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December 2023

## Can you cure a hangover?

**A thumping headache, raging thirst, nausea, fatigue, irritability and muscle aches. There's little to love about a hangover, and when you're in the middle of one all you want is a cure, and fast.**

Don't be deceived by miracle cures online. The only guaranteed way of avoiding a hangover is not to drink alcohol. But if you'd like a few drinks without the hangover the next day, then there are some things you can do before, during and after drinking that will help.

**Don't drink on an empty stomach.** Eat a meal or large snack before drinking, as this will slow the rate at which alcohol enters your bloodstream. One study in the *British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology* found that when compared to men who drank on an empty stomach, those who ate beforehand had a 'pronounced' lowering of blood alcohol levels. Eating also increased the speed at which the alcohol was cleared from their bloodstreams.

**Stay hydrated.** Alcohol is a diuretic, meaning it makes you need to urinate more. Dehydration is not the only cause of a hangover but it contributes to many of the familiar symptoms—thirst, fatigue, headache and dizziness.

Increasing your water intake while you're drinking alcohol (try alternating between water and alcoholic drinks) will help keep your blood alcohol level from rising too fast and may reduce some of your hangover symptoms.

Make sure you keep up your water intake the following day too, to help counteract dehydration.

**Eat a good breakfast.** Getting some food in first thing when you wake up with a hangover can help you maintain your blood sugar levels.

Low blood sugar doesn't necessarily cause a hangover, but it can worsen symptoms such as nausea and fatigue.

Eating a healthy breakfast—eggs on wholegrain toast with spinach, for example, or muesli with fresh fruit and yoghurt—can also give you vitamins and minerals that may be depleted after excessive alcohol intake. Studies have found that zinc-rich foods—such as nuts, seeds, eggs and wholegrains—may help.

**Try painkillers.** If you need some pain relief, try an anti-inflammatory such as ibuprofen. It's best to avoid paracetamol. Your liver breaks down both alcohol and paracetamol, and your body is more susceptible to the toxic effects of paracetamol when you drink alcohol.



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**Sunday 3 December is International Day of People with Disability.** Get involved in your workplace to break down barriers and promote greater awareness, understanding and inclusion of people with disability. Get together with your colleagues and hold an event on or around 3 December or join the conversation online or in your workplace. Visit [idpwd.org](http://idpwd.org) for more information.

# Should you worry about a leaky gut?



## How to protect your gut

### 'Leaky gut syndrome' gets blamed for a range of vague, unpleasant symptoms but the jury is still out on what causes it and whether we should be concerned.

Your gut (intestines) is your body's first line of defence. This long tube through which food and waste pass is lined by rows of cells that prevent unwanted substances from escaping—things like disease-causing bacteria—while allowing smaller particles, such as nutrients, to pass freely into your bloodstream.

#### What do we mean by 'leaky gut'?

Sometimes the tight junctions between the cells can become weaker, allowing some nasties to sneak across the intestinal wall, explains gut health dietitian Dr Megan Rossi, founder of the Gut Health clinic and author of *Eat More, Live Well*. Scientists call this 'increased intestinal permeability', or more colloquially, 'leaky gut'.

'Leaky gut syndrome' is a popular diagnosis in the world of alternative therapies, says Rossi, and the theory goes like this: toxins enter the bloodstream through gaps, or junctions, between the cells in your gut wall. This triggers a cascade of inflammation which leads to unpleasant symptoms from digestive issues like bloating and cramps

through to eczema, autoimmune disorders, migraines, fatigue and depression.

While some of these conditions are associated with chronic inflammation, the link with leaky gut hasn't been proven.

Common culprits behind leaky gut are said to include sugar, gluten and lactose (the natural sugar found in milk), says Rossi, and you may be told you can heal your gut by cutting out these foods. Scientific studies don't support these claims.

#### What we know so far

All of us experience a more permeable gut lining from time to time, caused by alcohol, certain medications, a high fat meal, and even stress. Once the trigger is taken away, the junctions between the cells usually tighten back up, says Rossi. Fortunately, she explains, even if a toxin does make it through your gut wall, your immune system is there waiting to deal with it.

Tamara Duker Freuman is a New York-based dietitian specialising in gut disorders. Writing at [fodmapeveryday.com](http://fodmapeveryday.com), she says researchers who study intestinal permeability have observed it in connection with a small number of conditions, the best-studied of which are the inflammatory bowel disease, Crohn's, and coeliac disease. If you have coeliac disease, it's gluten that causes the intestinal permeability, which resolves when you take gluten out of your diet.

