

Men's Health Guide

Feel good through life's ups and downs.



Take a step towards a healthier you and join our Good Vibrations community.



Offering a wealth of information, advice and support specifically designed to improve the health and wellbeing of men aged 50+, check out the Good Vibrations programme's fantastic range of resources.

Want health & wellbeing information?

Sign up at ageni.org/goodvibrations, for our monthly Good Vibrations ezine to receive information on important topics.

Listen to our 'How's the form?' podcast

Listen to the Good Vibrations podcast series, hosted by BBC's Joe Lindsay. Joe talks to some well know NI men who talk openly and honestly about their health and wellbeing. Find it wherever you get your podcasts!

Advice line

For information or advice on welfare benefits, community care, housing, and health you can call the Freephone Age NI advice line on **0808 808 7575**

Available: Monday - Friday 9am-5pm

I-connect wellbeing website

Sign-up at ageni.org/iconnect, and use the pin **GOODVIBRATIONS** to unlock our online well-being platform.

Good Vibrations wellbeing programmes

Delivered online by Age NI, our Good Vibrations sessions are a chance for men to get together so that they can learn to improve their physical and mental health. The programme will offer expert tips and practical advice to help men over 50 deal with life's many ups and downs.



Scan the QR code, or visit ageni.org/goodvibrations for dates.

 **Good Vibrations**

Introduction

Welcome to this Good Vibrations men's health guide. You might be asking the question 'who is this guide aimed at?' – and the simple answer is: you.

There are plenty of men's health and mental health campaigns and resources for younger men, but Age NI noticed that there is very little specifically for older men. That's why we teamed up with Movember to create the Good Vibrations programme.

The aim of Good Vibrations is to provide information, tips, advice, and support to men over 50, aimed at improving physical and mental health in the second half of life.

We wanted to make sure that Good Vibrations is specifically suitable for men in Northern Ireland. We surveyed men over the age of 50 so that we could see what topics they wanted to know more about. We then set about creating the Good Vibrations programme (*and this booklet*) to meet those needs and deliver a handy way of learning about them.

We discovered that men in Northern Ireland wanted to know about a wide range of topics to help them deal with the many ups and downs that they'll face as they get older. Health checks, mental fitness, healthy eating, relationships, money matters, online safety, and scams were all areas of interest that men told us they wanted to know about.

We hope that there's something in this guide for you and that you keep it for when you might need it.

Let's get the bad news out of the way...

- On average, men die younger than women.
- Males have higher death rates than females for most of the leading causes of death.
- Poor lifestyles are responsible for many chronic diseases.
- Mental health difficulties are often pushed to the side, to be dealt with later, often with a heavy impact.
- Late presentation to the doctor leads to a large number of problems becoming untreatable.

The good news...

Many life-limiting conditions are preventable and many others are treatable with early detection; men's health can be significantly improved - if the right choices are made and help is sought out early.

Many of us have spent years using and abusing our bodies with little thought for the future. Now's the chance to give your mind and body a bit of TLC so it can keep you going!

Read on for some reminders on the simple, practical, and realistic everyday choices we can all make to invest in our health and vitality beyond 50.

Men's Health Checks



Don't stick your head in the sand! Many of the medical conditions that affect men can be treated successfully if they are detected early. If in doubt, get checked out!

Heart Health

Look after your heart and it will look after you! Its main job is to pump oxygen-rich blood around the body and carry nutrients to other organs to help the body function.

Seven out of eight males have at least one risk factor for coronary heart disease and stroke. Having high blood pressure (hypertension) and cholesterol can increase these risks. A healthy diet, exercise, not smoking, and reduced stress all play a part in reducing the risks.



Top tip

Regular exercise and a healthy diet can limit the chances of a stroke or heart attack.



Stroke - What is it?

A stroke happens when the blood supply to part of the brain is cut off. The brain needs oxygen provided by blood to function. Brain cells can die if this blood supply is restricted or stopped. In some cases, this can lead to brain injury, disability, or even death.

The main symptoms can be remembered with the word FAST:

- **Face:** The face may have dropped on one side, you may not be able to smile, or the mouth or eye may have dropped.
- **Arms:** You may not be able to lift both arms and keep them there because of weakness or numbness in one arm.
- **Speech:** Speech may be slurred or garbled, or you may not be able to talk at all despite appearing to be awake, or you may have problems understanding what is being said.
- **Time:** Dial 999 immediately if you see any of these signs or symptoms.

Strokes are a medical emergency and urgent treatment is essential.

Heart attack - What is it?

A heart attack (myocardial infarction) is when the supply of blood to the heart is suddenly blocked, usually by a blood clot. A lack of blood to the heart can damage the heart muscle and we all know a heart attack can kill you.

Know the signs to act fast. Take action if you experience any of the following:

- Uncomfortable pressure, discomfort, squeezing, or pain in the centre of the chest which lasts for more than a few minutes or comes and goes.
- The chest pain spreads to the back, neck, arm(s), jaw, or stomach.
- Light-headedness, sweating, nausea, vomiting, or shortness of breath.

Not all of these signs occur in every heart attack. However, even if you're not sure, don't wait - always seek help fast.

