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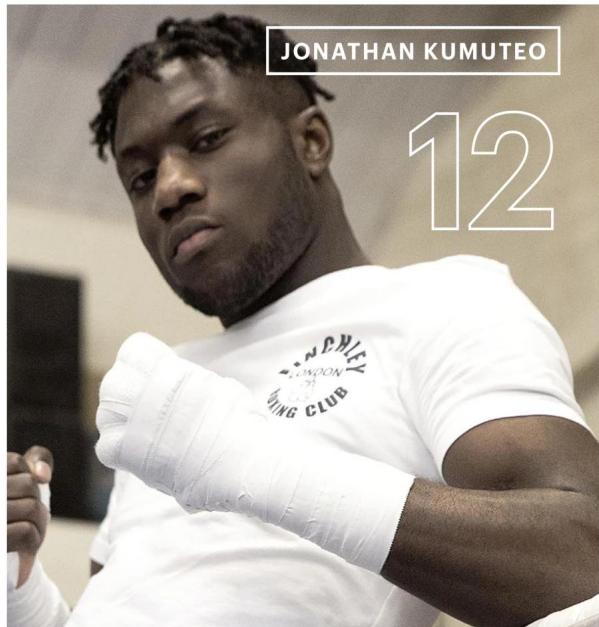
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Photograph:
Stocksy

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Welcome to this month's issue

yet. And if isolation has taken its toll on your mental health, we have advice to help you thrive in a social environment, page 50.

Amid the craziness of 2020, I've been lucky enough to celebrate the arrival of my daughter, a certain Willow Luna Rowley. I'm also about to go on parental leave for the best part of a year and spend some time watching her grow – not many dudes get that chance! For this reason, I'm handing over the *HFM* reins, for a while, to talented editor and author Gershon Portnoi, who'll bring all the passion and knowledge about health and sport you've come to expect.

Thanks for picking up this issue. As always, tell us what you think – see you in 2021.

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THE AWARD-WINNING HFM PODCAST



LISTEN UP, FOR MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

In our latest episode, we speak with British endurance motor racing trailblazer Philip Hanson, who shares how he prepares mentally for a racing season, and gets in the zone to push through the toughest moments. We hear how Philip gets race fit, and about his unique regime (you can read more about him on page 66). Download on your preferred podcast platform today.



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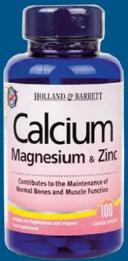


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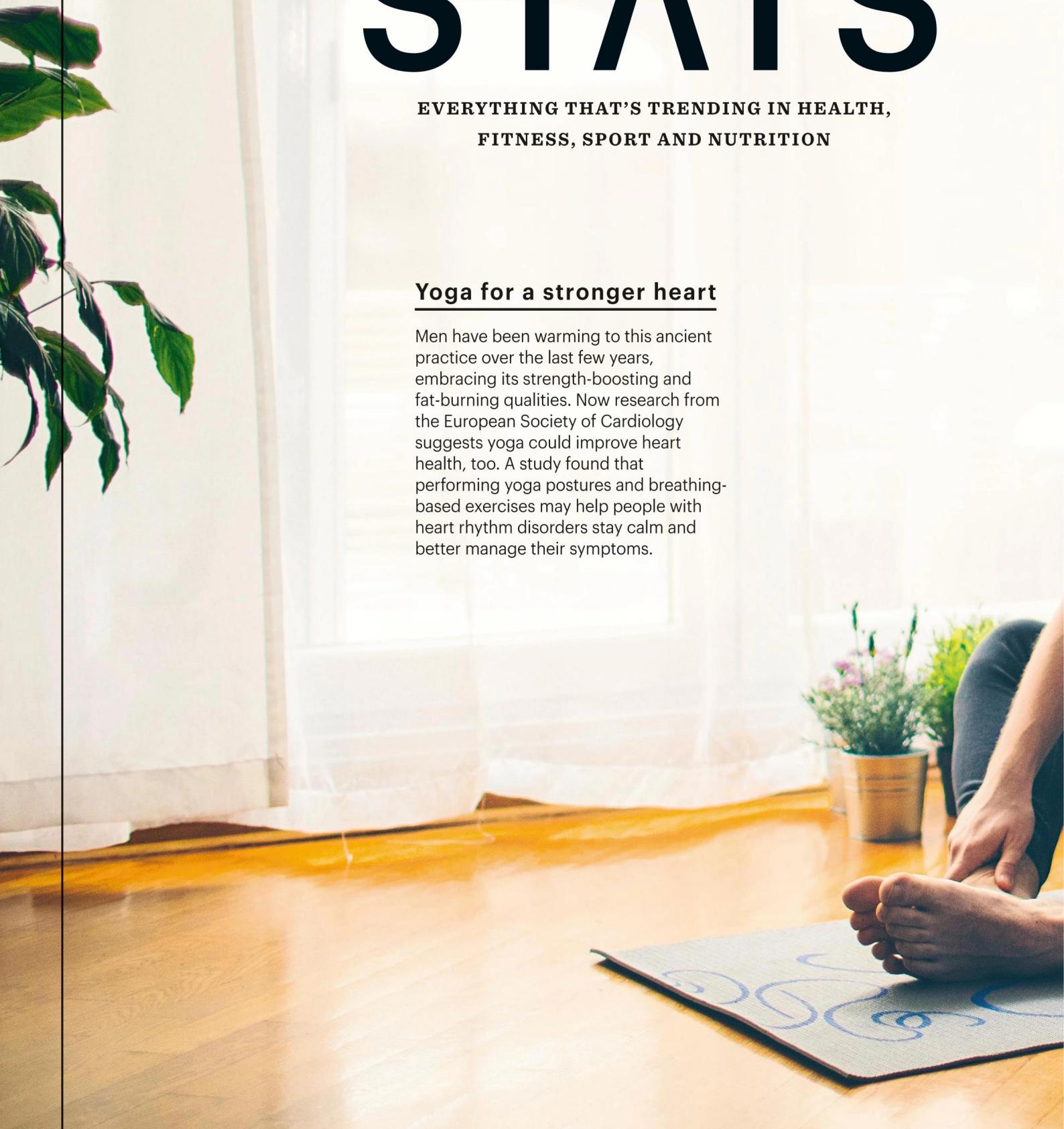
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VITAL > STATS

EVERYTHING THAT'S TRENDING IN HEALTH,
FITNESS, SPORT AND NUTRITION

Yoga for a stronger heart

Men have been warming to this ancient practice over the last few years, embracing its strength-boosting and fat-burning qualities. Now research from the European Society of Cardiology suggests yoga could improve heart health, too. A study found that performing yoga postures and breathing-based exercises may help people with heart rhythm disorders stay calm and better manage their symptoms.





NEWS IN BRIEF

► SLEEP AWAY RAGE

Anger can feel overwhelming, and it's all too easy to do or say things you regret. But, if you're on an angry streak, it could be related to sleep patterns. A study from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine found anger levels were linked to quality of sleep. Improve your ZZZs, with

Vitabiotics Sleepnite

Valerian

(£9.99,

30 tablets,

36 points*).



► NICE GUYS DON'T FINISH LAST

Selfishness might seem a way to get ahead in your career, but it's not the case, says research from the US. It found that being disagreeable didn't benefit people, even in 'dog-eat-dog' cultures. It's not that disagreeable people don't get high-powered jobs – but disagreeableness doesn't give them an advantage. Try kindness instead! (Page 48.)

► DON'T SWIM INTO THE LIGHT

Sperm are fragile little creatures. Everything from the food you eat to the heat of your laptop can stop them in their tracks. Recent research has found the light from devices used at night is also kryptonite to the poor things, decreasing the quality of sperm and fertility. Make sure you turn off your tech if you're not using it, especially if you're hoping to expand the family.

► UP YOUR SUPPS

Taking a multivit can top up what you miss from meals, and may reduce severity of illnesses. A study from Oregon State University found participants taking a multivitamin with high zinc and vitamin C content were sicker for a shorter period. Try

Holland & Barrett Super One Formula Multivitamin
(100 capsules, £17.99,
68 points*).



GOGLE-BOX

SNACKING

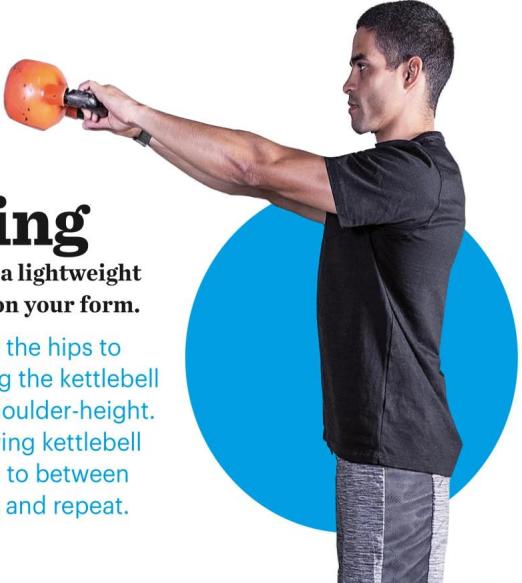
Be wary if you like to graze while watching the TV: a new study from the University of Sussex found that eating while your attention is elsewhere is likely to hinder your perception of how full you are. The study found that a 'perceptual load' disrupted 'satiety cues' – meaning we consume more calories because we're unaware of how we're feeling about hunger levels.

Master one move

The kettlebell swing

This move is king when it comes to core. Try using a lightweight kettlebell at first, to avoid back injuries and work on your form.

- Start with legs well apart, the kettlebell on the floor in front of you.
- Hinge your body at the hips, and bend your knees slightly.
- Hold the kettlebell in both hands between your legs and drive from the hips to swing the kettlebell to shoulder-height.
- Swing kettlebell back to between legs, and repeat.

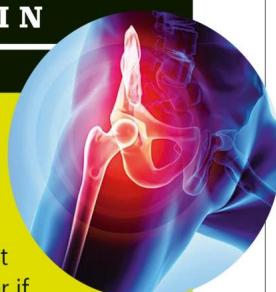


FAKE STEAKS

New plant-based options are coming in fast, with more people taking up the vegan mantle. Recent research from Stanford Medicine, California, found that swapping out red meat for certain plant-based meat alternatives can reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease. Even if you're not going full-blown vegan, it might be worth mixing it up now and then, to help you embrace a healthier heart.



RE-THINKING JOINT PAIN



The thought of a painful workout can hold us back from becoming our healthiest selves, but it can be even harder if we have issues with our joints. New research from Penn State University, USA, found when people felt an exaggerated hopelessness about their pain, they were less likely to exercise at all. Even if you have joint issues like arthritis, exercise is important, so focus on what make you feel good for a positive routine.

GOT THE GUTS TO AGE WELL?

From mental health to energy, our gut microbiome seems to affect everything. Research from the European Society of Cardiology links certain bacteria and other microorganisms with health conditions like high blood pressure, high blood lipids and even high BMI.



Try Holland & Barrett Gut Powered Night (£14.99, 30 capsules, 56 points*) to boost your gut health, and help resist age-related health issues.

rolling WITH THE punches

Born in war-torn DR Congo, boxing prodigy Jonathan Kumuteo overcame a serious skin condition to sign a major sports deal – and he's not finished yet

WORDS GERSHON PORTNOI

These days, everything is sold as inspiring: going for a run, an Instagram shot of someone's lunch, even the label description on a bottle of craft beer. Speaking to welterweight boxer Jonathan Kumuteo for an hour, however, genuinely is inspiring.

The young athlete has had to overcome real adversity in the shape of a painful long-term skin condition called hidradenitis suppurativa (HS), taking him to the very depths of his wells of strength and belief. So when he says that he's unstoppable, and that it's his destiny to become a champion, he has to be believed.

For Kumuteo – or JK to his mates and the boxing fraternity – the last five years have been a rollercoaster, not that his early years were straightforward either. Born in DR Congo in 1995, the country's civil war forced him to move to Zambia before joining his father, an economics masters degree student, in London, when he was seven. 'All I knew about the UK at the time was the BBC news,' he says. 'I remember seeing snow for the first time, that was just amazing. But the biggest



JK takes part in a late night training session

difference was going to a multicultural school – we didn't have that in Zambia.'

Instead of boxing, it was the discipline of the Sea Cadets that gave Kumuteo the platform for his future career. He was a medallist at the National Combined Regatta (the Cadets' annual sailing and rowing contest), mainly thanks to his competitive streak. 'Anything where I could be a winner, I always wanted to win, whether that was at school, on the PlayStation, or sport.'

That will to win eventually led him to boxing, when he finally gave in to a friend's challenge to spar at his local gym. 'Being the person I was at the time, I thought I was the

best at everything,' he admits. 'The first time I walked into the gym it was as if I was at home. I instantly fell in love with the sport.'

A NEW HOME

The gym was Finchley ABC, home to champions like Anthony Joshua and Dereck Chisora. A year after finding his feet, Kumuteo was making progress when he discovered a mysterious growth under his arm. 'It was about the size of a golf ball and if I put my arm down, it was so painful,' he says. He tried to tough it out, but at the point where it felt like his underarm was 'about to explode', he was rushed to hospital for surgery. 'I will never forget the shock factor of that first operation,' he says. 'It was the most painful day of my life. When the nurse removed the dressing, she started crying, and so did my girlfriend. I asked why, and the nurse said: "There's a huge hole in your underarm."'

It was a 4cm-deep cavity and, although he didn't know it yet, Kumuteo had HS, a painful skin condition which causes abscesses to grow near hair follicles that are adjacent to sweat





glands. He recovered, but the pain returned, this time in both armpits. Despite that, and the effects of taking heavy medication, Kumuteo was able to dig deep and return to the gym to train for the 2016 London Novice Championships, which he went on to win, before losing in the national semi-finals.

'I was so determined to win,' he recalls. 'Two of the antibiotics I was taking at the time were so strong that HIV and TB patients take them,' he explains, adding that his surgeon estimated the medication only allowed him to perform at 50% of his capabilities. After his second operation, the mental pain also began to take its toll on Kumuteo, alongside his physical ailments. He had gone from London Novice Champion to bed-bound in the blink of an eye.

'I became depressed,' he admits. 'That was difficult for me because I was ill for eight months. I felt lonely, low, and nobody could comprehend what I was going through. I just disappeared. I wasn't on social media. I just

"I felt lonely, low and no one knew what I was going through"

hid. When you spend so much time in bed, you're consumed by your own thoughts. I was deeply upset and started to doubt myself.'

BACK IN ACTION

Even when JK made it out of bed after eight tough months, his excitement at finally being able to return to the gym was short-lived. 'I tried to use the bench press and I couldn't



lift it, so I used the assisted one, and I couldn't even do 10 reps with no weight on,' he says. 'That for me was the lowest point.'

