

A practical guide to healthy ageing in Merton

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Page 47

This guide has been prepared by NHS Merton Clinical Commissioning Group and Age UK Merton with support from CFOA, Carers Trust, Carers UK, Public Health England, local service contributors in the Borough of Merton and older people themselves. It contains general information which we hope will be of use to you.

Additional information about local services has been incorporated by NHS Merton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). Valuable contributions have been provided by Healthwatch Merton to reflect the wide variety of services available to local residents.

Your individual case may well have specific circumstances that apply to it and so this guide should not be read as specific advice given to you, it should not be relied on as a basis for any decision or action you take in respect of the matters it covers and it should definitely not be used as a substitute for seeking specific advice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional (generally, your GP).

Neither Merton Clinical Commissioning Group or Age UK Merton nor any of their respective subsidiary companies accept any liability arising from this guide or its use by you, except where the law states otherwise. We aim to ensure the information contained in the guide is as up to date and accurate as possible at the time of publication, but it is inevitable that certain areas will be subject to change from time to time. Please see our website or contact us for more up to date information.

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Contents

Who is this guide for?	2
Try this at home	3
Look after your feet	5
Look after your eyes	7
Look after your mouth	8
Make your home safe	9
Keep active	11
Talk about your medicines	13
Get your vaccinations	14
Preventing falls	15
Get your hearing tested	16
Keep warm and well	17
Get ready for winter	18
Eat well and drink plenty	19
Bladder and bowel problems	20
Look after your mental health	21
Looking after your brain	23
Caring and looking after yourself too	24
Action plan	25
Local Services Guide	27

Who is this guide for?



The advice in this booklet will help improve the health and general fitness of people of any age, but it is written to be particularly relevant for people who are about 70 years or older.

People of this age, and sometimes younger, begin a 'slowing-down' process related to the effects of ageing on their body.

We cannot stop the process of ageing, but the advice given here will help to keep you fit and independent.

Try this at home

Mrs Drakos: My Story



“ Looking back, I can see I’ve been a bit worried about myself for a while. It’s not as though I was ill or anything, but just a feeling that I’ve sort of slowed down – things being more of an effort. Like doing the weekly wash seemed to take all day. Or doing the family Sunday lunch would knock the stuffing out of me. And Doreen, the Post Office lady, seemed to be mumbling all the time. Anyway, I came across this guide.

Got my daughter to help with the walking speed test. Was surprised at how slow I turned out to be. But there it was! It was a real wake-up call! So I checked out the guide and sure enough found I needed new glasses, and the hearing aid has been a real boon. Rang Age UK in the town and they put me onto a local “Get Fit” group. Love the company and chat. All-in-all, feel I’m back in control again. Thank goodness.

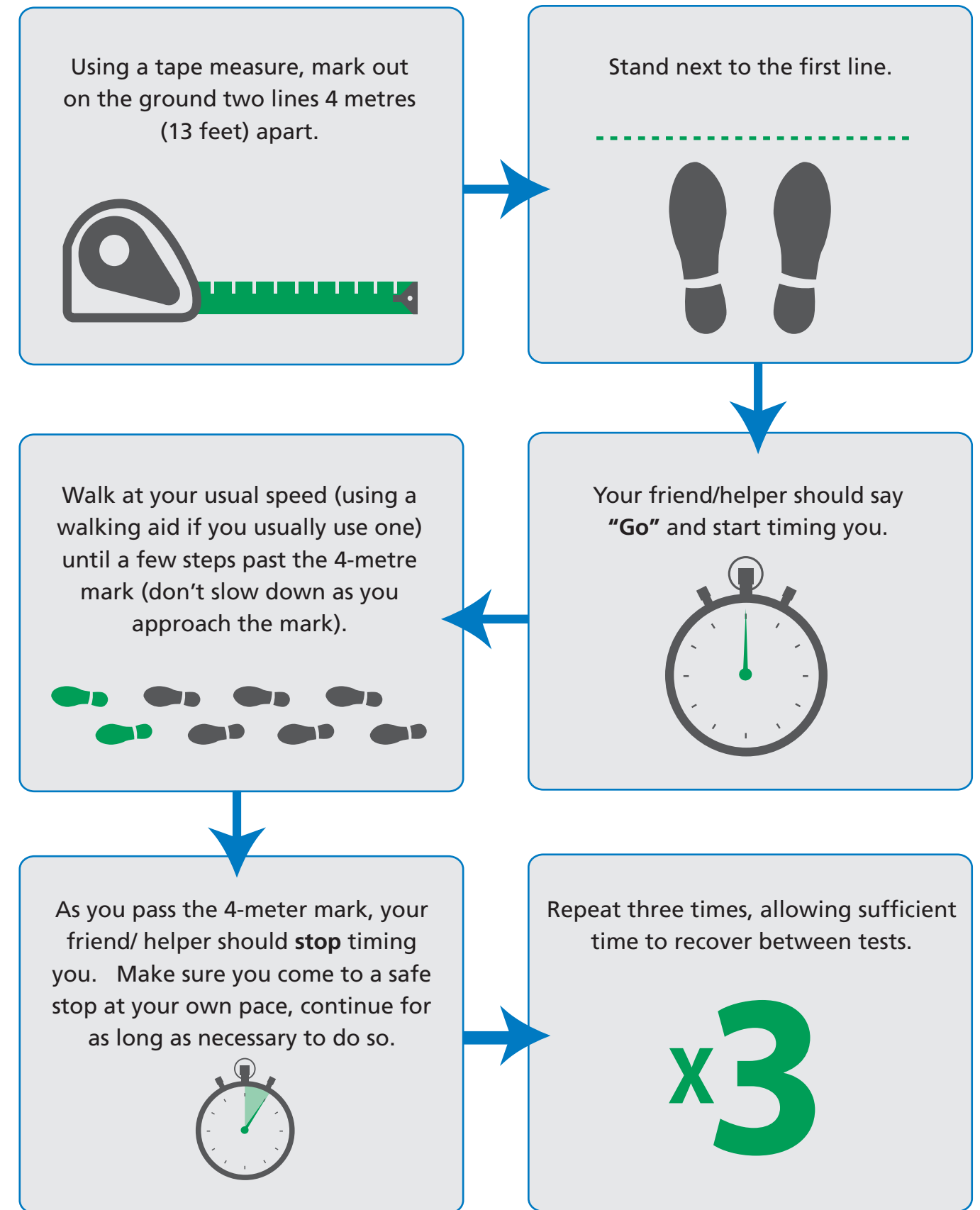
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Page 49

Have you noticed it’s taking longer to get to the bus stop than it used to?
Or that your weekly supermarket shop takes longer than before?

