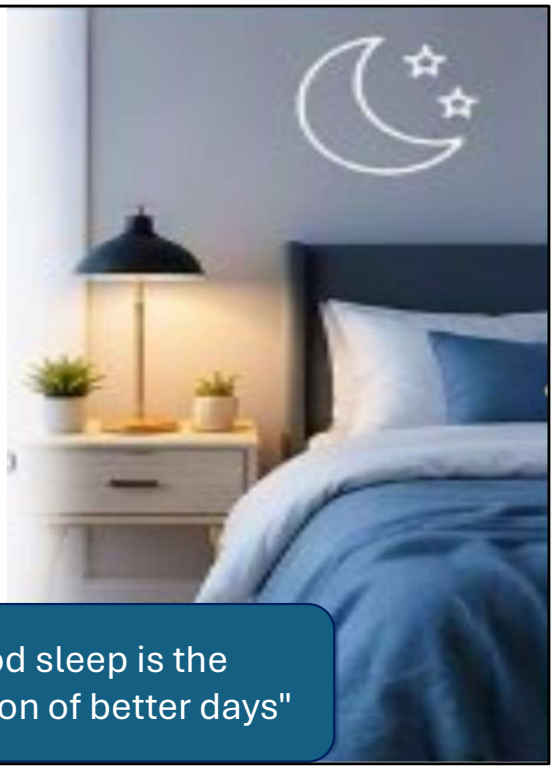


Welcome to our 6 week self-management group session on lifestyle. Today we're going to look at some lifestyle factors that can have a positive impact on health and wellbeing, particularly when living with a long-term condition.
The aim isn't to make huge changes overnight. Instead, we'll focus on small, realistic steps that can make a meaningful difference over time."

1 Sleep

- Create a peaceful sleep space
- Establish a bedtime routine
- Consider the impact of stimulants such as alcohol and nicotine.
- Practice relaxation or mindfulness
- Limit/adjust screen time.



"Good sleep is the foundation of better days"

Sleep does much more than help you feel rested. While you're asleep, your body is hard at work repairing and restoring itself.
Physically, sleep helps your body heal. During deep sleep, your body repairs muscles and tissues, helps your immune system fight inflammation and infection, and supports recovery.

Sleep is also important for keeping your body's systems in balance, including how regulating your blood sugar levels and improves how your body uses insulin. Getting enough sleep also helps control the hormones that affect hunger and appetite, making it easier to maintain a healthy weight.

Your brain also benefits from sleep too. During the night, the brain clears away waste products and toxins that build up throughout the day. Sleep also helps regulate mood,strengthens memory, concentration, and clear thinking, helping you perform at your best.

In short, sleep is one of the most important things you can do for your physical health, emotional wellbeing, and brain function

Getting a good night's sleep often starts before your head hits the pillow. There are

several simple strategies that can help improve both the quality and quantity of your sleep. First, try to create a peaceful sleep space. A bedroom that is quiet, dark, comfortable, and cool can help signal to your body that it's time to sleep. If possible, keep your sleep environment free from distractions and use your bedroom mainly for sleep and relaxation.

It can also help to establish a regular bedtime routine. Doing the same calming activities each night, such as reading, stretching, listening to soothing music, or having a warm drink, helps your brain recognise that bedtime is approaching. Over time, this routine can make it easier to fall asleep.

Another important consideration is the impact of stimulants such as nicotine and alcohol. While alcohol may make you feel sleepy at first, it can disrupt the quality of your sleep later in the night. Nicotine is a stimulant that can make it harder to fall asleep and stay asleep. Reducing or avoiding these substances, especially in the evening, can help improve sleep quality.

Practising relaxation or mindfulness can also be beneficial. Simple techniques such as belly breathing, guided relaxation, or mindfulness exercises can help calm a busy mind and reduce stress, making it easier to drift off to sleep.

Finally, think about your screen time before bed. Phones, tablets, computers, and televisions can keep the brain alert when it should be winding down. Try limiting screen use in the hour before bedtime, or consider using night mode settings if screens are needed.

Remember, improving sleep is often about making small, consistent changes. Finding the strategies that work best for you can make a real difference to your sleep, health, and wellbeing."

