

OUR PLACE *News*

The monthly magazine dedicated to help everyone over 50 get the best out of life!

JUNE 2020

Inside this issue...

Face Masks -
a simple guide

Blooming lovely!

The Queen and royal family share favourite blooms to mark Chelsea Flower Show

Homework motivation

10 tips for greater productivity working from home

Strawberry fields forever

Six amazing health benefits of eating strawberries and their tops

PLUS...

What's on • Health & Beauty • Money & Work • Leisure & Travel
Food & Drink • Arts, Crafts & Hobbies • Home & Garden

Letter from the Editor

Welcome to Our Place - The monthly magazine dedicated to help everyone over 50 get the best out of life!

Every month, we bring you news and features on; Health & Beauty, Money & Work, Leisure & Travel, Food & Drink, Arts, Crafts & Hobbies, Home & Garden, plus... our Charity of the Month!

Our Place was founded with a mission to connect the mature online community to a world of news, features, offers and life changing products they may have missed out on. Bring them all into one place, Our Place.

What makes us special is that we are a vibrant team of all ages, from 21 to 65 who are all passionate about living life to the fullest irrespective of age. We have built strong relationships with some of the best UK age related businesses with the aim of brokering discounted rates for our Over-50s community.

Become a Friend of Our Place and receive our exclusive newsletters. They are a great way of keeping updated with the latest news and promotions. We aim to bring a smile to your face every time you open your inbox by selecting exclusive vouchers and discounts just for you.

We welcome you and hope you enjoy Our Place.

The Editor - Our Place

PS. Do you have an interesting story or article? If so, send us an email by visiting: www.ourplace.co

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Coronavirus (COVID-19): what you need to do Stay at home

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (where this absolutely cannot be done from home)
- Stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

Anyone can spread the virus

Full guidance on staying at home and away from others

The single most important action we can all take, in fighting coronavirus, is to stay at home in order to protect the NHS and save lives.

Details

When we reduce our day-to-day contact with other people, we will reduce the spread of the infection. That is why the government is now (23rd March 2020) introducing three new measures.

1. Requiring people to stay at home, except for very limited purposes
2. Closing non-essential shops and community spaces
3. Stopping all gatherings of more than two people in public

Every citizen must comply with these new measures. The relevant authorities, including the police, will be given the powers to enforce them - including through fines and dispersing gatherings.

These measures are effective immediately. The Government will look again at these measures in three weeks, and relax them if the evidence shows this is possible.

Symptoms and what to do

Do not leave your home if you have coronavirus symptoms

Do not leave your home if you have either:

- a high temperature - this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- a new, continuous cough - this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)

To protect others, do not go to places like a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital. Stay at home.

Use the 111 online coronavirus service to find out what to do.

Advice for people at high risk

Who's at high risk from coronavirus

Coronavirus can make anyone seriously ill, but there are some people who are at a higher risk.

For example, you may be at high risk from coronavirus if you:

- have had an organ transplant
- are having certain types of cancer treatment
- have blood or bone marrow cancer, such as leukaemia
- have a severe lung condition, such as cystic fibrosis or severe asthma
- have a condition that makes you much more likely to get infections
- are taking medicine that weakens your immune system
- are pregnant and have a serious heart condition

Who's at high risk from coronavirus

If you're at high risk of getting seriously ill from coronavirus, there are extra things you should do to avoid catching it. These include:

- not leaving your home - you should not go out to do shopping, pick up medicine or exercise
- stay at least 2 metres (3 steps) away from other people in your home as much as possible

Ask friends, family or neighbours to pick up shopping and medicines for you. They should leave them outside your door.

Self-isolation helps stop coronavirus spreading

Do not leave your home if you have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) or live with someone who does. This is called self-isolation.

If you are self-isolating, you must:

- not leave your home for any reason, other than to exercise once a day - but stay at least 2 metres (3 steps) away from other people
- not go out to buy food or collect medicine - order them by phone or online, or ask someone else to drop them off at your home
- not have visitors, such as friends and family, in your home

You can use your garden, if you have one.

STAY AT HOME!

Coronavirus: UK drug trial for over-50s recruiting

A trial of potential coronavirus drugs aimed at over-50s, who are vulnerable to developing serious symptoms, is looking to recruit more UK volunteers.



BBC News reports that over 500 GP surgeries are asking those with a new, continuous cough or high temperature to test existing drugs.

Patients aged over 65 or over 50 with an underlying health condition can fill out an online questionnaire at home to see whether they can be included.

Patients can also contact participating GPs to discuss their suitability.

The trial, led by a team at Oxford University, will compare with the current best available care a number of low-risk treatments recommended by an expert panel advising the chief medical officer for England, including:

- a seven-day course of hydroxychloroquine, usually used for acute malaria or arthritis
- the antibiotic azithromycin

The participants will still be able to take paracetamol to alleviate their symptoms.

And every day, for up to four weeks, they will be asked to answer some online questions about them.

Prof Fiona Watt, executive chair of the Medical Research Council, which is funding the trial, with the National Institute for Health Research, said: "We need more people to join the trial to see if we can identify a drug that helps prevent people reaching hospital and speeds up their recovery."

