

## DAY 3: Vitamin D, swimming and desi dances near you!

Hi there,

You're already on Day 3 of our challenge, we hope you're enjoying it so far – you may even be noticing the small benefits of your actions already. Remember, changing habits isn't easy. If you haven't managed to get in the swing of it yet, don't worry, you'll get there.

Let's get into today's ideas and information...

### Summary:

- **Vitamin D** plays a key role in helping our bodies absorb calcium and maintain strong bones, teeth and muscles. Because sunlight in the UK isn't enough for much of the year, **vitamin-D-rich foods or simple supplements** can help keep levels topped up.
- Dehydration can lead to dizziness, memory problems, urinary infections and even long-term kidney issues. Our hydration also varies in different seasons - in winter we don't always feel thirsty so it's important to keep drinking - try warm drinks and water rich foods like soups. In the summer, warm weather causes us to lose more water from sweating so try regular sips and drinking before going outside.
- **Swimming** supports muscle strength, mobility and aerobic fitness. Hillingdon has four pools, with plenty on offer including women's only swim sessions and [free swimming for the over-65s](#). Interested in **swimming lessons**? Speak to your local leisure centre.
- Ideas for social connections: Hillingdon council hosts [tea dances and desi dances for over 65s](#) and [MHA runs social activities](#) in our borough.
- Have a look at [U3A Hillingdon](#) for a huge range of learning opportunities that are good for brain health.
- [Discover Hillingdon](#) highlights events across the borough to keep minds engaged and spirits lifted.

### For more information...

#### Eat

We can use food to help us build resilience as we age – this is important because when we start to lose resilience, that's what doctors refer to as frailty. Today our focus is on **Vitamin D**, an essential vitamin for helping the body absorb calcium and therefore key to healthy bones, teeth and muscles. Our skin naturally produces vitamin D when exposed to sunlight, however, due to the UK's climate from October

to April, we cannot produce enough vitamin D. Also, depending on our lifestyle and skin type, there are risks throughout the year – for instance for Black people or those that find it more difficult to spend time outside. Vitamin D rich foods include oily fish, egg yolks and some fortified foods such as cereals. If you are concerned you might not be getting enough vitamin D, it's worth considering whether a simple vitamin D supplement (widely available in supermarkets) would help boost your intake.

## **Drink**

As we said last time, it can be easy to become dehydrated as you get older and so it's important to drink regularly and keep an eye on your pee colour. But why is hydration important?

**Every process in our body requires water!** Water helps lubricate our joints and helps digestion and nutrient absorption, it is essential in metabolism in every cell in the body, it is an essential component of sweat in temperature regulation and urine for waste excretion. If we are dehydrated, our blood volume slightly reduces, this makes our blood slightly thicker and harder for the heart to pump. As a result, we can feel dizzy and this can increase our risk of a fall. Dehydration also affects memory, increases the risk of a urinary infection and over the long term can cause chronic kidney disease.

## **Our thirst also changes with the seasons:**

- In colder months we don't feel as thirsty, and indoor heating dries us out more than we realise. Try: warm drinks, small regular sips, water rich food like soups and stews and linking drinks to routines like meals or medication.
- In warmer months we lose more fluid through sweat, even when we don't notice it. Try: keeping a bottle with you, choosing water-rich foods like fruits, salads and yogurts, drinking before going outdoors.

## **Move**

Dive in for a **swim** – widely regarded as one of the best workouts for your whole body, swimming is low-impact and supports your body to stay active even when you're injured or struggling with your mobility. Don't worry if you haven't ever learnt to swim or need a refresher - contact your local leisure centre about swimming lessons.

Swimming is great for building and maintaining muscles as well as great for aerobic fitness – for a full list of health benefits, head to [Just Swim](#) to find out more. Here, in Hillingdon we are spoilt for choice when it comes to pools with Hillingdon Sports and Leisure Complex, Botwell Green Leisure Centre and Highgrove Pool. Plus, if you are over 65, swimming is free – check out how on the [Hillingdon Council webpage](#).

## **Connect and engage**

How do you feel about your level of social connection? It's common for our social network to become smaller as we get older, so if you're feeling that you'd like to make some new connections, you're definitely not alone. Meeting new people isn't always easy but there are local activities that can help. Hillingdon council hosts [tea dances and desi dances for over 65s](#) and [MHA runs social activities](#) in our borough. We know it might not be easy to go along to a new group but these meetings are designed to be welcoming spaces, bringing a sense of community as many people will be coming alone. Also, Have a look and challenge yourself to go along to something this week.

### **Think**

There are natural changes in our brains as we age. We might expect to see some differences in our memory and that will vary from person to person. However, the good news is there's lots we can do to exercise our brain and maintain our thinking skills for longer. One of the best places to start is the [U3A Hillingdon webpage](#). The U3A (University of the Third Age) has over 900 members, all local people looking to learn and enjoy later life. There's a group for everyone – from murder mysteries to fluent French!

### **Tip of the day!**

Have you heard of [Discover Hillingdon](#)? If not - you are in for a treat. This website lists many of the organised events across the borough, from theatre productions to online exhibitions.

We've loved coming together to share these small steps towards a healthier lifestyle, and hope you've enjoyed reading them. We'll sign off now so that you can take a break from your screen, grab a drink, and have a stretch - if you're able to do that outside, even better!

We'll be back in a few days – keep going, you've got this.

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.