Eat to turn back the clock

Simple tips to stay healthy for longer

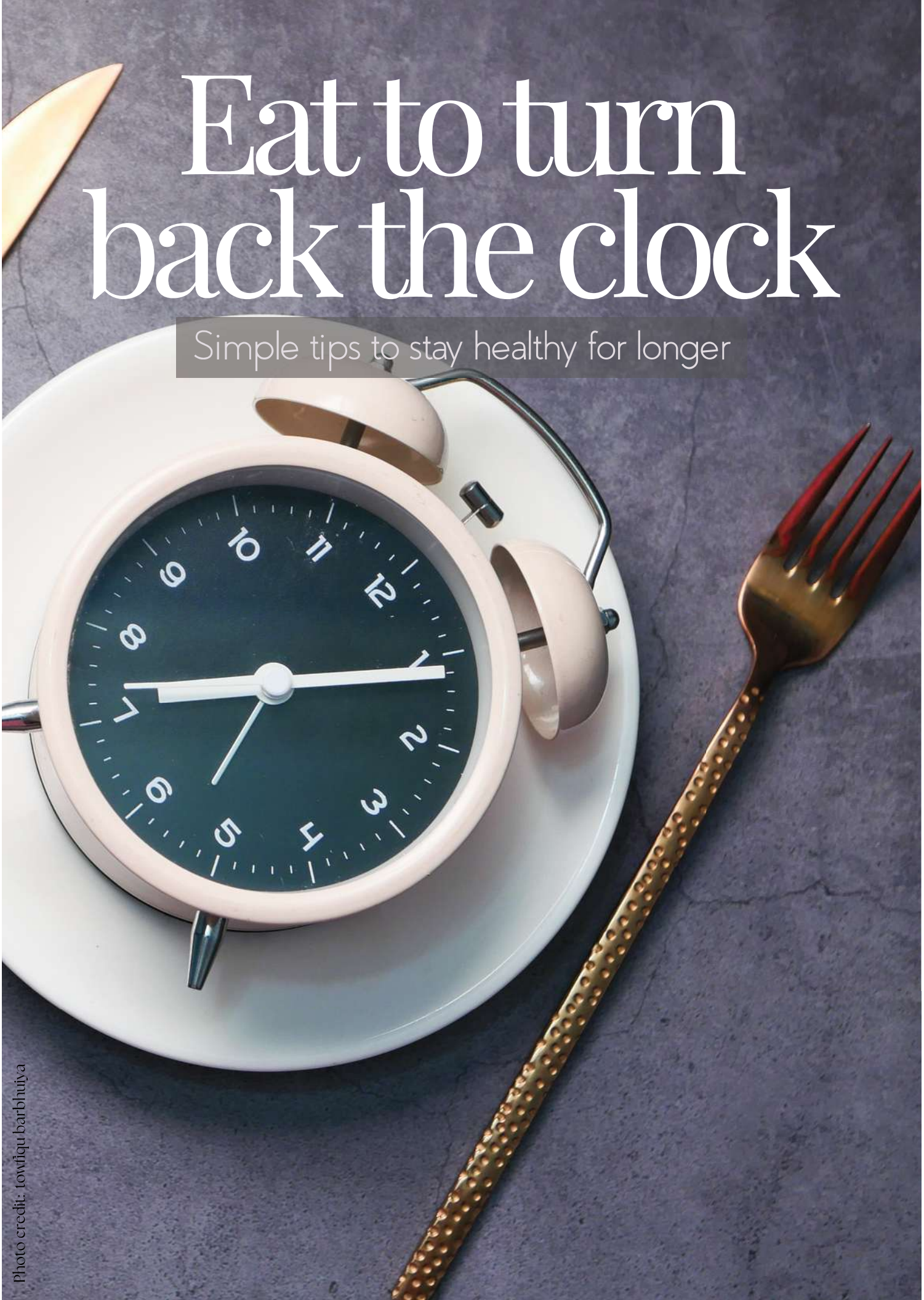


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There's a lot to like about getting older.

You've made most of the silly mistakes you're going to (and survived). You've likely got more time on your hands since your children have flown the nest (or are at least at a more self-sufficient stage). You now have the confidence to care much less about what other people think of you and no longer suffer fools. You may find that you have more money in the bank to do with as you wish. and since the desire for more and better has diminished. you're calmer and more content.

