



Health & Well-Being Toolkit

Key Workers

Key worker health and wellbeing support

Staying on top of your mental and physical wellbeing during the outbreak of COVID-19 is essential. Taking a proactive approach to your wellbeing is vitally important to remain fit and healthy and in this evidence based guide, you will find useful information on how best to look after yourself while working during busy periods, nutritional advice on maintaining and maximising energy while working, mental health tips to ensure your mental wellbeing isn't compromised, tips on how to keep your immune system healthy and quick and easy body weight exercise ideas based around shift working patterns.

[There are also six accompanying podcasts which complement the information you will find in this guide. These podcasts offer supplementary information on a range of health and wellbeing topics.](#)

Mental health

Nutrition

Hydration

Exercise

Sleep

Boost your immune system



Mental health





[For further information please listen to episode 4 of the health & wellbeing podcast: Anxiety & the media](#)

Mental Health and COVID-19

It is normal to feel worried or anxious about the current COVID-19 pandemic and increased media consumption can sometimes exacerbate this feeling of unease as you may be accessing more information, both from mainstream media sources and social media sources, than you otherwise would.

The following tips will help you to consume media more mindfully and reduce feelings of worry and unease:

It is important to inform yourself with accurate information. Social media feeds can be filled with unhelpful and false information which can have negative effects on your health and wellbeing. For the most up to date guidance and information on the COVID-19 outbreak visit www.gov.uk/coronavirus or www.nhs.uk/coronavirus. The government will also be televising daily briefings on the coronavirus pandemic at roughly 17.00 every day, these are broadcast live on BBC.

If you are travelling, or have plans to travel, then visit www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice for up to date information on your destination, including updates on travel recommendations.

Twitter and Facebook can be great sources of information, but you should carefully review and question where data has been sourced from, Public Health England post regular and trusted coronavirus updates on their Twitter page.

Other top tips for social media consumption include:

- Don't be afraid to mute or unfollow people that are posting unhelpful information or that you find increases your anxiety
- If constant updates are overwhelming you, then turn off notifications for media outlets and only access these at certain times of the day

There are also ways to make your newsfeed more positive. Many outlets are sharing positive stories and messages, including:

- Good News Movement (Instagram, facebook)
- The Happy News (Instagram, facebook, twitter)
- Action for happiness (facebook, instagram, twitter)
- Headspace (twitter, instagram, facebook)
- Happiful Magazine (Instagram, facebook, twitter)

Stressful life events or periods can lead to a deterioration of your mental wellbeing. Stress can be described as the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them. These pressures include mental, emotional, physiological and physical stresses placed upon the body and can be influenced by factors such as work life, home life, financial issues and relationships. It is crucial that you reach out for help if you are suffering. Utilise those around you, talk to your GP or contact the various services listed below for support, guidance and advice. Symptoms often overlap between mental health conditions.



[For further information please listen to episode 2 of the health & wellbeing podcast: Progressive muscle relaxation](#)

Common symptoms of mental health conditions could include:

- Excessive tiredness or fatigue
- Irritability, mood swings, overly emotional
- Increased nervous habits, scratching, shaking or tremors
- Poor time management
- Social withdrawal, relationship issues
- Increased reliance upon drugs, smoking or alcohol
- Inability to make quick simple decisions

Depression

Depression is a low mood that lasts for a long time and impacts on your everyday life. In its mildest form, depression can mean just being in low spirits. It doesn't stop you leading your normal life but makes everything harder to do and seem less worthwhile. At its most severe, depression can be life-threatening because it can make you feel suicidal or simply give up the will to live.

Anxiety

Anxiety is what we feel when we are worried, tense or afraid – particularly about things that are about to happen, or which we think could happen in the future. Anxiety is a natural human response when we perceive that we are under threat. It can be experienced through our thoughts, feelings and physical sensations. However, when these symptoms last for a long period of time and are overbearing then we need to access help and support.

Stress

In order for us to cope well with stress, we must work on and build up our resilience, which is defined as 'our capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness'. It is our process of adapting well in the face of adverse circumstances, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress.

