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HEALTH EDITOR

**Faye M Smith**

DEPUTY HEALTH EDITORS

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**Natalia Lubomirski**

SENIOR HEALTH WRITER

**Jenny Rowe**

HEALTH WRITER

**Rose Goodman**

COVER DESIGN

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ART EDITORS

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**Ian Pollard, Anne Roth,**

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PICTURE EDITOR

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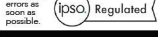
**Mary Bird**

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# Let's leap into SPRING

It's our absolute favourite time of the year – when the days are longer, Mother Nature paints her colours in flower beds and on trees, and the promise



of warmer temperatures seems ever closer. Hopefully, you're emerging from winter feeling fit and well and ready to get going. But if you're struggling, then you've come to the right place.

This month's Feel Good You, from the experts at our wonderful sister magazine woman&home, has your back. From fitness plans to put a spring in your step (p72), to beauty routines to give you the best skin (p56) and hair of your life (p62). Plus, we've caught up with some truly inspirational women, who we hope will motivate you to move. Check out the likes of Dame Kelly Holmes on p76, and Laura, Shelle and Donna on p112, who prove you don't need to be an Olympian to win at life.

We also bring you the latest health news and advice, really cool swimwear (p84), tricks for keeping things fresh in the bedroom (p125) and a workout you can do in bed (p78)! What are you waiting for?

*Michelle*

**MICHELLE HATHER**  
Editor, Feel Good You  
[michelle.hather@futurenet.com](mailto:michelle.hather@futurenet.com)

**PS** Feel Good You, the very best health and wellbeing magazine, is on sale every two months and can also be taken as a subscription. Look out for our early summer edition, on sale 11 May, and don't miss our sister title woman&home, out now!

**3 GREAT THINGS TO TRY THIS ISSUE...**



**Improve your posture and look younger instantly (p26)**

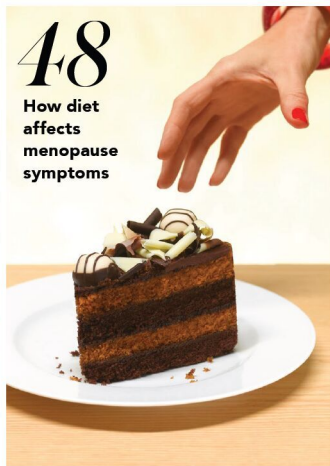


**Rest and recuperate on a wellness break in Arizona (p126)**



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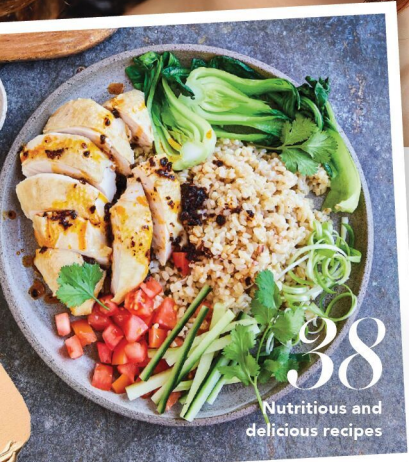


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HAIR & MAKE-UP: KATIE  
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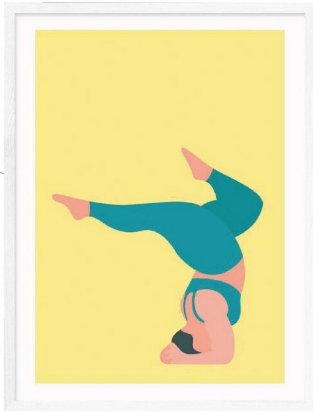


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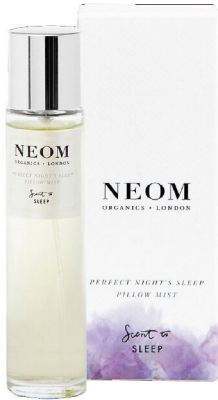
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# What's healthy RIGHT NOW?

All the latest news, views and what's on this spring



## Everyone's talking about...

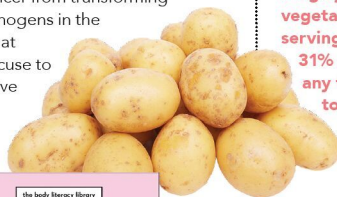
### SOCIALISING CAN BOOST GUT HEALTH

Struggle with bloating? Certain foods upset your tummy? Spend time with your friends, says research from Oxford University. Over an eight-year period, scientists measured monkeys' social connectedness, then collected and analysed the DNA of their stools. These were controlled for other factors that could affect the microbiome, such as age, season, sex and rank within the group's hierarchy.

Findings showed that those who socialised more, had a more diverse range of gut microbes known to benefit the immune system. Less sociable monkeys had more streptococcus bacteria, which cause infection. Good gut bacteria are important for reducing the risk of diabetes and heart disease.

## POTATOES COULD HELP SAVE YOUR LIFE

Not just a versatile root vegetable, spuds could also help fight cancer and reduce the severity of side effects of existing treatments\*\*. They contain glycoalkaloids – compounds rich in the *Solanaceae* plant family, which includes potatoes, tomatoes and aubergines. These have been shown to stop potentially carcinogenic chemicals known to cause cancer from transforming into carcinogens in the body. What better excuse to get creative in the kitchen?



## Vitamin K can protect your bones

Roughly 2% of bone density is lost each year during the menopause but, according to new research by Edith Cowan University, filling up on vitamin K could help. Findings showed that women who ate more than 100 micrograms of vitamin K1 – equivalent to roughly 125g of dark leafy vegetables, or one-to-two servings of vegetables – were 31% less likely to have any fracture, compared to participants who consumed less than 60 micrograms per day. Time to tuck in!

## breasts



an owner's guide

Dr Philippa Kaye

## TREASURE CHEST OF SUPPORT

From bra-fitting advice to what to do when things go wrong, *Breasts* by Dr Philippa Kaye (£15, DK) gives you everything you need to know in one place. Including checklists, FAQs and myth busters, all supported by the latest medical research.

**70%** OF BRITS SAY THEY FEEL THE WELLNESS INDUSTRY STILL FOCUSES MORE ON HOW WE LOOK THAN HOW WE FEEL\*.



## Sip-sip, hooray!

Ditching the booze and struggling to find tasty alternatives? Look no further – Sippers (sippersdrinks.com), gives you the very best of no- and low-alcohol drinks in one place. Cheers!

**IT'S A FACT** Door and cabinet handles in your home are covered in up to eight times more





feel good news

## 3 OF THE BEST SPRING SAVIOURS

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IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP. CHECK WITH YOUR GP OR MEDICAL EXPERT BEFORE TAKING NEW SUPPLEMENTS. \*DELICIOUSLY ELLA. \*\*FRONTIERS IN PHARMACOLOGY. \*\*\*IRONMONGERDIRECT. WORDS: ROSE GOODMAN. PHOTOS (POSED BY MODELS): GETTY

bacteria than the average toilet seat, and 63% of us aren't cleaning them the recommended once a week\*\*\*.





# SPRING awakening

A change of seasons means a shift in our daily patterns too – here's how to make it work for you

**S**unny mornings and lighter evenings are what many of us look forward to when British Summer Time begins. However, the shift from winter weather can have a big impact – not only on our daily habits, but on our health, too.

'The first week after the clock change – when an hour of sleep is lost – is associated with increased irritability, daytime fatigue, heart attacks and even mental health problems,' says Russell Foster, professor of circadian neuroscience at the University of Oxford. And, as many of us are already not getting enough sleep, this can make us vulnerable to these problems for months to come.

But, fear not, there are plenty of easy lifestyle tweaks you can adopt to make the transition into spring and summer feel easier. Intrigued? Our experts reveal how to successfully change your habits with the seasons.

## *Running like clockwork*

Feeling sleepier than usual right now? Then your circadian rhythm could be out of sync. 'Circadian rhythms are controlled by circadian clocks, which are present in almost every organ and cell,' explains Dr Satchin Panda, professor at Salk Institute, San Diego, California\*.

'These set the timing for different bodily processes, including the sleep-wake cycle, digestion, metabolism, body temperature, hormone production, and immune,

muscle and brain function.'

This means every hormone, brain chemical and digestive enzyme is preprogrammed to peak at optimal times of day. So, what part do the seasons play? Dr Panda explains that our master clock in the brain, called the suprachiasmatic nucleus (SCN), receives information about light and darkness from the outside world and shares it with the rest of the body – influencing the timing of everything from sleep to hunger. >>



# SPRINGING FORWARD

Your circadian rhythm does not cope well with change but, unfortunately, this is unavoidable when spring arrives and it stays lighter longer.

'We can struggle to feel sleepy when it's time for bed, and not feel awake enough to get up when it's morning,' says Dr Lindsay Browning at Trouble Sleeping. And this feeling can last for weeks – or even months. 'We may feel sluggish when we wake because our circadian rhythm thinks we should still be sleeping, and we may feel too alert in the evening to go to bed on time.'

This is perhaps the most obvious side effect we might notice, but there are a variety of other, more serious health consequences.

## + SIGNS OF INCREASED IRRITABILITY

You may feel frustrated more easily and vulnerable to stress, as losing just one hour of sleep can have a big impact on your mood. This was shown in a study by the University of Pennsylvania, where people who

were limited to only 4.5 hours of sleep a night for one week reported feeling more stressed, angry, sad and mentally exhausted.

## + WEIGHT GAIN

Sleep deficiency can increase your appetite because of the rise of ghrelin – the hunger hormone – and the decrease of leptin, the hormone that registers fullness. So, not only will your usual eating cues be out of sync, but with those light evenings keeping you awake for longer, you might be more likely to snack or have heavy meals before hitting the hay. And we're less likely to be making healthy food choices when tired, says research\*\*.

## + POOR MENTAL HEALTH

The loss of sleep and the shift of light can cause a dip in mood and even increase the risk of depressive symptoms. A 17-year Danish study found that patients being diagnosed with depression rose by 11% over the first 10 weeks of Daylight Saving Time

(DST). This is believed to be due to the mornings being darker for a short while, which can increase symptoms of seasonal affective disorder (SAD).

## + PHYSICAL HEALTH SCARES

Disrupting our body's internal clock can lead to heart attacks and stroke, says US research. On the first Monday after the clocks go forward, hospitals report a 24%\*\*\* spike in heart attack visits each year, while a study published in *Sleep Medicine* showed stroke rates increasing by 8% in two days following both clock changes.

## + ACCIDENTS

Driving to work at the crack of dawn? You might want to make a large coffee-to-go, says Russell. When you're sleep deprived, your reaction times become slower and you can struggle to focus. In fact, a study from the University of Colorado Boulder found that there was a 6% increase in road traffic accidents in the work week following the start of DST.





## Re-sync your body clock

These easy lifestyle changes can help prepare your body as the seasons change...

### + GET OUTSIDE

'Being exposed to evening light puts you at risk of going to bed later and getting up later,' says Russell. This is why getting outside early in the day is so important – morning light has the opposite effect, making you go to bed earlier and get up earlier. Helping your body clock to become more closely synchronised to sunrise and sunset will encourage regular sleep patterns.

### + RETHINK MEALTIMES

Russell advises concentrating your meals into the first and middle parts of the day. This is because eating a heavy meal before bedtime can cause an increase in core body temperature, and there needs to be a drop in order for us to fall asleep. Fill up on sleep-boosting foods rich in magnesium – including spinach and avocado – calcium, found in dark leafy greens, and tryptophan which you can get from seeds, nuts and eggs.

### + LOWER THE LIGHTS

Reduce how much bright light you are exposed to before bed. 'You may like to dim the lighting in your room, use candles or a lamp instead of the overhead light, and reduce the brightness of screens,' says Dr Browning. 'This will help your body to produce the sleep hormone, melatonin, earlier to help you fall asleep earlier.' If you have poor curtains, invest in blackout blinds.

### + KEEP A COOL BEDROOM

This can be more difficult as we head into summer, but it's important for

#### WATCH YOUR WORKOUT

Evening exerciser? Try to avoid it until you have adjusted to the season shift, advises Dr Browning. 'Exercise tends to help our body feel more alert, and can help to shift our circadian rhythm.'

achieving that drop in core body temperature, needed for both falling and staying asleep. 'The ideal room temperature is 18 degrees, certainly no more than 22,' says Russell. Quality bedding can also help. A seven-tog duvet will keep you cool. If you don't want to invest in two duvets for the seasons, a 10-tog duvet works all-year round. Cotton and linen will help reduce night-time sweating.

### + STICK TO A REGIME

Do you use the weekends or Bank Holidays to 'catch up' on sleep? It might be doing you more harm than good. 'You're never going to be able to catch up on your sleep debt,' says Russell. 'Try to get the sleep you need during the week and aim to get up and go to bed at the same time over the weekend.' Why? If you oversleep on the

weekends, then you're missing out on that important morning light, meaning that you're going to feel tired on Monday.

### + SKIP THE NIGHTCAP

Beer garden drinks might be tempting during the warm evenings, but try to avoid overdoing it. While having a nightcap might make you feel sleepy and relaxed, in excess, it can lead to poorer sleep and insomnia. 'Alcohol reduces REM (rapid-eye-movement), aka deep sleep, during the first part of the night, decreases sleep quality, results in less sleep and causes frequent waking in the night,' says Russell in his new book *Life Time* (£10.99, Penguin Books). This can cause day-time sleepiness, which means that you rely on caffeine to stay awake, then alcohol to fall asleep.



**W**hat's the first thing you do when you're feeling bored, sad, frustrated or need cheering up?

**While many of us seek comfort from food, some of us go into autopilot mode when emotions are running high, reaching into our pockets to treat ourselves in order to avoid discomfort that might be plaguing us. But with the spiralling cost of living making our everyday lives more difficult – and a lot more expensive – a continuous cycle of overspending can lead to deep financial waters, which can further impact mental health.**

### *The spending-spree high*

Worryingly, a recent study found that 63% of women aren't confident their finances can withstand the financial squeeze.\* At difficult times like these especially, it's clear that impulsive

spending offers a one-way ticket to soaring levels of stress and anxiety.

'Spending becomes dangerous when we use it as a coping mechanism to regulate our emotions – hence the term "emotional spending",' says consultant psychologist Elena Touroni, co-founder of The Chelsea Psychology Clinic. 'Some people shop to mask difficult emotions, such as stress, boredom, anxiety and low self-esteem.'

On a physiological level, when we treat ourselves, levels of the reward neurotransmitter surge short-term. 'Shopping gives us a dopamine "high", in much the same way as drugs like cocaine, opiates and nicotine, which is why, for some people, it can become addictive,' says Elena. The problem comes after this momentary rush, when most people who overspend are left with a huge sense of guilt that makes them feel much worse in the long run.

Fed up of being in the red and want to break the cycle? Here are our top ways to get your emotional bank balance back in check.

### *Put everything down on paper*

Your finances should dictate your lifestyle and not the other way round. 'Weigh up the pros and cons before buying anything – the shopper "high" can interfere with healthy decision-making. Write a pros and cons list and mull it over to make sure you're buying something for the right reasons,' says Elena. Figure out whether you need or want the item in question.

If spending large amounts is tied with striving to foster happiness, look to other self-care practices that can ease any negative feelings. Yoga, meditation and journaling are all good outlets to help lower stress. Best of all, they're free!

# *Is your* **CREDIT CARD** *your* **CURE?**

Emotions dictating your spending habits? Prioritising your mental health can help to better balance the books



## SELF-CARE ON A SHOESTRING

These budget feel-good tips will help to lighten the stress load

### HAVE A DIGITAL DETOX

Social media fuels comparison syndrome, which can trigger spending. Remember that social media reflects an edited version of reality, so seemingly 'perfect' lives are usually just a facade. Unfollow any accounts that are causing you anxiety and give yourself incremental breaks. Start with a 24-hour digital detox once per month, building this up to fortnightly and then weekly. Be mindful of how cathartic it can feel not to scroll through your social feeds and use your time productively instead.

### LISTEN TO A SOUND BATH

An audio sound bath (you can find plenty of sound-bath sessions for free on YouTube) can be a restorative way to ease stress and clear your mind. For example, listening to the meditative sounds of vibrating singing bowls helps to stimulate brainwaves, which evokes deep relaxation.

### TAKE A WALK OUTDOORS

Nature is proven to boost the feel-good factor and even just 10 minutes per day spent in green spaces will help you to reap the benefits. Next time you're tempted to splurge, step away from the situation and go for a walk outside. It's amazing how a breath of fresh air can help to clear your mind.

## KNOW YOUR VALUES

Your guiding principles help you to make everyday choices – this innate set of values makes us who we are. Sometimes we need to take a step back and ask ourselves questions that help to define our principles so that we can connect with them. 'Ask yourself what qualities you value, and what kind of person you ultimately want to be. What would you like to be remembered for? Connecting with our values steers us away from the superficial things in life and towards the things that really matter to us,' says Elena.

## Look within

Being more mindful about your spending decisions will help you to identify any recurrent patterns. Understanding the root cause of overspending is the first step to breaking the cycle, so try to work out if you're unconsciously trying to cover up certain emotions. 'Do you shop after speaking to a particular person? After having an argument with your partner? When you're bored?' asks Elena. 'Getting an idea of your triggers will help you understand what emotions you're trying to mask.'







# Relight your FIRE

Surviving not thriving? Here's how to step out of the fog and into the sunshine

**A**re you OK, but not how you used to be? You may have been experiencing languishing. 'Simply put, this is the absence of mental wellbeing,' says Gosia Bowling, national lead for mental health at Nuffield Health. 'You're not depressed, but you're certainly not thriving.'

Many of us will be able to remember those feelings during the pandemic – where the sense of Groundhog Day took a toll on mental wellbeing, resulting in a sense of limbo, aimlessness or emptiness in the day-to-day. However, with lockdown behind us and normal life resuming, many are still struggling to get our groove back. Sound

familiar? We've asked our experts for the lowdown on languishing and how you can move towards flourishing and fulfilment.

## *Invisible condition*

Languishing isn't diagnosable – it's not an illness and many are still able to function throughout.

'It can be more easily understood by thinking about it as the foggy grey middle ground between depression and flourishing. It's the kind of "blah" where you're just not really one thing or another,' says clinical psychologist

Dr Marianne Trent\*\*. You're simply getting through the day without any real joy in it.

'As a feeling or emotion, languishing

sits at the crossroads between health and ill health, with some able to recognise and work on the feelings associated with it to positively move towards mental fitness, and others unable to do so, running the risk of moving towards mental ill health,' adds psychotherapist Brendan Street from Nuffield Health.

## *What's the impact?*

Rather than being actively engaged in what is going on around you, when you're languishing, you muddle through on a mundane auto pilot. 'While you are not ill, you're certainly nowhere near your best,' says Brendan. This can disrupt ability to focus and sap motivation, meaning less creativity, performance and productivity.

What makes languishing so >>>

**10%**  
of people say they experienced languishing during the pandemic\*.



problematic is that it can often go undetected. You might tell yourself it's 'just one of those weeks', which can insidiously slip into months of feeling unmotivated and unfulfilled. If you're not conscious of your deteriorating mental health, you won't seek help.

'People who are languishing now, and then blindly drift further without support, are more likely to develop more serious mood difficulties in the next months and years,' says Brendan. 'Languishing also makes it more difficult to practise good self-care; as we become less energised, interested and motivated, we take less care of our physical health.'

## Languishing vs depression

There are some clear similarities, such as changes in mood, motivation and drive, and feelings of restlessness and detachment. However, Gosia points out that languishing is different from depression, because it's an absence of flourishing rather than the presence of mental ill health.

'Whilst depression also varies in severity, it has a much greater impact on ability to work or function in different aspects of life,' she adds.

## SPOT THE SIGNS

If you recognise three or more of these in yourself, you might be experiencing languishing...

- The movements of your day-to-day feel mundane rather than worthwhile or engaging.
- You don't have the usual drive or energy for something you were once ambitious about.
- There's a sense of unease, but you're unable to pinpoint exactly where it's coming from.
- You're having difficulty focusing within all aspects of life.
- There's a feeling of detachment, not just from people, but also situations or moments.
- You're struggling to find the point in the day-to-day.



### Did you know?

The risk of a major depressive episode is two times more likely among those who are languishing, compared to moderately mentally healthy adults, and nearly six times more likely among languishing adults compared to those who are flourishing\*\*\*.

## STUCK CYCLES

These occur when thoughts, emotions, actions and physical feelings interact with each other, each having a knock-on effect that can keep us stuck in helpful, and often unhealthy, patterns, says Gosia. Look out for:

### + SWITCHING OFF

Ever decided to stay in because going out feels like too much effort? While in the short term this might not be an issue, but if you notice yourself choosing TV and mindlessly

scrolling social media every evening or weekend – instead of socialising or engaging in activities you once enjoyed – every day can feel the same, with little to no enjoyment.

### + BOREDOM

By having no change to our routine, we get increasingly bored and indifferent.

'This, together with a lack of connection or purpose, impacts on mood, increasing a sense of "meh",' says Gosia. 'You feel you have nothing much of interest to say, so we become more disconnected from social contacts, increasing boredom and stagnation.'

### + UNHEALTHY HABITS

Languishing can often feel like a vicious cycle – cooking a healthy meal from scratch and getting outside in the fresh air to exercise feels like a chore, yet it will undoubtedly have a much more positive impact on our wellbeing, instead of ordering a takeaway and not moving from the sofa.

'This sluggishness has a knock-on effect on motivation and energy levels,' says Gosia.



# FIND YOUR FLOURISH

Break free from the languishing cycle and regain your purpose

## + NAME YOUR FEELINGS

'The most important factor in managing languishing is to recognise and name this experience. Once you are aware of languishing, you can take steps to do something about it,' says Brendan.

## + FIND YOUR FLOW

'One of the ways of acknowledging and breaking the cycles languishing creates is a concept called flow,' says Gosia. This is often referred to as 'being in the zone' – when you become so engrossed in a meaningful activity that you lose track of time and all sense of self disappears. The best way of finding your flow is doing an activity you enjoy – whether that's baking, gardening, painting, hiking or playing music.

'In order to move from the stagnant state of languishing, you need to take meaningful action which will get you "unstuck" and back into a state of flow,' adds Gosia.

## + CREATE STRUCTURE

If the days feel as if they're merging into one, giving yourself structure can be transformational, says Marianne. 'You may find it helpful to use time blocking. Allocate yourself small increments of time to get things done and get them ticked off your list,' she says. This can be implemented for anything – whether it's completing jobs around the house, scheduling time for coffee with a friend or going for a walk.

It can help to protect these blocks of time – meaning no scrolling social media, watching TV or checking your emails. Ease yourself in with blocks of 20 minutes – there doesn't need to be any maximum limit, but having a shorter time frame in mind can reduce feelings of overwhelm that may stop you from getting started.

## + BECOME MINDFUL, NOT MINDLESS

Mindfulness is not having a completely blank mind or reaching some blissful or 'zen' state. 'Mindfulness makes us more aware of the streams of thoughts and feelings that we experience, and rather than just accept them, notice how we can untangle ourselves from past unhelpful patterns,' says Gosia. In times of uncertainty and stress, this is a really helpful skill.

'Want to give it a go? Practise giving your full attention to the things that you are doing or experiencing. 'Notice what is happening in your thoughts, emotions and body,' says Gosia. 'When your mind starts to wander (which it will), notice what happened to your attention and gently bring it back. Like any skill, it needs practise to develop. Start off with short mindful moments and build your practice gradually.'

## + STAY CONNECTED

When you're feeling low and unmotivated, it can be very easy to isolate yourself but it's during these times that our relationships are the most important. Surrounding yourself with people who make you feel positive and energised, can help you to thrive. If you've ever considered joining a community group around shared interests, or even volunteering for a local charity, now is the time to do it.

'Working together with a shared sense of purpose can help you out of the sense of aimlessness associated with languishing,' says Gosia. 'Network, share resources and look out for each other. Knowing you have each other's backs can be a huge comfort during difficult times.'

*Want  
to talk?*

Speak to your GP or find  
an accredited therapist  
at, for example,  
[nuffieldhealth.com](http://nuffieldhealth.com)

# Tidy house TIDY MIND!

Neutralise the smell in your homemade, vinegar-based household cleaner by adding fresh lemon.

Natural spring-cleaning tips to refresh your home – and mental health

**Y**our grandmother was right – when you keep your home sparkling, it does wonders for your state of mind too.

Studies have shown that cleaning can relieve stress and promote mindfulness, while removing clutter can prevent overstimulation, enabling us to focus.

## MAKE A GENERAL PURPOSE CLEANER

Mix salt with vinegar. Use to swab down tiles, surfaces and cupboards. It will also remove tea and coffee stains from cups and teapots. Just don't use vinegar on waxed surfaces, marble or linoleum.

**YOUR ECO INGREDIENTS**  
 Hate harmful chemicals? Stock up on these instead  
 + Bicarbonate of soda  
 + Lemon juice + Salt  
 + White distilled vinegar  
 + Chalk + Dried herbs

## IN THE KITCHEN

### + FOR A SPARKLING FRIDGE

Freshen up the inside of your fridge with a half-and-half solution of water and white vinegar.

### + FOR A SPOTLESS CHOPPING BOARD

Rub a lemon slice over the board to disinfect and deodorise it. Squeeze lemon juice over any tough stains, let this sit for about 10 minutes, then wipe away.

### + FOR STINKY DRAINS

Clean with lemon juice, especially if you have a septic system. Pour 90g bicarbonate of soda down, followed by hot lemon juice.

## IN THE BATHROOM

### + FOR A GRIME-FREE FINISH

To remove grime, mildew and scum from the bath, tiles, shower curtain or door, wipe over with undiluted white vinegar then rinse with water.

### + FOR DISCOLOURED GROUTING

Scrub bathroom tiles and any dirty grouting with an old toothbrush and a thick paste of bicarb and water.

### + FOR A GOOD-AS-NEW SHOWER CURTAIN

When machine-washing shower curtains, add a cup each of vinegar and bicarb.

## More natural ways to clean and care for your home...

### + MAKE METAL GLEAM

To clean metal (eg brass, copper and pewter), sprinkle salt into a squeezed-out lemon half and use it to rub down metal, then rinse and buff with a soft cloth. Rinse thoroughly, otherwise copper and brass will turn green (this can be washed off).

### + HEAVEN-SCENTED WARDROBES

Herbs, such as lavender, keep clothing smelling fresh. Pop in a cloth sachet, tie with ribbon and

hang on the rail.

Cedar and rosemary keep moths away, too.

### + SHINIER SILVERWARE

To prevent silverware from tarnishing, tie two sticks of chalk in cheesecloth and place in the cutlery drawer. Your silver will stay cleaner for longer, and look shinier.

### + TO REMOVE RUST

Simply rub a lemon half against the rust, leave for 30 minutes, then clean it off.

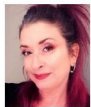


**DID YOU KNOW?**  
 For streak-free windows and mirrors, mix equal parts of lemon juice and water in a spray bottle. Use with a lint-free cloth.

COMPILED BY: DEBRA WATERS. PHOTO: GETTY. IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP



# *I buried my emotions with* **BOOZE'**



Quitting drinking helped Ryz Charters, 53, find the strength to face her grief



**I** always thought boozing was part of my identity. I was a party person, and “liquid lunches” and “hair of the dog” were social norms. At times, I’d drunk excessively and dysfunctionally, but had always managed to rein it back in. Because of this, I was drawn towards working in substance-misuse services, learning about the risks of heavy alcohol use and the tools to manage it.

Then, six years ago, my dad became seriously ill and was in and out of hospital for months. I got “the phone call” several times to say he wouldn’t make it, then he’d improve and hang on. It was an incredibly stressful time.

When he did eventually pass away, my mum went to pieces. I felt I had to be strong and went into coping mode with my brother – together we sorted out all the practical and financial issues.

I hit the bottle hard as my outlet, on a mission to block everything out, fearing if I acknowledged my feelings, the dam would break and I’d shatter.

I’d completed Dry January before, but never with the intention of lasting abstinence. But that first January after losing my dad, I knew I needed a break. Alcohol was no longer my friend.

I committed to a booze-free month, using an app to track my dry days. I still went to the pub and socialised, because avoiding “triggers” meant I’d be avoiding life. Luckily, my motivation was strong. I knew that my dad would

be heartbroken to see me drinking so much, so I vowed to be a better version of myself in tribute to him.

Initially, I didn’t think past that first month, but I saw some people in the online support group I’d joined were aiming for 100 days. That seemed too big a challenge, but I took each day at a time. When I got to April, I’d reset my mindset and habits, and couldn’t think of one good reason to drink again.

My drinking was really about my grief, so I had counselling. I told my counsellor that I feared by lifting the lid on my emotions, I would be engulfed in sorrow. Very slowly, she helped me explore my grief.

I’ve just passed my five-year sober anniversary and have gained so much. Obvious benefits are money saved and weight loss – I dropped two dress sizes! I never get ill and I have the energy for

hobbies as I no longer waste evenings drinking, or feel sluggish first thing.

I’ve been to festivals, parties and gigs without drinking, and much prefer the sober experience. It’s vivid and real, rather than missing half of it queuing at the bar or forgetting it all in the haze.

**‘I was on a mission to block out everything’**

My mental health is better and my emotions are more authentic. If I cry, it’s because something has genuinely touched me, and when I laugh, I’m really in the moment. I also love my work as an NHS health and wellbeing coach, supporting others to make sustainable, healthy lifestyle changes.

The word alcohol comes from an ancient Arabic word that roughly translates to “spirit stealer” – and this rings true. Booze sucked my spirit – stealing my time, money, energy and relationships. I do not miss drinking one bit.’

## NEED TO KNOW

✦ According to national statistics, drinking over the recommended 14 units of alcohol in a week is most common in adults aged 55 to 64.

