

Take charge of your mental health



You can maintain good mental health or improve your mental health and wellbeing through smart lifestyle choices. The self-care strategies outlined below can help.

For each strategy, indicate if you do it most of the time, sometimes or rarely.

Test yourself: Take care of your body

How often do you practise this habit?			Self-care strategies
Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	
			Sleep well Try to keep a regular sleep routine and get seven to eight hours of quality sleep every night. Sleep deprivation promotes mood swings, irritability and general unhappiness. It is also linked to many chronic physical and mental conditions, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, depression and schizophrenia. The quality of sleep is just as important as the quantity of sleep. Some tips for getting a good night's sleep are provided below.
			Take part in regular physical activity Physical activity and exercise have been shown to help improve some mental health conditions, including in people who are also taking antidepressant medication. Over the long term, regular aerobic exercise, such as brisk walking, also helps to prevent depression from coming back.
			Eat healthily Eating healthily can make a difference to your mental health and wellbeing. Include vegetables, fruits, whole grains as well as lean meats, fish and low-fat dairy products every day so you get enough vitamins, minerals and other healthy nutrients from your food, especially omega-3 fatty acids, folate and vitamin B12. Try to steer clear of processed foods, added sugar and salt, and caffeine.
			Avoid tobacco, alcohol and drugs Smoking, vaping or drinking too much alcohol as a way to cope with mental health problems make matters worse. As well as being harmful to your health, they will reduce your coping skills. Avoid taking drugs to cope, unless your GP has prescribed medications for you. Always take medications exactly as directed.

Test yourself: Take care of your mind

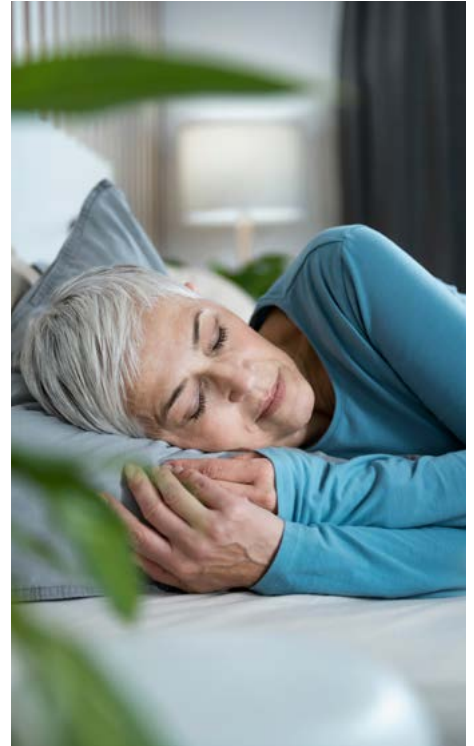
How often do you practise this habit?			Self-care strategies
Most of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	
			Relax and recharge Set aside time for yourself. Even a few minutes of quiet time can be refreshing and help to calm your mind and reduce anxiety. Many people benefit from practices such as deep breathing, visualisation, mindfulness, stretching, meditation and yoga. Select a technique that you will enjoy and practise it regularly.
			Focus on positive thoughts Monitor your 'self-talk' (the things you say to yourself) and choose to think positive thoughts. Consider starting each day by listing things you are grateful for. Maintain a sense of hope, work to accept changes as they occur and try to keep problems in perspective. Recognise that some days will be better than others.
			Limit screen time Turn off your electronic devices for some time each day. Make a conscious effort to spend less time in front of a screen — television, tablet, computer and phone. Also, limit exposure to news media. In times of an emergency or disaster, constant news of all types can heighten fears. While it is important to look for reliable sources of national and local recommendations, try to limit news and social media that may expose you to rumours and false information.
			Set priorities Set reasonable goals each day and outline steps you will take to reach those goals. Give yourself credit for every step in the right direction, no matter how small. They all lead to success.



Tips for a good night's sleep¹

Sleep is a key part of our mental health and wellbeing. Getting a good night's sleep will help you recharge and feel refreshed for a new day. Mind has the following tips to help you improve your sleep:

- **Try to establish a routine**
Going to bed and waking up at around the same time every day is a good habit but experiment until you find what works best for you.
- **Relax before you try to sleep**
Taking time to relax can help you sleep. Options include reading a book, breathing exercises, having a bath and listening to relaxing music.
- **Fill in a sleep diary**
Keeping a record can help you understand what works – and doesn't work – when it comes to your sleep. Include details of your sleep but also any physical activity, caffeine and alcohol intake and how your mood was that day.
- **Make your sleeping area more comfortable**
Most people find dark, quiet and cool environments best for sleep but try different settings to see what is right for you.
- **Think about screens and device settings**
Using screens in the evening can affect your sleep so consider turning them off an hour or two before bed. Use a blue light filter, night mode or dark mode and avoid stimulating activities such as games
- **Find support for connected issues**
If something's keeping you awake at night, reach out for advice and support. Your employee assistance programme can help or speak to a charity helpline.



What can you do?

Take charge of your lifestyle and make your mental health a priority.

Sources:

1. [Tips for a good night's sleep](#)

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