

PIGEON POST

Keeping you informed & involved
May/June 2026



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Hello

We're loving the longer days here at Age UK Barnet and making the most of every chance to get outside. If you need any encouragement to get out for a stroll in your local park, turn to page 7 for the many benefits of doing an activity in green spaces plus our easy park workout.

If you'd like to explore the link between nature and wellbeing even further, join us on Wednesday 10 June for a fascinating talk from Professor Catherine Loveday on the science behind it all. All details on page 7.

And if you're someone whose attention tends to drift, turn to page 3 for Catherine's tips on improving focus.

Looking further ahead, we hope some of you will join us for our annual Summer Music Festival at our centre in East Finchley on Saturday 4 July. Live music including folk, opera and a bit of pop, dancing, food and possibly even a Pimms or cocktail or two! What's not to like?!

In the meantime, enjoy the issue!

Helen Newman
Chief Executive
Age UK Barnet

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You are never too old
to set another goal or
to dream a new dream.

C.S. LEWIS



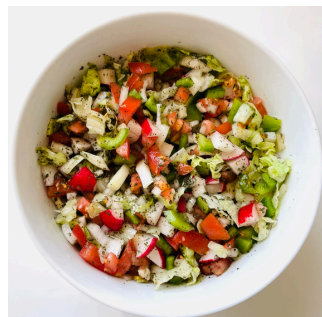
Dietitian Kato on making the most of pulses- plants that produce edible seeds that can be dried, just like grains. “These plants are nutritional powerhouses,” she says. “We generally refer to them as beans, although (confusingly) lentils are a pulse, but not soybeans or green beans,” says Kato.

They’re an excellent source of fibre, which is fermented by our gut bacteria to produce a range of chemicals that boost our immune system and reduce the risk of developing chronic conditions such as diabetes and heart disease, as well as some types of cancer.

Healthy adults should eat four portions of pulses a week. A portion is half a cup (or half a can) of cooked beans, which provides roughly 10g of fibre, or a third of the recommended 30g a day. “Unfortunately, only 4 per cent of UK adults manage to eat this amount,” says Kato. “On average we manage only half of that!” The recipes below will give you ideas for tasty and cheap summer meals, using a variety of pulses. They are quick and easy to make, and can be stored in the fridge for up to three days to have as leftovers for lunches and side dishes.

Lentil salad

Drain a 400g can lentils, and add to ½ diced cucumber, ½ cup chopped fresh mint, ½ cup chopped fresh parsley, ¼ cup chopped red onion, ¼ cup crumbled feta. Combine 2tbsp extra virgin olive oil, the zest and juice of ½ lemon, ½ minced garlic clove, ½ tsp Dijon mustard, ½ tsp honey and pepper and salt to taste. Mix the salad and dressing.



Chickpea salad

Add a 400g can drained chickpeas, slightly mashed, (25g) parsley, roughly chopped, 25g coriander, roughly chopped, 1 red onion, thinly sliced, 2 large tomatoes, chopped. Mix 2tbsp extra virgin olive oil with 2tbsp harissa paste (in most supermarkets), and the juice of one lemon. Add to the salad ingredients.



Tuna and beans on toast

Drain 1 can (400g) white cannellini beans and whiz with 200g drained tuna chunks in olive oil in a blender. Add 2 anchovy fillets, black pepper, ½ garlic clove, grated, and 1tbsp lemon juice and whiz again. Serve on toasted bread or crackers of your choice.



Black bean salad

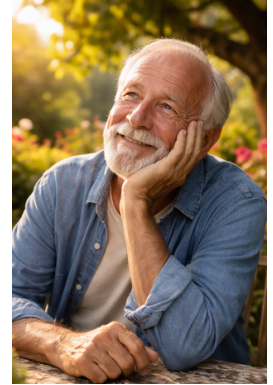
Combine the juice of 1 lime, a handful of coriander, finely chopped, ½ tsp ground cumin and 1 fresh jalapeno pepper, deseeded and finely chopped (or a few slices of bottles jalapeno peppers) and 2tbsp rapeseed (vegetable) oil in a bowl. Season to taste. Tip in a 400g can of drained black beans, 200g halved cherry tomatoes, 1 chopped romaine lettuce, 200g can of sweetcorn, drained, and 1 red pepper, finely chopped. Crumble in a handful of plain salted tortilla chips and mix to coat everything in the dressing. Scatter over 25g toasted pumpkin seeds and serve.

HOT OFF THE PRESS.... Eating a high-quality plant-rich diet that includes whole grains, vegetables and fruits reduces the risk of Alzheimer’s and dementia by 11 per cent - even when people start that diet in their late 50s and 60s, according to a study at the University of Hawaii Cancer Center in Honolulu which looked at diets over a decade.

