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Foreword from the CEO

Welcome to this Autumn/Winter edition of our **VOICE** magazine.

As the vibrant colours of Autumn begin to paint the world around us, our hearts yearn for the warmth and joy that the upcoming festive season brings. I am pleased to present the latest edition of our Voice magazine.

In this issue, we have curated a collection of articles that we hope you will find helpful and interesting. From cosy recipes and Winter gardening hacks to health and wellbeing advice.

As the cold winter winds blow, allow our magazine to be your trusted companion, providing comfort, inspiration, and the perfect dose of festive cheer.

Don't miss out on the opportunity to immerse yourself in the captivating world of autumn, Christmas, and winter. Grab a cup of your favourite steaming hot drink, snuggle up and let the pages of our magazine entertain you.



Wishing you a season filled with love, laughter, and cherished moments. Stay well, stay connected, and join us in embracing the magic of Autumn, Christmas, and Winter.

Warm regards,

Karen

Karen Perry
CEO, Age UK Bedfordshire

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Christmas

Christmas – it’s one of the words that can conjure up excitement, joy, love, or dread, worry, and a heightened sense of being alone.

No matter which camp you are in, we hope that this article will give you something of interest to read and a smile or two. Why not also try our special Christmas quiz at the end to see how much you know?

Christmas is celebrated as the birthday of Jesus although there is no evidence he was born on that day. It was declared his birthday in 440 AD. In England Christmas was originally called Yule. The old Saxon word Yule meant mid-winter. However when the Saxons were converted to Christianity the word Yule came to mean Jesus’ birthday. The word Christmas (Christ mass) was not used until the 11th century.

For most of history Christmas was just one of many festivals celebrated throughout the year. Until the 19th century Christmas was not particularly important in England.

Most of the things that make up a ‘traditional’ English Christmas were actually invented or imported into England from other countries in the 19th century. That includes Christmas trees, Christmas cards, Christmas crackers, paper decorations and, of course, Father Christmas or Santa Claus with his white beard and red costume.

During the 17th century and 18th century people continued to celebrate Christmas as they had done for centuries. For centuries it was traditional to burn a Yule log in the fireplace at Christmas. In the 19th century it was also common to light a large Yule candle.

Boxing Day was originally a day when alms-boxes in churches were opened and the money was distributed to the poor. Later ‘boxes’ were given to servants.

Our modern Christmas really began in the 19th century. Long before the 19th century people in England decorated their houses at Christmas with holly, ivy and mistletoe. In the 19th century people began to use colored paper decorations.

For centuries it was common to give Christmas gifts to friends and relatives at Christmas. However hanging out stockings to be filled with presents was first recorded in parts of England in the early 19th century. It became common in the late 19th century.

Christmas cards were invented in the 19th century. The first one was designed in 1843 by John Horsley. Before 1840 it would not have been feasible for ordinary people to send cards because of the cost of postage. However Rowland Hill introduced the penny post in 1840. By the 1860s Christmas cards were very popular in England.

Christmas crackers were invented in 1847 by a confectioner named Tom Smith. While in Paris he saw sugar almonds sold wrapped in tissue paper and he invented the Christmas cracker. He added moltoes to the sweets (later these evolved into jokes). Smith added the ‘bang’ in 1860. Little gifts were also added to Christmas crackers.

Christmas trees were used in central Europe from the Middle Ages. By the 16th century they were decorated. By the 17th century tinsel was used. Other Christmas ornaments included paper flowers, candles, barley sugar, gingerbread and wax shapes. The first Christmas trees in England appeared in England in the early 19th century but they did not become popular till Queen Victoria married a German, Prince Albert. In 1848 they were shown in a picture in the Illustrated London News with a Christmas tree. As a result Christmas trees became very popular. Electric Christmas tree lights were invented in 1882 by Edward H. Johnson.

Father Christmas and Santa Claus were originally two different figures. In England Father Christmas was a man dressed in green (representing the return of Spring) who was supposed to visit families and feast with them at Christmas. (He did not bring gifts). However in the 19th century in England Father Christmas merged with the Dutch Santa Claus. He is supposed to be based on St Nicholas a Christian bishop who lived in Turkey in the 4th century AD. According to tradition St Nicholas gave generous gifts to the poor. St Nicholas had a feast day on 6 December. (In Poland Santa still brings gifts on 6 December). On that day it was traditional to give gifts or to give to charity to remember the saint’s generosity.

