

# **AMIAN HEALTH & WELLBEING**

**APRIL 2017**

- **TAKE THE 30 DAY CHALLENGE**
- **BOWEL CANCER AWARENESS MONTH**

## TAKE THE 30 DAY CHALLENGE!



If you have taken part in Lent (1<sup>st</sup> March – 13<sup>th</sup> April) you have probably given up something that's generally deemed 'bad' or unhealthy such as alcohol, coffee, biscuits or a morning croissant. The period leading up to Easter traditionally signifies fasting, penance and reflection. And while its origins are religious, many people regardless of their religious practices take part in some way. Whether you're a believer or not, it's always beneficial to take inspiration where we can to add value, awareness and intention to our life. Therefore by the time Easter rolls around we're plotting and planning the moment when we can reintroduce the forbidden food into our lives. Although the commitment to temporarily restricting something negative from our diets can be beneficial, very little time is spent reflecting on why we feel how we feel, how we actually want to feel and what we can do to change it.

We also usually just rely on the default 'baddies' to give up rather than thinking of what will truly benefit us. So for the month of April you could set yourself the challenge of adding in things rather than restricting them. To go one step further, the challenge could be to pick a few things from different aspects of wellbeing. Here's the deal though, whatever you choose needs to be have a positive

impact on your health and wellbeing, and needs to nourish your mental state. It can be a big effort or small habit - it's entirely up to you. But it must be something that you commit to from **1st April – 30th April** that brings more intention and purpose to how you live your life. 30 days of intentional living. 30 days of small changes with big rewards.

Here are some suggestions to help if you need some inspiration!

### Things you can do for 5 minutes a day:

#### 1. Mindfulness

Even if it's just 5 minutes, adding in a daily mindfulness practice will do you wonders if you commit to 30 consecutive days of it. Not only does mindfulness lower cortisol (stress hormone), positively influence metabolism and improve decision making, it has also been shown to increase perceived happiness, decrease perceived stress and help contribute to a more purposeful, meaningful experience of day to day life.

#### 2. Yoga

Yoga is an amazing workout in so many ways. Many people assume it's a gentle activity to do – which it can be, however it's the most commonly underestimated exercise by those 'not in the know'. Three or four times a week is a good medium, or if you can do half an hour a day, that's perfect. If you are someone who is really pushed for time, then even a ten minute Yoga routine on the mat each day, morning or evening, you will see the benefits:

- Yoga looks after you as you approach old age

Yoga keeps our organs functioning well as we move the body around in 'poses', it helps with circulation, keeps blood pressure low and our joints supple. It also helps with our core strength and balance. With many elderly people being admitted to A&E due to falls, keeping up yoga throughout life will help you to prevent this.

- **Yoga is great for mental health**

Yoga is used as part of holistic treatment in many mental health illnesses, but not as much as it should be. If you have depression, stress, anxiety or any mental health disorder, Yoga can help you. It helps to connect mind with body which can help when you are feeling chaotic and stressed. Exercise helps with endorphins which make us happy. You can incorporate gratitude and meditation into your workout, spend a few moments on the mat after a workout just being you, taking that time to just be. This, even if for a few moments will make such a difference to your well being.

- **Daily Yoga reduces likelihood of illness**

Yoga practice will improve your immune function, reduce inflammation, as well as reducing the risks of health issues, like osteoporosis, and all sorts of other diseases.

- **Yoga keeps away the fat and helps you to eat better**

A daily work out with actually stop you from eating more than you need in time, you will also make better choices as your body will have better communication to your mind. You will actually hear your body tell you what it wants more than when you are not doing Yoga, and make better choices. You will tone up, lose those bingo wings, love handles and muffin tops, and you will look radiant.

- **Yoga improves posture, core strength and self awareness**

You will gain good core strength with regular practice, this means that you will have less back and shoulder problems. Back problems are so common and can have a huge affect on the quality of your life, especially as you age. You will notice that you will be more aware of your posture and with time, it will be second nature to hold yourself with more balance and alignment. Your increased self awareness will mean you are less likely to cause yourself a muscle or back injury.

