



ADOPTING HEALTHY HABITS

Why is it so hard to do?

Most of us have a good idea about the kind of changes we could make to our lifestyle to keep ourselves healthier for longer.

We know we could:

- Exercise more
- Eat a healthier, more nutritious diet
- Stop smoking
- Keep within recommended alcohol limits
- Get a good night's sleep

But we find it really hard to adopt new, healthier habits. Sometimes we feel sad, sorry or guilty that we didn't make changes sooner. And sometimes we feel overwhelmed and anxious and don't know where to start.

What can help?

Keep positive

Tomorrow is another day and it is never too late to adopt a new, healthy habit.

Take it one step at a time

Choose just one area of your lifestyle where you'd like to make a change to start with.

Set yourself specific goals and start small

Rather than saying, "I must exercise more" say, "I'll walk for 10 minutes every day".

Be practical

If you set yourself a goal like eating fewer biscuits and cakes make sure you have other, healthier snacks like fruit or nuts to hand for when you feel like a snack.

Think of adopting a new, healthy habit as a journey

You might have setbacks or delays along the way but what matters is that you're heading in the right direction.

Simple Healthy Habits to Try

- Drink at least 6 glasses of water every day.
- Eat breakfast every day.
- Eat fish twice a week, especially oily fish.
- Eat five portions of fruit and vegetables a day – fresh, canned, frozen, juiced, dried – it's all good.
- Go for a walk with a friend instead of meeting them for coffee.
- Do chair based exercises whilst you watch television.
- Take time to unwind before you try to sleep and listen to music or have a warm bath.
- Try to go to bed at the same time every day.

To register with Bromley Well:
Freephone 0808 278 7898
Or register online:
www.bromleywell.org.uk/refer

Contact Lifestyle Support direct
07985 431484 / 07985 444210
or email
enquiry@bromleywell.org.uk



What is HIV?

HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) is a viral infection that attacks and causes damage to the immune system. Most HIV infection is contracted through unprotected sex because HIV is present in body fluids such as blood, semen, anal mucus and vaginal fluid. It can also be transmitted through sharing injecting drug equipment and from mother to child at birth or through breastfeeding (but this is rare in the UK because pregnant women are screened in early pregnancy).

HIV can develop into AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), which comes in the late stages of HIV. It is when people with HIV also have a collection of illnesses due to their compromised immune system.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms are most likely to occur 2-6 weeks being infected with HIV – this period is called “primary HIV infection” or “sero-conversion” and at this time people can be highly infectious if they have unprotected sex. After sero-conversion people can be symptomless but they can still be infectious to others.

Symptoms can include:

- Fever
- Sore throat
- Rash
- Joint and muscle pain
- Fatigue
- Swollen glands

What about treatment?

At present there is no cure for HIV but there is effective medication called anti-retroviral therapy that controls the virus to such a level that it can't be detected in blood samples. Immune function is therefore preserved, therefore, controlled HIV results in a normal life expectancy. Furthermore, an undetectable viral load also means the virus can't be passed on during unprotected sex.

What can I do?

- Get tested – the most important way we can prevent complications in HIV is to diagnose and treat people as soon as possible after they have become infected. You can either order HIV test kits online or receive them through a sexual health clinic or your GP.
- Effective condom use. Free condoms for at risk people can be accessed via sexualhealthbromley.org.uk website.
- PrEP and PEPSE (pre and post exposure prophylaxis) – it can also be taken by an HIV negative person to prevent HIV acquisition via unprotected sex
- Needle exchange programmes organised through local pharmacies

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FURTHER RESOURCES

HIV community nurse Contact number 01689 86647	Support and help from community nurses in Bromley.
Terrence Higgins https://www.tht.org.uk Hepline 0808 802 1221	Charity that provides support for people living with HIV through helplines, community groups, running HIV workshops, providing testing and campaigning for people with HIV.
National AIDS trust https://www.nat.org.uk/about-hiv/understanding-hiv	Charity that can provide financial, and social support for those living with HIV, they also work with healthcare professionals to keep practices up to date.
Sexual Health Bromley https://www.sexualhealthbromley.co.uk/	For information about local HIV and sexual health services, prevention and free condom schemes.
HIV i-base https://i-base.info/	HIV treatment advice and advocacy - comprehensive details about anti-retroviral medication.
Sexual Health London https://www.shl.uk/	Free home STI/HIV testing.

References: National aids trust: [Understanding HIV | National AIDS Trust](#), Sexual health Bromley: [Sexual Health Bromley - Free sexual health services in Bromley](#), HIV treatment & advocacy: [HIV i-Base](#), Home testing: [Sexual Health London • SHL.UK](#), HIV & AIDS NHS: [HIV and AIDS - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#).

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ANGINA

What is Angina?

Angina is chest pain that occurs when blood supply to the heart is restricted. There are two types of angina; stable and unstable:

Stable angina - angina attacks that occur occasionally due to clear triggers e.g. exercise. This type of angina improves with medication and rest.

Unstable angina - more unpredictable angina attacks, occurring with no obvious trigger and continuing after rest.

What are the symptoms?

A dull, heavy or tight pain in the chest that can sometimes spread to the arms, neck, jaw and back. The pain normally comes after physical activity and typically lasts a few minutes.

What are the causes?

Angina is mostly caused by atherosclerosis, which is the hardening and narrowing of arteries as a result of a build-up of fatty substances known as plaque. This can restrict the blood supply to the heart and trigger the symptoms of angina.

Risk factors for angina include:

- High blood pressure
- A diet high in saturated fat and cholesterol and lack of exercise
- Smoking
- Type 1 and type 2 diabetes
- Age and family history

What about treatment?

Treatment for angina aims to:

- Relieve symptoms during an angina attack
- Reduce the number of angina attacks
- Reduce the risk of a heart attack or stroke happening

Treatment can be preventative medications such as calcium channel and beta blockers, anticoagulation medication etc, which reduces risks of heart attacks. Or provide immediate relief with GTN (glyceryl trinitrate) which widens blood vessels. Stents and surgery are used if angina continues.

TIPS

GTN

When using GTN always follow advice or guidance from the prescriber. You should keep your tablets or spray on you at all times. If you are having an angina attack take 1 dose under the tongue (1 tablet or 1-2 sprays) and wait for 5 minutes. If pain continues take a second dose. If pain has not subsided after another 5 mins, it is getting worse or you feel unwell then call 999.

SELF CARE TIPS

Having a healthy lifestyle is the most effective way of reducing your risk of angina and preventing your symptoms from getting worse.

Try to:

- Eat a healthy, balanced diet.
- Avoid smoking.
- Reduce your alcohol intake, as alcohol can increase your blood pressure.
- Take regular exercise as this will help keep your heart and blood vessels in good condition, help you lose weight and lower your blood pressure.



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<p>British Heart Foundation</p> <p>www.bhf.org.uk</p> <p>Help Line: 0300 330 3311</p> <p>Email: heretohelp@bhf.org.uk</p>	<p>A national charity providing information and advice for the public and for health professionals. A useful site containing lifestyle advice, support groups and the latest research and information about tests and treatments.</p>
<p><u>Heart UK</u></p>	<p>National cholesterol charity providing support and advice for people concerned about cholesterol. Advice on healthy eating and maintaining a healthy weight, including recipe ideas and diet plans.</p>
<p><u>NHS Live Well</u></p>	<p>NHS advice on topics such as eating well, exercise and maintaining a healthy weight.</p>
<p>NHS wellbeing app</p> <p>https://www.england.nhs.uk/supporting-our-nhs-people/support-now/wellbeing-apps/</p>	<p>Links to NHS wellbeing Apps designed to support you in making healthy lifestyle changes.</p>

References: NICE: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg126/chapter/Introduction> NHS UK: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/angina/treatment/>

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ALCOHOL

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What is harmful drinking?

Harmful drinking is defined as a pattern of alcohol consumption causing health problems directly related to alcohol. This includes psychological problems such as depression, alcohol-related accidents or conditions such as acute pancreatitis.

What are the risks of heavy drinking?

Long term heavy drinking can increase your risk of developing:

- High blood pressure - a major risk factor of having a stroke or heart attack
- Heart disease
- Liver disease
- Liver cancer and bowel cancer
- Mouth cancer
- Cirrhosis of liver (where damage to the liver causes scar tissues to build up which can lead to cancer)

Other effects of alcohol

Alcohol has high sugar content

Drinking excessive amounts over time can decrease the effectiveness of insulin, leading to high blood sugar levels and diabetes.

Alcohol is a diuretic

It acts on the kidneys to make you lose more fluids from your body, leading to dehydration which can cause headaches.

Alcohol poisoning

May lead to vomiting, seizures (fits) and falling unconscious.

What about treatment?

- Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) has been shown to be helpful
- Medication such as acamprosate, disulfiram, naltrexone and nalmefene can be prescribed to treat alcohol misuse
- Keeping a drinking diary to record how many units of alcohol you drink a week may help control your alcohol intake

References: NHS choices: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/high-blood-pressure-hypertension/> Public Health England: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-combating-high-blood-pressure/health-matters-combating-high-blood-pressure>

ALCOHOL UNITS



1 UNIT

½ pint beer, lager, cider
ABV 3.6%

125ml glass of wine

25ml measure of spirits

100ml glass of prosecco

ALCOHOL GUIDELINES

- Men and women should not regularly drink more than 14 units a week
- If you drink more than 14 units of alcohol a week, it's best to spread this evenly over three days or more
- Pregnant women should not drink alcohol
- Have one or two alcohol free days each week
- If you have drunk too much, allow 48 hours for your body to recover

DO YOU KNOW THAT?

- Alcohol is very high in calories and excessive consumption can lead to weight gain
- Alcohol can affect your sleep patterns and it best to avoid drinking alcohol before bedtime
- Alcohol weakens the heart muscle, which can mean the heart does not pump blood efficiently, this can cause premature death, usually through heart failure

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<p><u>Drinkaware</u></p> <p>Drinkline 0300 123 1110</p>	<p>National charity providing advice, information and tools to help you make better choices about your drinking.</p>
<p><u>Alcohol Change UK</u></p> <p>Alcoholics Anonymous 0800 9177 650</p>	<p>National charity providing information, advice and support to help you make better choices about your drinking.</p>
<p>Drink Wise Age Well https://www.drinkwiseagewell.org.uk/about/</p>	<p>Website with online workshops to support lifestyle changes around alcohol.</p>
<p><u>Drugs and Alcohol Service in Bromley</u></p> <p>Weekday 020 8289 1999 Weekends 07738 802 713</p>	<p>Drug and Alcohol Service that offers support in crisis but also ongoing support in person and on the phone.</p>
<p><u>NHS live well alcohol support</u></p>	<p>NHS advice on drinking, including a tracking app and links to services.</p>
<p><u>NHS Better Health & Drink Less App</u></p>	<p>Link to download NHS drink less app.</p>

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ASTHMA

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What is Asthma?

Asthma is a long term condition that affects the airways (bronchial tubes) in the lungs. People with asthma have inflamed (swollen) and sensitive airways that become narrow and clogged with sticky mucus in response to certain triggers.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms include:

- Shortness of breath
- Tightness in the chest
- Coughing and wheezing

What are the causes?

