

## The 2026 MODERN WELLNESS GUIDE

From food that might help you live longer to yoga classes in 100-degree heat, we put the year's buzziest trends under the microscope.

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### WHY DID WORKOUTS GET SO HOT?

Everything is hot now. The earth, teddy coats—and, especially, our workouts. While hot yoga classes have been around for decades, the super-warm workouts du jour are Bikram at full blast, featuring lightweight dumbbells, upbeat playlists, and sauna-like temperatures. Hot Pilates in Los Angeles has gained a following among celebs like Hailey Bieber and Kendall Jenner, and Fuze House in Miami and New York City is crowded with TikTokers in matching workout sets.

Your body naturally generates heat as you exert yourself—it's evidence of the energy your muscles are producing. A hot workout piles on with infrared heating panels or mats. "It loosens your muscles. You can strengthen and stretch them better," says Tricia Donegan, cofounder and director of teacher training and class development at ID Hot Yoga. She notes that the heat may help boost metabolism, which could be backed up by a 2020 study in *Acta Physiologica* that showed that higher temperatures had some metabolic benefits for overweight subjects. Julia Iafrate, DO, a sports medicine specialist in New York, points to a 2024 study in the *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research* that found that resistance training in heat might lead to somewhat better performance and muscle building. And talk to anyone who enjoys hot workouts, and they'll likely mention the mental clarity that comes from sweating buckets in a sweltering room.

Hot workouts aren't for everyone, Iafrate cautions, stressing that if you're not used to heat, you may experience hyperthermia or dehydration, which could cause heatstroke. Some people should avoid hot classes altogether, including anyone

who is under 18 or over 65, has a history of fainting or cardiovascular issues, or is taking medications like diuretics.

That said, hot workout classes might be your preferred option. "Some people are low on time and want to get a good strong workout and have the cardiovascular ability to tolerate that heat," Iafrate says. "Those are the people I'll advise, 'Yeah, this might be a good workout for you.'"—KATIE BEROHN

### HOW SCARY ARE MICROPLASTICS?

Earlier this year, a study from *Nature Medicine* revealed that the human brain might contain the weight of a plastic spoon's worth of micro- and nanoplastics—tiny shard-like fragments under 5 millimeters. From there, panic ensued. Everyone threw out their black kitchen utensils. "Microplastic influencers" popped up. Medical technology startup Clarify Clinics claims it can help remove microplastics from your blood using a mixture of activated carbon and a "proprietary plasma device" for a cool \$13,000. (Orlando Bloom has tried it.)

Microplastics aren't only in the brain; they've been found everywhere from in the blood to placentas, according to Dana Zhaxylykova, a microplastics researcher and founder of the MicroplasticFree app. The fragments are virtually omnipresent—in our oceans, drinking water, fabrics, and the dust in our homes. But how dangerous are they, really?

Experts are quick to point out the lack of actual scientific data that microplastics cause harm. "A lot of what we know is still only emerging," says Naomi Ko, MD, a medical oncologist in New York. Still, many scientists do think microplastics could end up being proven harmful to our health. "Younger people



are getting breast and colon cancer,” Ko says. “Scientifically interrogating microplastics is one [potential factor] that we need to be focused on.” Early research suggests environmental microplastics can trigger inflammation and DNA damage when they interact with cells, according to a 2024 study in *Life Sciences*.

Zhaxylykova says that the easiest way to reduce exposure is to stop using plastic cutlery, since heat makes plastic break down. She recommends avoiding plastic water bottles and paper cups (which have a plastic lining) and opting for wooden cutting boards and cooking utensils. If your clothing has synthetic fibers (read: most workout clothes), Ko recommends washing them in shorter cycles and on cold. Vacuum often, because plastic particles linger in dust. Every expert we consulted cautioned that there is no need to panic. “You’ve got to live your life,” Ko says. “Until we have more data, we don’t know.” There’s no harm in switching to an aluminum water bottle or metal cutlery. But there’s probably no reason to get your blood cleaned at the moment, either.—K.B.

## DO ANTIAGING DIETS WORK?

“Food longevity,” a term that suggests that eating nutrient-dense food can lead to a longer lifespan, may not sound all that different from simply eating healthfully. But lately a certain Silicon Valley set has taken the idea to extremes. Entrepreneur Bryan Johnson eats only between 6 and 11 a.m. and restricts himself to mainly plant-based, nutrient-dense foods. And while you may know Jeni Britton for inventive ice cream flavors, the founder of Jeni’s Ice Creams has more recently created Floura, a fiber-focused snack bar company, claiming that the nutrient “changed my life.” Once Britton put more fiber into her diet, she noticed a newfound lightness, a vibrancy to her skin, an “inner glow,” and heightened vitality. “I heard it all the time: ‘Goodness, you’re reverse aging,’” Britton has said. Other products leaning into the trend include Novos, the so-called longevity bar, which contains a host of buzzword-y ingredients such as astaxanthin—a powerful natural antioxidant—and taurine, an amino acid that may support cardiovascular health and slow biological aging.

Reality check: Eating fresh food is probably more impactful than a bar, says Sean P. Heffron, MD, a preventive cardiologist at the Center for the Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease

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—ERIC WILLIAMSON, PHD

at NYU Langone Heart. He recommends following common nutritional advice—reducing intake of land animals, choosing minimally processed foods, and eating a rainbow of fruit and vegetables—over trendy supplements.

