

by
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The Wellness Column

Wellness doesn't have to mean expensive supplements, complicated biohacking or completely overhauling your life. Sometimes it is the small things we do, day after day, that add up.

I am often asked what my secret is for my vitality and general healthful demeanor. I would say it's really my overall wellness mindset. Over the years, researching health and wellness – and writing this column – has changed many of my habits. Open my kitchen cupboards or bathroom cabinet and you'll probably find evidence of another rabbit hole I've disappeared down!

But I don't believe wellness should become an obsessive quest for perfection. We are constantly exposed to pollutants, plastics and an extraordinary cocktail of chemicals. Scientists increasingly study our lifetime environmental exposures under the term **"the exposome."** The total burden of these exposures is sometimes called our **"toxic load."**

We cannot control everything. But where there is a simple way to reduce an unnecessary exposure or introduce a healthier habit, I tend to think: why not?

So here are some of the little things I do. You don't need to incorporate all at once, but if you try to address a few a week – our toxic load will lessen, which can mean less illness later in life.

My morning routine

Before reaching for coffee, I start Ayurvedic-style with warm water. Then I move.

It doesn't have to be a full workout. Stretch, mobilise your joints, walk, cycle, practise a few yoga poses – just remind your body that the day has begun. Better still, get outside. Try to get your heart beating faster. Morning daylight helps regulate our circadian rhythm, supporting alertness during the day and sleep later that night.

And coffee? I adore it, but I make myself wait. **Caffeine can temporarily increase cortisol**, although the '90-minute rule' is much debated. I prefer to hydrate and give my body a chance to wake naturally first. Besides, the coffee tastes even better when I have waited for my "treat".

Rethink your kitchen

Take a look at what your food touches. I have become increasingly wary of unnecessary plastic, particularly when heat is involved. I favour glass food containers and avoid heating food in plastic – I threw my microwave out. **Exchange any kitchen plastics** including kettles, re-useable water bottles (unless BPA free), cooking utensils, and the **worst culprit plastic chopping boards** – cutting on polyethylene and polypropylene boards can release microplastic particles.

Then there are our pans. Damaged non-stick cookware goes in my bin. PTFE-coated pans (ie Teflon) shouldn't be severely overheated – I now don't use them. I prefer stainless steel, cast iron, carbon steel, glass or enameled cookware.

And **salt**? This is more complicated than social media would have us believe. But to me – a natural form of sea salt is automatically healthier than table salt – which is processed and often bleached (although iodised table salt can be an important source of iodine). Irrespective I prefer good-quality, minimally processed sea salt – and the island we live on produces a very good quality version in Fleur de Sal.

Filter your water – intelligently

Hydration is one of the simplest wellness habits, particularly living somewhere as hot as Mallorca. But there is no definitive rule: how much water we need varies according to our size, diet, exercise, health and temperature. Two litres daily is a good amount to aim for.

I filter my drinking water, but filters aren't all equal. Activated carbon, reverse osmosis and other systems remove different substances. Reverse osmosis can also remove minerals, so understand what your system is doing rather than assuming all "filtered" water is good quality. It's worth the research.

Become a bathroom-cabinet detective

Our skin is our largest organ and an extraordinarily effective barrier – but some substances applied to it can be absorbed, depending on the ingredient and formulation.



Walk after a meal. Take the stairs. Cycle instead of driving. Stand up from your desk every hour. Stretch or squat while the kettle boils.

ant, and scrutinise moisturisers, shampoos, sunscreen and cosmetics. I buy as natural as I can – I use Tropic and Lavera, but some more regular brands like Clinique. Nr 7 have some items with fewer chemicals. Check them with you Yuka App.

Does current evidence prove that aluminium antiperspirants cause breast cancer? No. Major cancer organisations say a causal relationship hasn't been established. But there are still scientific questions around some ingredients used repeatedly in personal-care products. When there is an alternative I enjoy using, I choose the precautionary route.

Apps such as **Yuka** and resources such as **EWG VERIFIED** can be useful for checking ingredients.

Sunscreen: protect yourself, but choose carefully



THE LITTLE THINGS I DO EVERY DAY FOR MY HEALTH

So I have gradually simplified.

I favour bar soap over liquid soap

at home – fewer plastic bottles and of-ten more natural for-mulations. Liquid soaps of-ten contain parabens and preservatives. I choose my toothpaste carefully (my choice is fluo-ride free – much to the dismay of my dentist – but you can read why in my Nitric Oxide article online), use **aluminium-free natural deodor-**

Living in Mallorca makes sun protection non-negotiable. But sunscreen isn't the only answer. Shade, hats, avoiding burning and being sensible about peak UV hours matter too.

Some sunscreen ingredients are systemically absorbed, which has prompted further safety research. I therefore check individual formulations rather than buying by brand name, and consider environmental impact too – there are numerous good brands



sympathetic to sea life – I particularly like SVR Sun Secure. Caudalie is sold locally in select pharmacies.

Clean up the air around you

One of the easiest changes? Stop trying so hard to make your home smell artificially "clean".

Air fresheners, fragranced sprays and some cleaning products can release volatile chemical compounds into indoor air. Keep indoor spaces, particularly bedrooms, ventilated, and buy an air freshener with quality essential oils, or even use a diffuser.

I also favour simpler cleaning products where possible, but beware the word **"natural"**. Natural doesn't automatically mean non-toxic, and some products contain only a token natural ingredient. I now make my own.

Use your kitchen extractor and reduce unnecessary fragrance. We spend an enormous proportion of our lives breathing indoor air, yet rarely think of it as part of wellness.

Move more – not just at the gym

Exercise is important. **Movement is important too.**

Walk after a meal. Take the stairs. Cycle instead of driving. Stand up from your desk every hour. Stretch or squat while the kettle boils.

Include cardiovascular exercise, but don't forget strength. Maintaining muscle becomes increasingly important as we age – and, as anyone who has followed my recent bone-health series will know, resistance and impact exercise matter enormously for our skeleton too.

Good sleep is essential for good health

Good sleep starts long before your head hits the pillow.

I try to finish my main meal around three hours before bed, turn down the lights and reduce screens during the final hour. Rather than obsessing about blue-light-blocking screen protectors (although I confess to using them), reducing bright light and stimulating scrolling is probably the more useful habit.

Take the television out of the bedroom. Charge the phone elsewhere. Read, meditate, listen to gentle music and keep the bedroom cool and dark.

And if switching off the Wi-Fi router stops you disappearing down one last internet rabbit hole at midnight, switch that off too! Some people believe in the impact of EMFs (electro magnetic frequencies), and some not. I like to be cautious.

And finally – don't forget to live

Perhaps the most important wellness practices aren't found in an app, supplement bottle or bathroom cabinet.

Get outside. See daylight. Spend time in nature. Eat with people. Laugh. Hug someone. Meditate. Breathe. Call a friend. Go to the seaside.

Our relationships, our nervous systems and our sense of connection matter too.

None of us is going to live a perfectly "clean" life – and trying to do so would probably create enough stress to defeat the object. You've got to live a little too!

I think about reducing what I reasonably can, adding more of what supports my health, and letting lots of small choices accumulate over time.

Because perhaps everyday wellness isn't about doing everything perfectly. It is simply about doing a few things better, more often.

I'll be expanding these tips at MallorcaWellnessLiving.com – looking more closely at cookware, plastics, water filtration, cosmetics, sunscreen, household products, sleep and the evidence behind some of our everyday wellness choices.