

GOAL: LESS BACK PAIN

NATURAL SOLUTION: FOOT REFLEXOLOGY

IN reflexology, a trained practitioner puts pressure on a client's foot in spots that are believed to correspond to specific organs, systems and tissues throughout the body. "The theory is that all the chi, or energy, in our body passes through those points, so we use them as a portal to access and stimulate the corresponding areas," says Robert Turner, a physical therapist at the Spine Therapy Center of the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York City. In an Iranian study of 50 nurses who suffered from chronic low back pain, a thrice-weekly regimen of reflexology for two weeks was superior in pain relief to the same amount of standard massage. "Reflexology may help by promoting the flow of chi that may be tensed up or congested in the lower back," Turner says. "It can be used on an as-needed basis for pain."

GOAL: ENHANCED SEX LIFE

NATURAL SOLUTION: PILATES

WANT a better sex life? Take up Pilates, a gentle mind-body exercise that emphasizes core strength, posture and flexibility. A 2015 Turkish study found that attending a 60-minute class twice a week for 12 weeks led premenopausal participants to experience increased desire, arousal, lubrication, orgasm and satisfaction. Pilates may benefit sexual functioning because regular practice boosts mood as well as blood circulation, according to various studies, says lead author Ahmet Gokce, MD, associate professor of urology at the Sakarya University School of Medicine.

GOAL: REDUCED SOCIAL ANXIETY

NATURAL SOLUTION: YOGURT

A recent study at the College of William & Mary found that people who consume more fermented foods (think yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, kimchi) are less susceptible to social anxiety than others, especially if they have neurotic personalities. What's the connection? These foods contain health-promoting bacteria called probiotics. "Probiotics reduce inflammation of the gut and attenuate the

body's response to stress," explains lead author Matthew Hilimire, PhD, assistant professor of psychology at the school. No one yet knows the dosage that will lower anxiety, but "it seems like regular, frequent consumption might be best," Hilimire says. That means a yogurt a day may keep social anxiety at bay.

GOAL: PREVENTING ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

NATURAL SOLUTION: THE MIND DIET

NUMEROUS surveys have found that many women fear they will develop Alzheimer's. Now there's evidence that a specific diet can offer protection. The MIND diet (short for Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay) is a hybrid of the Mediterranean diet and the antihypertension DASH plan; it emphasizes the consumption of plant-based foods, especially berries, leafy green vegetables, whole grains and olive oil. "These foods contain nutrients that have been shown to protect the brain against neurodegenerative changes," says Martha Clare Morris, ScD, professor of nutritional epidemiology at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago. Research from the Rush Alzheimer's Disease Center found that following the diet offers impressive benefits. Study participants (ages 58 to 98) who adhered to the MIND diet most diligently during the four-and-a-half-year research period were 53 percent less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease; those who did a moderately good job of sticking with the plan saw a 35 percent reduction in risk. By contrast, "the Mediterranean diet was significantly associated with reduced Alzheimer's disease risk only when strictly, not moderately, adhered to," notes lead author Morris.

GOAL: LESS STRESS

NATURAL SOLUTION: BERGAMOT OIL

NEXT time you start to feel tense, sniff bergamot oil. A study done earlier this year at the Kyoto Prefectural University of Medicine in Japan found that after women spent 15 minutes inhaling water vapor infused with this essential oil, their saliva had significantly lower levels of cortisol (a stress hormone) than it did before the experiments. Participants also reported improvement in their

moods and a decline in fatigue. Bergamot oil, available at stores such as the Vitamin Shoppe and GNC, contains two important ingredients, explains Eri Watanabe, PhD, lead author of the study: linalyl acetate, a phytochemical with a sedative action, and limonene, an antioxidant found in the peel of citrus fruits and other plants that has a calming effect.

GOAL: DENSER BONES

NATURAL SOLUTION: DRIED PLUMS

IF you're concerned about losing bone mass as you get older, consider making dried plums (aka prunes) a part of your daily diet. Research has shown that dried plums improve bone density and may even reverse bone loss. In a 2014 study involving 160 women with osteopenia (a precursor to osteoporosis), participants who consumed 100 grams of dried plums (about 10 prunes), along with 500 milligrams of calcium and 400 IU of vitamin D, daily for a year had more significant increases in the bone mineral density of a forearm bone (the ulna) and spine than did those in a control group. "Dried plums have one of the highest antioxidant capacities among commonly consumed fruits and vegetables, and they are rich in vitamin K, potassium, magnesium and boron, which are known to be important for bone health," explains study coauthor Bahram H. Arjmandi, PhD, professor of nutrition science at Florida State University in Tallahassee. Don't overdo it with the dried plums, though, or you could end up with an uncomfortable case of the runs.

