

# A care leavers services and **information guide**





**Lockdown has been hard for lots of people in many ways.**

You may have been unwell, found it difficult to budget or maybe you're getting less sleep than usual. Perhaps you felt bored or frustrated by the restrictions. You might have missed friends/family or perhaps you felt confused and anxious about the changing situation. You may have found time to take up hobbies such as baking, painting, computer games, meditation or cycling. Even though the rules are changing, there is still lots of uncertainty, limitations on how we usually go about our daily lives and things that we are still feeling worried about. Perhaps you



are excited about getting back to the new normal or maybe you aren't ready to pick up the pace again.

Lots of change and uncertainty can feel stressful and overwhelming. This is completely normal and at times like these, it can be easy to fall into unhealthy habits, which can make you feel worse.

There are simple things you can do to cope and feel better. If you need support to help you manage your mental health, self-esteem, physical health, and relationships there are services that can help with this. We have put together some useful information and links to where you can find tools to help you during this difficult time.

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# Being a care leaver

Between the ages of 16 and 18 you will be preparing to leave care. You may be excited about the opportunity to live independently without being told what to do by adults, maybe you are keen to move on from an unhappy placement or perhaps you don't quite feel ready to live alone and may feel as if there won't be anyone to turn to when things go wrong. The leaving care process officially starts around the age of 16, which means that care leavers are generally preparing to live independently much earlier than their peers. Therefore, it's important that you are supported with this process. Support includes important life skills such as learning to cook meals, managing bills and doing laundry.

You should be assigned a personal adviser who will help you to develop a personal plan that sets out what support you need to help you achieve your goals. This might cover education, finances, employment ambitions, where you want to live and should be reviewed every six months.

## Local support

### Young Lives Foundation

Mentoring and advocacy services providing advice and guidance in resolving the challenges that you are facing.

[www.facebook.com/ylf.org.uk](https://www.facebook.com/ylf.org.uk)

### Care Leaver Progression Partnership

A partnership of organisations in Kent and Medway, committed to improving the post-16 education and training experience for local children in care and care leavers.

[www.careleaverpp.org](http://www.careleaverpp.org)

### Become charity

Advice line, information online and tips for managing life during coronavirus.

[www.becomecharity.org.uk](http://www.becomecharity.org.uk)

### Medway Council Children's Services

16+ Care Leavers Service

Email: [16plus.duty@medway.gov.uk](mailto:16plus.duty@medway.gov.uk)

## National support

### Career Pilot Next steps and career options

[www.careerpilot.org.uk](http://www.careerpilot.org.uk)

### Young Peoples Support Online

A huge list of helplines and websites where young people can get information, advice and support on a number of things, including eating disorders, abuse, sexuality, drugs, self-harm, bullying and bereavement.

[www.supportline.org.uk](http://www.supportline.org.uk)

### Coram Voice

Advice and support for children and young people in care or leaving care.

[www.coramvoice.org.uk](http://www.coramvoice.org.uk)

### National Youth Advocacy Service

Advocacy, helpline, legal services and training

[www.nyas.net](http://www.nyas.net)

### The care advice line

Offers personalised information and advice for adults with care and support needs. Providing assistance for the individual, their carers, their professional advisers or their personal representatives to help ensure that they make informed decisions about their care and how to pay for it.

[www.thecareadvice.org](http://www.thecareadvice.org)

# Social activities

Social activities have a beneficial effect on health and wellbeing. These activities are fun, a chance to build new relationships and develop new skills as well an important way to unwind during more challenging times. Depending on what interests you, there are a wide range of activities available that can be undertaken either in a large or small group of people at a range of venues. These might include sporting events, arts and crafts or online gaming for example. You can also create your own social events such as online or face-to-face game nights, a camping trip, a bake-off challenge, or a game of dodgeball in the local park. During the lockdown you may have developed new hobbies or been less able to take part in the activities that you usually enjoy. This is a chance to review your social calendar and try out some new hobbies.

## Local support

### Medway Youth Service

Face to face social activities for children and young people are currently suspended. However online sessions lasting around 40 minutes are available via Microsoft Teams 11-18 or up to 25 for those with additional needs. Nearly 20 different sessions running each week including anime, escape rooms, Minecraft and drawing.  
[www.medway.gov.uk/onlineyouthwork](http://www.medway.gov.uk/onlineyouthwork)

### Online Lego Club

For children and young people over the age of 13.  
[www.medway.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.medway.gov.uk/libraries)

### Medway SENDIAS youth group

A chance for people aged 15-25 to socialise and share the views on a range of matters. The first session will take place on 14 September 2020 4-5pm. Contact 01634 566303 or email [medwaysendias@family-action.org.uk](mailto:medwaysendias@family-action.org.uk) to register your interest.



# Support with education and employment post 16

While being in lockdown will have had different effects on people of all ages, older teenagers have had unique challenges. They have had an abrupt end to their academic year and no one could have predicted that GCSE and A levels exams would not happen.

You might feel really upset or frustrated about not taking the exams that you have worked so hard for and now you are worried about your grades and what happens next. Year 11 and Year 13 are always important transition years and whilst schools and colleges are doing their best to support their students – the offer is compromised by the situation.

Perhaps you have missed out on celebrations, transition and social events that mark the ending of a stage in education and a new beginning. You may be working on exam courses remotely with very little contact with your tutor.

Whilst there has been some innovative teaching and learning happening remotely, there is no substitute for the social contact that school and college provides. Social media has its limitations and challenges for maintaining all important friendships and relationships. It can also impact on self-esteem and has the potential to expose you to harmful situations.

## Local support

**Medway Colleges and Sixth Forms**  
[www.medway.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.medway.gov.uk/admissions)

### Medway IAG

Information, advice and guidance service for 16 and 17-year olds.

[www.medway.gov.uk/youth](http://www.medway.gov.uk/youth)

### MidKent College

16-18 Funding Support.

[www.midkent.ac.uk](http://www.midkent.ac.uk)

### Bemix

Supported internships for young people aged 16-24 with EHCPs.

[www.bemix.org](http://www.bemix.org)

### Get on Track Partner Recruitment

A year long programme open to young people aged 16-25 from Medway. Sessions will be delivered over a year in a virtual environment (until face-to-face delivery can resume).

Supporting you to achieve your goals through skilled athlete mentors.

