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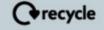
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EDITOR'S LETTER

AI IS NO PT (YET) - BUT IT IS OUR FUTURE

Like many of you, I'm sure, we in the Men's Health office have been preoccupied with the meteoric rise of generative AI and its potential impact on our lives. The nature of these discussions invariably oscillates between the opportunistic and the fatalistic; almost always, they are self-serving. So, whereas one minute a colleague might be wondering how an AI chatbot can help research an article or proofread a feature, the next he'll be panicking over whether said chatbot might end up taking his job. (Full disclosure: I asked ChatGPT if it could write this month's editor's letter. Even fuller disclosure: I've read worse.)

Advanced technology has always been viewed with

equal parts excitement, scepticism and fear. Depending on the version of history you prefer, the industrial revolution was either a period of progress, wealth and opportunity or the beginning of mechanised exploitation and environmental harm. Meanwhile, the idea of a pernicious All entity becoming intoxicated with its own sense of power is a common cinematic trope, from 2001: A Space Odyssey to, erm, Superman III. It's inevitable, then, that journalists – and creatives generally – may see these developments as a metaphorical parking of tanks on the lawn.

Earlier this year, a reporter from MIT Technology Review decided to test ChatGPT's chops by asking it to devise a 16-week marathon training plan. Her inquiry belied a rather bigger question: 'Is ChatGPT the future of how we work out? Or is it just a confident bullshitter?' The

response was both perplexing and inconclusive. On the surface, its recommendations were impressive. But in its first stab at the task, the chatbot suggested training runs of no more than 10 miles; on a second go, it advised a final long run of 19 miles... the day before the race itself. You don't need to be a seasoned runner to know that both approaches would almost certainly result in failure.

Bullshitter, then? That's not the word AI advocates would employ. They prefer the term 'hallucinator'. Generative AI works by taking prompts from the user and running them through the reams of information the model has been trained on, which is effectively skimmed from other sources. More pertinently, it is designed to deliver answers it predicts are right, based on this stored knowledge, in a friendly, conversational and ultimately convincing manner. So when it gets things wrong, it does so with a dauntless, reassuring smile on its face. Or, as one wag recently pointed out, it's like having a highly intelligent, excessively confident Oxbridge intern turn up to his first day of work experience while tripping on acid. So perhaps journalists and schoolteachers shouldn't be too worried yet.

Of course, what we should really be asking is how developments in AI could potentially help others. In last

month's issue, when we sought advice from various luminaries on how to fix the existential problems facing the NHS, many spoke to the role of tech in improving services and efficiencies for the benefit of all. 'The big difference now from when I was Secretary of State for Health,' said Alan Milburn, 'is that technology is capable of doing the things we always wanted to, but never could, because we didn't have the tools in the box. The hope has always been that tech would help facilitate an approach to healthcare that the founders of the NHS envisaged, which is to focus on prevention more than treatment. This is now within our gift.' Whether he realised it or not,

he was plainly talking about Al.

Long before the press was writing cautionary tales on how ChatGPT will undermine university degrees, invalidate A-level coursework and ransack the creative industries, *Men's Health* ran a piece on a company called JAAQ, set up by War Paint founder Danny Grey, with the express purpose of using AI to plug the ever-widening gap in the provision of mental health services.

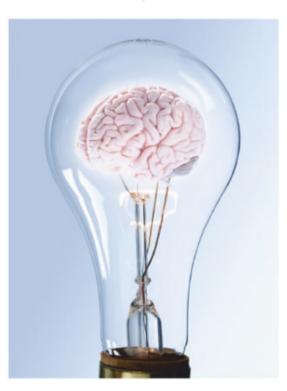
With more than 1.6 million people on the NHS waiting list for mental health care, plus a further 8 million who struggle and are denied care because they're 'not yet deemed unwell enough', it's clear that we could do with the help. Grey was introduced to the machinery behind JAAQ by Sarah Coward, CEO and co-founder of conversational tech company In The Room. It uses Al software to interpret questions and

company In The Room. It uses Al software to interpret questions and choose the most appropriate responses from hundreds of pre-filmed human answers. Crucially, it puts people in front of each other, albeit in ways we couldn't manage alone. 'As soon as I saw the tech in action,' says Grey, 'I immediately saw how it could provide access to doctors at scale. I realised just how powerful it could be.'

This kind of stuff should be nabbing the AI headlines, not the hysteria surrounding the way an anodyne trap song featuring the cloned voices of Drake and The Weeknd managed to dupe the listeners behind 20m streams – before it was pulled from the likes of Spotify and Apple Music. Even so, it was the response to that fleeting furore by Will Hodgkinson, music critic for *The Times*, that remains my favourite take on this controversial tech.

'Al can only create based on the information fed to it,' he wrote, 'which means the more your music follows a predictable pattern, the better job a machine can do of replicating it. [But people] want connection, emotion, character. Why has live music exploded in our digitally dominated age? Because we crave the authentic experience.'

The same lesson applies to us all.



USING AI TO DEMOCRATISE ACCESS TO HEALTH Expertise might prove a bright idea

TOBY WISEMAN, EDITOR IN CHIEF

MR MARVIS











TURN ON THE AFTERBURN

Increase the heat with the calorie-torching **BURPEE**

SNATCH AND LUNGE:

a heart-hammering move that builds elite fitness, fast

ew moves induce nausea quite like the burpee.
Whether you love them or hate them – or, most likely, a bit of both – there's no disputing the fact that they're incredibly effective, ramping up your heart rate while also strengthening your legs, glutes, core, arms, chest and shoulders.

But trainer Jay T Maryniak (@jtm_fit) still sees room for improvement. His twist on the move incorporates a kettlebell snatch and a reverse lunge, which is particularly good news for your abs. When you hold a weight overhead, especially on one side of the body, your core fires on all cylinders to keep you stable throughout the rep.

After hitting your chest and triceps with the burpee, you'll target your posterior chain with the lunge. That's a lot of muscle worked in one rep, maximising your calorie burn, even after you leave the gym. Deploy it as a workout finisher, Maryniak suggests. Put 60 seconds on the clock and do as many reps as you can. Rest for one minute and repeat the move for another two sets. Then have a lie down. You'll need it.

()]

HOLD ON

Begin by grabbing
a pair of kettlebells.
While holding them on
the floor, perfect your
posture by keeping
your spine straight and
pinning your shoulders
back. Put your weight
on your heels to switch
your glutes on. You're

ready to go. Hard.



O2 KICK BACK

Jump both your legs back into a high plank position. Keeping your core tight, lower slowly until your chest is in line with the weights. Push back up and finish the burpee phase by jumping your feet forwards. Now for the added value.

THE BEST EXERCISE YOU'RE NOT DOING

POWER PUNCH

Snatch the kettlebell by

extending through your

hips and ripping the

weight up above your

head. Step back into a

lunge on the same side.

floor. Push through your

your back leg forwards.

Sink down until your

back knee skims the

front heel and bring

SWAP DEAL

Return the kettlebell to the floor by flipping it back over your hand.

Perform a snatch and reverse lunge on the other side, then lower the weight to the floor.

Kick your feet back and out to return to the starting position.

That's one rep. Sorry.

WHAT YOU'LL GAIN



+

EXPLOSIV



POSSIBLE





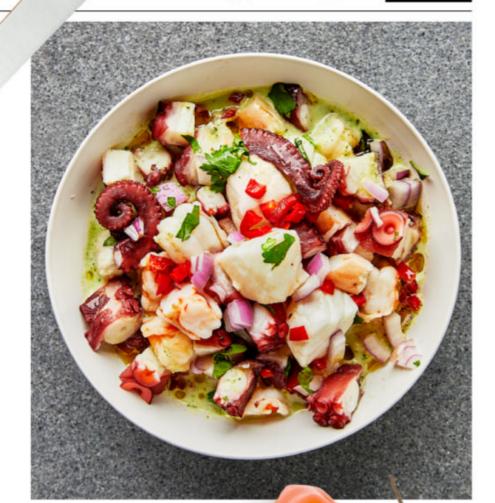
Mar by Gaston Acurio restaurant.

03

- **SERVES 8** 8 limes, juiced
- 4 tbsp fish or seafood stock
- 550g skinless, boneless firm white fish, diced small
- 1 medium celery stalk, diced
- ½ red onion, minced
- Small handful of coriander stems, chopped
- ½ scotch bonnet chilli, chopped
- 8 cooked prawns, diced small
- 1 cooked octopus tentacle, diced small
- 1 tbsp evaporated milk
- Coriander, to garnish

METHOD

In a blender or food processor, add the lime juice, stock, 230g white fish, half the celery, 1 tbsp red onion, coriander stems, scotch bonnet, 1 tsp salt and 1 ice cube. Blend till smooth. In a large serving bowl, combine the prawns, octopus, remaining fish, remaining celery, remaining red onion, evaporated milk and lime juice mixture. Mix well and adjust to taste with additional salt and/or lime juice. Garnish with coriander and serve.



02 **FRESH IDEAS**

O3 CATCH OF THE DAY

SWEET POTATO CEVICHE

Nando Chang, chef and co-owner of Miami's Itamae, created this lip-tingling, powerfully aromatic, spicy, flavourful dish. We hope you like a hot kick.

SERVES 4

- 240ml orange juice
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 clove
- 3 tbsp sugar
- 1 small sweet potato
- 4 limes, juiced
- ◆1 garlic clove, minced
- ½ scotch bonnet chilli, minced
- 250g skinless, boneless firm white fish (grouper, cod or snapper), diced
- •100g sweetcorn
- •1 red onion, thinly sliced
- •100g toasted corn
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- Handful of coriander, chopped

METHOD

Preheat your oven to 190°C. In a cast-iron pan, add the orange juice, cinnamon stick, clove and sugar. Stir until the sugar dissolves. Add the sweet potato, transfer the pan to the oven and roast for 20 mins until fork-tender. Remove from the oven and put the sweet potato on a chopping board. When cool, peel and dice. In a bowl, add the lime juice, garlic, scotch bonnet and a pinch of salt. Mix until the salt dissolves. Add the fish to a medium serving bowl, pour over the lime juice mixture and stir well. Top with the sweetcorn and sweet potato, then add the red onion, toasted corn, olive oil, coriander, salt and pepper on top.

FIND YOUK **NEXT HAUL**

Not sure where to start? Try one of these trusted seafood sources

| THE SEA, THE SEA



This London fishmonger and seafood restaurant has fresh catch every day and an expert team on hand with prepping and cooking tips. theseathesea.net

THE UPPER SCALE



Not only does it offer UK-wide deliveries and sashimi-grade fish, it

buys 90% of its stock directly from fishermen and day boats. theupperscale.co.uk

BILLINGSGATE MARKET



Most fish is directly transported from the coast and arrives in the early hours of the morning. Go at 4am if you can stomach it. cityoflondon.gov.uk







MATCH DAY IS A WIN FOR YOUR MIND

New research shows that sports fandom provides an open goal for your mental health. Here's how you can score from the sidelines

> re you a team player? According to research on 'cultural dimensions' led by psychologist Geert Hofstede, the UK is one of the most individualistic societies in the world. Though some might take comfort in the idea of Great Britain as a nation of self-reliant lone rangers, the belief that we exist independently of each other can take a heavy mental toll. After all, it's human nature to crave belonging, and researchers such as George W Brown and Tirril

NEWSFEED Harris have long demonstrated that a sense of community and social support can alleviate depression and help us deal with the anxiety

and stress that life may bring.

It's perhaps partly for this reason that sport means so much to us. A recent study conducted by psychologists at Anglia Ruskin University found that attending live sporting events can positively shift our subjective wellbeing and reduce feelings of isolation. Simply turning up as a spectator - whether it's for a cup final or a local cricket match - was found to boost levels of 'life satisfaction'. a metric associated not only with better mental health but also with lower mortality rates and good physical health. Crucial to this effect is that such events provide ample opportunities for social interaction, mitigating loneliness and fostering group identities. In other words, when we join a buzzy crowd and become invested in a match, we feel part of a collective that's reassuringly bigger than ourselves. So, focusing on your mental health could be as simple as accepting that there's no 'I' in 'team'. So will you be heading to

STRENGTH **IN NUMBERS**

Not a sports guy? Find another way to crowd-source better health



Take The Mic

Belting out your favourite song at a karaoke night increases the release of dopamine, which can lower your blood pressure, breathing rate and heart rate.



Team Up

Studies show a

weekly group fitness class can improve wellbeing and reduce perceived stress more efficiently than a solo workout session.



Get The Gig See it live:

researchers from Imperial College London found that





HOOP DREAMS

To play LeBron's high-school BFF in a new small-screen biopic, *Stranger Things* star Caleb McLaughlin hit the gym hard. And his best shot paid off

aleb McLaughlin hangs from the bar, sweat dripping from his forehead. He's halfway through his morning workout at EpiFIT Club, just west of Atlanta, Georgia, and his trainer, Mikael Hadiri, is pushing him through a pull-up gauntlet. Each set, McLaughlin switches grips, going from underhand to overhand to wide grip to narrow.

It's a tactic for back gains and serious forearm burn – and it's going to cripple McLaughlin's jump shot when he hits the court later. But the 21-year-old actor wouldn't have it any other way. 'I've been super competitive my whole life, and I've always been into, like, physique and health,' he says during a 60-second breather between sets.

McLaughlin smiles, perhaps in part because he knows that few people realise how hard he trains. He's known mostly for playing not-so-jacked teenager Lucas Sinclair in *Stranger Things*, and that role has meant limiting his pursuit of size and muscle – for now, he says with a wink.

One day, he may lift for pure brawn. But in the meantime, he's getting more out of these sessions than mere muscle mass. 'A good, refreshing workout in the morning helps me with my mental space,' he says. Plus, he's found other ways to challenge his body. His role in the upcoming LeBron James biopic *Shooting Stars* has given him a chance to show off something he's been honing for years: his athleticism. He plays















STRANGER SWEAT

When McLaughlin hits the road, this is his go-to workout. Do these exercises in order, resting 90 secs between sets and moves. Can't hit the reps? Just do as many as you can.









Dru Joyce III, the point guard who became LeBron's best friend when they played together at high school from 1999 to 2003.

It was a role that had the actor training both in the gym and on the court. In prep to play Joyce, McLaughlin hooped daily with his castmates and college ballers who were brought to the set. And while he's played plenty of basketball, he'd never faced runs this intense. 'I've worked out my whole life,' he says, 'but getting that type of training was something that I haven't experienced.'

McLaughlin is keeping up with that work today. Filming for *Shooting Stars* wrapped months ago, but he continues to train with Hadiri three days a week. And the sessions are much like this one, which started with high-rep sets of overhead extensions (to fry his triceps) and reverse lunges (for glute, quad and hamstring strength). Once he's done a few more strength moves, he hits the basketball court for suicide runs and shooting drills.

By the time he's finished with these, he's in a deep sweat. But McLaughlin battles to keep his form ultra-tight. Years of training have taught him that form is key. 'Even now that I'm starting to implement weights into my workouts, I don't ego lift,' he says. Spoken like a true gym veteran.

BETWEEN SETS

DREAM WORKOUT PARTNER?

'Michael B Jordan.
Seeing his
transformation
into his Creed
shape, I want
to see how he is in
the gym. Like, how
hard he goes.'

FAVOURITE EXERCISE?

'I love doing press-ups because you can do them anywhere.' EXERCISE YOU HATE?

'I have really strong legs, but I just hate training them.' CHEAT MEAL?

'Pizza and a vanilla milkshake from Chick-fil-A. I love chicken parmesan and calzones. I try to stay away from dairy, but when I cheat, I'll eat it.'



ALL-NEW ALL-ELECTRIC LEXUS RZ

THE DRIVE IS EVERYTHING







THROW SHADE

Alcohol 'abolishes your thermoregulatory control functions', says Zafar, meaning you can't properly sense temperature. In the winter, this is responsible for your beer jacket, but during a heatwave, it might put you at risk of heat exhaustion. If you're in direct sunlight, take a break every 15 to 30 minutes. Dizziness, nausea and a thumping head are all signs you're approaching the dehydration zone.

GRUB'S UP

Spending time in the sun could increase the appetite-stimulating hormone ghrelin. A bowl of chips might level you out when you're feeling woozy, but simple carbs spike blood sugar levels, priming you for a brutal hangover. Highprotein, high-fibre foods reduce those peaks and crashes, Zafar says, so have a meal before hitting the boozer. Already two glasses in? Order a bag of nuts.

HAPPY HOUR

There's good news, too. Sunlight fortifies your grey matter by increasing the concentration of BDNF, a protein that supports the growth, function and lifespan of brain cells, in your blood. What's more, spending time outdoors has a positive effect on brain structure and mood, regardless of how sunny it is. So, there's reason to avoid a dash for carpeted floors, even if the weather turns more 'sweater' than 'singlet'.

WHAT **HAPPENS** WHEN...

DRINK IT IN

As you bask in the sun's warmth, your body starts to sweat, sapping electrolyte minerals such as potassium. Meanwhile, booze blocks the production of antidiuretic hormone, upping your trips to the bathroom, 'a double whammy of dehydration', says Rayyan Zafar, a neuropsychopharmacologist. As well as drinking water, sub in a low-alcohol beer every other round. Hot day? Down an electrolyte drink before you sleep.

02

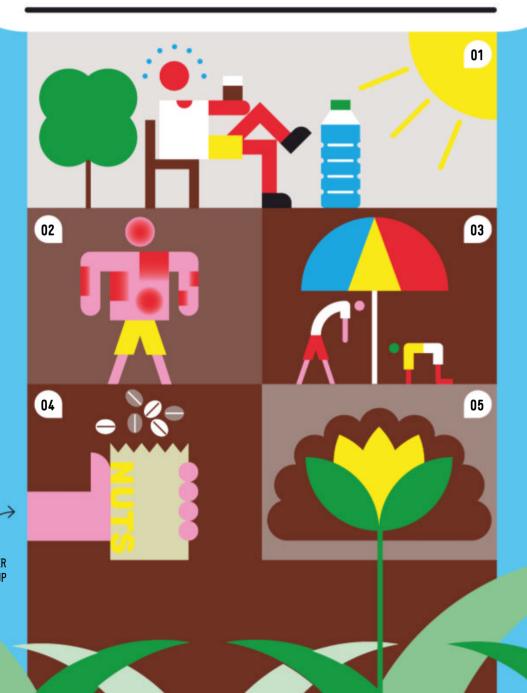
HEAL THE BURN

Sinking an ice-cold drink in the heat fires up your sunburn risk - and not just because you're more likely to forget the factor 50. Alcohol lowers levels of antioxidants in your body, curtailing their ability to protect your skin against sun-induced ageing. One small study* found that just three drinks can lower your defences. Ensure you're topped up on carotenoids via green veg, fruit or even a spicy tomato juice. That's without the vodka, ideally.

> DON'T LET SUMMER **SWALLOW YOU UP**



Sun's out, pints out – if an afternoon at the local beckons, learn to chill the smart way. Our cheat sheet will save you from unwanted side effects





If you're ready to make the transition from lido to lake, look no further. The MH Lab took the plunge in search of the best wetsuits around

pen-water swimming has made a big splash in the fitness space over the past few years, but that needn't mean diving in head first wearing nothing but Speedos and a silicone cap.

In fact, you can reap many of the benefits of an outdoor dip – strength, endurance, stress relief, a fat-burning booster shot – without flirting with hypothermia.

Even in the summer, the temperature of Britain's seas and lakes tends to remain around 15°C to 18°C, dropping quickly as autumn approaches. So, whatever time of year you intend to take a dip, a wetsuit is a smart buy, making that first wade into the waters more tolerable.

It's an investment in your fitness, too; after all, the warmer and more comfortable you are, the longer you'll be able to keep up those laps. Wetsuits also assist with buoyancy and provide protection against floating debris.

Whether you're a seasoned swimmer or are eager to dip your toe in for the first time, our edit of the best suits – tested at the *MH* Lab – has you covered. Come on in, the water's fine!

STEADY SWIMMER

82.5/100

Decathlon Nabaiji Men's Open Water Swimming Wetsuit, £179, decathlon.co.uk

Performance Design Ease of use



FUSS-FREE STYLE: This simple but effective suit is a good buy for casuals. It was speedy to put on and take off solo, and testers felt streamlined in the water.

Just note that it won't keep you warm in winter waters.

EXPERT VERDICT:

The range of motion was reasonable, but some panellists found it a little tight on dry land, although this was less of an issue mid-swim. It remains a reliable buy for fair-weather dips.



SINK OR SWIM Our MH Lab

team judged each wetsuit on three main criteria:



01/ EASE OF USE

Our testers considered how easy it was to slip in and out of each suit and noted if a helping hand was needed when doing up the zipper.



94/100

Zone3 Men's Azure Wetsuit, £159, wiggle.co.uk

Performance Design Ease of use



ON THE MOVE: The Azure's biggest flex? Flexibility. This stretchy suit provided a great fit for our swimmers, with fitted cuffs to keep out chilly water. Buoyancy pads optimise the position of your legs and hips for swimming, making it a smart choice for smashing PBs. Basically, it'll make you feel like a dolphin. **EXPERT VERDICT:** It's thick

enough to keep cold at bay for most of the year, and our testers rated the supple shoulders, which offer unrestricted movement.



03/ PERFORMANCE

Stretchy suits
that fitted
snugly and
kept our testers
warm, without
restricting their
movement,
earned the
highest scores.











Orca Openwater Core Hi-Vis, £169, orca.com

Performance Design Ease of use



safe and sound: Hi-vis orange panels make our test-winning wetsuit easy to spot in open water. The stretchy Yamamoto neoprene was easy to slip in and out of, while still providing that vital tight fit, and our testers' shoulders were able to move freely, whatever their stroke.

EXPERT VERDICT: The relatively thin fabric was supremely comfortable and kept all testers warm, with no reports of awkward bulging or pinching. If in doubt, size down as it came up slightly large for some.

04 BOARD MASTER

72/100 Regatta N

Regatta Men's Full Wetsuit, £100, regatta.com

Performance Design Ease of use



SURF'S UP: This sleek, lightweight suit, complete with a grippy chest overlay for better board control, is tailor-made for all your surfing and paddleboarding adventures. Our testers had no issues peeling it off post-dip, it delivered brilliant warmth and it dried in a flash. **EXPERT VERDICT:** It's

comfy and flexible, and none of our testers reported chafing, but some cold water did slip into the gaps under the arms and legs. Longer arms would have been nice for some of our testers.







MH VERSUS
PROBIOTICS VS
PREBIOTICS

THE INSIDE TRACT

We all know the way to a man's health is via his stomach, and these dietary additions promise to improve the lot. But which wins out?

PROBIOTICS

£55.9

The estimated value of the probiotics market in 2023, up from £40bn in 2018. Quite an appetite for better health. VS

PREBIOTICS

£6.4

The value the prebiotics market is expected to reach by 2025. Big bucks, but still playing catch-up with OG yoghurt shots.



Also known as 'good' bacteria, probiotics are microorganisms, many of which already live in our bodies. Different types offer different health benefits.









Prebiotics are plant fibres that move through your gut undigested and act as food for these 'good' bacteria.

They fuel probiotic growth, basically.

These might prove useful in any fat-loss plan. A Canadian study* found that yoghurt containing certain lactobacillus bacteria can reduce body fat by 4% in six weeks.



WEIGHT LOSS





Research* into children with obesity found that adding prebiotic fibre supplements to their diets helped reduce annual weight gain, compared with a placebo group.





















Probiotics help you metabolise nutrients that synthesise hormones in the gut, including mood-balancing serotonin, a 2020 study* from Italy concluded.



MIND



Volunteers in a University of Oxford study received prebiotics or a placebo for three weeks. The former group showed stark drops in levels of the stress hormone cortisol.

Australian research* suggests that probiotics can reduce your blood pressure and levels of LDL cholesterol, both of which affect heart-attack risk.



TOTAL HEALTH



A separate Australian study* has linked prebiotic intake to a host of benefits, including improved immune function and a lower risk of heart disease.

THE MH VERDICT: PREBIOTICS WIN!

It's damn close. Probiotics are a quick win, providing potential health benefits for your entire body. However, it's more economical in the long run to feed your own natural bacteria rather than parachute them in. Oats for breakfast it is, then – and maybe a glass of kombucha to wash it down.



THE BEST REASON TO GET EXCITED FOR DARKNESS.

Venturing past ordinary limits requires more than a dive watch.

It requires a conqueror of darkness, highlighted by a sapphire bezel shining with micro gas tubes.

It demands an impenetrable fortress capable of securing a pristine caliber of precision.

All combined, it requires a game-changer unafraid of what's to come:

Engineer M Skindiver III Beyond.



HOW I

BODY

BUILT MY

In a new online column for MH, the UK's pre-eminent boxing promoter is documenting his comeback fitness journey. Here's how Eddie Hearn lost 17kg – and won back his health

∎ddie Hearn announced his new status as a Men's *Health* columnist in a way that was entirely true to character: by superimposing his face on to the body of a young Arnold Schwarzenegger and posting the image on Instagram. Hearn might not quite be as ripped as our cover star was in his prime, but he's certainly closer than he was. Over the past 18 months, the Matchroom Sport chairman and voice of British boxing has developed a deep passion for fitness – and the results are conspicuous.

