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HEALTHY BODY, MIND, AND SPIRIT

Difficulty Managing
Your Weight?
**It May Be Your
Metabolism**

Autoimmunity
and Natural Health Products

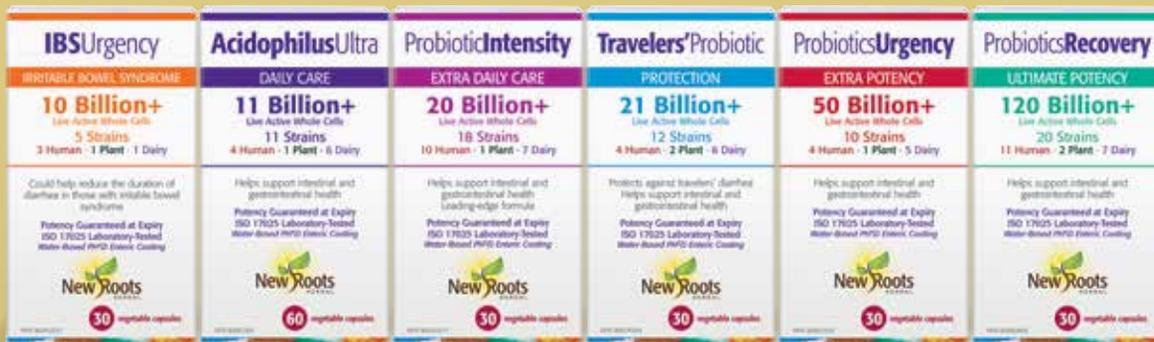
TOP 10 WAYS

*To Give your New Year an
Energy Boost*

Vol. 2, No. 2 · Free
January/February 2018



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Editor's Letter

A Brand-New Year Lies Ahead of Us!



I have often mentioned that I do not take any resolution at the beginning of the year. I prefer to work on my priorities, my challenges, and my goals when the right moment presents itself throughout the year. This often occurs with the changes of season, or in the warmth of our house

during the cold days of winter, which is a favourable time to make assessments.

I love winter; however, January and the coming weeks will bring cold temperatures, viruses, and limited hours of sunshine. We will likely feel more tired, lack energy, and unfortunately, seasonal depression will affect more than 25% of the Canadian population. Fortunately, countless simple and natural resources are available to improve our mood, our stress management, and our health. We touch upon these exact topics in this issue of *Flourish*.

My first recommendation is: Get moving outside, and breathe the fresh air! Parents are often heard telling their children to “go outside and play!” Well, why don't we adults do the same? The winter season allows us to stay young and active. Another great tip that has a positive impact for me is to try new things. In this issue, our contributors will specifically address several ways to improve mental health, enhance and regenerate your energy, and strengthen your immunity. You will certainly find the right combination to suit your needs, and maybe even discover something new! We also present recipes for beautiful skin, not to mention those that will satisfy your taste buds!

Although I usually prefer to look straight ahead, it is interesting to backtrack and see the evolution of great accomplishments or projects, as in the case of our *Flourish* magazine. Its success is due to the extraordinary quality of our collaborators, not to mention the great team behind the scenes! We hope you enjoy this issue, which has eight additional pages of content. Also, don't forget about our blog! Stay in touch with us, and visit flourishbodyandmind.com regularly for additional articles and recipes.

On behalf of our incredible team, we would like to wish you a wonderful year! Lots of health, love, and joy, throughout 2018.

Sonia Lamoureux
Editor-in-Chief

flourish

Flourish magazine is published every second month and distributed throughout Canada.

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Total Copies Distributed

96,750 (English and French)

Legal Deposit: Library and Archives Canada

Legal Deposit: Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales du Québec
ISSN 2371-5693 (Print Version)
ISSN 2371-5707 (Online Version)

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Stress... Simplified

by Gordon Raza, BSc

There's no shortage of tips, lists, and suggestions available from trusted friends, family members, spiritual leaders, television personalities, psychologists, and psychiatrists regarding the topic of coping with stress.

Cutting back on caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine; getting more exercise and sleep; talking to someone you trust; practicing mindfulness and relaxation; even compiling a list to manage your time appears on many "top-ten lists" for stress management.

If the very thought of giving up on some of your guilty pleasures or embarking on a spiritual journey stresses you out, there are a few natural nutrients worthy of discussion that can make a difference in your life.

