

Fresh air and sunshine can give you a boost



WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

WEEK 42

Coping with the winter blues

If you're feeling down, help is at hand

Is your Christmas cheer already a long lost memory? Robert L Leahy, author of *Beat the Blues before they Beat You* (£10.99, Hay House), has tips to get you back in gear.

THE BRIGHT SIDE

- **Begin your day with a 30-minute walk.** This gives you more sunlight and the activity will help get your endorphins going.
- **Try not to wear sunglasses.** If you block the light to your retina, you're preventing the activation of serotonin which gives you a natural boost.

GADGETS ARE GREAT

- **Use a lamp.** Light therapy helps wake you up in the morning and jump-starts your circadian rhythms. If there

NEXT WEEK: Spice up your marriage

isn't much natural sunlight, you can buy a lamp or lightbox designed for this purpose and use it for 15 to 30 minutes every day.

● **Negative air ionization machines can be helpful since they supplement the low ion levels during the winter and mimic the summer density of ions which some studies shows can improve mood.**

SEEK HELP

- **If you're feeling really low, see your GP.** Antidepressant drugs such as sertraline and fluoxetine can help.
- **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) may also help you learn how to increase your motivation and identify and modify your negative thinking to overcome your mood.**

Give Yourself A Lift

Like a lie in? It's in your genes
A recent study found one in five people have the ABCC9 gene and need 30 mins more sleep than the rest of us, who average eight hours.



Instant appointment



With Dr Chris Brown

A GP for 26 years, Chris specialises in women's health

And squeeze!

Q After my first baby, I had a prolapse, but managed to avoid surgery by doing 200 pelvic-floor exercises a day. I'd like another baby now. Will I risk long-term problems with another vaginal delivery? Should I have a Caesarean?

Tasha, Nailsea

A Another vaginal delivery will have some impact on your pelvic-floor muscles, but second deliveries are usually much easier than the first. It'll be important to continue your pelvic-floor exercises after the second baby, whichever delivery you choose, as pregnancy itself puts pressure on the pelvic floor.

Ask your obstetrician about which type of delivery is likely to be best for you, as it probably depends on the size of the next baby and the condition of your pelvic floor. I'm impressed by your 200 contractions a day. Keep it up. Never let a red traffic light or a queue be a missed opportunity to fit in a few 'pulls'!



Hold it right there

Good old garlic

Q I've heard that garlic's good for you. Is it true and if so, how?

Alex, Weston-super-Mare

A Yes! Garlic's been proved to have antibacterial, antiparasitic, anti-blood-clotting, cholesterol-lowering and blood-pressure lowering effects. Crushing or chopping garlic releases allicin which is responsible for its anti-infection benefits but this is lost when garlic is cooked. Whether the other benefits are due to allicin is strongly debated, but it's probable that raw garlic is best.

It's not working

Q My toddler has eczema and although I use emollient cream on her skin twice a day, it's still dry and itchy. My GP says I need to use it four times a day, but that would be difficult. Any suggestions?

Kit, Wembley

A Emollient creams are super-moisturisers that don't contain irritating chemicals such as fragrance and colour. Dermatologists say that these creams should be used up to 10 times a day, which for most people isn't practical. But their use relieves itching and dryness, calms eczema, and reduces the amount of steroid cream needed. Using emollient bath oil every day is also a good idea.

CONTACT US

For medical advice, contact us via one of the methods below. Letters, emails and texts are selected randomly for publication. **TEXT:** MEDICAL to 80088. Texts cost 25p (less than a first-class stamp!), plus network charges. **SP:** Telecom Express, 0870 880 4869. **WRITE TO:** Pick Me Up!, IPC Media, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London SE1 0SU.