Duker Freuman warns that the leaky gut diets you'll find online may be further damaging your gut, rather than healing it.

Many of these call for the elimination of so-called inflammatory foods, such as grains. But this can result in a lower intake of fibre, she says, which is especially good at nourishing your gut microbiota.

When you deprive your gut bacteria of the fibre they need, they start to eat away at the mucus lining of the gut. This is a problem, says Duker Freuman "because a depleted mucus layer lining the gut makes a person more susceptible to infection by disease-causing bacteria.

"If you're truly worried about your gut's leakiness, you may be better off looking to expand the variety of whole, plant-based foods you eat—not culling it."

If you experience any unexplained symptoms, gut-related or otherwise, don't assume leaky gut is to blame. Start by seeing your doctor, who can refer you to a dietitian or gastroenterologist if needed.



# What happens to my body if I regularly climb stairs?

Stairclimbing is a fancy term for what many of us do every day: take the stairs. Research proves that intentionally climbing stairs is a great, often underestimated workout. Here's the changes you can expect if you regularly climb stairs.



## You'll condition your muscles

Going up and down stairs activates multiple large muscles, including your glutes (butt), hamstrings, quadriceps (thighs) and calves. You're also switching on your core muscles with your abs and lower back.

Plus, you have the extra resistance of gravity. It's called "vertical displacement" and for stairclimbing, it means that every time you step up, you're getting a mini resistance workout as you're working against gravity.

This gives you a greater bang for your buck in terms of a workout, compared to running or walking on a flat surface.

Strengthening your muscles has flow-on effects for countless aspects of your physical and mental health. It helps with weight management, helps manage chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and arthritis, and helps with stress, depression and anxiety, among other benefits.

## It's proven you'll improve your fitness

Many studies have looked at the benefits of stair climbing, which became more popular during COVID-lockdowns when people in apartments weren't allowed to leave their building.

A 2019 study published in the *Journal of Applied Physiology, Nutrition and*

*Metabolism*, found that even doing stairclimbing in "snacks", i.e. short bursts of just 60 steps, three times a day, can improve fitness.

A study of older adults, published in the *Journal of Ageing and Physical Activity* in 2021, found stair climbing had a "fairly large, albeit only marginally significant" impact on cognition.

Another 2021 study published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* focusing on women found "strong statistical evidence of efficacy" in terms of aerobic fitness and weight, along with improvements in body fat ratios. The study also found that stair climbing at home was "at least as effective as" using a stairclimber machine at the gym.

## You'll feel in control

One thing many of the studies discovered is that stairclimbing works because people believe they can do it. Most able-bodied people know they can walk up and down stairs—they do it every day. This means there are fewer mental barriers to taking it up, unlike the resistance we might feel to taking up a new sport or a more challenging skill.

Plus, you can easily incorporate it into your day, especially if you take the "snack" approach of short sharp stair climbs. Few of us go through a whole day without coming

across some stairs. And because it's part of your day, you don't even have to change clothes, although it's highly recommended that you wear flat shoes with good grip.

## Ready for more? Try tower running

Tower running is stair climbing, to the max.

It's often done as a race or competition, but you can just compete against yourself in your own time. The idea is super simple: run up and down stairs in tall buildings as fast as possible.

The international races are serious affairs, with even a Tower Running World Cup. These races are short sharp bursts, often over in 10-12 minutes, but they cover immense heights of more than 90 floors, in the world's tallest skyscrapers including the Eiffel Tower and the Empire State Building.

If you want to try tower running in your area, you can try Googling "tower running near me" or "stair climbing near me" to get a list of stairs in your area.

# Confidence: what is it really, and how do you get it?

**We all know at least one of those confident people. They seem to attract opportunities and success, even though their actual skill is no greater than their peers. And we all know someone who struggles with confidence, even though we can see they are just as smart. What is this mystery factor, and how can we get more of it?**

## What is confidence?

It can be hard to define confidence, yet we all know how it feels when we're confident. It's like we know, "I've got this", we know we can cope with the situation, we have a sense of knowing who we are and feeling secure in that.

Mindtools, an online support resource for the workplace, says: "Self-confidence means trusting in your own judgment, capacities and abilities. It's about valuing yourself and feeling worthy, regardless of any imperfections or what others may believe about you."

Self-confident people seem at ease with themselves and their work, says Mindtools. They invite trust and inspire confidence in others.

