



**MAYFAIR**  
WE CARE

# Mayfair cares

**HEALTH & SAFETY  
NEWSLETTER**

[Click here to visit our blog](#) for more helpful tips and advice across a range of topics.

**JULY 2022**

## Can you **reverse** type 2 diabetes?

**So, you or a loved one has been told they have type 2 diabetes, or possibly pre-diabetes. You go through the stages of grief: denial, anger, acceptance. But can you actually change it? Reverse it?**

The answer is yes: type 2 diabetes is reversible – for many people. It's not curable, and it may come back without close attention, but it is possible for your symptoms to go into remission.

When you have type 2 diabetes there is too much glucose (a type of sugar) in your blood. That's because your cells have stopped responding properly to insulin, a hormone that moves glucose from your blood into your cells. Doctors used to think the cells were shut down for good, but research shows that they may recover.

UK researchers have identified a particular diet program that can not only reverse type 2 diabetes, but also reduce the high blood pressure that often accompanies diabetes.

Dr Mike Lean, Professor of Human Nutrition and a physician from the University of Glasgow, was part of the research. He says:

"Getting a remission of diabetes, being able to say to a patient 'you are no longer diabetic' is a really big deal. Approximately half of our patients were able to get to that point at one year, and about a third of them are still there at two years."

By comparison, only four percent of the study's control group were able to reverse their condition. The control group followed standard practice for type 2 diabetes.

In the study, the successful group followed a very low calorie diet. The program was designed to help them lose 15kg over three months.

Acknowledging that this level of weight loss is often difficult, Dr Lean attributes the success to two things:

1. Having the support of their doctor throughout the program
2. Approaching the program "as seriously as you might consider chemotherapy for cancer". "People don't fully appreciate what a serious disease type 2 diabetes is. The prognosis is not as good as breast cancer," says Dr Lean. ✕

**NOTE:** A very low calorie diet requires medical supervision. Do not start a very restrictive diet without the support of your doctor. See your doctor to find out more about programs that will work for you.

### WHAT'S INSIDE

Can you really boost your immunity?	2
Why doctors are prescribing social connection	4
The exact words you need to give feedback - without pain	5
Don't show up to work sick	6



The International Day of Friendship is on July 30. The International Day of Friendship is a United Nations day that promotes the role that friendship plays in promoting peace in many cultures.

The International Day of Friendship was created with the idea that friendship between peoples, countries, and cultures can inspire peace efforts and build bridges between communities.



# Can you really boost your immunity?

Since the start of the pandemic, online searches for things that can boost your immunity have surged. We're all looking for tips to protect ourselves against COVID-19, as well as colds and flus, and strengthen our immune systems.

Search for 'immune boosters' or 'boost my immunity' on the internet or social media and you'll find a huge array of proven – and unproven – tips. Whether it's the wonders of apple cider vinegar, turmeric and ginger shots, herbal tonics, combinations of vitamins, even inverted yoga poses, you'll be forgiven for thinking that the secret to staying healthy is just a mouse click away.

The problem, says pain medicine specialist and gynaecologist Dr Jen Gunter, is that we think about the immune system in the wrong way. "We think of it like a muscle that we can strengthen by feeding it lots of antioxidants and supplements. But that's just not how the immune system works."

She explains that while your immune system can be suppressed and be less effective, the reverse – strengthening or 'boosting' the system overall – just doesn't happen.

"The truth is, you can't boost your immune system," says Dr Gunter. "The immune boosting myth preys on our fear of getting sick and completely misrepresents how the immune system works, and how incredibly complex it is."

## What is your immune system?

Your immune system is a network of cells, organs and tissues that work together to protect your body from infection – from the bacteria, viruses, fungi and toxins you encounter every day. It also plays a vital role in wound healing.

Immunologist Dr Katherine Gundling, from the University of California San Francisco, explains that the immune system is located virtually everywhere in your body.

"Whenever we take a breath in, we're also inhaling organisms that might be dangerous to us," she says. "So the cells in the immune system right within the respiratory tract are processing those immediately."