Food alone can’t predict your lifespan. “Mental health is more predictive of longevity than physical health,” says registered dietitian Eric Williamson, PhD, director of nutrition at Canyon Ranch. “If you look at Blue Zones, a huge aspect of their approach to food is the community experience.” So while what you eat is important, experts advise taking



a communal approach to food, like gardening or dining with friends. Heffron never misses Saturday morning pancakes with his daughter. “The act of eating together and sharing time is what life is really for,” he says. “Longevity is important, but if you’re miserable every day because you can’t eat a plate of nachos with your friends, just eat the nachos.”—TASHA NICOLE SMITH

## NEURO-WHAT?

The 2024 Word of the Year, according to Oxford University Press, was “brain rot,” describing a post-scrolling haze of cognitive decline. So maybe it’s not surprising that 2025 has brought a new assortment of supplements, prong-like headsets, spas, and even perfumes, many which have “neuro” in their names, hoping to activate your brain for the better.

Our brains are constantly in a “firing” state, explains Tola T’Sarumi, MD, a psychiatrist in Wellesley Hills, Massachusetts. When you feel low or depressed, your neurotransmitters are not firing as they should. With a lot of these “neuro” products, T’Sarumi says, “We are trying to reactivate the neural pathways, so there are more neuron connections.”

Brands and experts have different theories about the best way to jump-start your brain. Following the aftereffects of long Covid, Amanda Chantal Bacon, founder of Moon Juice, created Neuro-Magnesi-Om, a supplement with a type of magnesium called L-threonate, which studies show is more bioavailable and thus can more easily reach the brain. She drinks it first thing in the morning, explaining that “it can [aid with] neuroplasticity, which in turn helps with memory, recall, executive function, and mood. For me, honestly, it just feels like mental stamina.”

Exomind, a transcranial device that's been used by Gwyneth Paltrow and Serena Williams, uses magnetic stimulation to improve brain function over six sessions. It's brought to you by BTL, the aesthetic company that makes EmFace and EmSculpt; its purported effects include reduced stress and improved mood. "I often hear, 'I feel calmer; my head feels

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lighter,'" T'Sarumi says. In NYC's SoHo, the neuro-focused well-being concept space 113 Spring creates programming approved by its advisory board of experts, including Emergence, a meditation session with binaural beats and visuals, and Mind-Scent, a custom fragrance experience that uses EEG.

"We're just starting to scratch the surface with respect to how you can potentially influence the brain in a noninvasive way that impacts your physiology, behavior, or emotions," says neuroscientist Jennifer Garrison, PhD, a member of 113 Spring's expert advisory board. "There's a lot of really exciting and interesting stuff happening, but most of these devices have very little to no clinical data." She notes that less tech-y, more traditional wellness practices, such as meditation or sound baths, have been studied on a small scale and shown to have potential brain benefits. Ultimately, she says, "The best interventions we have, by a mile, are what you put into your body and how you move: diet and exercise."—KATHLEEN HOU

## SHOULD WE ALL BE GETTING PEPTIDE SHOTS?

Amanda Kahn, MD, is New York's "Peptide Princess": She has her nickname on a cashmere *Lingua Franca* sweater—and her hotshot clients on a personalized regimen of hot shots. Of course, GLP-1s are sometimes part of their peptide "stack" (a term for their wellness regimen), but their fridge might also contain GHK-Cu, a copper peptide for collagen; BPC-157, for tissue repair; or NR, a stable version of NAD<sup>+</sup>, said to have some antiaging effects. "I hear it all day, every day: 'This changed my life,'" Kahn says. The fridge is the new medicine cabinet.

Peptides are tiny links of less than 20 amino acids, a "sequence [that] gives [them] a certain shape [so that] they can bind to receptors in the body and increase some functions that could have decreased with age," explains Dominique Fradin-Read, MD, a physician in Los Angeles. (Fans call the combination of BPC-157 with thymosin beta or TB-500 the "Wolverine" stack, presumably after his self-healing powers.) Sometimes peptides can act as hormones, neurotransmitters, antimicrobial agents, or even signaling molecules, says Los Angeles dermatologist Jennifer Herrmann, MD. New York plastic surgeon David Shafer, MD (stack: testosterone, human chorionic gonadotropin, semaglutide, BPC-157), agrees, and describes peptides as keys that bind to certain locks, like protein receptors, to trigger responses in the body. Compared with supplements, he says, injections are more bioavailable. But there aren't extensive human studies on some of these yet, and longevity doctors like Kahn are well aware of the possibility of

the placebo effect—though, she says, "I feel strongly that it's not fully that, because I don't think that would account for all the benefits I'm seeing, even in skeptical patients."

Converts include tech founders and some A-list celebrities. "I've gone without [peptides] for periods of time, and I've really noticed a difference," says Cassandra Grey, founder of Violet Grey (stack: GHK, NR, thymosin beta-4). Nicolas Travis (stack: NAD<sup>+</sup>, glutathione, BPC-157, GHK-Cu, FOXO4-DRI), founder of the skin care line Allies of Skin, started peptide injections in 2023. He says he's noticed "better sleep, skin, and function both on the road and in the gym. I definitely have more energy and vitality."

It can take a few days to weeks to start feeling the full results, and cost hundreds to thousands of dollars a month. Some people try to cut corners by sourcing shots online, which doctors do not recommend because there is a risk of toxicity and impurities. "They have become available online through providers that use 'research-grade' level of peptides, which are not safe," Fradin-Read says. Though some, but not all, have been FDA-approved, peptides must be dispensed by prescription and filled through a certified and inspected pharmacy, Kahn says. Patients should consult with a doctor and undergo cancer screenings to see if they are a candidate. "Theoretically, since we're boosting cells, we'd want to make sure we're not boosting any aberrant cells or cells that shouldn't be there," Kahn explains. "'Don't do this on your own,' is the bottom line that I want every patient to take away."—K.H.

Editor's Note: This does not constitute medical advice. Please consult with your doctor before deciding if certain cosmetic or medical treatments are right for you.

