

# HEALTH MATTERS

The CABA guide to physical and emotional wellbeing



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## LOOKING AFTER YOUR WELLBEING

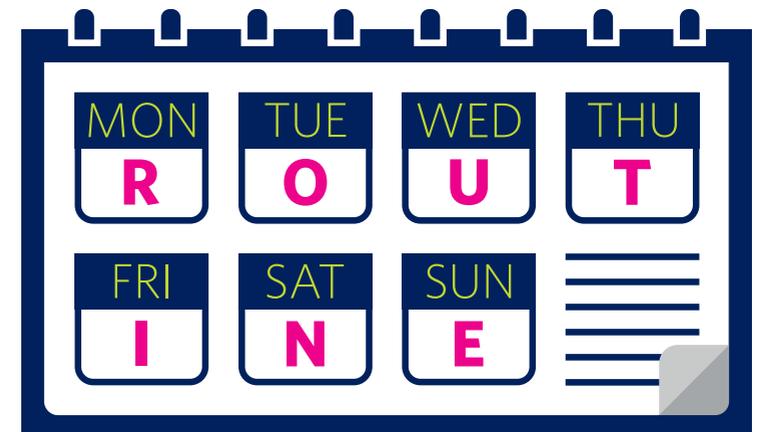
Few things are more important, or more connected, than your physical and emotional wellbeing. And because we think it's a good idea to look after both, we created this handy guide.

You'll find everything you need to know about healthy eating, staying active and managing stress - from taking care of your back while exercising to top tips for a great night's sleep.

It may act as a reminder to make sure you're getting enough vitamins, or you may find some new ideas in here that could fit into your daily routine. Either way, we hope the guide will help you look after your physical and emotional wellbeing - now and in the future.

Don't forget, we're here for you 24 /7. If there's anything we can help with, call us on **+44 (0) 1788 556 366** or go online and chat with us live at [caba.org.uk/letstalk](https://caba.org.uk/letstalk)

**Kelly Feehan**  
Services Director



# LIVE WELL

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There's overwhelming evidence to suggest a healthy lifestyle is strongly associated with how long you'll live and enjoy good health. The cornerstones of a healthy lifestyle include eating well and staying active.

## HOW TO EAT HEALTHILY

Not only does eating healthily make you feel and look better, it may also help reduce your risk of a range of medical problems. Here are our top tips to put you on the road to healthier eating:

### Fruit and veg

The Department of Health currently recommends eating at least 5 portions of fruit and veg a day. That way, not only will you be adding lots of vitamins and minerals to your diet, but you'll be getting lots of fibre too – plus most fruit and veg is naturally low in calories, which is good news for your waistline.

Try to make sure you eat a variety of different coloured fruit and veg every day – the darker or brighter the colour, the better.

### Starchy foods

A third of everything you eat should be made up of starchy foods such as bread, oats, rice, potatoes, barley, couscous or pasta. Choose wholegrain versions wherever possible, as they contain more nutrients and fibre than the white varieties, and eat potatoes with their skins on.

### Did you know...

A portion of fresh fruit or veg is 80g, while a portion of dried fruit is 30g. A portion of fruit or vegetable juice is 150ml

### Protein

Protein foods, such as meat, fish, eggs, beans and certain other non-dairy foods are also an important part of a healthy balanced diet. Have 2 to 3 portions of protein foods a day, such as 3 slices of lean meat, 2 eggs or 4 tablespoons of cooked beans or lentils.

Aim for at least 2 portions of fish a week, 1 of which should be oily fish such as herring, pilchards, sardines, mackerel, salmon, fresh tuna or trout.

The average man needs around 2,500 calories a day to maintain their weight, whereas the average woman needs 2,000 a day. If you're not particularly active, you may need fewer. If you need to lose weight, aim to eat fewer calories than your body needs (reducing your daily calories to 1,900 if you're a man and 1,400 if you're a woman should result in a safe, sustainable 1-2lb loss per week)

## Milk and dairy foods

Foods such as milk, yoghurt, cheese and fromage frais are good sources of protein and calcium. You should aim to have 2 to 3 portions of milk and dairy foods every day (a portion is the equivalent of 200ml of milk, 150ml of yoghurt/fromage frais or a matchbox-sized piece of cheese)

## Sugar

If you eat too much sugar reducing your intake can have a dramatic effect on your calorie count. It can also help to stabilise your blood sugar levels which may reduce your risk of diabetes and heart disease.

Try drinking watered-down fruit juice instead of sugary squashes or canned drinks. If you do need to have something sweet for dessert try swapping high-sugar puddings and cakes for fresh fruit with yoghurt or fromage frais.

Aim for no more than 1 portion of sugary foods a day (or 7 a week), such as 2 plain biscuits or a small bar of chocolate.

## Fats: saturated

It's thought that saturated fats – found in butter, ghee, margarine, fatty and processed meats, dairy fats and other processed foods such as pies, pastries and cakes – can be bad for your health because they may increase your cholesterol levels.

Have fewer of these foods in your diet and choose leaner cuts of meat (aim for no more than 30g of saturated fat a day if you're a man and no more than 20g if you're a woman).

## Fats: unsaturated

Unsaturated fats – found in oily fish, nuts, seeds, vegetable oils and some fruit and veg – are thought to help lower your cholesterol. Try swapping saturated for unsaturated by eating vegetable, seed and nut oils instead of lard, butter or margarine and choose low-fat dairy foods instead of full-fat ones. Grilling instead of frying can also help you use less fat in cooking.

### Top tip...

Use the 'eatwell plate' as a guide of how much fruit and veg, starchy foods, protein and foods high in fat and sugar you should eat every day (visit [nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/eatwell-plate.aspx](https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/eatwell-plate.aspx))

Check the nutrition labels on your foods and stick to those that contain less than 3g total fat per 100g (and less than 1g saturated fat per 100g). If a food has more than 20g total fat and 5g saturated fat per 100g, avoid it or eat it sparingly

## Salt

Try not to eat more than 6g of salt a day (3g for children) as the more salt you eat the more likely it is you'll have high blood pressure.

Stop using salt at the table and avoid using it in cooking. Also check food labels to see how much salt there is in any processed foods you eat since around 80% of the salt we eat is found in foods such as bread, breakfast cereals, ready meals, takeaways and biscuits.

## Salt vs sodium

Some food labels state the amount of sodium in food, rather than salt: 2.4g of sodium is the equivalent of 6g salt. If a label says a food has 0.3g or less of salt per 100g (or 0.1g sodium), it means it's low in salt and you can eat plenty of it. But try to avoid anything that contains 1.5g or more salt (0.6g sodium) per 100g.

