

# Women's Fitness

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**AIMEE FULLER**

'Hot yoga is my mental reset'

## CAN YOU GET FIT ON A FAST?

Dr Jack Mosley reveals how to exercise safely

**PLUS**

Pilates for health

Latest smartwatches

Gut-loving recipes

**REAL-LIFE STORY**

*'I went from a catwalk model to a fitness coach' & now fit mum-to-be!*

**MAKE  
REST DAYS  
COUNT!**

*Fitness experts weigh in on how to recover faster*

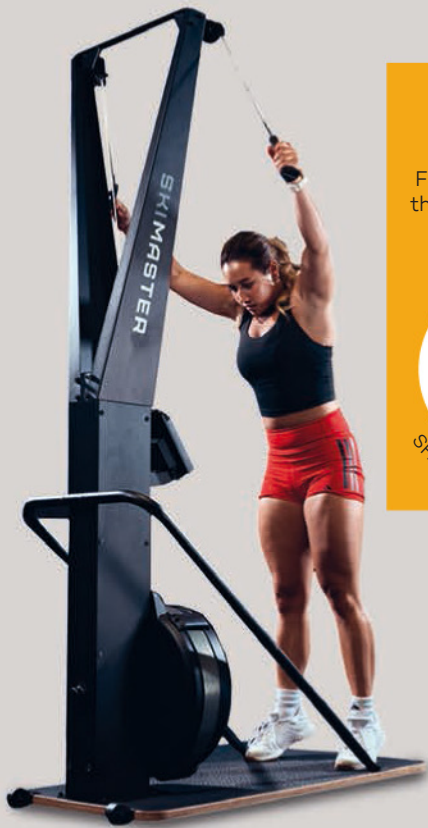
- p14 -

**EAT FOR ENERGY**  
(Tip: put protein on the menu)

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# Women's Fitness

**WOMEN'S FITNESS MAGAZINE**  
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**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:** SARAH SELLENS  
**HEALTH EDITOR:** EVE BOGGENPOEL  
**ART EDITOR:** XAVIER ROBLEDA  
**SOCIAL MEDIA & NEWSLETTERS:** AMY DOWRICK  
**THANKS TO:** CHRISTINE BAILEY, SARAH CAMPUS,  
 LAURA CLARK, JO EBSWORTH, AIMEE FULLER,  
 NATASHA GALE, ROB HOBSON, DR LENA REBECCA  
 LARSON, LUCY MILLER, LOUISE PYNE, LILY SMITH,  
 DR TIM SPECTOR  
**ADVERTISEMENT SALES:** TALK MEDIA  
**INVESTMENT MANAGER:** BONNIE HOWARD, 01959  
 543587, BONNIE.HOWARD@KELSEY.CO.UK  
**AD PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR:**  
 GRACIE STANDEN 01732 445300  
 PRODUCTION@TALK-MEDIA.UK  
**EDITORIAL:** WF.ED@KELSEY.CO.UK

**MANAGEMENT**  
**CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER:** PHIL WEEDEN  
**MANAGING DIRECTOR:** OSWIN GRADY  
**RETAIL DIRECTOR:** STEVE BROWN  
**AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT MANAGER:** ANDY COTTON  
**OPERATIONS DIRECTOR:** GILL LAMBERT  
**SUBSCRIPTIONS MARKETING MANAGER:**  
 NICK MCINTOSH  
**HEAD OF EVENTS:** KAT CHAPPELL  
**PRINT PRODUCTION MANAGER:** GEORGINA HARRIS  
**PRINT PRODUCTION CONTROLLER:** HAYLEY BROWN

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## REST UP LIKE A PRO!

As a lover of all things fitness, my time in the gym, on the roads, across trails and through water has been plagued by injuries – so much so that a list of all the niggles I've had would form a good basis for a 'common injuries' article. Over the years, I've had the opportunity to investigate why I'm so injury prone and I surmise – from DNA tests, expert insight and some fitness know-how – that it's the culmination of four things: (1) inadequate refuelling, (2) a lack of warming up and cooling down, (3) dialling up the intensity of recovery activities, and (4) not following the 10 per cent rule (i.e. to increase the duration or intensity of exercise by no more than 10 per cent weekly).

Fortunately, I seem to have come to a time in my life during which I'm happy to invest in my nutrition, and I take no shame from approaching my recovery activities at the intensity they're intended (very easy), but I also realise that the recovery market is a minefield. From post-workout shakes and bars, to massage guns or contrast therapy, it's hard to navigate, and if I were new to exercise, I'd definitely feel overwhelmed by it.

In our experts feature this month, we get qualified insight into how to make the most of your rest days for better injury prevention and performance. We also catch up with our panel of nutritionists to discover the winners of our *Women's Fitness* Nutrition Awards 2025 (page 55), helping you make educated decisions when choosing your pre- and post-workout fuel.

Plus, we speak to regular *Women's Fitness* contributor, and this month's cover model, Chloe Thomas, to reveal how her battle to gain weight led to her becoming a fitness and wellness coach who is holistic in her approach to physical and mental health. It's well worth a read (on page 18). We've of course got our usual mix of body, mind and health advice, too!

*Sarah Sellens*  
 Editor-in-chief

## On my fit kit list this month



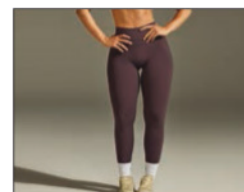
### Fit to run

With a responsive Pebax plate and cushioned fit, the HOKA Mach X 3 (£170, [hoka.com](https://hoka.com)) trainers are my new favourite shoes for tempo-paced long runs.



### Sole mates

Cosy, comfy and in Animal or Zebra print, I didn't know socks could feel as good as BAM's Women's Pattern Gifting Socks (£24, [bambooclothing.co.uk](https://bambooclothing.co.uk)).



### Gym style

Flattering and in on-trend brown, I can't stop wearing Oner Active's Unified High Waisted Pocket Leggings (£58, [uk.oneractive.com](https://uk.oneractive.com)) in Dark Umber Brown.

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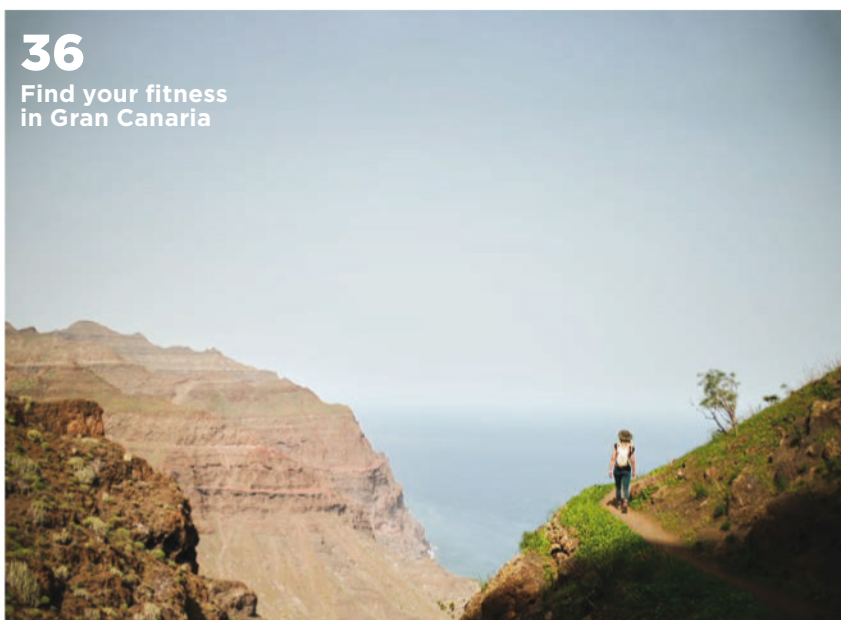


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**ON THE COVER**

**Model:** Chloe Thomas  
**Clothing:** Oner Active (oneractive.com)  
**Photography:** BassFilm Co

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Erin O'Flaherty on her success since taking up the sport four years ago



# Meet the team

Get to know the experts and contributors to *Women's Fitness*...



## ***Eve Boggenpoel***

Eve is a qualified yoga teacher, counsellor and homeopath.

She is passionate about helping people heal, so they can connect with and live their authentic selves with greater clarity and ease.  
@eveboggenpoel



## ***Aimee Fuller***

Aimee Fuller is a former Team GB two-time Olympic snowboarder. She is now a broadcaster and author, as well as an avid runner and qualified yogi. Follow her @aimee\_fuller



## ***Lily Smith***

Lily is a health and wellness writer and qualified yoga teacher, specialising in prenatal and postnatal yoga. She loves helping people feel more grounded and present, both on and off the mat.  
@lilythewordsmith



## ***Lucy Miller***

Lucy is a fitness journalist, ex-national gymnast and qualified Level 3 PT. She is also a nutritionist and life coach who loves nothing more than to go for a run or to the gym.  
@lucycmiller\_



## ***Joanna Ebsworth***

A qualified Level 3 PT and fitness instructor, Jo has been combining her love of exercise and writing for 20 years, and is keen to inspire others to be active.  
@joglows



## ***Rob Hobson***

Rob is an award-winning nutritionist, bestselling author, and TV expert. With 20+ years of experience, he works with private clients and consults for top health brands, including All Blacks Healthspan Elite.

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*Tess Daly*



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\*UK's No1 women's supplement brand. Nielsen GB ScanTrack Total Coverage Value & Unit Retail Sales 52 w/e 12/07/25. To verify contact Vitabiotics Ltd, 1 Apsley Way, London, NW2 7HF. Wellbeing of Women is a registered charity. England & Wales: 239281. Scotland: SC042856

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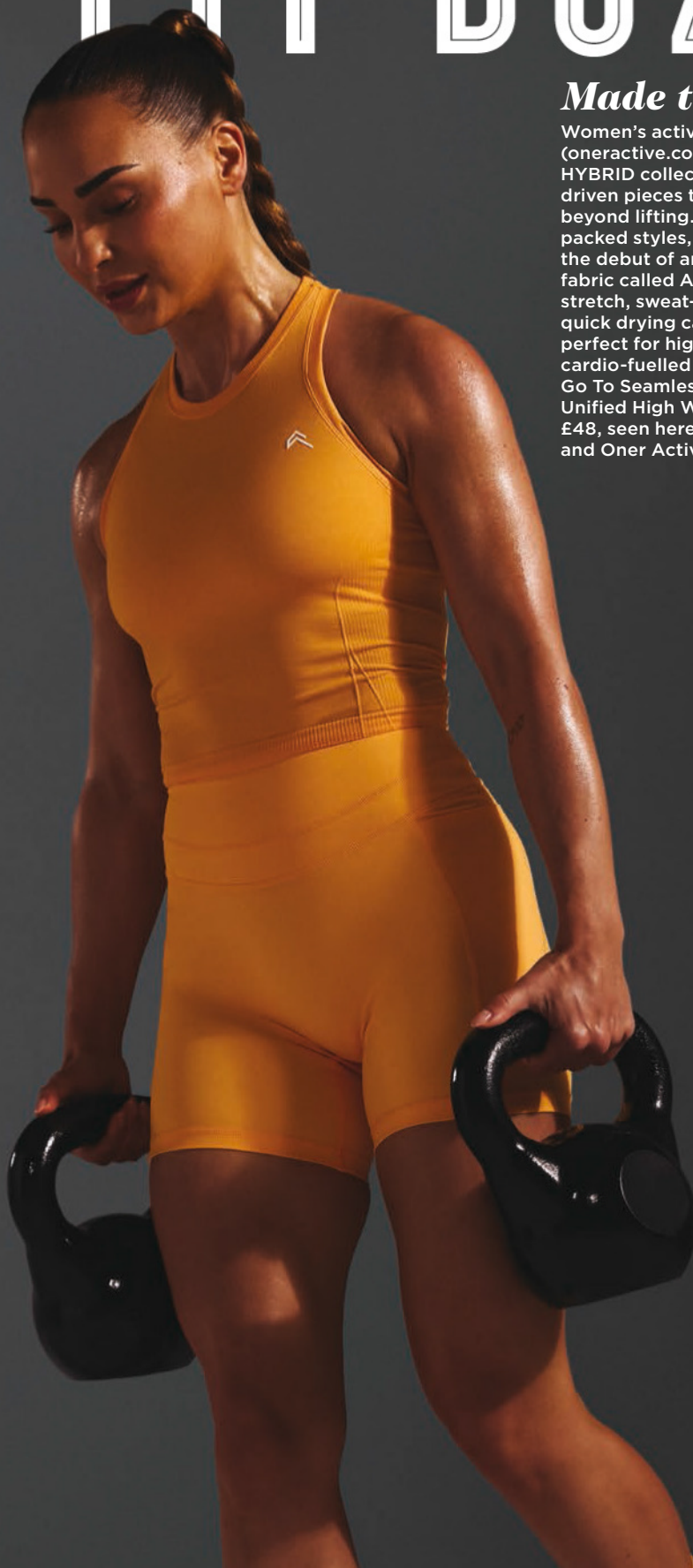
Suitable for adults and children over 2 years

This month's hottest things to do, buy and try

# FIT BUZZ

## *Made to move*

Women's activewear brand Oner Active ([oneractive.com](http://oneractive.com)) has launched a new HYBRID collection of 20 performance-driven pieces to serve its community beyond lifting. Featuring new tech-packed styles, electrifying colours and the debut of an innovative technical fabric called AirMove boasting four-way stretch, sweat-wicking properties and quick drying capabilities, the range is perfect for high-intensity workouts and cardio-fuelled training days. We love the Go To Seamless Fitted Mid Vest, £30, and Unified High Waisted Pocket Shorts 6", £48, seen here on fitness entrepreneur and Oner Active founder, Krissy Cela.





**TRY THIS...**

**Power up your Pilates**

Had enough of over-packed Reformer Pilates classes? Look no further than the Hausformer; a sleek, foldable Reformer Bed that brings the studio experience home. Built for both instructors and home users seeking a stylish, space-saving way to move more consistently, it sets up in seconds, supports dynamic Pilates practice, and offers a cost-effective alternative to studio sessions with flexible payment options. Available in two signature colour ways for £1,750, the professional-grade machine is perfect for wellness lovers, Pilates enthusiasts and anyone ready to elevate their movement routine. Find out more at [hausformer.com](https://hausformer.com)



**Play time**

If you live in London and want to shake up your fitness routine, check out sports and social club Hollow Rocks ([hollowrocks.com](https://hollowrocks.com)). Created as an antidote to the challenges of modern life, the club leverages the power of play to bring people together, be more active and spend time with friends, by offering more than 70 classes a week for people of all levels. A great option for those looking to try different sports at a range of different locations via one single monthly membership of £125, coaching is offered across a variety of activities, including basketball, football, boxing and gymnastics. Seasonal options where members can try athletics and tennis in the summer or pick up a rugby ball in the winter are also available, in addition to free community walking, running and cycling clubs, and regular social events.

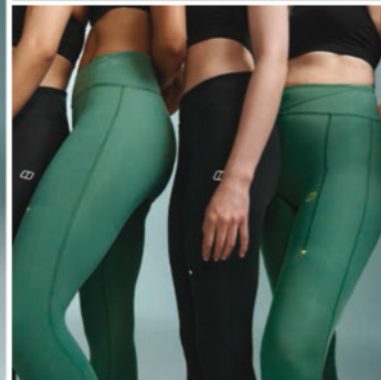
**DO THIS...**



**WEAR THIS...**

**Winter warmer**

Delta Roam (formerly D-Robe; [deltaroom.com](https://deltaroom.com)) has partnered with British presenter and model Jodie Kidd to celebrate the launch of two of their unisex outdoor robes being made available in a new sophisticated Chestnut colour. Perfect for autumn and beyond, choose between the longer Beaufort D-Robe, £155 (pictured), or the shorter Cirrus jacket, £135, and head out into the elements with confidence knowing both styles are designed to keep you protected, comfortable and dry, thanks to the waterproof outer layer, insulating interior and tailored fit.



**WEAR THIS...**

**Free to move**

Created by the MtnHaus innovation team at British outdoor brand Berghaus ([berghaus.com](http://berghaus.com)) with help from Dr Yasmin Carter, a world-leading specialist in translational female anatomy, and an all-female Test Squad of over 100 women from across the UK, the new Farren Leggings, £100, feature award-winning ZonalAdapt technology. This technology is engineered to respond to the way women's bodies move and change, tackle bloating, cramps, chafing and swelling, and finally provide support where it's needed most. Key design features include a flexible waistband that maps the abdominal muscles with a front panel to redirect pressure on the stomach and accommodate up to 3cm expansion in bloated waist circumference without digging in or rolling down; targeted compression zones that activate the leg muscles and stimulate lymphatic drainage to reduce puffiness and fatigue; a lumbar support panel that grips the lower back to support the base of the spine and hold the leggings in place without adding pressure on the stomach; and strategic seam placement aligned with natural muscle and movement patterns to reduce chafing. Tried, tested and heartily recommended by *WF*, they're available in sizes XS to 2XL in two classic colours.



**DO THIS...**

**Get your skates on**

Skate at Somerset House with Virgin Atlantic Holidays returns this winter, bringing the enchantment of the festive season to London's most iconic courtyard. Running from November 12, 2025, to January 11, 2026, the historical building-turned-arts-and-entertainment venue will be transformed into a scene from a beloved Christmas movie, where visitors can glide across the ice with loved ones, enjoy a cosy seasonal drink by the rink in the Skate Lounge, and indulge in festive favourites. The much-loved Skate School will also return to offer beginners and enthusiasts the opportunity to brush up their skills and become skating superstars, with daytime coaching sessions run by National Ice Skating Association (NISA)-accredited instructors. Book tickets online at [somersethouse.org.uk](http://somersethouse.org.uk)

**TRY THIS...**

**Lyte fantastic**

Clean Scandinavian electrolyte brand, SALTE (drinksalte.com), delivers simple, effective, science-backed hydration to support both athletic performance and everyday life. While heavy sweaters and elite athletes may lose sodium and potassium in sweat at ratios as high as 5:1 respectively, SALTE strikes a balanced midpoint with a carefully calibrated 2:1 ratio grounded in human physiology and real-world hydration needs. Each sachet delivers 800mg sodium to replace key losses from sweat, 400mg potassium to support muscle contraction, blood pressure and fluid balance, plus 60mg magnesium to aid energy production and reduce fatigue, so you can restore what you lose in sweat without going overboard on sodium or skimping on potassium. Sugar-free, vegan-friendly and naturally flavoured, SALTE is available to buy in a pack of 30 sachets for £35, and comes in five options: Lemon, Orange, Strawberry, Unflavoured and the refreshingly crisp Apple flavour.



**WEAR THIS...**

**Winter warmer**

After continual requests from their community, eco-conscious outdoor brand VOITED - famed for its versatile blankets and changewear - has launched its first ever range of 100 per cent recycled fleeces for the winter. In total, there are three styles to choose from, including designs with either a half-zip or full-zip fastening if you like having the ability to let some air to your body, or the pullover Sherpa Fleece Hoodie seen here, £79, with Ripstop accents and an adjustable three-piece hood to keep you unbelievably warm. Available in sizes S to XL from [voited.co.uk](http://voited.co.uk)

**BUY THIS...**

**Festive fuelling**

It's time to jingle those kettle bells! Grenade's sell-out Protein Bar Advent Calendar, £55, is back for 2025 to provide a great-tasting alternative to a chocolate countdown to Christmas. Behind each of the 24 doors, you'll find a delicious full-sized bar to give you some extra fuel this holiday season, whether you're in need of sustenance for shopping or a festive boost post-gym. Available exclusively online from [grenade.com](http://grenade.com), many of the brand's most popular flavours are included, from the indulgent OREO Protein Bar to the rich Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough Bar, both of which are high in protein, low in sugar and less than 250 calories. 🍫



# Bigger portion More protein

## Sorted!

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**59G  
PROTEIN**



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\*Subject to availability

# ACE A REST DAY

Wondering how to make the most of your day off for better injury prevention and performance? Read on...



**AIMEE VICTORIA LONG**

Aimee is one of London's premier fitness experts, trusted by those who seek sustainable, real results. Her unique approach combines Pilates, barre, strength training and HIIT. Visit [aimeevictorialong.co.uk](http://aimeevictorialong.co.uk)

**Q** A friend does a mobility workout on her rest day. What are the benefits of this and will doing the same when I should be resting hinder my recovery?

**A** Mobility workouts on rest days are actually one of the best things you can do to enhance your recovery. They're low-intensity, low-impact and they help to stimulate blood flow to tired muscles - speeding up recovery, reducing soreness, as well as improving your long-term performance.

Mobility isn't the same as a workout that taxes your body. Instead, it's about controlled movement, joint care and flexibility. Think of gentle hip-openers, spinal rotations and shoulder mobility work. This kind of 'active recovery' [a low-intensity exercise that enhances recovery] keeps your body moving without stressing it.

