

Ageing Well Tools & Resources

The following factors are known to increase risk for poor wellbeing and development of dementia later in life. If your Ageing Well Check has identified any of the following factors, here are a number of useful tools and resources that can assist you to reduce these risk factors. Talk to your GP about which of these might be helpful to you.

LOW MOOD or ANXIETY

Aim to be free of low mood or anxiety most of the time.

- If you are experiencing low mood, worry or anxiety ask your GP for a referral to a psychologist for cognitive behavioural therapy. You can obtain a Mental Health Care Plan from your GP to receive rebates for your sessions.
- As part of this Ageing Well Check trial you can access treatment for low mood, worry and anxiety through two similar psychological interventions run face-to-face or via telehealth through our clinic at Macquarie University. These are the:
 - *Ageing Wisely* program for treating low mood, anxiety and loneliness, and
 - the *Happy Health Ageing Program* for treating depression, anxiety, loneliness when in combination with addressing smoking, weight loss, diet management, low exercise, mental stimulation, and alcohol use.
 - Ask your GP for a referral and call the Older Adult Mental Health team on (02) 9850-4866 or email AgeingWisely@mq.edu.au who can assist you to receive the relevant program for your needs.
- You can enrol in a free internet program for addressing low mood and anxiety via Mindspot, <https://www.mindspot.org.au/>
- You can also find out about other services by visiting Beyond Blue: <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>
- You can also access self-help resources for coping with low mood (<https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resources/Looking-After-Yourself/Depression>) and anxiety (<https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resources/Looking-After-Yourself/Anxiety>). They contain information and strategies you can try from your home.

SOCIAL CONNECTION

Aim to maintain regular social contact with a variety of people.

- Call or visit friends, family and neighbours regularly.
- Belong to more than one social group such as a hobby group or skills group, and attend regularly. Look on local community websites, council newsletters and noticeboards for local groups you can join.
- Visit your local community centre to participate in activities and meet people in your community.
- Get involved with volunteering. See the NSW Volunteering website (<https://makeadifference.volunteering.nsw.gov.au/volunteering/in-new-south-wales-nsw>).

- If transport reduces your ability to meet up with people, get access to community transport (<https://transportnsw.info/travel-info/ways-to-get-around/community-transport>)
- Ask your GP to link you in with a social worker to get you connected with others (<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/social-work-services>)
- You can obtain a Mental Health Care Plan from your GP to see a psychologist and talk through difficulties you might have in meeting new people or maintaining relationships with others.
- If your difficulties maintaining social connections are due to feelings of low mood, worry or anxiety, you can access the psychological treatment program called “Ageing Wisely” as part of this Ageing Well Check through our clinic at Macquarie University. Ask your GP for a referral and call (02) 9850-8715 or email AgeingWisely@mq.edu.au

SMOKING

Avoid or quit smoking (including cigarettes and e-cigarettes)

- Call the Quitline for assistance with quitting. Phone: 137848
- Ask your family and friends for extra support to help you quit.
- Talk to your GP about strategies to help you quit.

STIMULATING MENTAL ACTIVITIES

Regularly engage in a variety of mentally challenging activities to keep your brain active:

- Regularly do a variety of mentally-challenging activities such as crossword puzzles, sudoku, quizzes or playing board games. Variety is key.
- Try a new activity like joining a book club, attending community talks, and watching documentaries.
- Learn a new skill. See your local newspapers, community and Council pages, also see this link for some ideas. <https://www.skillshare.com/en/>
- Read regularly (e.g., books, magazines, newspapers, information online). Borrow books from your local library.

ALCOHOL

Aim to drink less than 10 standard drinks per week to reduce risk for dementia and chronic illness.

- Drink less than 17 standard drinks per week to **reduce risk for dementia**. This is equivalent to approximately 2 bottles of wine, 11 schooners (425ml of full-strength beer), or 500ml of high-strength (40%) spirits.
- Drink less than 10 standard drinks per week to reduce **risk for other illnesses**. Read the latest guidelines on safe alcohol consumption: <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/health-advice/alcohol>
- Link up with Alcohol and Other Drugs Information Service for support services and guidance on quitting (<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/aod/Pages/contact-service.aspx>), phone: 1800 250 015.
- Ask your GP for a referral to a psychologist, or for information on medical interventions appropriate to you.

EXERCISE

Aim to engage in regular cardiovascular exercise. Each week try to get:

1 hour and 15 minutes of vigorous exercise. This includes activities like heavy lifting, digging, aerobics, or fast bicycling).

