

Your Health

 Health Partners

JANUARY 2025 NEWSLETTER



DRY JANUARY & BOOSTING YOUR ENERGY LEVELS

Plus a focus on sitting right

In this issue of **Your Health** we take an in depth look at the annual movement of Dry January, plus how to maintain and boost your energy levels. Additionally, we focus on sitting right and how to prioritise movement over holding a “perfect” position.

The Rise of Dry January

As the festive season winds down and the New Year begins, many individuals across the UK and beyond are choosing to abstain from alcohol in an annual movement known as Dry January. This one-month sobriety challenge, which started as a public health campaign by the charity Alcohol Change UK in 2013, has gained momentum over the years, turning into a global phenomenon embraced by millions seeking a healthier start to the year.

WHY DRY JANUARY?

The initiative is not just about abstaining; it’s about reflection, making conscious lifestyle changes and understanding one’s relationship with alcohol. For many, it is a reset button after the indulgences of the holiday season, a period that often involves increased alcohol consumption.

THE BENEFITS OF A BOOZE-FREE MONTH

Health improvements are at the forefront, with many participants reporting better sleep, weight loss and increased energy levels. The absence of alcohol can also lead to clearer skin, a stronger immune system and a reduced risk of certain diseases.



Health improvements are at the forefront, with many participants reporting better sleep, weight loss and increased energy levels.

Mental health benefits are equally significant, with many individuals experiencing improved mood and reduced levels of anxiety. The break from alcohol can also enable a greater sense of clarity and the opportunity for a review of one’s drinking habits.

THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT

Dry January has a broader social and economic impact beyond personal health. It challenges social patterns around alcohol consumption and encourages a dialogue about the role of alcohol in society. Many participants report saving money during January, as the costs associated with going out for drinks or purchasing alcohol for home consumption are eliminated. The campaign has also influenced the beverage industry, with a noticeable increase in the availability and variety of

non-alcoholic alternatives. Pubs, bars and restaurants are expanding their alcohol-free offerings to cater to those participating in Dry January, which in turn supports the growing trend towards mindful drinking.

It is a reset button after the indulgences of the holiday season.

CHALLENGES

Participating in Dry January is not without its challenges. Social pressures and the habitual nature of drinking can make abstaining difficult for some. There is also a risk that the message of moderation could be lost, with some individuals potentially returning to heavy drinking patterns once February arrives.

For those with alcohol dependency, it’s important to seek medical advice before participating in Dry January, as sudden withdrawal can be dangerous without professional support. Speak to your GP if you have any concerns.

THE LASTING EFFECTS

While Dry January is a month-long campaign, its lasting effects can be profound. Many individuals who participate find that they drink less in the months that follow or become more mindful of their drinking patterns overall.

Whether it’s to improve health, save money or simply to test one’s willpower, Dry January offers an opportunity for positive change, making it a worthwhile undertaking for anyone looking to start the New Year on a sober note.

Boosting Your Energy Levels

Maintaining high energy levels is essential for leading a productive and healthy life. Whether you're tackling a busy day at work, engaging in physical activities or simply looking to improve your overall wellbeing, understanding how energy levels work and how to optimise them is key.

WHAT ARE 'ENERGY LEVELS'?

Energy levels refer to the body's capacity to function effectively, fuelled by the energy we derive from food. This energy, measured in calories or kilojoules, powers everything from basic cellular functions to physical activities. Maintaining the right energy balance is crucial for ensuring the body operates efficiently.

WHY ARE ENERGY LEVELS IMPORTANT?

Energy levels are closely tied to energy balance, a state where energy intake (from food and drink) equals energy expenditure (through activities and bodily functions).

Achieving this balance is critical for:

- ▶ **Weight management**
When energy intake exceeds expenditure, weight gain occurs. Conversely, burning more energy than you consume results in weight loss.
- ▶ **Health**
Imbalances can contribute to conditions like obesity or eating disorders, which are associated with numerous health risks.
- ▶ **Day-to-day functioning**
Energy fuels vital processes such as maintaining homeostasis (the body's stable internal environment), and supporting physical and mental activity.



