Information and advice you need to help you love later life.

We’re Age UK and our goal is to enable older people to love later life.

We are passionate about affirming that your later years can be fulfilling years. Whether you’re enjoying your later life or going through tough times, we’re here to help you make the best of your life.

Our network includes Age Cymru, Age NI, Age Scotland, Age International and more than 130 local partners.

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Looking after yourself in later life

It’s never too late to adopt a healthier lifestyle. A few small changes can make a big difference to your body and mind.

Looking after your body doesn’t have to mean digging out your gym kit. We’re all different and it’s important to be realistic about what’s achievable and suitable for you. There are lots of ideas in this guide.

Health is as much about how you feel mentally as physically. So looking after your mental wellbeing is just as important as keeping fit and active.

If you want to be healthier but don’t know where to start, this guide highlights changes you may like to consider and the benefits they can bring.

As far as possible, the information given in this guide is applicable across the UK.

Key

This symbol indicates where information differs for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
The benefits of being active

Everyone benefits from moving about more and it’s never too late to start.

Any amount of extra activity makes a difference and can help you to stay mobile and do everyday tasks more easily. It also allows you to keep doing the things you enjoy for longer, such as spending time with family or gardening.

Keeping active helps you to:

• reduce the risk of heart attack, stroke, diabetes and some cancers
• manage high blood pressure and angina.
• stay at a healthy weight
• strengthen muscles and bones, which reduces the risk of falls and fractures
• prevent some long-term conditions, such as arthritis, from getting worse
• maintain bowel health
• improve your appetite
• improve sleep quality
• stay social.

What’s good for your body is good for your brain. As well as improving your mood, your mental wellbeing and helping you deal with stress, being active can help protect your thinking skills.
Doing physical activity to improve stamina, strength, flexibility and balance can help you live independently for longer.

**Stamina** helps you to walk longer distances, go for a swim and keep up with the grandkids.

**Strength** helps you carry shopping and get up from a chair or toilet unaided.

**Flexibility** helps you get in and out of a car, wash your hair and get dressed.

**Balance** helps you to walk and climb steps confidently and respond quicker if you trip.

**Avoid sitting for too long**
Break up long periods of sitting by getting up regularly. You could stand up or walk about while you’re on the phone. And if you find it hard to move about, getting up and stretching is a good alternative.

**If you find it hard to move about**
Just do what you feel you can manage. This may be walking to and from the front door, doing the washing up or standing and doing the ironing. Do what you can, as often as you can.

Chair-based exercises, which you can do while sitting or holding on to the back of a chair, are a great way to improve flexibility and strength.

You can watch videos online that show you how to do chair-based exercises. There may be chair exercise classes in your local area. Ask your local Age UK about this.
Finding something that suits you

Being active shouldn’t feel like a chore, so find something that you enjoy and that suits your lifestyle – you’ll be more likely stick with it.

The benefits of some popular activities and classes are outlined below.

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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Flexibility</th>
<th>Strength</th>
<th>Stamina</th>
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<tr>
<td>Climbing stairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swimming</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dancing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bowls or golf</td>
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<td>Yoga</td>
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<td>Tai chi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chair-based exercise</td>
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</table>

These are only suggestions, but you can have a go at things to see if you find something you like. Ask friends how they stay active and join them – staying active with someone can help you stick with it. Or see what your local gym or leisure centre offers.
If you have a health condition

If you are anxious or worried about doing more activity or you have a health condition such as arthritis that makes moving about difficult or painful, talk to your doctor.

You could also contact the relevant organisation for your health condition, for example, Arthritis UK or the British Lung Foundation. They’ll be able to suggest what activities might be best and how taking part in a programme of physical activity could help you.

Volunteer driver or community transport schemes may be able to help if you need transport. Contact your local council or Age UK to find out what’s available in your area.

Who to contact
Contact your local Age UK, Age Scotland or Age Cymru to find out about classes near you (page 32).

For more information
The NHS has step-by-step guides to exercises on its website. In Wales visit NHS Direct Wales website (pages 36-37).
Getting started

Adopting a healthier lifestyle can seem daunting and the first step can be the hardest. So start small. Lots of everyday activities count as exercise, so look out for simple ways you can begin to move more. Ideas include:

• walking to the shops instead of taking the car or bus
• using the stairs instead of lifts or escalators
• getting off the bus a stop earlier than usual
• choosing a parking space a bit further away from the shops
• doing the housework or gardening
• breaking up prolonged sitting by getting up and stretching.

