

WELLNESS

# WELLNESS

magazine

WINTER 2025

WELLNESS

brought to you by



HEALTHIER MIND

HEALTHIER FOOD

HEALTHIER BODY

HEALTHIER WORLD

WELLNESS

# WELCOME TO THE LATEST ISSUE OF OUR WELLNESS MAGAZINE!



As the crisp days of winter settle in and a new year begins, we're reminded of the importance of things that ground us and support our wellbeing.

In this issue, we explore the importance of traditions to nurture our sense of connection and resilience and highlight the power of kindness to make a profound difference to someone's day.

We also aim to enhance awareness of lesser-known health conditions like endometriosis, and provide a deeper understanding of complex conditions such as bipolar, to encourage open conversations, break down stigmas and offer support to those who need it.

Underpinned by our four pillars of wellness — healthier food, mind, body and world — the magazine invites you to embrace opportunities for growth and balance in the months ahead. From tips to help with a healthier mind and body to more sustainable living, we hope you feel inspired by this holistic approach to wellbeing!

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to be 'Leanne King', written over a dark, textured background.

Leanne King  
Head of Nutrition and Wellbeing - ESS

# CONTENTS

## FOOD

Traditions Can Support Our Wellbeing .....	4
Shedding Old Skin: Traditions, Tastes and New Beginnings .....	6
Perfect Pancakes .....	8
Can Nutrition Really Support Our Sleep? .....	10

## MIND

Understanding Bipolar and its Implications .....	12
Kicking Off the New Year Right .....	14
Mindful Moments: The Importance of Talking .....	15
The Complexities of Disordered Eating .....	16
Small Gestures, Big Impact .....	18

## BODY

Increasing Awareness of Endometriosis .....	20
Who Do We Trust With Our Health? .....	22
Beyond the Finish Line: How Cardiomyopathy Challenges the Fittest .....	24

## WORLD

Do you Pledge to Increase Your Veg? .....	26
Nature's Hidden Secrets .....	28
New Bee-ginnings .....	30

# TRADITIONS CAN SUPPORT OUR WELLBEING

**BURNS NIGHT: 25<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2025**

**Cultural traditions play a vital role in enhancing wellbeing by fostering social connections, preserving identity and promoting mental and physical health.**

Rooted in shared practices, beliefs and rituals, traditions bring people together, creating opportunities for connection and collective celebration. Whether through festivals, communal meals or storytelling, these moments strengthen social bonds, offering a sense of belonging that is key to emotional resilience.

Traditions provide continuity and stability, serving as anchors in times of change or uncertainty. They encourage reflection, mindfulness and creative expression, which can reduce stress and boost mental wellbeing. Many traditions also incorporate physical activities, such as dancing or outdoor events, which supports physical wellbeing.

In a broader sense, cultural practices connect individuals to their heritage, reinforcing a sense of identity and pride. This connection not only nurtures personal growth but also contributes to societal cohesion by passing values and knowledge between generations. By integrating cultural traditions into daily life, communities can create a sustainable framework for promoting holistic wellbeing.

Burns Night offers an opportunity to connect cultural traditions with aspects of wellbeing. Rooted in honouring the life and work of Robert Burns, Scotland's national poet, the event often involves communal gatherings, poetry, music and traditional food. This cultural celebration has several links to wellbeing:

- **Community connection:** Burns Night brings people together, fostering a sense of belonging and community, which is crucial for mental and emotional health. Shared traditions and storytelling create positive social interactions that can combat loneliness.
- **Cultural identity:** Celebrating cultural heritage can enhance a sense of identity and pride, contributing to emotional resilience and self-esteem.
- **Mindfulness and joy:** Engaging with poetry, music and reflective traditions encourages mindfulness and an appreciation of creativity, boosting mood and reducing stress.
- **Shared meals:** The communal aspect of enjoying a traditional Burns Night supper, including haggis, neeps and tatties is a reminder of the joy of sharing food, which can support both physical and emotional wellbeing. See the recipe on the next page.

Burns' poetry itself often touches on themes of nature, love and human experience, offering moments for reflection that can align with personal growth and emotional wellbeing. Integrating Burns Night into wellbeing initiatives—whether through workplace events or community activities—can provide a meaningful and enjoyable way to celebrate heritage while promoting overall health.

So, for 2025, why not consider learning and embracing cultural celebrations while also supporting wider wellbeing?

# HAGGIS NEEPS AND TATTIES

Serves 6-8



## Ingredients:

500g/1lb 2oz haggis

### For the tatties:

- 1.5kg/3lb 5oz floury potatoes, such as Maris Piper or King Edward, peeled and cut into even chunks
- 100ml/3½fl oz semi-skimmed milk
- 200ml/7fl oz cream
- 2 tbsp butter
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

### For the neeps:

- 1kg/2lb 4oz swede, peeled and cut into even chunks
- 2 tbsp butter

### For the whisky cream sauce:

- 4 tbsp cracked black pepper
- 50g/1¾oz butter
- 1 tsp vegetable oil
- 2 shallots, peeled and finely chopped
- 120ml/4fl oz Scotch whisky
- 200ml/7fl oz beef stock
- 200ml/7fl oz double cream

## Method:

- 1 To boil: Bring a large pan of water to the boil, add the haggis and reduce to a simmer. Time according to weight – guidelines suggest boiling a 1kg natural-cased haggis for 1 hour and 15 minutes.
- 2 To serve, carefully slit open the casing and tip the filling onto a plate. Meanwhile make the tatties. Cook the potatoes in a saucepan of salted boiling water for about 12–15 minutes until the chunks are soft and tender. Drain in a colander and allow to cool for 5 minutes to get a little fluffy on the outside. Mash the potatoes using a ricer. Heat the milk and cream in a saucepan until just simmering, then add to the mash with the butter. Season and mix until you have a smooth, creamy mash.
- 3 To make the neeps, cook the swede in a saucepan of salted boiling water for about 12–15 minutes until the chunks are soft and tender. Drain in a colander. Add the butter and mash until smooth. Season with salt and pepper.
- 4 To make the sauce, toast the pepper in a dry frying pan and set aside. Melt the butter and oil in the pan and add the shallots. Fry until fragrant and soft, but not browned. Pour in the whisky, turn up the heat and simmer for a second. Add the beef stock, then the cream. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat and simmer for around 10 minutes or until reduced by about half. Stir in the cracked pepper.
- 5 Serve the haggis, neeps and tatties with the whisky sauce on the side.

# SHEDDING OLD SKIN: TRADITIONS, TASTES AND NEW BEGINNINGS

CHINESE NEW YEAR: 29<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2025

NATIONAL HEART MONTH: FEBRUARY 2025

Chinese New Year is the celebration of the New Lunar Year and includes three different celebrations.

The first is the 'Little Year', where preparations begin for the new year, starting on January 21st and lasting until the Lunar New Year's Eve.

The second is the 'Spring Festival', when the new lunar year begins, running from January 29th to February 8th.

Last is the 'Lantern Festival' which runs from February 9th to February 12th. The exact dates change each year as the lunar year is linked to the moon.

Each year in the repeating zodiac cycle of 12 years is represented by a zodiac animal. The 12 animals in order are: rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog and pig.

Each animal has its own characteristics, and it is believed that a person's horoscope, personality and love compatibility are closely associated with their Chinese zodiac sign, determined by their birth year.

This year is the year of the snake. People born in the year of the snake are thought to be mysterious, smart, determined and caring.

Certain dishes are eaten during Chinese New Year for their symbolic meaning and the belief that they bring good luck for the coming year. These include:

- Spring rolls
- Dumplings
- Fish
- Tangyuan (sweet rice balls)
- Good fortune fruit
- Niangao (glutinous rice cake)
- Longevity noodles

Many of the key ingredients used in Chinese home cooking are enjoyed as part of a healthy diet. Consuming

staple foods such as vegetables, tofu and seafood has been shown to lower the risk of developing cardiovascular disease. Unsaturated oils, such as peanut oil, are often used in the preparation of dishes. Strong evidence shows that replacing saturated oils with unsaturated oils reduces the incidence of heart disease.

However, some Chinese foods can be high in fat, which can be detrimental to our heart health. This includes pork spareribs and fried dough sticks, which although popular on takeaway menus in the UK do not necessarily reflect the daily foods eaten in China. Cooking methods like deep fat frying can increase the saturated fat content of a dish, so alternative methods such as steaming or air frying can be used to lower the fat content.



Heart disease remains one of the leading causes of death globally, however lots of the risk factors associated with cardiovascular problems—such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol and obesity—can be controlled or reduced. Eating the right foods can help protect your heart, improve circulation and enhance overall cardiovascular health.

These include:

- **Fruits and vegetables:** Contain vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and fibre. Having a variety of colours can help to maximise your nutrient intake.
- **Wholegrains:** Oats and barley contain beta-glucan which can help lower blood cholesterol and ingredients like brown rice, quinoa and wholegrain pasta are excellent sources of fibre and B vitamins.
- **Lean proteins:** Provide essential amino acids with minimal saturated fat. Sources include fish, skinless poultry and plant-based options like beans and legumes.
- **Healthy fats:** Avocado, olive oil, nuts, seeds and oily fish provide unsaturated fats which can help to reduce levels of bad cholesterol (LDL).

The following recipe for Chinese New Year contains lots of heart healthy foods including nuts, vegetables and rapeseed oil. Have a go at making it yourself!