GOAL: FEWER HOT FLASHES

NATURAL SOLUTION: HYPNOSIS

FEELING hot? Think cool. In a Baylor University study, postmenopausal women combated hot flashes by practicing a form of self-hypnosis that combined "mental imagery for coolness—imagining being near a lake or in the mountains where they could feel a cool breeze, gentle rain or snow—and guided suggestions for relaxation," says Gary Elkins, PhD, director of the Mind-Body Medicine Research Laboratory at Baylor. After five weeks of daily practice, participants experienced a 72 percent decrease in the frequency of hot flashes and a 76 percent drop in hot-flash

intensity. Sleep quality also improved for the women, perhaps because they had fewer night sweats. You can find self-hypnosis instructions in Elkins's book, *Relief from Hot Flashes: The Natural, Drug-Free Program to Reduce Hot Flashes, Improve Sleep, and Ease Stress*.

GOAL: IMPROVED MEMORY

NATURAL SOLUTION:
 GREEN TEA EXTRACT

GREEN tea extract—a liquid or supplement derived from green tea leaves—appears to improve memory and cognitive function as people get older, according to several recent studies. “The extract boosts blood flow and dopamine to the brain and helps people focus,” says Daniel Amen, MD, founder of the Amen Clinics and author of *Change Your Brain*,

the nerves, making it easier for you to guide stool out of your body,” explains lead author Ryan Abbott, MD, adjunct assistant professor of medicine at the David Geffen School of Medicine at the University of California, Los Angeles. “The people in our study did it as they were preparing to go to the bathroom, on an as-needed basis, but I think you could also use it regularly to prevent constipation.” For how-to details, go to more.com/perineal.

GOAL: WEIGHT LOSS

NATURAL SOLUTION:
 AYURVEDIC MEDICINE

AYURVEDA, an ancient Indian practice, posits that there are three life forces, or doshas, that influence your well-being. For each person, one dosha is more dominant than the

lost eight pounds after three months and 13 after nine months. To find your Ayurvedic type, go to more.com/dosha.

GOAL: FEWER COLDS

NATURAL SOLUTION:
 MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

FAMED teacher Jon Kabat-Zinn once wrote, “Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally.” In a mindfulness-meditation practice, heightened awareness is cultivated both during meditation sessions and in daily life. This much-studied technique (the original training program is at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center in Worcester) has been connected to a number of benefits, including a boost to the immune system. For instance, in a study done at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, healthy adults who participated in an eight-week mindfulness-meditation program experienced a stronger antibody response to a flu vaccine than did nonmeditating controls. Why? “Regular practice of mindfulness meditation may lower your levels of stress hormones, which would result in improved immune function,” says study lead author Richard J. Davidson, PhD, founder of the Center for Investigating Healthy Minds at the university. For info on training in this form of meditation, visit more.com/mindfulness.

In a Wisconsin study, healthy adults who participated in an eight-week mindfulness-meditation program experienced a **stronger antibody response to a flu vaccine** than did nonmeditating controls.

Change Your Life. The effects are short-lived, however. “Green tea extract works when you consume it but not for long afterward,” Amen says. To achieve optimal benefits, you must consume it regularly. You can buy supplements of green tea extract that you swallow or drops that you can add to other beverages. “In our clinics, we recommend 600 milligrams per day of green tea extract,” Amen says. If you’re a big tea drinker, that dose of extract translates to six to eight cups of liquid green tea.

