DAY 23: Diabetes, COPD & Asthma

Hello and welcome to Day 23 of your Take Five challenge,

It's day 23 and you're doing an incredible job of this challenge! It's not easy to change habits. Even here at Take Five HQ we haven't all managed our action every day. The important thing is that we're thinking about what we can do to age better. And… we've all been doing it together.

We know we are throwing a lot of information your way - don't worry if you don't want to read it today - you can always come back here another day.
Today we're looking at some long-term conditions that affect many people; **diabetes, COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)** and **asthma**. These conditions are very common - there are ways to reduce your risk but also ways to live well with the condition. Let's find out how…

Summary:

- Diet plays a major role in preventing and managing diabetes, with **wholegrains, lean proteins and regular meals helping stabilise blood sugar.** Avoiding highly sugary or starchy foods reduces spikes; people with diabetes should monitor their blood sugar carefully, especially if taking certain medications that can cause low blood sugar, and seek guidance from their GP or diabetes nurse when unsure.
- COPD isn't caused by diet, but eating well is important because breathing requires more energy.
- Bored of water - try **adding some slices of cucumber or orange to give it a bit of flavour.**
- Movement supports better management of diabetes, COPD and asthma. Joe Wicks - the nation's PE teacher has some videos for older adults to get everyone moving.
- **Moving with others** makes it easier to maintain than solo exercise. Arranging regular movement with a friend or joining friendly local groups, including Age UK Hillingdon sessions, can boost motivation and enjoyment.
- **Free workshops from MyHealth** Hillingdon help people understand and manage conditions like COPD, diabetes and asthma.

For more information...

Eat

For diabetes, maintaining a healthy weight and avoiding a highly sugary, carb heavy or starchy diet is part of prevention. Foods like white bread, white rice, potatoes,

pastries, sugary cereals and large portions of pasta can cause blood sugar to rise quickly.

If you are living with diabetes, food choices have a big impact on energy levels and long-term health. The advice is similar for many long term conditions - for instance, choosing wholegrains and lean protein but also eating regular meals to avoid big sugar swings. If you have diabetes and take certain medications - such as insulin or some tablets like sulfonylureas (for example, Gliclazide), you can be at risk of hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar). High blood sugar (hyperglycaemia) tends to cause problems over time, but low blood sugar can affect you suddenly, causing symptoms like shakiness, sweating, confusion or fainting. To stay safe, make sure you monitor your blood sugar regularly and speak to your GP or diabetes nurse if you're unsure about your targets or how often to check. For more information of low blood sugar events, here's a handy leaflet.

If you are reading this as someone with type 2 pre-diabetes or at risk of type 2 diabetes, there are ways to reduce your risk - Diabetes UK have healthy eating tips on their website and physical activity is also recommended. The NHS runs a Healthier You Diabetes Prevention Programme - for more information, see their website.

COPD is a respiratory condition and whilst diet is not a risk factor, it is important to eat well with the condition particularly as breathing is harder work with COPD and requires more energy. NHS Scotland has some great information on their website about eating well with COPD.

Drink

Tasty tip! If you're trying to drink more water but craving flavour, see what you think of our **infusion** ideas:

- Get that spa vibe at home by adding some sliced cucumber to your water – it's surprisingly refreshing.
- Feeling fruity? Pack in some flavour with your favourite fruits, whether you're in the mood for citrus or berries, give it a try.
- A handful of herbs can pep up your water, try some basil, rosemary or mint for a tasty twist.

Move

Again, movement is good for managing and even reducing the symptoms of diabetes, COPD and asthma. It's important to exercise safely and there's a wealth of information on the Asthma and Lung UK website about exercising with a lung

condition. Similarly, Diabetes UK has information about exercise and physical activity on their website.

We couldn't get through a whole month of talking about exercise without mentioning the **nation's PE teacher, Joe Wicks.** Rising to fame as a result of his free workouts for homeschooling families during the Covid-19 lockdowns, Joe Wicks posts countless workouts on his YouTube channel catering for all levels of fitness. And his sessions aren't just for school children…

Joe's collection of workouts for seniors includes seated options for those with limited mobility and routines for complete beginners. So, what are you waiting for? Head to YouTube and get moving in the comfort of your own home!

Don't just take it from us - Betty, who took part in Take Five To Age Well last year, was inspired to get active by the resources we shared:

"I have been following the Age UK videos that you sent, at the moment I am working through the balance video, and I am finding that a really great way to increase my movement. I aim to continue with this during this project and hopefully beyond."

Connect and Engage

Did you know we are *much* more likely to maintain physical activity if it's social? For many people the social aspect of group classes or walks is the main reason for going. So, today's recommendation is to **seek out a friend or two and arrange a regular movement session together** - it could be a Joe Wick's youtube session, a walk or attending one of the many organised classes in Hillingdon. If you don't know the right person to be your movement buddy, **check out the sessions run by Age UK Hillingdon** which are friendly and full of people keen to meet you.

Think

MyHealth Hillingdon offers **workshops on COPD, diabetes and childhood asthma**. The workshops are free and aim to help empower us to take control of our health by sharing the latest knowledge. All workshops are facilitated by a health professional in a group setting both online and face to face. Book online on the My Health website.

Tip of the Day!

As mentioned in previous emails, we believe that knowledge is power and all the evidence supports this. People with h**igher levels of health literacy** - being able to access, understand and use information to make health related decisions - have better health outcomes. So, on Day 21 we talked about knowing your cancer risk - today we urge you to check your type 2 diabetes risk in this quiz, look at the COPD

risk factors and symptoms and asthma symptoms as many people do not realise it can develop in adulthood.

Remember, you are doing great - we hope your daily action is going well and having an impact on how you feel. You might even be enjoying it.

Thank you for reading and until next time, have a great day,

The Take Five team.

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