

Reduce your risk of developing dementia





Did you know?

Getting older **does not** mean that you will get dementia.

You **will not** necessarily get dementia because a family member has.

You can take action to lower your risk of developing dementia.

It is never too early or too late to **take action**.

What is dementia?

The word 'dementia' describes a group of symptoms that include memory loss and difficulties with thinking, problem-solving or language. It may also involve changes in mood, perception or behaviour.

There are many different causes of dementia, and many different types, for example Alzheimer's or vascular dementia.

To find out more, including symptoms, visit www.alzheimers.org.uk

Reducing the risk

Although there are some risk factors that cannot be changed, the good news is that research shows that it is possible to reduce your likelihood of developing dementia. This involves making some changes to help keep your body healthy and prevent damage to your brain. This can be useful for people of any age.

This guide will give you information about some of the risk factors. It will also make you aware of local support and information that will help you to take action to reduce your chances of getting dementia. If you are worried about yourself or someone else, you should seek advice from a healthcare professional.



Look after your hearing

Your risk of getting dementia is increased if you experience hearing loss and don't take action.

Often, managing hearing loss works best when you start doing it early on. This means protecting your hearing from a young age. For example, you can avoid listening to loud noises for long periods, and wear ear protection when necessary.

It's important to get your hearing tested.

Always see a GP first if:

- you also have other symptoms, like earache or discharge – this could be something easily treatable like an earwax build-up or ear infection
- you have sudden hearing loss in one ear

There are several ways you can get your hearing tested.

How to get an NHS hearing test

You can get a free hearing test on the NHS. A GP may refer you to a hearing specialist (audiologist) who can do the test.

It could take a few weeks to see a specialist, so it might be quicker to get tested somewhere else, like at a large pharmacy or opticians. This is often free and there are several modern hearing aids for free available on the NHS.



Why not take a free online hearing test to check your hearing?

You can take the test on The Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID) website - www.rnid.org.uk

This can tell you if you need to have a face-to-face hearing test and give you access to advice on what to do next.

Make sure that you use and maintain your hearing aids if you need them!

Stop smoking

Stopping or avoiding smoking can lower your risk of getting dementia.

Smoking does a lot of harm to the circulation of blood around the body, particularly the blood vessels in the brain, as well as the heart and lungs, and increases the risk of cancer, cardiovascular disease and other diseases.

Stopping smoking is the best thing you can do for your health, and the health benefits start straight away.

It's never too late to quit smoking. However, the earlier you stop, the lower your risk of getting dementia.

You are four times more likely to stop smoking using an NHS Stop Smoking Service than if you try to quit alone.

Second hand smoke (sometimes called passive smoking) may also increase the risk of dementia in later life.



Look after your mental health



Everyone can feel low sometimes. Symptoms of a general low mood may include feeling:

- sad
- anxious or panicky
- more tired than usual or being unable to sleep
- angry or frustrated
- low on confidence or self-esteem
- not wanting to take part in the activities you used to enjoy

A low mood often gets better after a few days or weeks.

Symptoms of depression

If you have a low mood that lasts 2 weeks or more, it could be a sign of depression.

Other symptoms of depression may include:

- not getting any enjoyment out of life
- feeling hopeless
- not being able to concentrate on everyday things
- having suicidal thoughts or thoughts about harming yourself

What can you do to help yourself?

If feeling low is affecting your life, there are things you can try that may help.

You can improve a low mood by making small changes in your life, for example by talking about your feelings to a friend, family member or counsellor. **You could also contact Samaritans (call 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.org) if you need someone to talk to.**

Why not try the Five Ways to Wellbeing?

1. **Take notice** - Take time for yourself, notice things around you and savour the moment
2. **Connect** - Make time to connect with friends and family to help enrich your day
3. **Be active** - Being active makes you feel good. Get moving - dance, sing, step outside - go for a walk, a run or cycle
4. **Keep learning** - Learning something new can be fun, make you feel good and build your confidence
5. **Give** - Acts of kindness, helping others or even volunteering can make you feel happier

Further support is available if the things you're trying yourself are not helping. A list of sources of help is provided at the end of this handbook. If you are feeling suicidal, you should contact a health professional.

Stay connected with others and engage your brain

Engaging in mental wellbeing or social activities may help to build up your brain's ability to cope with disease, relieve stress and improve your mood.

