

new you

FOR WOMEN WHO LOVE LIFE

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'My son was born with meningitis!'

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reveal their
healthy secrets!



The Showgirl

Former Eastenders actress

Jill Halfpenny danced her way to fitness



Protect antibiotics so they can protect you

Against colds and flu, there's
nothing antibiotics can do

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welcome

to **new you** magazine, the magazine that puts you in control of your health!

In this issue, you'll find loads of great ideas and advice to help you look and feel better – healthy recipes that taste good, ideas for getting more active without slogging away in the gym, and a smattering of celebrities sharing their secrets on how they do it.



Strictly Come Dancing winner, Jill Halfpenny tells how she danced her way to fitness and Lynda Bryans shares how she balances her hectic workload with being a mum of two.

So pour yourself a cup of tea, put your feet up for half an hour and find out how to achieve a healthier new you!

4 ways to reduce your risk of cancer

Eat your greens

...and reds, and oranges, and purples! **Around a third of cancer cases may be linked to diet.** The media often hypes individual fruits or vegetables as superfoods, but in reality, the best option is to eat as wide a variety of fruit and veg as possible. At least five portions a day will make sure you get a whole range of vitamins, minerals and antioxidants, as well as plenty of fibre, which will help reduce your cancer risk.



Stub it out!

In the short term, you get nicotine-stained teeth and fingernails, bad breath and wrinkles. In the long term, you get a hugely increased risk of cancer. **Around 30% of all cancer deaths are linked to smoking – lung cancer is perhaps the best-known risk, but up to 15 other types of cancer are also associated with tobacco.** Giving up smoking can be a huge challenge, but there is support available – call the smokers' helpline on **0800 85 85 85** for friendly help and advice, and details of local services that can help you quit.

Take care in the sun

We all need a little sun – 10-15 minutes a day to allow our bodies to make enough vitamin D – but expose your skin for longer than this and damage can occur. **Cases of skin cancer are on the increase and too much sun is the culprit (yes, even here in rainy Northern Ireland!).** Protect yourself when the sun's shining by always using sunscreen (at least SPF 15), wearing a hat and sunglasses, and staying out of the sun during the times when the sun is strongest (usually between about 11am and 3pm).

Walk this way

In fact, any sort of physical activity will do, but walking is one of the simplest forms of exercise and probably the easiest to incorporate into your everyday life. **Being active can reduce your risk of colon cancer by up to 50% and has also been linked with a reduced risk of breast, prostate and lung cancer.** At least 30 minutes a day on five or more days of the week is recommended, and you don't even need to do it all in one go if you don't want to – three 10 minute sessions in a day will still count!



Real
life

'My son was born with meningitis!'

When first-time mum, Jacqueline Speer was told her newborn son Joshua had meningitis, the news came as a devastating shock. "When I heard it was meningitis, I automatically thought that's it, there's no hope for him. I was picturing everything, a coffin, his funeral - everything runs through your head," explains Jacqueline. "You just never think something like this will happen to you, it always happens to someone else."

Joshua was born with listeria meningitis and spent the first month of his life in the Special Care Baby Unit at the Ulster Hospital. Listeria meningitis, a rare form of

the disease which occurs mainly in babies, elderly people and those with weakened immune systems, can be passed from mother to foetus during pregnancy.

Jacqueline had a trouble-free pregnancy and birth and although Joshua was born two and a half weeks early, he still weighed a healthy six pounds. "I had a fantastic pregnancy," says Jacqueline, "I didn't smoke, drink or take unpasteurised dairy products. I was very careful and did everything I had to do. I'd been sick two weeks before Joshua was born, with flu-like symptoms and the night before I went into labour I felt it coming on me again. The only thing I can put it down to is contaminated poultry. It really couldn't have been prevented."

Very few cases of listeria meningitis now occur in the UK and Ireland, largely due to successful education campaigns about the dangers of eating unpasteurised milk

products or contaminated pâté, poultry or shellfish during pregnancy.

It was two days after Joshua was born when the doctors confirmed he had meningitis. "Being a first-time mum, I didn't know what was normal and what was not. He was very quiet and I just thought he was a very good baby. I was trying to breastfeed him but he wasn't feeding at all and he didn't seem to like being passed from person to person."

Joshua's condition worsened and he developed a very high temperature, rapid breathing and a distended abdomen. He had meningitis, septicaemia and a suspected perforated bowel. "He had so much wrong with him and there was nothing we could do, we couldn't even hold him. We just sat with him, touching his hand. It hit everyone pretty bad," recalls Jacqueline.

Joshua was treated with antibiotics two days after he was born and remained in a serious condition for the five days that followed. Jacqueline has nothing but praise for the medical team that looked after Joshua and supported her family during the ordeal. "They were absolutely amazing and they do prepare you for the worst. They told us, 'he's the sickest baby in here and he's fighting for his life', things you don't want to hear but I suppose you have to be prepared. I think the reason he survived was because it happened in hospital and they were able to react so quickly."

As Liz Hamilton, Information and Education Officer at Meningitis Research Foundation explains, "Listeria meningitis can be very serious, with a death rate of about 30%. In the absence of effective vaccines against all forms of meningitis and septicaemia, the Foundation



emphasises the importance of knowing the symptoms and the need for prompt action, if suspected."

Joshua has come through the experience free from any after effects or complications and is due to attend one more follow-up consultation before he gets the all clear. Jacqueline is only too aware of how lucky they are, "You never hear of success stories with meningitis but he has made a full recovery. He really is a lucky wee boy."

For further information about meningitis and septicaemia, contact **Meningitis Research Foundation** on Tel: **028 9032 1283** or call the Freephone 24 hour helpline on **080 8800 3344** or visit the website: **www.meningitis.org**












Meningitis!

Know the symptoms

Cut out and keep this helpful guide to the symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia.

Symptoms can appear in any order and not everyone gets all of these symptoms.

Septicaemia can occur with or without meningitis.

	Septicaemia	Meningitis
Cold hands and feet/shivering 	✓	✓ <small>Not present in all cases</small>
Rash (develops anywhere on the body) 	✓	✓
Fever and/or vomiting 	✓	
Rapid breathing (or unusual breathing) 	✓	
Stomach/joint/muscle pain 	✓ <small>Sometimes with diarrhoea</small>	
Drowsy and less responsive/vacant 	✓ <small>Not present in all cases</small>	✓
Severe headache 		✓
Stiff neck 		✓ <small>Unusual in young children</small>
Dislike of bright lights 		✓ <small>Unusual in young children</small>

Seizures (fits) may also be seen in cases of meningitis

Other symptoms in babies:

- Tense or bulging soft spot on their head
- Blotchy skin, getting paler or turning blue
- Refusing to feed
- Irritable when picked up, with a high pitched or moaning cry
- A stiff body with jerky movements, or else floppy and lifeless

Trust your instincts. Someone who has meningitis or septicaemia could become seriously ill very quickly. **Get medical help immediately if you are worried about someone who is ill.**

Taken with permission from the Meningitis Research Foundation leaflet 'Race Against Time'.



Celeb style

Doing it celeb style – we reveal the secrets that help keep these celebs fit and healthy!



Davina McCall

"Being a wife, a mum and having a career is madness. I know how chaotic life can get and finding time to exercise can seem impossible, but it's not. I put on so much weight when I get pregnant, I'm not someone who twangs back into shape." Davina believes that exercising several times a week and eating healthy meals is the best way to get fit and lose weight.



Cindy Crawford

Supermodel Cindy Crawford has said that she likes to maintain her figure in a healthy, sustainable way, for example, she doesn't cut out carbohydrates or crash diet:

"Going seven hours without food isn't the way to maintain your weight or your energy. As soon as I feel I'm not allowed something, that's what I want. Once you learn to eat right, you don't have to feel deprived."

"Organised group physical exercise classes in coordinating sweat outfits was never my thing, nor was I ever self motivated enough to get on with it myself, luckily, I don't have a weight problem!

