

● Health ● Wellbeing ● Fitness

MEET TWO WOMEN WHO RISKED COSMETIC

SURGERY ON THEIR 'UGLY' TOES



WHY A BREW IS SO GOOD FOR YOU

NO matter how you like it - frothy, milky or black - coffee can help you live a longer, healthier life.

A study has found those who drink it are less likely to get Type 2 diabetes. The condition - linked to obesity - can lead to organ damage if untreated. Here CHRISTINA EARLE reveals other ways coffee can aid your health.

**MAKES YOUR BRAINIER:** Have you ever noticed how your concentration is so much better after a cup of coffee? That's because it improves short-term memory and reaction times. According to a study by the Medical University at Innsbruck, Austria, it speeds up the brain's prefrontal cortex, which controls planning and decision-making.

**MAKES YOU THINNER:** Caffeine in coffee is one of the few natural substances that helps you burn fat. It stimulates thermogenesis, or heat production, in the body, which means you burn fat quicker. It is also thought caffeine may act as an appetite suppressant.

**PACKED WITH NUTRIENTS:** Coffee is a source of magnesium, which is required for the maintenance of healthy bones and nervous system. Niacin, which helps keep your heart healthy, and potassium, which controls fluid balance in the body, are also in every cup.

**WARDS OFF DEMENTIA:** Coffee is also proven to protect against dementia which sees sufferers struggle from severe memory loss. A Swedish study found coffee fans have a 65 per cent lower risk of developing the condition in later life.

**PROTECTS THE LIVER:** Scientists in Finland found that people who have four or more cups a day have an 80 per cent lower risk of developing liver disease and a 40 per cent lower risk of getting liver cancer.

**HELPS YOU LIVE LONGER:** Researchers have found that females who regularly drank coffee were 26 per cent less likely to pass away at a young age. In the 20-year study, they also discovered male coffee drinkers had a fifth lower risk of an early death.

**LOWERS STROKE RISK:** A Japanese study discovered that just one cup of coffee a day lowers your risk of stroke by 20 per cent. They tracked 83,000 adults for 13 years and found that the drink reduces the chances of having a stroke due to burst blood vessels and stops the blood from clotting.



Foot op means we can at last wear trendy shoes

'I can't wait to show the world my new tootsies'

**RELOCATION** manager Gabriella Gal spent €16,000 this year on having three "straggly" toes on each foot shortened, and her bunions removed. The 30-year-old, from London, can't wait to wear open-toed shoes for the first time ever. She says:

"I have never liked my feet. Since I was a teenager I've taken a size nine, which is big for a woman.

My feet have also been long and straggly, with my toes pointing in opposite directions.

They didn't bother me much when I was younger but, as time went on, I stopped wearing any other shoes than ballerina pumps and trainers.

My straggly toes and bunions meant I was too embarrassed to show them off. I missed beach and pool parties with friends as a result of my horrible looking feet.

I couldn't face wearing open-toed shoes like my friends. The one time I did wear flip flops, people stared at my feet so much it put me off getting them out in public again.

As I got older, it became more painful to walk because my bunions got worse. By my late twenties, any amount of pressure on my feet hurt, so I couldn't walk long distances.

My mum and grandmother had to have their bunions removed when they were younger so I decided to seek help for the same.

I booked a consultation with foot surgeon Jason Hargrave at The Harley Street Foot and Ankle Centre. It was then that I discovered I had short tendons in my foot which caused my toes to go in opposite directions.

I wasn't aware that I could have my unsightly toes fixed, as well as my bunions. I instantly

knew I wanted to have surgery to correct my dodgy-looking feet. The procedure sounded really grim - breaking the bones and fusing them back together but I chose not to think too much about it.

As with every kind of surgery, there were risks. The surgeon made me aware that it was possible for the bones not to fuse together properly, which could leave me with mobility issues but I knew that age was on my side.

I was also fit and healthy so there was no obvious reason that surgery should go wrong.

I was told it was best for me to have two ops, one on each foot, a few months apart. This was to allow the bones in my feet to heal properly. It was essential I didn't put weight on one foot for two weeks post op.