[www.damekellyholmestrust.org](http://www.damekellyholmestrust.org)

## National support

### Childline

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

### Princes Trust Coronavirus Support Hub

Offering advice and guidance to help young people develop their confidence and skills as they explore their next steps for finding a job or becoming self-employed. They have a number of initiatives including online training, an enterprise relief fund, free career starting training opportunities and support in finding employment.

[www.princes-trust.org.uk](http://www.princes-trust.org.uk)

# Financial hardship

Living independently requires a care leaver to manage their money, pay their bills on time and live on a budget. You may not have been involved in how household decisions about money were made or perhaps you haven't been shown how to budget or understand how bills are managed. COVID-19 may have made it harder to find or sustain work. However there are things that can help such as the 16-19 bursary where you will receive up £1,200 a year to help you stay in full-time education and the leaving care grant to help you buy essential things when you do move out.

You may also be entitled to things like jobseekers' allowance, income support or housing benefit. You can also be supported to find work. Your Local Authority or Council are required to provide you with support up until you're 25. You should be allocated a personal advisor who will work with you to develop a pathway plan that must assess and set out arrangements to manage your needs such as how you will manage financially.

## Local support

### Medway Food Bank Services

[www.medway.foodbank.org.uk](http://www.medway.foodbank.org.uk)

### Citizens Advice

For debt, housing issues, and help to claim service.

[www.medwayadvice.org.uk](http://www.medwayadvice.org.uk)

### Medway Housing Options

Work with your landlord to try to prevent your eviction. Get you support with budgeting and managing finances. Advise you regarding all your housing options.

Book your appointment by phone, email or in person: Phone 01634 333600 or email [housing@medway.gov.uk](mailto:housing@medway.gov.uk)

## National support

### Gov.uk

All information around what to expect from your local authority, benefits, financial support and finding work can be found on [www.gov.uk/leaving-foster-or-local-authority-care](http://www.gov.uk/leaving-foster-or-local-authority-care)

### Remploy

A free service which offers support to employees who are struggling with issues at work such as depression, anxiety, stress or other mental health issues affecting their work. Employees can self-refer for support and they can support for up to 9 months.

[www.remploy.co.uk](http://www.remploy.co.uk)

### Shelter Housing Advice

[www.england.shelter.org.uk](http://www.england.shelter.org.uk)

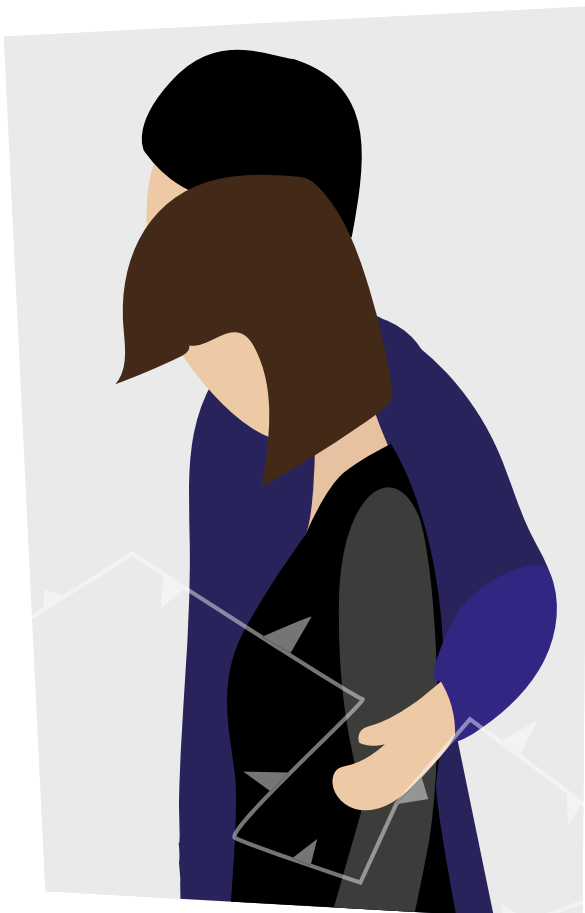
### Childline money issues

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

Search for 'money problems'

# Bereavement

We all have different experiences of death and processing grief. As a young adult your coping skills are more developed than when you were a child; so you may find that you revisit your grief as you get older and are a more able to process your feelings about what happened. The current situation may trigger certain memories or cause stress and anxiety. Being bereaved can be one of the loneliest experiences you or someone you care about goes through. This strange and distressing time might make the feelings of loneliness and grief much more intense. During the lockdown, families and communities have not been able to visit and comfort one another or attend funerals. The impact of dealing with a bereavement, compounded with feelings of worry about external situations can mean that feelings of grief aren't fully expressed.



Talking, and being with friends and family can be one of the most helpful ways to cope after someone dies. So even if you can't be with loved ones physically - pick up the phone and share how you're feeling. There are organisations that can listen and some also provide grief counselling. It's also important to rest (even if you can't sleep), eat well, exercise when you feel up to it and enjoy some fresh air and sun light daily

## Local support

### Cruse Bereavement – Maidstone and Medway

Our office is staffed by volunteers who aim to provide telephone support and advice 10am to 12.30pm Monday to Friday and answer email enquiries promptly.

Contact on 01622 671011 or email [maidstone@cruse.org.uk](mailto:maidstone@cruse.org.uk)

## National support

### Young Minds

Grief and Loss.

[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

Search for 'Grief and Loss'.

### Sue Ryder Childhood Bereavement Network

Advice and resources on how to provide the best support to someone you know who is bereaved, and information and guidance for people who are struggling with their own grief.

[www.sueryder.org/how-we-can-help](http://www.sueryder.org/how-we-can-help)

### NHS

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

Search for 'coping with bereavement'.

# General health information

There are things we can do to keep ourselves safe and well, such as regular exercise, stopping smoking, practicing safe sex, eating well, getting enough rest, managing our alcohol intake, and looking after our well-being. It is also important that we keep up to date with routine healthcare such as immunisations, dental check-ups, eye tests and any medication that we are required to take on a regular basis. We have put together some information about how to manage your health needs.

## Registering with a GP

If you move to a new area, you may need to switch to a new GP practice. You have the right to choose a GP practice that best suits your needs. You can use this link to find and

compare GP facilities, services and accessibility. Your chosen GP practice must accept you unless they have reasonable grounds not to.

