

Keeping fit and well

It may not be at the top of your priorities but your health is important and you need to make time to look after yourself, which is sometimes easier said than done. Most carers are so busy looking after the person they care for that they neglect their own health needs. However, by making time for leisure interests and looking after your health, you will find you have more energy for your caring role and will feel better in yourself, both as an individual and as a carer.

Like anyone else, carers need:

1. good food - including plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables
2. exercise or physical activity - ideally at least three times a week
3. enough sleep - usually about seven hours each night
4. treatment or help if ill
5. friends, a loving relationship, or someone to talk to who can be trusted
6. relaxation and time to oneself

It is not always easy to achieve all or any of the above, but there is help available

Looking after your mental health

Maintaining good mental health is important for all of us but sometimes it can be harder for carers. Ways suggested to do this include; talking about your feelings; keeping active, eating well, drinking sensibly, keeping in touch with friends and family; asking for help, taking a break; doing something you are good at; and accepting who you are.

The Mental Health Foundation has produced bilingual guides on how to look after your mental health, visit www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications

Healthy Eating

Living and Feeling Well is a website which is full of practical ideas on how to eat better, including recipes for healthy meals which are easy to prepare.

<https://111.wales.nhs.uk/LiveWell/>

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Carers Wales have a lot of useful information on their website about a number of health topics, including healthy eating,

www.carersuk.org/wales/help-and-advice/your-health-and-wellbeing

They also have booklets and leaflets which can be downloaded

www.carersuk.org/wales/help-and-advice/your-health-and-wellbeing/the-importance-of-good-nutrition or you could phone Carers UK helpline **0808 808**

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Health and Wellbeing

Carers Trust have a useful webpage <https://carers.org/health-and-wellbeing/health-and-wellbeing>

If it is difficult for you to leave your home, there are other ways you could try to keep fit and make time for yourself. Perhaps you are able to enjoy gardening, or can find time to put on some music and just dance around the sitting room.

If your caring involves any lifting, then you need to protect your back or you may damage it. If you already have problems with your back then talk to your doctor or a physiotherapist about it. Gwynedd Carers Partnership published a booklet for carers, *Good Back Care and Safer Manual Handling*. A copy can be downloaded from the carers page on the Cyngor Gwynedd website

www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/en/Residents/Health-and-social-care/Carers/Unpaid-Carers.aspx

There is useful information on walking on Age UK's website

www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/health-wellbeing/exercise

The Mental Health Foundation has a guide *How to look after your mental health using exercise* on their website www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/publications/how-look-after-your-mental-health-using-exercise

National Exercise Referral Scheme

This scheme is for those over 17 years of age, who would benefit from access to a supervised exercise programme to improve health and wellbeing.

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Benefits can include weight management, reducing blood pressure, reducing stress and anxiety. Speak to your GP/practice nurse about being referred.

Byw'n lach (Leisure Centres)

Many of the Byw'n lach centres now offer sessions for people with disabilities so perhaps you would be able to fit in a session (and time for yourself) whilst the person for whom you care has a session in the fitness room or goes for a swim. Some leisure centres offer chair aerobic sessions which perhaps you could do together.

Although there is normally a charge for these sessions, it is possible to obtain discounted rates by subscribing to a monthly package, and sessions during the day are often cheaper than those in the evening. However there is no charge for carers accompanying someone just to help them use the facilities. This should include use of the Fitness Room, swimming and other sessions in the centre. If carers take part in the activities as well, then there is a charge.

Contact your local leisure centre for more details.

Arfon

Byw'n lach Plas Ffrancon, Bethesda	01248 601515
Byw'n lach Bangor	01248 370600
Byw'n lach Arfon, Caernarfon	01286 676451/676945
Byw'n lach Plas Silyn, Penygroes	01286 882047

Dwyfor

Bwy'n lach Dwyfor, Pwllheli	01758 613437
Byw'n lach Glaslyn, Porthmadog	01766 512711

Meirionnydd

Byw'n lach Pavilion, Barmouth	01341 280111
Byw'n lach Bro Dysynni, Tywyn	01654 711763
Byw'n lach Glan Wynion, Dolgellau	01341 423579
Byw'n lach Penllyn, Bala	01678 521222

Dementia Actif Gwynedd

A large part of the Dementia Actif Gwynedd programme is the classes, which include physical and social activities to support and improve the quality of life of people who have been affected by dementia. Dementia Actif classes are held throughout Gwynedd. The programme provides online activities as well, and supports people to become digitally included. There is a strong social and supportive element so visit their website www.dementiaactifgwynedd.cymru for more information, or contact Emma Quaek by phoning **07768 988095** or emailing emmajanequaek@gwynedd.llyw.cymru

Sleep problems

Sometimes it can be difficult to get a good night's sleep but lack of sleep can make life much harder. If you cannot sleep because of your caring role e.g. the person for who you care sometimes gets up in the night/falls out of bed, you might find that Telecare or Assistive Technology can help. To find out more contact your local Community Resource Team (Llŷn area **01758 704099**; Caernarfon area **01286 679099**; Bangor area **01248 363240**; Eifionydd-North Meirionnydd **01766 510300**; South Meirionnydd **01341 424499**)

Sometimes stress prevents people from relaxing and sleeping. Practising relaxation techniques, such as some simple yoga, can help. If you are unable to attend a class, you can still teach yourself some basic techniques through borrowing a book from your local library. Exercise will also help, as can talking things through with a sympathetic friend or family member. Your local carers' organisation will also be happy to listen and to suggest ways to help. Contact Carers Outreach Services on **01248 370797**. If they cannot help you, then they will signpost you towards someone who can.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists have written some useful leaflets including one on *Sleeping Well*. You can download or order a free copy of their website:

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www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/mental-illnesses-and-mental-health-problems/sleeping-well

The Mental Health Foundation has a sleep guide -

www.mentalhealth.org.uk/cymru/explore-mental-health/publications/how-sleep-better