

Put the spring back in your step

When there's a whiff of spring in the air, you know it's time to get fit and frisky, if only you had the energy! **Marina Gask** shows you how to get tons more.

Hibernating and comfort eating may have seemed the only way to cope with the freezing cold days and grey skies of winter.

But those days are long gone and it's time to re-energise, get fit and shed the excess pounds. That means getting organised.

Health and well being consultant Liz Tucker from www.behappybehealthy.co.uk, says: "When we think about overhauling our health we are more likely to put things off, vowing to start a diet and get fit, but not doing much about it."

So start with a plan and work out a time frame for what you want to achieve, so you have a definite target to work towards.

This might mean taking a critical look at your lifestyle, as that could be one of the main causes of previous failed attempts.

Liz says: "From an emotional point of view

we often fail in our attempts to change our habits because we only look at the symptom, not the cause.

"Improve the situation and the unhealthy habits will fall away."

Now you have a plan, try these tips and you'll soon be looking and feeling great.



DIET

Whether you want to lose weight or not, a good diet is essential for boosting energy levels, making skin glow and improving mood and concentration.

Now's the time to give up the puddings, pastries and chips.

Nutritionist Zoe Firth of www.thefoodguru.co.uk, says:

"Eating junk can leave you feeling sluggish and lethargic as junk foods do not contain the slow release of energy necessary to keep you going all day without craving another sugar rush.

"After the rush comes the slump and you find yourself in a vicious circle."

Spring clean it

- Instead of processed foods loaded with sugar and fat, go for foods with slow-release carbohydrates, such as wholewheat bread, wholegrain



pasta, apples and pears. These will help keep your energy levels up, give you a feel-good boost while helping balance your moods so you can cope with stress.

- Eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day, so you're brimming with vitamins and minerals that keep you looking and feeling good.

Homemade fruit salads and smoothies give you several portions at once.

- Get organised. Not planning your meals can leave you stuck for a tasty healthy option. That's when the junk sneaks in.

- Look for foods that keep you feeling fuller for longer, such as beans, oats and wholegrains. That way you'll feel less tempted to snack on unhealthy foods.

Soup is a great option, says Zoe, especially if you make your own so it contains two portions of veg. "Liquidised food helps you feel full for longer, too, so it's excellent if you're keen to lose weight."

FITNESS



Exercise can help you lose weight and keep it off by raising your metabolism, so you burn more calories.

But that's not all it does, says GP Dr Gill Jenkins: "Apart from

stimulating blood circulation, which will help to give you a healthier glow, exercise also makes you feel more energised, helping you to look and feel younger."

Spring clean it

- Try to get your exercise in the morning. Personal trainer Anthony Mayatt of

www.breathfitness.co.uk, says: "You may feel tired at first but the feel-good factor when you finish puts you in a great mood and gives more health benefits than exercising in the evening." If you fancy a dance class before work, try [Zumba](#), the Latin inspired dance fitness programme.

- If you're exercising at home, give the Wii Fit programme a go. For all-body workouts, Anthony recommends a TRX Suspension Trainer (£178.60, www.trxfitness.co.uk).

- Don't like gyms? Then take a brisk walk of at least 30 minutes every day to get your heart pumping and put colour in your cheeks. Your local park might even have a free "trim trail" for fun circuit exercise.

HEALTH

A bit more daylight isn't enough to give us the energy and inclination to get active if we're weighed down with stress or not getting enough sleep.

Getting things into perspective will help, says Liz Tucker: "Write down individual anxieties and put them in an order of annoyance. For example, problems with a child will be much higher than next-door's cat digging up the garden.

"If you separate and prioritise your worries it makes it much easier to deal with them, rather than adding everything into one big emotional pot."

Spring clean it

● Poor sleep can impact on many areas of your life. A recent study found people with insomnia are four times more likely to have relationship problems.

Body heat, or lack of it, can be a factor. To create an even body temperature at night and prevent



restlessness, get a Slumberdown Climate Control duvet. Available from Asda, from £22.

● With little time to relax in the day we often feel drained of energy. Neil Shah, Director of Stress Management Society (www.stress.org.uk) recommends baby breathing to help chill out.

He says: "Imagine a triangle that starts at your belly button, with the corners at your hips and a balloon in your tummy that fills up when you breathe in. Hold the breath for five, then exhale and pull your navel in to your spine. Do this five times."

This helps to slow and deepen your breath and maximises the amount of oxygen in your system, which in turn helps you to feel more relaxed and calm.

● When you're feeling tired and sluggish, steer clear of caffeine – it only gives you a temporary boost – and make sure you drink six to eight glasses of water daily. Dehydration causes fatigue and makes you grumpy.

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