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Caerdydd a'r Fro
Cardiff and Vale
University Health Board

What is good for your heart is good for your brain

This toolkit can be used all year round. The key dates are:
Dementia Action Week 20 - 26th May 2019
World Alzheimer's Day 21st September 2019

Cardiff and Vale Local Public Health Team Social Media
Communications toolkit for partners across Cardiff and Vale

Aim of toolkit

- **Raise awareness**

- o Healthy lifestyle can significantly reduce dementia risk
- o The earlier you adopt a healthy lifestyle the bigger the benefit
- o The six steps which can help individuals to reduce their risk of dementia and delay onset

Background information

Dementia describes a set of symptoms that may include memory loss and difficulties with thinking, problem-solving or language. Dementia is progressive which means that symptoms will get worse over time.

One of the actions in Dementia Action Plan for Wales 2018 – 2028

“Individuals will understand the steps they can take to reduce their risk, or delay the onset of dementias.”

This communication pack aims to support and enable organisations to disseminate accurate and evidence based messages about reducing the risks of dementia across their communication and social media platforms.

Target audience

Although we cannot see dementia, it is much more prevalent than you might think, most individuals and communities will be affected by dementia in some way and will benefit from messages which will support people to reduce their risk.

The information, resources and social media messages in this pack are aimed at everyone. It will enable health and social care professionals, Local Authorities, all third sector organisations and housing providers to disseminate messages to their patients, clients and service users about how they can reduce their dementia risk.

Is Dementia preventable?

There is no certain way to completely prevent all types of dementia, however there is good evidence that a healthy lifestyle can help reduce your risk of developing dementia as you age.

Dementia risk factors

A risk factor is something which increases the chance of an individual developing a disease or condition.

Whilst some risk factors for dementia are impossible to change such as age or gender, the latest research is showing that 30% of dementia risk is modifiable, meaning we can reduce our risk by making small changes to our lifestyle.

Adopting a healthy lifestyle, staying socially active and looking after our mental and physical health will all help us stay healthy for longer. Many people aren't aware that what is good for your heart is good for your brain, and taking steps to lead healthy and active

lives will not only reduce your risk of dementia but will help keep heart and other organs healthy.

Six steps to reduce your dementia risk

- Be physically active
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Be socially and mentally active
- Think about your drinking
- Stop smoking
- Regularly review your health

Be physically active

The Risk

Being inactive can increase your risk of heart disease, diabetes type 2 and being an unhealthy weight, all of which are known risk factors for dementia.

What can we do?

Physically active is one of the best things you can do to help reduce your risk of dementia. There are lots of ways to be active the most important thing is to sit less and move more!

- o Walking
- o Gardening
- o Cycling
- o Swimming

Find something you enjoy, start small and set yourself a goal to become more active, talk to your GP or practice nurse about opportunities to get active.

Maintain a healthy weight

The Risk

Overweight or obese can increase your risk of diabetes type 2 and can increase your blood pressure, both of these are linked to Vascular dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

What can you do?

Maintaining a healthy weight and eating a healthy balanced diet can help to reduce your risk of dementia. Some simple tips include:

- o Aim to eat 5 portions of fruit and veg a day
- o Cut down on sugary foods and snacks.
- o Eat smaller portions

Eating well is about eating the right amount of fuel, so that your body has the energy it needs.

Be socially and mentally active

The Risk

When it comes to health, other people matter. Evidence has shown that social connections are good for our mental health, keep our brains active and reduce the risk of depression and anxiety.

What can we do?

Connecting with the people around you, talking to your neighbours or volunteering your time to help others are good ways to be socially active. Being mentally and socially active could include:

- o Learning something new
- o Doing crosswords
- o Taking the time to explore and notice your surroundings

Age related hearing loss can prevent you from being socially active and increase your risk of dementia in later years. Get your hearing checked regularly and seek advice on ways to improve your hearing.

Think about your drinking

The Risk

Drinking alcohol often or in large amounts can cause damage to the body and is known to have a negative effect on both short term and long term health, including damage to your brain and nervous system.

What can you do?

There is no safe limit, but to protect your health stick to the recommended limits for both men and woman.

- o Have several alcohol free days a week
- o Drink less than 14 units a week
- o Spread your drinking over 3 or more days

Drinking less alcohol will help to reduce your risk of dementia but will also help you sleep better and support a healthy weight.

