

## Info NOW mail feature issue: ageing well

### 3rd August: Our feature edition: ageing well, keeping healthy and fit

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### Are you guilty of stereotyping ageing?

If most people, young or old, were asked to describe what quality of life means to them, they would say something along the lines of: 'being able to make choices,' 'remaining independent,' 'doing the things I enjoy,' 'eating well,' 'doing things with my family and friends,' 'mobility and access,' 'learning new things' and 'being who I want to be.' So why do we have a negative perception of ageing? Have all the items on this list been eroded? - is decline inevitable, preventing us from connecting with others or accessing services or entertainment? The short answer is 'no', we can continue to take control of our lives as we age, make choices and enjoy ourselves. So what prevents us?

The Royal Society for Public Health in partnership with the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation has [reported](#) that there are significant ageist attitudes across the UK:

- Firstly, we have low expectations of older people and ourselves as we get older. We anticipate becoming slower, performing badly, sliding into medical conditions including high blood pressure and diabetes, becoming overweight, falling and sleeping badly. Younger adults aged 18 -25 years, believe that dementia or at least

significant memory loss, is synonymous with old age.

- Secondly, the press and beauty specialists ramp up our fear of getting old. We read about the 'ageing time bomb,' 'struggling with hearing - it could be a sign of dementia' and 'elderly bed blocking on the rise' and we buy anti-ageing wrinkle cream to combat the signs of ageing on our skin - and so it goes on.

The result is that as we age, we may fulfil the negative stereotypes by reducing our health maintaining behaviours.

In this edition, [Information NOW](#) draws your attention to a few positive things that you can do to live well and maintain a good quality of life.

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## How to avoid falls and keep fit

Are falls a natural consequence of getting older? The Chief Medical Officer issued [guidelines](#) on how to prevent falls that are not a consequence of poor vision, a medical condition and hazards in the home or streets.

The age categories are split, 19 - 64 years and 65 + years. However, whichever category you fall into, the recommendation is the same (though the activities may be different). An adult should undertake 75 minutes of vigorous activity a week (leading to fast breathing and difficulty talking) such as running, tennis or climbing the stairs or 150 minutes of moderately intense activity (resulting in faster breathing but able to talk) such as walking, swimming and cycling.

In addition, we should sit less (TV and computers/games) and do some strength and balance exercise over two days. These activities might include: carrying shopping to build muscle strength, doing yoga, pilates or going to the gym as well as maintaining our balance through doing tai chi, bowls and dance.

The good news is that all of these activities and many more, are available in and around Newcastle and they are generally affordable at £1 to £4.00. Information NOW has an events and activities section which includes [sports and fitness](#) and [dancing](#) so you should be able to find something that suits you that is accessible locally. There is also an article on [leisure centres in Newcastle](#) which covers a range of swimming pools, gyms and opportunities to access clubs and coaching, for instance, in table tennis and tennis.

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## Life expectancy

The starkest example of the power of negative self-perceptions comes from [a study](#) which found that those with more positive self-perceptions of ageing live, on average, 7.5 years longer than those with less positive self-perceptions of ageing. So, our mental health is key to self esteem, self confidence and proactive and positive behaviours, as well as aiding our recovery from a severe medical event, such as a heart attack.

It is important to stay connected to family and friends, [make new friends](#), [learn new skills](#) or [hobbies](#) and develop and maintain your [emotional resilience](#) in the face of difficulty and adversity. Don't forget you can [stay connected](#) by contacting befriending services or using social media. Information NOW is reviewing its information on mental health to ensure it is current and up to date.

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## Healthy eating and drinking

For many people, staying socially connected means eating and drinking with friends and family. At the same time, we are exposed to fast food chains, restaurants, ready meals and it is possible to lose track of what we are eating and drinking - and maintaining a healthy, balanced and nutritious diet.

Information NOW has updated its [healthy eating and drinking](#) article to ensure that you are up to date with current information. So, what are the key risk factors in our diet?

