

Natural Lifestyle

LOVE LIFE, LIVE WELL – NATURALLY

www.mynaturallifestyle.com

March 2021



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Overhaul your digestion
for a healthier you

Conception questions

Expert advice on
boosting your fertility

STEPS TO

BETTER SLEEP

CREATE A HEALTHY
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LOVE LIFE, LIVE WELL – NATURALLY

Welcome



Lockdown round three, and almost a year since we went into the first, it's quite incredible to think of what has passed in the last 12 months. Schools closed, shops shut, banned from seeing friends and family and restrictions placed on our freedoms, freedoms that prior to this we just accepted as a given that we had.

It's been tough, challenging for everyone in different ways, and no one has been immune to this. The phrase 'we're all in the same storm but in different boats' really resonated with me because I think this really sums up the pandemic and how we are experiencing it – every individual has a different lifestyle to the next, varied family and work demands, some of us thrive on being outdoors, others prefer to be at home, some people have been able to find things to occupy their time, and others have found their mental health has really struggled.

The point to make is everyone's feelings during these most testing of times has been and remains valid, and we are all allowed to feel angry, frustrated, and upset. On the flip side, we can also admit to finding joy in some of the facets of lockdown – time with our closest family, not constantly rushing around, a slower pace and enjoying the simplest of things in life are all elements that we could look to retain when we come out of this.

But for now, *Natural Lifestyle* remains here for you, our readers, to support you in your health and wellness goals. And in this issue, as in all issues before and during the pandemic, we bring you a whole host of holistic health advice. In this issue, we bring you important tips on how to get your digestive health functioning properly, and we also offer

an expert guide to boosting fertility in men and women.

We also bring you some fantastic recipes using store cupboard ingredients (an essential during lockdown when you can't get hold of usual items), and we bring you some cheer with a selection of giveaways.

We hope this issue helps in some small way to keeping you healthy and happy, and we look forward to brighter days ahead.

*Rachel Symonds,
Editor*



THE EDITOR RECOMMENDS

Nourishing the brain is key to keeping it functioning, which is why we love Viridian Nutrition's Brain Support Multi, a multivitamin and mineral formulation featuring a blend of 22 nutrients, including supportive vitamins to promote brain health and function. Featuring natural brahmi extract and choline, it also contains iodine, iron and zinc, which all contribute to normal cognitive function.

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THE BEST BITS

An insight into what the *Natural Lifestyle* team have been up to this month.



Our design expert, Clare, came across some local animals in an orchard during a beautiful countryside walk.



It was an active kind of day for our Sales Director, Ruth, and her twin daughters, Amelia and Grace, who didn't let the cold weather stop them from working up a sweat.



The rain did nothing to dampen the spirits of our production whiz, Annabelle, who braved the elements for a wet lockdown walk.



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www.mynaturallifestyle.com

NATURAL LIFESTYLE, Target Publishing Limited, The Old Dairy, Hudsons Farm, Fieldgate Lane, Ugly Green, Bishops Stortford CM22 6HJ t: 01279 816300 e: info@targetpublishing.com www.mynaturallifestyle.com

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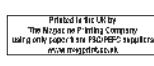
SENIOR SALES EXECUTIVE JAMES LLOYD e: james.lloyd@targetpublishing.com DESIGN CLARE HOLLAND e: clare.holland@targetpublishing.com PRODUCTION ANNABELLE DUGGAN e: annabelle.duggan@targetpublishing.com ADMINISTRATION/DISTRIBUTION BRIANNA HILLS WRIGHT e: brianna.hillswright@targetpublishing.com

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- ISSN - 20428421



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Waking up to wildlife

There is nothing better than the great outdoors and discovering our local wildlife, and a new challenge is here to make it fun for the whole family.

The Wildlife Trusts has announced The Big Wild Breakfast, a new outdoor celebration that will kickstart the UK's most popular nature extravaganza – 30 Days Wild.

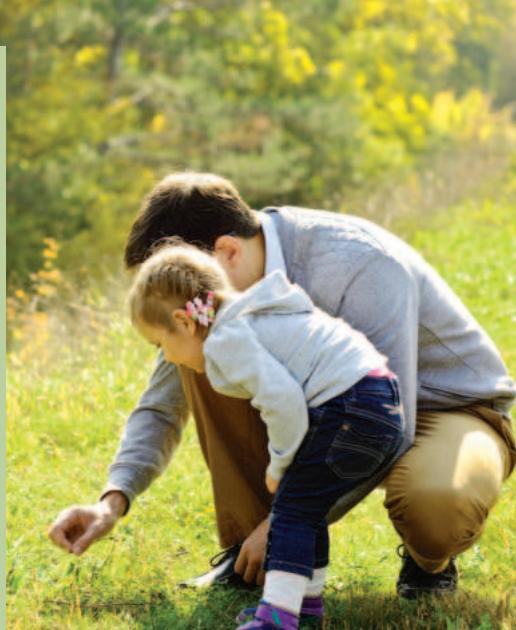
The 30 Days Wild annual challenge from The Wildlife Trusts has had more than a million participants to date – a record 650,000 people took part in 2020 alone. Every year, people sign up to do a 'random act of wildness' every day for 30 days in June. Popular activities include listening to birdsong, taking wildlife photographs and planting seeds. 30 Days Wild is proven to boost your health, happiness and sense of connection to nature.

For 2021, the organisation is asking everyone to kick-start their own challenge with a Big Wild Breakfast outdoors on June 1 and then keep life wild for the whole month.

The Wildlife Trusts invite everyone to see how much wildlife they can spot in just 30 minutes. To find out more, visit [wildlifetrusts.org/30DaysWild](https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/30DaysWild), where you can download a range of tools and discover lots of ideas to get involved.

In 2020, a five-year review of 30 Days Wild participants, run in conjunction with the University of Derby, found that people reported they felt happier and healthier from taking part, with positive effects lasting for up to two months afterwards.

Leanne Manchester, The Wildlife Trusts' Digital Manager, explained: "What could be better than making time for yourself and connecting with nature for just a few moments of your day? It's fun, free and easy – and after such a challenging year, we've never needed nature more!"



WAYS TO STRESS LESS

With new statistics showing our anxiety levels have risen sharply during the pandemic, it's important we find ways to stress less.

And here, natural health experts have offered their tips on how to manage stress, which follows the results of a survey by the Office for National Statistics which found that 49.6 per cent of UK adults described themselves as highly anxious during the first lockdown.

• **Steady your sugar levels:** Dr Marilyn Glenville, the UK's leading nutritionist, and author of *The Nutritional Health Handbook for Women*, explained: "Maintaining steady blood sugar levels is key to stabilising mood. Ensure you have a small meal every two to three hours that contains protein (eat breakfast, lunch and dinner, plus a snack mid-morning and one mid-afternoon). For example, a hard-boiled egg, 10-12 almonds, a small can of tuna and brown rice. This will stop those roller-coaster highs and cravings for sweet foods. Because your blood sugar isn't allowed to drop, your body will no longer have to ask you for a quick fix. As the blood sugar steadies, so will the mood swings – reduced adrenaline levels will automatically make you feel happier and calmer inside."

• **B happy:** "Certain nutrients can be very helpful in reducing stress levels, such as B vitamins, especially B5 for stress relief and energy, magnesium (nature's tranquiliser) for relaxation and sleep, chromium for blood sugar balance, L-theanine for reducing anxiety and finally Siberian ginseng, which acts as a tonic to the adrenal glands," Dr Glenville advised.

• **Sleep your way to feeling less stressed:** "Stress, sleep and anxiety are all related. If we don't get enough sleep, we can find it harder to adapt to challenging situations, and when we can't cope as efficiently with stress, it can be harder to have a good night's rest," explained Olivia Hemingway, Nutritionist at Natures Plus. "Magnesium is known as 'nature's tranquiliser' and is needed to relax our muscles and nerves, which helps us to fall into a peaceful sleep. To ensure you're getting enough magnesium, try and include plenty of magnesium-rich foods in your diet such as, pumpkin and sunflower seeds, fish and leafy green vegetables.

• **Runners' high:** After putting yourself through your paces and working up a sweat, do you get a sense of euphoria? This is down to your endorphins. "A workout places stress on your body, which activates your sympathetic nervous system by increasing levels of certain hormones, such as epinephrine, norepinephrine and cortisol. These hormones increase heart rate and blood pressure, stimulate energy breakdown and inhibit immune function. To protect our body, our brain releases endorphins to fight that stress, giving us that good feeling," Olivia explained.

Inside... HEALTH

THE NEED FOR WFH SELF-CARE

While the nation continues to adjust to working from home, a new poll has revealed the impact on our physical and mental wellbeing.

Research by the Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) has found that there are key health and wellbeing disparities between people who have to work from home. Overall, more people felt it was better for their health and wellbeing (45 per cent), compared to around one third (29 per

cent) who thought working from home was worse for their health and wellbeing. However, people who switched to working from home as a result of Covid-19 had experienced health and wellbeing impacts, with the most common being feeling less connected to colleagues (67 per cent), taking less exercise (46 per cent), developing musculoskeletal problems (39 per cent) and disturbed sleep (37 per cent).

It was found that one in four (26 per cent) are working from home from either a sofa or a bedroom and nearly half (48 per cent) of those who work from a sofa or bedroom said they had developed musculoskeletal problems and nearly two thirds (59 per cent) said they felt more isolated from their colleagues.

Home working is also having an impact on people's mental health, with 56 per cent saying they found it harder to switch off. However only a third of respondents had been offered support with their mental health (34 per cent) from their employer.

To tackle the issues people are experiencing as a result of working from home, RSPH is calling for employers to ensure all employees have access to mental health support to help them to cope with increased isolation and anxiety and have access to equipment and a remote assessment to support them with their physical health.

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FOCUS ON YOUR FITNESS BASICS

Mastering the basics when it comes to gaining benefit from exercise is crucial, according to one fitness expert.

Steven Virtue, Fitness Development Manager at Total Fitness, explains that getting the basic fundamental exercises means they can easily be incorporated into any workout routine and developed further as you become stronger and more advanced.

Steven suggests:

- **Squat – bodyweight squat:** Start with your feet hip width apart, or slightly outside with your toes turned outwards. From here, keep the chest up and send the hips back and down to knee level – or even lower if your mobility allows it. Drive through your heels to lift you back to the starting point and repeat the exercise. If you struggle with balance, place your arms out in front to help distribute your weight evenly.

- **Bend – deadlift:** Start with your feet shoulder width apart, placing them under a bar/dumbbell somewhere between the middle of the foot and shin. Grip it outside of the knees and maintain a straight, neutral spine. Squeeze your glutes and extend to a standing position. Then, hinge from the hips, pushing your hips back and maintaining a slight bend at the knee as you lower back to your starting position.

