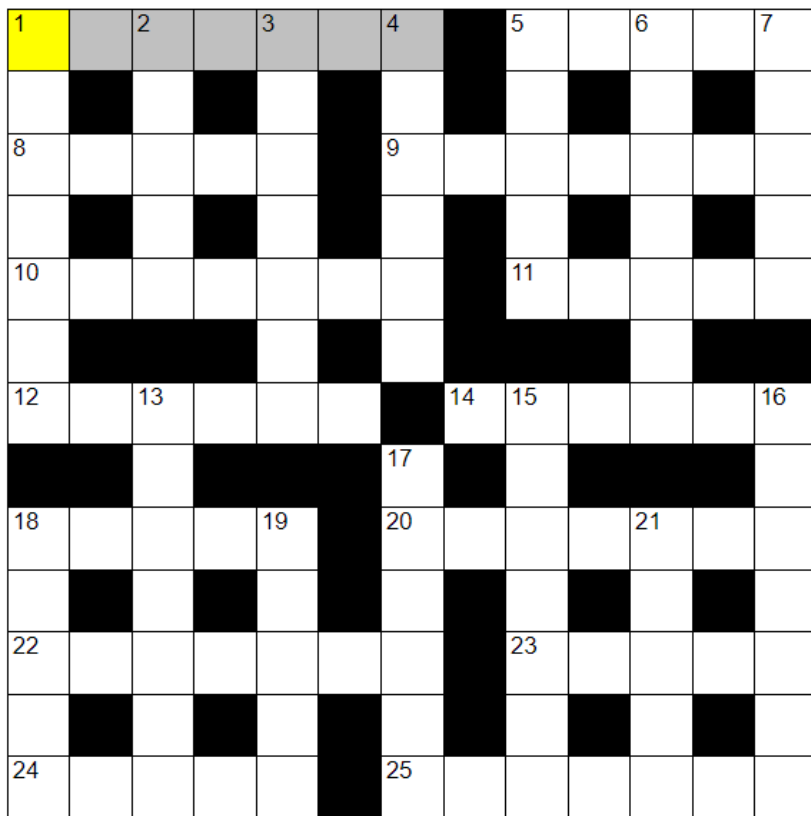
- Just like complete breathing except that as you breathe out you hum, again pull your tummy muscles in as you hum the last air from your lungs.

4. Chinese Breathing (from Tai Chi)

- Take 3 short breaths in.
- On the first breath raise your arms to shoulder height in front of you
- On the second breath pull your arms at shoulder height to your sides
- On the third breath raise your arms above your head.
- Then slowly breathe out, lowering your arms back down to your sides.

PUZZLE TIME

All answers on p16



Across

- 1 Young mares (7)
- 5 Illuminated (3,2)
- 8 Inert gas (5)
- 9 On the way (2,5)
- 10 Be boastful (4,3)
- 11 Fop (5)
- 12 Hot beverage (6)
- 14 Former name of Iran (6)
- 18 Preliminary period (3-2)
- 20 Scoundrel (7)
- 22 Broad-bladed kitchen implement (7)
- 23 Drink made from pears (5)
- 24 Ointment (5)
- 25 Gave way (7)

Down

- 1 Frenzied (7)
- 2 Lawful (5)
- 3 Dishonourable (7)
- 4 Vehicle for travelling over snow (6)
- 5 Enticed (5)
- 6 Absentees from school (7)
- 7 Devoutness (5)
- 13 Letters from admirers (3,4)
- 15 Oval shape (7)
- 16 Vexed (7)
- 17 Enclosure for birds (6)
- 18 Ascends (5)
- 19 Dried plum (5)
- 21 Ventilated (5)

SODOKU

		1		6		4	5	8
			3	9			2	6
					1			
	8	7			6			
			7			2	4	
			1					
6	5			3	2			
1	2	9		7		3		

