

NEW

Clean Living

GUIDE

GET THE GLOW

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STEPS TOWARDS A SIMPLER, MORE NATURAL WAY OF LIFE

10 Ways to cleanse your mind & ditch the tech

25 CLEAN EATING TIPS FOR

- More energy
- Weight loss
- Better mood

Digital Edition



FIRST EDITION



CLEAN SLEEP

10 tips for a restful night



SPRUCE UP YOUR HOME

Chemical-free cleaning



THE WONDERS OF WATER



Welcome to **Clean Living** **GUIDE**

The concept of clean living is one that increasing numbers of people are striving to incorporate into their daily lives, but what does it really mean to live cleanly? Eating a balanced diet filled with fruit and vegetables and ensuring that you get plenty of exercise are key pillars of this lifestyle, but, as many studies have shown, our mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing are just as crucial as our physical health.

In this holistic guide to clean living you will explore the many benefits of consuming foods brimming with the vitamins and nutrients that our bodies need to remain healthy and perform at their optimum. You will also learn how to improve the quality of your sleep, find out how to enhance and maintain hydration levels, discover the best ways to achieve natural beauty, and uncover the most effective methods for zoning out of a noisy world and cleansing your mind. It will then be time to turn your attention towards your home life with our handy DIY remedy tips and steps on creating a cleaner, greener living space.

All of this and more awaits you. It's time to turn the page and begin your journey towards a happier, healthier way of life.

Disclaimer

This publication is for information only and is not intended to substitute professional medical advice and should not be relied on as health or personal advice. Never disregard professional advice or delay seeking it. Always consult your pharmacist or GP for guidance and before using any natural, holistic, over-the-counter or prescription remedies, and read any instructions carefully.

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Contents

22

Clean living

- 8 *What is clean living?*
Discover how the movement can transform your health, happiness and impact on the planet
- 12 *15 steps to a non-toxic life*
A holistic approach to a simpler, cleaner lifestyle

Clean body

- 22 *Clean eating*
Learn to eat lean, green and as natural as possible
- 30 *Clean eating recipes*
Inspiration for healthy food that tastes good
- 36 *Pick the right exercise*
Find ways to work out that you can enjoy as part of a clean lifestyle
- 42 *Clean sleeping*
How to improve your sleep hygiene
- 48 *Natural beauty rules, ok?*
Feel gorgeous inside and out thanks to Mother Nature
- 54 *Clean beauty*
DIY face, hair and body treatments you can whip up in your kitchen
- 58 *Great hair the natural way*
Simple solutions for healthier locks
- 62 *Skin saviours*
Natural remedies to soothe your skin
- 70 *The wonders of water*
Why this liquid is so vital for a cleaner lifestyle





Clean mind

- 76** *Cleanse your mind*
Is your brain in need of a declutter?
- 80** *The power of positivity*
Change your life by changing your perspective
- 82** *Ditch the tech*
How turning off TVs, phones and PCs could help create a happier home environment
- 84** *10 tech-free activities*
Improve your wellbeing by switching off
- 86** *Declutter your friendships*
Organise your relationships in the same way you organise your home

Clean environment

- 90** *Keep it clean naturally*
Sanitising your house with no harsh chemicals
- 94** *DIY remedies to spruce up your home*
Learn how to make your own cleaning products and air fresheners
- 96** *Declutter your home*
How a clear out can help tidy more than your house
- 100** *7 ways to a greener home*
Making your spaces Earth-friendly to help the planet
- 104** *Create an eco-friendly wardrobe*
Change your approach to clothes and shopping
- 108** *Breathe easy*
Discover how to inhale cleaner air and improve your health
- 110** *What's all this plastic doing to our health?*
Should we be purging our cupboards of tupperware?





Clean Living

Get back to basics and start living a simpler, more natural way of life. From what you eat to how you sleep to the products you use on your body and in your house, clean living will have a positive impact, not only on how you look and feel, but on the planet too.

What is Clean Living?

Clean living sounds simple enough. But what does it actually mean? Read on to discover how the movement can transform your health, happiness and impact on the planet

WORDS BY **Rebecca Bradbury**

Behind every clean-living lifestyle is the motivation to make healthier, simpler and more natural choices. But what this looks like in reality can be a touch difficult to pin down.

From what to eat to where to shop, people's interests, preferences and priorities vary wildly. As a result, clean living begins to mean different things to different people, and it's this multifaceted nature that often makes the movement overwhelming for the uninitiated. To help demystify clean living, here's a useful rundown of what falls under

its remit, along with the benefits of incorporating certain elements into your lifestyle. It's the perfect pit stop before diving deeper into each topic over the following pages of this bookazine.

FOOD & DRINK

Chances are you will have already heard of clean eating. The rationale behind the movement is to consume foods as close to their natural form as possible. After surfacing in the mid-2000s and fuelled by the hashtag #eatclean on Instagram, it soon spread in popularity across the globe, appealing to those looking to not

just lose weight, but improve their overall health and wellbeing.

No longer a niche concept, clean eating avoids processed foods in favour of vitamin- and mineral-rich fare. Fruit and vegetables count, as do wholegrains, nuts, seeds and oils. Drinking lots of water is encouraged, while organic meat and dairy products from local sources are preferred.

Eating fresh, natural produce is associated with cooking from scratch and imparts a heightened awareness of where the food on your plate comes from. Yet as there are no hard and fast

Get back to basics with clean living, a holistic lifestyle approach associated with less stress, more mental clarity and a multitude of health benefits

rules, one clean eating diet will look different from another. For example, some clean eaters avoid animal products, choosing to adopt a vegan or plant-based approach instead.

Most important to remember, however, is clean eating should not be about deprivation. Rather than cutting back, the movement is about embracing all the wholesome, nutritious and delicious foods the planet offers. Making just a few 'cleaner' changes can go a long way, with improved heart and brain health, weight management and soaring energy levels among the many benefits.

BEAUTY

As the skin is the body's largest organ, it makes sense that clean-living advocates focus on what they slather on it. 'Clean beauty', as it's known, encourages the use of toiletries and cosmetics free from ingredients suspected or shown to cause harm to human health.

Of course, very few people would intentionally put harmful substances on their skin, but companies have a habit of sneaking them into their products. For example, parabens, phthalates, sulphates, silica, refined petroleum and hydroquinone regularly feature on the ingredient lists of beauty products, despite being linked to side effects such as skin irritation, hormone disruption and cancer.

The good news is that more and more brands are catching on to this growing demand for cleaner beauty. Consumers are calling for more transparency, as well as products that are kinder to the environment, resulting in ethical, cruelty-free formulas, and packaging that is recyclable or reusable.

Unfortunately, however, attention still needs to be paid to ingredient lists, as make up and skin-care goods can still be marketed as 'clean' without having to adhere to any regulatory framework. Some natural substances can be unsafe too, so it pays to do the research.

MIND

A 'clean mind' in this context doesn't refer to the virtuous interior of a chastely saint. Rather it sums up the goal to declutter one's brain of unhelpful, overwhelming and racing thoughts.

Brains are continuously at work, absorbing and adapting to different stimuli and demands in a non-stop

modern society. As the stressors begin to pile up, minds are often left feeling overworked and in dire need of a reboot. The idea is that a 'deep clean' of our mental faculties can help in these circumstances by decreasing anxiety, sharpening focus and putting a stop to intrusive ruminations.

One of the most popular ways to spruce up a brain is by practising mindfulness. This involves becoming more aware of the present moment by giving full attention to a particular task at hand. Whether it's while doing the washing up or walking the dog, focusing on each breath and the sensations at hand can help prevent thoughts spiralling out of control.

Meditating, listening to music, journalling or carrying out a creative task can also be helpful. Yet these activities should not just be relied upon in times of stress. For a sparkling clean mind, they should be implemented on a daily basis, with the aim of reducing stress and boosting happiness in the long-term.

ENVIRONMENT

Our minds are not the only things that require a regular declutter. Clean living also emphasises the benefits of tidying up our immediate surrounds. But

what this looks like will vary between individuals, as it doesn't necessarily mean having a spotless, sterile house – although there is an increasing selection of non-toxic cleaning products on the market in line with clean living.

“Taking time away from technology is proposed by clean living followers looking to tune out any unwelcome distractions and mentally switch off”





order to conserve energy and harness more joy.

SUSTAINABILITY

Feeding into most clean-living practices is an awareness of building more sustainable, eco-friendly habits. It's not just about the individual, but how their lifestyle impacts the wider world.

Clean eating, for example, usually promotes organic produce free of harmful pesticides, while clean beauty calls for the use of cruelty-free, non-toxic ingredients. Harmless formulas are not only kinder to human beings, but they also lessen the number of dangerous substances in the environment.

A person with a clean-living mentality will often look for ways to reduce their waste, too. Many people have already taken up recycling and regularly bring reusable bags to the supermarket, but further changes can be made, such as composting food waste, shopping at zero-waste stores, buying second-hand clothes and avoiding plastic packaging.

Clean living is not about making people feel guilty, nor reproaching them for their current actions. Neither is it necessary to completely overhaul your entire lifestyle.

The approach is accessible to all, with a few easy hacks. Simply narrow down the elements of clean living that are most appealing to you. Now pick one or two changes, which relate to this, and then gradually implement them into your daily routine.

Taking things slowly ensures new habits stick and, once ingrained, it will be time to add in a few more adjustments. Small changes can have a big impact.

A 'clean environment' is more often about being wary of physical clutter, as research shows too much visual stimuli can cause added stress and be debilitating for productivity.

The theory is that the more mess there is, the more easily people are distracted. A chaotic, untidy room can also be incredibly overwhelming. Also consider how stressful it is to locate a much-needed object in a messy room. An organised workspace, therefore, can help set you up for success.

It is not just about getting stuff done, however. Emulating a feeling of calm and peacefulness at home by filtering out unnecessary distractions can also aid rest and relaxation. Also don't forget about the things you can't see – sounds and smells can influence your reaction to a particular environment, too.

LEISURE TIME

Some clean-living principles can also be incorporated into your spare time. Being a holistic approach, the movement promotes exercise for the many health benefits it brings. Whether it's yoga, walking or playing a favourite sport, being active boosts both physical and mental wellbeing.

Taking time away from technology is another method proposed by clean

living followers, looking to tune out any unwelcome distractions and mentally switch off. Swapping mobile phones for the great outdoors is recommended too, as immersing yourself in nature has a long list of positive effects. Less screen time will also limit exposure to blue light, which is necessary for improving sleep hygiene, another key element in an effective clean-living lifestyle.

The people you spend time with is vital, too. Priority should be given to friends who lift your spirits. If certain individuals in your social circle leave you feeling drained, it might be worth reassessing who you hang out with in



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15 steps to a non-toxic life

Want to improve your energy, mood, skin and overall wellbeing?
Here's how to clean up your act for a simpler, more natural lifestyle

WORDS BY Zara Gaspar and Bee Ginger

Holistic health means looking at your physical, mental, spiritual, social and emotional wellbeing as a whole

Toxic. It was the Oxford Dictionary's Word of 2018 and has evolved to become a label that encapsulates much more than a substance that is literally dangerous to one's health. In the modern world toxicity is attributed figuratively to negative mindsets, unwelcome opinions and even the way we choose to live our lives. But what does a toxic way of life really look like, and more importantly, how can we take steps to ensure we are embarking on a non-toxic lifestyle?

The first and arguably most critical point to consider is that a non-toxic life

requires a holistic approach that seeks to improve and maintain our physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. Allowing any one of these elements to fall by the wayside will result in an unbalanced and ultimately unhealthy existence.

Thankfully, there are plenty of steps that you can follow to ensure that you

are taking care of yourself properly. From exercising regularly to eating a balanced diet, getting good-quality sleep and immersing yourself in nature to connecting with loved ones and shutting out the noise of the modern world, here are some handy tips that will guide you on your quest to enjoy a fulfilling, healthy and happy life.

“By looking at every aspect of your health... you can improve your wellbeing on a much deeper level”





"Your mind benefits from a healthy diet as what you eat can improve your mood and wellbeing"

Keep active

We all know that exercise is important for our health. You should get your heart beating faster by exercising for at least 30 minutes a day. This will improve your circulation and as blood flows through your body, your heart will get more oxygen. Exercise not only improves your heart and lung health, but your muscle strength and endurance. If you enjoy exercising, running, cycling and swimming alongside weight training are great ways to stay fit. If you're not much of a gym bunny, try do something you enjoy to keep active whether that's going for a walk with friends, gardening or dancing. All of these will release those endorphins and will improve your mood.

"Your emotional health is just as important as your physical health, but often it is overlooked"



Look after your body

Have you ever heard the saying about your body being a temple? If you treat your body well and take care of it, you will find you have more strength and energy. This isn't just down to eating well and exercising. You should think about everything you put in or use on your body. For optimum health you should not smoke and avoid consuming too much alcohol. Make sure your skin is hydrated by drinking at least two litres of water a day. Water can help relieve constipation, eliminate toxins from your body and prevent headaches. You should also think about any products that you apply to your skin, as these can be absorbed into the bloodstream. Stick to products made from natural ingredients wherever possible.

There are plenty of natural remedies available to care for our bodies. Honey, arnica and tea tree oil contain antibacterial components, making them handy for cuts. Aromatherapy uses different smells to heal both the body and mind. Bergamot oil, for example, can be used to treat skin conditions, and chamomile helps keep you calm.



Eat well

Eating a balanced whole diet made up of the right amounts of protein, carbohydrates and healthy fats is essential for a healthy body and mind. It's important to eat a nutrient-dense diet to provide your body with energy, help it repair itself and protect it from disease. But your mind also benefits from a healthy diet, as what you eat can improve your mood and wellbeing. Food can act as a natural remedy. If you've got a cold, try ginger, garlic, vitamin C or zinc and, if you're suffering from indigestion, try settling your tummy with peppermint. Eat foods high in antioxidants and omega-3 fatty acids. It's important not to skip meals and eat every 3-4 hours. Cooking at home is a good way to ensure you're eating healthily, but avoid the microwave. You also want to limit processed foods and hydrogenated oils found in margarine, packaged snacks and fried foods.

Ask for help

Your emotional health is just as important as your physical health, but often it is overlooked. If you're struggling emotionally this can cause physical health issues from a headache or neckache when you're stressed, to stomach problems if you're anxious. It's important to seek help if you need it and not suffer in silence. Therapy can help you work out how you feel about certain situations. Sometimes it's easier to talk it through with a stranger and find clarity.



Get a good night's rest

Your body needs between seven and nine hours of sleep each night to help it recharge and repair itself. Getting a good night's rest can also help lower your risk of obesity, heart disease, diabetes and other health issues. But it's not just your body that needs rest. Sleep is vital for brain function and if you don't get enough your mind won't be able to focus properly. There are a number of things you can do if you're struggling to sleep. Make sure your room is dark and not too warm. Avoid alcohol and caffeine at least four hours before bed as these can disrupt your sleep. Switch off your devices about half an hour before you go to bed and do something relaxing such as reading or gentle stretching. Lavender oil is known to help you fall asleep so if you're struggling to doze off, rub a few drops into your pillow.

"Yoga, meditation and reiki are all beneficial practices you can spend time doing to improve your mental and physical wellbeing"

Embrace mindfulness

Mindfulness is the act of being fully present in the moment. Have you ever found your mind racing as you juggle five different tasks at the same time? Practising mindfulness enables you to focus your mind on one task, so when you take a mouthful of food you're savouring every minute of it instead of wolfing down your dinner distracted by the TV and thinking of the next thing you have to do. By being mindful in everything you do, you'll be taking more time for things and being more aware of your actions, which, in turn, will help reduce your stress levels.



Save the planet

You may be asking what saving the planet has to do with looking after your health, but external factors play a huge role in our health. For example, by recycling and reducing our plastic, we are not only protecting the planet but ourselves. Humans are ingesting thousands of plastic particles every year and we are still not fully aware of how this could be negatively affecting our health. By eating an organic, mainly plant-based diet, we are not only helping to protect our wildlife, but also improving our health. Finally, we can improve our wellbeing by doing more to help make the world a better place. By giving back, you're doing good and this can only help improve your mood and your overall health.

Connect with people offline

Studies have shown that the happiest people are those who enjoy deep and meaningful connections with friends and family. In today's world we spend so much time glued to our phones and computers that it

can be easy to lose touch. It's therefore important to nurture your relationships, whether that's meeting a friend for a coffee and chat or joining a local community group to share a passion or hobby.



Keep a journal

The best way to monitor your health is to write everything down. If you record your thoughts, feelings and ailments, you will be able to figure out patterns in your physical and emotional health. So, for example, if you're working late every Friday and always getting backache, by writing it down it may make you rethink your work schedule or it may force you to take more breaks to stretch so that you're not sitting for hours at your desk.

Keeping a journal can also be a form of therapy. Write down what makes you happy or sad and what you're grateful for, and also write out daily affirmations. Even if you're having a hard time, this process can help with maintaining a positive attitude throughout the week and remind you of the good aspects.

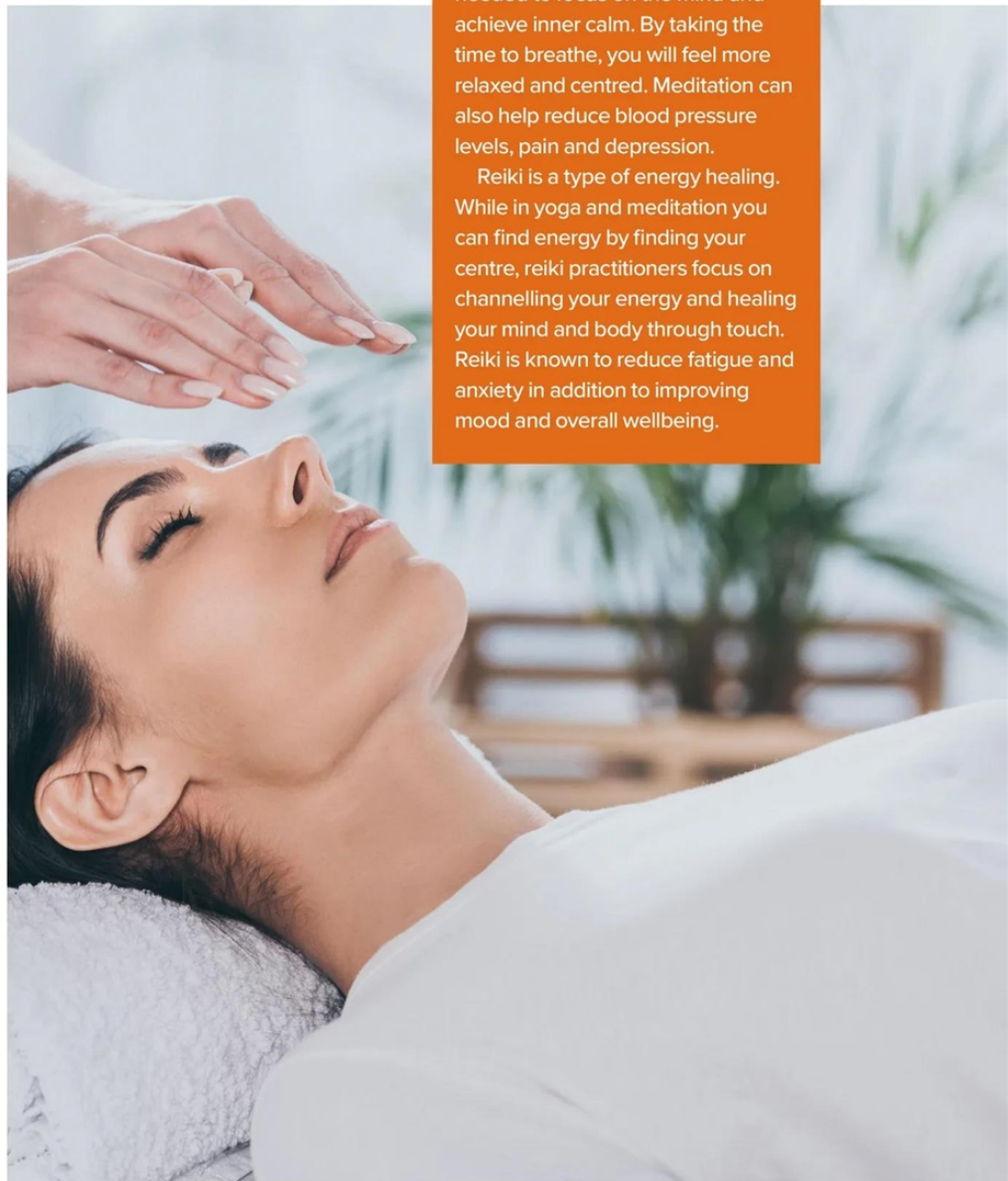


Take time for you

One of the best acts of self-care is taking time for yourself. It's important to spend time each day by yourself, focusing on what you love to do. Even if you have a busy life, make sure you find balance by taking 20 minutes each day to unplug and recharge away from technology and distractions. This could be spent drawing, playing an instrument, reading or dancing. If you've got a busy job or a family you may not think you have time, but self-care is important and, believe it or not, time alone will give your brain a rest, make you feel better as you do something you enjoy and help you be more productive afterwards.

Keep your mind active

When we think about exercise, we think about moving our bodies, but it's just as important to keep our minds active. Research shows that exercising your brain keeps you sharp, slows down your mental decline as you age and reduces the risk of diseases such as dementia. Problem-solving exercises such as sudoku and crossword puzzles are great for this, but if you don't enjoy quizzes, try learning a new skill, reading or listening to music to keep your mind fit. You can also keep your mind sharp by breaking out of your routines to make the brain work hard at a different way of doing things.



Balance your energy

There are a number of alternative holistic practices that help you increase and balance your energy. Yoga, meditation and reiki are all beneficial holistic practices, which you can spend time doing each day to help improve your mental and physical wellbeing.

Yoga will help you with your flexibility and muscle strength, it will improve your balance and help protect you against injury. It has also shown to improve sleep quality, mood and reduce stress.

Meditation has similar benefits. This practice gives you the tools needed to focus on the mind and achieve inner calm. By taking the time to breathe, you will feel more relaxed and centred. Meditation can also help reduce blood pressure levels, pain and depression.

Reiki is a type of energy healing. While in yoga and meditation you can find energy by finding your centre, reiki practitioners focus on channelling your energy and healing your mind and body through touch. Reiki is known to reduce fatigue and anxiety in addition to improving mood and overall wellbeing.



Learn to love yourself

You don't just have to treat your body right, you need to love your whole self. Learn to talk to yourself with kindness. If your friend told you she had gained some weight would you tell her she was a fat and ugly failure? No! So don't speak to yourself that way. Similarly, know which people to surround yourself with. Know when to walk away from toxic relationships, learn to say no and how to put yourself first. Loving yourself will improve your mental and emotional wellbeing.

"One of the best acts of self-care is focusing on yourself"



Help others

You may think that holistic health centres around focusing on yourself, but while this is important, it is equally as important to care about other people. Studies have shown that helping others and random acts of kindness can improve your health by lowering your blood pressure and reducing stress. Try offering help to a friend or neighbour or volunteering at a local hospital or animal centre. It will be an instant confidence boost, lifting your self-esteem and your mood. It's important to do things that make you feel good about yourself and to try to tackle life with a glass half-full approach, as positive thoughts lead to positive actions both for others and for yourself. You don't have to be religious to be spiritual. Learn to connect with your inner soul and the world around you.