OR 2.5 hours of moderate exercise. This includes activities like carrying light loads, bicycling at a regular pace, or doubles tennis.

OR 4 hours of walking. This includes walking at work and at home, walking to travel from place to place, and any other walking for recreation, sport, exercise, or leisure.

OR a combination of vigorous and moderate exercise and walking.

Try to build up to walking 10,000 steps a day (slow pace) or 7,000 steps at day at a fast pace. Count your steps or get an electronic step counter.

Take a friend with you to aid motivation and keep you committed to your goal.

DIET

Aim to maintain a healthy diet by:

- Eating one serving of fish per week.
- Reduce sugars, animal fats, and eat regular serves of fresh fruit and vegetables. Check out these healthy recipes by the Heart Foundation:
<https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/Bundles/Healthy-Living-and-Eating>
- Find up-to-date guidelines on healthy eating here:
<https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/guidelines/australian-dietary-guidelines-1-5>
- Check out this website for healthy eating ideas: <https://www.eatingwell.com/>
- Pre-plan meals ahead of time to reduce impulsive food choices when hungry.
- Talk to your GP about a referral to a dietician to assist with meal planning.

WEIGHT

Aim to maintain a healthy weight range.

- See the recommendations for diet above.
- Find up-to-date guidelines on healthy eating here:
<https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/guidelines/australian-dietary-guidelines-1-5>
- Check out this website for healthy eating ideas: <https://www.eatingwell.com/> Reduce in-between meal snacking.
- Reduce meal portion size.
- Reduce alcohol consumption.
- Increase physical exercise to reduce weight. Ask your GP for appropriate guidelines for your circumstance. Engage in physically active social activities and sports groups.

DIABETES

Aim to keep diabetes well-controlled and reduce pre-diabetes risk.

- Reduce risky behaviours such as drinking alcohol, smoking or eating unhealthy foods in excess.
- Manage a healthy weight (see recommendations above).
- Exercise regularly (see recommendations above).

CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH

Maintain regular exercise, eat well, and maintain a healthy weight.

- Reduce sugars, animal fats, and eat regular serves of fresh fruit and vegetables. See the section on diet above. Check out these healthy recipes by the Heart Foundation:
<https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/Bundles/Healthy-Living-and-Eating>

- Stay active and exercise most days by walking or engaging in sport. See the recommendations for exercise above.
- Modify any other risk factors (e.g., overweight) and seek ongoing management from your GP.

CHOLESTEROL

Aim to keep cholesterol levels under control.

- Maintain a healthy diet and regular exercise. See recommendations above.
- Choose low cholesterol food options in the supermarket (e.g., margarine spreads)

SLEEP

Aim to get regular sleep each night.

- See the following self-help resources to help your sleep & insomnia:
[https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resource s/Looking-After-Yourself/Sleep](https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resource%20s/Looking-After-Yourself/Sleep)
- Talk to a psychologist for cognitive behavioural interventions to improve your sleep and any issues that affect you. Ask your GP for a referral.
- Enrol in an internet intervention to help your sleep at *This Way Up*.
<https://thiswayup.org.au/programs/insomnia-program/>

HEARING

Aim to normalise hearing so to maximise social and mental stimulation and wellbeing by:

- Getting an audiology assessment in a hearing clinic if you have hearing loss that affects conversation. If you have hearing devices, ensure to get a timely follow up assessment to maximise hearing.
- Read information about hearing loss: <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/hearing-loss>

FALLS AND HEAD INJURY RISK

Aim to reduce the risk of head injury and falls, and reduce frailty by:

- Keeping your home safe from trip hazards, and install handrails as needed. Complete this checklist to ensure a fall-safe home:
<https://www.activeandhealthy.nsw.gov.au/preventing-falls/home-safety-checklist/>
- Building your mobility and confidence by increasing your strength and fitness across a range of activities. Seek advice from a physiotherapist or an exercise physiologist.
- See the following resource to help you Staying Active and On Your Feet:
<https://www.activeandhealthy.nsw.gov.au/preventing-falls/staying-active-and-on-your-feet/>
- Join a community exercise group in the Sydney North Local Health District (<https://www.nslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/HealthPromotion/ActiveAgeing/Pages/default.aspx>)
- Wear a helmet when cycling, skiing and engaging in other relevant activities
- Use walking frames and walking sticks as recommended.