WORD SEARCH

ALADDIN
BEANSTALK
BEARS
BEAST
BEAUTY
BIG BAD WOLF
CHICKEN LITTLE
CINDERELLA
ELVES

EMPEROR
FAIRY GODMOTHER-
FROG PRINCE
GENIE
GIANT
GOLDEN GOOSE
GOLDOLOCKS
GRANDMOTHER
GRETEL
HANSEL
HUNTER

JACK
KING MIDAS
LAMP
LITTLE MERMAID
LITTLE RED RIDING
HOOD
MIRROR
PEA
PINOCCHIO
PRINCESS
RAPUNZEL

RUMPELSTILTSKIN
SEVEN DWARFS
SHOEMAKER
SINBAD
SNOW QUEEN
SNOW WHITE
STEPMOTHER
STEPSISTERS

SWAN
THREE LITTLE
PIGS
THUMBELINA
UGLY DUCKLING
UNDINE
WISHES

CRAFTY CRAFTS

DRAGONFLY WHISK!

What you will need

Wire whisk. Look for a whisk that looks like the ones you see in the photo below as these are easier to bend. The whisk should have 5 “loops” and a handle.

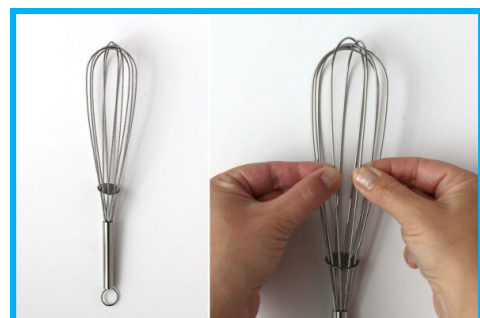
Needle Nose Pliers. You need pliers that have a snip section so you can cut through one of the metal loops to create antennae. You’ll also use the pliers to bend the end of the antennae down.

Wood Beads. I used 3/4 inch wood beads with holes through middle.



Instructions

Turn the whisk until you can find the place where the two top loops come down right next to each other to hook into the handle. Grab those two loops as shown



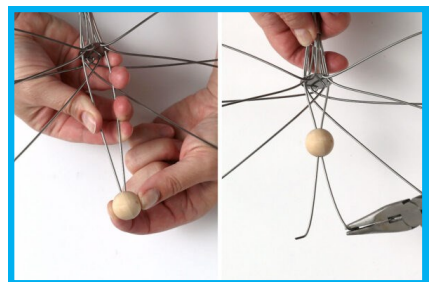
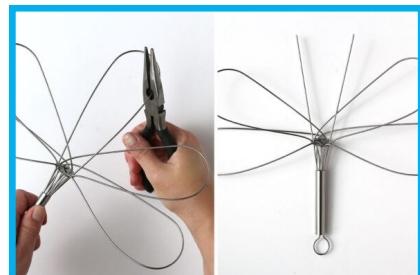
Pull the loop you are holding in your right hand to the right and the loop you are holding in your left hand in the left. You’ll see that they criss cross in the back. Pull each loop down until it’s perpendicular to the handle.

Then grab the next two wire pieces, and pull those loops out to the sides in the same way to make a second set of wings. You’ll have one loop remaining upward.

Grab your pliers and use them to snip off the curved portion of the remaining center loop.

This will leave you with two straight wire pieces

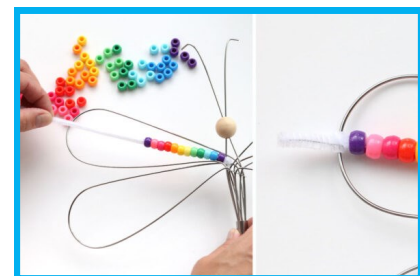
that will be the antennae. If either of these pieces crosses behind a wing, bring it forward through the wing.



