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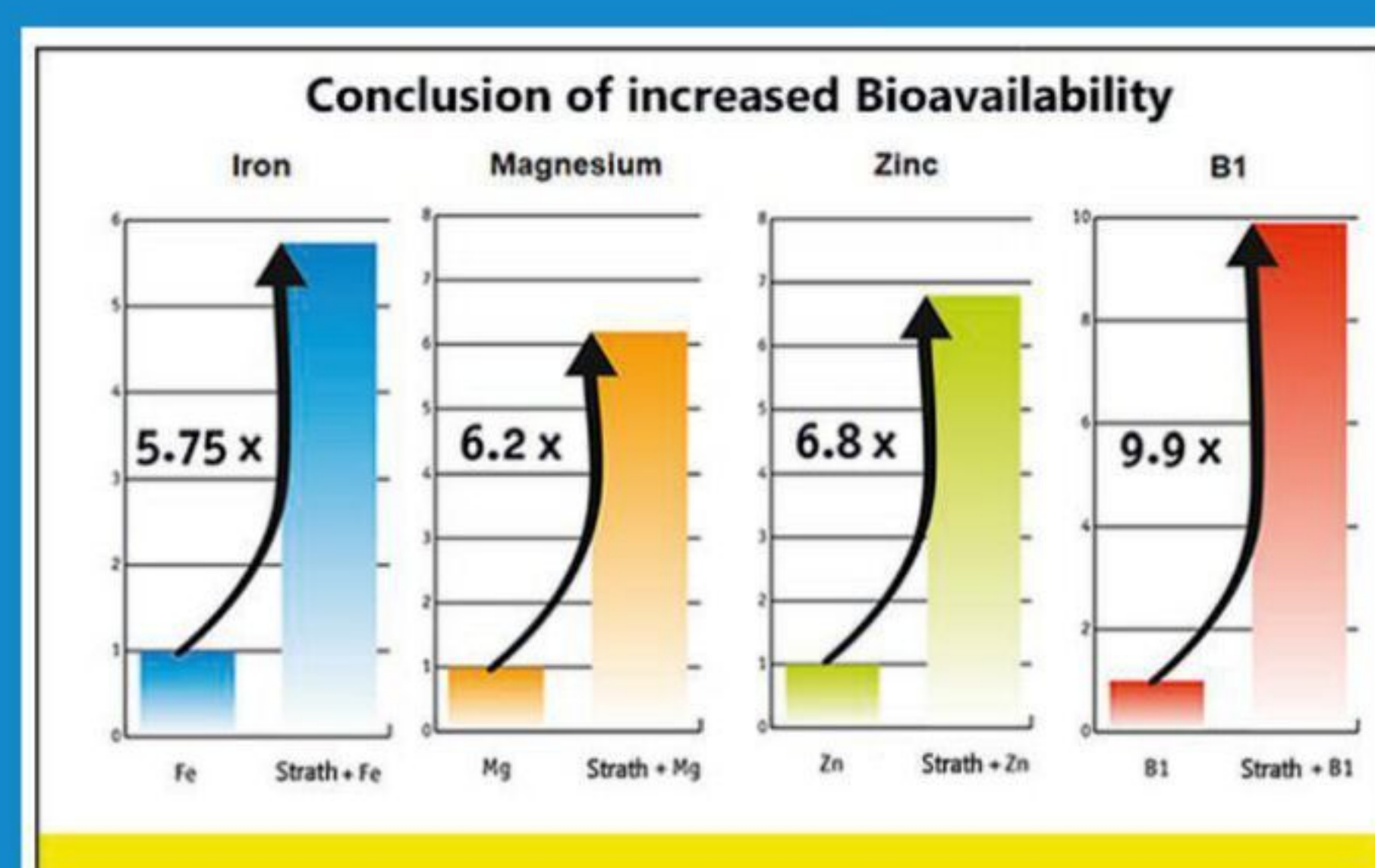
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Welcome to the issue

Welcome to the latest *Healthy For Men*, my first as interim editor while Tom Rowley is on parental leave.

In this issue, as we head into 2021, we have loads of ways to help you get your fitness, health and general wellbeing on track after what has been a very tricky 2020, to say the least. I've been doing the maths – and in this issue alone, we have awesome advice from no fewer than 21 professionals at the top of their game.

We hear from former Special Forces operative Jason Fox (page 12), who bares his soul to tell us why it's so important to keep talking about mental health, and how we all need to get out of our comfort zones in order to build our inner strength. It's inspiring stuff.

As you plan your exercise goals, not only do we have a guide to smashing

those aims – whatever they are (page 18) – but we focus on the nutritional side, with the lowdown on all things protein (page 30) so you can make sure you have what you need to support your fitness.

Staying with fuel, we take a look at the vital ingredients you're going to require to help your immune system through winter and beyond (page 42), and we also look at the do's and don'ts when it comes to eating for your heart (page 37).

And if you're one of the millions of men who have great difficulty sleeping properly (but may not always talk about it), we have plenty of expert advice to help you fix that, too (page 60).

Enjoy the issue, and have a great start to the new year.

Gershon



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In our latest episode, we speak with British round-the-world yachtsman Alex Thomson, who reveals how he coped mentally and physically while spending two-and-a-half months alone at sea, travelling 26,000 miles. From surviving on 30 minutes' sleep at a time to eating freeze-dried food, he shares how he managed and what he learned (read more about him on page 66). Download on your preferred podcast platform today.



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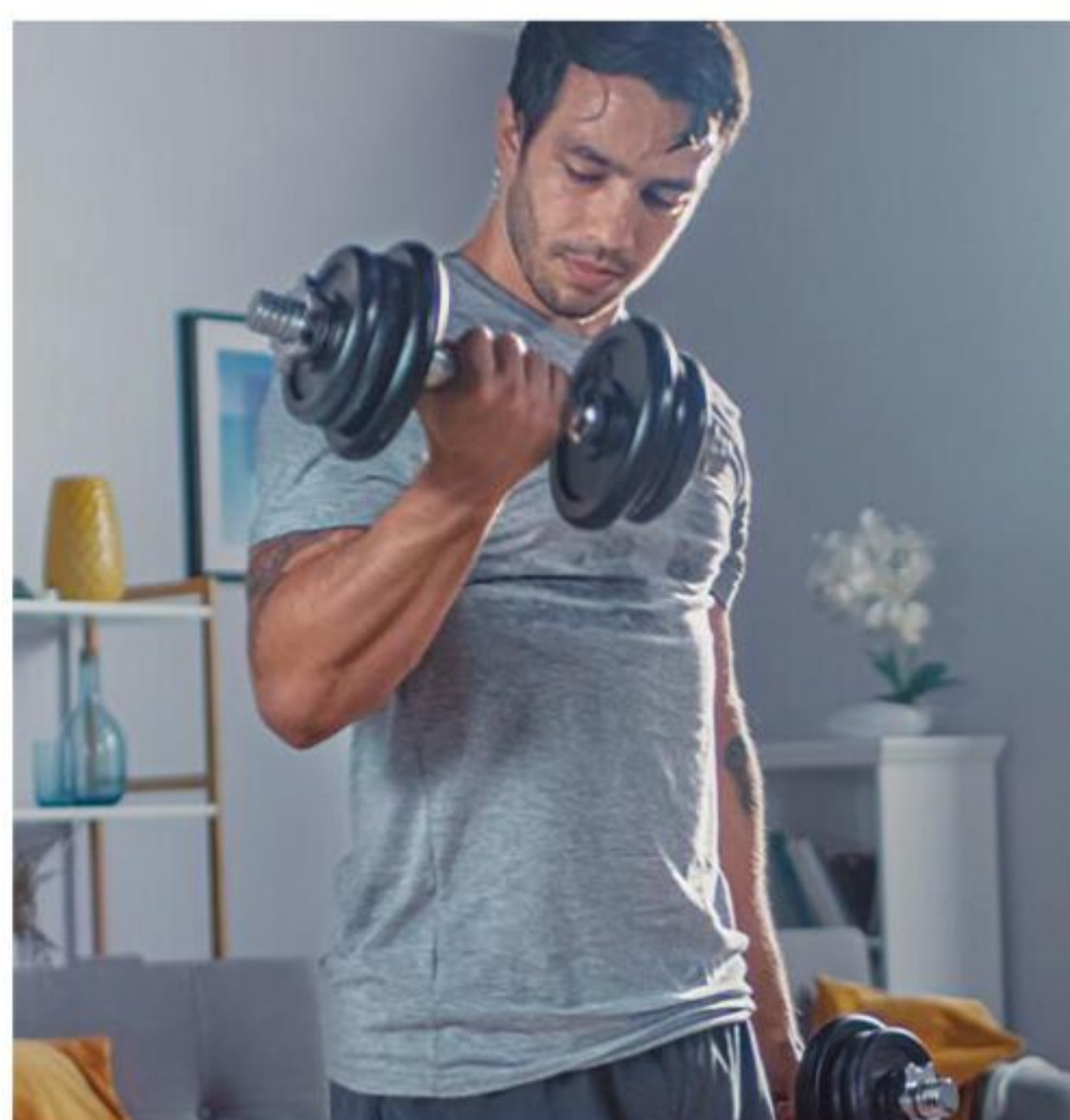


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DO NOT KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON – GET EXCITED!

If you tend to feel anxious before a big event, whether it's a job interview, work presentation or fitness challenge, you're not alone, because most of us do.

The most common method of dealing with these nerves is to try to remain calm, and we go to all sorts of lengths to relax ourselves. However, a US research paper in the *Journal Of Experimental Psychology* has counterintuitively suggested that calming down might not be the best strategy for a successful outcome.

According to Alison Wood Brooks, the paper's author, ramping up your excitement is actually a far better way to manage your pre-performance anxiety, and produced significantly better results in the study for singing, public speaking and maths, compared to those who tried to stay calm. She argues that if we adopt an 'opportunity mindset' as opposed to a 'threat mindset', we will be more likely to succeed in whatever our challenge is.

'People believe that trying to calm down is the best way to contend with pre-performance anxiety,' Wood Brooks says. 'However, across several experimental studies, I found that reappraising anxiety as excitement is more effective than trying to calm down.'

NEWS IN BRIEF

► SKIN YOUR RASPBERRIES

If you suffer from hypersensitive skin complaints like rashes and inflammation, then black raspberries might help you. An Ohio State University study found that eating the fruit for a period of three weeks drastically reduced skin inflammation levels.



► SUPPORT YOUR WORKOUT

A study by Tohoku University, Japan, has found that wearing compression garments or supports during and after exercise not only aids recovery but also minimises the loss of strength. The study focused on knee supports and found those wearing them trained to maximal intensity quicker than those without. You can also help your joints with **Holland & Barrett Glucosamine Sulphate 1000mg** (£3.99, 30 caplets, 12 points).



► REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL

Research has found that people who retain a positive outlook on life are less likely to develop memory problems as they age. The US study tracked participants over decades, and found memory declined as people aged, but was slowed in those with a happier view of life.

► SCRATCH THAT ITCH

The most common cause of itchy beard syndrome (we made that up) are ingrown hairs, which can appear soon after you stop shaving – something many of us did during lockdown. There are many solutions (such as not growing a beard), but we like the healing properties of aloe, which helps reduce itchiness. Find it in **Mancave Face & Stubble Cleanser** (£5.99, 100ml, 20 points).



All products available at hollandandbarrett.com

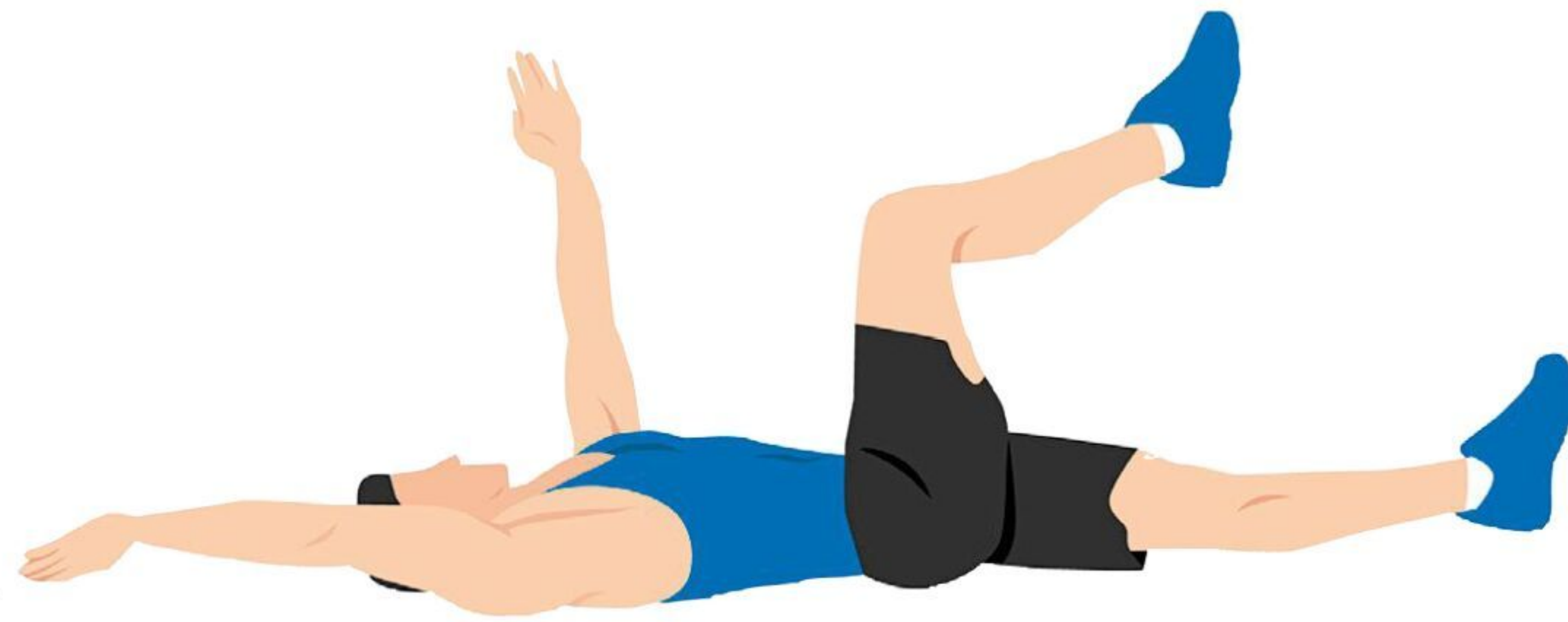
FIGHT DEMENTIA WITH COLD WATER

If you've been braving the elements by swimming outdoors during lockdown, you might have landed a blow against dementia at the same time. Researchers from Cambridge University discovered that swimming in freezing water might help protect the brain with a 'cold shock' protein, found in the blood of frequent outdoor swimmers. The protein is thought to slow the development of dementia – and might even fix some of the problems it can cause.*

Master one move

The deadbug

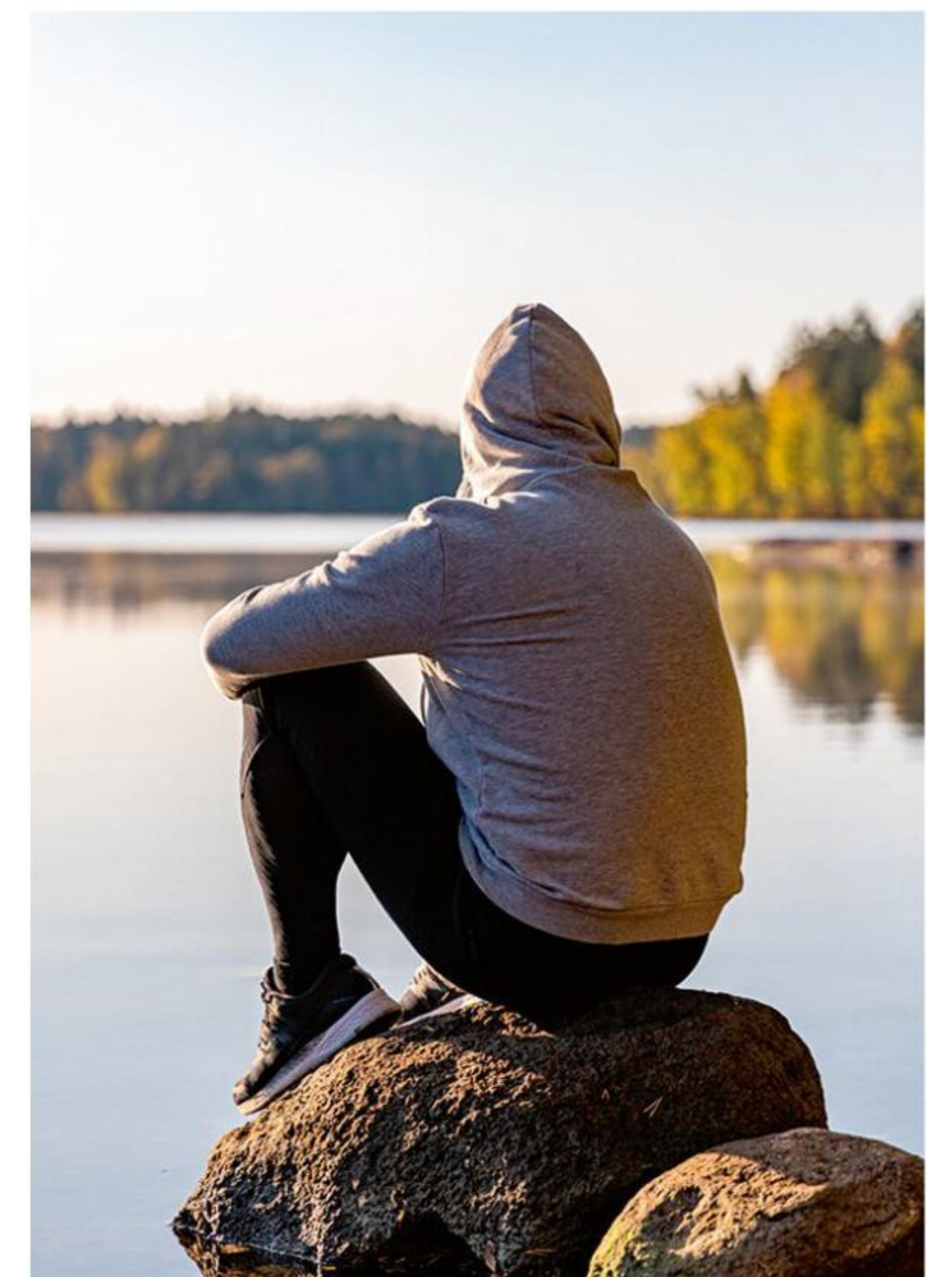
This move is a fantastic workout for your core strength, and requires no equipment so you can do it anywhere.



- ▶ Lie on the ground with your back in contact with the floor and your knees bent.
- ▶ Raise your legs up to a 90-degree angle with knees above your hips, and toes pointed towards your shins.
- ▶ At the same time raise your arms straight up, also at a 90-degree angle.
- ▶ Exhale, drive the lower back into the ground, then stretch your right leg out so that your heel is just above the floor – while simultaneously extending and lowering your left arm just above the floor.
- ▶ Bring leg and arm back to 90-degree angles, relax for a moment, then repeat with your left leg and right arm.

THE SOUND OF SILENCE

Those of us who have been working from home during lockdown may have found life much quieter than usual, but that's not necessarily a bad thing. In a German study, researchers found that two hours of silence helped mice** become more alert – the quiet helped their brains create new cells in the hippocampus, the centre for learning and emotions. Whatever your circumstances, treating yourself to some silence may be the key to improving your cognitive ability.



LEVEL UP YOUR LIBIDO

Arginine can play a significant role in boosting your flagging libido, according to Professor Piet Hoebeke, a Belgian urologist. The amino acid assists in nitrous oxide production which is essential for erections, and can support your immune system and libido. It's found in red foods such as beetroot, peppers, tomatoes and



cranberries, or take it in supplement form with **Holland & Barrett's L-Arginine capsules 500mg** (£4.99, 50 capsules, 16 points).

ARE YOU CHILLY?

If you're feeling a bit colder, it might not just be because of the weather. For two centuries, the accepted normal human temperature has been 37°C, as decreed by German doctor Carl Wunderlich. But, recent findings have shown that we're actually a little cooler than that. A UK study in 2017 found that our average temperature was 36.6°C, while research in California in 2019 recorded an average of 36.4°C. One reason for this might be that healthcare has improved since Wunderlich's times, so we're fighting infections less and therefore body temperatures drop slightly.



A man with short brown hair and a beard, wearing a dark grey zip-up jacket and dark cargo pants, stands with his arms crossed in a rocky stream. The background shows a lush, green hillside. The text "JASON FOX'S SECRETS OF INNER STRENGTH" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font. A bright green horizontal bar is positioned below the text.

**JASON FOX'S
SECRETS
OF
INNER
STRENGTH**

The ex-special forces and TV star on leaving your comfort zone, how talking about mental health changed his life, and dealing with broken washing machines while at war

Jason Fox is no ordinary human being. After a 20-year military career in which he saw active service as part of the Special Boat Service, he went on to become one of the stars of Channel 4's cult reality hit *SAS: Who Dares Wins*. But, despite all that, what Fox wants us all to know is that he's no different to any of us. And if you're wondering when you last ran through gunfire in Afghanistan, that's not what he means.