In her thought-provoking talk for Age UK Barnet, Professor Catherine Loveday explored why our attention drifts, what pulls it back, and why mind-wandering is not only normal but essential for our wellbeing. As she reminded us, losing focus isn't an age-related issue - it happens to all of us, whether we're retracing our steps to find our glasses or realising we've read the same sentence three times.

If we haven't paid attention to something, we simply won't remember it, explained Catherine. Our brains move between two modes - focused attention and daydreaming/reflection - and both are vital. That drifting, reflective state helps us process experiences and lay down memories, acting like the brain's emotional housekeeping. And attention can only be in one place at once - multitasking simply means you're good at switching from one task to another.

She also unpacked what captures our attention most powerfully. Novelty, emotion, relationships, anticipation, identity and nostalgia all play a role in pulling our focus. And while our attention can be easily grabbed, sustaining it is much harder. It takes energy, motivation and the right conditions - and can be quickly disrupted by tiredness, boredom or too many distractions.



How to stay attentive

- Take short breaks and keep healthy snacks handy – if you are hungry or tired, you won't last long. Short breaks can refresh the attention system and cold drink or splash of cold water on your face can also wake you up.
- Find a way to remove distractions – the sound of white noise on headphones can work.
- Recognise what you do when you get bored – picking up your phone, for example - can help you understand your triggers.
- If you're a morning person, this is the time for your more challenging tasks.
- Remember mind-wandering is good – it helps your brain process what's happening in your life.
- Pick the right music when you're driving – upbeat music is better for motorways, more relaxed music for urban environments. Coffee, a little rest, cold air and regular stops all help on long drives. And think twice about talking on the phone while driving - studies show it can impair performance as much as a double vodka!

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Signature



What you will need

- 3 Egg Cartons
- Scissors
- Spray Paint (This example uses 3 different colours of pink), you can use craft or acrylic paint
- 26" long Stick (look in your garden or park)
- Hemp Twine

Instructions

1. Using scissors, cut apart your egg cartons to make different shaped and sized flowers.



2. Paint the egg carton flowers. Paint both sides of the flowers, but mainly focus on the bottoms because that is what shows the most on the wall hanging.

3. Poke a hole in the bottom of each flower using the pointy end of the scissors. Be careful not to poke your fingers! Might be a good idea to use gloves or a hard surface to do this step. Thread an egg carton flower onto a piece of twine that measures about 40" long.

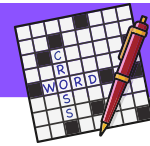


4. Tie a knot to hold the flower in hanging position. Repeat Steps 4 and 5 until there are 5 flowers on your piece of twine. Then repeat until you have 7 strands of egg carton flowers.

5. Tie the 7 strands of flowers to your stick, trying to make them as evenly spaced apart as you can. You can vary the height of each strand of flowers.

6. Tie a piece of twine to both ends of the stick so that you can hang it on the wall. And you're done!





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Across

- 1 Go up (6)
- 4 Flaw (6)
- 8 Regulations (5)
- 9 Underhand, sneaky (7)
- 10 Continue (5,2)
- 11 Faithful (5)
- 12 Difficult situation (5,4)
- 17 Protective garment (5)
- 19 Indistinct (7)
- 21 Edicts (7)
- 22 One who shows people to their seats (5)
- 23 Uncover (6)
- 24 Distress signal (6)

Down

- 1 Continent (6)
- 2 Guilty party (7)
- 3 Unpleasant (5)
- 5 Enfold, surround (7)
- 6 Hard dark wood (5)
- 7 Struggle (6)
- 9 Gifts (9)
- 13 Male geese (7)
- 14 Slightly crazy (7)
- 15 Rider's seat (6)
- 16 Annually (6)
- 18 Go over it again (5)
- 20 Finnish-style steam bath (5)

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Where did backgammon originate?
- 2 Named after the mallow flower, mauve is a shade of what?
- 3 Who played Queen Elizabeth II in the first two seasons of 'The Crown'?
- 4 Which empire, led by which charismatic general, conquered a vast part of Europe (Hungary, most of Ukraine, much of Germany and Poland and parts of the Balkans) in the fifth century, before the empire dissolved just as quickly after the death of the leader?
- 5 Who is the American artist known for hits like "Man in the Mirror" and "Thriller"?
- 6 Who was known as the 'Iron Lady'?
- 7 In the Simpsons, what's Homer's catchphrase?
- 8 What is the name of the sea located between Italy and Tunisia?
- 9 What famous man became president of his country after being in jail for 18 years?

