



EVERYBODY BENEFITS: EMPLOYEE GUIDE

How to live well for longer

Living well for longer doesn't stem from one significant life change. It's the small, everyday choices that accumulatively make the biggest difference.

Research suggests that around two-thirds of what we do each day is habitual - automatic behaviours we repeat without much conscious thought. This means that introducing healthier changes is often less about starting from scratch and more about replacing one routine with another.

It's not about being perfect every day either. A core part of developing healthier habits is understanding what your body wants and needs and learning how to create balance for a better chance of long-term success. Some days are more stressful than others and life can throw obstacles you hadn't planned for - but understanding how to be flexible and balance healthier choices is key to creating healthy change that lasts.

Healthy life expectancy in the UK has dropped by around two years in the last decade





How to live well for longer


We all like a quick reward - yet the benefits of healthier habitual choices are not always immediate.

Males in the UK spend **77%** of their life in good health, while females spend **73%**

You may not feel the reward of an earlier night, a healthier meal, or a short walk straight away. But repeated often enough, those choices can help support your energy, resilience, recovery, and long-term health while becoming a natural part of your routine.

Take a moment to consider... what would make life easier for my future self?

Here, we share some of the everyday choices that could help you to live well for longer.

A woman with curly hair and glasses is sitting in bed, reading a book. She is wearing a black top and has a tattoo on her shoulder. The background shows a floral patterned garment hanging on a rack.

The average UK adult gets good quality sleep on only **three days** a week

A good night's sleep

Sleep is one of the most important tools we have for long-term health. It supports the immune system, concentration, mood, metabolism, heart health, and the body's ability to repair.

But when life gets busy, it is often one of the first things to be sacrificed.


Avoiding caffeine late in the day, reducing screen time close to sleeping, and ensuring a consistent sleep and wake schedule are key to optimum sleep health benefits.

Creating and maintaining a wind-down routine can help too. In the same way children benefit from a familiar bedtime routine, adults can also use simple cues to tell the body it is time to rest. Reading, listening to calm music, or a nighttime skincare routine can help signal to the body that it is time to switch off and prepare for sleep.

The bedroom has a part to play, too – keeping it dark, cool, and comfortable and a gadget-free zone aides good sleep.

If you suffer regularly with sleep problems, we recommend speaking to your GP.

For more advice, read our [sleep employee guide](#).



People who eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day have a lower risk of heart disease, stroke and some cancers

Fuel your body

Supporting your long-term health through food and drink does not have to mean following a strict diet.

Start by thinking what you can add to your current diet, not what you can cut.

Calcium (Plain yoghurt, hard cheese, milk) – Strengthens bones to lower risk of fractures and reduces chance of neurological decline as we age.

Fibre (Lentils, black beans, broccoli) – Reduces chronic inflammation and supports good digestion which reduces type 2 diabetes risk.

Folate (Spinach, kale, chickpeas) – Builds and repairs cells, lowers risk of heart disease and stroke, and helps maintain a positive mood.

Omega 3 (Salmon, tuna, walnuts) - Reduces the risk of heart disease and improves eye health and brain function.

Protein (Chicken, salmon, tuna) – Prevents muscle mass loss, aides general muscle growth and repair, and supports bone health.

Vitamin D (Oily fish, egg yolks, supplements) – Absorbs calcium for better bone and muscle health, reduces risk of age-related heart disease, and improves overall immunity.

Hydration is just as critical - staying hydrated during the day improves energy, concentration, digestion and the general functioning of our body. And while more water may mean more trips to the bathroom, that can be no bad thing if it encourages you to get up and move during the day, especially if your job is sedentary.

Change works best when slowly implemented into your day-to-day, gradually adapting over a period of time that works best for you. Starting can be as small as adding yoghurt, fruit, or nuts to your breakfast options, introducing more vegetables to your main meals, measuring your water intake with a water bottle, or adding meal prepping or batch cooking to your weekly schedule if it will help the busier weeks.

Tiny steps create a positive ripple effect, and once the growing habit becomes more natural, you won't even have to consciously think about it being 'healthier' – it's just what you do.



1 in 10
premature deaths
could be prevented if
everyone did 11 minutes
of moderate-intensity
exercise every day

Keep moving

Exercise looks different for everybody, and doesn't mean excessive and extreme gym or weight sessions. It is simply about finding ways to move your body regularly in a way that feels realistic for you.

Moving more slows the effect of ageing and supports strength, balance, mobility, and mental wellbeing.

Movement does not have to be limited to workouts or gym sessions either - it's taking the stairs instead of the lift, suggesting a walking meeting, a stretch during the workday, hopping off the bus a stop early, or simply putting on your favourite music and dancing like you mean it.

