

# THE HEALTH CLINIC

Taking care of the physical health and mental wellness of all your family members

## THE BIG QUESTION

**Q. I'm constantly exhausted yet I find myself lying in bed at night with my mind racing and struggling to fall asleep. What can I do to help me drift off?**



**A:** By making just a few tweaks to your lifestyle and

bedtime routine, you can boost your chances of getting a better night's shut-eye. Most of us fail to prepare for sleep in the way we need – remember as children, it was, 'bath, book, bed'? Well, working or scrolling right up until we switch out the light means we're trying to fall asleep when our mind is in a state of stimulation and our body is still in stress response mode. We actively need to prepare for sleep by giving our mind and body the signal it's safe to switch off now.

**These tips can help get the restorative sleep we all crave:**

- Try a 10-minute meditation or breathing practice as a bridge between your busy day and sleep. (I like the Calm app.)
- A gratitude practice is a lovely and effective way to switch off from the stresses of the day and encourage better sleep: simply keep a notebook next to your bed and write down three things you're grateful for from that day.
- Consider taking a magnesium supplement, a powerful relaxation mineral, before going to bed. Or have a hot bath and add magnesium-rich Epsom salts and a few drops of lavender oil.
- Make sure your room is dark, free of clutter, and cool (around



**ABOVE:** Switching off – in more ways than one – will help you prepare for a good night's sleep

18 degrees). If you don't have black-out curtains, buy a sleep mask and see what a difference it makes. Try using earplugs or a white noise machine to block out disruptive sounds.

- Try to choose a wake-up time you can stick to within an hour, every day of the week (even on the weekends). This really does make a difference as it supports your body's natural rhythms.
- Expose your eyes to daylight in the morning. This supports your circadian rhythm (your body's 24-hour body clock), so encouraging a better night's sleep.
- Avoid screen time for an hour before going to bed. If you have to look at a screen, buy yourself a pair of special amber light glasses to screen out the blue light.

- Charge your phone or tablet outside of your bedroom (if you're telling yourself you need your phone to wake you up, invest in an alarm clock).
  - Finish dinner at least two hours before you intend to go to bed.
  - Leave a three-hour gap between exercising and lights out.
  - Avoid caffeine in the afternoon/evening. Keep an eye on the alcohol too.
  - Avoid sugary snacks – they'll raise your blood sugar, making it harder to fall asleep.
- Suzy Glaskie is an Altrincham-based functional medicine certified health coach, founder of Peppermint Wellness ([peppermintwellness.co.uk](http://peppermintwellness.co.uk)) and host of the Wellness Unwrapped podcast.**

## DID YOU KNOW?

### Manchester University's Professor Emma Crosbie has launched a national charity, Peaches Womb Cancer Trust

Womb cancer is the fourth most common female cancer in the UK, but until now there has been little awareness of the disease and no nationwide charity to raise funds for research. Now, Emma Crosbie, Professor of Gynaecological Oncology at the University of Manchester, has launched Peaches Womb Cancer Trust.

"There are around 9,500 new cases of womb cancer each year and until now there has been no womb cancer-specific charity in the UK. Womb cancer has been considered a 'good' cancer to get, if you will; it mainly presents with bleeding after the menopause, so if women go their GP and it gets diagnosed at an early stage it's treatable, but we still have quite a lot of women dying of womb cancer and very little media attention, very little fuss, very little research effort, and we wanted to change that."

According to Professor Crosbie, womb cancers picked up at an early stage can often be treated by surgery – a hysterectomy might be the end of it.

"If women don't know that abnormal bleeding needs to be checked out immediately by



their GP then they don't have the opportunity to come and be diagnosed and treated early. About 80% of cases are post-menopause, so these women generally know that they shouldn't be bleeding and they do come forward and be tested.

"Of course, in the first few years after the menopause they may not know that this isn't just a rogue period, or the bleeding may be very light and they put it down to a water infection and not realise they need to be checked out. One of our main aims with

**ABOVE:**  
Professor Emma Crosbie says womb cancer picked up at an early stage is treatable

Peaches Womb Cancer Trust is to really highlight that any abnormal bleeding needs to be checked out.

"There are very simple ways that women can be checked; an ultrasound scan to check the thickness of the lining of the womb will reassure most. Bleeding after the menopause is really very common and mostly it isn't womb cancer, only about 5-10% of the time do we find a cancer causing that problem, but it's that 10% we need to catch."

Peaches Womb Cancer Trust has chosen the colour peach to sit alongside pink for breast cancer and teal for ovarian cancer. By placing Peaches firmly alongside those already well known, Emma and her team hope to grow awareness and funds quickly.

"We want to start the ball rolling on fundraising for the charity. Money will be spent on raising awareness, educating women, GPs and healthcare professionals who may not realise that bleeding needs to be investigated either and also for research.

"The amount of money spent on womb cancer research is a tiny fraction spent on breast cancer or lung cancer, and we need to try and level it up a bit if we're to see any kind of progress for women who are getting this cancer." [peachestrust.org](http://peachestrust.org)

## Don't stress about... THE ONSET OF WINTER



Laura Bamber  
and Katy Brown

The world still feels very strange and uncertain, and we know many people are struggling to feel optimistic about heading into the darker months, but remember: our mindset, outlook and ultimately life experience can be significantly affected by how we choose to mentally approach something. This November, let's do as the Norwegians do and try to focus on what we can look forward to. Try this...

**Seek out beauty** – chase the sunrise and sunset, abundant colours are being served up by nature so make sure your eyes see it.  
**Add seasonal fun to your home** – decorate with conkers, pinecones, vases of golden leaves, pumpkins.

**Get outdoors** – exposure to daylight is beneficial to our sleep quality.

**Get cosy** – comfy socks, slippers, blankets, candles and real fires. This is the time of year to embrace 'hygge' and snuggling up on the sofa for movie night.

**Keep moving** – our bodies are crying out to be moved despite the desire to retreat. Try 20 minutes of yoga each day, join us on Instagram @thevibrancyhub for a library of free gentle yoga and meditation sessions.

**Laura Bamber and Katy Brown are co-founders of personal and professional life coaching business The Vibrancy Hub.** [thevibrancyhub.co.uk](http://thevibrancyhub.co.uk)