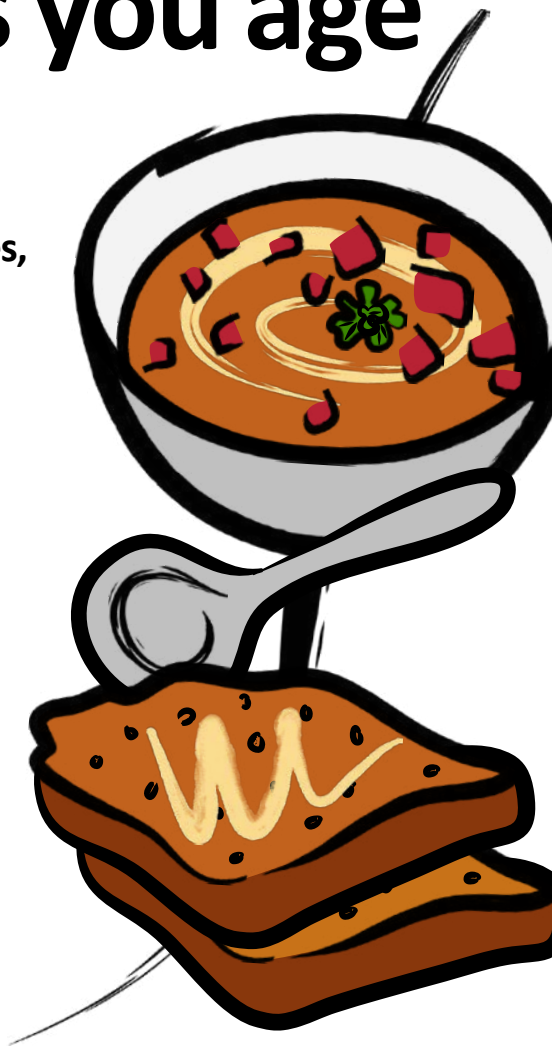


# Eating well to stay healthy as you age

An information booklet for older people, their families, friends, carers and anyone who may be helping an older person make decisions about their diet and health.

**This booklet is for people who may not be eating enough to be healthy.**

This guide is designed to help you **spot the signs of undernutrition** and suggests ideas to help you prevent it.



Brighton & Hove

**FOOD**  
Partnership



AGEING WELL

This booklet has been written by Brighton and Hove Food Partnership and Impact Initiatives as part of Brighton and Hove's Ageing Well programme. It has been funded by Brighton and Hove City Council and NHS Sussex.

*Published 2017, updated 2024*

Brighton & Hove Food Partnership,  
Community Base,  
113 Queens Road,  
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T: **01273 234810** or visit  
**www.bhfood.org.uk**

Ageing Well,  
Impact Initiatives,  
19 Queens Road,  
Brighton BN1 3XA  
T: **0808 175 3234 / 07770 061072**  
or visit **www.ageingwellbh.org**

*Thanks and credit to:*

- Malnutrition Task Force 'Are you Eating Enough' Booklet
- Claire Godley, Age UK West Sussex, Brighton & Hove 'Healthy Eating and Malnutrition' report
- BSUH Nutrition and Dietetic Service

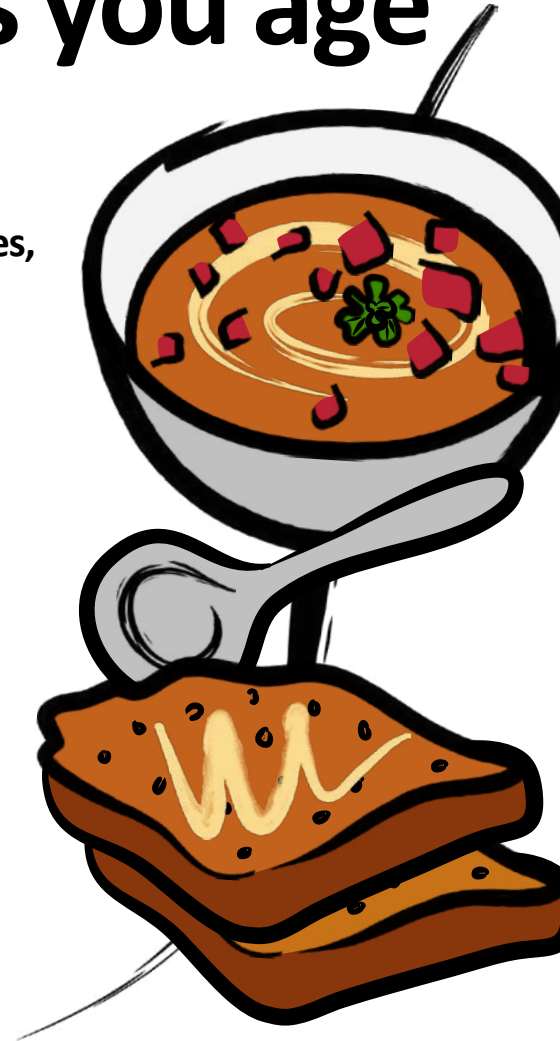
For more information see the booklet 'Eating Well in Later Life – Tips for looking after yourself as life changes'. **www.malnutritiontaskforce.org.uk**