There are a number of things that increase the risk of, Asthma, these include

- A family history of asthma or related allergic conditions known as atopic conditions such as eczema, food allergy or hay fever
- Smoking or if you had exposure to tobacco smoke as a child
- Exercise - (exercise-induced asthma)
- Being born prematurely or with a low birth weight

Asthma symptoms can be triggered by:

- Allergens - house dust mites, animal fur and pollens
- Airborne irritants such as cigarette smoke, strong smell and gases
- Medicines - particularly painkillers such as Ibuprofen, aspirin and beta-blockers such as atenolol (used for high blood pressure)
- Weather conditions including sudden changes in temperature, cold air, windy days and hot humid days
- Chest infections

What about treatment?

The goal of treatment is for people to be free from symptoms and be able to lead a normal, active life. Asthma medication is taken using different inhalers. An inhaler is a device that delivers the drug directly to your airways. Take your medication as directed by the prescriber. Do not stop taking your medication unless your doctor tells you to.

SELF CARE TIPS

KNOW YOUR TRIGGERS

Find out what your triggers are and avoid them.

MAKE SURE YOU KNOW HOW TO USE YOUR INHALER PROPERLY

Use your preventer inhalers regularly every day to reduce the inflammation in the airways and your reliever inhalers when you are having an attack. Make sure to speak to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you have any concerns or you are having difficulties using your inhaler.

DRAW UP A PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

Discuss a plan with your doctor or asthma nurse. Your plan should include information about your medicines, how to monitor your condition and what to do if you have an asthma attack.

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FURTHER RESOURCES

Asthma + Lung UK

Helpline 0300 222 5800

Email:

helpline@asthmaandlung.org.uk

A national charity providing information and advice for the public and for health professionals around Asthma and other lung conditions. Contains advice on triggers, inhalers and medication and how to manage your condition. Was created in 2020 when Asthma UK and the British Lung Foundation combined.

NHS Conditions

NHS conditions pages contain information about the causes, symptoms and treatment of asthma and advice for people living with the condition.

NHS Wellbeing App

Links to NHS Wellbeing Apps designed to support you in making healthy lifestyle changes and managing stress.

Bromley Asthma + Lung UK Support Group

Tel: 0300 303 0253

Local Support for people living with a lung condition.

References: NHS Condition: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/asthma/> British Lung Foundation <https://www.blf.org.uk/support-for-you>

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COPD

What is COPD?

COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease) is a condition where you have long term inflammation in your airways and damage to your air sacs which cause it to be more difficult to breathe.

What are the symptoms?

- Breathlessness, especially when walking, due to less oxygen reaching the lungs.
- Persistent, chesty cough.
- Wheeze or a tight chest.
- Coughing up a lot of phlegm (regular sputum production).
- Frequent chest infections, especially during the winter.

What are the causes?

- Smoking is the main cause of COPD as it damages the lining of the airways and lungs.
- Work environments involving exposure to harmful substances such as smoke, fumes, dust and chemicals.
- Air pollution may increase your risk of as it can affect the function of the lungs.
- Genetic disorders, although this is rare.

What about treatment?

The aim of COPD medication is to slow the progression of the disease, improve your symptoms and make breathing easier.

- Stopping smoking can massively help with COPD as it reduces the damage to the lungs and airways.
- Inhalers can help with making breathing easier by widening your airways or by reducing inflammation in the airways.
- Medication that also expand the airways and reduce inflammation or reducing the thickness of your mucus which makes it easier to clear.
- Pulmonary rehabilitation is a exercise and education programme that is run by healthcare professionals such a physiotherapists, nurse specialists and dieticians. It supports people to become more active and manage their condition.
- Surgery can be considered for some people with severe COPD whose symptoms have not been controlled by medication.

References: NHS Condition: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/asthma/>
British Lung Foundation
<https://www.asthmaandlung.org.uk/conditions/copd-chronic-obstructive-pulmonary-disease>

SELF CARE TIPS

STOP SMOKING

This reduces any further damage to the lungs and the airway.

ATTEND PULMONARY REHABILITATION

This is a specialised programme of exercise and education that provides physical exercise tailored to your needs and ability and also psychological and emotional support

AVOID TEMPERATURES THAT ARE TOO HOT AND TOO COLD

GET VACCINATED

Keep up to date with vaccinations like your yearly flu vaccination

HAVE REGULAR CHECK-UPS WITH YOUR GP

To make sure treatment plans are up to date and working for you.

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[Bromley Asthma + Lung UK Support Group](#)

Tel: 0300 303 0253

Local Support for people living with COPD.

[Bromley Healthcare Respiratory Team](#)

Tel: 0300 330 5777

Community Respiratory Team that help those with chronic respiratory diseases, they assess patients, offer specialist advice and support them in clinics and in the community.

[NHS Wellbeing Apps](#)

Link to an NHS Wellbeing App, designed to help you manage your lifestyle and help manage your condition.

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DIABETES

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What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a long term condition that causes a person's blood sugar (glucose) level to be high due to your body not producing enough insulin or the producing insulin that isn't effective

There are two main types of diabetes:

- Type 1 diabetes – occurs because the pancreas does not produce any insulin. People with type 1 diabetes need insulin injections.
- Type 2 diabetes – occurs because the pancreas does not produce enough insulin or the body cannot use the insulin produced and affects 90% of the UK population.

What are the symptoms?

- Feeling very thirsty
- Urinating more frequently than usual, especially at night
- Frequent episodes of thrush
- Feeling very tired
- Weight loss
- Cuts or wounds that heal slowly
- Blurred vision

What are the causes?

The amount of glucose in your blood is controlled by a hormone called insulin. Insulin is produced by your pancreas. When food is digested and enters your bloodstream, insulin moves glucose out of the blood into the cell, where it is converted into energy. If you have diabetes, your body is unable to convert glucose into energy. are living with overweight or obesity. Your risk of diabetes are increased if you:

- Do not have a healthy diet
- Have a family history of type 2 diabetes
- Are of Asian, Black African or African Caribbean origin
- Take certain medicines such as steroids for a long time
- Have high blood pressure
- Have had gestational diabetes during pregnancy

What about treatment?

Treatment for diabetes includes managing blood sugars by regular checking them and using medication and insulin where necessary. but also lifestyle changes such as eating healthily and being active.

References: NHS Condition: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/diabetes/>
Diabetes UK <https://www.diabetes.org.uk/>

Monitoring Your Blood Sugar

Knowing how to monitor and manage your blood sugar levels will help you manage your diabetes. National Charity Diabetes UK has lots of tips and advice on how to go about this.

If you are a diabetic your target range will be:

- When you wake up and before you have eaten, 4 to 7 mmol/l
- 2 hours after meals, less than 8.5 mmol/l

SELF CARE TIPS

- Eating a healthy balanced diet
- Losing weight if you're overweight or obese
- Stopping smoking if you smoke
- Increasing physical activity
- Taking oral, anti-diabetic medication

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FURTHER RESOURCES

[Diabetes UK](#)

Helpline 0345 123 2399

Email helpline@diabetes.org.uk

A national charity providing information for members of the public and health professionals. A really useful website packed with information on everything from recipes to the latest research.

[Diabetes UK Bromley Support Group](#)

3 Hayes Lane, Bromley, Bromley BR2 9EA

Email: diabetesbromley@gmail.com

Telephone: 0208 460 7368

Local support groups run by Diabetes UK in Bromley

[Diabetes.co.uk](#)

An online forum for members of the public. Contains advice on many areas from dealing with difficult emotions to practical advice around work and benefits, for people living with diabetes.

[Bromley Council Diabetes and prevention in Bromley](#)

Information about diabetes and about diabetes prevention programmes in Bromley.

[BDA Foodfacts Type 1 Diabetes](#)

[BDA Foodfacts Type 2 Diabetes](#)

The Association of UK Dietitians food fact sheets containing diet advice for people living with diabetes and tips for managing your condition.

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CROHN'S DISEASE

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What is Crohn's Disease?

Crohn's disease is a type of Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD). It is a lifelong condition that causes inflammation in parts of the bowel. It can lead to ulcers throughout the gastrointestinal tract, bowel perforation or holes in the bowel, fistulas and other complications.

What are the symptoms?

- Diarrhoea
- Stomach aches and cramps
- Blood in your poo
- Fatigue
- Weight loss
- Abnormal balance of gut bacteria which can originate with a previous stomach bug.

What are the causes?

The exact cause is not known but there are a few factors that can play a role and increase risk:

- Family history
- Ethnicity
- Autoimmunity
- Environmental factors such as cigarette smoke and pollution

What about treatment?

- Steroids to reduce inflammation.
- Medicine to stop inflammation returning.
- Surgery to remove part of the digestive system that is damaged.
- Alterations to diet e.g. many people with Crohn's find that less spicy or lower fibre food can help with flare ups.

References: NHS Condition: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/crohns-disease/>
Crohn's and Colitis UK <https://crohnsandcolitis.org.uk/>

SELF CARE TIPS

DON'T SMOKE

Those who have Crohn's and smoke are more likely to have disease complications and higher risk surgeries.

DRINK IN MODERATION

Alcohol may interfere with your medication but it also irritates the lining of your bowel which can make symptoms worse.

INCREASE HYDRATING FLUID INTAKE

You are more likely to be dehydrated if you have Crohn's as your digestive system does not absorb as much water and it is lost in your stool.

EXERCISE REGULARLY

Exercise can help with digestion function but also decrease stress. Resistance training also decreases risk of Osteoporosis which can be a complication of Crohn's.

FIND SUPPORT GROUPS

Support groups can provide understanding and reassurance that people may not be able to get from family and friends.

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<p><u>Crohn's and Colitis UK</u></p> <p>Helpline 0300 222 5700</p>	<p>Charity for those with Crohn's and Colitis, providing support such as a helpline, local support services, online social events and getting can't wait cards to allow access to public toilets.</p>
<p><u>Crohn's and Colitis Foundation</u></p>	<p>Free educational booklets.</p>
<p><u>Guts UK Factsheet</u></p>	<p>Factsheet on Crohn's Disease from Guts UK who are a charity that raise awareness on all things related on the digestive system.</p>
<p><u>NHS information sheet</u></p>	<p>Information regarding Crohn's Disease from the NHS website, going through diagnosis, symptoms and treatments etc.</p>

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EPILEPSY

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What is Epilepsy?

Epilepsy is a long term condition that affects the brain and causes frequent seizures. There are two main types of seizures—generalised and focal. Generalised seizures occur if the abnormal electrical activity affects all or most of the brain. Symptoms tend to be general and involve much of your body. In focal seizures, the burst of electrical activity starts in one part of the brain and tend to have localised symptoms.

What are the symptoms?

Seizures can affect people in different ways, depending on which part of the brain is involved. The main symptoms of epilepsy are repeated seizures. These are sudden bursts of electrical activity in the brain that temporarily affect how it works.

- Other possible symptoms of epilepsy include:
- Uncontrolled jerking and shaking known as a fit
- Losing awareness and staring blankly into space
- Becoming stiff and collapsing
- Strange sensations such as a rising feeling in the tummy, unusual smells or taste and a tingling feeling in your arms or legs

What are the causes?