Grab a wood bead and thread both straight wire pieces through it. Push the bead down. The wires will cross as you do this. Push the bead down until it seems secure. Use the pliers to bend the ends of the antennae

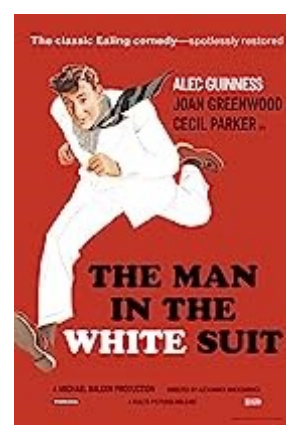
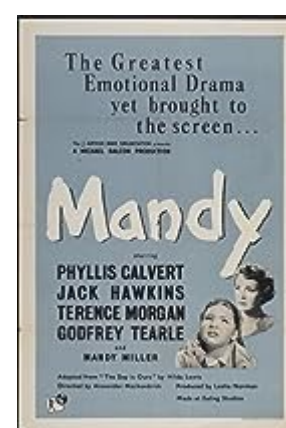
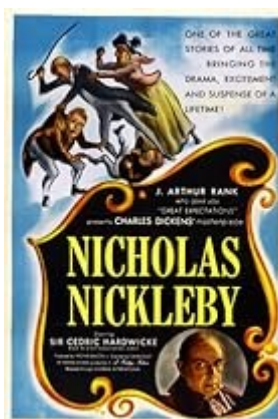
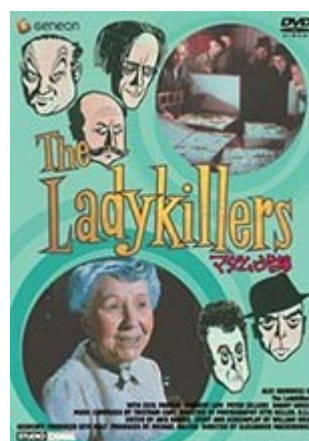
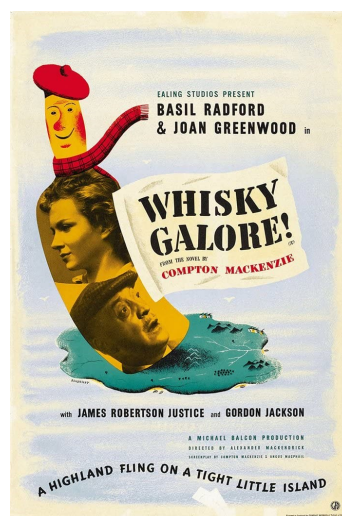
To decorate, twist a pipe cleaner around one of the center wires to secure it. Thread on beads in any pattern you like, until you get to the outside of the wing. Wrap the pipe cleaner around the

outer edge of the wing a couple of times, then clip off any excess pipe cleaner



NOSTALGIA PAGE

 **FILMS MADE IN EALING STUDIOS....Do you remember any?**



HOW CAN WE HELP?



AGE UK BARNET SERVICES



For advice about benefits, grants, housing and money concerns, phone our **Later Life Planning Service** on **020 8432 1417**.

For scams advice and support, call our **Scams Prevention Service** on **0208 432 2217**.

Would you enjoy a regular chat over the phone with a friendly volunteer? Try our **Befriending Service** on **020 8432 1416**

For essential jobs in the home please phone our **Handyperson Service*** on **020 8150 0963**. Some jobs such as changing a lightbulb are free of charge.

Unable to get out to the shops and cannot shop online? We have a **Shopping Service*** for people who need a light weekly shop. For more info, Tel **020 8150 0963**

Living Well Dementia Hub—dementia adviser service and **day clubs** for people living with mild to moderate dementia and their carers. Phone 020 8203 5040. Our **Dementia Befriending Service** offers companionship—phone **020 8150 0967**.

Our Stepping Out Service for those who have early stages of dementia or confirmed memory issues, we offer short weekly walks with a volunteer Phone **020 8150 0963**.

Foot care* We offer basic nail-cutting (£15) at the Ann Owens Centre in East Finchley and, for people with diabetes, taking steroids or warfarin, we have nail-cutting with a podiatrist (£20).

