



# Tips to promote health

**Research shows that people with HD, people at risk and people who are gene positive can help reduce the impact of symptoms and delay progression or onset by staying physically, mentally and socially active.**

**Maintain your interests and social life** - Enjoying hobbies and interests and maintaining social interaction increases positive thinking and provides a sense of fulfilment. Meeting friends or family members for a cuppa and chat, joining a yoga or dance class or taking a regular walk with a friend can enhance mood and physical wellbeing. These are also enjoyable ways to manage your stress and anxiety.

**Stay active and eat well** - Regular aerobic exercise is good for body and mind. It helps concentration and memory, maintains core strength, enhances mood and well-being and promotes healthy sleeping patterns. Activities such as yoga, pilates or dancing stimulate physical and mental energy. Think of ways to incorporate exercise into your daily routine such as walking to the shop, mowing the lawn or walking the dog. Eating regular, well-balanced meals promotes health. Food that is good for our hearts is also good for our brain, choose fresh food such as fruit, vegetables and oily fish. Wholemeal cereals, nuts and pulses and poultry are also considered beneficial.

Minimise over processed foods and food with saturated fat and sugar. Avoid over indulging in alcohol and other unhealthy stimulants.

**Sleep well** - Avoid taking worries, work, technology or TV to bed and keep your bedroom cool, well ventilated and as dark and quiet as possible. Relaxing activities like reading or taking a bath can help promote sleep.

**Stimulate your brain** - Brain activity is thought to build reserves of healthy brain cells. Change and novelty promotes mental sharpness. Brain training activities include: learning a new language or musical instrument, eating with the opposite hand, reading aloud and playing board games or doing puzzles and crosswords. Joining a class can help you engage in new learning on a regular basis. Explore your creative or artistic side or investigate new technologies.

**Manage Stress** - Moderate levels of stress can be stimulating but excessive stress can have a negative effect on memory and attention. Relaxation and mindfulness (staying in the present) training are helpful for people who are experiencing distress due to physical or psychological problems.

**Stay informed** - Change can be unsettling at times, particularly when dealing with a diagnosis of HD in your family.

- Stay informed of possible options and changes you may face
- Talk to people you trust
- Plan ahead in relation to informing loved ones, managing finances, legal matters (power of attorney, wills etc), suitable accommodation and supports you may need.

Remember that there is an international community of HD scientists, researchers, clinicians and HD family members working to improve standards of care and find effective treatments. More is known about HD today than at any time in the past.

*“I am a strong believer that finding out that you have the gene does not have to be the end of the world. We don’t know what tomorrow has in store and we are all lucky to be here today, and in the meantime anything can happen. So for anyone who has HD in their lives we have to stay strong, positive and keep living”.*

HD advocate and gene carrier.