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**HEALTH & SAFETY
NEWSLETTER**

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November 2019

In the mood for **November**

Thousands of men die every year from different causes but what is most shocking is that many are dying unnecessarily. What's going on with our men?

Compared to women, men visit the doctor less frequently, have shorter appointments, and only attend when their illness is in its later stages. Men who are reluctant to see their doctor are missing out on regular health check-ups including those for skin cancer, cardiovascular disease, bowel cancer, diabetes and bone density.

Prevention is key

Regular check-ups can save lives because they give doctors a chance to pick up the early warning signs of illness and recommend lifestyle changes, screening or medication that may prevent an illness from developing or getting worse.

Healthy checklist

HEART: Neither high cholesterol nor high blood pressure typically have any warning signs, which makes it critical to have regular checks to reduce your risk of developing heart attack and stroke.

CANCER: Always make an appointment to see your doctor if you notice any unusual changes.

- Prostate cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed in men and the most common cause of cancer death in men but it can usually be cured if treated in its early stages.

- Bowel cancer is the second most common cancer in both men and women. The risk increases with age but early detection greatly improves the chances of successful treatment.

MENTAL HEALTH: Men are more reluctant than women to talk to or see someone about a mental health problem, yet we know men are more likely to die from suicide. Research shows that support programs can make a huge difference to men. If you've been feeling more angry and irritable than usual, or lost interest in activities you usually enjoy, speak to your GP, or contact a mental health service such as BeyondBlue in your local area. ✕



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November runs from all November.

Every November, the November Foundation is responsible for the sprouting of moustaches on thousands of men's faces around the world. The aim of this facial furniture growth is to raise vital funds and awareness for men's health, specifically prostate cancer, testicular cancer and male mental health.

3 'health' foods that aren't

They're sold to us as healthier choices, and often with a hefty price tag. But are these foods really as healthy as they appear?

Pink Himalayan rock salt

It's said to contain more minerals than table salt, and can balance the body's pH levels, improve sleep and regulate blood sugar. The truth? There's no evidence to support any of these claims, but you'll pay up to 30 times more for Himalayan rock salt compared to regular table salt.

The extra minerals that give Himalayan rock salt its pink hue are so negligible they're unlikely to offer any benefits. It's also as detrimental to health as regular salt, says Clare Farrand, a public health nutritionist at The George Institute for Global Health. That's because any salt, regardless of where it comes from or how expensive it is, is 98 per cent sodium chloride, says Farrand. It's the sodium component in salt that can cause high blood pressure, which increases the risk of stroke, heart attack and kidney disease.

Coconut water

Coconut water is the liquid from an immature (green) coconut and has been described as 'Mother Nature's Sports Drink', with the promise that it will hydrate your body better than water and sports drinks.

It's true that you do lose electrolytes (sodium and potassium) when you sweat,

and coconut water does contain some electrolytes. But for the average light-to-moderate exerciser, drinking enough water and eating well the rest of the day will give you all the fluid and electrolytes you need, says dietitian Marjorie Nolan Cohn, spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

