



**COVID-19**

**HEALTHY  
LIFESTYLE  
FOR OLDER  
PEOPLE**

**Wiltshire Council**



## INTRODUCTION

This healthy lifestyle leaflet is aimed at older people during COVID-19 whilst social distancing measures are in place and more time is being spent in your own homes.

Use the guide to learn about healthy eating or remind yourself of some key healthy eating recommendations, as well as the importance of hydration and physical activity and how this will all contribute to preventing the risk of falls during this time of social distancing, but also in the future.

## CONTACTING YOUR GP

Your GP continues to offer support to all patients. If you have any concerns about your health and wellbeing, please do contact your GP, they are still available to support patients.

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Staying physically active is important for us all during this time of COVID-19. Guidance on physical activity for older people focuses on maintaining bone strength to reduce the risk of bone fractures if you do fall, as well as reducing any muscle wastage by staying active and limiting the time spent sat down.

Adults aged 65 or older, who are generally fit and have no health conditions that limit their mobility, should try to be active every day and should do at least two and a half hours of moderate aerobic activity such as cycling or walking every week. You should also aim to do strength exercises on two or more days a week that work all the major muscles (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest).

Sitting for too long is also not good for keeping healthy and building muscle strength, so you should try to break up long periods of sitting with light activity, no matter how much exercise you do. You could do this by reducing the time you spend watching TV, by getting up to make a cup of tea, walking up and down the stairs or doing some housework. If you are watching TV, roll your shoulders regularly and get up and walk about in every ad break or between programmes.

This leaflet includes NHS guidance on **strength**, **balance** and **sitting** exercises which can be followed and easily done in your own home.

There are also virtual opportunities to stay active in your own home, if you have access to the internet:

- Tune in to 10 Today for daily physical activity for just 10 minutes each day - [www.10today.co.uk](http://www.10today.co.uk)
- Move it or Lose it – online videos to keep active [Click here](#)
- Wiltshire Council's Active Health team have produced home videos for you to follow along to - [Click here](#) and [click here](#)



# EATWELL GUIDE

The **Eatwell Guide** provides an overview of a healthy balanced diet, illustrating how much of what you eat should come from each food group.

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## Fruit and Vegetables

### A sample of foods included

Apples, bananas, raisins, carrots, sweet potato, chopped tomatoes, frozen peas, grapes, strawberries, tinned fruit in fruit juice.

### What is a portion?

Aim for five portions a day.

One portion = one handful of fruit, two handfuls of vegetables, 30g dried fruit (only one portion of dried fruit per day), 150ml of fruit juice or smoothie.

### Why do I need this food group?

Fruit and vegetables have a range of vitamins and minerals which are essential for good health.

### Top Tips

Eat a range of colours to make sure you are getting a range of different vitamins and minerals.

Where possible, eat fruit and vegetables whole rather than as juice to ensure you are getting all the fibre.

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## Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates

### A sample of foods included

Choose higher-fibre wholegrain varieties such as brown rice, brown pasta and leaving the skin on potatoes. These contain higher fibre than white varieties as well as more of other nutrients.

### What is a portion?

Women should aim for seven portions per day.

Men should aim for eight portions per day.

Examples of one portion include; one fist sized jacket potato, one slice of brown bread, two heaped tablespoons of cooked rice or pasta.

### Why do I need this food group?

These foods provide a good source of energy and fibre. Many people believe starchy foods are fattening but, gram for gram, they contain less than half the calories of fat.

### Top Tips

Consider the way the foods are cooked, particularly the amount of fat you add when cooking.

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## **Dairy and alternatives**

### **A sample of foods included**

Cheese, yoghurt, milk.

### **What is a portion?**

Women should aim for three portions. Men should aim for three portions.

Examples of one portion include; one small glass (200ml) of semi skimmed or skimmed milk or four tablespoons of low-fat natural yoghurt.

### **Why do I need this food group?**

Good source of protein, vitamins and minerals, such as calcium, which contribute to keeping bones strong.

### **Top Tips**

Some can be high in fat and saturated fat but there are low fat options e.g. semi skimmed, 1% or skimmed milk and reduced fat cheese. Look for the low fat, low sugar options.

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## **Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins**

### **A sample of foods included**

Beans, peas and lentils are good alternatives to meat – low in fat, but high in fibre, protein, vitamins and minerals.

### **What is a portion?**

Women should aim for two portions. Men should aim for three portions.

Example portion sizes include; three heaped tablespoons of beans - e.g. kidney beans or chick peas, two eggs, and one hand-size piece of chicken or fish.

### **Why do I need this food group?**

These foods are good sources of protein, vitamins and minerals. Pulses such as beans, peas and lentils are good alternatives to meat because they're lower in fat and higher in fibre.

### **Top Tips**

Consider the type of cut or meat product and how you cook it; lean cuts of meat/mince, cut the fat off of meat and skin off chicken. Eat two portions of fish a week, including a portion of oily fish.



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## Oils and spreads

### A sample of foods included

Olive oil, rapeseed oil, vegetable oil and low fat spread.

### What is a portion?

Choose unsaturated fats such as those listed above and use in small amounts.

Women should aim for one portion. Men should aim for two portions.

Examples of one portion include; one teaspoon of butter, two teaspoons of low fat spread, one teaspoon of oil.

## Why do I need this food group?

We need some fats in our diet to help absorb the vitamins and minerals.

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## Hydration

### A sample of foods included

Water, fruit juice, smoothies, tea and coffee. Be aware that smoothies and fruit juice are high in sugar so be careful with the amount of these you drink. Water should be your main source of hydration.

### What is a portion?

Aim for 6-8 glasses of water a day.

Any fluid is good (apart from alcohol) for staying hydrated. Also consider eating fluid rich foods such as jelly, ice cream and yoghurt.

