

# CONNECT

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enough quality sleep?

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BETTER NIGHT'S SLEEP

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## Try our latest delicious recipe

Take a look at our tasty apple and cinnamon baked oats recipe.

## Advice for every day living: Buying a bed

The British Chiropractic Association offer sound advice on how to help buy the perfect bed.

## Book Recommendation

Anna shares her latest read, which has inspired her to be positive and focused during lockdown.

# Welcome

Read our foreword from Anna Hawrot, Spinavita Chiropractic Clinic Director and Chiropractor.

**W**elcome to edition 2 of our Spinavita Connect magazine. We hope you enjoy it and we would love to hear any feedback you may have.

Well, I don't think 2021 has been quite the start of the year we all wished for. As I write this, in January 2021, we are in another lockdown, with a surge in Coronavirus cases in Gloucestershire as well as the whole of the UK and a feeling of uncertainty yet again.

I know, like many I have found this lockdown harder. This time I have a feeling of claustrophobia, which I think is down to the fact that we cannot plan to see the people we love, we cannot book holidays abroad or even travel to the coast, if we wanted. I feel for our children, who are unable to see their friends at school, or for young adults who seem to be missing out on a massive period of their social freedoms, at a time of their lives when this is so important.



However, I gain great hope from the vaccination drive across the country, the days are starting to draw out and already I can see the shoots of bulbs as we move closer to Spring. I count my blessings to have a healthy family and to have the ability to be able to go out on daily walks, I have even started running. I have a real feeling that we are all in this together, and we will get through it, together.

At Spinavita, we feel so privileged to have been able to continue caring for our community throughout this difficult time. We are so proud to be able to support our NHS as 'essential workers' and continue face to face appointments for those in need. We also launched a telehealth service for those who would like advice and diagnosis from the comfort of their own home.



Personally, I am starting to prepare for my return from maternity leave, and all being well I will be opening a couple of shifts from May 2021. I really miss practising, so I am looking forward to seeing you all again.

That leaves me to say, a big thank you to you all who continue to support our clinic and a special thank you to my team for their ongoing hard work and dedication to the clinic.

Please stay safe, happy and well. See you all soon.

Anna

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## Award winning clinic



# Vitamin D and COVID-19

## A perspective

by Jeanette Hawrot

**M**uch is being said about Vitamin D and COVID-19. We thought we'd take a look at the main points.

Our bodies are finely tuned machines. In order to flourish they need fuel - (nutritious food, sufficient hydration) and regular maintenance (exercise and sleep). Included in the fuel, is the requirement for various vitamins and minerals, which, in most instances can be found in a varied diet of vegetables, proteins, cereals, pulses, nuts, fruit and more.

### Vitamin D - The Sunshine Vitamin

Whereas most vitamins can be obtained through a healthy and varied diet, only a small amount of our requirement for Vitamin D can be achieved from food, (oily fish, liver, egg yolks and mushrooms). The remainder comes from our own body's manufacturing process, triggered by sufficient exposure to sunlight. Our skin absorbs Vitamin D from Ultraviolet B (UVB) and our liver converts it to Calcifediol - the active form of Vitamin D.

### So what does Vitamin D do for us?

It has been long established that Vitamin D is essential for healthy teeth, bones and normal growth. But vitamin D also contributes to so much more. It is needed in every cell of the body. Muscles need vitamin D to move, nerves need it to carry messages between your brain and your body, it is important for a healthy heart and blood vessels and for normal blood pressure; and very relevantly your immune system needs Vitamin D to fight off invading bacteria and viruses. It is this aspect of Vitamin D that has become so relevant. Recent claims by some experts say that sufficient levels of Vitamin D in your body can help it cope with an attack from COVID-19.

### Vitamin D and the immune system

Vitamin D is an immunoregulator. It promotes the immune response to fight off invading bacteria and viruses, and importantly also helps suppress excessive pro-inflammatory responses which can occur in COVID-19 patients.

### Vitamin D deficiency - an international problem/ a UK problem

Living as we do, so far away from the equator, getting enough sunshine to produce Vitamin D, is a problem. Even in warmer sunny climes, due to the very real fear of skin



cancer, sun avoidance can lead to Vitamin D deficiency. People with darker skins, which are designed for sun protection, do not synthesise Vitamin D as quickly or as efficiently as people with fairer skin tones.

