

How can I reduce my risk of dementia?



Many people worry about developing dementia.

This leaflet provides advice on the steps you can take to keep your brain healthy and reduce your risk of developing dementia.



Mental well-being

Being socially and mentally active plays an important role in keeping your brain sharp and may help to reduce the development of dementia. Learning new skills, taking up a new hobby or joining a club are all ways of connecting with people and keeping the brain active which, in turn, can lead to improved mental wellbeing, helping you to feel happier and more positive. Research has shown there are five steps we can all take to improve our mental wellbeing:

Connect – Try to connect with the people around you as much as possible; your family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Building social networks is important for your well-being.

Be active – Being active isn't just good for your physical health it also helps you to feel good. Dance, go cycling, do gardening or any activity you enjoy.

Keep learning – Learning new skills can give you a sense of achievement and a new confidence. Try something new like signing up to a cooking course or learn a new craft. Read the news or a book; do a crossword or Sudoku.

Give – People who help others are more likely to rate themselves as happy. Do something nice for a stranger or do some volunteering. Even the smallest gesture can count; smile at someone, say hello, thank or compliment someone.

Take notice – Reflecting on surroundings is a great way to feel good. Take some time to enjoy the moment and be aware of the things around you, your feelings and thoughts.

People with depression are probably at a greater risk of developing dementia. If you are experiencing symptoms of depression, you should seek help from your GP because it can be treated, either with drugs or talking therapies (or both).

For more information contact **RDASH Talking Shop** on **01302 565650** or **Doncaster MIND** on **01302 812190** www.mind.org.uk

Sleep

It's long been known that not getting enough sleep is bad for your health, increasing your risk of diabetes, depression, heart disease and other troubling ailments. However, new research suggests that lack of sleep may also have an impact on the brain, leading to an increased risk of dementia.

It is recommended that adults aged 18 to 64 get seven to nine hours sleep a night. People over the age of 65, should have between seven and eight hours.

Smoking

Smoking has a very harmful effect on the heart, lungs and blood vessels, including those in the brain. Research shows that smokers have a 50 per cent greater chance of developing dementia than those who have never smoked.

If you want help to stop smoking contact the **Doncaster Stop Smoking Service** on **0800 612 0011** or visit www.nhs.uk/smokefree for FREE information, advice and useful tips.



Alcohol

Drinking above safe levels of alcohol significantly increases the risk of developing dementia. Very heavy drinking is known to cause alcohol-related dementia, also known as Wernicke-Korsakoff Syndrome.

It is recommended that both men and women do not regularly drink more than 14 units a week. It is advised that if you drink as much as 14 units a week you spread your drinking over three days or more. Try to keep at least two days per week alcohol-free so that your liver, in particular, can recover from the toxic effects of alcohol.



If you are concerned you may be drinking too much take a quick test at www.drinkaware.co.uk or contact **Aspire - Drug and Alcohol Service Doncaster** on **01302 730956**.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D is essential for good health in ageing adults. A lack of Vitamin D has long been associated with osteoporosis, cardiovascular disease, asthma and cancer and new research suggests that it may also play a role in the development of dementia. A study found that people severely lacking in the sunshine vitamin were twice as likely to develop dementia than those with healthy levels.

Vitamin D can be found in foods such as oily fish, eggs and fortified cereals but it is advised that you take a Vitamin D supplement through the winter months when sunlight is at its lowest.



Further Reading and Useful Resources

Hello Brain provides easy-to-understand scientific information about brain health and practical tips on how to keep your brain healthy. Visit www.HelloBrain.eu for more information.

Take the Hello Brain Challenge and do one thing every day to help your brain stay healthy. Download the free Hello Brain app which provides daily suggestions and support.

Get some practical tips from the NHS on how you can make healthier choices for a healthier life by visiting:-
www.nhs.uk/livewell
www.nhs.uk/change4life/

Find out more about living well with dementia at
www.dementiaroadmap.info/doncaster/

This leaflet has been produced on behalf of the Doncaster Dementia Strategic Partnership and the Doncaster Dementia Action Alliance
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Exercise

Keeping active is important for brain health as well as heart health. Research shows that regular exercise in middle aged or older adults can improve thinking and memory, and may reduce the risk of developing some types of dementia.

Try to be active for at least 30 minutes, three to five times a week, with an activity that raises your heart rate. Walking, cycling, dancing and even gardening are all great ways to keep fit. Any activity is better than none!