The Dutch took the tradition of ‘Sinterklaas’ to America. In time Santa Claus evolved into a figure who brings gifts to sleeping children at Christmas. The modern Santa Claus or Father Christmas was invented in 1862 by a German-American artist called Thomas Nast. In the late 1860s Santa Claus was imported into England.

Mince pies have been eaten at Christmas in England since the 16th century. Originally they were made of minced meat but in the 19th century the meat was replaced with dried fruit and spices.

Originally people ate a cake on Twelfth Night (6 January). In the late 19th century people began to eat the traditional Twelfth Night cake at Christmas. So a Victorian Christmas contained all the elements of a ‘traditional’ Christmas such as Santa Clause, Christmas trees, Christmas crackers, Christmas Cards, Christmas cake and pudding.

Today Christmas is still celebrated on 7 January in Ethiopia. The Russian Orthodox Church also celebrates Christmas on 7 January.

Now try the Quiz

1. Christmas Island, in the Indian Ocean, is a territory of which country?
2. The North Pole, said to be Santa’s home, is located in which ocean?
3. And all the bells on earth shall ring, on Christmas day in the morning... is from which Christmas carol?
4. Which Christmas condiment is made from fruit sometimes referred to as marshworts?
5. Which American-born English poet, having first names Thomas Stearns, wrote the poem The Cultivation Of Christmas Trees?
6. Which British monarch (born 1865, died 1936) introduced the custom of giving thousands of Christmas puddings to staff?
7. In the UK it is traditionally believed that eating a what each day of the twelve days of Christmas brings happiness the following year: Sausage; Mince pie; Carrot; or Turkey drumstick?
8. Who composed the music known as The Nutcracker Suite, for the Christmas themed ballet The Nutcracker, premiered in St Petersburg, 1892?
9. What day of the week was Christmas day in the year 2000 (in the conventional western calendar)?
10. Charles Dickens is said to have considered the names Little Larry and Punny Pete for which character?
11. Under which Puritan leader did the English parliament pass a law banning Christmas in 1647?
12. In which European country is it said that malicious goblins called Kallikantzori (or Kallikantzari - singular Kallikantzoros) play troublesome pranks at Christmas?
13. Which traditional Christmas plant was once so revered by early Britons that it had to be cut with a golden sickle?
14. In Mexico, it is said that wearing what colour/color underwear on New Year’s Eve ensures finding new love the following year: Yellow; Green; Red; or Brown?
15. In which country does Santa have his own personal postcode HOH OHO?
16. In 2004, the post office of which country (international dialling code 49) gave away twenty million free scented stickers, to make Christmas cards smell like fir trees, cinammon, gingerbread or honey wax?
17. Nadolig Llawen’ means Merry Christmas in which western European language?
18. The surname Chandler derives from the making or selling of what?

Answers

1. Australia
2. Arctic Ocean
3. I Saw Three Ships
4. Cranberry Sauce
5. T S Elliot
6. King George V
7. Mince Pie
8. Tchaikovsky
9. Monday
10. Tiny Tim in A Christmas Carol
11. Oliver Cromwell
12. Greece
13. Mistletoe
14. Red
15. Canada
16. Germany
17. Welsh
18. Candles



What you didn't know about

Diana Blackmum

Chief Executive Officer of Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire

Since moving out of London into the Shire Counties, Diana worked for both large and small organisations before starting work in the political office of Bedfordshire County Council working directly for the Leader of the Council and Executive Members.

Diana then progressed to Adult Social Care to work more closely with service users and the public and to pursue her degree in Social Sciences with Social Policy. In her more recent role working for Central Bedfordshire Council, Diana led on Customer Engagement for a procurement project which won the Government Opportunities Best Customer Engagement Initiative of the Year Award in March 2012. Diana was also the recipient of the 2012 Employee of the Year Award given by the Social Care, Health & Housing Directorate of Central Bedfordshire Council in December 2012.



Diana is a keen volunteer and her work includes volunteering at a local hospice and with local youth groups. Diana is passionate about customer engagement, involving customers in the provision and delivery of health and social care; to have their say and drive up quality.

Who has been the biggest influence on your life?

The people that have influenced me the most are the people I have worked for, and with, over the years. There is always something to learn which helps to enhance my skills and I am continually amazed by the lived experiences of all the people I meet along the way.