Kumuteo eventually returned to boxing, but the HS returned soon after. That was when he opted for major surgery to remove his troublesome sweat glands via a skin graft from his backside – the chances of success were no better than 50-50.

'I remember the surgeon said to me, "When you wake up you're going to feel like you got hit by a bus," and that's exactly how I felt. But this time I was mentally prepared,' he says. 'It was a breeze because I created a list of things I wanted to do, like films I wanted to watch, and I had a few things I wanted to study.'

He also had to stay extraordinarily patient as he was only allowed to move his bowels once a week, but this time he stayed visible via social media, with one Instagram video going viral, helping him enormously. 'It shows people you can go through hard times and overcome it, and be smiling throughout,' he says. 'There's beauty in the struggle.'

He never struggled alone, with world heavyweight champion Anthony Joshua in his corner throughout. 'After my second operation, even though he was in Dubai, he would reach out to me every day to check up on me,' he says. His coach Sean Murphy, a former British featherweight champion, was also a huge influence. 'Not only did

he teach me how to throw punches, he taught me life lessons,' he says.

Earlier this year, when a fully fit Kumuteo finally signed his first professional contract, it seemed like nothing could stop him. Apart from a global pandemic. For most boxers, the indefinite cancellation of a pro debut would have been a devastating blow, but not Kumuteo, whose life philosophy is now

irrevocably linked to his experience of overcoming his illness. 'Having HS was a blessing in disguise because it allowed my life to slow down,' he says. 'It's like the pandemic – everybody's lives have been forced to slow down. I feel fine. I'm still training, and I'm in a great place. To overcome HS, to sign with Frank Warren and BT Sport, it's unheard of.'

Despite the uncertainty, Kumuteo is still looking to the future and has big plans. 'I want to become a champion inside and outside the ring. If I can win the London Novice Championships performing at 50%, be ill for four years, and still compete at elite national level, imagine what I will be capable of now I'm healed, and guided by one of the best teams in professional boxing. The world is mine, that's how I see it.' You can't argue with that. **HFM**

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FITNESS ➤

Winter warmer



This quick workout from fitness expert James Stark will help burn through fat and boost your energy for the cold season. Perform three 40-second sets of each exercise with 20 seconds rest between sets.

Hand-release burpees

Lower your body to the floor, supporting your body weight with your palms. When you are fully flat, briefly lift your hands then place them back down, close to the chest. Drive yourself upwards with a powerful push-up motion, into a squat position. Then jump up, driving through the heels, opening your hips, body and arms to full extension with your hands above your head.

Kick-throughs

Starting in a press-up position, bring your right foot forward and place it wide of your right hand. Supporting your weight with your right foot and left hand, raise your right hand and kick your left leg under your body, extending it fully in front of you. Perform a set of kick-throughs with each leg.

Bear crawls

Start on all fours with legs hip-width and arms shoulder-width apart. Lift your knees slightly off the ground, keeping them bent at 90 degrees. Move your right hand and left foot forward an equal distance, keeping your back flat and low. Switch sides, moving the opposite hand and foot.

Mountain climbers

Starting in a plank position, bring one knee forward under your body to your chest, keeping your hips low. Return to start and repeat, alternating legs, in a quick climbing motion.

Box jumps

Starting in a squat position, facing a large box or bench, jump explosively onto it, accentuating the move. Jump back down, landing close to the box.

James Stark is co-founder of starksfitness.co.uk





MAKE 2021 YOUR FITTEST YEAR EVER

**As far as many athletes were concerned, 2020 was cancelled.
Fortunately, 2021 promises to bring a bigger and badder roster
of fitness events to reinvigorate your training**

The bounce back begins. There's no doubt that the Covid-19 crisis curtailed fitness routines for millions as competitions were cancelled, training programmes postponed, events put on hold and races rescheduled. But as 2021 looms into view, the time has come to find your fitness peak once more, re-ignite your workout regime and aim for those all-important goals by signing up to challenges that will test your stamina, mental strength and physical abilities to the hilt. Rediscover your competitive edge, feel the thrill of the chase and experience PBs in endurance events with our round-up of the best ways to achieve your fittest year ever...

PILGRIM CHALLENGE (6-7 February)

A two-day, 66-mile ultra-marathon, this well-established race follows in the footsteps of pilgrims travelling to Canterbury – with a faith-testing run through the legendary North Downs Way – in the depths of winter. If you're going to get your new year off to a flying start, this race could be the one to set your standards by. Good luck.
xnrg.co.uk

TOUGH GUY (21 Feb – All Year)

With Tough Guy's first 2021 challenge scheduled for February, this gruelling assault course promises to be harder than ever. Couple cold weather with a brutal route featuring obstacles with names like the 'Mighty Killing Fields', and it's one hell of a challenge. Events are scheduled through the year, and for those debuting in this world of adventure, it's the one where competitors must sign an obligatory death-waiver before taking to the start line. With special tweaks for social distancing in place, it'll be interesting to see how well-established obstacles such as the 'Vietcong Torture Tunnel' and the 'Electric Nettle' – dangling cables with a sting courtesy of the National Grid – will adapt. We'll let you find out and report back, if that's OK.
toughguy.co.uk

MANCHESTER MARATHON (11 April)

A top 10 European Marathon, and the UK's fastest, flattest, and friendliest 26.2-miler, it's set to run again in 2021

hosting 25,000 people of all abilities. For the first time the route will take competitors through Manchester's city centre, but it will still host some of the world's greatest runners.
manchestermarathon.co.uk

DEVIL'S CHALLENGE

(30 April-2 May)

The Devil's Challenge is a three-day, 97-mile (156km) ultra-marathon along the South Downs Way, passing the legendary Devil's Dyke valley. A favourite with experienced runners, it starts in Winchester in Hampshire on a route which heads through the stunning South Downs National Park, offering undulating challenging trails with some great views before finishing in Eastbourne in East Sussex on the third day. xnrg.co.uk

ETAPE CALEDONIA

(16 May)

Etape Caledonia is a mass-participation cycling event which has attracted more than 35,000 people since it debuted in 2007. With 5000 places on offer each year, this cycle race event attracts riders from all over the country to take on one of the most breathtaking rides through the spectacular Scottish Highlands. The 2021 event has two distances, 40 (64km) and 85 mile (136km) – with food and drink stations placed around the course. etapecaledonia.co.uk

MALDON MUD RACE

(23 May)

A 400m dash over the bed of the River Blackwater – competitors endure the quagmire condition of the muddy river bottom in a charity race that requires both stamina and tolerance for boggy sludge between your tootsies. This fun-filled event day also includes a fancy dress competition, and can attract nearly 20,000 people to this stretch of the Essex waterway. maldonmudrace.com

COOPER'S HILL CHEESE ROLLING

(31 May)

As challenges go, the Cooper's Hill Cheese Rolling Race at Brockworth in Gloucestershire may not be the harshest you'll face in 2021 – but it may well be the most memorable. Held in Cooper's Hill Nature Reserve, it pulls in thousands of spectators and tourists to witness the preservation of an ancient tradition which – according to some experts' estimates – goes as far back as pre-Roman times. You'll join hundreds of entrants on the top-most hill ➤



for a chase after a wheel-shaped cheese rolling down at a speedy 70mph (112kmh). The winner is the one who catches it... radseason.com

RACE TO THE WALL (19-20 June)

One of the UK's most iconic ultra-marathons, requiring runners to cover 70 breathtaking miles (112km) from Carlisle to Newcastle through countryside dominated by the historic remnants of Hadrian's Wall. You can run or trek this classic route over two days, or run it in one. There's also a Relay event which allows you and three friends to run sections of the route before crossing the finish line together. The 2021 event is already full, but you can still put your name on a waiting list for places. ratracethewall.co.uk

MONTH OF ENDURANCE (August)

Endurance outfit Spartan Race has grown into a global brand staging some of the most innovative and challenging assault course events on offer to those mad enough to sign up to them. Their Month of Endurance challenges will have enjoyed an additional year of planning, thanks to lockdown, and will no doubt bounce back even tougher than ever before. A UK summer spectacular looks set to



be Spartan Hurricane Heat – a team-based adventure challenge on 29-30 August – involving physical and mental tests for four, 12 or 24 hours. Also look out for their popular Stadion events (dates to be confirmed) – assault course challenges staged in some of the country's most iconic sports stadiums – where you'll be able to challenge yourself in multiple ways with an endurance workout, climbing sessions and sprints around the likes of Twickenham Stadium. spartanrace.uk

COAST TO COAST (11-12 September)

A Scottish adventure race which offers competitors the chance to put themselves to the test in running, riding and kayaking 105 miles (168km) across the spectacular wilds of the Highlands. Sure you get to take in the sights of the historic Cawdor Castle, the legendary Loch Ness and the mountainous Glen Nevis and Glen Coe – but this really is unforgiving terrain, even at the tail end of a British summer. As the organisers say, tough weather breeds tough folk and when you sign up to Coast To Coast, you'll find out exactly why that is. ratracecoasttocoast.co.uk **HFM**

HOW TO BEAT A SUPER-TOUGH CHALLENGE

Get yourself in shape for a big event with these tips from Sam Stauffer, Spartan's director of training

Plan ahead

'Have a programme or routine already laid out for at least 30 days before the race. This will help to hold you accountable and keep you on track. To add to this, make sure that your training leading up to the race (about one week out) is tapered back. It should be less intense so your body has a chance to recover fully for the big event.'

Move motion muscles

'For athletic events, such as a Spartan Race, your body needs to be able to move well; otherwise, you may find yourself struggling on the course. This means training movement patterns such as the lunge, pull-up, and deadlift rather than "show muscles" like the biceps curl.'

Cardio with care

'If you haven't run in a while, start with a walk. A one-mile-plus walk is a great way to begin a cardio programme and will help you to avoid any potential injuries. Jumping right into running if you haven't for a while is usually a recipe for disaster.'

Take a HIIT

'Doing HIIT (high-intensity interval training) once per week will keep you sharp. However, HIIT shouldn't be the main course; rather a side dish.'

Get a grip

'Kettlebells are a great way to keep your grip working constantly. Grip is typically a limiting factor in a race so you want to make sure you're training the major grip types: hook grip (pull-up grip), crush grip (for rope climbs), and pinch grip (for climbing walls). You not only want to build grip strength, but muscular endurance too.'

Go overhead

'Practising traversing obstacles such as monkey bars will go a long way. But they require a baseline level of upper body and core strength. Mixing in dead hangs, pull-ups, rope climbs, and hanging knee tucks are a great way to train the upper body for what's to come.'

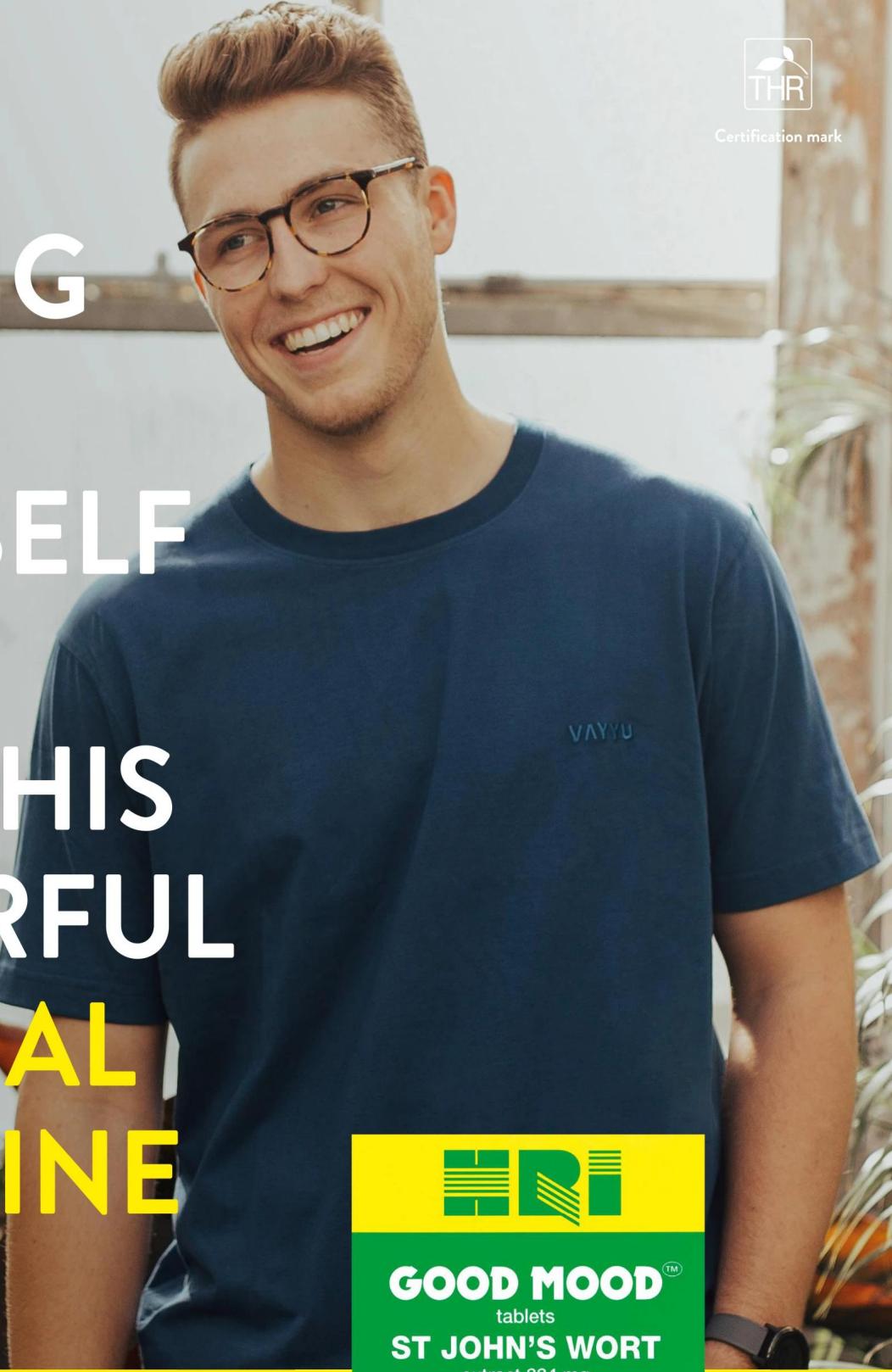
Bodyweight benefits

'Most people jump right into strength training and this is when injuries can occur. Bodyweight training is undervalued and typically written off as too easy. I assure you, it's plenty hard! The payoff for learning how to master simple bodyweight movement patterns is huge. You'll create a synergy between your mind and body.'