# Eating well to stay healthy as you age

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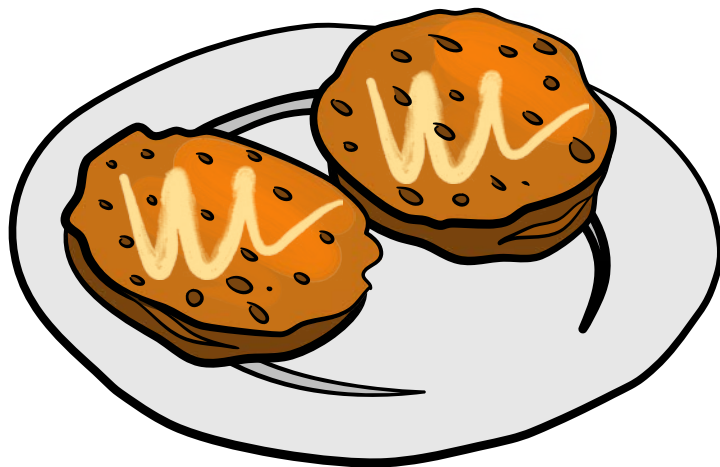
This guide is designed to help you **spot the signs of undernutrition** and suggests ideas to help you prevent it.



## What is undernutrition (sometimes called malnutrition) and why is it important?

- A person is undernourished if they are not eating enough and this can lead to longer term health problems
- Dehydration, or not drinking enough, can also lead to health problems
- You are more likely to become ill, leading to an increase in hospital admissions and it can delay the time it takes to recover from illness
- It affects physical, emotional and mental well-being
- It can lead to depression and social isolation

**If you have had sudden or recent weight loss speak to your GP or Practice Nurse.**



## Not eating properly can cause undernutrition

**Older people can be more at risk of a poor diet or dehydration. Some reasons include:**

- reduced ability to shop for food
- lack of motivation to cook and eat
- eating alone
- changes to appetite
- loss of sight
- a recent stay in hospital
- difficulty swallowing
- dental problems, including dentures
- long term health conditions such as arthritis, dementia, Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and Parkinson's disease
- underlying illness
- lack of mobility, which causes problems for accessing or preparing food
- the increasing cost of living
- bereavement
- social isolation
- low mood
- medication which affects the taste of food



## Key signs

Some good questions to ask someone who you think may be at risk include:



1. Are you eating less than usual?
2. Have you suddenly lost weight or lost weight without trying?
3. Do you feel weak, tired or lacking energy?
4. Does your physical and/or mental health make it difficult to buy food?
5. Do you often forget to drink, or not feel like drinking?
6. Have your clothes or jewellery become looser?
7. Do you have little or no food in the fridge or cupboards?
8. Do you struggle to prepare meals and snacks?
9. Have you lost interest in cooking?
10. Do you feel cold most of the time?
11. Are you often ill and find it difficult to recover?
12. Do you find it difficult or painful to eat or chew?

