**Diabetes – easy lifestyle changes for healthier living**

A diagnosis of diabetes or pre-diabetes almost always comes hand in hand with recommendations from your doctor on lifestyle changes you need to make to improve your health. Often, you’re advised to lose weight, start exercising more or even change your diet.

Making these changes can feel very daunting, especially if you’re used to a fairly sedentary lifestyle, and eating whatever you like. However, there are actually many simple ways you can introduce small changes to your normal routine that will not only make a significant difference to your overall well-being but can also help you manage your newly-diagnosed condition.

Here are ten practical, easy and effective ways to get yourself on track to a healthier lifestyle:

- Make simple swaps to your diet so you don’t feel like you’re missing out on foods you love! At breakfast, opt for wholegrain toast instead of using white bread, or choose porridge or oats instead of sugar-laden breakfast cereals.

- For healthier snacks, popcorn is a great alternative to crisps, and if you really can’t face giving up chocolate, choose the dark variety instead of milk. Lunches on the go can still be filling if you choose a baked potato or soup rather than a calorie-laden sandwich.

- Cook for yourself rather than buying ready meals. Choosing your own ingredients means you can stay more in control of what you’re eating. You can still choose food you enjoy but it’s easier to make healthy swaps if you’re preparing your own food. Put lean meats or fish, and plenty of vegetables and wholegrains on the menu from now on – easily done if you swap white rice for brown and opt for wholegrain pasta.

- Incorporating healthy meals into family life – so that everyone is eating the same thing – means you won’t feel you’re “missing out”. Keeping to your goals is a lot easier if you have everyone’s support and involvement and it will help reduce the temptation to eat unhealthily.

- You may not think of yourself as a “keep fit” addict, but it’s easy to introduce additional activity into your day with a few little changes. Try parking further away from your workplace and walk the rest of the way in, or use the stairs rather than always taking the lift. However hectic your day, you can probably still find time to fit in a short walk during your lunch break, or even an exercise class if there’s a gym nearby. The important thing is that you do something you enjoy so that you’ll stick to it.

- Keeping an “activity diary” is a great way to track your progress. Then you can gradually step up your activity – for example, by introducing slightly longer walks or fitting in an extra swim. Remember to include things like gardening or carrying heavy shopping bags in your diary – they all count as activity.

- Write down what you want to achieve – and why it’s important – to help keep you focused.

- Keep your goals realistic – you don’t need to implement all these changes at once and it’s important that you are doing activities you enjoy and eating foods you like. Start small, and gradually build up towards bigger changes.

- Consider joining a local weight-loss group to help support you in your goals and guide your diet.

- Talk to family and friends and ask them to get involved and support what you’re doing. You’ll be more likely to continue if you have people cheering you on.

It’s far easier to embark on a healthier lifestyle than you might imagine and there are myriad benefits to be gained from eating well and taking a bit more exercise.