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Body and Soul
The art of body maintenance
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The signs of ageing, whether it be a sore back or total exhaustion, can get you down. Debra Taylor shows you easy ways to fix them.

Winter is the time to be kind to your body. A hectic job and busy social lives often mean we're not giving our bodies the respect they deserve. But everything from tired eyes to aching muscles can be soothed if we know what it is they need. So, do you feel like you need an entire body overhaul? Here's our top-to-toe guide.

Brain - use it

- * possible problems Memory loss, dementia and strokes.
- * maintenance "Keeping your brain supple with brain teasers and puzzles can help keep it healthy," says Dr Mukesh Haikerwal, vice president of the Australian Medical Association. "Nuts and fruit and fish are also believed to be brain food. But the key with diet is balance."
- * treat yourself For something that's healthy and fun, Dr Haikerwal suggests doing a crossword every day.

Eyes - look lively

- * common problems Sore, tired or dry eyes, blurred vision.
- * maintenance "Eat brightly coloured vegetables, such as carrots, capsicum, oranges and tomatoes. The antioxidants they contain are good for the eyes," says Emmanuel Calligeros from the Optometrists Association Australia. "Also, look into the distance regularly if you are working at a screen."
- * for a treat "Get a good pair of sunglasses to protect eyes from wind, dust and UV light," says Mr Calligeros.

Teeth - flash'em

- * common problems Decay, tooth wear and tear and erosion from acids.
- * maintenance "Most people with decay have a diet high in starch and sugars," says Dr Don Wilson, Australian Dental Association chairman. "You also need to brush twice a day and, preferably, floss. Research shows flossing and rinsing with an antiseptic mouth wash reduces plaque and fights decay."
- * treat yourself "Go to a hygienist once or even twice a year," says Dr Wilson.

Spine - sit up straight

- * common problems Lower back pain.
- * maintenance It's important to keep flexible and strong. "That means exercising your core muscles," says Lisa Hall, physiotherapist at Sydney's Newtown Gym. So, instead of heavy weights, focus on core stability exercises. Physios, osteopaths and trainers can all help.
- * treat yourself "Buy a Swiss ball," says Hall. "You can use it as a chair to keep good posture and also do exercises on it."

Skin - brighten up

- * common problems Sun damage and dry skin during the winter.
- * maintenance We all know to slip, slap, slop in the sun, but winter brings its own problems caused by colder weather and heating. "It's better to put on more clothing than use heating all the time," says Dr Alan Watson of the Australasian College of Dermatologists in Sydney. "We also tend to shower with hotter water in winter and that dries out the skin. So use a moisturiser regularly."
- * treat yourself "When you can, have a bath with oil and soak for 15 to 20 minutes," says Dr Watson.

Hands - in the air

- * common problems Wrist and hand pain, such as repetitive strain injury.
- * maintenance To help keep your hands agile, take five minutes to do some simple exercises at your desk. "For example," says Hall, "with your arm straight, bend your wrist upwards towards you and feel the stretch on the back of your forearm."
- * for a treat "Place your hands in hot water and massage them," says Hall.

Lungs - take a deep breath

- * common problems Infections, asthma, bronchitis and lung cancer.
- * maintenance Lung cancer is the biggest cancer killer in men and the second biggest cancer killer in women, according to the Australian Institute Of Health and Welfare, so taking care of your lungs is crucial. "Exercise is the key here," says Dr Haikerwal. "You need to get the heart working and pumping air through the lungs. Activities such as swimming are especially good as they build up the muscles across the chest." And, of course, don't smoke.
- * for a treat "Get away from the city every now and then to get some clean air," says Dr Haikerwal.

Stomach - eat well

- * common problems Constipation and irritable bowel syndrome.
- * maintenance "To keep things moving, eat a high fibre diet with plenty of whole grain, fruits and vegies, plus drink two litres of water per day," says Trent Watson from the Dietitians Association Of Australia. Once everything is on the go, the likelihood of problems is decreased.
- * for a treat "Eat five serves of veg and two pieces of fruit a day," says Watson.

Kidneys - drink up

- * common problems Salt imbalance and kidney stones.
- * maintenance "You need to avoid a diet high in salt and protein," says Dr Haikerwal. "And it is important to drink plenty of water. In hot areas people get dehydrated which can lead to kidney stones." Women should drink lemon barley to avoid urinary tract infections, which can lead to kidney infections.
- * for a treat "Drink six to eight cups of water a day," says Watson.

Liver - be kind

- * common problems Cirrhosis due to alcohol or a fatty diet.
- * maintenance "The liver is responsible for the cleansing of the blood and it also produces cholesterol," says Dr Haikerwal. "So it's important to get the right balance of foods. For instance, you don't want to have too much protein or fat."
- * for a treat "Have two alcohol free days a week," says Watson.

Feet - walk this way

- * common problems Ankle ligament sprains, sore soles and flat feet.
- * maintenance "If you have a painful foot or ankle condition, you will need advice from a physio or podiatrist," says Hall. To avoid that try to keep your calf and leg muscles flexible with stretches. Also, strengthen your feet with simple exercises. "One is to put a tissue on the floor and pick it up with your toes."
- * for a treat "Simple, just put your feet up at the end of the day," says Hall.

Muscles - start flexing

- * common problems Aches, strains and tight or overstretched muscles.
- * maintenance "Exercise to stimulate blood flow, especially for tight muscles," says James Au, a massage therapist with mobile massage company Zenith Vitality, in Sydney. "Stretch regularly and rest."
- * for a treat "Visit a day spa and pamper yourself," says Au.

Mind - emotional rescue

- * common problems Self-criticism, anxiety, depression, anger and stress.
- * maintenance "It's important to take focus off the self," says Sydney psychologist Dr Lissa Johnson. "Don't focus on how well you're doing at work, but on what you're doing. Focus on the moment."
- * treat yourself "Do something you can lose yourself in, whether it be sport, a movie or reading," says Dr Johnson.