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**HEALTH & SAFETY  
NEWSLETTER**

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**October 2022**

## Are you **overwhelmed** by email?

**We all know the feeling. No matter how many times you respond, delete, or move your emails, the number of unread, unsorted and unanswered ones keeps building. The result is stress – every single time you open your inbox.**

"Email has become the biggest and worst interrupter the universe has ever experienced," says Marsha Egan, a workplace productivity coach and author of *Inbox Detox* and *the Habit of E-mail Excellence*. "It's cheap, it's immediate, and you can copy 200 people if you want to."

Not only that, says Cary Cooper, organisational psychology professor at UK's Manchester University, but the added stress affects our health.

"Email overload is causing people to get ill," he says. "It's a great way to keep in touch with people, particularly who are remote," he says. "It's a great way to send data, to send information. By itself it's fine – it's the way people are using it that's the problem."

Get smarter with your email by putting up some boundaries.

- **Avoid opening each email as it arrives.**

Instead, process them in a batch, preferably just a few times a day. If this isn't possible for you, then check email between other things, rather than while you're focusing on a specific task.

- **Stick to 'the four Ds'.** Egan recommends this technique for every email you receive: do, delete, delegate or defer.

If you can deal with it within two minutes, do it. Defer if it will take longer, popping it in a folder to which you return later. The key

is to deal with each message before moving on to the next, to stop them all piling up unread. If you can, delegate the email to someone else, and always delete emails you don't need.

- **Turn off notifications.** Constant dings telling you that you have mail makes it almost impossible to stay focused, and your productivity will plunge.

- **Find and delete.** There are easy ways to filter out messages you can quickly delete – for instance, any that you're copied in on that are more than three days old.

- **Unsubscribe.** Those newsletters that you thought you should read but never do? Delete and unsubscribe. The same goes for emails from shops you once bought from, or restaurants you once ate at. It takes a little longer than deleting, but you only have to do it once. ✕

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**10 October is World Mental Health Day**, a day to raise awareness of mental health issues around the world and mobilise efforts in support of mental health. This year's theme is 'Make Mental Health & Well-Being for All a Global Priority'. For more information visit [wfmh.global](https://www.wfmh.global)

# Vitamin D: a cure-all or overhyped?



**Vitamin D has become one of the 'must have' supplements. Known for keeping our bones and muscles strong and our immune system healthy, we're also told that vitamin D can help ward off cancer, heart disease, multiple sclerosis, depression and Type 1 diabetes.**

So far, research on any causal link to these conditions is inconclusive at best. And despite the hype, there's little evidence that taking a supplement of vitamin D when you're not deficient will give you any health benefits at all.

## What's the evidence on supplements?

Australian researchers from the QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute have found that monthly high-dose vitamin D supplements don't have any effect on the life expectancy of otherwise healthy people.

The D-Health trial ran for five years and involved more than 21,000 Australians aged between 60 and 79, making it the world's second-largest trial of high dose vitamin D.

Lead researcher Professor Rachel Neale said there was no benefit at all if a person wasn't already vitamin D deficient.

"There's been considerable controversy over how much vitamin D we really need,

and this study suggests if you are not vitamin D deficient, then you don't need to take a supplement," Professor Neale told smh.com.au.

"If we were to give everyone in Australia regular supplements, this study suggests there would not be a noticeable effect on health outcomes."

The richest food sources of vitamin D are oily fish and egg yolks, but they won't provide enough for your needs. The best way to get vitamin D is through safe sunlight exposure. How much time you need to spend in the sun depends on factors including your skin type, where you live, your lifestyle, the time of year and the time of day.

You can use an app such as [dminder](#), available at [Google Play](#) and the [App Store](#) to track the best time to get your Vitamin D.

The take home message? If you're not deficient, taking a vitamin D supplement will not bring you any health benefits. If you belong to a group who is at greater risk of deficiency, talk to your GP. These groups include older people, dark-skinned people, those on certain medications, pregnant and post-menopausal women, and anyone who wears clothing that covers most of their bodies. ✕

## What's a safe amount of vitamin D?

Vitamin D is one of the fat-soluble vitamins (the others are A, E and K). This means that your body doesn't excrete any excess, putting you at risk of toxicity if you take too much.

Early in 2022, a man spent over a week in a UK hospital with kidney failure, after taking 80 times the recommended daily dose of vitamin D as part of a health drive. The case study, published in the *British Medical Journal*, led to Britain's National Health Service (NHS) warning about the dangers of taking supplements.