Content Warning: This article discusses strategies to boost energy levels, including topics related to nutrition and exercise, which may be sensitive for individuals with eating disorders. Please prioritise your wellbeing and consult a healthcare professional if needed.

HOW TO BOOST YOUR ENERGY LEVELS

Adopt Healthy Eating Habits

Your diet plays a pivotal role in determining energy levels. Here's how to optimise your nutrition:

- ▶ **Eat a balanced diet**
The NHS Eatwell Guide recommends eating a variety of foods, including at least five portions of fruits and vegetables daily.
- ▶ **Choose quality proteins**
Incorporate pulses like beans, peas and lentils as healthy protein sources.
- ▶ **Limit saturated fats**
Found in foods like butter, red meat and full-fat dairy, these could be replaced with healthier unsaturated fats, such as olive oil or sunflower oil.

A balanced diet ensures your body has the nutrients it needs to produce sustained energy throughout the day. By avoiding foods high in refined sugar, you should also be able to minimise the post-prandial dip, where energy levels drop temporarily after eating.

Manage Lifestyle Factors

Beyond diet and exercise, lifestyle adjustments can make a significant difference:

- ▶ **Stay hydrated**
Dehydration can lead to fatigue, so aim to drink plenty of water throughout the day.
- ▶ **Prioritise sleep**
Quality sleep allows your body to recharge and maintain optimal energy levels.
- ▶ **Practice stress management**
Chronic stress can deplete energy. Techniques like mindfulness, yoga or deep breathing can help.

Stay Physically Active

Regular exercise is one of the most effective ways to increase energy levels and improve quality of life. It not only boosts physical fitness but also reduces fatigue. Research highlights the benefits of combining aerobic and resistance exercises for maximising energy and reducing fatigue.

The NHS recommends:

- ▶ 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity weekly.
- ▶ Strength-training exercises targeting all major muscle groups at least twice a week.

Tip: Longer, low-intensity exercise sessions can significantly enhance energy levels and reduce fatigue.

Boosting energy levels is about balance – your diet, physical activity and lifestyle habits. By incorporating these tips into your routine, you can improve not just your energy but also your overall wellbeing. Remember, small changes can lead to significant, lasting improvements in how you feel and function every day.

For more health tips, explore resources like the [NHS Eatwell Guide](#) and [Physical Activity Guidelines](#).

Sitting Right

THE PERFECT POSTURE, DOES IT EXIST?

Humans are designed for movement and while much emphasis is often placed on finding “the perfect posture”, the reality is that the perfect posture does not exist.

Take a moment to think about the various postures and movements a body would have gone through whilst hunting for food, setting up camp or caring for others – one could conclude that posture should be dynamic rather than static and the most recent science supports this.

A posture that feels comfortable and correct in one moment will lead to stiffness and discomfort if maintained for hours. Instead of aiming for a rigid, fixed position, it’s healthier to think of posture as a fluid state that changes and adapts throughout the day.

The key is to stay mindful of how your body feels and to prioritise movement over trying to hold a “perfect” position.

This dynamic approach to posture encourages regular movement and position changes, which prevent muscle fatigue, joint strain and circulation issues associated with prolonged stillness. Even small adjustments, like shifting your weight or crossing and uncrossing your legs, help keep your muscles from being overworked or stiff and your joints lubricated.

The key is to stay mindful of how your body feels and to prioritise regular postural breaks and micromovement over trying to hold a “perfect” position. The cliché of, “your best posture is your next posture” and “motion is lotion” is quite accurate.



YOUR GUIDE TO “SITTING RIGHT” AND CREATING AN ERGONOMIC WORKSPACE

Along with changes of position, when you are seated for a long period, one should aim to sit in a way that requires the least muscular effort whilst allowing us to be productive.

