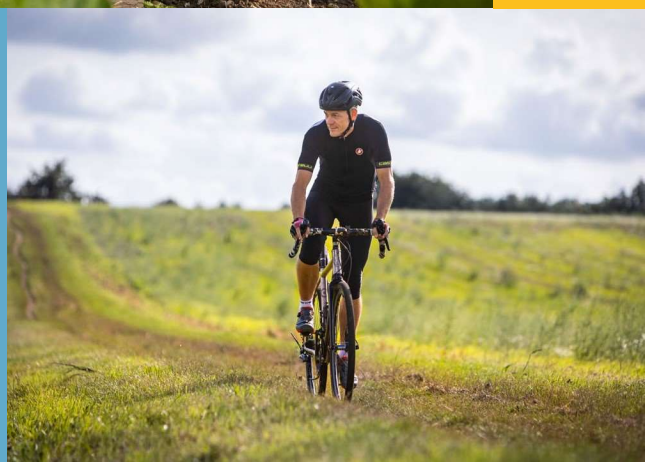
Reduce your risk of developing dementia







Partneriaeth Ranbarthol Gorllewin Morgannwg | West Glamorgan Regional Partnership

Dementia Hwb



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Did you know?

Getting older **does not** mean that you will get dementia.

You **will not** necessarily get dementia because a family member has.

You can take action to lower your risk of developing dementia.

It is never too early or too late to **take action**.

What is dementia?

The word 'dementia' describes a group of symptoms that include memory loss and difficulties with thinking, problem-solving or language. It may also involve changes in mood, perception or behaviour.

There are many different causes of dementia, and many different types, for example Alzheimer's or vascular dementia.

To find out more, including symptoms, visit: www.alzheimers.org.uk

Reducing the risk

Although there are some risk factors that cannot be changed, the good news is that research shows that it is possible to reduce your likelihood of developing dementia. This involves making some changes to help keep your body healthy and prevent damage to your brain. This can be useful for people of any age.

This guide will give you information about some of the risk factors. It will also make you aware of local support and information that will help you to take action to reduce your chances of getting dementia. If you are worried about yourself or someone else, you should seek advice from a healthcare professional.



Look after your hearing

Your risk of getting dementia is increased if you experience hearing loss and don't take action.

Often, managing hearing loss works best when you start doing it early on. This means protecting your hearing from a young age. For example, you can avoid listening to loud noises for long periods, and wear ear protection when necessary.

It's important to get your hearing tested.

Always see a GP first if:

- you also have other symptoms, like earache or discharge – this could be something easily treatable like an earwax build-up or ear infection
- you have sudden hearing loss in one ear

There are several ways you can get your hearing tested.

How to get an NHS hearing test

Ask the staff at your GP practice to book you an appointment.

The hearing specialist (audiologist) will check your hearing. They will give you advice and tell you what to do next. If you need a hearing aid, they can help you get one for free. You can also choose to go to private companies for a hearing test if you want but you will need to pay for any private hearing aids.



Why not take a free online hearing test to check your hearing?

You can take the test on The Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID) website - www.rnid.org.uk

This can tell you if you need to have a face-to-face hearing test and give you access to advice on what to do next.

Make sure that you use and maintain your hearing aids if you need them!

Stop smoking

Stopping or avoiding smoking can lower your risk of getting dementia.