'You can't get away from the fact that people are people,' he says. 'You've just got to look for the positives as opposed to the negatives.' He's especially fond of the recruits on the TV show, believing there are many similarities between them and his ex-military colleagues. 'Fundamentally, they're all driven, all perfectionists, they like to be busy, they like travel. And when they get an opportunity to chill out and let their hair down, they do.'

Fox has joined *HFM* on a Zoom call not just because he's a thoroughly decent person, but also because he has a new book out, *Life Under Fire*, which explores how we can build inner strength, confidence and thrive under pressure. But this is not some easy-win commercial venture for the former marine. Listening to him, it's clear it's a passion project, and he's desperate to help everyone fare better in the difficult circumstances many of us can find ourselves in. And his message is clear – if you want to deal with life's stresses, you need to get out of your comfort zone. Fox is not advocating heading to your nearest war

zone, but he does think by exposing ourselves to a bit of fear, we can learn a lot. 'If people are honest and say, "I'm a little bit unsure of doing something like this," and do it in manageable stages, they'll naturally learn how to deal with the situation. Ultimately, those challenges probably will get bigger and more daunting because you'll become comfortable with everything that's gone before.'

Similarly, if we want to learn how to thrive under pressure, we're going to have to experience it. 'Pressure is very important to becoming a more rounded version of yourself. You can liken it to diamonds, which are made from being under pressure – crappy analogy, but how do you make a diamond person? You put them under pressure, which means you've got to take them out of their comfort zone. You do that, you learn, you grow.'

FEEL THE FORCE

Fox served 10 years with the Royal Marines before going through the infamously brutal selection process for the special forces, and joining the Special Boat Service for another decade. Despite the ferocious physical intensity of that selection, it was the mental side that was most challenging. 'That little devil in your head telling you that you're not good enough – it's so powerful sometimes, it's unbelievable, but you've got to silence it. If people are truly honest with themselves, it's always the demons in their head that are the hardest things to overcome in any walk of life.'

For all the physical and mental hardship he endured during his time in the armed forces, it was the moment he left the military from which Fox believes he learned the most. Discharged in 2012 because of mental health problems, a combination of PTSD and depression left Fox facing his biggest battle of all – one which he is determined to talk about to help raise awareness, and help others to find strength in adversity. 'I don't think I'd ever been honest with myself until I was stood on top of a cliff, contemplating ending my life,' he admits. 'It's a dark place, but I'm glad I was in it. I wasn't glad at the time, but now with »

Below: Fox with fellow *SAS: Who Dares Wins?* instructor Mark 'Billy' Billingham





“I wasn’t honest with myself till I stood on the edge of a cliff”

out. They don’t care about the future. All they care about is what they’re doing in any given second. It was enlightening. Which is great because my brain is pretty much in tune with an 18-month-old’s!

Jokes apart, Fox believes we should educate our children about mental health problems to help them realise it’s normal. With suicide still the biggest killer of UK men under 45, he urges us to keep speaking up. “When you’re in those dark places, it is a journey and you’re going to find out an awful lot about yourself.’ Certainly, if Fox’s experience of revealing the full extent of his mental health issues on national TV is anything to go by, we can take a lot from fronting up to our problems. “The main reason I did the show [*SAS: Who Dares Wins*] was to use it as a platform. The day before that episode went out I was like, “Oh my God, I’m going to be branded a weakling.” But when the responses came in, it was the most empowering moment of my life.’

ALL OF LIFE

Perhaps the most surprising thing about speaking to Fox is how normal he is, despite all his experiences. Even members of the special forces have a work-life balance to think about. So when he was fighting in Afghanistan, the last thing he would have wanted to deal with was his partner on the phone informing him that the washing machine had broken. ‘Your life runs at 1000mph in the special forces, you’re just learning how to deal with the stresses and strains of that job, and the normal life that runs concurrently,’ he says. “That’s probably the hardest bit – arguments, bills to be paid. I’m a war fighter and I’ve still got this other noise going on.’ Unpaid bills? Broken kitchen appliances? Jason Fox really is exactly the same as the rest of us. **HFM**

Life Under Fire by Jason Fox (Bantam, £20)

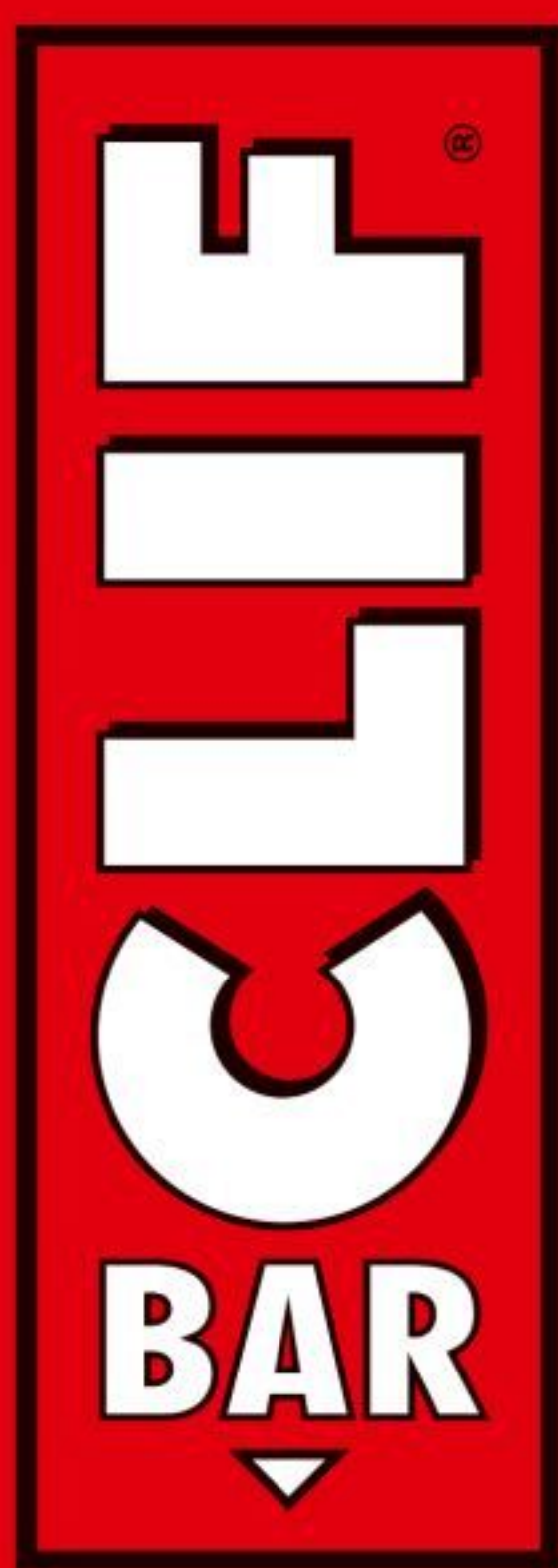


Above: Fox showing us how it’s done on TV

the luxury of hindsight, if I hadn’t been in that place, I’d still be fumbling my way through life wondering who the hell I am, probably lying to myself and never truly being happy.’

STAYING IN THE MOMENT

Out of his darkness came light, with Fox going on to set up Rock2Recovery, which provides support for current members of the armed forces, veterans and their families. He also realised that living in the moment was an important strategy for him – and arguably all of us – to get more out of life. ‘I remember walking through the woods with my therapist, Alex, when we saw a toddler playing, and she said, “Watch how they live life.” They don’t care what happened 30 seconds ago when they hurt themselves and bawled their eyes



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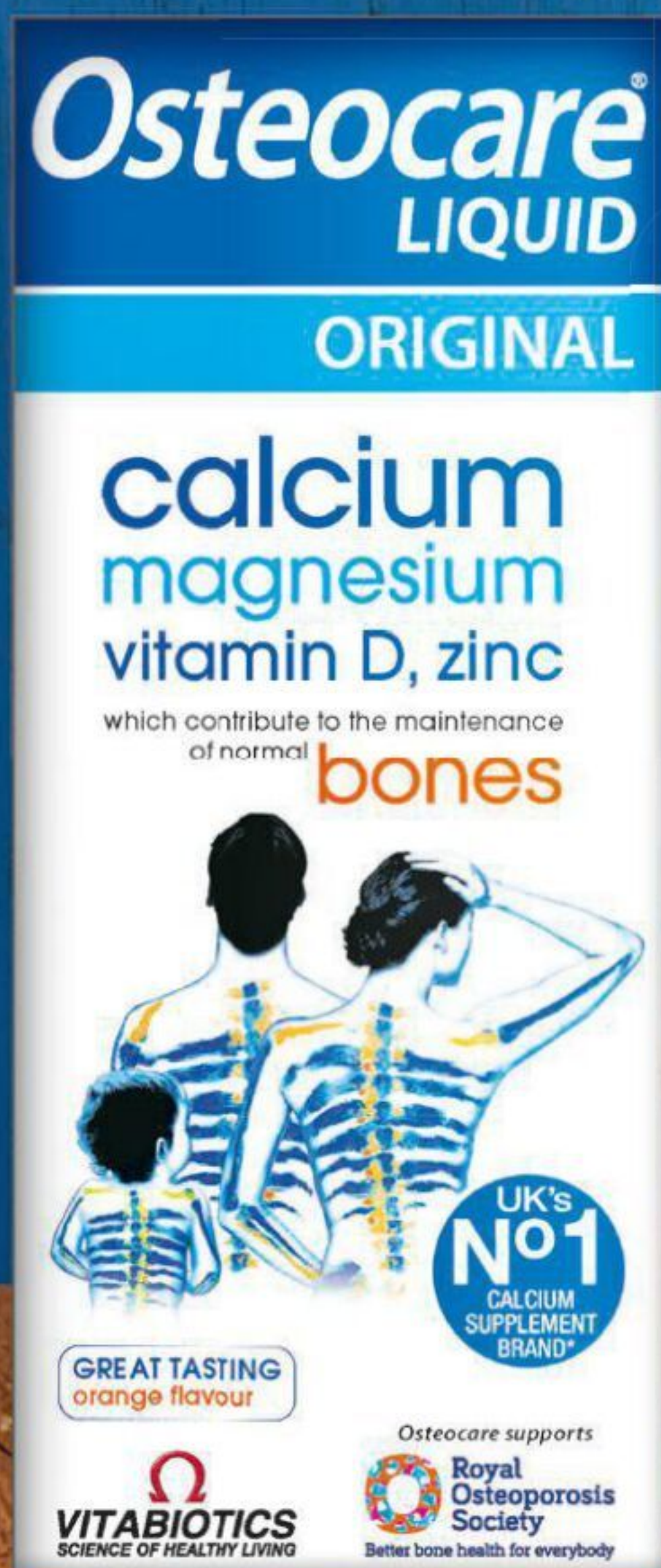


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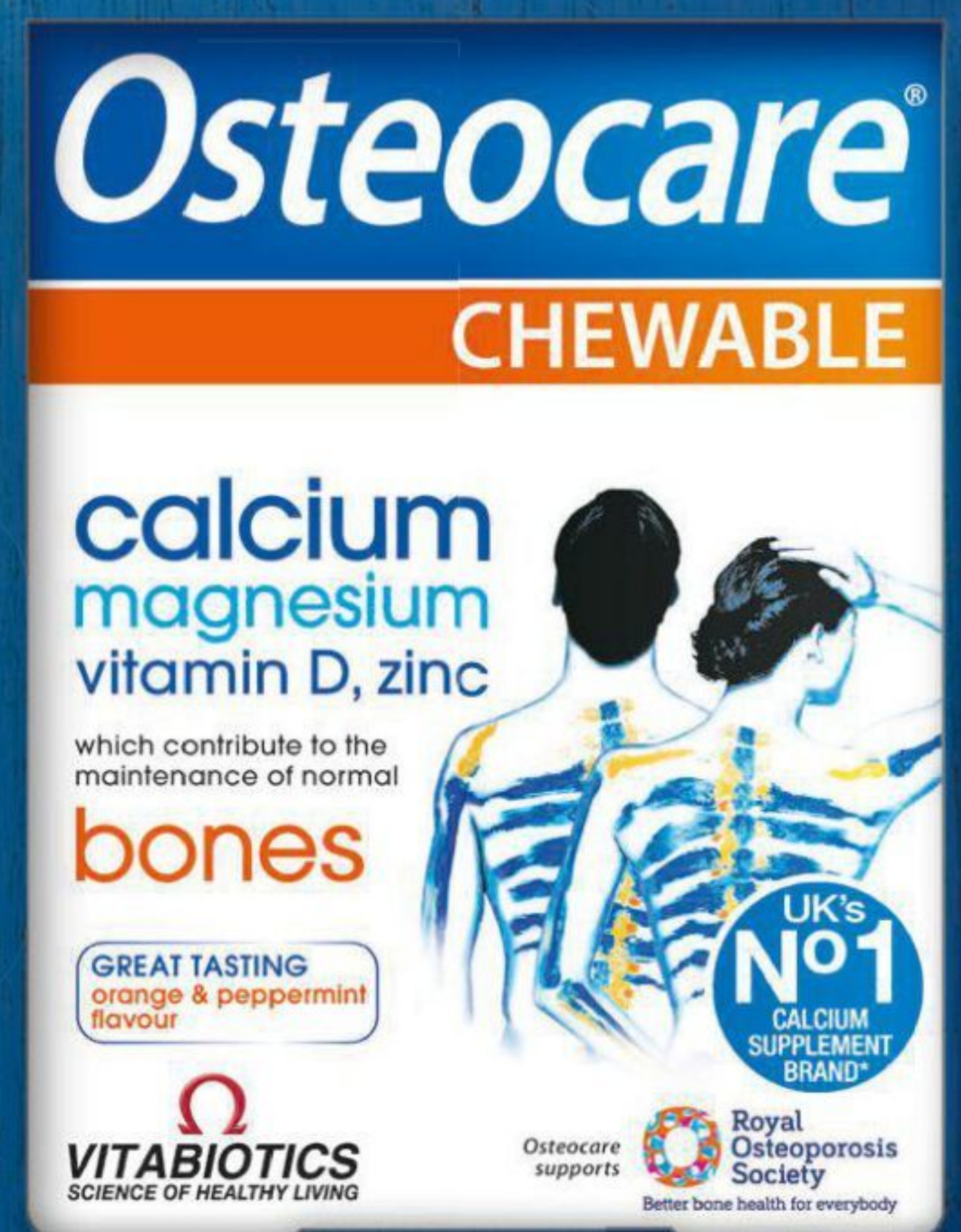


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FITNESS >>



Power up your brain



If you grew up with the kind of parents who used to say ‘stop playing football and come in for supper’, you’ll be pleased to know they had their priorities all wrong. Well, kind of. New research conducted by University of Geneva neuroscientists shows that exercise can have a direct impact on improving your memory.

During any period of intense physical exertion, the body produces small molecules called endocannabinoids, a type of neurotransmitter that binds to receptors in the hippocampus, which is the main part of the brain responsible for processing memory. In fact, the higher the

levels of endocannabinoids, the more activated this region of the brain becomes.

All of which is a rather complicated way of saying that exercise improves the plasticity of your brain, enhancing your memory power. So it may just be that the perfect time to play sport or have an intense workout is straight after you’ve been reading a work report or learning something new – as you’ll be more likely to remember it if you give your brain a boost at that point.

This also means you would have had the perfect excuse to continue playing football as a kid – as long as you’d done your homework first, of course.

GET ON TRACK

After a tricky 2020, here's all the motivation and know-how you'll need to dust off your workout wear and spring back into action

There's no denying 2020 has taken its toll on the nation's mental and physical health and wellbeing.

Whether working out in the gym, running or cycling in the great outdoors or turning your home into an exercise yard, it's still been a tough few months trying to keep in shape. With the new year here, there really is no better time to rediscover your fitness. Whether it's lifting weights, cranking up the cardio or running for the hills, it's the perfect season to shake off the exercise saboteurs, fire-up your fitness routine and rebuild body and mind using the tools personal trainers often apply to help you on your way.

MOTIVATION MAKEOVER

If the desire is there but the cold mornings and dark days have dented the motivation since your last full-on training session, you'll need to employ some of the hacks used by elite sportsmen and women – and their personal trainers, like Marvin Burton, Head of Fitness at Anytime Fitness UK (anytimefitness.co.uk) – to reignite a routine.

Set yourself some manageable weekly targets to work towards 'You need to feel successful and positive about your training,' suggests Burton. Setting an overall 12-week goal is good but it can sometimes feel like the end is out of reach and too far away. 'Small, manageable goals keep you focussed and give you a regular sense of achievement.'

Keep a regular log of your workouts 'Write down the weights you lift, number of reps and rest times,' adds Burton. Alternatively, use apps or a training diary to record your runs or cycle rides, swimming sessions or

GETTING STARTED

Once the muscle-building, PB-busting mind-set is in place, it's time to kick-start your training – ensuring you hit the ground running, in a way that won't be scuppered by injury. Apply these actions to your new workout routine.

► GET PERSONAL

'Getting started is the most difficult part,' says Burton. He recommends initially working with a personal trainer to establish your goals and how best to reach them. 'Work to create a structured plan that provides you with more than one type of workout – this could be a strength session and a cardio one, for example.' Expert instruction is not only great for tailoring exercises to your goals, it can also prescribe drills that take into account your ability, experience and any injuries or restrictions you may have.

► TAKE A TEST

Do an initial fitness test for a benchmark to check your progress against. 'This will depend on your goal, but it just needs to be relative,' advises Burton. If you are into cardio, test how far you can run in a set time; if your goal is strength, it could be the max weight you can lift for 10 reps. 'Without a benchmark, you may not realise if or how much you are improving.'

► BE PREPARED

Have your workout kit and routine for each week planned in advance. 'This needs to include nutrition,' adds Burton. 'You may need to buy some items for the kitchen to speed up your food preparation – maybe a slow cooker, a blender or juicer and storage containers.'

To improve your fitness, especially to have an impact on weight, your nutrition may need an overhaul as part of a bigger change in lifestyle. Having the tools to make healthier eating part of your routine is a sensible step in the right direction, too.

cardio circuits, including data on distance and times along with personal input on how you're feeling and the perceived effort you applied. 'Once you can see that you are improving, you will naturally be more motivated to keep on succeeding.'

Make a fresh start This may sound like 'a word from our advertisers' but investing in some new workout wear or exercise equipment really can have a positive impact on how you apply yourself to getting fitter. 'This could be new active wear, a pair of trainers or even a new music playlist,'

“Manageable goals give you a regular sense of achievement”

suggests Burton. 'A fresh start needs a new feel about it and gives you a renewed sense of motivation and opportunity.'

STICKING AT IT

With the reasons to re-start training in place and the methods and tips to ensure you stay on track established, it's also worth examining the benefits to training and especially the importance of training in whatever form you prefer during a pandemic.

'Exercise gives you a release of stress and is vital for mental health,' says Burton. During»

THE EXPERTS



Marvin Burton has worked in the fitness industry for more than 20 years, developing programmes for gym chains and equipment suppliers, such as TRX and Wattbike. As a personal trainer, he has worked with everyone from children to elite athletes.



Lewis Richardson is a personal trainer with eastnine.fit specialising in strength and conditioning. He is also an amateur boxer and a Tokyo 2021 Team GB Olympic Games hopeful. He's currently part of the podium potential development squad for Team GB.



“A new year is a chance to write a new script for our health”

the pandemic, many people have been under emotional and mental strain which needs to be channelled into something positive and rewarding. ‘Exercise releases happy hormones (endorphins) which helps with this and makes us feel a sense of achievement and reduction in anxiety,’ he adds.

Many of us also used this time to reflect on health, and try creative new ways of exercising – from performing workouts in our own front room to taking up cycling again and even stand-up paddleboarding – as we

became more conscious of the need to be both physically and mentally stronger. ‘The new year gives us a fresh calendar to hit the reset button on our health,’ says Burton. ‘It’s a clean slate on which to write a new script for our health and embrace the possibilities that physical activity can bring.’

Psychologically, starting at the beginning of a new year makes it easier to remember how far we have come. The longer you last and the more healthy habits you create, the sooner the benefits will come. The reinvigorated levels of energy, better sleep patterns and improvement in your mood and mental wellbeing outweigh any other feeling. ‘Although this may be a new year, you should make these changes forever,’ insists Burton. ‘Doing a little bit more, drinking a little less and making some sensible changes will lead you down a successful path which improves your entire lifestyle and impacts people around you in a much more positive way.’ **HFM**

HOW TO TRAIN FOR ANYTHING

Lewis Richardson, personal trainer for fitness app eastnine.fit gives his beginner’s guide to almost everything

Building muscle

Weights Put your muscles under some serious stress in order for them to rip and recover to grow back bigger and stronger. Aim for a heavy load and low reps or average load and high reps – both will be strenuous but if executed correctly, will build muscle.

Nutrition This should be high in protein but not neglecting the other key parts of a balanced diet, particularly carbohydrates. Protein directly after a big weights session is vital, and don’t skip meals!