It also boosts mind-body awareness and highlights movement restrictions you wouldn't notice during a regular workout. Plus, it can be deeply calming - a great tool to manage stress or improve sleep.

So, no, it won't hinder your recovery. Quite the opposite - it will support it and, over time, mobility work will help your body move better, lift more efficiently and feel great in everyday life.



*'Active recovery highlights restrictions you wouldn't notice during a regular workout'*

*'Light activity after a session, like walking or stretching, can help to reduce stiffness'*



**PENNY WESTON**

Weston is the director of Moddershall Oaks and founder of MADE, a 360° wellness centre. She specialises in fitness, nutrition and wellness. Visit [pennyweston.com](http://pennyweston.com)

most effective post-workout recovery routine focuses on the basics: gentle movement, good nutrition, hydration and quality sleep. Light activity after a session, like walking or stretching, can help reduce stiffness and encourage blood flow to sore muscles.

You don't need all the gadgets, though some people find tools like foam rollers or massage guns helpful for short-term relief. Use them if they make you feel good, but don't feel you're missing out if you don't.

More important is refuelling after exercise with a balance of protein and carbohydrates, ideally within

a couple of hours of finishing your workout. This helps your body repair muscle tissue and restore energy. Staying hydrated throughout the day supports every system in your body, including your ability to recover well.

And let's not underestimate sleep. This is when your muscles repair, hormones balance out and the real gains happen. If you feel particularly sore or fatigued, don't be afraid to take an extra rest day or swap a tough session for something lower impact. Recovery isn't about doing more, it's about giving your body what it needs to adapt.

**Q** I'm a regular exerciser who is confused by all of the recovery kit that's available now. What's the best post-workout recovery routine to invest in?

**A** Recovery can seem complex, but it doesn't have to be. The



**TOBY WILSON**

Toby is a wellbeing personal trainer at Nuffield Health. He holds a BSc in Sports Science and Management and has competed in

10 HYROX races and qualified for the past two HYROX World Championships. Visit [nuffieldhealth.com](http://nuffieldhealth.com)

**Q** I'm training for a HYROX event and keep exercising well 4-5 times weekly for 6-8 weeks, then feel ill or exhausted. What can I do to improve my recovery?

**A** HYROX is an incredibly demanding sport. It's common to feel great during your initial weeks of training, only to find yourself exhausted or even unwell after 6-8 weeks. This often happens because recovery hasn't kept pace with training intensity.

Recovery starts with sleep and nutrition. Scientific research shows that sleep is fundamental for muscle repair, hormonal balance and immune function. Aim for 7-to-9 hours of quality sleep per night to allow your body to rebuild and adapt to training stress.

Nutrition fuels your recovery — without enough calories, especially carbohydrates, your body struggles to restore glycogen stores and repair muscle tissue.

Carbohydrates consumed before, during and after workouts help optimise energy availability and enhance recovery rates. Focus on nutrient-dense foods such as whole grains, fruits, vegetables, lean proteins and healthy fats to support overall health and tissue repair.

It's easy to get inspired by elite HYROX athletes on social media doing multiple intense sessions daily, but their training is the result of years of progression. For most people, gradually building training volume and intensity is key to preventing overtraining and injury. If you're just starting, try increasing your training volume by about 10



*'Gradually building training volume and intensity is key to preventing injury'*

per cent per week (especially running distance or overall workload) to give your body time to adapt. Pay attention to signs of excessive fatigue, prolonged soreness or mood changes, which indicate you may need to scale back.

One of the most effective strategies I used while preparing for the HYROX World Championships was alternating high-intensity days with low-intensity recovery days. This approach respects the body's

need for active recovery while still accumulating training volume. For example, after a hard session, the next day could be a lighter effort day, such as easy-paced running or cross-training activities like cycling, rowing or skiing at a low intensity. Alternatively, you could focus on upper-body strength or mobility.

HYROX training is intense and rewarding, but your progress depends not just on hard work but also on smart recovery.



*'Replenish glycogen stores with 30-40g of carbohydrates in a shake or recovery meal'*

Words and images: Aimee Long, Penny Weston | Dr Richard Allison, Toby Wilson | Photography: Shutterstock



**DR RICHARD ALLISON**

Dr Allison is a nutritionist at Herbalife. He previously led Performance Nutrition at Arsenal Men's and Tottenham Hotspur Women's Football Clubs, and has worked with elite athletes. Visit [herbalife.com](http://herbalife.com)

**Q I'm a mum-of-two who would like to get back into running. What can I do to support and strengthen my body during the recovery period?**

**A** Recovery nutrition is a cornerstone of performance, especially during postpartum and early return-to-exercise phases. The right balance of nutrients can significantly accelerate healing, replenish depleted energy stores and rebuild strength.

Prioritise high-quality protein. To support muscle repair and growth, aim for 20-40g of high-quality protein post-exercise. Animal-based sources such as eggs, Greek yoghurt and lean meats provide high leucine levels, a key amino acid for muscle repair. For plant-based diets, combine sources such as pea, rice or quinoa to achieve a complete amino acid profile. A post-workout recovery shake is a convenient option for busy parents. Consuming protein within one-to-two hours post-exercise aids muscle synthesis and may reduce muscle breakdown.

To replenish glycogen stores, include 30-40g of carbohydrates in your recovery meal or shake. Easy, portable options include bananas, oats or a smoothie with fruit and nut butter. And aim to rehydrate with 1.5 times the fluid lost during exercise.

This can be achieved with water, electrolyte-rich drinks or a protein shake that also delivers fluid and nutrients in one go.

Support the body's natural recovery with foods rich in omega-3s and antioxidants. Think oily fish, chia seeds, walnuts, avocados and colourful vegetables – all of which help reduce inflammation and support immune health.

Muscle protein synthesis is raised up to 24-48 hours after resistance training and several hours after endurance work. Timing is flexible, but avoid long gaps without food. Build lean mass with 20-25g of protein every three or four hours – a slice of wholegrain toast with peanut butter and banana, boiled eggs with hummus and a wholegrain wrap, or overnight oats with berries and Greek yoghurt. **W**

# ‘I QUIT DIET CULTURE TO BECOME STRONGER AND HEALTHIER’

Former fashion model **Chloe Thomas**, aka Chloe Inspires, tells us about her personal battle to gain weight after years of suffering from anorexia, and why she ditched the catwalk to become a fitness, nutrition and mindset coach

**Words:** Joanna Ebsworth **Images:** BassFilm Co **Publicist:** Super Super PR

**Content warning:** This article contains references to eating disorders which some individuals may find triggering

‘**B**ody transformation’ is a phrase that gets banded around a lot in the world of fitness, usually supported by dramatic ‘before’ and ‘after’ pictures illustrating significant weight-loss journeys undertaken in the pursuit of so-called physical perfection. But for former fashion model-turned-women’s health, fitness, nutrition and mindset coach Chloe Thomas – who embarked on her own ‘body transformation’ after quitting the modelling industry in 2016 – her journey to better health was only ever about gaining weight, not losing it, and healing her body and mind with strength training, therapy and self-love after battling a life-threatening eating disorder, depression and body dysmorphia.

Now on a mission to help women feel strong and nourished, and empowered from the inside out, via

her coaching platform Chloe Inspires ([chloeinspires.co.uk](http://chloeinspires.co.uk)), the 33-year-old from Kent has even more reason today to celebrate her transformation from anorexic model to body positive personal trainer, as she enters a new era in her life: motherhood. Pregnancy is a blessing both she and doctors feared might not be possible for her, after years of restricted eating saw her body weight plummet to dangerously low levels and halt her periods.

‘When I was 19, I was told that if my BMI got any lower and I stayed at a certain weight for a long time, I was much more likely to be infertile when I was older,’ explains Chloe. ‘Bearing in mind that my anorexia started at the age of 16, I was very concerned about the damage I’d done to my body by restricting my calorie intake and, because I was on the Pill for years, I didn’t actually know whether I had periods or not.’

‘So, when I stopped taking contraception three years ago, I started using Natural Cycles ([naturalcycles.com](http://naturalcycles.com)) as a method of natural birth control and, once my partner and I decided we were ready to start trying for a family, we switched to the Plan Pregnancy mode. We’d get alerts on my most fertile days,’ she continues, ‘And now, I’m growing a little baby! We couldn’t be happier, obviously, but I do think it might not have happened if I hadn’t quit the diet culture and put in the work to become the healthiest, happiest and strongest version of myself that I could be, both mentally and physically.’

## TURBULENT TIMES

A professional tennis player at the age of 15, Chloe spent a lot of time training in the gym outside of school hours. ‘My training was very cardio-heavy, so

**Clothing:** Oner Active Effortless Seamless Shorts, £44, and Cotton Fitted Mid Vest (uk.oneractive.com)





Chloe swapped modelling  
for personal training



I was doing lots of running and ab workouts but I wasn't lifting any weights. Then, when I was 16, my anorexia started.

'Initially, on the surface, it was like a diet... I started seeing food the way my mum did. She had followed diets on-and-off my whole life, so when I started buying low-calorie cereal and having crackers instead of bread, my weight started going down, down, down.

'My mum took me to the doctors in the summer as soon as she noticed the problem, but they dismissed her concerns because my weight was "not low enough to be a problem". Afterwards, things spiralled when I went to a new boarding school for sixth form, but luckily, the school doctor realised there was an issue, and that's when I was officially diagnosed with anorexia,' reveals Chloe. 'Unfortunately, the NHS wasn't great in my area, so my parents paid for me to have private CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy), but my "recovery" was rushed. I was doing it for everyone else, and not for myself.'

As an outpatient at The Priory, Chloe quickly realised she would be released from treatment sooner if she hit a certain BMI target and admits now to putting on weight to 'get people off my back, not to get better mentally'. Thereafter, she managed to maintain a low-yet-healthy weight for two years but sadly went on to relapse worse than before when she dropped 60lbs during her gap year at the age of 19 (Chloe tipped the scales at just 46kg at her lowest weight).

Thankfully, Chloe admitted the cause of her illness this second time around, but with long NHS waiting lists and no help available from CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services), her family paid for a psychodynamic therapist to help her work through the cause of her symptoms, and uncover 'the deeper issues of where my anorexia came from, such as the addiction side of things, and how it has more to do with control over your food. Because I never wanted to be thin; I used to cry to my mum when I couldn't eat, as

I was so confused and would wear baggy clothes and heavy eye make-up to distract people from my body.'

### MODEL WORK

It was during her therapy that it emerged Chloe's trauma came from her childhood, among other things, and it was at this time that she decided to move to London to study speech sciences at university. Once there, however, she was scouted by a modelling agency, quit her studies, became a full-time fashion model and she travelled around the world for shoots and shows.

'When I first started, my agency actually said I was too skinny, so that probably illustrates how thin I was,' she elaborates. 'I was still suffering from body dysmorphia, still restricting my food and still doing cardio (I wasn't allowed to lift weights because you cannot have muscles as a fashion model). But I worked with huge brands, did some big TV commercials, and walked during New York and London fashion weeks. Ironically, I earned the most money at my thinnest.'

However, after five years of modelling, Chloe's love for the fashion industry faltered and those feelings were compounded when her agency pulled her in for a visit and told her - despite knowing she'd suffered from anorexia in the past - that she needed to start running more, take water retention tablets for her 'fat face' and stop doing the Body Pump classes she had recently posted about on Facebook.

'While they didn't directly tell me to lose weight, they said they couldn't put me up for any jobs while I looked

the way I did,' recalls Chloe. 'So, after I reminded them that my BMI was 16 and that I would be severely underweight if I lost any more, I went home, thought "What am I going to do?", and decided to quit modelling for good towards the end of 2015.'

### ROAD TO RECOVERY

Rather than feeling like she had to lose more weight, Chloe tells us the meeting with her agency had the opposite effect. After deciding she wanted to put weight on in a healthy way (as opposed to the 'unhealthy way' she says she gained weight at 16), Chloe searched for PTs who'd previously battled eating disorders themselves and found 'an amazing coach who understood what was going on in my head'. Soon, she was weightlifting three times a week and sticking to trusted nutrition advice from her trainer, a combination that saw her gain weight and muscle in a gradual way that wasn't too overwhelming and left her feeling

stronger and more confident.

'It was at this point I started filming my weight-gain journey and posting it on YouTube, because I couldn't find anything about weight gain back then, and gaining weight can be really hard as a woman,' says Chloe. 'I told everyone I'd quit modelling and that this was my journey, so I posted about my training programmes and what I ate. In time, I noticed people were asking if

I was qualified, and whether I could write programmes for them or offer advice on food. That's what pushed me to get a qualification in personal training and, shortly afterwards, I qualified as a nutrition coach too, so I could help more people.

'One video I posted about growing

*'When I started buying low-calorie cereal and having crackers instead of bread, my weight started going down, down, down'*

glutes went viral with half a million views, and things continued from there,' she adds. 'But I never worried about other people's opinions. The feedback I received was always really positive, and that's where my YouTube channel and social media handle, Chloe Inspires, comes from, because people were always saying it was inspiring to see my weight gain journey.'

'I then launched my first website off the back of seeing so many women struggle with either weight loss or weight gain, and embarked on my mission to counteract the misinformation about diet culture on the internet. Because diet culture is what instigated my weight loss at the age of 16. Back then, I'd had this belief that eating fat was terrible, and it spiralled the anorexia. Whereas

now, I know you have to eat protein and healthy fats, and I wanted to share that knowledge with more women and help them get off the fad diets.'

### HELPING OTHERS

In the years that have followed, Chloe has gone on to help over 800 women worldwide reach their goals, all the while adding further qualifications to her impressive CV – including CBT, basic counselling, self-hypnosis and breathwork – to give her the tools necessary to help others realise that true transformation, as per her philosophy, only happens when we address the root causes of our struggles and effectively manage our mental health and mindset.

'I attract a whole range of women from different backgrounds and age groups, but most of them have weight struggles in common. Most have probably also done a fad diet,

are probably doing too much cardio and don't understand the basics of nutrition and lifting weights. So, I help with both, but what I've also found from working with women is it's about helping them to deal with the emotional eating, the disordered eating, the binge eating and the body dysmorphia.

'These things are not about the food or exercise; they're about your mind,' she continues.

'I knew that from having 10 years of therapy, and that's why I wanted to get my other qualifications, so I could teach women what I knew from experience. With emotional eating, for example, you can't just say to someone, "Oh, just eat less and go to the gym. And if you binge, just eat less the next day".

'That doesn't work. Instead, you have to find out why they're emotionally eating and work on that. My approach to fitness and wellness is definitely more holistic and less about aesthetics. I just want to empower women to get away from beauty standards, so they don't feel pressured to look, eat or train a certain way, and instead find what works for them. Because the diets and workouts we see on social media are not personalised, and getting away from those fads is key to creating a healthy lifestyle.'

### PLANS AHEAD

With these words of wisdom ringing in our ears, it comes as no surprise to hear that Chloe's brand-new coaching programme, Your 30-Day Upgrade: Ultimate Mind & Body Glow-up, has absolutely nothing to do with taking on a gruelling fitness challenge in the

new year, and everything to do with forming healthy lifestyle habits you can start now. By the time you finish the plan, you'll have built powerful routines to carry you confidently into December and beyond.

'I designed my 30-day reset plan to gently support both your body and mindset in just 20 minutes a day, so you can finish the year feeling stronger, healthier and more confident at a time of the year when we can all find it harder to look after ourselves and stay motivated during the darker, colder months.

'It only takes 21 days to form a new habit,' she adds. 'So, by the end of 30 days, you should be waking up calmer and feeling stronger with healthier food habits, thanks to daily breathwork to lower cortisol and quiet the noise, journalling and gratitude prompts focused on self-worth and body neutrality to boost mood and motivation, simple shopping list and food guides, and three 15-minute, low-impact home workouts you can do anywhere to improve energy while supporting fat loss. Plus, there's advice on mindful eating and body awareness practices, so you can learn to tune into hunger cues and fullness, and understand how to stop emotional eating at the root cause.

'Christmas and the new year can be such an overwhelming time for many women; full of stress, exhaustion, illness and triggers if you've ever suffered from disordered eating in the past. But I hope this plan will give women the tools they need to help them go into the winter feeling good, so they don't need to buy into all that, "New Year, New You" stuff,' emphasises Chloe. 'You could also use it anytime of the year to build simple, sustainable routines that make you feel good. The best project you'll ever work on is you, so why wait for January to make a change?' 🍷

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Find out more about Chloe's coaching services and programmes, or sign up for her 30-Day Upgrade: Ultimate Mind & Body Glow-up, at [chloecinspires.co.uk](http://chloecinspires.co.uk)

***'My approach now is more holistic and less about aesthetics. I want to empower women to not feel pressured to look a certain way'***

**Clothing:** TLC Sport Medium Compression Mini Shorts, £34, and Zip Front Polo Top, £46 (tlcspport.co.uk).



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# FULLER *on fitness*

This issue, *Women's Fitness* columnist **Aimee Fuller** reveals why she loves yoga, and how she found her flow state on and off the mat



## MEET THE EXPERT

Two-time Team GB Winter Olympian, Aimee Fuller is a former pro snowboarder-turned TV sports broadcaster. Follow her @aimee\_fuller

I first discovered yoga somewhere in the middle of two Olympic cycles, when my life had been on the road for five weeks at a time, bouncing from one competition to the next on the World Cup snowboard circuit. Back then, I craved something consistent, something that was mine, no matter where I was in the world. Gyms weren't always an option and I didn't want to have an excuse, so a yoga mat became my simple fix – a no-excuses approach to owning my time and creating a routine through

the whirlwind of qualifications. I made a commitment of 30 minutes in the morning, 30 minutes in the evening, and it was non-negotiable. It became my anchor. That little rectangle of space was the only controllable in an otherwise unpredictable schedule of flights, training and competing. It wasn't about perfecting poses or ticking boxes, it was about grounding myself, stretching out sore muscles and finding calm amid chaos.

Fast forward to today and yoga isn't just part of my

routine; it's something I love. It's where I recharge, reset and connect with myself, and occasionally, invite a friend to join too! So why not start? Even with 20 minutes twice a week?

## WHY YOGA WORKS FOR ME

Snowboarding is high-adrenaline, high-impact and pretty unforgiving on the body. Yoga is the antidote. The

*'The headspace, stillness and breathwork have carried me through intense competitions'*

mobility, balance and strength it builds has supported my riding and kept me resilient. But the mental benefits have been just as powerful. The headspace, the stillness and the breathwork (that's always been my biggest challenge!) have carried me through intense competitions and busy media schedules.

Here's the thing: yoga isn't one-size-fits-all. You don't have to be flexible. You don't have to be spiritual. You don't even need to do it for an hour a day! My motto is '10 minutes on the mat is better than no minutes', and it truly can set you up for the day. There's a style and a class for everyone, from vinyasa if you love to move, to yin if you need to slow down, to hot yoga if you want to sweat it out.

## TURNING UP THE HEAT

Hot yoga has become my real love. There's something about stepping into that warm studio, especially in the winter months, that feels like a safe haven. The heat allows you to go deeper into postures, but it's not just

▼ Acro yoga with gold Olympic medalist Torah Bright



physical; for me, it's about the mental reset. You walk out drenched but lighter, calmer and more present.

I started with Hot Yoga Basics, a great entry point if you're new to it and far more welcoming than the rigid world of Bikram. Now, it's my go-to recharge. In London, I love studios like Yoga Haven, The Good Rooms, and several boutique hot yoga spaces that create such a supportive, inclusive environment.

It's this love that's inspired me to take things further: after the

Olympics I did my yoga teacher training because I wanted to deepen my knowledge, to understand why yoga has been so transformative for me, and to be able to share that with others.

### YOGA AT HOME

While I adore the studio energy, home yoga is just as important for me. Rolling out the mat in my living room, putting on a class or simply moving through my own flow is part of my day-to-day. One of my favourite hacks? Laying the mat out the night before. When it's there waiting for you in the morning, there's no excuse not to step on it. Having it there is a reminder, and you really don't need much space.

Yoga has been with me through Olympic highs and everyday resets. It's my balance, my breath, my space – and I'd encourage anyone to give it a go. You don't need to be bendy, you just need to start. Tag me @aimee\_fuller to let me know how you get on. 🙏



Yoga is where Aimee recharges and reconnects

Words: Aimee Fuller | Photography: Max Howard

## TOP SPOT

London is full of great yoga studios. Here's a few I recommend



### Yoga Haven, Richmond/Clapham ([yogahaven.co.uk](http://yogahaven.co.uk))

A studio that instantly feels like home. The warm flow classes are a highlight; creative, fluid, welcoming, all in a cosy space with staff who radiate friendliness. It's a safe, comfortable place to practise, while still being pushed in the right ways.



