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**HEALTH & SAFETY  
NEWSLETTER**

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**March 2019**

## Tackle **inflammation** and **live longer**

### **Inflammation helps us heal when we're injured, so why is it linked to disease?**

When it comes to healing, inflammation is key. Yet arthritis, heart disease, asthma, diabetes, bowel disorders, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease and cancer — as well as the visible signs of ageing — are all linked to inflammation in one way or another.

#### **What's going on?**

Inflammation helps your body recover, it's when it becomes chronic that problems arise. This happens when inflammation kicks in to help the body heal on the inside from antagonists like:

- Environmental toxins.
- Stress.
- Unhealthy diet and lifestyle.
- Food allergies or sensitivities.
- Intestinal permeability ('leaky gut').

As long as the antagonist exists, the inflammation continues.

#### **Don't ignore the signs!**

It's when the signs of chronic inflammation are ignored, or masked with medication, that trouble begins.

#### **Eight signs to watch for**

1. Frequent headaches and brain fog.
2. Digestive problems.
3. Joint pain.
4. Rashes.
5. Fatigue.
6. Unexplained weight gain.
7. Gum disease.
8. Low mood.

### **Give health a chance**

Eat well, move more, stress less. That's the recipe for reducing inflammation. There are no surprises — it's the advice we hear over and over and there's no escaping it if we want to have the best possible health outcomes. Start by:

#### **Eating more anti-inflammatory foods:**

Plant foods are especially effective as they contain anti-inflammatory phytonutrients like antioxidants and plenty of fibre. Use olive oil, include omega-3-rich foods like walnuts, linseeds and salmon, and add fermented foods like natural yoghurt.

#### **Avoiding pro-inflammatory foods:**

Excessive sugar; trans fats — formed or added to foods during processing; refined carbohydrates — found in white flour products like pasta, white bread, and biscuits; excessive alcohol; processed meat such as hot dogs and sausages; and highly processed/junk foods. ✕



### **WHAT'S INSIDE**

3 myths about protein	2
Pros and cons of wearable weights	3
Why moving makes your mind healthy	4
How to resolve workplace bullying	6

