

Health & wellbeing

Great advice to keep you happy and healthy.

I'm returning to work less than two days after a long-haul flight. How can I minimise the effects of jet lag?



Dave Gibson, sleep expert and founder of thesleepsite.co.uk, is here to help.

Jet lag occurs because our body clock remains set to the destination we have just left, while we want to switch to the time zone we arrive in. The more time zones we cross, the harder it is to adjust.

Reduce the impact of jet lag by adjusting your timings before you leave. If you are going east, this means going to bed and rising earlier, and if you are

going west you would shift everything later, including meal times. Stagger the changes over a few days.

Once on the plane, set your watch to the new time zone, adjusting your meals and sleep to match. Drink plenty of water as dehydration is one symptom of jet lag.

If trying to stay awake after you land, get out in the sunlight and fresh air. If you have to nap, limit it to 20 minutes as any more can interrupt your main sleep.

If you land in the evening, keep it quiet and relaxed, and in the morning get outside as soon as you can as it helps set your body clock to the new time zone.



In The News

Breakthrough In Migraine Treatment

Migraine sufferers blighted by frequent debilitating headaches might find relief in a new monthly injection called Erenumab, which could soon be available on the NHS.

The key ingredient is an antibody designed to block a receptor thought to be responsible for transmitting the pain signals associated with migraine, and it has been shown to reduce the number of monthly headaches by more than 50% in a third of people with hard-to-treat migraines.

Pillow Talk

Are your pillows working well for you? Here are a few problems which could be resolved by updating your sleeping arrangements.

- **Stiff neck: those who sleep on their side should choose a thick pillow, and back sleepers a flatter pillow, to avoid strain on the neck, says physiotherapist Sammy Margo**

- **Skin problems: dermatologists warn to change your pillowcase weekly to avoid skin problems**

- **Poor sleep: an old or tired pillow can cause sleep problems. You know it's time to replace it if it doesn't spring back to shape when bent in half**

- **Allergies: choose an allergy-proof pillow if you are prone to wheezing, sneezing or itchy eyes**



Health Bite



Although nuts and seeds are the most nutritious snacks to stave off hunger between meals, popcorn comes in a surprisingly close second and a long way ahead of crisps and other salty snacks.

The key is to eat your popcorn plain with no added salt or sugary coatings. That way, it becomes a useful source of fibre (to keep your digestive system moving, help strip cholesterol from the blood vessel walls and regulate blood sugar levels), antioxidants (to help fight cancer and the ageing process), vitamins B and E, plus helpful minerals like manganese and magnesium.

Better still, a large handful of popcorn comes in at only 30 calories, which is five times less than a bag of crisps.



Getting help is easier than you think

Ask A Pharmacist



Our Health Writer, Colleen Shannon, explains the many services on offer at your local pharmacy.

It can be so difficult to see your GP these days, because they are under such pressure. Try phoning the surgery and you might be on hold for ages. Then, if you hit the jackpot and get an appointment, you could still be in for a long spell in the waiting-room.

If only we could walk in when it's convenient and get a problem sorted on the spot! The answer might lie in your local pharmacy.

It's handy because you'll find pharmacies on the high street, attached to doctors' surgeries and even in large supermarkets. In cities, most people live within walking distance of a pharmacy.

And they are staffed by experts we trust. What many people may not know is how highly trained these professionals are, and what a wide range of services they can provide.

Pharmacists study medicines and human health to gain a Master's degree, then spend another year training in a pharmacy under close supervision. They must pass a rigorous examination and keep up to date through ongoing study after they've qualified.

So how can we make the most of this expertise?

Pharmacists can advise you on minor ailments like colds and tummy bugs. Many pharmacies also give flu vaccinations. They can help you stop smoking, too.

Some pharmacies also offer the NHS Health Check, which aims to detect problems like high blood pressure and cholesterol, diabetes and kidney disease early, when they can best be treated.

Another time when your pharmacist can help is when you've just been diagnosed with a long-term condition. Starting a new medication, which you may need to take for many years, can be daunting. Some extra advice from an expert can be most welcome.

If you have been diagnosed with asthma or another lung condition, type 2 diabetes or high blood pressure, or if you're starting medicine to prevent blood clots, your pharmacy may have a special service to help you make a good start.

Even if you've been taking your medicines for a long time, it may be possible to have an "MOT" with your pharmacist. This involves sitting down for a private chat about how you take your medicines, any side effects that you may be having, and whether any changes might be needed.

The availability of these services can vary depending on where you live, so pop into your local pharmacy to see what's on offer.

"Your pharmacist can help you with all kinds of health queries," Sandra Gidley of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society says. "We are here for you every day and can advise you on your medicines and tell you about the conditions you are being treated for."

"We're open long hours, and usually at weekends, too. You don't need an appointment to get expert advice in a confidential area of the pharmacy. The days of explaining your problems over the counter are gone – just ask to speak to the pharmacist in confidence. We're here to help."

Hot News

If you're worried about your risk of stroke, a new study from an international team of scientists has found that jumping in a sauna four to seven times a week could reduce your risk of stroke by 61%.

They found that the more frequently you take a sauna, the lower your risk, because the swift exchange between extreme heat and cold helps reduce blood pressure, stimulates the immune system and improves cardiovascular function.

But for those of us without easy access to a sauna, you can still gain a 14% reduction in risk by finding somewhere to take a sauna just twice a week.

"Mussel" Relief

Green-lipped mussels have long been known to contain special extracts that can help ease joint pain and mobility. The active ingredient perna canaliculus, which is extracted from New Zealand-sourced shellfish, has been shown in studies to contain nourishing and regenerative substances which can help ease stiff and painful joints.

Perna is readily available in capsule form, but you can now get it in a rapidly absorbed gel (combined with cooling menthol and other essential oils) to rub into sore and swollen joints.

PERNATON® Gel 40ml is £3.99 from Holland & Barrett.