CROSSWORD

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RECIPE TIME

COD WITH CUCUMBER, AVOCADO & MANGO SALSA SALAD - SERVES TWO

If you're looking for a healthy lunch bursting with the colours and flavours of summer, this delicious cod, avocado and mango salad is low in fat and calories

Ingredients

- 125g cod fillets
- 1 lime zested and juiced
- 1 small mango peeled, stoned and chopped (or 2 peaches, stoned and chopped)
- 1 small avocado stoned, peeled and sliced
- ¼ cucumber chopped
- 160g cherry tomatoes quartered
- 1 red chilli deseeded and chopped
- 2 spring onions sliced
- handful chopped coriander
- Any spices (if more flavour required!)



NOTE: If using frozen cod, see packet for cooking time

Method

Heat oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6.

Put the cod fillets in a shallow ovenproof dish and pour over half the lime juice, with a little of the zest, then grind over some black pepper.

Bake for 8 mins or until the fish flakes easily but is still moist.

Put the rest of the ingredients, plus the remaining lime juice and zest, in a bowl and combine well. Spoon onto plates and top with the cod, spooning over any juices in the dish.



MUSHROOM & CHICKPEA BURGERS (MAKES 4)

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 250g chestnut mushroom finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves crushed
- 1 bunch spring onions sliced
- 1 tbsp medium curry powder
- zest and juice ½ lemon
- 400g can chickpea rinsed and drained
- 85g fresh wholemeal breadcrumb
- 6 tbsp 0% Greek yogurt
- pinch ground cumin
- 2 mixed-grain muffins or rolls, toasted and halved
- 2 plum tomatoes sliced
- handful rocket leaves

Heat 1 tsp oil in a non-stick frying pan and cook the mushroom, garlic and spring onion for 5 mins. Mix in the curry powder, lemon zest and juice and cook for 2 mins or until mixture looks quite dry. Tip out onto a plate to cool slightly.

Use a potato masher or fork to mash the chickpeas in a bowl, leaving a few chunky pieces. Add the mushroom mix and the crumbs, then shape into 4 patties. Fry in the remaining oil for 3-4 mins on each side until crisp and browned.

Mix the yogurt with the cumin. Place half a muffin on each plate, then spread with the yogurt. Top with the burgers, a few slices of tomato and a little rocket.

Spending time outside becomes infinitely more inviting as the days lengthen and the sun finally remembers we exist - and according to the latest science, a stroll in the park can do wonders for our health

Research from the University of Exeter has shown that spending time in green spaces can lower cortisol, the body's stress hormone, helping us feel calmer and more energised. Sunlight also triggers the production of vitamin D, which boosts bone health and immune function - something many of us in the UK are short of after winter. And simply being outdoors has been linked to improved mood, sharper thinking, and better sleep. Add in the benefits of light movement, and you've got a recipe for feeling brighter inside and out.

A park workout doesn't need equipment or Lycra - just comfortable shoes, a bottle of water, and a willingness to move at your own pace.

A simple park routine

1 - Start with a gentle warm-up Walk slowly for 3–5 minutes to loosen joints and ease your body into movement.

2 - Pick up to a brisk walk. Increase your pace until you feel slightly warm but can still chat comfortably.

3 - Add mobility stretches. Pause by a bench or tree for slow shoulder rolls, ankle circles, and gentle neck stretches.

4 - Try a balance challenge. Hold onto a rail or bench and lift one foot for 10–20 seconds, switching sides to build stability.

5 - Finish with a cool-down. Slow your walk and stretch calves, thighs, and arms to help your body recover.

This routine can take as little as 15 minutes, or longer if you're enjoying the sunshine and birdsong. The key is consistency - little and often works wonders. See our talk on Wednesday 10 June (see below) for more reasons to get out into your local open spaces



Power of weights

A recent study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association suggests weight-lifting and maintaining strength may add years to the lives of women over age 63 and also help manage menopause symptoms.