This means doing these activities may help to delay, or even prevent, dementia from developing. Find activities you enjoy that challenge your brain and do them regularly. This could be puzzles or crosswords, but there are also many other activities you could do. Anything that engages your mind, processes information and develops your thinking skills is good for you.

Social activities are good for the brain, making them a great way to reduce your risk of getting dementia. This includes interacting with other people online as well as in person. This means it's important to try to keep in touch with the people who matter to you, such as friends and family. Having a conversation with someone can also exercise a wide range of your mental skills.

Why not try?

- adult education or learning
- arts and crafts (especially in groups)
- playing a musical instrument or singing
- volunteering
- doing 'brainteasers', such as puzzles, crosswords or quizzes
- playing card games, chess or board games
- reading books, or becoming a member of a book club
- creative writing or keeping a diary
- learning a new language



Protect your head

Traumatic brain injuries are caused by a blow or jolt to the head – especially when the person is knocked unconscious.

This can start a process in the brain where the substances that cause Alzheimer's disease build up around the injured area.

Brain injuries are mostly caused by:

- Road traffic accidents
- An object accidentally hitting your head
- Some sports

Try to wear protective headgear in situations where there is a higher-than-normal risk of head injury.



Keep an eye on your blood pressure

High blood pressure, especially during midlife or later life, can increase the risk of developing dementia. As you get older, it is important to be aware of what your blood pressure is.

The only way of knowing whether you have high blood pressure is to have a blood pressure test.

You can get your blood pressure tested at a number of places, including:

- at your GP surgery
- at some pharmacies
- in some workplaces



These lifestyle changes can help lower and even prevent high blood pressure:

- reduce the amount of salt you eat
- reduce added sugar
- have a generally healthy diet
- limit alcohol intake
- lose weight if you're overweight
- exercise regularly
- reduce caffeine intake
- stop smoking

There's more information about some of these lifestyle factors in other sections of this guide.

Blood pressure should be below 140/90 mmHg for those aged below 80 and 150/90 mmHg for those aged 80+.

Please note that the ideal blood pressure range may vary dependent on individual health conditions.

Move more and move often

Keeping active is good for your heart, circulation, weight and mental wellbeing and can reduce your risk of developing dementia.

Adults should aim for at least 150 minutes per week of moderate activity (with increased breathing but still being able to talk), or at least 75 minutes per week of vigorous activity (with fast breathing and difficulty talking), or an equivalent combination of both.

Move more, sit less - start slowly and build up to being active for 30 minutes every day. Just 10 minutes of activity at a time will benefit your health.

You can choose physical activities that you might enjoy and find one that works for you.



Why not try?

- Walking
- Swimming
- Dancing
- Signing up to a gym (Leisure Membership)
- Taking part in an exercise class
- Cycling
- Running

Or start with small changes like:

- Build walking into your daily living routine by walking to the shops
- Take the stairs and not the lift
- Leave your car at home when taking local journeys
- If your job involves lots of sitting down, make sure you take regular breaks to move around



Reduce your risk of type 2 diabetes

Type 2 diabetes is a condition that causes a person's blood sugar (glucose) level to become too high and can increase your risk of getting dementia.

The good news is that you can reduce your chances of developing type 2 diabetes by making the following changes:

1. Reaching a healthier weight
2. Increasing your activity level
3. Stopping smoking
4. Choosing higher fibre foods
5. Eating less processed meats, pastries, cakes and full sugar drinks
6. Aiming for at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day
7. Cutting back on alcohol

If you do have type 2 diabetes, it can be managed through making changes to food choices, being active and achieving a healthy body weight. Research has now shown for some people that type 2 diabetes can be put into remission through weight loss. This is more likely to occur within the first 6 years after diagnosis.

Limit your alcohol intake

Excessive alcohol consumption is linked with brain changes and dementia. Limiting your alcohol consumption can reduce your risk of developing dementia.

Alcohol guidelines



Keep the amount of alcohol you drink within the recommended limits of no more than 14 units per week for both men and women – that's about a bottle and a half of wine or six pints of beer.

If you do drink as much as 14 units per week, it's best to spread this evenly over 3 days or more.