- **Push – push-up:** Start in a straight arm plank position with the wrist and elbow directly underneath your shoulders. Next, lower yourself down by bending the elbows, bringing your chest to the floor. From here, extend yourself up with a gentle push back to your starting point. If you're struggling on your toes, try doing this movement on an elevated surface to begin with, such as a wall.

- **Pull – row:** Start with your feet underneath your hips, setting up the movement similar to that of the deadlift. Next, grab the barbell with a double overhand grip outside the knees, then hinge forward until your midline is roughly parallel to the floor. Squeeze your lats muscle and pull the bar towards you until you make contact with your belly button, then slowly lower the bar to your starting position.

- **Single leg – lunge:** Stand with your feet hip-width apart and standing up tall. Take a step forward with the left leg, then slowly bend both knees until the back knee is just above the floor, making sure that your left knee doesn't pass over your left foot. Push yourself back up to the starting point from your front heel and repeat on the other leg.

- **Core – forearm plank:** Hold yourself parallel to the ground using your forearms, with elbows directly underneath your shoulders at a 90-degree angle. Maintain a straight, flat back for the duration of the exercise by pulling down your ribcage and squeezing your glutes to maintain a solid structure. If you're a beginner, start on your knees and with shorter intervals, building from 10 seconds, to 20 second and so on.

- **Rotation – landmine:** Place your feet firmly, shoulder to hip width apart and keep the arms straight. Rotate to one side of the body, allowing the opposite leg, hip and ankle to rotate towards the direction of the barbell. Next, ensuring the supporting straight leg stays stacked under the hip and shoulders, rotate back to the centre and repeat on the other side.



Inside... LIFESTYLE

THE WORKOUT RULES

Our ability to exercise in the way we used to might be restricted right now but that needn't mean you abandon any kind of workout regime.

According to Darren Kirby, founder of Fitter Healthier Dad, getting fitter is not as complicated as most of us think. Here, he offers some simple ideas:

- **Home HIIT:** This can be done inside or outside, you don't need equipment or a lot of space. To start, you can do five exercises, with 40 seconds for each set, and a one-minute rest in between. Here's an example; four rounds, star jumps, mountain climbers, high knees, squat jumps and burpees. This will take around 20 minutes to complete and is a good all-round full body workout.

- **Yoga:** Very beneficial for functional movement and stress levels. From a physical aspect, yoga enables us to become more flexible and move in a more natural way, which reduces physical stress on the body.

- **Sleep:** Sleep is when the body recovers, carries out muscle repair and resets the mind. Some things you can do to ensure you get a good night's sleep includes stay away from electronic devices one hours before bed (blue light from screens slows down the production of melatonin, the sleep hormone), stop eating three hours before you're due to go to sleep so your digestive system isn't trying to digest food, and don't have any caffeine eight hours before bed.

- **Food:** Watching your food intake is important, as it's very easy to let boredom, stress, or frustration lead us to think we're hungry. If you're less active than normal, look at your portion sizes and eat less, but make sure you are drinking enough water, as being dehydrated can be confused with being hungry. Eat nutrient-dense food, and having a balanced plate is important, so make sure you have a good mix of vegetables, meat, or fish (tofu if you're vegan) with low-GI carbs such as sweet potatoes, brown rice, etc. Avoid sugary snacks and chocolate, as these will leave you feeling lethargic once sugar levels subside. These products contain vegetable oils, which are the worst kind as they create inflammation in the body. Inflammation will affect your alertness and stress levels.

- **Steps:** I will caveat this final recommendation, as due to lockdown restrictions, it may not be possible in the current climate. However, if you are able to be safe and keep your distance from others when going outside, attempting to walk 10-15k steps per day is beneficial for a number of reasons. Walking is classed as low-intensity steady-state cardio and works in the lower heart rate regions of 55-65 per cent, which is in the fat-burning area. However, you need to be getting a minimum of 10-15k steps a day to get the full benefits. Walking outside exposes us to the sunlight and boosts vitamin D, which is great for our mood and serotonin levels (the happy hormone).

WINTER WARM-UP

There's nothing quite like getting outside in the fresh air, but whether you're heading out for a run or a walk, it's important to wrap up.

And here, we offer you some ideas to keep toasty while the weather stays on the chilly side.

A base layer is one of the best choices to keep you warm without overheating, and so why not try the Winter High Neck Base Layer from Megmeister, with superfast moisture wicking and excellent thermal insulation. You can also keep your hands warm with Columbia's Trail



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IN THE SHADE

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And four new shades have been added to the Rapid Dye range in ash tones of chestnut, Swedish blonde, light chestnut and dark golden blonde.

Inside... BEAUTY

YOUR SKINCARE SURVIVAL GUIDE

With lockdown meaning we haven't been able to access the usual treatments we might do, looking after our skin at home has never been more important.

And Consultant Dermatologists at the Cadogan Clinic have shared their advice to help you navigate skin concerns until we move out of lockdown:

- Don't delay mole checks:** Dr Susan Mayou, Consultant Dermatologist, urges anyone noticing changes in their moles to have them checked immediately. There has been a 25 per cent rise in skin cancer patients at the Cadogan Clinic due to patients not accessing mole check services throughout the pandemic. Appointments can be made with the GP, who will be able to refer on if required. "This is a health check that should not be delayed until after lockdown; a thin melanoma of less than 0.75mm picked up early has a 95 per cent cure rate but this recovery rate reduces if the melanoma is thicker – time is of the essence," Dr Mayou warned.

- Manage stress levels:** Mental health is at an all-time low for many people and stress is exacerbating inflammatory skin conditions, such as eczema, psoriasis and acne. Many people are reluctant to consult with a doctor throughout this time, but doctors are still seeing patients, with many offering phone or video consultations. The effects of iron deficiency as a result of people embracing a plant-based diet have also been noted, which can be particularly problematic in women and exacerbate skin conditions. The experts urge adequate supplementation if dietary changes are being made.

- Use daily SPF:** Even though time outside is restricted, Dr Mayou urges people to continue wearing sunscreen, especially on bright, sunny, albeit cold winter days. UVA rays are responsible for premature skin ageing, including the formation of wrinkles. They are present all year round and can even penetrate through glass. Wearing SPF on a daily basis is the cheapest and most effective, scientifically proven anti-ageing product available.

- Check use by dates for make-up and skincare:** Most of us have reduced or ceased wearing make-up for the last 10 months. It's a good idea to check the use-by dates of make-up to ensure products haven't expired by the time we resume the regular make-up routine. It's also a good time to throw away old mascaras and either clean or replace make-up brushes, which can be a breeding ground for bacteria.

Three of the best...

SERUMS

Serums offer our skin intense nourishment, which has never been more needed with the cold weather and the toll it takes on our skin. Here, *Natural Lifestyle* suggests three of our top choices:



synergised, long-lasting and light-weight serum that sinks deep into the skin to plump, even and brighten the complexion.

Q+A Caffeine Eye Serum – caffeine is packed with antioxidants that help perk up eyes while detoxifying green tea stops puff-causing fluids from gathering around the eye area. The serum includes blends of pomegranate extracts to protect from environmental damage and reduce signs of ageing and is made from 98.4 per cent natural, vegan ingredients.



Root + Fruit Juice Boost Brightening Serum – supercharge mature skin that's tired and in need of a radiance boost with this serum that is formulated with stabilised vitamin C to encourage improved elasticity and a more even tone, along with betaine to support skin's natural hydration and invigorate skin texture, and tightenyl to improve firmness, elasticity and natural bounce.



SWITCH IT UP

Five simple bathroom swaps for a natural, stress free cycle.

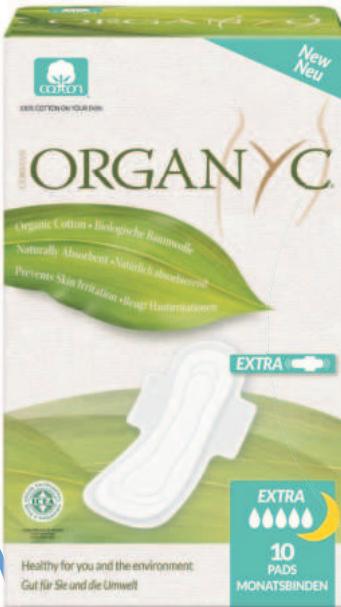


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The healthy sleep rules

Sleep has been troublesome for many during the Covid-19 pandemic, but with a little focus on your routine and nutrition, you can enjoy good quality shuteye – and here's how.

It's a worrying fact that 40 per cent of us experience sleep issues (and that's before we take into account the effects of the Coronavirus lockdown, which have added another layer of worry and anxiety).

And this is really going to have an impact on our collective health as poor sleep can lead to bad food choices, lack of motivation to be active, poor concentration and stress. Therefore, getting it in check is important.

A sleep routine

It's advisable that you take time to plan your sleep regime, and try to stick to it, even at the weekends, as this will allow your body to get into a routine.

The first thing to mention is social media and other apps on your devices. Although social media helps us feel connected at this time, checking your phone late at night means you cannot switch off. Try to leave your devices outside the bedroom and certainly put them down an hour before you want to go to sleep so you have time to wind down.

We must make mention of nutrition, crucial when it comes to sleep. Try not to eat too late as your body will still be digesting food when you're trying to sleep. Sugar and processed food will cause your blood sugar to spiral, especially before bedtime, so these should be minimised to just a treat. Instead, try some dark chocolate, which contains antioxidants and less refined sugar.

You need a balanced diet, plenty of fruit and veg, and good carbs (wholemeal varieties instead of white) and quality protein; the latter is really important as protein is required to help our bodies to repair. Certain nuts, including walnuts and almonds, contain natural melatonin so are a good choice, and avoid spicy and fatty foods in the evening as they are hard for the body to process.

Some supplements can help too. Montmorency cherries have natural melatonin, which can support sleep; you could have a glass a little while before bed. Valerian is a great herb to support sleep and can be found in supplement form in your health food store. Magnesium is also a fantastic sleep support, helping the body to relax. You could try magnesium flakes in the bath or apply it to the skin.

Other choices to consider (and your health food store can advise) is L-theanine, lemon balm, L-tryptophan and ashwagandha.



IDENTIFY THE ISSUE

We can experience sleep problems for different reasons, some shorter-term, such as an immediate worry, and others long-term, such as insomnia. Identifying the issues, and, where possible, addressing the triggers is crucial.

