



# Taking Care of **YOU**

A health and wellbeing  
resource co-created by  
carers, **for carers.**



**Best.**  
**you**  
Coventry Carers

# Introduction

Caring for someone else can be demanding, and many carers like you don't always have the time, freedom or energy to do things you enjoy.

We believe the smallest changes can make a big difference.

Our aim is to help you take care of your own health and wellbeing and feel the best you can through practical advice and tailored information.

This pack has 'quick tips', stories and information for you – find out about carers groups to connect with people like you and learn about our carer-friendly support that can help you make small, manageable lifestyle changes.



[www.HLScoventry.org/carers](http://www.HLScoventry.org/carers)

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## Taking time for you

Feeling well mentally and physically is so important to help you look after the person who relies on you.

**But when was the last time you thought about:**

- **What's important to me?**
  - **How do I feel?**
  - **What do I need?**

This pack is designed to help you think about quick and easy ways to do more of what's important for you - what you enjoy and what makes you feel your best.

What is important to me?

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What is important for me?

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When I'm at my best I am:

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## Connect with others like you

Being a carer can often be lonely and isolating, with little time to socialise and do the things you enjoy.

You may feel like your life is very different from other people's and that no one understands how you feel. Sometimes you may feel angry and resentful at the person you care for, which then makes you feel guilty and upset.

**These are normal feelings, you are human.**

By talking to other carers, you will realise you're not alone. Connecting with others in a similar situation to you, will help you give and receive advice from people who understand.

It gives you a sense that you're not alone and puts your own problems into perspective

You find you want to help and give each other reassurance that we're doing amazing, because we are!

## Where can I connect with carers like me?

Many carers are using Best-You the FREE App and Website to connect with like-minded people on the Best-You 'Coventry Carers' Group.

You can join in from the comfort of your own home - on your phone, tablet or computer.

Carers are using the group to share experiences and support one another remotely.

Go to: [www.best-you.org/covcarers](http://www.best-you.org/covcarers) to join FREE and you will automatically be joined to the private carers group.

You can also find out about local carers groups by contacting the Carers Trust or visiting Coventry Council website (Details are shown on page 32).



Like many other carers, you can also use Best-You to explore other parts of your health and wellbeing that are important to you:

- Read information about healthy eating, exercise and other habits that may be relevant to you like smoking and alcohol.
- Think about small changes you'd like to make and keep track of your personal progress.





# Get carer-friendly support at:



**Making changes can sometimes feel overwhelming, and a little help goes a long way.**

Our friendly coaches can give you this help by identifying small changes that you can make, as well as supporting you to achieve them.

## **We can help you to:**

- Eat healthily
- Be active
- Get smoke free
- Feel the best you can

“When I talk to my coach it’s like I’m talking to a good friend. They are not there to judge you; they are there to help you.”

**FREE 121 Support** from a friendly, non-judgemental coach

**Carer-friendly** to help you make small, manageable changes

**Small commitment** - we know caring takes up much of your time

**Support from the comfort of home** - by phone, text message or the computer.

We are here when you need a help in hand.  
To find out more call us FREE today on:

**0800 122 3780 Or [info@hlscoventry.org](mailto:info@hlscoventry.org)**

## Nadia's Story

Nadia (aged 47) knew that to be able to take care of her dad she needed to take care of herself.

When Nadia's mum sadly passed away a couple of years ago, she moved to a new house on the same street as her dad (84).

Over the years, her dad's mobility has decreased, stopping him from completing daily tasks such as walking to the shop or cash point.

Nadia works as a cleaner and the hours are varied giving her time throughout the day to visit her dad and support him with day-to-day tasks and keep him company.

Nadia was finding that she had very little time for herself but would take half an hour to relax on the couch after her day.

She has struggled with her weight over the years and when her mum passed away, she found that she put on a lot of weight. This started to affect her mobility, her job, everyday tasks and caring for her dad. She said she was *"getting to the point where people were having to help me"*.

Nadia knew that she needed to improve her overall health. If her mobility decreased any further, she would need a care service to support her dad.

**I've noticed a huge change.**

Nadia's GP recommended she join the Healthy Lifestyles Service to get FREE support to lose weight.