**If you have had sudden or unplanned weight loss speak to your GP or Practice Nurse.**



## Sudden weight loss is not a normal part of ageing

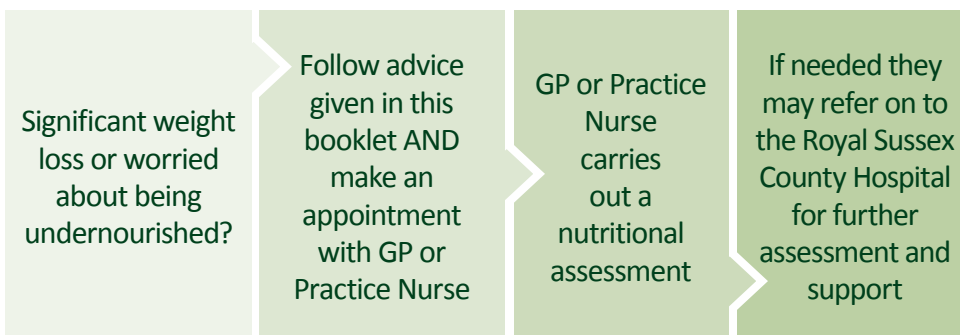
**Sudden weight loss can be a sign of undernutrition or other illness and should not be overlooked.**

**If you have suddenly or unintentionally lost a significant amount of weight in the past 3-6 months then you might be undernourished. If you are concerned for yourself or someone else there is a simple screening process.**

Your GP or Practice Nurse can carry out an assessment called a Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool (MUST) to see if you are malnourished.

Based on this, they may refer you to Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals (BSUH) Nutrition and Dietetics Service (based at the Royal Sussex County Hospital) for further assessment, review and support.

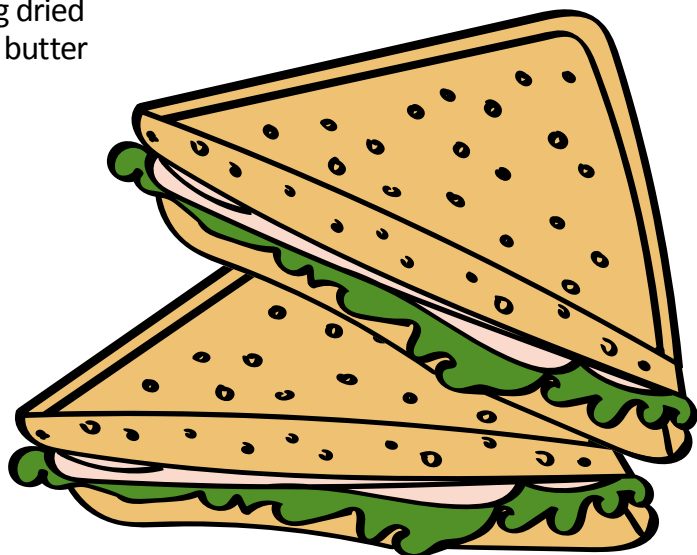
### The screening process



# How to prevent becoming undernourished – what to eat

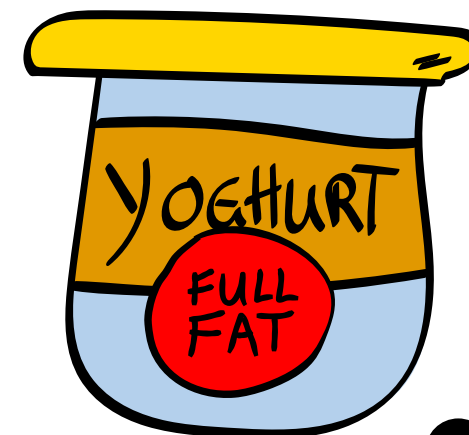
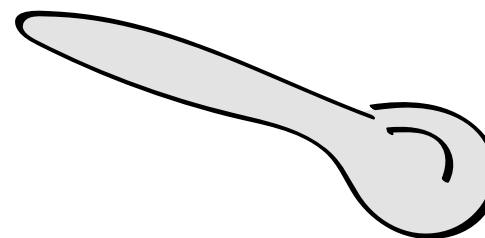
## If you are below a healthy weight or have a small appetite:

- Try to eat little and often e.g. Small nutritious meals and snacks every 2-3 hours
- Choose full fat foods – not low fat or low sugar foods
- Choose energy-rich foods – e.g. avocado, peanut butter, full fat milk, full fat yoghurts, butter, double cream
- Make the most of every mouthful – fortify food with fats and proteins e.g. by adding dried milk powder, butter or cream
- You should still eat a mixture of fruit and vegetables each day for vitamins. Fresh, frozen and tinned fruit and vegetables all count
- Make sure items in the cupboard are easy to open and prepare
- Keep it simple – choose small portions of foods that you enjoy and fortify them where you can