What are the most important lessons you've learned in life?

Over the years I have learned not to judge, to always compromise and be kind. As you get older it is important to aspire to be a better person and to remember that when life gives you lemons – add gin!

What are your hopes and dreams for future generations?

I hope that future generations will be more tolerant and compassionate; that there will be more equality for all and that they are less reliant on technology. I hope that they will see the benefit of social interaction by actually getting out and about in their community and not just through social media because human interaction is vital to your health.

If you could be anyone for a week (living or dead) who would it be and why?

I would like to be either Queen Victoria or Eva Perón for a week. Both very strong women who lived through times of great social upheaval and who inspired millions with their campaigns. It would be great to see what a week in their lives would involve.

If you could take only one book and one record onto a desert island what would they be?

I would take a book that tells you how to survive on a desert island and how to avoid boredom! The record I would take is 'Million Years Ago' by Adele. I never tire of the lyrics in that song.

What did you think you were going to be when you grew up?

When I was growing up I wanted to be a PE Teacher as I was very sporty and loved all kinds of physical games. However, I also wanted to work in London as I thought that's where all the hip and trendy people were so I ended up working for the Civil Service and my career took a very different path, although I still play quite a bit of sport.

If you could wave a wand and make one significant change on the planet what would it be?

If I could wave a magic wand it would be to put an end to war and hostility on the planet; war is a pointless act of conflict and results in the tragic loss of so many lives.

Do you plan on retiring ever?

I don't ever plan on retiring as I really love what I do; I get to meet so many fascinating people and their resilience and strength

in the face of such adversity never fails to impress me. It makes me realise that the struggles in your own life are minor compared to what some people are going through.

Which radio station do you listen to more than any other?

I always listen to Virgin Radio, especially Chris Evans in the morning. He has such a wide variety of guests on, including authors, politicians and life coaches, many of whom discuss human behaviour with tips on how to navigate life's stresses and strains.

Regrets, do you have a few?

I think everyone has regrets of some kind and I am no different. I regret not asking my parents more questions about their lives when they were growing up, as there are things I would like to know that I never thought to ask them; sadly I missed my chance.

Do you get nervous before making a speech?

I always get very nervous before making a presentation. I always like to think that I am behaving like a swan; calm and composed on the surface but paddling away like mad underneath. It doesn't always work and sometimes I wish I had a time machine so I could go back and do it again to get it right!

What's your current "can't miss" TV programme?

I never miss an episode of Vera, starring Brenda Blethyn. She is a complicated and very solitary character but very passionate about what she does. I like fairly sophisticated detective stories that make you think and keep you guessing until the end.

Which book are you currently reading?

I finally got around to reading Stephen Hawkins, A Brief History of Time. I have been meaning to read it for some time and I am surprised at how well he explains everything – it's an easier read than I thought and very interesting.

Do you have a sporting hero?

I am a big fan of F1 Motor Racing and have great respect for all the drivers but Lewis Hamilton is a big favourite. The split second decisions, attention to detail and the strength and resilience of the drivers whilst travelling at vast speeds never fails to impress me. I tried Go Karting once and was absolutely rubbish at it because it's a lot harder than you think, so I really admire what they do.

Gardening

As we enter the autumnal season I look forward to the change in the colours in my garden. The change in the leaves brings a fierce, fiery perspective to the mellow greens of the last summer foliage. There is still much to enjoy in the autumn and lots of end of season harvesting to be done. I'm sure I will manage to coax a last fruit from my tomato plants in the greenhouse before they are replaced with winter storage space!

Autumn jobs include planting spring bulbs such as daffodils ready for the new season and some spring bedding such as wallflowers. Keep an eye out for the first frosts and protect tender plants, moving them under cover. In mid-autumn perennials can be tidied and cut back and late autumn is when we can take hardwood cuttings. Clear away fallen leaves for composting.

Whilst I was dead-heading the roses the other day my inbox pinged and Mrs K from Shefford had sent me an email. She asks:



'I have noticed a white bloom on some of the leaves on my roses which seems to be spreading. Some of the badly affected leaves are falling off. What is it?'

This sounds like a form of mildew Mrs P. Mildew is most commonly found as Powdery Mildew and is a type of fungus. It can be seen on the surface of the leaf, starting on the top and if left to spread will affect the whole leaf and even other parts of the plant. The mildew can stunt growth and affect flowering, especially on roses. A severe problem can eventually kill the plant.