Spend time in nature

Studies have shown that spending time in nature can improve your overall health by lowering stress and reducing blood pressure levels. Whether it's a park or a forest, getting outdoors can increase your vitamin D levels, help you relax and gain more focus. And if you can't get outside, research has shown even dotting pot plants around the house can lift your mood.





Clean Body

Self-care is not only about taking a look at what food you're putting into your body, but about the products you use on it, how much you move and how well you sleep. Eating wholesome food, sticking to a natural beauty regime, staying hydrated and making sure you get enough exercise and rest is all part of a clean body and lifestyle.

25 *Clean Eating Tips*

Clean eating is as simple as the name suggests:
eat lean, green and as natural as possible!

WORDS BY **Bee Ginger**



Clean eating is a healthy way to boost both your physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Although not a diet, it can still help you achieve your weight-loss goals in a positive, sustainable and healthy way. When we eat 'clean' we feel an increased control over our food, and in turn, our bodies. We are choosing what we put in and are rewarded in turn with improved health and mental clarity, not to mention a wonderful feeling of accomplishment. By incorporating even a few of the following handy tips, you could soon be on the journey to a healthier and more active lifestyle. So ditch the processed foods, stack up on whole foods and let's embark on a journey towards a cleaner way of life.

PASS ON PROCESSED FOODS

The experts consistently implore us to ditch processed foods, but what are they? Simply put, they are anything packaged, bagged, canned or in a box, such as ready meals or a pre-packaged sandwich. Of course there are exceptions to the rule; bagged salads or frozen fruits and vegetables are very much encouraged when eating clean. Processed foods are often packed full of added ingredients to make them more flavoursome or to extend their shelf life. Fat, sugar and salt, among other things, are added, and it is these foods that often lead us to eating more than our daily recommended amount. In turn, these are then the foods that we usually find ourselves craving in order to fill us up as they have left us nutritionally lacking.



REACH FOR THE UNREFINED

Where possible, try to buy your whole grains in their unrefined form as they are far higher in fibre and can help in reducing cholesterol. They also assist in maintaining a healthy body weight as they fill you up for longer (thereby reducing your cravings) and stabilise your blood sugar. They contain many of the essential vitamins your body needs, including iron, magnesium and B vitamins. Quinoa, brown rice, amaranth and millet are all whole grains, and because they have all been less processed than their refined counterparts, they are instantly more nutritious. Legumes and beans are crucial to a healthy diet too, as are clean sugars like maple syrup and honey.



SAY FAREWELL TO REFINED CARBOHYDRATES

Yes they taste good in the moment, but saying goodbye to bread, pasta and white rice will be one of the best decisions you can make when embarking on your clean eating journey. Not only do these foods fail to provide the important vitamins and minerals your body needs, but they are also lacking in protein, fibre and the good fats that are essential for your body to function. In fact they can have an adverse affect on our bodies by causing serious health issues such as diabetes and obesity. So by switching to more nutrient-dense carbohydrates that are rich in fibre (such as brown rice and oats), we can wave goodbye to feeling bloated, sluggish and craving all the bad fats, salts and sugars we can definitely do without.

PUT YOUR CHEF'S HAT ON

If you're the one preparing your food then you have control over what you cook and what goes into your meal. Granted, it is lovely to be cooked for or to eat out, but by cooking your food you can see exactly what goes into your meals and enjoy experimenting with different ingredients and flavours. Try to cook something new once a week, or cook for family or friends and get them onboard with your clean eating journey. Expanding your palate will keep your meals interesting and you will find that having a wider range of ingredients to work with is more enjoyable. A little creativity in the kitchen has been proven to make people happier.



5

EATING THE RAINBOW

When it comes to clean eating, embrace eating the rainbow. This can be done by choosing fruit and vegetables in a whole different range of colours. We know that fruit and vegetables are packed full of essential antioxidants that are called polyphenols, and by eating a variety of colours we are filling our bodies with a huge amount of beneficial minerals,

phytochemicals and vitamins. The different colours each represent a phytochemical and different set of nutrients. Red, for example, contains lycopene from the vitamin A family. It also boasts folate, vitamin K1, C and potassium and is hugely beneficial for heart health, as an anti-inflammatory and as an antioxidant. Leafy greens, on

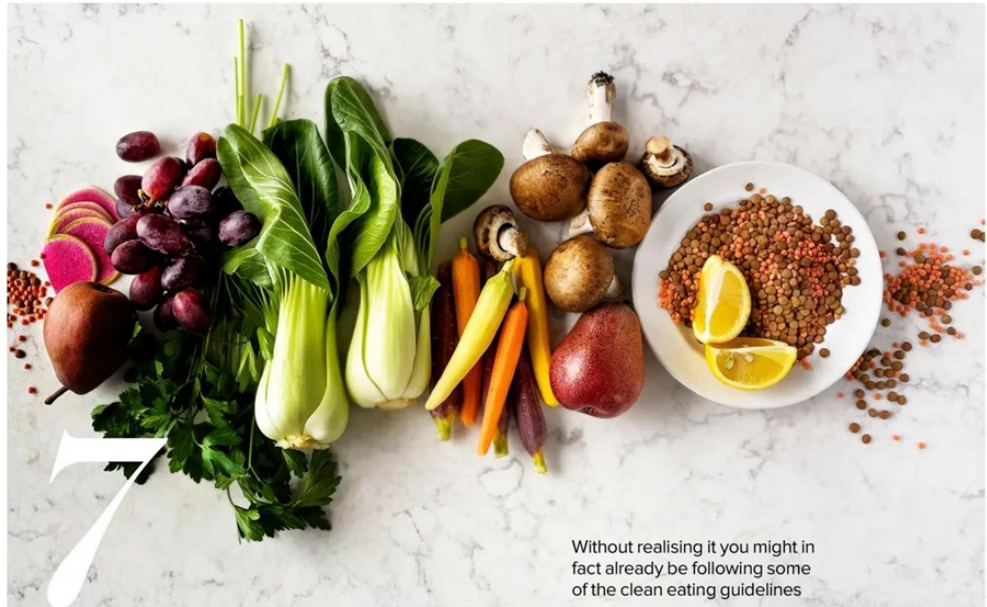
the other hand, are packed full of chlorophyll and carotenoids, and cruciferous greens like cabbage are high in isothiocyanates, glucosinolates and indoles. They also contain magnesium, folate and fibre and could lower your risk of heart disease and cancer. Turns out eating your greens really is important!



6

GET FAMILIAR WITH LABELS

Nutrition labels tell you all you need to know about a product. The fewer the ingredients on the label the better the product will be for you. Consider each ingredient separately as well, and if you're unsure of an ingredient, don't buy. Foods with labels that include the words 'modified' or 'hydrolysed' need to be avoided. Look instead for whole wheats, whole grains, fibre and fructose. Be aware of foods that are high in saturated fat, sodium and sugar and those with artificial colours or flavourings. Remember – the best foods don't come with a label!



Without realising it you might in fact already be following some of the clean eating guidelines

7 PRIORITISE PLANTS

Eating a plant-based diet is an easy way to stay healthy, energise your body and feed your gut. To begin with, try to eat one plant-based meal per day and work your way up from there. Including vegetables in your meals and snacks immediately boosts the amount of nutrients that you are consuming. The plant-based diet is split into five sections that give a clearer indication of what you should be eating:

WHOLE GRAINS: oats, whole wheat, brown rice, quinoa, cereals and grains.

FRUITS: all fruits are included in this category, even citrus.

TUBERS: these are starchy root vegetables like sweet potatoes, beetroot, parsnips, carrots, rutabagas and turnips.

LEGUMES: pulses, lentils and a whole variety of different beans.

And of course vegetables, where nothing is off the table!





8

NO COUNTING CALORIES

Clean eating is about nutritional content, so it's far more important to focus on the ingredients and quality of the item rather than how many calories are in it. Nuts, for example, are high in calories but packed full of healthy fats and fibre that keep you full between meals. Learning to develop a healthier relationship with food begins by understanding which foods will best nourish your body and picking those rather than labelling foods good or bad. When we focus on foods that contain nutrients, minerals, vitamins, antioxidants, phytonutrients, fibre and healthy fats, we will also be filling ourselves with happiness and health. After all, as the saying goes, you are what you eat.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO EAT OUT

Clean eating doesn't need to spell the end of dining out. On the contrary, this can still be just as fun, especially when trying out new restaurants and cuisines. Try to focus on meals that contain healthy fats, lean proteins, complex carbohydrates and above all, fresh produce. Ordering as simple as possible is always a good option, but do keep an eye on sodium. Most restaurants offer steamed vegetables on the side, which can be paired with a grilled steak or some chicken. Or opt for a seasonal salad teeming with grains and couscous – just switch out the dressing for a drizzle of olive oil. If you can't see something on the menu, don't be afraid to ask; restaurants are very accommodating to dietary requirements. You could even check out the menu online before you go so that you know what options are available to you, but do remember to have the occasional treat.



9

BE PREPPED AND READY TO GO

Prep for success for your week ahead and you will find mealtimes so much easier. Take the stress out of shopping by making and sticking to a list and preparing meals in larger quantities so you have plenty for the coming week or the freezer. Having fresh options ready to grab from the fridge will also stop you from making poor food choices when you are hungry and tempted to order in or grab an unhealthy snack on the go. A chalk or pin board in the kitchen can help you write down your meal plans and any shopping needed for the week ahead to keep you on track. Remember not to shop while you're hungry, as this can lead to buying unhealthy snacks.



10



11 INTUITIVE EATING

This simple idea of intuitive eating benefits both our mental and our physical health. In short it boils down to making peace with your food and what you consume without giving it a label of good or bad. Instead it encourages you to listen to your body and eat what is right for you without worry or restriction. You will find that by reconnecting with your body's built-in signals regarding food, you will only eat when you are actually hungry and stop when you feel full. By allowing yourself to eat what you like, so-called forbidden or bad foods lose their appeal. You often find that when you deny yourself food and eat what you think you should be eating, you later feel hungrier and are tempted to have those snacks anyway.

BUY SEASONAL, ORGANIC AND LOCAL



Much of clean eating revolves around knowing where your food and ingredients actually come from. Have they travelled the globe or have they been grown down the road?

Purchasing food from your local farm shop or pick your own is always preferable, but it's understandably not always an economical choice, particularly with supermarket price wars creating tempting prices. Even so, knowing exactly where animals have been raised and what methods have been used to grow vegetables and other produce keeps us informed and also helps us to support farmers and the local economy. It also enables us to stay on top of which produce is seasonal and thereby enables us to enjoy the freshest food. This makes for both clean and clever eating.

REVISE YOUR COFFEE ORDER

Thankfully you can still enjoy your morning coffee from your favourite coffee shop, you just have to rethink your order a little. Unfortunately the pumpkin spiced latte and the caramel macchiato might have to be a thing of the past as they are packed with sugars and additives. Enjoy instead an espresso or an Americano, which are full of antioxidants and flavonoids, both of which are multiple bioactive compounds found in coffee. Don't forget it is antioxidants that destroy the free radicals in our bodies that are responsible for cell damage and premature ageing. A coffee a day really will keep the free radicals at bay!



14 SETTING ACHIEVABLE GOALS

When you embark on your journey of clean eating it is imperative to set achievable goals. Everybody's reason for improving their approach to nutrition is different. For some it will be weight loss, for others improved mental clarity, and for many it will represent a whole lifestyle shake up. Therefore each journey will be varied. Structure is key, but eating clean should also be maintainable, so start with small steps. Work out how best you can meet your nutritional needs each day and fit it around your lifestyle. Consider when you have time in your week to concentrate on shopping and preparing foods and think about how you can incorporate daily exercise. A balanced approach is vital, and don't forget you need to nourish your mind as well as your body.



SAY HELLO TO H2O

Whether you're splashing around at your local lido, going for a nature swim or just running to the bus with your umbrella at full mast, water really is one of life's elixirs. Staying hydrated is absolutely key as drinking water throughout the day keeps us refreshed and helps to regulate body temperature. Drinking before meals will not only hydrate you, but also help you to be more mindful of how hungry or full you are. Water even aids digestion and the transportation of nutrients around the body. Humans are made up of approximately 60 percent water, which is why it is recommended that we drink at least six to eight glasses per day. If you don't like the taste of water try flavouring it with some sliced fruit or cucumber, or by adding a squeeze of citrus and some herbs.



LET'S GET PHYSICAL

We are all aware that diet and exercise are both vital for our mental and physical health. We also know that when we exercise we experience an instant burst of energy, however, to achieve that we also need fuel, and this is what we get by eating clean. Timely meals bursting with the right nutrition will keep you and your blood sugar on top form, giving you the energy you need to enjoy a walk, run or gym session. When we work out and exercise we are also supporting the neurotransmitters in our brain. These are dopamine, serotonin and norepinephrine (to name a few) and they work to maintain your energy levels and regulate your mood, among many other critical tasks.



EAT LOGICALLY, NOT EMOTIONALLY

Emotions are often a trigger for overeating or poor food choices. When we are bored or stressed we sometimes use food to compensate, but this is only ever a short-term fix. It would be much more productive to uncover the cause of the problem, which can often relate to the way we look. We are all unique and our size and shape reflects that, but it can be difficult to let go of unrealistic body images. We need to realise that what we see online and in advertisements is not normal and has been highly edited. Start by respecting your body and accepting your size; it really will help to make you feel more confident about yourself and your relationship with exercise and food. In time you will be making logical decisions around food and not reaching for the snacks that only fuel a negative cycle.



FORGET FAT-FREE – JUST FOCUS

Appreciate and enjoy what's on your plate and concentrate on how your body is feeling. Take breaks during meals to work out if you are full, and savour the experience. Try to avoid distractions like phones or television, as studies have shown that when we are distracted we often eat more. Avoid the temptation to grab a supposedly diet snack. Diet drinks, meal-replacement snack bars or low-fat alternatives are often packed full of sugars, artificial sweeteners and preservatives, so leave them well alone.



19 DRINKING CALORIES

Be careful not to drink your calories. Many drinks (including fruit juices) contain a high level of sugar that can lead to mood swings, excessive hunger and sugar cravings later on in the day. These drinks don't fill us up either, so we eat and drink to compensate for this. Water and unsweetened tea and coffee are the best options. Consuming little or no alcohol is another healthy choice. If you like to unwind with a glass of something alcoholic, then from an ingredient perspective you know what you are getting with a glass of wine. Enjoy in moderation.



20 SWERVE SALT, SUGAR & SATURATES

If you can't find it in nature, you shouldn't have it on your plate. So much of the food we consume is loaded with salt and sugar. Who would have thought that tomato ketchup would contain 4g of sugar per tablespoon or that a low-fat yoghurt could contain roughly seven teaspoons of sugar? When it comes to fats, you will find healthy fat in avocados, raw nuts, seeds and unrefined oils. Natural sweeteners, like dates, pure maple syrup, honey and coconut sugar can all add a sweet hint to a dish. As for salt, only use it in moderation. Sea salt is best, and avoid any products that have added salt in them.



21 PUT THE FUN INTO FITNESS

If you don't enjoy something, don't do it. You are no longer in your school PE class, so pick daily exercises that you actually enjoy and concentrate on how they make you feel rather than focusing on burning calories. How about dancing in the kitchen while mopping the floor or space hopping round the garden? Try cycling to a friend's house or to the shops. Even gardening is fantastic for you, both mentally and physically. Involve family or friends if you don't enjoy exercising alone or join a local group and make some new acquaintances.



22 PRIORITISE YOUR PROTEIN

Protein is an essential fuel for the body and should be included in every meal we consume. It's a good idea to check food labels closely so you can avoid any unhealthy additives, predominantly found in refined products. These can include nitrates, flavouring and colourings alongside preservatives and sugars. But with so many clean options to choose from, clean protein won't be a problem to embrace. If you are a meat eater then wild fish, organic chicken and organic grass-fed beef are lean and clean options. Vegetarians can enjoy free-range eggs, cottage cheese and cultured yoghurt, and vegans can feast on almonds, lentils, tempeh, quinoa and seeds.



23

ONE STEP
AT A TIME

Remember this is a walk and not a sprint. This is not a fad diet but a lifestyle change, so concentrate on taking one step at a time. Begin with adding more whole foods to your daily meals before eliminating other products, like switching white rice for whole grain or wild rice. Instead of ice cream for dessert, try some natural yoghurt with seasonal fruit and a drizzle of honey. Aim to have a fruit or vegetable with every meal and pick one meal a day to be clean and made from scratch, then work your way up from there.

MUNCHING
FOR MENTAL
HEALTH

Your diet not only shapes your body but also your mind. A poor diet can have an enormous effect on your brain, which is responsible for regulating your emotions, hormones, mood and sleep (among many other things). It therefore follows that healthy eating can have a hugely positive impact. Enjoying a nutrient-dense diet with plenty of fresh produce has been shown to help people suffering with anxiety. Cramped full of nutrients and low in calories, sweet potatoes, broccoli, eggs, seeds, berries and wild salmon are all superb options. Combine these with fruit rich in antioxidants and you're on to a winner.



CLEAN EATING WITH KIDS

Get the whole family involved with your new clean eating lifestyle plan. It's never too early to make positive food choices for your children, and it will be easier if everyone is on board from the start. Raising your family to eat healthily is one of the most rewarding life lessons you can teach them. By educating them early on and enjoying tasks like cooking together, clean eating will become normal and fun. Take trips to the pick your own and farmers' market and have a go at growing your own herbs and vegetables in the garden or in containers.

Clean eating *Recipes*



Healthy food can be tasty too, just take a look at these recipes for a little dash of inspiration

WORDS BY Julie Bassett



TIP
You can add a little feta cheese to this dish if you wish for an extra hit of saltiness.

CHILLI & BULGUR WHEAT SALAD

ENJOY THIS ZESTY LIGHT SALAD WITH A KICK

Prep time: 10 mins Cook time: 20 mins Servings: 4

- 1 Add the stock cube to 1 litre | 35 fl oz | 4 cups of water and bring to the boil.
- 2 Add the bulgur wheat to the pan and bring back to the boil.
- 3 When boiling, reduce the heat and put a lid on. Leave it to simmer for 15 mins or until most of the stock has been absorbed, then remove it from the heat.
- 4 While the bulgur wheat is simmering, bring a smaller pan of water to the boil and cook the garden peas for a couple of minutes.
- 5 Drain the peas and add to the cooked bulgur wheat.
- 6 Stir in the diced red chilli, sun-dried tomatoes, lemon juice and zest.
- 7 Tip the bulgur wheat mix into four bowls and top with slices of avocado and rocket leaves to serve.

INGREDIENTS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 250 g 8 oz 1 ¾ cups bulgur wheat, rinsed in cold water • 1 vegetable stock cube • 100 g 3 ½ oz ½ cup garden peas • 100 g 3 ½ oz ¾ cup sun-dried tomatoes in oil • 1 fresh red chilli, diced (can 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> adjust the quantity to suit preferred heat) • 1 lemon, juice and finely zested • 1 ripe avocado, peeled and sliced • A handful of rocket leaves
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PUMPKIN & CARROT SOUP

THIS SPICED SOUP IS A FAB WINTER WARMER

Prep time: 10 mins Cook time: 25 mins Servings: 4

- 1 Heat the oil in a large cooking pot and add the diced onion. Sauté on a medium heat until soft.
- 2 Stir in the spices and ginger, mixing well, then pour in the stock and bring to the boil.
- 3 Reduce to a simmer and leave for 15-20 minutes, until the vegetables are soft.
- 4 Allow to cool for a few minutes and then use a stick blender or food processor to blitz the soup. If it seems too thick, you can add a little extra hot stock or water to get your desired texture.
- 5 Serve with a tsp of sour cream per person drizzled on top, and add a couple of fresh parsley leaves.



INGREDIENTS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 tbsp olive oil • 1 large onion, diced • 3 medium carrots, peeled and diced • 600 g 21 oz 4 cups pumpkin, peeled and cubed • 1 litre 35 fl oz 4 cups vegetable stock 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 tsp fresh root ginger, grated • ½ tsp ground turmeric • ¼ tsp ground nutmeg • ¼ tsp ground coriander • Salt and pepper to taste • 4 tsp sour cream • A few leaves of fresh parsley
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LENTIL, FETA & BEETROOT SALAD

PROVING SALADS DON'T HAVE TO BE COLD

Prep time: 10 mins Cook time: 50 mins Servings: 4

- 1** Pre-heat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan) | 390°F | gas 6. Put the beetroot and red onion wedges in a roasting tin. Cover with 1 tbsp olive oil and 1 tbsp of red wine vinegar, then shake to coat the vegetables evenly.
- 2** Roast in the oven for 45 minutes, or until the vegetables are soft.
- 3** While the vegetables are cooking, add the lentils to a large pan and cover with cold water. Bring to the boil and cook until just tender, but not too soft, around 15-20 minutes.
- 4** Drain the lentils and add to a large bowl.
- 5** Mix in the cooked vegetables, 1 tbsp of red wine vinegar, feta cheese and salad leaves. Drizzle a little olive oil, season to taste and serve while it's warm.



TIP

You can make this recipe even easier by using pre-cooked puy lentils, which just need heating for 2 mins in a microwave.

TIP

Once you've mastered the base, you can add any toppings you like for different flavour combinations.

INGREDIENTS

- 150 g | 5 oz | ¾ cup quinoa
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 60 ml | 2 fl oz | ¼ cup water
- ½ tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp salt
- 2 tbsp passata
- 5 king oyster mushrooms (king trumpet mushrooms), sliced
- 2 tbsp green pesto (shop bought or homemade)
- Handful of spinach leaves
- 10 black olives



INGREDIENTS

- 500 g | 17 oz | 3 cups beetroot, peeled and cut into wedges
- 2 red onions, peeled and cut into wedges
- 1 tbsp olive oil, plus more for drizzling
- 2 tbsp red wine vinegar
- 300 g | 10 oz | 2 cups puy lentils
- 150 g | 5 oz | 1 cup feta cheese, crumbled
- A handful of mixed salad leaves



MACKEREL & ROASTED VEGETABLES

A SIMPLE AND TASTY ONE-TRAY BAKE

Prep time: 10 mins Cook time: 1 hour Servings: 4

- 1** Pre-heat oven to 180°C (160°C fan) | 350°F | gas 4. Add the oil to a large baking dish and spread evenly, then pop in the garlic cloves.
- 2** Tip in all the prepared vegetables and the bay leaf, then mix to coat in the oil.
- 3** Roast in the oven for 25 minutes, then stir and put it back in for another 15 minutes – keep an eye on the vegetables to ensure they don't burn.
- 4** Score the skin on the mackerel fillets, season and place in the oven tray on top of the vegetables, skin side up.
- 5** Return to the oven for a further 20 minutes to cook the mackerel and ensure the skin goes nice and crispy. Then serve immediately.



