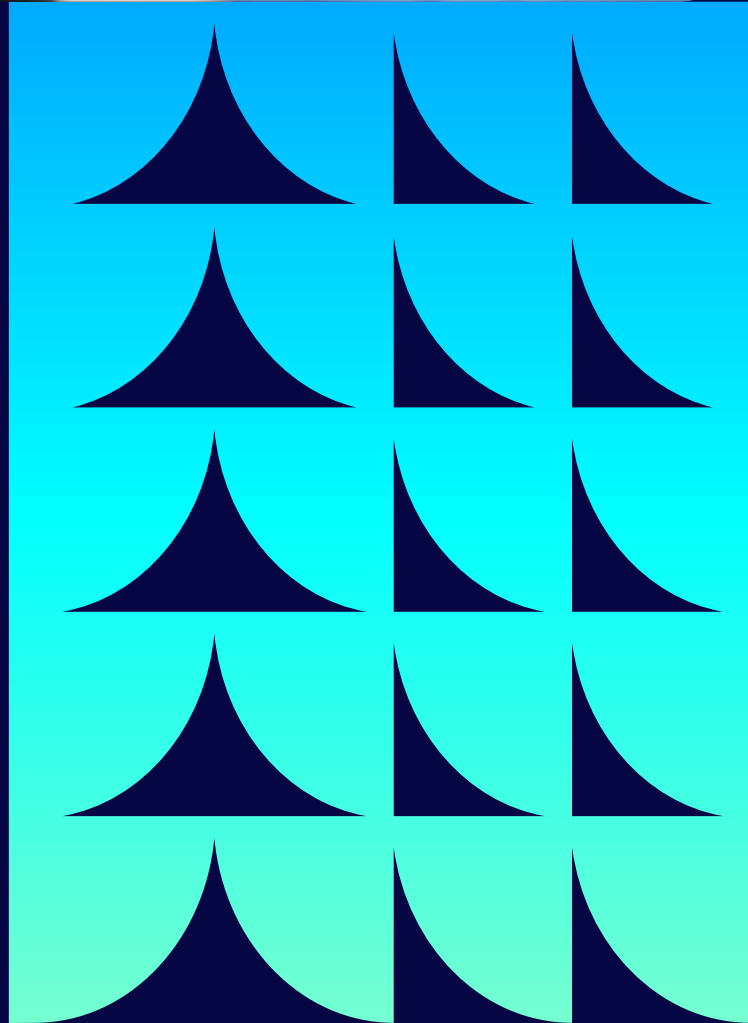




Take Five to Age Well

A guide to groups' participation

 The Open University



A guide to groups' participation in Take Five to Age Well

Introduction

Take Five to Age Well is a health pledge campaign that invites members of the public to join a UK-wide community making small daily changes for better ageing. Participants are invited to choose and keep up one or more small but impactful changes for healthier ageing for the duration of May 2025, with the aim of making these changes lasting habits.

Take Five to Age Well is an initiative of The Open University which is supported by partners across the UK including Age UK and Age Scotland. Pledges can be made through the Take Five to Age Well website, with participants invited to opt-in to regular online content to help them achieve their personal healthy ageing pledge.

When Take Five to Age Well first ran in 2023, it was recognised that some potential participants might lack the capability or inclination to engage with the campaign online. It was also acknowledged that achieving a health pledge alone can be hard, and that for some individuals the support of a community group could be pivotal for their success. Age Scotland therefore piloted in Scotland a way for community groups and services that involve older people to take part without the need for online access. This guide shares learning from the pilot, which it is hoped that communities across the UK will find of value.



Learning point 1. Extend the invite early

Age Scotland has extensive experience of engaging with and supporting community groups and services that involve older people. We've found that it's not uncommon for older people's groups to plan a calendar of activities as much as a year in advance. Some groups don't meet as frequently as every week, and they may take breaks e.g., for school holidays when some members may help care for grandchildren.

Whether or not to participate in Take Five to Age Well might require a committee meeting, potentially adding weeks or months to a group's decision-making process. The earlier older people's groups are invited to participate the more likely it is that they will.

Multiple modes of communication can work well for engaging groups, for example a written invitation with verbal follow-up and periodic reminders.

Learning point 2: Enable group conversations leading up to Take Five to Age Well.

Peer-group conversations about healthy ageing topics can be powerful. Through these individuals learn in a memorable way, often from each other, and benefit from mutual encouragement and support. One way of doing this could be by forming a 'Take Five to Age Well' club, comprising all or part of an existing group depending on the level of interest, to give their collective aspiration for better ageing an identity.