It is best to use good methods to tidy up the plant and spray with a fungicide, available from garden centres. Removing the affected leaves promptly will stop the mildew from spreading and prune any touching, distorted or dead stems to increase the flow of air through the plant. Water from below and avoid watering the leaves of the plant.

I hope this helps Mrs K and that you can enjoy many blooms on your roses in future years. Next time we can look forward to the winter season in the garden.



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From the Beatles to the Spice Girls

Some Iconic Pop Bands in the UK's Musical History

The 1960s and 1970s were an extraordinary era for music in the United Kingdom, with the emergence of numerous influential and ground breaking pop bands. These groups had a profound impact on popular culture, shaping the music industry and inspiring generations to come. We at Age UK Bedfordshire thought we would delve into the world of pop bands in the UK during the 60s and 70s, exploring their rise to fame, musical innovations, and lasting legacies.



The Beatles: Pioneers of Pop

No discussion about pop bands in the UK during the 60s and 70s is complete without mentioning the Beatles. Hailing from Liverpool, the Fab Four forever changed the landscape of popular music. From their early days performing in the Cavern Club to their ground breaking albums like "Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band," the Beatles became global icons, revolutionizing both song writing and studio production techniques.



The Rolling Stones: Rock 'n' Roll Rebels

While the Beatles embodied the pop sound, the Rolling Stones represented the

rebellious side of the era. Known for their raw and blues-infused rock 'n' roll, the band's energetic performances and enduring hits like "Paint It Black" and "Jumpin' Jack Flash" captured the spirit of the times. Their longevity and influence make them one of the greatest rock bands of all time. Who would have guessed that 60 years later you would see Mick Jagger at a black tie event standing next to King Charles and the President of France, just a few weeks ago.



The Bee Gees: Disco Kings

Moving into the 70s, the Bee Gees achieved incredible success with their distinctive falsetto harmonies and catchy disco tunes. With hits like "Stayin' Alive" and "Night Fever," they became synonymous with the disco movement, dominating the charts and dancefloors worldwide. The Bee Gees' music continues to be celebrated and enjoyed to this day.



ABBA: Global Sensations

Hailing from Sweden but finding immense success in the UK, ABBA became one of the most successful pop bands of all time. Their infectious melodies, captivating stage

presence, and timeless hits like "Dancing Queen" and "Mamma Mia" ensured their enduring popularity. ABBA's music has remained a staple in pop culture, with enduring influence on subsequent generations of artists. Now we have ABBA in another musical experience. Described as "jaw-dropping" by fans, ABBA Voyage combines live music with virtual reality to create a unique, immersive show. Through the powers of modern technology, you'll see Agnetha, Björn, Benny and Anni-Frid looking and sounding just as they did when they first shot to stardom in 1974.



The Spice Girls: Girl Power Revolution

In the mid-1990s, the Spice Girls burst onto the scene, reigniting the spirit of pop music in the UK. With their empowering anthems, vibrant personalities, and catchy tunes, they created a global phenomenon known as "girl power." Hits like "Wannabe" and "Spice Up Your Life" became instant classics, inspiring a new generation of young girls to embrace their individuality and confidence.

The pop bands of the UK during the 60s and 70s left an indelible mark on music history. From the Beatles' revolutionary sound to the Spice Girls' empowering message, these groups shaped the pop landscape and continue to influence artists today. Their innovative music, charismatic performances, and timeless hits have stood the test of time, ensuring their place in cultural memory. The legacy of these pop bands serves as a reminder of the power of music to captivate, inspire, and bring people together. We hope by listening to some of these artists on tape, record or radio brings back many happy memories and encourages you to jig around the kitchen too. And if you can't jig maybe do the Hand Jive!



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If you are online
Great!
 But what if you are not?

Technology and the internet are supposed to make our lives easier, but for many older people it's just making things harder.

Obviously, there are many people over the age of 75 plus, who are familiar with the internet. Perhaps some level of expertise gained from previous employment or helped by their children or grandchildren. These people are probably coping pretty well. In fact I am lucky enough to be one of them.

