

Spring health SWAPS

We look at what's worth swapping and what's not, saving you time and money!

New doesn't necessarily mean better. So we've done some digging to find out what's worth a health swap and what's not. If you do make a switch, give it time. 'Stick to a new health goal for three months before you decide if it's working for you,' says registered dietitian Sophie Medlin. Our experts advise on what to embrace and what not to waste your money on...



Should you swap...

...PROBIOTICS FOR POSTBIOTICS?

Our gut health can affect our mental wellbeing, inflammation levels and immunity – and until now the focus has been on supplementing with probiotics, which contain species of gut bacteria. 'But postbiotics are an exciting area of innovation,' says Sophie. 'They're beneficial compounds that are produced by the good bacteria in the gut. Postbiotics essentially cut out the middleman (the probiotic) and give us the end product.'

THE VERDICT: Postbiotics are likely more of a quick fix. 'You may feel better when you're taking them but not when you stop,' says Sophie. 'Conversely, postbiotics are a better investment for long-term gut health.'

TRY: Holland & Barrett's Tribiotic range.

Although pricey, it contains pre-, pro- and postbiotics (£27.99 for 30 capsules). To focus on probiotics, eat live yogurt, kefir and kombucha or supplement with Bio-Kult Advanced Multi-Strain Formulation (£9.49 for 30 capsules, Holland & Barrett).



...SLEEP TRACKING FOR STRESS TRACKING?

Women in the UK say they feel stressed 10 days each month – with money worries and lack of sleep ranking as the most common causes*. So how can we regain control?

'Stress trackers monitor your heart rate and the intervals between heartbeats – providing insights into what's causing stress during the day, so you can respond more positively to triggers in future,' says Stephanie Taylor from stressnomore.co.uk. Sleep trackers monitor your body's activity overnight to help you improve your rest.

THE VERDICT: Stress tracking might be better. Your sleep may also improve by doing it, with studies showing that stress levels and sleep quality are closely linked, says Stephanie.

TRY: Free app StressScan (iOS, Android).





...ABSTINENCE FOR MINDFUL DRINKING?

Similar to the mindful eating trend before it, mindful drinking involves being in the moment when you consume alcohol in order to understand – and perhaps rewire – what’s driving your behaviour. It’s a new concept for people who want to change their drinking habits. The alternative – to quit drinking completely – can force some people into an all-or-nothing struggle.

THE VERDICT: ‘Through mindful drinking you can discover what sort of a relationship you have, or want to have, with alcohol,’ says Angela Calcan from drinkcoach.org.uk. And it’s never too late to change that.

TRY: The DrinkCoach app (iOS, Android), which allows you to track your habits for free. Or next time you’re drinking, ask yourself: will this drink add anything extra to the evening? ‘Notice how you feel when you pick up, hold and put down an alcoholic drink, and then do the same with a non-alcoholic drink,’ advises Angela.



...ALMOND MILK FOR POTATO MILK?

Plant-based potato milk is winning people over with its creamy taste and sustainable credentials – compared with almonds, potatoes need 56 times less water to grow.

THE VERDICT: ‘Unless they’re fortified with calcium, B vitamins, iodine and vitamin D, the difference in health benefits is negligible,’ says Sophie Medlin. However, you can’t beat cow’s milk for supporting bone health, vital during the menopause.

TRY: Dug Barista Potato M*lk (£1.80, Waitrose & Partners) in your morning coffee.



The best of the rest

These other trends are worth a try...

* MUSHROOMS

High in beta-glucans, these help ‘prime’ our immune system – shiitake and oyster varieties are best.

* LISS

Low intensity steady state (LISS) exercise, such as walking or yoga, may not leave you sweating, but you’re more likely to be back for more.

* MOOD DIARIES

Monitoring mood can help identify what provokes negative thoughts, as well as those that lead to joy.

* TENNIS

Thanks to Emma Raducanu, this sport is gaining popularity again – for all ages. Even at a basic level, it engages your brain – tactics are key – as well as your cardiovascular system.

* VISION SUPPLEMENTS

Look for zinc, lutein and vitamin B1, which are proven to play a role in maintaining good eye health and could help prevent age-related eye conditions.

...MEDITATION FOR SOUND HEALING?

Meditating at home can be a simple way to manage stress on a regular basis. ‘With regular practice, meditation tells our bodies that we are safe to relax, repair and heal,’ says Sophie Andrews from heartworktherapies.com. Sound healing works in a similar way, she adds. ‘You’re guided through a meditation using spoken word, vibrational tools and breathing techniques.’

THE VERDICT: ‘Anyone can take part in sound healing effectively – no learnt practice or lessons are required – making it the more accessible option,’ explains Sophie Andrews.



TRY: Listening to nature. Research** shows it can reduce our body’s natural fight-or-flight instinct. Or head to ‘Healing Vibrations’ on YouTube for a singing bowl sound bath.