### Home Yoga, Primrose Hill ([homewellness.uk](http://homewellness.uk))

A beautiful studio with a progressive feel – perfect for anyone looking to deepen and develop their yoga. With a variety of class options and a focus on growth, it's a space that encourages exploration and elevates your practice.



### HotPod Yoga, Belgravia ([hotpodyoga.com](http://hotpodyoga.com))

Think of stepping into a heated dome that feels both cocooning and energising, with the flexibility of attending a studio anywhere in the country. The practice is strong, the teaching excellent, and the warmth is perfectly manageable: you leave feeling empowered rather than drained. Bonus: the all-important showers and hair dryers!

## HOT YOGA 101

Hot yoga often sounds intimidating, but it's one of the most welcoming ways into the practice. Here's why:

- It helps you go deeper. The warmth loosens tight muscles, making it easier to stretch safely and access poses.
- It's a total detox. Sweating it out leaves you feeling lighter, energised and cleansed.
- It boosts mental clarity. The heat demands focus. You can't think about your inbox when you're holding Warrior II in 38 degrees!
- It's inclusive. Hot Yoga Basics classes are designed for everyone.

Yoga Haven has a variety of classes from Warm Flow to Hot Flow and Hot Basics. Also try The Good Rooms. Hot Pod is all over the country, with a class and a time to suit everyone. I find it convenient when travelling, and always welcoming. Home Yoga is new and has a wide range of classes, both hot and at room temperature.

If you can't make it to a studio, at-home practices are brilliant. Simply close the door, turn up the thermostat, and move with an online class. Invest in a good mat as grip is key. I like Yogi Bare mats ([yogi-bare.co.uk](http://yogi-bare.co.uk)).

SLOW

&

STE

A growing number of fitness fans are realising the benefits of the slower-paced cardio method known as LISS (low-intensity steady-state) training. PT **Lucy Miller** explains why it's not just for endurance athletes

# ADY

**I**f you're used to doing high-intensity training (HIIT) sessions, slowing down can feel counterintuitive and, yet, that's exactly what LISS (low-intensity steady-state cardio) is – slowing down. 'It's a less demanding workout that requires steady movement – nothing too strenuous and without the need for rushing from one exercise to another,' says Olga Jukowska, physiotherapist at Bupa Health Clinics ([bupa.co.uk](http://bupa.co.uk)). More and more athletes are realising the power of incorporating LISS cardio into their training programmes, but you don't need to be a long-distance runner to reap the rewards.

'LISS cardio is continuous exercise that elevates your heart rate and oxygen use,' explains Olga. 'It's typically done for 30-to-60 minutes to reach a "steady state", and strengthens your heart and lungs over a longer period compared to HIIT. As an aerobic exercise, LISS taps into aerobic energy, using oxygen to convert fat into fuel and firing up your mitochondria – those microscopic power stations inside every cell.'

In practice, this means moving at a pace where conversation is still possible but your body is working hard enough to build stamina, aid recovery and support overall cardiovascular health. Think light jogging, brisk walking, easy cycling, rowing or swimming.

#### LISS VS HIIT

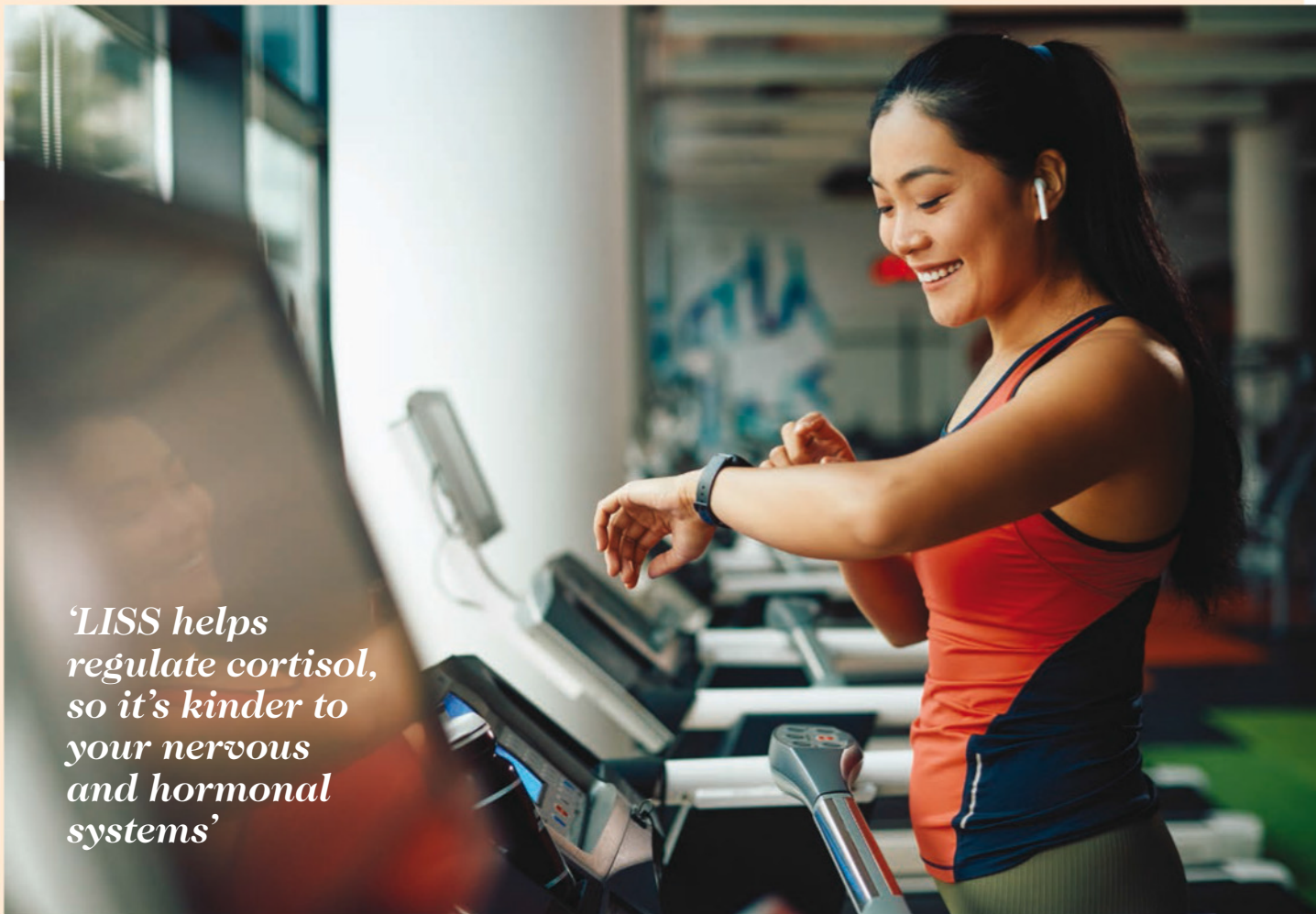
What's the difference between LISS and HIIT? LISS boosts cardiovascular

health and improves endurance over time, without placing the same strain on your muscles and joints as high-impact training. It's also a smart way to build a solid fitness foundation before incorporating in more intense workouts.

'During this kind of workout, you'll use around 50-65 per cent of your maximum heart rate. If you have an exercise tracker like a watch or chest strap, you'll see your heart rate sits in and around zone two,' explains Olga. 'This helps build fitness and stamina over time, as your body uses oxygen to burn free fatty acids for fuel. It's also a great option if you want to prepare for more intense training and eventually step it up a notch.'



LISS sessions last 30-to-60 minutes, so you reach that 'steady state'



*'LISS helps regulate cortisol, so it's kinder to your nervous and hormonal systems'*

By contrast, HIIT pushes your heart rate close to its maximum for short bursts, followed by recovery before repeating. This challenges your body in a very different way from LISS. 'You'll use a lot of muscle glycogen and produce lactate during HIIT,' adds Olga. 'HIIT also has an "after-burn" effect, meaning your body continues to use up calories for 30-to-60 minutes after your workout. LISS's after-burn is much lower and your body typically returns to its resting state within five-to-10 minutes. This quick recovery means you're ready to move again sooner. It also supports hormone balance and helps maintain consistent training long term.'

#### **LISS BENEFITS**

The advantages of LISS extend well beyond calorie burn. Regular sessions can improve cardiovascular fitness, ease joint pain, support weight management and even lift mood.

'It's especially helpful if you're returning to exercise after a break, injury, pregnancy or a busy spell,' says Olga. 'LISS lets you reconnect with your body, build stamina at a steady pace and regain confidence without overwhelming your system.'

Another key benefit is its effect on stress and depression. As it helps regulate cortisol (the body's primary stress hormone), researchers at Anglia Ruskin University found LISS to be kinder to your nervous and hormonal systems, making it particularly valuable for women during times of hormonal fluctuation or chronic stress.

Emerging research backs this up. A review in the National Library of Medicine found that steady-state

training offers similar cardiovascular improvements to HIIT, with little difference in fat loss between the two approaches. Meanwhile, a study published in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* suggests women may not need to exercise at the same intensity as men to achieve comparable results. 'Thanks to hormonal and physiological differences, women are often more efficient at burning fat during lower-intensity training,' explains Olga. 'So you may notice the same fat-burning benefits from LISS that a man might only get from a HIIT class, especially when it's done consistently over weeks or months.' Ready to give it a go? Turn the page for eight ways to get your LISS on...

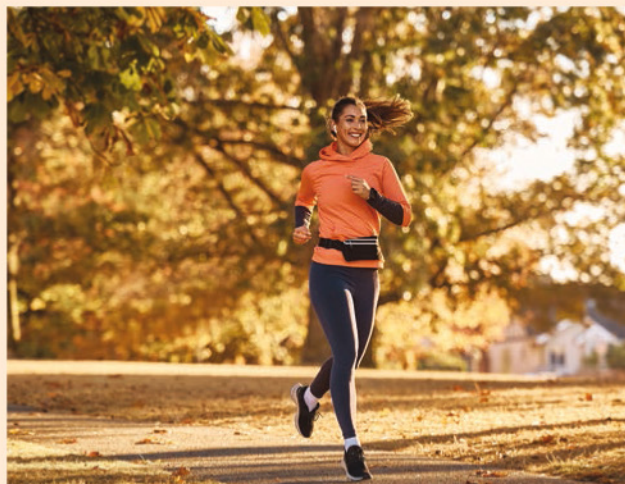
▲ LISS training is around zone 2, and builds fitness

# SWITCH FROM HIIT TO LISS

If you thrive on pushing hard, swapping intervals for steady effort can feel almost too easy. But LISS isn't about slacking - it's about supporting your body between tough workouts and balancing intensity with recovery. Here are eight awesome LISS workouts to try.

## 1. LIGHT JOGGING

Simple, accessible and effective, and an activity that can be done outdoors or on a treadmill at a steady pace. 'Great for fat burning, cardiovascular health and mental clarity, light jogging or a power walk is perfect during your lunch break or after work to loosen stiff joints and reset posture,' says Olga.



## 2. CARDIO MACHINES

Hop on the cross trainer, stepper or rower, and stick to a moderate pace for around 30 minutes. 'Even if you're a HIIT fan, ideally you shouldn't be doing it more than three times a week,' adds Olga. 'Those other days are the perfect chance to slot in some LISS.'



## 3. NORDIC HIKING

Walking on nature trails with minimal elevation combines aerobic activity with the mood-boosting benefits of time outdoors. 'Focus on 30-to-45 minutes of steady movement,' says Olga. 'And when you have more time at the weekend, an hour-long walk outdoors is a great way to reconnect with nature.'



## 4. SWIMMING

Continuous, moderate-paced lengths gently elevate your heart rate while offering full-body, joint-friendly resistance. 'Think of LISS as active recovery,' says Olga. 'It gives your muscles and joints a break while still keeping you moving.'



Photography: Shutterstock

## 5. GENTLE CYCLING

Stationary or road cycling at a consistent pace builds endurance without taxing your joints. 'Don't forget to track your effort,' says Olga. 'The simplest way is the talk test: aim for a pace where you can comfortably chat but not sing.'



## 6. DANCING

Olga suggests trying a choreographed class such as Zumba Gold or Dance Fitness for 'continuous movement and fun, uplifting energy. This is your chance to choose joy over grind. The more enjoyable it feels, the easier it is to stay consistent.'



## 7. PILATES

While not traditional cardio, beginner-friendly Pilates sequences (mat-based or reformer) can provide continuous, low-intensity movement that supports mobility, stability and core strength. 'Instead of chasing reps or PBs, the goal is sustainability, not exhaustion,' explains Olga.



## 8. REBOUNding

Gentle bouncing sessions support circulation and lymphatic flow without impact. 'Most exercise can be made into LISS,' says Olga. 'It's all about your pace and finding something you enjoy.'



**TIP:** Remember, LISS doesn't need to replace your beloved HIIT sessions. 'If you're time-poor, you can blend the two into one workout,' suggests Olga. 'Start with a 10- to 15-minute LISS warm-up, add 15-to-20 minutes of HIIT, then finish with a 10-minute steady-state cool-down, such as walking, light cycling or mobility work. This combo gives you the best of both worlds and helps promote fat burn increase as well as support recovery.' 🎧



## Women to watch BUNNY SHAW

### EARLY DAYS

The way things are structured in the Caribbean, people mostly believe in education, so I have a lot of teachers and chefs in the family. I'm the only one that sneaked around to become an athlete.

Track and field is the most successful sport in Jamaica, but football is the biggest and it was always around me. We played in the streets, and where I lived, my gate basically became the goal. Every evening, the boys would come

out and play and I would watch from afar, but as the days went on, the closer I got to the gate. One day, I was sitting on the side and one of the teams was short of a player. They asked me if I could go in goal, and that's how it started.

My journey to becoming a professional footballer has definitely been difficult. My parents didn't want me to play football, but I was really good at it, so I had to sneak off to play when my mum went to the supermarket and my dad went

to work. I had to make sure I was showered and back watching from the side before they came home so they wouldn't catch me. One day, they did catch me, and I got a proper whooping for it, but I persisted. Eventually, they allowed me to play, especially when I got invited to represent Jamaica. That's when they really gave me permission.

When I got a scholarship to go to America, I promised them I would just focus on my degree, come back, work and try to help the family. But the further on I went in college, the better I became at football, because I had the resources and the support there that I didn't have back home in Jamaica. Then in 2019, we qualified for the World Cup, and everything changed. After that, I signed my first professional contract in France, played two years there and now I'm here at City.

### TRAINING

A typical training week, after playing on a Sunday, consists of having Monday off, training Tuesday and Wednesday, taking Thursday off, training Friday and Saturday, and then playing again on Sunday. Training sessions are usually an hour-and-a-half to two hours and, most days, we also do gym after training, have lunch, and sometimes do another gym session after that.

We don't really have much time for extra individual training outside of football because the schedule is so hectic, especially with all the travelling. 'Match-day +3' is normally our hardest session, but as the week goes on and we get closer to the next game, the sessions get shorter and lighter, with fewer reps to taper down into match-day – my favourite day of the week!

### Meet Bunny

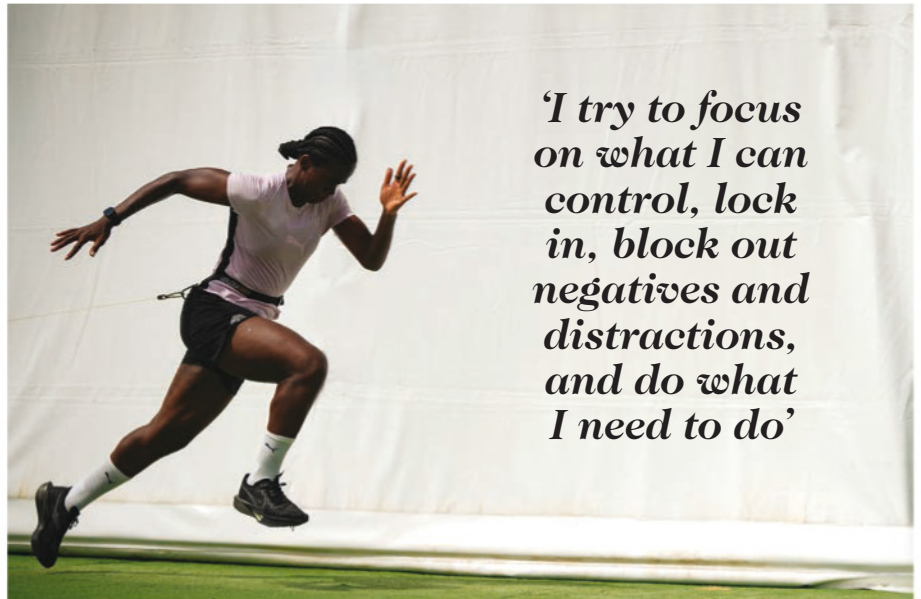
Professional footballer Bunny Shaw, 28, plays as a forward for Women's Super League (WSL) club Manchester City and captains the Jamaica national side. Widely considered to be one of the best strikers in the world, she is City's all-time top goalscorer, Jamaica's all-time top goalscorer for both men and women, and holds the record for the most hat tricks in the WSL.

Scoring goals is a reward for the team and all the hard work that we put in, because it's a hustle out there for 90 minutes. I love the thrill and enjoyment of scoring goals and celebrating with my teammates afterwards. No matter how many goals I scored in the last match, I always want to be in front of the goal again in the next training session. The more I'm there, the more confident I feel for the next game, so that's where I want to be, whether that's small-sided games, attack versus defence, or finishing drills.

### MINDSET

I think my ability to maintain a positive mindset comes from how I grew up and the lessons I carry with me now: 'Control the controllables'. If you focus too much on things outside your control, it creeps in and affects you mentally. So, I just try to focus on what I can control, lock in, block out the negatives and distractions, and do what I need to do.

I've had injuries recently, and that definitely gets to you. Balancing personal life and football can be tough too,



*'I try to focus on what I can control, lock in, block out negatives and distractions, and do what I need to do'*

▲ Being strong mentally is key for Bunny

because it's not always happy; sometimes things outside of football affect you. So, for me, it's about having a strong mentality every single day and also making space for other things outside of football.

That's where working with an organisation like Evelyn Partners has been really beneficial. They've supported me and numerous other players with managing our finances, educating us on what we can invest in, and what we

can do with our careers outside of football, so that takes a lot of pressure off me. Often, we don't think about life after football until it's close. But with their help, I've been able to start preparing early. For me, that makes a huge difference. Once I know that side is sorted off the pitch, I can go out and give my maximum on the pitch.

### GOALS

My main goal is to help City achieve as much as we can this year. We're not in the Champions League right now, so we have to put maximum focus, energy and effort into winning the league, winning the cups and, most importantly, qualifying for the Champions League for next season. Internationally, it's about helping Jamaica qualify for the next World Cup. Qualifying starts in November, so that's the big focus there. 🏆

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Bunny Shaw is ambassador for Manchester City Women's global partnership with leading wealth manager Evelyn Partners. Together, they offer players financial guidance and life-planning support through Rethink Rehabilitation and Rethink Retirement programmes.

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▼ Bunny is considered one of the best strikers in the world



Words: Joanna Ebsworth | Photography: Manchester City

# WINTER SUN

Lucy Miller swaps winter chills for year-round sunshine and a fitness-packed family adventure

**Y**ou know when you just can't motivate yourself for a workout, especially during the chilly winter months? That's me, looking out the window, curling up under a blanket and pretending the gym doesn't exist. So, I decided to chase the sun; I wanted beach runs, open-water swims in crystal-clear sea, Olympic-sized swimming pools and mountain hikes, all with stunning views and a warm 23°C temperature. Is that too much to ask? I didn't

think so. Enter Gran Canaria. Just a 4.5-hour flight from London Gatwick, the beautiful island off the coast of Northwest Africa ticked every box: winter sun, stunning landscapes and the perfect place for some fitness-focused family time.

## SETTLING IN

A smooth 30-minute transfer from Las Palmas Airport had us settling into our resort with ease. Our six-day stay had started with an early morning flight and zero time

difference, meaning we wasted no time enjoying the heated infinity pool with a sea view at Hotel Marina Suites in Puerto Rico, on the south-west coast.

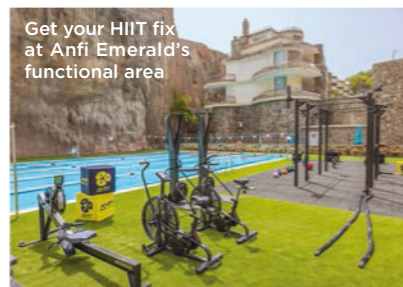
The hotel had a relaxed sailor theme, and I was blown away by the marina views. The spacious rooms, complete with a kitchenette and living room, felt like home. The kid-friendly pool was perfect for my two little ones to dive into and splash around while I recovered from my morning beach run.