INGREDIENTS

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 courgettes (zucchini), sliced
- 2 red peppers (bell peppers), sliced
- 10 cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 bay leaf
- 4 mackerel fillets with skin on
- 3 cloves garlic, peeled
- Salt and black pepper to season to taste

MUSHROOM & QUINOA PIZZA

WHO SAYS THAT PIZZA CAN'T BE HEALTHY?

Prep time: 15 mins Cook time: 40 mins Servings: 2

- 1** Tip the quinoa into a bowl and add enough water so it is just covered. Leave for at least 6 hours.
- 2** Pre-heat the oven to 220°C (200°C fan) | 425°F | gas 7. Line a baking tray with oiled baking paper.
- 3** Rinse the quinoa, then place in a food processor. Add the water, baking powder, salt and 1 tbsp olive oil, and mix well to form a thick batter. You may need to add a little water if the mix is too thick.
- 4** Pour the batter into the tray, spread evenly and bake for 15 mins, then turn it over and bake for another 15 mins so it's solid enough to support your toppings. Next spread passata across the base.
- 5** Add the mushrooms, spinach, olives and drizzle over the pesto, baking for 15 mins, then serve.



SPINACH FALAFELS

LEAN, GREEN AND VERY TASTY – THESE FALAFELS ARE A REAL CROWD-PLEASER

Prep time: 20 mins Cook time: 10 mins Servings: 20 falafels

INGREDIENTS

- 200 g | 7 oz | 1½ cups baby spinach
- 400 g | 14 oz can of chickpeas in water, drained
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled and diced
- 100 g | 3 oz | ¾ cup plain flour
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp chilli flakes
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 150 g | 5 oz | 1 cup plain natural yoghurt
- 3 sprigs fresh mint, leaves picked and finely chopped
- 1 lemon, juice, and zest finely grated
- 1 clove of garlic, peeled and finely chopped
- Salt and pepper to season
- Flatbread or pitta bread

- 1 Boil a full kettle of water. Place the spinach in a colander and pour the boiling water over it so that it wilts.
- 2 Drain the spinach and squeeze out as much water as possible (make sure it is cool enough to touch first), then place in a food processor.
- 3 Add the chickpeas, garlic, flour, cumin and chilli flakes to the food processor with the spinach and pulse until just combined. Turn out the mixture and use your hands to roll out 20 individual evenly sized balls.
- 4 To make the dip, put the yoghurt in a bowl and stir in the mint, lemon zest and garlic. Add lemon juice and seasoning to taste.
- 5 Warm 1 tbsp of oil in a frying pan and fry half of the falafel for around 5 mins, turning frequently to ensure all sides are cooked. Repeat for the second batch.
- 6 Serve the falafel warm with the yoghurt dip, and your choice of bread.

ROASTED CHICKPEAS

A TASTY ALTERNATIVE SNACK TO NUTS

Prep time: 5 mins Cook time: 35 mins Servings: 4

- 1 Preheat the oven to 180°C (160°C fan) | 350°F | gas 4. Pat your drained chickpeas dry with a paper towel.
- 2 Tip your chickpeas into a bowl and drizzle over the oil, mixing well for even coverage.
- 3 Sprinkle over your spices and mix thoroughly to ensure good distribution.
- 4 Tip the chickpeas onto a baking-paper-lined oven tray, spreading them out well.
- 5 Roast in the oven for 35 minutes, but give the tray a shake every 10 minutes to loosen the chickpeas and ensure they dry out evenly.
- 6 Leave to cool and serve immediately, or store in an airtight container.



INGREDIENTS

- 400 g | 14 oz can of chickpeas in water, drained
- 1 tsp olive oil
- 1 tsp ground paprika
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp dried oregano

SPINACH, ORANGE & HALLOUMI SALAD

A SUPER-SIMPLE AND TASTY SALAD WITH ONLY FIVE INGREDIENTS

Prep time: 5 mins Cook time: 5 mins Servings: 4

- 1** Warm a griddle pan. Add the halloumi and cook for about 2 mins on each side until the slices are lightly charred.
- 2** Next add the spinach and mint leaves to a large bowl.
- 3** Stir in the orange segments, pressing them slightly to release some juices.
- 4** Top with the charred halloumi and drizzle with a little olive oil.

TIP

This recipe is great as a light main meal, served with warm bread, or as a tasty side dish.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 large oranges, peeled and segmented
- 250 g | 8 ¾ oz | 2 cups halloumi, sliced
- 200 g | 7 oz | 6 ½ cups spinach
- Handful mint leaves
- Olive oil to drizzle

Pick *the right* EXERCISE

Clean living is all about long-term health, so choose fitness activities you like to do

WORDS BY Julie Bassett

There is no one form of exercise that is better than another. There are lots of different types of exercise that you can choose from. If you prefer something low-impact and gentle but that gets your heart rate up a little, consider walking or swimming. If you're looking for something to work both the mind and body, then things like yoga, Pilates and martial arts are great options. If you want to get outside in the fresh air, then look at cycling, running or outdoor bootcamps. And if you like the idea of being among other like-minded people and trying something new, there is a plethora of gym classes to get involved with.

Exercise is simply moving your body in some way, getting your heart rate up and warming your body. There really is something for everyone. You might think you 'hate' exercise, but this could be because you haven't found the right thing for you yet. It's so important that you enjoy the type of exercise you do; it will encourage and motivate you to do it more often and get better results.

If you don't want to join a gym or go for a run, then think outside the box. Consider activities like paddleboarding or kayaking, which are great forms of exercise as they use your core, challenge your balance and raise your heart rate.

Any form of exercise counts, so even if you walk faster on the school run, take the stairs more often, get off the bus a few stops early or jump about on a trampoline, it's all part of your fitness journey.



What's right for you?

IF YOU'RE COMPETITIVE

✦ If you enjoy pushing yourself and like winning, why not consider trying a team sport? Things like football, netball, hockey, rugby and tennis doubles are available in most areas for all levels. There is always the chance to improve your game, play matches and make the most of that competitive streak.

IF YOU LIKE VARIETY

✦ Consider a bootcamp or circuits class, which challenges you to move from station to station performing lots of different exercises. There is no chance to get bored as you are continually switching it up.

IF YOU'RE SHORT OF TIME

✦ When time is tight, interval training is your perfect go-to activity. High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) is a type of exercise that involves hard work for a short period of time, with a rest in between sets. You can complete a workout in just 20 minutes and feel great!

IF YOU HAVE LIMITED FUNDS

✦ Running is a great way to get fit quickly without spending too much. As long as you have some decent trainers, you can start running. If your office has a shower, you could even combine running with your commute to save money on travel too.

IF YOU LOVE THE OUTDOORS

✦ Get those walking boots on and start hiking! Exploring rural trails can be a great way to see the country, as well as get fit. As long as you have the right kit, you can do it all year round and increase the length and elevation of your hikes to push your fitness.

IF YOU LIKE MAKING NEW FRIENDS

✦ Dancing is a great way to make friends in your local area. Whether you fancy ballroom or salsa, Zumba or line dancing, there are plenty of styles for you to try to meet like-minded people along the way.

IF YOU STRUGGLE TO GET MOTIVATED

✦ Motivation can be hard to come by, especially when there are so many distractions in life. Try pre-booking classes or gym sessions in advance, so that you have them in your diary. There's something about having paid for a class that helps motivate you to stick with it.

IF YOU LACK CONFIDENCE

✦ Start in the comfort of your own home by investing in a few workout DVDs or finding some workouts on the internet. This will help you build the confidence to perform exercises correctly, which might lead to you joining public classes in time.

TRY BEFORE YOU BUY

Many clubs, groups, gyms or pools will have the option of a free trial so you can give something a go before committing to it. This can be a good way of exploring your options and seeing what you like.

Running & walking

Running and walking are the most natural forms of exercise that you can do. We all walk every single day, even if it's just from A to B. You don't need any fancy equipment to start walking, you don't need a gym membership and you can adapt it to suit any amount of time that you have.

Walking is very underrated as a form of exercise, but it is the perfect place to start. The idea is to walk slightly faster than your normal walking pace so that you raise your heart rate a little. Try to fit extra steps into your day on a regular basis, such as walking to work if you can, or planning a walk after dinner to shake off the day. Start with just 15 minutes and build up from there. You can challenge yourself by walking in different environments, such as off-road or uphill, and it's easy to get family members and friends involved. Many areas will offer health walks that are specifically designed to help you get fit through walking.

Basic kit to get running

There is very little you need to start running, but there are a few basics to consider. Most importantly, you need trainers that are designed for running, and it can be worth going to a sports shop to get advice. If you are a woman, you will need a high-impact sports bra too. Comfortable leggings or shorts, a t-shirt, a lightweight waterproof jacket, something to carry your phone in, a water bottle and a high-visibility vest should be enough to see you through all year round.

If you want to move a bit faster, you might want to take up running. If you have never run before, then consider a Couch to 5K style programme, of which there are a few to pick from. These start with a walk-and-run approach, with set intervals that build up week on week until you can, over time, run a 5K distance. If you run a little already, you might want to follow a plan designed to help you hit your next milestone distance or improve your pace.

You can run or walk on a treadmill in the gym or at home if you prefer, but getting outside will give you more health and fitness benefits. You'll be out in the fresh air, and your body works harder to adapt to the changing terrain, camber and bends.

Track your steps

If you're interested in using walking as your choice of exercise, invest in a method of tracking steps, such as a pedometer, phone app or activity watch. You can set yourself goals on how many steps you want to walk in a day, and you can slowly increase this goal as you get fitter. It can be a great way of keeping your motivation up.

“If you run, you are a runner. It doesn't matter how fast or how far”

– John Bingham, marathon runner



POP UP AT PARKRUN

If you can run, walk or even combine both over 5K, why not try your local parkrun? There are hundreds of these events across the country, taking place every Saturday morning. They are free to attend and open to all.



TRY A TRI

Ever considered a triathlon? It's not just for the super fit or elite! Beginner triathlon events often include a pool swim rather than in the sea. You can start with a Super Sprint, which is a 300-metre swim, 8K bike ride and 2K run, then build up to longer distances.

Swimming & cycling

Here are two amazing low-impact exercises you can do. You might already use a bike on a casual basis, or it may have been years since you last got on one, but cycling is a great form of exercise. It's endlessly adaptable to suit your ability and preferences.

You can use a bike to commute to work – great for your wallet, your fitness and the planet! There are lots of cycling groups around too, which cater for those who want more structure with a training plan, or those who want group rides with like-minded people on a more leisurely basis. You may prefer to cycle off-road or on a traffic-free cycle path. There are plenty of good cycling networks that offer both long- and short-distance routes, so take a look to see what paths there are near you.

You could also improve your cycling fitness by going to spinning classes at the gym. These are held on static bikes with different resistance levels to simulate hills. They are high-intensity classes, so you'll burn lots of calories!

If you prefer to be in the water rather than on the roads, then consider swimming. This can be a great option if you want to focus on cardiovascular fitness. Swimming is a low-impact activity, so it's easy on the joints and good for those who may struggle with injury. You can increase your stroke speed to raise your heart rate, or go for the endurance option and see how many lengths you can manage at a slower pace. Check out your local pool timetable – you can usually find adults-only sessions, which can be

Cycle safe

If you've not been on the roads for a while, you should consider a cycle safety course before getting on your bike. These courses offer a refresher on things like how to switch lanes, signal, turn across traffic, use roundabouts and keep a safe distance between yourself and vehicles. This can help to build your confidence on the roads and help you to stay safe.

Swimming lessons

Swimming lessons are not just for children; you can start learning at any age. There are lessons to take you from non-swimmer to swimmer, or if you can already swim, you can take lessons to improve your stroke or breathing techniques. You can even get swimming-based circuits or HIIT classes to challenge your fitness even further while working up a sweat in the pool.

good if you don't want kids jumping in around you. Or, if you have children, you can all go together and make it a fun way to work out as a family.

You're not limited to the pool either. Wild and outdoor swimming is gaining popularity. If it's your first time, stick to designated lakes or lidos to get used to it. Join an outdoor swimming group to pick up hints and tips, and discover safe places to swim. If you're swimming in the sea, don't forget the golden rule – swim where the lifeguards are!

The gym & group training

TRY SOMETHING NEW

Gyms provide lots of opportunities to try new activities. You may not enjoy everything you try, but by taking a chance on something different, you could discover a class you love!



Got a gym membership that you never use? Well, now is the time to change that. The gym offers so many different possibilities and there is sure to be something that suits you.

For a start, there is the gym itself. It can be quite an intimidating environment at first, with every exercise machine under the sun available to use, so don't be afraid to ask for an induction or a re-induction so that a member of staff can show you how to use all the equipment properly. It can help to have a proper workout plan to follow, so you don't just flit from machine to machine. The gym staff should be able to help with this, but you could always hire a personal trainer for a few sessions to help you get confident with it.

Think about what you want to get out of your gym sessions. It might be that you want to work solely on strength to complement the fat-burning cardio work that you already do, or perhaps you would prefer a well-balanced programme that incorporates both cardio and strength work.

Don't be afraid of the free weights area either. You don't have to be building big muscles to go here. There are plenty of bodyweight and free weight exercises that you can try, which will help you to build lean muscle, improve your fitness and burn calories. If you're unsure, see if your gym offers any gym floor classes. These are small classes, of usually no more than six people, that use the equipment in the gym itself to give you a good workout.

“Don't be afraid to ask for an induction or a re-induction so that a member of staff can show you how to use all the equipment properly”

Outdoor and home gyms

There are alternatives to using your local gym. If you have the space, you could set up a small gym at home so you can work out at any time. You don't need much – a mat, a few different weights and some resistance bands is a good start, and you can add more kit as you go. In many parks you will also find small, free-to-use outdoor gyms. These are often based on traditional gym machines powered with your bodyweight, and are a brilliant way to get fit.

Gym machines

Gyms have various weight machines for you to use. These offer an alternative, or a complement, to using free weights. They do offer some advantages. For a start, they are easy to start using and will help you to target a very specific muscle group. However, they don't work multiple muscles in the way that free weights do; you could overwork one muscle at the expense of another.

As they are run by an instructor, you can be sure that you are doing it properly.

It's also worth taking a look at the class timetable in your gym. There are so many forms of group training – including things like aerobics, boxing-based classes, interval workouts, circuits, stretch classes – that there is bound to be something for you.



USE A MIRROR

When you are at a class or practising at home, use a mirror. You can check your alignment and pose, and make subtle corrections to get it right. This will help you to get more out of each pose and build on your skills.

Yoga & Pilates

Yoga and Pilates are often put together, and while they are similar in many ways, they are also quite different.

Yoga is an ancient form of exercise, which challenges you to move from pose to pose while controlling your breathing. The poses are designed to help build your strength, flexibility and fitness, while the breathing techniques can help you to practise mindfulness and improve mental wellbeing.

There are lots of different types of yoga that you can try. They range in difficulty from gentle beginners' classes, where you will spend more time in each pose in order to learn proper technique, to more dynamic classes that get your heart rate up by moving from one pose to another more quickly. There are lots of variations and progressions for each pose, which means that you can continue to challenge yourself over and over again.

Pilates, however, is relatively modern. It was invented by Joseph Pilates, who

brought it into the USA when he moved there from Germany in the 1920s. Pilates works to improve core strength and help you to become more aware of how the body connects. It can be adapted for people of all ages and abilities, and can be quite challenging, even if you are fit. It helps you to develop strength, which can also help to protect from injury. It is also possible to use different equipment, like resistance bands, to adapt exercises.

Because both Pilates and yoga provide similar low-impact, strength-building benefits, there are now classes that bring the two together into combined workouts. PIYO, for example, is a fast-moving, high-intensity workout that uses both yoga and Pilates principles in a cardio workout. Body Balance combines Pilates, yoga and Tai Chi, and focuses on working the whole body one area at a time, ending with a chance to relax and meditate. See what's on offer at your local gym.

Home vs classes

You can get plenty of apps, DVDs and online videos to guide you through yoga or Pilates routines. This can be useful to keep your workouts going at home, it's easy to fit into your day and very useful if you're away from home. However, it is also useful to initially attend some classes if you can, as the instructor can help you to get your posture and poses right, so that you get the most out of your workouts.

And relax...

The relaxation element at the end of a yoga or Pilates class can take some getting used to, especially if you're not one for lying still or meditating, but it's a great skill to learn and has a whole host of benefits. Spending a few minutes relaxing after a workout, listening to the silence or working through a guided meditation helps your mental wellbeing. The more you do it, the easier it will become.

“Yoga means addition – addition of energy, strength and beauty to body, mind and soul”
– Amit Ray, author

Clean Sleeping

For many, getting a good night's rest isn't easy. However, clean sleep is all about improving your sleep hygiene or quality of sleep with these tips

WORDS BY **Bee Ginger**

Sleep is imperative for our health and wellbeing, but due to our increasingly busy lives many of us become overtired. This can cause us to replay the day's events over in our minds when it's time to rest, often leaving us wired and unable to fall asleep. Difficulty in falling asleep, nightmares and waking up regularly throughout the night are common issues, but the side effects of these problems can have a detrimental impact on both our mind and body. When our bodies begin to run out of gas our nervous system is also affected, causing us to have trouble reacting to events. This then affects our focus and our ability to make rational decisions. It can even impact our ability to understand and process what is going on around us.

It is between the hours of 10pm and 2am that our bodies produce the most amount of melatonin. This influences the secretion of the human growth hormone (HGH), which is used by our bodies to burn fat, repair collagen, repair cells, regenerate body tissue and improve bone density. To help this process run smoothly, cultivating some mindful habits and thinking about our actions as we prepare for bed can teach our bodies to recognise that it is time to switch off and rest.



10 ways to enjoy clean sleep

We all need sufficient quality rest to heal our bodies and function in our daily lives. Try embracing these practices to fall asleep and stay asleep



1 MAKE SOME ME TIME

Try switching up your routines and habits and forcing yourself to be more present and mindful in your daily tasks and activities. Begin to enjoy the time before going to sleep by listening to relaxing music and lighting some candles instead of firing off those late-night work emails. Take time for yourself and enjoy reading a book or soaking in the bath.

2 TAKE TIME TO DIGEST

Be mindful about eating too much close to your bedtime. Leaving a few hours between dinner and bed will allow your body to digest and process, which should also ensure you won't need to get up numerous times in the night to use the bathroom, interrupting your sleep. By avoiding heavy meals you will also help to prevent heartburn and indigestion.



3 INHALE, EXHALE

Essential oils can be very beneficial in assisting sleep. Lavender oil has been used for many centuries in medicine and relaxation and can have a huge impact on the quality of your sleep. Other oils that enhance your sleep are vetiver, chamomile and valerian. Try creating a relaxing spa feeling in your bathroom by running a bath and breathing in some sleep-inducing scents.

4

PUT IT DOWN ON PAPER

Before you get into bed, try writing a list to help calm your mind and relax. By writing down your day's accomplishments and what you need to do the following day, your mind can let go of the tasks for the night. It's on the list – you don't have to think about it!



5

TAKE A BREAK FROM YOUR DEVICES

We often hear that we should avoid our blue light devices before bed, although how many of us actually do it? But when it comes to improving sleep, it is advice worth heeding because blue lights keep us alert, whereas warm, dim lights calm our bodies, helping to stimulate the production of melatonin. This hormone is vital for sleep. In addition to putting down the devices, engaging in a calming activity before bed with low lights or candles can aid the transition into a restful slumber.

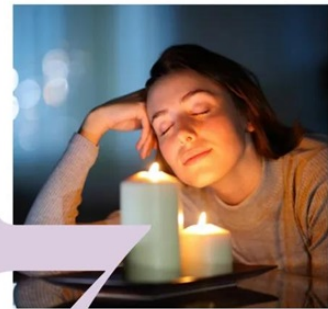


When meditating, observe your thoughts and emotions and allow them to pass without judgement of yourself.

6

EAT YOURSELF SLEEPY

Consuming certain foods or drinks before bed can help to get you off to sleep, as some have sleep-promoting properties. Almonds are a particularly good source of melatonin and magnesium. The melatonin regulates your internal clock, preparing you for sleep, and the magnesium helps to reduce the levels of cortisol, which is the stress hormone known to interrupt sleep.



TAKE IT OUT OF THE BEDROOM

If sleep isn't forthcoming in your bed, try some mindfulness practice elsewhere. When you stay awake in bed for over 20 minutes, your brain starts to associate the bedroom with not sleeping well. You, in turn, will then come to anticipate not being able to sleep there. Be it inside or out, relocate and try using some mindfulness methods before returning to bed.



8

CHECK IN WITH YOUR HABITS

By being mindful of your habits you might be able to uncover something that is interfering with your sleep patterns. For example, cutting back on foods high in sugar, not drinking caffeine or alcohol close to your bedtime, and taking a daily walk or doing some gentle exercise are all excellent ways to enhance your chances of falling asleep. By implementing healthy habits you can ensure you're not harming your body's natural sleep process.

Don't be tempted to try and force yourself to fall asleep. The pressure of trying so hard can actually have the opposite effect and increase feelings of stress. Instead, allow sleep to come naturally by practising mindfulness and embracing the moment.



9

SCAN YOURSELF

An exercise in scanning your body and making you more aware of it can help improve concentration and release tension. Lying down, start from your head and consider how it is feeling. Be aware of it and notice it; confirm how it feels. Gradually move all around your body from head to toe. If you come across a tense area, tighten those muscles for a moment then release, feeling the difference between the two. This focused action relaxes the body, encouraging sleep.

10

VISUALISE YOUR HAPPY PLACE

Visualising yourself in another place is a simple and effective process to ease your body and mind, setting yourself up for a restful night of sleep. Start by making yourself comfortable and thinking about a place in which you feel calm. Using all your senses, think about the smells, sounds and feelings you associate with it. Immerse your mind in these feelings and your body will begin to relax, ready for a good sleep ahead.

Natural beauty rules, okay?



There's nothing more beautiful than someone who is comfortable in their own skin. Here we reveal a few natural beauty rules to help you feel confident and gorgeous

WORDS BY **Rebecca Lewry-Gray**

Natural beauty can mean many things to many people. For one person it could be the act of making the most of what they have been blessed with, for another it could be only purchasing minimally-processed skin care products. Many people look for natural beauty solutions that are also vegan or earth friendly. What's important is that you do what feels right for you, not in a 'I do what I want' kind of way, but the natural beauty practices that help you feel like your intention and authentic self. Make your beauty routine an enjoyable ritual –

nobody wants to make self-care a chore or something that is boring. Find the joy in the scents and textures in natural beauty products, whether they are bought in a shop or made at home. As a first step, you could make the switch from highly-processed products to those that are more natural, and less processed. There has never been a better time to look for alternative products, both on the high street at your local health food shop or online. And don't forget – it's also a lot of fun to have a go at concocting your very own natural beauty remedies.





Hydrate!

You've probably been told that you must drink around eight glasses of water a day to stay hydrated. Obviously water is vital for your body and health, but it's also important for your skin! The more hydrated you are the easier your skin will find it to retain moisture. Drinking more water can also increase blood flow to your skin, which evens out texture and your complexion. Water also assists in improving the elasticity of your skin – which helps all over!

Grab a water bottle with time stamps on it – this can help ensure that you hit your goal every day – and you'll soon see the difference.