These can be signs that you’ve started slowing down.

If you’ve noticed you’re a little slower than you used to be, or even if you haven’t, you may want to try the simple test opposite which will let you know if the ‘slowing-down’ process of later life is affecting you. It is called the Walking Speed Test. You can do it easily at home. All you need is a tape measure and a watch with a second hand or a mobile phone with a stopwatch function.



If you take more than 5 seconds, it’s likely you’re affected by the slowing-down process of later life. Of course, some of us walk slowly for other reasons, such as arthritis, but the test will give you a good indication of your general fitness. If you have slowed down then this guide will help improve your health and general fitness.

Look after your feet



Your feet have been constant fellow travellers throughout your life, but they may be showing signs of strain. Healthy feet are essential for comfort and safe walking and the good news is that there are lots of things you can do to look after them.

Painful and uncomfortable feet aren't a natural part of growing old or something to put up with.

A lot can be done to improve comfort, relieve pain and maintain mobility.

Wash your feet often

Wash your feet daily to help prevent any infections. If you leave dirt on the skin, it can become irritated and infected. Dry them well, especially between the toes to help prevent Athlete's foot. If you have some hard skin, apply moisturising foot cream (not body lotion).

Toenails

It can get harder to cut toenails as you get older, but keeping them short will help keep you mobile. When cutting your nails, trim them straight across, never at an angle or down the edge as this may cause an ingrown nail. You may need help with this from your chiropodist or a toenail cutting service. Ask your local Age UK if they provide or know of a local service.

Keeping warm

Try to keep your feet warm. Warm stockings or socks can help. Avoid anything too tight which can restrict your circulation or cramp your toes. Wearing fleece-lined boots or shoes or even an extra pair of socks will keep you warm but make sure your shoes aren't too tight as a result. Bed socks are also a good idea when the weather is particularly cold.

If your feet are cold, don't try and warm them up by putting them close to a fire or on a hot radiator as this risks chilblains.

Choosing the best footwear

If your shoes fit well they protect and support your feet and may improve your balance and stability. Poorly-fitting shoes or slippers can easily trip you up and cause a fall. Look for shoes with uppers made of soft leather or a stretchy man-made fabric which is also breathable. Also, try shopping for shoes in the afternoon and make sure they have adjustable fastenings so that they can adjust to your foot shape.

Avoid plastic 'easy clean' uppers which don't allow the foot to breathe and won't stretch to accommodate your own foot shape. Check that the heel is held firmly in place. You'll find that a lace-up or Velcro fastening shoe will give more support than a slip-on.

When trying new shoes on they should fit well and feel comfortable, don't buy them if they're too tight thinking you can break them in. If they don't fit well, they can make even minor foot problems worse.

If your feet swell during the day remove your shoes and try to raise them at an angle that is good for circulation, if in bed add a pillow underneath them. When pain and swelling subsides you can replace your shoes.

You can book private podiatry appointments at Age UK Merton (see page 28), Chiropody treatments at the Wimbledon Guild (see page 29), or general foot care services at The Merton & Morden Guild (see page 33).

Look after your eyes



Your eyes should give you a lifetime's service, but sometimes they can be affected by conditions that develop as you grow older.

Pages 1 It's easy to neglect your eyes because they rarely hurt when there's a problem. Having an eye test will not only tell you if you need new glasses, it will also check the health of the eye and can spot eye conditions before you become aware of them so they can be treated early. If you have a low income, you may be eligible for help with the cost should you need glasses or contact lenses.

An eye test can pick up eye conditions, such as glaucoma and cataracts, as well as general health problems, such as diabetes and high blood pressure.

You can help keep your eyes healthy by:

- not smoking – smoking damages the eye, making it more likely to develop age-related macular degeneration and cataracts
- eating lots of fruit and vegetables
- protecting them from the sun by wearing sunglasses.

The good news is that if you're 60 or over, you can have a free NHS eye test every two years. You can have a free test every year if you're 70 or over.

If you're unable to visit your optician due to mobility or health issues please contact the Morden Eye Centre to book a home visit (see page 37 for further details). If you have been diagnosed with permanent sight loss you can contact Merton Vision to access support services (see page 31 for further details).

Look after your mouth

Maintaining good oral health is important. It contributes to general wellbeing and allows you to eat, speak and socialise without discomfort or embarrassment.

Some top tips to improve your oral health:

- Reduce the amount and frequency of sugary foods and drinks you consume and avoid eating or drinking sugary foods and drinks just before bedtime.
- Using fluoride toothpaste is an effective way of preventing tooth decay.
- Brush your teeth at least twice a day, last thing at night and on one other occasion, with fluoride toothpaste.
- Your dentist may prescribe a toothpaste with a higher fluoride content if you have tooth decay or are at particular risk of tooth decay.
- Spit after brushing, and do not use mouthwash straightaway as this will rinse away the fluoride in the toothpaste.
- Avoid excess alcohol consumption and do not smoke (or use smokeless tobacco such as paan, chewing tobacco and gutka), as this can increase the risk of mouth cancer. If you would like help to stop smoking, ask your dentist to refer you to your local stop smoking service.

A dry mouth can increase your risk of dental decay and can impact on your quality of life through its effect on your ability to speak, eat and enjoy your food. It can also affect the comfort of your dentures, if you wear them.

- Take regular sips of water.
- Suck on sugar-free sweets or chew sugar-free gum.
- Suck on ice-cubes.
- Avoid alcohol (including alcohol-based mouthwashes).
- Ask your dentist, GP or specialist to suggest/prescribe an artificial saliva substitute.

If you're unable to visit your dentist due to mobility or health issues please contact The Domicillary Dental Practice, for services to housebound residents (see page 37 for further details).

For more information:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/dry-mouth/pages/introduction.aspx

Make your home safe



It is important to feel safe and comfortable in your home. There are some simple things you can do to ensure that you keep yourself and your possessions safe and reduce the risk of accidents, fires and other issues.