"The only exercise I really enjoy is a daily one hour walk with my black Labrador Meg and a good natter with my girlfriend and her dog along the way! I also ice skate every week with a group of friends, it's a good laugh, and we're even getting quite good at it."



Carol Smillie



Gabby Logan

"When I was pregnant, Sydney my dog, was perfect for taking on long walks, when I had to stop running. Unfortunately the pace and distance that the pram goes on a daily basis are not enough for her. Now that I can extend my training regimen, she can come on runs with me."



Shauna Lowry

"I'm an outdoor girl, I love to walk dogs and ride horses in the countryside for fresh air and to keep fit when I can. It's harder to do this in London where I live most of the time so I do pilates and swim regularly at my gym and try to walk everywhere. On holiday I love to go swimming and scuba-diving in the sea, it's the most relaxing form of exercise, really beautiful and fascinating."

"My favourite exercise is to go for a walk with my dog Rocky who is a border terrier. Walking is free and healthy and I think it is the best possible exercise you can do."

"When you are a mum you obviously take more of an interest in what your children are eating. I like to chop up raw carrots and keep them in the fridge to snack on and stir fries are a great way to eat lots of vegetables."



Kate Thornton

"I am a healthy-sized woman who eats an averagely healthy diet with the odd fast food/takeaway thrown in. There are loads of things I would love to change about myself, but I'm certainly not going to deny myself food that I want. I exercise as much as I can with the time that I have."



Lorraine Kelly



Thinking about drinking?

Test your knowledge of alcohol with our simple quiz.

Which one of these is closest to your usual drinking pattern?

- A** You have a beer or a glass of wine some nights during the week, with maybe a couple at the weekends.
- B** You generally don't drink during the week, but you often have eight or nine drinks or more on a Friday and Saturday night.
- C** You polish off a bottle of wine or a six pack of beer pretty much every night.

Answer

It's fine to drink daily or most days as long as you're only having one or two drinks on each occasion. You can't save up your units for the weekend though, so if you answer B you're drinking too much in one go and will be doing yourself damage. If you answered C, you definitely need to cut down.



Which of these combinations of drinks do you think matches the maximum recommended daily limit for a woman?

- A** Two vodkas with a mixer.
- B** Half a bottle of wine.
- C** Three pints of lager.

Answer

A is equivalent to about 3 units of alcohol, the maximum amount that experts recommend women should drink in a day. B equals about 4½ units and C would be around 6 units.

Which of these has the most calories?

- A** A pint of cider.
- B** A small packet of crisps.
- C** A serving of Belgian chocolate ice cream.

Answer

You might be surprised to hear it's the cider – a pint contains about 200 calories, while the crisps contain about 130 and the chocolate ice cream about 160. Alcohol is mainly sugar, which makes it high in calories, so if you're trying to lose weight, cutting out the booze may help!

Which of these will help you sober up?

- A** Time.
- B** A cup of strong coffee.
- C** A fried breakfast.

Answer

Time is the only thing that will make you sober – it takes about an hour for each unit of alcohol to be processed by your body (so you can still be over the limit in the morning if you've been drinking heavily the night before). Coffee or a fry might make you feel a bit more human, but they don't affect the rate at which the alcohol is processed.

So how did you score?

If you got mostly As, give yourself a pat on the back – you obviously know your stuff where alcohol's concerned. If you answered mostly Bs or Cs, you need to know more so here are the important facts.

Health experts recommend that women should not drink more than 3 units of alcohol in one day, and no more than a total of 14 units in a week. Men should not drink more than 4 units in one day and no more than 21 units in a week.

Drinking too much can increase your risk of damage to the liver, heart, brain and

stomach. Women are more susceptible to the effects of alcohol than men and can suffer ill health effects at lower levels of drinking.

Some companies label the number of units in a bottle or can, but the following is a general guide.

pint of lager/beer/stout	2 units
bottle of lager	1½ units
pint of cider	2 units
bottle of alcopop/ready-mixed drink	1½ units
small glass of wine	1½ units
small pub bottle of wine (185ml)	2½ units
bottle of wine	9 units
NI measure of spirits	1½ units



Get a life, get active!

The message that exercise is good for you has been around for years. So how come in the 21st century we're now less active than ever before?

A combination of labour saving devices that take the effort out of everyday tasks like washing and cleaning, the spread of the car, new working environments that keep us sitting or standing still most of the day, and the rise of electronic forms of entertainment like computer games and DVDs, means that we no longer get the level of physical activity our grandparents would have got just going about their everyday business.

While few people are likely to be complaining that we no longer have to do our laundry with a washboard and mangle,

the downside of modern lifestyles is that, unless we consciously try to be active, we are unlikely to get enough physical activity to keep us healthy. Our bodies are designed to be active and if we spend most of our day sitting down, as many of us now do, they tend to complain.

In Northern Ireland, 70% of men and 74% of women don't get enough physical activity to benefit their health, and this is reflected in our high rates of the diseases that are linked to lack of activity, like heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

A few of the benefits that being more active can bring:

Being active makes you feel more energetic – it's often lack of activity that makes us feel sluggish and exhausted by the end of the day.

Combined with healthy eating, **physical activity helps you lose weight** and keep it off once you've lost it.

It **improves your mood** – physical activity reduces feelings of depression and anxiety, and boosts self-esteem.

Being active helps protect you against a range of diseases – experts estimate that a third of all coronary heart disease, a quarter of diabetes and half of all hip fractures could be avoided if we all got enough regular physical activity.

Physical activity helps prevent the development of **high blood pressure** and lowers blood pressure in people whose level is slightly too high.

It increases the level of "good" cholesterol in your bloodstream.

Regular physical activity has been proven to **protect against colon cancer** and may reduce your risk of other types of cancer too.



If you're going to be active every day (or nearly every day), you need to make it part of your daily life, something that you do almost without thinking.

How much do I need?

It depends what you want to achieve. If you want to protect your health and reduce your risk of the diseases that are linked to being inactive, aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on five or more days a week. You don't have to do it all in one go – two 15 minute or three 10 minute stretches of activity will do just as well.

Moderate activity is a level of activity that makes you feel warm and just a little out of breath – like when you go for a brisk walk. You should still be able to carry on a conversation while you're doing it.

If you are overweight and want to lose a few pounds or reduce your waistline, then you'll need to do a bit more – between 60 and 90 minutes most days – but again this can be spread out in shorter sessions throughout the day.

Part of everyday life

If you're going to be active every day (or nearly every day), you need to make it part of your daily life, something that you do almost without thinking. The easiest way to do this is to incorporate activity into the things you have to do anyway, like going to work, shopping, gardening, looking after the kids and so on.

A really useful tool to help you monitor how well you're doing is a pedometer or step counter. They're everywhere at the moment, often being given away as promotional items (*we've got 500 to give away ourselves – see page 23 for details*) or they can be bought very cheaply from sports shops (from around £5).

This handy little gadget simply clips onto your belt or waistband and counts the number of steps you take in a day – 10,000 steps each day is the target to aim



for, as this is the amount associated with good health. For the first week just stick to your normal routine, so you can see what your average daily step count is. If it's less than 10,000, then over the course of a few weeks try to increase your daily average by 500 or 1,000 steps until you reach the 10,000 step target.

And how do you increase the number of steps you take?

Well, think about how you go about doing everyday things.

Do you automatically get in the car to go to shops that are a mile or so away? It would only take you about 15-20 minutes to walk there at a brisk pace. Walk there and back, and your 30 minutes is done. The same goes for taking the kids to school – children need exercise too! Take them to the local park or play area, play football with them, or get them to teach you how to roller skate or do the latest dance routine – encourage them to play actively rather than with computer or video games.

If your journey is too long to walk all the way, could you cycle instead? Or if you travel by public transport, why not get off the bus or train one stop before your usual one and walk the rest of the way? If you're coming into Belfast or Derry, try using a car park on the edge of the city rather than one in the centre and walk the rest – it'll be cheaper too.