If we discover and establish effective coping mechanisms that allow us as an individual to cope better in stressful circumstances, it will reduce the toll the stress has on us both physically and mentally. It is important to practice methods and establish coping mechanisms which allow you to actively improve your state of mind. Spending a few minutes practicing methods each day will help you to improve your mood, methods include:

- Practice mindfulness – Mindfulness is the psychological process of bringing one's attention to the internal and external experiences occurring in the present moment or put simply, the act of focussing on the here and now rather than events which have already happened or are going to happen. A good way to practice mindfulness is to utilise breathing techniques. Try this:
 1. Feel your breath. Follow the sensation of your breath as you inhale and exhale.
 2. Notice when your mind has wandered. Inevitably, your attention will leave the sensations of the breath and wander to other places. When you notice this return your attention to the feeling of your breath as you inhale and exhale.



[For further information please listen to episode 3 of the health & wellbeing podcast: Five ways to wellbeing](#)

3. Be kind to your wandering mind. Don't judge yourself or obsess over the content of the thoughts you find yourself lost in.
- Exercise – Do home workouts, go out for walks or runs in the open air, do some gardening.
 - Journaling – write down what is troubling you as a release or write a 'to-do' list, so you feel more organised and on top of things.
 - Small Mental Tasks – buy a puzzle book or download a brain training app to keep yourself occupied and also give you chance to stimulate your mind.
 - Do something you enjoy.
 - Establish and stick to a bedtime routine.

The five ways to wellbeing

The five ways to wellbeing are evidence backed methods which are proven to improve your mental state. It is important we take note of the methods throughout our professional and personal lives.

Below are some useful tips on how to complete the five ways to wellbeing:

- Connect – Videocall instead of emailing colleagues, call friends and family. Have a drink with colleagues at break times, speak about things you enjoy.
- Be active – Introduce a morning stretching routine, start a home based exercise routine, go for a walk at lunch breaks, start an exercise class amongst colleagues over skype in the evenings
- Take notice – look out the window for five minutes per day focussing on different areas, notice something new. On your commute to work note down positive things you notice.
- Learn – use the opportunity to learn about new cultures, if you are self isolating learn a language or read a new book which interests you.
- Give – connect with neighbours, friends and family and ask if they need help shopping etc

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Nutrition



Nutrition

Put simply, eating more calories than you burn per day will cause you to gain weight, while eating fewer calories than you burn per day will cause you to lose weight. Generally, women need around 2000 calories a day, and men around 2500 calories.

It is also important to ensure that the diet we are eating remains balanced and healthy. Eating too much of one nutrient, and not enough of another, can cause adverse health outcomes and make you feel unwell and tired – as well as having a negative impact on your vital organs. The UK Government's Eatwell Guide aims to help people understand what proportions of different food groups they need to achieve a healthy, balanced diet.

The plate is designed to show you what to eat over a whole day, rather than at each meal time. It is recommended that starchy foods and fruit and veg make up the bulk of our diet. Proteins and dairy foods are recommended in moderate amounts, while unsaturated oils are considered healthy in small amounts.

Food groups

Carbohydrate – This is where the body gets the majority of its energy. Carbohydrate is broken down into glucose and used by the body for producing its energy. Foods rich in carbohydrate include: Bread, pasta, rice, potatoes, hard green vegetables.

Protein – This is used by the body to repair and grow. Working long hours in roles with high levels of movement may lead to your body aching, which is why we need to increase the protein content in our diets to allow the body to repair. Foods rich in protein include meat, dairy products and nuts.

Fats – The body uses fat as an energy source when the sugar in carbohydrate has been depleted, so it is vital that our diet includes fat. There are two types of fat, saturated and unsaturated. Saturated fat is normally solid at room temperature, like butter and lard, and should be eaten in moderation. Unsaturated fat is normally liquid, olive oil and omega 3 in oily fish, and we should eat more of this.