Another example, she says, is every time we eat food. Foods contain many different microbes. "Your gastrointestinal tract is processing that every time we put something in our mouths."

Dr Gundling describes the immune system as an orchestra striving for harmony or balance. You don't want to be boosting the wrong part of your immune system, as this can cause great harm. She says the perfect example is COVID-19.

"One of the causes of death in people who have COVID-19 is that part of the immune system might become overactive. And that overactivity creates tremendous inflammation all over the body that leads to a variety of problems and ultimately death. So the immune system is not about boosting. The immune system is about balance."

Lecturer in immunology at the University of Sussex and author of *Your Blueprint For Strong Immunity*, Dr Jenna Macciochi agrees.

"'Immune boosting' is a phrase that I can't get along with," she says.

"The benefits of quick fixes and 'immune-boosting' supplements have been touted for decades, but as an immunologist, I find that most conversations around building a strong immune system are woefully inadequate.

"Of course, it's always a good idea to do everything you can to get your immune system firing away at full speed, but it's important to know that an over 'boosted' immune system is potentially harmful because it could lead to a state of chronic inflammation."

Inflammation is linked to a host of chronic diseases and conditions, including cancer, heart disease and type 2 diabetes. ✕





## How to keep your immune system in balance

If immune boosting supplements don't work, then what can we do to help protect ourselves?

- **Lower your stress.** Whether it's anxiety about COVID, the cost of living, your job security, or the state of the world, worrying definitely makes us more susceptible to infection, says Dr Macciocchi.

While we can't make ourselves invincible to viruses, she says we can reduce the effects of stress. Find time to do things you enjoy and that relax your mind, whether that's reading, taking a walk outdoors, meditation, yoga, or going for a run.

- **Prioritise sleep.** A sleep-deprived immune system doesn't work as well. When you're resting is when your immune system heals and repairs, ready for its next challenge.

One study found that short sleepers – those who regularly slept less than six hours a night – were 4.2 times more likely to catch the common cold compared to those who slept over seven hours. Improve your sleep by sticking to a regular bedtime and wake-up schedule and avoiding screens,

night-eating, alcohol and exercise right before bedtime. See your GP if you regularly sleep poorly.

- **Eat a balanced diet.** No single food or natural remedy has been shown to bolster your immune system or ward off disease. While there are small studies that might suggest a benefit to certain foods – turmeric, garlic, ginger, citrus fruits for example – there is little strong evidence.

By eating plenty of fruit and vegetables, you'll be getting plenty of vitamin C, says Dr Macciocchi. This vitamin plays a key role in immunity, and a deficiency of it can lead to a higher susceptibility of a cold or virus. Taking more in supplement form has not been proven to ward off infections.

- **Support your gut health.** A healthy diet will also take care of your gut microbes, says Dr Macciocchi. She explains that rather than relying on probiotics such as kefir, you should aim to fertilise and feed the gut bugs you already have with a diet rich in fibre and one that contains a diverse range of fruit, wholegrains and vegetables.

**No single food or natural remedy has been shown to bolster your immune system or ward off disease.**

Your gut microbiota play a large role in gut and overall immune health. One of the products that your gut bugs produce for example, is the short chain fatty acid called butyrate, which combats inflammation and can turn off cancer genes.

- **Get vaccinated.** "Vaccines are truly genius," says Dr Gunter. "They contain a weakened or inactive part of a pathogen, like the flu, that triggers the body into making antibodies without needing to get sick from an illness first. They give the system exactly what it needs to respond to a specific pathogen quickly and aggressively." So get your immunisations and get your flu shot every year, she advises.

# Why doctors are prescribing social connection

**Science has shown that connection and social support are essential to our health – so essential that doctors are now prescribing it like a drug. Here's why.**

As humans we need connection, just like we need oxygen and water. Even for the most introverted among us, social connection is vital to our physical and mental health.

Lack of social support and not feeling connected to others has been linked to many chronic illnesses.

'Social prescription' is being used by doctors around the world, particularly for marginalised communities who struggle to access social services.