Plan Include both cardio sessions and weight training in your programme, but aim to do the weights on the last session of the day and last of the week. This allows your body to be in a state of growing muscle for a longer period of time.

Endurance event

Think ahead Start a training plan anywhere between 4 to 12 months out from your event. Build your training regime and distances gradually. Don’t go big early. Slow and steady wins the race – or at least completes the course.

Set goals Establish targets throughout your training to keep you motivated en route to the big end goal. Keep a log of each target and celebrate achieving even the micro-goals along the way.

Listen up Stay disciplined and listen to what your body is telling you. There’s a fine line between pushing your limits and pushing yourself over the edge. Build rest and recovery into every session, giving it equal priority to your training and don’t overdo it – especially at the start.

Increasing overall fitness

Mix it up Vary the type, intensity, location and duration of the workouts you do. Some will be more enjoyable than others, some easier than others, but keep in mind it’s those tough sessions that improve both physical and mental strength.

Strike a balance Build your fitness routine into your lifestyle. Look at your average day and identify times when you can be training that don’t upset work or family time. Think about changing your habits or swapping ‘time-wasting’ pursuits for workouts.

Start now Find a training regime you feel may work for you and attack it at the earliest stage possible. The sooner you start building a habit, the sooner you’ll begin to see the results you want, and the easier it’ll become not to miss a session, too.

Healthy & Healthy For Men Awards 2020

Readers of *healthy* and *Healthy For Men* voted in their thousands for their favourite health and wellbeing products. Here's our pick of the winners...

BRAND OF THE YEAR

NEW NORDIC Established in 1990, New Nordic has a 30-year track record of supporting your all-round health and wellbeing with its impressive range of solution-focused herbal products. New Nordic's line-up targets all areas of everyday health and wellbeing, ranging from Apple Cider tablets to support digestion to Prosta Vital to provide the nutrients you need for healthy prostate function. Your favourite brand of 2020 even has bedtime covered – research shows the lemon balm and chamomile in Melissa Dream can improve sleep, so that you wake up feeling more refreshed.

BEST FOR SLEEP

UNBELIEVABLE HEALTH BEE RESTED If you've been tossing and turning, you're not alone. Research from 2020 suggests only 11% of Brits sleep soundly through the night. This gentle supplement helps you drift off, with chamomile, lavender, magnesium, Montmorency cherries and other great ingredients linked to a calmer night.

BEST HEALTHY SNACK

EAT REAL SEA SALT HUMMUS CHIPS When you're fighting off cravings for a pack of ready salted, these tasty bites made from chickpea flour deliver all the satisfying crunch of potato crisps but are 48% lower in fat. Plus they're vegan, gluten-free and free from all 14 declarable allergens.

BEST NEW PRODUCT LAUNCH

PURESENTIEL PURIFYING AIR SPRAY Created with a unique blend of 41 essential oils, this 100% natural purifying air spray gives rooms and fabrics a fresh scent without synthetic chemicals. It also combats the source of allergies and potentially harmful household bacteria.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

BEST TARGETED HEALTH SOLUTION | CHERRY ACTIVE

Made with nothing but 100% concentrated Montmorency cherry juice, Cherry Active is loaded with antioxidants to aid faster post-workout recovery. It could also help you sleep better, too.



the healthy awards 2020 WINNER

BEST FOR GUT HEALTH

HOLLAND & BARRETT GUT POWERED 50 BILLION

We're learning more all the time about how our gut microbiome affects our wellbeing, so it makes sense to support the 100 trillion or so bacteria that live in our digestive system. These capsules are packed with the good guys, including *Lactobacillus acidophilus*.

BEST FOR IMMUNITY

BETTERYOU DLUX 3000 VITAMIN D ORAL SPRAY

Vitamin D is one of the most crucial nutrients for supporting our immunity. We make it naturally when our skin is exposed to sunlight, but we're in danger of being deficient in winter, or if we spend too much time indoors. This handy spray provides your daily dose of D without having to swallow a tablet.

BEST CONFECTIONERY

NAKD SALTED CARAMEL FRUIT & NUT BAR

Made only from natural ingredients, Nakd's moreish Salted Caramel bars are as healthy as they are delicious. This is your firm favourite, packed with tasty dates, raisins, cashews, peanuts, and a smidgen of sea salt, plus it's vegan, wheat- and gluten-free. Stash in your kit bag for a treat post-workout or as a mid-afternoon pick-me-up.

BEST SPORTS BAR

CLIF PEANUT BUTTER BAR

Full of heart-healthy fats, protein and fibre, peanut butter can provide a slow release of energy as part of a balanced diet. Plus, it makes a tasty, creamy filling in this on-the-go snack bar, made with organic oats and wholegrains. Each bar has up to seven grams of plant-based protein, to aid muscle repair and recovery.

The HFM workout

These multi-muscle moves will take your 2021 fitness regime to a new level

Compound your training



If you're looking to give your training a boost for the new year, you've come to the right place. Our simple exercise regime features five compound moves, designed to use different joints and muscle groups simultaneously, giving you a far more dynamic, all-round workout. What's more, because you're using multiple muscle groups, you're likely to generate a greater cardiovascular hit, and burn more calories in the process. Win win.



► SQUATS

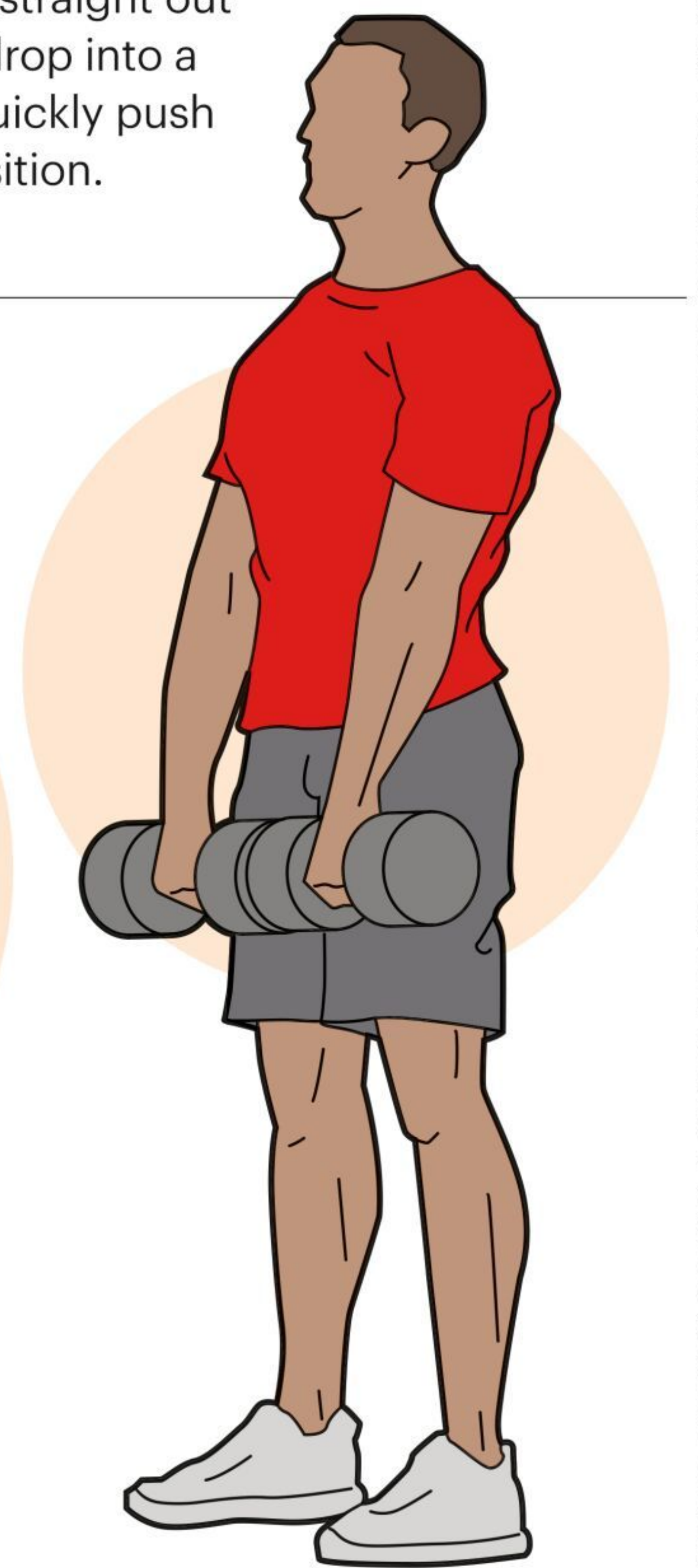
Sets: 3 Reps: 10 Rest: 60 seconds between each set

This classic move will engage your glutes and quads, and improve your overall balance and mobility – not bad for essentially just crouching down. Start with your feet shoulder-width apart, chest out and your arms straight out in front of you. Push your bum out and slowly drop into a sitting position – as low as you're able to go. Quickly push up through your heels to return to the start position.

► DUMBBELL DEADLIFTS

Sets: 3 Reps: 6-8 Rest: 1 second between each lift, and 60 seconds between each set

If marathon world record holder Eliud Kipchoge says the deadlift is the most important exercise he does in the gym, who are we to not give it a go ourselves? This will work a load of muscles, including the glutes, quads and hamstrings. Start by standing with your feet hip-width apart, and holding the dumbbells just outside of each foot. Your shoulders should be in front of the dumbbells, with shoulder blades engaged, keeping your back in a neutral/flat position. Then straighten your body to an upright position, keeping the dumbbells over the middle of the feet, and making sure your heels stay down.



► **BENCH PRESSES**

Sets: **3** Reps: **10**
 Rest: **60 seconds between each set**

This upper body staple will work your pecs, deltoids and triceps to name but a few. Place your hands shoulder-width apart on the bar, while lying flat on the bench. Lift the bar above your chest, keeping your arms straight, then bring it down slowly until it's almost touching your chest. Hold for a second, then straighten your arms to push the bar back up to the starting position.



► **WALKING LUNGES**

Sets: **3** Distance: **approximately 10 metres** Rest: **60 seconds between each set**

You'll need a bit more space for this, but with your calves, hamstrings, glutes and quads set to be seriously engaged, it's worth the effort. Starting with hands on hips and feet shoulder-width apart, step forward, lowering your hips until your rear knee almost touches the floor, keeping your back straight, and your front knee directly above the foot. Push through the heel of your front foot to raise yourself up, then step forward with your other foot to repeat the process. Continue to do this for around 10 metres, or the length of a room. You can also hold weights to increase the difficulty, and give even more muscles a workout.

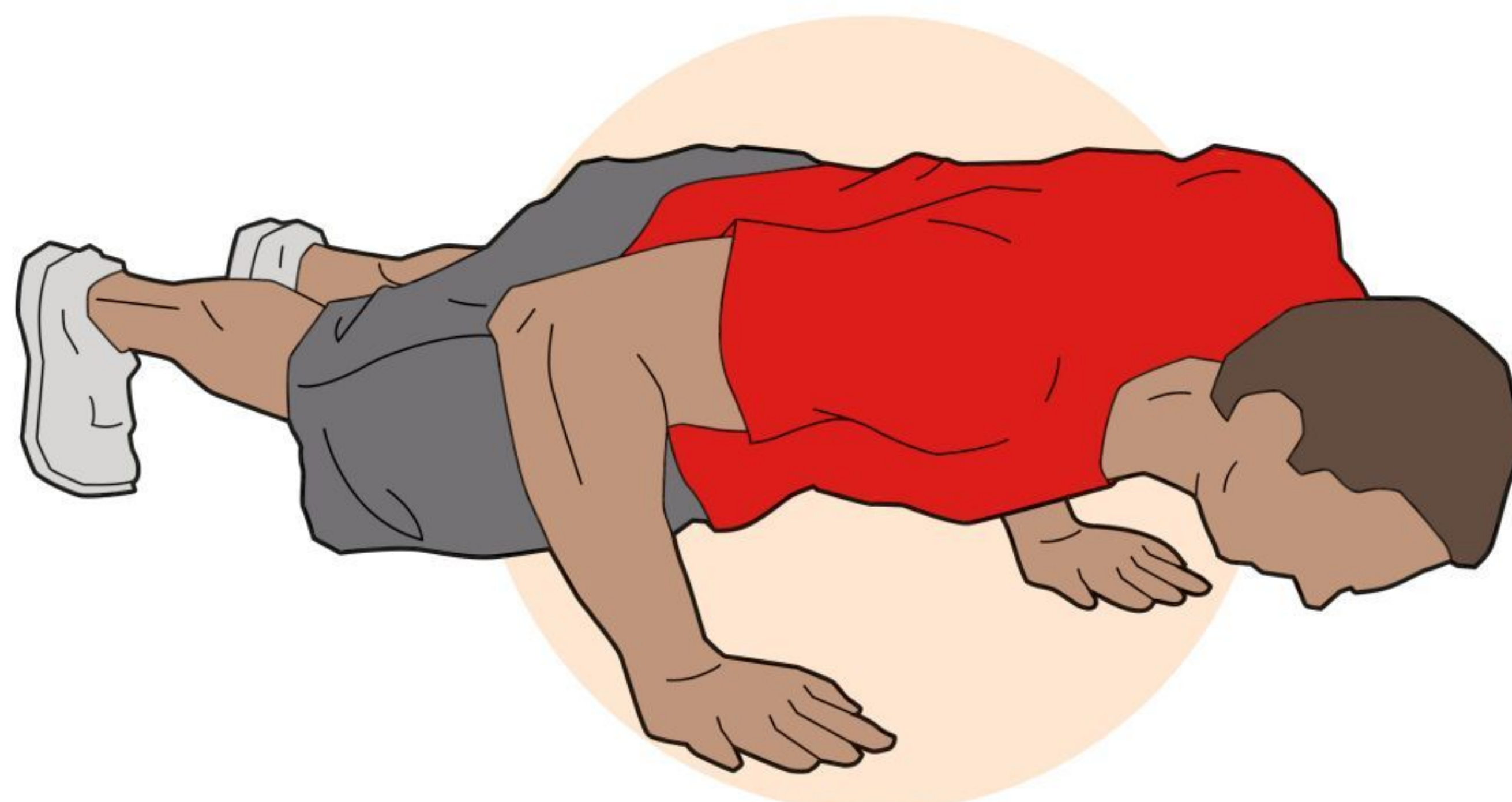


► **PRESS-UPS**

Sets: **3** Reps: **10** Rest: **60 seconds in between each set**

This old-school favourite will make sure that your pecs, deltoids, triceps and abs all benefit. Start with your arms and legs straight, and your hands and toes on the floor, supporting your body. You're looking for a straight line from your neck to your heels. If you're

confident you've got that, lower your chest slowly towards the floor by bending your elbows, all while bracing your core. When you feel your chest is about to make contact with the ground, straighten your arms again and push back up.



► **BURPEES**

Sets: **3** Reps: **10**
 Rest: **60 seconds between each set**

Arguably the ultimate compound move, the burpee will work your calves, quads, glutes, abs, chest and shoulders to name but a few – it also gives a bonus cardio hit. Start by standing with your feet shoulder-

width apart, then drop to the ground by bending your knees and placing your hands either side of your feet. From there, jump your feet backwards so you end up in a high press-up position with your body at a slight incline. Leap forwards with your feet and jump straight up, hands high in the air, before returning to the starting position. **HFM**



SECRETS

OF

SUPER

STAMINA



Physical endurance is key to many sports and activities but it's also the thing that will help you to live longer, be healthier and work harder – here's how to build your own stamina

The best way to increase your stamina is to use it. Your body is already primed to increase its endurance – it just needs the stimulus of you exercising it. This will cause your lungs to process oxygen more efficiently, your blood vessels to improve their carrying capacity, and your muscle fibres to adapt for stamina.

Your psyche will also be trained, increasing your mental capacity to take on endurance challenges. A common misconception is that some people are born with bucketfuls of stamina hard-wired in, but this is not true. They had to train it up, just like everyone else.

Life being what it is, the time, energy and motivation to do this can be elusive, so how can we stack the cards in our favour to help us stick to an effective exercise regime?

STAMINA'S SNEAKY SECRET

If there's one thing that stamina hates, it's inconsistency. If you kick off a new exercise regime at 100mph, with daily workouts and a militant nutrition plan, but then crawl into week three, where the wheels fall off, then you will struggle to make endurance gains.

Take the long view and decide how many workouts you can realistically fit into your life, week in, week out, practically forever. Then do those, consistently, and well. You will get measurable results by doing this, so long as you increase one of three areas every two to three weeks: duration, distance/volume, or intensity. Known as progressive overload, this method of gradually increasing your training load is the key to endurance gains.

Keep a log of your workouts and some metric to measure against your own rate of

perceived exertion (RPE) scale. You can track your heart rate for this, or do a VO2 max test to measure the maximum volume of oxygen you can inhale. Put simply, the less out of breath you are for a given effort, repeated over time, then the greater stamina you have built.

If you find your energy levels flagging, know that pushing yourself to complete a workout may actually reduce your fatigue, rather than increase it. A University of Georgia review found that 90% of people completing an exercise programme had reduced levels of fatigue, compared to those who did nothing.

STIMULATING STAMINA

Often, the most effective way to improve your mental stamina for exercise is to find an aerobic activity that doesn't even feel like exercise, because you are so wrapped up in the moment.

This could be something like rock climbing, for example. The mental demands of a long rock climb, where you are required to puzzle out sequences of movements between holds, make it feel more like solving a brain-twisting riddle than a workout, even as your forearms burn with lactic acid, and your feet push so

hard into the wall that your toes go numb.

Another way to get into the zone and make your workout feel effortless is to listen to music; it can even improve your performance. A 2017 study published in the *International Journal of Physiology, Pathophysiology and Pharmacology* found that listening to fast and loud music significantly increased exercise duration, and therefore endurance, as well as raising maximal heart rate.

Not every workout can be fun, but the way you approach them can turn your whole regime into a game, says PT and founder of Train Badass, Max Cotton (trainbadass.co). He finds that going on a 'streak' of completed workouts helps him to complete his planned sessions. 'If I have four days of gym training a week on my programme and I hit all four in a week, then I'm on an unbroken streak. I don't want to break the streak, because it feels good. I take down another week and it feels really good; it's now a habit.'

Cotton adds that this gamification of his workouts helps him to train more consistently, and actually achieve his goals.

MAKING TIME

If the idea of slow and steady training sessions bores you silly, or you just don't have time for them, then you should know there is a handy hack to reduce overall training time, so long as you are prepared to work harder.

Intensity is the one thing missing in many workout spaces, but short periods of high intensity work broken up by short rests can raise your lactate threshold, and aerobic capacity (VO2 max), as effectively as longer workouts. In fact, studies have shown that»

“Completing a workout ‘streak’ helps exercise become a habit”

“Exercise also boosts mental focus and productivity”

six to eight weeks of high-intensity interval training (HIIT) can be more effective in raising aerobic capacity than the same period of moderate intensity continuous training (MCT).

For HIIT to be effective, you need to work at around 80% of your capacity in several bursts of 60 seconds or less, spaced out by active rest periods of around two minutes. If you are new to HIIT, you will need to be supervised (due to potential heart risks*), but you can ramp up the intensity of your existing workouts by reducing the rest periods, working harder during particularly banging tracks on your gym playlist, or aiming to cover more distance in a shorter time.

While increasing workout intensity is a sure fire way to up your game, it's important to strengthen your joints at the same time. Separate stabilisation exercises, such as single-leg bodyweight squats, or yoga, will help prevent injury.

SIDE BENEFITS

The benefits of consistent endurance training don't stop at giving you more stamina. Regular exercise is also a proven way to boost mental focus, memory and productivity. One British study found that if you work out on a work day, your concentration increases by 21% and your motivation soars by 41%.

But the most significant effect of following a life-long exercise plan, as part of your lifestyle, is that you will probably live for significantly longer. We already know that exercise improves the odds of avoiding heart disease and cancer, and V02 max is shown to be a strong predictor of future health.

Now, a 2019 study published in *Cell Reports*, found that decades-long exercise regimes change the activity of a gene which governs your metabolism, making it more effective and healthier. This, in turn, will improve your stamina. What's more, the change starts to occur as soon as you start an exercise plan, which means it's never too late.