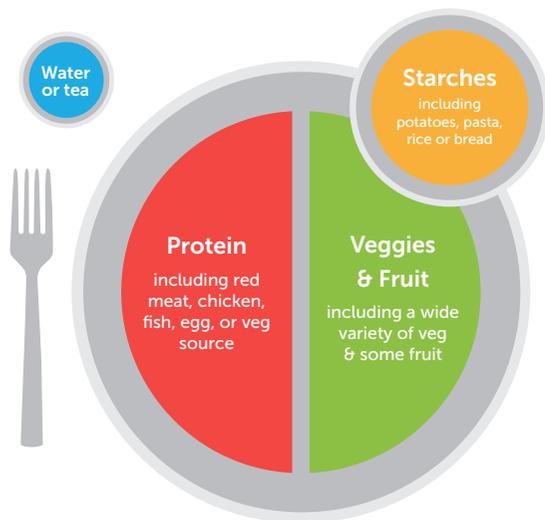
Fruit and veg – You should aim to eat five portions of fruit and veg per day. This food is rich in vitamins and minerals which are essential for proper function of the body. Try to eat a variety of colours as different colour foods have different minerals and vitamins.

Eating for energy

While working long shifts the energy we take from food becomes even more important. The above advice is still relevant and underpins the advice given for improving energy levels through nutrition, however working in roles with high levels of activity means some small adjustments need to be made. Below is some advice on maintaining energy through nutrition.

- Eat 4/5 × per day – The majority of your daily calories should still come at meal times, so do not skip breakfast, lunch and dinner, however it is also important to supplement this with additional snacks. Try to base your snacks around slow release carbohydrate, things like cereal bars or fruit will help.
- Eat breakfast – As mentioned above, breakfast is a key component of supplying energy throughout the day. You will feel lethargic in the morning and are more likely to eat unhealthy snacks if you skip the first meal of the day.
- Eat healthy fats – Fats will act as an energy source when we have depleted the energy in carbohydrates. Its important to continue to eat healthy fats, things like oily fish, nuts, pulses and seeds are rich in these nutrients.

When you are working long hours and need increased energy, you should base your meals around this principle:



Glycaemic Index

The glycaemic index (GI) is a rating system for foods containing carbohydrates. It shows how quickly each food affects your blood sugar (glucose) level when that food is eaten on its own. While using the glycaemic index to decide whether foods or combinations of foods are healthy can be misleading, foods with a high GI are not necessarily unhealthy and not all foods with a low GI are healthy, using the GI index for energy purposes can be very useful.

Foods with a low GI rating will release energy into your blood stream more slowly, thus giving you more prolonged energy reserves opposed to a spike of energy followed by a trough.

When you are working long hours with an increased workload, try to base your diet around foods with a low GI rating. These foods include wholemeal breads, pastas and rice, wholemeal cereals, oats, hard green vegetables and many legumes and beans.

3 Hydration



Hydration

When we increase our activity levels, whether that be through movement at work or increased exercise levels, it is important that we remain hydrated. NHS recommendations are that an adult should consume between 6 to 8 glasses of water a day. This can include lower-fat milks and lower-sugar or sugar-free drinks including tea and coffee. Fruit juice and smoothies also count towards your fluid consumption, but they contain free sugars that can damage teeth, so limit these drinks to a combined total of 150ml per day.

Dehydration occurs when your body is losing more fluids than you are taking in, if you don't adequately rehydrate this can lead to serious health complications. Signs that you are dehydrated could include:

- Feeling thirsty
- Dark yellow and strong smelling pee
- Feeling dizzy or light-headed
- Feeling tired
- Dry mouth, lips and eyes
- Feeling confused
- Feeling sick

If you feel any of these symptoms you should increase your fluid intake. If you have exercised, or lost fluid through sweating, vomit or diarrhoea then you should aim to increase your fluid intake to replenish what you have lost.

There are various ways that you can stay hydrated, not just by drinking plain water:

Make tea

Adding flavour by brewing up some fruit tea, ordinary tea, green tea or one of the other varieties, it's a great way to liven up the taste.