In the supermarket carpark, park as far away from the door as possible (it'll be a lot easier to find a space), so that you have to walk further. If there's an escalator or a lift in your office or your local shopping centre, ignore them and always use the stairs. Whether your goal is to have more energy, to lose weight or to protect your health, all these little bits of activity will soon add up to help you reach your goal.



Don't worry, be happy!

Are you stressed out? Do you feel that you haven't got enough time to do everything already, let alone start exercising five times a week on top? Well, that makes you exactly the person who needs physical activity the most!

There are several factors at work here. Being active regularly will actually give you more energy, making it easier to cope with a heavy workload

or busy home life. Physical activity boosts your immune system, making you more resistant to those coughs, colds and minor viruses that sap your energy over the winter. On top of that, regular physical activity alters brain chemistry and leads to improved mood and feelings of wellbeing. People who suffer from anxiety improve when they exercise regularly. Physical activity has actually been shown to reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety, and to raise self-esteem.

So what are you waiting for?

"I haven't got time" just isn't a good enough excuse - follow our advice above for making physical activity part of your everyday life and say hello to a healthier, happier new you!

Safety first!

Following a few basic safety tips will help you make sure you can enjoy getting more active without putting yourself at risk.

If you're going out alone, make sure you always tell someone else where you're going and what time you intend to be back.

If you're going out in the dark, always wear light coloured clothing and preferably a reflective sash or strip so that you can be seen easily. If you're cycling in the dark or in poor light, you should use front and rear lights.

Wear comfortable shoes, preferably ones with thick flexible soles that cushion and protect your feet.

Always wear a helmet when cycling. It is important to buy a new one, as second-hand ones may have been damaged even though they look ok. A helmet should fit squarely on your head (not pushed back) and fit snugly without pinching.

If you have any health problems or worries about starting to be more active, check with your GP first.



📩 £250 up for grabs!

Have you got a good tip for fitting more activity into a busy lifestyle? Send them to us and we'll publish them on our website www.getalifegetactive.com **The best five will each win £50 in cash!** Send your tips by *30 June 2006* to: Get Active Tips, Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland, 18 Ormeau Avenue, Belfast, BT2 8HS or email us at physicalactivity@hpani.org.uk. *Don't forget to include your name and address so that we can contact you if you win.*

Real star

The Showgirl

Former Eastenders actress Jill Halfpenny danced her way to fitness to wow the judges on Strictly Come Dancing and bag a lead role in a West End musical.

Before winning Strictly Come Dancing, how good was your tango?

I'd watched the first series and when my agent rang to ask if I'd be interested, I jumped at the chance. I'd never done ballroom or Latin dancing before and was really excited to learn. I did ballet as a kid and loved it. I was just like every little girl, going to ballet school and wanting to become a dancer. Then I starred in Byker Grove [with Ant and Dec] and thought acting was more my thing, so the dancing sort of petered out.

You've recently played Roxie in the musical Chicago. Is the stage very different to TV?

It was a lot of hard work doing eight shows a week, but I like a challenge. It was fun! With theatre, you're working late at

night and your day is the opposite way round to doing TV.

You're looking amazing. Do you have to work hard at it?

I don't have a particular health regime, but when I'm dancing that keeps me fit. The only thing I make sure I do before a performance is a warm-up. If you don't warm up you can get injured. When I was doing Strictly Come Dancing I had some bruising and tendonitis in my ankle. That's when your tendons get inflamed and can rub against the bone. It was proving very painful when I moved it at a certain angle, so the physio gave me some stretches and I've just kept on doing those. Some professional dancers pull their legs above their head and beyond – but I wouldn't recommend trying anything like that!

Do you watch what you eat?

No, not really. It changes every day. For dinner tonight I might have a hamburger and chips and some chocolate – but I always make sure I have lots of fruit and veg too. I like all kinds of food and there's not much I don't eat. I love going out to restaurants.

Is it hard to eat sensibly if you're filming on location?

Not at all. Catering vans on TV dramas are amazing – there's everything you want, from a healthy salad to pie and chips.

Are you a healthy person?

Yes, I'm very healthy. Of course I get colds like everyone else, but nothing serious. I've pulled a few muscles dancing, but fingers crossed there's been nothing worse than that.

Jill on TV

Jill Halfpenny pictured at the British Soap Awards 2003 with Eastenders actors, Kim Medcalf and Steve McFadden.

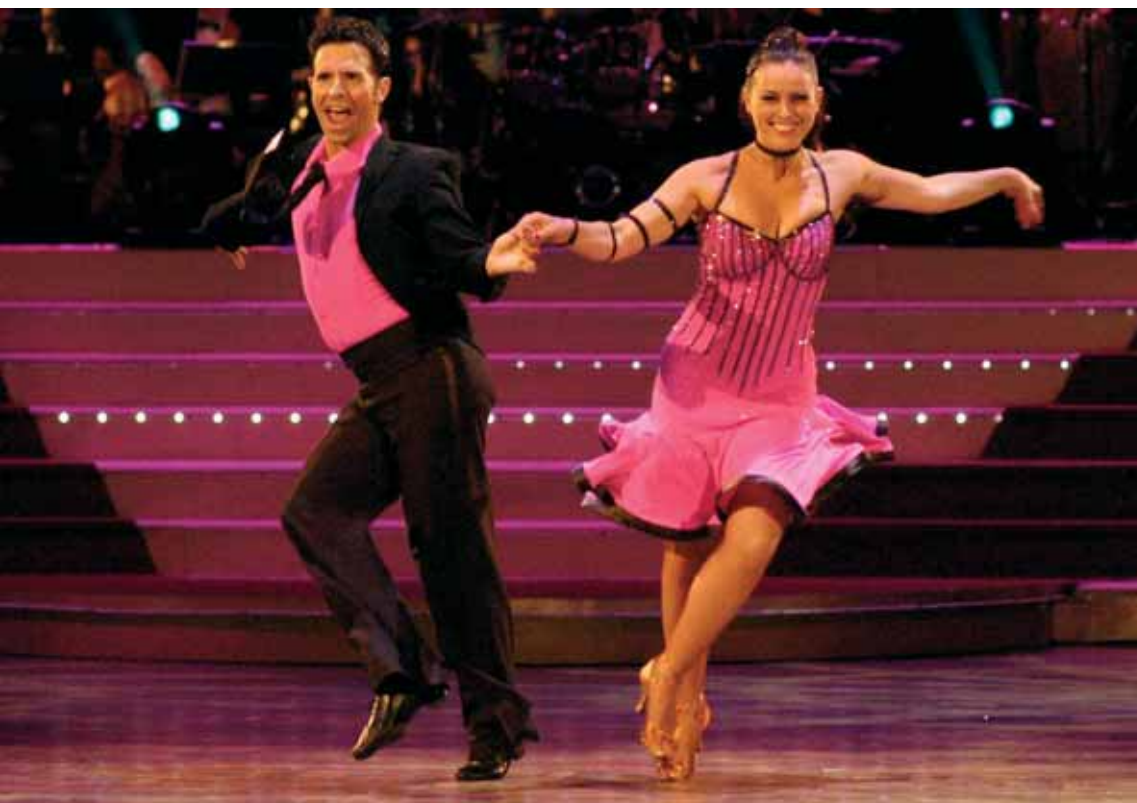


And have you always had a lot of oomph?

As a little girl I played out in the street a lot, riding my bike. I didn't sit indoors playing computer games – and I still love exercise. The only thing I don't really like is running. I'd rather do a class like step, boxercise or a combined step, aerobics and body conditioning class. They really help me get motivated. I know I have one hour to work out and I just go for it – the gym environment can be so boring otherwise. Something sociable's best!

Are you a sucker for the latest celebrity hangouts?

