

Strength Starts Here

# Women's Health

SPRING 2025 | WOMENSHEALTHMAG.COM

**20<sup>TH</sup>**  
ANNIVERSARY  
ISSUE

**Do Pull-Ups at  
Any Age!**

**Your Full Body  
3-Step Plan**

P. 92

**Fast-Track Your  
Transformation**  
With This Hybrid  
Workout

**Why Women Are  
Obsessed With  
This Skin-Care  
Trend**

▼  
**"The Best  
Thing I've  
Ever Done"**

**Hilary Swank** on  
the decision that  
changed her life

SKINCARE  
*Super* POWER  
FOR YOUR **SHOWER!**



5+ INGREDIENTS for  
LUMINOUS SKIN

OLAY

*Super*  
SERUM  
BODY WASH

for Normal Skin

Serum Complex with:  
Niacinamide  
BHA  
Collagen Peptide  
Vitamin C  
Vitamin E

5

Visible Skin Benefits

- HYDRATES
- FIRMS
- SMOOTHS
- BRIGHTENS
- EVENS

© P&G 2025

INSPIRED BY  
OLAY'S #1 SERUM



OLAY  
BODY

# in this issue

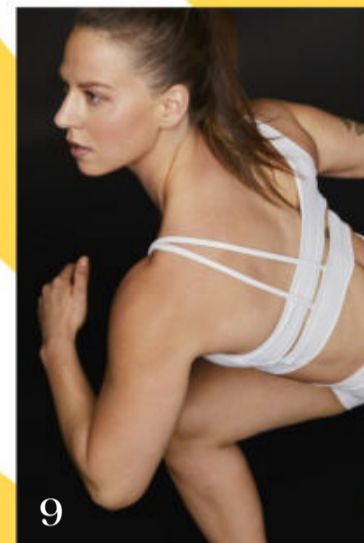
2 **Editor's Letter**

9 **Strong Start**

100 **Finisher**

Spring 2025

70



9

62 **Hilary Swank Is Exactly Where She Wants to Be**

The actor and mom on why life now, at 50, is the sweetest it's ever been.

70 **A Celebration of Strength & Sweat**  
WH turns 20 this year, and we're looking way back (and forward).

84 **Best in Show**  
Our team slathered, painted, brushed, dried, and more to find the most effective and *worth-it* products. Meet the 2025 Beauty Award winners.

92 **Raising the Bar**  
Want to finally nail that pull-up? You've come to the right place.

**Cover photographed by Jonny Marlow. Stylist:** Kristen Saladino. **Hair:** Kevin Ryan for Art + Commerce. **Skin care and makeup:** Fabiola using Dior Capture Le Sérum and Rouge Dior Lipstick. **Manicure:** Tom Bachik using Manicurist. **Production:** Crawford Productions. OYE Swimwear swimsuit, Jane D'Arensbourg hoops, Jane D'Arensbourg bands (left), Hilary's own ring (right).

“Making a change isn't a bad or stressful thing that your brain can't manage—it is literally its job.”

—Rachel Proujansky, PsyD, "This Is Your Brain on Change," page 50

84



30



CHELSEA CRAIG (KETTLEBELL), LIAN BENOIT (BLOW-DRYER), JUSTIN STEELE (EXERCISER), ROCKY LUTEN (FOOD).

*Women's Health* Vol. 22, No. 2 (ISSN 0884-7355) is published quarterly by Hearst, at 300 W. 57th St., New York, NY 10019. Steven R. Swartz, President & Chief Executive Officer; William R. Hearst III, Chairman; Frank A. Bennack, Jr., Executive Vice Chairman. **Hearst Magazines, Inc.:** Debi Chirichella, President; Regina Buckley, Chief Financial and Strategy Officer; Treasurer; Catherine A. Bostron, Secretary. © 2025 by Hearst Magazines, Inc. All rights reserved. *Women's Health* is a registered trademark of Hearst Magazines, Inc. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send all UAA to CFS. (See DMM 507.1.5.2); NON-POSTAL AND MILITARY FACILITIES: Send address corrections to *Women's Health*, PO Box 5173, Boone, IA 50950. IN CANADA: Postage paid at Gateway, Mississauga, Ontario; Canada Post International Publications Mail Agreement Number 40012499. GST #R122988611. Mailing Lists: From time to time we make our subscriber list available to companies that sell goods and services by mail that we believe would interest our readers. If you would rather not receive such mailings by postal mail, please send your current mailing label or exact copy to: *Women's Health*, Mail Preference Center, PO Box 5173, Boone, IA 50950. **Customer Service:** Call 1-800-324-1731 or write to *Women's Health* Customer Service, PO Box 5173, Boone, IA 50950.



## What would you tell your younger self if you had the chance to zip back in time?

**That's a question** we tossed around at the *WH* office as we put together this anniversary issue. Personally, I don't have many regrets or deep pearls of wisdom to share, but there is one specific choice I'd tell teenage Abby to reconsider: the belly button piercing. *Just don't do it*, I'd say. I promise you will never have a need for a bedazzled torso later in life, but you will be left with a tiny hole that never quite goes away and actually becomes even more pronounced with each pregnancy.

Oh, and *Stay out of tanning beds*, I'd add. Nothing good comes from those, either.

If only the younger me could have eavesdropped on our cover star, legend/icon/mother of twins Hilary Swank, who shares that she'd tell young Hilary to first chill for a second.



### Happy Bday!

It's a cake, it's a dumbbell, it's... both? Kind of. The frosting is real, the DB form is foam. (Page 70 has the outcome.)

"Take a breath." Then she'd suggest that li'l Hil take a good hard look at her decisions: "Really ruminate on the choices that you're making every day. Make sure what is happening is what you want. That's the only control we have—the choices we make every day."

Hilary Swank's advice—and there's more in the interview on page 62—sure would've come in handy back on that Jersey Shore boardwalk in the early aughts.

Assembling the 20th-anniversary celebration that starts on page 70, we reflected *a lot* on ourselves, our lives, and our health and fitness journeys, as well as the evolution of *Women's Health* (the brand) and the health of women in general over the years. There's been so much progress, but also regressions here and there. The ultimate result? Millions of small, and big, and slow, and fast steps forward.

The stories in here capture what makes *WH* *WH*: our coverage of the latest in health breakthroughs (see "The IUD Pain Revolution" on page 40, which tracks the checkered history of IUD insertion tools); our parsing of the buzzy conversations around culture-changing wellness topics (like GLP-1s infiltrating the running community, page 14); and our gathering together of the voices that speak of women's experiences around mental health (if you've never crushed a car with a battle tank to get over your grief, go to the essay on page 58).

While I can't do much about my regrettable body piercing now, I know that all the tiny holes, scars, and imperfections are what help to build a whole person and a healthy, rich life. And the sheer privilege of getting old enough to even reflect back on your younger self? That's the icing on any birthday cake.

We feel the same about *Women's Health*: fortunate, privileged, honored that you're here with us—and so ready to sprint into the next 20 years and beyond.

Abigail

**ABIGAIL CUFFEY**  
Executive Editor  
@alcuffey

## Let's Connect

A few of my favorite links and places in the *WH* universe.



### Strength Starters

▶ Join me on the Ultimate Pull-Up Plan, developed by trainer Tina Tang, at [WomensHealthMag.com/ultimate-pull-up-plan](https://WomensHealthMag.com/ultimate-pull-up-plan), and let's get our first reps together. Already in your wheelhouse? Great. Find all of our fitness (and food) plans at [WomensHealthMag.com/challenges](https://WomensHealthMag.com/challenges).

### Sports All Day

▶ Everyone watches women's sports. For all of the latest and greatest, plus exclusive features, chats, and Q&As with the most talked-about athletes on the planet, bookmark [WomensHealthMag.com/sports-athletes](https://WomensHealthMag.com/sports-athletes) and follow [@WomensHealthMag](https://@WomensHealthMag) on social (Instagram/TikTok).

### Power Play

▶ Trainer Lacey Lazoff discovered confidence and solace at the barbell rack after her life fell apart at 40. "*Strength training was my rebel yell from the battlefield that we, as women, have to change the narrative behind what we tell ourselves about who we are.... To sweat, grunt, have calloused hands and a double-your-body-weight deadlift commands presence and power.*" Read the piece at [WomensHealthMag.com/lifting-power](https://WomensHealthMag.com/lifting-power).

**Are ya 1? Are ya 2? Are ya 3? Are ya 4?** Okay, you get the idea. Our celebration continues all year long at [WomensHealthMag.com/20th-anniversary](https://WomensHealthMag.com/20th-anniversary) and on social ([@WomensHealthMag](https://@WomensHealthMag)). Come for the nostalgic look back at some of our favorite covers (hi, T-Swift) and stay for our best advice to help you hit your goals in 2025...or 2045.

# KENTUCKY

*Find what moves you*



**Hey Mother Nature, challenge accepted.**

From some of the region's best climbing to acclaimed hiking trails through epic forests, you'll feel invigorated by all the spectacular nature in our new Kentucky home. Plan your thrilling getaway today.

**[KentuckyTourism.com](https://KentuckyTourism.com)**

TEAM  
**KENTUCKY.**

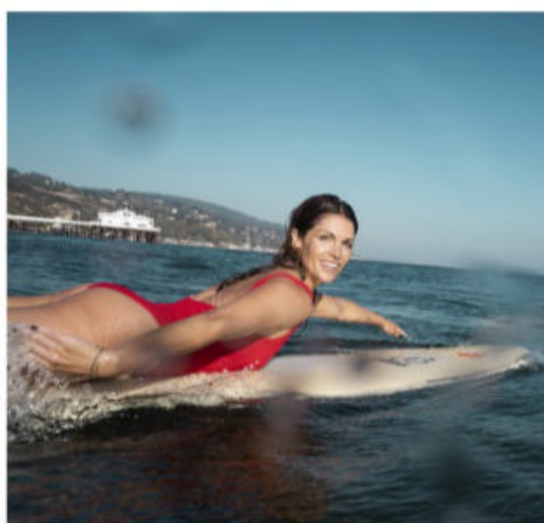
*New*  
**Kentucky**  
Home

SOUTHEAST MOUNTAIN GUIDES,  
CAMPTON



# Stronger, for Longer

"I'm tired of this narrative of limiting a woman at a certain age. I love that there's this resurgence of empowered women," says Kate French, who was the cover star of *WH*'s official first issue at the age of 20. Now 40, she's a mom of two, a working actor, and a Cali-girl surfer. And the love of fitness as a healing modality runs deep: "I've been doing yoga for about 17 years," she says. "I've dealt with a lower-back issue since I was young—impacted discs from running track—so yoga's been great to help ease that pain."



## Join the WH+ Community

for exclusive access to our latest fitness challenges, expert-authored books, high-protein recipes, and so much more. Scan below for a deal that scores you \$10 off an annual membership.



## Fit Flashback

We asked about your best memories and takeaways from *WH* over the years—and you delivered, via Instagram poll.

### Is there a *WH* tip or piece of advice that made an impact on your life?

"*WH* was how I started getting into shape. It was the only form of exercise education I had."

—Marsha, 34

"I learned that short workouts can be just as effective as long workouts."

—Kimberley, 54

"The importance of protein and how to make sure I'm getting enough!"

—Cheryl, 35

### What did your workouts look like 20 years ago?

"I did aqua aerobics! Now I do running, yoga, and weights."

—Gráinne, 41

"I overdid cardio. *WH* helped me discover strength training and pilates."

—Marsha, 34

### How have your views on health evolved?

"I want to be strong so that I can enjoy life as I get older."

—Gráinne, 41

"Balance not perfection."

—Jessica, 35

"Wellness isn't just about the scale."

—Velvet, 62



**Life lift needed?** Here's a teaser tip from the new *WH* book *Strong & Fit After 40*: Stay motivated by pairing workouts with an activity you look forward to, like listening to a podcast. Your brain gets a hit of pleasure, which you'll then associate with exercise. Also in the book, by Ashley Nicole, CPT (that's her on the cover!), you'll find a 28-day strength-boosting workout plan that shows you exactly what to do each day, with Ashley demonstrating every single move along the way.

# The future of cool, comfortable sleep is here

Sleep up to  
**15°**  
Cooler on each side<sup>‡</sup>

Meet the ClimateCool™ smart bed. The only smart bed in the world that actively cools and effortlessly adjusts to both of you.<sup>†</sup> So you sleep comfortably all night, every night.

sleep  number.

Sleep Better Together™

visit [sleepnumber.com/womenshealth](https://sleepnumber.com/womenshealth) | 1-877-832-9738

<sup>‡</sup>Based on internal microclimate testing. <sup>†</sup>Based on use of temperature features and our proprietary Responsive Air® technology.

# Women's Health

## ADVISORY BOARD

### CARDIOLOGY

**Jennifer H. Mieres, MD** Professor of cardiology, Zucker School of Medicine at Hofstra/Northwell; senior vice president, Center for Equity of Care, Northwell Health

### DERMATOLOGY

**Mona Gohara, MD** Associate clinical professor, department of dermatology, Yale School of Medicine

**Ellen Marmur, MD** Founder, Marmur Medical

**Joshua Zeichner, MD** Director of cosmetic and clinical research in dermatology at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City

### FAMILY MEDICINE

**Navya Mysore, MD** Primary care physician; sexual and reproductive health expert

### FERTILITY

**Sheeva Talebian, MD** Fertility specialist and reproductive endocrinologist, CCRM New York

### FITNESS

**Ariel Belgrave, CPT** Board-certified health and fitness coach; Under Armour athlete; creator of the L.E.A.N. Method; DEI wellness expert

**Ben Bruno, CFSC** Certified functional strength coach and private trainer

**Sohee Carpenter, MS, CSCS** Evidence-based fitness coach and certified sports nutritionist; author of *Eat.Lift.Thrive.*

**Betina Gozo, CFSC** Certified functional strength coach; NASM corrective exercise specialist; Nike master trainer; creator of *Women's Health's The Woman's Guide to Strength Training*

**Lauren Kanski, CPT** NASM-certified personal trainer; functional strength and conditioning specialist; kettlebell skills specialist

**Stacy T. Sims, PhD** Exercise physiologist; nutrition scientist; author of *Roar: How to Match Your Food and Fitness to Your Female Physiology for Optimum Performance, Great Health, and a Strong, Lean Body for Life*

### FUNCTIONAL MEDICINE

**Robin Berzin, MD** Founder and CEO, Parsley Health

**Frank Lipman, MD** Founder and director, Eleven Eleven Wellness Center; creator, Be Well

**Gabrielle Lyon, DO** Founder, Institute for Muscle-Centric Medicine

### GASTROENTEROLOGY

**Samantha Nazareth, MD** Board-certified gastroenterologist

### GYNECOLOGY

**Jessica Shepherd, MD, MBA** Minimally invasive gynecology, Baylor University Medical Center; founder, Her Viewpoint

### INTERNAL MEDICINE

**Keri Peterson, MD** Physician, internal medicine; medical advisor, HealthiNation.com

### MENTAL HEALTH

**Ken Duckworth, MD** Medical director, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

### NEUROSCIENCE

**Claudia Aguirre, PhD** Neuroscientist; founder, DoctorClaudia, Inc.

### NUTRITION

**Keri Glassman, RD** President, Keri Glassman, Nutritious Life; author of *The O<sub>2</sub> Diet*

**Amanda Baker Lemein, RD, MS** Registered dietitian; nutrition communications specialist

### ONCOLOGY

**Karen H. Lu, MD** Chair, department of gynecologic oncology and reproductive medicine, The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center

### PHYSICAL THERAPY

**Jen Fraboni, PT, DPT** Creator, The Mobility Method and The Optimal Body

### RELATIONSHIPS

**Chloe Carmichael, PhD** Clinical psychologist; founder, Carmichael Psychology; author of *Nervous Energy: Harness the Power of Your Anxiety*

**Shawntres Parks, PhD, LMFT** Licensed marriage and family therapist; cofounder, Parks & Powers Psychotherapy; core faculty, Antioch University Seattle

### EXECUTIVE EDITOR

**Abigail Cuffey**

### CREATIVE DIRECTOR

**Jamie Prokell**

### EXECUTIVE MANAGING EDITOR

**Abigail Greene**

MANAGING EDITOR **Laura McLaughlin**

DEPUTY MANAGING EDITOR **Janna Ojeda**

DEPUTY EDITOR, COMMERCE **Christian Gollayan**

EXECUTIVE HEALTH & FITNESS DIRECTOR **Jacqueline Andriakos**

SPECIAL PROJECTS DIRECTOR **Amanda Lucci**

BEAUTY DIRECTOR **Brian Underwood**

ENTERTAINMENT DIRECTOR **Nojan Aminosharei**

LIFESTYLE DIRECTOR **Lindsay Geller**

NEWS & FEATURES EDITOR **Currie Engel**

FITNESS EDITOR **Talene Appleton**

FITNESS COMMERCE EDITOR **Nicolette Accardi**

ASSOCIATE FASHION COMMERCE EDITOR **Lily Wohlner**

ASSISTANT LOVE & LIFE EDITOR **Addison Aloian**

ASSISTANT SOCIAL MEDIA EDITOR **Isabel McMahon**

EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS **Olivia Luppino, Sabrina Talbert**

### ART

ART DIRECTOR **Christine Giordano**

SENIOR ART DIRECTOR **Matt Ryan**

DESIGN ASSOCIATE **Leanne Mattern**

DIGITAL DESIGNER **Taryn Colbert**

ASSOCIATE DIGITAL VISUAL EDITOR **Jason Speakman**

### COPY AND RESEARCH

COPY CHIEF **Marli Higa**

RESEARCH CHIEF **Jennifer Messimer**

RESEARCH DIRECTOR **Andrew Gillings**

ASSOCIATE COPY EDITOR **David Fairhurst**

ASSOCIATE RESEARCH EDITOR **Judy DeYoung**

### CONTRIBUTORS

ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR **Amy Wilkinson**

JUNIOR DESIGNER **Briana Rengifo**

FASHION ASSISTANT **Alexandra Juric**

### FOOD

CHIEF FOOD DIRECTOR **Kate Merker**

DEPUTY FOOD EDITOR **Trish Clasen Marsanico**

RECIPE EDITOR **Susan Choung**

FOOD PRODUCER **Tina Martinez**

ASSISTANT EDITOR **Samantha MacAvoy**

### HEARST VISUAL GROUP

CHIEF VISUAL CONTENT DIRECTOR, HEARST MAGAZINES **Alix Campbell**

EXECUTIVE VISUAL DIRECTOR **Fabienne Le Roux**

DEPUTY VISUAL DIRECTOR **Dangi McCoy**

SENIOR VISUAL EDITOR **Emily Adar**

VISUAL ASSISTANT **Berkeley Brooks**

### VIDEO

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER **Dorena Newton**

CREATIVE PRODUCER **Elyssa Aquino Senior**

SENIOR VIDEO EDITOR **Kyle Orzovich**

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER **Janie Booth**

### BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, FITNESS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR **Ebenezer Samuel**

### FINANCE & OPERATIONS

DIRECTOR, ADVERTISING & MEDIA SERVICES **Elizabeth Bloom**

EDITORIAL BUSINESS MANAGER **Caryn Kanare**

### EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

**Richard Dorment**

### HEARST MAGAZINES ADVERTISING INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP

STYLE & BEAUTY **Elizabeth Webbe Lunny**

HOME & DESIGN **Jennifer Levene Bruno**

TRAVEL, TECH, CPG & EMERGING MARKETS **Chris Peel**

### CATEGORY LEADERS

**Haley Bachman, Corianne Carroll, Karen Deutsch, David Hamilton, RW Horton, Courtney Pappas, William Upton, John Wattiker**

### WOMEN'S HEALTH

VP, BRAND STRATEGY & DEVELOPMENT **Brent Williams Allen**

BRAND STRATEGY LEAD **Marnie Braverman**

SENIOR DIRECTOR, PUBLIC RELATIONS **Jaime Marsanico**

### HEARST MAGAZINES

CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER **Sherri Chambers**

HEARST MEDIA SOLUTIONS **Tom Kirwan**

HEARST DATA SOLUTIONS **Mike Nuzzo**

ADVERTISING REVENUE OPERATIONS **Rachael Savage**

MEDIA SERVICES **David Rockefeller**

### CIRCULATION

VP, STRATEGY AND BUSINESS MANAGEMENT **Rick Day**

### PUBLISHED BY HEARST

PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER **Steven R. Swartz**

CHAIRMAN **William R. Hearst III**

EXECUTIVE VICE CHAIRMAN **Frank A. Bennack, Jr.**

### HEARST MAGAZINES MEDIA, INC.

PRESIDENT **Debi Chirichella**

GENERAL MANAGER, HEARST ENTHUSIAST & WELLNESS GROUP

**Brian Madden**

GLOBAL CHIEF REVENUE OFFICER **Lisa Ryan Howard**

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR **Lucy Kaylin**

CHIEF FINANCIAL & STRATEGY OFFICER; TREASURER

**Regina Buckley**

CONSUMER GROWTH OFFICER **Lindsay Horrigan**

CHIEF PRODUCT & TECHNOLOGY OFFICER **Daniel Bernard**

PRESIDENT, HEARST MAGAZINES INTERNATIONAL **Jonathan Wright**

SECRETARY **Catherine A. Bostron**

PUBLISHING CONSULTANTS **Gilbert C. Maurer, Mark F. Miller**

**MAIN OFFICE** 300 W. 57TH STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10019 **ONLINE** SERVICE.WOMENSHEALTHMAG.COM **CUSTOMER CARE** 800-324-1731

**EMAIL** WHLCUSTSERV@CDSFULFILLMENT.COM **MAIL WOMEN'S**

**HEALTH** CUSTOMER SERVICE, PO BOX 5173, BOONE, IA 50950

**FOR LICENSING AND REPRINTS** CONTACT WYNDELL HAMILTON AT WRIGHT'S MEDIA, 281-419-5725 X152, WHAMILTON@WRIGHTSMEDIA.COM

**COPYRIGHT © 2025 HEARST MAGAZINES, INC. WOMEN'S HEALTH IS A REGISTERED TRADEMARK OF HEARST MAGAZINES, INC.**

**FROM TIME TO TIME WE MAKE OUR SUBSCRIBER LIST AVAILABLE TO COMPANIES THAT SELL GOODS AND SERVICES BY MAIL THAT WE BELIEVE WOULD INTEREST OUR READERS. IF YOU WOULD RATHER NOT RECEIVE SUCH MAILINGS BY POSTAL MAIL, PLEASE SEND YOUR CURRENT MAILING LABEL OR EXACT COPY TO: WOMEN'S HEALTH, MAIL PREFERENCE CENTER, P.O. BOX 6000, HARLAN, IA 51593-1500.**

**HEARST MAGAZINES INTERNATIONAL** SVP / GLOBAL EDITORIAL & BRAND DIRECTOR **Kim St. Clair Boddien** GLOBAL EDITORIAL & BRAND DIRECTOR **Chloe O'Brien**

**GLOBAL EDITIONS** AUSTRALIA / CHINA / GERMANY / JAPAN NETHERLANDS / PORTUGAL / SOUTH AFRICA / SPAIN / TAIWAN UNITED KINGDOM / UNITED STATES

WOMENSHEALTHMAG.COM



# BREATHE BETTER.

## SPRING BETTER.

**MAKE SURE XLEAR NASAL SPRAY IS PART OF YOUR SPRING WELLNESS KIT. XLEAR'S UNIQUE XYLITOL FORMULA:**

- Alleviates congestion.
- Cleans and blocks adhesion of bacteria and viruses to protect.
- Opens upper airways naturally.
- Moisturizes dry, irritated nasal passages.

**READY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?**

Learn more at [ShopXlear.com](http://ShopXlear.com)



SINUS CARE  
**Xlear**<sup>®</sup>

801.492.2100 / XLEAR.COM

A PRODUCT OF:  
**XLEAR**<sup>®</sup>  
PRO-ACTIVE HEALTH



**WTF  
IS  
NSF  
Certified for Sport®?**

The only independent third-party certification program trusted by more than 13 professional athlete organizations. NSF Certified for Sport® tests every batch of AG1 for 280+ banned substances, including stimulants, anabolic agents, and beta blockers. So you always know what's on the label is what's in the pack.

[DrinkAG1.com](http://DrinkAG1.com)



# Strong Start

strength ◀ beauty ▶ fuel ▶ health ▶ mind ▶

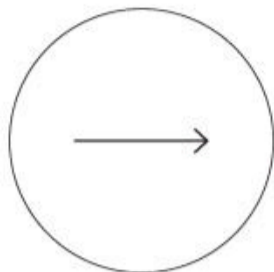


## Prime Conditioning

Metcon fitness is making a comeback—and new research reveals just how effective the workout method is for netting full-body results.

By **Ava Erickson** and **Jennifer Nied** Photographs by **Justin Steele**

## Strength



Picture this: a dimly lit workout studio, the pounding of sneakers as people furiously

push through burpees, all while a coach yells, “Ten more seconds!” as you yearn for that rest period on the other side. Does that give you the vibes of, say, a sweat-drenched Orangetheory class? Or Equinox’s cult-favorite MetCon3 class circa 2012? Or perhaps you’re having flashbacks to the first time you went to your local CrossFit box. That high-intensity, huffing-and-puffing style of workout is what many associate with the early days of metabolic conditioning: vigorous, no-frills, maybe even a bit old-school. But fast-forward to today and metcon has entered its resurgence era.

Over the years, higher-intensity workouts took a back seat for exercisers chasing low-impact or recovery-focused fitness trends. (Think slow and controlled sculpt classes or the social media–driven craze for low-cortisol workouts.) But the approach is making a return thanks to new scientific insights backing its effectiveness.

