

How a **HEALTHY GUT** can help slow down the ageing process



Catherine Rogers explains how a healthy, gut-friendly diet can improve energy levels and cognitive function at any age.

The state of the gut affects all aspects of health, including mood, cognitive function, energy levels and libido. It also has an impact on how we age. A gut-friendly diet helps to slow the ageing process and enable us to live longer and healthier lives, with more energy, a sharper mind and less chance of developing type 2 diabetes and other avoidable diseases.

Tiredness

Many of us accept low energy levels and trouble sleeping as a natural part of ageing, but it doesn't have to be. By improving our diet, it is possible to get better sleep, feel more energised during the day and avoid those afternoon slumps. Give your body the right fuel and you enable it to run more efficiently and get more from your day.

Avoiding high-sugar foods (such as cakes, biscuits or sugary drinks) means you are less likely to have the mid-afternoon energy dip as your blood sugar crashes. Instead, choose slow-burn foods that include fat, protein or complex carbohydrates, which will keep you fuelled throughout

the afternoon, like oatcakes covered in smashed avocado or nut butter. Remove common inflammatory and allergenic foods from the menu, such as gluten, caffeine and alcohol, and you can give the gut a chance to reset. Avoiding foods that irritate the gut lining, especially at night, makes it easier to get a good night's sleep and you will wake up refreshed.

Many of my clients report that cutting out sugary foods and increasing healthy fats and proteins, with lots of fruit and vegetables, increases their energy levels to 100%, rather than running on 40%. They also experience improved mental clarity and better quality sleep.

Belly Fat & Diabetes

As we age, the body changes and we begin to store fat in different places. Rather than counting calories, it's better to focus on the quality of food you eat. This means eating plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, as well as good-quality meat and fish. By making these changes to your diet, you can achieve long-lasting weight loss, including getting rid of that stubborn belly fat. This is because cutting out sugary foods helps to avoid stimulating higher insulin production, which can cause excess sugar to be stored as belly fat, in our muscles, or even in our liver.

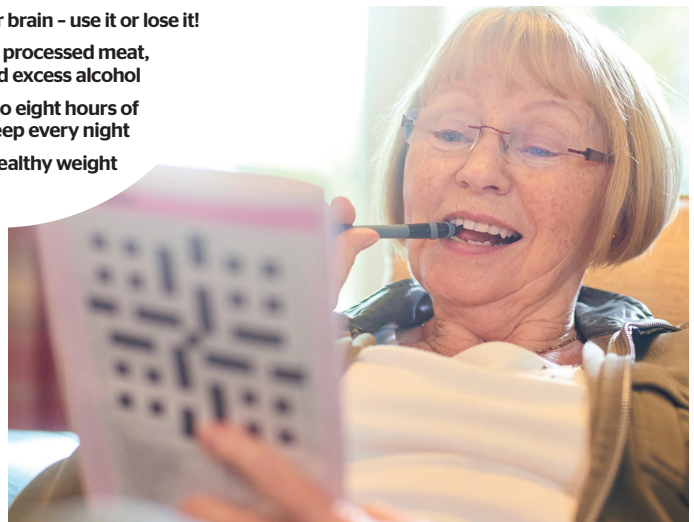
Furthermore, by eating a healthy diet and avoiding extreme rises





Lifestyle changes you could try to combat signs of ageing:

- Exercise, stretch and enjoy being active
- Try to stick to a diet high in fresh fruit, vegetables, nuts and fat from plant sources
- Keep challenging your brain – use it or lose it!
 - Avoid trans fats, processed meat, refined sugar and excess alcohol
 - Aim for seven to eight hours of undisturbed sleep every night
 - Maintain a healthy weight



"Diet can delay and even reverse cognitive decline."

in blood sugar levels, it's possible to avoid more serious health problems like diabetes or obesity. Instead, try eating meals high in fat and protein to fuel you throughout the day. Rather than starting the day with sugary cereals or toast, why not try eggs or beans and seeded bread, or a smoothie filled with fruit, vegetables and pea protein powder? The addition of an egg or chickpeas to a lunchtime salad can add some much-needed protein and means you will have more chance of staying away from white carbs at dinner. In the evening, switch out rice for cauliflower rice, or swap pasta for spiralised courgette, which avoids spiking blood sugar before bedtime.

Brain Fog & 'Senior Moments'

Most people have 'senior moments', where phone numbers no longer come to mind so fast, or words begin to escape

you! According to Age Concern UK, mild cognitive impairment affects 5-20% of people over the age of 65. These moments can be at best embarrassing and at worst debilitating. Diet can help to delay and even reverse this cognitive decline. Research by the American Medical Association has shown that people who regularly eat fish, fruit, vegetables and only small amounts of dairy or red meat, experience a much slower rate of memory loss than their less diet-conscious counterparts. In this study, both higher Mediterranean-type diet adherence and higher physical activity were independently associated with reduced risk for Alzheimer's.

So research says that by improving the diet, anyone can experience these benefits to their body and mind, at any age. Diversity in food consumed is important because it leads to diversity in our gut bacteria -

various studies have found that a broader range of bacteria in the gut is better for human health. If you look at obese people or those who suffer from asthma and allergies, they are more likely to have less diverse gut bacteria and may also find themselves feeling tired, lethargic and lacking in energy. Each individual species of bacteria has a special job - some produce short-chain fatty acids, essential to good gut health and energy production, while others produce neuroactive substances like serotonin that communicate with the brain via the gut-brain axis. These are just some of the functions that science knows about, but there are many microbes whose function within the body is not fully understood.

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Gut Well Soon: A Practical Guide to a Healthier Body and a Happier Mind by Catherine Rogers is published by Panoma Press. For the online programme, visit www.ryghealth.com