As the 44-year-old

explains to MH, it was during the summer of 2021 that he reached a point when, in his own words, 'I was just feeling shit... In my suits, at press conferences, in the mornings, I was feeling sluggish,' says Hearn. It's no coincidence that 18 months ago was also the time when Matchroom announced a huge deal with the streaming service DAZN. Behind the scenes, Hearn's workload had tripled, and his wellbeing was on the ropes. 'I just thought to myself, if you keep living this lifestyle you might die,' he says. 'As extreme as that sounds, I've got a history of heart problems in the family. I've got a job that's full of stress. I'm not really sleeping, my diet's shit, I'm not training that much. I'm



Eddie's column, Don't Call It A Midlife Crisis, drops every other Friday. Follow us @menshealthuk to ensure you never miss it. Subscribers to the MH newsletter get early access.

HEIGH₁



COMEBACK KING





you're snacking and it's a complete waste of time.' Hearn now eats three solid meals a day, including lots of carbs around his workouts, plus additional 'snacks' – usually a protein shake – between meals.

Hearn's final step towards improving his health was to switch up his training. While he'd always made time to exercise, his training had predominantly been cardio-based – long runs in preparation for race events. It took him until his early forties to acknowledge the benefits of strength training and pick up a dumbbell for the first time. He hasn't looked back.

'I want to get stronger, I want to lift more weights,' he says. 'And, on a completely egotistical level, I want to look really good in a pair of swim shorts.'

ASSAUCTRUNNER

At his heaviest, Hearn was pushing 20st. He's now down to 17st 2lb, thanks to a complete lifestyle overhaul, which included adopting a sustainable diet plan, ramping up his efforts in the gym and reducing his alcohol intake.

For Hearn, like many men, nights of heavy drinking often derailed any healthy intentions, with hangovers dealing a knockout blow to his gym time and eating habits. That's why the boozing, which began in his teens and continued into his forties – from

mindset. Hearn had always believed that if you wanted to lose weight, you just had to eat less. 'I'd never have breakfast,' he says. 'I just

'I want to get stronger – and I want to look good in a pair of swim shorts'

thought, hang out till midday, then have some lunch. But then lunch would turn into dinner and then you're hungry at night, so

HEARN'S MIDLIFE ICK-STARTERS

Want to embark on your own transformational journey? Here are three rules Hearn sticks to

Н

ICE BATHS

Hearn aims to take an ice bath or cold shower every day, and will even find somewhere to take the plunge when he's travelling. 'I have absolutely no doubt that it's been one of the major factors in my weight loss,' he says.



CONSISTENCY

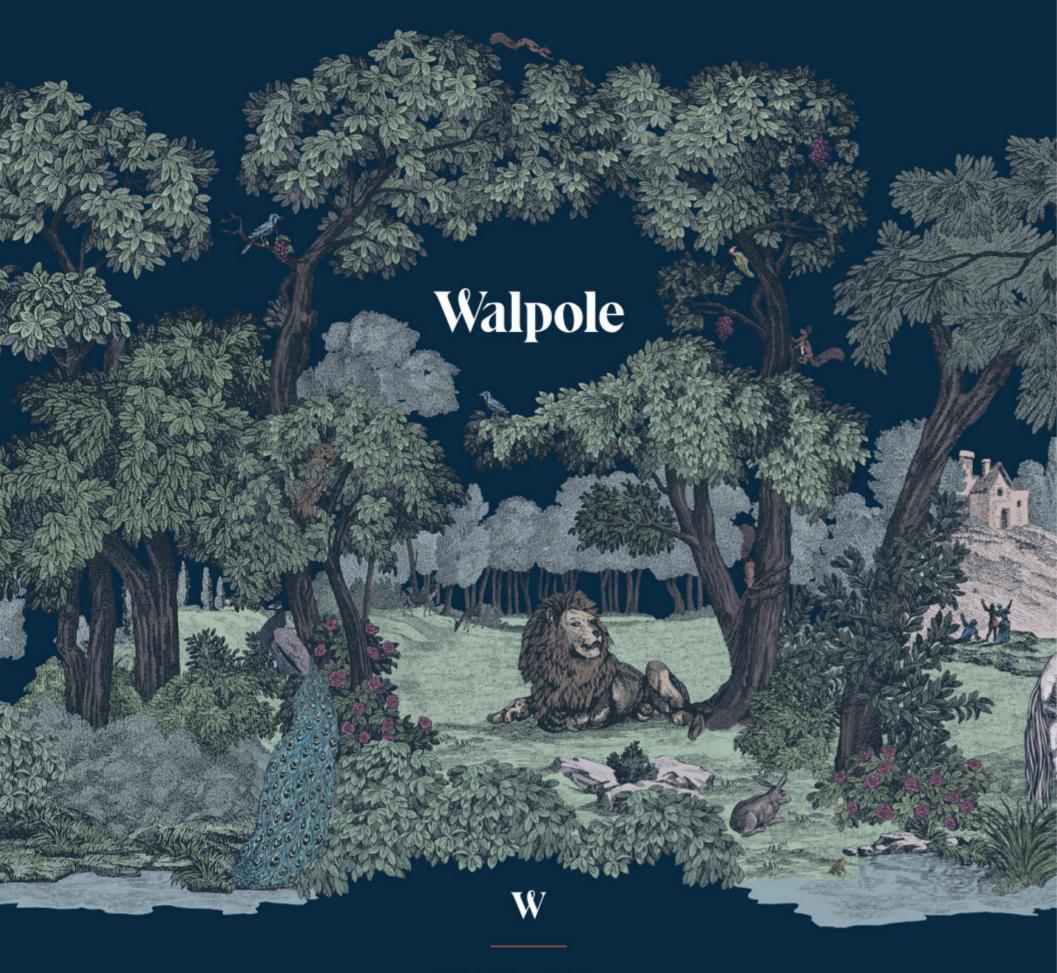
Ideally, Hearn

shoots for three strength sessions and three cardio sessions each week, but sometimes his schedule gets in the way. Still, he always makes time for two cardio and two intense lifting sessions every week.



ABSTINENCE

Hearn has cut out after-party drinks and midweek boozing, but his approach to sobriety isn't all or nothing. 'I just choose not to drink an excessive amount of alcohol. If I can avoid it, I will always avoid it,' he explains.



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16 TWICE AS NICE



BOUNCE BACK WITH A FLAT WHITE

Want a softer landing after grinding it out at the gym? Scientists have brewed up a potential salve to postworkout sores. We spill the beans

he French novelist
Marcel Proust may have
written, 'We are healed
of a suffering only by
experiencing it to the full' – but
he probably never had to endure
the unique discomfort of DOMS
after a legs day. When it comes to
the business of building muscle,
microtears (and the pain they
bring) are part of the programme.
But does recovery always have to
be so, well, agonising?

There are many well-established ways to help speed up post-workout repair, ranging from hydrating properly and fuelling up on protein for muscle-synthesis support to consuming more omega-3 fats for joint health. Among the most recent solutions, however, is one that comes with a buzz. A study published in the Journal Of Agricultural And Food Chemistry reported that the anti-inflammatory effect of antioxidants (called polyphenols) is vastly enhanced when they react with amino acids. In practical terms, unlocking this could be as simple as adding protein-rich milk to coffee, which is packed with antioxidants: that is, opting for a flat white over an espresso.

Research into the post-gym benefits of this everyday cocktail is, admittedly, in its early stages. The Danish researchers, however, are buzzing with excitement that increasing polyphenol absorption in this way could prove an effective way to ease swelling and soreness. While the science brews, we think it's worth giving it a (double) shot.



STRONGERTOGETHER

Coffee and milk aren't the only potent pairing. Try:

. OLIVE OIL + TOMATOES

Extra-virgin olive oil is packed with fatty acids and contains vitamins E and K - yet its true value is as a supporting player. According to a study in The American Journal Of Clinical Nutrition, an oily salad dressing can supercharge absorption of several micronutrients in your body, including heart-healthy lycopene, anti-inflammatory lutein and vitamin A for eye health - all found abundantly in tomatoes.

11. YOGHURT + BANANA

Chances are you combine these ingredients anyway because they make a strong topping for your morning muesli, but this pairing is a powerful nutritional one-two punch that has holistic health benefits. The prebiotics found in bananas (such as inulin) activate the probiotic bacteria in the yoghurt, supporting your immune system and keeping your digestive system in good working order.

iii. SALMON + CHEESE

Vitamin D is essential for the health of our bones, teeth and muscles, and our bodies need it to absorb calcium – yet low levels of it are common in the UK. So, pair a salmon fillet, which contains about 150% of your daily requirement, with a creamy, cheesebased sauce - or opt for a smoked salmon and cream cheese bagel. The vitamin D in the fish will help your body to make the most of the calcium in the cheese.













MH GAME CHANGERS CHPT3 TRANSIT CYCLING SHOE





A SMART WAY TO RECYCLE YOUR KIT

A new hybrid trainer that combines style and performance allows urban rouleurs to pedal hard and party harder, without a wardrobe change ommuter wear is not a new concept, per se. With the Wiggo effect of 2012 boosting interest in cycling generally, plus the fixed-wheel trend and the introduction of the Bike2Work scheme, the rise of urban cycling has brought with it a raft of apparel lines designed to take you directly from saddle to seminar to night spot. There's no longer any excuse for rocking up at work in Lycra. What to

wear on your feet, however, is another story.

'As an urban cyclist, you're

forced to

change shoes when you jump off the bike to go to work or to hang out with friends,' says James Carnes, former global creative director at Adidas. 'No one has ever designed a cycling shoe you can wear all day.' Until now, that is. Carnes has worked with British cycling brand Chpt3 to create the Transit – a hybrid shoe that's been engineered for riding in the city, but also looks like your go-to pair of Common Projects.

Being able to click into an SPD pedal, then walk immediately into bar or boardroom, means that the Transit isn't only the first cycling shoe made to wear all day – it's the first shoe that reflects the urban-cycling lifestyle. 'Cycling is the future of urban transportation,' says Carnes.

'We want to give people technology and design for the future.'



The 10mm cushioned midsole makes the Transit feel more like an athletics trainer than a typical cycling shoe, with enough stiffness for power transfer to the pedals, but soft enough for walking in all day.

£200, CHPT3.COM

OWN.

The O.W.N. Microplate is revolutionary new tech that gives the rider SPD (clip-in) compatibility and force transfer to the pedal without the stiffness of a normal plate.





50%

The Transit shoe was designed with sustainability in mind, as well as technology. The sole is made from a revolutionary 50% bio-based polyurethane material, and Carnes says that a new vegan upper made from Tencel (wood pulp) is currently under development.

THE BIG QUESTION

AMILOSING FITNESS WITH AGE-OR JUST NOT TRAINING HARD ENOUGH?

ASK MEN'S

HEALTH

Kit, Manchester

f every run, row and rep is feeling
a little tougher than it used to,
it can be tempting to pin the
blame on the passage of time.
Hollywood's veteran action heroes,
after all, are surely the exception,
not the rule. But how much of an
impact does age have on our PBs?

'From their mid-twenties men typically lose about 10% of their VO₂ max [a marker of aerobic fitness] per decade,' says exercise physiologist Tom Cowan. 'After 50, this decline usually accelerates.' Age-related muscle mass, or sarcopenia, also kicks in from around age 30, occurring at a rate of about 3% to 5% per decade.

That might sound a bit gloomy.
But think about it: that's just 1% of your fitness lost each year. To frame it another way, the average man in his forties can run 5K just two minutes slower than a man in his twenties.
Are the changes you're noticing more dramatic than that? Then there are likely to be other culprits.

It's difficult to untangle cause and effect. One study of middle-aged men by the University of Sydney,

Australia, concluded that declining testosterone was more likely to be a consequence of deteriorating health – expanding waistlines, reduced activity – than a cause. Our creaking joints and lingering fatigue can as much be a symptom of too much time behind a desk as they are a hindrance when we finally make it to the gym.

So, ask yourself: what else has changed? Are you sleeping less? Eating less protein? Are you still making it to the gym three nights a week, but finding yourself too distracted by work and family commitments to fully engage?

If lack of time is a problem, swap trundling on the treadmill for short blasts of high-intensity work on the bike, rower or SkiErg. When weight training, switch your focus to compound exercises, such as squats, bench presses, pull-ups and deadlifts, aiming to include two moves per major muscle group each week. And don't skip your mobility work, either (see right) – ageing is associated with a loss of flexibility, too. You'll be back on form by your next birthday.











Today 8pm

My stomach and bank account are at odds. Am I stuck with packet ramen?

No, just shop smart. Frozen fish, in particular salmon (£1.50 per portion), is a smart option, because it's swimming with protein and dietary fats

Makes sense... But I'm not into fish. Is there anything else?

Eggs are another good source of protein and healthy fats. How about a frittata, or Spanish omelette? You can pack in lots of veg – whatever's in the fridge.

Ah, yes, there's a ropey-looking broccoli rattling around in the bottom drawer...

Or see if the supermarket has a 'wonky' section. It can be a cost-effective way to add greens to your meals. And check the frozen aisle. Ideally, you should eat everything fresh, but frozen food does keep a lot of nutrients locked in.

I spoke too soon. The shop is fresh out of eggs. But I've found a reduced tub of guacamole for 70p. Any pointers?

Yep. Scour the aisles for chilli ingredients. Rice and beans are easy on the wallet and, when they're mixed together, serve as a complete protein source.

Nailed it. Cheers! de de de

Nick Jeffs, nutritionist at Hero; herowellbeing.com

NJ

THE FITNESS FIX

I OFTEN, ERM, 'FORGET' TO WARM UP IN THE GYM. GOT SOMETHING FOOLPROOF?

Ezra, Woolwich

Let's keep it simple, then. This plan, from MH fitness editor Andrew Tracey, will mobilise your whole body. Do 10 reps of each move, then 9, 8, down to 1.



HANDS-DOWN KANG SQUAT

Reach down and grab the front of your feet, legs straight and glutes high, then drop into a deep squat position, using your arms to drive your knees out. That's 1 rep of 10.



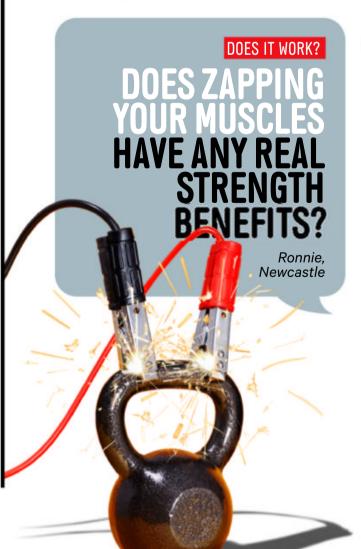
LUNGE AND TWIST

Also known as the world's greatest stretch. First, lunge forwards, then drop your right hand to the floor and twist up. That's 1 rep. Reverse to standing, switch legs and repeat.



DIVE BOMBER PRESS-UP

From downward dog position, 'dive' between your hands, lowering your hips and push the ground away. Do 10 reps. For bonus points, finish each round with a 60-sec cardio blast.



Electrical muscle stimulation (EMS) is growing in popularity, with reportedly more than 13,000 EMS studios now open worldwide. It involves slipping on an electrically wired bodysuit, which gently activates your muscles while you move. and is said to deliver the benefits of an hour-long resistance-training session in a third of the time. At around £60 a session, it's not cheap – but is it worth it? 'EMS has been proven

to deliver similar results to highintensity resistance training over 16 weeks,' explains personal trainer Lucy Gornall. 'But it should be an add-on to your strength routine, not a replacement.' For rehab and relief from muscle soreness, 'it could help', adds Gornall. But for truly functional strength and fitness gains, the work you do in the gym should mimic the way you move in the real world. The weights room still reigns.

YOUR PERSONAL IRAINERON GREAT



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rnoldTh fluencer

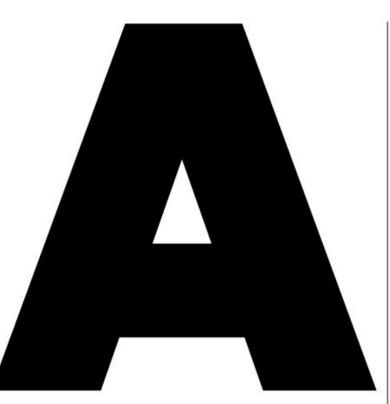
He's outmuscled and outsmarted his way to the top of bodybuilding, Hollywood and politics. Now **Arnold Schwarzenegger** is ready for his next reinvention

Words by Ebenezer Samuel - Photography by Michael Muller



PHOTOGRAPHY: GEORGE LONG/SPORTS ILLUSTRATED/GETTY IMAGES. STYLING: TED STAFFORD. GROOMING: JOANNEL CLEMENTE. LOCATION: GOLD'S GYM IN VENICE, CALIFORNIA. PRODUCTION: LYRIC PRODUCTIONS.

Cover Model Muscle **Arnold Schwarzenegger**



rnold Schwarzenegger is staring past the row of weight machines, past the chain-link fence that outlines Gold's Gym in Venice, California. He's been taking me through his five-round morning shoulder circuit, and now we're supposed to be starting the fourth round, moving from exercise to exercise with no rest.

No matter. Two women beyond the fence just snapped iPhone pictures of him – and Schwarzenegger noticed. 'Hello! How are you doing?' he says. They ask if they can take pictures. 'Of course,' he tells them. 'You're in a public place. It's a sidewalk. You can do whatever you want.'

Schwarzenegger pauses. 'Did you take the picture? How did I look?' The reply: 'Awesome.' 'You just made my day,' he says. The women smile. He wedges himself into a shoulder-press machine and pounds out 11 reps.

Immediately after that, he beckons fellow actor and friend Douglas Farrell over to flex for the cameras. When Farrell tightens his biceps, Schwarzenegger shakes his head. 'Now flex.' Farrell flexes his chest instead. Schwarzenegger nods. And when a powerlifter from Ohio, Cory Gregory (better known as @corygfitness on Instagram, with 197,000 followers), stops him, they shake hands. Minutes later, in the middle of his finishing arm circuit, Schwarzenegger stops doing dips so he can stand behind me during my preacher curls, hands on my biceps. 'Think biceps,' he says loudly. Then he leans in closer. 'Make this,' he whispers, 'your best set ever.' I crush 12 reps, and here he says, 'Perfect.' I freeze for a moment. Did he say that about me?

It's a frenzied one-hour workout – and a brief glimpse into the latest iteration of a man who's made a career out of reinventing himself. At age 75 (he turns 76 on 30 July), he's no longer the effervescent ball of muscle who jumped from the Olympia stage to Hollywood to politics. But Updated Arnold still demands attention, and

if Gold's doesn't prove that, then his 24 million Instagram followers and 6 million TikTok devotees do.

And it's all because of his ability to adapt. He's four decades removed from his bodybuilding prime and 20 years removed from his last big-screen Adonis moment (when he materialised out of thin air in a desert to open Terminator 3: Rise Of The Machines). He mills around Gold's like a rusted T-800, with lumbering steps and an ever-so-slightly hunched back. His ostrich-egg biceps have deflated a bit, and his elbows ache. He's aware that the body that set the original actionhero standard is no more. When I ask him if he still hits all the classic bodybuilding poses, he smirks. 'Yes, but only in the bathroom,' he says, 'because sometimes it makes me cry.'

But this latest evolution doesn't rely on abs or chest or biceps. To achieve his goals, he's adopted the role of influencer, using social media to foster a community and good vibes. Tune in to his Instagram right now and you'll catch videos of Whiskey and Lulu, his pet pony and donkey, or you'll see him filling the potholes that California forgot. All of that has set up bigger ventures: the Netflix release of *Fubar*, an eight-episode spy dramedy, in May was the start, shortly followed by Arnold, a three-part personal docuseries (also on Netflix), in June. And in October, he'll fix



SCHWARZENEGGER AND THE LATE FRANCO COLUMBU TRAINED TOGETHER AT THE ORIGINAL GOLD'S GYM IN THE 1970S

everyone's problems through *Be Useful: Seven Tools For Life* (£20, Ebury Edge).

'Be useful, meaning go and do something for other people,' he says, explaining the theme of his first self-help book. 'One of the rules of success is to give something back.'

e've all been influenced by Schwarzenegger, whether we realise it or not. Decades before TikTok and YouTube, Schwarzenegger used old-school platforms - books, TV and radio - to make oversized muscle cool. Pre-Arnold superheroes were often average guys in spandex. (Think George Reeves, the original small-screen Superman in the 50s.) Then came Conan The Barbarian in 1982. 'People were going crazy,' Schwarzenegger says, 'that there was a guy that actually looked like Conan, the way Frank Frazetta painted it.' Films such as Commando and The Terminator sparked an 80s filled with stacked heroes, and that era helped set the stage for Marvel's takeover.

Meanwhile, a generation of trainers (myself included) fell in love with bodybuilding. 'He was influencing me and all the other young guys who wanted to work out,' says YouTuber Athlean-X, aka Jeff Cavaliere (who has 13.3 million YouTube subscribers).

Everyone who's circled a bench press has a favourite Arnold moment. Celeb trainer Don Saladino loves the *Commando* scene in which Schwarzenegger hoists a tree on to his shoulder. Cavaliere wanted to look like him in *Predator*. If not for *Terminator 2*, I'm not penning this story – or telling my parents, 'Hasta la vista, baby' daily for a month straight.

Years after T2, I found Encyclopedia Of Modern Bodybuilding at a New Jersey library. Written by Schwarzenegger (and Bill Dobbins) and published in 1985, it covers all the fundamentals, such as power training and range of motion – and it's a musclehead must-read. (Cavaliere has two copies.) There are old photos of Schwarzenegger in it, too, and as I thumbed through, my life's goal was forged: Grow. Big. Biceps. His shredded physique and action-hero archetype inspired guys to try to become their most well-muscled selves.

Not that Prime Arnold's influence was perfect. By spotlighting bodybuilding culture and being open about his steroid use, he drew attention to performance-



enhancing drugs (PEDs). And with each blockbuster, he gave men a compelling reason to consider them: if you could build the ideal muscular aesthetic, you could follow in his footsteps and reach megastardom.

This wasn't the fitness legacy he'd imagined. Schwarzenegger would prefer if his legacy were more defined by his morning workouts at Gold's. The routines are like today's: 25 to 30 total sets, often in *Terminator* sunglasses. The focus isn't raw muscle; he spends time talking and posing for photos. He trains to 'stay alive, to be able to do my movies'.

He comes to Gold's partly for the atmosphere, which reminds him of his youth in Thal, a village in Austria, 60 years ago. He remembers his first time doing pull-ups, as a 15-year-old with friends, repping out on tree branches. He did two reps, but the older weightlifters promised he'd be able to do 20 reps eventually – if he kept working. Days later, they asked him to join their weightlifting club, Athletik Union Graz. From then on, he always had a partner.

He brought that approach to the original Gold's in Venice, a tiny box of a gym, in the 70s. Back then, he trained with fellow Olympia competitors Franco Columbu, Frank Zane and Dave Draper. All went on to have illustrious bodybuilding careers. 'There's a certain energy in the gym that we used to have,' he says. 'And I wanted everyone to feel that joy.'

But when Schwarzenegger realised that few bodybuilders were doing TV interviews and

Speed Round

Favourite exercise of all time?

'If you do one thing, clean and press. It covers everything.'

Any exercises you hate?

'Abdominal twists. They're bad for your back, and they don't spot reduce.'

Favourite film you've been in?

'I can't choose. All are great. The action movies were the hardest to film.'

Favourite cheat meal?

'Schnitzel! And kaiserschmarrn. I use my mother's recipe for both.'

Favourite gym song?

'None. At home, or when I'm driving, I listen to 50s/60s music and country-western.'

Euphemism for sex?

'At my age, sex is becoming a four-letter word: help!'

growing the sport, he began 'influencing', 70s-style. 'I never looked at myself as the term influencer, because it's a new word. But I always tried to use the media to spread my message.'