Fruit juice

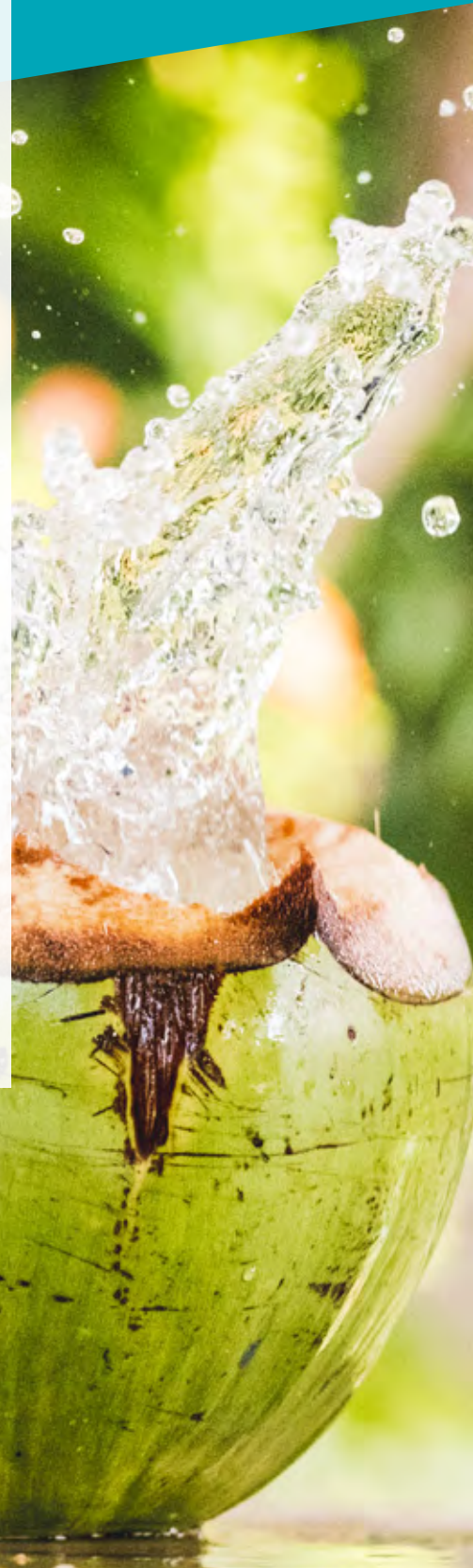
Juice contains most of the vitamins, minerals and plant chemicals (phytonutrients) found in the whole fruit. All good so far. What you do miss out on is fibre, as juices have most of the fibre from the fruit removed. Without the fibre, the sugar in fruit juice is absorbed more quickly, causing a spike in blood sugar that causes your pancreas to release insulin to bring it back down. Over time, if this is repeated too often, it can increase your risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

Juices containing vegetables have less sugar than those made of fruit, but they still lack valuable fibre. Diets high in fibre are important to health and help maintain a diversity of gut bacteria, which is linked to better physical and mental health.

Instead of juicing, you might consider blending all the edible parts of the fruit to produce a drink that contains more healthy fibre. ✕

Tip:

When choosing salt, select one that's 'iodised'. This means that it's had iodine added, a trace element that's often lacking in our diets but is essential to thyroid function and for children's brain development. ✕





The benefits of functional fitness

Gym classes may tempt you with weight loss and flat abs, but what we really need is the strength and flexibility to do our daily activities. That's where functional fitness comes in.

Functional fitness has become the new buzzword in gyms. Functional exercises are designed to train your muscles to make everyday activities easier and safer, whether that's manual tasks at work, carrying groceries, or playing football with your kids.

Traditional machine-based weight training was developed to allow bodybuilders to isolate single muscle groups. Functional fitness training is a little different. The exercises train your muscles to work together, focusing on movement patterns and the combination of movements. This prepares you for daily tasks by simulating common movements you might do at home, work or in sports – reaching, lifting, climbing stairs, bending and twisting.

Many gyms already offer functional fitness as part of their classes, perhaps using tools such as fitness balls, kettle bells, and weights. Many movements that are part of a Pilates or yoga class can also be considered functional.

Why should you try it?

Whatever your age or level of fitness, you'll benefit from functional training.

Functional fitness:

- uses the many joints and muscles of your body, as you do in everyday life. This means that daily activities can be completed with more ease.
- can be low impact so is a good option if you are a beginner. You can practise movements and techniques using your body weight only, rather than heavy weights. If you are new to exercise, make sure you are properly supervised.
- improves balance and posture. Poor posture, particularly when working at a computer, can cause shoulder and neck pain. By using and strengthening multiple muscles during functional training exercises, you will be more able to hold a correct posture to help avoid pain. ✕

Try these at home

You don't have to go to a gym to do functional fitness exercises. Here are three you can try at home:

Squats, done either freestanding or against a wall, train the muscles you use when you rise up and down from your chair, or pick up objects off the floor. Always have your feet slightly wider than your hips, toes pointed slightly outward, and as you squat down focus on keeping your knees in line with your feet.

Stationary lunge mimics the movement of getting up off the ground. It strengthens your quadriceps, improves mobility in your knee joints, and helps with balance. When you do a lunge, balance on the toes of your back foot, bend your back knee towards the floor and make sure your front knee is in line with your ankle.