In epilepsy, the electrical signals in the brain become scrambled and abnormal sudden bursts of electrical activity occur leading to seizures. In many cases, it's not clear why this happens. However, this could partly be caused by your genes affecting how your brain works.

Epilepsy can also be caused by damage to the brain due to:

- A stroke
- A brain tumour
- A severe head injury
- Drug abuse or alcohol misuse
- Brain infection
- Lack of oxygen during birth

What about treatment?

The aim of treatment is to help people with epilepsy to have fewer seizures or stop having seizures completely. Medicines called anti-epileptic drugs are mostly used in the treatment of epilepsy. Tell your doctor if your medicine is causing unpleasant side effects. Don't skip doses or stop taking without getting medical advice, as this could cause you to have a seizure.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Seizures can occur when you're awake or asleep and can sometimes be triggered by certain things such as feeling very tired.
- A ketogenic diet (low carbohydrate) can help control seizures.
- You may need treatment for life but you might be able to stop treatment if your seizures disappear over time.

WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY

Call 999 for ambulance if you or someone:

- Is having a seizure for the first time
- Has a seizure that lasts more than 5 minutes
- Has lots of seizures in a row
- Has breathing problems or has seriously injured themselves

OTHER TREATMENT OPTIONS

- Surgery to remove a small part of the brain that's causing seizures
- A procedure to put a small electrical device inside the body that can help control seizures

To register with Bromley Well:

Freephone 0808 278 7898

Or register online:

www.bromleywell.org.uk/refer

Contact Lifestyle Support direct

07985 431484 / 07985 444210

or email

enquiry@bromleywell.org.uk



EPILEPSY

Bromley

Well

HEALTH FACT SHEET

Updated July 2024

FURTHER RESOURCES

Epilepsy Action

Helpline 0800 800 5050

A national charity providing information and advice about living with Epilepsy. A really useful website packed with information and advice on areas such as treatment, wellbeing, daily life, driving and advice for carers.

Epilepsy Society

Helpline 01494601400

Email

helpline@epilepsysociety.org.uk

A national medical charity pioneering research and offering specialist assessments. Epilepsy society have a helpline for anyone affected by Epilepsy.

NHS Conditions Epilepsy

NHS conditions pages contain information about the causes, symptoms and treatment of Epilepsy and advice for people living with the condition.

References: NHS UK: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/epilepsy/#causes-of-epilepsy> NICE: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng217>

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EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

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HEALTH FACT SHEET

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WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Living with a long term health condition can be stressful. You might be anxious about your future or worried about managing day to day tasks. Friends and family can find it difficult to understand your situation and this may make you feel isolated. Learning how to look after your emotional wellbeing and finding ways to manage your mood is an important part of self care. We've put together this list of online resources to help you. If feelings of low mood or anxiety persist, contact your GP.

[NHS Moodzone](#)

Advice on coping with stress, anxiety, fear, anger and panic attacks. Pages include interactive tools, videos and audio guides.

[Live Life to the Full](#)

Free online courses covering low mood, stress and resiliency.

[Good Thinking](#)

Service for people feeling anxious, stressed or who are experiencing low mood. You can take a very brief self-assessment and be directed to further sources of support.

[Mind UK](#)

Charity that can offer advice and materials on improving your mental health and also sign post you to other services.

[Get Self Help](#)

A wide range of mental health issues are covered by this site including anxiety, depression, eating disorders and phobias. Site includes an online CBT course, worksheets and video resources.

SELF CARE TIPS

GET A GOOD NIGHTS SLEEP

Lack of sleep can make us feel irritable, low and overwhelmed.

EAT A WELL BALANCED DIET

Our brains need vitamins, minerals and energy to help us feel at our best

KEEP PHYSICALLY ACTIVE

Evidence shows that exercise can boost our self-esteem, improve our wellbeing and protect us from anxiety and depression.

AVOID ALCOHOL AND CAFFEINE

Alcohol is classed as a 'strong depressant' and can lower your mood and excess caffeine can contribute to feelings of anxiety.

STOP SMOKING

Evidence suggests the beneficial effect of stopping smoking on symptoms of anxiety and depression can equal that of taking antidepressants.

FIND TIME TO RELAX

Evidence suggests that techniques such as mindfulness and meditation can help to improve our emotional wellbeing.

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DIVERTICULAR DISEASE

What is Diverticular Disease?

A condition that affects the large intestine, causing abdominal pain and other symptoms. In this condition small bulges and pouches develop in the walls of the intestine which can sometimes become infected or inflamed which leads to Diverticulitis.

Types of Diverticular Disease:

Diverticulum – a small pouch that sticks out from the wall of the large bowel.

Diverticula – multiple diverticulum

Diverticulitis – when the pouch/pouches become inflamed or infected due to bacteria becoming trapped inside bulges, it can lead to abscesses.

Diverticulosis – the presence of diverticula.

What are the symptoms?

- Pain in the lower side of the abdomen
- Stomach pain that gets worse after you eat and gets better when you pass wind or open your bowels.
- Change in bowel habits e.g. constipation or diarrhoea.
- Blood in your stool.
- Bloating.

What are the causes?

- Some studies suggest that a low fibre diet can increase risk but this is not conclusive.
- Age – after the age of 40 it becomes more common.
- Obesity.
- Smoking.

What about treatment?

- Increasing fibre in your diet.
- Using pain relief to ease the discomfort – it is not recommended to use any pain relief in the NSAID (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory) such as Aspirin and Ibuprofen as these can cause further stomach issues.
- Antibiotics for diverticulitis.
- In cases with serious complications surgery can be used to remove the affected section but this is rare.

SELF CARE TIPS

TRY HEAT THERAPY

Sometimes heating pads applied to the abdomen can ease pain.

GET MORE VITAMIN D

Some research shows that low Vitamin D can cause complications. In order to get the right amount of Vitamin D it is recommended to eat plenty of fish and try to get sunlight each day. In some cases you may need to supplement with Vitamin D.

KEEP PHYSICALLY ACTIVE

Evidence shows that exercise can boost our self-esteem, improve our wellbeing and protect us from anxiety and depression.

TRY ALTERNATIVE REMEDIES

It can be beneficial to try to increase your intake of foods and spices such as ginger, turmeric and garlic that can be anti-inflammatory. Please consult with your doctor before trying any treatment.

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DIVERTICULAR DISEASE

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HEALTH FACT SHEET

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FURTHER RESOURCES

[Bladder and Bowel Community](#)

Charity that provide information and advice for anyone that has a condition that affects their bladder or bowels. They can help get Can't Wait Cards to use public bathrooms if you are having diarrhoea symptoms.

[Guts UK](#)

Factsheet on Diverticular Disease from a charity who are a charity that raise awareness on all things related on the digestive system.

[Facebook Support Group](#)

The longest run Diverticular Disease and Diverticulitis UK Based Support Group. This group offers support and discussions for people with Diverticular Disease based on the NHS guidelines and the latest scientific research.

References: NHS Inform: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/stomach-liver-and-gastrointestinal-tract/diverticular-disease-and-diverticulitis> NHS UK <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/diverticular-disease-and-diverticulitis/>

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FIBROMYALGIA

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HEALTH FACT SHEET

Updated July 2024

What is Fibromyalgia?

Fibromyalgia is a long-term condition that causes widespread pain. The pain can be felt in any part of the body. In addition to pain people may experience extreme tiredness, stiffness in their muscles and have difficulty sleeping.

What are the symptoms?

In addition to pain and tiredness symptoms can include:

- Headaches – ranging from ordinary types to migraine
- Alternating diarrhoea and constipation, sometimes accompanied by gas in the abdomen or nausea
- Lack of concentration, temporary memory impairment and word mix up
- Clumsiness and dizziness
- Sensitivity to changes in the weather and to noise, bright lights, smoke and other environmental factors
- Allergies

What are the causes?

The exact cause is unknown, but it is likely that a number of factors are involved:

- Changes in the way the central nervous system processes pain messages around the body resulting in constant feelings of and sensitivity to pain.
- Research has shown that people living with Fibromyalgia have lower than usual levels of certain hormones. Our hormones control many things in our bodies including how we process pain.
- Triggers. In some people the condition is triggered by physical or emotional stress caused by a stressful life event such as; an injury, an operation, an abusive relationship, relationship breakdown or bereavement.

What about treatment?

Treatment for is designed to relieve the symptoms but because there are many symptoms associated with Fibromyalgia no single treatment will work for everyone. You might find yourself referred to a:

- Rheumatologist – a specialist in conditions that affect muscles and joints
- Neurologist – a specialist in conditions of the central nervous system
- Psychologist – a specialist in mental health and psychological treatments

You could be prescribed: Painkillers, Anti-depressants, Muscle relaxants, Medication to help you sleep

SELF CARE TIPS

RELAXATION

Finding ways to relax has been shown to help manage symptoms. You could try having a warm bath, listening to music or techniques such as mindfulness and meditation.

HEAT

Having a warm shower or bath or using a hot water bottle helps many people to reduce pain, stiffness and aching.

DIET

No particular diet has been found to help but it's important to eat a healthy, balanced diet and try to cut down on caffeine and alcohol.

EXERCISE AND PACING

Physical activity has been shown to be helpful for people living with Fibromyalgia. Exercise improves our mood, builds our stamina, keeps us supple, helps us sleep and helps us maintain a healthy weight. If you are living with Fibromyalgia and haven't exercised in a while, you may experience pain and discomfort when you start. You will need to build up gradually and pace yourself.

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FIBROMYALGIA

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HEALTH FACT SHEET

Updated July 2024

FURTHER RESOURCES

[FMA UK \(Fibromyalgia Action UK\)](#)

Helpline: 0300 999 3333

Benefits Line: 0300 999 0055

A national charity providing information and advice for the public and for health professionals. A really useful site containing advice, the latest research and information about treatment.

Bromley Well Fibromyalgia Peer Support Group

Meets face to face bi-weekly on Mondays at Community House, South Street, Bromley, BR1 1RH between 14:30 – 16:00. Also, online bi-weekly Fridays 11:00 to 12:00 Further details can be found on our events calendar: [Events – Bromley Well](#)

[Fibromyalgia NHS conditions](#)

Fibromyalgia Self Help guidance from NHS conditions.

[Pain UK](#)

Charity that supports people with chronic pain through helplines and resources.

References: NHS conditions <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/fibromyalgia/> NHS inform [Fibromyalgia | NHS inform](#) FMA UK information packs <https://fmauk.org/information-packs-mainmenu-58/booklet-mainmenu-135>

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GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR GP

Bromley Well

HEALTH FACT SHEET

Updated July 2024

1) Is your issue urgent? Do you need to see a specific GP? If you have a long term health condition, would you benefit from seeing a GP who knows you?

2) Take a list of your medicines – prescribed or otherwise. Include tablets, liquids or creams. Your GP needs to know about everything you are taking.

3) Make a list of what's wrong – if you have several symptoms, begin with the most important. Try not to overcomplicate it.