Try using rice to tend to your hair

Women in Japan have been washing their hair in rice water since the Heian period (794-1185). Rinse a cup of rice, then soak it in a cup of water until the water becomes cloudy. Strain the rice and retain the water for 24 hours at room temperature, refrigerate it and then use as a rinse after applying conditioner.



Sleeping Beauty

A good night's rest is one of the simplest tasks to help you achieve a natural beauty routine. The stress hormone cortisol is lowest when you're asleep and just happens to be something that can cause a loss of collagen – a protein that gives structure to your skin.



Shiny bright smiles

It sometimes feels that bright, unnaturally white teeth surround us in the media and our self-esteem can suffer as a result. Many home whitening treatments are more dangerous for your teeth than we think – many can be too harsh, creating sensitivity problems that didn't exist before. If you'd like to lighten your teeth, there are natural ways to do so. A paste of baking soda and hydrogen peroxide, while sounding a bit scary, is a really easy way to brighten your smile. Make sure you use a low percentage hydrogen peroxide (no more than 3 percent) and make sure you carefully remove the paste with a water rinse. Only use the paste a few times a week to avoid any risk of damaging your tooth enamel.

Exfoliate naturally

If you want a natural way to look after your skin, make a natural exfoliant to help remove dead skin cells from your body. Physical exfoliants work by sloughing off dead skin cells through rubbing or massage. It's important to remember that the skin on your face is much more delicate to that on your body, so don't be too rough when applying the exfoliant. Natural exfoliants can be something as simple as coffee grounds or porridge flakes. Add natural oils like coconut or jojoba to bind the scrubbing ingredients. Use gentle circular motions when massaging your body and be careful not to over-exfoliate.

A small amount of baking soda, mixed with honey and nourishing oils, makes a fine facial scrub. Lips can also benefit from some exfoliation, but be careful not to do this if you have any cuts or blisters. Finely ground sugar or coffee is gentle enough to use on your lips, with a nourishing oil to bind it together.

Treat yourself

Take a moment to think about the last time you relaxed – and we mean properly relaxed, without worrying about all the other little jobs you 'needed' to get done. Self-care and slowing down is an easy way to promote natural beauty. Indulge in a natural facemask or do some gentle exercise, such as yoga or a calming meditation exercise.



Oils

There are many claims that have been attached to essential oils such as peppermint, tea tree and lavender. We don't know the full potential or effectiveness of essential oils in treating health conditions, but using oils for natural beauty is a winner. Oils assist during massages (whether body or facial) and their scents are great for freshening up.



Exercise

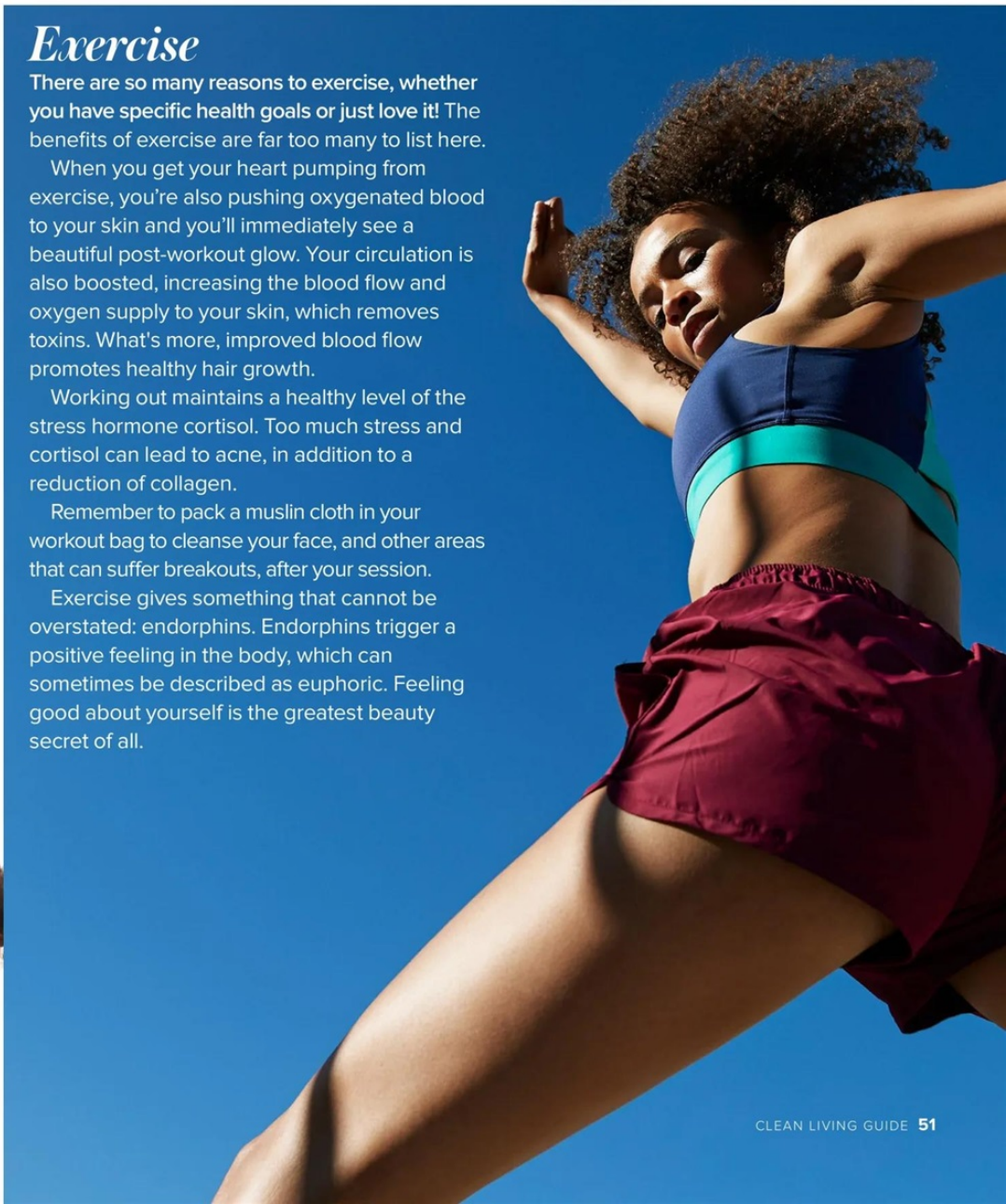
There are so many reasons to exercise, whether you have specific health goals or just love it! The benefits of exercise are far too many to list here.

When you get your heart pumping from exercise, you're also pushing oxygenated blood to your skin and you'll immediately see a beautiful post-workout glow. Your circulation is also boosted, increasing the blood flow and oxygen supply to your skin, which removes toxins. What's more, improved blood flow promotes healthy hair growth.

Working out maintains a healthy level of the stress hormone cortisol. Too much stress and cortisol can lead to acne, in addition to a reduction of collagen.

Remember to pack a muslin cloth in your workout bag to cleanse your face, and other areas that can suffer breakouts, after your session.

Exercise gives something that cannot be overstated: endorphins. Endorphins trigger a positive feeling in the body, which can sometimes be described as euphoric. Feeling good about yourself is the greatest beauty secret of all.



Love yourself

Confidence is paramount. Beauty 'rules' change all the time – what is in style one week will be passé the next, especially with fast-moving trends from social media. It's important to take stock of what makes you you, what you love about yourself, and then OWN IT! This isn't an easy fix, and you may feel a bit of a fraud at the start of this journey.

Stop worrying about what others think of you, focus instead on what you want to communicate, whether through your words, actions or the way you present yourself.

Hands and Nails

There are so many ways to keep your nails looking beautiful without unnecessary chemicals and expensive treatments. Try to keep your nails short (you'll know the right length for you) to avoid painful breaks or the temptation to bite! Keep your hands moisturised and never cut your cuticles. Cuticles are living skin and trimming can encourage infections. If you find the whites of your nails tend to stain due to cooking or general day to day wear, mix up a paste of baking soda and water and gently scrub under and around each nail. Remember to wear gloves when doing dirty jobs!

Wear your sunscreens

We all know that we must wear our sunscreen on days that are both burning hot and overcast. But many mainstream sunscreens are packed with irritating compounds that can interfere with our bodies. If you prefer to use 'cleaner' products on your skin, there is a wide range of more natural mineral sunscreens on the market. These sunblocks use minerals such as zinc oxide and titanium dioxide as active ingredients. These minerals sit on top of your skin and protect it by reflecting away UV rays, in opposition to chemical sunscreens that absorb UV rays, then dissipate them through a chemical reaction.





“Regular massage can help with any tension you hold in your jaw or neck”

Gua Sha

Gua Sha is a natural therapy practised as far back as the Yuan Dynasty in China to treat heatstroke and colds. It involves sliding a stone tool across your skin upwards and with firm pressure to smooth the skin, encourage blood flow and redirect ‘energy’. When starting Gua Sha it’s important to prep your skin with hydrating oil, so the stone doesn’t drag across your skin while pushing. Work gently to avoid damaging your skin and spend some time locating tutorials online.

While it might seem strange to scrape your skin with a piece of polished stone, there is evidence that regular use improves microcirculation and blood flow to your face as well as encouraging collagen production. Regular massage can also help with any tension you may hold in your jaw, neck or forehead. Working Gua Sha into your morning or evening routine also ensures that you make time for yourself and your self-care.



Nourish

Nutrition is vital for natural beauty. An unhealthy diet not only damages your organs and metabolism, but also your skin and hair.

It might therefore seem counterintuitive to eat fat to stay healthy but one of the best foods for your skin and hair is fatty fish. Fish such as salmon, herring and mackerel are sources of omega-3 fatty acids, which keep our skin moisturised and reduce redness. Along the same lines, healthy fats can also be found in avocados, walnuts and sunflower seeds.

Maintaining healthy skin and hair is not just about eating avocado toast every day, however. Beta carotene is a really interesting pigment in vegetables that is converted by our bodies into vitamin A, which is then incorporated into skin to help protect skin cells from sun exposure. Beta carotene can be found in sweet potatoes and bell peppers.

There are so many other foods that keep you healthy and beautiful inside and out, but remember everything is best in moderation.



Don't pick

This is a tough one. The urge to pick and prod at our skin is often a temptation that can be hard to resist.

Squeezing spots can easily lead to more spots developing and spreading. In fact, the squeeze can actually spread the infection around the skin instead of pushing it out! With larger cyst-like spots, squeezing can push the bacteria deeper into your skin. It's also important to remember that when you bring your fingers to your spots you're actually adding new dirt to your skin. This can infect what was once a small simple spot! Plus, making a larger hole in your skin where the spot was can lead to scarring.

The next time you find yourself going to prod at your face or body, stop and ask why you are picking at your skin – is it simply a part of your beauty ‘routine’ or something more serious like a compulsion? If you can use distraction methods to stop your picking, or promise yourself a reward if you get to x days/ weeks/ months without picking and prodding, your skin will certainly thank you!

Always remove your makeup

While it's not the most exciting natural beauty rule, it is one of the most important ones. If you're a person who wears makeup, get in the habit of removing it before heading to bed. Put simply, sleeping in your makeup will cause damage to your skin.

Our skin renews overnight and by keeping that extra layer of old product on your skin, you're preventing this from happening. Signs of fatigue also become more obvious.

Some makeup products are made of oils, which clog pores and can cause blemishes. Remember to thoroughly – but gently – cleanse your skin before bed and apply a moisturiser to assist in the overnight renewal. Try to avoid makeup remover wipes as they can be harsh to skin and are also not the most eco-friendly option. Muslin cloths can be used with an oil-based cleanser to remove stubborn products, then you can double cleanse with your favourite foaming wash.

Clean Beauty

For the ultimate in clean beauty, try these simple DIY face, hair and body treatments that you can whip up at home – you'll find many of the ingredients in your kitchen cupboard. They make great gifts too!

Olive & coconut cleansing cream

Far from adding extra grease, oil actually dissolves oil. Massaging a little of this oil-based cleanser into your skin will dissolve a day's worth of bacteria, dirt and debris gathered in your pores. The result? A clearer, more even complexion in between cleanses.

Makes enough to fill 1 x 60ml/2 floz ointment jar

- + 4 tbsp coconut oil
- + 1 tbsp olive oil

TO MAKE

- 1** Ensure that your coconut oil is solid – in warmer temperatures it will be very soft or liquid, so chill in the refrigerator for 30 minutes before use to solidify.
- 2** Put the coconut oil and olive oil in a bowl and blend together using a hand blender until creamy.
- 3** Spoon the cream into your jar or other small airtight container and seal with the lid. Store in a cool, dry place where it will keep for up to 6 months in the airtight container.

TO USE

- 1** Place a warm, damp face cloth on your face for 20 to 30 seconds to open up pores, then pat dry with a towel.
- 2** Massage a teaspoon of the cream into your face with your fingertips. Leave the cream in place for a further 30 seconds, then use a warm, damp face cloth to dab off any excess.



Warm coconut & honey ultimate deep-conditioning treatment

Raw coconut oil contains lauric acid, which binds to the protein in your hair, helping to protect breakage. Manuka honey is a natural antibacterial, helping to target dandruff and remove impurities on your scalp, whilst rosemary acts as a stimulant to encourage healthy growth.

Makes enough for one application

- + 2 tbsp coconut oil
- + 1 tsp manuka honey
- + 5 drops rosemary essential oil
- + 5 drops lavender essential oil

TO MAKE

- 1** If your coconut oil is solid, melt the oil over a gentle heat then stir in the honey.
- 2** Remove from the heat and leave to cool for 2 minutes, then stir in the essential oils.
- 3** Use immediately while the treatment is still warm, which will help your hair follicles open up on application.

TO USE

- 1** With hair damp, massage the warm mask into your scalp and through the length and ends of your hair.
- 2** Wrap your hair up into a bun (if long enough), put a shower cap over the top and leave the mask to soak in for at least 30 to 40 minutes.
- 3** Wash out in the shower using your normal shampoo (shampoo twice to ensure that all the residue has been removed), and enjoy a good hair day!

Coffee & orange breakfast scrub

The caffeine in coffee has a similar energising effect when applied topically as it does when you drink it. It stimulates circulation and blood flow to skin cells, promoting radiant, glowing skin. Olive oil deeply hydrates skin, and oatmeal gently but thoroughly cleanses and exfoliates. The orange zest aids exfoliation and ensures you smell amazing too.

Makes enough for two applications

- ✦ Optional: up to 15 drops peppermint essential oil
- ✦ 3 tbsp olive oil
- ✦ 4 tbsp ground organic coffee
- ✦ 1 tbsp medium/regular oatmeal
- ✦ Grated zest of 1 orange

TO MAKE

- 1 If you are using the essential oil, mix with the olive oil in a small bowl.
- 2 Add the remaining ingredients and mix together well with a clean spoon, until a grainy paste is formed.
- 3 Transfer to a small airtight container. Use the first application immediately after making, then store the remainder in the airtight container in the fridge and use within three days.

TO USE

- 1 Scoop out a portion of the scrub using a spoon.
- 2 Apply to damp skin in the shower and exfoliate in circular motions. There's no need to follow with moisturiser, as your skin will be nourished and hydrated from the olive oil.

TIP!

If you leave out the orange zest, this will keep for up to one month in a (preferably) cool, dark place.

PHOTOGRAPHS GETTY IMAGES/CULTURA RF, NASSIMA ROTHACKER



Recipes extracted from *Skin Food* by Sophie Thompson. Out now in paperback, £12.99 (approx \$18)

Great hair THE NATURAL WAY

Discover some of the most effective ingredients for keeping your hair healthy, how and why they work, and how best to prepare them

WORDS BY Bee Ginger

One of the issues with many commercial hair care products is that they strip away the natural oils from your hair and scalp – not to mention they can be packed full of chemicals and parabens. Thankfully, there are plenty of natural remedies you can turn to, many of which can be found in your kitchen!

Herbal heroes

There are many different herbs that can help to combat the loss of hair and increase new hair growth and restore your hair and scalp's natural oils, from ginseng, which is found in many natural shampoos and nourishes and boosts hair growth, to nettles, which stimulate the scalp by improving blood circulation, thereby protecting against further breakage. Nettles are also packed with minerals essential for healthy hair growth. Try drinking nettle leaf tea then watch your hair transform.

One particular hair hero is lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*), a well-known and much-loved garden herb, not only for its scent but also as an attractor to bees and butterflies. This herb is a bit of an all-round superpower, known for boosting hair growth and reducing baldness. The oil stimulates the scalp's circulation, balancing the natural oil production of the scalp and strengthening new hair growth. Lavender oil is also a powerful antiseptic and anti-inflammatory, making it highly effective in combatting a dry and flaky scalp and dandruff. As a natural insect repellent, it can also ward off head lice. Another garden herb known to nourish and promote hair growth is rosemary. Used for hundreds of years, it is also said to prevent hair from going prematurely grey.

Roses

Revitalise your hair with roses by adding the petals to boiling water and allowing them to steep. Once cooled, use the water as a rinse to condition your hair and give it a healthy shine.

The rose's natural antiseptic properties can also be beneficial when treating an irritated scalp.

Peppermint

Peppermint oil contains methanol, known to promote circulation. When applied to the scalp it can increase your hair's strength and encourage growth, helping to regenerate hair follicles.

To make a peppermint hair mask you will need:

- ❖ 5 drops peppermint oil
- ❖ 1 tbsp coconut oil
- ❖ 2 tbsp olive oil

Mix the ingredients together and massage onto the scalp (this is best done on dry hair). Leave the mixture on for approximately 30 minutes then wash your hair as normal.

Onions

A slightly quirkier idea to encourage hair growth is onion juice. Rich in the antioxidant quercetin, onions are said to strengthen hair in as little as two weeks. Rich in sulphur, this juice tends to the hair's roots and its antibacterial properties protect the scalp from dandruff and infection. Onion juice can be combined with coconut oil (which promotes hair growth, nourishes split and damaged strands and adds a natural shine to your locks) for a winning hair-care formula.

To make it, mix together:

- ❖ 2 tbsp onion juice*
- ❖ 2 tbsp coconut oil
- ❖ 5 drops lavender or rosemary essential oil

Apply the mixture to your hair and scalp then wait for 30 minutes before washing as usual with a mild shampoo.

* You can extract the juice of the onion by using a juicer or a blender. Begin by dicing your onion and blending. You will then need to pour it through a sieve to extract the juice and leave behind the pulp.



DIY HAIR MASK

Look for a homemade hair mask recipe using items such as olive oil or egg.

Dull, dry hair

Everyone's hair gets a little damaged and dull from time to time, whether this is due to cold and dry air in the winter or chlorinated pools, salty seawater and intense sunshine in the summer. Your hair goes through a lot! Instead of heading to the hairdressers for a costly treatment, try a homemade one using an everyday kitchen staple.

Tea

Many of us start the day with a nice cup of tea, and it turns out that your hair can benefit from a morning brew as well. Black tea is a fantastic way to revitalize your locks to give them optimum shine. Start by making a pot of black tea and enjoying your morning cup. Allow the rest of the pot to cool. Once cooled, pour the tea over your hair (best done over the bath or sink) and allow it to infuse for ten minutes. Then rinse off and enjoy your shiny hair!

Split ends and frizz

Split ends can be problematic, causing your hair to look frizzy and untamed. There are several nourishing superfoods that can double-up as hair heroes to control frizz and smooth the appearance of split ends.

Coconut oil

Use it as a hair mask by liberally applying some coconut oil to towel-dried hair (when the hair's cuticles are still open), working the oil from the mid-lengths all the way down to the ends. Once you're done wrap your hair in a warm towel to maximize the body heat from your head, which further helps to open up the cuticles and allow the nourishing coconut oil to penetrate. Leave on for half an hour, rinse and condition your hair as usual. Fine hair will also benefit from lighter oils, such as avocado or olive, as coconut can weigh lighter strands down.

Bananas

Rich in potassium and packed with nutrients, bananas can help add life to our dull and dry tresses. They also contain a mineral called silica, which aids your body in synthesising collagen, thus making your hair not only stronger but also thicker. Try it in a mask to moisturise your hair and also relieve a

dry and itchy scalp. Using a blender, mix together two ripe bananas and 125ml (4.2floz) coconut milk. Cover your hair and scalp in the mask, leave on for 30 minutes before rinsing well.

Avocados

Another fabulous de-frizzer of tangled tresses, avocados boast an amazing combination of nutrients that smooth and tame unruly hair. Bursting with vitamins A and E, biotin, essential fatty acids and antioxidants, this superfood can be applied every other week to save your hair from a frizzy nightmare. You can mash an avocado by itself and apply it directly to your hair, or combine it with an egg yolk, 2 tbsp of plain yoghurt or even 2 tbsp of mayonnaise, all of which are amazing hydrating ingredients. Leave on your combination for 15 minutes then rinse well. You can also add a spoon of honey to the mix. As a natural humectant, honey attracts and locks in moisture, combatting your dehydration demons.

Oily hair and product build-up

We all suffer from greasy hair from time to time, either through an overuse of hair products or for reasons such as stress, hormonal medication or menstruation. Greasy hair occurs as a result of excessive sebum production. Sebum is an oil produced by glands in the skin, and it is what keeps our hair and scalp naturally moisturised. A build-up of oil leaves our hair looking lank and dull and stops it smelling fresh. These excess oils can also cause skin irritation to your scalp.

Tea Tree

Try a shampoo with tea tree oil to benefit from its anti-inflammatory properties, or one with seaweed extract, which will work to remove excess oil from the scalp.

Lemons

Lemons are another handy tool in the fight to keep your scalp and hair clean. Not only do they absorb excess oil but they also clear up dandruff thanks to the hydroxyl acid they contain, leaving you with citrus-scented, fresh, clean hair. This simple lemon and aloe rinse for oily hair will make your hair softer and ensure your scalp is free from product build-up and oil. The lemon juice acts as an astringent, which will help to control the production of sebum, and the aloe vera repairs your scalp and promotes hair growth. Add 1 tsp of lemon juice to a cup of warm water along with 2 tsp of aloe vera gel. Mix well and rinse your hair with the mixture after shampooing. Leave on for 15 minutes and rinse off with cold water. Repeat weekly.

Apple cider vinegar

Another cupboard hero if you need to get going in the morning is apple cider vinegar. This will give you super shiny, frizz-free hair and a clean scalp in no time. The vinegar balances the scalp's natural pH, preventing the build-up of hair product and helping to maintain a proper oil balance. Best of all, the mixture you need is super simple to make: Just pour 125ml (4.2floz) apple cider vinegar in a jug and add the same amount of warm water, then pour it over your hair. Leave for ten minutes before rinsing thoroughly. Another tip is to make sure you clean your brush regularly, as a build-up of product, dust and bacteria on its surface will transfer onto clean hair, making it look greasy. Try soaking your brush in a bowl of warm water and cider vinegar.

DIY DRY SHAMPOO

With busy lives, sometimes we just do not have the time to wash our hair. As with any gap in the market, the need to keep our hair clean while we are on the go has resulted in dry shampoos becoming extremely popular in recent years. But they are not the only solution. One super speedy tip to use if you're running late or in a hurry is applying baking soda or arrowroot powder to your locks. These powders help absorb the dirt and oil in your hair with ease. Apply with a make-up brush and dust it on both your hairline and scalp, using your fingers to remove any excess particles.