It's important to know that the signs of a heart attack for men and women differ.



Get your blood pressure and cholesterol checked regularly. You can only find out if you have high blood pressure from a test – so what's keeping you?

Men's Health Checks

Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm: 'Triple A' - What is it?

An abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) happens when the main artery carrying blood from the heart to the stomach (the aorta) becomes weakened. If it ruptures, it can cause life-threatening internal bleeding.

Men aged 65 or over are most at risk of getting Triple A.

AAA will often cause no obvious symptoms. If an aneurysm gets bigger, you might sometimes notice:

- Tummy / Abdominal or back pain
- A pulsing feeling in your tummy

(Note: these symptoms can be caused by lots of things and do not mean you have an abdominal aortic aneurysm, but it's best to get them checked.)

About 8 in every 10 people who have a burst Triple A die before they get to hospital, or do not survive emergency surgery to repair it. It's really important to detect it early.



If you're over 65, you will get a screening invitation in the post. You don't have to wait for that though – you can also book a test with your GP. If you have a family history of 'Triple A' or are in a high-risk group, you can ask your doctor for a test. It uses ultrasound – meaning that the test is quick and painless – it could save your life!



It's not just old age

As we get older, parts of our body don't work as well as they once did. This is not just old age and a thing that we have to accept – and that's why it's worth getting a check-up to make sure that everything is okay.

Get your hearing tested

Losing your hearing can be a normal part of the ageing process, but because it happens gradually you may not notice any change. Perhaps you've needed to have the TV on louder or found you can't always follow conversations, especially in a group or in a noisy public place.

It's important you detect hearing loss early because treatment is easier the earlier problems are diagnosed. Sometimes it's as simple as ear wax – and your pharmacist can give advice and suggest treatments. Research shows there is a link between hearing loss and dementia.



You can book a hearing test with your GP – and if their waiting list is long, you can also book a test with some pharmacies and opticians.



Take care of your eyes

Eyesight naturally changes as we age. It's easy to neglect your eyes but having a regular eye test will not only tell if you need new glasses, it will also check the health of the eye.

Age-related macular degeneration is a common condition that affects the middle part of your vision. It usually first affects people in their 50s and 60s.

It doesn't cause total blindness but it can make activities like reading and recognising faces difficult.

An eye test can pick up eye conditions such as glaucoma and cataracts, which are common in men and can lead to blurry vision or blindness, as well as general health problems such as diabetes and high blood pressure before you become aware of them.



If you're aged 60 and over, you can receive a free eye test every two years, but you may be advised to test more frequently.

Did you know?

Nearly 112,000 people are living with diabetes in Northern Ireland.

Know about diabetes

Diabetes is a condition that causes a person's blood sugar level to become too high.

When too much blood sugar stays in your bloodstream, over time this can cause serious health problems, such as heart disease, vision loss, kidney disease and circulation issues affecting the feet – which can lead to amputation.

Diabetes needs to be diagnosed as early as possible because it's likely to get worse if left untreated.

The symptoms include:

- feeling very tired
- feeling very thirsty
- urinating more frequently than usual, particularly at night
- weight loss and loss of muscle bulk
- itching around the penis
- cuts or wounds that heal slowly
- blurred vision



Diabetes can only be detected by having a blood test. Type One diabetes can develop quickly over weeks or even days so act fast and see your GP if you experience the main symptoms of diabetes.

The C Word – Men and Cancer

We don't like to talk about cancer – and many of us ignore the subject entirely. It usually means talking about your bits and bobs – but don't be embarrassed – your doctor will have heard it all before!





Getting treatment

Treatments have improved and there's a good chance that you will be cured or that the treatment will help keep the cancer under control if you spot it early.

Some cancers can be prevented, and you can reduce the risk of getting them by trying to live a healthier life.

Again, the message is to know what's normal for you – act fast and get checked out if something seems unusual.

If in doubt, check it out.

Getting checked is never a waste of anyone's time - and it could save your life.

There's also no need to be embarrassed about that 'personal issue' - your doctor will have been there / seen it all before!



Top tip

Don't ignore the body's early warning signs. If something looks or feels unusual, remember: you're in charge.



What to look out for

Different types of cancer have different symptoms. If you notice any of the following, contact your GP as soon as possible...

- A new lump, bump, or swelling anywhere on your body, or a sore that doesn't heal (*including inside your mouth*).
- Skin changes, such as a new mole or changes in the colour, shape, and size of existing moles.
- Unexplained bleeding and/or coughing-up blood (including traces of blood in pee or poo).
- Sudden weight loss which is not related to dieting.
- Constantly feeling tired/ exhausted / worn out.
- A cough that lasts for more than three weeks or changes in your voice and feeling short of breath.
- Changes in your bowel or bladder habits, such as prolonged constipation, diarrhoea or problems passing urine.
- Difficulty swallowing, persistent indigestion, heartburn, or a feeling of being bloated.
- Pain that doesn't go away.

The C Word – Men and Cancer



Prostate Cancer

Prostate cancer is the most prevalent cancer among men. It primarily affects the prostate gland, which is part of the male reproductive system.

Risk factors include age, family history, and genetic factors.

