Subject - Day 1: Protein, how to check if you are dehydrated and the Hillingdon Health and Care directory

Welcome to the first day of your Take Five to Age Well challenge.

We are delighted that you've taken the first step towards a healthy, happy future by joining our supportive Hillingdon community. We will be with you every step of the way, providing information, new ideas and encouragement to make those small changes which could make a huge difference over time. Take Five is all about **keeping you doing the things you love** for longer – no one can avoid ageing but we can all do things to help us retain our health and wellbeing as long as possible.

You may not have decided on your daily action yet, don't worry, remember, this is **your pledge** – your opportunity to do something for your future self. You can adapt the actions to work for you, keep it SMART and make it something that is challenging but not impossible. It's important to remember that we all start this challenge from different places. You may not find it possible to do something everyday, that's fine, it's about trying your best.

Before we get into today's tips, here's a quick reminder of why we're doing this…

Take Five to Age Well is evidence based, and expert led. There is a vast range of information on health out there, but it can be contradictory, false or confusing. Our mission is to bring you the latest best advice and information on how to age well according to the evidence.

Research has found that healthy ageing is largely driven by non-genetic factors; **what you eat and drink, how much you move, your stress levels, social connections and thinking time all make a big difference in our risk of developing diseases**. In other words, there are lots of little things we can do to boost our health and happiness in later life. Isn't that amazing news?

Without further ado, let's get started - it's time to age well together!

Summary:

- Eating well is central to lifelong health by protecting against conditions like diabetes and heart disease, and **preserving muscle** as we age. Getting enough **protein, calcium and vitamin D**, alongside regular strength and balance activities is essential for healthy ageing and staying independent. Check out the information on the British Heart Foundation website.
- **Staying hydrated** becomes increasingly important as we get older, as our bodies store less water and thirst signals weaken; simple checks like **monitoring the colour of our pee** can help us spot dehydration early.

- Move more! Walks are a great way to stay active - check out guided Walking – Hillingdon Council or if mobility is difficult, **these seated exercises**.
- **Social connection** plays a key role in wellbeing and helps our brains stay active. Age UK Hillingdon has plenty of friendly meet ups, check out the groups near you.
- **Learn something new** - this is a great way to keep the brain active and reduce the risk of certain diseases of the brain. Find out more in this BBC article.

For more information...

Eat

This action is about eating for our health and wellbeing.

Our diet is the fuel for our body and mind. Healthy eating is essential throughout our lives and part of this is trying to avoid obesity as this puts us at higher risk of conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and dementia.

There are also some specific changes that happen as we age; we naturally lose muscle. Loss of muscle can increase our risk of falls and frailty and therefore thinking about how we can maintain muscle through movement and diet is important to ageing well.

Studies have shown that eating enough **protein** and **calcium** as well as having **daily vitamin D** supplements can help us, when combined with strength and balance activities, to retain and even improve our muscles as we age. So, think about your protein intake - your body needs protein for energy, growth and repair. Because we don't store it like fat and carbohydrates, we need to eat protein rich food every day. Whether you're looking for a lean meat, fish or plant based protein hit, British Heart Foundation has got you covered, explaining how much protein you need and where to find it. Need some inspiration? It's easy to get stuck in a rut and cook the same things every week. Check out BBC Good Food's cheap high protein collection to help you mix it up.

For more information, check out this article from the Association of UK Dietitians. There's also an Eat Well page on the Hillingdon Council website.

Drink

This action is all about avoiding dehydration.

Did you know that the risk of becoming dehydrated increases as we get older? That's partly because as our muscle mass reduces, we have less capacity to store water. So, we have less reserves and can more easily dehydrate. Add that to the fact that the signals to our brains which recognise thirst become less clear and our

kidneys get less efficient – so it's worth focussing on our hydration levels more than ever.

Our first simple tip is to check the colour and smell of your pee. If it's dark yellow and strong-smelling, you need to drink more water. NHS Scotland has published a handy colour chart to show what healthy pee should look like.

Move

We are built to move - our health depends on it.

We know how hard it can be to get moving, especially if it's been a while. For those who are able, introducing a walk into your daily routine is a great way to start and you'll notice the physical and mental health benefits in no time. Try to get your heart going by walking a little faster than might normally. The NHS has a great webpage to get started with walking, including how to prepare and how to keep it up. There are walking groups in Hillingdon – with the Ramblers or Walking – Hillingdon Council which you can just turn up to or you could go alone or with a neighbour. Also, Stockley Country Park Run takes place every Saturday at 9am and welcomes people to take it any pace from walking to sprinting.

If you have limited mobility, you could try these sitting exercises recommended by the NHS, just make sure that your chair is stable before you start. Hillingdon also runs chairobics groups locally.

Connect and Engage

Social networks are key to our health and wellbeing.

The right amount of social contact looks different for all of us, but we all need to connect and engage with others in some way. Even the busiest people may experience loneliness at points in their lives - it can be difficult to recognise and even more difficult to reach out for help. There are reasons why older people may be more vulnerable to loneliness – life events such as bereavement or retirement can be isolating and so whoever you are it is worth thinking about your social network. Have a look at a range of information and services on the Hillingdon Council webpage on social isolation and loneliness.

Age UK Hillingdon have local meet ups for older adults – these include a knitting club, a vinyl club and a games and puzzles group. It's a great way of getting out of the house, going somewhere warm and meeting some new people. Check out the groups near you.

Think

Like any of our muscles, the brain needs exercise! Research has shown that learning something new helps maintain brain health. There are multiple benefits to learning a new skill - it provides the brain with a mental 'work-out', creating new brain connections as well as often providing additional benefits such as being in the moment and providing an opportunity for focus and concentration - another task that is 'good' for the brain. Read all about it in this BBC article.

Tip of the day!

Did you know that Hillingdon has a care and support directory for you. The directory provides information and signposting on everything from local activity groups to help at home and housing options. If you haven't already had a dig around, it's really worth a look - we particularly like the health and wellbeing section and impressive list of activities and leisure offerings in the area.

That's a wrap for today – congratulations for joining us and we can't wait to be in touch again in the next few days.

Bye for now,

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