(Story source: BBC News)



'Support bubbles' for single households - how the system will work

Adults living alone or single parents living with children under the age of 18 are covered by the new arrangements.

Silver Surfers reports that Boris Johnson has announced that single adult households in England will be able to form a "support bubble" with another household.

Who is covered by the new arrangements?

Adults living alone or single parents living with children under the age of 18.

What will they be able to do that they could not before?

They can form a bubble with one other household which means they will effectively be treated as a single household for the purpose of the lockdown rules.

That means they can visit each other indoors in their homes - staying overnight if they wish - and they will not have to observe the two-metre social-distancing rule.

Who might benefit?

Elderly people living alone could form a bubble with the household of an adult son or daughter enabling them to visit and even hug their grandchildren for the first time since lockdown. Single parents could pair up with their own parents allowing them to share childcare duties and reuniting grandparents and grandchildren. Couples who do not live together will be able to visit and to stay with each other.

What about households where both grandparents are still living - can they now visit their children and grandchildren?

At this stage only if their son or daughter is the only adult in the other household in the bubble.

Downing Street has acknowledged not everyone will benefit from the change although officials have hinted a further loosening of the rules if the coronavirus outbreak continues to decline.

Can households form more than one bubble?

No. The arrangement must be exclusive with no switching of bubble partners.

Will people have to formally register these bubble arrangements?

No, it will be taken on trust. No 10 says the public has shown "great responsibility" in following the social distancing rules so far.

Is there any limit on the distance between households in a bubble?

Again no, although officials are suggesting people should try to "stay local" where possible.

What about vulnerable people who are shielding due to their age or health problems?

At the moment, officials say it is too soon for them to be able to join support bubbles.

What about parents who are separated but who currently share childcare with the children moving between the two households?

That will continue. If the parents are the only adult in the household they can form a bubble with another household - meaning the children could potentially be in two bubbles, one for each parent.

What happens if someone in a bubble develops coronavirus symptoms?

All members of both households in the bubble must self-isolate for 14 days.

(Story source: BBC News)

More than 25% of over-50s keep health issues a secret

'What is important to remember is a problem shared is a problem halved, and sometimes carrying the worries of a health issue can do more harm than good'

The Independent reports that one in five over-50s are keeping their potentially serious health issues a secret, a new study claims.

Research commissioned by hearing aid manufacturer Signia suggests a large number of older British people have not yet told their friends and family about their health problems. These problems range from hearing loss to heart disease and arthritis to mental health issues.



One in 10 of those surveyed said they have been keeping this information to themselves for longer than 12 months. Six out of 10 said they do not tell those close to them about their health problems so as not to worry them, and another 29 per cent said they feel "too embarrassed" to share the details of their condition with others.

One in three of the study's respondents said they would feel self-conscious wearing a hearing aid. However, half said they worry about their hearing failing as they grow older and 43 per cent recognise that wearing a hearing aid would improve their quality of life.

Maarten Barmentlo, Signia's marketing lead, said: "As we get older it is natural for our health to become more fragile, and it's a lucky few who make it into old age without acquiring something to worry about. "What is important to remember is a problem shared is a problem halved, and sometimes carrying the worries of a health issue can do more harm than good."

Of the 20 per cent of those surveyed who said they were keeping an illness secret from their friends and family, two thirds said they were happy to disclose the nature of their illness for research purposes. Over half said they would be most likely to confide in their partner about their health concern, followed by their best friend.

Thirty per cent said they have had a loved one disclose a health concern to them in private, which they haven't told anyone else about. However, 11 per cent said they have later discovered their partner was keeping their own health condition a secret from them.

More than half of those surveyed who are worried about their hearing said they regularly have to ask people to repeat themselves.

A third said they sometimes pretend they have heard what has been said, and a quarter said they make up a response in reply and hope it's the right one. However, 39 per cent of the survey's respondents said there is still a stigma attached to wearing a hearing aid which may put them off talking to their doctor about having one fitted.

Maarten Barmentlo of Signia added: "After decades of listening and living a louder life, it's not unreasonable to expect our ears to have lost some of their lustre, and British people shouldn't feel deterred from wearing a hearing aid if they feel they need it.

"Hearing aids have long been associated as being out of date and not at the cutting edge of today's cool technology and we wanted to change that perception."

(Story source: The Independent)



Face Masks - a simple guide

Planned Government regulations will soon require face coverings to be worn by all hospital outpatients and visitors as well as anyone travelling on public transport in England.

Before the new rules come into effect on June 15, here is what you need to know about the use of masks and coverings.

What is a face covering?

Face coverings are not the same as face masks. The Government has stated that coverings can be made from scarves, bandanas or other fabric items, so long as they cover the mouth and nose. They should allow the wearer to breathe comfortably and be tied behind the head to provide a “snug fit”. Officials have said people can make their own coverings at home using T-shirts or cotton fabric and string.

Why are they being recommended?

The Government states that, while wearing a face covering does not protect the wearer, it may protect others if people are infected but have not yet developed symptoms. People wearing a covering should wash their hands before putting it on and after taking it off. It should also be washed regularly in the laundry with detergent, the Government said.

When should I wear a face covering?