For an appointment, phone **020 8203 5040**.

Household Support Fund - grants for Barnet residents over the age of 55 who are struggling to make ends meet during this cost of living crisis. Phone **020 8203 5040** or email support@ageukbarnet.org.uk

***There may be a charge for this service**



OUR HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND IS CHANGING LIVES

We were touched by the thank you letter from someone who received a grant to buy a scooter.



'I will never find words to thank you and your team at Age UK Barnet for the enormity of the gift. It is not just a scooter with four wheels, it is freedom, it is independence, it is escape from loneliness. It is being able to go shopping, pick up prescriptions, meet with friends and go to the hospice where I work as a volunteer. It is being able to get to the park. I can breathe in Winter beauty and crisp cold Winter air, every day when I head off on my scooter. I will never forget your kindness, your rescue, not making me feel bad for asking, believing me how bad things were for me. That is what that gift means, every day for years to come, Bless you all'

The Household Support Fund team is still there for people in need. Call **020 8203 5040** and ask for the Household Support Fund.



‘Me.....and my (very) old friends’

Writer Lee Janogly – an 84 year old semi retired fitness instructor and author – shares the conversational highlights of her regular meet ups with a group of good friends. This time she talks bras and the fashion choices we make as we get older.

‘The basis of any outfit is a well-fitting bra,’ said the fashion expert who was giving a talk at the local shopping mall, and my friend Barbara and I stopped for a moment to listen. ‘When putting it on,’ she continued, ‘fasten it at the back then lean forward to that your breasts ‘fall into’ the cups. Then when you straighten up, your bust will be in the right place.’

‘If I did that, I’d trip over them,’ muttered Barbara, and we moved on towards our intended destination which was Costa.

However, the fashion expert’s talk reminded me of my own introduction to the art of suitable underwear when my mother took my 12-year old burgeoning buds to a local shop specialising in ‘ladies’ undergarments’ to be fitted for my very first bra. In those days, not only did they manage to get bosoms in the right place but also apostrophes!

The shop was run by an ancient (in my eyes) Polish lady whose name consisted of so many Ss and Zs that no one could pronounce it, so she was known as Madame Zizi. I continued to frequent Madame Zizi’s establishment – known affectionately as ‘Bras R Us’ – all through my adolescence, marriage and subsequent pregnancies, and always left feeling uplifted in mind and breast. I was devastated when Madame Zizi died, and we all thought the establishment would go bust (haha). Fortunately, her daughter stepped in to save the shop going tits-up (heh!) and later, various nieces were welcomed into the bosom of the family (OK, I’ll stop now). Seventy-five years later it’s still going strong in spite of running out of family members, although the new owners have now expanded into swimsuits and shapewear.

Fashion can be a minefield at any age, doubly so when you’re older. Some magazines try and be helpful with strident headlines on their covers proclaiming: ‘Fashion advice for older women’. It only takes one glance to realise that their idea of ‘older women’ is anyone over 40. I’ve got nighties older than that! Apparently once you reach 40 your fashion sense drops as sharply as your oestrogen levels.

Looking at my friends, I noticed that we all have our own style of dressing which, in my case, is no style at all. It’s mutton versus frumpy. Wearing anything too short or girly makes you look like a cross between the Sugar Plum Fairy and Barbie’s grandmother. As we have invariably lost height over the years, wearing floor length dresses presents an image of one of Snow White’s little helpers. It’s difficult to get it right. Is grey-haired granny ‘getting down with the kids’ turning up at the school gate wearing ripped jeans, - or did she have an accident with an e-scooter on the way? (all right, I’ll throw them out!)

Maybe I should have stayed and listened to that fashion expert at the mall for a bit longer. At least I’ve got a well-fitting bra!

Lee’s very funny book, ‘Getting Old, Deal with It’ is published by Mensch Publishing.