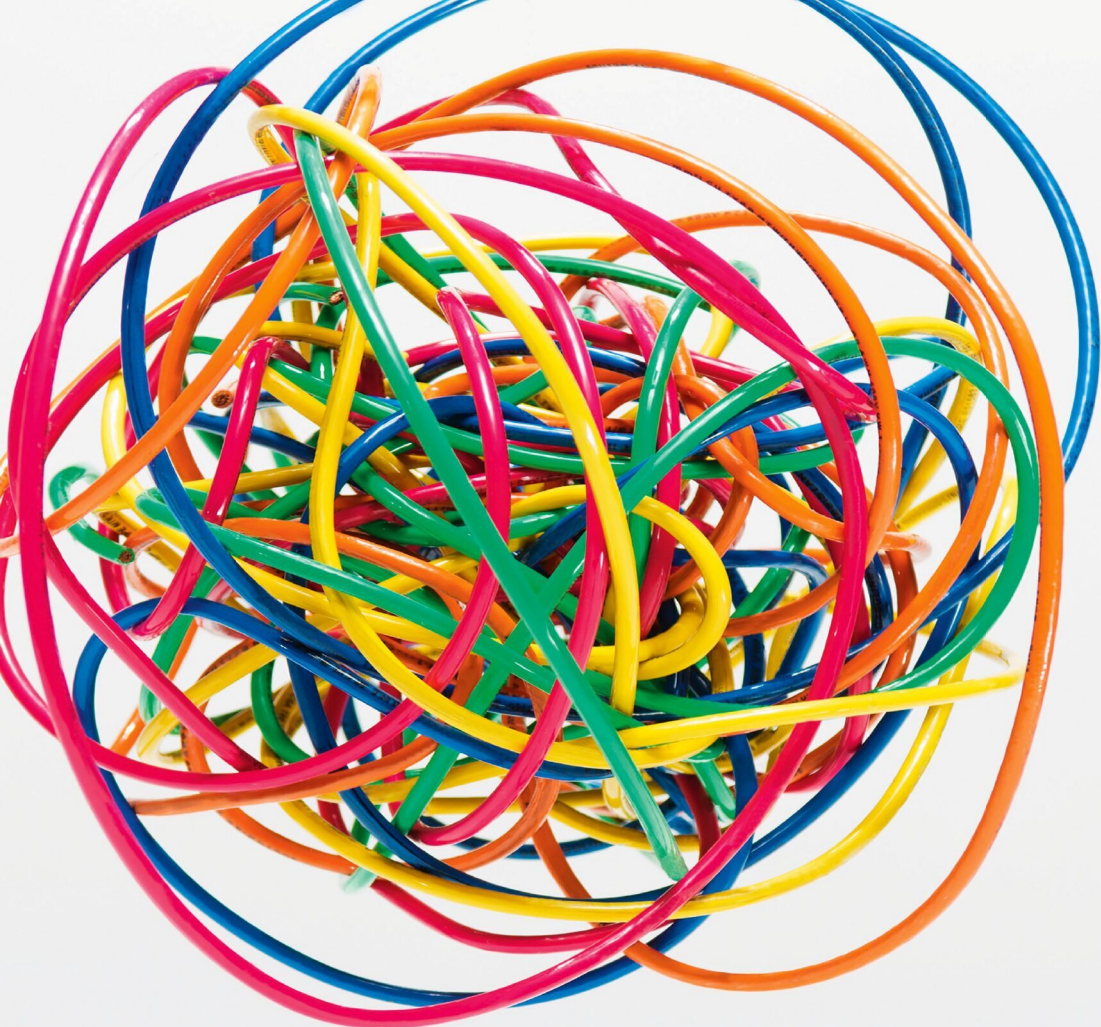
✦ Research shows that having a month off from alcohol lowers blood pressure and cholesterol, reduces diabetes risk, and lessens

the risk of certain cancers.

✦ It also helps create healthier drinking habits long-term.

Download the Try Dry app at any time of the year to get started (Apple and Android).

✦ Find support to help cut down, or quit, at [wearewithyou.org.uk](http://wearewithyou.org.uk)



# *The* ADHD *boom*

A new era of understanding is seeing an increase in the number of women seeking a diagnosis





**When Nadia Sawalha revealed to Loose Women viewers that she'd been diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), women posted messages of support on social media – many of them sharing that they felt 'seen'.**

Nadia (above) made a video about the condition for ITV's daytime show, which saw the 58-year-old make the emotional discovery. An assessment with an ADHD specialist confirmed Nadia had been struggling with symptoms since childhood. Speaking about her 'life-changing diagnosis', she said there was now a reason for the 'chaos I've experienced throughout my life'.

And Nadia isn't alone. In a bid to bust myths about the condition, an increasing number of celebrities are choosing to talk about their midlife diagnoses. This, along with a greater awareness of female ADHD traits, means more women are gaining understanding of their own neurodiversity – after years of being undiagnosed and untreated. Here's what you need to know.

### WHAT'S THE IMPACT?

We've moved on from the stereotype of 'naughty' boys bouncing off walls, but there are still misconceptions

surrounding how ADHD affects adults – and women specifically. So what are the facts?

'ADHD is a neurodevelopmental condition that creates difficulties with attention and concentration, restlessness and impulsivity,' explains Dr Jo Steer, clinical psychologist and editor of *Understanding ADHD in Girls and Women* (£19.99, Jessica Kingsley Publishers). But it's so much more complex than being a fidgeter or the person who loses their keys. 'These difficulties are so significant they interfere with everyday functioning,' she adds.

Symptoms of ADHD are categorised in three ways: inattentiveness (difficulty concentrating and focusing), hyperactivity-impulsiveness, or a combination of both. This means the condition can manifest very differently from person to person.

But middle-aged women aren't simply waking up with ADHD, so what explains such late-in-life diagnoses? The sad reality is that many women simply slipped through the net at a time when there was little awareness. Research has since shown that girls and women with ADHD

tend to be 'inattentive' rather than having the 'hyperactivity' more commonly seen in boys – this can look like daydreaming, scattiness, and an inability to regulate emotions, so symptoms can be easily missed, the resulting difficulties get masked for decades and feelings are internalised. It's estimated that between 50% to 75% of women with the condition are undiagnosed.

ADHD tends to run in families, so it's

also common for a woman to only recognise her traits when one of her children undergoes assessment and treatment, says Dr Steer. 'Alternatively, a woman may access mental health services for anxiety or depression and, during the course of this support, it then becomes clear that she has experienced long-standing difficulties throughout her childhood and beyond.'

### HOW A LABEL CAN BE HELPFUL

Getting diagnosed can bring clarity.

'Women who don't know they have ADHD can struggle with low self-esteem, believing they're lazy, crazy, stupid, broken, attention-seeking, overly emotional, or "too much" – which is a horrible way to live,' says former model and author Leanne Maskell, who qualified as an ADHD coach following her own diagnosis.

'It can feel like you're working 150% harder than everybody else simply to appear "normal" – and using a huge amount of energy to mask who you really are often results in burnout. As ADHD is linked with a neurodevelopmental delay in

*The hormone effect*  
It's thought that hormone fluctuations have a huge effect on ADHD symptoms and cognitive behaviour – perimenopause and menopause can be a time when women with ADHD particularly struggle with symptoms.

**400%**  
The increase in the number of adults seeking an ADHD diagnosis since 2020, according to the ADHD Foundation.

## COMMON SIGNS

- + Carelessness
- + Inability to start or finish a task
- + Boredom
- + Problems focusing / prioritising
- + Difficulty remembering instructions / forgetfulness
- + Interrupting others / speaking out of turn
- + Mood swings
- + Poor stress management
- + Risk taking

executive functioning skills, “simple” daily tasks like meeting a friend can feel extremely overwhelming, but it’s common to invalidate this experience and just push through.’

The pressure to cover up and keep up takes its toll – evidence suggests that a missed diagnosis increases the risk of women developing depression, anxiety and low self-esteem, which then ripples across all areas of life.\* To complicate matters further, Dr Steer explains that even once diagnosed many women with ADHD have comorbid disorders, meaning they will often be managing symptoms alongside other mental health issues, learning difficulties or neurological conditions, such as dyslexia and autism.

\*A formal, NHS-recognised

diagnosis can help you to access medication, but this won’t necessarily help by itself or at all – “pills don’t give skills”, says Leanne.

However, it does improve self-awareness and self-acceptance, so you are in a much better position to seek out the support that you need, which can be game changing. ‘Post-diagnosis, I felt confused and overwhelmed, trying to figure out what to do with all the information. The turning point was having ADHD coaching as it helped me to understand, accept and embrace my diagnosis. I’ve since gone on to coach women with ADHD in their 50s who are wildly excited about their future,’ says Leanne.

## Times are changing

ADHD was only officially recognised as an adult condition in the UK in 2008. It wasn’t until 2018 that health guidelines were updated to reflect that girls and women are more likely to have undiagnosed ADHD, be misdiagnosed, or less likely to be referred for treatment.

## CELEBS WHO’VE SHARED

These famous faces have spoken out about their ADHD diagnosis.



**CHRISTINE MCGUINNESS, 34** When sharing that she had been diagnosed with ADHD, along with autism and dyspraxia, the reality star said, ‘Knowledge is key. Getting a diagnosis has really opened up my life.’



**MELANIE B, 47** The Spice Girls singer said she uses exercise to ‘help my mind’ after revealing she has ADHD.



**DENISE WELCH, 64** Loose Women panellist Denise said she got her ADHD diagnosis after, ‘two or three days of quite intense tests with a psychologist’.



**GEENA DAVIS, 67** Oscar-winning actress Geena said she felt relieved to discover she had ADHD at the age of 41, ‘I thought there was something wrong with me because I couldn’t finish or start a lot of things.’



**SUE PERKINS, 53** Commenting on her diagnosis in midlife, the comedian and former *Great British Bake Off* host tweeted, ‘Suddenly everything made sense – to me and those who love me.’

LEARN MORE...



### + READ

**ADHD: An A to Z** by Leanne Maskell, £12.99, Hachette  
A handy guide that’s packed with practical strategies and confidence-building tips to help you better understand how the ADHD brain works.

### + LISTEN

**Is It My ADHD?** Podcast host Grace Timothy explores what it really feels like to have ADHD. She covers a common theme of ADHD each episode, chatting with guests about everything from friendships and family to money and medication.

### + SCROLL

@adhd\_girls, Instagram  
Follow ADHD advocate Dr Sam Hiew for her powerful insights and savvy advice as she empowers neurodiverse females to thrive.



## 6 STEPS TO AN ADHD DIAGNOSIS

**Suspect you may have ADHD? Follow Leanne's guide to getting an adult assessment.**

**1** Fill in an accredited online symptom checklist ([add.org/adhd-questionnaire](http://add.org/adhd-questionnaire)) and take this to your GP. Be prepared to explain your symptoms honestly and why you think you have ADHD.

**2** If your GP agrees that you may have ADHD, they can refer you to a specialist for assessment. Ask your GP about typical waiting times and, if you'd like to, ask to be referred to Psychiatry-UK, exercising your 'right to choose' (if based in England). The current waiting time for patients who have been referred for an ADHD assessment is approximately six months.\*\*

**3** Depending on your specific situation, you might wish to visit a private psychiatrist for an appointment. If you can, tell your GP about your plans and ask them whether they will be able to accept the referral from a private psychiatrist. They may be able to recommend one to you and write a letter of support. Look at different options and price ranges.

**4** Ask a couple of people that you trust to support you in this process, including accompanying you to any appointments or providing background information if required.

**5** When you visit the psychiatrist for an assessment, make sure that you are well prepared. Try to find any school reports that you may have, and present a full picture of how ADHD may have affected you throughout your life.

**6** If you are diagnosed privately, ask to be referred back to the NHS afterwards, and for a copy of your diagnosis and any prescriptions that you may be given. If your assessment is on the NHS, your GP might be provided with the results directly, and should update you accordingly.

# Look YOUNGER in 60 seconds!

Not only can standing straight help you reverse the years in a matter of moments, it may even be better for your health

**H**olding your shoulders back and your stomach in may help you look your best for a photo, but it's often only seconds before you slump back down again. Constant hunching forces the lower back to curve excessively and pushes the stomach outwards – making you look much bigger and older than you are. Years of carrying heavy handbags, bending over smartphones and wearing high heels will have added to the problem.

But there is good news – it's never too late to change your posture and rewind the years. Short-term tweaks can help you look instantly slimmer, while making an effort in the long term will not only keep back pain at bay, but could improve digestion, circulation and your mental health.

## *Solid foundations*

**Osteopath Monica Franke recommends checking your alignment a couple of times each day until the following posture becomes your new normal.**

- 1** Take three long, slow breaths with feet contacting the ground – aim for 50% of the weight in the heel, 30% around the big toe and mid foot, and 20% to the outer two toes.
- 2** Let the knees soften and allow the back of your pelvis to gently lengthen down.
- 3** Breathe softly into the space between your shoulder blades. Breathe out, allowing the lower ribs to come together and back. Your shoulders will naturally soften into the back of the ribcage, which is where you want them, not up by your ears.

## *Drive time*

Is getting behind the wheel causing you bother? Adjust any equipment to improve your comfort levels – it'll make you a safer driver too. 'To protect your spine, make sure hips are back in the seat and knees just slightly lower than hips,' says physiotherapist Sammy Margo, from [mindyourbackuk.com](http://mindyourbackuk.com). 'Ensure that eye level is above the steering wheel and adjust your seat so it's ever so slightly leaning back.' Plus, check your mirrors are well positioned for quick, easy viewing, adds physiotherapist Valentina Roffi, from [sprintphysio.co.uk](http://sprintphysio.co.uk).

## *Model mealtimes*

'When we stand to eat, we are more likely to overeat, while sitting with



## BANISH BAD HABITS

Try these tiny tweaks that will add up and make a big difference over time:

### 1 DITCH THE SLIPPERS

'High heels, sandals, flip-flops and flat trainers all add stress to your spine – the same goes for bare feet and slippers,' says physiotherapist Phil Evans, at urbanbody.co.uk. 'Without cushioned footwear, your back takes the impact every time your foot lands on the floor. Wear well-fitted shoes instead.'

### 2 LIMIT READING IN BED

'Avoid it for any more than 20 minutes at a time because your head is looking forwards and down, which increases the tension in your neck and back muscles,' says Phil.

### 3 AVOID BAGS THAT HANG OFF ONE SHOULDER

'Carrying a bag on one side adds tension to your neck, because the weight isn't evenly distributed,' says Phil. 'You could end up with a curvature of the spine, as that side is working harder, making you look older than your years.'

### 4 DON'T LOOK DOWN

Always checking your phone? Craning over handheld devices increases the weight load on the neck by five-fold, according to Italian researchers. In some cases this leads to postural change and pain known as 'text neck syndrome'. 'Try to avoid looking down at your phone as you walk. Wait until you're sitting comfortably and look at the screen at eye level,' says Sammy.

## BREATHE EASY

'Poor posture and a "compressed" diaphragm stop the lungs from fully expanding, which may lead to shallow chest breathing,' says Valentina. 'These upper chest breaths can be linked with panic attacks and poor blood circulation.'

an upright posture is thought to aid digestion,' says Valentina. This is because slouching restricts the diaphragm, which helps to move food through the oesophagus. So sitting up during and after meals can assist digestion and therefore reduce bloating, constipation and acid reflux.

## Sort out your sofa

Always napping on the couch? 'While this may feel comfy when you first drift off, it's common to wake with a crick in your neck due to poor sleeping posture,' says Sammy. 'To optimise your sofa set-up, you could place a small pillow behind your knees, lower back or behind your neck for extra support,' adds Valentina.

## WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE MENOPAUSE?

'Biologically speaking, it's natural to undergo postural changes,' says physiotherapist Chongsu Lee. 'Bone becomes less dense and smaller in size after the menopause, plus muscles lose their strength.' HRT may help to boost bones, but easy lifestyle changes can make a big difference. 'Most effective is regular exercise, such as swimming, Pilates and yoga, as they improve the function of joints and muscles,' says Chongsu. 'A healthy diet, including vitamin D (salmon, sardines, eggs, orange juice) and plenty of water is also vital.'

# FOCUS and be III





# APPY

Keeping a clear head when times get tough can really help your mental health, says Claire Cantor

**P**ositive mantras are having a moment. Whether it's an old fashioned Post-it note on the fridge or a scroll through mood-boosting musings on Instagram, there seems to be a motto to help us through any crisis.

Recently, I found myself quoting the 'stay in your lane' mantra to my 18-year-old daughter as she sobbed into the phone during her first year at university. There she was, away from home, where it appeared that everyone else was 'living their best lives', knew each other and were super-confident. She felt lost, nervous and no doubt a little homesick. It didn't last of course, but I realised that while at times we may be able to maintain our levels of self-worth, stick to our goals and have a sense of moving forward, it's often hard to stay on track when faced with challenging situations.

As a lifelong swimmer, I have trained myself to stay focused and 'in my lane' when I'm in the pool. Not worrying who is swimming faster or further than me, I concentrate on my stroke, my breathing and the sensation of being in water. Yet, sometimes, I feel that my life is veering off course. I'm lurching from left to right like a boat in a storm. I lose sight of my values and goals, and find myself trapped in the destructive loop of comparing myself with others and feeling that everyone else has got it sorted while I am floundering. Perhaps like me, you need to remind yourself to stay in your lane? Here's how. >>

## WHY WOMEN HOBBLE

Life coach Becky Hall, author of *The Art of Enough\**, believes it's common for women to question their value, especially those who have become primary carers within their families and given up professional careers to do so.

'We are brought up with the conditioning that we need to do well at school, maybe go to university or obtain additional training and get a good job. This makes us believe that our value is to be found in how well we do in life,' she says. 'If we then give it up to raise children, it can be devastating to our story. We are no longer "doing" enough to make us feel recognised or valuable, or even successful, which can lead to women feeling as if they have lost their way.'

So, how can we learn to resist the pressure of society and feel good about ourselves no matter what? It's about owning it, says solution-focused psychotherapist Gin Lalli, author of *How to Empty your Stress Bucket\*\**. 'Confusion occurs as we start to look elsewhere for guidance rather than working on ourselves and staying true to our own convictions.'

There can be few in life who haven't experienced a wobble, lack of purpose or direction, drifting dependently into believing that everyone else has worked things out. Scratch under the surface and often the appearance of confidence is not solidly embedded within. Everyone's success is different and comparison is the kiss of death for confidence.

## STOP LOOKING SIDEWAYS

Despite our best intentions, comparing ourselves to others is hard to stop. But there are ways to help. Julia Cameron, author of *The Artist's Way\*\*\**, offers the trick of adding the phrase 'just like me' each time you catch yourself doing it. For example, 'She is really successful/ kind/ attractive... just like me.'



And then there's keeping an 'I did it' list at the end of each day – a favourite self-love hack that Becky advocates. Not forgetting the tried-and-tested gratitude list.

'Stop looking at others assuming they have it all sorted,' says transformational coach Gillian McMichael, author of *Coming Home: A Guide To Being Your True Self\*\*\*\**. 'Social media is a killer for showcasing others' achievements, but, remember, this is usually a façade. Go back to focusing on you, your goals and your achievements rather than focusing on others – it's an energy drainer and will start to chip away at your self-belief. You are unique, so celebrate who you really are and become your own cheerleader. Befriend yourself rather than judging what you haven't got.'

## DO YOUR GOALS NEED TWEAKING?

Feeling demotivated or rudderless may also be a sign that our values are not aligned with our goals. 'People often feel lost when the small actions they are taking every day are not lining up with their overall vision of where they want to be,' explains Gin.

'Values drive our behaviour. Focus on what would be good about achieving your goals – what is the end result, and what is the positive emotion behind it:

✦ **WHY** you want to do something is so much bigger than **HOW** you will do something.

✦ Don't **DEFINE** your values, keep them a bit loose, allow for changes, and be open to new ideas.'





## MAKE LIFE ABOUT YOU

**Do you focus all your energy on the wants and needs of others?**

**If so, it's easy to feel like you are floundering or stagnating.**

'Take time out to have a "view from the balcony",' says Becky. 'What are the things that really matter to you in your life? Then consider your goals and make them achievable and specific.

Use the acronym **SMART**:

- + **SPECIFIC**
- + **MEASURABLE**
- + **REALISTIC**
- + **TIME-BOUND**

Write your own narrative – if you were watching the movie of your life, what would you want to be seeing? Forget about comparing yourself with others – just focus on what your film would show.'

## POSITIVE BOUNDARIES

Just as my swimming lane is defined by a buoyant barrier, enabling me to swim in a straight line and protecting me from collisions with other swimmers, maintaining boundaries is essential for staying in your own lane in everyday life.

'It's the key to success,' says Gillian. 'Learn to say "no" or "not now". This will change how others speak to you, how they behave towards you. You will feel empowered, and others will see this as a strength in you.'

Becky suggests keeping a 'no' journal. 'Write down every time you manage to say no, how it feels and what saying no allowed you to do instead. This can make you aware of the positive impact of saying no.'

## UNDERSTAND YOUR TRIGGERS

**For many of us, it doesn't take much to lose faith in ourselves. I know that merely the sight of certain people on the other side of the street can trigger a compare-and-contrast mechanism.**

Identifying our triggers and analysing why they are triggering us is a useful step towards self-love. 'Some self-reflection, journaling or talking it out with a friend or therapist will help,' explains Gin. 'Come up with solutions together.

Talking helps us get a different perspective and ideas from others can help you find solutions quicker.'

We all get triggered, whoever we are. 'When we lack self-worth we compare and worry,' says Becky. 'Try creating a sentence or mantra based on what you are grateful for about yourself.

It could be as simple as "I'm grateful that I am enough" or "I'm grateful that I believe in kindness and that I'm loyal to my family and friends", which links together your values.'

Believing that we are in control of our triggers and our reaction to them can help build self-confidence and be the difference between a confrontation or getting on with your life peacefully.

'Triggers are like a label, and at any time we can choose to think differently or even choose to throw the label away,' says Gillian. 'Other people are not in control of how you feel about yourself – only you can choose to see yourself as successful, beautiful, kind, happy, empowered.'

## EVERYDAY TIPS

Building more of what you love into your life and prioritising your own needs can help reinforce a sense of self-worth, bring fulfilment and keep you centred. 'You'll feel happier, lighter, liberated. 'I'm a great believer in small everyday moments,' says Becky. 'We all have busy lives. No one I know has won the lottery and been able to give up everything to just have fun. But we can identify small things that we love doing – that energise us or make us happy. If you love dancing, put on your favourite tune and dance for five minutes every day. The benefit and joy of doing this accumulates over time.'

★ ON SALE NOW! ★

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# YOU & YOUR DIET

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

We're serving up some delicious recipes – with the added bonus they can help clear the mind and the system! From brain-boosting dishes to meals that heal, shake off the winter doldrums with food that bursts with sunshine. Our fasting-eating plan will also put a spring in your step. Studies have shown the benefits of sticking to a smaller eating window, whether you want to drop a few pounds or simply feel better. We show you how...



LOSE UP  
TO 5LB IN  
ONE  
MONTH

# No-fuss FASTING

Going hours without food might sound daunting, but stick to our simple 16:8 eating plan and you'll see how easy and effective it can be

**S**witching between periods of eating and fasting is known as intermittent fasting, but not all fasting plans are the same – and some are tougher than others. Many find the 16:8 diet the easiest to follow. Even Jennifer Aniston is a fan! The only restriction is that you eat all your food within an eight-hour time frame. Then, for 16 hours, you don't eat anything. According to interviews in 2019, Jennifer noticed a big improvement in her health when she first started adhering to the plan.

But it's not just Jen who can vouch for it – the 16:8 diet has solid scientific research behind it: in a study by the University of Illinois, 23 obese volunteers were allowed to eat anything they wanted between 10am and 6pm, but could only drink water or calorie-free drinks for the remaining 16 hours. Compared with standard dieters, they consumed about 350 fewer calories, and over the 12 weeks they lost about 3% of their body weight and also saw their blood pressure drop.

Another US study, from the University of Alabama, compared regimens in which pre-diabetic men ate all their meals either between 7am and 3pm or spread out between 7am and 7pm. It found that those who ate during the

restricted hours had much lower insulin levels, which significantly reduced their risk of developing actual diabetes.

Our exclusive 16:8 diet\* combines the science of a time-window approach with modest calorie restriction, helping you to shed up to 5lb in a month. (You may lose a little bit more or less, depending on your starting weight.) So, if you've tried other restricted-eating regimes, you may find you achieve success with this one!

## WHAT TO DO...

**Follow these simple rules to lose at least a pound a week.**

- ✦ Practise time-restricted eating by not eating for 16 hours after your last food of the day. For example, if you finish your last meal at 7pm, that means not eating again until 11am (water, tea without milk and diet drinks are fine).
- ✦ Pick one brunch and dinner from our lists and also have one of the 300-calorie light meals/snacks during your eight-hour window.
- ✦ After the first month or so, when you are used to when and what sort of food you can eat, feel free to introduce your own meals. There's no need to count calories if you don't want to, but aim to limit highly processed foods. Also, choose wholegrain foods and try to fill one half of your plate with fruit and veg.

## WHY 16:8 WORKS

✦ In studies that find benefits from 16:8, there is a common finding – far fewer people drop out than on other intermittent-fasting methods. This is because 16:8 participants feel less hungry.

✦ Only eating during eight hours in the daytime also significantly benefits the metabolism by working in harmony with the body's own natural 24-hour circadian rhythm.

✦ Following the 16:8 plan also allows insulin levels to go down far enough and for long enough to help fat burn off more effectively.

✦ Slotting all your daily food intake into this smaller window seems to activate the body's brown fat – the type that burns calories effectively.





# Your MEALS



Baguette; pot of Activia strawberry yogurt and two mini citrus easy peelers.

+ Cold poached salmon fillet on a slice of German rye bread; big handful each of watercress and cherry tomatoes, 1tbsp balsamic dressing.



+ Porridge made with 50g oats and 300ml semi-skimmed milk, topped with 100g blueberries and 20g almonds; 150ml glass orange juice.

+ 1 large (400g) can baked beans on a slice of lightly buttered wholemeal toast or German rye bread, topped with half an avocado.

+ Tesco Chicken Salad Sandwich, carrot and reduced-fat houmous snack; Innocent Berry Protein Super Smoothie.

+ Bol Posh Noodles Korean Chilli Ramen, followed by a pot of Aero chocolate mousse.

+ Grilled salmon steak served with jacket wedges (made from one large skin-on potato, cut into wedges, parboiled and roasted with 2tsp sunflower oil), carrots and spinach; 1 banana.

+ Healthy spag bol: cook a small onion, carrot, celery stalk and garlic clove in

1tsp olive oil until soft. Add a handful of sliced mushrooms, 200g canned tomatoes, 1tbsp tomato purée, herbs and 200ml vegetable stock. Simmer for 10 min. Add 125g Quorn mince and heat through. Serve with 200g (boiled weight) wholewheat spaghetti.



## SNACKS/ LIGHT MEALS

(approx. 300 calories)

+ Slice of wholemeal toast topped with 25g peanut butter and 100g thin slices of sweet (eg Pink Lady) apple.

+ 300g bowl of fresh tomato and basil soup with a slice of wholemeal toast topped with 30g full-fat soft cheese.

+ 50g fruit-and-nut muesli with 150ml semi-skimmed milk and a handful of berries.

+ Slice of wholemeal toast topped with 30g full-fat soft cheese and 60g smoked salmon; handful of berries.

+ Big handful of carrot and cucumber strips and a wholemeal pitta cut into strips, dipped into 100g tzatziki.

+ Tesco Prawn Mayonnaise Sandwich.

+ 2 slices of toasted fruit bread topped with a mashed banana.

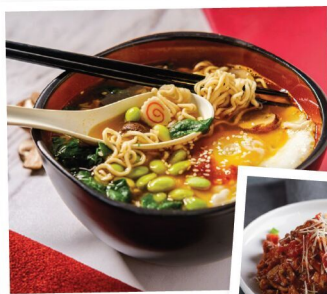
## BRUNCHES

(approx. 600 calories)

+ 2 poached eggs and steamed spinach on 2 slices lightly buttered wholegrain toast; 100g blueberries and half a banana with 100g 5%-fat Greek yogurt.

+ Sausage sandwich made with 2 slices wholemeal bread, 2 reduced-fat sausages, spread of ketchup and a large sliced tomato; banana with 100g 5%-fat Greek yogurt.

+ Pret Free-Range Egg & Av



## DINNERS

(approx. 600 calories)

+ Chicken and noodle stir-fry: stir-fry a large, chopped chicken breast with half a bag of stir-fry veg in 2tsp oil, with ginger and chilli to taste. Add 150g cooked wholewheat noodles, stir for two minutes more and add reduced-salt soy sauce to taste.





## SIMPLE TIPS FOR SUCCESS

### + TRY CLEANING YOUR TEETH RIGHT AFTER YOUR LAST FOOD OF THE DAY

It will psychologically reinforce that your eating is done for the day.

+ **SPRINKLE SOME CINNAMON OVER FOOD (EG YOGURT, BANANAS, PORRIDGE)** The spice can have a stabilising effect on blood-sugar and insulin levels, helping to protect against diabetes and obesity.

+ **ALWAYS GO FOR WHOLEGRAINS** Unlike the white versions, these are rich in filling fibre, which can keep your hunger at bay for longer. A sensible portion size is a fist-sized amount (eg of brown rice or pasta).

+ **HAVE A GREEN TEA** It contains catechins, a type of phytochemical that can briefly boost metabolism. Drink it without any additions and this is a calorie-free brew that you can enjoy throughout your 16-hour fast.

+ **AVOID EATING ON THE RUN** Aim to sit down and allow time for your meals, chewing each mouthful well.

+ **CLEAR OUT ANY UNHEALTHY FOODS YOU CAN'T RESIST** If you have them in the house, you're making weight loss harder than it has to be.

+ **HIDE THE SALT CELLAR** Too much salt encourages our tissues to hold on to water which, in turn, can cause puffiness and extra pounds due to fluid retention.

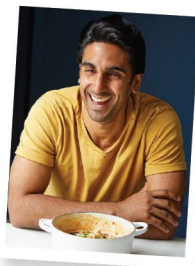
## KEEP MOVING

To support your weight loss, aim for at least three 25-minute sessions of moderately vigorous exercise – such as fast walking or cycling uphill – three times a week.

Combine with two weekly 20-minute resistance-exercise sessions, such as using weights or resistance bands, or even digging the garden.

# Meals that HEAL

Eat your way to better health with help from Dr Rupy Aujla, the bestselling food writer behind *The Doctor's Kitchen*



## *Inauthentic Singaporean chicken rice*

'A take on Hainanese chicken, with wonderful aromatic flavours, delicious spices and plenty of colourful greens to serve with a gorgeously flavoured rice.'

