

# Shift your mid-life middle in 21 days

After reinventing her own diet to lose her 'mum bod', Annie Deadman, 58, devised The 21 Day Blast plan to share with everyone

I walked out of the doctors' surgery with the nurse's words ringing in my ears. 'You could do with losing a stone,' she said as I stepped off the scales. Her words stung: I felt angry and shocked. With my self-esteem at rock-bottom, she'd really hit a nerve.

At the time, I was in my mid-30s with two young daughters – Emily, now 26, and Sara, now 23 – and working as a project coordinator for a large toy company. I was firmly stuck in a 'Mum tunnel', with looking after myself low on my list of priorities. Like many working mums with young children, I had little time and ate food that was quick and easy during the week, tucking into wine and crisps at the weekend. I knew this wasn't great, but I didn't have the energy to tackle it.

## THE BIG CHALLENGE

Weight had always been an issue for me. I was a chubby teenager and feared being overweight and unhealthy like my mum. So when I went to university I did what made logical sense to my immature, exercise-averse mind – I dieted. Life was all bran flakes and cottage cheese.

As long as I was thin, I was happy.

But, I can see now, I wasn't healthy. I avoided exercise like the plague, and had no idea if what I was eating was good or bad, as long as it didn't make me fat. That's when, faced with exhaustion, full-time office work and two young children, the weight went on. But after that nurse's appointment, I was shocked into doing something.

I love a challenge and started devouring

books about nutrition, and made changes to my own diet, experimenting all the time. I gave up alcohol for a month and stopped eating processed food and sugary snacks. The Jane Fonda workout video was my company after the girls went to bed. Not only did my weight start to shift, so did my

mindset. I felt calmer and happier about life.

After that, I managed to squeeze in a sports nutrition course, and joined a body conditioning class. To my surprise, I loved it. I found muscles and contours I never knew I had. I began to ditch my leggings and baggy T-shirts, and swap them for figure-hugging fitness gear instead.

**'As a working mum in my mid-30s, I ate food that was quick and easy.'**

## WOMEN AND WEIGHT LOSS *My top tips*

- Women are emotional about food in a way that men aren't. Like you, I've opened the fridge at a time of crisis – it's an automatic reflex. But I remind myself that I'll feel worse if I hit the chocolate!
- Most people think that cardio is the only way to lose fat. In fact, resistance work is crucial. Do more squats, lunges, weights work, or tough yoga. This makes for firm muscle (which will burn energy while you watch the telly!).
- Once people hit their 40s, they can think that it's too late to turn things around. It isn't. I've seen it happen time and time again.
- You're more likely to stick to exercise if you do things you like. I mix things up. I go power walking one day with a friend, a class the next, or go for a bike ride.
- It's easier to break bad habits if you keep a food diary of what you ate, and how you felt when you ate it to identify your emotional triggers.



Annie wears Jumpsuit, New Look, £24.99. Necklace, £22.5; bracelet, £7.5, both Dower & Hall. Ankle boots, Chte Mihari



*Top tip!*  
The 21 Day Blast plan is designed to help people feel great and lose weight.

**‘When people hit their 40s, they think it’s too late to turn things around, but it isn’t!’**

My confidence soared: I never weighed myself, instead I just enjoyed my new body shape.

I was so amazed I wanted to share what I’d found out with others. I did a personal training course, then started running an evening aerobics class.

I felt renewed motivation at being able to help others and that exercise had given me that passion.

## WE HAVE BLAST-OFF

Fast forward 15 years and I’ve left my desk job behind. I now run a whole raft of group training sessions including circuits, bootcamp and boxing with a team of fantastic instructors. I understand how hard it is to break bad habits – as well as find time to exercise. I still do my workout classes in the same church hall in south west London, and most start at 6am so people can fit exercise into their day before work. Even at that time the classes are packed.

Six years ago, I developed The Blast programme for my class members to help them feel well and lose weight, largely based on cutting out foods that can play havoc with your gut. The results were amazing. Two years ago, after one of my class members wrote about The Blast in *The Sunday Times*, I took it online. These days, there are people all over the world doing squats and refining their diets because it really works. My new book, *The 21 Day Blast Plan*, is full of everything I’ve learnt over the past 15 years, summed up in 288 pages!

