

Women's Health



How Basketball Star

Angel Reese

Found Power In
**POSITIVE
THINKING**

■
Glowy,
Healthy, Happy:
**This Is Your
Skin On
PROTEIN**

■
**The
Everything
Guide To
OZEMPIC**
(And Other
Weight-
Loss Meds)

■
**SALADS
That
Actually
Satisfy**

■
**Make The
RUNNER'S
HIGH
Last**
P. 21

■
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Powder...
Cool?**
It's Trending
Because It
Works

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WHO'S ON YOUR MVP LIFE TEAM? EMBRACE THEM!

Hervé Léger
dress, herveleger.com for similar styles; **DKNY**
coat, dkny.com; **Soko** earrings, shopsoko.com



We brought Willa on a family trip to Colorado a few summers ago. George, then 6, and I took her on a six-mile hike to a lookout point called Castle Rock. During our descent, the weather shifted. My heart rate skyrocketed as we were pelted by ice—what kind of mom has her child hiking through a hailstorm?! But truth be told, Willa soothed us. She scrambled in front of us, and I swear to you, that dog looked back over her shoulder directly at George the entire way down. I am convinced she was making sure he didn't slip and fall.

As we were putting this issue—the teamwork issue—together, I couldn't help but think that the unsung MVP of our family is Willa. She's the team member who gives so much love and expects nothing in return. With Willa, we've been able to find the softest sides of ourselves—and the mental health benefits she's sparked are a pleasant surprise in our house bursting with teen energy! You'll see other examples of teamwork in the pages to come, whether that's cover star Angel Reese talking about the power of teammates or the participants in our Strength in Diversity program shouting out the mentors who've helped them surge ahead. Life's just better when we've got one another's backs!

LIZ BAKER PLOSSER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
@lizplosser



George, my 9-year-old son, has a special relationship with our Berner: He generously offers Willa dog treats at all hours of the day and, of course, ceaseless hugs.

Most Sundays, I begin my day by jogging a few miles with my dog, Willa.

She's a three-year-old Bernese mountain dog who delights in galloping through the park beside me. As runners, walkers, and cyclists catch sight of Willa, there is a universal reaction: joy. Parkgoers break into giant smiles, or sometimes a chuckle, often giving me a thumbs-up or even slowing down to take a picture. (I should find her an agent!) I get it, though: An 85-pound, gleefully bounding doggo is simply a sight to behold. Instant mood lifter.

Willa doesn't bring cheer to only my neighborhood park, though—she also brings good vibes into our home. My 13-year-old son, Charlie, told me he loves how Willa greets him, tail wagging furiously, when he gets back from school. "She's always so happy to see me!" he said. Lucy, his twin sister, told me that her favorite way to unwind after a "long day" or finishing her homework is a lengthy pet-Willa sesh. "She never wants me to stop!" Lucy whispered in disbelief. (It's true, Willa stares at you attentively as long as you don't stop petting her.)

I call Willa "Little Baby," and my husband, Matt, coos "Honey" in a sweet voice I thought he'd retired with our children's babyhoods. But the truth is, she's our family's mother hen. I notice each of the kiddos subconsciously seeks out Willa when they're feeling down or have had a tough day at school. They know she'll be there for them no matter what. And it's not in my head: Children with dogs in their households are less likely to develop anxiety disorders, according to research in the *Preventing Chronic Disease* journal.

FROM TOP: PHILIP FRIEDMAN; COURTESY OF LIZ BAKER PLOSSER

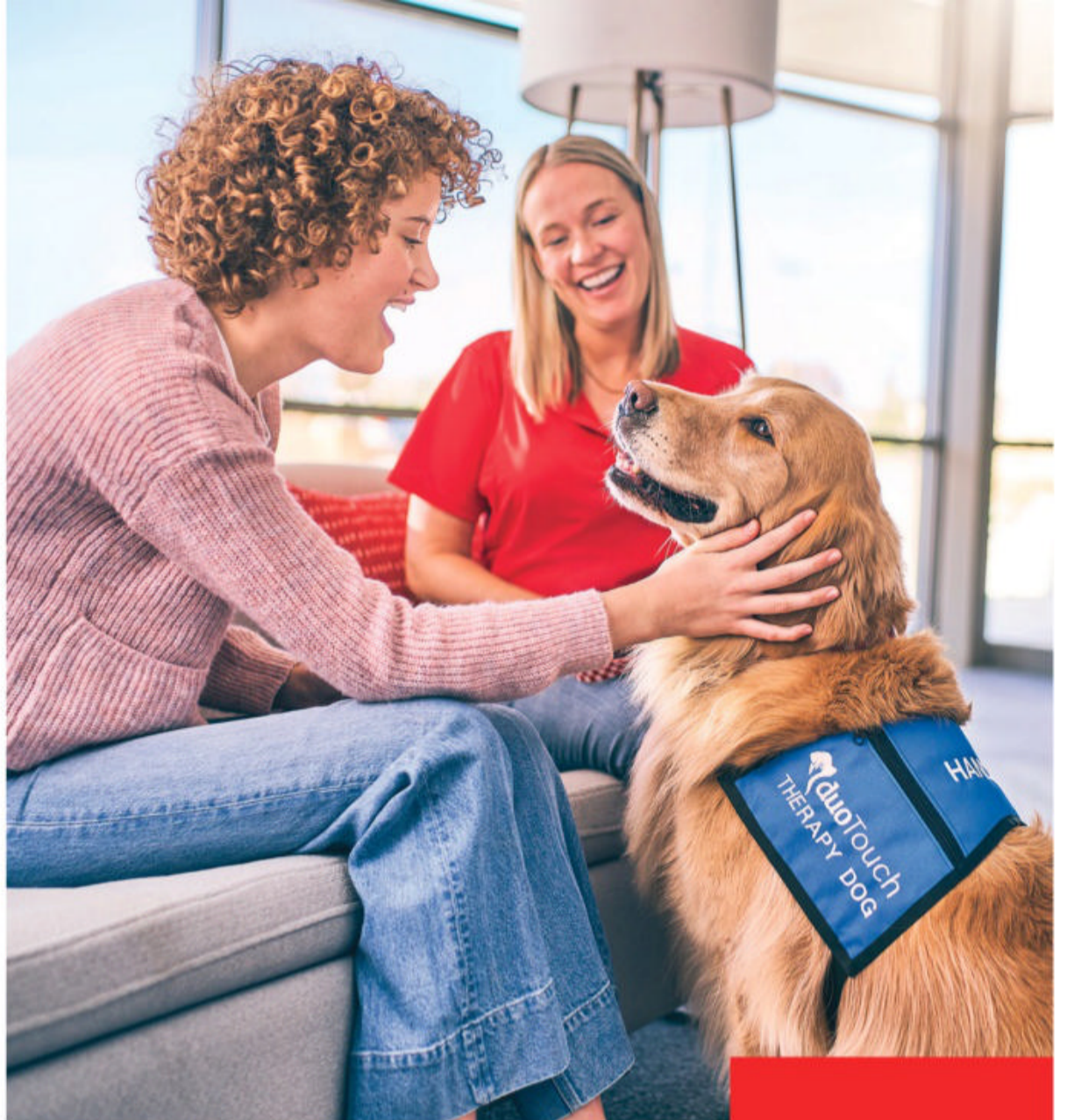
The Healing Power of Pet Therapy

Mental health issues nationwide are at an all-time high with a reported 70 percent of teens experiencing struggles with mental health.* Purina is stepping up to make a difference by volunteering their time—and their pets—to the cause.

Dr. Julie Spears, Senior Manager, Clinical Trials Management at Nestlé Purina North America, and her adorable golden retriever, Graham, are one of 30 pet therapy teams Purina has helped get certified so far. Here, Dr. Spears discusses the extraordinary power of this Purina volunteer program to spread joy to youth struggling with their mental health.



Dr. Spears and Graham brighten the day of everyone they encounter.



“To see our dogs’ effects on students—the stress melting away and their faces lighting up—shows the real power of this initiative.”

– Dr. Julie Spears

How does pet therapy affect kids and teens?

▶ Just 10 minutes of petting a dog is scientifically proven to reduce cortisol (the stress hormone), decrease feelings of loneliness and depression, and even lower blood pressure. It’s amazing to watch a student’s body language and mood completely change after only a few minutes of cuddling with Graham.

Why is youth mental health an important initiative for Purina?

▶ We extend our knowledge of pets to help our communities any way we can. When we learned about the youth mental health crisis, Purina employees jumped to volunteer with their dogs to be part of the solution.

Do therapy dogs require special training?

▶ Purina has teamed with Duo Dogs, a nonprofit group that trains dogs—and their owners—in Touch Therapy. Teams learn obedience, awareness, safety, and etiquette for specific places, like schools and hospitals. Graham and I are proud graduates of the 16-week program.

Where do Purina employees and their pets volunteer?

▶ We visit preapproved hospitals, schools, and colleges. I love going to universities around St. Louis. College is stressful, as students are learning to live on their own after leaving their families (and pets!) while also focusing on their studies, jobs, etc.

What is Purina’s goal for the future in helping youth mental health?

▶ With over 2.5 million youth suffering severe depression, this is just the beginning of the work we need to do. We’re committed to continuing to expand our program and partnerships, helping ensure there’s a therapy dog for any kid who needs one.



For more information on how Purina is making an impact on youth mental health, visit Purina.com/mentalhealth

Learn more about our
30+ pet therapy teams



Dan & Bambi
Pet Therapy Team

PURINA
+ duo dogs

duo Touch
THERAPY DOG

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PURINA

CARES

HERE.

Harnessing the healing power of pets.

STARTING WITH OUR OWN.

Youth mental health issues are on the rise—and so is the demand for therapy dogs. Purina is helping ensure there's one for any kid who needs it by helping employees get their pets certified.

Own Your Morning

BREANNA STEWART

NEW YORK LIBERTY FORWARD
AND REIGNING WNBA MVP

If I had a choice, I don't think I'd be a morning person. But my wife, Marta, and I are definitely morning people because we have a 2-year-old, Ruby, and an infant, Theo—they're up, so we have to be up. Ruby wakes around 7 a.m., so we have a sprint of an hour to get her ready. I take out my night guard, wash my face with CeraVe, and do skin care. I put on my workout clothes so that once I eat, I can just go. One of us will get Ruby dressed while the other makes her breakfast, then it's coffee time (I take mine black). Ruby has to be at school by 8:30, and we're sprinting out the door to walk her there. When I come back, I'll eat breakfast: toast with cream cheese and an omelet on top. I also get fruit in there, plus orange juice and immunity shots. Then I work out, either with trainer Chris Brickley in Manhattan—I take the subway, I love it—or with Liberty staff at Barclays Center. I start with stretching, Pilates, and my Theragun before an hour or more on court. Afterward, I head into the weight room—I put in my headphones and go. If I stop and talk, Marta will be like, "Where were you?" and I'm like, "Well, I was just talking and working out for four hours...."

HER MORNING MUST-HAVES

1

KEURIG

"I feel like coffee is the start of my day. We do the K-Cups—easy—and have them throughout the morning."

2

THERAGUN MINI

"That's what I use as my first activation before I get on the court, just massaging everything."

3

SHISEIDO SKIN CARE

"I like the toner, serum, eye cream, and moisturizer. I'm on a full regimen, thanks to my wife."



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Future of Fitness

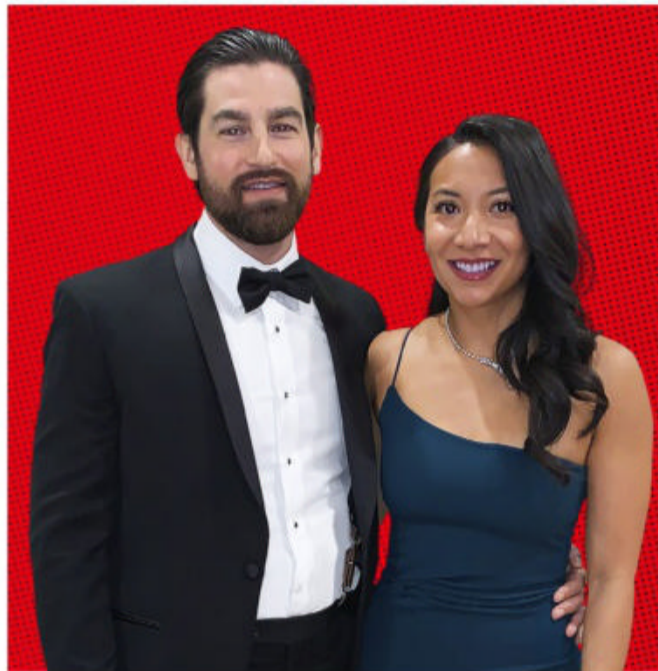


Teammates aren't just on-the-field peers—they're the folks at home, in the gym, and even on the Internet who inspire us to be our best selves. We asked trainers and mentors from the *Women's Health/Men's Health Strength in Diversity* initiative to shout out their starting roster.



BRITTANY SPENCER, 35 / @bounced.back.britt

"I call Maya Evans [left] my 'swolemate.' She came into my life during a tough season; I was confused and borderline depressed. But from our first interaction, I knew it was a safe space. We make mental health check-ins a priority, and our conversations always leave me feeling empowered and encouraged. Maya constantly reminds me not to settle or allow my fears to keep me from dreaming big."



TATIANA LAMPA, 32 / @tatianalampa

"My husband, Mike, was diagnosed with kidney failure a month after we got engaged. More than a year later, we're still in search of a donor to save his life. We made a promise to never go to bed angry or sad—instead, we share a silly video or a funny moment from our day and laugh together before we sleep. We refuse to let our struggles define who we are. Together, we can conquer anything."



NELLIE BARNETT, 30 / @nellbellsfitness

"I remember walking into Kailey Rowan's office at her gym, North County Fitness & Performance in Vista, California, to discuss my fitness goals. Kailey [left] fostered an inclusive community at NCFP where members were, and still are, excited to go to the gym! I fell in love with fitness and now have my own online coaching business. Kailey taught me that teamwork brings out the absolute best in you."



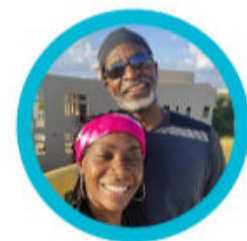
ARI COBB, 27 / @thearicobb

"When I was getting ready for my amateur MMA title fight, I had a lot of anxiety and self-doubt. I started doing coaching calls with fellow fighter Brittney Cloudy [left], who helped me find the root cause of these feelings so I could better control and overcome them. I felt validated, understood, completely at peace, no matter the outcome of the fight. I see through her how beautiful this sport is and can be."



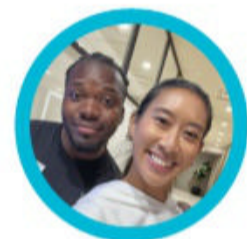
**Ashley Nicole, 40
@ashnic_rawarriorfitness**

"As a bodybuilder with rheumatoid arthritis, I face unique challenges. Support from my coach, Felicia Cox [left], keeps me focused."



**Patricia Greaves, 56
@pattiftnfab**

"My husband, Tyrone, is the cornerstone of my life. Together, we've raised a beautiful family that prioritizes health and well-being."



**Claudette Sariya, 30
@yearofclaudette**

"Donell Carter, who I worked with at Life Time, showed me what fitness could offer—and helped me realize what I had to offer too."



**Almoni Ellis, 26
@runningsoles**

"My powerlifting coach, Sam Calhoun [left], sets the standard for leadership. She's given me everything from wrist wraps to life advice."

Fridge Goals

Take a peek into the fridges of *WH*'s editors and advisors for their must-buy products. For this issue, we asked: *What do you swear by for fast dinners?* The answers:

Illustrated by Mark Nerys

YOLI SONORAN-STYLE FLOUR TORTILLAS
Warmed up, these tortillas have a flexibility that makes 'em the perfect vehicle for so many things. Rice and beans, anyone? —Becca Miller, associate food editor

WILDWOOD BAKED TERIYAKI TOFU
I've been obsessed for years! The plant-based power protein comes in a big square you can cut up and add to salads, wraps, and pastas. —Currie Engel, news & features editor

TRADER JOE'S STEAMED LENTILS
Found in the produce section, these lentils hold their shape when heated up and taste better than what typically exits from a can. They're clutch for vegetarian sloppy joes and lentil soup. —Lindsay Geller, lifestyle director

NEW YORK SHUK PRESERVED LEMON PASTE
Just a dab of this high-quality paste adds instant mouth-puckering brightness to marinades and dressings. I love it mixed into pesto. —Susan Choung, recipe editor

BIRDS EYE CHOPPED SPINACH
Packing in a ton of greens is as easy as seven minutes in the microwave. I'll serve with oil and a pinch of salt or stir into cooked grains. —Samantha MacAvoy, assistant food editor

Clean-Out Challenge

STRATEGIES FOR SPARING FRESH GOODS

Grain Glow-Up Staring down a fridge full of broccoli florets? Roast, pulse in a food processor, then fold into your favorite grain (farro, barley, and brown rice are our faves).

Egg Muffin Magic Meal-prep mini frittatas and stash in freezer: Whisk together 8 eggs, 1 cup milk, and a pinch kosher salt; pour into muffin tin, add toppings, and bake at 350°F for 22 minutes.

Sauce Solve Blend up a dreamy sauce you can drizzle over *all* your dishes: In a mini food processor, blitz one carrot (chopped) with fresh ginger, canola oil, white miso, and rice vinegar.

Firsts Class

WH Editor-in-Chief **Liz Baker Plosser** goes halfway around the world for an intensive surf retreat—and learns a lesson that hits much closer to home.

► Before

On our honeymoon in Cabo, Mexico, 16 years ago, my husband, Matt, and I rented surfboards. Miraculously, despite receiving no coaching from the overwhelmed guides overseeing a crowd of tourists, including us, we both managed to get up... and then crashed directly into each other, like cartoon characters. Romantic!

Last spring, in Bali for a long-anticipated vacation, we were determined to try again. This time we had a lot more support: retired pro surfer Brad Gerlach, who led the retreat at Uluwatu Surf Villas, a gorgeous destination nestled atop the beachfront cliffs in this year-round surf hot spot. Rather than heading straight to the beach, Brad had the trip's guests—five journalists, plus Matt—on the floor of the hotel's Beach Deck, acting out the motions we'd employ while approaching a wave, getting up, and riding it. (This was an IRL taste of Brad's Wave Ki surf program, which features instruction, drills, and workouts for surfers of all levels.) He regularly interrupted himself to pause contemplatively, then say Yoda things like "You want to *feel* the energy of the water."

It was cool to get such an emo-minded microeducation, but I was feeling a little antsy. (Get me to the waves!) I'm pretty athletic, and I had been crushing it in the gym all year: In all honesty, I was sure I was going to kick the ocean's ass and couldn't wait to do exactly that.

► During

Spoiler: The ocean won. I struggled to sync my stand-up with the changing momentum of each wave, oscillating between going too early, before there was enough velocity, and too late, when it was already crashing. Water went up my nose, sand wedged into my bikini, and I cursed and willed up with tears more often than I'd like to admit.

But unlike at Cabo, we had Brad. He swam around to coach each person. Eventually, I realized he didn't expect me to nail it out of the gate. Once I let go of my superwoman vision of people saying "Liz, you could have been a pro surfer!" and just let my best be enough, I had more fun. By the end of the afternoon, I could get up on most of the waves I committed to. And even though I was wobbly and adopted a strange deep-crouch pose as I rode, which perplexed Brad, surfing felt more emotionally exhilarating than physically exhausting.

► After

I surfed again the next morning, and it seemed like two steps forward, one step back. Without Brad's pre-ocean, yoga-studio-sensei session, my form and cueing weren't nearly as buttoned up in the water. Which was okay! Because unlike on the previous day, I felt comfortable with my emotional ebb and flow. Perhaps my biggest lesson of all: I don't have to be a natural at something to enjoy it immensely. Being present, patient, and grateful for the effort? Those are qualities I'll take over raw talent any day.



Wet yet full of wisdom (and sore muscles!)