4) Ask for a double appointment – if you have more than one health problem you want to discuss.

5) Ask questions until you understand. Not clear on a treatment plan? Ask again. Make sure you understand the next steps before you leave.

6) Ask who to contact if you have any more questions. You may have questions after your appointment. Find out who you can contact, including local support groups.

7) If you need support, take a relative, carer or friend. They can help you explain, understand and remember.

8) Unhappy? Ask to see another GP. You can also change GP practice but as a first step, discuss concerns with another staff member from your practice.

9) Could the practice nurse deal with your problem? Consider this as an alternative to making a GP appointment. The surgery may also run special clinics such as asthma and diabetes, so it is worth looking into it.

10) Take notes. You can take notes with you so that you're clear what you want to say and take notes during your appointment, so that you remember what your GP has said to you.

References: Healthwatch <https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/>

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HEALTHY EATING

Bromley

Well

HEALTH FACT SHEET

Updated July 2024

Why is it important?

If you are living with a long term health condition eating a well balanced diet and maintaining a healthy weight will help you manage your symptoms.

How can it help Long Term Health Conditions?

Type 2 diabetes

Maintaining a healthy weight and eating a diet that's low in saturated fats and high in fibre can help reduce your risk of developing type 2 diabetes and help you manage the condition if you have already been diagnosed.

Heart Health

A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low fat dairy and low in salt can help to reduce your risk of heart disease and maintain healthy blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

Arthritis

Maintaining a healthy weight helps reduce the strain on your joints.

Osteoporosis

A diet rich in calcium keeps your teeth and bones strong and can help to reduce bone loss that occurs with ageing.

Emotional wellbeing

Eating a nutritious diet can help us maintain our emotional wellbeing. In order to concentrate and focus our brain needs energy and this comes from the food we eat. If our diet is lacking in vitamins and minerals this can affect how we feel. For example, if we don't have enough iron in our diet we can feel tired and weak.

Pain management

It's important for people experiencing chronic pain to eat a healthy, balanced diet. Our nervous system is able to dampen pain via our body's own pain relieving substance, endorphins. To function properly our nervous system needs certain nutrients.

HEALTHY EATING TIPS



- Base your meals on starchy foods
- Eat lots of fruit and vegetables
- Eat more fish – including portions of oily fish
- Cut down on saturated fat and sugar
- Try to eat less salt – 6g max for adults per day
- Get active and try to be a healthy weight
- Drink plenty of water
- Don't skip breakfast!

Weight Management Tips

- Keep a food diary and think about what has worked before.
- Follow the healthy eating guideline and Eat well Guide
- Cut down on saturated fats and sugars
- Consider your portion sizes
- Practice mindful eating
- Don't make weight loss the goal!

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FURTHER RESOURCES

<p><u>British Nutrition Foundation</u></p>	<p>National charity providing information about healthy diets, weight management and nutrition. Website contains information on the latest research, webinars, blogs and recipes.</p>
<p><u>The Association of UK Dietitians</u></p>	<p>Professional body for dietitians in the UK the website also includes a “Your Health” section with useful information for the public including Food Fact Sheets giving expert nutrition advice for particular health conditions.</p>
<p><u>NHS Live Well Healthy Eating</u></p>	<p>NHS guide to healthy eating packed with tons of information and advice. Includes advice on healthy eating, vegetarian and vegan diet and eating disorders. Tools include a calorie checker, a BMI healthy weight calculator, a food allergies self-assessment and a 12-week guide to weight loss.</p>
<p><u>NHS Wellbeing Apps</u></p> <p><u>NHS Eatwell Plate</u></p>	<p>Link to a page of NHS Wellbeing Apps including Easy Meals and Smart Recipes, a BMI calculator and Change4Life food scanner.</p> <p>The NHS interactive eatwell plate is an easy-to-use guide to healthy eating.</p>

References: NHS Eatwell Plate <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-guidelines-and-food-labels/the-eatwell-guide/>, NHS Balanced Diet <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/how-to-eat-a-balanced-diet/eating-a-balanced-diet/>

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HEART ATTACK

Bromley

Well

HEALTH FACT SHEET

Updated July 2024

What is a Heart Attack?

A heart attack is a life-threatening medical condition that occurs when the blood flow that brings oxygen to the heart is suddenly blocked, usually by a blood clot. A lack of blood to the heart may seriously damage the heart muscle.

What are the symptoms?

Don't Delay! Call 999 for ambulance immediately if you have:

- Chest pain – a sensation of tightness, heaviness, pain or a burning feeling in the centre of your chest
- Pain in other parts of the body Pain may radiate from chest to arm, jaw, back and abdomen
- Shortness of breath
- Sweating
- Feeling light-headed or dizzy
- Feeling nauseous and vomiting

What are the causes?

Coronary heart disease (CHD) is the main cause of having a heart attack. In CHD blood vessels that supply the heart with blood (coronary arteries) get clogged up with deposits of cholesterol called plaques. These plaques may burst causing a blood clot to develop. The clot may block blood supply to the heart, triggering a heart attack.

- Your risk of developing coronary heart disease is increased by:
- Smoking
- A high fat diet
- Diabetes
- High cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Being overweight or obese

What about treatment?

Treatment is dependant on the severity of the Heart Attack. It is ideal if you are having any kind of Heart Attack for you to have an angiogram, which is a minimally invasive procedure to look at the health of the arteries to decide on treatment. Sometimes they will proceed with putting a stent in to open the arteries affected. Or they may prescribe cholesterol and blood thinning medication that can help break down the clots and prevent further build up. If you have to wait to have a stent they may prescribe blood thinning medication to help break down the clots and reduce the symptoms prior to investigation.

SELF CARE TIPS

STOP SMOKING

Smoking can increase the risk of plaque building in your arteries which is something that clots can then get caught blocking the arteries.

DIET

Certain foods can increase your risk of Coronary Heart Disease. Reducing the amount of saturated fats and eating a, high-fibre diet including whole grains and plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables can reduce your risk of developing it. It may be worth considering managing your weight if you are obese.

KEEP PHYSICALLY ACTIVE

Keeping physically active increases the efficiency of the heart and reduces blood pressure which helps with heart health. However, physical activity is also known to regulate blood sugars and increase HDL cholesterol or "good" cholesterol. Simply getting up and moving every now and then rather than living a sedentary lifestyle can help.

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HEART ATTACK

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Email: heretohelp@bhf.org.uk

A national charity providing information and advice for the public and for health professionals. A really useful site containing lifestyle advice, the latest research and information about tests and treatments. There are also British Heart Foundation support groups that are listed on the website.

Heart UK

National cholesterol charity providing support and advice for people concerned about cholesterol. A great website packed with advice on healthy eating and maintaining a healthy weight, including recipe ideas and diet plans.

NHS Conditions Heart Attack

NHS conditions pages contain information about the causes, symptoms and prevention and treatment of heart attacks.

NHS Wellbeing Apps

Links to NHS Wellbeing Apps designed to support you in making healthy lifestyle changes

References: NHS conditions <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/heart-attack/> British Heart Foundation <https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/conditions/heart-attack>

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HEART FAILURE

Bromley

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HEALTH FACT SHEET

Updated July 2024

What is Heart Failure?

Heart failure is a condition in which the heart does not pump efficiently enough to meet all the needs of the body. This usually occurs because the heart has become weak or your heart muscle is damaged.

What are the symptoms?

- Shortness of breath after activity or at rest.
- Rapid or irregular heart beat.
- Swelling of feet, ankles and abdomen, due to fluid retention.
- Feeling tired most of the time and finding exercise exhausting.
- A persistent cough, a fast heart rate and dizziness in some people.

What are the causes?

The most common cause of heart failure in the UK is coronary heart disease. Heart failure is also common in patients with high blood pressure and in those who have had a heart attack in the past.

Heart failure can also be caused by:

- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Congenital heart conditions
- A viral infection affecting the heart muscle
- An uncontrolled irregular heart rhythm (arrhythmia)

What about treatment?

Treatment aims to control symptoms and slow the progression of the condition

Common treatments include:

- Making lifestyle changes such as eating a healthy diet, regular physical activity and stopping smoking
- Medication – a range of medication can help
- Devices implanted in your chest can help control your heart rhythm
- Surgery – bypass operation or a heart transplant

SELF CARE TIPS

EAT A LOW SALT DIET

Sodium is an electrolyte in your body. If we have too much sodium the body can retain too much water which puts even more pressure on the heart.

MONITOR AND CONTROL FLUID INTAKE

Ideally those with heart failure should aim to drink between 1–1.5L of fluid to reduce risk of fluid overload.

CHECK WEIGHT REGULARLY

Checking weights means you can notice signs of fluid retention early before symptoms begin.

GET VACCINATED

Keep up to date with vaccinations like your yearly flu vaccination

ADHERE TO YOUR MEDICATION

By taking your medication you can better control your symptoms and reduce the risk of fluid overload etc.

DID YOU KNOW?

There is around 900,000 people in the UK living with heart failure.

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NHS conditions pages contain information about the causes, symptoms and prevention and treatment of heart attacks.

NHS Wellbeing Apps

Links to NHS Wellbeing Apps designed to support you in making healthy lifestyle changes

References: NHS conditions <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/heart-failure/> British Heart Foundation <https://www.bhf.org.uk/informationsupport/conditions/heart-failure>

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HYPERTENSION

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HEALTH FACT SHEET

Updated July 2024

What is Hypertension?

Hypertension is High Blood Pressure.

Blood pressure is recorded with two numbers. The higher number measures the force at which your heart pumps blood around your body and is known as systolic pressure. The lower number is the resistance to blood flow in the blood vessels known as diastolic pressure. Both are measured in millimetres of mercury (mmHg)

In the UK, more than 1 in 4 adults have high blood pressure. Many people are unaware that their blood pressure is too high because hypertension rarely has noticeable symptoms.

What are the symptoms?

Most people with High Blood Pressure do not experience symptoms but some do experience:

- Headaches due to increased in smaller blood vessels.
- Shortness of Breath
- Nosebleeds
- Anxiety

If you do start to experience new symptoms, especially severe headaches, shortness of breath or chest pains you should contact a healthcare provider.

What are the causes?

It is not always clear what causes high blood pressure but your risk is increased if you:

- Eat too much salt and don't eat enough fruit and vegetables
- Don't do enough exercise
- Drink too much alcohol or coffee (or other caffeine-based drinks)
- Smoke
- Don't get much sleep or have disturbed sleep
- Are over the age of 65
- Are overweight

What about treatment?

Healthy lifestyle changes that can help lower your blood pressure:

- Eat less salt (Limit your salt intake to 6g/day)
- Eat a balanced, healthy diet
- Be physically active
- Cut down on alcohol and caffeine based drinks
- Stop smoking
- Try to get a good night's sleep
- Blood pressure medication through your doctor - do not stop taking these without contacting your medical professional

HOW TO KEEP TRACK OF YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE

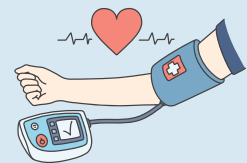
You can check your blood pressure yourself with a home blood pressure monitor. Your local pharmacist can signpost you to where to get one.