2 Hydration and Healthy Eating

Hydration

- Set reminders e.g. alarms and build into your routine
- Drink water before exercise
- Drink caffeine/sugary drinks in moderation



Nutrition

- Eat 3 meals per day.
- Choose complex carbohydrates, proteins and healthy fats.
- Include a range of fruits and vegetables

"Your diet is a bank account. Good food choices are good investments." Bethenny Frankel

Hydration is crucial for maintaining cognitive function and energy levels. Dehydration ca n lead to brain fog, fatigue, and reduced thinking. Even mild dehydration can affect conc entration, mood, and overall mental performance.
The brain is approximately 75% water, making it particularly sensitive to dehydration. In the Eatwell Guide, the government recommends that people should aim to drink 6 to 8 cups or glasses of fluid a day. This is a guide and some people will need slightly less and others more. Remember, small and regular drinks throughout the day can make a big difference. Staying hydrated helps support your body, your brain, and your overall health.

Alongside hydration is nutrition. While food won't cure symptoms such as fatigue or brain fog, eating well can help support energy levels, improve recovery, and give your body the nutrients it needs to function effectively.
One of the most helpful strategies is eating regular, balanced meals throughout the day. Having three to four smaller meals at consistent times can help keep blood sugar levels stable and prevent energy crashes. Skipping meals or relying on large meals can often leave you feeling more tired.
Choosing complex carbohydrates can also help maintain steady energy. Foods such as oats, whole grains, brown rice, potatoes, and other starchy vegetables release energy more slowly, helping you avoid the peaks and dips that can come from sugary foods and drinks.

Including protein with each meal is equally important. Foods such as eggs, fish, chicken, beans, and lentils help maintain muscle health, support tissue repair, and provide longer-lasting energy throughout the day.
Healthy fats are another valuable source of energy. Foods like olive oil, avocados, nuts, seeds, and oily fish provide sustained fuel for the body and may help reduce inflammation.
Finally, try to include plenty of colourful fruits and vegetables in your diet, especially foods rich in antioxidants and anti-inflammatory nutrients such as leafy greens, berries, tomatoes, nuts, and fatty fish. These foods help protect the body's cells and support overall health.

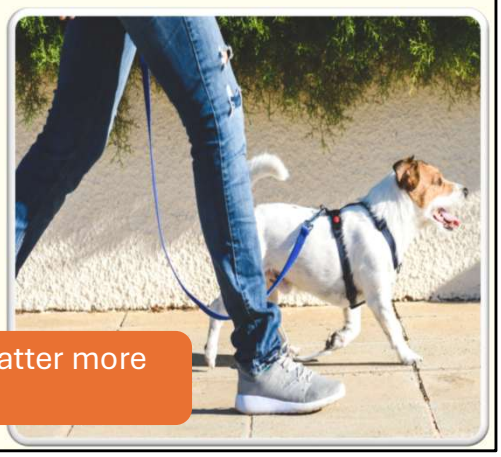
Remember, it's not about following a perfect diet. Small, consistent choices such as eating regularly, choosing nourishing foods, and staying hydrated can make a meaningful difference to your energy, wellbeing, and ability to manage daily activities.

3 Weight Management

Maintaining a healthy weight can help improve symptoms, energy levels, and overall wellbeing for people living with long-term conditions.

Focus on sustainable habits, not quick fixes.

- Balanced eating
- Regular movement and activity
- Healthy routines and eating patterns
- Understanding emotional influences on eating



Focus on progress, not perfection. Health benefits matter more than weight alone.

Maintaining a healthy weight can help improve symptoms, increase energy levels, and support overall wellbeing. Rather than thinking about diets or quick fixes, it's more helpful to focus on sustainable habits that fit into everyday life. This may include choosing balanced meals, building regular movement into your routine, or becoming more aware of emotional triggers that influence eating habits.

Maintaining a healthy weight is about much more than appearance. It plays an important role in protecting your overall health, improving your quality of life, and supporting long-term wellbeing.
Even small changes can make a big difference. Losing just 5 to 10% of your body weight can improve blood pressure, blood sugar levels, and cholesterol, reducing the risk of conditions such as type 2 diabetes.

Excess body fat can contribute to ongoing inflammation, which is linked to a range of long-term health conditions. Therefore a healthy weight can also help reduce inflammation in the body.

Weight management can also benefit your joints and mobility. Every extra pound of

body weight places additional pressure on the knees and other weight-bearing joints. Maintaining a healthy weight can reduce joint pain, improve movement, and support an active lifestyle.

Another important benefit is better sleep. Excess weight can increase the risk of sleep apnoea and poor-quality sleep. Achieving and maintaining a healthier weight can improve breathing during sleep, helping you feel more refreshed and energised during the day.