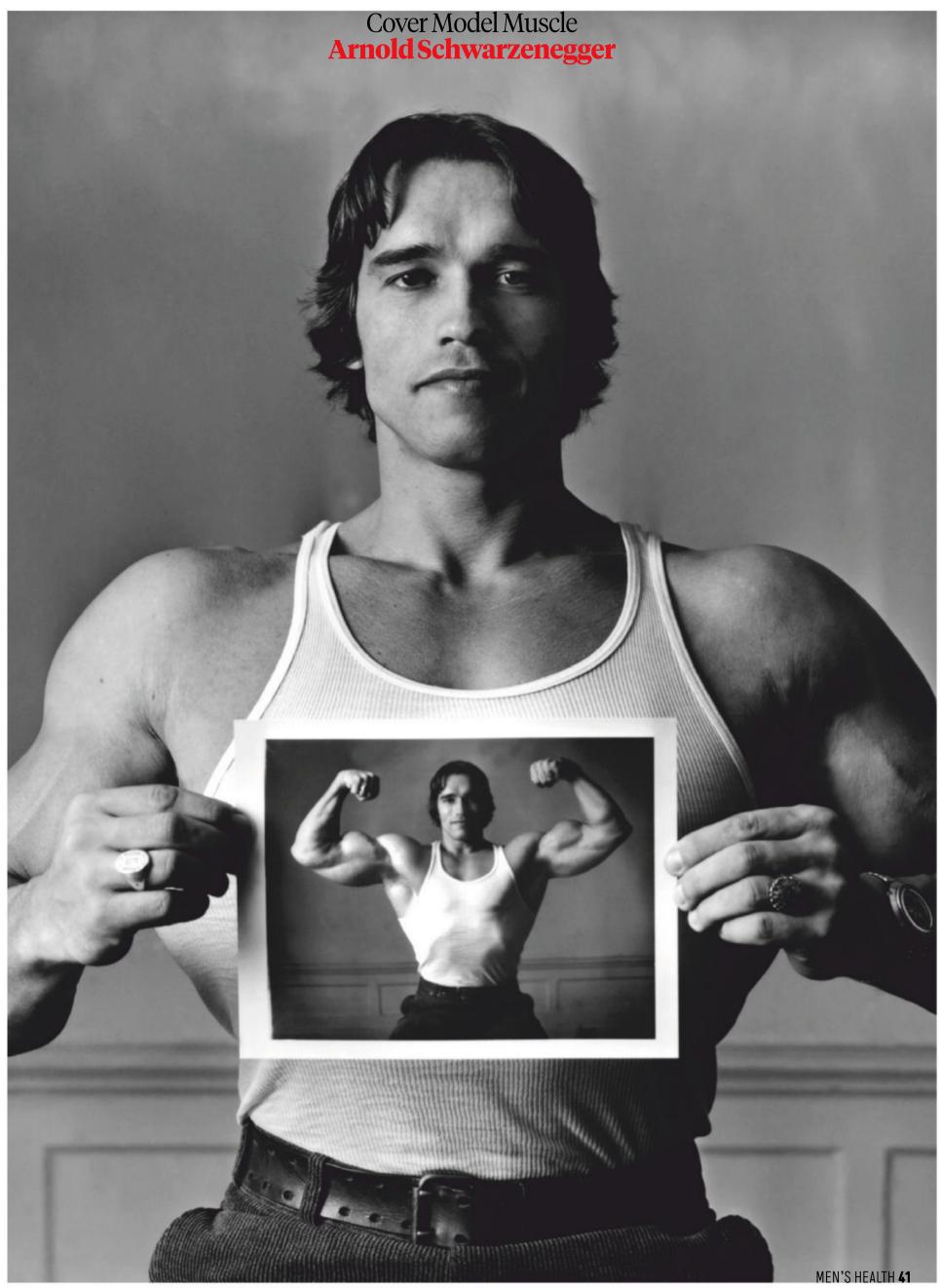
Watch *Pumping Iron*, the 1977 documentary on bodybuilding, and you'll see the likes of Columbu and Zane lifting in silence. Lou Ferrigno, the doc's other star alongside Schwarzenegger, trains at home, stone-faced. Meanwhile, Schwarzenegger jokes throughout, delivering one particularly legendary soliloquy comparing the 'pump' you feel after an exercise to 'coming'.

'I was much more casual, much more fun,' he says, before making a statement that's proved true in everything from bodybuilding to Hollywood to politics. 'How do you make the people know about your product? Schwarzenegger.'

He channels that casual, fun attitude during our workout. I lag behind him into the second round of shoulders, used to training with people who want to focus. But as Schwarzenegger approaches the lateral-raise machine, he yells at me to hurry up, then to put away my phone. (I was trying to sneak a few pics.) Only then does he begin his set – with a request. 'Why is my training partner not counting out my reps,' he wonders, 'like Franco used to do?'

All at once, he keeps me loose, energised – and he imparts the gym wisdom I crave. I count his





© ELLIOTT ERWITT/MAGNUM PHOTOS. ARNOLD WEARS: (PREVIOUS PAGE) SHIRT, RHONE; TROUSERS, POLO RALPH LAUREN; WATCH, AUDEMARS PIGUET

Cover Model Muscle **Arnold Schwarzenegger**

reps, then he counts mine – and sees that I'm cutting my range of motion just short because he doesn't hear the weights clanking as I lower on each rep. 'Why rob it of one-tenth of the movement?' he asks. 'Which could be – we don't know – but which could be one-tenth of the growth?'

chwarzenegger has always been a master of identifying opportunities that others miss. And the way he sees it, that makes him responsible for more than simply fixing my lateral raise. 'I didn't plan to be the action star in movies,' he says. 'I didn't plan to be governor of the state of California. I didn't plan on being the warrior for a clean environment – or any of those things. When I see there's a vacuum... what the fuck's the matter with these people? Then I jump in.'

That includes jumping in to solve problems he helped create, which is why Schwarzenegger has spent the past few years working hard to shift the fitness narrative away from mirror muscles and towards long-term wellness (although it'll always be about the pump, too). This process actually began 34 years ago, with his Arnold Sports Festival. The yearly event is highlighted by a bodybuilding competition (of course), but Schwarzenegger says its true purpose is to celebrate more than just muscle, hosting more than 50 different sports.

It offers a chance for Schwarzenegger to undo one of fitness's greatest myths: that the ultimate barometer of your fitness is your physique. The more Prime Arnold flicks you've watched, the more you might think biceps solve everything. That was never his belief. 'In the beginning,' he says, 'my message was, "Hey, everyone, wake up. We all have to do something." His festival includes disabled divisions that have invited a variety of athletes, such as the late Karen Skålvoll, who set a deadlift world record with an oxygen tank in 2017.

But the Arnold fest can't fix the enduring problem of PED use. Among bodybuilders, it's well-known that you stand little chance of competing if you're not using. Influencers routinely detail their PED regimens on YouTube. As testosterone-replacement therapy (TRT) marches towards mainstream acceptance, more and more lifters are openly aligning with TRT clinics on Instagram and Facebook.

In old clips from his bodybuilding days, Schwarzenegger doesn't deny taking steroids – and he's even more open when I ask about what he took. 'One hundred milligrams a week,' he says of his testosterone usage, 'and then three Dianabol [a steroid still popular among bodybuilders] a day, so that was 15mg a day.'

He insists his usage was completely unlike today's steroid abuse. Steroids weren't illegal in the US until 1990, when Congress passed the Anabolic Steroids Control Act. Secondly, Schwarzenegger says, he only took them under a doctor's supervision. That, he says, is different





'I hope my story inspires people to find their vision'

from how lifters acquire their PEDs today. 'Bodybuilding always, always, was considered a safe sport. But now it's not. Now people are dying – they're dying because of overdoses of drugs and they don't know what the fuck they're doing. They're listening to charlatans. If I want to get medical advice from a doctor, I go to UCLA or [...] the Cleveland Clinic.'

He's trying to say the right things but knows he's a flawed messenger. 'Don't go there,' he says. 'Yes, we're at a time now where we always look for the easy way to make money, the fast way to get rich, the easy way to be an influencer. Any time you abuse the body, you're going to regret it. So I just want young people to know that I have seen people getting kidney transplants and suffering tremendously from it.'

He gets that you don't want to listen, comparing himself to a rock climber who takes major risks, then tells others not to. 'I recognise the fact that, who am I to say this? This is the guy who climbed without a rope.'

chwarzenegger's latest
evolution positions him to
try to solve some of these
fitness issues – and some social
media problems as well. It starts with
his transparency on PED use. Whatever
Young Arnold did can't be changed, but
Today's Arnold is all about that influencer
buzzword: authenticity. And it continues
with a heavy dose of Motivational Arnold
across multiple platforms. There's *Be Useful*, which he hopes will help with the
'crisis of utility' he believes is wrecking
humanity. (He's open to a Marvel movie,
too. 'If the role is right!' he says.)

The *Arnold* doc excites him more than any other project. He's barely interested in talking about *Fubar*, saying only that



NETFLIX'S ARNOLD (TOP LEFT) AND FUBAR (BELOW LEFT) HAVE KEPT SCHWARZENEGGER BUSY, AND A SELF-HELP BOOK IS FORTHCOMING. NONE OF THAT HAS PREVENTED HIM FROM TRAINING REGULARLY. 'I'M ADDICTED,'HE SAYS.'I HAVE NO CHOICE'

the script reminded him of *True Lies*. The three-part docuseries, which chronicles his three distinct careers (athlete, actor and politician), marks the first time he's been interviewed for a project on his life. 'I said no to projects like this for years,' he says, 'but I've seen how many people are inspired by my story. I hope it inspires millions of people to find their vision.'

He's borrowing from the modern playbook of influencerism, too, delivering daily fitness wisdom to his audience with a free email newsletter. *Arnold's Pump Club*, started in January, already has 431,000 subscribers. Email newsletters are an increasingly popular way for influencers to bypass social media algorithms and connect with their most fervent followers.

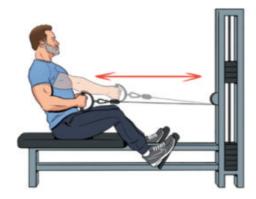
The newsletter overflows with quick workouts and mindset advice from

Schwarzenegger, as well as the occasional rant on society. In April, he slammed influencer culture for being full of 'bullshit artists and charlatans and outrage salespeople', and various websites wrote about his diatribe. He didn't mind. He recalls a Russian weightlifter, Yury Vlasov, who inspired him in his youth. 'You have to become the Yury Vlasov for the millions of people who come up to you,' he says, 'because it has an effect on all of them. Then they eventually will be somebody, and then they'll do the same for somebody else.'

The goal, I'm starting to understand, has always been about more than biceps. It's been about impact. And I can't help wondering if maybe that's why Schwarzenegger let me join him in his morning workout, pushing me hard on that final set of biceps curls and showing me his secret to strong rear delts. (His tip: keep your chest off the pad during machine rear-delt flys.) But Schwarzenegger had other reasons. 'It's teamwork,' he says. 'You inspire me. I inspire you.' Just like those old Gold's Gym days, when his influence reached only his workout buddies. "

Rise Of The Machines

Schwarzenegger trains mostly with machines now to work around injuries and create muscle-building time under tension. Here are his three top moves



01 CABLE ROW

► He's had no serious back injuries, so he's able to focus on getting a mid-back pump during these. (Bonus: back training will keep your shoulders healthier, too.) Aim for 3 sets of 12 to 15 reps.



02 PULLOVER

► This classic – which blasts your lats and develops ab strength – has been one of Schwarzenegger's go-to moves for decades. 'I've done this since my original Gold's Gym days,' he says. Start with 3 or 4 sets of 10 to 12 reps.



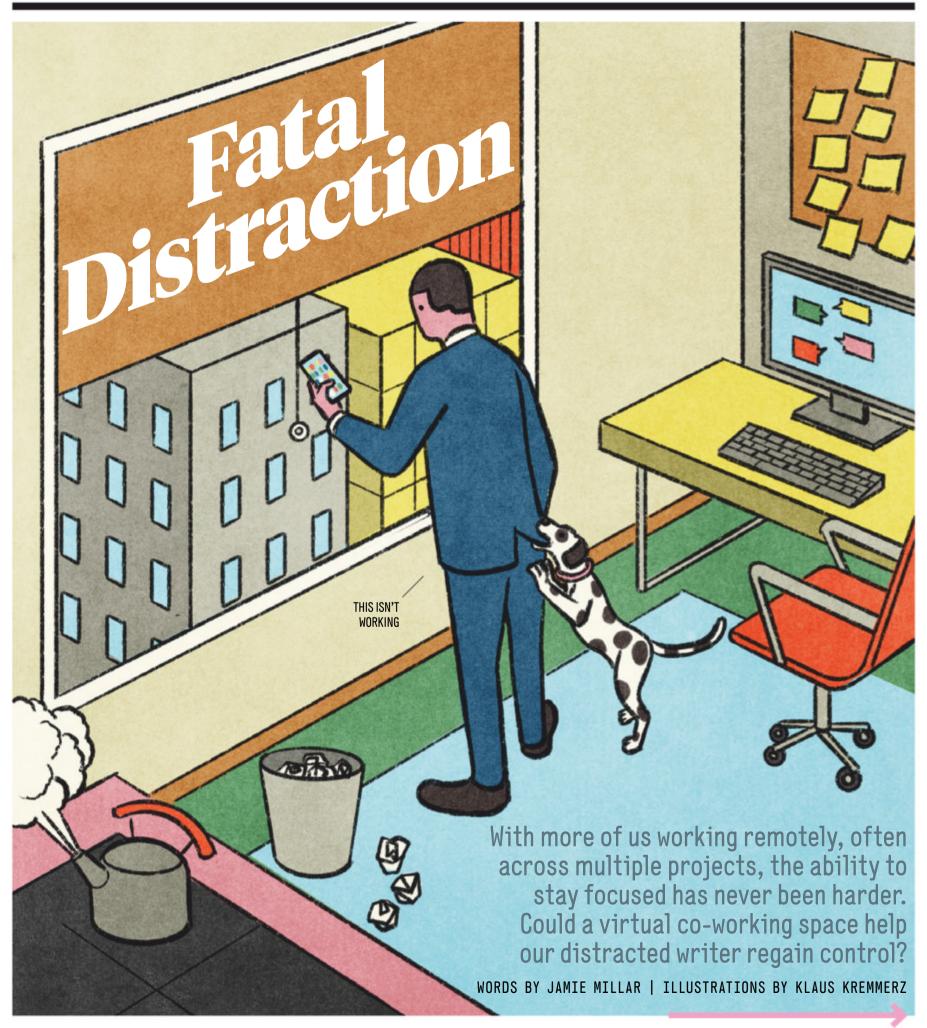
03 LATERAL RAISE

Schwarzenegger loves this machine so much, he has one flown in when he travels. Do 3 sets of 10 to 12 reps. On the final rep of each set, try this Arnold trick: hold for 10 secs before lowering.





Head Streng Good Health Starts Up Top







Flow Club is you do not talk during the portions of its co-working sessions that are designated for 'muted deep work'. But in the few minutes at the start, my

But in the few minutes at the start, my host, a psychotherapist in Toronto – a long way from where I am in Stocktonon-Tees – prompts me and my fellow co-worker, a programmer in the Netherlands, to share our goals aloud.

I've deliberately thought up a goal that might sound impressive: 'To read some scientific papers as research for the book I'm writing.' So, I'm pleasantly surprised by my host's more modest ambitions, including to 'figure out his goals' and 'eat'. A latecomer from the Bay Area also eats on camera. But once immersed in my papers, I forget that my virtual co-workers are even (not) there. Afterwards, I receive a congratulatory email with a thumbs-up GIF.

Flow Club aims to help its users block out distractions and achieve 'flow', that exalted mental state in which you're so focused that you lose track of time. As psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi writes in his 1990 book *Flow*, which popularised the term, 'The best moments usually occur when a person's body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile.'

The more we flow, his research found, the more satisfied we are with life; work, with its challenges and objectives, is ironically easier to enjoy than downtime.

to enjoy than downtime.

Unfortunately, both our
mental chatter and working
environments can stand in the way of
flow, which is easily interrupted. A video
call with a gaggle of strangers might not
sound like an obvious solution.

However, the steady stream of virtual co-working platforms, such as Flow Club, Flown and Caveday, over the past few years would suggest the meeting of a genuine need. As would the similar trend for 'body doubling' or 'parallel working'. Strange as watching strangers work online might sound, this new

practice is, as business magazine *Forbes* recently reported, really just the old strategy of working alongside others that used to take place in an office but has now migrated to Zoom and TikTok, as the lurch to remote work 'leaves many people struggling to concentrate'.

Users of virtual co-working platforms, who pay the equivalent of a monthly gym membership (Flow Club is about £30), also get accountability. 'It's like going to the gym by yourself versus going to a workout class,' explains the Flow Club website. Partly inspired by boutique fitness, it seeks to provide an 'energetic virtual environment... like working at a cafe', but without having to take your laptop to the toilet.

Flow Club's promise of 'improving mental fitness' is a strong sell to me, with the prospect of a book-writing ultra-focus-athon. My mental fitness, like my actual fitness, is not what it used to be: I'm pushing 40, attempting to work from a home also occupied by anywhere up to three young children, one with special needs. Distractions are ganging up.

In this attention economy, I sell my focus, or at least rent it out. And we're in a serious attention crisis, according to journalist Johann Hari's 2022 book *Stolen Focus*. The collapse of our collective ability to pay attention is, he writes, not due to personal failing, but 'powerful forces', not least Big Tech. With virtual co-working, I effectively now have to pay to get my focus back.

The dizzying increase in the volume of information to which we're exposed has, writes Hari, come at the cost of depth. Spend enough time being interrupted and you start to interrupt yourself.

More optimistically, however, experts believe the brain is like a muscle – the more you practise concentration, the better you get at it.

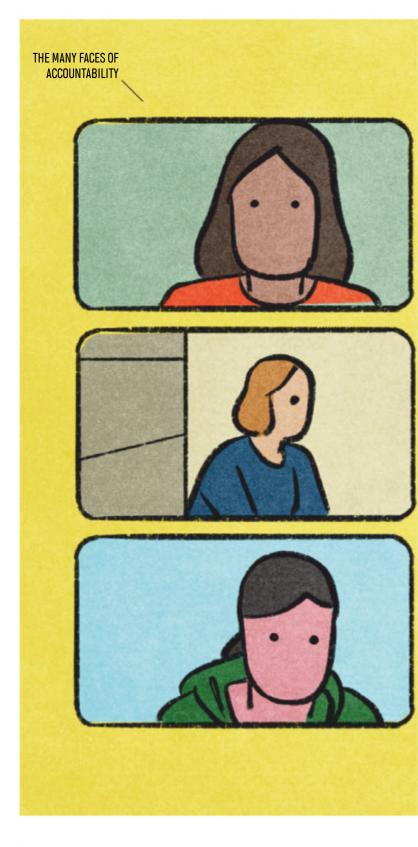
Better Together

'I'm plugging

away at my laptop

in a messy room,

Think of Flown as 'Peloton for work', founder Alicia Navarro tells me. 'It turns a task into an event that you RSVP for, that you turn up for.' I wonder whether attention has become not just a commodity, but a luxury. Hari's book warns of a future where an 'attention



upper class' are aware of and able to resist the forces of distraction, while those with fewer resources are manipulated.

Flown isn't elitist, says Navarro, costing the same for a year as a night in a 'cheap' hotel. Flown was initially conceived as an Airbnb for workspaces, but Navarro didn't want to create something only for rich people.

With half its members reporting some type of neuroatypicality, mostly ADHD, Flown is available under the government's Access to Work scheme, which supports those with a disability or physical or mental health condition. Friday 'Flocks' are free.

Navarro's goal is to build a Headspace or Calm, but for deep work and flow, which she sees as 'the new mindfulness': poised to hit the mainstream. More organisations are implementing focus strategies, such as no-meeting Fridays.



My first two-hour Flock feels like a virtual conference. The host splits the 30-odd attendees into breakout rooms to share our goals and 'what courage means to us'; in the half-time interval, she invites us to draw our courage. Stumped, I draw Spider-Man.

Flown was inspired by computer science professor Cal Newport's 2016 book *Deep Work*. He describes deep work as, 'Professional activities performed in a state of distraction-free concentration that push your cognitive capabilities to their limit' – and it's becoming increasingly rare and valuable. Knowledge workers are drowning in 'shallow' work, instead: studies show they stay on task for all of three minutes. The few workers who cultivate the habit of going deep will, Professor Newport writes, thrive as digital technology revolutionises the labour market.

In At The Deep End

I became a freelance features writer the best part of a decade ago, partly to flee the distractions of the office – and this was before Slack. I quickly realised that working from home, like working out from home, was convenient but not always easy or enjoyable. I've used co-workspaces before, but now I rely on a low-cost strategy of making a cup of coffee and listening to the same music on repeat. Do I really need anyone's help to work? I do this for a living.

As Flow Club co-founder Ricky Yean tells me, there's some ego – and vulnerability – involved in exploring new ways to work. 'No one wants to think they could be more accountable.'

Even with whole mornings and afternoons free on my calendar, I'm surprised at how hard I find it to log co-working sessions. More than one

is interrupted by my wife asking me to hold the baby, but my co-workers don't seem to react, presumably because they're so focused.

My struggle to schedule sessions is partly because they clash with other commitments, or are fully booked. But it's also, I suspect, because not as much of my day is spent as productively as I imagined. Flown recommends booking sessions ahead of time by a week or more, but I'm not that organised. I begin to devalue deep work outside of sessions: if I focus and no one's around to see, does it count?

Helpfully, Flown's Drop-In is an all-day unfacilitated silent room where I can see other people working and receive encouraging biceps emojis. Flow Club's Lounge is basically a pomodoro timer: 25 minutes' work, five minutes' break. Caveday's Solo Cave is a video with the words, 'You are inside the cave.' It's all faintly contrived and a bit silly, often self-consciously, but it works. My mental fitness has improved.

I suspected virtual co-working might be performative virtual presenteeism; hustle-culture cam porn. Instead, I see people struggling to get things done, sometimes still in their dressing gown, interrupted by their cat. It's more comforting, and inspiring, than it might sound: I'm plugging away alone at my laptop in a messy room with varying success, but I'm not alone.

Virtual co-working is partly about not working: a clearer divide between work and free time now that so many of us effectively live at the office, and an easy way to aportion your time. I'm surprised, constantly, by how many users employ sessions to do things unrelated to work: 'exercise', 'play the guitar', 'fix bedding'. While flow and deep work are related, they're not synonymous; you can find flow washing the dishes.

Although I'm impressed most by the breadth of Flown's offering and wordplay, Flow Club has more session times and lengths that work for me – in particular, the 1.30pm slot hosted by Dave, a laid-back East Coast engineer. After one session in which my stated goal was to write this story, he asks me how I got on with a pitch for another story I'd written in a session the week before. I feel part of something real.

Posting Selfies Make Me A Narcissist?

The word gets thrown around a lot, but there's far more to narcissism than flexing your assets — Dr Gregory Scott Brown sets the record straight

aybe for you, a selfie never happens without two or three retakes to 'get the right angle'. Or you can't stop posting about the other 'gram-worthy things in your life, such as your promotion, your new SUV and your latest deadlift success. Does sharing all this stuff on social media mean that you're a narcissist?

It's complicated. Between Anna 'Delvey' Sorokin, The Tinder Swindler, Netflix's Ted Bundy documentary and everyone else touting themselves, narcissism seems to be having a cultural moment. Sure, having an abundance of self-esteem or being fixated on capturing the exact right look may seem narcissistic because you're saying to a big audience, 'Hey, check me out.' But a real narcissist, clinically referred to as someone who has narcissistic personality disorder (NPD), is the type of person doctors like me treat. This goes far beyond posting selfies. In fact, NPD is one of the most misunderstood mental illnesses. Let me break it down for you.

What Narcissism Isn't...

There's nothing wrong with showing off every once in a while – in real life

or online. It's probably even good for your mental health because it keeps you self-assured and makes you human. Boasting to your friends about your son being the best player on his school football team or posting a snap of the latest accolade you earned is completely normal. Fishing for your next compliment doesn't make you a narcissist, as long as it's not causing problems at work or home. If you don't have NPD, a low-performing selfie will just feel embarrassing and maybe you'll even delete it, or the comment about your child will stop the conversation for a moment, you'll feel uncomfortable, and then everyone will move on.

But if your need to be the centre of attention leads you to exploit other people to get there, or if you feel empty when your friends smile and say, 'There he goes again,' it might be a sign of NPD.

...And What It Actually Is

First, the truth is, most people don't have it. NPD is quite rare, affecting less than 7% of the population – and most of those who have it are men.

Second, people with NPD aren't high on themselves; all that apparent confidence is a mask for a deep sense of insecurity and low self-esteem. In fact,

EXHIBITIONISM CAN BE A REFLECTION OF LOW SELF-ESTEEM

> Narcissists need success as much as they need oxygen, food and water

Mirror Image

narcissists don't only enjoy success and admiration; they need it as much as they need oxygen, food and water – just to feel alive. They need to be told or shown they're valuable and if they're not, they feel completely worthless. If someone with NPD doesn't receive the amount of praise or attention they crave, or they experience failure in life, it might be very difficult to be around them. As a result, they can become isolated and depressed, and may even have suicidal thoughts.

Third, there's more to NPD than that; the disorder is a constellation of symptoms, such as being preoccupied with power, believing that you can only relate to high-status people and feeling as if others are envious of your accomplishments. These traits occur in multiple settings (at home and in the office). All of this isn't just bloviating – it's a cry for help.

Getting Past Narcissism

There are ways to treat narcissism, although the disorder generally isn't what brings people to my office – no one has ever booked an appointment with me to say, 'Doc, I'm a narcissist. I need help.' Most of the people I see with NPD are coming in for something else, such as depression, anxiety or substance abuse. Even for someone in my position, it can take time to figure out if NPD is the reason a person is drinking more or feeling depressed.

If you or someone you know has NPD, trying therapy or taking medication, such as antidepressants, can be effective. Therapy is not an overnight fix, but it can help people discover why they're feeling or acting the way they are. In the best cases, it helps people see how NPD has been hurting them all along, which is a stepping stone to improved health.

