

ASK *the* EXPERTS

We put your fitness, health and nutrition questions to our panel of experts...

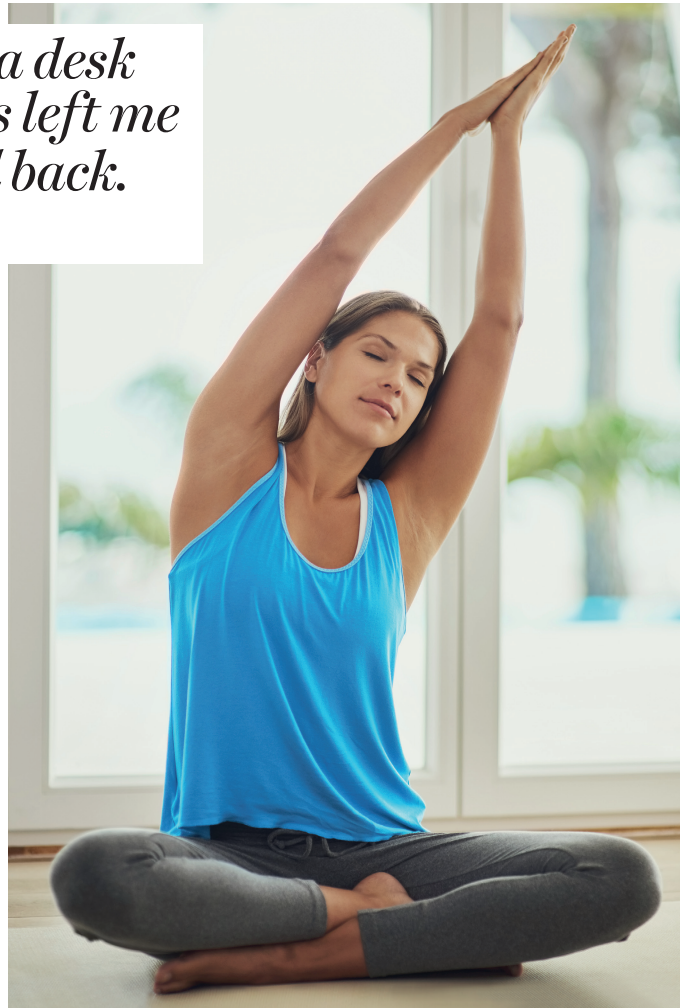
Q *Sitting at a desk all day has left me with a bad back. What can I do?*

Elite Fitness Trainer
FAISAL ABDALLA
(@faisalpmfitness) says:

Our backs are made for moving but when the muscles become weak through too much sitting, additional stress is added to the spine which can lead to lower back pain. The key to relieving this is to keep moving and follow the acronym S.T.E.P.S. (Stretch, Therapy, Exercise, Posture and Strengthen). Start with a range of mobilising stretches to ease stiff muscles and improve circulation. Begin with a spinal stretch, reaching your arms above your head. Try bending from side to side and then rotate your middle. You can also stand up with your hands flat on your desk then flex and extend your back slowly. Although it's tempting to rest, I encourage gentle low-impact exercise, so go for a walk at lunch or swim after work. Posture is also crucial so keep your ears, shoulders and hips in line and sit with your bum to the back of your chair. Finally it's important to strengthen your back muscles. Try rolling your spine down slowly and do a plank or bridge, holding the position for longer each time. While movement is key, it's useful to keep topical therapy close by. Warming products such as Deep Heat provide pain relief and can help soften tight muscles.

STAR BUY

Aromatherapy Associates De-Stress Muscle Gel, £25, aromatherapyassociates.com



Q *Why do we chant OM during yoga classes?*

Exec Warrior SARAH DRAI,
at Yogi2Me says:

"Whether a yogi or not, we have all heard the word 'OM' – it's an ancient Sanskrit word, and it is the matrix of all sounds. When it is diversified, it gives rise to all words in language. So how does this benefit our wellbeing? The idea that sound affects the health of the mind and body is not new.

Chanting and mantra recitation has been a part of Hindu spirituality and the healing power of yoga for thousands of years. Given the recent interest in mind-body medicine, it is not

surprising that it is now being utilised in modern day living.

Everything in the universe has a vibration whether we can tune into it or not. Each and every part of our bodies has their own natural resonance, and getting out of tune with this is the result of disease. Research shows that chanting 'OM' has many health benefits including:

- Stabilising the heart rate
- Speeding up the metabolism
- Focusing the mind and alleviating stress levels
- Fostering a deep mental clarity
- Leading to enhanced wellbeing and overall happiness

Q *How can I stop bloating?*

Nutritionist BERNADETTE KEOGH, a graduate of the College of Naturopathic Medicine (naturopathy-uk.com), says:

Chewing food properly, not over-eating and eating in a relaxed environment is essential for good digestion. Adding black pepper, cumin or ginger to recipes will help to stimulate digestion and try to avoid eating fruit straight after a meal as this will produce gas and bloating. Try a cup of peppermint tea, as the menthol has been found to relieve spasms and reduce bloating. Another cause can be an imbalance of good and bad bacteria in the gut – to combat this add small amounts of fermented foods such as miso soup, sauerkraut or sour pickles to your meals as they contain natural probiotics (or good bacteria). Sugar, on the other hand, feeds the bad bacteria so avoid it as much as possible. If bloating persists and there are no medical reasons, see a nutritional therapist who can help with an elimination diet or tests to work out if you have any food intolerances or allergies.

LITTLE HELPERS

Newby Tea Peppermint Tisane, £4.50
newbyteas.co.uk

James White Drinks Organic Ginger Zinger Shot, £1.69,
hollandandbarrett.com

Bio-Kult Probiotics, £32.56,
bio-kult.com