# VEGETABLE PAD THAI

Serves 2



**Matt Lord,**  
Regional Executive Chef  
- ESS



## Ingredients:

- 90g broccoli
- 10ml rapeseed oil
- 16g shallots
- 3g garlic greens
- 2g red chillies
- ½ lime
- 15ml light soy sauce
- 3g caster sugar
- 20g cashew nuts
- 20g onion
- 2g coriander
- 120g rice noodle nests
- ½ spring onion

## Equipment:

- Bowl
- Saucepan
- Sieve
- Knife
- Chopping board
- Wok

## Method:

- 1 Soak the rice noodles in a bowl of hot water for approximately 25 minutes or until tender, then drain well.
- 2 Bring a large pan of water to the boil. Separate the broccoli heads into small florets, then peel and slice the stems. Blanch the broccoli pieces in the boiling water for 4 minutes.
- 3 Chop the nuts. Pick the coriander leaves. Juice the limes. Peel, crush and chop the garlic. Peel and thinly slice the shallots and onion. Slice the spring onions at a slight angle. De-seed and finely chop the chillies.
- 4 Heat a wok over high heat. When it is hot, add the oil. When it is very hot and slightly smoking, add the shallots, onion, spring onions, chillies and garlic and stir-fry for 1 minute.
- 5 Add the rice noodles, broccoli florets, soy sauce, lime juice and sugar, then continue to stir-fry for 2 minutes, mixing well.
- 6 Finally add the coriander and stir-fry briskly for 30 seconds. Present on a warm platter, sprinkle with the nuts and serve at once.

# PERFECT PANCAKES:

## A WHOLESOME TREAT FOR EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR

PANCAKE DAY: 4<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2025

NUTRITION AND HYDRATION WEEK: 17<sup>TH</sup> -23<sup>RD</sup> MARCH 2025

Pancakes are a versatile and beloved comfort food, perfect for breakfast, brunch or dessert.

Traditionally made with refined flour and topped with sugary syrups, they're often seen as indulgent rather than nutritious. However, with a few smart swaps and additions, you can significantly boost the nutritional profile of your pancakes while ensuring they stay delicious. Here are some ideas for making pancakes healthier and more balanced.

### Upgrade the flour

The base of a pancake can set the tone for its nutritional value:

- **Wholemeal flour:** Swap white flour for wholemeal to increase fibre and micronutrients like B vitamins.
- **Oats or oat flour:** Add blended oats for soluble fibre, which helps maintain steady blood sugar levels.
- **Alternative flours:** Experiment with buckwheat, almond or chickpea flour for added protein and minerals.

### Boost the batter

Enhancing the pancake mixture itself is a great way to add nutrients:

- **Eggs:** Add extra eggs for protein, healthy fats and choline, which is essential for brain health.
- **Greek yoghurt:** Mix in Greek yoghurt for creaminess, calcium and an extra protein punch.
- **Mashed banana or pumpkin:** Use these as natural sweeteners, which also add fibre and vitamins like potassium and beta-carotene.
- **Milk alternatives:** Opt for fortified almond, oat or soy milk to include additional vitamins like D and B12.

### Go natural with sweeteners

Traditional pancakes often come drenched in syrup. Instead, try:

- **Honey or maple syrup:** Use sparingly as they contain natural sugars but also some antioxidants.
- **Fresh fruit:** Top with fruits like berries, kiwi or pomegranate seeds for natural sweetness and a boost of antioxidants.
- **Cinnamon or vanilla extract:** Add these to the batter for flavour without sugar.

### Choose healthier toppings

The toppings are where pancakes can truly shine nutritionally:

- **Nut butters:** Use almond or peanut butter for healthy fats and protein.
- **Crushed nuts and seeds:** Sprinkle walnuts, chia seeds or flaxseeds for omega-3 fatty acids and fibre.
- **Unsweetened yoghurt:** Replace whipped cream with a dollop of Greek yoghurt.
- **Dark chocolate shavings:** Add a touch of indulgence with antioxidant-rich dark chocolate.

### Balance the plate

Pair pancakes with other nutritious foods to create a balanced meal:

- **Vegetables:** Add a savoury twist with spinach, mushrooms or avocado for fibre and vitamins.
- **Protein sides:** Pair with poached eggs, smoked salmon or tofu to balance macronutrients.
- **Hydration:** Complement your meal with a hydrating drink like water, herbal tea or a nutrient-packed smoothie.

### Experiment with savoury options

Who says pancakes have to be sweet? Savoury pancakes can be a fantastic way to increase vegetable intake:

- **Add vegetables to the batter:** Include grated carrots, courgette or spinach in your mix.
- **Savoury toppings:** Use hummus, avocado or roasted tomatoes for a nutrient-dense twist.

With the right ingredients and toppings, pancakes can be more than just a treat—they can be a nutritious, well-balanced meal. By making simple changes, you not only enhance their nutritional value but also promote a healthier, more sustainable relationship with food.







**Adrian Roj,**  
Function and Hospitality  
Head Chef - ESS

There are many ways to make pancakes and many ways to serve them. For me, key features are:

- Use good quality ingredients.
- Have a good quality frying pan – my favourite of all is the cast-iron pan or you can also use a ceramic coated one.



It's worth remembering that "we are what we eat and drink".

At home, we try to source ingredients as sustainably as possible. Most of the food in our house will be free range or organic, like eggs, flour and meat (organic delivered from Cornwall because it's hard to get locally).

My favourite recipe is made by using a sourdough starter instead of baking powder. This requires a bit of time and patience, but the result is worth the effort! I use a mixture of organic white spelt and wholemeal emmer flour, and slices of apple to put on top of each pancake when frying. You can find the recipe opposite:



# PANCAKES

Makes 12-25 pancakes (depending on size)

## Ingredients:

- 100g active sourdough starter (I used wheat starter)
- 180g milk of your choice
- 250g organic white spelt flour (or flour of your choice)
- 100g wholemeal emmer flour (or flour of your choice)
- 50g brown sugar
- 50g melted butter
- 3 organic eggs
- 1tsp organic vanilla paste
- Pinch of salt
- Butter, ghee or coconut oil for frying

## Method:

- 1 Melt the butter in a saucepan, when cooled add the eggs and whisk together.
- 2 Add milk to the sourdough starter and whisk it all to thin out the starter. Add the flour and the rest of the ingredients and mix well until the batter is a thicker consistency than the usual pancake batter. Cover and leave at room temperature for around 4-6 hours until the mixture doubles in size and bubbles appear.
- 3 Warm up the pan and add a heaped tablespoon of fat of your choice. Using a small ladle, pour the batter into the pan and put few slices of apple on the top, fry on medium heat until bubbles appear, flip it and fry on the other side for about 2 minutes.
- 4 Serve sprinkled with icing sugar or drizzle with honey, fresh fruits or delicious homemade jam.

# CAN NUTRITION REALLY SUPPORT OUR SLEEP?

WORLD SLEEP DAY: 14<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2025

Sleep is essential for maintaining overall health and wellbeing, playing a key role in physical, mental and emotional resilience.

Quality sleep allows the body to recover, supports immune function, aids memory consolidation and regulates emotions, while chronic sleep deprivation can contribute to various health problems including obesity, heart disease, diabetes and depression.

Beyond sleep habits, nutrition has a significant impact on sleep quality. Certain nutrients like magnesium, calcium and tryptophan, are linked to better sleep because they help regulate neurotransmitters that support relaxation and the sleep-wake cycle.<sup>2</sup> Balanced meals, hydration and reducing stimulants like caffeine and sugar close to bedtime can further enhance restful sleep.<sup>3</sup> Together, prioritising both a nutritious diet and good sleep hygiene can significantly improve health and promote sustained wellbeing.<sup>4,5</sup>

## Balanced diet:

A diet rich in complex carbohydrates, lean proteins, healthy fats and fibre helps to maintain stable blood sugar levels and supports restful sleep. Whole grains, fruits, vegetables and lean proteins provide the body with steady energy and prevent sugar crashes that can disturb sleep.

## Did you know?

Koalas spend up to 18-22 hours a day sleeping.<sup>16</sup>

## Specific nutrients supporting sleep:

- **Magnesium** (found in leafy greens, nuts, seeds and whole grains) helps relax muscles and calm the nervous system, promoting better sleep.
- **Calcium** (from dairy, leafy greens and fortified alternatives) helps the brain produce melatonin, the hormone that regulates sleep.
- **Tryptophan** (from foods like turkey, chicken and bananas) aids in melatonin production and can help with falling asleep more easily.
- **Vitamin D and omega-3 fatty acids** (from fatty fish, fortified foods or supplements) also play a role in sleep regulation by supporting serotonin production.<sup>4,6</sup>

## Avoiding sleep disruptors:

- **Reduce caffeine** in the afternoon and evening since it can interfere with the body's ability to fall and stay asleep.
- **Limit heavy or spicy foods** close to bedtime as these can cause indigestion or disrupt sleep cycles.
- **Cut back on sugar** as high sugar intake may lead to energy spikes and crashes, impacting sleep quality.<sup>4</sup>
- **Hydration:** Drinking enough water throughout the day helps with overall health but avoid too much close to bedtime to reduce night-time awakenings.

## Did you know?

On average, we sleep for roughly 227,760 hours or 25 years (assuming a lifespan of 75 years).

## Other support strategies for a more restful night's sleep:

- **Bedtime routine:** Developing a consistent pre-sleep routine, such as reading or taking a warm bath, helps signal to your body that it's time to wind down, making it easier to transition to sleep.
- **Consistent sleep schedule:** Going to bed and waking up at the same time each day, even on weekends, strengthens the body's natural circadian rhythm, leading to better quality sleep.
- **Sleep environment:** A quiet, dark and cool room promotes better rest. Invest in comfortable bedding and consider using blackout curtains, white noise machines or an eye mask if light and sound disturb your sleep.
- **Managing stress and relaxation:** Practicing relaxation techniques such as meditation, deep breathing or gentle yoga can ease anxiety and stress that often disrupt sleep. Support from therapy, if needed, or connecting with others for emotional support can also help manage stress and improve sleep.

## Did you know?

Domestic cats can sleep for 12-16 hours a day. This is so they conserve energy for short bursts of activity.<sup>18</sup>

1. Hirshkowitz, (2015). National Sleep Foundation's sleep time duration recommendations: methodology and results summary. *Sleep Health*, 1(1), 40-43.