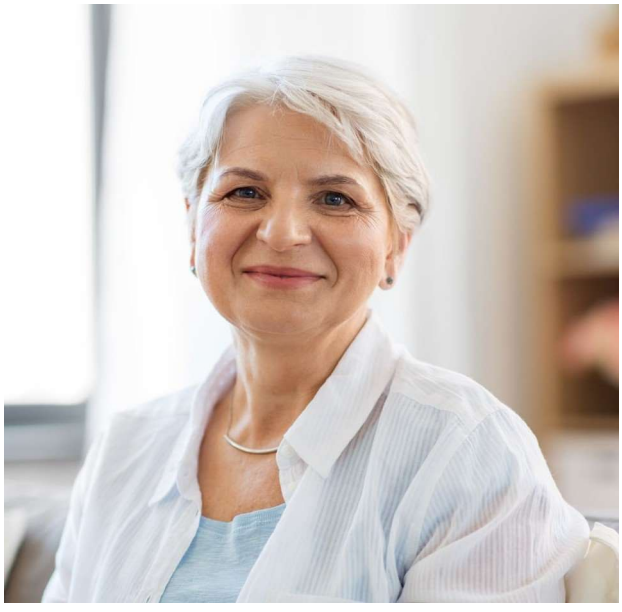
Smoking does a lot of harm to the circulation of blood around the body, particularly the blood vessels in the brain, as well as the heart and lungs, and increases the risk of cancer, cardiovascular disease and other diseases.

Stopping smoking is the best thing you can do for your health, and the health benefits start straight away.

It's never too late to quit smoking. However, the earlier you stop, the lower your risk of getting dementia.

You are four times more likely to stop smoking using an NHS Stop Smoking Service than if you try to quit alone.

Second hand smoke (sometimes called passive smoking) may also increase the risk of dementia in later life.



Look after your mental health



Everyone can feel low sometimes. Symptoms of a general low mood may include feeling:

- sad
- anxious or panicky
- more tired than usual or being unable to sleep
- angry or frustrated
- low on confidence or self-esteem
- not wanting to take part in the activities you used to enjoy

A low mood often gets better after a few days or weeks.

Symptoms of depression

If you have a low mood that lasts 2 weeks or more, it could be a sign of depression.

Other symptoms of depression may include:

- not getting any enjoyment out of life
- feeling hopeless
- not being able to concentrate on everyday things
- having suicidal thoughts or thoughts about harming yourself

What can you do to help yourself?

If feeling low is affecting your life, there are things you can try that may help.

You can improve a low mood by making small changes in your life, for example by talking about your feelings to a friend, family member or counsellor. **You could also contact Samaritans (call 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.org)** if you need someone to talk to.

Why not try the Five Ways to Wellbeing?

1. **Take notice** - Take time for yourself, notice things around you and savour the moment
2. **Connect** - Make time to connect with friends and family to help enrich your day
3. **Be active** - Being active makes you feel good. Get moving - dance, sing, step outside - go for a walk, a run or cycle
4. **Keep learning** - Learning something new can be fun, make you feel good and build your confidence
5. **Give** - Acts of kindness, helping others or even volunteering can make you feel happier

Further support is available if the things you're trying yourself are not helping. A list of sources is provided at the end of this handbook. If you are feeling suicidal, you should contact a health professional.

Stay connected with others and engage your brain

Engaging in mental wellbeing or social activities may help to build up your brain's ability to cope with disease, relieve stress and improve your mood.

This means doing these activities may help to delay, or even prevent, dementia from developing. Find activities you enjoy that challenge your brain and do them regularly. This could be puzzles or crosswords, but there are also many other activities you could do. Anything that engages your mind, processes information and develops your thinking skills is good for you.

Social activities are good for the brain, making them a great way to reduce your risk of getting dementia. This includes interacting with other people online as well as in person. This means it's important to try to keep in touch with the people who matter to you, such as friends and family. Having a conversation with someone can also exercise a wide range of your mental skills.

Why not try?

- adult education or learning
- arts and crafts (especially in groups)
- playing a musical instrument or singing
- volunteering
- doing 'brainteasers', such as puzzles, crosswords or quizzes
- playing card games, chess or board games
- reading books, or becoming a member of a book club
- creative writing or keeping a diary
- learning a new language



Protect your head

Traumatic brain injuries are caused by a blow or jolt to the head – especially when the person is knocked unconscious.

This can start a process in the brain where the substances that cause Alzheimer's disease build up around the injured area.