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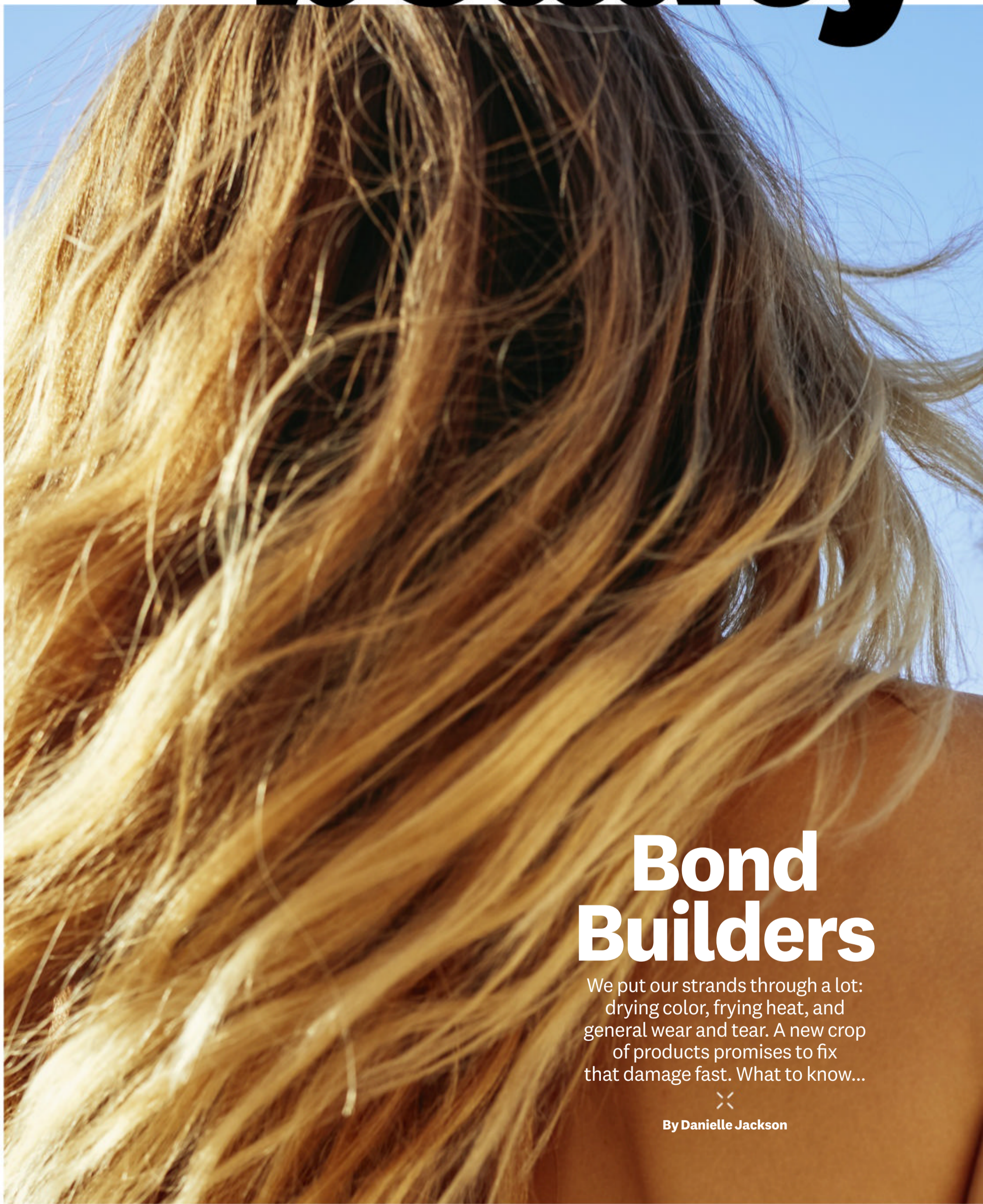


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beauty



Bond Builders

We put our strands through a lot: drying color, frying heat, and general wear and tear. A new crop of products promises to fix that damage fast. What to know...



By Danielle Jackson

KAYLA VARLEY/AUGUST IMAGE



Imagine a treatment that allows you to strength train your strands, fortifying them from the inside out in the same way that lifting weights builds muscle. It's not magic; it's called bond building—and you can add products featuring this new technology to your shopping cart right now.

Just as the term suggests, these masks, pre-shampoos, and serums are designed to improve your hair's overall toughness and manageability by repairing broken bonds deep inside each strand—connections that hold hair together but can become compromised by color, chemical straighteners, or heat styling.

Once available only as professional salon services, bond-building products are popping up everywhere, powered by consumers who are “becoming more concerned about their hair health” rather than just the style, says Beth Labrecque, a product development scientist with Dove Hair, which recently released a first-to-drugstores bonding collection. But what's the science behind these hair healers, and how can you put them to work for you? Good questions! Let's kick off with a quick chemistry lesson.

Good Form

First, picture what each individual hair strand looks like under a microscope. The outer layer, called the cuticle, resembles a shingled roof, and it protects the cortex—a collection of cable-like structures—from damage. “The cortex is primarily made up of a protein called keratin, which is separated into two amino acid chains that are held together by three different types of chemical bonds,” says Crystal Aguh, MD, a board-certified dermatologist and an associate professor of dermatology at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. (For more info on this triumvirate, see “Bond Lexicon,” below.)

These bonds are responsible for maintaining the shape, strength, and integrity of your hair. In order to alter its look or feel—to, say, change your hair color or add some curl with a hot tool—these bonds must be broken, Dr. Aguh says. You may get the desired result, but the process can also make your locks feel brittle or dull. “Other environmental factors, such as exposure to UV radiation, can cause bond

damage as well,” says Neera Nathan, MD, a board-certified dermatologist and researcher at Massachusetts General Hospital and Lahey Hospital and Medical Center in Burlington, Massachusetts.

Inside Job

Though we know what bonds are, the exact science of how bond-building products work is tricky to pinpoint. Many of the most popular ones on the market—like Olaplex No. 3 Hair Perfector or the newer K18 Leave-In Molecular Repair Hair Mask—are made with proprietary ingredients.

Still, experts agree the main factor these formulas have in common is that they're enriched with amino acids that penetrate the cuticle, fortifying the damaged cortex with protein and causing the bonds to reattach, which creates a thicker, stronger hair shaft, says Dr. Nathan. These amino acids often come in the form of peptides, but newer formulas also contain reparative ingredients such as hyaluronic acid (a hydrator that can reduce frizziness) or alpha hydroxy acids.

BOND LEXICON

Behold, the inside of a hair strand. Those squiggles? They're amino acid chains held together by bonds (the little bubbles you see). The three main types:



1. Hydrogen

“These are the most abundant, primarily contributing to hair's hydration and texture,” Labrecque says.

2. Ionic

Also known as salt bonds, these give strands their strength.

3. Disulfide

Maintaining shape is their main job, says Labrecque, and they're the strongest.

Boost Your Roots



Meet the miracle workers that will enhance your hair from its very core.

Beauty From Within

The first in a four-step system, this five-minute pre-shampoo treatment gets deep—seven layers!—into the cortex.

Garnier Fructis Inner Fiber Repair Treatment, \$10, garnierusa.com

Origin Story

The pioneer of the category is designed to fix breakage and split ends before you shampoo. Apply to wet hair, wait 10 minutes, then rinse.

Olaplex No. 3 Hair Perfector, \$30, sephora.com

Strong Start

Before washing, coat your hair with this affordable option that has a reparative complex that includes citric acid.

L'Oréal Paris EverPure Bond Repair Concentrate, \$13, ulta.com

Top Ten

The peptide-rich mask provides double-digit benefits (detangling, frizz reduction, and breakage prevention among them) in only a minute.

Dove 10-in-1 Bond Strength Serum Mask, \$10, target.com

Last Resort

After shampooing and conditioning, slather on this amino acid-based leave-in and style as usual.

Nexus Amino Bond Intense Rebond Treatment, \$16, amazon.com



Routine Redux

So who should be using these products? Anyone with hair, honestly. If you're often styling with heat or coloring, it's a no-brainer. But "certain bonds can also be broken simply by dry weather, combing or brushing, and just general aging," Dr. Aguh says. Think of it like buying a moisturizer for your skin. "If someone has eczema, a great cream can help," she says. "But even if you don't have a diagnosed skin condition, you'd still benefit because it will make your skin feel better." The same goes for bond builders: If your hair feels brittle, has split ends, or is frizzy or less shiny, a bonding treatment could be the fix.

It's likely you'll come across these products as masks, serums, conditioners, or pre-shampoo treatments, as well as full collections with complementary shampoos and conditioners. For the best results, use the treatment on wet hair (water causes the hair's cuticle to open, making it easier for bond-building ingredients to penetrate) once a week, Dr. Aguh says. If you don't have significant damage, or if heat, color, or chemicals aren't something you frequently use on your hair, a monthly treatment will suffice. Don't go overboard: Using these products more than recom-



x
Most bonding treatments should stay on for 10 minutes.

mended may result in protein overload, causing the hair to feel dry and brittle—exactly the problems you're trying to fix, says Dr. Nathan. (For more on this, see "When It's Actually Bondage Overload," below.) You can use your preferred shampoo and conditioner or the products in a bonding

collection, which, unlike the more intensive treatment products, "are designed for daily use and can safely be part of your regular routine," says Isfahan Chambers-Harris, PhD, a trichologist and founder of Alodia Hair Care.

Turns out, rebuilding strands is delicate—but doable—work.

WHEN IT'S ACTUALLY BONDAGE OVERLOAD

If bonding treatments have been your go-to, yet your hair still feels dry or damaged, it's possible you erred on the side of being heavy-handed. "Proteins are essential for strengthening and repairing the hair, but excessive or frequent use can lead to an imbalance," says Chambers-Harris. The biggest giveaways are "stiffness or brittleness, a lack of elasticity, increased breakage, and a rough feeling to the touch." Fortunately, there's an easy way to course-correct: Hold off on using your bonding treatment, replacing it with moisturizing and deep-conditioning products for a few weeks. Then get back on track, using the bonding items only as directed.



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New Dove. For visibly thicker, stronger, fuller hair from scalp to tip.



Brighter Undereyes

Dark circles and discoloration can be tricky to treat, but there's a host of eye-opening solutions you can try. Start with these strategies.

► By Brian Underwood



Irritation can cause hyperpigmentation, says Dr. Rubin, so be judicious about the products you use.

1

Find the Cause

Dark circles can be caused by skin discoloration or underlying blood vessels that show through. Use Dr. Rubin's "pinch test" to ID your culprit: Grab a tiny bit of skin and move it up, down, and to the sides. If the darkness moves too, it's hyperpigmentation. If not, visible vasculature is to blame.

2

Peep Good Products

Look for eye creams with retinol, vitamin C, and niacinamide to fight dark spots and build collagen so blood vessels aren't obvious. And check for caffeine too: "It's a vasoconstrictor that prevents blood from pooling and causing the appearance of darkness," Dr. Rabach says.

3

Address Light Play

Puffiness and hollowness cast shadows, but OTC hacks can help: "Cool compresses and gua sha massage push out the fluid that causes bags," says Dr. Rabach. Docs can also inject filler on top of the orbital bones under the eyes to "counteract volume loss and indentations," says Dr. Rubin.

4

Opt for Minimal Makeup

When it comes to concealer, less is more, says Jafri. "Dot it over areas of discoloration only, then press it in with your fingertips or a brush," she says. (If you have a shadow sitch, dab concealer just under puffiness, then blend.) Lock into place with a translucent setting powder.

Shield Skin Smartly

To address hyperpigmentation, wear sunscreen. But if you've experienced SPF-induced stinging, you know that applying it near the eyes is tricky. Dr. Rubin's solve: Use your fingers to tap on a mineral-based stick. The thicker formula will protect—and stay put.

Your Go-To Pros



COURTNEY RUBIN, MD
Dermatologist and Cofounder of Fig.1 Beauty



MORGAN RABACH, MD
Clinical Assistant Professor of Dermatology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai



TAYABA JAFRI
Makeup Artist and Global Beauty Director at Laura Mercier

The Essentials

These products are designed to add some light—and give your undereyes a boost.



Eye Do

A gentle form of vitamin A and antioxidant-rich plant oils tackle darkness without irritating this delicate area.

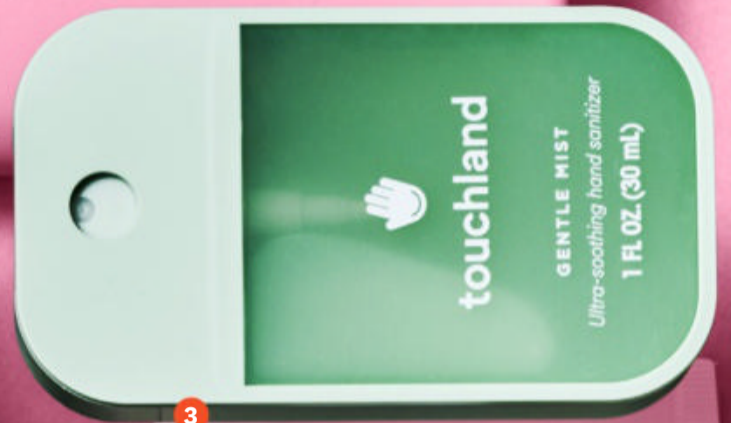
Fig.1 Beauty Pro-Retinol Eye Cream, \$36, fig-1.co



Multitasking Makeup

Cover up discoloration with this crease-proof, serum-infused formula, available in 22 shades.

Laura Mercier Real Flawless Weightless Perfecting Concealer, \$33, lauramercier.com



"A sanitizer that actually makes my hands feel better *after* using it. And the scent: fresh and wonderful."
Brian Underwood, beauty director



"This serum proactively fights off fine lines and fills in what's already there. Bonus: It smells amazing!"
Danielle Jackson, senior beauty editor



Beauty MVPs

The *WH* team selected and sweat-tested the best products for your active lifestyle.

Photographed by Joe Lingeman

1. Clean...to a Tea

Popping the top of this wash is like having an Eastern herbal medicine specialist right in your bathroom: Antioxidant-rich matcha tea protects, Japanese mugwort nourishes the way ceramides do, and coix seed and willow bark exfoliate to refine skin.

Tatcha *The Matcha Cleanse*, \$40, sephora.com

2. Aroma Therapy

The ancient—but suddenly trendy—mood-boosting powers of woody palo santo are on full display in this perfume, which combines it with earthy clary sage and flowery ylang-ylang. If that doesn't put a smile on your face, the price sure will.

Being Frenshe *Palo Santo Sage Eau de Parfum*, \$30, at Target

3. Changing Hands

From the brand that made sanitizers sexy comes a new innovation for sensitive-skin types. Infused with anti-inflammatory and moisturizing ingredients such as niacinamide and *Centella asiatica* leaf extract, the spritz battles microbes without messing up your mitts.

Touchland *Gentle Mist*, \$16, touchland.com

4. Glow Get 'Em

The bronzer offering is a worthy addition to Glossier's viral Cloud Paint franchise, with five adaptable shades and a blendable gel-cream formula that leaves you looking naturally sun-kissed, *not* as if you went a little overboard with a brush.

Glossier *Cloud Paint Bronzers*, \$20, glossier.com

5. Good Lighting

If you find OTC retinoids too irritating to your complexion, here's the smoothing serum for you. It's formulated with a microalgae that activates the same skin receptors retinol does and has been patch-tested for suitability on sensitive skin.

Omorovicza *Queen Serum*, \$180, omorovicza.com

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§ With continued daily use.

^ With continued daily use, Align helps with occasional digestive upsets.

‡ Among gastroenterologists who recommended a brand of probiotic in ProVoice 2008-2023 surveys.

* THESE STATEMENTS HAVE NOT BEEN EVALUATED BY THE FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION. THIS PRODUCT IS NOT INTENDED TO DIAGNOSE, TREAT, CURE, OR PREVENT ANY DISEASE.

fitness



Mile Markers

Running is bigger than ever. And as it continues to become more accessible *and* inclusive, now's your time to hit the road with this no-BS guide.

By **Caitlin Carlson**



MARTIN RUSCH

fitness

On the surface, running is incredibly simple: With a pair of sneakers and a dash of motivation, you can participate pretty much anywhere, anytime. But look under the hood (or, *ahem*, on the Internet), and the universal sport gets more complicated.

Couch-to-10-K plans and recovery tech abound, but deciding where to start, how to up your mileage and/or pace, and who to follow for inspo can be overwhelming. And the gear! Even the main essential—shoes—has become complex. We haven't even mentioned nutrition yet.

Remember this, though: Innovation and excitement in the field are wonderful things—and we are in a season of them. More than a fifth of runners said they run

more often now than pre-pandemic, in part thanks to the no-equipment, go-at-your-own-pace nature of this form of exercise, per a recent Nielsen study. Plus, 40 percent of people surveyed across 10 countries consider themselves runners, with 30 percent running at least once a week. (Love to hear it!) Here, *WH* cuts through the clutter to bring you simplified answers to the biggest running questions out there.

WHOA!

Jogging just a mile or two a few times a week can help with longevity and lower your risk for disease.

Source: *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*

What-to-Eat Cheat Sheet

Running for 30 minutes or less? It's okay to go on an empty stomach and not overthink the after-run eats. But as you get into longer distances, fuel properly for peak energy (and don't forget to hydrate!).

Up to One Hour

Carbs
30 grams

✕ **Protein**
7 to 10 grams

✕ **Calories**
150

✕ **Think:**
Single-serving Greek yogurt with fruit, or a slice of bread with honey, jam, or a spoonful of peanut butter

Up to Two Hours

Carbs
45 grams

✕ **Protein**
10 grams

✕ **Calories**
220

✕ **Think:**
Half-cup of oats with a banana and a hard-boiled egg

Two-Plus Hours

Carbs
60 to 90 grams

✕ **Protein**
15 to 20 grams

✕ **Calories**
300 to 440

✕ **Think:**
A PB&J sandwich, or a bowl of oatmeal with berries and a scoop of protein powder

Post-Long Run

Carbs
30 to 45 grams

✕ **Protein**
30 to 40 grams

✕ **Calories**
250 to 450

✕ **Think:**
Overnight oats with protein powder, Greek yogurt, chia seeds, berries



I want to do an endurance race. Now what?

Just focus on stamina—“especially if we’re talking about the marathon, because you’re out there for three to five hours,” says Mark Coogan, a New Balance Boston Elite coach, an Olympian, and the author of *Personal Best Running*. There’s also the mental-stamina component necessary for success in a distance feat, Coogan adds. “Being on your feet [for that long] is mentally tough.” (We get that!)

▼ **ACTION MODE:** Get in the habit of slowing way down rather than fully stopping when running any distance in training. “This is an easy way to ensure you’re going at a pace that’s sustainable,” says Kara Dudley, a running coach and Bandit ambassador. Another tip from Dudley: Eliminate your “medium” pace, and focus on making your easy runs actually feel easy and fast runs actually feel fast. “You need to build your aerobic system and endurance, and if you’re running your easy runs too fast, you’re completely missing out on that,” Dudley says.



What’s the most important training factor?

Consistency. If you’re scheduled for, say, three to four runs a week but are doing only one or two of them, you can’t expect to be prepared on race day, Dudley says: “Consistency is your best friend if you want to feel good during your race, complete it, and know you gave it your best shot.”

▼ **ACTION MODE:** *Motivation* is the operative word, pros agree. Coogan recommends motivators such as having a training partner who holds you accountable or joining one of the many nationwide running groups, like Back on My Feet (backonmyfeet.org) or November Project (november-project.com). Setting

shorter-term goals, like signing up for a 10-K in the middle of a half- or full marathon training cycle, helps.



Which recovery methods *actually* work?

You might crave a sexier answer, but here’s the truth: Much of your body’s ability to recharge comes down to old-fashioned sleep, proper nutrition, and stretching. But if you’re looking to be extra (*raises hand*), getting a massage, while pricey, is a great investment. “Massage has consistently proven to be the most effective method for alleviating delayed onset muscle soreness [DOMS],” says Jonathan Peake, PhD, a senior lecturer at Queensland University of Technology in Australia, who has extensively researched postexercise recovery.



▼ **ACTION MODE:** Permission for self-care granted! Go for twice-monthly massages—ideally after your longest run—if that’s within your budget (but even once a month can be beneficial), advise both Peake and Nancy Ann Richardson, LMT, a New York City–based massage therapist. “Receiving a sports massage while training for a race promotes faster recovery by reducing post-workout muscle soreness, fatigue, tightness, adhesions—commonly called knots—and joint stiffness,” says Richardson. Between (or in place of) rubdowns, it’s ideal to use compression garments and/or foam rollers for DIY healing. “Although these other methods do not provide the same level of benefit as massage, they are less expensive and easier to apply at home,” Peake says.