## Alcohol

Drinking too much alcohol can cause high blood pressure and abnormal heart rhythms as well as damage your liver.

The current guidelines for alcohol recommend no more than 2 to 3 units a day for women and 3 to 4 for men (a unit equals 1 small glass of wine, half a pint of normal strength lager, cider or beer, or a single pub measure of spirits).

It's also a good idea to have at least a couple of alcohol free days each week, which may help your liver recover.

Find out more about how alcohol affects you and how you can keep track of your units by visiting [drinkaware.co.uk](https://www.drinkaware.co.uk).

### Did you know...

Alcohol is high in calories, with a pint of beer or large glass of wine containing around 200 calories

Around two-thirds of the human body is composed of water, so make sure you drink enough for your body to work efficiently and not become dehydrated. According to the European Food Safety Authority, men should drink 2 litres of fluids a day and women 1.6 litres (drink more when you're exercising or in hot weather). All drinks count when it comes to your daily fluid intake, not just water



# VITAMINS AND MINERALS

A healthy, balanced diet should provide all the nutrients your body needs to stay healthy. Here's a quick guide to some of the vitamins and minerals you need, including the foods they're found in:

## Vitamin A

**What does it do?** Vitamin A keeps your bones, skin, eyesight and immune system healthy.

**Where do you get it?** Vitamin A is only found in animal foods, including liver, cod liver oil, kidney, full-fat dairy products and eggs. It can also be converted by the body from beta carotene which can be found in fruit and veg such as spinach, carrots, yellow peppers and mangos.

## Vitamin B

**What does it do?** The B vitamins include thiamin (B1), riboflavin (B2), niacin (B3 – either nicotinic acid or niacinamide), pantothenic acid (B5), pyridoxine (B6), biotin, cobalamin (B12) and folic acid. They help release energy from the food you eat plus keep your heart, brain, nervous system, muscles and skin healthy.

**Where do you get it?** The best sources are wheat, nuts, meat, whole grains, beans, dairy products, yeast and fortified cereals.

## Vitamin C

**What does it do?** Vitamin C keeps your cells and connective tissue healthy. It's needed for healthy skin and wound healing.

**Where do you get it?** From fruit and veg – oranges are best known for their vitamin C content, but top sources include blackcurrants, guava, papaya, kiwi fruit, green peppers, broccoli and strawberries.

## Vitamin D

**What does it do?** Vitamin D strengthens your bones and teeth by helping calcium to be used in the body.

**Where do you get it?** Vitamin D is mostly produced in the body when your skin is exposed to sunlight. Food sources include full-fat dairy foods, eggs, cod liver oil and some margarines.

## Vitamin E

**What does it do?** Also called tocopherol, vitamin E is important for your heart, immune system, skin and circulation.

**Where do you get it?** From vegetable oils, nuts, seeds, beans, avocados, leafy green veg and egg yolks.

## Calcium

**What does it do?** Calcium helps keep your bones and teeth strong. It's essential for healthy nerves, muscles and for making sure your blood clots normally.

**Where do you get it?** Dairy foods such as milk and cheese, green leafy veg (broccoli and cabbage, but not spinach), tinned fish (with bones), nuts, pulses, tofu, sesame seeds and whole grains.

## Iron

**What does it do?** Iron carries oxygen from your lungs to all the cells in your body – too little of it, and you may develop anaemia. It's also needed for healthy hair and a strong immune system.

**Where do you get it?** Best sources include liver and red meats, but it's also found in nuts, dark green veg, dried apricots, beans and soya foods.

## Magnesium

**What does it do?** Magnesium helps keep your teeth and bones strong. You also need it for your muscles and nervous system, and for releasing energy from food.

**Where do you get it?** Mostly from nuts, dried fruit, whole grains, green veg, soya beans and other pulses, plus some seafood.

## Selenium

**What does it do?** Selenium is necessary for healthy skin, hair, nails and eyes. It also helps regulate hormone levels and is important for your immune system.

**Where do you get it?** From liver and kidney, fish, shellfish and dairy products. Other sources include Brazil nuts, bread and blackstrap molasses.

## Zinc

**What does it do?** Keeps your reproductive and immune systems healthy, plus it's good for skin, teeth and bones.

**Where do you get it?** Best sources include meat, seafood, bread and nuts. Green veg, whole grains, beans and root ginger are also good sources.

### Do you need a supplement?

If you eat healthily, you shouldn't need to take vitamin or mineral supplements. However, some people who have restricted diets may need extra nutrients, as may women who are pregnant (health experts recommend taking a daily 40mcg supplement of folic acid to help protect against certain birth defects) or those who smoke. If you're not sure if you need a supplement – or which one you should take – ask your local health food store or pharmacy for advice

## 10 FAT-FIGHTING TIPS

Carrying too much weight is linked to a range of health conditions. But when it comes to your waistline, it's not just what you eat but how you eat it that can make a difference. Try these 10 tips to stay trim...

1. Buy stronger-tasting foods to eat less of them. For example, by swapping your mild cheddar with extra mature cheddar for cooking, you'll use less cheese because it tastes so much stronger.
2. Studies suggest people who have a large salad as a starter eat fewer calories in their meal overall than those who skip the first course. Just skip the high-calorie salad dressings.
3. Experts agree it takes about 20 minutes for your brain to realise that your stomach is full, so don't dive into dessert straight after your main course.
4. Drinks contain calories too, even though they don't fill you up the same way solid foods do. Cut down on liquid calories by swapping juices and non-diet colas for water or watered-down juice.
5. Avoid buy-one-get-one-free and super-size offers at the supermarket as some researchers believe they encourage you to eat more.
6. Eat food flavoured with turmeric, cayenne pepper, mustard, chilli, ginger and garlic. In tests, people given spicy meals burned more calories after eating compared with others who hadn't eaten spices.
7. Eating out can be a dieter's worst enemy, especially if you're one of those who has to finish everything on your plate at restaurants. Instead, eat half and ask for the rest to be packed up to take home with you.
8. Eating wholegrain versions of foods such as bread, pasta and rice could shave inches off your waistline, as studies suggest people who eat primarily white flour foods gain more around their middle than wholegrain eaters.
9. Getting a good night's sleep can help keep you slim since sleep affects the levels of hormones that control your appetite. In 1 study, volunteers subjected to sleep deprivation ate 45% more calories than those who'd slept well.
10. Watching TV could make you eat more – the theory is that it takes your mind off how much you're eating. So switch it off at mealtimes and savour every mouthful.