Vitamin D deficiency is recognised as a problem in the UK and throughout the world. Many countries have regulatory requirements to fortify food with vitamin D. This was the case in the UK for 73 years, from 1940 when Churchill was concerned about the health of the nation, until 2013, when the regulation was dropped.

### Government Policy

There has been much debate about this topic and some politicians and scientists have been lobbying for Vitamin D deficiency to be urgently addressed. The outcome has been that:

- The government has now decided to provide free vitamin D for certain vulnerable groups of people.
- The NHS now recommends that everyone takes a daily vitamin D supplement throughout the summer months as well as during the winter, as we are all staying at home more.
- The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) recommends the same.

### Conclusion

- Vitamin D is necessary for health.
- Achieving enough through diet and sufficient sunshine in our country is impractical.
- Vitamin D is a safe vitamin to take at the correct dose. It has a 100-year track record with minimal side effects.
- The Government recommends that the population take it and is giving free supplements to vulnerable people.
- There is evidence that vitamin D can be beneficial in mitigating the infectivity and severity of COVID-19.
- Therefore the sensible course appears to take a Vitamin D supplement.

How to take Vitamin D, see page 6 →



# Are you getting enough quality sleep?

by Jessica Davy, Chiropractor

**S**leep is the absence of wakefulness and the loss of consciousness of one's surroundings, but, while some are able to slip into sleep as soon as their head hits the pillow, others aren't as lucky. In 2017 approximately two-thirds of people in the UK reported disrupted sleep and its not hard to imagine this number will have risen during the pandemic. With sleep just as important for our health and wellbeing, as exercise and good nutrition, our Chiropractor Jess takes a look at the importance of sleep and how you can improve your chances of getting a good nights rest.

## Sleep Science

The sleep-wake cycle tells us when we are feeling tired or refreshed. As natural light disappears, the body releases a hormone called melatonin which makes us feel drowsy. When the sun rises in the morning the body then releases the hormone cortisol which promotes energy and alertness.

This is one of the most well known circadian rhythms, which are 24 hour cycles that are part of the body's internal body clock. Circadian rhythms carry out essential functions and processes in the body, which are synchronised in the brain and are influenced by our environment especially light, which is why they follow the cycle of night and day.

Once we are asleep, we then follow a sleep cycle that is made up of four stages. The first three stages are known as non-rapid eye movement (NREM) sleep, and the final stage is known as rapid eye movement (REM) sleep.

- Stage 1 is light sleep as we transition from wakefulness and we are likely to only spend a few minutes in this stage as our heart and breathing rates start to slow down and our bodies relax.
- Stage 2 is a deeper sleep where eye movement stops and our body temperature decreases. We spend most of our time in this stage of sleep.
- Stage 3 is the most restorative phase of sleep when our body is the most relaxed. It is when the cells re-energise and repair. The amount of time spent in this stage decreases throughout the night.
- REM sleep is the phase normally associated with dreaming and we tend to enter it 90 minutes after we fall asleep. The duration of REM sleep usually increases as the night progresses and this phase has been linked to how we process memories.

These four stages repeat throughout the night until we wake. A full cycle usually lasts for 90-120 minutes.



## Benefits of Quality Sleep

We all know that a poor night's sleep can make us irritable the next day, but it also affects concentration, memory recall, reaction times and our ability to focus. Long term consequences of sleep loss have been linked to depression and anxiety.

Making sure you get quality sleep is more important than the number of hours your head is on the pillow. It can improve decision making, complex thinking, and learning, by preparing your brain to make new memories, helping to solidify them to prevent forgetting. When you're well rested, your immune system is better supported and getting consistent good rest lowers the risk of heart attacks, strokes and diabetes.

Our response to pain changes after we sleep, even subtle changes each night have been found to affect our day-to-day ability to cope with pain and discomfort. Prolonged sleep loss has been shown to lower our pain tolerance, which is why my patients will know I'm always banging on about getting as much rest as possible!