"Taking too many vitamin D supplements over a long period of time can cause too much calcium to build up in the body (hypercalcaemia). This can weaken the bones and damage the kidneys and the heart."

NHS doctor Dr Alamin Alkundi, who looked at the man's case, said that cases of "hypervitaminosis D" were rising around the world, perhaps in response to the unfounded promises of a quick health fix in pill form.

While vitamin D supplements are generally safe, it's possible to take too much. The recommended daily adequate intake varies between 10-20 micrograms (400-800IU) a day for adults. Your national health organisation may recommend a more specific intake. The safe upper limit is 80 micrograms (3200 IU), although higher doses are sometimes used to treat certain health issues.

Studies show that taking between 1000-2500 micrograms (40,000 to 100,000 IU) each day for several months can cause vitamin D toxicity. And in case you're wondering, no you can't get too much vitamin D from sun exposure – although you always have to stay sun safe to reduce your risk of skin cancer.

# Everyone's talking about HIIT. Should you be doing it?

## What do you do in HIIT?

Most HIIT sessions, either online or in a gym, are around 10-30 mins. You'll generally do a mix of cardio and strength activities such as jumping jacks followed by pushups, for example.

You need to push your body out of its comfort zone for anywhere from five seconds to eight minutes. Aim to work at around 80% to 95% of your maximum heart rate. To calculate your max heart rate, subtract your age from 220. You should be short of breath and unable to hold a conversation.

As an example, the type of HIIT most commonly cited in studies is the "Wingate Protocol" or Wingate Anaerobic Test from the 1970s. This involves 30 seconds of cycling at maximum effort, followed by four minutes of recovery, repeated 4-6 times per session, with three sessions per week.

Remember, if you have heart disease or any health concerns, consult your doctor before starting a HIIT program.

## HIIT's promise seems too good to be true: get fit and strong in half the time. Is it true? And is it right for you?

HIIT stands for High Intensity Interval Training. It involves short sharp bursts of extreme activity, followed by a short rest. Then repeat.

An example is running on the spot very fast for one minute, followed by one minute rest.

When compared with continuous moderate exercise (CME) such as running or walking, studies show HIIT gives similar fitness benefits in a shorter time.

So what are the real advantages of HIIT, and are there any disadvantages?

### Advantages of HIIT

#### Fat loss

For most people, HIIT is better for weight loss than moderate exercise

"High intensity interval training has been shown to significantly reduce subcutaneous

fat, especially abdominal fat, as well as total body mass," says the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP). A 1994 study showed that a HIIT program resulted in a nine-fold greater reduction in body fat compared to a continuous moderate exercise program, with a more recent study from 2008 finding a similar result.

#### Cardiovascular health and fitness

Harvard Health says HIIT boosts cardiovascular fitness and produces equal or greater improvements in blood pressure and blood sugar compared with moderate-intensity exercise.

Plus, HIIT has been shown to result in a reduced risk of cardiovascular events in both males and females.

#### Convenience

A HIIT workout is quick. You can improve your fitness in less time than with other types of workouts.

You don't need special equipment. You can do HIIT at home with just your body weight.

## Disadvantages of HIIT

### It's not comfortable

You'll feel your muscles burn and your lungs pushed beyond your normal state.

### You need to be motivated

Because you have to push yourself, it's hard to do HIIT when you're feeling flat. In these cases, you might find it useful to do a free HIIT workout on YouTube or try a HIIT class at the gym.

As always, the best exercise for you is the one you will actually do. So give HIIT a go, and see if you like it.

If you're just starting out, ease into it. For example, switch between 30 seconds of very high-intensity activity and two to three minutes of slower activity. You can look for 'Beginner HIIT' workouts on YouTube or at your local gym. ✕



# Take a breath: the surprising benefits of breathing differently

It reduces stress, lowers blood pressure, boosts immunity, increases clarity and concentration and helps you feel steady and grounded. It's completely free and you can do it anywhere, anytime, even in the middle of work.

If it was a pill, the world would be taking it.  
It's breathing. Simple slow, deep breathing.



## What do we mean by “breathing”?

We all breathe, usually without thinking about it, and usually around 22,000 times a day.

Yet too many of us breathe in a way that makes us more stressed and stops us performing at our best.

When we're stressed, we tend to take short shallow breaths only from the upper chest. This kind of breathing causes a vicious cycle: the short shallow breaths tell our body we're under stress, which triggers a stress response, which in turn causes more short shallow breaths.

