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**HEALTH & SAFETY  
NEWSLETTER**

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**June 2021**

## How to handle a chatty co-worker

**Chatting to colleagues at work is one of the things we've missed most while working from home during COVID-19. But how do you respond when a workmate talks too much?**

Those small conversations you have with your workmates can be powerful interactions. Casual talk about your life, what you're doing at the weekend, and even discussing work politics builds rapport and nurtures budding friendships.

As valuable as those conversations can be, sometimes you need to let a co-worker know that they are chatting too much and you need to get on with work. How do you do this without causing offence?

"When you have an incessant talker, you have two options," says author and workplace advice columnist Alison Green.

"You can deal with it on a case-by-case basis as it happens, or have a big-picture conversation about your need for more space to focus. The second option will probably feel more awkward in the moment, but it tends to be less exhausting in the long run.

"But if you're not ready for that – and it's fine if you're not – then the approach to try first is being more assertive about setting boundaries in the moment."

Green advises saying things like:

- "Sorry, I'm swamped today and can't really chat!"
- "I'd better get back to this X project, I've got a ton of work to do."
- "I'm glad your weekend was good! I can't talk much today, got to finish up X."
- "Sorry to cut you off—I've got to get back to this."

Liz Fosslien, co-author of *No Hard Feelings: The Secret Power of Embracing Feelings at Work* suggests a similar approach: "A great way to frame the problem is to make it about either a) your need for heads-down time to focus on and finish important work, or b) your need for more alone time," she explains.

Fosslien also suggests setting a time in the future when you're likely to be available and more in the mood to chat. "You can offer an alternative time to talk by adding, 'Maybe we can grab coffee together tomorrow morning?'"

If chattiness is becoming a frequent problem, it might be necessary to have a more direct conversation about it, uncomfortable as this may be. Green suggests saying: "I want to let you know that I'm trying to focus better during the day so I probably won't be able to chat as much as we used to."

Once you've said that, you'll likely find it easier to be direct in the future. ✕



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**14 June is World Blood Donor Day.** This event aims to raise awareness of the need for safe blood and blood products and to thank voluntary blood donors for their life-saving gifts of blood. To find out more visit [who.int/campaigns/world-blood-donor-day](https://www.who.int/campaigns/world-blood-donor-day)

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# Are plant-based milks better for you?

For anyone who doesn't want to drink cow's milk there are many alternatives available. Are these healthier than traditional milk, and should we all be making the switch?



First it was soy, now there's almond, cashew, hazelnut, oat, rice and coconut. Plant-based milks are increasingly popular, with no shortage of people promoting their supposed health benefits over regular milk.

Plenty of us don't drink cow's milk, and there's no reason why you have to, says nutrition researcher Dr Tim Crowe.

"If you don't like milk, or if you're intolerant to it, or have ethical issues with it, then seeking out an alternative that some of these plant-based milks may offer seems a logical step."

That said, continues Dr Crowe, if you're happy drinking cow's milk, then there's really no reason to switch to a plant-based option. Milk contains important nutrients including protein, vitamin D and A, and many micronutrients. It also plays a significant role in bone health, being a particularly rich source of dietary calcium.

And for anyone concerned that milk promotes inflammation in the body, a number of review studies have shown the opposite – that dairy acts as an anti-inflammatory.

## How to choose a healthy milk alternative

None of the plant-based milks naturally contain enough calcium to rival cow's milk, which is why many of them – but not all – are fortified. Whatever one you choose, read the nutrition label. This will tell you if it contains added calcium and any sweeteners. Vegans may also want a milk that has added B12.

**Soy:** If you're after the closest match nutritionally with dairy milk, then choose soy. Soy typically contains more protein than other plant-based alternatives (and like milk it's a complete protein, containing all the essential amino acids), along with carbohydrates and B vitamins. Most soy milks are fortified with calcium and contain healthy unsaturated fats and fibre.

**Almond:** You may have heard that almonds contain calcium, so it makes sense to assume almond milk is rich in calcium, doesn't it? Not unless it's fortified.

A 2017 survey conducted by consumer group *Choice* found almond milk contained only two to 14 per cent almonds, with water being the predominant ingredient. Almond milk is also low in energy and protein but

as a bonus does contain heart-healthy monounsaturated fats.