Chair

- ▶ Ensure your chair is set at a height that allows your elbows to bend at a 90-degree angle when typing. Your feet should rest flat on the floor with your knees slightly below hip level. If you are short, you may need to use a footrest.
- ▶ There should be approximately 2-3 fingers width of space between the back of your knees and the edge of the chair.
- ▶ Arm rests are best used when reclining, reading or on meetings where one is not accessing the keyboard and mouse frequently. Try to avoid leaning on them as this can lead to compression of the forearm.
- ▶ Adjust your chair to optimise the built in lumbar support features and ensure you lean back on your back rest. Sitting forward for short periods is fine but should not be the norm. Most importantly, get familiar with your chair adjustments and use them. If you hot seat at a shared workspace, remember to adjust the chair to fit you for the day.

Monitor

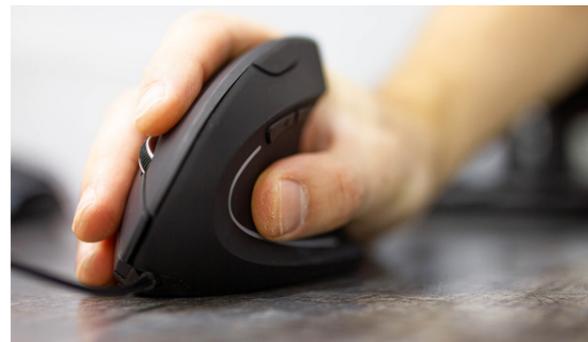
- Current DSE Regulations stipulate you should have an external monitor if using a laptop.
- ▶ Your eyes should be level with the top line of the text unless you wear varifocals in which case your screen should be lower.
 - ▶ Your monitor should be at arm’s length away from you when you’re seated.
 - ▶ Ensure your screen is positioned away from glare so it is clear and visible, and ensure you find a screen brightness and font size that suits you.
 - ▶ For those with dual screens, they should be placed in an open book format to avoid excessive neck movement. If you wish to use your laptop as your screen, it should be raised on a laptop raiser to the correct height.

Desk

- ▶ Your desk height should allow your elbows to bend at a 90-degree angle when typing or using a mouse, with your forearms parallel to the ground. If you are having trouble achieving this, be sure to check that there is no obstruction preventing you from getting close to the desk such as the arm rests or something stored under the desk.
- ▶ Whilst some people find sit to stand desks helpful if they have underlying medical problems which limit their sitting tolerance, they aren’t for everyone. A recent review of sit to stand desks by the HSE found that movement is far better than prolonged standing.

Keyboard and mouse

- ▶ The keyboard should be approximately 10cm away from the edge of your desk so you can rest your forearms on the desk. Keep your wrists neutral so they’re in line with your forearms.
- ▶ Your mouse should be kept close to the body so that your upper arm remains in a neutral position.
- ▶ If you suffer with wrist pain, you may find a vertical mouse helpful.



