



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Dementia

Reduce your risk in 6 steps

**Dont wait, act now – you're never too young
to reduce the risk**





newid am dds
Bwyta'n ddid – Sgwad mwy – Bwy'n hiraeth
change 4 life
Eat well – Move more – Live longer



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What is dementia?

Dementia is a term used to describe a progressive loss of the powers of the brain.

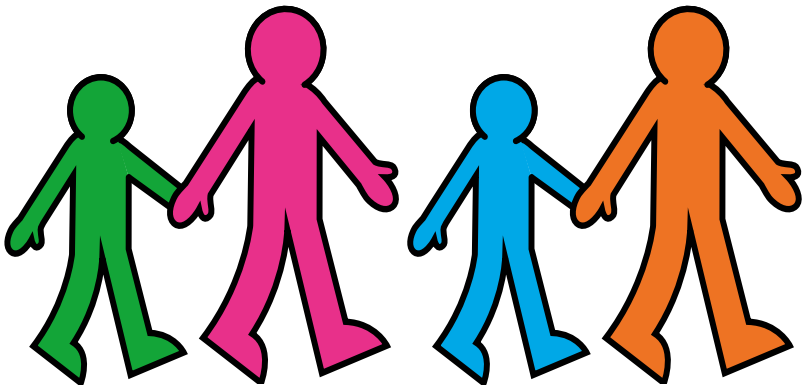
The most common kinds of dementia are Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia (caused by reduced blood flow to the brain).

These conditions damage brain cells causing memory, communication and thinking problems. This can affect people's ability to manage money, prepare food, get dressed and other essential skills.

It's never too early or too late to take steps to reduce your risk of dementia

In this leaflet you can find out about:

- lifestyle choices that affect your risk of dementia
- steps you can take to reduce that risk
- where you can find more information and support.





6 steps to reduce your dementia risk



**Be physically
active**



**Maintain
a healthy
weight**



**Be socially
and mentally
active**



**Think about
your drinking**



Stop smoking



**Commit to
review your
health**

These six steps will not only make you feel better and reduce your risk of developing dementia, but will also help protect you from other health risks such as cancer, heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

Small changes to your lifestyle can, over time, lead to BIG changes in your health. Evidence suggests that adopting any one of these six steps would be beneficial in reducing your risk and that the more steps that you follow, the greater the impact. Over the next few pages we will provide help and support to make these changes.

Step



1



Be physically active

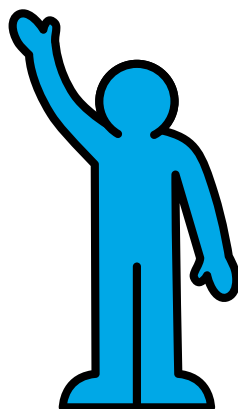
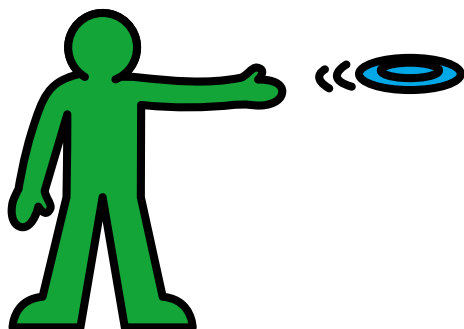
The number one thing you can do to reduce your risk of dementia is to be physically active.

There are lots of ways to be active: walking, running, riding your bike or even mowing the lawn counts. Search online for Change4Life Wales for lots of ideas to help get you moving!

It's recommended that you should do 150 minutes of moderate exercise each week. This might sound like a lot but can be achieved in blocks as short as ten minutes at a time.

Walking fast counts towards this, so you may already be doing more than you think. Little changes, such as going for a walk or a ride on your bike at lunchtime, may be all you need to do.

There are lots of other ways to build physical activity into your daily life, for example replacing short journeys in the car with walking, or using the stairs instead of lifts. Time your walks to the shop or to work and also check out how many steps you are already doing. You can use a pedometer to do this; most smart phones have them already built-in.



Step



2



Maintain a healthy weight

Dementia is more common in people with raised blood pressure and diabetes, those not eating a healthy diet or being overweight.