### **3. HIIT (High Intensity Interval Training)**

Five minutes of HIIT in the morning is a fantastic way to boost your metabolism, wake up your body and progress your conditioning in a small amount of time. It doesn't have to be much, just enough to get your heart rate up before breakfast. Set your interval timer for 20 seconds on, 10 seconds off and mix up squat jumps, burpees, press ups and split squat jumps.

## Things you can eat:

### 4. Plant Based Meals

If you've been looking to make your diet more natural, commit to a couple days of plant based meals each week. Since it's only 4 weeks, you can add onto the idea of 'Meatless Mondays' by extending it to Wednesdays. Try going plant based Monday -Wednesday each week and see how you feel.

### 5. Replacing Your Snack

Replace your afternoon snack with veggies or a cold pressed vegetable juice. After 4 weeks you'll see and feel a massive change.

### 6. Greens For Breakfast...everyday

Adding a handful of spinach or kale to your smoothie or eggs is an easy nutritional win and will help you increase your veggie intake. If you already do this, you can make the challenge bigger and aim to get vegetables in at every meal. It also creates positive momentum with your food choices and usually helps continue your day the way you start - in a healthful way.

## Habits you can start:

### 7. Commit to Cooking

Nobody has ever had regrets for having more nutritious, home cooked meals. It saves money, it's healthier, and if the more you do it the more confidence you gain in the kitchen. Set yourself a goal of many meals you'll cook for yourself (and friends!) each week.

### 8. Digital-Free Nights

Imagine if you went to bed and didn't read emails, look at Instagram, or get sucked into social media. Studies have shown that using a screen before bed decreases melatonin (the hormone that helps us sleep deeply), decreases amount of time spend in

REM, and keeps the stress hormone cortisol elevated. Remember when we used to read books? Buy an alarm clock and leave your phone in the other room.

## 9. Walking

Walking is one of the most important factors to long term health. It decreases depression, anxiety, blood pressure, and is good for your joints. Whether you choose to take a walk after a meal, before breakfast or during the afternoon, adding in a 10 minute walk each day has a surprising effect on your state of mind.

## Bowel Cancer Awareness Month



**April is Bowel Cancer Awareness Month, a fantastic opportunity to raise awareness of bowel cancer.**

## **Bowel cancer screening.**

Bowel cancer is the UK's second biggest cancer killer but it is treatable and curable especially if diagnosed early. Taking part in bowel cancer screening is the best way to get diagnosed early. Bowel cancer screening saves lives but at the moment in some areas of the UK only a third of those who receive a test in the post complete it. Thousands of people are missing out on the best way to detect bowel cancer early when it is easier to treat and there is the greatest chance of survival.

### **How does screening work?**

If you're registered with a GP and aged 60-74 (50-74 in Scotland), you will receive a free NHS bowel cancer screening test in the post every two years.

You have to collect three samples of your stools, over a maximum of two weeks (10 days in Scotland), and send it back in the hygienically-sealed freepost envelope provided. You carry out the simple test at home in private and it comes with clear step by step instructions. The test looks for hidden blood in your stools, which could be an early sign of bowel cancer.

You usually get the results of your test in about two weeks.

Most people have a normal result. If this happens, you will receive a test again in two years but see your GP if you have any symptoms in the meantime.

If the results aren't clear, you might be asked to do the test again.

If blood is found in your stool sample, you will be offered more tests to take a closer look at what might be causing this. This doesn't mean you definitely have cancer as it could be as a result of a non-cancerous polyp or another health problem. But it is definitely worth investigating. If it is cancer, the earlier it is diagnosed the quicker it can be treated and the greater the chance of survival.

### **Knowing the Symptoms of Bowel Cancer could save your life**

- Bleeding from your bottom and/or blood in your bowel movements
- A change in bowel habit lasting for three weeks
- Unexplained weight loss
- Extreme tiredness for no obvious reason
- A pain or lump in your tummy

**Whatever your age, if you have any symptoms you are worried about, speak to your GP**

**AMIAN** Counselling and support service provides all Bolton University Staff with unbiased, impartial, independent, free advice and support and is a practical and positive way to help resolve concerns and difficulties. Not all staff accessing our service require counselling, some just need the assistance from someone outside of the situation to help explore possible options and provide advice, support and information.

**The service is completely confidential and is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The service is available to all employees.**

**If you have any further questions or wish to book an appointment, please do not hesitate to contact **AMIAN**:**

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