

YOUR VERY GOOD health

You can't look after others unless you look after yourself. So welcome to our new health and wellbeing pages with news and views, advice and tried and tested health products



Downward dog posture – for instant calm

You see toddlers doing it all the time – but the downward dog yoga posture is surprisingly effective at calming the brain.

- Start from a 'table' posture with your hands and knees on the floor. Your hands should be directly under your shoulders, and your knees directly under your hips.
- From this posture, lift your bottom, and straighten your legs. Press your weight down into your hands, and try to get your heels flat on the floor, stretching your back and the backs of your legs.
- Hold for five breaths and feel your stress float away.



Q. Do cholesterol-lowering spreads really work?

A. YES. Spreads fortified with plant sterols (eg Flora pro.activ and Benecol) are proven to lower LDL (thought of as 'bad') cholesterol. However, obesity researcher Zoe Harcombe says: 'Plant sterols are essentially plant cholesterol. They lower levels of our naturally occurring human cholesterol by competing with it for space in the body. But some studies have linked them to an increased – rather than a reduced – risk of heart disease. The body needs the cholesterol it naturally makes, because it plays a vital role in everything from keeping our cells healthy to manufacturing hormones and making vitamin D.'



On the spot diagnosis

What are your eyes trying to tell you about your health?

Losing the outer third of your eyebrows
Often the first sign of an underactive thyroid gland.

Fatty spots on your eyelids
These 'xanthelasma' could be a sign that your cholesterol is on the high side.

Whites of your eyes looking a bit yellow
A sign of jaundice and a possible liver condition.

If you think you have any of these tell-tale signs, see your GP

3 OF THE BEST FOR LOWER BLOOD PRESSURE

BEE TIT ORGANIC BEETROOT JUICE

(£2.99 for 1 litre, from health stores and supermarkets)
Drinking one glass (250ml) a day can lower high blood pressure by 10 points, by opening the blood vessels to aid blood flow.



HAMBLEDEN HERBS ORGANIC HIBISCUS TEA

(£1.99 for 20 teabags, from health stores)
A study showed that sipping three cups a day for six weeks lowered systolic (top number) blood pressure by 7 points.



A VOGEL CRATAEGUS (HAWTHORN) DROPS

(£9.15 for 50ml, from health stores)
10-15 drops in water taken three times a day has been shown to lower diastolic (lower number) pressure by 3.6 points.



Check your blood pressure during Know Your Numbers Week, 16-22 September. Find your nearest mobile unit at www.bloodpressureuk.org

WARNING

MEDICINE SABOTEURS



DAIRY

Avoid it for one hour before and after taking certain antibiotics – the calcium in milk and cheese binds with the drugs doxycycline, minocycline, and ciprofloxacin, making them less effective.



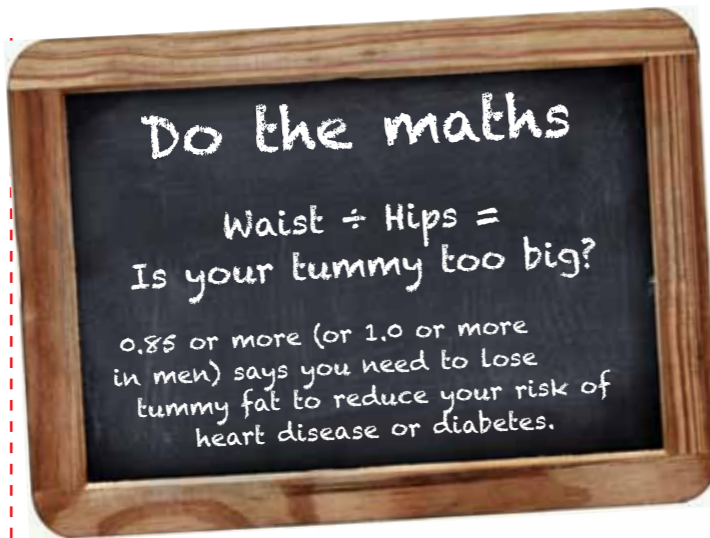
GRAPEFRUIT

Not your best breakfast fruit or juice if you're taking statins for high cholesterol – it blocks the liver enzymes that break down these drugs, causing high levels of medication in your bloodstream.



CRANBERRY JUICE

Choose another drink if you're taking the blood-thinning drug warfarin – cranberry has been known to enhance the drug's effects, putting you at increased risk of bleeding.