For Starters, Top Up Your Oil

The health benefits of omega-3 fatty acids found in fish are abundant, particularly eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA). Think of fish oil, particularly EPA, as lubricant to keep your brain and nervous system running smoothly. Clinical trials conducted at the Tehran University of Medical Sciences showed significant reduction in levels of cortisol (the stress hormone) with an intervention of 1000 mg of fish oil-sourced EPA over an eight-week period. The benefits of fish oils are gradual and lasting, which makes them a great foundation nutrient for long-term stress management.

Go Green

There are many botanicals renowned for their protective effects from acute and chronic stress. The great news is that current research has identified their therapeutic compounds and paved the way for the development of standardized extracts available in many dosage forms. Extracts of astragalus, ashwagandha, passionflower, and rhodiola rank among the most clinically researched and effective nutraceuticals available.

Astragalus and ashwagandha work in similar ways: They contain specific compounds recognized for improving stress tolerance. These compounds stabilize the activity of neurotransmitters to shield the brain from stressors. Look for astragaloside content in astragalus, and for a potency-verified concentration of withanolides for ashwagandha.

Passionflower has a long history of use for alleviating stress and anxiety. It contains flavonoids, which are neuroprotective compounds that increase levels of *gamma*-aminobutyric acid (GABA). GABA makes brain cells less prone to excitability during stressful situations. Passionflower can also inhibit the accumulation of belly fat—how about that?

Rhodiola is among the most researched botanicals for both mental and physical endurance. It modulates production of cortisol (the "fight-or-flight" hormone); excessive presence of cortisol leads to stress, anxiety, and a cascade of additional health concerns, including weight gain. Rosavins and salidroside rank as the pivotal compounds in the mosaic of active constituents found in rhodiola.

These are among the many side effect-free, nonaddictive alternatives to prescription drugs for stress and anxiety. Look for them in stress and anxiety formulas, or as stand-alone products. Consider them nutrition for your disposition.



Ditch the New Year's Resolution

Restore Your Energy Instead

by Dr. Melissa West

Did you know that only 8% of New Year's resolutions actually stick? Usually, they are made at a time of year when we are completely exhausted on all levels. The winter days are short and dark. We are emotionally exhausted from holiday parties and family get-togethers. Mentally, we are feeling overwhelmed about returning to the avalanche of work.

On top of that, our inner critic and perfectionist rises to the occasion, making a list of our inadequacies, and decides the only way we are going to feel better about ourselves is to shame us into losing weight with sweat-induced vigorous workouts.

But hold up for just a second! Did you know there was another way? A gentler, more compassionate way to meet yourself, just as the natural world withdraws to embrace winter's deep slumber. Even without losing sight of that desire to shed a few pounds?

Many of us are feeling overextended from the hustle and bustle of our holiday season, and this is a time to rest, reflect, hibernate, and redirect our outward-focused energy inward. The relentless pace of our anxiety-producing world pushes us to perform, accomplish, and achieve. This goes against the stillness that characterizes winter. Winter is an invitation to avoid rushing and instead embrace a slower and more relaxed pace.

Luckily, Maria G. Araneta, Ph.D. at the University of California, San Diego designed a study to see if overweight patients needed

vigorous exercise to lose weight. Her study tested who would benefit more: Women who took part in a 48-week program of restorative yoga, or those who engaged in a program of stretching exercises.

Both the stretching and the restorative-yoga groups lost weight, but the restorative-yoga group lost twice as much weight in the first six months—and they were able to keep the weight off. The restorative-yoga group also lost more than two and a half times the amount of subcutaneous fat (the fat directly under your skin) as the stretch group.

It is hypothesized that the yoga group experienced more weight loss because of the stress reduction associated with the restorative yoga. The stress hormone cortisol is known to cause an increase in abdominal fat specifically.

Here are three of my favourite restorative yoga poses to rebuild your energy during winter's long rest.



Legs up the Wall

How to Do it: Sit beside the wall with your knees bent. Gently turn your body to bring your legs up the wall. If you have back problems, bend your knees. Rest your hands on your belly for an inward focus. Rest here for five to ten minutes, breathing into your lower belly.

Benefits: Calms anxiety, relieves depression and insomnia, and boosts the immune system.



Child's Pose

How to Do it: Kneel on all fours, and open your legs wide, with your toes together. Lean back and sit your buttocks onto your heels. Place a bolster between your knees, and rest over the bolster. If this pose puts too much pressure on your knees and ankles, lie on your back and draw your knees to your chest.

Benefits: Relieves stress and fatigue, stretches muscles of lower back, and eases anxiety.



