



Disease fighter!
Citrus fruits can help boost the immune system

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Avoid accidents by getting help putting up the decorations



Pinch a candy cane from the tree for a quick pick-me-up



Lose weight faster by stepping on the scales regularly



A glass of bubbly is a low cal option to toast in the NewYear. Cheers!

DAYS, 31 WAYS

Enjoy the festive season full of energy, feeling great and still able to fit into that fabulous party dress **By Danielle Simpson**

And so the countdown begins. Presents

to be bought, guests to arrive, parties to be organised. And that brings excitement, fun, and stress. Here's how to survive the month day by day, and look and feel great at the end of it.

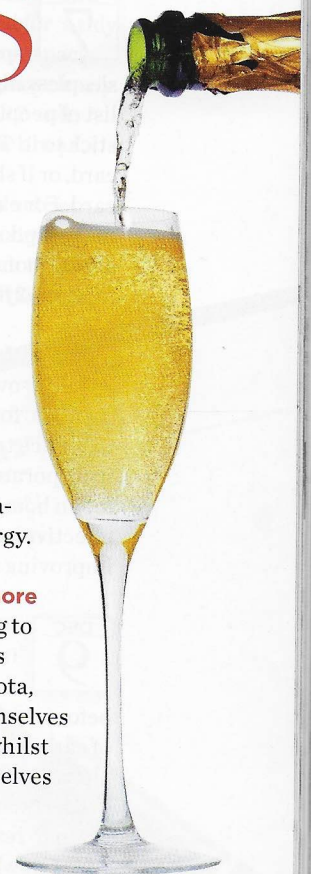
DEC 1 **Get planning**—mark your calendar with the important dates—when you need to shop, mail Christmas cards, buy the presents and decorate. Feel energised and stress-free, safe in the knowledge that you are completely organised. Great calendar apps for your phone are Week Cal for iPhone or iPad and Calendar Pro 1.3 for Blackberry.

DEC 2 **The weather is getting cooler**, save energy and freshen the air by turning off the a/c and opening the windows. Air conditioning can spread bacteria, mildew, mould, viruses and pollen as well as increase the risk factors for respiratory problems. You owe it to your health and it's a good time to start the cost-cutting now.

DEC 3 **Time to stockpile the freezer** with prawns, boneless chicken fillets, even corn on the cob, and don't forget the ice cream. Be prepared for an impromptu barbecue when friends drop in. Grilling meat results in healthier meals because the fat drips off as the food cooks and the shorter cooking time results in minimal loss of moisture and vitamins from vegetables so much of the nutritional content is retained.

DEC 4 **If you haven't already done so, make your Xmas present list.** Plan where you want to buy your presents from and try to buy one or two each day. According to the Mayo Clinic, being organised alleviates stress, boosts motivation and frees up time and energy.

DEC 5 **Step on the scales more frequently.** According to a study by researchers from the University of Minnesota, participants who weighed themselves daily lost an average of 5.4kg, whilst those who only weighed themselves weekly lost around 2.7kg. So avoid piling on the pounds by starting the weigh-ins now. →





A lavender aromatherapy massage will help you sleep

DEC 6 **Stock up on non-perishables** for the store cupboard. You'll be fully prepared for unexpected visitors and houseguests, and it will make your final Christmas shop a lot lighter. Essentials include tinned tomatoes and tuna, flour, herbs, spices, condiments, oils, pasta, ready-made sauces and pastes, rice, sugar and vinegars.

DEC 7 **At this time of year** worrying over how much you're going to spend might be giving you sleepless nights. Make a budget and a list of people you have to buy for—and stick to it! Try to use cash not a credit card, or if shopping online use a debit card. For each actual purchase that you make, update your budget with the actual money spent. *For more advice turn to page 62 for our Smart Shopping guide.*

