

# Lifestyle and Self- Help Fact Sheet

## Staff Information Leaflet

**This leaflet is designed to give you evidence-based information to help you to manage your musculoskeletal condition by optimising your general health and lifestyle. It is advised that you use this resource alongside physiotherapy (or other medical management of your condition) to reduce the impact of your symptoms, improve fitness and aid recovery.**



# Introduction

Musculoskeletal conditions can be long-term and significantly impact on your life; but there are ways which you can learn to live with these conditions.

Below, we have provided some current information on different lifestyle choices and how they can influence your musculoskeletal condition. We have provided simple advice and recommendations on what you can do to help manage your condition more effectively in the long-term.

Included:

- Weight management
- Diet
- Exercise
- Smoking
- Alcohol



# Weight management

## Facts

- Approximately 29% of adults in the UK are obese, a further 36% are overweight.
- Being overweight increases the strain on joints and can cause inflammation, pain and earlier degenerative change leading to a reduced quality of life.

## What can I do?

One method of weight loss does not suit everybody. Your GP can advise you about losing weight safely. They can also let you know about other useful services such as local weight loss groups that could be provided by your local authority, the NHS or commercial services you may have to pay for.

The following link provides support and evidence based advice on how to best manage your weight:

- <http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/>

There are some helpful websites and free apps which you can download that scan food packaging and track your calorie and nutritional intake including:

- <https://www.myfitnesspal.com/>
- <https://www.loseit.com/>

## Diet



A healthy, balanced diet may help you to ease the symptoms of musculoskeletal conditions in conjunction with weight management. The table below shows how essential nutrients can be obtained from dietary sources.

## Vitamin D

- Essential for bone and cartilage health.
- Can be obtained from dietary sources. Sunlight is the primary source but remember to follow guidance on safe sun exposure.
- Low vitamin D levels can contribute to joint and muscle pain and reduced balance.
- Maintaining a healthy weight may also improve the ability of your body to access vitamin D.

## Antioxidants (vitamins A, C and E)

- Protect the body from 'oxidative stress' which may be involved in the development and progression of osteoarthritis.

## Vitamin K

- May influence osteoarthritis through its role in making bone and cartilage.

Vitamin A	Vitamin C	Vitamin E	Vitamin D	Vitamin K
Carrots Curly Kale Sweet Potato Liver products Cod Liver oil	Citrus fruits Blackcurrants Raw green/red peppers	Vegetable oils Margarine Wholegrain cereals Nuts and seeds	Oily fish Egg yolks Fortified products (spreads and cereals)	Kale Spinach Lettuce Broccoli Brussel sprouts

## What can I do?

- Consume a healthy balanced diet, aim for your '5 a day.'
- Consume sources of vitamin K and the antioxidants A, C and E.
- Take a Vitamin D supplement of 10-25mg /day when there is no sun exposure. During summer months aim for daily sunlight exposure of 10-15 minutes per day.
- See below links for more information:
  - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vitamins-and-minerals/>
  - <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/>

## Exercise



Physical Benefits	Functional Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthens bones and muscles</li> <li>• Reduces muscle and joint pain</li> <li>• Improves flexibility and mobility</li> <li>• Reduces risks of fractures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improves function</li> <li>• Improves quality of life</li> <li>• Improves sleep</li> <li>• Increases energy</li> </ul>

## What can I do?

### **GET MOVING!**

People who are physically active for **2 hours and 30 minutes a week** have a **33% lower risk** of all-cause mortality than those who are physically inactive. The World Health Organisation recommends weekly exercise consisting of:

#### Cardiovascular Exercise

- **1 hour and 15 minutes of vigorous intensity;**
  - Running, fast/hill cycling, fast swimming, rowing, competitive sport
  - Increased breathing, difficulty talking, sweating, raised heart rate

**OR**
- **2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate intensity;**
  - Brisk walk, fitness class, swimming, hiking, dance
  - Increased breathing, difficulty talking, sweating

**OR**
- A combination of both

#### Strengthening Exercise

- **2 days a week**
  - Involving major muscle groups (quads, hamstrings, glutes, back, shoulders, chest)
  - Gym exercises: Free weights and resistance machines
  - Body weight exercises: Squats, lunges, planks, press ups

#### Useful links:

- **Active Newcastle:** Local activities - <https://www.activenewcastle.co.uk/>
- **Better:** Local leisure facilities - <https://www.better.org.uk/>
- **Couch to 5K:** A 9-week running plan for beginners - <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/get-running-with-couch-to-5k/>
- **NHS Fitness Studio:** Aerobic, strength, pilates, yoga, fitness plan videos - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/>
- **10 Minute workouts:** Equipment-free fitness routine videos - <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/10-minute-workouts/>



# Smoking

Cigarette smoking has several negative effects on the musculoskeletal system. Smoking can affect almost all tissues within the body; but the most widely known effect it can have on the musculoskeletal system is the loss of bone mineral content, which can lead to a higher risk of fractures. The toxic effect of cigarette smoking can lead to other negative consequences, such as:

- Poor wound healing.
- Increased fracture healing time and poorer outcomes.
- Reduced muscle mass and strength, higher risk of tendon and muscle tears.
- Increased likelihood of developing Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Increased rate of Osteoarthritic joint change
- Higher complication rate following surgeries such as joint replacements
- Reduced tolerance to pain

## What can I do?

Recent research has suggested that many of the negative effects that smoking has on the musculoskeletal system can be somewhat reversed by stopping smoking.

If you are considering stopping smoking and feel as though you would benefit from some support, please discuss smoking cessation with your GP.

Additional smoking cessation support:

- Smoke Free App - available for iOS and Android
- <http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking/>
- Smokefree National Helpline: 0300 123 1044



# Alcohol

24% of adults in England regularly drink over the Chief Medical Officer's low-risk guidelines.

## Explained: low risk drinking guidelines

To keep health risks from alcohol to a low level, men and women should not regularly drink more than **14 units** a week, spreading them evenly over three or more days.

### What do 14 units look like?

6 pints of beer  
a week



or

6 medium  
glasses of wine  
a week



drinkaware

Alcohol interferes with the way the body absorbs calcium and vitamin D. Calcium is an essential nutrient for healthy bones. Research shows that heavy alcohol use during young adult years can affect bone health and increase the risk of osteoporosis later in life.

Heavy drinkers are more likely to suffer fractures, slow bone healing and nerve damage.

### What can I do?

If you are considering stopping or reducing your alcohol intake and feel as though you would benefit from some support, please discuss this with your GP.

Further support can be found at:

- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-support/tips-on-cutting-down-alcohol/>
- <http://www.drinkaware.co.uk>

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For more information on lifestyle and self-help please follow the links below:

<https://www.nhs.uk/>

<https://www.flourishatnewcastlehospitals.co.uk/>

<https://painconcern.org.uk/pain-at-work-paw-toolkit/>

<https://www.paintoolkit.org/>

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