Reclined Bound-Angle Pose

How to Do it: Sit with your feet together and your legs making a diamond shape. Place blocks to fill the space under your knees. Lie back over a bolster so that the base of the bolster supports you at about the level of your lower ribs. Adjust the props for your own comfort.

Benefits: Relieves stress and depression and the symptoms of menstruation and menopause, stretches inner thighs and groins, opens chest and shoulders.



Follow the signs of nature in winter

Hibernate like the bears, take the much-needed rest and relaxation being called for on the shorter darker days, and enjoy some restorative yoga.



Dr. Melissa West

She helps you restore your energy every Friday on YouTube with her library of over 400 restorative, yin, and hatha yoga videos.

melissawest.com



Difficulty Managing Your Weight?

It May Be your Slow Metabolism

by Dr. Angeli Chitale, ND

Weight management is a delicate subject which has cultural, gender, and age biases, which are deeply rooted in society. Recently, in our attempt to balance some of these negative body messages, as a society we are moving towards a more realistic inclusive definition of healthy weight.

However, weight gain can be a warning sign of underlying metabolic and/or hormonal imbalances which could also pose a serious health risk. This article looks at naturopathic approaches to assessment, diagnosis, and management of underlying metabolic and hormonal conditions which can lead to unhealthy weight, and provides some tips and tools for healthy weight management.

Your Thyroid and Metabolism

Your thyroid is responsible for the calories you burn at rest, also known as your basal metabolic rate (BMR). It is like a background program that is constantly running. The impact of it reaches every single organ and cell in your body.

Low body temperature syndrome is a metabolic condition which negatively affects your metabolism. It is:

- A persistent but reversible slowing of the metabolism;
- Often brought on by the stress of illness, injury, or emotional trauma;
- Often worsened in stages with subsequent stress episodes;
- The cause of low body temperature and associated low-thyroid (hypothyroid) symptoms;
- A feeling that “something is wrong” which often doesn’t respond well to improved rest, diet, exercise, or stress management alone;
- A condition which often shows normal thyroid hormone levels in blood tests;
- Often reversed with a special thyroid treatment; and
- Often associated with other chronic illnesses and or toxicity.

Predisposing Factors

Low body temperature syndrome is common for those whose ancestors survived famine, such as:

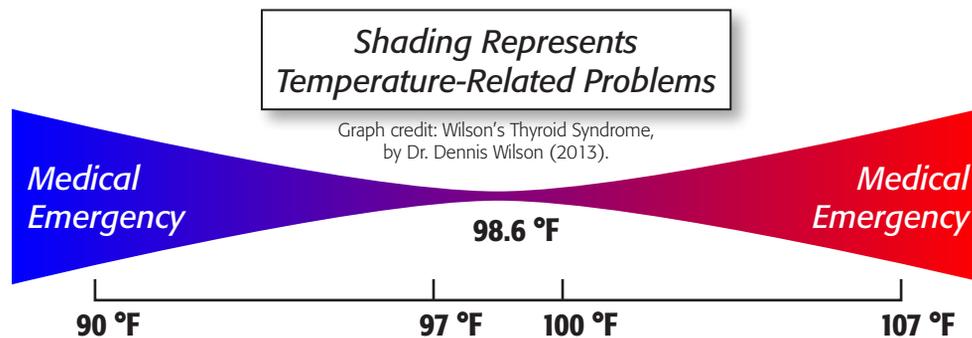
- Irish, Scot, Welsh, American Indian, Russian, etc. Most susceptible of all seem to be those who are part Irish and part American Indian.
- Under multiple or severe circumstances, people of any nationality can develop low body temperature syndrome.
- About 80% of Wilson's Temperature Syndrome sufferers are women.

For people who are more prone to developing WTS than others, their symptoms tend to:

- Come on earlier in life; so early that some patients may not even know what it feels like to be normal;
- Worsen gradually over time, if left untreated; and
- Fail to respond to various therapies without much improvement, including medication (thyroid hormone, antidepressants, mood stabilizers, etc.).

Common Symptoms of Low Thyroid Function (WTS)

- Weight gain, gradual increase over time despite eating well and exercise;
- Dry skin and/or hair loss unresponsive to most treatments;
- Feeling tired / difficulty waking up or waking up unrefreshed;
- Depression/anxiety;
- Constipation;
- Elevated cholesterol;
- Premature ageing;
- Low libido; and
- Fertility issues / difficulty conceiving.



How Can Low Body Temperature Cause So Many Symptoms?