Nadia has been working 1-to-1 with a Healthy Lifestyles coach to make small changes to her diet and gradually increase the walking she can fit into her day.

Nadia has since lost over three stone and her mobility and confidence have improved massively!

**Receive free support to:**

- lose weight
- stop smoking
- get more active
- and feel your best

**Contact us on freephone 0800 122 3780, or text COV NY to 60777**





# Paul's Story

It's not easy caring for his wife, but Paul has found ways to look after his own health and wellbeing to feel well and carry on caring.

Paul (aged 65) is retired and has cared for his wife, Mary (aged 63), for over a year now, since she suffered from a serious stroke. Mary is still recovering and although she can do some things herself, caring for Mary takes up most of Paul's time and energy.

Paul occasionally goes out for half an hour, yet he is always rushing back and often feels guilty for leaving Mary in the first place.

Once a week, he goes to the gym, to do some light cardio exercises before Mary wakes up. It gives Paul a way to release his emotions and gives him the strength to carry on. He's always home in time to make Mary her morning cup of tea.

Like many people, if Mary's having a bad day her needs come first and Paul can't always do the things he'd love to do. At times he wants to run away, he feels resentful towards Mary and wonders what life would be like if she hadn't recovered. A thought like this leads to guilt and upset because Paul's never been a selfish man, he's simply trying to do the best he can in a situation he didn't expect to be in.

Like carers do, Paul does what he can to pick himself up and carry on, usually in the evening when Coronation Street is on or Mary's gone to bed. He'll go upstairs to listen to his favourite music – and if only for a short while, he's in the moment, not thinking about it all, as his favourite songs play out through the speakers.

Most days Paul is often busy with appointments, chores and making meals. It's not always easy to eat well but swapping out white bread and rice is something he found easy enough to do. He loves chocolate but knows when it's in the fridge - it's gone! Buying it as a treat is his next step.

**We asked Paul what advice he would give to you:**

*"In my mind, her needs are more important, but you've got your life to lead as well and that doesn't mean you don't care. Find something you enjoy, that works for you, even if it's just for 10-minutes."*



## Good days start with sleeping well

How often do you climb into bed and your brain starts racing and thinking about things you need to do?

### You're not alone.

Many people struggle to get to sleep when they have a lot on their mind – and as a carer, you will know well how important it is to get a good night's sleep - to give you the energy to keep on top of things and reduce your stress and worry.

These simple ideas can help you switch off and improve your sleeping habits.

## 5 ways to a better night's sleep

### 1. Move!

Being active and getting some fresh air can help you sleep better. Taking a short walk during the day or standing in the garden in stillness can help clear your mind before bed.

### 2. Calm your bedroom

Your bedroom is a place to rest and wind down. Making your room dark, quiet and cool – as well as removing technology or things that distract you - will make it easier to fall asleep.





### **3. Relax and unwind**

Taking some “me time” before bed will help you relax and calm your mind. Whether that be reading a book, having a bath or why not try out the Headspace App? It includes a collection of relaxing music and sounds to help you sleep well and cope with whatever tomorrow brings.

### **4. Write down your thoughts**

5 minutes before you go to bed, write down your ‘to do list’ for the next day. The act of writing will help “offload” the things on your mind that you would otherwise think over as you try to drift off.

### **5. Daily routine**

Keeping a daily routine can not only help the person you care for, but help you sleep better. Going to bed and waking up at a similar time each day will help your body clock get used to a regular sleeping pattern.

How much sleep we need is different for all of us and changes as we get older. Tune in to a routine that’s right for you.