- **Stress** – The Sleep Charity highlights research from the Mental Health Foundation that found over one in five of UK adults had felt panicked and three in 10 had felt afraid because of the pandemic. More than six in 10 felt anxious or worried. This may, in turn, lead to problems with falling or staying asleep because, as The Sleep Charity explains, stress causes hyperarousal, which can upset the balance between sleep and wakefulness.
- **Lack of activity** – with gyms closed and our freedoms restricted, you may be getting outside less and not doing as much exercise. This all has an impact on how tired you feel.
- **Anxiety** – so interlinked with stress, anxious feelings can stop people from sleeping, which then leads to further stress.
- **Stimulants** – whether alcohol or caffeine, you may enjoy it at the time but excessive amounts, especially just before bed, will disrupt sleep and mean you don't get good quality shuteye.

A SANCTUARY

Your bedroom and your sleep routine play a big part in how well you sleep, so it's really worthwhile thinking about if you are giving yourself the best chance of shuteye.

Your room needs to ideally be cool and dark, and to promote a feeling of calm; The Sleep Charity advises that you make sure it's not cluttered.

Unwinding is also really important, so your sleep routine should start in advance of actually getting to bed; a warm bath with magnesium salts, curling up with a good book or some self-care pampering are all excellent ways to relax.

If you find your mind is active at night, keep a notepad and pen by your bedside and if you find you can't sleep, write it down so that it helps you to calm the mind and you don't lie awake thinking about it.

Don't forget relaxation techniques are a great way to unwind, such as meditation or deep breathing exercises, and we also love mindfulness apps; Headspace and Calm are both great choices.

TRY THIS

BetterYou Magnesium Sleep Bath Flakes

Viridian Nutrition L-Theanine and Lemon Balm

Patrick Holford Chill Food

A.Vogel Dormeasan

NutraTea Nutra Relax

KEEP AN EYE ON CAFFEINE

Drinking too much caffeine, or drinking it too late in the day, can be disruptive to good sleep as it is a stimulant. If you are struggling with quality sleep, or find you are particularly sensitive to caffeine, try to cut your intake down, and certainly avoid it in the afternoons.

Ideally, swap heavily caffeinated drinks like coffee for herbal teas; if it's night, choose teas that contain chamomile, lavender and oats, as well as the already mentioned valerian. If it's afternoon, then green tea is a refreshing drink that has lower levels of caffeine and is good for energy. If you would rather some kind of coffee drink, then chicory is a substitute you can find in your health food store.

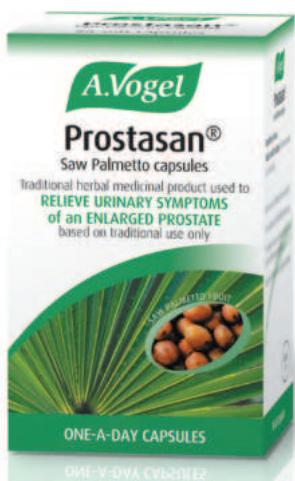
And don't forget if you fancy a bit of an indulgent treat, many leading herbal tea brands also have latte type drinks, so you can get the feeling of your coffee treat without the caffeine.

Too many trips to the toilet?

1 in 2 men over the age of 50 are affected by symptoms of benign prostatic hypertrophy (BPH).

Symptoms of BPH can include a feeble urinary stream, having to urinate frequently and urgently and feel that you can't empty your bladder completely. Prostasan Saw Palmetto Capsules is a traditional herbal medicinal product for use in the relief of lower urinary tract symptoms in men who have a confirmed diagnosis of an enlarged prostate or BPH, exclusively based upon long-standing use as a traditional remedy. Prior to treatment other serious conditions should have been ruled out by a doctor. Always read the leaflet.

www.avogel.co.uk



NutraRelax Herbal Remedy Tea

NutraRelax® by NutraTea® is a soothing herbal remedy tea that has been expertly blended to promote sleep onset and maintain a healthy sleep. This unique herbal blend contains 100% active botanicals that have been sustainably sourced including Lemon Balm, Hawthorn Berries and Viburnum to help

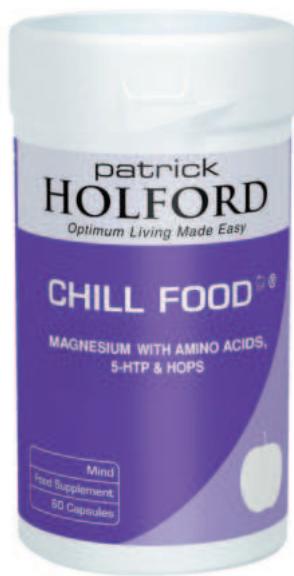
support your mental wellbeing in cases of tension and stress. Each natural tea bag is free from flavourings, oils and bulking agents making it the ideal herbal supplement alternative that can be reused throughout the day. This tasty herbal tea is a convenient way to contribute to optimal relaxation and maintain a mental calm.

www.nutratea.co.uk

Chill Food

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NATURAL LIFESTYLE'S

Top Picks



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Brain Support Multi is a specific multivitamin and mineral formulation featuring a blend of 22 nutrients including supportive vitamins to promote brain health and function, together with bioavailable minerals and selected phytonutrients. Featuring natural brahmi extract at a therapeutic level and a high dose of choline. Additionally, Brain Support Multi contains iodine, iron and zinc which all contribute to normal cognitive function. Formulated by Viridian's nutrition experts to provide the nutritional building blocks for normal brain activity. 100% active ingredients with no fillers, binders or nasties. Vegan, never GMO, palm oil free, against animal testing, ethically made.

www.viridian-nutrition.com



Organic MultiVitamin

The Organic Multivitamin for WOMEN has been specifically tailored to boost your overall health and wellbeing. Its unique formula of micronutrients from ingredients such as moringa, shatavari root, Kale powder and turmeric may help to reduce tiredness and fatigue, and boost your immune system. The Organic Multivitamin MEN provides an advanced formulation of vitamins and minerals specifically created to meet your daily demands. This unique combination of premium ingredients such as ashwagandha, turmeric and moringa may help to reduce inflammation, fight fatigue. When taken alongside a well-balanced diet these multivitamins are your number one support for a healthy lifestyle.

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www.newnordic.co.uk



CherryActive Sleep Formula

CherryActive Sleep Formula capsules contain a blend of Montmorency cherry, lavender, chamomile and magnesium powders - ingredients shown by research to promote healthy sleep patterns. Nutritionists recommend to take two CherryActive Sleep Formula capsules, half an hour before bed, with a sip of water. CherryActive Sleep Formula capsules are 100% vegetarian/vegan with no added fillers or other ingredients.



WORKING OUT FOR A healthier you

Natural Lifestyle's starter guide to taking your first steps into fitness.

Lockdown has been a time of challenge for many, but it has also had some positives too; one of those is that we know more people than ever are working out, trying new exercises and generally having more of a focus on their own health.

What's important to remember is there is no right or wrong type of exercise, just being up and active is a great step on your health journey. But working out can feel daunting when you see people around you and on social media making it look easy, kitted out in the fanciest of outfits and with a level of fitness many of us could only dream of.

And so, *Natural Lifestyle* is here to set out the first steps on your exercise journey. The most important factor is make it fun, incorporate different types of exercise into your weekly routine so you don't get bored, involve the family and use it as a chance to discover your local surroundings.

Set your goals

To get the most from activity, it's important to set goals – do you want to lose weight, for example? Or want to generally feel healthier? Is it because you want to try a new skill? Whatever your goal, write it down, along with the type of exercises you like – there's no point making running 5k a goal if you dislike the sport.

In terms of activities that are easy to start with, cheap to do and can be done anywhere, our favourites include:

- **Walking** – no matter where you live, or how fit you are, walking is for everyone. Getting outside has so many benefits to health, especially topping up your vitamin D, and walking also helps you to build muscle. If you add in some hills or a brisk pace, you will also get your heart pumping, which supports cardiovascular health. It's also something that can easily be done during lockdown.
- **Running** – more people than ever are trying running and for good reason; even a gentle jog or a walk/run has huge benefits to your cardiovascular fitness, as well as with weight management and your mind health. You don't need lots of fancy kit to get started but we would advise you get a pair of running trainers that are fitted to your gait to avoid injury.
- **Yoga** – dual benefits to be gained from yoga are the calming aspect, but also the strength building. It is a great activity to add in to support the cardiovascular elements of your exercise routine. There are many yoga apps you can find if you want to try it in the comfort of your own home, which has been important during lockdown. Similarly, we also suggest Pilates for its excellent core strengthening ability.
- **HIIT** – this has become a bit of a buzzword, and really just means high intensity exercise, so lots of aerobic moves and plenty of sweat! It is great to get your heart rate going and the good news is you don't need to spend lots of time on HIIT – a 15-20 minute session is going to be hugely effective. You can download various apps that feature HIIT or create your own circuit that fits with the space and equipment you have – burpees, push-ups, star jumps, running on the spot, squats and jumping lunges are all excellent for getting the heart going.

Fuel right

Exercise is fantastic for our health and wellbeing but, depending on what you do, you may need to consider your nutrition both before and after.

As a basic guide, being hydrated is so crucial and without it, you can be lacking in energy. Plain water is the best choice and try to drink little and often through the day, rather than downing a litre of water before you start exercising. Some people will also try isotonic drinks but be sure these are natural and not made with additives. You only need these for longer exercise, such as a lengthy run.

Pre-workout, healthy carbs are important to fuel your workout, such as porridge or healthy homemade granola, quinoa, wholemeal bread and brown rice. Post-workout, you want protein to repair muscles. A great choice is some peanut butter with apple or rice or oat cakes, or you could try some Greek yoghurt with berries. Nuts and seeds, beans and lentils are also protein-rich.

Post-workout, consider soothing the muscles, which can experience delayed onset muscle soreness, better known as DOMS. Try a glass of Montmorency cherry juice, which is great for easing this, and also arnica (as a gel or cream, or in a pill form as a homeopathic remedy), is excellent. And you could also treat yourself to a relaxing bath filled with magnesium bath salts.

TRY THIS

A. Vogel Atrogel

Terranova Life Drink

Viridian Nutrition Sports Multi

Good Health Naturally Ancient Magnesium Lotion Cool Relief

Salus Floradix Liquid Iron

GETTING STARTED

There are so many apps available that you can work out to from the comfort of your own home and suited to the time you have and your fitness level and goals. It's worthwhile planning out your weekly routine to try and ensure you are getting the recommended 150 minutes a week of moderate exercise.

If running is the one for you, we like the NHS Couch to 5k app, which breaks down each week in terms of the sessions to do that will get you up to running 5k, a great place to start if you are a novice.

If you want some inspiration for walking, Ramblers is a great organisation to inspire, and has a wealth of information at www.ramblers.org.uk



GOOD GUT GUIDE

What we eat and our lifestyle choices have a huge impact on digestion and, in turn, how healthy we are, making it hugely important you focus on nourishing your gut.

It seems that many articles in this magazine begin with the impact Covid-19 has had on our health, and in the case of our guts, this effect should not be underestimated.