Most breathing exercises involve a form of controlled breathing, where you learn to harness the power of your breath.

Controlled breathing is also called diaphragmatic breathing, abdominal breathing, belly breathing, deep breathing and paced respiration.

Various techniques play around with the basic formula, but you don't have to overcomplicate it. Just breathe slowly,

through your nose and into your belly, when you can, as often as you can, for as long as you can.

## What are the benefits?

Go onto YouTube and you'll find millions of clips of “experts” telling you the astounding benefits of controlled breathing. They'll tell you it cures asthma, inflammation, autoimmune disease, as well as anxiety and ADHD.

It's a favourite tool of “bio hackers” like Wim Hof who encourage particular types of breathing (combined with ice baths!) So, what can it really do?

The undisputed benefit of controlled breathing is **stress relief**.

“Deep breathing is probably the most portable stress reliever we have,” says Mindd Foundation.

“A good, deep breath will help to stimulate the parasympathetic division of your autonomic nervous system.”

This happens for two reasons:

1. By slowing and deepening your

breathing, you're tricking your body and brain into thinking you're relaxed.

When you're naturally relaxed, you're naturally breathing quietly, slowly and deeply.

2. Deep breathing stimulates the vagus nerve – the longest nerve in your body which has a huge role to play in how stressed or relaxed you feel. Stimulating the vagus nerve activates your parasympathetic system.

When you switch on your parasympathetic nervous system, you're turning on your relaxation switch.

A relaxed nervous system in turn helps with anxiety, resilience, immunity, sleep and gut problems.

## What happens when we don't breathe properly?

The benefits of good breathing can perhaps best be seen when we look at the effect of poor breathing.

In their book, *Behavioral and Psychological Approaches to Breathing Pattern Disorders*,



“True health and inner peace occurs when breathing is quiet, effortless, soft, through the nose, abdominal, rhythmic, and gently paused on the exhale.” McKeown

### How do I improve my breathing?

Controlled breathing techniques have been around for tens of thousands of years – if not since humankind began.

The Indians called it Pranayama. They encouraged the type of breathing familiar to anyone who's done yoga: abdominal breathing, alternate nostril breathing and chanting.

The Chinese developed practices such as Qigong and Tai Chi, which match slow actions to slow breathing.

Here we introduce some basic breathing techniques based on eastern and western traditions:

#### 1. Notice your breath

This is the starting point for all breath exercises. Simply notice your breath, without even changing it. Notice the air going into your nostrils and the cool air going out.

You'll probably start to change to belly breathing as you do this. If so, notice your belly rising and falling as you breathe in and out.

#### 2. Box breathing

Also called square breathing, this technique helps slow your breathing and rebalance your oxygen and CO2 levels.

- Slowly inhale for a count of 4. Breathe into your belly, through your nose.
- Hold your breath for a count of 4.
- Slowly exhale out of your nose for a count of 4.
- Wait for a count of 4 and repeat. (Over time, you can extend the count to 6 or even 8.)

#### 3. Extended outbreath

Like box breathing, but with your exhale longer than your inhale. You should feel a little bit of “air hunger”, that is, feeling you want more air, without it stressing you out.

- Take a breath in for 4 seconds through the nose.
- Hold the breath for 2 seconds
- Release the breath taking 6 seconds, then pause before breathing in again.

#### 4. The 4-7-8

A version of extended outbreath breathing made famous by a TED talk by Dr Andrew Weil. He says the technique can help with anxiety, insomnia and cravings.

Note: Dr Weil recommends breathing out through your mouth with pursed lips to make a whooshing sound.

- Breathe in for a count of four, holding your breath for a count of seven, and exhaling for a count of eight.

#### 5. Alternate nostril breathing

This helps slow your breath and is said to rebalance the two sides of your brain.

- close the right nostril with the thumb of one hand
- breathe in through the left nostril
- close the left nostril with the fourth finger and release the thumb
- breathe out through the right nostril
- breathe in through the right nostril
- close the right nostril with the thumb and release the fourth finger
- breathe out through the left nostril

#### 6. LSD – light, slow, deep breathing.

Patrick McKeown says we should be taking light, almost undetectable breaths.

His LSD technique is designed to create “air hunger” – a feeling of wanting a little bit more air:

- Breathe in so slowly and gently that the hairs on your nostrils barely move. Hold, then breathe out in the same way, but for much longer.

