

# TIME FOR A (healthy) RETHINK

YOU MIGHT THINK YOU'RE DOING THINGS THE HEALTHIEST WAY – BUT YOU COULD BE WRONG. HELEN FOSTER FINDS OUT HOW WE CAN DO BETTER



Breathing, using the bathroom, cooking rice – these are all things you probably think you've mastered by now, but perhaps not. Here are 10 things you could be doing wrong and how to do them in ways that are better for your health.

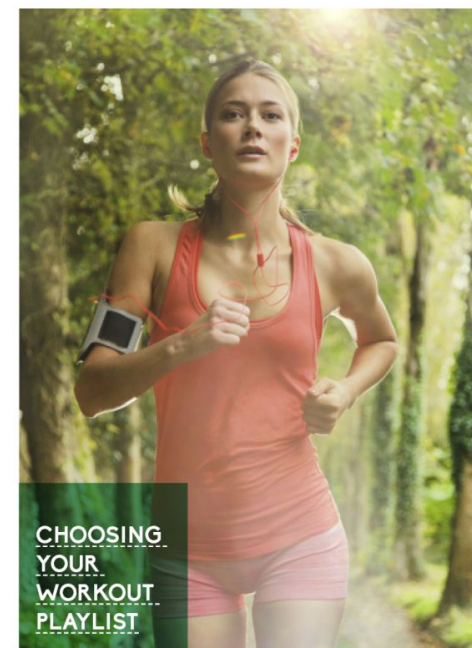


## Cooking rice

Most of us cook rice in just enough water that the rice absorbs all the liquid before we serve, but that's not the best plan. Rice can contain trace amounts of arsenic, which it absorbs as it grows, and using the absorption cooking method doesn't remove it.

**INSTEAD:** Put the rice in a sieve and rinse it with cold water for a minute, then put it in the pan with plenty of water, says Professor Andrew Meharg from Queen's University Belfast. "We find that a 6:1 water-to-rice ratio is very effective in getting rid of most of the inorganic arsenic – it's particularly recommended for brown rice."

So for 100g of rice you need 600ml of water. Bring the water to a boil, add the rice and boil for about 10-12 minutes (or according to packet instructions), then drain it in a sieve before serving. If it's too starchy, rinse with boiling water before you serve.



## CHOOSING YOUR WORKOUT PLAYLIST

You might think exercise music needs to be all super-fast tunes with a heavy base, but a recent study in the *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research* found that tempo didn't really matter – what counted was that the listener found the tune motivating.

**INSTEAD:** Personalise your playlist so it makes you feel strong, empowered and happy, whatever the beats per minute (bpm). "Look for tunes that create positive emotions when you hear them," says Sydney-based personal trainer Mark Moon. "I always say there's nothing more motivating than a break-up song that makes you feel powerful. Anything fun or happy also works well, or choose songs from a time in your past when you were full of life and energy and recapture that feeling as you work out."



## Applying eyeliner

If you're running the pencil along the inside of your eyelid rim to get that smoky-eye look, then it's time to change things. Liner applied inside the eye is more likely to spread into the tear film, damaging contact lenses and irritating sensitive eyes, found a study. It also increases the risk of bacteria from the pencil tip entering the eyes.

**INSTEAD:** Line the outside of the rim. But if you prefer the inside-rim method, researcher Dr Alison Ng from Canada's University of Waterloo suggests sharpening the eyeliner before you use it because a fresh tip can help prevent infection. ▶





## Tackling a hangover

If you wait and see how you feel the morning after to tackle a hangover it's likely to be too late.

**INSTEAD:** Use remedies before you go out for the evening. That was the finding of a recent study by research group CSIRO which found drinking Korean pear juice reduced hangovers if consumed before the person went drinking. The reason for this is that hangovers are caused when alcohol forms a by-product called acetaldehyde. The less acetaldehyde produced, the less of a hangover you develop – and to keep this by-product to a minimum the remedy needs to be in your system before you start to drink.