While helping others and getting their amazing feedback is the best reward of all, my own health still motivates me. Obviously, I don’t know what’s around the corner, but I want to give myself the best chance of staying well, without being a total goody-two-shoes.

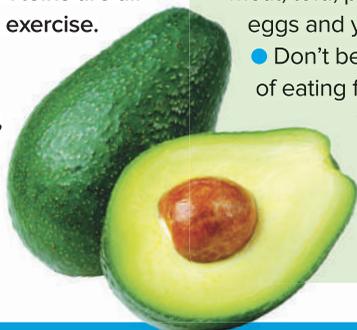
The day the first copies of the book were delivered was one of the proudest of my life. I couldn’t believe how far I’d come – personally and professionally. My 20-year-old-self would choke on her bran flakes if she could see me now! ➔

# The 21-Day BLAST PLAN

**T**his is not a diet,' Annie explains. 'It's a programme of better eating and

exercise that will soothe your gut, boost your energy levels and your mood, creating a body that is harmonious inside as well as out. It's a plan where you play about with food which may cause intolerances, to help give a smooth-running digestive system. Carbs, fats and proteins are all encouraged as is exercise.

Why 21 days? It's enough time to break bad habits, like that wind-down wine and TV chocolate!



## Small changes, big difference

Annie's secrets for everyday good living

- Increase the amount of protein you eat and the exercise you do. This will prompt the body to take energy from your fat stores instead of your muscles. Good sources are fish, chicken, red meat, tofu, pulses, beans, eggs and yogurt.
- Don't be frightened of eating fat, just eat the right kind. Get some good fats (avocado, nuts, oily fish) into your diet to improve your mood *and* your skin.
- Fill your plate with vegetables, especially green ones. Broccoli is my go-to greenery.
- As life gets tougher, it's easy to comfort eat. Try to stick to three meals and one snack a day, all with an emphasis on protein.
- You don't have to avoid carbohydrates totally if you love them. Just realise that they're not necessary at every single meal.
- Accept that there will be times where your resolve is pushed to its limit. You've got a new job and your friends bring round fizz and cake, and you've been so 'good' all week. So eat, drink and enjoy, then return to a good routine the following day.
- If you don't fancy a workout, then go for an energising power walk instead. Just stick on a podcast and away you go in the fresh air.

## The food philosophy

### FRIDGE ESSENTIALS

High-protein yogurt  
Eggs  
Almond milk or coconut milk  
Tuna  
Spinach  
Broccoli  
Almonds  
Bananas  
Turkey mince or steaks  
Blueberries

**THE APPROACH** When trying to lose weight, people often focus on eating too little and watching the scales. My approach differs: in fact, I threw away the scales long ago. Instead, I want people to understand how our bodies metabolise muscle and fat to get energy, and how we can preserve muscle by feeding it more protein. Blast helps establish great habits for life like more protein, less sugar, more water, less alcohol.

**A HEALTHY GUT** Give foods that are bad for your gut a wide berth. Over three

weeks of cutting out most dairy, wheat, processed food and minimising caffeine, you can explore which foods leave you feeling lethargic or bloated.

**ANYTIME FOODS** Meat, fish, eggs, pulses and beans, all veg apart from starchy ones, berries, peaches, watermelon, soya products, unsweetened high-protein natural yogurt, nuts and seeds, nut butters, tofu, oils, milk alternatives.

**WHAT TO EAT POST-WORKOUT** Carbohydrates such

as oats, potatoes, rice, sweet potatoes, wheat-free pasta, bread made without wheat, other fruits including pears, apples and bananas (you can eat these fruits any time on a workout day).

### WHAT YOU CAN DRINK

One caffeinated drink a day, three litres of water or herbal tea a day, decaffeinated tea or coffee (with non-dairy milk).

**WHAT TO AVOID** Wheat, cows' dairy products (except natural yogurt), sugar, processed foods, caffeine (one cup a day).



## Hip raises



- Lie on the floor on your back with your legs bent, feet flat on the floor.
- Dig your heels in so your toes point upwards.
- Lift hips slowly off the floor as high as you can, squeeze the glutes as you go.
- Drop them back down but not all the way to the floor. Make this more challenging by elevating your feet on to a chair or bed to give you more range of motion.

## Squats



- With feet slightly wider than shoulder-width apart, and toes facing forwards, lower your hips slowly to the floor, keeping your back straight and your chest forwards (as if you are sitting on the toilet!).
- Squeeze your glutes a little to bring yourself back up.

