

Top tips for work and play: keeping you at your best

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1) Eat well

Eat a balanced and [healthy diet](#).

- Eat at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day
- Base meals on higher fibre carbohydrates including, bread, rice, pasta or potatoes in their skins
- Have some dairy or dairy alternatives; choosing lower fat and lower sugar options
- Eat some beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other protein alternatives such as tofu or nuts (including 2 portions of fish every week, one of which should be oily e.g. salmon, mackerel)
- Choose unsaturated oils and spreads and eat/use in small amounts
- Drink 6-8 cups/glasses of fluid a day (tea and coffee count)

If consuming foods and drinks high in salt, saturated fat or free sugar have these less often and in small amounts.

Don't overeat!

- Grabbing food on the go can add extra calories – try to plan your food so you eat the calories you need to maintain a healthy body weight
- Try to eat regular meals (even when on long shifts)
- Plan your snacks rather than eat what is nearest and choose healthier snacks (here's some helpful guidance around food swaps in this link [snack suggestions](#))

Vitamin D advice

- Public Health England has re-issued the existing advice on vitamin D (21 April 2020). The Government is currently advising people to stay at home. For most people, this will mean being indoors for much of the day, which could result in not getting enough vitamin D from sunshine exposure.
- Vitamin D is needed to keep bones and muscles healthy.
- Existing public health advice is that if you're not going outdoors, you should consider taking a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D. We, therefore, recommend that whilst the stay at home measures are in place, everyone considers this advice (including children, pregnant and breastfeeding women and older people).
- This advice is not about preventing coronavirus (COVID-19) or mitigating its effects.
- You can buy vitamin D supplements at most pharmacies and supermarkets. Please don't buy more than you need

More information and tips on Vit D intake can be seen [here](#).

2) Keep active

The UK Chief Medical Officers' Guidelines recommend **each week** adults do:

- At least 150 minutes moderate-intensity activity, 75 minutes' vigorous activity, or a mixture of both
- Strengthening activities on two days
- Reducing extended periods of sitting

Walking is simple, free and one of the easiest ways to get more active, lose weight and become healthier. Sometimes overlooked as a form of exercise, walking briskly can help you build stamina, burn excess calories, and improve your heart health.

A brisk paced 10-minute daily walk has lots of health benefits and counts towards the recommendation. If you like using apps, try the Active 10 app produced by Public Health England – it is free and good for motivation.

For more information and tips, look [here](#). Public Health England guidelines on physical activities can also be seen [here](#)

3) Don't smoke

- Smoking is the single greatest cause of ill health and death. If you smoke, now may be a good time to think about quitting.
- You can access some advice and self-help tips, including local smoking cessation services, in this [link](#)

4) Sleep well

Sleep is an important consideration, as most adults need between 6 and 9 hours of sleep every night. However, research shows that regularly sleeping less than six hours is associated with many adverse effects of sleep deprivation. If you do find you are regularly getting less than six hours a night and are exhausted the next day, then it might be time to consider an overhaul of your sleep and lifestyle habits. Winding down before bed is critical for a good night's sleep. You may want to consider one or more of these ways to relax:

- A warm bath (but not hot) will help your body relax
- Writing "to-do" lists for the next day can organise your thoughts and clear your mind of any distractions
- Relaxation exercises, such as light yoga stretches, help to relax the muscles. Do not exercise vigorously, as it will have the opposite effect
- Use gentle hypnotic music and sound effects to relax you
- Reading a book and listening to the radio relaxes the mind by distracting it
- There are several apps designed to help with sleep, see [the NHS Apps Library](#)
- Avoid using smartphones, tablets, or electronic devices for an hour or so before you go to bed as the light from the screen on these devices may have a negative effect on sleep.

These tips and more information can be found [here](#).

5) Limit Alcohol

To keep health risks from alcohol to a low level if you drink:

- The current UK guidelines advise limiting alcohol intake to 14 units a week for women and men.
- This is equivalent to drinking no more than 6 pints of average-strength beer (4% ABV) or 7 medium-sized glasses of wine (175ml, 12% ABV) a week.
- Spread your drinking over 3 or more days if you regularly drink as much as 14 units a week
- If you want to cut down, try to have several drink-free days each week (<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-support/calculating-alcohol-units/>)

This [link](#) provides further information and advice on cutting back your alcohol consumption.

Finally, a word about optimising your immune function

Much has been claimed about 'boosting' your immunity in relation to fighting COVID-19 infections. Your immune system defends your body against illness and infections, so it is important to keep it functioning as well as possible. Eating a balanced diet is important for

supporting the normal functioning of the immune system, as many nutrients influence the body's ability to fight infection. But, it is critical to understand that there is no individual nutrient, food, or supplement that will 'boost' immunity, or stop us contracting highly infectious viruses, like COVID-19.

While you can't boost your immune system, exercise, sleep patterns and stress levels do have an impact on supporting it.

Remember as health professionals we seek to understand the evidence and advise accordingly. This document has been produced using evidence from reputable sources and supports common public health messages.

This resource was compiled using government resources, initially for information purposes for students on Faculty of Health and Social Care programmes at the University of Chester.

May 2020