Have a look round your home and check for some simple things you can do to make your home as safe as possible:

- Consider getting and wearing a personal alarm, particularly if you live on your own. This will let you contact a 24-hour response centre at the touch of a button should you fall or become unwell. Don't be afraid or embarrassed to push the button if you need to. The response centre will be glad to reassure you or call for help.
- Have smoke alarms installed in hallways and living rooms of your home and a heat alarm in the kitchen. If you have a gas boiler or a coal or wood burning fire or stove you also need a carbon monoxide alarm. Test all alarms regularly (at least once a month).
- To receive a free home visit contact your local fire and rescue service who will provide fire and safety advice and fit smoke alarms. To receive a free home visit contact the London Fire Brigade on tel: 0800 028 4428 (see page 39 for more info).
- If you have an electric blanket, get it tested every year and replace it every ten years. Check for danger signs such as frayed fabric and scorch marks. You can ask the shop where you bought it about testing and servicing, or contact trading standards.
- It's easy to slip in the bathroom. Get a non-slip bath mat and a handrail to help you feel more stable.
- Remove any clutter on the stairs that might trip you up and ensure stair carpets or stair runners are secured in position. Age UK run an 'At Home' maintenance service (See page 28) and MASCOT offer a free handy man service for their customers (see page 38), for further details.
- Use plug-in night lights that turn on automatically at night. They provide a low light so you can see your way to the bathroom or stairs.
- Coil up any long or trailing electric leads, particularly around doorways or stairs, or tape them close to the wall. Don't overload sockets and make sure leads and cables aren't damaged – if they are, then have them replaced.
- Don't walk in socks, tights or bare feet. Wear well-fitting slippers.
- Don't wear loose-fitting, trailing clothes that might trip you up, such as a long dressing gown.
- Loose rugs and mats can be a trip-hazard and should be avoided. Replace frayed carpets or repair with double-sided carpet tape.

MASCOT telecare provide a range of services (including personal alarms) to help people remain safe in their homes (see page 38 for further details).

Worried about a relative, friend or neighbour? The London Fire Brigade provides free 'Home Fire Safety Visits' for Merton residents (please see page 39)

Read Age UK's free guide *Home safety checker* for more information. Call 0800 169 6565 or download it from www.ageuk.org.uk

Keep active



It can be easy to retreat into the pleasing comfort of an armchair, particularly during the colder months.

But taking life too easy can actually speed up the slowing-down process of later life. It's never too late to start being more active or begin an exercise program.

Keeping active is the key to staying fit, mobile and independent.

Regular exercise can help reduce the impact of several diseases, such as osteoporosis, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke. Regular exercise can also reduce arthritis-related pain, improve sleep, prevent falls and fractures, and improve low mood and memory. In fact, taking regular exercise is one of the best things you can do to remain independent.

The good news is that any exercise is good for you. You don't need to go to a gym! Try to find things that can be part of your everyday routine, such as simple chair-based exercises, walking to the shops, or things that are fun, such as dancing or playing bowls.

Why not contact your local leisure, community centre or Age UK Merton to see what they've got on, or if possible see if you can find an activity to do with friends or other people, such as walking and dancing. This is especially important if you are finding that you are spending a lot of time on your own.

If you haven't been very active, you should aim to minimise the amount of time spent sitting down for extended periods. You could do this by reducing the time you spend watching TV, taking regular walks around the garden or street, or swapping a bus or car journey for walking part of the way.

Your next aim should be to increase your activity so you build up to about 30 minutes activity on three to five occasions a week. Each activity should be sufficient to raise your heart rate and make you breathe faster and feel warmer.

Examples of the sorts of activity that improve or maintain health include:

- Brisk walking
- Ballroom dancing
- Climbing stairs
- Swimming

You should also aim to undertake activity to improve muscle strength on at least two days a week, such as:

- carrying or moving loads such as groceries
- gardening jobs such as pushing a lawn mower, digging, or collecting grass and leaves
- activities that involve stepping and jumping such as dancing
- chair-based exercises.

For further information on local organisations offering a large number of varied physical and social activities, please refer to our Local Services Guide (pages 27 to 45).

Read Age UK's free guide *Healthy living* for more information.

Call 0800 169 6565 or download it from www.ageuk.org.uk

Talk about your medicines



Page 54

You may be taking several different medicines, especially if you have a condition such as diabetes or asthma. It's important that your medicines and the doses are reviewed regularly.

Your GP, nurse or pharmacist will do this for you. They may recommend alternative medicines or lower doses, or sometimes suggest the medicine is stopped altogether.

Did you know that your pharmacist can help you with queries you might have about your medicines? They are experts on medicines, and often have extended opening hours and no appointment is necessary.

Don't simply stop taking a prescribed medicine if you are worried about side effects. If you think a medicine is causing side effects (perhaps dizziness, a fuzzy head, dry mouth, loss of appetite, nausea or constipation), get advice from your GP, practice nurse or pharmacist.

You should see your GP, nurse or pharmacist if you have not had your medicines reviewed for more than one year, or if you are concerned about the medicines you are taking.

Get your vaccinations



If you're 65 or over, get a free flu jab every year.

As we age, our immune system becomes less efficient at protecting us. A number of different vaccinations are available for older people. These are free on the NHS.

- Flu vaccination, commonly known as the flu jab, protects against influenza. Flu can be particularly serious in older people and cause complications such as pneumonia. It is free to people aged 65 and over and also to carers and younger adults with conditions that make them susceptible to complications if they have flu. So ask at your GP service if you think you could be eligible for an annual flu jab.
- People who are aged 65 and over should have a single pneumococcal vaccination which will protect you for life. This is a one-off jab that will protect you from pneumococcal infections caused by bacteria.
- You are eligible for the shingles vaccine if you are aged 70 or 78 years old. In addition, anyone who was eligible for immunisation in the previous three years of the programme but missed out on their shingles vaccination remains eligible until their 80th birthday. Talk to your GP practice for further information.

Preventing falls



Falls are a common concern as we get older, but they are not inevitable and there is much that can be done to reduce the chance of a fall, even if you have already had one.

The slowing-down process of later life affects our balance and makes our muscles weaker. This increases the risk of falling. But both balance and muscle strength will be improved simply by taking some of the actions already described in this guide.

Preventing falls

- Looking after your feet (see page 5)
- Staying active (see page 11)
- Looking after your eyes (see page 7)
- Getting your medicines reviewed (see page 13)
- Making your home safe (see page 9)
- Looking after your hearing (see page 16)

So each of these actions has a double benefit. All the more reason to consider them!

Dizzy spells or faints can be related to too much medication and should be discussed with your GP or pharmacist.

Read Age UK's free guide *Staying steady* for more information.

Call **0800 169 6565** or download them from www.ageuk.org.uk

Read SAGA's free guide *Get up and go*.

For more information download it from www.saga.co.uk

Get your hearing tested



Losing your hearing is a normal part of the ageing process, but because it happens gradually you may not notice any change.

You may realise that you need to have the TV on louder or find you can't always follow conversations, especially in a group.

Having trouble hearing can make it hard to understand and follow a doctor's advice, to respond to warnings, and to hear doorbells and alarms. This can sometimes be frustrating, embarrassing, and even dangerous.