## How to get a better nights kip?

With there being so many benefits, here are a few tip to help you increase your chances of having a good restful sleep.

### Establish a routine

Most of us tend to stay up later on the weekends because we can afford the luxury of a lie in the next morning. However, research has found that changing our sleep and wake times can affect our circadian rhythm. To avoid having a rigid routine, aim to go to bed within the same half an hour window each night, that way you're more likely to stick with it.

To wake up gently in the morning, look into sunrise alarm clocks. They mimic the morning light, rousing naturally as they help to prepare your body to wake up by tapping into our circadian rhythms. (I have one and would recommend it to anyone!)



### Avoid working from bed

As tempting as it can be if you are working from home, try not to use your bedroom as your office as this blurs the boundaries between rest and work, making it harder to fall asleep in the evenings.

If you have to use your bedroom, try to finish at the same time every evening. Do an activity, like changing your outfit or going for a walk, to signify the end of your work day and leave the space tidy so you're not reminded of work when you go to bed.

### Keep active

Daily activity helps to support your internal body clock which makes it easier to fall asleep at night. It doesn't have to be an intense form of exercise, housework and gardening are just as effective.

### Reduce screen time

We are all guilty of looking at screens more during this current lockdown, be that a family zoom or checking the news on our phones, but that has a negative impact as it stimulates our brains keeping us awake and alert. If you can't avoid screens, consider a pair of blue light glasses to stop the emitted light suppressing the sleep hormone melatonin.

### Get natural light

Working from home, social distancing or even self-isolating may mean you're

struggling to enjoy being out in the natural light (even if it is cloudy!) Exposure early in the day helps to reinforce our circadian rhythms and even just working near a window can help to reset the body clock and make us more alert.

### Make your bedroom relaxing

Creating a calm and relaxing environment in your bedroom can help you to achieve a good nights rest. To improve your chances, aim to keep the room cool, dark and quiet with comfortable bedding.

Changing our night time habits can seem daunting at first, but you don't have to change everything at once; do what works for you and remember that everyone will need a different routine.

## World Sleep Day

→ World Sleep Day is an annual event which aims to lessen the burden of sleep problems on society through better prevention and management of sleep disorders. This year, World Sleep Day will be held on Friday, March 19th. Visit [www.worldsleepday.org](http://www.worldsleepday.org) for more information.

# Apple and cinnamon baked oats

We've been at it again. You may have seen some of our healthy eating recipes on our Facebook page in recent weeks - and here is another delicious recipe courtesy of Jenny Hawrot for you to try! Thanks Jenny!

## Ingredients (serves 2)

80g Oats  
 Cinnamon - as much or little as you like!  
 100ml Oat milk  
 20g Desiccated Coconut  
 2 eggs (or mashed banana for vegan version)  
 Apple in small chunks  
 Honey (to taste)

Use coconut oil to grease a dish. Mix the ingredients together and add to the dish. Bake in the oven at 180° for 35-40 minutes. Serve with yoghurt and honey and enjoy!



## Vitamin D and COVID-19

### A perspective

(continued from page 3)

#### How do I take vitamin D?

*Take with food* - Vitamin D is a fat soluble vitamin and therefore it is wise to take it with food containing some fat to help absorption. Avocados, nuts, seeds, full-fat dairy products and eggs are nutritious sources of fat that help boost vitamin D absorption.

*When to take* - There are anecdotal reports that taking vitamin D later in the day can interfere with a healthy night's sleep, although this is yet to be proved by scientific investigation. So you can experiment and check which time works best for you. The key is to take Vitamin D regularly.

**Please note** : If you have high levels of calcium in your blood, suffer from chronic kidney disease or heart disease, you should **speak to your GP before taking Vitamin D**.

**Do not exceed the recommended dose as it could be harmful.**

#### Further sources of information

- [Vitamins and minerals: Vitamin D](#) (NHS)
- [Vitamin D deficiency in adults: treatment and prevention](#) (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence)



# Get the most out of working from home

by Melissa Folly, Chiropractor

**M**elissa Folly discusses five top tips to make sure working from home is working for you!

## 1. Start your day right

Don't just roll from your bed to your desk. Take the time before you switch your computer on or take calls to get up have breakfast, take a short walk or do some light exercises. Then get dressed for work! This will allow you to wake up properly, get your blood pumping and oxygen boosted ready for the day ahead.