Brain injuries are mostly caused by:

- Road traffic accidents
- An object accidentally hitting your head
- Some sports

Try to wear protective headgear in situations where there is a higher-than-normal risk of head injury.



Keep an eye on your blood pressure

High blood pressure, especially during midlife or later life, can increase the risk of developing dementia. As you get older, it is important to be aware of what your blood pressure is.

The only way of knowing whether you have high blood pressure is to have a blood pressure test.

You can get your blood pressure tested at a number of places, including:

- at your GP surgery
- at some pharmacies
- in some workplaces



These lifestyle changes can help lower and even prevent high blood pressure:

- reduce the amount of salt you eat
- reduce added sugar
- have a generally healthy diet
- limit alcohol intake
- lose weight if you're overweight
- exercise regularly
- reduce caffeine intake
- stop smoking

There's more information about some of these lifestyle factors in other sections of this guide.

Blood pressure should be below 140/90 mmHg for those aged below 80 and 150/90 mmHg for those aged 80+.

Please note that the ideal blood pressure range may vary depend on individual health conditions.

Move more and move often

Keeping active is good for your heart, circulation, weight and mental wellbeing and can reduce your risk of developing dementia.

Adults should aim for at least 150 minutes per week of moderate activity (with increased breathing but still being able to talk), or at least 75 minutes per week of vigorous activity (with fast breathing and difficulty talking), or an equivalent combination of both.

Move more, sit less - start slowly and build up to being active for 30 minutes every day. Just 10 minutes of activity at a time will benefit your health.

You can choose physical activities that you might enjoy and find one that works for you.





Why not try?

- Walking
- Swimming
- Dancing
- Signing up to a gym (Leisure Membership)
- Taking part in an exercise class
- Cycling
- Running

Or start with small changes like:

- Build walking into your daily living routine by walking to the shops
- Take the stairs and not the lift
- Leave your car at home when taking local journeys
- If your job involves lots of sitting down, make sure you take regular breaks to move around

Reduce your risk of type 2 diabetes

Type 2 diabetes is a condition that causes a person's blood sugar (glucose) level to become too high and can increase your risk of getting dementia.

The good news is that you can reduce your chances of developing type 2 diabetes by making the following changes:

1. Reaching a healthier weight
2. Increasing your activity level
3. Stopping smoking
4. Choosing higher fibre foods
5. Eating less processed meats, pastries, cakes and full sugar drinks
6. Aiming for at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day
7. Cutting back on alcohol

If you do have type 2 diabetes, it can be managed through making changes to food choices, being active and achieving a healthy body weight. Research has now shown for some people that type 2 diabetes can be put into remission through weight loss. This is more likely to occur within the first 6 years after diagnosis.

Limit your alcohol intake

Excessive alcohol consumption is linked with brain changes and dementia. Limiting your alcohol consumption can reduce your risk of developing dementia.

Alcohol guidelines



Keep the amount of alcohol you drink within the recommended limits of no more than 14 units per week for both men and women – that's about a bottle and a half of wine or six pints of beer.

If you do drink as much as 14 units per week, it's best to spread this evenly over 3 days or more.

If you are pregnant, the safest approach is not to drink alcohol at all, to keep risks to your baby to a minimum.

If you have any concerns about your alcohol consumption, visit www.alcoholchange.org.uk or speak to your GP.

How can you drink sensibly?

- **Make a plan**
  Before you start drinking, set a limit on how much you're going to drink.
- **Set a budget**
  Only take a fixed amount of money to spend on alcohol.
- **Let others know**
  If you let your friends and family know you're cutting down and it's important to you - you could get support from them.
- **Track your units**
  Cut back a little each day. You could try a drink tracker app to easily check how many units you are drinking.
- **Make it a smaller one**
  You can still enjoy a drink, but go for smaller sizes. Try bottled beer instead of pints, or a small glass of wine instead of a large one.
- **Have a lower-strength drink** Cut down the alcohol by swapping strong beers or wines for ones with a lower strength (ABV in %) or a no alcohol version. You'll find this information on the bottle.
- **Stay hydrated**
  Have a glass of water before you have alcohol and alternate alcoholic drinks with water or other non-alcoholic drinks.
- **Take a break**
  Make sure you have several drink-free days each week.