NHS hearing tests are free and can be arranged through your GP.

It is important to identify hearing loss early as treatment is more likely to be effective when problems are diagnosed early. The problem may be as simple as earwax, which after removal can restore hearing.

To do a quick hearing check before seeing your GP, use the free hearing check provided by Action on Hearing Loss. It only takes five minutes and you can do it at home either by phone (0844 800 3838 (local rate), or online for free (www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/hearingcheck). This check will indicate if you have hearing loss. If you have any concerns, speak to your GP.

You may wish to consider approaching other services, such as large pharmacies and opticians, who may also offer the service. In addition, Age UK is also able to accommodate requests.

Hearing aids are much more discreet than ever before and will enhance your hearing.

Keep warm and well



Keeping warm over the winter months can help to prevent colds, flu and serious health problems such as heart attacks, strokes, pneumonia and depression.

Page 56

Heat your rooms to a minimum of 18°C (65°F). If you can't heat all the rooms you use, heat the living room during the day and the bedroom just before you go to sleep.

- Keep your bedroom window closed at night. Breathing in cold air is bad for your health and could put you at risk of a chest infection.
- Use a wheat bag or hot water bottle to keep warm.
- Make sure you are receiving any benefits you are entitled to. Your local Age UK Merton can provide advice and even help you to fill out forms.
- Hot meals and drinks help to keep you warm, so have regular hot drinks and eat at least one hot meal a day if possible. Eating regularly helps keep energy levels up during winter.
- Wear several light layers of clothes (rather than one chunky layer). Thermal underwear can be good as a base layer.

Read Age UK's free guides *Winter wrapped up* and *More money in your pocket* for more information.

Call **0800 169 6565** or download them from www.ageuk.org.uk

Get ready for winter

There are practical things that you can do to prepare for winter weather, which may bring cold, ice, snow and high winds. Remember that cold weather can start in October.

- Icy pavements and roads can be very slippery. Take extra care if you go out and wear boots or shoes with good grip on the soles. Rubber snow/ice grips that attach to outdoor shoes are very effective.
- Consider fitting a grab rail if you have steps at your front or back door. Age UK run an 'At Home' maintenance service (See page 28) and MASCOT offer a free handy man service for their customers (see page 38), for further details.
- Have your heating system serviced before winter arrives.
- Have some food supplies in a cupboard or freezer in case you can't go out for a few days.
- Ask your family, neighbours or friends if they could call or visit you more often if a period of cold weather stops you getting out and about.
- Keep simple cold, flu and sore throat remedies in the house.
- Speak to your friends, family or carer if you are feeling under the weather, down or need some practical help. They may be able to help you.
- Order repeat prescriptions in plenty of time, particularly if bad weather is forecast.
- Local pharmacists can help you manage long-term conditions and can offer advice if you have a bad cough, a cold or a sore throat. They have longer opening hours than GP practices, and most have a private consultation area. They'll also tell you if they think you should see a doctor.

Read Age UK's free guides *Winter wrapped up* and *Save energy, pay less* for more information.

Call **0800 169 6565** or download them from www.ageuk.org.uk

Eat well and drink plenty



Hot meals and drinks help to keep you warm, so eat at least one hot meal each day and have hot drinks during the day, especially during cold weather.

Wholesome soups make a warming snack. Include a good range of foods in your diet (for example wholegrain cereals, milk and cheese for calcium).

Aim for five portions of fruit and vegetables each day, so that you're getting plenty of nutrients and vitamins.

Remember that frozen vegetables are as good as fresh.

Having a glass of water within reach during the daytime will remind you to keep up your fluid intake. Having a hot drink before bed and keeping one in a flask by your bedside can be good ideas too.

It's important to eat enough, especially in winter. If you're worried about a poor appetite or losing weight, speak to your GP.

Read Age UK's free guide *Healthy eating* for more information.

Call 0800 169 6565 or download it from www.ageuk.org.uk

Bladder and bowel problems

People of all ages can experience bladder control problems – including over 2.5 million people over 60 – yet many people keep it a secret for years.



Bladder and bowel problems are not an inevitable part of ageing, or something you have to put up with. Start by talking to your GP. Symptoms such as frequency, urgency, not getting to the toilet quickly enough, or having to get up at night to pass urine are common so there's no need to feel embarrassed. Your doctor will assess your symptoms, identify the cause, and discuss what treatments or exercises may help. Or you could refer yourself directly to your local NHS continence service for an assessment, where a continence adviser can help you.

There are things you can try that may help improve your symptoms too.

- Drink normally, as cutting down on liquids will usually make urinary incontinence worse, not better.
- If you notice that tea, coffee and cola make your symptoms worse, cut down or try decaffeinated versions.
- Check whether any medicines you're taking could be affecting your bladder.

Urinary infections can be serious. Consult your GP or pharmacist if you think you have a urinary infection.

Symptoms include needing to urinate more often, pain when urinating, cloudy urine or blood in your urine, an unusually unpleasant smell, or back or groin pain.

Read Age UK's free guide *Bladder and bowel problems* for more information.

Call 0800 169 6565 or download it from www.ageuk.org.uk

Look after your mental health



Good mental wellbeing is important for all of us. Here are some things you can do to help or improve your mental wellbeing:

- **Begin a conversation** – Communication is key to wellbeing and we all respond to a friendly face
- **Invite friends for tea** – Make time for friends
- **Keep in touch by phone** – The next best thing to catching up in person
- **Learn to love computers** – Connect with others and browse the web
- **Get involved in local community activities** – Singing, walking, book clubs, bridge, bingo
- **Try do something every day** – Plan things to look forward to
- **Help others** – Volunteering can be a great way to stay involved and meet new people
- **Age UK's befriending services** – The service works by assigning each older person a befriender, who provides friendly conversation and companionship. Ask your local Age UK if they provide this service.

Depression

We all feel down from time to time, but if you are feeling low and out of sorts for longer periods of time, you may be suffering from depression.

Symptoms include:

- loss of confidence and feeling down
- feeling anxious or panicky
- not being able to enjoy the things you usually do
- unexplained aches and pains
- avoiding people, even those you're close to
- sleeping badly
- loss of appetite
- feeling bad or guilty, or dwelling on things from the past.

With the right help you stand a very good chance of getting better, whatever age you are and however long you've felt this way.

Depression is just as significant as a physical illness. You can speak confidentially to the NHS Service 'Think Action' and self-refer by calling: 0300 012 0012 to discuss your feelings. Think Action can also liaise with your GP on your behalf. Please see page 40 for more information on their services.

