

## Occupational Health Service

### Balancing Wellbeing

As a result of the Government advice around Covid-19 we have been asked to stay at home and only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home).

This has resulted in us experiencing many changes in our normal day to day activities and the daily routines we used to have.

At difficult times like this it can be easy to fall into unhealthy patterns of behaviour that can initially feel good but which can impact on us over time and it can make us feel worse.

Try to eat healthy, drink enough water and avoid smoking, alcohol and drugs. Exercise inside where possible and try to get outside once a day will all be beneficial for us.

Taking steps to balance our wellbeing will be helpful and you may wish to focus on the following areas.

#### Sleep

Sleep is essential for good health and wellbeing. A lack of sleep can have an impact on the body's ability to function. Good sleep varies from person to person but aiming to have 6-9 hours each night is viewed to be healthy.

Please see the NHS page how to get to sleep; Sleep and tiredness:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/how-to-get-to-sleep/>

The following steps may also help:

- Keep your sleep environment at a temperature that isn't too hot or cold
- Avoid Caffeine or Nicotine late at night
- Avoid eating a heavy meal late at night.

Every Mind Matters is an NHS tool. Please see their page on sleep:

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/sleep/>

#### Exercise

Exercise can help to boost your immune system and your mood whilst you are being asked to stay at home. Try to put an exercise slot in your daily diary.

We are being asked to only go out of the house once a day to exercise at present and you may wish to walk, jog or cycle. Remember to stay at least 2 meters away from other people.

If you have an outdoor space that you are able to use go outside, consider walking or gardening:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults>

If you are staying at home, you can find free easy workouts from the NHS:

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/for-your-body/move-more/home-workout-videos/>  
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British Heart Foundation also have a 10 minute living room workout you could try:

<https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/heart-matters-magazine/activity/10-minute-workout>

## Diet during isolation

At this time it can be all too easy to find ourselves eating more than we normally would. The British Heart Foundation offer some useful suggestions for nutrition whilst in isolation.

- If you have food in the cupboard or in the freezer, this is a good time to use it. You will probably be surprised at what's lurking in the back of your cupboards – those good intention healthy buys, such as pearl barley, lentils and dried fruit.
- Try some new recipes with those new found items and try starting with the ingredient and then track down the right recipe.
- Old oats can become a healthy pudding with using them as crumble on a pie and the filling can be tinned fruit.
- Don't bin browning bananas, as they could be combined with old flours or brans in your cupboard and make banana bread or muffin.
- Add pulses such as lentils to dishes like Bolognese or chilli con carne, and you'll add protein and heart-healthy fibre to your diet at the same time.
- Dried herbs and spices are an easy way to add flavour without adding salt, as this can increase your blood pressure and can raise your risk of further heart problems.
- At this time the couch and fridge will seem in easy reach, so if you can avoid snacking by establishing a mealtime routine to keep work and play separate this will be helpful.
- If you do snack, go for a handful of unsalted nuts, a cup of veggie sticks or a small plate of cut up fruit to curb that afternoon craving. Opt for this instead of unhealthy foods like crisps, biscuits, chocolate or flavoured sugary drinks.

Please see information from British Heart Foundation about health eating:

<https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/support/healthy-living/healthy-eating>

## Alcohol

Alcohol is often consumed with a meal or as a way to celebrate and some people feel it can help them wind down. We need to be mindful about how much we are drinking and the impact it can have on our physical and mental health. At present we are being asked to spend time at home and as a result we may be tempted to drink more.

### Alcohol Intake:

Men and women should not drink more than 14 units of alcohol each week and if you can you should also aim to have several alcohol-free days each week.

### Understanding what a unit of alcohol is:

When we pour a drink at home we can often underestimate how many units we are drinking.

A unit of alcohol is:

- A single pub measure (25mls) of spirits (40% ABV) contains one unit of alcohol.
- A glass (50 ml) of liqueur, sherry or other fortified wine (20% ABV) contains one unit of alcohol.
- Half a pint (about 300mls) of normal strength (4% ABV) lager, cider or beer contains 1.1 unit of alcohol - be aware that many beers and ciders are stronger and have a higher volume than this.
- A standard 175ml glass of wine (13% ABV) would be 2.3 units - be aware that many wines have a higher alcohol content and the size of glasses may be bigger.

See the advice on Drink Aware: Coronavirus alcohol and your health:

<https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/>

Isolation and cutting down on alcohol at home:

<https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/alcohol-facts/drinking-habits-and-behaviours/alcohol-and-coronavirus/isolation-how-to-cut-down-on-alcohol-at-home/>