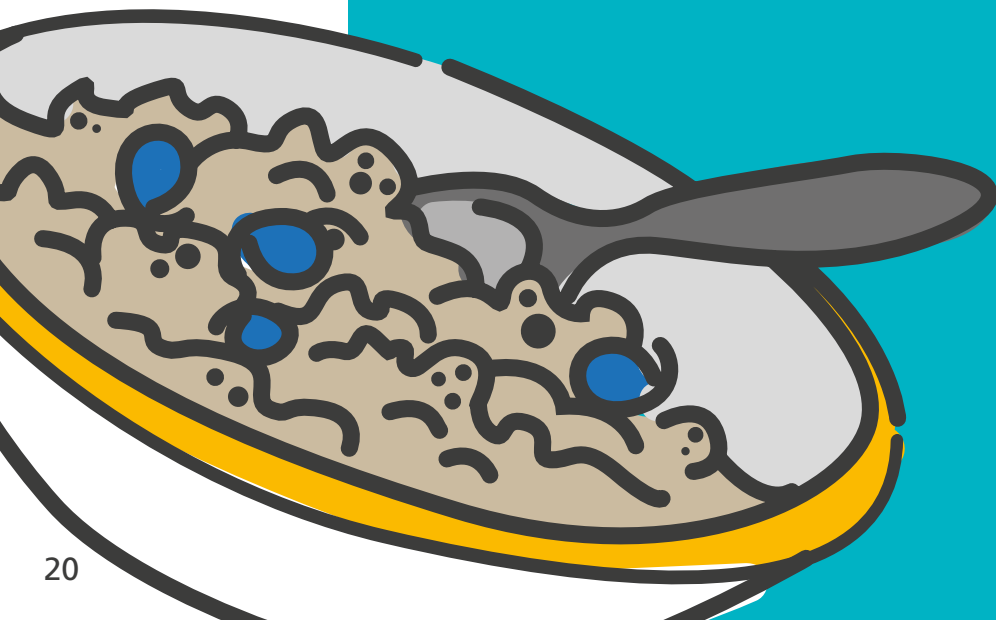


## 3 ways to eat better and feel your best

Sometimes the thought of cooking can be overwhelming or too time consuming, on top of everything else you need to do.

Many carers struggle to eat balanced meals or have simply gone off their food – but eating better can be simple, quick and easy to do.

It gives you enough energy to care for the person you care for and **IMPORTANTLY** yourself.



### Eat regularly...

It's not just what we eat, but actually how we eat can effect our mood and eating more regularly can help. We recommend to:

Eat breakfast - you could miss out on essential nutrients and you may end up snacking more throughout the day.

Eat with our eyes - Rather than grabbing a chocolate bar for a burst of energy each time, try to have some fruits & nuts to hand – you'll be more tempted to grab the healthy snacks when you can see them and need a boost.



## Eat well on a budget

2

Healthy eating doesn't need to be expensive. You can make batch meals and use supermarket own brands as a cheaper alternative to branded products.

Many people make simple swaps on the things they already buy, like choosing brown bread, rice and pasta rather than white. Same price, just different choices.

Our top tip is to make a shopping list based on the meals you are making to reduce waste - and don't go shopping when you're hungry, you'll buy more!

## Eat for hunger, rather than comfort

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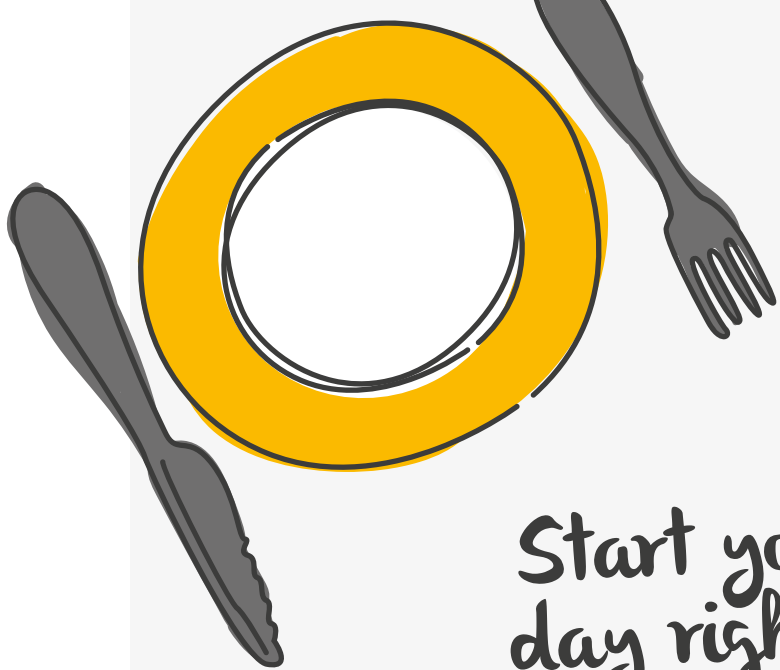
As a carer, it's not uncommon to reach for food as comfort when you feel stressed or emotional. Many people crave certain foods like chocolate or sweets and may feel guilty afterwards.