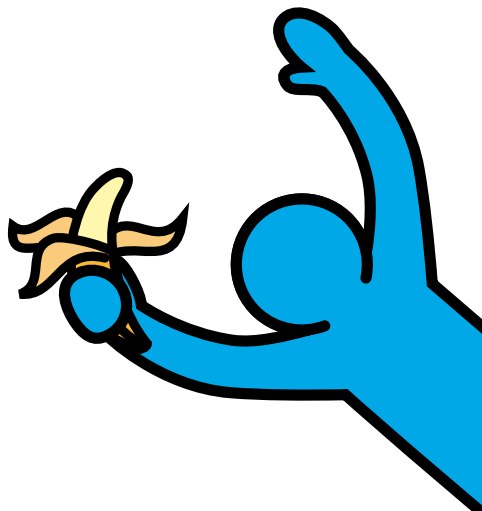
It's important that you have a varied diet that has plenty of fruit and vegetables.

Eat more fibre, such as wholegrain cereals and bread. Also, find ways of eating less fat; by choosing low-fat products like semi or skimmed milk. Also try to eat less sugar and salt. Look out for the traffic light labels on the front of packs and try to pick foods with mainly green and amber lights.

Many of us were brought up to finish the food on our plate, but often it's more than we need. The problem these days is larger portion sizes are more readily available. We often end up eating too much and not burning it off. You don't have to give up everything you like – start with a few healthy swaps such as salad rather than chips in your main meal or when snacking.

A lot of these ideas are not as hard as you think, and you can search online for Change4life Wales for practical advice and recipes to help you. Eating healthily is about eating the right amount of food for your energy needs.

It's a good idea to try to get a good balance every day, but you don't need to do it perfectly at every meal. Search online for the Eatwell Guide which shows how much of what you eat should come from each food group.



Step
3



Be socially and mentally active

Keeping socially and mentally active is also very important. Spend time with your friends and make an effort to walk and talk to your neighbours.

Challenge yourself, learn a new skill or take part in a quiz.

Puzzles and reading are also good for you, as is playing mind-stretching games.

A good way to ensure that you are doing this is by following the '5 Ways to Wellbeing'.

5 ways to wellbeing

Connect:

With people around you, family, friends, colleagues and neighbours.

Keep learning:

Try something new. Learning new things will make you more confident.



Give:

Volunteer your time. Seeing yourself and your happiness linked to the wider community.

Be active:

Go for a walk or run. Step outside, cycle or dance, exercise makes you feel good.

Take notice:

Be curious. Catch sight of your surroundings. Notice and savour the changing seasons.

Step



4

The UK Chief Medical Officers' Revised Alcohol Guidelines



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To keep health risks from drinking alcohol to a low level, both men and women are advised not to exceed a weekly limit of

14 units



This is what 14 units looks like:



14 single measures of Spirit (25ml)
40% ABV



10 glasses of Wine (125ml)
11% ABV



6 pints of ordinary strength Beer/Lager/Cider (568ml)
4% ABV



4 glasses of Wine (250ml)
13% ABV

ABV = Alcohol by volume

Think about your drinking

Having a few drinks most evenings or drinking a bit too much every weekend causes damage to your body that builds up over time.

There is no safe limit... but if you want to keep your health risks low:

- Drink less than 14 units a week
- Spread your drinking out over three or more days.

If you are pregnant, or there is a chance you could be, it is safest not to drink at all.

NEW RESEARCH means that we know more about the link between alcohol and some diseases.

Drinking increases the risk of a range of illnesses, including breast and bowel cancer. We also know now that drinking has no health benefits for most people.

Thinking about a change?

Having several 'drink free' days is a good way to cut down. Here are some tips that other people have found helpful...

Go low

Choose lower alcohol drinks or have more soft drinks

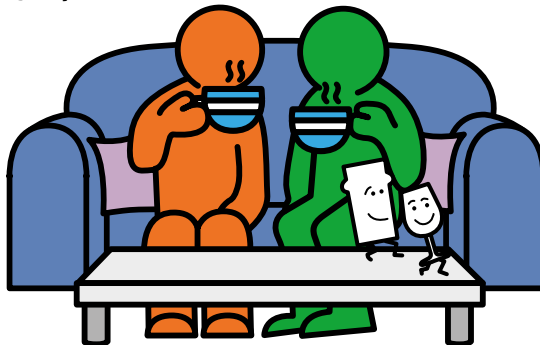
Go slow

Drink more slowly or with food

Go small

Choose smaller glasses, bottles rather than pints.