**Serves 4-6 • Prep 20 mins**  
**• Cook 1hr 40 mins**

**1.5kg whole chicken**  
**50g ginger, sliced**  
**6 garlic cloves, unpeeled, bashed**  
**4tbsp tamari or soy sauce**  
**2tbsp coriander seeds**  
**2tsp black peppercorns**  
**3 star anise**  
**6 cloves**  
**300g short-grain brown rice, rinsed well**

**To serve:**  
**400g choi sum or pak choi**  
**300g ripe tomatoes, diced**  
**1 cucumber, thinly sliced**  
**4tbsp Chinese chiu chow chilli oil, from most larger supermarkets**  
**4 spring onions, shredded**  
**Small bunch of coriander, torn**

**1** Put the chicken into a large stockpot and pour over enough cold water to completely cover. Add the ginger, garlic, tamari or soy sauce and

spices, then bring to a gentle simmer. Cover and cook for 40 mins, skimming the surface occasionally to remove any impurities. Remove from the heat and leave to stand with the lid on for 10 mins, then transfer the chicken to a baking tray, cover loosely with foil and set aside to rest.

**2** Strain the poaching broth into a jug, skim off any fat, then pour 600ml back into the pan (any leftover broth can be chilled or frozen). Add the rice, bring to the boil, then reduce to a gentle simmer, cover and cook for 30 mins. Remove from the heat and leave to stand with the lid on for a further 10 mins.

**3** When the rice is nearly ready, steam the choi sum or pak choi for 2 to 3 mins until wilted. Take the chicken breast off the bone and cut into thick slices. Pull the thigh and leg meat away from the bone.

**4** Season the rice with a little extra tamari or soy sauce, if needed. Serve the chicken with the rice, choi sum, tomatoes and cucumber, drizzled with the chilli oil. Garnish with the spring onions and coriander.

*Per serving based on serves 6: 475 cals, 14g fat, 3g sat fat, 42g carbs*



**Dr Rupy's tip:**  
Cooking a chicken in this way is super economical and low waste, as well as bringing out the best from the produce.



Research has shown that the ideal fruit and vegetable consumption is in excess of 800g per day, equivalent to 10 portions by UK standards.





## White bean práwen saganaki

'This dish will blow you away. The sauce is simple to make, but the flavours are intense, sweet and spicy. The greens and beans pack this with more vegetables, but the sauce is full of the good stuff too. You can easily make this vegetarian by substituting the prawns with more beans that have plenty of protein.'

**Serves 4 • Prep 15 mins • Cook 30 mins**

**4tbsp extra virgin olive oil**  
**240g white onion, diced**  
**5 garlic cloves, finely chopped**  
**2 red chillies, finely chopped**  
**2tsp caraway seeds**  
**2tsp nigella seeds**  
**2tsp dried oregano**  
**500g tomatoes, roughly chopped**  
**2tbsp tomato purée**  
**2tbsp honey**  
**50g feta, crumbled**  
**200g chard or spinach leaves, roughly chopped**  
**20g basil, roughly chopped (reserve some leaves to garnish)**  
**400g can giant white beans or butter beans (or any other white bean), drained and rinsed**  
**200g raw jumbo prawns, peeled and deveined**

- 1 Heat the oil in a flameproof casserole over a medium heat. Add the onion and cook for 5 mins until soft and translucent, then add the garlic, chilli and seasoning and cook for 2 mins.
- 2 Toss in the caraway and nigella seeds with the oregano and stir into the onions for 1 min before adding the tomatoes, tomato purée, honey and feta. Cover and cook for 12 mins until the tomatoes have fully broken down and the feta has melted into the sauce. Add a splash of water if it sticks to the bottom of the pan.
- 3 Uncover the pan and stir so that all the ingredients combine with the sauce, then add the greens and most of the basil. Stir for 2 to 3 mins until the greens have wilted.
- 4 Heat the grill to high. Add the beans to the sauce and put the prawns on top. Simmer for 2 mins, then transfer to the grill for 4 mins to finish cooking the prawns and caramelise the top of the dish. Garnish with the reserved basil leaves.

*Per serving 400 cals, 15g fat, 3.5g sat fat, 27g carbs*



**DR RUPY'S TIP:** For even more flavour, toast the caraway and nigella seeds for 1-2 mins and crush in a pestle and mortar before adding to the pan.



## Spicy halloumi bake

'This is spicy, wholesome, warm and inviting, all in a dish. The beautiful spices of ras el hanout work super well in this simple tray bake and you can easily substitute different vegetables for the squash and greens.'

**Serves 4 • Prep 15 mins**  
**• Cook 40 mins**

**½ butternut squash (300g), unpeeled, deseeded and cut into 2cm cubes**  
**1 courgette (250g), cut into 2cm cubes**  
**1 red pepper (200g), deseeded and roughly chopped**  
**2tsp cumin seeds**  
**3tsp ras el hanout or baharat spice mix**  
**1tsp chilli powder**  
**3tbsp olive oil, plus an extra 1tbsp to drizzle**  
**150g spinach, finely chopped**  
**350ml passata**  
**400g can kidney beans, drained and rinsed**  
**200g halloumi, sliced 1cm thick**

**1** Heat the oven to 200C Fan/Gas 7. Put the butternut squash, courgette, red pepper and the spices into a large roasting tin. Pour over the 3tbsp oil and season, then toss well to coat. Roast for 25 mins, turning the vegetables halfway through.

**2** Remove the roasting tin from the oven and increase the temperature to 220C Fan/Gas 9. Scrape up any crusty bits from the bottom of the roasting tin for extra flavour, then fold in the spinach. Tip in the passata and kidney beans, and mix well.

**3** Layer the halloumi on top, drizzle with the extra tbs oil and return to the oven for a further 15 mins until the halloumi is melted and charred in areas.

*Per serving 406 cal, 24g fat, 10g sat fat, 22g carbs*



**DR RUPY'S TIP:**  
 Swap the spinach for kale, swiss chard or spring greens, depending on the season, and replace the kidney beans with borlotti or cannellini beans if preferred.



**+ Cooks by**  
**Dr Rupy Aujla**  
**(Ebury Press),**  
**RRP £22**

Dr Rupy's food philosophy centres on a simple mantra: eat well, every day. Drawing on more than a decade of clinical experience as a GP, academic studies and his own healthy journey, his approach blends the joy of cooking with the science of food as medicine. *Cooks* focuses on simple meals, filled with nutrient-rich ingredients.



# SEEDS *of change*

Could a sprinkling of goodness in your daily diet help to offset debilitating menopause symptoms?

**W**hen you approach perimenopause, and then transition into menopause, it can really feel like something has shifted. While some women sail through these biological stages symptom-free, others feel their lives have been suddenly thrown off course. Many experience debilitating symptoms including night sweats, hot flashes, low libido, poor mood

and weight gain thanks to a drop in oestrogen levels.

So, if it feels like you have no stability in life any more, you're not alone. However, what if we told you that the answer could be as easy as adding seeds to your diet? This simple ingredient could be a game changer when it comes to coping with the side effects of menopause. Here's what you need to know.





## DID YOU KNOW?

More than 75% of women experience menopause symptoms, with 25% describing them as 'severe', says The British Menopause Society. But while this might feel overwhelming, menopause is the best time to get into the driving seat and take control of your health to future-proof it for years to come.

## SEED CYCLING

With a long list of impressive health benefits, seeds have been consumed for centuries, but health advocates are now shouting about the virtues of eating this plant food in a new way. The idea is that experimenting with a key group of seeds can exert powerful wellbeing effects, slashing many of the unwanted side effects that come with the drop in hormone levels at this life stage.

Known as seed cycling, rotating different seeds in your diet, in a particular order, is a naturopathic method that's often used to help balance hormones during periods – but the benefits are not limited to women who are menstruating.

'Seeds are a powerhouse of nutrients and micronutrients (vitamins, minerals and healthy fats), and consuming different types of seeds in various phases of the menstrual cycle may support normal hormone levels,' explains head dietician Roxane Bakker from Vitl.

Seed cycling is also sparking interest in women who are suffering from the shift in hormones that happens when, on average, we reach our mid- to late 40s onwards. If you're perimenopausal and your periods are becoming irregular, or if you're going through menopause, then the method is slightly different compared

with women having regular cycles.

'Essentially, you start consuming the seeds on any given day following a two-week rotation plan,' says Roxane. 'The first 14-day phase in seed cycling is where one tablespoon of pumpkin and one tablespoon of flaxseeds should be consumed. The second phase involves eating one tablespoon of ground sunflower seeds and one tablespoon of sesame seeds.'

## PHYTOESTROGEN POWER

Since levels of the hormones oestrogen and progesterone naturally drop from perimenopause onwards, it's thought that including seed cycling (as part of a balanced diet) may help to support this imbalance as a result of the rich nutritional profile in seeds. 'There's scientific evidence to show they support hormonal function,' says Roxane.

There's also another compound found in seeds – called lignan – that experts believe acts as a natural menopause treatment. 'Lignans are plant compounds that are believed to weakly mimic some of the effects of human oestrogen,' explains nutritionist Christina Mamada.

On a scientific level, the chemical structure of lignans is similar to the oestrogen produced in the body, and

when there is not enough oestrogen in the body, lignans bind to oestrogen receptors and safely help to increase levels. Pretty remarkable, right?

And, although limited, science backs up the virtues. One piece of research published in the Journal of the American College of Nutrition indicated that women who consumed lignans over an eight-week period experienced an 80% reduction in the frequency of severe hot flashes. Granted, the trial involved a high 72mg dose of lignans, but what this does show is that overall, including lignans in a menopause diet could mark a turning point in rebalancing fluctuating hormone levels and alleviating menopause symptoms.

## STAYING SAFE

Since seed cycling is safe (unless you have an intolerance or allergy to seeds), it's recommended to follow a seed cycling diet for three months. That noted, you can continue to 'seed cycle' for longer, as seeds are one of the most nutritional foods you can eat. And there are plenty of healthy ways to add them into your diet. 'Two tablespoons can be added to smoothies, as toppings to salads, in your porridge, added to sauces and soups, and they should always be consumed raw and ground,' says Christina.



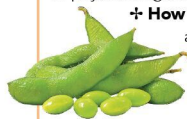
## MENOPAUSE MUST-EATS

Along with seeds, munch on these phytoestrogen foods to help combat symptoms...

### 1 EDAMAME

These little pods of soybeans are rich in phytoestrogens.

**+** **How to eat:** snack on a handful of edamame beans topped with sweet paprika.



### 2 ALFALFA SPROUTS

Alfalfa sprouts (which come from germinated alfalfa seeds), are

a good source of vitamins K and C, along with phytoestrogens.

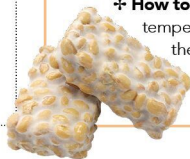
**+** **How to eat:** add alfalfa seeds to salads.



### 3 TEMPEH

With its nutty flavour, fermented tempeh is good for gut health and also rich in phytoestrogens.

**+** **How to eat:** marinate tempeh in teriyaki sauce, then pan-fry with Asian stir-fried vegetables.



## MAGIC MORSELS

Here are some of the top nutrients found in seeds and how they can help your body

#### PUMPKIN SEEDS

**+** **Key nutrient:** zinc

Levels of zinc decline with age, and this marvellous mineral, which is found in pumpkin seeds, can assist with a range of menopausal symptoms, such as thinning hair, changes to sex drive and low energy levels.

#### FLAXSEED

**+** **Key nutrient:** omega-3

Flaxseed contains ALA, an omega-3 fatty acid, which studies show can help to reduce depression symptoms in postmenopausal women. It's thought that this is due to the anti-inflammatory and serotonin-boosting benefits of omega-3.

#### SUNFLOWER SEEDS

**+** **Key nutrient:** vitamin E

Eating antioxidant-rich sunflower seeds

may help perimenopause symptoms, as well as hot flushes in menopausal women. And for an extra-powerful boost, take a supplement alongside eating vitamin E-rich seeds. According to one study, a 400 IU vitamin E supplement for four weeks helped to significantly reduce hot flushes.

#### SESAME SEEDS

**+** **Key nutrient:** magnesium

There's evidence to suggest that sesame seeds can help with PMS symptoms (so a great seed if you're perimenopausal). Magnesium, along with folic acid and the antioxidant glutathione, is crucial in phase two of the detoxification process in the liver. It also helps to metabolise oestrogen.

## YOUR DAILY MENU

Going through the menopause?

**You don't have to sync your seed intake to your cycle. Instead try:**

**+** **Days 1-14:** 1tbsp of pumpkin and 1tbsp flaxseeds daily.

**+** **Days 15-30:** 1tbsp ground sunflower seeds and 1tbsp sesame seeds. Then repeat.



# TUCK *in!*

Get a glowing complexion in your lunch hour with this easy pick

**N**ot only does a sarnie make for a great grab-and-go way to keep those hunger pangs at bay, but it can help you stay looking young and fresh, too. Yes, really. Just be sure to make nutritious choices and stay away from high-processed, salty fillings, such as packaged meats and full-fat cheese. Intrigued? Our experts give the lowdown on how to craft the perfect sandwich to rejuvenate your skin.

## DETOXIFYING GREENS

Include dark green leaves. 'These give fatigue-fighting red blood cells a boost, plus a hit of folic acid to regulate blood pressure,' says dietician Sarah Schenker. In terms of your complexion, they also help detoxify your liver and, in turn, your skin.

**TRY Spinach, rocket or watercress.**

## SKIN-FRIENDLY SALAD

Boost your complexion by adding chopped tomato or a quarter of a red pepper – both contain the wrinkle-defying compound lycopene.

**TRY Cucumber is a good choice, too, as it contains silica to help boost collagen.**

## PROTEIN POWER

Choose a filling bean middle for your sarnie. 'Packed with protein, beans will keep you feeling fuller for longer,' says Sarah. This nutrient is also an important building block of bones,

muscles, cartilage, blood and skin.

**TRY 1tbsp kidney or adzuki beans, lightly mashed – the flavonoids in their skin repair damaged DNA.**

## HEALTHY FATS

'Reduce cholesterol, boost heart health and give your skin a good plump with omega-3 fatty acids,' says Sarah. They'll also preserve your skin's natural barrier.

**TRY A small tuna or salmon steak, flaked. For a veggie option, the high vitamin E content and monounsaturated fat of avocado are important for healthy skin – and it makes a great face mask!**

## THE BENEFITS OF BUCKWHEAT

Buckwheat bread is a great sandwich option. 'The gluten-free grain is

packed with antioxidants that help combat inflammation-related skin damage,' says Sarah. Buckwheat is also a rich source of B vitamins, which are key for boosting nerve function and helping to process fats in your body to keep your skin smooth and moisturised.

**TRY A buckwheat slice or wrap, or rye or pumpernickel bread.**

## ANTI-AGEING SPREAD

'Chickpeas are rich in magnesium to rejuvenate dead tissue,' says Sarah. They contain manganese, too, which fights free radicals.

**TRY A dollop of houmous. If you want to make your own, simply mash a can of chickpeas with 1 garlic clove, 2tbsp olive oil, 2tbsp tahini paste and the juice of half a lemon.**



# EAT TO BEAT

# BRAIN FOG

Improve concentration with these brain-boosting recipes to help you focus all day long

## *Oat-and-sesame-crusted salmon with blistered tomatoes*

Fatty fish like salmon and mackerel are loaded with omega-3, which is vital for memory and brain function. Tomatoes and other bright red veg contain lycopene, a powerful antioxidant that's linked to long-term memory and cognitive health.

**Serves 4 • Prep 5 mins • Cook 25 mins**

**4tbsp oatmeal**  
**1tsp oregano, chopped, or ¼tsp dried oregano**  
**4tbsp sesame seeds**  
**1½ lemons**  
**4 skinless salmon fillets (about 140g each)**  
**2tbsp olive oil**  
**2 courgettes, trimmed and cut into sticks**  
**1 garlic clove, crushed**  
**200g cherry tomatoes on the vine**

**1** Heat the oven to 160C Fan/Gas 4. Combine the oatmeal, oregano and sesame seeds in a shallow dish. Squeeze the juice of 1 lemon into another shallow dish.  
**2** Dip the fish in the lemon juice then the oatmeal mixture, turning to coat, then arrange on a lined baking tray and drizzle with 1tbsp of the olive oil. Bake for 15 mins, until golden.  
**3** Toss the courgettes with the garlic and the remaining oil. Season well and spread over another baking tray. Roast for 15 mins.  
**4** Cut the remaining half lemon into wedges and add to the fish tray, along with the tomatoes. Turn the courgettes and return both trays to the oven for another 10 mins.  
*Per serving: 500 cals, 35g fat, 6g sat fat, 13g carbs*

**TIP:** If you're vegetarian, flaxseed, nuts, seeds and seaweed are excellent sources of omega-3





## Green tea smoothie bowl

Green tea contains caffeine and L-theanine, a combination that improves concentration, while the antioxidants in blueberries have been shown to stimulate blood and oxygen flow to the brain, boosting clarity and memory.

**Serves 1 • Prep 10 mins**

**¼ avocado, diced**  
**100g frozen mango or banana**  
**2tbsp natural yogurt**  
**Handful baby spinach**  
**4cm-piece cucumber**  
**Squeeze lime juice**  
**1tsp matcha tea powder**  
**To serve**  
**Handful mixed fresh berries**  
**1tbsp mixed seeds**

**1** Blitz all the smoothie ingredients in a blender or food processor with 100ml cold water, until smooth.  
**2** Top with berries and seeds to serve.  
*Per serving: 378 cals, 24g fat, 5g sat fat, 25g carbs*



## Spicy Turkish eggs with tahini yogurt

Eggs are packed with choline, a nutrient that boosts memory and concentration, while leafy greens are a good source of folic acid, which improves mental clarity.

**Serves 4 • Prep 5 mins • Cook 20 mins**

**3tbsp olive oil**  
**2 large onions, thinly sliced**  
**1 red, 1 green and 1 yellow pepper, each cut into round slices**  
**3 garlic cloves, finely chopped**  
**½tsp each cumin seeds, caraway seeds and cayenne pepper**  
**1tbsp tomato purée**  
**400g can chopped tomatoes**  
**A few cherry tomatoes, pierced**  
**1 bunch flat-leaf parsley, chopped**  
**80g spinach, wilted**  
**1tsp harissa (optional)**  
**4 eggs**  
**80g feta, crumbled**  
**2 spring onions, chopped**


**250g thick natural yogurt**  
**4 heaped tsp tahini**  
**Pitta breads and olives, to serve**

**1** Heat the oil in a large frying pan. Add the onions, peppers and some seasoning and cook for 3 mins. Add the garlic and cook for a further 1 min.  
**2** Stir in the spices, tomato purée and all the tomatoes. Simmer uncovered for 10 mins until slightly reduced, then turn off the heat and stir in the parsley, spinach and harissa, if using.  
**3** Make four small wells in the sauce around the peppers and break an egg into each. Return to the heat and cook over a medium heat for a few mins, until the whites are just set and the yolks still runny. Crumble over the feta and spring onions.  
**4** Mix together the yogurt and tahini and serve alongside the Turkish eggs, with pitta and olives, if liked.  
*Per serving: 406 cals, 27g fat, 8g sat fat, 16g carbs*



# What's your DODGY DIET doing?

Feeling bleurgh?  
It could be  
down to something  
you're eating



**H**as a low-key health problem been niggling you? Maybe a pesky headache, not bad enough to see a doctor, but painful enough to leave you irritable. Perhaps your skin looks duller than you'd like, or spots have surprisingly only now become a problem. Or is it your heartburn that's cropping up all too often?

'A lot of these things are often chalked up to our age as we expect aches and pains to come with the midlife territory,' says nutritionist Pauline Cox, author of *Primal Living in a Modern World*\*. 'But even if you think you eat a fairly normal, balanced diet, it could be what you're consuming – or the way you're consuming it – that's causing the problem.' Here's what you need to know.

## Did you know?

A daily dose of fermented food (such as sauerkraut) is a super source of vitamin C, essential for collagen synthesis which can support healthy, youthful-looking skin.



## Gut helper

### YOU'RE... CONSTIPATED

Going for a daily Number Two is important, because hormones destined for the loo can be reabsorbed if bowel movements become infrequent, putting us at greater risk of female cancer. If you find it difficult to go, it could be you're not drinking enough water or eating enough roughage.

'Remaining hydrated and eating sufficient fibre is a good starting place for constipation,' says Pauline. 'However, you could be eating too much dairy.' When dairy ferments in the gut, it causes methane gas, which slows food passing through.

**SWAP cow's products for goat and sheep cheese and milk. They're easier on the digestion, but rich in calcium, protein and nutrients.**

### YOU... HAVE HEADACHES

If you're popping pills to combat headaches, first cut back on sugar, caffeine and alcohol – which can all trigger head pain. But you should also consider the amount of bread and baked goods you're consuming.

'Many women see an improvement with a gluten-free diet,' says Pauline. 'Omega-3 fatty acids can also support an anti-inflammatory approach to reducing headaches, with current research suggesting most women aren't hitting the recommended 300mg a day.'

**SWAP some of your shopping for gluten-free alternatives and ditch alcoholic drinks for kombucha, a fermented tea drink packed with beneficial bacteria.**

### YOU... GET SPOTS

Breakouts can feel distressing and are associated with perimenopause. But spots can also be triggered by too much sugar in our diet.

'Cutting back on highly sweetened food can help balance your blood sugar levels, which can reduce skin breakouts,' advises Pauline. 'Eating a diet rich in fibre, to support

Add 20ml of raw, unpasturised apple cider vinegar in a glass of sparkling water – it's a good soft drink for your gut.

healthy oestrogen metabolism, can also help – when midlife hormonal imbalances come into play.'

**SWAP sweets, chocolates and crisps for healthier snacks, such as magnesium-rich dark chocolate, olives, houmous and veggie sticks to support healthy blood sugars.**

### YOU'RE... SUFFERING FROM HEARTBURN

Chasing your meals with a packet of indigestion tablets isn't ideal, so if heartburn (also known as acid reflux) is becoming a problem, cut back on rich, fatty foods and reduce things on your plate that might be acidic.

'As we age, we lose acidity in the stomach, which can result in stomach acid tracking up the oesophagus, causing painful heartburn as well as bloating and flatulence,' says Pauline. 'Food such as cheese, seafood and carbonated drinks adds to the acidity in your system, so minimise these as well as highly processed foods that can also bring on heartburn.'

**TRY eating more fermented foods (natural yogurt, kimchi and kefir) and a variety of vegetables to support a healthy gut microbiome.**

### YOUR... SKIN LOOKS OLD AND TIRED

Our skin changes as we age, but cutting back on the amount of refined carbs you're eating (think white flour, bread and rice) might help keep it more supple and nourished than an expensive moisturiser can.

'High blood sugars accelerate skin ageing due to sugars binding to proteins within the tissues,' explains Pauline. 'Refined carbs lead to rapid spikes in our blood sugar and insulin levels, so by aiming to eat less of these, we can help look after our skin and slow down the ageing process.'

**TRY eating more 'healthy fats' such as eggs, seeds, nuts and avocados, which play a vital role in keeping skin supple and sealing in moisture.**

## YOUR MENO MENU

Going through the change? Make sure you...

### GET ENOUGH PROTEIN

As women enter the perimenopause, they are at risk of losing lean muscle mass, which increases insulin resistance. Opt for poultry, eggs, legumes, and soy products like tofu or tempeh.



### AVOID SALTY SNACKS

Too much salt is never good, and foods high in sodium – crisps, pizza, fast food – can make you retain water and feel more bloated.



### CONSUME CARBS

Holding on to weight? Insulin resistance could be blocking your effort to lose it, so be aware of the carbs you choose. Starchy veg helps optimise blood sugars to combat this.

### TURN DOWN THE HEAT

Spicy food can trigger sweating, flushing and other symptoms of hot flushes. Pick spices for flavour, not heat, as in cumin, turmeric and basil.

### CHOOSE MAGNESIUM-RICH FOODS

Magnesium supports psychological function, protects bones and boosts energy. So foods rich in this – pumpkin seeds, cacao powder, sesame seeds, Brazil nuts and kale – can help.





# The new mental health *BOOST*

Serving up beneficial bacteria could give your mind – as well as your body – the boost it craves

**A**lready pop a probiotic supplement each morning? Maybe you're striving to reduce bloating or gas, which these gut-helpers are best renowned for. But now, scientists are focusing on certain strains of probiotic bacteria known as psychobiotics – new research reveals these can positively influence our mood and have an impressive impact on mental health. 'Psychobiotics may work to increase the absorption of

nutrients, which are supportive of brain health,' says nutritional therapist Libby Linford, founder of Surrey Centre for Nutrition. Want to give your mind a boost? Here's what you need to put on your plate.

## *The science bit*

So, just how does 'good' bacteria give you a natural high? Psychobiotics can regulate the production of chemicals called neurotransmitters, such as

feel-good serotonin and dopamine. They act on the gut-brain axis (the two-way communication system between the environment in the stomach and the brain) via the vagus nerve. The idea is that modifying and improving this communication system through the use of psychobiotics could positively alter brain function and behaviour, assisting with mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety, along with slowing down the rate of cognitive decline.



## PROTECT YOUR GUT BUGS

Healthy lifestyle choices will help keep your mind and gut working in harmony. Here are the factors that can harm your 'good' bacteria...

- ✦ **STRESS** Ongoing stress triggers the release of harmful hormones that can reshape the composition of the gut bacteria.
- ✦ **SMOKING** Need another reason to quit? One study found significant changes in the gut flora of cigarette smokers – particularly an increase in the bacteria linked to a higher risk of colon cancer.
- ✦ **ALCOHOL** Heavy drinking can lead to a disruption in the gut

microbiome, resulting in an overgrowth of bad bacteria.

- ✦ **MEDICINES** Even in cases of short-term use, some medicines (such as antibiotics) can affect the diversity of the gut flora.
- ✦ **LACK OF SLEEP** Studies suggest that the make-up of your gut microbiome is linked to sleep quality.
- ✦ **INACTIVITY** There is evidence to prove that people who engage in regular exercise have a healthier gut.

## Modify your diet

The good news is, making the most of these beneficial bacteria is as simple as adding gut-friendly foods to your diet. 'Certain foods bring benefits not only due to the bacteria they contain, but also because they are supportive of the health of the gut,' says Libby.

### YOUR SHOPPING LIST

Increase your intake of these gut-friendly probiotic food and drinks:

- ✦ **Kimchi**
- ✦ **Sauerkraut**
- ✦ **Tempeh**
- ✦ **Kefir**
- ✦ **Kombucha**
- ✦ **Miso**
- ✦ **Yogurt with live cultures**
- ✦ **Sourdough bread**

In fact, in 2022, scientists at University College Cork, in Ireland, undertook a month-long psychobiotic diet trial. Interestingly, they found that following a daily diet that included two to three portions of fermented foods, six to eight servings of fruits and vegetables, five to eight servings of grains, and three to four weekly servings of legumes led to a greater reduction of perceived stress and better sleep.

## Fill your plate

And that's not all. Eating more prebiotics will also help to ensure a thriving environment within the digestive tract. So, try combining them with your psychobiotic diet. 'Prebiotics

are the fibres that feed *probiotics* – their food for strength and colonisation,' says Libby. 'Ensuring your diet has both will ensure a healthy gut.'

### YOUR SHOPPING LIST

Prebiotics can be found in fruits, vegetables, grains and legumes:

- ✦ **Apples**
- ✦ **Artichoke**
- ✦ **Onions**
- ✦ **Cabbage**
- ✦ **Mushrooms**
- ✦ **Garlic**
- ✦ **Oats**
- ✦ **Flaxseed**

## Boost levels of postbiotics

Want to turn around your gut health completely? Along with probiotics and prebiotics, postbiotics will also keep gut health on track and positively impact mental health. Postbiotics are active metabolites (the by-products left over after probiotics feed on prebiotics). They include special substances (called peptides and short-chain fatty acids), which allow good bacteria to thrive. Boost levels of postbiotics by eating more prebiotic foods like those listed above.



## Did you know?

The gut environment is made up of trillions of bugs. Each of us has a unique microflora make-up, and when this is thrown out of balance it can cause physical issues, such as gas and bloating, along with raising levels of stress, anxiety and depression.

## MAXIMISE YOUR SUPPLEMENTS

Want to top up with a pill? When browsing the aisles, ask these questions to find the best product for your needs...

### 1 WHAT STRAINS ARE IN THE PRODUCT?

It's a misconception that the more strains a supplement contains, the better it is for your health. 'Look for two of the most researched psychobiotic strains – *lactobacillus helveticus* and *bifidobacterium longum*,' says Libby. 'These have both been found beneficial in moderating the body's response to stress. Both strains have also been shown to reduce anxiety and depression.'

### 2 ARE THERE SCIENTIFIC STUDIES PROVING THE EFFICACY OF IT?

Seek out products that back up claims via scientific clinical trials rather than extravagant marketing terms, as these will deliver the best results. It might involve research, but will save you wasting your cash.

### 3 HOW DO YOU USE AND STORE THE PRODUCT?

Read instructions carefully. Most psychobiotics don't need to be taken with food, but some will need to be stored in the fridge to maximise effectiveness.

reader offer

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**P**hilip Kingsley is renowned worldwide for their understanding of hair and how to make it look and feel amazing. Each of these products is inspired by the real-life hair and scalp concerns they see in their clinics every day and has been chosen as a great way for you to improve your hair's long-term health and strength.

## THE OFFER INCLUDES:

- ✦ Elasticizer Deep-Conditioning Treatment 40ml RRP £12
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- ✦ Flaky/Itchy Scalp Anti-Dandruff Shampoo 20ml RRP £3.50
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# HAIR & BEAUTY



## ***SKIN DEEP***

It's the single most important part of your beauty routine – so it makes sense to understand why looking after your skin is so crucial, and how we can do it better! Our four-page special definitely doesn't just scratch the surface. It's a full deep dive on what the body's biggest organ needs to glow, whatever the season. Plus we're keeping one step ahead of the weather to help you get your legs in tip-top shape for when the sun finally shines. Ready to leap into action?

# What works RIGHT NOW?

All the latest beauty trends as we look forward to spring

## Undo hair damage

If you've overdone bleaching, colouring or heat styling, your hair may be suffering. Bond builders will come to the rescue, working to repair damaged bonds and leave locks looking smoother and swishier. L'Oréal Paris' new range is genuinely impressive, rivalling a much more expensive brand. The hero of the collection is the pre-wash treatment – after just one use, hair feels softer and much more manageable.

**L'Oréal Paris Elvive Bond Repair Pre-Shampoo, £14.99,** and **Bond Repair Shampoo, £11.99, Boots**



## BRIGHT EYES

If you're prone to dark circles, you've likely tried lots of things to try to hide them, but these new launches are cleverer than your average concealer.

**Rare Beauty Positive Light**

**Under Eye Brightener, £23, Space NK,**

has a cooling metal ball applicator, which feels like a real treat to use, and also helps banish puffiness – plus, its super-light consistency won't sit in creases. **Pixi CC Crayon, £10, pixibeauty.co.uk,**

has a subtle peach tone to help colour-correct the areas of darkness, instantly cheating a bright-eyed look.