EVENTS

TALKS: Getting to grips with your tech. A series of useful talks as part of Age UK Barnet's free weekly digital support sessions on Mondays from 2-4pm at the Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane, East Finchley N2 8LT. **11 May - How to download and use bus and travel apps; 1 June - The perks of joining your library; 6 July - how to use Parking apps.** For more info contact Howard on 0208 432 1415 or email howard.chapman@ageukbarnet.org.uk

TALK: The science of nature and wellbeing – Wednesday 10 June (6.45-8pm). Neuroscientist Professor Catherine Loveday on the impact of nature, fresh air and natural environments on memory, mood and mental health. We explore the benefits of green and blue outdoor spaces and how to make the most of them! Free but donations welcome. Takes place at the Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane, East Finchley N2 8LT. To register, contact Teresa on 07502 989403 or email teresa.gallagher@ageukbarnet.org.uk

Summer Music Festival – Saturday 4 July (11am- 3pm) at the Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane, East Finchley N2 8LT. Join us for our annual celebration of music – we'll be joined by some favourites, including the wonderful Italian tenor Yuri Sabatini and the N12 Choir as well as some fresh new talent. Have a bite to eat, grab a drink and sit back and enjoy the sounds or stroll around the stalls and have a go on the tombola. £3 on the door. You can just come along but it would be great if you could let us know you're coming to get an idea of food numbers. To register, contact Teresa on 07502 989403 or email Teresa.gallagher@ageukbarnet.org.uk



Each month former journalist Ed Newman has a lovely chat with a Barnet resident and shares their story with the rest of us. This time he speaks Anthea Pelham-Burn who rejected the debutante life and finishing school to become a restorer of paintings

Anthea went to great lengths to escape the curse of Highclere Castle only to be struck down by it three months after she'd left the building.

Now resident at Candlewood House Care Home in Barnet, Anthea was at the time restoring paintings at the Berkshire stately home which became famous as the

location for Downton Abbey.



Anthea restored paintings at Highclere Castle (Downton Abbey)

She was given strict instructions about one painting in particular.

"It was a portrait from around 1800 of an evil looking woman," Anthea relates to Pigeon Post. "The agent sent me a message from the family telling me not to remove the painting because the subject had placed a curse on the family. That made it very difficult to clean and I told them they couldn't expect me to climb up ladders because I wasn't insured for that. Then I got another message saying I could take the painting off the wall but she mustn't leave the room.

"I looked at the woman and thought that she really did have an evil eye. She seemed to be staring at me and I didn't like it at all. I'm quite susceptible to that sort of thing and believe in ghosts. There was certainly an atmosphere around her.

"We got to the last day and, having given my young colleagues and I lunch throughout our stay, the chef didn't realise we were still there. So, he opened the fridges, shovelled the leftovers from a banquet onto a platter and told us to help ourselves. It was cold pheasant and I thought it was a wonderful feast.

"That was in April and by the July I was feeling really ill with excruciating stomach pains. I went to stay with a friend in Hereford and she told me to go to see her GP. He examined me and said, 'You've got stomach cancer, what do you want to do about it?'. I told him I'd like a second opinion, so he wrote a letter to a local surgeon. The surgeon thought it sounded like appendicitis but he would need to confirm it with a scan. When it came back, he asked me if I had eaten grouse recently and I said, sadly not, because I love grouse. Then he asked what about rabbit and I said not for ages. I asked him why he was asking these questions and then he showed me the scan and said 'there's your appendix and there, underneath, is a piece of lead shot. So, I had lead poisoning and the only way to get rid of it was to have my appendix out. That was nothing compared to cancer. It all came back to me that it must have been the pheasant I'd eaten at Highclere. It was the curse. She'd tried to kill me but she didn't succeed!"

Anthea was born in St Albans in 1946. She likes to think she was something of a 'celebration' baby after her father, Ronald Russell Pelham-Burn, returned after five long years of war. He'd been a Captain in the Seaforth Highlanders who had bravely held out against the German advance so that hundreds of thousands of men could escape from Dunkirk in June 1940. Eventually captured at St Valery-en-Caux, he was sent to a Prisoner of War camp where he would use his engineering skills to set up a wireless system to keep in touch with the course of the war. He also had a rather strange encounter with one of the most famous of all British airmen.



"My father was told that Douglas Bader was coming to the camp," Anthea continues. "Bader, of course, was a great hero to all the airmen there. He had lost both his legs in an accident and so my father arranged with some local carpenters to have some articulated legs made for him. However, when he tried to hand them over, Bader just threw them back in his face saying he was never wearing any (expletive deleted) German legs. He never spoke to Bader again after that.

"As head of the escape committee, my father tried to help others to get out of the camp and designed ladders that would unfurl as they were thrown over the wire. He never spoke to me about it but he did keep diaries throughout the war and I think he felt the chances of escaping were pretty hopeless really because of how far they were from safety."

Anthea's mother had experienced a very different sort of war, including attending a lot of dances at the Dorchester. She wanted the party to go on and, after they eventually separated, she spent much of her time in the South of France, while Anthea's father moved to a farm in the Cairngorms.