2. Peuhkuri, (2012). Diet promotes sleep duration and quality. *Nutrition Research*, 32(5), 309-319.

3. Grandner, (2014). Sleep symptoms associated with intake of specific dietary nutrients. *Journal of Sleep Research*, 23(1), 22-34.

4. Sleep News: The Latest Research, Trends, and Insights in Sleep

5. Medic et al., (2017). Short- and long-term health consequences of sleep disruption. *Nature and Science of Sleep*, 9, 151.

6. Sleepopolis

7. Bant et al., (2006). Valerian for Sleep: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *The American Journal of Medicine*, 119(12), 1005-1012.

8. Zick et al., (2011). Preliminary Examination of the Efficacy and Safety of a Standardized Chamomile Extract for Chronic Primary Insomnia: A Randomized Placebo-Controlled Pilot Study. *BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, 11, 78.

9. Lewith et al., (2005). A Single-Blinded, Randomised Pilot Study Evaluating the Aroma of *Lavandula angustifolia* as a Treatment for Mild Insomnia. *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, 11(4), 631-637.

## Alternative herbal therapies:

Herbal remedies have been used for centuries to promote relaxation and support restful sleep, offering a natural alternative to pharmaceutical interventions. While sleep is essential for mental and physical wellbeing, many people struggle with insomnia or disrupted sleep patterns due to stress, lifestyle or health conditions.

Certain herbs, such as valerian root, chamomile and lavender, are commonly sought for their calming and sleep-inducing properties. Studies show that these botanicals may positively impact sleep by reducing anxiety, enhancing relaxation or supporting metabolic processes linked to circadian rhythms.

### Did you know?

The little brown bat spends around 19 hours a day sleeping.<sup>17</sup>

## Below are some popular herbal supplements for sleep:

### Valerian root:

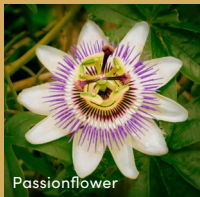
Known for its mild sedative effects, valerian root is often used to reduce the time it takes to fall asleep and improve sleep quality. It may increase levels of gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA), a neurotransmitter that promotes relaxation.<sup>7</sup>

### Chamomile:

Popular for its calming effects, especially as a tea. It contains apigenin, an antioxidant that binds to specific brain receptors that may promote sleepiness and reduce insomnia.<sup>8</sup>



Lemon balm



Passionflower

### Lavender:

Often used in aromatherapy, lavender has been shown to improve sleep quality. Inhaling lavender essential oil or using it in a diffuser can reduce stress and promote a restful night.<sup>9</sup>

### Passionflower:

This herb may increase GABA levels, which can help reduce brain activity and induce relaxation. Passionflower is sometimes taken as a tea or supplement for its mild sedative effect.<sup>10</sup>

### Lemon balm:

Part of the mint family, lemon balm is believed to relieve stress and anxiety, which can improve sleep. Often combined with other herbs like valerian, it may support sleep through its gentle, calming effect.<sup>11</sup>

### Ashwagandha:

Known as an adaptogen, ashwagandha can help the body manage stress and reduce cortisol levels, a stress hormone that can interfere with sleep.<sup>12</sup>

### Magnolia bark:

Used in traditional Chinese medicine, magnolia bark contains compounds like honokiol that are believed to relax the mind and reduce anxiety, helping to prepare the body for sleep.<sup>13</sup>

### Hops:

Known for their inclusion in beer brewing, hops also have mild sedative effects and are sometimes combined with valerian to improve sleep quality and decrease the time needed to fall asleep.<sup>14</sup>

While these herbs can support sleep, their effectiveness can vary individually. It's advisable to consult a healthcare provider, especially if taking medications, to ensure no adverse interactions. By combining a nutritious diet with supportive lifestyle habits, you can set the foundation for restful, uninterrupted sleep that promotes overall wellbeing.

# A RECIPE FOR SLEEP



**Ryan Hopper,**  
Head of Culinary  
Operations - ESS

For a soothing, sleep-supportive recipe, try a milk with chamomile and honey, which combines several nutrients and calming herbs to promote relaxation before bedtime.

### Equipment:

- Mug or cup
- Small saucepan or microwave
- Teaspoon

### Ingredients:

- 1 cup milk (dairy or almond milk for calcium and magnesium)
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric (for its calming and anti-inflammatory properties)
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon (stabilises blood sugar and has a comforting aroma)
- 1 teaspoon honey (raises tryptophan availability in the brain)
- 1 chamomile tea bag or a few dried chamomile flowers (promotes relaxation)
- Optional: a pinch of nutmeg (to enhance relaxation effects)

### Method:

- 1 Warm the milk in a small saucepan over medium heat or a microwave.
- 2 Add turmeric, cinnamon and nutmeg, if using, and stir to combine.
- 3 Place the chamomile tea bag in the milk mixture and steep for 5-10 minutes.
- 4 Remove from heat, remove the tea bag and stir in honey.

Chamomile and warm milk support sleep through tryptophan, magnesium and calcium, while turmeric and cinnamon add an anti-inflammatory boost that enhances the body's ability to relax.<sup>6,16</sup>

10. Akhondzadeh et al., (2001). Passionflower in the Treatment of Generalized Anxiety: A Pilot Double-Blind Randomized Controlled Trial with Oxazepam. *Journal of Clinical Pharmacy and Therapeutics*, 26(5), 363-367.  
11. Kennedy et al., (2006). Modulation of Mood and Cognitive Performance Following Acute Administration of *Melissa officinalis* (Lemon Balm). *Phytotherapy Research*, 20(1), 96-102.  
12. Langade et al., (2019). Clinical Evaluation of the Safety and Efficacy of Ashwagandha Root Extract in the Management of Insomnia and Anxiety:

A Double-Blind, Randomized, Placebo-Controlled Study. *Cureus*, 11(9), e5797.  
13. Chen et al., (2017). Effects of Magnolol and Honokiol on Gastrointestinal Motility in Mice. *Journal of Pharmacological Sciences*, 134(1), 62-78.  
14. Koether et al., (2007). A Randomized, Double-Blind, Placebo-Controlled, Prospective Clinical Study to Demonstrate Clinical Efficacy of a Fixed Valerian-Hops Extract Combination (Ze 91019) in Patients Suffering from Non-Organic Sleep Disorder. *European Journal of Medical Research*, 12(4), 185-191.  
15. Sleep Foundation

16. Martin, R. W., & Handasyde, K. A. (1999). *The Koala: Natural History, Conservation, and Management*. UNSW Press.  
17. Kunz, T. H., & Fenton, M. B. (2003). *Bat Ecology*. University of Chicago Press.  
18. Turner, D. C., & Bateson, P. (2000). *The Domestic Cat: The Biology of Its Behaviour*. Cambridge University Press. Explains cats' polyphasic sleep patterns and energy use.

# UNDERSTANDING BIPOLAR AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

## RED JANUARY

BLUE MONDAY: 20<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2025

TIME TO TALK DAY: 6<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2025

WORLD BIPOLAR DAY: 30<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2025

WORLD SLEEP DAY: 14<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2025

**Bipolar disorder is classified as one of the more common long-term mental health conditions in the UK, comparable in prevalence to conditions like cancer and more prevalent than others such as dementia or epilepsy.**

However, it takes an average of nine-and-a-half years to receive a correct diagnosis, highlighting challenges in recognition and treatment.<sup>1</sup>

Bipolar disorder is a complex mental health condition characterised by significant mood swings, which include manic or hypomanic episodes—where an individual may feel euphoric, energetic or unusually irritable—and depressive episodes marked by sadness, fatigue and hopelessness. These mood fluctuations can severely impact various aspects of life, including personal relationships, academic or job performance and overall wellbeing. Individuals with bipolar disorder may also struggle with self-esteem and decision-making, leading to additional challenges.

The start of January can be particularly daunting, as the post-holiday blues settle in and the weather turns colder. Blue Monday, often cited as the most depressing day of the year, highlights the emotional struggles many face during this time, exacerbated by factors such as short daylight hours, financial stress and the return to routine. Conversely, Red January promotes mental health through physical activity, encouraging people to engage in exercise to boost mood and wellbeing. For individuals with bipolar disorder, adjusting to new routines or increased activity can lead to mood instability, underscoring the importance of a balanced approach to health during this season.<sup>2</sup>

Discussing mental health openly is essential for fostering understanding and connection. Conversations about bipolar disorder can help demystify the condition, reduce stigma and encourage those affected to seek help. Support from family, friends and mental health professionals plays a crucial role in recovery and management, providing strategies for coping with mood fluctuations and everyday challenges. Resources such as support groups and helplines can also offer valuable assistance and a sense of community. Research from Mind highlights the importance of talking about mental health to reduce stigma and foster supportive relationships.<sup>2</sup>

Sleep is fundamentally linked to mood regulation, particularly for those with bipolar disorder. Irregular sleep patterns can lead to increased vulnerability to mood swings, while insufficient or erratic sleep can precipitate manic or depressive episodes. Establishing a consistent sleep routine is vital for maintaining emotional stability. Practicing good sleep hygiene, such as creating a calming bedtime environment, limiting screen time before bed and avoiding stimulants, can significantly improve sleep quality. Better sleep can enhance overall mood and resilience, providing a solid foundation for managing bipolar disorder.<sup>3,4</sup>

Awareness and education about bipolar disorder are essential in reducing stigma and promoting a healthier society. A comprehensive understanding of bipolar disorder, recognising seasonal challenges, promoting open dialogue about mental health and prioritising sleep can collectively support those affected. By fostering a culture of acceptance and conversation around mental health, we can help to create a supportive environment that encourages individuals to seek help and practice self-care.

In the UK, approximately 1.3 million people, or about one in 50, are estimated to live with bipolar disorder.