GOAL: REDUCED CONSTIPATION

NATURAL SOLUTION: ACUPRESSURE

PERFORMING acupressure on yourself—by pressing on the perineum, the spot between the genitals and the anus, in pulses of three to five seconds each—can relieve constipation, says a 2014 study. “The pressure appears to relax the sphincter muscles and stimulate

others; good health depends on properly balancing your individual mix of these forces. “The Ayurvedic approach to weight loss focuses on diet, exercise, sleep, relationships and environmental factors,” says Jennifer Rioux, PhD, a medical anthropologist at the University of New Mexico Medical School. For instance, if you are high on the kapha dosha scale, you may be prone to weight gain. In that case, you should go to bed early and wake up early to prevent the physical sluggishness and mental grogginess that could contribute to poor decision making concerning food and exercise, Rioux explains. In addition, people with this Ayurvedic type are advised to emphasize lightly cooked or raw vegetables, whole grains, fruits and light proteins such as legumes, fish or poultry; to avoid sweet, salty, oily, rich and dense foods; and to drink four to six eight-ounce glasses of room-temperature water each day. In Rioux’s research, participants who followed Ayurvedic practices

GOAL: LESS INTENSE MIGRAINES

NATURAL SOLUTION: BIOFEEDBACK

IN biofeedback therapy, a machine provides feedback that helps you learn to control certain body functions that are normally considered involuntary, such as heart rate or body temperature. In a recent study from Toho University in Japan, migraine sufferers carried a palmtop-type computer that recorded their moment-to-moment symptoms (such as pain, anxiety, stress or irritation). During an attack, the participants performed progressive muscle-relaxation exercises and received biofeedback about their heart rate or body temperature. The combination relieved the anxiety and poor moods that often accompany these excruciating headaches and also reduced their **CONTINUED ON PAGE 118**

WHAT'S UP, WHAT'S DOWN



Vibrio infections (raw shellfish)

E. coli infections (various foods)

CASES of vibriosis, an intestinal disease often linked to eating contaminated shellfish, shot up from 2006 to 2014, according to the CDC. Because *Vibrio* bacteria thrive in warm water, some scientists connect the jump to climate change. Vibriosis is rare but potentially fatal; protect yourself by avoiding raw clams and oysters. In the same period, instances of infection by a potent strain of *E. coli*, O157, fell by almost a third. The drop is attributed to increased food safety efforts, including stepped-up beef testing, plus DNA fingerprinting of bacteria samples, which helps epidemiologists quickly identify the source of an outbreak.

2 minutes

SPEND THIS much more time each hour walking instead of sitting, and you may reduce your risk of premature death by one third, possibly because of the metabolic benefits of moving, says Srinivasan Beddhu, MD.

TELEPORT A TRAINER

WANT a personal trainer but don't want to leave your living room? Try Wello (wello.com), which offers live online workouts with certified personal trainers on your computer or iPad via two-way video; you need either a built-in webcam or an external one. Wello offers 44 types of exercise, including vinyasa yoga, high-intensity interval training and kickboxing. Once you make a selection, you're presented with a list of user-rated trainers to choose from. One-on-one sessions start at \$99 a month for four half-hour workouts, while group classes (with a max of four friends in separate locations) begin at \$49 a month for four one-hour workouts. A dashboard tracks your progress. Founded in 2011 by two Stanford MBA students, Wello was bought by Weight Watchers last year.

DECENT EXPOSURE

IF you're already wearing your Lululemon yoga pants to the grocery store, you'll be interested in the latest development: Athletic women are sporting their sports bras, uncovered, on the street. The look "shows off your active lifestyle," says New York City fashion correspondent Sofia Hedström. There's a potential health benefit, too. Compared with traditional bras, sports bras keep your weight better balanced and closer to your body, which reduces the odds of straining your spine, says New York orthopedic surgeon Howard Luks. If you're not that keen on displaying your midriff, wear the sports bra under everything.

GOOD MOVE

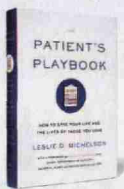
Fend off falls

WHEN you step in a pothole or slip in the shower, strong foot muscles can help you remain upright rather than land on your butt. Here, a research-proven exercise that boosts stability.



1 Standing, shift weight to left leg, then lift right leg so that thigh is parallel to ground. **2** Spread body weight evenly on heel, big toe and little toe of left foot. Lift toes on left foot, spread them apart, then place them on ground. **3** Push tip of big toe down into ground, which increases foot's arch. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat 5 times, then switch sides. Source: podiatrist and human-movement specialist Emily Splichal, DPM, author of *Barefoot Strong: Unlock the Secrets to Movement Longevity*

BOOK OF THE MONTH



THE PATIENT'S PLAYBOOK by Leslie D. Michelson. Each year an estimated 400,000 people die from medical error, but this medical-care management expert and patient-education advocate shows how savvy patients can protect themselves. A tip: When searching for a specialist, look at expertscape.com to find a nearby doctor who has published a lot in your field of interest and would thus be up on the most-advanced techniques.

