

ACTIVATE

HER STORY

MEET THE FIERCE,
FABULOUS AND
FEARLESS WOMEN
OF SOUTH AFRICAN
SPORT



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Playlists to get you moving



THE **POWER YEARS**

Redefining menopause

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Everything you need to stay healthy, active and thriving

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HEY VIRGIN ACTIVE FAMILY

“Run like a girl”, “punch like a girl”, “throw like a girl”... No more!

We’re tossing out these tired old phrases that perpetuate the idea that femininity is associated with being the weaker gender, and redefining what it means to be a woman in all our fierce glory.

It starts with embracing our strength and celebrating our achievements, and so in this special issue we’re showcasing the women who dominate our national sports. By highlighting their incredible skills, unwavering determination and unapologetic confidence, we’re giving women’s sports the coverage it deserves, tearing down the visibility gap and sending a clear message that women won’t be sidelined.

We’re not just levelling the playing field but changing hearts and minds as well. Celebrating the incredible achievements and contributions of our fitfam, we’re reminded of the vital role that sport plays in shaping tough, confident and successful women.

It is inspiring to discover that many women who have reached the pinnacle of success in the business world were once athletes in their younger years. For instance, Meg Whitman, the former CEO of Hewlett-Packard, actively participated in lacrosse and squash during her university days. Another example is Indra Nooyi, the former CEO of PepsiCo, who was a competitive cricket player

in her youth. These accomplished women attribute their sporting experiences to fostering within them the drive, motivation and perseverance to ultimately excel in their professional careers.

Movement is a powerful tool for personal growth, empowerment and overall well-being. When girls participate in sports, they learn valuable lessons that extend far beyond the field or court. They develop resilience, teamwork, discipline and determination – traits that are instrumental in

achieving success in any career they choose to pursue. Sport provides girls with a platform to challenge societal norms, break barriers and shatter glass ceilings.

By embracing sports, girls not only become physically strong but also mentally and emotionally resilient.

At Virgin Active, we are proud to have some amazing women in our ranks who live the brand, and in this issue you’ll discover how they’re contributing to our culture. We even roped in some of our members – women who are helping to rewrite the narrative that women embody strength on so many levels.

So, let’s crush stereotypes, break boundaries and show the world what it really means to “feel like a woman”. Get ready to run, punch and throw like a woman – the unstoppable badasses we are!

With fierce determination,
Jessica Spira

*Managing Director
Virgin Active*



CLARINS

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Double Serum Light Texture Complete age defying concentrate.

Everything you love about Double Serum, now also in a lightweight skin. Fast absorbing texture, barely there feel: in only 7 days, signs of ageing look reduced.*

*Consumer test, multi-ethnic panel, 352 subjects.

START HERE

*Everything you need to stay healthy,
active and thriving*

Your ultimate source of wellness, we've compiled a treasure trove of tips and tricks to help you on your journey towards becoming your best you. Discover how you can keep your gym gear smelling fresh, master the art of meal prep, fortify your immune system and adapt your training to your cycle. Read on for all the knowledge and tools you need to achieve your goals.

SKIP

Your Workout

Jump to it with **@Ciara_Jumps**

Skipping is a quick way to burn calories, increase stamina and improve coordination. Plus learning new skills and tricks will activate your mind, says Ciara Glaum, who started jumping rope as a way of staying active during lockdown and has since become something of a social media sensation.

“Because skipping is such a high-intensity, full-body workout, I’ve toned up and shed excess weight without making massive changes to my diet,” says Ciara. “I’m persistent when it comes to learning new skills, and my patience has also improved a lot. I now take this resilient attitude into all aspects of my life.”

Ciara likes how she can take her jump rope with her wherever she goes and that, besides the obvious benefits, it also improves blood pressure and strengthens bones.

OKAY, WE’RE CONVINCED. SO HOW DO WE GET STARTED?

“You’ll need a jump rope, a flat open surface and a comfortable pair of shoes. If you’re new to skipping, just get used to swinging the rope around and jumping over it. You’ll definitely trip in the beginning, but count how many jumps you’ve cleared and then challenge yourself to beat that number every time.

If you’ve skipped before and would like to advance your skills, try high knees, criss-cross jumps, boxer step and jump lunges. When you’re comfortable with the change in coordination, you can try shuffles, wraps and other challenging jumps. If you don’t know what any of those things are, check out my Instagram page, @Ciara_Jumps.”

Ciara regularly shares tutorials, videos, tips and tricks and our favourite, Messy Monday (all the bloopers of mistakes she’s made).

“I still make a lot of mistakes and have so much to learn. It’s not a quick process and requires a lot of time and effort to learn new skills. In those moments of failure, I don’t think I’ll ever get it right, but after continuous practise, I eventually do.”



Clean Your Gym Gear

No more funky fitness fumes

Training hard will result in two things: progress and perspiration.

Sweat is full of bacteria that cling to fabrics and cause a stink. Your workout gear is subjected to more sweat than anything else you wear, and the synthetic fabrics tend to hold these more.

Here's what to do:



Wash your workout gear immediately after every use, which is the best and only way to get rid of the bacteria.

Before tossing workout gear into the washing machine, fill up the sink with cold water, add a cup of white vinegar and a cup of bicarbonate of soda, and soak the clothing for at least half an hour before putting them through a wash cycle.

Wash them in cold water on the gentle cycle, and don't use fabric softener.

Synthetic materials are prone to static build-up and are not recommended for dryer use. Instead, let them dry naturally on a washing line.

Stop sneakers stinking

- 1/** Always wear socks with gym shoes.
- 2/** Air sneakers out after use.
- 3/** Use a sports shoe cleaning spray.
- 4/** Sprinkle in shoe powder.
- 5/** Rotate a few pairs of gym shoes.

Keep trainers tiptop

Don't let the mud and grunge build up. Wipe away the excess dirt as you go.



1/ Mix a gentle cleaning solution of water and a few drops of detergent or dish soap.

2/ Remove the insole and laces to give each part of your shoe a good scrub down.

3/ Use an old facecloth or toothbrush to gently scrub shoes on all sides.

4/ Use the toothbrush to get deep into the crevices of the sole.

5/ Rinse thoroughly with warm, clean water.

6/ Leave them to air-dry naturally.

Don't forget about your gym bag



Air it out. When your tote stays closed underneath your desk, in your car or by the front door throughout the day, there's little air circulation to help remove any odours. This can create the perfect breeding ground for funk.

Remember to turn your gym clothes inside out for washing them, as that's where the dirt is.

Spritz your bag with disinfectant spray or give it a proper wash.

Another great way to keep odours at bay is to add to what's inside your gym bag:

Teabags

These absorbent little beauties can help trap odours overnight, sucking up unpleasant smells with ease. Simply replace after a few days of use and your gym bag should be always good to go.

Dryer sheets

The fresh scent you find after each load of laundry can be experienced from your fitness gear. Sensitive nostrils beware – potent dryer sheets can be a little overpowering.

HYDRATION

hydration station

You've probably heard that you should be drinking eight glasses of water daily. In reality, everyone's hydration needs are different. Sip on this list of hydration facts:

1

— Drink 2 glasses of water plus 1 extra glass per 10kg of your body weight.

2

— Dehydration can negatively impact exercise performance by up to 25%.

3

— Drink 500ml (2 glasses) of water 1-2 hours before a workout; a glass of water 15 minutes before you start; and a glass of water for every 15 minutes of your workout.

4

— For every 500g of weight you've 'dropped' post workout, drink 500ml of water.

5

— Unless you're doing prolonged, intensive exercise, there's no need for sports drinks.

6

— Dilute cooldrinks and fruit juices with water or crushed ice.

7

— Caffeine-free teas don't act as diuretics and may replace your water intake.

8

— Flavour water with herbs, fruit pieces or homemade berry-filled ice cubes.

9

— When socialising or dining, drink a glass of water between each unit of alcohol consumed.

10

— Carry a reusable water bottle to refill throughout the day.

HEY, LADIES!

Dr Phatho Zondi, sports and exercise medicine (SEM) physician and Virgin Active South Africa's expert on women's health, is here to share some female-focused exercise tips.

1. Find a tribe: Whether you join Virgin Active, a running club or hiking group, exercising in a community offers camaraderie, accountability and a sense of safety, which is an important consideration for women in South Africa. Even if you can't meet up in person, technology has made exercise even more accessible and has increased ways to connect with your tribe.

2. Don't be intimidated by strength training:

This type of training helps you increase

endurance, flexibility and balance. It's a great complement to any other exercise you may already do (like running or cycling), making you stronger and decreasing injury risk. Strength training also improves your metabolism by increasing lean muscle mass, which continues burning calories long after you've completed your workout session. Set up some time with a Personal Trainer to learn about the different types of strength exercises, correct posture and technique, and equipment to use.

3. So important it needs to be said twice: One of the most important considerations for women as you begin to age or reach menopause is losing bone mass, which puts you at risk of osteoporosis. However, strength training and weight-bearing exercises can help with improving bone density and preventing bone loss as it encourages the osteogenic effect (bone growth). Other than a consistently well-balanced diet, this is one of the best ways to prevent age-

related fractures and movement-related injuries in the future.

4. Embrace the benefits of mindfulness:

Introduce mindfulness into your daily routine through breathing exercises and guided meditation. These types of activities improve self-awareness, reduce stress and anxiety, and generally enhance emotional and mental health. Don't underestimate the power of affirmation in building your self-confidence and initiating positive change.

Keep a Food Diary

Registered dietician Kim Hofmann doesn't count calories, she records every meal. Here's why you should do it too.

A food diary is an excellent tool that can help you figure out what's happening with your eating. It can help you understand your eating habits and patterns, what leads to your eating choices and behaviours, show you where your gaps are and where you can focus your shifts, and help keep you on track with your diet plan.

When you keep a food diary, you become much more conscious of what you're putting into your mouth, and it often gives you the pause that you need to think about whether you really want that something.

A diary can be kept in any format – on an app, in a Notes page on your phone or written down on paper in a notebook.

What it should include:

- 1/ Time of eating
- 2/ What you're eating (plus portion)
- 3/ Why you are eating (mouth or stomach hunger)
- 4/ Your hunger before and fullness after
- 5/ Reflections of how you felt after eating (body and mind)
- 6/ What you want to try next time

It is best to keep your diary as you go along during the day. Sitting down at the end of the day and writing it all down can also work, but if you try to do it a couple of days later, your recollection will generally not be accurate – we forget about the little extras that crept in during the day. If you forget to keep it for a while, just start again on the day that you remember.

It's important that you are honest with yourself, especially on days where it all goes 'wrong'. Remember that these are the days that we need to learn how to manage, so looking at your responses to stress and emotions will start the process of improvement. This is not a chance for you to beat yourself up again – you have certain behaviours that you need to understand in order to change.

And lastly, know that your diary doesn't have to be perfect!

FAST FACT Breathe

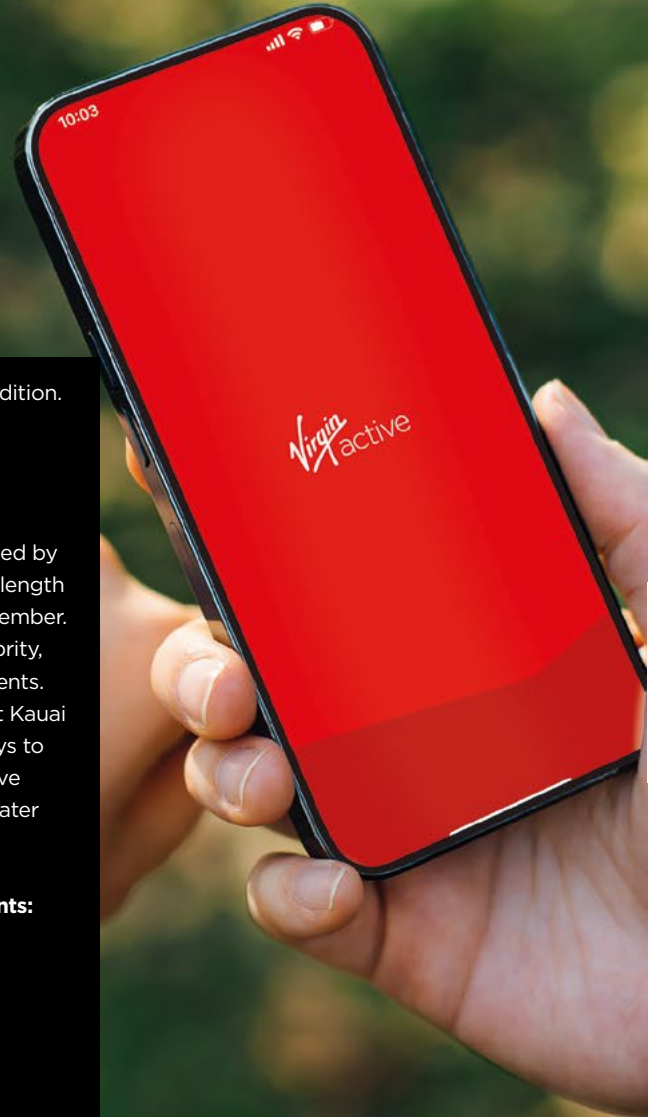
Does your energy tank at 1pm every day? Before you reach for a Lunch bar, take a breather. Mindful breathing exercises (or meditation) can help reset the parasympathetic nervous system and give you a boost to keep killing your afternoon.

Download

OUR NEW APP

and get rewarded...

Get it for Android.
Get it for iPhone.
Get it here



Only available in our new app, our Loyalty Programme for members offers four ways to get rewarded.

1. Weekly rewards:

Visit a club twice a week and get a free small smoothie or hot drink from Kauai or Nü.

2. Sprint rewards:

Hit your weekly goals for four consecutive weeks and choose a R50 wallet balance, 150 tier points or a smoothie from Kauai or Nü.

3. App wallet:

Earn cash back into your wallet or pay towards your monthly membership fees.

4. Tier benefits:

Bronze, silver and gold – earn points and get exclusive member benefits from Virgin Active and our partners based on your tier status.

REWARD PARTNERS

Enjoy discounts on products, events and experiences with these amazing brands. Earn up to 20% off at Garmin, Sealand, Damascus,

Clarins and Virgin Limited Edition. (Discounts vary per tier and change over time.)

TIER BENEFITS

Your tier is initially determined by your membership type and length of time as a Virgin Active member. Benefit from access to celebrity, partner and sponsorship events. Get free birthday rewards at Kauai and Nü. There are many ways to earn tier points that will move you up and unlock even greater rewards.