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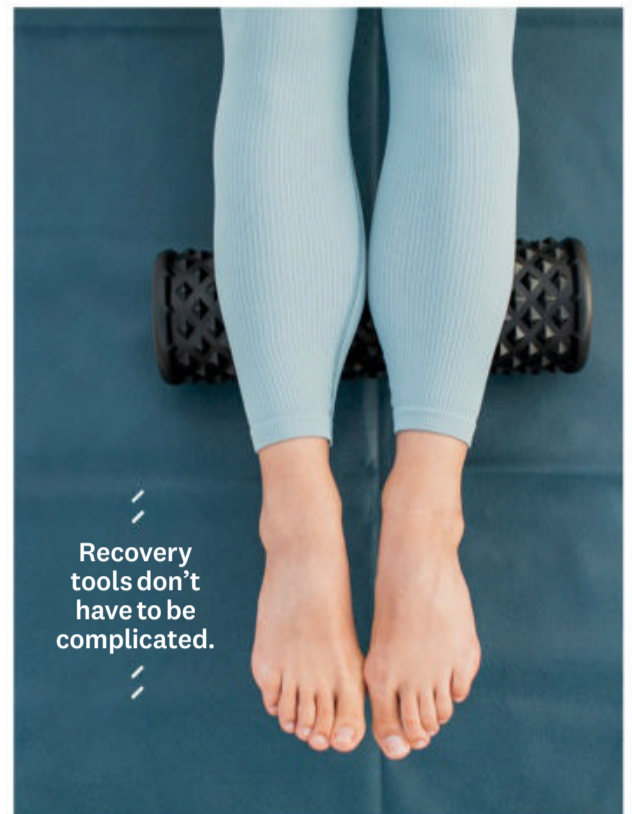
fitness

✘ I've heard about "super sneakers." Um, what?

"Super shoes" are essentially sneakers that have a carbon-fiber plate along with thicker midsole foams. The most up-to-date science appears to show that "performances improve in both elite and recreational runners" when their kicks have these next-generation features, says Adam Tenforde, MD, a sports medicine and running doctor who has researched the fancy footwear.

Olympian and marathon champion Shalane Flanagan calls them a game changer. "I have my college athletes training in them on specific days," she says. "They buy you extra miles of feeling good because they take away from some of the pounding that fatigues the legs and causes muscle tissue breakdown."

ACTION MODE: Use them sporadically, not for every run, to avoid injury. Precision Run and marathon coach Elizabeth (Corky) Corkum wears these for speed workouts, races, and just a handful of long runs so they "feel natural to me for marathon day." (FYI: Nike Vaporfly, Saucony Endorphin Pro, and Asics Metaspeed Sky+ are standouts.)



Recovery tools don't have to be complicated.

✘ I just wish running felt easier. Help!

Running can be interpreted by the body as a response to something bad. "We are wired to run away from threats, which requires a full fight-or-flight response," says Aarti Soorya, MD, an integrative medicine physician at Grover Health. Running for extended periods of time can also circulate stress chemicals, so it's no wonder the feat often feels tough.

ACTION MODE: Tap into the ventral vagal state of your nervous system, which is activated when you feel safe. "Bring in your senses," says Dr. Soorya. Ask yourself what you see, and what you smell, feel, touch, and taste. *Ahh...moving meditation.*

How to Shoe-Shop

Head to a running store that has a treadmill so you can try a few pairs IRL. Three pro faves...



BEST FOR BEGINNERS
Asics Gel-Nimbus 26
"Start with neutral shoes—less is more," notes running coach Meg Takacs. (\$160, asics.com)



BEST FOR DISTANCE
New Balance Fresh Foam X 1080v13
"They're super cushy" for long runs, Dudley says. (\$165, newbalance.com)

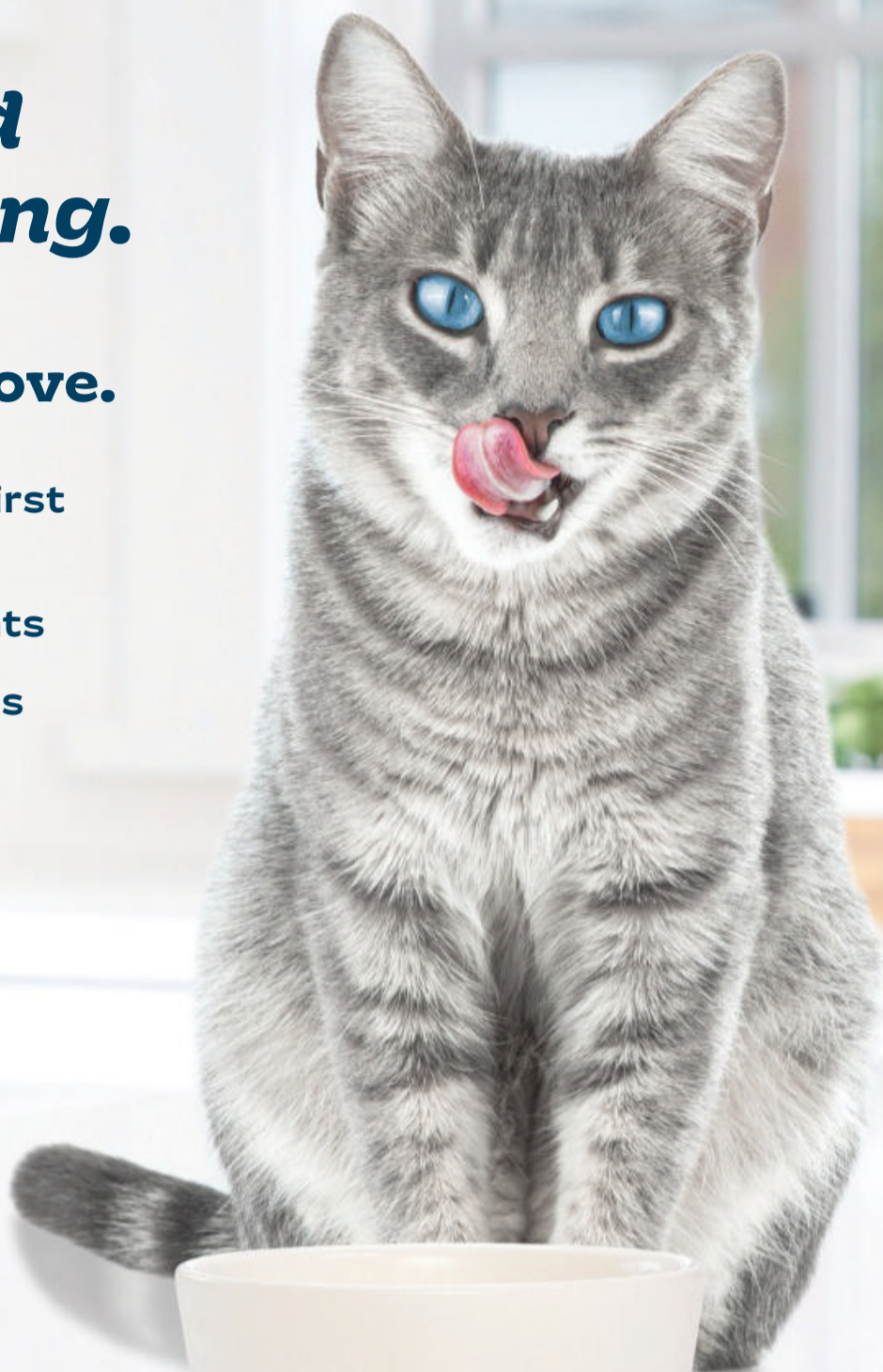


BEST FOR 5-KS AND 10-KS
Mizuno Wave Rider 25
This has been Corkum's go-to "for the past decade." (\$90, mizunousa.com)

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SWEAT TEST

OsteoStrong

Meet the wellness center for all ages that claims to strengthen your frame in just minutes a week.

By Addison Aloian
Illustrated by Lauren Tamaki

How often do you think about the health of your bones? To be honest, I rarely did until learning about this offering. FYI: You reach peak bone mass in your early 20s, and it starts to decline by your early 40s, according to *Osteoporosis International*. That is, unless you purposefully do something about it. Enter OsteoStrong, a skeletal-strengthening health center with locations around the world.

Here's how it works: OsteoStrong uses four pieces of proprietary equipment (picture typical weight machines but without the plate stacks—the equipment uses only your body weight) that load the bones in specific ways and apply targeted forces on the skeleton. This stimulates bone growth as well as strength gain, which can improve posture, agility, and balance. Each machine focuses on different areas of the body to spur measurable bone growth, multiple studies confirm.

You might be thinking, *But I strength train, isn't that enough?* It does work in a similar way. But OsteoStrong requires less time and effort (think: a single all-out hold instead of multiple reps and sets), which is what appealed to me. Let's see if we can become unbreakable....

THE ROUTINE
After the warm-up, a trainer led me through the circuit of machines (one each for upper, lower, core, and back). Though I barely moved, I used all my might to hit the target level of force on each.

FREQUENCY FACTOR
OsteoStrong recommends doing the in-studio circuit weekly for optimal bone health and density. Those with chronic pain or osteopenia can benefit most from OsteoStrong, and also postmenopausal women ages 50 and over, because they're at a higher risk for bone fractures, per research in *Endocrinology and Metabolism*. To confirm changes in bone density, you can do a DXA scan or blood tests at the doc after six months.

TIME SAVER

I was surprised how short the OsteoStrong sessions were. Each visit was a totally reasonable 15 to 20 minutes. I also left with muscle power to spare for other activities, and no sore spots.

EFFICIENT EQUIPMENT

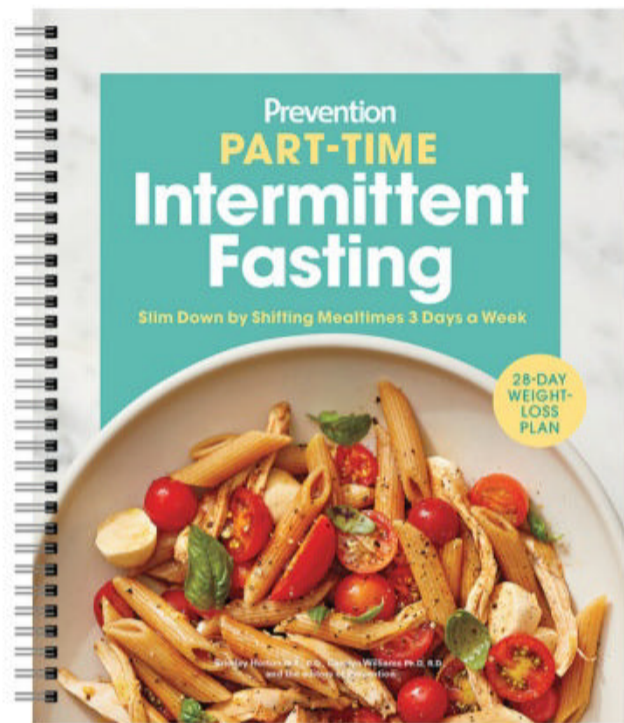
While you won't see weights here, each device has handles to push or pull, a seat, and a screen for real-time feedback on the force you generate using body weight only.

**\$149–
\$259**

OsteoStrong offers monthly memberships within this range, as well as single-session drop-in rates at centers across the U.S., Europe, Asia, and Australia. FYI, traditional health insurance doesn't typically cover it. However, you can use a medical savings account.

Crush Your Goals

Make the most out of every day with these expert-approved essentials.



Prevention's Part-Time Intermittent Fasting

28-day meal plan to lose weight and improve overall health with an easy intermittent fasting schedule that is suited to women.

prevention.com/fasting



Prevention MyMedic Kit

Keep your family safe with Prevention MyMedic this Spring! This first aid kit comes complete with everything you need to treat major to minor injuries.

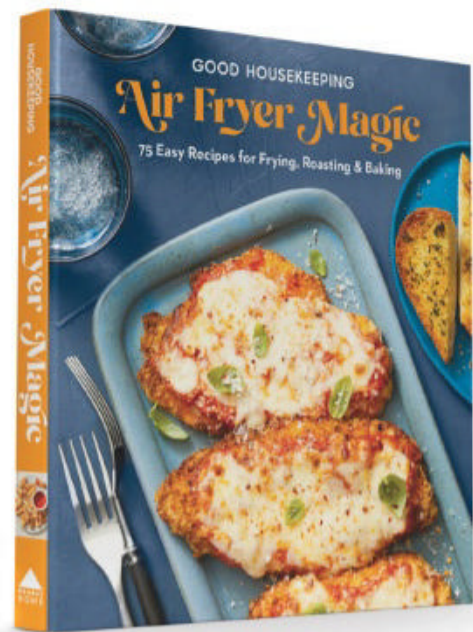
prevention.com/firstaid



Benevolence Velvet Jewelry Box

This cute velvet jewelry box keeps your jewelry organized in style. Makes a perfect gift too!

womenshealthmag.com/jewelrybox



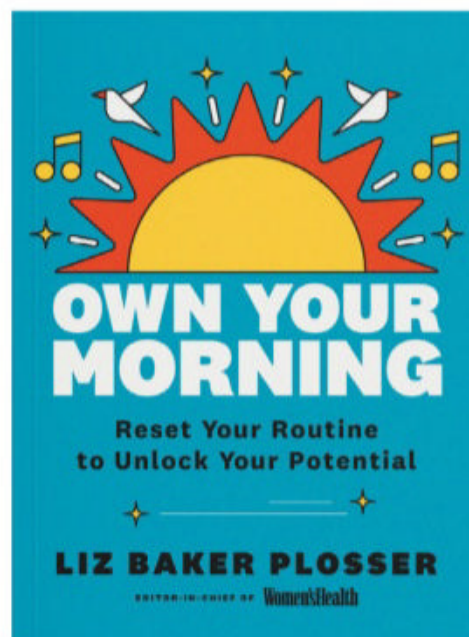
Good Housekeeping Air Fryer Magic

75 easy air fryer recipes from the Good Housekeeping Test Kitchen—plus the experts' secrets for making the most of basket and toaster oven-style appliances. goodhousekeeping.com/airfryermagic



Eau de Juice Gift Set

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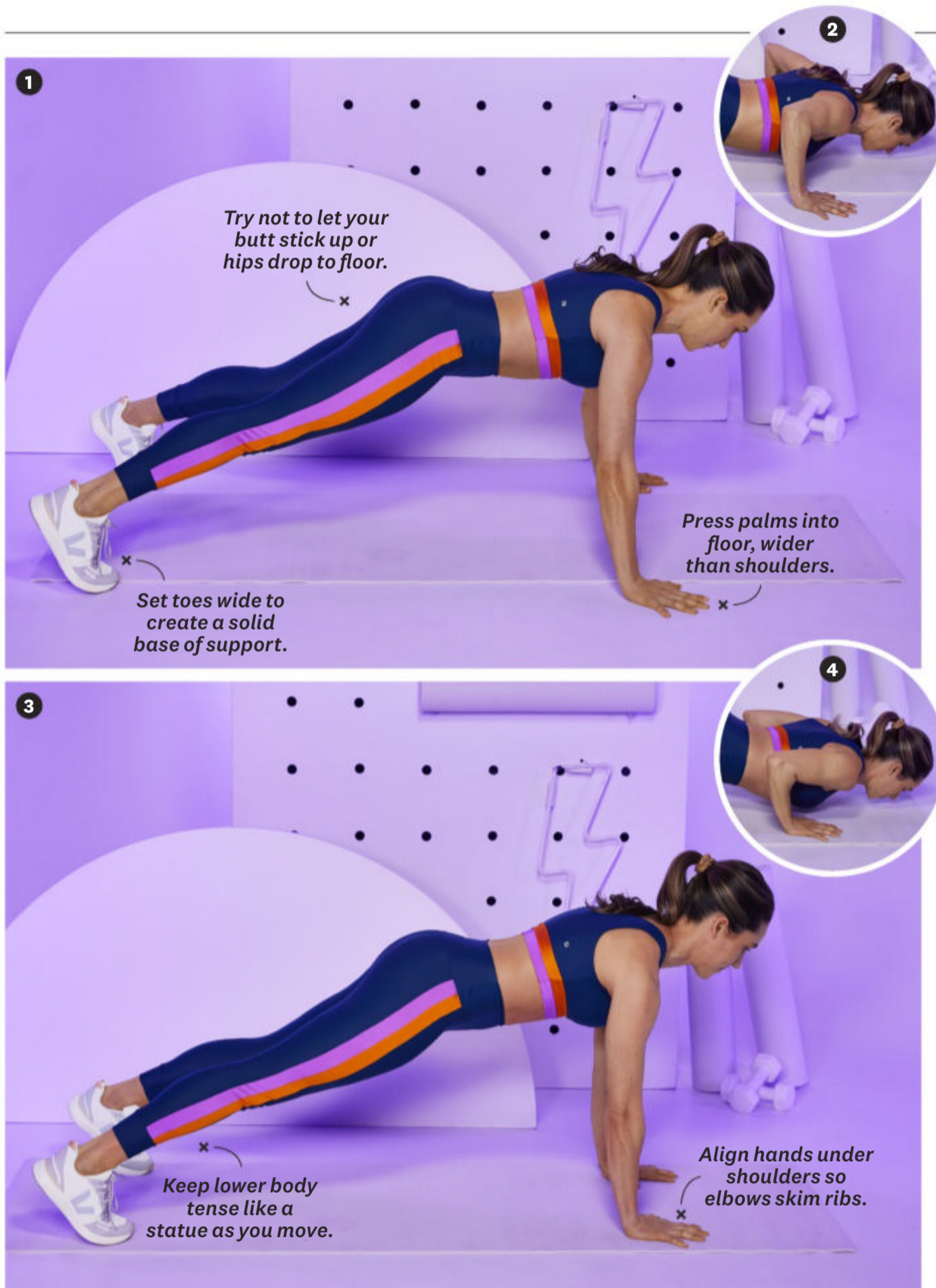
womenshealthmag.com/ownyourmorning

MOVE OF THE MONTH

Plyo Power

Enhance the traditional pushup's explosiveness with this fast-paced variation.

By Jennifer Nied



Lanston Sport sports bra and leggings, lanstonsport.com; Veja sneakers, veja-store.com

WHY WE LOVE IT: This twist on a classic bodyweight move blasts the upper-body muscles: chest, triceps, core, etc. “Work explosiveness and speed by focusing on the powerful push upward,” says Ladder app coach Lauren Kanski, CPT, a WH advisor. Here’s how to drop it like it’s hot...the right way.

STEP 1 **ENGAGE** muscles head to toe in a high plank, with palms placed wider than shoulders and toes driving into floor.

STEP 2 **DROP** to the bottom of the pushup as fast as you can without losing posture in pelvis and core.

STEP 3 **PAUSE** at bottom with chest hovering above floor. Then explode up to high plank by pushing the floor away and jumping hands closer together.

STEP 4 **REPEAT** the fast drop with hands narrow, and launch back up to high plank with force as you jump hands out to a wide position. That’s 1 rep.

WORK IT IN
Do 2 or 3 sets of 3 to 5 reps as part of a HIIT circuit or to prep the central nervous system before a lift like a bench press.

SPEED CHECK
Totally gassed? If the fast pace is too much, lower slowly to the ground and explode only on the upward motion.

MAXIMIZE THE MOTION

Engage your full range of motion throughout (for instance, don’t stop halfway down) to reap max benefits. If that’s too tough, modify and do the move on your knees, Kanski recommends.



CALLING ALL BEGINNERS

Trying the exercise for the first time? Lean against a wall to lighten your upper-bod load.



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Sip Smart Strategies

Experts read the tea leaves for you and share tips for getting the most health perks and flavor from each and every cup.

By Susan Choung
Photographed by Chelsea Kyle



But First, Caution
They may sound harmless, however, it is possible to overdo it with herbal teas. You know the deal: Consult with your doc to check if they'll interact with any medications and for advice if you're pregnant.



Do you swear by chamomile tea to get quality shut-eye? Love yerba mate for those moments when you need a strong jolt? Or maybe you're just curious about the 3,000-plus varieties of tea out there....

Let's start with the basics. All varieties of tea (black, green, white, oolong) come from the leaves of the *Camellia sinensis* plant. What determines the color is how long the leaves are exposed to air—i.e., oxidized. The longer the time, the darker and more robust the tea. Most white and green teas are unoxidized, oolong is semi-oxidized, and black is the most oxidized. Pretty straightforward!

"Herbal tea," however, is kind of a misnomer. They're not "true" teas because they don't come from the *Camellia sinensis* plant. We could take a cue from the French and call them "infusions" instead.

As you might surmise, these infusions can be made from herbs (mint or lemon balm, for example), but also

from flowers (lavender, hibiscus, jasmine), roots (turmeric, licorice), and leaves from plants (rooibos, nettle). "Herbal teas can offer the benefits of plants not typically consumed," says Marissa Meshulam, RD, founder of MPM Nutrition, based in New York City. Case in point: When was the last time you chomped on chamomile flowers? But when dried and steeped in hot water, they result in a soothing beverage that many drink as a sleep aid. Ginger is another ingredient you wouldn't eat on its own but that can be a panacea in tea form. "It's great for our GI systems and provides an antioxidant boost," says Meshulam.

