

Luna's top dog for school's autistic children

A DOG is soon to be an unlikely new classmate for pupils at a primary school.

One-year-old Luna, right, will be supporting children with autism, which affects social interactions, at Redriff Primary School City of London Academy in South-East London.

Luna, right, a golden retriever poodle cross, will become the school's first therapy dog when she joins after completing her training with a charity that specialises in training dogs to work in schools.

Jack Gibbs, Luna's owner and assistant headteacher at the school, said: 'We hope that Luna is able to be a loving companion for the children and encourage them emotionally, physically and socially.'

'She will help the children reach their full potential.'

The school, which is accredited by the National Autistic Society, has an integrated unit called 'the boathouse' with 14 places for children with special education needs.



CLIVE TOTMAN

How tuneless choirs get you back on song

TONE-deaf singers can boost their mental health by joining 'tuneless' choirs. Recent studies have shown singing is beneficial to mental health, reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression, as well as loneliness.

Tuneless Choir founder Nadine Cooper, 50 – once banned from a singing class due to her 'tuneless' voice – says: 'I read about how doing it releases endorphins, our feelgood hormones. I wanted somewhere that I could sing and have people laugh with me rather than at me.'

The network's ethos, 'sing like no one is listening', has encouraged thousands to take part since the first event in West Bridgford, Nottingham, in 2015. Choirs are to be launched in 29 new locations.

A PILL containing bacteria that absorb stomach gases could help beat the bloat. Called Blautix, the pill contains a live bacterium called *Blautia hydrogenotrophica* that mops up hydrogen sulphide – the rotten-egg gas that causes abdominal pain, discomfort and flatulence after eating.

The pill is being trialled at Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital, London, by 500 patients with the common digestive complaint irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), which affects one in five people in the UK.

New research found that more than eight in ten patients using the twice-a-day capsule had improvements in pain, cramps and bloating. People with IBS have different types of bacteria in their gut than those not affected by it, and it is this which is thought to be responsible for symptoms.

Ibuprofen 'cuts cancer risk'

THE painkiller ibuprofen can cut the risk of bowel cancer by more than a quarter, a major new study shows.

Researchers from Spain and Serbia trawled through data from one million people and found that regular use of the popular over-the-counter drug protected some groups against the disease – especially women and those over 40.

Ibuprofen belongs to a class of drugs called non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, or NSAIDs.

The theory is that ibuprofen stifles tumour development by dampening inflammation in the bowel.

Aspirin, also an NSAID, was not part of the study because of its links to stomach bleeds.

Brain blaster you use at home to end migraine misery

By Fiona MacRae

MILLIONS of people could be spared the misery of migraines thanks to a device that zaps the brain with tiny bursts of electricity – in the comfort of their own home.

The size and weight of a portable radio, the single pulse transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) device, treats and prevents the pounding headaches that blight the lives of up to 25 per cent of British women, and ten per cent of men.

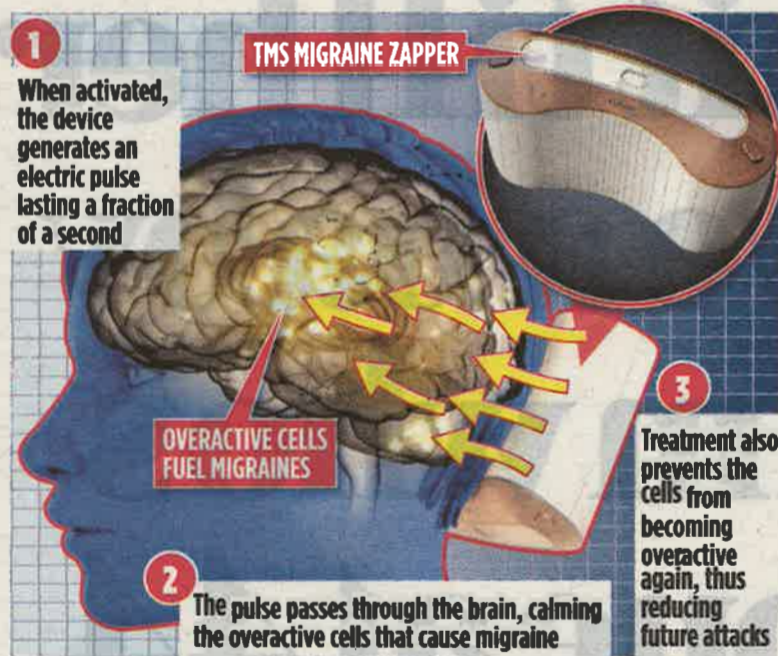
The device is cradled at the back of the head and at the push of a button sends out painless pulses of electricity to short-circuit the 'electrical storm' in the brain that causes the splitting pain, flashing lights and blurred vision of migraines.