Add natural flavours

Infuse water by adding fruits, vegetables, herbs and or spices to it. Place them in a bottle or jug fill with water and place them in the fridge, that way when you're ready you have a tasty refreshing glass of water ready for you.

Eat your water

Making water based soups or broths are a great way to get your water intake up over the cooler months. Alternatively when it's warmer, cool yourself off with homemade ice lollies or jelly. Go for the low sugar jelly mixes and avoid calories laden cream based soups.

Our top tips for staying hydrated are:

1. Start your day with a glass of water, or have a drink of water during the commute to work
2. Include a bottle of water in your work bag to ensure that you have access to water through-out the day
3. Buy a 1L refillable bottle, aim to drink one before lunchtime, refill it and drink another after lunch.



[For further information please listen to episode 5 of the health & wellbeing podcast: Nutrition](#)



[Please refer to Sleep section for further information](#)

According to H.H. Mitchell, Journal of Biological Chemistry, the brain, spinal cord, nerve trunks and heart are composed of 73% water, and the lungs are about 83% water. The skin contains 64% water, muscles and kidneys are 79%, and even the bones are a watery 31%.

Water plays an important role in how the human body functions from day-to-day:

- Your brain requires it to manufacture hormones and neurotransmitters
- Keep mucosal membranes moist
- Forms saliva
- Regulates body temperature through sweat and respiration
- Allows body's cells to grow, reproduce and perform cell functions
- Lubricates joints
- Helps kidneys and liver function optimally
- Provides shock absorption for brain and spinal cord
- Flushes out body waste (mainly through urine)

How hydration levels affect your sleep?

Being poorly hydrated can lead to a disrupted night's sleep. By being even slightly dehydrated this causes your mouth and nose to dry out. This can lead to snoring, waking up parched with a dry mouth and hoarseness in the morning.

Dehydration can leave you more susceptible to muscle cramps that may keep you awake throughout the night or disrupt your sleep pattern so your quality of sleep is affected.

Drinking too much water too close to bed can also affect your sleep. You may need to wake up several times throughout the night to empty your bladder, thus disrupting your sleep pattern.

4 Exercise





[Please refer to Appendix 1: Chair yoga stretching routine](#)

Exercise

Exercise has even more benefits than you think. Research shows that exercise aids brain function, your musculoskeletal system, your heart, your blood vessels, and your lungs. Exercising also helps you sleep better. It staves off all manner of diseases, from Alzheimer's to diabetes. It prevents older people from falling, reduces anxiety and depression, and lowers your risk of all kinds of cancers. Exercise is an important tool in energy production, with people who regularly exercise reporting increased energy levels, even if they are working in hard, manual sectors.

When we are working long hours it is important that we still maintain our exercise levels and carry on exercising on a daily basis. It can be difficult to find time to add exercise into a routine, however even 15 minutes per day will aid your energy levels, sleep quality and mental wellbeing. Exercise boosts metabolism and contributes to weight loss or weight stability. These two factors significantly increase your chances of living longer. One recent study suggests that even if you have a family history of heart disease, exercise can reduce your risk. Working out can boost your mood, too.

With the closure of gyms, exercising at home is vital. It is easy and below you will find simple, home exercise routines which can be done without equipment. These are good for when you are working long hours because they can be done quickly and easily. We have three simple exercise routines for you to follow, based around cardiovascular health, muscular health and flexibility.

Please exercise with caution and only if you feel able to do so. Please do not exercise if you are suffering from conditions which may be exacerbated through physical activity (including heart or circulatory conditions). Ensure you are thoroughly warmed up before partaking in physical activity. If you experience pain, discomfort, light headedness, dizziness or sickness while exercising please stop and seek professional advice.