## Try:

- Crackers with cheese
- Dips e.g. hummus or mashed avocado served with crackers/ breadsticks
- Malt loaf, fruit scones or toasted teacakes with butter, jam or peanut butter
- Soups, add lentils, full fat milk, cheese or cream to add protein and fat
- Individual pots of full fat yoghurts, rice pudding or custard
- Sandwiches made with energy rich fillings e.g. cold meat, tuna, soft or grated full fat cheese, egg, peanut butter, avocado, hummus
- Baked beans, sardines, cheese or egg on toast
- Milky drinks e.g. Horlicks or Ovaltine
- Add cream or custard to desserts
- Add butter to your peas or other vegetables
- Add butter, cheese, cream or oil to soups, stews, mashed potato or scrambled eggs
- Choose ready meals which include at least one portion of vegetables. Avoid those labelled 'low fat'



## Fluids

Not drinking enough puts you at risk of dehydration. Try to have 8 cups of fluids a day. This doesn't have to be water as tea, coffee, milky drinks (Horlicks and Ovaltine), and squash all count, but avoid fizzy drinks as they can fill you up.

Have a jug or easy to open bottle of water nearby to remind you to drink.

A small amount of alcohol can stimulate appetite; however it's important to be aware of possible interactions between alcohol and medication.

## Teeth issues

If your teeth or dentures are proving problematic, make an appointment with the dentist. If you increase your sugar intake as a way to increase calorie consumption brush your teeth with a fluoride toothpaste more regularly and check your gums for a build-up of plaque.

## Other considerations

If you are experiencing difficulty chewing or swallowing, speak with your GP who can make a referral to the Speech and Language Therapy team.

**If you have had sudden or unplanned weight loss speak to your GP or Practice Nurse.**



## Tips for eating on a budget

- Supermarket 'value' brands are often cheaper
- Frozen and tinned items such as fruit or fish are just as good as fresh
- Fruits and vegetables in season are tastier and cheaper
- Supermarkets often have multibuy offers on ready meals
- Cook extra portions for your evening meal so you can have the leftovers for lunch the next day

## Cooking for one

Eating well while living on your own can be a challenge. If you are struggling, try the following:

- Buy food you enjoy. Sights and smells can stimulate appetite
- When you do feel motivated, try making a larger batch of soup, stews or casseroles and freeze them in individual portions
- Try eating a regular snack or meal when you watch your favourite TV programme
- If choosing ready meals, look for those that include a portion of vegetables. Avoid diet, healthy eating or low calorie ready meals

## Think about scams

**People like to offer support in times of need.**

**Unfortunately a few might take advantage of the situation.**

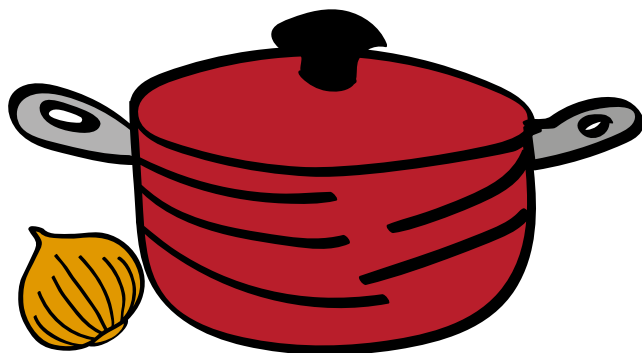
- If you are offered help by someone you don't know, you don't have to accept it if you think it isn't genuine
- If someone claims to be from a recognised organisation, don't be afraid to ask for proof
- Never hand over money to someone you don't know





## If you are caring for an older person:

1. Discover food memories, find out favourite foods and consider dislikes
2. Encourage some variety in the weekly shop. Avoid over-repetition and help stimulate an interest in food
3. Encourage planning of daily meals and snacks
4. Think about cultural and religious backgrounds
5. Remind the person you care for to space meals out throughout the day, and if appetite is small to eat little and often
6. Make sure water or other fluids are available
7. Discuss payment for shopping early on and stick to the agreement



## Ageing Well Eating Well Service

Eating well is an important part of ageing well. Our service supports people aged 65+ who are at risk of undernutrition and dehydration. Ageing Well can offer information on what services and help are available within Brighton & Hove, as well as have a talk through how nutritional needs change as you age and how to eat well. Contact Ageing Well on **0808 175 3234** or [ageingwellbh@impact-initiatives.org.uk](mailto:ageingwellbh@impact-initiatives.org.uk) for support with:

### Undernutrition information and advice

- Work with you to develop an understanding of how your nutritional needs change as you age.
- One-to-one support to look at the specific barriers that could be contributing to your risk of undernutrition/dehydration, then provide preventative support and signposting to do with these factors.