Some ways to earn tier points:

- Download our app.
- Hit your sprint goal.
- Visit a club.
- Book a class.
- Do an online workout.
- Pay membership fees.
- Refer a friend.



7 OF THE BEST HEALTH AND FITNESS APPS

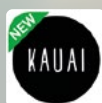
Are you looking for some help prioritising your health and wellness? Check out this list of the best apps to help you stay on track!

MyFitnessPal



Track your meals, water intake and exercise to stay on top of your fitness goals.

Kauai



Make payments, schedule orders and get cash back with this app.

Headspace



Guided meditations to help you reduce stress and improve focus.

Sleep Cycle



Monitor your sleep patterns with this app and wake up feeling refreshed.

WaterMinder



A simple app to track your water intake and remind you to stay hydrated.

Discovery Health



Track your medical aid benefits, access health info and book appointments.

Strava



Keep track of your runs and rides, connect with friends; join motivating challenges.

PREP SCHOOL

A little weekend food prep goes a long way if you want nourishing meals after a long workday. Get 3 dinners for one done in a flash on weeknights! Just double or quadruple the ingredients to serve a family of 2 or 4.

WEEKEND MEAL PREP

COOK SOME BULGUR WHEAT

Cover 2 cups (500ml) bulgur wheat with 4 cups (1L) boiling, salted water. **Set** aside for 30 minutes. **Fluff** up with a fork once all water is absorbed and cool completely. **Add** chopped parsley, if you like, cover and refrigerate.



MAKE A THAI GREEN CURRY SAUCE

Heat a glug of oil in a pot and fry 2 sachets (100g each) Thai green curry paste for a minute. **Add** 1 can (400g) coconut milk, 1½ cups (375ml) vegetable stock, juice of 1–2 limes and 1 Tbsp (15ml) each fish sauce and low-sodium soy sauce. **Blitz** with 1 bag (100g) baby spinach. **Cool** completely then refrigerate.



ROAST ROOT VEGGIES

Place 1 packet (500g) diced butternut or sweet potato, 1 punnet (200g) baby aubergines, halved, 1 packet (400g) sliced baby marrows and 2 chopped red peppers on two baking trays. **Season**, drizzle with oil and roast at 200°C for 30 minutes or until tender. **Cool** completely, then refrigerate.



MAKE IT A MEAL!

ROAST VEG GREEN CURRY

Combine half the pre-roasted veg and ¾ of the curry sauce with ½ can (200g) chickpeas and 1 cup (250ml) veg stock in a pot to heat up. **Serve** on a cup of the pre-cooked bulgur wheat.

ROAST VEG & BULGUR WHEAT SALAD WITH HARISSA

Toss half the pre-roasted roast veg into 1½ cups (375ml) pre-cooked bulgur wheat. **Crumble** ½–1 disc feta cheese over and sprinkle with chopped fresh herbs of your choice. **Combine** 1 tsp (5ml) harissa paste with 1 Tbsp (15ml) each olive oil blend and lemon juice. **Serve** salad with dressing.

FRIED GREENS WITH GREEN CURRY DRESSING

Grate 2 cloves of garlic and 1cm knob fresh ginger. **Heat** a glug of oil in a pan and fry 600–800g green veg (such as broccoli stems, fine green beans and sugar snap peas) with garlic and ginger. **Lower** heat and add ¼ of the curry sauce. **Cook** until steaming hot. **Serve** on pre-cooked bulgur wheat, sprinkled with sesame seeds.

Dinner
in 10
minutes



Sweat It, GIRL

Exercise boosts a girl's self-confidence, academic performance and sense of belonging, writes **Dr Phatho Zondi**.



Staying active is an important aspect of physical health and well-being for the girl child. It also has an immensely positive effect on her mental health as well as social and interpersonal skills, and will help her to become more comfortable in her own skin. Here are five ways, using exercise, to empower the next generation of confident women.

1/ Active mothers raise active girls

Research shows that girls closely emulate what their mothers do. Compared to their sedentary counterparts, active mothers are more likely to raise active

girls. The key is to make exercise a fun-filled activity that encourages the development of a new skill or where personal progress can be demonstrated and celebrated. Exercise shouldn't feel like a chore and should never be used as punishment.

2/ Build the foundations

Be intentional about the quality time you spend with your children, and make sure that family time includes exercise. Being active as a family is the best way to cultivate a lifelong love of movement in young children. Remember, if you model movement as part of your lifestyle, your children will naturally mimic you.

3/ Break gender stereotypes

There's an increasing number of opportunities for girls to partake in what have traditionally been viewed as boys' sports. Encourage your daughters to try soccer, cricket, rugby, basketball, skateboarding and whatever else interests them. Many schools and clubs now have mixed teams, as well as female-only teams for all sports; if not, ask the coach if your girl can play with the boys. In pre-puberty, there are no significant differences between girls and boys in terms of speed, strength or any other sports performance-related parameters.

fitness level. This type of encouragement builds confidence, especially when it comes from parents or coaches. And be sure to acknowledge her efforts across the board, not just when she's excelling. This will encourage her to try new and unfamiliar activities, even if she is not good at them – a particularly valuable life skill to carry into the future.

5/ Teach her to listen to her body

Encourage your daughter to be aware of how her body is changing with age and, once she reaches puberty, how she responds to hormone fluctuations. By helping

“Acknowledge her efforts across the board, not just when she's excelling”

4/ Build her up

Girls tend to be hard on themselves. Don't allow that critical voice and self-doubt to creep in. Be consistent in acknowledging participation, effort and improvement in skill or

her understand her menstrual cycle, she can adjust the type and intensity of her training accordingly (see page 18). Understanding these shifts and being able to communicate this is hugely valuable.

Protect Your Immune System

John Berry, head of product development at Kauai, prepares your immune system for winter and beyond...



A demanding lifestyle puts strain on your immune system, even before the inevitable wave of colds and flu that comes with the change of season. Fortunately, with some simple planning, you can equip your body for battle.

Stockpile nutrients by adding a few of my favourite foods to your shopping list.

1/ Beef (naturally raised, of course) is one of the most zinc-rich foods available. Or better still, treat yourself to some fresh oysters. If you eat animal protein, you're more likely to absorb zinc. Vegetarians and vegans are at risk of zinc deficiency and, to combat this, should eat plenty of pumpkin seeds, nuts, oatmeal and legumes.

2/ Fresh ginger is my number-one winter defence. Up your intake of this antioxidant-rich root with ginger shots, smoothies, juices and delicious winter curries.

3/ The earliest people recognised garlic's value in fighting infections. Garlic's immune-boosting properties come from a heavy concentration of sulphur-containing compounds such as allicin, and given the beneficial effects on risk factors like blood pressure, it makes sense that garlic could also help you live longer. It's easily incorporated into everyday meals like stews, curries and pasta sauces.

4/ Eat seasonal fruits and vegetables with a high concentration of

vitamin C. Your body doesn't produce its own vitamin C and you're unable to store it, so it needs to be regularly introduced into your diet. Oranges, guavas, pawpaws, kale and broccoli are readily available and more affordable in winter – so eat up!

5/ Beetroot, which has a high concentration of nitrates, helps to dilate blood vessels in your body, increasing blood flow and oxygen delivery. Plus it's packed with potassium, antioxidants and soluble fibre, which all work together to ward off heart disease.

Try these

KAUAI DRINKS:

PEANUT BUTTER BERRY SMOOTHIE
with almond milk, blueberries and banana

VITAMIN SEE SMOOTHIE
Orange, pineapple, carrot and mango

LEMON CUCUMBER COOLER (JUICE)
Plus apple, mint, celery and pineapple



INTRODUCING THE VIRGIN ACTIVE BOMB



**ADD PROTEIN
POWDER!**



New Virgin Active Bomb Smoothie

Exclusively available when you unlock your weekly workout reward in the NEW Virgin Active Rewards App. Made with sugar-free peanut butter, banana, cacao, full cream yoghurt & milk.

LET'S **KAUAI** LET'S LIVE

Build a

BETTER BUTT

FAST FACT**Resistance builds resilience**

Resistance training impacts frontal lobe function. So, while cardio is great, don't underestimate a few sessions of resistance-band or weights workouts a week to boost your mental performance.

BARBELL HIP THRUSTS WITH TRACK STAR TURNED MODEL TAYLER FETTIG.**"I've been an athlete all my life and now that I'm modelling,**

I won't shy away from who I am, even if strong women aren't as accepted in the market. I want to emphasise the beauty of strong women, embracing my strength and allowing myself to be confident in the body I have.

"The barbell hip thrust is a power movement that builds the glutes.

And who doesn't want a bigger booty these days? Do this exercise and you'll see results.

"To do it well, take your time and start at a comfortable weight. Keep it at a consistent weight to tone and shape. Add more weight if you want growth. Plant your feet hip-width apart, lift the pelvis to a 90° angle and focus on squeezing the glutes with each rep."

"Don't compare yourself to all those TikTok influencers pushing intense numbers. **We're all on our own journey,** so make yours your own. Now **get to the gym** and build that booty!"

"I lift to get stronger"



Dr Adrian Rotunno, a sports and exercise medicine (SEM) physician and Virgin Active South Africa expert, shares his tips on how to gently get back into an exercise routine after an injury.

Easy does it

As frustrating as it may be at times, going forward progressively – one step and one day at a time – is the wisest approach to get you back to your usual level of fitness, strength, endurance and confidence.

1

REST, RECOVERY, RESTORATION AND REHABILITATION

It can't be emphasised enough that these four Rs should be your priority. Practise the self-awareness of trusting the management plan and what will be required going forward. Remember that all professional athletes prioritise rest and recovery days in their regular training schedule, but particularly if they have an injury.

2

TAKE YOUR TIME

No matter how long it takes, it's essential to heal fully before jumping into your usual exercise routine again – the one that caused the injury in the first place. If it takes a month or two longer than you expected, give in to that rather than going back too early. There's no need to rush your recovery, as it could just land you back at square one.

3

GET PROFESSIONAL HELP

Depending on the nature of your injury, you should enlist the help and guidance of a healthcare professional such as a physiotherapist, SEM physician, coach or Personal Trainer on your road to recovery. They can recommend other forms of movement or exercise that do not exacerbate your injury – and show you how to do them correctly. At the same time, they help you keep adequate tabs on your injury to prevent it from getting any worse.

4

A TRANSIENT DIRECTIONAL CHANGE

The above-mentioned professionals will also be able to recommend an appropriate exercise prescription based on your injury to help you maintain your fitness and conditioning while you recover and before you return to your baseline to build from there. It's vital to closely monitor your load and to start off with a graded return. It's only natural to build up your strength slowly, before plateauing, and then building up to the next level, before plateauing again and so on. Your pre-injury exercise load will come back with time. Be patient with yourself and the process. Don't try to jump the gun too much or too quickly, as that could bring on injury again, and all the frustrations that come with it.

Listen to Your Body

Dr Phatho Zondi on training during different phases of your menstrual cycle

When it comes to 'that time of the month', it's only natural for us to want to hang up our running shoes for a few days, at least until we begin to feel stronger, more confident in our physical abilities and much more like ourselves.

Hormone fluctuations during the menstrual cycle can impact energy levels, mood, appetite, recovery times and other physiological factors that can affect training and athletic performance. That said, it is important to note that every woman (and menstrual cycle) is unique, and what works for one may not work for another. Additionally, other factors such as stress, sleep and nutrition can also impact training and performance.

There is not yet consensus on how women should adapt their training to their menstrual cycle – if at all. There's an (old) school of thought that supports increasing strength training and power

exercises during the follicular phase (days 1 to 14) when oestrogen levels, known to influence muscle protein synthesis, are higher.

Linked to this, the recommendation would then be to shift to endurance and recovery strategies such as foam rolling, stretching and relaxation exercises during the luteal phase (days 15 to 28) when progesterone levels rise and may cause water retention and reduced insulin sensitivity.

During the actual menstrual phase (days 1 to 5), women may be advised to reduce the intensity of their training or take a break from high-intensity activities altogether and rather consider light activity such as yoga or walking.

However, leading experts in female physiology suggest that there is currently no scientific basis for systematic and generalised training recommendations based on the menstrual cycle. In the most recent systematic review published on

the topic, authors Lauren Colenso-Semple, Kirsty Elliott-Sale and colleagues conclude that cycle phase does not influence strength performance. Specifically, in the reviews and meta-analyses studied, there is either no correlation or very poor evidence (due to insufficient or inappropriately analysed data) presented in the literature.

In reality, most women and many professional athletes do report

missing training due to symptoms related to menstruation. So, while there is strong anecdotal and some (weak) scientific evidence to support adapting one's training to your menstrual cycle, the extent of these benefits can vary widely from woman to woman. There is still much to be learned about the effects of the menstrual cycle on athletic performance, and individual responses can vary widely.

A menstrual tracking app or calendar can help you track your monthly cycle and better understand your body to guide your training choices. Ultimately, it's about listening to what your body tells you throughout the month.

Consulting with a knowledgeable trainer or healthcare provider, who will also consider factors such as sleep, diet, training history and fitness goals, may also be helpful.





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POWER UP AFTER YOUR WORKOUT...

the milky way

There's a good reason why you should go straight for a glass of milk after working up a sweat. In fact, there's not just one good reason - there are MANY!

With its healthy mix of carbohydrates, high-quality protein, electrolytes and water, milk provides a great nutritional boost for rapid recovery after a vigorous workout. It's the ultimate sports drink.

Here's why:



1 Research shows that as little as 500ml of plain or flavoured milk after high-intensity training has all the right ingredients to help replace, repair and grow muscle tissue that broke down during exercise. Having a recovery drink that is nutrient-rich, such as milk, within an hour of working out helps your body maintain energy levels and limits tissue breakdown, making it possible to train just as hard the next day.

2 Milk also contains calcium, which is important for building strong bones, along with potassium, sodium and magnesium, which are all lost through sweat.

3 To build lean body mass, a drink of milk after strength training is the perfect option. Why? Because it provides the right combination of protein and carbohydrates that researchers say is necessary to stimulate muscle growth.

So, whether you're pushing the pedals, pounding the pavements or pumping iron, plain or flavoured milk is your best training buddy to power up your post-performance recovery. For more information on the role of dairy in sport, visit www.rediscoverdairy.co.za/dairy-sport/ or email info@rediscoverdairy.co.za. You can also follow us on Facebook: **RediscoverDAIRY**

Top

XOLISWA NKOSI

The Head of Boxing at Virgin Active shows you how to hit like a girl.