Sun, sea and sit-ups at Anfi del mar



Try virtual cycling at the Suites



Get your HIIT fix at Anfi Emerald's functional area

pull-up machines, dumbbells, and SkiErgs. But honestly, who needs the gym when you've got stunning trails and mountains to explore? Each morning, I stepped out of my room to some of the best views Gran Canaria has to offer. Passing the 18-hole golf course, I'd head down a 6K dirt track leading straight to the beach. After a run, I'd hike up the local mountain for 10 minutes of pure serenity, before diving into the outdoor Olympic pool for a quick 10 laps.

It wasn't just any swim, though. I worked on my form using the mirrors on the pool floor, with a little help from Isaac Suárez Peña, the manager of the Anfi Sports Academy. He even gave my kids a private 45-minute swim lesson, which had me impressed as they were soon diving with a half-decent form and doing front crawl with noodles in their hands.

Along with the gym and pool, we enjoyed table tennis and yoga classes, while the kids got creative in

Over the next three days, I kicked off each morning with a run along the beach, followed by beach yoga and a nap on the Balinese beds in the adults-only area. Meanwhile, my kids had a blast playing mini-golf and ping-pong, or at the playground. There's also a games room and plenty of events, such as face painting and boules, to keep them entertained. After three days of bliss, it was time to move on – and that's when the real fitness fun started.

### FITNESS FUN

Just a short hop to Mogán, the Anfi Emerald Club offered a quieter, more secluded vibe, and impressively, was carved into the volcanic rock. It screamed 'fitness camp' for cyclists, runners and golfers. As soon as I saw the outdoor Olympic swimming pool next to a training rig, I knew this was going to be an active three days.

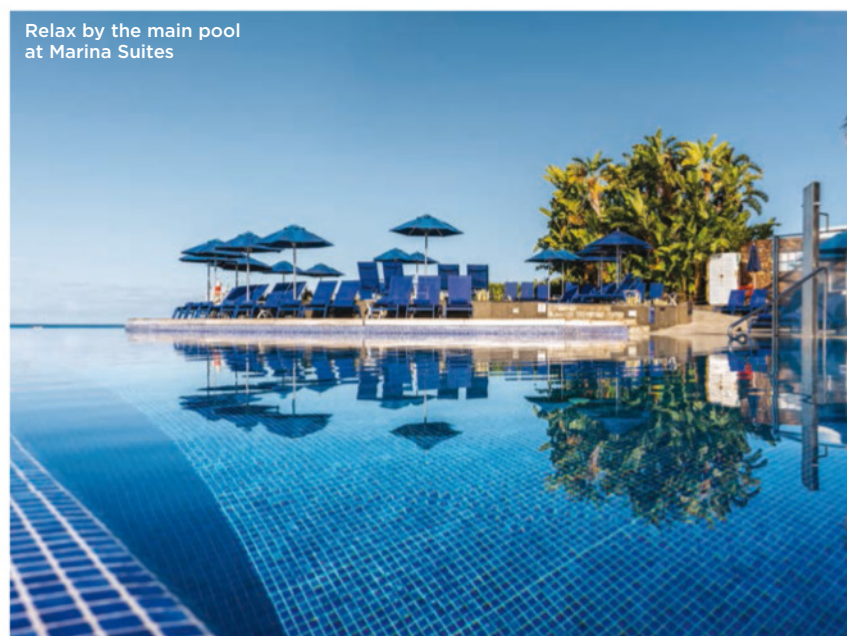
Both hotels had gyms, but the Anfi Emerald was a Technogym hub with top-of-the-line cardio equipment,



The kids' pools at Anfi Emerald



Lucy's children enjoy a swimming lesson



Relax by the main pool at Marina Suites



Marina suites at sunset

**READER OFFER**  
 Inspired by Lucy's journey? Discover the Women's Fitness Offer at Anfi Sports Academy by contacting [marketing@anfi.es](mailto:marketing@anfi.es) and quoting code **Womensfit25**

Aerial view of Anfi Emerald with its splash pools and lush gardens



the kids' club. If we had more time, I'd have loved to have tried the 'Energy Training Experience', a 45-minute functional fitness session.

**BEACH LIFE**

While you'll definitely want to pack your fitness kit (and swim cap for those Olympic-pool laps), don't forget your bikini. Both resorts are perfectly located for soaking up the sun after other activity. Hotel Marina Suites has direct access to the beach, while Anfi Emerald is a short 1.8k stroll, or a 15-minute shuttle ride, away from their beach at Anfi Beach Club. Here, we relaxed on the Balinese beds on Anfi del Mar beach, soaking in the white sand and crystal-clear sea. The kids loved splashing around near the shore, but watch out for the waves if you're heading into deeper waters, especially if you're going out on a boat for dolphin and whale watching.

When boarding the Spirit of The Sea boat trip (dolphin-whale.com), I honestly thought I would be fine. We couldn't wait to go searching for dolphins, turtles and whales. But just 30 minutes into the boat ride, my stomach was doing some pretty crazy somersaults. Despite seeing a pod of performing dolphins as

promised, two-and-a-half hours was a bit too much for my stomach to handle and, unfortunately, the waves made me and my son feel pretty green. Although the boat trip was an exciting concept, we both agreed to stick to the safer option of a pedalo, which we enjoyed at Anfi del Mar beach.

Hiring a pedalo from Water Sport

Luis Molina, and climbing up and zooming down the slide, was a fun-filled activity for us all – restoring our faith in the sea. It was the perfect way to spend an afternoon, and you get to have a sneaky leg workout too! Who needs a squat rack?

*'It's clear that Gran Canaria provides the perfect backdrop for staying fit and healthy'*

**FINE FOOD**

With breakfast served in both hotels (Hotel Marina Suites and the Anfi Emerald), the food was delicious and a great way to refuel after morning exercise. Hot made-to-measure eggs at the Marina Suites were protein heaven, and the buffet-style dining at Anfi Emerald was made up of delicious fruits, cereals, and some hot foods like fried eggs and pancakes. A great way to start the day.

Lunch outside overlooking the pools at both hotels came via an extensive menu of salads, burgers and fresh fish, whilst dinner at Marina

Suites was a short walk to the town where there were plenty of bars and restaurants to choose from. Marina Suites also has a restaurant on-site, but be sure to book early (we didn't get in there, despite trying to book on the first night).

From my first experience of Gran Canaria, it's clear that this island isn't just about sunbathing and sightseeing (although, don't worry, there's plenty of that too). For the active mum who wants to train while keeping the kids entertained, this destination really does tick every box.

Whether you're running along the beach, hiking up volcanic mountains or diving into an outdoor pool workout, Gran Canaria provides the perfect backdrop for staying fit and healthy. With so much to do for all ages, it's the ideal spot to create lifelong memories for the whole family, while keeping your fitness goals on track. 🏆

**TRAVEL FACTS**  
 Lucy travelled to Las Palmas airport from Gatwick London with EasyJet (easyjet.com), which costs from £85.99 one way and takes around four hours. Transfer from Las Palmas airport to both the Hotel Marina Suites and Anfi Emerald is 30-40 minutes. To find out more, visit [marinagrancanaria.com](http://marinagrancanaria.com) and [anfi.com](http://anfi.com)

Words: Lucy Miller | Photography: Hotel Marina Suites Gran Canaria, Anfi Emerald Club

# ALSO TRY

There's something for everyone in Gran Canaria

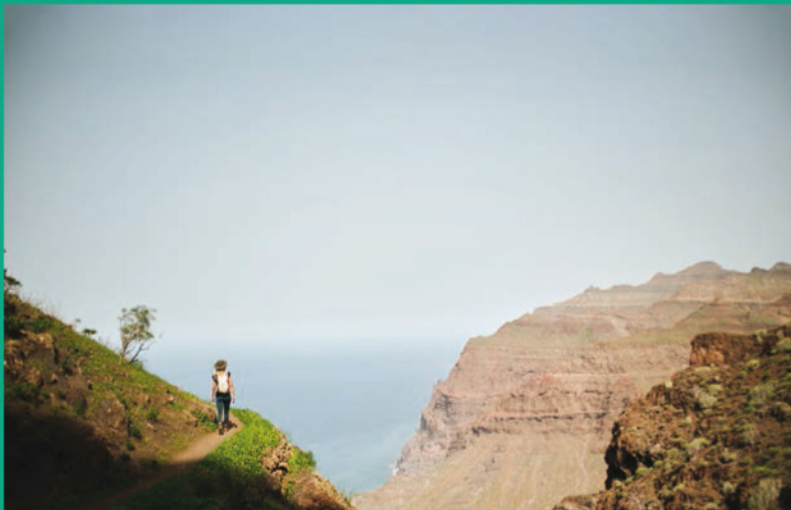


## For triathletes

### Challenge Mogán Gran Canaria

(April 2026, [challenge-grancanaria.com](http://challenge-grancanaria.com))

Situated at Anfi del Mar, the Challenge Mogán race begins at the stunning beach resort of Amadores, which boasts an 800m stretch of golden sand and crystal-clear waters. The 113k course takes racers through wide valleys and deep ravines, descending dramatically from 1,600m above sea level to a coastline lined with cliffs and inviting golden beaches. It's the perfect blend of athletic challenge and breathtaking scenery. Visit [grancanariatribikerun.com](http://grancanariatribikerun.com) for more details.



## For walkers

### Gran Canaria Walking Festival

(23-26 October,

[grancanariawalkingfestival.com](http://grancanariawalkingfestival.com))

Join hiking enthusiasts from all over the world as you take part in the Gran Canaria Walking Festival. The aim of the festival is to not only to showcase Gran Canaria's most natural and emblematic sites, but also its culture, historic accommodation and the flavours of the island. A great weekend full of nature, steps, good company and plenty of hills.



## For cyclists

### EPIC Gran Canaria

(7-9 February, [epicgrancanaria.com](http://epicgrancanaria.com))

If you love to cycle, the annual EPIC Gran Canaria road cycling event is part of the 2026 Gran Fondo World Tour circuit. Stage one will see participants cycling 115k, including a challenging 12.3k climb to Ayagaures and a 45k stretch to Ayacata, before taking on stage two, a 75k circuit through Tirajana, Arteara and Santa Lucía. Showcasing some of the Canary Islands' best cycling roads, the event has been a major highlight in Spain since 2018 and is now in its 7th year.

Photography: Gran Canaria Natural & Active



# Up the ante!

Upgrade your home workout without making a big investment by adding a simple set of ankle weights into the mix

**A**re your home workouts fast becoming a catalogue of bodyweight moves? Then, get a set of ankle weights to give an additional challenge. Hailing from the 1980s, ankle weights have seen an uptick in popularity in recent years – and it's not hard to understand why. Normally neoprene with a dense filling such as sand to add resistance, ankle weights are a simple but practical – not to mention affordable

– way to increase the intensity of lower-body exercises.

'Ankle weights are an effective piece of equipment because they provide added resistance to exercises, intensifying the workout to build strength and muscle endurance in the legs, core and glutes,' adds PT Sarah Campus (ldnmumsfitness.com). 'They can improve stamina, balance and posture by forcing the body to work harder to stabilise, and

they add versatility to routines by challenging the body with different movement patterns.'

## LET'S GET STARTED

If you're ready to upgrade your home workout, read on for Sarah's easy-to-follow ankle weights workout. Simply perform the moves in order, aiming to do 10-12 repetitions on each side and repeating the entire circuit 3-4 times. Let's go!



## ◀ DONKEY KICK

**Targets the hamstrings and glutes, especially the gluteus maximus**

- Attach the weights around your ankles. Start with your hands and knees on the mat in an all-fours position. Position your hands directly under your shoulders and your knees under your hips, maintaining a neutral spine (A).
- Engage your core by pulling your belly button in towards your spine to help stabilise your pelvis and prevent your lower back from arching.
- Keeping your knees bent at a 90-degree angle and your foot flexed, engage your glute muscle to lift one leg up toward the ceiling (B).
- Raise your leg until your thigh is roughly parallel to the floor. The sole of your shoe should face the ceiling. Do not lift your leg so high that you have to arch your back or tilt your hips.
- Hold the position at the top for a moment, squeezing the glute of the working leg to maximise the contraction. Slowly and with control, lower your leg back to the start. Don't let it touch the ground (this keeps tension on your glute). Repeat then switch sides.



**▲ FIRE HYDRANT**

**Works all glute muscles and strengthens the hips**

- Stay on all-fours with your hands directly under your shoulders and your knees under your hips. Your back should be flat and your core is engaged.
- While keeping your knees bent at a 90-degree angle, lift one leg directly out to the side until it is about hip height (A). Avoid shifting your body weight to one side or rotating your hips.
- Pause for a second at the top of the movement and consciously squeeze the glute muscle of your working leg.
- Slowly and with control, lower your leg back to the starting position (B). Repeat, then switch sides.

**▼ GLUTE BRIDGE MARCH**

**Works the core and glutes while stretching hip flexors**

- Lie on your back on the mat with knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Your feet should be about hip-width apart and a comfortable distance from your glutes. Place your arms at your sides with your palms facing down.
- Engage your core and glutes to lift your hips until your body forms a straight line from your shoulders to your knees (A). Pause and squeeze your glutes at the top of the bridge.
- Lift one foot a few inches off the floor, bringing your knee toward your chest, while keeping your hips level (B).
- Hold the lifted leg for a second, then slowly return your foot to the ground. Repeat the movement with the opposite leg, maintaining tension in your glutes and core.
- Continue alternating legs, keeping your hips elevated throughout.





### ▲ HAMSTRING CURL

An isolation exercise that targets the hamstring muscles

- Get back on all-fours with your hands directly under your shoulders and knees under hips; back flat and core engaged.
- Lift one leg in the air, in line with your body, with foot flexed (A).
- Bend the knee to bring your heel up towards your glutes (B), then slowly extend back to the start, ensuring the movement is smooth and controlled.
- Repeat, then switch sides.

### CLAMSHELL ▼

Focuses on working the hip abductors and gluteus medius

- Lie on a mat on your side supporting your weight on your arm. Ensure your shoulders and hips are stacked (aligned directly on top of each other), and bend both knees to a 90-degree angle, bringing them in line with your chest, feet together (A).
- Engage your abdominal muscles to stabilise your core and prevent your back from arching.
- Lift your top knee towards the ceiling (B), but only as far as you can without rotating your hips or leaning backward.
- Squeeze your glutes to feel the contraction, then slowly and with control lower your top knee back to the starting position. Repeat, then switch sides.





### ▲ **SIDE-LYING LEG LIFT**

Works the glute muscles and the outer thighs

- Stay lying on your side on a mat, supporting your head with your lower arm. Ensure your body is in a straight line and your hips are stacked directly on top of each other.
- Bend the lower knee to 90 degrees keeping the top leg straight (or slightly bent if more comfortable). You can place the foot in front of your lower leg for stability (A).
- Keeping your pelvis stable, lift the top leg vertically away from your body. Aim to lift it as high as possible without letting your torso or hips rotate (B).
- Slowly and in a controlled manner, lower the leg back to the starting position. Repeat, then perform on the other side. 🕒

# INTEGRATIVE NUTRITION FOR THE MIDLIFE WOMAN

Here's how to find balance amid conflicting advice, explains **Laura Clark RD**, dietitian, food therapist and nutrition consultant.



If you're navigating midlife, you've probably noticed how noisy nutrition advice gets: 'ditch the carbs', 'eat more protein'. And what about sugar, sweeteners, or fat? With hormonal shifts affecting muscle, mood, heart, bones and weight, it's no wonder many of us feel overwhelmed.

Here's the reality: no single nutrient is the villain, and no single food is the saviour. The key is finding harmony: bringing protein, carbohydrates, fats and fibre into balance. For some women, this might also include using non-sugar sweeteners as a safe, evidence-based way to cut back on added sugar without losing out on enjoyment.

## PROTEIN: STRENGTH, METABOLISM, BONES

From around age 40, women can lose 3-8% of muscle mass each decade, a process linked to falling oestrogen levels. Protein intake of around 1-1.2g per kilo of body weight has been shown to protect against this loss.

Protein also helps with fullness, which can be useful if weight regulation is a concern. But more isn't always better. A better approach is balance: because the body doesn't store protein, it's best to spread it across the day. Aim for a source at each meal such as fish, eggs, pulses or tofu.

## CARBS AND FIBRE: BRAIN FUEL AND GUT HEALTH

Carbs have had a terrible PR campaign, but the truth is the brain runs on glucose. Cut carbs too much and fatigue, brain fog and low mood often follow. Long-term research, like the *Nurses' Health Study*, back up their importance, showing that women who eat more wholegrains have a lower risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

UK guidance recommends 30g of fibre a day, but most of us fall short. Fibre supports gut health and weight management, and helps to lower cholesterol. Both soluble fibre (from oats, beans, fruit) and insoluble fibre (from wholegrains, bran and skins) have roles, but the right balance varies between people.

## NON-SUGAR SWEETENERS, SUGAR AND BALANCE

Another common midlife question is whether sugar should be cut completely and what to make of non-sugar sweeteners. According to all leading health authorities worldwide, including the European Food Safety Authority, non-sugar sweeteners such as stevia, sucralose and aspartame are safe. The acceptable daily intake (ADI) set by these bodies is many times higher than typical daily use,



meaning most people consume well below the threshold. They also don't increase appetite or weight.

Hormonal changes in midlife affect how the body handles sugar, with falling oestrogen linked to reduced insulin sensitivity. Non-sugar sweeteners don't raise glucose or insulin levels, so are a useful tool here, but neither does sugar have to be avoided completely. It still contributes to carbohydrate needs, but managing portions helps regulate energy and long-term metabolic health.

Concerns are sometimes raised about non-sugar sweeteners, but current evidence shows they don't negatively affect gut or bone health when used in the context of a balanced diet with adequate calcium and fibre.

## HEALTHY FATS: HORMONES, BRAIN AND HEART

After menopause, women's risk of cardiovascular disease rises sharply and eventually overtakes that of men. Protecting heart health becomes a priority in midlife, and the right fats can help. The PREDIMED trial showed people following a Mediterranean diet with extra olive oil and nuts had a 30% lower risk of heart disease compared with those on a low-fat plan.

Fat isn't something to fear – it's about type and quality. Olive oil, nuts and avocado provide monounsaturated fats that support cardiovascular health, while oily fish, flax and chia supply omega-3s, which have anti-inflammatory effects and may also benefit the brain.

## NOURISH, DON'T PUNISH

Integrative nutrition is about how nutrients complement one another, and also how food fits into real life: social occasions, preferences, the joy of eating. What matters is consistency, flexibility and giving yourself permission to eat in a way that nourishes your body and peace of mind – including practical tools like non-sugar sweeteners if they help you strike that balance. 🍷

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### More information:

For more information on the use of non-sugar sweeteners, visit [britishsoftdrinks.com/non-sugar-sweeteners](https://www.britishsoftdrinks.com/non-sugar-sweeteners)

# FIT FUEL

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Latest products to fuel your fitness

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How to eat to ease winter fatigue

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Tim Spector's good-gut recipes

**p55**

The *WF* Nutrition Awards 2025 results are in!

Want more nutrition tips?  
Head to  
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and also follow us  
at [instagram.com/womensfitnessuk](https://www.instagram.com/womensfitnessuk)



# Fuel up

Collagen supports joint and bone health but declines with age. A growing number of brands are producing collagen products that could help protect our body's needs



## Have it your way

With 20g of collagen (made with quality type 1 collagen protein) plus vitamin C to support healthy skin and joints, Isopure Collagen (£29.99, Boots) is made using minimal ingredients, and comes in two types: Raspberry Lemonade, which makes a refreshing drink, and Unflavoured, which can be added to your morning cuppa. No artificial flavours or sweeteners.



## Rich in history (and nutrients!)

New to the table, Hunter & Gather Beef Bone Broth (£30, Holland & Barrett) is full of protein, collagen and flavour, delivering 15g of protein per serving. Made the traditional way, it's been crafted with bones from grass-fed cattle, vegetables and herbs, gently simmered to preserve the goodness. Whisk into hot water, or stir into your favourite stews and other recipes.



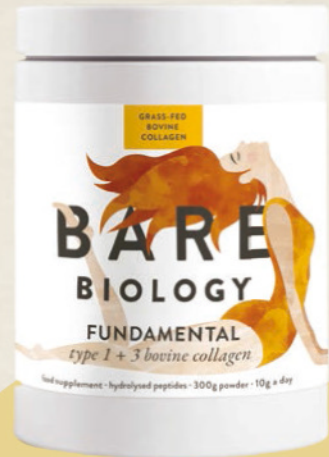
## The daily ritual

A hit with the *Women's Fitness* team, Veloforte Collagen Pro (from £23.79, [veloforte.com](http://veloforte.com)) boasts 10,000mg of bovine collagen plus a micronutrient blend of vitamins C, D and zinc. Sustainably sourced and bioavailable, its flavourless blend mixes well with a morning coffee. With 9g of clean protein per 10g serving, it's the ultimate choice for healthy muscles and joints.