Natural healing

Soothe a mild burn with fresh onion juice. Just cut the onion in half and place it on the sore spot until the pain subsides. The quercetin in onions is a natural anti-inflammatory.



First Aid: test your know-how

Here are the top 3 myths, according to British Red Cross

NOSE BLEED

THE MYTH

The best way to treat a nose bleed is to tilt the person's head back and pinch the hard bit of the nose.

No. By doing this blood will run down the back of the throat and could affect breathing. The correct thing to do is to pinch the soft bit of the nose and tilt the head forward. This helps the blood to clot and will stop bleeding.

HYPOTHERMIA

THE MYTH

Give a person with hypothermia a glass of whisky or brandy to warm them up.

No. Alcohol has the opposite effect, increasing the size of the blood vessels underneath the skin, making the body even cooler – which is exactly the opposite of what you are trying to achieve. You should give the person warm drinks and chocolate.

RESUSCITATION

THE MYTH

The kiss of life (resuscitation) can restart a person's heart and bring them back to life.

Not correct. The kiss of life on its own is unlikely to be of much benefit to a collapsed non-breathing person. You should call 999 and start chest compressions to keep the brain supplied with blood and buy the person time.

FIND OUT MORE AT WWW.REDCROSS.ORG.UK



Juicy cute-cure

Watermelon juice may reverse atherosclerosis, or 'hardening' of the arteries from deposits of fatty plaques in the arterial walls, experts say. In a lab test, mice given watermelon juice instead of water also lost weight in eight weeks.

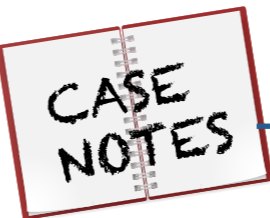


WE RECOMMEND

LIQUORICE & MELISSA LIP GEL

£7.95 for 15ml, from www.skinshop.co.uk

Our tester says: 'I get a lot of cold sores and have tried most remedies. Usually, despite my efforts, it will take a week for the sore to go. But I applied this new gel to my lip an hour after a tingle had turned into a huge blister – and the next morning there was no sign of it. The gel has been endorsed by the Herpes Viruses Association – and I can see why!'



'My size shame nearly cost me my life'

Laila Saif hadn't had a smear test for years. With four kids aged five to 15, she convinced herself she was too busy. But there was another reason...



'When my cousin mentioned she'd just had a smear test I said I hadn't had one for ages as I was embarrassed about my weight. I was 20 stone. She called me selfish and asked me what my kids would do

if anything happened to me.

This shamed me into booking an appointment. The nurse at my GP's said my last smear had been eight years before – and the results had been abnormal. I was shocked. The letters I'd had said my smear was overdue, nothing about abnormalities. I went home worried sick. I kept thinking of my lovely nan who had cervical cancer twice, first in her 40s, then in her 60s.

I tried to think if I'd had any symptoms. I remembered I had noticed tiny spots of blood in my knickers sometimes.

When my test came back as abnormal again, I was sent for a colposcopy, an internal examination where they can see pictures of your cervix on a computer screen. My worst fears were confirmed. I had cervical cancer, stage 4. The doctors couldn't say how long I'd had the cancer, but stage 4's as bad as it gets. I needed an

immediate hysterectomy. I was only 35.

During the operation, they removed lymph nodes from my groin and stomach and everything was clear. I wouldn't need chemo or radiotherapy. I was very lucky.

But the operation had affected me psychologically. I didn't feel like a real woman and I pushed my partner, Alec, away. I became snappy and obsessed with hygiene. Eventually, I was referred to a Macmillan nurse for counselling. She explained my obsession: I could control my cleaning, whereas I couldn't control the cancer. We worked through my fears, over six sessions. It really helped.

I take care of myself now – I've lost over three stone and I never miss my check-ups. My experience was tough, but I was lucky. I say never put off having a smear test for any reason. It could cost you your life.'

RECOGNISING CERVICAL CANCER

Each day in the UK, eight new cases of cervical cancer are diagnosed and there are three deaths from the disease. But cervical screening is estimated to save the lives of 500,000 UK women a year – so make sure you have a smear test every three years up to the age of 50 and every five years after that. See your GP if you experience any of the following:

- Abnormal bleeding between periods or after intercourse.
- Bleeding after the menopause if you're not on HRT.
- Unusual or unpleasant vaginal discharge.
- Pain or discomfort during sex.
- Lower back pain.