But what if you technically don't have NPD, yet people keep teasing you about being a narcissist? Ask yourself whether you're looking for certain reactions by posting, or whether you're doing it because you really want to share. If you lack self-awareness or overcompensate due to low self-esteem, it sometimes causes attention-seeking behaviours – which are things you can work on in therapy. And maybe once you figure all that out, you and your (fewer, less-agonised-over) posts might get even more likes on Instagram.





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Head Strong

How I Keep It Together

Anthony Katz

The founder of performance-tech brand Hyperice might have muscle recovery at the core of his business – but he knows that his mental game is where the day is won

ILLUSTRATION BY JASON RAISH



6am Take It Outside

Katz starts each day with some time outdoors, walking his 14-year-old poodle mix around North Laguna Beach, California, 'so she can stay healthy', he says. But he acknowledges the walks are as much for him as they are for her. 'They clear my mind and prepare me for the day.'

9am Tune In (And Out)

Katz has always loved listening to music when he drives. At one point, business calls started to creep into his 20-minute commute. So he made the decision to put off any communication until he was in the office – and put Pink Floyd back on.

9.15am Meet Up In Person

'Because we're a products company, checking in with the products team first is the most important job I have,' Katz says. He's an in-person person, 'I don't like most things about Zoom culture. People can collaborate more effectively in person and develop real relationships.'



Katz doesn't run his life according to a pre-built schedule. 'I won't be writing books on time management – let's just leave it at that. I've always surrounded myself with people who have the opposite skill set and are very organised. That provides structure for me. If I had a bunch of people like me, we would never get anything done,' he explains.

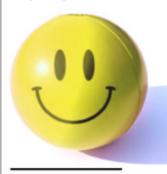


3pm Keep It Casual 'I'm pretty

informal. I dress casual and my door is always open to anyone who wants to talk,' he explains. But Katz's relaxed attitude is not to be mistaken for a lack of drive. 'You can be competitive and also have a laid-back personality,' he says. The key is to not let day-to-day business conflicts interfere with the big picture.

5.30pm Prioritise Play

Katz always makes a point to have a family dinner and play with his boys, who are aged four and seven. This could be throwing a ball around or swimming in the ocean – 'anything to tire them out.'



6pm **Play Some More**

On Thursdays and Sundays, the former basketball coach joins a high-level game. 'It's like a two-hour cleanse. You go inside those four walls and immerse yourself in the competition. I'm not thinking about work; I'm not thinking about anything. It's a physical and mental release'.

8.30 to 11pm **Shut Down**

Katz has a hard time turning off his mind, so he winds down with 45 minutes in his Normatec 3 boots while reading, looking at the news or watching a sports match. Along with a shower, it promotes circulation, which improves his sleep, he says.



Alastair Campbell Journalist, mental health campaigner and Men's Health contributing editor



Talking Heads Alastair Campbell meets Nick Kyrgios

Break Point

Brash, unpredictable, maverick, impudent
– and those are just his good points – there is
no tennis player quite like Nick Kyrgios on the
professional circuit. Preternaturally talented,
perennially misunderstood, the controversies that
surround him overshadow a complex and sensitive
character. But the sport's most colourful talent is
finding himself. Could this be the year the
bad boy of tennis comes good?

Photography by Steven Chee -



Talking HeadsAlastair Campbell meets **Nick Kyrgios**

his interview is a little different to others I have done for the Talking Heads series, which have been conducted face to face, together in the same room. Instead, this one was on Zoom - me at home in north London, Nick Krygios at home in Sydney, Australia. The so-called 'bad boy of tennis'. The Australian son of a Greek father and a Malaysian mother who has reached almost McEnroe-level notoriety for his outbursts about rivals – but even more so for his outbursts at officials and fans. A player recognised as one of the finest natural talents the sport has ever known, yet whose commentariat constantly laments his 'failure to fulfil his true potential'.

He is, after all, one of only two players, along with fellow Australian Lleyton Hewitt, to win his first career meetings with the Big Three of modern tennis - Roger Federer, Rafa Nadal and Novak Djokovic – which suggested a world-beater in the making. He's won his fair share of tournaments, yet so far a Grand Slam is not among them. The closest he came was at Wimbledon last year, winning the first set against Djokovic, before losing the next three. Now aged 28, he still has time, but he has been dealing with a long-term injury, which has allowed him to catch up on other aspects of his life, and he's not minded, as you shall see, to take up Djokovic on his offer to be his coach. Uniquely among the top players, he refuses even to have a conventional coach, insisting he knows best how to get the best out of himself.

Until now, I've known him only through his playing and his off-court controversies, including an in-court charge of common assault against former girlfriend Chiara Passari (which was later dismissed), a record number of fines on the ATP tour, plus stories of spitting at a fan, masturbating bottles, chucking chairs and calling a referee 'a fucking tool'. So whatever it was I was expecting, it was not necessarily the thoughtful, considerate and articulate young man coming at me down the Zoom line from the other side of the world. As open and engaging about his own mental health struggles as he was about what he really thinks of the sport that has made him famous, and the big names within it, not least a side to Andy Murray we rarely see.

AC: This series is called *Talking Heads*, Nick, so describe your own mindset.

NK: The word that comes to mind is original. I like to do things my own way and I've been like that since I was a little kid. A good analogy is that I never stay within the lines. I always challenge, I ask questions. I want to know why I'm doing things, whether that's about how I go about my everyday



life or how I play the game a certain way. So yeah, that's my mindset: staying original.

AC: And in terms of your success as an athlete, what's the balance between the role of physical strength and mental strength?

NK: Mental is the most important.

The mental aspect of what we do as athletes is key. When you're in the right mindset, feeling good about yourself, feeling confident, and you believe you're capable of doing something great, the physical will follow. If, mentally, you're

struggling, the mindset is not right, you're struggling with confidence or you're dealing with mental health issues, it's hard to feel good physically. So mental strength, for sure.

AC: You have a reputation for volatility on court, for having a real temper. Has that been an asset or a handicap to you?

NK: I would say at times it has helped me and at times it hasn't. Tennis is a very repetitive sport – it's not easy, it can be very tedious and amazing discipline and amazing patience are required. People see me as volatile, but you don't make it this far in the sport without composure and patience. I'm actually incredibly patient.

AC: Give me an example of where your temper

'People see me as volatile, but you don't get this far without patience'

NK: I feel I've always been a perfectionist and, sometimes, to get the best out of myself I have to fire myself up, get out of a rut, lift my energy levels. A mental outburst can get me going. It's all

has helped you.

about balance. All athletes get into a zone and need to be pumped up to some extent.

AC: I'm going to give you two statements and ask you which one applies more to you: 'I love winning,' and, 'I hate losing.'

NK: 'I hate losing.' Yeah, hating losing is the closest to me. That goes for anything, in any scenario, whether I'm playing tennis or I'm playing video







games. I just can't stand losing. I do love winning as well, but for me, having the ability to not lose is what suits me.

AC: What about this one: 'I love tennis,' or, 'I hate tennis.'

NK: [Long pause, during which he repeats the question] It's both. I've definitely gone through phases when I've loved it and others when I've hated it, and sometimes at the same time. So, I love tennis and... [pause] That's a really hard question. You know, I'm not sure if I can answer it.

AC: When you're in a phase of hating it, but you have to do it, get out there and play, what's that like?

NK: It's torture. It's not easy. [Pause] It's really hard. Your energy feels all over the

place. You're not doing it for yourself but for other people. There have, for sure, been moments in my career when I've not being playing for myself, and then it's almost impossible to perform.

AC: Do you have the same love-hate relationship with training?

NK: I love to train, to get out there and reach a point of vulnerability.

AC: And what about your resistance to having a coach? Surely in any elite sport it's better with a good coach?

NK: I've found a way without it. I feel like it's hard for me to let someone into my team and my experiences. I know my game the best and it's hard for me to find a coach who will care about my best interests.

Talking HeadsAlastair Campbell meets **Nick Kyrgios**

AC: What did you make of Novak Djokovic saying he'd like to be your coach?

NK: [Laughs] I think most coaches wouldn't mind taking me on because it would be a roller coaster and there would be a lot of fun. But I'm not sure Novak would take it too seriously.

AC: Is it possible to make real friends on the tennis circuit?

NK: [Pause] When I stop playing, I think I'll probably stay in contact with two or three people. So it's possible. I see these people more than I see my family.

AC: Who is your closest friend on the circuit?

NK: A couple of the Americans – Jack Sock is a good friend – and a couple of my countrymen. It's hard, though, because it's such a competitive sport, and you're all playing against each other every week. You eat with each other, you see each other all the time.

AC: If you never win a Grand Slam, would you consider your life as unfulfilled?

NK: Not at all. I've had that conversation with myself and it's a tough one to have. Every day since I came on the scene, everyone in the sport has had an opinion about me. 'He's one of the most talented

players... will he ever fulfil his potential... will he this, will he that?' If you allow their expectations to influence you, you can feel like a failure. But I can look back and I've achieved some pretty cool things. I've achieved a lot, been on an amazing journey.

'I have much better habits now. I'm growing up, maturing'

AC: Knowing you only from your on-court persona, I'd have said you were a glass-half-empty guy, but listening to you now, you come over as glass-half-full.

NK: I'm definitely a glass-half-full guy. Getting thrown into tennis at 13 or 14 years old and travelling all over the world, seeing some eye-opening things around the world, I look back at my life and my journey so far and realise I've been blessed. Everything is a bonus from now.

AC: You have talked about getting depression, and sometimes that has led to self-harming. Tell me about that. How often, how bad and how do you deal with your depression?

NK: I still have to deal with it, but I have steps to deal with it better. If I'm feeling down or not motivated, I'm able to step back and analyse it. The biggest thing now is to ask myself, 'How do I deal with the way I am feeling?' I have much better habits now; I'm growing up, maturing. I feel I deal with it better.

AC: Have you ever taken medication for depression?

NK: No. I've had it prescribed, been told to take it, but I never did. I felt there were other ways that I could deal with my problems.

AC: Last year you posted a picture of yourself on Instagram, and you said that while you looked okay, it was actually a dark period for you. You were self-harming, having suicidal thoughts, struggling to get out of bed, abusing alcohol and drugs. Tell me how it feels when you have what you call 'a dark period'. What did that mean at that time?

NK: I was numb. I was running on autopilot every day. I was pushing away family, friends and relationships. My career was on autopilot. I was doing things because I was told to do them. I literally couldn't feel anything at all. The only time I felt anything was when I was doing those things [self-harm, cutting or burning] or when I was drinking. That's when I felt okay, and that's concerning. I was playing

in tournaments, thousands of people watching me, and I didn't feel anything. Most people would feel great being able to do that. I felt terrible. It was a rough time, not pleasant at all,

never remotely close to decent.

AC: I describe depression as like feeling dead and alive at the same time.

NK: Yeah, yeah, like numb to everything.

AC: You share management with Naomi Osaka [Japanese player who has spoken of her mental health challenges]. Do you think the sport understands and appreciates the struggles players have? Do you get the support you could have done with?

NK: I don't think people in general understand how hard this sport is.
Especially someone from Australia, like myself, because of the distance from where most tournaments are. We're on the road seven to eight months of the year, away from family and friends and normality, and the comforts you're accustomed to. We're dealing with a lot

Kyrgios is a big fan of basketball – from the game itself to the culture and fashion that surrounds it









of pressure, dealing with expectations. I don't feel people respect the demands, how much it takes out of you mentally and emotionally. With me, people just see the tennis player. 'Ah, he's here. He's turned up. He's playing in the tournament, he must be okay.' People don't see you as a normal human. And I fell to pieces.

AC: Do you think most players struggle psychologically?

NK: Most players do, but I think it's worse if you come from Australia because of those distances. European players can go home more often, reset, see the special people in their lives after tournaments. Someone like myself doesn't have that ability.

AC: What makes you angry outside of tennis?

NK: I think the biggest thing about me is that I'm very different off court to on it. I'm very calm. I'm low maintenance. I like playing computer games, I drink a lot of coffee and I like good food. So nothing much makes me angry. I just like to do what I like do. Nothing makes me too emotional. Tennis is the best sport with that because it gives you the ability to step back and analyse and not overreact.

AC: Are you political?

NK: Not really.

AC: But you have a foundation.

NK: Yeah. It gives underprivileged kids an opportunity to play sport and be accepted. In my youth, I didn't feel accepted. I was a 'coloured' kid, a bit overweight. I didn't feel it was okay for someone like me to go and play sport, so we try to give kids who feel like that the opportunity to get out there and do sport and be the best they can be.

AC: Have you suffered a lot of racism in your life?

NK: I have. I have dealt with bad racism. Australia is a pretty racist country in general, one of the most racist countries in the world.

AC: Still?

NK: Yeah, I think it is. I have grown some thick skin in sport and in life, so I deal with it better than I did. But it's never easy.

AC: What kind of stuff are we talking about?

Talking HeadsAlastair Campbell meets **Nick Kyrgios**

NK: Some of the most iconic people in sport in Australia have told me and my family to go back where we came from and this kind of bullshit. Stuff that isn't acceptable, not acceptable at all.

AC: So your dad's Greek, and I read your mum, who's from Malaysia, is connected to some kind of royal family there.

NK: Yeah, but to be honest, I don't know much about it. I met my mum's dad just once in my entire life. Just that once and then never met him again.

AC: Why not? Why no family connection?

NK: I don't know. I guess when she came to Australia, she left it behind. It's a whole side of my life I never explored.

AC: And your mum never felt the need to educate you about it?

NK: No. My mum is a very big personality. Definitely a personality.

AC: Is that where you get your on-court side from?

NK: Definitely. If people understood my family, they

would definitely understand where I get my fiery side. I can't even explain to you how my brother is - he's like me times three, crazy, super-intense, energetic in a good way, a prankster, a jokester, all of the above. He's almost 35 now.

AC: So if that's from your mum, what about your dad?

NK: My dad is quite gentle. He is a super-generous man, that's where I get that. The emotional side is my mum.

AC: Are you religious?

NK: I'm not religious. I try to do good and I believe in karma - that if you do good it comes back around - but no, I'm not religious.

AC: Do you cry much?

NK: I do cry, sometimes.

AC: When was the last time you cried?

NK: The last time? [Pause] Not for a while actually, which is not a bad thing – not that it's a good thing. I'm in an exciting time in my life. I'm in a good relationship with my girlfriend [Costeen Hatzi, blogger and founder of her own home decor business], things are going well with my family, I'm getting my body right, I'm enjoying it all.

AC: You have been off injured for a while. How has that been? Is it not torture not being able to play?

NK: I've had an amazing time. If you look back at the last decade of my life, day in day out, week in week out, I've been travelling, playing, travelling, playing, not seeing family for months on end, missing significant events, and suddenly I've had time to be normal and spend time with the most

important people in my life. So you can't go getting upset about needing rest. I've enjoyed it. You have to look at the hand you're dealt and see what you can do with it. It's not as if tennis is the only thing I do. I do a lot more than that.

AC: Who would you choose as the greatest sportsman or woman of all time?

NK: I love basketball, so I think I would say LeBron James.

AC: You were a decent basketball player as a kid. Could you have made it as a pro?

'It's hard being

me at times.

There's a lot

going on'

NK: There are a lot of leagues around the world; for sure, I could have played somewhere.

AC: What is it about basketball that you love?

NK: The team

element. I love team sports. I love the culture around the sport, what they wear, how they're allowed to show their personalities more than they are, say, in tennis. You see who they are. The whole sneakers thing, the closeness to fans, it feels more connected.

AC: Do you feel tennis is still quite a class-bound sport?

NK: It is. Tennis and I haven't always agreed. My goal was to bring other fans around the world into tennis. I think a lot of people in tennis want to keep the same people. But you look at other sports, in the US, the UK, they are growing their base. I'm not sure tennis can say the same. We need to explain better, get more people in.

AC: Working-class people?

NK: Not just working-class people. Any people. Tennis is one of the most globally watched sports, played by people from all over the world: Aussies, Americans, Europeans, Africans, Asians. There are so many different personalities and the fan base needs to grow in all those places.

AC: Did I read that you're a Spurs fan?

NK: Tottenham Hotspur? Yes. Not a massive fan, but yes.

AC: Why?

NK: It's a funny story, you'll like this. I play computer games a lot and I used to like Emmanuel Adebayor on Fifa. At the time, he played for Spurs, so I supported them and have never changed.

AC: Back to tennis: describe Djokovic in a word.

NK: I would say the word has changed maybe six times during the time I have known him. But right now, the word is legend. He's a real legend of the game. What I like about Novak is that he deals with a lot of shit but just keeps going. He has a fan base where a lot of people love him and a lot of people don't. He sometimes doesn't know where he can play, what tournament, he deals with a lot of other people's opinions coming at him, and he just does it. That's a cool thing.

AC: Roger Federer in a word.

NK: GOAT.

AC: The greatest of all time?

NK: Yes. You'll never find anyone else who plays like him. So pure, so natural, the way he plays the game... yeah, pure.

AC: Rafa Nadal in a word.

NK: I would say... [pause] Jeez, this is a tough one. [Pause] I've never seen anyone so intense in my entire life. He's an incredible athlete, but yeah, intense.

AC: What about Andy Murray?

NK: An underrated player. And one of the funniest guys I ever met in my life. I know his humour isn't always appreciated in the UK, but he's so funny.

AC: He doesn't have that reputation.

NK: I know. You guys voted him the most boring athlete or some nonsense. I'm telling you, he's hilarious. The way he tells jokes, really hilarious.

AC: Well, it has been great to talk to you. So different from what I expected.

NK: That's what my girlfriend thinks, too.

AC: What was she expecting?

NK: I think she thought I was probably a bit too confident. She loves me now, though.

AC: When you look back at some of your more controversial moments - the woman in the crowd who sued you because you said she was drunk; the referees you have abused; the argument with your girlfriend that landed you in court - and the kind of feelings you may have inspired in other people, do you ever wonder whether sometimes you can be so in the moment - in your own personality and feelings - that you

underestimate the effect you have on others?

NK: I don't see myself as being someone who's really famous. I don't take myself too seriously. So I can sometimes forget who I am. I learned from all those things, and I think I'm a better person today because of what I learned. All the outbursts are from the earlier stages of my career. My last season on court was a mazing, I learned a lot, I was much more composed. But it's hard being me at times. There's a lot going on.



33% 01\ State Of Play When asked I'm happy with I'd prefer to the amount drink less **I drink** about your habits, half of you told us you'd like to – or are currently trying to – drink less.

Sobriety and NoLo beverages might be more popular abstemious as the headlines suggest—they're just alcohol plays in men's lives today, we interviewed how you really feel about the



than ever, but Britain's booze habits are not quite as more polarised. To take a truer measure of the role hundreds of our readers, anonymously, to find out way you drink. What'll it be?

*STATISTICS TAKEN FROM AN ANONYMOUS SURVEY OF 282 *MEN'S* HEALTH READERS AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLLS OF 732-791 READERS

Is this the beginning of the end of Booze Britain?

It's a question we've asked ourselves in the *Men's Health* office more than once. And the answers present very differently, depending on where you look. Did you know, for example, that one in five British adults are now teetotal? Or that demand for no- and low-alcohol beer has increased by an estimated 40% in the past two years alone? Or how about this one: according to the Office for National Statistics, the number of people dying from alcohol-related causes increased by 27% from 2019 to 2021.

That last one jars a little, doesn't it? That's because the shift in our nation's drinking habits currently looks less like a downwards slope than a fault line.

You've probably heard that young people – Gen Z – drink less than the generations before them. Although even that's not as straightforward as it seems: while an increasing number of that group are rejecting alcohol, those who do drink are as fond of a midweek pint as their millennial forebears.

There are theories as to why Gen Z is less boozy, as a whole. These include increased time socialising online, a growing fixation with looks and fitness, lower wages... and shame over their craft beer-swigging Gen X parents, who more than make up for their temperance.

Other factors are at play, too: modern society incorporates more non-drinking cultures. Those who do drink might find they abstain among some social groups but binge with others. And money is an issue: people in higher-income brackets are statistically more likely to drink above the guidelines. Perhaps most shockingly, the 4% of people who make up Britain's heaviest drinkers put away roughly 30% of all alcohol sold.

But what about the *Men's Health* reader? Does he drink? According to our survey*, most of you do, and 31%

'fairly often'. Roughly half of you are thinking about cutting back. A third of you have, at some point, worried about your drinking habits.

A bigger question than how much we drink, of course, is why. 'You've got to ask yourself, "Why is alcohol the world's favourite drug?" says David Nutt, a neuropsychopharmacologist and the author of *Drink? The New Science Of Alcohol And Health*. He's also the chief scientific officer for GABA Labs, which is developing a safe, synthetic alcohol replacement. 'And that's because most people get benefits from it, largely in social situations.'

When surveyed, roughly half of you said something similar. Alcohol

improves your confidence when meeting new people. In fact, 40% of you confess you sometimes struggle to socialise without it. Many more of you simply like the taste and the ritual. One in five of you confessed you sometimes turn to alcohol

as a fast way to improve your mood.

'My experience, working in this field for 13 or so years, is that you have to meet people where they are,' says Andrew Misell, director for Wales at Alcohol Change UK. 'In our research, people often talk about how much they enjoy drinking. It's how they relax. It's one of their pleasures.'

So, where's the line? Government guidelines suggest up to 14 units a week – about six pints of 4% strength beer – to reduce your chances of alcohol-related health problems. 'At 14 units, your risk is very, very low – if you don't drink them all in one go,' Professor Nutt says. 'If you go from 14 to 28 units, your health risks go up significantly, but it's still not outlandish.' Largely, it's a question of what you find acceptable. 'If you drink

14 units a week for 40 years, it'll take four months off your life, on average,' he says. You might be okay with that. 'If you drink twice as much, then it could take a year off your life... But it's up to you to make that decision.'

As the units stack up, things get dicier. 'If you're drinking two bottles of wine a day, you're taking 20 years off your life,' says Professor Nutt. The relationship between intake and risk isn't linear, either. 'The more you drink, the bigger the benefit in cutting down. So, going from a bottle of wine a day to half a bottle gives you a vastly greater benefit [than] cutting from half to zero.'

We all know too much booze is bad – raising our risk of heart disease, liver disease, dementia and various cancers – but you'd be forgiven for thinking the message wasn't getting across to everyone. The UK's heaviest drinkers are men aged 55 to 64, a demographic in which 36% drink over the guidelines, and 7% put away more than the 'highrisk' marker of 50 units a week.

'The trouble with trying to persuade people through fear is that if they don't feel unwell, they don't think anything's wrong,' says Misell. 'And everyone knows someone who drinks heavily or smokes and is apparently "fine". Because we're

not talking about absolutes here. We're talking about relative risks and percentages, which are tremendously complicated.'

There are a few simple things we can

all do. A good starting point is to track your units – something only a tenth of you have tried. Much like your blood pressure or cholesterol, it's a useful metric to know. An app like University College London's Drink Less can make it easier to keep count.

If you routinely open a bottle after work, try to break that habit. Professor Nutt points to the normalisation of nightly drinking in pop culture. 'It's one of the greatest subtle advertising campaigns in history. We've convinced the British middle class that you cannot eat an evening meal without wine.'

He hopes, too, to see more investment in 'functional' alcohol: alternatives that tap into some of the neurotransmitters responsible for promoting relaxation,

02\ Pressure Points

Most of you have used alcohol as a crutch to cope with issues such as anxiety or insomnia. Work stress and challenges at home were cited as key reasons, although not all of you feel your habits are problematic.



A small but significant number of you confessed that you find it hard to enjoy yourself without alcohol. 15% That's me... Now how to have a good time without booze

44%

of you say you find self-moderation hard at least some of the time

without causing harm. 'All most people want is to feel relaxed for a couple of hours between about six and eight in the evening,' he says. Greater visibility of non-alcoholic alternatives could also help to reinforce the role of the pub as a centre of the local community, 'but in a way that gives people the option not to have to drink alcohol to socialise'.

In our survey, relatively few of you reported using tools such as counselling, hypnotherapy, books, apps, podcasts or support groups to help you cut back. If you've previously tried and struggled to reduce your intake through willpower alone, these might be worth exploring.

For Misell, the road to change begins with eliminating stigma. 'Shame is a massive issue. In many ways, it's less embarrassing to share some ridiculous drinking escapade than to say, "Do you know what, fellas? I think it's all gone a bit too far. I think I've got a problem."

A big part of why this is so difficult is that drinkers tend to attract other drinkers. Men worry that by speaking up about their own issues with alcohol, those around them will feel judged by association, Misell says. 'We need to be willing to help people. Just to think, "Okay, so my friend has told me he wants to cut back or stop. What can I do?" That would probably make more of a difference than telling men liver disease is gonna get 'em in 30 years' time.'

You might be perfectly happy with your current drinking habits. Statistically, according to our survey, there's a 50/50 chance that you are. But there might also be men in your life who could benefit from an honest and empathetic chat. Because, on whichever side of the fault line you stand, navigating British drinking culture in 2023 is anything but simple. As ever, it starts with a conversation.