So whatever your sport or workout activity, make sure you keep doing it, because exercise really is the gift that keeps on giving. **HFM**



*CHECK WITH YOUR GP BEFORE TAKING UP ANY NEW EXERCISE REGIME. WORDS MATT RAY. PHOTOGRAPHS STOCKSY

STAMINA ON ORDER

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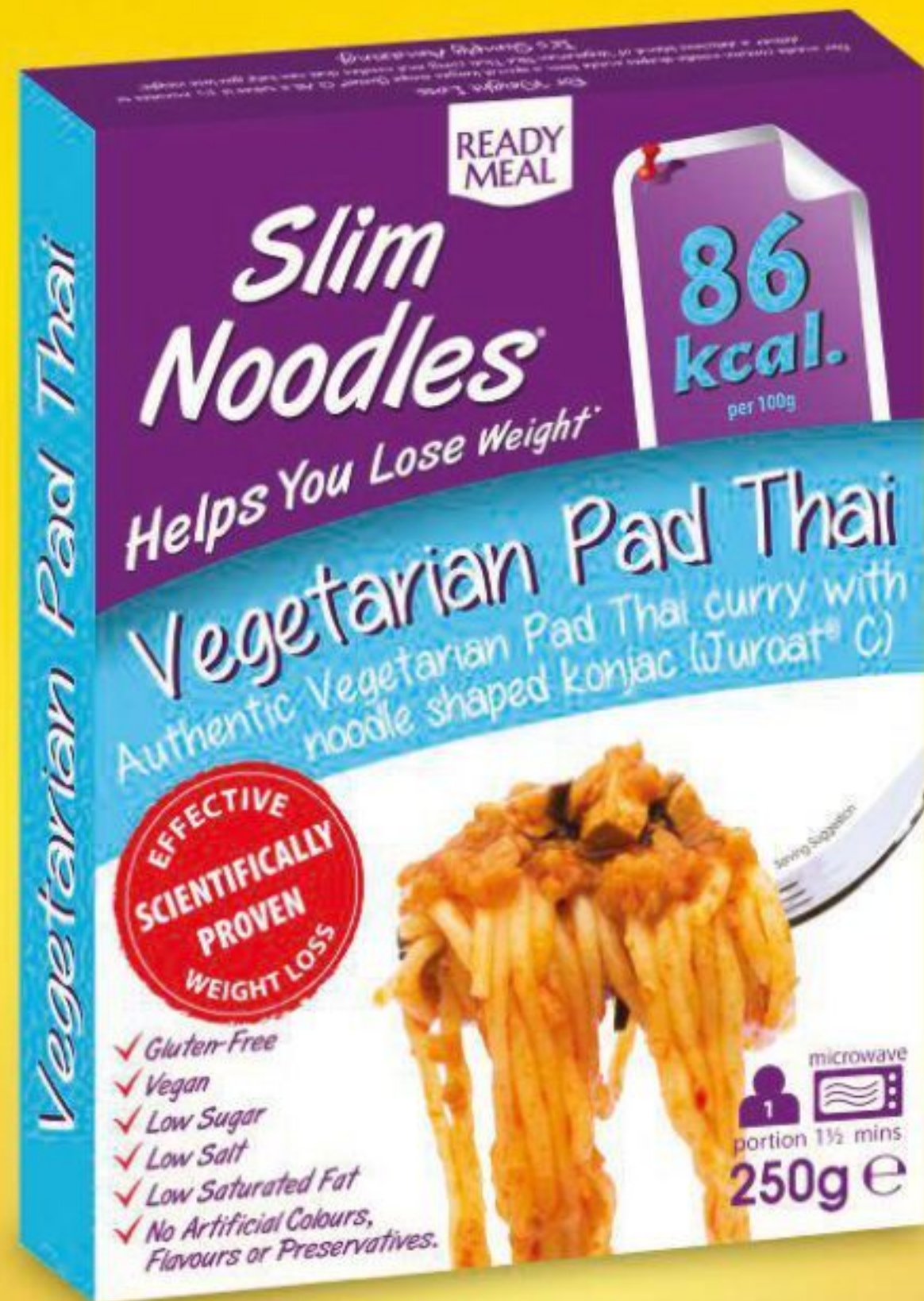
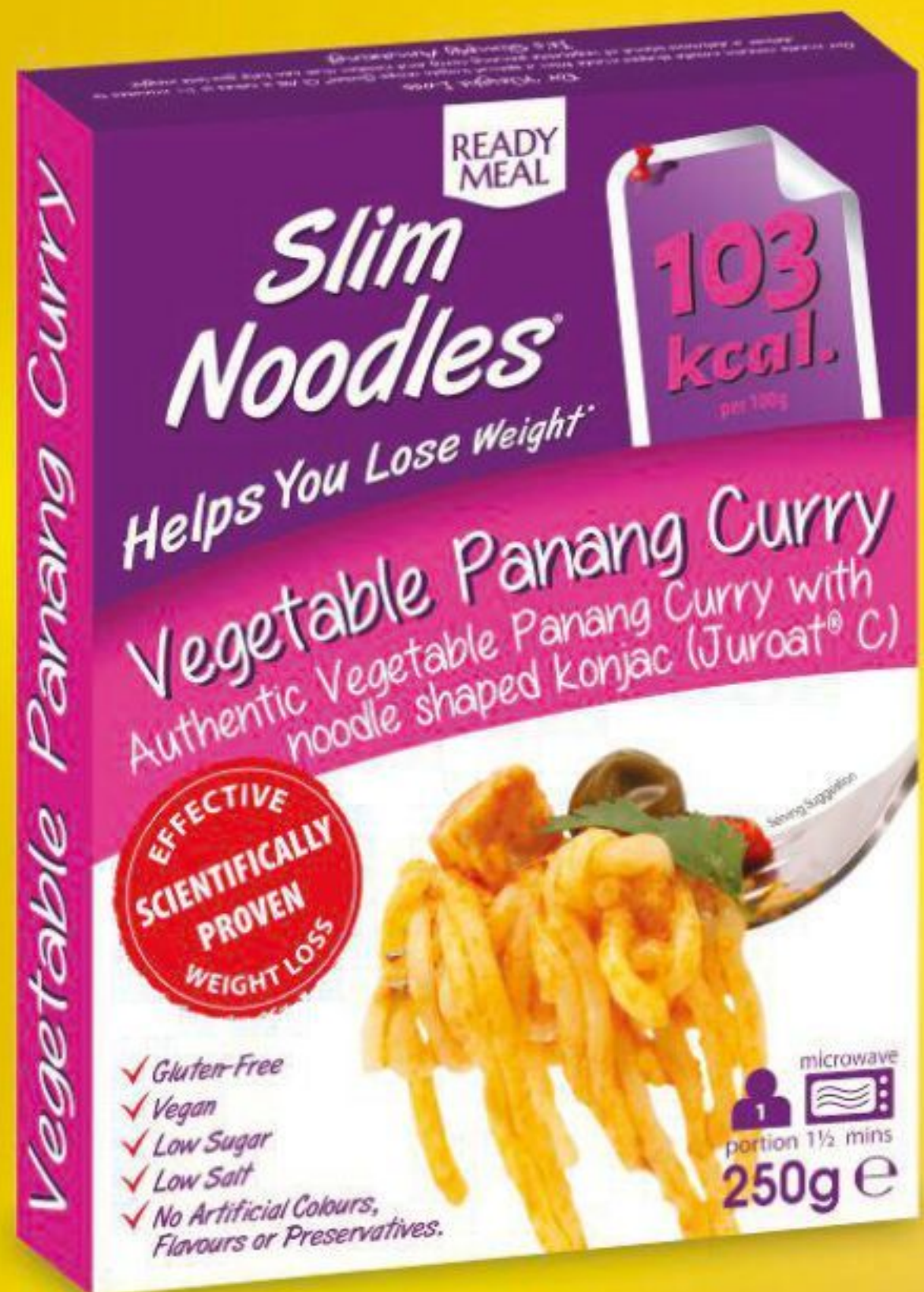
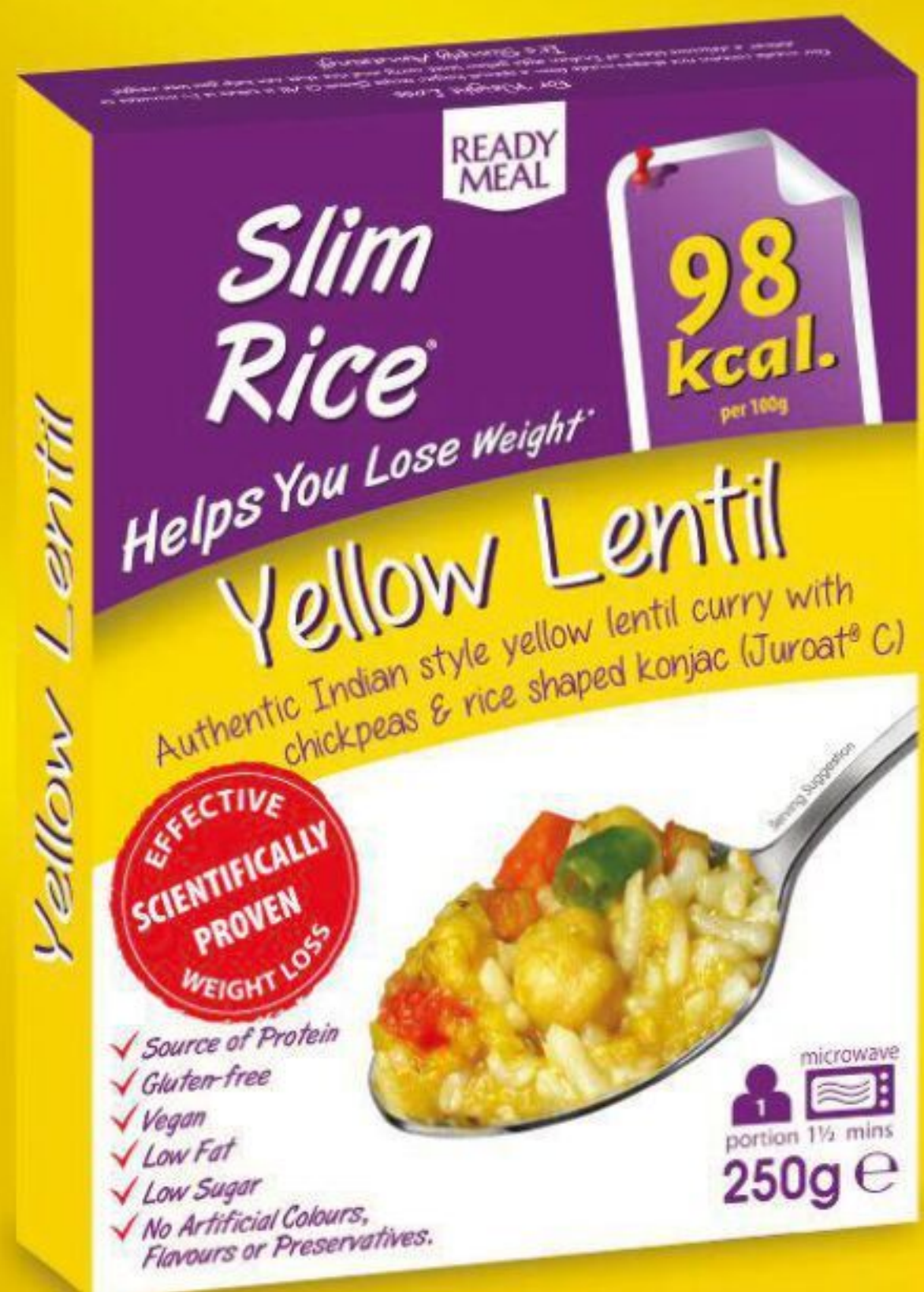
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THE PRIZE

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NUTRITION

Fly steak, anyone?



With ongoing concerns about the sustainability and ethics of our red meat consumption, a University of Queensland study has found a reliable replacement protein source. The larvae of the black soldier fly are richer in zinc and iron than lean meat, and contain as much calcium as milk, according to study author Professor Louw Hoffman. The fly's larvae are already in use in animal feed, and although 2 billion humans eat insects regularly, they haven't quite made the leap into western diets yet. 'The biggest factor that prevents fly proteins being used in our food

supply is western consumers' acceptance of insects as food,' said Professor Hoffman.

Less than half a hectare of the black soldier fly's larvae is estimated to be able to produce more protein than cattle grazing on around 1200 hectares, or 52 hectares of soya beans, meaning its environmental value is huge. 'If you care about the environment, then you should consider and be willing to eat insect protein,' adds Professor Hoffman. While you digest that, head over the page to discover everything you need to know about more conventional sources of protein.





THE NEW RULES

OF PROTEIN

Thinking
differently about
the science behind
your nutrition
could be the key
to staying in great
shape for the
year ahead

So here we are, entering 2021, and it suddenly feels like we've come a long way in a relatively short space of time. Walk around a supermarket now, and it seems like every other food package is branded as a protein product – there are even protein chocolate bars, somehow.

The p-word has become ubiquitous, but it all seems to have happened very quickly. You don't have to go back that far to remember a time when protein shakes were still fairly niche, and tasted absolutely awful.

Yet, despite this nutrition revolution, how much do we really know about the

current thinking surrounding protein, are we over-consuming it, and what is the science telling us about it?

To answer these questions, let's rewind a bit to remind ourselves of some nutrition basics that we can never hear too often. Our food is full of nutrients which supply us with energy, the main three being carbohydrates, proteins and fats. These are also known as macronutrients. So far, so straightforward.

As we all (hopefully) know, proteins are the building blocks for our bones and muscles, but they actually play more than just that one role. When the body breaks the proteins down into amino acids, they are pooled



for various different uses. ‘The body just restructures proteins from this pool to make different kinds of protein type structures for different uses,’ explains dietitian and sports nutritionist Felicity Lyons.

‘I like to use the alphabet analogy when describing this to my clients. Amino acids are like the different letters in the alphabet – we need different amino acids for different proteins in the same way that we need different letters for different words.’

HOW MUCH, WHEN?

Important tasks performed by proteins include: helping to form enzymes which stimulate our body’s reactions; making up neurotransmitters in the brain; acting as hormones; being used as an energy fuel when glycogen stores are low; and helping to regulate metabolic pathways (chemical processes in the body such as digesting food).

Despite all the different jobs that protein performs, current advice suggests that most of us need no more than 10-15% of our energy intake to be provided by it, according to

Lyons. ‘Generally speaking, for the body to work optimally we look to protein consumed across a 24-hour period – so if we’re not consuming enough during this time, the body may start to break down its own tissue to source amino acids that haven’t been supplied,’ she says.

And that means an even spread of protein eaten over the day is the optimal way of giving your body what it needs, with Lyons

“You don’t need to be bulking up to benefit from extra protein”

recommending that we aim to consume 15-25g of protein as part of every meal.

All of which is very useful to know, but what if you’re entering 2021 with some

serious health and fitness goals, and you’re thinking about using protein supplements to help you achieve your aims? You don’t need to be intent on bulking up to benefit from regular, additional protein consumption as it can be helpful whether you’re just trying to maintain muscle mass, build your strength for endurance challenges, or trying to manage your weight in the year ahead.

‘We are all individuals with different days ahead of us and what I need may be different to what you need. This can also change on a daily basis,’ says Lyons, who advises the use of protein supplements for anyone finding it difficult to eat all the calories they might need to fuel intensive training sessions.

ACTIVE PROTEIN

‘The science says that for individuals who are more active, we do need a higher intake of protein than is recommended for the general population,’ she says. ‘We need the extra protein to compensate for breakdown of protein during and immediately after exercise, and to ensure we optimise repair’ »

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**VITABIOTICS**



and growth of new muscle and bone tissue.’ As well as consuming protein straight after exercise to enhance muscle recovery, Lyons stresses the importance of the fuel you take on board before you work out. ‘Ensure you’re properly fuelled so that you optimise your carb storage (glycogen) and minimise your use of protein as a fuel,’ she says. ‘But the longer and more intense your training, the more likely your need for more protein.’

If you’re into cardio or endurance exercise like running or cycling, you’ll want to increase

“Optimise your carb storage to minimise using protein as fuel”

your protein intake, but not at the expense of your carbohydrate or fat intake, with Lyons stressing that the protein percentage of our energy intake shouldn’t change. While there is an emphasis on carb loading for endurance events, we shouldn’t forget the need for more protein, in proportion.

BULKING UP

When it comes to building muscle and strength, clearly you’re going to need more

protein than the average daily guidelines suggest. Lyons recommends thinking about a daily intake of approximately 1.6g-2g of protein per kilo of your own bodyweight. So, if you weigh 75kg, you’re looking at trying to consume between 120g and 150g of protein.

‘The suggested way to build muscle is to increase your overall calorie intake by around 20% or you can trial an increase of about 200kcal per day and see where that gets you,’ says Lyons. ‘In the first few hours after a strength-training session, the rate of breakdown of muscle tissue exceeds the rate of synthesis. It’s important to ensure that you work to achieve a positive nitrogen balance [since nitrogen is a key component of protein], so that the body is retaining more protein than it is excreting or has been used as fuel.’

If you aren’t getting enough protein in those crucial post-exercise hours, you run the risk of wasting all that hard work you’ve put in, because you could actually be encouraging your body to reduce muscle mass.

‘If you don’t get yourself into positive nitrogen balance, you can end up with a slower rate of growth of muscle size and mass, slower increase in strength, and even lose muscle mass despite hard training,’ warns Lyons, adding that timing your protein intake – and balancing it with carbs – is crucial.

AGE-RELATED INTAKE

But it’s not just those of us who want to get stronger who can benefit from an increase in protein. Lyons believes that as we age»

WHAT IS PROTEIN LEVERAGE?



► **DIETITIAN FELICITY LYONS EXPLAINS HOW EATING PROTEIN EARLIER IN THE DAY MAY ASSIST WITH WEIGHT MANAGEMENT**

‘Protein leverage is an idea which looks at using protein as a lever to change and manage our weight and health better.

‘The hypothesis is that by consuming more protein earlier and evenly across the day, we optimise the functions of protein in the body, and impact our hunger for food generally so that we eat less.

‘The concept is based on looking at dietary intake within populations around the world, with the conclusion that protein intake tends to plateau at roughly 15% of energy intake. The other energy-giving nutrients are the ones where we see variation: some populations may eat more fat and some more carbs, but most tend to get 15% or less of their energy intake from protein.’

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

‘Some scientists suggest that protein intake is really quite well managed by the body, and that once we have hit our requirement (11-15% of total energy intake) we turn off the appetite tap that is seeking protein, and just stop eating.

‘And that’s where it’s interesting, as we know the majority of us are struggling with managing our weight. One reason for this weight challenge may be because we are not consuming sufficient protein early enough in the day. So we continue to seek out foods to satiate our appetite on a physiological and a psychological level, but continue to feel “hunger” as the body is driving us to seek out protein to fulfil its needs for all its functions.

‘We also know that we tend to eat a bigger serving of protein at our evening meal, by which time many of us will have already over-eaten on fats and sugars.

‘Therefore, leveraging the protein with earlier consumption during the morning, could be part of the answer to our weight-management problems, as we’ll simply be less hungry throughout the day.’

“Using protein is a great way to help weight management”



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we could all benefit from extra protein. ‘When we are older, our bodies are more physiologically resistant to making bone and muscle so the thinking is that supplying more protein content will optimise these functions physiologically. ‘Those over 50 who are especially active might benefit from protein in between meals – that extra protein can come from food-based snacks or from a protein shake,’ she says

Likewise, anyone recovering from illness or injury could also use the extra protein and, according to Lyons, it’s ‘a whole lot easier to make a shake than cook a steak.’

WEIGHT-MANAGEMENT PERKS

Whatever age you are, protein can help with any weight goals you may have. ‘Using protein is a great way to help with weight management,’ says Lyons. ‘For any weight reduction diet, we need to cut calories.’

She explains that there are three ways that this can work. Eating more protein in a meal can leave us feeling fuller for longer, which can help reduce our overall calorie intake; taking in more protein proportionally can help preserve your lean tissue, whether you’re exercising or not; and more energy is used during the metabolism of protein meaning that it ‘exerts a higher thermic effect’ that keeps your body working.

In one trial, young adults who regularly skipped breakfast were given a higher protein breakfast, resulting in a reduction of the amount of high fat and high sugar snacks they ate throughout the day. This theory of protein leverage (see page 33) is another key part of how protein can assist with weight management, according to Lyons.

PROTEIN RISKS

Although it’s an essential nutritional source, it’s also possible to overdo it with protein, especially if you’re not getting enough exercise. ‘If you overconsume protein and you are not utilising its energy content, you will simply gain weight, and that weight will be as fat stores,’ explains Lyons.

There is also a risk of kidney stones for people who overuse protein and don’t train intensively with it, while any diet high in red meat protein can also increase risks of heart disease and colon cancer due to the high concentration of saturated fat in some of those animal-based products.