But do you find yourself wishing 'if only...' in relation to your health and wellness?
You may wonder where your energy and vitality has gone. Your skin has probably lost its dewy glow and freshness. Your digestion is more troublesome than it's been in years. and you want to ensure you're taking care of your long-term health. so there are no nasty surprises lurking around the corner.

I want to let you know that the food you eat matters more than you think. What and how you eat influences every area of your health and eating the right diet for YOU coupled with some positive lifestyle changes. like getting the sleep you need and managing stress. will help you feel like a new person.

There's no reason that you cannot feel fabulous at any age. if you take the right actions. and it's my pleasure. as a health coach to motivate and support my clients to do just that. Of course. working one-to-one means I can create a nutrition and lifestyle strategy built around your exact needs. I'm going to share 6 of the most common things that come up for my clients. and how you can use the immense power of good nutrition to lead a long and healthy life.

EAT *to turn back the clock*

Feel more energised

Blood Sugar Balance

There are so many reasons that you might be feeling more sluggish than you'd like. and pinpointing what's behind your lack of energy is something we'd need to discuss in person. But what I'm going to share with you is a simple strategy that can make a big difference.

Balancing blood sugar levels is one of the key things I help my clients with. Eating in a way that provides a constant supply of energy through the day will help you avoid dips in blood sugar than can leave you feeling tired. grumpy and craving the 'wrong' kinds of foods.

Very simply. you'd want to have a little protein at every meal and snack. This includes meat. fish. eggs. and vegetarian protein sources like tofu. lentils. beans. chickpeas and quinoa. You also need plenty of non-starchy veg (starchy veg include potatoes. parsnips. sweet potatoes. corn) and smaller portions than you may be used to of starchy carbs like potatoes. rice. bread and pasta.

Unfortunately. the staple diet for many people involves cereal. sandwiches and pasta - often several servings in the same day - and this can contribute to blood sugar highs and subsequent crashes.



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Fix your digestion

As you get older. some very important changes take place that can alter the way you digest your food

Stomach Acid

With age. the body produces less stomach acid. This is needed to break down protein in your food. Low stomach acid is linked to a variety of gastrointestinal problems. including Helicobacter pylori infection. dysbiosis. food allergies and intolerance. rheumatoid arthritis. acne rosacea. asthma. and decreased secretion of intrinsic factor. a chemical required for vitamin B12 absorption.

Heartburn and Indigestion

These become more common as we age. Contrary to public belief this - in the majority of cases - is a result of too little stomach acid. not too much. Because of that. many people take over-the-counter meds to neutralise stomach acid or are even prescribed a proton pump inhibitor (PPI) medication that blocks stomach acid production. The drug's name usually ends in "-ole". such as Lansoprazole or Omeprazole. As a result. vitamin B12 deficiency is common. especially in older people. and unfortunately it can be the single underlying reason for anxiety and depression. If you have been prescribed a PPI. do not stop the medication without your doctor's help and support. Stopping the drug can result in 'rebound reflux' - heartburn that is much worse than before - so you must come off it in a controlled way. If you are found to be deficient in vitamin B12. but you have a condition that requires you to remain on PPI long term. your doctor may be able to support you with regular B12 injections.



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EAT *to turn back the clock*

Fix your digestion

Digestive Enzymes

The stomach and intestines secrete enzymes that help break down the food further. You guessed it. these enzymes are reduced as you age. too - not least because enzyme secretion depends on adequate stomach acid levels. The result of one or both of the above can be bloating. belching or flatulence after meals. undigested food in the stool. indigestion. and diarrhoea or constipation. The good news is that targeted supplements are available that can improve symptoms of both. but these should be recommended by an experienced nutrition practitioner.

Vitamin D

This is important for digestive function and affects all organs involved in the digestive process. including making stomach acid. The older you get. the more likely you are to be deficient in vitamin D. simply because you lose some of your body's natural ability to make it. That extra holiday in the sunshine is important. along with supplementation (and finding the right dosage for you. based on functional testing is key).

Constipation

As the digestion starts to slow down. constipation can become a problem. Some types of medications may include constipation as a side effect. These include calcium channel blockers for high blood pressure and narcotic painkillers. Increased inactivity also plays a part.