Symptoms include having to pee more often at night, having difficulty peeing and blood in the urine.

What to do?

If you notice any symptoms, then you should visit your GP and they will conduct the relevant tests.

Lung Cancer

Lung cancer is a significant health concern for men, often linked to smoking - although non-smokers can also develop the disease. There are two main types: non-small cell lung cancer and small cell lung cancer.

What to do?

Early symptoms may be subtle, but persistent cough, chest pain, and difficulty breathing are common signs. Get these checked out if they continue.

Testicular Cancer

Testicular cancer is relatively rare in men over 50. It usually begins as a painless lump in the testicles and early detection and prompt treatment are highly successful in curing this cancer.

What to do?

Testicular cancer is diagnosed through blood tests which detect certain hormones in your blood.

Did you know?

Cancer is the leading cause of death for men aged 55+.



Bowel Cancer

Bowel cancer affects the colon and rectum and is the third most common cancer in men.

The key is early detection and treatment. Common symptoms include changes in bowel habits, blood in the stool, and abdominal discomfort. Don't wait to get these checked.

What to do?

If you're over 60 you will automatically be sent a bowel cancer screening test – don't ignore it, scoop the poop and post it back!

It's a moment in time for much longer term peace of mind. Visit your GP if you notice something unusual. Don't be shy and don't put it off.

Skin Cancer

Skin cancer isn't restricted to hot countries – in fact, it's one of the most common cancers in Northern Ireland. Melanoma is a type of skin cancer that can spread cancer to other areas of the body. There's another type of skin cancer called non-melanoma skin cancer. It's more common and usually less serious but it's important to get treated because it can spread.

What to do?

Regularly inspect your skin for any unusual changes and pay attention to new or changing skin growths, sores that don't heal, and any unusual patches or discoloration. See a doctor if you notice any changes to the shape, size, or colour.

Keep an eye on ABCD: Asymmetry, Border, Colour and Diameter.

Wear SPF sun cream even here in Northern Ireland and always wear a hat to protect your head and face.

Physical Activity

Regular exercise is important. You don't have to become an olympic athlete, just do a little bit of physical activity to keep you fit and healthy.

Work your heart and lungs and keep your muscles and bones strong. Whether you do it alone, in a group, in a gym or outdoors, all movement is really beneficial!



Did you know?

People who are insufficiently active have a 20-30% increased risk of death compared to people who are sufficiently active.

Weight management

Obesity is associated with various health problems, including diabetes, joint issues and heart attacks. In simplest terms, weight management is about calories in versus calories out.

Why do it?

Exercise helps maintain a healthy body weight by burning energy (*calories from the food we consume*). We can do this by getting the heart pumping and working up a bit of a sweat.

Watching what you eat can help to control the “calories in” part of the equation. For weight maintenance, the two should be about the same; if you’re aiming for weight gain, you may need to consume more energy-rich foods; and for weight loss, you may need to eat less calorie-rich foods (*high fat, high sugar*), eat more fruit and veg, and move more to burn more energy.



Top tip

Aim for at least 30 mins a day of moderate intensity activity on 5 days a week, or 150 minutes a week. 10 minutes here and there through the day will also add up to make a positive difference.

Cardiovascular health (Heart, lungs, blood vessels)

Regular activity, especially aerobic activities like running, swimming, and cycling, can improve cardiovascular health.

Why do it?

It helps lower the risk of heart disease, hypertension, and stroke by reducing blood pressure, improving cholesterol levels, and enhancing the function of the heart and blood vessels.

We’re not talking about running a marathon – just something where you are moving enough to get up a bit of huff and puff and build a little heat in your muscles, but you can still maintain a conversation.

Mental health

Physical activity has numerous mental health benefits, including reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression, enhancing mood, and relieving stress. It can also improve cognitive function and boost self-esteem. Simply put – your mind feels clearer after it.

Have more energy and sleep better

Regular physical activity can boost energy and reduce feelings of fatigue, increasing overall vitality. It can also help regulate sleep patterns, making it easier to fall asleep and stay asleep.

Eating Well

Eating and drinking

Eating well is a key step to help nourish our body to keep healthy and stronger for longer. What we eat and drink becomes even more important as we get older, and staying hydrated is essential for how the body functions.

Think of it as putting the right fuel in, not just for energy to do the things we enjoy, but as the building blocks of a strong, resilient and healthy body.

At each meal time try to have:

- Foods rich in starchy carbs and fibre
- Foods rich in protein
- Plenty of fruits and vegetables
- Foods containing calcium for healthy bones

Base meals around starchy food

Starchy foods, like rice or pasta, are a good source of energy. Wholegrain and high-fibre versions are even better, as they help prevent constipation, too.

Eat different sources of protein

You could try alternatives to meat, such as beans, lentils or soya-based meat substitutes. Dairy products such as milk and cheese contain protein, too. They're also a good source of calcium, which helps to keep your bones strong. If you eat meat, limit portion sizes of red meat or poultry, and choose lean cuts of meat or mince.



Top tip

Try to get as many colours into your plate as possible. Eat the rainbow!