There can also be positive effects on mental wellbeing. Many people report improvements in mood, confidence, energy levels, and overall quality of life when they achieve sustainable weight management goals.

If you are underweight, your body may not be getting enough energy and nutrients to meet its daily needs. This can lead to increased fatigue, reduced strength, poorer concentration, and a longer recovery time when you're unwell.

Gaining weight in a healthy way can help improve energy levels, build and maintain muscle strength, support your immune system, and increase your ability to take part in everyday activities. Weight gain is not about eating large amounts of unhealthy foods. Instead, it's about choosing nourishing, energy-dense foods and eating regularly throughout the day. Small changes, such as adding healthy fats, increasing protein intake, and having nutritious snacks between meals, can make a significant difference over time.

It's important to remember that weight management isn't about achieving a perfect number on the scales. The goal is to make realistic, sustainable lifestyle changes that support your health.

Remember, everyone's needs are different. A healthcare professional or dietitian can help you develop a personalised plan that supports healthy weight gain while considering your specific condition, symptoms, and goals. Even small increases in weight can have a positive impact on your strength, wellbeing, and quality of life."

4 Emotional Wellbeing & Stress Management

- Consider the mind body connection
- Recognise your thoughts and emotions e.g. diary
- Introduce daily self-care
- Prioritise rest



When we care for our mind, we support our whole self

I'd like to spend a moment talking about emotional wellbeing, because looking after our mental health is just as important as looking after our physical health.

Stress and long-term conditions often go hand in hand. When you're stressed, your body releases hormones that prepare you to deal with challenges. While this response is helpful in the short term, ongoing stress can leave you feeling physically and mentally exhausted. As a result, stress can make symptoms worse. It can increase feelings of tiredness, affect concentration and memory, disturb sleep, and make it harder for the body to recover and restore energy.

When you're living with a long-term condition, it's completely normal to experience stress, worry, frustration, or days when things just feel a bit overwhelming. In fact, most people will experience these feelings at some point.

What we sometimes forget is how closely connected our mind and body are. Have you ever noticed that when you're stressed, you might sleep less well, feel more tired, have less patience, or find your symptoms harder to manage? The mind and body are constantly influencing each other – the mind body connection.

That's why it's important to check in with yourself regularly and recognise how you're feeling. Simply taking a moment to acknowledge your thoughts and emotions can help you understand what you need and how best to support yourself.

Stress can also encourage a cycle of 'doing too much on good days and paying for it later.' Many of us are good at looking after everyone else and often put ourselves at the bottom of the list. But rest isn't being lazy, and it's not something we need to earn. Rest is an important part of staying healthy, managing our energy and managing symptom flare-ups .Finding ways to relax and unwind can help reduce physical tension, improve sleep quality, and support emotional wellbeing. It can also help you think more clearly, make balanced decisions about your energy, and feel more in control of your condition.

Self-care is another key part of managing wellbeing. And when I say self-care, I don't mean expensive spa days or major lifestyle changes. It could be something as simple as taking a walk, having a chat with a friend, listening to music, spending time in nature, or setting aside a few minutes for relaxation or mindfulness can all help reduce stress levels.

Remember, stress management is not about eliminating stress completely. It's about recognising when stress is affecting you and developing healthy ways to respond. Small, regular stress-management habits can make a meaningful difference to energy levels, symptom control, and overall quality of life.

So, as you're listening today, think about this question: *'What helps me recharge when life feels stressful or overwhelming?'*

5 Alcohol

Examine your current drinking

Limit how much you drink

Drink more slowly

Drink with food

Alternate with water or non-alcoholic drinks



Recognising the need for change is the first step!

Alcohol has been linked to many health conditions and increases your risk of developing more. While alcohol may seem relaxing in the moment, it can often make symptoms worse. Although alcohol can make you feel sleepy, it disrupts the quality of your sleep. This means you may spend less time in the deep, restorative stages of sleep, leaving you feeling more tired and less refreshed the next day.

Alcohol can also contribute to fatigue by dehydrating the body and affecting how efficiently your body produces and uses energy. This can lead to increased feelings of exhaustion and reduced stamina.

For people who experience breathlessness, alcohol may worsen symptoms by disrupting sleep, affecting fitness levels, and increasing the feeling of tiredness that can make everyday activities feel more demanding.