Maintain a healthy weight

People living with obesity can have a higher risk of developing dementia.

How to tell if you're living with obesity

The most widely used method to check if you're a healthy weight is by finding out your body mass index (BMI). BMI is a measure of whether you're a healthy weight for your height. You can also use the NHS BMI healthy weight calculator to work out your BMI. Reducing abdominal obesity or waist size also matters.

There are things you can do to achieve and maintain a healthy weight:

- Eat a balanced diet, including plenty of fruit and vegetables.
- Join a local weight loss group or ask to be referred to your local dietetic weight management service.
- Increase your physical activity or movement.

You may need to check with your GP before you take up more strenuous exercise.

Losing weight can be challenging. Support is available from trained health professionals who can help you change the way you think about food and eating. Speak to your GP if you think this may be useful to you.

Small changes can help, such as:

- Reducing sugar and sugary foods in your diet
- Reducing or eliminating ultra-processed food
- Eating fewer fatty foods and filling up on fruit and vegetables/salads
- Using whole grain products, like grain bread
- Including pulses like lentils or chickpeas to bulk out meals and increasing fibre intake
- Drinking plenty of sugar free fluids – water if possible



Look after your eyes

Sight loss can be linked to dementia and treatment of some eye conditions may lower your risk of dementia. Sight loss can also make diagnosing dementia more difficult.

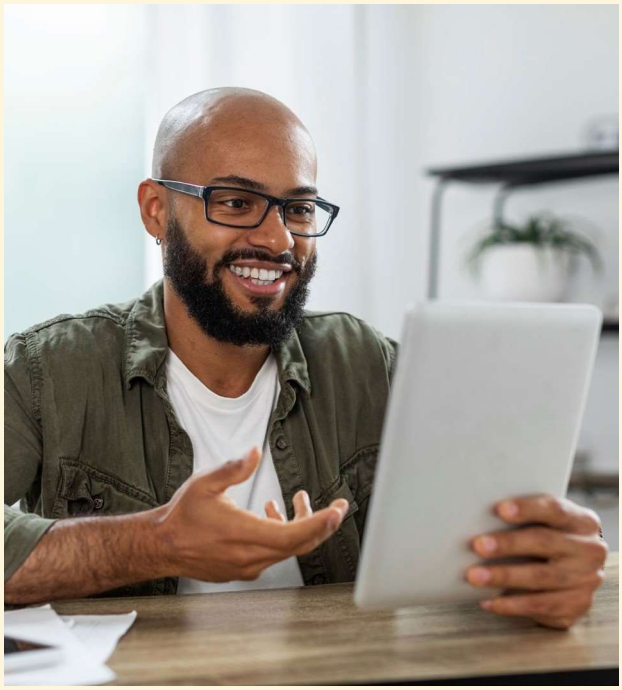
Regular eye examinations provide an assessment of your vision and can help to detect eye conditions. Many eye conditions can be treated if they are found early enough, so don't delay getting your eyes tested.

It is important to get your eyes tested regularly:

- You can book an eye examination at your local optometrist.
- NHS eye examinations are available for certain groups - find out if you're eligible for an NHS sight test here: www.nhs.wales/sa/eye-care-wales
- If you have any concerns about your eyes, see an optometrist straight away. The optometrist will advise you if you are eligible for a free eye health examination.

A healthy lifestyle, including a nutritious diet and regular exercise, will also help your eyes stay as healthy as possible. It is also recommended to protect your eyes from the sun when outdoors.