According to new World Health Organisation (WHO) advice, face coverings should be worn in public whenever social distancing is not possible, especially if you are over 60-years-old or have an underlying health condition. However this is not yet compulsory.



Are there any specific locations that require me to wear a face covering?

Health Secretary Matt Hancock announced on Friday all hospital visitors and outpatients will be required to wear face coverings and all hospital staff will be required to wear surgical masks in England from June 15.

Face coverings will also be mandatory from the same date for anyone using public transport in England.

Several airlines such as easyJet and Ryanair have also introduced a requirement for passengers to wear face masks.

The advice reads: “The evidence suggests that wearing a face covering does not protect you, but it may protect others if you are infected but have not developed symptoms.

“If you have symptoms of Covid-19 (cough and/or high temperature) you and your household should isolate at home: wearing a face covering does not change this.”

It adds that the recommended face coverings are not the same as the surgical masks used by healthcare staff and other workers. “Face coverings should not be used by children under the age of two or those who may find it difficult to manage them correctly, for example primary school age children unassisted, or those with respiratory conditions,” the guidance continues. “It is important to use face coverings properly and wash your hands before putting them on and taking them off.”

There are differences between the performance and protection of each type of mask and here we look at the difference between a variety of face coverings that are available:

Cloth masks of face coverings

We are now being advised that homemade masks and face coverings could help to limit the transmission of Covid-19 where social distancing is difficult, especially on public transport and in shops. Homemade masks are less effective than medical masks at preventing the wearer from transmitting the virus so it is important to understand their limitations and continue to adhere to the Government’s social distancing rules and advice on hand washing and avoiding touching the mask or face. Cloth masks are very easy to make with even no-sew options available.

Surgical face masks

Surgical medical masks are used in hospital and healthcare settings and are for use in protecting others from the wearer transmitting infection. There are four main types:

- Type I Face Mask
- Type I R Face Mask
- Type II Face Mask
- Type II R Face Mask

They differ in their bacterial filtration efficiency from 95 to 98% and in thickness and comfort. The breathing resistance, and splash resistance for Type I R and Type II R masks, are exactly the same. Surgical masks of this type stop the wearer from infecting the surrounding environment. They are not effective at protecting the wearer from airborne diseases such as coronavirus.

Sustainable & reusable face masks with filters

There are many face mask being sold by a whole host of suppliers. Find out more about sustainable facemasks from 100% recyclable plastic here from MAASK here.

These sustainable masks are hand stitched from fabric created out of recycled ocean plastic. They have an internal pocket for a disposable protection filter which is PM 2.5 grade. This is similar to FFP1 (but is not to be confused with N95/KN95 or FFP2/FFP3 which are used in medical/surgical settings).

These masks provide a high level of protection from the transmission of water droplets and other airborne irritants. They are suitable for the general public using them for added protection in public settings such as crowded city centres, public transport, airports, shops and parks/beaches/beauty spots etc.



Respirator masks

These respirators meet the guidelines from the World Health Organisation for protection against Covid-19 and are worn in ICU hospital units.

- FFP2 Face Mask (equivalent of N95)*
- FFP3 Face Mask

FFP2 & FFP3 Face Masks are European classes of respirators, tested on the direction of inspiration (outside to inside) and take into account leakage to the face and filtration efficiency. These and other respirator masks, including N95 are effective at protecting the wearer from viral transmission. N95 masks cannot be officially legally recommended for use in healthcare settings in Europe although in the current situation with PPE shortages in practice a more flexible approach seems to be being taken.

(Article source: Silver Surfers)

How to get financial advice through social distancing, the benefits of remote advice

Over the last few months, there have been considerable changes in our society, not only from a health perspective but economically and socially.



Silver Surfers reports that with the profound changes economically, keeping track of your finances and planning for the future has become even more essential to ensure you can still enjoy your retirement.

Although many services and lifestyle choices are restricted, getting expert financial advice from the comfort of your own home is always available and potentially better suited to you.

Remote, Telephone-Based Financial Advice

At Hilltop Finance, we've been delivering, remote financial advice through our telephone service since 2014; it's how we've built our business.

With the current Covid-19 situation continuing, our telephone financial advice is helping people take control of their finances, in the comfort and safety of their own home.

Want to discuss your pensions and investments?

Visit www.hilltopfinance.co.uk and arrange a callback or call us on 0161 413 7051.

So, what is the benefit of telephone advice?

Apart from the health and safety aspects, we are advised to uphold; we believe our telephone-based advice service has many more benefits to our clients

- **Flexibility** - A telephone-based advisory firm is more accessible and available at a time that's convenient for you. Whether you are commuting to work, on a lunch break or have a little spare time, you will have access to your independent adviser regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority when it's suitable for you.
- **Security** - All telephone calls are recorded and monitored to FCA regulatory standards, so there can be no confusion or errors on what is discussed. There's no need to have an adviser visit your home or place of work, making quick notes as you talk.
- **No pressure** - We believe that not having someone visit your home to discuss your finances, relieves the stress you would feel to make a decision there and then. Our advisers never push the hard-sell, and any decision made is entirely yours.
- **No cost** - Any advice or service calls are made by our team, so you do not have to pay for calls to us. If you'd like to see us, that's no problem, as we can now offer video calls too. Plus, we won't be drinking your tea or eating your biscuits while we provide advice.