I'm more likely to head straight home! Going out and having a late night takes too much out of me, so I have to be really disciplined when I'm working. If I went out drinking and smoking it would be bad news for my throat, and I could end up damaging my voice.



Here's one I made earlier!



Spaghetti bacon Serves: 4 Time: 15-20 mins

Ingredients

500g (1lb) wholemeal spaghetti	1-3 cloves garlic (optional)
350g (12oz) smoked bacon	1 teaspoon oregano (dried)
2 x 400g cans of chopped plum tomatoes	black pepper to taste
1 small can of tomato purée	1 tablespoon olive oil
	grated Parmesan cheese for serving (optional)

Method

- 1 Bring a saucepan of water to the boil, add the spaghetti and cook for 12 minutes.
- 2 While spaghetti is cooking cut the rind and fat off the bacon and cut the bacon into small pieces. Peel and crush the garlic.
- 3 Heat the olive oil in a wok or large frying pan, add the bacon and cook for 5 minutes.
- 4 Drain the spaghetti in a colander and rinse with boiling water. Add to the bacon along with the chopped tomatoes, tomato purée, garlic, oregano and black pepper and continue to cook gently.
- 5 Remove the spaghetti bacon mixture from the heat and divide it between four plates.
- 6 Sprinkle lightly with the Parmesan cheese (if using).

Spicy chicken Serves: 4 Time: 30-40 mins

Ingredients

2 medium chicken portions	120ml (4fl oz) chicken stock
1 dessertspoon unsaturated oil	1 x 400g can of chopped tomatoes
1 onion	1 x 420g can of beans, eg haricot or kidney beans
1 teaspoon curry powder	100g (4oz) canned or frozen sweetcorn
1 teaspoon dried mixed herbs	1 green pepper (optional)
1 clove garlic (optional)	pepper to taste
1 dessertspoon plain flour	

Method

- 1 Begin by preparing the ingredients. Peel and crush the garlic, and wash, deseed and chop the pepper if using. Peel and finely chop the onion, drain and rinse the beans, and cut the chicken into strips.
- 2 Heat the oil in a large saucepan. Add the chicken, onion, curry powder, mixed herbs and garlic. Cook for 5 minutes, stirring all the time.
- 3 Add the flour and cook, stirring for a further 2 minutes.
- 4 Add the chicken stock, chopped tomatoes with their juice, beans, sweetcorn, green pepper, and pepper to taste.
- 5 Bring to the boil, stirring. Cover, reduce heat and simmer for 25-30 minutes (or until the chicken is tender).

Serve with jacket potatoes, boiled rice or pasta.





Lemon cheesecake Serves: 6

Ingredients

<i>Biscuit base</i>	150ml (1/4 pint) low fat natural yogurt
75g (3oz) wheatmeal biscuits	finely grated rind and juice of
40g (1 1/2 oz) margarine (high in mono/polyunsaturates)	1 lemon
	15g (1/2 oz) gelatine
	2 tablespoons water
<i>Filling</i>	2 egg whites
350g (12oz) cottage cheese	fresh fruit to decorate, eg kiwi or orange
50g (2oz) caster sugar	

Method

- 1 Crush the biscuits to fine crumbs. Melt the margarine and add the crushed biscuits. Mix well, then spoon into an 18cm (7 inch) loose-bottomed cake tin or pie dish. Spread evenly and press down with the back of a spoon. Leave in the fridge to cool.
- 2 Whisk the egg whites until stiff and set aside.
- 3 Push the cottage cheese through a sieve with the back of a spoon. Put the sieved cottage cheese in a large bowl and add the yogurt, sugar, lemon rind and juice. Mix well.
- 4 Put the water into a cup and sprinkle the gelatine over the water. Stand the cup in a pan of hot water and stir until the gelatine dissolves. **Do not allow the water in the pan to boil.** Gradually add the dissolved gelatine to the cheese mixture, stirring well.
- 5 Gently fold in the whisked egg whites to the cheese mixture, pour this over the biscuit base and place in the fridge until set.
- 6 To serve, remove from the tin or serve in the pie dish, decorated with slices of fresh fruit.

Note: This recipe is not suitable for pregnant women because it includes uncooked egg white.

Beef and vegetable stew

Serves: 4 Time: 55-70 mins

Ingredients

450g (1lb) stewing steak, with all fat removed	2 carrots
900ml (1 1/2 pints) beef stock	1 turnip
1 onion	4 to 8 medium potatoes (depending on appetite)
	pepper to taste

Method

- 1 Peel and chop the onion, and peel and dice the turnip, carrots and potatoes.
- 2 Cut the meat into small cubes (about 1 inch/2.5cm). Place in a large non-stick saucepan and gently heat, stirring occasionally, until the meat is browned on all sides (8-10 minutes).
- 3 Add the rest of the ingredients, cover and bring to the boil, then reduce the heat and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the meat is tender - about 45 to 60 minutes. Add a little extra water as necessary.
- 4 If desired, the stew can be thickened by adding a little cornflour blended with cold water and cooking for a few more minutes.

You can cut down on cost and fat and increase the fibre content of this recipe by replacing 100g (4oz) of meat with either 100g (4oz) of dried lentils or a 415g (15oz) can of red kidney beans, drained and rinsed.



Cheat's corner!

Too busy to cook? Too tired to do much more than pop something in the oven or microwave? Convenience food can be high in fat and salt, but you can make it healthier with a few little tweaks.

Most chilled or frozen ready meals are short on vegetables – give them a boost by adding your own. For example, if you're having rice with an Indian or Chinese dish, add a handful of frozen sweetcorn, peas or mixed veg to the rice for the last few minutes of cooking.

Pizza can be a good choice if you're selective about the toppings – steer away from the extra cheese, pepperoni or meat feast varieties, which will be high in fat, and go for the ones topped with vegetables or lean meat such as chicken or ham and

pineapple. You can also add extra veg before you put it in the oven – sweetcorn, sliced mushrooms or peppers will all add nutrients and are tasty too.

Pasta with a ready-made sauce makes a quick and easy meal – go for the tomato-based ones, rather than those based on cheese or cream.

A bowl of salad goes with most things and will help you make sure you're getting your five portions a day. Alternatively, finishing off your meal with a bowl of fruit salad or tinned fruit (in natural juice) is another good option.

But you can cook something tasty with very little effort and in less than the time that it takes to heat up a ready meal or bake a pizza. Try either of these two recipes for a healthy, quick and easy meal.



Tuna and tomato pasta

Use quick-cook pasta for this speedy dish

100g (4oz) pasta, eg penne
1 x 230g can of chopped tomatoes with herbs
1 x 185g can of tuna in spring water
1/2 small red or yellow pepper
1 scallion (spring onion)
1 teaspoon unsaturated oil

- 1 Wash and chop the scallion and the pepper into small pieces. Drain the tuna and flake with a fork.
- 2 Heat the oil in a small saucepan. Add the scallion and the pepper and fry gently for 3-4 minutes.
- 3 Add the tomatoes and the tuna and heat through.
- 4 Meanwhile, cook the pasta according to the instructions on the packet.
- 5 Drain well and combine with the tomato sauce.

Serve the pasta with salad and crusty bread.

Serves: 2 **Time:** 15 minutes

 Cut out and keep

Ham and mushroom omelette

Quicker and easier than getting a takeaway

100g (4oz) thinly sliced cooked ham
25g (1oz) butter
150g (6oz) mushrooms
4 eggs
2 tablespoons chopped parsley (optional)
black pepper to taste

- 1 Wash and chop the mushrooms and slice ham into ribbons.
- 2 Lightly beat the eggs with a fork, and add the pepper.
- 3 Melt the butter in a non-stick frying pan and fry the mushrooms for 3-4 minutes.
- 4 Pour the eggs into the pan, then add the sliced ham. Cook for a further 3-4 minutes till set.
- 5 Brown the top of the omelette under a hot grill.

Scatter over the parsley and serve the omelette with salad and crusty bread. You can vary the recipe by using additional ingredients like grated cheese or thinly sliced onion or red pepper (fry briefly as for the mushrooms).