In this context, social prescription involves linking the patient with activities and services provided by community organisations, in a way that is trackable and measurable. It's accepted in community health as a preventative and early-intervention service.

Research shows that it works. In Britain, social prescribing is a formal part of the National Health Service. An Australian literature review found it reduces chronic disease, depression and suicidal behaviour, reliance on medication and substance abuse, while improving social confidence,

physical and mental wellbeing, sense of purpose and health self-management.

## How social prescribing can work for you

You mightn't necessarily need help with linking to community services, but you might benefit from permission to socialise more.

For many of us, a doctor's 'prescription' gives us both permission AND accountability. With a prescription for social connection, you won't need to justify it, but embrace it as part of your health care plan.

Too often, we put socialising way down the list of things to do. We get caught up in the necessities of work, housework and caring for children or ageing parents. We try to find time for exercise and preparing good food, but catching up with friends, or joining a hobby group, can sometimes seem like a luxury.

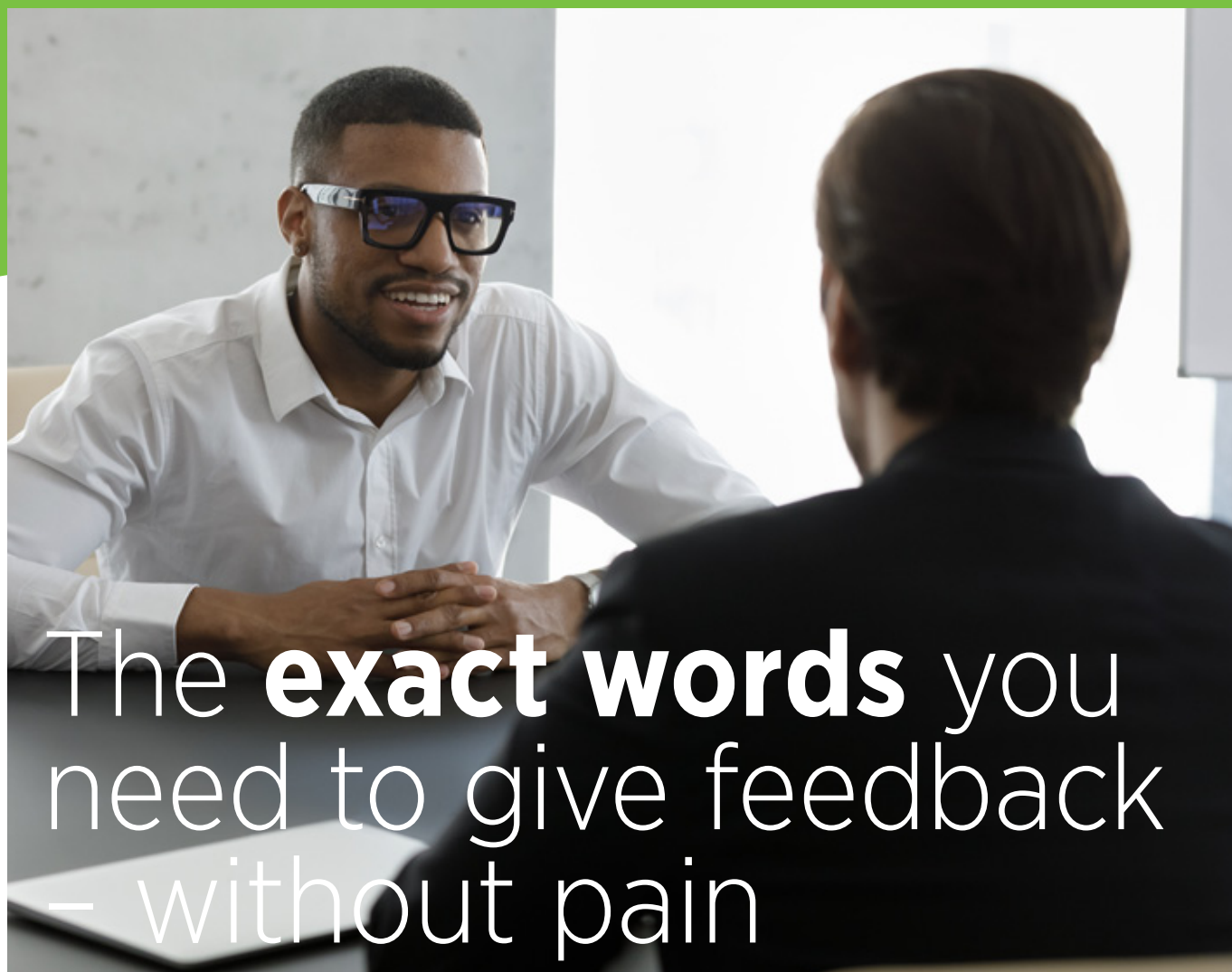
What if you prioritised social connection, in the same way you prioritise drinking water, or getting exercise, or taking daily medication?