After boarding school, Anthea's mother expected her to become a debutante and do the season like her sister had done previously. Then, she would be sent to Paris to be 'finished' but Anthea herself had other ideas.

I just wasn't suited to that sort of life," she recalls. "School only educated us to be secretaries or housewives but I wanted to find something different. So, I decided instead to go to Florence where I studied Italian and the history of art. I met somebody there who was involved in restoration and I thought it sounded fun."

"When I came back to England, I was introduced to the man who set up the conservation department at the National Gallery. He told me I would have to study life drawing or I wouldn't be able to do restoration. My father had always been disappointed that he couldn't teach me how to draw and I'd been told to give up art at school. However, after a year at art college, I had improved and was given the chance to learn the restoration profession at a studio in St John's Wood and you had to make sure you listened to every word said. On my very first day I was told, 'Here's a portrait by Joshua Reynolds, here's a scalpel and spatula, fill in the holes!'

"Throughout my career I was lucky enough to work on a lot of paintings in private collections that other people never got to see. You wouldn't ever get to meet the owners but you certainly found out about what sort of art people like Rupert Murdoch liked. He had a wonderful collection of Australian art."

"When a conservator is working on a piece of art, cleaning and doing any necessary repairs, they can discover a lot about the history of a painting. That occasionally means delivering bad news to owners, as was the case when Anthea discovered a stamp on the canvas of a portrait, thought to be of Jane Austen, that proved it couldn't, in fact, be the great writer. The date on the stamp was actually after Jane Austen had died. It provoked a long-running debate in both the art and literary worlds but, many years on, Anthea knows she came to the correct conclusion.



Jane Austen

"I simply told the owner and the National Portrait Gallery what I'd discovered," says Anthea. "The family weren't happy because it meant the painting was worthless but the gallery backed me up and said it made sense with the research they'd done on the history of the work. It wasn't my fault, I just told the truth."

WHY WE SHOULD BE PICKING UP COMPUTER SKILLS



We've all heard the warnings that too much screen time might "fry our brains", but new research from New York University paints a much more reassuring picture. In fact, using the internet in later life could actually help keep our minds sharp. The study found that older adults who went online regularly had around half the risk of developing dementia compared with those who didn't use the internet at all.

Part of the benefit is simply staying connected to the world as it is now. So much of life happens online - banking, booking holidays, catching up with grandchildren on FaceTime - and feeling confident with technology helps us stay independent and involved.

But, as the researchers point out, it's all about balance. The effect follows a U-shape: no internet use isn't great for the brain, but neither is spending hours glued to a screen. There's a sweet spot where being online acts as a mental workout rather than a time-draining distraction.

And what you do online matters. Mindlessly scrolling through Facebook doesn't challenge the brain in the same way as replying to an email, managing your budget, or looking up something you're curious about. Even online games vary - if Wordle feels too easy these days, it might be time to switch to something that makes you think a bit harder.

The "brain rot" we worry about in younger people tends to come from passive use - zoning out rather than engaging. For older adults, the trick is to treat devices as tools: for learning, organising life, staying in touch. Not as background noise.

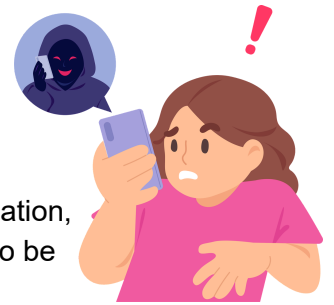
In short: a little thoughtful internet use can be good for you - as long as you still get out, move your body, and spend time with real people in the real world.

Want to learn how to shop online, upload your photos or how you can use AI to plan your holidays or simply learn to use email? Bring your devices and your questions to our IT drop in sessions in East Finchley, North Finchley, Mill Hill and High Barnet. For more information, contact Howard on 0208 432 1415 or email howard.chapman@ageukbarnet.org.uk

As energy prices are set to increase, watch out for energy scams which are typically spread using suspicious emails, texts and calls.

Fake British Gas calls. Recent reports to Which? show that scammers are impersonating British Gas through cold calls. Worryingly, some recipients of this call noted that the caller knew information about them, including their email address and postcode.

Other reports warned that callers have asked for their billing details and meter information, and that they were told that there was a problem with their upcoming bill. All appear to be an attempt to get bank details.



Fuel subsidy and winter fuel payment scam texts are also on the increase according to Which? A link in the text will send you to a copycat government website, which may steal your personal and financial information. Remember, most people will get the Winter Fuel Payment automatically if they're eligible in November or December 2026.

Fake energy saving devices: Facebook ads have been selling fake devices that claim will give you up to 90% savings on your electricity bill without changing your usage habits. These devices don't work and could be dangerous.