High Sobriety



The Fitness Coach Tarek Shuhaibar

34, PERSONAL TRAINER
AND SPORTS NUTRITIONIST

y relationship with alcohol has changed quite a bit over the past 10 years. There was a time when the thought of drinking would freak me out, mainly because of the calories. That made social events challenging. I was also a bit OTT with training and let other things in life take a back seat. I'd miss parties because it felt easier to say no. Removing the guilt was the hardest part.

These days, I go out a lot with friends who like to drink. Rather than missing out, I just set boundaries. If I say I'm having two drinks, I'll have two. There's a bit of a stigma around this, as people can label you 'boring'. But I'm not concerned about what people have to say.

Now, if I want to have the occasional big night, I will. I know and accept the consequences, but I'd rather enjoy myself than worry about it. In reality, one night won't have a huge effect on your health and fitness.

1_{IN}7

of you sometimes restrict your food or calories to compensate for excess drinking 04\ Cutting Back

You lot take your gym time seriously. When asked about your biggest booze deterrents, 'fitness and performance' came first, ahead of any health concerns.



06\ The Sharp End

More than half of you have felt concerned by the drinking habits of someone close to you, often a male friend or family member. Of that number, 38% of you haven't spoken about it.











The Midlife ModeratorBen Greig

43, PROPERTY MANAGER

spent 20-plus years working in hospitality, which has a big drinking culture. From the age of 15, I was out after work with older colleagues several nights a week.

As I got older, pressures mounted. I'd deal with it with a few beers or a bottle of wine after work, whether it was 5pm or 3am. I drank every night for years. I'd always wake up tired. I still tried to stay active – going to the gym, running and training in Brazilian jiujitsu. But there would be days when I wouldn't train because of how tired I felt.

I left hospitality to work in healthcare, and my drinking really escalated during the pandemic; it felt like the only way to escape after the hellish days we experienced.

When I reached my forties, I could feel my drinking taking a toll. So, a couple of years ago, I started switching my cans of craft beer for bottles of Bud Light. Some nights, I didn't drink at all and found that my quality of sleep was better.

Now, I only drink every other weekend, when I don't have my kids. And I drink for pleasure, not just out of habit. I think cutting back, rather than going teetotal, was the key. Had I tried to stop altogether, I would have failed.

At 43, I'm in the shape of my life. I recently competed in my first ever MMA fight for Cancer Research UK and I didn't drink at all in the couple of months leading up to it. It was surprisingly easy.



The Cut-Back Strategist Chris Wood

27, COMMUNICATIONS EXECUTIVE

rowing up in rural Devon, I saw excess drinking at house parties as normal. As a teenage boy, you're pigeonholed into laddish culture, and I've since found a big correlation with all-male social events and alcohol.

At the height of my drinking, I'd be out maybe three times a week, getting plastered. Last year, I went on a day-long session and ended up with a god-awful hangover. I couldn't sleep for four days. I swore I'd never put myself in that state again.

The increasing amount of media looking at alcohol abuse, such as Louis Theroux: Drinking To Oblivion and Adrian Chiles' Drinkers Like Me, also helped me realise 'nice, normal, middle-class' drinking can have disastrous effects. We kid ourselves that it's okay because we surround ourselves with people who drink like us.

Socialising with friends who drink a lot is hard. I'm 27 and still want to go to sports fixtures, day festivals and gigs. The availability of better alcohol-free drinks has helped hugely. I no longer have to pretend my coke has vodka in it. Having something to do on Sundays helps, too, and I ride with a cycling club every two weeks.

Nowadays, I might drink one weekend out of four, usually with a meal or at a social event. And I like drinking with older friends – they don't tend to want to carry on the party.



The Post-Pandemic Quitter Amir Ghomshei

49. ESTATE AGENT

he first time I tried going sober was April 2020. The pandemic hit me hard, and alcohol wasn't helping my mental health. I started drinking again 18 months later, at Christmas. Everything seemed fine at first, but when my mental health was bad, I would drink to excess. I wanted to find a way to deal with my emotions without the help of Peroni or gin, so I went sober for good last July. I have way more energy. My nutrition is so much better now that I'm no longer reaching for kebabs to deal with my hangovers.

I've worked in property since the 90s, and drinking was heavily encouraged by the industry. I used to live to party. I did have the best time, but there's more to life than that. I used to take medication to relieve my heartburn, so I could carry on drinking, then take ibuprofen to sort my hangovers. I honestly think if we had only just discovered alcohol now, it would be illegal.

I run a monthly CrossFit and social event called WODproud, a place where LGBTQIA folk can find their tribe. After our events, we go for food and often end up partying in Soho, [London], until the early hours. We still do that... but now I'm the one who ducks out after the meal. How times have changed!



The Pub- Lunch ProfessionalDavid

37, SENIOR SALES EXECUTIVE

dmittedly, I probably drink a lot more than I should. I'm not sure how many units exactly; I've never counted. But drinking is a part of my work culture. The company I work for is a bit old-school: we hold meetings in the pub; meet clients for drinks after work; celebrate good days by getting a round in.

I don't think it's always a bad thing. Drinking breaks down barriers, and it helps people to open up, be more honest. I've had a lot of my best ideas while hashing it out with colleagues over a drink.

Obviously, I enjoy it, too. I'm someone who finds it difficult to relax and shut off my brain after work. I do have other outlets. I play sport and make music. But even those activities tend to be better with a drink.

I suppose I always assume I'll cut back at some point. Probably when I have kids. I don't worry about it too much. I think my health is pretty good – but perhaps that's wishful thinking!

27%

Many of you say your friends sometimes encourage you to drink more than you want to





The Newly Sober **Mixologist** Noah Villeneuve

30. HEAD OF CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT AT CLUB SODA

've been sober since April 2022, driven by a plummet in my mental health. I had an alcohol problem for the best part of 15 years, and enough was enough.

Growing up, I romanticised the rock 'n' roll aesthetic. Being a drunk or strung out was attractive to me. And I gravitated towards the industries that were more accepting of that behaviour - the music industry and hospitality. In the UK, it's indoctrinated from such an early age that drinking is normal, and the only way to socialise, celebrate, commiserate. I thought alcohol made me more creative, cooler.

I think I've always been aware of the risks, but drinking was my coping mechanism – a way to bury my head in the sand when it came to my emotions. Now that I'm able to reflect with more clarity, I realise how much of a crutch it had become. I could barely take a 20-minute walk without a couple of beers stashed in my bag. Now that it doesn't control me, I've begun to take that power back.

I used to manage wine bars in Bristol. Now I work at the UK's first alcohol-free cocktail bar and shop in London. My mental and physical health have improved immeasurably.



The Religious Abstainer Abdurrahman Chowdhury

20, DENTAL STUDENT AND OPTICAL ASSISTANT

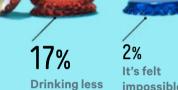
y abstinence stems from Islam - the prohibition serves to protect us from its damage to our health, as well as any associated harm. I've always been sober.

It isn't something I think about, day to day. It's natural to me. I was born and raised here, but a lot of my late childhood and early teenage years were spent between London and Saudi Arabia, where alcohol is prohibited.

There is a big drinking culture at uni, though. I avoid events at the student union where alcohol is the focus, as it's not worth compromising my values to fit in. I do have to be more intentional when it comes to choosing friends, but I see that as a good thing. Friendships based on shared values and respect last longer.

I have friends who drink, too, and we have other ways to socialise. I go out to dinner quite regularly. Recently, I've fallen in love with ice skating. I also used to be an avid tennis player, something I plan to pick up again this summer. I'm part of the university's Islamic Society and the Sober Society.

I've not experienced negative reactions to my sobriety, but I feel like society in general views those who don't drink due to their religion as restrictive. I also think that most people who do drink go beyond the healthy limit.



was tough

09\ Support Squad

Among those of you who have tried to cut back, success has varied. 'Willpower' was the most popular strategy. Roughly 5% of you cited therapy and support groups as tools, with most turning to books and podcasts first.







I guess I'm still working on it...

11\ It's Your Round

About one in five say alcohol plays a useful, even essential role in their social life.





Gut Reactions

Healthy diets are not one-size-fits-all. As the latest science shows, a range of factors influence how our bodies respond to food, from genetics and lifestyle to our postcodes. And most of it starts in our guts. MH sat down with the pioneer of personalised nutrition, Professor Tim Spector, to learn the new rules of microbe management

Interview by Richard Godwin - Portraits by Julian Benjamin

im Spector has an unusual amount on his plate. As a professor of genetic epidemiology at King's College London and pioneer of identical twin studies, he has done more than just about anyone to answer the old 'nature vs nurture' question. (It's a bit of both.)

As a researcher on the microbiome, he has focused attention on the huge importance of gut bacteria to our overall health, as well as doing wonders for sales of kefir, kombucha and kimchi.

As a science writer, he has authored the least bullshitty diet books I've ever come across, including *The Diet Myth* (2015) and *Food For Life* (2022), which contains the excellent insight that two cups of black coffee contain more fibre than a banana.

And during the pandemic, Professor Spector was also behind the Covid Symptom Study, a pioneering piece of citizen science that saw four million people share their symptoms via a specialised app. That has now evolved into the world's largest nutrition study,

Zoe, and has turned Professor Spector into an unlikely entrepreneur. Sign up to Zoe and, for £299, you'll receive a kit in the post to test your blood sugars, blood fats and microbiome – and personalised dietary advice based on the results.

'We hope people see it as more than just a test,' he says. 'It's a long-term programme. The food you eat is the most important choice you make regarding your health, and you make these choices many times a day.'

If all this activity sounds disparate, there is a common theme. Your genes are important. But so is your microbiome. Get to understand both and you'll be in a far better position to improve your metabolism and your overall health.

You're critical of 'one-size-fits-all' diets. Why?

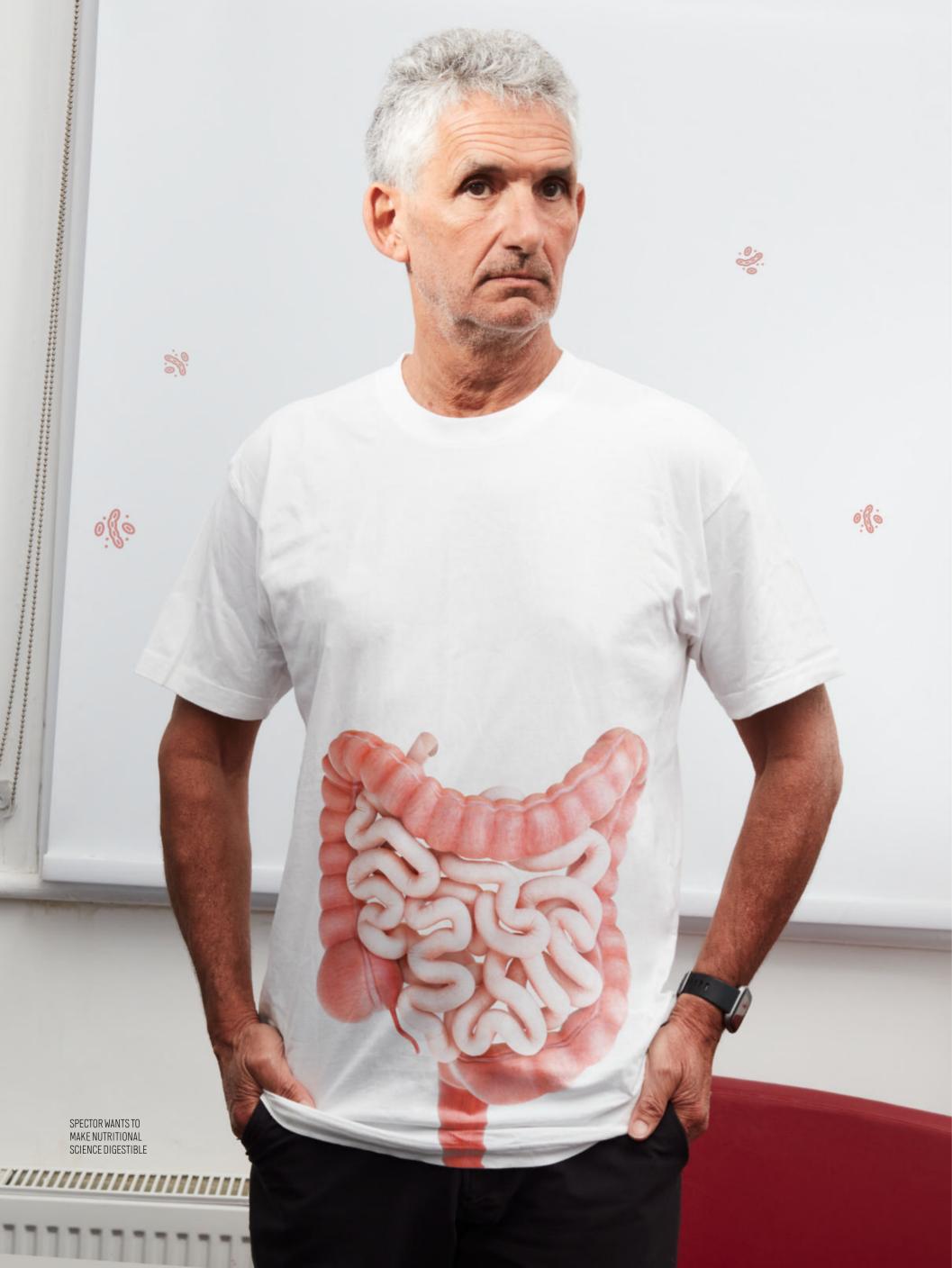
One-size-fits-all diets have been disproven – they've been shown to be not valid. We're not all robots with identical energy levels and calorie counts. The standard 2,500 calories for a man is simply a rough average. Many people will be above that 2,500 calories a day, many will be below it and it's impossible to count calories accurately anyway.

Personalised nutrition is a concept based on the fact that we're all a lot more individual in our responses to food than we've been taught. There's a 10- to 20-fold difference to how each of us responds to identical foods in terms of sugar levels, fat levels and inflammation, so we need a more individualised approach to choosing the right balance of foods in our diet. In the past few years, we've had the technology to do this.

What has the technology told you that you didn't know before?

Some people will have a good response to sugar – carbs, in other words – whereas others will have a good response to fats. These two things – how big are your sugar peaks, and how long are the triglycerides in the fat staying in the blood? – are strong indicators not only of short-term but long-term health, heart disease, dementia, etc.

The basis of all this comes from the Zoe Predict study, which we launched a couple of years ago and published in *Nature Medicine*. We looked at over 1,000 individuals in the UK and US, mostly identical twins. We gave each of them an identical meal – a specially designed muffin – and found that some people's blood-sugar response was below average, and some people's was



TRUST YOUR GUT

four times that amount. Even identical twins, with exactly the same genes, responded differently to the same food.

And that's the basis of personalised nutrition. If you can work out which people are bad at processing fats and sugars, then you can really improve their metabolism.

So, let's get into specifics. How does Zoe work?

The Zoe kit is an extension of the original Predict study. It contains a continuous glucose monitor that you wear for two weeks; this gives you a continual readout of your blood-sugar levels to your phone.

There is also a one-time bloodprick test, which tells you how much your triglycerides have gone up six hours after eating a fatty meal – in this case, a specially designed muffin. This tells you how quickly your body processes fats.

Then there's a full genome sequencing on your gut microbes to assess your overall gut health; this is done via stool sample. We call it 'poo in the post'. You can do all this at home. The hard bit is done in a couple of days. Then you can run some experiments yourself.

How has your research changed your own diet?

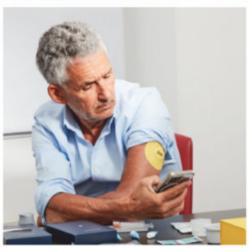
It turns out that I have an extremely poor sugar response, while my wife has a really good one. So that means I need to increase the amounts of fats in my diet and decrease the sorts of sugars that cause peaks. It means that eating muesli first thing isn't good for me – but it might be good for my wife.

You now have 50,000 people feeding you data. What are the numbers telling you?

Lots of things. We're seeing subtle differences in the gut microbes between the US and the UK, and even between different regions of the UK. We're seeing differences between men and women that we didn't predict. We're seeing some interesting parasites in the gut microbes that are actually quite beneficial.

And we've noticed that about one in four men experience something called 'sugar dips' three hours after eating, where they'll suddenly experience hunger and reduced





THE BRAINS BEHIND
THE ZOE COVID SYMPTOM
TRACKER IS REPURPOSING
HIS TOOLS TO HELP
KICK-START A REVOLUTION
IN THE WAY WE THINK
ABOUT NUTRITION

energy levels. So, now we can identify who is a consistent dipper and we will generally be advising them to switch to a low-carbohydrate, high-fat, high-protein breakfast – yoghurt or boiled eggs, say – or maybe even to skip breakfast altogether. It's about experimenting to see which one suits them best.

Do you know what could be causing those regional differences?

We don't know for sure. Between different countries, it could be due to antibiotic use and ultra-processed foods – which are terrible for the microbiome. In the US, we see huge differences between the coasts and the Midwest, while in the UK, there is a north-south divide. I suspect it's due to food habits: it might be an indicator of whether you live in a junk-food-saturated area or not. But as the microbiome database gets bigger – and it's already the biggest in the world – it's going to become an amazing international resource that will allow us to pick out much more subtle things.

What is your view on the NHS's Eat Well advice?

Some of it is valid. Eat more fruit and veg. Eat more fibre. Everyone agrees that's a very valid

point. But it hasn't really changed for the past 20 years and there's lots in there that's either misleading or unhelpful.

They're still telling people to eat low-fat foods and avoid saturated fats without talking about the quality of the food. They're still telling people to avoid skipping meals when the evidence from randomised control trials suggests there can be benefits to doing this. They say that fruit juice can be one of your five-a-day, which suggests that there's no difference between a glass of Tropicana and an orange - which is nonsense! And they're not recommending whole foods over ultra-processed foods, which make you overeat and upset your gut microbiome. No nutrition expert would give that advice.

Why do you think we're so behind on ultra-processed foods?

I suspect it's because of lobbying from the food industry. Look, there are some good-quality processed foods and there are some bad-quality ones. But this entire notion of quality is entirely absent from the government guidelines. And all the ultra-processed foods have negative impacts on your gut health.

Many people find nutrition advice confusing without discovering that it's all incredibly personal, too, and by the way, it costs £299 to test yourself. Isn't there a risk that you discourage people?

Well, I think you can get half the way there by understanding gut health. If you eat for your gut – lots of fermented foods – you can improve a lot of your parameters.

But it's really important to appreciate that nutrition isn't simple. It's complex. We're complex and we're going to need aids and devices rather than a simple NHS table with six rules on it. There's no getting away from that.

And yes, these tools are expensive. But they will become much cheaper. If the NHS did something like this at scale, they could do microbiome testing for £30 a time and replace the colon screening they do with something decent. All these things start expensive and end up cheaper.

And in the meantime, you can experiment on yourself – particularly with breakfast. Some people will do well on yoghurt or boiled eggs; some



will do well on muesli and wholewheat toast; some people can't. Some readers may notice their own dips. But others will be struggling.

In The Diet Myth, you advised that we should eat as wide a variety of (whole) foods as possible, which has always struck me as a great piece of diet advice. Do you have any update on that?

People always ask me for my rules. I always explain that they're not rules, they're guidelines, but you're right, number one is: try to eat a diverse range of plants, including herbs, spices, nuts and seeds.

The second is to eat fermented foods, little and often. The third is to eat the rainbow, so you're getting your polyphenols and so on. The fourth is to avoid ultra-processed foods and the fifth is to fast overnight – that's 12, ideally 14 hours when your gut is resting. If you follow that advice, most other things fall into place.

You became well known during the coronavirus pandemic for your symptom tracker. How did that work feed into what you're doing now?

We learned that diet quality was an important predictor for Covid – that was an eye-opener for us. It also showed us how important it is, when designing any product, to interact and communicate with people. And we also learned that there is real value in community science. People did want to participate, and that's one of the nice things about Zoe. It's one big experiment. We've hit on something that people like to do.

We've now switched the Covid app to measure lifestyle habits. We've just finished an experiment where we got 80,000 people to try intermittent fasting. What about exercise? Probiotics such as kefir and kombucha? Cold showers? Meditation? The government is never going to fund research into lifestyle stuff like this. But these are all things we can test.

How do you see the market for this type of product developing?

Well, we're still seeing a loss, six years in! So it's definitely a long-term plan rather than a short-term get-rich scheme. But we do feel we're just at the beginning. We have a product that people like. We have a four-month waiting list. And because there's so much complexity, you'll always need new advice.

Henry Dimbleby's National Food Strategy calculated the cost of Britain's poor diet choices at £54 billion a year in lost earnings and profit. And in many places, these aren't choices at all. In schools, hospitals, prisons, institutions, you have no choice. Bad food is just what's delivered. We're the worst in Europe. No one is talking about the government's responsibility on this. We know ultra-processed foods have terrible effects on our health, and we're being urged to eat them. It's unsustainable.

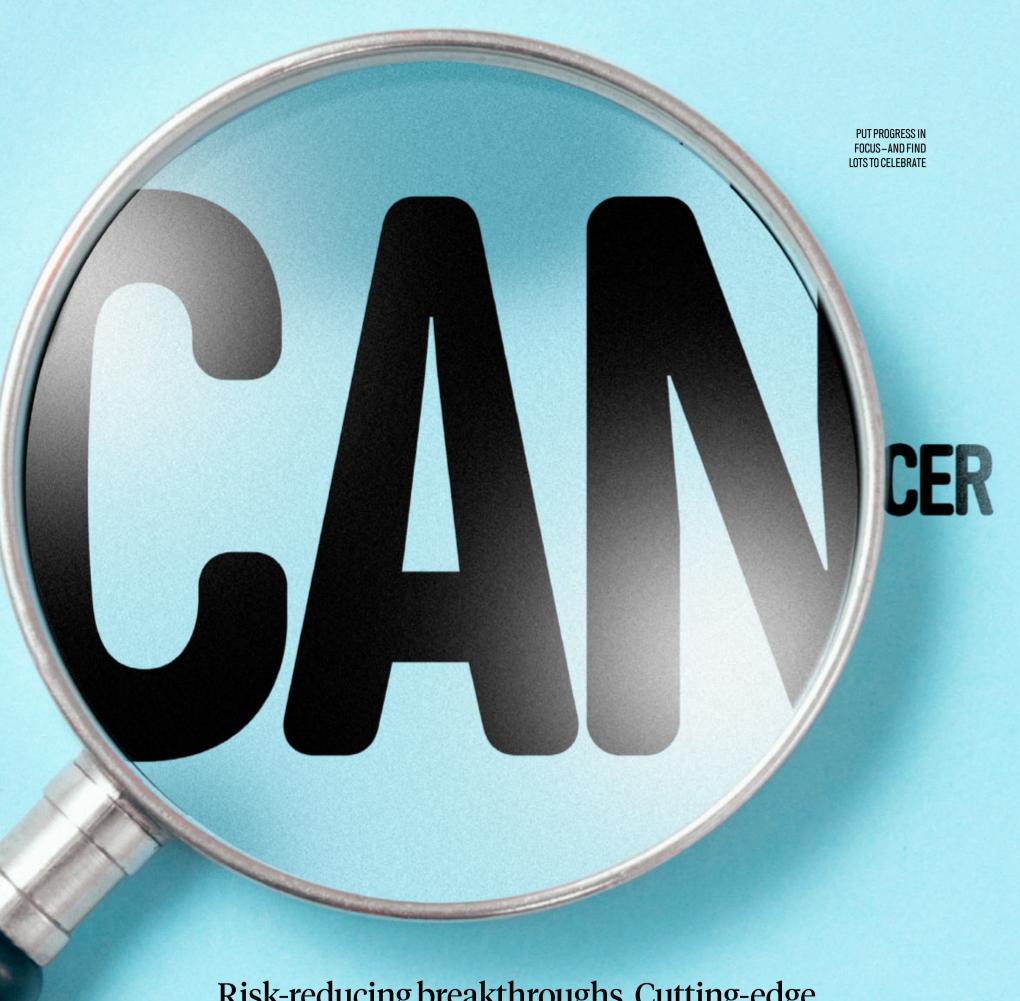
Do you see any optimism?

Well, when I wrote my first food book, *The Diet Myth*, in 2015, hardly anyone had heard of kefir, kimchi and kombucha. Now they're everywhere. Governments give me no optimism – but the consumer does.

Food For Life: The New Science Of Eating Well (£22, Jonathan Cape) is out now

THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT





Risk-reducing breakthroughs. Cutting-edge screenings. Powerful new treatments. The death rate from cancers in the UK has declined by a tenth over the past decade. But there's more to be done. Wise up on the facts now and you'll vastly increase your odds of surviving. Here's how...