The feeling of nostalgia – that bitter sweet, wistful affection for the past – is something we all feel, no matter where we're from and how old we are. 'We are more likely to feel nostalgic as we get older but children and teenagers still have nostalgic thoughts,' says Professor Catherine Loveday. 'On average we feel nostalgic about two or three times a week, although some people are more prone to these feelings than others.'

Nostalgia is associated with our autobiographical memory – our ability to think about things that have happened at different times in our life and be able to recall those. 'Shared memories or sharing memories with each other is how we build and enhance our friendships, helping us to connect and bond with each other,' says Catherine. Autobiographical memory also shapes our sense of who we are.

'We can be nostalgic for any time in our life, but we commonly access memories from the period between the ages of 10 and 20 years old, which is a time of high emotion, excitement and change for most of us,' says Catherine. 'We have stronger, warmer feelings for the music of this time too.'

There's a belief that people who are nostalgic are somehow more stuck in the past. This is not what the research shows. 'Scientists have found that people are often more positive, more creative and more forward looking after nostalgia exercises,' says Catherine. 'If you make people think about the past, they can feel more positive about what they are able to do.'

Other studies have found that nostalgia exercises can increase people's self esteem, give people a stronger feeling of purpose, make them feel more socially connected and boost levels of health and wellbeing. People are also more likely to seek help if they need it.

Generally our memories of the past become more positive as we get older and we screen out the negative experiences. 'When we are younger we need to remember bad times so we avoid repeating mistakes and carve out a better future,' says Catherine. 'When we get to 60, it serves us better to focus on positive memories as we are not likely to make the same mistakes and we've learnt most of the lessons.'

How to evoke feelings of nostalgia – and light up your memory circuit!

To access our memories from the past, we can actively search it out and try to remember the details. Or the memory could be triggered by certain cues – whether that's a smell or a song, which makes a memory pop into their head. Maybe someone you haven't thought about for years crops up in a dream?

A few ways to bring back those nostalgic feelings:

- Seek out objects and artifacts from the past such as old toys and appliances, The Science Museum, The Museum of Advertising or Barnet Museum all display old artifacts and packaging from the past.
- Listen to music – a song from the past can transport you to a different place
- Dig out old clothes such as wedding outfits to bring back fond memories.
- Watch an old favourite comedy or film.
- Go back to a place that was important to you in the past– your old school, a family holiday destination, an old house, for instance.
- Give an old friend a ring.
- Share nostalgic stories. Every time we think back to a moment we reconstruct it slightly differently and talking about the past with friends and family creates new shared memories.
- Look at old photos.
- Cook yourself a favourite childhood meal – something that your mum cooked you, perhaps.

Why smell can trigger a memory

Memories are stored as a network of activity across lots of cells in the brain. When we cast our minds back to a time in the past we are triggering that network - the sights, the sounds, the smells, the feelings and thoughts we were having. All of these responses are connected in the brain's memory network. So when we trigger that memory we experience a rush of all these responses. After a while we may lose some of the details, but we can still get the feeling that comes with it – the slight warmth or feeling of excitement the fluttering in your tummy, for instance.



WHATS GROWING ON

Our new gardening columnist Kevin loves spending time in the garden and his allotment since retiring. Each issue he lets us know what he's been up to and shares a few seasonal gardening tips.



Although I like to spend as much time as possible in the garden or at the allotment, it's always great to get out and about visiting other gardens. A great favourite is Kew Gardens where there is always plenty of interest whatever time of the year.



When the weather is cold, wet and miserable and you can't get outside, it's a good time to browse through seed catalogues and plan what to grow come the spring. But

be careful as it is very easy to get carried away and buy too many packets of seeds! At our allotment site we have a seed swap weekend where excess seeds can be exchanged among members.

At the allotment I have been storing all the leaves I have collected to make leaf mould. I reuse old builders' bags, but you can also build a frame of chicken wire or use black sacks - just pierce the bag a few times to help aerate the contents. Once full of leaves, make sure they are damp before covering or tying the top. Leave them for a year or two and you will end up with a lovely dark brown mix that is great for using as a mulch and improving your soil.