Simple tips to boost digestion

- Get your digestive juices flowing by thinking about your food and how delicious it's going to be. Saliva contains enzymes that are ready and waiting for that first bite!
- Take 2tsp apple cider vinegar in a little warm water 5 minutes before a meal (or with a meal as part of a vinagrette) to stimulate stomach acid production.
- Eat slowly and consciously, taking care to chew each mouthful plenty of times until the food is little more than a mush.
- Try a gentle walk after meals for 15 minutes - this helps with the digestive process and can also help balance your blood sugar levels, which is important to avoid slumps in energy.
- Pineapple and papaya are natural food sources of enzymes and worth bringing into your diet.



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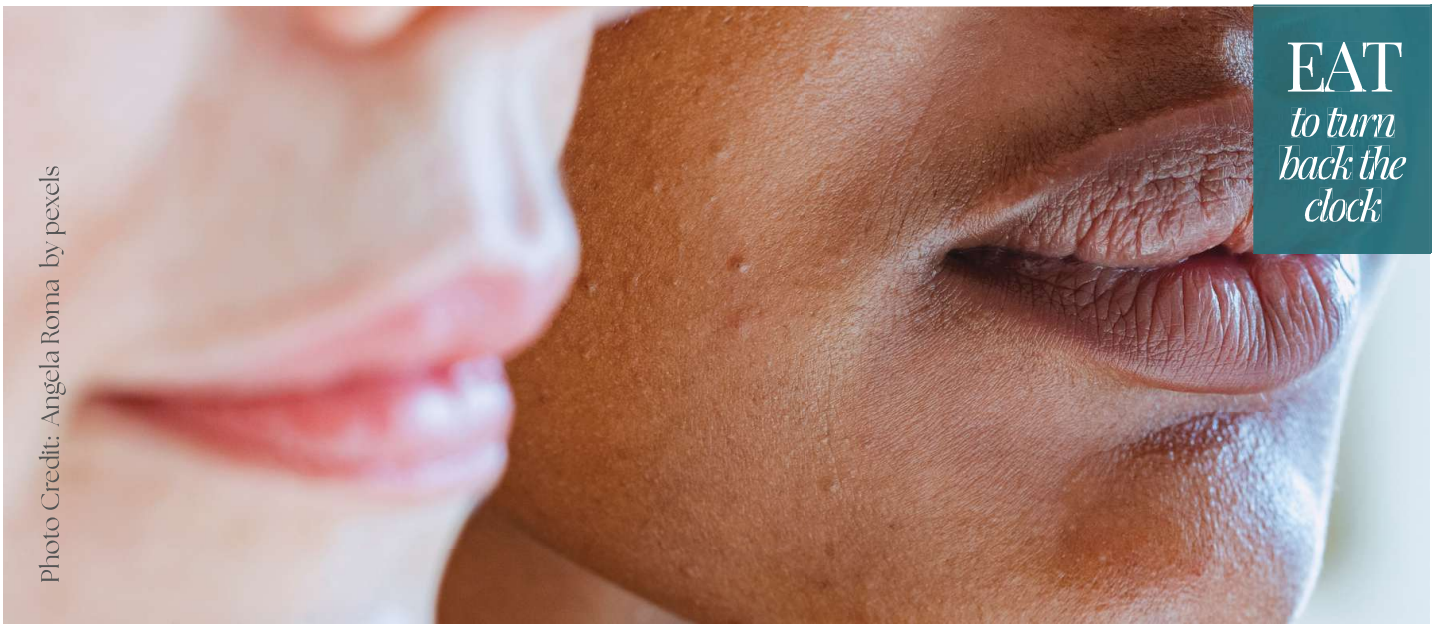


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Skin

Look your best

For some. one of the most bothersome things about the ageing process are wrinkles and the dullness your skin can take on. Although it's not possible to turn back the clock. there are many things you can do to bring back that feeling of radiance.

The ageing process is due to inflammation of one sort or another. I know you'll get that in relation to joint pain. but did you know that what you eat has a big impact on how your skin ages?

Eating too much sugar and processed carbohydrates (like pasta. bread. and baked goods such as cakes and biscuits) can lead to damage in your skin's collagen. which keeps your skin elastic and helps it resist wrinkles. Alcohol and caffeine can also have a negative effect on the appearance of your skin. On a more positive note. you should bring more of the healthy fats into your diet. Essential fats found in fish. avocados. nuts and seeds keep cell membranes soft and smooth - they're nature's perfect skin plumpers. If you have even a passing interest in face creams. you'll likely have read about how some ingredients fight age-accelerating particles called free radicals. The magic ingredients in this case are antioxidants. and they're in plentiful supply in fruit and vegetables of all colours. Eating as many different colours over the course of a week is helpful.

