

Wellbeing

Book

The Food Mood Connection

Dr Uma Naidoo



The idea that what we eat benefits physical health is well established. But it's taken longer for experts to connect the importance of

diet to mental health. Psychiatrist and nutrition specialist Dr Uma Naidoo, who is also a trained chef, wants us to wise up to the links between food and mood.

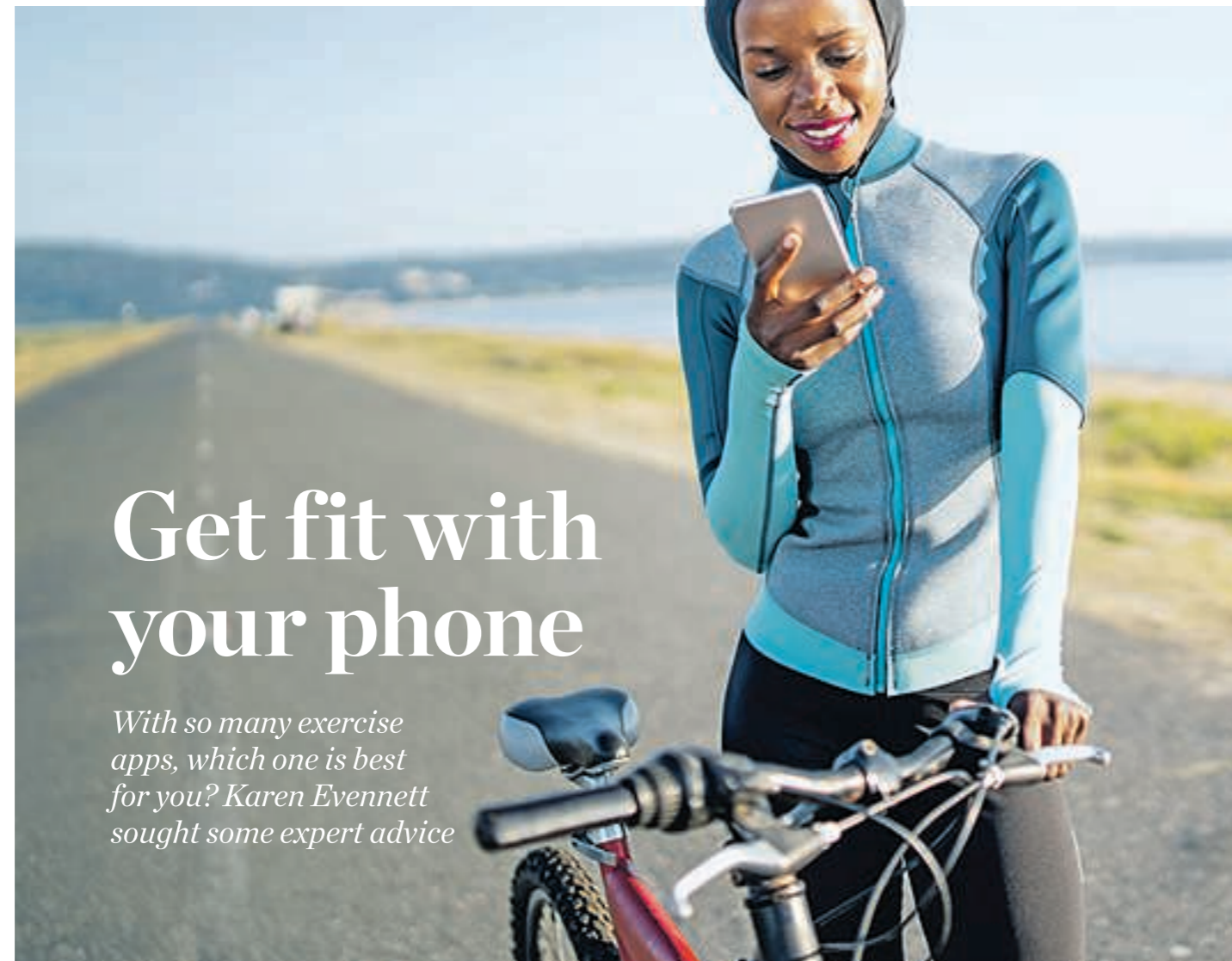
As she explains: "We counsel patients about diet and high blood pressure, for example, but we don't address food and mental health."

Tweaking our diet is an easy win because we all have to eat. In *The Food Mood Connection* Uma unpicks the latest research to show how a healthy, balanced diet can help with psychological and cognitive health issues, including anxiety, depression, dementia and sleep. "Restricting what you eat is not helpful and does not lead to a sustainable habit change," she says. On the other hand, small, gradual lifestyle changes can.