As a young girl, Xoliswa Nkosi would watch her uncle, a professional boxer, train – he would be working the bag, shadow boxing, doing push-ups and sit-ups. Xoli soon joined him,

but stopped when she got older after being told that girls her age had to help with household chores and had no place in boxing.

However, the desire was still there and in college, Xoli joined a gym where the coach was so impressed with her performance that he convinced her to fight. She quickly progressed from amateur to pro.

Even though she no longer steps into the ring competitively, Xoli still pulls on her gloves so that she can share her passion with others.

“Boxing has taught me discipline, dedication and determination. It’s made me resilient. It’s a skill that anyone can benefit from, physically and mentally. And it’s a lot of fun! You don’t even realise how hard you’re working while training,” she says.

Boxing is a mix of cardio and strength. Xoli lists the benefits:

- 1/ It helps improve hand-eye coordination.
- 2/ It relieves stress.
- 3/ It’s fun and never gets boring.
- 4/ It helps with weight management.
- 5/ It allows you to meet and make new friends.

Xoliswa likens boxing to “mental warfare”, saying that boxing keeps you mentally sharp and improves alertness. It’s a battle of strategy and tactics, and it boosts self-confidence.

It teaches important life lessons like:

- 1/ When you get hit down, get right back up and keep going.
- 2/ Always keep your guard up until you’re ready to make a move.
- 3/ React, don’t anticipate.
- 4/ Breathe.

If you’d like to dig deep and discover who you really are, try the following **Virgin Active boxing classes:**

- 1/ **“Punch”** takes place in a bespoke boxing studio using aqua bags.
- 2/ **“Rumble”** shares a studio with some of the other classes and uses free-standing punching bags.
- 3/ **“VA Number Punch”** takes place on the gym floor using numbered bags, digital content and club sound.

When it comes to your wellness, you deserve the best. That’s why we only work with the best. Meet five women who make your experience great and discover their inspiring stories.



DELIA FLISBERG

Virgin Active Personal Trainer and mom of five shares how she stays fit after 40.

By the time her fifth baby came, Delia had almost doubled in size – to 92kg. “I felt like a stranger in my own body, and the bigger I got the more depressed I became.”

So she decided to “run away” from her problems, and after a month of taking up running entered her first 10km race.

“It was that feeling of achievement that pushed me further along my fitness journey. My eyes opened to a new way of living. There were workouts where I felt like crying or quitting, but I learned that even when I didn’t believe in myself, I had to shut off the negative talk and put in the work.”

Now a personal trainer, group exercise instructor and wellness coach, Delia is as passionate about helping other women better themselves as she is focused on her own fitness journey. In the past two decades, her self-improvement journey has led to a bachelor’s degree in health science and social service, honours in psychology, and diet and nutrition certification, all of which enable her to help clients achieve their goals.

“I’m not going to sugar-coat it. It’s not easy and there’s going to be times when you feel like quitting, either because you’re tired, have run out of stamina or the novelty and excitement have

“Work-life-fitness balance is a key part of self-care... juggling work, family, friendships and time for exercise”



worn off. You’ve got to commit. You’ve got to be dedicated. And you’ve got to stick with it. Remember, it’s not a race, it’s a journey, with plenty of discoveries along the way.”

Delia acknowledges that she has a responsibility to manage the expectations of her clients, matching the reality of what’s

possible given their level of commitment. “I work with nature instead of against it, scheduling physical activity for times when you feel more energetic.”

Delia also stresses the importance of community. “When it comes to maintaining a fitness routine, while it’s possible to do it on your

own, it’s easier if you develop friendships with other active people who can keep you accountable.”

Some of Delia’s key exercise coaching tips include:

1/ Plan exercise like you would an important appointment. Make others aware of your commitment and ask

for their support.

2/ Work together with a group and enjoy the sociability and encouragement.

3/ Choosing activities you enjoy will help you to stick to your routine.

4/ Acknowledge that progress will happen in time. It’s important to not give up or become discouraged.

As a busy mom, Delia says that fitness is as much for her mental health as it is for her physical health. Her work as a psychological counsellor allows her to integrate mental health and well-being into fitness coaching.

“My health and mental state are important for the sake of my family. If I don’t exercise, I get irritable. Exercise is a stress release and the endorphins released during a workout have a positive effect on my emotional resilience. Exercise demands mental toughness, and being in the right headspace is key.”

Delia believes exercise offers higher levels of emotional stability and better mental health, and that besides weight loss, there are many intangible advantages such as a feeling of accomplishment, mood enhancement and a sense of community. Ultimately, it’s all about balance.

“I prioritise my well-being above all and have had to learn to say no to demands piling up in my day. Work-life-fitness balance is a key part of self-care for me, especially when juggling work, family life and friendships, as well as time for exercise.”



JOËLLE SLEEBOS

Yoga instructor at Virgin Active invites you to explore this ancient practice.

Yoga has many physical benefits, creating a stronger, more flexible, more mobile and healthier body. It also improves blood flow, lymphatics and organ health. However, more than purely physical, yoga will improve your well-being by relieving stress, anxiety and feelings of depression.

Yoga simply makes you feel good in your skin and connects you to the deeper layers

of your being – your mind, emotions and inner world. When you consciously move and breathe, you get to know yourself better, and it’s here that you learn to navigate life from a connected place. Exploring the different yoga practices also allows you to deal with life’s challenges more gracefully.

Ready to take you on that journey is Joëlle Sleenbos who, despite a passion for health and wellness, and even teaching group fitness since she was 17 years old, never really saw the appeal. Then, while

working in Australia, she decided to give what she’d always called “not real exercise” a try.

“My workplace offered yoga on a Tuesday during lunch break and I decided to try it out,” says Joëlle. “It started to creep under my skin and quickly improved my life in ways I could never have imagined. It’s become a lifestyle that I’m extremely grateful for.”

Joëlle explains that yoga is rooted in the ancient wisdom of the sister science of Ayurveda, which is based on the five elements of nature and

the energy existing in and around us. “These elements allow us to explore our personal, physical and mental composition and know our doshas. There are three doshas – Vata, Pitta and Kapha – and based on these doshas we can stimulate different energies to cultivate more physical and mental balance.”

At Virgin Active, we offer 45-, 60- and 90-minute classes both in the club and online. Our classes include: 1/ Yoga Flow, which cultivates airy Vata energy (dynamic

and flowy). **2/ Yoga Align, which cultivates fiery Pitta energy (steadiness and focus).**

3/ Yoga Calm, which cultivates earthy Kapha energy (slow, grounded, calm).

“Our Flow and Align classes are active classes that will make you sweat and discover places in your body you didn’t know existed,” Joëlle says. “We also work with philosophical monthly themes to allow our members to find deeper meaning in their lives, be more mindful and broaden their awareness.”



CATH COUPAR

The Head of Family Experiences at Virgin Active wants to see more girls in sport.

“I do this not as a job but as an opportunity to have a positive impact on families and children,” says Cath, who points out that girls aren’t encouraged to play in the same way that boys are. She believes this lack of encouragement stems largely from school and how the curriculum is set up.

She has her own fond childhood memories

of riding her bicycle, climbing trees and spending time in the backyard, either bowling at cricket stumps or trying to wedge a golf ball into a jam tin.

“Being active was a fundamental part of my upbringing and I have my parents to thank for that. Even my grandmother played tennis into her 70s. Every role model in my family played sport, and to this day I’m confident enough to hold my own on a tennis court or a hockey field, or simply throwing a ball

around with the guys on the beach.”

It’s because of this that Cath’s mission is to encourage kids to move. “The future lies with our children but, equally, it lies with us. With the right guidance and role modelling we can set them and future generations up for a happy, healthy and bright future,” she says.

In adulthood, sport boosts business success too. An Ernst & Young survey found that of the 821 high-level executives they sampled, 90% played sports; among

women holding a C-suite position, this figure rose to 96%. “There are a few great examples that, in my mind, show you how valuable sport in general is for children.”

Participating in sport teaches several important life skills:

- 1/** Sport promotes communication, collaboration, teamwork and problem-solving,
- 2/** Sport requires focus, discipline, consistency and determination.
- 3/** Sport shows you that even if you fail, you can

improve and come back stronger and better.

- 4/** Sport teaches you humility – to be humble when faced with failure – but also to remain tenacious and determined enough to overcome the failure.
- 5/** Sport requires time management, diligence, critical thinking and persistence.

“I must emphasise, though, that sport should not be used to drive children towards impossible levels of success. Sometimes sport just needs to be sport.” So let’s play!

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STEPHI HOLMWOOD

Assistant Creative Director at Virgin Active talks living with multiple sclerosis.

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a condition affecting the brain and spinal cord that can cause serious disability. It affects mainly women and there's currently no cure.

When Stephi was diagnosed with MS at just 27 years old, instead of seeing it as a prison sentence, she used it as an opportunity to make lifestyle changes that could give her a fighting chance.

"It's upsetting that there's no cure for MS and I can't reverse the progress of the disease, but I can slow it down - that's why I've chosen a more positive approach to the diagnosis."

Stephi's life changed on 4 March 2016 when she was diagnosed, but it's because of what she did after that that her life changed for the better.

Stephi's key lifestyle changes:

1/ A nutrition plan.

"I wanted to make sure I was getting enough calories, with a good macro breakdown. Previously, I'd stayed away from carbs, but after having my calories calculated, with a breakdown of protein, fats and carbs, I now include them to give my body enough energy to function. And with my training, I need to up my calories significantly."

2/ A good night's rest.

"It's while you sleep that your body repairs, rests,



"I couldn't imagine a life without training and am just so grateful it helps with my illness"

grows and prepares itself for the next day. I get the recommended eight hours of sleep every night, after learning that neglecting sleep put me in a place where I didn't know how I should feel any more. I had ignored the signs of being tired, sick and unproductive, and kept pushing regardless."

3/ Supplementation.

"After years of bad eating and not enough sleep, I was playing catch-up. I wanted to help repair some of the damage from years of neglect, and found the best supplements for me were vitamin D3, zinc, magnesium, fish oil and Metagenics supplements to help

with stress, hormone imbalances and sleep."

4/ Regular blood work.

"This testing allows me to track what's happening to my body hormonally. Working with an endocrinologist, I've discovered I have low levels of DHEA (a naturally occurring hormone that the body uses to make

other hormones, like oestrogen and testosterone) as well as low insulin and white blood cells, and that my brain was inflamed and stressed out."

4/ Consistent exercise and stress management.

"Numerous studies show that exercise benefits those with MS, and strength training especially can improve symptoms." Stephi was an active child who achieved a black belt in karate and even represented her country.

She has always made it a priority to balance her work days with visits to the gym and continues to train post-diagnosis. "I couldn't imagine a life without training and am just so grateful it helps with my illness. Exercise also plays a huge role in managing my stress and I wouldn't cope without it. I get more stressed if I don't exercise daily."

With MS affecting so many women, what should we look out for?

"From pins and needles to pain and the blindness in my left eye, I knew there was an issue." Other symptoms might include fatigue, muscle spasms and weakness, and dizziness. "When my physiotherapist could no longer help with the pain, she recommended I see a neurologist. After an MRI and lumbar puncture, it was confirmed that I had MS. I'm glad I had enough time to act before the lesions took over more parts of my brain."



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Fitter. Faster. Stronger. Harder. The language of performance broadcasts these messages from billboards that tower above us at unreachable heights. Caps locked and with exclamations to further the point, we're challenged to just do it, be better and never stop never stopping.

Motivationals harass our Discover feed. Well-intentioned fit friends frustrate us with their toxic positivity. Slogan T-shirts taunt us at the gym: 'If you want it, work for it', 'Be stronger than your strongest excuse', 'If it's not hurting, it's not working'...

However, for most of us, the extreme is not where we're at and the most inspiring #MondayMotivation post isn't WD-40 for the joints. Why is it that the fitness narrative to push ourselves harder is often at the expense of our bodies? And is there a way to achieve wellness without sacrificing ourselves in the process?

Enter low-impact exercise, physical activity that's gentle on the body without risk of injury. "Low-impact exercise side-steps the single biggest barrier we have to getting fit once we've made a commitment to it, which is injury risk," says Professor Ross Tucker, a sports scientist and high-performance sports expert. "A lot of people reach the point of changing their lifestyle to train, which is the biggest hurdle, but then stumble over the next challenge - pain and sometimes injury. This happens when we put our bodies through unfamiliar exercise."

If you have no real history of exercise, even mild training can put pressure on the joints, tendons, ligaments and muscles. Tucker says that this stress is good, but if there's too much too soon, it can overwhelm the body's ability to cope. "Low-impact exercise avoids this scenario, and even though it does to some degree limit what we can do, it allows us to make that start with less risk."

**READY TO MAKE YOUR START?
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CYCLING
As easy as riding a bike

Cycling will lower your blood pressure, reduce the risk of chronic illnesses such as heart disease and diabetes, and shred fat while strengthening the legs, glutes and core. The best part? You don't have to invest in expensive gear, risk your life on the road or wear spandex - our Cycle Studio has a stationary bike waiting for you.

"Cycling is one of the few fitness activities that can be enjoyed by everyone, from the very young to the very old," says Head of Cycle at Virgin Active Fiddy Gey van Pittius. "The nature of cycling lends itself to a natural and simple action of the legs, with little co-ordination needed, making it easy for people to start cycling and keep cycling."

Fiddy goes on to explain how regular cycling not only helps people to lose weight, but also helps overweight people to become more mobile and agile at the same time. And it's not just bigger bodies that benefit, but older people too.



“Done daily, cycling is linked to increased brain health and promotes blood flow to the brain, assisting with the reduction of degenerative cognitive changes due to ageing. For the elderly, cycling is also an activity which assists in keeping them socially engaged and less isolated.”

Fiddy suggests the following to anyone wanting to get up and riding: “At Virgin Active we offer 45- to 60-minute classes that cater for all. Tell the instructor you’re just starting out and they’ll ensure they give you the best introduction to their class. Remember, you’re in control and can progressively build your fitness.”