Recent research found evidence that metabolic conditioning workouts may help produce more substantial results in terms of fat loss, muscle gain, and overall performance when compared to traditional moderate-intensity, steady-state cardio. In particular, high-intensity interval training (HIIT), perhaps the best-known version of metcon, is being touted as one of the most time-efficient ways to get cardiovascular and metabolic benefits.

So, if you’re searching for the ultimate sweat to help you change your body composition in less time, metcon may be the perfect choice for you. Here’s what you need to know about its health and performance payoffs and how to integrate it into your routine.



### What "Metcon" Actually Means

Metcon workouts are a type of interval training that involves rotating through strength exercises and cardio bursts, with intermittent rest periods. They come in a wide range of styles, and you don’t necessarily need to go to a specialized gym to reap the benefits.

Another outdated misconception: that you have to gasp for breath every time you do metcon. “It’s a workout that has exercises that vary from high intensity to moderate intensity,” says Jenna Matroni, CPT, a New York City–based personal trainer at Equinox. Matroni’s metcon classes are always designed to exercise your cardiovascular system through short bursts of activity, but also to target your upper body, lower body, and core with traditional, controlled strength training.

### Why You'll Net Major Gains

The main benefit is right there in the name. “It conditions your metabolism,” says Heather Milton, CSCS, a clinical exercise physiologist at the Sports Performance Center at NYU Langone Health. While most types of exercise do this to a certain extent, metcon is especially useful for achieving it, she notes, because of the circuit style and the simultaneous emphasis on cardio and strength. “That is one of the best ways you can improve your aerobic capacity, your metabolism, as well as build muscular strength and maintain lean mass,” Milton says. “So if people are looking to lose weight or look more ‘cut’ or fit, [metcon is] a good way to do it.”

Metcon workouts increase post-exercise oxygen consumption as well, when the body continues to burn calories long after the workout is over,

which helps with shedding fat and improving metabolic function.

They also help to boost your VO<sub>2</sub> max—which is the maximum amount of oxygen your body can use while exercising and a key marker of health and fitness—while preserving muscle. To put this in a real-life scenario, when you're doing traditional steady-state cardio, like a long, slow run, you're building aerobic metabolism, which is important for stamina and endurance—but you're losing muscle and fat at the same rate. But “with metcon, you're utilizing the muscles in more of a resistance-training fashion,” Milton explains. “That's how we can get that marriage of improving VO<sub>2</sub> but also improving muscle composition.”

The upsides get even more nuanced from there. Low-volume HIIT can help people with type 2 diabetes manage their condition better (by improving insulin resistance and blood sugar) and boost cardiovascular health, per a recent study in *Frontiers in Endocrinology*. A short evening session of high-intensity exercise before a night of poor sleep reduced the next day's memory impairment caused by sleep deprivation, according to a study in *Sleep*.

## How to Work It in Safely

If you are new to working out, Milton recommends doing some type of resistance training and aerobic training on your own for at least four weeks to learn the technique

you need for basic lifts before diving into a metcon workout. That might mean a full-body workout with an exercise for each muscle group, such as squats, lunges, planks, overhead presses, bent-over rows, and other simple movement patterns, with weights you can handle for 8 to 12 reps. The reason: It's difficult to achieve proper technique when you're fatigued and working at high intensity. (Want to take out the guesswork? For a four-week workout pdf, head to [WomensHealthMag.com/beginner-workout-plan](http://WomensHealthMag.com/beginner-workout-plan).)

Metcon is not suggested as an everyday modality, since the higher intensity (where your heart rate is more than 80 percent of your predicted max) taxes your systems and requires proper recovery between sessions, says Milton. “If, during a metcon workout, you notice that your heart rate is at that level, that's a good indication that you might need up to 72 hours of rest before you do it again,” she says. (You don't have to rest completely; moderate-intensity cardio or resistance training should be A-OK, she adds.)

Matroni recommends adding metcon to your routine two or three times a week, or up to every other day if you're advanced and don't have a more specific fitness goal. Milton agrees: “For maximizing hypertrophy, or muscle growth, the muscles need more time under tension, or slower lifts with more sets and reps. And for those looking to focus on improved stamina and endurance, steady-state cardio is still recommended.”

## HIIT vs. Metcon: What's the Actual Difference?

High-intensity interval training is a type of metabolic conditioning—but not all metcon is HIIT. Metcon workouts typically involve lifting weights, but they can also include less-intense cardio than what you might picture with traditional HIIT (like cardio bursts in the form of jogging, rowing, and stationary cycling). “Metcon can be either HIIT or steady state,” says Matroni. Got it!



# Engineer Your Sweat

Apply these rules of metcon to build your own banger.

### GO BY TIME, NOT REPS

When structuring a metcon workout, you need to determine a set work period and a set rest period (say, 30 seconds on and 30 seconds off, or 30 seconds each of multiple exercises in succession before your rest period) as opposed to tracking a specific number of reps. This is the best way to improve aerobic capacity and gain muscle at the same time, says Milton. Time-based intervals encourage you to focus on keeping a pace, whereas counting reps may cause you to slow down as you get fatigued or to sacrifice form as you try to hit a number.

### INCLUDE VARIETY

Choose an exercise from each of these key areas for a holistic, efficient sweat: “Always incorporate a lower-body exercise, an upper-body exercise, a cardio burst, and any core exercise. You want a mix of full-body movements,” says Matroni.

### PICK MOVES YOU'VE MASTERED

If you are new to metcon or to working out in general, Milton doesn't recommend starting with complicated movement patterns, such as a clean or a snatch. (Metcon already encourages intensity, and pushing yourself through unfamiliar movements against the clock is a recipe for injury.) Start with more straightforward exercises (such as goblet squats) “prior to trying more intense power lifts,” she says.



# The Burn & Build Circuit

You'll work every major muscle group in this metcon workout from Kelly Bryant, CPT, a coach on the personal training app Future. Using one set of dumbbells (try 10 to 15 pounds), do each move for 30 seconds, then continue to the next. After you've done all exercises back-to-back, recover for 30 seconds. Then repeat the entire circuit twice more.



## 1 Pushup

**HOW TO:** Start in plank position, hands shoulder-width apart. Lower body by bending elbows, keeping them at a 45-degree angle to torso, until chest almost touches floor. Push through palms to return to start, maintaining stiff plank throughout the movement. That's 1 rep.



## 2 Squat

**HOW TO:** Stand with feet shoulder-width apart. Keeping chest up, back straight, and core engaged, push hips back and bend knees to lower body, as if sitting down into a chair. Go as low as you can while keeping heels on floor. Pause briefly at bottom, then drive through heels to return to standing. That's 1 rep.

## 3 Hollow-Body Hold

**HOW TO:** Lie faceup with arms extended overhead. Press lower back into floor to engage core. Lift head, shoulders, and legs off floor, keeping arms and legs straight. Maintain a tight core as you hold the position for 30 seconds.



## 4 Isometric Split Squat and Overhead Press

**HOW TO:** Holding a dumbbell in each hand at sides, step one foot forward as if performing a lunge. Keeping torso upright and core engaged, lower body until front thigh is parallel to floor and back knee is just above floor. Maintain a static position at the bottom of this split squat as you press the weights overhead, extending arms fully. Pause in the overhead press, then lower weights to shoulders. Step front foot back to return to start. That's 1 rep. Repeat for 30 seconds on each side.



## 5 Hang Clean

**HOW TO:** Stand with feet shoulder-width apart, holding dumbbells in front of thighs. Hinge forward at hips, keeping back straight as you lower dumbbells to knees. Straighten through hips and knees explosively to power dumbbells upward (a). As dumbbells reach chest, rotate wrists and catch weights as you lower into a squat. Stand up fully, bringing dumbbells to shoulders (b). Lower dumbbells back down to thighs. That's 1 rep.



## 6 Push Press

**HOW TO:** Stand with feet shoulder-width apart, holding dumbbells at shoulders. Bend knees slightly, then explosively extend hips and legs while pressing dumbbells overhead. Lower dumbbells back to shoulders. That's 1 rep.

Systane®  
PRESENTS



# MULTI-SYMPTOM DRY EYE RELIEF

STARRING **TINA THE TIRED ONE**, **DREW THE DRY ONE** AND **IRENE THE IRRITATED ONE**.  
CO-STARRING **THE SORE ONE**, **THE BURNING ONE**, **THE STINGING ONE** AND **THE WATERY ONE**.

Systane Complete's preservative-free formula lasts up to 8 hours.

**OPEN YOUR EYES TO LASTING RELIEF.**

© 2024 Alcon Inc. US-SYX-2400012



**\$3 Off**

Any ONE (1) SYSTANE®  
Lubricant Eye Drops  
(8ml or Larger)

EXPIRATION DATE 06/30/2025

030065-107929



Coupon void if altered, copied, sold, purchased, transferred, exchanged or where prohibited by law. CONSUMER: Limit one coupon per specified item(s) purchased. This coupon good only on product sizes and varieties indicated. RETAILER: ALCON VISION, LLC will reimburse you face value plus 8¢, if submitted in compliance with ALCON VISION, LLC Coupon Redemption Policy, available upon request. Consumer must pay sales tax. Cash value 1/20 cent. Good only in USA. Mail to: Inmar Brand Solutions Dept. 30065, Mfr Rcv Office, 801 UNION PACIFIC BLVD STE 5, LAREDO TX 78045-9475.

# GLP-1s: A Performance Play?

The weight-loss and diabetes medications have sparked a heated conversation in the running community.

By **Anna Medaris**

Shannon Ford used to go to bed dreaming about what she'd eat for breakfast and finish her morning meal fixating on what she'd have for lunch. No matter how much she ate, she never felt satisfied. But after starting a non-FDA-approved GLP-1 agonist—an injectable drug similar to the diabetes drug Ozempic and the weight-loss drug Wegovy—in January of 2023, "the appetite absolutely vanished right away," she says.

Ford lost 80 pounds in just over a year and a half, and running—something she'd avoided since childhood—took on a new appeal.

"Once I realized I could run, I was like, 'I'm going to run a marathon,'" says Ford, a 45-year-old child abuse detective in Medford, Oregon. She followed Peloton's Road to Your 26.2 training program, and despite briefly developing anemia from underfueling thanks to the appetite-crushing medication, she completed her first marathon in September 2023. A new obsession was born.

Now, instead of feeling consumed with thoughts of food, Ford devours running podcasts, plans her weeks around her runs, and buys "a ridiculous amount" of running shoes. She recently completed her second marathon, and while she barely missed her mile pace goal of 8:30, she still beat her prior pace of about 12 minutes and busted her previous marathon PR by 30 minutes. Right now, she's maintaining her weight loss on a less-frequent

dose of the GLP-1 (taking it every two to three weeks) and occasionally running half-marathons.

Though she doesn't know how her body will handle the drug long-term—and experts caution against non-FDA-approved varieties—Ford accepts that she may be on it for the rest of her life. (Research suggests that stopping the drug makes the weight come back.) "Sometimes I still wonder, *10 years from now, am I going to regret this?*" she says. "I don't know. Right now, I'm okay."

Ford is certainly not alone. While there's no clear data on exactly how many people are mixing running with weight-loss and diabetes medications like Mounjaro, Ozempic, and Wegovy—referred to as GLP-1s, GLP-1 agonists, or GLP-1/GIP receptor agonists—*WH* spoke with several women who, like Ford, discovered running (or better running times) while on them. More will likely join them: About 9 percent of the U.S. population is predicted to be taking the drugs by 2030, per recent research from J.P. Morgan.

## The Current Landscape

Certain GLP-1 meds, like Ozempic, are FDA-approved for people with type 2 diabetes or kidney disease. Others, like Wegovy, are approved for weight loss in patients with obesity or who are overweight with a weight-related condition, like high blood pressure. Still, plenty are prescribed off-label, and people are finding work-arounds—like fibbing about their weight to virtual doctors—to access them.

And stigmas persist—especially in the running community, where good ol' grit is valued over a perceived "quick fix" to nail PRs. But sports and nutrition experts say having an honest discussion about the drugs' potential impact in the running world is important since



## Fitness World Infiltration

Technically, GLP-1s should be prescribed along with lifestyle changes, like a healthy diet and exercise.

So it makes sense that wellness businesses are introducing GLP-1s to their offerings.

Gym chains, like Equinox, have launched specific GLP-1 support programs. Life Time, a health club, now has a clinic that offers GLP-1s alongside personal training and other fitness services.

the meds' depletion of muscle mass and appetite could be a recipe for injury and eating disorders in athletes. They also worry that runners without much weight to lose might abuse the drugs in search of faster times—all the while subjecting higher-weight runners to even more scrutiny and shame.

"There's such a pressure to look a certain way because you're a triathlete or you're a marathoner but you don't quote-unquote 'look' like one," says Jennifer O'Donnell-Giles, RDN, a sports dietitian and running and triathlon coach in Ridgefield, Connecticut. While she wishes the drugs weren't as popular as they are, she's accepted that they are here to stay. "My whole philosophy is to help keep my athletes who are on it as healthy as possible, since they made this decision."

## It's a Numbers Game

It's easy to see why everyday runners might get faster on GLP-1s. After all, runner math reasons that every extra pound slows you down by one to two seconds per mile, and there's legit (though imperfect) research to back this up.

When runners were made 10 percent lighter via a series of pulleys, they improved their 3-K race times by 5.2 percent, running 2.4 seconds faster for each pound lost, per one small study presented at an American College of Sports Medicine conference. This is partly because your energy mostly goes toward supporting your body weight while running—not driving it forward, per separate research in the *Journal of Experimental Biology*.

But real-world weight loss is messier. If it's the result of losing muscle or fueling inadequately—both nearly guaranteed on GLP-1s—it may slow you down at first. Meds like Ozempic work by mimicking the body's GLP-1 hormone (or GLP-1 and GIP for Mounjaro), which triggers the release of insulin, lowering blood sugar. They also suppress appetite, slow digestion, and boost satiety, leading to quick weight loss. But this can easily result in malnourishment if the person isn't eating enough while doing a hard physical activity. The drugs can also seriously cut into lean mass (like muscle), with that making up as much as 60 percent of the weight loss, studies show. "[When] you lose muscle mass, you lose power, speed, bone density, and metabolism," O'Donnell-Giles says.

### GLP-1s in the Wild

● ● ●  
Kim Scharoff, 49, a speech-language pathologist and school administrator on Long Island, did her first Couch to 5K program 12 years ago and has since run 101 half-marathons. But even with all that running, she couldn't keep her weight down to a healthy level. She started Mounjaro in February 2023. "When I was losing all the weight, it was a shit show. I didn't feel great," says Scharoff, whose prescription is covered by insurance because of her polycystic ovary syndrome.

She remembers sitting at dinner before one 10-miler, struggling to choke down enough food to get through the next day's race. "I knew I hadn't eaten enough, but I felt like I couldn't eat anymore," she says.

After about six months on the drug, she was 50 pounds lighter and had learned what sorts of nutritional fuel worked for her body—like fruit snacks, not gels, for carbs during races. She also added two weekly lifting sessions to her schedule. Six more months passed and Scharoff, who typically completed half-marathons in about three hours, was markedly faster. When she crossed the finish line of her 96th half-marathon, in April 2024, the clock read 2:43, a personal best.

"Now that I've solidified the weight loss and I've been lifting weights more than I used to, I'm seeing nothing but a positive impact on my running," Scharoff says. It just took some trial and error to find what worked for her.

Beth (not her real name), a 37-year-old human resources professional in Florida with type 1 diabetes, had a similar experience. She secured an Ozempic prescription

in 2022 as she began training for her second marathon. Her doctor said the medication could possibly help with weight loss and disease management, even though it's only approved for type 2 diabetes.

During her first weeks on the injection, Beth suffered from dizziness and nausea so severe she wondered if she was pregnant. She could barely stomach more than a few bites of food. Gradually, her body adjusted, and she resumed training. Always a mindful eater because of her diabetes, she found that the drug helped her eat smaller portions. She also learned more about proper fueling and invested in better running shoes.

Within three months, she'd lost 30 pounds, and after her third marathon, in November of 2023, she qualified for Boston. "I lost all that weight, so I had less to carry," she says. "That's just facts."

### Medical Necessity or Performance Enhancer?

● ● ●  
There's a stark difference between seeing your running improve as a result of taking a GLP-1 for disease management and taking one just to shave minutes off your mile time.

But there are rumblings that some runners are considering using them this way. In one Facebook running group, an anonymous poster training for the Boston Marathon polled the group's nearly 7,000 members: "I haven't done a ton of research yet on runners and Ozempic but just curious if anyone has done this? I am not overweight, but have that 10ish lbs that I would love to fall off," they wrote.

Don't do it, most experts caution. This approach "seems extreme to me," says Nancy Williams, ScD, a professor of kinesiology and





physiology at the Pennsylvania State University who studies energy balance, reproductive function, bone health, and exercise performance. It can also put you at risk of losing essential nutrients and fat as well as critical skeletal muscle mass, adds Elizabeth Sharp, MD, an internal medicine physician. Plus, it may not work:

In a letter to the *Fuel for the Sole* podcast, one male runner admitted snagging an Ozempic prescription to lose weight and speed up. The results were disastrous: His resting heart rate shot up, which “seriously messed with” his sleep, recovery, and running. He also experienced vomiting and diarrhea. After quitting the meds, “my running recovered and the weight came back, because nothing about how I lived actually changed,” he said.

People using the drugs for medical reasons can still face health risks and running roadblocks. In addition to potentially causing nutrition issues and muscle loss, the drugs can significantly reduce bone mineral density, per new research in *JAMA Network Open*. That’s especially concerning for female athletes, who may already be at risk for relative energy deficiency in sport (RED-S) or female athlete triad (FAT), a condition involving undereating, missing periods, and low bone mineral density. “I can see where an athlete would benefit from losing body mass to a certain extent, but then there’s a danger in becoming too energy deficient and losing too much body weight,” Williams says.

Another concern: Endurance athletes are typically striving to keep their resting heart rate—a marker of fitness and recovery ability—low, but one clinical trial of Ozempic showed that the drug

increases it one to six beats per minute. Beth, for one, is considering stopping the drug for this reason. “If I want to be able to push myself harder and faster, I don’t want my heart to explode,” she says.

Plus, both exercise and GLP-1s can lower blood sugar; together, they put athletes at risk for hypoglycemia, a dangerous condition that can come with dizziness, an irregular heartbeat, loss of coordination, and other symptoms.

Exactly how the drugs could affect a runner’s cardiovascular system—which is already being taxed during a major feat like a marathon—is “very patient specific,” Dr. Sharp says. “This is one of the reasons that it’s very important to be under the care of a physician when taking prescribed medication.”

Perhaps one of the most widespread concerns is that the medications could become a gateway to eating disorders. “With running, there are land mines everywhere: Once you start losing weight or once you start getting faster, it’s really hard not to obsess about it and keep that chase up,” says Kelly Roberts, a Brooklyn-based running coach and founder of Badass Lady Gang, a running community for recreational athletes.

Then there’s a more day-to-day issue. Namely, gastrointestinal distress. Many runners already dread race-day diarrhea or constipation, and some organize their training around bathroom breaks. Drugs like Wegovy can exacerbate these problems.

Roberts, for her part, worries about the psychological side effects. “There is already this general underlying tone that slower runners or bigger runners just aren’t trying hard enough,” she says. “My biggest fear is that so many people will feel like they should take these drugs because they are eating really healthy and they are working out a lot, and they think, *If I can’t beat them, join them.*”

## How to Run Safely While on a GLP-1

It is possible to pick up, stick to, or even progress in the sport while taking these meds.

### Get a team of experts.

Working with a doctor, dietitian, and therapist can “pull all the pieces together in a healthy way,” says Kelly Jones, RD.

### Play the long game.

Experts caution against major weight loss while training for extreme activities (like a marathon), which introduces too many variables at once.

### Pair strength training with protein.

This helps maintain muscle and prevent bone density loss. Aim for one gram of protein per pound of body weight.

### Don't forget micronutrients.

Periods and the sport’s pounding motion can deplete iron, so focus on your intake. Pair iron-rich foods with foods high in vitamin C to boost absorption.

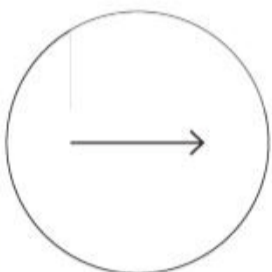
### Consume plenty of calories.

If you don’t eat enough total cal to support your activity level, your body will convert protein into energy instead of using it for muscle growth.

# Creating Space for Calm and Clarity

Soccer star Sarah Gorden developed a game-changing routine that works on the pitch—and in daily life.

By **Amanda Lucci**



Professional soccer player Sarah Gorden's morning routine is her sanctuary—but that wasn't always the case. Back in 2016, newly drafted into the National Women's Soccer League and a single mom to a 2-year-old, she was consumed by anxiety. She "didn't know what to do with" her feelings, she says, so she added yoga and meditation to her mornings as a way to process the chaos in her head. Initially, her goal was clarity on the pitch: As a center back for

Angel City Football Club, she's the last line of defense before the goalkeeper, so it's critical to keep her composure. Armed with an outlet for anxious thoughts, she learned to accept any situation for what it is and move forward—a practice she applies when surveying the field, but also in her daily life. "As athletes, we have no choice but to confront our mental health," she says. "It affects our everyday performance." She's passionate about sharing her mindfulness practice with others and even started a nonprofit, HoodSpace, to help girls and women of color unlock those skills. These are her best tips.

- 1 Start With Movement**
  - ▶ Stiffness in Sarah's body often translates to stiffness in her mind, so she begins her day with 10 to 15 minutes of feel-good yoga flow. "I follow my body in what it feels like it needs," she says.
- 2 Make the Time**
  - ▶ Sarah is 100 percent devoted to her a.m. routine—including yoga, meditation, breathwork, and journaling—and she can get it done in 40 minutes before her son wakes up. "There's never a day where I'm like, 'I don't have time,'" she says. "I'm committing to this."
- 3 Expect the Unexpected**
  - ▶ "There are still so many times where it gets chaotic on the field and all the mindfulness stuff goes out the window," she says. To get back to center, she quickly assesses (and accepts) the situation—then takes care of business.
- 4 Embrace Nonlinear Progress**
  - ▶ When Sarah tore her ACL in 2022, her routine suffered too. Once she found her way back to herself, her dedication to mental health practices was even stronger. "You can never bypass the pain," she says. "Sometimes it's a good thing. You take a few steps back to take more steps forward."
- 5 Try Small Changes**
  - ▶ Sarah kicked off her journey with the Headspace app and free yoga videos on YouTube. Most important, she stayed consistent. "I did 10-minute meditations every day," she says, "no matter how I felt."

# HIGH-PROTEIN NUTRITION

TO SUPPORT MORE THAN MUSCLE

ENSURE® MAX PROTEIN  
USERS REPORTED FEELING  
**MORE ENERGY**

IN JUST  
**2**  
WEEKS\*

**30g**  
PROTEIN

**1g**  
SUGAR

**25**  
VITAMINS &  
MINERALS



## ENERGY METABOLISM

8 B vitamins, including  
vitamin B<sub>12</sub> and folate



## MUSCLE HEALTH

30g protein to feed  
muscles up to 7 hours†



## BONE HEALTH

Excellent source of calcium  
and vitamin D



## IMMUNE HEALTH

Protein, zinc, vitamins A, C, D, E,  
and selenium



**SAVE \$4 INSTANTLY**  
[ensure.com/instantcoupon](https://ensure.com/instantcoupon)



Use as part of a healthy diet.

\* Survey of 1038 consumers 50+; those who drank 1 Ensure Max Protein shake per day for 14 days and reported feeling more energy vs control group. Ensure Max Protein has 150 calories, 30g protein, and 8 B vitamins for energy metabolism.

† Fast- and slow-digesting protein.

©2025 Abbott 202521542/February 2025 LITHO IN USA

**Ensure**  
STRENGTH &  
ENERGY

**Abbott**  
*life. to the fullest.®*

# 40 Years in Action with Australian Gold



Want all eyes on you at the beach or pool? The relaunched **Solar Dust™ Dark Tanning Power Gel** gives you a rich, deep tan while you show off your expert moves. Apply after SPF and watch the golden flakes give you a bronzed finish.



**Instant Bronzer with SPF** provides immediate gorgeous color while also protecting skin with every movement. The lotion, continuous sprays, and spray gels give a natural bronze tint that protects and enhances your skin.



The new **Mineral Collection** features all the benefits of sunscreen, but without the heaviness or dryness; a vanishing nude tint helps combat the white cast typically associated with mineral sunscreens. Hypoallergenic, dermatologically tested, fragrance free, and formulated with shea butter to help boost hydration for a variety of skin types and tones, it's a new go-to.



The **Extreme Sport SPF Collection** works hard to keep you protected, cool, and smelling great. Broad-spectrum SPF 30 and 50 offer quick-drying, clear formulas with no white cast and features the refreshing Coastal Breeze fragrance. Ultra Chill Technology cools instantly and helps neutralize odors to keep you fresh. Antioxidant tea tree oil also fights odors, while aloe vera smooths and conditions skin.

In 1985, Australian Gold burst onto the beachgoer scene, first sold in small surf shops in Cocoa Beach, Florida—before quickly evolving into a sporty sun-lovers' favorite around the world. Today, the time-tested brand is trusted for antioxidant sun care with SPF, offering reliable protection. Products are made with the highest-quality ingredients and feature the iconic Cocoa Dreams fragrance. Proudly vegan, cruelty-free, and budget-friendly, Australian Gold protects all skin types and tones, letting you focus on performing your best or simply enjoying the sun.