Pay attention to cues of emotional eating and deal with negative emotions by stepping outside or going for walk which can help change your perspective in those emotional moments.

### Drink!

And don't forget to drink plenty of water – it has many benefits and importantly for carers like you, it delivers oxygen throughout the body in the form of red blood cells that are made up of 90% water and produces the energy we need to stay on top.





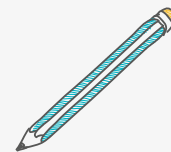
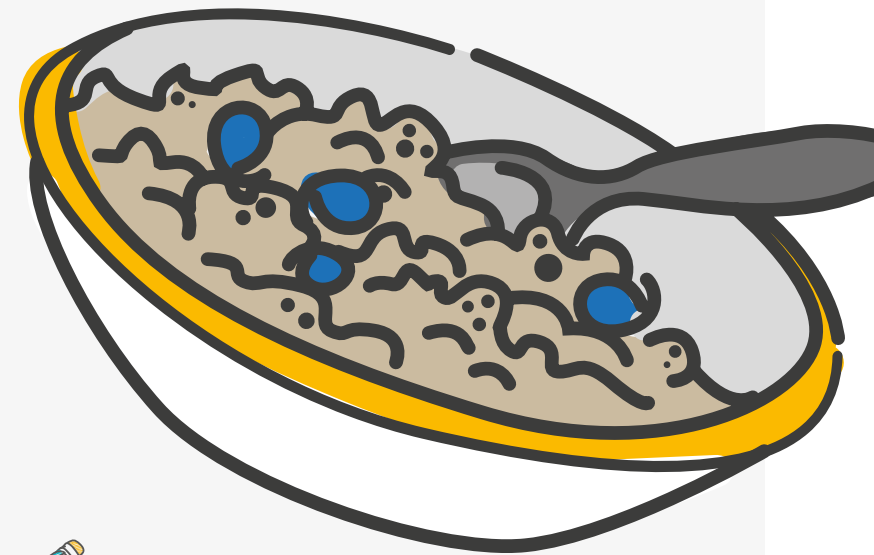
## Start your day right... with 3 easy & simple breakfast swaps

Eating the right breakfast gives you the energy you need for the day ahead.

People who skip breakfast are more likely to reach for high sugar, high fat snacks later in the day. They have more difficulty losing weight than people who do have breakfast.

A healthy breakfast is one of the easiest ways to give your body the fuel it needs to take on the day and be healthy.

Choosing the right breakfast is easy with these simple swaps.



Swap whole milk for semi-skimmed or skimmed milk in your morning tea or coffee.

Swap high sugar alternative milks like Almond and Soya milk to the unsweetened versions.

Swap a sugar-coated breakfast cereal for a wholegrain breakfast cereal such as porridge, weetabix or shredded wheat with no added sugar.

Swap a sprinkle of sugar for a topping of fresh fruit which counts towards one of your 5 A DAY...

- On cereal swap sugar for sliced banana and blueberries with a drizzle of honey.
- On porridge swap treacle for grated apple or pear and a sprinkle of ground cinnamon.

# Taking 'me time'

It's important to take time for yourself so you have the energy to do the things you enjoy and carry on caring.

We know that often finding time to leave the home or the person you're caring for can be a real challenge. 'Me time' doesn't have to be a full day off or an exercise class.

Simply taking ten minutes to do something for you - whenever you can really helps.



**1** Make yourself a cup of tea or coffee and sit down and enjoy without any distractions.

**2** Get outside in the fresh air whether that be sitting in the garden or taking a short walk.

**3** Listen to some of your favourite music.

**4** Take a hot bath or shower to relax and cleanse yourself.

**5** Read a chapter of a book or magazine.

**6** Make yourself a healthy snack, like vegetable sticks or eggs on toast.

**7** Speak to someone about how you're feeling. Have a look on page 8 for information on talking to other carers like you.