However, the latest statistics from the Office for National Statistics (2021) stated that nearly 5 million people over the age of 65 did not have internet access. But essential activities from booking medical appointments to applying for financial support and even parking suddenly have to be done online. It's unacceptable that people who can't – for whatever reason – use the internet are being shut out from these services and their needs simply overlooked.

Age UK Bedfordshire has seen a considerable increase in the number of

older people asking us to help them apply for a Blue Badge as they do not have online access. In Bedfordshire we are fortunate that both Central Beds Council and Bedford Borough Council offer help to people needing a Blue Badge, without having to go online. Bedford Borough Council will send you a hard copy form and Central Bedfordshire Council can make an appointment for a person from their Blue Badge team to ring you and fill out the form on your behalf.

But many older people are being excluded because of the increasing use of online only culture. Plans to close railway ticket offices show this is getting worse and it's older and disabled people who are suffering. Obviously many younger people who cannot afford online access are also suffering.

That's why Age UK is launching a new campaign, 'Offline and Overlooked,' to get the Government to step up and guarantee accessible offline routes to every public service older people rely on. Supporting Age UK Bedfordshire allows us to do far more to help our older community.

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Stay Fit and Active 2023

Simple Exercises for Older Adults at Home

Staying fit and active is crucial for people of all ages, but it becomes even more important as we grow older.

Regular exercise not only helps improve physical health but also enhances mental well-being and overall quality of life. If you're an older adult looking to stay fit from the comfort of your home, this article is here to lend a helping hand. We'll explore a variety of simple exercises tailored for older individuals, including those with mobility challenges.

Chair Exercises

For people with mobility limitations or balance issues, chair exercises offer a safe and effective way to stay

active. Here are a few examples:

- Seated March: While sitting in a chair, lift one leg at a time, mimicking a marching motion. Alternate legs for 1-2 minutes.
- Arm Circles: Sit upright with feet flat on the floor. Extend your arms out to the sides and make small circles with your hands, gradually increasing the size. Repeat for 1-2 minutes.
- Leg Extensions: Sit on the edge of a chair, extend one leg out straight, hold for a few seconds, then lower it back down. Repeat with the other leg. Aim for 10-15 repetitions per leg.

Standing Exercises

For older adults with better mobility, a range of standing exercises can be incorporated into their daily routine:

- Wall Push-Ups: Stand about an arm's length away from a wall, place your hands

flat against it at shoulder height, and slowly bend your elbows, bringing your chest towards the wall. Push back to the starting position. Aim for 10-15 repetitions.

- Leg Lifts: Stand behind a sturdy chair, hold onto it for support, and lift one leg straight out to the side, then lower it. Repeat with the



other leg. Aim for 10-15 repetitions per leg.

- Heel-to-Toe Walk: Position your right foot directly in front of your left foot, touching heel to toe, and take a step forward. Repeat with the left foot. Continue for a few minutes, maintaining a slow and steady pace.

Flexibility and Balance Exercises

Enhancing flexibility and balance is particularly important for older adults to maintain independence and prevent falls. Here are a few exercises to incorporate:

- Ankle Circles: Sit on a chair and lift one foot off the floor. Slowly rotate your ankle in a circular motion, clockwise and then counter clockwise. Repeat with the other foot.
- Toe Taps: Stand behind a chair, slightly lift one foot off the ground, and tap your toe forward, to the side, and backward. Repeat with the other foot. Aim for 10-15 taps per foot.
- Yoga or Tai Chi: Explore gentle yoga or tai chi routines designed for older adults. These practices improve flexibility, balance, and promote relaxation.

Remember, it's important to consult your GP or a qualified fitness professional before starting any exercise program, especially if you have any underlying health conditions or concerns.

Staying fit and active doesn't have to be complicated or require a gym membership. By incorporating these simple exercises into your daily routine, you can maintain and improve your physical well-being while enjoying the comfort of your own home. Remember, start slowly, listen to your body, and have fun while staying fit! Stay active, stay healthy, and keep smiling!

GET SET FOR WINTER

There really is no need to be cold in your home this Winter – or any Winter. Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council have supported Age UK Bedfordshire to help older people Get Set for Winter

Email enquiries@ageukbedfordshire.org.uk
Or call 01234 360510

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Provide energy saving advice both verbally and in the form of a booklet, left with you, to read at your leisure. An onsite benefit assessment can be carried out and where necessary we will carry out a full benefits check to ensure you are receiving everything you are entitled to.