Enzymes are special proteins which spark chemical reactions in the body. All metabolic actions that take place in our bodies are activated by enzymes. Enzymes depend upon their shape for their function. When enzymes are not the right shape, they cannot function optimally, resulting in mismanagement of the body's entire metabolic system.

When the body temperature is too low, nearly all the enzymes in the body function less effectively. This can cause a very wide variety of complaints.

High fevers (42 °C / 107 °F) can cause brain damage and even death, and very low body temperatures (< 32 °C »/ 90 °F) can also be life-threatening.

Factors Affecting Enzyme Function

- Body temperature;
- pH (how acid or alkaline body fluids are);
- Mineral levels (catalyst for enzyme reactions and buffers for detox pathways); and
- Cellular toxicity (metabolic waste accumulation).

Likewise, a temperature a little above normal (say 38 °C / 100 °F) is plenty of reason to feel badly and be excused from school or work. Temperatures that are just below 37 °C / 98.6 °F can easily explain a classic set of symptoms. To function optimally, the body must be at the optimal temperature: As close to 37 °C / 98.6 °F as possible.

To test this, the most accurate way is to take your temperature every three hours after waking, three times a day, to record your metabolic cycle. This is more accurate than lab tests alone.



Hormone Imbalances Related to Weight Gain and Low Body Temperature Syndrome

In my 15 years of treating low temperature syndrome, I have seen cases where hormones play an important role in weight management. Adrenal function and high cortisol, insulin, and blood sugar levels; estrogen dominance; menopause; liver function; and medication use, when out of balance, have an impact on a person's ability to maintain healthy weight.

Adrenal Hypofunction

Low adrenal function has four phases which show distinct hormonal pictures.

Research done on medical students subjected to prolonged stress of medical school show an initial phase of elevated adrenaline (acute phase) followed by elevated cortisol (three months of stress) followed by a gradual decline, first in adrenaline, then in both adrenaline and cortisol (six to nine months).

High cortisol levels in the blood (phase 2) slows metabolism by altering thyroid function. Cortisol blocks the conversion of thyroid hormone (T_4) to active thyroid hormone (T_3) and favours the creation of reverse T_3 (rT_3). This induces low body temperature syndrome. High rT_3 levels are seen on blood tests in patients with low body temperature.

Impact on weight: High cortisol levels are correlated with midtruncal obesity or "apple-shaped" fat distribution, which is associated with cardiovascular and diabetes risk in men and women.

Insulin Dysregulation: Reactive Hypoglycemia and Prediabetes

Insulin is a hormone produced by the pancreas in response to the food you eat. Think of insulin like an all-season entry pass for sugar to enter the cells of the body from the blood. Once inside cells, sugar is used as fuel. But that is only half the picture. Your pancreas will provide an extra 50% background insulin and leave it in your bloodstream as backup to ensure your cells have a constant supply of glucose or fuel.

If blood sugar levels drop because too much insulin is produced or too little blood sugar is available, then hypoglycemia or low blood sugar can result. What some people feel when they miss a meal and get "hangry" (hungry and angry). Low blood sugar is a serious condition which can cause the body to go into shock or lose consciousness. Hypoglycemic events can be triggered by exertion, stress, medication, liver issues, not eating enough food, and mineral depletion which I have clinically seen in oral contraceptive use (zinc and chromium depletion).

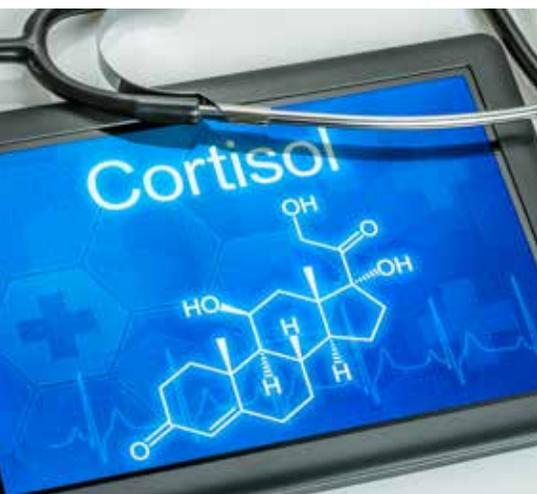
Impact on weight: Excess or irregular spikes in insulin levels can cause midtruncal weight gain and fat deposits along the waist, increasing the risk of heart disease and diabetes.