Marching with bicep curls keeps your legs conditioned and strengthens your arms at the same time. Try marching on the spot and doing bicep curls at the same time, holding a dumbbell in each hand. As you lift your right leg, lift your left arm and vice versa.

The stress spectrum



We don't feel good when we're stressed but what's it really doing to our physical health when we're under the pump day after day?

Most of us know that certain lifestyle habits like smoking or not exercising can jeopardise our health, but what we also need to pay attention to is stress, which if switched on for too long can wreak havoc on our physical and mental health. Learning how chronic stress affects our mind and body will highlight the importance of finding ways to reduce our stress load.

Stress is good ... and bad

US neuroendocrinologist Robert Sapolsky, who has studied stress for over three decades, explains it best: "For a normal mammal, stress is about three minutes of terror." In life-threatening situations, stress can save our lives by helping us physically escape danger, thanks to the fight-or-flight response, but in the modern world where stress is triggered more frequently, it can eventually make us sick.

Hormones remaining high

The stress hormones cortisol and adrenalin speed up your heartbeat and send blood rushing to the areas that need it most in an emergency, such as your muscles, heart and other important organs. But when these hormones remain high due to persistent low-level stress, they affect most areas of the body:

Your digestion

Butterflies in your stomach? This is caused by nerve endings and immune cells in the digestive tract when they're affected by stress hormones. So it's no surprise that stress affects your digestive system in other ways, too, for instance, acid reflux as well as exacerbating symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome and inflammatory bowel disease.

Your heart

Under stress, your heart pumps faster. The stress hormones cause your blood vessels to constrict and divert oxygen away from the extremities and towards your muscles to help you move fast. This raises your blood pressure. When your blood pressure rises so does your risk of stroke and heart attack.

Your sleep

If you're on edge, you're probably not sleeping well. But stress affects sleep in other ways, in particular, if you're overproducing stress hormones. Normally cortisol rises in the morning to wake you up and declines through the day, but when you're constantly under stress this pattern can change, meaning you'll wake up tired but be buzzing at bedtime.

Your diabetes risk

Although little is known about how stress contributes to diabetes risk, one theory is that cortisol alters the body's sensitivity to insulin,

making stress a risk factor for diabetes. One Swedish study found a strong link between stress and diabetes risk. Other studies have also looked at stress as a pathway to developing diabetes, and found evidence that chronic stress can initiate changes in the immune system that may result, or increase the likelihood, of developing type 2 diabetes.

Your cancer risk

Health experts can't agree whether or not stress causes cancer and most of the large scale studies can't find evidence of a direct link. A large 2016 study of over 100,000 women in the UK, for instance, showed no consistent evidence for stress causing breast cancer, although a 2017 study of a similar scale did report a link between workplace stress and prostate cancer. There is a stronger link between stress and the progression of cancer. Stressful situations, however, can lead us to develop unhealthy habits, such as smoking, overeating and heavy drinking, habits which do increase the risk of cancer.

Your brain

As anyone who has frozen in the middle of a speech knows, stress reduces your ability to recall information. But what's less known is that over time chronic stress can lead to memory impairment. In fact, it can shrink your hippocampus – the part of the brain that regulates emotion. ✕

Good health tip:

Develop gratitude

Count your blessings. Try keeping a gratitude journal and write down three positive things that have happened each day. This can lead to increased wellbeing.

Reducing your stress levels

Stress is part of everyday life – and we're not talking major traumatic events – it's those day-to-day micro stressors that add up and take their toll. It's when our normal stress response becomes more dangerous than the stressor itself that we can end up in dire straits. Finding a way to switch off stress is important for disease prevention. Here is how to work on reducing your everyday stress.

GET INTO TIME OUT: The most effective stress-buster is me time. For at least 15 minutes every day, and more if possible, stop everything, and be selfish. Schedule relaxation into your day. Read a book, listen to music, have a bath, go for a walk, whatever you find comforting and soothing but make it digital-free time.

GET A MOVE ON: Exercise can help stop the build-up of stress. If you take a brisk walk shortly after feeling stressed, this will deepen your breathing, and help to relieve muscle tension. Other activities such as yoga and tai chi combine fluid movements with deep breathing and mental focus, which has a calming effect on your nervous system.