Other nut milks like cashew, hazelnut and macadamia have a similar nutrition profile, although tend to be more expensive.

**Oat:** Blend oats and water, strain off the liquid, and you have oat milk. Low in fat but also low in protein, oat milk is naturally sweet, contains fibre (including the cholesterol lowering beta-glucan), vitamin E, folate and riboflavin.

**Coconut:** There's little advantage to choosing this, as it's low in protein and carbs, and high in saturated fat.

**Rice:** Produced from milled rice and water, rice milk is naturally high in carbs and sugars, but low in protein and calcium, unless fortified. ✕

## Are any plant milks good for children?

If you want to give your children plant-based milks, it's a good idea to discuss the best options with a dietitian first as many may not be suitable.

Of all the plant milks, soy milk comes out on top for children as it provides similar nutritional benefits to dairy milk. Protein is an important part of a child's diet, essential for normal growth and development, and soy provides a similar amount of protein to dairy milk.

For children, look for a soy milk that is full fat and fortified with calcium, ideally at least 100mg per 100ml.

Rice milk is the plant milk least likely to trigger an allergy but is still not a suitable milk substitute for children because of its low protein content.

# You like to move it, move it

**Do you tell yourself you should move your body more? Do you feel guilty at the end of the week for not exercising enough?**

This guilt-driven “should” mindset is a clue to why you might not be incorporating enough movement into your day.

Too often we turn exercise into yet another thing we have to do. Or, worse, yet another example of how we’ve failed.

Instead, start to change the way you think about movement and exercise and how it can make your life better.

Follow these steps to motivate yourself to move your body more:

## **1. Create a list of reasons WHY you want to exercise**

Does it simply make you feel good? Does it help you with stress or sleep? Do you want more energy?

Write down the top three outcomes you want from moving more.

## **2. Imagine your life once you’ve achieved those outcomes**

Take a moment to visualise your future self once you’re reaping the benefits of step 1. Imagine what your life would be like when you have lots of energy, or when you get better quality sleep, or when you feel fit.

## **3. Understand the real reasons why you’re putting it off**

What’s actually stopping you from moving more? Unless it’s a medical condition or injury, there is something else stopping you from prioritising exercise. And it’s not time. We all have time for things we really want to do, even if it’s just scrolling through social media for half an hour before bed.

For example, you might be embarrassed about how unfit you’ve become. Or, you might not be prioritising self-care because work/family/personal issues have taken over. Find out what the problem is, so you can address it head-on.

## **4. Make it easier**

Too often we take an all or nothing approach. We tell ourselves we’re going to run for an hour every day before breakfast. And then when we inevitably fail, we give up.

Yet research shows that movement “snacks” can be just as effective. Start by finding 10 minutes to move your body: a brisk walk, or simply stand and roll your arms and shoulders to get the blood pumping.