If you don't feel comfortable checking your blood pressure yourself, you can get your blood pressure checked:

- Some pharmacies
- During a NHS Health Check
- In some workplaces
- At your GP surgery

You should also be checked for low blood pressure if you are having:

- Light headedness or dizziness, Fainting
- Blurred vision
- Feeling sick
- Confusion
- Generally feeling weak



Blood Pressure Information

- Normal Blood pressure is between 120/80 mmHg or less
- High blood pressure is 140/90mmHg or higher
- Low blood pressure is considered to be 90/60mmHg or lower

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Blood Pressure UK

Help Line: 0207 882 6218

National charity providing information about how to check your blood pressure and what the results mean and advice about lifestyle changes and medication. Online forum available.

BDA Fact Sheet Hypertension

The Association of UK Dietitians fact sheets containing diet advice for people living with hypertension and tips for managing the condition.

NHS Approved Apps Healthy Living

Links to NHS approved Apps designed to support you in making healthy lifestyle changes.

NHS Live Well

NHS Live Well pages have information on topics such as maintaining a healthy weight, sleeping well, drinking sensibly and looking after your mental and emotional wellbeing

References: NHS conditions <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/high-blood-pressure-hypertension/> British Heart Foundation Hypertension Tips <https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/heart-matters-magazine/research/blood-pressure/blood-pressure-tips> Public Health England <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-combating-high-blood-pressure/health-matters-combating-high-blood-pressure>

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What is Ischaemic Heart Disease?

Ischaemic heart disease, also known as Coronary Artery Disease, is a condition that affects the supply of blood to the heart. If you have ischaemic heart disease it means the blood vessels carrying blood to your heart (your arteries) are narrow or blocked, due to deposition of cholesterol on the walls of your arteries (atherosclerosis) resulting in reduced supply of oxygen and nutrients to your heart.

Ischaemic heart disease can increase your risk of having a heart attack. Your heart pumps oxygenated blood to all your other organs. If there is a problem with your heart, other organs such as your brain, liver and kidneys can be affected. Ischaemic Heart Disease can also increase your risk of stroke and heart failure.

What are the symptoms?

The main symptom is chest pain, known as angina. You can also feel breathless or have heart palpitations. In certain cases you may feel clammy, fatigued and deal with weakness and nausea.

What are the causes?

Your chances of developing ischaemic heart disease are greater if you:

- Smoke
- Have high blood pressure
- Have high blood cholesterol
- Have diabetes
- Are physically inactive and overweight

What about treatment?

Depending on the severity of the disease in your arteries you may be advised to manage it with medications. The medications are used to reduce blood pressure, widen your arteries. Do not stop taking your medicine unless your doctor tells you to. Other treatments include angioplasty to put a stent in your arteries or sometimes having bypass surgery to replace the artery.

SELF CARE TIPS

EAT A HEALTHY DIET

Eat a well balanced diet, ensuring you eat plenty of fruit and vegetables. Also replacing as many saturated fats (that can increase your cholesterol) with unsaturated fats (sometimes known as 'healthy fats') such as oily fish like mackerel and salmon, nuts, yoghurts, olive oil etc.

CONTROL YOUR BLOOD SUGAR AND ALSO CHOLESTEROL

This can be done through diet and also medication.

STOP SMOKING

Smoking can damage your heart and blood vessels increasing the risk of atherosclerosis..

BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WEIGHT

Physical activity increases heart health and can help manage blood pressure.

To register with Bromley Well:

Freephone 0808 278 7898

Or register online:

www.bromleywell.org.uk/refer

Contact Lifestyle Support direct

07985 431484 / 07985 444210

or email

enquiry@bromleywell.org.uk



FURTHER RESOURCES

British Heart Foundation

**Help Line: 0808 802 1234 and
0300 330 3311**

**Email:
heretohelp@bhf.org.uk**

A national charity providing information and advice for the public and for health professionals. A really useful site containing lifestyle advice, the latest research and information about tests and treatments. Also has information on local support groups.

NHS Conditions Coronary Heart Disease

NHS information page on Ischaemic Heart Disease (Coronary Heart Disease) that covers important information from causes to diagnosis and treatment.

NHS Live Well

NHS Live Well pages have information on topics such as eating well, exercise and maintaining a healthy weight.

NHS Wellbeing Apps

Links to NHS Wellbeing Apps designed to support you in making healthy lifestyle changes.

References: NHS conditions <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronary-heart-disease/treatment> Public Health England <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-combating-high-blood-pressure/health-matters-combating-high-blood-pressure>

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What is Long Covid?

Most people with coronavirus (COVID-19) feel better within a few days or weeks of their first symptoms and make a full recovery within 12 weeks.

For some people, symptoms can last longer. This is called long COVID or post COVID-19 syndrome. Long COVID is a fairly new condition which is still being studied.

What are the symptoms?

The most common symptoms of long COVID are:

- extreme tiredness (fatigue)
- shortness of breath
- loss of smell
- muscle aches

However, there are lots of symptoms you can have after a COVID-19 infection, including:

- problems with your memory and concentration ("brain fog")
- chest pain or tightness
- difficulty sleeping (insomnia)
- heart palpitations
- dizziness
- pins and needles
- joint pain
- depression and anxiety
- tinnitus, earaches
- feeling sick, diarrhoea, stomach aches, loss of appetite
- a high temperature, cough, headaches, sore throat, changes to sense of smell or taste
- rashes

What about treatment?

Your doctor will talk to you about the care and support you might need. You may be given advice about how to manage and monitor your symptoms at home. If the symptoms are having a big impact on your life, you may be referred to a specialist service, rehabilitation service or a service that specialises in the specific symptoms you have.

These services can help manage your symptoms and help you recover.

If you have mental health symptoms, such as anxiety or depression, find out [how you can access NHS mental health support services](#).

MANAGING FATIGUE AND BREATHLESSNESS

PRACTICE PACING

Plan what you're going to do and don't over-exert yourself. Try to break tasks which feel difficult down into smaller chunks, and alternate easier and harder activities or spread them out through the day.

TRY TO KEEP MOVING BUT TAKE BREAKS

Don't stop doing things that make you feel breathless. If you stop using your muscles, they'll get weaker, which can make you more breathless when you try to use them. Take breaks when needed if you use a walking stick or a frame, lean forward on it when you feel breathless.

SLOW AND STEADY

Try to gradually increase the amount of exercise you do. Try going for short walks or doing [simple strength exercises](#) and build up from there.

GET HELP IF NEEDED

The ME Association has published a leaflet about [post-Covid fatigue](#). You can also call them on 0344 576 5326 for further support.

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FURTHER RESOURCES

[Bromley Healthcare Post COVID Syndrome Community Pathway](#)

Contact: 0300 330 5777

Email:
bromh.communitypostcovid@nhs.net

This Pathway provides a comprehensive assessment where your current symptoms, abilities and main goals to maintain or progress your recovery are discussed.

[Managing Long Covid Symptoms Video Series](#)

Videos produced by healthcare professionals and people with Long Covid to cover some of the main areas those with this condition suffer with and offer advice. They talk about relaxed breathing, how to boost sleep etc.

[Post-COVID syndrome \(long COVID\)](#)

NHS England long covid pages contain information about the causes, symptoms and treatment of long covid and advice for people living with the condition.

[Long-term effects of coronavirus \(long COVID\) - NHS](#)

Official NHS resource providing information on the latest research into long Covid and tips and advice on managing the condition.

References: NHS conditions <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/covid-19/long-term-effects-of-covid-19-long-covid/> NHS inform <https://www.nhsinform.scot/long-term-effects-of-covid-19-long-covid/about-long-covid/signs-and-symptoms-of-long-covid/>

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OSTEOARTHRITIS

Bromley Well

HEALTH FACT SHEET

Updated July 2024

What is Osteoarthritis?

Osteoarthritis is a long term condition that causes joints to become painful and stiff. It is the common type of arthritis in the UK. Osteoarthritis can affect any joint in the body but the most commonly affected joints are the knees, hips and small hand joints.

What are the symptoms?

Joint pain and stiffness are the main symptoms of osteoarthritis. Some people also experience swelling, tenderness and a grating or crackling sound when moving the affected joints.

What are the causes?

In osteoarthritis, the protective cartilage on the ends of your bones breaks down, causing pain, swelling and problems moving the joints. Bony growth can develop, and the area can become inflamed (red and swollen).

Although the exact cause of osteoarthritis is not known, several factors may increase the risk. These include:

- Joint injury - Overusing your joint when it has not had enough time to heal after an injury or operation
- Other conditions - Osteoarthritis can occur in joints severely damaged by a previous or existing condition such as rheumatoid arthritis or gout
- Age - Your risk of developing osteoarthritis increases as you age
- Family History - Osteoarthritis may run in families
- Being overweight - Being overweight puts excess strain on your joints, particularly those that bear most of your weight such as your knees and hips

What about treatment?

Severe symptoms can be managed with treatments such as:

- Medication- to relieve your pain
- A structured exercise plan carried out under the supervision of a physiotherapist
- Surgery may be carried out if damage to joints is very severe

SELF CARE TIPS

KEEP PHYSICALLY ACTIVE

Exercise such as swimming and cycling are ideal as they don't put too much strain on your joints.

EAT A HEALTHY DIET

Eat a well balanced diet, ensuring you eat plenty of fruit and vegetables. Maintain a healthy weight can help to reduce strain on the joints. Some people find that certain foods trigger their Osteoarthritis to flare up so it is always worth keeping a food diary to track anything like this. It also may be worth increasing your intake of anti-inflammatory food such as garlic, antioxidant rich berries etc.

WEAR SUPPORTIVE FOOTWEAR

Wearing comfortable and supportive footwear helps to support joints throughout the lower body.

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FURTHER RESOURCES

Versus arthritis

Help Line: 0800 5200 520

A National charity providing information on the latest research into arthritis and tips and advice on managing the condition. Online support for people living with arthritis.

Arthritis Action

Help Line: 020 3781 7120/0800 652 3188

A National charity offering healthy eating advice, physical therapies, exercise tips and pain management techniques.

NHS Conditions Arthritis

NHS conditions pages contain information about the causes, symptoms and treatment of arthritis and advice for people living with the condition.

BDA fact sheet osteoarthritis

The Association of UK Dietitians food fact sheets containing diet advice for people living with arthritis and tips for managing the condition.

References: NHS conditions <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/osteoarthritis/symptoms/> NICE <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng226>

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What is Osteoporosis?

A health condition where bones are weakened due to new bone is not being created as quickly as old bone is broken down, this makes them more fragile and more likely to break. It is often only diagnosed once a fall or sudden impact leads to a bone breaking. The most likely injuries to have with Osteoporosis are broken wrist, broken hip and broken spinal bones but it happen in any bone.

What are the symptoms?

- Stopped posture
- Pain – due to breaks e.g. back pain in lower back due to repeated spinal fractures
- Fractures healing slowly
- Fatigue

What are the causes?