## Press-ups



- **First level:** Start on all fours, hands slightly wider than shoulder-width apart and lower your upper body to the floor, keeping your head beyond your hands, not in between. To come back up, exhale and push the floor away from you. This will recruit those chest muscles.
- **Next level:** The same move, but knees are further back and your hips forward a little so there is more weight over your upper body. Keep your spine level and tighten your abdominal muscles as you come back up.
- **Full-on 'get you' version:** Knees off the floor, lower yourself slowly, breathing in. Then, push the floor away from you to come up. If you only do a few, that's terrific! ➔

Top tip!

Eat more protein to preserve your muscle!

# 3 key exercises

Exercising four times a week is part of The 21 Day Blast plan. These exercises form part of your workout and are great for targeting a lot of muscles at once.

## Try Annie's recipes

The Blast plan uses 'Anytime' and 'After Workout' healthy meal choices. Here are three of her lighter 'Anytime' suggestions



### Nut and berry breakfast jar

**SERVES 1** CALORIES 414 PROTEIN 23.4G

- 100g raspberries
- 2tsp chia seeds
- 175g Greek yogurt
- 60g strawberries, hulled and sliced
- 10g pecan nuts, chopped
- 10g Brazil nuts, chopped
- 10g pistachio nuts, chopped
- 1tsp cacao powder
- Mint leaves, to garnish (optional)

**1** Put the raspberries and chia seeds in a small blender and blend to a paste. Stand for 2min to thicken slightly.

**2** Spoon half the yogurt into a jar, then top with half the strawberry slices.

**3** Spoon over the raspberry mixture, then top with the remaining yogurt.

**4** Put the nuts in a small frying pan and cook over a medium heat, making sure they don't burn. Remove from the heat and stir in the cacao powder.

**5** Spoon the coated nuts on top of the yogurt; top with the remaining strawberry slices. Serve immediately garnished with mint leaves, if using, or chill in the fridge until needed.

### Thai prawn cakes

**SERVES 2** CALORIES PER SERVING 205 PROTEIN 25.8G

- 300g cooked prawns
- Juice of ½ lime, plus extra to garnish
- 2cm piece of fresh ginger, peeled and grated
- 2 spring onions, trimmed and thinly sliced
- ½tsp fish sauce
- 1 medium egg yolk
- Small handful of coriander leaves
- ¼tsp black pepper
- 1tbsp olive oil
- Rocket salad or stir-fried vegetables, to serve



**1** Put the prawns, lime juice, ginger, spring onions, fish sauce, egg yolk, coriander and black pepper in a small blender and blitz until well mixed.

**2** Use your hands to shape into 8 small fishcakes. Chill for 30min.

**3** Heat the oil in a frying pan and cook the prawn cakes for 2-3min on each side until slightly golden.

**4** Serve with rocket salad or stir-fried veg. Garnish with extra lime.

### Salmon tandoori with cucumber raita

**SERVES 4** CALORIES PER SERVING 326 PROTEIN 42.5G

- 200g Greek yogurt
- ½tsp smoked paprika
- ½tsp ground turmeric
- ½tsp garam masala
- ½ green chilli, deseeded and diced
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 1cm piece fresh ginger, peeled and grated

and grated

- 1tbsp chopped coriander
- Juice of ½ lemon
- 4 x 150g salmon fillets
- ¼ cucumber, grated
- Small handful of mint leaves, chopped
- Tomato and red onion salad or green veg, and lemon, to serve

**1** Preheat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan) mark 6.

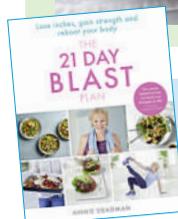
**2** Pour half the Greek yogurt into a bowl. Stir in the spices, chilli, garlic, ginger, coriander and lemon juice.

**3** Spread over the salmon fillets, cover, set aside for 20min.

**4** Meanwhile, mix together the remaining yogurt, grated cucumber and chopped mint to make the raita.

**5** Put the salmon fillets on a baking tray and bake for 8-10min until the salmon is cooked through.

**6** Serve with salad or cooked green veg, the raita and a lemon wedge.



For the recipes, the workouts and full details, check out *The 21 Day Blast Plan* by Annie Deadman (HQ, £18.99).