We will also help you with benefit checks, complete any necessary forms and send them to the Department of Works and Pensions on your behalf.

Dates for Your Diary

British Summer Time Ends
29 October (clocks go back one hour)

Halloween
31 October

All Saints Day
1 November

Bonfire Night - keep pets indoors!
5 November

Armistice Day
11 November

Remembrance Sunday
12 November

Christmas Eve
24 December

Christmas Day
25 December

Boxing Day
26 December

New Year's Eve
31 December

New Year's Day
1 January 2022

Shrove Tuesday
13th February

Valentine's Day
14th February

St David's Day
1st March

Mothering Sunday
10th March

St Patrick's Day
17th March

Maundy Thursday
28th March

Good Friday
29th March

Easter Sunday
31st March

British Summer Time commences - Clocks go forward one hour
31st March (1am)

Easter Monday
1st April

April Fools Day
1st April

St George's Day
23rd April





Stay Mentally Organised
Keeping the mind organised can help reduce cognitive load and improve mental fitness. Use calendars, to-do lists, or digital reminders to stay organised and on top of daily tasks. Engaging in mentally stimulating activities that require planning, problem-solving, and critical thinking can also help keep the mind active.

Stimulate the Mind
Engaging in mentally stimulating activities can help keep the brain active and sharp. Consider activities such as reading, puzzles, crosswords, Sudoku, or learning a new skill or language. Social interaction is also crucial, so joining clubs, volunteering, or participating in group activities can provide mental stimulation while fostering social connections. We at Age UK Bedfordshire operate a telephone befriending service. So if you live alone and don't have the chance to chat to people that often, give us a call and ask for Sian.

Simple Ways to Stay Mentally Fit and Reduce the Risk of Dementia for Older People in the UK

As we age, it becomes increasingly important to prioritise our mental well-being.

One of the most significant concerns for older people is the risk of developing dementia. However, by adopting certain lifestyle changes and engaging in activities that stimulate the mind, it is possible to promote mental fitness and potentially reduce the risk of dementia. Let us explore some simple yet effective strategies that you might be able to incorporate into their daily life.

Manage Stress
Chronic stress can have detrimental effects on cognitive function. Find effective stress management techniques that work for you, such as meditation, deep breathing exercises, yoga, or engaging in hobbies that provide relaxation and joy. Consider seeking support from friends, family, or professional counsellors to help manage stress effectively.

Stay Physically Active
Regular physical exercise has numerous benefits for both the body and the mind. Engaging in activities such as walking, swimming, or even gardening can improve blood flow to the brain, reducing the risk of cognitive decline. Aim for at least 20 minutes a day aerobic exercise. Aerobic exercise is any exercise that gets your heart beating faster. And you don't have to spend 20 minutes in one go. Try 5 minutes 4 times a day. Walking is considered one of the best exercises as long as your heart is beating a little faster than usual. But if that is out of the question, put on the radio, choose a station that plays your favourite music and wave your arms around in time to the beat. You will feel so much better for doing it. Obviously you should always discuss any form of exercise you plan to do, with your GP surgery.

Maintain a Healthy Diet
A balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats is essential for brain health. Include foods with antioxidants, such as berries and leafy greens,

that can help combat oxidative stress and inflammation in the brain. Limit the consumption of processed foods, sugary snacks, and excessive salt, as they can have negative effects on cognitive function. If you are not sure what processed food is, check the ingredients label. If it is made up of anything you would not normally store in your cupboard, it's probably processed. So are sausages, bacon and most sugar. Although the occasional sausage or piece of bacon is probably alright. You know what they say "A little bit of what you fancy does you good". But like your Mum and Dad kept nagging on about "Eat your greens"

Get Sufficient Sleep
A good night's sleep is vital for overall brain health. Aim for 7-8 hours of quality sleep each night to allow the brain to rest and recharge. Establish a relaxing bedtime routine, create a comfortable sleep environment, and limit the consumption of caffeine before bed. Try to sleep in a room without light as this will promote better sleep. If you have problems sleeping, please discuss it with your GP.

Stay Socially Active
Maintaining social connections is essential for mental well-being. Make an effort to connect with friends, family, and the community. Joining clubs or organizations, attending social events, or participating in group activities can provide opportunities for social interaction, which can help prevent feelings of loneliness and isolation.