Alcohol can also affect mood. Regular or excessive drinking can increase feelings of anxiety, stress, and low mood, making it harder to cope with the challenges of living with a long-term condition.
Your brain is affected too. Alcohol can impair concentration, memory, decision-making, and mental clarity. For people already experiencing brain fog, this can make symptoms more noticeable and frustrating.

The first step is simply taking some time to reflect on your current drinking habits Recognising the need for change is the first step. Consider how many units your drink per day or how many days in a week you have a drink and then decide whether any changes would be helpful.

Setting limits e.g. 4 days alcohol free, drinking more slowly and/or alongside water or having alcohol with food can help.

Even small reductions can have a positive impact on health and wellbeing.



Stopping smoking is one of the most beneficial things you can do for your health. The benefits begin almost immediately and continue to increase over time. Quitting can reduce the risk of developing other health conditions, improve fitness and quality of life, save money, and help protect family and friends from second-hand smoke.

Many people need several attempts before they successfully quit, and that's completely normal. Every quit attempt is a step closer to success, and support is available to help. Quit Your way has a free phone service where you can discuss your needs (0800 916 8858).



By now we've discussed several areas where lifestyle changes can support health. Rather than trying to tackle everything at once, think about which area feels most relevant to you right now. What's one small change you could make this week?
Set yourself a goal, write it down and monitor your progress. This could be a tick at the edge of a calendar the number of times you go for a short walk, or tracking your sleep on an app.

Starting small and building consistent routines increases the likelihood of success and helps create lasting habits.

Conclusion



Lifestyle strategies - diet and hydration, weight management, use of alcohol, smoking and sleep – are all essential components that work together to improve daily living and quality of life.

Small, sustainable improvements in one of the topics covered can have a powerful impact.



Small habits create big changes – start today

Taking care of your health is about the small choices you make every day.
While no single lifestyle change is a cure for any long-term health condition, together these habits can have a powerful impact.

Small, sustainable improvements can lead to better physical health, clearer thinking, improved mood, and greater resilience.

Remember, you don't have to change everything at once. Every positive step you take is an investment in your health and wellbeing, and even small changes can make a meaningful difference over time.

Ask yourself today, what 1 lifestyle change could your try today?

Transfer Learning Into A Plan

Having a personalised self-management plan can help apply your learning.

- Identify the strategies that work best for you
- Recognise early warning signs that your symptoms may be worsening
- Develop a plan for managing flare-ups and support your recovery



Look out for your next appointment which will be sent out via e-mail

Congratulations on completing the 6-week self-management course. We hope the information and strategies you've learned will help you feel more confident in managing your health and wellbeing.

The next step is putting these strategies into practice in your everyday life. To support you with this, one of our Healthcare Support Workers will be in touch to offer an appointment.
Together, you'll create a personalised self-management plan. This plan will help you identify the strategies that work best for you, recognise early warning signs that your symptoms may be worsening, and develop a plan for managing flare-ups and supporting your recovery.

Remember, self-management is a journey, and you don't have to do it alone. Having a plan in place can help you feel more prepared, more in control, and better equipped to maintain your health and wellbeing in the long term.

What Happens Next?

In the meantime, optional workshops will be available covering the following topics:

- Complex fatigue
- Well-breathing
- Moving Forward with difficult emotions
- Sleep
- Staying Healthy at Work
- Movement

Look out for an e-mail with workshop timetables and instructions on how to book!

While you wait to be allocated to a clinician you also have access to specialist workshops. These smaller group sessions provide an opportunity to explore specific topics in greater depth, learn practical strategies, and take part in open discussion with others who may be experiencing similar challenges.
The relaxed and supportive environment allows you to ask questions, share experiences, and gain personalised tips from our healthcare team. We hope you'll join us and make the most of this opportunity to build your knowledge, confidence, and self-management skills.

Resources



Read

- British Dietetics Healthy eating leaflet
- **Water, drinks and hydration - NHS**

Watch

- Quit Your Way - **NHS GGC- Top Tips to Stop Vaping**
- **Reduce Alcohol intake**
- **Online MBSR/Mindfulness (Free)**

Do

- Download Sleepio
- Contact smoking cessation today
- Make 1 small change to your diet.

There are a number of excellent resources available to support you.
You can access healthy eating and hydration information, watch videos on reducing alcohol intake and stopping vaping, explore free mindfulness resources, or use tools such as Sleepio to improve sleep.
As you leave today, I would encourage you to choose just one action

Remember - One small step today can be the start of a healthier future."