Serves: 2 **Time:** 10 minutes



Small changes, big benefits!

We all know we feel healthier and happier when we're the right weight for our height. But you might not know that as your weight creeps up, so does your risk of all sorts of diseases – cancer, diabetes, coronary heart disease, stroke – the list goes on and on.

So keeping your weight at a healthy level (and by that we mean not too high or too low) is one of the most important things you can do to protect your health.

"Eating healthily is about so much more than just losing weight," says local nutritionist Laura Donnelly. "There are plenty of thin people out there who still have terrible diets! A poor diet will affect your health, whether you are overweight or not. That said, a lot of people in Northern Ireland – almost 6 out of 10 adults – are now overweight or obese, and we are already seeing a rise in health

conditions that are related to weight, such as diabetes.

"It's not too difficult to see why when you look at our eating habits – although we know we should be eating less fat and sugar, and more fruit and veg, most of us seem to find it difficult to put this into practice. Local research has shown that we tend to go for the crisps, sweets or biscuits when we want a snack, rather than the healthier options, and we regularly eat chips and other fried food. In contrast, only one in five of us eats enough fruit and veg."



So what's healthy?

As far as the experts are concerned, the definition of healthy eating hasn't changed for years. There are just a few basic guidelines you need to know to get you started.

- Enjoy a wide variety of different foods.
- Eat regularly, and definitely don't skip breakfast.
- Fruit and vegetables should make up one third of the food you eat – aim for five or more portions per day.
- Unrefined starchy foods (ie bread, other cereals, pasta, rice and potatoes) should also make up about a third of your food intake – at least six portions a day.
- Eat two portions of lean meat, fish or a vegetarian alternative each day, choosing lower fat options whenever possible (processed meat products like sausages tend to be high in fat).
- Eat dairy foods like milk and cheese two or three times a day, but choose the lower fat versions.
- Have foods that are high in fat and sugar just occasionally, and in small quantities. Don't smother your food in butter, margarine or creamy sauces, and use cooking methods that don't add extra fat, like grilling, casseroles, steaming or microwaving.

How do we know if we need to lose a few pounds?

One of the simplest ways to find out if you're a healthy weight is to take the **tape test**. Storing fat around your middle increases the likelihood of developing heart disease, high blood pressure and stroke, and measuring your waist will show if you are at higher risk. Measure half way between the bottom of your ribs and the top of your hips (usually about tummy button level), and check against the table below.

So if you are overweight, what do you do about it?

One problem is that, when it comes to eating healthily and trying to lose weight, it can be hard to distinguish the facts from the fiction. New diets seem to come and go every week – cabbage soup, grapefruit, Atkins, South Beach, GI – and with a multi-million pound industry dedicated to promoting the latest new idea, it's no wonder we can get a bit confused about what really works.

"Most diets appeal to our desire for a 'quick fix'," says Laura. "We want to lose weight as fast as possible and the diet industry plays on that. But in reality, the extra weight goes on over months or even years, so it's not going to come off overnight."

'Going on a diet' is probably a mistake in the first place. The trouble with diets is that they usually involve severely restricting either what foods you can have or how much you can eat, and that sort of eating pattern can't be sustained for very long. So even if you do manage to lose the weight, as soon as you stop dieting and go back to your normal eating patterns, you put it straight back on again. A better approach is to try to develop a healthy way of eating that you can happily carry on with for the rest of your life.

Waist measurement for:	at increased risk	at high risk
Women	80cm (32 inches)	88cm (35 inches)
Men	94cm (37 inches)	102cm (40 inches)
Asian men	90cm (36 inches)	

The other crucial factor, if you need to lose weight, is keeping your portion sizes under control. The 'super-size' culture has meant that average portion sizes served in fast food outlets and restaurants have been getting bigger and bigger, and many of us no longer know what a normal portion really is. Check out the box to the right for a guide to portion sizes.

Keeping a food diary for a couple of days is a good way to assess what you need to change about your eating habits. Write down everything you eat and drink during that time and compare it to the guidelines.

Are you eating enough fruit and veg? Are you eating fatty or sugary foods too often? Are your portions extra-outsize? What are you eating between meals? This can be quite significant – for instance, if you're eating a packet of crisps mid-morning and a chocolate bar in the afternoon, that's the equivalent of having four meals a day instead of three!

Get more active

To avoid putting on weight, you need to get a balance between the energy you take in and the energy you use up. You can change the balance by eating less, but you can also change it by using up more energy through being active.

For general good health, 30 minutes of physical activity on five or more days of the week should be your aim, but if you want to lose weight, you'd need to up this to 60-90 minutes most days.



This sounds like a lot, but you don't have to do it all in one go. If you build being active into your everyday life, you can burn a lot of extra energy without spending hours in the gym. Walking the kids to school, getting off the bus one stop earlier on the way to work and walking the rest, taking the stairs instead of the escalator – it all adds up. Have a look at the article on page 8 for more ideas on how to get more active or visit www.getalifegetactive.com.

Set some targets

Once you've identified a few things you need to change, pick one or two to begin with. Start with realistic targets that you know you will be able to achieve, for example:

- ☑ eat an extra portion of fruit and veg every day
- ☑ cut crisps from every day to twice a week
- ☑ swap deep fried chips for oven chips
- ☑ walk to work/walk the kids to school one day a week
- ☑ go for a longer walk, a swim or a cycle ride at the weekend

Once you've set your targets, keep going! Don't fall into the common trap of thinking you've 'failed' if you don't stick to your plan every single day – it's what you do most days of the week that counts. Just accept it and get back to your new way of eating and being more active.

After a few months you'll forget you ever did anything else!

What's in a portion?

Fruit and vegetables

- 1 slice of large fruit, eg melon
- 1 medium fruit, eg apple or orange
- 2 small fruit, eg plum or kiwi
- 1 cup of very small fruit, eg berries or grapes
- 2 heaped tablespoons of cooked veg
- 1 dessert bowl of salad
- 1 glass of fruit juice (*juice can only ever be counted as 1 portion per day*)

Bread, cereals and potatoes

- 1 slice of bread
- 2-3 tablespoons of cooked rice or pasta
- 3 tablespoons of breakfast cereal
- 1 egg-sized potato

Meat, fish and alternatives

- 50-75g (2-3oz) cooked meat or poultry
- 75-100g (3-4oz) cooked fish
- 2 eggs
- 3-4 tablespoons of baked beans

Milk and milk products

- $\frac{1}{3}$ pint of milk
- 25g (1oz) cheese (*the size of a matchbox*)
- 1 carton of yogurt
- 1 mug of milky drink
- 1 bowl of milk pudding

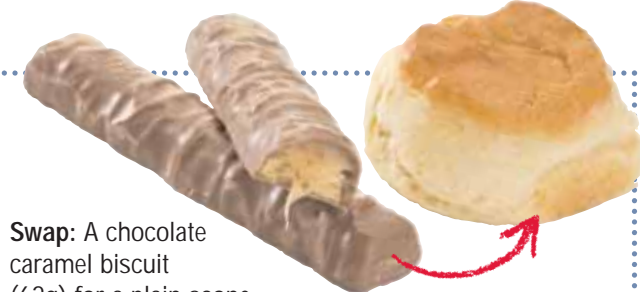
This group doesn't include butter or cream

Swap and save!



Swap: A packet of crisps (35g) for a cup of plain air-popped popcorn
Save: 150 calories and 11g fat

Swap: A can of fizzy drink for a bottle of water
Save: 140 calories



Swap: A chocolate caramel biscuit (62g) for a plain scone
Save: 80 calories and 7.5g fat



Swap: A ham and cheese toasted sandwich for a chicken salad sandwich
Save: 162 calories and 15.5g fat

Lunchbox inspiration

Everybody needs a healthy diet, but kids need it more than most, to make sure they grow and develop properly. A lunchbox full of white bread, chocolate, crisps and fizzy drinks might be popular, but it won't provide the vitamins, minerals and other nutrients that your children need. So why not try some of these healthy lunch ideas?