Detect and treat high LDL cholesterol

- Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol is a type of fat that circulates in the blood and is sometimes known as "bad" cholesterol
- High LDL cholesterol is already associated with heart disease, but recent research has shown that if left uncontrolled, it can also increase your risk of developing dementia in later life
- High LDL cholesterol is caused by weight gain and being overweight, eating fatty food, not exercising enough, smoking and drinking alcohol. It can also run in families
- Too much LDL cholesterol can block your blood vessels. It makes you more likely to have heart problems or a stroke
- A 5–10% weight loss can significantly reduce LDL cholesterol. Eating healthily and getting more exercise will also help. In addition, people may also need to take a statin medicine
- New research suggests detecting and treating high LDL cholesterol can reduce the risk of developing dementia later in life

Getting tested

High LDL cholesterol does not usually cause symptoms. You can only find out if you have it from a blood test.

Your GP might suggest having a test to check if your cholesterol level is high.

This may be because of your age, weight or a condition you have (like high blood pressure or diabetes).

A cholesterol test can measure:

- total cholesterol – the overall amount of cholesterol in your blood
- good cholesterol (called HDL) – this may make you less likely to have heart problems or a stroke
- LDL cholesterol



What can help?

Lifestyle changes can help control your high cholesterol level, including:

- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Increasing physical activity
- Quitting smoking
- Making changes to your diet, including:
  - Reducing saturated fat (e.g. from fatty red meat or dairy or fried foods) and increase your intake of healthier protein, such as oily fish (e.g. mackerel, sardines) or chicken
  - Increasing your intake of soluble fibre, found in oats, beans, lentils, vegetables and salad foods
  - Moderating your intake of sugary foods and alcohol

If you have been tested and diagnosed with high LDL cholesterol levels, it is important to also consider medication, in addition to lifestyle changes.



Further Information and Support

NHS- Find out more about preventing dementia
www.nhs.uk/conditions/dementia/about-dementia/prevention/

Look after your hearing	
Swansea University Health Board Audiology Services **(Note: new patients will need to contact their GP (or other health professional within the hospital) for a referral to the Audiology department)**	**www.sbuhb.nhs.wales/hospitals/a-z-services/audiology** **Tel: 01792 285270, open 8:45am – 12:30pm and 13:30pm – 16:30pm** **Email: audiology.singleton@wales.nhs.uk**
Eargym Hearing Training (app)	**www.eargym.world**
Online Hearing Test (RNID)	**www.rnid.org.uk/information-and-support/take-online-hearing-check**
Stop Smoking	
Help Me Quit	**www.helpmequit.wales** **Tel: 0800 085 2219** **Text HMQ to 80818** **Email: helpmequit@wales.nhs.uk**
NHS Live Well – Quit Smoking	**www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking**
Pharmacies	**Support to stop smoking is offered by many pharmacies. Ask at your local pharmacy for more information about quitting smoking.**
Smoke Free (app)	**www.smokefreeapp.com**

Look after your mental health	
ACTivate your life - free online self-help course designed to help you improve your mental health and wellbeing ACTivate Your Life - Public Health Wales (nhs.wales)	www.phw.nhs.wales/services-and-teams/activate-your-life
C.A.L.L Helpline (Community Advice & Listening Line) - Offers emotional support and information/literature on mental health and related matters to the people of Wales.	Freephone 0800 132 737 or text HELP to 81066
Swansea Mind	www.swanseamind.org.uk Tel: 01792 642999 Email: admin@swanseamind.org
Neath Port Talbot Mind	www.nptmind.org.uk Tel: 01639 643510 Email: info@nptmind.org.uk
Swansea Bay University Health Board 111	Calling 111 and selecting option 2 allows for residents in Swansea and NPT to access a qualified mental health practitioner or nurse for urgent mental health issues.
Every Mind Matters (NHS)	www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters
Mindfulness	www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/tips-and-support/mindfulness
Reading Well for Mental Health (Books on Prescription)	Available at all Swansea and Neath Port Talbot Libraries www.libraries.wales/library-services-activities/health-wellbeing/reading-well-books-on-prescription-in-wales
Samaritans	Call 116 123 Need support in Welsh? Tel: 0808 164 0123 Email: jo@samaritans.org

