

Staying supple starts here...

Get the odd twinge when you're gardening? Can't get down on the dance floor like you used to? Follow our tips to keep yourself agile and healthy

The science bit: 'When we reach our 30s, the tendons and ligaments which connect our muscles to the bones become less elastic – and the fluid that lubricates our joints becomes less effective,' explains Jane Dowling, personal trainer from the UK. 'This is why it's important to exercise to keep your joints healthy and prevent stiffness.'



Stretching the point

Staying supple is a breeze if you do a few simple stretches every day – you can even stretch at your desk: sit tall, draw your chin slowly into your chest, then straighten out one and then the other leg to stretch hamstrings. Next, sit tall and join fingers together. Arms straight, reach them above your head until they're level with ears to stretch shoulders, top of spine and elbows. 'Do each stretch slowly and maintain for 30 seconds at the point of tension, but not pain,' says physio Christopher Norris. 'Breathe normally and relax into the stretch – if you tense your muscles, you defeat the object.'

A little extra help

Celadrin is a natural fatty acid that helps joint flexibility. Celadrin tablets are available from Dis-Chem, 180 tablets for R120 (price subject to change). **Omega 3**, found in oily fish, keeps you supple too, so try Natrodale Omega 3 Complex, R103, which combines the power of three Omega 3 essential fatty acids for a healthy cardiovascular system. Available at leading retail outlets, Clicks and Dis-Chem stores.



Loosen up!

Your lower back and hips are often the first parts of the body to fall prey to stiffness. Try these flexible fixers once a day:

Spine twist

Lie on your back, knees bent, feet flat on the floor, arms to the side. Slowly lower both knees to one side, bring back; repeat to the other side.



Bottom and hip stretch

Lie on your back, knees bent, feet flat on the floor. Put your right ankle on your left thigh. Reach for your left thigh and gently draw your knee towards

your chest. Hold for 30 seconds if you can, then repeat on the other side. If you find it difficult, use a scarf or yoga belt behind your thigh to help draw it to the chest.

Get the balance right

'Agility is the ability to change direction at speed,' says fitness trainer Andrew Prosser from the UK. 'But you need to be balanced to achieve good agility.' Yoga is great for improving balance and flexibility. To find a yoga studio in your area, visit livingyoga.co.za; bikramyoga.co.za; mothercityyoga.co.za; yogafit.co.za. You could also try TRUEStretch, a piece of equipment that helps maximise flexibility (email m@bermartrading.com or visit truefitness.com to find out more about it).

Relax!

A warm bath is a great place to loosen up. Hemporium's **Hempseed & Mustard Seed Bath**, R35 for 300g (from faithful-to-nature.co.za), is a detoxifying bath mix made according to a centuries-old formulation of fine salts, essential oils and minerals. It soothes muscular aches, callouses, athlete's foot and skin disorders, and is great for treating colds, flu and general fatigue.