## 2. Set a plan for your day

If you break your day into segments you will keep more focused and boost productivity! We advise you break your day into four segments, taking a mid-morning and mid-afternoon 10–15 minute break and longer break for lunch. Having a clear idea of the time

and activity you are planning on doing during these breaks at the start of the day is important. Try and include some movement or light exercise but always ensure you take time away from your desk!

## 3. Healthy work environment

Where possible always set your desk and work space up in a separate room or dedicated area of your house. This will allow you to close the door or leave the space for breaks and after work. Be strict with yourself and keep anything work related in there. Creating a working environment can get you in the right headspace that you need to work productively.

## 4. Desk set up and work space

With the right desk set up you'll feel more comfortable, work more efficiently

and feel more motivated. Space is the key here. If you're having to make do with a table chair and laptop you can still make the best of it. The main principles for a good desk set up are; feet flat to the floor with room under the desk to move. Chair pulled in close to desk with forearms rested on the surface. Right angles at your hips, knees and elbow. Computer screen should be in line with your eyes when your back and neck are straight. If you're using a laptop invest in a separate key board and mouse so you can raise it up on some books or a box.


## 5. Keep your house a home

Working from your house can start to make your home feel less than a relaxed place to wind down. Ensure you don't bring any work or take calls outside your dedicated office space. Buy a few plants to life your spirits during these dark wintery days. On a weekend make the most of natural light and sunny spells to get out in the fresh air and remember to keep the body moving and mobile, you'll sleep better and have more motivation. Spring is just around the corner!

# The Power of Manual Therapy

by CocoMehendo Gyaba

*Coco shares her first-hand experiences of chiropractic and how it inspired her to become a chiropractor herself.*



**W**hilst completing my undergraduate degree in Human Biology, I suffered from a sports injury. It is then that I encountered chiropractic care for the first time, from my friend who was then a senior student clinician at the Welsh Institute of Chiropractic. I personally had no idea what chiropractic was and what a chiropractor did.

Initially after my injury I visited my GP a few times, I was referred for an X-ray, which was normal. I quickly realised that my GP wasn't interested in my problem and just gave me painkillers saying that my injury would resolve itself. Nearly two to three months down the line, my symptoms were getting worse and when my friend suggested chiropractic care, it was a last resort situation for me and I thought it can't do any harm to try it out. I was nervous about my consultation but, by the end of the session, I was at ease as I realised that someone actually understood what I was going through.

The journey to recovery included me having regular treatment sessions along with rehabilitation, where I did specific targeted exercises for two to three months. After three to four months, my original pain of complaint was completely resolved. It was a life changing experience for me! Being a patient helped me to understand what chiropractic is at a very personal level. →





After experiencing the power of manual therapy first hand, I decided to have a career change and went back to university to train as a chiropractor. Whilst I was a student chiropractor, I still saw my chiropractor regularly every two to three weeks. I had a very busy life, I was working part time and carrying on with my sport and dance activities whilst undertaking a whole other degree. My session with my chiropractor was vital to me as it was a time dedicated to self-care. The sessions helped me to carry on with my daily activities by reducing the aches and pains from daily life stressors, but in addition it was also a safe space where I could talk about my life.

It was another 4 years of study, but at the end of it, I gained life skills that enabled me to help facilitate the body's natural healing abilities. If anything, because I am now a busy working chiropractor, I need the help of chiropractic care even more. Therefore I continue to have regular treatment. As with many manual therapy professions, after a busy week at

work due to repetitive motions, my body needs care. I see my co-workers every two to three weeks now for treatment and that works out as a perfect balance for me. In between my sessions, I do exercise in the form of dance and yoga, as movement goes hand in hand with wellness. If I miss my treatment or am delayed for a session, I feel like my body goes out of sync. After every treatment session I always sleep better, my energy levels are up and mentally I feel very calm and better in myself.

If there's one thing I have learnt, it is to never underestimate the power of touch and one to one physical therapy. As evidence informed practitioners, chiropractors, put the patients in the centre of our care. Due to my own experience I know how powerful having chiropractic care is and I would recommend it to anyone that wants to feel well and live a life with a body that's not just pain free but also at it's best natural ability.