Swansea Council for Voluntary Services Wellbeing Directory	**www.scvs.org.uk/wb-directory** **Wellbeing directory of Swansea and National services.**
Mental Health and Wellbeing Support SBUHB Directory	**www.sbuhb.nhs.wales/hospitals/preparing-for-surgery/mental-health-and-wellbeing-support/**
Stay Connected with others and engage your brain	
Adult Learning Wales Powys Neath Port Talbot Adult Learning in the Community	**www.adultlearning.wales**
Swansea Council Lifelong Learning	**www.swansea.gov.uk/lifelonglearning**
Powys Neath Port Talbot Adult Learning in the Community	**www.powysneathalc.co.uk**
Swansea Libraries	**https://www.swansea.gov.uk/libraries**
Neath Port Talbot Libraries	**www.npt.gov.uk/libraries/**
Gower College Swansea – Adult Learners and Skills for Swansea	**www.gcs.ac.uk/adult-learners** **Skills for Swansea** **Email: Skills4Swansea@gcs.ac.uk**
The University of the Third Age (u3a) Swansea	**swanseau3a.wildapricot.org/** **Tel: 07780 002262** **Email: u3aswansea@me.com**

Keep an eye on your blood pressure	
Check your heart age (NHS)	www.hns.uk/health-assessment-tools/calculate-your-heart-age
Move more and more often	
Swansea National Exercise Referral Scheme (NERS)	www.swansea.gov.uk/joinNERS
Neath Port Talbot National Exercise Referral Scheme (NERS)	www.npt.gov.uk/leisure-parks-and-culture/sports-and-activities/npt-physical-activity-and-sport-service/national-exercise-referral-scheme-ners/
Swansea Parks and Gardens	https://www.swansea.gov.uk/parksatoz?p=2
Neath Port Talbot Parks and Gardens	www.npt.gov.uk/leisure-parks-and-culture/parks-and-outdoor-spaces/parks/
Dewis Cymru (lists local clubs/groups)	www.dewis.wales/home
Leisure Centres Swansea	www.swansea.gov.uk/article/7456/Swansea-leisure-and-sports-centres
Leisure Centres Neath Port Talbot	www.npt.gov.uk/leisure-parks-and-culture/leisure-centres/
Swansea Walking Group Directory	www.swansea.gov.uk/walkinggroups
Action for Elders Balanced Lives Activities	www.actionforelders.org.uk/swansea/ Email: info@actionforelders.org.uk Tel: 03033 030132
Move More, Eat Well	www.movemoreeatwell.co.uk Email: movemoreeatwell@wales.nhs.uk
NHS Fitness Studio – Exercise videos	www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio
parkrun	www.parkrun.org.uk

FitJacks Health and Wellbeing Programme	**www.swanseacity.com/community/swansea-city-afc-foundation-our-projects-and-initiatives/health-and-wellbeing/fit-jacks** **Email: fitjacks@swansfoundation.org.uk**
Swansea Ageing Well Activities	**www.swansea.gov.uk/ageingwell activities** **Email: AgeingWell@swansea.gov.uk**
Swansea Healthy City Directory	**www.healthycitydirectory.co.uk/**
NHS Live Well Sitting Exercises	**https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/sitting-exercises/**
We Are Undefeatable – resources on how to get active when living with various health conditions	**www.weareundefeatable.co.uk/ways-to-move**
Swansea Council Sport and Health Team	**Email: SportAndHealth@swansea.gov.uk**
Neath Port Talbot Council Physical Activity and Sport Service (PASS)	**www.npt.gov.uk/leisure-parks-and-culture/sports-and-activities/npt-physical-activity-and-sport-service/**