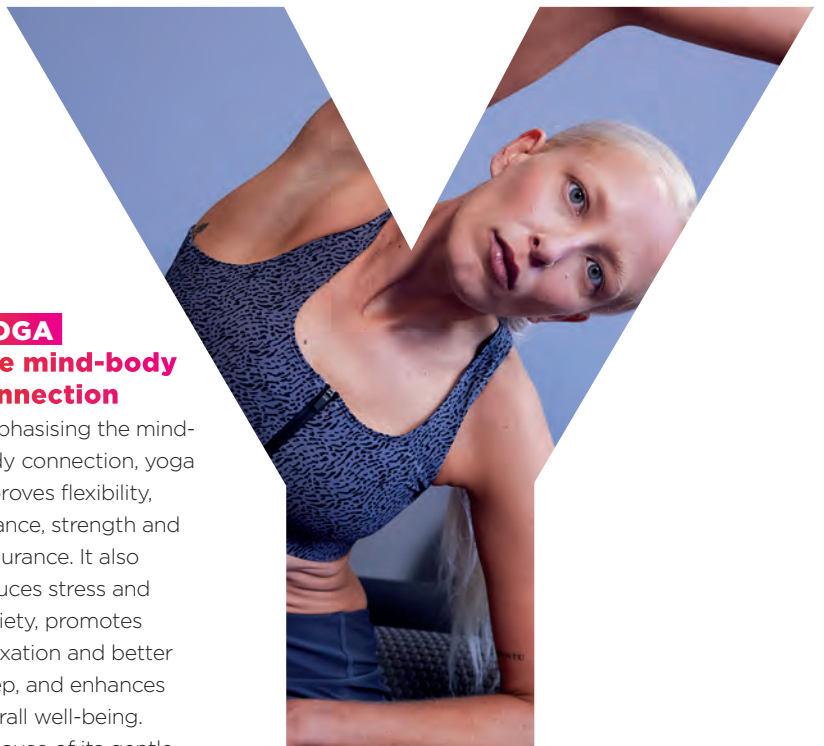
SWIMMING
The ultimate low-impact exercise

Swimming engages almost all major muscle groups while being gentle on the joints. An excellent cardio workout, it’s the ideal choice for anyone with arthritis, joint pain or other conditions that limit high-impact activities. In addition to its physical benefits, swimming will take care of your head, too – it’s a relaxing and meditative activity that reduces stress, anxiety and depression.

Nicholas Myler, a group swim project manager from the UK who recently joined Virgin Active SA, reports that promoting weekly swimming in England saves the National Health Service and social-care system more than £357 million a year.

“Exercise within aquatic environments provides additional buoyancy, which alleviates pressure on joints and injuries,” says Nick. “Similar to other forms of exercise, swimming also releases endorphins, which support in increasing positivity and a sense of well-being.”

Nick says that not only does regular swimming reduce long-term health conditions, but that swimmers report feeling 6.4% healthier than non-swimmers. This is comparable to feeling 12 years younger! Dive right in, then, if you’re searching for the fountain of youth.



YOGA
The mind-body connection

Emphasising the mind-body connection, yoga improves flexibility, balance, strength and endurance. It also reduces stress and anxiety, promotes relaxation and better sleep, and enhances overall well-being.

Because of its gentle and low-impact nature, yoga is suitable for people of all ages, sizes and fitness levels.

“Yoga will make you connect with deeper layers of your being,” says Virgin Active yoga instructor Joëlle Sleetbos, “and because it’s non-competitive and non-judgemental, it allows everyone to practise in the same space at the same time.”

The awareness of the power of your breath, the practising of a rhythmic breath together with the meditative/relaxation practices of yoga, are designed to induce a sense of calm, well-being, stress tolerance and mental focus, all of which may minimise depression, anxiety and stress.

“Consistently practising yoga is also an excellent way to prevent injuries in athletes, as it creates a subtle understanding of the body and is an excellent way to become aware of your movement patterns.”



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TOP TIPS

No matter which exercise you choose, here's how to get the most out of your workout:

- 1/ Warm up and cool down.** Before exercising, spend a few minutes warming up your muscles to prevent injury. After your workout, stretch to reduce muscle soreness.
- 2/ Listen to your body.** Pay attention to how your body feels during exercise. If you feel pain, adjust your intensity.
- 3/ Progress gradually.** As you become more comfortable with your exercise routine, gradually increase the intensity or duration of the workout to challenge your body and see results.
- 4/ Cross-train.** Incorporating different types of low-impact exercises into your routine prevents boredom and engages different muscle groups.

Yoga is for everyone, and Virgin Active offers three different classes – Yoga Flow, Yoga Align and Yoga Calm – each of which cultivates a different energy and has different benefits for the mind, body and soul. Join the class of your choosing, or if you'd rather practise at home, check out our bank of yoga videos on YouTube.

PILATES**It's got your back**

Pilates strengthens the core, improves posture and increases flexibility. A strong core takes pressure off your spine and can reduce or prevent back pain. Pilates also incorporates breathing and mindfulness techniques that promote relaxation and stress reduction. Adding pilates to an existing cardio or weights routine results in improved balance, better posture and reduced risk of injury.

"People of all sizes, shapes and ages can take pilates classes," says Verna Young, a Virgin Active pilates instructor. "It's a low-impact exercise that doesn't require a high level of cardiovascular or muscular fitness to get started. As long as you make the necessary adjustments to suit your starting point – your instructor will guide you here – you'll find pilates accessible."

Verna adds that the variety of modifications makes this a fantastic, low-impact form of exercise for older people especially. "Pilates strengthens the thigh muscles, and this may help prevent arthritis and knee injuries. It's also a good choice if you have chronic lower-back pain."

Pilates is also a great tool to assist or even enhance a physiotherapy programme if you're recovering from an injury. "By strengthening the deepest muscles of the core, optimising alignment and creating correct movement patterns, you prevent reaggravation of those injuries and the development of new ones."

In addition to the physical benefits, research shows that when thinking about your movement, your brain cells grow at a faster rate and your nervous system creates better connections throughout the body. Looking to reduce stress, anxiety and fatigue while improving your mood? Pilates is just the thing.

So, whether you prefer swimming, yoga, pilates or cycling, these low-impact exercises provide numerous physical and mental health benefits while reducing the risk of injury. By following the tips above and listening to your body, you can achieve your fitness goals while maintaining a healthy, sustainable, active lifestyle.





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sleep

The Sun Sleep Solution

By **Carey Townsend**





Like most things in life, when we don't have them, we covet them, and sleep is no different. Speak to the new mother who dreams of sneaking away for uninterrupted Zs, or the insomniac whose anxiety hits as the sun goes down – when we're not sleeping, we're suffering.

In my teens and 20s, I discovered the booming nightlife of the metropolis of Cape Town and happily handed over my sleep to the clubs,

racking up debt as deep as the Mariana Trench. Interestingly, I didn't feel it at the time and, perhaps due to my youth or just the sheer excitement of being out, happily eked it out on the bare minimum.

Fast-forward to my early 30s when my first son was born, and the coveting of sleep began. I'd climb into bed anxiously calculating how many hours of sleep there'd be until the next feed. Resentment grew as my husband and I bickered over who got up last time, grumbling with burning eyes to the nursery. Suddenly sleep was very much on the agenda and has remained front and centre ever since.

"Sleep is incredibly important to live your healthiest life," says Christie Stanley, holistic health practitioner specialising in lymphatic iridology and circadian biology. "Our bodies cannot enter deep phases of cellular repair if we don't enter the deepest phases of sleep."

In bypassing this essential state of regeneration, we experience a cascade of symptoms, from hormonal imbalance to low libido and lack of focus. "Most adults are suffering from chronic exhaustion," says transformational psychiatrist Dr Shiv Dawson, "so we crave restorative sleep as a key pillar of health and happiness."

The quest for sound sleep led me
back to nature. Not long ago people lived
according to the Earth's relationship with the sun.

Our activities and diet changed with the seasons and we honoured
the primal and cyclical nature of our bodies. Waking with the sun, performing
tasks until dusk, settling in for the night and sleeping. By implementing a few of these
ancestral hacks, we might just be able to consistently secure the ever-elusive full night's rest.

Circadian rhythms, your internal biological clock, operate on a roughly 24-hour cycle
and influence when you begin to feel sleepy, when you wake up and when you carry out various bodily
processes. Our modern lives, however, see us connected to light-emitting digital devices from the moment
we open our eyes to the moment we close them, and this constant connection wreaks havoc with our circadian
rhythms and bodies as a whole. "Circadian disruption leads to the destruction of vital hormones and contributes
to the onset of neolithic (infectious) diseases," says Christie. "Blue light devices and bright artificial light after sunset
are major circadian disruptors, reducing melatonin (the body's sleep hormone) and driving inflammation." Exposure
to blue light from screens before bed tricks the brain into thinking it's still daylight, thus blocking the release of
melatonin and making it difficult to fall and stay asleep. Minimising contact with blue light at night is a powerful
way to down-regulate your system and prepare it for sleep.

While I've embraced candlelight at night (thank you, Eskom, for the lighting inspo), I do still indulge in the odd night of
scrolling and watching (hello, *Succession* S4). To counter the effects, I decided to try a pair of blue light-blocking glasses.

TrulyBlue founder Jacques Prinsloo recommends limiting blue light exposure for at least an hour before going to bed or
using blue light-blocking glasses to minimise the negative effects on sleep, and I must say I am sold. Slipping on the glasses,
I've found viewing a screen less sharp on my eyes and less arousing for my nervous system. Saying that, my blue-blocking
glasses are filed for occasional use only, as easing into candlelit evenings definitely sets me up for sleep success.

It appears that what you do first thing in the morning is as important as what you do at night. "Good sleep is established
with healthy habits, beginning in the morning," says Dr Dawson. Her suggestion? Tuning into your circadian rhythm
and rising with the sun (a feat far more achievable once late-night viewing has been axed). Another game-changer is
exposing your eyes to early-morning natural light and avoiding waking and scrolling. The light that enters your eyes
communicates to your cells what time of day it is, providing vital signals to balance hormones and other functions.

Exposing your eyes to sunrise wavelengths (even on an overcast day) tells your body to stop producing
melatonin and allows for the natural rise of cortisol and the production of dopamine and serotonin, leaving
you feeling naturally energised and happy. Interestingly, windows block these powerful wavelengths,
so your best bet is to get outside – onto the ground, if possible – or to crack open a window or
door and raise your face to the sky.

One thing that poor sleep is unequivocally linked to is weight gain. Have you ever
noticed that a short stint of sleep (less than a full 7 to 9 hours) leaves you craving
all of the carbs? The science says the reason you're reaching for that
chocolate croissant is that two hormones, leptin and ghrelin,
are out of whack and messing with your body's
ability to regulate your appetite.

All we need to do is tune back in to the natural rhythms of our bodies and channel the wisdom of our ancestors: more morning sunlight, more feet on the grass...



Leptin, secreted by your body's fat cells, is known as the "satiety hormone". It's your body's way of telling your brain that you're full. Ghrelin, on the other hand, has been dubbed the "hunger hormone", signalling to your brain that your digestive system needs filling.

Studies show measurable differences in the levels of these hormones when people are well rested compared to when their sleep is scrappy. Specifically, when people slept for shorter periods, their levels of leptin fell while ghrelin rose. Creating a more supportive and consistent sleep routine helps aid weight loss and works to keep blood sugar stable.

Some of the most potent healing solutions are available to us free of charge from nature. All we need to do is tune back in to the natural rhythms of our bodies and channel the wisdom of our ancestors: more morning sunlight, more feet on the grass, more time in nature. Tried-and-tested cures for restorative, healthy sleep and a happy, healthy body. See you outside!

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Quanita Bobbs, Andile Dlamini, Aimee Barrett-Theron, Shabnim Ismail and Bongwiwe Msomi came to slay, not play.

Stacking up the accolades and gaining an unprecedented surge in public support, South African women's national sports teams – cricket, netball, soccer, hockey and rugby – are playing like they've got something to prove. From Banyana Banyana's AFCON victory to the women's cricket squad's incredible showing at the T20 World Cup, the athletes at the top of their game continue to play with a confidence that puts them in a league of their own. But the game's far from won. With women's sport lacking financial and institutional support, success is maintained game by game, with personal dedication, strength and courage behind every victory. This Women's Month, we've selected five whose wins are well worth celebrating.

Quanita Bobbs has shaken self-doubt

by **Natalie Fraser**

What does it take to become an Olympic athlete? For South African hockey player Quanita Bobbs, it's all about self-motivation. This is what took her from the sidelines, watching her dad's club play, and weaving a hockey ball through home-made obstacle courses as a child to representing South Africa at the recent Tokyo Olympics.

She describes her journey to this point as “a roller coaster” that started at age 10. She moved quickly from youth club hockey to playing for Western Province, which is where she was called up to the SA Schools Team. She showed no signs of slowing down when she enrolled at Stellenbosch University. Before she had finished her first year, she had been called up to represent South Africa at the 2012 Junior World Cup. Eleven years later, Quanita is an Olympian and has three World Cups under her belt.

The South African women's hockey team is relatively new and brimming with potential, and Quanita is optimistic about the team's upwards trajectory. The passion and commitment to her team is tangible as she speaks about their achievements thus far, but she remains focused on continual improvement. “It's all about self-motivation,” she says, emphasising that bettering oneself as an individual is crucial to a team's success.

This mindset has taken her from strength to strength, helping her refine her skills and overcome struggles with insecurity and self-doubt in her abilities. She has now captained the South African team on several occasions, something she considers to be one of the highlights of her sporting career.

Alongside her whirlwind of a sporting career, Quanita has thrived at work too. “I really try to make sure I am giving my best in all aspects of my life,” she says. In only four years, she has quickly moved up the ranks and is now Totalsports' customer relations manager. “I'm lucky enough that Totalsports supports my sporting career. They allow me to work remotely when I have national commitments.”

Quanita is currently at the top of her game and is only adding to her list of achievements as she takes on the role of entrepreneur. Her business, Great Herr, makes sports scrunchies that are secure, sweat-resistant and stylish. She hopes to create a community through Great Herr and turn it into a foundation that can provide support to promising young athletes in need of the financial means to pursue their sporting dreams.

“It's all a balancing act,” she admits, when asked how she manages her commitments to hockey, work and personal entrepreneurial ventures. She notes the importance of a get-it-done mentality, as well as having the right processes and support in place. Quanita also makes sure to include time for herself in this balance, and advises others to “make time for things you enjoy, whether it's going for walks or going to your favourite coffee shop”.

“LET'S
ALL
ABOUT

SELF
MOTIVATION”



**“LET’S TURN NEGATIVES
INTO POSITIVES,
NO MATTER HOW
CHALLENGING THE
SITUATION IS”**



For **Andile Dlamini**, the best is yet to come

by **Lethabo Nxumalo**

Many people now know Andile Dlamini as the 2023 South African Sports Star of the Year. Few remember her as “Sticks” from Thembisa, but all will agree on her incredible tenacity on the soccer field.