Every step counts, so try and set yourself achievable goals every day, even if it’s just a few steps. Always build up your activity levels gradually.

If you’d like to do a bit more

If you’re generally fit and have no health conditions that limit your mobility, it’s recommended that you aim to do moderate intensity activity for 2 hours 30 minutes, spread throughout the week.

Moderate intensity activity will make you warmer, breathe harder and increase your heart rate. It can include:

• walking while being able to hold a conversation
• cycling at a leisurely pace
• mowing the lawn
• ballroom or other forms of dancing
• chair aerobics
• sports such as walking football or netball
• swimming at a comfortable pace.
If you’re already fairly active

If you have no trouble doing moderate intensity activities, you can improve your fitness and health further by doing vigorous intensity activity throughout the week for 1 hour 15 minutes. This can include:

- walking while unable to hold a conversation
- going for a jog or run
- cycling at a fast pace or on a hilly route
- climbing stairs
- swimming at a fast pace
- doing a spin or Zumba class
- playing sports such as tennis or squash.

Walking for Health (page 38) runs a network of health walk schemes across England. In Wales, contact Ramblers Cymru and in Scotland, contact Paths for all (page 38).

Muscle-strengthening activities

It’s important to keep your strength up. Physical activity that helps strengthen your muscles includes heavy gardening or lifting household objects, bags of shopping or weights at the gym. It’s recommended that you build up to two sessions of muscle-strengthening activity a week, if you can.

Balance activities

Activities such as yoga, pilates and tai chi improve balance, help you to stay supple and reduce your risk of falling.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who to contact</th>
<th>For more information</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speak to your doctor if you want to increase your activity levels to make sure you can do it safely.</td>
<td>Visit the NHS website (page 36) to read the government’s physical activity guidelines for older adults.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Healthy eating

Don’t worry, you don’t have to give up chocolate to be healthy! To eat well you don’t have to cut out any ‘unhealthy’ foods that you enjoy, just eat these foods in moderation and as part of a balanced diet.

Keeping a healthy weight
It’s not good for us to be overweight or underweight. If you’re worried about your weight, would like advice about how to lose weight or if you’ve recently lost weight but aren’t sure why, make an appointment with your doctor.

Food labels
All major supermarkets have agreed to help make choosing food easier with a standard label on the front of packaging to help you make healthy choices.

You can see at a glance the amount of fat, saturated fat (saturates), sugar and salt there is in foods: red is high, amber medium and green is low.

Visit www.nhs.uk/LiveWell/Goodfood and click on the ‘Food labels’ link (page 36) for more information on how to read food labels. In Wales, see the ‘Live Well’ section of the NHS Direct Wales website (page 37).

If you’re struggling to shop or cook for yourself
Talk to your local adult social services department (or social work department in Scotland) and explain the problems you’re having. Your local Age UK will know if voluntary groups in your area can help.

As with physical activity, it’s important to be realistic when it comes to a healthy diet. See pages 10-14 for guidance on following a balanced diet.
Try to eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day
Eating plenty of fruit and veg makes you less likely to develop heart disease or certain cancers, such as bowel cancer. Frozen, canned or dried fruits and fruit juices all count. Don’t be put off if you don’t always reach your ‘five a day’ – two or three portions a day is better than none.

Try to base meals around starchy food
Starchy foods, such as rice or pasta, are a good source of energy. Wholegrain and high-fibre versions help prevent constipation.

Try to eat fish at least twice a week
Having one portion of white fish, such as cod or pollock, and another of oily fish, such as salmon or mackerel, every week is ideal. Oily fish are rich in vitamin D and a type of fat that helps reduce the risk of heart disease. Grill, poach or bake fish rather than frying it.

Try varied sources of protein
You could try alternatives, such as soya-based meat substitutes, beans or lentils. Dairy products, such as milk and cheese, contain protein too. They’re also a good source of calcium, which helps to keep bones strong. Try to go for lower fat versions. If you eat meat, limit portion sizes of red meat or poultry and choose lean cuts of meat or mince.

Try to cut down on foods high in salt, fat and sugar
Eating too much salt can increase your risk of high blood pressure and stroke. Look for lower-salt versions of foods where you can. Foods that are high in saturated fat such as cakes, sausages and cheese increase cholesterol levels in the blood and raise your risk of heart disease and stroke. These foods should be a treat rather than an everyday snack.
Try to drink about six to eight glasses of fluids each day
This doesn’t have to be water. Tea, coffee and low-sugar or sugar-free squash are fine too. When it’s hot, drink more than you would usually so that you stay hydrated.