If you find the pale powders don't blend in well with your hair colour, you can try adding some ground cinnamon (for redheads and strawberry blondes) or cocoa powder (for brunettes and dark blondes) to the mix, adjusting the amount until you reach a shade that blends in well.





Skin saviours

Soothe, smooth and save your skin with our guide to the best natural remedies

WORDS BY Julie Bassett

Dry skin and eczema

If you suffer from flaky, dry or sore skin, the answer might be lying in your food cupboard!

Your skin is the largest organ in the human body, and one of the most complex too. It's open to the elements

and works hard to protect your body, regulate temperature and provide immunity.

Your skin can suffer from a number of conditions throughout your life, from sun and wind damage, dry patches and spots, to the natural process of ageing. There is a huge market in products promising to combat these effects and renew your skin. But adding more and more chemicals to your skin could be doing more harm than good.

Nature provides us with so many solutions that work with your skin to help soothe, restore and replenish. Even the top beauty manufacturers know this, with natural components being added to their concoctions to reap their benefits.

You don't need a fancy moisturiser, when you can go back to basics. Many natural remedies are easy to source – you might even have them lying around your home. In this guide, we'll explore simple ways to use natural products to solve and relieve common skin complaints.

USE COCONUT OIL FOR DRY PATCHES

Why it helps

If you've only ever used coconut oil for cooking, you're missing out! Coconut oil has so many uses, and one is as a moisturiser for dry to very dry skin. Coconut oil is made up of natural fats and fatty acids. It has antimicrobial properties too. It forms an oily layer over your skin, helping your skin to retain its natural moisture, as well as adding extra hydration. In doing so, it stops the skin from drying out and can make it look plumper and fresher..

How to use it

While coconut oil is safe to use anywhere, it's not recommended to use it on your face as it could clog your pores and cause breakouts. However, for dry skin or eczema on your body, coconut oil can provide much-needed relief. Use small amounts of pure virgin coconut oil on any sore patches, either on its own or as a top layer over your usual moisturiser to seal in the protection.

TRY AN OATMEAL SOAK TO HELP RELIEVE ECZEMA

Why it helps

The thought of adding porridge oats to a bath might sound a little odd, but it's an

old-fashioned remedy that is still used today. Oatmeal refers to rolled, cut oats rather like a coarse flour, as opposed to large whole oats. Soaking in an oatmeal bath can help relieve the itchiness and irritation that often comes with eczema. It's also thought that an oatmeal bath can provide the skin with some protection against further dryness and it can help the skin to maintain its natural PH balance.

How to use it

You need to use 'colloidal oatmeal', which is very finely ground so it dissolves in water. You can buy this ready ground or you can make your own by blending normal oatmeal into a fine powder. You can test if it's fine enough by dissolving a small amount in a glass of water and check it is absorbed. To have an oatmeal soak, add about a cup of colloidal oatmeal to a warm (but not hot) bath full of water. Soaking for 10 minutes is plenty – too long and it can start to dry out your skin. Rinse off, pat yourself dry and apply your chosen moisturiser.



APPLY HONEY TO DRY SKIN

Why it helps

Honey is one of nature's wonder remedies and has many potential uses. One such application is for dry skin, as it can speed up your skin's natural healing processes. Honey can also help if you suffer from eczema or psoriasis thanks to its potent natural compounds.

How to use it

You need to use a raw, unpasteurised

honey, as this ensures it has the healthy bacteria you need for your skin. Make sure you do a patch test first, to check for a reaction. You can simply apply honey as it is to small areas, or you can apply a thin, even layer to your whole face as a mask and leave for about 20 minutes before rinsing off. It also blends really well with other ingredients to make different masks – for example, blend with a little olive oil, which helps make the mixture smoother to apply, and also imparts its own dry-skin soothing benefits.





Oily skin

If you have oily or shiny skin, these remedies could help you to mattify and freshen up

ABSORB OIL WITH EGG WHITES

Why it helps

Eggs are high in protein, but did you know that using egg whites on your skin is thought to absorb excess oil and tighten your skin? They are also reported to help shrink large pores, giving your skin a more even texture and reducing shine from an overproduction of oil.

How to use it

Egg whites are usually combined with other ingredients to create a homemade face mask, as they are good at binding liquids together. The simplest solution for oily skin is to combine one egg white with 3-4 drops of fresh lemon juice. Whisk the two together and apply to your face. Leave for up to 20 minutes, before rinsing off. This combination can also help dark circles under your eyes – so it's a double win!

MAKE A SCRUB FROM ALMONDS

Why it helps

Ground almonds can be used to make your own facial scrub at home. They are coarse enough to help lift any dry skin, but they are really useful for oily skin as they can also help to absorb excess oil on the skin. Almonds are also high in Vitamin E, which can help heal any scarring from spots or acne.

How to use it

If you're allergic to nuts, then definitely don't try this one! Make your own face scrub by grinding up raw almonds until you have about 3 tsp worth. Add to 2 tbsp of raw honey and mix. Apply to your face in a gentle, circular scrubbing motion, then rinse off with warm water.



CONTROL OIL PRODUCTION WITH JOJOBA

Why it helps

It might seem counterproductive to use an oil, but actually there are many oils that can be used on your skin to combat an overproduction of sebum – the oily substance produced by your body's sebaceous glands. Jojoba oil is one of these, and comes from the jojoba plant. Jojoba oil is quite similar in its makeup to natural sebum, so your skin is signalled that it has enough sebum and doesn't need to produce any more. This helps your skin to regulate its own sebum production, while keeping your pores unclogged and your skin soft.

How to use it

Make sure you use pure jojoba oil. You only need a very small amount on your hands, which you can then massage into your face. It's a gentle oil that can be used as a carrier oil as well for other essential oils, such as tea tree oil if you suffer from spots alongside the oily skin.



Signs of ageing

You can reduce the signs of ageing with some simple home remedies

SMOOTH WRINKLES WITH ALOE VERA

Why it helps

If you're trying to smooth fine lines, aloe vera might be the natural solution you're looking for. Aloe vera has so many uses on the skin, from soothing sunburn to healing acne. Research has shown that it can be effective at improving the appearance of wrinkles, increasing the elasticity of the skin and boosting collagen production. In effect, it improves the texture of the skin and makes it appear plumper, thereby making wrinkles less obvious.

How to use it

Aloe vera can be taken as a supplement or applied topically. Applying it topically means you can directly benefit from its moisturising effects while improving your fine lines. It's easy to buy a pure aloe vera gel, but you could also grow your own plant at home – they are easy to look after. Simply cut open a fresh leaf and scoop out the gel inside. Apply as a thin layer all over your face and leave for up to 10 minutes, before rinsing off. Make sure you do a patch test before the first application.

EVEN SKIN TONE WITH YOGHURT

Why it helps

If you've got a pot of natural yoghurt in the fridge, it can be so much more than a simple, tasty snack! It's thought that yoghurt can help to brighten your skin's natural tone and lock in moisture making it appear plumper, and therefore more youthful. It is also reported to correct uneven skin tone and help reduce the appearance of age spots.

How to use it

Ideally, you want to use a natural, plain yoghurt. Cow's milk is good for its high calcium levels, but you can also use plant-based yoghurts if you prefer or have a milk allergy. Greek-style yoghurts can be easier to apply as they are thicker. Usually other ingredients are added, such as honey, lemon juice, aloe vera or turmeric. A yoghurt mask can be applied and left for up to 15 minutes before being rinsed off.

COMBAT AGEING WITH VITAMIN C

Why it helps

Of all vitamins, vitamin C is the best for helping combat the signs of ageing on your skin. Vitamin C is naturally found in your skin and plays a key role in collagen production, keeping your skin youthful and healthy. It can decrease cell damage, heal damaged skin, make your skin firmer and reduce wrinkles – a real wonder vitamin!

How to use it

Vitamin C can be taken orally, as either a supplement or in your daily diet. You can also apply it topically by purchasing a serum that can be applied directly to your skin. There are now lots of beauty products that offer the power of vitamin C, but often this is in only tiny amounts. It's best to go for a serum with as few ingredients as possible, such as a concentrated vitamin C with hyaluronic acid – look for at least 10-20 percent pure vitamin C concentration for the best effect.



Chapped lips

Get baby-soft, smooth lips with these easily sourced natural ideas



EXFOLIATE WITH A SALT SCRUB

Why it helps

Exfoliating your lips can help to remove dry skin, but it's important to use a gentle formulation or you will end up making them sore and red. You can make your own lip scrub using products from around the home. Most scrubs need a coarse agent to rub with – the exfoliant – and salt is a great option. It's anti-inflammatory and can soothe sore skin, while gently lifting dead skin cells to reveal soft, fresh lips. It needs to be used alongside a hydrating base, but there are plenty of options.

How to use it

Use a good-quality sea salt rather than normal table salt – you need the larger granules to work as an exfoliant. There are lots of different recipes for homemade salt lip scrubs. If you have some petroleum jelly, you can simply mix a small amount with some sea salt to both exfoliate and moisturise. Coconut oil also makes a great base, as it's known for its moisturising properties. You want roughly 2 teaspoons of your hydrating base to 1 teaspoon of sea salt. You could add a drop of a soothing essential oil too, for an added boost, such as lavender.

HYDRATE LIPS WITH CUCUMBER

Why it helps

Cucumber is an age-old remedy for use on the eyes, to help reduce puffiness and dark circles, but did you know that the humble salad vegetable can help your lips too? Cucumber is well known for its hydrating properties, and it is packed with vitamins too. Cucumber will help cool and soothe irritated skin, as well as add essential moisture too. It's perfect in summer in particular to cool hot lips.

How to use it

Slice the cucumber and gently rub it over your lips, then leave the juice for about 10 minutes before washing off. You can also rest the cucumber slices on your lips as you would on your eyes for a cooling effect. You can do this as often as you need to, for on-the-go relief.



USE GREEN TEA TO SOOTHE SORENESS

Why it helps

Green tea is a great drink, with many reported benefits. Drinking a few cups every day is thought to help improve brain function, improve blood flow and give you a dose of antioxidants. However, green tea is also potent when applied topically. It might seem odd to rub a teabag on your face, but those antioxidants and tannins are perfect for helping hydrate and soothe sore skin, while the polyphenols may help with inflammation. Using green tea in this way can help heal dry skin and rehydrate lips.

How to use it

Add a green tea bag to hot water, as if you were making a cup to drink. Let it cool – don't apply to your lips hot! Once it's cooled enough (warm is fine), lie back and place the teabag on your lips. Leave for a few minutes before rinsing off. Try to do this daily if you have very dry, chapped lips.

Spots and acne

Problem skin can be treated with these all-natural remedies

TREAT ACNE WITH TEA TREE OIL

Why it helps

Probably the best-known and most widely accepted of all natural remedies for problem skin, tea tree oil is derived from the *Melaleuca alternifolia* tree, native to Australia. It's often used in traditional spot remedies, but it doesn't need to be part of a medicinal product to have an effect. It can help with both active acne breakouts, as well as with the scarring. Tea tree oil is both anti-inflammatory and anti-microbial, meaning it can heal, relieve and reduce the swelling associated with spots and acne.

How to use it

Tea tree oil is a potent essential oil, so it's not suitable for being used neat. You should also do a patch test before applying. Tea tree oil needs to be added to a carrier. You could include a few drops in a witch hazel toner for an all-over solution for ongoing treatment of acne and spots (see more below). You can also mix a drop into aloe vera gel as a treatment to apply directly to spots. Other popular base carriers include coconut oil, almond oil or even plain distilled water.

WASH YOUR FACE WITH APPLE CIDER VINEGAR

Why it helps

Apple cider vinegar is a very potent home remedy for a number of different ailments. Apple cider vinegar is a product of apple cider fermented with yeast. It might not smell that great to put on your face, but it has a lot of uses. During fermentation, a compound called acetic acid is formed, which is known to be both antibacterial and antifungal.

How to use it

Make your own face wash with apple cider vinegar and use daily to cleanse your face. This helps to remove oil and dirt, as well as help prevent spots from forming. It's really simple to make – simply add 1 tbsp apple cider vinegar to about a cup of warm water, and use this to wash your face or apply with cotton balls. Rinse afterwards with plain water. You can also use apple cider vinegar neat on a cotton swab to apply on newly formed spots to help them heal.

TONE WITH WITCH HAZEL

Why it helps

Witch hazel is the name of a bush in the United States, and has a long history of being used as a skin treatment. It helps to reduce irritation and inflammation, which is why it is often used in the treatment of acne or spot-prone skin. It can act as an astringent, meaning it dries out your spots, and is a natural ingredient that can replace harsher, chemical toners.

How to use it

You can buy distilled witch hazel from most pharmacies, or you can source natural products where witch hazel is part of the ingredients in a gel or serum. If you go for the distilled version, you can use it to make your own toner by mixing with water. You could also add extra ingredients, such as a drop of tea tree oil. Or, apply it neat to spots using a cotton swab.



Seasonal issues

Winter and summer can both affect skin in different ways; here are some natural solutions



USE SANDALWOOD ON HEAT RASH

Why it helps

Prickly heat, or heat rash, is caused by excessive sweating so is particularly common in the summer months. It causes a red rash to appear, made up of small, itchy red spots. Your skin can also feel hot and sore. It's most important to try and cool the skin down with a damp cloth or ice pack, but there are natural remedies that can ease the itch and pain. One of these is sandalwood, which is anti-inflammatory to help with swelling and an analgesic to help relieve pain. You can buy sandalwood as either an oil or a powder.

How to use it

It's best if you can get sandalwood as a powder for this purpose. Mix the powder with a little water to form a paste-like substance. This paste can be applied directly to the heat rash areas and left on until the pain is reduced, before rinsing off. You should do a patch test before applying, and it's important not to apply on broken skin.



EASE SUNBURN WITH CAMOMILE TEA

Why it helps

Camomile is a daisy-like plant, of which two species are used to make traditional, herbal remedies. Camomile tea is made from the dried flowers of these plants. They are packed with polyphenols, which are thought to have an antioxidant effect. When consumed, the tea is thought to help lower blood sugar, reduce pain and inflammation, and help with sleep and relaxation. However, these healing properties can also be applied directly onto the skin for a direct effect, and can help the skin heal when sunburnt as well as reduce inflammation and pain.

How to use it

If you have just a few, smaller patches of sunburn, make your camomile tea as usual, but steep in boiled water. After 15-20 minutes, apply the teabags directly to your skin. You can soak a cloth in the tea itself and use that to apply the tea to a larger area, letting it rest on the affected area for up to 30 minutes to provide relief. You can also make a larger amount of tea (say 5-6 bags' worth) and add it to a cool bath, so you can soak your whole body.

EASE WINDBURN WITH SHEA BUTTER

Why it helps

In the colder months, wind and cold air can play havoc with your skin. If you're out in it for a long time, you might develop sore, red patches that sting as though they are burnt – this is wind burn, and it can be common with skiers and snowboarders. The sore skin might even peel, making it even more sensitive in that area. It can be quite uncomfortable, and you should avoid harsh skin treatments, which can make it worse. It's better to use natural, gentle solutions as a treatment. Shea butter, the fat extracted from the nut of the African shea tree, helps to rehydrate and soothe the skin, without clogging the pores.

How to use it

Try and buy unprocessed, raw shea butter if you can. Pure shea butter can crystallise, so you may need to massage the pack before using. You only need a small amount for a great effect, so squeeze a little on to your hand and rub into the affected areas. You can also apply it before heading out into cold weather, as this can help prevent wind burn in the first place.



Common complaints

We round up some natural solutions to other common skin conditions

REDUCE PUFFY EYES WITH POTATOES

Why it helps

If you are prone to waking up with puffy eyes, you might be keen to know how to reduce them naturally. One of the most-common options is to use cucumber slices, which we mentioned already in our section on chapped lips, where we discussed their hydrating properties. However, another very good, easily accessible and cheap solution is to use slices of cold potato. Potatoes have enzymes and astringent properties that make them especially good for tightening your skin and reducing inflammation, plus they are safe to use on the eye area.

How to use it

It's best if your potatoes are cold, so store them in the fridge for this purpose. Slice raw potato thinly and place over your eyes. Lie back and relax for up to 20 minutes to reduce puffy eyes.



EASE ROSACEA WITH LAVENDER

Why it helps

Rosacea is a long-term skin condition that causes redness on your nose, cheeks, forehead and chin. It tends to come and go, and can be more common in women and those with lighter skin. Men do get rosacea too and often the symptoms can be worse. As the condition progresses, tiny broken blood vessels can appear on the skin that don't go away. There are various triggers for rosacea, including certain foods, alcohol, caffeine and exercise. While there are many medicinal solutions (and depending on severity, this might be the best course of action), there are some natural remedies that can ease symptoms. Lavender is a natural anti-inflammatory and can help to shrink the blood vessels in the face. It can also soothe and calm the skin.

How to use it

Lavender can be used topically either directly or in a carrier oil. It can also be dropped into your usual moisturiser. You don't need much – one or two drops is enough to benefit.



REMOVE DARK UNDEREYE CIRCLES WITH TEA

Why it helps

Teas that contain caffeine and antioxidants can help to stimulate your blood circulation, which helps to lessen the appearance of dark circles or shadows under your eyes. It also helps to shrink your blood vessels and tighten the skin, which also helps to get rid of those dark patches. It's best to use normal black tea for this, and even better if the teabags are cold, as the cool compress will enhance the effects.

How to use it

Brew yourself a cup of black tea as usual, soaking two bags in hot water for about 4-5 minutes. Then, take the tea bags out and pop them in the fridge for about 10-15 minutes until they are cold. Lie back and place them on your eyes, then relax for 10-15 minutes to let them do their work. The best bit is, you can drink the hot tea while waiting for the bags to cool down!



CLEAN WATER

It's not only important to drink more water, but to clean up the water we're drinking. Check out EWG's Tap Water Database to see what toxins are in your water. It may be worth investing in a better filter.

THE WONDERS of water

Great for your mind, body and soul, here's why water is so important for us and for living a clean lifestyle...

WORDS BY **Natalie Denton**

Water, so overlooked yet so vital to our very existence. Did you know that more than half of your body is made up of water and that every one of your cells relies on water to work? It's essential for completing many of your bodily functions, which is why you could only survive a couple of days without it. Your blood, which needs water, carries oxygen to all your cells, so no water means those cells would die. Your immunity depends on water; it's contained in lymph, the illness-fighting fluid your body creates when it senses an attack. Your temperature is stabilised by water, and is the main ingredient of sweat, which is used to cool your skin to prevent overheating. Your digestive system can't function without water as it's needed to help create the 'juices' that flush all those nasty toxins and waste out of your body. So they're the headlines, many of which you may already have known, but there's so much more to explore when it comes to exactly why water is so good for you.

Keeping yourself hydrated when exercising will ensure you keep yourself energised

How much water should you be drinking?

In the UK, the advice for adults is to consume six to eight glasses of water (and/or other liquids) over the course of a day, whereas for children aged 1-3 years old, the suggestion is four cups, increasing to five for those aged between 4 and 8 years.

While it's important to drink enough water, it's just as important not to go overboard and drink too much water over a short period of time, as this can cause overhydration. The danger of this is that it can lead to hyponatremia, a condition which sees the kidneys sent more water than they can cope with thus creating a dangerous low sodium concentration in the blood. Symptoms of hyponatremia include confusion, headaches, nausea and poor balance, and in severe cases can be fatal.

How water keeps you healthy

It's universally agreed upon that drinking water keeps you healthy and here's why. First of all it contains a whole host of much appreciated, incredibly vital vitamins, minerals and nutrients that the body loves, needs, to help it function properly, all helpfully dissolved within the water itself, making it easier and quicker for them to reach every part of the body. For example, the common minerals you can expect to find at 'safe' levels in drinking water include: calcium (important for bones and teeth), magnesium (also helps with bones and cardiovascular health), potassium (helps nerves to function, regulates the heartbeat and muscles to contract), sodium (an essential electrolyte), copper (helps with absorption of iron and antioxidants), selenium (similar to copper and also supports immunity), and fluoride (protection against tooth decay).

When it comes to getting active, dehydration is a big problem because it means you're less able to perform, so if you're doing something like exercising the chances are you're more likely to quit earlier than you would if you were properly hydrated. Another way in which water helps to keep you moving is that parts of the body like cartilage, found



Water is essential for survival, but did you know it can have a raft of other benefits too, such as younger-looking skin?

in joints and the discs of the spine, are said to be approximately 80 percent water, therefore long-term refusal to drink enough H₂O can reduce your body's ability to absorb shock and increase the likelihood of joint pain as you get older.

As mentioned before, our blood needs water. The less water there is means the thicker the blood will be, which increases blood pressure and can escalate the likelihood of cardiovascular problems such as heart disease and stroke.

Another vital role water plays in our body is how it digests food. Water is essential for avoiding all manner of ailments such as constipation, heartburn and even stomach ulcers. Furthermore when it comes to losing waste, the kidneys rely on water to regulate the fluid within your body. Not enough of it can lead to kidney stones, chronic kidney disease, and urinary tract infections.

When you're dehydrated the airways tighten in a bid to cope with water loss, which can heighten the impact of allergies or make breathing conditions like asthma much worse.

Losing weight, how water helps

Swapping out your favourite sugar-laden sodas or sugar-sweetened coffee drinks for water will see you shed the pounds in a relatively short space of time. Water can also help to suppress your appetite, as often when we think we are hungry, we're

in fact just dehydrated, so reaching for the tap instead of the cookie jar can help make a huge difference to your calorie intake and therefore reduce your weight over time. Some medical experts even advise drinking a glass of water before eating a meal if you have a tendency to be too generous with portions, as the water will make you think you're fuller, sooner.

Why water is a wonder tonic for beauty

Like the rest of what's inside your body, water does wonders for what's on the outside, too. As the body's largest organ, the skin needs more than its fair share of water. Apart from anything else this will avoid it becoming dry, tight and flaky, not to mention help to prevent premature aging by becoming wrinklier than your

You can top up your water levels from eating certain types of food



“When you’re dehydrated the airways tighten in a bid to cope with water loss, which can heighten the impact of allergies or make breathing conditions like asthma much worse”

genes intended. And that’s where water is a wonder tonic; it helps your skin maintain moisture, which enhances elasticity. The more water you drink, (within reason) the more elastic your skin and therefore the fewer wrinkles and fine lines.

Scientific studies have also shown that drinking water improves your complexion for two reasons. Firstly it flushes out toxins and secondly, it increases blood flow to the skin, resulting in a more radiant glow. This is especially helpful for those with skin conditions like psoriasis, rosacea, or eczema.

Acne sufferers can also take solace with a large cool drink of H₂O because water flushes toxins from the skin, which in turn shrinks pores, meaning they’re less likely to clog and become a spot. Finally, if you’ve woken up looking a little on the puffy side, the chances are you are probably dehydrated and your body is desperately storing what little water remains. For smoother skin, keep a glass of water by your bed for nighttime top ups.