But those concerns are based on extreme protein intakes where the required amount of exercise is lacking. As you consider your plans for the year ahead, think about your nutrition alongside your other goals. We’ve all come a long way, but it’s never too late to learn and start afresh. **HFM**

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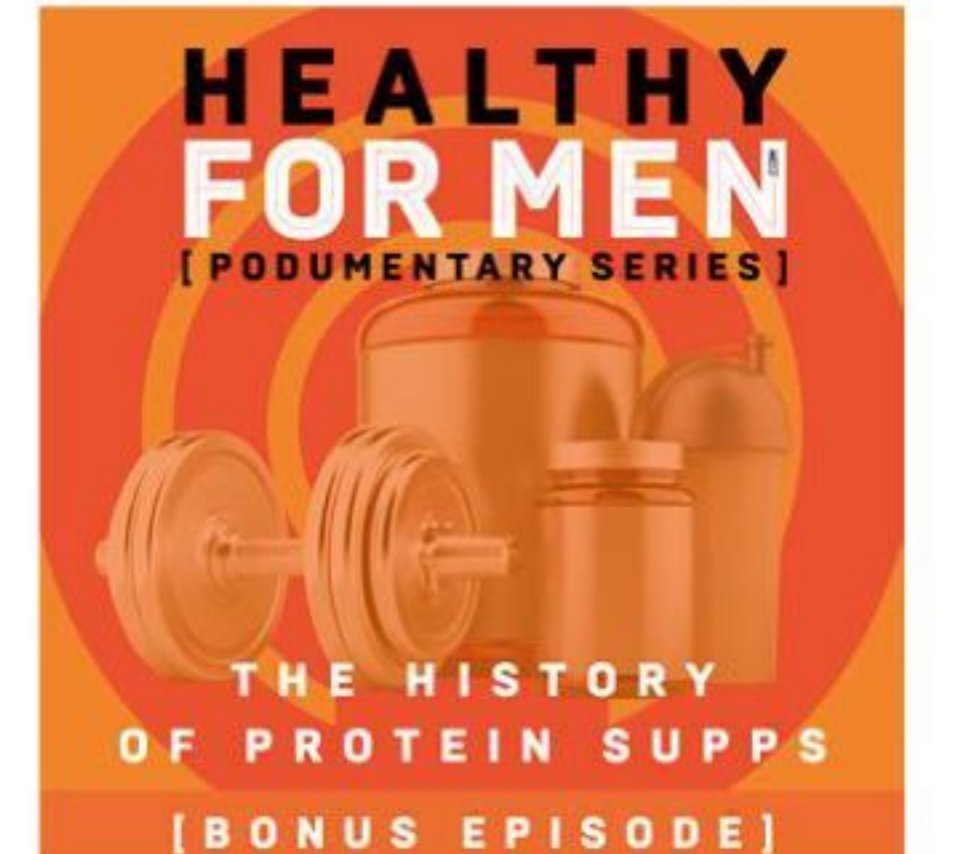
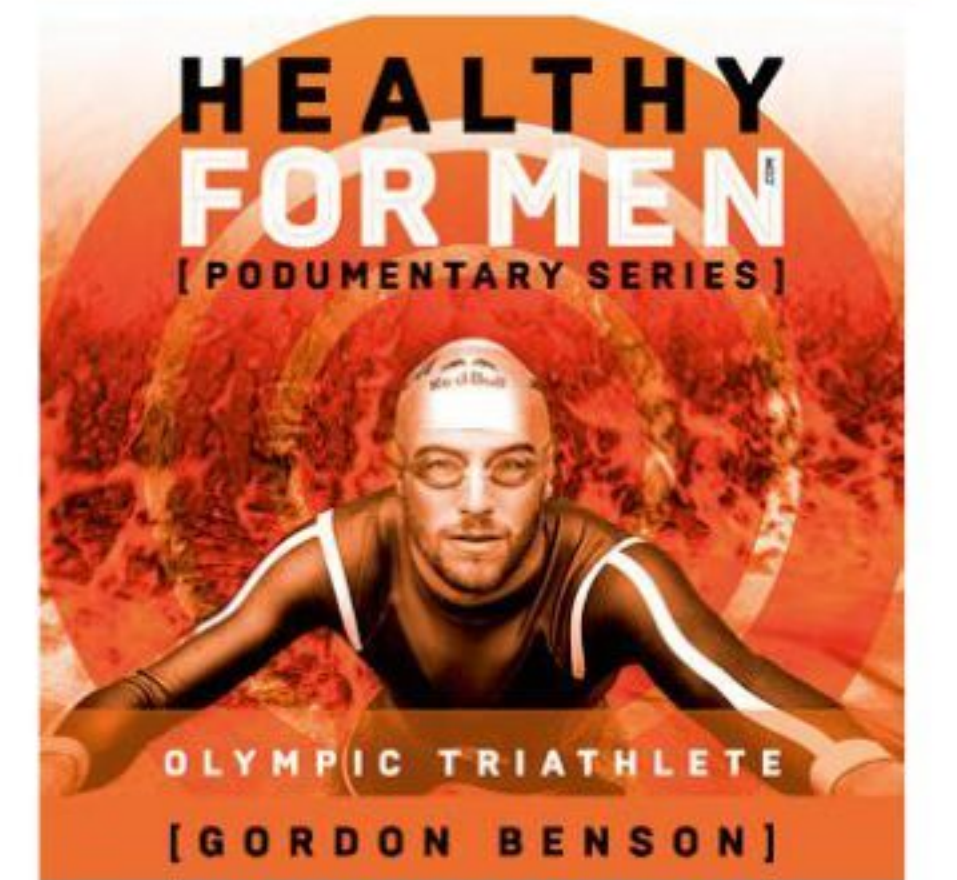
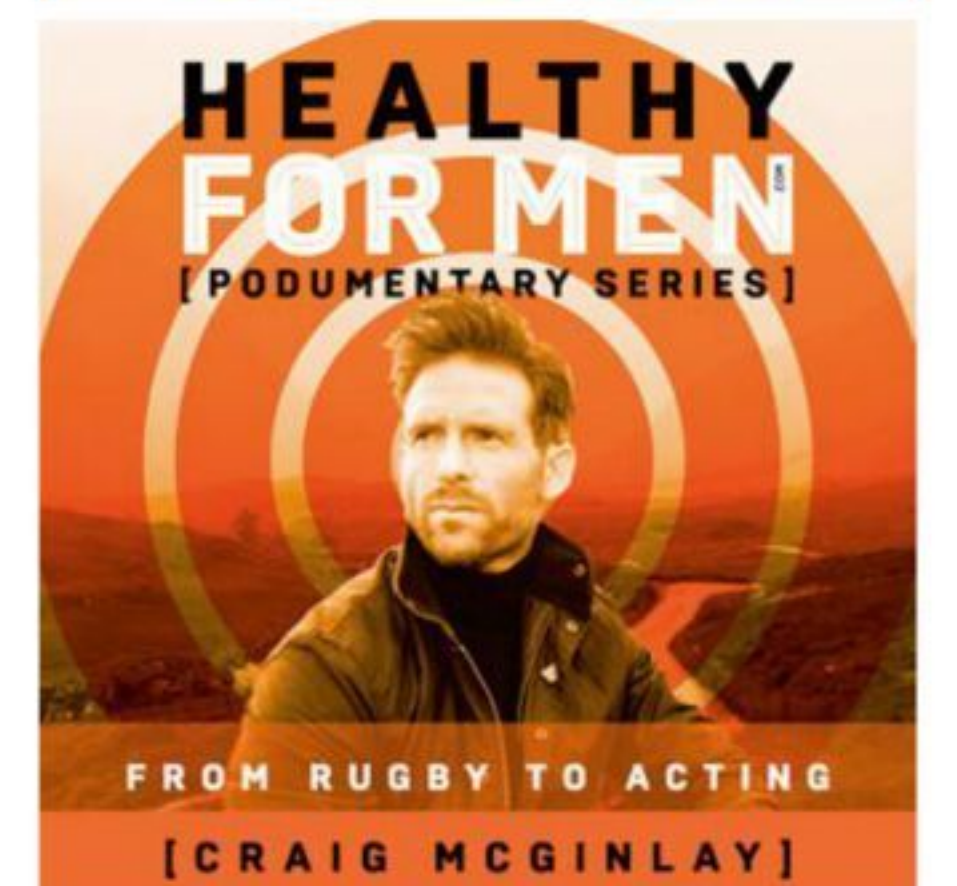
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Heart fuel

When it comes to our hearts, what we eat is as important as what we don't eat. Make 2021 a healthier year with our expert advice

We all know carrots help you see in the dark (*Ed: 'They don't'*), and that protein is the building block for your muscles, but what about our very precious hearts? With heart disease now responsible for more than a third of deaths worldwide, it's time to take action, so we spoke to dietitian Juliette Kellow to find out about the heartiest foods, and the science behind them.

DITCH THE SATURATED FAT

'One of the most important things we can do for our hearts is control our bodyweight, so we should limit the amount of saturated fat in our diet,' says Kellow. Food like sausages, bacon, full-fat dairy products, chocolate, and baked goods made with butter are all high in saturated fat. 'For men who aren't interested

in cutting calories, reducing saturated fat intake is an easy vehicle for cutting calories without them even noticing," she adds.

"There's no need to give up meat unless you want to, but make sure you're choosing lean cuts, and cutting the fat off. There are plenty of reduced fat dairy products like semi-skimmed milk, reduced fat yoghurts and cheeses, that can all help.'

THINK LIKE POPEYE

Everyone's favourite cartoon sailor kept Olive Oyl close to his heart, and so should you. Kellow explains that olive oil is high in monounsaturated fat, but you just need to be careful not to overdo it, especially if you follow a Mediterranean diet and load up on bread, oil and balsamic vinegar. 'There's about 100 calories in a tablespoon of oil, and it's easy

to consume four or five tablespoons of olive oil with bread. You also need to take care with coconut oil, as it's even higher in saturated fat than lard, for example, which most people are quite surprised about.'

Rapeseed oil and olive oil are very similar, and the former tends to be cheaper, especially when it's disguised as vegetable oil. 'When you buy vegetable oil in a supermarket, it is actually rapeseed oil. So if you're on a tight budget, vegetable oil is a good alternative.'

And while we're on monounsaturated fats, our old friends avocados are packed with them, meaning they can also help lower your LDL or 'bad' cholesterol levels.

UPLOAD SOME OMEGA-3

Not all fat is bad fat, when it comes to your heart. Kellow recommends swapping the »

saturated fats in your diet for unsaturated fats like polyunsaturated or monounsaturated which are found in many foods: 'At the top of the list is oily fish. UK guidelines are to eat two portions of fish a week, one of which should be oil-rich like mackerel, sardines or salmon. They're rich in omega-3 polyunsaturated fats, and there's lots of good evidence to suggest that omega-3 fats help maintain normal heart function, in particular helping us to maintain normal blood pressure, and normal levels of a blood fat called triglyceride, high levels of which are linked to an increase in heart disease.'

GO NUTS

Nuts are a great source of monounsaturated fats, which can help lower LDL cholesterol. 'High cholesterol is a big risk factor for heart disease so what we're trying to achieve is lower LDL and higher HDL ('good') cholesterol in the blood,' explains Kellow. 'Studies have shown that almonds are great at reducing the LDL component as well as

“Almonds are great at reducing LDL cholesterol”

reducing the overall total cholesterol.' Other elements like magnesium, thiamin (vitamin B1) and linoleic acid make almonds a great, all-round package for a healthier heart, while studies have shown snacking on almonds help us feel more full, so unlikely to turn to other, less nutritious snacks. 'Walnuts also have similar qualities, and all nuts tend to be linked to healthier hearts,' she adds.

TAKE THE WHOLE GRAIN

'People who have higher intakes of wholegrains have healthier hearts in general,' says Kellow. 'Wholegrains have all three parts of the grain including the nutrient-rich centre and the fibrous outer cover, giving you extra vitamins and minerals. Processed grain tends to just be the starchy part.' Kellow advises switching from white carbs to brown carbs, so wholewheat pasta, brown rice and multigrain bread, for example. 'Watch your portion sizes, because mountains of wholewheat pasta and brown rice are no good.

'Oats and barley are a good choice of wholegrain, and oats contain a particular type of fibre called beta-glucan, which we know from numerous studies is linked to lowering

LDL cholesterol. Porridge for breakfast is good, and you can incorporate oats into baking, but make sure that you're not using a saturated fat such as butter to bake with.'

GET YOUR FIVE A DAY

'There's plenty of research to suggest that higher intakes of fruit and veg are linked to a healthier heart,' says Kellow. 'The reasons are because they're low in calories and low in fat which is good for weight management, but they're also the main suppliers of potassium in our diet. Higher potassium levels, combined with lower sodium levels, help to control our blood pressure.' Fruit and vegetables also contain plant flavonoids which have antioxidant qualities that are linked to improved heart health. **HFM**

Juliette Kellow is a registered dietitian and was speaking on behalf of California Almonds



A VERY KIND-HEARTED MENU

► **BREAKFAST**

Porridge with fruit, and a sprinkling of cinnamon. Make it with soya milk, or a low-fat milk.



► **MID-MORNING SNACK**

A handful of almonds (30g) to keep hunger at bay.

► **LUNCH**

Sardines or mackerel on wholegrain toast, with plenty of salad on the side, and a piece of fruit afterwards.

► **AFTERNOON SNACK**

Plant-based yoghurt, but avoid ones with too much added sugar. If you want a protein boost, go for a plain or unsweetened yoghurt mixed with plenty of fresh fruit.

► **DINNER**

Spaghetti bolognese, made with wholewheat pasta, and turkey mince to reduce the saturated fat. Adding beans and pulses is a great idea for the extra fibre, as there's evidence that pulses help to lower cholesterol.

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B U Z Z F E E D

It's a natural energy source and smart sugar swap – but honey has health-helping properties too. HFM explores its shift from store cupboard staple to buzzy wonder stuff

Until recently, you probably thought honey was just something pleasant to spread on your toast. Now fast approaching superfood status, honey is increasingly on our radar as a treat with extra benefits. It hit headlines in 2020 when scientists endorsed it as a remedy for coughs and colds, and honey has also been associated with everything from healing wounds to treating acne.

During coronavirus uncertainty, honey's association with bees also taps into a wider desire to reconnect with nature. 'I think honey is having a moment,' agrees Clare Thornton-Wood, registered dietitian and spokesperson for the British Dietetic Association (bda.uk.com). 'People are thinking more about living sustainably, and getting their food locally, too.'

Consequently, we're all becoming connoisseurs of specialist honeys, from small batches produced by local hives to manuka and 'raw' unpasteurised varieties. 'Proper local honey is astonishingly different – it has a lot more flavour,' says Pam Hunter, microbiologist and manager of research, technical and environmental matters at the British Beekeepers Association (bbka.org.uk). For those craving a personal supply, there's a buzz about beekeeping, too: David Beckham was snapped wearing an apiarist's suit during lockdown, while Ed Sheeran reputedly installed hives at his Suffolk estate.

Honey's appeal is nothing new. It was the first sweetener used by humans – 8000-year-old cave paintings in Spain depict people foraging for it. In traditional Indian ayurvedic medicine, it is used as a digestive remedy, and Ancient Egyptians applied it as an ointment

for skin ulcers. It's also the key ingredient in mead, the world's oldest alcoholic drink.

Commercial beekeeping took off in 19th-century Europe, kickstarting the modern industry. Today, worldwide sales are worth £7.58 billion, with organic honey in particular predicted to grow. Plus honey is popping up in more cosmetics and pharmaceuticals.

NUTRITIONAL BENEFITS

Essentially, honey is a viscous liquid made by bees from nectar, a sugary sap they collect from flowers. 'Honey is a mix of 80% natural sugars (glucose and fructose), 18% water, and 2% minerals, vitamins, pollen and protein,' explains nutritionist Christine Bailey.

Its biggest appeal is as a natural alternative to refined sugar. Fructose and glucose are both simple carbohydrates, making honey a natural energy booster. But because it contains a higher proportion of fructose than refined sugar, honey is slightly lower on the glycaemic index, which means it makes blood sugar levels rise and fall more slowly. This makes it a great food for fitness, says Bailey. 'The fast-releasing glucose and slower-releasing fructose may support workouts. Studies show this combination may improve performance in prolonged cycling, compared to glucose alone.'

Unlike sugar's 'empty calories', honey also contains multiple nutrients, albeit in

micro doses. 'Honey has small amounts of B vitamins, vitamin C and an array of antioxidants including polyphenols. Additionally, it contains minerals such as calcium, iron, magnesium and potassium,' says Bailey. 'You're only taking small amounts of things like polyphenols, but nevertheless it is quite valuable,' adds Hunter.

However, remember that honey is classed as a 'free sugar', of which adults shouldn't have more than 30g daily – so don't glug it Winnie-the-Pooh style. Honey actually contains more calories than sugar: 21 per teaspoon, versus 16, says Thornton-Wood. 'The plus point is you're likely to eat less of it because it's sweeter.'

HONEY AS A REMEDY

The superpowers of honey go way beyond its sweetness, however. In particular, it is naturally antibacterial. 'All honey is antibacterial to some extent, with manuka at the top,' says Thornton-Wood. It may also have anti-inflammatory properties, thanks to all the antioxidants. Now research suggests it could help health in a variety of ways.

Easing upper respiratory tract infections

Most of us have sipped a mug of warm water, lemon and honey to soothe a sore throat or tickly cough. But it's more than a folk remedy. A 2020 systematic review published in the *BMJ* supported honey's effectiveness for the symptomatic relief of upper respiratory tract infections, concluding that 'It provides a widely available and cheap alternative to antibiotics.' Obviously, honey shouldn't replace conventional medical treatment. But Thornton-Wood says, 'In many ways, honey probably *is* better than antibiotics because

“All honey is naturally antibacterial”



they're only good for bacterial infections.' 'It's also pleasanter than a lot of cough mixtures,' adds Hunter. 'The viscosity soothes the mucous membranes when our throats feel rough.'

Healing wounds

Honey is well-established as an effective wound healer – the NHS uses medical-grade honey in sterile dressings. A 2020 systematic review found that honey used in wound treatment had anti-inflammatory effects, decreased pain and shortened healing time.

Its miraculous effects are partly thanks to the antibacterial substances it contains, including the chemical hydrogen peroxide. 'This was traditionally used as an antiseptic, but its levels in honey are very low so it's gentle,' says Hunter. 'Honey also draws liquid out of wounds, and stops dressings sticking, so you can peel them off without damage.'

That said, Hunter doesn't recommend sloshing raw honey over scraped knees ('Though lots of beekeepers probably do'). 'It needs to be irradiated so there are no contaminating organisms.'

Helping allergies

Anecdotally, many people swear that eating honey helps their hay fever. No strong science supports this yet – any positive effects would come from the pollen, says Hunter, which your stomach acid would destroy. But if you let honey hang around in your mouth, she says, it's within the realms of plausibility: 'Sublingual absorption happens under your tongue, and the mouth has lots of receptors.' To try it, stick to British honey, says Hunter, as the bees need to visit our native flora.

Reducing hangovers

If you're suffering the morning after the night before, honey might help, says Hunter. 'It's known as a good hangover cure. The fructose speeds up the oxidation of alcohol by the liver.' It's a theory that's even been endorsed by the Royal Society of Chemists, who recommended a classic serving of honey on toast.

Supporting digestion

Fructose is more easily digested than white sugar, but some also believe honey eases digestive complaints (although it may exacerbate IBS symptoms). 'Research suggests honey may help with preventing acid

reflux, and aid with reducing the duration of diarrhoea,' says Bailey. One 2013 study showed that manuka killed bacteria associated with food poisoning. That's because this thick, dark honey harvested in New Zealand has potent non-peroxide antibacterial properties, thanks to a substance it contains called methylglyoxal (MGO). The higher the MGO number, the more powerful this is.

Honey is also believed to be a prebiotic – a food that feeds the 'good' bacteria in your gut. 'It contains compounds such as fructo-oligosaccharides that can help enhance the growth of helpful microbes,' says James Annabell, co-founder of Egmont Honey.

Helping acne

Honey is popular in skincare, and not just because it smells amazing. 'Research suggests it may help keep skin moisturised,' says Bailey. If you don't mind the stickiness, fans

apply it to spots, especially manuka, due to its antibacterial properties again. 'It can also be used as a face wash for pimples,' adds Bailey.

WHICH VARIETY?

There's a massive range of honeys out there, each with a unique colour, consistency, flavour (reflecting which flowers honey bees visit) and active ingredients. As a rule of thumb, read the label so you know the source, and avoid blends that aren't pure. 'Honey which can be tracked from "hive to home" often guarantees quality,' advises Annabell. 'Choose a sustainable honey, which protects the environment, the bees and the people working to get it on your shelves.'

'Raw' usually means honey that hasn't been treated at high temperatures or highly filtered – though there's no official definition. Many people swear by manuka honey. 'Traditional honeys are usually pasteurised and filtered, but manuka is subjected to little processing,' adds Annabell.

Ultimately, though, the best thing about honey is that it's delicious. Drizzle over baked apples, use as a glaze for a roast, or a topping for pancakes. 'It's good stirred into porridge or yoghurt,' says Bailey. 'Add a spoonful to your pre-gym smoothie for a pre-workout boost. Or use it in homemade granola, protein bars or cookies for a sweet treat.' **HFM**



ALL ABOUT THE HONEY

▶ Egmont Manuka Honey MG 70+

Stir this rich, dark honey from New Zealand into porridge and shakes, or eat straight from the jar. **£33.99, 250g, 132 points**



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▶ **Ricola Soothe & Clear Honey Herb Lozenges** Relieve scratchy throats with these Swiss herbal wonders. **£1.49, 20 lozenges, 4 points**



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IMMUNITY COOKING

A new nutrition guide and cookbook has amazing tips not just for healthy eating, but also supporting your ability to fight off pesky bugs and viruses at the same time. Here's a three-course meal that your body will thank you for

Eating well can be a daily struggle for many of us, but with a new year comes new hope. And here to help you is *The Immunity Cookbook* by award-winning nutritionist and gut health expert Kate Llewellyn-Waters, an amazing, educational tome, healthy-eating guide and practical toolkit for supporting your immune system, all rolled into one. We've chosen a suggestion each for starter, main course and dessert, to help you on your way to a year ahead full of great food and self-care.