PHOTO: PETER ARDITO; ILLUSTRATION: DOUG ILLUSTRATION.COM

3 WAYS TO ...

Lower your cholesterol

ONE THIRD of U.S. women have high LDL (“bad”) cholesterol, which puts them at risk for heart attacks. Here’s how to lower your level and improve your odds of a long life.

1

Eat plant sterols

WHY Sterols and stanols are plant substances that prevent the small intestine from absorbing cholesterol. One study says taking 2 grams a day reduces LDL by 10 percent.

HOW It’s difficult to get that amount in a normal diet, so manufacturers add these substances to foods such as margarine and orange juice. You can also get the recommended dosage by taking an OTC supplement called CholestOff twice a day with food, says registered dietitian nutritionist Dawn Jackson Blatner, author of *The Flexitarian Diet*.

2

Cut saturated fat

WHY Many studies show that trading saturated fat (such as butter) for healthier fats—the mono- and polyunsaturated kinds found in vegetable and nut oils, olive oil, avocados and fish—will significantly reduce LDL cholesterol.

HOW While most of us know that burgers, bacon and the like contain saturated fat, pizza (blame the cheese) is actually the biggest source of the stuff in the U.S. diet. Instead of having two slices of pizza, eat a salad first, and then stick to a single slice.

3

Increase your fiber intake

WHY Fiber comes in two forms: the soluble kind (found in oatmeal, legumes, citrus fruits and strawberries), which brings down cholesterol, and the insoluble kind (found in whole grains and vegetables), which helps prevent obesity, a risk factor for heart disease.

HOW To get the recommended 30 grams of fiber each day, Blatner advises planning your daily produce intake this way: one cup of vegetables with lunch, one cup with dinner and a half-cup for a snack (carrot sticks would be good). Add two cups of fruit daily and two cans of beans weekly, and you’re done.

A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR (FURRY) FRIENDS

PET owners are 60 percent more likely to become friendly with their neighbors than are those without animal companions, according to a survey published in *PLoS One*. Dog owners who walk their pooches are the most likely to form friendships through pets, but even cats bring people together. One survey respondent told researchers about her feline’s “hilarious” habit: “The cat steals socks from [my neighbors’] homes and then I return them. It’s a good way to get to know people.” The social-lubricant effect of pet ownership has important health implications: Wide social circles boost individuals’ physical and mental well-being.

14%

HOW MUCH YOU MAY REDUCE your risk of dying over the next seven years if you eat spicy food regularly (three to seven days a week), according to a Chinese study in *BMJ*. The seasoning eaten most often: chile peppers, which seem to have anti-inflammatory and anticancer effects.

NATURAL HEALTH BOOSTERS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 112 intensity and frequency. “Biofeedback may help by bringing on the relaxation response,” explains Randolph W. Evans, MD, clinical professor of neurology at the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. “This state of deep rest may decrease the generation of migraines and also decrease anxiety, which is a trigger for them.”

cherry juice’s anthocyanins (compounds that give cherries their pigment), says Pittsburgh sports nutritionist Leslie Bonci, RD, author of *Bike Your Butt Off*. “If the taste is too tart for you, cut the cherry juice with pineapple juice, use it in a smoothie with yogurt or almond milk and fruit, or dilute it with a flavored seltzer water,” she suggests. Tart cherry juice is now available in grocery stores.

GOAL: IMPROVED MOOD

NATURAL SOLUTION: OMEGA-3 FATTY ACID SUPPLEMENTS

IF you’re susceptible to depression but don’t want to swallow prescription remedies, an over-the-counter pill may give your mood a lift. In a 2011 review of the medical literature, researchers at the New York State Psychiatric Institute concluded that taking omega-3 fatty acid supplements containing eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) substantially improved depression. The effective supplements contained 200 to 2,000 milligrams more EPA than DHA. Omega-3 fatty acids help maintain cell membranes, including those in the brain, and have a stabilizing effect on neurotransmitters such as serotonin, which is beneficial for mood and brain function, explains David L. Katz, MD, director of the Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center.