So many choices

If you thought water was boring, think again, as there are many different options to try, but sometimes when you’re faced with all the choices it can be confusing to know what each type is. So let’s start with the easy one. Regular, non-fancy tap water, which comes straight out of the tap from the main water supply is perfectly safe to drink and relatively inexpensive. Mineral water is taken from a spring and filters naturally through hills and rocks thus contains a bunch of helpful minerals such as magnesium and calcium. Common brands of mineral water found at the supermarket are Buxton, Highland Spring or Volvic. Spring and glacial water are allegedly bottled at the source of a respective water flow, such as Evian. Sparkling water provides drinkers with a little extra fizz courtesy of the carbon dioxide that has been infused, such as San Pellegrino or Perrier. Distilled water is

water that’s been boiled, collected as steam and then cooled back into a liquid. It’s not a choice that is usually sold in bottles in shops due to its lack of mineral content, but is a sensible option if you’re visiting somewhere where the water supply is contaminated or questionable. Another option in this situation would be to consume purified or filtered water, which is essentially tap (or groundwater) that has been treated to remove harmful elements. Filtered water has become increasingly popular in recent times as many water filters can remove potentially dangerous components of tap water such as heavy metals like lead from old pipes, chlorine that’s used to kill bacteria, and microplastics that are shed from the tonnes of rubbish floating around the oceans. However, be aware that water

filters can also strip away important minerals such as magnesium and calcium.

Then there’s flavoured water, which really spices things up. If you go this route, just be sure to take a look at the ingredients if you’re aiming to avoid sugars or sweeteners.

And that’s not all, because you needn’t rely on getting your eight-a-day from normal water alone. Plain decaffeinated tea, fruit tea, decaf coffee, skimmed milk and fruit juices are other options. What’s more, there’s plenty of water in certain foods too, especially fruit and vegetables. In fact here is a list of the top water-rich, readily available foods: watermelon, strawberries, cantaloupe and honeydew melon, spinach, peaches, mushrooms, oranges, cucumber, lettuce, broth, courgette, celery, natural yoghurt, tomatoes, peppers, cauliflower, cabbage, grapefruit, cottage cheese, broccoli, apples, blueberries and so many more.

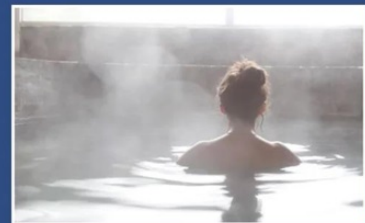
The fact is simple. Water is good for us. It’s the difference between life and death, thriving or just surviving. Just as we need oxygen, food and sleep, we need water. It’s the thing that links us to every other living organism; we all have the same one thing in common; we all need water.

THE BENEFITS OF HOT SPRING BATHING

Take a dip in a rejuvenating natural hot spring to restore more than just your spirits

Hot springs are nature’s spa. These wonderfully warm pools, infused with a glorious assortment of skin-revitalising minerals, are actually natural water springs heated by subterranean volcanic activity. There are many things to love about hot springs besides the stunning scenery: the heat soothes aching muscles, while the water contains a fortifying mix of minerals that are dissolved in the balmy water, including magnesium, silica, lithium, radium, calcium and more! Think of it as a miracle multivitamin serum for the skin. What’s more, a soak in the spring can offer other benefits for the rest of your body because the sulphur, which gives the natural phenomenon its signature, if slightly

unpleasant scent, acts as a decongestant for the chest and nose, it improves circulation and lowers blood pressure, not to mention relaxing in the great outdoors does wonders for your mental wellbeing.



Safe hot springs - those of a usable temperature and free of known disease-causing organisms - are regularly flocked to by local residents and tourists alike, not only because they’re surrounded by gorgeous vistas, but because of the healing properties of the water.





Clean Mind

It's not just your house that needs a tidy. Your mind can become cluttered with all the overthinking and stress so it's important to give it a spring clean. This means spending less time on your phone and making more time for positive thoughts, mindful activities and friendships that help you grow.



CLEANSE YOUR MIND

Forget the bathroom cabinet, there's something else in need of a declutter...

You can't fold a jumper without hearing about the apparently life-changing 'home-tidy' Marie Kondo method. But what if there was something more in need of a declutter than our overflowing sock drawer? Just like our homes, our brains aren't a pretty sight when they're clogged up with too much bric-a-brac. So it's important to do a regular brain blitz and clear out our grey matter. Here's how...

Information overload

Our brains are a feat of nature. Incredibly, they can store as much information as the entire Internet. "We live in an age where there is just so much content available to us at a click of a button," says mindset and business coach Irene Moore (irenemoore.com). As our inboxes are filling up with endless newsletter sign-ups and notifications, so too are our minds. This overload of information can make us feel overwhelmed, and many of us are also making too many commitments. Researchers from the University of Wisconsin-Madison found that each stressful incident could age our brain by one-and-a-half years. So, unwinding is an important step in the decluttering process.



HOW TO DO IT

1 SWAP BUSY FOR BREATHE

Using words like "stressed", "busy" or "hectic" can make you feel overwhelmed. Every time you think "busy", swap that word for "breathe" – then take a deep breath in and out.

2 BEDITATE IN THE MORNING

Want to tap in to your creative brainwaves today? Jumping out of bed stressed won't help. "When you're in a stressed beta brainwave

mode, you're very focused on a particular goal – great for when you know what you're doing, but not so good for problem-solving," explains meditation

creator Laurence Shorter. "Beditating, which involves spending five minutes in bed before you get up, slows down and relaxes your brainwaves, so you move from stress-driven beta-wave mode into a more relaxed alpha-wave mode." Try beditating for a clearer, calmer mind. Lie there and do nothing. Acknowledge the voice in your head that says you need to be doing something, but don't react. Also be mindful of your body lying on the bed. Don't worry if you struggle to feel calm, just repeat the process until you

do. Once you feel relaxed, ask yourself: "What are my priorities for the day?" Don't worry if the answer doesn't come to you immediately. Hopefully, by relaxing, you'll give your brain space to think and conjure up creative solutions.

3 FEEL THE PRESSURE

Sleep is key for brain functions, including how neurons communicate. But a jam-packed brain can stop you switching off and dropping off. Try this snooze-inducing trick – rub the spot behind your ear where there's a hollow. "It's one of the most relaxing points in the body," says Gillian Berry, a member of the British Acupuncture Council.

4 LEARN TO SAY NO

Constantly feel under pressure to say "yes"? Your people-pleasing ways may be having a negative effect on your wellbeing. Overcommitting ourselves can cause stress levels to rise, as we agree to give time and energy we don't have, and lead us to foster resentment. Saying "no" can help you balance the demands of others, and leave you feeling happier, calmer and more in control. "If you find it hard to say no to someone's face, tell them you'll check your diary and get back to them. Honestly explain that you'd like to help but don't want to let anyone down as you are overcommitted," explains psychotherapist Juliet Grace.



Why is mental clutter bad?

Like that 'everything' cupboard under the stairs where we chaotically stuff all our odds and sods, our brain can struggle to sort through all the rubbish and find what we actually need. "Having a cluttered mind can be debilitating and can leave us feeling unfocused and anxious," says Irene. "Often we don't know where to begin, because there is so much swirling around in our brain."

While being informed is never bad – after all, our minds are designed to think and process information – overstimulation can have a negative effect. "Like most things, too much of anything isn't good for you," she adds.

When we overload ourselves, instead of becoming smarter as we tackle lots of new challenges, our brain's ability to learn and problem-solve actually decreases. It can also cause us to overthink things, which can feel draining and eventually even be a cause of chronic stress. This can suppress your immune system, upset your digestive system and increase your risk of heart problems and stroke.

"When we have a clearer mind, we're able to process information effectively and make better decisions," says clinical hypnotherapist Fiona Lamb. "By decluttering, our mind becomes sharper – clearing the old for the new."



TECH TIP

Bombarded with work emails after work? Put your out of office on when you leave for the day and say you'll reply when you're next at work. And then STICK TO IT!



Clear our minds

So how can we flick our filter switch and make our brains less busy?

+ DO A DIGITAL DETOX

"We're bombarded with messages, calls and never-ending notifications," says life coach Carole Ann Rice. "We get a dopamine thrill, so it can become addictive, but this eventually becomes toxic." Take time away from your phone – read, go for a walk or meet a friend – and avoid taking it into the bedroom. Download the Space app (iOS/Android). It encourages mindful screen time by setting screen unlock and time use goals as well as alerting you to overuse.

+ SAY TA-TA TO TO-DOS

Endless checklists might make us feel more organised, but they're actually draining our brains. Carole Ann suggests employing her 3D concept of Do it, Dump it or Delegate it:

Do it Devote time to completing a task entirely. Be realistic about how long it will take and focus on one thing at one time.

Dump it This refers to time and tasks. Say "no" more often – it stops you becoming overloaded. Don't do something out of obligation or guilt, and ensure you leave 'white space'

in your diary (at least a couple of days free) that is just for you.

Delegate it Don't have time, energy or the inclination for a task? Ask for help. Do a 'skills swap' – whatever you dislike doing, someone else will love.

+ SAY "NO" TO MULTITASKING

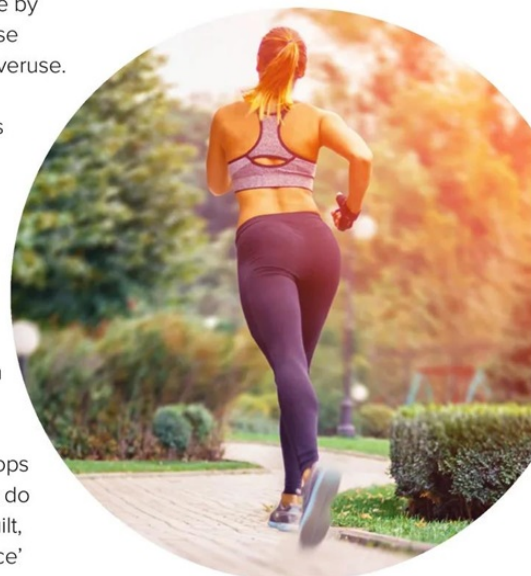
Despite popular belief, it doesn't make you more efficient. In fact, research shows that our brains are not nearly as good as we think they are at handling multiple tasks, and could even reduce productivity by 40 percent. Shifting your attention and focus from one thing to the next makes it difficult to tune out distractions, and can cause mental blocks that can slow you down.

+ JOURNAL FOR 5 MINUTES

Irene recommends setting out some time each day – ideally morning and night – to list all of your thoughts. "Try and stick to the same time every day if you can so you start to create a routine for decluttering your mind," she says. Prioritise these thoughts from 1 to 3, with number 1 being the most important. Focus on trying to complete the 1s this week.

+ GET MOVING

"Exercising boosts blood flow and releases happy hormones dopamine and serotonin," says Fiona. "This clears the mind and strengthens brain nerve cells." Dancing, in particular, requires mental skills and co-ordination, which improves cognitive function and slows down ageing.





Click yourself calm

Do you get that sinking feeling every time another email pops up on your phone? An out-of-control inbox can be enough to drive the most calm of us to our third espresso of the morning – a study by Loughborough University found that measurements of heart rate, blood pressure and the stress hormone cortisol were shown to peak at points in the day when people's inboxes were fullest. So here's how to get a handle on your inbox. All it takes is five minutes a week...

+ DEVELOP A SCHEDULE

It takes workers a third longer to complete a task if they're interrupted by emails.*

So establish a routine for when you check emails. A study by the University of British Columbia found that limiting it to three times per day has a significant impact on mental health. Think about the quietest moments in your day to block off as your email sessions.



+ JUNK THE JUNK MAIL

An inbox constantly filling up with messages from mailing lists you signed up to years ago can make you feel out of control (and wake you up at 2am). So take five minutes to unsubscribe from all your junk mail.

+ BE A FOLDER FAN

Filing emails into folders makes it easier to find relevant messages. Look at the first three pages of your inbox and note down recurring subject matters – these should be the names of your folders. In future, once you've dealt with an email, drop it into the relevant folder.

+ HIT SNOOZE

If your inbox gets packed out with emails that are important but not right now, try using the 'Snooze' function (available on Gmail, Outlook and more). They'll be removed from your inbox temporarily and land back in it on the day and time you state.



The power of POSITIVITY

Could changing the way you think have a beneficial effect on your health?

WORDS BY Faye M Smith and Jenny Stallard

Did you know that ditching negativity could add years to your life? A recent US study has found that a positive outlook can help you live up to 15% longer and give you a better chance of reaching 85 years or older. "The health benefits of positivity are off the scale," says Andy Cope, who has a PhD in happiness. "It boosts your immune system, you'll catch fewer colds, recover from illness quicker and have lower blood pressure. You'll also create a ripple effect that impacts on others."

And that's not all. "Positive people engage in more health-promoting behaviours around diet and exercise, and have better heart health," says

positive psychologist Miriam Akhtar. "Plus, research has shown that happy people suffer less chronic pain when it comes to conditions such as arthritis, and are more resilient to stress, which can affect the cardiovascular system." Research by the American College of Cardiology even found a sunny outlook may help with chronic angina, while a study in 2009 found it led to better blood glucose levels in those with type 2 diabetes.

"While some degree of our happiness is set by our genetics (experts estimate between 10% and 50%), the rest is down to us," says functional medicine certified health coach Suzy Glaskie. "We can learn to be positive and happier, just as we can learn a foreign language." Here's how...

Invest in new memories

According to psychologists at San Francisco State University, experiences make us happier than new objects, because the excitement of buying something new fades faster than memories. "Positive reminiscence is a way of revisiting pleasurable experiences," explains Miriam. "For instance, recreate a holiday meal. The smell and taste can evoke memories and stimulate the happy hormone, dopamine, bringing those feelings right back."

Put your time to good use

Researchers at the London School of Economics found that, compared with someone who never volunteers, your odds of feeling 'very happy' rise by 16% if you do it every week. "Putting your talents to good use will make you feel fulfilled," says Suzy.

Pinch yourself positive

Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) is based on the theory that by tweaking your physical actions, you can change what happens in your brain. One technique is anchoring – you visualise yourself at your most confident, then link this feeling to an action, such as pinching your thumb and forefinger together. Next time you need to feel confident, do the same pinch to get back to that positive mental state.

Think-quick trick

Give yourself just 30 seconds to run through a list of all the things you love –

"There are 34 known effects of the menopause and each woman will have a different combination," says Miriam. "So, for some it's scary and fearful but, for others, it's liberating and joyful." Feeling overwhelmed? "Challenge the attitude to it and all the negativity," says Miriam. "See it as a transition rather than a loss. Yes, we're vulnerable when going through this transition, but eventually it will settle. Ask yourself what are the positives that have come."

These can include:

- 1 You're emotionally stable. "You're less sucked into the drama of emotions. You care less about others' opinions."
- 2 You're wiser. "You might have lost youth, but you have all that wisdom to share."
- 3 You're more confident. "You've a lot to offer – and confidence is a very sexy quality." A survey by Superdrug found 64% of women over 50 said they felt more confident now than in their 20s.

Boost your brain

A positive attitude to ageing could halve your risk of dementia, found a study by Yale School of Public Health.

thinking really fast is proven to boost your mood, found Princeton University researchers.

Track your emotions

"Keeping a gratitude journal is a powerful way to boost happiness," says Suzy. "Keep a notepad by your bed and, before you fall asleep, jot down five things from that day that you're grateful for."

Fake your feelings

Simple steps, such as smiling, standing up straight and using positive affirmations such as "I look great today" can actually change your inner dialogue to be more positive over time.

Did you know?

A 2009 study found that people who adopted a positive outlook had faster wound healing.

10%. Make sure you're tired at bedtime by walking outdoors in the day – this optimises your light exposure, while walking triggers the release of naturally occurring feel-good hormones.

Check gut health

"The gut can affect low mood," says health psychologist Dr Meg Arroll. Keep yours healthy with a probiotic taken as a supplement or in yoghurt. "Studies looking at the effect of probiotics on depression found that within eight weeks mood was improved," says Dr Arroll.

Clear clutter

Research by Princeton University Neuroscience Institute found that too much clutter makes it hard to focus. "Simplify the way you run your life, so that you can be present to the joys when they happen," says Miriam. Have a clear-out, donate to charity, or sell unwanted items.

Change perception

Positive emotions help you see different options available to you. "For example, you could think of exercise as a drag, or instead you could think of it as something that comes with a ton of benefits," says careers coach Gill Hasson. Talking therapies can also help you to see things from a new perspective. Speak to your GP to be referred to services available in your area.

Accept, breathe, choose

Turn a negative thought into a positive one with the ABC method from leadership mentor Clare Josa

- * **ACCEPT** Try not to resist the negative thought, or it will 'fight back'.
- * **BREATHE** Three deep, 'sighing' (make a sigh noise) breaths in through the nose and out through the mouth. That starts to reset your nervous system and your body goes back into calm. This is the 'going through neutral' part.
- * **CHOOSE** Think one positive thing about your life in that moment. Be as specific as possible and take a moment to feel the emotion that goes with that.





Ditch the tech

Discover why ditching tech could help you create a happier, healthier home

WORDS BY **Andréa Childs**

The living room has taken on an ambient blue glow; pools of light illuminating the faces of my family. I'd like to say it's

the result of artistic lighting. In fact, it's the reflected shine of our various screens. My husband is scrolling the cricket scores on his phone; my daughter is plugged into the iPad watching cake-making videos; my son is on the laptop, doing maths homework while messaging friends about a party at the weekend. I'm 'working', otherwise known as getting distracted by Facebook posts from friends I barely talk to face-to-face.

"I'm a big fan of technology; it has huge potential to enhance our lives. But the tech designed to enable has begun to enslave us, having an impact on our relationships and physical and mental health," says digital entrepreneur Tanya Goodin. "It's time for it to go back in its place, as a tool to be used when we need it and put away when we don't." Tanya's spent her working life onscreen as owner of one of the UK's first digital marketing agencies, but she also founded digital detox specialists itstimetologoff.com, runs retreats to help us rebalance our relationship with technology, and has written books about it. "Most of us aren't addicted to our phones or devices, despite the headlines, but we've developed bad habits around them. We need to set boundaries."

That's easier said than done. In the UK, adults check their phones around 33 times a day and spend more than two hours a day on them (30 days a year).

A third of us reach for them within five minutes of waking, and roughly the same number check them during the night. That's not to mention the lost hours spent compiling Pinterest mood boards or bidding on eBay. For shopping, research, tracking our energy use and putting our heating on technology is awesome. But there's a reason we feel anxious when we leave our phones at home, or find it hard to ignore the pings of our devices, even as we're having dinner or reading to our kids. The 'persuasive technology' of social media notifications, the automatic playing of the next Netflix or YouTube video, the validation of 'likes' and stream of news stories feed a sense of reward (the anticipation of clicking on something good can trigger the release of the feel-good chemical dopamine) and fuel a fear of missing out.

Digital detox

Science journalist Catherine Price wrote *How To Break Up With Your Phone* when she realised hers had become a "partner in a dysfunctional relationship: something with the power to make me feel bad about myself and to keep me coming back for more." She began with a 24-hour digital detox, when she and her partner avoided all phones, tablets and computers. They enjoyed it so much,

they made it a regular event. "Without the distraction, time seemed to slow. We read books, walked and talked," she says. "The effects lingered for a few days afterward – a digital hangover that actually felt good."

Be more in control

To share that sense of peace and connection, I've recalibrated the digital life of my family. We've never allowed my son to have his phone in his room overnight. I've banished my own phone downstairs, too. I used to scan the news before breakfast – not a feel-good way to start the day. I've changed to a fix of headlines at lunch and my mood is much better. Also, I've followed Tanya's advice and switched off notifications. "It means you check your devices consciously, rather than being reactive," she explains. "What surprises people is how little they miss out on; those alerts rarely need to be responded to in the moment."

This type of technology is so new, we're still learning to cope with its impact and implications. "With tech, we're making up the rules as we go along," says Tanya. "It's not about returning to dial-up phones and analogue TV, but we need to find a balance in our homes and lives that makes us happy."

"There's a reason we feel anxious when we leave our phones at home or find it hard to ignore the pings of our devices"

10 tech-free activities

Make the most of your time away from technology and try some of these ideas to improve your wellbeing, sleep and health

WORDS BY **Julie Bassett**

We know unplugging from the digital world is good for us. Spending time away from your phone helps balance your mental health and wellbeing, as well as improve relationships. But if you're

used to being online on a regular basis, the initial silence can be overwhelming. We've put together some tech-free activities to help get you started and find new ways to unwind and enjoy yourself offline.



Get outside

Walking is such a beneficial way to exercise, but often overlooked in favour of faster forms of fitness.

Pop on some comfortable shoes and just start walking, no need for a plan. Take in the sounds and sights around you, which will calm the mind.



Cook a meal

We have to eat every day, but how often do you cook a proper meal from scratch? Spend time planning a menu, go out to buy the right ingredients and cook every element with love. It requires a level of focus that switches off everything else in your brain.



Visit a museum or gallery

If you're in a city or large town, you've probably got a museum or gallery of some kind. Many of these cultural attractions are free or low-cost. The quiet environments help soothe the soul, and you can learn something new at the same time.



Go to the library

Take a trip to the peaceful confines of your local library and have a browse through the books. You might find something to read you'd never considered before. This is also great to do with kids to help them explore a wide range of titles.



Play a board game

This is a brilliant way to spend a night with friends or family. Pick old classics or try something new. Board games are a lot of fun, bring out a friendly competitiveness and are great for bonding.



Drive somewhere new

Set out on a road trip with no destination in mind. Crank up your favourite tunes and just see where the road takes you. Pull over and take a look at anything interesting – you're not on a timetable.



Declutter

Decluttering might not sound like the most fun way to spend your time, but it can be immensely therapeutic. Pick one cupboard or drawer you've been meaning to sort out and get it done! You could donate or sell what you don't need, too.



Have a rest

Find a cosy spot, indoors or out, and make yourself comfortable. Let your mind wander and drift, focusing on nothing in particular. Just sitting and being still is something we rarely find time for, but it is very good for both mind and body.



Try something new

Learning a new skill, language or craft can help keep your mind active, while also switching off all that everyday stress. Even if it's just hitting a new gym class or doing a puzzle, the challenge keeps you on your toes.



Colour it in

Colouring is a perfect mindful activity for adults and children alike. It can help to reduce stress and make you feel more relaxed. Unleashing your creativity is very satisfying, and it's something the whole family can take part in.

Declutter your friendships

As we embark on life's journey, we meet a lot of people along the way, but having too many friends can be exhausting. Learn how you can declutter your friends in the same way that you can declutter your home

WORDS BY Zara Gaspar



Over the course of your lifetime you will, without a doubt, meet a lot of people.

As we navigate our way through life, some of these people we meet will end up becoming our friends. Friendships can form when we meet people at various stages of our lives, including when we go to school and university, when we start a new job, or when we participate in hobbies. But what really defines a true friend? What are the differences between acquaintances and life-long companions? And why should you hold on to some and not others?