"Confident people inspire confidence in others: their audience, their co-workers, their bosses, their customers, and their friends."

## The self-perpetuating cycle of confidence

According to psychotherapist Amy Morin writing in *Psychology Today Australia*, boosting self-confidence makes us more successful, improves our health, and increases our happiness.

The inverse is also true. People with low confidence are less likely to attempt to achieve the success that could give them more confidence.

It's easy to find evidence for any belief, and if you believe you're not good enough, you'll find plenty of "proof".

Think about a situation where you're not happy with your performance in a work presentation. If you have low confidence, you'll tell yourself, "See? I told you that you're hopeless. This proves it."

You'll then avoid further opportunities to put yourself out there, telling yourself you've proven you are unworthy. You might go further and avoid any situations where you feel you could be judged by others.

But if you have healthy confidence, you'll be able to say "I didn't do as well as I'd liked in that presentation. I'm going to figure out why and make sure I learn from this for next time."

## Don't wait

This cycle is also why it doesn't work to wait until you have more confidence. Many people fall into the trap of putting off challenges: "I'll join that gym when I'm more confident", "I'll go for that promotion next year when I'm more confident", "I'll go out more when I'm more confident".

Morin says you shouldn't wait until you feel completely confident. Instead, take steps to build confidence.

"Act as if you feel confident," says Morin. "No one gains confidence by sitting around the house doing nothing. Sometimes, the

best way to change your feelings is to change your behaviour first.

"Ask yourself what you'd be doing if you felt confident. Would you enrol in classes? Move to a new city? Talk to more people? Do those things now."

## Why you can't "get what she has"

It can be tempting to try to emulate or reverse engineer someone else's confidence. But the problem is that what makes them confident may not be what makes you confident.

British journalist and author, Dolly Alderton says, "Everyone gets their confidence from different things, and it takes a while to figure it out." Writing in a column in *Sunday Times*, she advises: "I urge you to spend some time thinking about what actions you can take, what things you can avoid and what habits you can form that make you feel like your truest, most unashamed self."

## How to build your confidence

Mindtools offers three effective ways to genuinely strengthen your confidence for the rest of your life.

### 1. Build confident habits

Do the things that make you feel good, and embed them into your life through habits.

Mindtools uses regular exercise, a good night's sleep and a healthy diet as an example.



## 2. Review past achievements

Mindtools recommends doing a personal SWOT Analysis to identify your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

"Your self-confidence will increase when you're able to say, 'I can do this, and here's the evidence,'" says Mindtools.

Look at things you're good at, based on past successes, and list the 10 things that you're most proud of. Then, says Mindtools, use these to make positive affirmations about what you can do. "These statements are particularly powerful if you tend to undermine your confidence with negative self-talk."

## 3. Set confidence-boosting goals

A proven way to build confidence is to set and achieve goals, especially when you allow yourself to see and feel good about how far you've come.

Mindtools suggests using your personal SWOT analysis to set goals that play to your strengths, minimise your weaknesses, and take advantage of your opportunities.

But just setting goals can make things worse unless you plan how you'll achieve them. Work out small, easy steps to achieve your goal. Mindtools suggests making sure these steps take no longer than an hour. "This will get the ball rolling and improve your confidence through the achievement of appropriate goals."

## Strike a pose

Amy Cuddy is a social psychologist at Harvard Business School who shot to fame with her TED Talk about the [Power Pose](#).

Her research found that standing in a posture of confidence, even when you don't feel confident, can boost feelings of confidence, and might boost your chances for success.

A power pose is adopting the stances associated with confidence, power and achievement—chest lifted, head held high, arms either up or propped on the hips.

This pose has been used by animals and humans for millennia to prove power. And it turns out, the pose works to prove power to ourselves. Striking a power pose changes your internal state and makes you feel powerful.

Cuddy conducted an experiment where people stood in either a high-power or low-power pose for two minutes. She then measured their stress hormones and found physiological differences between the two groups. Those who took a high-power pose showed an eight per cent increase in testosterone, while low-power posers had a 10 per cent decrease in testosterone. The opposite happened with the stress hormone, cortisol. High-power posers showed a 25 per cent decrease in cortisol levels, while low-power posers had a 15 per cent increase in their stress levels.

We know that our thoughts can change how we feel in our body, but Cuddy found the inverse is also true. "Our bodies change our minds," says Cuddy. "I want people to know that how they carry their bodies is to some extent shaping how their interactions play out...The body is signalling a lot to our nervous system about what state we're in and how we should respond."