What if you scheduled it into your day as a non-negotiable? ✕

## Action item:

1. Next time you plan your weekly schedule, add in non-negotiable time for connecting and socialising with others. Make it fun!
2. If you think you need more permission or accountability to make this happen, consider raising it with your doctor during your next visit, and ask them to prescribe it for you on a formal prescription pad. It'll do wonders for your health!





**You've tried the 'sandwich' formula for feedback, and found it left a bad taste in your mouth. It's time to get out the 'velvet hammer'.**

Why does the word 'feedback' make us feel a bit uncomfortable? After all, it's intended to help. It's probably because very few people know how to do it effectively.

For years, we've been told to use the sandwich formula for feedback: start with something positive, then go into the negative feedback, and end on a positive note.

And for years, we've known it doesn't really work. We're so accustomed to this formula that we ignore the positive, or assume the positive feedback is made up just to make us feel better.

An alternative is called the 'velvet hammer'.

The velvet hammer formula was created by Joy Baldridge, author of *The Joy in Business: Innovative Ideas to Find Positivity (and Profit) In Your Daily Work Life*.

Here's exactly how to do it, according to Baldridge:

1. Start with, "Do you have a minute? Great. I need your help."

2. Next, say: "I noticed that [problem behaviour goes here.] (Pause) I was wondering what's causing this problem (pause), because it cannot continue. What do you suggest we do?"

Or in other words:

- You ask for help, in a friendly way.
- You state the problem.
- You explain why it is important to you.
- You invite the recipient to offer a solution.

This works for a number of reasons.

Firstly, asking "What do you suggest we do?" shows that you are both working through this together. It's not 'me versus you', but 'us versus the problem'.

Secondly, you're providing a clear justification for why it matters and why you're approaching them. You're not just being critical.

Thirdly, you're encouraging them to find a solution, with you as their partner. You're not telling them what to do.

For this reason, it's vital to use a helpful and friendly tone of voice, rather than one that sounds like a reprimand. ✕

## More tips for giving feedback

**1. Always focus on the behaviour, not the individual.** Be highly specific about a particular action or situation.

**2. Don't try to diminish your opinion or feelings.** Avoid the temptation to downplay what you're trying to say, especially if you're giving feedback to a peer or someone senior to you. Skip phrases such as, "It's not a big deal, but..."

**3. Get to the point.** When you try to circle around the issue, or hide it in small-talk, it can make the feedback situation feel even more awkward. Approach it as though there's nothing to be embarrassed about.

# Don't show up to work sick

You may feel a little off colour. A few sniffles, a headache, some aches and pains. But you 'soldier on' – such a common and acceptable term that it's even been used in an ad for a cold remedy.

'Soldiering on' is also known as 'sickness presenteeism' – being at work but being ineffective due to ill health. Presenteeism is also used to describe working excessively long hours, and working when you're burned out or mentally unwell.

We know absenteeism can be a problem for workplaces, but presenteeism can be an even bigger issue. A study by the World Health Organization suggested that while absenteeism costs companies about 4 days a year per employee, up to 57.5 days are lost to presenteeism.