It’s important to aim for a balanced diet, but it’s equally important to make sure you’re eating regularly. Anything is better than not eating at all.

Preventing constipation
If you’re struggling with constipation, make sure that you have enough wholegrain cereals and fruit in your diet. Drinking plenty of liquids can help, too. Physical activity helps to keep the bowels moving, so try to keep active. If changing your diet doesn’t help, see your doctor.

Look after your teeth
Keep your teeth and gums healthy by brushing them twice a day and visiting your dentist regularly for a check-up. The better your teeth, the more foods you’ll be able to enjoy. Even if you have full dentures, a regular check-up is still important as the shape of your mouth changes over time and leads to poorly fitting dentures. See our factsheet Dental Care: NHS and private treatment for information on dental services. In Wales, see Age Cymru’s version of this factsheet.

To do next
If you have a smartphone or tablet, look at the NHS tools library at www.nhs.uk/tools for apps to help you stay healthy.

For more information
The NHS website has more information about eating well. In Wales, visit the NHS Direct Wales website. In Scotland see the NHS Inform website (page 36-37).
The Eatwell Guide

The Eatwell Guide can help you follow a healthy, balanced diet. It shows how much of your diet should come from each food group. This includes everything you eat and drink during the day.

**Check the label on packaged foods**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Only typical values (as sold) per 100g: 697kJ/167kcal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Energy 1046kJ/250kcal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fat 3.0g</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturates 1.3g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugars 3.4g</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salt 0.9g</td>
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<td>of an adult’s reference intake</td>
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<td>Typical values (as sold) per 100g: 697kJ/167kcal</td>
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<td>13%</td>
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<td>38%</td>
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<td>15%</td>
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</table>

Choose foods lower in fat, salt and sugars

Eat at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day

Eat more beans and pulses, 2 portions of sustainably sourced fish per week, one of which is oily.

Eat less often and in small amounts

Source: Public Health England in association with the Welsh government, Food Standards Scotland and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland
The Eatwell Guide can help you follow a healthy, balanced diet. It shows how much of your diet should come from each food group. This includes everything you eat and drink during the day.

Choose wholegrain or higher fibre versions with less added fat, salt and sugar.

Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates

Choose unsaturated oils and use in small amounts

Dairy and alternatives

Choose lower fat and lower sugar options

Fruit and vegetables

Oil & spreads

Choose unsaturated oils and use in small amounts

Water, lower fat milk, sugar-free drinks including tea and coffee all count.

Limit fruit juice and/or smoothies to a total of 150ml a day.

Per day 2000kcal 2500kcal = ALL FOOD + ALL DRINKS

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Healthy drinking

You might enjoy a glass of wine or a splash of whisky now and then. By all means enjoy your favourite tipple, but do so in moderation. Drinking too much can damage your liver, brain, blood vessels and increase the risk of some cancers.

Alcoholic drinks come in different strengths and sizes, but 14 units is equal to:

- 6 pints of beer or cider (4% strength); or
- 6 medium (175ml) glasses of wine (13% strength); or
- 12 glasses (25ml) spirits such as gin or vodka (40% strength)

Men and women should not regularly drink more than **14 units a week.**

Having a few alcohol-free days a week and spreading your drinking over the other days can make sure you’re not overdoing it.

Avoid drinking alcohol with certain medicines, so always read leaflets that come with any medicine and if in doubt, ask your pharmacist.

If you feel that you need a drink to help you to cope with a difficult situation, speak to your doctor or someone else you trust about how you’re feeling.

**Who to contact**

If you are worried about your own or someone else’s drinking, speak to your doctor or visit the Drinkaware website (page 35).

**For more information**

Visit the Drinkaware website for information about what’s recommended (page 35).
Smoking

Even if you’ve smoked for years, it’s never too late to give up. It’s been shown that older smokers are more successful than younger ones at quitting smoking for good.

Whatever your age, you can expect a range of benefits if you stop smoking. You’re likely to:

• be able to breathe easier
• reduce the risk of existing heart and lung problems becoming more serious
• reduce your risk of developing heart and lung problems
• reduce your risk of having a stroke
• reduce your risk of having problems with your eyesight
• recover more quickly after an operation
• feel better overall and live longer.

Most people know how unhealthy smoking is but find it difficult to give up. Ask your doctor about local one-to-one or group support or medication that can help you stop.

For more information
The NHS Smokefree website and helpline has tips on stopping smoking and details of local services. In Wales, contact Help me Quit, in Scotland contact Quit Your Way Scotland, and in Northern Ireland contact Want2stop (page 37).
Foot care

Looking after your feet is important to your overall health.