## HEAVEN SCENT

We always get excited about Jo Loves scents, and their brand-new launch smells totally delicious. A blend of rich blackberries and cassis is warmed with nutmeg, patchouli and cedarwood to create a totally addictive, unique scent. In a word, gorgeous. The luxe-looking amethyst packaging also makes it a real dressing-table delight.

**Jo Loves Ebony & Cassis Parfum, £78, joloves.com**



## Dream day cream

**Sculpted by Aimee CloudCream, £30,**

**sculptedbyaimee.co.uk,** is very aptly named. It's infused with a blend of skin-healing ceramides as well as super-hydrators hyaluronic acid and shea butter, to intensely nourish skin, leaving it looking plump and bouncy. The whipped consistency feels fresh and light on the skin, and it's also available as a refill (£25), to cut down on packaging when you inevitably want to buy another.



## DID YOU KNOW?

82% OF PEOPLE GAVE UP ON SKINCARE PRODUCTS BEFORE THEY'VE FINISHED THEM\*





## MAGIC WANDS

New-in mascaras for a fuller flutter

**Glossier.**



### NATURAL LOOK

**Glossier Lash Slick in Brown, £16, uk.glossier.com**

This cult favourite gives just the right amount of volume for everyday wear and has just launched in a brown shade, which is more flattering on pale or fair complexions.



### LASH LIFT

**No7 4D Lift & Curl, £14.95, Boots**

No7's latest offering was designed to give the look of an LVL-style treatment without having to go to the salon – it lifts, separates and curls with just a couple of sweeps.



### 2-IN-1 TINT

**Maybelline Sky High Tinted Primer, £11.99, Superdrug**

This mascara is a bestseller for its ability to lengthen the stubbiest of lashes. The follow-up is a serum and a primer in one, conditioning and helping them grow fuller and longer.

5 MILLION Brits have never washed their foundation brush\*\*

# Be your own SKIN EXPERT

Swot up on the latest skincare innovations and ingredients and become a true beauty pro – no lab coat necessary

**I**n recent years, there has been a huge focus on the ingredients in products, allowing us to personalise what we use for our complexion's exact needs. The problem is that many of us aren't experts, and end up cobbling together a routine that isn't necessarily right for us. And with so many new launches, hero ingredients and innovations being shouted about all the time, it can be overwhelming. Cutting through the jargon will help you become your own skincare expert. This is where we come in.



## See the light

LED has been a popular treatment in salons for years, but now at-home LED tools are booming. Dr Dennis Gross, dermatologist and founder of his eponymous brand, loves the high-tech technique. 'Our cells have receptors for LED, like they do for active ingredients,' he says. 'It's a catalyst for stimulating our skin's natural collagen production, reducing inflammation.' These two benefits combine to target signs of ageing, but it's also an effective treatment for acne. 'The light connects to acne-causing bacteria, causing it to implode. You only need to use it for three minutes a day to see a difference, and the results show after just three uses.' For wrinkles, use **Dr Dennis Gross Spectralite, £175, spacenk.com**. It's worth it for years of use.

## Mushrooms

Believe it or not, fungi are big news in skincare this year. *Abi Cleeve*, founder of *SkinSense*, explains, 'Studies have shown the impressive impact mushrooms can have on the skin. Reishi mushrooms support the skin barrier by soothing inflammation, locking in moisture and helping skin weather environmental aggressors.' She adds, 'Shiitake and maitake mushrooms can improve pigmentation, helping to fade dark spots, and have anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties.' Origins was one of the first big brands to harness the ingredient, and has just reformulated

**Dr Andrew Weil For Origins Mega-Mushroom Relief & Resilience Soothing Treatment Lotion, £33, origins.co.uk**, to include 10 times more reishi mushrooms. It reduces redness and strengthens the skin's barrier.



## Gallic acid

Derived from plants and herbs, this active ingredient helps to brighten the skin. It's an anti-inflammatory and a powerful antioxidant, protecting and reversing damage caused by ageing and pollution.

**Dermalogica Smart Response Serum, £139, dermalogica.co.uk**, uses it to overhaul

ageing skin, helping to brighten and hydrate your complexion. The **Inkey List Brighten-i Eye Cream, £12.99, Boots**, also includes gallic acid to tackle dark circles and puffy eyes.



## Moisture boost

According to *Dr Gross*, there's a gentler alternative to retinol that's just as effective. 'Retinol is the gold standard for targeting ageing, but it has a bad reputation for triggering sensitivity. Research shows that bakuchiol can mitigate the irritating side effects of retinol while strengthening our skin's moisture barrier, increasing cell turnover and improving collagen production.' **Bybi Beauty Bakuchiol Booster, £30, lookfantastic.com**, contains a 1% concentration of bakuchiol to leave skin feeling plump and bouncy. >>







## *SLOWLY DOES IT*

Dr Gross advises, 'When introducing new products, start one at a time. That way, if you experience breakouts or irritation, it will be easy to determine the culprit. If your skin is very sensitive, you can patch-test a product on a small area to see if you have a reaction before committing.'



## *Gently does it*

We know all about AHAs and BHAs, but what about PHAs? Polyhydroxy acids are the gentlest of the exfoliating acids, melting away dead skin cells without irritating complexions. If you have suffered from stinging or redness from other acids, PHAs might be the perfect solution. **Typology PHA 14% + Centella Asiatica Serum, from £18.90, [uk.typology.com](http://uk.typology.com)**, uses PHA to boost hydration while battling hyperpigmentation. Trinny London has also branched out into skincare – we love **Trinny London Better Off AHA/PHA Gel Cleanser, £28, [trinnylondon.com](http://trinnylondon.com)**. It uses a mix of PHA and AHA to deeply cleanse and exfoliate the skin, without leaving it with that tight, dry feeling.



## *Smart thinking*

Also known as good bacteria, probiotics could be the secret to keeping skin balanced and clear. Similar to the way they keep your gut happy, in skincare they're known to restore calm and balance, and help cells to flourish. The idea is that probiotics help to protect the skin's microbiome, while regulating oil production and fending off free radicals. Smart, right? Try **Aurelia London The Probiotic Concentrate, £99, [aurelialondon.com](http://aurelialondon.com)** – it's the ultimate skin soother and leaves complexions feeling calm and soft.





# VITAL VITAMINS

## VITAMIN A THE WRINKLE BUSTER

**ALIASES** Retinol, retinal, retinoic acid, retinoids.

**BENEFITS**

Increases cell turnover, helping wrinkles and age spots fade. **BEST USED IN** overnight treatments like night creams, as it can increase the risk of sun damage.

**TRY L'Oréal Paris Revitalift Laser Retinol + Niacinamide Pressed Night Cream, £27.99, Boots**

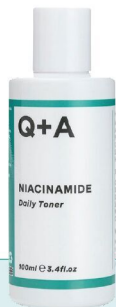


## VITAMIN B THE PORE REFINER

**ALIASES** Vitamin B3, niacinamide, panthenol, pantothenic acid. **BENEFITS** Helps even out skin's texture, tightens pores, balancing oil production.

**BEST USED IN** day creams for congested skins, or as a toner.

**TRY Q+A Niacinamide Daily Toner, £8, Sainsbury's**



## VITAMIN C THE BRIGHTENER

**ALIASES** L-ascorbic acid, ascorbyl palmitate, sodium ascorbyl phosphate.

**BENEFITS** A natural antioxidant, it helps brighten skin and reverse damage caused by pollution. **BEST USED IN** serums, to help it sink deeply into skin, or your day cream.

**TRY Garnier Vitamin C 2 in 1 Brightening Serum Cream, £9.99, Boots**



## VITAMIN D THE SUPPORT ACT

**ALIASES** D2 – ergocalciferol, D3 – cholecalciferol.

**BENEFITS** Calms inflammation, protects skin and gently improves cell turnover.

**BEST USED IN** a routine alongside antioxidants and actives, to help them work harder.

**TRY Zelens Power D Vitamin D Concentrate, £47, cultbeauty.co.uk**



## VITAMIN E THE HEALER

**ALIASES** Alpha-tocopheryl acetate, tocopherol.

**BENEFITS** Restores and nourishes skin, soothing everything from sun damage to skin conditions like eczema.

**BEST USED IN** anything and everything! It's a great all-rounder when it comes to skincare, but it's also good in bath and body products.

**TRY Malin + Goetz Vitamin E Face Moisturizer, £44, Space NK**



## Personal touch

According to Grace Vernon, trend expert at No7, skincare gets extra personal this year. 'We're seeing the democratisation of dermatology, as people take to social media for expert advice. This is paired with advances in tech, which allow us to gain an even greater understanding of our skin. Hyper-personalisation is at the heart of this, empowering the consumer

with the ability to tailor their routines for the best results.' Because of this, No7 has launched the **Pro Derm Scan** in 457 Boots stores. It's a free service that scans your skin, analysing its needs and wants, and selects the right products for your perfect personalised routine. We're also really impressed with **Skin + Me**. It's a dermatologist-prescribed routine, customised for your skin's needs. Upload some pictures, fill out the speedy, in-depth questionnaire, and they'll create the perfect products, delivering them to your door. We saw results within just days of use, and particularly enjoyed the lack of faff. **Skin + Me Treatment, £24.99 per month, skinandme.com.**

## IT'S A DATE

All beauty products should contain a symbol to indicate their shelf life. Look for a picture of a jar with a number in it – 6M means it's good for six months, and 24M means it's OK for up to two years after opening.

# Find your PERFECT FOUNDATION

Complexion perfecting bases to suit all skin tones

**T**he right foundation can make or break your look. Too heavy and matt can mean the formula might sit in lines, wrinkles and dry areas. Too sheer and you won't get a flawless, even finish that your complexion may need. The change in seasons also means that what worked for your skin during the winter months, may not be so good when the days get warmer and brighter. If you're ready for an upgrade and searching for your perfect match, we've tried and tested a host of formulas...

## MATCH MADE IN HEAVEN

Some foundations can oxidise – this is when the formula reacts to air and changes colour – often turning a lot darker than it should be. But **MAC Studio Fix Tech Cream-to-Powder Foundation, £30**, bucks the trend. It's on the pricier end of the scale, but you get what you pay for with a lightweight product that comes in a great variety of shades. It stays true to colour on application, so you can avoid a make-up mismatch.



## WAKE UP AND GLOW

Radiant skin is the one beauty trend that never goes out of style. But if your skin is looking drab, fake a glow with **Charlotte Tilbury Beautiful Skin Foundation, £39**, [charlottetilbury.com](http://charlottetilbury.com). Packed with hydrating hyaluronic acid, it brings luminosity to dull complexions. For a more affordable option but with similar coverage, try **E.l.f. Camo CC Cream, £14**, **Boots**. It masks imperfections as well as treating the skin with niacinamide and peptides.



## LIGHTEN UP

If you favour a heavier texture during the winter months, then swap to something dewier for spring to add a glow to your skin. Opt for sheer, fresh formulas like **No7 Restore & Renew Serum Foundation, £20.95**, **Boots**. It offers flawless coverage that still lets freckles shine through, but evens out redness or uneven tone. Even better, if lines and wrinkles are an issue, the skincare/make-up formula is boosted with peptides and retinol and promises smoother skin in just two weeks.







### A SEAMLESS FINISH

If a layer of foundation feels too heavy on your skin but you still want a bit of 'something', cheat your way to flawless with **L'Oréal Paris Infallible More Than Concealer, £9.99**. This creamy, formula allows you to get targeted coverage just where you need it. Blend round your nose and chin, or wherever you have redness, and let the warmth of your fingers melt it into the skin for a precise application.



### MAKE-UP THAT THINKS IT'S SKINCARE

Exciting new formulas mean that you no longer have to choose between products that do good and look good. Skincare/make-up hybrids like **Max Factor Miracle Pure Skin-Improving Foundation, £13.99, Superdrug**, do both. Containing skin-brightening vitamin C, hydrating hyaluronic acid and an SPF of 30, this foundation is your all-in-one. It smooths your complexion, blurs imperfections and gives a natural-looking finish.

### MATT NOT FLAT

If your skin type is combination or oily, the last thing you want from a foundation is added glow, as this can just end up making your face look greasy. Instead go for a powder formulation. Contrary to popular belief, not all powders will leave you looking cakey and overdone. **Maybelline SuperStay 24HR Hybrid Powder Foundation, £11.99**, gives the same comfort as a liquid foundation, in a pressed compact that doesn't feel heavy on the skin. You only need one swipe with the sponge applicator for a coverage look that lasts all day.



# CURL *power*

Embrace your natural coils, waves and kinks with this expert-approved guide



**W**hen our hair looks its best we feel fabulous. But often, because natural curls require a lot of care and attention, it can seem simpler to fight against what nature gave us. If you're blessed with waves or coils, we bet you've often spent many hours straightening them smooth, and had the aching arm to prove it! But accepting your natural hair texture can make getting ready each day much quicker and more enjoyable. Just understanding the natural pattern of your curls can help you care for them better, as well as encouraging increased bounce and spring in your style. Just as knowing your skin type enables you to choose the very best beauty regime, knowing your curl type works the same way.

No two curls are created equal – their texture can change from day to day, depending on a whole range of factors, from the general health of your hair, to the hardness of the water you wash in, and even the weather. 'Most people have more than one curl pattern, and it's perfectly normal to have several,' says Michelle Sultan, creative director and brand ambassador at Imbue. Unpredictability is both the

beauty of curly hair and the reason why it can be trickier to style. But instead of giving up and ironing those strands poker straight, it's time to get to know your hair a bit better and learn a few clever tricks from the experts to transform your natural hair into a mane of glory.

## What's my curl type?

'It's important to know what type of curl you have because this will help determine how you look after your curly hairstyles best,' advises Michelle. To bring out their potential, you should use products that are best for your curl type. The best way to find out yours is to look at your hair when it's wet. Examine your different curls and consider the shape of them. Many stylists and hairdressers like to separate them into curl types using a number and lettering system. 'The numbering system (2-4) will determine your curl type and whether you have wavy, coily or kinky hair,' explains Michelle. 'The letter classifications of A to C are based on the width or diameter of your wave, curl or coil pattern. Type As have a wider pattern size, type Bs medium, and type Cs the smallest of the three.'

## DECODE YOUR CURL PATTERN

- ✦ **TYPE 2A** The loosest of all curls, hair tends to look straight from the crown, developing slight bends as you move along the strand.
- ✦ **TYPE 2B** Grows relatively straight from the root, but the wave starts closer to the crown than 2A. The best way to picture this is as beachy waves.
- ✦ **TYPE 2C** The tightest wound of all the waves. They're also more prone to frizz, with increased body and thickness.
- ✦ **TYPE 3A** Big and bouncy curls that look like loose spirals. They're the widest of all curl types and tend to need little maintenance.
- ✦ **TYPE 3B** Slightly springier and more tightly wound, these curls would sometimes be described as ringlets.
- ✦ **TYPE 3C** Boasting plenty of volume, these curls are tight, but not necessarily all the same diameter. You may find you have a blend of a few different textures.
- ✦ **TYPE 4A** Springy coils with definition, a very tight 'S' pattern or slightly looser 'Z'. It could also be a mix of both.
- ✦ **TYPE 4B** Bends in more of a 'Z' than an 'S' shape and the strands are closer together, creating plenty of volume.
- ✦ **TYPE 4C** Coils are very tightly packed, which means the exact 'Z' shape is not always visible. You are also likely to experience the most shrinkage.

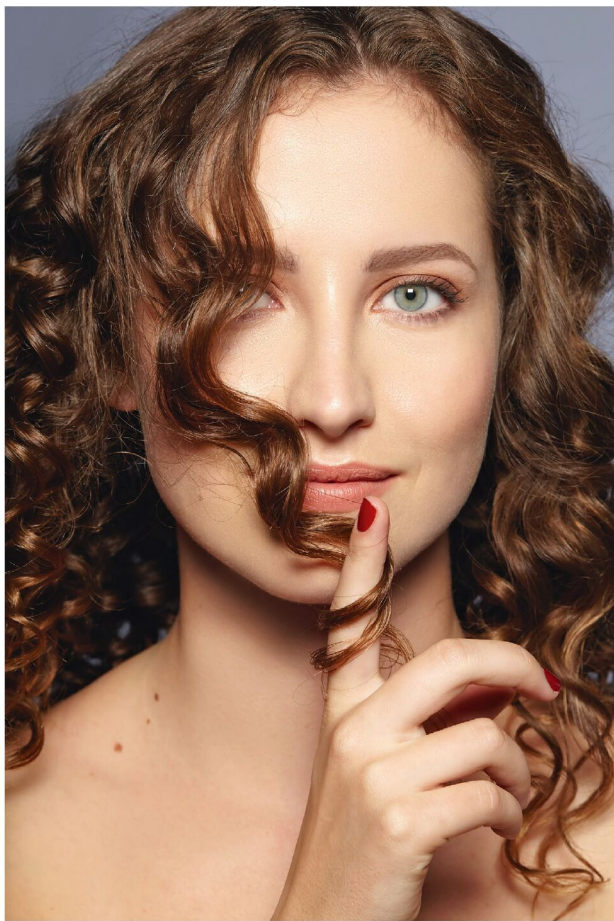
## How to cut curly hair

This type of hair can be much longer when wet and stretched, so it's best cut when dry. By seeing how the curl pattern naturally forms and falls, your hairdresser will be able to cut curl by curl for a bespoke finish.

'The most important part of choosing any style for curly hair is taking face shape into consideration,' says Zoë Irwin, creative director for John Frieda Salons. 'If you have a round face, then something lighter and layered is more flattering. If you have a longer face, long layers work well to lift, and they work well with

a fringe. The main thing is not to have a style that cuts into the curls too much – razor cuts are terrible for curls. See a curl specialist so this doesn't happen.'

Though often pricier than a standard trim, seeing a specialist is definitely worth it. It can take a bit of extra help maintaining and looking after it, but how can you find a stylist who's qualified to cut curls and coils? It's a problem many of us face, with the search term for 'Hairdressers near me for curly hair' on Google continuing to increase at 190% year-on-year.



One way to find an expert stylist is to contact your nearest L'Oréal Professionnel salon and enquire if it has a curly hair expert. L'Oréal Professionnel has provided curls and coils training in its salons to help stylists become equipped with the core technical skills and particular expertise required for cutting curls and coils.

'Instagram is a great place to discover curly hair experts in your area,' advises Keisha Jo Lawler, brand founder of Trepadora. 'Any curly salon worth going to should have regular posts featuring its work. If possible, try to visit the salon before booking to see the space and ensure it is somewhere you would feel comfortable. Ask questions before booking, but also own your natural texture and be realistic in your expectations. Curly salon specialists are very passionate about what they do, but they can only enhance what you naturally have.'

## Caring for your curls

'If you have type 2 curls, your hair may need a product to help the curl or wave, as this hair type can be more flyaway and prone to frizz,' explains Michelle. 'Type 3 hair may need products to help define the curl and support the coil. If you have type 4 hair, you will need products that contain moisture-based ingredients.'

The porosity and elasticity of your hair also has a part to play in the kind of products it needs. 'If your hair has a high porosity, then it may mean that it reacts differently to certain products than if it had a low porosity,' says Michelle. 'Finding out the porosity of your hair is simply finding out your hair's ability to hold and retain moisture. Porosity can be determined by the condition of your hair. For example, if your hair is quite damaged, it's likely to be more porous.'

You can spot damage by increased frizz, dullness or dry texture. Low-porosity hair tends to be shiny, doesn't need too much product and can be prone to grease. 'Elasticity can also determine if your hair is damaged or not. If it's feeling a bit mushy or overly stretchy, then a protein treatment is likely to be needed,' says Michelle.



## The best products for your curls

'Finding the correct products and using the right quantity is key to styling good curls and keeping them at their optimum health,' says Michael Lendon, from the Aveda pro team. 'Using a light touch is also important when styling curly hair. Don't be too heavy-handed, as you may promote frizz.' Using your hairdryer on a cooler setting once your hair is completely dry will add to the weightless texture. Or try the new **Shark Style IQ Hair Dryer & Styler, £179.99, johnlewis.com**, which cleverly adjusts the airflow and temperature when used with the diffuser, to style curls without damage or frizz.

### + TYPE 2 CURLS

Search out lightweight shampoos and conditioners. 'Wavy hair often needs a super-strong-hold gel to achieve definition,' advises Keisha. 'A good tip for type 2 is to spend time gently scrunching gel into your wet hair to get the definition really strong.'

**TOOLKIT: Trepadora Goji Berry Mint Reviving Hair Rinse, £24, trepadora.com; Umberto Gianni Curl Jelly, £8.25, boots.com**

### + TYPE 3 CURLS

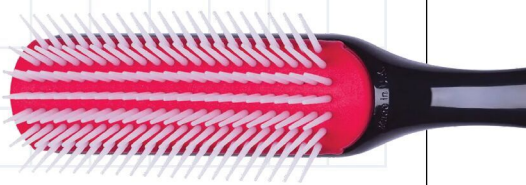
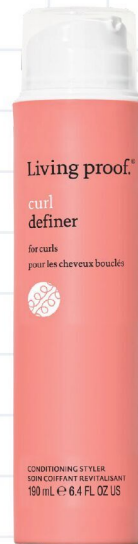
'A prep product will create the perfect base to add moisture and definition, ensuring that styling your 3A-3C curls will be easier and will hold for longer,' recommends Michael. 'And to combat frizz, use a product that controls volume and lengthens even the tightest curls for a natural finish.'

**TOOLKIT: Aveda Be Curly Style Prep, £24.50, aveda.co.uk; Living Proof Curl Definer, £33, lookfantastic.com**

### + TYPE 4 CURLS

'Distribute your prep product on wet hair when just washed, and brush through – this seals the cuticle and helps to lock in moisture,' says Michael. 'Don't start using your product on half-dry hair – this is when frizz starts to develop, and you'll create an uneven texture and finish.'

**TOOLKIT: Imbue Curl Worshipping Shine Oil, £8.99, imbuecurls.co.uk; Denman D3 Classic Brush, £11, lookfantastic.com**



# Prettier hands NOW

Say goodbye to the tell-tale signs of ageing with these handy tips and tricks



## Apply your SPF

Sun damage is one of the biggest reasons for ageing skin. Our hands are just as vulnerable to UV rays as our faces, but we bet you don't protect yours as much as your face? Using a hand cream that contains sun protection is vital for youthful-looking hands. **Ultrasun Anti-Ageing and Anti-Pigmentation Hand Cream SPF25, £20, [ultrasun.co.uk](http://ultrasun.co.uk)**, is non-sticky, non-greasy and gives high protection against UV rays. Keep it in your bag so you can reapply after every hand wash.



## Smooth out wrinkles

Retinoids are a superhero anti-ageing ingredient and work by speeding up cell turnover, smoothing skin and improving collagen production. It's used a lot in face creams, but you can also apply it to your hands to smooth the skin. We like **No7 Pure Retinol Hand Cream, £14.95, Boots**. Apply generously before bed.



## Daily moisture boost

Our hands are subject to everything from cold weather to harsh detergents, often causing skin to become flaky and dry. Keep yours looking and feeling great with a dose of **Tisserand's Lavender & Neroli Soothing Hand Cream, £12, [tisserand.com](http://tisserand.com)**, each time you wash them. It has a soft, nourishing formula and a gorgeous scent.



## Keep nails healthy

Nails can get dry and brittle as we age. Give them some added protection with **OPI Nail Envy Nail Strengthener, £20.50, [lookfantastic.com](http://lookfantastic.com)**. It may seem pricey, but this fortifying treatment is a cult buy for manicurists, as it strengthens weak nails and keeps them from splitting like nothing else. Apply two coats to bare nails and then apply another coat every other day. You can even apply over a manicure for added strength – but be aware that it does leave your nails with a matte, not shiny finish.







## Fade age spots

Dark spots on the hands are one of the biggest ageing giveaways. They always tend to appear on the hands first, as this is the one area that is exposed to the elements all year round. If you're conscious of yours, invest in a hand cream specially formulated to treat pigmentation. **Nivea Luminous630 AntiDark-Spot Advanced Hand Cream SPF15, £6.99, Boots**, contains a patented ingredient to lighten dark spots by up to 50% in eight weeks.



## Scrub away dead skin

Head-to-toe exfoliation is key for great looking skin and **L'Occitane One Minute Hand Scrub, £8, uk.loccitane.com**, buffs away dead skin cells for softer, smoother hands in just 60 seconds. Use it once a week before applying a hand mask (see below).



## Try a mask

Just like you'd treat your face to a mask once in a while, give your hands some TLC too with **Nails.Inc Thirsty Hands Moisturising Hand Mask, £5, nailsinc.com**. This supercharged hand mask slips on like a pair of gloves, giving skin a dose of nourishing vitamin E and shea butter. Perfect as a once-a-week treat – pop them on while you're watching TV and let them work their magic.



# Time to put in the LEG WORK

Make the most of your pins with some extra TLC now, advises Sarah Cooper-White. You'll thank us come summer!

Our legs can get neglected at this time of year, especially if they've been buried under 100 deniers all winter long. While good genes and regular workouts count for a lot, the right products and an extra five minutes of body prep each day can go a long way to helping your limbs look their best.



## SKIN SOOTHERS

Legs can be prone to dryness, so use a nourishing shower gel, such as **CeraVe Hydrating Foaming Oil Cleanser**, from **£12.50**, [boots.com](https://www.boots.com), followed by a body cream or oil to lock in moisture. We love **Caudalie Vinotherapist Hyaluronic Nourishing Body Lotion**, **£18**, [cultbeauty.co.uk](https://www.cultbeauty.co.uk) – it smells like summer and leaves limbs gleaming. Ingrown hairs and bumpy skin texture won't stand a chance against **Nip + Fab Glycolic Fix Body Cream**, **£12.95**, [nipandfab.com](https://www.nipandfab.com), formulated with AHAs to smooth out problem areas.



## DO THE PREP

Shed dry, flaky skin and those annoying red bumps with a salicylic acid enriched body exfoliator. Apply **Necessaire The Body Exfoliator**, **£30**, [spacenk.com](https://www.spacenk.com), to dry legs and buff in before rinsing off. The non-messy gel texture works to address crêpey, uneven texture for unbelievably silky shins.

## BRUSH UP

We say it every year, but body brushing really is the best way to get your pins prepped for summer. Make this the year you really stick to the habit. Start by working your way up your legs, massaging the skin in long upwards strokes to ensure you're going in the direction of your lymph system. This brushing motion will create an instant surge of blood flow, feeding skin with fresh nutrients and oxygen to boost energy and improve tone. If you do it daily, it can help the appearance of cellulite too. Try **Mio Dry Body Brush**, **£15**, [mioskincare.co.uk](https://www.mioskincare.co.uk)








**SMOOTH OPERATOR**  
 After exfoliating, your skin is prepared for a closer shave – it helps lift ingrown hairs and stops dead skin cells from clogging the blades of your razor. For a smoother shave, change your razor head regularly and try using a shower oil to shave with, to give a softer, more nourishing finish. Elevate your leg shave to spa-like levels with **Emma Hardie Moringa Luxury Bath & Shower Oil, £38, lookfantastic.com** – it leaves skin nourished and conditioned.

**TACKLE LUMPS AND BUMPS**

If cellulite is a problem, give **Weleda Birch Cellulite Oil, £27.95, hollandandbarrett.com**, a try. Nothing is a miracle fix, but applying daily over four weeks has been clinically proven to give smoother, firmer skin. Massage it in the right way to aid lymphatic drainage. Start at the ankles and use your thumbs to firmly massage around your feet. With your thumb and forefingers, work up your legs towards your calves and the backs of the knees. Finally, use your thumbs to massage the length of your thighs in one smooth motion.



**GET A GLOW**

Replace sheer tights with an application of **Legology Sun-Lite Sheer Lingerie for Legs, £38, lookfantastic.com**, which works a bit like a foundation to improve the skin tone on your legs. Or, for a subtle, longer-lasting colour, pop a few drops of **St Tropez Luxe Tan Tonic Drops, £30, feelunique.com**, into your body lotion. The more drops you apply, the deeper your glow. After a stronger colour? Try **St Moriz Fast Tan Mousse, £6.99, boots.com**. Apply with a mitt and leave on for three hours for a 'two weeks in the sun' style glow.



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# STAY FIT & WELL

## ***MOVE IT, DON'T LOSE IT***

Some brilliant inspo this month from Dame Kelly Holmes. She may be a double gold medal winning athlete but, at 52, she's still facing the challenges of staying fit in midlife. Her message? Keep moving your body and you'll reap the benefits, not just physically but mentally, too. She's right, we promise, but if outdoor exercise sounds a bit daunting right now, don't miss our yoga workout between the sheets. We're sure even an Olympian would approve.



# TRIM, TONE & BOOST YOUR MOOD

Going through the menopause? With this easy workout, you'll build your strength and get a handle on hormonal weight gain

**I**s your body shape changing with each passing year? Are the pounds creeping on much quicker? You're not imagining it. Declining oestrogen levels during perimenopause and the menopause can lead to weight gain. Plus, shifting hormones may also be to blame for your stiff joints and loss of muscle tone – not to mention that low mood. But don't get disheartened, with the right kind of workout you can turn things around.

'Exercise is so important throughout the menopause, as it can ease some of these unwanted symptoms,' says fitness coach Suzy Alvarez\*. Ready to look and feel better? Here are the moves that will help to keep you stronger and slimmer as you navigate this time of life.





*Movement is medicine*

Women who have a sedentary lifestyle are more likely to suffer severe menopausal symptoms, according to a study\*\*.

**WHY IT'S TIME TO GET STRONGER**

If you've reluctantly recognised the arrival of wobbly thighs and a flabby bottom, you're not alone – in fact it's common for women to experience a decline in muscle mass after the age of 50.

'There's a very strong link between the menopause and losing muscle, due to the decline in oestrogen, which works to stimulate muscle growth,' says exercise physiologist Lindsey Kass. 'The most noticeable sign of muscle loss as we age is the lack of definition – the body becomes softer. And this can happen even if you're doing the same amount of exercise as you did when you were younger.' Weakness and a loss of stamina are other signs of reduced muscle mass – and a sedentary lifestyle is one of the top causes.

Studies show that beyond the age of 30, inactivity can reduce muscle mass in the body by 3 to 5%, per decade. 'Just walking regularly can make a difference to muscle function,' says Lindsey. 'But if you want to keep bulk, definition and strength, you do need to incorporate some resistance training into your routine.'

