

PEACE OUT

From cortisol-free fitness to stress-busting diets and calm skin,
Fiona Embleton reveals ten mindful ways to approach health and well-being

Art direction and styling by LISA OXENHAM Photographs by JASON HETHERINGTON

1 CONTROL YOUR CORTISOL

Think a HIIT class after a difficult day at work will sweat away the stress? Actually, training too hard can produce more cortisol, the stress hormone that can sabotage your health and weight-loss goals. 'The body doesn't know the difference between running for cardio and running away from danger, so it instantly goes into fight or flight mode,' says Nathalie Schyllert, CEO of Bodyism, a London-based fitness club that adapts its sessions to members' stress levels. 'Too much cortisol can disrupt your metabolism. It inhibits the production of insulin, which would normally remove excess blood sugar and prevent it being stored as fat around your belly.' Enter alternative options: low-intensity exercises like yoga or Pilates. 'We also advise taking our Pure Serenity Shake [£50 for 240g/30 servings, Net-A-Porter] because it contains camomile and magnesium, to improve your sleep quality, which is proven to help lower cortisol levels.'

2 HEAD FOR A CALMER COMPLEXION

One in ten people in the UK suffer from rosacea symptoms – redness, flushing, visible blood vessels and pimples. While the cause is not yet completely understood, emotional stress is likely to be a major factor, as it stimulates the nervous system and leads to greater circulation to the face. 'Stress prompts our neuroendocrine system [the hub for chemical messages] to activate cellular processes that cause skin disease,' says Dr Alia Ahmed at the Eudelo clinic in London, who combines dermatology with psychological support. 'Worrying about how it looks only adds to the stress. Those with rosacea often have higher levels of anxiety and depression, which is where techniques like meditation and cognitive behavioural therapy can help.' Combine this mind-body approach with products like Neostrata Redness Neutralizing Serum (£51.70) and La Roche-Posay Toleriane Ultra Fluid Moisturiser (£17.50) to soothe skin.

IRON MAIDEN

3 'Iron is necessary to produce energy in the brain, so that's why a deficiency is often associated with feelings of depression and fatigue,' says Dr Claudia Gravaghi, nutritionist at The Organic Pharmacy. 'Add lemon juice, which is rich in vitamin C, to red meat, fruit and vegetables to increase your iron absorption.' Or, take Blueiron Liquid Iron Food Supplement (£14.99 for 330ml, Boots), as the iron is encapsulated so it's protected as it travels through the stomach, then dissolves and releases the exact amount of iron your body needs. ►