GOAL: LOWER BLOOD SUGAR

NATURAL SOLUTION: CINNAMON

MIXING a small spoonful of cinnamon into your food can reduce your postmeal blood sugar and enhance sensitivity to insulin, a 2012 study from Ball State University concluded. The payoffs to adding this ingredient: stabler energy levels and lower blood sugar, which could reduce your long-term risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Additional research from the University of California, Davis, links cinnamon consumption to lower fasting blood sugar in people who already have type 2 diabetes or prediabetes. Add a quarter to a half teaspoon of cinnamon to your meals—say, in a rice dish, your breakfast cereal or a cup of tea—each day.

GOAL: PREVENTING POSTEXERCISE MUSCLE SORENESS

NATURAL SOLUTION: DRINK TART CHERRY JUICE

CONSUMING tart cherry juice, which is higher in antioxidants than regular cherry juice, before and after intense exercise can help your muscles recover quickly. A study from the University of Vermont found that when exercisers drank 12 ounces of the tart juice twice daily for eight days, they experienced less pain and muscle damage after completing a series of arm exercises on day four. Similarly, a U.K. study showed that when marathoners drank the tart beverage for five days before, on the day of and for two days after the race, they experienced less inflammation and muscle damage than those who drank a placebo. Chalk up these benefits to the antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects of the

GOAL: REDUCED BLOOD PRESSURE

NATURAL SOLUTION: BLUEBERRIES

CONSUME blueberries every day for eight weeks, and your blood pressure could fall by 7 mm Hg/5 mm Hg, a small but clinically significant amount, says a 2015 study from Florida State University in Tallahassee. The drop may occur because the vitamins, minerals, fiber and antioxidant compounds in blueberries work together to reduce stiffness

of the arteries and improve the functioning of the inner lining of the blood vessels, says lead author Sarah A. Johnson, PhD, RD, now an assistant professor of food science and human nutrition at Colorado State University.

GOAL: LESS PAIN SENSITIVITY

NATURAL SOLUTION:
 SLOW, DEEP BREATHING

WHEN you experience pain, modify your breathing so that you inhale and exhale slowly and deeply. This can lower your sympathetic nervous system activity (which activates the tensed fight-or-flight response), dialing down pain sensations, according to research from the University of Regensburg in Germany. Engaging in this sort of breath therapy can be particularly helpful if you have chronic pain. The key is to relax as much as you can while engaging in these breathing exercises rather than concentrate too closely on achieving the right rhythm, the researchers say. You could use this strategy either when you're in pain or when you anticipate pain (say, before a dental visit).

GOAL: Milder Menstrual CRAMPS

NATURAL SOLUTION:
 AROMATHERAPY MASSAGE

IF you have a lot of discomfort when you menstruate, consider an aromatherapy massage. A 2015 study found that women who received a massage over their lower abdomen with lavender oil experienced much more relief from menstrual cramps 30 minutes postmassage than those who did not receive the oil. The researchers note that massages produce pain relief by stimulating the release of endorphins, reducing muscle tension and increasing blood flow. Adding the relaxing aroma of lavender to the equation ups the comfort factor, because "lavender has been shown in many studies to help with anxiety, and anxiety makes pain feel stronger," says Jacob Teitelbaum, MD, an integrative physician in Kona, Hawaii. ©

STACEY COLINO is coauthor (with David L. Katz, MD) of *Disease-Proof: The Remarkable Truth About What Makes Us Well*.

GET PAID WHAT YOU'RE WORTH

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 68 a different job title, was in the salary band below mine and had less experience—she had been at the organization for almost two years, which is the same point at which I, too, negotiated my first significant raise.

I told her my salary, \$70,000, with the understanding that she could attach my name to my number when she negotiated. Arming her in this way felt uniquely satisfying: a real-time pay-transparency experiment. I checked in with her a few days after her review and found that she had secured a new title and a raise. "Having the information from you put me in a position to argue my case more concretely and confidently," she told me. "I could say, 'Here are some people I consider comparative. Given that their titles and salaries are X and Y, I think it's fair that I ask for Z.'"

Of course, simply talking about salary is no panacea for wage discrimination. Bridging the national gap demands a complex formula of public policy, buy-in from executive leadership and a broad cultural shift. But big social changes are often ignited by the brave work of individuals: women and men who may not immediately profit from their impact. Talking about pay isn't just leverage for a raise. It's about demanding what's right—for everyone. "The impact of the pay gap is felt not only by individual women but also by their families and the economy as a whole," says Gillis. "It's important for both men and women to say that pay inequality is wrong and that their spouses, mothers and sisters should be paid what they are fairly due." ©

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