

ASK *the* EXPERTS

Our panel of health experts answer your burning questions...



Q *“Are there any natural remedies for irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)?”*

GEMMA HURDITCH, naturopath and lecturer at CNM College of Naturopathic Medicine (naturopathy-uk.com), says:

“Symptom relief for IBS includes peppermint oil capsules, digestive enzymes, aloe vera juice and probiotics. Peppermint oil capsules work by relaxing the muscles of your digestive tract, thereby reducing pain and cramping, as well as acting as a natural antibiotic that potentially reduces the bad bugs. Digestive enzymes help you to breakdown food more effectively and can reduce bloating, gas, fullness and discomfort. Aloe vera juice is useful in reducing gastrointestinal inflammation – it improves digestion, as well as reduces bad bacteria. Prebiotics, such as apples, blueberries and green tea, can help boost beneficial bacteria. Probiotics, such as lactobacillus plantarum 299V (a strain of good bacteria), also offer help. A naturopath can help you tailor support, including with an elimination diet to identify trigger foods. Relaxing your stressed gut with breathing or journaling techniques is also useful.”

Q *“I often wake in the middle of the night due to stress. Can you recommend any techniques to help relax me back to sleep?”*

RICHIE BOSTOCK, breathing expert, says

“If you are waking up in the middle of the night feeling stressed then you need a way to be able to calm your nervous system down, shifting it from a state of high arousal to a state of rest and relaxation. You can do this in two ways. The first way is to change the focus of what you are thinking about (often easier said than done but it is possible) If you are stressed about the day ahead, or things that you need to do, I would recommend keeping a pen and paper by your bed. When you wake up write down all the things that are stressing you out.

This helps your brain to let go of those thoughts for the time being, as you know they will still be there in the morning. The second way is to change the physiological state of your body, and the best way to do this is through breathing techniques. Put one or both hands over your belly button and, when you breathe in, inhale through your nose. Feel your hands rise a few centimetres and then fall a few centimetres as you exhale. Try this gentle breathing rhythm – a three-second inhale, six-second exhale, and three-second pause. Repeat until you drift off to sleep.”

Q *“I’ve heard rosemary is good for improving memory. Is this true and, if so, how can I get more of it into my diet?”*

DAVID SPENCER-PERCIVAL, founder of Rosemary Water (rosemarywater.com), says:

“Throughout history, rosemary has been believed to enhance memory. And let’s not forget the part rosemary played in Elizabethan folklore, with Shakespeare extolling its powers of remembrance in his play Hamlet, too. Drinks with rosemary extract in them capture all the active compounds found naturally in the herb that are believed to help support brain function, as well as being a really convenient way to incorporate it into your diet. No1 Rosemary Water was borne out of the need to get more of the herb into everyday diets. There is a tiny hamlet in Italy with a record-breaking number of residents living to over 100 years old and scientists found that rosemary was a key addition to their traditional Mediterranean diet.