



ASK THE EXPERTS

Don't suffer in silence – our wellbeing wonder team of experts is on hand to answer your health questions.

“I'm a vegan – which supplements do you recommend I take?”

Naturopath **Gemma Hurditch** at the College of Naturopathic Medicine (CNM) (naturopathy-uk.com) says:

If you eat a good vegan diet – plant based with lots of unprocessed whole foods and an excellent variety of vegetables, grains, nuts and seeds – then it's going to be vitamin D, vitamin B12, iron and omega 3s that you need to keep an eye on. Ideally, get your levels of these checked before embarking on supplementation, so that you know your base levels. If you live on a diet of vegan junk food, such as white bread, chips and vegan doughnuts, you're also likely to be lacking in vitamin A, as this comes from the conversion of beta carotene (found in richly coloured fruit and vegetables such as carrots, sweet potato and kale), iodine and calcium. Make sure you increase your intake of calcium-fortified foods, green leafy vegetables, seaweed, soaked nuts and sprouted grains. I recommend getting personalised nutritional advice before deciding on supplementation. Above all, always aim to eat as many vitamins and nutrients as possible to aid this and treat supplements as a secondary option.

“What yoga moves can you recommend to help me get a better night's sleep?”

Yoga and meditation teacher **Michelle Moroney** (cliffsofmoherretreat.com) says:

To prepare for a great night's sleep, it helps to clear your mind and release tension from your body. Allow 15 to 20 minutes to do this, but even 10 will help. Set the scene – pyjamas, dim light, candles and slow, relaxing music. Let your body and mind know that it's time to wind down and release the day. Try these poses to help you feel more relaxed, too.

1. Child's pose – Consider an easier version with your knees together and arms alongside your body, not overhead. With your inhale, clench your buttocks; with your exhale, release them and feel your whole spine relax. Do this for 20 breaths.

2. Spinal twist – A gentle twist is good before bed. Sit crossed legged and bring your right hand to your left knee, twisting to the left. Sit gently in this pose. Stay for 15 long breaths, before repeating on the other side.

3. Meditation – Sit upright and as comfortable as possible. Repeat the following mantra – as I inhale, I smile; as I exhale, I relax. Sit for five minutes and allow tension to melt from your body.

“What breathing exercises can you recommend for de-stressing?”

Chartered psychologist **Dr William Van Gordon** (williamvangordon.com) says:

If you're alive, it means you're breathing – therefore, mindful breathing can be practised anywhere and at any time. All you need to do is gently rest your awareness on your in-breath and out-breath. If you're taking a walk, working, or eating lunch, you should try to do so while calmly attending to your breathing. After a short period of following your breath, you may notice that your mind starts to slow down and becomes anchored in the present moment. If you become distracted by feelings of stress or anxiety, you simply return your awareness back to the cycle of breathing. Breathe in, noticing and experiencing your external environment, and breathe out, noticing and experiencing your internal, psychological environment. Let sounds, sights, smells, sensations, thoughts and feelings come and go. Instead, remain with your breathing and let the present moment unfold around you – you'll feel calm in no time.