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Ways to fight off the mid-life health crisis

With a few simple lifestyle changes, you can feel better, look younger and live longer

Middle age is a turning point, a time to take stock, and think about where you are and what you want to be. But there is no age at which 'midlife' starts, according to NHS expert Dr Muir Gray. "The effects of ageing start at about 40. But you won't wake up on your 40th birthday and suddenly become middle-aged. Yet you do need to start making

some changes," he says. People in their forties and fifties are the sandwich generation. They have children on one side, parents on another. Then throw in a busy job, commuting and sitting at a desk for eight hours. For most of us, what happens from 40 onwards is a result of the loss of fitness, preventable disease and our attitudes. Dealing with everyday health is the place to start:



US engineers developed an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-enabled system that can translate brain signals into intelligible speech, a breakthrough that may help those who cannot speak to communicate with the outside world.

Researchers say they plan to test more complicated words and run the same tests on brain signals emitted when a person speaks or imagines speaking

The study, led by Columbia University researchers, showed that by monitoring one's brain activity, an AI-enabled technology can reconstruct words a person hears with unprecedented clarity, according to news sources.

A team of neuroscientists from the university trained a voice synthesiser or vocoder to measure the brain activity patterns of epilepsy patients already undergoing surgery while those patients listened to sentences spoken by different people.

Those patients listened to speakers reading digits between zero to nine while recording brain signals via the vocoder.

Then, they used a neural network, a type of artificial intelligence, to analyse the signals, and gave

robotic-sounding voices, according to the study published in the journal Scientific Reports.

"We found that people could understand and repeat the sounds about 75 per cent of the time, which is well above and beyond any previous attempts," says Nima Mesgarani, from the university.

Previous research showed that when people speak or even imagine speaking, distinct patterns of activity take place in their brain and those patterns of signals also emerge when we listen to someone speak or imagine listening.

— IANS



Kajol says, "I love my body. And, I'm always working out. I'm an exercise freak, be it cardio, weights, tai chi or yoga"

Get fit

"The drop in physical activity between the ages of 30 and 60 leads to a dramatic drop in health. So over a week, aim for at least two and a half hours of moderate intensity activity, 10 minutes or more at a time," says Dr Gray. You are less likely to be affected by the common conditions—stroke, type 2 diabetes, depression, heart disease and even some cancers. Exercise is the miracle cure we've always had. But we neglect to take our recommended dose. This is how you can start:

- 1 JUST MOVE:** Build everyday exercise into your day: 10 minutes walking at lunchtime, use stairs rather than a lift, put a hanging bar in a doorway, etc.
- 2 THINK AS:** That's strength, suppleness, stamina, skill. Try circuit training, aerobics, running, football, rugby, netball, hockey, swimming, yoga, pilates, the list is endless. Just find the one you like.
- 3 AVOID SITTING:** Sitting uses one calorie per minute, standing uses two. An hour a day of sitting rather than standing is 420 calories less used every week. So, one extra hour a day on your bottom equals seven lb more fat by the end of a year. If

you stand for two hours of your workday, that's like running 15 marathons a year. You don't need a fancy standing desk. Find a surface that's the right height or buy a plastic storage box to turn upside down on your desk.

4 GET A DOG OR CAT: "The positive effects are significant," says Dr Gray. "For cats, they help mental wellbeing, but dogs improve both mental and physical health, particularly weight control. If you don't own one, there may be one nearby you could help walk," he says.

5 STILL SMOKING? The advice is simple: Stop. There are so many benefits. You'll live longer—half of all long-term smokers die before their time. You will have more energy (within two to 12 weeks blood circulation will improve dramatically), you will look younger as your skin gets more nutrients, be more fertile, have whiter teeth, unleash your true sense of smell



Author Tim Ferriss has said, "Turning 40 didn't, as a number, scare me or throw me off at all"

— DAILY MIRROR

Five super shortcuts that will save you both time and money

Make flowers last

It's easy to give beautiful blooms some staying power, says Florismart florist Emma McDonald. "Firstly, cut an inch off the stems at a 45-degree angle," she says. This helps the flowers absorb water once they are placed in a vase. Ensure the vase is clean and big enough for the flowers to breathe. Use any attached flower food, then re-trim the stems and refresh the water every three days. Finally, display away from heat and direct sunlight.



reduces water temperature to below freezing, chilling drinks more quickly than ice and water alone. Alternatively, wrap the bottle in wet newspaper, pop in the freezer and set an alarm for 20 minutes.

Chill

Guests arriving and nothing in the fridge to drink? Don't panic. There's no need to head to the supermarket to buy something chilled. Put room-temperature beverages into a big saucerpan of ice and water, add a handful of salt, and it will cool quickly as you greet your guests. The salt



Whiten teeth

This natural remedy will remove stains in a flash. "Mash strawberries to a pulp, mix with a small amount of baking powder and apply to teeth using a soft toothbrush," says Dr Guy Barwell, dental surgeon at The Implant Centre. Leave for five minutes, then brush as normal to remove the mixture. Strawberries contain a gentle, natural acid that removes surface stains so teeth look whiter.