Cardiovascular, HIIT work out

- 30 seconds running on the spot, 1 minute rest
- 30 seconds burpees, 1 minute rest
- 30 seconds squat thrusts, 1 minute rest
- 30 seconds lunges, 1 minute rest
- 30 seconds running on the spot, 3 minute rest
- Repeat x5

Muscular work out

For video examples of the below exercises please follow this link: www.youtube.com/channel/UCIh5KG2II3agSEaHAbv8QbA

Upper body:

- Push ups – max repetitions x3
- Superman – 8 repetitions x3
- Shoulder taps – 8 repetitions x3
- Shoulder press up – 8 repetitions x3
- Door frame single arm row – 12 repetitions x3

Core:

- Leg raises – 8 repetitions x3
- Flutter kicks – 8 repetitions x3
- Reverse crunches – 8 repetitions x3
- Bicycle crunches – 8 repetitions x3
- Plank – 30 seconds x3

Lower body:

- Squats – max repetitions x3
- Glute bridges – 8 repetitions x3
- Lunge step ups – 8 repetitions x3
- Side leg raises – 8 repetitions x3

Recovery and Stretch

During exercise, muscles are called upon to work. During this work, fuel is used up, waste products are created and muscle fibre structure is disrupted by multiple micro tears. Short-term recovery is crucial to maintaining and improving performance and preventing injury in all levels of training.

Short-term recovery, sometimes called active recovery, includes the lower intensity cool-down phase after a tough training session as well as an entire rest day that involves low-intensity exercise like walking, stretching, yoga or other activities like Pilates. Short-term recovery also requires replenishing energy and fluid lost during exercise and getting adequate sleep.

Muscle soreness and is there a good way to get rid of it?

When you exercise, the subsequent contractions cause microtraumas to your muscle cells. We build more muscle when those damaged cells repair themselves. One specific type of contraction is the eccentric contraction, which happens when your muscles tense and lengthen at the same time, this is the main cause of this cellular-level trauma. For example, when you do a basic squat, your quadriceps contract and lengthen as they lower.

There are multiple ways of getting rid of DOMS, the best ways would be to produce a combination of active stretching and light exercise. Your recovery exercise should be light in comparison to the training session that made you sore; you want to get your body moving while still giving it time and energy to recover. Take a walk, go for a swim if possible or do some yoga. This facilitates the removal of waste products and the influx of fresh blood and nutrients. Massage and heat treatments, like warm baths or saunas, have also been known to help.

5 Sleep





[For further information please listen to episode 6 of the health & wellbeing podcast: Sleep](#)

Sleep

Changes in routine, working long hours or different shift patterns, including night shifts, are often cited as reasons why we sleep poorly, however the principles of a good night's sleep remain constant whether you sleep at night or during the day. Studies show that in order for bodily systems to function optimally, 7 – 9 hours of sleep per night is advised. At first glance, this may seem unachievable, however with a few simple changes it is a target which is easily attainable.

We all know what it is like when we haven't slept well, with common symptoms of short term lack of sleep being grogginess, confusion and irritability, however if it continues, lack of sleep can affect your overall health and make you prone to serious medical conditions, such as obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes. After several sleepless nights, the mental effects also become more serious. Your brain will fog, making it difficult to concentrate and make decisions. You'll start to feel down and may fall asleep during the day. Your risk of injury and accidents at home, work and on the road also increases.

Benefits of sleep

Boost your cardiovascular health – Those who suffer from poor sleep have higher blood pressure and higher heart rates on average than those who sleep for at least 7 hours per night. This can lead to heart disease or heart attacks if left untreated.

Boost your immune system – Prolonged lack of sleep can impact your immune system and make you more susceptible to catching bugs and diseases, however those who report sleeping for at least 7 hours per night report fewer colds and illnesses.

Maintain a healthy weight – Studies have shown that regularly sleeping less than 7 hours per night can lead to weight gain. It is believed to be because sleep deprived people have lower levels of leptin, the chemical which makes you feel full.

Prevent diabetes – Lack of sleep can impact the way the body processes glucose which can increase your chance of developing type 2 diabetes. The same studies show that those who sleep the required amount report having more energy.

Improve your mental state – When people with anxiety or depression were surveyed to calculate their sleeping habits, it turned out that most of them slept for less than 6 hours a night. By changing your sleep pattern you may increase your mental wellbeing.

How to improve your sleep

Routine – Maintaining a constant routine is key to a good nights sleep. You should try to go to sleep and wake up at the same time every day, even on your days off. Studies show that those who maintain a routine both fall asleep faster and wake up feeling more refreshed than those who do not.