The pain is worth it

I had my left foot done in March this year. The surgeon shortened my second, third and fourth toes and removed my bunions. The op took about two-and-a-half hours.

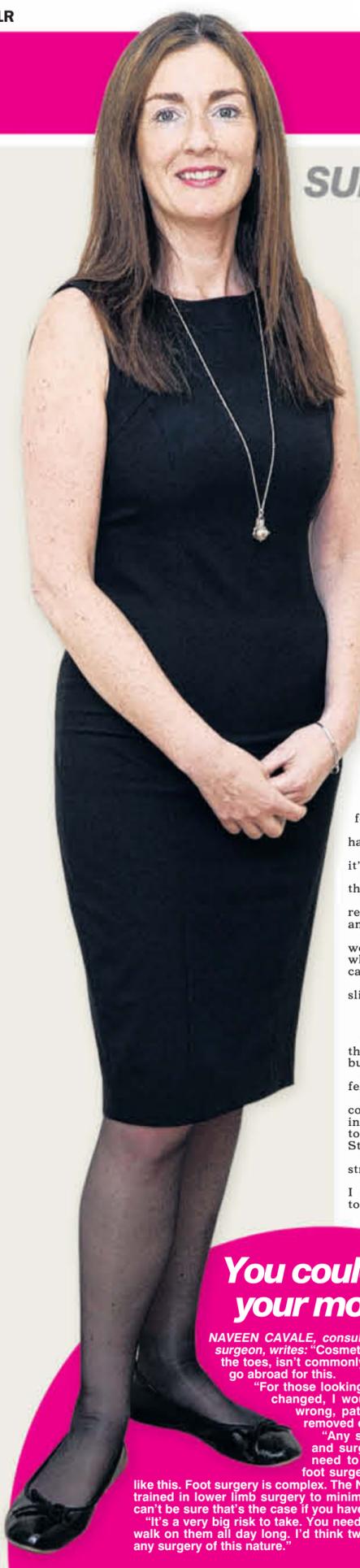
I pretty much spent the next two weeks in bed, with my leg in the air and ice on my foot but it was worth it.

I had my right foot done five weeks ago and, only in the last few days, have I had the surgical pins removed.

It's still taking me longer to walk about than usual but I know the pain is worth it. Although my feet are still swollen, I have already bought ten pairs of open-toed shoes to wear this summer.

My feet look so much better, which has boosted my confidence and my well-being. They are also a size smaller, which makes me feel happier too.

I can't wait to wear a summer dress and show off my new tootsies to the world - without people staring."



'I was so ashamed of my lumpy bumpy bits'

**MANAGER** Paula Lee, 49, who works in corporate finance, had €4,000 worth of work done to correct her "knobbly toes and misshapen feet". Paula, who lives in Lamberhurst, England, with her property developer husband Julian, 52, says:

"People might think toes aren't very important but when you are unhappy with your feet it really does affect you.

So I see no reason why people shouldn't have cosmetic toe surgery.

For people who hate their feet, like I did, it's embarrassing to wear summer shoes.

Until I had surgery four years ago to sort them out, I was so ashamed of my feet.

I hated the way my feet and toes looked - really flat and misshapen, with various lumps and bumps.

My toes had a "knobbly" look and they were the wrong lengths. I also had a bunion which made my feet look very misshapen and caused me a lot of pain.

Also I'm only a dress size eight and quite slim but my toes looked fat and I hated that.

It's made a big difference

I never wore strappy sandals and on holiday the first thing I would do on the beach was bury my feet in the sand.

I didn't want anyone looking at them and I felt very self-conscious.

Eventually I plucked up the courage to have cosmetic toe surgery. I did some research and in 2000 I had various corrective work on my toes done by Jason Hargrave at The Harley Street Foot and Ankle Centre in London.

I had my bunion corrected and eight toes straightened, shaved and slimmed down. It was fairly major surgery, and afterwards I had pins sticking out of my toes and I had to take five weeks off work.