It can be hard to sift the facts, especially in the face of fad diets and unreliable advice on social media. That's why Uma recommends we start with small, sustainable tweaks. These can be things like having an orange instead of orange juice; making sure we get at least five portions of fruit and veg a day; making veg the focus of a meal to add more fibre, vitamins and minerals; consuming more berries; and drinking plenty of water. She also suggests eating more plant-based proteins, such as chickpeas, beans, nuts and seeds. And to make it easy to put all this into practice she includes simple, easy-to-follow recipes.

With a flood of misinformation and fake news, this book is a timely reminder that being mindful of what we eat is the way to stay healthy in body and mind. **Patsy Westcott**

The Food Mood Connection (Short Books) is out on 10 September



Get fit with your phone

With so many exercise apps, which one is best for you? Karen Evennett sought some expert advice

Many gyms are now open, but during lockdown, millions of us discovered a new way to work out using smartphone apps. We asked fitness experts James Griffiths and Sammy Margo to test some of our favourites.

IF YOU'RE NEW TO EXERCISE

5 Minute Yoga (1 week free, then £2.29/month)
This app offers simple yoga workouts – none of them more than five minutes. "Focusing on flexibility and core strength, it's a great intro to fitness if you're short of time and looking for something to get you motivated," says James Griffiths of Wild Training. "But, while I love that it offers baby steps to a more positive lifestyle, it's too basic for experienced yogis. And, even if you're a novice, I imagine that you'll soon be moving on to longer, tougher workouts." **Orcha rating: 78%**

FOR CARDIO HEALTH

Fitbit (90 days free, then £7.99/month, or £53.99 with coaching)
If you love stats, you'll love Fitbit. "It's all about the numbers," says James. "You'll be able to set yourself targets and bask in the sense of achievement as you pass each goal. Although you can use the app for strength

WHAT'S THE SCORE?

There are currently more than 365,000 health and fitness apps, and the market is growing by nearly 100 new products every day.

The Organisation for the Review of Care and Health Apps (Orcha) is an independent digital health evaluation organisation that has reviewed more than 6,000 of them. Its scores – covering data privacy, clinical assurance and user experience – are used by the NHS and bodies such as The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy. Visit appfinder.orchaco.uk for reviews.

training, the data it gathers is most relevant for cardio workouts, like running or cycling. It checks your heart rate and monitors the distances you cover and calories you burn. You can use Fitbit on your phone, but it works best on the Fitbit smartwatch (Fitbit Versa 2, £199.99, johnlewis.com). Either way,

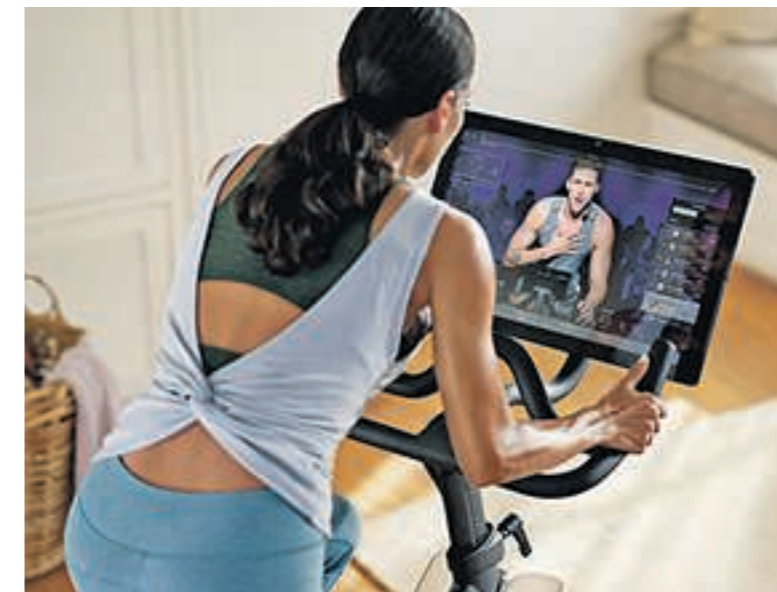
it requires time-consuming data input from you before you can use it. That puts some people off." **Orcha rating: 82%**

IF YOU WANT TO FEEL SPECIAL

Peloton (1 month free, then £12.99/month)
Offering a diverse range of workouts – including mindfulness, yoga and stretching, as well as cardio and strength training – this is a top app. "It's slick and very nice to use, with an easy sign-up process," says James. "It's got the Midas touch – but with a price tag to match. Look a bit deeper and most of the workouts are generic. There's not much you couldn't find on YouTube. I like it. But I'd love it if it cost £9.99." **Orcha rating: 77%**