Turn the tech off – You should aim to stop using lit screens such as mobile phones, laptops, tablets or TV's one hour before bed. The light omitted by these devices can stimulate your body and keep it awake. If you absolutely require the use of a screen then you should make use of "night mode", a setting which reduces the amount of blue light omitted by a device.

Peace and quiet – You should aim to relax and wind down before calling it a night. Use methods such as mindfulness, which can be as simple as just reading a book, or other relaxation techniques to allow you to switch off. Keep the room you are in as cool, dark and quiet as possible. If you sleep during the day consider using an eye mask or ear plugs to maintain this tranquillity.

Cut the caffeine – Your last caffeine intake should be no later than 8 hours before you wish to go to sleep. Remember that drinks such as tea, coffee, coca-cola and energy drinks all contain caffeine, so you should consider swapping these for caffeine free alternatives. Eating a low GI diet, foods such as wholemeal rice and pasta and wholegrains and wheats, can allow you to feel more energised than a high caffeine diet.

Adjust your meal times – Going to bed feeling hungry or full can impact upon your sleep. Try to allow roughly 1 hour between eating a large meal and going to bed. If you are still hungry then eat a small snack.

6 Boost your immune system





[Please refer to Nutrition section for further information](#)

Boosting our immune system

During the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus and the uncertain times ahead, it is essential that we take care of our bodies from a physical, mental and nutritional perspective, with a large focus being on keeping our immune system strong and healthy. Without an immune system, our bodies would be unable to fight off harmful substances, germs and cells that enter our body and have the potential to make us ill.

The main task of our body's immune system is to:

- Fight disease causing pathogens like bacteria, virus, parasites and fungi and remove them from our body.
- To recognise and neutralise harmful substances from the environment.
- To fight disease causing changes in the body, for example cancer cells.

How is our immune system activated?

Activation occurs when an antigen (bacteria, virus etc) enters our body, an antigen being something our body doesn't recognise as its own. When an antigen attaches to special receptors on immune cells, it triggers a whole series of processes in the body aimed at fighting and removing it. Once the body has fought off an antigen once, the immune system stores information on how to fight it, so should you come into contact with it again, your body will be able to fight it faster and more effectively.

(Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care, 2019).

How we can keep our immune system healthy

Nutrition: Various micronutrients are essential in our diet for immuno-competence, including vitamin A, C, D, E, B2, B6, B12, folic acid, iron, selenium and zinc.

Poor nutritional status can cause us to become more prone to infection, so it's important we don't allow ourselves to become deficient in any of the micronutrients listed above. Research shows that restoring any deficiencies in said micronutrients may improve our immune system function, thereby increasing our resistance to infection and supporting a faster recovery in those that are infected.

Please see below information on each micronutrient, including how much we should be consuming and what foods we can find them in.

Vitamin A: Important for vision, reproductive function, and normal cell reproduction.

Good sources:

- Eggs, Oily fish, Cheese, Yoghurt, Milk, Liver.
- Beta-carotene can also be turned into Vitamin A by the body. Good sources of this include:
- Yellow, Red and Green leafy vegetables (spinach, carrots, sweet potato, red pepper)
- Yellow fruits like mango, papaya and apricots

Recommended daily amount (adults aged 19–64):

- 0.7mg for men
- 0.6mg for women

Vitamin C: Has several important functions including:

- Protecting cells and keeping them healthy
- Maintaining healthy skin, blood vessels, bone and cartilage
- Helping with wound healing

Good sources:

- Oranges, Orange juice, Red and Green peppers, Strawberries, Blackcurrants, Broccoli, Brussel Sprouts, Potatoes.

Recommended daily amount:

- Adults aged 19–64 need 40mg per day – Vitamin C can't be stored in the body so we need to ensure we are getting enough in our diet each day.

Vitamin E: Helps to maintain healthy skin and eyes, and strengthen our bodies immune defences.