We know people's diets have changed during the various lockdowns, often for the worse, and it's widely accepted that stress levels are at an all-time, which has an impact on our guts. Add in rising amounts of caffeine and alcohol and it's clear to see our digestive systems are less than happy.

This not only causes digestive discomfort but has a huge knock-on effect to our overall health; a badly functioning gut, with imbalanced microbiome, lowers immunity, can affect mood, skin will feel and look less than healthy, and energy levels fall, among much more. Therefore, we must focus on getting guts in good health.

"Unfortunately, many aspects of modern life can negatively impact the microbiome, and as such, we are seeing massive reductions in bacterial diversity in the human gut. For example:

- Broad-spectrum antibiotics have been shown to disrupt the microbiome, as they are non-selective, killing both pathogenic and beneficial bacteria.
- Western diets, high in processed foods, sugar, refined carbs and unhealthy fats and low in fibre can rapidly affect the microbiome, with changes in as little 24 hours!
- Environmental pollutants such as pesticides, chemicals, pollution, food additives, heavy metals and chlorinated tap water may negatively impact the microbiome.
- Overly hygienic environments and lack of exposure to the outdoors may play a part in declining diversity as we need exposure to a wide variety of microbes to develop our gut flora and immune system.
- As we get older, we often see declining levels of certain types of bacteria. This may in part be a consequence of years of the above diet and lifestyle factors."

GUT CHECK

We should all give our guts a health check, noting symptoms that may point to poor digestion.

"It is estimated that 10-20 per cent of people in the UK have irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), while many more may live with symptoms of the condition without a formal diagnosis," commented Alice Bradshaw, Head of Nutrition Education and Information at Terranova Nutrition. "Disturbed digestion, with symptoms such as excess gas, bloating and heartburn, have almost become a regular thing for a growing number of people and it's often assumed this is normal and just requires an over-the-counter digestive remedy."

Hannah Braye, Head of Technical Advice at ADM Protexin, which has the Bio-Kult and Lepicol digestive health brands, added: "A major factor in digestive health is the approximately 100 trillion micro-organisms (most of them bacteria, but also viruses, fungi, and protozoa) which reside in the human gastrointestinal tract. In fact, the microbiome may now be thought of as a virtual organ of the body."

FIBRE FACTS

Fibre is critical to our gut, yet can be lacking.

Steven Riley, Director of Marketing and Consumer Sales at OptiBiotix Health, explained: "Statistically speaking, we know the majority of people in the UK do not eat enough fibre. According to the British Nutrition Foundation, the average intake of fibre for women is approximately 17.2g, while for men it stands at 20.1g. Since the recommended daily amount is 30g per day, it's clear that our fibre intake remains an issue."

"Many studies have suggested fibre is intimately tied to our gut microbiome, and that by increasing our intake will help to diversify the bacteria, which – in turn – can support a healthier and happier gut. There is a growing population that understand that by increasing their fibre consumption, it can lead to improved gut health."

Jenny Logan, Product Development and Training Manager at Natures Aid, continued: "Stress causes

energy to be diverted away from the digestive system as part of the 'fight or flight' reaction. Long-term, this will have an impact on digestive function, and can lead to digestive issues such as IBS."

Condition wise, Dr Marilyn Glenville PhD, the UK's leading nutritionist and author of *Natural Solutions to IBS*, advised: "Indigestion is a feeling of discomfort or pain in the upper part of the digestive tract and can give a feeling of fullness and bloating and also symptoms of belching and nausea. Indigestion may also cause heartburn due to stomach acid reflux."

"IBS can include symptoms of abdominal discomfort/pain/cramps or spasms, diarrhoea, constipation (even a combination of both constipation or diarrhoea), bloating, flatulence, nausea and frequent visits to the toilet. But it is important for anyone with any of the above symptoms to visit their GP to rule out a more serious digestive disorder, such as peptic ulcers, gastritis, gallstones and cancer."



How healthy is your diet?

What you eat affects the gut and even simple changes can help.

"The popular phrase 'you are what you eat' remains a valid reason why people have poor digestive health. Those who have a poor and unbalanced diet, particularly one that contains a large amount of highly processed foods, without regular exercise, are at increased risk of developing chronic lifestyle diseases." Steven pointed out.

Being aware of refined foods is important, with Dr Glenville advising: "Key culprits for gut problems can include refined foods where there is lack of natural fibre which should be contained within foods. This can cause problems with constipation. Other culprits include fizzy drinks, too much alcohol, coffee or tea, spicy and spicy and high fat foods, like chocolate and drinking lots of liquids with meals, which dilutes the digestive fluids and makes it harder for food to be digested."

"Wheat can also be a problem as 'modern' wheat has been grown to be high in gluten to make mass production easier and cheaper. If someone gets digestive problems like indigestion, flatulence, bloating, constipation or diarrhoea, then it's worth eliminating wheat for a week to see if it makes any difference."

Jenny continued: "A low fibre, high sugar diet has a negative impact on the health of the bacteria living in the microbiome and can lead to dysbiosis and a build-up of less friendly bacteria, leading to issues such as IBS, bloating and thrush, as well as contributing to food intolerance."

Katie Lane, Nutritionist at Savant, which has the Udo's range, suggested checking for intolerances: "Protocols include eliminating certain foods that can be aggravating to a sensitive system. Common food sensitivities, or allergies, include wheat, gluten and dairy, which can be identified by symptoms that follow ingestion of these foods. For example, lactose intolerance, the inability to break down lactose sugars from dairy, can present as severe gastrointestinal distress very shortly after consuming dairy products."

Be aware of foods that can be problematic, Jenny advised: "Many people I speak to about gut health have tried to switch to a more natural diet and increase fibre intake. However, they often try and achieve this by increasing intake of wheat-based fibres and raw/salad vegetables. This is not a great idea as they are difficult for a digestive system under pressure to digest."

SUPPLEMENTS FOR THE GUT

You could also consider other supplements.

Dr Glenville recommended: "Ginger has a number of benefits in that it can help to prevent indigestion, gas and bloating. Ginger also acts as an anti-spasmodic and relaxes and soothes the intestinal tract. Slippery elm helps calm and soothe the digestive tract by coating the lining of the intestines to reduce irritation and to calm the inflamed mucous membranes in the intestines."

"Like slippery elm, marshmallow contains mucilage, which can reduce irritation in the digestive system and can form a protective coating over irritated and inflamed intestinal mucosal membranes. Licorice helps heal the irritated surfaces of the intestines and also has an anti-spasmodic effect so lessening abdominal cramps, and fennel helps prevent and relieve flatulence, as well as soothing the digestive tract and reducing cramps and spasms."

Alice continued: "Since many gut-related symptoms and disorders are associated with digestive enzyme deficiencies or imbalances, digestive enzyme supplements are often essential tools in dealing with such problems. Any number of food components can trigger symptoms, so the best results are likely to be achieved with broad-spectrum products providing a wide variety of enzymes."

"Gentian and ginger stimulate the release of protein-digesting compounds in the stomach, while fennel, ginger and cardamom relax the intestinal muscles, which may help relieve abdominal spasms and cramps and may also help release trapped wind. Supplements can also offer direct symptomatic relief. A key example is magnesium to relieve constipation."

Katie added: "A multi-enzyme product can be used to help with food breakdown. Enzymes such as amylases, proteases and lipases, can target macronutrient groups (carbohydrates, proteins and fats) in a more general way to fill gaps where enzymes might be lower than needed."

You may also want to consider prebiotics, Steven advised: "Take chicory root and konjac glucomannan, for instance, prebiotic fibres that help support growth of healthy bacteria by providing the food they need, as well as offering other outcomes, such as aiding weight management."

Brittany added: "For some, it's more difficult to increase fibre intake through dietary changes alone. In these cases, a prebiotic supplement may be recommended. Knowing what we do about the 'fibre gap' and how so few of us reach the recommended daily intake, consuming more prebiotic fibre in the diet can be beneficial for everyone. It can be found naturally in foods such as Jerusalem artichokes, onions, shallots, bananas and whole grain oats."

EAT RIGHT

You should consider what needs to be added to nourish and repair the gut.

"A diet of low-quality foods, sugar and alcohol, which lacks nutrient-dense whole foods, is disruptive to the digestive system and will contribute to many symptoms of digestive disharmony. The first step is clean up the diet by choosing fresh, non-processed wholefoods," Alice advised.

"The ultimate goal should be to broaden the diet to include as much diversity as possible, as the gut microflora has been shown to benefit from a wide range of nutrient-rich foods."

Jenny went on: "People with gut issues should focus on foods which are reasonably easy to digest. Instead of salads and bran, look to soups, stews, rice, and oats. This will help give digestion a bit of a break, whilst providing the type of fibre which helps it to work properly."

Brittany Pearse, Nutritionist at Bimuno, continued: "What we put into the gut – and how we're fuelling the good gut bacteria – matters. Generally, our diets tend to be less diverse than we want. As well as lack of fibre, we also see low variety in plant-based foods, and excessive consumption of protein, which can influence and change the gut microbiome's composition."

"Instead, aim for variety. Fruits, vegetables, legumes, grains, nuts and seeds are great natural sources of fibre. Oily fish, nuts and seeds contain omega 3s, which can help to support a balanced gut microbiome. A wider variety of plant-based foods means the body is taking more variety of fibre, as well as being more likely to consume micronutrients such as vitamins and minerals."

Dr Glenville added: "A cup of peppermint tea after eating can help digestive problems. Peppermint reduces inflammation in the digestive tract, relieving flatulence, heartburn and indigestion, and chamomile tea also has antispasmodic, anti-inflammatory, gas relieving properties."

Try this

- ★ Bio-Kult Boosted
- ★ Terranova Nutrition Digestive Enzyme Complex
- ★ New Nordic Dida
- ★ The Ginger People Organic Ginger Juice
- ★ The Good Guru Organic DigestKare

Top up your bacteria

Hannah explained: "Live bacteria supplements are a useful addition to gut-healing protocols, due to their ability to support multiple aspects of digestive function, for example:

- Helping us to digest our food, by producing enzymes such as lactase (needed to break down lactose in milk).
- Synthesising nutrients such as B vitamins, vitamin K and short-chain fatty acids.
- Inhibiting unbeneficial pathogenic species.
- Supporting the immune system (70 per cent of which is located in the gut).
- Stimulating peristalsis to ensure bowel movements.

"Different strains also exert their effects in

different parts of the digestive tract, so multi-strain products may provide more all-round support for digestive conditions."

And Jenny suggested: "For those looking to rebuild their microbiome after illness, infection, or antibiotics, a much stronger – between 30-100bn – will be required, and a broad-spectrum product would be best. Those with IBS-D or diarrhoea issues should look for a specific product which includes *S. Boulardii*, *L. rhamnosus* and *S. thermophilus*, whilst research has shown that a combination providing *L. plantarum*, *L. rhamnosus* and *B. animalis subsp. lactis* is the perfect blend to help IBS-C, constipation, and bloating."