When you have found a practice you like, you'll have to formally register with it as an NHS patient by submitting a registration form to them. The GMS1 registration form (PDF, 156kb) is available at the practice, or you can download it from GOV.UK. When you have completed and returned the form, NHS England will transfer your medical records to your new practice and write to you to confirm your registration as a patient with that practice.

Your personal adviser can help you with this process. They will also support you to get a health check where you will receive your Health Passport. Your health passport will have all of your health information like blood type and the



name of your GP and will be useful when you need to access health services. To find a GP visit:

[www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-GP](http://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-GP)

## Support until you are 19

The Looked After Children's Nursing Team will continue to provide you with support until your 19th birthday. A nurse will take part in your pathway planning meetings, support you with your health needs and advice you on where to go for local services. The team offer a 9am to 5pm weekday service. Phone 01634 333634 or email [lacadmin@medway.gov.uk](mailto:lacadmin@medway.gov.uk) or [lac.health@medway.gov.uk](mailto:lac.health@medway.gov.uk)

## How to find an NHS dentist

It is important to brush your teeth twice a day for at least two minutes. You should spit the toothpaste out rather than rinsing your mouth and you should try to cut down on sugary food and drink. You should also visit the dentist regularly and seek help for anything out of the ordinary. NHS 111 service can put you in touch with an urgent dental service but you should go to A&E if you experience severe pain, heavy bleeding or injuries to the face, mouth, or teeth.

If you are happy with your current dentist, there is no need to register with a new dentist in the same way as with a GP because you are not bound to a catchment area. Simply find a dental surgery that's convenient for you, whether it's near your home or work, and phone them to see if there are any appointments available. You can search for an NHS dentist near you using the link. You don't have to pay for NHS dental treatment if:

- under 18, or under 19 and in full time education
- pregnant or have had a baby in the previous 12 months
- being treated in an NHS hospital and your treatment is carried out by the hospital dentist (but you may have to pay for any dentures or bridges)
- receiving low income benefits, or you're under 20 and a dependant of someone receiving low income benefits.

To find a NHS dentist visit

[www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist](http://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist)

## Eye care

The NHS recommends that you should have your eyes tested every 2 years. Having an eye test will not just tell you if you need new glasses or a change of prescription – it is also an important eye health check because it is unusual for eyes to hurt when there is a problem. An optician can spot many general health problems and early signs of eye conditions before you are aware of any symptoms, many of which can be treated if found early enough. Visit your opticians or GP if you are concerned about any aspect of your vision at any time.

You may be entitled to a free NHS eye test and optical vouchers to help reduce the cost of glasses or contact lenses if you:

- are under 16
- are 16, 17 or 18 and in full-time education

People over the age of 18 may also be eligible under certain criteria which is available here.

You can find your nearest optician at

[www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-an-optician](http://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-an-optician)

# Emotional health and wellbeing

Following this long period of disruption, you may be experiencing increased stress or anxiety. It may have intensified or triggered anxieties that you were already dealing with or perhaps new fears have developed. Whether you are dealing with worry, isolation, low self-esteem, experiencing negative thoughts, feeling very angry/irritable or less interested in your usual activities; there is support and help available. Difficulty sleeping, nausea, a reduced appetite and headaches are also signs that you might not be coping. It is important to look out for these symptoms and try to find support and advice from trusted and reputable sources.

## Local support

### Medway Young Persons' Wellbeing Service

This is for people aged 0-19 years or up to 25 with SEN needs. The service offers advice and support for stress, low mood, depression, anxiety, self-harm, difficult to manage behaviors; as well as support for neurodevelopmental difficulties such as ADHD or ASD. You might also benefit from some of the self-help resources available at [www.mindfresh.neflt.nhs.uk](http://www.mindfresh.neflt.nhs.uk)  
Call 0300 3001981 to self-refer.

### Kent and Medway Children and Young People's Wellbeing Service

Out of hours number 0300 555 1000.

### KMPT

Provides community mental health and specialist support services to people aged 18-65 years living in Kent and Medway. Most of the services are provided through community teams, outpatient clinics and inpatient units. Open dialogue, community and inpatient



rehab, creative arts therapy, peer support, occupational therapy, support groups, carers' workshops, lifestyle advice, early intervention for psychosis and mental health support for people with learning disabilities are just of the services provided.

Call the 24 hour helpline on 0300 222 0123 if you need urgent help or visit [www.kmpt.nhs.uk/need-help](http://www.kmpt.nhs.uk/need-help)

### Self-harm support

Emerge is a youth work charity that supports young people attending hospital because of self-harm or suicidal feelings or actions. Currently offering remote support available Tuesday – Thursday from 7-11pm.  
Phone 07983136215 or email [info@emergeadvocacy.com](mailto:info@emergeadvocacy.com)

### Medway Safe Haven

Whether you're feeling distressed, overwhelmed or if you need some advice on accessing support for your mental health you can visit the safe haven between 6pm and 11pm, which is based at Age UK, MacKenney Centre, Woodlands Road, Gillingham, ME7 2BX. The centre is open 365 days per year offering out of hours mental health support to anyone over the age of 16.  
[www.mhm.org.uk](http://www.mhm.org.uk)

## National support

### The Big White Wall

Offers 1-1 online therapy with registered and accredited counsellors and CBT therapists as well as an anonymous & stigma-free support network all for people aged 16+.

[www.bigwhitewall.com](http://www.bigwhitewall.com)

### Anna Freud

Advice on managing wellbeing during the coronavirus situation and an extensive list of self-care ideas for young people to help them look after their wellbeing - includes ideas such as hope boxes, aromatherapy, creative writing and baking.

[www.annafreud.org/coronavirus-support/](http://www.annafreud.org/coronavirus-support/)

### Young Minds

Support for young people who may be struggling with their mental health following the pandemic.

[www.youngminds.org.uk/](http://www.youngminds.org.uk/)

### Mind

Extensive information about the coronavirus, which includes advice on coping with the changes to school/college, what to do if you're worried about someone else, if you're about to leave social care or if you are a young carer. There are also tips on how to look after your wellbeing and links to further support.

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

Search for 'coronavirus young people'.

### SHOUT

24 hour service for anyone in Kent or Medway in need of mental health crisis support. This service (for all age groups) is available simply by texting the word "Medway" to 85258

### Looking after your self-ie

Looking after your self-ie explores social media's impact on loneliness and relationships, self-image and self-esteem, sleep and online bullying. This course is relevant to members of the public of all ages.