This figure indicates a lifetime prevalence of around 1% to 2% of the population, with some studies suggesting that as many as 5% of people may fall on the bipolar spectrum.<sup>1</sup>

### Did you know?

**Blue Monday**, often dubbed ‘the most depressing day of the year’, occurs on the third Monday of January. This notion originated from a 2005 press release by a travel company, which claimed to have calculated the date based on factors like post-holiday blues, weather and financial stress.

Although the formula has faced criticism for its lack of scientific validity, the term has become associated with the January blues and the feelings of sadness many experience after the festive season.<sup>6</sup>

**Red January** is a UK initiative encouraging people to engage in physical activity throughout January to boost mental health. Launched by the charity Mind in 2018, it highlights the benefits of exercise for mental wellbeing, particularly after the holiday season. Participants can choose any exercise—such as walking, running or yoga—and share their experiences on social media to inspire others. The campaign also aims to foster community connections and reduce mental health stigma, while fundraising efforts support mental health charities.<sup>7</sup>

1. Incidence and prevalence | Background information | Bipolar disorder | CKS | NICE  
2. Mind. (2021). How to talk about mental health.  
3. National Sleep Foundation. (2020). Sleep and Mood Disorders.

4. Bipolar UK. (n.d.). Sleep and Bipolar Disorder.  
5. Rethink Mental Illness. (2022). Understanding Bipolar Disorder.  
6. Mental Health foundation  
7. Mind UK

# KICKING OFF THE NEW YEAR RIGHT



**Steve Holmes,**  
People Partner - ESS

I've always loved Christmas - it's the perfect time to unwind, spend quality time with family and friends and, of course, enjoy all the food and drink (mince pies included!). But once the festivities are over, I'm often left feeling a bit down. January looms large with its colder, darker days and the inevitable post-holiday blues. Like many, I also find that overindulgence leads to a few extra pounds and an inevitable sluggish feeling, making the start of the new year even more daunting.

That's where Red January comes in! For the past 10 years, this fantastic mental health campaign has encouraged people to get active every day throughout January. It's designed to help us tackle the January slump by focusing on physical activity to improve mental wellbeing, at a time when many of us need it most.

I personally love starting my day with a morning run. It not only energises me physically but also helps me mentally prepare for the day ahead. The endorphin boost from exercise is a great mood-lifter, setting a positive tone for the rest of the day.

But the beauty of Red January is that it's not about running fast or far—it's about moving at your own pace. You can mix it up with activities that suit you, whether that's a brisk walk, a swim or even a gentle stretch. The goal is to simply keep moving in a way that feels comfortable.

I've previously taken on Red January with a team, which is a wonderful way to stay motivated, get active and improve mental health together. Our 'Sunday Run Club' became a highlight of the week, giving us a chance to get outdoors, exercise and chat about life - including our mental wellbeing.

So, if you're looking for a way to shake off those post-Christmas blues, I highly recommend giving Red January a go. It's not just about fitness—it's about feeling good, inside and out.

For more information visit:  
[RED January](#)



# MINDFUL MOMENTS

HEALTHIER MIND

## THE IMPORTANCE OF TALKING

TIME TO TALK DAY: 6<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2025

### INTRODUCTION

Talking provides a channel for individuals to express their emotions, whether positive or negative.

Verbalising feelings in conversation helps individuals to make sense of their experiences, thoughts and feelings, and allows for validation and understanding from others which is crucial for maintaining good mental health.

It can act as a form of catharsis and relief, reducing the burden of suppressing emotions and allowing them to build up and become potentially harmful. Open conversations about mental health will also help to break down stigmas, encouraging more people to seek help and support.



### HOW CAN I HELP MYSELF AND OTHERS OPEN UP?

#### Help yourself

Building a support network around you will help during challenging times and those that you open up to, whether they are friends, family members or professionals, may be able to provide a different perspective and offer solutions to problems you may have felt you couldn't face alone.

Through conversation, people can learn and share effective ways to manage stress, anxiety and other mental health challenges.

#### Help others

Picking up the phone or meeting someone for a chat can also help to combat feelings of isolation and loneliness, providing a sense of connection and belonging. Ask someone how they are twice.

### HOW MIGHT MY WORK BE IMPACTED?

Keeping your feelings bottled up can lead to you distancing yourself from other people.

You may find yourself not speaking to colleagues or avoiding getting involved in workplace events.

You may struggle to concentrate on specific tasks as well as avoiding socialising outside of work with friends and family.

### TIPS TO START A CONVERSATION WITH SOMEONE STRUGGLING TO OPEN UP

**Smile and make eye contact:** this conveys warmth and openness.

**Start with a simple greeting:** find an effective way to begin a conversation.

**Find common ground:** if you're in a specific setting or event, talk about something related to that context as a good conversation starter.

**Ask open-ended questions:** these encourage people to share more.

**Compliment something specific and be genuine:** it's a nice way to break the ice.

**Share something about yourself:** opening up about yourself can help the other person feel more comfortable and willing to share.

**Listen actively:** show genuine interest and ask follow-up questions.

**Be mindful of body language and non-verbal cues:** if the other person is engaged and responsive, that's a good sign to continue.

### SUPPORT

It can be hard to open up to friends and family, however if you are feeling stressed or low it is important to talk.

- Therapeutic conversations with mental health professionals, such as counsellors or therapists, play a crucial role in promoting emotional wellbeing and provide a safe place to open up and explore your feelings.
- **Mind** – call 0300 102 1234.
- **Samaritans** – call 116 123 for free, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

# THE COMPLEXITIES OF DISORDERED EATING

EATING DISORDERS WEEK: 24<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY – 2<sup>ND</sup> MARCH 2025

Disordered eating describes a range of irregular eating behaviours that may not qualify as a specific eating disorder, like anorexia or bulimia, but still indicate an unhealthy relationship with food, body image and self-perception.

Disordered eating, while not meeting the clinical threshold for an eating disorder, can severely affect mental and physical health, contributing to issues like low self-esteem, anxiety, digestive problems and weight fluctuations.

Both excessive eating and fad diets can be considered forms of disordered eating, although they manifest in different ways. Excessive eating often signals disordered eating patterns, where harmful relationships with food negatively impact mental and physical health. Fad diets often involve extreme or restrictive eating patterns that prioritise quick weight loss over balanced nutrition.<sup>1,2</sup>

In the UK, the prevalence of excessive eating, often associated with binge eating disorder (BED), is estimated at around 3.5% for women and 2% for men, making it the most common eating disorder.<sup>8</sup>



## Excessive eating or overeating

Involves regularly consuming more food than the body needs, often driven by various factors:

- **Emotional eating:** Many overeat in response to stress, loneliness or sadness, creating a cycle of temporary comfort followed by overconsumption.
- **Environmental cues:** Easy access to calorie-dense foods, large portions and social events can promote overeating.
- **Biological factors:** Hormones like ghrelin and leptin, which regulate hunger, can be disrupted by sleep deprivation or genetics, increasing appetite.
- **Psychological conditions:** Disorders like binge eating disorder (BED) involve repeated, uncontrolled eating, often accompanied by shame or guilt.
- **Dieting and restrictions:** Strict diets can paradoxically lead to overeating, as deprivation triggers binge episodes.<sup>2</sup>

Excessive eating can significantly affect both physical and mental health. Physically, it often results in digestive issues such as discomfort, bloating, acid reflux and constipation, as the digestive system struggles to process large quantities of food. Consistently overeating, especially high-calorie foods, typically leads to weight gain and obesity, which in turn increases the risks of type 2 diabetes, heart disease and some cancers. The metabolic cycles associated with binge eating, and any restrictive

behaviours that may follow, can disrupt metabolism, making it challenging to maintain a stable, healthy weight. Additionally, excessive consumption of foods high in salt, sugar and unhealthy fats contributes to cardiovascular strain, raising cholesterol and blood pressure levels, which heightens the risk of heart-related diseases. Over time, high-calorie, high-fat diets also lead to fat accumulation in the liver, which can result in fatty liver disease.<sup>2</sup>

The mental impact of excessive eating is equally considerable. Many people experience emotional distress, feeling guilt, shame or frustration, which can trigger a cycle of restrictive dieting followed by further overeating. When overeating is emotionally driven, it may also worsen feelings of anxiety and depression, as food becomes a coping mechanism that reinforces these mental health issues. Weight gain and body image concerns can harm self-esteem, which might lead to social withdrawal and other impacts on overall mental wellness. Finally, reliance on food for managing emotions, such as coping with stress or sadness, can foster an unhealthy dependency on food, limiting the development of healthier emotional coping mechanisms.<sup>1</sup>

Managing excessive eating can involve mindful eating, recognising emotional triggers, consuming balanced meals rich in protein and fibre, and seeking professional support like cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) or support groups such as Overeaters Anonymous.



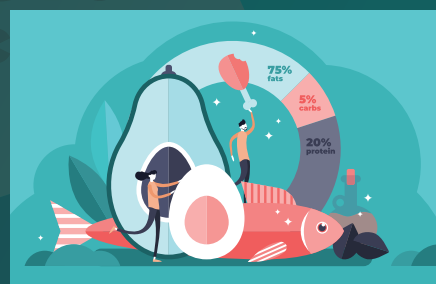
## Fad diets

Contribute significantly to disordered eating by promoting unrealistic and often unhealthy dietary practices. These diets typically promise rapid weight loss through extreme restrictions or by eliminating certain food groups. According to the British Dietetic Association (BDA), such approaches can lead to nutritional deficiencies and negative health outcomes.<sup>3</sup>

Fad diets continue to be popular in the UK, despite concerns from health experts about their effectiveness and the potential risks to long-term health. A 2022 YouGov survey revealed that nearly half (46%) of UK adults have tried a fad diet at least once, with younger individuals more inclined to experiment with these restrictive eating patterns. Among the most popular

are keto, intermittent fasting and juice cleanses. According to the British Nutrition Foundation (BNF), almost 70% of UK dieters reported trying a fad diet within the past year, underscoring their widespread appeal.<sup>4</sup>

The economic impact of these dieting trends is substantial. The UK's diet industry, driven by the popularity of short-term diet plans, supplements and products marketed as 'weight-loss solutions', was valued at around £2 billion in 2021. Despite this booming industry, the British Dietetic Association (BDA) and the NHS advise against fad diets, instead promoting sustainable lifestyle changes through campaigns like the BDA's 'Food First', which encourages balanced eating habits over restrictive approaches.