Why choose Hilltop Finance?

Directly authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority, we are committed to going the extra mile, holding your needs and requirements at the centre of our trusted advice. Everybody is different, and the financial advice Hilltop Finance's advisers deliver reflects that.

Expert financial advice shouldn't be exclusive to the rich and wealthy. We believe that everyone would benefit from professional help when it comes to their finances, particularly with pensions and investments. We work for your future, and pride ourselves on our personal, honest and friendly approach.

To find out more, visit our website hilltopfinance.co.uk

(Story source: Silver Surfers)

Can I still release equity during lockdown?

Almost every business has been affected by the coronavirus lockdown in some way, so we understand that you have questions about how this has impacted the equity release industry.

50 Connect reports that rest assured, Equity Release Supermarket is running as normal and you can still release equity in your home through us.

However, we have modified and enhanced some of our processes since lockdown, so that we are able to continue offering the same first-class services.

A new approach to appointments

Prior to the pandemic, face-to-face appointments were available. These gave our customers the chance to speak directly with their adviser, ask their questions and understand how equity release could help them enjoy financial freedom. Of course, social distancing has meant this way of working isn't viable at the moment. However, rather than postpone face to face appointments, we decided to move them online.

For those wanting to 'meet' their adviser, we recently introduced our video chat facility - release Supermarket are now able to offer 'remote meetings' that function much in the same way as our face-to-face ones. Our customers are able to ask their questions and our advisers can guide them through the equity release process - with both parties gaining that all-important human interaction during lockdown.

Mark Gregory, Founder & CEO of Equity Release Supermarket, regards this a natural transition, given today's digital-first trends, "We knew that many of our customers already preferred to use remote channels, with 40% of our advice being conducted by telephone alone in 2019." Even as we look beyond this pandemic, video meetings will continue to be available and remain a feature of the Equity Release Supermarket process.

Sorting out the finer details

The introduction of remote meetings offers our customers additional reassurance during these difficult times, while the rest of the advice process has remained the same at Equity Release Supermarket.

We continue to email and post documents as normal. We are also continuing to place all documents in the customer's personal and secure online portal, which can be accessed at any time. It's also a simple and convenient way for our customers to track the progress of their applications.

Lenders and solicitors have adapted

The valuation of your property is one of the factors lenders use when deciding how much money they'll lend you and your solicitor is vital to ensure that the legal side of equity release is taken care of. Both of these important aspects of the equity release process have been affected by social distancing measures.

A surveyor is not able to visit your property at the moment and the equity release industry initially stalled as lenders and funders adapted to the changes required to continue with the application process. However, many lenders quickly implemented solutions to overcome the need for immediate physical valuations and agreed an interim process to allow applications to progress, via a semi-automated valuation process.

Lenders are taking different approaches to conducting surveys and most are using teams of independent surveyors, providing 'desktop valuations' whereby they can access over 20 data points that are openly available on the property (e.g. Google earth/street map etc) and also using data from nearby properties that have previously sold.

Once the valuation has been completed, dependent upon the product, each lender has revised their underwriting criteria. Some lenders have reduced their standard loan-to-values to accommodate the additional risk of desktop valuations. Others will apply a 'haircut' to the valuation - for instance, Legal & General will only use 95% of the valuation figure for calculation purposes. In other scenarios lenders may hold back up to 10-25% of the loan applied for and release the remainder once a satisfactory physical valuation has taken place.

Similarly, a face-to-face meeting with your solicitor is normally one of the requirements of the Equity Release Council. However, in these difficult times, the Council has temporarily waived the necessity for the solicitor to be the one to witness the mortgage deed.

Your solicitor will ensure you are still provided with the necessary legal advice and you will now be given the choice to receive their advice over the telephone, by video calls or as done previously - face-to-face, once social distancing restrictions have been lifted. Your mortgage deed can now be witnessed by an independent person, under social distancing conditions and your solicitor will work with you to provide you with the best solution for your personal circumstances.

At Equity Release Supermarket, we pride ourselves on looking after our customers' best interests. So, if you are not happy with the terms and conditions within the lender's offer, you can always put your application on hold and return to it at a later date, once the market normalises and physical valuations resume. Alternatively, we can look to another lender for a solution (as we advise on the whole of the market), with most offering free valuations.

The current state of the market

Now you know that Equity Release Supermarket continue to operate effectively during lockdown, the question still remains; is now a good time to release equity? Well, with current market conditions, there really hasn't been a better time.

According to the Equity Release Council's Spring 2020 Market Report, average equity release rates fell to a record low of 4.48% last year. For context, the average standard variable rate (SVR) of the six top high street banks is currently 3.54% - which narrows the margin between lifetime mortgage rates and standard residential mortgage rates to less than 1%.

For our customers, these all-time low interest rates could make borrowing more affordable over time.

For example, with record numbers of plans offering interest only and additional overpayment options, we are seeing many younger borrowers using these features of lifetime mortgages as a solution to continuing their existing residential mortgage into retirement.