Similar procedures, carried out in a hospital setting, are already used to treat conditions from depression to Parkinson's disease.

Now one of Britain's leading hospitals is prescribing the new portable TMS machines for migraines.

Grandfather-of-four Barrington Simner, 72, is one of the first to benefit from the scheme being pioneered by Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust in Central London.

He had migraines for 20 years, suffering up to five devastating attacks a week. 'I started getting migraines when I turned 50 and over time they got progressively worse,' says the retired pharmacist.



Simner. 'They were completely debilitating. I would have to lie down in the dark for a day or two.'

Drugs produced side effects that ranged from irritability to drowsiness. He tried Botox – sometimes used to treat the condition – but it affected his vision.

However, after two months of treating himself with TMS three times a day, his migraines started to improve. Mr Simner, of Bromley in South-East London, now has an attack just once every five or six weeks. He no longer takes any painkillers and is able to live life to the full once more. He says: 'The treatment has changed my life.'

Ranked as one of the top 20 most disabling lifetime conditions by the World Health Organisation, migraines can take up to three days to pass and are responsible for more sick days than almost any other illness.

Treatments include powerful painkillers and blood-pressure and epilepsy medicines, which can have major side effects.

TMS uses magnetic fields to generate pulses of electricity that stimulate or dampen down key brain circuits.

In migraines, it aims to calm signals in the cortex, one of the parts of the brain that is over-active dur-

ing attacks. It is thought it also blocks key pain receptors and helps prevent cells in the cortex from going into overdrive again.

TMS is approved by the health watchdog, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), to treat migraines.

However, the need for daily preventative sessions or 'on-demand' treatments at the first sign of a migraine means it hasn't been practical for hospitals to provide TMS in their outpatient departments. As a result, it has not been available until now.

Some 90 patients have been given portable TMS machines since the scheme was launched 18 months ago and two-thirds are still using the devices.

Patients typically use the device twice a day to prevent migraines, morning and night. Each session lasts a matter of minutes – enough time for the patient to self-administer up to eight 'zaps'.

The Migraine Trust said it is a 'good treatment option' for those who cannot take migraine medicines. 'Migraines are very common,' says Dr Anna Andreou, director of headache research at Guy's and St Thomas'. 'But it's not fully understood why they develop and for some people the condition can be extremely debilitating, causing severe headaches and vomiting.'

'What's really great about the TMS device is that the treatment is safe, non-invasive and portable. It is completely life-changing for many patients.'

MAKE YOUR OWN



ZINGY 'APPLETIZE'

IF YOU'RE doing Dry January and would like some alcohol-free fizz, but have had your fill of shop-bought soft drinks, this home-made juice is just delicious. Ginger, one of my favourite ingredients, provides the zing and a whole host of health benefits – from soothing the digestive system to easing aches and pains.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 whole apples
- A tin piece of fresh ginger, peeled and roughly chopped
- Sparkling mineral water

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Cut the ginger and apple into chunks, removing any pips from the apple, and juice them together.
- 2 Pour into a glass, top up with sparkling water and stir. Drink immediately.

Frederick Faulkner

BOOK ME IN

The Energy Plan, by James Collins

The UK's leading expert on performance nutrition reveals a practical programme to enable everyone from busy parents to City workers to power through the day and feel at their best. £12.99, Vermillion