- Ageing – losing bone is normal as you get older but some people lose it faster than others.
- Menopause – women lose bone rapidly in the first few years after menopause, they are often more at risk.
- Overactive thyroid gland
- Reduced oestrogen or testosterone
- Pituitary gland disorders
- Family history of osteoporosis
- Low BMI (body mass index)
- Long term use of high dose steroid tablets
- Having eating disorders such as anorexia or bulimia
- Heavy drinking or smoking
- Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Coeliac disease, Crohn's disease that affect absorption
- Some medications that are used to treat cancer
- Long periods of inactivity

What about treatment?

- Medications such as: Bisphosphonates that slows down the rate that bone is broken down, selective Oestrogen Receptor Modulators (SERMs) that helps maintain bone density, Parathyroid Hormone or other hormone therapies to stimulate new cells
- Calcium and Vitamin D supplements.
- Exercise – specifically resistance training to increase bone density

SELF CARE TIPS

USE TOWELS TO ADJUST YOUR POSTURE

You can either do this as a way to stretch but lying on the floor with a towel underneath your lower back or you can use it as you sit with a towel in a similar position.

USE HOT AND COLD THERAPY TO HELP WITH PAIN

Using heat can help with relaxation and soothing pain in general. Some people also find that applying cold to areas of pain can help.

PRACTICE PACING

Plan what you're going to do and don't over-exert yourself. Try to break tasks which feel difficult down into smaller chunks, and alternate easier and harder activities or spread them out through the day.

NOTICE PHYSICAL TRIGGERS

If you notice certain physical exertions trigger pain try to warm up a bit prior to doing them to allow blood flow to increase, strengthen overstretched muscles and allow them to relax and stretch slowly.

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FURTHER RESOURCES

Royal Osteoporosis Society

Help Line: 0808 800 0035

A charity that provides support for people with Osteoporosis. It has a helpline where you can get advice from a specialist nurse, they also provide general advice and guidance. Also, has directory for in person support groups for those with Osteoporosis.

NHS Conditions Osteoporosis

NHS conditions pages contain information about the causes, symptoms and treatment of osteoporosis and advice for people living with the condition.

Bromley Healthcare Falls and Fraction Prevention Services

Contact: 0300 330 5777

Link to Falls and Fraction Prevention page. This service provides an assessment with a Healthcare professional to provide you with tools to prevent falls which can be a big risk for those with Osteoporosis.

References: NHS conditions <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/osteoporosis/> NICE <https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/osteoporosis-prevention-of-fragility-fractures/>

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PAIN MANAGEMENT

Bromley

Well

HEALTH FACT SHEET

Updated July 2024

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Living with a long term health condition can involve living with pain of some kind. Long term or chronic pain can affect our mood and can mean affect the rest of our life. We've put together this list of online resources to help you manage your pain.

<u>NHS Advice ways to manage chronic pain</u>	Advice based on the latest research about ways to manage chronic pain.
<u>The Pain Toolkit</u>	Website full of information and advice on self-management techniques for pain management including this set of videos.
<u>Crystal Palace Physios</u> Contact: 020 8778 9050	From 3rd April 2018, if you are a registered with a Bromley GP and are 18 years or older and have back, neck, joint or general muscle problems you can now self-refer to physiotherapy without a GP appointment.
<u>The British Pain Society</u>	This website is primarily aimed at healthcare professionals but there are pages for people living with pain. Site includes information about the latest treatment plans and options.
<u>Pain Concern</u> Help Line 0300 123 0789	Website packed full of information and advice including podcasts videos and information leaflets.
<u>Understanding Pain in 5 minutes</u>	Easy to follow video explaining our current understanding of the causes of chronic pain.

SELF CARE TIPS

KEEP A PAIN DIARY

Keeping a diary can help you understand your pain, identify any triggers and keep track of what eases your pain.

PRACTICE PACING

Plan what you're going to do and don't over-exert yourself. Try to break tasks which feel difficult down into smaller chunks, and alternate easier and harder activities or spread them out through the day.

KEEP MOVING

Keeping active to help maintain your strength and flexibility. Physical movement can help to relieve pain. Just be aware of your limits.

TRY RELAXATION AND DISTRACTION

Relaxation techniques such as breathing exercises, mindfulness and meditation have been shown to relieve pain. Distracting yourself with these techniques or another activity such as reading or doing something creative has been shown to relieve pain.

REDUCE YOUR DRINKING AND TRY TO STOP SMOKING

Both these things affect your nervous systems sensitivity.

BE AWARE OF YOUR MEDICATIONS AND WHAT THEY ARE FOR

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PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Bromley

Well

HEALTH FACT SHEET

Updated July 2024

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Being physically active can help prevent and manage long term health conditions. For example, it can reduce joint pain caused by arthritis, ease breathlessness in people with COPD and delay the progression of osteoarthritis. It keeps our heart healthy, helps us maintain a healthy weight and improves our sleep. Evidence also shows that being physically active can improve our emotional wellbeing and reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety. And remember, you don't need to join a gym to be active. We've put together this list of resources to give you some ideas.

[NHS Fitness Videos](#)
[NHS Live Well 10 Minute Workouts](#)
[NHS Live Well gym free workouts](#)

NHS Fitness Studio: free online fitness videos, aerobics, pilates and yoga videos and condition specific videos.

[Crystal Palace Physios](#)
Contact: 020 8778 9050

From 3rd April 2018, if you are a registered with a Bromley GP and are 18 years or older and have back, neck, joint or general muscle problems you can now self-refer to physiotherapy without a GP appointment.

[Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults](#)

NHS Physical activity guidelines for adults aged 19-64 and 65 plus.

[Mytime Active](#)

Provides a variety of classes for over 60s.

[Be Active In Bromley](#)

Information about local cycle routes, outdoor gyms, parks and outdoor spaces and clubs and classes locally.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

DO A VARIETY OF ACTIVITY

We need a variety of activities to help build and maintain our stamina, our strength, our flexibility and our balance.

BREAK UP SEDENTARY TIME

A sedentary lifestyle (sitting or lying with low energy expenditure) can be detrimental for many reasons. Inactivity can increase your risk of Type 2 Diabetes, Cardiovascular Disease etc. Any movement can break this up including chair based exercise.

MAKE SMALL CHANGES OVER TIME

We want physical activity to be part of our daily lives so doing things like taking the stairs or making sure you take a break every hour to stretch etc can be really important.

START NOW

The sooner you start being physically active the sooner you can see some of the benefits.

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RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

Bromley

Well

HEALTH FACT SHEET

Updated July 2024

What is Rheumatoid Arthritis?

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a long term condition that causes pain, swelling and stiffness in the joints.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms usually affect the hands, feet and wrists and include:

Pain – Joint pain associated with rheumatoid arthritis is usually throbbing and aching pain that can be worse in the morning and after inactivity.

Joint stiffness – especially in the morning. E.g. you may not be able to bend your fingers fully if your hands are affected.

Swelling, warmth and redness: The lining of joints affected become inflamed causing the joints to swell, become hot and tender to touch.

Other symptoms may include:

- Tiredness and lack of energy
- A high temperature (fever)
- Sweating
- Weight loss
- Poor appetite

What are the causes?

Rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune disease. This means your immune system which usually fights infection attacks the cells that line your joints by mistake. This can make the joints to become swollen, stiff and painful. Over time, this can damage the joint itself, the cartilage and nearby bone.

It's not clear what triggers this problem with the immune system, your risk is increased by:

- Your genes – the condition may be due to inherited genes although this is rare
- Hormones – the condition is more common in women than men. This may be due to the effect of the hormone oestrogen
- Smoking – people who smoke are at increased risk of developing rheumatoid arthritis

What about treatment?

Treatment is designed to reduce joint, relieve pain, prevent or slow joint damage, reduce disability and enable you to live an active life.

Options include:

- Medication to relieve symptoms and slow disease progression
- Physiotherapy and occupational therapy to help keep you mobile
- Surgery to correct any joint problems that develop

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

DO A VARIETY OF ACTIVITY

We need a variety of activities to help build and maintain our stamina, our strength, our flexibility and our balance.

BREAK UP SEDENTARY TIME

A sedentary lifestyle (sitting or lying with low energy expenditure) can be detrimental for many reasons. Inactivity can increase your risk of Type 2 Diabetes, Cardiovascular Disease etc. Any movement can break this up including chair based exercise.

MAKE SMALL CHANGES OVER TIME

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START NOW

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FURTHER RESOURCES

Versus Arthritis

Help Line: 0800 5200 520

A National charity providing information on the latest research into arthritis and tips and advice on managing the condition.

Arthritis Action

**Help Line: 0800 652 3188/020
3781 7120**

A National charity offering healthy eating advice, physical therapies, exercise tips and pain management techniques.

NHS Conditions Arthritis

NHS conditions pages contain information about the causes, symptoms and treatment of arthritis and advice for people living with the condition.

British Association of Dieticians Factsheets

The Association of UK Dietitians food fact sheets containing diet advice for people living with arthritis and tips for managing the condition.

References: NHS conditions <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/rheumatoid-arthritis/> NICE <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng100>

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WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Sleep is important for our physical and emotional wellbeing. When we don't get enough sleep we can become irritable and impatient and find it difficult to concentrate. We can feel anxious and low. Sleep helps to regulate our blood pressure and our metabolism and weight. If you are living with a long term health condition getting a good night's sleep is an important part of managing your symptoms.

<u>Sleep Council</u>	An advisory organisation that raises awareness of the importance of a good night's sleep and provides advice on how to improve sleep quality.
<u>NHS Live Well Sleep and Tiredness</u>	NHS guidelines for getting a good night's sleep.
<u>Why we sleep – Matthew Walker</u>	Professor of neuroscience in Berkley California, Matthew Walker has produced a number of easy to follow YouTube videos explaining the importance of sleep for our bodies and minds.
<u>Good Sleep Guide</u>	Information pamphlet from the Chartered Society of Physiotherapists that can be ordered or downloaded from the site as a pdf. Guide contains advice about sleeping positions, use of pillows and mattresses.
<u>NHS Wellbeing Apps</u>	NHS Wellbeing Apps including Sleep Station, a six week course.

HOW TO IMPROVE SLEEP

REGULAR ACTIVITY

Physical activity is shown to relieve stress and aids in good quality sleep.

ALLOCATING TIME TO UNLOAD WHAT YOU'RE WORRYING ABOUT

Setting aside some 'worry' time each day to write down anything that's bothering you and set it aside until the next day can help to get those thoughts out of your head.

MAKE TIME FOR RELAXATION

Relaxation exercises e.g. breathing exercises, muscle relaxation techniques or a relaxing bedtime routine e.g. taking a bath or shower, listening to music, reading will help you wind down.

MAKE YOUR BEDROOM A SLEEP FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT

Make sure your bedroom is dark, your pillow and mattress are comfortable and your bedroom is the right temperature – not too hot or too cold.

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STOPPING SMOKING

Bromley

Well

HEALTH FACT SHEET

Updated July 2024

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Whatever long term condition you are living with, stopping smoking will be one of the things you can do to help manage your condition. Some people find it easier than others to stop smoking so we've put together this list of online resources to help you.