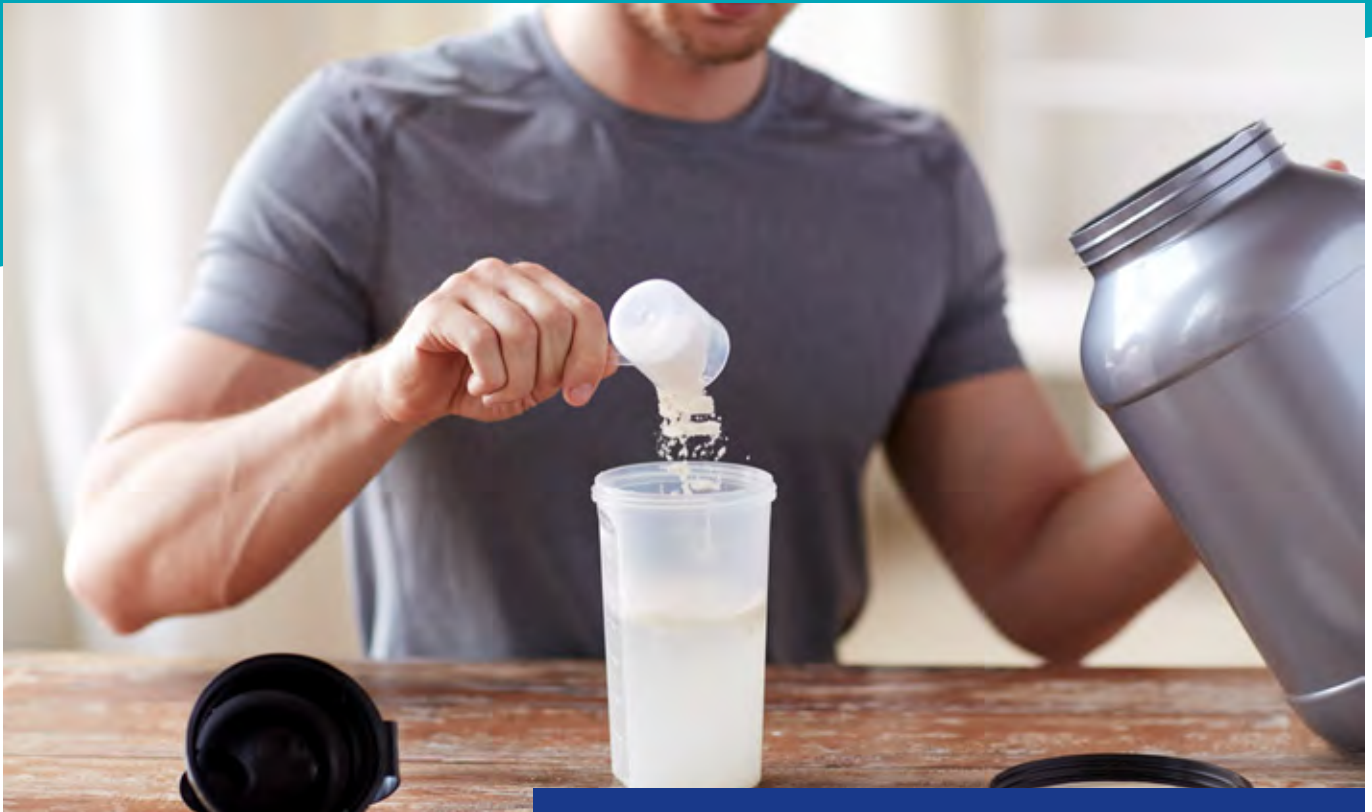


Brain Awareness Week runs from 11 March to 17 March. This global campaign aims to increase public awareness of the progress of brain research and treatment for brain disorders such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, stroke, schizophrenia and depression.

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# 3 common myths about protein



**Protein powders and amino acid supplements are big business, worth over USD 12.4 billion in 2016, and projected to increase by at least 6% a year. Experts now question whether they have any effect and could potentially be harmful.**

## **Myth 1: If you're aiming to build muscle the more protein you eat the better**

We are sold the idea that you need additional protein in your diet to build up muscle, either through meat or supplements. This simply isn't true, says Thomas Sanders, professor of nutrition and dietetics at King's College London.

"There are some quite nice trials which now show that giving people extra protein doesn't actually increase muscle mass," he explains. "What builds up muscle is exercise and load bearing and the body has ways of conserving its existing protein to do that."

## **Myth 2: Protein supplements are a convenient way to meet your protein needs**

Protein is widely distributed in our diet from both animal sources (meat, fish, eggs and dairy) and vegetable sources (legumes, grains, nuts and seeds), says Evangeline Mantzioris, lecturer in nutrition at the University of South Australia. "Most Australians consume about double the

recommended intake of protein per day," she explains. "Almost 99 per cent meet or surpass the required intake." Even athletes with their higher protein requirements tend to consume enough through diet.

When you rely on supplements for protein you will also miss out on all the other nutrients that natural foods contain, such as iron, zinc, calcium and omega-3 fatty acids.

## **Myth 3: There's no harm in taking protein powder**

This really depends on how much extra protein you're taking. Levels up to two to three grams per kilo of body weight per day don't appear to have any health risks. But you should be more careful if you're considering protein intakes beyond this.

Any surplus amino acids (the building blocks of protein) you take in are broken down and excreted, while any protein your body doesn't need is usually stored as fat. This can lead to weight gain over time. One 2016 study found that weight gain was

significantly associated with diets where protein replaced carbohydrates, but not when it replaced fat.

Other potential risks of excessive protein include constipation, dehydration, calcium loss and kidney damage. Several large observational studies have linked high-protein diets with an increased incidence of cancer, heart disease and other diseases. Many experts urge caution, claiming that protein powders and supplements are a relatively new invention and we really don't know the long-term effects. ✕

**"Any protein your body doesn't use is usually stored as fat while any surplus amino acids are broken down and excreted."**



**“Although ankle weights will increase the energy you burn while walking, they come at a cost. They can strain the ankle joints and leg muscles, increasing the risk of injury.”**

# Pros and cons of wearable weights

**Slipping on a pair of ankle and wrist weights is an easy way to add some strength training to your workout. But do they do more harm than good?**

It's recommended we all do some form of resistance exercise at least twice a week. Adding weights to your workout increases the strength, endurance and size of muscles and improves bone density.

## Walking with weights

Strapping on ankle weights while you go for your morning walk might seem a simple way to add some resistance but is this a good idea?

Perhaps not, says Dr Edward Laskowski, physical medicine and rehabilitation specialist with MayoClinic.com.

Although ankle weights will increase the energy you burn while walking, they come at a cost. They can strain the ankle joints and leg muscles, he warns, increasing the risk of injury.