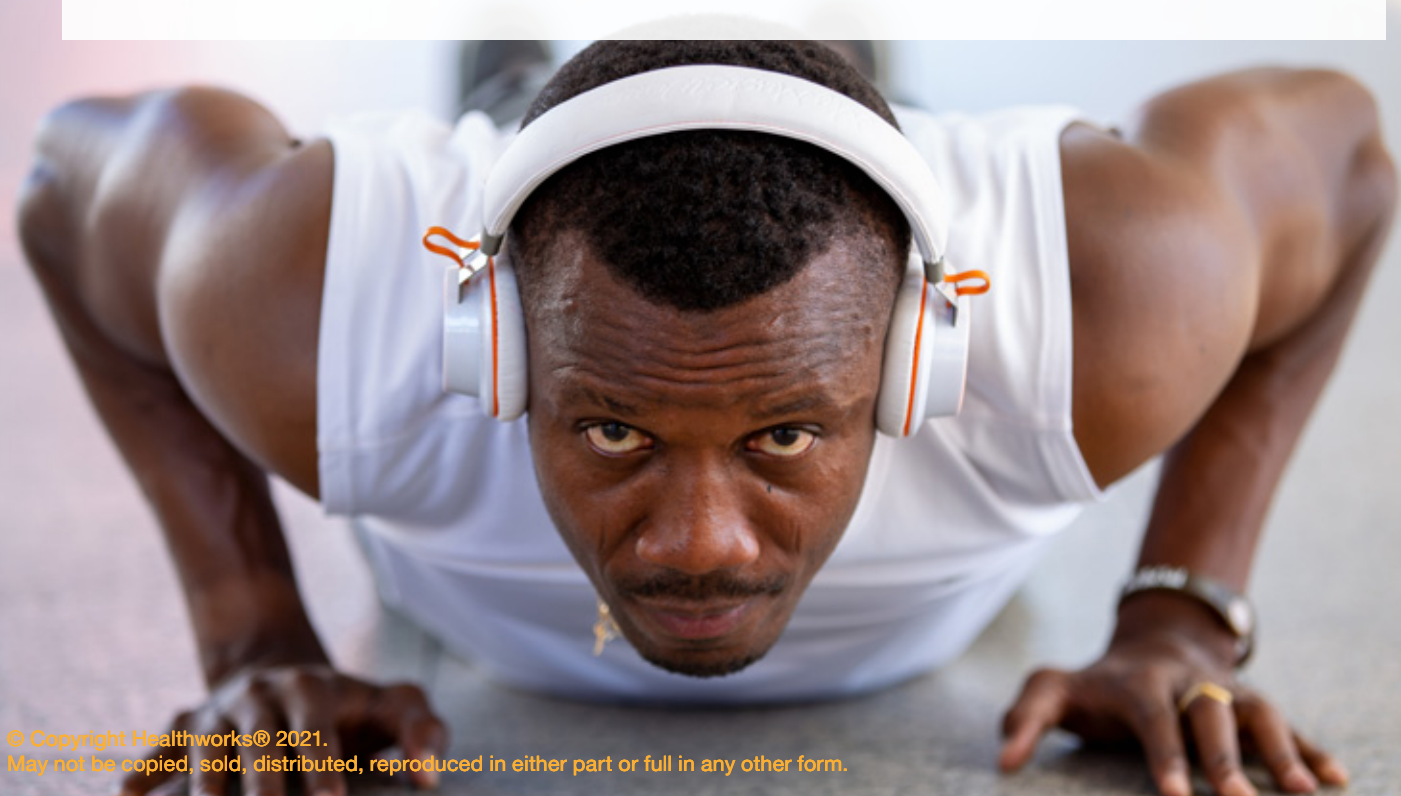
Make it so easy that there’s no excuse not to do it. ✕

## **The motivational magic of music for movement**

Next time you take a movement break, pop on some headphones and blast some music. Numerous scientific studies have shown that music is not only motivational but can improve your exercise performance.

The best tempo for exercise is 120 beats per minute, or bpm. The five most popular 120bpm songs right now, according to [jogfm](#), are:

- P!nk - Raise Your Glass.
- Lady GaGa - Bad Romance.
- Lady GaGa & Colby O'Donis - Just Dance.
- Journey - Don't Stop Believin'.
- Ke\$ha - Tik Tok.





# Why aren't you listening?

Learn why listening is so hard yet so important, and how to do it better.

*"Effective listening helps build relationships, solve problems, ensure understanding, resolve conflicts, and improve accuracy... Listening builds friendships and careers. It saves money and marriages."* – Diane Schilling, founder of Forbes WomensMedia

We know how amazing it feels to be truly heard, and how frustrating it is when someone only pretends to listen to us.

Yet how often do we give other people the respect of active listening?

While we all want to be good listeners, we face numerous barriers to effective listening. Here are just some of the reasons we don't listen well:

- **You want to look smart.**

Our instinct is to impress others, and we assume the best way to do that is to talk more. In reality, the best way is to listen more.

Fred Halstead, author of *Leadership Skills that Inspire Incredible Results*, says, "When you really listen... you are able to form insightful questions that naturally continue the conversation. You'll feed on what the person is saying to bring out their best thinking, and through questions you'll bring out your own best thinking."

- **You're trying to multitask.**

You're in the middle of an important email and someone wants to chat. You don't want to be rude, so you pretend to listen. But even while you're looking at them, you're still composing that email in your head.

We are surrounded by distractions. It takes a concerted effort to stop thinking and focus on the person talking, but the benefits of truly listening are vast – for both you and the talker.

- **You never learnt how to listen.**

Think about it – how was listening modelled to you at home as a child? Chances are your busy parents pretended to listen to you while their focus was elsewhere.

Even at school, as our teachers told us to sit still and pay attention, many of us simply learnt how to pretend to listen while our minds wandered.