THE FIRST RULE OF CANCER: TRY NOT TO GET IT

Doctors know more than ever about how to avoid cancer – and you're more in control than you may realise

Some day, there may be drugs that protect you from all types of cancer. There's a vaccine already
– the HPV vaccine – that does just that for certain
types. And labs all over the world are trying to find
ways to ID who's at increased risk for what cancer
so they can target exactly what you need to prevent it.
You can talk molecular targeting and mRNA therapy
all you want, but when you ask researchers about the
most successful way to prevent cancer right now,
they'll tell you the answer is in your hands. Forty-two
per cent of new cancers may be avoided if you make
lifestyle changes that reduce your risk. These tweaks
make a greater difference than you might think.

01 FIGHT OBESITY TO FEND OFF CANCER

Yes, we're going to mention weight

here. That's because researchers are now discovering a major link between obesity and cancer. How much obesity affects the risk of cancer kind of depends on the type, but the National Cancer Institute in the US says that excess weight may lead to as many as 48% of liver and gallbladder cancers and about 33% of oesophageal cancers in men. Excess body weight may also have a role in (deep breath here) multiple bone marrow, breast, brain, kidney, upper stomach, pancreatic, thyroid and colon cancers.

Fat tissue doesn't just sit there. It produces hormones that can encourage cells to multiply and blunts those that rein in proliferation – dangerous with cancer. People with obesity also often have higher levels of insulin, which is also a cancer risk. Add to all this the fact that the chronic inflammation that comes with obesity can lead to DNA damage and you have yourself a potential firestorm. Luckily, you can take charge.

ASSESS YOUR WAIST-TO-HIP RATIO

Use this method to see if your body fat is putting you at risk. It's better than BMI and more useful than your scale read-out.

Step 1: Get a tape measure and loop it around your waist at the smallest point.

Record the number.

Step 2: Measure the widest part of your hips. Record that, too.

Step 3: Now divide the number you got for your waist by the number you got for your hips.

Results for men:

1.0 or over = elevated risk 0.99 or below = normal risk

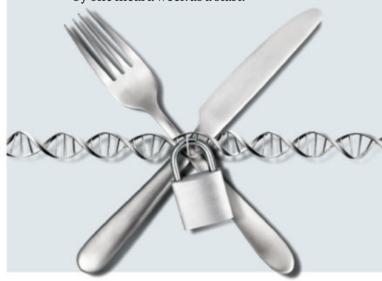
There's no single right to-do:

Maintaining a healthy weight involves using the exercise, diet and mentalhealth practices that work for you. Just get enough activity: that's 150 to 300 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise, 75 to 100 minutes of vigorous-intensity exercise or a combination of both, as well as two days of muscle-strengthening activity, each week.

O2 EAT MORE OF THE GOOD STUFF, TOO

There's growing evidence that following the Mediterranean diet

may reduce your risk of various cancers, such as lung, colorectal and prostate. In fact, a new study in Cancer found that the eating plan, which emphasises fruit, veg, whole grains, legumes, fish and olive oil, while limiting meat and dairy, may even slow the progression of prostate cancer. It may be related to chronic inflammation, which can feed the growth of cancerous cells, says Justin Gregg, an assistant professor of urology at University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center and lead author of the study. If you're not already eating this way, Dr Gregg suggests making changes gradually. So try upping your fish intake by one meal a week as a start.



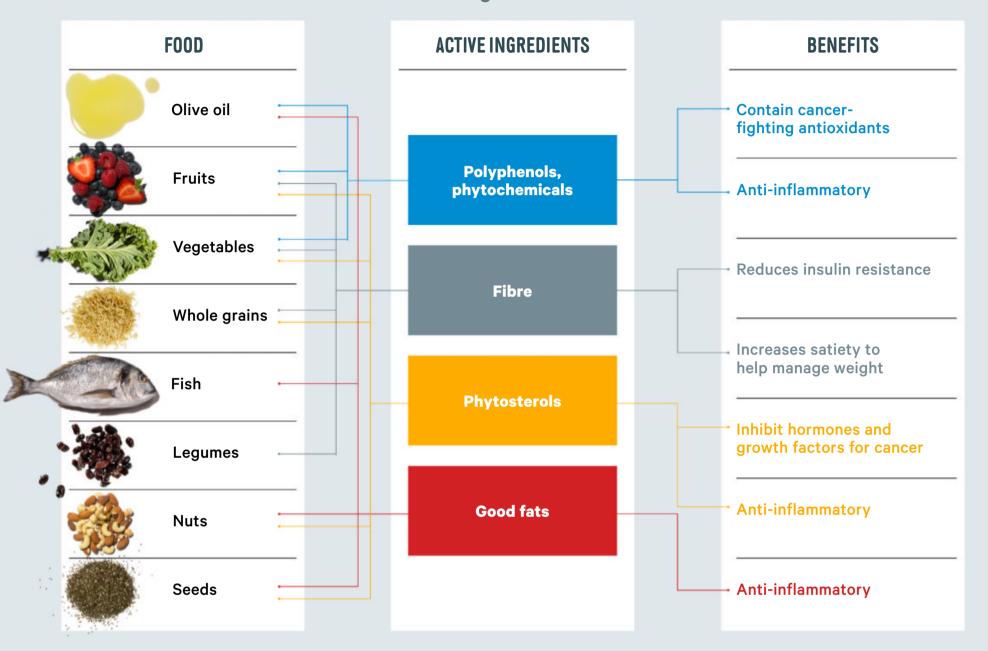
CHECK FOR INSULIN RESISTANCE

You can assess whether insulin is a problem for you by testing your blood glucose, or HbA1c. If you're over 40 and haven't yet booked your NHS Health Check, which includes a blood test, call your GP.

Proportion of newly diagnosed cancers that are potentially avoidable

WHY MEDITERRANEAN MATTERS

There's not just one thing about the Mediterranean diet that explains why people who eat that way have lower rates of cancer. There may be loads of active ingredients at work



4 MORE TACTICS TO SLASH RISK



QUIT SMOKING AND VAPING

No surprise, but still essential. A full 20% of all cancers are caused by smoking. (Lung cancer is still the cancer that kills the most men.) Long-term data on e-cigarettes is lacking, but no doctor will tell you that vaping is good for you. It's not easy to quit, but cessation programmes – not cold turkey – are the smarter way to go.



EMBRACE THE NA TREND

More than five alcoholic drinks a day, or 15 a week, can raise a man's risk of colorectal, breast, liver, oesophageal, stomach, mouth and throat cancers by up to 500%. If you want to cut back, try tracking your units for a month, then aim to reduce your number over time. For a closer look at the relationship between booze and health, see p60.



BE SMART IN THE SUN

Almost nine in 10 cases of melanoma could be prevented by simple steps such as applying SPF, spending more time in the shade and avoiding sunbeds. If the day's UV index is three or above, be wary of excess exposure. Those with darker skin have a lower risk, but can still burn – skin might feel sore, without much change in colour.



DON'T SWEAT

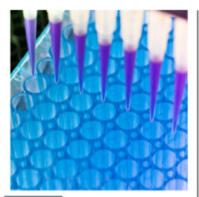
While it's true that a highsugar, low-nutrient diet has its health risks, there's no evidence that sugar directly causes cancer, nor that a sugar-free diet slashes your chances of a diagnosis. Likewise artificial sweeteners.

It's your overarching dietary habits that really make the difference. So

focus on the big picture.

DETECT CANCER EARLIER

Recent tech advances have further optimised screening tactics, which means doctors can spot cancer earlier – and stop its advances faster



THETECH

LIOUID BIOPSY

One such blood test, known as Galleri, can detect more than 50 types of cancer by identifying DNA shed by cancer cells. Surgeon Peter Attia, author of Outlive: The Science & Art of Longevity, is using Galleri with his patients, coupled with a proactive screening approach – although the blood test is not yet available in the UK outside of clinical trials. The goal is early detection of a treatable problem rather than late discovery of a grim one. 'No one should ever die from prostate or colon cancer,' says Dr Attia. 'That's because the rate and manner at which they progress is very slow. But you need to be thoughtful about screening.' In the future, other blood tests may detect cancer even earlier than other screening methods, maybe up to a year before tumours begin to form. One new test, called HrC. checks for stem cells that hold a biomarker for cancer and is being tested in

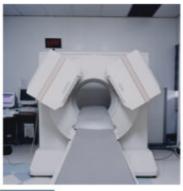


THETECH

AI COLONOSCOPIES

Colonoscopies havelong been the gold standard

for colorectal-cancer detection - and now artificial intelligence is making them even better. The screening process works a little like (of all things) facial-recognition software, says James East, a gastroenterologist at Mayo Clinic Healthcare in London. 'Instead of training the AI to recognise faces, we train it to recognise potential polyps,' he says. Dr East and his colleagues published a study in *Gastroenterology* last year that revealed that incorporating AI into colonoscopies reduced the risk of missing suspicious lesions by 50%. And the good news keeps coming: 'The cure rates of early colorectal cancer are incredibly high - more than 70% to 90% are completely cured,' explains Andrew Hendifar, medical director of the Pancreatic Cancer Screening and Early Detection Program at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, US.



THE TECH

PROSTATE MRI

In some UK hospitals, you'll be offered a prostate biopsy,

where a thin needle is used to take tissue samples, followed by an MRI scan to see if any cancer found inside the prostate has spread. But the latest research suggests that undergoing an MRI first is a smarter move for men with suspected prostate cancer. For some, MRIs might even be enough to determine whether you can skip the biopsy altogether. Even if you do need a biopsy, undergoing an MRI first may help increase its accuracy, says Pedro Barata, an oncologist at UH Seidman Cancer Center in Ohio, US. Not all hospitals offer MRI scans before biopsy, but you can ask your doctor to refer you to one that does.

GOOD NEWS NUMBER

GOOD NEWS NUMBER

Reduction in the miss rate of

Reduction in the miss rate of suspicious lesions when AI is used to enhance colonoscopy

THE NEW RULES OF...

BOWEL CANCER SCREENING

- The faecal immunochemical test (FIT) scheme launched in 2019. Everyone registered with a GP is automatically sent a bowel-cancer testing kit every two years from the age of 60 (if you live in England or Northern Ireland), 55 (Wales) or 50 (Scotland), up to the age of 74.
- The FIT looks for tiny traces of blood in your stool sample. If blood is detected, you might be referred for a colonoscopy. (But don't panic: most people who are advised to get further tests don't have cancer.)
- Some people might benefit from screening at a younger age. There are several conditions that can increase your risk, including familial adenomatous polyposis, Lynch syndrome, ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease. Speak to your GP.

PSA SCHEDULING

- This measures the amount of prostate-specific antigen (PSA) in your blood. You can ask your GP for a test if you're aged 50 or over.
- There's no national screening programme for prostate cancer. Research suggests current tests don't reduce the number of men dying from prostate cancer and can lead to men being treated for slow-growing cancers that wouldn't have caused harm in their lifetime.
- Instead, look out for symptoms such as an increased need to pee or a feeling that your bladder hasn't fully emptied (though these symptoms don't always mean cancer) and book a GP visit if something changes. Courtesy of

Cancer Research UK

some hospitals in the UK.



THESE 3 MEN FACED CANCER AND ARE STRONGER FOR IT



DETECTING RECURRENCE EARLIER

How a new screening tactic helps FREDDY HERRERA stay ahead of possible recurrences

Back in 2018, Freddy Herrera asked his doctors for a series of tests after he suffered post-workout head pressure, abdominal cramping and vomiting. They kept assuring him he was fine, just out of shape, but Herrera felt otherwise. Then they noticed blood in Herrera's stool sample. This led to a colonoscopy through which they found a tumour in his colon. Standard treatment – surgery and chemotherapy - took care of it. But when doctors determined that Herrera had a high risk for recurrence, they brought out a new

monitoring tool in between his frequent colonoscopies. The blood test, called ctDNA (circulating tumour DNA), detects DNA fragments associated with colon cancer while they're floating in your blood, long before scans or a colonoscopy could detect them, and while they're easier to treat. Now 40, Herrera is enrolled in a clinical trial focusing on lifestyle changes and colon-cancer recurrence. 'Having a plan and being aware of what I'm putting in my body has been great,' he explains. 'I've been discovering new ways to do things, and I'm enjoying it.'

Reduction in risk of dying from prostate cancer in men who did vigorous activity for three or more hours a week compared with men who did

less than an hour



TURNING TREATMENT ON ITS HEAD

A novel protocol helped **DEXTER LESEUER** survive

pancreatic cancer

In January 2021, Dexter Leseuer, 59, was trying to slim down. But when he couldn't stop losing weight, tests and follow-ups landed him in the office of Davendra Sohal, a medical oncologist and assistant director of clinical trials at the University of Cincinnati Cancer Center. Leseuer learned he had aggressive stage two pancreatic cancer. The news was dire; pancreatic cancer is one of the hardest to treat and has a five-year survival rate of 5% to 10%. But Dr Sohal had conducted a clinical trial on a new approach. The traditional surgery-first treatment method often left people unable to tolerate radiation therapy or chemo. Reversing the order might shrink the tumour before operating and make the process more successful. The tactic is often used with other cancers but was a new approach for this one.

At first, the tumour didn't respond well to chemo. But radiation shrank it and made his operation successful. He weathered the ups and downs, he says, by trusting his doctors and supporting treatment. 'You've got to be active in your own survival and do something that's positive to your mental stability every day,' he says.



RALLYING THE IMMUNE SYSTEM

Immunotherapy helped

JAYSTAN DAVIS fight

colorectal cancer

When you're 19, getting a colonoscopy isn't exactly on your to-do list. When extreme pain in his hip and lower back popped up unexpectedly, Jaystan Davis chalked it up to a sporting injury - until it was so bad he could barely walk. 'I probably had three or four different doctors say, "There's no way this is cancer," he says. While colorectal-cancer rates are climbing in younger men, it seemed unlikely in someone healthy and active. It turned out to be stage three colorectal cancer. During surgery to remove the tumour, doctors discovered that it had spread to his back and his diagnosis jumped to stage four.

That diagnosis ended up being 'a blessing in disguise', Davis says, as it qualified him for a clinical trial using the most talked-about promising cancer treatment today, immunotherapy. He received a monoclonal antibody medication called atezolizumab, which worked by stimulating his immune system to target and kill cancer cells. Combined with chemotherapy, it worked. Davis is in remission and back to exercising six days a week. He hopes telling his story saves lives and reminds men that if something feels wrong, don't blow it off. •





Here's the the thing:

there's a reason why diets are synonymous with deprivation. When weight loss is the goal – as it often is – we tend to fixate on what we can't have and less so on what we need more of to ensure that our bodies are able to function at their very best.

As a goal, 'weight loss' alone is fairly meaningless. Take the boxer Anthony Joshua. At 110kg and 6ft 6in, his body-mass index makes him technically overweight. That's plainly ridiculous. But it illustrates a point: if you're only focusing on eating less and dropping kilos, you're not truly working on achieving the powerful body you want.

You've heard that muscle weighs more than fat. Many weight-loss plans target dense muscle over fat mass, because it produces a bigger shift on the scales. After a week spent starving, you might be lighter, but only because your fat-to-muscle ratio has tipped the wrong way. So, for men who are serious about getting in shape, there are plenty of reasons to eat smarter: raising your immune system, elevating your energy, boosting endurance and getting stronger.

'Diet is a key piece of rebuilding strength,' says Brian St Pierre of Precision Nutrition. 'Without sufficient macronutrients and micronutrients, you won't be able to recover adequately or perform at your peak.' And that kind of strength will benefit not just your workouts, but your focus on work, your mental resilience and everything in between. Will you lose fat on this programme? Absolutely. But more importantly, you'll do so without weakening your body in the process.





Eat Stronger

Step

Diversify Your Fuel

Some crash diets slash entire food groups to shock your system into weight loss. But the big surprise is how quickly it piles back on again. To strengthen your entire body and support lasting change, you need to eat a range of nutrients, says St Pierre. Here's exactly why each is important. (Don't worry, we'll translate the science into delicious meals later.)

Protein

Enhances your strength by repairing and growing your muscle tissue

Especially: Zoonutrients

Nutrients that occur only in animal foods, such as creatine, will further stoke muscle power and strength. Red meat is the best source, but vegans can find it in supplement form (£9.99, myvegan.com). Other examples include carnosine, linked to muscle function and reduced fatigue.

Slow-Burn Carbs

Supply the fuel to work out longer and keep hormones in balance

Especially: Phytonutrients

These occur only in plant foods, reducing training-induced inflammation and boosting your all-round health. Examples you've heard of include carotenoids, flavonoids and resveratrol.

And: Myconutrients

Found only in mushrooms and other fungi, these help you avoid deficiencies that might sap your strength.

Healthy Fats

We don't just mean those derived from plants such as avocado and nuts, or from oily fish, but also those found in less obvious suspects such as egg yolks, grass-fed beef, pork and organ meats. Unprocessed fats from whole foods lower inflammation, regulate hormones, support joint health and improve immunity, so you'll never need to miss a workout.



Step O

Calculate Your Portions

This involves a little bit of maths for a whole lot of progress. You don't need to follow this to the letter, but adjusting your intake of proteins, fats and carbs will reap rewards in the gym, no gains lost. Use this guide to ensure that the fuel you fill up on is fit for purpose.

- **Set Your Calories** If you want to maintain your weight but add strength and muscle, your total daily caloric goal should be about 15 times your body weight in pounds. So, if you weigh 160lb (11st 6lb), that's 2,400 calories a day.
- Prioritise Protein Spreading your protein intake evenly throughout the day is crucial for maintaining muscle mass. The oft-cited target of 1g of protein per pound of body weight is the gold standard. So if you weigh 160lb that's 160g of protein, or 40g per meal with two 20g snacks.
- Fill In Your Fats You need to derive at least 20% of your calories from fats in order to maintain your hormone levels, says St Pierre. That might equate to roughly 500 calories, depending on your size. (We'll do the maths for you later on.)
- Pile On The Carbs Start with a base of 20% if that sounds low, there's space to build on it. St Pierre recommends diversifying the carbs you eat, making sure to include phytonutrients and myconutrients. You can tinker with this ratio as you adapt the diet to suit you.
- notice you have some calories left over: about 750. How you allocate them is up to you. St Pierre advises experimenting, adding more fat or more carbs until you find a balance that satisfies your stomach and your taste buds. Not sure where to start? Split the remaining calories equally into carbs and fat and see how that feels.





Eat Stronger

Step 03

Turn Maths Into Meals

All this talk of measurements and macros, but what does that look like on a plate? Take the numbers you calculated in step two and turn them into a plan for creating easy daily meals. Because you have enough to think about.

Customise Your Programme

\rightarrow	68kg Man	82kg Man	95kg Man
Daily Needs	2,250 cals	2,700 cals	3,150 cals
Quality Protein Meat, fish, poultry, eggs, Greek yoghurt, tofu, seitan	palm- sized portions (180g protein)	palm- sized portions (215g protein)	8 palm- sized portions (240g protein)
Non- Starchy Carbs Spinach, cauliflower, mushrooms, peppers, courgette	6 fist- sized portions	fist- sized portions	8 fist-sized portions
Carbs Beans, entils, whole grains, fruit, potatoes, squashes	cupped handfuls (180g carbs)	cupped handfuls (240g carbs)	cupped handfuls (275g carbs)
Fat-Rich Foods Nuts, seeds, nut butters, avocado, cheese, olive oil	thumb- sized portions (85g fat)	7 thumb- sized portions (100g fat)	8 thumb- sized portions (115g fat)

Want To Go Bespoke?

Go to precisionnutrition.com's nutrition calculator, plug in your data and choose 'Body Recomposition' as your goal. The formula will spit out a plan to maximise your strength.

Step Control of the state of th

Now Build Up Your Meal Plan

Breakfast Savoury Oat Bowl



Ingredients

30g oats, cooked with water; bag of spinach, sautéed; 4 cremini mushrooms, quartered and grilled; 2 slices of prosciutto, torn and grilled; 2 eggs, soft-boiled

Method

Top your oats with the spinach, mushrooms – a powerful virus-fighter – prosciutto pieces and eggs. A source of healthy fats and vitamin D, the yolks support testosterone production. Drizzle with oil, crack over some freshly ground black pepper and tuck in. Simple as that. 449 cals, 30g protein, 38g carbs, 21g fat

SnackBeef Jerky

246 cals, 20g protein, 7g carbs, 15g fat





Immunity Boosting Pork Chop Salad See right

Eat Stronger

Lunch Salmon Burger



Ingredients

Wholemeal burger bun; 1 tbsp mayo; ½ tsp wasabi powder; 115g salmon fillet, cooked; handful of pea shoots; ½ avocado, sliced

Method

Halve your bun and spread it with the combined mayo and wasabi, which can stimulate the body's stress-response antioxidant defences. Stuff with the salmon fillet for recovery-boosting EPA and DHA fats, pea shoots and avo. Serve alongside a crisp Asian pear.

618 cals, 37g protein, 47g carbs, 33g fat

Snack Protein Shake



220 cals, 48g protein, 4g carbs, 1g fat

Dinner Apricot Pork Chop with Quinoa Salad

Ingredients

115g pork chop, seared; ½ red onion, quartered; 3 apricots, pitted and quartered; 180g (cooked weight) quinoa; 1 tbsp olive oil; 1 tbsp apple cider vinegar; ½ bag kale, chopped; handful of cherries, pitted and halved

Method

Cook the pork, a great source of protein and immunity-boosting selenium, along with the onion and apricots. Combine the amino acid-rich quinoa with the oil, vinegar, kale and cherries, which accelerate post-workout recovery.

653 cals, 39g protein, 76g carbs, 23g fat

Total 2,200 cals, 174g protein, 172g carbs, 93g fat



All Scott Adkins ever wanted was to be an action star.

You've probably seen him in action, getting slaughtered by the likes of Keanu Reeves and Matt Damon. But he's not a star. More often, he's a human punchbag. **What does** it feel like when half of your dream comes true?



WORDS BY JOSHUA ST. CLAIR | PHOTOGRAPHY BY DYLAN COULTER



FADE IN: BIRMINGHAM, ENGLAND - 1989.

We open on a boy. He is 13. Dark, wiry hair. His body lean. His smile a mischievous grin. We see him boarding a bus with his mates. We see him standing in the back with his mates when some men get on. Robbers. They make for the boys. They turn them around, frisk them, take out their wallets. The men don't have weapons. They're just older, bigger. One robber, taking out the boy's wallet, catches him grinning.

ROBBER#1

Why are you smiling?

BOY

I've never been robbed before.

[A pause]

It's kind of cool.

The man just looks at the boy and then – WHACK! – punches him in the face. In the ensuing mayhem, the boy escapes. But the coppers come, drive the boy home and escort him up to the front door, where his father is waiting, looking as if he's about to throw a punch himself.

The boy's father is a butcher, and his father's father is a butcher, and his father's father was a butcher – just butchers all the way down. But the boy doesn't want to be a butcher. He goes down to the shop on Saturdays, making less than a pound an hour hacking away at fat and bone, and he thinks, no. He thinks the same thing at school and doesn't pay attention. Why should he? The shop, school – they're back-up plans, and a back-up plan is just an excuse, right? An excuse not to make it. After he's mugged, the boy has a plan: he's going to make it.

The boy turns his father's garage into a dojo. Motorbikes are pushed to one side, replaced by punchbags, a makiwara and a poster of Bruce Lee – part of a shrine, really. The effigy watches the boy train. It watches the boy devour magazines, Black Belt and Muscle & Fitness, and every VHS tape on martial arts he brings home. Once the boy can drive, he goes from one video store to the next, scavenging. Who's got the latest Van Damme, the latest Chuck Norris, the latest Jackie Chan? A dream forms in the boy's mind: to be the next Van Damme, the next Chuck Norris, the next Jackie Chan. And then the dream becomes more than a dream. It becomes a plan.

Soon he's doing kick-boxing bouts in random gyms and squash courts. He's about 20. He gets his

head punched against the wall during one bout – WHACK! – and he blacks out.

BOY'S FATHER

(voice-over)

Son, you gotta get your head screwed on... You gotta get a trade... This is not gonna work out for you.

The boy wakes. The boy leaves home.

CUT TO: BIRMINGHAM - MARCH 2022, 25 YEARS LATER

INT. THE ADKINS HOME, IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. A man sits in his study: SCOTT ADKINS – cropped black hair, wiry over the forehead, a mischievous grin, a granite jaw, wrestling shoulders. This is the boy.

It's early afternoon. The house is quiet. Adkins opens his laptop. His forearms are bruised from a reshoot the weekend before; he was blocking kicks. His knee has been acting up again. He can feel something catching. He probably needs surgery, he thinks. But he doesn't want surgery. Surgery means they might cut off a piece of his meniscus. He needs all his meniscus. He'll be 46 soon.

In an hour, Adkins will drive to the preschool/primary school to pick up his son and daughter. He lives 10 miles from where he grew up, in the kind of house he'd drive by with his mum, who would go, 'Ooh, I'd love to have a house there one day.' Well, now he can say it, 'I made it, Mum.' Mum still lives nearby.

Adkins checks his emails. He's waiting to hear back about an audition, a ridiculous bad guy part in a streaming

film. His agent said he should send in an audition tape. It was his daughter's birthday that weekend, so he said no. They asked him again the next weekend. Adkins said okay and sent in a tape. But he doesn't have high hopes. It's the fifth, sixth, seventh, maybe eighth role behind the lead. He should have heard back by now.