Wearing ankle weights while walking or during an aerobics workout can cause a muscle imbalance by forcing you to use your quadriceps and not your hamstrings, cautions Terry Downey, a physical therapist at Harvard-affiliated Spaulding Rehabilitation Network.

Ankle weights are most helpful for exercises that target the leg and hip muscles, such as leg lifts, says Downey.

The weight places a greater load on the muscle group being targeted so that it has to work harder to move the load against gravity, increasing muscle strength. Ankle weights can also be beneficial for anyone recovering from an injury or surgery.

## When to use wrist weights

You'll see people wearing strap-on wrist weights during a cardio workout or occasionally on a walk. But swinging your arms back and forth while wearing weights can lead to muscle imbalance and the heavier the weights the more burden on your wrists, elbows and shoulders. This increases the likelihood of injuries like sprains, dislocations and ligament tears.

However, wrist weights definitely have a place in your workout. If you can't grip a dumbbell you can use wrist weights for targeted exercises such as bicep curls or shoulder exercises like rows.

Incorrectly using any weights can result in injury. Before you use wrist or ankle weights develop a strength-training plan with a physical therapist or trainer. ✕

## Something always better than nothing

A common barrier to being more active is the all-or-nothing mindset: “Unless I've time for a full workout, why bother to start at all?”

Yet even seemingly insignificant bouts of activity have health benefits. A five-minute exercise interval performed once an hour may improve glucose and insulin levels, found one study. Another found that people who rode 10 minutes on a stationary bike had a sharper cognitive response compared to people who read a magazine for the same length of time.

Some movement is always better than none. Standing is better than sitting, walking around is better than standing, while walking briskly is better than a stroll.

# Move more for a healthy mind



## 3 reasons your brain loves exercise

1. Exercise pumps blood to the brain, which increases your ability to think clearly.
2. It bumps up the size of the hippocampus, the part of the brain responsible for memory.
3. It increases connections between the nerve cells in the brain, improving memory and helping to protect your brain against injury and disease.

**Research shows that people who exercise regularly have better mental health and emotional wellbeing, and lower rates of mental illness. So what are you waiting for?**

It's good for our physical health, helping to keep our hearts in good shape, our weight in check, our blood flowing well, and generally lowering our risk of disease. But being active has a knock-on effect that is often overlooked: it is a powerful mood-booster and stress-buster.

### Work out for your mind

Being physically active lowers the stress hormone cortisol, which in turn helps relieve feelings of anxiety. It also encourages the brain to release endorphins and serotonin, often referred to as 'feelgood chemicals' because of their positive impact on mental health. But exercise will also indirectly benefit your mental health because of its positive effect on other areas.

**Sleep:** Exercising regularly can help you sleep better, and poor sleep quality and mood disorders are closely linked. Sleeping well boosts cognition because your body works to support healthy brain function while you snooze.

**Self-esteem:** People who are active often report feeling a sense of achievement, which

in turn increases self-esteem. When we make and stick to goals, it gives us a sense of control over our lives and an increased ability to cope.

**Social support:** Not only does exercise give you the chance to try new experiences, like dance classes, a walking group or gym, but it is also the perfect opportunity to socialise. Meeting new people and making new friends encourages a sense of community and belonging, and reduces isolation.

**Energy boost:** Being more active increases your energy levels, which can have a profound impact on your mental state.

### It's easier than you think

When you think of exercise, you probably visualise long hours spent sweating it out at the gym in body-hugging activewear, but that's not the case. Australian Government guidelines recommend adults do at least 30 minutes of moderate to intensive physical activity on most or all days of the week. But you can make up the 30 minutes over the day by combining shorter 10 to 15-minute sessions.

### Make it work

You're more likely to stick to your exercise goals if you:

- Choose an activity you like or have enjoyed in the past.
- Don't dive in too fast; build up your activity gradually.
- See your GP before you get started just to make sure you're in good shape.
- Schedule your exercise just like you would a hair appointment or dinner with friends.

### How to be more active every day

There are plenty of simple ways to work your body. Start by making exercise part of your everyday activity: walk or cycle instead of using the car; get off a tram, train or bus a stop earlier and walk the rest of the way; or walk your kids to school when time permits.

**Rediscover your garden** It's a great way to get outdoors and it has stress-reducing powers. When you're feeling overwhelmed or anxious, focusing on digging, planting or weeding directs your attention onto other things and gives you a break from worrying thoughts and mental chatter.