FOR INJURY REHAB

GPEP (from £1.99 for 35 days)
If you've pulled a muscle or have a sore joint, this app is for you. "All the exercises have been carefully developed by physiotherapists to help patients with a wide range of back, muscle and joint issues," says Sammy Margo of The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy. "The advice is up to date, safe and reliable. But, if you don't want to pay and you have time at your disposal, you could find the same



READY, SET, GO!
There is a wide range of exercises you can do using your phone



information by doing your own research." Advice and videos for specific problems costs £1.99 per body area. If you want exercises for both your knees and your hips, you'll pay £3.98. **Orcha rating: 79%**

AFTER A HOSPITAL STAY

Get Up And Go (free)
Most exercise apps assume you have some level of fitness and are at least able to walk, says Sammy. "This one is exceptional in addressing the needs of the bedbound or seriously sedentary in the earliest stages of rehabilitation. I haven't seen this before and am pleased to see this advice being available, because we know how rapidly muscles atrophy when they're not being used and

how important exercise is to prevent this from happening. It's down to earth and will give you solid, helpful information that you won't find on YouTube." **Orcha rating: 78%**

TO PREVENT BACK PAIN

Improve Posture For A Healthy Spine (4x10-minute workouts free, or £1.99 for a four-week programme)

Good posture is vital to help prevent back injuries and aid healthier circulation. This app is the postural equivalent of the rookie runner's Couch to 5k, says Sammy. "It takes you through a 30-day programme of Pilates-style exercises, but it's down to you to motivate yourself, and the app is not set up to give you feedback on how you are doing. For that level of help, you may want to invest in a wearable tracker, such as Upright Go (for around £85) which will remind you when you're slouching."

TO PREVENT OLD-AGE FALLS

Moves4Me (£8.49 for 3 months)

We can't stop ageing, but maintaining strength and balance will help to prevent falls as we do, says Sammy. "This app is like having a personal trainer at home. There are video tutorials to show you how to do muscle-strengthening exercises correctly, and feedback on how well you're performing them. This is great if you're sufficiently computer literate to use the programme, or if you're a carer helping an elderly person to exercise safely." **Orcha rating: 66%**

KNOW YOUR NUMBERS!

High blood pressure increases the risk of heart disease or stroke, but has no symptoms. So what better time than Know Your Numbers! Week (7-13 September) to get yourself a blood pressure monitor and measure yours

at home. If your numbers are consistently high (at or above 140/90mmHg), it's time to see your GP for advice on how to bring it down. It could save your life. For more tips on managing blood pressure, visit bloodpressureuk.org.

Photography: Valentin Rusanov/Getty Images, Eivind Hansen



24 HOURS ON MY PLATE

Courtney Act

The Aussie drag star, singer and reality TV winner can't resist vegan custard and Pink Lady apples

"I'm still in a different time zone, as I returned from LA a few weeks ago. So yesterday I didn't wake until noon, when I had a glass of water before going out for an oat milk mocha coffee. Back home, I did 45 minutes of yoga before breakfast – porridge, half a banana, cinnamon, soya milk and honey, and more water, which I sip throughout the day.

"I spent the afternoon working on my memoir *It's All an Act* taking a break to watch Ricky Gervais on Netflix. Around 4pm I had lunch – steamed kale with fried garlic, tempeh in a ginger and soy sauce followed by a Pink Lady apple, plus more water.

"I had writer's block, so read Grayson Perry's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Girl* until 9pm, when I ordered a buffalo burger (buffalo-glazed fillet of seitan, pickles and coleslaw with ranch mayo) from the Temple of Seitan. Naughty but yummy, and worth every calorie. I had my favourite dessert too – vegan custard made with soya milk, corn starch, vanilla essence, turmeric and brown sugar. I felt really full so I lay on the couch before going to bed and reading until 2am.

"Healthy eating is second nature – I was brought up on fruit, veg, nuts, seeds and berries. I've been vegetarian since 2011 and vegan since 2014. Dull though it sounds, my favourite food is Tenderstem broccoli. I love sweet things, especially Lindt dark chocolate with mint, but I try not to buy snacks. I missed going out during lockdown, but I travel a lot, so revelled in the solitude, shopping locally and, as I love cooking, trying new recipes."

See Courtney tour the UK with *Fluid* from 6 April 2021, gigantic.com/courtney-act-tickets. Her EP, *A Drop of Fluid*, is out now



VERDICT

Emma Williams, Partner & nutritionist, says

"Porridge is always a healthy breakfast winner, being full of fibre and cholesterol lowering when topped with some fruit. Just ensure your soya milk is fortified and why not have all the banana? Kale is rich in vitamin K and a source of calcium, both important for healthy bones. You needed a little more 5 a day, fibre (30g per day is recommended) and less of the takeaways. But you were jet-lagged, which probably led to the craving!" **3.5/5**