Remember: Verify the source, do not click on links in emails or texts; go to the official website directly. Also, handle cold calls carefully. Hang up on unexpected calls. If a person claims to be from a legitimate company, call them back using an official, verified phone number.

Scams Awareness - To find out more about our scams prevention service or feel you have been a victim of a scam, please call Gill Hirsch on 0208 129 7615 and 0208 129 7627 to discuss.

Free one-to-one scams prevention support

1-hour consultation for anyone aged 50+

The Age UK Barnet service offers

- tailored guidance
- confidential support
- security advice
- practical tips




Book your free session with a member of our trusted friendly team today

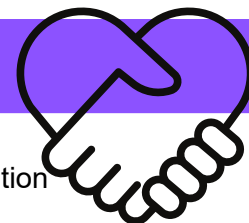
Tel: 0208 129 7615 and 0208 129 7627
Email: scamsawareness@ageukbarnet.org.uk

Age UK Barnet is a registered charity (1080458)



New research from Heidelberg University is challenging the old idea that only young people can change their ways. The study shows that both younger and older adults can continue to grow and develop new skills - from handling stress to dealing with tricky social situations.

As the researchers put it, their findings "somewhat contradict the adage that you can't teach an old dog new tricks." And that's good news. With the right motivation, we all have the ability to learn, adapt and try new approaches at any age.



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 129 7615 and 0208 129 7627

Would you enjoy a regular chat with a friendly volunteer? Try our Befriending Service on befriending@ageukbarnet.org.uk or call 020 8432 1416.

For essential jobs in the home please phone our Handyperson Service* on 020 8150 0963 or email info@ageukbarnet.org.uk We charge an hourly rate of £35 and £20 per hour for those on certain means tested and disability benefits. Some jobs such as changing a lightbulb are free of charge for people on certain means tested benefits.

We have a Shopping Service* for people who cannot get out or can't shop online who need a light weekly shop. The charge is £20 per month for a single person, which is reduced to £15 if the client is in receipt of means tested benefits. For more info, Tel 020 8150 0963.

Dementia advice and Dementia Day Clubs for people living with mild to moderate dementia and their carers. Day clubs in Hendon and East Finchley. Email info@ageukbarnet.org.uk or phone 020 8203 5040. Full day £45 including lunch and transport (£40 without transport).

Our Dementia befriending service provides companionship for people living with dementia. Phone 020 8150 0967. Note - currently closed to new referrals.

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 or email info@ageukbarnet.org.uk

Scams Awareness - To find out more about our scams prevention service or feel you have been a victim of a scam, please call Gill Hirsch on 0208 129 7615 or 0208 129 7627 to discuss.

ADVICE CLINICS in Chipping Barnet and Burnt Oak - for Barnet residents over 55 who might be struggling financially. The Age UK Barnet advice team will be giving benefits checks, pension credit checks and other advice. Chipping Barnet Library, Chipping Barnet Library, 3 Stapylton Rd, Barnet EN5 4Q - 1st and 3rd Tuesday of every month. 1st Tuesday session of 2026 will be held on 20 Jan 2026.

Burnt Oak Library, 99 Watling Ave, Burnt Oak HA8 0UB - 2nd and 4th Mondays of the month. The clinics are open from 10am-1pm and 2-4pm. To book an appointment, please call us on 0208 432 1417 or email us on laterlifeplanners@ageukbarnet.org.uk

*There is a charge for this service



If you have any new unopened gifts or bottles of alcohol or non-alcoholic drinks you would like to donate to our Summer Music Festival please contact Teresa on 07502 989403 or email Teresa.gallagher@ageukbarnet.org.uk - The festival takes place on Saturday 4 July (11am- 3pm) at the Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane, East Finchley N2 8LT.



LARK OR OWL?

THE BEST TIME TO MOVE



Want to get more out of a brisk walk or exercise class - or even your household chores?

Try timing it to your body clock. Researchers say early birds get the biggest boost from morning exercise, while night owls do better later in the day.

A new Open Heart study found that matching activity to your natural rhythm can improve sleep, lower blood pressure and support healthier blood sugar levels.

Volunteers who exercised in sync with their body clocks saw bigger gains in fitness, heart health and overall wellbeing.

Your internal clock shapes your energy, hormones and sleep-wake patterns, all of which influence how well you move.



Writer Lee Janogly, an 86 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 they welcome someone new to their group.



I asked my friend, Sheila for a lift to our Wednesday coffee 'n' cake meeting as my car was in the garage having a small – well, large – dent mended after that tree backed into me as I was trying to park. I didn't like the way the man at the garage rolled his eyes and muttered, "Not again!" when he saw me, but if they will plant trees in stupid places, what am I supposed to do?