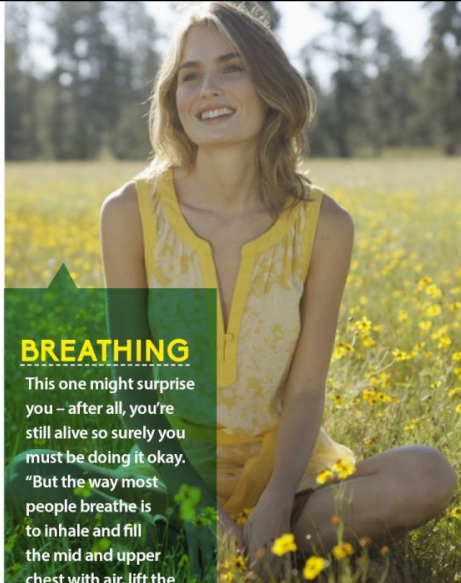
Other scientifically verified remedies like the supplement n-acetyl cysteine also work better taken before you go out on the town.



## Drying your hands

You wouldn't dream of leaving the bathroom without washing your hands, but how do you dry them? If the answer is wave them in the air, wipe them on your jeans or rub them together under the hand dryer you're not making the best health choice. Leaving hands wet means any germs you have left on your fingers can grow, increasing the risk of infection, and rubbing hands together seems to increase bacteria growth further.

**INSTEAD:** Wipe them with a paper towel until they are totally dry. Do that for at least 15 seconds, say Queensland University of Technology experts. If you do use a warm-air dryer, dry your hands for 45 seconds and don't rub them together to try and speed things up.



## BREATHING

This one might surprise you – after all, you're still alive so surely you must be doing it okay.

**"But the way most people breathe is to inhale and fill the mid and upper chest with air, lift the shoulders and draw in the diaphragm,"** says Melbourne-based breath awareness coach Christine Heart Savage. This is actually the opposite of what you should do and not only reduces oxygenation of the body, leading to problems like fatigue, it also adversely affects the autonomic nervous system, increasing feelings of stress and anxiety.

**INSTEAD:** Expand the lungs from the base. As you inhale your belly should get fuller and wider. "Also, breathe in a soft, deep and relaxed manner, aiming to slow the number of breaths you take to eight to 10 per minute. You'll soon feel calmer and stress and anxiety will ease," says Heart Savage.



According to studies 90 per cent of asthmatics use their inhaler incorrectly, often breathing too fast or too slow for their inhaler type. This incorrect technique could reduce the amount of medication that reaches the lungs fourfold.

**INSTEAD:** Ask your doctor or pharmacist for a lesson. They should already have given you one of these if you were recently diagnosed but, according to Sarah Spagnardi, pharmacist and manager of NPS MedicineWise, you might need a refresher if you're a long-term sufferer. "Most people actually use their inhaler well when they are first diagnosed but then slip into bad habits as time goes by," she says.

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## Setting goals

How many times have you told yourself, 'I'm not going to eat that today?' then find yourself desperately craving whatever food you were hoping to avoid?

The reason is that you used a negative word like 'not' in your instruction. "The mind does not understand negatives," says personal trainer Zana Morris, author of *The High Fat Diet*, which includes an entire chapter on how your mind impacts your body. "All it hears in that statement is 'I'm going to eat that today' and it'll then move mountains to make that happen."

**INSTEAD:** Reframe any goals into a positive statement. So, instead say, 'Today I'm going to make healthy choices for my meals' or 'If I want chocolate, I'll have fruit instead' – then watch how things change.



So, you just go into the bathroom, sit down and nature happens? Well, according to German microbiologist Giulia Enders in her book *Gut*, that's not the best plan. Enders says that sitting on toilets puts the bowel in a position that doesn't allow for optimum evacuation, and as such we increase our risk of problems like piles or diverticulitis.

**INSTEAD:** Put your feet on a small stool and lean forwards to help things along. Ideally, Enders says we should squat down as is common in countries like China, but Western toilets don't allow for that. ❏

## TYING YOUR LACES

Most of us criss-cross laces on our sneakers until we reach the last holes along the tongue, then tie them in a bow.



**INSTEAD:** Make sure you use the little hole just off to the side as well, say experts at sports safety company Illumiseen. By doing this you'll increase foot stability, helping reduce the risk of blisters and blackened toenails.

Try this special way of lacing. When you reach the last hole you'd normally use, instead of tying a bow, feed the lace backwards and downwards through

that extra hole to create a small loop. Repeat on the other side – imagine you're creating bunny ears on either side of your shoe. Now feed the loose part of each lace through the loop on the opposite side so it makes a loose X between the loops. Pull both sides out and downwards so they tighten and create a flat vertical lace. Visit [youtube.com/c/Illumiseen](http://youtube.com/c/Illumiseen) to watch a demonstration.