[www.rsph.org.uk](http://www.rsph.org.uk)

Search for 'looking after your selfie'.

## Useful resources

### Apps:

#### Calm-Harm

Is suitable for people who are trying to manage urges to self-harm.

#### Headspace

Helps you to let go of stress and relax with guided meditations and mindfulness.

#### Cove

Allows you to create music connected to your feelings.

#### DAYLIO

Is a daily mood tracker that will help to discover what makes you happy, achieve your goals and improve your wellbeing through daily journaling.

#### Every Mind Matters

Expert advice and practical tips to help you look after your mental health and wellbeing

[www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/](http://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/)

# Sleep

During lockdown you have been spending more time at home and less time travelling to work/school or college and therefore might have been benefitting from more sleep than usual. Or perhaps you have found that because of increased anxiety you are finding it more difficult than usual getting to and staying asleep.

A minimum of 8-9 hours of sleep is recommended for young people. Here are some ideas on how to improve your sleep hygiene. Even if you aren't able to improve the quality of your sleep, it is really important to get enough rest.

## Keep a sleep diary

It can be a good idea to keep a diary to identify habits or activities that contribute to your sleeplessness. A sleep diary can also reveal underlying conditions that explain your insomnia, such as stress or medicine.

## Limit screens in the bedroom

It's likely that the adults at home remind you daily about cutting down on screen time. This is because the light from the screen interferes with sleep, making it more difficult to fall and stay asleep. You should aim to remove all screens (including the TV and laptop) at least 30 minutes before you intend to go to sleep.

## Exercise for better sleep

Young people are advised to do at least 60 minutes of moderate exercise per day. Regular exercise promotes good sleep as well improving your overall health.

## Cut down on caffeine

Drinks such as tea, coffee and coca cola contain caffeine that interferes with sleep – particularly in the 4 hours before bed.

## Watch what you eat

Going to bed on an overly full or an empty stomach can making it more difficult to sleep.

## Get into a good routine

Having a good routine such as reading a book, taking a bath or listening to some soothing music before bed can help you relax and prepares the body for sleep.

## Create the right environment

Ideally a space for sleeping that is dark, quiet, cool and comfortable.

## Talk through your problems

It can be difficult to get to sleep if you are struggling with these worries alone. This can help put things into perspective for a better night's sleep. If there isn't anybody at home that you can/want to talk to, try phoning a friend, writing down your worries or speaking to one of the helplines mentioned above.

## Cut down on weekend lie-ins

Late nights and long lie-ins can disrupt your body clock and will leave you with the feeling of jetlag on a Monday morning. It is much better to try and go to sleep and wake up at the same time every day.

## National support

### NHS

Recommended apps that can help with sleep.

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

Search for 'sleep'.

### Sleepstation

Articles about sleep and insomnia.

[www.sleepstation.org.uk](http://www.sleepstation.org.uk)

### Young Minds

Take time out to relax.

[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

### Anna Freud

Sleep and self-care.

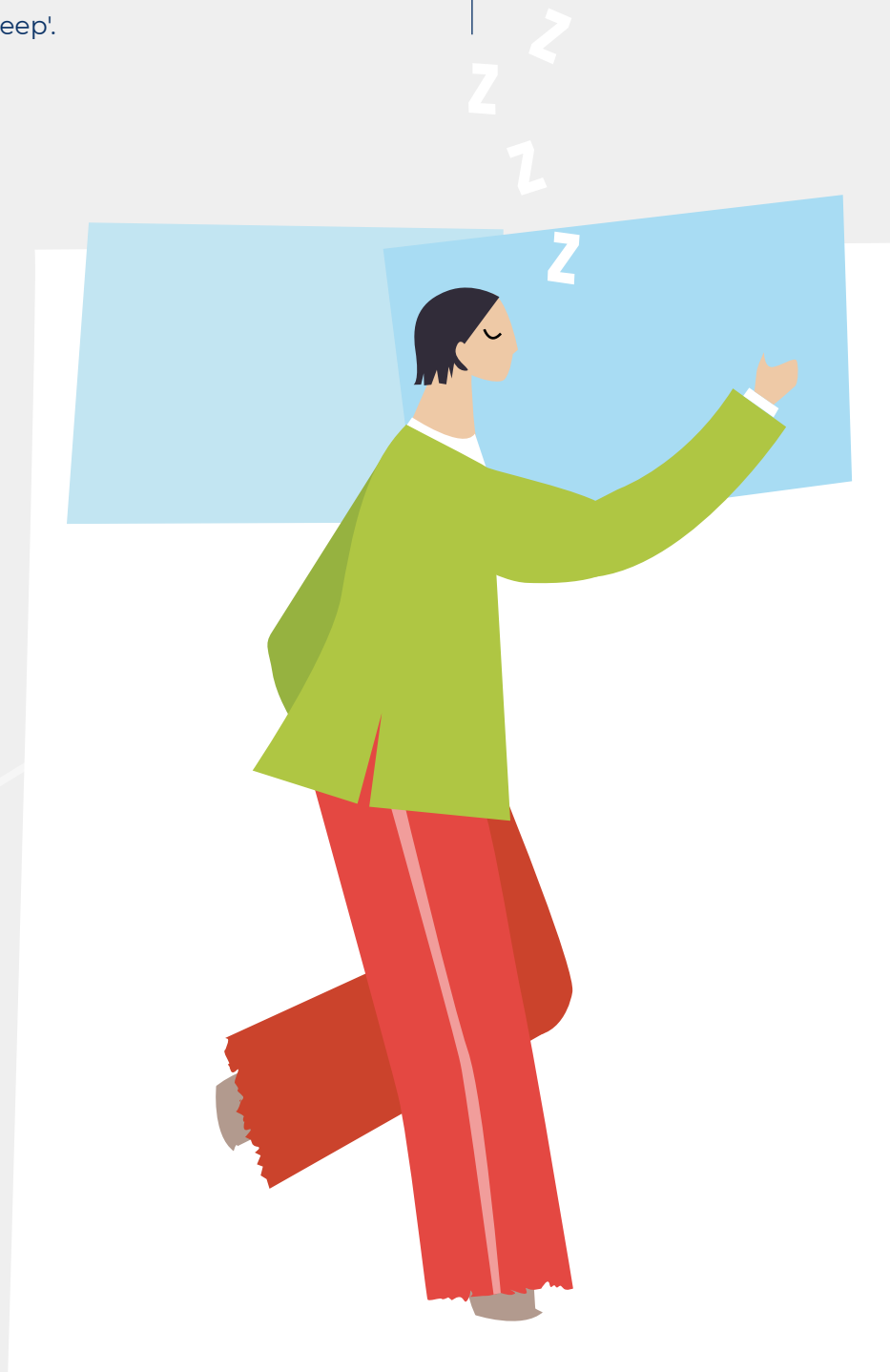
[www.annafreud.org](http://www.annafreud.org)

Search for 'sleep'.