Since the pandemic we've learnt not to show up to work when if we've tested positive to COVID-19, not least for the sake of our workmates' health and that of their families. So what should you do instead to get better quickly?

- **OTC remedies.** It's tempting to pop a pain reliever or flu remedy and head off to work. After all, they make you feel much better. But while these may help cover the symptoms, they do nothing to address the cause of the illness, and you will still be infectious. Stay home until your symptoms stop.

- **Take time to recover.** If you don't take time off, it's going to take you longer to recover, whether you're working from your workplace or working from home.

While working from home does mean you won't spread a contagious illness to your workmates, there are downsides. Studies show that wherever you work, working while sick will affect the quality of your work, can increase the risks of poor health in the future, and increases the risk that you'll have to take more time off due to sickness 18 months later. ✕



## Ask an expert about ...

### Q Can blood pressure ever get too low?

Yes it can, says the Australia's virtual public health information service, Healthdirect. Doctors will say you have low blood pressure if it drops below 90/60 mmHg.

It's not always bad news. Low blood pressure can be a sign of good health in people who are very fit and have a slow pulse. As a bonus, people with low blood pressure tend to lead longer lives.

You can also experience low blood pressure from overheating; having too little blood circulating (from blood donation or bleeding heavily); being dehydrated; being pregnant; taking one of many different

types of medicine; or having a lot of drugs or alcohol in your system.

Certain medical conditions may also cause your blood pressure to drop. These include allergic reactions, infections, certain heart conditions, nutritional deficiencies or severe pain.

There is also a type of low blood pressure called 'postural hypotension' where blood pressure drops suddenly when a person stands, making them feel dizzy.

Low blood pressure can cause some unpleasant symptoms. These include:

- Light headedness or dizziness

- Weakness
- Blurry vision
- Pale, clammy skin
- Fatigue
- Fainting

See your doctor if you think you have symptoms of low blood pressure as an underlying cause may need treatment. But if it isn't causing you problems, treatment won't be needed.

Your doctor may advise that you take precautions to prevent episodes of low blood pressure, such as avoiding dehydration, hot showers, or standing up too quickly. ✕

## App of the month

### Duolingo

Perhaps you're dreaming of overseas travel again, or maybe you enjoy the challenge and stimulation of learning a new language. Whatever your motivation, Duolingo is the app for you. Designed by language experts, it's the fun, free app for learning over 35 languages through quick, bite-sized lessons. Practise speaking, reading, listening and writing to build your vocabulary and grammar skills.

Available free on the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#).

# News Bites



## How to stay active in all weather

If you struggle to get motivated to move, Harvard Health has the following tips to help get back to your usual exercise habit:

**1. Join a fitness group.** A walking or running group or another outdoor activity with a team component will encourage you to get out and show up. Even meeting one other person for a morning walk will keep you accountable.

**2. Set a Spring goal.** A strict deadline helps motivate you. You can sign up for a race, sign on to a couch to 5K program or book an active adventure trip for September or beyond. That way, you'll have to get outside more to be physically prepared.

**3. Embrace the season.** In winter, while most of us can't visit the ski fields, we can reap the benefits of exercising in colder weather. "In cold temperatures, your heart doesn't have to work as hard, you sweat less, and expend less energy, all of which means you can exercise more efficiently," says Dr Adam Tenforde, an assistant professor of sports medicine and rehabilitation at the Spaulding Rehabilitation Network.

If it's summer and too hot to exercise outside, try a swim in your local pool or join a gym and exercise indoors. This can have the benefit of allowing you to explore different types of exercise. ✕

## Meditation can help you make fewer mistakes

Feeling more forgetful than usual? Do you make more mistakes when you're in a hurry? Then a new study, which found that meditation can help you to become less error prone, will be welcome news.

The research from Michigan State University, published in *Brain Sciences*, tested how open monitoring meditation – meditation that focuses awareness on feelings, thoughts or sensations in the mind and body – altered brain activity in a way that suggested increased error recognition.