[Fat](#) - we should be eating no more than 20g for a woman and 30g for a man per day

[Sugar](#) - we are consuming far too much. The recommended allowance of **free sugars** for an adult is 30g, or 7.5 tsp or 7 cubes per day. For example, one 330ml can of cola contains 36g of free sugars, more than our daily allowance.

[Salt](#) - The maximum amount of salt that we should be eating is 6g per day, which is about a teaspoonful or 2.4g sodium. Salt and sodium are not the same.

[Alcohol](#) - To keep health risks from alcohol to a low level, it is safest not to drink more than 14 units a week on a regular basis. We should also take several days a week without alcohol.

Too much fat, sugar and alcohol are associated with [weight](#) gain and as a contributory factor in a number of [cancers](#). The Health survey for England 2016,

shows an increase in men and women who are overweight or obese between the ages of 45 and 74 years of age. Being overweight is also associated with [type 2 diabetes](#).

Too much salt, alcohol and saturated fats are associated with [high blood pressure](#), [stroke](#) and [heart disease](#).

So why not take control of your health? Think about what you eat on a daily and weekly basis - join a club such as [Newcastle CAN](#), take up [exercise](#) and you can also ask for help or a referral from your GP to one of the specialist services to help you get started.

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## Cancer screening

Four in 10 cancers are preventable but there are concerns that people are not attending their screening appointments. Research published in the Lancet shows that there is a stigma associated with cancer, such that people do not always attend screening because they are afraid that they will lose friends and family because of their diagnosis.

At the same time, scientists continue to develop tests that help find specific types of cancer before signs or symptoms appear. Each type of cancer has its own screening tests. Some types of cancer currently do not have an effective screening method. Developing new cancer screening tests is an area of active research. The main goals of cancer screening are to:

- Reduce the number of people who die from the disease, or eliminate deaths from cancer altogether
- Reduce the number of people who develop the disease

There is a worrying trend in women not attending their cervical screening. Lack of knowledge about the cause of cervical cancer and who can be affected seems to be contributing to older women (aged 50-64) not attending cervical screening. [There are a number of reasons](#) for this which include:

- women being unaware that the main cause of cervical cancer is HPV (Human papillomavirus) which is a viral infection that is passed between people through skin-to-skin contact.
- Single, separated and divorced women were more likely to have never been for

screening compared to women who were married or in a relationship

- women over 50 years have found the test painful since growing older
- some could not take time off work to attend appointments.

Public Health England is also concerned that people are not taking up bowel screening. [Cancer Research UK](#) ran a campaign recently to encourage men and women aged 60 to 74 years and 55 years to undertake screening to enable earlier detection, better treatments and longer survival rates.

Keep your appointment or take the test, it could make all the difference to your healthy life expectancy.

Information NOW has updated its article on [cancer](#) to ensure you are informed about what screening is available and self-examination.

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[Advocacy](#) is free, independent support to help you to get your voice heard. You may be having trouble accessing services or feel that your needs are not well understood. [Advocacy Centre North](#) has published an interesting independent evaluation of their service for people with neurological conditions, alongside a service user [film](#), *Fighting for your rights*. Neurological conditions comprise around 5% of the population and include conditions as wide-ranging as Parkinson's, epilepsy, cerebral palsy and multiple sclerosis, as well as rarer conditions. Symptoms of neurological conditions may include: mobility issues, fatigue, difficulty with communicating and difficulties with cognitive function. Out of 292 people who used the service, nearly 100 people were supported by staff and volunteer advocates to access health services - demonstrating that there are hidden populations whose needs are not being met by health services.

For more interesting insights into this service, read the [evaluation here](#).

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## **Support the Alzheimer's Society at the Great North Run**

Do you want an opportunity to take part in an amazing charity event experience and support people with dementia? [Alzheimer's Society](#) is looking for enthusiastic volunteers to support their runners on 9 September this year. You don't have to commit a whole day and you can be based at the Newcastle or South Shields ends.

[Contact](#) by email.

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## What's on Information Now

### Events and activities

Why not try a walk with City Guides

Join a Wild Walk with Active Newcastle

### Updated and New Articles

Healthy eating and drinking

10 tips to good health

Cancer

High blood pressure

Feeling Lonely

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