**Around 30–40% of individuals seeking weight loss treatment are estimated to have BED.<sup>8</sup>**

**70% of UK dieters used a fad diet in the past year and, overall, 45% of dieters turned to a fad diet.<sup>4</sup>**

**Approximately 46% of individuals have used a fad diet at least once.**



**In the UK, eating disorders – including anorexia and bulimia nervosa and BED – affect approximately 6.4% of adults overall (including clinical cases and those displaying disordered eating behaviours).<sup>8</sup>**

## Fad dieting can lead to various physical and mental health issues.

The NHS warns that restrictive fad diets can cause deficiencies in essential nutrients like vitamins, minerals and fibre, which can lead to conditions such as anaemia, osteoporosis and weakened immune function. Inadequate nutrition from fad diets can also result in fatigue and weakness, diminishing energy levels and affecting daily life and overall wellbeing.

Metabolically, extreme dieting can disrupt normal processes, putting the body into 'starvation mode', which slows metabolism and makes it more challenging to maintain or lose weight over time, raising the risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. Sudden dietary changes can also trigger digestive problems like bloating, constipation and discomfort.

Mentally, fad diets promote rigid eating rules, which can heighten stress and anxiety over food choices and weight, reinforcing feelings of guilt or shame around eating. Extreme

restriction can also contribute to disordered eating patterns, such as binge eating and emotional eating. The constant focus on weight and body image can erode self-esteem, leading to body dissatisfaction and impacting mental health. Finally, the restrictive nature of these diets may lead individuals to avoid social events involving food, fostering social isolation and feelings of loneliness.

Research published in the *Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics* (2021) found that only 5–10% of those who try fad diets achieve lasting weight loss, with most individuals regaining the lost weight within a year due to metabolic shifts caused by extreme dieting.<sup>5</sup>

Both excessive eating and fad diets disrupt healthy relationships with food. Addressing these issues often requires a comprehensive approach, including psychological support, nutritional education and a focus on balanced eating habits.

1. National Health Service (NHS). (n.d.). Eating disorders. Retrieved from NHS

2. Beat Eating Disorders. (n.d.). Binge Eating Disorder. Retrieved from BEAT

3. British Dietetic Association (BDA). (n.d.). Fad diets. Retrieved from BDA

4. British Nutrition Foundation (BNF). (2023). "Eating Habits in the UK: Fad Diets and Long-Term Effects."

5. *Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics*. (2021). "Long-Term Efficacy of Fad Diets for Weight Loss."

6. Mental Health Foundation. (n.d.). The link between diet and mental health. Retrieved from Mental Health Foundation

7. National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). (2017). Eating disorders: recognition and treatment. Retrieved from NICE

8. Eating Disorder Statistics: An Updated View for 2024 - National Alliance for Eating Disorders

9. NHS UK. (2022). "The Risks of Fad Diets and Their Impact on Health."

# SMALL GESTURES, BIG IMPACT

RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS DAY: 17<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2025

Modern lifestyles can be stressful as people juggle busy home and work schedules and manage the high cost of living.



These challenges are shared across many communities, creating a growing need for support and connection.

This is where small gestures and random acts of kindness can make a difference. A simple act—like offering a helping hand, a thoughtful compliment or covering a small expense for someone in need—has the power to brighten someone's day, foster hope and build resilience. These moments of generosity and compassion not only alleviate immediate burdens but also remind us of our shared humanity, helping to create a sense of solidarity.

A random act of kindness can create a ripple of positive emotions and enhance wellbeing for both the giver and the recipient.

## Benefits of random acts of kindness:

### Boosting happiness:

Kindness triggers the release of dopamine and serotonin, brain chemicals associated with pleasure and satisfaction. This creates a 'helper's high' for the giver and uplifts the recipient's mood.

### Strengthening social bonds:

These acts build a sense of trust and connection between individuals, even strangers, reinforcing the idea that humanity is fundamentally supportive and compassionate.

### Promoting positive ripples:

Witnessing or experiencing kindness often inspires others to pay it forward, creating a chain reaction of goodwill in the community.

### Improving mental and physical health:

Studies show that performing or receiving acts of kindness can lower stress levels, reduce feelings of anxiety and even support heart health by reducing blood pressure.

Random acts of kindness are a reminder that even small gestures can brighten someone's day and contribute to a happier, more connected world. Whether planned or spontaneous, these actions create a shared sense of positivity that resonates far beyond the moment.

## How did it make you feel?

*We live on a moderately busy road with only a small area at the front of our house before the footpath. While I was heavily pregnant, we received a delivery for a large heavy household item and the driver left the crate outside on the footpath by our house. Using his trolley, he explained that he legally couldn't and wasn't required to move it further. Despite clearly seeing my condition and my inability to handle it, he refused to help, leaving me in tears and completely overwhelmed.*

*At that moment, my neighbour from the block of flats across the road and his friend—whom I'd never spoken to before—noticed what was happening. Without hesitation, they came over and moved the item, not just into our front porch but all the way into the house. Their kindness brought me immense relief from the stress and left me feeling so grateful, especially as it reminded me that, even in a city as busy as London, there are thoughtful and helpful people.*

*The next day, I bought a box of chocolates to thank them and took it over. My neighbour was absolutely delighted and hadn't expected anything in return. We ended up standing outside, chatting for a while. Now, nearly four years later, we still stop to talk whenever we see each other—a lovely bond that started with a random act of kindness.*



**Leanne King,**  
Head of Nutrition and  
Wellbeing - ESS

*Many years ago, with a car full of luggage when my children were small, we set off to North Yorkshire for a holiday, only to find an issue with the car's brakes ten miles in. Following a recovery to the garage back near home, on a Saturday lunchtime as they were closing – I'll be honest, I did not hold out much hope of our holiday commencing that day! I had let the garage owner know of our predicament, and received what I thought was an immense gesture in itself – he stayed behind to help and was able to repair the brakes and get us on our way within a couple of hours. It did not stop there – he said he did not want us to pay that day as we had a holiday to get on and we could sort it on our return.*

*Kindness enough? I thought so!*

*I diligently ensured that I returned on our first day back to settle up and give a gift of thanks, only to be told that he would not accept payment and it was his pleasure in making sure we all got our holiday – he also checked if we'd had a good time. Garage owner Ray – we need more like you!*

*Another occasion was far simpler. After finding just the right change for an all-day pay and display car park and approaching the machine to pay, someone who had left before us made the time to get out of their car, take their ticket as they departed the car park back to the machine and carefully lodge it within the coin slot, ready for the next person (me!) to receive. It was perhaps only worth a fiver, but it meant so much that someone had taken time out of their day to return to the machine and gift their paid ticket to someone else, knowing they would never meet their recipient.*

*Their kindness has prompted me to do exactly the same each time I visit, in turn ensuring someone else gets a small win as they approach the machine to pay.*

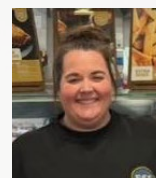


**Rob Fletcher,**  
Operations Manager -  
ESS



*When we were rolling out a new contract, I was working alongside some new colleagues and it happened to fall on World Kindness Day. I decided to buy our new colleagues a coffee and a biscuit to show appreciation and welcome them to our large team at ESS. They were really happy, said it had made their day and made them feel very welcome. Small acts of kindness like this can brighten someone's day.*

*Last year, on World Kindness Day, our team put out a campaign called 'Lean On Me'. This was all about showing kindness and letting people know that if they need help and support, they can always lean on someone within our team. There was a video to this, with colleagues singing along to the song which sent out a very powerful message.*



**Laura Bradley,**  
Catering Manager - ESS

# INCREASING AWARENESS OF ENDOMETRIOSIS

ENDOMETRIOSIS AWARENESS MONTH: MARCH 2025

**Endometriosis is a chronic and often painful condition in which tissue similar to the lining of the uterus (the endometrium) grows outside the uterus.**

This misplaced tissue can appear on the ovaries, fallopian tubes, pelvic lining or even other organs, causing inflammation, pain and sometimes fertility issues.<sup>1</sup>

Around 1.5 million women in the UK are affected by the condition, which equates to approximately one in 10 women of reproductive age. Despite its prevalence, it can take an average of seven and a half years to receive a diagnosis, underscoring the need for better awareness and understanding.<sup>1,2</sup>

The exact cause of endometriosis is not fully understood, but several theories offer potential explanations:

- One of the most widely accepted is retrograde menstruation, where menstrual blood flows backward through the fallopian tubes into the pelvic cavity instead of exiting the body. This backward flow may cause endometrial-like tissue to implant and grow outside the uterus.
- Genetics also plays a role - if a close relative has endometriosis, the risk of developing the condition is increased by seven to 10 times.
- Another theory involves immune system dysfunction, where a weakened immune response may fail to recognise and eliminate the misplaced endometrial tissue.
- Additionally, hormonal influences, particularly oestrogen, are thought to contribute to the progression of endometriosis, as the hormone is known to stimulate the growth of endometrial tissue outside the uterus.

Endometriosis can present a wide variety of symptoms, which often overlap with other conditions. Symptoms can vary significantly between individuals, with some having mild symptoms while others experience debilitating pain and complications. Importantly, the severity of symptoms does not necessarily correlate with the extent of the condition.