“True health and inner peace occurs when breathing is quiet, effortless, soft, through the nose, abdominal, rhythmic, and gently paused on the exhale,” says McKeown. ✕

Beverly Timmons and Robert Ley list many symptoms of poor breathing, including:

- **General:** fatigue, poor concentration and memory
- **Respiratory:** frequent sighing, yawning and coughing
- **Cardiovascular:** irregular or fast heart beats, cold hands and feet
- **Gastrointestinal:** heartburn, reflux, bloating
- **Neurological:** dizziness, headaches, pins and needles or numbness in hands and feet
- **Psychological:** anxiety, tension, panic attacks.

Author of *The Breathing Cure*, Patrick McKeown, says too many of us are hyperventilating, which involves breathing too fast and taking in too much air – often through the mouth.

He says breathing pattern disorders affect 75 per cent of people with anxiety, causing a vicious cycle of stress.

# Your guide to sun safety

**You can't see it or feel it. It can pass through clouds or lightly woven material and, like asbestos and tobacco, can cause cancer. Here's how to protect yourself from the sun's ultraviolet radiation (UVR).**

For anyone who works outside, UVR is a potential workplace hazard. It can cause lasting damage to eyes and skin and is the main cause of skin cancer. You don't even have to work in direct sunlight to be affected, says Safe Work Australia, as UVR can be reflected off certain materials, such as concrete, metal, snow and sand.

## Manage the risk

Like any hazard, risks associated with exposure to UVR must be eliminated as much as possible.

Safe Work Australia recommends:

- Working indoors if possible.
- Replacing the hazard with a safer option. This could be working during the early morning and late afternoon when the risk of UVR exposure is lower.
- Isolating the risk, such as working undercover or in a well shaded area.
- Using engineering controls. These are physical control measures to minimise the risk from UVR, such as permanent shade structures, or altering a surface to be less reflective.

## Use your PPE

It's not always possible to avoid exposure to UVR so it's important to protect yourself with personal protective equipment (PPE). This includes:

- UPF 50+ clothing. UVR can pass through lighter colours or lightly woven fabrics. An everyday white cotton T-shirt has a UPF (Ultraviolet Protection Factor) of only about 5, which is why you need to wear clothing that is designed to block at least 98 per cent of UVR.
- Broad brimmed hats or hard hats with brims/flaps.
- At least SPF 30+ broad-spectrum water-resistant sunscreen. Don't rely on sunscreen alone – always use it with other sun protection control measures. Reapply sunscreen at least every two hours or more if sweating.

Want to know your risk on any given day?

Try the World Health Organization recommended [SunSmart Global UV app](#) available at both the [Apple App](#) and [Google Play](#) stores. ✕



## Ask an expert about ...

## Q Should I tell my employer about my caring role at home?

### Carers Australia replies:

While the activity of being a caregiver tends to be unrecorded, it has been estimated that up to 20 per cent of the population is a caregiver. A caregiver is someone who looks after another person who needs help with their day-to-day living.

Many carers combine the responsibilities of work and caring, because they have to. But work also provides a break from their caring role, and the simple opportunity to get out of the house and interact with others.

Whatever the reason, maintaining both paid work and an unpaid caring role can be incredibly stressful – many carers describe it as like trying to hold down two full-time jobs.

It's up to you whether you're comfortable telling your employer about your caring role.

Many of us prefer to keep our personal lives separate from work, however, in order to access certain flexible provisions or leave arrangements (such as carer's leave if it is available) it may be worthwhile letting your

employer know about your circumstances. You don't need to go into detail about your relationship to the person you care for or their medical condition if you don't wish to.

To help you decide, you may want to find out about what policies your workplace has for employees with caring responsibilities. There may be workplace provisions you weren't previously aware of. Being aware of your rights and entitlements before speaking with management will also help you prepare for discussions.



## App of the month

### Nerva – IBS hypnotherapy

If tracking symptoms or changing your diet isn't something you'd like to try for your irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), Nerva may be a good option for you. Developed by experts, Nerva can help you learn to 'fix' the miscommunication between your gut and brain with a 6-week psychology-based program. Clinically proven in a study at Monash University (creators of the low FODMAP diet) this psychological approach was found to work well for helping to manage IBS symptoms. It includes interactive content with articles, guides and animations to help reduce stress and anxiety. You can also get support from real people with an in-app chat feature.

Available free, with subscription option, from the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#).