## 4 Decades of Fun: Australian Gold evolves for sun lovers while staying true to its surf roots



**1985** Launch of products for surfers and beach sports enthusiasts to enhance their tans

**1992** First combo products debut: tan + protect in one with Hydrating Spray Oil SPF 4

**2000** Sun Care line launches; Instant Bronzers with SPF protect skin and give an instant glow

**2016** Botanical sunscreens feature natural, eco-friendly ingredients

**2020** Expansion into higher SPF and sensitive skin formulas

**2025** Celebrating 40 years with new Mineral and After Sun Collections, plus the return of Solar Dust™ Dark Tanning Power Gel



**Australian Gold.**

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY, SYDNEY** Originally hand-drawn, Sydney the Koala was born in 1985. He continues to embody the active beach life, sporting sunnies and always ready to hit the waves on his signature surfboard.

Find **AUSTRALIAN GOLD SOLAR DUST™ DARK TANNING POWER GEL** exclusively at Walmart or [walmart.com](http://walmart.com), and discover the entire **AUSTRALIAN GOLD COLLECTION** at [australiangold.com](http://australiangold.com).

# GENTLE PROTECTION: MINERAL SUNCARE FOR EVERY SHADE



Australian Gold®



SCAN HERE TO SHOP  
OUR MINERAL COLLECTION





# Generation Tweakment

More and more 20-somethings are dabbling in aesthetic procedures and even plastic surgery. But what happens when you turn back a clock that has barely started ticking? One 40-plus writer explores what's going on below the surface—and engages in her own forms of experimentation.

By **Krista DeMaio**

**i** was 22 when Botox became FDA-approved as a temporary cosmetic treatment for moderate to severe frown lines. It was 2002; I was fresh out of college and working as a beauty assistant at a women's magazine. Frown lines never crossed my mind then—I didn't even use eye cream. As I climbed the editorial ranks over the next decade, vouchers for the neurotoxin from top dermatologists would land on my desk. *I don't need Botox at 26!* I thought, a bit smugly.

Despite two decades of free offers, I was almost 42 when I finally tried it. These days, I'm conservative with Botox. I get it twice a year. I tried filler in my nasolabial folds but didn't continue out of fear of the dreaded puffy-face look (a major concern). In my circle of friends, I'm



one of the only 40-ish moms who has dabbled in injectables. Some are working up the nerve; others are decidedly anti-antiaging. Yet recent research shows there's one age group that's plunging in wholeheartedly: Gen Z.

The use of Botox and other neuromodulators increased 73 percent overall from 2019 to 2022, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS), and Gen Z'ers (those born between 1997 and 2012) are all in on the growing trend, with Botox injections in those 19 and younger increasing by

9 percent between 2022 and 2023, says the ASPS. And it's not just injectables: A staggering 75 percent of plastic surgeons have seen a spike in clients under the age of 30, according to the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery.

The trend has been dubbed *prejuvenation*, a new term describing Gen Z's preventive approach to aging, according to one study. The authors of the paper write that "the most notable change in cosmetic dermatology over the past two decades lies in

the shift from correction and reversal for millennials to preventative measures for Gen Z."

I'm no millennial (baby Gen X'er here), but I can't help but notice the contrast between those in my age group and the younger set. As buzzy terms like *pro-age* and *aging well* gain traction with my peers, Gen Z seems determined to erase lines they don't have yet.

### An About-Face

Experts point to the obvious impetus for this trend: social media. Gen Z is the first to fully grow up in the digital age; even its oldest members likely don't remember life without Facebook or Instagram. "Skinfluencers" have stripped the stigma attached to aesthetic treatments by being more transparent about the treatments they receive.

The social media connection isn't just speculation either: There is a distinct correlation between time spent on those platforms and with photo-editing apps and the desire to undergo cosmetic procedures, according to recent research, which also found that following and engaging with celebrities, influencers, plastic surgeons, and dermatologists significantly increased the desire to have a cosmetic procedure.

Pop culture played a role in Ali Pereless's decision to get lip filler at 26 (she's now 28). "I'd seen a ton of really good representations of it—and some really bad ones—on social media and TV," she says. "I've always been insecure about my lips not being that full, especially my

**19.1**  
million  
nonsurgical  
aesthetic  
procedures were  
performed in  
2023, with  
botulinum toxin  
injections and  
hyaluronic  
acid fillers being  
the two most  
popular.

top lip, so I decided to make an appointment for my birthday.” Pereless, who lives in Charleston, South Carolina, gets plumped every eight months and likes the result.

But it’s not just strangers on the Internet driving this trend. Young women say their social network IRL heavily influenced their decision to get an aesthetic treatment—good old-fashioned peer pressure in a modern world. Emma McCormick, 29, of New York City, started Botox at age 25. “A lot of my friends were getting it,” she says. “They felt like their makeup was going on smoother, it looked natural, and they felt more confident. Eventually I said, ‘Screw it—I want to try!’” McCormick had visible forehead lines and wanted her foundation to look flawless. She’s since treated her crow’s-feet, which she says she’s had since she was 15. “I’m a very smiley person.”

It’s a trend in Pereless’s friend group too. “We’ve all done some sort of aesthetic treatment, whether it’s Botox or a lip flip,” she says. “My generation is spending money on daily coffee runs and lip filler. Maybe our priorities are out of whack, but it’s about feeling and looking good.”

### Ozempic Face

Another phenomenon driving the trend: the explosion of GLP-1 drugs, such as semaglutides like Ozempic, which are being used

both on- and off-label for weight loss, says New York City–based double board-certified plastic surgeon Lesley Rabach, MD. “In the last year and a half or so, I’ve seen countless people who’ve lost 40 to 50 pounds and now have excess skin and want a neck lift,” says Dr. Rabach. It’s a phenomenon that’s been dubbed “Ozempic face.” “With any shift in weight, up or down, the skin gets stretched—even when you’re at peak age for collagen and elastin production,” she says. “If skin stretches too much, you may need to lift it.”

Dr. Rabach, who has turned young patients away for procedures she thinks they don’t need (and may regret later), says weight-related surgeries require different considerations, and a 22-year-old coming in for a facelift due to weight loss is much different from a young person who wants a facelift just because.

After shedding some pounds, Devin Patterson, 26, had breast augmentation to restore volume and also tried cheek fillers to reduce what she saw as a hollowing in that area. Patterson, a medical assistant at North Shore Cosmetic Surgery in Melville, New York, had been getting Botox and lip fillers for several years. Her then-injector also suggested filler in her tear

troughs to fill hollows and connect the undereye area to her newly volumized cheeks. But as more information came out about the risks of tear-trough filler, including swelling (since the filler can block lymphatic channels under the eyes), Patterson decided not to continue. “I was 23 and getting four syringes that I didn’t need,” she says. She has kept up with the cheek filler because she likes the balancing effect and subtle lift that pulls up her nasolabial folds.

### Seeking Balance

Patterson’s cheek filler brings up an important point and another buzzy term driving the desire to tweak faces: *facial balancing*. This aesthetic trend, gaining steam on social media, involves placing dermal fillers and neuromodulators in certain areas of the face to create symmetry. It’s also referred to as nonsurgical facial optimization.

“It’s more about facial structure than aging,” says Rukmini Rednam, MD, a plastic surgeon based in Houston. Dr. Rednam says someone may want to do facial balancing if they have a receding jawline or chin or disproportionate features but adds that young people should do their homework on providers. “There’s a higher likelihood of choosing the wrong person to do the work when you’re young.” (See “How to Pick the Right Pro,” right.)

Surgical procedures can also create balance, but Dr. Rednam cautions against doing anything you can’t go back on if you’re not happy. “Try facial balancing with a temporary filler first to decide if you like the effect before doing something that’s harder to reverse.”

Mary Grace Cannon, 25, of Philadelphia, went the permanent route at 22 with jaw reconstruction to correct an overbite and a chin implant to create balance. Cannon’s receding jawline and overbite could have led to issues like TMJ or sleep apnea, so she was able to get the surgery covered by insurance. Still, she says the aesthetic effect was her

# 75%

**of plastic surgeons have seen a spike in clients under the age of 30, according to the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery.**

# How to Pick the Right Pro

Selecting the best doctor for the job significantly increases your chances of getting a good result—and your money's worth. What to consider.



## Look for a board-certified surgeon.

And check the actual boards. "The leading boards for plastic surgeons are the American Board of Plastic Surgery and the American Board of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery," says Dr. Rajagopal. "You don't want to go to someone who's only done a few months of cosmetic surgery training."



## Check hospital privileges.

Specifically ask if they have the privilege to do the procedure they propose at the hospital they're affiliated with. Their answer should give you a lot of helpful insight. "If they can perform that specific surgery at a hospital, they're well trained and have the right certifications," says Dr. Rajagopal.




## Get the goods on expertise.

For example, you'll want to make sure the nurse practitioner, registered nurse, or physician assistant at a med spa is well trained to inject. Ask about training certificates, experience level, how long they've been injecting, and who the physician in charge is. "They are supposed to be in close proximity to deal with any adverse effects if they occur," Dr. Rajagopal adds.



## Don't be swayed by social.

"There are people in my field with millions of followers on TikTok and Instagram. Does that mean they're a better surgeon than me? Maybe. Or maybe they just have a really good, capable social media team who's helped to build their following. On days I'm operating all day, I don't have the time to post on Instagram," says Dr. Rabach.



## Cutting to the Chase

Ask doctors to share before-and-after pics of past patients. Finding a pro whose aesthetic matches your own is key.



main motivation. The recovery was brutal—Cannon had to be on a liquid diet for about six weeks and was left with numbness in part of her chin and the side of her face, which is likely permanent. But she still feels that going under the knife was worth it. “I’m especially happy with my side profile,” she says. The reshaping of her jaw and chin led her to try filler in her bottom lip to further balance her features.

### The Case for Youth

As a woman in her 40s who’s grappled for most of my adulthood with the superficial part of wanting to tweak my aging face while wondering, *What will people think?* I admire Gen Z’s unapologetic attitude. “I always wanted fuller lips, and I could finally have them, so why not?” says Patterson. There’s a boldness and a sense of autonomy here that the feminist in me finds worth celebrating.

Members of this younger generation are willing to take care of their skin with advanced skin-care products and better diet choices, including drinking less alcohol (the growing sober-curious movement), because they want to look and feel their best, says Usha Rajagopal, MD, a board-certified plastic surgeon and medical director of the San Francisco Plastic Surgery and Laser Center. She’s a fan of the idea of preventive Botox in the mid-to-late 20s. “It has to be done judiciously,” she says. “When your face is at rest and you see faint lines, doing a little Botox is worthwhile.” And research suggests that, over time, the use of neuromodulators improves skin elasticity.

There’s also this to consider: If you start making small tweaks to your skin in your 20s, you won’t look wildly different. But if you wait to try an aesthetic treatment in your 40s or 50s, when the signs of aging have set in, your results are

more likely to be dramatic—and noticeable. “Even when I had my undereye filler, it was subtle enough that no one noticed,” says Patterson. “Younger women are starting earlier, and a lot of the time, you’d never know. You attribute their look to youth.”

### Age-Old Concern

On the flip side, it must be said that some of these early interventions can make 20-somethings appear older, says Dr. Rednam. “The ideal that many young women are striving for is something you might see in a more mature face, so the procedures themselves can prematurely age them.” She points to the more sculpted, contoured face that often comes with age and is now a standard of beauty for the younger set.

Take buccal fat removal, for example, which is a surgery to remove fat in the lower cheeks to create a more sculpted look. “It’s a trend that started with dramatic contouring on social media,” says Dr. Rajagopal, who removes buccal fat to reduce facial fullness, but typically not in patients in their early 20s. “Your face naturally slims with age, so we don’t want to prematurely remove the fat, because that fat is valuable—it makes your face look more youthful.”

And, of course, we have to talk about a big golden elephant in the room: cost. “These younger generations are spending a lot and are willing to go into debt for aesthetic services,” says Dr. Rabach. “In my practice, patients, even younger patients, are prioritizing cost for the services over other things. They view it as an investment.”

At the end of the day, a little Botox never hurt anyone. But too much work—or the wrong kind—can add years to your appearance. Understanding the risks, especially for permanent procedures, and going to a trained medical professional who’s been thoroughly vetted is likely the very best way for Gen Z’ers to preserve their youth—and still look their age.



**Face First?** Noninvasive body contouring procedures are gaining in popularity, too, with the treatment numbers rising from 2.6 million in 2009 to 5.1 million in 2023.

PROMOTION

# the game plan

STUFF THAT COULD CHANGE YOUR LIFE.



### Great Taste Comes Naturally

BLUE Tasteful's is so tasty, we could only call it one thing. Cats love the great taste from real meat and natural ingredients. Available in dry and wet recipes.

[BLUETasteful's.com](http://BLUETasteful's.com)



### Indulge in the Ultimate Wellness Escape at Sea

Embark on a rejuvenating Cunard™ voyage with the exclusive Harper's BAZAAR Wellness at Sea program, featuring three luxurious packages to revitalize skin, body, and mind with tailored spa treatments, nourishing cuisine, inspiring master classes, and premium ELEMIS products.

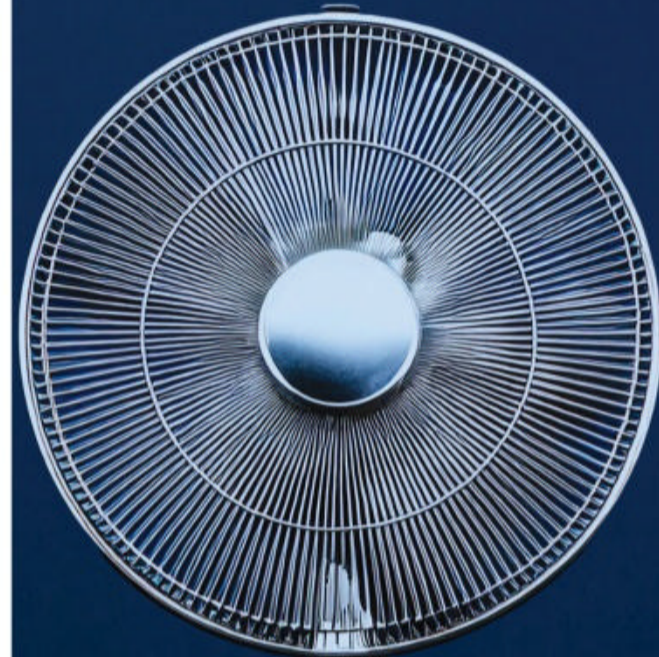
Visit [Cunard.com/HB](http://Cunard.com/HB) for more information

[WOMENSHEALTHMAG.COM/PROMOTIONS](http://WOMENSHEALTHMAG.COM/PROMOTIONS)

Secret.

# PUT YOUR FAN TO BED

GOODNIGHT,  
NIGHT SWEATS



FOR PITS



FOR BITS

\* AI Generated



▲  
Texture troubles? Solutions range from cosmetic to surgical.

## Smooth-Skin Science

Breakouts can leave behind marks that stick around long after the red bumps fade. Heal them fast with these pro tips.

By **Brian Underwood**

# 1

### Try Topicals

► Atrophic acne scars (the ones that resemble tiny indents) are most common. They're caused by inflammation that affects the skin's structural proteins, says Dr. Hogan. Retinoids (vitamin A derivatives) manage the acne and help fade scars by stimulating collagen production.

# 2

### Manage Color

► Inflammation can also cause dark spots, which may exacerbate the appearance of scars. "UV exposure can prolong any post-inflammatory pigment change," Dr. Hogan says, so SPF is key. Proven faders include topicals with tranexamic acid or vitamin C.

# 3

### Go Under Cover

► The key to addressing textural changes via makeup is the right base, says Harris. Spot-treat scars with a filling primer, which will create a smoother canvas (use regular primer elsewhere). Then neutralize hyperpigmentation with color-correcting concealer, finishing with a light foundation.

## Your Skin-Smart Squad



Kavita Mariwalla, MD, is the founder of Mariwalla Dermatology in West Islip, New York.



Todd Harris is a celebrity and editorial makeup artist.



Sara Hogan, MD, is a dermatologist with George Washington University.

## The Essentials



### Primed and Ready

Harris recommends this makeup prep product, with silicones and silica, to create an even surface underneath your foundation.

**NYX Pore Filler Blurring Primer**, \$15, [nyxcosmetics.com](http://nyxcosmetics.com)



### Skin Win

You can get collagen-boosting adapalene over the counter (Dr. Hogan is a fan of this popular one) or with a prescription.

**La Roche-Posay Effaclar Adapalene Gel 0.1% Acne Treatment**, \$36, [laroche-posay.us](http://laroche-posay.us)

# 4

### See a Professional

► Derms have a lot of tools at their disposal. Fillers will plump, lasers and microneedling can fade, and trichloroacetic acid (TCA) builds collagen, says Dr. Mariwalla. Subcision, in which tiny needles are used to snip away fibrous tethers that pull skin down, is another option.

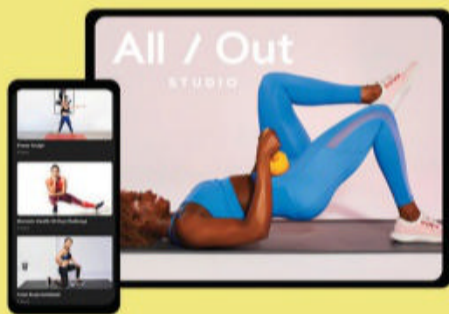
# WOMEN'S HEALTH+ PREMIUM

Enjoy unlimited website access, dozens of fitness and nutrition challenges, 450+ streaming workouts—plus a copy of *The Women's Health Guide to Strength Training* with your purchase.

UNLOCK  
PREMIUM  
FOR LESS THAN

**\$5** /MONTH

\$89.99 VALUE



\$20.99 VALUE



SIGN UP NOW AT  
[womenshealthmag.com/joinpremium](https://www.womenshealthmag.com/joinpremium)  
OR SCAN TO JOIN

# IVORY



## Trusted by families

FOR

# 140 Years

Made without  
parabens, phthalates,  
and dyes.



# Super Fruit

Dates are a sweet source of nutrients and a serious sleeper-hit ingredient for recipes.

By **Samantha MacAvoy**

Recipes by **Gabriella Favilli-Vigoreaux**

Photographs by **Rocky Luten**

The dehydrated mahogany orbs from the date palm tree may taste like dessert, but they're surprisingly legit in terms of the good-for-you stuff. "Dates are full of dietary fiber and essential minerals," says Lauren Manaker, RDN, a dietitian in Charleston, South Carolina. "Their antioxidant content enhances the nutritional value." They're rich in potassium and magnesium, key tools in helping to maintain normal blood pressure, plus they each have about one to two grams of gut-healthy fiber. Dates are great for more than snacking, too: Their toffee-esque taste means you can treat 'em like sugar in a recipe or use them to balance the flavors in a hearty salad.





## Lentil Salad With Roasted Carrots and Mint

TOTAL: 35 MIN.  
SERVES: 4

- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 3 Tbsp red wine vinegar
- 1 tsp pure maple syrup
- 1 tsp lemon zest
- 1 small clove garlic, grated
- 1/2 tsp ground cumin
- 1/4 tsp ground cinnamon
- Kosher salt and pepper
- 1 lb medium carrots (about 7), peeled and sliced on bias 1/2 in. thick
- 1/4 cup sliced almonds
- 1 14-oz can no-salt lentils, rinsed
- 2 large medjool dates, pitted, halved lengthwise, and thinly sliced crosswise
- 1/2 cup mint leaves, chopped
- 1 5-oz pkg. mixed greens

**1.** Heat oven to 425°F. In large bowl, whisk together oil, vinegar, maple syrup, lemon zest, garlic, cumin, cinnamon, and 1/4 tsp each salt and pepper.

**2.** On large rimmed baking sheet, toss carrots with 2 Tbsp of vinaigrette and roast, undisturbed, 16 min. Scatter almonds on top and roast until carrots are just tender, 3 to 5 min. more.

**3.** Add lentils to remaining vinaigrette and toss to coat. Fold in roasted carrots, almonds, and dates, then mint and mixed greens.

*Per serving: About 325 cal, 17g fat (2g sat), 0 mg chol, 213 mg sodium, 36g carb, 12g fiber, 14.5g sugar (1g added sugar), 10g pro*

**LIQUID  
LEVEL-UP**

To add a dose of sweetness sans the sugar or syrup, toss a pitted date into the blender. Perfectly balanced blend ahead!

## Coconut Kale Smoothies

TOTAL: 10 MIN.  
SERVES: 4

- 5 oz curly kale, ribs discarded (7 cups kale leaves)
- 4 cups bottled coconut water (from refrigerator section; we used Harmless Harvest, which has no added sugar)
- 7 oz extra-firm tofu
- 3 Tbsp natural peanut butter
- 1 large medjool date, pitted
- 2 bananas, sliced and frozen

In high-speed blender, puree all ingredients until smooth and creamy, about 1 min.

*Per serving: About 289 cal, 8.5 g fat (1 g sat), 0 mg chol, 79 mg sodium, 46 g carb, 4 g fiber, 32.5 g sugar (0 g added sugar), 11 g pro*



**31,000 tests a month means quality you can count on.**

We perform 31,000 quality tests every month to ensure you're getting the highest quality supplements at the best price possible. Like our BioCell Collagen® for joint and skin support.\*



\*These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease.

# Spiced Butternut Squash Breakfast Cookies

TOTAL: 35 MIN. PLUS COOLING  
MAKES: 8

- 2½ cups quick-cooking oats
- 1 cup almond flour
- 2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- ½ tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp kosher salt
- 1 cup canned butternut squash puree (not no-salt)
- ⅓ cup coconut oil, melted
- 2 Tbsp pure maple syrup
- 1 tsp pure vanilla extract
- 6 medjool dates, pitted and chopped
- 2% Greek yogurt, for serving

1. Heat oven to 350°F. Line baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. In medium bowl, whisk together oats, almond flour, cinnamon, ginger, baking powder, and salt.
3. In large bowl, whisk together butternut squash puree, coconut oil, maple syrup, and vanilla. Add oat mixture and dates and stir to combine (mixture will be thick).
4. Using cookie scoop, portion dough into 8 equal mounds (each scant ½ cup) on prepared sheet, spacing 1 in. apart. Press lightly to flatten. Bake until bottoms are golden brown, 22 to 24 min. Let cool 10 min., then serve with yogurt, if desired.
5. To store leftover cookies, refrigerate in airtight container up to 4 days.

*Per serving (1 cookie): About 219 cal, 12 g fat (4.5 g sat), 0 mg chol, 106 mg sodium, 26 g carb, 4 g fiber, 9.5 g sugar (2.5 g added sugar), 5 g pro*



## Starting Lineup

Peep the benefits of popular date varieties.

### MEDJOOL

Enjoy these big softies for a boost of energy while aiding digestive health—they're particularly high in natural sugars and fiber.

### DEGLET NOOR

These are slightly firm with a more delicate flavor than others. Pop them into savory recipes for a subtle contrast.

### BARHI

Get these small, round ones with a caramellike chew from specialty growers, like Date Lady.

# Glucerna

## HELPS MANAGE BLOOD SUGAR RESPONSE\*



made with **CARBSTEADY**<sup>®</sup>  
to help manage  
blood sugar response\*

#1 Doctor-recommended  
brand for people  
with diabetes

Use as part of a diabetes management plan.

\* Designed to help minimize the blood sugar spike from consuming Glucerna<sup>®</sup> compared to high-glycemic carbohydrates.

©2025 Abbott 202420483/January 2025 LITHO IN USA

**Abbott**

· GOOD ·  
HOUSEKEEPING

QUALITY ★ TESTED

GOOD  
HOUSEKEEPING



# GOOD HOUSEKEEPING

EVERYDAY ESSENTIALS

*tested 'til perfect*

## DELICIOUS RESULTS. EASY CLEANING.

SHOP THE ENTIRE COLLECTION AT  
[GOODHOUSEKEEPING.COM/KITCHENWARE](https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/kitchenware)



© 2025 QVC, Inc. All Rights Reserved. QVC and Q are registered service marks of ER Marks, Inc.

From the Editors at Women's Health



# WOMEN'S HEALTH+

**Join our membership program to level-up your health, fitness, and well-being all year long!**

You'll unlock exclusive perks including a members-only newsletter, premium workout videos, access to our 30-Day Fitness Challenges, and special discounts on the All/Out Studio fitness app.

## SCORE ALL OF THIS (AND MORE) WHEN YOU REGISTER



An entire year of *Women's Health* delivered right to your door



Unrestricted access to [womenshealthmag.com](https://www.womenshealthmag.com) and our members-only newsletter



Premium fitness content available only to WH+ members

**Join for less than \$1/week**

Head to [womenshealthmag.com/joinnow](https://www.womenshealthmag.com/joinnow) or scan to join.



# Power Pair

Win weeknights with a lean protein coupled with fiber-filled beans and greens.

Recipe by **Kristina Kurek**  
Photograph by **Joe Lingeman**

## Fennel-Crusted Pork With Saucy Beans and Broccoli Rabe

TOTAL: 30 MIN. SERVES: 4

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>1</b> 1-lb pork tenderloin, trimmed   | <b>4</b> large cloves garlic, finely chopped, divided         |
| <b>3</b> Tbsp plus 1/2 tsp olive oil, divided  | <b>1</b> oz Pecorino Romano                                   |
| <b>1</b> Tbsp fennel seeds, crushed  | <b>1</b> 15.5-oz can roman beans, drained and liquid reserved |
| <b>1</b> 16-oz bunch broccoli rabe, trimmed of tough ends, cut into bite-size pieces | <b>1/4</b> tsp red pepper flakes                              |
|  | <b>1</b> tsp lemon zest plus 2 Tbsp lemon juice               |

**1.** Heat oven to 450°F. Coat pork with 1/2 tsp oil, season with 1/4 tsp salt, and rub with fennel seeds. Heat 1 Tbsp oil in large ovenproof skillet on medium-high. Add pork and cook, reducing heat to medium as needed to avoid burning, until deep golden brown on all sides, 6 to 7 min. total.