Certification mark

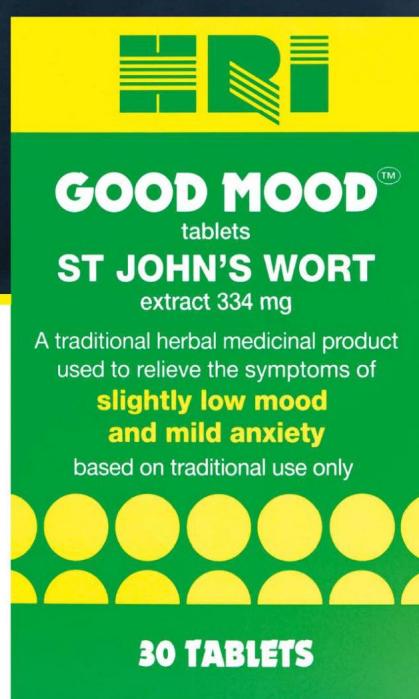
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THE BIG FAT SHRED

THE EXPERTS



James Stark,
co-founder of
starksfitness.co.uk



Steven Virtue,
fitness content and
programming manager
at Total Fitness



We asked the fitness experts who help others torch fat every day for their final word on burning through those unwanted layers

Fat-burning is the magic bullet for successful weight loss and muscle definition – but what does it mean and how is it done? ‘When a person maintains a new exercise regimen and limits their calories, the body begins to burn fat,’ explains James Stark, personal trainer and founder of Starks Fitness. ‘It does this by using the energy stored in fat cells to fuel new activity – the brain signals to fat cells to get them to release fatty acid molecules into the bloodstream as a source of energy.’

However, it’s not as simple a process as it sounds. Our body is a complex and individually unique creation – with both genetic and environmental influences shaping it. Before you attempt to burn body fat, it’s also pretty useful to know how much of it you need to burn. ‘There are a number of ways that we can measure our body fat,’ says Steven Virtue, fitness content and programming manager at Total Fitness. However, two tools are most commonly used by fitness professionals and health clinicians.

‘Bioelectrical impedance analysis (BIA) is the technology used in weighing scales that monitor body composition, and sends a low-voltage electrical current through the body,’ says Virtue. ‘Fat conducts less electricity than water or muscle, and so as levels of body fat increase, so does the resistance within one’s anatomy.’ (BIA works by measuring the

amount of time taken for the current sent through the body to feedback to the machine, which can then estimate the level of body fat.)

Callipers are the second tool. ‘Simple yet effective, they’re widely regarded as the most effective way to measure body fat. The callipers grip the outer layer of skin – where subcutaneous fat is stored – and quantify this in millimetres.’ (The three-site test is the simplest way to use callipers to produce a body fat reading. Sites are typically the chest, abdomen and quadriceps on men; the triceps, suprailium [hip] and quadriceps on women.)

TAKE A HIIT

The experts’ exercise format of choice when it comes to setting the switch to burning fat is high-intensity interval training (HIIT) – drills that combine short bursts of cardiovascular exercise with bodyweight-based strength training moves that rapidly raise the heart-rate but in intervals, so the body can train intensely without fatiguing. ‘As your heart-rate increases, fat is slowly released from the body’s stores,’ explains Stark. ‘This fat is transported in the blood to be used by the muscles. Inside the muscles, both glycogen and fat are the fuel mix to sustain the energy needed to keep the muscles contracting.’

It’s not just during exercise that the body torches through fat. As Virtue explains, HIIT has an ‘afterburn’ effect – excess post-exercise oxygen consumption – which is what makes it such an optimal option for fat-burning.

‘Following high-intensity activities such as sprinting or Tabata, the body consumes oxygen at an increased rate. This oxygen is then used to restore the body’s normal resting state, otherwise known as homeostasis – this process includes balancing hormones, replenishing stored energy, and repairing tissue.’

Research suggests that the increased metabolic rate caused by strenuous and high-intensity exercise can last up to 38 hours, meaning your body will burn significantly more calories in a resting state, while it returns to homeostasis.

HOW TO BURN FAT, FAST

In order to encourage the body to burn fat efficiently, many athletes opt to do cardio in a ‘fasted’ state – as when we eat pre-exercise, our bodies utilise the nutrients from this food to fuel activity. ‘It is only once these nutrients have been burned though that the body will tap into stored fat to supply energy for the exercise,’ explains Virtue. ‘By comparison,

FAT FAULTS

Avoid these fat-burning pitfalls

► BAD PLANNING

‘Follow a structured plan that will guide you through the exercise process, along with a nutrition plan that lends itself to burning fat,’ says Stark. ‘Being accountable to yourself is also important, and so a daily weigh-in can be helpful.’



► WRONG TIME OF DAY

‘The best time of day to do cardio will be hugely dependent on your lifestyle, sleeping patterns and personal training goals,’ explains Virtue. ‘Your exercise routine should complement rather than compete against your working life, so a great way to determine when the optimal time to work out is by doing a series of fitness testing and lifestyle assessments with a fitness professional or lifestyle coach.’

► NOT STAYING ACTIVE

‘On the days you aren’t training, it’s important to keep blood moving around the body,’ says Virtue. ‘A rest day shouldn’t be a day of doing nothing: a low-intensity walk will circulate oxygen and nutrients around the body, enhancing your recovery.’

training aerobically in a “fasted” state allows the body to quickly tap into fat stores much quicker, accelerating the fat-burning process.’

But it’s important to keep the intensity low when training in a fasted state to avoid the energy source switching from fat stores to muscle glycogen. ‘Generally, a calorie deficit is essential for those who want to burn body fat,’ adds Virtue. ‘Consume most of your calories through protein first, then make up the remaining calories with carbohydrates and fats.’ (For beginners, a good starting point for protein consumption is to eat 1 to 1.5g of protein per kilogram of bodyweight.)

It’s a point Stark concurs with. ‘A key reason why some people struggle to burn fat is down to consuming too many calories – often calories you don’t notice in the foods you eat around meals that you didn’t prepare yourself.’ Though it’s not the sole reason why exercisers can have trouble shedding fat.

SLEEP ON IT

There are other ways you can aid the burning process outside of the gym. ‘Nutrition, hormonal balance and recovery all directly contribute towards fat loss,’ says Virtue. ‘Too much vigorous exercise without enough recovery days can lead to overtraining, which causes your body to store more fat due to an increase in the stress hormone cortisol.’

Virtue recommends 2-3 strength sessions per week and no more than two HIIT sessions per week, resting as needed, to get the most out of the time you train and to ensure proper recovery. ‘Sleep is also crucial to fat burning – aim for at least seven hours of quality sleep per night. Not getting enough sleep

can contributes to a rise in cortisol – not prioritising sleep is a fundamental mistake to make when trying to lose weight.’ **HFM**

Many athletes like to exercise in a fasted state

YOUR HIIT TRIO

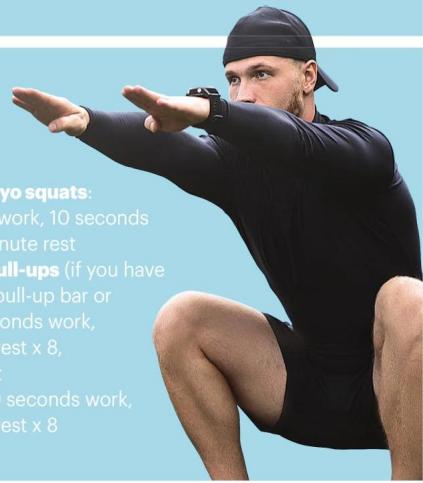
‘This HIIT workout is 12 minutes of total exercise and hits all the major muscle groups, giving you the biggest bang for your buck in the shortest space of time,’ says Virtue. ‘The goal is to fatigue and exhaust the major muscle groups – these muscles require more time to recover compared to smaller muscles, meaning your resting metabolic rate will stay higher for longer after the workout, and so more calories will be burnt while resting.’

Squats or plio squats:

20 seconds work, 10 seconds rest x 8, 1 minute rest

Sit-ups or pull-ups (if you have access to a pull-up bar or TRX): 20 seconds work, 10 seconds rest x 8, 1 minute rest

Burpees: 20 seconds work, 10 seconds rest x 8



The HFM workout

No time? Keep this equipment-free workout in mind the next time you're strapped for minutes, to build your strength and stamina

12-minute blitz



With this super-speedy circuit, do each exercise for 30 seconds or 1 minute, then move straight onto the next one. If you struggle to fill the time, try performing the exercise slower, or adapting it for ease – eg for the push-up, try it leaning against a kitchen worktop rather than on the floor. Once the set is over, rest for 1 minute, then start the circuit over. Do three circuits for a great calorie-shredder and muscle-booster.

► SQUATS

1 minute

Muscles worked: glutes, quads

► Start with your feet shoulder-width apart, chest out, and your arms straight out in front of you. Keep your bum out and slowly drop to a sitting position – to full depth, if you're able. Quickly push up through your heels to return to the start position.

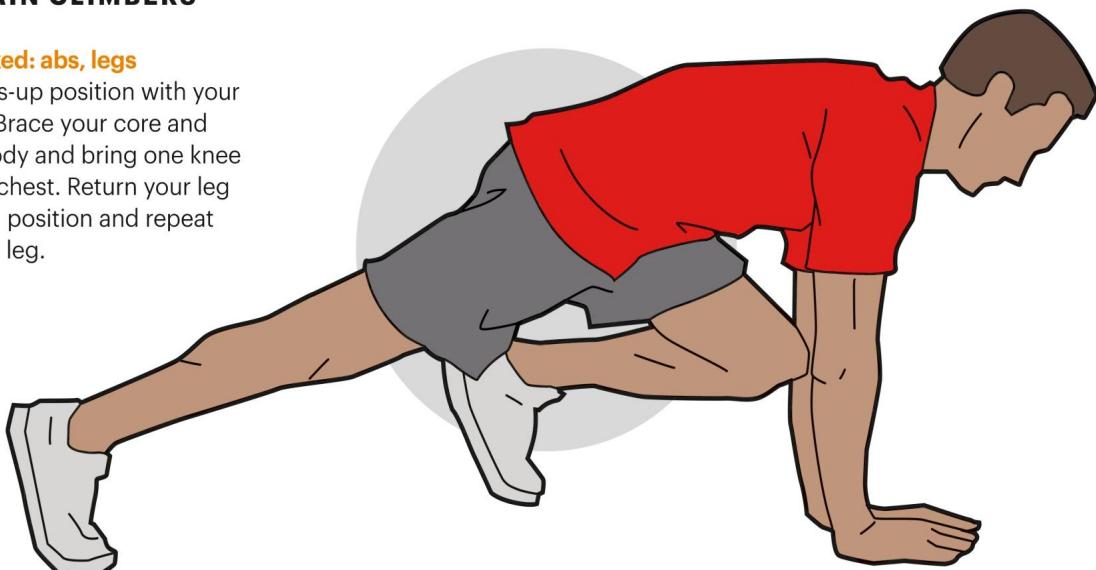


► MOUNTAIN CLIMBERS

30 seconds

Muscles worked: abs, legs

► Enter a press-up position with your arms locked. Brace your core and your upper body and bring one knee towards your chest. Return your leg to the starting position and repeat with the other leg.

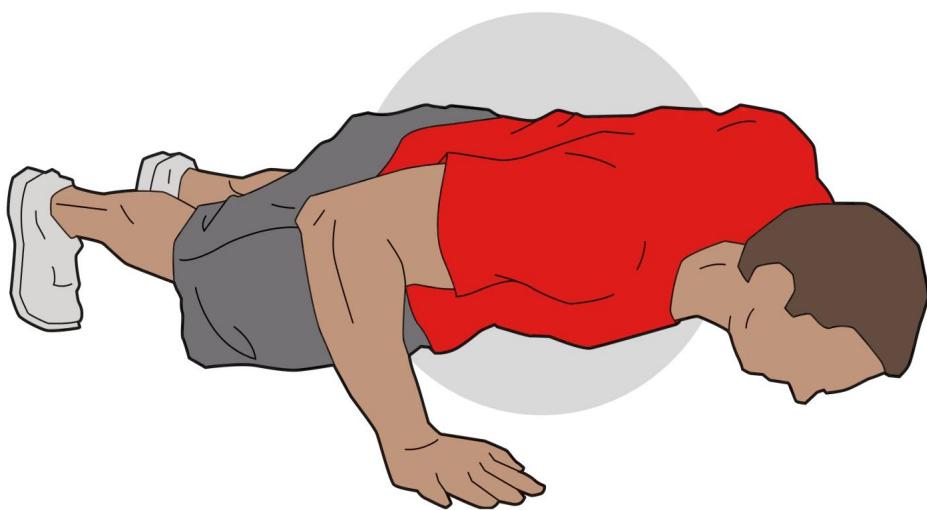


► PUSH-UPS

30 seconds

Muscles worked: chest, shoulders, triceps

► Get into a plank position with your palms just either side of your chest. Keeping your elbows tucked in to your sides, lower your body until your chest is nearly touching the floor. Push from your chest and triceps until your elbows are locked. Remember to keep your back straight and your bum slightly raised.

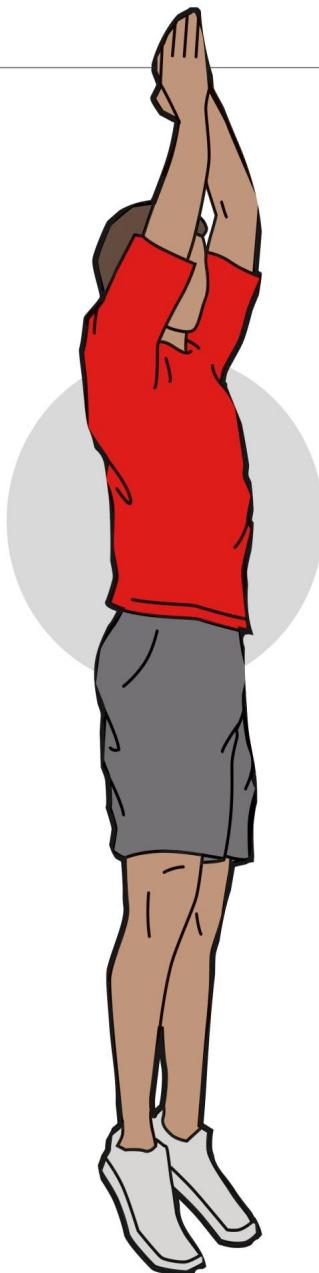


► BURPEES

1 minute

Muscles worked: chest, back, core, arms

► Fall down into a crouch, then drop to a push-up position (increase the intensity by incorporating a full push-up into the move at this point, if you like). Pull your knees forward so your feet end up by your hands, then jump up explosively, raising your hands above your head. Fall straight back into a crouch and repeat. **HFM**



A close-up photograph of a man's torso and legs. He is wearing a black tank top and grey shorts. He is holding a black dumbbell in his right hand, which is extended downwards. His left arm is partially visible, showing his bicep. The background is dark and out of focus.

