



When's the BEST TIME TO...?

Pick the right moment to try these healthy hacks

1 LEARN SOMETHING

Your brain is sharpest at recalling exact details – such as names, places, dates and facts – in the morning. But integrating new information with what you already know is best done in the afternoon, according to researchers from the University of Sussex. The best time to tackle problems and write reports is between 8am and 12pm. Movement-oriented tasks (filing, errands, music practice or drawing) are better done between 12pm and 2pm. And 2pm to 6pm is the prime time for any heavy-duty reading, such as studying history or literature.

2 LOOK AFTER YOUR SKIN

Apply moisturiser at night (ideally straight after a bath or shower when your skin is damp). 'In the evening your skin absorbs the active ingredients used in some moisturisers better,' says Dr Michaela Arens-Corell of the medical-science department at Sebamed. 'This is because your repair and regeneration process is most active when you're asleep.'

DID YOU KNOW?

53% of us opt for evening exercise while 33% get their bodies moving at the crack of dawn, says a survey from DW Fitness Clubs

5 GET ACTIVE

The best time to exercise is whenever you exercise, says naturopath and trainer to the stars, Max Tomlinson. 'That means any time is better than no time at all. But to optimise your workout, do any weight loss exercise first thing in the morning on an empty stomach. Take your pulse and work out at below 140 beats per minute to burn fat (above 140bpm will only burn sugar and make you hungry). Early morning is also the best time for ashtanga yoga (which counts as a cardio workout) as well as weight training – because the repair hormone human growth hormone is at its highest early in the day. I don't recommend cardio exercise in the evening (running fast or doing aerobics) as it stimulates adrenaline and will stop you winding down.'

WORDS: KAREN EVENNETT. PHOTOS: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM

3 SWALLOW YOUR SUPPLEMENTS

Different supplements work better at different times of the day. Nutritionist Rob Hobson says, 'Vitamin D can affect sleep, so take it at breakfast. B vitamins boost your va-va-voom by aiding the conversion of food into energy, so take them first thing to kick-start your day. But probiotics are best taken at night with cold water, and on an empty stomach, as hot drinks and digestive enzymes can destroy the bacteria.'



4 TAKE YOUR MEDICINES

Talk to your GP about the most effective time of day to take your medication. 'Antidepressants are best taken at night so they're in your body by morning and you're less stressed throughout the day,' says Sid Dajani of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society. 'Bedtime is also best for taking statins as your body releases most of its cholesterol overnight. Blood pressure drugs are better taken in the morning – especially diuretics, which, if taken at night, could cause you to wet the bed!'



A dinner made with carbs, such as pasta, could help you sleep

6 EAT CARBS

'Eating carbs during the day can help maintain your energy levels,' says Rob. 'But they also have a role to play at night, helping you get off to sleep. They aid the transportation of tryptophan to the brain where it's used to make melatonin, the sleep/wake cycle hormone. So try some ancient grains (eg, quinoa, amaranth and freekeh) for dinner to maintain steady blood sugar levels.'

7 SNACK ON FRUIT

Eat it mid morning. 'If you've had a good breakfast, a piece of fruit should be enough to satisfy any peckishness and keep you going through to lunch,' says Rob.



DRINK WATER

'Do this all day to keep hydrated,' says Rob. 'But some people use a glass or two before and after a meal as a weight loss aid.'

8 BOOST YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

You're more susceptible to infection first thing in the morning, new research shows. So if you wake up feeling under par, top yourself up with an immune booster such as A Vogel's Echinacea Throat Spray, says nutritionist Ali Cullen. 'Eating vitamin C-rich berries for breakfast will help too.'



Protect your pearly whites by brushing before you eat

9 BRUSH YOUR TEETH

'Always brush before breakfast to clear the overnight build-up of bacteria,' says Dr Uchenna Okoye, clinical director of the London Smiling dental group. 'Brush straight after and the acids from sweet foods will wear away enamel, so to freshen up after a meal, wait at least 30 mins. Brush again before bedtime – it's also the ideal time to floss.'