**2.** Transfer skillet to oven; roast until pork registers 145°F on instant-read thermometer, 5 min. Transfer pork to cutting board and let rest at least 5 min. before slicing (reserve skillet).

**3.** Meanwhile, on rimmed baking sheet, toss broccoli rabe with remaining 2 Tbsp oil and 1/4 tsp salt. Roast 5 min., then toss half of garlic into broccoli rabe. Continue roasting until tender and beginning to crisp around edges, 2 min. more. Grate Pecorino Romano on top, then transfer to plates.

**4.** Add remaining garlic to reserved skillet and cook on medium, stirring, 30 sec. Stir in beans, 1/4 cup reserved bean liquid, and red pepper flakes, and cook until heated through, about 2 min. Stir in lemon juice. Spoon over broccoli rabe. Serve with pork, drizzling any pan juices on top, then sprinkle with lemon zest.


*Per serving: About 382 cal, 17.5 g fat (4 g sat), 81 mg chol, 773 mg sodium, 22 g carb, 10 g fiber, 0.5 g sugar (0 g added sugar), 35 g pro*



# The IUD Pain Revolution

Women are demanding better, less painful options—and doctors and medical companies are finally, *finally* listening.

By **Currie Engel** Photographs by **Joe Lingeman**  
Prop styling by **Mia Kato**



**I**f you ask a group of women if they've ever had an IUD placed, their responses will vary—and often be more than just a simple yes or no. Some may say, “It wasn't too bad,” or “It was like a really bad period cramp.” But chances are high that at least one will have a horror story.

They fainted from the pain. Or maybe threw up. Or screamed out loud. Maybe the doctor had to try three or four times to place the device, and the bleeding wouldn't stop. They might tell you it was the worst thing they've ever endured, even worse than childbirth.

As of 2023, roughly one in five women of reproductive age has had an IUD, a threefold increase from 2007 to 2010, according to the National Health Statistics Report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. And as the birth control method becomes more popular with younger women who haven't given birth, its painful reputation seems to be increasing too. About half the women reported “intense” pain at placement, and another 47 percent reported light or moderate pain, per a recent study on IUDs in *The European Journal of Contraception & Reproductive Health Care*. Only 2.5 percent reported no pain at all.

Studies going back to the 1970s and '80s have tried to parse and solve IUD insertion pain. Though the experience varies vastly, women have been saying for a long time that it can be really, really painful. But it felt as if no one was taking

them seriously—or doing anything about it—until now.

Last August, the CDC updated its guidelines for IUD insertion, highlighting the need for doctors to discuss and offer pain-management options for patients. The new guidance provides a road map for how to talk to patients, involve them in the decision process, and take a patient-centered approach, says Alison Edelman, MD, MPH, an ob-gyn specializing in complex family planning and a professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Oregon Health & Science University.

“There has been this shift, especially over the last 5 to 10 years, of centering patients' experiences, needs, and preferences more than before,” adds Katharine White, MD, MPH, chief of obstetrics and gynecology at Boston Medical Center. By that, she means listening to what patients want and to their concerns—whether that means taking their pain more seriously, offering pain-management options, or simply not pushing one type of birth control or procedure. “We have reached a tipping point, and I could not be happier.”

This groundswell of change includes medical equipment too. In

Move aside, tenaculum. The Carevix, a new tool that aims to quell IUD insertion pain, is already a game changer.

2023, Swiss start-up Aspivix received FDA approval for a new IUD insertion tool called the Carevix (the name comes from the idea that the company is “caring” for your “cervix”). Early patient trials in Europe showed up to 73 percent less pain and up to 83 percent less bleeding with the tool.

### **Innovation Joins the Chat**

The IUD itself hasn’t changed shape since the 1960s, back when the very first breast implants were also created. And the tool long used to insert IUDs, the tenaculum—which resembles metal scissors with two hooks at the end and was inspired by medical procedures used during the Civil War—hasn’t changed either. But that’s where the Carevix comes in.

Aspivix, founded in 2015, created the first prototype in 2019. A half-moon-shaped suction device grasps the cervix instead of puncturing or clamping down on the tissue the way a tenaculum does. The pandemic slowed the initial rollout, but by 2024, Aspivix secured a distribution deal with pharma giant Bayer, one of the global leaders in IUD production. There are now 26 ambassador program sites across the world

where the tool is being used, including private clinics and doctors’ offices, as well as universities that are testing it. So far, 1,300 patients have undergone procedures with the Carevix through these sites.

After an incredibly painful and traumatic IUD insertion in 2017, which involved a medical tool getting stuck on her labial tissue, 31-year-old Taylor Townsell was desperate for something—anything—that could ease the pain she anticipated for her 2023 insertion. She researched online but came up empty. When Townsell finally stumbled upon the Carevix, she filled out a form on Aspivix’s website asking for help. “I sent them the saddest, most impassioned email request. It was basically just like, ‘I have to get an IUD again. I don’t know if I can handle it. Please help me. Is there anyone in the U.S. that is authorized to use this?’” Townsell says. She got a quick reply from senior manager of global operations Eric Lluvich, who helped her connect to providers at Columbia University, where the Carevix was being used.

With five people in the room—Townsell, her boyfriend, a patient-care advocate, the supervising doctor, and a doctor in training—the doctor used the Carevix to place her copper IUD. “It felt like someone

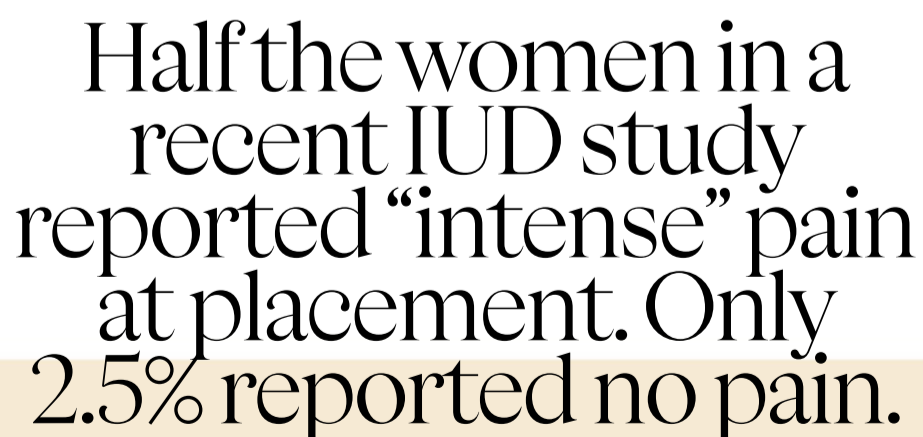
was just lightly holding me. It wasn’t the pinch of the tenaculum,” she says of the suction sensation.

The first U.S. pilot study on the Carevix is being run by Alissa Conklin, MD, an assistant professor of clinical obstetrics and gynecology at Indiana University School of Medicine. So far, results from a very small patient sample haven’t shown statistically significant differences in pain during IUD placement with the Carevix versus the tenaculum, but it’s hoped that larger studies will show a stronger correlation between use of the device and less pain, Dr. Conklin says. Plus, these early results provide enough information to expand the trials. Currently, a multicenter study is being discussed.

Aaron Lazorwitz, MD, an ob-gyn specializing in complex family planning at Yale School of Medicine, hasn’t personally used the Carevix or seen the company’s data on the tool (partly because it’s still being studied), but he feels optimistic that steps are being taken to push his field forward. “This is old equipment that we’ve been using for a long time. So I’m a huge fan of any innovation, any new technology, because it just has the potential to make things better,” he says. Dr. White (who also hasn’t used the Carevix firsthand) agrees, adding that she is “so overwhelmingly thrilled that this space, which has gone untouched for so long, is finally getting attention.”

### **Navigating the Pain Matrix**

Even as doctors and companies search for modern solutions, solving IUD insertion pain as a whole remains a conundrum. It’s partly because the experience can be so variable, doctors say. “I’ve put IUDs in 13-year-olds who’ve never had anything in their vagina ever, and they were like, ‘Oh, you’re done already?’ And I’ve put IUDs in patients who have had four kids



Half the women in a recent IUD study reported “intense” pain at placement. Only 2.5% reported no pain.



■ The tenaculum (left) hails from the Civil War era and is still used in IUD insertions today. The Carevix (right) is a new tool that uses suction, not sharp hooks, to gently grasp the cervix during the procedure.



## Comfort Cues

Truth? Having contraception options that fit your lifestyle is still awesome. Until the medical industry fully catches up, use these tips for the smoothest appointment possible.

### ▼ Know your options.

If you're heading into an IUD consultation, arm yourself with information and questions for your provider so you feel mentally and physically prepared. Simply getting your doctor to walk you through the procedure and pain-management options can make a real difference. "What also helps relieve pain is knowledge and feeling like you get to make choices and have control over a situation," says Dr. White.

### ▼ Curate a peaceful environment.

There are things unrelated to medication that can make a big difference in your experience. Some doctors' offices might provide music or aromatherapy or allow you to bring a support person along, says Dr. White.

### ▼ Speak up.

If something isn't working for you, you don't have to grin and bear it, says Dr. Edelman. Tell your provider what you want and what you're experiencing. And they should listen. "Advocate for yourself," adds Lovett. "Ask questions, talk about it, follow your gut. No one knows your body like you do."

without an epidural, and they're like, "That was worse than childbirth," says Dr. Conklin.

Women also have different pain responses during different parts of the process. For some, the worst is the speculum insertion. For others, it's the tenaculum clamping down on their cervix. But most find the actual device insertion the most painful. So upgrading one tool is not a silver bullet that will fix the entire process. But the Carevix is still an important development, as replacing the tenaculum is a "critical part" of addressing insertion pain and discomfort, says Susan Nicholson, MD, Aspivix's board chair and scientific advisor.

Currently there are three pain-management options for IUD insertion or removal: oral or injectable meds, lidocaine (an analgesic), and sedation. Most providers have been using oral pain meds for years, but those really only work for cramp pain, says Dr. White.

Sophie Lovett, 28, has had three IUD insertions with very different experiences each time. The first go-round she had a nonhormonal Paragard placed and took an oral pain pill and anti-anxiety medication before the insertion. It went smoothly, and she didn't have any major pain. For her second IUD, Lovett went to a different doctor, who convinced her to try a smaller, hormonal IUD, even though her Paragard had worked well. This procedure didn't go so well.

"I was not prescribed anything, and the insertion process was horrendous," Lovett says. It took the doctors three or four tries to insert the device, and they had to use an ultrasound to help with placement—an additional cost Lovett was not expecting or consulted about. "It was the worst experience, not only financially but also just the pain of it," she says.

At the appointment, Lovett felt that the doctors were laser focused

on placing the IUD no matter what and didn't really check in or seem to care that their continued attempts to place the device were hurting her. "I didn't feel like I was being treated like a human who felt pain," she says. "I definitely felt taken advantage of and just not cared for."

After deciding she didn't like how the hormonal IUD made her feel, Lovett went back to the Paragard and visited a third doctor where she was living in Los Angeles at the time. This doctor prescribed an anti-anxiety medication and a topical internal numbing cream that Lovett could apply before the procedure. Though it wasn't completely pain-free, it was the best experience of the three, she says, and she still has that same IUD.

## Barriers to Entry

Just because pain-management options exist doesn't mean they're always accessible. For starters, not all doctors' offices can provide lidocaine injections or sedation, which often require a separate anesthesia setup, says Dr. White. In fact, only 4 percent of U.S. doctors offered

local anesthesia injections for IUD insertions, per a national survey.

Even if you have access to prescription meds or anesthesia, your insurance may not cover it. Dr. Conklin says insurance reimbursement for pain management is "horrible," and she wants the CDC to follow up on its new guidelines by requiring insurers to cover the options the agency recommends, such as lidocaine injections.

Sometimes the pain itself becomes a barrier to entry, with women opting for other methods so they don't have to endure the procedure. Whether they have heard frightening stories from friends or had a bad insertion experience themselves, some women are stopped in their tracks by anticipation of the discomfort.

Jenna Smith, a 35-year-old working in sales, has had two IUDs placed and removed without significant pain. The worst part, she says, was the speculum insertion and the anxiety that preceded it. Her first two insertions and first removal

went without a hitch, but by the time she was ready for her second removal, she'd begun hearing scary stories from friends. "I was so anxious and in my head about it," she says.

Luckily, Smith spoke up before the appointment. She was traveling, so she met with a nurse practitioner at a university hospital. "I let them know, 'Hey, I'm super anxious about this.' They were amazing. They talked to me through everything," she says.

The nurse practitioner made her feel comfortable at each step. And it made a world of difference.

## Revolutionary New Ideas, Finally

While the Carevix aims to solve one part of the pain problem, others remain: the actual device insertion, plus the crampy pain that can continue if the IUD's shape doesn't match that of the endometrial cavity or uterus. Innovation at these literal pain points is necessary, and companies and researchers are putting their money and brainpower to work to solve these big questions.

Dr. Lazorwitz sits on the scientific advisory board of 3Daughters, a company developing a frameless, magnetic, nonhormonal IUD resembling three little beans that self-assemble in the uterus. (The "beans" have a special applicator and don't require a tenaculum—solving two issues at once.) Control Europe, a Belgian biotech company, is also creating a frameless IUD, the GyneFix, made of copper tubes linked to a surgical thread that is implanted in the uterus. It is one-third the size of existing products.

Doctors are also dreaming up innovations. "What if you could just put a little bit of liquid in the uterus and it formed into your IUD?" asks Dr. Edelman. "Wouldn't that be great? You wouldn't have to put any instruments in."

One thing is clear: Comfort and care will be at the heart of these innovations. And that's a long overdue but very welcome change.

### Sharing Your Truth

When a version of this story ran on WH's digital and social channels, the responses were frank. How you really feel...

"Dead serious, my labor and delivery was less pain than my IUD insertion and removal."

—@kristieladams

"I've broken bones and fallen down hills while skateboarding, yet the removal and reinsertion of a new IUD was the worst pain I felt in my life."

—@nikafeetpete

"I fainted having mine inserted... TWICE!"

—@caroline\_suzi\_church

"This is so real, with endometriosis especially."

—@endonutrition

"It's about freaking time."

—@drlindsaytaylor

IUDs haven't changed shape in decades. New tech could change that.





Make  
reproductive  
choice  
possible

**Women's rights, voices and  
lives are under attack.**



Funding has been cut to MSI Reproductive Choices, the only source of reproductive healthcare for millions of women across Africa and Asia.  
**Help women avoid unwanted pregnancies.**

**Donate today. [msiunitedstates.org](https://msiunitedstates.org)**

# Better Breathing?

**Mouth taping is sweeping social media. But before you seal up your lips, read what experts say.**

By **Olivia Luppino**



From melatonin supps to white noise machines, endless life hacks exist for better sleep. And now, mouth taping is on the scene. Supporters of the practice say it prevents morning breath, helps you snooze, and even gives you healthier teeth.

The wellness trend took off on social media a few years ago, primarily as a way to aid sleep. The idea is that it potentially helps with nasal breathing, says Raj Dasgupta, MD, a physician specializing in sleep and critical care medicine. Some athletes have even incorporated mouth taping into their fitness routines to reap the purported benefits.

While you can easily purchase mouth tape online, it's unclear how helpful these sticky pieces really are. Be sure to consult your doctor first, but in the meantime, here's what you need to know about mouth taping and what it can (and can't) do for you.



## Mouth tape will help you snooze better.

### TRUE?

► Breathing through your nose can help you relax and lower your anxiety, which could also help you drift off more easily, says Dr. Dasgupta, but he wouldn't rec mouth tape to his patients, nor would Shannon Sullivan, MD, a sleep specialist at Stanford Medicine. There's just not a lot of solid evidence supporting it for sleep.

Another big concern: Nasal breathing is what our bodies naturally do, so you shouldn't need to tape your mouth shut while you snooze. If you're not breathing through your nose at night, you want to get to the bottom of that first. Left untreated, an underlying condition like obstructive sleep apnea can lead to poorer-quality sleep, which affects every organ in the body, says Dr. Dasgupta. If you're consistently struggling with sleep issues, you should see a physician who can determine the root cause and suggest a better, more effective treatment. "If you have to tape your mouth to breathe through your nose, that tells me there's something anatomically or medically wrong that should be evaluated," he says.

## It might improve athletic performance.

### NOT SO FAST.

► You may have seen athletes using mouth tape in an attempt to reap the benefits of nasal breathing. There may be some occasions when it's okay to use mouth tape during a low-intensity session, says PJ Nestler, CSCS, vice president of performance at FitLab. But overall, "mouth tape during exercise or for athletes is very, very, very, very commonly misused, and people really don't understand the when and why of how to use it."

While he no longer uses mouth tape to train his athletes, Nestler tapped it in the past as a tool to remind them to keep themselves at a lower level of intensity during a workout or as a psychological challenge or stressor. For example, mouth tape could be used on a casual run to remind you to breathe through your nose, but it shouldn't be used during sports with bursts of action, like tennis, he says.

## Your oral health will improve.

### MAYBE.

► Mouth taping may offer some benefits for your dental hygiene since it encourages nasal breathing, which is healthier for your teeth, says Priya

Mistry, DDS, a dentist and dental sleep specialist in Vancouver, Washington. "A dry mouth can contribute to more cavities," Dr. Mistry says. "If you can't mouth-breathe, your mouth won't dry out." So switching your breathing path to your nasal passages may mean more moisture in this key area. However, even if it helps you temporarily, a sticky strip definitely isn't a cure for serious issues, so be sure to see a doctor, dentist, or hygienist if you have concerns.

## The trend is wacky but harmless.

### NOT EXACTLY!

► To be clear, sealing off a vital airway is a risk, says Dr. Sullivan. If you can reliably breathe through your nose lying down, then mouth taping could be safe, but for many, horizontal nose breathing isn't as simple. If you have sleep apnea, a deviated septum, allergies, chronic sinusitis, a chronic cough, postnasal drip, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or gastroesophageal reflux—anything that messes with nasal breathing—it's not a good idea to use mouth tape.

The bottom line: Just because your fave influencer is mouth taping and posting about it on social media doesn't mean it's worth trying. Speak with your doc to determine if it's safe for you—and to identify potential reasons why you're breathing through your mouth in the first place.

## Why Nasal Breathing Is So Awesome

Many benefits accrue from nasal breathing, so it's totally understandable why that's a major (yet misconstrued) selling point for mouth taping. Dr. Dasgupta lays out the top three perks.

### 1. For starters,

your nose has tiny hairlike structures called cilia that protect you from little invaders such as germs and environmental debris, and nasal breathing can help filter out dust and allergens.

### 2. Next up,

breathing through your nose humidifies the air before it reaches your lungs—and your body prefers moist air as opposed to dry, as the latter can be irritating to your lungs.

### 3. Finally,

nose breathing \*might\* lower blood pressure. The process releases nitric oxide, which dilates the blood vessels and could in turn help decrease BP.



### Cut Outs

Some mouth tapes can be worn vertically (like an uppercase I) or horizontally (capital H).

# Everyday Uplifts

Discover the surprising impact that small changes can have on your home, mood and well-being. Start with the most popular room in your house: the kitchen. Even tiny adjustments, like incorporating vibrant colors and fresh scents, can have an enormous impact. And with **Glad® ForceFlex MaxStrength™** Tall Kitchen drawstring trash bags in a bold teal color and Bahama Bliss scent, you can do both. The fun color and amazing scent will bring tropical vibes to your day-to-day.



## Bright Bursts

Add some energy to your kitchen by swapping out neutral-colored everyday essentials like bowls, utensils and cookware with bright accents. Think: a bold red Dutch oven, patterned plates, and of course, **vibrant teal** Glad® Tall Kitchen trash bags in Bahama Bliss scent. These pops of color will elevate your kitchen's atmosphere and your spirits



Fresh herbs add wonderful flavor to food, and they can also improve mood. Grow a mini herb garden to help reduce stress and add tranquility to your kitchen.

## Joyful Scents

A fresh-smelling kitchen is a welcoming one. Glad's **Bahama Bliss**-scented bags feature a steady release of Febreze freshness with hints of star fruit, cedar and mango. Add to the vibe with a simmer pot filled with sliced oranges and herbs, or a bouquet of fragrant fresh flowers.



## Party Preps

Organizing table settings, decor and music is the fun part of party planning. But whether it's a cozy dinner or an all-out bash, every soiree also needs a garbage plan. Our pro tip: line your trash cans with extra Glad® ForceFlex **MaxStrength** Bahama Bliss-scented bags so you can swap out full bags easily mid-party without missing a beat. The vibrant color, tropical scent and durability ensure you've got this hosting thing in the bag.



## The New "It" Bag

**Glad® ForceFlex MaxStrength** Tall Kitchen drawstring trash bags have superior strength and maximum rip protection, making them 25% more durable.\*

Glad® 13-gallon Bahama Bliss scented trash bags with ForceFlex MaxStrength have **double-sided seams**, a **reinforced bottom** and **grip-the-can drawstrings**, so they never slide down.

**LeakGuard** and **RipGuard** technology protect against leaks, rips and tears, so you can feel confident about stuffing Glad bags without them breaking.

ad 13-gallon ForceFlex bag. Certain trademarks used under license from the Procter & Gamble Company or its affiliates.

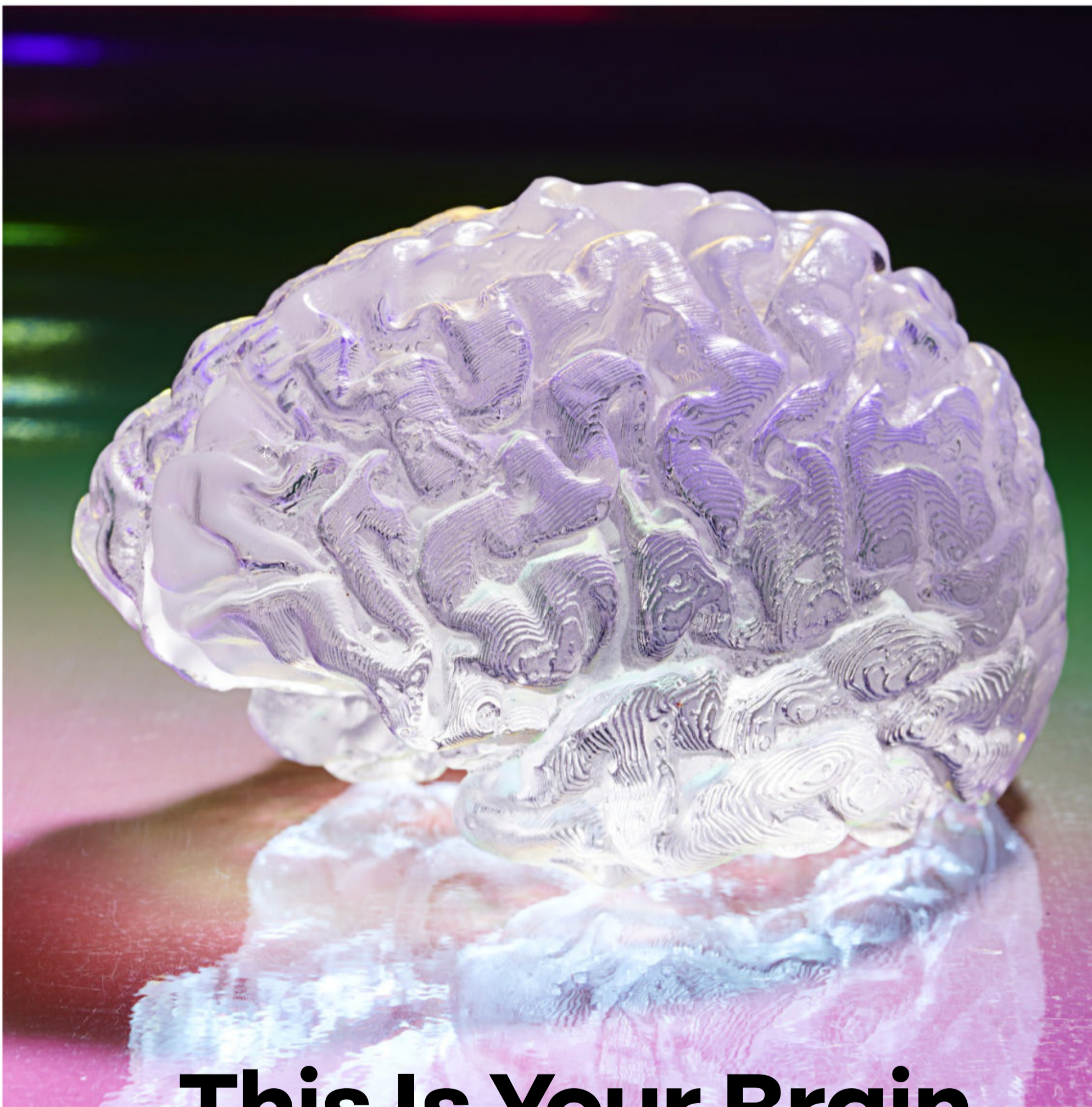
Find out more about Glad products at [www.glad.com](http://www.glad.com).



# BAHAMA BLISS

A scent escape  
that starts in your home





# This Is Your Brain on Change

Big moves and major decisions impact you on a molecular level. Here's how to harness it all for smooth sailing.

By Addison Aloian

**t**wo major life changes hit me at the same time, roughly seven years ago: moving to a big city and going to college. I couldn't wait to finally begin the adventure. But by the time August rolled around and I started packing up my boxes, the emotions came on hard. I was moving somewhere I'd always wanted to live (woo-hoo!), but I was also leaving behind family and friends. And my parents were selling my childhood home. And I was going to have to navigate life in a dorm. Yes, this was college, not a unique experience, but still—these chaotic feelings did a number on my mental health and made me pretty darn anxious. But that's normal when you're going through changes, whether good or bad, rare or run-of-the-mill.

