

6. Health and well being

Health issues become increasingly important once you reach the age of 50. Recognising the possible signs of illness, having regular health checks and being aware of potential health risks will give you a head start in protecting yourself both mentally and physically for the years ahead.

As you get older conditions such as dementia and depression become more likely. If you are worried that you might be developing symptoms, your doctor can make an assessment. Should you require additional care, you are much more likely to be supported in your own home, for as long as possible, than be encouraged to enter a care home or hospital.

Things to look for

Women's health

If you are over 50, diseases like breast cancer and health issues like osteoporosis and the menopause can be of particular worry. By being well-informed, you'll have a better sense of how to take care of your health and protect yourself.

Men's health

There are a number of health issues and illnesses that can affect men over the age of 50. Prostate problems, heart disease, bladder cancer and impotence can be of particular concern.

To ensure you continue to live life to the full, it is important that you manage your health as you would your car ie: having an annual MOT to check your blood pressure

and cholesterol. If you have any concerns, either visit your doctor or discuss them with the staff at your local health centre.

Managing your health

There are various ways in which you can manage your health including:

- if you are taking regular medicines, make sure you have a medication review at least every year
- flu jabs are available - ask your GP
- your vision plays an important role in your sense of balance so make sure you have your eyes checked regularly. (Once every two years up to 75 years of age and once a year after 75). Once yearly for diabetics. Eye tests are free if you're 60 or over and are available at home if necessary. Contact Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) for more information
- looking after your feet and having your feet checked by you or your partner, relative or carer is important.

Reducing my risk by diet and exercise

Although the most significant risk (age) is unavoidable, there are some risk factors that we can do something about. Living a healthy lifestyle can reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke and might also reduce your risk of developing dementia.

- Eat healthily -lots of fruit and vegetables, limit high fat, sugary and salty foods.
- Get active, exercise for 30 minutes five times a week.
- Watch your blood pressure and cholesterol and keep a healthy weight.

Strokes

It is important to respond quickly at the first signs of stroke by using a simple test called FAST:

- **F**acial weakness – can the person smile? Has their mouth or eye drooped?
- **A**rm weakness – can the person raise both arms?
- **S**peech problems – can the person speak clearly and understand what you say?
- **T**ime to call 999 – if the person shows any one of these signs, call an ambulance.

Remember, think **FAST**.

Dementia

One in 14 people over 65 years of age has a form of dementia. The most common cause of dementia is alzheimer's disease but other conditions such as a stroke can cause another type of dementia called vascular dementia.

Many of the risk factors for vascular dementia are the same as those for a stroke. Smoking, drinking too much, an unhealthy diet and lack of exercise are all contributing factors to vascular dementia.

Remember, dementia is not an inevitable part of ageing. If you have any concerns, or any problems with your memory it is important to tell your doctor straight away and have this investigated. If you do receive a positive diagnosis there is lots of advice and support available to help you.



Bone health

Falls, trips and slips are the most common type of accident in the home. Many people are seriously injured every year. This can lead to a reduction in your quality of life.

Within Kirklees approximately 20,500 falls happen every year, for people over 65 years of age.

For some people this will result in a broken bone and hospital treatment. It can also lead to a loss of independence.

Experiencing falls is not an inevitable part of getting older. By taking some sensible precautions most accidental falls can be prevented.

Falls can be due to weak muscles and poor balance. The risk of falls can be reduced by:

- regular physical activity such as walking, gardening, housework and dancing, keep-fit classes or chair based exercises
- regular gentle exercise and massage to relieve arthritic pain and swelling
- balance training exercises, such as Tai Chi.

Remember – if you are new to physical activity speak to your doctor first. Take it gently at first. For more information on exercising visit:

Help The Aged, Tel: 01484 514735, visit website at www.helptheaged.org.uk General health and well-being can make a big difference to your quality of life, whatever your age. Eating well, keeping fit, looking after your bones and your feet are all important and can help you stay mobile and independent.

Clothes and shoes

Avoid wearing loose fitting or open backed footwear or trailing clothing that might cause you to trip or slip. Wear flat shoes with a broad based heel. Try to avoid walking in socks or tights on slippery floors, or when climbing the stairs.

Your home

Small changes in your home can help reduce accidents:

- use non-slip mats under rugs
- handrails by the front / back door
- good lighting
- keep the floor clear of trailing flexes
- consider getting a cordless phone or an answering machine, so you have no need to rush to answer the phone
- always mop up spills immediately
- see if you can get help with household chores such as changing bedding, light bulbs or curtains etc
- make sure you have everything you need e.g. soap, towels etc within easy reach before you get in the bath or shower.

For more information on support for your caring role, see section four.

For tips on how to stay active, healthy and well, see sections six, nine and 10

Loving in later life

We all have a basic need to socialise, have friendships and a relationship with a special person. Although the younger generation often assume sexual intimacy disappears once you become a pensioner, your needs can be just as great now your over 50.

