



# Top ten tips to live healthily and happily for longer





At North West Ambulance Service, our Patient Transport Service is here to help you get to and from important healthcare appointments. Our **NHS 111 service** is available to give you health information and advice on the telephone, and our Paramedic Emergency Service is here for you if you ever have to dial **999 in an emergency**.

But we're also here to help you live healthily and happily for longer. That's why we have teamed up with Age UK to share **10 top tips for ageing better**.





## 1. Watch what you eat and drink

It sounds obvious, but having a balanced diet is crucial for good health, energy and preventing illness. An ideal diet should be low in saturated fat, with lots of fruit and vegetables, wholegrains, oily fish, and small amounts of low-fat dairy and lean meat.

Don't forget to top-up with lots of water to avoid dehydration, which can make you feel tired and confused. Tea, coffee and fruit juice will also help you to stay hydrated, but avoid sugary fizzy drinks.

If you drink alcohol, keep at least two days per week booze-free to give your liver time to recover from the toxic effects of alcohol, and don't exceed recommended daily limits for alcohol consumption.



## 2. Look after your teeth

Brush your teeth twice a day and floss daily. Floss helps to prevent gum disease by removing pieces of food and plaque from between the teeth.

If it's left to build up you might notice sore or bleeding gums, and gum disease can also be linked to diabetes, strokes, heart disease and rheumatoid arthritis.

Have regular check-ups and, if you wear dentures or have a bridge, ask your dentist to check that they fit properly.



### 3. Stay active

Daily exercise helps you to stay strong and healthy. This will lower your risk of obesity, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and even cancer. If that wasn't enough, staying active can boost your self-esteem, improve your sleep, and give you more energy.

Government guidelines recommend that older adults do 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity per week, as well as strengthening exercises twice a week.

If that sounds like a lot, start small and as you get stronger you will be able to work up to those amounts.

You don't have to be moving around to benefit from exercise. Chair-based exercises, which you can do sitting or holding on to the back of a chair, are ideal for improving muscle strength and flexibility.

If you're physically able, but find yourself sitting in front of the computer or television for hours at a time, try to break it up and build activity into your day.

If you have a health condition that makes moving about difficult or painful such as Parkinson's, arthritis or osteoporosis, always consult your GP for help in choosing the right exercise for you.



### 4. Make the most of your GP

It's a good idea to get some routine tests done at the doctors to check your blood pressure and cholesterol levels. High readings increase your risk factor for stroke and heart disease but any problems are completely reversible with medication.

Whilst you're there, why not ask your doctor about the seasonal flu jab? It's free once you reach 65, or if you have a health condition that puts you at risk of more serious problems if you caught the flu.



## 5. Get a vitamin boost

Lots of people have a vitamin D deficiency and don't know it. In fact, it's estimated that it affects half of the adult population. Vitamin D deficiency has been linked to cognitive impairment, bone problems and also cardiovascular disease.

Once we reach the warmer spring and summer months, try to get outdoors in the sunshine for at least 15-20 minutes a day for a vitamin D boost. It can also be found in food such as eggs and oily fish. Alternatively, talk to your doctor about a vitamin D supplement.

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## 6. Take care of your feet

Look after your feet by applying moisturiser to prevent dry skin and cutting your toenails straight across. Make sure you have footwear that fits properly and supports your feet.

If they're sore you may be tempted to stay in slippers, but a pair of trainers could be a good option as they are more supportive.

Contact your GP if your feet become painful, feel very hot or cold or if you have common problems like corns, bunions or ingrown toenails.

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## 7. Sort out your sleep

Many of us have trouble getting – or staying – asleep as we get older. This can leave you feeling tired and grumpy.

Avoid insomnia by cutting down on daytime naps, establishing a bedtime routine and going to bed at the same time each night.

Try a warm drink such as chamomile tea or hot milk before you go to bed.



## 8. Take the tests

As we age our hearing and eyesight can be affected, so it's important to get them checked regularly. Hearing loss is common in older people so see your GP if you have to have the TV on loud or you're having trouble tuning into conversations. If you need a hearing aid, some are available on the NHS.

Have your eyes checked every year if you are aged 70 or over, and every two years if you are under 70. This means that changes in your vision can be corrected and any problems can be picked up before they seriously affect your sight. Eye tests are free if you are over 60.



## 9. Stay in touch

Spending time with other people can prevent you from feeling lonely or anxious. If you find that you are no longer able to do the things you used to do, try to develop new hobbies and interests or think about becoming a volunteer.

Use Skype or Facetime to make video phone calls to friends and family who don't live nearby.

Age UK offers two different types of befriending services:

- Face-to-face befriending: where a volunteer befriender visits an older person in their home, perhaps for a cup of tea and a chat, or accompanies them to an activity (such as a trip to a café or the theatre).
- Telephone befriending: where a volunteer befriender will phone an older person at an agreed time for a chat.

With both types of befriending each older person is matched with a befriender who has similar interests. They will provide friendly conversation and companionship on a regular basis over a long period of time.

Befriending provides an older person with a link to the outside world and often acts as a gateway for other services and valuable support. These services are usually free of charge.



## 10. Give up smoking

We all know that smoking is bad for your body and your brain.

It's linked to a whole range of different health problems, including heart disease, lung cancer, and bronchitis.

The good news is that if you stop smoking, regardless of your age, your circulation, lung capacity and energy levels will improve.



## Feeling healthy and happy?

If you are, that's great! But all of us struggle with health problems or don't quite feel ourselves from time-to-time.

There is further information available from Age UK about everything mentioned in this leaflet. For more health and lifestyle advice, visit [www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk), call Age UK on **0800 055 6112** or visit your local Age UK branch.

# MAKE THE RIGHT CALL



If you're feeling unwell and you're not sure where to turn, remember to make the right call:

<b>A&amp;E OR 999</b>	CHOKING. CHEST PAINS. BREATHING PROBLEMS.	Visit A&E or call 999 if someone is seriously ill or injured and their life is at risk.
<b>NHS 111</b>	UNWELL? UNSURE? NEED HELP?	Call NHS 111 if you urgently need medical advice or you're not sure which NHS service you need.
<b>URGENT CARE</b>	MINOR CUTS. SPRAINS. RASHES.	Get help at an urgent treatment centre if you have a minor illness or injury and can't wait to see your GP.
<b>GP</b>	FEELING ILL. BACK PAINS. EAR ACHES.	Make an appointment with your GP if you are feeling unwell and it is not an emergency.
<b>PHARMACIST</b>	HEADACHES. TUMMY TROUBLES. COUGHS.	Ask your local pharmacist for advice on common minor illnesses.
<b>SELF CARE</b>	COLDS. SORE THROATS. HANGOVERS.	Take care of minor ailments at home with a first aid kit and a well-stocked medicine cabinet.

This information can be made available in alternative formats, such as easy read or large print, and may be available in alternative languages upon request.

How to contact us:

☎ 0345 112 0 999

@ [nwasenquiries@nwas.nhs.uk](mailto:nwasenquiries@nwas.nhs.uk)

🌐 [www.nwas.nhs.uk](http://www.nwas.nhs.uk)



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