I have also been clearing out the greenhouse and trying to tidy up my shed, they are both a great place to sit down, warm up and get some peace and quiet.

A few other jobs for January and February.

- ⇒ Deadhead pansies, primulas and cyclamen to encourage more flowers.
- ⇒ Prune fruit trees like apples and pears. Cut out diseased, damaged or crossing branches.
- ⇒ Wash down greenhouses and propagators so they are clean and ready for the new season.
- ⇒ Sweep down patios and balconies to avoid walking on slippery surfaces.
- ⇒ Replace water in bird baths and top up bird feeders.



WHY IT'S GOOD TO GET OLDER

Emotional intelligence and social intelligence improve with age, according to professor of psychiatry and neurology at Columbia University Davangere P Devanand. 'Older people have less emotional volatility and a better understanding of relationships and have worked out strategies for different situations - what we call wisdom!,' he says.



TRY SOMETHING NEW THIS YEAR

We are encouraging people to try something new this January. Challenging your brain and learning new things is an important way to keep hold of your thinking skills, according to neuroscientist Catherine Loveday. 'Our brains are flexible and plastic which means that they have the ability to change and adapt as a result of experience,' says Catherine. 'Learning new things fires up different nerve cells and activates new pathways and circuits in the brain.'

So if you need any more convincing, why not try one of our activities. We have plenty to choose from – bridge, craft activities, social walks, courses to improve your memory, cookery, computer skills, book group and much much more. Give Helen Nicolaou a ring on 07384 466840 to see what we can offer. And look out for our What's On guide and Try Something New leaflet which have lots more ideas.



79-year-old Luigi learnt to knit in our 'Knit 'n' Natter' classes.

'Learning to knit has brought up fond memories of being a child in Italy and my grandma and other relations knitting all the time. I am living with cancer and knitting has helped me deal with all the stress. I just focus on the task and forget about everything else. It really gives me a boost. It's also keeps my hands moving and is good for my dexterity. I make loads of mistakes – I drop stitches and add extra stitches, for instance – but I still enjoy it. I look forward to coming to the class every week, not only to knit, but to meet people and chat.'

For details of our Knit 'n' Natter classes contact Helen on 07384 466 840 or email helen.nicolaou@ageukbarnet.org.uk

HOW TO KICKSTART YOUR YEAR THE HEALTHY WAY

It's very easy to get out of our healthy routine during the holiday period so health coach Ann larchy gives her tips on getting into good habits. 'Many of our regular activities are not taking place and we end up on the sofa, watching TV or reading a book or spending more time with family,' says Ann. 'Generally all that involves more food, including party food. And for some more alcohol as well!'



- **Boost your hydration:** After indulging in holiday treats, focus on increasing your water intake. Swap sugary drinks and alcohol for water or herbal teas. Hydration helps with digestion, energy levels, and can aid in flushing out toxins you've ingested over the holidays.
- **Try mindful eating:** Practice mindful eating by being aware of portion sizes and savouring each bite. Incorporate more lean protein, vegetables, and whole grains into your meals. Try to fill your plate with nutrient-dense foods to provide essential vitamins and minerals. And snack on a piece of fruit and a handful of nuts instead of chocolate and biscuits.

• **Exercise regularly:** Start with manageable exercise routines. It could be as simple as taking a 20-minute walk, practicing yoga, or doing bodyweight exercises at home. Gradually increase the intensity and duration as you build momentum. Get back to whatever class you were attending before the holidays. Just be more active.

• **Reset your sleep schedule:** Aim for 7-9 hours of quality sleep per night. Create a relaxing bedtime routine, limit screen time before bed, and ensure your sleep environment is conducive to rest. The important part is to get back into your normal routine and schedule.



• **Set Realistic Goals:** Set achievable health goals for yourself. Whether it's aiming to cook more at home, reducing processed food intake, or incorporating more movement into your day, setting realistic goals will help you stay motivated and focused.