Bereavement

A common trigger for depression can be bereavement. People are affected by bereavement in many different ways. Remember that there is no right or wrong way to feel, and it can take time to adjust. However, if you feel things aren't improving for you, you might need help if:

- you neglect yourself or your family, for example you don't eat properly
- you feel you can't go on without the person you've lost
- the emotion is so intense it's affecting your life, for example you can't face getting out of bed or you're taking your anger out on someone else.

If you feel that you are not coping it is important that you talk to someone about it and share your feelings with someone that can help. For some the best way to cope is to discuss feelings with family or friends but if you don't feel this works for you then you can always contact local bereavement services through your GP.

For pre and post bereavement support and advice, please contact 'Compass' or the 'Raynes Park Bereavement Services' (see page 41 for further details).

Read Age UK's free guides *Healthy living* and *Bereavement* for more information. Call 0800 169 6565 or download it from www.ageuk.org.uk

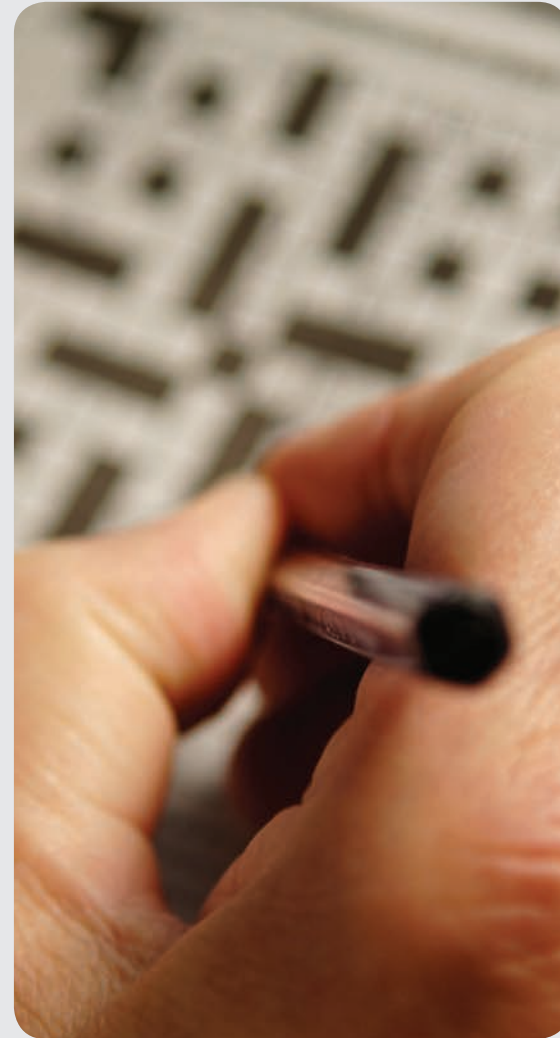
Looking after your brain

There's a lot we don't know about how to keep our brain healthy but we do know that what's good for our body is good for the brain.

There are some simple things we can do.

These include:

- eating a healthy diet
- maintaining a healthy weight
- exercising regularly
- not drinking too much alcohol
- Stopping smoking (if you smoke). You can contact 'One You Merton' (see page 27) for their smoking cessation service.
- making sure to keep your blood pressure at a healthy level
- getting enough sleep, including a day time nap if you need one
- keeping socially active with friends and family
- keeping your mind busy: learn new things; hobbies; volunteering; clubs; gardening; read books; attend plays; solve puzzles; learn a language



Memory loss can be annoying if it happens occasionally, but if it's affecting your daily life or is worrying you or someone you know, you should seek help from your GP or contact the Merton Dementia Hub on 020 8687 0922.

For more information on local clubs and groups offering a wide range of social and psychological activities please see our Local Services Guide (pages 27 – 45).

Caring and looking after yourself too



Lots of older people care for a family member or friend; this might be helping someone with eating, getting dressed or washed, or reminding them how to do day-to-day things. You may also be looking after the home or doing the shopping.

This is an important role which can be tough, and may affect your physical or mental health. Make sure you look after yourself. You should ask your local authority for a carers assessment to find out if you are entitled to any support, including time off from caring. Your GP or local carers group can support you too and help you get the information and support you need.

You can contact 'Carers Support Merton' on tel: 020 8646 7515, for more details see page 30.

To find support in your local area, visit www.carers.org
For further information and advice, visit www.carersuk.org
Read Age UK's free guide 'Advice for carers', call 0800 169 6565

Read Alzheimer's Society's Caring for the person with dementia handbook available from Merton Dementia Hub on 020 8687 0922.
For more information on the Hub's other services, see page 38.

Action plan



Page 60

Five things we recommend you do:

1. Check your walking speed.
2. Stay active or become more active.
3. Socialise regularly, spend time with other people and have regular chats.
4. Keep on top of your health (get your eyes and ears tested, have your vaccinations and get your medicines reviewed).
5. Look after yourself (keep your home warm, eat well and don't put off asking for help).

Five things I am going to do:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Local Services Guide

The following is a selection of key local services that you may find useful, but is not intended to be an exhaustive guide. More information can be found at: <https://www.mvsc.co.uk/>

Practical Help, Advisory Services, Physical Activities and Psychological Support

Healthwatch Merton

Healthwatch helps Merton residents to get the best of out of their local services; firstly by providing information to help navigate the wide range of health, social care, voluntary and charitable services available within the borough (including finding advocacy services for patients who have a complaint). Secondly they collect feedback from patients and the public about real experiences of health and care services, and use their independent statutory position to help services make changes which will benefit their users both currently and in the future.

Tel: 020 8685 2282

Email: info@healthwatchmerton.co.uk

Website: <http://www.healthwatchmerton.co.uk>

One You Merton

One You Merton is here to give you friendly advice to a healthier you! They can support you to eat well, move more, drink less alcohol and stop smoking. Call our local health advisors for a friendly informal chat about the support available.

Tel: 020 8973 3545

Email: oneyou.merton@nhs.net

Website: <https://www.oneyoumerton.org/>

Age UK Merton

Based in Mitcham, Age UK Merton provides a range of services to support older residents across the borough. Most services are available to all aged 50 and over.