Sandwiches will be more interesting if you vary the bread – use crusty rolls, baguettes, tortilla wraps, granary bread, soft rolls, potato, soda or wheaten bread.

Try these tasty sandwich fillings:

- grated cheese and pineapple
- ham with sliced cucumber and tomato
- tuna mayo with finely chopped red pepper and sweetcorn
- grated cheese mixed with onion and mayonnaise
- chicken salad with mayonnaise
- chicken tikka and salad using natural yogurt as dressing
- egg and spring onion with lettuce

For extra fruit portions, give your child pure fruit juice to drink (freezing the drink overnight will help to keep everything else in the lunchbox cool – it should have melted by lunchtime), and a

handful of sultanas or small pot of fruit in natural juice for afters.

Lunch doesn't have to be sandwiches, finger foods are a good alternative. You could try:

- a slice of cold pizza with cherry tomatoes, and a yogurt
- mini pitta breads filled with grated cheese, chicken, ham or tuna mayo, and sticks of carrot or sweet pepper with a mild salsa, yogurt and mint or cream cheese dip
- crackers with cheese or mackerel pâté, with a chicken leg and some grapes
- cold pasta/couscous salad with crunchy vegetables and a tomato based sauce
- cheese scones

Stay safe at home

Because children are often so inquisitive and absorbed in their own immediate interests, they can be oblivious to their surroundings and unaware of the dangers that face them every day, even in their own home.

Accidental injuries are a major health problem and unfortunately the home is the place where accidents are most likely to happen. You can't watch your children 24 hours a day but you can be aware of the dangers in your home and help keep your children safe.

What can you do?

The main causes of injury and death for children in the home are falls, fires, poisoning, drowning, glass-related accidents, suffocating and choking. By taking a few simple steps you can greatly reduce the risk of accidents in your home.

- Keep floors and stairs free of toys and other obstructions.
- Fit and use a stairgate at the top and bottom of the stairs.
- Always use a securely fitted safety harness in a pram, pushchair or highchair and never leave babies unattended on raised surfaces.
- When cooking, turn pan handles towards the rear of the cooker and use the back rings whenever possible.
- Service heating appliances and chimney flues annually.
- Fit a smoke alarm on every floor of your home and check them regularly.
- Keep matches, lighters and sharp knives out of reach.
- Always use a fireguard in front of fires and heaters.
- Stay with all children under the age of four at bath time.
- Prepare a fire escape plan with children and practice it regularly.
- Keep all medicines and chemicals high up and preferably in a locked cupboard and pick bottles with child resistant caps.
- Make sure toys are well made and suitable for the age of your child.



For further information about home safety, contact the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) on Tel: 028 9050 1160 or visit the website: www.rospsa.org.uk.

Active kids are

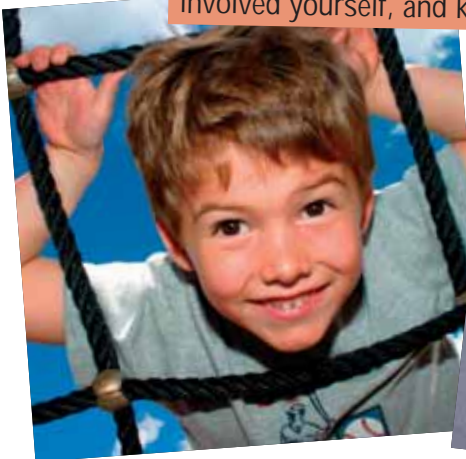
healthy kids!

It's easy for kids to get into the habit of spending their spare time sitting down – watching TV, playing computer games, listening to their MP3 players – but it's important for them to be active so that they grow and develop properly with strong muscles and bones.

Active children tend to do better at school, and exercise is also good for their mental health, helping them to deal with stress better. The younger you can establish the habit of being active in your children

the better, but it's never too late to start. Children need more physical activity than adults - at least an hour each day. Just like adults, they can accumulate this amount in several shorter bursts.

Encourage your children to play actively by getting involved yourself, and kill two birds with one stone!



Get active ideas

- Create an indoor bowling alley with empty plastic bottles and a soft foam ball.
- Play active games like hopscotch, hula hoop, Frisbee, skipping games or hide and seek.
- Walking is always a good choice because it's easy to fit in to your everyday life. Make it more fun with counting games – count the number of red cars or yellow flowers you see on your way. Walk to school rather than taking the car (some schools may run a walking bus where children are escorted safely to school).
- Dance with your kids to their favourite music, or try out a dance mat.
- If you have young children, practice throwing, catching and jumping with them. Children who are not confident in these basic skills are more likely to shy away from sports as they get older.
- Limit the amount of time that children are allowed to spend in front of the TV, PC or games console.
- Get the whole family involved in the household and garden chores, even young children can help with washing the car or cleaning the house – it'll mean you get more free time too.
- Encourage your child to try out new sports to find out what they enjoy. If they're not into traditional school sports such as gaelic games, football, rugby, netball or hockey, they might enjoy martial arts, tennis, athletics, swimming or horse riding.

- Look out for local holiday schemes offering coaching sessions, or contact your local leisure centre to find out what's on offer there.

Check out www.ni4kids.com for ideas for great family days out and activities all over Northern Ireland.





Your questions answered

Our health expert Dr Brian Gaffney offers advice on your health and lifestyle concerns.



During the last year, I've noticed several very dark moles appearing on my leg. I am concerned about them. What should I do?



Many people have moles on their skin which remain harmless all their lives. However any new, growing or changing moles should be shown to your doctor, eg if a mole bleeds or becomes itchy or changes colour. Monitoring moles and other pigmented patches is an important step in the diagnosis of skin cancer, especially malignant melanoma.

To protect your skin, remember to put on a high factor suncream of at least sun protection factor (SPF) 15 when going out in the sun, and stay in the shade during the hottest part of the day (usually 11am to 3pm).



My mother died of breast cancer last year and I can't stop thinking that I may have the disease – I am 35. What should I do?

Make an appointment to see your doctor who can advise you fully. While only women aged 50 to 64 are invited for breast screening, your GP can make arrangements for you to be screened, if necessary.

Breast cancer can develop at any time but is more common in women over 50. If it is detected at an early stage, there is a good chance of a successful recovery. For younger women, the best way to ensure early detection is to be 'breast aware'. This just means being familiar with how your own breasts normally look and feel - there's no set way to examine your breasts.

Check your breasts regularly and if you become aware of any changes - for example, any change in the size or shape of your breasts, unusual pain or discomfort, bleeding or discharge from the nipple, or any obvious lump or thickening - see your GP immediately.



My nine year old seems to be putting on weight very quickly. Her dad and I are both overweight and I don't want her to struggle with her weight the way we do. Is there anything I can do right now?

Being overweight as a child can increase the risk of conditions like heart disease, some cancers and diabetes, so you are right to want to do something about it. The first and most important thing is that diets to lose weight are not recommended for children.

Weight loss advice for children is very complex, and the aim is usually to make some changes to the normal eating pattern so that no further weight is gained. This means as your child grows taller she will then 'grow into' her weight. If you are concerned that your child is overweight, then you can ask your GP to refer her to see a Registered Dietitian who will provide detailed advice.

There are, however, some simple changes that you can make, which will benefit the whole family:

- make sure that your daughter is eating three main meals each day including breakfast;
- reduce or cut out the fatty or sugary foods and drinks, particularly between meals, for example crisps, chocolate bars and sugary drinks. Instead, offer fruit or bread-based snacks like bread sticks, pancakes, toast, scones, water and milk between meals;
- encourage your daughter to be more active, for example could she walk to school? Being more active as a family can be really enjoyable and can help to build strong relationships for the future.