Lentil and butternut squash soup

Kate says: 'Lentils are an inexpensive plant-based protein source loaded with B vitamins, magnesium, zinc and potassium. As they are made up of over 25% protein, they're an excellent meat alternative. They're also a valuable source of iron, a mineral that's sometimes lacking in a plant-based diet. In addition, they're fibre-rich, which is exactly what we need to help support overall gut health.'

SERVES 4

2 tbsp olive oil
2 red onions, finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
1 medium butternut squash, peeled and roughly chopped
110g dried red lentils
1 litre hot vegetable stock
Juice of ½ lemon
Freshly ground black pepper

1 Gently heat the oil in a saucepan over a medium heat. Add the onions and garlic and cook for about 5 minutes until softened. Add the chopped butternut squash, lentils and hot stock and stir well. Reduce the heat to low and simmer for 30-35 minutes until the butternut squash is soft and the lentils are cooked.

2 Remove from the heat and transfer to a food processor or blender. Add the lemon



juice and blitz until creamy and smooth. Season to taste with black pepper.

► KATE'S TIP

'Use any kind of dried lentils you have to hand. I tend to use red or yellow, as they provide a sweet, nutty flavour and a lovely colour combined with the squash. If you don't have dried lentils, use canned. This tastes super with a little "heat", so spice it up with 1 tsp chilli powder or ground cumin.'

Veggie cottage pie with sweet potato mash

Kate says: 'I love this plant-based cottage pie as it's packed with nutrients. Again, the lentils make a brilliant alternative to meat. I use sweet potatoes over white potatoes in this dish, as they are rich in fibre, vitamins and minerals, and high in antioxidants that help protect our bodies from free radical damage and chronic disease. Also, the fibre and antioxidants in sweet potatoes encourage the growth of beneficial gut bacteria.'

SERVES 4

2 tbsp olive oil
1 large onion, sliced

2 large carrots, diced
Small bunch of fresh thyme, chopped
150ml red wine, vegan if necessary
50ml water
1 x 400g can chopped tomatoes
2 low-salt vegetable stock cubes
1 x 400g can black lentils
1kg sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into chunks
1 tsp ground nutmeg
100g grated vegan cheddar
Freshly ground black pepper

1 Gently heat the olive oil in a saucepan over a low heat. Add the sliced onion and sweat for 5 minutes until softened, then add the diced carrots and most of the chopped thyme, reserving a little for sprinkling over later. Add the red wine, water and chopped tomatoes, and crumble in the vegetable stock cubes. Simmer for 10-12 minutes. Add the lentils along with their canning liquid, cover and simmer for a further 12 minutes until the lentils are pulpy.

2 Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 180°C/160°C fan/gas mark 4. Bring a large pan of water to the boil, add the sweet potatoes and cook for 15 minutes until tender. Drain and mash the potatoes and sprinkle over the ground nutmeg.

3 Transfer the cooked lentils to an ovenproof dish, top with the sweet potato mash and scatter over the vegan cheddar cheese and the reserved thyme. Pop in the oven and cook for 30 minutes until golden and cooked through. Season to taste with freshly ground black pepper.

► KATE'S TIP

'If you are not vegan or dairy-free, you can use a mature cheddar in place of the vegan cheese. If you don't drink alcohol, omit the red wine and replace with vegetable stock. I tend to use black lentils (also referred to as Beluga lentils) for this, as they have a full-bodied flavour and work well in hearty dishes such as this or casseroles.' ►



Kate says:
'This is a great dish to cook in batches and pop in the freezer (it will keep frozen for up to a month). Alternatively, keep it covered in the fridge for up to two days.'



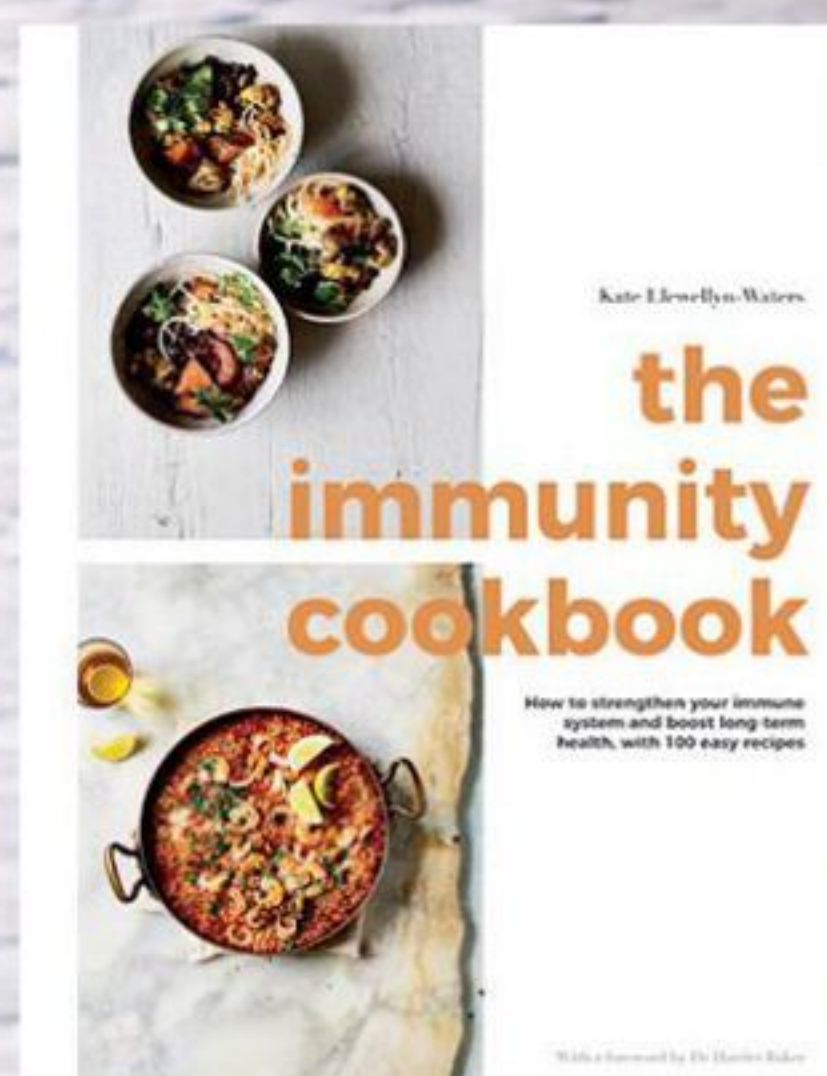
Fruit 'n' nut quinoa crumble

Kate says: 'I use quinoa in this crumble as it is a great protein source – as are nuts, also very good sources of vitamin E, magnesium and selenium. I particularly like to use Brazil nuts, as they're incredibly nutritious and are the richest food source of selenium. This important mineral plays a vital role in supporting your immune system and promotes immunity by lowering oxidative stress in your body. Nuts also have anti-inflammatory properties and are high in fibre, which helps you feel satiated, reduces calorie absorption and promotes gut health.'

SERVES 4

- 140g cooked quinoa
- 50g Brazil nuts, roughly chopped
- 50g pecans, roughly chopped
- 50g walnuts, roughly chopped
- 30g desiccated coconut
- 4 tbsp maple syrup
- 3 tbsp coconut oil, melted
- 150g frozen raspberries
- 150g frozen blueberries
- 100g frozen blackberries
- Coconut yoghurt, to serve

- 1 Preheat the oven to 180°C/160°C fan/gas mark 4. Put the quinoa, nuts and coconut into a food processor and lightly pulse 2-3 times to combine.
- 2 Mix the maple syrup and coconut oil in a bowl, then stir into the quinoa mixture.
- 3 Scatter the frozen berries over a baking dish, cover with the crumble mix and bake in the oven for 25 minutes. Serve with coconut yoghurt. **HFM**



The Immunity Cookbook by Kate Llewellyn-Waters (Quadrille, £20) is out 24 December

Ticket to ride

Cycling is an efficient calorie burner and a great way to tone muscles and boost cardio fitness – it's time to get on your bike!

Most of us learned to ride a bike as children, but cycling saw a huge surge in popularity in 2020, as one of the permitted forms of exercise during lockdown.

Cycling is easily built into your routine and gives a real sense of freedom. Whether you're enjoying the scenery on a leisurely ride, or taking a more sporty, energetic approach, it's a great way to tone the body and support overall health and fitness, as well as reducing the risk of chronic illnesses like heart disease, type 2 diabetes and stroke. It's also easy on the joints, and the lower body and core get a thorough workout.

GET STARTED

First, make sure your bike fits and feels comfortable – your local bike shop can help you make adjustments. If you haven't been on a bike for years, build up your confidence somewhere traffic-free. Remember the gears are there to help – drop down a few gears as you approach hills to make pedalling easier.

Once you feel comfortable, get out on the roads – and don't apologise for being there. Be assertive and give clear signals to other road users. If you prefer to stay offroad, there are woodland trails of varying levels of difficulty – and riding the most technical ones can provide a serious full-body workout.

If you want to take it to the next level, gradually increase your distance and ride faster – this will help build endurance and strength. Include hills on your route, and try to ride more often. Join a local cycling club or use an app like Strava to help spur you on, while strengthening your back and abdominal muscles and reducing pressure on your joints. If you're unsure on the technique, check out a tutorial video online.



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MENTAL HEALTH

Winter may not be so SAD



We've long believed that seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is caused by a lack of sunshine through the winter months. However, new research has called this into question. A Dutch study of more than 5000 people found that winter did not affect their mood – as long as they already had a positive outlook on life. It was only the people struggling all year round with a negative

frame of mind who reported being affected by the long winter nights, and were therefore more likely to be labelled with SAD. For those participants with a sunnier disposition, the move into winter made no difference to their overall temperament. 'The findings of this study do not support the widespread belief that seasons influence mood to a great extent,' concluded the researchers.

**Man
talk**



**T A K E O N Y O U R
I N S E C U R I T I E S
A N D W I N**

More than ever, men are comparing themselves to others in increasingly unhelpful ways, leading to lower self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy. The good news is that it's perfectly possible to stop the negative cycle

It's a familiar scene. You wake up, roll over and scroll through Instagram. Within seconds, you're bombarded with photos and hashtags like #swole, #gains and #runningmotivation, blowing any tiny chinks of insecurity wide open, leaving you peering down at your body and vowing to make changes before you've even climbed out of bed.

These painstakingly curated and highly filtered feeds have been proven in studies to negatively affect those who are looking at the posts, especially if the person scrolling suffers from low self-esteem. A 2019 review published in the journal *Current Opinion In Psychiatry* found that adolescent depression and suicidal behaviour has increased over the past two decades, following the onset of heavy social media use in teenagers.

'The use of highly visual platforms like Instagram significantly predicted body image concerns,' says Dr Adam Huxley, clinical director, psychologist and co-founder of NHS-backed wellbeing platform Thrive (thrive.uk.com). 'This may lead to anxiety about your own body image, particularly if it doesn't resemble the photographs you see on social media. The pressure to conform to these stereotypes can often result in men feeling under pressure to take additional steps to achieve this look.'

Insecurities can lead many men along dark paths that they end up wishing they'd never ventured down, whether that's a quick-fix fad diet, a dodgy teeth-whitening procedure or a grimace-inducing back-hair wax – or something that involves more dramatic medical intervention such as a hair transplant, steroid use or a penis enlargement.

SHIFTING INSECURITIES

One recent study in *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism* showed an increase in anabolic steroid use and body image disorders among young men. Others are increasingly obsessing over what they eat and spending disproportionate amounts of time in the gym, often at the expense of other responsibilities such as work or relationships.

Dr Huxley warns that making extreme changes to the way you look can often lead to more entrenched psychological problems. 'If one of the motivations to change the way you look is to try to manage anxiety you experience as a result of your body image, then that anxiety may not always go away.' Indeed, the insecurity often simply transfers to a different part of your body that you then become unhappy with.

'There is evidence to show that some people with body dysmorphic disorder [BDD]

who undergo cosmetic surgery can find it exacerbates their body image dissatisfaction,' says Dr Huxley. A 2012 study in the *Journal Of Plastic, Reconstructive & Cosmetic Surgery* followed up patients who had cosmetic surgery and found that high-BDD symptomatic patients were more dissatisfied with the results of surgery, exhibited higher levels of psychopathology, and experienced lower self-esteem than the low-symptomatic BDD patients.

But the blame can't all be laid at social media's door. Dr Elena Touroni, a consultant psychologist and co-founder and co-CEO of myonlinetherapy.com, says that childhood experiences often play an important role in determining whether someone is vulnerable to insecurities.

'Positive self-image is about being able to see our inherent value as a human being, regardless of external factors and what's going on in the world around us,' she says. 'The amount men compare themselves to others normally comes down to a number of different factors – self-esteem, how much they place value on external factors and experiences growing up.' Dr Touroni recommends therapy as a starting point in tackling problems of low self-esteem, where you can unravel your experiences and see beneficial results.

JOB DISSATISFACTION

For many, the world of careers and finance can also lead to chest-tightening insecurities. From perceptions that you're not earning as much as your peers to feelings of emasculation if your partner earns more than you, men can easily slide down a long, slippery financial slope that ends in racking up significant debts on credit cards.

'Financial worries often stem from the preconceived notion that men are supposed to be the providers for the family,' says Asim Amin, CEO and founder of online therapy platform Healingclouds. 'Society doesn't help with breaking down these gender barriers, as there are still huge differences in pay scales and positions between men and women.'

'I had a humble upbringing but I grew up around rich kids,' says Amin. 'My family couldn't afford to give me what my friends had. So when I started earning, I was irresponsible, trying to live a lifestyle that I couldn't afford. It all came crumbling down when I faced huge debts, and then I had to start all over again.'

The first step to overcoming any insecurity is realising you have an issue and addressing it. 'There are practical steps men can take to address their insecurities,' says Amin. »

THE EXPERTS



Dr Adam Huxley, clinical director, psychologist and co-founder of NHS-backed wellbeing platform Thrive (thrive.uk.com)



Dr Elena Touroni, a consultant psychologist and co-founder and co-CEO of myonlinetherapy.com



Asim Amin, CEO and founder of online therapy platform Healingclouds



5 WAYS TO TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR INSECURITIES

DR TOURONI GIVES HER PRACTICAL ADVICE ON HOW TO SLAY YOUR ANXIETIES

LIST WHAT YOU'RE GRATEFUL FOR

'Instead of focusing on all the things you don't like about your appearance, shift the focus to a sense of gratitude for all the amazing things your body does for you every day. Make a list of three things you're grateful for, in a diary or on your phone – for example, the ability to run, get stronger or simply breathe.'

UNDERTAKE A SOCIAL-MEDIA CULL

'Unfollow any brands on social media that imply you need to change, or that you should improve yourself in any way.'

EXAMINE YOUR VALUES

'Turn your attention to values instead of superficial qualities. What values are important to you? What kind of person do you want to be – for example, kind, considerate, honest, independent and so on.'

INCREASE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

'Engage in activities that bring you in touch with your body. Try a body scan meditation, and physical activities such as running, cycling or yoga.'

CONSIDER THERAPY

'If you struggle with self-esteem, therapy is a great place to unravel where this stems from and identify any negative thought patterns so you can build a healthier, more balanced mind-set.'

'But to acknowledge there is a problem and take the decision to make a change is huge.'

Once you have taken that crucial first step, you'll be surprised just how much help is out there. 'Understanding that the way we view ourselves might not be how others view us is an important part of reducing anxiety,' says Dr Huxley. 'We often have overvalued ideas about ourselves and may experience a number of "thinking errors" that lead to faulty thinking patterns. We can try to restructure some of these thoughts by finding a more balanced alternative for them; for example, by thinking, "Maybe I am a bit overweight but that doesn't mean everyone in the office thinks I'm obese. No one has ever said that to me." Of course, it's easier said than done, but feeling comfortable about the way we look is one way to feel content with

“Every person's idea of what is 'masculine' will be different”

our bodies. Understanding that the images we see are often manipulated to create an "ideal" type, or that "beauty" is a subjective concept, is important. What one person perceives to be "masculine" will differ from the next person.'

One of the simpler solutions is to take a break from social media – shifting your attention onto something else will stop you worrying excessively about your

insecurities. Both Dr Huxley and Amin recommend mindfulness relaxation sessions as a way of helping to control worrisome thoughts. 'There are many YouTube and podcast channels where you can find useful information to help manage your insecurities,' says Amin. 'Apps such as Headspace and Calm are worth looking into, as well as the works of the yogi Sadhguru and spiritual teacher Eckhart Tolle. You can start seeing changes in a short period of time.'

THE RIGHT KIND OF THERAPY

'For more severe difficulties like BDD, there is compelling evidence for the effectiveness of talking therapies such as CBT,' says Dr Huxley. 'This supports cognitive restructuring and behavioural experiments to test assumptions that people may have about themselves.'

For Amin, a combination of therapy, meditation and exercise turned his life around. 'It helped me in my personal growth,' he says. 'I'm calmer, know how to manage my anxiety and am comfortable in my skin. Consistency is key. I have regular therapy sessions, meditate every morning and exercise several times a week. Once you put in the work, you can achieve great results.' **HFM**

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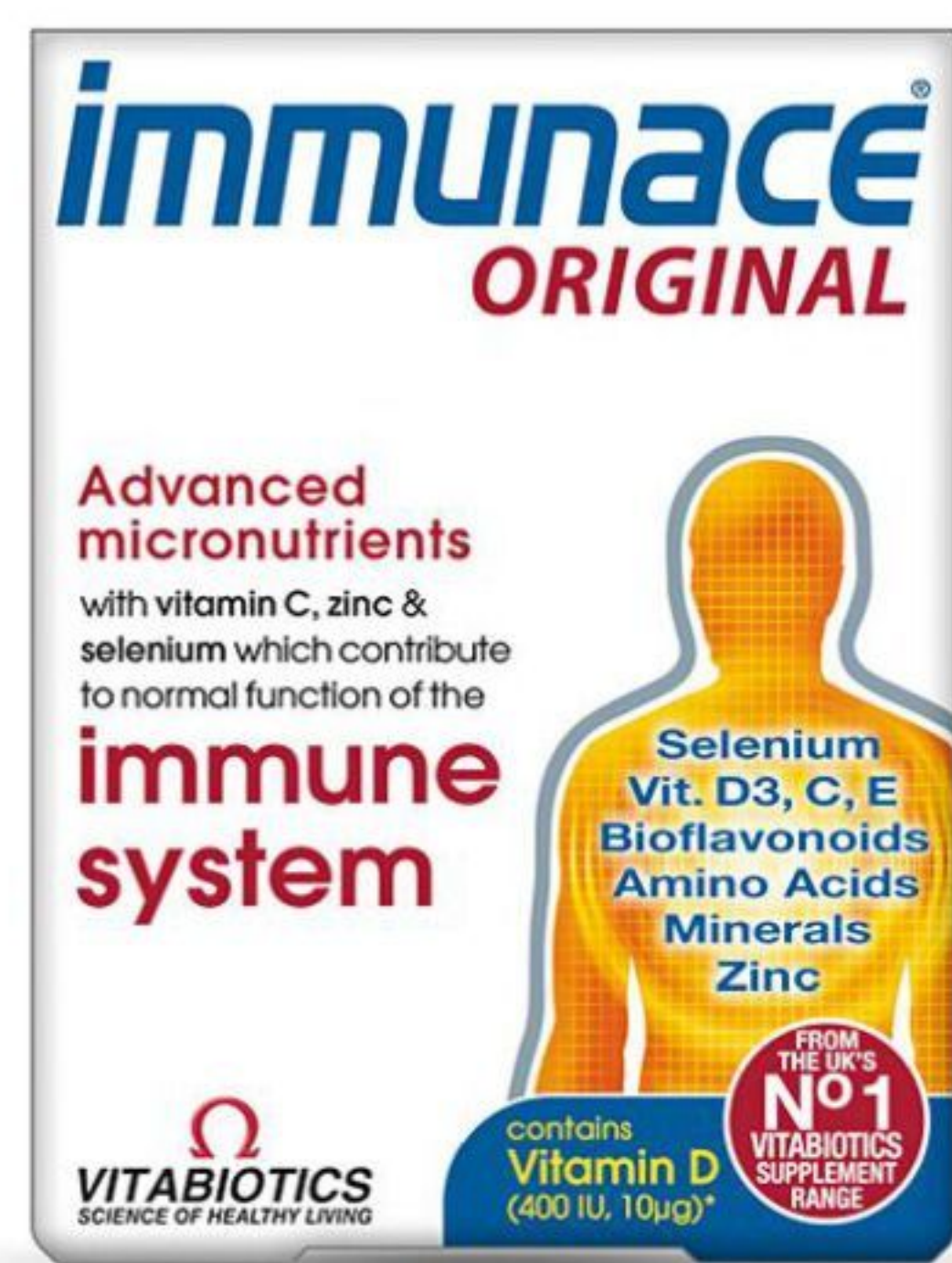
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PLAN LIKE A PRO

Ever get the feeling that you want to do so many things, but can never get around to actually doing any of them? You're not alone, because we all do that. Follow our expert tips, and you might just hit your goals

Well, 2020 was quite a year, wasn't it? Covid-19 made it virtually impossible to plan ahead – something that isn't easy at the best of times. We can be overwhelmed with a desire to do so many different things that we end up never doing any of them. It's easy to get sidetracked by *life*.