Services include but are not limited to:

- Activities, Social Club & Lunch – keep active, learn new skills and meet up with friends - catering to all interests and abilities
- At Home with Age UK Merton – domestic support, shopping and respite for carers to help you stay independent
- Befriending
- Handy person service
- At Home service which offers a range of maintenance and domestic support services to enable you to stay independent and maintain your home.
- Happy & Active - for over 75s living with long-term health conditions
- Information & Advice – covering benefits, housing, social care and local services
- Life After Stroke – rehabilitation for Stroke survivors & groups for carers
- Solemates professional podiatry (foot) service

Tel: 020 8648 5792

Email: info@ageukmerton.org.uk

Website: <http://www.ageukmerton.org.uk/>

The Wimbledon Guild

Wimbledon Guild aims to improve the wellbeing of people who live, work or study in Merton by providing a mix of personal support, activities, social opportunities and practical assistance. Here are just some of the ways in which they can help:

- Practical help and advice, for example on living safely in your home, transport options and form filling
- Social clubs, classes, talks and trips, ideally suited for complete beginners upwards
- Individual counselling; group, family and couples therapy; and emotional support groups
- Help with checking benefits entitlement
- Community café serving nutritious, home-cooked meals, and cakes
- Befriending for people who are housebound or living alone with a long-term health condition
- Bereavement support, (Compass service, page 41) for more information
- Small grants to help Merton residents buy items they need but cannot afford, often when they have exhausted all other avenues of help.
- Hairdressing
- Professional chiropody service

Tel: 020 8946 0735

Email: info@wimbledonguild.co.uk

Website: wimbledonguild.co.uk

Carers Support Merton (CSM)

Carers Support Merton is a friendly and accessible one-stop-shop for unpaid carers in Merton. CSM's Young Carers Service supports children and young people under age 18, who are looking after someone in their family. The Adult Carers Service delivers a Carers Support Hub that provides comprehensive, holistic support to adult carers and their families including:

- Information, support and advice about all aspects of being a carer including: rights, benefits, financial & legal entitlements, housing & employment
- Carers Assessments and Support Plans with eligible access to Carers Discretionary Grant and Carers' Personal Budget, community resources and services
- Training and workshops to provide help on how to navigate Health & Social Care systems
- Social events and peer networks, newsletters, email bulletins, carers packs
- Support to maintain or improve physical and emotional health and wellbeing
- CSM Counselling Service, tailored support for older carers and a telephone Support Service also.
- Specialist support and cafes for mental health carers as well as New to Caring Groups and Information Days
- Future planning and risk/crisis management strategies
- Life After Caring support
- Opportunities to shape and design carers' services, as well as feedback on service experience

Tel: 0208 646 7515

Email: info@csmerton.org

Website: <http://www.csmerton.org/>

Merton Vision

Merton Vision aims to support and empower people with a visual impairment, from their diagnosis of permanent sight loss through the entire rehabilitative process. Merton Vision provides a range of services such as:

- Life long learning and social activities.
- A resource centre where people can try out all the current tools and adaptations to assist with daily living.
- A rehabilitation service in partnership with Merton social services which promotes independence, choice and support for integration into the community.
- Tailored information in person or via audio newsletter on courses, agencies and schemes relevant to an individual's circumstances, including financial benefits and entitlements
- Recruitment, training and support of volunteers who can then work in any number of different services, including home visits, social clubs, office help, driving, and social activities

Tel: 020 8540 5446

Email: info@mertonvision.org.uk

Website: <http://www.mertonvision.org.uk/>

Merton Centre for Independent Living (CIL)

Merton CIL is a rapidly growing user led organisation for Deaf and Disabled people living in Merton. They provide Advice and Advocacy Support, Disability Hate Crime Prevention and Volunteering Opportunities. They also run a number of inclusive events and hold a monthly meeting, that is open to anyone.

Merton CIL provides Advocacy and Advice support in the following areas:

- Benefits: Applications, Assessments and Tribunals
- Housing
- Community Care and Independent Living
- Debt and Low Income
- Hate Crime: If you have experienced abuse, bullying or harassment because of who you are, then they can help.
- Health

Merton CIL can provide home visits to those that are less mobile.

You are also able to sign up to Merton CIL as a member to receive free monthly online updates , quarterly newsletter, become involved in community action groups, debate issues and participate in events.

Tel: 0203 397 3119

SMS: 0744 936 2233

Email: info@mertoncil.org.uk

Website: <http://www.mertoncil.org.uk/>

Merton & Morden Guild of Social Services

The Guild is a charitable organisation which offers activities to older people in the community to help them socialise, make friends, keep active, learn new things and have fun. Organised events include:

- Market days, coffee morning and lunches
- Card games (playing and learning)
- Exercise classes ranging from seated/chair assisted to dynamic classes with movement between the classes as appropriate
- Tap, line dancing and zumba
- Foot treatment clinic
- Massage therapy clinic

If you would like more information on the full range of services offered, please contact the Merton and Morden Guild directly for a copy of our yearly handbook where each activity is listed.

Tel: 020 8640 1640

Email: mandmguild@aol.com

Website: <http://mandmguild.wixsite.com/mandmguild>

Merton Council's Walk4Life Group

Walk4Life encourages and supports residents to walk more as it is beneficial for health and wellbeing. Our walks are free, suitable for all ages and abilities and suit both beginner and intermediate levels. The walks last for around 50 minutes to an hour and you walk at your own pace for as long as you want, within the safety of a group with trained walk leaders. All walks are led from the YMCA's Wimbledon Centre. Walks take place Monday to Friday at a range of locations; Morden Hall Park, John Innes Park & Rec Ground, Wimbledon Common and Mitcham Common.

Tel: 020 8545 3206

Email: road.safety@merton.gov.uk

Website: <http://www2.merton.gov.uk/transport-streets/roads-highways-pavements/roadsafety/walk4life.htm>

Merton's University of the 3rd Age (U3A)

U3A coordinates a wide range of intellectual, linguistic, art and physical activities such as: history, philosophy, arts and crafts, cycling, gardening, opera, bridge and even golf buddies.

Tel: 020 8648 2522

Website: <https://u3a.org.uk/>

Merton Libraries

Libraries in the Borough host a range of activities for all ages and are a great place to access free computers and Wi-Fi with support available if you need to get online. Other activities include coffee mornings, local history talks and sessions on keeping safe. A Home Visits Library Service and an online service is available for customers who cannot make it to the library. The Merton Libraries website has access to thousands of e-books, which can be downloaded for free if you have a suitable device for them to work on.

Tel: 0333 370 4700

Email: library.enquiries@merton.gov.uk

Website: merton.gov.uk/libraries

Friends in St Helier (FiSH)

FiSH is a volunteer organisation which aims to support users with long term conditions in order to maintain their health and independence through targeted activities, such as chair based exercise and yoga. The group meets on a weekly basis at venues in Mitcham and Morden.