<p><u>Stop Smoking London</u></p> <p>Help Line 0300 123 1044</p>	<p>Bromley no longer has a specialist stop smoking service but you can use the Stop Smoking London website and portal. It contains lots of helpful information about quitting and links to other services including Apps.</p>
<p><u>Action on Smoking and Health</u></p>	<p>Campaigning public health charity. Website contains tips on quitting and information about treatment to help you stop smoking.</p>
<p><u>NHS Live Well Stop Smoking</u></p>	<p>NHS Live Well pages have information on over 100 topics about healthy living. The stop smoking pages are full of tips to help you give up, information on the benefits of quitting and the treatments that are available to help you.</p>
<p><u>NHS Well Being Apps</u></p>	<p>Links to NHS Wellbeing Apps designed to support you in making healthy lifestyle changes</p>

TIPS

IDENTIFY YOUR SMOKING TRIGGERS

Sometimes certain things make us want to smoke such as stress. Noticing these patterns can help you plan ahead and also avoid situations where you may be tempted.

PACE YOURSELF

Take it one day at a time.

BUDDY UP

It can be great to have someone to hold you accountable and encourage you.

USE NICOTINE SUPPLEMENTATION

Patches and sprays can help with withdrawal.

CELEBRATE THE LITTLE THINGS

Make sure you take the time to celebrate yourself, doing things like using the money you save to treat yourself can really help.

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STRESS

Bromley

Well

HEALTH FACT SHEET

Updated July 2024

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Stress is the emotional and physical response we have when we feel overwhelmed and unable to cope with the demands of life. When we are stressed we can find it difficult to sleep, have difficulty concentrating, feel irritable, experience new pains and experience problems with appetite and digestion. We are all likely to feel stressed at some point in our lives and a little bit of stress can sometimes help to motivate us. But prolonged periods of stress can be harmful to our physical and emotional wellbeing. We've put together this list of online resources to help you. If your physical and emotional sensations persist, contact your GP.

<u>NHS moodzone</u>	Advice on coping with stress, anxiety, fear, anger and panic attacks. Pages include interactive tools, videos and audio guides.
<u>Get Self Help</u>	A wide range of mental health issues are covered by this site including anxiety, depression, eating disorders and phobias. There is also advice on chronic pain. Site includes an online CBT course, worksheets and videos.
<u>Living Life to the Full</u>	Free online courses covering low mood, stress and resiliency. Includes resources aimed at people living with long term health conditions and chronic pain.

STRESS BUSTING TIPS

EAT A WELL BALANCED DIET

Our brains need vitamins, minerals and energy to help us feel at our best.

KEEP PHYSICALLY ACTIVE

Evidence shows that exercise can boost our self-esteem and improve our emotional wellbeing.

AVOID ALCOHOL, CAFFEINE AND NICOTINE

Alcohol is classed as a 'strong depressant' and can lower your mood and excess caffeine and nicotine can contribute to the feelings of anxiety we experience when stressed

RELAX

Make sure you find time to do activities that help you relax.. Evidence suggests that techniques such as mindfulness and meditation can help to improve our emotional wellbeing.

CONNECT

Remember that you don't have to cope with it alone. Connect with people who can offer you support. That could be friends and family, work colleagues, your HR department, local peer support groups local organisations like Bromley Well.

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STRESS

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HEALTH FACT SHEET

Updated July 2024

FURTHER RESOURCES

There are still more resources below. We've put together this list of online resources to help you. If your physical and emotional sensations persist, contact your GP.

<u>Good Thinking UK</u>	Service supported by NHS clinical commissioning groups, London Boroughs, Public Health England and the Mayor of London. Website for people feeling anxious, stressed or who are experiencing low mood. You can take a brief self-assessment and be directed to further sources of support.
<u>Mind UK</u>	National charity. The Mind website includes a wealth of information for people experiencing a mental health problem. Information on <u>Mindfulness</u>
<u>NHS Wellbeing Apps</u>	Link to a page of NHS Wellbeing Apps including many designed to help people manage their emotional wellbeing including Chill Panda, Thrive, Beat Panic, I Prevail and My Possible Self.
<u>Bromley Mental Health and Wellbeing Support</u>	Information about support services in the borough and links to further information.

STRESS BUSTING TIPS

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What is a Stroke?

A stroke is a life-threatening medical condition that occurs when blood supply to part of the brain is restricted or stopped.

During a stroke, brain cells in the affected part of your brain become damaged because they are not getting the oxygen they need. This can lead to brain injury, disability and possibly death.

What are the symptoms?

To spot the early warning signs of stroke in yourself or another individual, use the **FAST** test:

Face – The face may fall on one side and the person may not be able to smile

Arms – unable to raise both arms and keep them in position

Speech problems – not able to speak clearly

Time to call 999 for ambulance if you see any of the three signs

Other signs of stroke include

- Sudden weakness or numbness on one side of the body including legs, hands and feet
- Sudden blurred vision or loss of sight in one or both eyes
- Sudden memory loss of confusion, dizziness
- Sudden falls and severe headaches

What are the causes?

There are two main causes of strokes:

- Ischaemic – Accounts for 85% of all cases. Blood supply to the brain is stopped because of a blood clot
- Haemorrhagic – Occurs when a weakened blood vessel supplying the brain bursts

There are certain conditions that can increase the risk of having a stroke. These include diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and atrial fibrillation.

What about treatment?

Treatments depend on the type of stroke:

- Ischaemic – treatment focuses on breaking down the clot, through medications such as thrombolysis (alteplase) or anticoagulants or antiplatelets or a procedure to remove the clot (thrombectomy). Other changes may be made to medications like statins and blood pressure medication to control risk factors.
- Haemorrhagic – it may require medication to reduce blood pressure or sometimes surgery to access and stop bleeding (craniotomy).

SELF CARE TIPS

EAT PLENTY OF FRUIT AND VEGETABLES

Generally eating a healthy balanced diet decreases your risk of having a stroke. Specifically eating five portions of fruit and vegetable a day can reduce your risk of stroke by 30%. This is because fruit and vegetables contain antioxidants such as Vitamins A, C and E which prevent damage to your arteries, which can lead to stroke

REDUCE SATURATED FATS AND PROCESSED FOODS

Having too much fat, salt and sugar in your diet can increase the risk of stroke. So cutting down on saturated fats, cheese, fatty meat, processed meat and takeaways can help reduce this risk.

THINK ABOUT THE EAT WELL PLATE

The Eatwell plate gives us clear guidance on how to maintain a balanced diet. Starchy foods should make up a third of your daily diet. We should keep our salt intake below 6g per day. We should also aim to eat some protein every day found in oily fish, peas, beans and nuts.

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FURTHER RESOURCES

<p><u>Stroke Association</u></p> <p>Helpline 0303 3033 100</p>	<p>National charity offering information for healthcare professionals and the public.</p>
<p><u>My Stroke Guide</u></p>	<p>Advice, information and videos from the Stroke Association explaining what you need to know after a stroke. Includes an online forum.</p>
<p><u>Different Strokes</u></p> <p>Information Line: 03451307172</p>	<p>A national charity providing support for younger people affected by stroke.</p>
<p><u>NHS Conditions Stroke</u></p>	<p>NHS conditions pages contain information about the causes, symptoms and treatment of Stroke. It also includes information about recovery from stroke and about the rehabilitation services you might be entitled to.</p>

References: NHS conditions <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/rheumatoid-arthritis/> NICE <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng100>

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What is Sickle Cell Disease?

Sickle Cell Disease is the name for a group of inherited conditions that affect the red blood cells. The most serious type is called sickle cell anaemia. Sickle haemoglobin (red blood cells) become distorted when oxygen leaves them, this creates a red blood cell that is the shape of a crescent instead of the usual smooth, disk shape. This can then lead to cells sticking together and not moving through the blood vessels. These blockages can cause pain (sickle cell crisis). Sickle Cell disease affects 1 in every 2000 births in England. High-Risk Ethnic Groups include African or African-Caribbean.

What are the symptoms?

- Sickle Cell Crisis, painful episodes that can last for days or weeks.
- More prone to serious infections
- Anaemia
- Tiredness
- Shortness of Breath

What are the causes?

Sickle Cell is inherited; it is caused by a change in the genes that help produce Haemoglobin. Both parents must have the gene for it to affect the child.

What about treatment?

- Drinking plenty of fluids and staying warm to reduce painful episodes.
- Exercise regularly.
- Eating food rich in folic acid and calcium.
- Using paracetamol or ibuprofen when treating crises from home.
- Daily antibiotics and having regular vaccinations.
- Regular blood transfusions can be used in cases where your symptoms are continuing or getting worse.
- Emergency blood transfusions in cases of severe anaemia.
- Medications such as Hydroxycarbamide, this can reduce sickling which can prevent crisis developing.

SELF CARE TIPS

DRINK PLENTY OF WATER

If you have sickle cell diseases, especially sickle cell anaemia being dehydrated can bring on a sickle cell crisis as red blood cells begin sticking together.

WEAR WARM CLOTHES AND AVOID EXTREME TEMPERATURE CHANGES

Both the cold and also extreme temperature changes e.g. going into a cold swimming pool can be triggers for sickle cell crisis.

USE HEAT TO SOOTHE PAIN DURING CRISIS

Items such as heated blankets and other devices can really help with pain when applied to location of it.

ENSURE YOU ARE UP TO DATE ON YOUR VACCINATIONS

Those with sickle cell disease are more vulnerable to infection so protecting yourself through vaccinations can reduce risk in this area.

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FURTHER RESOURCES

Sickle Cell Society

**Help Line: 0780 973 6089
(Available Monday–
Wednesday)**

National charity that supports and advocates for those with Sickle Cell Disease. They have information on a wide range of topics for all age groups, covering things such as treatments, breaking barriers and new research. They also run specific children activities.

Let's Keep Talking

Website created to support you in working with your Healthcare Team. There is lots of information on here to empower you to manage your condition.

NHS Conditions Sickle Cell

NHS conditions pages contain information about the causes, symptoms and treatment of Sickle Cell disease. It also includes information about recovery from stroke and about the rehabilitation services you might be entitled to.

References: NHS conditions <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/sickle-cell-disease/> NICE <https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/sickle-cell-disease/>

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IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME

Bromley

Well

HEALTH FACT SHEET

Updated July 2024

What is IBS?

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is a condition that affects the digestive system. The cause is unknown but it has been linked to food passing through the gut at the wrong speed, oversensitive nerves in your gut, stress and family history. There is currently no cure and therefore is a lifelong condition, but diet changes and medicines can often help control the symptoms.

What are the symptoms?

- Stomach pain or cramps – which gets better after going to the toilet
- Bloating
- Diarrhoea
- Constipation
- Flatulence
- Passing mucus in your stool
- Fatigue
- Nausea
- Back problems
- Irregularities with urinating
- Bowel incontinence

What are the causes?

The exact cause is not known however it can be caused by:

- Muscle contractions in the intestine. Contractions in the walls of the intestines is what keeps food moving through. If there are changes to the strength of these it can cause gas, bloating and diarrhoea or hard and dry stools.
- Issues with the nerves in your digestive system which may cause discomfort when your abdomen stretches from gas or stool due to the nervous system overreacting to these things.
- Severe viral or bacterial infection can damage the digestive system. This is called gastroenteritis. IBS might also be associated with a surplus of bacteria in the intestines (bacterial overgrowth).
- Early life stress. People exposed to stressful events, especially in childhood, tend to have more symptoms of IBS.
- Changes in gut microbes. Research indicates that the microbes in people with IBS might differ from those in people who don't have IBS.