### ***Something fishy***

Bone broth not your thing? Hunter & Gather also stocks a range of collagen powders, including a dairy-free Collagen Creamer in Vanilla and Creamy Cacao (£24 each, [hunterandgatherfoods.com](http://hunterandgatherfoods.com)). And, if you follow a pescatarian diet, there's the Marine Collagen powder, £25.60, which has 10,000mg of type 1 collagen from wild-caught white fish.



### ***Strong to the bone***

Crafted to strengthen bones, joints and muscles, new Bare Biology Bovine Collagen (£29.95, [barebiology.com](http://barebiology.com)) is made from a special blend of 10,000mg type I and type III collagen, plus hydrolysed peptides for easy absorption. Mix up to 10g daily into coffees, smoothies and other recipes.



### ***Beyond skin deep***

With an impressive offering – from a Mushroom blend to improve focus, to a Menopause Max blend to reduce symptoms – Revive Collagen comes in easy-to-use sachets tailored to your concern. The Revive Collagen Original (from £29.27, [revivecollagen.com](http://revivecollagen.com)) has 8,500mg of type 1 marine collagen, plus hyaluronic acid to hydrate skin and aloe vera to calm inflammation. 🍷

# Eat FOR ENERGY

## 1. FULLER FOR LONGER

When the cold sets in, it's natural to reach for hearty, comforting foods, often high in refined carbs or sugars. But these can cause blood-sugar spikes followed by crashes, leaving you feeling even more drained.

Protein helps increase satiety, which means you feel fuller for longer. Sources of protein such as lean meat, eggs, seeds and nuts, legumes and wholegrain oats, slow digestion and stabilise your blood sugar, reducing the likelihood of snacking or overeating later in the day.

Instead of a quick-fix muffin or toast, start your day with a warm, protein-rich breakfast like scrambled eggs with beans, low-fat Greek yoghurt with fruit, cinnamon and oats, or perhaps even protein porridge. And if you're between meals? Opt for a balanced snack such as the More Nutrition Protein Bar (£2.69 per portion, [morenutrition.co.uk](http://morenutrition.co.uk)) in flavours including

Peanut Caramel, Caramel Crunch and White Chocolate Peanut Caramel. Guaranteed to satisfy sweet cravings, it

offers 16g of protein per bar and is under 200 calories, with no added sugar, meaning it won't spike your blood sugar the way a standard chocolate bar would.



## 2. SUPPORT A STRONG SYSTEM

Colder weather also brings an increase in viruses and the dreaded winter colds. That's where protein plays another behind-the-scenes role in building and supporting your immune defence.



Many people don't realise that antibodies, which fight off infections, are actually made of amino acids acting as a building blocks for

Feeling sluggish and lack-lustre? **Dr Lena Larsen** suggests upping your protein intake to help beat winter fatigue and to power through the season

**A**s the days get shorter and chillier, that all-too-familiar feeling starts to creep in — sluggish mornings, flagging energy by mid-afternoon, and cravings for carby comfort foods. Seasonal fatigue is real, and for many of us, it can throw energy levels, mood and fitness goals completely off track.

But before you hibernate until spring, there's one simple but powerful tool that can help: protein. While it's often associated with muscle recovery and fitness performance, protein also plays a crucial role in supporting immunity, regulating appetite and maintaining energy — especially when the temperature drops. Each person's protein target will be different, depending on their weight and goals, but I'd generally recommend consuming around 1.4-2g of protein per kilogram of body weight.

From curbing cold-weather cravings to powering your immune system, here's how protein can help you stay energised, strong and balanced all season long.

protein. If your intake is too low, especially during winter when your body is under more stress, your immune system lacks the building blocks it needs to function optimally.

Incorporating a steady intake of high-quality protein throughout the day helps your body repair and protect itself more efficiently. It's not just about what you eat when you're sick, but how you consistently nourish your body to stay well in the first place.

### 3. STAY ENERGISED (EVEN ON THE DARK MORNINGS!)

If you feel like crawling back under the duvet every morning from October through to March, you're not alone. With reduced daylight and colder temperatures, our natural energy rhythms shift, but protein can help regulate this, too.

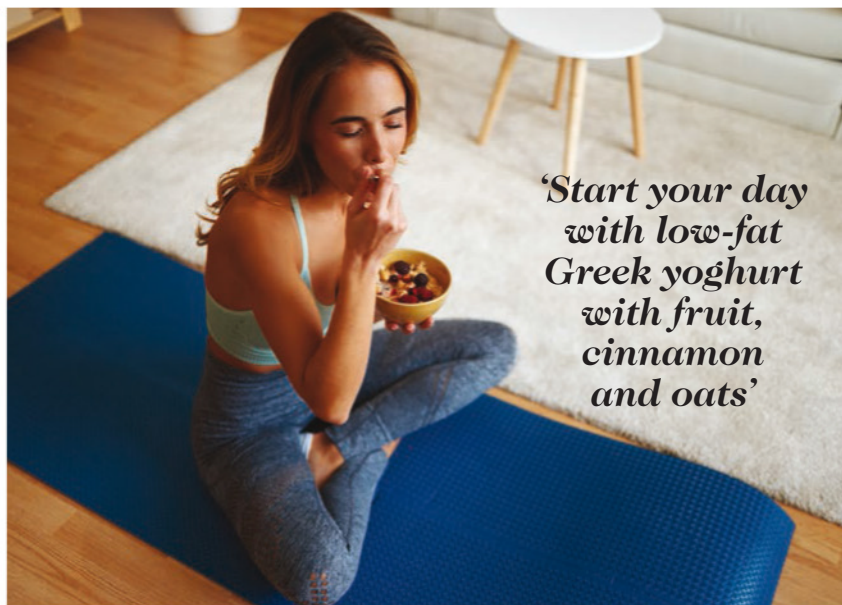


Unlike simple carbs, protein provides a steadier energy release. It works with your metabolism and hormones to maintain consistent energy levels throughout the day. For active women especially, who are balancing training with work, family and seasonal stress, protein becomes essential for cellular repair and energy production. Your body uses amino acids from protein to rebuild tissue and support your mitochondria, your cells' energy factories.

Including a protein-rich snack, such as a protein shake, between meals can be a game-changer. You'll feel less tired, more focused, and less reliant on caffeine or sugar.

### 4. MAINTAIN MUSCLE WHEN LESS ACTIVE

Let's be honest, when it's cold and dark outside, many of us find it harder to stay active. Whether your workouts



*'Start your day with low-fat Greek yoghurt with fruit, cinnamon and oats'*

become less frequent or you're less inclined to go for long walks, you might start feeling a dip in strength or motivation.

Muscle is metabolically active tissue, and protein is essential for maintaining it, especially when your movement levels decrease. Preserving muscle doesn't just help with body composition; it also supports your metabolism and your ability to stay warm.

Winter is a great time to focus on strength training and recovery, and protein is central to both. If you're not eating enough protein, you risk losing muscle mass, which makes it even harder to get back into your routine when spring comes back around.

### 5. COMBAT THE WINTER BLUES

The colder months don't just affect our bodies, they impact our mood too. Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), a form of winter depression, affects many women and can lead to cravings, fatigue and a lower sense of motivation.

Protein is a key building block for neurotransmitters serotonin and dopamine, which regulate mood. If your diet is low in protein, your brain may struggle to produce enough of these feel-good chemicals.

I'd recommend spreading protein evenly throughout the day, not just

loading up at dinner, to keep your mood and energy balanced.

Foods rich in tryptophan – such as turkey, eggs, nuts and dairy – are especially useful in supporting serotonin levels naturally.



Winter doesn't have to mean energy crashes or feeling like you're running on empty. By prioritising protein-rich meals and snacks, you can nourish your body to better handle cold weather, fight fatigue and support your fitness goals – without feeling restricted. Think of protein as your winter power tool. It keeps you full, energised and resilient, plus it's so easy to build into your day with smart choices. 🍌



#### Meet the expert

**Dr Lena Rebecca Larsen** is a nutrition specialist and research & innovation lead at better-for-you nutrition brand, More Nutrition ([morenutrition.co.uk](https://www.morenutrition.co.uk)).

# GO WITH YOUR *Gut*

Once a way to preserve food sans refrigeration, fermenting has come to the fore as a great route to good gut health. Try these recipes from **Dr Tim Spector's** new book *Ferment*

**F**ermenting is one of the most ancient, nutritious and cheap techniques for preparing and preserving food and drink. With little more than time, patience and basic equipment, the humblest of ingredients can be transformed into nutritious foods with a range of benefits for our gut health. In his new book *Ferment* (Jonathan Cape, £25), Dr Tim Spector, scientific co-founder of ZOE and pioneer of microbiome research, reveals his practical tips and favourite fermenting recipes, as well as explores all of the new science of this waste-friendly process. Here are two simple recipes to whet your appetite.

## SIMPLE KIMCHI

This is a short cut for those people who want a faster recipe, cutting out the traditional two-stage salting process.

### Ingredients (Makes 1 jar)

- 1 cabbage or Chinese/napa cabbage
- 1 daikon
- Sea salt
- 4 garlic cloves
- 1 bunch of spring onions, trimmed and sliced
- 1-2 tbsp Korean chilli flakes (gochugaru)
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tbsp fish sauce (or fermented miso paste for vegans)

### Method

- 1.** Trim the cabbage and cut it into 4-5mm slices. Trim and peel the daikon and cut into thin half-moons.
- 2.** Weigh the combined vegetables, tip into a bowl and add 2 per cent salt of the total weight. Using your hands, massage the salt into the vegetables until they are starting to soften, then cover the bowl and set aside at room temperature for about 4 hours.
- 3.** Combine the garlic, spring onions, chilli flakes, soy sauce and fish sauce in a food processor and pulse to combine. Add to the vegetables and mix well to thoroughly coat them.
- 4.** Pack tightly into a clean jar ensuring that the vegetables are submerged beneath the brine. If necessary, add a little 2 per cent brine (i.e. 2g salt for every 100ml water) to cover. Press weights on top and loosely cover with a lid, then leave in a cool, dark place for 5-10 days until fizzy. Transfer to the fridge and eat within 1-2 months.



## SIMPLE SAUERKRAUT

Traditionally sauerkraut is fermented slowly at lowish temperatures – 2–4 weeks at around 15–20°C – to give enough time for the sourness to properly develop. With a pH of 3.5 sauerkraut is around seven times more sour than kimchi, its spicier cousin.

### Ingredients (Makes 1 large jar)

- 1 white or red cabbage
- 1–2 carrots (optional)
- 1 tbsp caraway seeds (or juniper berries)
- Sea salt

### Method

**1.** Trim the base of the cabbage and peel away the outer leaves; set these aside for use later. Cut the cabbage into quarters and use a mandoline, food processor, coarse grater or sharp knife to finely shred the cabbage and carrot (if using).

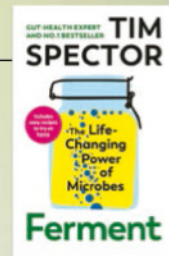
**2.** Tip the cabbage into a large bowl, add the caraway seeds and make a note of the total weight. Add 2 per cent salt of this total weight – if the total weight is 600g, you will need 12g salt.

**3.** Using your hands, massage the salt really well into the shredded cabbage for a couple of minutes until it starts to soften. Cover the

bowl with a clean cloth or plate and set aside for at least 30 minutes and up to 3 hours until the cabbage is very soft and has released water.

**4.** Scoop the cabbage and any resulting liquid into a clean 1–2 litre jar and really pack it down hard so that the shredded cabbage is submerged under the briny liquid and you have a clear 5cm gap between the cabbage and the top of the jar. Cover the top of the cabbage with the reserved outer leaves and place a weight on top. Close the lid but leave it slightly loose – if the jar is sealed tight it runs the risk of exploding!

**5.** Place the jar on a plate in a dark, cool cupboard out of direct sunlight and leave for 2–3 days for fermentation to start. Burp the jar daily to release any collected gas. After 7 days the sauerkraut should be fermenting nicely so it can now be stored in the fridge. Use within 1–2 months, depending on how soft you like it. 🍷



Extracted from *Ferment*  
by Tim Spector  
(Jonathan Cape, £25)



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# Women's Fitness Nutrition Awards 2025

# THE WINNERS ARE...

Discover the very best nutrition products for your general health, endurance and strength goals in 2025

Whether you're running a half-marathon or recovering from a strength session, getting the right fuel into your body will support your efforts. And while it always pays to have a balanced diet, pre-made nutrition products take some of the guesswork out of measurements and nutrient combinations. So, we run these awards to showcase the brands

that deserve your attention and to help you make smart decisions based on qualified opinion.

Behind the scenes, our team of independent nutritionists have been busy trialling dozens of products, testing each one for its nutritional merit, quality of ingredients and performance benefits. Their results are in...

# GENERAL HEALTH



**Meet the nutritionist**  
 Louise Pyne is an experienced freelance health writer and registered nutritionist at Nutrable, a personalised coaching nutrition service (nutrable.com). She takes a holistic view on wellness and believes in treating the cause rather than the symptoms of health conditions. Find out more at [louisepynenutrition.com](https://louisepynenutrition.com) and follow her online at [instagram.com/loulou\\_nutrition](https://instagram.com/loulou_nutrition)

nutritionist at Nutrable, a personalised coaching nutrition service (nutrable.com). She takes a holistic view on wellness and believes in treating the cause rather than the symptoms of health conditions. Find out more at [louisepynenutrition.com](https://louisepynenutrition.com) and follow her online at [instagram.com/loulou\\_nutrition](https://instagram.com/loulou_nutrition)

## Collagen for hair + skin

### Dr. Vegan Skin Saviour (£24.99, [drvegan.com](https://drvegan.com))

Dr Vegan is a trusted supplement brand, so it's no surprise that its collagen capsules are truly gimmick-free. Helping to hone a glow from the inside out, the capsules had an impact on my skin in just a few weeks of testing. My complexion looked more plump and glowy - I have no complaints!

### Shreddy Superglow (£38, [shreddy.com](https://shreddy.com))

I love a product that meets its promises, and this fruity-flavoured collagen powder does exactly that. Clinically proven to reduce fine lines by almost 33 per cent, I saw noticeable results in the form of dewier skin within a couple of weeks.



## Collagen for joints

### Healthspan Elite Joint Physio Glucosamine & Chondroitin

(£33.99, healthspanelite.co.uk)

With high-quality dosages of 500mg glucosamine hydrochloride and 400mg chondroitin, these easily absorbable supplements helped to keep my gym-weary body happy in just a few weeks of use. My joints soon felt less stiff and more agile. Result!



## Digestive supplements

### SMART STRAINS for your immune system

(£26.49, smartstrains.com)

These probiotics are worth every penny to help keep immunity tip top during winter. Made with specific strains that have been scientifically proven to support the upper respiratory tract during the winter months, these are a must-buy to stash in your health toolkit.



### Revive Active Joint Complex

(£39.95, reviveactive.com)

If you're looking for a one-stop shop to help joints, this super supplement features a whopping 10 active ingredients including glucosamine and collagen to help protect from wear and tear. The sachet formula is particularly useful if you don't like swallowing pills, and tastes great in water, smoothies or juices.



### myota Gut Booster

(£32.50, myotahealth.com)

If you're looking for a product that makes it easy to ace your daily fibre goals, this gut booster is for you. The low-FODMAP certified mix of five prebiotic fibres helps to restore balance in the gut, making it a good buy if you suffer from bloating or cramps.



**Health drinks + shots**

**Bio&Me Vanilla Kefir Drink**

(£2.60, [sainsburys.co.uk](https://sainsburys.co.uk))  
 Fermented drinks are all the rage for helping to support a diverse gut microbiome. If you're looking for a product with kudos, I give this Bio&Me buy five stars because, with no added sugars or nasty preservatives yet over 100 billion gut-friendly cultures, you can be sure of a product that fully lives up to the nutritional hype.



**SHREDDY SUPERSNOOZE**

(£32, [shreddy.com](https://shreddy.com))  
 This cherry-flavoured nighttime blend is just lovely. With all the goodies you need for a good night's sleep, including magnesium, ashwaghandha and functional mushrooms, it definitely helped me feel more relaxed and prepared for a blissful slumber.



**One Living Health Shots**

(£2, [oneliving.com](https://oneliving.com))  
 Easy to knock back in the morning, each health shot contains chicory inulin prebiotic fibre along with one billion probiotic bacteria to help rebalance the gut environment. Clinically proven to reach the gut alive, every shot comes in a refreshingly fruity flavour, making it a simple (and tasty) part of my morning routine.



**Multivitamins**

**Dr.Vegan Multivitamin**

(£19.99, [drvegan.com](https://drvegan.com))

I was impressed with Dr. Vegan's easy-to-take capsules. Gentle on the stomach, the two-a-day dose is perfect if, like me, you prefer to take your capsules together for ease. That said, they can be taken separately too, and provide a well-balanced mix of essentials and zero unnecessary fillers.



**Healthspan Elite Sports Essentials**

(£25.99, [healthspanelite.co.uk](https://healthspanelite.co.uk))

Ideal if you need to fill nutrient gaps, this sports bundle offers peace of mind for fitness enthusiasts looking to improve performance and recovery. Each daily tear strip combines a trio of capsules - a comprehensive multivitamin, omega-3 and probiotic - which can all be taken together to make sure you hit your nutritional goals.



# ENDURANCE



**Meet the nutritionist**  
Christine Bailey is an award-winning registered performance nutritionist, functional nutrition practitioner and author with

over 20 years of experience across the health, fitness and wellbeing sectors. She brings science-led, personalised nutrition to her clinical and consultancy work. Her latest book *Personalised Nutrition for Menopause* (Singing Dragon, £8) is due out later this year. To find out more, visit [christinebailey.co.uk](http://christinebailey.co.uk)



## Recovery shakes

### SIS REGO Clear Recovery

(£25 for 460g, [scienceinsport.com](http://scienceinsport.com))

This is a great-tasting and innovative recovery product. Good for gym sessions and less intense training, it provides a balanced 1:1 ratio of protein to carbohydrates, with 20g of clear whey protein isolate and 21g of carbohydrates. The use of whey protein isolate ensures rapid absorption, and the hydrolysed protein is even faster, making it an excellent choice for immediate recovery. The product is designed to be a light and refreshing drink, rather than a traditional thick shake. Its low sugar content (1.5g) is a notable feature, and it's Informed Sport certified, providing the highest level of quality assurance for all athletes.



### Veloforte Nova Recovery Protein Powder

(£9.89 for 3 sachets; [veloforte.com](http://veloforte.com))

Veloforte Nova is a plant-based recovery shake with a strong focus on natural ingredients. Each 67g serving provides 238 calories, and 13.5g of complete plant-based protein from a blend of pea, brown rice and pumpkin protein. It contains 40.7g of carbohydrates, with a notable 29.7g of sugar from cane sugar, freeze-dried banana powder and maize starch. This gives it a carb-to-protein ratio of approximately 3:1. While the protein may be on the lower side compared to other brands it could be boosted by mixing with milk rather than water. The product also includes a beneficial dose of electrolytes, with a total of 250mg of sodium per serving from pink Himalayan salt and coconut water powder. The inclusion of natural adaptogen maca root is a unique feature. Made from 100 per cent natural ingredients.



**Energy supplements**

**Veloforte Attivo Electrolyte Powder with Caffeine**

(£6.59 for 3 sachets, veloforte.com)  
An excellent, natural electrolyte powder for rehydration and performance, each serving provides 75mg caffeine (from guarana), 275mg sodium and 175mg potassium, along with 22g carbohydrates from cane sugar and coconut-water powder. Great tasting and all-natural ingredients.



**Puresport Ultra Magnesium**

(£25, puresport.co)  
This product provides 225mg of elemental magnesium from a blend of citrate, bisglycinate and taurate. The addition of beetroot powder provides a source of dietary nitrates which may enhance performance. The product also contains vitamin D3. There's a recommended dose of three capsules per day, ideally one hour before exercise, to support performance.



**Energy gels + chews**

**Healthspan Elite Energy Gel**

(£39.99 for 24, healthspanelite.co.uk)  
This is a well-formulated energy gel that provides 25g of carbohydrates, from a 2:1 maltodextrin-to-fructose blend. It contains 65mg of sodium, along with potassium and calcium, to replace lost electrolytes. The gel has a light, smooth consistency, is made with natural fruit extracts, does not require water and is easy to swallow.



**Veloforte Mela Energy Chews**

(£8.25 for 3 packs, veloforte.com)  
A great option if you prefer natural, real-food fuel over gels, these are made from concentrated fruit juices and beet sugar, providing up to 7.3g of carbohydrates per chew. Soft and easy to digest, they also contain 98mg of sodium and 50mg of potassium per pack, with natural electrolytes like Himalayan salt and coconut-water powder. The chews are formulated with both glucose and fructose.



