

LESS WASTE, MORE TASTE...

Many of us assume that foods past their 'sell-by' date must be unsafe. In fact, virtually all of it is perfectly good, but the implication that it is 'off' has contributed significantly to the five million tons of edible produce (worth an estimated £12 billion) that is binned each year by households in the UK. Much of that goes to landfill, which is expensive and eventually forms the powerful climate-change gas methane. But, since 15 September, sell-by dates have begun to be phased out. Most foods (eg, tinned and dry goods, jams, pickles and snacks) should carry a 'best before' date, after which they'll no longer be at their best but are still safe to eat. 'Use-by' labels will only go on food that's unsafe after a certain date, eg, soft cheese, meat, fish, eggs and ready meals.

London Mayor Boris Johnson is throwing his weight behind a new campaign to cut food waste, which launches this Friday in Trafalgar Square. 'Feeding the 5,000' will serve hot lunches made from fresh but cosmetically imperfect food that would otherwise have gone to waste. For further information, visit feeding5k.org.

Visit the website to organise your own walk

Walkies back to HAPPINESS

Walking a four-legged friend for half an hour or more daily could be your ticket to a healthier, happier and longer life, according to Heart Research UK. And if you haven't got your own dog, you could offer to walk a neighbour's or help at a shelter for abandoned or mistreated dogs. The Dogs Trust organises fundraising 'Waggy Walks' (waggywalks.org.uk).



BREATHE SLOWLY, BREATHE DEEP TO FIGHT FATIGUE

Q Like most 30-something working mothers, I'm often anxious. I don't sleep well, can't concentrate and yawn a lot. My GP says I'm tired but is there something else wrong?

A As well as the demands on your time, a significant factor in your anxiety and tiredness may be over-breathing or chronic hyperventilation syndrome (CHVS). Although your symptoms seem unrelated, they are typical of CHVS. Sufferers also report feeling bloated, experiencing dizziness and nightmares. Respiratory physiotherapist Dinah Bradley says, 'This disorder may affect as many as one in ten people. But although it's implicated in a wide range of health problems, CHVS remains widely undiagnosed.' Respiratory expert Dr Mike Thomas of Aberdeen University believes that 'the biggest problem is a lack of reliable information', and recommends Bradley's book *Hyperventilation Syndrome: Breathing Pattern Disorders* (Kyle Books, £6.99*).

In over-breathing, more air moves through the lungs than your body can deal with. So, while you have plenty of oxygen, you flush out too much carbon dioxide (CO₂). This upsets your body chemistry, causing physical and psychological symptoms including anxiety and disrupted sleep patterns. CO₂ deficit also reduces blood flow to the brain – thus the loss of focus.

You can self-check. Count how many times you breathe in and out per minute, and also how you breathe. If you take more than 15 breaths a minute, and/or breathe into your upper chest rather than your belly, and also tend to inhale through your mouth (rather than your nose) for long periods, you're 'a sitting duck for CHVS', says Bradley.

Upper-chest breathing uses much more energy (10-30 per cent) than belly breathing (2-4 per cent). Try taking six nose breaths in and out and then do the same breathing through the mouth: put one hand on your upper chest, one on your stomach, and feel the difference.

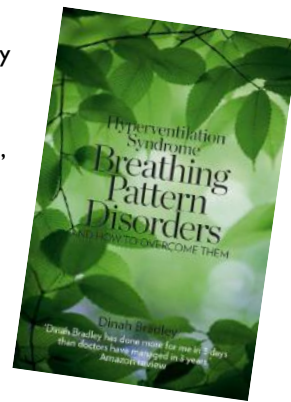
Becoming a nose breather is top priority. The nose is also our air conditioner, filtering environmental 'nasties'.

Be patient. It takes time to restore normal nose/abdominal breathing, so practise consciously. Hands-on help is available via Physiotherapy for Hyperventilation (physiohypervent.org), a UK network of specialist CHVS physiotherapists.

Ask your GP to check your iron levels for anaemia.

If you don't have enough red blood cells, you have to breathe harder to circulate oxygen. This can trigger CHVS, fatigue and aching neck and shoulder muscles. But correcting iron levels alone may not correct disordered breathing, so retraining is still vital.

Email your questions to s.stacey@you.co.uk



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