Remember, small, consistent changes can make a significant impact on your overall health. Start gradually and be kind to yourself throughout the process!

CONTACT US



AND FINALLY.....

If you have enjoyed this newsletter, please let us know. Just drop us a line at Pigeon Post, Age UK Barnet, Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane, East Finchley N2 8LT.

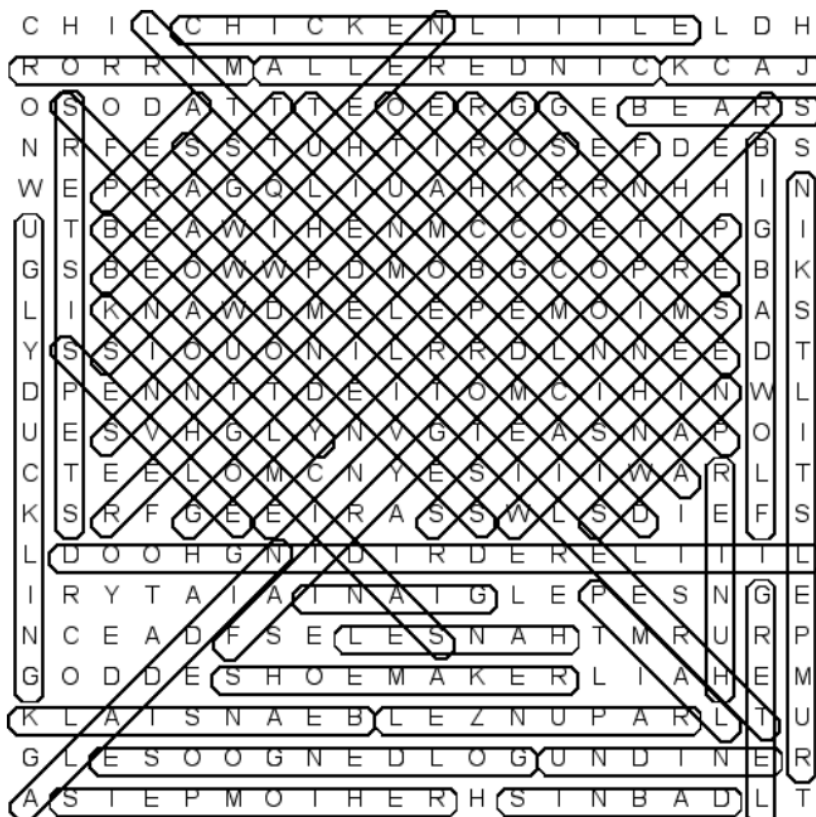
SUDOKU ANSWERS

3	9	1	2	6	7	4	5	8
8	7	4	3	9	5	1	2	6
2	6	5	8	4	1	9	7	3
9	8	7	4	2	6	5	3	1
4	3	2	5	1	9	8	6	7
5	1	6	7	8	3	2	4	9
7	4	3	1	5	8	6	9	2
6	5	8	9	3	2	7	1	4
1	2	9	6	7	4	3	8	5

CROSSWORD ANSWERS

1	F	I	L	L	I	E	S		5	L	I	T	U	P
	R		E		G		L		U		R			I
8	A	R	G	O	N			9	E	N	R	O	U	T
	N		A		O		D		E		A			T
10	T	A	L	K	B	I	G			11	D	A	N	D
	I					L	E				T			
12	C	O	F	F	E	E			14	P	E	R	S	I
			A						17	A		L		
18	R	U	N	U	P			20	V	I	L	L	21	A
	I		M		R		I			I		I		O
22	S	P	A	T	U	L	A			23	P	E	R	R
	E		I		N		R			S		E		E
24	S	A	L	V	E				25	Y	I	E	L	D

WORDSEARCH ANSWERS



**A bloke said to me today
'Are those thick lens
glasses you're wearing?'
I said 'No, they're mine'**