**Electrolytes**

**Puresport Ultra Electrolytes**

(£33, puresport.co)  
This is a high-sodium, zero-carb electrolyte for heavy sweat losses, endurance training and hot or humid conditions. It contains 1,000mg of sodium per serving, and is optimal for those with very high sweat sodium concentrations. The formula is Informed Sport certified, uses stevia as a natural sweetener and has clean refreshing flavours.



**Healthspan Activ Hydrate**

(£15.99 for 40, healthspanelite.co.uk)  
Healthspan Activ Hydrate is an effervescent tablet for general hydration and moderate exercise. With 300mg sodium per litre, it is on the lower end of sports performance guidelines but well-suited for shorter sessions, cooler climates or lighter sweaters. Informed Sport certified, its tablet format makes it easy to use. Great flavours and dissolves well.



**Brain-health supplements**

**Healthspan Elite Omega 3 Pure EPA 1g**

(£49.99, healthspanelite.co.uk)  
This high-potency formula contains 1,000mg of EPA and 100mg of DHA, the EPA concentration being beneficial for its anti-inflammatory properties and potential to reduce muscle fatigue and soreness. The highly purified fish oil concentrate is an Informed Sport tested, so safe for competition. They are large capsules, though, which not everyone found easy to swallow.



**Dr. Vegan Brain Fuel**

(£25.99 for pouch of 30, drvegan.com)  
A comprehensive formula with a clinical dose of BacoMind (300mg), shown to improve memory recall and mental energy, plus phosphatidylserine (200mg) for general cognitive function. The supplement also contains B vitamins for neurotransmitter synthesis and energy production, plus biloba and zinc citrate. Turmeric levels are low, and there's no Informed Sport certification.



# STRENGTH



## Meet the nutritionist

Laura Clark is a registered dietitian and nutrition consultant who specialises in making evidence-based nutrition accessible and

practical. With a background in clinical and brand consultancy, she offers expert insights that bridge the gap between science and real-life habits. Passionate about supporting women to feel strong and confident, Laura focuses on the dynamic relationship between food, mindset and environment. Visit [lecnutrition.co.uk](http://lecnutrition.co.uk)



## Protein bars

### ESN Designer Protein Bar

(£25.99 for 12, [uk.esn.com](http://uk.esn.com))

ESN's bars scored highly for their soft texture and enjoyable flavours [there are 13 to choose from such as Cookie Dough, Peanut Caramel and Strawberry Yogurt], with Pistachio White Chocolate being a particular favourite! With 14g protein and low sugar, they support satiety and recovery well. The fibre content is lower than some rivals, but overall, these bars balanced taste and function effectively.



### Veloforte Mixed High Protein Crunch Bars

(£9.89 for 3, [veloforte.com](http://veloforte.com))

Veloforte's new Crunch Bars came out on top, with a natural taste and crunchy texture that set them apart from the dense style of many protein bars. With good protein content [20g, plus 5g collagen], no artificial aftertaste and a broad flavour appeal, these were enjoyable to eat and a clear favourite overall.

## Vegan Protein bars

### Healthspan Elite All Blacks Plant-Based HiLo Protein Bar

(£32.99 for 12, [healthspanelite.co.uk](http://healthspanelite.co.uk))

HiLo bars excel nutritionally with 20g protein, high fibre and very low sugar, supporting energy and satiety. While the Chocolate & Salted Caramel flavour felt a little chewy for some testers, others valued its satisfying nature. Despite this, they remain a strong option for those prioritising the nutritional profile alongside convenience.



### ESN Vegan Designer Protein Bar in Fudge Brownie Flavour

(£22.99, [uk.esn.com](http://uk.esn.com))

ESN's vegan bar offers a rich chocolatey flavour and a solid protein boost, making it a convenient snack for recovery. While slightly sweet and dense for some palates, it delivers dependable nutrition in an indulgent style. A good option if you enjoy dessert-like flavours in your protein bar.





**Protein shakes**

**ESN Designer Whey Protein**

(£34.99 for 908g tub, uk.esn.com)

ESN Designer Whey offers 23g protein per serving with very low sugar, giving it one of the strongest nutritional profiles tested. The mixability was smooth, and flavours like Pistachio were especially popular [there are 11 other flavours to choose from]. It delivers excellent protein density while maintaining enjoyable taste, making it both functional and appealing.



**WINNER**  
Women's Fitness UK  
Nutrition Awards  
2025

**Pre-workouts**

**ESN Pump Booster  
Crank Pump Pro**

(£33.99, uk.esn.com)

This pre-workout impressed with its smooth mixability and a fruity flavour. It combines ingredients aimed at boosting energy and blood flow, with a balanced caffeine content compared to rivals. Testers felt a tangible lift in workouts without overwhelming side effects. Label clarity could be better, but overall, this is the strongest option on test.

**WINNER**  
Women's Fitness UK  
Nutrition Awards  
2025



**Isopure Whey Protein Isolate in Chocolate**

(£30 for 480g tub, Holland and Barrett)

Isopure Whey Isolate delivered an exceptionally lean profile, with 25g protein, almost no carbs or fat, and only 100 calories per serving. The chocolate flavour was smooth and balanced, but not as distinctive or versatile as other powders tested. This is a clean [only six ingredients] and dependable option, even though less exciting in taste.



**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**  
Women's Fitness UK  
Nutrition Awards  
2025

**MOVE Pre-Workout Original Formula in Evergreen Lime**

(£24.99, movepreworkout.com)

MOVE's sachet format is convenient and the powder mixes well, offering a bold lime flavour. At 228mg caffeine, it delivers a strong energy hit, which some testers found motivating but others felt was too much. It's a powerful option for high-intensity sessions, but not suited to everyone.



**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**  
Women's Fitness UK  
Nutrition Awards  
2025

## Vegan Protein Shakes

### Healthspan Elite All Blacks Plant Protein Vegan Blend in Vanilla

(£38.49 for 750g, [healthspanelite.co.uk](http://healthspanelite.co.uk))

Healthspan's Plant Protein mixed smoothly without clumping and was light on the stomach, avoiding bloating. The vanilla flavour was natural and not overly sweet, with protein coming from three plant-based sources [pea, pumpkin and brown rice]. At 20 g protein per serving, it offered excellent balance and digestibility, scoring highly across both nutritional profiles and enjoyment.



### Veloforte Troppo Protein Shake

(£9.89 for 3 sachets, [veloforte.com](http://veloforte.com))

Veloforte Troppo impressed with its smooth mixability and refreshing, more savoury-leaning, flavour profile. Each serving provides 20g protein, making it a strong recovery option. The unusual combination of mango, coconut and lemongrass surprised testers positively, though some still preferred chocolate-based shakes. A high-quality, well-formulated vegan option.



## Creatine

### Healthspan Elite All Blacks Creatine Monohydrate

(£43.99 for 500g, [healthspanelite.co.uk](http://healthspanelite.co.uk))

Healthspan's creatine was easy to dissolve, tasteless and left no residue, making daily use straightforward. While less convenient for travel, it offers reliable dosing and Creapure certification for assured purity. It is slightly more expensive than the ESN Ultrapure Creatine Powder (£28.99), but is a trusted and effective option backed by strong quality assurance.



### ESN Ultrapure Creatine Capsules

(£33.99 for 300, [uk.esn.com](http://uk.esn.com))

ESN's capsule format makes creatine supplementation simple and mess-free. While swallowing three large capsules per day was initially a challenge, the format avoids any mixing or taste issues. They're slightly pricier than some powders, but still cost-effective compared with some sachets. These are a convenient alternative for those who dislike powders. 🍷



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# FIT HEALTH

**p66**

The latest ways to keep your body in optimum health

**p68**

5 ways to make recovery days more effective

**p72**

We discover the health benefits of Peto Pilates

Want more health recommendations? Head to [womensfitness.co.uk](http://womensfitness.co.uk) and also follow us at [instagram.com/womensfitnessuk](https://www.instagram.com/womensfitnessuk)



# Health NOTEBOOK

Keep the doctor away with news of the latest products, services and advice to help you stay fighting fit

FEMCARE FOCUS

## A.Vogel Cystorelief (£5.49, avogel.co.uk)

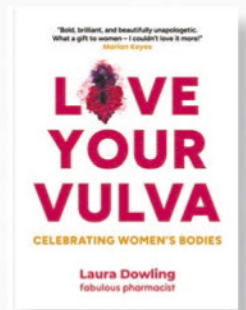
This dual-action herbal remedy combines the astringent and antiseptic properties of uva-ursi (also known as 'bearberry'), with the immune support offered from fresh echinacea purpurea, to help reduce the duration and recurrence of cystitis.



## Walk to good health

Got back pain? While it might sound counterintuitive, walking every day could be the most effective way to prevent aches - and it's the length, not speed, of your stroll that matters most. That's according to a large study of over 11,000 people published in the *JAMA Network Open* journal, which found that those who walked for more than 100 minutes daily had a 23 per cent lower risk of back problems than those who clocked 78 minutes or less. Given that back pain is a very common problem - data shows that approximately 80 per cent of the UK population will experience lower back pain at some point in their lives - this could be a cost-saving solution for healthcare systems.

# Book Shelf



*Love your vulva  
(Independent  
Publishing  
Network, £19.99)*

This book from women's health advocate and pharmacist, Laura Dowling, is packed with straight-talking, science-backed advice on everything from breast health and menopause, to pelvic health and sexual wellbeing. Tackling the topics others shy away from, Laura helps women everywhere better understand their own bodies.

## Shower saviour



What's in your water? It's may be something you've thought about when it comes to the water you put into your body, but have you considered the effects of the water you put *onto* your body? Enter the new **Water2 Filtered Showerhead** (£99, [water2.com](http://water2.com)) which removes up to 90 per cent of chlorine, filtering microplastics and THMs (trihalomethanes), while boosting water pressure and helping prevent limescale build-up. Designed to combat hidden impurities, it uses an activated carbon system to filter water before it even touches your skin and hair. Great for helping reduce skin or scalp irritation.

**11.5 MILLION PEOPLE ARE NOW MEMBERS OF A HEALTH OR FITNESS CLUB IN THE UK\***

*\*UK Health & Fitness Market Report 2025*

## Own your health

If you're considering getting a health check, here are some of the latest options

### FibroScan at The Liver Clinic

(£299, [theliverclinic.com](http://theliverclinic.com))  
This liver scan uses transient elastography to measure the speed of sound waves through the liver, helping detect fat and scarring levels to support early detection of fatty liver disease.



### U-Test Iron Deficiency

(£2.99, Home Bargains)  
Sold in Home Bargains stores across the UK, this five-minute, self-testing kit enables users to track their iron levels from the comfort of their home. Other tests include Bowel Health, Vitamin D Deficiency and the Vaginal PH BV Thrust test.



### Bodyset's Women Health Assessment

(Free 1-2-1, then from £80; [bodyset.co.uk](http://bodyset.co.uk))  
Take the first step towards a life without pelvic health issues, such as leaks and pain, by booking in for a free consultation with this physiotherapy clinic. There are over 42 clinics across London and the south of England.



**5**  
WAYS  
TO...  
**BOOST  
YOUR  
RECOVERY**

How you eat and move after you work out can help muscles repair faster. Here's what to do to maximise your recovery





## 1. Nourish with protein

1. Recovery isn't about doing nothing, it's about giving your body what it needs to repair and adapt. Protein is essential for rebuilding muscle fibres, and research suggests aiming for around 20-25g at each meal. Prioritise whole food sources such as eggs, chicken, fish, beans or lentils, which also supply valuable vitamins and minerals. That said, protein shakes can be useful on busy training days or if your needs are particularly high. Distributing protein evenly across the day, ideally alongside complex carbohydrates such as brown rice or quinoa, helps muscles repair and replenish glycogen so you're ready for your next session.

## 2. Embrace active recovery

2. A recovery day doesn't have to mean heading for the sofa. Low-intensity activities such as yoga, Pilates, walking or gentle swimming can ease muscle stiffness by encouraging blood flow and delivering nutrients to recovering tissues. This kind of movement also helps with mobility, posture and flexibility, which are areas that often get overlooked when training is intense. Active recovery supports circulation and can reduce the risk of feeling heavy-legged or sluggish when you return to structured workouts. Keep it light, enjoyable and mindful, as it's about balance rather than exertion.



## 3. Control the inflammation

3. Inflammation is a normal part of recovery, but the foods you eat can influence how well your body manages it. A diet rich in colourful fruit and vegetables, nuts, seeds, extra-virgin olive oil and oily fish provides antioxidants and omega-3s that support muscle repair and immune function. Research shows omega-3s, in particular, may help reduce exercise-related soreness. Spices such as turmeric and ginger are also being studied, though most evidence comes from concentrated supplements such as Healthspan Opti-Turmeric (£13.99 for 30 capsules, healthspan.co.uk), which is 185 times better absorbed and seven times faster acting than standard powdered turmeric. Think of these foods as giving your body the best tools for recovery rather than a quick fix for soreness.

## 4. Plan your meals

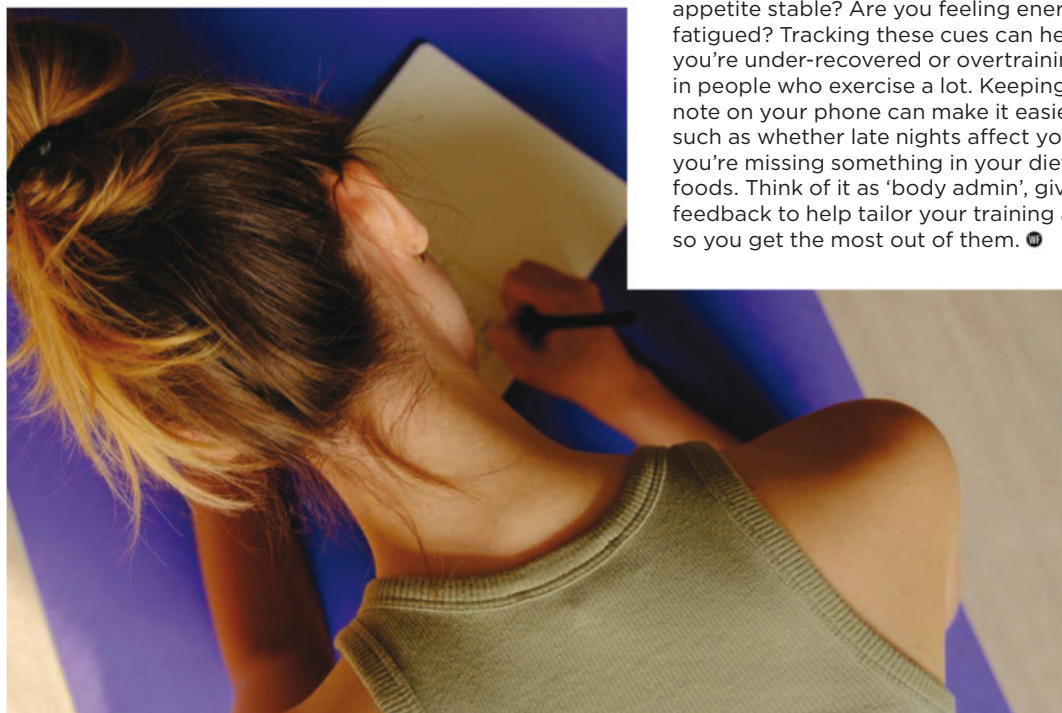
Recovery days provide the perfect opportunity to get organised with your food. Batch-cooking a protein-rich stew, chopping vegetables or preparing overnight oats can save you time and help you stay on track during busier training days. Prepping in advance also reduces the temptation to grab ultra-processed convenience foods when you're tired or short on time. This isn't about perfection but setting yourself up for success. Even something as simple as cooking a tray of roasted vegetables and a batch of quinoa can provide the building blocks for several nutrient-packed meals that support both recovery and long-term health.

*'Inflammation is a normal part of recovery, but the foods you eat can influence how well your body manages it'*



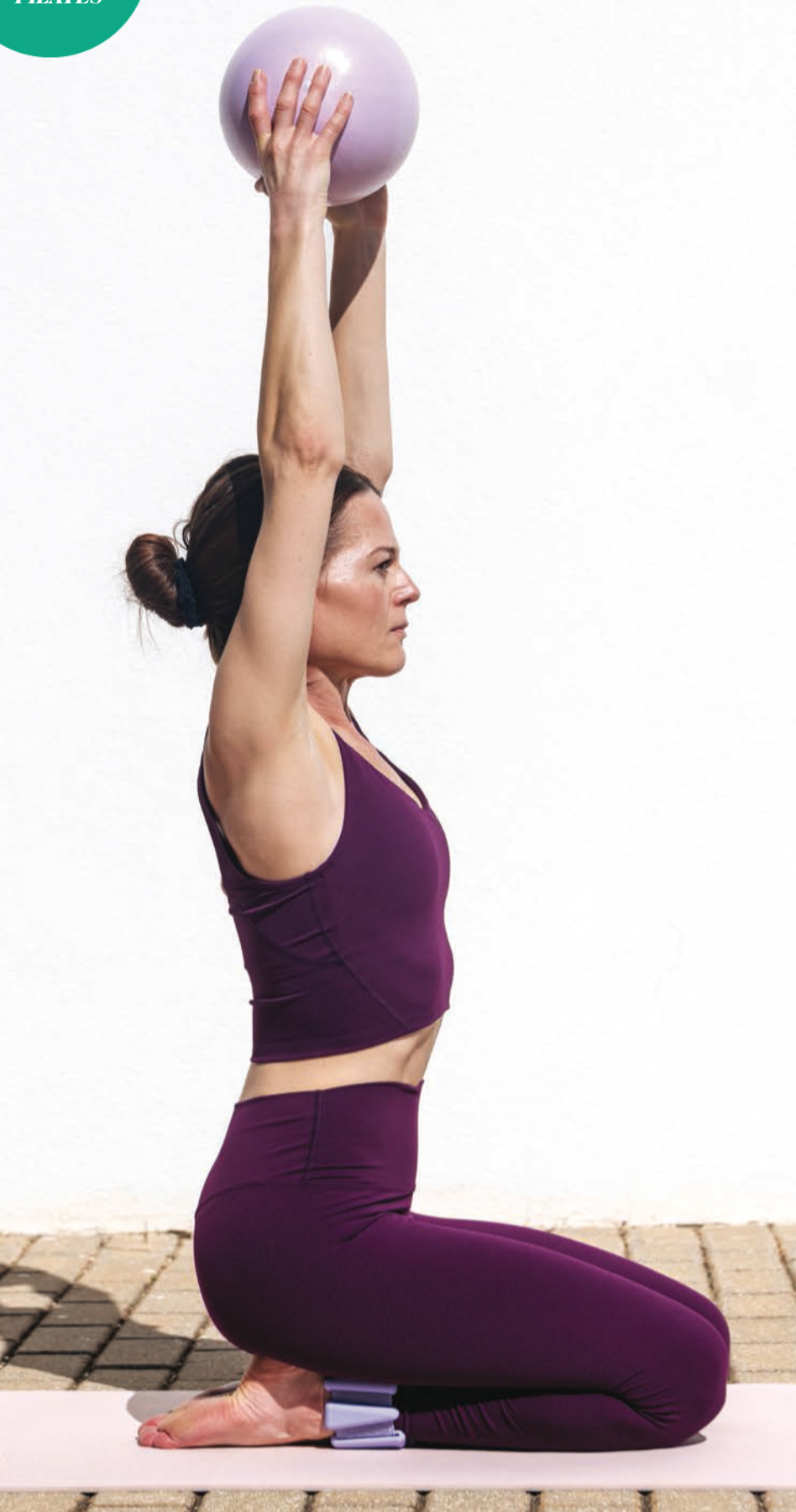
## 5. Check in with your body

Rest days are ideal for paying closer attention to how your body feels. Are you sleeping well? Is your appetite stable? Are you feeling energised or unusually fatigued? Tracking these cues can help you spot when you're under-recovered or overtraining, which is common in people who exercise a lot. Keeping a simple journal or a note on your phone can make it easier to notice patterns, such as whether late nights affect your workouts or if you're missing something in your diet such as iron-rich foods. Think of it as 'body admin', giving you valuable feedback to help tailor your training and lifestyle choices so you get the most out of them. 📝



Rob Hobson is a registered sports nutritionist and the author of cookbook *Unprocess Your Family Life* (Thorsons, £19).