As a result of these favourable terms, Equity Release Supermarket has seen a sustained number of equity release enquiries year-on-year. This speaks volumes to the strength of the equity release market and Equity Release Supermarket's reputation and ability to adapt, even during these unprecedented times.

(Story source: 50 Connect)



Homework motivation: 10 tips for greater productivity working from home

Struggling to stick to your work routine at home? You're not alone.

Many people report feeling less productive when working from home, compared to being in an office surrounded by colleagues. From having more distractions to missing the social buzz, merging your work life and home life can be a real challenge.

Here, experts share their tips for greater productivity...

1. Take short, regular breaks

It can be so easy not to skip screen breaks when you're not in the office, but they are as important for productivity as they are for your wellbeing.

Joshua Zerkel from work management tool Asana, says: "The trick is making sure your quick 10 minutes doesn't turn into an entire afternoon. In order to keep yourself motivated, set aside time slots for other activities, like checking the news or your social feed. Once this time runs out, make sure to put your phone down."

2. Get up and change your surroundings

You might feel duty bound to stay at your desk (or whatever piece of furniture you're working on) all day, but Zerkel says a change of setting can help.



"During the current situation, it is easy to feel unmotivated and lose focus. When this happens, don't give up - instead, get up and look for a change of scenery. Moving to a different setting within your home can help reset your brain and jumpstart creativity."

3. Rethink your to-do list

Author of *The Hard Work Myth*, Barnaby Lashbrooke, says: "We tend to set ourselves up for failure by writing unachievable lists of tasks that prevent us from striking off the big-ticket item on our lists. It leaves us feeling guilty and dissatisfied. And, to compensate, we sit at our desks for longer, or use evenings and weekends to play catch up, increasing our risk of burning out."

"The reason we regularly fail to tackle the bigger jobs on our to-do lists is because we're naturally inclined to move on the quick and easy bits that offer small bursts of satisfaction with every strikethrough. Instead, break your big, difficult task down into smaller, more digestible, component parts, write them out in list form and work through each, one by one. With a new perspective, everything seems more achievable."

4. Do a walking commute

To avoid going straight from bed to desk, try getting out for a short walk before the start of your day, so when you sit down to start, you've already got a few steps under your belt, woken up your muscles and breathed in some fresh air.

'Walking home' from work - i.e. around the block and back - can mark the end of your working day nicely too, so you're more ready to switch off and relax.

5. Fit in at least 20-minutes of exercise

Mark Williams, co-founder of fitness and wellbeing app Revoola, says to find the time of day that works for you for exercise. "It might be first thing in the morning, to help you focus and plan for the day ahead. Others find an afternoon workout helps address that post-lunch slump."

"Try and be physically active for at least 20 minutes every day. Little and often is best - short bursts of exercise break up the day and give a mental refresh," he says.

You could even challenge colleagues to do the same online class at the same time as you.

6. Ask your employer for more flexibility if you need it

Workplace learning and careers expert Rajeeb Dey says: "With increased demands on your time - potentially child care commitments, requirements to care for family members, it's OK to be flexible. If that means starting earlier, breaking mid-day or starting later, ultimately employers should trust their employees to do what's best."

7. Dress the part

It's tempting to work in your pyjamas, but psychologically, getting dressed can have a big impact. Harley Street therapist Karl Rollison says: "Have a shower and dress in your work clothes. This creates positivity for the day ahead. You're telling your subconscious mind this is productive time."

8. Create time zones

"In order to protect your mental health, it's important to set two different time zones during the day: work and down time - this will put you in sync with your circadian rhythms and ensures you have good sleep and awake patterns," says Rollison. Ideally you'd aid these boundaries by working in a separate room (with a door) to where you relax.



9. Drink up

"So many of us are limping through the day chronically dehydrated," says Suzy Glaskie, of Peppermint Wellness. "If you're not drinking water throughout the day, you'll very likely find yourself feeling sluggish and will quite possibly turn to the nearest quick fix (like a coffee or chocolate bar) to perk yourself up - but that will only leave you feeling worse later on. Aim to drink eight glasses of water a day and watch your mental focus and energy levels rise."

10. Reflect on why you're doing your job

It's easy to get stuck in the day-to-day, but keeping the bigger picture in mind can be really motivating and lead to greater productivity.

"Work is a vital part of our identity, it gives us purpose and contributes to our wellbeing," says Elissa Makris, business psychologist at Thrive. "Take the time to reflect on how your role supports not just colleagues and organisation, but also customers and clients who might need you in these circumstances. Helping others elevates our mood and increases both their, and our, wellbeing."

(Article source: *Silver Surfers*)

National Trust to open gardens and parks for free to all.

The National Trust has announced that it will, where possible, open as many of its gardens and parks for free, but close its houses, cafes and shops to help the nation fight the spread of the coronavirus.



Mature Times reports that following the Prime Minister's briefing, Director General Hilary McGrady announced that the National Trust's pay-for-entry sites including houses, cafes and shops, would all close.

McGrady said the charity would work hard to keep as many of the Trust's gardens and parklands open, free of charge, alongside coast and countryside, to encourage the nation to enjoy open space, if appropriate, during the pandemic, while adhering to the government's social distancing guidance.