## Walking, not extra protein, **preserves your muscle**

A trial that asked if milk was better at helping build muscle than a non-dairy milk found that, in fact, increasing walking was all that was needed to increase daily muscle building.

For the study, published in the *Journal of Nutrition*, 22 older women were initially put on diets that provided the recommended amount of protein, then were divided into three groups: those receiving whole milk, skim milk, or a non-dairy almond beverage.

On the last three days of the nine-day study, the women added extra activity by increasing their step count by about 150 per cent. This added activity was enough to increase their ability to make muscle with or without the extra protein in their diet.

We tend to lose muscle as we age, and many of us believe that eating more protein will help build more muscle and prevent its loss. But most of already get more than the recommended amount of protein in our diets, so moving more may be the answer.

## wellatwork™

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# News Bites



## How caffeine **boosts your workout**

Caffeine will improve your sports performance, whether you're a leisurely runner, casual gym goer or serious athlete.

There are about 800 studies on caffeine and exercise, Professor Ben Desbrow, a sports dietitian at Griffith University, told [smh.com.au](http://smh.com.au).

He says there's strong evidence caffeine will improve a range of sporting domains: endurance, strength, and perceived rate of exertion, or 'how hard exercise feels'. Which is good news if you're dreading that gym class.

You don't need much caffeine for it to be effective, so Desbrow's advice is to limit your coffee to no more than three to four cups a day.

Coffee comes with downsides too. Pregnant women should have no more than two cups a day. If you have too much caffeine or are particularly sensitive to it, you are at greater risk of increased heart rate, anxiety, sleep problems and gastrointestinal upsets. If you know you're sensitive to caffeine the best advice is to avoid it. ✕

## Check your **bone health**

It's easy to dismiss the bone thinning disease osteoporosis as an older woman's issue. It's true that women over 50 are most at risk, but as their sex hormones decline after the age of 50, men can also be affected by bone loss.

Other factors impact your bones, too. Certain medications (such as steroids and some antidepressants), coeliac disease or other gut malabsorption disorders, a history of extreme low body weight, or a history of excessive alcohol use can all affect your bone health.

It's never too early to see if you're at risk. Check your bone health at [knowyourbones.org.au](http://knowyourbones.org.au), and see your doctor if you have any risk factors, as there's plenty you can do to increase your bone strength before you develop osteoporosis.

20 October is World Osteoporosis Day. For more information visit [worldosteoporosisday.org](http://worldosteoporosisday.org)

# 1

## THING YOU CAN DO TODAY



## Go for an early morning walk

The internet is full of body hacks, miracle mornings and convoluted ways to supercharge our days.

It's easy to think that unless you can rise before dawn and meditate and write and do yoga and take an icebath and do a 10km run, then you might as well not bother.

But what if there was a simple way that's also free, quick, can be done anywhere and requires no special skills – or even special clothes? The benefits of an early morning walk are enormous:

### 1. Energy boost

Even a short walk boosts your energy. In fact one study showed that 10 minutes of walking up stairs was more energising than a cup of coffee.

### 2. Mood boost

Regular walking (even just for 20-30 minutes) will reduce stress and symptoms of anxiety and depression.

### 3. Heart health

Walking for 30 minutes a day can reduce your risk of heart disease by 19 per cent.

### 4. Mental clarity

A study of older adults found a morning walk increased cognitive function. Other research shows a walk outside boosts creativity.

### 5. Better sleep

Exercise in the morning promotes better sleep than exercise later in the day.

## EAT SMARTER

## Frittata

It's packed full of everything we need more of: vegetables, protein, calcium and omega 3. You can eat it for breakfast, lunch or dinner, it's cheap, it's easy and it uses ingredients you'll usually have in your fridge.

A frittata is a great way to use up vegetables that are getting soft or soggy, and you can pump it up with any meat or other flavours. And it's easy to give it an Asian, Mexican or Mediterranean twist simply by adding herbs and spices.

Although a classic frittata starts with a layer of potatoes, you can actually use any vegetable you like.

Here's the basic recipe:

- Use 6 eggs to 2 tablespoons of milk and half a cup of cheese. Mix together with salt and pepper.
- Add any extras you have on hand: onion, garlic, mushrooms, pumpkin, capsicum, zucchini, parsley, tomato, baby spinach, and bulk up with leftover meat such as chicken, ham or pork.
- Bake in a 190°C (375°F) oven for 35-40 mins. ✕



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