Estrogen Dominance

Hormone imbalances can occur at nearly any age. The normal pathway for estrogen production starts with compounds called acetates. Acetates convert to progesterone, which then forms estrogens. Progesterone also antagonizes (opposes) estrogen function to help maintain proper hormone balance. When estrogen takes this pathway, a woman is progesterone-dominant, and the hormones are in proper balance. The alternate pathway for estrogen production is from acetates to the adrenal hormone DHEA, then to estrogen. In this case, production of enough progesterone is bypassed, creating a condition known as estrogen dominance.

Symptoms of estrogen dominance include endometriosis, fibroids, ovarian cysts, weight gain, thyroid suppression, depression, lack of libido, insomnia, and an increase of facial hair from the excess testosterone formed from the unopposed estrogen. External hormone sources—such as birth control pills, estrogen replacement therapy, estrogens found in farm-raised meats, and xenoestrogens (dioxins, DDT, PCBs, etc.)— can aggravate these problems.

Impact on weight: Excess estrogen causes fatty deposits all over the body, resulting in general weight gain, which responds well to hormone management by improving liver function and eliminating excess estrogens.



Read the full article on our blog: flourishbodyandmind.com



Angeli Chitale, ND

Dr. Angeli Chitale is a licensed naturopathic doctor with additional training and certification in treatment of both thyroid and endocrine conditions including fertility for men and women.

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PROUDLY

10 Steps to Improve

Mental Health

by Christina Bjorndal, ND

For many, mental illness is fraught with many unanswerable questions. In my case, the question “Why me?” is one I have asked myself over and over. This question has become the central quest of my life’s work as a naturopathic doctor specializing in mental health, exploring why mental illness happens. Through decades of experience of working with my own struggles as well as with my patients’, I have come to recognize the importance of addressing ten key areas when pursuing mental wellness:

- Diet
- Sleep
- Exercise
- Stress Management
- Thoughts
- Emotions
- Behaviours vs Reactions
- Exposure to Environmental Toxins
- Spirituality
- Love and Compassion for Yourself and Others

DIET

Conditions like depression and anxiety are commonly seen as a neurotransmitter deficiency, but taking a drug doesn’t fix the root cause of why these chemicals are out of balance. Your body may not be supporting the pathway to make healthy amounts of neurotransmitters in the first place, because it may be missing the building blocks or missing other key biochemical cofactors.

If your diet is poor, highly processed, or full of caffeine and sugar, you simply cannot make enough serotonin or other neurotransmitters to feel balanced. Environmental toxins like heavy metals, pesticides, and endocrine disruptors also block nutrient absorption. Key pathways in the brain require proper amounts of the essential nutrients—such as tryptophan; vitamins C, B₆, and B₃; iron; magnesium; riboflavin; folate; and zinc.

While diet components are extremely important, so is the eating environment. Creating habits like cooking at home, eating with others, chewing thoroughly, and eating mindfully will make a big difference. Blood sugar levels also affect mood significantly, so it is important to eat regularly. There is so much to say about diet that I have written a guide book on this subject: *The Essential Diet: Eating for Mental Health*.



SLEEP

A consistent and regular sleep routine is critical to our mental health, because it allows us to rest, detoxify, and process what happens to us during the day. Being deprived of sleep decreases energy; increases stress, cortisol, and emotional reactivity; suppresses the immune system; and promotes weight gain. More importantly, doctors now recognize lack of sleep as a direct contributory factor for many chronic and acute mental health conditions like depression, anxiety, and episodes of psychosis.



It's not just about quantity; it's about quality. Are you sleeping through the night, or waking several times? Are you stressed and grinding your teeth or having terrible dreams? Stress increases cortisol in your body, which decreases your body's ability to produce the sleep-inducing hormone melatonin, making it harder to get a good night's sleep.

In the end, getting a good sleep is multifactorial and requires you to work with your lifestyle, thoughts, eating and exercising habits, hormones, and coping mechanisms for stress. Supplements and medications can only take you so far; getting to the root cause of poor sleep is the goal.

EXERCISE

I often say that exercise is the most underprescribed antidepressant treatment available. A 2016 meta-analysis focusing on regular aerobic exercise as a treatment for depression shows it is statistically equal to antidepressants as treatment, without the adverse effects. It is also effective in schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, ADHD, and OCD. It's not just aerobic exercise that's effective; studies have also shown the psychological benefit of other types of activity. Having a regular routine of weight lifting, playing sports, and/or doing yoga can improve mood and decrease anxiety and depression scores just as well as rigorous, high-intensity running can.

