



Simple Swaps

If you're looking to adopt a healthier lifestyle but are thinking, "Where do I even start?" you're not alone. Nutritionist and naturopath Belinda Kirkpatrick, author of *Healthy Hormones*, has some painless swaps to get you going.

It's easy for your health to take a back seat when trying to juggle work, kids, a spouse, a social life and putting dinner on the table every night. But the funny thing is, the healthier you are, the more energy you'll have, which will make powering through your to-do list that much easier.

Becoming healthier doesn't need to mean a complete life overhaul. In fact, I wouldn't recommend drastic changes because it's difficult to stick with them long term. Rather, I suggest picking one or two things you can painlessly change in your routine, and slowly introduce more as and when you feel ready.

To get you started, here are some simple swaps and ideas you can enact to improve your wellbeing, without feeling like you're sacrificing time, energy or money.

Around the home

A lot of commercial cleaning products contain chemicals and toxins, which you may not want in your home as they contain ingredients that may contribute to a variety of short and long-term health effects. Many of these chemicals are also endocrine-disrupting chemicals – known as EDCs – that can interfere with the natural hormones in your body by blocking or mimicking their actions. EDCs are thought to affect many aspects of our health, including human reproduction, puberty and metabolism. The residues of cleaning products can stay in our environments for a long time and leave us exposed to them on a daily basis.

A great fix for this is to look at making your own, as this way, you'll have a truly natural, low-tox, budget-friendly product. Here's a recipe for a great all-purpose cleaning spray:

- 10-15 drops of eucalyptus or orange oil
- ½ cup white vinegar
- ½ cup water

Add these ingredients to a clean spray bottle and use for kitchens, bathrooms and benchtops. For more heavy duty cleaning, like ovens and showers, sprinkle bicarbonate of soda on any grease or soap scum build-up before

spraying with your homemade cleaning spray. Leave it to bubble for around 10-15 minutes and gently wipe it clean.

In your diet

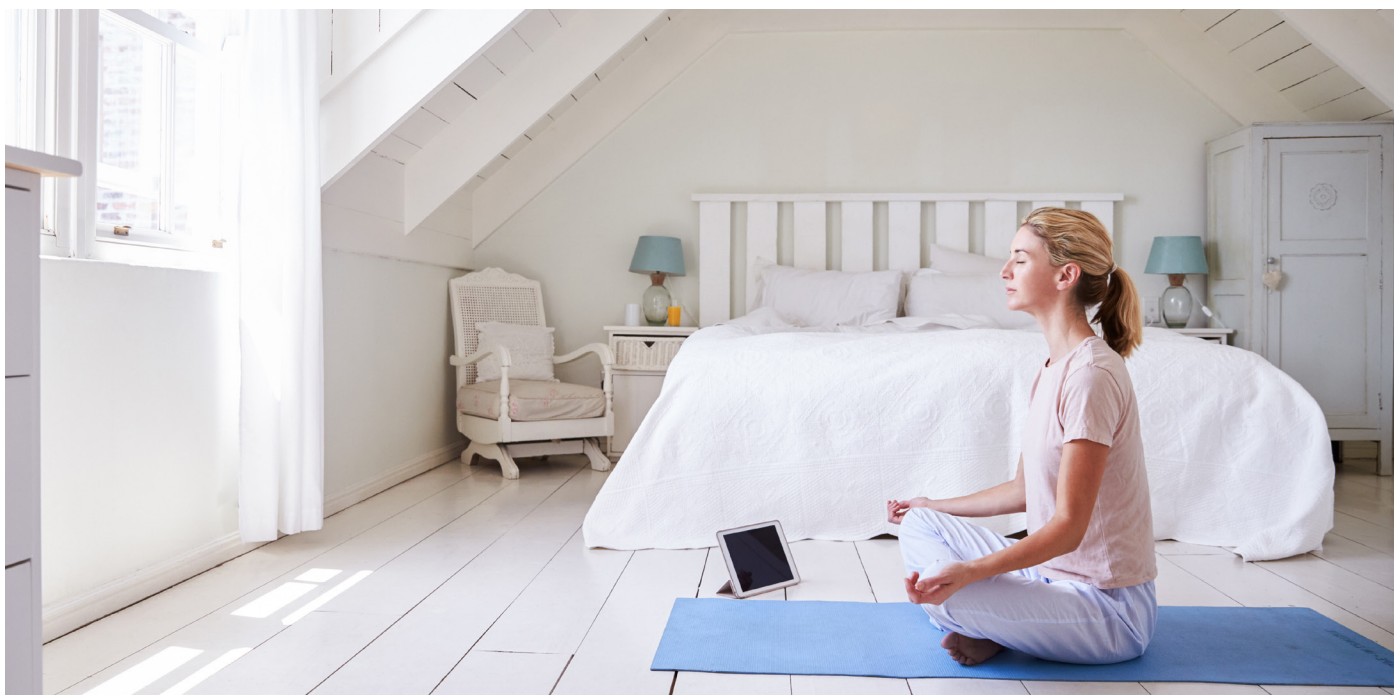
Snacking is something you need to get right if you want to keep a healthy diet on track. The key is to remember to add protein. Protein helps boost energy and mood and keeps us feeling full and less likely to crave a sweet treat. Next time you reach for a piece of fruit or plain crackers as a snack, try to add a source of protein.