Stop smoking

The Risk

Smoking damages your body and significantly increases your risk of dementia. Smoking is linked to heart disease, stroke, lung disease, some cancers and damages your bodies circulation system.

What can you do?

Quitting smoking is the single best thing you can do for your health, remember:

- o You are four times more likely to quit with specialist support
- o It is never too late to quit smoking
- o Quit do not cut down
- o The health benefits of quitting will be seen almost immediate

Help Me Quit is the Free specialist stop smoking service in Wales, you can contact **Help Me Quit on 0800 085 2219** or speak to your GP about a referral and there skilled smoking cessation advisors will support you on your quit journey.

Regularly review your health

Remember what is good for your heart is good for your brain

Taking steps to reduce your risk of developing diabetes and ensuring you have a healthy blood pressure and healthy heart will help keep your body and brain healthier for longer.

A health check can help you spot early signs and let you know if your risk of developing certain health problems is higher, some of which will increase your risk of dementia.

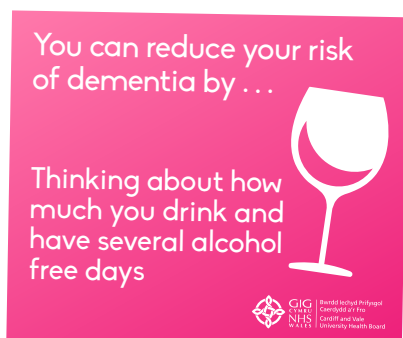
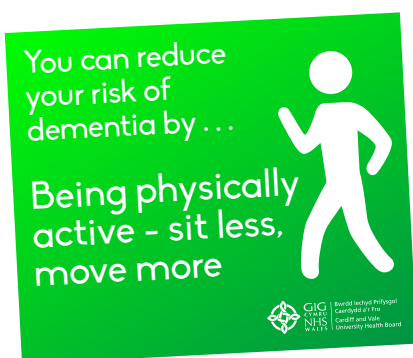
You can go to your GP or use the Add to your Life online health check too:

<https://addtoyourlife.wales.nhs.uk/intro.cfm>

Social Media Messages

General

- What is good for your heart is good for your brain.
- There are six steps that you can take to reduce your risk of dementia: Be physically active, maintain a healthy weight, be socially and mentally active, drink less alcohol, stop smoking, review your health regularly.
- Age related hearing loss can increase your risk of dementia later in life. Get your hearing checked.



Six Steps Messages for social media

- Being physically active is one of the best ways to reduce your risk of dementia.
- Sit less, move more, more often is a great way toward reducing your risk of dementia.
- Build up to being active for about 30 minute every day, this can be as simple as going for a 10-minute walk, some vigorous housework or gardening and will help towards reducing your risk of dementia.
- Maintaining a healthy weight will help reduce your risk of dementia. Make sure you are eating your 5 a day!
- Being a healthy weight will help reduce your risk of dementia, use the traffic light labels on food, pick mostly green and amber lights and be confident it's a healthy choice.
- Being a healthy weight will help reduce your risk of dementia. Smaller portions and swapping sugary and fatty snacks for healthier alternatives is a great step.
- Keeping your mind active is likely to reduce your risk of dementia. Challenge yourself and learn new things.
- Being socially active can reduce your risk of dementia, keep talking and maintaining connections with the people in your life.
- If you smoke you're putting yourself at a much higher risk of developing dementia later in life. Kick the habit with 'Help Me Quit'.
- It's never too late to quit smoking and is a great way to reduce your risk of dementia.
- Drinking too much alcohol increases your risk of developing dementia. Do you know how much you drink a week?
- Having several alcohol free days, a week and drinking less than 14 units is a great step towards reducing your risk of dementia.
- Look after your health, have regular health checks and reduce your risk of dementia.

Useful links

Alzheimer's society - <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk>

Help Me Quit - <https://www.helpmequit.wales>

Add to your life - <https://addtoyourlife.wales.nhs.uk>

Alcohol Change UK - <https://alcoholchange.org.uk>

NHS choices - <https://www.nhs.uk>

We would love to hear your thoughts on this toolkit and how you have used it:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/QW2RXN6>