'They've probably been to Frank Grillo, and [he] turned it down,' Adkins says, unprompted. 'Then it's like, "Let's see if we can get Scott Adkins!"' He laughs. He flashes a Cheshire Cat grin in moments of sincerity and wryness, such that one cannot always tell which mood he intends – or whether the smile punctuates or masks what he really feels.

'There's a pecking order, isn't there?' he says. 'I'm guessing I'm behind Frank.'

The grin.

Anyway, no email.

He's used to empty mailboxes. The roles he didn't get. The chances that were never offered. He's appeared in about 60 movies, and yet...

Some hurt worse than others. He auditioned for *Batman* in 2013, the role Ben Affleck won. He never expected an offer. He auditions with this understanding: he expects to be disappointed. But it's the role he most wants. When he went for it, he read from the script for *The Dark Knight Rises*, the words Christian Bale says on-screen. Adkins was hired as a stuntman for that movie. He was to double Bale in the Batsuit. That also didn't work out. Then there was *The Witcher*, another possible break. He sent in his tape and then woke the next morning to the news that Henry Cavill had been cast. We love you, they always say, but we're going in another direction. 'It's bullshit,' Adkins says, with a tired smile.

A lot never happened. But a lot did. Some dreams need to contract to come true. And some version of Scott Adkins' dream has come true. Just not the full version, not the one you think about when you think about dreams.

He leans back in his chair. His study is small. (Likely a lot smaller than Affleck's.) A desk. Bookshelves with martial arts DVDs. A guitar in the corner. The room is adorned with framed movie posters: Avengement, Accident Man, Ninja II. Adkins's face looks down from each. Films not many people have seen, but those who have seem to love them. He jokes that if someone asks him what movie he's doing next, he can usually say, probably something with '3' or '4' in the title.

When the king of the low-budget sequel comes to Hollywood, he loses. They hire him to lose. He has lost many times.

SMASH CUT TO: TIMES SCOTT ADKINS HAS BEEN KILLED OR BEATEN TO A PULP

Front-kicked by **JACKIE CHAN** [The Medallion]. Throat-jabbed by **DONNIE YEN** [Ip Man 4: The Finale]. Groin-kicked by **MATT DAMON** [The Bourne Ultimatum]. Blown up by **BENEDICT**





CUMBERBATCH [Doctor Strange]. Pounded to a pulp by **JEAN-CLAUDE VAN DAMME** [The Shepherd]. Decapitated by **HUGH JACKMAN** [X-Men Origins: Wolverine]. Front-kicked in the face by **JET LI** [Unleashed]. Brass-knuckle-punched into a helicopter blade and, again, decapitated by **JASON STATHAM** [The Expendables 2].

Still no email.

He looks back to the wall. Above him, there's another poster. *Boyka: Undisputed*. Adkins stands shirtless as the hulking Yuri Boyka, a fictional Ukrainian MMA fighter. The character seems to be his most beloved; if Adkins is stopped on the street, it's because of Boyka. He played Boyka

three times, each film seeing wide theatrical release mainly in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Most English and American viewers only ever saw Boyka on DVD. But Boyka seems to resonate. If Adkins is only remembered for one role, that role, he knows, will be Boyka. It's as close as he comes to a John Wick. To a Rocky Balboa. But not many recognise him as Boyka. Not many recognise him at all.

Adkins took his daughter to see *The Batman* recently. His daughter was too young, the cinema attendant said. (She's 11.) Adkins protested, 'Are you kidding me?' The attendant didn't recognise him, but this wasn't a surprise. Even those who know Adkins as Boyka don't recognise him – he bulked up for the role – and so when people

Trading Blows

come up to him, some might be disappointed: you're not Boyka.

Anyway, they didn't get in.

So few make it. Even this far. Adkins still wants more. 'I've done straight-to-DVD action movies, and I'm seen as that guy – and I'm aware of that,' Adkins says. The grin. 'And look, it's not the end of the world. I'm still making a good living doing what I love.' And he knows his privilege. Nice house in the country. Making money for movies. But when pressed, he voices those childhood dreams again. Because saying 'I made it, Mum' isn't really true.

'I'd like to have a bigger career,' he says, 'and be somewhere more towards where Dwayne Johnson and Jason Statham are.'

FADE IN: EGYPT - JUNE 2022

EXT. AN OPPRESSIVE DESERT LANDSCAPE

The movies! It looks like the desert, and it tastes like shit-circling flies buzzing into his mouth. Every day for a week, the crew picks Adkins up in a van and drives him over this shitty, bumpy road to the desert's edge. There's sand, a beating sun and a reservoir – standing water, which explains the flies; they're everywhere. He stops fighting them. Just lets them stick and jump and poke his face. It's miserable.

The film: outlandish action. Adkins gets to ride away from an explosion on a motorbike, fly through the air, jump away from a fireball – stuff he always dreamed about doing. But he feels ridiculous. It's a Second World War movie. Everyone else is shooting guns. And here's Adkins running through the gunfire and karate-kicking people. But hey, that's what the director wants, and they gave him more money than they did the last time.

The previous movie: *Karmouz War*, one of the highest-grossing films ever in Egypt. (It made more than the final *Avengers* movie there.) Adkins played the antagonist, a stand-in for British colonial oppression. In the final battle, the hero bludgeons Adkins with a fire extinguisher, straps a bag to his chest, pulls a grenade pin, then front-kicks him into oblivion. BOOM!

Here, Adkins feels like a superstar. The reason is Boyka. When Adkins walks down the street here, people shout, chant, 'Boyka! Boyka!' One of the Egyptian posters for *Karmouz*







SCOTT ADKINS VS. EVERYONE

FROM LEFT: ADKINS VS. KEANU REEVES IN *JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 4*; ADKINS VS. DONNIE YEN IN *IP MAN 4: THE FINALE*; AND ADKINS VS. MARTYN FORD IN *BOYKA: UNDISPUTED*

War – which is not a Boyka movie – didn't even say 'Scott Adkins'. It said 'Boyka'.

The shouting and chanting make Adkins feel nervous. Alone, no security, in a foreign country. It happened once in Serbia a few years ago. He went to a movie. In line for popcorn, a guy started shouting, 'Boyka! Boyka! Boyka!'

There are moments he wants to be Dwayne Johnson, and then there are moments he's thankful he's only Scott Adkins. He imagines the paparazzi, cameras outside his Birmingham front door, the inability to move about his life, his family routines changing. 'There would be a trade-off,' he says.

But now he is thinking of the other side. Being Batman. Being Bond.

'I would choose to be more famous, I suppose,' he says, after a pause. 'Because you're reaching for it, aren't you? You want better opportunities, better movies to be in. But maybe I'd regret it. Who knows? Probably.'

FADE IN: A VILLAGE, SOUTHERN CHINA – OCTOBER 1999

Adkins's first movie. He had left England. Couldn't afford London. Didn't fit in with the acting kids. Singing and dancing. He wanted to punch and kick people in movies. So he sent his reel to a director in Hong Kong and soon found himself here.

Some shit hotel room.

Cockroaches scuttle across the floor, and the food – what the Hong Kong crew feeds him for lunch with rice – makes him sick. He eats McDonald's instead. (Is it making him fat? He can't afford to get fat.) He sits and sits and waits, tries to stay loose for 14 hours of filming. Sitting and sitting and waiting and then... ACTION!

FADE IN: LONDON - 2014

INT. RESTAURANT. Lunch. CHAD STAHELSKI – the former Matrix stunt double for Keanu Reeves. He co-owns a stunt company. He asks Scott if he wants to join. Steady work. Steady pay.

SCOTT

No, Chad. I can't be a stuntman. I want to be a leading man. I want to be starring in films.

CHAD

[Half-kidding]
Scott, do you honestly believe that anyone in Hollywood sees you as anything other than a stuntman?
The guy in Ninja and Ninja II?

Adkins remembers filming The Bourne Ultimatum with Matt Damon. They spent all day on a small fight scene. Several cameras rolling, all angles. It was madness. You can't sell a punch if you're filming from several angles at once – you'll see it miss. But production didn't care; they were just gonna chop it all up in editing and call it a fight. Dancing around the cameras, pretending to hit Damon, Adkins thought, 'Fucking hell, these guys don't know what they're doing.' He was gonna have to punch Damon for real in order to sell it. In the end, it was Damon who hit Adkins for real. Kicked him in the balls, actually, caught him with a toe to the testicles. Adkins appears in the film for less than 30 seconds. An entire day of filming for just 30 seconds - and a kick to the balls.

FADE IN: BIRMINGHAM – NOVEMBER 2022

Everything has been falling through – left, right, and centre. After Egypt,

Adkins had planned on filming two other movies over the summer. Both fell through.

Then he was scheduled to fly to New Orleans for another film. He spent time working with a dialect coach, trying to get his New Orleans accent down. The shoot date is getting moved, they tell him, but who knows. It might just be dead. More time wasted, more money, more hope. He had turned down other projects, thinking he'd be filming in America. Now he has nothing. Just one movie for the rest of the year. Maybe that falls through, too.

It's been only a few years since Adkins took a film to pay bills. He had just bought his house, in Birmingham. Really stretched himself. Spent money he was supposed to be paying back. He took the first movie available. It wasn't good. But there was another time before that when he took the first job at hand. That was in 2010 – his wife was pregnant with their first child and they were broke. He had just done a Boyka movie, but he didn't get paid much for it. (Boyka never paid much.) For the first time, Adkins asked himself, 'Can I support a family like this? Do I need to do something else?'

Things changed for Adkins only about six years ago. The work has become more consistent. But sometimes it feels like it all could end. He thinks about what he might be able to do with more money. He remembers filming *John Wick: Chapter 4* with Reeves. Just two summers ago. It'll be one of his biggest films. He remembers the set, a warehouse turned into a nightclub, a huge waterfall. An £8m set. He remembers looking up and gaping.

If Adkins were to list the top five greatest action stars ever, Reeves would be up there. Right beside Arnold Schwarzenegger, Jackie Chan, Sylvester Stallone and Tom Cruise.

What is it that makes a man a star? Adkins' skills, his years of work, they're undeniable. Taekwondo, kick-boxing, wushu, kung fu, jeet kune do, capoeira, krav maga. And his face. Is it not the face of an action star? Cropped black

Trading Blows



hair, wiry over the forehead, a dark brow, a granite jaw. He looks like Bruce Wayne.

What is it that makes a man a star? Why Ben Affleck and not Scott Adkins? Why Keanu Reeves and not Scott Adkins?

CUTTO: BERLIN-JULY 2021

INT. A MULTIMILLION-DOLLAR MOVIE SET A warehouse. Inside, a nightclub. Lights strobing. A large waterfall. Torrential downpour over two men fighting. Scott Adkins vs. Keanu Reeves.

Adkins is on his back, lying on a soaking mat/puddle, as waterfall rain drenches him. Reeves, who's on top of him, is just beating the absolute shit out of him. A right punch two inches from his chin. Then a left, buried into his shoulder. And then a right, pounding his sternum.

What is it that makes a man a star? There is, at least, an answer to what makes Adkins the kind of star he is. It's an eternal Hollywood truth: stars like Reeves will always need people like Adkins.

When Stahelski – the director of the movie, the man who once tried to recruit Adkins to be a stuntman – called Adkins for the latest *John Wick* sequel, he needed someone to make Reeves look good. He gave Adkins a break. But he also gave him a risk. When he cast Adkins, he told him what he had in mind for his character: Adkins was going to act in a fat suit. He'd look 100lb heavier. He'd be punching and kicking after hours in a make-up chair, adding chins to his face and girth to his waist. He'd wear grills. He'd look ridiculous. It was to be Adkins' biggest movie, but even if you knew him, you wouldn't recognise his face.

'I always thought Scott was going to be something,' Stahelski says. 'I still believe. He's got a long way to go. And he's gonna get there. We all have different paths. It's just a matter of time. It's not so much [a question of] why hasn't Scott become big as much as it is, when will he?'

Adkins thinks about all of this, of course. His choices. Maybe he shouldn't have done so many

'I don't want an Oscar. That's not what I'm in this game for. I'm in this game to get an award from Jackie Chan'

stunt roles. Maybe he should have finished drama school and gone the traditional way, done straight acting. Not flown back and forth to China for every martial arts film.

He remembers filming his first huge movie fight. All those years ago...

FADE IN: DUBLIN - 2001

He has to kick Jackie Chan in the chest. If he does it right, if he impresses Chan, then he'll be given the final fight; losing to him in the final fight would be an honour. But first, he has to kick him – hard but not too hard. The first couple of kicks: too soft!

FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHER

Hit him harder! A stuntman from Jackie's team comes over, whispers something sharply to Scott.

STUNTMAN

Be very careful! Shit, Scott thinks. But he does it. He kicks Jackie in the chest – hard but not too hard. He gets the final fight.

RETURN TO: BIRMINGHAM - 2022

'I remember after that fight scene just thinking to myself, "This is the best day of my life," Adkins says. 'Having fought Jackie Chan and acquitted myself well – and everything you've dreamed of up to that point. Being tested and coming through with flying colours. I remember just feeling so happy.

'And I had that feeling again, maybe 15 years later, when I was invited to the Jackie Chan Action Movie Awards, and I was presented with the award for best action actor, and best fight sequence, for the film *Boyka: Undisputed*.

'I don't want an Oscar,' Adkins says with finality. 'That's not what I'm in this game for. I'm in this game to get an award from Jackie Chan.'

There's no grin.

We all tell ourselves stories about who we are, who we might become. Sometimes, we move on. Sometimes, we outgrow the stories. But sometimes, the stories outgrow us. Isn't it better this way? To always be reaching. But also to lean back in our chairs and remember roles that make us proud. Adkins wants bigger roles. But for now, Boyka will be his legacy. His less-watched John Wick. His lower-budget Rocky Balboa. Boyka may not be enough, but it means... something. Doesn't it?

Adkins isn't always sure what, exactly, Boyka means. Or what, exactly, it means that he's in *John Wick: Chapter 4*, in one of the biggest action-movie franchises in the world – with one of the biggest action stars in the world. Adkins only knows that he's not that star. His plan didn't quite work out, and he's already 46. But he's gotten a hell of a lot closer than most people get to their dreams. And he's only 46.

There's a sad but redemptive end to the story of Yuri Boyka. He always wins, but he's always imprisoned. The franchise ends with Boyka returning to the prison ring, fighting for a small audience of inmates, performing for a few who appreciate his craft while the majority outside hardly know his name.

FADE IN:

INT. A PRISON HALLWAY, DIMLY LIT, BLUE GLOW

THE FINAL SHOT: Close-up on a man. He's silhouetted in black against the blue hallway. He walks towards the camera. The chants of those in a far-off room grow with intensity. The man steps into the light. SCOTT ADKINS as YURI BOYKA. He moves determinedly forwards, and the camera swivels to track his destination: a roped boxing ring surrounded by cages. The man walks into the ring and turns now to the screaming crowd, the other inmates.

They rattle the bars, the ring before them.
As the man raises his fists in pre-emptive triumph, they continue the chant, now deafening:

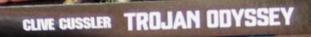
'Boyka!'

'Boyka!'

'Boyka!' 🖤

IN HONOR OF THE FAMOUS NOVELIST AND EXPLORER

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EDITED BY CHARLIE TEASDALE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAN MCALISTER

Men's Health



All Change

Landmark anniversaries combine with brandnew novelties and eye-popping colour to make 2023 a dazzling year for Rolex Rolex isn't known for enacting wholesale

change. The watchmaker tends towards gradual refinement rather than revolution. Last year, key developments in the portfolio included putting the crown of the GMT Master II on the opposite side (thus creating a 'left-handed' model) and enlarging the date window on the Deepsea by a very specific 8%. Such subtleties still managed to get the critics purring, so you can only imagine the brouhaha when this year's 'emoji' Day-Date was unveiled in late March

Yes, you read that right: emojis instead of dates, with emotional keywords including 'hope' and 'gratitude' in the display where the days should be. And a dial with a multicolour jigsaw motif and multicolour diamonds for hour markers. The watch is, Rolex says, 'an unexpected creative twist' that 'brings an element of spontaneity into the wearer's daily life'.

Understandably, the frolicsome Emoji-Day-Date (an unofficial nickname) has been one of the watch world's hottest topics since it first emerged. But it wasn't the only big drop from Rolex. Far from it. The Daytona - Rolex's prototypical chronograph - is 60 years old this year and, to celebrate, a slew of upgrades and adjustments have been made. The sub-dials and hour markers have been slightly shrunk, giving the dial a new, slightly airier look, and there's a new movement

- the calibre 4131 – which is more efficient than its predecessor. And if you get the platinum model, you can see it through the sapphire caseback: a first for a Rolex sport watch.

Elsewhere, the brand unveiled the Perpetual 1908, a new dress watch available in four finishes. This is, we assume, the first of many and a replacement for the Cellini, which was discontinued last year. A 39mm yellow- or white-gold case houses a matte-black or 'intense' white dial, with a small seconds sub-dial at 6pm a combination inspired by a Rolex from the 1930s. The year 1908 refers to when company founder Hans Wilsdorf coined the name 'Rolex'. If he could only see how the brand blossomed.

Faces To Watch

All That Jazz

Hamilton goes full Hamilton with its 2023 offerings

Quietly, Hamilton has become one of the coolest

and, in the best possible way, weirdest watchmakers out there. It's not only the place to go for exceptional value for money and reliable build quality – the Khaki Field Mechanical, for example – but it offers interesting design, from stoic to sensational.

Case in point: the
Jazzmaster Face 2 Face
III (below), which is somehow
more complicated in body
than name, and features a
dual-dial body that flips on an
axis. (And does a good job
of maintaining Hamilton's
space-race aesthetic.)

At the other end of the scale is the Khaki Navy Scuba, a classic 37mm or 43mm dive watch with a green colourway that evokes the ocean itself.

These two watches are wildly different, yet both are perfectly Hamiltonian.





Old And New

IWC revisits its archive, and a designer, for its new Ingenieur

There is no one more influential in the world

of watch design than Gérald Genta. Credited as the saviour of luxury watches in the face of the so-called 'Quartz Crisis' of the 1970s, Genta's aesthetic is as fashionable today as it was back then. This explains why LVMH recently announced it would be relaunching his eponymous brand. And why

IWC chose 2023 as the year for its relaunch of an Ingenieur Genta designed for the brand in 1976. The new Ingenieur 40 Automatic, equipped with the in-house 32111 calibre and a soft-iron inner case to guard against magnetism, is by no means a simple copy of the original 'Jumbo' (as it has come to be known), but it's more than just a homage, too.

Good Sport

Tissot has some new faces

on its sporting prowess by appointing England rugby ace Marcus Smith as its latest ambassador. The fly-half is one of the sport's most exciting young talents, with a Premiership title with Harlequins, an immovable spot in the national team and a call-up to the British & Irish Lions under his belt. Elsewhere. Tissot's new MotoGP ambassador Enea Bastianini joins the brand as it launches a clutch of new watches in line with the superbike competition. The T-Race MotoGP Special Edition chronograph (right) is the pick of the bunch, limited to just 800 pieces.

Tissot has doubled down





Bell & Ross

BR 03-92 DIVER WHITE BRONZE, 42MM BRONZE CASE ON BROWN CALFSKIN STRAP, £4,200

Faces To Watch



Longines

SPIRIT FLYBACK, 42MM STEEL CASE ON BROWN CALFSKIN STRAP, £4,100

Faces To Watch



Bremont

VULCAN, 42MM STEEL CASE ON CAMO SAILCLOTH STRAP, £4,295



Tissot

T-RACE MOTOGP CHRONOGRAPH 2023 LIMITED EDITION, 45MM STEEL CASE ON RED RUBBER STRAP, £625



Hublot

MP-13 TOURBILLON BI-AXIS RETROGRADE, 44MM SATIN-FINISHED AND POLISHED TITANIUM CASE ON BLACK RUBBER STRAP, £137,000

Faces To Watch



Tag Heuer

CARRERA CHRONOGRAPH, 39MM STEEL CASE ON BLUE LEATHER STRAP, £5,600

Faces To Watch



Breitling

TOP TIME B01 SHELBY COBRA, 41MM STEEL CASE ON BROWN CALFSKIN STRAP, £6,250



Citizen

CZ SMART SPORT SMARTWATCH, 44M STEEL CASE ON GREY STEEL BRACELET, £379



Oris

PROPILOT X KERMIT EDITION, 39MM TITANIUM CASE ON TITANIUM BRACELET, £3,700

Faces To Watch



Tudor

BLACK BAY 54, 37MM STEEL CASE ON STEEL BRACELET, £3,200





ONE-POT WONDERS

PAELLA WITH ADDED MUSCLE

One pan, one hour, four plates of the Spanish showstopper. Make this dish part of your gym-fuel repertoire

YOUR SUMMER PROTEIN FIX



This recipe comes courtesy of Caroline Farrell, a registered nutritionist who has worked with a number of Premier League footballers.

Step 1 Heat the oil in a large paella or frying pan and gently fry the chorizo for 5 mins, turning it in the oil. Set aside on kitchen roll to soak up excess fat.

Time so far: 5 mins

Step 2 Fry the chicken pieces in the same pan for about 5 mins until cooked through. Remove and set them to one side with the chorizo.

Time so far: 10 mins

Step 3 Add the red pepper, garlic and onion to the pan and fry gently until softened. Now throw in the rice, turning it in the oil for 1 min.

Time so far: 15 mins

Step 4 Mix in the saffron and stock and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat, cover with a lid or foil and cook gently for 20 mins until the rice is ready to eat.

Time so far: 40 mins

Step 5 Return the chorizo and chicken to the pan, then stir in the peas and seafood. Cook for 5 mins, season and serve, scattered with the parsley. Garnish with the lime wedges for extra style points.

Total time: 45 mins

15 mins Prep









INGREDIENTS

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 100g chorizo, chopped
- 4 boneless chicken thighs, chopped
- 1 red pepper, chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 onion, chopped
- 250g paella rice
- 1 tsp saffron threads
- 450ml chicken stock
- 100g peas
- 400g frozen seafood mix, defrosted
- 1 handful of flat-leaf parsley, chopped
- Lime wedges to garnish





BIG SQUEEZE

Be liberal with lime juice. A single 25ml shot provides about 10% of your daily vitamin C needs.
Higher levels of the vit can help the over-50s retain more muscle mass, the University of East Anglia found.

POWER

This mixture of mussels, squid and prawns delivers the whole spectrum of B vitamins to maintain healthy energy levels.
They're also low in calories, with roughly 90 cals in every 100g serving, while being very high in protein.

HAPPY

Carbs don't just fuel your efforts in the gym – increased insulin also helps your muscles absorb more amino acids. Saffron is a bonus, too, potentially raising serotonin levels in your brain.

-<u>;</u>

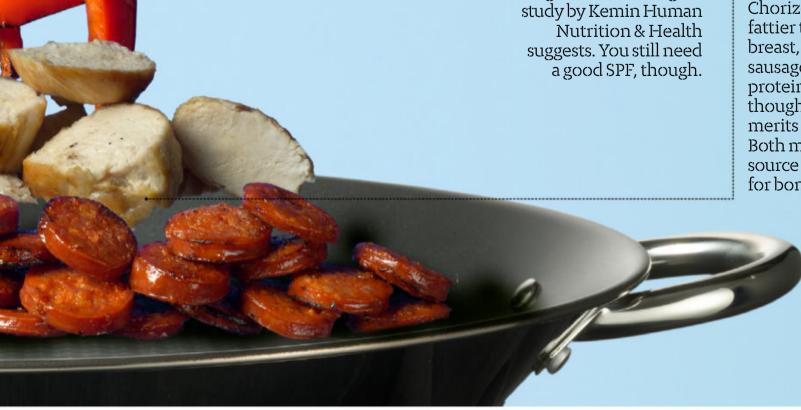
OUTLOOK

Along with high levels of vitamin C, peppers are rich in zeaxanthin and lutein, carotenoids that can protect skin against UV damage, a study by Kemin Human Nutrition & Health suggests. You still need a good SPF, though.

PROTEIN PAYLOAD

Chorizo might be fattier than chicken breast, but the spicy sausage offers a real protein hit. Its flavour, though, is why it really merits inclusion here. Both meats are a good source of phosphorus for bone health.

MEN'S HEALTH 109



THE BIG WORKOUT

BUILD A BEACH READY RIG IN JUST 4 WEEKS

Blending big lifts with loaded carries, our strongman plan will help you build size and strength on the move. Make your summer gains a breeze

Ensuring you get in 10,000 steps a day is well-worn health advice. But much like eating your greens, it's not always the most fun to follow.

But there is a loophole: by adding heavy weights, you can use that time to build a stronger, fitter body, and make muscle gain a walk in the park.

Loaded carries – the missing link in many a gym bro's fitness routine – are essentially 'cardio for people who hate cardio'. You'll get all the same benefits – better heart health, improved lung function, serious fat-burning – but by loading yourself up, you can also strengthen your core and spark extra growth.