GET FRIENDLY: Levels of the stress hormone cortisol tend to be higher in lonely people, and the damaging effects of not feeling connected can be compared to smoking. The solution? Regularly spend time in the company of friends and family (even if it's a chat on the phone), or join a club.

When you need a helping hand

There are times when we really need help to get through stressful times. St Vincent's Hospital Sydney, and UNSW Faculty of Medicine have developed a free online course for people experiencing stress due to life's demands. Find it at thiswayup.org.au.



Working outdoors in hot weather

It's wise to exercise caution when working in hot weather conditions.

When the temperature soars it can spell disaster for workers. "Heat is a hazard in many workplaces, whether work is performed indoors or outdoors," says Safe Work Australia CEO Michelle Baxter. "Eliminating the hazard is the first priority for worker safety. Sometimes this may mean cancelling or rescheduling work for when there are cooler conditions."

Who's most at risk?

Anyone can be at risk of heat-related illness under certain conditions, but at greater risk are workers:

- exposed to direct sunlight, especially during the hottest part of the day.
- exposed to reflected heat from construction materials, polished aluminium and glass.
- carrying out strenuous tasks or work for sustained long periods.
- who are exposed to additional heat from machinery.
- in hotter parts of the country.

Overheating at work

Heat-related problems at work can be caused by:

- inadequate rest periods out of the heat and insufficient fluid consumption.
- weather conditions such as low air movement, high humidity, and high temperature.

- factors that may cause dehydration such as vomiting and diarrhoea.
- dehydration caused by alcohol and excess caffeine consumption.
- medical conditions such as heart problems, diabetes and hypertension.
- medication that may affect the body's temperature regulation.
- increasing age, poor general physical fitness and being overweight.

Working in the sun

If you work outside, you're at risk of exposure to ultraviolet radiation from the sun, even when it's cloudy or cool. Remember that UV radiation is even higher in summer than in winter, although in certain places, the UV in winter can still be damaging. Sun exposure can cause permanent and irreversible damage to the skin and increase your risk of skin cancer.

What you can do

- work indoors, where possible.
- avoid working outside in the hottest parts of the day.
- stick to shade and sheltered areas.
- use sun protective clothing, hat, sunglasses and sunscreen, particularly when the UV index is 3 or above. ☒



Be well informed

The average UV levels worldwide vary by country and season. You can Google the UV index in your local area or try sunburnmap.com

Or you can try an app like Accuweather www.accuweather.com or look in the Apple Store or on Play.



Ask an expert about ...

Q Is the option to "Buy Now, Pay Later" a good idea?

A The buy-now-pay-later phenomenon is on the rise. The services are being used in millions of transactions each month and allow a shopper to buy and own something immediately and pay the amount back in instalments without interest being charged. These are usually small items like clothing and beauty products.

Money magazine managing editor Darren Snyder says payment plans, laybys/layaways and the newer buy-now-pay-later offerings are sound options, provided you manage your spending wisely. Options like Afterpay and Zip Pay, for example, should be treated in the same way you would use other layby

services. Spend within your means and don't buy so many items that you can't keep track of what's due to be paid and when, Snyder says. And just because a buy-now-pay-later service might use an algorithm in an attempt to try and stop users over-spending or placing too many orders, it doesn't mean you can be careless with your transactions.

When using buy-now-pay-later services, it's also a good idea to purchase items with your debit card, not your credit card. Multiple transactions on the credit card will soon add up, especially when you might pay four instalments per item purchased, and this can be a negative for your credit history. ☒

App of the month

Moodfit

Similar to the way you might decide to get into physical shape, Moodfit aims to help you get into mental shape. This

app provides you with a way to chart your mood, revealing the trends that shape your mood that you might not be aware of. You can set reminders to provide yourself with positive messages, set up mindfulness practice, create a gratitude journal and more. It's customisable as well, at no extra cost.

Available free from Google Play and the App Store.

Email inbox solution

Facing a crowded inbox every day is daunting, and ploughing your way through is likely to give you a giant headache.