Being out in nature, even in your own backyard, can be a powerful sensory experience. Gardening can have a similar soothing effect to other relaxation techniques such as mindfulness as it naturally brings us into the present moment, reducing stress hormone levels and subsequently improving mood. In winter, gardening can be a powerful way to prevent seasonal depression or the winter blues.

**Pet friendly** It's no secret that owning a pet can bring joy into your life, but new research shows a furry friend can also help your mind and mood. Just patting a pet can ease stress and reduce blood pressure, but if you're a dog owner, taking your four-legged friend for a daily walk is a great motivator to get you out and about.

**Strike a pose** Yoga has been shown to have a positive effect on anxiety and depression, largely due to deep-breathing techniques, which reduce levels of the stress hormone cortisol and slow your heart rate. Your nervous system gets a treat too as doing yoga prompts the brain to release the chemical GABA, which has a calming effect. ✕

**"It doesn't matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop."**

Confucius



### Power of touch

Massage can be a powerful tool and can go a long way to lifting your mood and relieving anxiety. Although not a relaxation therapy in itself, regular massage has been shown to reduce levels of the stress hormone cortisol and release more feelgood endorphins. As a bonus, a regular massage will boost the immune system and improve sleep quality, both of which play a role in mental health. According to a study published in the *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, massage is associated with reduced symptoms of depression.



# How to resolve workplace bullying

## What really is 'bullying' and how can you tell if it's happening to you?

Something a coworker does or says makes you feel uneasy and it happens regularly. But you've turned a blind eye to it because you don't want to look like a whinger. Could you be the victim of workplace bullying?

### Bullying in simple terms

Bullying is any repeated and unreasonable behaviour that is directed towards a particular person. This could include:

- Offensive language or comments.
- Practical jokes or malicious rumours.
- Unfair criticism or complaints.
- Being excluded from workplace activities.
- Withholding information that is needed to get on with the job.
- Being asked to perform tasks that are well below or above your skill level.
- Unreasonable changes to work arrangements, such as rosters and leave.

Any of this sound familiar? Then there's a good chance you are the victim of workplace bullying. If this is the case, deal with it quickly because the longer it goes on, the harder it is to resolve with a positive outcome.

### Your three step plan

**Take care:** Bullying can have serious repercussions for your mental and physical health. It's not uncommon to experience: anxiety, panic attacks or disturbed sleep; muscle tension, headaches, fatigue and

digestive problems; difficulty concentrating; depression, and suicidal thoughts. Be kind to yourself and don't be afraid to ask for support from family and friends or a counsellor.

**Take action:** If you feel comfortable enough, you may choose to speak to the person. Sometimes people don't realise the effect their behaviour is having and it may be enough to point out that you find it distressing. It's important to:

- Raise your concerns informally and in a non-confrontational manner.

- Focus on the unwanted behaviour and how it makes you feel, rather than the person.

- Be open to feedback.

**Take it further:** If the matter is too serious to be resolved by a friendly chat, it needs to be reported. Ask your human resources officer whether a bullying policy and reporting procedure is in place. You can make a report verbally or in writing by informing your supervisor, manager, or health and safety representative. If this is unsuccessful, you may be able to make a complaint to an external body such as the Fair Work Commission. ✕



Ask an expert about ...

**Q** Is it worth getting the flu jab?

**A** The World Health Organization recommends vaccination as the most effective way to prevent infection and severe outcomes caused by influenza viruses. Getting a flu shot also means you help to protect other people, including those who are too sick or too young to be vaccinated, as well as vulnerable groups such as babies, people over 65 years and pregnant women.

Bastian Seidel, President of Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP), says it's important for people to get vaccinated whether they are healthy or at high risk. "Every year thousands of people are dying or being admitted to hospital for complications of the flu. That

is entirely avoidable if people have their flu vaccination," he says.

Although the flu vaccine doesn't provide complete protection, in healthy adults it's about 60 to 70 per cent effective. The best time to get the jab? It's an important question because the effectiveness of the flu vaccine may begin to decrease after about three to four months. It's hard to predict exactly when the best time is because the peak period of flu activity varies from year to year but your best bet, according to health experts, is anytime from the second month of autumn. In the southern hemisphere, this is April-May, while in the northern hemisphere, this is in October-November.

