

11 healthy things you must do AFTER 30

Health and fitness habits you adopt in your thirties and forties lay the foundations for the decades ahead. So what should you be doing right now?

1 DRINK THROUGH A STRAW

If you're a lover of a G&T, fruit smoothie or fizzy water, it's time to start drinking them through a straw. 'After 30, teeth become more brittle and susceptible to fractures and damage,' says dentist Dr Richard Marques of Wimpole Street Dental, London. 'Drinking through a straw protects your teeth from fruit acids and the carbonic acid in sparkling water and other fizzy drinks that starts to wear down your enamel.'

2 HAVE A RELATIONSHIP SPRING-CLEAN

In our thirties and forties, many of us settle into longer relationships. While they can be beneficial to your health, they can also be negative if bad habits creep in. A 2016 study found that people who don't feel supported by their spouse have higher levels of hardened arteries. Another study found gratitude was a key strengthener, so try to say thank you, even for the small things.

5 MIX UP YOUR TEAS

Ah, English breakfast tea, how we love you. It's packed with antioxidants and restores the soul. But adding in just one cup of green tea a day could lower your risk of heart disease and premature death, according to a new study. It found that women over 40 who drank just one cup a day had a 10% lower risk of dying early from heart disease and stroke.

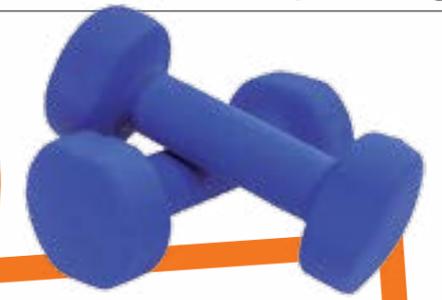


8 FOCUS ON FOLATE

Not just for those looking to get pregnant, this B vitamin is vital to all women. 'Not getting enough can lead to fatigue and anaemia, but B vitamins such as folate have also been implicated in mood stabilisation,' says dietitian Jo Travers (theharleystreetnutritionist.co.uk). It's found in foods such as leafy greens, oranges, fortified breakfast cereals, peas, avocado, kidney beans and peanuts.

3 GIVE UP SMOKING

If you're still hanging on to the habit, now is the time to give up. Do it before you reach the big 4-0 and you'll avoid 90% of the excess mortality risk from continuing to smoke. For help, visit nhs.uk/smokefree.



4 DON'T BE SHY OF WEIGHTS

Exercise in middle age leads to lower levels of muscle loss in old age. 'Weight-training makes you leaner, as you carry on burning calories afterwards,' says Lisa-Jane Holmes, personal trainer (wildcatfitnessuk.com). 'Build muscle with resistance exercises such as squats, and lifting weights.'

6 KEEP LEARNING

Research shows that the middle-aged mind is calmer and better able to process social situations. Memory skills start to decline in your twenties, but verbal and maths abilities, spatial reasoning (how your brain processes 3D shapes) and abstract reasoning (how you process information) skills all improve in your thirties and forties. So invest in your fabulous brain and preserve its function by feeding it with books, plays, newspapers, magazines and podcasts.

7 NURTURE YOUR FRIENDSHIPS

It's easy to let friendships slide when life duties crowd in, but it's important to make time for your BFFs. Research shows women with strong social networks have lower blood pressure, and reduced risk of heart disease.

9 KEEP WEIGHT OFF YOUR ABDOMEN

Weight around your abdomen is a risk factor for type-2 diabetes, and this risk increases with age. Women are at higher risk if they have a waist circumference of 80-88cm and very high risk if it is over 88cm. 'Sit-ups are not the answer, as they won't tackle the overlying fat,' says Lisa-Jane Holmes. 'Instead, you need to do high-intensity interval training (HIIT) to burn off the fat.' Check out *Davina 7 Minute Fit* (£13, amazon.co.uk).

10 EAT IRON-RICH FOODS

A recent survey found that almost one in four women are low on iron, which can lead to tiredness and poor concentration. 'Women require more than men, especially during pregnancy or if they have heavy periods,' says nutritionist Laura Clark (lecnutrition.co.uk). 'Eat lean red meat at least once a week, along with pulses and dark green leafy veg frequently. Cashew nuts are rich in iron, so add to stir fries.'



11 CARE ABOUT YOUR SLEEP

'At 30 you begin to rely on restorative sleep to consolidate memories and improve alertness,' says Dr Paul Kelley from the University of Oxford's Sleep and Circadian Neuroscience Institute. 'Eight hours is about right and six hours is too little.' ©

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