In the last three years, she has won two major continental titles at national and club level. As a Mamelodi Sundowns player, she participated in the inaugural 2021 CAF Women’s Champions League. During the tournament, the team didn’t have a single loss and conceded no goals – as goalkeeper, Andile kept a clean sheet. For her efforts, she won Best Goalkeeper of the Tournament.

Andile was also a member of the SA women’s national team that won the 2022 Women’s Africa Cup of Nations with a spectacular 2-1 victory over Morocco, the first time Banyana Banyana won the continental trophy and the first time the country has collected silverware since 1996.

Andile’s road to success wasn’t always smoothly paved. In her first couple of years as a professional

soccer player, her career was marred by struggle. She started off on the bench for the national team, behind Roxanne Barker and Thokozile Mndaweni. She made her debut for Banyana Banyana in 2011 against Botswana, and while she was selected for the 2012 and 2016 Summer Olympics respectively, she did not participate in a single game.

She only got her first slot in the national starting eleven in 2018 against Sweden. Just as she seemed to be getting on track, the pandemic derailed her progress. She suffered a Covid-induced heart condition that took about six months to recover from and threatened the vitality of her career, but she bounced back even stronger. She has displayed incredible fortitude and character through it all.

“I take challenges as a battle that I need to win. I turn negatives into positives, no matter how challenging the situation is, and I always have faith that things can change,” she says.

Football is not just a professional endeavour for Andile, it has also been a lifesaver. And with incredible loyalty to her craft, she believes that she can become the best goalkeeper in the world. And why not? “I see myself at the highest level,” she says. “I still have so much to achieve, and I can do it through hard work, discipline, faithfulness and staying grounded.”

Aimee Barrett-Theron is here to make history

by **Lethabo Nxumalo**



Aimee Barrett-Theron has been an active person ever since she was a child. Like her father, she was, in her own words, “sports mad”, playing hockey, touch rugby, tennis and softball. She was quite shy but would come alive on the field and court, with dreams of becoming an Olympian. That fiery determination made it inevitable that she would be a history maker.

As a professional rugby player, Aimee enjoyed a seven-year career, playing for the KwaZulu-Natal and Western Province Women’s Sevens teams. During that time, she also represented South Africa on the international stage at the 2009 Rugby World Cup Sevens and again the following year at the Women’s 15s World Rugby.

After hanging up her boots in 2013, Aimee took up refereeing in 2014 at the encouragement of her peers. It’s a job that she performs with dedication and passion. She applies the same principles to her work as a biokineticist and her physical therapy and conditioning business in Cape Town.

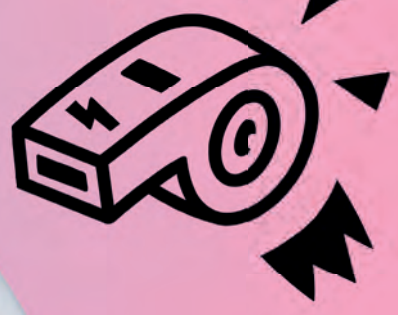
In 2016 her childhood dream of one day taking part in the Olympics was realised – albeit in a different way to what she envisioned – when she refereed at the Rio Olympics. Since then, she has been on the sidelines of the Currie Cup, World Rugby Women’s Sevens Series, Six Nations Rugby, World Cup qualifiers and the Women’s Rugby World Cup.

In 2021 she made history when she became the first woman to referee a men’s United Rugby Championship match in Italy – famously reprimanding scuffling players on field by saying, “I came all the way here to referee a rugby match, not look after children.”

While Aimee has earned reverence from colleagues and rugby fans, her story is far from complete. She aims to continue to climb higher in her career and, more importantly, hopes to be a role model to daughter, Harper, who was born last year.

“I absolutely love being a mom and it’s been a few months of adventure,” she says. “I’m hopelessly obsessed with her little chubby cheeks. I really hope she grows up feeding off my determination and drive to achieve. I hope she follows my love for sport and physical activity and getting outside and enjoying the beauty of Cape Town.”

“ I HOPE MY DAUGHTER FOLLOWS MY LOVE FOR SPORT & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ”



“WE
HAVE
TO

MEET
TOUGH
FITNESS
STANDARDS”



Shabnim Ismail

bowls us over

by **Abigail McDougall**

Shabnim Ismail is a pioneer of women's cricket in South Africa. She started her 16-year career with the Proteas in 2007 before the women's team were paid. "In 2014 I was one of the first six women to get paid to play. That was a game-changer. Now young women can see that you can actually play professionally," she says.

Shabnim started out playing in the streets of Cravenby, Elsie's River, as a teenager. She made it her goal to become the best in the world, and today she is a top international player, often referred to as the fastest female bowler in the game.

She was instrumental in South Africa's commendable performance in the recent T20 World Cup campaign, which was played at home. During the semi-final, Shabnim broke the women's speed record with a 128km/h rocket, helping the Proteas reach their first-ever World Cup final. She was honoured by the ICC as a standout player of the tournament. "The best part for me was that we had our families watching and all of South Africa supporting us. That gave us an extra boost," she says.

Shabnim admits that her goal was actually to reach 130km/h! "That's what I'm striving for." And she is relentless. If she could spend all day every day bowling, she would – she loves it that much. Her

quest for perfection has given her a furious pace and aggressive style that intimidates opponents. "I don't feel any pressure. The way I bowl in the practice nets is the exact same way I bowl during matches," she says. Her nerves of steel are key to her success with the Proteas and the international clubs she's played for in Australia, Wales and India.

Shabnim makes it look easy but fast bowling is physically demanding. "There are a lot of hard yards that go into it. We have to meet tough fitness standards, and you have to train to make sure your body is strong enough to withstand the bowling." Most important is finding the rhythm in her run-up, and bowling with a clear mind.

Shabnim has taken more wickets than any South African bowler in women's cricket history. At 34, she is a decorated veteran, and is ending her professional career on a good wicket after announcing her retirement from the professional game earlier this year. "I still strive to be better every single day. I always try to break down barriers; I want to make sure that I leave a legacy for the youngsters that come after me."

So what's it like to be an icon? Shabnim says she's living the dream she had as a teenager and as such loves being a role model for younger players, coaching and sharing her knowledge wherever she can. What would she say to her younger self? "Become a South African cricketer and bowl as fast as you can!"

Netball has arrived, as has **Bongiwe Msomi**

by **Lethabo Nxumalo**

It's been almost 20 years since Bongiwe Msomi accidentally fell into netball. While watching her friends play, she was asked to fill a spot, and that unremarkable moment turned out to be the catalyst for a career that changed her destiny.

The centre/wing attack player has had a successful career, representing South Africa at the Commonwealth Games and Netball World Cup, as well as playing in Australia, England and South Africa at club level.

In the span of her career, she has seen netball in this country start to enjoy more visibility, thanks to the increased participation at school level and more sponsors coming to the table to support its growth.

"Netball has remained an amateur sport over the years [perhaps due to it being a female-only game in the shadow of basketball], despite being one of the sporting codes that seems to be doing well both in stats and performances. The lack of financial support made it difficult for the sport to be taken seriously or to even be considered as a career like other professional sporting codes in our country," Bongiwe explains.

"We have seen a massive change, though, which led to the players at the national level receiving

contracts for the first time last year! This is a massive step for netball and it surely gives hope to netball lovers that the sport is heading in the right direction – that is, towards becoming a professional sport in the coming years."

Currently ranking fourth in the world, and with South Africa hosting the Netball World Cup for the first time ever in July and August this year, Team SA is a serious contender, hoping to better their performance at the 1995 World Cup in England, where they finished as runners-up.

In the last three competitions, South Africa has finished either fourth or fifth. As the leader on the court, the 34-year-old captain is confident in her team and knows what they are capable of. The key to winning is, as Bongi puts it, "all about preparation, the support and the belief".

"I believe we are putting in all the work, and it will be great to see it all come together," Bongiwe adds. "We've identified the areas that need improvement currently and I think it's such great timing that we are hosting the World Cup this year. We can make informed decisions and plans that are crucial to our preparations."

Through her Bongi Msomi Netball Project, Bongi is also investing in the future of netball by developing coaches and athletes to reach even greater heights.

**“THE KEY TO WINNING
IS ALL ABOUT PREPARATION,
THE SUPPORT AND THE
BELIEF.”**



Real Women, Real Results

Meet a community of empowered women activating wellness in their own unique ways. From inspiring member stories to expert insights, we share your survey results as well as the ultimate playlist for you to move and groove to. Sweat, strength and success start here...

MEMBER STORY

Dive Right In

You're never too old to learn new lessons,
writes **Delight Nonhlanhla Mondlane**

I promised myself that I'd learn to swim before my 40th birthday. When I mustered the courage to take the plunge, I'd only ever slipped into a swimsuit to pose for photos next to a pool.

Swimming and my swimming coach, Constance Mbuyane, gave me deep insights into life. Water is soft and flexible but powerful as well. You cannot struggle or wrestle with it and expect to succeed. Nothing and no one can oppose water; you must surrender to it. If you don't calm yourself down and trust the water to carry you, you will exhaust yourself and sink.

At my very first swimming lesson, I realised that if I wanted to make any progress, I had to trust my coach and surrender to the water. So, taking a moment to compose myself, I tucked a pool noodle under my arms and, face down in the water, began to glide.

When I relaxed, let go of all resistance and surrendered to the power of the water, the heaviness left me and I was able to glide gently forward. On the flip side, when I was tense and struggling against the water, my body sunk.

As I emerged from the water, I broke down and sobbed. Those few seconds of floating buoyantly on top of the water unlocked something in me. And as the tears flowed, it dawned on me that it wasn't only my physical frame that had experienced an intense release, but a huge shift had taken place in my mind too. Titanic mental blockages had been wrecked and I felt emancipated. That moment was tiny and brief,

yet it was profound enough to set the tone for all the swimming lessons that lay ahead of me. Each session released a new wave of reflections.

Life is like a body of water

It must be approached with respect, otherwise it will humble you. It's either you surrender to its flow and float as it carries you, or you struggle against the current and succumb to its force. To surrender doesn't mean aimlessly going with the flow – it's understanding certain situations you may find yourself in are beyond your control, and therefore you must not exhaust yourself physically, emotionally or otherwise trying to challenge the rhythm of your life. Do not resist. Release the need to control the flow of things or the process. Just allow. When you surrender, you float. It's the law.

Without proper alignment, life gets wobbly and progress is delayed

When my coach encouraged me to stop using the noodle and use my arms to manoeuvre my body in the water, the fear kicked in again. My glide was gone and I felt wobbly as I bobbed about frantically. When I asked the coach where I went wrong, she said, "Your body was not in a straight line, that's why you lost your balance. Try to have your head and legs in a straight line and see if you can glide further." With this advice, I took a second dive and flowed forward with ease. The same applies to life: when we are well aligned, life is effortless. When we align ourselves with the flow of the universe, we find balance, stability and progress.

Not only do I now wear a swimming costume for the purpose for which it was designed, I've also learned many lessons, the primary one being you are never too old to fulfil the promises you made when you were younger. Take the plunge!

VIRGIN ACTIVE SURVEY

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING WINTER WORKOUTS DO YOU TYPICALLY ENGAGE IN?

Running
33%

Cycling
29%

Swimming
17%

Strength Training
52%

Group Fitness Classes
48%

Other: Aqua aerobics, dancing, hiking, surfing, spinning, home workouts, animal flow, stretching, stair stepper, walking

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Virgin
active

KIDS

Tips and strategies from the floor

Virgin Active is about building a community, so we asked our members to share their best tips on training and staying motivated (especially during the colder months).

1 Cardio or HIIT indoors.

Always pack your gym gear the night before.

3 Adjust your schedule if you can (for example, it's not pleasant or safe to run in the dark early in the morning). Check if there are alternatives on the gym schedule.

6 Avoid winter binge-eating (and binge-watching)!

4 Just wake up and do it. Think of the summer body benefits.

5/ GET A GYM BUDDY.

7 Keep going, keep warm – and warm up before. Walking is a good warmup to get your body ready.

8 EXERCISE OUTSIDE ON A SUNNY DAY. GO FOR WALKS ON THE BEACH OR IN THE MOUNTAINS.

9 Find classes that make you want to be at the gym and attend those as much as you possibly can.

10/ STEAM ROOM, THEN SWIM, THEN STEAM ROOM, THEN FLOOR WORKOUT. HELPS THE BODY WARM UP TO PREVENT DAMAGE TO MUSCLES AND JOINTS AND ENSURES A HOLISTIC WORKOUT.

11 Having a personal trainer motivates one to an extent, as you're committed.

12 JUST CONSISTENCY ALL THE WAY.

13 PREPARE AHEAD OF TIME SO THAT YOU DON'T CHANGE YOUR MIND.

14/ Get up, get dressed, get going!

Walk whenever you can. Take the steps, not the lift.

15

16 Instead of running I have been walking on the treadmill and focus on toning, and then eating properly so I don't become a couch potato.

21 PUSH YOURSELF TO GO AND WORK OUT FOR YOUR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH.

17 KEEP IT UP TO BOOST YOUR IMMUNITY.

18

19/ Schedule your workout as if it is a business meeting and commit.

20 Group classes motivate me to go on.

Do something you enjoy.

22/ DO NOT MAKE EXCUSES - GO IN THE MORNING, EAT TO FEEL ENERGETIC AND HAVE GOALS IN MIND TO FEEL MOTIVATED TO GO TO THE GYM.

Going the Distance

Duathlon world champion in her age group, **Karen Walker** shares some of the secrets to her success.

As Head of Spatial Design at Virgin Active, Karen visualises, conceptualises and designs our clubs across the country. Her ability to see the bigger picture is something that has helped her to achieve in her sporting life, too, and this world duathlon champion is currently working towards defending her title at the Zofingen 2023 Powerman Duathlon World Championships: Long Distance in Switzerland later this year. We caught up with Karen to discover how she manages to do the most.

HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN SPORT?

I've always been sporty – I love running and the Comrades Marathon. My husband is a cyclist and does the Cape Town Cycle Tour. We had a bet going where he said he'd run the Comrades if I did a Cycle Tour, and that's how we both got into run and bike.

AND DUATHLON?

We joined a club where friends introduced us to it. They were training for the world championships and I trained with them for two years. They kept saying to me that I had to do Worlds, but I thought I couldn't do it. But once I tried and qualified, I've never turned back and have placed and qualified for four World Duathlons (10km run, 150km bike, 30km run).

“No matter what the weather is doing, we need to get out there”

WHAT'S YOUR CURRENT TRAINING ROUTINE LIKE?