While there is no guaranteed way to prevent dementia, adopting these simple lifestyle changes can help older people maintain their mental fitness and potentially reduce the risk of cognitive decline. By staying physically active, maintaining a healthy diet, stimulating the mind, getting enough sleep, managing stress, staying socially active, and staying mentally organised, you will be taking proactive steps towards a healthier brain and overall quality of life.



Smokey Sausage Casserole
serves 4

Ingredients

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 1 large celery stick, finely chopped
- 2 peppers (any colour), cut into chunks
- pack 6 pork sausage (about 400g/14oz)
- 1 tsp sweet smoked paprika
- ½ tsp ground cumin
- ½ tsp chilli flakes
- 2 x 400g cans chopped tomatoes
- 400g can cannellini beans, drained
- 250g bag spinach (or use the same quantity as frozen)
- 2 tbsp fresh breadcrumbs (or frozen with herbs)

Method

1. Put the oil in a large, heatproof casserole dish over a medium heat and add the onion, cooking for 5 mins until starting to soften. Tip in the garlic, celery and peppers, and give everything a good stir. Cook for 5 mins more.
2. Turn the heat to high and add the sausages. Cook for a few mins until browned all over, then reduce the heat to medium, sprinkle in the spices and season well. Pour over the tomatoes and bring to a simmer. Cover and continue simmering gently for 40 mins, stirring every now and then.
3. Heat the grill to high and uncover the casserole. Add the beans and spinach and stir to warm through. Scatter over the breadcrumbs and grill for 2-3 mins until golden and crisp.



Salted Caramel and Apple Pudding

Ingredients

- 1 tbsp butter, softened
- 3 large eggs, and 2 egg yolks
- 50g dark brown soft sugar
- 200ml whole milk
- 300ml double cream
- 375g can caramel, beaten until smooth
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 75g plain flour
- 3 apples (Pink Lady)
- ice cream, to serve (optional)

Method

1. Heat the oven to 180C/160C fan/gas 4. Butter a 30 x 20 x 4cm baking dish. Put the eggs, extra yolks, sugar, milk, cream, 200g of the caramel, the vanilla and a large pinch of sea salt in a large bowl, then whisk until combined. Stir in the flour until the batter is smooth.
2. Halve, core and cut the apples into 1cm slices – there's no need to peel them. Arrange in the baking dish and pour over the batter. Bake for 30-35 mins until the batter is set in the centre, golden and slightly risen.
3. Drizzle over the remaining caramel, then sprinkle with a little extra sea salt. Leave to rest for 5-10 mins (it will deflate a little). Serve warm with vanilla or peanut butter ice cream, if you like.



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Maintaining a home can start to feel like a full-time job and can sometimes mean sacrificing your quality time. For many of our homeowners the appeal of leaving all of that behind is the reason they decided to move. Homeowner Margaret said: "We have much more time available to do the things that we want to do because we no longer have to worry about the upkeep of a big house and garden."

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Charlie Chuckles

Q: What happens if you eat yeast and shoe polish?

A: Every morning you'll rise and shine!

Q: What do you get when you cross fish and an elephant?

A: Swimming trunks.

EVER WONDER ...

Why the sun lightens our hair, but darkens our skin?

Why don't you ever see the headline 'Psychic Wins Lottery'?

Why is 'abbreviated' such a long word?

Why is it that doctors call what they do 'practice'?

Why is lemon juice made with artificial flavour, and dish washing liquid made with real lemons?

Why is the man who invests all your money called a broker?

Why is the time of day with the slowest traffic called rush hour?

Why isn't there mouse-flavoured cat food?

Why didn't Noah swat those two mosquitoes?

You know that indestructible black box that is used on airplanes? Why don't they make the whole plane out of that stuff?!

Why don't sheep shrink when it rains?

Why are they called apartments when they are all stuck together?

Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson were going camping. They pitched their tent under the stars and went to sleep.

Sometime in the middle of the night Holmes woke Watson up and said: "Watson, look up at the stars, and tell me what you see."

Watson replied: "I see millions and millions of stars."

Holmes said: "and what do you deduce from that?"

Watson replied: "Well, if there are millions of stars, and if even a few of those have planets, it's quite likely there are some planets like earth out there. And if there are a few planets like earth out there, there might also be life."

And Holmes said: "Watson, you idiot, it means that somebody stole our tent."

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