# Pilates FOR HEALTH

More than a trending activity that improves core strength, Pilates goes beyond the mat to help with the management of certain health conditions

If 2025 was an activity it would be Pilates. A quick search of the WF inbox reveals that we've received nearly 900 emails relating to Pilates since December 30, 2024 - new studios, new apparel lines, and new insight into the benefits of this 'moving meditation'. Indeed, one piece of data from confused.com reveals that one-in-10 people think that Pilates has a positive effect on their wellbeing. But if you delve deeper into the health benefits of Pilates, it quickly becomes apparent that the focus on body awareness and balance can help support many chronic conditions, including multiple

Small achievable steps help build mobility



# 5 PETO MOVES FOR MOBILITY

## 1. CHAIR STANDS AND SITS

Improves leg strength and balance

- Sit in a sturdy chair with feet flat on the floor.
- Stand up, using your leg muscles as much as possible and aligning your position.
- Sit back down with control, pushing your hips back.

## 2. SEATED ROW

Strengthens back and improves posture.

- Sit tall with feet flat. Hold a resistance band with both hands, arms extended in front.
- Pull the band towards your chest, squeezing your shoulder blades together.
- Slowly release. Rep 3-8 times.

## 3. SEATED LEG EXTENSIONS

Strengthen the quadriceps.

- Sit tall with feet flat and hip-width apart. You may bring yourself forward slightly on the chair.
- Extend one leg out straight, keeping your knee straight. Hold briefly, then slowly lower.
- Repeat on the other leg.

## 4. HEEL RISES

Improves circulation and reduces swelling

- Sit or lie down. Point your toes away from you, then flex them towards you.
- Repeat several times.

## 5. HAND SQUEEZES

Maintains hand strength and dexterity

- Use a stress ball or, if not available, a rolled-up sock.
- Squeeze and release repeatedly.

### Meet the expert

**Noemi Nagy-Bhavsar** graduated from the International Peto Institute. She trained with APPI (Australian Physiotherapy Pilates



Institute) and became a physio-based Pilates teacher. She founded Beyond Move, which offers expertly-led Pilates, Yoga and Barre classes. Peto Pilates is designed to enhance the lives of those with neurological conditions and movement disorders. Visit [beyondmove.com](http://beyondmove.com) and [instagram.com/beyond\\_move](https://www.instagram.com/beyond_move)

Classes are adapted to client group needs



sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, ataxia, stroke and cerebral palsy.

Enter Peto Pilates. This method was designed for those with movement difficulties and neurological conditions such as these. It also benefits those with mobility issues, from injuries, spinal surgeries or joint problems, to women's health concerns, knee-and hip-replacement rehabilitation, osteoporosis, scoliosis and hypermobility. Peto Pilates acts like a bridge between general Pilates and other individual rehabilitation approaches such as physiotherapy, offering a holistic focus for both the body and mind.

### WHAT IS PETO PILATES?

By practising small, achievable steps, and focusing on improving balance, mobility and confidence, Peto Pilates helps people to support or overcome their issues. 'It's more than just exercise,' says Noemi Nagy-Bhavsar, Peto Pilates instructor and founder of studio Beyond Move ([beyondmove.com](http://beyondmove.com)), 'It involves building trust and adapting moves to individual needs, with a deep understanding of neurological conditions. Classes are

designed to be inclusive, ranging from one-on-one sessions to specific condition-focused groups, with the aim of integrating clients into group settings for social motivation.'

### WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

A feel-good activity, Peto Pilates focuses on a positive mindset ('I can' instead of 'I can't'), as well as precise alignment for better quality movement that aids the brain's ability to create new pathways. 'Exercises may incorporate mobility tasks or multitasking, even addressing issues like speech and fine manipulation that can be affected by neurological

conditions,' adds Noemi.

'The teaching approach varies based on the condition. For example, a slower, gentler tone for MS, stroke or anxious clients, versus a faster, louder tone and rhythmic aids for those with Parkinson's to encourage initiation of movement.' The benefits are big, and Noemi reports people seeing improvements in activities like getting in and out of bed or dressing, enhancing independence and quality of life. This just goes to show that movement really can be medicine. 🎯

*'Peto Pilates acts like a bridge – offering a holistic focus for both body and mind'*

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Kit reviews \* Fitness equipment

# FIT KIT

**p78**

We test out the latest smartwatches

**p82**

Discover Flexera's Home Reformer

Want more kit recommendations? Head to [womensfitness.co.uk](http://womensfitness.co.uk) and also follow us at [instagram.com/womensfitnessuk](https://www.instagram.com/womensfitnessuk)



# EVERY



# SECOND COUNTS

Sports watches just got smarter! As well as track exercise, measure health metrics and sync with phone apps, they now boast longer-reach connectivity, better battery life, new sleep insights and more



## Garmin Fenix 8 Pro

£1,029.99; [garmin.com](https://garmin.com)

**What the brand says:** Designed for pursuits that make it impractical to carry a phone, the Garmin Fenix 8 Pro series are the first GPS smartwatches to feature inReach technology for cellular and satellite connectivity - letting athletes leave their phone behind while staying in touch when both on and off grid. It's loaded with Garmin's full suite of performance, navigation, health, wellness and connected features, including endurance score, hill score, daily suggested workouts, preloaded TopoActive Maps, the Garmin ECG App, sleep coach, Garmin Pay, tracking features and more.

**What we say:** If you're like us, you want to spend your time running on the roads and trails, and not at home charging or syncing your sports watch. With the Garmin Fenix 8 Pro, set-up couldn't be simpler - you just log on to Garmin Connect and let it sync with the watch - and the battery life is beyond fantastic. Indeed, we haven't had to charge it yet, two weeks (and many, many miles) into using the device.

The display of this watch is huge, and it can be personalised with whatever metrics or stats you want to view. From distance to pace, or whatever information you choose to display on your wrist, the digits are so large, crisp and easy-to-read that a quick glance mid-effort is all that's required. This is what makes an AMOLED display so worth having - the colours are vibrant, and you can decipher your splits easily, no matter how hard your session or how weary your brain. You can even view it under water when using Pool Swimming or Open Water Swimming (or Scuba Diving, Apnea Diving, Depth App, Snorkelling, Whitewater, Surfing, and many more watersport functions).

It is slightly weightier than other Garmins we've tried, so you might want to consider a different model for a shorter-distance race, but the awesome map functions, including Garmin Trails, Outdoor Maps+ with a subscription, and TopoActive maps from around world, mean you wouldn't give its place on your wrist a second thought if you're someone who's partial to an ultra-marathon, trail, mountain or other exploratory run.

We know you're thinking it's a hefty investment, but what you get for your money (beyond Garmin's full suite of features like Garmin Pay, ECG app, Garmin Coach and so many more that we can't fit them in this review) is the fantastic inReach technology that uses an LTE connection, so you can leave your phone behind while still benefitting from the safety and security of having full connectivity. In our opinion, this is what sets it apart from other smartwatches boasting fitness tracking, health metrics, mapping and AMOLED displays. It really is super smart!

### AT A GLANCE

Features inReach technology for phone-less connectivity

Rugged design with up to 15 days of battery life

The full suite of Garmin training and performance features

*'Having the ability  
to take an ECG  
reading helps  
rebuild confidence  
in your health'*

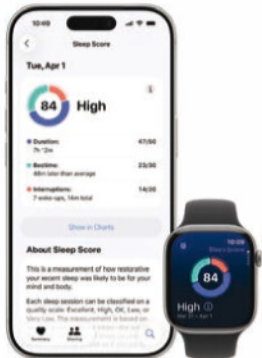


## Apple Watch Series 11

From £369; [apple.com](https://apple.com)

**What the brand says:** The Series 11 offers the most comprehensive set of health features yet, up to 24 hours of battery life, 5G cellular capabilities for faster performance on the go and a durable display that's 2x more scratch resistant than the Series 10, all in its thinnest and most comfortable design. The ultimate health and fitness companion, it now empowers users with pioneering notifications for signs of chronic high blood pressure, plus new insights into sleep quality with sleep score.

**What we say:** Having tested several Apple Watch iterations, I've always been impressed by the user-friendly navigation, lifestyle and media features, sleek design and health insights relating to heart health, cycle tracking, hearing and mental health – not to mention the outstanding fitness features. However, as a woman in the throes of perimenopause – who has experienced a host of related symptoms from costochondritis (chest wall inflammation, that results in regular chest pains) to BPPV (a form of vertigo that can easily be confused with hypertension), plus breathlessness, poor sleep and increased anxiety – I'm only just beginning to appreciate the incredible peace of mind that wearing the Series 11 affords, especially when you add the new Sleep Score and Hypertension updates into the equation. It can sometimes be hard to believe that the symptoms you're experiencing are down to perimenopause and not hypertension or heart health issues, but having the ability to take an ECG reading with a few swipes of your finger and continually monitor high blood pressure – coupled with valuable health insights from the Vitals app – helps rebuild confidence in your health. You can also present your GP with data for further exploration when you think it's needed (I've been telling GPs I've been suffering with sleep apnoea since my teenage years, and they're only just beginning to take me seriously due to the Sleep Apnoea readings from my Apple Watch). Moreover, the longer battery life, tougher display and thinner design make the Series 11 more convenient and comfortable than ever to wear throughout the day and night. 📱



### AT A GLANCE

Spots signs of chronic high blood pressure

Get a better quality of sleep with Sleep Score

Up to 24 hours of battery life with normal use

## BEST OF THE REST

### Huawei GT6 Pro

(£329.99, *consumer.huawei.com*) is made for outdoor adventures, with GPS and heart-rate tracking, pro-level sports modes including cycle and virtual cycle tracking, and up to 21 days of battery life.



### Tag Heuer Connected Calibre E5

(£1,450, *tagheuer.com*) is a 'timing instrument' that supports your physical pursuits, with its Wellness Activity app that tracks steps, heart rate, calories and more, plus running plans that work with its GPS tracking for structured training.



### Polar Loop

(£149.50, *polar.com*) is the brand's first screen- and subscription-free wearable, that tracks activity, sleep and health quietly in the background. When training, choose to start a workout in the Polar Flow app or let the automatic training detection record it.



### Samsung Watch8 Classic

(£408, *samsung.com*) tests antioxidant, blood pressure, skin temperature and blood oxygen levels, body composition and sleep score, with personalised sleep coaching, plus an AI running coach and auto workout function.



# Skip THE STUDIO

Like the idea of reformer Pilates but don't have a studio nearby? With Flexera's Home Reformer you can practise from your lounge!

## THE FLEXERA REFORMER

£2,399, [joinflexera.com](https://joinflexera.com)

If you've scrolled social media lately, you'll have noticed Pilates is having a moment. The method, devised by German trainer Joseph Pilates, has been around for decades but it's currently booming – and only getting bigger. The global Pilates Reformer market is expected to grow from \$743.4 million in 2024 to \$1.2 billion by 2032.

But while boutique studios are thriving, it's not always easy to attend a class. Scarce slots sell out quickly, and not everyone can afford them or fit pricey sessions into their schedule, let alone commit to attending every single week. Consistency, after all, is key.

That's where Flexera ([joinflexera.com](https://joinflexera.com)) comes in. Launched late last year, this foldable reformer is designed for home use and, thanks to a new rental programme, you don't need to drop thousands to join the trend. It's on wheels for easy manoeuvring and comes with its own training platform, so you don't have to second-guess the moves or design your own workout plan.

The *Women's Fitness* team put the Flexera Reformer to the test. Here's what happened when we brought the studio into our living room.

### At a glance

Considering it's made for the home, Flexera's reformer is anything but flimsy. With a sleek oak frame and upholstery in ivory, mocha or sage, it looks more like stylish furniture than gym kit. Better still, it folds neatly away after your session and wheels away – ideal if you don't have a dedicated workout space. To fold it, simply release the cords and slide the carriage all the way to the top of the frame. Then, lift the foot bar and the two black poles, and lift the frame to allow the hinge to bend the reformer in half; much simpler than expected, though at 78kg it's still a two-person job to move around comfortably.

When it comes to performance, the smooth-glide carriage and adjustable spring resistance made it feel every bit as satisfying as a studio machine. The machine featured six springs (two heavy, two medium, two light) with two gear levels and soft-touch ropes, meaning that not only does the machine let you comfortably and easily adjust your settings, but it was also quieter than expected. Whether you're a beginner testing the waters, or experienced in Pilates and looking to consolidate or improve your flow, the overall build felt sturdy, luxurious and solid – just like a studio reformer, only in the comfort of your own home.

### Rent or buy?

With Flexera, you can do both, but let's be real, reformers aren't cheap. Retailing at £2,399, Flexera is still an investment if you're buying outright, but you do have the choice to pay in instalments of £1,000 or £500. The new rental programme also changes the 'Pilates at home' game. For a monthly fee of £200, you can have the reformer delivered to your home, without the financial sting of ownership or space-invading commitment.

For busy working women, time-poor mums or those trying to rehab after an injury, that's a genuine win. It's Pilates on your terms: no commute, no timetable clashes, just unfold the reformer and go. If you're renting it and get fed up with having it in your lounge? No problem. Call the helpline, and it can be gone as soon as you need it to be.





# At-home Pilates Apparel



## BetterMe Pilates Grip Socks

(£36, store. [betterme.world](http://betterme.world))

Wherever you're practising Pilates, at home or in a studio, you'll need a good pair of grippy socks and we love this stylish pair from BetterMe. Perfect for Pilates, yoga or barre, they come in a range of colours and have a pretty criss-cross ribbon pattern around the tops of the feet.



## H&M Move SoftMove Sports Leggings

(£27.99; [hm.com](http://hm.com))

Designed with a buttery-soft fabric that moves with you, these sports leggings offer gentle contouring and extra support where it matters most, especially around the tummy, thanks to the high waist and wide waistband panel. The result is a luxurious balance of performance and comfort that flatters every shape. There are 16 colours to choose from, but we love the new Light Purple shade, as well as the Aubergine Purple colour option.



## Oner Active Mellow Rib Halter Neck Vest

(£46; [uk.oneractive.com](http://uk.oneractive.com))

Oner Active is one of our go-to brands for comfortable and supportive workout gear, and this vest is no exception. Made from an ultra-stretchy ribbed fabric with built-in support, it's designed to move with you through every roll-down and sliding lunge. The halterneck cut feels fresh and flattering too - we love how it shows off the shoulders and adds a touch of style to your at-home Pilates look. 🍷

### Fitting into life

Reformer Pilates isn't just about toned abs and long lines. The workout is loved for its ability to strengthen and sculpt while staying gentle on your joints. Having a reformer at home means you can weave Pilates into your week however it works for you, whether that's a quick 20-minute session before the school run or a full-on lunch-hour blitz.

Pair it with the Flexera Studio Class programme and you'll never run out of inspiration. While you won't get the hands-on adjustments of an in-person session, you can choose a 'Strong Core and Glutes' class with instructor Aisling. Alternatively, like us, you could take part in the 14-Day Sculpt, which was a commitment of four 30- to 40-minute classes a week that went through full-body moves, as well as a flexibility and recovery class that helped you recover and feel '10cm taller'. For each class, you can choose your level (Beginner, Intermediate or Advanced) as well as the length of the class (0-15, 15-30 or 30-60 minutes) and the body part that you'd like to work. It's your reformer, in your space and your choice, which can only mean three things: consistency, confidence and freedom.

### Our verdict

Flexera's foldable reformer is stylish, sturdy and practical - everything you want from a piece of home-fitness equipment. And with its new rental programme, it makes one of the most in-demand workouts finally feel accessible, no matter your postcode.

Once set up, our tester found it surprisingly similar in feel to the machines she was used to in class.

The springs were satisfyingly weighty, adding a reassuring resistance to each move. That said, even with some in-person reformer experience, it was easy to question whether we were performing exercises with perfect form. The app-based instructor gave very clear guidelines, but there's nothing quite like a real-life teacher by your side.

Over the weeks, though, our tester's confidence grew. And as she glute-bridged and leg-circled her way through the workouts, she even experienced the infamous Pilates shake - a sure sign that the right muscles were firing. She was lucky enough to have a home gym where she could leave the reformer set up, and she vowed to use it at least twice a week - which she did.

The classes were great - especially the Runner Recovery session with Amy, which included footwork, hip openers, spine stretches, and hamstring stretches using the carriage and foot straps. Having the machine set up under the TV meant our tester could stream the classes on the screen, although watching on a phone or tablet would work just as well.

### Will she continue to use it?

Absolutely. But she says it's best suited to women who truly love home workouts and would happily choose them over in-studio classes. Flexera is a clever, confidence-boosting way to bring reformer Pilates home. It's sturdy, it looks great, and it fits seamlessly into a home gym. And if our tester decides she doesn't want it taking up space? She'll just fold it away until she's ready to roll again.

The Folding Reformer starts from £2,000 from [joinflexera.com](http://joinflexera.com). The Folding Reformer with accessories and a year app access costs £2,399. Rental is £200 per month for six months minimum. Studio Reformers from £2,750. Delivery time is estimated at four weeks, and there's a premium two-man delivery and assembly included in the cost to Ireland and UK. Europe and UAE delivery also available.

Photography: Shutterstock. \*Articles are subject to change



# COMING UP IN THE DECEMBER ISSUE...

- How to exercise safely over winter
  - Can AI help you get fitter?
  - Ways to eat well on a busy schedule
  - What you need to know about creatine
  - *WF's* gift guide for every budget
- ...plus lots more!\*

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# FIT MIND



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The latest ways to be happy and healthy

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Stay fit while you fast with Dr Jack Mosley

**p92**

Breathwork for mind, body and soul

**p98**

'Wheelchair racing changed my life'

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# Wellbeing Wonders

WF writer Eve Boggenpoel draws on her background in holistic health, yoga and meditation to bring you her pick of the best ways to feel healthier, happier and more yourself each month



## Feel-good indulgence

Just looking at this Luxury Advent Calendar from L'Occitane (£149, worth £276.50, [uk.loccitane.com](http://uk.loccitane.com)) lifts our spirits! Beautifully illustrated with a hint to the soft golden light that adorns the houses of Provence, it's filled with 24 of the company's most-loved products across skincare, hand care, body & shower and fragrance. Highlights include the Immortelle Cleansing Oil, Divine Cream and Reset Oil; Almond Supple Skin Oil; Neroli Orchid Body Lotion and Cherry Blossom Eau de Toilette, with sizes ranging from 7ml to 75ml. We've written our Christmas list early in the hope that someone gets the hint!

## Supplement spotlight

### By gum

Grab a slice of serenity with Manifesto Serene gummies (from £35, [cultbeauty.co.uk](http://cultbeauty.co.uk)) to soothe stress, boost sleep, regulate hormones and enhance emotional wellbeing. Packed with calming ingredients including ashwagandha KSM-66, vegan vitamin D3 (from Icelandic lichen), lemon balm, chamomile and jujube seed extract, plus vitamins B6 and B12, they come in a cute keepsake tin – a perfect reminder to take your daily dose.

## Root refresh

Keep post-gym hair fresh 'til you have time to wash it, with Gem & Tonic Revive & Refresh Hair & scalp Mist (£19, [gemandtonicshop.com](http://gemandtonicshop.com)). Unlike traditional dry shampoos, this mist leaves no build-up, just soft, lifted, refreshed hair. Powered by moonstone for shine and tapioca starch to absorb oil, it soothes the scalp and brings your roots back to life – fast. Perfect for lunchtime fitness sessions, you can spend more time exercising – less in the shower – and get back to the office looking fresh as a daisy.



Photography: Various brands



**Fancy a cuppa?**

If you've always been curious about cupping but were afraid to take the plunge, try this gentle introduction to the technique to boost blood flow, ease tight muscles and reduce inflammation. NAYDAYA's silicone Leg Sculpting Cup (£12, [naydaya.com](http://naydaya.com)) harnesses clinically proven massage techniques to create a vacuum between your skin and the cup, releasing lymph fluid and toxins from around fat cells, and improving skin texture. While designed for the legs and bottom, you can use it anywhere on the body to support lymphatic drainage and improve skin tone. Pair with NAYDAYA Body Blitz Oil (£39) for super hydration and menopausal skin repair.



**Walking on air**

Sometimes, negotiating traffic or public transport after a massage treatment undoes all its benefits. That's where the Synca Rei Ottoman Massager (£899.99, [decathlon.co.uk](http://decathlon.co.uk)) comes in. Suitable for daily use, it's designed to be a foot rest when not in use and is ideal for active folk, particularly runners. The foot, calf and lower-back massages are based on Japanese shiatsu and gua sha reflexology to soothe workout-weary feet, relieve overworked calves and ease tension in the lumbar spine. With three intensity settings and three programmes (comfort, relax, energise) plus a heat setting, you simply place your feet inside the 'leg compartments', while shiatsu rollers work deeply into the soles of your feet, air compression massages your calves and the detachable lid offers an invigorating back massage powered by Bluetooth. We found the medium setting plenty strong enough to work deeply into aching muscles, while rollers either side of the Achilles tendons hold your feet firmly in place so you get maximum pressure underfoot. Surprisingly effective, we became so relaxed we found the upper body gently swaying from side to side as the treatment progressed. And the best bit? The results last long after the treatment - days later, the soles of our feet feel still felt wider, more flexible and mobile, and we felt calm and grounded. ☺

**Good hair days**

We love the new CURATED Clip-in Fillers from Hadley Yates (£69, [curatedhairextensions.com](http://curatedhairextensions.com)). Whether you're experiencing hormone-related hair loss at your temples or just want to upgrade your look for a special occasion, these ethically sourced real-hair extensions don't just add volume but confidence, too. Available in 12 natural-looking shades from Jet Black to The Clean Blond, the pack includes 2 x 30cm clip-ins you can trim to suite your desired style. We gave them a whirl and were seriously impressed.