It's an intense 12 weeks where I'll be building up my endurance and then tapering down towards race day. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday I do double sessions with core and strength training at my Virgin Active club. In the mornings I'll use the Wattbike and AirRunner, as well as functional training like Grid classes or core work with a personal trainer. Monday and Friday are for recovery, and I'll do a light swim and sauna. On weekends I'll train with the South African team anything from four to six hours, and it's either a long bike, long run or brick session where we run, bike, run.

What's key is that no matter what the weather is doing, we need to get out there. You never know what will happen on race day.

HOW DO YOU DO IT ALL? HOW DO YOU BALANCE INTENSE TRAINING WITH THE REST OF YOUR LIFE?

By staying focused on my training plan. I eat well, take my vitamins and keep my body healthy. I'm always listening to my body, and it's just as important to keep a strong mind. Everything in my life is about balance. That's why all my training sessions are either early mornings or late evenings, which allows me to have family time. My workload's quite intense, especially because I travel for site visits, so the days where I'm travelling, I'll make those my rest day.



ADVICE FOR SOMEONE WANTING TO TAKE THEIR SPORT TO THE NEXT LEVEL?

Believe in yourself and you'll go far. Then join a club. You'll meet like-minded people with experience who can coach, mentor and direct you. That's really important.

DOES YOUR TRAINING INFLUENCE YOUR DESIGN WORK?

I think having an understanding of training helps me to understand what our members expect. When I design spaces I look at how everything flows and works, and always approach a design project as someone who actually uses the facilities.

Would you be interested in participating in a winter fitness challenge hosted by **Virgin Active?**

SAID YES

71%

WHAT?

- Run challenge: 30% • Swim challenge: 9%
 - Cycle challenge: 22% • Circuit challenge: 20%
 - Adventure challenge: 21% • Step challenge: 32%
 - Group fitness challenge: 53%
- NO:** Winter is challenging enough!
• I'd prefer a gym leaderboard.

A FAMILY AFFAIR

Meet Natasha Adams, a Virgin Active Personal Trainer who is always looking to make her fitfam even bigger

"A lot of my clients share the common misconception that they'll never look as good as they did in their 20s," says Natasha. "I always tell them the same thing – that I'm far better now than I ever was at 20."

We're giving away Natasha's age here, but back then she was a member of the Health & Racquet Club. Today she's a personal trainer, just like her husband and daughter are.

"Wellness isn't easy and I believe that if your 'why' isn't strong enough, you're heading for failure. My 'why' is to stay healthy for my family. In our family we say that if you look after yourself for me, I'll look after myself for you."

For Natasha, being a PT isn't a job, it's her life, and it's little wonder then that her clients become so much

"If you help people get what they want, you'll get what you want"

more than that. "To be a good PT you have to love helping people. My philosophy in life is that if you help people get what they want, you'll get what you want."

More than anything, Natasha wants to see her clients succeed in whatever their specific wellness goals are. Because she refuses to give up on anyone who is willing to meet her halfway, Natasha has had a lot of career highlights, but one in particular brings a tear to her eye. "My greatest achievement was when a client of mine phoned me to tell me that her doctor had just halved her medication and even taken her off some of her chronic meds, all because she'd become a healthier person through exercise. It's amazing, three times a week she drives from Khayelitsha to train with me at 6am. How's that for commitment?"

Small wins make for long-lasting lifestyle changes, and Natasha says that success is "when a client is happier on day three of their programme than they were on day one". You don't have to wait 30 days to see results, she says. It's the little gains that make up the big successes. Whatever the mind can conceive and believe, it will achieve.

"If someone is not ready mentally, then the training programme is not going to last – I can guarantee that. Mindset is everything. I like to ease my clients into their programme. Simple, keep it fun and the magic will happen. A habit, or what I like to call 'happy-bit', must start small."



Music

TO MOVE TO

A playlist to elevate workouts, leisurely walks and everything in between – from the women tuned in

Whether your day begins with a high-intensity workout at dawn or a brisk stroll to work, if you're moving, it's likely that there's music involved. We've put together a track selection for these moments, with the help of women who love movement and music. Just push play!

TECLA CIOLFI @texxonfire

From event curation and artist management to journalism and podcasting, Tecla Ciolfi has been involved in the music industry for 15 years. She recently began training and, by her own account, "suffers at gym most mornings" – all the more reason to trust her for music that keeps the motivation coming.

Energy – Beyoncé
Dior – Pop Smoke
Miss You – Oliver Tree & Robin Schulz
Sad Girlz Luv Money Remix – Amaarae (ft Kali Uchis)



ZAMA DLAMINI @boobykrypt @babypinkicecubes

A multidisciplinary visual artist, poet, nature-lover and part-time DJ "who listens to music full-time". Of course, it's music that fuels this boundless creativity.

Howl – Alexandra Savior
How Is It To Be You? – Cosmo Vitelli & Truus de Groot



AMY AYANDA @amyayanda

Multimedia artist Amy began playing piano and guitar in high school and developed over the years into her current, distinctive electronic sound. She has performed with her band on stages including CTEMF, Design Indaba and Rocking the Daisies.

Slip – MEUTE
Manila – Maribou State
How It Goes – Mocky



DHANUSHA DHOORGALU @miss_dhanusha

With a focus on holistic wellness for millennial women, Dhanusha is a self-care coach, content creator and speaker. Like the content she makes to help women learn to feel good about themselves, Dhanusha's music to move to is upbeat, confident and fun.

Break My Soul – Beyoncé
Good As Hell – Lizzo
Unstoppable – Sia



FAYE TUNNICLIFFE @fayetunncliffe

Faye is both a personal trainer and professional cricketer, but "there's always time to have a good time!" She has broad, varied music tastes; these tracks she's chosen reflect her fun-loving personality and that she enjoys "working hard and hustling too".

Put You On Game – Russ
Hell On Earth – REZZ x Yultron
Industry Baby – Lil Nas X (ft Jack Harlow)



TAYLA FAULMAN @thescienceofslaying

Exercise physiologist Tayla has "a passion for exploring what the body is capable of doing". Her current training focus is on Olympic weightlifting, and she's been involved in various competitive sports – from water polo to soccer – as well as working as a strength and conditioning coach. No surprise she's got a winning selection of songs to go hard to.

Monster – Kanye West
Heads Will Roll – Yeah Yeah Yeahs
Come Down – Anderson .Paak



WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO CONTINUE WORKING OUT DURING WINTER?

Maintain or improve overall fitness:

68%

Boost mood and energy levels:

59%

Achieve a specific fitness goal:

31%

Social interaction with other gym members:

12%

Maintain or lose weight:

54%

Other:

"I train with one of your trainers, Ed, and if I wasn't meeting him I'm sure I wouldn't make it there half as much as I do now."

– Samantha de Reuck

"My biggest motivation is Clive Grobbelaar. I have never attended a class with an instructor as good and as motivating as he is. He pushes everyone to stretch their limits, and the benefits to my health have definitely paid off."

– Aileen Davey

WHAT CHALLENGES DO YOU TYPICALLY FACE WHEN TRYING TO STAY ACTIVE DURING THE WINTER MONTHS?

Cold weather and lack of daylight:

60%

Limited motivation to exercise:

32%

Time constraints due to work/school:

48%

Safety concerns:

16%

Lack of access to equipment or facilities:

9%

Other:

Load shedding

Flu

Injury

"I actually prefer training in winter compared to summer. It's cooler and there's less traffic at the gym at the times I'm there."

– Tabisa Sotyato

Exercise doesn't need to hurt to make you feel good. To debunk that old 'no pain, no gain' myth, we've rounded up a few forms of exercise outside mainstream workout routines that make working out feel less like PE class and more like fun.

by **Josie Roux and Shai Rama**

R

eframing exercise begins with the understanding that there are endless options beyond the 'punishing' workout or the idea of pushing your body to its absolute limit. Alternative exercise routines offer a sense of

freedom and self-expression and are undoubtedly a more gentle, inclusive and enjoyable way to incorporate movement into your life. So why not break out of your fitness rut and try something new? You may just discover a new passion and a healthier, happier you.

Alternative exercise is about creative movement, which can be more exciting and engaging than traditional methods of physical exertion, helping to get you motivated to try something fun and keep you motivated to stick to a new routine. Many offbeat exercise routines are designed to be accessible to people of all fitness levels and abilities, making them a great option for beginners or those who are looking for a new challenge.

LAUGHTER YOGA

We've all heard the phrase 'laughter is the best medicine', and this form of yoga takes that to heart. Based on the belief that laughing is a natural way to reduce stress and promote physical and mental health, laughter yoga involves a combination of yogic breathing and simulated laughter exercises designed to produce the same physical and psychological benefits as natural laughter.

In case you're wondering, laughter yoga is not forced or stimulated by humour, jokes or comedy. Instead, it is a deliberate and intentional exercise that involves breathing and movement techniques

to encourage prolonged, sustained laughter.

Participants engage in laughter as a group, creating a positive and supportive environment that promotes social interaction and a sense of connection.

Laughter yoga is the antithesis of the 'pain is weakness leaving the body' philosophy, as it encourages joy, relaxation and socialising as its primary objectives, rather than discomfort, sacrifice and hard work.

Sylvia Dass, a retired English teacher, took up laughter yoga in Cape Town before continuing with the practice in Miami, Florida, where she now resides. "At my age, I was sceptical about this new form of yoga and I was truly nervous about what it entailed," she says. "After trying it out for the first time, I felt completely relaxed afterwards and the aches, pains and high blood pressure that naturally comes with old age felt more tolerable."

MOVE



DIFFERENT

“The classes are always inclusive, with people of all ages, which made me feel more comfortable. And for the first time in my life, laughing during class doesn’t get you kicked out!” she says.

The benefits? Well, laughing minimises the level of stress hormones in the bloodstream and triggers the release of endorphins, which enhances the immune system and reduces blood pressure, helping to prevent heart disease, strokes, ulcers and arthritis – not to mention that even a few minutes of simulated (or genuine) laughter can have a significant impact on the abdominal muscles. Abs from laughing? We’ll take that.

POLE DANCING

While it may have a history as a form of adult entertainment, since the early 2000s pole-dancing studios have proliferated as people realised the incredible health benefits of this form of exercise. In terms of its physical benefits, pole dancing is something of a triple threat: it’s great for full-body strength building, while also improving flexibility and cardiovascular endurance. Many students of pole dancing also say that they find it to be hugely empowering and invigorating, and the practice has become a space for exploration far removed from a form of entertainment that promotes objectification.

Pole dancing allows women to reclaim their agency, sensuality and creativity in a way that feels both self-affirming and fun. “Of course, pole and aerial have amazing benefits for people’s bodies: if practised with correct technique and learned in a safe environment, they provide a full-body workout and make our

bodies strong,” says Tiina O’Connor, owner of South Pole Studio in Cape Town, which is focused on pole and aerial dance as an art form. “But pole especially has another benefit that I find much more special and which I hear about from so many of my students: it makes us okay with our bodies. Students start appreciating their bodies for their capabilities, they become more comfortable in – and even proud of – their bodies.”

Tiina has a background in ballet, contemporary dance and theatre that gives her a unique perspective. “It’s really beautiful to watch this happening,” she says, “and I have so many students and

instructors, and also myself – coming from a ballet background and always having struggled with my body image and eating habits – who can tell the same story. It’s quite life-changing.”

ROLLER DERBY

Conceived in the United States in the 1930s – a time when women playing a contact sport was almost unthinkable – roller derby is a high-intensity activity consisting of two teams of roller skaters on an oval track attempting to score points. The sport is a mix of athleticism, strategy and entertainment, making it a thrilling experience for both players and spectators.

Roller derby in South Africa has gained a dedicated following in recent years. Several leagues have been established, including the Golden City Rollers in Johannesburg, the Cape Town Roller girls and the Durban Roller Derby.

According to author and copywriter Ming-Cheau Lin, “You can’t truly separate the sport from the organisation – it becomes a family”. Much of what Ming-Cheau loves about roller derby relates directly to this inclusivity and the fact that “it’s a fun and active community to be part of [and] there are roles for all types of members and volunteers, like non-skating officials and announcers”.

Roller derby leagues provide opportunities for women of all ages, backgrounds and skill levels to participate. Many offer beginner-friendly programmes and workshops that help players learn roller skating basics, as well as the nuanced rules and tactics of the game. “I’d last roller skated when I was seven, then again at 24. My body remembered and I caught

on quite quickly,” says Ming-Cheau. “But I’ve seen beginners who have never skated before turn into roller derby professionals. There is room for a skater at any level. The league has coaches and sessions where you train in groups, and members often do outdoor skate sessions together.”

The sport’s physical nature provides a release, and there’s a good degree of teamwork and cooperative play involved: players must work closely together and communicate effectively to succeed. It allows participants to connect with themselves and those around them, improving self-confidence and providing



a sense of community and belonging. Besides these mental benefits, roller derby is an excellent form of cardiovascular exercise and is a great workout for the legs, glutes and core. And did we mention the quirky outfits and zany alter egos adopted by players? There are few sports that welcome self-expression to this degree.

ULTIMATE FRISBEE

Ultimate Frisbee, often referred to simply as 'Ultimate', is a game played between two groups of seven with a frisbee (or flying disc). The players throw the frisbee down the field to each other and score points by catching the frisbee on their opponents' side of the field. The sport is an excellent form of exercise, as it requires you to be constantly on the run, with short bursts of sprinting if the frisbee comes your way. It also helps improve your aim and hand-eye coordination.

The South African Flying Disc Association (SAFDA) was established in 1990, and Ultimate has been growing in popularity ever since, with SAFDA organising events and competitions across the country. Over the years, women have become better represented in the Ultimate community, and initiatives such as women-only training camps and tournaments have made the space more inclusive and equitable.

Ultimate can be played professionally or recreationally. While there are plenty of official teams competing in national and even international events, there are also many informal community-based groups that play for the joy of it. If you're looking to get your body moving, get some fresh air and have fun, then there's perhaps no better way than to grab a group of friends and a frisbee and head to your nearest green open space.

"I came to know about Ultimate Frisbee when I saw a group of people tossing a frisbee around while I was walking my dog at Hamilton Park in Bryanston," recounts Mia Albrighton. "A few days later, my boyfriend and I asked if we could play and they happily welcomed us to join in on the action. I've been playing Ultimate casually over the last few months, normally before going to the gym, to get that cardio in!

"It's a really fun, no-pressure activity and the people are always super-friendly with no judgement, no matter what your skill level is. My boyfriend, Dane, tore his ACL a while back and has been playing Ultimate Frisbee to ease his way back into physical exercise. We play together some afternoons and would encourage anyone to try it out for themselves."