### Shopping

- Guidance on how to make use of phone/online shopping options, food boxes and other delivery services, alongside help to understand safe payment methods when using these services.

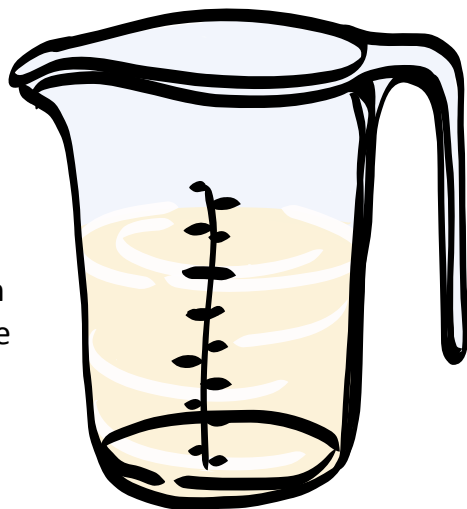
- Information on transport to supermarkets, such as accessible transport options, and assistance available when in supermarkets.
- If finances are a barrier, work with you to find healthy, low-cost food solutions.

### Meals and cooking

- Support with local and national meal delivery services including hot, cupboard-stored or frozen meals.
- Information on tasty, fortified recipes that can easily be made at home.
- Help to navigate the available local lunch clubs and community cafe options.

## Milk fortification

If you find it challenging to manage a poor appetite, have lost weight due to illness or need extra nourishment, it is important that you get enough nutrition to maintain your health. There are simple ways to incorporate more calories into your day to day eating routine. Such as making the most of your pint of milk.



### Fortified milk recipe

- Add a little whole milk to a measuring jug
- Add 4 tablespoons of skimmed milk powder
- Whisk until dissolved
- Make up the rest of the pint by adding whole milk
- Pop it in the fridge to use for tea and coffee or pour it over your cereal. You can use it in milk-based soups or in white or cheese sauce

Fortified milk keeps for 3-4 days in the fridge.

Use the fortified milk as you would normally, e.g. to make milky drinks, milkshakes, smoothies, porridge, puddings, and custards.

If you cannot tolerate dairy products, or follow a plant-based diet, you can swap some of the suggested ingredients for non-dairy alternatives. You can add 3-4 teaspoons (15-20g) of pea protein powder to 1 pint of your chosen milk alternative (such as plain soya milk) and whisk until dissolved.

## Four useful food items to add to your food shopping if you are undernourished

1. **Add skimmed milk powder to your shopping list to make fortified milk**
2. **Look out for tinned oily fish which can be spread on toast, crackers or stirred into pasta. Tinned sardines, mackerel, or pilchards are good options**
3. **Nut butters, like peanut butter can be spread on toast, stirred into porridge, or added into a smoothie or milkshake. As well as peanut butter, you could try alternatives like almond butter or cashew butter**
4. **Choose enriched milk drinks such as Ovaltine or Horlicks**

**If there are any health concerns which have previously required you to limit fat and sugar in your diet, e.g. diabetes or high cholesterol, you should discuss whether you still need to limit these with a health professional**





## Five simple supermarket swaps for older adults at risk of undernourishment

1. **Switch semi-skimmed (green top) or skimmed milk (red top) for whole milk (blue top). If you don't drink dairy milk try a plant-based alternative such as soy milk**
2. **Choose soup with beans or added meat instead of plain vegetable soup**
3. **Instead of light mayonnaise choose full fat mayonnaise**
4. **Swap 0% fat yoghurt for full fat yoghurt**
5. **Choose full calorie ready meals over low fat/ reduced calories options**



Call the Ageing Well Team on 0808 175 3234 for support with any barriers that could be contributing to you not eating enough to maintain a healthy weight.