Your muscle building arsenal



Every fitness plan needs the fuel to back it up. If you're planning on building muscle and getting strong, these four elements will be essential for progress

There's really no other way about it: building muscle requires the right nutrition. This means getting a mix of protein, carbs, vitamins and minerals to fuel your body and repair the muscles damaged from that intense weights session. To make things easy for you, we've rounded up the most important elements to include in your muscle-building diet.

PROTEIN

Synonymous with strength, there's really no escaping this massive macro from your muscle-building manifesto. Protein is commonly consumed as animal or plant products such as whey and soya, and it's utilised in the body to rebuild and repair damaged muscles – in turn, making your muscles stronger and bigger. But protein is more than mere muscle fuel: it helps maintain bone structure in adults, according to a review by the International Osteoporosis Foundation, and it may help heart health, says a study by the National Heart, Lung, And Blood Institute, in the US.

Some proteins, including whey (derived from milk), contain a full set of essential amino acids, which means they contain everything your body requires to repair damaged muscle. However, you can get all the aminos you need from plant-based proteins – foods like quinoa and soya are already complete. Plant proteins are also usually lower in fat and calories than animal-based proteins, and higher in fibre and nutrients. They're better for the environment, too, as they have a smaller carbon footprint.

Recent research also suggests that relying solely on animal protein could have adverse effects. A 2019 study from the University of Eastern Finland found that diets rich in animal protein could be associated with a higher risk of early death. Another study, published in the *JAMA Internal Medicine* journal, linked diets high in plant-based protein with a lower risk of early death. ➤

“The humble potato is a surprising source of high-quality protein”

Try mixing it up and having an intake of varied protein sources – there are some you might not have considered. A study from the University of Exeter found that mycoprotein (protein grown from fungi) could build muscle better than some animal protein. The humble potato, known primarily for its starchy content, is a source of high-quality protein that helps maintain muscle-mass,

though the actual amount is fairly small (meaning we wouldn't recommend swapping out your protein shake for a helping of mashed potato just yet).



TRY Vega Clean Protein Chocolate (£26.99, 552g, 104 points)

CREATINE

Another ingredient commonly listed on the back of mass-building powders is creatine. It's one of the most well-researched and supported muscle-boosting products, and it's similar to protein as we can get it from animal products like fish and red meat. Usually available in its monohydrate form, this compound is naturally found in our muscles – but a top-up with a supplement may help increase the reps you can do on the bench.

Creatine works very differently to protein: rather than repair muscle, it helps increase muscle performance in short bursts. It does this by helping you produce more adenosine triphosphate (ATP), a compound that's the 'basic unit' of energy in our bodies.

Experts have found that creatine is most effective when combined with healthy fats, like omega-6 fatty-acids. A study from McMaster University, USA, found that combining creatine with linoleic acid (a polyunsaturated fatty acid which may support heart health) can help maximise muscle growth, alongside resistance training. Creatine may also help those with muscular

dystrophies (genetic conditions that gradually cause muscles to weaken), and research published by The Royal Society found that it can boost brain power. Another US study found that creatine particularly benefits the

cognitive function of vegetarians, likely because they get less than those who eat animal products. Recent promising research from California found creatine powers white blood cells called T cells, potentially helping fight cancer.

TRY Precision Engineered Creatine Powder (£24.99, 510g, 96 points)

BCAAs

Of 20 amino acids, nine are considered to be essential, meaning that they cannot be synthesised by the body and need to be obtained from food or supplements. These include the three branched-chain amino acids (BCAAs), leucine, isoleucine and valine. Taken combined, these are a popular dietary supplement, great for boosting strength and building muscle.

Each of the BCAAs have their own benefit to athletic performance: leucine has been found to preserve muscle mass and help generate energy, suggests a review in the journal *Nutrients*. Valine supports muscle

regeneration for building lean mass, and isoleucine helps to improve endurance and control blood sugar. Some experts recommend taking BCAAs during a workout – but if that's not practical, taking them post-workout might be just as effective.

TRY Nutramino Heat BCAA Drink (£1.99, 330ml, 4 points)

CARBS

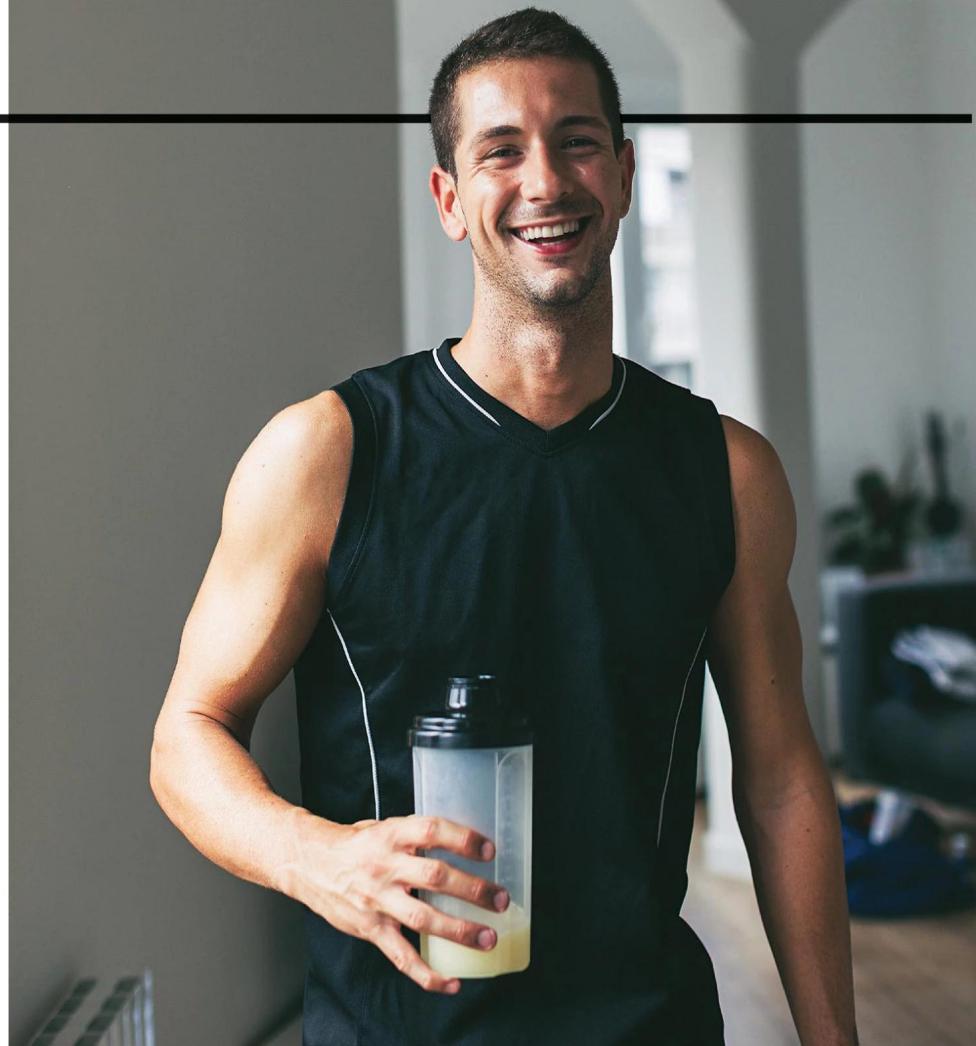
Traditionally, athletes associate carbs with endurance – and rightly so, as they're the sugars and starches that fuel our muscles. But they're more complex than you might think.

A study by the University of Lincoln found that consuming a carbohydrate-based drink post-workout was no less effective in

recovering muscle than a milk-based one. Studies also suggest carbs may help ease muscle soreness post-workout. Meaning dropping carbs might be counterproductive to staying in shape.

TRY Applied Nutrition Carb X (£29.99, 1200g, 116 points) HFM

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You don't need lots of expensive equipment to get fit – just a pair of comfortable trainers! Try these easy tips to turn your walk into a workout

STEP UP YOUR WALKING GAME

We repeatedly hear the mantra that we need to do 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise a week, but many of us find it hard to fit this into our busy lives. Or maybe the idea of regular sessions in the gym lifting weights or slogging on the treadmill simply doesn't appeal. But there are other options. For example, there's one particular form of exercise that comes naturally to us, which helps us get from A to B every day, and doesn't require any specialist equipment: walking.

An effective way to improve your overall cardiovascular health, manage your weight and explore your local environment, walking is an easy form of exercise that's accessible to everyone – all you need is a comfortable pair of shoes. Plus, walking at a brisk pace – so that you can feel your heart rate increase, but still hold a conversation – is a great way to hit that weekly exercise target.

Remember that what counts as a 'brisk pace' is different for everyone, depending on your body shape and fitness level. If you need guidance on gauging your effort, try downloading the NHS Active 10 app on your smartphone, which will send you hints and tips to help you pick it up. When you're ready to up the ante and turn your walk into a workout, try the following tips.

CLIMB THOSE HILLS

It might be tempting to go for the flattest route, but adding an incline to your walks has serious body benefits. As well as burning more calories and boosting your heart rate,

walking uphill works your quads, glutes and hamstrings for overall muscle tone. Plus, some studies have indicated that it helps your body metabolise blood sugar and cholesterol, so it may be beneficial for people at risk of diabetes and heart disease. No hills near you? No worries – even taking the stairs rather than the lift in the office counts.

TRY WALK-RUNNING

This is a great method for beginner runners, as well as regular walkers looking for an increased energy burn. Set a timer and after two minutes' walking, break into a jog. After a minute of running, switch back to walking, then repeat the process. It might seem tough at first, but if you do it regularly, you'll find you're soon able to increase the length of your running intervals and reduce your walking time. There's also less risk of injury than running non-stop – each walk break gives your muscles a bit of rest, which minimises fatigue.

MAKE IT NORDIC

For upper body benefits, try Nordic walking. All you need to get started is your normal walking gear, plus a pair of poles. Hold the poles upright and take long, fast strides, swinging your arms from your shoulders, with your elbows straight. Doing this will increase your calorie burn by 40 per cent, 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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NUTRITION

Brain food



The ancient idea of dualism – that the body and mind are separate – is looking more and more old hat these days, with scientists continually proving that the state of our body greatly affects the ability of our brain. A recent study from the *Journal Of Alzheimer's Disease* found that the higher your BMI (body mass index), the more likely you are to develop Alzheimer's disease and certain other mental illnesses later in life.

The study used brain imaging to look at 17,000 human brains, and discovered that, as your body weight goes up, all regions of the brain go down in activity and blood flow. All of which is further encouragement to stick to a healthy, balanced diet to help you maintain a healthy weight.



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO CHRISTMAS EATING

We consume three days' worth of calories, and knock back an entire week's worth of alcohol, on 25 December alone. But you *can* enjoy all the festive pleasures without paying the price

Christmas isn't a time for macro-counting, but for enjoyment, and that is entirely possible if you approach it in a smart way. In fact, often the best advice when it comes to food is to eat more of the festive favourites. Traditional Christmas food – and particularly Christmas lunch – is very colourful, and therefore impressively nutritious. 'The body needs 45 different nutrients daily, which many people are unable to eat on a daily basis, so it's a great opportunity to gain the health benefits all these nutrients can deliver,' says nutritionist Suzie Sawyer (suziesawyer.com). 'Use the opportunity to include some different dishes, sides or vegetables that you wouldn't have the rest of the year, such as chestnut stuffing or honeyed carrots and parsnips.'

Realism about the pitfalls is key, too. 'If it was only a few days, it wouldn't be an issue, especially if your diet is balanced generally. It's the extended Christmas that's responsible for most of the weight gain,' says Sawyer. Temptation is plentiful, so being more conscious is key, both on Christmas day, when faced with bowls of nuts, boxes of chocolates and plates of mince pies from dawn 'til dusk, and in the run-up, which (pandemic-

allowing) involves wall-to-wall get-togethers. 'Enjoy all the festive fare, but have definite breaks between meals', says Sawyer. 'It's the constant grazing that thwarts any weight-management programme.'

At social events, don't stand next to the food table, where it's incredibly easy to mindlessly munch, and before heading out have a healthy, filling snack so you don't arrive famished and gorge on all the most glutinous goodies. Take a spin around the food table before grabbing a plate – or at a dinner table, scan to see what there is, so you can load up with tasty veggies and the things you really want, not the dishes that happen to be closest to you. Take 10 minutes to let your food go down before deciding whether to go back for seconds, and when it comes to desserts, decide which is your must-have indulgence and enjoy, rather than sampling everything, then feeling bloated and lethargic.

MINDFUL DRINKING

Our approach to alcohol needs a similarly brainful approach. 'Christmas is a socially acceptable time to drink to excess,' says Professor Adam Winstock, consultant psychiatrist and addiction medicine

specialist, and founder and CEO of the Global Drug Survey. 'But for one in every three occasions where people get drunk, they regret it.' We go from having a few drinks two or three times a week, to barely taking a day off. We're feeling celebratory and sociable, but it's important to be self-aware. 'The right amount of alcohol can enhance the pleasure of being with people, and make a good night a bit better. But have a bit more than that and the positives get wiped out. You can ruin your reputation at a bad Christmas party.'

Just like with food, you need strategies, the first of which is to avoid rounds. 'Rounds are risky, because people drink at the rate of the quickest drinker', says Prof Winstock. 'Avoid that by choosing not to hang out with people who drink a lot, joining later, or leaving earlier.' But there are some even simpler, practical tricks too: drink bottles of beer not pints. It forces you to drink more slowly, and people can't see clearly how much is in a bottle, so when you're offered another drink, you can just pick up your bottle and say 'I'm fine'. If spirits are your tipple, choose a long glass, have singles and top yourself up with a mixer. But the best strategy, according to Winstock, is simply to arrive later, ➤

'as there's nothing more off-putting than turning up somewhere to a bunch of people who are really drunk. It means you won't stay that long and you'll drink less...'

Food-wise, festive desserts get a bad rap, but again, it's down to making smart choices. 'Dark chocolate is packed with antioxidant-rich polyphenols, which are especially beneficial for heart health, while a slice of Christmas pud only has around 290 calories and provides lots of iron-rich dried fruits,' says Sawyer. And, if you're training, iron is an important nutrient that many active males can lack. Turkey is a great choice, too – 'it's slightly lower in fat than chicken and high in protein, needed for growth, repair, healthy immunity and producing hormones. It's why turkey is a favourite of male body builders,' Sawyer explains.