Hilary McGrady said: 'The National Trust was founded 125 years ago for the benefit of the entire nation. We want to honour our mission - to enable people and nature to thrive. Over the coming weeks we will do all that we can to keep on providing public benefit through caring for places and giving people access wherever possible.'

'While we will close our indoor areas to help fight the spread of coronavirus, we recognise that people are likely to need access to open space and to nature, beauty and history.'

A National Trust spokesperson said: 'Following the Government announcement that Britain has now moved into the delay phase we want to reassure our staff, volunteers and visitors that their health and wellbeing is our top priority.'

'We are planning ahead, staying vigilant and continue to follow government advice. We are making contingency plans and working closely with partner organisations to ensure we can respond to a range of scenarios as they unfold. We have asked all our staff and volunteers to follow guidance on regular handwashing and follow government advice to stay at home for seven days if they have a high temperature or a new continuous cough.'

'Staff and volunteers have access to occupational health services if they have any concerns and are kept up-to-date with the latest advice and information.'

Latest government information on coronavirus can be found on the Department for Health and Social Care's website.

(Story source: *Mature Times*)

Trading standards teams at Heathrow Airport have stopped 6.5 million sub-standard face masks and 8,000 counterfeit hand sanitisers coming through the airport since the pandemic started, according to London Trading Standards (LTS).

LTS reports that the majority of masks seized had been labelled with false claims or fake safety certificates and around 4.25 million had to undergo label amendments before they were subsequently released.

Mature Times reports that however, 2.25 million have been found not to comply with legal safety standards.

Trading standards teams examined a further 1.5 million face masks where no issues were found. Many of the consignments were referred to trading standards by Border Force teams at the airport.

The teams also seized 8,000 fake hand sanitisers, branded Andrex and Comfort, at Heathrow Airport. Suspicions were raised as they had identical packaging and labelling, except for the brand name, and the same batch code on the entire consignment. Identical fake sanitiser products have been found on sale in Bexley by trading standards officers. A further 4,500 hand sanitisers with false labelling were seized at the airport, according to LTS.

Hillingdon and Hounslow Councils' Trading Standards services provide product safety inspections at Heathrow Airport on behalf of the UK Office for Product Safety & Standards (OPSS).

Making applying for an ESTA child's play

If you are looking to travel to the USA after lockdown restrictions are lifted, whether for business or pleasure, the chances are you will be needing an ESTA travel permit.



As well as stopping dodgy imports, trading standards are increasingly concerned about unsafe UK-made hand sanitisers being sold that fail to meet safety standards.

Tower Hamlets trading standards have for example recently found UK-made hand sanitiser on sale online from a local shop that contains the banned substance Triclosan.

Ealing Council's Trading Standards team recently detained 454,500 face masks described as "anti-virus", where fake safety certification was supplied. Ealing also seized 60,000 face masks that failed to have the necessary importers details, batch, declaration of conformity or test certificates available to demonstrate compliance.

The borough also seized 3,390 hand sanitisers, which lacked any legally required information regarding ingredients, batch, traceability, warnings or instructions.

London Trading Standards Operations Director, Stephen Knight, said: 'Trading standards teams at Heathrow Airport and around London play an important role in protecting consumers from unscrupulous businesses seeking to bypass EU and UK safety laws.'

There has been a surge in firms attempting to import sub-standard face masks, many with false labelling or faked safety certificates.

Trading standards teams are being pragmatic in seeking to let these important goods through, once misleading labelling is removed, and the necessary safety compliance can be shown. However, we will continue to protect consumers from unsafe goods.'

Cllr Ray Puddifoot, Leader of Hillingdon Council and London Councils' Executive Member for Health & Care, said: 'Boroughs' trading standards teams are on the frontline of London's clampdown on sub-standard products that are supposed to help protect people from coronavirus.'

'As these results show, dishonest businesses are seeking to exploit Covid-19 pressures by bringing in significant quantities of unsafe equipment - but we're not standing for it.'

'The checks carried out by trading standards officers at Heathrow and by local teams across the capital are crucial for identifying fake and sub-standard products, upholding the law, and keeping people safe.'

(Story source: *Mature Times*)



Why an ESTA?

The ESTA USA is an electronic system for travel (a travel permit) that lets you visit America for less than 90 days without the need for a visa. This is called the visa waiver programme.

Who needs an ESTA?

You will need an ESTA travel permit if:

- You are a UK citizen, or you are visiting the US from another visa waiver country
- You are wanting to visit the US for 90 days or less and your trip is for business or pleasure
- You arrive into the US via plane or cruise ship - you will not need an ESTA if you drive into the US from Canada or Mexico

An ESTA also serves to replace the green form that previously had to be completed on the plane before entering the USA.

How long does an ESTA last?

An ESTA is valid for two years, or until your passport expires - whichever comes first. Once your ESTA is approved you can make multiple trips back to America during those two years without having to reapply.

The benefits of applying for an ESTA with e-visa

Efficiently processed, with just a few easy to answer questions the ESTA can be fully and safely applied for online with no tedious and time-consuming visits to the US consulate. And if you are not travelling alone but with the family or in a group, it is simple to add multiple travellers to the one application form via e-visa.