**8** Take a moment to breathe. Just 5 minutes a day can make all the difference. Have a go and download the 'Headspace' App to help.

**9** Write down the things on your mind – it can be something that's bothering you or 1 or 2 things you are grateful for today.

**10** Say something kind to yourself - think what you would say to a friend in a similar situation. We often give far better advice to others than we do to ourselves.



## Feel your best with exercise that's right for you

Many carers have reduced the amount of exercise they do over time because of commitments, yet simple daily exercises can make a big difference to your physical and mental health.

Believe it or not, physical activity makes you feel more energised, making daily tasks easier – it releases stress and clears your mind – leaving you feeling happier and more relaxed.



## Find what's right for you:

Take a walk and get some fresh air, an easy way to take a short break from it all and feel the benefits of being outside.

Gardening is a great way to get in some activity and connect with nature, making you feel good.

There are plenty of ways to get active at home for all the family. Yes! Dancing in the kitchen does count! Turn up the music, dig out the skipping rope or find a follow-along exercise video by searching 'Family Carer exercise' on YouTube.

**When you're out and about why not:**

- Take the stairs rather than lifts or escalators
- Get off the bus a stop earlier
- If it's a short journey, walk instead of driving.

Find more exercises on:  
[www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/)



# Important information for you...

Many people who care for someone else are not aware of their entitlements – and some don't see themselves as a carer at all.

It's important that you know what benefits you can receive, from financial support to practical help and time off caring. Knowing that there is help and support available helps to give peace of mind.

## Get trusted advice:

Contact the **Coventry Carers Wellbeing Service** that is run by the Carers Trust at Coventry Central Library, Smithford Way, CV1 1FY.

This service offers FREE and CONFIDENTIAL advice face-face, on the phone or by video call – and in multiple languages such as: Urdu, Hindi, Panjabi, French and Mandarin.

You can drop in to get advice face-face or call **024 7663 2972**

For more information visit: [www.carerstrusthofe.org.uk](http://www.carerstrusthofe.org.uk)

*Little job?*

Need help with a job in and around the home? To find a trusted trader go to:

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

*Register with the CRESS!*

The Carers Response Emergency Support Service (CRESS) can provide you with support in the event of an emergency and will help you build an emergency plan.

[Carerstrustofe.org.uk](http://Carerstrustofe.org.uk)  
Call **024 7663 2972**

## Find a peer support group:

Carers groups in Coventry are a safe and friendly place to share experiences or simply chat with other people like you.

Find a group that's right for you:

### Carers Trust Peer Support Groups:

**WHO:** Carers Trust offer a group for all carers with dedicated groups for BME carers and carers who require support with their mental health.

**WHERE:** Penny Collard Centre, Fleet St, City Centre, Coventry, CV1 3AY

**FOR INFO:**  
call: **02476 632972**

### Alzheimer's Society Carers Peer Support Group :

**WHO:** For who care for someone with dementia.

**WHERE:** Queens Road Baptist Church, Grovesnor Road, CV1 3FE

**FOR INFO:**  
call: **024 7665 2602**

### Learning Disability Carers' Coffee Mornings:

**WHO:** People who look after someone with a learning disability.

**WHERE:** Coventry Central Library, Smithford Way, CV1 1FY

**FOR INFO:**  
Click the link below.

For further details and the latest times and dates for other Coventry carers support groups and events, go to: [www.coventry.gov.uk/carerssupportevents](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/carerssupportevents)



## Find more information for carers:

Search for the 'Carers Support' on the Coventry Council Website for information on:

- Carers Assessments
- Local forums, meetings and events
- Health information
- Being a young carer

Go to: [www.coventry.gov.uk/info/76/carers\\_support](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/info/76/carers_support)



# My Contacts

There are many local services and support available for carers in Coventry.

Writing down contacts of people or organisations that are important for you can help you feel prepared, so you know who or what local service to contact in a hurry.

## If I need support:

Name:

Name:

Contact details:

Contact details:

Go to for:

Go to for:

# Notes



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Thanks for  
reading!

Freephone **0800 122 3780**  
Email **info@hlscoventry.org**  
**www.hlscoventry.org/carers**

  **@HLSCoventry**

**www.best-you.org**  
Online Self-help portal