### Mindfulness for teen worry

A clinical psychologist offers quick easy-to-learn mindfulness skills teens can use anytime, anywhere to stop worries from growing and taking over.

[www.timetothrive.org](http://www.timetothrive.org)



# Sexual health and relationships

Being in a new relationship can make you feel excited and happy. But relationships can change and it can be hard to know when things are starting to go wrong. In a healthy relationship someone shouldn't try to control you. Controlling or threatening behaviour can be physical, sexual, emotional, financial, or psychological. If your relationship doesn't feel right, it may be time to end it. Sex should be something that you enjoy, can have safely and give consent to each time. Go to your GP or local sexual health service to keep yourself protected against STIs or an unwanted pregnancy.

## Local support

### METRO charity

Provides advice and advocacy, STI home testing kits, free condoms, counselling services, workshops, relationships and sex education training and support groups where diversity is celebrated. 1-1 services are continuing remotely during the coronavirus outbreak. Phone: 020 8305 5004, email: [youth@metrocharity.org.uk](mailto:youth@metrocharity.org.uk) or visit: [www.metrocharity.org.uk](http://www.metrocharity.org.uk)

## National support

### Stonewall

Is an LGBTQ rights charity. Stonewall's work focuses on working with organisations to bring equality to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people at home, at school, and at work. [www.stonewall.org.uk](http://www.stonewall.org.uk)

### NHS

Information about contraception  
[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
Search for 'getting contraception'.

### The Brook

Sexual health and wellbeing guide for under 25s  
[www.brook.org.uk/help-advice](http://www.brook.org.uk/help-advice)

### Relate

A counselling service for young people aged 11 to 18 years old, who are having problems at home, with their family or at school.  
[www.relatemnk.org.uk](http://www.relatemnk.org.uk)

### Childline

Healthy and unhealthy relationships advice and information.  
[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

### Mermaids

Is a charity for gender diverse children, young people, and their families.  
[www.mermaidsuk.org.uk](http://www.mermaidsuk.org.uk)

### Respect

Offers information, advice and support to perpetrators of abuse.  
[www.respectphoneline.org.uk](http://www.respectphoneline.org.uk)

### Victim Support

[www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)

# Alcohol and substance misuse

**Drug and alcohol misuse are complex issues. While the number of people with a serious problem is relatively small, there may be people who may have turned to alcohol or drugs as a way of managing their thoughts and feelings about the current situation. The impacts of alcohol dependency and substance misuse are serious and long-lasting. It can affect our physical and mental health, finances and ability to maintain adequate housing. It also seriously impacts the people who care about you. These people as well as the agencies in your local community can support you on your journey to recovery.**

## Alcohol dependency

Alcohol misuse is when you drink in a way that's harmful or when you're dependent on alcohol. You could be misusing alcohol if you feel as if you can't cut down on your drinking, other people have criticised your drinking, you feel guilty or bad about your drinking or you need a drink first thing in the morning to steady your nerves or get rid of a hangover.

It is against the law for anyone under the age of 18 to drink alcohol. To keep health risks from alcohol to a low level, both men and women are advised not to regularly drink more than 14 units a week. If you drink as much as 14 units per week, it is best that you spread these over at least 3 days.

A unit of alcohol is 8g or 10ml of pure alcohol, which is about:

- half a pint of lower to normal-strength lager/beer/cider (ABV 3.6%)
- a single small shot measure (25ml) of spirits (25ml, ABV 40%)
- a small glass (125ml, ABV 12%) of wine contains about 1.5 units of alcohol.

Alcohol misuse can increase the risk of accidents and injuries which require hospital treatment, violent behavior, unprotected sex that could lead to an STI or unwanted pregnancy as well as more long-term consequences including heart disease, cancer and stroke. If you concerned about your drinking habits, it is important that you get help; either from your GP or from one of the organisations below.

## Substance Misuse

Substance abuse covers misuse of a range of mind-altering substances. It can have a severe impact on your functioning as well as your physical health. Substance abuse or misuse is formally defined as the continued misuse of any mind-altering substance that severely affects a person's physical and mental health, social situation and responsibilities. Most forms of substance abuse may give you a temporary feeling of wellbeing or of being in control, but all of them can ultimately damage your health.

The most severe forms of substance misuse are normally treated by specialist drug and alcohol rehabilitation services. For people with mental health problems who are also substance misusers, the mental health team normally encourages contact with a specialist substance misuse service for help. There is also a lot you can do to help yourself.

## Local support

### Medway Lower My Drinking

You can now get help to control of your drinking with the new 'Lower My Drinking' service using our website and app service. Our website can help you measure your alcohol score in minutes, while our app can provide

you with more tailored support if you need it.  
[www.lowermydrinking.com](http://www.lowermydrinking.com)

### **Open Road**

Open Road is an established Drug and Alcohol Recovery support charity, which provides services to support individuals on their journey to recovery from drug and alcohol addiction. As well as this Open Road offers helps to individuals in the Criminal Justice sector. You can get help from Open Road at our centres, on the streets and at festivals, within the criminal justice system and working with businesses. You can reach out to us in person, over the phone, online via our website and social media platforms or via a professional you are currently engaging with such as a GP.  
[www.openroad.org.uk/what-we-do](http://www.openroad.org.uk/what-we-do)

## **National support**

### **NHS - alcohol misuse**

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/alcohol-misuse/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/alcohol-misuse/)

### **Talk to Frank**

[www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)

### **NHS - Drug addiction: getting help**

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

Search for 'addiction'.



