

Report: Middle-aged fears for future health *UK adults leaving diet changes too late*

- ***More than two thirds of people in the UK cite memory loss as their top fear in old age***
- ***Half fear loss of mobility and deteriorating eyesight***
- ***Yet one-in-five does not believe diet impacts on long term health until aged over 40***
- ***Only 27% of adults aged 19-64 meet the 5-A-Day fruit & veg recommendations***
- ***Over a quarter (28%) DON'T BELIEVE diet changes can be beneficial at all with regards to health or age-related needs in later life***

A new report¹ by the *Health and Food Supplements Information Service* (HSIS) has unveiled alarming new data which predicts additional pressures for the already-overburdened NHS. The study reveals that despite middle-aged people in the UK living in fear of an old age spent in poor physical and mental health, they are still not making simple, practical changes early enough which could help protect against poor quality of life and ill health in the future.

The findings fuel concerns from health professionals that preventative action is not being taken seriously, which will in turn intensify demands on the health service in coming years.

Whereas the impact of age is being tackled head on in terms of appearance by the UK public through increased spend on anti-ageing skincare² and aesthetic plastic surgery procedures³, diet appears to be a strategy that is being overlooked by the vast majority of people.

UK life expectancy is now 79.1 years for a male and 82.8 years for a female, but men will spend one fifth of their lives and women one quarter of their lives in poor health or with a disability⁴. Yet a healthy diet with adequate levels of key nutrients from middle age can contribute to the prevention of common health worries such as memory loss, joint stiffness and deteriorating eyesight.

Dietitian Dr Carrie Ruxton, from the HSIS, says: "Small changes made to diet in the middle years can help to future-proof health. Government data shows that nutrient intakes are currently well below recommended levels, yet these are essential if we want to combat cognitive decline, osteoporosis, age-related macular degeneration, cardiovascular disease and sarcopenia in later life."

HSIS research found that 17% of people in the UK expected that they could wait until age 40 or over before making changes to avoid their diet impacting later health. Yet UK diets are lacking many crucial nutrients according to the National Diet & Nutrition Survey (NDNS)⁵ – both men and women in their middle years have intakes below LRNI (the intake level at which deficiency is likely to occur) of vitamin A, riboflavin, folate, calcium, magnesium, potassium, iron, zinc, selenium and iodine. And although vitamin D does not have an LRNI, data from the NDNS shows both low intakes and low blood levels, which led Public Health England to recommend everyone take a supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D in the autumn and winter and those in ‘at risk’ groups should take a supplement year round⁶.

Dr Ruxton adds: “We must stop seeing poor health in our older years as an inevitability and take a more proactive and holistic approach to healthy ageing. It’s clear that many people do not recognise the positive impact they have on their health by eating a balanced diet and including a multivitamin, multimineral and fish oil supplement. To future-proof health we need to take action before it is too late.”

Key health issues as we age & essential nutrients that help⁷

1. **Cognitive function** – omega-3 fatty acids, iron, B vitamins - B1, B2 (riboflavin), B6 and B12
 2. **Bone health** – calcium, vitamin D, phosphorus, vitamin K, magnesium
 3. **Eye health** – omega-3 fatty acids, vitamin B2 (riboflavin), vitamin A
 4. **Cardiovascular health** – vitamin D, vitamin E, folic acid, omega-3 fatty acids, potassium
 5. **Sarcopenia (reduced muscle mass)** – vitamin D, vitamin E
 6. **Immune health** – vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin D, vitamin B12, zinc, selenium
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For further information or to arrange an interview with an HSIS spokesperson, please contact the HSIS press office hsis@nexuspr.com or call 020 7052 8888. Out of hours please call 07730 682111 or 07482 107207

ABOUT HSIS

HSIS (the Health and Food Supplements Information Service) is a communication service providing accurate and balanced information on vitamins, minerals and other food supplements to the media and to health professionals working in the field of diet and nutrition. Find out more at www.hsis.org.

¹ For the full report visit www.hsis.org

² <https://www.raconteur.net/lifestyle/changing-face-of-uk-skincare>

³ In 2016 there were more than 30,000 in the UK according to data³ from the British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons Annual Audit Results 2016 https://baaps.org.uk/baaps_annual_audit_results.aspx

⁴ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandlifeexpectancies/bulletins/disabilityfreelifeexpectancybyupperlocalauthority/england2012to2014>

⁵ Ruxton C and Derbyshire E (2017) Nutrition in the Middle Years. Complete Nutrition

⁶ Public Health England recommends that people consider taking a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D in autumn and winter and that at risk groups, including pregnant and breastfeeding women, those with little skin exposure, children aged under five years, and people from ethnic minority groups, should supplement year-round <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/phe-publishes-new-advice-on-vitamin-d>