**YOUR MENOPAUSE MOVES**

We created a strength-training plan that you can easily do at home. 'This routine works all the major muscle groups, keeping them strong and functional,' says Suzy. For the best results, aim to do three sets of 12-15 reps for each exercise, at least twice a week.



**REVERSE FLY**

- + Stand with feet shoulder-width apart and feed a resistance band or tube with handles under both feet, then cross the band.
- + Slightly bend your knees and hinge forward from the hips.
- + Slowly raise your arms out to the side and upwards as far as they can go, then lower.

Keep your spine straight and your shoulders back.

For low-cost resistance bands, search the range at decathlon.co.uk

**Blast those bingo wings! Don't worry if you can only manage a few push-ups at first.**



### PUSH-UP

- + Start in the all-fours position on the floor. Lean forward so that your hands are under your shoulders and your weight is over your top half. Cross your ankles.
- + With your elbows facing outwards, lower your body to the floor, keeping your back straight.
- + Push through your arms to lift your torso back up to the starting position.

### SPLIT SQUAT

- + Take a long step forwards, raising your back heel so your foot is supported by the toes.
- + Lower slowly into a lunge, keeping your chest and chin lifted – get your knee as low as possible to the ground.
- + Engaging your core and using power from your back leg, rise to the start position. Complete a set, repeat on the other leg.



**Great for firming up your bum and legs.**

## What else helps?

In addition to this workout, try to do two or three sessions of cardio activity a week – something that gets you sweaty and out of breath. 'Exercise should be fun, so find ways to stay active that you enjoy and can do with friends, such as dancing, hiking or group classes,' says Suzy. Not only will you look forward to the social aspect, but it will become a part of your weekly routine.

### SEATED ROW

- + Sit on the floor with your legs straight out in front of you. Bend your knees slightly if you like.
- + Loop a resistance band around the soles of your feet and grab hold at the point around your mid-thighs. Sit up straight with your elbows by your sides, engaging your core.
- + Pull the band towards you, squeezing your shoulder blades until your elbows are behind you. Slowly return to the starting position.

**Improves poor posture and will tone flabby arms.**



### CURTSEY LUNGE

- + Start in a standing position with feet hip-width apart, then step one foot backwards until it crosses behind your front foot.
- + Lunge down until your knee is a few inches from the floor – or as low as you can go.
- + Slowly reverse the lunge and return to the standing position. Repeat on the other side.

**This move will give you better balance.**







No hand weights? Try using bags of sugar or large, filled water bottles.

### SHOULDER PRESS

- + Hold a dumb-bell in each hand, with your palms facing forwards at shoulder height.
- + Lift the weights straight upwards – your arms should be extended with a slight bend in your elbow.
- + Slowly bring your arms down back to the starting position.



## FUEL YOUR WORKOUT

'Good nutrition is essential for recovery and muscle growth and it's even more important to eat healthy, balanced meals during the menopause,' says Suzy. Tweak your diet with these tips.

**+ POWER UP WITH PROTEIN** Protein is the building block of healthy muscles, so it's essential to get enough from your meals. Good sources are poultry, eggs, fish and low-fat dairy, while plant-based protein sources include soy, beans, legumes, vegetables, nuts and seeds. But how much should we be having? UK guidelines recommend 45g of protein a day for women. 'But this is fairly low,' says Lindsay. 'If you're over 50, you could up your daily intake to 1.3g of protein per kg of your body weight, or even 1.6-1.8g if you're exercising regularly.'

**+ CALL TIME ON WINE** Cutting down your alcohol intake will help prevent weight gain. A workout is also so much easier without a hangover – when your body is going through hormonal changes, it doesn't need the extra demands that processing alcohol places on it.

**+ STAY HYDRATED** Sip water throughout the day – avoid gulping it down only when you exercise. As a rule, your wee should be light straw coloured if you're drinking enough.

## Get enough rest!

When you're exercising, good-quality sleep allows cell regeneration to take place and it plays a crucial part in muscle recovery. 'When they are worked, muscles gain microscopic tears in the fibres, and most of the healing and rebuilding – which then grows the muscles – happens when you sleep,' says Lindsay. You'll also have more energy to exercise if you prioritise rest, especially if you're struggling with fatigue. 'Factor in recovery days and remember to stretch to keep length on your muscles, so they don't overstretch and tear.'

A woman with short, styled hair is smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a bright blue tank top and colorful patterned leggings. She has a large, intricate tattoo on her left shoulder and is wearing a black necklace and a watch. Her arms are crossed, and she is sitting on a green track with white lane markings. The background is a blurred gym setting with other people and lights.

*The more  
YOU MOVE  
the better  
YOU'LL FEEL*

Stuck in a rut? Dame Kelly Holmes explains how getting active is key to boosting both mind and body



**A**fter a double gold medal-winning performance at the 2004 Olympics, Dame Kelly Holmes waved goodbye to competitive athletics, but keeping fit remains central to her life. Now 52, she's got hormonal changes and the backlash from COVID-19 to contend with. Here, Kelly shares how to stay fit during this potentially difficult decade, whatever your starting point.

#### How do you stay fit now, and how has this changed?

To be honest, I'm in complete denial that I'm in my 50s. I prefer 39 plus! This approach maintains my mindset that I should still be training. Many people assume that you do less as you get older, but it's more that you need to do better.

Training has changed a lot for me, as you might expect. I was an international athlete in my 30s, and then from my mid-30s up until maybe five years ago, I've just been keeping fit. I didn't really have any specific goals other than the London Marathon when I was 46 (which I don't think I'll ever do again!).

I now do more weight training than I did – about three or four times a week, as it's so important to maintain bone and muscle density at this age. I mix it up with cardio. I enjoy a Parkrun when I can.

#### Have you had to adapt your training in other ways over the last few years?

Whether it's age or the menopause, I find that my body is slower to recover now. To combat that, and help avoid injury, I make sure I warm up properly, for example by going on a cardio machine for 5-10 minutes before lifting weights. And make sure you don't do too much, too soon – I'm definitely guilty of this, and will end up having to take time off with really bad delayed onset muscle soreness. Try doing something twice a week and then build to three times a week.

#### Has the menopause been a struggle for you?

Hormonal changes have had a big impact on my energy levels. This, coupled with having COVID-19 and then just about every illness going, has made the past couple of years tough. Lots of women don't feel like themselves during this time and that can be scary because it feels out of your control. I've always been so in tune with my body, but recently I feel like I've lost some of my drive. And when you're dragging yourself out of the house, it doesn't make you feel good about yourself.

In the past I've often blamed myself for these feelings, but I've reached a point where I want to properly understand what's happening to my body and do something about it. Speak to doctors and look holistically at my life and identify what I can do right now to feel better and get me through the unavoidable.

#### How do you get it done even when you have no drive?

I just focus on staying consistent, doing a little exercise often. The more consistent you are with exercise, the quicker your body adapts. The exercise you're doing will start feeling easier and you'll need less motivation to get out there. I try to avoid big blocks of time off as it makes everything feel harder.

The best way to stay consistent if you feel demotivated is to hold yourself accountable. If you like goal setting, book an event and start a training plan. Another way is to find a friend to exercise

*Make sure that you don't do too much, too soon'*

# 150

The minutes of moderate exercise we should be doing every week. Yet, on average in the UK, we only manage 64\*. For it to count as moderate exercise, you need to be walking briskly – strolling to the shops won't cut it.

## DO IT DAILY

Other than regular exercise, there are four health rules Kelly tries her hardest not to bend...

### 1 EAT SOME PROTEIN IN EVERY MEAL

'Understanding a bit about how nutrition is important for energy and recovery needs could really help you progress,' says Kelly.

### 2 GET SEVEN HOURS OF SLEEP

'This one is tricky,' admits Kelly. 'But it could make a huge difference to both your mood and motivation levels.'

### 3 DO A MINIMUM OF 10,000 STEPS A DAY

'Get a watch or use the health app on your phone,' says Kelly. 'You might be overestimating how many you do.'

### 4 HAVE 15 MINUTES OF 'ME-TIME'

'I like to have a bubble bath with music and candles,' says Kelly. 'It's so important to have that breathing space.'

with. Or even get a whole community behind you, whether it's online or at the gym where you could join a regular class.

#### How is your mental and physical health linked?

The connection between mental and physical health exists for everyone, but I think in some people, it's stronger. I've had fitness in my life forever. So when I don't have that, the effects on my mindset can be quite dramatic. Other people need to understand the link far better – that the more you move, the better you'll feel. Movement is so powerful. If you feel down, you need to go for a walk or to the gym. I guarantee you'll come back feeling more alert.

✦ Dame Kelly Holmes is an ambassador for Nuffield Health, the UK's largest healthcare charity. To get fit in your 50s or find out more about Nuffield Health services, visit [nuffieldhealth.com/gyms](https://nuffieldhealth.com/gyms)

# STRETCH

*yourself to sleep*

Struggling to nod off? Try this simple  
sequence last thing at night





**F**ind it difficult to drop off? Think you don't have time to squeeze a relaxing yoga session into your day?

**We've found a way to combine yoga moves with your bedtime routine – a soothing ritual to help relieve your body of physical tension and switch off your busy brain so that you can fall asleep much faster.**

Certain yoga poses are guaranteed to ease you into a calming state of mind, says yoga instructor Clara Baker, working with Simba. 'This gentle routine is a great remedy for anyone who struggles to clock off. It's designed to rebalance, calm and realign our chakras (the various energy centres in our body) through simple stretches and controlled breathing techniques.'

And the best thing about this stress-melting sequence? You can do the six sleep-inducing moves from the comfort of your bed – bliss!

## YOUR BEDTIME YOGA MOVES

A huge part of unwinding at night is getting cosy and comfortable, so the more you can do to heighten that sensation, the better chance you have of reaching deep relaxation. For these poses, you can use a pillow or rolled-up blanket to get yourself as comfy as possible – prop yourself up or push under parts of you that need a little support. Adjust your set-up to make the experience right for you, and take it slow and easy.

### Get the benefits

Yoga supports a healthy body and mind. In addition to helping you sleep, regular sessions of stretching and breathing can:

- ✦ Increase flexibility
- ✦ Lower blood pressure
- ✦ Relieve stress
- ✦ Strengthen bones and joints
- ✦ Boost the brain
- ✦ Improve posture

### 1 SIMPLE CROSS-LEGGED POSE AND ALTERNATE NOSTRIL BREATHING

**'This exercise helps calm the mind and slow your breath, preparing your body to switch from "fight or flight" to "rest and restore" mode,' says Clara.**

- ✦ Find a sitting position on the bed that allows your spine to be straight without creating tension.
- ✦ Close your eyes and tune into your breath. Inhale deeply through your nose, filling your lungs.
- ✦ Count the length of the breath silently, making the inhalation and exhalation equal.

- ✦ Once you've established a steady rhythm, raise your right hand and rest the first two fingers between your eyebrows. Bring your thumb to rest on your right nostril and your left finger to rest on your left nostril.
- ✦ Exhale fully through both nostrils. Closing your right nostril with your thumb, inhale through your left nostril.
- ✦ Closing your left nostril with your ring finger, exhale through your right nostril. Inhale through the right, close and exhale through the left. Inhale left, close, exhale right. Inhale right, close, exhale left.
- ✦ Continue for five to 10 breaths. >>





## 2 BOUND ANGLE POSE

'This pose helps to release tension along the spine and deep into the hips,' says Clara.

- + From a seated position, place the soles of your feet together and open your knees outwards.
- + Take your hands on to your feet and open them out like a book, with the outside edge and little toes touching, and big toes and inner seam apart.
- + Inhale, lift your chest and look up. Exhale, and fold forward. Allow the body to soften and relax.
- + Breathe slowly and stay here for five to 10 breaths.



## 3 SIMPLE SEATED TWIST

'You'll release tension along the spine, and open the chest and shoulders with this move,' says Clara. 'It's a great antidote to a hunched posture from stress and desk work.'

- + Bring your knees together, feet flat on the mattress in front of you.
- + Place both hands on your knees, inhale and lift your chest to sit tall.
- + Exhale, turn to your right, wrap your left arm around your knees and place your right hand behind you for support.
- + Look over your right shoulder.
- + Inhale, feel your spine lengthen, exhale, use your left arm to twist a little deeper.
- + Breathe slowly for five to 10 breaths. Repeat to the left.

*Did you know?*  
 More than 55% of people say yoga helps them get better sleep\*



## 4 KNEES TO CHEST POSE

'When you bring your knees to your chest, the lower back is stretched and released, while the internal organs are compressed and released, aiding digestion,' says Clara.

- + Lie down on your back and hug both knees towards your chest.
- + Allow your arms and shoulders to relax.
- + Inhale, feel your legs lift away from your abdomen slightly. Exhale and use your arms to gently draw them in a little closer.
- + Breathe slowly here for five to 10 breaths.





## 5 SUPINE SPINAL TWIST

**'This pose helps release tension and toxins from the body,' explains Clara.**

+ Lying flat again, stretch your left arm out on the mattress beside you. With your right hand on your knees,

roll your legs over to the right until they come to rest on the mattress.  
 + Turn your head to look down your left arm.  
 + Stay here breathing slowly for five to 10 breaths. Repeat on the other side.



## 6 RECLINING BOUND ANGLE POSE

**'In this pose the spine rests in a supported neutral position, while gravity slowly opens the hips,' says Clara. 'Counting your breath calms your mind and helps overcome the common "racing mind" syndrome.'**

+ Draw your knees back into the centre and hug them in.  
 + Place your feet back on the mattress with soles touching, and

allow your knees to fall out to the side.

+ Slowly begin to lengthen the exhalation until it reaches double the length of the inhalation (so if your inhalation lasts for a count of three, your exhalation will last for a count of six). Do this slowly and gradually. Never strain or hold the breath.  
 + Stay here, breathing deeply for as long as desired.

## MAKE IT MINDFUL

Meditation is a central part of yoga practice. That's why many classes end with a short session of guided meditation. In fact, the physical side of yoga was originally designed to prepare your body for meditation practice. Search YouTube for free sleep meditations or try adding this short Headspace\*\* meditation to the end of your bedtime yoga session to prepare you for a great night's rest.

- + Take a deep breath, inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth.
- + As you exhale, feel the weight of your body sink into the bed. Let go of any thoughts.
- + Feel the contact between your body and the mattress – notice your heels, backs of legs, lower back, upper back, arms and fingers, the neck and the back of your head.
- + Slowly inhaling and exhaling, allow your mind to drift off in its own time.

## Create a haven

- If your space is calm and peaceful, you'll look forward to yoga practice and feel ready for rest.
- + Keep your bedroom clean, decluttered and dimly lit in the evening.
  - + Scent your space with relaxing aromatherapy oils such as lavender, clary sage, ylang-ylang or jasmine. Burn an aromatherapy candle before bed or mist the air using a diffuser.
  - + Have a set 'winding-down' routine – this could include a soothing skincare ritual and preparing your things for the next day.
  - + Switch off your electronic devices at least an hour before bed – ban screens from your sleeping space.

fitness fashion

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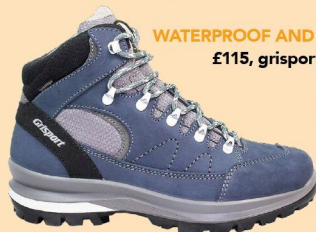
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# You don't have to exercise TO GET FIT!

Our expert Annie Deadman explains why it's easier than you think to burn calories



**M**y friend Jane emailed me the other day and declared that she was going to start 'working out'. Her message was punctuated with words like 'power', 'sweat' and 'endorphins'.

After I picked my chin up off the floor (she isn't known for her love of movement), I made a gentle suggestion that she start by simply being more active, day to day. Jane has a very sedentary job, working from home and staring at a laptop. 'That's what I just said – working out,' came the retort. But it's not actually the same thing. Keeping active means moving more outside of the gym, Zumba class, HIIT session or 5km run, and it makes a sizeable contribution to your health. And by good health, I mean protection from serious conditions and diseases.

The official name for what I'm talking about is NEAT – or non-exercise activity thermogenesis. It is the key to burning calories without realising we're doing it. NEAT means the energy we expend on everything we do that's not sleeping, eating or sports-like exercise. So that means walking, cycling, fidgeting, cleaning, mending, sweeping, dancing (because I know you swing those hips when no one's looking) – anything and everything that doesn't have the explicit goal of training. (And yes, if

you're thinking what I'm thinking, then that counts too!)

It's tempting to view the 'gym workout' as the be-all and end-all of movement, which means we then give ourselves permission to be pretty much inactive for the rest of the day – and that is bad. Sitting for long periods of time can contribute to cardiovascular disease, cancer, depression and other life-limiting conditions, so getting our blood pumping is massively beneficial, not only for health but also for weight loss.

The BMR (basal metabolic rate) is the number of calories our bodies need to function without movement (nails to grow, organs to do their thing, digestive system to work). If you're an active person, that number will be higher, even when you're sitting still, watching Netflix.

The more active you are, the better the blood supply around the body, and the more muscles you will be using. A pound of muscle burns roughly six calories a day, while a pound of fat burns only two calories a day. Raising your BMR by moving more is known as 'getting your NEAT up'. So how can we do that? Let's have a list.

## 'Walk up and down while on the phone'

flow, uses big muscle groups in the legs, and it's a number to aim for. In today's world, we are busy and we have to-do lists, so sometimes mapping out non-conscious activity consciously makes it much easier!

- 2 Plan ahead and walk the long way round to your destination.
- 3 Get off the bus two stops earlier and walk the rest of the way.
- 4 Don't take the lift and walk up the stairs instead.
- 5 Walk up the escalator rather than standing still, gripping the handrail (10 smug points in the bag but, hey, it's all in the name of raising our metabolic rate).

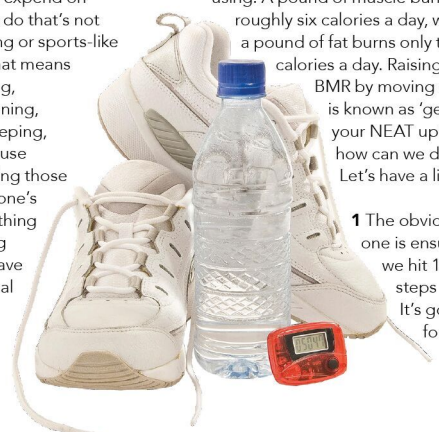
6 Park at the far side of the supermarket car park, and maybe ditch the trolley and carry your shopping to the car.

7 Walk up and down while you're talking on the phone (and, if you're like me, gesticulate wildly to get your point across).

8 Stand rather than sit (find great standing desks at flexispot.co.uk).

Inventing ways to raise your NEAT will influence your metabolic rate and boost your health and energy expenditure. It's a game changer that involves thought and planning, but not much effort.

**+** Annie is a fat-loss and fitness coach, and the creator of [theblastplan.com](http://theblastplan.com), which is an online programme of exercise and nutrition guidance aimed at midlife women. Follow her on Instagram @anniedeadman for health tips and lots of laughs too.



- 1 The obvious one is ensuring we hit 10,000 steps a day. It's good for blood

sports kit

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swimsuit, £125, sizes 8-18, swimsuit,  
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Bag, £105,  
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Swimsuit, £39, sizes 6-22,  
[next.co.uk](http://next.co.uk)







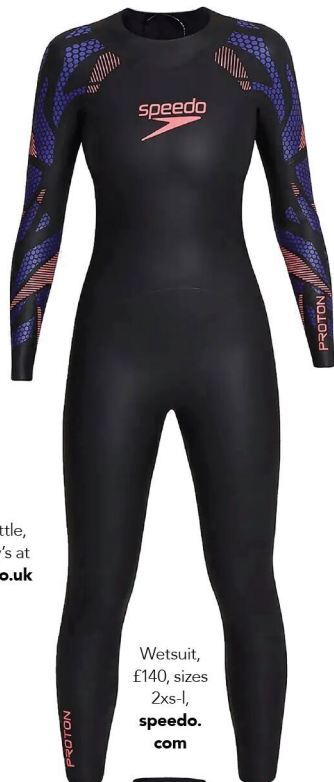
Bikini,  
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Gloves,  
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# Call of THE WILD

Bored of the gym? Struggling to get motivated at home?  
Take inspiration from these three women who've found  
the secret to loving exercise is to head outdoors



## *'The mountains are my playground'*

**Harri Corp, 33, from Shropshire, keeps fit hiking her local hills and the dramatic peaks of Snowdonia.**

'My exercise of choice will always be outside, whether it's hiking, mountain biking or wild swimming. I don't like doing cardio indoors and only relent during the winter to keep my fitness levels up for when the days get longer and I can be outdoors more. My first experience of being in the mountains was when my dad encouraged me to walk Snowdon (Yr Wyddfa) with him. I completely underestimated it (thankfully, Dad was prepared!) but the feeling I had afterwards, a sense of achievement and freedom, stayed with me.

I then began walking some easy routes in the Shropshire Hills. Each weekend I just wanted to explore new

places. My partner and I hiked some well-trodden peaks in the mountains and I also encouraged friends to get out of their comfort zone until I was confident enough to go solo. The first mountain I went up by myself was Pen y Fan in the Brecon Beacons National Park. I was nervous but when I made it to the top at 886m, I was over the moon. It felt like such a challenge and by the time I got to the bottom I was already thinking about the next one.

I have since hiked many hills and mountains alone, which I love. Knowing that I have to use just my body and my mind to get me up

and down improves my strength physically and mentally.

I'll admit that Mother Nature can be a challenge at times, particularly in the UK. The wind and rain or snow and ice can really put you off. But, with the right clothing, this can still be fun! Lack of self-belief is often the biggest battle. I run events for a women's adventure community

and it's something I hear time and time again. But, by doing hard things, we build resilience. I love how it feels to achieve something I thought may not be possible.

I have completed training courses to develop my navigation skills so it's safe for me to hike in more remote areas.

It's important to have an awareness of ability and put safety steps in place when moving out of your comfort zone. For a new or tricky route, I advise going with someone who has done it before or booking a guide. I'm also a kit geek,

which means I'm prepared for every eventuality when out in the hills. Knowledge boosts my confidence – if something was to happen I know that I can rely on myself to get through it.

My need for outdoor exercise seeps into my mind while I'm chained to my laptop so I'm a big believer in 5pm-9pm adventures – I try to get out even for a short time to offset the chaos of everyday life. My fitness goals are pretty simple. I want to hike more mountains on the weekends, see more sunrises before work and squeeze in movement outside as much as possible.'

➕ @harri\_adventuremedia >>

Hiking gives Harri a sense of freedom and achievement



Outdoor exercise leaves her feeling on top of the world

## 'Outdoor yoga keeps me healthy and grounded'

**Laurie Bell, 45, from East Neuk of Fife, does yoga on the beach to balance her body and mind.**

'I live in a vibrant fishing village that's situated on the Fife Coastal Path, looking out to the Isle of May nature reserve. I have a great love and respect for the outdoors and my local area is rich in history, beaches, wildlife, golf and water-based activities. Before I eventually became a yoga teacher, I practised yoga outside for years. I would meditate in the garden or by water and used to find quiet beaches to enjoy practising and swimming alone, which is still one of my favourite things to do.

When my sister was very ill with cancer and died, I'd often go and practise on the beach by myself. It was a way to be present, feel supported by the environment and come to terms

with my circumstances. Even now I can head to the beach with some challenge or another and it seems to melt away into the sea as I move through the poses.

Yoga is a way of life and soon becomes part of everything – your practising continues long after you leave the mat. My husband and teenage children do beach yoga with me too, they have grown up to appreciate and pay attention to nature.

It has so many physical benefits and doing it on the shoreline is a completely different experience to being in a studio. Calming the nervous system through regular practise helps to regulate hormones and optimise organ

health. Movement generates healthy fluid production, and increases strength and flexibility, as well as promoting the production of feel-good hormones.

Yoga brings attention to the present moment and the added element of being by water impacts the way you feel. The naturally meditative quality relaxes the mind and body, helping you feel at one with nature. I love absorbing the healing sounds and

sensations and responding to its changing states and tides. This helps me to be adaptable, learning to go with the flow and let go of expectations.

I now teach regular group yoga classes on the beach. Everyone who comes brings their own energy to the natural environment and we encourage a welcoming, inclusive culture. People are naturally more playful on the beach and appreciate the space around them so it feels warm, friendly and is a fun form of exercise. There is laughter and a real appreciation for the views. Nature guides the practising, from blossoming movement at ground level in the spring, to shorter, upright sequences in winter. The range of ages and experience is also notable. We have serious athletes and yoga teachers next to beginners and people with physical restrictions, and there are teenagers and great-grandparents stretching side by side. Everyone belongs on the beach.'

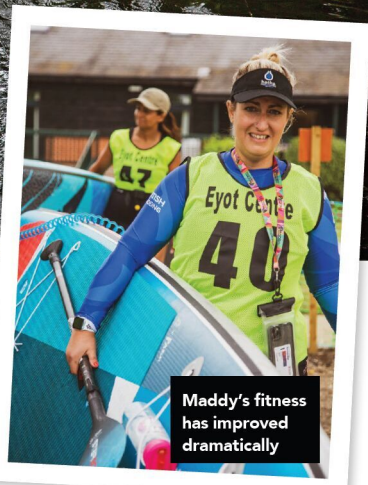
✦ [curativate.co.uk](http://curativate.co.uk)

'People are naturally more playful on the beach'



Laurie finds yoga on the beach relaxing for mind and body





**Maddy's fitness has improved dramatically**

## *'I feel strong and powerful'*

**Maddy Enoch, 41, from Middlesex, discovered a passion for paddle boarding on her local waterways.**

'Being in or around water has always been soothing and invigorating for me, but I put that down to being a Pisces! I first tried stand-up paddle boarding (SUP) three years ago with my youngest daughter on a lake at a local activity centre. I was hooked from day one, but never imagined it would become such a huge part of my life.

Now, I paddle in all seasons. I am blessed to live near to the non-tidal Thames, the stunning Wey Navigations and Basingstoke Canal, and numerous lakes. Paddle boarding on natural water means you are surrounded by wonder and can get up close to nature without disturbing it. There are shoals of fish, and plants beneath the surface, nesting birds, a gentle breeze and many trees – your body just drinks it all in. I'm transported to a different world that is a great escape from screens, my work as an SEN teacher and busy life as a mum.

Like many hard-working women and mothers, setting aside the time to exercise can seem almost impossible so

it's key to find something you love. I've never been very good at going to the gym or for a run. The appeal isn't there for me. But SUP has made me feel incredibly strong and capable again.

I'm passionate about being proud of the body you have and what it can achieve – an important message when bringing up two girls. SUP uses more muscles in the body than many other physical activities and burns a huge amount of calories. I've developed muscle tone and have fantastic upper abs! My arms and shoulders are strong and, despite being incredibly clumsy, I now have a good sense of balance. The real testament to the fitness benefits is

**'I'm passionate about being proud of the body you have'**

that I've recently felt strong enough to try SUP racing. I have taken part in GBSUP leisure category events and an Aquapaddle (like Parkrun for paddle boarders). I would never have thought that I could, but my stamina and

resilience have improved dramatically.

SUP has also been a lifeline when my mental health has been poor. In early 2020, my son was very ill and this had a huge impact on my whole family, and I found everything very hard to cope

with. I realised I had to look after myself in order to support others and from that came the need to move my body. On my very first paddle that summer I found my outlet. There have been many times since when myself or friends have needed this "blue therapy" and we've paddled and chatted through our worries while reconnecting with nature.

The SUP community far and wide is so friendly and supportive. I am incredibly proud to be the membership secretary for the Paddle Up Club, based in and around Shepperton. It's high-energy fun and we look out for each other. Everyone is welcomed and valued and we take safety very seriously, hosting regular water safety skills events to equip everyone with the knowledge so we can hit the water and enjoy ourselves. I would encourage anyone to join a local club. I've got fitter and gained so much more.'

➔ [@maddys\\_sup\\_world/paddleup.co.uk](https://www.instagram.com/maddys_sup_world/paddleup.co.uk)



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# YOUR BODY & HEALTH

## **SMART THINKING**

An apple a day may keep the doctor away – but equipping yourself with the latest medical info might be a little more useful when it comes to taking care of your health. For instance, did you know that varicose veins could be lurking in more intimate parts of your body? Or that it's wise to spread moisturiser a little further than the usual face, neck and chest areas? Or that the phone you use every day could be a lifesaver? No? Then read on...



*The varicose  
veins you*

**DON'T  
SEE**

Newsflash – they don't  
just affect your legs





**H**ave varicose veins and hate them? You're not alone. More than half of all women will develop varicose veins in their lifetime and they don't just look unsightly. They raise your risk of blood clots, and can lead to circulation and skin problems, leg pain and ulcers. The bad news? They don't affect only your legs, either. Varicose veins in your pelvis are relatively common too, leading to pelvic pain, an irritable bowel or bladder, and painful sex. In fact, you can develop them anywhere, from your forehead and hands to your ovaries, vagina and vulva.

'You can get hidden varicose veins in your legs too,' says Prof Mark Whiteley, a consultant venous surgeon and phlebologist. These affect veins deeper in your legs, so aren't visible on the surface. You'll only know for sure that you have them through a venous duplex ultrasound scan, although they can cause the same symptoms as visible varicose veins – heavy, tender, achy and tired legs, thread/spider veins, and swollen ankles with brown or red staining (eczema).

## WHY AGE IS A FACTOR

Healthy veins take blood from our feet and legs – where it has taken vital oxygen and nutrients – to the heart. But because it's working against gravity, the blood will try to flow the wrong way. This is prevented by one-way valves in our veins that open and close to let blood through.

**IT'S A MYTH...**  
...that crossing your legs causes varicose veins.

'Varicose veins occur when the small valves in our leg veins fail,' says Prof Whiteley. 'This allows blood to fall back to the ankles and feet, and collect in veins.' Veins can become varicose if their wall is stretched and the valve is weakened.

Noticed more as the years have passed? They become more common with age, when veins lose their elasticity and valves stop working so well, and women are particularly at risk because our hormones can relax vein walls, making valves more prone to leaking. Pregnancy, being overweight and having a job which requires long periods of time standing, may raise your risk of varicose veins. But the biggest influence is genetics, says Prof Whiteley. 'The more relatives you have with them, the more likely you are to have them.'

## STOP SMOKING

It damages your heart, blood vessels and arteries, restricts your circulation and raises your risk of a blood clot.