My friend says that after a night out, drinking a pint of water before I go to bed will stop me getting a hangover. Does this really work?



Some of the symptoms of a hangover are caused by dehydration because alcohol is a diuretic – it makes your body get rid of more liquid than it takes in.

Drinking a pint of water before you go to bed may help to reduce some hangover symptoms a little. What it won't do is reduce the damage which binge drinking does to your skin, heart and liver. It won't sober you up either.

Before you go on a night out, make sure you have

something to eat, which will help absorb the alcohol, and then alternate alcoholic drinks with water. This will help keep you hydrated and help to reduce your overall alcohol intake.

Dealing with drinking too much once you get home may be too late. If you have been drinking heavily, you are more likely to be the victim of assault or other crimes. Remember to be careful and plan how you are getting home.



I've tried to give up smoking half a dozen times now and every time I fail. Should I just resign myself to being a smoker for life?

Definitely not! Giving up smoking can be difficult and many people have a number of failed attempts before they manage to quit for good. In fact, smokers who have tried several times to give up are actually more likely to eventually succeed in quitting.

You may benefit from a bit of extra help though. Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) approximately doubles your chances of quitting. NRT comes in a range of different

forms, so it's a good idea to discuss it with your GP, as they can advise you on which type might work best for you.

Alternatively, you might prefer to get moral support through counselling or a stop smoking group. The smokers' helpline can offer you friendly help and advice, and can direct you to local services for smokers in your area. **Call 0800 85 85 85.**



I know my child needs vitamins and minerals, but it's a struggle to get her to eat fruit and veg. Why can't I just give her a supplement instead?



A supplement will provide vitamins and minerals, but there's a lot more to fruit and veg than that. We also need the fibre in them for a healthy digestive system and to protect against some types of cancer and heart disease.

Fruit and veg also contain lots of other natural substances that aren't added to supplements, which will help to keep your child healthy. Just taking a supplement can't replace the effects of eating five portions of fruit and veg a day, so it's worth persevering to try to get your child to eat them.

Get away today!

Doing simple, everyday things like walking to work or to the shops is the easiest way to start getting more active, but if you feel like trying something new or going a little further afield, maybe at the weekend, Northern Ireland has loads of great opportunities right on your doorstep.

If walking's your thing, check out the eight routes known as 'waymarked ways':

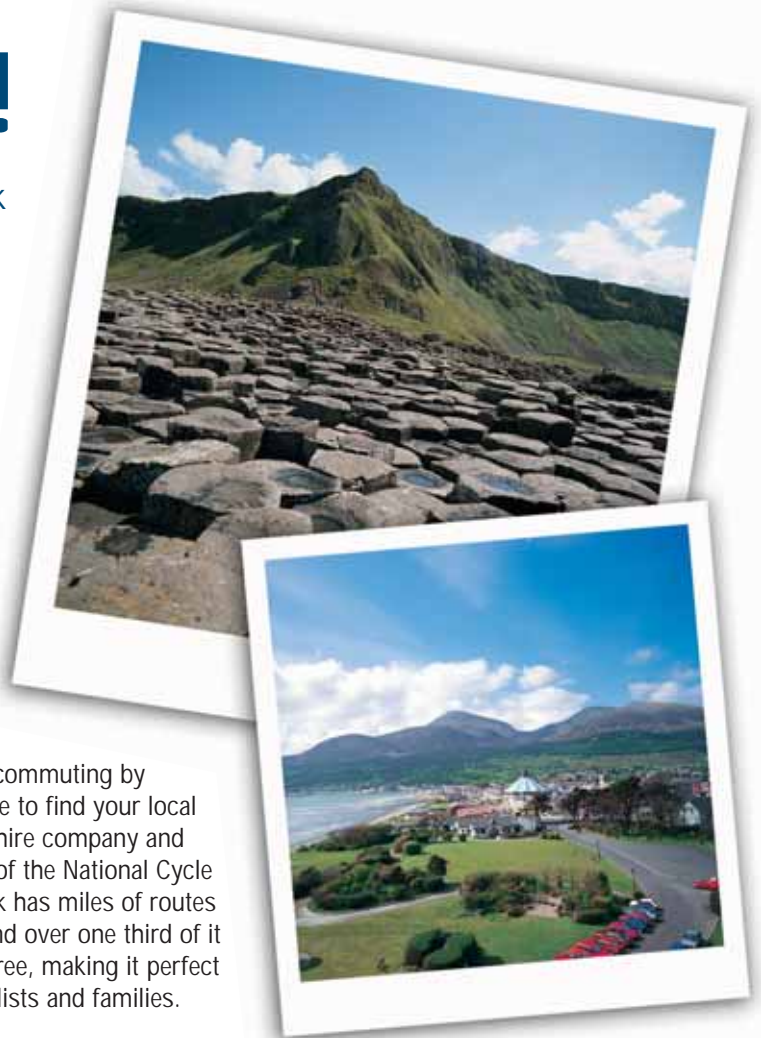
- Carleton Trail
- Sliabh Beagh Way
- Ring of Gullion
- Newry Canal Way
- Moyle Way
- Lecale Way
- Causeway Coast Way
- Central Sperrins Way

These walks take in some of the most attractive scenery Northern Ireland has to offer, as well as fascinating historical and natural features. The routes are well signposted and leaflets showing the routes and describing features of interest along the way are available from your local tourist information office. You can also order the leaflets from the website www.waymarkedways.com where you will find more information about the routes and details of any special walking events being organised.

Cyclists' first port of call should be the website www.cycleni.com which offers information on short rides, cycling daytrips, long distance routes, and commuting by bike. It tells you where to find your local cycling club or cycle hire company and also provides details of the National Cycle Network. The Network has miles of routes in Northern Ireland and over one third of it is completely traffic-free, making it perfect for inexperienced cyclists and families.

Opportunities for both walking and cycling can be found in the many forests around Northern Ireland. Check out the website www.forestserviceni.gov.uk to see a list of forests near you and to find out more about the activities on offer there.

The Countryside Access and Activities Network has a great website, with loads of information about a wide range of activities



available in Northern Ireland, including walking, cycling, horseriding and watersports. Find them at www.countrysidecreation.com

For more information on getting active, log on to: www.getalifegetactive.com



Life in the spotlight: Lynda Bryans on food and fitness

"I love boxing but don't get the chance to do much of it – I used to kick box at Billy Murray's studio in East Belfast and my favourite part of the lesson was when Billy held up the boxing pads and I whacked them, taking out the stresses and strains of the day on them. Nowadays, I have gym membership but it can be difficult to stick to a routine.

Exercise for me is more in the form of running round the house after our two boys (PJ aged 11 and Christopher aged 8) and we have a trampoline which gets a lot of use in the summer evenings!

Trampolining is super exercise, great fun (we laugh and laugh) and very good for tightening up all those slack tummy muscles!

