

THE BEST

# HEALTH TIPS

## you'll ever read

Who said healthy had to mean boring? Living by these 10 expert rules couldn't be easier

**Break a sweat**  
If you want a real mood boost, go for the burn. A recent study has found people feel more positive after a high-intensity workout than a moderate one. "Try a moderate pace for one minute, then one minute of max intensity (so fast you can't talk). Repeat for 20 minutes. Increase to two minutes' max intensity over time," says personal trainer Jojo Head.

**Take a break**  
Step away from the screen! Studies show that when we're in front of a computer, we blink less often. "This makes eyes feel dry and gritty, and can lead to headaches, so take frequent breaks from your screen," says optometrist Sonal Rughani.

**Soak up the sunshine**  
The best excuse to catch some rays. Women are more at risk of osteoporosis than men, so protect yourself while your bones are stronger. "Sunlight is vital for generating vitamin D, which helps you absorb calcium," says Sarah Leyland from the National Osteoporosis Society. "Aim for 10-20 mins of sun on bare skin a day, but take care not to burn. Milk, watercress, broccoli, tofu and apricots are all good calcium sources too."

**Cop a feel**  
One in 2,000 women will get breast cancer under the age of 29. So check your breasts regularly and if you notice any of these changes, make an appointment with your GP, says Dr Lisa Wilde at Breast Cancer Campaign: \* A lump or thickening that is different from the rest of the breast tissue \* Continuous pain in one part of the breast or armpit \* One breast becomes larger or lower \* A nipple becomes inverted or changes shape or position \* Puckering or dimpling of the skin \* Swelling under the armpit or around the collarbone \* A rash on or around the nipple \* Discharge from one or both nipples. For more information, visit [www.breastcancer.org](http://www.breastcancer.org).

**Leave the office on time**  
Burning the midnight oil at work? It's not just your social life that could suffer. Researchers at University College London studied the health and well-being of more than 7,000 full-time employees, and found that working more than 11 hours a day increases your risk of heart disease by 67%.

**Get real about how much you drink**  
So, a glass of wine is one unit of alcohol, right? *Wrong*, says Dr Dawn Harper, GP and co-presenter of Channel 4's *Embarrassing Bodies*: "If a bottle of wine contains 12% alcohol, then a litre contains 12 units of alcohol. So in a standard 75cl bottle of wine, there are nine units - if you drink a 250ml glass, that's three units. Schedule in at least two 'dry' days a week to allow your liver to recover," she says. Government guidelines recommend that women shouldn't regularly drink more than two to three units per day. Sad-but-true fact: women's bodies can't process alcohol as well as men's. So don't try to match him drink for drink.

**Never skip breakfast**  
You know you *should* eat breakfast, but do you still skip it? That could up your risk of heart disease. Lina Patel of the British Dietetic Association explains: "Your body fasts as you sleep, raising levels of the hormone cortisol, linked with stress. Too much leads to carb cravings which, in turn, causes weight gain around your middle. Reduce cortisol by eating a high-protein breakfast within an hour of waking: try a boiled egg on wholegrain toast or a smoothie with low-fat yogurt."

**Stretch your legs**  
Those killer heels may make your legs look sleek, but they could shrink your calf muscles, making it painful to wear flats, according to research published in *The Journal Of Experimental Biology*. The good news? You don't have to give up stilettos. "Just stretch your calf muscles every day," says Lorna Taylor, physiotherapist and spokesperson for Backcare. "Place both hands against a wall, put one foot in front of the other and bend your front knee, making sure that knee doesn't reach beyond your toes. Keep the back leg straight and feel the stretch for 60 seconds. Repeat on the other side."

**Look after your sexual health**  
We all know about safe sex, but if you do slip up, going to a sexual-health clinic could help avoid heartbreak. Dr Dawn says, "Chlamydia is the most common STI in the UK - it often has no symptoms and can cause infertility. It's so sad when a woman is desperate for a baby but discovers she's had chlamydia for years. It's so easy to treat when detected early." Get a cervical screening every three years too.

**Get off your butt!**  
A desk job + love of TV + daily Facebook session = weight gain, posture problems and maybe a shorter lifespan. We can easily spend 14 hours a day sitting down, and a recent study found that people who watched TV for more than four hours a day were 80% more likely to die due to reasons linked with heart and artery disease. So whether you're at home or at work, get up and move regularly. Go and talk to a colleague rather than emailing them, or stand up when you're on the phone (this has the added bonus of making you feel more authoritative). Even fidgeting is beneficial! ♦

**5 'rules' you CAN ignore**  
**1 You must drink eight glasses of water a day**  
"Everyone's needs are different, and a better indication of whether you're dehydrated is the colour and quantity of your urine. If it's a pale-straw colour and there's plenty of it, you're drinking enough fluids," says Lina.

**2 Sit-ups give you a flat stomach**  
Studies have shown that sit-ups alone won't guarantee Lady Gaga abs - you need to combine them with cardiovascular exercise, such as jogging.  
**3 Never eat after 8pm**  
Experts agree it doesn't matter what time of day you eat. "If

you burn more calories than you consume during the day, you *will* lose weight, and if you put in more than you expend, you'll gain weight," says Lina.  
**4 Stress is bad**  
Not necessarily - recent brain-imaging studies have shown that stress may help you focus and succeed in life, while other studies have

shown it can boost your immune system.  
**5 You should take vitamin supplements**  
"A healthy, balanced diet should give you all the nutrients you need," says Lina. "Of course, sometimes when we're busy or stressed, we don't get enough vitamins, in which case a low-dose supplement is fine."