DAY 16 - understanding some different male and female health risks

Hello Take Fivers,

You're now into the second half of your challenge, what an achievement. We hope you are noticing subtle changes in how you feel: perhaps a little more energy, a clearer head, or simply a growing sense of pride that you're doing something positive for your future self.

We also hope you've noticed we're not aiming for perfection – any action you've adopted will make a difference, and for that, we're giving you a massive cheer.

Today we're focusing on some of the specifics of **how men and women age.** Our bodies change over time, and understanding those changes helps us make choices that keep us strong, independent and thriving for longer.

Let's dive in…

Summary:

- Men and women face different health risks as they age, and diet can play a powerful role in reducing them. **Women: calcium, vitamin D, protein and magnesium to support women's bone and muscle health after menopause. Men: heart-healthy fats, fibre and reduced salt to lower the risk of heart disease and high blood pressure.**
- A simple **reusable water bottle** can make hydration easier and more consistent throughout the day, while also reducing plastic waste - win win!
- Movement is for everyone. For some people, **single sex activity groups** are preferred. In Hillingdon there are various single sex activities from walking football to women-only swimming. More details in the move section below.
- Social connection can also feel easier in single-sex spaces, with local options including **Asian women's groups and Men's Sheds.** Further details in the connect and engage section below.
- Curiosity and lifelong learning support brain health and confidence. The Open University offers free online courses on the Open Learn platform.
- Did you know there are free Health workshops in Hillingdon - see our tip of the day for links to sign up today.

For more information...

Eat

As we age, men and women can face slightly different health risks and what we eat can make a real difference.

For women, the years after menopause bring a higher risk of **osteoporosis and musculoskeletal problems**. Falling oestrogen levels can reduce bone density and muscle strength, so diet becomes even more important. The good news is that there are ways to fight back and certain foods are part of our armour including:

- **Calcium-rich foods:** such as dairy, fortified plant milks, leafy greens and tofu
- **Vitamin D**: essential for absorbing calcium
- **Protein**: maintain muscle mass – think beans, lentils, eggs, fish, yoghurt and lean meats
- **Magnesium and vitamin K**: found in nuts, seeds and green vegetables, which support bone health

The Osteoporosis Society has information about calcium rich foods as well as snack and meal ideas.

For men, there is a higher risk of **heart disease, high blood pressure and gout**. Diet can play a big role in reducing these risks. Helpful changes include:

- **Eating less red and processed meat**: which can raise cholesterol and uric acid levels
- **Choosing heart-healthy fats:** olive oil, nuts, seeds and oily fish are top choices
- **Increasing fibre:** wholegrains, fruit and vegetables are fibre rich
- **Reducing salt**: this helps manage blood pressure

The British Heart Foundation has a recipe finder to help inspire you with heart healthy recipes. Remember, small changes really do add up – and they're easier to stick to when you choose foods you enjoy.

Drink

Today's hydration tip is a practical one: **buy a water bottle and carry it with you**.

It sounds simple, but having water on hand makes it far more likely that you'll drink regularly throughout the day. Many people only realise they're thirsty once they feel tired, foggy or headachy; all signs that dehydration has already set in.

A reusable bottle is a great cue to drink more, and it helps build hydration into your daily routine. Plus, did you know that by using a reusable water bottle, you could reduce waste by an average of 156 plastic bottles per year?

NB. It's worth a reminder on alcohol - **heavy alcohol consumption is a risk factor for osteoporosis** as it can affect Vitamin D and calcium absorption. **Alcohol is also a risk factor for heart disease,** increasing blood pressure amongst other things. Despite occasional news stories suggesting that red wine is good for your heart,

contemporary research suggests that overall there is no benefit to alcohol consumption.

Move

Did you know there are **single-sex activity groups** across Hillingdon designed to help people feel comfortable, confident and motivated to move? We understand that there are many reasons why a person may prefer a single sex movement class so again, Hillingdon has it sorted.

Options include:

- **Men's and women's walking football**, a brilliant low-impact way to stay active and social
- **Women-only swimming sessions at** Botwell Green

If you're a woman seeking inspiration or encouragement, can out the This Girl Can campaign on how to get started with your movement journey.

Movement is for everyone – and finding a group that feels right for you can make all the difference.

Connect and Engage

As with movement, sometimes, we might want a single sex group to connect with. Again, in Hillingdon we've got some great options.

There are:

- **Asian women's groups**: offering friendship, conversation and cultural connection.
- **Men's Sheds**: designed as male spaces for meeting, chatting and working on practical projects together. There is a Men's shed in Capender's Park just outside Hillingdon.

If you've been meaning to meet new people but haven't known where to begin, one of these groups could be a great first step.

Think

We know many of you are keen to learn about health and wellbeing and this curiosity is to be celebrated. Learning is essential to keep the brain active and understanding why and how we can stay healthy longer builds our confidence and helps us feel more in control of our health. Plus, research shows us that health information spreads - people share their knowledge with friends and family for greater benefit.

To help our learning, The Open University has Open Learn, a platform full of free online courses on topics like ageing, mental wellbeing, nutrition and chronic conditions. It's a treasure trove of free learning; why don't you have a look at what's on offer and find a course that sparks your interest?

Even a short course can give you fresh insight and a sense of achievement.

Tip of the Day!

Health checks and workshops - have you had yours?

- **Women**: if you're experiencing symptoms of menopause or perimenopause, you're entitled to support. Hillingdon offers menopause awareness sessions free for local residents to help you manage symptoms.
- **Men and women**: it's easy to access regular blood pressure checks across the borough - most pharmacies offer blood pressure checks for free with no appointment needed.
- **Health workshops:** book health workshops through My Health Hillingdon – simply give them a call or visit their website to find out more. Workshops include blood pressure, weight loss, COPD, diabetes and menopause so there's plenty to choose from.

Taking steps now can help prevent problems later.

We'll be back in a few days. Until then, make sure you congratulate yourself and each other on everything you've achieved so far. Remember, the little things all add up to help change how we age for the better.

Take care,

Team Take 5

Reminder: This information is general guidance and if you have any concerns over your own health please speak to your medical professional.