### How to do a power pose

The classic power pose studied by Cuddy is standing straight with your arms up in the air in a V, or like a super hero, and holding for a minute or two before entering a stressful situation. But you can also do it sitting down: "feet up on the desk with your hands behind your head," says Cuddy. The idea is to be expansive and open.

"I encourage people to do it in the privacy of their own office, or a bathroom stall or a stairwell before they walk into these stressful situations so they're not feeling like a tiger is about to attack them."



# How to avoid **driver fatigue** these holidays

**The statistics are eye opening. Driver fatigue contributes to approximately 10 to 20 per cent of all road accidents. This means that up to one in every five accidents can be attributed, at least in part, to drivers like you being too tired. The number could be even higher as fatigue, unlike alcohol and drugs, can't be easily tested for.**

Driver fatigue, also known as drowsy driving, occurs when you're too tired to stay focused on the road. It's like trying to stay awake during a boring movie—only this time, your life is on the line. It slows your reaction time, slowing down and reducing your ability to make quick decisions.

## Long lazy days and long drives

Holidays can be synonymous with long road trips. And even if you think you're alert, or you've pumped yourself up on caffeine, the monotony can lull you into a dangerous state of fatigue.

But what makes driver fatigue so dangerous on holiday drives?

**Extended hours on the road:** Holiday drives often involve vast distances, especially when you're trying to "avoid the crowds" and reach that perfect stoppage

place or get to your destination as fast as you can. These journeys can take many hours or even days. The longer you're on the road, the greater the risk of fatigue.

**Heat and storms:** If you're driving in summer, heat can make you even drowsier, even with the aircon blasting. And severe weather like storms, and driving in a downpour or sudden storm can increase stress levels and make you more susceptible to fatigue.

**Traffic congestion:** you know the feeling... crawling along in a traffic jam, not knowing when it's going to clear. The kids are getting restless and it's adding hours to your trip. These traffic jams can be physically and mentally draining, increasing the likelihood of drowsiness.

## How to avoid driver fatigue

**Get a good night's sleep:** Before you even start your journey, make sure you've had a proper night's sleep. Aim for at least seven to nine hours of shut-eye. Sleep is like fuel for your body, and starting your trip well-rested will give you the best chance of staying alert.

**Plan your stops:** Don't be in a hurry to reach your destination. Plan regular breaks along the way, about every two hours or 200 kilometres (125 miles). These breaks

will not only help you stretch your legs but also give your mind a chance to reset. Use this time to enjoy a quick snack, hydrate, and get some fresh air.

**Avoid long drives at night:** Your body's internal clock is naturally inclined to rest during the night. Avoid scheduling long drives during these hours. If possible, stick to driving during daylight when your body is more alert.

**Stay hydrated:** Dehydration can make you feel tired and sluggish. Always keep a water bottle within reach and take sips regularly. Avoid excessive caffeine or sugary drinks, as they may provide a quick energy boost but can lead to a crash later on.

**Eat healthy snacks:** Pack some healthy snacks like fruits, nuts, and whole-grain crackers. These will provide a steady supply of energy and keep your hunger at bay without causing a sugar rush and crash.

**Listen to engaging music or podcasts:** Keep your mind active by listening to upbeat music or podcasts that keep you focused and alert.

**Recognise signs of fatigue:** Know the warning signs of driver fatigue: yawning, heavy eyelids, drifting out of your lane, and trouble keeping your head up. If you notice any of these, it's time to pull over and rest.



## App of the month

### SunSmart

UV radiation can be damaging your skin without you realising. The SunSmart Global UV app provides reliable at-a-glance real-time and forecast UV levels for locations across the world. The app then translates this data into clear, evidence-based health advice from Cancer Council Victoria to recommend sun protection for your location. (If you've downloaded the previous version of the SunSmart app, delete it and download the new SunSmart Global UV app instead).

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

## News Bites



## Cover up before you tee off

Golf combines exercise, being social and the great outdoors. What's not to love?

Think again, warn researchers from the University of South Australia, who found that golfers have a higher risk of skin cancer compared to the general population. Their study found that one in four golfers had received a skin cancer diagnosis, indicating a 2.4 times greater risk of the disease.

Lead researcher Dr Brad Stenner says the findings highlight the importance of being sun smart on the green.

"Playing golf regularly has a range of excellent health benefits—from helping you stay fit and active, to keeping you in touch with friends," Dr Stenner says.