HABIT CHANGING

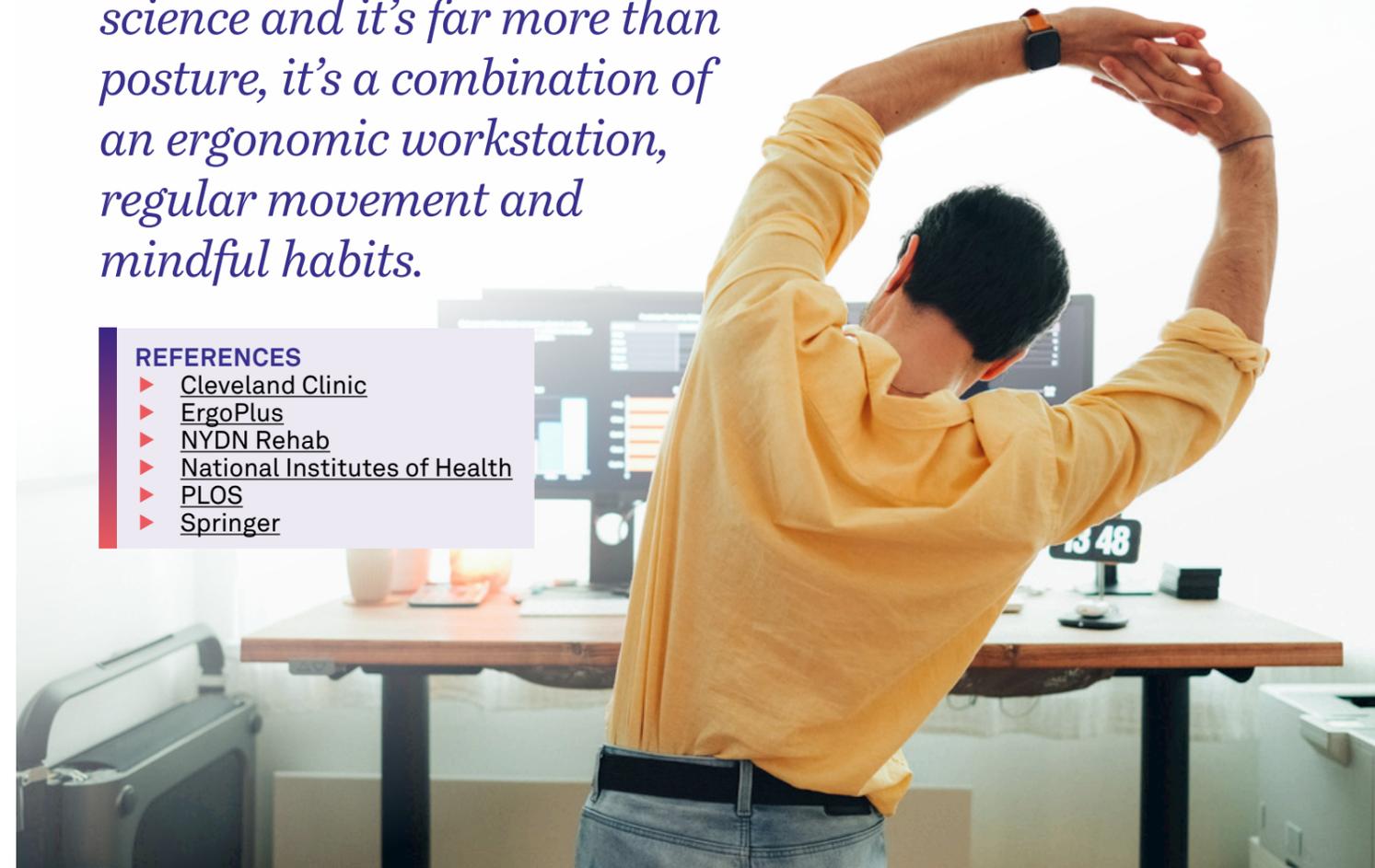
Even an optimal workstation set up won’t compensate for prolonged sitting, so here are some tips that can help manage the sitting dilemma:

- ▶ Find ways to move your body:
 - ▶ Have a small glass of water so you need to get up to fill it up.
 - ▶ Get up and speak to your colleagues in person. Often the subsequent chat in person can be more productive and human interaction is important for our mental health.
 - ▶ Have walking meetings.
 - ▶ Do mini exercises at your desk.
- ▶ Combatting eye strain or fatigue: follow the 20/20/20 rule - every 20 minutes, look 20 feet away for 20 seconds.
- ▶ Get active around your workday! There are many opportunities for movement in the day, such as a walk round the block during your lunch break or going to the gym after work, you just have to take them.

“Sitting right” is not an exact science and it’s far more than posture, it’s a combination of an ergonomic workstation, regular movement and mindful habits.

REFERENCES

- ▶ [Cleveland Clinic](#)
- ▶ [ErgoPlus](#)
- ▶ [NYDN Rehab](#)
- ▶ [National Institutes of Health](#)
- ▶ [PLOS](#)
- ▶ [Springer](#)





NEXT ISSUE:

- ▶ Financial Wellbeing
- ▶ Help Your Heart
- ▶ Strength Training

At Health Partners we offer a full range of tailored health and wellbeing services.

Our thinking is innovative. We constantly develop new responses and tools designed to address the health and wellbeing challenges that face your business and people.

Our commitment is total. We invest in our services, creating new ones and keeping in step with every client. We constantly explore new ways of working and make no compromises in the quality of our services.

Simply put, we are here to help people be their best.