Make sure you:

• wear clean socks each day.
• wear comfy, supportive shoes.
• dry your feet carefully, particularly between the toes.
• apply foot cream containing urea which hydrates the skin (don’t apply between the toes).

Make sure you don’t:

• wear the same shoes every day.
• soak your feet for too long – it destroys their natural oils, causing dry skin.

Pay attention to any changes to your feet, especially if you have a long-term condition, like arthritis or diabetes.

If you find it difficult to cut your toenails, your local Age UK or Age Cymru may offer a local nail-cutting service, or be able to help you find one.

Who to contact

Contact your practice nurse or doctor to report any foot problems, particularly if you have diabetes.
It’s never too late to adopt a healthier lifestyle. Just a few small changes can make a big difference to your body and mind.
My story

Ron joined his local bowls club and met new people while improving his health.

After Ron’s wife died he found it hard to take an interest in anything on his own.

‘When my wife, Joan, was alive we used to play golf every week. But since she died last year, I haven’t wanted to go; it just wouldn’t be the same. In fact, I don’t seem to have the same interest in many things we used to do together – like gardening and going to car boot sales.

‘When I went for my blood-pressure check, I was chatting with the practice nurse and I told her how I was feeling. We talked about Joan.

‘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, I have more energy and life seems better every day.’
‘I have more energy and life seems better every day.’
Healthy bones

Your bones are largely influenced by your genes but your lifestyle can help keep them healthier too.

Keep your bones strong by doing regular physical activity. Eating calcium-rich foods such as dairy products, canned fish, leafy greens and nuts is also beneficial.

**Vitamin D**

Vitamin D is important for strong bones and helps the body absorb calcium. Most people get the vitamin D they need from sun exposure. If you can, spend time outside in spring and summer, but don’t let your skin redden or burn. During autumn and winter you’re unlikely to get enough vitamin D from your diet so consider taking a daily supplement.

If you think you could be at risk of not getting enough vitamin D, particularly if you stay indoors a lot or cover your skin for cultural reasons, speak to your doctor.

**Osteoporosis**

Bone loss or osteoporosis can be expected as you age – bones become significantly more fragile and are more likely to break if you fall.

You are more at risk of osteoporosis if you:

• have been immobile for a long time
• have been a smoker or regular drinker
• have a parent who broke a hip
• are underweight.

**To do next**

Complete the ‘Are you at risk?’ quiz on the National Osteoporosis Society’s website (page 36). Print out your answers to take to your doctor if you’re concerned.
Tests and checks to stay healthy

Free checks are offered to older people on the NHS to help you stay healthy. These can help to pick up on any problems early on. It’s easier to deal with any health concerns early, so they’re less likely to become a problem down the line.

**NHS health check**

NHS health checks are offered free every five years to people aged between 40 and 74 who don’t have a pre-existing condition. They usually take place at your doctor’s surgery or local pharmacy.

At the check, you’ll be asked about your family history and your lifestyle and you’ll have some routine tests. Afterwards you’ll be given a personal report on your risk of heart disease, stroke, kidney disease and type 2 diabetes, how to stay healthy and reduce your risk of developing certain conditions, and what to look out for.

In Wales there’s a programme of checks for the over 50s. Speak to NHS Direct Wales or your doctor for further information. In Scotland talk to your doctor.

**Screenings**

Screening is a way of identifying people who may be at risk of developing a particular condition, for instance certain cancers. There are benefits, risks and limitations of screening and along with your invitation to attend, you should receive a leaflet to help you make an informed choice about whether to go.
Breast screening is offered to women aged 50 to 70 to detect early signs of breast cancer. If you are registered with a doctor you should automatically be invited for screening every three years. After the age of 70 you’ll usually stop receiving invitations for screening but you can still request an appointment every three years.

Bowel cancer screening is available to men and women aged 60 to 74 (or 50 to 74 in Scotland), and a test is being rolled out in some areas to men and woman at the age of 55 (you’ll be automatically invited for this if it’s available in your area). You should get a home testing kit sent to you every two years. If you’re aged 75 or over, you can request the test by phoning 0800 707 60 60. If you are aged 75 and over in Wales and are concerned about bowel cancer, you should contact your doctor for advice.

Abdominal aortic aneurysm screening is offered to men when they turn 65. It detects if there is any swelling in the aorta, the main blood vessel that runs down from the heart which causes no symptoms but could be fatal. You’ll be told your results at the end of the test and if it’s clear, you never need to have the test again. If there is a problem, you’ll be told and then sent a letter to let you know what happens next.

