

NEW YEAR, NEW YOU



MAKEOVER
YOUR
diet

New year, new start! It's time to listen to your body for amazing rewards

*It's time to listen up
and give your body the
nourishment it needs'*

If you want to transform from junk-food fan to health food aficionado, you've come to the right place. If you've made that all-important pledge to get your diet act together, we're here to help. 'Studies have shown that temporal landmarks, such as the New Year, provide the perfect backdrop for change,' says nutritionist and health writer Angela Yussuff.

Tried diet after diet but never really had any long-lasting success? Faddy diets will never work in the long run – they just aren't sustainable over prolonged periods. So if you're sick of failed diets and are seeking an alternative, all you need to do is implement some healthy habits. And there's no time like the present...

Your body is constantly communicating its needs – you just have to be willing to listen and take action. Is your skin out of sorts? Are your stress levels through the roof? Is your belly bloated? These are clues that all may not be well inside, so it's time to listen up and give your body the nourishment it needs. Here are signs you need a diet makeover...

Clue 1: Low concentration levels

Your brain needs to stay active to keep concentration and memory at their peak, but it also needs the right nutrients. Certain foods, such as antioxidant-rich blueberries and omega-3-packed salmon, help protect brain cells, and drinking plenty of water is also vital. 'Hydration plays a key role in your ability to concentrate. Numerous studies have shown that when your brain is functioning on a full reserve of water, you'll be able to think faster, be more focused and experience greater clarity and creativity,' says Angela.

Clue 2: Abdominal bloating

A swollen tummy is one of the most obvious signs that your digestion could do with a helping hand. 'Bloating is usually caused by intestinal gas produced by the bacteria in the digestive tract. This bacteria generates gas from food that has not been properly digested and absorbed,' says Angela. Eat slowly and chew food properly to aid digestion.

Clue 3: Dry hair

New year, new locks! It's time to kiss dull, dry hair goodbye. Filling up on keratin-rich foods can give you the silky tresses you've always lusted after. 'The two primary components of hair are keratin and collagen, meaning it is made up almost entirely of protein. Hair requires this nutrient for its proper growth and repair, so a diet low in protein can result in thin, brittle hair,' says Angela.

Clue 4: Comfort food cravings

Feeling blue? Stodgy comfort food is a classic short-term cure when you're feeling down, but loading your plate with the right sorts of food to keep your blood-sugar levels stable will whisk away any negative vibes. 'The level of sugar in your blood is critical to how you feel. If it is too low, you may feel tired, irritable and depressed. Eat regularly to keep your sugar level steady, and choose foods such as oats and nuts that release energy slowly,' Angela says.

Clue 5: Irregular bowel movements

Excuse us but we're about to get intimate. From consistency to frequency, your bowel movements reveal key health signs. 'The more build-up of food waste you have sitting against the walls of the intestines, the more toxic your entire system becomes,' shares Angela. Often, this is down to a low-fibre diet of processed carbohydrates, along with dehydration, which can leave you constipated. 'The muscles in the colon can become lazy, which can cause you to have irregular bowel movements,' adds Angela. Give your system a kickstart by drinking eight glasses of water every day and

filling yourself up on lots of fibre-filled fruit and vegetables.

Clue 6: Dull skin

Dull skin is a sign your body's cells could do with a kickstart and, first things first, sugar needs to come off the menu. 'Consumption of sugar is linked to dull skin through a process known as glycation. Once sugar enters your bloodstream, it attaches to proteins to form harmful degenerative molecules called advanced glycation end products (AGEs). These cause damage to collagen and elastin, the protein fibres that keep your skin firm and elastic,' reveals Angela.

Clue 7: Poor dental health

Regular trips to the dentist are all well and good to safeguard the health of your teeth, but if you're worried about decay or bad breath, there are plenty of steps to take. Avoid fizzy drinks and chew on fresh parsley and peppermint for an antibacterial breath freshener. 'Make sure you eat a balanced diet containing all food groups – including complex carbs. When there are no carbohydrates for the body to use, the body burns up fat and, as a result, produces ketones. This accumulation of ketones in the blood can cause bad breath,' says Angela.

Clue 8: Brittle nails

No one wants splitting, brittle nails, and if your talons need some love, it's time to try a supplement says Angela. 'Nails are made up mostly from keratin, with fat and water molecules in-between the keratin to help keep nails healthy and supple. Brittle, splitting nails are a common problem associated with low silica levels.' Try a supplement like Lamberts Silica, £9.40, nutricentre.com

Clue 9: Excess weight

Stress levels are a massive part of the weight-loss equation. If you're stressed, you'll probably find it harder to lose weight. Fact. This means it's time to put a stress-less plan in place, which includes eight hours of sleep a night, eating three square meals a day and giving yourself downtime. 'Avoiding sugar and raising the levels of good bacteria in your gut can also help with stubborn weight loss,' adds Angela. 