NATURAL LIFESTYLE'S Top Picks



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Also contains B vitamins and caffeine to support energy levels, with coQ10 and guarana extract. One-a-day powder sachets -mix with water to make a delicious orange flavoured effervescent drink or take directly into the mouth.

Immune Intensive Night-time Support is a hot honey, lemon and blackcurrant drink for the evening, containing immune support with prebiotics and magnesium.

Powder sachets designed to be taken in the evening as a hot soothing lemon, honey and blackcurrant drink. 1000mg vitamin C per sachet with vitamin D and zinc to support immunity bee propolis, beta glucans and elderberry extract & inulin.



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www.newnordic.co.uk



What's your gut feeling?

A diverse microflora plays an important role in the development and function of all the bodily systems. The use of live bacteria supplements could be considered as part of a maintenance plan to support a balanced gut flora. The Bio-Kult Digestive Range is a line of scientifically developed multi-action formulations for the whole family. The line includes, the original 14 strain product, Bio-Kult Advanced, Bio-Kult Infantis for babies, toddlers and young children, and the latest additions to the range, Bio-Kult Boosted and Bio-Kult S. Boulardii for the digestive and immune systems.

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Ask the experts

NOURISHMENT FROM THE INSIDE...

by Alice Bradshaw

What nutrients can we be lacking if our skin isn't in the best of health and what are the most obvious outward signs?

It's often said that the skin is an outwards reflection of the health of the body. It may reflect nutrient deficiencies, hormonal imbalances, digestive problems and even poor lifestyle habits. Typically, rashes, dry skin, pimples and blemishes, broken capillaries and eczema suggest that there are some nutrient imbalances within the body that need addressing. A number of nutritional imbalances may compromise skin health. Deficiencies in vitamins A, C and E, essential fatty acids and protein are possibly the most detrimental to skin health and integrity.

What diet and lifestyle suggestions can you offer for healthy skin?

Generally, a diet that contains a lot of processed foods, sugar and alcohol is more likely to result in poor skin health. The diet for healthy skin will be nutrient-rich and be based upon fresh wholefoods and plant focused. Fresh vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds and quality protein sources are the basis of this diet. Poor gut health can lead to food intolerances and reactions to certain foods, which may manifest as skin rashes, blemishes and so on. It is important to address exercise, stress and sleep issues as these factors can influence the condition of the skin too.

And what are your go to supplements for healthy skin?

The key nutrients involved in supporting skin health include vitamins A, C and E, zinc, omega 3 fats, biotin, probiotics and sulphur. Adequate protein intake is also vital. Any of these nutrients can be missing from a diet that lacks variety and fresh, nutrient-dense wholefoods. Nutritional and botanical supplements may be a useful adjunct to a diet for optimal skin health. Nutrients such as vitamins A, C and E, as well as zinc and selenium, can easily be found within a multivitamin formula. Additionally, these nutrients can be combined with botanical compounds, such as nettle leaf, pumpkin seeds, watercress and other nutrient-dense green foods. There are also some speciality products that may offer additional support. They may contain ingredients such as methylsulfonylmethane, or MSM, which supports collagen production and hyaluronic acid, a water-loving molecule that is found in skin.

About the experts



ALICE BRADSHAW is a qualified Nutritional Therapist with a passion for health writing. She has worked in the natural health industry for 25 years and is Head of Education and Nutrition Information at Terranova Nutrition.



THERESA CUTTS is an independent Nutritional Consultant working with a wide range of brands in the natural products industry, being involved with many aspects, including product development, staff training and social media. She is Nutritional Consultant to Vestra Nutrition.



Dr JOHN BRIFFA BSc MB BS (Lond) is a holistic medical doctor, speaker and author of nine health books. He has formulated the immune-boosting supplement, Virilin.



ADRIENNE BENJAMIN is a Nutritionist at ProVen Probiotics and is committed to understanding (and sharing) the ways in which the gut and the microbiome support health.

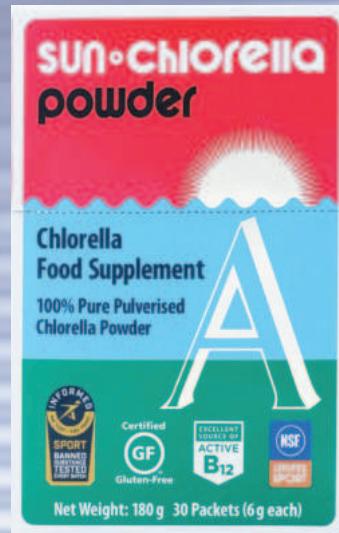


Q What are the most important natural agents for supporting my immune system?

Dr John Briffa advised: There are a few herbs and nutrients that have a role in supporting immunity. One of my favourites is *Andrographis paniculata*. This Asian herb has been shown to stimulate the immune system and several studies show it can safely combat infections, including both upper and lower respiratory tract infections such as cough, bronchitis and pneumonia. Another immunity-boosting herb is *Sambucus nigra* (black elderberry). This has a long history of use in Europe as a treatment for fever. Laboratory studies have found that *Sambucus nigra* has the ability to inhibit several strains of the 'flu virus, and other research shows the herb can help 'flu symptoms. Nutrient-wise, I like to use zinc for the immune system. This is known to play an important role in supporting broad immune function. I like to use zinc in combination with herbs as this helps cover our bases when supporting immunity and resistance to infection.

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Ask the experts

CRITICAL VITAMIN C...

by Theresa Cutts

Why is vitamin C so important for my health, and do I need other nutrients alongside it?

Vitamin C is one of the most well-known and frequently taken as a vitamin. Being water-soluble, it is not stored in the body and is easily flushed out. As with many nutrients, vitamin C plays many roles. Perhaps the most relevant for many at the moment is the fact it is needed for normal functioning of the immune system. It is also needed for collagen production, helping in the production of healthy skin cells and so making it a useful addition to a natural beauty regime. In addition, vitamin C can help us when we feel tired as it contributes to the normal function of the nervous system and can also play a role in the reduction of tiredness and fatigue. In nature, we find vitamin C with co-factors such as bioflavonoids and another flavonoid called quercetin. They have actions in their own right, especially as an antioxidant, they are also useful to support the absorption of vitamin C.

What is liposomal vitamin C and why is it different to other vitamin C supplements?

Liposomal vitamin C is a big leap in the advancement of the absorption and utilisation of this vitamin. Binding the vitamin C with liposomes has a protective effect on the vitamin as it travels through the body. Liposomes are such tiny particles that can travel through the body's cells, supporting absorption and utilisation. These nano-sized particles mimic the body's own cell membranes, so they are easily recognised by the body. This helps the vitamin get carried into the cell and end up just where it needs to be.

How do I make sure I am getting a quality liposomal supplement?

Liposomal supplements are becoming popular as they are better absorbed, and with vitamin C, some find it more gentle on the stomach. When choosing a supplement, look for a brand that has not just a liposomal form, but also the co-factors to support absorption. Look for a formula that's free from binders and fillers or other excipients, such as flavourings and colourings. Look for packaging that protects the product, such as dark glass too. And if you are environmentally aware, look for packaging that can be recycled too.



How can my gut play a role in weight management and are probiotics useful?

Adrienne Benjamin explained: Our weight is affected by many factors, both from our external environment and internal bodily systems – including diet, exercise, life stage, medications, genetics, sleep, stress, blood sugar management and gut health. Our gut is host to billions of bacteria, known as the microbiome, made up of both commensal (good) and potentially opportunistic (bad) strains of bacteria. Our commensal bacteria have a number of key roles in our bodies and maintaining a healthy balance of bacterial strains is key to supporting our health. Research into the roles of these bacteria has increasingly shown their potential impact on weight and weight loss and studies have found that overweight and obese people carry different strains of gut bacteria to lean individuals. The two main families of bacteria found in our intestines are known as *Firmicutes* and *Bacteroidetes* and increased numbers of *Firmicutes* have been associated with a higher weight. Studies into the use of probiotics supplements for weight loss have shown that *Lactobacillus* strains, in particular, may help to support a reduction in belly fat. How this weight loss occurs is not clear currently, although research has suggested that some bacteria might help to release hormones that support satiety and may also help to reduce inflammation, which is linked to obesity. More recent research suggests that some strains of bacteria may reduce absorption of dietary fat by increasing the amount of fat excreted in faeces. One study using a blend of bacteria known as Lab4P showed increased excretion of bile from the body, thus potentially reducing fat absorption and helping to support weight loss.



“I designed a brain-friendly kids’ food range”

Jo Saunders, Nutritional Therapy graduate at the College of Naturopathic Medicine (CNM), explains what inspired her studies.

C MN not only provides a brilliant breadth of knowledge which to build upon in private practice, it opens doors of opportunity for health-minded individuals enabling a change of career they feel truly passionate about.

What I love most about practising is sharing my knowledge and educating people in areas which are often confusing or overwhelming in the media. It feels amazing offering genuinely personalised nutrition advice which helps people make informed decisions and become responsible for their own health.

I have always had a passion for food, nutrition and the workings of the human body. Whilst my job in television was interesting and enjoyable (I worked for the Discovery Channel and Animal Planet, Tigress Productions, then at Channel 5), I felt my heart lay elsewhere. I was keen to train for a career I felt passionate about and could help myself, my family and others to feel better.

I strongly believe that symptom-led medicine is not sustainable. We have lost the art and science of preventative medicine. I wanted to learn more about how the body functions and how nutrition – through foods, herbs and appropriate supplements – can support optimal health.

I see clients as part of the UK-wide NatureDoc team, led by experienced Naturopath, Lucinda Miller. I have also co-founded the UK's first and only children's frozen food range focused on mental health and wellbeing, Smart Infused Fûd, something I am hugely excited about! The range is designed to be rich in nutrients studied for their benefits in cognitive function and mental wellness. Working mums need all the help they can get and Smart Infused Fûd offers guilt-free, locally sourced, environmentally friendly, nutritionally balanced food solutions for five-11-year-olds.

What attracted me to CNM was the holistic



Jo Saunders

approach, which was important to me and offered me the invaluable flexibility of studying around my full-time job.

Empowering, engaging and in-depth, the CNM course opened up amazing doors of opportunity for me, and I adore my work. I love being able to share my knowledge with clients and friends. My learning was hugely encouraging as a mother; it enabled me to help my children in the best way possible. Email josanders@naturedoc.co.uk for more information.

Study online with CNM, UK and Ireland's leading education provider in natural therapies. We have over 22 years' superb track record and over 80 per cent of CNM graduates are practising. Internationally accredited diploma courses, visit cnmcourses.com or call 01342 777 747.