Evidence suggests it is important to try to maintain relationships throughout your 50s and beyond. Recent studies by Age Concern have found that at least 50% of men and women over the age of 70 are sexually active.

The health benefits

There are many reasons why regular sex is good for you. "Research shows that men who are more sexually active actually live longer," said Dr Sarah Brewer, author of *Intimate Relations: Living and Loving in Later Life*. "In women, it can fight the effects of menopause and reduce wrinkling."

In women it can also increase blood oestrogen levels, helping to protect against coronary heart disease and osteoporosis. In men, sex releases hormones which help strengthen bones and muscles, protect against heart disease. It may relieve congestion in the prostate gland.

It's also a great stress reliever and induces sleep!

Your changing body

No matter how young we feel, our body is changing. If you experience problems in maintaining sexual relations, don't accept these as part of growing old -talk to your doctor who can offer you advice and discuss possible treatment.

Relationships

Talk openly to your partner as good communication helps keep a close sexual relationship going.

If you are alone in later years, socialising or taking up a new hobby can help you make friends with people who have similar interests. There are dating agencies which cater for older relationships.

For more information visit:

- www.lifestyle60.com
- www.laterlife.com
- www.relate.org.uk

Same sex couples will face many of the same issues and health concerns as everyone else as they grow older. If you are concerned about specific issues, you can get specialist information and advice from Age Concern.

A range of fact sheets and downloads are available from Age Concern providing information on various financial and social issues.

Visit: <http://www.ageconcern.org.uk/openingdoors>



Healthy Lifestyles

Maintaining an active and healthy lifestyle can help you enjoy a better quality of life. There are a number of support options that are available to you in Kirklees.

Enjoy being more active

If you want to take up more physical activity have a look at section 10 of this booklet. For local information on opportunities to be active please look at the time to be active website at www.Time2beactive.co.uk

Eat well

If you would like more information about eating healthily and staying active why not visit the Eat well for life website. Here you will find tips and easy ways for you and your family to enjoy eating more healthily and getting active. There is also information about what's on in your local area including:

- Healthy eating events
 - Cooking classes
 - Growing food with others
 - Places to go to buy or eat healthy meals
 - Activity sessions
 - Walking groups
- Eatwell4Life -
<http://eatwell4life.kirklees.nhs.uk>

Help yourself to better health by finding information at the library. Your local library has a lot of resources and information about health issues. Call into your nearest branch and ask your local library staff about health resources or contact Kirklees library and Information Centres on 01484 226300 or visit the website www.Kirklees.gov.uk/libraries

Find support if you have a long term condition

If you have a long term health condition* such as Diabetes, Asthma, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary disease (COPD), Coronary heart disease (CHD), Back or joint pain or other chronic pain conditions such as arthritis or mental health conditions such as anxiety or depression there are various support options available to you. (* there are many more long term conditions than listed here, these are just a few examples of the more common conditions)

Self-Care Support

The Kirklees Self-Care Programme aims to connect people who have long term conditions with the right information and support. The self-care toolkit contains information about the types of support you can access to support you and improve your health if you have a long term condition at the following website <http://www.kirklees.nhs.uk/your-health/self-care-programme/self-care-toolkkit/>

Expert Patients

Learning to live with your condition: Expert Patients Programme
If you would like to learn how to manage your long term health condition why not join the Expert Patient Programme? Its a FREE six-week course. The course provides a set of tried and tested skills which have been shown to lead to many benefits for people with long term health conditions; helping people feel better and more in control of their lives. If you would like to find out more information or would like to sign up for a course please contact

- Expert Patient Programme,
Tel: 01924 351423

Health trainers

The health trainer service provides one to one support to adults with long term conditions. Health trainers help people to change behaviour to support a healthy lifestyle or to access the right services and information. Health trainers are qualified experts who are trained to help motivate and set goals by developing personal health plans and giving practical support to help you change your lifestyle.

- Health trainers, Tel: 01484 344349 or 01924 816176
Queries about health: The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service

The PALS service can help you if you have a query or complaint about health service matters. It is a free and confidential service to guide you through the different services available at NHS Kirklees and through local NHS providers.

- PALS, Tel: 01484 466172/466214,
email: pals@kirklees.nhs.uk or visit www.kirklees.nhs.uk

Choice

If you and your GP agree that you need to see a specialist at a hospital, you can choose to go to any hospital in England funded by the NHS, which includes many private hospitals too. You will be given information about hospitals so that you can make an informed decision about where you would like to go.

Choose and Book

Choose and Book is an electronic system which lets you choose your hospital, the date and time of your appointment. You might even be able to book your appointment at the hospital of your choice before you leave your GP surgery or, if you would like to think about the options available, you can book your appointment later. Your surgery will give you an appointment request letter which lists the choices available to you and tells you how to book your appointment.

Choose and Book gives you the opportunity to be involved in making decisions about where and when you have your appointment.

Ask at your GP surgery for information.