Change impacts your brain on a chemical level. "Novelty is a big driver of learning and synaptic change," says Alison L. Barth, PhD, a professor of life sciences at Carnegie Mellon University. "Your brain works differently when everything seems new." The positive side of it all: Your brain was built for this. "Making a change isn't an inherently bad or stressful thing that your brain can't manage—it is literally its job," says Rachel Proujansky, PsyD, director of trauma services at the Center for Motivation and Change in New York City.

We can all thank a feature called neuroplasticity, which is the brain's ability to adapt in response to a new environment. Your brain learns what to expect by restructuring its circuits and creating fresh neural pathways, says Daya A. Grant, PhD, a neuroscientist and certified mental performance consultant in Los Angeles. This translates to you

thinking differently, based on the relevant sensory cues you encounter, even though you likely won't notice you're doing it. For instance, on the first day at a new job, you might be extra observant about your surroundings, taking note of whether the front desk worker is grouchy or helpful. Your brain is in "learning mode" as you're familiarizing yourself with the situation.

This process can go on for a while: Your brain takes time to fully adapt to change. In fact, you won't feel adjusted right away because, like muscles getting used to a strength-training routine, your brain needs a lot of reps to get on board. And that mental discomfort you feel, maybe when a coworker seems annoyed at your very fair question? That's your brain sending the body a stress signal because it's still unfamiliar with the new normal, says Grant. As humans, we crave control and predictability

in our lives, which helps keep anxiety at bay. But if that stability is threatened (even if we actively chose to switch jobs), our brain wants us to stay alert to danger in the new environment, says psychiatrist Sue Varma, MD, author of *Practical Optimism*.

Thousands of years ago, humans got these stress signals when, say, venturing into a different forest, because a bear might be lurking behind a tree and we had to be alert. But nowadays, those same stress signals are released even when the threat is nonphysical, like a life-altering change that feels unpredictable. (In my case, the threat was moving to NYC and not knowing if I was going to make friends or adapt to college life.)

But experts say to be patient. Your brain is working hard to learn and to create fresh neural pathways. And there are a lot of factors that can affect how fast you adapt, including how you handle stress and your mental attitude going into these experiences.

## Breaking Down the Brain Basics

Right before, during, and after you experience a big life change, hormones (like cortisol) and neurotransmitters (the chemical messengers that carry info between neurons, like dopamine, serotonin, norepinephrine, and gamma-aminobutyric acid) increase and can fluctuate for minutes, hours, or even days. Many of these messengers are released at the same time, because initially our bodies are "reacting, acclimating, and getting prepared" to respond and protect ourselves, says Dr. Varma. Eventually, you'll be able to step back and decide how you feel about that change (exciting! fresh! intense!). So just remember that these emotional and chemical fluctuations are what propel us through various circumstances,

even if they might not feel so good at first. How long these chemical fluctuations last depends on how you perceive the change, says Dr. Varma. Let's say you know you'll be receiving a marriage proposal and even helped pick out the exact engagement ring of your dreams: The actual proposal might feel less significant once it does happen. In this scenario, the neurotransmitters that are released will likely fluctuate for only minutes or hours. But if you're completely caught off guard

by a proposal (you truly had *no* idea it was on the horizon), you might view it as more significant and noteworthy, and those fluctuations may last longer.

Similarly, the way you handle stress—including your baseline stress level—plays a role, per Dr. Varma. If you're more easily frazzled, your neurotransmitter levels will probably already be high, and adding more stress to your plate means these chemical messengers will stay elevated longer.

## Making Sense of the Science

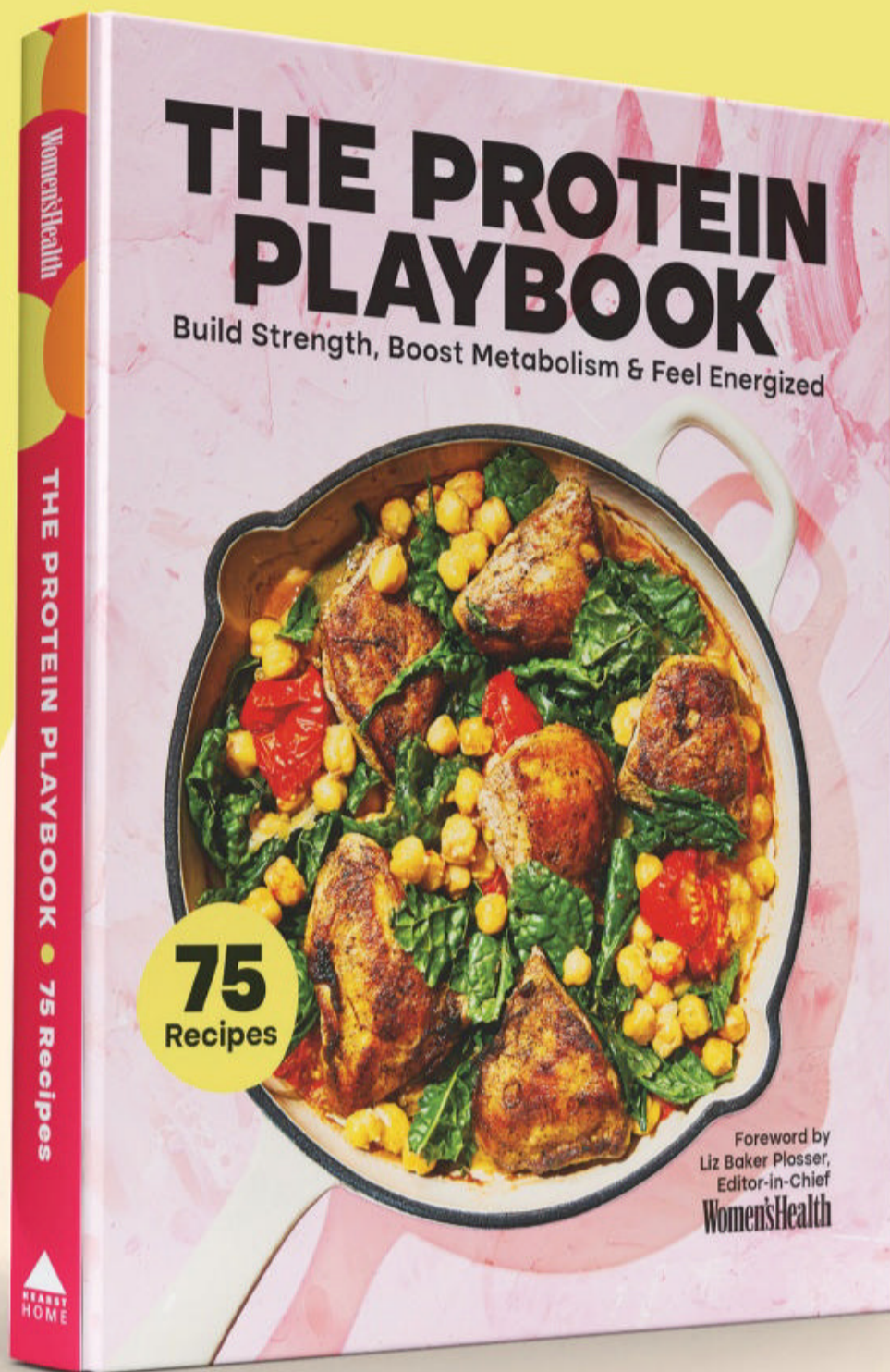
Let's examine a little case study here to understand how this works: Say you've just moved because you wanted more space, yet you left behind a street with good friends and a tight-knit community. As you begin settling into your new house, you might look around at your kids and your belongings in new places and start to feel anxious, second-guessing the decision, perhaps even wondering if you should have just stayed put. (Thank the increase in cortisol for that reaction, says Proujansky.) As part of this stress response, adrenaline is also released, triggering a fight-or-flight reaction, and you get a spike in norepinephrine, which helps keep you focused and alert.

But the morning after, while you're making pancakes for the family, the stress has melted away and you might feel practically euphoric. That's because dopamine, which is in charge of motivation and is part of the brain's reward pathway, has increased, telling you that the change is good and encouraging you to keep going—or in this case, to stay in this new, exciting home rather than go back to your old place, says Grant. (There's a reason people call the first moments after a big life change the "honeymoon" phase.) Without dopamine, you wouldn't get out of bed in the morning, go to work, plan your week, take risks, or make decisions that give you a sense of purpose, Dr. Varma says. Plus, endorphins—those natural painkillers related to feelings of happiness—reinforce this better-than-great feeling.

And after a few weeks, when you're all settled, watching Netflix in your spacious living room, you might start to feel calm and content again. That's because gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA) and serotonin are being released, helping to promote relaxation, regulate your mood (GABA), and make you



# Unlock the **Powerful** **Health Benefits** of **Protein**



Discover the power of protein to build strength, boost your metabolism, and feel energized! This easy-to-follow action plan reveals why protein is essential for your greater health. Plus, you'll find out how much you really need every day (spoiler: more than you think!) and get to enjoy 75 delicious protein-packed recipes to boost your intake at every meal.

Head to [womenshealthmag.com/proteinbook](https://www.womenshealthmag.com/proteinbook) or scan to get your copy! Also available wherever books are sold!



“happy” (serotonin). In fact, you’ll get a serotonin boost anytime something positive happens that’s related to that change (maybe you realize how nice it is to have a backyard and to watch your kids play in the grass), helping you stay happy and motivated when you think about it. So when you host your first dinner party in the new place, you can bet the serotonin will be flowing, reinforcing the feeling that you made the right decision and are exactly where you’re meant to be.

## Practice Makes... Stronger

Over time, we get better at learning and adapting to change, because the more we experience it, the more our brain is primed to take on all that newness in future situations. After all, it’s had practice in talking to its different networks and making those connections. This makes any change-related task smoother.

Something called “long-term potentiation” (LTP) is one of the main mechanisms allowing our brain to adapt to new situations. It refers to the strengthening of your brain’s synapses (which are the gaps between neurons through which they talk to each other by sending chemical signals) after being repeatedly activated. The stronger the synapse, the faster the chemical “message” is transmitted, Grant says.

Think about it: If you switch jobs and have to go into an office farther away than your previous one, you may have to take a different route to get there. The first day, you might get lost. But after a week, the new “pathways” in your brain have become stronger thanks to LTP, altering your brain at the neural level, Grant says. In other words, your neurons have already spent five days talking to each other in this new way, which translates to you remembering exactly which turns to

## It's normal to feel unsettled when going through a change—try these tips to feel more at home in your brain and body.



1

### LET IT RAIN

The RAIN acronym stands for 1) recognize what's happening, 2) allow the experience to happen and accept it, 3) investigate your emotional reactions, thoughts, and physical sensations, and 4) nurture yourself by reminding yourself that “this is hard, and it's okay for it to feel challenging and to not figure it all out immediately,” Proujansky says. Practice these steps by journaling—including writing down why you made this change and reminding yourself of that on a daily basis—and meditating.

2

### TAP INTO NETWORKS

Humans are wired for connection. “We tend to feel our best when our social relationships are at their healthiest,” Proujansky says. So look for a support group or reach out to friends so you feel less alone. You could also join an activity-based social group during a new life phase, like an intramural sports club, a knitting class, or a book club, Proujansky says. “Start small, whatever small means to you, and those small steps will add up,” she explains. You can even set little goals. Maybe

bring a friend with you to your first month of social events, but after four weeks, you attend solo.

3

### STICK TO ROUTINE

Maintaining your nonnegotiables is “a good reminder that not everything in life has changed—we still know who we are and what we enjoy,” Proujansky says. Maybe you made tacos every Tuesday night; keep that going after a move. “Stick to your foundational practices, but leave room for adjustment,” Grant says.

4

### BE STILL

Your brain is constantly receiving sensory information in a new environment or situation, says Grant. So adding quiet time to your routine (outside of sleeping and watching Netflix) is key. That could mean going for a walk, hiking, or meditating—sans technology—to settle your nervous system, Grant adds.

5

### DREAM IT INTO LIFE

Write down qualities you want future you to embody. If you just got married, you could write “adventurous” because you’re

embarking on a new life adventure, or if you just retired, you could write down “relaxed.” Then close your eyes and breathe deeply for one to three minutes as you picture yourself going about your day with those qualities—maybe you’re traveling with your spouse or attending a local pottery class.

6

### ASK AN EXPERT

Therapy is especially helpful when dealing with transitions, as it can help you identify goals and roadblocks and teach you new skills and strategies for problem-solving, Proujansky says. Plus, it may literally change your neural circuitry and therefore the way you think, per research published in *Frontiers in Psychology*.

7

### GET MOVING

Exercise is “critical for cultivating resilience,” Grant says. “Sweat in whatever way you like—that’s how you’re going to be consistent.” That might mean starting a new yoga practice or continuing an established routine.

8

### PRIORITIZE YOUR Z’S

Sleep is beneficial for many reasons, but it \*definitely\* improves your learning skills, according to research in the *Journal of Neuroscience*. This can help you adjust faster.



for women  
of all ages

**FASTEST ABSORBING AMINO ACID**

For increased lean muscle, ATP, muscle recovery, improved gut & brain health, try Accelerated AMINOS. 10% off! Code: **MUSCLE10** acceleratedhealthproducts.com



**THE "MIRACLE BERRY"** Boost collagen, skin cell regeneration & natural immunity w/the Australian rainforest's "miracle berry". 20% off! Code: **NEWYOU20** bit.ly/tipsntrends-bh-003

**joint problems?**

Try a new approach. Joint Boost contains 2 specialized collagen peptides, clinically studied to improve ligament & cartilage health. Studies show results in 3 months. Love the flavor or swap for free! 20% off! Code: **WH20** at [rb.gy/zedjwq](http://rb.gy/zedjwq)



**facial sculpting, contouring & lifting**

The professional grade bt-sculpt from Bio-Therapeutic does it all, merging precise kinesthetic lifting with targeted True Microcurrent to help visibly lift and tone the facial landscape in just minutes a day. [bt-sculpt.com](http://bt-sculpt.com)



# Wellness Vibes Only



natural potent HA alternate

**ANTIOXIDANT-RICH NATURAL MASK**

This luxe Bilberry & Snow Mushroom Mask w/creamy gel-esque texture gives mega-hydration & a cool soothing experience. 20% off! Code: **WH20** bambuearth.com



**SMARTEN UP YOUR FN FACE**

Boost your natural glow & cognitive health w/Skin Genius' cutting-edge formula of powerful NAD+, resveratrol & HA. 20% off! Code: **NAD20** facialnova.com

**all in for aging beautifully**

Think cellular health & longevity. Happy Aging Longevity Shot helps regenerate cells & protect against premature aging with Swiss-sourced resveratrol & science-backed cutting-edge ingredients. 15% off! Code: **HAPPYAGING** at [happyaging.com](http://happyaging.com)



**the OG face patch trending for a reason**

Why? It tackles crow's feet, smile lines & forehead wrinkles. Apply Frownies Facial Patches before bed & wake up looking smoother & refreshed. Your day will feel so much better after Frownies at night. 10% off! Code: **Patch** at [frownies.com](http://frownies.com)



**ICONIC BROWS IN 4 WEEKS!**

Vellora Brow Serum supports visibly fuller, shapeable brows w/stem cell exosomes, tropo-elastin, keratin & peptides. 20% off! Code: **WH20** vellora.co



**AWARD-WINNING GLOW**

Hello beautiful, build-able, long-lasting, streak free glow w/LUX Self-Tanning Bronzing Mousse + aloe & antioxidants. 25% off! Code: **WH25** sunluxskincare.com



**protein that doesn't taste like protein**

Oath Clear Protein delivers 20g of grass-fed whey in a light, refreshing drink with <1g of sugar. No milky texture, just fruity, delicious protein. 20% off! Code: **OathClear** at [oathnutrition.com](http://oathnutrition.com)



**zero sugar energy & focus**

Energy, peak brain function (hello learning & focus) & healthy immune support? All possible with Advocare Spark. Packed with vitamins A, C, E & B plus choline, 0 sugar + 120mg of caffeine. 20% off! Code: **wh** (Exp. 7/31/25) at [advocare.com/wh](http://advocare.com/wh)



**naturally radiant, naturally you**

Experience vibrant, long-lasting color and irresistibly soft, shiny hair with Naturtint's cruelty-free, ammonia-free formula made with up to 92% naturally derived ingredients. Get a free box! Code: **FREEWH** at [naturtintusa.com](http://naturtintusa.com)



**LOVE YOUR LOCKS**

Stronger hair starts with Swanson. Nourish your roots for thicker, fuller, more vibrant hair. 20% off! Code: **WSHEALTH** swansonvitamins.com



**REFUEL & REFRESH**

20g protein, 0g sugar & only 80 calories. Vertical Protein Water is the most delicious way to power your day. 10% off! Code: **WH10** verticalprotein.com

Scan for access to shop



@TIPSNSTRENDS tipsntrends.com



**100% grass-fed beef, clean protein**

Teton Waters Ranch Polish Sausage: No fillers, no nitrates, no sugar. Grill, sauté or bake to fuel your day. [tetonwatersranch.com](http://tetonwatersranch.com)



# Tastefuls™ Purées

Feed as a  
**Snack,  
Topper, or  
Treat**

Made to please,  
no matter how  
*you squeeze.*



One Taste Is All It Takes™

## Mind

“When we recognize that we are fully capable of handling these changes, we develop resilience.”

take, the correct highway exit, and where to park. This is the brain saying, “Oh yeah, I’ve already done this process a few times, so I know what to do here now,” Grant says. The more times you make your new commute, the more confident you become. “We recognize that we are fully capable of handling these changes, then we develop resilience,” she says, so the next time you endure a big change of any kind, you’re better prepared for it.

By the way, encountering positive change is crucial for brain health as you age, Grant adds. Something as simple as adjusting to your puppy’s feeding and walking schedule, for instance, can help your brain’s neuroplasticity and even help you develop new neuronal connections, according to recent research in *Brain Sciences*. Your brain has to work harder when you introduce it to something new, and this strengthens your memory and your ability to learn as you age.

### Not All Change Is Created Equal

Lest you think we’re here solely to sing the praises of change, it’s important to note that in certain circumstances, a significant shift is much more difficult for your brain to process. Anytime you *choose* to make a change—say, deciding to retire—there’s an element of control that means it’s more likely you’ll perceive it as a positive challenge, says Proujansky. But if the change is out of your control, like getting fired or your spouse being relocated to a

new state, you’re more likely to perceive it as a threat.

At this point, “our body really kicks into high gear, as it can feel really draining,” Proujansky says. With these types of changes, the brain is built to protect itself and us from danger, so it takes an extra emotional toll.

In this scenario, the frontal cortex—which is involved in decision-making, social behavior, impulse control, and planning—will shut down, and your attention will go to the threat in your environment (this unexpected change), Proujansky says. You might be thinking, *What do I need to do to survive?* instead of *Wow, I’m really looking forward to this new era of my life.* You’ll likely experience more negative emotions, like fear, anxiety, and sadness, at first.

A caveat: As women, we go through changes in life that can make us feel out of control—like getting our period, experiencing pregnancy and childbirth, or going through menopause. These changes are in a league of their own because, on top of all the usual brain shifts, our hormones fluctuate during these life stages. This added biological component can make our responses (and our brain’s responses) to change inconsistent, Proujansky says. You can, however, shift your mindset to view an unwanted change, or an event you didn’t expect at a certain time, as a welcome challenge. And it may be as easy as saying that to yourself, in your head or out loud. As Grant says, you’ll feel more curious and motivated because you’re excited.



# Tastefuls™

## Great taste from natural ingredients.

- ◆ #1 ingredient is real meat, poultry, or fish\*
- ◆ Natural fruits, veggies, and grains
- ◆ Wet foods, dry foods, and snacks
- ◆ Formulas for all life stages & lifestyles



© Blue Buffalo Company, Ltd.

One Taste Is All It Takes™

\*In all dry and wet, complete and balanced diets.



# Crushing Cars, Rebuilding My Life

How one woman discovered she could begin again...  
after annihilating everything in her path.

By **Jaclyn Trop**

**I**'m assuming neither of you has crushed a car before?" Tony Borglum, the owner of Drive a Tank, asks me and my friend Gina. We shake our heads. I'm nervous. We've been driving armored military vehicles all morning, but the watershed moment of the two-day program in Kasota, Minnesota, arrives before I feel ready. "As you approach the car, stay on the throttle," he instructs. "You're going to have to fight every impulse in your brain, but remember: Do not lift your foot off the pedal."

When we booked our girls' trip months ago, we'd envisioned blowing off everyday stress by driving decommissioned tanks through the wilderness. But by the time the day arrived, the trip felt less than celebratory. My fiancé, Davey, had died in an accidental drowning five weeks earlier, and the trip would mark my first reunion with Gina, a close mutual friend whom we'd tapped to officiate our future wedding. It would also mark my first effort to return to normalcy following a prolonged bout of delirium.

In the early days, after I reported Davey missing while he was out riding a motorcycle, I channeled my frazzled energy into publicizing the search efforts in media interviews, call-

ing the police for updates, and reading hundreds of messages that poured in from around the world. Some sought to provide comfort, while others proffered bogus tips that Davey had been spotted in some corner of the world, raising my hopes each time despite the growing impossibility.

When I wasn't running on waning adrenaline, I retreated into an ever-shrinking shell of myself. I relied on a bulwark of friends to feed me, clothe me, and drive me around town. They patiently listened to me voice my disbelief repeatedly, and they sat sentry with me day and night. In those weeks, I couldn't bear even a minute alone—a disorienting urge for an avowed introvert.

As my grief razed me, I saw Davey's face—both in pictures and imagined in strangers—everywhere. I lost 20 pounds while wearing the same beige sweater. I felt too dazed and erratic to trust myself to get behind the wheel of a car, let alone a tank.

Though I wanted to cancel the trip to Minnesota, I didn't have enough energy or motivation to make even a small decision, so I boarded the plane as planned.





During the flight there, I justified the trip by telling myself that if anything could provide a respite from the grief, it might be the parasymphathetic thrill of driving a 130,000-pound tank over a defenseless, junkyard-bound car. I picked up Gina at the airport, and later, over a drink at our barren Best Western, chosen for its proximity to Drive a Tank, we reminisced about a trip the three of us had taken to the Arctic Circle six months prior.

**I**n a wooded area an hour southeast of Minneapolis, Drive a Tank opened for business in 2006. The company “rents out tanks for nonmilitary recreation and lets you pay to destroy stuff with the relics of war.” Borglum says that his initial bookings were bachelor parties and corporate retreats but that he’s seeing more female customers come in for the GI Jane experience. Since then, similar outfits have launched around the country, such as Tank America in Orlando; Tank Town USA in Morganton, Georgia; and Drive Tanks in Uvalde, Texas.

The itinerary is designed to build courage by starting small and moving to larger, more complex machinery. After Borglum leads us on a private safety and history lesson, we begin the intense hands-on portion of the program by ambling around the forest in a 30,000-pound, Cold War-era British fighting vehicle at a manageable five miles per hour.

Then we graduate to a yellow FV432 APC (armored personnel carrier) that allows us to experience steering by periscope. I lower myself down the hatch, and once it’s closed, I’m greeted with utter darkness. I feel my way around a tiny compartment whose dimensions raise my hackles, inducing a panicked and sweaty claustrophobia. An ancient periscope provides the only pipeline to the outer world. When I look through it, I am comforted by its lens, which blurs and distorts the world in a way that mirrors my own experience of it.

Several hours later, Borglum says we’re ready for the World War II-era Sherman, one of the gargantuan crown jewels in his collection. The green, 33-ton tank is harder to maneuver, but Gina drives it expertly during her turn, and I do my best. We’re shown how to shoot the cannon, and we decamp to separate tanks so we can drive the wooded course while hurling projectiles toward each other that explode in a puff of smoke. When we move to the barn for the day’s finale—the car crush—it feels like a relief merely to not be under attack. And the sensory overload has also had an inuring effect: After having actual shells fired at me, I no longer feel as destabilized by the critics that emerged following Davey’s death.

Borglum ushers us into the barn and introduces a 60-ton battle tank named Larry. Gina volunteers to go first, donning her safety glasses before climbing into the driver’s seat. We watch as Larry lumbers forward at



## Unpacking the Catharsis High

Alondra Hernandez, a licensed marriage and family therapist in La Jolla, California, helps make sense of the unexpected euphoria the author experienced at Drive a Tank. Grief often comes with an intense feeling of losing control, Hernandez explains, so we seek ways to recapture it. "When we talk about grief, we often talk about the sadness elements of it," she says. "But there is anger in there as well, and one of the ways we deal with anger is by lashing out. Driving a tank is the very definition of unstoppable. You choose what you want to destroy, press a button, and make that true. That's powerful."



a funereal pace to grab the 1999 Chevrolet Monte Carlo in its maw, shattering its glass from windshield to taillights and twisting its frame completely beyond recognition. A gasp of air escaping from its tires is the only evidence that the Chevy ever served a purpose.

My heart beats faster in equal parts dread and excitement as my turn approaches, my muted, grief-ridden instincts grappling with a primordial thirst to destroy something other than myself. Borglum tells me how to use the toe shifter to get the tank into second, which he calls "optimal car-crushing gear," and sends me into the driver's seat.

"Just come up to the car and squish it," he calls out, as though I may forget my one objective here. Then he voices an afterthought that floods my nervous system with fear: "Leave your back wheels on the car."

