

Health & WELLBEING

Great advice to keep you happy and healthy.

TOP news

Cancer Treatment

Patients with advanced cancers of the head and neck are being fast-tracked on to a clinical trial for a potentially transformative vaccine under an NHS scheme operating at 15 hospitals across the UK. The jab uses mRNA technology, originally deployed in COVID vaccines, to train the immune system to fight cancers of the mouth, throat or voice box.



BACK PAIN

Our health writer Jackie Mitchell looks at prevention methods.

IT'S Back Care Awareness Week from October 2 to 8. The campaign aims to raise awareness about back pain, causes, prevention and treatment.

Some 2.9 million people in the UK are living with a form of back pain, while most of us will experience the condition at some point.

Michael Fatica is lead osteopath and co-founder of the Back in Shape Program (BIS).

"The impact on back health of our increasingly sedentary lifestyles and use of electronic devices can't be under-estimated," he says.

"Being seated in a hunched over position can cause stress and inflammation of the spine and neck."

Symptoms of back pain can include dull aches, sharp pain or a burning sensation. It can occur after lifting something or a sudden twist.

"Lower back pain in general can cause lower back stiffness, pain in the buttocks and sometimes down the legs. Stiffness in the leg muscles can also be an issue," he says.

According to Michael, simple adjustments to common bad habits will avoid most back pain complaints.

"Not doing these is the main reason back injuries don't get better and return after time. The good news is that it's never too late to adopt them."

The best way to avoid back pain is being a fidget!

"Stretch, walk around, make a drink, anything to change position and get the body moving," Michael explains.

He recommends doing several

exercises at regular intervals during the day to prevent back pain.

For the chest stretch, brace your hands either side of a doorway, just below shoulder height.

Push your chest through the door until you feel a nice stretch through the chest and hold for 30 seconds.

For the towel stretch, lie down and place a small rolled-up towel under the lower back curve. Stretch your arms above your head as if trying to stretch your body lengthways.

You may notice clicks and pops, releasing the tension in your spine. This can be done for 10-20 seconds.

For the chest pop, sit or stand with good posture and engage your mid back muscles to elevate your breastbone up and forwards as your shoulders relax down and back. Repeat 10 times to activate muscles.

If you have back pain, Michael recommends keeping moving and working the muscles within reason.

"As long as you are not causing any pain to worsen. Pain relief such as paracetamol or ibuprofen will help with inflammation in addition to a topical analgesic gel. A massage gun can provide much-needed pain relief."

For back pain lasting for over a week, seek professional help such as an osteopath or physiotherapist.

Michael advises a daily strength-based exercise programme; following a protein rich diet and adopting back friendly practices into your routine. **IT**

• Visit www.backinshapeprogram.com for more information.



ASK AN EXPERT...



Dr Sabrina Brar, former ENT surgeon and medical officer at www.powerbreathe.com, is here to help.

Q. Why do I feel short of breath even when doing light activities?

A. Feeling breathless when climbing stairs or taking a brisk walk isn't just about getting older – it's often a sign that your breathing muscles aren't as strong as they used to be.

Over time, the diaphragm can weaken, making each breath feel like more effort. Add in reduced lung elasticity, lower activity levels, or even mild respiratory conditions, and suddenly, everyday tasks can feel exhausting.

The good news? You can train your lungs to work more efficiently. One proven method is Inspiratory Muscle Training which helps build lung strength and stamina.

A simple handheld device such as POWERbreathe, often called "dumbbells for the diaphragm", provides gentle resistance as you inhale, making breathing muscles work harder and gradually improving your ability to take in oxygen. Studies show breathing into it for a few minutes a day can reduce breathlessness, boost energy, and make activities feel easier.



WE RECOMMEND...

With a small bottle of Wype gel in your handbag, you can instantly transform simple loo roll into an eco-friendly wet wipe when you're out and about. The Wype formula combines aloe vera, chamomile and other moisturising ingredients to create an unscented and hypoallergenic gel that doesn't break down the tissue fibres in your hands. But your moist wipe can be safely flushed away without any environmental risk – unlike most wet wipes.

Wype, £11.99 from www.wypeuk.com.



Foods To Help You Sleep

Some foods contain compounds that help in the production of sleep hormones. Nutritionist Brenda Madole of myorthrive.com suggests some evening snacks:

- 1 GRAPES:** support melatonin production to help regulate your circadian rhythm.
- 2 KIWI FRUIT:** boosts serotonin levels which can improve sleep onset and duration.
- 3 CHERRIES:** high in melatonin and tryptophan which aids serotonin production.
- 4 BANANAS:** source of magnesium which relaxes muscles, and vitamin B6 which helps convert tryptophan into serotonin.
- 5 ALMONDS:** source of magnesium to support relaxation.
- 6 WARM MILK:** source of tryptophan, and calcium which supports melatonin synthesis.
- 7 CHAMOMILE TEA:** contains an antioxidant which promotes relaxation and reduces anxiety.

Aubergines

These delicious dark purple vegetables are an excellent source of antioxidants known to be especially effective in preventing ageing and maintaining skin health, according to new studies. One compound in the purple skin, called trigonelline, may also protect the brain against damage and cognitive impairment. Beyond that, aubergines are a great source of fibre to support digestion and eating them will help boost levels of B vitamins, potassium, copper, magnesium and manganese which are important for bodily functions.



Moan About Your Back Pain!

If you're quietly putting up with chronic back pain, it might be time to start moaning about your discomfort more! A new study from Australia has found that conventional forms of care provide "small to moderate" benefit, but talking therapies (where you get to grumble if you want to) reduced lower back pain and disability – improving activity levels and pain intensity for up to three years after treatment.