Eat fish at least twice a week

Having one portion of white fish (*like cod or shellfish*) and another of oily fish (*like salmon or mackerel*) each week is ideal. Oily fish is rich in vitamin D and a type of fat, Omega-3, that helps reduce the risk of heart disease. Grilling, poaching or baking fish is healthier than frying it. Tinned sardines, tuna and salmon are just as good.

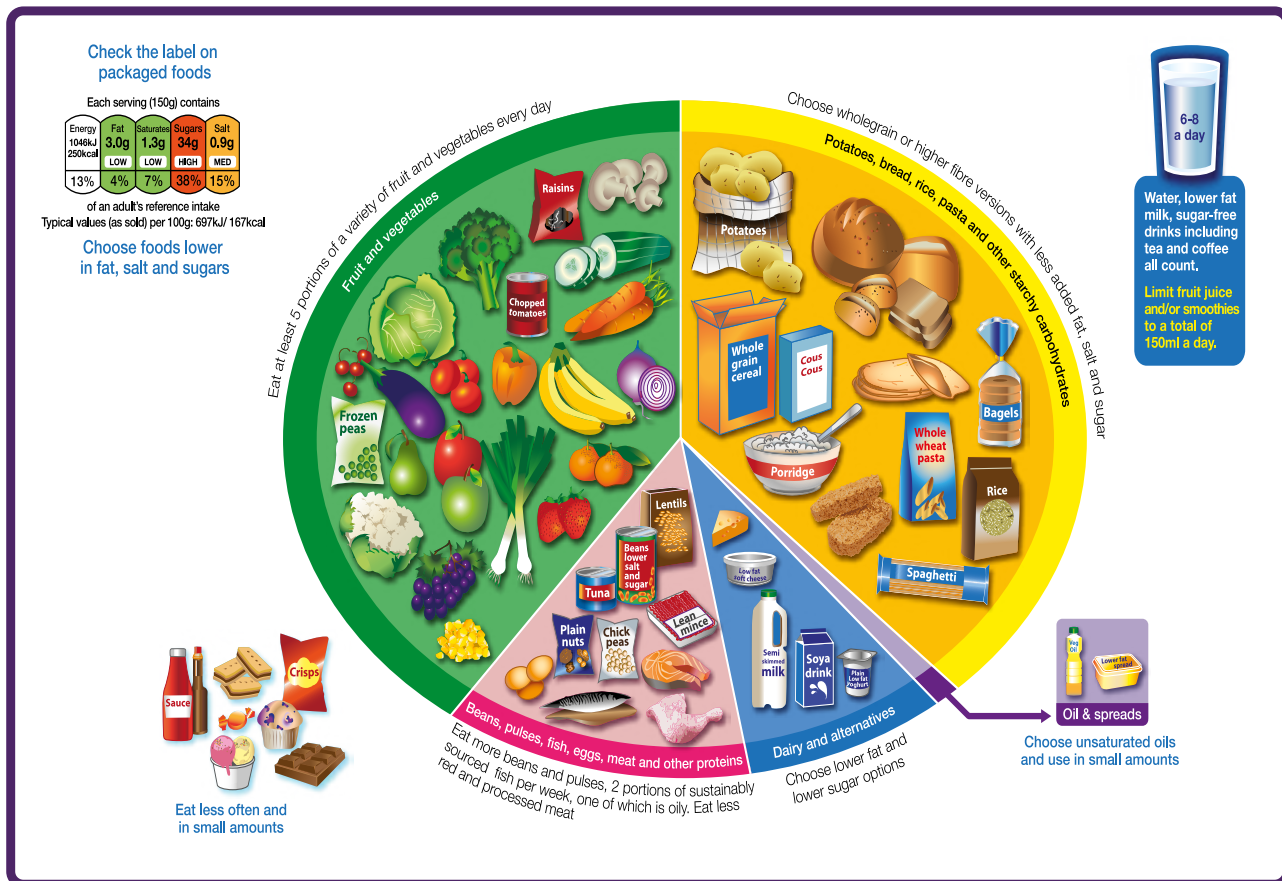
Eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day

Eating plenty of fruit and veg reduces your risk of developing heart disease and certain cancers, like bowel cancer. Frozen, canned or dried fruits and fruit juices all count. Don't be put off if you don't always reach your 'five a day' – two or three portions is better than none. Aim to eat more green leafy veg each day, and try to eat more berries (*frozen are much cheaper than fresh and just as good*).

Drink about six to eight glasses of fluids each day

This doesn't have to be just water. Tea, coffee and low-sugar or sugar-free squash are fine, too. When it's hot, drink a little more to make sure you stay hydrated. Having a glass of water within reach during the daytime will remind you to keep up your fluid intake.

The Eatwell guide



Source: Public Health England in association with the Welsh Government, Food Standards Scotland and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland © Crown copyright 2016

Cut down on foods that are high in salt, fat and sugar

Eating too much salt can increase your risk of high blood pressure and stroke. Look for lower-salt versions of foods where you can. Foods that are high in saturated fat, such as cakes, sausages and cheese, increase cholesterol levels in the blood and raise your risk of heart disease and stroke. Try to see these as a treat rather than as something you'd have day-to-day.