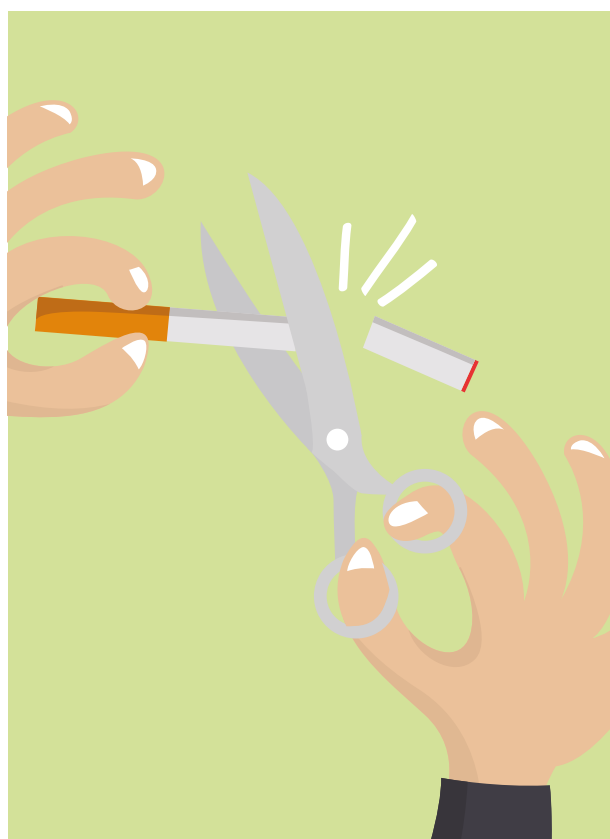
# Stopping smoking

You may have gone back to smoking if you were someone who used to smoke or maybe you have taken up smoking in an attempt to help you manage your thoughts and feelings about coronavirus and being in a period of uncertainty. However, not only is smoking bad for your health, it increases the stress response.

The younger you start smoking, the more damage your body will suffer when you get older. Here are some important reasons to quit followed by some ideas on how to increase your chances of success.

## Why quit?

- You'll be healthier and less out of breath – smoking decreases your lung capacity.
- You'll save yourself a lot of money. Use this tool to work out how much money you'll save by stopping smoking [www.nhs.uk/smokefree/why-quit/cost-calculator](https://www.nhs.uk/smokefree/why-quit/cost-calculator)



- You'll look better. Chemicals in cigarettes restrict blood flow to your skin. Smokers have more wrinkled and saggy faces by the time they're in their mid-20s.
- Quitting helps save the planet. Deforestation because of tobacco production accounts for nearly 5% of overall deforestation in the developing world.
- Someone who starts smoking at 15 is 3 times more likely to die from cancer than someone who starts smoking in their mid-20s.
- Not smoking will make you instantly more attractive. Most people prefer kissing non-smokers.

## Top tips for quitting successfully

- Get help from friends and family
- Talk to your GP or local stop smoking service. Cessation aids are free on prescription for 12-18-year olds
- Get help with cravings
- Stay healthy
- Keep focused

## Local support

### Medway Stop Smoking Service and Smoke Free Advice Centre

The Medway Stop Smoking Service is a completely free service, offering 1-2-1s with highly trained, approachable advisers and drop-in sessions throughout Medway.

[www.medway.gov.uk/stopsmoking](https://www.medway.gov.uk/stopsmoking)

# Healthy eating

You may have used the lockdown as an opportunity to look at your diet and eating regime. Perhaps you have become better at cooking and meal planning. With the new restrictions in place around social distancing and eating out, you might have cut down on takeaways and junk food. Maybe you filled your time by baking lots of cakes and other high fat and high sugar snacks or perhaps you ate what you wanted when you wanted because you didn't feel like cooking, and shopping was too much effort. Sometimes we can fall into these habits without even really realising it. You could keep a food diary for a week or so to look at what you eat and the reasons why you eat. Examine your food diary and try to spot trends - did you choose certain foods because you were bored, anxious, hungry, celebrating a special occasion or tired. Now the restrictions are easing, and it is a little bit easier to get out and about, this is a really good time to look at those habits and triggers and start meal planning to help you break the cycle.

## What is a healthy diet?

Having a balanced diet is very important for our health and helps us to feel at our best. As no single food contains all the nutrients our body needs to function well, it is important that we eat a wide range of foods to get all of the nutrients that our bodies need. A healthy diet should provide our bodies with the right amount of energy to maintain energy balance. This is where calories consumed from our diet are equal to the number of calories used by the body. If we have too many calories then this will lead to weight gain, and if we do not eat enough calories then we may lose weight.

However, it is not just the number of calories

that are important but making sure we are eating nutritious foods that are providing our bodies with a range of vitamins and minerals. A healthy diet includes different types of foods that correspond to the five food groups displayed in the Eatwell Guide below.

The Eatwell Guide is split into five different food groups in the proportions in which we should be consuming them each day. The largest food group, displayed in green, is the fruits and vegetables food group. Aim for at least five different portions of fruits and vegetables every day. This food group provides us with fibre, vitamins and minerals, and our meals should be based around this food group. The next largest food group is carbohydrates, and this includes food such as cereals, bread, pasta, potatoes, and rice. Eat wholegrain, whole wheat, brown and granary versions of these food instead of white versions as this will provide you with more fibre and nutrients. The pink section is the protein food group which includes meat and fish as well as vegetarian options such as beans and pulses. Try to eat two portions of fish per week, one of which to be oily fish, and if you eat meat try to consume lean cuts to reduce saturated fat consumption. The next food group is dairy and alternatives which provides the body with calcium and vitamin D. Try to consume low-fat yoghurts and milk to reduce fat consumption. The smallest food group on the Eatwell Guide is the fats and spreads group and this is because our bodies only require a small amount of this food stuff.

## Budgeting and meal planning

Cooking healthily does not mean spending lots of money and buying ingredients that you have never heard of before. Nor does it mean that you need to spend all evening in the kitchen to prepare a healthy meal. It is possible to eat

healthily on a budget and cook easy and delicious meals.