Avoid multi-buy offers.





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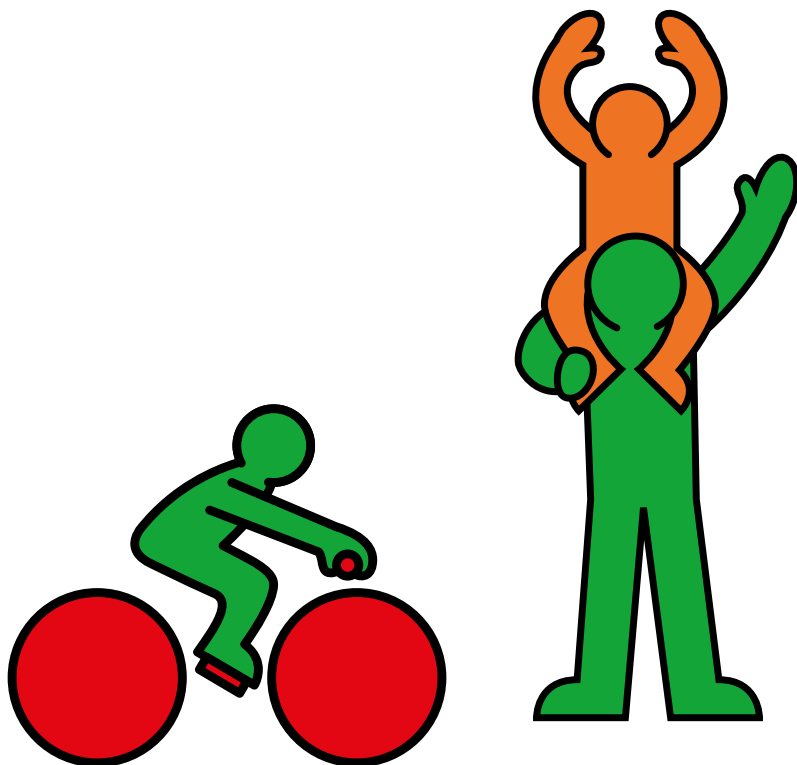
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Stop smoking

Smoking affects your circulation and increases your risk of dementia. Smoking also raises your risk of coronary heart disease and a range of cancers as well as other significant health problems. Giving up smoking is a benefit to you, as well as protecting those around you from the harms caused by second-hand smoke.

You don't have to go it alone when you try to give up smoking. When you use NHS Support you are four times more likely to give up.

Contact the free NHS Stop Smoking Wales service by searching online or calling 0800 085 2219 to find out about the free support in your area.



Step



6



Commit to review your health

What's good for the heart is good for the brain.

Taking steps to reduce your risk of high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes will also reduce your risk of getting dementia in later life.

You understand your health better than anyone else. This places you in the best position to make the lifestyle changes highlighted in this leaflet that will benefit your health and reduce your risk of dementia.

If you are concerned that you may have high blood pressure or diabetes get in touch with your local pharmacist or GP – they will be able to provide you with further advice.

If you are over 50, a good way to review your health is by using Add to Your Life – it's a confidential and easy-to-use online health check for everybody in Wales. It will help give you an overall picture of your health and wellbeing, and support you to make positive changes in small achievable steps.

It does this by providing tailored health and wellbeing information, as well as signposting you to relevant sources of support, based on the answers you give in the self-assessment.



Reducing the risks

The risk of dementia increases with age, and as more people are living longer, the number of people developing dementia will grow.

However, it's never too early or late to start following the 6 steps to reduce your risk of dementia. By taking these steps, you can significantly improve both your physical and mental health as you age.

Here in Wales, a study in Caerphilly looked at the health behaviours of over 2000 men aged 45–59.

The study looked at their weight, how active they were, how much they smoked, how much alcohol they drank and if they were eating a healthy diet.

It found that people could reduce their risk of developing dementia by up to 60% by simply living a healthier lifestyle.

For more information, visit:



Change4LifeWales.org



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