

FUTURE-PROOF

Think you've heard it all when it comes to lowering your risk of disease?

BREAST CANCER

stage a blackout

Researchers at the University of Haifa in Israel recently found that women who were exposed to artificial lights in the bedroom were up to 40 per cent more likely to develop breast cancer than those who slept in complete darkness. That's because the body doesn't produce as much of the breast-cancer-protective hormone melatonin in light. Try sleeping with the TV and lights off, an eye mask on, or light-blocking curtains.

get enough vitamin D

Sensible sun exposure combined with vitamin D supplementation can lower breast cancer risks by up to 45 per cent." So how much of the vitamin do you need? "You acquire enough from moderate levels of sun exposure during normal daily activities," explains Dr Andrew Penman, CEO of Cancer Council NSW.

ONLY 3-4 HOURS OF EXERCISE A WEEK REDUCES BREAST CANCER RISK BY 20-30%*

"For example, outside 11am to 3pm, this would be 10 minutes of sunscreen-less sunlight to the face, arms and hands in summer; 15 to 20 minutes in spring and autumn; and 30 minutes in winter." On top of that, nutritionist Sally Joseph advises, "A therapeutic dose of 6000 IU [international units] to 10,000 IU per day, taken as a gel cap or in liquid form, to replenish and prevent vitamin D deficiency." But before supplementing, ask your GP to check your levels.

TYPE 2 DIABETES

ditch BPA plastic

A 2008 study[†] found people with the highest amounts of the chemical bisphenol A (BPA) in their urine were 1.4 times more likely to develop type 2 diabetes. "The body can absorb BPA from plastic drinking bottles, microwave containers, cosmetics and more," warns nutritionist Vanessa Solomon. "Once in the body, it steadily accumulates because we aren't able to detoxify the daily load." Look for the BPA-free

labels when you are buying a new lunch box.

consume coffee and nuts

Get in the cafe queue: a Japanese study[‡] showed that drinking three or more coffees a week can reduce your risk of type 2 diabetes by 42 per cent (just hold the sugar). While you're there, ask for peanut butter on your toast; women who eat nuts five or more times a week reduce their risk by more than a quarter, a Nurse's Health Study[§] showed.

EATING NUTS FIVE OR MORE TIMES A WEEK REDUCES YOUR DIABETES RISK BY 25 PER CENT

PHOTOGRAPHED BY GETTY IMAGES. TEXT BY OLIVIA RICHARDSON. *HARVARD WOMEN'S HEALTH WATCH (2007). **CANCER EPIDEMIOLOGY, BIOMARKERS & PREVENTION VOL. 20, NO. 1, 181-188 (2011). †THE JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION VOL. 300, NO. 11, 1303-1310 (2009). ‡ANNALS OF INTERNAL MEDICINE VOL. 144, NO. 8, 554-562 (2006). §JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION VOL. 286, NO. 20, 2554-2560 (2002). ¶EUROPEAN HEART JOURNAL, FEBRUARY 7 (2011). #BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL VOL. 340, 2451 (2010). ~THE JOURNAL OF NUTRITION VOL. 133, NO. 7, 2336-2341 (2003)

YOUR HEALTH

These get-ahead, stay-well strategies might just surprise you

HEART DISEASE

visit the dentist

A 2010 study from the University of California suggests women who get professional dental care at least every two years lower their risk of cardiovascular problems and strokes by at least 33 per cent. Another study[#] showed those who didn't brush their teeth twice daily were 70 per cent more likely to develop heart disease than those who did. The culprit? Inflammation (in this case, in the mouth), which can clog arteries.

eat red fruit and vegetables

"They contain the antioxidant lycopene, which protects the heart," states nutritionist Lola Berry. One US study[^] found women who ate

REGULARLY SLEEPING LESS THAN 6 HOURS A NIGHT INCREASES HEART DISEASE RISK BY UP TO 48%*

tomato-based foods seven times a week reduced their cardiovascular disease risk by 30 per cent compared to those who had them less than once a week. In this case, fresh isn't necessarily best – your body absorbs more lycopene from cooked tomatoes. And your skin will thank you too. A 2008 British study showed people who regularly ate tomatoes had higher levels of procollagen, which gives the skin more elasticity and helps prevent skin ageing.

OSTEOPOROSIS

stand on one leg

"One of the reasons osteoporosis occurs is because people don't move enough and put enough stress on their bones," explains exercise physiologist David Beard, adding that weight-bearing exercise boosts bone strength. If you hate the gym, **marie claire LOVES** stand on one leg whenever you get the chance – even washing the dishes or waiting at the photocopier – says Beard. "[I]f done regularly, this strategy can help keep muscles strong and protect bones from losing calcium."

DANDELION TEA'S EARTHY FLAVOUR AND ENERGISING EFFECTS MAKE IT A HEALTHY COFFEE SUBSTITUTE

drink dandelion tea

You may think of dandelion as a pesky weed, but it's full of bone-strengthening goodies. "It contains more calcium than milk and even provides the body with vitamin D, which we need to absorb calcium," explains Berry. It can also ease period pain. For best results, ditch tea bags for loose leaf tea: "It's less processed and therefore higher in nutritional content," says Berry. Dandelion tea's earthy flavour and energising effects make it a healthy coffee substitute, she adds. "It's caffeine-free and a great liver stimulant, so if you go off coffee, the dandelion will help stimulate a mini-detox."