One big reason to drink teas of *any* kind: All, including herbal infusions, are brimming with polyphenols—antioxidant-packed compounds found in plant-based foods. "Antioxidants help fight oxidative stress in our bodies," says Meshulam, "keep our cells in tip-top shape, and reduce our risk of chronic disease." Time to get brewing.



SUPER SOURCE Looking for a li'l hit of energy? Different teas boast varying levels of caffeine—but even with teas on the high end of the spectrum, your body will process the caffeine in them more slowly than it would a similar amount in coffee. That's thanks to the L-theanine found in tea (green tea has the most), which slows down absorption of the stimulant, helping you avoid a post-java crash, says New York-based dietitian-nutritionist Asako Miyashita, RDN. Another reason to love this amino acid? "L-theanine in combination with caffeine produces sharper focus and mental clarity," says Meshulam. (Also: Study participants who took L-theanine performed better and faster on attention tasks, found research in *Journal of Medicinal Food*.) Cool!

Caffeine Clarity

How much is **really** in your mug? The breakdown, per eight-ounce cup:



0 MG

Chamomile

This nighttime favorite is caffeine-free, as you might guess—which is the case with many other herbal infusions.



30 TO 70 MG

Green Tea

Many steeps fall within this range, but there are a few powered-up exceptions.



50 TO 90 MG

Black Teas

Generally, the darker the tea, the more caffeine it contains. English Breakfast (a blend of different black teas) and Assam (the tea often used to make chai) are just a couple that will give you a boost.



UP TO 75 MG

Matcha

There's a reason this revved-up green tea is a morning mainstay.



80 TO 100 MG

Yerba Mate

The most notable outlier in the herbal infusions category has about the same amount of caffeine as coffee, cup for cup.



UP TO 140 MG

Gyokuro

Meet another green tea that can pack a very high caffeine punch, depending on how it's prepared.



STEEP FOR SUCCESS Even the best teas won't taste great if you don't prepare them properly. We asked Corinna Geib, cofounder and owner of ImmuneSchein Tea Haus in Saugerties, New York, how to steep like a pro. Her three rules for excellence:

Perfect Your Water Temp

Some teas are best steeped at a boiling temperature: black teas, dark oolong, pu-erh tea, and pretty much all herbal infusions. More delicate teas (e.g., white teas and Japanese green teas) should **not** be brewed at boiling temps—that will burn their leaves and release bitter flavors.

Prioritize Water Quality

The water will also affect how the tea tastes. Feel free to use the water you drink at home, whether it's filtered or straight from the tap. Skip anything that's chlorinated or overly treated.

Time It Right

Most teas can steep for three to four minutes in hot H₂O (though Japanese green teas need only one to two minutes). Oversteeping releases more tannins—mouth-drying compounds that make tea astringent. So go ahead and set a timer.

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Let's start deviling some eggs. Scan the code for this Tangy Mustard Deviled Eggs recipe and other great appetizers.



**FOOD
IN A
FLASH**

Miso Magic

Golden-brown triangles of tofu and tender-crisp cabbage wedges are the perfect canvas for a savory-sweet, umami-packed sauce.

Photographed by Nico Schinco

Roasted Cabbage and Tofu With Walnut Miso Sauce

TOTAL: 30 MIN. SERVES: 4

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Tbsp plus 4 tsp olive oil, divided | 2 tsp honey |
| 1 14-oz pkg. extra-firm tofu, drained and patted dry | 1 tsp rice vinegar |
| 1 small red cabbage (about 1½ lbs), cut into 12 wedges, core intact (each about 1¾ in. thick) | ¼ cup unsweetened pear juice or nectar, warmed (we used Ceres) |
| Kosher salt and pepper | ¾ cup roasted walnuts, roughly chopped |
| 1 clove garlic, grated | 4 scallions, thinly sliced |
| 2 Tbsp red miso | |

1. Arrange racks in upper and lower thirds of oven and heat oven to 475°F. Brush 2 rimmed baking sheets each with 2 tsp oil. Cut tofu into 4 wedges along both diagonals, then stand each wedge on its side and cut in half lengthwise to yield 8 triangles. Pat both sides of tofu dry then place in single layer on 1 prepared baking sheet. Brush with ½ Tbsp oil and sprinkle with ¼ tsp salt. Flip tofu and sprinkle with ¼ tsp salt.

2. Place cabbage wedges on second baking sheet then brush with remaining ½ Tbsp oil and sprinkle with ⅛ tsp salt. Transfer

both baking sheets to oven and roast 15 min. Flip cabbage and tofu and rotate positions of pans and roast until cabbage is golden brown and tender-crisp and tofu is golden brown, 6 to 8 min. more.

3. Meanwhile, in medium bowl, whisk together garlic, miso, honey, vinegar, and ¼ tsp pepper. Gradually whisk in pear juice. Stir in walnuts. Drizzle cabbage and tofu with walnut miso sauce and sprinkle with scallions.

Per serving: About 403 cal, 27 g fat (3 g sat), 0 mg chol, 589 mg sodium, 27 g carb, 7 g fiber, 14 g sugar (3 g added sugar), 17 g pro

READY,
SET,
PREP

Pantry Goals

If your Insta feed gives you serious storage envy, know this: While the prettiest pantries have everything in clear containers, the most practical ones don't. That said, decanting *can* make sense to prevent certain goods from going stale quickly and to create a less-mess system overall. The *WH* Test Kitchen team breaks down what works best and what you should leave to the 'gram.

Do It!

- Flours
- Sugars
- Oats
- Rice
- Grains
- Dry beans
- Protein powder

Skip It!

- Boxes of pasta
- Boxed sides
- Tinned fish
- Mac and cheese
- Dried fruit
- Croutons
- Bags of chips
- *A good rule of thumb is to forgo decanting anything you switch up often or use all at once.

Airtight canisters are ideal for locking in the freshness of decanted items (we love Rubbermaid Brilliance).

Product Placement

Consider this your treasure-stashing map so you can find everything later.

ORGANIZE ACCORDINGLY

Pretend your pantry is a grocery store: You want to easily navigate the “aisles” and find what you need stat. Group goods by category—baking ingredients, canned produce, beans, pastas, grains, tinned proteins, sauces, you name it. Next up, sort each subsection alphabetically.

UNPACK LIKE A PRO

Supermarkets follow the *first in, first out* rule, and you should too: Place your most recent buys toward the back of shelves, so the older ones are front and center (encouraging you to use them first). When decanting, label with the product name, date decanted, and best-by date.

MAXIMIZE LONGEVITY

Common sense suggests you should keep foods at a temp similar to where you found 'em in the store, but some things benefit from switching to colder storage—looking at you, nuts and seeds. FYI: No need to fret if you typically use up these ingredients quickly.



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Gut Feelings

A rising interest in the microbiome means an old-school health hack is making a major comeback. Here, how to supplement with fiber in 2024.

By Amy Wilkinson

Fiber: not just your g-ma's supplement anymore



When you hear the words *fiber powder*, what springs to mind? Is it an orange carton perched on your grandmother's kitchen counter? Or a TV commercial featuring a hand stirring a chalky substance into a glass of water? Maybe it's simply a hushed voice whispering "constipation." It's safe to say no one has ever accused fiber powder of having a sexy reputation.

Indeed, while stars like Jennifer Aniston and Venus Williams hawk their favorite protein powders, few celebrities line up to endorse supplements that help them poop. But maybe they should—and maybe they will soon. Thanks to the rise of plant-based diets and trendy fiber supps (like psyllium husk, which has been linked to weight loss) and the destigmatizing of gut issues, with help from social media (hello, #HotGirlsHaveIBS), there's new interest in the fiber powder industry.

This resurgence comes just in time, as two-thirds of American adults now experience recurring digestive issues, according to a recent poll. And women seem to be especially prone to certain conditions: The rate of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is nearly twice as high in female patients as in male patients, another study found. Moreover, the proportion of newly diagnosed individuals younger than 55 rose from 11 percent in 1995 to 20 percent in 2019. "Anecdotally, I can say my younger patients are most concerned with the uptick in early-onset colon cancers, and with the obesity epidemic, which is affecting all age groups," says Cynthia Quainoo, MD, a Brooklyn-based gastroenterologist-hepatologist.

Let's dive into the digestive journey, *Magic School Bus*-style. You'll quickly see how fiber plays an integral role in digestion by nourishing our gut bacteria—and learn how to pack plenty of the good stuff to keep things a-movin'.

Why Fiber Matters

► Fiber is a category of carbohydrate that the body can't fully digest. There are two types: soluble and insoluble. The former breaks down in water, creating a gel-like substance that helps push waste through the digestive tract. The latter does not break down in water and softens and bulks stools. You need both types in your diet to reap all the digestive benefits, per experts.

"Fiber makes it easier to pass stools through the digestive tract," says Samantha Nazareth, MD, a *Women's Health* advisory board member who is double board-certified in internal medicine and gastroenterology-hepatology. "It helps prevent constipation and

lowers your risk of developing hemorrhoids or diverticulosis [in which small pouches in your colon become inflamed and painful]." Fiber also feeds the healthy microbiome in your colon, which helps many aspects of health, including brain function, immunity, weight, and blood sugar control.

While Dr. Nazareth encourages folks to meet their dietary intakes through whole foods like fruits, veggies, beans and other legumes, and whole grains, when that's not possible, fiber supplementation is a good option, she adds. "When I travel frequently and my food choices are out of my control, I supplement with fiber," says Dr. Nazareth, who mixes psyllium husk with water to reach her nutritional goals (see "Straight to the Source," page 42, for a fiber supplements cheat sheet).

The Female Factor


► More and more women are turning to fiber powder, whether for regular bowel movements or troubleshooting of chronic gut troubles. (FYI: Most of us aren't getting enough fiber.)

WH lifestyle director Lindsay Geller, 31, has been supplementing with psyllium husk since 2019, with the main goal of keeping things moving when stressed or traveling. "I take it pretty much every day, either by tossing a teaspoon into my smoothie or mixing with some yogurt, peanut butter, and protein powder," Geller says. "The main benefit I've experienced is staying regular, and I've noticed that when I don't take it for whatever reason, I miss that extra dose."

For Chloe Melas, 37, entertainment correspondent for NBC News, psyllium husk has been a game changer for GI issues. At 23, Melas was diagnosed with ulcerative colitis (UC), an inflammatory bowel disease affecting the lining of the large intestine. "I was put on steroids for months and developed 'moon face' [swelling] from it because there are side effects," says Melas. "You couldn't even give me a hug without me feeling like my whole body hurt."

In 2014, Melas married Brian Mazza, an entrepreneur and fitness influencer, who, she says, is constantly introducing her to the latest innovations in wellness. In 2020, he brought home a big bag of psyllium husk from their local nutrition store, and she started mixing it into water along with other vitamins and supplements, essentially mad-sciencing her own fiber water. "I noticed an immediate benefit to my regularity and bloating," Melas says. "I did a lot of research [on the benefits] and became a religious user of psyllium husk." That, coupled with the right mix of traditional medicines, has helped Melas relieve her symptoms.

While her doctors support Melas's use of psyllium husk, they are loath to say it "cured" her ulcerative colitis (there's no known cure for the condition). Nevertheless, Melas has been in remission for two years now and recently had her first normal colonoscopy ever. Melas's 14-year diagnosis and treatment timeline left her wishing she'd "known about the importance of fiber sooner."



**Women should
aim to consume
25 grams of
fiber per day, yet
the average
American consumes
only 10 to 15.**

Sources: Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Harvard Health

Smarter Supplements

▶ The truth is, fiber is for all ages, and companies are starting to bridge the gap. Inspired by her friend Melas and prompted by her own issues with IBS and lactose intolerance, Shannon Race used her experience as a vet of Vital Proteins to cofound Bio.me, a gut-health company hoping to revolutionize the fiber powder market.

The company launched in September last year. (Melas's husband, Mazza, is a partner.) The brand currently has two powders on the market: Daily Prebiotic Fiber, with partially hydrolyzed guar gum and resistant potato starch; and Fiber Rescue, with psyllium husk. It also has a synbiotic in pill form.

"I felt there was an opportunity, first and foremost, for something that was really easy to incorporate into your daily routine—it's not just a product but part of your lifestyle," Race says of the white space she intends to fill in the fiber powder market. "The brands that do exist that have unflavored products that can be added to juice, water, whatever—they still felt very pharma, prescriptive, sterile, not approachable or for the modern consumer."

Race wanted a product chic enough to fit in a young woman's kitchen but not so young-feeling as to dissuade an older demographic. To strike that Goldilocks balance, her team focused on the packaging. Eschewing a gimmicky aesthetic that might undercut the science and research that went into developing



Fiber is linked to reductions in death by heart attack and stroke.

Bio.me, the team opted for sleek, monochromatic pouches that feel sophisticated in their simplicity.

Of course, Bio.me has competition in the race to make digestive health cool. Companies like the Instagram-ubiquitous Seed (which sells its own synbiotic pill) have already staked their claim on a certain corner of social media, working with influencers, and even actor Lana Condor, to reach wellness-minded women in their 20s and 30s. Bonny Fiber Supplements,

meanwhile, is leaning into the bodily function of it all, with cheeky taglines like "Tastes great, makes you poop" and "Fiber should make you crap, not taste like it." And then there's Naked Nutrition, whose organic fiber is so stripped down that it contains only one ingredient (baobab pulp).

Race is confident about the lane she's chosen for Bio.me. "It's about the importance of fiber for overall health, and that's the message I want to drive, in a way that's still fun."

STRAIGHT TO THE SOURCE

▶ While Dr. Nazareth says supplementing with fiber powder daily is safe, start with a slightly lower-than-recommended dose and gradually increase it to avoid digestive issues. Be sure to check the label for ingredients you don't want, like added sugar, and if you're on any medications, get your doc's okay first to prevent any possible adverse interactions. Three fiber origin stories:

Psyllium Husk

This has been dubbed a potential "alternative" to the drug Ozempic. (Such comparisons are overblown, though fiber does promote satiety.)

Psyllium husk is derived from the seeds of the *Plantago ovata* plant. "If you mix it in water, it forms a gel-like substance as it absorbs," says Dr. Nazareth. That substance is what helps move things through the digestive tract, alleviating constipation.

Potato Starch

Yes, the humble spud has resistant starch that is a complex carbohydrate similar to dietary fiber. Think of it as gut fuel: "Potato starch doesn't digest in the small intestine and reaches the colon intact as food for the beneficial gut bacteria," Dr. Nazareth explains.

Guar Gum (and Others)

It's made from the seed of the cluster bean (*Cyamopsis tetragonoloba*) plant. You might also see pectin, a soluble, plant-based fiber, and inulin on labels; inulin is another soluble fiber, found in plants like chicory root, Dr. Nazareth says. Inulin can also be used as a prebiotic fiber to support gut health.

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WELLNESS
CURIOUS

Nerve Flossing

The technique's purported payoff? Smooth, pain-free mobility.

By Jennifer Nied

I'm noticing more friends flossing lately. But it's not a surge in dental hygiene—instead, it's a way to improve nerve health and move freely. Nerve flossing (or gliding) is a stretching technique that's easily done on your own and is said to relieve a host of symptoms.

How it works: Nerves get compressed by surrounding tissue—creating sensations like pain, numbness, or tingling—and nerve flossing is a way to free and get them moving, says Shannon Leggett, a New York City-based physical therapist. “Think of it like a dynamic stretch for the nerve,” she adds. Essentially, you're carefully and mindfully moving the joints around the target nerve. (In practice, it looks a lot like stretching, but with even slower and more specific movements.) Ahead, physical therapists on mobilizing your nervous system with this technique and what to consider before you give it a go...

It's the same as stretching.

NOT EXACTLY

Both modalities help improve range of motion (and are important!). But there are nuances to each. For example, in a static hamstring stretch, you apply tension through the full length of the muscle—in this case, pulling your extended leg to its limit and holding to target the hamstring muscle. When flossing, say, the sciatic nerve (which runs along the leg), you pull one knee toward the chest; extend leg up and point foot; then bend knee and flex foot.

Nerve flossing doesn't mean pushing to your end range. Instead, you put tension on one end of the nerve while adding slack to the other—this is key. Nerves are delicate,

and their main function is communication, so pushing them to or beyond their limit can aggravate aches, Leggett notes. Muscles are made for moving and can take more strain than nerves.

It's totally safe to do on your own.

YES, BUT START WITH A PRO

Nerve flossing is common PT homework that doesn't require equipment. So, yes, anyone can do it at home—but you may not need it or really know what areas to focus on. That's where working with a physical therapist comes in, so you can do it properly. “There is no one-size-fits-all solution to nerve pain,” says Morgan Sileo, DPT, an orthopedic clinical specialist at the Hospital for Special Surgery. And gliding the wrong nerves could make the prob even worse. Ouch.

If it hurts, it's working.

NOPE

The goal of nerve flossing, when done properly and in the right area, is to diminish pain and discomfort. Targeting your nervous system is different from massage or foam rolling (where a little eek is okay) due to the very delicate nature of the nerve tissue. If pain happens and symptoms intensify, become more frequent, or extend farther down the arm or leg away from the spine—a sign of increased nerve tension—that's a flag to press pause. You may need to adjust your technique or modify your range of motion, says Sileo (which is where pro guidance is clutch again) to finesse your form so you can focus on healing.



KATIE THOMPSON

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mind



Why Women Are Choosing to Be Child-Free

The choice can be liberating, yet stigmas persist. Here, how to cut through the noise with clarity and confidence to make the decision that's right for *you.*

By Amy Wilkinson
Photographed by Joe Lingeman

PROP STYLING: NICOLE LOUIE



When Devin Propeck-Silva, a 38-year-old business owner in Portland, Oregon, meets someone new, the introductions follow the same script. “After they find out I’m married, they ask how many kids I have. (I don’t have any.) Then they ask when we’re planning to have kids. (We’re not.)”

That’s when the vibe shifts, and Propeck-Silva tries to fill the silence by reassuring the person that she and husband Matt love kids (they’re a proud aunt and uncle!) despite not wanting their own children. “I feel I have to explain my decision and clarify that I’m not a monster,” she says.

For those who are child-free by choice, confused and critical responses are nothing new. In 1974, Marcia Drut-Davis, a 34-year-old substitute teacher, experienced this on a whole new level when she appeared on a segment of the TV show *60 Minutes* in which producers followed her and then-husband Warren as they broke the news to his parents that they didn’t intend to have children. Within a day of the episode’s airing, Drut-Davis says, she was blacklisted by her school district and received death threats—all because she owned up to the radical notion that she didn’t want to be a mother.

“I was terrified,” Drut-Davis, now 84, says of the response. “I shut up about it for many years. I didn’t say a word.” Perhaps unsurprisingly, her husband at the time didn’t suffer the same ill consequences, she says. “His job wasn’t affected; his friendships weren’t affected. Mine were. I was less than a snail at the bottom of the ocean.”

Fast-forward 50 years—through the rise of women in the workforce, third-wave feminism, and the

#MeToo movement—and, despite some awkward dinner party banter, the convo around being child-free has gotten a little easier, a little less fraught for many with a uterus.

Claire Guentz, a 35-year-old real estate agent and influencer in Raleigh, North Carolina, often discusses her decision to forgo motherhood with her following of nearly 150,000 and has experienced only infrequent blowback. “There have been a couple of messages about how a woman’s job is to stay at home, but I don’t even entertain those,” Guentz says. “Overall, I feel like 95 percent of the feedback I’ve gotten has been very positive.”

But pressure to reproduce persists—despite the growing number of people saying no thanks to parenthood. (In 2023, 43 percent of U.S. homes were childless, up 7 percent from 2012, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.)

“We tend to think of motherhood as a natural part of being a woman,” says Amy Blackstone, PhD, a sociology professor at the University of Maine and author of *Childfree by Choice: The Movement Redefining*

Family & Creating a New Age of Independence. “Gen Z has insisted on disentangling the connection openly and without apology, but it persists because it’s so deeply embedded in many of our social institutions. Religion depends on it. Our economy depends on it. The institution of family (as predominantly understood) depends on it.”

So when a woman decides to break this connection for her own reasons, people do tend to have thoughts. “We still hear occasionally that you’re less of a woman or you’re not a real woman unless or until you’ve had children,” Blackstone notes. Refrains of “she’s selfish” are commonly voiced even today, she adds.

At a time when a woman’s right to choose is somehow still up for political and ideological debate, the choice to not have a child, ever, may remain the most radical of all—leaving many women feeling alone or ostracized. But that is changing for the better, thankfully.