- **You think too fast.**

University of Minnesota research shows we think much faster than people can talk. People tend to speak at 125 words per minute, while our brains are capable of processing far more information.

In their book, *Are You Listening*, Ralph G. Nichols and Leonard A. Stevens explain why this gap is a problem.

"When we listen... we continue thinking at high speed while the spoken words arrive at low speed...We can listen and still have some spare time for thinking.

"The use, or misuse, of this spare thinking time holds the answer to how well a person can concentrate on the spoken word."

**"Seek first to understand, then to be understood."**

Stephen Covey

## How to listen like a leader

Listening is the hallmark of a good leader. Bill Clinton and Barack Obama were both known for their outstanding listening skills. This not only allowed them to take in multiple opinions and vast amounts of information quickly, but it also made everyone they interacted with feel special.

Here are some proven tips on how to listen better:



### 1. Clear your mind

Put away distractions. Put your phone down. If you're listening on the phone, stop looking at your computer. Quit thinking about what you'll have for dinner, and give the speaker your full attention.

### 2. Be empathic

Adam Bryant is Managing Director at Merryck Mentor and works with CEOs every day. He says, "Listening, done well, is an act of empathy. You are trying to see the world through another person's eyes, and to understand their emotions."

As you listen, tune in to the other person's feelings and experience as well as their words. You will build a far stronger connection.

### 3. Don't interrupt

We try to finish someone's sentences, thinking it's empathic. Or we desperately want to add our own story, "Oh I know! The same thing happened to me the other day."

Or, most commonly, we want to help by sharing what we see as the obvious solution. But most people don't want solutions; they want to be heard.

Instead, allow the speaker to finish their thought. Better still, ask them what they think they should do. You may be surprised by what you learn.

### 4. Be genuinely interested and open

Rather than pretending to be interested with the right kind of nod and eye contact, bring a genuine interest in what the other person can teach you.

"Why not think about listening as a ticket to a free education?" says Adam Bryant. "All you have to do is assume that everyone you meet has learned a thing or two in their lives, and that you can unearth those insights with a combination of genuine interest and some open-ended questions."

"If you show interest and energy, people will respond and share what they know and how they learned it." ✕

**"I remind myself every morning: Nothing I say this day will teach me anything. So if I'm going to learn, I must do it by listening."**

Larry King

## You're biased. It's OK, we all are.

Often, the reason we're not listening is because we're too busy judging. We don't mean to – we don't see ourselves as the judgemental type – but we do it unconsciously.

Associate professor of linguistics at Stanford University, Meghan Sumner, talks about unconscious bias. In multiple studies, she found that we all listen differently based on where we're from and our feelings toward different accents.

We make assumptions about people based on their looks, body language, age, gender, position and a dozen other factors we're barely aware of.

This can colour the way we interpret what they're saying.

Become aware of your assumptions about the person you're listening to, and choose to open up to new perspectives.

# I'm not an anti-vaxxer, but...

How do you feel about the COVID-19 vaccine? If you're unsure about its safety, we answer some of your concerns.

It's brand new, was rapidly developed, and we don't really know that much about the vaccine, do we?

There have been an number of studies published on COVID-19 vaccine acceptance rates around the world. Some countries, like China and Malaysia, have acceptance rates over 90%, while other countries have much lower rates. In the US, the vaccine acceptance rate was found to be 57%, while in Russia and Italy it's a little over 50%. Yet more countries, like Australia, hover around the 75% mark.

We don't have to get the vaccine, but the more of us who do, the safer everyone will be – particularly when international travel becomes more in reach for everyone.

Most of the reasons for hesitancy centre around the safety of the vaccine. Here are some of the most common concerns:

## **Concern: The vaccines have been developed too quickly**

The vaccines appear to have been developed quickly. But the urgency of the COVID-19 crisis meant that all available resources and efforts, including some of the best minds in the world, were directed towards finding a vaccine, says the Australian National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance.

Vaccines can be developed faster than in the past, thanks to newer technology that uses the genetic code for the virus to build the vaccine. Researchers were able to start work as soon as the genome for the virus was released in January 2020.

Clinical trials of the vaccine were also able to progress quickly because COVID-19 was widespread in many countries. This meant that differences between vaccinated and unvaccinated groups could be detected sooner than for a rarer disease.