**See Page 19 to find out how mindful eating could help you watch your weight.**

## WALKING FOR HEALTH

Walking is one of the easiest ways to boost your wellbeing. According to the walking charity, Ramblers, if everyone in England did enough walking to meet the current recommended guidelines it could prevent almost 37,000 cases of people dying prematurely, 295,000 cases of diabetes and just over 12,000 cases of people going to hospital for emergency coronary heart disease treatment.

Walking briskly on a regular basis can help improve the performance of your heart, lungs and circulation while lowering your blood pressure and reducing your risk of coronary heart disease and strokes. It can help you manage your weight, improve your flexibility, joint and muscle strength, and make your immune system stronger. There's also evidence that walking can improve your mood and self-image, reduce anxiety and help you get a better night's sleep.

### Getting started

One of the great things about walking is you can do it whenever you feel like, whether on your own, with friends or with family. Best of all, the only thing you need is a pair of comfortable shoes (walking shoes or trainers are ideal, but any supportive shoe will do).

You may want to start by simply taking a 5 or 10-minute walk around the block, then progress to a turn around your local park then a longer walk down a country path or along a river or canal. To keep yourself motivated, try joining a local

walking group. The Walking for Health programme, run jointly by Ramblers and Macmillan Cancer Support, offers more than 3,000 free short walks around the country each week: visit [walkingforhealth.org.uk](http://walkingforhealth.org.uk)

Other websites where you can find walking groups and events include [walk4life.info](http://walk4life.info) and [www.bwf-ivv.org.uk](http://www.bwf-ivv.org.uk) (British Walking Federation). To find a sponsored walk in your area, visit [doitforcharity.com](http://doitforcharity.com).

### Top tip...

Try to keep a record of where you walk and how long you walk for, so that you can track your progress

### Action...

To walk briskly enough to increase your heart rate, you should aim to get warm and slightly out of breath (you should be able to talk but not sing)

## LET'S GET PHYSICAL

The evidence that physical activity is essential for health is overwhelming. The NHS has produced statistics that show exactly how much regular physical activity could improve your health. Here are some of the benefits you could enjoy if you're active on a regular basis:

- Up to 35% lower risk of coronary heart disease and stroke
- Up to 50% lower risk of type 2 diabetes
- Up to 50% lower risk of colon cancer
- Up to 20% lower risk of breast cancer
- Up to 83% lower risk of osteoarthritis
- Up to 30% lower risk of depression
- Up to 30% lower risk of dementia

But that's not all. Being active on a regular basis can help keep your weight down and keep you in good shape. It can also relieve stress, boost your energy levels, give you more confidence, help you sleep more soundly and give you more independence as you get older.

### How much is enough?

The Chief Medical Officer in the UK recommends that adults are moderately active for at least 150 minutes each week. According to the Health and Social Care Information Centre's 2013 Health Survey for England, 66% of men and 56% of women in the country claim they meet these recommendations - but experts believe the reality may be much lower.

As a nation, the UK is becoming increasingly sedentary. The answer is we need to move more. So aim to be active every day and to do at least 30 minutes of exercise that leaves you warm, slightly out of breath and with a faster heart rate 5 days a week.

Try to do at least a couple of strengthening activities a week too, such as lifting weights, heavy gardening or anything that uses your body's weight as resistance (including yoga).

The good news - especially if you're on a budget - is that being physically active doesn't have to mean joining a gym. Just remember to start slowly and build up gradually as your fitness improves.

### In the pool

Swimming is one of the country's best-loved activities. There's no age barrier to taking a dip, and you can take things

#### Action...

Always check with your GP before starting to exercise, especially if you haven't been active for a while or if you have a medical condition

at your own pace. If you can't swim, many local authority swimming pools offer adult lessons and aqua aerobics classes. Studies suggest that swimming every day could help protect against dementia and, if you have joint problems, swimming is ideal as the water supports your weight and takes the pressure off your knees, hips and spine.

### Strut your stuff

Dance floor fans will be delighted to learn that dancing can help keep you fit, healthy and give you a positive outlook on life. There's an added bonus for those who take to the dance floor too as studies show learning a new dance can help keep your memory sharp and lower your risk of mental decline.

With ballroom, Latin, jive, disco, line dancing and even belly dancing, there's something for everyone. Check your local newspapers, Yellow Pages and library for dance class listings in your area.

### Pedal power

If you already have a bicycle, cycling is a cheap and convenient way to get regular exercise. It could save you money on petrol, too, since statistics show most car journeys are under a mile long.

Cycling is ideal for working your lower body and your cardiovascular system and can help reduce your risk of heart disease and high blood pressure.

Since a moderate ride burns 8 calories a minute, it protects against obesity too. According to experts, people who cycle regularly are as fit as those who are 10 years younger.

Many employers provide funding for cycling equipment through the Cycle to Work scheme. Ask your manager for details. For more details on cycling, including important safety information, visit [ctc.org.uk](http://ctc.org.uk)

If you find the government's recommendations impractical, don't let that put you off. Even the smallest amount of activity can boost your health and wellbeing. Day-to-day activities such as gardening, playing with your children or grandchildren, doing DIY or the housework and going shopping all count too

### Did you know...

The British Heart Foundation says that cycling for 20 miles a week or more reduces your risk of heart disease by half compared with a non-cyclist

## STAYING ACTIVE IN LATER LIFE

Staying active as you get older is vital for good health because it can help delay the ageing process – plus it helps you feel better. Finding physical activities that work well for you may help reduce the risk of or delay the onset of several age-related illnesses. Being active can help reduce joint pain and may also boost your psychological wellbeing.

When you age, your muscles tend to get weaker and you develop more aches and pains, not to mention becoming more susceptible to falls and injuries. All of these things can make you feel less motivated to stay active.

On the other hand, many studies suggest staying physically active can slow down some aspects of the ageing process, such as finding it more difficult to get around. It's also a great way to make new friends and improve your overall quality of life.

### Preventing falls

Being physically active can improve your overall balance, muscle strength and tone, so you may become less likely to lose your balance and fall or have an accident. Here are some of the other things it can improve:

- Flexibility
- Mobility, speed and stamina
- Cognitive abilities (such as memory and reasoning skills)
- Sense of wellbeing

Most importantly, don't forget to get the all-clear from your GP before starting any physical activity, especially if you have a medical condition or you're not very active.