I admit I was there fairly recently when I knocked a bit off the corner of my neighbour's car – well the whole back bumper, actually. Again, it wasn't my fault! He's got this huge Toyota Hunchback, the length of three buses; so if he insists on parking it in the road with the tail end overlapping my drive, what does he expect?

Anyway, Sheila was slightly reluctant to give me a lift as she was still annoyed with me about the last time. She had to make a slight detour to drop off some papers to her husband's office which he'd left behind that morning. There were no free parking meters for miles around so she checked the road was clear, then cautiously left the car on a yellow line, saying she would only be a few minutes. I said I'd wait in the car and, having been forewarned about this, I'd brought my book along. I love reading and always have a book on the go. I was so engrossed in it that I seriously didn't notice the attendant slip a parking ticket under the windscreen. Sheila's explosive "What the ****!!" when she opened the driver's door, made me jump.

"I'm so sorry."

"You were SITTING there! How could you not SEE him?!"

"I know, I'm really sorry." The rest of the journey resumed with no further incident – or conversation! The same can't be said when I was being driven by another friend, Deely, some years ago. It was in the 70s, and we were travelling up Sloane Street in the centre of London when we were stuck in an enormous traffic jam. Deely spotted a turning to the left and said, "I'll just shoot down here."

I gasped, "You can't, it's a one-way street!"

She said, "I'm only going one way."

I relaxed as the road ahead seemed empty - until we came face to face with a large van emblazoned with the words, MOTHER'S PRIDE BAKERY. He stopped. We stopped. He waited. We waited. Then the driver's door of the van opened, and this tattooed man-mountain approached our car. Deely wound down the window and before the man could speak, she said, "I'll have a large, sliced wholemeal, please." Silence.

I started to laugh in spite of the situation, then Deely started to laugh – and laugh. The man stood there unimpressed by two hysterical women convulsing in the car. Once recovered, Deely executed a smart reverse three-point turn and we sped off in the correct direction to rejoin the traffic in Sloane Street.

I must figure out how to get the Uber app on my phone.

Lee's book, 'Getting Old, Deal with It' is published by Mensch Publishing.



We asked a few of our activity goers about the fashions they loved when they were younger



“Winklepickers! They were like clown shoes.”

Louise - 73



Men in flared trousers and high heels. I remember going down Carnaby Street in my flared jeans and Cuban Heeled brown leather boots.”

Pearl - 68

“I still think about my old suede mini skirt. Completely impractical, far too short, but I felt unstoppable in it. Sometimes I wish I'd kept it just to touch the fabric again.”

Jacky - 72

“Dress codes. I remember clothes shopping in Carnaby Street for a suit I needed for a job interview. Back then, no suit meant no interview – and in the office, you needed permission to grow a beard!”

Brian - 70



Flared trousers, but they're back in style now – it's interesting how trends repeat themselves every 20-25 years. I kept mine, and would put them back on if they still fit.”

Emma - 58

I had a pair of saddle shoes I wore until they practically fell apart. They weren't glamorous, but they made me feel like one of the cool girls from the American films.”

Belinda - 60





Since retiring, our gardening columnist Kevin loves spending time in the garden and his allotment. Each issue he lets us know what he's been up to and this time he offers tips on growing your own fruit and veg

Current global events, food security and rising costs are becoming real concerns for many households so it's a good

time to think about growing and sowing your own fruit and vegetables, whether on the allotment, in the garden, a balcony, or just a window box. Even the smallest space can become surprisingly productive. You don't need a garden to get started, it's surprising how much you can produce in grow bags, containers and small spaces. Herbs on a windowsill, salad leaves in containers, or vegetables in a small outdoor space can all make a difference.



Growing your own fruits and vegetables can significantly lower your grocery bill, particularly for expensive items like herbs, berries and organic produce. But it's not just about saving money, home-grown produce is harvested at peak ripeness. Produce picked straight from the plant is always better in flavour and nutrients, having avoided long transport and storage times. Also gardeners are more likely to use all of their harvest, including "imperfect" produce and there are great ways preserve or freeze any excesses.

Start small, focus on one small bed or container to avoid feeling overwhelmed and try high-yield and beginner-friendly crops that are both productive, easy to grow and can be sown now.

Courgettes are well known for being incredibly prolific - a few plants can supply a family all summer. Leafy Greens like Kale, Spinach and salad crops like lettuce and radish are fast-growing and nutritious. Also "cut-and-come-again" varieties provide continuous harvests. Potatoes are a high-yield crop that can be grown in sacks or containers, providing a reliable calorie source. Tomatoes and peppers are highly rewarding, productive and always taste so much better.