Variety is the spice of life

Include a good range of foods in your diet to help you get all the nutrients you need and to help you to maintain a healthy weight. The Eatwell Guide shows how to get a healthy balance over the course of a day or a week.

If you have special dietary or medical needs, you may wish to speak with your GP or dietitian first.

Did you know?

Only 38% of men consumed 5 or more portions of fruit and vegetables per day in 2019/20.

Tips on a Tipple

Many men enjoy a drink – but alcohol consumption in Northern Ireland is high when compared to other countries.



Did you know?

In Northern Ireland, 350 alcohol-specific deaths were registered in 2021, accounting for 2% of all deaths registered.

Don't ignore these health risks

Drinking can increase your blood pressure and blood cholesterol levels, both of which are major risk factors for heart attacks and strokes.

Long-term alcohol misuse can weaken your immune system, making you more vulnerable to serious infection.

The potential health consequences of excessive alcohol consumption include liver damage, addiction, and other negative effects on your physical and mental health.

Drink in moderation

There is no such thing as a 'safe level of drinking'. For some, 'safe drinking' may mean not drinking at all.

Guidelines recommend that you should have no more than 14 units of alcohol per week and this should be spread over at least three days.

It's also recommended that everyone should have at least two alcohol-free days each week.

Drinking less than this is even better for you.

Know your limits

Know your own tolerance for alcohol and know your limits. Avoid drinking to excess, as this can lead to negative health effects and risky behaviours.

Recommendations

Eat before drinking

Eating a meal before drinking can help slow down the absorption of alcohol in your system, reducing its effects.

Alternate with water

When you're drinking, alternate alcoholic beverages with water or non-alcoholic drinks. This can help to pace yourself and reduce the risk of dehydration.

Never binge drink

Avoid binge drinking. This is when you consume a large amount of alcohol in a short period of time. Binge drinking can lead to serious health issues and dangerous situations.

Take a break

Try not being in a round when you're out with mates and instead drink at your own pace.

Mind Fitness

You've heard the expression 'mind over matter', haven't you? We're all aware of the things we can do for physical fitness and in the same way, mind fitness can be built up and optimised.



Did you know?

Around 1 in 5 adults in Northern Ireland experienced mental health issues in the previous year.

(2021/22 NI health survey)



What is it?

There are ways to maintain and improve your mental and emotional well-being that enhance our ability to cope with stress, pressure and everyday worries.

Feeling low, in bad form, down in the dumps, stressed out, can't be bothered, don't fancy going out, gone a bit quiet... all of these can be signs we need to look after our mental wellbeing.

For some reason, many men seem to think of 'mental health' (*which everyone has and needs to attend to on an ongoing basis*) as 'mental illness' (*a condition that may require medical treatment*). For many men, this can be a reason to quickly change the conversation to another topic!

Let's think about our 'mental health' in terms of 'mind fitness' ie. something that will go up and down, change over time, and (most importantly) something that we can exercise a degree of control over - if we choose to. **It's ok not to feel ok.**

Stress

If you're feeling stressed:

- **Talk to someone that you trust:**

It can be easy to underestimate the value of talking to friends and family.

- **Take time out:**

If you can, try to get away from the cause of the stressful situation, even for a short period.

- **Learn to accept what you cannot change:**

Know that, at times, you simply have to let some things go.

- **Breathe:**

By controlling your breath, you can also control your heart-rate, making you feel more calm. Practice deep breathing and relaxation techniques - it really works!

Mind Fitness



Focus

Try being fully present in the moment, whether you're eating, walking, or working. We all think multi-tasking is a skill but the reality is that it can really stress the brain! Focusing on just one thing at a time can reduce anxiety and enhance your ability to manage stress.