The veggies are also packed with benefits. Sprouts contain the highest amounts of glucosinolates of all cruciferous vegetables. These phytonutrients have been well researched as being possibly cancer-protective. They're also very high in a wide range of vitamins and minerals, and help with liver detoxification.' Meanwhile, carrots contain some of the highest amounts of beta-carotene. 'This is turned into vitamin A, which is great for the immune system,' something we are all increasingly keen to bolster these days.'

When it comes to drinking on the 25th, Prof Winstock says that if you're hosting, you're responsible. 'You can easily pour a third of a bottle of wine into the wine glasses most of us have at home, so use smaller ones. Remember, you don't need to always have two bottles of white and two bottles of red on the table, because that means there is never a time where someone has to ask to open another bottle.'

'And while British culture dictates that as soon as someone walks in the door you should offer them a drink, offer sparkling water or juice, as well as beer or wine.' He also says there are better choices, whatever your taste. 'If you like white wine, swap to spritzers. If you like reds, the darker your beverage, whether it's red wine, brandy or scotch, the worse you'll feel because they contain more congeners, which give you worse hangovers.' Oh, and there's no shame in popping your hand over your glass if you don't want a top-up.

EAT POSITIVE

We also, it's important to state, gain some real positives from eating during a period when nearly all of us take a break. 'Being relaxed and socialising is key for mental wellbeing,'

Work out your personal tipping point for alcohol

says Sawyer. 'And a long, relaxed Christmas meal has digestive benefits, because as blood flow is automatically diverted away from the digestive organs as part of the normal "fight or flight" response, on Christmas Day, when hopefully people are less stressed, that shouldn't happen.'

While we're on the subject of mental wellbeing, alcohol needs consideration here too, because many people suffer increased anxiety after drinking. 'Your brain releases lots of anxiety-inducing chemicals, and the more you drink, the more you get', says Prof Winstock. 'People who drink because they think it will make them feel less anxious are trading a short-term benefit for huge rebound anxiety the next day. It doesn't



take much alcohol to settle social nerves, it's understanding where your maximal benefit is.' That understanding of your personal alcohol tipping point is paramount. 'People have three pints in an hour-and-a-half, feel happily drunk, so then have another three pints in the next hour-and-a-half, when what they need to do is slow down to have a pint every hour or so,' explains Prof Winstock.

'The key is, once you are approaching feeling slightly disinhibited and a bit jokey – to keep that feeling, slow down.' But also, pay attention to where your personal tipping point is, and decide that's your limit. It's about thinking how you want your night to end, and most people want to remember a good night. When you drink too much, you lose your memory, even if it was a great night.'

What of the headlines that crop up year-on-year claiming we all shovel 7,000 calories-worth of grub into our bodies on Christmas Day alone – is that a real worry? 'Studies have found that it's not uncommon for people to consume around 5,200 calories over the day, but Christmas lunch generally weighs in at around 3,000 to 3,500 calories', says Sawyer. 'It's important to remember that it's only one day. Clearly, if you're diabetic or have other health issues, this will put more pressure on your body, but if you're calorie-counting on Christmas Day, that will just cause stress and anxiety and spoil the pleasure.' In other words, eat, drink and be conscious. That's how you can really enjoy Christmas. **HFM**

TRY THIS

► START YOUR CHRISTMAS DAY WITH A COFFEE

Last year, UK scientists discovered that drinking a cup of coffee can stimulate brown fat. That's good, because brown fat's main function is to generate body heat by burning calories, as opposed to white fat, which stores it. It produces heat by burning sugar and fat, improving blood sugar control as well as burning extra calories. So if you're determined to dollop cream on your mince pie and brandy butter on your figgy pudding, a coffee could provide a mini buffer.



Professor Winstock is behind the free, NHS-approved Drinks Meter app, which gives you personalised feedback on your drinking – visit drinksometer.com

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VITABIOTICS

**ENJOY THE
DAILY GRIND**



That cup of coffee offers more than a mere morning kick – it's full of antioxidants, with plenty of health-boosting properties. Just make sure you don't overdo it...

We Brits consume about 95 million cups of coffee a day – that's an increase of 25 million cups a year over the past 10 years. We're also increasingly moving away from the instant stuff and appreciating fresh ground coffee instead, according to the British Coffee Association. But while we're starting to embrace coffee's more artisan qualities, it's time to look at the effect these delicious beans are having on our bodies.

'In the past, we thought of coffee as being something we drank for its stimulant effects,' says Sophie Medlin, registered dietitian and founder of City Dietitians (citydietitians.co.uk). But now we know more about the chemicals it contains. 'The power of antioxidants only came to our attention in the 1990s, and the benefits of polyphenols are still being investigated,' says Medlin. 'As a coffee lover myself, I am always glad when new research comes out to support its benefits.'

Coffee contains polyphenols, compounds found naturally in plants which have positive effects on our body. 'The polyphenols in coffee have been shown to offer preventative benefits for heart disease, cancer and type 2 diabetes,' says Medlin. Smaller doses of polyphenols are also found in wine and tea. One study by the University of Barcelona found that a high intake of polyphenols is associated with a 30% reduction in mortality for older adults.

Other hot drinks like green tea and white tea are often the first ones discussed when talking about health-boosting drinks. But, like

some teas, coffee contains a solid number of healthy antioxidants. 'The antioxidants in coffee are useful for preventing damage to cells that is caused by pollution, smoking, sun damage and other lifestyle factors.' And a hot brew has been found to have even more antioxidants than cold-brew coffee, says a study from Thomas Jefferson University, Philadelphia, USA – so stick to your traditional coffee-making method for maximum gains.

KEEP THE CAFFEINE IN CHECK

Because of the caffeine in coffee, it can be a natural way to boost your mood – but for this reason, it might be tempting to overdo it. So how many cups are too many? The University of South Australia sought to answer this question by conducting a series

It's a natural mood-booster, if you stick to safe limits

of studies, published last year. Their research concluded that six daily cups of coffee can be detrimental to your health and increase your chance of heart disease by up to 22%. That's a pretty good reason to go slow on the Joe.

However, while there's a fair amount of research, not every coffee is equal. ➤

THE EXPERT



Sophie Medlin,
consultant dietitian
and director of
[City Dietitians](http://citydietitians.co.uk)





'It's important to remember that everyone has their coffee differently and because coffee beans come from plants, each variety is a bit different. That means it's hard to research, and guidance on doses for reaping the benefits is difficult to be sure about,' says Medlin. 'So we do still need to be careful of our caffeine intake, particularly if you have anxiety or high blood pressure.'

'Around 400mg of caffeine seems to be safe for most adults,' she adds. 'One shot of espresso

We all have different levels of tolerance to caffeine

is usually around 65mg, and an average cup of coffee is around 100mg. Don't forget that tea, green tea, energy drinks, cola and pre-workout supplements also contain caffeine, so count your caffeine intake from them, too.'

Coffee also has a greater effect on men than women, starting only 10 minutes after consumption, according to another study by the University of Barcelona. Coffee also has a half-life in our system, which differs from person to person. 'The half-life of caffeine refers to how long it takes for our body to clear half of it out of our system. For some people, the half-life is up to 9.5 hours, for others it's closer to 1.5 hours. On average, the half-life of caffeine is five hours so make sure you're careful with your caffeine intake in the afternoon if you want a good night's sleep.'

Another major element of managing your coffee intake is noticing how it makes you feel. While coffee can boost your mood, caffeine withdrawal is recognised as a disorder and can negatively affect your mental health. 'Everyone has different caffeine tolerance levels, and this is determined by our genes,' explains Medlin. 'Some people are far more sensitive to caffeine than others. If you notice that you're shaky, anxious, have headaches or are struggling to get to sleep at night, it might be time to cut back on those lattes and espressos.' But get to know your limits, and coffee really is a worthy companion. **HFM**

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► Cheerful Buddha CBD Coffee
£13.99, 100g, 52 points



► Roastworks Coffee Co Ltd Decaf Columbia Ground Coffee
£6.29, 200g, 24 points

► Bean Bags Raw Bean Breakfast Blend Bags
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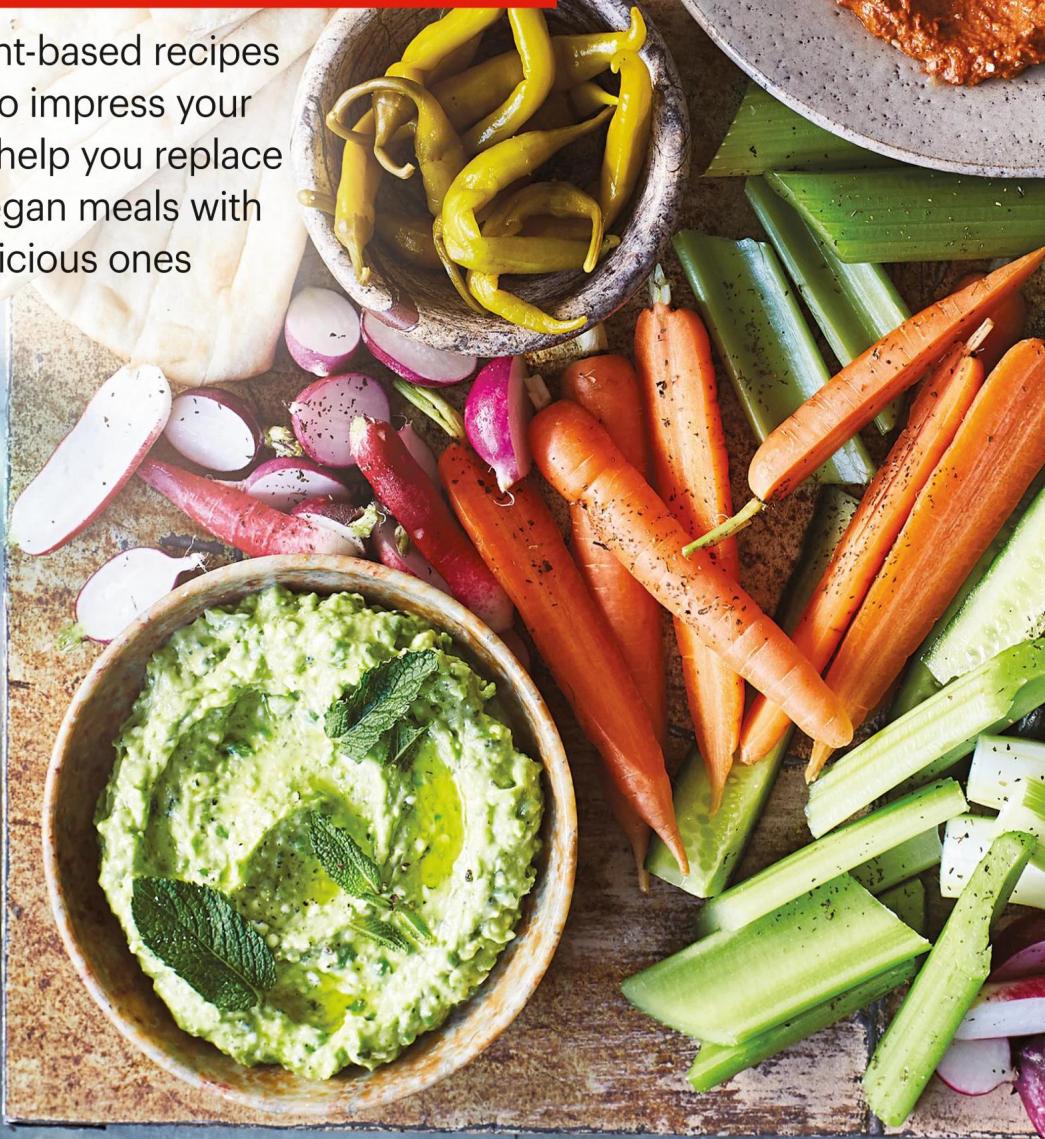
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SPEEDY VEGAN

These quick plant-based recipes are designed to impress your taste buds, and help you replace popular non-vegan meals with equally delicious ones



▲ Quick mezze platter

Firth and Theasby say: 'Perfect for entertaining, nibbling or eating for lunch at your desk, little mezze dips are a weekly staple in the BOSH! household. We've combined some newly discovered flavours a few classics; our beetroot, tahini and dill dip is incredible, and our pea, feta and mint dip is an old favourite

made plant-based. The mighty muhammara takes the crown here, with its rich roasted pepper flavour, and for the full Levantine effect we've matched the dips with flatbreads, shop-bought dolmades and dippy veg.'

'If you're wanting to up your dip game and impress guests at your next party, these recipes are gonna help you out.'

Chefs Henry Firth and Ian Theasby, otherwise known as the BOSH! boys, have made serious waves since their super-quick recipe videos took off on social media. Their series of no-BS cookbooks are designed to help bring vibrancy (and speed) to your plant-based nutrition plan. We chose three meals from their latest, *Speedy BOSH!*, to inspire you.



You'll definitely need a food processor here and, if you're making them all, having a silicone spatula to hand would be very helpful to speed up the process.'

SERVES: 4-6

6 flatbreads

1 x 300g jar of pickled green chillies

1 x 280g tin dolmades

For the beetroot, tahini and dill dip

- ½ lime
- 2 cooked beetroot
- 2 tbsp tahini
- A small handful of dill
- ½ tsp sesame seeds

For the muhammara

- ½ lemon
- 1 roasted red pepper from a jar

2 tbsp pomegranate molasses

½ tsp chilli flakes

½ tsp cumin flakes

2 tbsp olive oil

1 tsp salt

80g walnuts, plus 10g for the topping

Handful of fresh flat-leaf parsley

For the pea, feta and mint dip

½ lemon

80g frozen petit pois

100g dairy-free feta

3 tbsp rapeseed oil

Handful of fresh mint leaves

1 tbsp olive oil

Small handful of fresh mint leaves

For the crudités

1 carrot

½ cucumber

½ fennel bulb

6 celery sticks

A bunch of radishes with leaves

Pinch of dried mint

½ lemon

1 Remove the peas for the pea, feta and mint dip from the freezer and set aside to thaw slightly until needed.

2 Next, make the beetroot, tahini and dill dip. Squeeze the lime juice into the food processor. Add the beetroot, tahini and a sprinkling of salt. Blitz until smooth. Adjust seasoning if necessary. Scrape the dip into a serving bowl. Roughly chop the feathery fronds of the dill and sprinkle over the dip along with the sesame seeds. Rinse the food processor bowl and blade.

3 For the muhammara, squeeze the juice of the lemon half into the food processor. Add all the rest of the ingredients except the 10g walnuts and parsley, and blitz until smooth. Scrape into a bowl. Chop the remaining walnuts and sprinkle over, then garnish with the parsley. Quickly rinse the food processor bowl and blade again.