## UNDER CONTROL

**Struggling with symptoms? There are several treatments which could help...**

### + COMPRESSION STOCKINGS

They squeeze your legs to improve circulation, and should be worn constantly, except in bed. Available on prescription, your GP should first arrange a Doppler test to check blood circulation to see if they're suitable. Not recommended as a long-term solution for varicose vein symptoms.

### + ENDOTHERMAL ABLATION

Heat is used (via laser or radio-frequency energy) to destroy the vein wall. Under local anaesthetic, an incision is made at the ankle or knee and a catheter is inserted into the vein through which the laser or radio-frequency energy is passed to seal off the vein.

### + FOAM SCLEROTHERAPY

Suitable for smaller varicose veins. A medical foam is injected into the vein, under local anaesthetic, to kill the vein cells. The leg is then bound, to hold the vein shut and destroy it. Bandages must be worn for several weeks.

### + LIGATION AND STRIPPING

This involves tying off the vein and removing it under general anaesthetic. Two incisions are made, one at the top of the leg where the vein is tied and the other further down where the vein is removed. Allow up to three weeks to recover, and you will need to wear compression stockings for several weeks afterwards.

## 3 WAYS TO KEEP VEINS HEALTHY

**1 GO FOR A DAILY WALK**  
Walking activates a pump effect, sending blood around your feet, calves, thighs and heart, improving your blood flow and circulation. 'Walking won't stop you from getting varicose veins if you are genetically disposed to them,' says Prof Whiteley, 'but it will help slow down the deterioration and risk of complications.'

**2 MOVE REGULARLY**  
'Research suggests that jobs requiring long periods of time spent standing still may increase your varicose-vein risk or worsen them,' says Dr Jenkins. And if you have to sit for a long time, such as on a long-haul flight, wear compression stockings and do regular foot and leg exercises.

**3 TOP UP ON VITAMIN C**  
A well-balanced diet is key for vein health and maintaining a healthy weight – being overweight puts added pressure on your legs. Vitamin C, in particular, can help prevent cell damage, keeping veins strong and elastic, and encourage the production of collagen which strengthens blood vessels. Fill up on citrus fruits, peppers, strawberries, tomatoes, broccoli and potatoes.

**WARNING!**  
Speak to your GP immediately or call 111 if your varicose veins start bleeding. You may need urgent medical treatment.

## CAN YOU STILL GET HELP ON THE NHS?

If your varicose veins are causing discomfort or complications, they can be treated on the NHS. 'Initially, your GP is likely to recommend compression stockings, taking regular exercise and elevating your leg when resting to help ease symptoms,' says GP Dr Gill Jenkins. 'Your GP may refer you to a vascular specialist for varicose veins causing pain, discomfort, swelling, or if there are skin changes caused by blood-flow problems, if the varicose veins have caused overlying eczema, or you have varicose ulcers.'

NHS treatment is not available, however, for purely cosmetic reasons. For these cases you'd need to consider private treatment.

## IT'S NOT JUST YOUR LEGS

Noticed prominent veins elsewhere? Any vein can become varicose (swollen and enlarged). Although they are most common in the legs, and most obviously visible here, you can have them on your hands, breasts or chest, plus 'hidden' varicose veins deeper in your legs and in other places such as your vagina, vulva and ovaries (men can get them on their testicles) and in your pelvis – known as pelvic congestion syndrome.

'Chances are that if you have varicose veins in the pelvis you won't even know they're there,' says Prof Whiteley. But they could be causing problems. 'About 30% of women attending gynaecology

## WATCH OUT FOR COMPLICATIONS

'Varicose veins can cause complications because they stop the blood flowing properly,' says Prof Whiteley. Those near the surface may bleed if you damage them. They can also lead to swollen ankles, eczema and ulcers. You're also at higher risk of blood clots.







A daily walk can help to keep varicose veins at bay

outpatients in the UK with chronic pelvic pain have pelvic congestion syndrome (pelvic varicose veins),’ says Prof Whiteley. Other symptoms include an irritable bowel or bladder, and painful sex.

Around one sixth of leg varicose veins stem from pelvic varicose veins. ‘If the veins in the pelvis aren’t treated when the leg varicose veins are treated, there’s potentially a high chance that the leg varicose veins will return,’ warns Prof Whiteley.

Other unsightly veins, such as those on hands, arms, breasts and forehead, can be treated with laser or foam, in the same way as leg varicose veins, or through the removal of surface veins (phlebectomy). Which method is used will depend on how big the vein is and exactly where it sits.

**16%**

of women with leg varicose veins will have them in the pelvis too.

## ‘MY PROBLEM WAS HIDDEN FOR YEARS’

TANYA PEAREY, 55, from London, had treatment for pelvic congestion syndrome

‘I wasn’t even aware that I had varicose veins in my pelvis until I had an ultrasound scan for the varicose veins on my legs. It showed a faulty vein at the top of my leg going into my groin, so my consultant referred me for a transvaginal scan to check my pelvic region. It revealed several abnormal, refluxing (varicose) veins on both sides of my pelvis, including on my left ovary.

I was told that if I had been a boy, I’d have known about this problem at around the age of 14 or 15 years, because you would have had visible varicose veins around your testicles. But mine remained hidden all these years. The only sign of their existence is the varicose veins appearing on my legs and a painful tightness in my right calf when I start running, until my circulation gets up to speed and then the pain disappears.

I was recommended pelvic vein embolisation, a simple pinhole procedure to permanently block the abnormal veins with tiny

metal coils. My surgeon made an incision in my neck and, using a special X-ray, guided a long, almost microscopically thin, platinum strip to coil inside these abnormal veins. The veins clamp down around the coils, forming a permanent blockage and preventing any further reflux.

It was all done on a walk-in, walk-out basis under local anaesthetic, and the procedure takes just under an hour. It seemed odd how it was done via my neck when the pelvis is such a long way away, but my surgeon said it’s an easier straight line down to my pelvic veins. Approaching from the other way would require bending the coils back into position, which is much more tricky.

The day after, my neck was sore and I felt a little tender and bloated around my abdomen but that soon passed. Two weeks without vigorous exercise and I was back to normal.

Obviously, I can’t see the effects because it’s all internal but a scan shows that the op has closed the affected veins and already the pain around my calf when I run has eased. The next step will be treating the veins in my leg to banish my leg pain completely.’

+ Tanya had her treatment at The Whiteley Clinic. For more info, visit [thewhiteleyclinic.co.uk](http://thewhiteleyclinic.co.uk) or call 0330 0581 850



Tanya had varicose veins in her pelvis

# Protect EVERY BIT of your body!

From top to toe, you deserve some moisturising TLC

**D**id you know there are some surprising parts of the body that you should be moisturising? We nourish our faces, hands and bodies with creams and lotions, but what about the hidden bits or the parts we don't realise need some extra lubrication from time to time? Take care of these, too, says the experts.

## Nose

Cold weather, viruses and allergies all contribute to problem skin around the nose, leading to soreness around the nostrils, particularly if you're blowing your nose frequently, says pharmacist Dr Richard Middleton, director of the British Herbal Medicine Association, who suggests moisturising this area as a preventative measure.

**FIX IT** 'Use an aqueous moisturiser rather than an oil-based preparation such as petroleum jelly.' Try **Boots Pharmaceuticals Aqueous Cream, £3.59, boots.com**

## Ears

Ever suffered the indignity of burned ears after a day in the sun? Ears tend to be overlooked, but neglect them at your peril. 'We're well trained to moisturise our faces with an SPF cream but often the ears get forgotten, which leaves them exposed to ultraviolet sunlight in winter and summer months,' says Dr Middleton. 'This can lead to skin damage, and increase the risk of developing cancer. Most of these cancers (between 6-10%, according to Cancer Research UK) start to develop in the skin of the outer ear, and you're particularly at risk if you have fair skin.' Protect ears year-round with a moisturiser containing SPF 30.

**FIX IT** If the skin on your ears is itchy, dry or flaky, Dr Middleton suggests an aqueous-based moisturiser. 'These are readily absorbed by the skin and are preferable to oil-based preparations, which are not,' he says. Try **E45 Face Moisturiser, £9.99, superdrug.com**





## WHAT NOT TO MOISTURISE

While moisturising all over is largely a good thing, there's one area we should leave. 'We advise not to put cream between your toes,' says podiatrist Emma McConnachie, a spokesperson for the Royal College of Podiatry. 'While the rest of your feet would benefit from a daily application of a urea-based cream, between the toes is warmer and more moist so applying cream can cause interdigital maceration – where the skin goes white, wet and rubbery and splits. This can lead to fungal or bacterial skin infections.' Emma recommends drying between your toes after bathing to ensure that moisture doesn't build up.



## Scalp

We condition our hair but often forget our scalp. 'Keep your scalp moisturised to avoid flakiness and irritation,' says trichologist Anabel Kingsley. 'A dry scalp (unlike dandruff, which is an oily scalp condition) occurs when the top layer of skin lacks moisture.'

**FIX IT** Rehydrate the scalp with a water-based toner such as **Philip Kingsley's Flaky Scalp Toner, £10.50, lookfantastic.com** 'It contains camphor, which cools and soothes, and benzalkonium chloride, which provides long-lasting relief from itching.' But don't apply oils to the scalp, she warns.

## Eyes

The seasons affect our eyes in different ways. In autumn and winter, chilly weather, central heating and hot, caffeinated drinks can trigger dry eyes (plus there's an increased risk of cold or flu-related eye infections). In spring and summer, we're vulnerable to airborne pollutants, such as pollen, that make our eyes itchy and watery. 'Lifestyle factors can also contribute, such as

stress or too much alcohol,' says optometrist Ian White. And for perimenopausal women, a drop in oestrogen levels can cause dryness.

**FIX IT** To keep eyes moisturised, Ian recommends staying hydrated. Supplements such as evening primrose oil and omega-3 are effective, as are drops, such as **A.Vogel Eye Drops, £10.49, hollandandbarrett.com** which contain euphrasia. 'This herb has been used for hundreds of years to treat eye problems, earning its alternative name "eyebright",' says Ian. 'It has anti-inflammatory and astringent properties, which lubricate the eyes and may help soothe them.' For the best results, use eye drops before bed to lubricate and soothe eyes overnight.

## Vagina

Moisturising your vagina is just as important as moisturising your face, says Dr Shahzadi Harper, aka the perimenopause doctor (theharperclinic.com). 'We associate vaginal dryness with older women, but it can start quite

## A good all-rounder

Healthspan's Sea Buckthorn Oil, £17.95, [healthspan.co.uk](http://healthspan.co.uk), is a combination of sea buckthorn berries (which are rich in omega-7 fatty acids), omega-9 fatty acids and vitamin A to help to lubricate the skin, mucous membranes, eyes and intimate areas.



early in perimenopause when oestrogen starts to decline,' she says. 'Oestrogen is also a humectant – it holds on to water and helps with lubrication. We lose plumpness within our vaginal walls, we lose lubrication, and the vagina can become dry.' This not only increases the risk of cystitis and thrush, but sex and even exercising can be uncomfortable.

**FIX IT** Vaginal moisturising gels can be effective at easing symptoms. Try **Balance Activ Menopause Moisturiser Gel, £11.99, boots.com**



*Are you being kind*  
**TO YOUR  
MIND?**

Your lifestyle could be having a big impact on your grey matter...



**W**e are advised to take care of our body, but what about the attention our precious brain needs? Brains are constantly bombarded with information, which has a negative impact on our focus, concentration and productivity. In addition, many of us struggle to get enough sleep, eat an unhealthy diet, and don't exercise regularly – it's hardly

surprising that our brain health is suffering.

A recent survey\* found that three quarters of UK adults claim they're concerned about caring for their brain, yet 85% of us struggle to name what nutrients we need to keep our brain in good condition, and only 19% of us consume foods that keep our brain healthy. How well are you looking after yours? Take our quiz to find out.

## HOW DID YOU DO?

Tot up your scores, then see which category you fall into.

- 1: A1, B4, C3, D2
- 2: A2, B4, C1, D3
- 3: A2, B4, C1, D3
- 4: A1, B2, C4, D3
- 5: A3, B1, C4, D2
- 6: A2, B4, C1, D3
- 7: A2, B3, C1, D4

## THE QUIZ

Answer each question, then check your score

### 1 HOW DO YOU SLEEP?

- A I'm an insomniac
- B Like a baby
- C I like an afternoon nap most days
- D I don't wake until the alarm goes off

### 2 DO YOU HAVE A SET SLEEP ROUTINE?

- A No
- B I have a regular bedtime
- C I use my phone before I sleep
- D I meditate before going to bed each night

### 3 HOW MUCH EXERCISE DO YOU GET A WEEK?

- A 20-minute walk at lunchtime
- B At least 30 minutes, four times a week
- C No formal exercise
- D Roughly an hour every day

### 4 WHAT SORT OF EXERCISE DO YOU DO?

- A Housework
- B Yoga and meditation
- C Running and spin classes
- D Walking

### 5 WHAT WOULD YOU SAY ARE YOUR VICES?

- A I start the day with a cappuccino

- B Cigarettes or wine daily
- C Chocolate
- D Junk food

### 6 HOW ARE YOUR EATING HABITS?

- A I eat whatever I like
- B My diet is largely Mediterranean
- C I'm only full after eating carbs
- D I'm fuelled by coffee

### 7 HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR LEISURE TIME?

- A At the pub
- B Outdoors
- C Watching TV
- D Crossword puzzles and reading



### 7-11 YOUR BRAIN IS UNHAPPY

If you watch lots of TV, go for a walk instead to improve your brain health\*\*. 'If you're struggling to be active, pick something that stimulates brain function, such as knitting or a crossword,' says expert Heather Snyder, vice president of medical and scientific relations at the US Alzheimer's Association. The good news? It's possible to up your score with some simple changes. Any movement, including housework, raises your heart rate and increases the size of your hippocampus (a brain structure that influences learning and memory), helping you to avoid dementia. Reduce your intake of junk food, or give it up – because highly processed foods can cause brain-tissue damage.

### 12-17 YOU COULD BE KINDER

When starved of sleep, our brains become overworked and don't function properly, so if you suffer from insomnia, ban electronic devices at bedtime – their glow suppresses the production of melatonin, interfering with our ability to drop off and stay asleep\*\*\*. If you have a high intake of carbs, be aware that refined carbohydrates raise blood sugar, damaging our memory and brain structure. 'We have known for decades that Alzheimer's is brain inflammation, and carbs and sugars inflame the

pathways to the brain,' explains neurologist David Perlmutter.

Take heart if you spend time in the pub, however. While drinking has limited health benefits, adults who socialise have more stimulated brain cells, meaning that they're less likely to develop dementia, according to research in the *Journal Of Gerontology*. Just watch the alcohol units – as prolonged consumption can cause your brain to shrink.

### 18-22 YOUR BRAIN APPRECIATES YOUR EFFORTS

You're probably trying to eat well, exercise and get enough sleep, but more tweaks will help. A regular sleep routine is vital, and if you need an alarm to wake you, watch out. 'Interrupting a sleep cycle is just as bad for brain health as lack of sleep,' says brain scientist Dr Jill Bolte Taylor. 'A sleep cycle runs between 90-110 minutes, so if you're forcing yourself to get up in the middle of a cycle, you may have blown a cycle of rejuvenation.' Work in cycles and calculate how many hours you need to sleep accordingly (eg to get five cycles – based on 90 minutes each – you need 7½ hours' sleep). Check out [sleepcalculator.com](#). And don't overdo cardio workouts, as excessive exercise can lead to a tired brain and poor decision making\*\*\*\*.

### 23-28 YOUR BRAIN IS WELL LOOKED AFTER

Good work! It looks like you're keeping your brain happy and healthy. Don't worry if you've said you need coffee to kick-start your day – it's packed with antioxidants that boost brain health, found a study from the University of Finland. Well done if you follow the Mediterranean diet – it helps protect against cognitive decline, according to research in the *Journal Of Neural Transmission*.

If you struggle to exercise but manage to squeeze in the occasional yoga session, keep it up – your brain will thank you for it! Neuroscientist Sara Lazar found that experienced meditators aged between 40-50 years had just as much grey matter as the average 20-30-year-old.

## NATURAL BOOSTERS

**'Nootropics are natural or synthetic substances that can boost brain performance – these can be incorporated into our diet to help cognitive function, including memory, focus and attention span,' says nutritionist Salma Dawood for plant-based nootropic brand Nu:tropic. Try these natural options...**

### *Lion's mane*

'This mushroom can improve focus, mental clarity, memory and verbal fluency,' says nutritionist and chartered psychologist Dr Naomi Newman-Beinart ([thelondondispensary.com](#)). 'Active compounds – namely hericenones and erinacines – are thought to be responsible for this mushroom's brain-boosting effects. Studies suggest that lion's mane can help slow the progress of cognitive decline, such as Alzheimer's and dementia.' Buy fresh, grow your own, or take a supplement.

### *Ginseng*

'This is a complex nootropic compound that's effective in memory improvement and in the prevention of degenerative brain diseases, such as Alzheimer's,' says Dr Newman-Beinart. 'Its neuroprotective effect may also be useful in the prevention of depression.' You can take ginseng in supplements or tea.

Add these  
to your diet...  
Avocados, berries,  
broccoli, coffee,  
eggs, leafy greens,  
nuts and seeds,  
oily fish, spices,  
wholegrains

### LOW IN IODINE?

Try Doctor Seaweed  
Focus+ (£29.95,  
[doctorseaweed.com](#)). It also  
contains brain-supporting B  
vitamins, zinc and  
omega-3 DHA.

### *Iodine*

'This is a fast-acting nootropic that can help prevent brain degeneration later in life,' says Dr Newman-Beinart. 'It's essential for brain development, and deficiency results in hypothyroidism. Symptoms of iodine deficiency include fatigue, depression, anxiety, brain fog, headaches, hair loss, weight gain and sensitivity to cold.'

### *Green tea*

'It may have health benefits such as improving brain function,' says Krisi Smith, founder of Bird & Blend Tea Co. 'One compound found in a tea leaf is theanine; theanine compounds – in particular L-theanine – are said to have a positive effect when absorbed.'





# Ready to quit CAFFEINE?

From headaches to sleep, cutting this stimulant could have a big impact

**C**an't get through the day without your morning latte? You're not alone. For many of us, the idea of quitting caffeine seems, well, impossible. In the UK, we're drinking 98 million cups of coffee a day,\* but it's not just coffee that's totting up your intake – it can be found in diet cola, tea, chocolate and protein bars.

And, if it's a regular part of your routine, you might not realise the effect it's having on your brain and body – such as increased anxiety and restlessness. Want to wean yourself off? Here's what could happen and how you can crack it.

## 1 YOU MIGHT GET HEADACHES

'Caffeine causes the blood vessels to narrow. When we stop having it, these blood vessels open up, increasing the blood flow to the brain,' says consultant neuroradiologist Dr Emer MacSweeney. 'This sudden increase may cause headaches, which can last up to nine days.' Staying hydrated can lessen their intensity – aim for two litres of water a day.

## 2 IT COULD CAUSE BRAIN FOG

'Eliminating caffeine may lead to fogginess in the brain and fatigue,' says Dr MacSweeney. This is because caffeine alters your brain chemistry, giving you that desired alert feeling.

Take it away and you're going to experience the opposite. 'The duration of brain fog is dependent upon factors such as the amount of caffeine consumed in a day, the length of time you've been having it for and even genetics,' she adds.

## 3 YOUR MOOD MIGHT CHANGE

Cutting out that caffeine hit can cause your mood to dip. Why? 'Caffeine increases the number of receptors in the brain for the feel-good neurotransmitter dopamine,' says nutrition expert Penny Weston. When

you stop having it, your brain needs time to adjust, which can lead to irritability and low mood.

## 4 YOU MAY FEEL LESS ANXIOUS

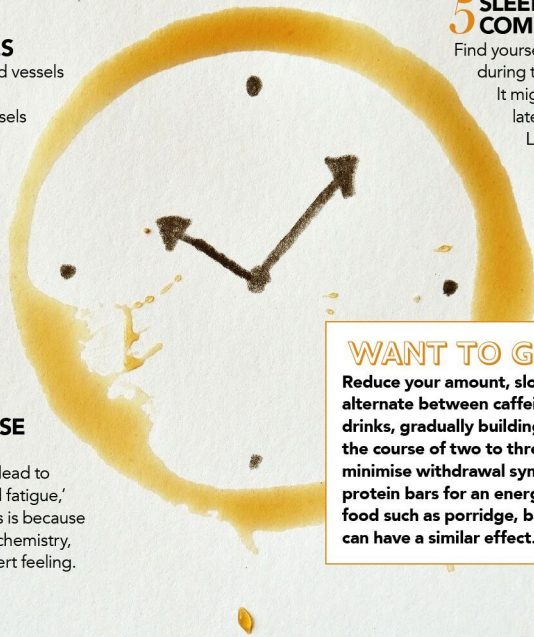
While caffeine can make you happier and more alert, too much can lead to 'coffee jitters' – which includes nervous energy, heart palpitations and shakiness. This is because through the blocking of the hormone adenosine – which makes you feel sleepy – the central nervous system is activated and releases fight-or-flight (stress) hormones such as adrenaline.

## 5 SLEEP COULD COME EASIER

Find yourself reaching for the kettle during that mid-afternoon slump? It might be the cause of those late nights, says sleep expert Lindsay Browning. 'Caffeine has roughly a six-hour half-life, which means that for around six hours after your last caffeinated drink or snack, half of it will still be in your system,' she says.

## WANT TO GIVE IT A TRY?

Reduce your amount, slowly. For example, alternate between caffeinated and decaf drinks, gradually building up to just decaf over the course of two to three weeks to help to minimise withdrawal symptoms. If you rely on protein bars for an energy fix, caffeine-free food such as porridge, bananas and lean meat can have a similar effect.





# Smart tech that can SAVE YOUR LIFE

Your device holds the power to alert you to potential health issues before they become something bigger

**A**ttached to your phone? You're not the only one. But, for once, it could be good for you. Most of us have our phones in our pockets every step of every day, allowing them to measure and monitor our movements and build a detailed picture of overall health. 'Sometimes we don't feel an injury or illness until things have already gone wrong,' says biotech expert Harry Glorikian, author of *The Future You* (£17.95, Brick Tower Press). 'Systems and sensors can be used to identify imperceptible changes before this point, so you can take action sooner rather than later.' Here's what you need to know...

## STAY CURRENT

Keep your phone's operating system up to date, so you don't miss out on any additions to its health and fitness capabilities.





## STEP UP YOUR ANALYSIS

We know our phones double up as pedometers – and increasing your daily steps has the potential to dramatically improve your long-term cardiovascular health. But that's not all. 'Our smartphones can measure a number of walking metrics that you'd otherwise need to go to a biomechanics lab for,' says strength and conditioning coach Mitch Raynsford at digital coaching app p3rform.co.uk

### ✦ TAKE STRIDES

'The motion sensors built into the iPhone 8 and later provide data on step length, double support time (see below), walking asymmetry and walking speed,' says Mitch. You can access this data in the Apple Health app. Step length naturally varies with pace, but tracking it over time will expose any trends – a decline could be linked to ageing or injury.

### ✦ KEEP YOUR BALANCE

Double support time is the percentage of time walking in which both feet are on the ground; the lower the value, the better. 'It is related to a rise in an individual's fear of falling, be that stemming from inactivity or injury,' says Mitch. 'If this value has begun to increase, try some simple balance exercises a few times a week.' You can also ask your iPhone

to send you a notification if you're at an elevated risk of falling within the next year.

### ✦ SIT LESS

With activity graphs produced by both Apple's Health app and Android's Google Fit (if this isn't already on your Android phone, just download it from Google Play), you can see how your steps are distributed throughout a day. Reducing sedentary time by one hour per day was linked to a 26% lower risk of heart disease, according to a US study – and it's just as effective to build this up through short, light-intensity interruptions to sitting. Many fitness watches send movement alerts – use your smartphone alarm to do the same.

### ✦ PACE YOURSELF

Walking requires strength, aerobic fitness and coordination. If any of these are declining, you might see your walking speed fall, too. Check your Apple Health app to see how your walking speed has changed over the past six months.

Meanwhile, Google Fit uses algorithms developed with the American Heart Association and will award more Move Minutes and Heart Points for brisk over slow walking. Set yourself a goal and let your phone do all the maths!

## CHECK YOUR VITALS

**The Google Fit app (Android and Apple) can detect your heart rate and respiratory rate using your smartphone's camera.**

✦ Most adults have a resting heart rate between 60 and 100bpm.

Too much caffeine, dehydration, inactivity and persistent stress could cause it to creep up.

✦ A normal respiratory rate in healthy adults at rest is roughly 12 to 20 breaths per minute. Causes of a high respiratory rate (>20) include anxiety, fever, respiratory diseases, heart diseases and dehydration. A low respiratory rate (<12) may indicate a drug overdose, head injury or obstructive sleep apnea.

## DIET APP IMPROVEMENTS

Tried and failed to use an app years ago? They're always undergoing development to improve user experience, so it might be worth revisiting it. For example, MyFitnessPal (free, Apple and Android) will now input calorie and macronutrient totals when a product barcode is scanned using your phone's camera.

## SUPERCHARGE YOUR SLEEP

'The more rest you get, the healthier you can be, as it gives your body a chance to recover. Without it, things are going to break down,' says Harry. And while phones can be our worst enemies at bedtime, they are now equipped with several in-built wellness aids designed to protect your sleep.

### ✦ SET BOUNDARIES

With similar options available on both Apple and Android phones, the do not disturb mode can mute sound, stop vibration and block visual disturbances. You can also personalise who/what you block, so if you want to

receive all incoming calls from certain family members, you can.

### ✦ BLOCK BLUE LIGHT

'Blue light has been shown to hinder the body's ability to prepare for sleep, as it restricts the production of the sleep hormone melatonin,' says Mitch. 'Night shift' on Apple phones, and 'Night light' mode for Android users, is your answer. Set a sleep schedule so that this is enabled automatically in the evening.

### ✦ SCHEDULE YOUR SLUMBER

Input your sleep routine and your smartphone can keep tabs on

how long you are resting each night. Even without information on sleep stages, which smartwatches provide, 'this will allow you to spot patterns so you can improve your sleep hygiene on days when you're consistently failing to get enough rest,' says Mitch. Perhaps exercising or eating too late due to other commitments is pushing bedtime back? You can also set a sleep schedule with 'wind down' time (Apple and Android) to cut back on app usage before bed and help you stick to your plan.

# Beating the odds of OVARIAN CANCER

Sadly, more than half of all women diagnosed with ovarian cancer don't survive five years or more. Find out why

**T**oday, 21 women in the UK\* will hear the frightening words, 'You have ovarian cancer.' And, worryingly, the odds are stacked against them. It has one of the worst cancer survival rates\*\* and kills more British women than the other four gynae cancers (womb, cervical, vaginal and vulval) combined\*\*\*. Our experts reveal the truth behind the statistics – and why awareness is key.

## Knowledge is everything

When it comes to cancer, it's important to keep on top of checks and available tests, whether that's feeling for breast lumps, tracking moles or attending cervical screenings. But ovarian cancer is still flying under the radar.

Perhaps it's because there's still no reliable, effective screening method for ovarian

cancer. Therefore, knowing the symptoms is vital, especially as survival rates soar when it's caught early. Diagnosed at stage I, there's a 90% chance of surviving five years or more, according to the Robin Cancer Trust ([therobincancertrust.org](http://therobincancertrust.org)). However, statistics from Ovarian Cancer Action reveal that 90% of women still don't know the four main symptoms. So what should you be looking for and when is it time to visit your GP?

## Spotting the signs

The four main symptoms are bloating (more than 12 times a month), feeling full, abdominal/pelvic pain and needing to pee. Other symptoms include back pain, changes in bowel habits (going more or less often) and extreme tiredness.

They all seem rather innocuous, and ones you'd associate more with an erratic digestive system than cancer. But recognising what's abnormal for you could be a lifesaver. 'You don't need to

have all these symptoms before you see your GP – having just one that's new and persistent needs your attention,' explains Dr Sharon Tate, head of primary care development at Target Ovarian Cancer. The advice is to ask yourself four vital questions about your symptoms...

- 1 Are they persistent (won't go away)?
- 2 Are they frequent (occur most days)?
- 3 Are they new (started in the last 12 months)?
- 4 Are they unusual for you?

## Mixed signals

Even when you know the symptoms, they can be confused with less serious conditions, such as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), ovarian cysts, polycystic ovary syndrome and the menopause. 'As symptoms are non-specific, it's likely people present to the GP later, often trying different things at home, or over the counter, first,' warns Dr Verity Biggs, women's health lead and menopause GP at [h3health.co.uk](http://h3health.co.uk). This is another reason ovarian cancer is often diagnosed late, when survival rates drop.

'If you're worried, talk to your GP,'

22%

of women wrongly think cervical screenings check for ovarian cancer, says Target Ovarian Cancer.





## I PUT MY SYMPTOMS DOWN TO THE MENOPAUSE

Unaware of ovarian cancer, **MARIE FOORD, 51**, was shocked to be diagnosed

'I wasn't aware of ovarian cancer or its symptoms. I felt bloated and was experiencing bowel changes (not getting the usual urge to go), but I just blamed it on my change in diet – my daughter was home from university and we were overloading on carbs. I was also urinating frequently and experienced a one-off, red/brown discharge that I put down to the menopause\*\*\*\*.

'My friend's husband's bowel cancer diagnosis prompted me to book a GP appointment, but I felt silly hassling my doctor with something I thought wasn't urgent. Based on my symptoms, my GP

requested a faecal test and blood sample the following day.

The same day my bloods were taken, I received a text telling me to book a doctor's appointment. I thought it was a bowel issue so, if anything, I expected bowel cancer, not

ovarian. Hearing my diagnosis, I was shocked and devastated.

'I started treatment within a month – four chemotherapy cycles, followed by a full hysterectomy, then more chemo. I had five months of tough treatment that put my cancer into remission for 15 months. Sadly, my cancer recently returned and I've been having more chemotherapy sessions.

'I wished I'd known about ovarian cancer symptoms. I would've acted sooner and it could have been caught earlier – by the time I was diagnosed, I had stage III advanced ovarian cancer. There has to be more awareness, especially for menopausal women, as symptoms are so similar.'

says Dr Tate. Be prepared and track symptoms and their frequency in a diary. This helps your doctor make a speedier diagnosis.

Symptoms can be confusing for GPs too. If you're over 50 and your appointment results in an IBS diagnosis, Dr Tate recommends asking for a second opinion. 'A new IBS diagnosis is extremely uncommon in women over 50', she says. 'If they suspect IBS, they should also request ovarian cancer tests too.' These include a CA125 blood test and ultrasound scan. 'If both tests indicate ovarian cancer, you'll be referred to a specialist.'