The most common symptoms include:

- **Pelvic pain:** This is the most prevalent symptom and can occur before, during or after menstruation. It can be so severe that it affects daily life.
- **Heavy periods (menorrhagia):** Many women with endometriosis experience abnormally heavy menstrual bleeding.
- **Pain during intercourse:** Pain can occur, particularly during deep penetration.
- **Painful bowel movements or urination:** This is more common during menstrual periods.
- **Infertility:** Up to 30-50% of women with endometriosis may experience infertility.<sup>3</sup>

The effects of endometriosis extend far beyond painful periods. Chronic inflammation caused by the growth of endometrial-like tissue outside the uterus can lead to several complications:

- Adhesions and scarring occur when bands of scar tissue bind organs together, causing pain and potentially impacting fertility.
- In some cases, endometrial tissue can form fluid-filled cysts on the ovaries, known as endometriomas, which may require surgical intervention.
- Additionally, endometriosis can affect the gastrointestinal system, leading to bloating, nausea and even bowel obstruction if it involves the intestines.<sup>3</sup>

Endometriosis can have a significant impact on a person's quality of life, not only physically but also emotionally. The condition can take a significant toll on mental health, with many women reporting feelings of frustration, disruptions to daily activities and anxiety or depression due to chronic pain and fertility challenges.

Prolonged diagnosis times can exacerbate these issues. A proper diagnosis is often delayed because symptoms can mimic those of other conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) or pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). The most definitive way to diagnose the condition is through laparoscopy, a minimally invasive surgical procedure that allows doctors to view the internal organs and take tissue samples.

**Nearly 95% of those with endometriosis report that the condition affects their wellbeing.<sup>2</sup>**

**Around 1.5 million women in the UK are affected by the endometriosis.<sup>2</sup>**

Once diagnosed, treatment options include:

- **Pain relief:** Over-the-counter pain medications such as ibuprofen or prescribed anti-inflammatory drugs can help manage mild symptoms.
- **Hormonal therapies:** These treatments aim to control hormones responsible for menstruation, thus reducing or eliminating periods and relieving symptoms. Common options include birth control pills, hormone-releasing intrauterine devices (IUDs) and GnRH agonists.
- **Surgery:** For women with severe symptoms, laparoscopic surgery may be used to remove as much endometrial tissue as possible. However, surgery is not always a permanent solution, as symptoms may recur.<sup>3</sup>

Around **30-50%** of women with endometriosis experience difficulty conceiving. The condition can lead to adhesions that block the fallopian tubes or interfere with egg release and implantation. While not all women with endometriosis are infertile, it is one of the leading causes of infertility in women. For those trying to conceive, in vitro fertilisation (IVF) may be an option. The success of IVF can vary depending on the severity of the condition and other individual factors.

Raising awareness of endometriosis is crucial. Early diagnosis and treatment can improve quality of life and preserve fertility. In the UK, organisations like Endometriosis UK provide support, information and advocacy for individuals affected. There is also a growing push for

better research and funding to improve treatment options and reduce diagnosis times. Endometriosis is a complex, often misunderstood condition that affects millions of women in the UK. Despite its prevalence, many women struggle for years before receiving a diagnosis. Understanding the symptoms, seeking early diagnosis and accessing appropriate treatment can significantly improve the lives of those affected.<sup>4,5</sup>

**One in 10 women of reproductive age are thought to have endometriosis.<sup>2</sup>**

**It can take an average of seven and a half years to receive a diagnosis.<sup>2</sup>**



**Leanne King,**  
Head of Nutrition and Wellbeing - ESS

*From a young age, I was crippled by severe pain during my periods every month –pain that was far worse than what my friends described, and I would often leave a lecture at uni and spend it sitting in the toilet. At first, I thought this was just ‘normal’ period pain, and I was prescribed medication, but as the years went on it wasn’t unusual for my husband to find me in a heap on the bathroom floor as I had passed out due to pain.*

*At no point was endometriosis ever discussed with me, and it wasn’t until my friend was diagnosed with it due to other symptoms (and then querying if I might have it too) that the question was raised in my head.*

*It wasn’t until I was 35 that I was finally diagnosed. My GP referred me to a gynaecologist due to my severe period pain, who suggested a laparoscopy to investigate the cause.*

*That’s when they found the endometrial tissue. Unfortunately, my symptoms persisted, and I ended up going for a second laparoscopy with a gynaecologist with a specialist interest in endometriosis, who removed further tissue and diagnosed me with a higher grade. Thankfully, since the operation I have not been in any sort of pain like before.*

*I was relieved to have an answer, however I felt angry at how long it had taken to get a diagnosis and at the lack of awareness of the condition for younger women. More research needs to be carried out to fully understand and support those diagnosed.*

1. NHS. (n.d.). Endometriosis. Retrieved from NHS UK  
2. Endometriosis UK. (n.d.). Endometriosis Facts. Retrieved from Endometriosis UK

3. NICE Guidelines. (2017). Endometriosis: Diagnosis and Management. Retrieved from NICE  
4. British Society for Gynaecological Endoscopy. (n.d.). Endometriosis Overview. Retrieved from BSGE

5. Women’s Health Concern. (n.d.). Endometriosis. Retrieved from WHC

# WHO DO WE TRUST WITH OUR HEALTH?

HEALTH INFORMATION WEEK: 20<sup>TH</sup>-26<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2025

**Health misinformation refers to the spread of false or misleading information related to health, which can lead to harmful outcomes.**

Over the last few years, the increase in health misinformation has been driven by various factors, including the rise of social media, global health crises and changing information platforms. This misinformation, often circulated through social media, websites or word-of-mouth, can have serious public health consequences.

Social media platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, Instagram and TikTok have played a significant role in amplifying health misinformation. These platforms' algorithms tend to prioritise content that generates engagement, which often includes sensational or misleading health claims. As a result, false information about health spreads quickly and widely, often outpacing verified facts.

This spread of misinformation erodes trust in healthcare providers, scientists and public health organisations. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has consistently warned about the dangers of an 'infodemic' - an overabundance of misinformation.<sup>1</sup>

This was particularly apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic when a flood of false information undermined public trust in health recommendations, diverting attention from effective public health measures such as mask-wearing and vaccination. A 2021 study by the UK's Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) revealed that 57% of people who encountered false claims about the COVID-19 vaccine reported it affecting their willingness to receive it.<sup>2</sup>

The pandemic also saw individuals promoting unproven remedies or conspiracy theories about the virus, thereby overshadowing effective health interventions. Influential figures, including celebrities and social media personalities, often unintentionally amplified these falsehoods, making it harder to counteract them. The erosion of trust in public health authorities, combined with political polarisation over health issues like mask mandates and vaccines, made the public more susceptible to misinformation.

The impact of health misinformation extends beyond physical health to mental wellbeing. False claims about health, such as exaggerated dangers of vaccines or conspiracy theories about the origins of diseases, can fuel anxiety and confusion. A study by The University of Oxford found that nearly 30% of UK adults who had seen

COVID-19 misinformation reported feeling more anxious as a result, highlighting the significant emotional toll that misinformation can take.<sup>1</sup>

Health misinformation can influence behaviour and decision-making in a variety of ways. For instance, nutritional myths have led people to adopt unsafe diets or rely on unproven supplements, putting them at risk of malnutrition and other health issues.

Technological advancements, including AI-generated content and deepfakes, have added another layer of complexity, making it more challenging for the public to distinguish between real and fake health information. The global nature of social media has also facilitated the spread of misinformation across different languages and cultures, creating difficulties for fact-checkers to effectively monitor and counteract false narratives worldwide.



In the UK, reliable health information sources such as the NHS, Mind, Cancer Research UK, Association for Nutrition (AfN), British Dietetic Association (BDA) and British Nutrition Foundation (BNF) provide evidence-based guidance to counter misinformation. The NHS offers trustworthy advice on a wide range of health topics, while Mind focuses on mental health and Cancer Research UK provides up-to-date information on cancer prevention and treatment. For evidence-based nutrition information, go to the AfN, BDA or BNF. Despite the availability of such credible sources, misinformation has led to the rejection of proven medical treatments and caused unnecessary worry and stress for many.<sup>4,5,6</sup>

**The World Health Organization (WHO) defines misinformation as the spread of false information without intent to deceive, while disinformation is intentionally false information spread to cause harm.<sup>1</sup>**



### Addressing Health Misinformation

Media literacy and public education are key components in minimising the harmful effects of misinformation, empowering individuals to make informed decisions about their health. Key steps include:

- **Cross-checking sources:** Trust reputable organisations such as the NHS, WHO or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- **Fact-checking:** Websites like Full Fact in the UK are dedicated to debunking health myths and providing accurate information.
- **Regulation:** Social media platforms have implemented policies to flag or remove misleading health claims. In the UK, the communications regulator Ofcom monitors posts.
- **Reliable Information Sources**
  - **NHS:** The NHS provides trusted medical advice and up-to-date health information on a wide range of topics, including mental health and chronic conditions.
  - **Mind:** A UK charity offering accurate advice on mental health, including dealing with anxiety and depression.
  - **Cancer Research UK:** Offers evidence-based information on cancer prevention, treatment and research.
  - **British Nutrition Foundation:** Provides nutrition education and information in simple terms.
  - **Association for Nutrition:** Provides regulated nutrition information and professional contact details for registered nutritionists.
  - **British Dietetic Association:** Provides regulated nutrition information and professional contact details for registered dietitians.

In 2020, a viral post confidently claimed that munching on bananas could shield you from COVID-19. While bananas might help you avoid cramps during a home workout, they certainly aren't a substitute for vaccines.

This sparked a wave of memes declaring bananas as 'nature's HAZMAT suit' and even mock debates over whether the peel or the fruit was the magical antiviral.



# BEYOND THE FINISH LINE: HOW CARDIOMYOPATHY CHALLENGES THE FITTEST

NATIONAL HEART MONTH: FEBRUARY 2025

Heart health is crucial for maintaining overall wellbeing. The heart, a muscular organ, pumps oxygenated blood throughout the body, which is essential for organ function.