Perfect fit

If you can't face the queue for the

Go to sleep

Hypnotherapist Ailsa Frank suggests, "Lie in the dark with your eyes open. Look up and down several times. Then left to right several times. Then diagonally in each direction. Then in a circle. Now count backwards from 30 as you blink rapidly, as fast as you can until your eyelids begin to feel heavy. When you can't blink any more, close your eyes," she says.

— DAILY MIRROR

Embrace the dark side of your browser

businessinsider.in

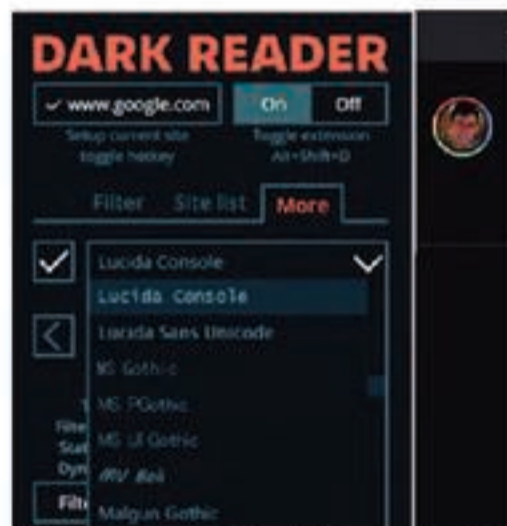
One of the biggest oversights in modern tech is darkness—blissful, easy-on-the-eyes darkness. Developers of operating systems, apps, and websites have ignored the possibility that regular people might be using their products in a dark setting, and that the bright white theme in a dark setting is extremely uncomfortable, whether a user realises it or not.

Some have recently acknowledged that dark versions of their bright-white products are preferable. Apple gave a dark mode to its macOS Mojave operating system. Microsoft has implemented a similar dark mode for Windows 10. And certain apps and websites, like YouTube and Reddit, have the option to go dark.

Turning dark grey

You can also get dark mode themes for web browsers, but they only make the navigation and tabs bar dark, not the websites themselves. The last remaining frontier for dark mode is now websites, and there is a handy web browser extension to achieve that.

Go to darkreader.org and click on the web browser you use. You'll be taken to your browser's extensions store where you can download and install Dark Reader for free. Once you install



Changing a site's white or bright colour theme to something darker is easier on the eyes when you're in a dark room

it, the majority of websites you visit will have a dark grey or black colour where they used to be white.

Switching back

If you want to take a step further towards darkness bliss, you can give your web browser the dark mode treatment. Chrome and Firefox have theme stores where you can install darker themes for the browser itself.

You can switch back to regular non-dark mode easily—just click the Dark Reader icon in your browser's extension bar and turn it off. However, using Dark Reader might make certain sites load a little more slowly than usual, as the extension is processing and changing a site's original colours into dark mode.

Staying on the move

Here are more reasons to get active in bed. Studies show that intimacy fights off migraines and ageing

Bit stressed? Skin looking dull? Back playing up again? If you're feeling under par and in need of a tonic, the answer is sex. Getting frisky regularly can keep you in fine fettle. One study has said we should all be having 200 orgasms a year because they boost our bodies in many ways. So, here's your sexual healing guide. You choose the dose and you don't need a prescription:

Painkiller

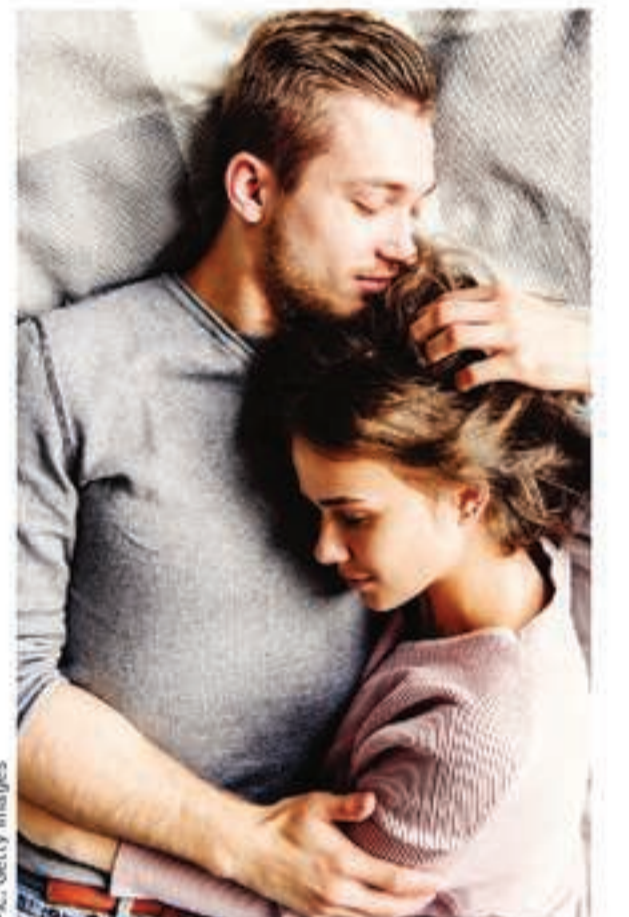
Next time your other half begs off with a headache, tell them lovemaking is actually an excellent painkiller. Research published in the Bulletin of Experimental Biology and Medicine said orgasms can halve the body's sensitivity to pain, including back pain, migraine and arthritis. Sex raises the level of endorphins (the body's own painkillers) by a third in minutes, making it far quicker than popping pills. Even stimulation without orgasm can block chronic back and leg pain, period pains and headaches.

