



# Nutrition CLINIC

PRACTICAL EXPERT ADVICE FOR  
YOUR HEALTH AND DIET DILEMMAS

## Q Are there any foods that can ease the symptoms of menopause?

**Dr Louise R Newson says:** "Some women find that eating foods containing high levels of natural plant oestrogens (otherwise known as phytoestrogens) can improve menopausal symptoms such as hot flushes and night sweats. Eating spicy foods and drinking alcohol can worsen hot flushes, so it may be worthwhile avoiding these.

"It is very important to eat a diet rich in calcium, as bone loss increases during the menopause, so women have a greater risk of osteoporosis. Many women turn to comfort eating, and therefore consume too much processed food and unhealthy snacks as their menopausal symptoms are affecting them so negatively. Clearly, this is not very healthy but sometimes it is hard to break this cycle without the right help and advice."

## Q Why is consuming excess salt unhealthy?

**Dr Sarah Jarvis says:** "In the UK, it is recommended that we should be eating a maximum of 6g of salt a day, but on average we are eating 8g a day, which is far too much. If we could bring our salt intake down to 6g a day, it is estimated that it could prevent more than 8,000 premature deaths each year and save the NHS £570 million annually. Excess salt in our diets raises our blood pressure, and high blood pressure is a major risk factor for stroke and heart disease, which are still two of the biggest killers in this country.

"To help cut down on your salt intake, try to reduce the amount of processed food, such as ready meals, ready-made sauces, soups and condiments that you are consuming in your diet - they often contain a lot of hidden salt, whereas when you make your own, you can monitor this. Cook with herbs, spices or lemon juice for added flavour. Don't be duped into thinking posh gourmet sea and rock salts are better for you; they contain exactly the same amount of sodium as regular table salt, so should be used in the same quantities. If you can't go without salt, try a reduced sodium salt like LoSalt which contains 66 per cent less sodium than the usual kitchen salts."

## Q How can I help prevent heart disease?

**Dr Riccardo Di Cuffa says:** "Stick to a diet low in fats and sugars. If you're overweight, then take steps to lose weight - if you do this gradually, your sugar cravings will be minimised. You should also consider drinking less alcohol. Regular or high alcohol intake can lead to a heart disease known as cardiomyopathy, while binge drinking can cause irregular heart rhythms called arrhythmias. Alcohol also contains a lot of calories which can have a big impact on how you manage your weight.

"You also need to curb your cholesterol levels to prevent heart attacks or strokes. To balance your cholesterol, try eating protein for breakfast, consuming unsaturated fats, and reducing the amount of flour and sugar in your diet. Increase your intake of omega-3 through nuts, or in moderation in oily fish. This fatty acid helps to protect against heart disease and dementia and is high in anti-inflammatory agents. Start eating more fibre, too. Experts believe that 30g of fibre a day can reduce the risk of developing heart disease. A great way of doing this is to increase your portions of fruit and vegetables."



# 30-second summary:

## Keep skin healthy



### Q What dietary changes will reduce rosacea?

**Dr Rupert Critchley says:** "With our internal organs being so intricately connected, you wouldn't expect the digestive tract to have such a close relationship to your skin, however, diet can play a key role in managing patients with rosacea.

"Many people who suffer from this skin condition may notice that certain triggers set off their symptoms. Often, food and drink play a key role. For example, alcohol and spicy foods can set off an inflammatory response causing redness and dilated blood vessels, leading to a flare up.

"Completely removing these triggers from your diet can yield hugely positive effects on those who suffer. Sometimes people find it hard to identify exactly what sets them off, so my advice would be to keep a diet diary. Writing down your exact food and drink intake and cross-referencing these with timings of your rosacea flare-ups can be really useful in identifying a dietary culprit. Once you've done this, you can cut it from your diet."

### Q How does diet affect diabetes?

**Dr Khaled Sadek says:**

"Diabetes is one of the biggest health epidemics facing modern medicine. Having a healthy diet is an important part of living with type 2 diabetes. If you are overweight, I would encourage you to lose weight - aim for a weight-loss target of five to 10 per cent of your weight.



"If you're taking dieting seriously, then you should also be careful not to eat too late in the day. It is also worth monitoring carbohydrate intake per meal, and how much alcohol you're drinking.

"My top three dieting tips for diabetics are: eat carbohydrates from fruit, vegetables, wholegrains and pulses; eat plenty of oily fish and low-fat dairy products; and reduce your intake of foods with saturated fats and trans-fatty acids.

"I wouldn't recommend buying food sold specifically for people with diabetes because they tend to be expensive and not necessarily any better for you. You can still enjoy some foods containing sugar, as long as they form part of an overall healthy and balanced diet and lifestyle."

### Q Is it true that eggs are bad for cholesterol levels?

**Dr Laura Quinton says:** "Many patients worry about eggs and cholesterol, but this is just one type of fat. Eggs contain about 5g of fat, and about 3g of this is unsaturated fat, which is good for your heart. Eggs also contain about 1-2g of saturated fat, which is fine as part of a balanced diet. You don't need to avoid eggs unless your doctor has told you to limit saturated fat for medical reasons - it's best to check.

"Eggs do not contain trans fats, which is the 'bad stuff' and best avoided. They contain a significant amount of cholesterol, but our bodies need this, for example, to maintain healthy cell walls and help nervous system function. One in 500 people will have a genetic condition called familial hypercholesterolaemia, and this should be identified and managed early. People with this condition may be asked to limit cholesterol consumption and told, for example, to eat a maximum of three or four eggs a week. So most of the general population, 499 out of 500 people, do not need to worry about this."



## Our Experts



Dr Sarah Jarvis is a GP and medical advisor to reduced sodium salt brand, LoSalt, losalt.com



Dr Louise R Newson is a GP specialising in the menopause, menopause.doctor.co.uk



Riccardo Di Cuffa is director and GP at Your Doctor, your-doctor.co.uk



Dr Rupert Critchley is a GP and founder of Viva Skin, vivaskinclinics.com



Dr Khaled Sadek is a GP and member of The Smart Clinics, thesmartclinics.co.uk



Dr Laura Quinton is a GP and student of Nutritional Therapy at CNM (College of Naturopathic Medicine), naturopathy-uk.com

- Stick to a diet low in fats and sugars to help prevent heart disease
- Cut down on processed foods to reduce your salt intake
- Eating spicy foods and drinking alcohol can worsen hot flushes during menopause
- If you suffer from rosacea, keep a diet diary to see if any foods make symptoms worse
- Diabetics should try to consume carbohydrates mainly from fruit, veg, whole grains and pulses