Leave the tank's back wheels on the 2004 Pontiac Grand Prix I'm due to destroy? Hardly Evel Knievel, I'm not even coordinated on my best days, let alone these darkest ones, when everything feels off-kilter. My hazy, muddled mind has already struggled for more than a month with the basic requirements of daily living. I do not trust myself, at all, to maneuver this military machine in any controlled way. I envision myself instead behind the wheel of a runaway tank that wrecks everything in its path until there's nothing left—to miss, to mourn, to make sense of.

Still, I hop up into the driver's seat and am surprised by an impulse to close my eyes, even though I'm sure that's not what was advised. I can't seem to bear witness as I fight through every neurological impulse and step on the gas to roll ahead slowly. When I do finally peek through lids half closed, I realize I'm sitting so high up that I can hardly see the Pontiac I'm targeting, anyway.

I will have to feel my way through this. When my wheels finally connect with the car's nose, I expect to hear the sharp crunch of sheet metal, but it sounds more like a thud. I flatten

the Pontiac into a heap of shattered glass, gnarled body panels, and stray hubcaps. Cautiously opening my eyes, I take measure of the destruction, check that I have left the tank's back wheels on the roof, and feel jubilant.

# W

hen Borglum shakes my hand and gives me the keys to the Pontiac as a memento, I feel a new-found optimism, a kernel of hope for the future.

That night, I sleep well for the first time in five weeks.

The next day, also for the first time in five weeks, I experience the impossible: a reprieve from the pit of grief that's throbbled in my stomach since Davey's disappearance. Crushing the car seems to have demolished my Drive a Tank jitters, so I am finally free to relax into whatever Borglum has planned for us, which is taking turns playing all five crew positions (loader, commander, gunner, navigator, and driver) in the Sherman.

It begins to rain, droplets forming thick, muddy rivers beneath the tank's wheels. As gunner, I am in control of aiming and firing our weapon, and I've got the mock enemy, the yellow APC, in my crosshairs.

I stand alert at my perch in the turret, mouthpiece at the ready, fully immersed in the make-believe world we have created here in the Minnesota wilderness. Though it seems silly, the playacting helps me recoup a real feeling of control.

Borglum's voice snakes through my earpiece. "How's my gunner?" he asks.

A smile sneaks across my face, an unfamiliar impulse, unfurling in spite of myself. "Good," I reply. "Never better."

# NEW 30-DAY ODOR CONTROL? FINALLY.



**Introducing our strongest litter ever: Fresh Step Heavy Duty.**  
The advanced odor fighting technology\*\* gives your litter box 30 days of freshness so your cat can strut like, well, their 🐾 don't stink.



**Fresh Step** **STEP IT UP**

FEBREZE is used under license from The Procter & Gamble Company or its affiliates. \*\*based on odor control \*\*vs. Fresh Step Multi-Cat.



HILARY  
SWANK  
IS  
EXACTLY WHERE  
SHE  
WANTS TO BE

At 50, the actor has two Oscars and two kids—and she's finally embracing life on her own terms, making time for what truly nurtures her (family, friends, movement, and meaningful roles).

By Samantha Leal || Photographs by Jonny Marlow || Styling by Kristen Saladino

# Hilary Swank has a way of noticing the small things.



After greeting each other in an Arizona hotel lobby on a February afternoon, we make our way through the building to find coffee—but we have no idea where we’re headed on this sprawling resort campus. Her hair is long, her face is makeup-free, and her dog Moon (a sweet little loaf that Hilary spotted on the side of the road in 28-degree weather while on a trip) is in tow.

As we ask each person we pass where to find coffee on our little excursion, Hilary thanks them effusively and warmly for the directions using the name on their name tag. Coffee finally in hand—Hilary goes for an iced triple decaf espresso with oat milk—we sit outside, the desert sun streaking our skin as mountains greet us in the distance. Soon, a hummingbird flutters by and stays awhile before moving toward the sun. “Oh, that was so cool,” she says, her wide smile meeting mine as we both take a moment to enjoy this. Yes, if noticing is an art, she’s seemingly mastered it; it’s like she’s not just seeing things but absorbing them. Instantly. No forced mindfulness, no internal reminders to be present—just an easy awareness, as if she’s never been wired to rush past things in the first place.

No doubt this skill has paved the way for her successful acting career. Hilary has two Best Actress Oscars to her name: the first for *Boys Don’t Cry*, in 2000, and the second for *Million Dollar Baby*, in 2005. Hilary was just 25 years old when she won that first Oscar. “It was like I was shot out of a cannon,” she says. I ask her what she would tell that younger self. “I probably would say, ‘Take a breath for a second.’”

Hilary then turns contemplative, as she emphasizes the power of intentional decision-making. “I’d say to really ruminate on the choices that you’re making every day. Make sure what is happening is what you want,” she says. “That’s the only control we have—the choices we make every day. My time is my life.”

She admits that getting her footing in Hollywood wasn’t easy or flush with choices. It often felt like do or die, agreeing to roles that didn’t always align with her point of view. In other words, the options weren’t that great. “Thankfully, it’s becoming more inclusive. But when I started, it was more patriarchal than ever,” Hilary says. “And so I was playing roles that were written by men from what a female point of view is, and it wasn’t



**PREVIOUS SPREAD**  
Hunza G bikini, Genny bomber, Ippolita earrings, Alexis Bittar ring.

**OPPOSITE PAGE**  
Staud one-piece, Agmes earrings, Alexis Bittar ring (left), Hilary's own ring (right).

**THIS PAGE**  
Genny bomber, Ippolita earrings.



**THIS PAGE**  
Norma Kamali gown,  
Hunza G bikini,  
CLEDearrings.

necessarily true.” Hilary saw her path forward with roles that spoke to a different type of character: complex and often physically strong and transformative. “It’s not that I don’t like being feminine—I just don’t like being told *how* to be feminine.”

Now she brings that complexity onscreen for the third season of Netflix’s *Yellowjackets*. Though she is tight-lipped about her specific role, given the timing of our interview, the nuanced characters of the show were definitely a draw for her. “I like to be part of projects where you either relate to somebody or you learn from somebody, or you’re just flat-out entertained. And sometimes the best case is when it’s all three,” she says. Hilary worked a lot with actor Melanie Lynskey. “We have some scenes that are so juicy and so loaded and so full,” Hilary says. “It’s fun to have that as an actor with another actress like that, to get in there and get in that sandbox and really play.”

**Speaking of play,** Hilary has a lot of that these days, thanks to her 2-year-old twins with husband Philip Schneider. (The couple split their time between Washington, Hilary’s home state, and Colorado.) Hilary froze her eggs at the age of 37 and became pregnant at age 47 and a mom at the age of 48. “I would have had kids earlier. I’m not saying I actively waited until 47,” she says. “But that was a magical time in my life, when it all culminated. It was the right time for a myriad of reasons.”

She notes that freezing her eggs was one of the best and most important things she did to prepare for the possibility of being a mom further on in life, because it gave her more assurance that she would be able to do it with fewer restrictions on timing. “Thankfully, I had that ability to freeze eggs for later,” she says, emphasizing that a lot of companies and insurance plans are helping to pay for the process now—and if you can, she says, do it. “It takes some of the pressure off.” She acknowledges that freezing eggs isn’t a guarantee, as not every egg will be viable, but still, she believes having the option can offer reassurance and flexibility.

As for being a mom in her late 40s and 50s? “I’m a very different parent than I would’ve been, even in my early 40s,” she says. “I’m much more patient. I’m much more understanding. I am much more, I think, interested in a different way than I would’ve been. I’m really interested in their brains. I’m fascinated about what makes them tick. And I have my career that’s already established, so I’m not divided. I’m able to really sink in and be present with them and be a hands-on parent.”

Caregiving is something Hilary knows intimately. She became her father’s caregiver in 2014 after his lung transplant, a role she embraced for years. (He passed in 2021.) The experience taught her invaluable lessons: the importance of advocating for a loved one’s health,

“It’s not that I don’t like being feminine, I just don’t like being told *how* to be feminine.”

recognizing that while doctors are often overworked, persistence is key; the necessity of self-care to avoid burnout; and a deep understanding that health is the foundation of a good life. “You don’t realize how well everything’s going until you don’t have your health,” she says. “It was a strong reminder that I haven’t forgotten—to not take health for granted and to be as diligent as possible about learning all there is to learn about what goes in and *on* my body.” That has also been a focus for Hilary in her role as chief innovation officer at natural baby-product company HealthyBaby, which she took on in 2024; she uses her experience as a new mom to codevelop items that are safe and sustainable.

**Taking care of** her body has been the saving grace for Hilary, who competed in swimming and gymnastics growing up. Working out is a pivotal part of her routine, as it brings normalcy to her forever-changing day-to-day. “Exercising took a back seat for a little while,” she says, pointing to motherhood and her busy schedule. “But even with the babies, when they’re napping, I have those three hours to get my exercise in and read a script or take a meeting or do an interview.” Hilary says she tries to work out at least three times a week, sometimes more.

“Right now, my go-to is tennis and Pilates. Tennis is a big thing. I used to do three days a week of strength training. For me, I love lifting. It just makes me feel really grounded in my body.” She stops me here, looking for her phone. “I’m actually building a gym in my garage, and I just got a piece of equipment I’m really excited about.” She’s grinning, and it’s easy to see how much she thrives on challenging movement. The equipment is the AmStaff Fitness SD-5000 All-In-One Smith Machine, a heavy-duty at-home strength machine. Finding a solid local trainer in Washington has been a bit difficult, so she hopes this giant pulley system will help get her lifting back on track. “I’m really blessed that I have that ability to [work out how I want], because I realize that a lot of people can’t.” In terms of her eating habits, Hilary is dairy-free and doesn’t consume a ton

of meat (“I eat fish, and my neighbors hunt elk, and I do eat some of that”), but she doesn’t stick to one way of eating. She’s focused on giving her body what it needs. “It’s one of the key things I keep in mind—eating to fuel your body, what makes you feel good and what gives you energy,” she says.

Her mornings start with oatmeal when the twins wake early, then another breakfast of sorts around 11. One of her favorite meals is a high-protein fish salad, hold the tuna. “I don’t do tuna anymore because it can be high in mercury,” she says. Her replacement? Sardines. She mixes sardines with hummus (instead of mayo) and adds onions and celery. “I put that on some sourdough bread with vegan cheese. It’s so good and so good for you,” she says. Later in the day, she’ll drink a protein smoothie or eat a protein bar or some nuts and

fruit. For dinner, a bigger meal could be anything from an elk burger to Indian food. Sometimes she’ll end with another protein shake before bed, or her new favorite, coconut yogurt with granola. (“Oh my god, I love Cocomune! Have you tried it?”)

Another thing she thrives on: being in nature and with animals. “I have five dogs,” she says, looking over at Moon, who is lazing in the sun. “I have two horses. Nature is such a fundamental part of who I am. Thankfully, I grew up in nature. For me, it’s in my DNA, it’s in my marrow, and I would not be the same person without it. And so I have to be in nature every day in some facet or another. And where I live is so perfect for that. I have a lake right in front of me and a forest in my backyard. That’s my recharge.”

**Aging has a way** of sharpening our priorities, revealing what feeds our soul and which relationships truly matter. Growing older has deepened Hilary’s appreciation for friendships built on honesty, resilience, and understanding. She no longer has the energy for pretense or half-hearted connections; only those who meet her with authenticity remain in her life. “I just don’t have time for falsehood in any way,” she says. “And a lot of people don’t like to be completely honest with people because they’re afraid of either hurting someone’s feelings or they’re afraid of confrontation. The relationships that are important to me are the ones that are willing to be honest and real.”

Just as she’s become more intentional with the people in her life, she’s also found new excitement in her career, embracing the opportunities that come with experience and maturity. “Most people might be like, ‘Aren’t you worried that you’re now 50 and there’s not a lot of jobs?’ I’m like, ‘No, I have more offers now than I’ve ever had,’” she says, pointing to the list of actors over the past 10 years who have been nominated for Academy Awards, many of them 40-plus. “It’s an incredibly exciting time.”

She sees this maturing stage in her career not as limitation but momentum. “Energy is flowing when you’re happy to be where you want to be, when you’re happy with where you are, because you made a choice to be there,” she says. I look at her and nod. There’s a clarity in the way she says this, in the way that she notices details and intuitively senses what’s around her—an awareness that feels both grounded and expansive, as if she’s fully tuned in to the moment, in her work and in her life. This is Hilary’s time, not by chance, but by choice. Not fearing time, but being present, and embracing and reveling in it.

Hair: Kevin Ryan for Art + Commerce. Skin care and makeup: Fabiola using Dior Capture Le Sérum and Rouge Dior Lipstick. Nails: Tom Bachik using Manicurist. Production: Crawford Productions.





**OPPOSITE PAGE**

Norma Kamali hooded top, Left on Friday bikini top, Jade Swim bikini bottom, CLEDearrings, Alexis Bittar ring.

**THIS PAGE**

Norma Kamali top, Left on Friday bikini bottom.

# 20 Years of Strength + Sweat

**I**n April of 2005, we launch our first-ever official print issue into a world that looks very different from today's. A few months earlier, George W. Bush was sworn in for his second presidential term. The iPod Nano is about to be released, and Hurricane Katrina is four months away from barreling into Louisiana. The terms *GLP-1* and *Apple Watch* aren't in regular circulation, and talking about

topics like postpartum depression, eating disorders, and "my therapist" will get you funny looks. It has been only 12 years since a law finally mandated that women be included in clinical trials and 11 years since the FDA created its Office of Women's Health.

Our very first cover offers some directives we've long since retired, like "Easy Ways to a Flat Belly!" and "Tight ABS! Toned ARMS! Trim THIGHS!" But it includes others we still deeply believe in—stories that help women live their happiest, healthiest lives by providing essential service on how you can "Power Up Your Diet," explore the "Secrets to Amazing Sex," and get stronger

with "New Weight Workouts." Like you, we've evolved.

In the first editor's letter, executive editor Kristina M. Johnson explains the engine that she hopes will drive *WH*. "The truth about smart, successful women's lives, as we all know, is that they're always slipping out of balance in one way or another," she writes. "It's easy to lose sight of the important things—your health, your peace of mind, your friends and family, and your dreams. That's where *Women's Health* comes in. We want to help you keep growing every day, to strive to live the life that *you* consider perfect." This mission still drives editorial decisions today. ►►





Photographs by  
**CHELSIE CRAIG**

When reflecting on what has changed in women's health care over the past decades, nearly all of the *WH* advisors interviewed for this feature pointed to the same big achievements: better representation—in the doctor's office, research, treatments and diagnoses, pain management protocols—and more information. In 2007, female ob-gyns represented half of all doctors in the specialty, says *WH* advisor Jessica Shepherd, MD, an ob-gyn, author, and menopause expert. (That stat now lands at more than 85 percent.) We've developed beauty products that work for a variety of skin tones. "It was very limited 20 years ago," says Mona Gohara, MD, a dermatologist and *WH* advisor. Society and medical professionals listen better to women's pain, even if we still aren't where we need to be. We've busted stigmas around menopause, periods, postpartum depression, and more. We've learned that lifting heavy isn't just for gym bros.

It hasn't been all sunshine and dumbbells, though. In the past few years, there's been a seismic shift in reproductive-health rights as well as declining trust in our medical systems. But through it all, *WH* has been there, answering your questions and helping you find the light even when it felt dark. That's why we do what we do. "The women that read *Women's Health*, they're looking for solutions," says Gabrielle Lyon, DO, a functional medicine practitioner and *WH* advisor.

In a lot of ways, we've grown up together. We've failed and gotten back up. We've asked big questions. We've faced hard truths. We've started over, again and again and again. And as Johnson put it in her closing note to readers in that very first issue, "We plan on being here for you for a long, long time." —Currie Engel

**Hanging 10 (or 40)** Kate's love for surfing increases with age.



# Catching Up With the (First) Cover Star

What's **Kate French** been up to since appearing on our inaugural cover? Oh, just some acting, modeling, mothering, and more. By **AMY WILKINSON**

**K**ate's most vivid memory from the cover shoot? The water temperature. "It was the coldest pool I'd ever been in," she says. Shot by photographer Steven Lippman at a private residence in Malibu, California, in January 2005, the photo shoot called for Kate, then 20 years old, to fully submerge herself and pop out of the pool—over and over and over again. "I'm a water person—I surf and am used to the cold—but getting my head wet each time was an instant brain freeze," she says. Although, apparently, a good workout too. "My arms were so sore from lifting myself up."

Kate didn't see the fruits of her labor until months later, when she attended the magazine's launch party in New York City, with her mom as her date. Spying the blown-up cardboard cover at the event felt "surreal," Kate says. "My dad is my biggest champion, and he had the cover on his wall." Given her dad's longtime *Men's Health* readership—in addition to her own love for movement (Kate is a big hiker as well as a surfer)—she was thrilled about the

JON W. JOHNSON (3)



# “Life is about the art of the pivot.”



prospect of a female brand counterpart. “It was very much in the vein of the lifestyle that I lived, so I was excited to be a part of it.”

Twenty years later, 40-year-old Kate is still living in that *WH* culture, albeit now with a husband and two kids in tow—and she’s learned plenty of lessons about life, love, and longevity along the way.

## LESSON 1 Bold Goals Require Bold Moves

► Born in New Jersey and raised on Long Island, New York, Kate moved to California in her late teens to attend the University of California,

Santa Barbara, where she declared an English major in the hopes of one day becoming an author.

“Once I got to college, my drive for that just immediately left,” she recalls. “I was very lost, and I was supporting myself and thought continuing to pay for college would not be the best use of my money.”

Kate had always wanted to act, and buoyed by positive feedback she received from appearing in a student film on campus, she made the decision to drop out of college and move to L.A. She got a place in West Hollywood and a job at the Fred Segal boutique in Santa Monica. Modeling gigs—like the *Women’s Health* cover—supplemented her income.

“That was my first cover ever,” she says. “*Women’s Health* was just such a special little family because I went on to do two more covers.”

Soon after, Kate landed one of her first big roles, on an American telenovela called *Wicked Wicked Games*, starring Tatum O’Neal. She booked a few more small roles before nabbing the part that she is perhaps best known for: Niki Stevens on Showtime’s *The L Word*. “I loved that character so much, and they were so free with improv and really just letting you figure it out.”

## LESSON 2 Movement Is Healing

► An avid surfer since age 12, Kate admits her passion took a bit of a back seat when she became a mother. “After I had my son, I didn’t surf for almost four years,” she says of the rigors of raising

Henry while her husband, Jon, traveled for work. That all changed when she got pregnant with her daughter, Chapel. “I surfed with her until I was too large to lie on the surfboard.” Then the pandemic hit, beaches closed, and surfing was on hold. But “once the beaches opened, surfing became my refuge again,” Kate says. “It was my mental health savior, and I kind of fell in with this group of older surfer men who used to be pro, and they started giving me tips.” Kate ended up meeting the group a couple days a week, and they helped her hone her skills.

She’s been asked to compete, but for now, she’s safeguarding the sport as her escape. “It’s a constant mental meditation of trying to be better,” she says. “There’s something about riding a wave that’s so moving and spiritual. It feels like a cleanse every time you do it.”

## LESSON 3 Embrace the Pivot

► Kate still models from time to time, but her career focus remains acting. Maintaining momentum in the industry, however, hasn’t been easy: First came motherhood, then the pandemic, then the writers’ strike of 2023. But there have been glimmers, like landing a small role in the Oscar-winning film *Oppenheimer*. In this area, too, she’s learning to go with the flow. “Life is about the art of the pivot,” she says. “You have to ride the wave. Even in my darkest moments, I still see the light and have gratitude.”

**Reflection Time**  
“My younger self would’ve been so pessimistic,” says Kate. “As I’ve aged, I just try to focus on everything I’m grateful for.”

# Charting Our Own Strength Transformation

How were you sweating 10 years ago? What about 20? Heading to a Zumba class in yoga pants in pursuit of the so-called “bikini body”? Clipping on a Fitbit to count calories? Whatever you were doing then likely looks different from today. That’s certainly the case for us at *WH*.

**W**e tapped some of our trusty experts to look back on two decades of fitness—exploring what’s changed (hint: a lot) and what’s stayed the same in our pursuit of strength. We even had them weigh in on one of our old covers, the September 2011 issue (*right*), which features a glowing Zoe Saldaña decked out in a crop top and denim miniskirt. Where “exercise” in this era was all about making our bodies look a certain way (see: “*FLAT ABS! FIRM BUTT! LEAN LEGS!*”), today our workouts tend to focus on how our sweat seshes make us feel. In 2025, fitness follows a “whole-body approach,” says Betina Gozo, CPT, a certified functional strength coach, Nike Global Trainer, and *WH* advisory board member. That means giving equal love to our body, mind, and nutrition.

Women’s magazines of the early aughts “unapologetically focused on beauty,” says Natalia Mehlman Petrzela, PhD, a historian and the author of *Fit Nation: The Gains & Pains of America’s Exercise Obsession*. Thanks to the body-positivity movement in the 2010s (which had origins in the 1960s with the fat-acceptance movement and the Civil Rights Movement), the entire space underwent a radical transition. Instead of an externally focused image of “health,” we now celebrate strength, mindfulness, and longevity, Petrzela says. The language used to describe bodies is more inclusive and uplifting too. (Think: taglines turned memes, like “Strong is the new skinny.”)

Today, strength takes center stage. “It used to just be aerobics, and now it’s quite the opposite. There’s less focus on cardio and much more on strengthening,” says Keri Peterson, MD, an internal medicine specialist and *WH* advisory board member. You can start

to see that shift even back in this 2011 issue, which includes an article about how to strength train correctly. It’s a good change, Dr. Peterson says, because strength training and muscle are essential for longevity and bone health, especially in women.

We also can’t talk about the past 20 years of fitness without mentioning the group fitness boom. “Women are becoming avid exercisers, partially due to classes like SoulCycle, where it’s a community,” says Dr. Peterson.

In fact, communal fitness might be our secret weapon. Over 36 percent of women reported participating in group fitness classes, compared to 8 percent of men, per a survey in *Gender and Power in Strength Sports: Strong as Feminist*, which was coedited by Katie Rose Hejtmanek, PhD, a cultural anthropologist. Her research found that during the pandemic, women reported much more resilience across physical and mental health markers because they had preestablished fitness networks. “You become stronger when it’s a collective endeavor,” says Hejtmanek.

Even sports like running draw thousands to clubs and social apps, with women leading the way: There was an 89 percent increase in women joining run clubs on Strava last year.

Now let’s dive into our fit past (and present) with this cover analysis. —*Olivia Luppino*

**36%**  
of women say they participate in group fitness classes, compared to just 8% of men.

**89%**  
Last year's increase in women joining run clubs on the social app Strava.



DID YOU KNOW...

## Taylor Swift Graced Our Cover?

◀ *WH* covers were in black and white—until December 2008. That’s when T-Swift burst onto the newsstand on the first full-color *WH* cover. Tagged as a “music sensation,” she shared in the issue that she writes when she’s “frustrated, angry, or confused. I’ve figured out a way to filter all of that into something good.” You can say that again!

# Body-Talk Truths

Jump back to 2011, six years after launch, and let's look with our 2025 glasses on. We're rating ourselves E for *evolving*.



### Fast, Easy Ways to...TONE EVERY INCH!

Let's settle this once and for all: You can't "tone" a muscle. Try "strengthen" or "build" instead. "Toning" was kind of a euphemism, anyway, for "slimming down," says Petrzela. But working out is not about making yourself smaller.

**His #1 Craving**  
We focus on our own pleasure, too, now, thank you very much.

### Hot-Body Special!

"Right from the get-go, there's this emphasis on looking hot," says Petrzela. But health and fitness shouldn't be so body-focused, especially at the expense of the mental health benefits of getting active. There's no one image of healthy or "hot."



**DROP 5, 10, 20+ POUNDS**  
Only if *\*you\** want to. Don't let a magazine headline (or anyone else, for that matter) make you feel like you should. Fwiw, losing weight might not even be the right goal for you. Try building muscle instead. "As you gain strength and build muscle, you might gain weight," says Gozo. But when this happened to her, it was the best she's ever felt about her body in her life. And, of course, you don't have to change your body to feel confident and happy.

**FLAT ABS! FIRM BUTT! LEAN LEGS!**  
Glad we're out of the "flat abs" era! For starters, abs aren't "flat." They're muscle, and muscle doesn't lie flat. Plus, it is so very normal to have a protruding belly that hides just how ripped your core is. "It's really about having a *functional core*," says Gozo.

### Live Longer Do This One Simple Thing—Starting Today

**Live Longer Do This One Simple Thing—Starting Today**  
This tip still holds: Get active. Fun fact: Women reap more benefits than men do from doing a workout for the same duration, per research done by WH advisor and cardiologist Martha Gulati, MD.

## 3x Cover Star MVPs

These celebs have appeared on our cover not once, not twice, but three times. Let's hear it for...



**Zoe Saldana**  
May 2009 /  
September 2011 / June 2018



**Kristen Bell**  
November 2009 /  
April 2012 / November 2019



**Gabrielle Union**  
March 2017 / March 2019 /  
October 2020



**Julianne Hough**  
May 2011 / July/August  
2015 / September 2019 /  
June 2020 (4x!)

# The Moments That Moved Us

# US

These are the **major breakthroughs** in **health and wellness treatments**, as well as the **earth-shaking cultural** moments, that changed **\*everything\*** for us over the past two decades. From GLP-1s to new IUDs, pandemics, and social movements, **WH was here for it all.**

2013

## PPD

becomes part of the broader diagnosis of perinatal depression in the *DSM-5*.

**"We need to normalize the vulnerability of going through difficult emotions and mental health during the perinatal time frame."**

—Wendy Davis, PhD, Postpartum Support International



## Better Than Gold

July 2008

Running icon Joan Benoit Samuelson pens a letter in *WH* to her younger self, saying, "Let passion drive you," and pointing to the power of the unknown: "I run a little faster when I don't know what's around the next corner."

