



Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health



Duncan Selbie
Chief Executive

Friday message

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Dear everyone

On Tuesday I hosted the launch of the fourth edition of [Health Matters](#), our communications resource for policy makers and practitioners to support commissioning and the delivery of local services. This edition focuses on midlife approaches to reduce the risk of developing dementia through healthy living, and the importance of moving away from thinking of dementia as simply an inevitable part of ageing. Dementia has been described as a ticking timebomb that could affect more than a million people in the UK by 2025. As well as the health and social costs of dementia there is growing concern about the economic burden, particularly at a time of tightening budgets, with dementia costing the UK an estimated £26 billion each year. We now have evidence that what is good for the heart is also good for the brain; modifying cardiovascular risk factors has contributed to a large decline in deaths from heart disease and stroke over the past 50 years, and the same could be the case for dementia. Please do share the infographics, slide sets, case studies and blogs with colleagues.

New [figures](#) from the National Diet and Nutrition Survey show that adult salt consumption has declined over the past ten years. However, we are still eating a third more salt than we should be. Too much salt in the diet can raise blood pressure, which increases the risk of heart disease and stroke. Reducing average adult salt intakes from the current level of 8g to the recommended maximum of 6g per day could prevent more than 8,000 premature deaths each year and save the NHS over £570 million annually. The survey allows us to monitor progress towards this and other dietary aims. A lot of work has already been done by some parts of the food industry to reduce the salt in manufactured products, but further action is still needed – particularly by the eating out sector – to help the nation eat less salt.

Millions are at risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, which is largely preventable through lifestyle changes. This week we announced the first phase of [Healthier You: NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme](#), working with NHS England and Diabetes UK. The Healthier You brand is aligned with our new campaign for adults, [One You](#). This is the world's first nationwide Type 2 diabetes prevention programme, which will start this year with a first wave of [27 areas](#) covering 26 million people, half of the population, with up to 20,000 places available. By 2020 an expected 100,000 referrals will be available nationwide each year. Those at high risk will be referred largely through primary care and via the NHS Health Check. They will be offered personalised support to achieve a healthy weight, including education on healthy eating and bespoke physical exercise programmes to help lower their risk. Four providers have been chosen to work with local health services to deliver the programme in their area. This is about enabling people to take control of their health and ultimately prevent or delay a potentially life-threatening condition.

On Wednesday we held a summit on Public Mental Health jointly with the Local Government Association. More than 250 partners from all over the country came to share the work they are doing nationally and locally to improve the public's mental health, and to shape what needs to happen next. Improving mental health, preventing mental health problems, preventing suicide and improving lives is something PHE is deeply committed to. At this time of pressure on communities, on budgets and on people's everyday lives, we must address mental health and physical health as equal priorities. Over the next year we will be taking forward a range of work with our partners, including steps recommended by the [Mental Health Taskforce](#), and I will continue to share the progress we are making together.

And finally, today is World TB Day. In England, the number of cases of tuberculosis is unacceptably high, but we are making progress in tackling one of the world's top infectious killers. Find out more [here](#).

With best wishes