

Health

Secrets to slow down ageing



Forget your home – here’s how to spring-clean your body to help combat accelerated ageing...

While it might be the first thing that comes to mind, your skin isn’t the only organ that shows signs of ageing. From your heart to your brain, the passage of time impacts your whole body’s health.

We can’t roll back the years, but there are ways that we can reduce their impact. Here, our experts reveal all...

Protect your heart

Ruth Goss, Senior Cardiac Nurse at the British Heart

Foundation says, ‘All hearts naturally age over time, but exercise is key in reducing the effects of ageing on the heart – reducing your risk of heart and circulatory diseases by up to 35%. Where possible, try to do 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise per week.

‘Eating a Mediterranean diet has also been shown to help reduce the risk of high blood pressure and raised cholesterol, which can lead to heart attack or stroke.

‘Additionally, if you’re a smoker, just one year after quitting smoking, your risk of a heart attack is half that of a current smoker.’

Boost your lungs

Emma Rubach, Head of Health Advice at Asthma + Lung UK says, ‘As we age, it’s important to stay as active as possible. Regular movement is good for your lungs because it increases the strength of your muscles, including your breathing muscles.

‘Eating a well-balanced diet can also help prevent

chest infections and keep your lungs healthy.

‘However, if you smoke, stopping smoking is the best thing you can do to protect your lungs, because smokers are at a much higher risk of developing a serious lung condition.’

Look after your liver

Professor Stephen Ryder, Consultant Hepatologist and Medical Advisor to the British Liver Trust, says, ‘The liver is an incredible organ with the ability to regenerate itself, but certain lifestyle factors can accelerate its ageing.

‘Reducing alcohol intake is essential. Excessive alcohol consumption places a heavy strain on the liver, leading to a build-up of fat, inflammation and scarring. If the liver has early signs of damage, taking just two to three weeks off alcohol can allow the liver to heal itself.

‘Losing weight and improving your diet can also have a positive impact on your liver. If you’re overweight or obese, losing five to 10% of your body

weight can significantly reduce liver fat.’

Nourish your kidneys

Fiona Loud, Policy Director at Kidney Care UK says, ‘Kidney function declines by about 1% per year as we get older, but there are lots of simple things we can all do to look after our kidneys as we age.

‘Smokers are four times more likely than non-smokers to develop kidney failure but quitting helps you reduce these risks.

‘Eating a balanced diet and reducing the amount of salt and sugar in your diet can help too. Drinking plenty of fluids helps your body’s cells work better, as well as flushing out bacteria that can cause urinary tract infections or the crystals that can form into kidney stones.

‘Sleep is important too, as research suggests sleeping for five hours or less a night may directly impact on your kidney function.’

Anti-age your brain

Dr Tim Beanland, Head of Knowledge at the

Alzheimer’s Society and author of *The Brain Health Puzzle Book*, says, ‘There are steps you can take to help slow down normal brain ageing and these will also help reduce your risk of dementia.

‘Keeping your heart healthy so your brain is well supplied with blood is key. Getting regular physical exercise – aerobic and resistance – and eating a healthy, balanced diet, can make a big difference.

‘Not smoking tobacco, drinking less alcohol, and keeping on top of any health conditions such as diabetes or high blood pressures can also help you slow down brain ageing.

‘Keeping mentally and socially active makes a big difference too. One way to “stretch” the grey matter in the brain is by regularly doing puzzles. Like any muscle, your brain needs to be challenged or “worked out” to stay in tip-top shape.’

● For more info, please visit britishlivertrust.org.uk/risk, bbf.org.uk, alzheimers.org.uk, asthmandlung.org.uk and kidneycareuk.org

Listen up

Research has shown a quarter of British parents struggle to put their kids to bed, and almost half report that bedtime creates household stress. TV personality and children’s author Vogue Williams has written a bedtime story to help. Created in collaboration with Professor Helen Ball from The Durham Infancy & Sleep Centre (DISC), the story and supporting bedtime routine uses language, volume, tempo and lighting to help grown-ups get their little ones to drift off faster. Available now – simply say, ‘Alexa, help my child fall asleep’.



OW Health SOS

When things got weird at home, I had no idea who – or what – was behind it

‘HAVE WE GOT A GHOST?’



From Sarah Taylor, 32, of Berkshire

Waking up, I heard my housemates talking downstairs in the kitchen.

‘The kitchen cupboards have been opened in the night again,’ one of them was saying.

‘It’s so weird,’ said another. ‘It’s like we’ve got a ghost.’

For a while now, someone or something was opening the cupboards in the night, and we couldn’t work out what was going on.

It wasn’t just happening in the kitchen, either. Sometimes, I would wake up to find my wardrobe doors open.

Then one night, I had a fright when I woke suddenly and found myself in the kitchen.

There was bread in front of me, as if I’d been making a midnight snack.

‘What on earth...?’ I thought.

That’s when it hit me. The mysterious cupboard opener was me. I’d been sleepwalking.

When I told my housemates, we laughed about it.

‘Just don’t come into my room and watch me sleep!’ one joked.

But I couldn’t control it,

and I found that it was happening more frequently.

I potted about the house in the early hours, opening doors and eating.

On one occasion, I found myself out on the street in my pyjamas.

I went to see my GP, but I felt I didn’t get any proper answers about what I could do to stop it.

In time, I moved in with my partner Kyle, and my sleepwalking got worse.

‘Last night you took the pillows from under my head and built a pillow fort on the floor,’ he told me one morning. ‘Your eyes were wide open but you

were fast asleep.’

Another time, I ate a tray of 12 doughnuts.

It wasn’t until nine years after my first episode that I was referred for tests.

I had blood tests, an EEG to monitor my brain activity, and a 12-hour sleep test.

After that, I was diagnosed with a sleep disorder.

And while there was no cure for my sleepwalking, I was given advice on how to live with it.

I now have a more relaxed and regular sleep routine, and hopefully I don’t cause havoc around the house!

Sleepwalking

● **What is it?** When someone walks or performs complex activities while not fully awake. Sleepwalking can start at any age, but is more common in children. Causes include not getting enough sleep, stress, anxiety, alcohol or drugs, and some medications.

● **What are the symptoms?** Walking during sleep, confusion or disorientation

when waking up, aggressive behaviour, not remembering the sleepwalking episode, sleepwalking.

● **What’s the treatment?** There is currently no specific treatment, but sufferers are advised to get enough sleep and have a regular, relaxing routine before bedtime.

● **Where can I find out more?** Visit nhs.uk and search ‘sleepwalking’.

Shop Spy

As the clocks reset, upgrade your sleep with an innovative new pillow. Cloudpillo is fully customisable, with a shredded memory foam filling you can take out bit by bit, cosy and cool sides to flip between, and an ergonomic design that’s proven to reduce neck and shoulder pain. Not convinced? You can try it risk-free for 100 days. Cloudpillo.co.uk, £69.95.