## **Concern: There were shortcuts taken so safety wasn't prioritised**

It's true that COVID-19 vaccine trials were set up quickly, but this doesn't mean that safety was compromised.

In fact, most of the vaccine trials included tens of thousands of people. This provided a larger amount of data than for many other vaccines we often get. Phase 1 and 2 trials often overlapped because safety had already been established.

In most countries, COVID-19 vaccines must meet the same high standards as any other vaccine. Once a vaccine is being used, experts and regulators continue to monitor its safety.

## **Concern: There may be long-term side effects**

"We're confident there won't be long-term risks with the vaccine, as that's not really how vaccines work," infectious diseases expert Dr Nick Coatsworth told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

"We know that if things are going to happen after a vaccine, and they're not short term, then they tend to be medium term – we're talking about the six- to eight-month mark."

The vaccines have been tested since mid-2020, and millions of doses have now been given with very few reported adverse effects. But they continue to be monitored, with countries sharing their vaccine safety monitoring data via a global database.

For up-to-date information on the vaccines visit your government health body's website and look for the COVID-19 updates. ✕



## Ask an expert about ...

### **Meg Parsons, Registered Nurse and Clinical Governance Manager at Bodycare Workplace Solutions replies:**

All vaccines, including those for COVID-19, have the potential to cause side-effects. Common side-effects are related to the immune system being activated by the injected antigen and from the action of injecting liquid into a muscle. Usually, these are mild and disappear within a few days.

The most common side-effects include: muscle or joint pain; chills and fever; fatigue; headache; pain, swelling and/or redness at the injection site; and nausea.

## **Q** I'm worried about the possible side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine. What are they and how can I treat them?

Uncommon side effects may include: enlarged lymph nodes; feeling generally unwell; pain in the limb; insomnia; urticaria (hives) at the injection site.

A severe allergic reaction or anaphylaxis can occur with any medication. While this risk is low, consumers and healthcare professionals must be adequately trained and prepared for this event.

Most common side effects are mild and last for one or two days. If you experience pain and swelling, you can use a cold compress or icepack wrapped in a cloth on the injection site. Paracetamol and ibuprofen

are not recommended to be taken prior to COVID-19 vaccination. However, they can be taken afterwards to alleviate pain, fever and swelling if required.

All side-effects should be noted and reviewed by a medical professional to ensure that they are appropriately treated and recorded. Normally, any expected side effects which are mild, common and very common are not reported. However, given that COVID-19 vaccines are new, they are subject to additional monitoring. All side-effects must be reported for analysis and ongoing surveillance. ✕



## App of the month

### Sanvello

A self-care app, Sanvello can function as a feel-better toolkit, including therapy, coaching, coping techniques, meditations, and goal and mood tracking, designed by experts to help

you feel better.

The app checks in with how you're feeling so you can track your emotions and progress over time. As patterns are identified, Sanvello can provide tools to keep you on the path to feeling better.

Available free with in app purchases from the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#).

## Belly fat may not respond to intermittent fasting

University of Sydney researchers have raised questions about one of the most popular weight loss methods around – intermittent fasting. Their study on mice examined the effects of every-other-day fasting (where no food is consumed on alternate days) on different fat tissue.

They found that when the mice were fasting, their visceral fat – that's the abdominal fat that surrounds organs – went into 'preservation mode' and adapted to be more resistant to weight loss. The result was unexpected, and important. At higher levels, visceral fat is associated with metabolic illness such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes. It's possible, say the researchers, that repeated bouts of fasting triggered the body to protect its energy store.

This research doesn't mean you should stop all types of intermittent fasting – such as the 5:2 and 16:8 methods – as there may be some benefits to this way of eating. This study was in mice, not humans, so more human research is needed before any conclusions can be drawn. ✕



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**Published by:** Healthworks®

Suite 3.06, 55 Miller Street Pyrmont NSW 2009 Australia  
ACN 624 842 351 **Phone:** 1300 90 10 90

**Website:** [www.healthworks.com.au](http://www.healthworks.com.au)

**Editorial Team:**

**Editor:** Jenny BOSS MHumNutr

**Deputy Editor:** Kylie Singh

**Subscriptions:** Janelle Gibb

**Email:** [well@healthworks.com.au](mailto:well@healthworks.com.au)

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## News Bites



## Will zinc shorten your cold?

Regardless of the season, you can still catch a cold. If you reach for zinc lozenges hoping they will shorten the duration of your cold, the evidence is mixed. A 2020 study from the University of Helsinki, published in *BMJ Open*, has cast doubt on their effectiveness.