Tel: 020 8640 0829

Email: fish.morden@googlemail.com

Friends in Lower Morden (FiLM)

FiLM is a subsidiary of the FiSH group (above), this group is based at Lower Morden Baptist Church and also run by volunteers. FiLM provide social lunches, day trips, games evenings, keep fit exercise sessions and holiday breaks, amongst other activities.

Tel: 020 8640 0829

Email: fish.morden@googlemail.com

'Going for a song' over 55's Choir

A group run by Attic Theatre Company at Vestry Hall, Mitcham and St. Mark's Church Hall, Wimbledon. The Group is led by Musical Director Christopher Killerby each Wednesday at 1pm and 3pm. Singing workshops are an excellent way to exercise the vocal chords and body. The group works towards different performances, including Age UK's annual 'Celebrating Age Festival'.

Tel: 0208 640 6800

Website: <http://www.attictheatrecompany.com/going-for-a-song>

Commonside Community Development Trust

The Trust holds weekly subsidised lunch clubs for older people to forge new friendships, at the New Horizon Centre in Pollards Hill.

Tel: 020 8764 9582

Website: <http://www.commonside.net/contact/>

Senior Fitness at NE Mitcham Community Association (NEMCA)

Senior fitness sessions are held at Every Thursday from 2pm – 3pm with free pick up and drop off via Merton Community Transport

Tel: 0208 685 9452

Email: info@nemca.org.uk

Website: <http://www.nemca.org.uk/senior-fitness.html>

Get Up and Go Exercise for over 55s (South Mitcham Community Centre)

Classes for over 55s take place on Mondays and Fridays.

Tel: 020 8648 3740

Website: <http://www.southmitchamcommunity.org.uk/content/activities-0>

Bowls Clubs (Merton Park, Mitcham Park and Wimbledon Park)

The local bowls clubs are mixed sex, constantly looking for new members and welcome new arrivals. The clubs provide a great opportunity for exercise and socialising. The bowling clubs play in the spring and summer seasons from April to September. Start dates may vary, so please contact each individual club.

Wimbledon Club (mixed sex teams):

Barry Willingham - Tel: 020 8265 5475 / Mob: 077333 75532

Mitcham Bowls Club (mixed sex teams):

Pauline Bond (Captain) - Mob: 07931 000174

Merton Park Club (single sex teams)

Derek Cox (Club Secretary) - Tel: 020 8542 2174

Pat Roll (Ladies membership) - Tel: 020 8542 9309

Community Volunteering

MVSC (Merton Voluntary and Community Service)

MVSC is an organisation aimed at people who are looking to stay healthy and active by taking on some form of volunteering to give back to the community. They have a website full of current opportunities, health and social initiatives and even training opportunities (i.e. trusteeship). They can also be contacted by phone and they hold regular open recruitment days for anyone who wants more information face to face.

Tel: 020 8685 1771

Email: info@mvsc.co.uk

Website: <https://www.mvsc.co.uk/>

Specialist Community Services

Optician Home Visits

The Morden Eye Centre

You may be eligible for a home visit if you have a physical ailment or disability, that prevents you from visiting your local optician. The service also provides low vision tests in the home. Weekly visits are scheduled every Wednesday, subject to availability with emergency appointments available 48 hours in advance.

Tel: 020 8648 3503

Website: <http://www.nhs.uk/Services/opticians/Overview/DefaultView.aspx?id=20525>

The Domicillary Dental Practice

Merton and Sutton patients can access home based dental and hygienist services for those who are housebound. The service is available for those who are elderly and housebound or have long term conditions such as alzheimer's or dementia. The service also caters for those with physical disabilities or learning difficulties. Appointments are available on a weekly basis subject to demand.

Tel: 020 8640 9673

MASCOT telecare

Mascot provides a range of services on behalf of Merton to help people to safely remain in their home. The personal alarm service (*Care Line) is 24/7 and can be combined with fall detectors, smoke detectors, carbon monoxide, chair and bed sensors. Property exit sensors can also be fitted for those with dementia and alzhiemers. Mascot can also provide its customers with a free handy man service to assist with minor DIY tasks.

Tel: 020 8274 5940

Email: mascot@merton.gov.uk

Website: <http://mascot-telecare.org.uk/>

Merton Dementia and Alzheimer's Hub

Merton Dementia Hub is a welcoming facility which offers a wide range of social, mental and physical support services, for residents with dementia and/ or Alzheimer's. We provide services at the Hub and around the borough. The Hub also provides Carer Information & Support programmes for carers, family or friends as well as a Life After Diagnosis programme for people with dementia who have been recently diagnosed. Other services include:

- Specialist on site dementia advice and support, our workers also visit people with dementia and carers in their own homes
- Support groups for people with dementia who have been newly diagnosed and a support group for younger people with dementia
- A number of support groups for carers including an evening carers support group and a support group for carers, family or friends of those with early onset dementia
- Specialist cognitive stimulation groups run by the Dementia specialist Nurses
- Weekly hub dementia café and a range of practitioners in the health suite and a range of Saturday dementia cafés
- Weekly hub activity groups offering gardening, crafts, darts, etc.
- Weekly table tennis sessions, Singing for the Brain and dance therapy for people with dementia
- A relaxing outdoor space for quiet time, gardening and organized practical activities

Merton residents and their Carers are able to refer themselves to the service by contacting the Hub directly or dropping in:

Tel: 020 8687 0922

Email: merton@alzheimers.org.uk

Website: <http://merton-i.merton.gov.uk/kb5/merton/asch/service.page?id=14CdS3TRjPI>

Home Fire Safety Visits by the London Fire Brigade

Trained staff will visit you at home, at a time that suits you and carry out a risk assessment. They will give you advice based on your home and individual needs, this includes; information on how to prevent fires, the importance of smoke alarms to detect a fire and your escape plan in the event of a fire.

A visit can take up to 90 minutes or longer if needed and we will fit free smoke alarms if required.

Specialist alarms can be fitted for people who may have a delayed response to escape for example; strobe light and vibrating pad alarms for those who have a hearing impairment.

How to book a Home Fire Safety Visit:

Freephone: 0800 028 4428

Email: smokealarms@london-fire.gov.uk

Text /SMS: 07860 021 319

Although everyone is eligible for a free home fire safety visit, some people with health problems or lifestyle behaviours can have an increased chance of a fire happening. To help you we have listed some of these examples below:

Increased risk factors can include:

Anyone that smokes; overloaded electrical sockets or poor wiring; unsafe use of candles or naked flames; previous fires or near misses; cooking left unattended; hoarding of any kind or someone who lives alone.

They are less able to react because of:

Conditions such as dementia or learning difficulties; no smoke alarms are fitted or they don't work; alcohol dependency or drug misuse (prescribed or recreational); physical health issues including sensory impairments eg. hearing or sight.