Good dietary sources:

- Plant oils (soya, corn and olive oil), nuts and seeds, wheat germ (found in cereals and cereal products)

Recommended daily amount:

- 4mg for men
- 3mg for women
- Any Vitamin E not used by the body is immediately stored to be used in the future, so we don't need to consume this everyday.

Vitamin B2 (Riboflavin): Riboflavin helps the production of red blood cells and is important for growth.

Good sources:

- Milk, Eggs, Fortified breakfast cereals, Rice.

Recommended daily amount (adults aged 19–64):

- 1.3mg for men
- 1.1mg for women
- Riboflavin can't be stored in the body, so you need this in your diet everyday.

Vitamin B6 (Pyridoxine): Allows the storage and use of energy from carbohydrates and proteins. Forms haemoglobin, the part of our red blood cells that carries oxygen.

The recommended daily amounts are:

- Women – 1.2mg per day
- Men – 1.4mg per day
- You should be able to get these amounts in a normal daily diet.

Recommended daily amount (adults aged 19–64):

- 1.4mg for men
- 1.2mg for women

Vitamin B12: Makes red blood cells and keeps the nervous system healthy. Releases energy from food. Uses folic acid.

Good dietary sources:

- Meat, Salmon, Cod, Milk, Cheese, Eggs

Recommended daily amount (adults aged 19–64):

- 1.5 micrograms – micrograms are 1000 times smaller than milligrams (mg)



[Please refer to
Exercise section for
further information](#)

Folate/Folic acid: Folate is a B vitamin found in many foods that helps with the formation of healthy red blood cells.

Good dietary sources:

- Broccoli, Brussel sprouts, Liver (avoid in pregnancy), Leafy green vegetables (e.g. cabbage and spinach), Peas, Chickpeas, Breakfast cereals fortified with folic acid.
- Folic acid is the man-made version of folate.

Recommended daily amount (adults aged 19–64):

- 200 micrograms – micrograms are 1000 times smaller than milligrams (mg)

Iron: Important in making our red blood cells, that have the essential job of transports oxygen around our body.

Good dietary sources:

- Liver (avoid in pregnancy), meat, beans, nuts, dried fruits, whole grains (e.g. brown rice), fortified breakfast cereals, soy bean flour, most dark leafy green vegetables (e.g. kale and watercress).

Recommended daily amount:

- 8.7mg for men aged over 18
- 14.8mg for women aged 19–50
- 8.7mg for women aged over 50

Selenium: Helps our immune system function properly, as well as being important in reproduction.

Good dietary sources:

- Brazil nuts, Fish, Meat, Eggs

Recommended daily amount (adults aged 19–64):

- 0.075mg for men
- 0.06mg for women

Zinc: This aids in making new cells and enzymes, wound healing and progressing carbohydrates, fats and proteins in food.

Good dietary sources:

- Meat, Shellfish, Dairy products, Bread, Cereal products.

Recommended daily amount (adults aged 19–64):

- 9.5mg for men
- 7mg for women

Physical activity

Physical activity helps to mobilise our sometimes rather sedentary white blood cells, the cells responsible for fighting infection. This mobilisation increases their flow around the body, allowing them to seek and destroy the antigen in all affected parts of the body more efficiently.

A vast amount of research has been carried out on the link between physical activity and the immune system. A review by Campbell and Turner (2018) stated that recent epidemiological studies show a physically active lifestyle can reduce the incidence of communicable (bacterial and viral) infections.

Additionally, they concluded that leading an active lifestyle is likely to be beneficial, rather than detrimental, to our immune function, which in turn has implications on health and disease in older age.