## The Power of Touch

→ Research shows that touch on the human body can:

- calm the heart rate and blood pressure
- stimulate the 'feel-good' hormones, such as, serotonin and dopamine
- reduce stress hormones, such as, cortisol and norepinephrine
- boost the immune system
- can boost mental and physical wellness
- can relieve pain

# Exercise at home: Squats

Hannah Hughes, Sports Rehabilitator at Spinavita Chiropractic demonstrates how we can keep active at home with squats. Squats are a well known exercise used widely in sport performance, injury rehabilitation and home workouts. They mimic everyday movements, such as; standing from a chair, walking up the stairs and getting in or out of the car, making them widely applicable to everyday life.

There is a whole host of benefits that you can gain from adding squats into your exercise or rehabilitation routines, but how do you know you are doing them right or using them in the best way?

## First of all you need to learn the correct technique

### Downward Phase

1. Begin by placing your hands on your hips, with your feet shoulder width apart slightly turned out - stand tall!
2. Brace yourself; taking a deep breath in - keeping your ribs down but chest up
3. Lower yourself into a 'sitting' position - ensuring that your knees follow the line of your toes
4. Throughout the movement make sure to maintain a shallow curve in your spine
5. See how far you can go, aim to get your hips just below your knees

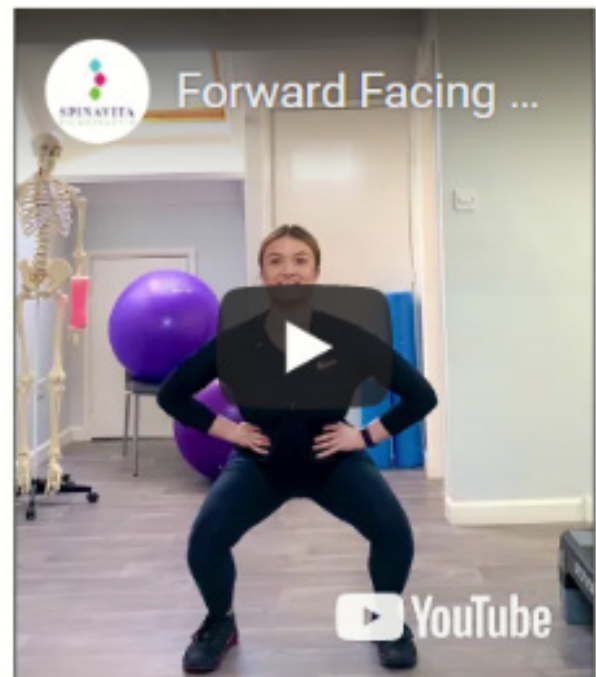
### Upward Phase

1. Once you have lowered yourself as far as you can, drive your heels into the floor and return to standing
2. Make sure to keep your bodyweight through your heels and lead with your chest with your balance.

## Learn more about squats

→ During a squat the Quadriceps, Gluteal, Gastrocnemius, Soleus and Iliopsoas muscles all work together to create the movement, along with the muscles of the core that help to keep you stable.

→ Alongside building muscular strength, they have been shown to increase load tolerance, coordination, stability and balance, as well as bone density and tendon or ligament integrity.



Now you have the technique, keep an eye on our social media pages for tips on how to avoid common mistakes when performing squats and alternative squat variations.

# Advice for every day living: Buying a bed

Chiropractors are often asked for advice on the selection of beds and mattresses and, in truth, there is no one solution that suits all. Choosing the right bed can minimise those factors that may lead to, or aggravate back pain.

Research by the British Chiropractic Association in 2011 showed that of those experiencing back pain, 41% of women and 36% of men said that their pain could be brought on by a night's so-called 'rest'. We come in different weights, shapes and sizes, but have one thing in common; we spend more than a third of our lives in bed, so should choose our beds carefully.

## Which is better, a hard or soft mattress?

- The best mattress is a 'supportive one'. A 16 stone person sleeping on a mattress may not get the same support as a 10 stone person sleeping on the same mattress.