It is important to ensure that conversations aren't rushed. Exploration of each Take Five to Age Well topics, nutrition, hydration, and cognitive, social and physical stimulation, might reasonably take 60-90 minutes. It can also be helpful to have a subsequent session for group members to think about what, if anything, they will pledge and how they might achieve it.

Learning point 3: Plan for interactivity and a range of materials

In introducing Take Five to Age Well topics interactivity is important. Presentations to share information can have a place but should be short and slides primarily picture based. Quizzes, games and discussion prompts can be helpful. Where appropriate you can engage the senses, e.g., with invitations to scent and guess mystery herbs and spices when discussing nutrition, then sharing any memories these smells invoke.

For Take Five to Age Well 2023 we offered groups the following printed materials:

- Health diaries: A suite of booklets covering each of the Take Five to Age Well topics which readers could use to better understand their current habits and plan changes for better ageing. These will be available for Take Five 2025.
- Tracker charts: A wall-chart for recording progress for your pledge. This will also be available for Take Five 2025.

These resources were generally well received, however we learned that additional simpler materials would be helpful in order to include more people. These will be developed for Take Five to Age Well 2025 and electronic versions made available to partners for them to print.

Learning point 4: Maximise peer support during the pledge

We would encourage groups to create space for sharing pledging experiences throughout May, and possibly for longer if more time is necessary. A buddy system could be established in which group members, perhaps with similar pledges, support each other.

Some participants in Take Five to Age Well clubs may have the capability and desire to engage with it online. They should be encouraged to do so, and to share and discuss what they learn from online content they receive with other members of their club.

Groups could keep a journal of their collective pledge experiences. This could be in words, photos, videos or a combination of these. One participant group, Super Snowdrops, used Twitter/X very effectively to share the story of their participation as they went. Members of that group found it motivational as they could be role models to others. We would encourage groups that do use social media to share their Take Five journey to tag @OpenUniversity.

While individuals may wish to pursue their own pledge, the group might choose to make a collective change. Examples would be to add healthy options to snacks at every meeting, or to start their meetings with a short physical activity opportunity. For 2023 we provide a menu of suggestions for group pledges, which are shared as an [appendix](#). If one member has a smart phone, that enables use of free online resources such as <https://worldwalking.org> through which you can set the equivalent of walking an iconic route together and have fun tracking progress.

For 2023 we allowed groups making a collective pledge three months to complete them in recognition that their meeting time take place weekly or less frequently.

Learning point 5: After the challenge

There's no reason why a Take Five to Age Well club should end once the challenge is concluded if participants wish to continue exploring a collective interest in healthy ageing. They might for interest invite local speakers and charities to run sessions for them diving deeper into healthy ageing topics. Whether or not the club carries on beyond May, it might be helpful to schedule a 3- or 4-month anniversary session in later summer or early Autumn in which participants can share whether and how they have kept up their habits, celebrate any successes and identify any ongoing needs or barriers.

Appendix: Take Five to Age Well Pledge options for groups

Eat

1. **Meals and snacks:** Have attractive and nutritious options available where meals or snacks are included in your get-togethers.
2. **Sharing:** Create regular opportunities for group members to share tips and recipes for healthy, tasty food.
3. **Preparing:** Introduce regular opportunities for group members to cook and enjoy healthy food together.

Drink

1. **Fluid:** Have water, herbal teas and (or) diluting juice available at every get-together
2. **Caffeine:** Offer decaf versions of tea and coffee
3. **Squeeze the juice:** Offer fruit juices and fizzy drinks only on special occasions.

Move

1. **Walk:** Arrange optional short walks before or after your get-togethers.
2. **Power:** Include regular movement breaks in your get-togethers, e.g., if you have speakers, give a standing ovation.
3. **Strength:** Introduce activities to build strength and balance in the group. Use a suitable online video or one of Age Scotland's free fun active games (visit <https://age.scot/resourcesforwellbeing>).

Connect

1. **Phone buddies:** Encourage and enable members to call each other for chats between get-togethers.
2. **Your neighbourhood:** Make a new connection with a group in your neighbourhood e.g., a school, and plan visits to or from them.
3. **Share hobbies and interests:** Establish regular opportunities for your group members to share their interests and hobbies with each other.

Think

1. **Learn:** Introduce a learning opportunity each group meeting e.g., arts and crafts, topic speakers, music making or appreciation.
2. **Be mindful:** Include a 1 minute 'mindful pause' in every gathering: sit tall, be quiet, slow the breath, and take notice of your surroundings.
3. **Play:** Introduce puzzles and games that challenge brains into every get-together.

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