### Top tip...

**Gardening is a great way to be active. The more effort you put into weeding, mowing and digging, the better the effect it will have on your wellbeing**

If you suffer from rheumatoid arthritis or aching joints, being active on a regular basis may help reduce pain and keep your bones strong. For those who have rheumatoid arthritis, the 3 types of recommended activities are stretching, strengthening and conditioning (see opposite). Avoid high-impact activities such as jogging or exercises that put a lot of stress on your joints

### Activity ideas

If you haven't been active for a while, the thought of it can be a bit daunting. So make a start with something you enjoy, whether that's an everyday activity, a structured work-out or a sport. Here are a few ideas:

- Walk or cycle whenever possible
- Take every little opportunity to be more active (use the stairs, get off the bus 1 or 2 stops earlier than usual)
- Play a sport, go to the gym or go swimming 2 to 3 times a week
- Go for a bike ride, do some DIY or gardening
- Join an exercise class

Once you get the hang of it here are the activities you should aim to do on a regular basis:

### Stretching

This involves stretching and holding different joint and muscle groups for 10-30 seconds to improve your flexibility. [nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk) has some gentle flexibility exercises you can try. Once you feel more confident, you may want to join a yoga or pilates class that may help with flexibility.

### Strengthening

Strengthening exercises work your muscles against resistance, which helps reduce age-related muscle loss. They can be done with or without weights. For starters, try

these easy chair-based exercises from [nhs.uk/Livewell/fitness/Pages/strength-exercises-for-older-people.aspx](https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/fitness/Pages/strength-exercises-for-older-people.aspx)

### Balance

This type of exercise can help you maintain your stability and reduce your chances of having a fall. Try these simple balancing exercises from [nhs.uk/Livewell/fitness/Pages/balance-exercises-for-older-people.aspx](https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/fitness/Pages/balance-exercises-for-older-people.aspx) or consider joining a Tai Chi class.

### Conditioning

Conditioning, or aerobic exercise, improves your cardiovascular fitness. Try low-impact activities such as walking, swimming, aqua aerobics or cycling (aim for 20-30 minutes at least 3 times a week).

### Top tip...

**Organise activities with friends or family members to help keep you motivated**

Gradually build up your levels of activity until you reach your target. Don't try to do too much too quickly because you may lose motivation. Once you're into a routine, increase the amount of activity slowly to build up your strength and fitness levels

# FEEL GREAT

Positive emotions are essential for wellbeing. That's because they help counteract the negative moods that can both deplete your mental energy and have a damaging impact on your physical health.

## START COMBATTING STRESS

A certain amount of pressure is good for you as it can be motivating and help you to get things done. If you're experiencing high levels of stress, you risk reaching stress overload or burnout – and that's bad news for your health. Too much stress causes your adrenal glands to produce the hormone cortisol. If you have too much cortisol in your system you may have a higher risk of impaired cognitive performance, high blood pressure and heart disease.

While a certain amount of stress may be part and parcel of modern life, it's important to keep an eye out for the early warning signs that things are getting too much.

### Stress signals

If you're not sure whether or not stress may be becoming an issue for you, ask yourself the following questions:

- Have you been feeling more irritable, short tempered, overwhelmed or anxious recently?
- Do you find yourself focusing on the negative or being constantly worried about things?
- Is it hard for you to relax?
- Are you sleeping a lot more or less than usual?
- Have you been experiencing physical symptoms such as nausea, dizziness, aches and pains, diarrhoea, constipation, frequent colds, chest pain or a rapid heartbeat?
- Have you been avoiding mixing with people or socialising?

- Have you lost your sexual appetite?
- Are you eating much more or less than normal?
- Do you find yourself procrastinating or neglecting your responsibilities?

If you answered yes to any of these it could be a sign that you're feeling stressed.

### Did you know...

There are 3 main stress behaviour types: people who get angry or agitated; people who become withdrawn or depressed; and people who 'freeze' under pressure. Which one are you?

If you feel unable to cope with stress don't just hope it will go away. Talk to your GP or call the CABA helpline on **0800 107 6163 (UK only)**. Our 5-point checklist (page 18) shows how you can start alleviating excessive stress in your life

## 5-POINT CHECKLIST



There are lots of different ways of coping under pressure. Here are 5 easy steps to becoming more stress resistant:

✓ **1.** If you're feeling stressed, taking part in physical activity can help to clear your mind. With a clear mind you can identify the causes of your stress and deal with problems more calmly. Being active may also boost your body's production of feel-good hormones called endorphins.

✓ **2.** Build a solid support network made up of your friends, family and peers as this can be a cornerstone of wellbeing in times of stress. Just having a support network in place can be comforting because you know people are there for you if you need them.

✓ **3.** Carving out time for yourself is essential when you're under stress. Try to set aside some time at least a couple of nights a week for socialising, relaxation or physical activity.

For more ideas on relaxing turn to page 21.

✓ **4.** Pushing yourself to learn something new, such as a language or sport, builds confidence. New challenges can help you become more emotionally resilient which means you'll be able to deal with stress more effectively.

✓ **5.** It may be easier said than done - especially if you're under a lot of stress - but try to be a 'glass half full' person instead of a 'glass half empty' one. Try to look at your situation from a more positive viewpoint. Even if you're a natural pessimist, you can train yourself to be more positive. Start by writing down 3 things at the end of each day that went well, or that you're grateful for.

### Top tip...

It may be tempting to turn to alcohol, caffeine or sugar when you're under lots of stress. Try to avoid the urge, as they may have the opposite effect by stopping you getting a good night's sleep

## MANAGING WITH MINDFULNESS

Everyone's talking about it, but it isn't new. Mindfulness and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy have been effectively used to treat a variety of emotional problems for a number of years. But what is it?

More than positive thinking or simple breathing exercises, mindfulness is an effective way to train your brain. It's all about being in the present moment, consciously aware and paying attention without judging. It's also a great way to promote happiness and mentally de-clutter. Here are a few everyday activities you can practice with mindfulness:

### Mindful eating

Get rid of distractions like the TV, newspaper, mobile phone, radio or talking and sit down to eat. Give your full attention to your food; How does it smell? What colour is it? What are the textures like? How do you cut it? Chew slowly and really savour your meal. Notice how it tastes different. This is also a great technique if you're watching your weight.

### Mindful cup of tea

Making and drinking tea can be a profoundly relaxing experience. Notice the weight of the kettle as you fill it with water, listen to the sound of the water as it runs from the tap, how the light bounces off the stream. Hear the sounds of the water in the kettle as it comes to the boil. Watch as you pour the boiling water onto the bag, how it floats as the

steam swirls upwards. Then notice the heat, the taste of the tea and all of the different flavours as you swallow.