Growing the Movement

● ●
If you spend more than five minutes a week on social media, you’ve likely noticed a rise in child-free content—whether it’s “Cool Aunts” posting about their last-minute trip to Paris or “DINKS” (short for dual income, no kids couples) doting on their goldendoodles. (Guentz and her husband, who have two pooches of their own, like to refer to themselves as DINKWADs—dual income, no kids, with a dog.) Accounts devoted to the child-free lifestyle, like @childfreebff, meanwhile, are garnering hundreds of thousands of views.

These aren’t merely TikTok trends but a bellwether of the state of parenthood—or, rather, nonparenthood. One study, conducted by Pew Research in 2021, found that 44 percent of nonparents between

Cheers to choosing
a path that is on track
with your true self.



the ages of 18 and 49 were “not too or not at all likely” to have children someday—a 7 percent increase from 2018. The reasons women are deciding to be child-free by choice (the preferred term for those who have made a conscious decision versus those who are “childless” due to circumstances) are as diverse as the women themselves.

For many, the decision rested on the fact that they never experienced a strong pull toward motherhood. Christina, a 40-year-old digital operations manager in New York, remembers holding baby dolls during playtime as a kid and feeling ambivalent about the idea of being a mom. She figured she’d grow into the desire as she got older, but in her late 20s, as she watched a handful of older female friends choose to become single mothers, she realized she never would.

“Seeing them make this really definitive choice—it made it clear that that’s not for me,” she says.

Some women, says Blackstone, arrive at their decision based on the harsh practicalities of modern life in 2024. “For Gen Z and even millennials, the environment and the economy are two main reasons,” she says. The carbon footprint a child may leave and/or the costs of raising a kiddo for 18 years (at least) are simply too profound to ignore, and the “we’ll figure out a way” mentality of earlier generations just isn’t realistic.



BABYPROOF YOUR CONVERSATIONS

Small talk can be weird enough without questions such as “When are you having kids?” entering the chat, especially when answers like “never” stop the convo (and a potential new friendship) dead in its tracks. When you’re faced with a sitch like this, Blackstone recommends reframing the question into one that continues the dialogue while changing the topic. “The best response is ‘I’m not, but one thing I’m really passionate about is _____,’” she says. “Depending on the timing or situation, I might say skiing or wine or that I played roller derby for six years.” This allows you to shift to a subject both parties can talk about—a win-win.

Over 15 years of research, Blackstone has also found that some women don't want to jeopardize the primary relationship with their partner. Single women may want to protect the carefully curated life they've established. For others, the choice may be emotionally fraught, as they wrestle with issues that may include an unhappy or traumatic childhood—"probably the most common reason," says Nicoletta C. Skoufalos, PhD, a New York-based psychologist. "People may not trust their ability to create a new, healthy type of family with their own child." (The Barefoot Contessa, Ina Garten, told BBC News that she and husband Jeffrey never had kids because her childhood wasn't something that she wanted to "re-create.")

The very real toll of childbirth on the body may also give pause, according to Skoufalos—whether the woman is an elite athlete who doesn't want to take a career break or an eating disorder survivor who is learning to accept her body. Not to mention that the U.S. has the highest rate of maternal mortality among high-income countries, which means that choosing to have a baby is a health risk in and of itself, unfortunately. Ultimately, the choice to have or not have a child is a personal decision—and one that often isn't easily reached.

Considering the Options

While the choice to have a child is black-and-white for some women, many find themselves languishing in the gray—unable to decide one way or the other. Even women who are pretty sure they don't want children can get caught up in the what-ifs. For some, the idea of regret looms large, while others worry about who will visit or take care of them when they're old. Still others are concerned about leaving a lasting legacy once they shuffle off this mortal coil.

The good news, says Karin Arndt, PhD, a clinical psychologist in Washington, D.C., is that it's okay to spend time in this gray space. "I talk to a lot of women on a weekly basis, and a lot are struggling with ambivalence," she says. "We're not used to, in this culture, sitting in the tension of not knowing, and we're trained that we need to have an answer quickly. Therapy is a place where we can wrestle with that and not have to come up with an answer right away."

Of course, if having a biological child is a requisite of parenthood for you—and egg freezing is not a viable option—time is not infinite, and you will have to make a decision eventually, potentially before you feel 100 percent ready to do so. Arndt recommends a period of contemplation to clarify your true desires. "Commit to listening closely to yourself—not just the topmost layer of your psyche, which is the conscious mind and rationally makes sense from a pro-and-con

perspective—but on a deeper level," she says. "And make some space for the unconscious through listening to dreams or doing morning pages."

As someone who's been through the decision process, Propeck-Silva recommends a granular approach: examining your day-to-day. "It's important, if somebody's questioning this, to think about what their daily life looks like now and to think about what life is like on their worst day, and then what daily life is going to look like on their worst day with children," she says.

Also, remember that the decision is yours (with or without a partner's input). Seeking advice and counsel from friends and family may be warranted, but ultimately you will be the one raising this child. It may also be helpful to keep in mind that while this is a big decision, there's no one "right" answer. And the ability to contemplate this choice at all is a privilege, both socioeconomically and physiologically; perspective here is key.



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Building a Life of Their Own

The flip side of eliminating one possibility is opening the door to so many others, and for women who have decided to be child-free, Dr. Arndt encourages finding a driving passion.

"What are you creating? What in your life is challenging you? What's your crucible, as I put it—the fire in which you're forming gold? We don't tend to see or hear about models of what it means to be between 30 and 60 that don't involve raising kids. What could those years look like if you're birthing something in your life and it has nothing to do with actual kids?"

For Guentz, that's meant establishing business ventures that excite her. For Christina, that's meant a fulfilling balance of work, travel, and volunteering. For Propeck-Silva, that's meant realizing her dream of refitting a 43-foot yacht, with plans to sail around the world. No sad, selfish, bored women to be found here. And so far, little to no regret about their choice. "I feel spoiled," Propeck-Silva says of her child-free lifestyle. "I get this quality time with my partner. Every weekend feels like a vacation."

As it turns out, that lack of regret is the case for many child-free people, decades later, according to recent research. For example, for adults in Michigan age 70 or older, the number of things they would want to change about their life was relatively consistent, whether they had kids or not.

For Drut-Davis, who has become an advocate for the child-free-by-choice movement and written two books about her experience, those findings bear out. While she admits to what she calls "Kodak moments" of regret—like seeing a photo of a mom friend holding her newborn in the hospital—they've been fleeting and far between. "The little vignettes are always so charming, but not the whole picture," she says.

When Drut-Davis reflects on the full picture of her life, she has only one real regret—"that I was too frightened to approach this subject earlier," she says. "We have to be as proud of our choice as parents are of their choice."

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BY ROZALYNN FRAZIER

DIGGING DEEP



Meet six athletes with six different health challenges. Their commonality? They all learned to thrive while owning their condition.



SIMPLY NAVIGATING life—careers, relationships, kids, etc.—can be overwhelming. Toss in health issues and things get exponentially harder: An unexpected diagnosis that affects you physically and mentally can throw a major wrench into your world. In spite of this, some people find strength in themselves they never imagined they had. They tap into their resilience to vault over obstacles and manage to pull off incredible physical feats. *WH* wanted to know what made individuals like this tick, and how they found that grit and drive to press on. So we talked to six women who push us to question our perception of what healthy looks like—and who act as a source of inspo to go after big goals, no matter what you're going through.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JAKE STANGEL; MADDIE MCGARVEY; ANDY J. SCOTT; ARI SKIN; CARMEN CHAN; HANA ASANO



“EVERYTHING WE EXPERIENCE IN LIFE—GOOD, BAD, OR UGLY—CAN BE USED AS A VEHICLE FOR TRIUMPH.”

**LINDSEY
HUIE, 41**

Former pro soccer player, youth soccer coach, and founder of Gritness

WHEN I THINK about the day I had my heart attack, nothing stands out. (I was walking up a hill on my way to coach a youth soccer team when it happened.) But when I look at the amount of stress I was under at that time, it actually makes sense.

I was going through a divorce; I had five children, one with high needs; my dog had been diagnosed with cancer and geriatric vertigo; I had come out of retirement and was a 36-year-old playing semipro soccer against a bunch of 20somethings; and I was coaching several youth soccer teams. All of this was compounded by not having help or outlets for the stress.

While I may not have realized just how much this was affecting my heart, I kind of predicted my own heart attack. I remember several text exchanges with my therapist in which I stated, somewhat nonchalantly, that I was going to have one.

Then in 2019, on a September day, I felt as if someone had ripped something inside of me, like how you rip a piece of paper with your hands. There was a fire in my chest. I was sweating and super nauseous. It was the most pain I've ever felt, yet it never crossed my mind that it could be a heart attack.

I was healthy. I ate clean. I was in great shape. I thought it must be some really serious heartburn. Later, at the hospital, I learned I'd had a heart attack caused by a spontaneous coronary artery dissection (SCAD), a sudden tear in a heart-artery wall that can slow or block blood flow. I was shocked not only that I'd had one but that SCAD can cause cardiac events in fit women who do intense workouts and have extreme stress.

Afterward, at home, I wanted to be active and involved with my kids, but I felt so lethar-

gic. It was like an out-of-body experience. I knew what needed to be done, but my body wouldn't cooperate. It would take 25 to 30 minutes to recover from just getting up to go to the bathroom. The darkest part of this period was the realization that I could go from being a Division I national champion to lying on the couch and struggling to feed myself.

To keep my spirits up, I told myself this was temporary and at some point I was going to be functional again. I also took a cue from my collegiate soccer coach about living with intention and purpose. They always said, "Everything that we experience in life—good, bad, or ugly—can be used as a vehicle for triumph." There was no way I was going to let this destroy me. Yes, it stopped me from playing soccer at a high level, which sucks because I didn't get to choose my ending in the sport, but it also helped me start my mental-strength training business, Gritness, in which I mentor female soccer players and teach them how to tap into their resilience.

I don't think I'll ever be 100 percent again, but I am 100 percent of where I need to be right now. That means instead of playing soccer professionally, I play pickup games with my sister. I have to be very strategic and calculated with how I go about things, which means making a daily calendar organized by the hour to help me understand my bandwidth. I don't want to overcommit and end up exhausted three days later.

Ultimately, I respect the fact that my heart attack happened. I went through a difficult thing, and though I can't control whether it happens again, I have worked very hard to control the things that I can—and that's enough for me.



“Parkinson’s Is a Tough Diagnosis, but It’s Enriched My Life in a Lot of Ways, Making It More Meaningful.”

I DID ONE IRONMAN in 2002 after I was done in the Air Force, just to do it, then stopped. In 2016 I decided to get back into the races, with the sole goal of making it back to Kona [the Ironman Championships in Hawaii]. At first I put up some good times, but then I got progressively slower, finishing about two hours longer than normal. I couldn’t figure out what was going on. By May 2019 my frustration got the better of me and I quit racing again.

Six months after I wrapped my career, I was sitting on the couch with my family watching a movie when my husband said my arm was shaking. I wondered why I would have a one-sided resting arm tremor. I Googled it and all these facts about Parkinson’s popped up. As I started reading, I realized I’d been having some of these symptoms—being super sore in the mornings and finding the volume of my voice trailing off at the end of sentences—for several years but chalked them up to getting older. The next day, a neurologist at the hospital where I’m an anesthesiologist confirmed my diagnosis of Parkinson’s.

It was a lot to process. The visions I had of my life and my retirement years immediately changed. I pictured myself disabled and not capable of doing anything for myself within 5 to 10 years. I also went through the stages

of grief—denial first, then anger, and then, at some point, acceptance—before moving forward.

At the time of my diagnosis, I hadn’t exercised since I stopped training. I was feeling sorry for myself. I had gained 30 pounds. I was depressed and anxious and figured running and racing were out of the picture for good. I also knew that if I kept on this track I wasn’t going to end in a good place, so I reevaluated my goals.

A movement disorder specialist gave me a list of research studies on physical activity and Parkinson’s symptom management, and I enrolled in a yearlong one studying the effects of cycling on the disease. Since I hadn’t been exercising, riding for 20 minutes on the bike was hard at the beginning. By the end of the study, though, I was riding for an hour, four or five times a week, and I felt better and much stronger. My anxiety, sleep, stiffness, and rigidity also improved, and I started to believe I could get back to triathlons. I signed up for Ironman 70.3 Ohio in July 2022.

I didn’t tell my husband, who was also signed up for the race. I was secretly training to see how it would go.

SARA WHITTINGHAM, 49

Air Force veteran, anesthesiologist, Ironman athlete

On race day, my goal was just to finish, but I surprised myself, beating my husband by almost an hour and coming close to my time prior to having Parkinson’s. I qualified for a spot in the half-Ironman World Championships in St. George, Utah, that October, where I also completed the race.

I’ve always been inspired by the Ironman stories. As I was watching the Kona championship broadcast from 2022, the story of Chris Nikic, the first



person with Down syndrome to finish an Ironman, caught my eye. I thought: *He has more challenges than I do, and if he could do a full Ironman, maybe I could too, and maybe others would also find my story inspirational.* So I wrote Ironman, and eight months later, I received a bib for the 2023 race.

As I ran down Ali'i Drive toward the finish line, I was overcome with emotion, a culmination of all the self-doubt and what I'd been through over

the previous three years. Even during the race when my medication started to wear off because I forgot to retake it, which made my mind and my body slower, I stayed positive. I remember thinking of all the other people going through Parkinson's and how I hoped they'd realize that they, too, could get back to doing what they love, whatever that may be.

Even with these victories, I've still had to adapt how I judge myself. I've

learned to be more patient. If I have a bad workout, I don't get upset. Instead, I do yoga to feel better.

I always know that if I can even force myself to smile, I'll be okay. So I think of something good about the moment and try to be grateful. To be honest, even though Parkinson's is a tough diagnosis, it's enriched my life in a lot of ways, making it more full and meaningful, and it's given me more of a purpose.

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“DEALING WITH HEARING LOSS WAS AN EXERCISE IN PATIENCE AND ENDURANCE.”

FIONA HUTCHENS, 21
Dancer with the Colorado Ballet and Diablo Ballet

IN SEVENTH GRADE I began having trouble with my hearing, so much so that I had to wear hearing aids. When I wasn't sitting close to my teachers it was challenging to hear them, and my friends were frustrated with me because I'd have to say "What?" so many times.

Over the next two years, my hearing loss got even worse, with my left ear declining faster than my right. While I knew something was wrong, the confirmation from a specialist that I was in fact losing my hearing was devastating. I worried that I wouldn't be able to hear and enjoy music in the same way. I was also afraid that my ballet dancing—which I'd been doing since I could walk—would suffer.

My rapid hearing loss qualified me for a cochlear implant, and in 2019, I had the surgery. I was nervous. It was going to be a big change from hearing aids. When my cochlear was activated (about a month after surgery), I couldn't hear anything for a good 10 minutes, then it sounded like bubbles. Finally I started to hear sounds, but everything was very high-pitched, which was different from the lower pitch range I was used to with my hearing aids. It was an exercise in patience and endurance: It would take another two months of wearing the cochlear every day for things to sound normal to me. But the reward—a big boost in my hearing—was worth it.

My cochlear implant has made me more confident. I feel less shy talking to people and more comfortable in social settings. It's helped me improve as a dancer as well. I used to have to watch other people to see when they were doing a step, to compensate for not hearing the music, but now I am mostly able to determine musical cues myself.

That doesn't mean there haven't been learning moments. Initially, I had to make sure the outer magnetic portion of my sound processor stayed in place; I found it would fly off while I was performing pirouettes, which was really embarrassing. So I now secure it by taping it to my head with KT tape. And sometimes delicate music is hard for me to decipher, as there's no clear rhythm. In this case, I look out for a couple of notes that I recognize as the music plays, and I count in my head for guidance.

One of the biggest lessons this has taught me is how to advocate for myself. I used to be afraid to ask others to accommodate me, and I've realized there's nothing wrong with asking for what you need. If I need the music louder, then I need the music louder—that shouldn't bother anyone. I want people to know that no matter your disability, it doesn't have to stop you from doing anything you want.

“If It Doesn’t Frighten You, Then You Aren’t Really Challenging Yourself.”

MY SISTER, who is a year older than me, was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes when she was 8 years old. So when I started showing signs at 14, I knew exactly what it was. I’d essentially already lived with the disease for seven years.

As a very active kid, I never let having type 1 diabetes, which prevents the pancreas from making insulin, deter me from anything. That included running, which I began in my youth but really got into in the ’90s, working my way up from a four-miler to the marathon. Back then, I’d carry my blood sugar meter with me. I’d stop

▼
LINDA CARRIER, 61
Author, ultra-runner, and the first woman to complete the World Marathon Challenge (seven marathons on seven continents in seven days) three times

mid-race to test myself, dropping my blood on the meter, which would take about three minutes. When I got the reading, I’d adjust. My husband would also meet me on different parts of the course with my insulin injections just in case my blood sugar ran high. I also always carried some kind of sweets, typically Swedish Fish or Skittles, with me, which I still do now, because you just never know with diabetes. You don’t know if your stress level is going to tank you or if you’re coming down with a slight cold that will affect your blood sugar. Honestly, it used to be a pain to control my blood sugar while running.

These days, the process is much simpler. I have a continuous glucose monitor on the back of my arm that checks my blood sugar and sends information to my insulin pump (the Medtronic MiniMed 780G), which is the size of an old-school pager; I hook it on my belt loop. This pump then feeds me insulin instead of my needing to do daily shots. When I’m running, my blood sugar goes up within the first two miles because of the exertion, but during the next few miles it goes down. My insulin pump in combination with my continuous glucose monitor accounts for this, adjusting every five minutes.

I’ve had type 1 diabetes for 47 years, and the way this pump works makes it almost feel like being a nondiabetic again—that is, of course, if everything works the way it’s supposed to.

That’s why it’s all about planning for the worst so you don’t have to worry if something were to happen. (When your blood sugar drops, it’s like hitting the wall, but worse; my vision gets blurry and dark, and I can’t walk in a straight line.) I approach every race with that preparation, including my most recent World Marathon Challenge, which is completing seven marathons on seven continents in seven days.

So while most people are training their body to learn to run on tired legs and trying out new running clothes, I also have to test out what I’m eating with the pump adjustments I have to make. This recent challenge required me to eat more, so I had to figure out what I could eat to keep my blood sugar and energy levels up, while taking into consideration muscle recovery. I worked with a nutritionist and a trainer and they came up with this drink mix that was basically carbs and protein. I would drink it 30 minutes after my run.

On race day, I also have to make sure that my insulin pump has a fresh AA battery because you don’t want that going dead during the race. I make sure I change my insulin the day before the race, because sometimes the cannula hits the scar tissues and the pump doesn’t give you enough and your blood sugar runs high. And I have to worry about my pump withstanding the various temperatures on each continent. Needless to say, there’s a lot I do that the average runner doesn’t have to even think about.

For me, though, it’s all about the challenge. If it doesn’t frighten you, then you aren’t really challenging yourself. And I’ve always liked to challenge myself.





“ANY TIME YOU GET TO GO OUT AND PLAY THE GAME, YOU HAVE TO APPRECIATE THAT.”

BEFORE A COLLISION with a player while playing overseas in Italy in December 2019, I'd never had a single back issue. But on the next play, as I landed on the court after jumping for a rebound, I felt a jolt of electricity from the ground up my back. I didn't think much of it, but in the following days, it was hard to move, lift my legs, or play basketball.

After an agonizing week, I got an MRI. I was floored when I was told that I had a tumor on my spine (spinal schwannoma), a condition usually found in men over 40, and that I needed surgery immediately, as the tumor could cause severe nerve damage or even paralysis.

DIAMOND DESHIELDS, 29

WNBA champion, former All-Star, and a guard on the Dallas Wings

Removing the tumor, though, could also potentially lead to paralysis. Either way, there was a possibility I would never walk or play basketball again.

Coming out of the three-hour-turned-nine-hour surgery in January 2020, I felt as if I were in the scene from *Kill Bill* in which Uma Thurman is trying to will herself to wiggle her big toe. I couldn't feel my feet after surgery, and when the sensation came back, they were sensitive. I'd have two-hour massages each day with different items, starting with a feather, which I could barely tolerate. I couldn't wear sneakers. I could not walk. I was also having daily full-

body tremors that lasted from two to nine hours and were extremely painful. I'd beg the nurses to make it stop, but no meds could calm them.