Your resolutions for this year may include grand plans like a career change, new car or new home, or they could be as simple as updating your wardrobe or being in touch with old friends. Either way, organisation is key.

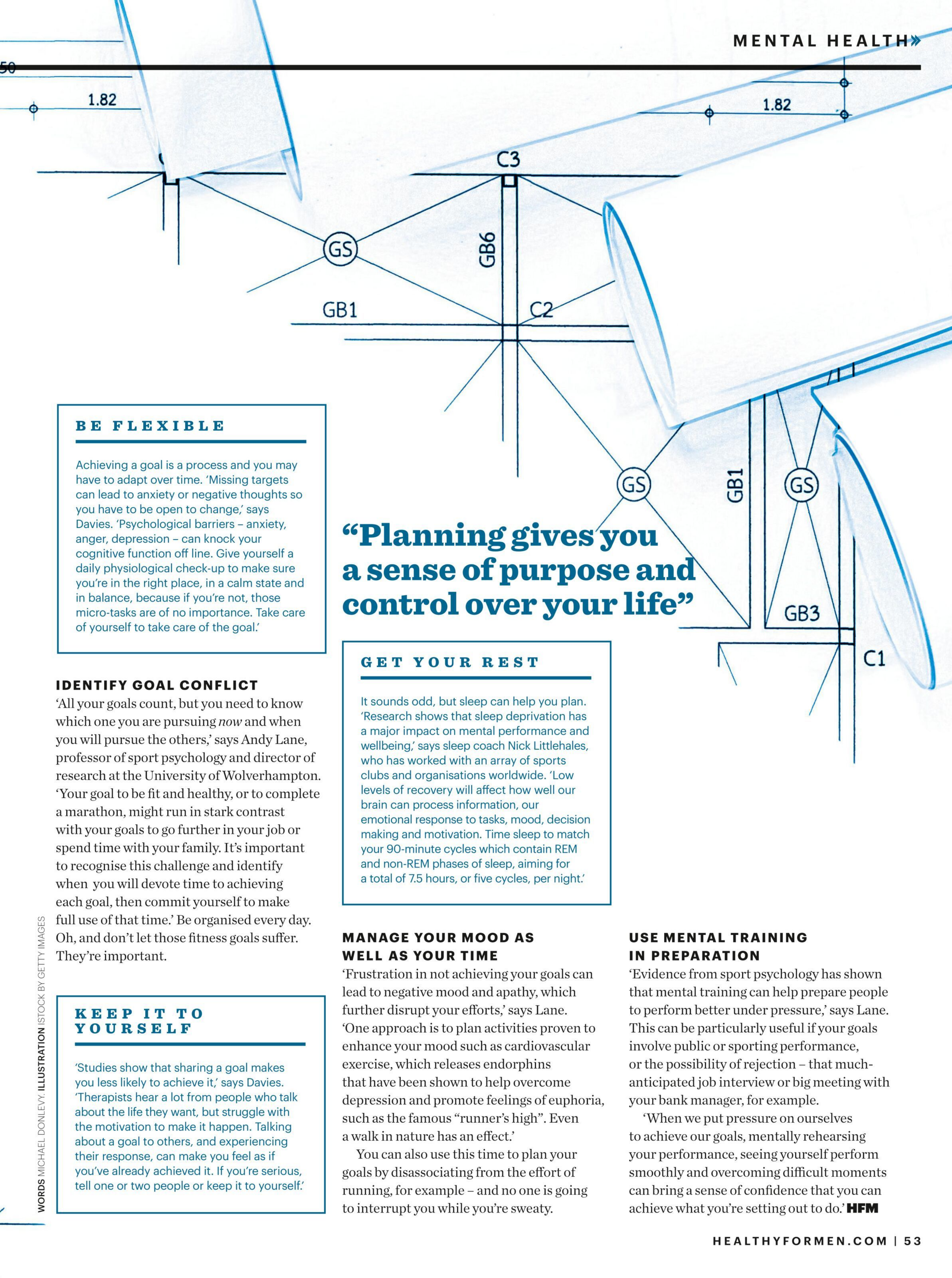
Almost anything is possible if you plan properly, and making those plans come off will make you feel more fulfilled across all areas of your life. Trust us – and trust the experts who are here to help you.

TAKE A STEP BACK...

...and ask yourself why you need to plan. 'We spend a lot of our lives doing things we're told to,' says psychotherapist John-Paul Davies. 'Often the motivating factor is fear, especially at work, and control over our lives is often further away than is good for us.' Planning something *you* want to do, and building in 15 or 20 minutes every day to make it happen, is good for your brain. 'It gives you a sense of purpose, a feeling of competency and control over your life,' says Davies.

WORK BACKWARDS FROM THE GOAL

Make a detailed plan and fill in the steps back from the goal by breaking it into chunks. 'It might help to create a "vision board", something visual that represents the goal,' says Davies. 'Ticking off micro-tasks along the way has a physiological benefit because your body releases dopamine, a neurotransmitter in the brain that helps to promote feelings of pleasure. This is a physiological reward for hitting a target, but you can give yourself physical rewards, too.'



BE FLEXIBLE

Achieving a goal is a process and you may have to adapt over time. ‘Missing targets can lead to anxiety or negative thoughts so you have to be open to change,’ says Davies. ‘Psychological barriers – anxiety, anger, depression – can knock your cognitive function off line. Give yourself a daily physiological check-up to make sure you’re in the right place, in a calm state and in balance, because if you’re not, those micro-tasks are of no importance. Take care of yourself to take care of the goal.’

IDENTIFY GOAL CONFLICT

‘All your goals count, but you need to know which one you are pursuing *now* and when you will pursue the others,’ says Andy Lane, professor of sport psychology and director of research at the University of Wolverhampton. ‘Your goal to be fit and healthy, or to complete a marathon, might run in stark contrast with your goals to go further in your job or spend time with your family. It’s important to recognise this challenge and identify when you will devote time to achieving each goal, then commit yourself to make full use of that time.’ Be organised every day. Oh, and don’t let those fitness goals suffer. They’re important.

KEEP IT TO YOURSELF

‘Studies show that sharing a goal makes you less likely to achieve it,’ says Davies. ‘Therapists hear a lot from people who talk about the life they want, but struggle with the motivation to make it happen. Talking about a goal to others, and experiencing their response, can make you feel as if you’ve already achieved it. If you’re serious, tell one or two people or keep it to yourself.’

“Planning gives you a sense of purpose and control over your life”

GET YOUR REST

It sounds odd, but sleep can help you plan. ‘Research shows that sleep deprivation has a major impact on mental performance and wellbeing,’ says sleep coach Nick Littlehales, who has worked with an array of sports clubs and organisations worldwide. ‘Low levels of recovery will affect how well our brain can process information, our emotional response to tasks, mood, decision making and motivation. Time sleep to match your 90-minute cycles which contain REM and non-REM phases of sleep, aiming for a total of 7.5 hours, or five cycles, per night.’

MANAGE YOUR MOOD AS WELL AS YOUR TIME

‘Frustration in not achieving your goals can lead to negative mood and apathy, which further disrupt your efforts,’ says Lane. ‘One approach is to plan activities proven to enhance your mood such as cardiovascular exercise, which releases endorphins that have been shown to help overcome depression and promote feelings of euphoria, such as the famous “runner’s high”. Even a walk in nature has an effect.’

You can also use this time to plan your goals by disassociating from the effort of running, for example – and no one is going to interrupt you while you’re sweaty.

USE MENTAL TRAINING IN PREPARATION

‘Evidence from sport psychology has shown that mental training can help prepare people to perform better under pressure,’ says Lane. This can be particularly useful if your goals involve public or sporting performance, or the possibility of rejection – that much-anticipated job interview or big meeting with your bank manager, for example.

‘When we put pressure on ourselves to achieve our goals, mentally rehearsing your performance, seeing yourself perform smoothly and overcoming difficult moments can bring a sense of confidence that you can achieve what you’re setting out to do.’ **HFM**

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HEALTH

Man 1 Smelly feet 0

 Having embarrassingly stinky feet is no laughing matter for a lot of men, who put the bro in bromodosis – the medical name for foot odour. But new research by scientists in Thailand has found that socks coated in zinc oxide nanoparticles can prevent feet from developing unpleasant smells. These particles have high antibacterial qualities while also being kind to human skin.

The study was conducted with Thai naval cadets – as military personnel often struggle with foot odour and infection problems while wearing boots. Not only did the specially treated socks nullify the cadets' bad foot odours, they also reduced the number of fungal and bacterial foot infections. Zinc oxide nanoparticles might just be the answer to your prayers.

HEALTH TRENDS RATED

From forest bathing to red light, which health trends are worthy of our investment, and which only benefit a select few? We asked a crack team of experts to make their assessments

We all want to live our best life, but who has the time – or inclination – to sample every potential fad that promises emotional, physical or medical utopia? Sure, a recommendation from a friend is useful, but sometimes we want cold, hard science, and intense scrutiny before we invest our time and money. In order to guide you, we’ve pulled together a collection of experts who have devoted their careers to helping people feel better, whether that’s by treating illness or keeping us on an even keel emotionally. Here’s their verdict on some classic health trends, and a few to look out for in 2021.

TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION

What is it? TM involves sitting in silence for 20 minutes, repeating a personal mantra (given to you by your TM teacher). As a result, you’ll supposedly be rewarded with a feeling of ‘deep restfulness’ or ‘bliss’. Positioned as a cure for modern life, it’s shown to lower blood pressure, improve sleep and ease depression.

The expert view Psychologist Emma Kenny says: “TM helps to bring you back to the present moment, like mindfulness, but it also helps you to feel connected to something “more than”, which is reassuring. It makes



you work on your spiritual, emotional and psychological growth and anything that allows that kind of enlightenment is helpful. Twenty minutes a day will see your serotonin levels increase, and cortisol and adrenalin decrease, which will make you feel more at peace. People who transcendently meditate tend to feel more positive. It's restful, disconnects us from the harassment of the world around us, and I wholeheartedly recommend it.'

The expert verdict 4 out of 5

Find out more uk.tm.org

FASTING FOR HEALTH

What is it? Intermittent fasting diets like the 5:2, popularised by Dr Michael Mosley, involve days where calorie intake is radically reduced. It's said to help people lose weight, but also improve blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugars, and even lengthen your life.

The expert view Dr Amir Khan, GP and author of *The Doctor Will See You Now* (Ebury Press, £16.99) says: 'If your doctor has recommended a short-term fasting diet, it will be safe and effective, but it's not sustainable in the long term. Fasting lowers insulin levels, which promotes fat metabolism and weight loss, and can boost levels of a neurotransmitter that helps speed up metabolism. Several studies show benefits in people with type 2 diabetes in particular, but turning to binge eating after the period of

WHOLE - BODY CRYOTHERAPY

► WHAT IS IT?

Developed in Japan, it involves standing in a chamber, where the air is frozen to between -110°C and -165°C to aid muscle recovery, reduce injuries, boost energy and improve sleep. It's also used to treat arthritis, psoriasis and depression.

THE EXPERT VIEW Giovanni Lombardi, head of the laboratory of experimental biochemistry and molecular biology at IRCCS Istituto Ortopedico Galeazzi, Milan, says: 'Cold therapies have proven anti-inflammatory effects – think icing an injury – and whole-body cryotherapy (WBC) is an extreme example of this. Our studies on athletes, together with other research, have demonstrated beneficial effects. WBC restores the proper pro-inflammatory response to exercise by reducing the baseline chronic inflammatory status and increasing exercise-induced acute inflammation. In "normal" people, we've also seen beneficial effects on pain. Every condition where there is an unusual inflammatory response, and consequently pain, can be potentially treated with WBC.'

THE EXPERT VERDICT 5 out of 5

Find out more Search 'cryotherapy' with your postcode to find your nearest whole-body cryotherapy venue.

FOREST BATHING

► WHAT IS IT?

Known in Japan as *shinrin-yoku*, spending time among trees while breathing deeply is believed to help you de-stress, while chemicals released by trees called phytoncides apparently support the immune system. Studies show that forest bathing may reduce blood pressure and improve concentration and memory.

THE EXPERT VIEW Holistic GP Dr Shamim Daya believes: 'Bathing in a natural atmosphere is of huge benefit. It's an important way to receive the negative ions [negatively charged airborne molecules produced by plants and other natural sources] that are thought to heal us, and counteract the excess of positive ions [such as air pollution] in modern life that may harm us. Forest bathing offers healing to our body, mind, emotions and soul. Everyone would benefit from it.' Emma Kenny adds: 'Research has shown that chemicals released by trees benefit immunity, but from a psychological perspective, you could argue that simply breathing deeply among nature does that, because it lowers levels of the stress hormone cortisol.'

THE EXPERT VERDICT: 5 out of 5

Find out more forestryengland.uk/blog/forest-bathing

fasting is a risk. I wouldn't recommend it for anyone who is at risk of hypoglycaemia (very low blood sugar). I'd consider advising it to overweight type 2 diabetics, but only after a healthy, well-balanced diet, exercise and other lifestyle changes have failed.'

The expert verdict 3 out of 5

Find out more thefastdiet.co.uk

RED LIGHT THERAPY

What is it? Otherwise known as photobiomodulation (PBMT), this involves exposing your skin to red light from a lamp, device or laser. This stimulates mitochondria, the tiny powerhouses inside your cells, which is why the therapy is thought to help speed up the healing of skin and muscle tissue.

The expert view Dr Shamim Daya says: 'The main benefit is to stimulate circulation – it's good for improving blood flow and overall circulation. It's also helpful for stimulating collagen, and is known to increase testosterone levels. The evidence behind ►

it is convincing enough and certainly worth trying.’ Chiropractor Sarah Richards is also a fan: ‘I have been using PBMT for 12 years. I find it useful on all patients, but especially those in acute pain. I use it with soft-tissue injuries such as knee sprains, and find it helps to speed up the healing process. Patients with chronic pain and nerve pain also report a decrease in symptoms following PBMT.’

The expert verdict 4 out of 5

Find out more Search ‘red light therapy’ with your postcode to find your nearest venue.

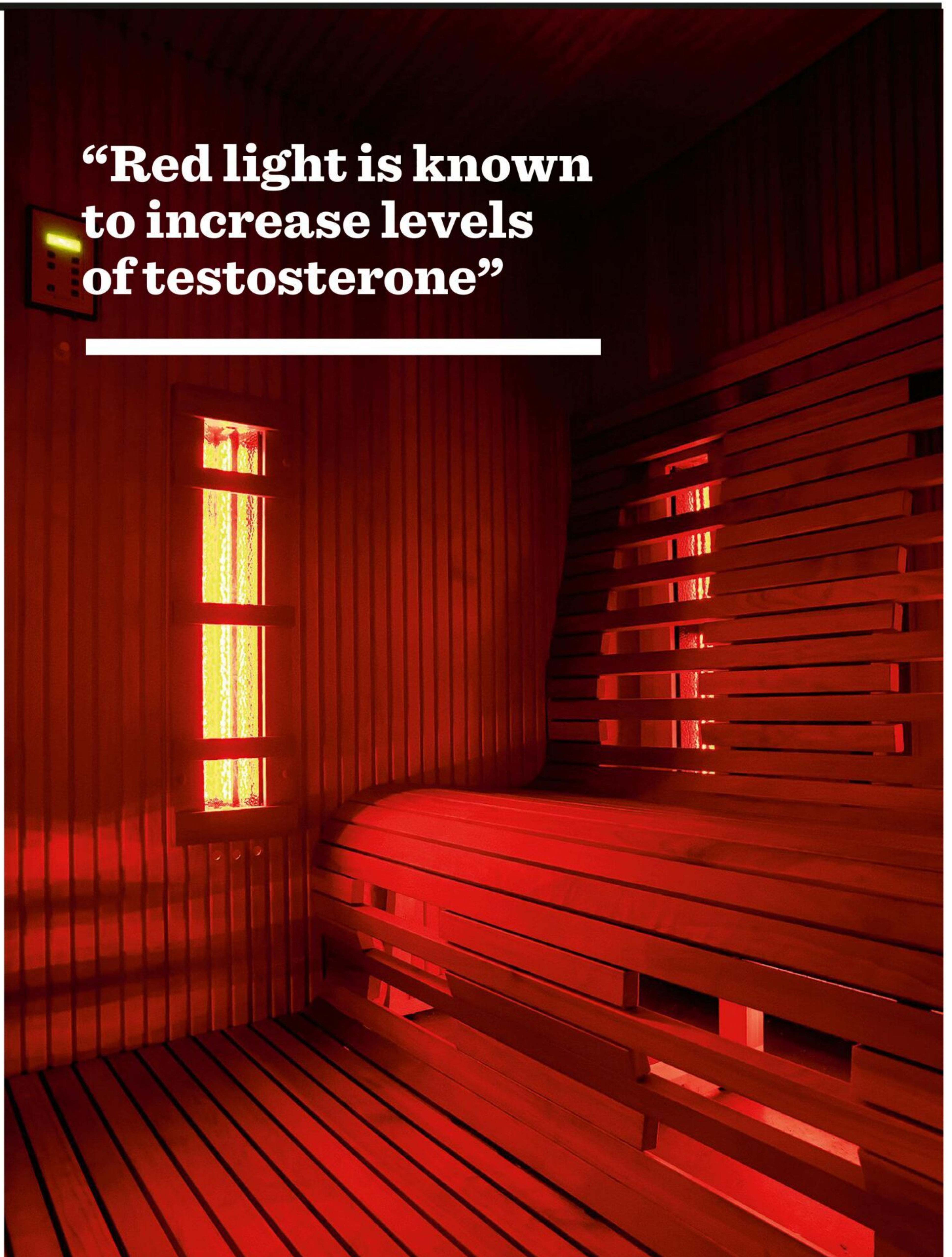
EATING 10-A-DAY

What is it? Gobbling 10 portions of fruit and veg a day – a team at Imperial College London pooled data from 95 studies and calculated doing so could prevent 7.8 million premature deaths each year by reducing the chances of heart disease, stroke and cancer.

The expert view Dr Khan says: ‘If you can get 10 portions of fruit and veg in a day, that’s fantastic – but is it realistic? No, and setting unachievable goals isn’t helpful. It’s better to stick to five-a-day and achieve it. The more fruit and veg you eat, the better, as they help protect against a multitude of diseases including cancers and cardiovascular disease. If you can get more than five, that will be more protective, but we have to be realistic. The best way to get more in is by making soups and snacking on fruit. Also, fruits and vegetables can trigger stomach issues such as acid reflux and irritable bowel disease.’

The expert verdict 3 out of 5

Find out more Cram in more fruit and veg with *10-a-Day The Easy Way* by TV botanist James Wong (Mitchell Beazley, £20). **HFM**



“Red light is known to increase levels of testosterone”

NEW TRENDS FOR 2021

WINNER OR BINNER – WILL THESE THREE NEW HEALTH TRENDS STAND THE TEST OF TIME?

► INFRARED SAUNAS

Saunas that use light to create heat, they make your body respond in a similar way to exercise, causing sweating and increasing heart rate, but at lower temperatures than regular saunas.

THE VERDICT Professor Marc Cohen, a medical doctor who has spent over 30 years researching holistic health, says: ‘Anything that makes you sweat is beneficial. Regular saunas have been shown to reduce all-cause mortality and prevent a range of chronic diseases, as well as improving sleep. Infrared saunas make you sweat at a lower temperature so are well tolerated. I recommend them to anyone interested in boosting their immune response or preventing chronic disease.’

FIND OUT MORE Search ‘infrared sauna’ with your postcode to find a venue near you.

► AURICULOTHERAPY

It’s acupuncture, but just on ears. Different points correspond to different organs, which are stimulated with needles or ‘seeds’.

THE VERDICT Professor Gary N Asher, expert in family medicine, carried out a systematic review of auriculotherapy for pain, and says: ‘It’s simple, safe, effective, and well-tolerated for acute and chronic pain, and especially for post-operative pain. Of course, some patients don’t like needles, and it’s possible for needles that remain in place for a few days to become infected, but that’s uncommon and can largely be prevented. I would recommend it for anyone with acute injury pain who would like to reduce their use of painkillers.’

FIND OUT MORE Take a look at fht.org.uk/therapies/auriculotherapy

► NIKSEN

A Dutch concept, whereby you allow yourself to be idle to beat stress and burnout.

THE VERDICT Emma Kenny says: ‘This idea of hanging around, looking at nature or listening to music is just a new name for informal mindful practice. Things like gardening, baking or puzzling combine relaxing with semi-automatic activity, so you get into a state of flow because you’re enjoying what you’re doing without having to think. It’s the simplest way of getting in a positive mental state without having to learn a technique, it’s free, and you can do it at home. Everybody should give it a go.’