"While there are clear health benefits of engaging in golf, this study explored the risks of playing golf as golfers tend to play for four or more hours in the sun, using various sun protection strategies.

"This study confirms that golfers have an elevated risk of skin cancer. Knowing that, players should more actively strive to protect themselves," he says.

"My advice is: before you go out and play golf make sure you put on some high SPF protective sunscreen, wear a broad brimmed hat and some sort of sleeve or arm protection to ensure you've got the maximum coverage, and don't forget to reapply sunscreen as you go. Once you have that you're all set to tee off."

## Fragrance may boost memory

Inhaling pleasant scents during sleep may offer an effective, easy way to improve brain health and memory, say neuroscientists.

In a small experiment involving 23 adults aged 60 to 85, those who inhaled scents when sleeping seemed to dramatically enhance their memory by as much as 226 per cent over a period of six months.

Study participants were divided into two groups—one group slept with an essential oil diffuser for two hours, releasing one of seven oils (rose, orange, eucalyptus, lemon, peppermint, rosemary and lavender). The participants rotated through the different aromas each night.

The other group followed the same routine but with undetectable trace amounts of odourant.

"We found that, compared to controls, 'enriched' participants improved in their performance on word-list recall, a key test of verbal learning and memory," wrote the study authors.

Although the experiment was small, the results align with other findings that demonstrate a connection between smell and cognition.

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## Stop your guests opening the fridge

If your guests keep opening your fridge to help themselves to drinks when you're entertaining, it can cause the temperature inside to rise. This makes it harder to keep food cold and increases the risk of food poisoning.

Solve this problem by taking the drinks out of the fridge, advises the Food Safety Information Council. Drinks are actually "ice cold" if put on ice, and a leak proof container is all that's needed.

Storing drinks outside is best as it keeps the crowd outdoors, ensuring the fridge will have a chance at running at or below the safe zone of 5°C, (40°F) and the cook can work in peace.

# 1

## THING YOU CAN DO TODAY



## Sign up to volunteer

Any time of year is a great time to give, and that can extend to your time as well. Why should you put up your hand to volunteer? Here are three reasons.

- Helps you make a difference.** Whether your cause is greening the environment or supporting the homeless community, volunteering can give you a sense of purpose.
- Gives you opportunities for social interaction.** According to the recent *State of the Nation Report on Social Connection in Australia 2023*, almost one in three Australians feel lonely, with one in six experiencing severe loneliness. A regular volunteering role allows you to build relationships with others and feel more connected to your community.
- Offers health and wellbeing benefits.** According to Volunteering Australia, volunteering is associated with greater psychological wellbeing, self-esteem, happiness and satisfaction with life, as well as lower symptoms of depression and anxiety.

There are many organisations that actively seek volunteers, in areas such as animal welfare, conservation, local emergency services, rural fire services and supporting vulnerable people.

Just look up "volunteering" in your local area or ask your local government authority on volunteering options.

**December 5th is International Volunteer Day.**

## EAT SMARTER

## Build a better salad

With a well-stocked fridge and pantry, you can make a refreshing dinner without resorting to cooking.

**Start with leafy greens.** Cookbook author Anna Jones recommends two handfuls per person. The darker greens are usually more nutrient dense (eg. spinach, rocket, kale and watercress) but all greens provide fibre, essential for feeding the bacteria that live in your gut.

**Add colour.** Jones suggests tossing in assorted colourful vegetables—try radishes, sweetcorn (fresh, frozen or canned), blanched peas, halved cherry tomatoes, beetroot, broccoli and sliced capsicum. The more colours you add, the more nutrients you'll be getting.

**Include healthy fats.** Think avocado, olives, nuts and seeds, and fatty fish such as anchovies, sardines, mackerel, tuna and salmon.

**Add crunch.** Make your salad texturally interesting, suggests Jones, by including toasted seeds or nuts, toasted tortilla strips, assorted beansprouts, croutons, or pomegranate seeds.

**Make it a meal.** Bulk out your salad by adding grains such as quinoa, couscous, rice, or pearl barley, canned drained beans (try chickpeas or butter beans), and a protein source such as hard-boiled egg, cheese, tofu, or shredded chicken.

**Dress it well.** Make your own dressing by following the 2:1 ratio, says Jones. This means two parts oil (such as extra virgin olive oil), with one part acid (your choice of vinegar or citrus juice). Season simply with salt and pepper, or add mustard, chopped herbs, grated parmesan, miso, capers or toasted spices.