Resources

On-line Support

There are a number of incredible evidence based resources available to help people cope during stressful or difficult times. The below apps, websites and telephone support services will help you to maintain good physical and mental health in the weeks and months ahead. The resources can be brilliantly incorporated within your wellbeing plan:

Apps:

- Happify: improve your state of mind with mindfulness, relaxation and brain training games.
- Headspace: Guided meditation and mindfulness for a monthly fee
- Big White Wall: Get round the clock help from therapists to help you cope with stress
- distrACT: Support with suicidal or self-harming thoughts

Telephone support:

- CALM – 0800 585858
- Samaritans – 116 123
- MIND – 0300 123 3393
- Rethink Mental Illness – 0300 5000 927

Websites:

- www.Mind.org.uk
- www.samaritans.org
- www.mhfa.org.uk
- www.time-to-change.org.uk
- www.sane.org.uk
- www.nhs.uk/conditions/vitamins-and-minerals/
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- www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4590612/#__ffn_sectitle
- www.simplypsychology.org/stress-immune.html
- www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5352117/

Appendices

Chair Yoga Sequence

Active Breathing

1. Eyes closed
2. Seated upright, feet flat on the floor and palm rested on your thighs
3. Take a deep breath in through the nose, ensuring the diaphragm (not the chest)
4. Breathe out through the mouth.
5. Repeat 10 times

Neck Side Flexion

1. Sat upright in chair head facing forward
2. Gently bring your ears to your shoulders
3. Repeat 5 times left and right side

Chin Tucks

1. Sat upright in chair head facing forward
2. Tuck your chin in towards your spine creating a double chin
3. Repeat 5 times*
4. Any sensations of nausea/dizziness stop the exercise.

Seated Arm Stretch to lateral glides

1. Sat upright
2. Raise both arms above your head
3. Stretch as high possible like you are pushing the ceiling
4. Gently bring arms to the side
5. Glide left to right reaching as far you can on either side
6. Repeat 5 times left and right

Seated Arm Stretch to Forward Fold

1. Both arms raised above your head
2. Back straight
3. Breathe in with your diaphragm
4. Stretch arms up
5. Breathe out
6. Gently lowering arms and bending your back bringing your head to your legs
7. Repeat 5 times

Seated Back Twist

1. Sit on the edge of your chair, with arms out to the side
2. Bending forward and twist
3. Bringing your hand to the opposite foot (Right hand to left foot)
4. Repeat 5 times and switch to right side

Seated Cat Camel

1. Sat upright in your chair
2. Hands resting on your legs
3. Inhale and curve your back in a C shape pushing your chest out
4. Exhale arch your back hunching forward
5. Repeat 5 times

Chair Yoga Sequence

Seated Chair Cross Leg

1. Sat in your chair, both feet flat on the floor
2. Cross your right leg over onto the left thigh at a 90-degree angle
3. Maintain equal weight distribution between the sitting bones
4. Maintain an upright seated position and gently lean forward
5. Hold for 5 seconds at a time
6. Repeat 5 times on each leg

Standing Push Up

1. Standing behind your chair feet shoulder with apart
2. Both hands on the back of your chair
3. Gently push down to the chair hold 3–5 seconds
4. Gently push up
5. Repeat 5 times

Standing Downward Dog to Upward Dog

1. Standing behind your chair feet shoulder with apart
2. Both hands holding on the back of your chair
3. Pull back away from the chair
4. Gently come towards the chair into a leaning position bring the chest out
5. Repeat 5 times

Standing Mini Squat to Tip Toe

1. Standing behind your chair feet shoulder with apart
2. Both hands on the back of your chair
3. Back straight
4. Gently bend the knee to a squat position (as far as you feel comfortable)
5. Straighten knees and go up to tip toes
6. Repeat 5 times

Seated Ankle Rolls

1. Sat upright in chair
2. Hands rested on your legs
3. Gently bring toes up on both legs to ceiling and roll forward to bring heels up
4. Repeat 5 times

Active Breathing

1. Eyes closed
2. Seated upright, feet flat on the floor
3. Take a deep breath in through the nose, raising hands up to the ceiling
4. Breathe out through the mouth gently lowering arms down
5. Repeat 10 times

Happy Exercising

Disclaimer: Perform exercises within your comfortable ranges. Should any exercise cause pain, stop the exercise immediately and consult you GP.

Team Prevent UK, First Floor Rickyard Barn, Pury Hill Business Park,
Nr Alderton, Towcester, Northamptonshire, NN12 7LS

01327 810262 | info@teamprevent.co.uk