



JANUARY 2017 naturalhealthmagazine.co.uk

UK's top alternative wellbeing magazine

JANUARY 2017

# NATURAL HEALTH

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**Plus:** DELICIOUS VEGAN RECIPES • HOW TO STOP BEING A HYPOCHONDRIAC • 24 NUTRITIOUS SUPERFOOD HEROES • THE FAT YOU'LL WANT MORE OF • EASY YOGA TO TRY AT HOME



# ASK THE EXPERTS

Don't suffer in silence – our wellbeing wonder-team of experts is on hand to answer your health questions

*I'm a really bad hypochondriac – I am constantly convinced that I have some sort of serious illness. I'm always stressed about it and it's affecting my work and relationships. How can I stop doing this to myself?*

**Dr Megan Arroll**, a researcher and health psychologist ([meganarroll.com](http://meganarroll.com)), says:

Every day we all experience physical sensations – some of these can be signs of an underlying health problem but most often they are simply the normal functioning of our bodies. When we interpret these feelings as representing a serious illness and then go on to assume the worst, we are caught in a catastrophising thought pattern. The good news is that you've already started the process of breaking this negative way of thinking by recognising that it's a problem and seeking help.

Now, every time you have a thought like this write it down and challenge the catastrophic prediction with logic and evidence. Ask yourself if you've ever had a serious illness before, how often it has happened, and realistically is it likely to occur again? You should find that your answers lead you to see that the disastrous outcome is unlikely. Do this exercise every time you have negative, worried thoughts and over time, the way you think about your health will change.

*How can I use aromatherapy to help me sleep better?*

**Ian Cambray-Smith**, an expert in essential oils and technical director at Fragrant Earth International ([fragranteearth.com](http://fragranteearth.com)), says:

Whether you experience difficulty in falling asleep or your problem is frequent or early waking, essential oils can really help. Having a relaxing aromatherapy massage before going to bed would be a great help but sadly few of us have a personal therapist! The good news is that there are a number of ways in which you can make the most of the calming, soothing benefits of essential oils at home.

Having a warm soak before bed is very effective – add three to four drops of your chosen oils once the bath has been run. Diluting them in a teaspoon of milk ensures even dispersion. Use only one or two drops for children and just one for babies under 18 months, and ensure that they are always diluted.

A vaporiser can also be effective but do not use a tea light in a child's bedroom – simply put a couple of drops of essential oil on a cotton wool ball and place on a radiator. If you are tempted to put a drop or two on your pillow then put the oil on the underside, otherwise you may inhale too much which could cause a headache.

In terms of what oils to use, lavender is popular for its sleep-inducing properties and alpine lavender is known to be particularly effective. Others include sweet marjoram, neroli, sandalwood, sweet orange, valerian and roman chamomile. Sweet dreams!

*Can the food we eat affect our genes?*

**Vera Martins**, a graduate in naturopathy and herbal medicine from the College of Naturopathic Medicine ([naturopathy-uk.com](http://naturopathy-uk.com)), says:

Absolutely. Our genes are flexible entities that can be switched on and off through a mechanism called epigenetics. Certain dietary compounds are known to control these switches, affecting various health conditions.

Foods rich in the polyphenols curcumin (found in turmeric), epigallocatechin gallate (present in green tea), resveratrol (present in grapes and berries) and isothiocyanates (found in broccoli and kale) are key to keeping our genes happy. These antioxidant compounds can reduce cancer growth and promote longevity.

Sugary, processed foods will negatively affect genes linked to cardiovascular health and memory, so try to steer clear of these. A diet rich in bad fats can also switch off the gene for leptin, a hormone which regulates appetite, meaning we may eat more than we need.