Obviously standing was painful afterwards and following such a big operation it's very important to rest and give your feet time

to heal. I believe that part of the problem with my feet was hereditary, but I also used to do a lot of Latin American dancing and ballroom - cramming my toes into high-heeled shoes which probably distorted them.

I had the surgery paid for through private medical insurance, but I think it would have cost me about €4,000.

Afterwards I needed further treatment because I had an odd sensation under my feet as if I was walking on pebbles and I needed steroid injections.

Feet are extremely sensitive things and have many nerve endings.

My feet and toes took about two months to heal after the operation, and were prone to swelling in the hot weather.

But today I have feet and toes that I am really proud of and I love to wear strappy sandals, treat myself to pedicures and paint my toenails.

I have no regrets whatsoever about having this done.

It has made a big difference to my life and I would recommend anyone who is unhappy with their feet to take the plunge.

During the colder months our feet are hidden but come the summer you want to show them off.

Also the foot pain caused by misshapen toes and bunions is such a misery, it pays to have them corrected."

You could lose your mobility

**NAVEEN CAVALE**, consultant plastic and reconstructive surgeon, writes: "Cosmetic surgery to change the length of the toes, isn't commonly practised in the UK. People often go abroad for this.

"For those looking to have the appearance of their feet changed, I would advise against it. If surgery goes wrong, patients could end up needing their toes removed or even lose their mobility.

"Any surgery on the feet is major and surgeons in this country don't need to be trained or qualified in foot surgery to carry out procedures

like this. Foot surgery is complex. The NHS has people specifically trained in lower limb surgery to minimise complications, but you can't be sure that's the case if you have it done elsewhere.

"It's a very big risk to take. You need your feet to get around. We walk on them all day long. I'd think twice before signing up to any surgery of this nature."



THE healthometer

What's hot and what's not in the world of wellbeing

**ALCOHOL:** The odd drink can give eyesight a boost - but only if you have one every other week. A study says those who don't drink at all could suffer most eyesight deterioration in old age.

**VIAGRA:** The 2.3million men over 18 who struggle with sexual function could be given a Viagra-type cream on the NHS. The cream claims to produce an erection in under 30 minutes.

**STRAWBERRIES:** It is thought that, despite their bright red colour, these act as a natural tooth-whitener. The summer fruit contains malic acid, which helps to clean stains off the teeth.

**OXYGEN:** Teenagers who exercise a lot do better in exams because they get more oxygen to the brain, a new study found. This gives them better concentration than couch potatoes.

**ROCK-A-BYE-BABY:** Babies regularly rocked to sleep will want the same again, and again, and again, meaning more years of sleepless nights for parents, a study in Reading, Berks, found.

**FOOD LABELS:** Words such as "gluten free" and "organic" trick shoppers into thinking foods are healthier - even when packed with sugar and other additives, a study in Houston, Texas, found.

**STRESS:** It has been proven that people who are stressed could end up with a damaged memory in old age. It is thought that the effect of stress hormones on the brain are to blame for this.

**E-CIGS:** Children as young as 11 years old find e-cigarettes appealing and more and more are now puffing away on them, according to Public Health Wales.

WEIRD TRENDS

**DIMPLE IMPLANTS:** Get cute dimples like Cheryl Cole, top right, with a procedure that involves making a tiny incision on the inside of the cheek. It takes 30 minutes and costs around €2,000 for both cheeks.

**DESIGNER VAGINA:** Unhappy with your lady parts? Labiaplasty (£1,500 to £4,000) reshapes the labia minora while vaginoplasty (£3,000 to £5,500) tightens the vagina. Labiaplasty enquiries rose from 2,400 in 2010 to more than 3,500 in 2013.

**CHIN IMPLANTS:** Hollywood goddess Marilyn Monroe, centre right, famously had this done. It adds definition and balance to facial features. Enquiries have doubled since 2010. Average cost is £5,500.

**EAR CROPPING:** Ear cartilage is removed to achieve littler lugholes while ear pointing creates a pixie-like point. Costs around £3,000.

**PALM LINES:** Give fate a helping hand by having a plastic surgeon carve new lines into your palms, bottom right. It costs around £750 in Japan but is not available here.