Exercise

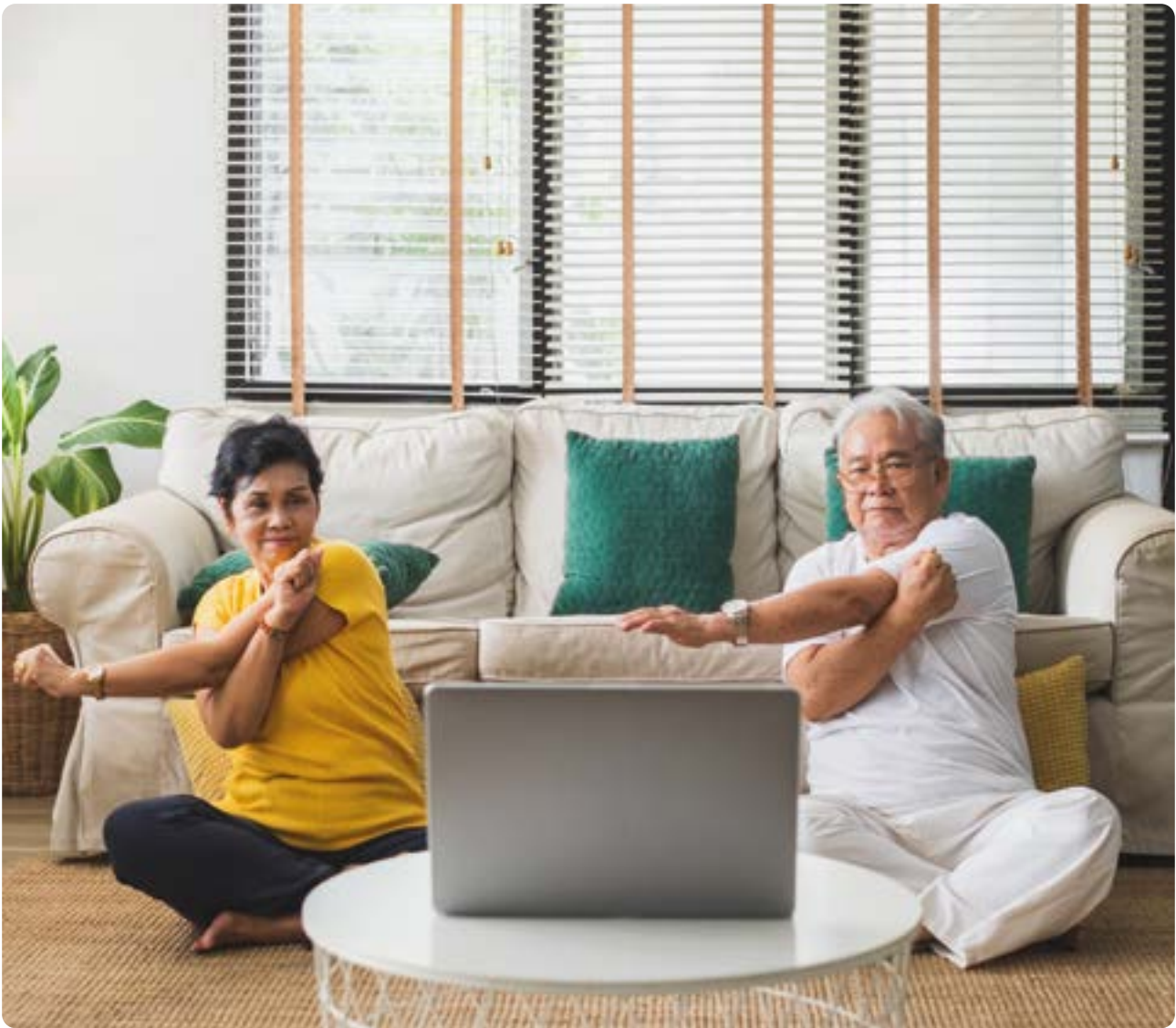
Regular physical activity has been shown to have a positive impact on mental fitness. Exercise releases endorphins (*feel-good hormones*), which can improve mood and reduce anxiety. The more you exercise, the better you feel. If you can make fresh air part of this, even better – being outdoors is great for calm, perspective and an escape from the noise of life.

Diet

What we eat and drink plays a crucial role in mental health. Consuming a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains can provide essential nutrients for cognitive function. It's time to fuel your body and your brain right. Sadly, life can't be all about burgers and pizza.

Social connections

Catch-up with a mate every now and then. Building and maintaining healthy relationships with friends and family can have an impact on your mental fitness. Humans are meant to be pack animals – we do better with others! Social interactions can reduce stress and improve emotional resilience.



Sleep

Quality sleep is a vital element for our health and well-being that is badly underrated. Try to make sure that you get 7-9 hours of uninterrupted sleep per night – and get off your phone and devices before you go to bed!

Meditation

It's not as airy-fairy as it sounds. Meditation can improve mindfulness, reduce stress, and enhance mental clarity.

It involves focusing your attention on the present moment, which can help calm the mind and improve cognitive function. There are lots of videos online - give it a go.

Continuous learning

Expand your mind! Engage in activities that challenge your brain, such as learning a new skill or hobby. Lifelong learning can help maintain cognitive function as you age (*it's good for keeping the brain sparky*).

Positive thinking

If you're constantly thinking negative thoughts or feeling weighed down, this is bound to affect how you approach everyday tasks. Instead, cultivate a positive mindset and practice gratitude – what are you grateful for today?

Can you list three things, no matter how small? Doing this daily can improve your overall outlook and emotional well-being.

Sleep – Invest in Rest

Alongside exercise and nutrition, good sleep is one of the most important ingredients for our health and wellbeing.





Get quality sleep

Sleep is important to our brain health, our mood and our ability to cope with everyday life. Sleep patterns change naturally as we age, becoming less deep, and we might wake up more often during the night or earlier in the morning.

Sometimes we sacrifice sleep to fit in everything we want to do in our day. But sleep affects both mental and physical health - it's vital to our wellbeing. When we're tired, we can't function at our best. Sleep helps us think more clearly, have quicker reflexes, and focus better.

Life events can be difficult to cope with; changes in our health, new caring responsibilities, or financial worries are a few examples. These changes can create stress in our mind and body, making it harder to relax and rest. Relaxing and resting are both important for our physical and mental health.

A good night's sleep

While we should aim for seven to eight hours of sleep per day, the quality of our sleep is just as important as the quantity; we call these factors "sleep hygiene" and they can help us to sleep well.