### Why do I need this food group?

To stay hydrated. Tap water has plenty of vitamins and minerals in, more than bottled water.

Lack of water intake can increase the risk of falls in older people, as it can lead to disorientation in mental state and increase the likelihood of dizziness and fainting.

If you are worried about incontinence, please don't stop drinking and staying hydrated as concentrated urine can irritate the bladder and cause a risk of infection.

### Top Tips

Make sure you drink plenty of water before, during and after any physical activity sessions.

Get a water bottle for every day use – you will drink more, just by always having it available.

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Look at the [urine chart](#) to see how hydrated you are.

There are some early signs to look out for to recognise whether you are dehydrated, [have a look at the diagram](#).

## VITAMIN D

Eating a healthy balanced diet, following the guidelines of the Eat Well Guide, should give most people the range of vitamins and minerals their body needs. Vitamin D is needed to keep bones and muscles healthy. The Government is currently advising people to stay at home. For most people this will mean being indoors for much of the day, which could result in not getting enough vitamin D from sunshine exposure. The body creates vitamin D from direct sunlight on the skin when outdoors during the spring and summer.

Existing public health advice is that if you're not going outdoors often, you should consider taking a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D. We therefore recommend that whilst the stay at home measures are in place, everyone follows this advice (including children, pregnant and breastfeeding women and older people).

It is not about preventing coronavirus (COVID-19) or mitigating its effects. You can buy vitamin D supplements at most pharmacies and supermarkets. Please don't buy more than you need.

## ALCOHOL

As we get older, drinking the same amount results in higher blood alcohol concentration. This is because fat replaces muscle as we age, and alcohol is not drawn into body fat as well as it is into muscle.

Older people are more likely to experience unsteadiness after drinking alcohol, and so are more susceptible to falls.

Government guidance promotes drinking alcohol in moderation and if you feel you are drinking too much or it is becoming a habit, speak to your GP for some support. You should avoid alcohol with certain medicines so always read leaflets that come with any medicine and if in doubt, talk to your pharmacist or GP.





## BLOOD SUGAR

Our blood sugar levels increase after we have eaten some food or had a sugary drink. Depending on how much our blood sugar levels increase, will depend on what food we have eaten or how much of that food we have eaten. Some foods will increase our blood sugar levels at a steady rate, keeping us fuller for longer – this is what we want to try and aim for.

Typically, when our blood sugars are low, i.e. when we haven't eaten for a period of time, we tend to crave foods higher in calories, that are typically unhealthy foods, such as chocolate, cakes, biscuits. We are more likely to choose healthier foods if we keep our blood sugar levels steady. We can achieve this by;

- eating regularly, aiming for three main meals and two-three healthy snacks
- getting enough quality sleep (physical activity will help with improving sleep)
- start the day with a healthy breakfast, this will help kickstart your body's metabolism which is your body using the energy up from what you consume
- limiting the amount of high sugary foods consumed
- staying within the recommended levels when consuming alcohol



## GOOD MENTAL HEALTH

Good mental wellbeing is important for everyone and satisfaction with life is shown to be an important predictor of healthy ageing. The five ways to wellbeing developed by the New Economics Foundation is a useful tool to feeling good:

**Connect** – connect with the people around you: your family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. This could involve talking to someone new, phoning an old friend or putting five minutes aside to find out how someone really is. During this time we are all finding it harder staying connected to people and some of us might be relying on technology to stay connected.

**Be active** – have a walk each day if you can or do the exercises in this booklet each day. If you have a garden try and spend some time out in the fresh air.

**Keep learning** – learning new skills can give you a sense of achievement and a new confidence. This may be more of a challenge during these times. If you have access online, perhaps see what new skills you could learn? Is there some useful information on gardening you would like to find out, is there a new recipe you would like to make, or an online crossword you could do? If you don't have access online, could you look through some of your recipe books to find some recipes you haven't made before, a jigsaw puzzle you could try doing?

**Give to others** – even the smallest act can count. During this time we can look to support each other in different ways. Giving people a regular phone call, writing a letter to someone, reaching out to others around us who may need some company. If you do go out for a daily walk, still say hello to people as you pass them by.

**Be mindful** – be more aware of the present moment, including your thoughts and feelings, your body and the world around you. Think about what gives you pleasure and try and do more of it.



## WARM AND SAFE WILTSHIRE

Warm and Safe Wiltshire advice service is still busy helping people who are struggling to keep warm or manage their fuel bills. We know that the current situation is particularly challenging for vulnerable people and that domestic energy costs have risen as households are obliged to stay at home. The Warm and Safe phone line is open, so do call them on **0800 039 5722** or visit **[warmandsafewiltshire.org.uk](http://warmandsafewiltshire.org.uk)**. And if you know anyone who might need help - for example in topping up their prepayment meter if they can't leave their home - please pass these details to them.



## MORE INFORMATION

- **Suggested drinks menu for nursing home** [See below](#)
- **Eatwell Guide** - Public Health England [Click here](#)
- **Healthy pee and colour chart** - Healthier Scotland Scottish Government and Scottish UTI Network [Click here](#)
- **Adult effect of dehydration** - Healthier Scotland Scottish Government and Scottish UTI Network [Click here](#)
- **Exercises for older people** - NHS Choices
  - Sitting [Click here](#)
  - Strength [Click here](#)
  - Balance [Click here](#)

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### Suggested drinks menu for nursing home

#### Hot Drinks Menu

- Tea
- Coffee
- Horlicks®
- Ovaltine®
- Hot chocolate
- Warm milk

#### Cold Drinks Menu

- Orange juice
- Cranberry juice
- Apple juice
- Milk
- Water
- Fruit squash
- Smoothie
- Pineapple juice
- Mango juice