I struggled mentally, coming to grips with the possibility of my entire livelihood changing. To make matters worse, COVID hit two months after my surgery, and I was no longer able to go to physical therapy or see my doctors. I left Chicago for Atlanta to quarantine with my family. I cried a lot and spent most days on the couch—I physically couldn't pull myself off it. I felt as if I were getting beat down every day.

Even though I *was* making progress, I never gave myself credit. Yes, I could rub my foot with a rag now, but I needed to be able to run and jump and move in a way that was so far from where I was at. I had so much more ground to cover that I never celebrated the little victories.

Being away from my team was almost as tough as my physical struggles. So I decided to go to the WNBA bubble in Florida, knowing that I didn't have much to offer as an athlete, but just to be around my friends. It was important to spend time with my Chicago Sky teammates; they helped me through a tough chapter.

I fought to get back on the court, working at it every single day. So when we won the WNBA finals in 2021 (and I was out there, playing), I was overcome with emotion.

Fast-forward to now, four years post-surgery, and I finally feel normal. Actually, I feel stronger. My tremors are gone, and I've realized how precious life and the game of basketball are. Any time you get to go out and play the game, you have to appreciate that.

I have big goals now: I want to get back to having fun playing basketball. I also want to go to the Paris Olympics. I've worked to be at a point where I feel I deserve that opportunity, and I'll hustle for it.



“Ultra-Running Feels Like the Vacation From the Hard Stuff.”

DEVON YANKO, 41
Ultra-runner, run coach, Lululemon ambassador and member of the Further team

IN THE SUMMER OF 2022, I planned to do five 100-mile races in five months to celebrate my 40th birthday. In mid-April I completed the first in this series, the Umstead 100, running my fastest 100-miler time. I felt amazing. By June, when I was slated to run the Kettle Moraine 100, I started having persistent symptoms: fatigue, joint pain, and Raynaud's (a condition where some areas of the body feel numb and cool in certain circumstances). I couldn't mentally force myself through this race. I didn't even make it past mile seven. I knew something was wrong.

In October, I saw a rheumatologist who confirmed that I had lupus as well as another autoimmune disorder, antiphospholipid syndrome (a blood clot disorder), which co-occurs with lupus. Honestly, it wasn't surprising, since I was a walking list of lupus symptoms. When you've had highs and lows in your health—I also have Hashimoto's disease and a Crohn's–colitis spectrum issue—

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and have been told so many times nothing is wrong, getting an answer feels like a reason to celebrate.

But just because I had an answer didn't mean I had a solution. Everybody's lupus journey is different. That's the hardest part: No one can tell you what your body is going to react to. Sometimes it feels as if I have to get a PhD in rheumatology to help myself. But I also realized that if I waited until I woke up in the morning feeling good before I went on a run, I'd probably never run again. Continuing to move for health is more important. If I can take away the judgment of wishing I was faster, and still get joy out of it, that's a win.

While I haven't had the easiest life, ultra-running still feels like the vacation from the hard stuff. My mantra at the Javelina Jundred 100 Miler last year, three weeks after my diagnosis, was "This is not hard; lupus is hard." There are some people who have lupus and can't even get out of bed, so if I am in a position of being able to run and it's a 100-miler, I don't really even need to tap into my mental stores. I'm going to save that for when this disease is actually tough.

That's not to say I don't have bad days. I have day-to-day variability, as well as flares, which is when your symptoms get so bad they feel, at least for me, like having COVID, the flu, and mono at once.

In these moments, I don't want to feel sick. I don't want to feel this way. But I try not to go down a rabbit hole. I ask myself what I need right now to make myself feel better. Sometimes that means crying; other times, it's running hard.

I've had runners reach out to me for advice and resources. Even people who don't have lupus, like my Further teammate Vriko, are extremely supportive; she'll write my name on her hand for runs and say, "This run is for Devon." So when I'm having a tough day, I pull from the strength of others and from my teammates who persevere in the face of their unique obstacles.

RESILIENCE RECHARGE

The obstacles and symptoms that creep up while you're training for an event don't have to throw you off your game. Practice these mental health tactics recommended by Katie Willard Virant, LCSW, who specializes in counseling patients with chronic illness, so you can tap into what works for you.

1 TRANSITION FROM GOAL TO PROCESS ORIENTATION

Sure, winning medals and setting PRs are worth shooting for, but remember how the activity itself is enjoyable, and what about it makes you happy regardless of performance outcomes.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

While training, pay attention to how your body feels in the moment. For example, if you're a swimmer, maybe you remember being a kid and experiencing joy in the water. Tell yourself statements like "I love moving my body like this," and hold on to those in-the-moment emotions as the reward.

2 REFRAME REST

FYI: Rest is medicinal, and also productive. "We are so opposed to rest in this culture, and that mindset does us no favors," says Virant. This is key on those days when your body is dragging or symptoms flare up beyond your control.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Before you set out for a training session, ask yourself, *What does my body want from me? Does it want gentle movement? Does it want stasis?* Listen to what your body tells you and try to honor that and not always push through.

3 DIG OUT OF DISAPPOINTMENT

It's natural to be disappointed at times and to think, *This is not what I want*. It counts as real grief, but we run into trouble when we get stuck there.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

After you allow yourself to feel, journal, or cry about it, shift your perspective by imagining a camera panning out. When you first experience disappointment, the camera is close, and that's all you can see. When you pan out, it allows you to view other positive things—like good relationships in your life, feeling physically better again, or something else you appreciate—and the negative emotion naturally diminishes.

4 MAKE YOUR OWN MANTRAS

Negative chatter can overwhelm, so be proactive, using affirming self-talk to whisper or shout amid struggles. Take time to find what really resonates with you and your personality in tough times.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

If you're extroverted, find a friend or family member and talk through what they would tell you for encouragement. Or just imagine what you would say to a loved one, beloved child, friend, or spouse going through a difficult time. Then practice the mantras so they're automatic.

5 BREAK FOR A BODY SCAN

Pain tends to cause muscles to tense up during training as well as off-times, as the body braces for danger. You may not notice when it happens or even realize you can reverse it.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Multiple times throughout the day, mentally travel down your body from head to toe, asking yourself, *How am I holding tension? Where am I holding it?* Then intentionally relax those muscles and clenched areas. This lets your nervous system know it's okay and that you're safe.

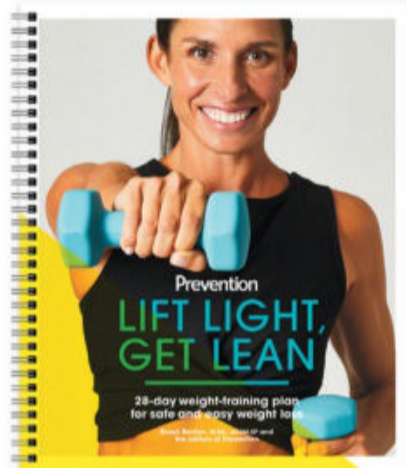
—Jennifer Nied

PROMOTION

Don't Sweat It.

Stock up on all the things you need to take your healthy habits to the next level.

[womenshealthmag.com/shop](https://www.womenshealthmag.com/shop)



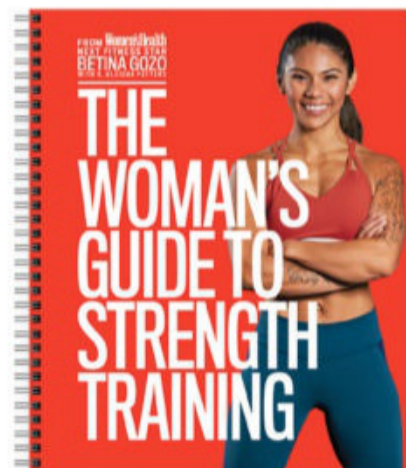
Lift Light, Get Lean

28-Day weight-training plan for lean muscle and a toned body.



Living Fit Resistance Bands

Warm up, stretch and build strength with 6 different resistance levels.



The Woman's Guide to Strength Training

Transform your workout — and your body with new exercises, techniques, and routines.



Women'sHealth **SHOP**

Salmon
Smørrebrød
Salad

RECIPE, P. 75



LETTUCE



**Buckwheat
Breakfast
Salad**

RECIPE, P. 75

LEVEL-UP

Salad is a staple yet deserves more glory than it often gets. We gussied up all kinds of greens for tastier plates that'll soon be in your meal rotation. Goodbye, basic bowls....

**PHOTOGRAPHED BY
ALEX LAU**

Roasted Veg Salad

TOTAL: 35 MIN. SERVES: 4

- 1** lb small brussels sprouts, trimmed and halved

- 3** Tbsp olive oil, divided

- ¼** tsp hot paprika

- Kosher salt and pepper

- 2** medium sweet potatoes (8 to 9 oz each), cut lengthwise into 1-in. wedges, then halved crosswise (if potatoes are long, cut into thirds)

- 1** Tbsp pure maple syrup

- 1** tsp sriracha

- ¼** cup tahini, stirred

- 3** Tbsp fresh lemon juice, divided

- 1** 5-oz container baby spinach and arugula mix

- 1½** cups cooked lentils

- 2** oz fresh goat cheese, crumbled (about ⅓ cup)

- 2** Tbsp sunflower seeds, toasted

- 2** Tbsp pepitas, toasted

1. Heat oven to 425°F. On large rimmed baking sheet, toss brussels sprouts with 1 Tbsp oil, hot paprika, and ¼ tsp each salt and pepper; arrange cut sides down. On another rimmed baking sheet, toss sweet potatoes with 1 Tbsp oil and ¼ tsp each salt and pepper; spread in even layer. Roast both baking sheets until brussels sprouts are golden brown and tender, about 15 min. Remove brussels sprouts from oven. Toss sweet potatoes and continue roasting until tender, 8 to 12 min. more.

2. Meanwhile, in small bowl, stir together maple syrup and sriracha. In medium bowl, whisk together tahini, 2 Tbsp lemon juice, 2 Tbsp water, and ¼ tsp salt until smooth; if needed, whisk in more water ½ tsp at a time to reach drizzling consistency.

3. While brussels sprouts are hot, drizzle with maple-sriracha mixture and toss to coat. In large bowl, toss greens with remaining 1 Tbsp each oil and lemon juice.

4. To serve, top greens with brussels sprouts, sweet potatoes, lentils, goat cheese, and toasted seeds. Drizzle with tahini dressing.

Per serving: About 486 cal, 25.5 g fat (5 g sat), 10 mg chol, 673 mg sodium, 51 g carb, 15 g fiber, 14 g sugar (4.5 g added sugar), 19 g pro



NO MEAT FOR YOU? BRING THESE PROTEIN-Y POWER PLAYERS TO THE PARTY.

LEGUME LOVE

Lentils,
chickpeas,
black beans,
cannellini

SCOOP STARS

Hummus,
guacamole,
cottage cheese

THE STAND-INS

Tofu,
seitan,
tempeh,
faux meats






**Chickpea
Salad With
Pomegranate
Molasses
Vinaigrette**

RECIPE, P. 75

If your salad has lots of small, chopped ingredients, swap your fork for a big spoon (seriously!). You'll be able to scoop up everything in one bite.



**Endive
Salad With
Chicken
and Blue
Cheese**

RECIPE, P. 75

HOW TO MAKE A STELLAR SALAD

Pick a few from each category to really satisfy your taste buds.

THE GREENS

■ **Mild:** Little Gem and green leaf provide a soft landing; romaine offers crunch.

■ **Medium:** Spinach, arugula, and herbs bring a mouthful of *mmm*.

■ **Bitter:** Consider complexity with frisée, radicchio, or endive.

THE TOPPINGS

■ **Texture:** Mix creamy and crunchy, cooked and raw elements.

■ **Flavor:** Balance tang or bitterness with sweetness. Add pops of salt or sugar (fresh fruit, anyone?).

■ **Shape:** Bite-size is best, or keep everything larger for a knife-and-fork vibe.

THE DRESSING

■ **Fat:** Stick to an oil that won't overpower, like mild olive, avocado, or canola.

■ **Acid:** Citrus, mustard, or straight-up vinegar add nonnegotiable punch.

■ **Seasonings:** Salt is a must, but a sprinkle of spices or drizzle of maple can really bring it home.

THE BONUS

■ **Cheese:** Good-quality hunks can simultaneously add texture, salt, and tang.

■ **Nuts and Seeds:** Necessary for crunch, they also add a richness that helps keep you full.

■ **Croutons:** Get creative! Try crushed chips, dry-roasted edamame, etc.



Meal prepping? Stash components separately (in fridge), so you can enjoy a crisp salad when ready to chow down.

Steak Burrito Bowl Salad

TOTAL: 30 MIN. SERVES: 4

- 1** 15-oz can black beans, rinsed and patted dry

- 3½** Tbsp olive oil, divided

- 1** tsp Tajín, plus more for sprinkling

- 1** 1-lb sirloin steak (1½ in. thick), trimmed

- Kosher salt and pepper

- 2** cups cilantro, chopped

- 1** small shallot, roughly chopped

- ½** jalapeño, seeded and roughly chopped

- ¼** cup fresh orange juice

- 2** Tbsp fresh lime juice

- 2** Tbsp Greek yogurt

- 2** cups cooked short-grain brown rice

- ¼** small head red cabbage (8 oz), cored and thinly sliced

1. Heat oven to 425°F. Add black beans to rimmed baking sheet and toss with ½ Tbsp oil and Tajín. Roast until beans are dry, split, and crispy, 18 to 20 min.

2. Meanwhile, heat 1 Tbsp oil in large cast-iron skillet on medium-high. Pat steak completely dry and season with ½ tsp each salt and pepper. Cook to desired doneness, 5 to 6 min. per side for medium-rare. Transfer to cutting board and let rest at least 5 min. before slicing.

3. Meanwhile, in blender, combine cilantro, shallot, jalapeño, orange and lime juices, yogurt, and remaining 2 Tbsp oil. Puree on high until homogeneous but still bright green, 30 seconds.

4. Divide rice among bowls. Top with cabbage and roasted black beans. Add sliced steak and drizzle with green sauce and sprinkle with more Tajín if desired.

Per serving: About 570 cal, 28.5 g fat (8 g sat), 76 mg chol, 726 mg sodium, 48 g carb, 9 g fiber, 5 g sugar (0 g added sugar), 32 g pro

Salmon Smørrebrød Salad

TOTAL: 25 MIN. PLUS COOLING
SERVES: 4

- 2** slices very thin pumpernickel bread (we used Mestemacher)

- 1¼** lbs skinless center-cut salmon fillet

- 1½** Tbsp everything seasoning blend

- Kosher salt and pepper

- ¼** cup Greek yogurt

- 1** Tbsp olive oil

- 1** Tbsp white wine vinegar

- ½** cup dill fronds, chopped

- ½** English cucumber, sliced into ¼-in.-thick half-moons (6¼ oz)

- ½** medium sweet onion, thinly sliced

- 1** head (about 7 oz) green leaf lettuce, leaves torn

- 1.** Heat oven to 425°F.
- 2.** Place bread on rimmed baking sheet and toast on upper oven rack until crisp and slightly darker brown around edges, 14 to 17 min. Let cool, then cut into triangles.
- 3.** Meanwhile, line another rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Add salmon and sprinkle top with everything seasoning and ¼ tsp each salt and pepper. Roast on middle rack until just cooked through, 14 to 18 min. Let rest 5 min., then flake.
- 4.** Meanwhile, in large bowl, whisk together yogurt, oil, vinegar, dill, 1 Tbsp water, and ¼ tsp each salt and pepper. Add cucumber and onion and toss to coat.
- 5.** When ready to serve, add lettuce and toss to coat. Serve salad alongside salmon with pumpernickel toast points.

Per serving: About 325 cal, 10.5 g fat (2 g sat), 68 mg chol, 567 mg sodium, 24 g carb, 6 g fiber, 5.5 g sugar (0.5 g added sugar), 33 g pro

Buckwheat Breakfast Salad

TOTAL: 30 MIN. PLUS COOLING
SERVES: 4

- 1** cup buckwheat groats, divided

- ¼** tsp smoked paprika

- 3** Tbsp olive oil, divided

- Kosher salt and pepper

- 8** large eggs

- 1** Tbsp sherry vinegar

- 1** tsp country-style Dijon mustard

- ½** tsp honey

- 4** small heads Little Gem or oak leaf lettuce (8 oz total), trimmed and leaves separated

- 1** small head frisée (about 4 oz), trimmed and torn into pieces

- 2** oz aged Gouda, shaved with vegetable peeler

- Flaky salt and cracked pepper, for serving

- 1.** Heat oven to 300°F. On small rimmed baking sheet, toss ½ cup groats with smoked paprika, 1 Tbsp oil, and ¼ tsp each kosher salt and pepper. Spread in even layer and bake, stirring halfway through, until golden brown, 25 to 30 min. Let cool.
- 2.** Meanwhile, cook remaining ½ cup groats per pkg. directions; set aside.
- 3.** Bring medium saucepan of water to a boil and fill bowl with ice water. Add eggs and rapidly simmer, 6 min. for jammy eggs, then immediately transfer to prepared ice water to stop the cooking. When cool enough to handle, drain and peel eggs.
- 4.** Meanwhile, in large bowl, whisk together vinegar, mustard, honey, and ¼ tsp each kosher salt and pepper. Slowly whisk in remaining 2 Tbsp oil until fully incorporated. Toss with lettuce and frisée to coat. Divide among bowls. Top with cooked buckwheat, soft-boiled eggs (halved lengthwise), Gouda, toasted buckwheat, and flaky salt and cracked pepper, if desired.

Per serving: About 460 cal, 27 g fat (8 g sat), 429 mg chol, 499 mg sodium, 35 g carb, 6 g fiber, 1.5 g sugar (0.5 g added sugar), 22 g pro

Chickpea Salad With Pomegranate Molasses Vinaigrette

TOTAL: 25 MIN. SERVES: 4

- ½** small red onion, finely chopped

- 1** tsp ground cumin

- 1** tsp ground sumac

- 2** Tbsp plus 2 tsp red wine vinegar, divided

- Kosher salt and pepper

- 2** 15.5-oz cans chickpeas, rinsed

- 2** Tbsp pomegranate molasses

- 1** tsp Dijon mustard

- ¼** cup canola oil

- 2** hearts romaine (10 oz), chopped

- 2** Persian cucumbers, quartered lengthwise and chopped

- ¾** cup flat-leaf parsley leaves

- ¾** cup mint leaves

- 12** oz grape tomatoes, halved

- 1.** In large bowl, mix together onion, cumin, sumac, 2 Tbsp vinegar, and ½ tsp salt. Add chickpeas and roughly mash; set aside.
- 2.** In small bowl, whisk together pomegranate molasses, Dijon, remaining 2 tsp vinegar, and ¼ tsp each salt and pepper. Slowly whisk in oil until fully incorporated.
- 3.** In large bowl, toss romaine, cucumber, parsley, and mint. Serve topped with tomatoes and chickpeas. Drizzle with vinaigrette.

Per serving: About 377 cal, 18 g fat (1.5 g sat), 0 mg chol, 721 mg sodium, 48 g carb, 11 g fiber, 11.5 g sugar (3.5 g added sugar), 12 g pro

Endive Salad With Chicken and Blue Cheese

TOTAL: 40 MIN. SERVES: 4

- 1** cup barley

- 5** Tbsp olive oil, divided

- 4** 5-oz boneless, skinless chicken breasts

- Kosher salt and pepper

- 3** Tbsp fresh lemon juice, divided

- 2** heads endive, sliced crosswise ½ in. thick

- 1** medium fennel bulb, very thinly sliced, plus ¼ cup fennel fronds

- 3** ribs celery, thinly sliced on bias, plus ¼ cup celery leaves

- 1** oz blue cheese, crumbled

- ¼** cup roasted salted almonds, chopped

- 1.** Cook barley per pkg. directions. Rinse with cold water until cool, then drain thoroughly.
- 2.** Meanwhile, heat 1 Tbsp oil in large skillet on medium. Season chicken with ½ tsp salt and ¼ tsp pepper. Cook in single layer, adjusting heat as needed to prevent burning, until deep golden brown and cooked through, 6 to 7 min. per side. Remove from heat and drizzle with 1 Tbsp lemon juice. Transfer to cutting board and let rest at least 3 min. before slicing.
- 3.** In large bowl, whisk remaining 4 Tbsp oil and 2 Tbsp lemon juice with ¼ tsp each salt and pepper. Add cooked barley, endive, sliced fennel, and celery ribs and toss to combine.
- 4.** Serve chicken with salad sprinkled with blue cheese, almonds, fennel fronds, and celery leaves.