Vaccinations
If you’re aged 65 or over, you’re entitled to the free flu jab every year. Others entitled to the jab include those with certain long-term conditions, or those who are the main carer for someone who is elderly or disabled.

You should have a flu jab every year to protect you over the winter – most surgeries and pharmacists start to offer it in September or October.
People over 65 are eligible for the pneumococcal vaccination, which protects against bacterial infections that cause illnesses such as pneumonia and meningitis. You only need a single vaccination, which offers protection for life.

There is a shingles vaccine for certain people aged 70-78 but when you can get this vaccine depends on your date of birth. Ask your doctor's surgery for more information.

**Checks you can do yourself**

It’s important to check yourself regularly between screenings and report anything unusual to your doctor. You should also go to your doctor if you notice any changes in the size, shape or colour of moles or get a persistent cough (one that lasts longer than three weeks).

For other signs of cancer contact Cancer Research UK (page 35) or see www.nhs.uk/be-clear-on-cancer.

**For more information**

Find out about screening and vaccinations on the NHS website or from your doctor. In Wales, see the NHS Direct Wales website for further information. In Scotland, see the NHS website (pages 36-37).

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**Free checks** are offered to older people on the NHS to help you stay healthy.
Sight and hearing

Sight
Have your eyes checked every two years, or as often as your optician recommends, so that signs of problems such as cataracts, glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration can be picked up early.

You can get a free NHS sight test every two years if you’re over 60, or annually if you’re over 70. In Scotland, everyone is eligible for a free sight check. You may be able to get help with the cost of glasses or contact lenses if you are on a low income.

Even with the right glasses or contact lenses, you may still find it hard to see things clearly. If sight problems affect your ability to carry out everyday tasks safely, ask your local social services department about equipment and services.

There are other things you can do to look after your eyes:

• Protect your eyes from the sun by wearing sunglasses on a sunny day – look for those labelled CE or UV400.
• Eat a balanced diet and stop smoking if you’re a smoker.
• Adjust the settings on any electronic devices to make the screen as easy to view as possible.
• Make sure there’s a good level of light around the house.

Who to contact
Contact the Macular Society or the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) for more information about eye health and the services they offer (pages 35 and 38).

For more information
See our factsheet Help with health costs for more information. In Wales, see Age Cymru’s factsheet Help with health costs in Wales.
**Hearing**

Hearing loss is common as you get older and you may find yourself turning up the telly or struggling to hear conversations. Speak to your doctor if you’re having trouble with your hearing or being able to communicate. They will check your ears and may refer you for a hearing test. Hearing aids and batteries are available free on the NHS, if you need them. If you think you have tinnitus, where you hear noises like ringing or humming in your ears, let your doctor know.

**Who to contact**

Contact Action on Hearing Loss for more information (page 34). You can try their free telephone or online hearing check on their tinnitus helpline, which will let you know if you should see your doctor.

**Combined sight and hearing difficulties**

You may have difficulties to varying degrees with both sight and hearing but there are things that can be done to help.

Contact social services and explain how your day-to-day life is affected. They may have a specialist team who can help.

**Who to contact**

Deafblind UK can offer support, practical advice, home visits and befriending to people who are deafblind or who have combined sight and hearing loss (see page 35).
Mental wellbeing

Feeling well is not just about being feeling good physically – it’s equally important that you feel good mentally. There are things that you can do, as well as looking after your physical health, to help support your mental wellbeing.

Social contact
Spending time with family, friends or new acquaintances can prevent you from feeling lonely or anxious and gives you a chance to share experiences, thoughts and ideas.

You could enjoy a hobby with other people, get involved in the local community or volunteer. Think about the kinds of things you like doing or something you’ve always wanted to try. And if you find that you’re not able to do the things you used to, why not try something new?

Make plans and enjoy yourself
When you retire it can be hard to adjust to the lack of routine work might have given you. But retirement can be a great opportunity to do things you enjoy.

It may be a good time to research an interest or learn something new. The University of the Third Age (page 38) has classes across the UK where members share their expertise with each other.

And there are plenty of groups you could join for a range of activities and interests.

For more information
Your local Age UK, community centre or library are great places to find out what’s happening in your area. To find out about volunteering, contact your local Age UK, National Council for Voluntary Organisations, or the organisations in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (page 36).
**Stay in touch**
Talk to the people you care about most whenever you can, by inviting them over or just giving them a ring. The internet has opened up ways to stay in contact and meet people, such as making video calls and using forums.