**Blue for you**

Get into a Blue Mind state without stepping outside your door with Spa Ceylon's Sea Veda range (from £15, [spaceylon.co.uk](http://spaceylon.co.uk) and [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)). Created using Marine Therapy Technology - natural compounds found in ocean environments - which helps create a sense of calm, clarity and emotional balance often experienced near large bodies of water. Infused with spearmint, patchouli, tuberose, rose geranium and lavender, the range supports stress reduction, improved mood and emotional balance. Choose from body cleansers, balms, elixirs and sleep mists. Ahhh.....



# GET FIT ON A FAST

Fasting and low-carb diets are renowned for quick weight-loss results, but if you're an active person, could they negatively affect your exercise goals?

Eve Boggenpoel asked **Dr Clare Bailey Mosley** and **Dr Jack Mosley** how you can lose weight without impacting your training

**I**t's almost 18 months since the tragic death of Dr Michael Mosley, and while media reaction at the time reflected the breadth of his professional influence, it was the heartfelt responses of the members of the public that showed how deeply he was loved, appreciated and missed.

*Women's Fitness* last featured Dr Mosley in 2021, when I trialled his Very Fast 800 programme (with exceptional results and delicious recipes that I still use every week), so it was a privilege to interview his wife and son to hear how they are honouring his legacy by continuing his work.

The latest, very timely, plan from The Fast 800 stable, The Fast 800 High Fibre, is a way of eating that supports people who are using GPL-1 weight-loss drugs such as Mounjaro and Ozempic, offering a high-fibre programme to help deal with the drugs' potential side-effects of constipation and muscle loss.

Here we ask Dr Clare Mosley and Dr Jack Mosley how The



Fast 800 diet and fitness programmes can help active readers enhance their weight-loss efforts.

### Should active folk not on weight-loss drugs use the new plan to help preserve muscle mass?

**Dr Jack Mosley (JM):** Not necessarily. The great thing about these plans is that they're very personalised. You fill in an on-boarding questionnaire about your goals - maybe you want to lose weight or eat more nutritious foods - and it will choose which of the 20 meal plans on offer is best for you. You also fill in your current exercise ability so it can choose which of the 450 exercise videos - ranging from resistance bands and kettlebell workouts to bodyweight exercises and high-intensity training - are appropriate to your level and weight-loss goals.

### Many of the plans restrict carbs and calories - both essential for people who exercise a lot. What are the implications of this for training?

**JM:** It's interesting within the exercise space, because you do need a ready source of sugar - typically glycogen stored in the muscles and liver - especially when you're looking at high bursts of intensive exercise, such as sprinting or certain types of weight training. Carbohydrates are a very efficient fuel but it's important to eat complex carbs such as legumes, beans, quinoa and wholemeal pasta. They're slower burning and really good for people doing endurance training. There's also emerging evidence of people going lower carb, or fasting, who are doing long-distance running.

**Dr Clare Bailey Mosley (CM):** There are actually two types of fuel your body uses. Mostly we run on glycogen stored in the muscles and liver. When those stores are low, the body can shift to burning fat and producing ketone bodies, which are another very effective form of fuel. There are all sorts of myths that you need glucose in substantial quantities, but ketones do the same thing and they support your brain as well. A lot of people find going into ketosis is a very effective way of losing weight, and some feel brighter, more alert and their mood is better.

**JM:** What is good about The Fast 800 meal plans is they're not strictly a low-carb approach, not strictly Keto. When you're initially trying to lose weight, especially if you have poor metabolic health or diabetes, going a bit low carb and sticking to more complex carbs is quite beneficial. But if you were doing 12 weeks on The Very Fast 800 meal plans and running marathons, it



There are 450 exercise videos on the Fast 800 plans

*‘Exercise is a great way to maintain weight loss and has lots of benefits for mood, brain and heart health’*



wouldn't be appropriate because you could be burning 3,000 calories on a run. It might be better to do the 5:2 diet or The Way of Life. The Way of Life would definitely be appropriate as the food you're eating would also help fuel your exercise.

**CM:** And you wouldn't want to start doing a high-intensity programme until you're settled into the programme and have lost some weight. That level of exercise puts a lot of stress on your system and it's better to settle in. If you're very fit it wouldn't be such a stress for your body, but the main thing is getting the food choices right.

**Is there a maximum carb level to aim for when eating out or making meals from scratch on The Very Fast 800 plan?**

**CM:** While you're on The Very Fast 800 meal plans, ideally have less than 50g of

carbohydrates – a couple of tablespoons of quinoa, brown rice or wholemeal bread (ideally sourdough with seeds) is fine and not going to make a huge difference. When you've finished the programme, you can relax. Carbs are part of a good diet but it's about moderation. We wouldn't just put a number on it because it's so variable. Some people respond differently to bread, for example, so it's a matter of trying it out and seeing if it works for you. Be curious about it and switch things around because there aren't fixed rules. What we do tend to say is it's about focusing on wholegrains and complex carbs, the slow burn food that doesn't give you that rush.

**JM:** Yes, I think it's definitely about cutting down on white refined carbs – normal potatoes, white rice, white

pasta, white bread – all of these things are releasing sugar very rapidly.

**For someone who wants to lose weight but isn't doing intense exercise but, say, 30 minutes five times a week, what would you suggest?**

**CM:** Most people do better on a rapid-weight loss plan. There was a myth about slow and steady, but it gets boring, and you're more likely to stick with a rapid weight-loss approach because it's more motivating.



▲ Most weight loss happens in the kitchen

**JM:** What is also interesting is that we used to think exercise was the best way to lose weight but a lot of the evidence is showing, while it's a great way to maintain weight loss – and it's got lots of incredible benefits for mood, brain and heart health, and eating well – as a way to burn calories, most weight loss happens in the kitchen. Unless you're doing significant amounts of exercise, your body compensates after a while and retains energy.

### Are there any emotional or mental health benefits to this way of eating?

**CM:** Eating a decent, high-fibre Mediterranean-style diet is known to have significant benefits. Particularly for people who are depressed there is evidence that if you change your diet you can significantly alter your risk.

**JM:** Yes, one of the original studies on this was the SMILE study, a randomised control trial carried in

2017 in Australia, and there's been some more research since to support this.

In the SMILE study, looking at people with moderately severe depression, one group ate a Mediterranean-style diet pattern and the other group was signed up to a befriending service. Only eight per cent of the control group went into remission, compared with 33 per cent of the diet group – an effect size that's similar to many antidepressants.

We don't know for sure why the Mediterranean diet supports mental health, but part of it is the fact these diets are very anti-inflammatory, and

a lot of inflammation of the brain can be damaging and lead to mood changes. You're also getting all the right nutrients, including things such as magnesium which helps control mood. You're also eating lots of fibre, which gets broken down in the gut and releases short-chain fatty acids that go to the brain and help reduce inflammation – all of which make you feel better. 🍌

### MORE INFO

To find out more or sign up to one of The Fast 800 plans, visit [thefast800.com](https://thefast800.com)



## FIND YOUR FAST

Not sure which The Fast 800 plan is right for you? Here's the low-down on the key points of four of the main plans:

### The Very Fast 800

A 12-week programme consisting of 800 calories a day (low-carb Mediterranean), exercise, mindfulness, health coaching for those wanting to:

- achieve fast weight loss
- lower blood sugar levels
- reverse type 2 diabetes

### The New 5:2

Follow The Very Fast 800 plan for two days a week and eat sensible portions the rest of the week. Suitable for those wanting to:

- lose or maintain weight
- enjoy the health benefits of intermittent fasting

### The Way of Life

Follow the low-carb Med-style meal plans on the Way of Life programme. Suitable for those wanting to:

- maintain their weight
- adopt a healthier diet
- improve and protect their health

### The Very Fast High Fibre

A 12-week meal programme consisting of 800-1,000 calories and around 24g fibre a day, plus the new Get Moving exercise programme. Suitable for those:

- taking GLP-1 medication and at risk of lower muscle mass

A Med-style diet boosts your mental wellbeing





A close-up photograph of a person's hand in a yoga mudra (prayer position) against a soft, golden sunset background. The hand is positioned on the left side of the frame, with the thumb and index finger touching. The background is a blurred landscape of water and sky, creating a bokeh effect with warm, golden light.

# CONSCIOUS breathing

Yogic breathing is far more than a series of practical techniques, it's a gateway to your true self, says **Mark Stephens**

There's a moment, often subtle, when awareness shifts from the rushing world around us to the quiet rhythm within. We notice the breath – not as a mechanical fact of survival, but as a living process that connects, informs and transforms us. For many, this moment is the first true encounter with pranayama, the ancient art and science of conscious breathing. It's a doorway into deeper experience – of yoga, life and being.

Pranayama is often treated as a technique, a category of practices in the yogic repertoire. But as I've explored in my forthcoming book, *Breathing: The Art and Science of Pranayama* (Inner Traditions, forthcoming 2026), it's much more than that. It's a philosophy, a psychology, a physiology, a path of spiritual development and a means of cultivating presence and resilience in a chaotic world.

Today, pranayama is often introduced with alternate nostril breathing, bellows breath, holding the breath and so on. These are powerful tools – but only when practised with understanding, respect and adaptability. The ancient and medieval texts emphasised this. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, the reader is warned that improper practice of holding the breath 'brings about disorders of the head and other diseases'. Yet when practised with care, the same techniques are said to bestow vitality, mental steadiness and the bliss of meditation.

Modern science, in its own language, echoes this wisdom. Slow breathing stimulates the vagus nerve and parasympathetic response, calming the heart and larger bodymind. Extended exhalations improve baroreflex sensitivity [a

mechanism that controls blood pressure], helping the body adapt to stress. Retaining your breath increases CO<sub>2</sub> tolerance and may enhance oxygen delivery to tissues via the Bohr effect [red cells' ability to adapt to changes]. In each case, we see how what the ancient yogis observed through deep introspection now aligns with what scientists measure with instruments.

But pranayama is not just breath training. It is not merely respiratory gymnastics. It is the art of attending – of learning to live in intimacy with the breath, not to conquer or control it, but to commune with it – indeed, of becoming more intimate with oneself.

### THE MEANING OF PRANAYAMA

Etymologically, pranayama is often broken down as prana (life force, breath) and ayama (expansion, extension, regulation). Some traditions take it instead from prana and yama (restraint), emphasising control. Both are true in their own way. But over the years I've come to think of pranayama not as control in the modern sense – tight, effortful, imposed – but as a kind of skilful co-operation with breath.

Like riding a wave in Cornwall, we don't force the ocean; we align ourselves with it, learning how it moves, where it rises, how it breaks. Pranayama invites us to ride the breath into deeper states of coherence, awareness and presence. We extend it gently, guide it compassionately, and allow it to reveal what lies beneath the everyday noise

of thought. It is here that pranayama becomes a form of inquiry. What is it like to breathe without effort? What does it mean to exhale completely? How does the breath respond when we are joyful, anxious, still? What hidden habits reveal themselves when we pause between breaths?

In a world that feels increasingly fragmented – politically, socially, ecologically – breathing practices offer a way to return to wholeness. Not in some abstract ideal, but in the immediacy of sensation. The breath is always now. It reflects our condition, moment by moment, and offers a path to shift it.

This is especially relevant when navigating the paradoxes of modern life. We often speak of presence, but rarely experience it deeply. We long for balance, yet live in overstimulation. In this context, pranayama is not optional. It is essential.

It helps us shift from being in the sympathetic 'go-go-go' mode to the parasympathetic rest-and-digest state – not by disengaging, but by tuning in. It strengthens the diaphragm, steadies the mind, and invites emotional regulation. Most importantly, it momentarily reorients our awareness from outside to inside, restoring the sense of embodied self that so many of us have lost – which, in turn, enhances our interpersonal relationships and engagement in the world.

### IN PRACTICE

Our everyday yoga sessions are transformed, too, when we place the breath at the heart of practice. Instead of striving toward an ideal shape, we begin to inhabit the bodymind more fully. The postures become expressions of the breath and our breathing – extensions of inner rhythm rather than external form. The yoga mat becomes a space not of performance, but of listening, learning and loving. In this way, pranayama

dissolves the boundary between meditation and movement. In daily life, it becomes the anchor that holds us steady amid uncertainty, change and challenge.

Even a few minutes of slow, conscious breathing can shift our state. A morning ritual of ocean breathing, a midday pause with

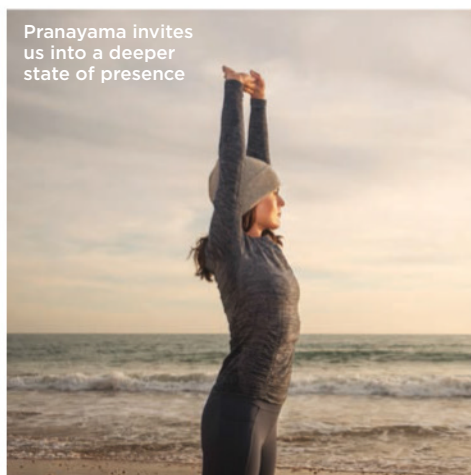
alternate nostril breathing or an evening sequence of softening bee breath exhalations – each is a small but powerful act of consciously re-inhabiting ourselves.

One of the most liberating truths

about pranayama is its accessibility. You don't need to be flexible, young or fit. You don't need fancy gear or an elaborate altar. You just need a willingness to be with yourself, as you are, breath by conscious breath. In my years of teaching, I've guided everyone from elite athletes to trauma survivors, from children to the elderly, through breathing practices. Each person brings a different relationship to it – shaped by bodymind, history, personality – but all can benefit. The key is to start where you are and to cultivate trust in the bodymind's dance with the wisdom of the breath.

There are, of course, times when guidance is essential. Not all techniques are appropriate for all people, and it's important to understand the why and how before diving in. That's part of why I wrote *Breathing: The Art and Science of Pranayama* – to offer both a map and a compass, grounded in ancient teachings and modern science, enriched by decades of lived experience. Breath connects us to every living being. The same atmosphere fills the lungs of plants, animals, rivers, oceans and stars. When we breathe with awareness, we re-enter this field of connection. We remember that we are not separate, not alone. Pranayama, in this deeper sense, is not something we do. It is something we become.

*'Breathing practices offer a way to return to wholeness'*



Pranayama invites us into a deeper state of presence

## AND BREATHE...

Tune into these pranayama techniques for calm in your day and focus in your yoga practice



▲ Alternate nostril breathing balances the left and right sides of the body

### **Alternate nostril breathing (*Nadi shodhana*)**

In yogic philosophy, a nadi is an energy channel, and shodhana means to cleanse. This practice calms the nerves, stills the mind and balances the left and right sides of the body.

- Sit in a comfortable position and take a moment to centre yourself. Bring your right hand to your nose, and rest the tip of your thumb on the fleshy part of your right nostril and the tips of your index and middle fingers between your eyebrows. Curl your ring and little fingers under, and rest the inside of your ring finger on your left nostril.
- Close your left nostril with your ring finger and exhale fully through your right nostril. Keeping your left nostril closed, inhale fully and slowly through the right nostril. Close your right nostril with your thumb, then release your ring finger to open your left nostril and exhale slowly.
- Pause, then slowly inhale through the left nostril. Close off the nostril with the ring finger. Pause, release the right nostril with your thumb, then exhale slowly and steadily through the right nostril.
- This is one round. Repeat, breathing slowly and mindfully for five minutes.

*'Imagine a fine golden thread of light streaming down from the sky and entering the front of your throat'*

### **Ocean breath (Ujjayi breathing)**

This breathing practice soothes and tones the nervous system, and energises every cell in your body.

- Lying on your back, close your eyes and allow your breathing to settle. Then, in your mind's eye, as you inhale, imagine a fine golden thread of light streaming down from the sky and entering the front of your throat. Sense it travel to the back of your throat, then, as you exhale, feel the light move forward to the front and return to the sky. Continue attuning to this golden ray of light with each breath, focusing on it gently entering and leaving your throat. Be here for a few minutes, allowing a soft stillness to settle around you.
- Gently release this contact, then slowly come to a comfortable seated position and continue drawing golden light into your throat, this time from the horizon rather than the sky. Once you sense a quietness enveloping you, continue for a few more rounds, then softly let go and let your breath return to its normal rhythm.
- Maintaining the sense of softness you have found, gently open your lips and breathe in and out through your mouth, making a soft 'haaa' sound as you do so. This action slightly closes your throat, and is the central physiological action of ocean breath. Continue in this way for a few minutes then gently let it go, and softly open your eyes.



Ocean breath aids focus when on your yoga mat



### **Bee breath (Bhramari breathing)**

One of the pranayama practices in the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, bee breathing stimulates the vagus nerve and activates the parasympathetic nervous system.

- Sit in a comfortable cross-legged position and draw your attention inwards by becoming aware of the breath moving in and out of your nostrils.
- When you feel centred, inhale with an ocean breath and deeply exhale with a humming sound, creating one long continuous tone for each exhalation.
- Practise six rounds and then sit quietly in stillness, noticing the effects, before repeating another six rounds one or two more times.
- Feel free to experiment with low, middle or high tones, but only one tone per exhale and notice where you feel the vibrations in your body. You might find that different tones create subtly different effects, calming and grounding you, or clearing tension in your head. 🐝

▲ Try a few rounds of bee breath when you need a dose of calm



Mark Stephens is an international yoga teacher, yoga teacher trainer and author of several books. *Breathing: The Art and Science of Pranayama (Inner Traditions)* is out in 2026. To find out more, visit [markstephensyoga.com](http://markstephensyoga.com)



## ‘WHEELCHAIR RACING HAS CHANGED MY LIFE’

Since starting wheelchair racing four years ago, **Erin O’Flaherty** has gone on to become a champion racer who now ranks 4th in the country

**Erin O’Flaherty, 20, was born with cerebral palsy, a disorder that affects movement and co-ordination, yet she has triumphed over the odds and is now ranked 4th in wheelchair racing in the UK and in the top 10 worldwide. Astonishingly, she only tried wheelchair racing for the first time four years ago.**

**Having always loved children, Erin originally started out as an early years educator but gave up her job at the beginning of the year to concentrate on her sporting career.**

She now trains six days-a-week at the track at ‘Better’s’ Croydon Sports Arena, and also in the gym. On the track, she reaches speeds of up to 22 mph!

**‘Wheelchair racing gives me a sense of freedom that I’d never had before,’** explains Erin. ‘Living with a disability can be difficult – people assume you can’t do things. I could never join in with PE at primary school, for example, but when I got to secondary school, there was a specialist teacher to help kids with physical disabilities take part. I was even able to pass my GCSE in PE!’

**For the past two years, Erin has been supported by GLL’s Sport Foundation in Croydon. The Foundation (GSF) was launched in 2008 and has grown to become the UK’s largest independent athlete support programme. It provides financial and in-kind support to talented athletes, helping them overcome financial barriers to progress in their sporting careers. Funding assists with a range of areas, including essential costs**

such as travel, coaching, equipment and competition fees.\*

**‘Wheelchair racing is an expensive sport,’** says Erin. ‘So, I am very grateful for the GSF award. It will allow me to train for free. I would tell other young people, “Chase your dreams and don’t give up!”.’

**‘Wheelchair racing, athletics and para-sport have helped me in ways I cannot describe,’** she adds. ‘From a shy young girl, scared of her own shadow, to developing as an individual and an athlete, being selected to represent England internationally and being part of Team England, wheelchair racing has changed my life. 🍎

*Applications for the Sport Foundation Awards 2026 open this December at [gllsportfoundation.org](http://gllsportfoundation.org) – Erin’s beloved pink wheelchair – especially adapted for racing – is now too small for her. Anyone who would like to contribute to the cost of a new one may do so at [justgiving.com/crowdfunding/erinoflaherty](http://justgiving.com/crowdfunding/erinoflaherty)*



*‘I would tell other young people,  
“Chase your dreams and  
don’t give up”’*

Additional words: Sarah Sellens | Photography: Erin O’Flaherty | \*Supported athletes also receive free access to all GLL’s sport and leisure centres in England and Wales, operated under the ‘Better’ brand, plus physical and psychological wellbeing services

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