Per serving: About 446 cal, 25.5 g fat (5 g sat), 84 mg chol, 690 mg sodium, 21 g carb, 6 g fiber, 3.5 g sugar (0 g added sugar), 34 g pro



BY
AMANDA LUCCI

PHOTOGRAPHED BY
DJENEBA ADUAYOM

STYLED BY
KRISTEN SALADINO

PAGE 76



How
Angel
Reese
Manifested
the Life
of Her



D R E A M S

The college
basketball phenom
knows what
she wants and how
to get there—
with epic focus,
drive, and
determination.

If you
want to
witness

M A G I C,

ASK ANGEL REESE TO PUT IT DOWN ON PAPER.

We're tucked into a conference room at a studio in Baton Rouge on a sunny, warm Tuesday in October, and the Louisiana State University senior is explaining her process of manifestation.

Every January, she mounts a vision board on her wall. To create it, she prints out quotes that speak to her and cuts photos from magazines, then arranges them on a canvas. And now, with two months left in the year, she proudly notes that she's already accomplished nearly everything she envisioned on this board.

Almost 10 million people watched the 21-year-old college basketball star lead LSU to its first national championship and then be voted the Final Four's Most Outstanding Player. In the months that followed, she collected trophies at the ESPYs and BET Awards, did a cameo in a Latto and Cardi B music video, and mingled backstage at a Beyoncé show. "I had a ball this summer," she tells me with a hint of a smile, knowing this is quite the understatement. In the meantime, her Instagram following grew from 70,000 to over 2.5 million—her TikTok, a similar trajectory—all while she inked brand deals with Mercedes-Benz and Reebok.

If anything, her 2023 vision board was conservative. In January, she prophesied a modeling career. By May, she was posing for *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit*; moments before we sat down to chat, she did the shoot for the cover of this magazine. She also predicted six-figure earnings. Today, her name, image, and likeness (NIL) valuation sits at around \$1.7 million.

"I had high hopes, and I manifested a lot of great things," she says of the past year as she glances around the room, looking at the pieces of art hanging on the walls. None of the canvases are large enough to contain everything she has planned for 2024, though. "I need to find something bigger," she says.

But 2023's vision board also included an eerie, almost psychic admonition. When she shows me a TikTok she made of her year-end process, my eyes are drawn to an image adorned with a quote about making mental health a priority: "Put yourself first," it reads. "You don't owe anyone an explanation."

Less than a month after we met, a four-game absence sent the rumor mill swirling over why LSU's star player was missing in action. Following her first game back, she alluded to taking time for a reset—but mostly, she let her 19 points and 9 rebounds speak to the power of the right mindset. "My mental health is the most important thing....I'm going to make sure I'm okay before anything," she said in a press conference, noting that failing to do this could cause a ripple effect in the locker room. "I want people to realize that I'm not just an athlete, I'm a human. I go through things. We all go through things."

It was classic Angel: self-aware and unapologetic. Challenges are inevitable when you're one of the most talked about young athletes in America, but Angel faces every one head-on. Besides her unquestionable talent and drive, her resilience propels her forward.



PREVIOUS SPREAD
A. Potts dress, *shop bop.com*; **Reebok** sneakers, *reebok.com* (worn throughout); **Philippe Audibert** ear cuff, *philippeaudibert.com*; **Ex Ovo** bracelet, *exovo.com*

THIS PAGE
Dion Lee tank top, *ssense.com*; **SER.O.YA** jeans, *seroya.nyc*; **Prada Eyewear** sunglasses, *saksfifthavenue.com*; **Scream Pretty @ Wolf & Badger** ear crawler, *wolfandbadger.com*; **Urban Outfitters** arm cuff, *urbanoutfitters.com*; **Frida & Florence @ Wolf & Badger** ring, *wolfandbadger.com*

**“IF IT’S
NOT
PEACE,
I DON’T
WANT IT
FOR ME.”**



Norma Kamali bra,
normakamali.com;
Amur skirt,
anthropologie.com;
Alexis Bittar ear-
rings and ring (right
hand), alexisbittar.com; **Philippe**
Audibert ring (left
hand), philippeaudibert.com





ANGEL GREW up surrounded by women who encouraged her to be exactly who she is, and that's stuck with her. "You don't see a lot of confident women, especially confident Black women, because people overshadow us a lot," she tells me in our conversation. "I'm trying to change that."

Her mom, also named Angel Reese, played basketball at the University of Maryland at Baltimore County and later for a pro team in Luxembourg. When her younger brother, Julian, picked up the sport, Angel decided to go all in. She wanted to be better than he was.

Their small Catholic high school in Baltimore, Saint Frances Academy, was predominantly boys, and basketball out on the blacktop was competitive. It was the kind of pressure cooker in which Angel thrives. Before long, she was one of the top high school recruits in the nation. "Our school was literally across the street from a prison," Angel says. "I was lucky enough to have skills and be able to make it out of there." Scholarships helped cover her tuition; she knew that wasn't an option for everyone, and she dreamed of starting an Angel Reese Scholarship at the school one day. (She donated \$12,000 in August to cover expenses for one student for a year: "I gave back to the people who started my journey.")

Despite receiving dozens of Division I offers from schools across the country, Angel initially chose the University of Maryland so it would be easier for family to attend her games. Julian currently plays there. For the Reese siblings, securing a free ride for college was bigger than basketball. "My mom worked hard [when I was] growing up, raising us by herself," Angel says. "So that was my payback to her."

Angel entered her freshman season at Maryland with high expectations to perform—pressure, she admits, that she mostly placed on herself. So when she suffered a Jones fracture in her right foot four games in, she was devastated. She returned to the court just in time for March Madness—helping Maryland win a Big Ten title and make it to the Sweet 16 in 2021—only to then need a rod placed in her left leg for a shin injury in the offseason. She hit "rock bottom," as she calls it. "I felt like I didn't even know who I was anymore."

To find her way back to herself, Angel needed to fall in love with the game again. Fortunately, she was already home, a 40-minute drive from the people who introduced her to basketball in the first place. She started journaling, praying more, and nurturing her closest relationships. "When you're in a dark place, you really don't know when and how you're going to get out of it. But my teammates were there for me," she says. "When

I got back on the court, it just felt like a breath of fresh air."

After her sophomore season, she craved a jolt to her game. She already knew Hall of Fame coach Kim Mulkey was growing the program at LSU, but "when I got to campus, it was mind-blowing," she recalls of her first time seeing it. "Everything was just perfect." The school's NILSU program prepared a presentation on brand-building via name, image, and likeness opportunities, featuring mega-popular (and now mega-rich) gymnast Olivia Dunne. It wasn't the primary reason Angel decided to transfer, but she understood that could become her path.

"Everybody used to talk about how Livvy wasn't even able to go to class and stuff [because of her fame]. I could only imagine what she was dealing with," Angel says. "And then when it happened to me [after the championship game], I was like, 'Well, dang.'"

Her first season at LSU, Angel racked up 34 double-doubles—a single-season record for women's college basketball—as she led the Tigers to their first NCAA Final Four wins. Angel "pours confidence" into the team, LSU guard and friend Flau'jae Johnson tells me via audio message. "When she's on the court, she's going to handle her business and work hard."

The moment LSU defeated the University of Iowa to win the national title, Angel's life changed. Her social media exploded, and a video of her flashing John Cena's famous "You can't see me" gesture at Hawkeyes guard Caitlin Clark went viral.

She and Caitlin have been on opposing sides since their high school Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) days. "I love that we're able to compete and still be cool after, regardless of the outside noise," Angel

says, noting that said noise raises both of their profiles—and grows the game. "People even say Magic [Johnson] and Larry Bird, that era [of basketball] and how it was. If that's who we are, then okay, cool.... I think we're both happy about what's going on."

Social media had other interpretations. Caitlin, who is white, had made the same gesture earlier in the tournament. But Twitter was quick to accuse Angel of inappropriate taunting. "People are going to say what they want to say, but I know how many people I have impacted in a positive way," Angel says, looking back at that double standard nearly a year later. "I don't live with any regrets."

That shouldn't come as a surprise—see the UNAPOLOGETIC tattoo on Angel's forearm, a word that has become synonymous with her brand and a permanent reminder to always be authentically herself. Back in January 2023, she posted these bold black-and-white letters in the corner of her vision board: *In the end they'll judge you anyway, so do what you want.*

"She's not worried about what others are telling her she should be doing," LSU alum and four-time NBA champ Shaquille O'Neal tells me via email. "She's focused on being herself and doing what feels best for her. That's a trait you don't see in a lot of young people."

When Shaq became president of Reebok Basketball last year, Angel was the first athlete he signed to an endorsement deal. Already a mentor to her, he also checked in daily during her two-week break from the team. She's "a true leader," he says. "Man or woman, in my opinion, there isn't a player out there who's impacted the game as much as Angel has this last year."



LAST APRIL was my first time witnessing the magic of Angel Reese in person, amid the roars of nearly 20,000 people at the national championship in Dallas. Everyone from Billie Jean King to First Lady Jill Biden to WNBA Finals MVP A’ja Wilson (Angel’s favorite player) was in attendance. It felt as if the energy in the arena were actively causing a seismic shift in the foundation of women’s sports. At its center stood LSU’s “Bayou Barbie,” proudly 6 feet 3 inches tall, trophy in hand and a crown affixed to her head. Millions more fans watched from home as purple-and-gold confetti rained down around her.

As the Tigers lifted their shiny new trophy and cameras flashed, Angel was practically vibrating with excitement at the culmination of years of hard work. “Breathe and believe—that’s all we did all year,” she told veteran ESPN journalist Holly Rowe from the court. “Just take a deep breath and keep believing in each other. Nobody thought we were gonna be here.”

Given her poise, which rivals that of the biggest stars in the game, it was easy to forget she’s also a college student who still had to study for finals. Fans greeted the women’s basketball team in the parking lot when they returned as national champions, and Angel knew college wouldn’t be the same.

With six classes on her schedule, only two of them virtual, the communications major stays busy. She dreams of working in sports broadcasting and even shadowed Rowe at the LSU–Alabama football game last season. She met Shaq for the first time at that game. “A lot of people have the passion or the talent but can’t deliver the package,” he says. “She can deliver.”

Building a solid foundation for the future has long been a priority. “I’m a businesswoman at the end of the day,” Angel says. “I feel like my brain is everything.” But athletics are ingrained in the culture at LSU, and the school’s student-athletes are celebs. With so many eyes on her, the typical college experience ends when class does.

“If I pick up this cup and it has water in it, people think it’s tequila,” she says. “If I’m speaking to a friend, a guy, people think we’re dating.” The Internet speculated all summer about who she was seeing, until she revealed she’d been in a relationship with longtime friend and Florida State University basketball player Cam’Ron Fletcher since May. She wishes she could go out with her teammates, “but it’s just too much. It is overwhelming for me,” she admits. “I can’t really enjoy myself how I want to enjoy myself and have fun how I want to have fun.”

She realized that spending time around “more mature adults” at red-carpet events and photo shoots all summer was a welcome reprieve. “I’m young, but

I’m an adult,” she says. “I feel like I’ve outgrown being in a college atmosphere.”

When I first met Angel on the *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit* red carpet in May, it struck me how, in the middle of a glitzy, A-list event—at which she was celebrating fulfilling a dream—she lit up the most when asked about prioritizing her mental health. “It’s a lot going on, dealing with school, social media, basketball,” she told me then. “If it’s not peace, I don’t want it for me.”



ANGEL HAS learned to like spending time alone, with just her tiny dog, Tiago. She does her own eyelashes, an Angel signature, and she finds cooking therapeutic when she has the time. Meditation is essential so she can have a moment before her day begins, often at 4 a.m. She’ll sit on a furry carpet in her living room and practice gratitude, or take deep breaths perched on the side of her bed. “Let’s get through today,” she tells herself.

“When I see her engage as a teammate, on the court and in practice, I think that says a lot about how grounded she is,” says LaKeitha Poole, PhD, a mental performance counselor and the assistant athletic director at LSU. “She’s doing these different activities and [has] coping mechanisms that allow her to be self-aware.”

Poole says putting mental health first is what separates “good athletes from the great ones”—it’s that adage about not being able to pour from an empty cup.

Angel also remains firmly rooted in her hometown friends and family, those who knew her before she became Angel Reese, basketball star. “It keeps my life so normal,” she says. She also includes them in her new reality, like taking her mom to see Usher in Vegas. “Having those connections is something I love,” she says. “I’m a giver.”

Aknvas dress, aknvas.com; **Live the Process** leotard, liveprocess.com; **Maria Black** earrings, maria-black.com; **Dinosaur Designs** bangles, dinosaurdesigns.com

Hair: Nai’vasha for the Wall Group. **Makeup:** Yolonda Frederick-Thompson with crowdMGMT. **Manicure:** Morgan Dixon. **Set design:** Emily Kingston. **Production:** Anthony Federici for Petty Cash Production.



BEYOND HER yearly vision board, Angel regularly covers her mirror in notes to self: “Positive attitude,” “Be confident,” “Pray every day.” She also sets goals. At the beginning of 2023, she wrote “National championship,” and you know how that turned out. Naturally, she has big plans for what’s next.

She spent part of her whirlwind summer establishing the Angel C. Reese Foundation, which she hopes to use to sponsor basketball camps and financial literacy programs for women, starting in her hometown of Baltimore. “Seeing all the players that have made it out, I wanted to be one of those players who gave back,” she says.

Ultimately, she plans to play in the WNBA—although with her growing NIL value and another year of NCAA eligibility left, she won’t say definitively when she’ll make the jump. “Basketball has gotten me to where I am,” she says. Forgoing her WNBA dreams for the influencer lifestyle was never on the table. Just in case she does declare for the draft, one of the notes on her mirror reads “Be a top-five pick.”

The pressure is mounting, but Angel’s taking it a day at a time. A fresh set of affirmations is in view. And unapologetic authenticity isn’t just her brand anymore, it’s her superpower. “I’m a perfectionist, and I have a lot of high expectations for myself,” she says. Pasted in the center of last year’s vision board: “I am creating the life of my dreams.” She’s proof that success and fame don’t simply happen to the best athletes. They’re fought (hard) for—and, yes, in her case, manifested.

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Game-changing **WEIGHT-MANAGEMENT** drugs are finally going mainstream. But as with any buzzy **HEALTH** topic, with the fascination come plenty of myths and misunderstandings. *WH* has the **EXPERT** info for determining whether one of the next-gen meds is right for you.

BY KORIN MILLER, EMILY SHIFFER, AND ANDI BREITOWICH
PHOTOGRAPHED BY JARREN VINK

AMPIG

WHEN 28-YEAR-OLD DANIELLE K. GAINED AROUND 50 POUNDS DURING THE PANDEMIC, SHE TRIED EVERYTHING TO DROP THE WEIGHT:

➤ **INTERMITTENT FASTING, WORKING OUT CONSISTENTLY, AND FOCUSING ON A BALANCED DIET.** Nothing made a difference on the scale or in the mirror.

Around the same time, Danielle's sister, who has type 1 diabetes, started taking a prescription drug called Ozempic—perhaps you've heard of it?—that has a known weight-loss side effect. While the drug is FDA-approved to treat type 2 diabetes (not type 1 at this point), it may help some individuals with type 1 reduce the need for insulin injections, preliminary research suggests. (FYI: It's legal for a licensed provider to prescribe Ozempic off-label for type 1 diabetes or weight loss; your doctor must judge whether off-label use is appropriate for you.)

Danielle noticed that her sister had shed “a significant amount of weight” after a year on Ozempic via self-administered injections. So, she started doing her own research, diving into Reddit threads about people's experiences. And then she asked her primary care doctor about it.

Since Danielle was considered obese, her doctor prescribed Ozempic off-label for her. Six months later, Danielle was down 25 pounds. “I've struggled with binge eating in the past, and as someone who constantly thinks about food, Ozempic has made it a lot easier to identify when I'm full instead of mindlessly eating,” she says. “It's been really great for me.”

Danielle is far from alone. In a short time, the drug has garnered attention from Hollywood A-listers, social media, and doctors alike. Now, Ozempic ads are everywhere on TV (the jingle may even be stuck in your head). TikTokers try to guess which celebs are injecting themselves. Even Oprah Winfrey recently spoke out about her own experience on an unspecified weight-loss medication and condemned the bullying around use of these tools. (“I'm absolutely done with the shaming,” she said.) Doctors say Ozempic's viral status has filtered into their practices too. “A lot of patients are inquiring about it,” says Gitanjali Srivastava,

MD, medical director of Vanderbilt Obesity Medicine.

Although these drugs are currently enveloped in a cloud of ethical and pop culture discussions, doctors say this shouldn't distract from the fact that it is a *real* medication that can help people who need it. There are legitimate and practical reasons why someone may benefit from a weight-loss drug—and thrive because of it, improving health outcomes and longevity. However, there are also indicators that you *don't* need to be using one.

Before you accept that one Instagrammer's experience as fact or sound off in the group chat, read this evidence-based guide in which experts clarify when it makes sense to go on a medication like this, who's a legit candidate, what you can expect, and more. The goal? To make the conversation around this hot yet fraught topic easier, less stigmatizing, and more empowering.



“I look at Ozempic as a tool as **OPPOSED** to a medication. It’s not a shortcut or a cheat; it’s a **TOOL** that’s changing my life.”
—Brandi Hazen, 37

“When I first went on Ozempic, I was very **QUIET** about my decision. I was **WORRIED** about what people were going to say. Ever since sharing, I haven’t received any backlash. It made people **SHARE** their experiences with me.”
—Grace-Anne Lebel, 38



“After years of **DIETING** and attempting every weight-loss **HACK** on the planet, semaglutide gave me an opportunity to lose **WEIGHT** without feeling restricted.”
—Pilar DeMann, 52



THESE MEDS ARE DESIGNED FOR VERY SPECIFIC GROUPS

> **LET'S CLEAR UP SOME CONFUSION FIRST.** Ozempic (generic name: semaglutide) belongs to a class of medications known as GLP-1 agonists (which also includes Trulicity, Byetta, and Saxenda). “Semaglutide mimics a hormone in your body and slows down travel of food from your stomach to your gut, making you feel fuller after a meal,” says Kunal Shah, MD, an assistant professor in the division of endocrinology at the Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical Center. “It stimulates insulin release in response to a meal to help people with diabetes and may make you less hungry in general.” While it’s specifically designed to manage blood sugar levels, patients on the medication in initial studies also lost weight.

Ozempic should be prescribed under very specific circumstances, the FDA states. Technically, you should have type 2 diabetes and have already tried to manage your diabetes with diet and exercise, unsuccessfully. Despite its not being FDA-approved for weight loss, though, many doctors still prescribe it off-label for that purpose.

Another version of the semaglutide injectable, Wegovy is FDA-approved for weight loss for those with a BMI of 30 or above. Ozempic is “the same [as Wegovy] for all intents and purposes,” says Dr. Shah.

You may also have heard about Mounjaro, which is an additional FDA-approved drug for treating type 2 diabetes and is also prescribed off-label for weight loss. The active ingredient, tirzepatide, works similarly to that in Ozempic and Wegovy but affects the body in slightly different ways. Newer on the tirzepatide scene is Zepbound, a co-agonist medication, which mimics *two* key hormones (GLP-1 and GIP) that impact weight management, as opposed to just one. (Wegovy and Saxenda, for instance, are GLP-1 agonists only.)

“Zepbound is by far the most powerful drug we have to date for weight management,” says Spencer Nadolsky, DO, medical director at WeightWatchers and an obesity and lipid specialist. “It’s the first co-agonist medicine FDA-approved for weight loss. By comparison, Wegovy reaches around 15 percent average weight loss for a little over a year, whereas Zepbound gets to 20 percent or more the longer it is taken.”

To put it plainly, “you should not consider a semaglutide if you are trying to lose a few pounds or fit into pants or a dress before an event. They are for people with obesity and/or type 2 diabetes and considered a prescribed and monitored medication you’d take for the foreseeable future,” notes Dr. Nadolsky.