### Mindful walking

The next time you're walking, really notice what's going on around you. Feel the ground under your feet, how you breathe as you walk, notice the buildings, your fellow pedestrians, feel the wind on your face. Remain in the present as you head towards your destination and notice what's different when you arrive.

### How can it help?

Mindfulness may help you cope with stress, anxiety and depression, with some studies suggesting it may work just as well against depression as antidepressant drugs. Many experts believe it may also be effective in cases of addictions.

There's also evidence that practising mindfulness on a regular basis could have a positive effect on physical health issues including high blood pressure, insomnia, chronic fatigue syndrome and chronic pain.

### Did you know...

The great thing about mindfulness is that you can use it any place, any time, anywhere – and it only takes a few minutes of your time each day

This mindful meditation is suitable for anyone, even complete beginners. All you have to do is focus on your breathing, which helps you become more aware of the present moment. Here's how it's done:

- Find a warm, quiet place where you won't be disturbed or distracted. Get into a comfortable position – but avoid lying down (as you may end up falling asleep).
- With your eyes either open or closed, start focusing on your breathing. Count your breaths, if you like, or repeat a soothing word every time you exhale. Try repeating the word 'calm', 'still', 'peace' or 'quiet', for instance.
- Focus your attention on your body. Start with your feet and work your way right up to the top of your head, concentrating on each part and how it feels right now.
- If other thoughts come into your head, bring your attention back to your breathing and let the thoughts gently flow back out again.

This technique, which you can do at any time, is also worth a try:

**Stop:** Stop what you're doing. Pause for a moment

**Take a breath:** Breathe, and really notice how the breath feels entering your body and how it feels as you exhale. Concentrate only on your breath

**Observe:** Now you've had that pause and breathed a little, how do you feel? What's going on for you? Just observe without judging

**Proceed:** Carry on with whatever you were doing

### Action...

Find out more by attending the free one-day CABA course called *An introduction to mindfulness*, which examines the foundation of mindfulness and shows you how to use mindful strategies. For more details, visit [caba.org.uk](http://caba.org.uk)

## 5-POINT CHECKLIST



Even if you can only manage 10 minutes a day, doing some form of relaxation could do you the power of good. But if the idea of sitting cross-legged and chanting 'om' or taking candlelit baths while listening to a whale song makes you cringe, here are 5 surprisingly simple – and practical – ways to chill out:

### ✓ 1. Listen up

Want to feel calm? Put on a CD or plug yourself into your MP3 player and listen to your favourite piece of music. According to Japanese scientists, listening to music has a measurable calming affect on the brain. Just remember to choose something soothing rather than energetic.

whenever you want to wind down. Alternatively, eating a biscuit or something similar may alter your mood because it sets off emotional and chemical reactions in your body that can give you a temporary feeling of calm and wellbeing.

### ✓ 2. Have a cuppa

Whether green, black or oolong, tea contains a substance called theanine, which has a calming effect on the brain. Just 50mg of theanine – the amount you'd find in 2 or 3 cuppas – is enough to stimulate the production of alpha brain waves. These brain waves signify a relaxed, but alert, state of mind.

### ✓ 4. Take 40 winks

When you're under stress, your blood pressure rises and puts added pressure on your heart. A short catnap of between 15 and 30 minutes could be enough to lower your blood pressure, making you feel more relaxed. (Note: try to avoid napping if you're not sleeping well – see page 32 for tips on getting a better night's sleep).

### ✓ 3. Chew gum

It may sound odd but chewing gum may help defuse tension. So keep a pack of chewing gum in your pocket and chew

### ✓ 5. See the funny side

Laughter can help you feel calmer. Research shows it reduces stress hormones and blood pressure, while boosting the immune system and triggering the release of endorphins.

## BOOST YOUR MOOD

Feeling happy can help you live a long and healthy life. Some scientists believe oxytocin – a hormone released when you have a happy experience – is linked to lower blood pressure, while others say happiness reduces chemicals in the body linked to heart disease, diabetes and cancer.

Yale University researchers have discovered that being happy may add 9 years to your life, while being optimistic may add 7 and a half years. Harvard Medical School experts found women who live to be 100 tend to be positive and optimistic and are rarely troubled by negative feelings. Here are a few easy ways to boost your mood:

### Walk tall

Body language can make the difference between sad and glad. Some scientists believe adopting positive body language can have an effect on your brain – so if you stand tall and walk with a spring in your step it could make you feel more cheerful.

### Head for the hills

Exercise is an established antidote to depression and fresh air can lift your mood even further. A growing body of evidence suggests being surrounded by nature may help you to forget your worries. If you can't get out to the country a walk in the park has the same effect.

### Be a fidget

Keeping your hands busy with a repetitive task such as knitting or stroking a pet may help your brain process upsetting thoughts and worries so you're less likely to keep churning them over in your mind.

### Follow your nose

Studies suggest certain smells trigger feelings of comfort and help reduce anxiety. Soothing smells for men include cinnamon buns, doughnuts and vanilla while women prefer licorice, cucumber and banana nut bread.

### 5 happy quick fixes

1. Make a compilation of music you associate with happy times to play whenever you need a boost
2. Absorb yourself in a hobby you love
3. Dig out photographs that make you smile
4. Tell a joke or have a giggle
5. Do something that takes you back to your childhood, such as eating a Sherbet Dip or blowing bubbles

## EAT YOUR WAY TO FEELING GOOD

Many experts believe food and nutrition can affect emotional and mental health. Here are 5 ways to eat yourself happy:

### 1. Cut down on caffeine

Too much caffeine – which is found in coffee, tea, chocolate and some fizzy drinks – may lead to emotional problems such as depression and anxiety. If you suffer from mood swings it's a good idea to switch to decaffeinated and non-caffeinated drinks, or limit yourself to 1 or 2 cups of caffeinated drinks a day.

### 2. Go slow with carbohydrates

If your energy level is low your mood may often follow, so eat plenty of foods that release energy slowly, including unrefined carbohydrates such as whole grains (oats, brown and wild rice, barley, corn, quinoa, rye and whole wheat).

### 3. Choose oily fish

Studies have found that omega-3 essential fatty acids – found in oily fish such as salmon, fresh tuna, trout, mackerel, pilchards and sardines – are important for healthy brain functioning as well as having a range of other health benefits. Eat at least 2 portions of fish a week, including 1 portion of oily fish (but no more than 2 portions of oily fish a week if you're a woman of childbearing age).