BRANSHOLME BONMARCHÉ, YOU ARE CHAMPS!

CONGRATULATIONS to the staff and customers of Bonmarché in Bransholme, Hull, who have just received a special award from Macmillan Cancer Support for raising the most money of all our stores. They collected a staggering £2,700.13p for this great charity.

'We are overwhelmed by the award,' says Bransholme's manager, Charlie Thompson.

'We love raising money for Macmillan – it is such a good cause. Every one of us knows someone whose lives have been affected

by some form of cancer.'

Sharon Cottam from Macmillan says: 'We are very proud to give Bonmarché at Bransholme our special award.'



All the money raised goes towards providing grants to people who need financial help. We are so grateful to everybody at Bonmarché who has helped us provide this much-needed service.'

WE ARE
MACMILLAN.
CANCER SUPPORT

You are not alone

Macmillan Cancer Support offers practical, medical, emotional and financial help. It's also a force for change, listening to people affected by cancer and working to improve care.

If you have a question about living with cancer, you can call their helpline free on 0808 808 0000 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 8pm) or go to www.macmillan.org.uk



The World's Biggest Coffee Morning

Bonmarché is a long-standing partner of Macmillan Cancer Support and has raised an amazing £2.5 million for the charity.

The World's Biggest Coffee Morning is Macmillan's biggest event. Go into any Bonmarché on 27 September and you'll find a warm welcome and plenty of coffee and cake.

Or organise your own coffee morning. Sign up at www.coffee.macmillan.org.uk and you will get a free kit with lots of useful tips.





Sunny side up

Lap up the last of the summer's rays. 'Sunshine is your best source of vitamin D, which protects against everything from allergies and joint problems to heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, auto-immune diseases such as multiple sclerosis, and also many cancers including breast cancer,' says women's health guru Marilyn Glenville (www.marilynglenville.com). 'It really is a wonder vitamin, but most of us are not getting enough of it. Try to bare your face and arms for 30 minutes a day before applying sun cream, and top up by eating eggs and oily fish.'

5 MINUTES TWICE A DAY...

That equals how long we should all be spending on brushing and flossing our teeth, says Professor Robin Seymour from the Simplyhealth Advisory Research Panel. 'The average is 30 seconds,' he says, 'but that just isn't good enough to remove plaque.'



Genes for Jeans Day

Wear your jeans to work on Friday, 20 September and raise funds for children born with genetic disorders. Go to www.jeansforgenesday.org



WHO KNEW...?

That eating strawberries helps protect against discoloured teeth. 'Their magic ingredient is malic acid, a natural tooth whitener,' says Dr Mervyn Druian of the London Centre for Cosmetic Dentistry.

DIY pain relief

Research has shown that long-term use of high-strength prescription painkillers (eg 2500mg ibuprofen or 150mg diclofenac for rheumatoid arthritis) can slightly increase heart attack risks. Pain specialists say DIY techniques can help. Go to www.paintoolkit.org for a 12-step plan for beat pain. And see topical remedies (right).

Brain food

Eat multicoloured meals to protect your memory! Recent research in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease* found that levels of the antioxidants vitamin C and beta carotene were significantly lower in people with mild dementia. So start chopping red peppers – they're a great source of both vitamin C and beta carotene.



TRIED & TESTED Topical painkillers

Avoid pain pills and target relief where you need it with the following recommendations from GP Dr Roger Henderson

BEST FOR MUSCLE PAIN

Salonpas Pain Relief Patch, £6.99 for five, or £4.99 for three, from pharmacies.



'A new product that's perfect for strains and sprains, using two active painkillers that are absorbed through the skin to bring relief to the affected area.'

BEST FOR JOINT ACHE

Tiger Balm Red, £4.90 for a 19g jar, from pharmacies and supermarkets.



'Uses natural pain relieving ingredients (eg camphor, menthol, cajuput oil and clove oil) and can be applied easily to joints to relieve pain two or three times a day.'

BEST FOR BACKACHE

Care Ibuprofen 5% Gel, £4.17 (50g) or £7.99 (100g), from pharmacies.

'Quickly absorbed into the skin, going to the root cause of pain. It also works for sprains and rheumatic and muscular pains.'