## Our First Issue

April/May 2005

Hello! We launch our first official issue, cementing *WH's* status as a bona fide brand.



2005

In **2005**, **Byetta**, the first GLP-1, hits the market for use in people with type 2 diabetes. (Yes, GLP-1s have been around this long, so yes, there is data on their long-term safety.)



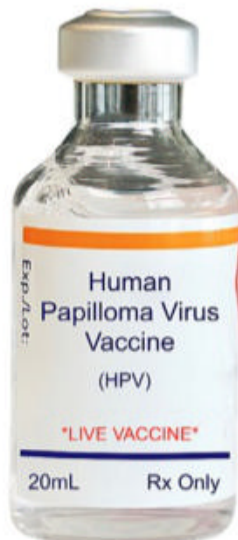
2006



**2006** **Plan B** is made available as an over-the-counter contraceptive for women 18+, providing essential access to these meds.

2007

In **2005**, **P90X** is created, launching an at-home workout movement. Remember: P90X walked so Peloton could run!



**2006**

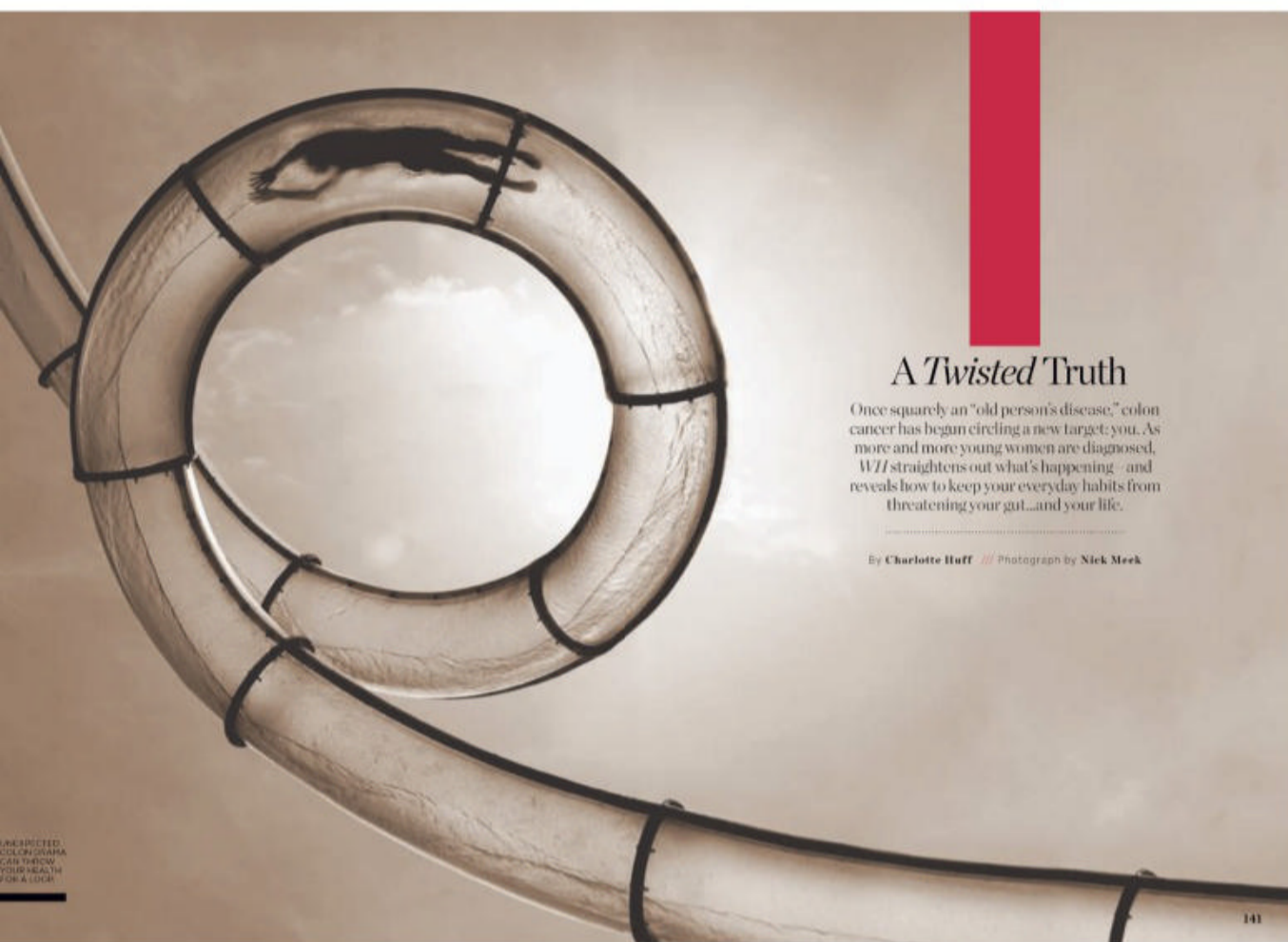
The first **HPV vaccine**, which can prevent cervical cancer and genital warts, gets FDA approval. Around 8 in 10 people have been infected by the virus in their lifetime, but since '06, infections with cancer-causing HPV types dropped 40 percent in women and 88 percent in teenage girls.

2008

2009

**2008**

The **Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act** passes, requiring insurance companies to offer mental and physical health care coverage at comparable levels, upping access and reducing stigma.



## A Twisted Truth

Once squarely an "old person's disease," colon cancer has begun circling a new target: you. As more and more young women are diagnosed, *WH* straightens out what's happening—and reveals how to keep your everyday habits from threatening your gut...and your life.

By Charlotte Huff // Photograph by Nick Meek

# A Twisted Truth

April 2015

Our story on the alarming rise of colon cancer symptoms among younger women would turn out to be eerily prescient (the colon cancer rate has gone up in the past decade for women under 55). Diving into the science, it breaks down the noticeable signs and shares the most effective ways that women can protect their gut.

## Feats of Strength

November 2015

Strength is in *WH*'s DNA. In this piece, we profile four women and their accomplishments, from a postpartum mom finishing an Ironman to a 64-year-old swimmer crushing a 110-mile swim. Behind every record breaker is a doubt waiting to be demolished, and behind every feat is a woman like you—and us.



2010



**2010**  
**Instagram launches,** and influencers, food inspiration, and fitspo abound!

2011

**2011**  
The first "female" crash test dummies are used in testing. Women face greater risk of injury and death in car accidents (we tend to be shorter, weigh less, and have a lower center of gravity), so this change is essential for safety.

2012

**2012**  
The FDA approves an at-home test that can detect HIV-1 and HIV-2 antibodies.



**2014**  
**Apple and Facebook are among the first large employers to pay for egg freezing.** "It used to be a silent conversation of assumptions, guilt, and shame. This really showed a shift."

—Jessica Shepherd, MD, *WH* advisor

2013

2014



**2015**  
**Same-Sex Marriage Is Legal** Love is love is love. In *Obergefell v. Hodges*, SCOTUS legalizes gay marriage in America. "They ask for equal dignity in the eyes of the law. The Constitution grants them that right," writes Justice Anthony Kennedy.

2015



## You've Got This, Mama

November 2018

◀ Motherhood is magical. But it can also make many women feel invisible. In our award-nominated article on postpartum experiences, we pull back the veil on how motherhood transforms our minds, bodies, boobs, and health.

**Athleisure** 2016  
The word *athleisure* is added to Merriam-Webster dictionary, officially cementing our collective love for wearing leggings all day, every day.



## The Strength in Our Scars

January 2019

◀ In this powerful photo-meets-essay portfolio, five women share their gripping stories—and the marks left behind. The overall message: Scars are a testament to power and survival. They're something to wear with pride. "Scars are part of being human. It just adds to the tapestry of my life."

—Robyn Lawley, model (pictured)

2016

2017

2018

2019

2020



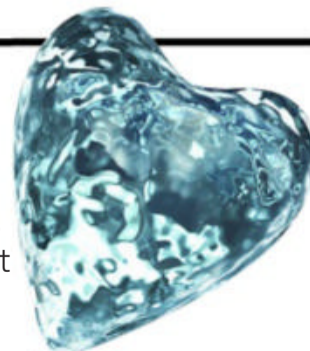
In **2016**, Congress passes a massive funding package to help fight the growing **opioid** epidemic.



**2017:** Serena Williams wins the Australian Open while pregnant.

### 2018

The first major article on **spontaneous coronary artery dissection (SCAD)** is published. Up to 35 percent of heart attacks in women 50 or younger are due to SCAD. It often affects young, healthy women (9 in 10 SCAD patients are female), and experts don't know why. But thanks to grassroots advocacy from survivors and doctors, this heart condition begins getting some much-needed attention.



### 2020

#### The Year That Changed Us

The greatest seismic shift in half a century strikes our work, health, and homes, in the form of the **COVID-19 pandemic**. It goes on to change our lives in ways that are still apparent today. The same year, the **Black Lives Matter** protests bring renewed attention to racial injustice and health disparities.



More and more women are shelling out—both financially and psychologically—for trying-for-baby treatment add-ons. But the controversy over whether these “accessories” are worth it, or even safe, is a complicated and emotional one. *WH* wades through the murky waters and investigates how women can stay informed while making the tough yet smart decisions.

# Fertility's Gold Rush

PHOTOGRAPHED BY VICTOR PRADO

PAGE 121



**“I Want People to Feel Empowered, Not Helpless”**

## Mind Maker

November 2022

The Apple Watch launched in 2015, but the health features (cycle tracking, heart rhythm, and more) added later make it a must-use. In an essay, Sumbul Desai, MD, Apple's VP of Health, discusses her mission.

## Fertility's Gold Rush

October 2019

*WH* wades through the murky world of fertility “add-on” treatments, sharing how you can make tough-yet-smart decisions about your reproductive health. We're not afraid to ask: “Are these ‘accessories’ worth it? Or even safe?” Keeping you informed is our top priority, always.



## Paris Olympics

Summer 2024

For 19 days, the world's best athletes perform at the highest level, at the first Olympics to reach gender parity. *WH* features six stars in this issue, including Ashleigh Johnson, water polo badass.

## Where To Next?

Scan to follow *Women's Health* on Instagram and let us know what's on your mind.



2021

2022

2023

2024

2025

**2021**  
**Clinical trials for the first triple-negative breast cancer vaccine begin.** “I’m feeling so lucky and so blessed that after many scary moments, I have another chance to live.”  
—Jennifer Davis, vaccine recipient



**2022**  
**U.S. Women's National Team Wins Equal Pay**  
The landmark settlement includes a \$22M payout for soccer players and a pledge to equalize pay.



**2022**  
**Roe v. Wade Is Overturned**  
SCOTUS's *Dobbs v. Jackson* ruling overturns the landmark 1973 case that made abortion legal for five decades. Although 63 percent of Americans support the right, it is no longer protected at the federal level.

In **2023**, **zuranolone**, the first oral PPD medication, gets FDA approval. “This news validates decades of women's experiences.”  
—Catherine Birndorf, MD



**2025**  
**Sobriety as a New Vital Sign?**  
Turns out, no amount of alcohol is “good” for you. In January, U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, MD, calls for an update to warning labels to include increased cancer risk.

**Here's to Future You...**



**A Healthy, Solid  
Foundation**  
What experts  
hope for in 2045.



# ...The Next 20 Years

What will health and wellness look like in 2045? Experts share their hopes, fears, and trend predictions for the two decades ahead.

By ANNA MEDARIS

**T**he year is 2045. Perhaps that makes you middle-aged, but people aren't calling it that anymore. Maybe we're measuring age internally—assessing your biological age based on the vitality of your cells, for example, not the number of candles on your birthday cake. Or we're gauging age by healthspan (years feeling fully alive), not lifespan (years being alive).

In a particularly gracious version of this future world, aging is supported by health-care professionals who take, and treat, women's pain seriously. While women outlive men by an average of 5.5 years, they tend to spend more of their lives in chronic pain, often as a result of age-related conditions such as osteoarthritis.

And when it comes to menopause, future doctors will (we hope) regularly and proactively offer hormone therapy and other yet-to-be-invented treatments, like implantable devices that detect and dispense said hormones. A future in which women have the knowledge and tools to continue living their best lives well into their 60s, 70s, and beyond? "That would be my wildest dream," says ob-gyn Jessica Shepherd, MD, author of *Generation M: Living Well in Perimenopause and Menopause*. "A lot of that has to do with how we treat ourselves—emotionally, nutrition, exercise—but also hormone replacement therapy, because it gives you the ability to have that longevity. Your body can thrive on it."

Of course, 2045 could look a lot more dire for women in the U.S. The climate crisis (a warming world disproportionately affects women's health, linking to issues such as preterm birth

and worsened menopausal symptoms), stymied medical research (in early 2025, grant and funding freezes halted essential health-care research on things like endometriosis and cancer disparities), and reduced bodily autonomy (19 states have a full ban on or limited access to abortion since *Roe v. Wade* was overturned) will remain essential issues that affect our overall well-being. But let's get to the good shifts that experts are excited about.

## 1 Precision Care Will Transform Your Health

► **HERE COMES** personalized everything, down to skin-care salves formulated from a pinprick. Glenicia Nosworthy, MD, an internal medicine and aesthetic physician in New York City, is already offering her patients such solutions—think injections of your own blood platelets instead of synthetic fillers. In fact, she coined the term *beauty hacking* to describe using your own biology and genetics to glow up without going under the knife. And she expects this practice to become only more widespread. "If we are doing the proper blood work and realizing, 'Okay, this is what your skin is lacking at this particular moment,' [we can] customize your skin care to optimize you...versus just selling you a generic line," she says.

Psychiatrist Jessi Gold, MD, chief wellness officer for the University of Tennessee System, has a related vision for the future of mental health: Instead of the largely trial-and-error approach of current depression treatments, she's eager to more definitively prescribe meds tailored to people's biology, history, and other characteristics. As it stands, antidepressants work on the first try for ►



**5.5**

The number of years by which women typically outlive men

**33%**

The average portion of her life that a woman spends in the post-menopausal phase

only about a third of patients. “A little bit less darts and a little more precision would be very helpful,” she notes.

Your personal wellness routine and health-care choices will likely be more tailored to your unique needs too. Maybe that means structuring workouts around hormonal fluctuations, or taking supplements designed for your body, or using AI tools to make more-informed decisions about cancer screenings. Machine learning could help you avoid unnecessary invasive treatments—like a painful colposcopy following an abnormal Pap smear—by more accurately identifying the type of HPV present and its likelihood of developing into cancer.

That’s not to say health care in the future will be automated and cold. Doctors are focused on keeping people at the heart of medicine, whether you’re seeing a doctor virtually, chatting with a bot about meds, or hanging in an office designed for comfort, not sterility (think spa-like waiting rooms and sleeker specula). “I hope that we can embrace technology [and] AI but not lose the art of medicine, which is that personalized touch,” says *WH* advisor Navya Mysore, MD, a primary care physician in New York City. “That compassionate care—the ability to listen to someone, to hold their hand while they’re going through something challenging—is so important.”

## 2 Buckle Up: GLP-1s Are Here to Stay

► It feels as if diabetes and weight-loss drugs such as Ozempic and Wegovy are already \*everywhere\* right now, but by 2030, nearly 1 in 10 people are expected to be on a GLP-1. The injectable meds, which suppress appetite and lead people to lose an average of 15 to 25 percent of their body weight, are

already influencing portion sizes, disrupting relationships, and infiltrating gym culture. Where will that put us in 20 years?

Among other unknowns, the drugs could spike rates of injury and bone loss in women who aren’t incorporating sufficient weight training and protein intake into their lifestyles, says Los Angeles-based celebrity trainer Jen Widerstrom. “You’re going to see a slew of problems like malnourishment and osteopenia and injuries cropping up,” Widerstrom says. She’s a proponent of the drugs in the right candidates with support, and she’s also concerned about their broader influence. Some reports show that nearly 80 percent of 17-year-old girls say they’re unhappy with their bodies, and roughly 1 in 10 adolescent girls say they’ve used nonprescription weight-loss pills—including “natural” alts to Ozempic.

On the other hand, the drugs’ widespread use could help drive down rates of obesity-related illnesses such as heart disease and diabetes. They could be repurposed to treat substance-use disorders and even behavioral addictions such as gambling. For now, many doctors feel strongly that these drugs are a positive, revolutionary treatment for obesity at a time when three in four people are overweight or obese in the U.S. (as of 2021 data).

## 3 Pay Attention to Policy and Politics—They’ll Shape Your Situation

► **EXPERTS ARE** focused, more broadly, on how the federal government’s priorities over the next four years are going to mold the future of women’s health. The fate of the White House Initiative on Women’s

Health Research is murky (the web page itself has been archived), and the dangerous consequences of the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in 2022, which had previously granted women the right to an abortion, continue to reverberate.

One 2024 investigation suggests that pregnant women in states with abortion bans are at higher risk of dying from preventable causes, including hemorrhages and fatal infections. Other data shows strain on the already burdened foster care system and exacerbated racial and socioeconomic disparities resulting from women forced to deliver babies they can’t support.

Also frightening is the current disregard for investment in women’s health. As it stands, just 4 percent of biopharma investments go to female-specific conditions (and beyond cancer, it’s just 1 percent), and only 10.7 percent of the 2023 National Institutes of Health budget went to women’s health research. And now, that overall budget is facing major cuts.

Innovative clinicians, entrepreneurs, private companies, and charitable foundations will need to step in—and some already have. Scientists and researchers worked to save essential data from government health databases before it disappeared. And fem-tech start-ups are continuing to push forward with new funding from investors. “We need to be a bit more creative working within the system to be able to still push for change and progress.” Dr. Mysore says.

## 4 We Will Lift Heavy and Lift Often

► **OVER THE PAST** few decades, we’ve changed our relationship with exercise, ditching a singular focus on all-cardio workouts to mix in strength training, trading out our little pink “girl” dumbbells for

### Quickie Stats

A few educated guesses and science-backed digits from the research world...

#### 1 in 10

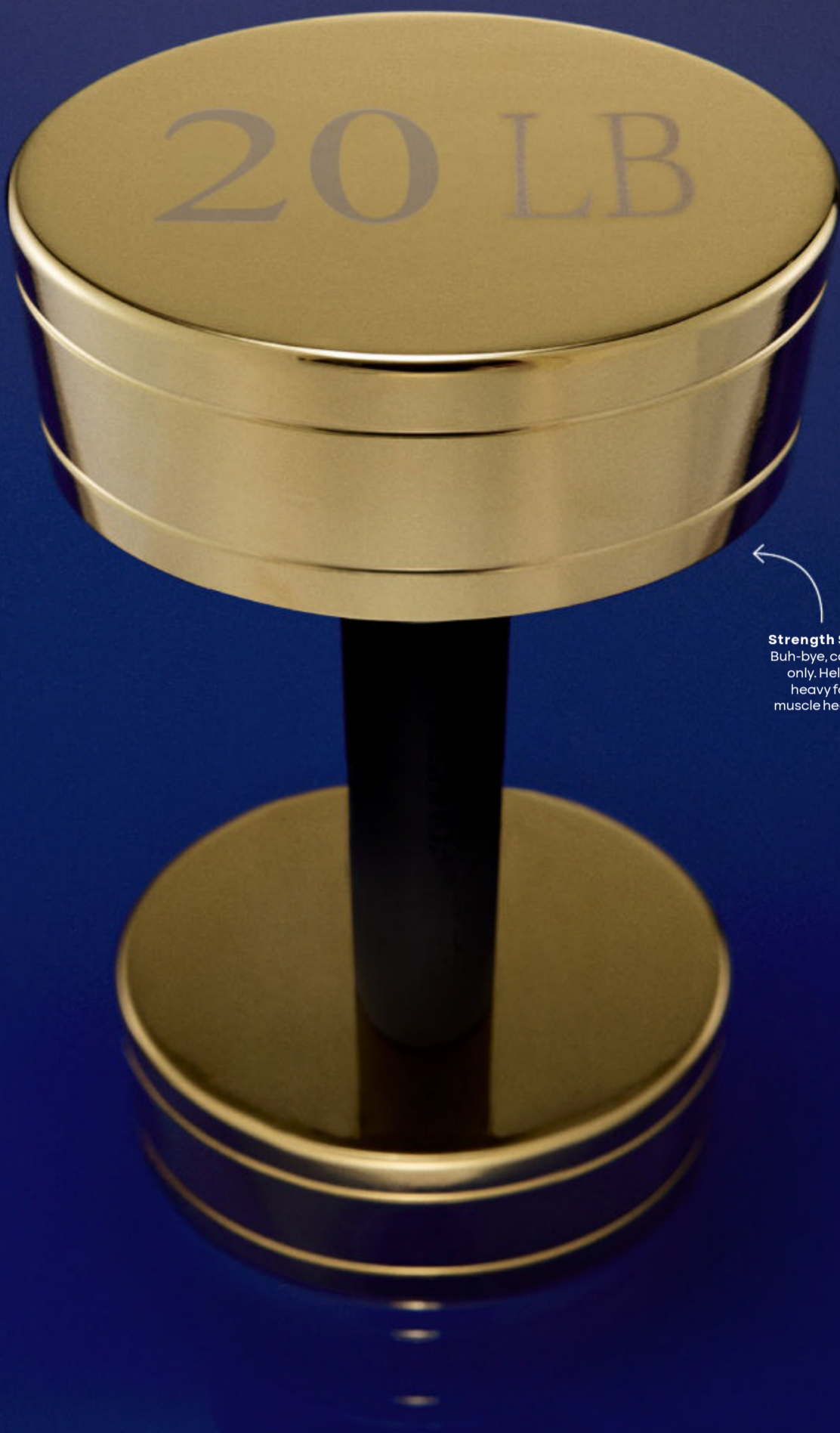
By 2030, this many people are expected to be taking a GLP-1 medication.

#### 4%

Currently, only 4% of biopharma investments go to female-specific conditions.

#### 2 or 3x

Women who do strength training two or three times a week will live longer than those who do none, per a study.



**Strength Shift**  
Buh-bye, cardio  
only. Hello,  
heavy for  
muscle health.

heavy-as-heck kettlebells, dumbbells, and barbells.

But it's not about aesthetics this time around: Muscle health is finally a bigger focus for women of all ages. FYI, muscle mass can impact our metabolism, mobility, risk of chronic illness, brain health, and longevity. "We're beginning to see the convergence of this concept of muscle being an organ system that is just as important as the heart, the lungs, the endocrine system," says *WH* advisor Gabrielle Lyon, DO. "Women are turning toward

muscle as their North Star. It was never like that before." The hope is that more women will come to understand the importance of muscle mass and curate workouts that celebrate their bodies, build their strength, and support their health.

## 5

### You'll Use Your Voice for Change

► **WOMEN CAN'T** sit back, either. Not that we will—or have been. But we're learning to get even more

comfortable asking for what we need. "There's a lot more women wanting to know more about themselves, as opposed to just going to a clinician, getting the recommendations, and taking the recommendations," says Umo Callins, RDN, a sports performance and wellness dietitian in Oklahoma. Increasingly, a lot of that knowledge is being shared or discovered online. TikTok-ers detail their excruciating IUD insertions (and pave the way for the CDC to update its guidelines for physicians performing the procedures), and hundreds of thousands of people with poorly understood conditions pass along advice and offer support.

Of course, this has its downsides, from companies peddling unregulated supplements to influencers without any credentials positioning themselves as experts. That's why it's critical to have an actual health-care professional, like a PCP or ob-gyn, in your corner.

## 6

### Social Connection Will Be Key

► **SIMILARLY**, Dr. Mysore suggests turning to your own family—not just your Insta family—for connection and to better understand what might be normal (or not) for your body. Ask your mom about her postpartum experience or about menopause. "What was that like for her? Talk to your aunt, talk to your grandmother, talk to your cousin," Dr. Mysore says. "The more we talk to each other, the more we can empower ourselves."

Widerstrom echoes that sentiment. She's witnessing more women who—in a healthy response to the current "loneliness epidemic"—are appreciating their social ties in real life in whole new ways. After her popular women's lifting class, for example, participants get coffee together. "There is an aspect of social health that is going to be on the rise," says Widerstrom, "and, frankly, needs to be on the rise."

The 2025 Beauty Awards

# Best

in

# Show

The Women's Health  
beauty team  
**tested** the **latest** and  
**greatest** launches  
across skin, hair,  
makeup, and **more**.  
The results of our labor:  
these **38** standouts.

by  
Brian Underwood and  
Sabrina Talbert

photographs by  
Lian Benoit

styling by  
Jasmine Fontaina





When it comes to beauty products, you've got tons of options. And sometimes, it seems as if there are *too* many choices. That's why the *WH* beauty team spent the better part of the past year sifting through the newest launches to find the ones that will truly add something to your routine. On the hunt for streamlined makeup that helps shave minutes off your a.m.? We got you. Searching for a serum to address fine lines? Look no further. We promise there's zero fluff here—just the best of the best.



# SKIN CARE

Picture it: you, with the clearest, smoothest complexion of your life.



