

LAUGHTER IS THE BEST MEDICINE

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Given that it is April fool's day tomorrow, I began to think about the impact of laughter on health. The staff in our Homes make it their mission to bring joy to our residents every day – do you laugh enough?

When we laugh, we stimulate something known as the vagus nerve. The **vagus nerve** is the **longest cranial nerve**. It contains motor and sensory fibers and, because it passes through the neck and thorax to the abdomen, has the widest distribution in the body. [\(1\)](#)

When we stimulate the vagus nerve through laughter we also switch on the **parasympathetic** part of the **nervous system**. Known as the 'rest and digest' part as opposed to the 'fight or flight' sympathetic part of the nervous system, which is switched on in times of stress.

Research is beginning to show that laughter may also have major positive physiological effects for those who engage in it on a regular basis. Currently, research is indicating that the physical act of laughing, even without humour, is linked to chemical changes in the body that potentially reduce stress and increase pain tolerance. [\(2\)](#)

Laughter strengthens your immune system, boosts mood, diminishes pain, and protects you

from the damaging effects of stress. Nothing works faster or more dependably to bring your mind and body back into balance than a good laugh. Humour lightens your burdens, inspires hope, connects you to others and keeps you grounded, focused and alert. It also helps you release anger and forgive sooner. (3)

The message here is to laugh more. Given the seriousness of the last year we could all do with a giggle! Relax with people and have a laugh; we certainly do within our **Nellsar Care Homes**.



One of our gentlemen at Princess Christian Care Home in Surrey