

Better By The Minute

These easy round-the-clock lifestyle tweaks will help make you feel so much healthier

07:00 Waking Up

GOOD Sleep with the curtains open – natural light stimulates energising hormones like adrenaline and inhibits sleep-inducing melatonin.
BETTER Get up at the same time every day to regulate your internal body clock.



BRILLIANT! Don't bound out of bed. 'Stretch first,' says fitness expert Jane

Wake. 'Do a cat stretch on your knees, lifting and lowering your back. Next, lie on your back and, resting on your elbows, lift your bottom off the bed. Pull in your tummy and squeeze your glutes.' Follow with a glass of water to hydrate.

07:30 Get Moving



GOOD Walk for 30 minutes. Studies show morning exercisers are more likely to stick with their regime. A daily workout will reduce your risk of heart disease,

diabetes and several cancers. It's great for brain function and mental health, helps you sleep better and keeps your weight in check.

BETTER 'Exercise with friends,' advises personal trainer Kim Ingleby (energisedperformance.com). 'You'll be less likely to cry off and let others down. Choose someone with similar exercise goals for a bit of healthy competition and motivation. The time will pass more quickly and you'll push yourself harder.'
BRILLIANT! Set yourself a goal that's a little bit challenging and commit to it. Sign up for the Race For Life, a Christmas 5-10km run, a Zumbathon or Breast Cancer Bike Ride.

07:15 Brushing Teeth



GOOD Brush for two minutes (74% of us only brush for 40 seconds!). Use a stopwatch if your toothbrush doesn't have an in-built timer. Divide your mouth into four quadrants and don't move on to the next section until the allotted 30 seconds has passed.

BETTER Use an electric toothbrush – studies show they are up to 45% more effective at cleaning than manual brushes.

BRILLIANT! Floss after brushing. It removes plaque and debris – and helps to prevent and treat bad breath.

08:15 Breakfast

GOOD Have a poached or boiled egg for breakfast. 'It's packed full of nutrients and protein,' says Laila Lewis, nutritional therapist at Nourishing By Nature (nourishingbynature.co.uk).

BETTER Have some wholewheat toast with your egg. Research shows that three daily



servings of wholegrains could lower blood pressure and heart disease rates by 15%.
BRILLIANT! Add some grilled tomatoes. Cooked tomatoes are full of the heart-protective antioxidant lycopene and a good start on your five-a-day.

11:00 Mid-morning Break

GOOD Enjoy your coffee. It may slightly reduce your risk of diabetes. People who drink three or more cups appear to be at the lowest risk of all, a new American study has suggested.
BETTER Bypass the biscuit tin. A handful of



dried fruit, nuts and seeds is not only better for you but will provide longer-lasting energy. Keep a packet handy in your bag, car or desk at work.

BRILLIANT! Get outside: Exposure to sunlight for just 10 minutes stimulates vitamin D production. And a deficiency in this vitamin is linked to osteoporosis, cancer and obesity.

15:00 Afternoon Break

GOOD Have an apple, pear, plum or a handful of berries – all low-GI fruit to keep energy levels on an even keel, advises Laila.

BETTER Add 7-10 almonds to your fruit or smear almond butter on oatcakes for added protein. This will sustain your energy and blood-sugar balance.

BRILLIANT! If you've been working at a screen all day, follow the 20/20 rule to give your eyes a break, says Kelly Plahay of The Eyecare Trust. 'Look up from your screen every 20 minutes and focus on something 20 feet away for 20 seconds. This will help avoid headaches and sore or tired eyes.'



18:30 Supper



GOOD Make a stir-fry with seasonal vegetables, lean protein, such as prawn or turkey, and egg noodles.
BETTER Add cashew nuts for good fats and swap the noodles for brown rice. You'll feel fuller for longer.
BRILLIANT! Use organic coconut oil for stir-frying (it has a higher smoke point than olive oil so it's better to heat). Serve with quinoa – it's higher in nutrients and protein.

13:00 Lunchtime



GOOD Avoid the mid-afternoon slump with the perfect protein to carb ratio of 1:1. Say no to snooze-inducing carb-rich foods like pasta, rice, bread and potatoes. Instead have an open chicken or salmon sandwich with plenty of salad for the healthy 1:1 ratio. Or try houmous on pitta bread if you prefer to avoid meat/fish.
BETTER Drink tea or coffee after your lunch – not with it. The tannins they contain inhibit the absorption of nutrients, particularly iron.
BRILLIANT! Save the piece of fruit or yogurt you might normally have after lunch for the afternoon. Studies show that eating smaller amounts more often helps to keep blood sugar and energy levels balanced and prevents overeating.

17:00 'Me-time'



GOOD Enjoy two squares of dark chocolate:

Cocoa contains phenethylamine, which researchers believe creates a feeling of euphoria.
BETTER Listen to your favourite tunes. This improves mood in 92% of people, according to David Niven, author of *The 100 Simple Secrets Of Happy People* (£7.99, Capstone).
BRILLIANT! Buy cinema tickets, not shoes! A study found the rush of buying something fades faster than memories of a great experience.

22:00 Winding Down



GOOD 'Set a technology cut-off time two hours before bed,' says sleep expert Sammy Margo (sammymargo.com). 'This allows the brain to switch off gradually.' Exposure to artificial light from a mobile or tablet also affects the release of melatonin, which harms sleep quality.
BETTER Drink a glass of cold milk: An *American Journal Of Clinical Nutrition* study found

that the alpha-lactalbumin protein in milk helps to improve your slumber.
BRILLIANT! Have pencil and paper beside your bed so if you do wake in the night, you can write down your worries and address them in the morning.



NEXT WEEK
Stronger Bones