As a very general rule. each different colour group contains a different set of plant chemicals. Scientists now know that bringing a variety of different antioxidants into your diet has a synergistic effect. which means the combined result is more powerful than the individual parts.

Bones

Take care of your bones

All women over the age of 35 (yes, really!) should take an interest in bone health.
That's because, until that relatively young age, the normal process of bone being broken down and rebuilt is in balance.
After about 35, bone is not rebuilt at the same rate as it's broken down, leading to a gradual loss of bone density.

There are lots of factors including genetics and racial origin (and to an extent the gradual slide to peri-menopause) that are important but that you can't control. However, you can take charge of your diet and lifestyle.

What we know about osteoporosis is that smoking is bad (hardly a newsflash), as is drinking alcohol in anything other than moderation, and being very overweight.

Load bearing exercise, involving light weights or resistance training is now considered just as important as diet for good bone health.

We also know that oestrogen is good for bones (falling levels after 35 are a big cause) - there are some foods called phytoestrogens, which exert a weak oestrogenic effect and can help. These are things like tofu, beans, lentils, chickpeas and flaxseed.

What works for supporting bone health is eating plenty of foods containing key vitamins and minerals.

The important ones are:

VITAMIN C

(Found in peppers, kale, parsley, spring greens, brussel sprouts, watercress, cauliflower, papaya, strawberries, spinach, oranges, lemon juice, mangoes, asparagus, and cantaloupe melon)

PHOSPHORUS

(Protein-rich foods like meat, poultry, fish, eggs, dairy products, nuts, and legumes are good sources. Others comprise whole grains, dried fruit and garlic)

CALCIUM

(Tofu, fish, like sardines where you eat the bones, green leafy vegetables, broccoli, baked and soya beans as well as brazil nuts, almonds, and tahini)

MAGNESIUM

(Found in green leafy vegetables, legumes, nuts like brazils, peanuts, pecans and almonds as well as seeds, unrefined grains, brown rice and fish)

VITAMIN D

(Good dietary sources include salmon, fresh tuna, sardines, swordfish, orange juice, eggs, and liver)



Photo Credit: Amy from Piebald

Boost your immunity

Your body needs real. unprocessed food to stay healthy and not the processed foods we kid ourselves are OK for us to eat.

Focus on eating natural. unprocessed food as often as possible. Follow the 80/20 rule (for the avoidance of doubt. this means eating healthily 80% of the time - think fresh apples rather than apple juice. or wholegrain bread instead of a white bread butty).

Meat and fish. fruit. vegetables and wholegrains all contribute to a stronger immune system and offset the occasional indulgence. When it comes to immunity and the ageing process. really focus on fruit and veg as these contain plenty of plant chemicals that. as discussed in the section on skin health. are choc-full of antioxidants. Not only do these help fight the signs of ageing on the surface. they contain immunity-boosting ingredients. too.

And did you know that up to 80% of our immunity is in the gut? The mucosa-associated lymphoid tissue (MALT) in the gut is part of the first line of immune defence. so getting the right balance between beneficial. or 'good' gut bacteria. and the 'bad'. or potentially pathogenic bacteria. is key.

How to boost your immunity

The gut environment takes a beating year after year. owing to poor diets. too much sugar. stress. alcohol. antibiotics and other factors. Even if you have no obvious tummy troubles. digestive health is vital. so it's worth the extra effort to take care of it.
Add probiotic and prebiotic foods to your diet. as these re-populate the gut with good bacteria and feed them well enough to crowd out bad bacteria.
Here are some gut-friendly choices to get you started:

Organic. probiotic. natural yoghurt

Kefir - fermented milk. Don't worry. it tastes lovely. very much like yoghurt. only runnier

Always buy full-fat. as the 0% or low-fat options have increased levels of milk sugars and added sugar for flavour - and fat isn't the enemy. either in life or in weight loss

Miso soup or miso bouillon paste (add these to soups and stews)

Oats (soak first. as you would to make overnight oats. in order to release the goodness)

Onions. garlic and Jerusalem artichokes

Green bananas - our digestive enzymes can't break down the carbs in green bananas. but the gut bacteria can. Ripe bananas. on the other hand. raise our blood sugar levels fast and high.

Beans

Cooked. then cooled potatoes