## App of the month

### Yoga in your pocket

Practise yoga regularly and you'll develop strength and flexibility while lowering stress and calming your mind. If you can't commit to a regular class

access a yoga session from your mobile with an app like Pocket Yoga. It has a database containing illustrations, descriptions and benefits of more than 200 poses and is suitable for yogis of all ages and skill levels. All poses and practices are designed by experienced yoga instructors. Available from the App Store and Google Play.

# News Bites

## Don't diss dizziness

If you regularly feel dizzy when bending over make sure you get checked out by your GP. It's likely to be nothing serious but dizziness can be caused by something that needs more investigation.

Dehydration is a common reason for feeling dizzy, as the brain relies on being hydrated to function at its best. Make sure you have water available when the weather is hot and during intense exercise.

Other reasons for dizziness include poor circulation, low blood sugar, low blood pressure, anaemia, an underactive thyroid gland and problems with your inner ear. ✕

## Chained to the desk

Too many of us are skipping our lunch break, says a survey from recruitment firm Hays. It found that while one in five employees takes an allocated lunch break, a similar number take one quarter or less, while over half reported eating lunch at their desk rather than leaving the office.

This is despite the fact that all employees agree that a break away from work at lunch time improves productivity.

"The tendency can be for employees to decide to work through lunch," says Jacky Carter, director at Hays, "yet even taking a short break will help improve productivity, effectiveness and efficiency."



## Tip: Drink coffee to have a better nap

It sounds counterintuitive but research has confirmed it: Drink a cup of coffee immediately before taking a 20-minute nap and by the time you wake up the caffeine will kick in and clear your brain of a molecule called adenosine, maximising alertness. ✕

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## How short is too short?

High-intensity interval training (HIIT) offers shorter workouts with health benefits to match those of much longer sessions. But just how short can the intervals get?

Researchers at the University of Copenhagen think they have the answer. They compared the benefits of two HIIT sessions: cycling hard for five seconds, followed by a rest of 30 seconds, repeated 18 times and cycling hard for 20 seconds, followed by two minutes of recovery, repeated six times.

While the amount of energy expended was about the same, the 20-second intervals stimulated greater creation of new mitochondria, which create energy within cells and can improve health and fitness.

# 1

## THING YOU CAN DO TODAY



### Check in on a mate

A simple conversation can make all the difference. Dropping by or phoning to check on a mate you suspect is struggling with a mental illness can help that person feel less alone and more supported.

On average, one in eight men will have depression and one in five will experience anxiety at some stage of their lives. Yet only one in four men will access the treatment that can help them.

Showing your mate that you're there for them isn't an easy conversation to have. Many men are conditioned to keep their feelings to themselves and just 'get on with it'. The mental health support service Beyondblue suggests a number of ways you might have a conversation:

- "You haven't seemed yourself lately – is everything OK?"
- Explain your concern: "I'm a little worried about you. Would you like to talk with me about what's happened?"
- If they don't want to talk, leave the door open: "OK, but you know you can talk to me if you ever need to."

#### The chat lap

Face-to-face conversations can be a little confronting and men often prefer chatting in the car, something Beyondblue calls a 'chat lap'.

"Blokes often prefer to talk side-by-side, rather than face-to-face," says Beyondblue, "which makes a car trip the perfect time for an open and honest conversation, without it being weird." ✕

## EAT SMARTER

### Snack on pumpkin seeds

All seeds and nuts are superstars when it comes to nutrition, but pumpkin seeds really stand out. Also known as pepitas, these crunchy green seeds contain the essential minerals magnesium, zinc and iron, as well as vitamin E, protein, fibre, omega-3 fatty acids and folate.

**Magnesium.** You need magnesium for the proper function of nerve and brain cells, to help control blood pressure and blood sugar levels and to strengthen bones. Just a quarter cup of pumpkin seeds contains nearly half your recommended daily amount of magnesium.

**Zinc.** Have you noticed that many cold remedies contain zinc? That's because it's key to your immune function, protecting you from infections. For men, zinc is also necessary for the production of healthy sperm. Zinc-rich foods help the body produce testosterone, the chief male sex hormone. Seafood and meat are the best sources, but a quarter cup of pumpkin seeds provides men with 24% of their daily zinc requirement.

**Iron.** Feeling fatigued, weak, dizzy and with a foggy mind? These may all indicate a possible iron deficiency, with women more often affected than men. Red meat is the richest source of iron, but women will get 16% of their daily needs in a quarter cup of pumpkin seeds. ✕



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