### Best Cleanser

Creamy, with the purifying power of foam. "I used this all winter, and it nixed dirt without over-drying," says our tester. **Kiehl's Since 1851 Ultra Facial Barrier-Hydrating Cleanser**, \$29, [kiehls.com](http://kiehls.com)



### Best Mineral SPF

Don't worry about the pea soup shade—it neutralizes redness (and soothes with Centella Asiatica and ceramides). **EltaMD UV Skin Recovery Red Color Correcting Green Tint SPF 50**, \$52, [eltamd.com](http://eltamd.com)



### Best Serum

Using neuroscience to improve your appearance and mood, this bottle contains natural extracts that target neural pathways that stress skin. **Neuraé Harmonie The Serum**, \$195, [neurae.com](http://neurae.com)



### Best Tool

What makes this LED mask stand out: three wavelengths of light, interlocking bulbs that ensure no spot is missed, and cooling undereye panels. **Shark CryoGlow Cooling & LED Face Mask**, \$350, [sharkclean.com](http://sharkclean.com)



### Best Moisturizer, Normal to Oily Skin

Developed by a founder whose autoimmune disorders made her skin supersensitive, this lightweight moisturizer soothes. **Yoé Ympossible Cream Light**, \$185, [yoeandco.com](http://yoeandco.com)



### Best Moisturizer, Normal to Dry Skin

"So hydrating, but my skin never feels greasy," our tester raves. **Ole Henriksen Après Skin Multi-Use Rescue Crème Overnight Moisturizer + Mask**, \$48, [olehenriksen.com](http://olehenriksen.com)



### Best Eye Patches

We were skeptical of the claims: brighter, tighter undereyes. But our tester confirms, "My skin was dewy—a coworker commented on how refreshed I looked." **NuFace IonPlex Hydra-Gel Power Patches**, \$55, [myNUFACE.com](http://myNUFACE.com)



### Best Chemical SPF

The best youth-boosting goodie? Sun protection you'll use every day. This hydrating moisturizer leaves no white cast. **Olay Complete+ Daily Facial Moisturizer With SPF 40**, \$20, at drugstores

● FP Movement runsie, Soko hoop earrings.

Our pick for best head-to-toe SPF protects and leaves behind a light-reflecting finish.

From moisturizing washes to überhydrating lotions, these picks will leave you silky-smooth all over.

# body



#### Best Wash

Infused with coconut oil, hibiscus flower, vitamin C, and songyi mushroom extracts, this does more than cleanse—it evens out dull skin for a full-body glow boost.

**SheaMoisture Coconut & Hibiscus Glowing Radiance Body Wash**, \$12, [target.com](https://www.target.com)



#### Best Sunscreen

Like your SPF with a side of shimmer? Here's the one for you: "There's a radiant finish, but I love how natural it looks," says our tester. "And the scent lives up to its brand name, transporting you to an island getaway."

**Vacation Shimmer Oil SPF 30**, \$38, [vacation.inc](https://www.vacation.inc)



#### Best Shower Oil

From the trendy brand comes a texture-transforming wash. "It morphs from an oil to a foam, with notes of vanilla orchid, sugared violet, and sandalwood," says our tester.

**Sol de Janeiro Delícia Drench Shower Oil**, \$26, [soldejaneiro.com](https://www.soldejaneiro.com)



#### Best Lotion

"This is the most lightweight lotion I've ever tried, but it still manages to be hydrating," says our tester. "I love the scent too—fresh and floral, but not too sweet."

**Vaseline Pro VitaB3 Serum-Burst Lotion**, \$8, [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)



#### Best Fragrance

Forty years of scent research went into Charlotte Tilbury's debut fragrance line, geared toward cultivating feelings like energy, serenity, and love.

**Charlotte Tilbury Fragrance Collection of Emotions**, \$150 each, [charlottetilbury.com](https://www.charlottetilbury.com)

Unfussy makeup that enhances skin's natural glow for the win.

# makeup

Put your best face forward with cosmetics that let the real you shine through.



#### Best Setting Powder

Set your makeup for all-day wear and blur tiny imperfections. "I have dark circles and use this under my eyes to lock in my concealer," our tester says. "Works great."

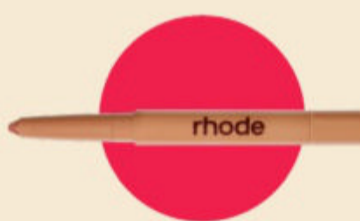
**Makeup by Mario**  
SurrealSkin Soft Blur Setting Powder, \$38, [makeupbymario.com](http://makeupbymario.com)



#### Best Foundation

Ace your base with an easy-to-wear formula that achieves the impossible: lightweight but with staying power, oil-controlling yet hydrating. In 53 shades.

**Bobbi Brown Weightless Skin Foundation**  
SPF 15, \$57, [bobbibrown.com](http://bobbibrown.com)



#### Best Lip Liner

Glide this silky formula along the outer perimeter of your kisser for a sharper shape. Then flip the pen and use the silicone smudger on the other end to blend for a fuller appearance.

**Rhode Peptide Lip Shape**, \$24, [rhodeskin.com](http://rhodeskin.com)



#### Best Tinted Moisturizer

"I have a hard time finding skin tints that match my tone, but with 36 adaptable shades, zeroing in on the right one was a breeze," says our tester. With SPF 30.

**WYN Beauty Featuring You Hydrating Skin Enhancing Tint SPF 30**, \$29, [wynbeauty.com](http://wynbeauty.com)



#### Best Eyeshadow Palette

Quads make creating eye looks easy, but the buttery texture of these shadows will make it enjoyable too. They're mostly neutrals with surprising pops of color.

**Victoria Beckham Beauty Eye Wardrobe**, \$75, [victoriabeckhambauty.com](http://victoriabeckhambauty.com)



### Best Blush

All the benefits of a powder (color payoff and staying power) and a cream (a cinch to blend) in one very smart compact. Milled mica pearls impart a just-luminous-enough finish. **Rare Beauty Soft Pinch Luminous Powder Blush**, \$27, [rarebeauty.com](http://rarebeauty.com)



### Best Lipstick

These French-made bullets get their bold, long-lasting pigment from natural sources such as turmeric, rose petals, and beetroot. It's plant-based power. **Le Rouge Français Lipstick**, \$49, [lerougefrancais.com](http://lerougefrancais.com)



### Best Mascara

If fuller lashes are your goal, one coat gets you there (the growth-promoting peptides also thicken fringe over time). "It won't flake and dries to a soft, beautiful hold," says our tester. **Sisley Paris Phyto-Noir Mascara 1**, \$85, [sisley-paris.com](http://sisley-paris.com)

# NAILS

Meet our fave multitaskers, from a one-swipe polish to a hand cream that doubles as a discoloration fader.

### Best Press-Ons

"I love experimenting with salon-quality nail art," our tester says. "I don't love the price, though. These falsies are easy to apply and last up to three weeks." **Chillhouse Chill Tips Catch the Crown**, \$16, [chillhouse.com](http://chillhouse.com)



### Best Polish

If an at-home manicure seems too complicated, try this all-in-one base coat, treatment, polish, and topcoat, which dries in less than 60 seconds. **Nails Inc. London It's Topless 1-Step Gel Manicure**, \$12 each, [nailsinc.com](http://nailsinc.com)



### Best Hand Cream

Gentle, nongreasy, and moisturizing. This checks all the boxes and more: It also hits dark spots with vitamin C. **Philosophy In Good Hands Multi-Restorative Hand Cream**, \$26, [philosophy.com](http://philosophy.com)



### Best Treatment

Gel manis are the best for longevity, but frequent UV exposure may weaken your nails. This formula improves damage in five days. **Essie To the Rescue UV Gel Damage Repair**, \$12, [essie.com](http://essie.com)



The polish featured here serves eye-catching color and a tough-as-nails finish.

● THIS PAGE: Urban Outfitters dress, Suddora armbands. // OPPOSITE PAGE: Athleta bomber, Soko hoop earrings, Missoma necklace.

# ORAL CARE

Looking for something to smile about? Try this curated collection of problem-solving superstars.



### Best Toothpaste

"I saw a brightening effect after my first brush," says our tester.

**Crest 3D White Deep Stain Remover Daily Toothpaste**, \$9, at drugstores



### Best Toothbrush

More than 10 intensity levels, plus plaque-fighting vibrations.

**Quip Ultra Next Generation Smart Sonic Electric Toothbrush**, \$100, [getquip.com](http://getquip.com)



### Best Mouthwash

This features cetylpyridinium chloride (an antiseptic that kills plaque and bacteria).

**Colgate Total Active Prevention Mouthwash**, \$5, at drugstores



### Best Whitening Product

A calcium and silica powder that imparts a radiance boost.

**Boka BrightBoost Whitening Powder**, \$21, [boka.com](http://boka.com)



### Best Shampoo

CeraVe is known for soothing, ceramide-rich skin care, so it makes sense that its first foray into hair care would be all about effective moisture and optimal scalp health.

**CeraVe Gentle Hydrating Shampoo**, \$9, [walmart.com](http://walmart.com)



### Best Conditioner

Founded by Brooke Shields, Commence addresses age-related issues. "This made my hair look shinier and fuller. No other styling products needed," says our tester.

**Commence Probiotic Smoothing Conditioner**, \$28, [shopcommence.com](http://shopcommence.com)



### Best Styling Product

Wax sticks are hot right now, and for good reason: They keep flyaways in check to create sleek ponytails and updos. Kitsch's version is a standout, with all-day hold but no hint of stickiness.

**Kitsch Hair Wax Stick**, \$14, [mykitsch.com](http://mykitsch.com)

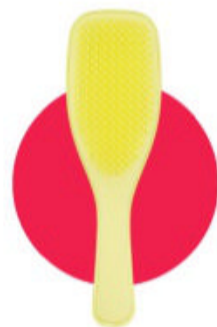
# hair

**Curlier curls, stronger strands, amplified edges...expect all that and more here.**



### Best Blow-Dryer

Using infrared light and preset heat and airflow modes, this tool gets hair dry in a flash. **L'Oréal Professionnel AirLight Pro Hair Dryer**, \$475, [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)



### Best Brush

We love Tangle Teezer, and the brand's latest is designed specifically for coils, eliminating tricky knots with ease.

**Tangle Teezer The Ultimate Detangler Plant Brush Naturally Curly**, \$18, [us.tangleteezer.com](http://us.tangleteezer.com)



### Best Leave-In Treatment

There's nothing this magical spray can't do: It makes detangling a breeze, strengthens, reduces frizz, and protects against heat and UV damage.

**Color Wow Money Mist**, \$29, [colorwowhair.com](http://colorwowhair.com)



### Best Hair-Growth Treatment

Three WH staffers tested these ingestible peptides for 12 weeks. The visible regrowth? Astounding.

**Omi WellBeauty Hair Growth Peptides**, \$79, [omiwellbeauty.com](http://omiwellbeauty.com)

HAIR: VALISSA YOE AT SEE MANAGEMENT USING BUMBLE AND BUMBLE. MAKEUP: TODD HARRIS AT HONEY ARTISTS USING LISA ELDRIDGE BEAUTY. MANICURE: YUKIE MIYAKAWA AT SEE MANAGEMENT USING DIOR BEAUTY. MODELS: ANGE-MARIE MOUTAMBOU AT HEROES MODELS; LAUREN SEARLE AT HEROES MODELS.



**Best Mask**

Most bond repair or strengthening treatments require waiting periods for penetration. Not this one, which promises 10 times the strength in just one minute.

**Dove Intensive Repair 10-in-1 Serum Mask**, \$10, [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)



**Best Edge Product**

"Consistency is key with this hair-restoring serum, which works if you give it the time," says our tester.

"It's formulated with biotin, rose, and ginger to promote growth around the hairline in about 30 days."

**Cécred Restoring Hair & Edge Drops**, \$56, [cecred.com](https://www.cecred.com)

**Win the hair-care game with these hardworking heroes.**

● **THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE PAGE:** Nike jacket, Levi's tank, Urban Outfitters briefs, Gola sneakers, Machete earrings, Soko/Baublebar rings, Wigwam socks.

# Raising the Bar

## The Ultimate Pull-Up Plan

Think pull-ups are out of reach? Plenty of women do. But with the help of one trainer's exclusive program, you're about to blow your own mind.

By Talene Appleton, CPT  
Photographs by Justin Steele





**Tina Tang, 54, knows what it's like to start from scratch with strength training. In fact, she didn't pick up a weight until she was 40. She wasn't chasing muscle definition or lifting PRs at the time—she was navigating a divorce, moving, and looking for something, anything, that would ground her. That something turned out to be a pull-up.**

“When I first tried to do one, I could barely hang on the bar,” Tang says. “But every time I went to the gym, I’d try.” She didn’t know how to use most of the equipment, but she knew the basics of what a pull-up should look like. The shoulders are stable, core and legs are engaged, and the back, upper arms, and forearms work in sync to lift the chin above the bar.

With no structured plan, only sheer consistency, she chipped away at the challenge for a year, mixing random strength workouts and group classes while practicing on the bar every gym session. Over time, her strength improved, and eventually, she pulled herself up.

You’d think she’d want to celebrate or show off on social media. But there was no dramatic aha moment. By the time she achieved her first full rep, it felt like the natural next step, a

quiet testament to the work she had put in. And that pull-up process sparked her curiosity about strength training, ultimately leading her to become a certified trainer.

Today, Tang has coached dozens of women on how to do their first pull-up (or tenth) with a plan that’s much more intentional and scientific than how she taught herself.

Mastering a pull-up is a powerful marker of physical strength, control, and discipline. Pull-ups target your back, shoulders, arms, and core, but lifting your body weight also tests your mental toughness—a challenge many women shy away from. “Most women don’t realize how strong they actually are,” Tang says. “They’re lifting less than they’re capable of.”

The biggest barriers? Misinformation and lack of confidence. “Many women assume they just ‘can’t do’ pull-ups,” says Tang. In reality, it takes a strategic plan—plus consistency and progressive overload, in which you gradually increase the load put on your body—to build up to that first rep. Ahead, Tang spills the secrets behind her exclusive approach to nailing the pull-up. Plus, the science behind why the iconic exercise has a connection to well-being.

**Tina is a certified personal trainer who focuses on helping women 40 and over add strength training into their lives. Follow her on Instagram at @ironstrongfit.**



## Get Unstuck

These are the three most common mistakes that stall progress in Tang's clients—and how to fix them.



## 1 Ignoring Your Core

If your body is swinging, your pull-up is going to feel harder than it needs to. "You have to tense your entire body to pull yourself up," says Tang. "Think about lifting dead weight—it's way harder when it's floppy. The same applies to your body."

**FIX IT** Before pulling, engage your abs, squeeze your glutes, and keep your ribs down—like a plank, she says. This full-body tension creates one solid unit, which is easier to move and helps you avoid wasting energy stabilizing yourself.

## 2 Not Gripping the Bar Correctly

Holding the bar with your hands too close together makes the pull-up harder than it needs to be, while an ultrawide grip forces your shoulders into an awkward position. Also: "A lot of assisted pull-up machines have bars that are too thick for women," Tang says. "If your hand can't fully wrap around, you lose leverage."

**FIX IT** Start with a grip that's shoulder-width or slightly wider. If your gym's bar feels too thick, look for a thinner one on a barbell rack, or use chalk for extra security. Some pull-up setups offer neutral (palms facing each other) and narrow grip positions, which can be easier because they recruit the biceps more.

## 3 Not Going to the Bar Enough

The pull-up bar, that is. Tang hears it all the time: "I'm working on my pull-ups!" But when she asks her clients if they practice every gym session, they say, "Sometimes I forget," says Tang.

**FIX IT** You have to train for pull-ups regularly, not just when you remember. "A few focused minutes per session—negatives, hangs, or assisted reps—will get you there faster than sporadic attempts," says Joanne Donoghue, PhD, an exercise physiologist at New York Institute of Technology's medical school.



■  
**At-Home  
Hack**

No access to a pull-up bar at the gym? No problem. Tang recommends a wall-mounted bar for home use (the one from Titan Fitness can be found on Amazon). It tends to provide better support than doorway versions and allows you to attach a suspension trainer for essential exercises such as inverted rows and seated pull-ups—two must-do moves for results.

# Stages of Success

Tang designed a three-phase program—the **Women's Health Ultimate Pull-Up Plan**—to take you from zero to your strongest pull-up yet. Over a six-week period (or less, depending on your strength level!), do three follow-along workouts per week to power yourself up to the bar. Here's a breakdown of the program (get the full strength-training plan at [WomensHealthMag.com/Ultimate-Pull-Up-Plan](http://WomensHealthMag.com/Ultimate-Pull-Up-Plan)).

## BLOCK 1

### Learn to Hang Longer

Before you even think about cranking out reps, “you need to be able to hold yourself at the top of the bar,” says Tang. That’s the focus of the workouts in the first weeks. “If you can’t hold for even a second now—which is totally normal—don’t stress. Your job in the beginning of your pull-up journey is to get comfortable in the pull-up’s toughest position,” she says. She zeroes in on isometrics (static holds), a secret weapon for building the raw strength and neuromuscular control necessary for your first full pull-up. Say what? Neuromuscular control refers to the way your nervous system activates muscles in the correct sequence to create smooth, efficient movement, says Heather Milton, CSCS, an exercise physiologist and strength coach at NYU Langone Health Sports Performance Center. In a pull-up, that means your stabilizing muscles fire first to secure your shoulder joint, followed by the coordinated activation of your back, arm, and core muscles to lift you up, she says.

**THE GOAL** By the end of this block, you should be able to hold yourself at the top of the bar for at least 10 seconds. Beginners may take longer to nail the hang, and that’s fine. Go at your own pace!

## BLOCK 2

### Build Your Muscular Endurance

Soon enough, you’ll be ready to focus on eccentrics, which is the portion of an exercise when the muscles lengthen. “For the pull-up, that means the descent,” says Milton. “We are about 20 percent stronger eccentrically than we are concentrically, so if you can’t do a full pull-up, you still may be able to do the lowering phase.” To build that type of endurance, this workout block focuses on hypertrophy (i.e., muscle growth) and time under tension for the muscles that power your pull-up: back, shoulders, arms, core.

**THE GOAL** By the end of this chunk, you should be able to lower from the top of the bar over five seconds (or longer) to the full dead hang position.

## BLOCK 3

### Master the Full Move

“Now, it’s time to put it all together and start working toward your first full rep,” says Tang. The workouts in the last phase of pull-up training focus on assisted reps (such as with bodyweight straps) and heavier strength work to help you complete the full range of motion and get you over the hump of initiating pulling yourself up from a dead hang.

**THE GOAL** In the final weeks, you should be able to pull yourself to the bar—unassisted or with minimal assistance if you are new to strength training. FYI: This phase is also about “lifting heavier weights to make your body more efficient at handling its own weight,” Tang says.

## The Longevity Connection

Pull-ups: Not just a gym flex, the move may actually help you live longer and better. It all comes down to grip strength. Your ability to hold on (or to grab that bar) is a powerful proxy measure of mortality, bone health, and even cognitive function as you age, according to a review in *Clinical Interventions in Aging*. People who maintain good grip strength as they get older also tend to have better health outcomes, such as lower risk of chronic conditions and the ability to live independently for longer.

Here’s the thread: Think of grip strength as a biomarker of overall muscle health—and muscle health is a known indicator of metabolic, cardiovascular, and nervous system function. “We lose muscle and strength with each decade after 40, but grip strength is an easy way to measure and track it,” says Donoghue. “It’s directly tied to functional movement—lifting, carrying, and reaching—which can all also be improved with pull-up training.” A simple handgrip test—in which you squeeze a dynamometer (a tool that measures force)—can provide more insight into a person’s overall physical fitness than most people realize. Want to improve your grip? Try dead hangs from a bar, farmer’s carries with heavy dumbbells, and plate pinches (holding a weight plate with just your fingertips).

## “I Started My Pull-Up Quest at 54”

I never thought of myself as a strength-training person. I've lived in New York City my whole life, so walking and running all over kept me active. In my late 40s, it hit me: I could run for days but couldn't lift anything. I felt weak.

That's when I started training once a week with Tina Tang, CPT. She introduced me to resistance training slowly and steadily, helping me build a foundation using dumbbells, kettlebells, body weight, and barbells as we progressed. Pull-ups, though? I'd never even considered trying one. But two years ago, she asked me if I wanted to give it a shot.

We started with isometric holds at the top of the bar. Then I worked on eccentric lowers, where I'd control my descent, going as slowly as possible. Over time, we added chinups (which are slightly easier because of the grip position and recruitment of the biceps), as well as assisted pull-ups using bands.

Having a specific goal made strength workouts more fun. And one day, I finally cleared the bar—using an underhand grip (a chinup). That's when I realized all those little consistent efforts over the year had added up. Now, I'm working toward my first full pull-up (overhand grip).

Achieving such a difficult move also helped me realize how much I underestimated my body's ability to adapt to new challenges, especially at my age. (Reminder: Strength is ageless.) I feel stronger. Safer. And I love the way my arms look in a tank top.  
—Amy Beaumont

# The Power Pull-Up Strength Workout

Itching to get your training started? Try this sample workout from the *Ultimate Pull-Up Plan*. Using medium to heavy dumbbells, move through the exercises in Lift A, with little to no rest between moves, for four rounds. Then do the moves in Lift B and Lift C in the same fashion, for three rounds each. Oh, and while this workout is a pull-up prereq, it's also a killer head-to-toe sweat anytime.

### LIFT A

#### a1 Half-Kneeling Single-Arm Shoulder Press

**HOW TO** Kneel with left foot in front of you, right knee on floor. Hold dumbbell in right hand, in front of right shoulder. With core and glutes tight, press weight directly overhead until right arm is fully extended (biceps should be close to ear). Slowly lower weight down to start. That's 1 rep. Do 8 reps on each side.



#### a2 Split Squat

**HOW TO** Stand with dumbbells at sides and feet staggered with left foot in front of body and right foot behind, right heel high. Bend knees and lower for five seconds until both legs form 90-degree angles and back knee softly taps floor. Hold for five seconds, then quickly drive through both feet to return to start. That's 1 rep. Do 6 reps on each side.

LIFT B

**b1** Inverted Row

**HOW TO** Using suspension straps (pictured) or a racked barbell at belly button height, take a shoulder-width overhand grip and walk legs forward under bar, straightening arms and using them to support your weight as you lower your body to a 45-degree angle to the floor. Unlock elbows and place feet closer together, toes lifted. Squeeze shoulder blades and engage back to pull body up until your chest reaches your hands (or as close as you can). Hold for three seconds, then straighten arms to lower. That's 1 rep. Do 8 reps.



**b2** Lying Triceps Extension

**HOW TO** Lie faceup with knees bent and feet hip-width on floor. Hold a dumbbell in each hand, arms extended straight toward ceiling, wrists above shoulders. Bend at elbows to lower weights just past temples. Upper arms should remain still, perpendicular to floor. Pause, then slowly straighten arms to return to start. That's 1 rep. Do 12 reps.

LIFT C

**c1** Hip Thrust

**HOW TO** Sit on floor with shoulders and back against bench, hands on each end of a heavy dumbbell resting at hip crease, feet planted hip-width apart. Push through feet and squeeze glutes as you lift hips until shoulders press into bench and upper body and hips are parallel to floor. Pause for a second at the top, then reverse motion to return to start. That's 1 rep. Do 15 reps.



**c2** Farmer's Carry

**HOW TO** Stand with feet hip-width and dumbbells on floor outside ankles. Engaging core, push hips back and bend knees to lower into a squat and pick up weights. Drive heels into floor to stand tall, engaging your lower body and shoulders. Take small, controlled steps forward for 1 minute, maintaining a strong grip and form.



# Three-time WNBA MVP A'ja Wilson works hard, plays hard, and just keeps winning. By Amanda Lucci

Elite



  
The six-time All-Star's first signature footwear and apparel collection, the Nike A'One, drops in May.

## 1 / First thing you do when you wake up?

I pray, I check on my parents, I do my skin care, and then I'm on my way.

## 2 / Who inspired you early on?

My grandma inspired me to be myself and show up in every room with a certain presence that says I belong there.

## 3 / First favorite sport?

Volleyball will forever be my first love. It's been super fun to watch the sport grow—if it was like this, maybe I wouldn't be a basketball player.

## 4 / Proudest career moment?

Winning back-to-back WNBA championships with the Las Vegas Aces. We had our backs against the wall, a lot of doubt in our space, but still we came out on top.

## 5 / First job?

In my parents' house. I had a lot of chores—like making sure that all the toilet paper rolls had toilet paper on them.

## 6 / Fave hype-up song?

"Tuned In Freestyle" by Megan Thee Stallion.

## 7 / Best way to relax?

I listen to rain noises.

## 8 / Go-to mantra?

"Good, better, best. Never let it rest, until your good is better, and your better is your best" [heard from NBA legend Tim Duncan]. I wish I could stamp it everywhere.

## 9 / Advice for aspiring athletes?

Give yourself grace. If it was easy, everybody would do it.

## 10 / Last thing you bought?

Topical undereye patches and an ice cube massager for my face.

## 11 / Last vacation you took?

Turks and Caicos during the last All-Star break.



**To A'ja, From A'ja** Twenty years ago, I would've been 8 years old. I would tell her, "Girl, eat your vegetables. They're actually really good for you, and you're going to be fine." And fast-forward 20 years into the future—[I'll have], what, the A'Twenty or A'Twenty-Two shoe? I would just tell her, "You're on the right path. Continue to strive for greatness."

SKECHERS  
HANDS FREE  
**Slip-ins**



**JUST STEP IN™**

**No Bending Over.  
No Touching Shoes.  
Just Step In & Go.**



LEARN MORE

AVAILABLE FOR MEN, WOMEN, AND KIDS

[skechers.com](https://www.skechers.com)



# HIGHEST PROTEIN NUT\*

**GET CRACKIN' WITH PROTEIN POWER.**  
With all nine essential amino acids and six grams of protein in every 1oz. serving, Wonderful Pistachios is the go-to snack that packs a protein punch.



\*Highest-protein nut, based on % DV. Pistachios have 12% DV.  
© 2025 Wonderful Pistachios & Almonds LLC. All Rights Reserved. WONDERFUL, GET CRACKIN', the Package Design, and accompanying logos are trademarks of Wonderful Pistachios & Almonds LLC or its affiliates. WP250218-10