Reduce your risk of type 2 diabetes	
Please refer to support under: 'Maintain a healthy weight', 'Move more and more often' and 'Limit your alcohol intake'.	
Limit your alcohol intake	
Alcohol Change	www.alcoholchange.org.uk Tel: 020 3907 8480 Email: contact@alcoholchange.org.uk
Newid Drug and Alcohol Service Swansea and Neath Port Talbot	www.newidcymru.co.uk Tel: Neath Port Talbot: 0300 790 4022 Swansea: 0300 790 4044
DAN 24/7 (the free Wales Drug and Alcohol Helpline)	www.dan247.org.uk Tel: 0808 808 2234
Drink Free Days (app)	www.nhs.uk/better-health/drink-less
Recovery Cymru	www.recoverycymru.org.uk Tel: 079 4485 1050 Email: info@recoverycymru.org.uk
Maintain a healthy weight	
Eat Well (NHS)	www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well
Bwyd Abertawe – Swansea sustainable food	www.environmentcentre.org.uk/bwydabertawe
Food Facts (BDA)	www.bda.uk.com/food-health/food-facts.html
Healthy Start Vouchers (If you're more than 10 weeks pregnant or have a child under 4, you may be entitled to get help to buy healthy food and milk)	www.healthystart.nhs.uk

Healthy Weight, Healthy You	**www.healthyweight.wales**
Move More, Eat Well	**www.movemoreeatwell.co.uk**
NHS Wales BMI healthy weight calculator	**www.111.wales.nhs.uk/livewell/bmicalculator**
NHS Food Scanner (app)	**www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/food-facts/nhs-food-scanner-app**
NHS Healthier Families	**www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/food-facts**
Nutrition Skills for Life	**www.nutritionskillsforlife.com** **Email: SBU.NutritionSkillsforLife@wales.nhs.uk**
Look after your eyes	
Eye Care Wales	**www.nhs.wales/sa/eye-care-wales**
Sight Life	**www.sightlife.wales** **Tel: 029 2039 8900** **Email: ask@sightlife.wales**
Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) – How to keep your eyes healthy	**www.rnib.org.uk/your-eyes/how-to-keep-your-eyes-healthy/looking-after-your-eyes/**
Detect and treat high LDL cholesterol	
Your GP	**Ask your GP surgery for a cholesterol test if you have not had a test before and you're over 40, overweight, or high cholesterol/ heart problems run in your family.**
For more information, visit the British Heart Foundation website and search 'cholesterol'.	**www.bhf.org.uk**

*Please note – if you are concerned about your own health, or someone else's, you should seek advice from