If you are pregnant, the safest approach is not to drink alcohol at all, to keep risks to your baby to a minimum.

If you have any concerns about your alcohol consumption, visit www.alcoholchange.org.uk or speak to your GP.

How can you drink sensibly?

- **Make a plan**
Before you start drinking, set a limit on how much you're going to drink.
- **Set a budget**
Only take a fixed amount of money to spend on alcohol.
- **Let others know**
If you let your friends and family know you're cutting down and it's important to you - you could get support from them.
- **Track your units**
Cut back a little each day. You could try a drink tracker app to easily check how many units you are drinking.
- **Make it a smaller one**
You can still enjoy a drink, but go for smaller sizes. Try bottled beer instead of pints, or a small glass of wine instead of a large one.
- **Have a lower-strength drink**
Cut down the alcohol by swapping strong beers or wines for ones with a lower strength (ABV in %) or a no alcohol version. You'll find this information on the bottle.
- **Stay hydrated**
Have a glass of water before you have alcohol and alternate alcoholic drinks with water or other non alcoholic drinks.
- **Take a break**
Make sure you have several drink-free days each week.



Maintain a healthy weight

People living with obesity can have a higher risk of developing dementia.

How to tell if you're living with obesity

The most widely used method to check if you're a healthy weight is by finding out your body mass index (BMI). BMI is a measure of whether you're a healthy weight for your height. You can also use the NHS BMI healthy weight calculator to work out your BMI. Reducing abdominal obesity or waist size also matters.

There are things you can do to achieve and maintain a healthy weight:

- Eat a balanced diet, including plenty of fruit and vegetables.
- Join a local weight loss group or ask to be referred to your local dietetic weight management service.
- Increase your physical activity or movement.

You may need to check with your GP before you take up more strenuous exercise.

Losing weight can be challenging. Support is available from trained health professionals who can help you change the way you think about food and eating. Speak to your GP if you think this may be useful to you.

Small changes can help, such as:

- Reducing sugar and sugary foods in your diet
- Reducing or eliminating ultra-processed food
- Eating fewer fatty foods and filling up on fruit and vegetables/salads
- Using whole grain products, like grain bread
- Including pulses like lentils or chickpeas to bulk out meals and increasing fibre intake
- Drinking plenty of sugar free fluids – water if possible



Look after your eyes

Sight loss can be linked to dementia and treatment of some eye conditions may lower your risk of dementia. Sight loss can also make diagnosing dementia more difficult.

Regular eye examinations provide an assessment of your vision and can help to detect eye conditions. Many eye conditions can be treated if they are found early enough, so don't delay getting your eyes tested.

It is important to get your eyes tested regularly:

- You can book an eye examination at your local optometrist.
- NHS eye examinations are available for certain groups - find out if you're eligible for an NHS sight test here: www.nhs.wales/sa/eye-care-wales
- If you have any concerns about your eyes, see an optometrist straight away. The optometrist will advise you if you are eligible for a free eye health examination.

A healthy lifestyle, including a nutritious diet and regular exercise, will also help your eyes stay as healthy as possible. It is also recommended to protect your eyes from the sun when outdoors.



Further Information and Support

NHS – Find out more about preventing dementia

www.nhs.uk/conditions/dementia/about-dementia/prevention/

Look after your hearing	
Cardiff and Vale University Health Board Audiology Services (Note: new patients will need to contact their GP (or other health professional within the hospital) for a referral to the Audiology department)	www.cavuhb.nhs.wales/our-services/audiology Tel: 029 2184 3179 Email: audiology.helpline.CAV@wales.nhs.uk
Eargym Hearing Training App	www.eargym.world/
Online hearing test (RNID)	www.rnid.org.uk/information-and-support/take-online-hearing-check
Stop smoking	
Help Me Quit	www.helpmequit.wales Tel: 0800 085 2219 Text HMQ to 80818 Email: helpmequit@wales.nhs.uk
NHS Live Well – Quit Smoking	www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking
Patients at University Hospital of Wales (UHW) and University Hospital Llandough (UHL) - refer to the in-house smoking cessation service	Tel: 029 2074 3582 (UHW) Tel: 029 2071 5420 (UHL)
Pharmacies	Support to stop smoking is offered by many pharmacies. Ask at your local pharmacy for more information about quitting smoking.