### 4. Chalk up 5 a day

Eating 5 portions of fruit and veg every day helps your body get the nutrients it needs and supports your emotional health too. If you find it hard to eat that amount of fruit and veg every day try adding some fruit to your cereal, porridge or yoghurt in the morning, snack on apples or raw veg in the afternoon and have a salad with dinner.

### 5. Have a banana

Levels of the 'feel-good' hormone serotonin are believed to be depleted by stress. Foods that contain the amino acid tryptophan help boost serotonin production. These include bananas, turkey, chicken, fish, cottage cheese, eggs, nuts, wheatgerm, avocados, milk, cheese and pulses.

### Action...

Thinking more positively may help you to look at your situation from a more constructive viewpoint. Even if you're a natural pessimist, you can train yourself to be more positive. Start by writing down 3 things at the end of each day that went well or that you're grateful for

# REVAMP YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

Good communication is essential for a successful relationship. To communicate effectively you have to be conscious of your emotions. In other words, you need emotional intelligence.

With highly developed emotional intelligence, you're far more likely to be in tune with your own, and other people's feelings, which is a must if you want successful relationships with your partner, family members, friends and co-workers.

Here are a few ways to start boosting your emotional intelligence right now:

## Build your self-awareness

Being self-aware means you're confident and don't let your feelings control you. One way to become more self aware is to keep a journal of your experiences and emotions to help you understand yourself better.

## Think before you act

All actions have consequences. If you have to act on something, think about how it'll affect other people beforehand. Try to understand how they'll feel, or how you'd feel if they acted in the same way towards you.

## Keep your emotions in check

People with highly developed emotional intelligence don't allow themselves to make impulsive decisions, or to get angry, jealous or upset when things

don't go their way.

It may be hard to stay calm in difficult situations but practising keeping your emotions under control can really help.

## Accept yourself

Accepting that you're not perfect can help you identify the areas you could work on to develop your emotional intelligence.

### Top tip...

Emotional intelligence can help you manage difficult conversations effectively by helping you communicate your emotions clearly and sense how the person you're talking to is feeling

Discover more about how emotional intelligence could help improve your relationships by taking CABA's free Emotional Intelligence for success course. This 1-day course will help you develop your own emotional intelligence and understand why it's so important. For more details, visit [caba.org.uk/courses](http://caba.org.uk/courses)

## How to cope with arguments

Even couples who have the strongest relationships argue from time to time, including arguments about who does what around the house, how to spend time together and dealing with parents and in-laws.

If arguments with your partner are spiralling out of control it can make both of you feel hurt and rejected. Here are some tips on how to argue more constructively:

## Break the pattern

Do you find yourself arguing about the same things again and again? If so, break the pattern by agreeing to discuss the subject at another time or in another place.

## Don't clam up

If your partner wants to discuss a sensitive issue that you think you're going to disagree over you may feel the best tactic is to refuse to talk about it. However, doing this can make your partner feel unappreciated or frustrated.

## Be a good listener

Avoid starting a conversation by jumping in and criticising or condemning your partner. Be amicable and give them as much time as they need to express themselves - without interrupting them.

## Pick your moment

Starting an argument while with friends at a restaurant is unlikely to help you resolve your issues calmly or satisfactorily. Pick the right moment and turn off your mobile phones to avoid distractions.

## Don't be defensive

If your partner criticises you ask them to explain themselves or tell them you need to think about what they've said. This will buy you some time to calm down and see things more objectively.

## Be prepared to compromise

Don't go all out to win an argument. If you refuse to budge you're much more likely to end up losing (all good relationships involve a lot of give and take, after all).

### Action...

If you really don't think you can have a discussion with your partner about an emotive subject without blowing your top, take some time to relax and put things in perspective beforehand. Do anything that helps you feel less tense, such as going for a walk, taking a relaxing bath or listening to music

# BE HEALTHY

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As the saying goes, if you don't have your health, you don't have anything. While it may sometimes be easy to take your health for granted, spending time looking after yourself always pays off.

## 7 WAYS TO HAVE MORE ENERGY

Few people are full of energy all the time. According to the Royal College of Psychiatrists, at any given time 1 in every 5 people in the UK feels unusually tired and 1 in 10 has prolonged fatigue.

Whether you have the occasional energy dip or are constantly worn out, it's no joke. Being tired means you're more likely to make poor decisions or snap at colleagues and family members, not to mention the affect it may have on the quality of your work.

There are lots of reasons why you may be running on empty. Here are 7 ways to boost your energy levels right now:

### 1. Eat regular meals

If you go for too long without eating, your blood sugar level can drop and you may experience light-headedness, anxiety and feel like you have no energy. The simple solution is to avoid skipping meals – including breakfast – and have some fruit or other healthy snacks handy in case you feel your energy dip between meals.

### 2. Skip junk food

Eating too much junk food isn't going to do your energy levels any favours because it means you're not getting the nutrients your body needs. A healthy, balanced diet with at least 5 portions of fruit and veg every day should see your energy restored to normal.

### 3. Eat energy foods

As well as eating healthily don't forget that some foods may help give you a boost, including nuts, lentils and low-fat dairy foods, all of which contain energy-releasing protein. Eating iron-rich foods such as lean red meat, green leafy veg, shellfish, eggs and seaweed may also help. Other energy super foods include oats, broccoli, chia seeds, spinach, hummus, sprouted seeds and oily fish.

### 4. Avoid stimulants

Certain foods and supplements may give you a short burst of energy but in the long run can leave you feeling drained. Stimulants containing caffeine are the most likely culprits, including coffee, tea, fizzy drinks and chocolate. Other stimulants include sugar, alcohol and nicotine.

### 5. Keep active

If you're tired all the time the last thing you may feel like is physical activity. Being active has a range of benefits, all of which help to boost your energy levels. You don't have to train for a marathon – even a short walk can help boost the flow of oxygen to your brain. Try not to exercise too close to bedtime, as it could stop you from getting to sleep.

## 6. Quench your thirst

Even being slightly dehydrated could make you feel tired and run down. Drink plenty of fluids throughout the day – it's okay to drink some caffeinated tea and coffee but also have plenty of water, low-fat milk, herbal or fruit tea, or watered-down fruit juice. If you need an instant pick-me-up, having a really cold drink with lots of ice can help you stay alert.

