STAYING WELL AT HOME

During the Coronavirus Pandemic

We know that there are 78,000 older people who are living alone in Northern Ireland. With strict measures now in place around social isolation and shielding for those who are most vulnerable, many older people are in need of vital support.

We have all been advised to self-isolate as much as possible to help protect us from the virus. This is particularly important for people over 70 and those with underlying health conditions because they are at higher risk of developing more severe symptoms if they become infected. Those at greatest risk have been asked to self-isolate for 12 weeks.

These are potentially difficult times for many older people, especially those living alone who may not have anyone to share their concerns. Age NI have developed tips around the 5 steps to wellbeing:

Keep Physically Active

It's really important to exercise and stay physically active as you get older.

Current government guidelines recommend that older people aged 65 or over, who are generally fit and have no health conditions that limit their mobility, do 2.5 hours of moderate aerobic exercise a week. This could include brisk walking or even chair-based exercises.

Regular exercise not only keeps you fit, but also increases flexibility, boosts your mood and safeguards your health. One of the easiest ways is to get walking – A daily walk, even if it's just a 15-minute stroll, can help to keep you active.

Stay Connected

Age NI, with the support of the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland, is offering a 'Check in and chat' telephone service for everyone who is over 60 in Northern Ireland, who may feel isolated or lonely during this time.
It's hoped that the initiative will help provide some reassurances to older people, answer basic queries and link people to local services and support during the Coronavirus outbreak.

Hopefully, this initiative will help older people cope with some of the challenges arising from the Coronavirus outbreak.

Anyone over 60 in Northern Ireland can register free of charge, to receive a regular telephone call from the service. All you need to do is:

Call Age NI Advice on 0808 808 7575
OR
Email info@ageni.org

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ni.info

Follow a Heathy Diet

Eating well means you're more likely to feel healthier, stay active for longer and protect yourself against illness. It's never too late to start eating healthily, and a healthy diet doesn't have to be boring or expensive.

It also doesn't mean going without your favourite treats, although it may mean eating them less often or in smaller portions.

Eating well means enjoying your food and having plenty of variety in your diet so you get all the nutrients you need and maintain a healthy weight.

The Eatwell guide shows how much of what you eat overall should come from each food group.

Fruit and vegetables contain a range of vitamins, minerals and fibre. Research shows that people who eat plenty of fruit and vegetables are less likely to develop heart disease and certain cancers.

Aim for at least five portions of different-coloured fruit and vegetables each day. These can be fresh, frozen or canned.

Keep Hydrated

It is key to stay hydrated – always keep a bottle or glass of water with you and sip it throughout the day. Your mouth should never be dry and your wee should be a pale straw colour! Most older adults need at least 6 to 8 glasses of water each day to be healthy.

Sleep Well

Our sleeping patterns naturally change as we get older, so it's not unusual to have trouble sleeping. This means that many of us can struggle to get to sleep or stay asleep, leaving us tired and grumpy the following day.

Chronic sleep problems should not be regarded as either an inevitable, or a normal part of the ageing process. On average, adults need between seven and nine hours of sleep. We need the same amount of sleep as we get older, but we are less able to stay asleep as we age.

Top tips for sleeping

Experts agree that practising good 'sleep hygiene' can make an important contribution to getting a good night's sleep. This is just another way of saying that you need to get into good habits:

- Go to bed and get up at the same time every day.
- Avoid lying in.
- Establish a bedtime routine – relax by reading a book or having a bath.
- Make sure that your bed and bedding are comfortable.
- Avoid caffeine, nicotine and alcohol in the evening.
- Don't eat a heavy meal late at night.
- Avoid exercise in the evening.
- Keep your bedroom cool and dark – the ideal bedroom temperature is 18°C.
- Ban TV and computers from the bedroom – the bright light can make you more awake.
- Try to avoid napping during the day. If you do enjoy a daytime nap, schedule this for roughly the same time each day.

If you tend to wake up in the night and struggle to get back to sleep

After 15–20 minutes, get up and go into another room. Avoid doing anything too involved, such as work or housework, and resist the temptation to turn on the television.

Instead, try reading or listening to the radio. Try going back to bed 20–30 minutes later and, if you still have difficulties in getting to sleep or staying asleep try and do the same thing again.

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