They have a reduced ability to escape:

Mobility issues due to a physical disability; age-related problems or as a result of a long-term illness; escape routes are not kept clear or are blocked due to actions such as hoarding or conditions that affect decision making.

If you know anyone who has any combination of these risk factors, give them our details to arrange a free home fire safety visit or simply ask them if they would like you to book a visit for them.

Remember - This is not an exhaustive list, if you are unsure please contact us for extra advice.

Mental Health

Silver Line Telephone Support

The Silver Line is the only confidential and free telephone helpline for older people, open day and night, 365 days a year including Christmas and New Year. No question is too big or small and there's no need to be alone.

Tel: 0800 4708090

Think Action

Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (miAPT)

A mental health therapy service that provides a wide range of treatment for people who are experiencing mild to moderate conditions including depression anxiety, stress and low mood.

The free and confidential treatment programmes are available for any resident who is registered with a GP in the London Borough of Merton. People can either visit their GP to be referred or they can self-refer. The service provides a full-range of evidence based interventions and treatments including:

- Counselling
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
- Interpersonal Therapy (IPT)
- Eye-Movement De-sensitisation Reprocessing (EMDR)
- Group work

Tel: 0203 823 9063

Self-referrals Tel: 0300 012 0012

Enquiries: mertoniapt@addaction.org.uk; **Referrals:** MERCCG.miapt@nhs.net

Website: <https://www.thinkaction.org.uk/contact-us/thinkaction-merton-miapt/>

The online referral system is now active via the website

Compass bereavement support

The Compass service in collaboration with the Wimbledon Guild and the NHS can guide you through bereavement. Compass offers a one-to-one service that can help you with advice, information and support pre and post bereavement. Compass provides face to face support, talking therapy, information and resources, as well as telephone and online support.

Tel: 020 8946 0735

Website: <http://www.compassbereavement.org.uk/>

Raynes Park Bereavement Service

The Raynes Park Bereavement Service provides free and confidential one to one support to people who have had a bereavement, recently or in the past. It's provided by volunteers who have been vetted, trained and are supported by professional counsellors, primarily for people living in the Raynes Park area, but it is open to requests from elsewhere.

The service is managed by Christ Church, Raynes Park, and is open to people of all faiths and none. Members are able to meet you in person at the Lambton Road Medical Practice, as often as needed. If someone is housebound they can also arrange to see them in their own home.

Tel: 07914 263420

Email: raynesparkbereavement@gmail.com

Website: <https://www.mvsc.co.uk/news/raynes-park-bereavement-service>

Minority Support Groups

Merton Ethnic Minority Centre

A voluntary organisation which provides advice and information for Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority (BAME) Centre on health, mental health and welfare, with an ever-changing program of activities and services for older people; currently includes yoga, dance and creative maths for active brains.

Tel: 020 8648 0084

Email: ethnicminority@btconnect.com

Merton Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender (LGBT) Forum

The Forum aims to build a platform for LGBT people in Merton with the local authorities and other governing bodies and agencies on matters of interest or concern to them. It also runs social events and activities to forge new relationships, with their Sunday Brunch club proving particularly popular with all age ranges.

Tel: 07546 345392

(calls will be returned at a convenient time, as number is not continually manned)

Email: info@mertonlgbtforum.org.uk

Polish Family Association

The Association provides advice and support in the fields of hate crime, domestic violence, health and well-being, education, as well as social and economic deprivation. They offer a full range of services with the overall aim of preventing the worsening of members circumstances and to enable self-sufficiency. Extensive interpreting and translation services are also available for a wide range of stakeholders (i.e. hospitals, schools and the police) and as advocacy representation when needed. The Association also provides advice and support with respect to hate crimes and domestic violence.

Tel: 07917 401064

Email: info@polishfamily.co.uk

Website: <http://www.polishfamily.co.uk>

Asian Elderly Group of Merton

The group offers an advisory service to residents of 55 years and over in areas such as:

- Welfare, housing, finance, benefits, health/ exercise, talks, outings, events
- Cross cultural counselling service drop in sessions (for which transport can be pre-arranged) at Merton Hall, and also hold activities in the day care centre in Taylor Road, Mitcham.
- Staff and volunteers speak Urdu, Gujarati, Punjabi, Hindi and Tamil

Sayed Hussein - Tel: 020 8944 9545 / Mob: 07734110739

Positive Network

An inter-generational and multi-cultural group which organises recreation or other leisure time activities for individuals who have need of them due to their youth, age, infirmity or disability, financial hardship or social circumstances with the objective of improving wellbeing.

Tel: 0207 998 1005 / Mobile: 07508 505097

Email: hello@postivenetwork.co.uk

Website: <http://www.positive-network.co.uk/>

African Educational Cultural Health Organisation Group (AECHO)

AECHO is a volunteer- led charity for the black and minority ethnic (BAME) community. Services include; advice, support, counselling, mentoring, training workshops in basic skills and advocacy with statutory services, housing & health care agencies. The service also offers information on health, heritage, citizenship, diversity, health and safety, social enterprise, and financial management.

- Monthly Tuesday morning drop in session to 'listen' to concerns of older residents.
- Signposting appropriate local health services especially in the areas which affect older BAME residents e.g. Diabetes, Hypertension, Dementia.
- Counselling for older residents who experience language and culture barriers, as well as social isolation.
- Mediation between the older and younger generations within the BAME communities on issues of traditional values and codes of behaviour which can lead to isolation and mental health breakdown among older people.

Tel: 020 8648 5405

Email: info@aecho.org.uk

The South London Tamil Welfare Group

One of the aims of this organisation is to provide support services for healthy lifestyle and overall wellbeing for older people in the Tamil community, with the purpose of improving quality of life. This service provides biweekly drop in sessions for Merton residents on Wednesdays and Saturdays, with opportunities to:

- Socialise (reducing isolation and promoting mental wellbeing), and partake in workshops,
- Improve conversational English and other forms of training and discussion to support integration.
- Helping residents to access advice on welfare benefits, healthcare and other statutory services.

Tel: 020 8542 3285

Email: admin@sltwg.org.uk

Web: <http://www.sltwg.org.uk/contact-us/>

Merton Goan Senior Citizens Association

A befriending service for the elderly Goan community that hosts lunches, exercises, visits to the theatre, historical places of interest and public gardens. Meetings are conducted once a week at South Wimbledon Community Association, 74 Haydons Rd. SW19 1HL.

Tel: 020 8715 4763 (Joyce Vaz, General Secretary) or

Tel: 020 8946 3635 (Anne Remedios)