"For the first time in my life, laughing during class doesn't get you kicked out!"

LONGBOARDING

If you enjoy the wind in your hair and a bit of a rush of adrenaline, longboarding could be for you. It's an offshoot of skateboarding that involves a longer board and wider wheels than average, making it a bit easier to balance and remain stable. Going longboarding could mean some relaxed cruising or exhilarating downhill racing. Either way, it uses muscles in your legs, upper body and especially your core, and it's a great way to improve your endurance and balance. South Africa's longboarding community is steadily growing and aims to be a welcoming, inclusive space for all.

Andréa Katzeff, a skateboarder from Cape Town, says that longboarding is one of the most liberating things you can do for yourself. "I got into longboarding when I worked at a surf shop, where one of my colleagues was a sponsored rider. I asked him to teach me," she says.

"I came from a skateboarding background, so I definitely had an advantage. I wouldn't say it's easy to learn but it's certainly easier than one thinks, as long as you've got your safety gear on while learning, which will boost your confidence – and keep those doctor's bills at bay! Ultimately, you just want to find a nice hill with smooth tar. Personally, I skate around Kirstenbosch and Bishopscourt, but there are countless spots."

Andréa's advice to anyone who wants to get into the sport is to find a group of people who are part of the community, on Instagram or Facebook, and get involved through that. "They'll welcome you into longboarding with open arms and teach you as much as they can," she says. "Don't be scared, don't be shy, just let loose and have fun!"

There are a number of longboarding groups, like the global Longboard Girls Crew, that you can join if you're looking to meet like-minded longboarders at every skill level. These groups hold meet-ups and events where female longboarders can share tips, help each other learn and break gender stereotypes. Make sure that you have the necessary protective gear, like a helmet and knee pads. Other than that, all you need is a board! You'll be having so much fun that you'll forget you're exercising at all.

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The POWER *years*

Contrary to popular belief, menopause can be the most empowering and fulfilling stage of a woman's life — but knowledge and support are key. **By Susan Hayden**



“B

lindsided” is how Soraya*, 51, a confident and successful Cape Town attorney, describes how the sudden and dramatic onset of menopause symptoms made her feel.

“I was in a Monday morning meeting with clients,” she explains. “It was a challenging meeting and I was stressed. I’d also had an argument with my teenage son that morning on the way to school, so I was feeling a bit off-kilter. Suddenly this rising wave of heat came over me, like there was a fire in my chest. I felt my face go red and I began to perspire visibly. My heart started to pound and I had a massive adrenaline surge. I must have looked odd because they were staring at me. I excused myself, went to the bathroom and had what I now know was a massive panic attack. I felt like I couldn’t breathe, like I was going to die. I sent a WhatsApp to my secretary, asking her to tell my clients I was sick, and snuck out of the building, embarrassed and confused. I drove home, shaking.”

This was the start of what Soraya describes as the most challenging years of her life, much harder than paying her way through university, way tougher than being a new mother juggling childcare and a career. Symptoms were hard-hitting and debilitating, and included crippling anxiety, chronic insomnia and brain fog so severe she struggled to do her job, having to take work home with her on the weekends.

Since her own mother had never spoken to her about it, because it was not something her sisters or friends had ever brought up in conversation, this highly educated woman in the prime of her life had had no idea of what to expect — and even less of an idea what to do about it when it happened.

For other women, the changes that come in the perimenopausal and menopausal years are more subtle and gradual: creeping weight gain, changes to the menstrual cycle, unexpected outbursts of anger and a niggling, nameless dread. Whichever way the post-menarche years of a woman’s

life occur, it’s a big deal both in physical and psychological terms. While we educate girls and boys at length about puberty, menopause (which is pretty much the hormonal opposite) remains stigmatised and shrouded in secrecy, something distasteful and embarrassing that should not be referred to in polite company. As a result, when it hits, most women are entirely unprepared. Even the bravest, most confident among us speak about this natural transition in shameful whispers, if at all. But, mostly, we keep it to ourselves, suffering in silence and hoping we’ll be able to bluff our way through and pretend nothing in our lives has changed – when, actually, a lot has.

According to the 2022 Dahlia Benchmark Report on the experiences of South African women during menopause, a massive 81% of women enter perimenopause with a very limited understanding of what is happening and what to expect:

- 1 in 5 women actively hide their menopause at home
- 1 in 4 describe their menopause symptoms as having a significant impact on their lives
- 1 in 5 say their menopause has a debilitating impact on their work.

These sobering statistics highlight how much this hugely significant part of every woman’s life is downplayed, at best, and ignored entirely at worst, leaving women in their mid-40s to mid-50s feeling confused, unsupported and unsure of where to turn.

The lucky few find their way to the consulting rooms of medical professionals like Dr Simone Silver, founder of Cape Town’s Hormonal Health & Wellness Centre. She understands all too well the role hormones play in our health and wellness and is passionate about giving women the information, help and support they need.

“While most women know that menopause will come at some point, what is often not as well understood are the perimenopausal years, which can start up to 15 years before menopause,” Dr Silver says. “The change in how female hormones behave can underpin myriad symptoms, such as mood imbalances, anxiety, heart palpitations, loss of stress tolerance, irritability, night sweats and sleeping difficulties. Because there can be so many reasons for this, healthcare providers often don’t initially

We keep it to ourselves, suffering in silence and hoping we’ll be able to bluff our way through and pretend nothing in our lives has changed



DEM BONES



Because the risk of osteoporosis skyrockets after menopause, strength training and exercise that puts weight on your bones is vital.

If you've always been a cardio bunny, now is the time to add dumbbells to your repertoire. Lifting weights helps to build bone and muscle strength and also burns off the fat that gathers around the midriff. More muscle means a quicker metabolism, so win-win.

attribute these symptoms to an underlying hormonal problem. In this way, these 'hidden' symptoms of hormone imbalance go completely undetected."

Dr Silver goes on to explain: "The historical notion is that if we manage menopausal symptoms like hot flushes and vaginal dryness, we've done quite a good job, but that is only the tip of the iceberg. We need to be managing menopausal patients from a holistic and multisystem point of view and employ a multifaceted plan of treatment, because it is not just the symptoms we see now that are a problem. The loss of female hormones significantly changes how our cardiovascular system functions, our thyroid, our joints and bones, and how our metabolism works.

"There are health changes that happen around the menopausal time which have a huge impact on what a woman's risks are down the line of chronic disease. It affects the brain, mood, sleep, cognition and memory, which not only has a huge impact on how women function but also increases their risk of chronic disease. From a medical point of view, we need to be mindful of this and take a holistic approach - what is happening in all the health systems of the woman we are treating?"

Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) is an integral part of the equation. As Dr Marlena du Toit, a Cape Town gynaecologist and sexual medicine specialist explains, a poorly conducted study in 2002 linked HRT to breast cancer and

blood clots, which created fear and stigma around this potentially very effective treatment. As a result, women often decline to get help and suffer in silence. "Over the past 20 years, follow-up studies have proven the safety and benefits of hormone therapy and we now know that it can significantly improve the lives of women during their perimenopausal and menopausal years."

A robust study conducted in 2019 clearly demonstrated that there is no association between blood clots and the use of topical HRT, she adds. The current best practice recommendation guideline is, as far as possible, to prescribe topical HRT in the form of a patch or gel which slowly releases oestrogen and progesterone into the bloodstream. And don't wait too long, she advises. The best time to initiate HRT in order to optimise quality of life and prevent osteoporosis and cardiovascular disease is in the early 50s.

Different kinds of hormones (natural versus synthetic) have different effects on the body and not all women are candidates for HRT (if they've had breast cancer, for example). For this reason, hormone therapy is just one part of the discussion. According to Dr Silver, a woman should be guided as to what her other options are, both from a pharmacological and broader point of view, with attention given to a woman's lifestyle, her stressors, her diet and nutrient status, how her gut health is functioning and the environment in which she lives.

The menopausal years can be a truly freeing stage when a woman has the opportunity, at last, to live a life of her own choosing

“There is a whole ecosystem to be considered when it comes to managing menopausal women, internally and externally,” Dr Silver asserts. “By using this ‘ecosystem thinking’, we can come up with a really good management plan. It’s so important to have an individualised care plan for every woman and to look at what her own experience of her menopause is, because every woman is unique.”

As women, even in the most developed societies, our *raison d’être* has largely been our capacity to breed, and the relative silence around this significant life transformation is a spin-off of a deeply patriarchal society and medical fraternity: if it’s not sexy, it flies under the radar. “If we’re no longer biologically viable, what use are we to anyone?” has long been the unspoken belief. Dr Silver argues that the narrative around perimenopausal and menopausal health needs to change.

“The idea that menopause invokes for many people is degeneration – ageing, loss of fertility, loss of energy and vitality – like a woman’s meaning and purpose and sense of sexiness is done. But what I see every day is that the opposite can be true. So, not to negate the challenges of some of the symptoms experienced, but when symptoms are managed and well controlled and women are informed about what this is and how to move forward, I see an incredible transformation happening, and there is a sense of coming back to oneself, to redefine one’s values and priorities, shift things with a new sense of vigour and excitement for life.”

In a time before this modern age, a woman truly came into her own in her latter years. Communities lauded the phenomenon that happened when a woman’s natural intuition (downloaded by nature so her offspring survived) was reinforced by years of experience. They celebrated the women of wisdom: the grandmothers, the midwives, the shamans and the matriarchs, who stood at the family’s spiritual centre, guiding, nurturing and healing. It is only in recent years that this wisdom has been disregarded but that is changing, too, as evidenced by some very encouraging numbers presented by Dr Du Toit.

Membership statistics from the SA Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (SASOG) in 2023 show 46% female and 54% male, which is almost half and half, and 74% of registrars at Stellenbosch University’s Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology are female. So, after many centuries, the medical field is seeing the welcome return of women taking care of women, a trend bolstered by the amount of information available to us that allows us to be informed and empowered.

Without the threat of an unplanned pregnancy and the all-consuming job of raising young children, the menopausal years can be a truly freeing and liberating stage where a woman knows who she is, values what she has achieved and has the opportunity, at last, to live a life of her own choosing. The postmenopausal stage is the longest one of our life; there is no reason why it can’t be the best.

* Not her real name.

ALCOHOL



The temptation to reach for a glass of wine after a hard day can be huge, and while it might feel good in the short term, alcohol actually exacerbates menopausal symptoms. It can trigger hot flashes and night sweats, negatively affect sleep and worsen psychological symptoms such as anxiety (waking up “hangxious”), which increases low mood and depression.

Let Food Be Thy Medicine

When the body is under stress, such as when you’re experiencing hormonal changes associated with menopause, following a diet rich in all the nutrients you need will go a long way towards relieving the symptoms – plus managing long-term health concerns. According to Cape Town dietitian Kim Hofmann, get your:

CALCIUM

From 2–4 servings of low-fat dairy products per day or by choosing fish with bones (pilchards, sardines, canned salmon), broccoli, leafy greens, nuts and legumes. Also get enough vitamin D (from sunlight during safe exposure hours or supplements), which helps your body absorb the calcium.

IRON

At least 3 servings per day of lean red meat, chicken, fish, eggs, leafy green vegetables, legumes or nuts.

FIBRE

From wholegrain breads, cereals, grains (brown rice, barley, oats), legumes, vegetables and fruit.

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SCAN ME

It's a Fake-out

By **Liezl Vermeulen**



Brown pita pizzas
recipe on page 68

Craving tasty foreign flavours? Comfort food from the local pizza joint? Stop. Stay in and try out these fast-food-inspired recipes that cut cost, cut calories and double down on downright deliciousness.

MEXICAN CHICKEN AND BEAN CHILLI BOWLS WITH NACHO TOPPING

A healthier way to satisfy that nachos craving... These hearty bowls are filled with fibre-rich, lean and heart-healthy protein.

3 Tbsp (45ml) **olive oil**
 4 **chicken breast fillets**
Salt and **pepper**
 2 **onions**, chopped
 2-3 **red** or **green peppers**, chopped
 2 Tbsp (30ml) **ground cumin**
 2 Tbsp (30ml) **ground coriander**
 4 tsp (20ml) **smoked paprika**
 4 cloves **garlic**, grated
 3 **chillies**, chopped
 2 cans (400g each) **chopped tomatoes**
 ¼ cup (60ml) **tomato purée**
 ¼ cup (60ml) home-made **tomato sauce** (see recipe far right)
 1 cup (250ml) **vegetable stock** (or water)
 1 Tbsp (15ml) **cocoa powder** (regular or dark)
 1 can (400g) **red kidney beans**, rinsed
 1 can (400g) **black beans**, rinsed
 Fresh **coriander** and **lime** wedges, for serving

Nacho topping:

1 packet (120g) baked unsalted **corn chips**
 ½ cup (65g) grated **cheddar cheese**
 2 **avocados**, sliced or diced

Salsa:

1 punnet (200g) mixed mini **tomatoes**, diced
 ½ **red onion**, chopped
 2 **spring onions** or 4 **red salad onions**, sliced

Handful each fresh **coriander** and **parsley**, chopped
 Dash of **vinegar**
 Pinch of **sugar**

SERVES 6

Heat olive oil in a pot over high heat.
Season chicken and fry until brown and cooked, about 5-6 minutes a side. Remove, set aside and shred once cooled.
Lower heat and sauté onion and peppers for 5-7 minutes.

Add spices, garlic and chillies and cook for 2-3 minutes.

Add canned tomatoes, tomato purée, tomato sauce, stock and cocoa and stir well. Season.

Simmer for 10 minutes to thicken sauce slightly.

Add shredded chicken and beans and cook for 5-8 minutes.

Place nacho chips on an oven tray, scatter with cheese and bake at 180°C for 8-10 minutes, or until cheese is melted.

Mix salsa ingredients.

Serve chilli-bean bowls topped with nacho chips and salsa, garnished with coriander, and lime wedges on the side.

BROWN PITA PIZZAS

A quick fix that's great for portion control compared to larger restaurant-style pizzas. If you don't have time to make your own sauce, combine passata sauce with some tomato paste.

6 **brown pita breads** (or wholewheat bread or flatbread)

1 cup (250ml) home-made **tomato sauce** (see recipe right)

1 ½ cups (200g) grated **mozzarella cheese**

1 punnet (200g) vine or mini rosa **tomatoes**, halved

2-3 baby **marrows**, thinly sliced

1 packet (200g) **olives**, drained and halved (optional)

Basil pesto and **basil** leaves, for serving

SERVES 4

Preheat oven to 200°C.
Place pitas on a baking tray. (For a smoky taste, you can char pitas over an open flame first.)