Smoke Free (app)	www.smokefreeapp.com
Look after your mental health	
ACTivate your life - free online self-help course designed to help you improve your mental health and wellbeing ACTivate Your Life - Public Health Wales (nhs.wales)	www.phw.nhs.wales/services-and-teams/activate-your-life
C.A.L.L. Helpline (Community Advice & Listening Line) - Offers emotional support and information/literature on mental health and related matters to the people of Wales.	Freephone 0800 132 737 Or text help to 81066
Cardiff Mind	www.cardiffmind.org Tel: 029 2040 2040 Email: admin@cardiffmind.org
Mind in the Vale of Glamorgan	www.mindinthevale.org.uk Tel: 014 4673 0792 Email: admin@mindinthevale.org.uk
Cardiff & Vale Action for Mental Health (cavamh)	www.cavamh.org.uk Tel: 029 2022 2000 Email: mail@cavamh.org.uk
Every Mind Matters (NHS)	www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters
Mindfulness	www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/tips-and-support/mindfulness
Psychological Therapies Hub (CAVUHB)	www.cavuhb.nhs.wales/our-services/mental-health/our-services1/psychological-therapy-hub

<p>Reading Well for Mental Health (Books on Prescription)</p>	<p>Available at all Cardiff Hubs and Libraries and all Vale of Glamorgan Libraries</p> <p>www.libraries.wales/library-services-activities/health-wellbeing/reading-well-books-on-prescription-in-wales</p>
<p>Samaritans</p>	<p>Call: 116 123 Need support in Welsh? Tel: 0808 164 0123 Email: jo@samaritans.org</p>
<p>Wellbeing Support Service (1:1 mentoring) - support to help people connect with Cardiff Hubs to improve their wellbeing</p>	<p>www.cardiffhubs.co.uk/wellbeing-support-service Tel: 029 2087 1071 Email: Wellbeingteam@cardiff.gov.uk</p>
<p>Wellbeing Matters Service (Vale of Glamorgan) - connecting citizens with community, charity and voluntary support</p>	<p>www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/living/social_care/Health-and-Wellbeing/Wellbeing-Matters-Service.aspx Tel: 01446 741706/01446 704138</p>
<p>Stay connected with others and engage your brain</p>	
<p>Adult Learning Cardiff</p>	<p>www.adultlearningcardiff.co.uk</p>
<p>The Vale of Glamorgan Adult Community Learning Service</p>	<p>www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/working/adult_and_community_learning/Adult-Community-Learning.aspx</p>
<p>Cardiff Hubs and Libraries</p>	<p>www.cardiffhubs.co.uk</p>
<p>Vale of Glamorgan Libraries</p>	<p>www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/enjoying/Libraries/Libraries.aspx</p>
<p>FAN Groups</p>	<p>www.thefancharity.org/find-a-fan-meeting</p>

<p>Wellbeing Support Service - support to help people connect with others</p>	<p>www.cardiffhubs.co.uk/wellbeing-support-service Tel: 029 2087 1071 Email: Wellbeingteam@cardiff.gov.uk</p>
<p>Wellbeing Matters Service (Vale of Glamorgan) – connecting citizens with community, charity and voluntary support</p>	<p>www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/living/social_care/Health-and-Wellbeing/Wellbeing-Matters-Service.aspx Tel: 01446 741706 / 01446 704138</p>
<p>Keep an eye on your blood pressure</p>	
<p>Check your heart age (NHS)</p>	<p>www.nhs.uk/health-assessment-tools/calculate-your-heart-age</p>
<p>Move more and more often</p>	
<p>Being Physically Active</p>	<p>www.cavuhb.nhs.wales/patient-advice/local-public-health-team/key-areas-of-focus/making-every-contact-count-mecc/being-physically-active</p>
<p>Cardiff Hubs (various activities)</p>	<p>www.cardiffhubs.co.uk/events</p>
<p>Cardiff Parks</p>	<p>www.outdoorcardiff.com/parks</p>
<p>Vale of Glamorgan Parks and Gardens</p>	<p>www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/enjoying/Parks-and-Gardens/Parks-and-Gardens.aspx</p>
<p>Dewis Cymru (lists local clubs/groups)</p>	<p>www.dewis.wales/home</p>
<p>Elderfit (fitness for older people)</p>	<p>www.elderfit.co.uk/group-sessions Tel: 07731 382224 Email: gareth.elderfit@gmail.com</p>
<p>Keeping Cardiff Moving (active travel)</p>	<p>www.keepingcardiffmoving.co.uk/home</p>