### RISK FACTORS

Being over 50 (although ovarian cancer is possible at any age), smoking, being overweight and a family history of ovarian and/or breast cancer.



Marie (with her family below) wasn't aware of ovarian cancer



### Future screening

'There are no effective tests available to screen at population level,' says Dr Tate, although ovarian cancer charities are funding research into this. Until then, Dr Biggs believes we need more targeted campaigns nationally, including posters and information leaflets in surgeries and toilet cubicles. So be aware, know the symptoms, seek help – don't stay silent.

IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP. \*CANCER RESEARCH UK. \*\*NUFFIELD TRUST OR CLUK. \*\*\*OVARIAN CANCER ACTION. \*\*\*\*ANY POSTMENOPAUSAL BLEEDING, HOWEVER SMALL, SHOULD BE INVESTIGATED BY A GP. PHOTO: GETTY



A close-up photograph of a woman with long, dark, wavy hair. She is shown in profile, facing right, with her eyes closed and a gentle smile as she smells a large, vibrant pink rose. The background is softly blurred, showing more greenery and flowers. The overall mood is peaceful and natural.

**E**ssential oils are an appealing wellness tool: they're inexpensive, natural and easily accessed at home. They're also incredibly versatile. 'Essential oils are composed of many different chemical molecules that have varying therapeutic properties,' says aromatherapist Jo Kellett from Tisserand Aromatherapy. 'I help clients who present with all sorts of ailments such as anxiety, poor sleep, IBS, menstrual imbalance and muscular aches and pains. The list goes on!' Our experts share everything you need to know about these potent plant extracts so you can get the most out of them, first time.

# Smell yourself **WELL**

When you know how to use them, essential oils are powerful natural remedies for diverse health issues, from anxiety to headaches



## BREATHING IS BEST

'Inhalation is the most common method of using essential oils and it's also the fastest way to get the molecules into the body,' says Dr Tim Bond, researcher and natural health expert for Puresentiel. To do this you could use a ready-to-use spray, diffuser or humidifier, or simply inhale from the bottle or a piece of cotton wool.

The essential oils activate receptor cells in the nose, which signal to the brain to release neuro-messengers linked to the immune system and other bodily systems, which influence heart rate, blood pressure and breathing.

## TOP TIPS FOR FIRST-TIMERS

**Essential oils have enjoyed a boom in popularity, but as with anything that goes mainstream fast, misinformation is a problem and mistakes can be made. Here's how to stay safe.**

- ✦ **Take care** Just because essential oils are natural, it doesn't mean that they're completely safe. 'Essential oils are concentrated liquids extracted from plants, which should be used with caution,' says aromatherapist Julia Lawless, managing director of Aqua Oleum. Always follow product usage instructions and research widely.
- ✦ **Never use neat** As such, 'Essential oils should not be taken internally

or used neat on the skin, even though you may have heard otherwise,' says Jo. This could irritate or even burn your skin. You should always dilute the oils for topical use – this can be done using a carrier oil (such as coconut, olive or sunflower oil). Do not use water (water and oil don't mix) unless you're only intending to inhale the aroma.

✦ **Don't overdo it** 'Aim for intermittent use for 30-60 minutes at a time at first,' says Dr Bond. Don't assume that exceeding the dose

will be more effective – it won't. 'Diffusing continuously doesn't increase the benefits and can cause toxicity,' he adds.

✦ **Buy a quality product** Look for 100% pure or organic essential oils. You could also check if the brand is a member of the Aromatherapy Trade Council, which means it will have passed various safety tests.

✦ **Keep your diffuser clean** 'An unmaintained diffuser can lead to growth of microbes and increased risk of infections,' says Dr Bond.

## SO WHAT WORKS?

**There are more than 100 essential oils, but some are more widely used than others. Here are the ones to help cure your health hang-ups.**

### ✦ FOR HEADACHE RELIEF

#### **Lavender or peppermint**

'Lavender oil has been used to soothe headaches for centuries,' says Jo. Add a few drops to a tissue and inhale. 'Peppermint oil is another commonly used essential oil to treat headaches and migraine attacks. It contains menthol, which can help relax muscles and ease pain,' says Dr Bond.

### ✦ FOR HAIR GROWTH

#### **Rosemary or peppermint**

Rosemary oil performed as well as minoxidil, a popular hair-growth treatment, while it caused less side effects, such as itching, in a six-month long study.

'Peppermint oil could also help,' says Dr Bond. 'It creates a cold sensation where it's applied. This increases circulation and a laboratory study has shown that it can encourage hair growth.'

### ✦ FOR BETTER SLEEP

#### **Lavender or sandalwood**

Lavender oil promoted deep sleep, which led participants to feel more energised the next day, in a US study\*. 'Spray a little lavender water onto a pillow before retiring to encourage a restful night's sleep,' says Julia.

In addition, 'Sandalwood, which is rich in alpha and beta-santalol compounds, has recognised sedative effects,' says Dr Bond.

### ✦ FOR NASAL CONGESTION

#### **Eucalyptus or peppermint**

'Essential oils are a popular natural treatment for sinus congestion and a blocked nose. Several, including eucalyptus, lavender, peppermint and tea tree, also have antimicrobial properties,' says Dr Bond. This means that they also help fight infection and prevent the spread of airborne germs.

Add a few drops of eucalyptus or peppermint oil to a bowl of hot water and inhale.

### ✦ FOR ANXIETY Lavender

Several essential oils can help with anxiety, including bergamot, lemon, rose, neroli and cedarwood, but lavender has the most scientific backing. Inhaling its scent significantly lowered anxiety, found a 2019 study\*\*.

### ✦ FOR REPELLING INSECTS

#### **Citronella, peppermint or cedarwood**

Citronella is a natural mosquito repellent. 'This can either be diffused into the air or applied to the skin as a flower water, as long as it's applied regularly,' says Julia.

'Peppermint is considered a spider deterrent,' adds Jo. Place two drops on a cotton-wool ball and place where you'd like to keep spider-free. 'Finally, cedarwood is an effective moth repellent. Again, put two drops on cotton wool and place it among your clothing.'

## MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR OILS

They can also be used for...

- ✦ **Massage**
- ✦ **Aromatic bathing**
- ✦ **Skin and beauty care**
- ✦ **First aid**
- ✦ **Scenting household items, such as linen**
- ✦ **Natural disinfectants and cleaning agents**
- ✦ **Natural perfumes**
- ✦ **Room fresheners**
- ✦ **Purifying indoor air to combat airborne germs**



THIS  
MONTH

+ Phobias  
+ Vaccines  
+ Hereditary breast  
cancer

# Your HEALTH

Got a medical problem or need health advice? Ask GP Dr Philippa Kaye

**Q** I hate being sick. This started after I had a horrible bout of food poisoning. I feel nauseous and anxious when someone talks about it or even if it comes up on the TV. I throw away food days before the expiry date and I've stopped going to restaurants or out with friends, as I'm concerned I will get ill. Can this be helped? I want my life back!

**A** It sounds like you have developed a phobia of vomiting. Phobias are overwhelming fears and can be related to anything from a place to an object or situation. It can be extremely debilitating and have a significant

impact on your life. This is because, essentially, you're changing your life to avoid being in a position where you might be faced with your phobia, which in itself can lead to a huge amount of stress. A phobia is a type of anxiety disorder and you describe anticipatory anxiety, when you get anxious even before you are confronted with vomiting. This anxiety can lead to physical symptoms, such as shortness of breath, palpitations, sweating and trembling, and to feelings of nausea too, which in your case may well make things worse.

The exact causes of phobias aren't always known, but they can be related to specific incidents, just as you write, with yours starting after being unwell. Please see your GP as there are treatments available, including talking therapies and potentially medication to help you deal with the anxiety.

**Q** My daughter is in Year 8 in school and is being offered a cervical cancer vaccine. How can a vaccine work for cancer and what else might prevent cancer?

**A** The vaccination given at age 12 or 13, to both boys and girls, is sometimes called the cervical cancer vaccine, but it's really a vaccine to protect against high-risk human papilloma virus (HPV). There are many subtypes of HPV, which can cause conditions such as verrucas and warts. However, high-risk types, such as types 16 and 18, are associated with not only cervical cancer, but penile and anal cancers, plus some head and neck cancers.

The hepatitis B vaccine can also help prevent liver cancer, which in some cases is linked to hepatitis B. These vaccines prevent infection and therefore (hopefully) prevent cancer from developing. There are treatments that boost the immune system to help fight cancer too, called immunotherapy.

There is lots of research looking at how to prevent cancer, treat existing cancer and prevent it from recurring. There are changes you can make to reduce cancer risk too, such as stopping smoking, drinking within the recommended limits for alcohol and exercising.

## FACT OR FICTION?

### THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS MAN FLU

False! Man flu might actually exist. Women have two X chromosomes, while men have an X chromosome and shorter Y chromosome. In every female cell, one of the X chromosomes is turned off, but in the case of a few particular genes, both X chromosomes remain active.

Some of these genes are involved in the immune response, such as the TLR7 gene, which makes a protein that detects viruses. This may mean

that women have a stronger antiviral immune response than men. There may be other factors, such as oestrogen, which has a role in the immune system, and it's known that men get sicker and are more likely to die of viral infections, such as influenza. But cultural pressures, such as the need for mothers to care for children when unwell, may also play a part of the psychological response to illness.





## DOCTOR'S ORDERS

### WOMEN ADDICTED TO GAMBLING

It's estimated one million women in the UK are at risk of harm from gambling, yet the impact of this is far-reaching as, for each person suffering, up to seven others are affected, such as family members.

Women may experience gambling and gambling addiction in a different way to men. While for some people gambling involves the excitement and thrill of potentially winning, for women, it's often used as a method of self-soothing, and they play online gambling games to switch off. However, although women are more likely to be aware that gambling affects their mental health, they're also less likely to seek support, potentially due to the stigma around gambling.

Gambling addiction can affect anyone, at any age, but what may start out as 'a bit of fun' can become extremely serious with negative consequences. Addictions can lead to mental health problems, including anxiety and depression, and can impact physical health, financial health, relationships and work. Warning signs that you may have an issue include losing track of time and the world around you when you're gambling, spending more money than you had planned and hiding your habit from others.

If you're concerned that you, or someone you know, may have an issue with gambling, free, confidential advice can be found at [begambleaware.org](http://begambleaware.org). Your GP may be able to advise about local support groups, talking therapies and possibly medication for issues, such as anxiety or depression. There is a National Gambling Helpline on 0800 802 0133 (available 24/7).

*After having breast cancer, I found out that I carry the BRCA 1 gene. I feel so guilty because I have two girls. My daughters decided to get tested and one also carries the gene. I don't know how to help her and I feel that this is all my fault. What would you advise?*

**A** I'm so sorry that you've had breast cancer and been unwell yourself. However, it is not your fault that you have a gene that increases your risk of the condition, or that your child also carries the gene. I know, having been a cancer patient myself, that we feel incredibly guilty for the impact that the disease can have on others.

Your children are likely to have undergone genetic counselling before having gene testing so, hopefully, they are already receiving some professional

support. There are two commonest types of breast cancer genes – BRCA 1 and BRCA 2 – and having a mutation in these genes also increases your risk of ovarian cancer and prostate cancer.

Knowing that your daughter has the gene may make her more aware of lifestyle choices, such as not smoking, and drinking alcohol within the recommended limits. It may remind her to check her breasts regularly, and she is likely to be eligible for annual breast screening with mammograms. Risk-reducing surgeries, such as a mastectomy and oophorectomy to remove the breasts and ovaries, can be considered, but this may also depend on other factors, such as fertility or wanting to try to breastfeed.

A woman may be advised on the age at which she might want to consider removal surgery, depending on which gene she has. All you can do is be there for your children, listen to your daughter and be supportive of her decisions.

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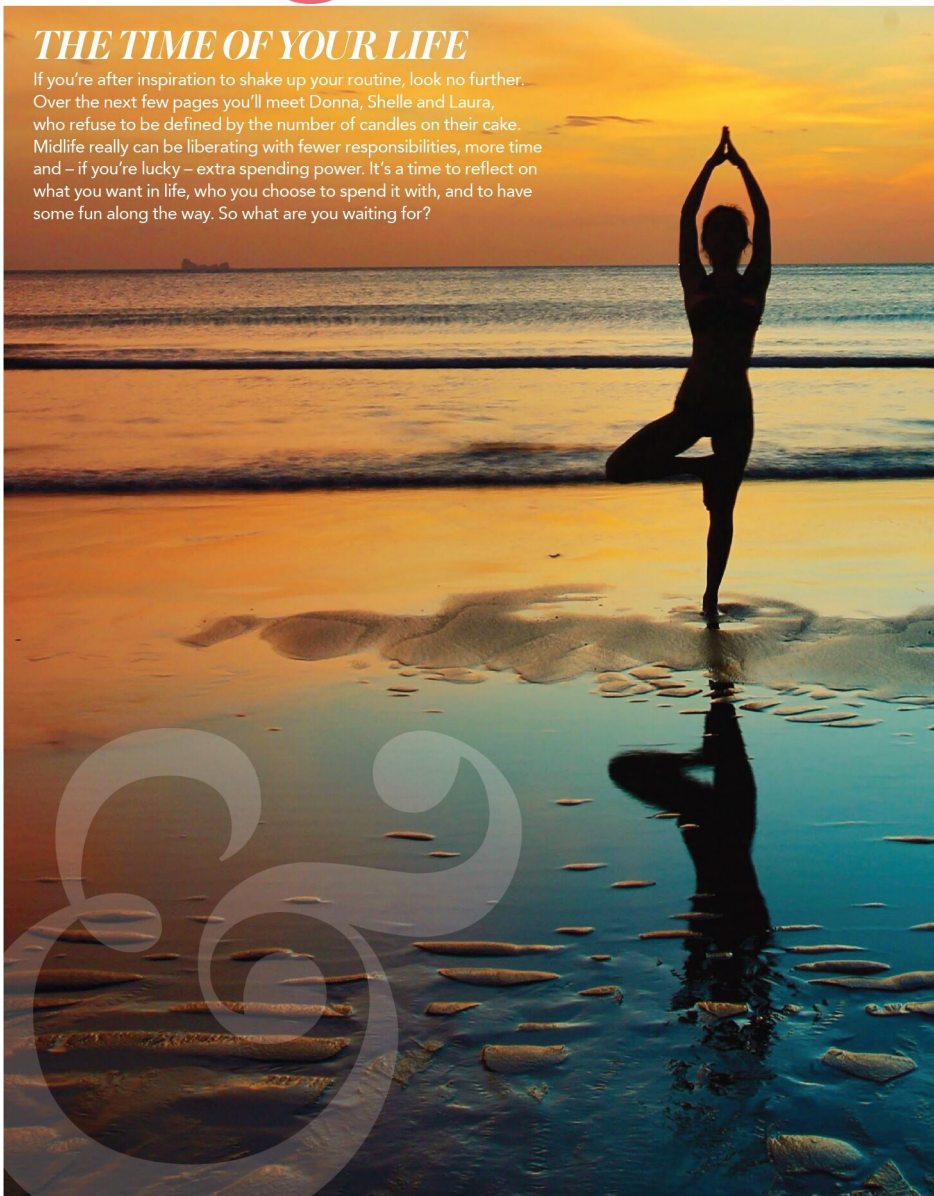
**woman**



# SELF & WELLBEING

## THE TIME OF YOUR LIFE

If you're after inspiration to shake up your routine, look no further. Over the next few pages you'll meet Donna, Shelle and Laura, who refuse to be defined by the number of candles on their cake. Midlife really can be liberating with fewer responsibilities, more time and – if you're lucky – extra spending power. It's a time to reflect on what you want in life, who you choose to spend it with, and to have some fun along the way. So what are you waiting for?





*The best*  
**IS YET**  
**TO COME!**

Meet three inspiring readers all fully embracing the next chapter in their lives



**J**ust the thought of hitting the big 5-0 can often leave women filled with dread. But midlife doesn't have to mean invisible woman syndrome, or feeling washed up thanks to the hormonal roller coaster ride.

'Midlife is a wonderful time to take risks in life,' says chartered psychologist Dr Megan Arroll, co-author of *The Menopause Maze* (£13.99, Singing Dragon).

'We're living for longer, but the average age of menopause hasn't changed, so it's possible that you still have half your life to live – so go out there and truly live it!'

We asked three women how they challenged themselves at this time of life – and won...

## *'I left my home and husband to live in a camper van'*

**LAURA SHUKBURGH, 53, is a 'digital nomad' in the south of France**

'Approaching midlife threw up some strange feelings for me. I recognised some of these as classic perimenopausal symptoms, such as hot sweats, brain fog and anxiety. But there was something else mixed in; a niggling feeling that I wasn't living the life I truly wanted, although I wasn't entirely sure what that looked like.

I was living in Leamington with my husband of eight years and we were making regular trips to France to look to buy a house there. But something didn't feel right, and when that internal whisper became more of a scream, I knew I had to follow my gut, rip up my old life and start something new.

I told my husband that I wanted a divorce, bought a car and drove to France with my dog Pammy – my 21-year-old son, Sol, waved me off. I had no idea what I was driving towards, but it turns out it was the life I believe I was meant to be living.

If it sounds like it all happened suddenly, that's because it did! I felt really scared en route to France, with just the address of the Facebook rental I'd sorted, especially as I'd never driven overseas. But the gut feeling I'd had felt like a calling, so I went with it, excited about where this adventure might take me.

My mum and dad were a bit worried, but generally everyone supported my decision to go.

Even my son, who was at university, told me I needed to do what made me happy.

I rented for three months in a village in the south of France, but wanted to try something else. Plus, I didn't have heaps of cash to spend on rent so I thought, why not get a motorhome so I can live relatively cheaply and travel? I bought the first one I saw.

I've lived in my "camping car", as the French call it, for almost two years and I love it. It's my own space, with the basics that I need and it gives me the freedom to move around from place to place whenever I fancy.

Now I'm living as a digital nomad, which means I work off hotspots and 4G wherever I travel, building my business, Marvellous Midlife. I coach and support other women navigating the menopause and their midlife, while also helping businesses put support in place for their staff. I'm so passionate about it, especially as I'm proof that life really can begin at this time of life.

Occasionally I'll house-sit – and it was while house-sitting last year that I met and fell in love with a French man, 13 years younger than me. He was doing some work for our mutual friend, and we became friends and the rest is history. I couldn't be happier.

In fact, I'm so in love with love that I've just qualified as a marriage celebrant and have my first wedding in a few months. There are so many beautiful spots and chateaux here, I can't wait to be a part of other people's love stories.

I took a massive risk in trusting my gut instinct and I'm grateful that I did, as I'm loving midlife and how my future looks.'

+ [marvellousmidlife.co.uk](http://marvellousmidlife.co.uk)



Laura is loving midlife with her dog Pammy, living on the road in France



## *A loop-the-loop was one of 50 challenges I did at 50*

**SHELLE LUSCOMBE, 51, from Hampton, works in music and events**

'In the run-up to my 50th birthday, I had a bit of a "midlife moment". I'd lost my dad to Parkinson's in 2017 and my mum, who developed dementia in her late-60s, was deteriorating rapidly. I felt frightened. If I followed a similar path to my parents – and my grandparents who'd also had dementia – I might only have 15 years before I start experiencing symptoms myself. It was a very sobering thought.

So I decided to throw myself into my 51st year by asking friends, family and people I didn't know to set me 50 challenges to complete before I turned 51 – and it kick-started my lust for life.

Supporting loved ones with dementia is exhausting, both physically and emotionally. Over the last few years, there's been a lot to do; taking care of Dad's affairs after he died, arranging care for Mum as her needs increased and eventually clearing out and selling the family home once she moved into a nursing home. My own life had been in limbo.

But approaching my 50th, I knew I wanted to have an adventure and do something memorable. I wanted to make the rest of my years count, and push myself out of my comfort zone.

I also knew that I wanted to stay active, keep my brain sharp and

keep socially connected – three things that can best help prevent cognitive decline. Plus, I wanted to raise awareness and some money for Alzheimer's Research UK, so I set up a JustGiving page, sent a message to my contacts on social media and waited for the challenges to start rolling in.

There were some fairly achievable challenges, like do 50 sit-ups a day for a week, wash everything up before bed and sign up to a dance class. And there were also extraordinary challenges, like skydiving from 15,000 feet, spending a night in a haunted house and performing three loop-the-loops in a glider.

I added a caveat that I could adapt suggestions to make them more achievable and affordable, seeing as I was financing everything.

I was terrified the morning of the loop-the-loop challenge, but after I was super-emotional. My dad had loved anything to do with aviation and would have been so proud of me.

Other challenges included broadcasting a live radio show while driving a barge up the Thames, cutting someone's hair

*'I wanted to push myself out of my comfort zone'*



after drinking Prosecco, giving up smoking and a 24-hour silence.

One of my favourite challenges was appearing on TV. I was invited on *Steph's Packed Lunch* and they challenged me to try skateboarding live on the show. It was nerve-racking but also hilarious – I was hopeless!

I didn't complete all 50 challenges within the year, because my mum passed away the day before my 25th challenge and for a while I lost momentum. A friend suggested I adapt it to '50 Challenges in 500 days' and I did it – not only raising over £11,000, but also gaining a welcome focus.

I've faced fears, learnt new skills, made new friends and laughed more than I have in a long time. So now I'm setting new goals and challenges and seeing where they take me. Life is short and none of us know how long we have left. But whether I've got another 15 years or 50, I want to fill them full of incredible experiences.'

**+ Shelle's donation page is still open at [justgiving.com/fundraising/shelleluscombeofficial](http://justgiving.com/fundraising/shelleluscombeofficial)**



**Raising money for Alzheimer's Research UK doing stand-up comedy...**



**... and appearing on Steph's Packed Lunch**



## *'I entered perimenopause – and signed up for an Ironman'*

**DONNA McCONNELL, 54, from London, now a full-time sportsperson**

'Four years ago, I was fast approaching menopause and a big birthday – my 50th. But instead of dreading it, I made a conscious decision to embrace it. So, on a whim, I signed up to do a triathlon, followed by an Ironman the following year. And I haven't looked back.

When I first started to get signs of the perimenopause, I felt pretty emotional. I was 49 when my periods became irregular and heavy, my energy was low and I felt disconnected to my friends. I then read *The Wisdom of Menopause* by Christiane Northrup. It broke down the menopause and explained the hormonal changes.

I started to think about what I wanted from life going forward – and it was new friends and experiences. Exercise had always kept me healthy and stable, so I explored that more. I sought out women on Instagram who were into fitness and came across the account @10Ironwomen.

There was a post calling for women to take part in the Barcelona Ironman triathlon the following year, which

involved a 3.8km swim, 180km bike ride and a full marathon of 42.2km. Having never done anything like this before, but figuring this was exactly what embracing a new chapter in life was all about, I signed up.

I then signed up for a triathlon (1.5km swim, 40km bike ride, 10k run) to work towards in the interim. And I threw myself into training, which gave me a positive focus away from what was happening in my body.

It also opened up new opportunities to meet people. I connected with cycling groups, such as the Black Cyclists Network and Rapha Women, and went on rides with them.

Previously, I'd been self-conscious about being older, curvier and less experienced. But knowing I had to train forced me out, and none of the things I'd worried about mattered.

Women of all ages, shapes, sizes and abilities came together to ride.

With all the training (about 10-12 hours a week), I had more energy and was losing stubborn weight around my stomach, which I'd not been able to shift previously.

My new lease of life

**'My life now is about setting new challenges'**



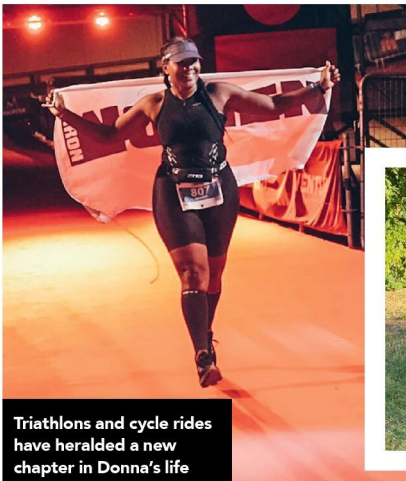
didn't mean that the symptoms of perimenopause vanished. In fact, I got one of my heaviest periods on the morning of my triathlon. It brought me to tears, as between each section of the race, I had to run to the toilet to change my tampon. But I did it.

The Ironman was put back a year because of the pandemic, but it meant that I had more time to train. I completed it in 2021, in 15 hours. It was so difficult, but finishing was incredible. I felt empowered.

My life now is all about setting myself new challenges and feeling strong and healthy. I've done the London to Brighton and London to Paris bike rides, and I'm doing a half-marathon soon too. I'm also a ride leader for Chain Gang Cyclists on weekend rides. I organise cycle groups, lead them to a destination, then we go for coffee, which I love.

Looking for the positives and throwing myself into this next stage of life was a change I'm glad I made. I think women are fearful about midlife and of admitting they're experiencing peri/meno because it ages you. But age shouldn't hold anyone back. The things that you want to do – or had never even thought about doing – are still possible. Middle age doesn't mean life stops, it's a new beginning.'

+ @the\_ironempres



Triathlons and cycle rides have heralded a new chapter in Donna's life



# How to HEAL *emotional* HURT

Turn your breakdowns into breakthroughs with this wise, practical advice

**W**e wouldn't be human if we didn't feel sadness at certain times in our lives, but learning to let go can open the door to a brighter, more content future. Every life contains periods of pain and loss when our heart aches. But that doesn't mean we can't try to heal these wounds. Therapist and author Donna Lancaster believes that to be fully happy, it's vital to work on healing our past heartbreak.

'When we don't allow the time and space to feel our sadness, anger and fears – our grief about our past – then it never really leaves us. It defines our present,' she explains. So how do we work through the effects of these tough times, draw strength from them and start to live life to the full? Here are some tips on how to get started on your healing journey.



## MEET OUR EXPERT

Donna Lancaster has worked as a coach and therapist for more than 25 years. Formerly head of teaching at the Hoffman Institute UK and co-creator of The Bridge Retreat, she is also the author of *The Bridge: A Nine Step Crossing into Authentic and Wholehearted Living* (£16.99, Penguin); [deepeningintolife.com](http://deepeningintolife.com)

## SHARE YOUR STORY

Donna recommends starting by acknowledging the hurt and loss you've experienced in your life so far. This can be really tough, but it's important. 'If we don't actively address past heartbreaks, our life force can become blocked and

life feels heavy, like we're wading through treacle,' she explains.

### ✦ DO IT: Map your heartbreak

On paper, write a timeline of the age you were when any significant hurts or losses happened. Everyday upsets can wound us deeply, so if it feels important, write it down. Think about how these past events have impacted on your life as you record them.





## 4 THE POWER OF AN APOLOGY

You may have been waiting many years for the person who hurt you to say sorry, but what if they never do? Now it's time for you to take back some power and create your own heartfelt apology. Donna says that it can be 'like a healing balm on an open wound.'

✦ **DO IT: Say sorry for your hurt**

Write a letter to yourself from the point of view of the person who hurt you. Include everything you would like to hear them say. This may be challenging, but Donna points out that 'true forgiveness is not about the other person. It can set us free.'

## 5 MAKE JOY YOUR SUPERPOWER

What makes you light up with positive energy? 'Joy is a superpower because it's highly contagious,' says Donna. 'The more you feel it, the more others do too, and this generates more joy inside you as you feel the ripple effect of your superpower!'

✦ **DO IT: Practise daily gratitude**

Every day, pause to give thanks for the good things in your life. Write them down or say them out loud. The more you focus on the positive, the more joyful you'll feel.

## 6 BE THE BEST VERSION OF YOURSELF

By healing past hurt, we're not aiming to live happily ever after, but to open the door to our best self right now. How can your breakdown become a breakthrough? Donna says, 'When we clear away the debris of false layers, I believe what sits underneath is simply our true nature, which is love, kindness, peace and joy.'

✦ **DO IT: Manifest positivity**

Donna recommends volunteering as a way of sharing the gifts our experience has given us. 'Identify the issues that matter to you then ask yourself what you could do to help.' By channelling the positive qualities we have to give, we can gain true freedom in life.

## 2 BECOME YOUR OWN BEST FRIEND

Donna suggests 'making a list of all the derogatory thoughts or words you've used against yourself, committing to ban them and replace them with words you would offer someone you love.'

✦ **Do it: Be kind to yourself**

Make a list of things that you like about you. Think about how you'd be kinder to yourself today if you were your own best friend, then behave like a great friend would. Donna urges us to 'commit to doing one small positive thing each day – it could be as simple as taking a short walk.'

## 3 WILL IT CAN YOU LEARN?

Once you have a clearer picture of past emotional pain, it's time to find out what it's saying to you right now. Donna says sadness always has something to tell us when we communicate with it. By connecting with the part of us that's still hurting and by being honest about how we feel, we clear the path to future growth.

✦ **DO IT: Write a letter**

Look at your timeline and think of yourself as the age you were when you were first hurt. Who were you then? Write a letter from the point of view of this past heartbroken self to the person who wounded you. It's for your eyes only, so write from your heart.

# Are you with THE ONE?

How to tell if your bond is strong and what will prevent it from faltering

**R**elationships can be tricky to navigate at the best of times. Throw a pandemic and an economic crisis into the mix and it's no surprise that UK family law firms have reported a surge of more than 40%\* in divorce inquiries. So if yours is in need of a refresh, or you're unsure about a new relationship, you're not alone. We asked Carmen Harra – a psychologist, relationship expert and co-author of *Committed: Finding Love and Loyalty Through the Seven Archetypes* (£13.95, Newman Springs Publishing) – what really makes a couple compatible. Here's her advice.

## THE TEST

Carmen recommends you ask yourself the following 10 questions to tell if your relationship is meant to be...

### DO YOU FEEL CALM AROUND YOUR PARTNER?

YES  NO

You shouldn't be in a relationship with anyone who constantly evokes anxiety, worry or fear. If this is the case, it means your partner hasn't developed enough integrity and consideration for others. A toxic relationship is one that causes more harm than good and creates frequent feelings of anxiety, anger and

even desperation. The greatest gift anyone can give you is peace of mind. A partner who inspires tranquility and steadies your emotions is like water to a rose garden, and will help you flourish.