4 For the pea, feta and mint dip, squeeze the lemon juice into the food processor. Add the petit pois, feta, rapeseed oil and mint leaves. Blitz until well-combined, but still retaining texture. Scrape into a bowl and swirl the top with the back of a spoon to make an indent. Drizzle the olive oil into the dip and garnish with mint leaves.

5 Toast the flatbreads under the grill for 1-2 minutes, then prepare the crudités. Trim and slice the carrot, cucumber, fennel and celery into sticks or wedges. Rinse and halve the radishes. Arrange on a platter, sprinkle over the dried mint and squeeze over a little lemon juice. Drain the pickled green chillies and dolmades and transfer to small serving dishes. ➤



▲ Ultimate vegan mac and cheese

Firth and Theasby say: 'There's something about creamy, cheesy pasta that just works. Mac and cheese is perhaps the perfect example of this, and that's why it's become a vegan street food classic. This speedy version is creamy, cheesy and wonderfully crunchy. Choose a vegan cheese you like, and stick with it.'

SERVES: 4-6

300g macaroni
750ml unsweetened almond milk
50g cashew nuts
40ml olive oil
1 garlic clove
40g flour
100g vegan cheese
3 tbsp nutritional yeast
2 tsp Dijon mustard
50g fresh breadcrumbs
2 tbsp olive oil
Salt and black pepper

1 Bring a pan of salted water to the boil. Add the macaroni and cook for 1 minute less than stated on the packet. Drain

2 Meanwhile, put the almond milk and cashews into a medium saucepan and bring to the boil. Transfer to a power blender and blitz till smooth.

3 Put a frying pan over a medium heat and add the oil. Peel the garlic and grate straight into the pan. Cook for a couple of minutes, until just starting to brown. Add the flour and whisk until it combines with the garlicky oil to make a paste. Cook for



1 minute. Reduce heat to low. Slowly pour in a little of the nut milk mixture and whisk until completely combined.

4 Keep adding more, little by little, whisking, until it's all incorporated. Cook for 2 minutes. Grate the vegan cheese. Add the yeast, mustard and cheese to the pan. Stir to mix, taste and season. Drain the macaroni. Take the sauce off the heat and tip in the pasta. Stir to coat it well.

5 Put the breadcrumbs, olive oil and a big pinch of salt and pepper into a bowl and stir to mix. Scatter over the pasta. Place the pan under the grill and cook for 2-3 minutes, until the topping is crisp.

▲ Tofu satay kebabs with herbs and lettuce wraps

Firth and Theasby say: 'The deliciousness of satay sauce is one of the cornerstones of Thai cooking. Firm tofu is a great partner: packed full of protein, it takes on flavour beautifully. The marinade for this is sharp and spicy, which helps bring the tofu to life, while the cornflour coating offers up a cracking crunch.'

SERVES: 4

280g firm tofu
½ lime
2 tbsp tamari or dark soy sauce
2 tbsp sriracha
4 tbsp cornflour
2 tbsp coconut oil
For the satay sauce
1 lime
2 tbsp water

3 tbsp crunchy peanut butter

1 tbsp soy sauce

1 tsp sriracha

1 tsp Chinese black vinegar

To serve

2 limes

2 heads of little gem lettuce

4 spring onions

Small handful of fresh coriander

Small handful of fresh mint

Small handful of fresh Thai basil

Handful of dry roasted peanuts

1 fresh red chilli

Sea salt

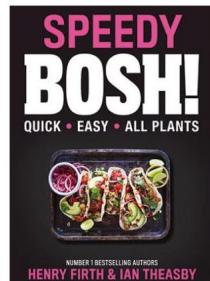
1 Slice the tofu into 12 fingers and place in a bowl. Squeeze the lime half over the tofu, then sprinkle over the tamari or soy sauce, sriracha and cornflour and toss to coat. Heat the coconut oil in a frying pan. Fry the tofu on all sides until golden. Remove to drain on the kitchen paper.

2 For the satay sauce, cut the lime in half and squeeze the juice into the food processor. Add the rest of the sauce ingredients and blitz until smooth. Transfer to a serving bowl.

3 Cut the limes into wedges. Arrange the lettuce leaves on a platter. Sprinkle with a pinch of sea salt and a squeeze of lime. Snip the spring onions over the lettuce, and arrange the herbs and lime. Bash the peanuts in a mortar and pestle and put them in a bowl. Transfer the tofu to a plate. Chop the chilli and scatter it over

4 To serve, bring everything to the table, and let everyone assemble their wraps as they like. Tuck in! **HFM**

Extracted from
Speedy BOSH! by
Henry Firth & Ian
Theasby (HQ, £22)
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PROSTATE SUPPORT

Made with flower bark and pumpkin seeds, New Nordic Prosta Vital is a natural way to help maintain normal prostate function



Many men over 50 experience a larger prostate than when they were younger, and this can affect urination – often the first sign of prostate enlargement. The prostate gland (also known as the bladder neck gland) is normally the size of a chestnut, around 2cm in diameter.

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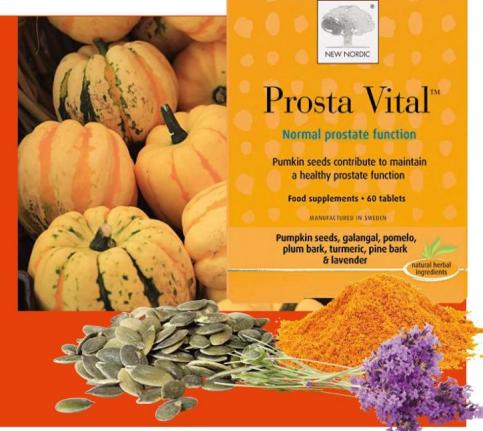
WHY NEW NORDIC?

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MENTAL HEALTH >

Smile, and the world smiles with you



Smiling is under growing scientific scrutiny, with 2019 research by the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, USA, showing that when people consciously make a facial expression, it can bring on the emotion associated with that expression. Now a study by the University of South Australia further confirms that the very act of smiling can trick your mind into being more positive.

The study involved participants holding a pen in their teeth, which activates the facial muscles used for smiling. Researchers found that doing so not only made subjects feel happier, they also started to see the world in a more positive light. So while smiling might not be the answer to all our problems, it's a good start.





STEPS TO BEING KINDER

Being kind to others not only helps improve society, it's

also good for our mental health. Psychotherapist

Malcolm Stern offers easy ways to embrace altruism

Many years ago, the Dalai Lama made a seemingly simple statement, which is truly profound. He said, 'My religion is kindness.' At this time in our evolution, we have a need to be kind both to ourselves and others. In my work with compassionate mental health, I've seen the effects that kindness can have. But if we are to be kind to others, we also need to be kind to ourselves. Our inner critic often has the capacity to undermine ourselves as the first step in undermining others.

Kindness is most effective when it becomes a practice. It's like a muscle that, when used often, becomes stronger and more a part of who we are. In more than 30 years of working as a group psychotherapist, I have found my intuition has become easier to access, as it is constantly called on in groups. I rarely find my answers through logic or deep thinking.

1 PRACTISE PRESENCE

When we see another in distress, our learned response, especially as men, is to try to fix them: to come up with a solution that will ease their pain. In the process of trying to assuage another's pain, subconsciously, we are wanting to create good feeling, without necessarily allowing difficult feelings to have expression. My skill as a therapist is not to come up with brilliant answers in the face of difficult emotions, but rather to stay with the feelings, so they can be heard and honoured, before moving on. In the same way, you can be a true friend to another by not fixing or running away from heightened emotion. It's a difficult but rewarding practice that's worth exploring.

In the same way, if kindness becomes a part of our daily life, it flows that much easier and we begin to have more connection to it, without having to think too much. With this in mind, I've listed five ways to initiate and practise kindness.

2 BE APPRECIATIVE

This is such a simple, but obvious gift we can bring into our lives and especially into our intimate relationships. Without

THE EXPERT



Malcolm Stern is a psychotherapist, co-founder of the alternative thinking platform, Alternatives, and co-presented the Channel 4 series on relationships, *Made For Each Other*. His latest book, *Slay Your Dragons With Compassion - 10 Ways To Thrive Even When It Feels Impossible*, is out now (Watkins, £12.99)

3 USE YOUR TIME WISELY

One of the effects of the Covid-19 virus has been that many of us, myself included, have slowed down. What I was able to observe was that, after initial resistance, I began to enjoy the spaciousness and spend more time walking in nature. Ensure that, in addition to diarising your work, you also diarise empty spaces. Give yourself time to 'be' without an agenda. If you have children, give them the gift of your time and attention, rather than filling life with busyness.

feeding our loved ones, relationships often stagnate and can become joyless. The essential thing here is to marry appreciation with authenticity. For example, when we notice our partner's attractiveness, voice it to them. It feeds both them and us – but don't appreciate them without meaning it. Instead make sure you feel what it is you're saying.

4 FOCUS ON THE OTHER PERSON FIRST

We often strive to get our point of view across to another when there is conflict. I used to repeat to myself many times the idea that, if I said what's vital for me with enough volume and repetition, I would be better understood and get my way. But one of the lessons from Stephen Covey's book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, is to understand the other before you seek to be understood yourself.

Rather than 'fixing' difficult feelings, try to stay with them

5 BE GENEROUS

Especially at this seasonal time, we have the opportunity to be generous. It is easy to confuse this with a purely financial gesture. Real generosity is about tuning into another and sensing what you might contribute, that would lift their spirits. Notice the enjoyment that flows back to you when your gestures light up another's face. We can be generous with our words and our hearts, as well as with our money. **HFM**

MANAGE YOUR SOCIAL ANXIETY

Socialising can boost our wellbeing and even help us live longer. But if you're avoiding seeing your mates this weekend, you could be suffering from this mental health issue

Banter, bonding and just being with a crew of like-minded folk can make you feel good: for most of us, being sociable releases a cocktail of neurotransmitters, boosting feel-good hormones such as oxytocin and lowering stress and anxiety. But that's not the case if you suffer from social anxiety, a condition that men rarely talk about, but which, for some, has become more pronounced, as a result of Covid-19 and coming out of lockdown.

Social anxiety, also known as social phobia, is an 'overwhelming fear of social situations' according to the NHS, and it's thought to affect as many as one in 10 people, say the charity Anxiety UK. Typically, sufferers will persistently worry about situations such as meeting new people, public speaking, starting conversations, and settings such as parties, group meals or just going to the pub.

For many, the issue begins as a teenager, and for some, it gets easier as they age. But for many others, it doesn't, and it can make life extremely distressing. It's more than shyness – someone with social anxiety might excessively worry about everyday things like speaking on the phone, avoid group chats, feel like they're always being watched, constantly worry about making a fool of themselves,

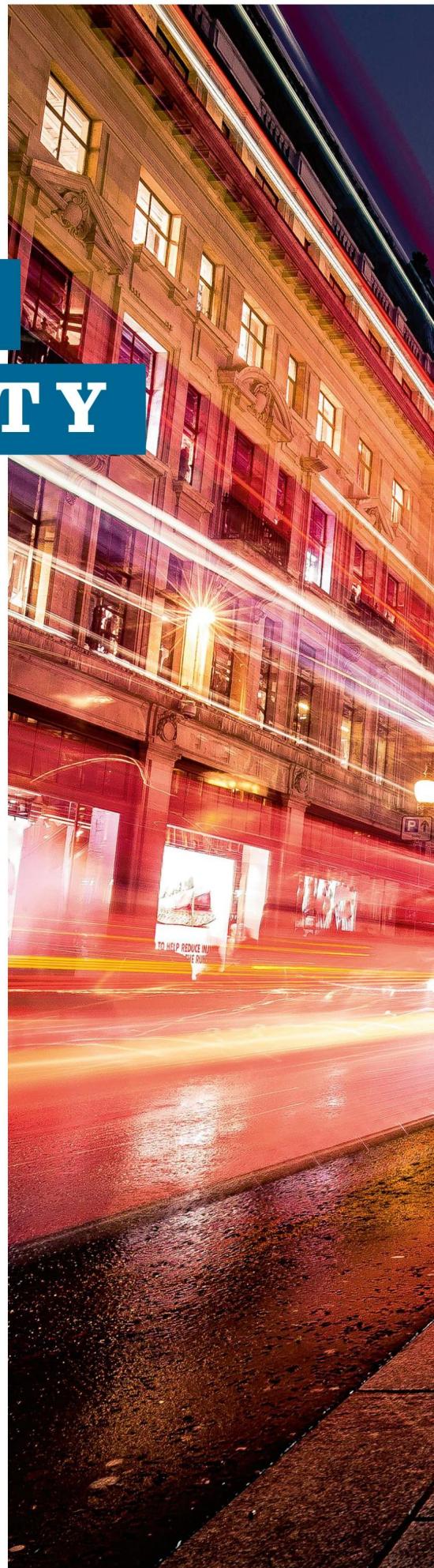
and experience physical symptoms such as sweating, trembling and palpitations.

Unsurprisingly, as a result, being with other people cancels out the usual positive benefits of socialising, says psychotherapist Rosie Whetstone. 'The stress of these situations often makes socialising unbearable, leading to feelings of being judged or scrutinised by others.' That's a real bummer, when in reality, your mates are excited to see you.

This can also lead to avoidance strategies, which means life can become restricted – and isolated. 'Many people feel anxious in a social setting,' says psychotherapist John-Paul Davies. 'It's normal to feel a little anxious before going to a party or meeting new people, for example. But it enters the realm of disordered behaviour when those feelings are disproportionate to the setting, and they lead to avoidance.'

SPEAKING UP

Studies suggest that women are more prone to social anxiety than men. But a survey by the Priory Group also found that 40% of men won't even talk about their own mental health, with 'embarrassment' cited as a cause in 29% of cases – so the number may well be higher. The same poll also showed that up ➤



Man talk





"Note how you behave, then imagine how you'd like to"

to 77% of men have suffered with anxiety and stress, meaning it's generally a big problem.

While it might look to an observer like a man with social anxiety is bonding over discussing footy or *Line Of Duty*, inside they may be struggling with feelings of being judged – for example, for being too quiet, too chatty or for how they look.

No matter how much you tell yourself that other people are too involved in their own social performance or they're a little anxious themselves, rationalising with yourself won't always feel helpful to someone with social anxiety – a bodily reaction can take over. 'It can cause an array of symptoms: you may feel light-headed, dizzy, sick, dizzy, numb or mute,' says Whetstone. 'You may blush, sweat, shake, feel sick, appear awkward, and often avoid eye-contact with others.'

'It can also cause anxious thoughts, as if

there's someone on your shoulder criticising,' adds Davies. "'You shouldn't have said that, these people don't like you'" – and then you analyse those criticisms. The anxiety is both physical and mental.'