"As for healthy eating, I've lost a stone during 2005 by changing the way I eat. I try not to eat after about six or so in the evening. I try to eat one or two portions of oily fish a week – smoked mackerel, salmon, herrings or similar. I try to eat unprocessed food, ie no cup-a-soup etc and snack on nuts and seeds. I also start each morning with a glass of hot water with half a lemon squeezed into it, a spoonful of

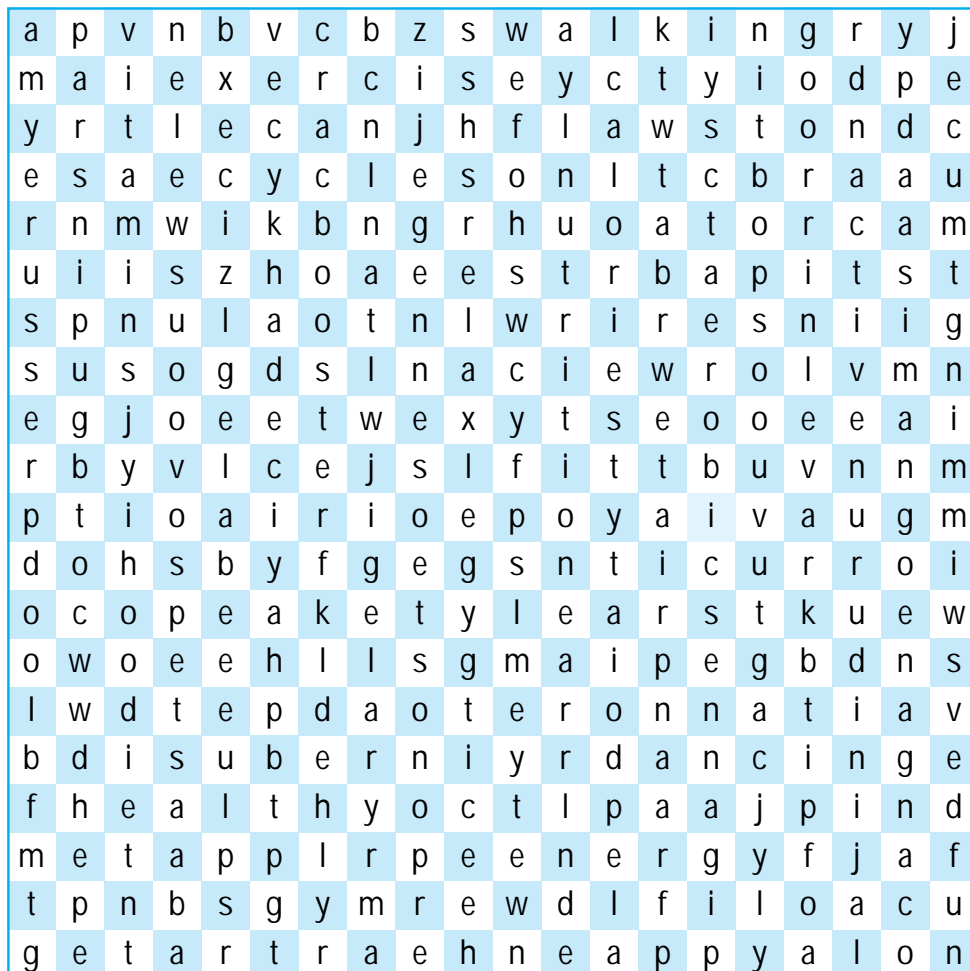
honey and a slice or two of ginger. Then I'll have some juice – usually celery, cucumber and pineapple, juiced. I have this on the way to work. Before my radio show at 12, I'll eat a bowl of porridge at UTV which keeps me going till three when I'm off the air. Then I might have a fruit salad or something light to keep me going till teatime.

"That's about it in a nutshell! Sounds very pious and healthy, but I do feel much better for it and still have the odd Chinese takeaway or fish supper when I feel like it!"

Wordsearch

Exercise your brain as well as your body!

- | | |
|----------------|------------|
| active | fun |
| aerobics | gym |
| balanced | healthy |
| blood pressure | heart rate |
| body | jog |
| boost | lifestyle |
| calorie | metabolism |
| cholesterol | nutrition |
| cycle | relax |
| dancing | run |
| diet | sport |
| energy | steps |
| enjoy | swimming |
| exercise | vitamins |
| fit | walking |



Step counter giveaway!

Wearing a step counter is a great way to find out how much walking you really do each day and helps motivate you to do more. **We've got free 'get a life, get active' step counters to give away to the first 500 readers to write in.**

For a chance to win one, just fill in the slip below and send it to us at **new you magazine, Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland, 18 Ormeau Avenue, Belfast BT2 8HS.**

This giveaway is open only to residents of Northern Ireland. Any personal information provided for this giveaway will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.



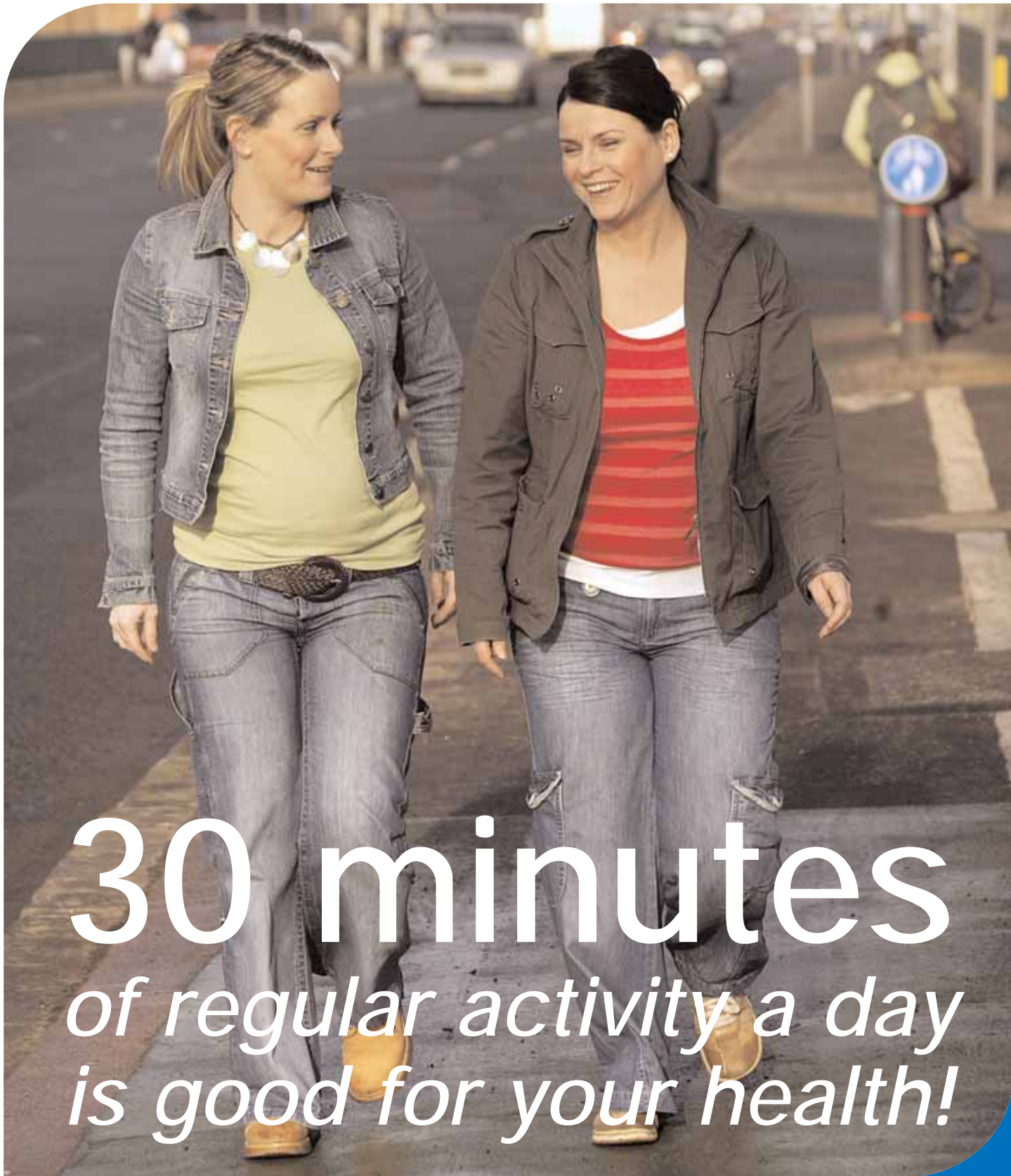
'Get a life, get active' step counter giveaway!

Name

Address

Postcode





30 minutes *of regular activity a day is good for your health!*

Regular physical activity is vital for good health and experts recommend that we do at least 30 minutes of moderate activity on five or more days of the week. You don't even need to do 30 minutes of activity all at once - three 10 minute sessions or two 15 minute sessions are just as good!

For more information on getting active log on to: www.getalifegetactive.com