## How do I know which is the right mattress for me?

- If you are lying on your side, your spine should be parallel to the mattress and your spine should not sag (bed too soft) or bow (bed too hard). The longer you can spend lying on a mattress before you buy it, the more accurate this feeling will be.
- Your pillow should be an extension of this i.e. your neck should be a continuation of the straight spine and not too high or too low.

## What about my partner?

- Always shop with your partner as your respective ideal mattress tensions could be very different. If this is the case, buy beds from a range that allow two single mattresses to be zipped together, so that you both get the support you need.

## How do I know if my current bed/mattress needs replacing?

- Are you and your partner getting comfortable nights sleep? If the answer is no, your bed may be the problem.
- Can you feel the springs through the mattress? If the answer is yes, it is definitely time to buy a new one.
- Is the bed more than 10 years old? If the answer is yes, consider purchasing a new one – beds wear out and may sag or lose support with time.

## What things can I do to help prevent back problems even with my new mattress?

- Try and adopt a sleeping position which creates less physical stress on the back. For example, lying on your side is better than lying on your front with your neck twisted to one side.
- Keep moving and avoid being in any one position for too long. No matter how comfy the position may initially feel, the longer you stay in one position, the more this will 'load joints'. If your partner moves around a lot at night, try separate beds for a while as your partner's movement could aggravate YOUR back condition!
- Drink water. Keep well hydrated; dehydration can make muscles ache.
- Don't leap out of bed first thing in the morning. After you have woken up, try some gentle stretches. And avoid bending or doing anything sudden or strenuous until you back wakes up!

# HIIT - High Intensity Interval Training

If you already have a good level of fitness and want to push yourself further, HIIT sessions are a great way to improve your cardiovascular fitness. A 15-30 minute HIIT session can burn between 200-500 calories, it's a great way to burn fat and tone the body.

Here's a good 30 minute session.

Warm up - jog on spot for 1 minute, punch for 1 minute - repeat 3 times.

6 exercises

Work for 45 seconds / 15 second rest between exercise

4 rounds, 1 minute rest between rounds

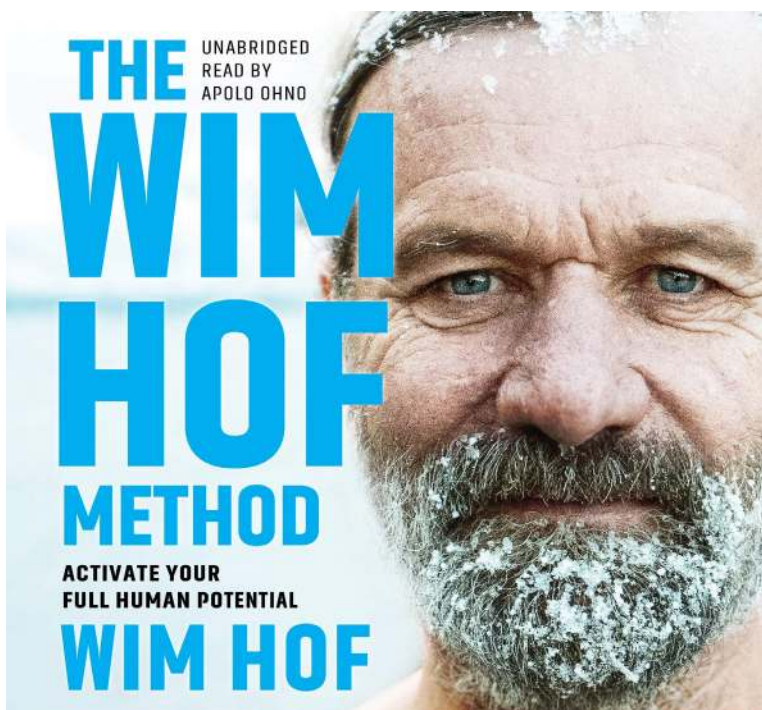
- 1). Jumping jacks
- 2). Squat jumps
- 3). Mountain climbers
- 4). Reverse lunges
- 5). Burpees
- 6). Push up

\*Use this format and substitute with different exercises to keep it interesting. Aim to do 2 HIIT sessions a week to see results.