THE CORONA FACTOR

Currently, there's another obvious element in the mix – the fallout from the coronavirus pandemic. An Office For National Statistics survey, in May, found that the number of people reporting high levels of anxiety 'sharply elevated' during the pandemic, with 19 million affected – and it's likely people with social anxiety were among them.

While staying at home allowed sufferers to avoid people in the short term, it made social interaction even more daunting when some semblance of 'normal' life resumed again. Anecdotally, people with milder cases of social anxiety pre-pandemic reported stronger symptoms post-lockdown, as they adapted to hanging out with others again.

'Anxiety has gone up because of the events of 2020. Coronavirus and the lockdown has amplified most mental health concerns,' says Davies. But, he adds: 'It may be that being separated has increased the need to see others – even in those who suffer from anxiety.' See right for tips on handling yours better. **HFM**

HOW TO BREAK THE CYCLE

Anxiety is natural – we all feel it sometimes. But too much is down to a combination of factors. These can include our earliest experiences, where maybe our caregivers didn't soothe our anxiety, or were fearful themselves. Here's our guide to soothing yourself in stressful social situations.

1 'Learn how to understand your emotional responses,' says Whetstone. 'Ask yourself how you expect to feel in a situation and why, then reassure yourself that you can cope. Your brain needs reassurance, rather than to be told you're not OK.'

2 'Ask yourself what evidence you have that your worst expectations will come true,' she adds. 'Have they ever? How many times? Compare that with the number of times they haven't. Be aware that the feeling of fear is a warning of danger, so reassuring yourself none is present can help.'

3 It can help to keep a diary and record what you're thinking and feeling in social situations. 'Note how you behave, then think how you'd like to behave and, crucially, imagine it happening,' says Whetstone.

4 'As with any anxiety, you can look at aspects across the spectrum of life to help manage negative thoughts and feelings,' Davies adds. 'Exercise, diet, sleep, good relationships and doing the things we love – as hard as that's been this year – all help.'

5 Switch certain things off for a holistic approach to happiness, says Davies. 'That includes monitoring your media intake and your social media interaction.'

6 Davies recommends exercising your mindfulness skills. 'Exercise is a great help and going for a jog or walk will help reset your nervous system. Taking deep breaths really can calm the body, and so the mind.'

7 If you're struggling, Davies says cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) may work for you. 'It short-circuits fearful thoughts,' he says. 'A therapist may gently suggest exposure to and contact with other people, which feels rewarding and allows you to build up your capacity for social interaction.'

8 Think of others as well. 'Break situations down into manageable chunks, talking yourself through each one so you feel more confident,' says Whetstone. 'Don't only focus on yourself, be present and look at what's going on around you.'

THE HFM LIST

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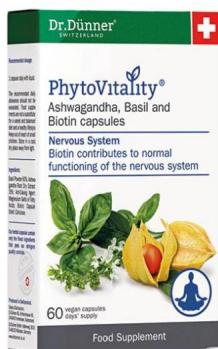
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£22.99, 60 capsules

MUSIC

THERAPY

With all the extra time spent at home this year, many of us will have been inspired to dust down that old guitar from the loft. It should have been the perfect chance to brush up our playing, or learn a new instrument. In reality, for some, the urge to play was blocked by other feelings. It's easy to think that music lessons are something you only do as a kid. Or that, if you did have lessons, your level of competence is set in stone at the point where you stopped.

In fact, there's no reason you can't take up a musical instrument, or continue to learn one, as an adult. Not only does playing offer a sense of accomplishment, it's positively good for you. A recent poll of 2,000 instrument-playing adults by music streaming service Spotify found 89% believe music helps keep them emotionally balanced. Over half said it makes them more relaxed, and 36% say playing an instrument gives them a sense of purpose.

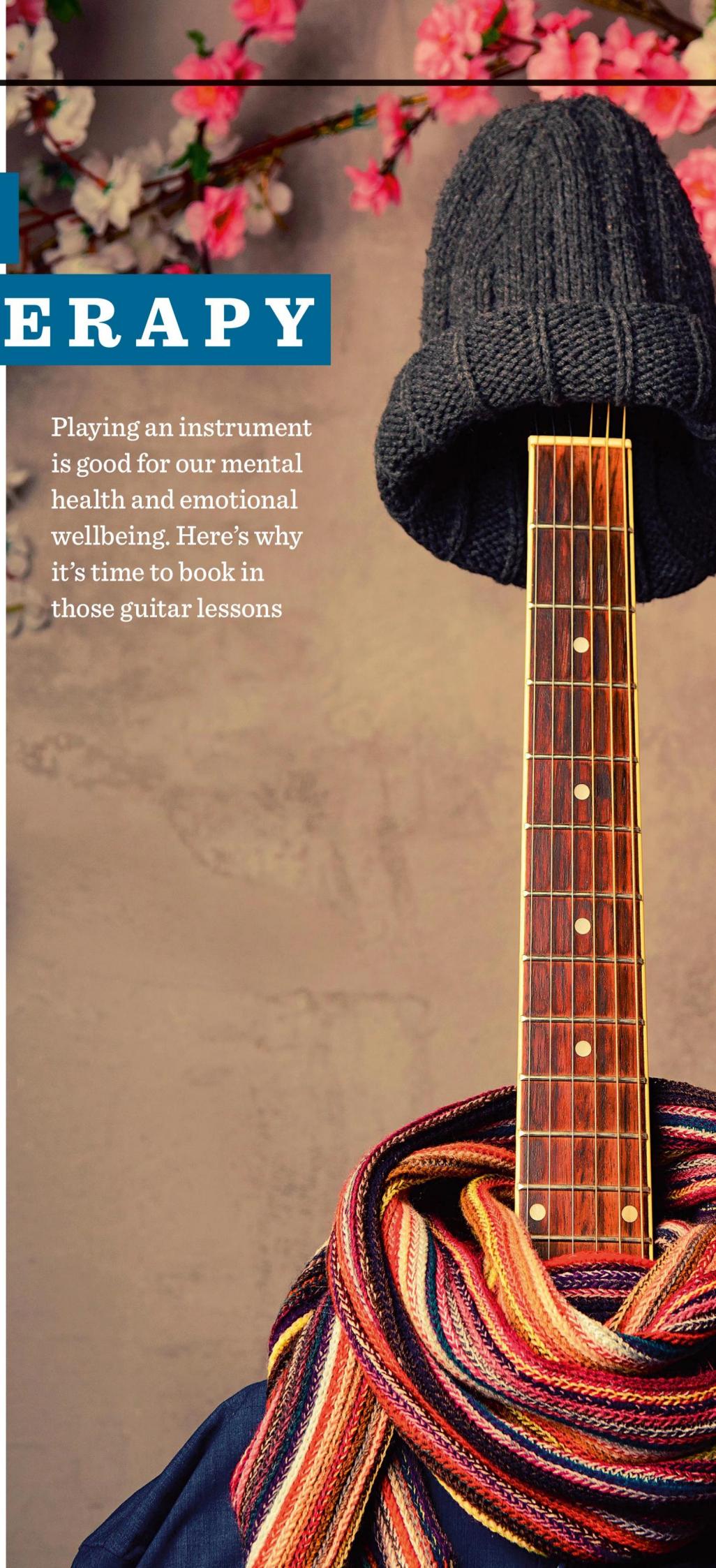
Now, with a wealth of online resources on offer, it's never been easier to start learning. All of which means you can rekindle those fantasies of being the next Ed Sheeran...

GO WITH THE FLOW

Enjoying music in general has a therapeutic, emotional dimension. As the British Association For Music Therapy says: 'Music can be exciting or calming, joyful or poignant. It can stir memories and powerfully resonate with our feelings.' However, playing an instrument has a more immersive quality than simply listening. It counts as a 'flow' activity: one where you're so engaged, you don't think about anything else. 'Playing is very mindful,' says Julie McKee, a piano teacher and jazz singer (juliemckee.com). 'You can't think about other problems when you're working out how to play a piece, or where to put your fingers.'

If you struggle with meditation, it could even offer an alternative. 'You don't have to make such an effort to get into another zone – you just do,' says McKee. 'It can also help if you're feeling anxious, as it takes your mind to a different place. Playing an instrument also has a physical element, so you're engaging more of your senses in a constructive way.'

Playing an instrument is good for our mental health and emotional wellbeing. Here's why it's time to book in those guitar lessons





WORDS CHERYL GREENMAN | PHOTOGRAPH © GETTY IMAGES

Research certainly suggests that playing an instrument promotes better mental health, and not just for younger people. One 2016 study found participants aged 65-plus who played the piano reported 'improved self-esteem, greater independence, and fewer feelings of isolation' compared to a non-piano-playing control group, and saw a 'decrease in depression, and fatigue'.

MOOD BOOST

No surprises, then, that music is used therapeutically – creating and enjoying music can be used to support people with mental health issues, or learning or developmental disabilities. 'Music therapy has been found to demonstrate improved social and psychological functioning for adults with depression, and help with anxiety and trauma,' says Clare Maddocks, a music therapist and spokesperson for the British Association For Music Therapy (bamt.org). 'Structured musical participation can help people build resources to manage these conditions, and provide a creative outlet for expressing emotions.'

Learning an instrument boosts self-esteem, she adds: 'We can experience positive feelings when we finish learning a piece, and play alongside others. Music helps motivate us and gives us an achievable goal.'

Practising those chords might improve your memory, too. 'When we take part in a musical activity, multiple parts of our brain are engaged,' says Maddocks. Studies show playing is good for cognition, and associated with a reduced risk of developing dementia. While people who've played from childhood have particularly protected cognitive function, a 2018 review of studies suggested adult learners still gained benefits.

And let's not forget the physical pluses. 'Playing engages your fine and gross motor skills, and your respiratory system if you're learning a wind instrument,' says Maddocks.

LEARNING AS AN ADULT

So what's stopping you from booking those lessons? You might have heard the idea it takes 10,000 hours to master an instrument (proposed in Malcom Gladwell's 2008 book *Outliers*) – a daunting prospect if you're struggling with a busy life. You

might have internalised the idea, from childhood, you're just 'not musical' – in fact, neuropsychobiological research indicates everyone is. While it's true that children's brains are wired to learn quickly, McKee points out adult piano players, for example, may have the advantage of stronger fingers.

However, McKee says perhaps the biggest hurdle for adult learners is self-doubt. 'People might have reached a level of competence in their career. They go back as a pupil and want to be as good as they are in other areas of life. But thinking "I'm not good enough" can get in the way of enjoyment. You need to combat that.'

McKee also argues that, as a society, we don't always value doing something that isn't 'useful'. 'We can have quite a utilitarian approach to life. But the arts aren't just quite a nice thing to have. They're part of life. For me, playing was a lifeline during lockdown.' Think of playing as an act of self-care, says Maddocks. 'Music gives us a break from the chaos of day-to-day life.'

STARTING AGAIN

There's no reason why you can't take up an instrument at any age, if you're prepared to put in a little work. McKee suggests aiming for 10-15 minutes' practice a day to see progress. 'Little and often is better than a big splurge every two weeks. But anything is better than nothing.'

Even if your skills are limited to strumming the first four chords to 'Wonderwall', you'll benefit. 'You don't have to be concert level to get something from playing,' says McKee.

The good news is, it's never been easier to learn. Many teachers have switched to online lessons, making them easier to fit in (search at musicteachers.co.uk). Flowkey offers interactive piano lessons (flowkey.com); Fender Play has guidance for guitar players (fender.com); Music Professor for brass and woodwind players (musicprofessor.com).

If you're a total newbie, consider which instruments you're drawn to. Anecdotal evidence suggests the ukulele, guitar, harmonica and piano are easier for adults. The French horn might be more challenging.

Other factors might affect your choice, like physical space – we don't all have room for a double bass. There's also the social element: do you want to join an orchestra, or play alone? But the most important thing is to love it – apart from anything, you'll practise. **HFM**

Enjoying music gives us a break from the chaos of life

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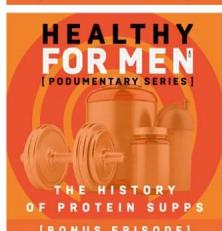
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HEALTH ➤

The perfect nap time

 Good quality sleep is vital to overall health. Experts associate lack of sleep with anxiety, obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes and other ailments. But if we're not getting enough sleep at night, can we top up with naps throughout the day? Well, yes, say experts, but for a limited duration.

A study from the European Society of Cardiology found that napping for longer than one hour could

have an adverse effect on your health. The study of over 300,000 participants found those who take regular naps longer than one hour during the day have a 34% higher likelihood of cardiovascular disease. The link is not proven to be causative but many experts recommend no longer than 30 minutes nap time to improve overall health and cognitive ability. Make sure you're setting your alarm!

A black male runner in a bright blue zip-up hoodie is shown from the waist up, jogging through a dense forest. He is looking down at his hands, which are clasped together in front of him. The background is filled with tall, thin trees without leaves, suggesting a late autumn or winter setting.

GET YOUR WELLBEING ON TRACK

National wellbeing has dipped to the lowest levels since records began. But, no matter where we're at, post-lockdown, we can rebuild our mental and physical fortitude



Collectively, we're not in a great place right now. A report by the London School of Economics earlier this year concluded that the nation as a whole is 'just under the threshold for psychiatric morbidity' (meaning we're more at risk of developing depression and anxiety). Analysing indicators including happiness, life satisfaction and anxiety, researchers recorded 'substantially worse' levels of wellbeing when compared with 2019.

This probably won't come as a massive surprise. 2020 has been a lot of things, but easy isn't one of them. Whether you or someone you love became ill, you changed or lost your job, or you were simply busy adapting to measures such as mask-wearing and working from home, chances are you found things challenging on some level.

As you'd expect, how well we've adapted partly depends on our individual situation and individual psychology. However, the path to wellbeing is a complex mix of the different parts of our lives. If you're struggling right now, try these ideas for getting back on track.

THE WELLBEING HOLE: Feeling unfit

For many, activity levels plummeted this year. 'People were doing less incidental exercise than usual, as they couldn't leave the house. Even when people visited the gym again, many still worked from home, so were still generally less active,' says Constantin Hampe, CEO at Surge Fitness (surge.co.uk). 'Unfortunately, over time, this has had a negative impact on overall fitness and wellbeing. The human body is built to move.'

Sitting at our computer for long hours while working from home is part of the problem. 'The muscles in our bodies need activating regularly to strengthen and support the body,' says Hampe. 'Otherwise strain and pressure is applied to the skeletal structure, leading to bad posture and poor blood circulation. This can be linked to health issues, such as back pain and heart-related conditions.'