Good heart health can be supported by lifestyle habits like maintaining a healthy diet, staying physically active, not smoking and managing stress levels.

Conditions that can threaten heart health include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity and diabetes. Proper management and prevention are vital for reducing the risk of cardiovascular diseases, including heart failure and cardiomyopathies.

Cardiomyopathy refers to a range of diseases that cause the heart muscle to become abnormal, altering its size, shape or structure and impairing its pumping efficiency. These changes affect the heart's ability to supply blood throughout the body, which can lead to significant health issues, including heart failure.

Symptoms of cardiomyopathy can include shortness of breath, fatigue, swelling of the legs or abdomen, chest pain and irregular heartbeats (arrhythmias). Causes vary by type and include:

- **Dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM):** DCM often involves an enlarged heart where the ventricles stretch and thin, weakening the heart's ability to pump blood. DCM can arise from genetic factors, previous heart attacks, high blood pressure or lifestyle factors like alcohol abuse. It is also the most common type, frequently leading to heart failure.
- **Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM):** Typically inherited, HCM causes the heart muscle (especially the ventricles) to thicken abnormally. This thickening can obstruct blood flow, leading to complications such as arrhythmias and, in severe cases, sudden cardiac arrest. HCM often affects young athletes, although it can develop at any age.
- **Restrictive cardiomyopathy (RCM):** Characterised by rigid and less elastic heart muscle, this rare form of cardiomyopathy makes it difficult for the ventricles to fill properly with blood. It is usually a result of other diseases, such as amyloidosis or sarcoidosis, that deposit abnormal proteins or scarring in the heart muscle.

- **Arrhythmogenic right ventricular cardiomyopathy (ARVC):** In ARVC, muscle tissue in the heart's right ventricle is replaced with fatty or fibrous tissue, disrupting the heart's electrical signals and leading to arrhythmias. ARVC is a genetic condition that often affects young adults and athletes.
- **Takotsubo cardiomyopathy (TCM):** Also known as 'broken heart syndrome', this condition is typically triggered by severe emotional or physical stress. It mimics symptoms of a heart attack but does not involve blocked arteries. The heart's left ventricle temporarily enlarges and weakens, usually returning to normal with treatment.

Although cardiomyopathy can develop at any age, certain types, like hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, are often diagnosed in young adults. Others, such as dilated cardiomyopathy, are more common in middle-aged people.<sup>1</sup>

Men are more frequently diagnosed with dilated cardiomyopathy, while both genders are equally affected by hypertrophic cardiomyopathy.<sup>1</sup>



## It is thought that risk of sudden cardiac death may be increased by up to 2.8 times in competitive athletes compared with non-athletes.<sup>8</sup>

While elite athletes are often considered to be extremely healthy, their intense physical regimens can place exceptional demands on their cardiovascular systems. Research shows that the combination of genetic susceptibility and extreme training can increase the likelihood of adverse cardiac events. These demands can expose or worsen pre-existing heart conditions, a paradox given the well-documented benefits of exercise.

Cardiomyopathy in this context is a particularly serious concern, as it is associated with sudden cardiac death (SCD), especially during

high-intensity physical activity, with conditions like hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM) and arrhythmogenic right ventricular cardiomyopathy (ARVC) being common causes of SCD in young athletes.

Despite the lower overall prevalence of these conditions in athletes compared to the general population, the risk is accentuated during intense exercise, making cardiovascular health a critical focus in sports medicine<sup>6,7</sup> and highlighting the importance of early detection and appropriate management.

**Cardiomyopathy is a significant cause of heart failure and sudden cardiac death, contributing to around 7,000 deaths annually in the UK alone.<sup>1</sup>**

The management of cardiomyopathy requires a multifaceted approach that focuses on treating underlying causes and alleviating symptoms to improve a patient's quality of life. It requires a combination of lifestyle adjustments, medications and, in some cases, medical procedures or surgical interventions, depending on the severity and type of cardiomyopathy.

Medications are fundamental in managing cardiomyopathy, particularly for controlling symptoms of heart failure, improving heart function and reducing the risk of complications.

- **Beta blockers** help to lower heart rate and blood pressure, easing the heart's workload and enhancing blood flow. Additionally, they are effective in managing arrhythmias, which are common in individuals with cardiomyopathy.<sup>2,3</sup>
- **Angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors** lower blood pressure by relaxing and dilating blood vessels, thereby reducing the heart's workload. This action can improve heart function and alleviate symptoms associated with heart failure, such as shortness of breath and fluid retention.<sup>4</sup>

- **Diuretics**, often referred to as 'water pills', help to remove excess fluid from the body. They are particularly useful for reducing symptoms of congestion and swelling (oedema) related to heart failure, which is common in advanced cardiomyopathy cases.<sup>3</sup>

- **Anticoagulant therapy** may be prescribed for patients with an increased risk of blood clots, such as those with dilated cardiomyopathy or atrial fibrillation. This helps prevent serious complications like stroke by reducing the blood's tendency to clot.<sup>5</sup>

Alongside medication, lifestyle changes are essential in managing cardiomyopathy. Patients are encouraged to adopt heart-healthy habits. Engaging in moderate physical activity can improve cardiovascular fitness. However, patients should consult their healthcare provider to develop an exercise plan that considers their specific condition.

Following a heart-healthy diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins can help manage weight and improve heart health. Limiting salt intake is also crucial for controlling blood pressure and reducing fluid retention.

Smoking and excessive alcohol consumption can exacerbate heart problems, so quitting smoking and moderating alcohol intake is highly recommended for cardiomyopathy patients.

## The importance of wellbeing and stress management

As already described, Takotsubo Cardiomyopathy (TCM) or 'broken heart syndrome' shows just how closely our emotional wellbeing is linked to heart health.

The condition is triggered by intense emotional or physical stress, highlighting the importance of addressing and managing stress and seeking emotional support to protect both body and mind.

**Globally, about one in 500 adults are estimated to have hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, making it one of the most common types.<sup>1</sup>**

**In the UK, cardiomyopathy and inherited heart diseases collectively affect around one in 250 people.<sup>1</sup>**

1. British Heart Foundation

2. American College of Cardiology

3. Risk of competitive sport in young athletes with heart disease | Heart

4. Return to play with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy: are we moving too fast? A critical review | British Journal of Sports Medicine

5. Sport Recommendations for Athletes With Cardiomyopathies, Myocarditis, Pericarditis - American College of Cardiology

6. Sports and Heart Disease | The ESC Textbook of Cardiovascular Medicine | ESC Publications | Oxford Academic

7. Coronary artery disease in athletes: An adverse effect of intense exercise? | Revista Portuguesa de Cardiologia (English edition)

8. Corrado D, Basso C, Rizzoli G, Schiavon M, Thieme G. Does sports activity enhance the risk of sudden death in adolescents and young adults? | J Am College Cardiology 2003; 42:1959-1963

# DO YOU PLEDGE TO INCREASE YOUR VEG?

VEGANUARY: JANUARY 2025

The Veganuary campaign was launched in 2014 to encourage people worldwide to try a vegan diet for the month of January.



Since then, more than 2,100 new vegan products have entered the market and the campaign has reached over 228 countries.<sup>1</sup>

Although those adopting a vegan diet full time are relatively low as a percentage of the UK population, Veganuary continues to pique public interest each year and triggers greater emphasis on plant-based ranges across the food industry.

As of 2024, there were an estimated 2.5 million vegans in the UK.<sup>2</sup>

Not sure whether you are ready for the jump into veganism or would prefer a more subtle shift? Here are a few approaches you can take on your journey:

## Less and better

Rather than eliminating meat from meals, some prefer to source more responsibly by prioritising higher animal welfare products. While this can come at a cost, it can be balanced by using smaller portion sizes.

## Meat mimicry

Often people's first step into meat-free meals is to replicate the taste and texture through plant-based alternatives. However, the nutrition content can vary and some highly processed soy-based products don't achieve the expected carbon footprint reduction.

## Plant-forward

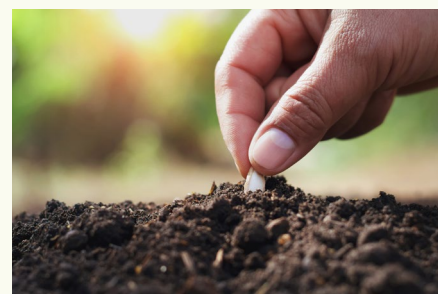
Sometimes known as flexitarian, this approach focuses on varying protein sources, introducing more meat-free meals which are centred around beans and pulses as well as hybrid meat and plant protein combinations that balance the best of both worlds.

## Global and vibrant

This approach is less focused on meat reduction itself and prioritises experimenting with global cuisines that have freshness and authenticity at their heart. Mediterranean, East and South Asian recipes are particularly known for a lower meat content without it feeling like a compromise.

## Committed vegan

Adopting a completely vegan diet is easier than it has ever been with more products to choose from across food environments. It is worth doing your research though, on where fortified products and supplements might be needed to boost nutrients naturally found in animal products.



Choosing a vegan diet has been linked to being more sustainable, but when looking at what defines a sustainable diet, environmental impact, healthiness and nutritional adequacy all need to be considered alongside food affordability and cultural acceptance of different diets.

In terms of environmental impact, diets based on animal products tend to result in high levels of greenhouse gas emissions, fresh water and energy use. Studies have shown that the more animal products that are removed from the diet, the lower the environmental impacts.

Vegan diets have the largest reductions in greenhouse gases and land use compared to diets consisting of animal products. Another study found that dietary changes resulting in lower animal consumption and more plant-based foods improved nutrient intake and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>3</sup>

The success of our food system relies on biodiversity for pollination, the maintenance of healthy soil and providing habitat for wildlife. Increasing the consumption of plant-based foods in relation to animal products is a way to help reduce the loss of biodiversity. This is achieved by reducing the pressure on agricultural land used to support the production of livestock.