## Top tips to keep hydrated

- Use a mobile phone or alarm clock to set alarms to help remember to keep hydrated
- Place sticky notes, reminding you to have a drink, in places that you frequent often in the home
- Visual prompts around the house, such as filling a jug with water or placing a cup in the bathroom, can be a helpful reminder

### How do I know I'm drinking enough?

- It's not always reliable to wait for a sensation of thirst as a sign of needing to drink – by the time we feel thirsty our body is already dehydrated
- The best sign of good hydration is urine colour, a pale straw-coloured urine is a reliable indicator of good hydration. Darker coloured urine is a sign that the body needs more fluid



## Local information

Ageing Well is a partnership between 10 local organisations for people aged 50+ living in Brighton and Hove. With one dedicated phone number you can find out what is available, helping to keep you connected to the community. We can talk through what you need or what your interests are and find options that will help you stay physically and emotionally healthy by signposting you to groups, activities, voluntary opportunities, befriending, support services, and information & advice.

0808 175 3234 / 07770 061072 ageingwellbh@impact-initiatives.org.uk

Listed below are some meal delivery services. This list is not exhaustive.

### Meal Delivery Options

#### Cookmere Meals

01323 884274

[www.cookmere.co.uk](http://www.cookmere.co.uk)

#### East Brighton Food Coop

07539 635 017

[www.eastbrightonfoodcoop.uk](http://www.eastbrightonfoodcoop.uk)

[eastbrightonfoodcoop@gmail.com](mailto:eastbrightonfoodcoop@gmail.com)

#### Cook

01732 759020

[www.cookfood.net](http://www.cookfood.net)

#### Wiltshire Farm Foods

0800 077 3100

[www.wiltshirefarmfoods.com](http://www.wiltshirefarmfoods.com)

#### Oakhouse Foods

0333 370 6700

[www.oakhousefoods.co.uk](http://www.oakhousefoods.co.uk)

### Other food services

#### Ageing Well

[www.ageingwellbh.org](http://www.ageingwellbh.org)

Go to 'Resources' page and click 'Shopping & Help Accessing Food'

#### Brighton & Hove Food Partnership

[www.bhfood.org.uk](http://www.bhfood.org.uk)

Browse for recipes and listings for other food services

**If you are struggling with the affordability of these meals Ageing Well can provide more information.**



## Lunch clubs, shared meals and community cafes

Shared meals bring people together to eat and can reduce social isolation. Please see below for a small selection of lunch clubs. You can contact the Ageing Well service on 0808 175 3234 to find out about other options.

#### Food and

**Friendship** Hove  
Methodist Church,  
Portland Rd, Hove  
BN3 5DR

Food and Friendship meets on Tuesdays 11:30am-1:30pm and Thursdays 12:00pm-2:00pm (school term time only). Tuesday is a three-course lunch with tea and coffee for £6. Thursday is a two-course lunch with tea and coffee for £4. Door to Door transport may be possible on Tuesday. Call 07813 667 857 or email [cookingcaroline@outlook.com](mailto:cookingcaroline@outlook.com) for more information.

**St Richards Church & Community Centre Knoll Lunch Club**, Egmont Rd, Hove BN3 7FP

Knoll Lunch Club takes place from 11.30am - 2.30pm every Thursday. It is £3 (subject to change) for a meal as well as tea and coffee. They are a very sociable group, and all are welcome to join. Call 01273 414483 for more information.

**Hop 50+** Palmeira Square, Hove BN3 2FL

The Hop 50+ café is open Mon/Tue/Thurs 9:30am-4:00pm and Wed 12:00pm-4:00pm. Lunchtime meal deal including main course, dessert and tea or coffee for £9. There is a roast dinner and dessert with a complimentary drink available for £10 on Saturday, cafe open 9:30am-3:00pm. Prices are subject to change. Call 01273 729603 for further information or email [thehop50@impact-initiatives.org.uk](mailto:thehop50@impact-initiatives.org.uk)

**Boccia and Lunch club at The Manor Gym**, Manor Rd, BN2 5EA

The Boccia Lunch Club runs every Tuesday 1:00pm-2:00pm. The cost is £2.50 (subject to change) which includes a chair based gentle warm up, followed by a game of Boccia and a healthy lunch. Call 01273 676828 for more information.