(Story source: *Silver Surfers*)



Strawberry fields forever: Six amazing health benefits of eating strawberries and their tops

It's difficult to resist a perfectly ripe strawberry, isn't it? In fact, they're one of the most popular berry fruits in the world - but did you know it's not just the sweet red part that's good for us?

Atop each juicy strawberry is a leafy top, called the calyx. Each year, tons of strawberry tops are discarded and chucked away as waste. But this humble leafy crown is actually edible and may hold the key to unlocking some exciting health benefits.

This isn't just a nutrition issue either, but a question of waste - which is a hot topic right now. Three major WRAP studies, published in 2013 and 2016, estimated that 85% of avoidable food waste arises in households and food manufacture.

With this in mind, and to help us make the most of our produce Lily Soutter, a nutritionist speaking on behalf of Seasonal Berries, reveals some of the health benefits of munching your way through whole strawberries - leafy bottoms and all.



1. They're a rich source of antioxidants

Antioxidant-rich foods are important to help protect your cells against the effects of free radicals - harmful molecules produced from pollution, sunlight, smoke and even prolonged exercise.

"Strawberries are a rich and diverse source of antioxidants. However, what's less well known is that strawberry calyx contains antioxidants too," says Soutter.

"One study, which looked at the fruits and leaves of blackberries, strawberries, and raspberries, found the leaves have a high ORAC value (a measure of the antioxidant capacity of different foods).

However, it's important to note that as leaves become older, the ORAC value decreases, so the leaves of fresh strawberries are likely to provide the highest antioxidant value."

2. They support the immune system

Adding a punnet of strawberries to your shopping basket will help support your immune system too. "Not only is the whole strawberry rich in plant antioxidants, but the red fleshy part is also extremely rich in the antioxidant vitamin C," says Soutter.

"In fact, eating just eight strawberries (80g) can provide as much as 115% of your daily vitamin C intake. Many associate oranges with vitamin C, but strawberries are actually a higher source per 100g."

3. They may help with blood sugar regulation

Next time you're thinking of pasta for dinner, try following up your meal with a bowl of fresh strawberries for pud. Research suggests eating strawberries, alongside a carbohydrate-rich meal, may help to reduce spikes in blood sugar and insulin levels.

"Improving blood sugar control and insulin sensitivity can be helpful for preventing metabolic syndrome and type 2 diabetes," says Soutter.

"While it's not clear why strawberries may have this blood sugar balancing effect, some studies have suggested that it may be down to their rich content of polyphenols (antioxidants), which may influence carbohydrate digestion and absorption."

4. They may have antimicrobial effects

As well as being delicious to eat, strawberries could also have a beneficial effect on the reproduction of bacteria and parasites in the body.

"One study analysed the tops and leaves of 200 strawberry plants, and found their large and diverse range of polyphenols are defensive against harmful microbes, and may even have benefit to human health," says Soutter. "While these results are certainly exciting, much more research into strawberry leaf polyphenols in relation to human health is required."

5. They may improve heart health

"Numerous studies have found an association between strawberry consumption and improved cardiovascular health," explains Soutter.

"It appears their high content of berry anthocyanins may play a role in reducing inflammation and oxidative stress, blood pressure, and even improving our cholesterol profile.

"While it's too early to state if strawberry calyx can actually lower blood pressure, one promising study showed potential vasodilatory (widening of blood vessels) effects," says Soutter.

"The study used water extracts of the strawberry leaf and showed an improvement in blood flow within isolated animal aortic rings."

6. They can help with weight management

Strawberries are one of the most guilt-free snacks going; they can satisfy a sweet craving, yet are surprisingly low in sugar and calories.

"With just 6g of sugar and 33 calories per 100g, they can provide the sweet fix we desire while keeping our waistlines trim," says Soutter.

"And for an even more indulgent option, try dipping strawberries into antioxidant-rich dark chocolate and coconut flakes."

Easy ways to include more strawberries - and their tops - in your diet:

1. Add both to smoothies.
2. Make strawberry leaf tea using the stalks and leaves. Leave both to brew for a few minutes in boiling water.
3. Create your own salad dressing by soaking the berries, including the tops, in balsamic vinegar for at least 48 hours.
4. Infuse your drinking water by dropping sliced strawberries and their leaves into your jug or bottle.
5. Whizz up your strawberries in a blender to create a compote that can be used as a breakfast topping.

(Article source: Silver Surfers)

Do you love eating strawberries?

Or do you have an interesting article about Food & Drink?

Tell us all about it by visiting: www.ourplace.co



Blooming lovely! The Queen and royal family share favourite blooms to mark Chelsea Flower Show

Buckingham Palace also released photos taken by some of the royal family of their gardens in bloom.

The Queen and members of the royal family have shared their favourite flowers to mark the start of the Chelsea Flower Show online.

Buckingham Palace revealed that lily of the valley is one of the Queen's most-loved blooms, while the Prince of Wales adores delphiniums.

As well as choosing their favourite flowers, some members of the royal family also took photographs while at home in lockdown of plants thriving in their gardens.



Lily of the valley, with its dark green leaves and bell-shaped fragrant white flowers, featured in the Queen's coronation bouquet and has held special associations for her ever since.