### WHAT DOES YOUR FUTURE LOOK LIKE?

STRONG  WEAK

Can you imagine building one together? Can you see yourself growing old with this person? If your partner shows serious flaws – such as addiction, abuse or pathological lying – you may not be able to see a future with them. Try to visualise your relationship in five, 10 or even 20 years. How do you expect it to change and evolve? If the thought pleases and reassures you, that's a good sign.

### DO YOU SHARE THE SAME MINDSET?

YES  NO

Even if you come from different backgrounds, you and your partner should have a similar mentality. Are your

views on life in sync? Are your morals essentially the same? Sharing consistent goals is more likely to keep you together.

### CAN YOU PUT UP WITH EACH OTHER'S BAD HABITS?

YES  NO

Having the right commitment beliefs will grant you a certain degree of tolerance. Can you and your partner 'stand' all of each other's faults? Do you appreciate each other's way of being? Unconditional love calls that we accept our partner's weaknesses in the same way as their strengths.

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
You're more likely to get divorced if you married young\*\*.

### HOW DOES YOUR PARTNER TREAT THEIR FAMILY?

WITH RESPECT  
 WITHOUT RESPECT

Do they have close ties? Is family a priority? Even if your partner has experienced family rifts (which can happen to anyone), have they cared >>



relationships



enough to try to work things out? You should be sympathetic to your partner's relationship with their family – whatever that relationship might be – but you should also anticipate that the way your partner treats family is the way they will treat you in the future. Remember that the same family issues (such as hating a parent or not seeing any kids they may have) are likely to play out again down the line if you have children together.

## ***IS THERE ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT?***

**YES**  **NO**

All of us are prone to error. You'll never find a perfect partner, every person who walks through your life will leave flawed footprints. We all need a bit of work, and we all have one vice to which we keep reverting. This can be anything from gambling to careless spending. If you detect your partner's bad habit early on, decide if you can put up with it long term – it may or may not improve with time. Do you see signs your partner wants to change for the better? What matters is someone's willingness to work on being a better person – ourselves included.

## ***WHAT HAS YOUR PARTNER TAUGHT YOU?***

**A LOT**  **NOTHING**

The right partner will double as your teacher plus they should learn from you. Whether these are lessons in love, work, finances or forgiveness, your partner should motivate you to expand mentally and evolve. You must match each other on a mental level, too. Their knowledge and wisdom should engage, intrigue and stimulate you. Relationships must be alive mentally as much as physically.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**The good news is 60% of marriages reach the 20th anniversary mark\*\*.**





## WHAT ARE THEIR PRIORITIES?

ME  SOMETHING ELSE

The obvious answer to this is that your partner's priority should be you. Of course, this can't always be the case, as your partner also has a career, family and other obligations. But you should evaluate how they prioritise their responsibilities and in which place you fall among them. If you put your partner first on your list, you should also be first on their list. If you feel as if you're not, it's time to rearrange your own list of priorities. Under no circumstances should you consider being with a person who prioritises drinking, hanging out with the wrong people or other such behaviours over you.

## IS YOUR PARTNER TOO MUCH LIKE YOUR EX?

YES  NO

Have you brought someone into your life who is a lot like a former partner? If you didn't completely heal or resolve issues from a previous break-up, you might attract a person who's a near copy of your ex. Compare patterns that existed in past relationships with things happening in your current relationship to ensure you're making progress.

## HOW DO YOU ARGUE?

CALMLY  AGGRESSIVELY

Do you scream and shout? Do both, or one or other of you, refuse to back down? Your relationship should not be marked by unending arguments, yelling, bickering, temper tantrums or any form of violence. No matter how much you both swear you love each other and want to be together, unless these kinds of emotions are controlled, the relationship isn't healthy. Being able to compromise is key to a lasting relationship. Do you both believe in compromise over being right? Are you both willing to give and take on essential matters? A relationship without compromise is a road with a dead end.

## TURN IT AROUND

Answered more negatively than positively to the 10 questions? Don't worry, it doesn't mean you're about to split up – but it might be time to make some changes. We asked the experts for their best advice when it comes to strengthening a relationship, however you answered...

# 1

### EXPRESS GRATITUDE

If you've been in a relationship for a while, it can be easy to take each other for granted, says relationship therapist Dr Laura Vowels. 'Identify and express gratitude for the things your partner does for you throughout the week, whether that's making you lunch or saying something kind.'

# 2

### CHANGE THE WAY YOU WATCH TV

Tend to binge-watch solo? 'Watching TV separately, but at the same time, can be deadly for a relationship – you're fixed on a screen, not engaging with each other,' says relationship expert Jessica Leoni. 'Even worse, you lead separate lives in separate rooms.' Find things to watch that you both enjoy at least two nights a week and talk about it.

# 3

### MAKE NEW MEMORIES

One of the best ways to rekindle a romance or strengthen an existing relationship is to do new things together. 'It doesn't have to be extravagant, but it can help broaden your mindset,' says Dr Vowels. 'Doing it with your partner can strengthen the bond between you.' It can even stop boredom or resentment setting in for good.

# 4

### THE PRESENT IS A PRESENT

Just as it's unrealistic to wish you had the same waistline you had in your 20s, so is trying to recreate the fireworks you felt when you met. 'Time changes a relationship,' says expert Neil Wilkie. 'Things can't be the same as before.' Focus on a relationship in the now, that's both realistic and achievable. Work at appreciation, mutual respect and having fun together.

# 5

### LISTEN UP

If communication between the two of you is flawed, try giving each other a head massage. 'The idea is that the person receiving the head massage listens, while the person doing the giving talks. If someone is in a relaxed state, they're more likely to respond in a supportive manner,' says Jasveer Matharu, founder of women's holistic wellness app, Elara Care. Search YouTube for 'Indian head massage' for the right technique.

# 6

### EASE THE PRESSURE

Emotional support's vital in a partnership but emotional dependency can become toxic. 'Avoid becoming too dependent on your partner in terms of expecting them to fulfil your happiness,' says Carlyne Bennett, an advanced law of attraction coach. If you feel upset by something in daily life, try to be your own 'hero' by empowering yourself to solve it.



*Can you really*  
**TAP AWAY**  
**STRESS?**

The secret to ridding yourself of negativity  
and anxiety is at your fingertips



**I**t's been hailed as 'emotional first aid' – a way to combat stress, anxiety and fear by simply tapping on the body's acupressure points with two fingers. 'Tapping – also known as EFT (emotional freedom technique) – is highly effective in helping people to get free of their past, ditch emotional

baggage and let go of self-limiting beliefs,' explains EFT practitioner Suzy Glaskie, founder of Peppermint Wellness. 'It's a method anyone can use anywhere to calm themselves quickly.' In fact, tapping can reduce levels of stress hormone cortisol by a whopping 43%\*. Here's how to put two fingers up to emotional distress.

## YOUR AT-HOME ANXIETY CURE

'Tapping is surprisingly simple to learn,' says Suzy. 'It's my number-one go-to tool for anytime I feel overtaken by negative or uncomfortable thoughts.' Want to try it yourself? Suzy shares her 'traffic light' method of tapping:

### TUNE IN TO YOURSELF

Notice the stress signals your mind and body are giving out. Pounding heart, shallow breathing, churning tummy or agitated legs? Your thoughts may be racing, jumping or stuck in repetitive loops.

### 2 RATE YOUR STRESS

GREEN = calm and clear-headed  
AMBER = stress is increasing  
RED = stop immediately and tap

### BIG RESULTS

When put to the test, tapping reduced anxiety by 40%, depression by 35%, pain by 57% and cravings by 74%\*\*\*. Meanwhile, happiness levels increased by almost a third!

### 3 BREATHE DEEPLY

Take two or three slow breaths, in through the nose and out through the mouth.

### 4 BEGIN TO TAP

Use your index and middle fingers; it doesn't matter which hand you use.

Start tapping on the side of one hand, just below the base of the little finger, known as the 'karate chop' point. Then tap each of the following points 12-20 times:

- ✦ Beginning of eyebrows, nearest the nose
- ✦ Outer corners of eyes
- ✦ Under eyes
- ✦ Above top lip
- ✦ Below bottom lip
- ✦ Just below bump of collar bone
- ✦ Under arm at bra level
- ✦ Go back to collar bone



Start to tap



Beginning of eyebrows



Outer corners of eyes



Under eyes



Above top lip



Below bottom lip



Below bump of collar bone



Under arm at bra level

## SUZY'S TOP TIPS



### Don't delay

Never wait until you're feeling 'at a red light' or completely overwhelmed to start tapping. There's no limit to how often you can do it.

### Do it daily

Make tapping a daily habit by tagging it onto something you already do, such as having a shower or try it before you open your laptop to check your inbox.

### Spread the calm

Share this simple technique with others to make calm 'contagious' and improve wellbeing for all. You can even teach kids to tap or, for toddlers and young children, you can tap directly on them.

### 5 TAKE TWO OR THREE DEEP SLOW BREATHS AGAIN

Repeat tapping and slow breaths. Tune back into yourself and notice how you feel. If you still feel on a red or amber light, simply repeat the process.

## HOW IT WORKS

It's all about the energy flow. 'EFT is a sort of psychological acupressure that focuses on the meridian points to restore balance to our emotional state,' says Suzy. Based on Chinese medicine, it's believed that energy flows through our meridian points and that this energy needs to be balanced in order to maintain good health. It's thought tapping stimulates the meridian points, accessing your body's energy and helping send signals to the part of the brain that controls stress\*\*.

If you've experienced trauma, it's best to talk to an EFT practitioner. See [beftcentre.org](http://beftcentre.org)

# Work hero or office dragon?

Your professional persona can have a big impact on how your co-workers feel about you



**D**o you tend to keep to yourself at work? Or is your job a big part of your social life?

Maybe you're not even aware of how you're coming across to others. Take our quiz to discover what kind of colleague you are and the tweaks to make to boost your 9-5.

**1** You want a cup of tea. You...  
**A** Make one.  
**B** Ask everyone else if they want one.

- C** Check if someone is making one.
- D** Tell a colleague they haven't done a round all day.

**2** The new shredder has been placed next to your desk. You...  
**A** Deal with it.

- B** Put up a sign asking people to be cautious.
- C** Lose your temper and complain out loud.
- D** Ask the people in HR to see if they can move it.

**3** When it comes to work parties, you...

- A** Tend not to go.
- B** Help out as much as you can to organise.
- C** Refuse to go if it's not a good location.
- D** Are the life and soul of the event!

**4** It's a Friday and you fancy drinks after work. Do you...

- A** Ask your friends outside of work if they fancy it.
- B** Send a team email to find out who is up for it.
- C** Pick a few to gossip about the others.
- D** Ask around the entire team.

**5** Someone's used your mug. What do you do?

- A** They wouldn't have, your mug is locked away.
- B** Brush it off, it'll come back!
- C** Approach the person using it and have a catch-up!
- D** Send a company-wide email asking who has it.

**6** Your colleague is up for the same promotion as you. How do you react?

- A** Keep to yourself, it's unprofessional to gab about it.
- B** Take it in your stride.
- C** Sulk and talk about it to anyone who will listen.
- D** Wish them luck!

**7** Using one word, your colleagues would describe you as...

- A** Quiet.
- B** Friendly.
- C** Unpredictable.
- D** Chatty.

## HOW DID YOU SCORE?

### MOSTLY AS INDEPENDENT WORKER

Colleagues are colleagues, not your friends, so you tend to stick to yourself. That's great, as the work gets done, but is it not isolating? Try opening up a bit so you don't come across as arrogant.

### MOSTLY BS GREAT WORKMATE

You're friendly, supportive and kind enough to do a huge tea round! You're that colleague everyone wants, and people trust you to do a good job. Your level-headedness will get you far.

### MOSTLY CS ERRATIC EMPLOYEE

Maybe it's time to tone it down, as your colleagues have to walk on eggshells. It's fine to get angry about things, but is someone using your mug really an injustice? Take a breather next time and step out.

### MOSTLY DS SOCIAL BUTTERFLY

You're pally with everyone at work, and it's nice when you can count your colleagues as friends. However, be careful not to spend too much time talking – remember the work still needs to be done!



# Turn up THE HEAT

Hit a dry spell? Get things sizzling between the sheets with these libido-boosting tricks

**G**etting it on with your other half can bring big benefits, such as increasing your immunity, lowering stress and blood pressure, and improving heart health. It can also help turn back the clock, as sex stimulates the release of oestrogen and testosterone – boosting collagen and preventing hair loss. **Fireworks fizzled out? Here's how to bring back the spark – fast!**

## *Try sexting*

If you think you're too old for sexting (sending sexy texts), think again. Your smartphone can add sizzle to your sex life by injecting some much-needed fun, no matter how long you've been in a relationship. The best bit? All you need is a Wi-Fi signal and a little creative thinking. 'Never underestimate the power of a suggestive text,' says Cecilia Sharp, sex expert at Lovehoney. Photos can be a big mood-builder, and you don't need to be nude.

## *All your senses*

A great way to get your libido going is by awakening all your senses. 'Dab on some new perfume or scented body lotion,' says sex and relationship expert Sammi Cole. 'Plus, go for soft lighting, pick out music that helps to get you both in the mood and swap out your usual sheets for something

a bit more luxurious. The more senses you can delight, the better!'

## *Just look*

Going back to basics can be just as good a way to connect with your partner. 'Sit on the bed facing each other and hold hands,' says romance and relationship expert Vena Ramphal. 'Look into each other's eyes for several minutes – eye gazing is very powerful.'

## *Try not to nag*

So they can't stack the dishwasher or put the lid on the toothpaste – but bite your tongue, especially when you're in the bedroom, as nagging is a really big turn-off. 'Nagging subconsciously reminds your partner of being told what to do by their mother – which is one of the fastest ways to turn someone off,' says love coach Persia Lawson. Leave daily life and chores at the bedroom door and save those domestic disagreements for another time.

## *Tell them what you want*

If you don't hold back when voicing your opinion on sorting the recycling bins, what film to watch or where to

go for dinner, then don't hold back in the bedroom either. Plus, if the only way you ever reach full orgasm is through masturbation, then show them how it's done.

## *Embrace fantasies*

They can help unlock your sex-play potential. 'Fantasies are natural and healthy and have no connection to cheating,' explains psychologist Emma Kenny. 'The majority of women fantasise about sex with their partner's friends, work colleagues or pretty much anyone. You don't have to tell them you're imagining their best friend on top of you – we all have our secrets.'

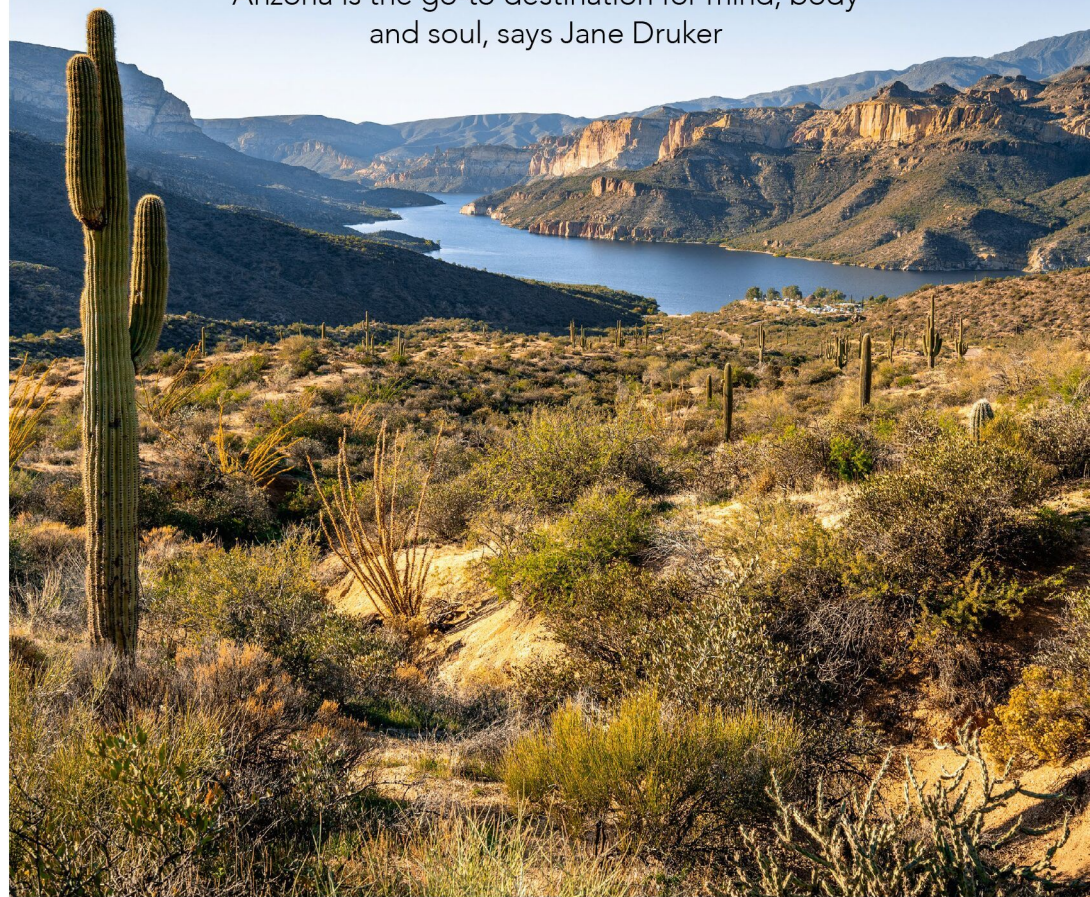
## *Plan 'couples only' time*

If all your weekends away have been family camping trips or visiting your older kids, it's time for a change. Book an adults-only night of X-rated fun. 'Once a year, have a weekend away that's dedicated to sex,' says Vena. 'Sensuality is the key to hot sex in long-term relationships.'

# *Go west... and* **RELAX**

With an impressive line-up of wellness retreats, Arizona is the go-to destination for mind, body and soul, says Jane Druker

PHOTOS: GETTY; CHRISTIAN HOBAN PHOTOGRAPHY; PRICES AND INFORMATION CORRECT AT TIME OF WRITING





A perfect spot for a sunshine break, Scottsdale, Arizona, is set in the Sonoran Desert, a region beneath the scenic McDowell Mountains, on the west coast of America. It's warm all year round and offers a unique vista for a wellness break, with opportunities to experience hiking, golf and horse riding, plus sunrise and starlit yoga and sound bathing.

The lifestyle here is all about the Great Outdoors and the cost of living is lower than its Hollywood neighbours (it's an hour's flight from LA), so it's becoming a retirement and star-studded mecca. Stevie Nicks, Steven Spielberg and Alicia Keys have all had homes in the area.

## REST UP

I split my trip between two hotels – the Four Seasons Scottsdale, a five-star mountainous retreat hugged by Pinnacle Peak and the Tonto National Forest, and Mountain Shadows, a mid-century modern affair where Elizabeth Taylor and Bob Hope partied in the 1950s. It was a perfect blend of rigorous activity and relaxation.

## AND BREATHE...

My stay began lying on a lawn looking up at the blue sky, breathing in the crystal-clear air. First up, an outdoor yoga class that segued into a sound bath. This ancient practice is a set of hypnotic sounds, with the vibrations helping to calm, relax, then revive. Bliss.

After sunrise yoga and a hike among the hills, I experienced the sophisticated spa. This area is renowned for its golf courses, but I opted for a golfer's massage instead. This was not a passive



From great shopping (above) to the Great Outdoors (left)



activity; you are stretched, rocked and rolled to extinguish the kinks, then golf balls are massaged around your neck and back. I felt completely energised afterwards and I ached in that good way where you feel you've had a workout.

## GET ACTIVE

In this land of cowboys, the next natural step is to try horse riding. It's an ideal way to explore the immense scenery of the Tonto National Forest, one of the USA's top national parks, set in the shadow of Superstition Mountains.

Off dry land, kayaking is another excellent way to spend part of your day, so head for the Salt-Verde River. It's a special spot for birdwatching, so look out for woodpeckers, red-tailed hawk and six-foot wingspan eagles.

## DINING OUT

From basic beautiful barbecue all the way up to fine dining, Arizona has something for every taste bud. After my hike, my first stop was at Bryan's Black Mountain Barbecue (bryansbarbecue.com). Plastic baskets of beef brisket, cornbread, chicken, ribs and beans provided an aromatic local feast. The gastro quota was upped at FnB (fnbrestaurant.com) where locally sourced vegetables are the order of the day: think

avocado with whipped goat's cheese, kale and falafel, carrots and crisp quinoa, all cooked to perfection.

## EXPLORE

Downtown Scottsdale is home to great shopping, hair and nail salons and restaurants. Here you'll find everything from crystals to Native American dreamcatchers to cowboy boots.

My favourite spot was Vintage by Misty, piled high with clothes and accessories – gems from Dior, Jean Paul Gaultier and Gucci to name a few – and I left with a haul of vintage 70s Halston, classic black and white Chanel and a striking golden Dolce & Gabbana pendant, all at reasonable prices (vintagebymisty.com).

## WHY GO?

Both of my chosen stays were a push-the-boat-out treat. But as a destination at any price point, Arizona offers a gloriously uplifting scenic vacay where high-octane glamorous restaurants and hotels blend with a spiritual, bohemian vibe. I couldn't recommend it more.

## HOW TO DO IT

**A Signature Deluxe Room at Mountain Shadows on a room-only basis starts from \$577 per night. To book, visit [mountainshadows.com](http://mountainshadows.com). A Deluxe Casita Room at Four Seasons Scottsdale on a room-only basis starts from \$855 per night. To book, visit [fourseasons.com/scottsdale](http://fourseasons.com/scottsdale)**  
 ✦ [experiencescottsdale.com](http://experiencescottsdale.com)

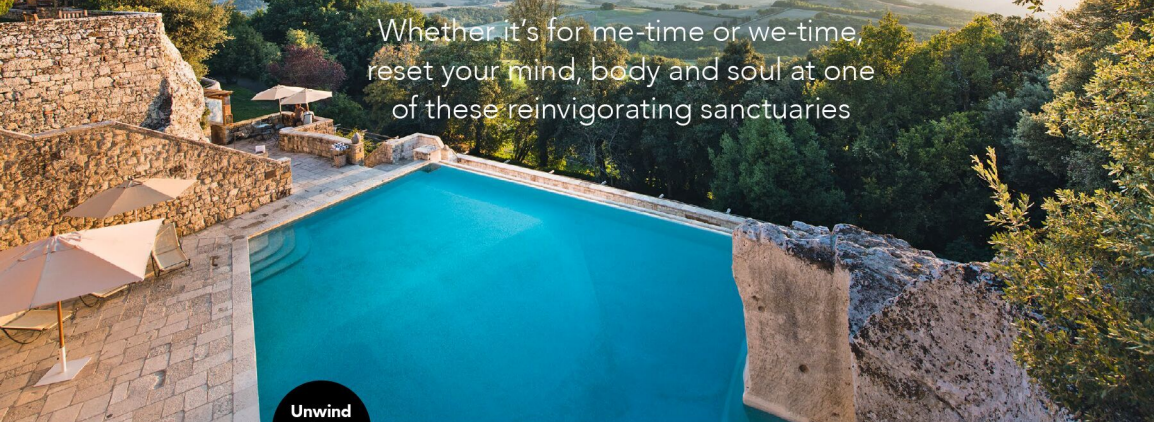


Enjoy five-star luxury at the Four Seasons Scottsdale



# 6 of the best... RESTFUL RETREATS

Whether it's for me-time or we-time, reset your mind, body and soul at one of these reinvigorating sanctuaries



Unwind  
with a  
cool view

## Best for... DIGITAL DETOX

### BORGO PIGNANO, TUSCANY

It's easy to switch off at Borgo Pignano – with so many nature-based activities, there's no time for tech. This Italian organic estate is luxury relaxation with an eco conscience. Take a horse ride through its 750 acres, cycle past vineyards and olive groves, shoot the breeze with the rare-breed pigs or try a cooking or painting class.

But if all you want to do is nothing, put yourself in the hands of Borgo's therapists, who use dreamy products to ease body and soul. Whether you stay in the 18th-century villa or one of the estate's properties with private pool, social media will be the last thing on your mind.

**Booking information: rates at Borgo Pignano, a member of sustainable collection Beyond Green, start from £390; staybeyondgreen.com**



Indulge  
new  
interests

## Best for... FINDING YOUR PASSION

### WYLDER AT CAN TERRA, IBIZA

Hosted in a beautiful villa in the village of San Miguel, each short-break escape includes yoga classes situated in a pine forest, Pilates classes, sound healing session, open-air movie night, live flamenco music, Mexican street food cooking class and a flower-arranging workshop, as well as hiking and optional paddle-boarding. For those seeking

some pampering time, there's also a choice of beauty and body treatments. Plus, all the meals are plant-based.

**Booking information: four-night breaks cost £2,800 (single occupancy) or £1,550pp shared, including transfers. Wylder Vamos (from 1 May), Wylder Fiesta (from 14 October), Wylder Buena (from 18 October); wylderretreats.net**



## Best for... NATURE LOVERS

### MODDERSHALL OAKS, UK

Want to gaze at serene scenery as you unwind in the outdoor sauna after a woodland trail or lakeside walk? You'll find this and more at Moddershall Oaks, in Staffordshire. You can also take in the views soaking in an outdoor heated spa pool or its courtyard lounge area, complete with a bio ethanol fireplace. Its indoor spa area is just as inviting, with reflexology foot baths and eucalyptus-milk steam room. Add on a massage or mud rasul treatment, and becoming at one with nature is complete.

**Booking information:** spa days cost from £100pp; moddershalloaks.com

Soak after a day in the wild



Get romance back on track

## Best for... RECONNECTING

### EAST WINDS RESORT, SAINT LUCIA

Designed to help couples deepen their romantic connection, the personalised IntimacyMoon retreat at East Winds includes a pre-retreat session with Marissa Nelson, an experienced therapist, to help establish your goals, followed by three mornings of activities at East Winds, and three monthly post-retreat sessions. Activities include an excursion to see the Pitons, Soufriere, a swim in a waterfall, private cooking class, chocolate-making session, learning to play the steel drums, a sunset cruise and vow renewal ceremony at sunset. What better way to reconnect than in paradise?

**Booking information:** from 3-7 July, US\$5,500 per couple (£4,468 approx), all inclusive; eastwinds.com

## Best for... GETTING ACTIVE

### BEACHCROFT HOTEL AND BEACH HUT SUITES, UK

Prepare for days of fresh sea air along the West Sussex coast at one of Beachcroft's outdoor activity retreats. Try mountain biking, paddle-boarding and cold-water sea swimming at sunrise. Then relax in your Beach Hut Suite with private terrace and direct beach access, and fall asleep to the gentle murmur of the waves.

**Booking information:** from £525pp for two nights (based on two adults sharing); beachcroft-hotel.co.uk



Stay calm with spa luxury



High energy on the coast

## Best for... CLEARING YOUR MIND

### SEAHAM HALL HOTEL & SPA, UK

Enter award-winning Seaham Hall in County Durham and you'll be enveloped in a cocoon of calm. It's perfect for a weekend break or spa day, or stay for longer in one of the suites, complete with private hot tub to soak away your cares. Try the Asian-inspired spa – offering a range of treatments, including the 60-minute ishga Top to

Toe Ritual, designed to promote all-over relaxation – before feasting on a two-course meal in its Pan-Asian restaurant, Ozone. How you fill your time is up to you – enjoy some tranquility around the pool or venture to its icy dip pool to invigorate your senses. We dare you to take the plunge! **Booking information:** spa packages from cost £95pp; seaham-hall.co.uk

## MY FEEL GOOD SECRETS

# LISA SNOWDON

Model, presenter and *Celebrity Masterchef* winner Lisa Snowdon, 51, lives in Epping, Essex with her fiancé George Smart

### My exercise routine...

I try to go to the gym three times a week and I do Pilates once or twice a week. There's a company called Zero Gravity Pilates, which uses a reformer Pilates machine. It's for all levels and is good at lengthening and strengthening your muscles and for core strength, which is something we all need for strong backs as we get older. I walk too. It's a lot of exercise, but I like my food!

### My diet...

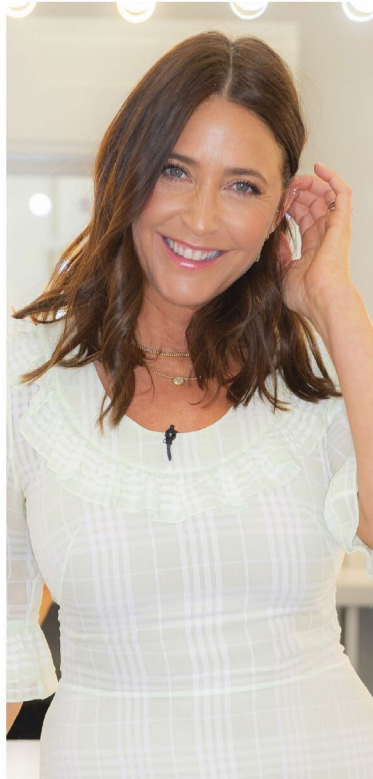
I have lots of good-quality plant-based food, lots of fibre. Pulses, lentils, things like that. I get a lot of greens and I do like to incorporate lean meat as well. I was vegetarian for a while but I started craving fish and chicken. Occasionally I do intermittent fasting, which requires me to have my meal earlier the night before and then maybe skip breakfast.

### My beauty routine...

I'm pro-ageing. It's about feeling comfortable in your skin and doing things that will help you look and feel fantastic. I particularly love Votary's Super Seed Cleansing Oil, and I like the Balance Me cleansing balm. I think as we get older we need something a bit more nourishing. And I'm a big fan of Prai products on my neck – we're never too young to look after our necks.

### My downtime...

I like cooking with George and going for walks in the forest. Cooking, eating, talking or watching a box set. We might



With fiancé George; Lisa likes plant-based food



go to a gallery in London or on a little city break. We work hard, so just having a catch-up over dinner and a glass of red is my ideal night.

### My happy place...

is at home and being with people I love. Spending time with George, my dad, mum, sisters and their kids. The kids make me so happy and I feel so lucky, as both my sisters and George's brother have children. It's my happy place when I get to see all the family.

### My friendships...

I've got some great friends and as I've got older, they have become like sisters. I can just call them up at any time and they're there for me, and I'd like to think I'm the same for them. You have to nurture your friendships like any relationship.

### My goal in life...

is to keep happy and motivated. But also to keep a happy work-life balance. I think the balance can sometimes get a bit skewed and I think I've certainly felt that before.

**+ Lisa is working with TENA as a menopause advocate to encourage conversation and support women to get comfortable with the uncomfortable.**





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