Try to mix up types of exercises too. Strength exercises build muscle while weight-bearing activities, such as walking and dancing, keep your bones strong. Stretching and practices like tai chi or yoga can also reduce stiffness and the risk of falls.

Don't feel like you have to dive in at the deep end. A ten-minute walk is a perfectly good place to start, and consistency will always matter more than intensity.

For more information, read our [walking employee guide](#).

Time to rest

When life gets busy, rest can start to feel like something you have to earn - a reward for when things are finally done. But rest shouldn't be seen as a luxury.

It's especially important when life feels busy or demanding. Stress can affect our sleep, mood, concentration, digestion, and physical and mental health – and while it may feel counter-productive to take time out of the to-do list to breathe and take time to unwind, it will help you in the long run.

Forms of resting could include taking your full lunch break away from your desk, getting outside for some fresh air, practising slow breathing, switching off work notifications after you finish, saying 'no' when your plate is already full, or making time for hobbies and socialising.

Please know that while stress can be a factor in all of our lives, if it is affecting your daily life significantly it may be worth seeking further support or guidance. You are not alone.

Chronic stress
can reduce your
lifespan by
2.8 years




Look after your mind

Your mental and cognitive health is just as important when it comes to living well for longer.

Keeping your brain active through reading, learning, completing puzzles, or having a creative hobby can all help cognitive function as you age.

Some habits can also drain your mental energy, such as spending too much time scrolling through news or social media which can increase feelings of anxiety. Something as simple as leaving your phone alone for the first hour of the day, or switching off in the evening, can make a surprising difference to how you feel. Practices such as puzzles and games that specify 'brain training', mindfulness, and meditation have also been shown to help, with just a few minutes a day enough to start noticing the benefits.



Loneliness is linked
to an estimated
100 deaths every
hour across the world

Stay connected

One of the most consistent findings in longevity research is that strong social connections are linked to longer, healthier lives. Loneliness and isolation, on the other hand, can have a serious impact on both physical and mental health.

That doesn't mean you need a packed social calendar. Staying in touch with people who matter to you or finding a sense of community through a club, a class, volunteering or simply a regular commitment with others can all contribute to your overall wellbeing.

Be mindful of alcohol and smoking

Smoking is one of the biggest risk factors for serious illness - including heart disease, stroke, and cancer. If you smoke and want to stop, your GP can refer you to free support and cessation services that significantly improve your chances of quitting for good.

Your alcohol intake is worth keeping an eye on too. The NHS recommends no more than 14 units a week, spread across three or more days. It's easy for intake to creep up gradually, particularly during stressful periods.

For more information, read our [alcohol employee guide](#).

40% of cancers are preventable and are linked to smoking, an unbalanced diet, and alcohol





Keep up with your health checks

Most conditions are far easier to treat when they're caught early.

Try to stay up to date with NHS health checks such as cervical screening, mammograms, bowel cancer screening, and the newer lung cancer screening, plus any other routine appointments relevant to your age and circumstances. Blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar are all useful indicators of what's going on inside your body too and can be easily monitored at home with inexpensive medical grade devices or if you are concerned ask your GP plus many pharmacists now offer this service.

Don't overlook regular dental check ups either, not just for your teeth but so your dentist can spot other health conditions too.

One small change is enough to start

Living well for longer is not about
doing everything all at once.

For today, it's just one small thing.

For tomorrow, try it again.

Put your head to the pillow half an hour earlier. Take a walk on your lunch break. Stretch between meetings. Swap the cereal bar for a portion of walnuts. Message the friend you've been meaning to catch up with and book that much-needed hello. Book that eye test you've been putting off. Put on the radio a little louder next time you're washing up and let your body feel the music.

It's not about being perfect. It's about doing what you can.





Everywhen. Everybody benefits.

Everywhen helps businesses and individuals manage risk, enable growth and protect the everyday, with insurance, protection and advice that is accessible to all.

Our employee benefits consultancy works for every business, enabling employers to attract talent and boost wellbeing, productivity and loyalty.

Protection that matters. You | Your people | Your business

0800 389 7723 (Monday to Friday)

Head office address

Everywhen
West Park House, 23 Cumberland Place,
Southampton, SO15 2BB

Everywhen is a trading name of Health and Protection Solutions Limited, which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). Not all products and services offered are regulated by the FCA. Registered in England and Wales number 4907859. Registered office: West Park House, 23 Cumberland Place, Southampton, SO15 2BB.

Copyright © 2026 Everywhen, all rights reserved.



SOURCES

bbc.co.uk
ons.gov.uk
cam.ac.uk
theguardian.com
who.int
mentalhealth.org.uk
nhs.uk
ctpublic.org
cancerresearchuk.org
sc.edu

EB289-1-0626