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The question of conception

So many factors in modern living can be barriers to conception. And so, our leading experts offer their advice on boosting your fertility with a holistic plan.

Modern medicine has allowed those experiencing fertility issues to realise their hopes of a family, and there is now so much more we know about barriers to fertility compared to even a generation ago. And while there is no doubt that medical interventions are required in some cases, it's so important to realise that there is much you can do – man and woman – to support your fertility.

This takes the form of a focus on nutrition, eating the right foods and removing those that can make conception difficult, ensuring you take the correct supplements, and assessing your lifestyle to cut out any habits that may make you less fertile.

Fertility is an area in which natural health approaches can really complement any medical interventions, and here, our experts answer some key questions about fertility and discuss what options you could consider.

Q

What are the most common reasons people struggle to conceive

There are a range of factors involved here, but if you think it is unusual to face problems, you'd be wrong.

Alice Bradshaw, Head of Nutrition Education and Information at Terranova Nutrition, advised: "With an estimated one in six couples finding it difficult to conceive, fertility issues are more common now than in recent history. Although there are numerous physiological factors for this, such as low sperm count, body weight imbalances, failure to ovulate and hormone imbalances, it is thought that our modern, fast-paced living may be affecting our ability to conceive."

"Conception is likely to be more successful when a couple are in good health. Important issues to address include hormone

imbalances, low or excess weight, sleep and stress management."

Dr Marilyn Glenville is the UK's leading nutritionist specialising in women's health and author of *Getting Pregnant Faster* and explained that there are so many different factors involved in making a baby.

"From a medical point of view, infertility is believed to be caused by the following factors, and in these proportions:

- Ovulatory failure (including polycystic ovary syndrome) – 20 per cent.
- Tubal damage – 15 per cent.
- Endometriosis – five per cent.
- Male problems – 26 per cent.
- Unexplained – 30 per cent.

"If the mathematics don't add up, it's

because many couples experience more than one problem when trying to conceive: for example, the woman may suffer from endometriosis, but her partner may also have a low sperm count.

"Interestingly, the most common cause of infertility is 'unexplained,' which means that following thorough investigations, doctors can find no specific or identifiable medical problem at the root. But this is where a nutritional approach can come into play. If a couple fails to become pregnant, there is obviously something causing the problem. It's no good labeling infertility 'unexplained.' The answer is to look deeper – at lifestyle factors, nutritional deficiencies and even emotional elements."

Q

How much of a role does our overall health play in conception?

The answer in short is a lot.

"Fertility is multi-factorial, so it is important to look at every aspect of your health, emotions and lifestyle. So, diet, stress, alcohol, weight and smoking can all have an impact on fertility for both the man and woman," Dr Glenville explained.

"Although it goes without saying that a healthy diet is crucial to a successful pregnancy and a healthy baby, many people are unaware of the fact that diet can help to correct hormone imbalances that may affect a couple's ability to conceive."

"Couples should think about three months where they make changes in their diet, lifestyle

and take certain key nutrients in supplement form. This is especially important if they are over the age of 35, have unexplained infertility, had a number of failed IVFs or have experienced recurrent miscarriages. Three months is the recommended period of time for pre-conception because it takes approximately that long for the follicles on a woman's ovaries to develop before one is mature enough to release an egg at ovulation."

"Women are born with their egg store so although we cannot change your ovarian reserve, we can certainly change the quality of your eggs and this is the important point. By improving the

quality of your eggs, it increases your chances of conceiving naturally and also preventing a miscarriage. If you are going for IVF, then this will help the eggs to be as healthy as possible so as to give the technique the best chance. With a national average success rate for IVF of just 25 per cent, it is important to do whatever is possible."

"With men, it also takes at least three months for a new batch of sperm cells to mature, ready to be ejaculated. Men produce sperm all their lives, so it is always possible not only to improve the quality but also the quantity with lifestyle and nutritional changes."



Q What are the most important nutrients to support fertility?

Our nutritional status has a huge bearing on not just our overall wellbeing but also specifically plays a role in fertility. Therefore, if you are thinking about trying for a baby, or are having issues with conception, considering how nutritionally healthy you are is crucial.

Alice advised: "For women, a comprehensive vitamin and mineral formula, vitamin D3, omega 3 fatty acids. And for men, a multivitamin and mineral, vitamin D3, zinc and selenium. Specific nutrients can be used to target specific health concerns, such as L-carnitine and coenzyme Q10 for sperm motility."

And Dr Glenville went on: "As well as looking at what you eat and drink, there is now a great deal of scientific knowledge about the use of nutritional supplements and their beneficial effects on boosting fertility, either to increase natural conception or to improve the success rate of IVF."

"Zinc is the most widely studied nutrient in terms of fertility for both men and women, and a zinc deficiency can cause chromosome changes in either men or women, leading to reduced fertility and an increased risk of miscarriage. Men given a combination a combination of zinc and folic acid showed a 74 per cent increase in total sperm count.

"Vitamin E has been shown to increase fertility when given to both men and women. With men, vitamin E helps to increase fertilisation rates during ICSI treatments. If a woman over the age of 35 is told that her fertility problems are caused by her age, then it is likely that she could benefit from taking both vitamins E and C. These antioxidants have been shown to significantly reduce age-related ovulation decline."

She continued: "Two amino acids, L-arginine and L-carnitine, are particularly important for male fertility. L-arginine is essential for healthy sperm production and protects the sperm against oxidative damage. The higher the levels of L-carnitine in sperm cells, the higher the sperm count and motility.

"And the omega 3 fatty acids have far reaching effects for both male and female fertility. Sometimes, immune problems may be affecting a woman's ability to get and stay pregnant. The theory is that in order for her body to stay pregnant, her immune system has to quieten down because half the baby's DNA is not hers. Normally, if the body detects something foreign, it aims to reject it and expel it from the body. For some women, their immune systems do not quieten down and so they can't get or stay pregnant.

"One of the immune antibodies measured is called antiphospholipid antibodies (APAs). These blood-clotting antibodies can prevent implantation and cause recurrent miscarriage by attacking the cells that build the placenta. The medical treatment for this is blood thinners like aspirin and heparin but research has shown that fish oil given to 22 women with APAs who already had three or more miscarriages went on to have 23 pregnancies (one woman has twins) without a miscarriage. Omega 3 fatty acids are also important for male fertility because semen is rich in prostaglandins, which are produced from these omega 3 fatty acids. Men with poor sperm quality, abnormal sperm, poor motility or low count can have inadequate levels of these beneficial prostaglandins and by supplementing with omega 3 fish oils there was a significant increase in sperm count compared to a placebo."

You could also consider vitamin D, which helps to balance the immune system and in men, to support sperm motility.

Try this

- ★ Garden of Life mykind Organics Prenatal Multi
- ★ Viridian Nutrition Folic Acid with DHA
- ★ Natural Health Practice Advanced Fertility Support for Men
- ★ Pharma Nord Bio-Selenium + Zinc
- ★ Good Health Naturally Vitamin D3 4000IU

Q Can you recommend a healthy fertility plan in terms of diet?

Our dietary choices can be a contributory factor as to why conception is taking time, and so both men and women should think about making some switches to their diet.

"Foods can either positively or negatively affect fertility. Alcohol consumption is associated with low sperm count in men and a lower rate of conception in women and xenoestrogens are environmental oestrogens that can make their way into food and water supplies. They can be found in tap water, food and drink stored in plastic and pesticides and herbicides," Alice explained.

"These chemicals have been shown to disrupt endocrine and hormonal balance and possibly lead to fertility issues, such as

sperm abnormalities and oestrogen imbalances. A high caffeine intake is associated with reduced fertility, so couples should be mindful of their intake of coffee, green tea, soft drinks and chocolate. Avoiding dietary sources of free radicals, saturated fats and trans fats will also help to maximise fertility."

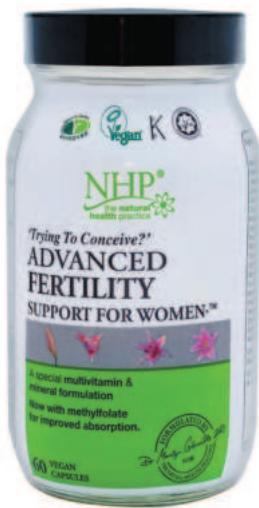
She continued: "In a recent study, it was shown that a Mediterranean-style diet was best for those looking to enhance fertility. Such a diet would be rich in whole plant foods, fresh fruit, vegetables, fish, olive oil, nuts and seeds and devoid of the excess sugars, refined carbohydrates, and caffeine containing beverages that are abundant in

many Western diets."

Dr Glenville continued: "This would be a healthy fertility diet to follow for both the man and woman:

- Plenty of fruit and vegetables.
- Complex carbohydrates – wholegrains like brown rice, oats and wholemeal bread.
- Organic foods where possible.
- Oily foods such as fish, nuts, seeds and oils.
- Reduced intake of saturated fats from dairy products.
- Increased intake of fibre.
- Avoid additives, preservatives and chemicals, such as artificial sweeteners.
- Avoid sugar, both on its own and hidden in food."

NATURAL LIFESTYLE'S Top Picks



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Contains

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- Vitamin B6 can contribute to the reduction of tiredness and fatigue

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Nutrients in their most bioavailable form to aid absorption. Vegan and Vegetarian Society registered, Kosher and Halal approved.

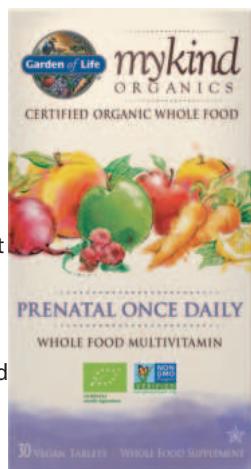
www.naturalhealthpractice.com

MyKind Organics Bespoke Whole Food Multivitamin

Garden of Life's mykind Organics Prenatal Once Daily is a bespoke whole food certified organic multivitamin that is also Non-GMO Project Verified. The convenient 'one a day' multivitamin has been formulated for women during pre-conception, pregnancy and lactation, and provides over 100% of your recommended nutrient intake of 16 vitamins and minerals, including natural state vitamin D3 and iron, plus 600mcg natural folate in its natural and biologically active form.

Garden of Life mykind Organics's patented Clean Tablet Technology uses only food ingredients no binders or fillers. Independently certified gluten free, vegan and kosher.