If you aren’t confident using the internet, your local Age UK or Online Centres Network can help (page 37).

**If you’re feeling low**
Speaking to friends or family about how you feel can be difficult if you haven’t done it before, but the sooner you can address problems, the less likely they are to develop.

If you’d rather speak to someone you’re not close to, you may find it helpful to talk to a counsellor or join a support group for people in a similar situation. The Samaritans has a helpline that is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, for anyone who needs to talk (page 38).

**If you’ve been feeling down for a while**
No one feels 100% all the time, but if you’ve been feeling out of sorts for two weeks or more you may be experiencing depression. Symptoms include loss of self confidence, not being able to enjoy the things you usually enjoy and having unexplained aches and pain.

Depression is just as significant as any physical illness and is not an inevitable part of getting older. If you have any of the symptoms above, speak to your doctor and explain how you’re feeling. There’s a range of treatments available depending on your symptoms.

**Who to contact**
If you need support or advice, contact Mind, Samaritans, CALL (in Wales), Aware Defeat Depression (in Northern Ireland), or Breathing Space (in Scotland). See pages 35-38 for contact details.
Sleep

Sleeping patterns change naturally as you get older. You may not get as much sleep as you used to.

Everyone is different – some people need less sleep than others. What’s important is that you get enough good quality sleep to enable you to function during the day.

You can improve your sleeping patterns by:

• cutting down on daytime naps
• going to bed at the same time each night
• not eating or drinking alcohol too close to going to bed
• reducing the amount of caffeine you have during the day, perhaps by trying decaf tea or coffee
• getting up and doing something for half an hour if you can’t get to sleep, before going back to bed.

To do next

If you have persistent problems with sleep your doctor may be able to help you find a solution. If you suffer from insomnia the NHS website (NHS Direct Wales website in Wales or NHS Inform website in Scotland) has tips on treating it (page 36-37).
Memory loss

You may have noticed you’ve become more forgetful or confused, struggle to remember things, get confused in familiar places, or have trouble remembering names and following conversations.

Most of us experience these things from time to time – and they don’t necessarily mean you have dementia. They can be symptoms of many common conditions, such as stress, depression or vitamin deficiencies.

If you’re worried about memory loss, talk to your doctor to find out what’s causing it. This can either ease your worries or allow you to get the help and support you need.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who to contact</th>
<th>For more information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If you’ve been diagnosed with dementia contact Alzheimer’s Society or Alzheimer Scotland for advice and support (page 34).</td>
<td>If you’ve been diagnosed with early-stage dementia, or if you care for someone with dementia, read our information guides Living with early-stage dementia and Caring for someone with dementia.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you’re worried about memory loss, talk to your doctor to find out what’s causing it.
Checklist for staying healthy

Use this handy checklist to see the key things you can do to stay healthy.

1 **EAT A VARIETY OF FOODS**

Check food labels before you buy and try to eat five different-coloured portions of fruit and vegetables each day. Aim to have fish twice a week, making sure that one portion is oily fish.

2 **GIVE UP SMOKING**

It’s never too late to get help to stop and enjoy the benefits of being a non-smoker.

3 **GET ENOUGH SLEEP**

If you have persistent sleep problems, talk to your doctor to see if they can help.

4 **DRINK SENSIBLY**

Keep a note of how much alcohol you’re drinking and make sure you stick to the safe limit of no more than 14 units spread out over the week.

5 **STAY ACTIVE**

Make sure you take part in regular exercise, whether it’s a hobby such as gardening or playing bowls or joining an exercise class.
6 **MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WEIGHT**

It’s not good to be overweight or underweight. If you’re concerned about your weight, make sure you talk to your doctor.

7 **GET YOUR EYES TESTED**

Get your eyes tested every two years, or every year if you’re over 70.

8 **VISIT YOUR DOCTOR**

Get your blood pressure and cholesterol checked regularly. Book your seasonal flu jab, and if you’re aged 70 to 79 ask your doctor about the shingles vaccination. Follow up invitations for NHS cancer screenings.

9 **TAKE CARE OF YOUR EMOTIONAL HEALTH**

Stay in touch with friends, try something new and do things that you enjoy. All of these things can help you to feel good and support your mental wellbeing.

10 **CARE FOR YOUR FEET**

Look after your feet by cutting your toenails regularly, wearing supportive shoes and getting any problems checked by your doctor.
Useful organisations

Age UK
We provide advice and information for people in later life through our Age UK Advice line, publications and online.