## 7. See the light

Whenever possible, sit near a window and go outdoors during breaks. That's because sunlight has a number of beneficial effects on your brain, including making you feel more energetic. Even if the sun isn't shining, being exposed to natural light at lunchtime could make you feel more awake throughout the afternoon. During the winter, when there's less natural sunlight, you may also want to consider investing in a daylight lamp or a therapeutic light box designed for people with seasonal affective disorder (SAD).

### Top tip...

If you feel tired all the time, an underlying health problem could be to blame. Underactive thyroid – or hypothyroidism – and anaemia both cause unexplained, general tiredness. You could be affected by depression which can also drain your energy levels. To find out if you have a health condition that's making you feel worn out, talk to your GP

If you tend to work a long day with very few breaks you may not even realise you're tired until you collapse on your sofa at the end of the day. Some experts believe excessive stress at work can cause this type of exhaustion. The easiest solution is to take more breaks at the office, at least 1 short break every 90 minutes. When you're back at home, switch off as often as possible (see page 21 for ideas on how to relax)



# KEEP YOUR BACK STRONG

Most people are affected by back pain at some point in their lives. According to the NHS it's the biggest cause of absence from work in the UK. Carers UK claims carers are also more likely to be affected by back pain than others as lifting and helping someone to move around can put a strain on the back.

The most common type of back pain is experienced in the lower back. Other types include neck or shoulder pain, sciatica (pain in the lower back that moves down into one or both legs), slipped disc, frozen shoulder, whiplash and ankylosing spondylitis, a type of arthritis that affects the spine.

In most cases, back pain is a result of sprains, strains, minor injuries and pinched or irritated nerves. It can be caused by several things, such as lifting, carrying, pushing or pulling, slouching, twisting, over-stretching and overusing your muscles.

Some people are also more susceptible to back pain, including those who are overweight, smokers, pregnant women and people who are under stress.

The good news is you can do lots of things to help prevent back pain being an inevitable part of your life.

Try these tips for a stronger, healthier back:

### Stay active

Health professionals believe regular exercise and being active on a daily basis will help keep your back healthy and strong. You don't have to become an exercise fanatic, just be more active in general. Walking, cycling, swimming and other types of exercise can also help strengthen your back muscles, while practising yoga or Pilates can make your muscles more flexible.

### Watch your weight

If you weigh more than you should for your height it can put a strain on your lower back. Eating a healthy diet and staying physically active can help keep your back in good shape because they may help keep your weight in check.

### Keep hydrated

Drinking enough water is important, says the charity [backcare.org.uk](https://www.backcare.org.uk), as experts believe it's essential for keeping the intervertebral discs hydrated. According to the European Food Safety Authority, if you're a man you should aim to drink about 2 litres of fluid a day, or 1.6 litres if you're a woman.

## Stand tall

If you're more aware of your posture you may be more likely to avoid bad postures that may put a strain on your back.

Always stand upright with your back straight – but keeping its natural curve – and avoid stooping or slouching, while keeping your weight balanced evenly on both feet. Sit upright too, and keep your knees and hips level with your feet flat on the floor.

## Take 5

Whenever you're in a situation where you're sitting for long periods of time – at work for instance – take regular breaks to stand up, walk around and have a good stretch. If you hold tension in your neck and shoulders (which is the case for many people who work at a computer all day) do some simple stretches at your desk too, such as neck rolls and shoulder shrugs.

## Lift carefully

Whenever you lift anything awkward or heavy it's important to use a good technique to protect your back muscles. Always bend your knees – not your back – when lifting and keep the weight of whatever you're lifting as close to your body as possible.

## Did you know...

If you're a carer, you could be eligible for equipment or alterations to your house that may help with lifting and moving the person you care for. If you haven't done so already, ask your local council for a carer's assessment, which will look at the help you may need. You can also ask your GP to refer you for an occupational therapy assessment

## Top tip...

Set up your office chair, desk and computer to minimise your risk of developing back pain. Your arms should be at a 90° angle, your feet flat on the floor and the top of your computer screen should be at eye level and at an arm's length in distance. Your wrists should be straight when you're using your computer keyboard and your shoulders relaxed

# LIVING WITH A LONG-TERM CONDITION

In England alone more than 15 million people currently live with 1 or more persistent health conditions such as high cholesterol, asthma, diabetes, depression or arthritis.

If you have such a condition sometimes the simplest things can be a real challenge. Taking care of yourself means you'll be able to manage your condition much more effectively from day to day and in the long term.

## Pace yourself

Don't try to tackle lots of activities at the same time, take them on one at a time. Plan what you're going to do a week at a time and spread tasks and activities evenly so you won't have days when you're tempted to do too much.

## Be patient

Don't be tempted to rush back into doing lots of things if you start feeling better as there's a chance you'll overdo it and have a set-back. Instead, be patient and take things 1 step – or day – at a time.

## Learn to relax

Add some relaxation to your daily plan. Relaxing is important because it helps to soften tense muscles as well as calm a busy mind.

## Help and support

People with a long-term condition may have extra expenses. The good news is you may be eligible for financial benefits:

- Disability Living Allowance is for people under the age of 65 (though Personal Independence Payments – or PIPs – are now gradually replacing this benefit) while Attendance Allowance is for those who are 65 or older. Find out more at [dwp.gov.uk](http://dwp.gov.uk).
- You may also be able to get help at home from social services. The first step is to contact your local authority and ask for a community care assessment. To find your local authority, visit [gov.uk/find-your-local-council](http://gov.uk/find-your-local-council).

## Did you know...

People with a long-term condition on a low income, may be eligible for help with the cost of travelling to NHS premises under the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme.

Go to the relevant website for your area to find out more:

- England: [nhs.uk](http://nhs.uk)
- Wales: [www.healthcosts.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.healthcosts.wales.nhs.uk)
- Northern Ireland: [nidirect.gov.uk](http://nidirect.gov.uk)
- Scotland: <http://www.show.scot.nhs.uk/>

# 10 STEPS TO BETTER SLEEP

Sleep isn't a luxury. It's a necessity, both for your physical and mental health. Extensive studies show that sleep plays a vital role in promoting physical health, longevity and emotional wellbeing. Here are our top 10 tips to help you get a better night's sleep:

## 1. Establish a routine

Choose a time when you normally feel tired and set a regular bedtime so that you can wake up at the same time every day. Try not to break this routine at the weekend when it may be tempting to stay up late. If you're getting enough sleep you should wake up naturally without an alarm.