Perennial herbs like rosemary, thyme and sage are cheap to start and save money for years, while annuals like basil and coriander are a great annual that are good in open ground or containers. Even onions and garlic are a good low maintenance crop that will store well for months if dried properly.

In uncertain times there has never been a better moment to grow even a small amount of your own food and you don't need a large garden to get started.



A few other jobs for May / June

Watering is important, but do it wisely. Not only to conserve water, but also to encourage healthy plants. Water more thoroughly, but less frequently will help get the water down to the deeper root tips.

Even if weeds seem to always keep reappearing, regular hoeing is an effective way of weakening and eventually killing them off without resorting to weed killers.

On a mild rainy day, houseplants dusty from a winter indoors can go outside for a shower. Bring them in again before the sun shines, or their leaves could scorch.

This is a good time to take softwood cuttings from many shrubs and perennials. Look for a plant that has finished flowering and put on some good new non-flowering growth. It really is easy, so have a go.

Wise words from a buddhist

"Without inner peace, outer peace is impossible. We all wish for world peace, but world peace will never be achieved unless we first establish peace within our own minds. We can send so-called 'peacekeeping forces' into areas of conflict, but peace cannot be imposed from the outside with guns. Only by creating peace within our own mind and helping others do the same can we hope to achieve peace in this world."

Geshe Kelsang Gyatso. How to Transform Your Life

Around 10 million people in the UK live with arthritis, affecting roughly one in six people. It is the leading cause of disability in the UK, impacting people of all ages. There are four main types, but the symptoms are often similar – including joint pain, stiffness, swelling and tenderness and restricted movements.

What to do if you are worried

If you are concerned about symptoms, do not self-diagnose. Arthritis can be a long-term condition that requires medical management to prevent joint damage.

See a GP if:

- you have unexplained joint pain, stiffness, or swelling that lasts for more than a few days
- symptoms are impacting your daily routine, such as affecting your sleep or making it hard to move
- your joints are stiff for more than 30 minutes after waking up.

Key treatments for the four main types of arthritis

- Osteoarthritis (OA): Focused on pain relief and joint function through weight management, physical therapy, pain relievers, and occasionally joint replacement surgery.
- Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA): Focuses on slowing disease progression and preventing joint damage using disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs (DMARDs) and biologic therapies, along with steroids and lifestyle changes.
- Gout: Targeted at reducing uric acid levels through diet adjustments (such as reducing alcohol and red meat) and medication, alongside anti-inflammatories for acute pain.
- Psoriatic Arthritis: Similar to RA, this requires DMARDs, biologics, and anti-inflammatory medications.

Celebrities living with arthritis

- Dawn French: The comedian, writer, and actress has spoken about living with osteoarthritis in her knees.
- Sir Patrick Stewart: The acclaimed actor has shared that he uses medical cannabis to manage pain from genetic osteoarthritis in his hands.
- Bob Mortimer: The comedian and presenter has spoken openly about his diagnosis of rheumatoid arthritis, which he was diagnosed with in his mid-20s.
- Paddy McGuinness: The TV presenter and comedian revealed he was diagnosed with arthritis at age 44.
- Hayley Tamaddon: The former Coronation Street and Emmerdale actress shared her diagnosis of arthritis in 2024 following severe neck pain

“It took a long time to get a diagnosis”

Tom Huntley, Age UK Barnet Computer Support Officer, shares his story

“About fifteen years ago my right knee suddenly began to swell and lock, and I could barely walk. No one knew what was causing it. I had fluid drained, steroid injections and even an exploratory operation, but nothing gave a clear answer.

Eventually I was referred to a rheumatologist who spotted the pitting in my nails and finally diagnosed psoriatic arthritis. It was a relief, but also frightening - especially when the first thing you read online is ‘incurable disease’.

Finding the right treatment took time too. I reacted badly to one of the medications and ended up with a dangerously low immune system, which meant weeks of daily hospital visits. Thankfully it was caught early and I recovered.

These days I manage the condition by staying active and eating well, though I still have ups and downs depending on stress and even the weather.

If you think you might have psoriatic arthritis, speak to your GP with a clear list of symptoms. Early diagnosis really does make a difference.”



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



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GENERAL KNOWLEDGE ANSWERS

1. In Persia
2. Purple
3. Claire Foy
4. The Huns, led by Attila
5. Michael Jackson
6. Margaret Thatcher
7. D'oh!
8. Mediterranean Sea
9. Nelson Mandela



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