The Prince of Wales, known for his love of gardening, said lyrically of his chosen flower: "For me, the magnificent, gloriously apparelled delphinium, with its impeccable bearing and massed in platoons, holds pride of place in my botanical affections."

Towering blue, pink and purple delphiniums are a key feature of the prince's sundial garden at his country estate, Highgrove.

The Duchess of Cornwall selected alchemilla mollis, otherwise known as lady's mantle, which has light green scalloped-edged leaves and tiny yellow or greenish flowers.

Camilla said: "This acid green fluffy-flowered plant is one of the best-ever foliage plants for the garden and the vase. A must for every gardener..."



The royal family's favourite flowers

- The Queen - lily of the valley
- The Prince of Wales - delphinium
- The Duchess of Cornwall - alchemilla mollis
- The Earl and Countess of Wessex - azaleas
- The Princess Royal - hellebores
- The Duke of Gloucester - daisies
- The Duchess of Gloucester - sweet peas
- Princess Alexandra - golden celebration rose

The Earl and Countess of Wessex together chose azaleas, describing them as "so breathtaking at this time of year and have the most intoxicating scent".

The palace released an image taken by Sophie of orange and pink azaleas.

The Princess Royal picked hellebores as her favourite, saying: "Not only do they flower early but they keep flowering for two months, and they are often beautifully marked with endless variations."

Anne photographed hellebores, also known as the Christmas rose, which have cup-shaped flowers ranging from white and yellow to pink and dark purple.



The Queen's cousin, the Duke of Gloucester, opted for the daisy, and the palace revealed he likes to gift the flower to friends.

The duke, who photographed a cluster of daisies, also enjoys "digging them up from between the paving stones and transferring them elsewhere to grow properly and healthily - both with some difficulty and much care".

The Duchess of Gloucester is a fan of sweet peas, and took a photo of the pretty delicate flowers growing up a wicker trellis support she made after recently learning to weave.

The duchess has been an Honorary Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Basketmakers since 1991.

Princess Alexandra opted for the golden celebration rose, a rich yellow English shrub rose.



"My Alexandra rose dominates my garden, but this golden celebration rose gives me great pleasure to look at and has the most extraordinary and unique scent," she said.

At this time of year, the Queen and members of the royal family would be preparing for their annual visit to Chelsea Flower Show in London.

But the Royal Horticultural Society is hosting its first "virtual Chelsea" instead due to the pandemic.

(Article source: Silver Surfers)

Please help us rescue and care for vulnerable hedgehogs - **Britain's favourite mammal**

A shocking study has revealed that hedgehogs are rapidly vanishing from our countryside, with numbers **HALVED** in the last 20 years.



I am delighted to tell you that Britain's hedgehog has won favourite mammal in a UK poll.

The UK's only spiny mammal won with 35.9% of the 5,000 votes, more than double that of the Red Fox, who came in second place with 15.4%. The Red Squirrel came third with 11.4%, out of a shortlist of 10 charismatic UK mammals.

Unfortunately, hedgehogs are rapidly vanishing from our countryside as numbers have **HALVED** in the last 20 years, a shocking study has revealed.

Henry Johnson, hedgehog officer, People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) said:

"We Brits seem to love hedgehogs for a whole range of reasons, including their cute appearance, their role as slug controllers and the way they have colonised our gardens with such aplomb. This is why it is so sad to see them decline, with one in three lost since the millennium."

Threats to hedgehogs come mostly from us. In rural areas, our farmland increasingly lacks the diversity of habitats hedgehogs need and the invertebrates they feed on. In towns and cities green spaces are lost to development, paved over or increasingly fragmented. Hedgehogs are also very prone to road traffic accidents.

This is why we have launched this special Annual Appeal to protect Britain's favourite mammal.

At Hedgehog Rescue Rehabilitation and Care Centre we respond immediately to rescue injured hedgehogs. A vet is called in straight away and the hedgehogs are monitored and cared for. Once fit and well they are released back into the wild.

Hedgehog Rescue is now conducting its Annual Appeal. Only by continuing our huge effort and long-life commitment can we give these wonderful animals a safe, happy and contented life.

We care for many hedgehogs here at our rehabilitation centre. Hedgehogs just like these:

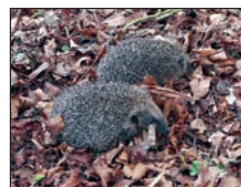
'Julie'



'Julie' (pictured left) came in last Autumn, quite small, out in daylight and had ticks. She stayed a few weeks, put on enough weight, and made a full recovery. She was released back to her own territory by the finder.

Baby Hedgehogs

These 2 hedgehogs came in as very small babies and had stayed with us a few weeks, gaining weight and giving us a chance to sort out their health issues. They had several ticks and needed worming. When they were 100% ready, we released them close to where they were found.



These hedgehogs are some of the lucky ones. Others are less fortunate.

As a friend who knows what a wonder animals can be, I hope you will support our Annual Appeal. Your kind gift will help us rescue and care for many more vulnerable hedgehogs - Britain's favourite mammal.

To donate to Hedgehog Rescue, go to:
<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/hedgehogrescue>
or write to: Raisemore, Unit 1, Alton Road Industrial Estate, Ross-on-Wye HR9 5NB