Top tips

- Get out in the fresh air during the day.
- Move more during the day to keep rest and sleep cycles on track.
- Minimise any napping, and never longer than 20 minutes if you have to at all.
- Reduce caffeine and alcohol intake and quit smoking.
- Don't eat too late in the evening.
- Keep a regular routine for going to bed & for waking up, 7 days a week.
- Have a peaceful, quiet space to sleep and aim for complete darkness.
- Start winding down 90 minutes before you aim to go to sleep.
- Disconnect from devices like phones, iPads, laptops before going to bed.
- Practice breathing exercises to help you relax to get to sleep.

Get Connected

As human beings, connecting with others is part of the natural medicine our brain needs to feel good. Put simply, it's good to talk.



Everybody needs somebody

Having a conversation with an old friend or family member is a good way to relieve some of life's pressures.

The support and connection we have with someone who knows us, beyond just being passing acquaintances, is truly invaluable for feeling we have a purpose, that we matter, and that we can play an important role in others' lives too.

Relationships can be complex and sometimes challenging, particularly as we get older and our circle may shrink.

It's more important in later life than ever, to nurture existing relationships, to rekindle old connections, to make peace wherever we can, and to find ways of creating new friendships.

The World Health Organisation states that the health impact of loneliness is the equivalent of smoking a packet of cigarettes a day. Loneliness is not just a state of mind, so wherever possible, try to find ways to connect with others like joining a club or a Men's Shed.



Top tip

Remember that all healthy relationships need attention, acceptance, appreciation, affection and allowing.

Fix a falling out

What if we fall out with people we care about? Life is short...how do you fix it?

Conflict can be resolved if both parties can be respectful and listen to each other. Make sure that you listen, be open and honest, and always try to reach an agreement.

Listen

Let the person know that you will listen to them and their perspectives. Open lines of communication at the right time and let the other person know that you will listen to them and their perspectives.

See both sides

Try to see the situation from their point of view – and remember that people often feel differently about the same event.

- “What happened?”
- “What were you feeling?”

Actively listen and then summarise what you have heard:

- ‘So what you are telling me is...’

Show understanding

Help the person understand the situation by asking about what happened before, or what may have affected their behaviour.

- “It sounds like you felt... What made you feel that way?”
- “What happened before it started?”



Reflect

Help the person see how their behaviour affected others.

- “Who else do you think has been affected/upset/ harmed by your actions?”
- “When I heard/saw..., I felt...because I...”

Problem solve

Help the person decide how to make things better. Lead them to a resolution they can feel good about, even if it is a consequence.

- “What can you do to make things better?”
- “What would you like to see happen?”

Create an agreement

This may be verbal, a checklist or even a written letter or contract. Be sure to follow through on your own promises.

- Based on our talk, I heard that you will... I will also...”
- “Can we agree on this plan?”

Did you know?

1 in every 20 adults report feeling chronic loneliness. (NISRA 2021)

Scams and Fraud

There are plenty of criminals out there who want to cheat us out of our hard-earned cash. We don't like to believe it, but we are all vulnerable to fraud and scams in both the digital and physical worlds.

Don't get cheated

Scams are increasingly sophisticated and are designed to outsmart even the most cautious among us!

Scams can have significant financial consequences and can also lead to a loss of confidence. **There are some tips, on the next page, to help you to stay alert to the risks.**

Stay informed

Try to be aware of the latest in-person and online scams. There are plenty of people out there who want to part us from our money.

Many scammers will pretend they are asking for information to protect you from a risk – they're very devious!

Check who you're talking to

This might sound stupid, but it can be easy to forget to do this in the heat of the moment. Confirm the legitimacy of individuals, businesses, or organisations before sharing personal or financial information, whether it's in-person, at your door, on the phone, or online.

Keep personal information safe

Avoid disclosing sensitive details like National Insurance numbers, bank account information, or credit card details both in-person and online. No bank or company will ever, ever ask you to do that.

Trust your instincts

If something seems too good to be true or feels suspicious, err on the side of caution and when in doubt, avoid it altogether.

Protect passwords

Create strong, unique passwords for all your online accounts, using a combination of letters, numbers, and symbols.

Beware of impersonation

You might think you know who you're talking to – but you might not! Verify the identity of anyone claiming to be a family member, government official, or financial institution, whether it's in-person or online.

Some scammers will pre-empt your suspicions by giving you a phone number to call in order to verify their identity, which will also be fake. Never use the number given by an unsolicited caller – look it up for yourself to ensure you're really calling the bank / energy supplier etc and not the scammer.

Did you know?

Around £19 million is lost to scams each year in Northern Ireland.
(Scamwise)



Top tip

Never send money to anyone you don't know or trust, whether in the UK or abroad, or use methods of payment you're not comfortable with. Never give banking or personal details to anyone you don't know or trust. If in doubt, tell someone else and check it out.



Keep an eye on your finances

Regularly review your bank and credit card statements for any unauthorised or suspicious transactions and report them immediately.

Verify charitable donations

Before making charitable contributions, ensure the legitimacy of the organisation, whether you're donating in-person or online.

Stay updated

Keep your computer, smartphone, and apps updated to patch security vulnerabilities and protect against malware / viruses.