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Terranova Prenatal Multivitamin Complex

Terranova Prenatal Multivitamin Complex is a comprehensive vitamin and mineral complex that's been formulated for women who are planning on getting pregnant, are already pregnant and for breastfeeding mothers. Contains a high amount of necessary vitamins for pre-, post- and during pregnancy such as folate, calcium and vitamin E. Made from all natural antioxidant rich superfoods and botanicals. Highly bioavailable, synergistic complex of botanicals and superfoods. Gluten, dairy and soy-free. Suitable for vegetarians and vegans.

www.terranovahealth.com

Pro-conception fertility

His and her's high potency formulation specifically designed to provide the essential nutrients to support pro-conception fertility. Fertility for Women contains the recommended daily intake of 400ug of supplemental folic acid. Key ingredients include DHA, zinc, iron and vitamins E and C. Fertility

for Men is a high potency multivitamin and mineral formula to optimise the potential for male reproductive fertility. Essential nutrients include zinc, vitamins C and B12. Zinc contributes to normal fertility and reproduction. Ideally, take at least 90 days ahead of planned conception. Vegan. Never GMO, palm oil free, against animal testing, ethically made.



www.viridian-nutrition.com

Support your wellbeing at home

With lockdown meaning we are spending much more time in our houses, have you thought about how an at-home sauna could help support your health and wellbeing? The people at Clearlight are here to explain how.

Detoxing your body is an important process, and while some choose to do an annual new year cleanse, removing toxins is ideally an ongoing process, which helps to support your health and wellbeing.

And one powerful tool to help is via sweating in an infrared sauna. By targeting the fat cells in your adipose tissue, toxins that are stored in these cells are broken down and released back into your body to be excreted. This is one of the benefits of infrared saunas, compared to traditional ones, as it's the infrared-wavelengths that penetrate the toxin storing cells, accelerating the detoxification process on a cellular level.

The signs that you have toxins in the body can take a number of forms. Poor lymphatic drainage, otherwise known as lymphatic dysfunction or lymphedema, can lead to inflammation, skin discolouration, and raised risk of infection in other parts of your body. Specific to toxins in the digestive system, irritable bowel syndrome, constipation, diarrhoea and leaky gut are common signs of toxins lurking in the digestive tract.

So, how could a sauna help you?

The benefits

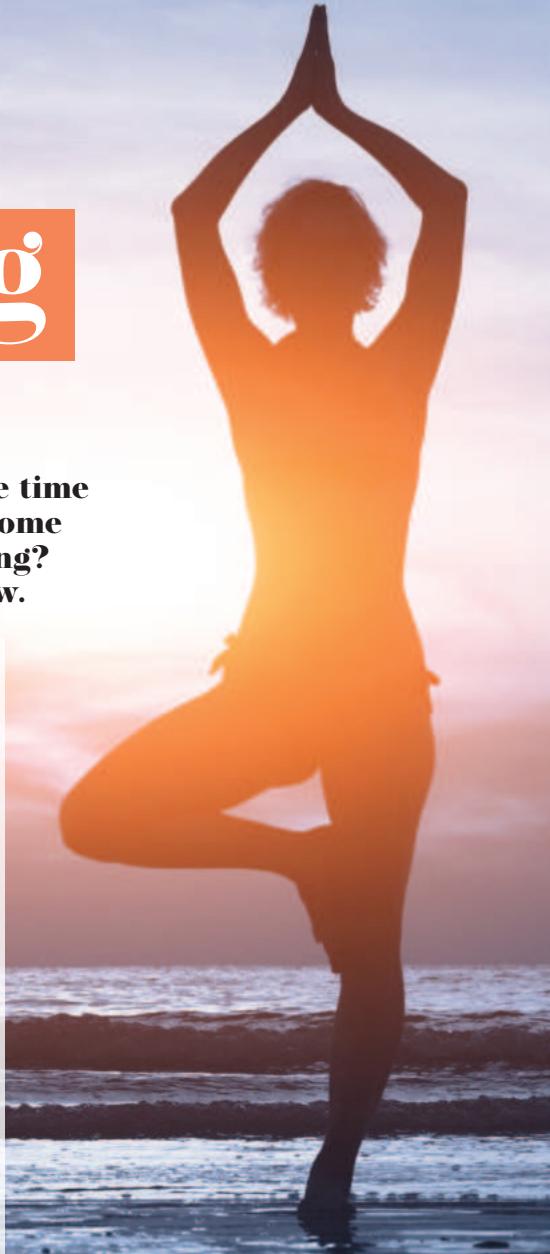
Looking in greater detail at the benefits of sweating, infrared sauna produces the same infrared heat produced by the sun. Infrared heat is required for all living things for optimum health. The radiant heat from a Clearlight infrared sauna surrounds you and penetrates deeply into your joints, muscles and tissues, increasing oxygen flow and circulation.

Using Clearlight's Sanctuary Sauna (*pictured below*) helps to remove impurities from your cells, specifically the cells inside your fat where our body stores waste and harmful toxins such as cholesterol and heavy metals. When used properly, your Clearlight infrared sauna will help improve your overall wellness.

But that's not all when it comes to the benefits, as it can also support your waistline; Clearlight explains that, according to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, regular use of a sauna imparts a similar boost on the cardiovascular system to running. As you relax in the gentle infrared heat, your body is hard at work producing sweat, pumping blood and burning calories. As your body increases sweat production to cool itself, your heart works harder to pump blood at a greater rate to boost circulation. This increase in your metabolism will burn calories.

And let's also look at our muscles too; saunas, in particular infrared saunas, have been proven to be beneficial when it comes to helping your sore muscles heal. A study from *Clinical Rheumatology* found that saunas helped to increase blood flow and relieve tension in the joints and sore muscles of those living with chronic diseases like rheumatoid arthritis over a four-week period.

This pain relief is largely driven by the dilation of your blood vessels, as well as the increased rate in which your body pumps blood as your cardiovascular and lymphatic system are both prompted to accelerate inside the sauna. The exposure to heat, be it with a traditional or infrared sauna, provides relief for muscle tension during recovery, and helps provide it with the conditions and nutrients needed for an accelerated recovery phase.



Discover Clearlight

With contemporary design and groundbreaking innovation, the Clearlight Sanctuary Saunas are unlike any other. They are the only true full spectrum infrared saunas available, offering advanced near, mid and far infrared technologies.



Clearlight's robust True Wave Full Spectrum heating system provides all wavelengths 100 per cent of the time to optimise your sauna session. The state-of-the-art digital sauna control works in concert with Clearlight's sleek tablet/smartphone app to give you the ability to control your sauna remotely.

With a lifetime warranty for residential use, Clearlight uses superior full spectrum technology, with medical grade chromotherapy included. And the best about this is the sauna hardly uses any electricity (around 30p for an hour of using it) and plugs into any standard household socket.

Find out more at www.infraredsauna.co.uk

• Clearlight reminds users that this should not be taken as direct medical advice, and users should always consult a medical professional if complications arise from prolonged use.

Inside the vitamin D Covid trial

Researchers examine if vitamin D can help to protect against Covid.

Can vitamin D protect against Covid? That is the aim of a ground-breaking piece of research being carried out by Queen Mary University of London.

The CORONAVIT study is a clinical trial looking at the effects of vitamin D supplementation on the immune system and protecting against Covid-19. Vitamin D supplements will be taken by over 5,000 people for a period of six months with studies looking into the effects.

Scientists at Queen Mary University hope that the large-scale trial will help to find out if correcting people's vitamin D deficiencies over winter can reduce the risk and/or severity of Covid-19 and other acute respiratory infections.

SUPPLEMENT OF CHOICE

The vitamin D supplement being used in the trial is Bio-Vitamin D3 from Pharma Nord UK.

Scientists chose this particular supplement because of its long-established use in other clinical trials and a number of previously published studies which show Bio-Vitamin D3's

effectiveness and its ability to raise vitamin D levels in the blood.

Bent Henriksen, Pharma Nord UK Managing Director, said: "To be chosen for one of the most important and high profile clinical trials in recent years is a real accolade for Pharma Nord and a hugely valuable seal of approval for the quality, safety and bioavailability of our Bio-Vitamin D3."

"The scientists at Queen Mary University are doing some amazing work in this field and it will be fascinating to see how the CORONAVIT study pans out. It was vitally important for them to choose a vitamin D supplement with a proven track record in clinical trials and documented evidence of its effectiveness in raising levels of vitamin D in the blood."

"Pharma Nord Bio-Vitamin D3 ticks both boxes in this respect and the fact that it is made to pharmaceutical standards is a further sign of quality, which will be crucial when it comes to assessing the results of such a large-scale trial."

PROMISING RESULTS

While a number of early studies into the relationship between vitamin D

supplementation and Covid-19 have yielded some promising results, this is the first mass-participation trial to take place.

Interest in the trial has been intense with coverage across national and international newspapers and broadcasters, including BBC News.

For a total of six months, the CORONAVIT study participants will be given supplements of vitamin D in two different strengths. Half the subjects will be taking 20mcg (800IU) capsules, while the other half will be given capsules with 80mcg (3200IU). The study is open-label and has no placebo group.

Those behind the trial say that it has the potential to give a definitive answer to the question of whether vitamin D offers protection against Covid-19 and other respiratory infections.

Lead researcher, Professor Adrian Martineau, from the Institute of Population Health Sciences at Queen Mary University of London, commented: "There is mounting evidence that vitamin D might reduce the risk of respiratory infections, with some recent studies suggesting

that people with lower vitamin D levels may be more susceptible to Coronavirus.

The UK Government already recommends that people take a low-dose vitamin D supplement over the winter to protect their bone health, but we do not know if this will have effect on Covid-19 or if higher doses might be able to provide protection against the virus. The CORONAVIT trial will test whether higher doses of vitamin D might offer protection against winter respiratory infections, including Covid-19."

Principal Investigator of the study, Dr David Jolliffe, from the Blizard Institute and Institute of Population Health Sciences at Queen Mary University of London, added: "CORONAVIT trial has the potential to give a definitive answer to the question of whether vitamin D offers protection against Covid-19. Vitamin D supplements are low in cost, low in risk and widely accessible; if proven effective, they could significantly aid in our global fight against the virus."

The CORONAVIT study has received funding from Fischer Family Trust, a charity organisation specialising in supporting medical research and education. It is also supported by Barts Charity and the Aim Foundation.

Why vitamin D levels fall – and how supplements can make them rise

In the UK, sunshine between October and April is too weak to make vitamin D in the skin and dietary sources of vitamin D are limited. As a result, around two in five of the UK adult population have inadequate levels of vitamin D over winter and spring.

The UK Government recommends that the general population considers taking vitamin D supplements during winter and spring. This has recently been extended to a recommendation of year-round supplementation in view of potentially decreased sun exposure during periods of lockdown.

In research, Pharma Nord's Bio-Vitamin D3 – the supplement being used in the CORONAVIT study – has been shown to raise vitamin D levels. In a study in the journal *Nutrients*¹, scientists found that a group given 40mcg of Bio-Vitamin D3 a day for five months over autumn and winter saw their vitamin D levels rise from an average of 60 nmol/L to an average of 75 nmol/L – a level health authorities regard as optimal.