FIND OUT MORE For more on how to switch off, settle back with a copy of *Niksen: Embracing The Dutch Art Of Doing Nothing* by Olga Meckling (£12.99, Piatkus)

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YOU ARE WHAT

YOU SLEEP

New research shows that men are suffering from sleep problems more than ever before. *HFM* finds out what we can do about it

Sleepless nights? No one knows them better than Tony Wright, an amateur sleep researcher from Cornwall who, in 2007, stayed awake for more than 11 days straight. Subsisting on a diet of raw food, cups of tea and countless games of pool, the 42-year-old was trying to set a Guinness World Record and prove that humans can survive with minimal amounts of shuteye.

Though he was avoiding bed in the name of science, the experiment posed serious risks to his health. In fact, Guinness refused to ratify his record for fear of encouraging copycats to impair themselves physically and mentally.

According to the NHS, most adults require between six and nine hours of slumber every night. It's when our bodies and minds recharge and heal themselves, bolstering our immunity, healing muscles and cells, and helping our brains process memories.

The problem is, few of us get enough of it. According to health technology company Philips' annual sleep survey, only 44% of Britons are satisfied with their sleep.

Anxiety caused by Covid-19 is exacerbating the problem. Research carried out by the Centre for Population Change at Southampton University has discovered that worry-related sleep loss normally affects 12%

of British men, but this number increased to 16.5% after the pandemic struck.

'We observed a large increase in the number of Britons, both men and women, suffering anxiety-induced sleep problems,' said Professor Jane Falkingham, who led the research. 'This reflects stress levels due to anxieties about health, financial consequences, changes in social life and the daily routine.'

There are many other causes of insomnia. In their survey, Philips pinpointed five main barriers to a good night's sleep. Of the 13,000 people they quizzed across 13 different countries (including the UK), 28% of subjects

SLEEP EASY

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► **LUMIE BODYCLOCK STARTER 30**
(£59.99,
236 points)

Eases you gently out of sleep with a simulated sunrise.



All available at
hollandandbarrett.com

reported suffering from general insomnia; 24% were kept awake by snoring; 12% by chronic pain; 10% by the disruption of shift work; and 9% by sleep apnoea.

The NHS warns that 'caffeine, nicotine, recreational drugs like cocaine or ecstasy, jet lag, uncomfortable beds, noise, and a room that's too hot or too cold' will all disrupt our beauty sleep. Alcohol may help us nod off, but it's not conducive for good quality sleep.

Dr Chris Dickson is the chairman of sleep technology developers Cambridge Sleep Sciences. 'When it comes to health, I regard sleep as being just as important as exercise and diet,' he says.

He explains how Covid-19 has turned our daily routines on their head, and that this has had a detrimental effect on our quality of sleep. Forced to work from home, many of us now use bedrooms as offices. 'If you possibly can, do your work in a spare room,' he advises. 'It's important that you associate the bedroom as a place of sleep, not work. And try not to watch

TV or use screens in your bedroom.'

It's also good practice to retire and rise at around the same time every day. A dark, quiet bedroom and a temperature of around 18 degrees, he says, will assist us on our way to the land of nod.

Certain sleeping disorders particularly affect men. Sleep apnoea, for example, causes breathing to repeatedly stop and start during sleep, and affects 4% of men aged between 30 and 60. 'You're constantly being woken up at night,' Dr Dickson explains. 'It affects older men, particularly if they're overweight or have excess weight around the neck area.' Many GPs will recommend lifestyle changes

like losing weight and drinking less to combat sleep apnoea. If those don't work, there is an effective solution provided by a device called a CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) machine which gently pumps air into a mask that you must wear over your mouth or nose while you're sleeping.

Another cause of sleep disruption, common in men aged 50 and above, is benign prostate enlargement, where you find yourself waking up frequently during the night to urinate. It's thought to be linked to hormonal changes as men get older. Medication or reducing fluid intake before bedtime can help. (An increased need to pee can also be a sign of prostate

“Coping with no sleep isn't ‘macho’, it's a health hazard”

cancer, but this is often accompanied by other symptoms like pain in the pelvic area, weight loss, and blood in the urine.)

There's also a sleep ailment called restless legs syndrome, or Willis-Ekbom disease – a condition of the nervous system that causes the legs to jerk around at night. Iron deficiency can be a cause, often treated by taking supplements. Some medics believe it's also caused by low dopamine levels. 'It's quite a common condition,' Dr Dickson says. 'People are embarrassed to talk about it because it seems trivial. But it really does keep people awake.'

Given all these potential disorders, it's easy to lose sleep worrying about losing sleep. Indeed, many people these days resort to using sleep tracker devices or apps in the quest for the perfect kip, but end up obsessing over the data. This obsession can become so overriding that medics in the United States have even given it a name: orthosomnia.

Despite all the research into insomnia, many men still tend to ignore the problem of sleepless nights. Some even boast of their ability to get by with just a few hours of sleep. 'Yes, there is sometimes a macho attitude, with men saying "I don't need sleep",' says Dr Dickson. 'But, of course they do. While some people cope better with the consequences of little sleep, it doesn't mean it's not affecting their health.' That's advice that Cornishman Tony Wright might well have heeded after his world record attempt. **HFM**

NEW YEAR, NEW REGIME

HFM's Stuart Miles has all the ingredients for the perfect grooming programme to last through 2021 and beyond



We all try to start the year with fresh resolve, but how long will that realistically last? When it comes to grooming, it's important to find a plan that we can stick

to, as consistency is key for achieving results. It's all about working out what our priorities are when it comes to looking good, and matching that to our busy lifestyles. Here are my top tips for creating an effective grooming regime that will last the distance.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

The men's grooming market is expanding year-on-year, and the choice of products is huge. Don't be taken in by all the marketing hype unless you want to be left with a shelf full of half-empty products and a large hole in your wallet. Try my four-product rule for total body grooming by choosing ones that cleverly combine ingredients.

- Find a hair and body wash that's mild enough not to dry out hair but can cut through after a sweaty workout. Try **Dr Organic Ginseng Hair & Body Wash** (£7.50, 250ml, 28 points). Formulated with ginseng root extract, it's designed for everyday use and supercharged with caffeine and aloe vera.

- Discover a moisturiser that contains an SPF to protect your skin. If you're pale, look for one with some added gradual tanner thrown in.

- Find a shaving gel that contains moisturiser, or beard oil that helps condition your skin as well, such as **Dr Organic Ginseng Shave & Beard Oil** (£8.99, 50ml, 32 points).

- Use a matt-look clay that defines your hair but also conditions it. These products tend not to weigh down the hair, so it can be restyled on the same day without the need to wash it again. Result!

DOUBLE UP ON YOUR ESSENTIALS

How many times have you forgotten your shampoo at the gym, or gone away for the weekend and left your moisturiser at home? Try buying two of everything and keeping one in your bathroom and the other in your washbag. That way, if you're going to the gym, or heading off for a few nights, you'll always have what you need at hand. The key to effective grooming is consistency so doubling up also helps ensure that you are using your products effectively. Stockpiling a spare is also handy if you run out and don't have time to go to the shops, or (heaven forbid) they don't have your favourite conditioner or invigorating face scrub.



GROOMING ROOM TIPS

▶ BANISH WRINKLES

If you're worried about lines, then invest in an eye cream. Protecting the delicate skin around your peepers is key as it's one of the first areas to show the signs of ageing.

▶ TOUGHEN YOUR TOWEL

Try washing your towels without fabric conditioner. A rougher towel will help keep your skin exfoliated in those hard-to-reach places like your back, which can be prone to oily patches and spots.



PHOTOGRAPH ISTOCK BY GETTY IMAGES

The grooming room



USE LESS OF EVERYTHING

After the last tip, this may seem a little contradictory, but it's all about using less each time you apply it, for a more sustainable approach. We tend to think that the more we use, the better the results, but this isn't true. Too much shampoo, for example, will dry out the scalp and make your hair too soft and flyaway. We waste a lot of product by over-applying – by simply scaling back and looking for non-plastic packaging, you'll not only help the planet but save some money.

Try **Ethique Tip to Toe Shampoo & Shaving Bar** (£12.99, 110g, 48 points), the perfect bar for multi-tasking, and a good way to avoid unnecessary plastic bottles.

CLEANSER PROPERLY BEFORE BED

The most neglected part of any man's grooming routine is the part before bed. Cleaning your face is important for washing away grime that can block pores. The skin also repairs itself at night, and this will be more efficient if it's clean. Use a simple cleanser or face wash that won't strip skin. If you suffer from dryness or are over 40, it may be a good idea to apply a rich night-time moisturiser.

MAKE A THREE-STAGE PLAN

Look at splitting your grooming into three manageable blocks: daily, weekly or monthly. Cleansing and moisturising are daily jobs. Things like exfoliating – especially the face – are a weekly job as too much scrubbing can be counterproductive. A face mask is another weekly option, particularly if you have oily skin which is prone to blackheads. A beard trim is another good task for the weekly list. A monthly task might include body hair trimming, hair removal or a top-to-toe body scrub. Dividing up tasks like this makes things much more manageable, and will help you keep on top of your grooming without spending ages in the bathroom. **HFM**

All products at hollandandbarrett.com

The locker room

Help get your 2021 fitness regime off to a flying start with the latest gear, and other top tech

1 Berghaus Spitzer half-zip fleece

£60, berghaus.com

Stay warm this winter without carrying any unnecessary weight with this mid-layer fleece (pictured left) from outdoor specialists Berghaus. Whether you're out walking on the trails or wrapping up warm at home, this all-rounder has got your back – and front. The enhanced fit means it will look good on you, too, without feeling too tight and uncomfortable, meaning it's sure to be a wardrobe staple for chilly days.

2

Incus Nova

£199.99, incusperformance.com

Already used by coaches for elite athletes around the world, the super-statistical Incus Nova device can take your running, swimming and cycling to new levels thanks to its eye for detail. Worn on the top of the spine, the device syncs with your phone to give you a fantastically in-depth analysis of your activity. It includes all the usual stats, but also gives a detailed breakdown of left and right-sided efforts, meaning you could well prevent injury by making much-needed adjustments to your style. Pretty impressive.



4 QDOS UV Sanitiser

£59.99 (with Qi wireless charging), qdossound.com

Step into the future with this 2-in-1 gem of a device which will wirelessly charge your phone using Qi technology, while simultaneously sanitising it. With our phones carrying a vast quantity of germs, the sanitiser can eliminate up to 99.9% of all common surface bacteria. And if you own other tech that you want to clean, you can stick it in there as well.

5

Adidas Terrex SP0039 snow goggles

£159.95, adidas.co.uk

While lockdowns have stopped many of us from travelling, if you are lucky enough to spend any time on the slopes this winter, treat yourself to a goggles upgrade.

Adidas's collaboration with Marcolin Group has resulted in some fine-looking skiwear pieces, featuring lenses that automatically adjust to the light conditions, while delivering the maximum UV protection you'd expect.



3 Garmin Forerunner 745 smartwatch

£449.99, garmin.com

It's probably easier to explain what Garmin's new watch can't do, rather than what it can. It can't make you a coffee, and it can't bring about world peace. And that's about it. Kinda. The Forerunner 745 might be the smartest smartwatch of its kind, tracking your whole day, and not just your swim, run, bike ride or walk. That's why if it suggests an exercise for you to do, or that you should actually be resting and not working out, you need to pay attention. This is probably the closest thing to having your own PT strapped to your wrist – and a lot more comfortable, too.

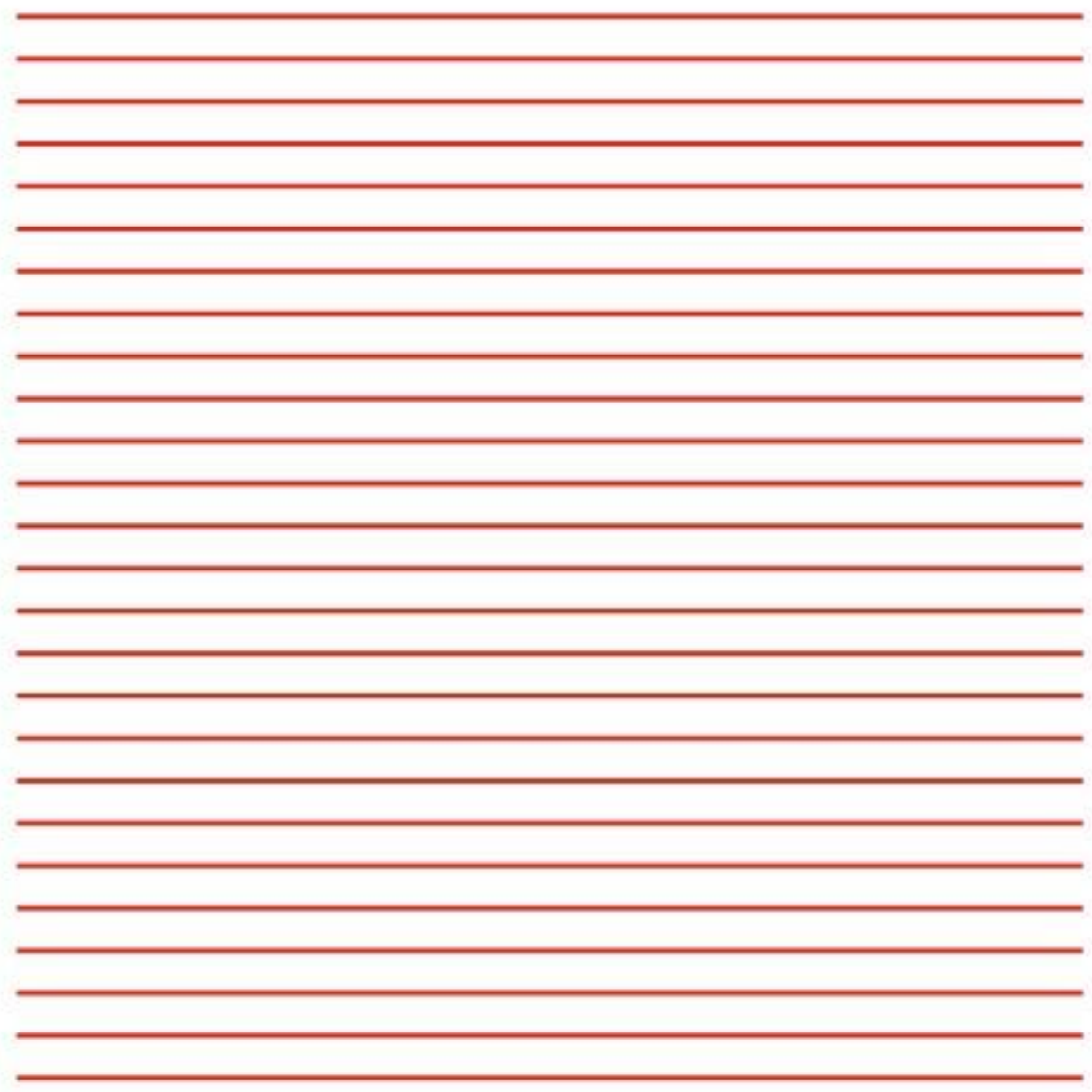


6

Salomon Supercross Blast GTX trail running shoe

£120, salomon.com

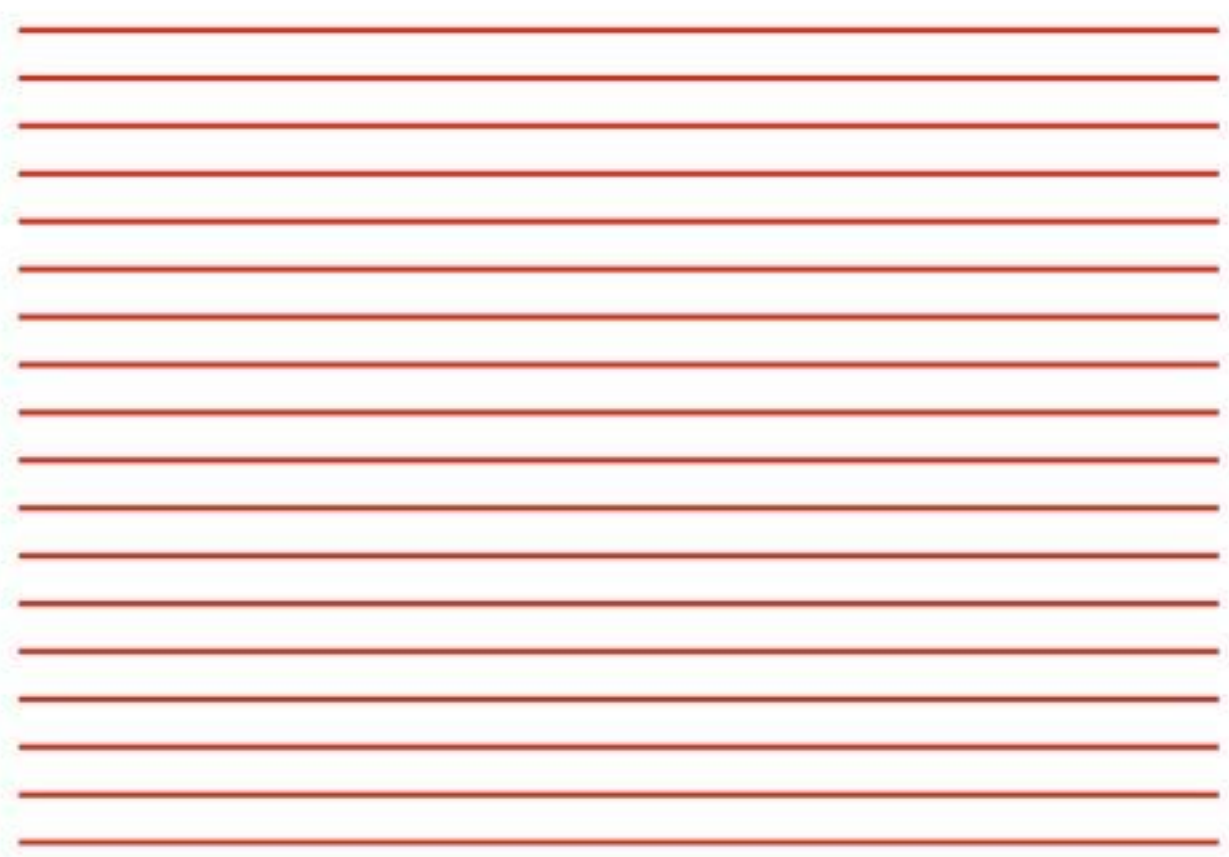
Once upon a time, trail shoes gave you grip and kept you dry, but at the cost of being tougher on your feet, due to their more durable fabric. These Supercross shoes are probably the most comfortable trail footwear we've ever used, offering a cushioned ride on even the boggiest terrain, thanks to their superb grip. The Gore-Tex membrane keeps your feet dry, and they're very handy off trails too, making them something of a hybrid. **HFM**



LAST MAN STANDING



“It’s a pure, brutal, relentless race”



Alex Thomson, Vendée Globe solo round-the-world sailor, tells us about taking part in one of sport’s ultimate challenges

The Vendée Globe is known as The Everest of the Seas, but fewer people have finished the Vendée than have climbed Everest, and 10 times more people have been in outer space.

It’s the world’s most difficult sporting challenge, and the ultimate test of a person’s physical and mental strength. It’s a pure, brutal, relentless race. It starts and finishes at Les Sables d’Olonne in France, where in pre-Covid times, 2.5 million people would come through the race village, so it’s extremely popular.

The course is easy – you come out of Les Sables, and you turn left, you race down to the bottom, go left at Africa, go round Antarctica, left at America, and back to France again. That’s about 26,000 miles. Last time it took 74 days, and I finished in second place. The boats now have hydrofoils, which is essentially like an aeroplane wing stuck outside the boat. As the water passes over the foil, it produces lift and starts to lift the boat out of the water, so it goes significantly faster.

A fair amount of gym work goes on to prepare for it, but I’m 46 now and I don’t feel like I need to be much fitter or stronger than I already am. The mental side of it is

a bigger advantage for me, and I have a sports psychologist called Ken Way who worked with Leicester City FC when they won the Premier League. I can’t talk to him during the race because that would be an obvious performance increase, so I have to give him my challenges beforehand and he works out a method to deal with those.

When you’re out of sight of land, it gives you a great perspective of where we are as humans in this world. If you have an ego, nature has a way of pushing it down. If you could give that feeling to everybody, the world would be a better place.

In recent races, I was sleeping 2.5 hours a day, with the average sleep about 30 minutes. It takes 10 days to two weeks to build into a rhythm to get your body to adjust from sleeping for seven or eight hours, where it might take 1.5 hours to reach the deep REM sleep that you require. It’s amazing what the human body is able to do.

I can talk to whoever I want from the boat as long as I’m not improving my performance. Sometimes I phone a mate and say, ‘How are you doing?’ and he says, ‘I’m looking at a nice big joint of beef in Sainsbury’s!’ while I have to eat freeze-dried food, which lots of people still call astronaut food. I take a Kindle, an iPad with games and TV shows on it. In the last Vendée, I got pretty good at Tiger Woods’ Golf.

Shop the BOSS Sailing Capsule on The Hub by Alex Thomson Racing (alexthomsonracing.com). Listen to the full chat with Alex on the Healthy For Men podcast series, available to download now from your preferred platform.

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