Seek knowledge

Attend workshops, seminars, and outreach programs on online and offline safety, and seek guidance from tech-savvy friends and family members.

Report any suspicion

If you suspect fraudulent activity, report it to local authorities, contact Action Fraud in the UK for online fraud, and report in-person scams to the appropriate agencies.

Keep family and friends informed

Keep your family and friends informed about your online and offline activities, so they can provide support and guidance in case of suspicious situations. Scammers will often tell you to keep their interaction secret to protect your identity. Don't believe it and keep someone close informed on anything money-related.

Adjust privacy settings

Set privacy settings on your social media accounts to limit access to personal information from unknown individuals to prevent unsolicited messages from scammers.

Financial Tips

Wonga, cash, moolah – whatever you call it, you want to make sure that you have it when you get older.



Top tip

Age NI's benefits calculator will provide an estimate of what benefits you could be entitled to.

Did you know?

Northern Ireland's lowest-earning households have seen their discretionary income fall by 47.2% over the last year (from £35.25 to £18.63). They now have less than £19 per week to spend after their bills and living expenses.



Money, money, money

Money worries can be a big source of stress and worry in later life, especially if your personal or health circumstances change and you are on a fixed pension income.

Ask the experts

One of Age NI's most important services is providing expert advice to older people, and supporting them to access all of the financial payments and benefits to which they are entitled.

If you are over pension age, you could be entitled to benefits you haven't been able to claim before. These can help with basic day-to-day needs, or give you a bit of freedom to do the things you enjoy.

Last year, Age NI helped thousands of older people to put more money in their pockets, by identifying well over £1million in unclaimed benefits. However you use the money, it's yours and you are entitled to it.

Even if you don't think you are entitled, you might be pleasantly surprised. Even a small entitlement like Pension Credit may not seem worthwhile claiming, but it can act as a gateway, opening up other payments, such as cost of living or winter fuel payments. It's well worth getting a check.

The average successful claim supported through the Age NI advice line amounts to £2,500 per year. Some open up much greater sums.

The Age NI advice line is available free of charge, Monday to Friday 9am-5pm.

Call 0808 808 7575.

i-Connect



i-connect – The Good Vibrations Online Hub

Access to good quality information is vital and that's exactly what you will find at i-Connect – the Good Vibrations online hub. It's a one stop shop – here you will find resources and information on a range of topics; tips and tools that can help you look after yourself and signposting to support that is available in your community.

Resources

i-Connect is packed full of useful resources. From alcohol to anxiety, self-esteem to money worries, a handy A-Z guide will provide you with useful information about a range of topics related to mental health and wellbeing.

The hub also has a range of self-help tools. With the help of some of the Good Vibration partners, we have created a media library, filled with videos and podcasts to inspire you to be active, learn new skills and take notice of the world around you.

Interactive

The hub features several interactive elements, including a mood and sleep tracker, as well as a goal-setting programme linked to the Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing model, which are built into your own unique dashboard.

The dashboard offers a space to bookmark your information, making it easy to dip in and out when you need it. You'll be able to track your progress and set the weekly targets that you want to achieve.

Support services

The i-Connect services page will help you find support available in your local communities. With one simple click, you can discover where and how you can seek additional help in your area.

Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing

The Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing are tried and tested pillars to help us feel good. Focusing on the activities and tasks that help us to Be Active, Take Notice, Connect, Keep Learning and Give are suggested as ways to keep us on track.

It might be as simple as going for a walk or phoning a friend you haven't spoken to in a while. i-Connect provides a list of websites and resources that can inspire you with suggestions to get you started.



Sign-up at ageni.org/i-connect and use the pin **GOODVIBRATIONS** to unlock our online well-being platform.

Useful Contacts

- **NHS Health Information:**
www.nhs.uk/
- **Cancer Focus:**
www.cancerfocusni.org/
- **Action Cancer:**
www.actioncancer.org/info-hub
www.actioncancer.org/services-info/skin-cancer-detection/
- **Bowel Screening:**
www.nidirect.gov.uk/bowel-screening
- **Care in the Sun:**
www.careinthesun.org
- **Spot Cancer Early and Reduce Your Risk: Manual for Men (Irish Cancer Society):**
www.tinyurl.com/25kn9jrp
- **Marie Keating Foundation:**
www.mariekeating.ie/get-men-talking
- **Northern Ireland Men's Sheds (Groundwork):**
www.groundwork.org.uk/supporting-mens-sheds-in-northern-ireland/
- **Prostate cancer:**
www.truenorth.movember.com
- **Testicular cancer:**
www.nutsandbolts.movember.com
- **Healthy Eating (FSA):**
www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/industry-specific-advice/nutrition-in-northern-ireland
- **Relationships (Relate NI):**
www.relateni.org
- **Lifeline:**
www.lifelinehelpline.info
- **The Samaritans:**
www.samaritans.org
- **NHS - Eat Well:**
www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well
- **NI Chest Heart and Stroke:**
www.nichs.org.uk/information/risk-factors/diet
- **NI Direct - Healthy Eating:**
www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/healthy-lives/healthy-eating
- **Safefood:**
www.safefood.net/healthy-eating
- **Men's Health And Wellbeing**
www.mhfi.org



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