Keeping Me Well (CAVUHB)	www.keepingmewell.com/living-well-leading-a-healthy-lifestyle/physical-activity
Leisure centres, gyms & swimming pools in Cardiff	www.better.org.uk/leisure-centre/cardiff
Vale of Glamorgan Leisure Centres	www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/enjoying/Leisure-Centres/Leisure-Centres.aspx
Make Your Move (Support to get active)	www.makeyourmove.org.uk Email: sportcardiff@cardiffmet.ac.uk
Move More, Eat Well	www.movemoreeatwell.co.uk Email: movemoreeatwell@wales.nhs.uk
NHS Fitness Studio - Exercise videos	www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio
parkrun	www.parkrun.org.uk
Race Equality First (Activities for people from ethnic minorities)	www.raceequalityfirst.org/sport-physical-activity Tel: 029 2048 6207
Sport Cardiff	www.sportcardiff.co.uk Tel: 029 20205286 Email: sportcardiff@cardiffmet.ac.uk
Vale of Glamorgan Healthy Living Team	www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/enjoying/Sports-and-Play/Meet-The-Team.aspx Tel: 014 4670 4793
Stay Steady (Falls Prevention)	www.gvs.wales/news/stay-steady-clinic-cardiff-and-vale-university-health-board
Strength and Balance Exercise Classes	www.cavuhb.nhs.wales/our-services/diabetes/keeping-well-type-2-diabetes/keeping-active-with-type-2-diabetes/strength-and-balance-exercise-classes

Walking in Vale of Glamorgan	www.valeways.org.uk Tel: 014 4674 9000 Email: info@valeways.org.uk
Walking, orienteering and cycle trails in Cardiff	www.outdoorcardiff.com/trails-across-cardiff
Reduce your risk of type 2 diabetes	
Please refer to support under 'Maintain a healthy weight', 'Move more and more often' and 'Limit your alcohol intake'	
Limit your alcohol intake	
Alcohol Change	www.alcoholchange.org.uk Tel: 020 3907 8480 Email: contact@alcoholchange.org.uk
Cardiff and Vale Drug and Alcohol Service (CAVDAS)	Tel: 0300 300 7000 Email: info@cavdas.com
DAN 24/7 (the free Wales Drug and Alcohol Helpline)	Tel: 0808 808 2234 www.dan247.org.uk
Drink Free Days (app)	www.nhs.uk/better-health/drink-less
Recovery Cymru	www.recoverycymru.org.uk/ Tel: 079 4485 1050 Email: info@recoverycymru.org.uk
Maintain a healthy weight	
Eat Well (NHS)	www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well
Food Cardiff - Community Fridges, Pantries, Buying Clubs and Co-ops etc	www.foodcardiff.com
Food Vale	www.foodvale.org

Food Facts (BDA)	www.bda.uk.com/food-health/food-facts.html
Healthy Start Vouchers (If you're more than 10 weeks pregnant or have a child under 4, you may be entitled to get help to buy healthy food and milk.)	www.healthystart.nhs.uk
Healthy Weight, Healthy You	www.healthyweight.wales
Keeping Me Well – Eating Well (CAVUHB)	www.keepingmewell.com/living-well-leading-a-healthy-lifestyle/eating-well
Move More, Eat Well	www.movemoreeatwell.co.uk
NHS Wales BMI healthy weight calculator	www.111.wales.nhs.uk/livewell/bmicalculator
NHS Food Scanner (app)	www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/food-facts/nhs-food-scanner-app
NHS Healthier Families	www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/food-facts
Nutrition Skills for Life	www.nutritionskillsforlife.com
Look after your eyes	
Eye Care Wales	www.nhs.wales/sa/eye-care-wales/
Sight Life	www.sightlife.wales Tel: 029 2039 8900 Email: ask@sightlife.wales

*Please note – if you are concerned about your own health, or someone else's, you should seek advice from a GP.

www.dementiafriendlycardiff.co.uk



www.dementiafriendlyvale.com