Reversing the loss of biodiversity is essential to protect our food systems for the future. Looking on a global scale, being able to rebalance regional production based on biodiversity concerns may help to remove added stress on land which reduces loss of biodiversity.

Trading between countries and regions could better our food security due to increasing availability and stability of food at affordable prices.

A more sustainable ecosystem approach to Veganuary goes beyond adopting a plant-based diet for a month. It involves mindful choices that take into account the environmental, social and ethical impacts of the food we eat.

By buying local and seasonal produce, reducing food waste, choosing low-impact proteins and supporting ethical brands and farming practices, individuals can contribute to a more sustainable food system. Additionally, a focus on education and conscious consumption can help individuals become more responsible eaters and advocates for change.

With these mindful choices, Veganuary can be a stepping stone towards a healthier planet and a more resilient food future.

1. Veganuary - <https://veganuary.com/>

2. <https://www.finder.com/uk/stats-facts/uk-diet-trends>

3. Chaudhary A., Gustafson D., Mathys A. Multi-indicator sustainability assessment of global food systems. *Nat. Commun.* 2018;9:848. doi:10.1038/s41467-018-03308-7.

4. Exploring Benefits and Barriers of Plant-Based Diets: Health, Environmental Impact, Food Accessibility and Acceptability - PMC

5. Actions | Planet-Based Diets | WWF

# NATURE'S HIDDEN TREASURES

WORLD WETLANDS DAY: 2<sup>ND</sup> FEBRUARY 2025

WORLD WILDLIFE DAY: 3<sup>RD</sup> MARCH 2025

## Why do wetlands and wildlife provide vital ecosystems?

Wetlands are a breeding ground for plant life that helps to sequester carbon as well as housing around a tenth of UK wildlife. A key feature of wetlands is peat, an organic matter that forms when vegetation can't decompose, which removes carbon from the atmosphere and stores it. Peat also contributes to the role wetlands play in flood defences during rainy periods, water retention for summer months and, crucially, support for many species of birds and insects as well as voles and snakes.

**With one in four people in England experiencing poor mental health each year<sup>1</sup>, nature and the outdoors can be an important release from the stresses of daily life.**

**According to the Mental Health Foundation, 70% of UK adults said that connecting with nature improves their mood, 49% said nature helps them to cope with stress and 65% of people report an improvement in their mental wellbeing when near water.<sup>2</sup>**

As part of a wetland's maintenance, generally they should be left alone and, importantly, the peat left in place. Peat-cutting for fuel and garden compost is damaging to wetlands and can take years to reverse and restore. Awareness is growing of the need to prevent this type of activity with some wetlands being legally protected alongside protective and restorative activity from organisations like Wildlife Trust.



Wetlands offer quiet and calm as well as fresh air and provide a good opportunity for mindfulness. In addition to the benefits to our mental health, wetlands can facilitate physical activity such as walking and engaging with nature and habitat diversity through activities like birdwatching. Raising our heart rate and being out in nature can help to reduce the risk of chronic diseases and improve cardiovascular health.

The social and economic value of wetlands is often overlooked. Research indicates that restoration of wetlands could generate over £11 billion in societal benefits. These include improved public health, better water quality and reduction in flood risk. The UK's Blue Prescribing Project is where structured engagement with environments has been shown to improve participants' mood and overall wellbeing, and wetlands can play a role in this.

**Only 3% of residents in disadvantaged areas have access to green spaces within a 15-minute walk.<sup>3</sup>**

Expanding wetlands could help to address these disparities and benefit under-served communities.

Wetlands not only serve as vital sustainable drainage systems which mitigate flood risks but as great spaces for exercise, relaxation and socialising.

<sup>1</sup> Mind - <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/mental-health-facts-and-statistics/>

<sup>2</sup> Mental Health Foundation - <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-06/MHAW21-Nature-research-report.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/MappingAnalysis.aspx?text=In%20the%20200%20most%20disadvantaged,%2Dline%20distance%20of%201km>

# NEW BEE-GINNINGS THE POWER OF TRYING NEW THINGS

Happy New Year from the Defence Academy Market Garden.

Hopefully you are all feeling refreshed after the festive break and ready to embrace the new year ahead!



**Janet Thomas**  
Head Gardener - ESS

I hope you had the opportunity to spend some time outdoors over the festive break. It is so easy to spend our lives in darkness at this time of year - going to work in the dark and returning home in the dark - the benefits of getting some fresh air and daylight are huge.

I'm not much of one for New Year's resolutions - I'm pretty bad at keeping them, especially when they feel like things I'm forcing myself to do to 'be a better person', like eating more healthily, drinking less wine or going to the gym more... the list goes on! Instead, I think it's nice to think about new experiences or hobbies that I might like to try over the next 12 months.

Something I've always loved the thought of is bee keeping. As a gardener, I have long appreciated the benefits of bees and the important role they play in pollinating our crops. While I've always endeavoured to add bee friendly plants to my garden to attract them, I never thought seriously about actually keeping them - it seemed like something I wouldn't even know where to start with! But this all changed two years ago when we decided to keep bees here on the Defence Academy garden.

As there isn't very much happening in the garden at this time of year, other than the usual planning, prepping, tidying and weeding ready for the coming growing season, I thought I'd take this opportunity to talk about the Market Garden Apiary and the very steep learning curve that saw me become a bee keeper!

We currently have five hives on the garden but started with two in spring 2023. The first step of the learning curve was realising that it would have been a good idea to have started planning for the bees the summer before we actually got them!



Our management team on site made the decision to keep bees in winter 2022. Never one to pass up a challenge, I agreed, naively thinking I could get myself on a course before the two colonies we ordered arrived in May 2023. I now know that beekeeping courses are held in the summer, for reasons that have since become obvious to me - that hives are not opened during the winter or the cold spring months to protect the clustering bees trying to keep warm to survive.

When the bees arrived in May, I had read my 'Beekeeping for Dummies' book cover to cover and, fortunately, was supported by a more experienced colleague on camp. I subsequently completed my course, and we haven't looked back!

Over the last two years, I've been stung (a lot), our bees have swarmed (a lot), we've captured and returned them, and we've overthrown queens and replaced them with younger models with better genetics - I often wonder what my postie thinks when a parcel arrives at my door labelled 'live bees'!

On top of all that, we've harvested numerous jars of delicious honey and left plenty for the hard-working girls.

Despite the initial stress, I can firmly say that I LOVE BEE KEEPING! While it's had me scratching my head a lot, I can honestly say it's been one of the most fascinating and rewarding things I have done, and I expect I will continue to be a beekeeper for many years to come.

So, I guess the moral of this story is... if you fancy trying a new experience, even if it seems a little daunting, why not give it a go?

If keeping bees interests you, I highly recommend getting in touch with your local British Bee Keeping Association (BBKA). You can become a member without owning bees, most of them have training apiaries and run courses, they hold regular meetings to discuss all things bees, and you receive a regular newsletter and magazine packed with loads of information.

It's a really good way of getting some hands-on beekeeping experience without throwing yourself in at the deep end or splashing out too much money up front.

Here are some amazing facts about the wonderful *Apis mellifera* (western honey bee)!

- Honey bees live in colonies, with one queen, a few hundred drones (male bees) and up to 80,000 female worker bees.
- A bee produces only a teaspoon of honey over its whole lifetime.
- Bees are important pollinators - they move pollen between the plants that they visit, ensuring those plants bear fruit.
- Honey has a natural preservative meaning bacteria can't grow in it, so it's a great ointment for cuts and minor wounds.
- Bees can fly up to three kilometres to collect nectar and pollen.



- A queen bee can lay up to 1,500 eggs per day at the height of the season.
- In winter, the bees stay alive by huddling around the queen inside the hive, occasionally leaving the hive to 'go to the toilet'.

If the thought of keeping bees is a little too much, I think everyone would agree that we need to do as much as possible to protect these amazing little creatures, particularly our lovely native bees.

If you are a gardener, try to add as many bee friendly plants to your garden or plot as possible, even if you only have a few pots - plants like lavender and geums will really attract them.

It is also important to garden as naturally as possible - please avoid weed killers and pesticides as there are lots of bee safe alternatives.

Hopefully I've given you some inspiration to try something new this year, but if nothing else, I wish you a healthy and prosperous year ahead!

***Keep on growing!***

***Janet***

# UPCOMING WELLNESS WEBINARS

Looking to increase your nutrition and wellbeing knowledge?

Attending our wellness webinars can help improve your knowledge and awareness of lots of different health and wellbeing topics. Previous topics covered in 2024 include digestive health, heart health, plastic freedom and sleep and shift work.

Please join us for the below webinars coming up over the next few months:

## HABIT BUILDING

Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> JANUARY:  
2pm – 2.30pm



## KINDNESS

Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY:  
2pm – 2.30pm



## HYDRATION

Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> MARCH: 2pm – 2.30pm



If you've missed any of our webinars and want to watch them back, check out our YouTube channel @WeAreESS.



WELLNESS

# CHECK OUT WELLNESS ON OUR YouTube CHANNEL

Improve your Wellness by watching videos from our registered ESS Nutrition & Wellbeing Team.



# ASK YOUR NUTRITION & WELLBEING SPECIALIST

WELLNESS

Ask anything to do  
with nutrition, health  
and wellbeing.



**Leanne King**  
BSc (Hons), PGCE, RNutr  
ESS Head of Nutrition  
and Wellbeing

Drop us an email and  
we will get back to you  
as soon as possible.



**Lottie Jones**  
BSc (Hons), MSc, RNutr  
ESS Nutrition and  
Wellbeing Officer

If you have any queries, email and ask your ESS Nutrition and Wellbeing specialist  
at: [ess.wellness@compass-group.co.uk](mailto:ess.wellness@compass-group.co.uk)

Subscribe to **WeAreESS** YouTube channel.

© 2023 Compass Group Holdings PLC. All rights reserved.