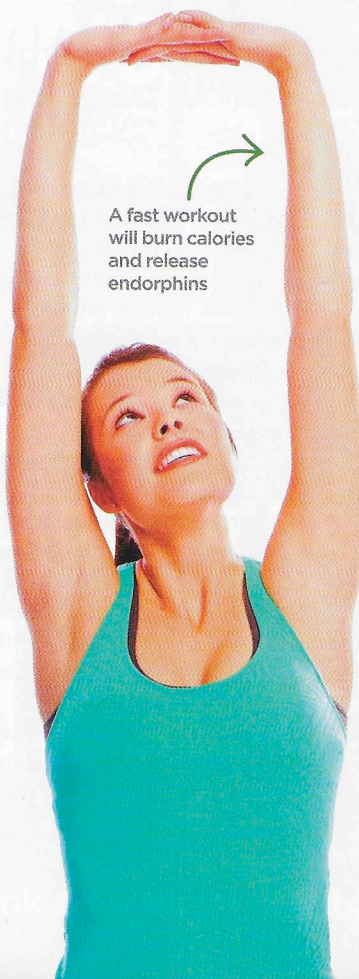
DEC 8 **If your sleep patterns** are all over the place book yourself in for a massage—a wonderful way to reduce tension. Choose one which incorporates aromatherapy and unwind for an hour. Lavender is particularly effective in aiding relaxation and improving sleep quality.

DEC 9 **It's Friday** and you've been invited out for brunch. If you're trying to watch your weight before the 25th, don't panic. Steer clear of carbs, go heavy on the veg and fish, alternate the bubbly with water and chew properly. It takes 20 minutes for the brain to realise that the stomach is full, so eat slowly and you'll need less.

DEC 10 **The cooler weather** can bring on coughs and colds. Honey is more effective at suppressing coughs than many over-the-counter remedies. For a dry cough, boil 2-3tbsp of flaxseeds in a cup of water until the water is syrupy. Strain and add equal parts of lemon juice and honey. Take a spoonful of syrup as needed. For a productive cough make a mixture of 2tbsp of lemon juice with honey and add a pinch of black pepper. This will help get rid of the phlegm and soothe your throat.

DEC 11 **Find out about** charitable initiatives in your area this holiday season. Donate old clothes, toys and food parcels to a good cause and feel better about yourself. Researchers at the University of California found that supporting others boosts your own contentment. Al Noor Centre for Children with Special Needs, City of Hope and Holy Trinity Thrift Store all welcome your unwanted wares.

DEC 12 **You're rushing around** trying to get everything done, and there's no time to eat. The healthiest snacks are the simplest; a piece of fruit, a handful of walnuts and a few dried apricots, 2-3 squares of plain chocolate, a low-sugar muesli bar, salted



A fast workout will burn calories and release endorphins

popcorn... All these will provide you with vital nutrients and give you the energy to carry on through your busy day.

DEC 13 **Place your turkey order** and start planning your meals for the holiday period. This will focus your grocery shopping and help you economise when it comes to buying the ingredients. Last order's on the 15th!

Make a budget when present shopping and use cash not cards



DEC 14 **Having drinks with friends?** White wine before a meal can lower your appetite for carbohydrates—which doesn't mean you should overdo it! Fancy cocktails and mocktails are usually full of sugar and calories. Remember, the more colourless your drink, the less calories it has.

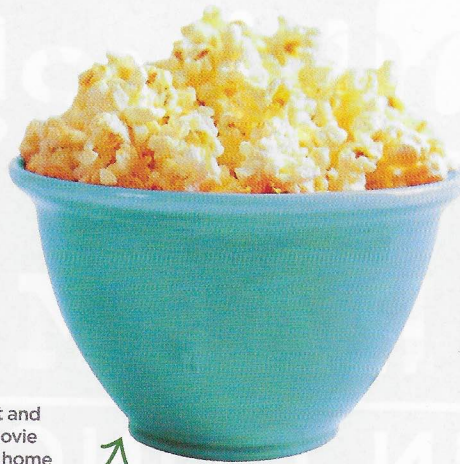
DEC 15 **Have a low key classic movie** night at home with your family. Make some popcorn, brew some mulled wine, and cosy up with some blankets. Favourite Christmas movies of all time include *It's a Wonderful Life*, *Home Alone*, *Love Actually*, *The Nightmare Before Christmas* and of course not forgetting, *White Christmas*.

DEC 16 **Many people gain** over 2kg during the holiday period. Find a Zumba class or buy a high impact workout DVD to try at home. If you put your all into it for 20 minutes, you'll burn off at least 200 calories compared to only 100 on a walk.

DEC 17 **To ensure delivery in time** for Christmas, order all your online gifts for friends and family today. Think outside the box. How about theatre tickets, membership to a museum or a treatment at a spa?

