

THIS is the month to...



1 Book a holiday

It's official – getting away does improve our health. Travel company Kuoni and charity Nuffield Health's recent *Holiday Health* experiment showed that on average, holidaymakers' blood pressure falls by six per cent; sleep quality improves by 17 per cent and ability to recover from stress goes up by 29 per cent. 'View going away as a chance to make healthier choices,' says health and energy expert Oliver Gray (energiseyou.com). 'Modern addictions like technology over-stimulate our central nervous system. Try to go cold turkey – no social media or emailing – while you are away. If you must check in, do it once a day at a set time. Be present and aware of your new surroundings and you'll reap the benefits.'

2 Step up

Taking the stairs is a great way to get moving, but how you climb them can make a difference to shifting those extra few pounds gained over the winter. A recent study by Dr Lewis Halsey, senior lecturer at the University of Roehampton, found that taking steps one by one burns more calories than going up two at a time. Researchers found that although initially it takes more energy to take two steps together, as you continue, more calories are burned by taking them individually.

3 Find release

Myofascial release is currently a hot topic among body therapists, yoga and Pilates instructors. With origins in osteopathy, it works with fascia – the head-to-toe connective tissue that surrounds and protects muscles, bones, tendons, ligaments and organs. 'There are many nerve endings in the fascia, which is why it's thought that emotional or physical damage can be held there for years after a trauma,' says massage therapist Helen Brown (helen-brown.co.uk). Therapists apply pressure deep into the tissue and wait for a release to alleviate restricted fascia and stop secondary pain in its tracks.

4 ADDRESS DIGESTION PROBLEMS

Recently, the NHS recognised the Australian FODMAP diet, which identifies short-chain carbohydrates (found in foods including apples, rye, avocado) as IBS culprits. If you suffer from abdominal pains, bloating and constipation, try an intolerance test to see what does and doesn't work for you. YorkTest now offers an IBS Diet Programme which screens for 158 trigger foods and drinks, including FODMAPs, to produce a personalised diet sheet. Take the First Step indicator test, £9.99, before enrolling for the full test, £299, at yorktest.com.

5 JOIN CAFÉ SOCIETY

Many cafés now offer good-for-the-soul events. The quirkiest must be 'cat cafés' which began in 1990s Japan – where those without pets can go to play with café cats. Lady Dinah's Cat Emporium (ladydinahs.com) is planned for London in the coming months. If felines aren't for you, perhaps try a science café (cafescientifique.org), or even a death café (deathcafe.com), where death is discussed in a non-morbid environment. ■