The three types of friendships

According to Aristotle we have three types of friendships: friendships of utility, friendships of pleasure, and friendships of virtue. Friendships of utility are relationships that have a mutual benefit to both parties and they are the more functional out of the three. For example, a neighbour that feeds your dog or a customer at work. The second is friendships of pleasure and these form when someone shares the same interests as you – for example, someone you do yoga with or play football with. Finally, we have friendships of virtue, which are based on mutual respect and compassion and usually form over a long period of time. These friendships are based on the idea that you share similar values and aspirations and can develop from as early as school years. But how are we meant to lead a balanced lifestyle with so many friendship circles? And is it possible to have too many friends?

Too often we hold onto friendships that no longer serve us, which is why it is important to take a step back every now and again to re-evaluate and ask yourself whether that friendship is of benefit to you. You have to ask yourself some key questions: Is this friendship making me happy? Is this person worthy of my precious time?

Time to let go

Maybe you can identify a relationship that is not making you happy and you frequently leave their company feeling sad. Maybe you have a toxic friendship that leads to arguments and constant negativity. We hold onto certain friends for a number of reasons, but a common deciding factor is because of time. If we have invested significant time into a relationship, we stick with it. But whether you've been friends for one month or ten years, if that relationship isn't adding anything to your life then why waste any more time trying to fix it? Perhaps you make an effort with someone and this isn't reciprocated – these one-sided friendships can leave you feeling exhausted. Like unnecessary objects in your home, it's possible to cull your list of friends.

Less is more

Focusing on the people that matter the most is a step in the right direction. We need to free ourselves of the stress that is caused by trying to please and instead focus on those people that make us happy. Choosing to have fewer, more valuable friends leaves you free from the unwanted pressure of trying to juggle your time between too many people.

Pause for a moment and think about how you feel. Do you feel as though you are spreading yourself too thin? Do you want to invest more energy and time into people that matter to you? Then it's time to have a reshuffle within your friendship circle and direct your attention to those that actually benefit your life.

A numbers game

According to anthropologist Professor Robin Dunbar, there are numbers at play when it comes to friendships. He believes that the average person knows 150 people as acquaintances. He goes deeper and suggests that within this group, 50 people are considered friends and 15 people as good friends. The most intimate of Dunbar's numbers is five – the group of friends we turn to in times of crisis. These are your ultimate friends who will be there for you through thick and thin. Take a moment to think to yourself of these five ultimate best friends and ask yourself whether you are spending enough time with them? Dunbar believes that one of the main reasons we should declutter and refine our friendships is so that we can ensure our time is being shared in an effective and manageable way. Having a small, intimate group of friends means that you can hone in on why these friends make you happy and concentrate on building stronger bonds with these individuals. Focus on these small, intimate groups of friends and be confident when you decide to walk away from the relationships that are no longer working for you. You will find that you will become happier, more energised and better at managing your time.

“Choosing to have fewer, more valuable friends leaves you free from the unwanted pressure of trying to juggle your time between too many people”





Clean Environment

Whether it's creating non-toxic cleaning products from your fruit bowl, filling your home with plants to breathe more easily or decluttering to make your household items and wardrobe more eco-friendly, there are plenty of ways to keep a clean environment.



Keep it clean naturally

Want a healthier way to clean your home with no harsh chemicals? Find out how more natural products can do the job

BICARBONATE OF SODA

Not only great for getting rid of stains and blockages, the kitchen staple bicarbonate of soda is also good for tackling several other general cleaning tasks around the house, too.

General cleaning

- Wipe away dirt and grease from worktops using a damp cloth sprinkled with bicarb.
- For a quick air freshener, mix 1 cup of bicarb with 3 drops of your favourite oil scent, and put in a bowl.
- Remove oil and product build-up from your hairbrushes and combs by soaking them in a sink or large bowl full of warm water with 1 tsp bicarb. Rinse and leave to dry.

In the bathroom

- Scour stubborn soap scum from around the bath by rubbing on a thick paste of bicarb and white vinegar, then rub it off with a clean cloth or sponge.
- Clean the sink using a soft cloth and ½ cup of bicarb mixed with a cup each of vinegar and water.
- Use the loo brush with a thick paste of bicarb and white vinegar to scrub inside the toilet bowl and under the rim.
- Clean the loo seat and all around the outside of the pan by sprinkling bicarb onto a soft cloth and scrubbing, then wiping clean with another damp cloth.
- Scrub bathroom tiles and discoloured grout with an old toothbrush and a thick paste of bicarb and water.
- When washing your shower curtain, add 1 cup each of vinegar and bicarb.

Around the house

- Freshen up your dog or cat between baths by sprinkling bicarb over their fur and combing it in. This acts like dry shampoo, and any powder that falls off won't harm children or the carpet.
- Prevent any musty smells and moisture in your linen cupboard by keeping a sachet or an open box of bicarb inside it.
- Make glass sparkle by washing it with a wet cloth and a sprinkle of bicarb. Rub some bicarb onto your windows, mirror or shower door, for example, then rinse off with another cloth soaked in hot water.
- To clean your outside doormat, sprinkle on bicarb, then scrub it in with a broom. The next time it rains, the bicarb will wash away any dirt.

LEMON JUICE

This is a mild, fresh, yet effective cleaner. It can be used for non-toxic house cleaning as a de-greaser and whitener, and its acid content is also a good antibacterial for helping to eliminate household germs.

General cleaning

- Make a gentle disinfectant cleaner for the kitchen and bathroom by mixing equal parts of lemon juice and water in a spray bottle. It's also great for shining windows and mirrors.
- Make a paste of lemon juice and borax to the consistency of peanut butter. Use it to scrub surfaces around your home. Borax is a natural cleaner in its own right, so this paste offers two hits of cleaning power.
- Use lemon juice to get rid of hard-water stains. The acid content in the juice works by neutralising the alkaline content of the hard-water build-up.
- Neutralise the smell of vinegar in your home-made, vinegar-based household cleaners by adding a small amount of lemon.

In the kitchen

- Rub a slice of lemon over your chopping board to disinfect and deodorise it. Squeeze some lemon juice over any tough stains on the board, let this sit for about 10 minutes, then wipe away.
- You can freshen and deodorise your microwave with lemon too. To do this, place a few lemon slices in a bowl of water, heat it on high for 30-45 seconds, then wipe down the interior of the microwave.
- To get rid of lingering dishwasher odours, place 1 cup of lemon juice in the bottom of the empty machine, then run the rinse cycle.
- After you've juiced a lemon, or if you don't need the peel, toss the skin or peel into your waste disposal unit and grind it to help get rid of odours.

In the bathroom

- Lemon can help scrub away mildew and mould from tiles and other surfaces. Make a paste from equal parts lemon juice and table salt, then apply this to the affected area and buff away the dirt before rinsing off or wiping with a damp cloth.
- To remove rust from surfaces, take half a lemon and rub it against the affected area, leave it for about 30 minutes, then clean it off. Alternatively, squeeze lemon juice over the rusted area, then clean it off. For a more potent cleaner, sprinkle salt over the lemon's cut surface or add it to the lemon juice.
- Clean your drains with lemon juice, especially if you have a septic system. Pour ½ cup bicarbonate of soda down the drain, followed by hot lemon juice.



SALT

Dissolved in water, salt can be mixed with several other natural cleaners, such as vinegar and lemon juice, to tackle various cleaning tasks around the house.

General cleaning

- Mix salt with vinegar to create a good general-purpose cleaner. Use to swab down surfaces and clean inside the fridge and cupboards. It will also remove tea and coffee stains from cups and teapots. Glass and tiles will gleam if you wash with a salt-and-vinegar solution, too.

- **Important!** Don't use vinegar on waxed surfaces, marble or linoleum, as it may cause damage.

In the kitchen

- If you run out of washing-up liquid, just sprinkle salt into the water and

wash as usual. Rinse the items well.

- Cover oven and hob spills with salt, let it stand, then wipe up, adding water if necessary. The salt absorbs the liquids and helps lift them from the surface. If you have a gas cooker, ensure you remove all the salt when you wipe up. Salt residues may cause your gas burners to flare up with a yellowish flame when you next light the gas.

- To clean cast-iron pans, just sprinkle salt around them and wipe clean. If your pan isn't burnt, you can do this instead of washing it in water. It will help protect the surface and make it act more like a non-stick pan.

Around the house

- To clean metals, such as brass, copper and pewter, mix salt with some lemon juice. You can sprinkle salt into a squeezed-out lemon half

and use it to rub down the metal, then rinse and buff to a shine with a soft cloth. Rinse thoroughly, otherwise copper and brass will turn green. This is caused by copper salts and can be washed off.

- Sprinkle salt onto fresh wine stains to absorb most of the colour. Follow up with white vinegar.

- Remove stains in glass vases and Thermos flasks with a mixture of crushed ice and salt. This is very useful for slim-necked items, which are hard to access.



WHITE VINEGAR

Definitely one to keep in your home-remedy arsenal! Highly acidic vinegar is effective at killing mould, bacteria and a multitude of germs.

In the kitchen

- Renew sponges and cloths by placing them in just enough water to cover, adding ¼ cup white distilled vinegar and leaving to soak overnight.
- Clean the inside of your fridge with half-and-half solution of water and white distilled vinegar.
- To remove soap build-up from a washing machine, pour a cup of white distilled vinegar into the empty machine and run a cycle.
- For stained and smelly plastic food containers, wipe them with a cloth dampened with white distilled vinegar.
- Get rid of lime deposits in the kettle

by adding ½ cup white distilled vinegar to the water and let it sit overnight. Alternatively, boil full-strength white distilled vinegar in the kettle for a few minutes, allow to cool, then rinse well.

In the bathroom

- Clean off calcium deposits on taps by soaking a cloth or kitchen towel in white distilled vinegar and wrapping the area tightly. Let this sit for at least a couple of hours or overnight.
- To remove grime, mildew and scum from the bath, tiles, shower curtain or door, wipe over with undiluted white distilled vinegar, then rinse with water.
- Spray shower doors with full-strength white distilled vinegar, either after you've squeegeed the glass or before you step in and turn on the water. It will help release the hard-water deposits so they don't remain on the glass.

Around the house

- Vinegar can help you easily clean Venetian blinds. Wearing cotton gloves, dip your fingers into a solution of equal parts white vinegar and warm tap water; run your fingers across both sides of each slat and let dry.
- Get rid of white water rings from wood with a solution of equal parts white distilled vinegar and vegetable oil. Make sure you rub with the grain of the wood.
- To remove a sticky label, cover the affected area with a cloth soaked in distilled vinegar. Leave this on overnight, and in the morning the label should slide off easily.
- Discourage ants from entering your home by spraying some undiluted white distilled vinegar around doors, windowsills, and any other gaps where pests might sneak in.



DIY remedies to spruce up your home

Making your own cleaning products and air fresheners is not only cost-effective, but it's also better for the environment and your health

WORDS BY Bee Ginger

YOU WILL NEED

- + White vinegar (you can use other vinegars, but white is the most effective for cleaning)
- + Tea tree oil, or your favourite essential oil (optional)
- + Spray bottle
- + Cleaning cloth
- + Warm water

Mildew and mould remover

A highly effective disinfectant, vinegar is great for getting rid of mould and mildew. Made from acetic acid, its acidity dissolves grease and grime and is even strong enough to kill bacteria. It does have a slightly off-putting smell, but you can counteract this by adding a few drops of your favourite essential oil.

TO MAKE

- 1 Fill a spray bottle with the white vinegar.
- 2 Add a few drops of tea tree oil or another preferred essential oil.
- 3 Screw the lid on the spray bottle and shake to combine.

TO USE

- 1 Spray the solution over the affected area.
- 2 After 30 minutes, rinse off with warm water.

All-purpose citrus cleaner

This is the powerhouse of cleaners and can be used on (almost*) every surface in the home, and with just a handful of ingredients, it really is an environmental and wallet friendly citrus-scented must! The base of this cleaner is vinegar, with the added disinfectant properties of citrus. Lemon in particular helps fight against bacteria and is a great stain remover.

TO MAKE

- 1 Put your leftover citrus peelings in a glass jar. Then fill to the top with the white vinegar.
- 2 Close the lid tightly and place it in a light, sunny spot to allow it to infuse for approximately 2 weeks.
- 3 After two weeks take your jar and using a sieve, strain the vinegar into a clean jar, discarding the citrus peelings. Store the vinegar in a dark, cool spot.
- 4 When you come to make your all-purpose cleaner, pour 1 cup of the vinegar into a spray bottle, then add in 2 cups of water. You can also add an optional 20 drops of lemon essential oil to the mix. Screw the lid on and give the mixture a good shake!

TO USE

- 1 Spray onto a surface and wipe clean with a damp cloth.
- 2 Store in your cleaning cupboard, making sure to label your spray and the ingredients in it.

YOU WILL NEED

- + Leftover citrus peel (ie lemon, lime, orange, grapefruit, or a mixture)
- + Distilled white vinegar
- + Water
- + Essential lemon oil (optional)
- + Two 500ml (18floz) glass jars
- + A sieve
- + A 1 litre (2pt) spray bottle

*Don't use this spray on natural stone or granite surfaces, as it may etch the stone.

WORDS: BEE GINGER. PHOTOS: GETTY

Lavender spray

Lavender is known to help reduce stress and anxiety and aid with sleeplessness. Use this spray to spritz over your pillows at night-time for an extra peaceful sleep and on throws and blankets. You can also use different oils to freshen sheets, fabric or a room.

YOU WILL NEED

- + Small jar with tight-fitting lid
- + 2 tbsp witch hazel or vodka
- + 10 drops lavender essential oil (you can always add more if desired)
- + 6 tbsp water
- + Small funnel
- + Spray bottle*

*You will need a clean spray bottle. A dark-coloured one is best as the colour helps keep UV rays from breaking down the essential oils.

TO USE

- 1 In the jar, combine the witch hazel or vodka and the lavender oil.
- 2 Put the lid on tightly and shake well for 30 seconds to combine the two.
- 3 Using the funnel, pour the mixture from the jar into the spray bottle.
- 4 Replace the lid of the spray bottle.

TO USE

- 1 Spray on your linens or other fabrics as desired.
- 2 Always look for 100 percent pure essential oils. The label will usually list both the common and botanical name of the plant that the oil is derived from.



Homemade reed diffuser

Scent your home without using chemical-filled synthetic air fresheners by making a simple reed diffuser with your favourite essential oils. You can use a container that best matches your aesthetic and develop a blend of essential oils that is uniquely yours. When selecting your glass or ceramic container, opt for one with a narrow opening, as the oil will evaporate at a slower rate than a jar with a wide opening. Picking a base oil is important. Mineral oils like sweet almond and safflower oil are thin enough to travel up the reeds, filling the room quickly with scent.

YOU WILL NEED

- + Clean glass jar
- + 30 drops of essential oil of your choice
- + A handful of reed sticks
- + 4 tbsp sweet almond oil

TO MAKE

- 1 Pour 60ml (2fl oz) of sweet almond oil into your glass jar.
- 2 Add your essential oil(s).
- 3 Clean the outside of your jar with a cloth in case there has been spillage.
- 4 Add your reed sticks. The amount you will need will depend on the size of your container.

- 5 After a few hours turn the sticks upside down to help the oils travel up.

TO USE

- 1 Place around the house and breathe in that freshness!
- 2 You will find that the diffuser will smell stronger in smaller rooms.



DECLUTTER *your home*

Stuff. In an age of conspicuous consumption, although we may always want it, we generally already have too much of it

WORDS BY Rebecca Lewry-Gray





Clutter is simply having more stuff than we use, need or have space for. For someone who regularly wears and loves high heels, 15 pairs may not be clutter; for someone who never does, even one pair is. It isn't the same as untidiness, although when a home is cluttered, it is virtually impossible to keep tidy. And often it accumulates over a period, so you may not notice just how bad it's become until a transitional time such as moving house or redecorating.

Why declutter?

Besides being difficult to live amongst physically, dealing with clutter on a daily basis can affect other areas of your life and be very draining on a personal level. If simple admin tasks mean long hunts for relevant documents, or you end up missing a gym class because you failed to locate both your trainers, it might be time for a declutter. Cluttered surroundings can have a big impact on how we feel about ourselves and result in a cluttered mindset.

On the other hand, decluttering frees up valuable time, space and emotional energy. When your surroundings are lighter and brighter, your mind and spirits get an instant boost.

Get to the route of the problem

When the realisation you need to declutter hits, it is worth asking yourself a few questions. When did the clutter start building? What kind of clutter is it? How is it affecting you? What has stopped you from tackling it before? What difference will getting rid of it make? Truthful answers can help you to declutter more effectively, as well as help avoid it building up again.

As an example, a freelance writer once realised she had managed to accumulate every publication she had ever had an article published in – for the best part of 20 years. For her, this represented her career and achievements, but it was also taking up most of a spare room. Her solution was to edit this down to what would fit on one row of a bookshelf. This

GET THE GEAR

Have the following to hand when decluttering:

- Strong bin bags for obvious rubbish and recycling.
- At least four different boxes marked 'Charity', 'Friends', 'Sell', and 'Keep'. (When you've filled them, be sure to action these boxes promptly rather than leaving them sitting there for weeks. Anything you keep also needs to be put away properly).
- A shredder for personal paperwork that you no longer need to keep.
- A file with different sections (car, home insurance and so on), so important documents can be filed immediately rather than shifted around.
- A suitcase, clothes protector bags and scented sachets for seasonal wardrobe decluttering.



one small decision immediately freed up considerable space in an area previously piled high with boxes.

Similarly, people may hang on to wardrobes full of clothes that haven't fitted for years 'just in case'; or have a special egg-boiling gadget and more than half a dozen egg cups littering up a cupboard when they live on their own and prefer scrambled.

There's usually a reason for knowingly hanging on to things we don't need or use, and often that involves an attachment to another time, place or person. Working out what this is, be it an ideal weight, or memories of a big family



“There’s usually a reason for hanging on to things we don’t need or use, and often that involves an attachment to another time, place or person. Working out what this is, can help you.”

breakfasting together, can help you to realise what you are really holding onto, and conversely help you let it go.

Back to basics

There's no getting away from the fact that if your home has got into a very cluttered state over a number of years, it will likely take some weeks (even months), plenty of motivation and a definite plan of action to reverse the trend. Decide on an amount of time you can realistically spend on the job at hand – be that six hours at a weekend or even just half an hour a day – put it in your diary and stick to it. Create an atmosphere you find personally motivating, perhaps playing your favourite music, and gather together the things you need, such as bin bags, a paper shredder or boxes to organise items. Enlist a friend if you feel you'd benefit from objectivity or

some physical help with moving heavy items, and offer to take them out to lunch as a thank you (or perhaps they would like some of the things you're getting rid of – win, win!).

Memory lane, not drain

Where clutter is a result of holding on to things for sentimental reasons, it can be incredibly difficult to give them up. A widow or widower who sees every item as symbolising a previous partner and their life together can easily end up with several rooms full of stuff they no longer need. If a downsize is called for, it can then feel quite traumatic to deal with.

If you have lost someone special or are cherishing a whole crate-load of artwork from numerous grandchildren, buy an attractive (but not ludicrously large) box

for memories of that person or people, and prioritise the most important things to go into it. You should be able to fit several of these boxes, along with wedding and special photo albums, into an ottoman or storage chest that becomes your designated nostalgia zone. Just don't fill it up and be tempted to buy another two!

Moving room by room

Decluttering a house is a massive undertaking. Make the process easier by breaking it down into rooms, then into areas and specific functions.

Clearing the clutter we have learnt to live with can initially seem like an insurmountable task. So start small. By breaking the house down into manageable chunks, the jobs will become easier.

Before you begin, reflect on how you got to a cluttered state. For instance, are you getting rid of clothes because they no longer fit or because you bought poorly? Clutter is a modern problem.

If you think about your grandparents' generation, they bought once and well or went without. Wastage is also a very modern problem; we waste food, clothes and books if we don't use them. This is not good news for the planet as we continue to consume mindlessly.

Being aware of how and why you create clutter means you can change your habits. If not, you'll have to declutter once you are snowed under again. What are the underlying problems you need to tackle to prevent clutter? Are you overwhelmed with laundry to put away or children's drawings? Proper homes for items can help. 'Homeless' items are the biggest component of clutter. These are things that have no true place, either due to a lack of necessity or a lack of storage. You need to be ruthless when categorising clutter. Many decluttering experts feel you should not hold onto something for a 'someday' situation.

We all have items that are aspirational, such as crockery we save for 'best'. By not using it, you're implying you're not worthy of it. Use the good stuff, even if you're worried about its monetary value – it has no value hidden away. Value can also be a barrier to removing items you don't use anymore. The sunk cost fallacy makes us feel we are wasting the money we spent on an item if we get rid of it. Remember the money has already been spent, and you're actually wasting that money by not using it or passing it along to someone who will use it.

Decluttering is not a 'once and done' job; it will require constant maintenance. But by blitzing through the house, room by room, you set yourself up for success.

SMALL STEPS, BIG IMPACT

It can feel intimidating when you begin to tackle your clutter, but breaking it down is the key to success

If every room in the house is heaving with clutter, it can be hard to know where to start. Target an area where you'll see a difference quickly, such as a hallway or bookshelf, to provide an instant sense of achievement and spur you on. This is preferable to starting on a larger mission where you risk ending up feeling overwhelmed and give up.


TURN CLUTTER INTO CASH

If you struggle to get rid of things because their financial value concerns you, try making money from them

Give yourself an extra incentive by turning unwanted items into cash. Do a car boot sale (providing you can trust yourself not to end up buying!). What doesn't sell can go straight into bags and be taken to a charity shop. Or for more valuable or specialist items, set aside a few hours to list them on eBay or other similar websites.



7 ways to a GREENER HOME



Making your home more sustainable and eco-friendly doesn't have to take a lot of effort or money, but there is plenty we can all do to help protect our planet. Small changes to our everyday habits can benefit the environment enormously, so try these simple swaps and clever ideas as we all take steps towards a cleaner, greener home.

WORDS BY Holly Walsh

TREAT FEET TO SUSTAINABLE FLOORING

One of the few companies to offer sustainably produced wood flooring, Ark One can trace back every piece of wood it uses to the European forest it was grown in. What's more, the company only uses natural glues, oils and varnishes in the finished product – making it as natural as possible.

Manhattan oak flooring (price on application), Ark One



2 INSULATE OR UPGRADE YOUR WINDOWS

Install double glazing or consider the latest generation of windows. Historically popular uPVC uses oil and chemical additives during manufacturing, so wood frame options, which were once avoided for warping and rotting, can be the best eco-choice. The critics have been silenced thanks to new 21st-century ways of production, and they remain the preferred choice for both modern and period homes.

Flush casement windows finished in 'white' with 27mm/1in astragal glazing bars (price on application), Timber Windows

3 USE NATURAL CLEANING PRODUCTS

Washing-Up Liquid, £3.25; Multi-Surface Cleaner Spray, £3.50, Wilton London range, Lakeland



Avoid filling your home with chemical-based cleaners that can be harmful to skin and give off a bleach odour, but instead opt for a vegan product that smells amazing. Wilton London makes powerful plant-based cleaners that are beautifully fragranced with natural oils, fully biodegradable and incredibly effective without the use of harsh products or artificial chemical smells. The fact that its (recyclable) packaging looks gorgeous too, is an added bonus. It's a win-win. >>

Bobble Hat claypaint, £54 for 2.5ltr,



DECORATE WITH BREATHABLE PAINTS

Chemicals known as volatile organic compounds (VOCs) were once used liberally in many paints, but in 2010 an EU directive came in that limits their use, as they were found to release fumes long after they've been applied to walls, and are associated with respiratory and skin irritations. Eco-conscious paint brand Earthborn ensures its breathable designer paints contain no added VOCs (so the content is virtually zero), or any other nasties, come to that. So a healthy home can start with your walls.