**Age UK Advice:** 0800 169 65 65

Lines are open seven days a week from 8am to 7pm.

www.ageuk.org.uk

Call Age UK Advice to find out whether there is a local Age UK near you, and to order free copies of our information guides and factsheets.

In Wales, contact **Age Cymru:** 0800 022 3444

www.agecymru.org.uk

In Northern Ireland, contact **Age NI:** 0808 808 7575

www.ageni.org

In Scotland, contact **Age Scotland:** 0800 124 4222

www.agescotland.org.uk

The evidence sources used to create this guide are available on request. Contact resources@ageuk.org.uk
Age UK runs a number of services in England that promote physical exercises and healthy eating to help improve your health and mental wellbeing.

Contact your local Age UK or call Age UK Advice for more information.

In Wales, Age Cymru runs a number of activity programmes to encourage older people to become more active – Nordic Walking, which is suitable for all ages and fitness levels, and Low Impact Functional Training (LIFT), where trained volunteers deliver low-level activities and games to older people and tai chi, which can improve physical health and general wellbeing. For more information, call 029 2043 1555 or visit the Age Cymru website.

In Northern Ireland and Scotland, contact Age NI or Age Scotland to find out about physical activity sessions.
**Action on Hearing Loss**
Provides advice and support for people who are deaf or hard of hearing through an information line, tinnitus helpline and a range of factsheets.

Tel: 0808 808 0123  
Textphone: 0808 808 9000  
Hearing check phone line: 0844 800 3838  
Tinnitus helpline: 0808 808 6666  
Tinnitus textphone: 0808 808 9000  
www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk

**Alzheimer’s Society**
Offers advice, information and support in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to people with dementia, their families and carers through its helpline and local offices.

Helpline: 0300 222 1122  
www.alzheimers.org.uk

In Scotland, contact **Alzheimer Scotland**  
Helpline: 0808 808 3000  
www.alzscot.org

**AWARE**
Support network for all those in Northern Ireland affected by depression or bipolar disorder.

Tel: 028 9035 7820 (Belfast) and 028 7126 0602 (Derry/Londonderry)  
www.aware-ni.org

**Breathing Space**
A confidential telephone line for people experiencing low mood, anxiety or depression.

Tel: 0800 83 85 87  
www.breathingspace.scot
CALL (Community Advice and Listening Line)
Offers support to people in Wales concerned about their mental health or that of a relative or friend.

Tel: 0800 132 737 or text ‘Help’ to 81066
www.callhelpline.org.uk

Cancer Research UK
Provide information about cancer and support for those affected by cancer. Call their helpline to speak to a nurse.

Helpline: 0808 800 4040
www.cancerresearchuk.org

Deafblind UK
National charity for people who are deafblind or have a combined sight and hearing loss.

Tel: 0800 132 320
Text: 07950 008870
www.deafblind.org.uk

In Scotland, contact Deafblind Scotland
Tel: 0141 777 6111
www.dbscotland.org.uk

Drinkaware
An organisation funded by alcohol firms that offers tips on responsible drinking.

Tel: 020 7766 9900
www.drinkaware.co.uk

Macular Society
Provides advice and support to people with age-related macular degeneration.

Tel: 0300 303 0111
www.macularsociety.org
**Mind**
Provides advice and support on mental health issues.
Tel: 0300 123 3393
www.mind.org.uk

**National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)**
Provides details of local volunteer centres and opportunities across England.
www.ncvo.org.uk

In Northern Ireland, contact **Volunteer Now**
www.volunteernow.co.uk

In Scotland, contact **Volunteering Scotland**
www.volunteerscotland.net

In Wales, contact **Volunteering Wales**
www.volunteering-wales.net

**National Osteoporosis Society**
Offers information and support on prevention and treatment of osteoporosis.
Tel: 0808 800 0035
www.nos.org.uk

**NHS**
Offers information about health topics including healthy eating and drinking, physical activity and insomnia.
www.nhs.uk

For guidelines on physical activity visit:
www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/physical-activity-guidelines-older-adults

For sitting exercises visit:
www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/sitting-exercises
In Wales, visit **NHS Direct Wales**
Tel: 0845 4647 or 111
www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk

In Scotland, visit **NHS Inform**
Tel: 0800 22 44 88
www.nhsinform.scot

**NHS Smokefree**
Provides information on stopping smoking and details of support available.
Tel: 0300 123 1044
www.nhs.uk/smokefree

In Wales, contact **Help me quit**
Tel: 0808 163 3031
www.helpmequit.wales

In Northern Ireland, contact **Want2stop**
www.want2stop.info

In Scotland, contact **Quit Your Way Scotland**
Tel: 0800 84 84 84

**Online Centres Network**
Helps people to master basic computer and internet skills.
Tel: 0114 349 1666
www.onlinecentresnetwork.org

**Paths for all**
Promotes walking for health in Scotland.
Tel: 01259 218 888
www.pathsforall.org.uk
**Ramblers Cymru**  
Promotes and encourages outdoor walking in Wales through the Let’s Walk Cymru programme.