## Tips

1. Try to determine your weekly food shop budget and try not to go too much over this figure.
2. Meat can be quite expensive so try bulking out meals with plant-based alternatives such as canned beans and pulses. These can be added to stews, soups, chillies and curries and they also count as one portion of your 5-a-day. If you do buy meat, try buying cheaper cuts of meat such as chicken thighs or drumsticks – you can trim off the skin/ fat at home.
3. Although eating fish is a healthy option, fresh fish can be quite expensive. Instead, try buying frozen or tinned fish. Fish such as frozen tuna, tinned salmon and sardines are still high in omega-3 but have a longer shelf life and are easy to prepare.
4. Fresh fruit can also be expensive, but canned and frozen varieties are considerably cheaper, have a long 'shelf' life and count as a portion of your 5-a-day. Try to go for tinned fruit in fruit juice or water instead of syrup as these versions do not have as much added sugar. Fresh fruits and vegetables that are in season tend to be a lot cheaper (and tastier!) than when they are out of season, so eating seasonal fresh fruits and vegetables would also help to keep food shopping costs down.
5. Planning your meals for the week is a great way to ensure you are only buying food that you need; it helps to cut down on food waste and you'll also spend less on your weekly food shop.
6. Spend some time for an hour or so each week to plan out your meals for the week. Display the weekly food planner somewhere accessible, such as on the fridge, so you can easily see what you will be eating each day. Make your shopping list from this planner and make sure you stick to it when you are food shopping. Double check the ingredients you already have in your cupboards to save buying multiple quantities of the same food item.
7. When you are out food shopping, try to only walk down the aisles where you need to buy food from as this will help stop you getting tempted by special offers or food items that aren't on your list. If there are special offers on food items that are on your list, think carefully about whether you will use the extra food. If it is a non-perishable item, then it might be more cost-effective to buy the item on special offer as it will not run out of date quickly.
8. Cook in bulk and freeze extra portions or leftovers. Label the containers and make a list of the meals you have in the freezer. By doing this you will have meals available in the freezer to defrost and enjoy, saving you time by not having to cook a meal from scratch.

# Eatwell Guide

Use the Eatwell Guide to help you get a balance of healthier and more sustainable food. It shows how much of what you eat overall should come from each food group.

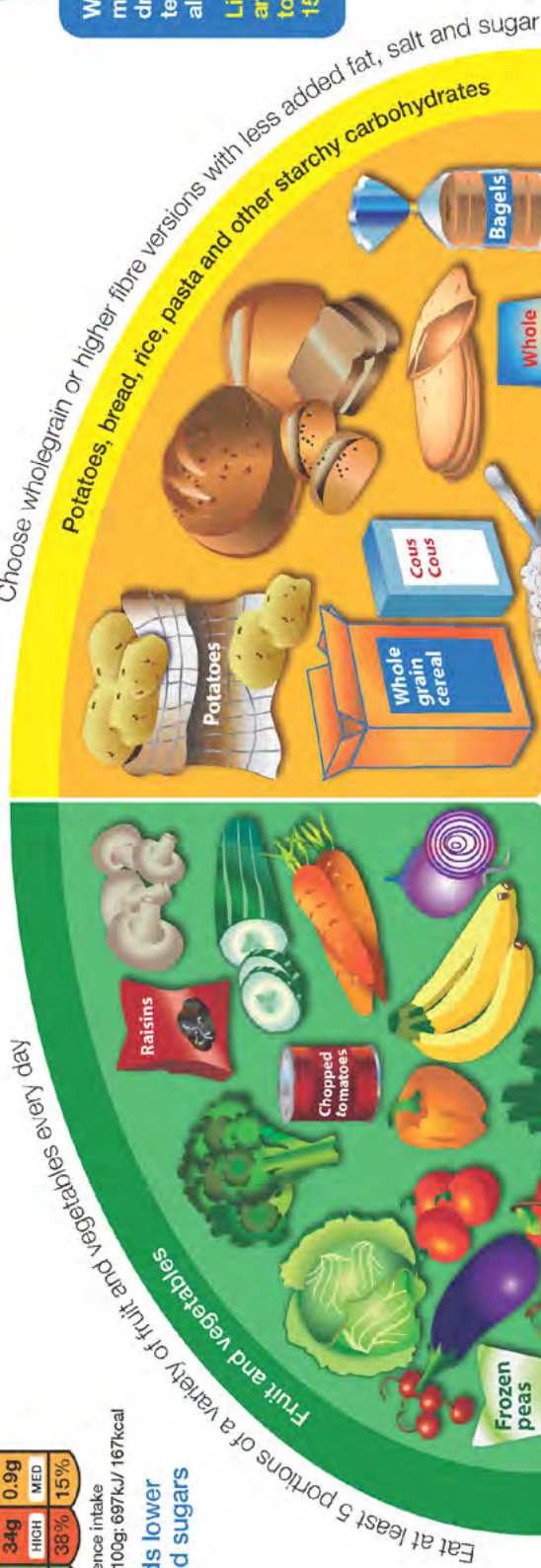
Check the label on packaged foods

Each serving (150g) contains

Energy	Fat	Saturated	Sugars	Salt
1046kJ 250kcal	3.0g	1.3g	34g	0.9g
13%	LOW	LOW	HIGH	MED
	4%	7%	38%	15%

Typical values (as sold) per 100g: 697kJ/ 167kcal of an adult's reference intake

Choose foods lower in fat, salt and sugars



Eat less often and in small amounts

Per day 2000kcal 2500kcal = ALL FOOD + ALL DRINKS

# Low cost recipe ideas

## Banana overnight oats

### Ingredients

- 1 over-ripe banana, mashed
- 50g oats
- 125ml milk
- 125ml low-fat yoghurt
- Toppings: fruit of your choice, nuts, seeds

### Method

1. Mash the banana in a bowl
2. Add the oats, milk and yoghurt and stir to combine
3. Add your chosen toppings
4. Cover with clingfilm and leave overnight in the fridge



## Minestrone soup

Serves 8 (great for bulk cooking and freezing)

### Ingredients

- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and shredded
- 1 litre low salt vegetable stock
- 2 medium tomatoes, cored and diced
- 85g dry, whole-wheat pasta
- 150g shredded fresh or frozen spinach
- 150g canned cannellini beans, rinsed and drained
- $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

### Method

1. Heat the oil in a pan over a medium heat. Add the onions and carrots and cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.
2. Add 250 ml water, vegetable stock, tomatoes, thyme, oregano, and black pepper. Bring the soup to the boil, reduce the heat, and simmer, covered for 20 minutes.
3. Add the pasta, bring to the boil, reduce the heat, and simmer for a further 10 minutes.
4. Add the beans and spinach and cook over medium heat for 5 minutes.