Each of these workouts focuses on a different muscle group and incorporates a different carry. Spread the workouts throughout the week and leave at least 24 hours between each session for recovery. Aim to go heavier each time you repeat a workout across the month. Think of this as the next step in upgrading your physique – and the step after that, and the one after that...



and lift the bar to standing

(B). Lower to the plates under control, repeat.

into your hips (B), pause

to the ground. Repeat.

here before lowering back

110 MEN'S HEALTH

WORKOUT#01 PULLING POWER

■ The mightiest muscles are the ones you can't see in the mirror, so we're kicking off the week with a big back day. After a thorough warm-up, set

a timer for 15 mins and use that time to build up to the heaviest 5 reps you can muster for movement 1. Try to beat this each week.

After a short rest, strip your bar down and work through as many high-quality rounds of moves 2, 3 and 4 as possible in 20 mins.



Less weight, more range - bigger burn. Hinge over and grip the bar (A), take a breath, brace your core and drive your feet into the floor, lifting the bar to standing (B). Lower to the ground under control and repeat. Remember, we're aiming for quality reps, so keep your form tight and ego in check. Grab the heaviest dumbbells you can clean up on to your shoulders. Rack them up with your shoulder blades down, back and secure (A). Stride forwards, keeping your torso upright (B). Do laps or lengths and drop and rest as necessary, but don't go back to the rows until you hit the 100m mark.



MEN'S HEALTH 113

for 8 to 10 reps.





FORM MASTERCLASS #6

COME OUT SWINGING

The bar muscle-up is no easy feat, but with our step-by-step guide, this elite gymnastics move is well within your grasp

START FROM THE BOTTOM

Coming out on top of the bar muscle-up requires both pulling and pressing strength. Our fail-safe progressions will prepare your body for every element, so you'll be ready to conquer the rig with a gymnast's grace and power.



EXPERT

James Pook

KNOWLEDGE

Soar above the bar with tips from Pook, the Turf Games' head of ops

CONTACT

@coachpooky





CHEST-TO-BAR PULL-UP

4 SETS OF 4-6 REPS

Your first step is to develop the strength to control a pull-up. Hang below the bar with an overhand grip, just wider than shoulder width, arms fully extended (A). Keep your legs together and bent at 90 degrees as you pull your chest up to touch the bar (B). Hold for a second at the top, then lower down under control.



STRAIGHT ARM PULL-DOWN

4 SETS OF 8-10 REPS

Take tension away from your biceps and isolate your larger back muscles. Loop a resistance band around the bar with an overhand grip at hip width. Step away, arms straight and lats stretched (A). Lower the band without bending your arms to bring your hands to your hips (B). Hold for a second, then reverse.



0300

HIP-TO-BAR PULL-UP

3 SETS OF 3 REPS

Generating enough power to bring your hips to the bar is hard. Start in the hanging position, then squeeze your shoulders back and down. Swing your legs into a kipping motion (A). Then raise using a straight arm pull-down movement, driving your hips to the bar (B). Push away and swing your legs back for rep two.



STRAIGHT BAR DIP

4 SETS OF 6 REPS

This will develop your triceps, shoulder and chest strength, while keeping your core tight. Set a barbell in a rack at the height of your upper abs. Extend your arms and bring your shoulders over the bar (A). Dip your shoulders, then bend your elbows to touch your chest to the bar (B). Push back up to lock out.

PHOTOGRAPHY: PHILIP HAYNES. STYLING: ABENA OFEI. MODEL: LEON FAGBEMI AT W MODEL. GROOMING: NAT SCHMITT USING SKINCARE BY CLINIQUE FOR MEN AND MAC PRO



Join the Men's Health research panel



NEW!

TRAIN LIKE... STORMZY

FITNESS THAT'S NOT FOR SHOW

A run of nightly gigs demands the dedication of a pro athlete. That's not something **Stormzy** lacks. Here's how Britain's biggest rapper hit peak fitness



01

CARDIO IS KING

Sure, looking good helps, but memorable performances aren't built on biceps alone. Trainer TJ Ossai, who met Stormzy in 2016, says, 'He wanted to perform like Beyoncé. He said, "Look how she can dance, run around, jump and still sing." Cardiovascular fitness proved paramount. With the musician's schedule often demanding strings of back-to-back shows, Ossai was tasked with keeping him fit on tour. 'I trained him like an athlete with weights, sprinting, long and short runs, and jumping.'

02@

SIZING UP

Stormzy wanted to put on muscle, too - no easy task given his height and (originally quite slight) frame. Consistency proved key. While some artists might sack off the gym after a late night in the studio, Ossai says Stormzy is 'driven and goal-orientated'. Some weeks, they'd train for five days; at other points, Stormzy worked solo. To prep for his Glastonbury set, the pair followed a 12-week programme, blending heavy lifting with stamina-building

03(

CORE POWER

One of Stormzy's favourite routines is a quick abs burner, which he can complete in his hotel room or backstage. 'When we first started, he couldn't do it,' Ossai says. 'But now he's conquered it.' Think you're up to the challenge? Complete three sets of 10 reps of each of the moves below, with a 60-second rest between sets. (You can find descriptions of the moves by searching for Stormzy's workout on the MH website.) Do it as a stand-alone abs session or tag it on to the end of your usual workout for an impactful encore.



KNOWLEDGE A
personal trainer,
World Masters
champion
sprinter and
founder of
Be Fit Today
Track Academy.
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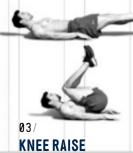
READY TO ROCK

Perform with or without the added weight. Drop the reps if needed



runs and bike work.





Calvin Klein





05/ Russian Twist

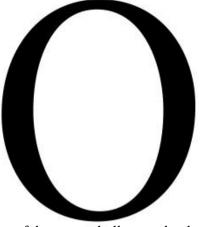
The Adventurist &

ONE IMPOSSIBLE CHALLENGE, FIVE WEEKS TO TRAIN, GO

WORDS BY ANDREW TRACEY







f the many challenges that have landed on my desk for the *Men's Health* Adventurist series, few have been more evocative of the word 'adventure' than the Croatia Multisport. With more than 60km of running and hiking – plus extra legs by kayak, paddleboard and bike – this jaunt across southern Europe sounded every bit the Tolkien-esque journey. Too good to pass up, right?

Well, there was a slight problem. With the trip a few months away, an injury to manage, plus several other more urgent work-related training projects to finish up first, I was confronted, for the first time, with the possibility of embarking on an assignment I couldn't complete. Sure, I was 'gym fit', but having done little in the way of distance-running in the preceding 18 months, the idea of performing competitively in a hilly, coastal ultramarathon seemed fanciful.

'We are not in the business of putting on "sufferfests",' reads the copy on the Rat Race website. 'We want people to succeed in the challenges we create.' That put my mind at ease... a little. Historically, I have been in the business of sufferfests. An event that wasn't designed to break me – physically, mentally, spiritually - appealed, as foreign a concept as it sounded. It's been a bit of a mantra of mine that I never want my physical fitness (or lack thereof) to be a barrier to any of life's experiences. Was I actually going to decline the adventure of a lifetime because I was worried my legs weren't up to snuff? No - this was the perfect time to put the idea of training for 'general physical preparedness' to the test. I wanted to see whether my CrossFit-style workouts would be enough to carry me to the finish line.

The kit list was, admittedly, a bit daunting: multiple bags; specialist footwear; first aid kits; electrolytes; wet-weather gear. I have a history of going rogue and eschewing the prep for my challenges. Once, I tackled a marathon distance across three mountain peaks with nothing but



a bottle of water, a tub of peanut butter and a food container full of sausages. But, realistically, my seat-of-your-pants approach probably isn't advisable.

And so, I packed my bags, boarded a budget flight out of London Gatwick and hoped for the best. Here's my blow-by-blow account.

DAY ONE: TOUCHDOWN

On landing in Dubrovnik, it's clear from the baggage and attire who my fellow Adventurists are. That said, the mix of ages and body types is far more diverse than the homogeneous crew you find at many high-level competitive events. There are about 30 of us in total, more than half travelling solo like me. We're greeted by Rat Race staff, including our expedition leader, Abbi. Her credentials

'Would my CrossFit-style workouts be enough?'

include more than 10 years as a mountain leader, mountain bike guide, bushcraft

instructor, sea kayak leader, sailor and skydiver – yeah, she's a badass. We're then shuttled via coach and ferry across to the island of Korcula: our start line.

DAY TWO: READY OR NOT

After breakfast, there are further introductions, briefings, kit checks and a chance to ask questions.

Everyone modestly expresses their lack of preparation, experience and endurance – though the number of wrists adorned with expensive Garmin watches suggests I'm not among novices.

Event doctor Mabli shares a few words of advice, followed by a tutorial

on GPS tech; it's clear that, logistically speaking, the Croatia Multisport is as well-supported as any other high-level race. I spend the rest of the day exploring the picturesque port town and swimming in the sea. Sitting in the town square, I sink a large pizza and cold lemonade. Call it 'carb-loading', if you like.

DAY THREE: THE LONG RUN

Time to get to work. We travel by coach to the far end of the island. Our first mission: to run, hike or otherwise make the 50km-plus pilgrimage back to the hotel. To avoid pushing myself too hard too soon, I decide to 'ruck' rather than run, loading some rocks into my already heavy pack to temper any urges to rush. It doesn't work. I'm swept up in the moment and find myself jogging along in the middle of the pack.

There are aid stations roughly every 10km, with snacks, sweets and drinks laid out in a car boot, described as a 'rolling picnic'. The scenery is stunning, too, and on foot, you can fully appreciate it. We pass ancient fishing villages with cobbled roads and colourful buildings, taking long, winding mountain paths, flanked by the clear Adriatic Sea on one side and lush forests on the other.

At the 20km mark, I begin to flag, and I tip the rocks from my bag. I'm enjoying myself and don't want to introduce any unnecessary masochism. I'm overtaken – and do some overtaking. I bump into an American couple who have drained the batteries on their devices and lost navigation. I give them my phone and push on. Unsurprisingly, distraction-free, the experience gets better.

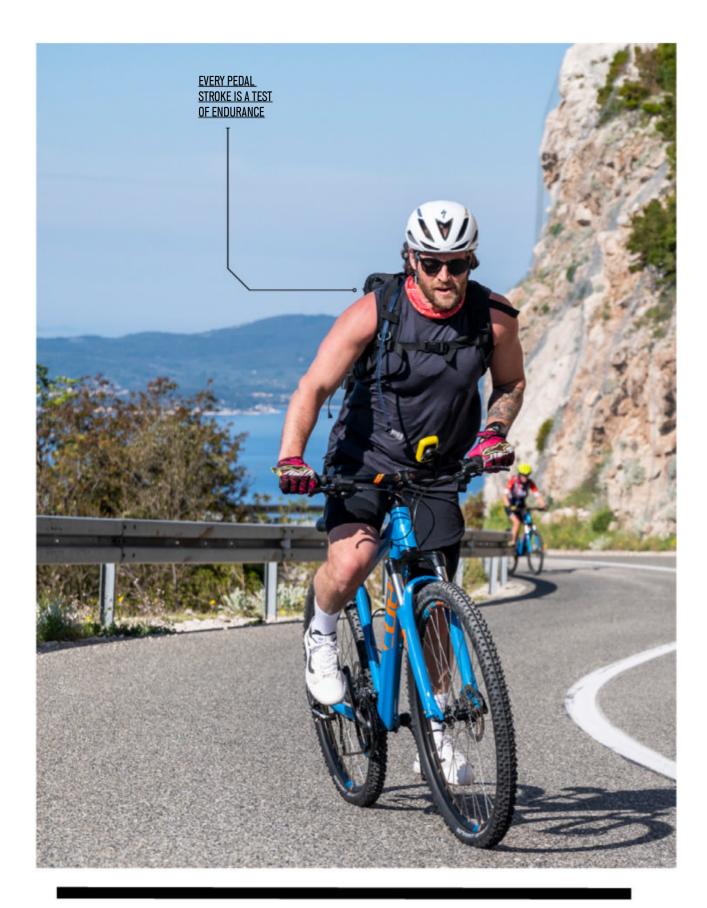
Despite the beauty surrounding me, 50km is a very long way, and I'm happy to reach the finish line. I strip down and wade into the cool sea to get a head start on the recovery process.

DAY FOUR: NO EASY RIDE

Early the next day, we hike across the coast to the shortest point (3km) between Korcula and the island of Orebic. The paddleboard crossing is an ethereal experience at sunrise – the perfect distraction from what's to come.

Next: a 66km ride across the island. I'm no cyclist. As a teenager, I exclusively rode a small BMX, and I'm uneconomical on a 'proper' bike. The first third of the leg presents a very long, very steep climb. I haven't sized my bike correctly and start cramping within the first few miles. On a steeper stretch, I get off and push.

My roommate, Darren, graciously sticks with me for the entirety of the



Pack These For Your Next Adventure

Here are the items our fitness editor was grateful to have in his arsenal



SIS GO ENERGY+ ELECTROLYTE GEL

When you're sweating buckets, there's more to rehydration than slamming water. Gels replenish the vital carbs and electrolytes you're losing more efficiently than water alone, without leaving you bloated (or heading for the bushes every five minutes). £12.60 for 6, scienceinsport.com



FORCLAZ WATER BLADDER 2L

This was my first time running with a 'bladder', and it made a big difference. I didn't miss the bicep pump you get from carrying a heavy water bottle. Not only was it quick and convenient, but it also encouraged me to hydrate more frequently.

£11.99, decathlon.co.uk



OAKLEY HSTN SUNGLASSES

For years, I ran with heavy glasses that would slip off of my sweaty nose and begin to hurt my ears on longer runs. Switching to lightweight, running-specific glasses has been an unexpected game changer for me. £135, oakley.com

ride. But I suspect that he could have made it in half the time if he hadn't. Shout-out to Darren. Once the hills are dispatched, I'm able to ride much more comfortably. As we reach high speeds descending the coastal roads, I'm once again able to appreciate the beauty of the countryside.

Finally, the 'Walls of Ston' come into view. The largest fortification of its kind outside of The Great Wall of China, the walls run 7km up and down the mountainside. From here, we travel on foot – a short(ish) run, but certainly not an easy one, thanks to the uneven steps, narrow paths and the beating sun.

Darren and I run side by side across the salt flats that mark the final strait. We make a deal – once the end is in sight, we'll burst into a sprint finish and make it a race. I'm surprised by how much fun I'm having, given that I now have well over 100km in my legs. I dive off the pier at the finish line.

We spend the night in an allinclusive hotel, nestled in a scenic valley. Dinner and conversation are both physically and spiritually fulfilling. I'm either on the most active holiday of my life or I'm participating in the bougiest race.

DAY FIVE: SAIL TO THE FINISH

We leave the hotel in darkness and head back to the previous day's end point, where we partner up and climb into our kayaks. As we exit the Broce





EMBRACE THE WINDING PATH OF THIS LUSH COURSE surrounding islands.

Our pod of boats begins to spread out. It's interesting to note a slight shift in our positions within the pack with the switch to a more upper-body dominant activity. The pump in my biceps suggests that I'm not rowing in a particularly efficient way, but I'm enjoying myself. My partner, Dan, previously worked in the fitness industry, so we talk shop as we push

'I'm sore and sunburned, but I feel fully refreshed'

ourselves across the glass-like sea.

Around 20km in, we reach Sipan. I quickly dry off and change into my running shoes for a 6km jog across the island, while our kayaks

are towed around. Then we climb back into our boats and get ready for the final stretch: another 20km into Dubrovnik.

I'm not sure if I'm fatigued or under-fuelled (there's no rolling picnic today), but I start to feel the strain. The many, many headlands of the Croatian mainland play tricks on me; I allow myself to believe that the end of our journey is just around every bend.

It's hard not to make crossing the finish line sound overly dramatic. Impossible, actually. We navigate into 'King's Landing' - the shoot location for the capital of the Seven Kingdoms in Game Of Thrones - with its imposing fortifications towering above our tiny boats. Maybe I'm tired, but it's also emotional. We hum the theme tune to the show all of the way in, greeted by ringing bells and raucous applause.

I'm a firm believer that anything can be treated as an adventure. But the past three days have genuinely satisfied the definition of the word in a grand way.

DAY SIX: PARTING WORDS

I'm bruised, sore, sunburned and walking with a slight limp. But at the same time, I head back to England feeling refreshed in a way I haven't in a very long while. Did my training see me through? Sure. But there were plenty of people on the trip who stopped in vineyards and pubs for a sneaky mid-race refreshment. Equally, there were serious athletes in the pack, training for major events. This range of abilities and outlooks is something I've rarely seen at events.

Thanks to some clever organisation, at no point in the trip did this mix hold anyone back, or push anyone too hard. This was very much a 'choose your own adventure' trip. At the same cost as a package holiday, I genuinely think this is one of the most satisfying ways to experience a picturesque part of the world – and all while pitting yourself against a genuinely hardcore challenge.

'Get out of your comfort zone!' is a popular war cry in fitness circles, but the Croatia Multisport balances the desire to get uncomfortable with a solid support network, creating a space in which anyone can launch themselves into a challenge, safely and enjoyably. And that really is something special.

Rat Race offers a range of trips that cater to varying abilities in locations from Croatia and Greece to Mongolia and Namibia. Find out more details at ratrace.com

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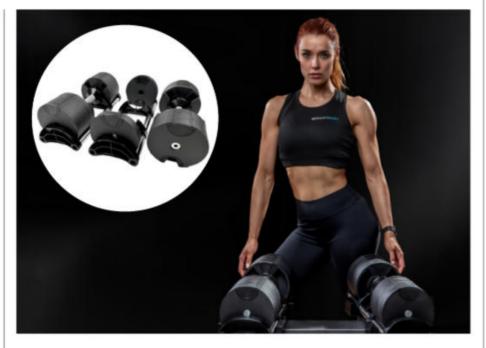
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Combining gold standard relaxation with unparalleled golfing experiences, the idyllic Northumberland estate is the ultimate choice for lovers of the sport looking to leave the city for a country escape.



With rooms ranging from Luxury Suites -featuring Emperor beds complete with 300 thread count Egyptian Cotton Sateen duvets, vast amounts of space, light and atmosphere as well as a complimentary chauffeur transfer when you book

- to charming Balcony Rooms with breathtaking views of the neighbouring countryside, with a dedicated concierge

team ready to be at your service. Whether you're looking for a chilled bottle of Laurent-Perrier ready for you in your room, or a bespoke Wine Tasting session to end your day - no task or detail will be overlooked from arrival to departure.

From the moment you tee off, you'll easily understand why this Northumberland paradise has been recognised as one of Today's Golfer Top 100 Resorts in Great Britain & Ireland. Matfen Hall is truly a showcase of the beautiful and vast surrounding countryside, as the course is sculpted within the ebbs and flows of the estate.

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Luxury meets gastronomy with five sensational dining destinations spoiling you for choice. Ranging from the stunning views in Cloisters, a beautifully refined seafood and grill restaurant which makes the perfect compliment to a challenging game, to the regally decadent Emerald Restaurant permitting views of the natural fast flowing river that supplies various water features around the course.

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How do Leatt helmets combat forces?

Rotation protection with 360° Turbine Technology

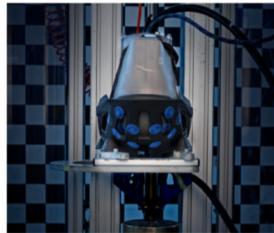
The optimally designed turbine discs enable the helmet to move slightly on the head upon impact, reducing peak acceleration to the head & brain.

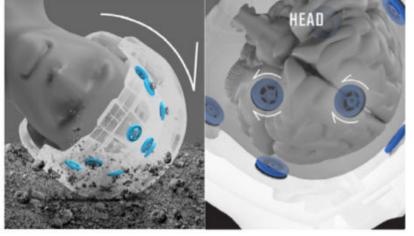
Low impact protection with 360° Turbine Technology

The special energy absorbing material in the turbines absorbs low impact energy associated with concussion.

High impact protection with impact foam

The helmet impact foam liner absorbs energy at high impact.





Leatt ensures that every helmet produced includes the 360° Turbine Technology – a testament to rider safety dedication.

Technology developed and refined in the Leatt Lab.



The patented 360° Turbine Technology is just another way in which Leatt continues to set the standard in rider safety!

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Your body is the main controller. You'll explore an incredible world and take on fierce enemies by QUELL



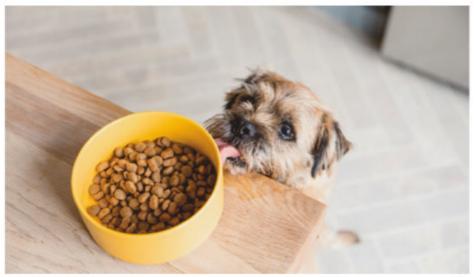
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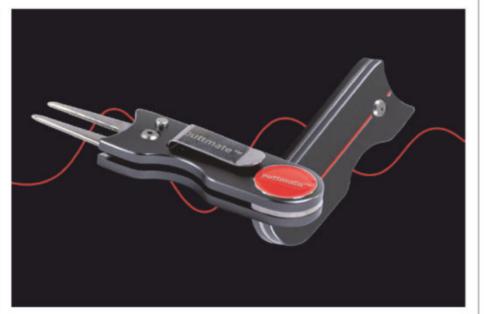
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Overlooking the historic city of Innsbruck Park Igls sits on a sunny plateau, secluded in a luxuriant park, framed by the snowy Tyrolean peaks.

The benefits of an Alpine break are well understood and Park Igls' location could not be more conducive to promoting good health and self-discovery.

A short 20-minute transfer from Innsbruck International Airport completes an easy journey from the UK. Breathe deeply the crisp Alpine air, feel the toxins dissipate and shed every last vestige of urban stress. Enjoy time for yourself allowing the Park Igls' team of expert Mayr doctors and therapists guide you on your personal journey of physical and mental healing.

There is no issue too simple or complex for effective treatment. Rehabilitation after surgery or sickness, allergies and addiction issues, a deep-seated phobia to confront, or a simple detox and reboot – all are exclusively tailored to suit each individual's needs following one-on-one consultation and medical check. The holistic approach to conventional and complementary medicine includes outstanding diagnostics working in tandem with top-quality nutrition and a progressive exercise programme.









When it comes to medical issues the sexes present symptoms and react to medication in very different ways; women are indeed from Venus and men from Mars. Always one step ahead of the game, Park IgIs was early to adopt gender-specific medicine and there is no better MOT for men than taking the high-level counselling and diagnostics on key topics such as ageing, infertility or erectile dysfunction in conjunction with one of the Mayr Programmes such as the Detox Intensive – or for a more granular experience try the Detox Medical Check.

Park Igls' complete range of diagnostic and therapeutic programmes using the Modern Mayr Medicine approach has been created to offer sustainable answers to ailments suffered in today's world.

Guests have full access to the swimming pool, sauna and panoramic gym, as well as the resort's championship-standard chipping and putting green.

They can expect flawless hospitality, outstanding medical facilities, an extensive choice of on- and off-site activities alongside individual and group exercise and therapy sessions.

Accommodation is charged separately at from \le 193 per single room per night (£1351 pw) and from \le 186 per person per night based on 2 sharing a double. **Reservations:** www.park-igls.com/+43512377305

*Detox Intensive is priced at €2460 per person. Includes: initial medical examination, integrated health check (30 mins), 2 medical examinations – manual abdominal treatments (20 mins each), Concluding examination (30 mins), 1 bioimpedance measurement (lean tissue, water and body fat), Expanded laboratory blood tests, 1 urinalysis, 5 full body massages (50 mins each), 1 exercise therapy/personal training session (25 mins), 3 detox compresses with beeswax. Basic services are included as follows daily Kneipp treatments (leg, arm or seated contrast baths), alkaline-oriented personal Modern Mayr cuisine diet plan, mineral water, herbal tea and base broth, diverse programme of medical relaxation and exercise activities, lifestyle management and mental coaching in groups, talks and presentations on getting and staying healthy, use of swimming pool, saunas and panoramic gym, use of our chipping and putting green

ONE WORD ANSWER #37



ames Herbert Bond's enviable swim-shorts body could be attributed to many things. The high calorie expenditure delivered by fighting atop moving trains, perhaps. Or maybe the core activation required to expertly manoeuvre a jetpack. But while we're certain all of these factors contribute, research suggests it could also be down to his famous choice of cocktail – at least, in part.

According to Italy's University of Palermo, your martini's sidekick, the humble olive, can take you one step closer to your body-composition goals. For a study, healthy volunteers were asked to eat 12 green olives every day for a month. At the end of the project, subjects saw their body fat decrease

by 3lb on average, while muscle mass went up by almost 2lb. Researchers say this could be due to conjugated linoleic acid, a type of fat found in olives and olive oil, which has been shown to have a beneficial effect on metabolism. The fruit is also a great source of copper – another nutrient that has recently been linked to fat loss by scientists from the University of California, Berkeley.

Now, clearly we're not suggesting you pair each one of your olives with a complementary sharpener. (Bond's indefatigable liver, it seems, is truly his greatest weapon.) But should thirst hit as you're passing the pool bar, a blend of dry vermouth and gin is certainly a leaner alternative to most sunshine cocktails. And a damn sight cooler, too.



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