



The Little Book of

Health & Wellbeing

Introduction

The safety, health and wellbeing of all employees are of paramount importance to us. If the Coronavirus pandemic has taught us anything, it's that we need to take extra care of ourselves and each other, whether that is at home, in our communities, or in the workplace.

Whether through the weekly Coronavirus (COVID-19) updates or on the HomeSafe-Me website, we are constantly aiming to share the best and most up-to-date advice on how to keep yourselves safe and well.

We hope that this new handy guide to health and wellbeing will prove a good reference tool for you - a one-stop shop for tips and guidance on keeping happy and healthy.

Please take the time to read through this e-book - which we hope to regularly update - so that we are all better equipped to head off serious problems before they occur.

Stay safe and well,

Improving how you feel



Sleep: our body can't function properly if you don't get enough sleep. If you're struggling to sleep, try and workout why (it could be as simple as too much caffeine or exercising late at night) and seek help if you can't find the answer.

Drink sensibly: Alcohol can cause depressive feelings, heightened anxiety, or feeling out of control in a way that feels unpleasant. It can also increase risk taking behaviours.

Food and mood: Nutrition has an impact on mental health and fuelling your body will not only give you energy but keep your mood stable and aid more restful sleep. Choose nutrient-rich ingredients, from all food groups, and during stressful periods go low on the refined sugars.

Take the time to relax: Make sure you have some downtime from the stresses of our current way of living. A hot bath, baking a cake, watching a film, yoga, whatever it is, think about the things that help to keep you feel calm or more content and make them part of your routine.

Digital detox: Smartphones, tablets and laptops can overstimulate our brains, and if you never take any time out from them, you won't be doing your mental health any favours. Take a mini digital detox every week, even if it's just for a couple of hours.

Don't be afraid to get help: it is better to act early if you feel rising levels of stress. The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is a free and confidential support service which is designed to give you access to information, advice and emotional support

Exercise

We all know exercise is good for your physical health, but did you know it can enhance our wellbeing as well by increasing our mental alertness, energy and positive mood?

Increasing numbers of studies tell us that exercise can have a positive impact on many mental health disorders like depression and anxiety. It is also a great stress reliever, improves memory, helps us sleep, and boosts our overall mood - even a 10-minute brisk walk can make a difference to how you're feeling.

Exercise affects the brain in many ways. It releases natural anti-depressant chemicals. It increases our heart rate, which pumps more oxygen to our brain. It helps with the release of hormones which provide an excellent environment for the growth of brain cells.

Even if you're not feeling quite ready to go back to the gym or use your local swimming pool there are alternative ways of keeping fit and healthy such as working out at home, taking a walk, going for a run or getting out for a cycle



Why not take a look at the range of free exercise videos and guidance available online to help you get up and active without needing to leave your home. If you're new to exercise you can access the NHS physical activity guidelines [here](#).

How to avoid over eating



Trapped in the house with a cupboard full of food:

More and more of us are finding ourselves overeating as the pressure of lifestyle changes are causing us to stress eat.

Try these tips to see if they can help stop you raiding the fridge when you're not even hungry.

Set a schedule and stick to it: this will help stop you from going to the kitchen for an unnecessary snack.

If you have an outline planned, you will have more purpose and be less likely to reach for the biscuits.

Eat healthy meals: Plan your meals and snacks for the day ahead at the start of each day, or even the night before. If you wait until you're hungry to decide what you're going to eat, you may end up eating more or choosing something higher in calories than if you had planned your meal and snacks in advance.

Remember: Processed foods may be convenient, but these foods make it easier to overeat

Avoid cravings: When you're bored, it's easy to turn to food, so keep busy. Set yourself a small task, call a friend or colleague or do 60 seconds of activity such as 20 squats or walking up and down the stairs. A simple task like this can keep your mind off food

Alcohol and wellbeing



The relationship between alcohol and mental health is complex.

Alcohol has been described as ‘the UK’s favourite coping mechanism’, and many people do drink to help manage stress, anxiety, depression or other mental health issues.

This is sometimes called ‘self-medicating’ with alcohol. Unfortunately, although alcohol can help us relax and give us a brief feeling of euphoria, the effects are short-lived and the long-term negative consequences of using alcohol in this way can be quite harmful:

Overuse of alcohol can worsen the symptoms of many mental health problems. It can lead to low mood and anxiety

As the immediate feeling of calm after drinking fades over time, you may feel worse than before

Post-drinking hangovers can be particularly difficult, with the usual headache and nausea being accompanied by feelings of depression and/or anxiety

Depression and heavy drinking have a mutually reinforcing relationship – meaning that either condition increases a person’s chances of experiencing the other

If you are feeling anxious, low or experiencing any other symptoms of mental health problems, you can get support from your GP, and get advice and help at www.mind.org.uk or from the Employee Assistance Programme*.

Working from home



For many employees who would normally work in an office, home life and work life has become intertwined as more people work from home.

This makes it all the more important to design a working environment that works for you. Here are just a few tips from seasoned home-workers.

- Have a routine, this includes having regular working hours, and set regular breaks away from your desk. Go out if you can for some exercise and fresh air
- Set up a group chat with your colleagues and create your own online version of an office chat
- While it may be tempting to lounge in your pjs all day, experts universally advise workers get dressed and set up an “office” at home
- Log out of social media if you can or have set time limits on it
- Working alone in an empty house can feel lonely so keep up-to-date with your boss and colleagues via regular phone calls
- Have a to-do list to help keep you focussed



Where to get help

The Employee Assistance Programme,

operated by Work Place Wellness, is a **free and confidential service** available to all employees providing information, advice and support when you need it.

It offers access to advice and information, coaching and counselling **24 hours a day, 365 days per year.**

Support is provided by expert advisers on career, relationships, money, emotional support, housing, children, your rights, health & wellbeing, management support, retirement, trauma, illness and crisis.



Freephone - **0800 111 6387**
From outside the UK: **+44 845 330 5132**
(Calls will be charged but call-back can be requested)

Website: **www.my-eap.com**

South West Water and Pennon Code:
SWWLWell

Other important numbers

- Mental Health Foundation—
020 7803 1101
- Anxiety UK—
08444 775 774
- Depression Alliance—
0845 123 2320
- Mind—
0300 123 3393



Module 5

The latest HomeSafe e-learning module focuses on mental wellbeing, and how promoting positive mental health can contribute to a happier and more productive workplace and help ensure everyone gets home safe every day.