Spread each pita with ¼ cup sauce, leaving a 1cm edge clean.

Sprinkle with cheese and top with tomatoes, baby marrow and olives.

Bake for 12-15 minutes, until cheese is bubbling.

Serve immediately, with dollops of pesto and scattered with fresh basil leaves.

HOME-MADE TOMATO SAUCE

A healthier sugar-free version you can use for pizza, pasta, stews and more. It keeps in the fridge for 6 days or freeze for later use.

1 Tbsp (15ml) **olive oil**

2 large **onions**, chopped

2 cloves **garlic**, grated

4 **carrots**, grated

6 **baby marrows**, thinly sliced

4 sprigs **rosemary**

4 sprigs **thyme**

1 Tbsp (15ml) **balsamic** or **red wine vinegar**

3 cans (400g each) **chopped tomatoes**

½ cup (125ml) **passata sauce**

Salt and **pepper**

MAKES 5 CUPS

Heat olive oil in a pot over medium heat.

Sauté onion for 5-8 minutes, until soft.

Stir in garlic, carrot and baby marrow and fry for 2-3 minutes.

Add herbs, vinegar, canned tomatoes and passata. Season and bring to a simmer.

Simmer uncovered for 20 minutes.

Blitz until smooth, check seasoning and set aside to cool.



GOOD IDEA

Add grated carrot and baby marrow to your sauce to bulk up the vegetable ratio. They will soften and almost disintegrate while cooking.

Mexican chicken and bean chilli bowls with nacho topping





OKONOMIYAKI (JAPANESE CABBAGE OMELETTES)

We've loaded it with greens to increase crunch and goodness and made it healthier by using low-sodium soy sauce (less salt), sugar-free tomato sauce and lite mayo. Feel free to add carrot matchsticks and corn kernels to the topping.

Sauce:

5 Tbsp (75ml) home-made **tomato sauce** (see page 68)
2 Tbsp (30ml) low-sodium **soy sauce**
2 Tbsp (30ml) **Worcestershire sauce**

Topping:

100g **edamame beans**
1 packet (200g) **sugar snap peas**
2 **radishes**, thinly sliced
1 cup (250ml) shredded **green cabbage**

Omelette:

½ large **green cabbage**, finely sliced
1 cup (250ml) **mung bean sprouts**
6 **spring onions**, thinly sliced
1 **onion**, grated
3 cloves **garlic**, grated

2cm knob fresh **ginger**, peeled and grated
7 jumbo **eggs**
Salt and **pepper**
Dash of **soy sauce**
Pinch of **chilli** (optional)
Olive oil, for frying

For serving:

¼ cup (60ml) **lite mayonnaise** (optional)
Sesame seeds, toasted
Chopped **chilli**
Fresh **coriander** sprigs

MAKES 3-4

Whisk sauce ingredients together until combined and set aside.

Blanch edamame beans and sugar snap peas (for topping) in boiling water for 1-2 minutes, then plunge into ice-cold water.

Combine omelette ingredients in a bowl.
Heat a glug of olive oil in a large nonstick pan over medium-high heat.
Ladle a quarter to one-third omelette mixture into the sizzling-hot pan.
Cook for 3-4 minutes, until the egg is set and the bottom is golden-brown.
Flip omelette and cook on the other side until golden and crisp.
Serve omelettes immediately, drizzled with sauce and mayonnaise, if using.
Top with edamame beans, sliced snap peas, radish slices and shredded cabbage.
Garnish with a sprinkling of sesame seeds, chilli and fresh coriander.



“Finding ways to supplement your meals with vegetables, like this omelette where the cabbage has been mixed into the omelette base, is a great way to give a nutrient boost. The added cabbage is a great source of fibre.”

- John Berry, Head of New Product Development at Kauai

Cauliflower 'buffalo wings'
recipe on page 72



No air-fryer? No problem!

Bake cauliflower at 220°C for 20 minutes, flip and bake for another 10 minutes.

THAI KINGKLIP LAKSA

We've swapped cream for coconut milk and plain yoghurt. Use baby marrow noodles for a carb-free option or serve with brown basmati rice for an added energy boost.

Sauce:

2 Tbsp (30ml) **olive oil**
 2 **onions**, chopped
 4 cloves **garlic**, finely chopped
 4cm knob fresh **ginger**, peeled and grated
 2cm knob fresh **turmeric**, peeled and grated (or whisk a pinch of ground turmeric into coconut milk)
 1 sachet (100g) **Thai red curry paste**
 2 cans (400g each) **coconut milk**
 2½–3 cups (625–750ml) **veg or chicken stock**
 1 stalk **lemongrass**, halved and bruised
 10 **lime leaves** (curry leaves work well too)
Salt and pepper
 2 tsp (10ml) ground or grated **palm sugar** (or brown sugar)
 1 tsp (5ml) **cornflour**
 1 cup (250ml) **plain yoghurt**
 Juice (60ml) of 2 **limes** (or 1 lemon)

To serve:

800g – 1kg **kingklip**
 600g **green veg** (such as broccoli, sugar snap peas, fine beans)
 1 packet (300g) **spiralised baby marrow**
 Ruby **microherbs** and chopped **chilli** (optional)

SERVES 4

Heat oil in a pan and sauté onion for 8–10 minutes until golden.
Add garlic, ginger, turmeric and curry paste and fry for 3–5 minutes.
Stir in coconut milk and stock, then lemongrass and lime leaves.
Season and add sugar.
Simmer uncovered over low heat for 10 minutes.
Whisk cornflour into yoghurt, and stir mixture into sauce.
Simmer on low for about 5 minutes, or until thickened and cooked.
Add lime juice and set sauce aside, keeping it warm.
Prepare fish to your liking, pan-fried or poached in the sauce.
Blanch veg in boiling water for 1–2 minutes.
Place vegetables and fish in bowls and ladle over hot sauce.
Serve sprinkled with microherbs and chilli.

CAULIFLOWER 'BUFFALO WINGS'

Sticky and spicy and finger-licking good! Ditch deep-frying for an air-fryer and make your own hot sauce, with a touch of cinnamon for sweetness.

Sticky sauce:

½ cup (125ml) home-made **hot sauce** (see recipe right)
 ¼ cup (60ml) **butter**
 1 Tbsp (15ml) **brown sugar** (use unprocessed

or coconut sugar)
 4 tsp (20ml) **Worcestershire sauce**
 2 tsp (10ml) **smoked paprika**
 1 stick **cinnamon**

Cauli wings:

1 cup (250ml) **flour** (wholewheat or cake)
 ½ punnet (10g) **parsley** or **coriander**, chopped
 1 tsp (5ml) **ground cumin**
 2 tsp (10ml) **paprika**
 Pinch **chilli flakes** or **cayenne pepper**
 ½ cup (125ml) **panko crumbs** (or regular breadcrumbs)
Salt and pepper
 1 cup (250ml) **milk**
 ¾ cup (180ml) **plain double-cream yoghurt**
 2 heads (300g each) **cauliflower**, broken into florets
Olive oil, for drizzling

For serving:

Cucumber and **celery** sticks, plain **yoghurt**, fresh **coriander** and **lime** wedges

SERVES 4–6 (SNACK OR STARTER)

Combine the sauce ingredients in a pot and simmer for 5 minutes, until butter has melted.
Whisk well, season to taste then set aside, keeping warm.
Combine flour, herbs, spices, breadcrumbs and seasoning in a bowl.
Whisk milk and yoghurt together in a separate bowl.
Dip half the cauliflower in milk mixture, shake off excess and toss in flour mixture to coat evenly.
Place in a single layer in an air-fryer basket, season and drizzle with oil. (Or bake in the oven – see page 71.)
Cook on fry setting

for 18 minutes or until crispy, turning cauliflower halfway. Set aside and keep hot.

Repeat with remaining cauliflower.

Toss hot cauliflower 'wings' in sticky sauce.

Serve immediately, with cucumber and celery sticks, coriander and lime wedges, and yoghurt for dipping.

HOME-MADE HOT SAUCE

Char chillies over an open flame until blackened all over to ensure a smoky taste. For a more fiery sauce, add habanero chillies. This sauce keeps in the fridge for 2 weeks.

4 **onions**, chopped
 Glug of **olive oil**
 20–25 **Thai or serrano chillies**, charred
 4 cloves **garlic**, sliced
 4 tsp (20ml) **chilli powder**
 ¼ cup (60ml) **sugar** of your choice
 2 cups (500ml) **veg or chicken stock**
 1 cup (250ml) **apple cider vinegar**
 ¼ – ½ cup (60–125ml) **water**

MAKES 2 CUPS

Sauté onion in olive oil for about 5 minutes.
Add chillies and garlic and cook for 5 minutes.
Stir in chilli powder and sugar and top with stock, apple cider vinegar and water.
Simmer with lid on for 15–20 minutes until pulpy.
Blitz using a stick blender until smooth.
Return to heat and simmer uncovered for 3–5 minutes (or until it's reached your desired consistency.). Strain sauce if you like.

“Fragrant Thai dishes often come with garlic and ginger, two of my favourite winter immune-boosting ingredients.”

- John Berry, Head of New Product Development at Kauai

GOOD IDEA

You can also use hake or any white fish. If you're not carb-conscious and, in fact, need the energy that carbs give you to exercise, swap the veg noodles for buckwheat noodles.



Thai kingklip laksa

When you make it yourself, you know exactly what goes into it – no hidden sugars in condiments, no excessive fat and no deep-frying.

Plus, you can add veggies or wholegrains to make it a balanced meal.

REMEMBER THE VOGUE DIET?

Words by **Cayleigh Bright**



I always wished that Bridget Jones would pull herself together. As a teenager watching *Bridget Jones's Diary*, I saw her as a relic of a more tedious past in which women were consumed with petty obsessions and an overwhelming desire for marriage. Somewhere in that past – between Regency corsetry and the ‘nothing looks as good as skinny feels’ 90s and early 2000s – was diet culture at its quaintest.

In the 1930s, the Grapefruit Diet promised that its headline ingredient would ‘burn’ fat, a myth that persisted for decades. The Cabbage Soup Diet (origin unknown) also took a one-ingredient approach but was arguably less pleasing. And in the 70s, the Vogue Diet famously allowed one bottle of wine per day alongside a sum total of three eggs and 150g of steak as the food component. One glass of this wine (“dry, preferably Chablis”) was to be consumed with breakfast.

I recently began listening to Maintenance Phase, a podcast hosted by journalist Michael Hobbes and activist and author Aubrey Gordon, because it promised to delve into these

silly moments in cultural history. On the show, and in Aubrey’s book, *You Just Need to Lose Weight: And 19 Other Myths About Fat People*, she advocates for the use of ‘fat’ as a preferred term rather than the euphemistic ‘curvy’, ‘chubby’ or ‘plus size’, suggesting that straightforward terminology might be a good move towards treating fatness as neutral, not fear-inspiring or intrinsically wrong.

Isn’t it fascinating when food is marketed as ‘guilt-free’? What a sense of self-importance, imagining that it’s able to choose how my guilt is allocated. It’s not just that mentioning guilt triggers feelings of “Well, should I feel guilty?” It’s that guilt has been baked into every food choice we’ve ever made, the secret ingredient that left a bitter taste in any mouth that enjoyed something remotely ‘naughty’, ‘decadent’ or ‘sinful’. Diet culture is less about thinness than it is about deprivation, and by feeling constantly guilty, we make sure that we feel deprived of joy even when we’ve indulged in food.

My experience – that of a person who has called herself fat insultingly, but in objective terms isn’t – is unexceptional. It’s normal in that I’ve drunk lots of water to feel full; fought with my mother when she contradicted me and said that I didn’t need to lose weight; fought with my mother when she agreed with me that I needed to lose weight; cried at a family gathering because

I thought I looked fat in a photo (I was 12); became a pro at on-site assessment of food calorie content; lamented that my stomach ulcer made itself known after my matric dance and not before; felt elation when I saw how thin I’d become after being hospitalised for an illness in my early 20s; and beamed when people said, “At least you look great, so keep doing what you’re doing!” after I was booked off work for stress. Just girly things!

Podcasts, *Vogue* and Bridget Jones: can you tell from my cultural touchpoints that I’m a white woman in her 30s? Here’s more where that came from: over on TikTok, Gen Z seems to be rejecting diet culture in the same way that they’re rejecting ‘hustle culture’, stemming from the harmful, workaholic norms of millennials like myself. A bit of commentary that I’ve found especially fascinating has been around ‘Almond Moms’. The term refers to a gruesomely funny TV moment in which Yolanda Hadid responded to

It’s up for debate whether we should be teaching all-bodies-are-beautiful positivity or it-doesn’t-matter-if-your-body-is-beautiful self-love, but what is clear is that rejecting diet culture involves pushing back against more than fad diets and the images presented by the media. We need to say “No, thank you” to the entire idea of diets and deprivation as a route to worthiness, lovingly imposed by the people closest to us who wanted us to be whole in the way that they believed only a thin person could be.

What if we all agreed to like ourselves – and to enjoy food? What if instead of focusing on depriving ourselves and having less, we opted for more: more fun, more energy, more movement, more life?

When *Bridget Jones* was cast in the early 2000s, there was controversy around far-too-skinny Renée Zellweger portraying a character who obsessed over her supposedly “wobbly” body. But the absurdity of this seems accurate to me:

The Vogue Diet famously allowed one bottle of wine per day.. “preferably Chablis”

her supermodel daughter Gigi’s complaint of feeling weak from hunger by telling her to “eat a few almonds and chew them really well”. We’ve all met an almond mom or almond aunt, grandmother, teacher, coach or doctor, because the people enforcing beauty standards are the same people hurt by them.

So, I don’t believe that this essay is going to fix all of your body issues, or even that all of mine are healed or, sadly, that any of us are quite free of fatphobic opinions. This cycle has continued for a very long time, but women of my age have grown up uniquely immersed in the idea of thinness as beauty (and virtue). Now I can only hope that my experiences with food are becoming as passé as my preferences in media.

Bridget’s actual weight is largely irrelevant because if she’d weighed less (or weighed more), it would have had little effect on her dreary preoccupation with denying herself the things she enjoyed, or the well-justified feeling that society was judging her for that enjoyment.

So a weight-obsessed character has become more relatable, and my views have circled back to wanting the same thing for Bridget Jones that I want for everyone: for her to get over it and get a (fuller, happier, freer) life.

Cayleigh is a Cape Town writer with a broad range of interests, from lifestyle to health to tech. She’s also the founder of Fair Social free libraries, and loves experimenting in the kitchen.

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