

REVIEW

The **Mo**
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BRAIN
WORKOUT
CENTRE PAGES

World Exclusive

Goldie Hawn's ex-husband – the father of Hollywood A-lister Kate Hudson – tells the astonishing story of his marriage to the sex-crazed superstar whose motto is...

What Goldie wants Goldie gets



OPEN MARRIAGE: Goldie Hawn and Bill Hudson at their wedding in 1976. Main picture: The couple at the Academy Awards in Los Angeles the previous year

By Dina Behrman

It may seem improbable, but blue light is being hailed by experts as an unlikely solution to many health problems – from jet-lag to acne and even the hospital bug MRSA. So just how can you benefit?

THE RIGHT KIND OF BLUES

Professor Russell Foster, an Oxford University neuroscientist, says blue light is now known to be more effective than other types of light in boosting mood and staving off the symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), and even some types of depression.

'Over the past few years it's been discovered we have a third type of sensory cell in our eye called melanopsin, which is sensitive to blue wavelengths of light,' says Prof Foster. 'These receptors regulate the arousal and alert systems in the brain and are stimulated by a deep blue, like the blue of the sky.'

He says early-morning exposure to natural daylight (which contains blue wavelengths) or a blue-enriched light box is the best way to ward off SAD.

'Natural light, even in winter, is hundreds of times brighter than average office or home lighting,' he says.

'We need lighting at 2,000 lux [the unit used to measure light] to really stimulate the cells. Home lighting

How blue light can make you glow all over...



is about 250 lux. On a sunny day, the strength of light outside is as much as 100,000 lux.'

He says you should try to experience at least half an hour of natural light a day, and if we can't get outside, sitting by a large window is also effective.

'What people should be doing is incorporating exposure to natural light every morning. If you can't get outside, use a light box that incorporates blue wavelengths,' says Prof Foster.

Light boxes, also known as SAD lamps, contain blue LED (light-emitting diode) bulbs, which emit large amounts of light – often about 10,000 lux – without creating heat. Leading brands include the Philips GoLITE Blu range and Lumie.

THE JET-LAG BUSTER

Studies have shown that blue-enriched light can also help people combat jet-lag or cope with working anti-social hours, particularly those working shifts, because the light receptors in our eyes respond most efficiently to

morning at your destination, so that when you get there you won't suffer from so much jet-lag.'

There have been concerns over blue-light sources and eye damage. However, Prof Revell says: 'Choose a medically certified device that has been tested for the amount of blue light in it, and assessed to make sure it is below what is considered hazardous. These light boxes have an equivalent, if not less, amount of blue light that you'd get from walking in normal daylight, so they're all completely safe.'

BANISH SPOTS

Blue light has also been found to have anti-bacterial properties and is now used to treat acne. Dr Rakesh Patalay is a research fellow in dermatology at London's Hammersmith Hospital, where a study that pioneered red/blue LED phototherapy to treat acne was carried out.

The study revealed that blue light is important in treating acne as it attacks the bacteria that cause it. Used in conjunction with red light, which is known to soothe inflammation and promote healing, it is said to provide an effective treatment for mild to moderate acne.

Products such as the Lumie Clear and the Oxy Clearlight are available for home use. They utilise blue light at a special inten-

sity and hue that is known to kill spot-causing bacteria.

Experts recommend that the day for about 12 weeks.

'For mild acne, light therapy may be more effective than creams, but not more severe cases,' says Dr Patalay.

'But the beauty of this type of treatment is that it can be used in conjunction with, but not to replace, traditional treatments.'

SHINING A LIGHT ON HOSPITAL BUGS

Microbiologist Steve Baker says that blue light is a proven anti-bacterial.

'It is known to kill acne bacteria, and now scientists are looking to use similar technology to treat MRSA. It's a slightly different wavelength but it's still blue light.'

Studies in laboratories have proved promising, but he concedes: 'It's too early to make any major claims.'

'But there are plans one day to manufacture devices that would light up and protect entire rooms from dangerous bacteria. It is very exciting.'

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Health

Stressed? Go for a jog...

Doctors often give sufferers of anxiety disorder powerful drugs to calm them – but relief could be found simply by going for a regular jog.

New research has found that hormonal and other changes triggered by exercise may be responsible.

Although everyone experiences anxiety, in some individuals the feeling can become exaggerated. It is estimated that one in 20 Britons will suffer at some time with the mental illness.

Symptoms include a tendency to magnify the consequences of often natural sensations, such as an increase in heart rate, or sweating. For them, a sore throat may be a sign of cancer, and a headache becomes a symptom of a stroke. In some cases, patients

experience tinnitus, a permanent ringing in the ears. Full blown panic attacks are a more physical manifestation.

Cognitive behavioural therapy – a type of psychotherapy – can be effective in the long term, while antidepressants or tranquillisers are prescribed.

The new study, from the University of North Carolina, found that exercise can be just as effective as medication or talking therapy.

Around 140 men and women with anxiety disorder were put in a stressful situation. They were asked to breathe through a mask supplied with a special mix of oxygen and carbon dioxide, with the latter increased gradually so there was a sensation of suffocation.

At the same time, they were asked to score how distressed they felt. Results showed that people with high levels of anxiety sensitivity who also regularly exercised were less anxious during the tests than those with low levels of exercise.

Just how exercise could work is not clear. One suggestion is that it increases levels of endorphins, the body's natural painkilling chemicals, and another is that it lowers levels of the stress hormone cortisol.

Dr Adam Perkins, of the Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London, says: 'Exercise has a beneficial effect on physical health, but it also has a considerable effect in mental health as well. We should be using it more.'