Trumpet claypaint, £54 for 2.5ltr, Earthborn



Tick-Tock (on the wall) and Hobgoblin (in the square) claypaint, both £54 for 2.5ltr, Earthborn



3 OF THE BEST ECO-FRIENDLY BUYS



These eco utensils are made from 35% recycled wheat fibre, which is completely compostable. Organic kitchen utensils, £3 each, Viners

These battery-powered ivory wax candles look just like the real thing. TruGlow LED Taper Candles, £24.99 for 4, Lights4Fun



Made from recycled plastic, but looks and feels like wool! Andalusia Cadiz Rug, from £175, Weaver Green





5 CHOOSE AN ECO-FRIENDLY MATTRESS

Most household mattresses sold in the UK contain chemicals, but bedmaker Harrison Spinks boasts chemical-free mattresses that contain soft, antibacterial and temperature-regulating wool. Plus, its Cortec spring system is the latest in sustainable comfort innovation, so the entire mattress can be recycled.

Fairford 29400 with a Bourton Deep Headboard in henson and cornflower, from £3,099 for a double, the Adam Henson range, Harrison Spinks

6 SWAP TO A RECYCLING KITCHEN BIN

Divide and conquer! There are many waste-separating bins that act as a reminder to recycle, and this one from Next has two sections in one casting, operated by a pedal foot, and comes in a wipe-clean metal finish. Either use to separate glass from plastics and paper, or just one side for refuse and the other for all recyclables.



40ltr recycling bin, £90, Next



Dry:Soon Drying Pod, £59.99, Lakeland

DRY CLOTHES THE GREENER WAY

Line-dried laundry is always the goal if you're trying to be green, but rain can scupper your eco plans. Thanks to Lakeland's ingenious Drying Pod, you won't have to worry about a house full

of washing for a week. Costing as little as 15p per hour to run, it blows hot air through clothes to gently dry them within the enclosed pod that zips around the frame.



Create an *eco-friendly* wardrobe

How changing our approach to clothing and shopping
can help people and the planet

WORDS BY Sarah Gane

Clothing is the ultimate tool for creative expression. What we wear says a lot about us. But, over recent years, the way we shop for clothes has changed. Gone are the days of having two seasons a year: spring/summer and autumn/winter. If we were to head into our favourite high-street store, we're likely to see new garments and collections every week. To make matters worse, research from Greenpeace shows that around 40 per cent of clothes we own are rarely or never worn.

As most of us already know, this unsustainable quench for something new is affecting our planet. According to

Fashion Revolution (fashionrevolution.org), global textile production emits 1.2 billion tonnes of greenhouse gases annually. That's more than that of international flights and maritime shipping combined. Something has to be done. And the best thing? Change really can start in our own homes.

"Every time we buy, wear and dispose of clothes, we create an environmental footprint and an impact on the people who make them, most of whom are women. That's why positive change is more urgent than ever if we are to tackle change and create a more equitable future for all," says Carry Somers, Fashion Revolution co-founder and global operations director.

Where to start

First up, let's look in our own wardrobes. Doing an audit of existing clothing – literally laying it all out there – enables us to see what we are really dealing with. Separate the items into piles: to keep, to mend, to donate and to recycle. Be honest with yourself about things that don't suit you, or make you feel less than gorgeous while wearing them. Clothes should be comfortable and enjoyable to wear. This isn't about shaming or punishing yourself either. Make it fun: put some tunes on, get a nice cuppa and have some snacks to give you the fuel to keep you motivated. Now you know what you've got to work with, you

“Refashioning is a great way of using up existing resources”



can move forward. What gaps have you noticed? Perhaps your most worn items are a little ‘overloved’. Jot down a list of essentials you need for future reference and put it to one side.

Fixin’ time

When it comes to clothing, wear and tear is inevitable. Bobbles, missing buttons, teeny tiny holes... these are all the signs of a well-loved garment. They’re relatively easy fixes too. Try running a pilling comb over your favourite jumper to remove the bobbles. Meanwhile, missing buttons and tiny holes can be sorted in a flash with just a needle and thread required.

Another great approach for bigger holes or stains could be to try a little

‘visible mending’ – make a feature of its imperfections and let your fixing be on display. Check out @TomOfHolland, @KatrinaRodabaugh or the many other beautiful examples on Instagram, using #visiblemending for inspiration.

Perhaps a pair of trousers or jeans are a little too long, or you’d prefer a different style of cut – from wide leg to regular for example – or maybe a zip is broken. If you’re crafty, you might be able to tackle this in your spare time; if you’re not, consider attending a local sewing class to learn some new skills. It can be a great way of relaxing after a busy day at work, as well as the added bonus of meeting new, like-minded people. Alternatively, take them along to a local seamstress to fix. You’re supporting the local economy, as well as keeping clothes out of the bin.

Recycling & refashioning

When it comes to your ‘recycling’ pile, you have a few options. Perhaps you could organise a clothes swap with friends and family. It’s a brilliant opportunity to meet up, relax, share a drink and nibbles, and gain some lovely new clothes for your wardrobe.

You could, of course, donate the items to a charity shop; well-worn and damaged clothes could be dropped off at your local textile recycling centre for them to be given a new lease of life. Loveyourclothes.org.uk has a list of recycling information on its website.

For those handy with a sewing machine, refashioning is a great way of using up existing resources and



“The important thing is to slow down ... and consider what’s in your basket”

transforming them into something you’ll actually wear. Great things can be made from the most unlikely of garments. Tents can become dog coats; shrunken jumpers could become cushion covers; curtains or bedsheets could be made into pyjamas, easy-peasy shopping tote bags, play tents or kids’ summer dresses. Don’t discount fabric scraps either – save them for pincushions, quilts or beeswax wraps.

Better yet, there’s a whole community already tackling these sorts of projects, so you’ll have plenty of support and help with any questions. A great starting point would be to get involved in the annual Refashioners challenge – head over to Portia Lawrie’s blog (<https://makery.co.uk/>) to see what can be done with limited resources and limitless imagination. Pinterest and Instagram also have some great tutorials. When you’ve finished, don’t forget to document and share what you’ve made on social media or your blog if you have one – it’ll help inspire others.

Buying something new

Switching to more eco-friendly fashion isn’t about stopping shopping completely; it’s about slowing the process down, doing some research and really considering what we purchase – buying less, but better quality. We care about what we eat, and wouldn’t dream of buying cosmetics or beauty products that were tested on animals, so it makes sense to take the same approach to clothes. As journalist Lucy Siegle once said: “Fast fashion isn’t free. Someone, somewhere is paying.”

Doing research

First of all think about all of your favourite shops and high-street brands – what do you really know about their ethics and working practices? Luckily for us, Fashion Revolution has done some amazing work in this respect. Simply head over to fashionrevolution.org to read this year’s

report on how each fashion brand fared. The results may surprise you.

Next, it’s time to think about fabrics. Opting for an organic fibre is most definitely a good start. “Organic textiles, especially organic cotton, provide solutions to many of the challenges that are related to the increasing consumption of fashion and fabrics,” confirms the Soil Association on its website. “Organic cotton helps to combat climate change, use less water, no hazardous synthetic pesticides are used and only low-impact dyes are allowed. It is also better for farmers and factory workers, and GM is banned.”

Thankfully, other alternative fabric choices are becoming more mainstream too: bamboo; Lyocell and Modal fabrics (made from wood pulp and beechwood fibres respectively); hemp; and even fruit fibres such as Abaca cotton, made from banana stalks blended with cotton, or Piña silk from the leaves of pineapples.

Slower shopping

Whatever you’re in the market for though, the important thing is to slow down your shopping to really consider what’s in your basket. Consider the shapes and

styles you feel most comfortable in. So, for example, the list of your 'essentials' that you jotted down can be your starting point, or simply have a look in your laundry bin – what we think is our style and what we actually wear can actually be very different sometimes. According to BBC Earth (bbcearth.com), three out of every five t-shirts bought today will end up in the bin within the year – but when we're investing in something we love and brands we support, we're more inclined to wear and repair them.

And, as consumers, the great news is we've never had so much choice. Brands such as People Tree (peopletree.co.uk), Thought Clothing (wearthought.com), Komodo (komodo.co.uk), BAM (bambooclothing.co.uk), Veja (veja-store.com), Patagonia (patagonia.com) and Rapanui (rapanui-clothing.com) sell some beautiful, ethically made clothes and accessories to suit a range of budgets. More and more regular high-street stores are offering organic ranges too, but refer to the Fashion Transparency Index (via Fashion Revolution) for a clearer picture on their working practices. WRAP's (Waste and Resources Action Programme) Love Your Clothes campaign website also has some brilliant information on buying and caring for your clothes: loveyourclothes.org.uk.

Independent designer makers

For those who would like to support smaller brands and businesses, Instagram is a great starting point to seek out like-minded, ethical makers. Check out Nido (nido-web.com.ar) who specialises in natural fibres, hand knitted and hand dyed with natural products. Not Perfect Linen (etsy.com/shop/notPERFECTLINEN) is a family-run brand making stunning clothes from OEKO-TEX certified linen fabric. Green Shoes (greenshoes.co.uk) are beautiful, ethical and handmade shoes created by a team in a Devon studio. Whether you choose leather or vegan materials, they're all repairable, which cuts down on waste. Birdsong (birdsong.london) states: "We connect women, from worker to wearer," promising products from no sweatshops and using no Photoshop. Birdsong works solely with women's groups and charities to produce its clothing, and everyone is paid above the London Living Wage.

DIY clothing

If you'd like to take matters into your own hands, creating clothing yourself offers multiple benefits: you know exactly how something's made, you can select

DID YOU KNOW?

Less than 1% of material used to produce clothing is recycled into new clothing.

Ellen MacArthur Foundation

It takes 2,720 litres (600 gallons) of water to make a t-shirt. That's how much we normally drink over a three-year period.

Fashion Revolution

A third of the carbon footprint of clothes comes from the way we care for them.

Fashion Revolution

By doubling the useful life of clothing from one year to two years reduces emissions over the year by 24%.

Fashion Revolution and Greenpeace



environmentally friendly materials, and it's a mindful process to enjoy. Merchant and Mills (merchantandmills.com) sells a variety of Tencel (the brand name for Lyocell and Modal) fabrics, while Offset Warehouse (offsetwarehouse.com) stocks organic cotton, Modal silk jersey, Ramie and Abaca (pineapple-leaf fabric) at one-metre (3-foot) minimums.

When it comes to patterns, shops such as Ray Stitch (raystitch.co.uk) and Drapers Daughter (drapersdaughter.com) stock a wealth of fabric options, along with designs from independent pattern companies.

Ultimately, though, whatever approach you decide upon – whether you're creating items to treasure and repairing them when needed, or buying better-quality clothes made using ethical and sustainable production methods – these little or big actions will all help keep garments out of landfill and in our wardrobes for longer.

Breathing clean air
alleviates a whole host
of respiratory problems



Breathe Easy

Discover how to inhale cleaner air and improve your
health with the following set of guidelines

WORDS BY **Rebecca Bradbury**

OPEN YOUR WINDOWS

Opening your windows for just five to ten minutes a day is a simple, yet effective way of getting rid of any harmful air pollutants. Not only will the fresh air aid ventilation, it will also help control moisture levels. A damp indoor space is the perfect breeding ground for mould, a type of fungi responsible for producing airborne spores. Inhaling these allergens has been linked to an increased risk of respiratory problems, asthma and allergies.

RAMP UP YOUR VENTILATION

An open window is not always enough. Normal daily activities such as showering and cooking often lead to excessive moisture levels. To combat spiralling humidity levels and excess condensation, consider installing exhaust fans in the bathroom and kitchen, just make sure the vents extract the air outside. Also be sure to regularly check for leaks, remove mould as soon as it appears and keep houses heated between 18 to 20 degrees Celsius (64.4 to 68 degrees Fahrenheit) in colder months.

GET HOUSEPLANTS

When it comes to clearing the air of harmful toxins, the humble houseplant has hidden superpowers. Many work by absorbing pollutants such as carbon dioxide and formaldehyde through the spores in their leaves, while soil microorganisms are also thought to play a part. Plants impressing the most with their air-purifying properties include snake plants, aloe vera, Boston ferns, English ivy and peace lilies. Plus, they can jazz up your home and, according to other research, help promote productivity, happiness and relaxation.

LIGHT NATURAL CANDLES

Lighting candles is the perfect way to add some ambience to your home, but there's a hitch. These common

No smoking
The most dangerous indoor pollutant is secondhand smoke from cigarettes. Never let anybody smoke inside your home.

household objects could be reducing the quality of your air. The culprits are those made from paraffin wax, a hydrocarbon derived from petroleum. When these burn they release chemicals associated with certain respiratory problems into the air. Candle-lovers need not despair, however, as there are safe options available, including those made of beeswax, soy wax or any other natural vegetable wax. Beeswax even contains negative ions, which have been proven to clean air. Always choose natural fragrances over artificial ones, and avoid metal-core wicks in favour of ones that are all cotton.

INVEST IN AN AIR PURIFIER

Air purifiers can be a useful way of improving air quality. Using fans to draw air in through one or more filters, these machines trap contaminants and re-circulate the cleaner air back into the room. Although purifiers are often useful to asthmatics, there are some limitations, especially when it comes to filtering larger, heavier allergens such as dust mites and pollen. These particles settle to the ground quicker than the air purifiers can catch them, so other methods are still required.

KILL DUST MITES

Where air purifiers fail, a regular cleaning schedule triumphs. Somebody who suffers from dust allergies is not allergic to the dust itself, but microscopic dust mites that feed off dead human skin cells and thrive in warm, humid settings. These mites live in furnishings, so clean rugs, curtains and cushion covers, wash bedding at high temperatures and vacuum regularly to reduce the amount of contamination. Going carpet-less can also help.

USE NON-TOXIC CLEANING PRODUCTS

A spotless, sterilised house is not necessarily a house free of airborne

contaminants. Many cleaning products contain toxic chemicals, which can cause eye, throat and eye irritation. As brands catch onto the demand for products free of harmful ingredients, there is an increasing variety of 'green' cleaning items on the market. Alternatively, make your own at home using kitchen cupboard staples like vinegar, baking soda and citrus juice.

WASH YOUR PETS

Ever heard of pet dander? It's the very tiny particles of skin that cats and dogs (or any other animal with fur or feathers) sheds. Capable of lingering in the air for a long time, pet dander – alongside urine, sweat and saliva particles – is inhaled, triggering allergic reactions and asthma-like symptoms in certain individuals. Pet-specific vacuum cleaners, a regular bathing schedule for your pet, and making your bedroom a pet-free zone are all useful methods for combatting these contaminants.

AIR YOUR KITCHEN

Water vapour isn't the only thing you need to be wary of in the kitchen, especially if you own a gas stove. Scientists discovered that cooking a single meal on a gas stove can produce levels of nitrogen dioxide that the US Environmental Protection Agency considers unsafe to breathe. Be sure to ventilate your kitchen by opening a window and ensuring you have a range hood to extract odours, grease particles and other pollutants while cooking.

Beware of toxic gas
Burning wood or coal to cook or heat the home produces dangerous gases. Get a working carbon monoxide alarm.

BEWARE OF FORMALDEHYDE

Found in glues, textiles, disinfectants and building materials, the carcinogenic gas formaldehyde became subject to certain restrictions in 2016. Although now only available for professional use, homes could still be affected due to its use as an adhesive in MDF and paint. Going forward, ensure your wooden furniture is not made from formaldehyde glue.

WHAT'S ALL THIS PLASTIC DOING TO OUR HEALTH?

Most of us have got the message: plastic isn't good for the planet. But what about our bodies? Should we be purging our cupboards of Tupperware for the sake of more short-term health concerns, too?

WORDS BY **Claire Fox**



Plastic is everywhere – not just in our toys and bottles, but in the cling film wrapped around our food and in the non-stick

coating on our frying pans. It can even be found on the coating of many of the UK's 11 billion till receipts (making them non-recyclable) and, according to Change Incorporated, in the 4.5 trillion cigarette filters discarded globally every year as cigarette butts. The message that our plastic consumption is having a negative impact on the environment is coming through loud and clear, but when it comes to the potential impact on our health, things get more confusing.

Secondary risk?

The health concern comes from the chemicals contained in plastic. Some of those chemicals, including Bisphenol A (BPA) – which some studies have linked to a higher risk of heart disease, breast cancer and diabetes – are able to migrate into our bodies. "A study in the US has estimated BPA to be present in more than 93 per cent of the US adult population," says Dr Margaret Wexler, Head of Science at the charity Breast Cancer UK. "The main route into our bodies is through our diet. It can leach into food and drink from plastic packaging as well as being absorbed through our skin," she says.

The question seems to be whether the amount of chemicals migrating into our bodies is sufficient to pose a risk to our health. In 2015, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) concluded that, at current levels of exposure, there was insufficient evidence of adverse health effects of BPA. And, in the UK, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) agrees. "Scientists estimate how much of a chemical people can consume daily over their lifetime without being harmed by it," says a spokesperson.

This is known as the chemical's tolerable daily intake (TDI). BPA has a temporary TDI set for it by the EFSA and we currently consume less than the TDI for BPA from sources such as food containers. The FSA agrees with the EFSA conclusion that BPA currently

poses no risk to health, based on dietary exposure.

However, the debate doesn't quite end there. Breast Cancer UK is calling for a ban on the use of BPA in all food and drink packaging. "There is a significant amount of scientific evidence that shows, even at low levels of exposure, BPA has an adverse effect on the development of breast tissue," says Dr Wexler. "Laboratory experiments show that BPA has the ability to transform normal breast cells into cells of a more cancerous or overall malignant nature. Animal studies also show that exposure to BPA in the womb or during early life can increase susceptibility to tumours. The evidence is suggestive of harm but is not conclusive. As it may be difficult to determine whether the plastics used to store food or drink contain potentially harmful chemicals, Breast Cancer UK's position is to try and use less plastic where possible."

Find alternatives

BPA has already been banned in food-contact materials intended for children under the age of three on a 'precautionary basis'. And the FSA advises taking various additional precautions, such as not allowing cling film to touch hot food and not using damaged plastic food storage boxes (see *Reducing Your Exposure*). The EFSA is also currently reviewing new toxicological data from the US.

Caroline Sherlock, a registered nutritionist and co-founder of Eat Drink Live Well, believes there is enough uncertainty to make a clear case for reducing our exposure to plastic, especially for anyone at a higher risk of cancer or hormonal conditions, or with a gut dysfunction such as constipation which, she says, can mean toxins are not so readily eliminated from the body.

So, while the debate rages on, what do we do? Although it's pretty much impossible to eliminate our contact with plastic entirely, there are lots of easy-to-follow precautions we can take to limit our exposure, particularly through what we eat and drink.



REDUCING YOUR EXPOSURE

Here are some easy ways you can lessen your risk now

1 NEVER REUSE A DAMAGED WATER BOTTLE

A 2018 study found microplastics in 90% of bottled water brands – and roughly twice as many as in tap water. For that reason, Caroline Sherlock recommends avoiding water sold in plastic bottles.

The FSA, however, maintains that disposable water bottles are safe, but recommends precautions on reuse. A spokesperson says: “Legislation requires that chemicals must not migrate into foods at levels which harm health. As plastic water bottles are expected to have a particularly long shelf life and not migrate chemicals at a level that could be potentially harmful during that period, they should remain safe if cleaned carefully before reuse.” However, bottles should be checked for damage before reuse and discarded in a recycling bin as necessary.

3 DISCARD TAKEOUT COFFEE LIDS

“The hot steam hits the lid and may release harmful chemicals that can drip down with the condensation right into your coffee,” says Caroline. “Better still, use a glass or stainless steel reusable cup, as some takeaway cups also have plastic linings. Even on reusable cups, the lids, unfortunately, are nearly always plastic. I’d recommend opting for a silicone lid, which studies currently suggest is safe – but remove it before drinking as a precaution.”



6 THROW OUT DAMAGED TUPPERWARE

When it comes to plastic food storers, the FSA advises that instructions for use should be followed and that any plastic storage boxes showing “clear signs of deterioration” should be replaced, because migration of chemicals may be accelerated following damage.

“In an ideal world, we’d eliminate plastic food and drink storage, and use glass, ceramic or stainless steel instead,” says Caroline. “But it’s not always realistic, so I think it’s important to do as much as you can. Glass in a freezer isn’t really practical, and since the chemicals are less likely to leach in cold conditions than hot, I use plastic bags there. It isn’t ideal, but I don’t use a lot elsewhere. Also, since chemicals are more likely to leach into fatty or acidic foods, there’s a greater risk of storing cheese, for example, than salad in plastic.”



2 KEEP CLING FILM OFF HOT FOOD

The FSA advises that cling film should not touch hot food. “Given that chemicals in cling film have the potential to migrate to a greater extent into hot foods than cold, we recommend



direct contact with hot foods is avoided,” says a spokesperson. “Cling film can be used to cover deep dishes for microwave cooking, but direct contact with the food should be prevented.”

Breast Cancer UK, however, recommends avoiding cling film, especially when microwaving. Opt for beeswax paper, glass, ceramic or stainless steel containers.

4 GIVE DAMAGED NON-STICK PANS A MISS

Non-stick coatings, such as Teflon, are often a type of plastic. The FSA advises being vigilant about damage to non-stick cookware and utensils, which may accelerate chemical migration. A spokesperson says: “We recommend replacing any item showing clear signs of deterioration.” Caroline advises opting for ceramic, stainless steel or cast iron.

5 MICROWAVE WITH CAUTION

“Since heat may increase the leaching of chemicals from certain types of plastics, microwaving in plastic is better avoided,” says Dr Wexler. An FSA spokesperson, however, says only that “consumers should ensure they follow instructions on packaging when heating, reusing or recycling food packaging.”

7 UNDERSTAND WHAT “BPA-FREE” MEANS

“The problem with plastics labelled BPA-free is that they may contain other bisphenols that may also be harmful,” says Dr Wexler. “We recommend choosing plastics labelled with recycling codes 2, 4 or 5,” she says. “Avoid plastic containers labelled with code 7, which may contain BPA or other bisphenols, or code 3, which may release potentially harmful plasticisers or vinyl chloride into food and drink.”

Clean Living

GUIDE

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Clean Living

GUIDE

10
Ways to
change your
mindset

STEPS TOWARDS A SIMPLER,
MORE NATURAL WAY OF LIFE



Living

What is clean living and how can it help you transform your health and happiness?



Body

Detox your body, from what you eat and the products you use, to how you move and sleep.



Mind

Declutter your brain to make room for positive thoughts and friendships that help you grow.



Environment

An eco-friendly wardrobe, non-toxic cleaning products and a greener home to help the planet.

Clean eating recipes • Picking the right exercise • Beauty tips