# Top tips for eating well

Having a healthy breakfast is a great way to start your day as it provides you with calories, energy, fibre, vitamins and minerals. Choose wholegrain options of carbohydrates, such as wholegrain cereals, porridges, wholemeal toast, and seeded bagels, and try to include some fruits and/or vegetables as well. If you do not have time in the morning to eat breakfast, try making overnight oats the evening before. In the morning you can grab your pre-made breakfast and take it with you to work or college.

## **Aim to eat at least 5 portions of fruits and vegetables every day.**

Fresh, frozen, tinned, dried, and juiced all count as a portion, however fruit juice and/or smoothies should be limited to 150ml per day. Try to incorporate some fruits and/or vegetables at every meal, such as adding frozen blueberries to a bowl of porridge for breakfast or grating courgette into an omelette or homemade tomato sauce.

## **Drink more water**

Aim to drink 6-8 glasses (1.5-2 litres) of water each day. Water is the best choice for hydration without providing extra calories or sugar to your daily intake. If you do not like the taste of water, try it with some sugar-free squash and work on replacing some of the squash drinks with plain water until you get used to the taste. Having a glass of water as soon as you wake up in the morning is a great way to instantly hydrate. To track how much you are drinking and to make sure you reach the recommended amount, you can buy a water bottle marked with the amount of liquid and times during the day to ensure you're on track.

## **Eat more fish, especially oily fish**

Aim to eat at least two portions of responsibly sourced fish per week, including a portion of oily fish, such as trout, mackerel, sardines, and salmon. There are lots of different types of fish available and lots of ways in which you can cook them, so experiment and find one you enjoy. Tinned mackerel on toast, frozen tuna with a jacket potato and salad, and roasted salmon with new potatoes and vegetables are all examples of meals that contain oily fish.

## **Snacking**

If you get hungry between meals then you may need a snack, however, try not to snack out of boredom or habit. Try not to go for convenience options such as crisps, chocolates, sweets, and cakes as these are typically high in salt, sugar and fat and provide little in terms of nutrients. They also will not keep you full and it is tempting to have more than we need of these types of foods. Healthier alternatives include hummus and vegetable sticks, unsalted nuts and dried fruit (a 30g portion), fruit and yoghurt.

## **Local support**

### **Medway Foodbank**

[www.medway.foodbank.org.uk](http://www.medway.foodbank.org.uk)

### **Medway Tri for You**

[www.medway.gov.uk](http://www.medway.gov.uk)

[www.facebook.com/triforyoumedway](https://www.facebook.com/triforyoumedway)

### **A Better Medway**

[www.facebook.com/abettermedway](https://www.facebook.com/abettermedway)

## National support

NHS Eat Well guide  
[www.nhs.uk/live-well](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well)

British Nutrition Foundation  
[www.nutrition.org.uk](http://www.nutrition.org.uk)

British Dietetic Association  
[www.bda.uk.com/food-health.html](http://www.bda.uk.com/food-health.html)

Trussell Trust  
[www.trusselltrust.org](http://www.trusselltrust.org)



# Keeping active

During the lockdown, particularly when we were only allowed to go out for essential reasons such as shopping or to exercise you might have found that you were walking or cycling more in an attempt to amuse yourself. You might have noticed now that the rules on lockdown are changing and we can enjoy other activities that your daily exercise routine has reduced. Or maybe you were someone who used to attend a sports club and haven't been able to over recent months.

Whatever your circumstances, keeping active is an important part of a healthy lifestyle because it helps your body and mind in many ways. For example, it can:

- Improve fitness
- Build muscle and bones
- Help us to maintain a healthy weight
- Improve quality of sleep
- Make you feel good
- Improve confidence
- Help us to manage stress

## How much activity do I need to do?

The amount of exercise you need to do each day depends on your age. If you are under 18 years old, it is recommended that you aim for 60 minutes of moderate exercise a day. If you are 19 years old or older, you need to aim for 150 minutes of moderate exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise a week.

## What is moderate and vigorous exercise?

Moderate exercise should leave you feeling like your heart rate has increased, you start to feel warm and your breathing increases, but you should be able to talk. A good example would

be a walking uphill or a bike ride. Vigorous exercise should make your breathing deeper and you'll find it harder to talk. An example of vigorous exercise would be running or lane swimming.

## How can I fit exercise in to my day?

### Active travel

A great way to get exercise is when you don't have to think about it. Try and use active ways to get about like walking or cycling rather than getting about by bus or car. For longer journeys you could park at a car park further away from your destination and walk or get off the bus a stop or two earlier.

### Keep it social

If you're not into exercise the best way is to keep it fun. Team sports are also a great way to keep active and catch up with friends. You don't have to join a sports club, it can be as simple as taking a ball down to the park for a kick about. If that's not your thing, how about practicing your favourite dance moves.

### Set yourself a goal

You might find it useful to set yourself a goal, make sure it's realistic and achievable. For example, it could be something like getting an extra 1000 steps in a day (many smart phones have step counters built in, or download an app) or working towards running a 5K.

## Local support

### Medway Healthy Weight

[www.medway.gov.uk/healthyweight](http://www.medway.gov.uk/healthyweight)

### Sports for disabled people

[www.medway.gov.uk](http://www.medway.gov.uk)

Search for 'sports for disabled people'.

### Medway Tri For You

[www.facebook.com/triforyoumedway](https://www.facebook.com/triforyoumedway)

### Medway Sports Centres

[www.medway.gov.uk](https://www.medway.gov.uk)

Search for 'sports centres'.

### Medway Sport

[www.facebook.com/MedwaySportOfficial/](https://www.facebook.com/MedwaySportOfficial/)

### Medway Parks

[www.medway.gov.uk](https://www.medway.gov.uk)

Search for 'parks'.

### Medway Youth Sessions

[www.medway.gov.uk/onlineyouthwork](https://www.medway.gov.uk/onlineyouthwork)

### Medway Outdoor Gyms

[www.medway.gov.uk](https://www.medway.gov.uk)

Search for 'outdoor gyms'.

## National support

### Change 4 Life

[www.nhs.uk/change4life](https://www.nhs.uk/change4life)



**This Girl Can**  
[www.thisgirlcan.co.uk](http://www.thisgirlcan.co.uk)

**PE with Jo Wicks**  
[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)  
Search for 'Joe Wicks PE'.

**NHS exercise advice**  
[www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/)

**NHS get active with a disability**  
[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
Search for 'active disability'.