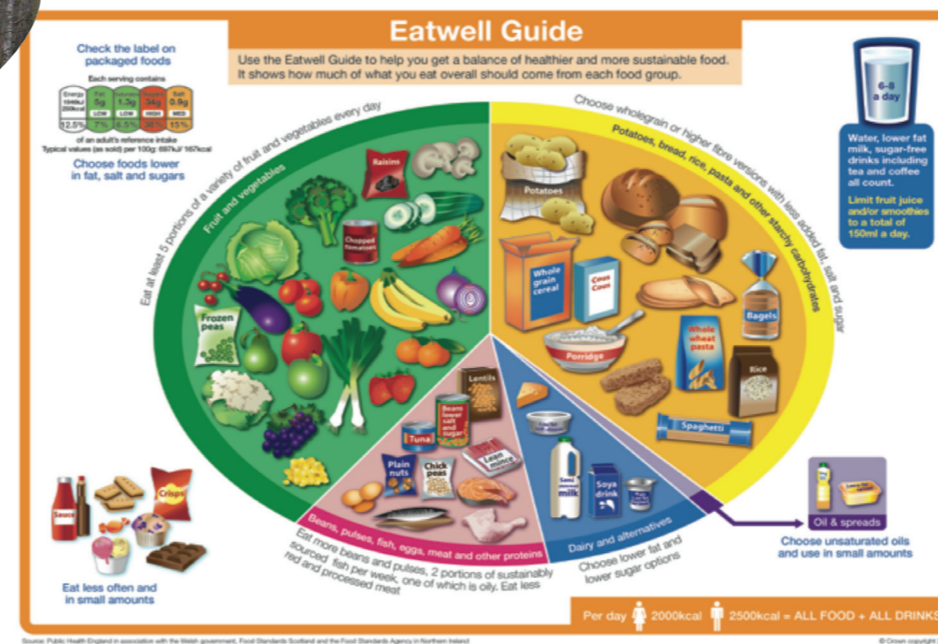
For more advice on keeping active contact **Doncaster Council's Active Doncaster Team on 01302 735403** or visit www.doncaster.gov.uk/publichealth

Diet

Diet can affect your risk of many types of illness, including dementia. A healthy diet that helps you to maintain a normal body weight is likely to reduce the chance of developing high blood pressure or heart disease, both of which put you at greater risk of dementia.

A healthy diet should include:

- Lots of fresh fruit and vegetables. The nutrients from these help the brain to work better and improve your mood
- Wholegrain cereals and bread
- Protein including meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans and lentils
- Calcium-rich foods (low-fat milk and dairy products)
- Foods containing vitamin D such as eggs and oily fish
- Foods enriched with Omega 3 good fats such as brazil nuts, avocados and mackerel. These help our brain to function
- Plenty of water



Reducing the level of sugar, salt and saturated fats in your diet (such as fatty meats, full fat dairy products, biscuits and cakes) may help to lower the risk of dementia. Fatty foods can also lower your mood and increase your risk of depression.

Healthy Weight

Obesity increases someone's chances of developing risk factors for dementia, such as high blood pressure and diabetes. This means people who are obese, especially in mid-life, are at an increased risk of dementia.

Eating a healthy diet and exercising regularly will help people to avoid becoming obese and (in most cases) maintain a healthy body weight.

Diabetes

There is a strong link between type 2 diabetes and the risk of dementia. There are things that you can do to reduce your risk of developing diabetes, such as staying at a healthy weight, being active and eating a balanced diet that is low in fat and sugar. If you already have diabetes, it's important to manage your condition well.



Cholesterol

Evidence shows that high cholesterol levels in mid-life can increase your risk of dementia later on. People over the age of 40 should have their cholesterol levels checked to make sure they are within a healthy range. Eating a healthy diet and keeping active will help you to maintain healthy cholesterol levels. Speak to your GP for further information.

For more information on healthy eating and weight management go to www.doncaster.gov.uk/publichealth

High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure significantly increases the chance of developing dementia in later life. If you are over the age of 40 you should get your blood pressure checked regularly and follow medical advice to keep it under control.

If you are between 40-74 years of age you can have a free NHS Health Check every five years. The check is quick and simple and is for people living in Doncaster who are not currently under the care of a doctor for stroke, heart or blood pressure problems, diabetes, kidney disease and/or cholesterol management.

It takes just a few minutes and is totally free and confidential.

Visit the Public Health website at www.doncaster.gov.uk/publichealth - **01302 315007** to find out where and when you can have your health checked.