By contrast, a group taking a placebo for the same amount of time found their vitamin D levels fell from an average of 60 nmol/L to an average of 47 nmol/L.

Pharma Nord's Bio-Vitamin D3 has been used in other scientific studies into the effects of vitamin D supplementation.

One study² was conducted by researchers from Oslo University and looked at vitamin D and muscle strength. Another study³ was carried out by Norwegian scientists and looked at vitamin D and its role in the wellbeing of school pupils.

Both studies used Bio-Vitamin D3 and showed that the product resulted in significant increases in vitamin D blood levels.

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1. Vitamin D Supplementation during Winter: Effects on Stress Resilience in a Randomized Control Trial Hansen, A.L.; Ambroziak, G.; Thornton, D.; Mündt, J.C.; Kahn, R.E.; Dahl, L.; Waage, L.; Kattenbraker, D.; Araujo, P.; Murison, R.; Rydal, K.; Grung, B. *Nutrients* 2020, 12, 3258.
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3. Linking vitamin D status, executive functioning and self-perceived mental health in adolescents through multivariate analysis: A randomized double-blind placebo control trial Bjørn Grung, Asle M Sandvik, Kay Hjelle, Lisbeth Dahl, Livar Freyland, Irene Nygård, Anita L Hansen. *Scand J Psychol* 2017; 58(2): 123-130.

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ESSENTIAL POST-WORKOUT PLAN

We know that exercise has many benefits but adding in a post-workout care plan is also crucial to ensure you repair and recover.

Daily exercise brings great health benefits, both physically and mentally. Some people exercise to lose weight or improve fitness, whilst others do to boost their mood. Whatever your reason, adding exercise into your daily routine will have positive impacts on your overall health and wellbeing.

When we exercise regularly, it's been medically proven we decrease our risk of developing major health issues such as heart disease.

Furthermore, there have been many studies showing the improvements that activity can have on your mental health. Exercise releases the hormone, cortisol, which is a great support for managing anxiety. Overall, exercise is a great way to benefit both your body and mind in the long run.

ESSENTIAL OPTIONS

Essential oils can also be a great way to aid your post-workout routine, whether it's using the oils on their own for their wonderful natural properties or specially formulated blends.

Black spruce is a great essential oil for soothing aching muscles and joint stiffness, helpful to use when experiencing muscle or joint pain after exercise. Another great essential oil for soothing achy muscles and joints is eucalyptus globulus due to its wonderful cooling and warming properties.

Specially formulated massage oils using a blend of essential oils and carrier oils can also be a great way to ease overworked muscles and joints after intense workout sessions. They can be used as a body oil after a bath or shower and lightly massaged into the skin or can be added to a warm running bath as a nice soothing bath oil.

Epsom salts are composed of magnesium sulphate, known for its beneficial effects on health and wellbeing. Renowned for calming pain and easing muscle strains, epsom salts are great to include in your post-workout routine. Pure epsom salts infused with pre-blended mobility essential oil blends, with oils such as peppermint, rosemary and eucalyptus are perfect for adding to a bath to release toxins from the body, so you are ready for your next workout.



THE NEED FOR RECOVERY

We've established exercise can benefit both our body and mind, therefore, we need to make sure we're looking after our bodies post-exercise so we can continue to reap the benefits. Post-workout care can be just as important as the exercise itself, as the rest between workouts is where your muscles repair themselves.

There are many ways in which you can care for your body post-workout that will help reduce the risk of sustaining an injury. Simple things like stretching for five-10 minutes can help to reduce muscle soreness and staying constantly hydrated can improve muscle strength. Rest days are also an important part of recovery, as it will help you perform better in your next workout.



Reader offer

Natural Lifestyle has teamed up with Absolute Aromas to offer readers the chance of winning one restorative post-workout bundle, including Mobility Epsom Bath Salts, Mobility Massage Oil, and cooling Ice and Glow Gel. Mobility is a soothing essential oil blend specially formulated to help provide warming, soothing relief to aching muscles and joints, helping to restore and revive, whilst Ice and Glow Gel can be applied whenever required to cool, refresh and restore tired muscles. See opposite page to enter.

Giveaways

Natural Lifestyle is about giving back to our readers, and each month, this page will showcase a selection of giveaways.



GOFIGURE SHAKES AND SNACKSMART GUMMIES

Natural Lifestyle has partnered with OptiBiotix to offer readers the chance of winning one of three Shakes and Gummies sets (worth £32.49 combined). Featuring the award-winning SlimBiome weight management ingredient, the GoFigure meal replacement shake helps support a diverse microbiome and offers a healthy, science-backed and sustainable approach to weight loss. Plus, get plenty of fibre to aid digestive health with the delicious Apple & Strawberry SnackSmart Gummies – snacking healthily has never been so easy.



BIO-CANNA CBD OIL

Introducing a pure, most effective and most easily absorbed CBD oil – Bio-Canna. Whereas most CBD is poorly absorbed, Bio-Canna is the breakthrough. Perfected through a decade of research, validated by human clinical trial, 100 per cent organic, and encapsulated in a superior GMO-free liposomal delivery system, Bio-Canna is fast and effective, and seven times better absorbed. It's internationally certified CBD oil, verifying its safety, purity and potency – and *Natural Lifestyle* is offering readers the chance of winning one of 12.



BENECOS BODY CARE SET

Natural Lifestyle has teamed up with benecos to offer readers the chance of winning one of four of these amazing natural and organic bodycare sets, containing a body lotion, shower gel, deodorant, hand cream and a konjac sponge to keep skin looking and feeling its best. Benecos prides itself in offering quality, modern, affordable and toxic free make-up and toiletries for everyone.

VITASIL SILICIUM LIQUID

Natural Lifestyle is offering readers the chance of winning one of five Vitasil Silicium Liquid 500ml size. The best liquid for helping to deal with upper respiratory issues, it can also help to reduce inflammation in the body. Vitasil Silicium Liquid is also effective at helping to take toxins out of the body, and allows the body to generate collagen naturally, helping to reduce wrinkles, and firms and hydrating the skin.



ENTER HERE Please indicate below which giveaway you are applying for, complete form and post back to us at 'Reader Offers', *Natural Lifestyle* magazine, The Old Dairy, Hudsons Farm, Fieldgate Lane, Ugly Green, Bishops Stortford CM22 6HJ. Closing Date: April 1, 2021. **Or you can enter online – visit www.mynaturallifestyle.com**

Please tick: Benecos OptiBiotix Bio-Canna Vitasil Absolute Aromas

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Storecupboard heroes

Take inspiration from the ingredients in your storecupboard with the help of Miguel Barclay and his new book, *Storecupboard One Pound Meals*.



Aloo masala cones

Makes four portions

This very simple recipe takes a handful of basic ingredients and transforms them with trusty storecupboard spices.

Ingredients:

- 4 potatoes, roughly diced (or 1 x 300g tin of potatoes)
- 1 onion, thinly sliced
- 2tsp curry powder
- 1tsp ground turmeric (optional)
- Pinch of nigella seeds
- Handful of fresh coriander, chopped

Method:

- Boil the potatoes in salted water for about 15 minutes until soft, then drain. If using tinned potatoes, drain, dice and set aside.
- Pan-fry the onion in a splash of olive oil over a medium heat for five minutes until softened. Add the curry powder and continue to fry for about 10 seconds

before seasoning and adding the turmeric, if using, the cooked potatoes and a splash of water. Continue to cook over a medium heat for about five minutes, allowing the potatoes to disintegrate slightly so they absorb as much of the flavour as possible, then throw in the nigella seeds and coriander for a final minute.

- Make a cone shape with one of the wraps and then spoon in some of the soft potato mixture. Repeat with the remaining wraps.



Sicilian focaccia pizza

Makes four portions

In Italy, there's a type of pizza with a focaccia base that they sell by the gram. They just cut off a slice, weigh it and wrap it in paper for you to take home to eat. I rather like that idea.

Ingredients:

- 250g strong bread flour
- 200ml lukewarm water
- 7g dried yeast
- 50g sun-dried tomatoes
- 1 garlic clove
- 1 spring onion, thinly sliced
- 1 ball of mozzarella cheese
- Olive oil
- Salt and pepper

Method:

- Grab a bowl and mix together the flour, water and yeast, along with a big pinch of salt to create a wet dough. Transfer the dough to an oiled baking tray, brush with oil and cover with a tea towel. Put in a warm place, for example, near a radiator, for one hour to rise.
- Meanwhile, throw the sun-dried tomatoes and garlic into a blender along with a generous glug of olive oil and whizz to a paste.
- Preheat your oven to 190°C/gas mark 5.
- Once the dough has risen, punch it to knock out the air, then stretch it out to fill the whole tray. Bake for 10 minutes. Remove from the oven, spread the sun-dried tomato paste over the top, add a sprinkle of chopped spring onion, tear over chunks of mozzarella and then return to the oven for 10 more minutes, or until golden brown at the edges and the mozzarella has melted.
- Season with salt and pepper and cut into big squares.



Vegan mushroom wellington

Makes four portions

This is a vegan dream come true, perfect for special occasions. Imagine tucking into this, with all the trimmings, at Christmas. Why not grab that puff pastry out of the freezer and give this a try?

Ingredients:

- 4 onions, diced
- 1kg mushrooms, sliced
- 4 garlic cloves, sliced
- A few sprigs of fresh thyme, leaves picked and stalks discarded (or 1tsp dried thyme)
- 1 sheet of frozen vegan puff pastry, defrosted
- Olive oil
- Salt and pepper

Method:

Start by pan-frying the onions in a glug of olive oil over a low heat with a big pinch of salt for about 15 minutes until sticky and caramelised. Remove from

the pan and put to one side.

- Pan-fry the mushrooms in a splash of olive oil over a medium heat for about 10 minutes, adding the garlic and thyme halfway through and seasoning to taste. Once the mushrooms are cooked, return the onions to the pan, mix it all together, then remove from the heat and allow to cool.
- Preheat your oven to 180°C/gas mark 4 and line a baking tray with greaseproof paper.
- Lay your puff pastry sheet on the lined baking tray, then spoon the filling in a line down the middle. Fold one side of the pastry over the other and seal the edges by pushing down gently with your fingers. Lightly score the top with a knife to create a criss-cross pattern, then brush with a little oil.
- Bake in the oven for about 25 minutes, or until golden brown and flaky.

NOTE: Make ahead – this can be made in advance and cooked from frozen.



Storecupboard One Pound Meals by Miguel Barclay
(available now, Headline Home, RRP £16.99). Photo credit: Dan Jones.

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- Clearlight reminds users that this should not be taken as direct medical advice, and users should always consult a medical professional if complications arise from prolonged use.

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