Feedback

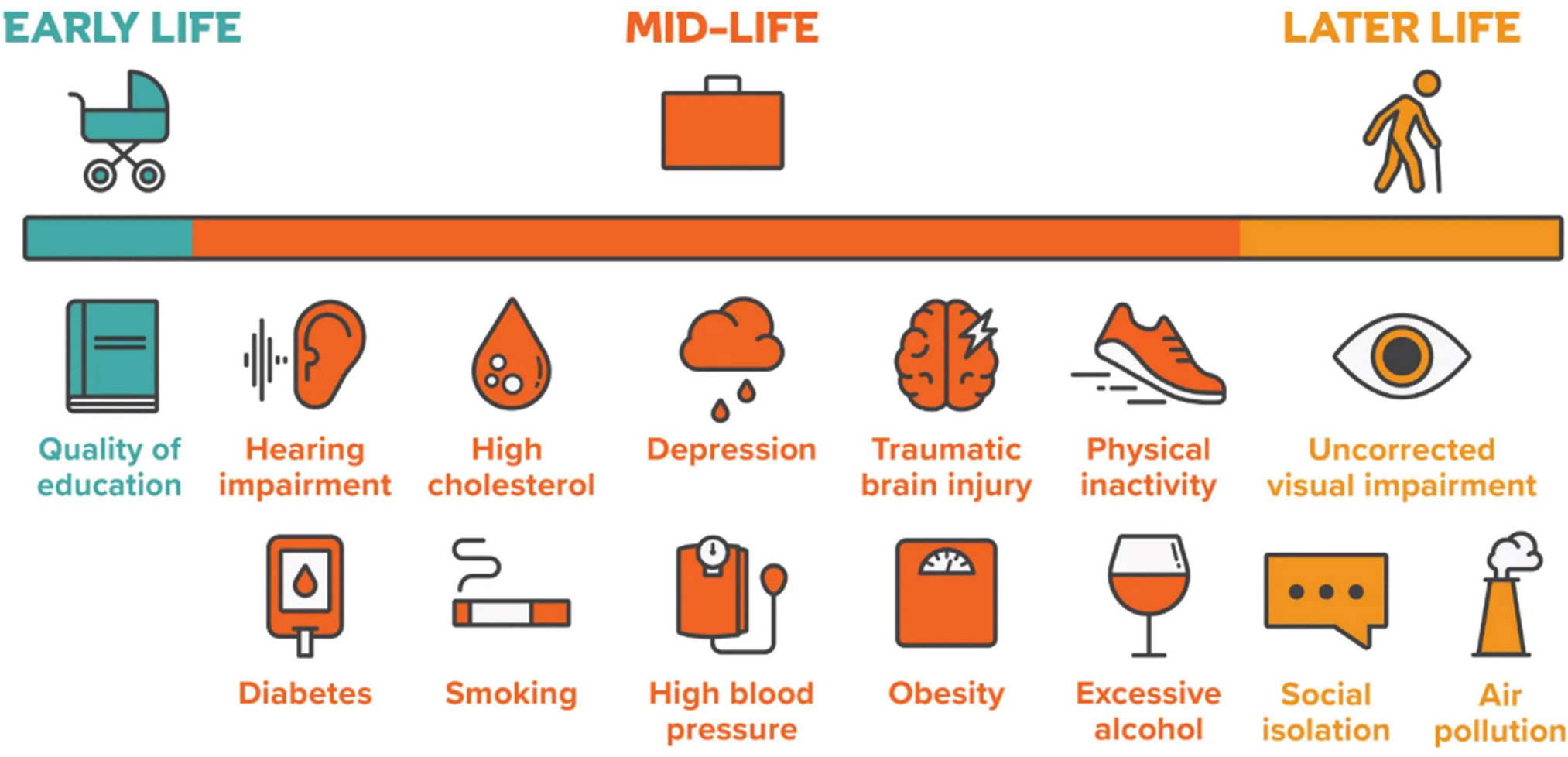
We would be grateful if you could provide feedback on this handbook. Please scan the QR Code below or visit:

https://forms.office.com/e/AVJg8Nz6KT

If you would like to view this handbook online, please scan the QR code below

For larger quantities for groups or organisations, please contact support@dementiafriendlyswansea.org or west.glamorgan@swansea.gov.uk

FACTORS LINKED TO DEMENTIA RISK



Adapted from The Lancet standing commission on dementia prevention, intervention and care, 2024.

ALZHEIMER'S RESEARCH UK FOR A CURE

Registered charity numbers - 1077089 & SC042474

www.dementiahwb.org www.westglamorgan.org.uk

Dementia Hwb

Partneriaeth Ranbarthol Gorllewin Morgannwg | West Glamorgan Regional Partnership

Cyngor Abertawe Swansea Council

Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot / Neath Port Talbot Council

GIG CYMRU NHS WALES | Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Bae Abertawe / Swansea Bay University Health Board

Llywodraeth Cymru Welsh Government

SCVS

Neath Port Talbot CVS / Castell-nedd Port Talbot