"People's interest in meditation and mindfulness is outpacing what science can prove in terms of effects and benefits," said Jeff Lin, MSU psychology doctoral candidate and study co-author. "But it's amazing to me that we were able to see how one session of a guided meditation can produce changes to brain activity in non-meditators." ✕

**wellatwork™**

**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 MHumNtr

**Deputy Editor:** Kylie Singh

**Subscriptions:** Janelle Gibb

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

Healthworks\* wellness, health, and safety products and solutions are a trademark of Bodycare Health & Wellbeing Pty Ltd (ACN 624 842 351), registered in Australia. Well at Work™ ©2022. All rights reserved. No part of this work may be re-sold, reproduced or copied in any form. The information in this publication does not provide medical advice for individual problems. For advice and treatment, consult your doctor or health care professional. Well at Work is printed on an environmentally responsible paper. The pulp for this paper is sourced from certified, well managed sustainable plantations and the paper mill is ISO 14001 accredited.



## Switch your sleeping position to help reflux

If you have gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (GORD) or struggle with night-time heartburn, sleeping on your left side, rather than on your right side or your back, may help.

Acid reflux occurs when the valve separating the oesophagus (food pipe) from the stomach leaks, allowing stomach acid to reach the oesophagus. This can cause the discomfort commonly known as heartburn, and can damage the lining of the oesophagus, increasing the risk for oesophageal cancer.

In a new study, researchers tracked the sleep position of 57 patients being monitored for acid reflux. They found a significantly shorter acid exposure time and faster acid clearance when people were lying on their left side compared to the right side or on their backs.



# 1

## THING YOU CAN DO TODAY



### Get some sunshine

During rainy or overcast days you might notice how a lack of sunshine can affect how you feel. Here's why getting outside and soaking up some sun will benefit your health.

**Builds strong bones and immune system.** When the sun's UVB rays hit your skin, they trigger the production of vitamin D. Vitamin D is needed to absorb calcium to support healthy bones, may reduce inflammation, and is important for a healthy immune system.

Sun exposure times will vary depending on season and location – depending on the time of year and your location, you will need more or less time in the sun to produce adequate vitamin D.

**Promotes better mood.** Exposure to sunlight is believed to increase your brain's release of a hormone called serotonin, associated with better mood and feeling calm. Without enough sunlight your serotonin levels can dip, and researchers have found lower levels in people during winter, when there are less hours of daylight. This may explain the prevalence of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) in some parts of the world.

#### Caution:

The UV rays from the sun increase the risk of skin cancer, including the most deadly type, melanoma. That's why we must get the balance right between too much and not enough sunlight. Check the UV level before you head outside. If it's three or above, go out when it's not so intense, or use sun protection measures. There are plenty of apps that will let you know what the UV level is at your location, or you can try your local weather bureau. ☒

## EAT SMARTER

### Open a can of beans

A staple of childhood, baked beans are making a comeback. At the start of the pandemic when many of us were busy panic buying, canned goods were very popular. And baked beans were on many shopping lists.

"What's not to love about baked beans?" asks Clare Collins, a professor of nutrition at the University of Newcastle, speaking on the ABC program *Catalyst*.

Baked beans are an inexpensive source of protein, iron, and folate she says. They also contain soluble fibre, the kind that attracts water, helps slow digestion and can reduce cholesterol absorption.

#### What's in the can?

The beans in a baked bean can are haricot beans, also called navy beans (because they fed the American Navy in the 1800s). They are canned in tomato sauce, which contains lycopene, a valuable phytonutrient, and vitamin C, which helps your body absorb iron from the beans, says Professor Collins.

Salt and sugar are also added, as they are part of the preservation process, creating an inhospitable environment for microorganisms.

"People worry about the sugar content in baked beans, but often don't realise some of those sugars are naturally occurring in the tomatoes," says Professor Collins.

If you're concerned about added sugar and salt, choose brands with the lowest amounts, or make your own beans in tomato sauce.

With most of us needing to eat more vegetables, the humble baked bean can be a quick, inexpensive way to reach your five serves of vegetables a day. ☒



Mayfair cares