Participants in the study who contracted a cold were immediately given lozenges to use six times a day for five days. Just over half the participants were given zinc lozenges, and the remainder given a placebo.

After 10 days, the researchers found no significant differences in cold duration or easing of symptoms between the two groups. ✕

## Did you know?

Crying is an important safety valve, because keeping difficult feelings inside – what psychologists call repressive coping – can be bad for our health. Emotional tears release the feel-good chemicals oxytocin and endorphins, which ease physical and emotional pain.

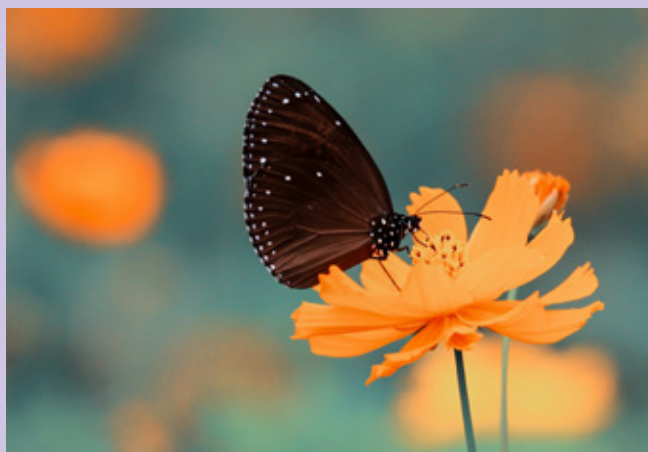
## Declutter your bedroom for better sleep

Black-out curtains. A cool temperature. No electronics. Despite trying all the recommended sleep hygiene tips you still struggle with sleep. How tidy is your bedroom? If your room's a mess, you could be at higher risk for sleep problems. What your eyes see when you walk into a room can influence whether or not you have an easy time falling asleep. ✕

# 1

## THING YOU CAN DO TODAY

### Snap a shot of nature



There was a time when to be a photographer you needed detailed knowledge, technical skills, time and money. Not anymore. With our phones in our pockets, we have the means to take high quality photographs whenever we like.

Taking a photo in nature can be a form of mindfulness. You're immersed in the moment, observing something that you wouldn't normally notice. With a focus on taking a photo you start to see the beauty in the everyday, whether that's the texture of a shell on the beach, how the light catches a dog in the park, or the details on the bark of a tree.

#### Two tips for better photos:

**1. Slow down.** With digital and phone cameras it's tempting to start shooting right away to get the perfect picture. But study your environment and subject first. Ask yourself what you are taking a photo of, advises landscape photographer Mandy Lea. "The flower? That rock? Once you know what your subject is you can compose the picture specifically to show that off."

**2. Consider the light.** An hour or so before sunset or right after sunrise are among the best times to take photos, but if you're not out and about then, look at how the light falls on the subject. ✕

## EAT SMARTER

### Cook a pot of soup

There are few dishes more satisfying than a bowl of delicious soup. Here are three reasons why:

#### 1. Soup helps you reach your five a day

You're making a minestrone. You add chopped onion, celery, carrots, tomatoes, capsicum, kale and mushrooms to the pot. You're on your way to creating a dish that contains seven or eight different vegetables, with a wide range of disease-fighting nutrients to help you get your daily quota of vegetables. Add healthy grains in the form of brown rice, barley, or quinoa, plus a can of beans or lentils and you've got added protein and fibre for a satisfying chunky soup. Your gut bugs will thank you too as your soup will be loaded with prebiotics.

#### 2. Soup keeps you fuller for longer

The bulk of soup helps to fill us up, so we feel satisfied with fewer calories. Studies show that when people have soup before a main course, they tend to eat less overall, which is how soups can help you lose weight.

#### 3. Soup's convenient and easy to cook

Soups don't need lots of hands-on time, particularly if you use a slow cooker. Once your vegetables are chopped, you can sweat them gently in olive oil, add water or stock and meat such as chicken or beef, and wait until they're cooked through. Soups are simple to cook ahead of time, and you can easily double the quantity to freeze for a later meal. ✕



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