**The Bevy Community Pub**, 50, Hillside, BN2 4TF

The Bevy host a Senior's Club which includes a lunch for people aged 50+ on Fridays 12:00pm-2:00pm. The lunch costs £5 for a meal, pudding, and unlimited tea/coffee. There is a raffle and bingo which each cost £1 per person to join on the day. Call 01273 281009 for more information or email [contact@thebevy.co.uk](mailto:contact@thebevy.co.uk).

## **Citizens Advice Brighton and Hove (CABH)**

Citizens Advice Brighton and Hove provides free, confidential and impartial information and advice support. Call **08082 78 78 15** or get in contact via the online enquiry form [www.cabrightonhove.org/online-enquiry](http://www.cabrightonhove.org/online-enquiry)

## **Telephone Befriending**

Opportunity to be linked up with a volunteer befriender to help combat loneliness and isolation. Contact either *Time to Talk Befriending* (65+) **01273 737710** or *Together Co* on **01273 775888**

## **CareLink Plus**

Brighton & Hove City Council's telecare alarm service, providing a personal alarm that's worn round your neck or wrist. If you fall, feel unwell or need help in an emergency, you can call for help by pressing a button on the alarm. Call **0300 123 3301** or visit [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/carelink-plus](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/carelink-plus)

## **Carers Hub**

Partnership of local services creating a hub for unpaid carers to get the information and support they need. Call **01273 977000** or visit [carershub.co.uk](http://carershub.co.uk)

## **East Sussex Fire and Rescue (ESFRS)**

ESFRS offer free home safety visits, offering a range of advice around home safety. They cover things like bed time routines, escape routes, electrical safety and specialist equipment as appropriate. They will fit smoke alarms & carbon monoxide alarms when needed. Call **0800 177 7069** or visit [www.esfrs.org/your-safety/home-safety-visits](http://www.esfrs.org/your-safety/home-safety-visits)

## **Digital Brighton & Hove**

Offering resources, information, and digital support, including matching up volunteers with people needing digital help. Advice around accessing equipment or an internet connection also available. Call **0808 196 5883** (Digital Skills Helpline run by Citizens Online) or visit [www.digitalbrightonandhove.org.uk](http://www.digitalbrightonandhove.org.uk)

## **Malnutrition Task Force**

National organisation with a website containing resources and studies to help agencies supporting older people. Visit [www.malnutritiontaskforce.org.uk](http://www.malnutritiontaskforce.org.uk)

## **Brighton & Hove Food Partnership**

*The Food Partnership* is a hub for information, inspiration and connection around food. Many cookery courses are available online. Call **01273 234810**

## **UOK**

A network of local services committed to supporting good mental health and wellbeing. Call **0808 196 1768** or visit [www.uok.org.uk](http://www.uok.org.uk)

## **Moneyworks Advice Line**

Information and advice regarding managing money. Call **0800 988 7037** or visit [www.moneyadviceplus.org.uk/advice-and-support](http://www.moneyadviceplus.org.uk/advice-and-support)

## **BHCC Healthy Lifestyle Service**

Access a range of healthy lifestyle services in Brighton and Hove to make healthy lifestyle changes. Call **01273 294589** or visit [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/support-be-active](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/support-be-active)



**As you age there may come a time when you can't shop or cook for yourself and the risk of undernutrition increases. Keep this booklet for future reference.**

## **Ageing Well partners:**

**Brighton & Hove Food Partnership**

[www.bhfood.org.uk](http://www.bhfood.org.uk)

**Citizens Advice Brighton and Hove**

[www.cabrightonhove.org](http://www.cabrightonhove.org)

**Impact Initiatives**

[www.impact-initiatives.org.uk](http://www.impact-initiatives.org.uk)

**Music For Connection**

[www.musicforconnection.co.uk](http://www.musicforconnection.co.uk)

**Switchboard**

[www.switchboard.org.uk](http://www.switchboard.org.uk)

**The Clare Project**

[www.clareproject.org.uk](http://www.clareproject.org.uk)

**The Hangleton and Knoll Project**

[www.hkproject.org.uk](http://www.hkproject.org.uk)

**The Trust for Developing Communities**

[www.trustdevcom.org.uk](http://www.trustdevcom.org.uk)

**Time to Talk Befriending**

[www.tttb.org.uk](http://www.tttb.org.uk)

**Together Co**

[www.togetherco.org.uk](http://www.togetherco.org.uk)

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