Examples include apple with almond butter, cheese and cucumber, carrot and hummus, fruit and nuts, Greek yoghurt with berries, or a chia pudding.

With your main meals, try swapping at least half your carbohydrate portion – bread, pasta, rice, crackers – with leafy greens. For example, you could serve your dinner on a big handful of baby spinach or rocket, add some spinach to your morning eggs or smoothie, and steam a few bunches of broccolini at the beginning of the week to add to your lunches. Before you know it, you'll have increased your daily veggie intake by one or two cups and your skin and your gut bacteria will love you for it.





To your lifestyle

Making time to slow down and be mindful is an essential part of a healthy lifestyle in our increasingly hectic world. Being constantly busy causes our bodies to release adrenaline, cortisol and stress hormones. In excess, these hormones can negatively affect hormonal balance, energy, sleep and mood.

To counteract this, download a mindfulness or meditation app on your phone, such as Smiling Mind, Headspace or Calm, and listen to it for 5-8 minutes every night before bed. If you feel like you're not good at it and your mind keeps wandering, don't worry. That's fine and you'll get better at it with time.

In your bathroom

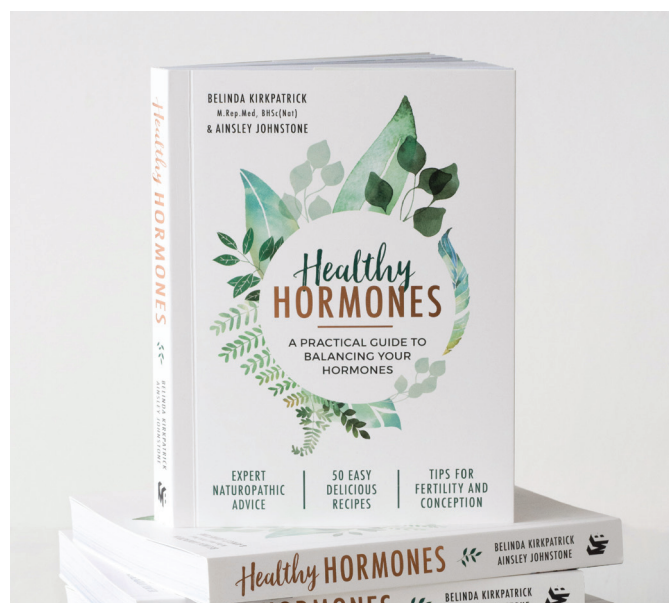
Ditch the anti-bacterial handwash – especially if it contains 'triclosan'. Triclosan is banned in many western countries, including the USA, for its damaging effects on the immune system. Swap it for a simple unfragranced soap and water, which is good enough to do the job and won't negatively affect your immune system.

As part of your daily routine

Do you eat in a rush? At your desk? While driving your car? Studies have shown the way we eat is almost as important as what we eat. This is possibly one reason many European cultures enjoy lower risks of cardiovascular disease, despite consuming more wine, bread and saturated fats. Many of us tend to smash a kale salad or a green juice at our desk while answering

emails, instead of taking time to relax, socialise and slowly enjoy and appreciate our food.

The social way of eating is hard to replicate on a work day or with an energetic two-year-old, but you can make small changes, such as trying to eat your meals in a relaxed environment – not at your computer, on your phone or in front of the TV – and focus on chewing and really tasting your food. If you are working in an office, take at least 15 minutes to walk outside and enjoy your lunch without distractions. Take a few deep breaths before returning to work or other tasks too.



Belinda Kirkpatrick is an expert nutritionist and naturopath with over 12 years' clinical experience. Besides running a busy clinic in Sydney, Australia, Belinda lectures in nutrition and naturopathy and is a regular television and media presenter on health and dietary topics. This year, Belinda published her first book, *Healthy Hormones*, with Ainsley Johnstone, which features expert naturopathic advice, 50 recipes and tips on lifestyle and nutrition. It is available for purchase at all good bookstores or on Amazon.