## 2. Get comfortable

Make sure you have a mattress that's right for you and that your room is as dark as possible (try fitting blackout blinds or curtains to prevent the sun waking you up too early). Also, keep your bedroom at the correct temperature. Most people sleep best in a slightly cool room (around 65°F or 18°C) with adequate ventilation.

## 3. Keep it quiet

Ear plugs can be a lifesaver when noise from outside is keeping you awake. Try not to have a television or computer in your bedroom as even dim standby lights can disrupt your sleep. If you're used to falling asleep while the TV is on, try soft music or a fan instead.

## 4. Try to relax

Making an effort to relax and unwind before bedtime may help you sleep more easily and more deeply. Try relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, visualisation or meditation, or take a warm shower or bath before going to bed to help relax muscle tension.

## 5. Make a list

Keep a pen and paper by your bed and write down a list of problems or tasks that are on your mind. This effectively files your thoughts away and allows you to relax knowing you're prepared for the next day.

## 6. Get some sunlight

Sunlight helps regulate your body clock and makes you feel sleepy at night by stimulating your body to produce melatonin. Morning sunlight exposure can be especially helpful, so open your curtains every morning to let light in.

## 7. Eat for sleep

Stay away from big meals at night. Try to make dinnertime earlier in the evening and avoid heavy, rich foods within 2 hours of bed. Avoid spicy or acidic foods in the evening, plus alcohol and caffeine before going to bed. A light snack before bed may help you sleep: choose foods that contain tryptophan (see page 23).

## 8. Stay active

Physical activity helps your body to relax and prepare for a good night's sleep but avoid moderate or vigorous activity for at least 2 hours before you go to bed. Instead, do something relaxing such as gentle yoga.

## 9. Quit smoking

Smoking is bad for sleep because nicotine stimulates the central nervous system. As a result, smokers take longer to fall asleep, wake more often and frequently experience more sleep disruption.

## 10. Stay calm

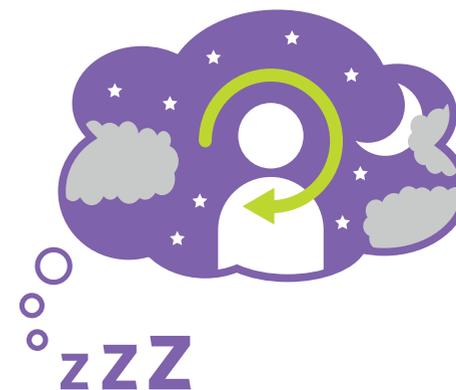
Hard as it may be, try not to get anxious if you wake up and can't get back to sleep because that very stress and anxiety encourages your body to stay awake. Make relaxation your goal, not sleep, and remind yourself that rest and relaxation still help to rejuvenate your body, even though they're not a replacement for sleep.

If you've been awake for more than 15 minutes try getting out of bed and doing something non-stimulating, such as reading a book. Keep the lights dim so that your body clock doesn't think it's time to wake up (avoid screens of any kind, including your TV, computer, tablet or mobile phone).

A light snack or cup of herbal tea might help you to relax but be careful not to eat so much that your body begins to expect a meal at that time of the day.

### Top tip...

Be smart when it comes to napping. If you're having problems sleeping at night try not to nap during the day, even if you're tired. If you must nap, do it in the early afternoon and don't nap for more than 30 minutes



# USEFUL RESOURCES

There's lots of help available from a range of organisations for those needing more information and support with health and wellbeing issues.

## CONTACTS AND LINKS

The following website links may prove useful if you need more information...

### Healthy eating

The eatwell plate: [nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/eatwell-plate.aspx](https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/eatwell-plate.aspx)

### Alcohol advice

Drinkaware: [drinkaware.co.uk](https://www.drinkaware.co.uk)

### Physical activities

CTC (national cycling charity): [ctc.org.uk](https://www.ctc.org.uk)

Go swimming: [swimming.org/go/](https://www.swimming.org/go/)

Walk4Life walk finder: [walk4life.info](https://www.walk4life.info)

Do It for Charity sponsored walks: [doitforcharity.com](https://www.doitforcharity.com)

### Mindfulness

Online mindfulness course:

[bemindful.co.uk](https://www.bemindful.co.uk)

Mental Health Foundation:

[mentalhealth.org.uk/mindfulness](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/mindfulness)

Free mindfulness resources:

[freemindfulness.org/download](https://www.freemindfulness.org/download)

### Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

The Seasonal Affective Disorder Association: [sada.org.uk](https://www.sada.org.uk)

Lightbox manufacturers: [sad.org.uk/recommended-manufacturers](https://www.sad.org.uk/recommended-manufacturers)

### Courses

CABA's professional and personal development courses, including *Emotional intelligence for success* and *An introduction to mindfulness*: [caba.org.uk/courses](https://www.caba.org.uk/courses)

### Back exercises

BackCare's exercises for office workers: [backcare.org.uk/CMS/files/703-Eurocrat-220910.pdf](https://www.backcare.org.uk/CMS/files/703-Eurocrat-220910.pdf)

### Relationships

Relate relationship counselling: [relate.org.uk](https://www.relate.org.uk)

### Healthcare travel costs scheme

Help with travel costs to hospital appointments:

England: [nhs.uk/nhsengland/healthcosts/pages/travelcosts.aspx](https://www.nhs.uk/nhsengland/healthcosts/pages/travelcosts.aspx)

Wales: [www.healthcosts.wales.nhs.uk](https://www.healthcosts.wales.nhs.uk)

Northern Ireland: [nidirect.gov.uk/hospital-travel-costs-scheme](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/hospital-travel-costs-scheme)

Scotland: <http://www.show.scot.nhs.uk/>

### Wellbeing

CABA wellbeing zone [caba.wellbeingzone.co.uk](https://www.caba.wellbeingzone.co.uk)

## CABA WELLBEING ZONE

Looking for the healthy option? Go to our wellbeing zone for everything you need to take care of your physical wellbeing. Try the self-assessment health tool, set personalised goals and track your wellbeing with a food and sleep diary. It's a great chance to make healthier choices.

Register now at [caba.wellbeingzone.co.uk](https://caba.wellbeingzone.co.uk) (access code **CABA1**)

## PROVIDING LIFELONG SUPPORT TO PAST AND PRESENT ICAEW MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

**Call CABA** +44 (0) 1788 556 366

**CABA 24 hour helpline** 0800 107 6163 (UK only)

**Talk to us 24 hours a day** [caba.org.uk/letstalk](https://caba.org.uk/letstalk)

**Email** [enquiries@caba.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@caba.org.uk)

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