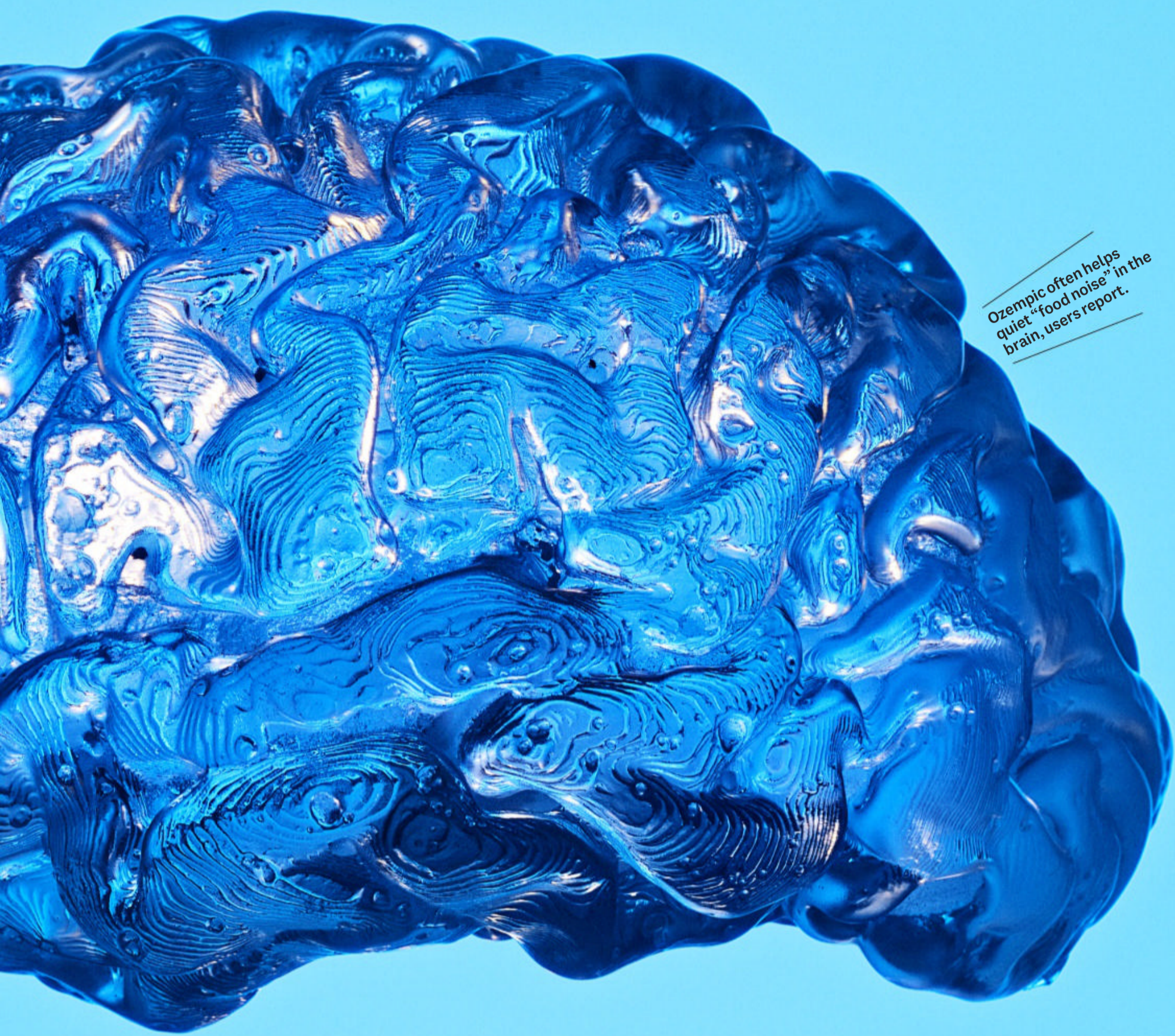
Consider this as well: You have to inject the medicine into your body. If that freaks you out, or you have a fear of needles, this is not for you.



2

Side Effects Happen, but They're Usually Not Serious

Scan a basic label on the meds and you'll see nausea, GI upset, vomiting, and reflux listed as side effects users may experience in the first few weeks, until their body adjusts. But scour social media, and clicky terms like *Ozempic butt* and *Ozempic face* may leave you wondering whether the drugs are worth the prick. A primer on how worried you really need to be about certain reactions...



Ozempic often helps quiet “food noise” in the brain, users report.

FACIAL AND BODY CHANGES

► Talk about Ozempic face and butt stems from the fact that using a drug of this kind “leads to rapid weight loss that has an impact both on the body and the face,” says *WH* advisor Joshua Zeichner, MD, an associate professor of dermatology and the director of cosmetic and clinical research in dermatology at Mount Sinai Hospital. When you lose fat and muscle under the skin, these areas

may sag as a result. Ozempic face is not dangerous, but if it bugs you, hydrate heavily to replenish skin suppleness and consider injectables and/or fillers if that’s your jam. For perking up the booty region, strength training is clutch for maintaining muscle as you lose weight.

HAIR LOSS

► The drug does not directly cause lost locks; the weight loss does. “There’s a form of stress-induced hair loss

called telogen effluvium, and any stressor on the body, whether it’s pregnancy, stress, or rapid weight loss, can cause it,” says dermatologist Amy Freeman, MD, of Millburn Laser Center, who is a member of the American Academy of Dermatology. To hang on to your strands, speak with your doctor about proper nutrition, supplementation (such as Nutrafol), and meds approved for managing hair loss.

OTHER (RARE) MEDICAL ISSUES

► There is a chance of developing pancreatitis—inflammation of the pancreas—but the risk is low, Dr. Shah says. It’s also important to note that Ozempic has what’s known as a “black box” warning from the FDA due to its potential to cause specific types of thyroid tumors and thyroid cancer, based on rodent studies. “It’s a theoretical risk,” Dr. Shah says. “It’s been seen in rats but not in humans.”

3

The Current Options Are Just the Beginning

For weight-loss meds, the future looks...plentiful. "There are many new studies underway, as well as newer treatments that may be introduced into the market that could change the percentage of weight loss and offer fewer side effects, as well as change dosing frequency," Dr. Nadolsky says.

One promising development? Oral pills. Last June, the American Diabetes Association presented a study (funded by Novo Nordisk, the manufacturer of Ozempic and Wegovy) that showed significant weight loss for subjects taking daily semaglutide pills. "There's something that feels very severe about injecting yourself weekly," says Rekha Kumar, MD, an endocrinologist and obesity medicine specialist and chief medical officer at Found. "And when it comes to weight management, which is such a sensitive issue, the idea of injecting yourself to achieve weight loss carries stigma." The notion of taking a pill "lowers the entry barrier, which could be a game changer because of safety, tolerability, and efficacy." The oral option may hit the market sometime this year.

This evolving medical landscape is an exciting space to watch, experts agree. Most likely, we'll see more and more meds in these drug classes approved for weight management in the future.

An oral version of semaglutide is on the horizon.

FYI: THE DRUGS ARE MEANT TO BE TAKEN INDEFINITELY

> **A BIG MISUNDERSTANDING** is that you can use these meds to lose weight and then stop taking them, says Dr. Nadolsky: “In truth, obesity is a chronic disease and will require long-term therapy, just like high blood pressure.” This doesn’t mean everyone will require medicine long-term, but most people likely will in some form.

And while these drugs are effective and doctors say they’re relatively safe, they are not a cure-all, says Joseph Arulandu, MD, an internal medicine physician at Northwest Medical Group who is also board certified in obesity medicine and clinical lipidology. “I tell patients that if, after six months, you have not changed the way you eat or your activity levels, you are going to gain weight back.”

Ozempic and Wegovy should be used in combination with diet changes or nutritional counseling, exercise, and lifestyle modifications. Lots of factors contribute to obesity, which means “there is no one-size-fits-all approach,” says Danielle Belardo, MD, a preventive cardiologist in Los Angeles and co-chair of the American Society for Preventive Cardiology Nutrition Committee. Dr. Nadolsky agrees: “Individualization is key—and things like resistance training and increased protein intake can help people hold on to muscle while they lose mostly fat, helping with quality of life and function.”

Ultimately, the interventions serve as kick-starters to eating healthfully and exercising. “To rely on a drug purely for weight loss is going to end in failure,” says Dr. Arulandu. “It has to be the drug plus lifestyle modifications.”

Cost Conundrum Truth: The buzzy Rx’s can run up a big bill. Some weight-loss medications are covered by insurance now, and others are expected to be covered in the future, says Michael Russo, MD, a bariatric surgeon at MemorialCare Surgical Weight Loss Center. But that’s not the case for all. Plus, when the medications are prescribed off-label, insurance companies won’t cover the cost, according to Jamie Alan, PhD, an associate professor of pharmacology and toxicology at Michigan State University.

While the sticker price varies by medication and dose, expect to pay about \$1,000 per month out of pocket if you’re not able to apply your insurance. (Remember, the drugs are meant to be used long-term, so costs can really mount.) With insurance, you would generally pay anywhere from zilch to \$100 monthly.

The best way to know if your meds will be covered is to contact your insurance company to find out how someone qualifies for coverage for the drug, then speak with your doctor about the parameters of your script. Each medication has certain criteria, and it can be a lot to wade through.

FUEL YOUR SKiN

BY VICTORIA KIRBY

* Inside your body, there's a crew of unsung protein heroes that scientists believe are the key to a healthy, glowing complexion. Heads-up: Your routine is about to change for the better.





When you hear the words *quality protein*, you likely think of hard-boiled eggs, flaked tuna, or a heaping scoop of whey powder. (And probably not your skin-care products!) But as the most plentiful substance in our bodies after water, proteins are, in fact, the building blocks of skin. Every function of your outermost layer relies on them, but surprisingly little is understood about how this vast network, known as the skin proteome, functions as a whole. Experts have a grasp on the biggies, like collagen and elastin, but there are thousands of other such proteins whose job remains unclear.

That's starting to change. Thanks to new research technology, scientists are learning more about the less-well-known proteins of this proteome and the role they play in skin aging and disease. And it's leading to advances in products and treatments, along with fresh insight into the role of diet and overall wellness. To be clear, you may already be doing a lot to support your skin proteome, but we're discovering that there are other ways to get even more plumping, glowing, smoothing benefits.

SEEKING THE INSIDE STORY

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Like the microbiome before it, the inner workings of the proteome are the next big frontier in skin care to be explored, researchers say. It's part of an area of study called proteomics, and as you read this, experts are hard at work mapping every single protein found in the body. "Every organ, from the

lungs to the liver to our largest, the skin, is made up of thousands of different proteins," says Michael Sherratt, PhD, a professor of biochemistry at the University of Manchester in England. Some are unique to their location; others, like collagen, can be found in multiple areas, like your bones, connective tissue, and, of course, your skin.

What's so intriguing about this research, which began in earnest in the early 2000s, is that, "while genomes can predict a person's disease risk in the future, proteomes are good indicators of the current state of health of individual organs, because they can be influenced by environment, lifestyle, and behavior," says Sherratt. The insights that individual proteomes could provide is one of the biggest reasons dermatologic scientists want to create a database of every known protein found in skin—painstaking work that is in motion and could take years to complete. "To understand all that goes on in the skin, we have to know everything that's in the skin," says Eleanor Bradley, PhD, senior scientist at No7, a cosmetic brand that has partnered with the University of Manchester to lead research in this area. "Knowing which proteins are present is just the beginning," adds Sherratt. "We've developed new techniques to screen proteins to identify damage, allowing us to better understand how to prevent or repair it."



The function of many skin proteins still remains a mystery.



For now, SPF is the best way to safeguard collagen.

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FIRST PAGE, PREVIOUS PAGE, LAST PAGE: FERNANDO GOMEZ/TRUNK ARCHIVE. THIS PAGE: JOE LINGEMAN, PROP STYLING: NICOLE LOUIE

PROTEIN PREP

These products nurture skin's support structure with established ingredients and exciting newcomers.

1

Science Project

Backed by five peer-reviewed studies, No7's Future Renew line contains a novel peptide blend that spurs skin's natural repair process.

No7 Future Renew Damage Reversal Night Cream, \$40, us.no7beauty.com

2

Protection Plus

This sunscreen shields skin from UV damage and has a peptide blend that clears away compromised collagen and elastin.

Alastin SilkShield All Mineral Sunscreen SPF 30, \$62, alastin.com

3

Blood Work

Exosomes derived from human platelet cells (a hot new technology) deliver growth factors that help to bolster your proteome.

Plated Skin Science Daily Serum, \$267, platedskinscience.com

4

With the Grain

Formulated with an epidermal growth factor derived from barley, this serum supports skin's natural production of firming collagen.

Bioeffect EGF Serum, \$175, bioeffect.com

5

On Target

Retinol is a proven collagen booster. Here, it's encapsulated in bioidentical lipids so it effectively penetrates skin to work its magic.

IS Clinical Retinol+ Emulsion 0.3, \$105, isclinical.com

WATCHING THE POWER PLAYERS IN ACTION

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To date, the University of Manchester and No7 researchers have identified more than 3,000 proteins in skin and presented their findings at the 2023 American Academy of Dermatology conference. (At the time of this story's publication, the study had been submitted to a top journal.) The proteins we know the most about right now are structural ones, like collagen (your complexion's main support system), elastin (it provides stretch and elasticity), and keratin (this one binds cells together). Then there are specialized proteins like fibrillin (which helps keep skin bouncy), fibronectin (essential to tissue repair), and laminin (involved in healing damage). But researchers believe there could be thousands more that haven't yet been named.

Through proteomics, scientists are learning how the main skin proteins become damaged and what role their supporters play. "This could translate into new therapies for conditions like psoriasis, eczema, and breakouts, since we now know that certain skin proteins can exacerbate acne or make you more prone to it," says Jessie Cheung, MD, a board-certified dermatologist based in Chicago. Some studies even found that proteins are involved in most skin cancers.

How does all this factor into how we care for our complexion? "For years, skin care has been aimed at encouraging plentiful amounts of proteins like collagen and elastin to be produced," says dermatologist Julie E. Russak, MD, an assistant clinical professor of dermatology at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City. Today, research is showing that it's not just about how much of a certain protein there is, but also how that protein is organized and functioning. Take elastin, for example: "You could have a lot of it, but if it's disorganized or clumped together, it's not going to firm and lift the skin," says cosmetic chemist Ron Robinson, founder of the skin-care brand BeautyStat. It's a combination of quantity and quality.

Scientists are also trying to determine how other, less-understood proteins function, so as to develop more targeted solutions. One example is fibrillin, which gives skin youthful bounce, says Bradley. Skin that lacks fibrillin won't be as firm or smooth—and proteomics suggests this may have less to do with chronological age and more with cumulative sun exposure (fibrillin is highly UV sensitive). Increasingly, says Dr. Russak, "we're understanding which skin proteins change with age and which change with injury, which helps us figure out what we can do to stimulate their repair."

71

Estimated percentage of all human proteins found in the skin

HEALTHY SKIN FROM THE INSIDE

It's not just the products you use—here, advice on how to nurture your skin's proteome from nutritionist and health coach Jennifer Hanway, who's worked with A-list celebrities and Olympic athletes.



AIM FOR 25-30 GRAMS OF HEALTHY PROTEIN AT EACH MEAL

Chicken breast, fish, lean beef and pork, tofu, tempeh, and quinoa are loaded with amino acids, the building blocks of skin's proteins.



EAT PLENTY OF ANTIOXIDANT-RICH PRODUCE

Fruits and veggies help skin ward off free radical-induced damage to your proteins. So do nuts and seeds, cacao, green tea, and extra-virgin olive oil.



CURB SWEETS AND REFINED CARBS

They trigger advanced glycation end products (AGEs), harmful molecules that break down collagen, elastin, and other skin proteins.



TRY TO REDUCE STRESS

Cortisol, our body's stress hormone, damages skin's proteome, weakening its functions and speeding up skin aging.

PROTECTING YOUR PROTEINS

✕

While developing new and novel treatments is the goal, experts urge you, for now, to keep doing what the pros preach. First, slather on sunscreen and an antioxidant serum to shield UV-sensitive proteins from damage, says Robinson. Then continue—or start—using “the gold-standard ingredients that help stimulate the main proteins, such as retinoids like OTC retinol and vitamin C,” he adds. Buzzy ingredients like growth factors and stem cell-derived exosomes are promising innovations that have also been shown to stimulate skin cells to churn out healthy collagen, says Dr. Russak. “Exosomes are tiny nutrient-filled sacs released by every cell in our body, and they play an essential role in cellular communication,” she says. “In this way, exosome products could reduce the signs of aging, improve texture, and enhance reparative processes.”

But while everything mentioned above is great at stimulating new collagen and, to a lesser extent, elastin, the ingredients can't repair damaged proteins. What seems to be initially promising in that regard: peptides. These short chains of amino acids, which can be targeted and tweaked in a lab, are the building blocks of the natural proteins in our body. “When proteins break down, they release peptides,” says Bradley. “Your skin senses these fragments floating around, a signal that damage has occurred, and its self-repair process kicks in.” Applying peptides topically triggers this same process, nudging skin to replenish its store of healthy, well-functioning proteins.

To that end, scientists from the University of Manchester and No7 identified the peptides released when proteins that support skin function—collagen, elastin, and fibrillin—break down. Using this information, No7 created a patent-pending complex that they call a “super peptide” blend, available in their Future Renew skin-care range. This proprietary technology targets the cumulative damage to 50-plus proteins both on and under the surface of skin, triggering their repair and restoration—a promising innovation that shows that as our knowledge of the skin proteome becomes more sophisticated, products developed to address it may follow suit.

Looking ahead, an ingredient piquing researchers' interest is Gravityl, a bioengineered version of a red macroalgae, which was created by cosmetic manufacturer Givaudan and is not yet available. “Gravityl improves elastin organization and the production of collagens I and III,” says Robinson, which helps fight and reverse the effects of gravity on skin. Givaudan studies show it reduced double-chin volume in one month, and experts believe it will likely make its way into skin care soon.

While you may be tempted to chug a collagen beverage or pop a pill after reading all of this protein chatter, topical products are your best bet. “When you eat collagen, it goes to your gut and connective tissue, like your joints, first,” says Dr. Cheung. “Some small studies suggest it may eventually make it to your skin, but I generally advise my patients not to expect ‘wow’ results.” A better inside-out approach is through diet. See “Healthy Skin From the Inside,” left, for more.



The Bottom Line This isn't the last time you'll hear about the skin proteome. "There's so much research going on, with many more discoveries to be made," says Dr. Russak. Our experts believe that the next benchmark, after repair of damaged proteins, will be ways to stop their degradation in the first place. UV exposure and pollution are big offenders, but anything we put inside our bodies can affect the function and integrity of skin's proteins, says Dr. Russak. "That's why we advocate for a healthy diet with as few preservatives and sugars as possible." Duly (or doubly!) noted.

BREAKTHROUGH

BROADWAY
ACTORKrystal Joy
Brown

The *Merrily We Roll Along* star took her first sip of alcohol at the age of 12. She remembers it tasting “horrible” but enjoying the pleasantly numb feeling it gave her. As a teen, she and her friends would sneak wine and beer into basement parties. By the time Krystal became a working actor, in her 20s, drinking just seemed part and parcel of the industry. “We celebrated with alcohol; we commiserated with alcohol,” she says. But when Krystal moved from New York to L.A. in the mid-2010s and struggled to make the leap from stage to screen, she found herself relying on the substance more and more as a coping mechanism. After one particularly rough night out, Krystal woke up the following morning and decided she was done with it. She found a 7 a.m. Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, which she then attended nearly every day for a year. “I stopped being able to metabolize [alcohol] in a way that was healthy for me,” she says. “I went deep into the world of sobriety—finding a new community that was not about drinking.” Now, Krystal says, she’s able to be fully present. “I feel like I am a good friend, partner, and employee,” she says. “That was the biggest learning—being in the moment.”

6

The number of Broadway shows in which Krystal has starred. She made her debut in *Hair*, in 2009.

“Trusting in myself and my abilities is something I always go back to.”

AS TOLD TO
AMY WILKINSON
PHOTOGRAPHED
BY CHRISTINE
DIPASQUALE

SEEK OUT A TRUSTED
PERSPECTIVE

“I started therapy at 23. There was a lot of stuff I was pushing to the side, and I needed help dealing from someone who was unbiased. Therapy was really great for that.”

CELEBRATE TINY WINS

“I began a gratitude journal in recovery, but I was so sad that I couldn’t even think of five things to write. So I started small—the roof over my head, my bed, my backpack. Then I found bigger ones.”

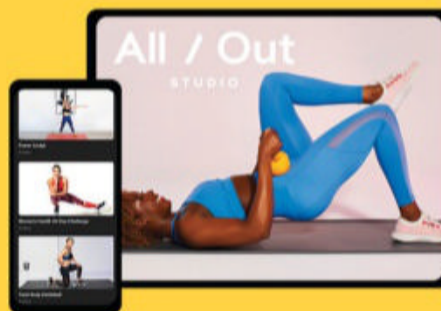


WOMEN'S HEALTH+ PREMIUM

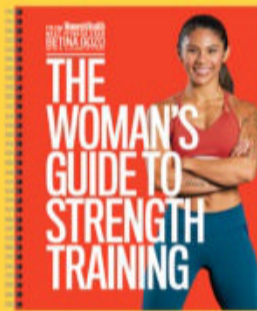
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