Age defier

Forget Botox, scientists at Royal Edinburgh University found couples that were intimate at least four times a week look 10 years younger. The pleasure releases hormones such as adrenaline, dopamine and norepinephrine which give you that 'glow'. They help to preserve skin cells and relax muscles to prevent wrinkles.

Cancer protector

An active love life can guard against breast cancer in both men and women. A Greek study published in the British Journal of Cancer found that men who had fewer than six orgasms a month



were at significantly higher risk of developing the disease. The National Cancer Institute found an average of 21 ejaculations a month cuts the threat by 33 per cent.

Bone builder

Intimacy can help men top up their testosterone and women to maintain their oestrogen levels, keeping bone density higher and cutting the risk of osteoporosis.

Cravings soother

Some studies show orgasms can act to regulate our appetites and cravings. Throughout intercourse the body produces phenethylamine, a natural amphetamine that may help to reduce cravings for junk food, and cigarettes.

— DAILY MIRROR



Deepika Padukone has said, "Food makes me happy. Make me work round the clock, but just feed me first"

The latest data released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention showed that the weight of American men and women has continued its upward climb, with the average BMI now almost at the cutoff for obesity. Unlike the myriad diet fads that have yet to stem the ever-increasing girth of humankind, what leading expert on portion control, Lisa R Young, describes is not a diet, but a practical approach to food and eating. This can be adapted to almost any way of life, even if most meals are eaten out or taken out. It is not prescriptive or even proscriptive. It does not cut out any category of food, like carbohydrates or fats, nor does it deprive people of their favourite foods, including sweet treats. Young's emphasis is less on what you eat and more on how much you eat of any food, including those considered healthful.

Downsize

Start by downsizing your dinner dishes to salad-plate size, and you can save nearly 600 calories a meal. Use measuring cups to dole out reasonable portions until you are able to eyeball them accurately. You might also in-

Serves you right

For real weight control, learn the size of a healthy portion



vest in a kitchen scale to help you keep a tab on your meat, poultry, and vegetable servings.

Know your plate

It's far more helpful to prepare and eat most of your meals at home. You'll know what's in them (was that stir-fry you ordered pre-

pared with a tablespoon of butter?) and how much lands on your plate. Fill half or more of your plate with low-carbohydrate vegetables, like broccoli, cauliflower, spinach, green beans, carrots, and brussels sprouts, and have a side salad with a drizzle of dressing. Limit starchy vegetables like



white and sweet potatoes (baked, not fried) and grains (whole, not refined) to a half-cup serving, one-cup max.

Maintain a food diary

Many people are unaware of how much, or how often, they eat. Keeping a food diary, recording everything you consume and where for a week or so, can help you recognise sources of mindless or excess consumption and their relationship to your feelings and circumstances. Be wary of "nutrition halos"—foods deemed healthful but loaded with calories, albeit from healthy fats.

Get over your fear of carbs

If you're eating the right kinds of grains in the right amounts, they



Sunil Raina, president, Xolo, says, "Eating the right food and portion at each meal is a must"

don't make you fat. They make you full—and provide you with a battalion of disease-fighting nutrients. But watch out for those oversized bagels, whole grain or otherwise, that are the caloric equivalent of six slices of bread.

Sweet treats

Young suggests incorporating 'treats and sweets' into your food plan, a few times a week, though perhaps not every day while you're trying to lose weight. And, as Dr Sylvia R. Karasu, clinical professor of psychiatry at Weill Cornell Medicine, points out in her fun and fact-filled book, Of Epidemic Proportions: Expanded Edition 2019, it helps to keep those treats out of sight and easy reach.

— THE NEW YORK TIMES



John Mackey, founder, Whole Foods Market, encourages people to eat real food and not the processed variety