General Health

Physiotherapists as healthcare professionals are keen to promote lifestyle choices that will not only benefit your specific conditions but also your general health. These include:

**Physical activity**
Being active and taking regular exercise need not require specialist equipment or gym memberships. Even small changes to your lifestyle like walking to your local shops or using the stairs instead of the lift can have a big impact on your muscle strength, flexibility, balance, weight, and stress levels. It helps to pick an activity that you enjoy and to encourage friends and family to join you. Being and keeping active decreases your chances of osteoarthritis and osteoporosis. It can help manage many long term health conditions.

**Diet**
Diet is very important even if you are at a healthy weight. Eating a balanced diet, including at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day, and drinking plenty of water provides your body with the building blocks to help boost your immune system and promote quicker healing. It is important not to starve yourself as our diet is our body’s energy source that allows us to remain active. Keeping a healthy weight will help to reduce strain on joints, muscles and ligaments, preventing aches and pains.

**Smoking**
Smoking is linked to many serious health problems. Giving up is an important step in improving your overall fitness and well-being. Smoking can make you out of breath, which makes it more and more difficult to keep up your daily activities. It can also cause circulatory problems and can slow down the healing process when recovering from an injury.

Barking and Dagenham have a stop smoking service to support you. For further information go to:

http://www.quitlocalbarkinganddagenham.nhs.uk/about-the-service.php

or phone 020 8532 6284

**Alcohol**
Drinking too much alcohol may have a large part to play in many injuries that cause long term pain and discomfort. These include sprains, broken bones and whiplash injuries. Reducing alcohol intake increases your
energy levels, and can help to reduce weight to enable you to become more active. If you drink alcohol, moderation is the key. If you need advice about your alcohol intake please discuss with your GP.

For further information see the NHS website:


Stress
Being stressed can affect your posture and muscle tone. If you have neck pain, it may be worth considering whether this starts when you are angry, tired or stressed. Reducing your stress levels can help these problems, and alter your body posture. Try to be aware of how your emotional state affects your body.

Where can I get more information?

Change for life: http://www.nhs.uk/Change4Life/Pages/change-for-life.aspx
NHS Choices: http://www.nhs.uk/Pages/HomePage.aspx