What about treatment?

- Manage with nutrition; find your triggers and try to avoid them e.g. some people find sweeteners trigger their IBS.
- Medicine management; depending on your symptoms you can be offered a few medications. Peppermint Oil or probiotics can be helpful. If you are having quite a lot of discomfort you may want to discuss with your GP about pain medication.

SELF CARE TIPS

DRINK PLENTY OF WATER

Being dehydrated can exacerbate symptoms such as constipation and gas as lack of water affects the digestive system.

REGULAR EXERCISE

Exercise can help with IBS symptoms in a number of ways, it relieves stress that often triggers IBS, it can aid with constipation and it improves your overall health. But be wary of your limits.

EAT A HIGHER FIBRE DIET

Fibre aids in digestion and bowel movements and so increasing fibre is advised.

KEEP A FOOD DIARY

Keeping a food diary can help to notify triggers in your diet. IBS trigger can be very individual.

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FURTHER RESOURCES

The IBS Network

A national charity that supports people with IBS through information, advice and peer support group.

BDA – The Association of Dieticians IBS Factsheet

Food fact sheet including advice on foods can often be triggers for people with IBS.

NHS Conditions IBS

NHS conditions pages contain information about the causes, symptoms and treatment of IBS. It also includes information about recovery from stroke and about the rehabilitation services you might be entitled to.

References: NHS conditions <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/irritable-bowel-syndrome-ibs/> NHS inform <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/stomach-liver-and-gastrointestinal-tract/irritable-bowel-syndrome-ibs/managing-irritable-bowel-syndrome-ibs>

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INCONTINENCE

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HEALTH FACT SHEET

Updated July 2024

What is Incontinence?

Incontinence is the inability to control either your bowels or bladder which leads to involuntary leaking. There are 2 types of incontinence; urinary incontinence and bowel incontinence, but these conditions can happen simultaneously.

What are the causes of incontinence?

Urinary Incontinence:

- Stress incontinence – when you leak when your bladder is under pressure e.g. when you cough, this is caused by weakening of the muscles that are used to prevent urination.
- Urge incontinence – when you have a sudden, intense urge to urinate due to overactivity in muscles that control the bladder
- Overflow incontinence (chronic urinary retention) – when the bladder does not fully empty during urination and you frequently leak afterwards, normally caused by some sort of obstruction which prevents the bladder emptying.
- Total incontinence – when you pass urine constantly or have frequent leaking due to your bladder being unable to store any urine.

Bowel Incontinence:

- Long lasting constipation or diarrhoea
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) or inflammatory Bowel Disease e.g Crohn's disease
- Haemorrhoids
- Childbirth or surgery that has damaged muscles or nerves that control your bowels
- Conditions such as diabetes, stroke or spina bifida.

What about treatment?

Some treatment options include:

- Reducing caffeine and alcohol intake.
- Pelvic floor exercises – sometimes aided by electrical stimulation.
- Bladder training – learning ways to wait longer between needing to urinate and passing urine.
- Exercising and healthy eating.
- Incontinence products.
- Identifying food that make diarrhoea worse and avoiding them or dietary changes such as increasing high fibre foods if you are constipated and reducing high fibre foods if you are experiencing diarrhoea.
- Medicine to reduce constipation or diarrhoea such as loperamide or laxative.
- Having a regular routine of going to the toilet e.g. directly after meals.
- Surgery can be considered if other treatments do not help.

HELPFUL TOOLS

CAN'T WAIT CARDS

Can't wait cards are for those with bladder and bowel concerns that cause an urgent need to use the bathroom. It allows you access to any public toilet.

RADAR KEYS

Radar keys can be used to open any accessible toilet with a lock.

SELF CARE TIPS

TRY PELVIC FLOOR EXERCISES

Strengthening your pelvic floor can help with leaks. You can find guidance on exercises [here](#).

CUT DOWN ON CAFFEINE AND ALCOHOL

Caffeine irritates the bladder exacerbating incontinence and alcohol acts as a diuretic increasing urination.

TREAT CONSTIPATION QUICKLY

Constipation could cause straining which weakens the pelvic floor. Eating plenty of fibre and ensuring you are hydrated can help.

AVOID FOODS THAT IRRITATE THE BLADDER

Spicy and acidic foods can sometimes cause irritation, keep a food diary to monitor patterns.

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INCONTINENCE

Bromley Well

HEALTH FACT SHEET

Updated July 2024

FURTHER RESOURCES

[Bladder Health UK](#)

This is a charity that offers support, help and information for those struggling with bladder issues including incontinence. This page provides a variety of articles on managing incontinence as well as different products to help.

[Bladder and Bowel UK](#)

Help Line: 0161 214 4591

Charity that can help with Can't Wait cards. They also have a helpline and other online support.

[Bladder and Bowel Community](#)

This charity can also help with Can't Wait cards. They provide information and support and also run online support groups.

[Radar Key](#)

The radar key allows access to accessible toilets with NKS (National Key Scheme) locks around the country. You can open the toilets independently as long as you have a radar key which can be purchased through this link.

References: NHS conditions <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/urinary-incontinence/>
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/urinary-incontinence/10-ways-to-stop-leaks/>

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What is harmful drinking?

Harmful drinking is defined as a pattern of alcohol consumption causing health problems directly related to alcohol. This includes psychological problems such as depression, alcohol-related accidents or conditions such as acute pancreatitis.

What are the risks of heavy drinking?

Long term heavy drinking can increase your risk of developing:

- High blood pressure – a major risk factor of having a stroke or heart attack
- Heart disease
- Liver disease
- Liver cancer and bowel cancer
- Mouth cancer
- Cirrhosis of liver (where damage to the liver causes scar tissues to build up which can lead to cancer)

Other effects of alcohol

Alcohol has high sugar content

Drinking excessive amounts over time can decrease the effectiveness of insulin, leading to high blood sugar levels and diabetes.

Alcohol is a diuretic

It acts on the kidneys to make you lose more fluids from your body, leading to dehydration which can cause headaches.

Alcohol poisoning

May lead to vomiting, seizures (fits) and falling unconscious.

What about treatment?

- Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) has been shown to be helpful
- Medication such as acamprosate, disulfiram, naltrexone and nalmefene can be prescribed to treat alcohol misuse
- Keeping a drinking diary to record how many units of alcohol you drink a week may help control your alcohol intake

References: NHS choices: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/high-blood-pressure-hypertension/> Public Health England: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-combating-high-blood-pressure/health-matters-combating-high-blood-pressure>

ALCOHOL UNITS



1 UNIT

½ pint beer, lager, cider
ABV 3.6%

125ml glass of wine

25ml measure of spirits

100ml glass of prosecco

ALCOHOL GUIDELINES

- Men and women should not regularly drink more than 14 units a week
- If you drink more than 14 units of alcohol a week, it's best to spread this evenly over three days or more
- Pregnant women should not drink alcohol
- Have one or two alcohol free days each week
- If you have drunk too much, allow 48 hours for your body to recover

DO YOU KNOW THAT?

- Alcohol is very high in calories and excessive consumption can lead to weight gain
- Alcohol can affect your sleep patterns and it best to avoid drinking alcohol before bedtime
- Alcohol weakens the heart muscle, which can mean the heart does not pump blood efficiently, this can cause premature death, usually through heart failure

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FURTHER RESOURCES

<p>Drinkaware www.drinkaware.co.uk</p> <p>Drinkline 0300 123 1110</p>	<p>National charity providing advice, information and tools to help you make better choices about your drinking.</p>
<p>Alcohol Change UK https://alcoholchange.org.uk/</p> <p>Alcoholics Anonymous 0800 9177 650</p>	<p>National charity providing information, advice and support to help you make better choices about your drinking.</p>
<p>Drink Wise Age Well https://www.drinkwiseagewell.org.uk/about/</p>	<p>Website with online workshops to support lifestyle changes around alcohol.</p>
<p>Drugs and Alcohol Service in Bromley</p> <p>https://www.changegrowlive.org/bromley-drug-alcohol-service</p> <p>Weekday 020 8289 1999 Weekends 07738 802 713</p>	<p>Drug and Alcohol Service that offers support in crisis but also ongoing support in person and on the phone.</p>
<p>NHS live well alcohol support https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-advice/alcohol-support/</p> <p>NHS Better Health & Drink Less App</p>	<p>NHS advice on drinking, including a tracking app and links to services</p>

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What is fibromyalgia?

Fibromyalgia is a long-term condition that causes widespread pain. The pain can be felt in any part of the body. In addition to pain people may experience extreme tiredness, stiffness in their muscles and have difficulty sleeping.

What are the symptoms?

In addition to pain and tiredness symptoms can include:

- Headaches – ranging from ordinary types to migraine
- Alternating diarrhoea and constipation, sometimes accompanied by gas in the abdomen or nausea
- Lack of concentration, temporary memory impairment and word mix up
- Clumsiness and dizziness
- Sensitivity to changes in the weather and to noise, bright lights, smoke and other environmental factors
- Allergies

What are the causes?

The exact cause is unknown, but it is likely that a number of factors are involved:

- Changes in the way the central nervous system processes pain messages around the body resulting in constant feelings of and sensitivity to, pain.
- Chemical imbalances. Our hormones control many things in our bodies including how we process pain, our mood, appetite, sleep, and how we react to stressful situations. Research has shown that people living with Fibromyalgia have lower than usual levels of certain hormones.
- Triggers. In some people the condition is triggered by physical or emotional stress caused by a stressful life event such as; an injury, an operation, an abusive relationship, relationship breakdown or bereavement.

What about treatment?

Treatment for is designed to relieve the symptoms but because there are many symptoms associated with Fibromyalgia no single treatment will work for everyone. You might find yourself referred to a:

- Rheumatologist – a specialist in conditions that affect muscles and joints
- Neurologist – a specialist in conditions of the central nervous system
- Psychologist – a specialist in mental health and psychological treatments

You could be prescribed:

Painkillers, Anti-depressants, Muscle relaxants, Medication to help you sleep

SELF CARE TIPS

RELAXATION

Finding ways to relax has been shown to help manage symptoms. You could try having a warm bath, listening to music or techniques such as mindfulness and meditation.

HEAT

Having a warm shower or bath or using a hot water bottle helps many people to reduce pain, stiffness and aching.

DIET

No particular diet has been found to help but it's important to eat a healthy, balanced diet and try to cut down on caffeine and alcohol.

EXERCISE AND PACING

Physical activity has been shown to be helpful for people living with Fibromyalgia. Exercise improves our mood, builds our stamina, keeps us supple, helps us sleep and helps us maintain a healthy weight. If you are living with Fibromyalgia and haven't exercised in a while, you may experience pain and discomfort when you start. You will need to build up gradually and pace yourself.

References: NHS choices:
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stroke> Stroke Association www.atroke.org.uk

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