Experiences rather than material goods often bring more satisfaction thanks to the important memories they create.

DEC 18 **According to** the US Product Safety Commission, 11,000 people end up in the ER every Christmas due to decorating injuries. Stay safe—get someone to hold the ladder or chair as you decorate the tree, and don't balance on tables to hang up the tinsel. If in doubt, call Jim Will Fix It on 800FIX/800349.



Chill out and enjoy movie night at home

DEC 19 **Detox your system.** There's still time to get your body into peak form before the real celebrations begin. Swap white bread, sugar laden cereals and biscuits for fresh fruit and vegetables, sustainable fish and wholegrains. By the time you're ready to start feasting, you'll be energised and sleeping well. Come on, it's only for a week. Think how great you'll feel!

DEC 20 **It may seem** as if time is running away with you, so stop and reflect on the good things. Studies by Emmons & McCullough show that cultivating a sense of gratitude can help you maintain a more positive mood in daily life and contribute to greater sense of emotional wellbeing (especially needed when the in-laws are in town!).

DEC 21 **If you're flying home** for the holidays, a simple list will make light work of your packing and airplane essentials: don't forget earplugs, toys for the kids and sweets to bribe them with. On the plane, remember a few simple exercises can save discomfort and the threat of DVT (and keep the little ones distracted). Try to get up and walk around every 30 minutes or so, or at least try to stretch your legs and point your toes.



DEC 22 **Get your festive CDs** out and join in at the top of your voice. Singing has innumerable health benefits—it

Honey's not just for bears—a spoonful will soothe sore throats

boosts your immune system, helps you sleep, releases endorphins, enhances your mood and relieves stress. And if you listen while you work, you'll find you get even more done.

DEC 23 **Time to tie up the** loose ends. Buy plenty of batteries for everyone's toys and appliances; do your main supermarket shop; start wrapping presents; stock up on chocolates and jars of delicious preserves for impromptu gifts. And if you've energy left bake a supply of mince pies and cookies.

DEC 24 **Celebrate with your friends** around the world. Many countries (like Sweden) celebrate Christmas today and as the UAE is such a multi-cultural country, take the opportunity to join in with their celebrations.

DEC 25 **Happy Christmas Day!** Expectations are high and moods are up and down like a yo-yo. Rich food, enforced company and an excess of 'family fun'—a toxic mix on any other day of the year—means stress levels are up. Find everyone a distraction. Send everyone on a walk on the beach, stagger present opening so it's not all done at once and delegate the kitchen tasks. Keep the kids entertained and ensure they're not hungry while they wait for the turkey—low blood sugar levels will make their moods plummet.

DEC 26 **You'll need some energy** to tackle the clear-up from the day before (and to hit the supermarket and restock the fridge). Send the family off to the cinema and pinch a candy cane from the tree or swizzle a cinnamon stick in your tea or coffee. Peppermint and cinnamon are research-proven pick-me-ups. So go ahead, just don't tell the children.

DEC 27 **Clear out your fridge.** Visit www.goodhousekeeping.com for inspired ideas to do with all the turkey leftovers. Once it's all finished, do a shop for fresh food. Stock up on fruit, vegetables and fish and give your liver a well-earned rest. There's nothing nicer than fresh and light flavours after so much heavy food.

DEC 28 **Do something different.** Don't miss the Christmas panto at the Madinat Theatre, or head out to the desert. It doesn't matter what it is, but get out the house and have a change of scene. If you have a host of houseguests split your party up and do separate things. Have a break from each other, you'll appreciate each other more when you meet up again in the evening.

DEC 29 **Plan a day out** and spend next to no money: take a ride on an abra, visit the Dubai Fountains at Dubai Mall, go to Jumeirah Beach, walk in Creekside Park, visit Bastakiya and the souks, walk along Jumeirah Beach Residence and enjoy the Covent Garden Market.

DEC 30 **De clutter your life** both mentally and physically. There's a lot to be said for 'a tidy desk, a tidy mind'. Organise your space and you will be able to think more clearly. Mark up your new diary for 2012 and envisage your goals for the year ahead.

DEC 31 **Happy New Year!** Whether you're celebrating in style or just going to the beach to watch the fireworks, pat yourself on the back and welcome in 2012! ■



Mark up your 2012 diary so you don't forget anyone's birthday