Tel: 029 2064 4308  
www.ramblers.org.uk/wales

**Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)**  
Provides information and support for blindness and visual impairment.

Tel: 0303 123 9999  
www.rnib.org.uk

**Samaritans**  
Confidential support for people who are despairing or suicidal. Lines are open 24 hours a day.

Tel: 116 123  
www.samaritans.org

**University of the Third Age**  
Local groups of older people who learn together informally.

Tel: 020 8466 6139  
www.u3a.org.uk

**Walking for Health**  
Runs a network of health walk schemes across England.

Tel: 020 7339 8541  
Visit www.walkingforhealth.org.uk and enter your postcode to find your local group. You can then contact them directly.
Can you help Age UK?

If you would like to, please complete the donation form below with a gift and return to: Freepost Age UK REPLY. Alternatively, you can phone 0800 169 87 87 or visit www.ageuk.org.uk/donate. If you prefer, you can donate directly to one of our national or local partners. Thank you.

**Personal details**

Title: [ ] Initials: [ ] Surname: [ ]

Address: [ ] Postcode: [ ]

We’d† like to let you know about the vital work we do for older people, our fundraising appeals and opportunities to support us, as well as the Age UK products and services you can buy. We will never sell your data and we promise to keep your details safe and secure.

☐ I do not wish to receive communications by post.

You can change your mind at any time by phoning 0800 169 87 87 or writing to Supporter Services at the registered address below. For further details on how your data is used and stored: [www.ageuk.org.uk/help/privacy-policy](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/help/privacy-policy)

**Your gift**

I would like to make a gift of £: [ ]

☐ I enclose a cheque/postal order made payable to Age UK, or

**Card payment** I wish to pay by (please tick):

☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa ☐ CAF CharityCard ☐ Maestro ☐ American Express

Card number [ ] Expiry date [ ]

Signature [ ]

**Gift Aid declaration**

☐ Yes, I want Age UK and its partner organisations* to treat all donations I have made for the four years prior to this year, and all donations I make from the date of this declaration until I notify you otherwise, as Gift Aid donations. I am a UK tax payer and understand that if I pay less income tax and/or capital gains tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Today’s date [ ]

*We, includes the charity, its charitable and trading subsidiaries, and national charities (Age Cymru, Age Scotland and Age NI). Age UK is a charitable company limited by guarantee and registered in England (registered charity number 1128267 and registered company number 6825798). The registered address is Tavis House, 1–6 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9NA. Age UK provides a range of services and your gift will go wherever the need is the greatest.
Supporting the work of Age UK

Age UK aims to enable all older people to love later life. We provide vital services, support, information and advice to thousands of older people across the UK.

In order to offer free information guides like this one, Age UK relies on the generosity of its supporters. If you would like to help us, here are a few ways you could get involved:

1 **Make a donation**
   To make a donation to Age UK, simply complete the enclosed donation form, call us on 0800 169 8787 or visit [www.ageuk.org.uk/get-involved](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/get-involved).

2 **Donate items to our shops**
   By donating an unwanted item to one of our shops, you can help generate vital funds to support our work. To find your nearest Age UK shop, visit [www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk) and enter your postcode into the ‘What does Age UK do in your area?’ search function. Alternatively, call us on 0800 169 8787.

3 **Leave a gift in your will**
   Nearly half the money we receive from supporters come from gifts left in wills. To find out more about how you could help in this way, please call the Age UK legacy team on 020 3033 1421 or email legacies@ageuk.org.uk.

Thank you!
What should I do now?

For more information on the issues covered in this guide, or to order any of our publications, please call Age UK Advice free on 0800 169 65 65 or visit www.ageuk.org.uk/healthandwellbeing

Our publications are also available in large print and audio formats.

The Age UK Group offers a wide range of products and services specially designed for people in later life. For more information, please call 0800 169 18 19.

If contact details for your local Age UK are not in the box below, call Age UK Advice free on 0800 169 65 65.