Don't forget to stretch!



## Book Recommendation



Spinavita's Anna Hawrot has a fantastic book recommendation for our Connect readers.

**The Wim Hof Method: Activate Your Potential, Transcend Your Limits**

*My hope is to inspire you to retake control of your body and life by unleashing the immense power of the mind.*

*The 'Iceman' Wim Hof shares his remarkable life story and powerful method for supercharging your strength, health and happiness.*

"This is a fantastic book to kick start the year. A powerful message of how with the power of our mind, we can achieve anything. I am now taking a cold shower everyday, and surprisingly it feels amazing!" - Anna Hawrot



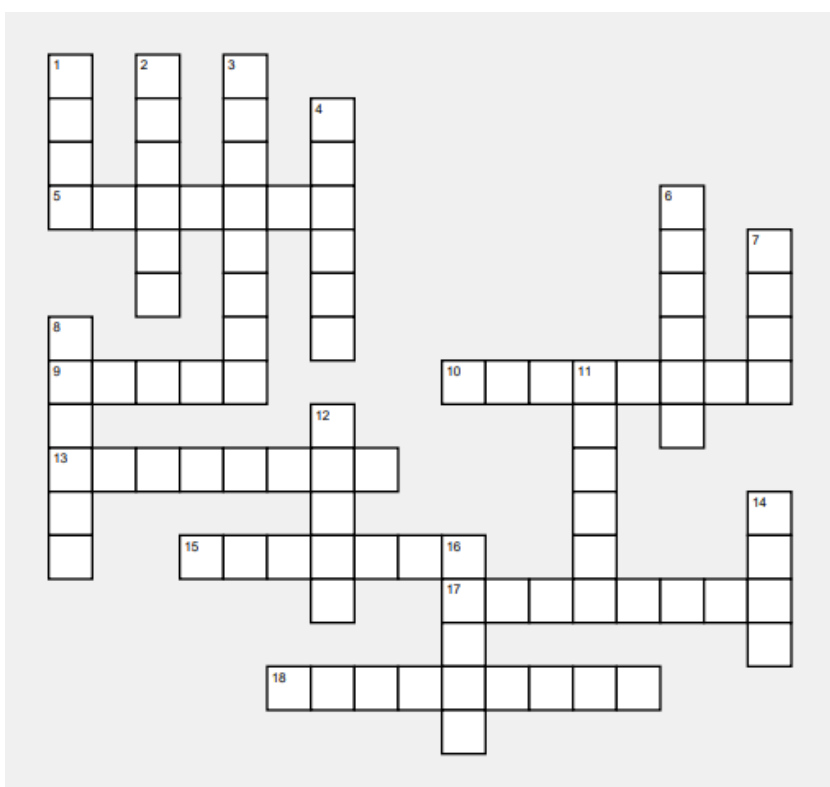
Spinavita is still here to support you and your family in every way we can. If you're not comfortable with face to face appointments, our online service allows us to give care and advice remotely. [Visit our website for more information.](#)

## Competition Time

Enter our competition for a chance to win a free treatment of your choice!

We are excited to again offer this great prize of a free treatment of your choice. All you need to do is send a photo of your completed crossword to [enquiries@spinavita.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@spinavita.co.uk). All correct entries will be entered into a prize draw and the winning name will be selected at random on **Monday 1st March**. Check Facebook to see the prize draw take place!

**WIN!**  
FREE TREATMENT  
OF YOUR CHOICE



### ACROSS

5. They're usually found in beds
- 9 Time for showers
10. Gloom's opposite
13. Yellow spring flower
15. Day for diamonds and dreams
17. Wet weather apparel
18. Monarch e.g.

### DOWN

1. Sport with tees
2. Fledgling plant
3. America's pastime
4. \_\_\_\_\_ egg
6. Eating outing
7. When spring ends
8. Vegetable plot
11. One of four in a year
12. Breezy
14. Flying toy with a tail
16. Verdant

# CONNECT WITH US

*There are many ways you can connect with us - and we'd love to hear from you! Drop us a message on social media or contact us using one of the methods below*

*We look forward to seeing you soon.*

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Wellness care to transform  
you and your family



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