One solution many of us try is creating folders for our emails. But rather than creating folders by subject, which means you have to remember where you've stored them, Zach Halon from Fast Company magazine recommends creating them by deadline. Here's how.

Create five folders:

1. **Inbox** – treat this as a holding pen before filing emails in another folder.
2. **Today**: those that require a response today.
3. **This week**: needs a response before the end of the week.
4. **This month/quarter**: everything that needs a longer-term response.
5. **FYI**: for all the information items you receive. Save them if you'll need to reference that email again.

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News Bites



Full-fat milk back on menu

Australia's Heart Foundation has relaxed its rules around restricting full-fat dairy foods for healthy Australians but says we should rethink how much red meat we're eating. According to Heart Foundation Chief Medical Advisor, cardiologist Professor Garry Jennings, unflavoured full-fat milk, cheese and yoghurt have been found to have a neutral effect on cardiovascular disease – that is, they don't increase or decrease your risk. Butter, cream, ice-cream and dairy-based desserts don't get off so lightly, as these contain much higher fat and sugar levels and less protein. Reduced-fat dairy is still recommended for anyone needing to lose weight, or with type 2 diabetes or heart disease.

Professor Jennings also cautions us to restrict lean red meat to one to three meals a week, the equivalent of about 350 grams per week. That's because evidence indicates it increases the risk for heart disease and stroke. Instead, we are urged to find protein from plant sources – beans, lentils and tofu – as well as from seafood, eggs and lean poultry. ✕

Turn down the heat on your shower

Save piping hot water for your tea, recommend dermatologists, not for your shower. Water that's overly hot removes too much of your natural protective oils (which is why it works better for cleaning greasy pans) and can also cause your skin to itch and even develop a rash. Keep water temperature tepid – that is, skin temperature or just a little warmer – particularly if you have fragile skin that's prone to dryness. Make sure you moisturise within three minutes of leaving the shower, as that way you'll trap some of the residue water droplets on your skin.

1

THING YOU CAN DO TODAY



Stand on one leg while you brush your teeth

You need good balance to do many basic daily activities – walking, getting out of bed or a chair, or bending over to tie your shoes. Good balance is also essential in many sports ranging from yoga to skiing.

We tend to ignore balance as a component of fitness, focusing instead on strength and endurance. But our coordination, joint stability, reaction time and long-term health will all benefit if we regularly do some sort of balance training. It also improves your sense of body awareness, the sense of how your limbs are oriented in space, which is known as proprioception. Proprioception is extremely important in preventing injury – something we all want to avoid at any age – as well as recovering from injury.

One exercise that will improve your balance is standing on one foot. To make it more challenging, stand on one foot while you brush your teeth, one minute on one leg, another minute on the other leg.

If that's too difficult you can hold on to a wall or the basin to steady yourself, gradually decreasing the amount of support from one hand to one finger, until you don't need to hold on at all.

Other ways to improve your balance?

- Practise walking heel to toe, just like a tightrope walker.
- Try sitting down and getting up from a chair without using your hands.
- Stand on a wobble board or a Bosu, if you have one available. ✕

EAT SMARTER

Watercress

Kale is today's superstar green. While it is exceptionally healthy, it may surprise you to learn that it doesn't sit at the top of the vegetable league table. In 2014 the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ranked 'powerhouse' fruits and vegetables – those most strongly associated with reduced chronic disease risk – by their nutrient density. Watercress came out on top while kale came in at number 15.

Then in 2018 came a paper published in the *World Journal of Psychiatry*, listing the top antidepressant foods. These were foods that contained nutrients demonstrated to play a role in the prevention and treatment of depressive disorders. The top animal food was oysters. The top plant food? Watercress.

What is it about watercress that makes it so special? A member of the cruciferous family of vegetables (along with kale, broccoli, cabbage and Brussels sprouts), watercress is high in vitamins A, C, E and K, the B vitamin folate, and the minerals calcium, iron, magnesium and potassium. It's also high in isothiocyanates, compounds that are believed to have anti-cancer effects, and is a source of a number of other beneficial phytochemicals.

You can use watercress as you would any other leafy green, but it's also great when used as a salad vegetable. Combine with walnuts, mint and feta, and top with a honey and mustard dressing. ✕



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