BUILD YOURSELF BACK UP

Think small as well as big

Integrate more daily movement into your life again. Hampe says that for long-term fitness, we need a combination of incidental, lower-intensity NEAT (non-exercise activity thermogenesis) – walking to the shops, cleaning – and EAT (exercise activity thermogenesis) – your usual workouts. 'Commute' to your home office, even if that's walking round the block four times. Now may also be the time to buy that fitness tracker.

Set a goal

'It was great to see the world taking part in home workouts, running and cycling at the start of the pandemic,' says Hampe. 'However, for many, this phase wore off. With few personal goals, people struggled to see results.' Set a tangible goal, whether that's running a 10K, or achieving a certain number of push-ups. Employing a PT may help motivate you. ➤

THE WELLBEING HOLE: WORK

2020 has been a tough old year for work issues. If you still have a job (many don't), the scope of what you do may have shifted. For many, wfh meant greater isolation, longer hours (despite no commute), and new ways of communicating (more Zoom calls, fewer restorative chats by the office kettle).

BUILD YOURSELF BACK UP

► INVEST IN REST

'We need to be wary of productivity for productivity's sake,' says Tiffany Philippou, co-host on the Is This Working? podcast. 'Productivity is about getting your work done in an efficient amount of time. On the show, we say the key to this is rest. You can only do good work efficiently if you take proper breaks. We'd even recommend napping in the day. And yes, it's been a hard year, so we do need managers to be compassionate as we won't always be able to work at our usual capacity.'

► DON'T GET ADDICTED

It's easy to use work to numb or block uncomfortable feelings. 'It's OK to use work as a coping mechanism in the short term, but it's good to be aware you're doing it and allow time and space to sit in the feelings you've been running away from,' says Philippou. 'It's better longer-term to embrace the discomfort of negative feelings. Pushing them away makes them feel worse.'

► SIT WITH UNCERTAINTY

Right now, the future feels insecure. But 'arguably, everything's always been uncertain,' says Philippou, 'I think we're facing the reality of how little control we have over what happens to us. Focus on what you can control, and try to take each day as it comes.'



Focus on muscles

For some, muscle strength and tone suffered during lockdown – especially if your usual team sports or gym visits were off-limits. If you're out of practice, ease back in with low weights, or a resistance band, to avoid injury. For a faster track to recovery, Hampe suggests electrical muscle stimulation (EMS) training, which Surge specialises in. Here special electrical devices give muscles extra stimulation while you perform move such as squats. ‘More muscle fibres are activated, so muscles perform quicker and stronger,’ he says. ‘Type II (fast twitch) muscle fibres are recruited most during an EMS session [those needed for jumping]. This means, whatever sport you’re training for, it helps your body perform more powerful movements. It’s also non-load bearing (no weights are involved), so ideal for people with joint issues.’

THE WELLBEING HOLE: Mental health

The global pandemic meant 2020 was a perfect storm for poor mental health. More than 60% of UK adults reported their mental health had declined during lockdown, according to research by the charity Mind, and people with existing mental health problems were particularly badly affected.

‘The effects of prolonged social isolation, possible health, job and financial worries, and powerlessly witnessing global trauma playing out on a constant rolling media, all added to our usual anxieties,’ says psychotherapist John-Paul Davies (thistrustedplace.co.uk).

One problem is the situation also feeds into our natural bias towards survival over happiness, believes Davies. ‘Survival means

spending more of our time in the safety-checking “anxious” part of ourselves, than the “calm and alive” state of wellbeing. This leads to a tendency for us to procrastinate, ruminate, be dissatisfied and catastrophise.’

BUILD YOURSELF BACK UP

Nudge your thoughts

‘Notice when you’re worrying or ruminating and switch your focus to any good stuff in your life, even with all the difficulties around you,’ says Davies. ‘See thoughts as invitations, not facts and know it’s up to you whether you accept them.’ It’s not realistic to aim for being worry-free. ‘But we can “turn up” the part responsible for enjoyment and fulfilment.’

Go back to basics

Simple measures really can boost wellbeing, says Davies. ‘Even in this current situation, most of us feel more balanced after a walk in nature, getting good sleep and nutrition, spending time with people we love, reading and being physically active.’

Prioritise relationships

Lockdown meant it was easy to let relationships slide, especially once that initial flurry of Zoom calls subsided. ‘Stress and anxiety often cause problems in relationships with others, which in turn increases stress and anxiety, creating a vicious circle,’ says Davies. ‘But keeping connected with others who help you feel good about yourself is key to your wellbeing.’ **HFM**

THE WELLBEING HOLE: POOR NUTRITION

If you ate more than your fair share of digestives this year, you weren’t alone. With boredom rife, and the kitchen cupboard in sight of your desk, it was tempting to give up on healthy eating. If you visited physical shops less often, fresh foods might have taken a back seat to junky store-cupboard buys.

BUILD YOURSELF BACK UP

► MAKE IT EASY

Snacking is inevitably about what’s available, so try to exercise restraint during your online grocery shop. ‘If it’s not there, then you won’t be tempted to eat it,’ says Rob Hobson (robhobson.co.uk), registered nutritionist and author of *The Art of Sleeping* (HQ, £9.99). ‘If you’re out of the habit of eating fresh fruit and vegetables, then keep things like peppers, carrots and cucumbers sliced in the fridge. That means you’re more likely to just grab them, and they work well with healthy dips such as humous or tzatziki.’

► FORM NEW EATING RITUALS

If 11am signals strong coffee and Wagon Wheels, try to overwrite this with a new habit. ‘Try a herbal tea or other hot drink instead – drinking water can help trick the body into feeling full,’ says Hobson.

► RETHINK YOUR KITCHEN

Some US research suggests that our physical environment impacts our food choices. Simple steps such as keeping unhealthy foods at the back of a cupboard may make a difference, or keeping fruit and veg in plain view. Studies also suggest that using heavier cutlery and smaller plates can encourage you to eat less.

Staying connected to others is key to your mental wellbeing

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The grooming room



YOUR WINTER GROOMING SURVIVAL GUIDE

Harsh winter weather brings with it a new set of grooming challenges. Stuart Miles explains how to manage being exposed to the elements





We often let things go a bit at this time of year, because mostly we're all wrapped up and feeling protected. However, as soon as you step out of the

front door, the skin on your face and the hair on your head take a battering from the elements. Even your skin gets a kicking from a lack of sun and fresh air. Whether you are someone who enjoys running and cycling whatever the weather, or you spend ages on your hair only for it to be ruined on your way to a night out – or both! – here are my top five tips for stepping up your grooming routine during the colder winter months.

INCREASE FACIAL MOISTURISING

During the summer months we sweat more and drink more fluid, so our skin is naturally more hydrated, but in the winter it's the opposite problem. You may prefer switching to a moisturiser for normal-to-dry skin to provide more protection, and your skin will be less likely to dry out. Don't forget that even during the winter months, the sun can be strong so if you're sun-sensitive or worried about premature ageing, a moisturiser with SPF is always the best option.

Lips can also feel chapped and a decent lip balm will help. **Burt's Bees 100% Natural Lip Balm Beeswax (£3.99, 12 points)** is great stuff and has a hint of peppermint, too. Re-apply lip balm frequently, especially before bed, as breathing through your mouth at night also dries out lips. This is common if you're suffering from a cold, so take some preventative action.

PROTECT BELOW YOUR NECK

It's not just about protection outdoors, but indoors. During the winter months, humidity levels drop, as people turn on the heating in their house. This results in moisture loss from the skin, which can make it itchy and dry. Longer, warmer showers can also remove more of the skin's natural lipids, again giving a drying effect. For this reason, it's important to invest in a decent body moisturiser at this time of year. There are plenty that absorb well into the skin, so you won't suffer that greasy feeling when you get dressed, especially if you're in a hurry post-gym. Mancave have



YOUR WINTER SHOPPING LIST

► DR ORGANIC GINSENG HAIR STYLE PUTTY (£7.99, 75ml, 28 points)

Infuse your hair with organic ginseng and conditioning avocado to help protect against the drying effects of cold weather.

► FIT KIT FACIAL MOISTURISER COOL DOWN SENSITIVE (£6.99, 100ml, 24 points)

To help you cool down after a winter run, this moisturiser has wild gooseberry which experts claim can help regulate skin temperature.

► ETHIQUE TIP-TO-TOE SHAMPOO AND SHAVING BAR (£12.99, 110g, 48 points)

Not only can you lather this pH-balanced soap on your face before a shave to keep your skin in great condition – it's also a moisturising shampoo, complete with kaolin clay and cocoa butter.



developed a sensitive range of moisturisers that use naturally derived ingredients to prevent irritation on your skin and absorb easily. Take a look at **Mancave Sensitive Moisturiser (£6.99, 100ml, 24 points)**.

KEEP YOUR SCALP HEALTHY

Another consequence of us living more of our lives indoors is that the dry air and lack of humidity can affect our scalp. Often people mistake the symptoms of a dry scalp for dandruff and use a strong anti-dandruff shampoo, which will only make the situation worse. Try massaging a light conditioner into your scalp after shampooing or if it's less severe, try a mild sulphate-free shampoo. These are more suitable and won't strip the hair and scalp of their natural oils so easily.

NO SHAME IN BRONZING

If you think you look pale and tired, then a facial moisturiser with a hint of fake tan can really help. The effect is very subtle and you can build it up. Fake tan for the body is stronger, so anything that says 'gradual tan' for the face is a safer bet to avoid that fake orange look. Just be sure to exfoliate first.

DON'T NEGLECT YOUR HANDS

An increased amount of hand washing because of Covid-19 plus exposure to the cold means it's important to moisturise after every hand-wash to replenish barrier function. Use a hand cream and look for the ingredients glycerine, shea butter or niacinamide, as they can all help to improve barrier function and soothe irritated skin. Try **Balmonds Intensive Hand Cream** with shea (£10.99, 50ml, 40 points).

CHANGE UP YOUR HAIR PRODUCT

As soon as you step out the door, you're pretty much guaranteed that the wind will blow your hair around, unless you go short and find a strong hair wax. Some of the new matt clays work just as well. They may not hold your barnet rock-solid, but when you reach your destination, you can put your hands through and re-style, as they'll still allow some movement. Also search for products designed to block humidity, to prevent the air from making your hair go curly or frizzy, if you prefer a slick, straight look. **HFM**

All products at hollandandbarrett.com

1 Luna 2 For Men facial scrub brush

£149, foreo.com

Meet your skincare needs with this futuristic bit of cleansing kit. It gently scrubs the dirt, grime and dead skin cells off, and helps prep skin for a smoother shave. This award-winning product will freshen you up in only two minutes, twice a day.



You don't need material things to make you happy, but these innovative products might help you get fitter – or make an awesome Christmas present



3 Exodus ANC Headphones

£199.99, thehouseofmarley.com

These wireless headphones boast an impressive 28-hour battery life with active noise cancelling, and 80 hours without. They feature a foldable design and a protective carrying case. Great-quality sound, and perfect for a session in the gym.

The locker room

2 Echelon EX3 bike

£1119, echelonfit.uk

If you're looking for the Peloton experience but don't want to splash out too much, the Echelon offers a great fitness biking workout. The Echelon app offers a membership of £24.99 a month for fitness classes. Riders get the chance to explore different terrains – from scenic French countryside to the streets of Singapore – while an exclusive partnership with Zumba is just one of the many off-bike options available.



4 Remington T-Series trimmer

£79.99, argos.co.uk

Become a pro bearded with this self-sharpening beard trimmer. It comes with nine beard combs to create that polished vibe. It can be used cordless or with a cord, has a turbo mode, and the battery lasts for up to five hours.



5 Saucony Kinvara 10

£115, saucony.co.uk

The lightweight Kinvara is a neutral running shoe, ideal for all kinds of terrain. Designed with breathable mesh and a flexible mid-sole, it's just the ticket for striding out on a winter run.



6

**Vivobarefoot
Tracker FG hiking
boots, £190**vivobarefoot.co.uk

Feel the sensation of barefoot running in the mountains with these all-terrain-tackling hiking boots. They're thin and flexible, helping you get close to the ground and reconnect with nature – and they look cooler than you'd expect from a barefoot shoe.



7

Sleep Hub**£599, sleephub.com**

Trouble catching some ZZZs? Sleep Hub have designed this high-tech device to help you overcome all your snoozing worries. It helps users achieve quality slumber through scientifically formulated sounds that use rhythms and pulses to simulate the waves that the brain should produce through each sleep cycle. **HFM**



LAST MAN STANDING

“Failure drives you to victory”



Racing driver **Philip Hanson**, 21, became the youngest ever top-10 finisher at the Le Mans 24-hour race in 2019. Here's how his fitness fuels his success

Winning is rare in racing. Racing has such a hook because we, as racers, spend so much time losing that when we win, it's all the more satisfying. You experience defeat and failure so often that it drives you on to victory. The feeling of being on top of the world lasts for about 24 hours, but the feeling of losing could last for two weeks afterwards. It really does hang on your mind.

Mental strength is very personal. I think the best way to train is to take your mind back to when you really needed to perform. If you're deep into a race and are fighting for second place, you're at a level of physical fatigue and it's just this mental strength that keeps you going. Those are the times when you grow mentally. But it's important to bring yourself to physical exertion in the gym, getting to a point of failure and allowing your mind to take over.

If I'm struggling, I think of the most pain I've ever been in physically, and how I endured it. I compare it to a past experience in the gym and how I mentally pushed myself. I convince myself that because it was in the past, it was

always more painful than it is now. No matter what I'm encountering, it can't be as painful as that one set of intervals I did in the gym that time. It's comforting to know I've probably been in similar pain and I'll get through it.

It can be hard to focus in an endurance race.

A Formula 1 race may last two hours, but an endurance race can last up to 24 hours. When you're getting in the car three to five times during a race, for up to four hours each time, it's easy for your mind to drift off, especially when physical fatigue sets in. At Le Mans, the morning hours are when everything goes wrong. That's when mental strength matters. You need to bring yourself into the moment to stay focused. Top-level sports people maintain their focus, even after a night of racing.

The physical fatigue is so strange when the G-force holds your body still. You've got to hold yourself up, a seat belt isn't enough. Your body's strapped in, but your neck is free to move, because you need to move it to see. You're vulnerable, and it's tricky to train for. I do compound moves and a little neck training. But I focus more on setting the foundations for when I'm in the car by ensuring my cardio and strength are up to scratch. So far, it's worked great.

My favourite pre-race meal is chicken spinach pasta.

Typically, it's about replenishing your carbs. Sports gels, such as those by SiS, are easy to absorb. I survive on them during the race. You've got to eat to fuel yourself. Though I'll have a big ice cream after a bad race for comfort! **HFM**
Find the full conversation with Philip Hanson on the Healthy For Men podcast series, available on your preferred platform.



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