The psychological benefits of exercise are even greater when we do it with others, and especially beneficial when we exercise outdoors. Joining a community sports team that gets you outside and interacting with others regularly is a big step toward improving your mental health.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Stress is a psychological experience of feeling like your resources (internal or external) are almost exhausted (or are fully used up), and you are struggling to cope with the demands of life. No matter what the stressful event is, if the mind experiences psychological stress, the body experiences physiological stress. This physiological stress is an ancient survival mechanism built into our bodies to help us flee harmful situations, but in today's world, it's less helpful.

This "fight-or-flight" reactivity suppresses the immune system, halts digestion, and affects hormone production, which affects our sleep and impacts adrenal energy stores. Over the long term, this can lead to adrenal exhaustion, muscle tension, digestive complaints, depression, anxiety, and insomnia.

The first step in stress management is becoming aware of triggers. With awareness, you can then work to reduce or eliminate them. If you can't reduce stressors, you must learn to manage your reactivity given your current life situation. Working with psychotherapeutic techniques, such as the seven Rs of working with problematic thoughts (that I discuss in my book *Beyond the Label*) or systematic relaxation tools, you can manage your response to stress.





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EXPOSURE TO ENVIRONMENTAL TOXINS

In today's day-to-day life, chemicals are everywhere. It's the sad truth that regulatory groups just don't protect us enough from so many harmful environmental toxins. Unfortunately, these insidious chemicals contribute to many chronic health conditions, including mental illness.

To understand your toxin load, take our *Environmental Quiz* (<http://naturalterrain.com/environmental-quiz/>), which considers exposure you might have to plastics, pesticides, nonstick pans, microwaves, extended cell-phone use, artificial coloring and fragrance, make-up and personal-care products, genetically modified foods, antibacterial soap, alcohol, and pharmaceuticals. Also, what is the air and water quality like in your hometown, and do you filter either?

With so many sources, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. The point is not to burden you with the task of immediately changing everything. Start by becoming familiar with your most frequent and intense exposures, and work to reduce them. Be aware of initiatives like the Environmental Working Groups' list of the most heavily pesticide-sprayed foods (*The Dirty Dozen*) and the least sprayed foods (*Clean Fifteen*), and apps like *Think Dirty* that lets you scan household products to discover their toxin content and find healthier alternatives.

THOUGHTS

Every thought we think isn't necessarily true; thoughts are simply ideas that exist in our heads. However, some thoughts are so powerful that we take them to be facts. Sometimes, old wounds and childhood conditioning come out in thoughts like: "I'm not good enough," "I can't do this," and "I'm unlovable."

Each time we have negative thoughts like this, we naturally have emotional reactions to them as if they were true. We may feel hurt, saddened, defeated, demoralized, depressed, and suicidal. These emotions then can reinforce the thoughts, making them feel very real. It is as if the emotions were evidence that the thoughts are true.

When this spiral happens, the work that needs to be done is breaking the thought-emotion cycle. Using a stepwise practice, you can learn to widen the space between thoughts and emotions and learn to separate fact from fiction. You will learn that thoughts and the emotional reaction to thoughts don't have to run your life. You can learn a more balanced approach to thinking. This practice uses a cognitive model to recognize and work with distorted thought patterns, as well as body-focusing techniques and breathing to harness the parasympathetic nervous system and modulate the physiological stress response.



SPIRITUALITY

Mental health is often viewed as a biochemical imbalance. I have made my life's work an exploration of the other factors that contribute to mental health concerns beyond biochemistry, including psychology, trauma, physiology, and environment, but there is another factor to explore: The spiritual aspect of mental health. Here, I define spirituality as believing in, or being connected to, a power greater than yourself.

My view is that mental illness is a way by which our spirit is trying to get our attention because some aspect of our lives (such as school, work, or a relationship) is not moving in concert with our spirit. By looking at ourselves and taking the time to be silent, very present, talk to others, and open up about what we are feeling, we can address the underlying root of depression, anxiety, addiction, bipolar disorder, and other problems that can lie in the spiritual realm.

It is my personal belief that a connection to a spirit, whatever your chosen practice is, is critical and vital to healing yourself and the current state of the planet.

LOVE AND COMPASSION FOR YOURSELF AND FOR OTHERS

Ultimately, it is our feelings about ourselves and how we treat ourselves that are critical to our mental health and wellbeing. I ask every patient how much they love themselves on a scale of one to ten, and it is rare for me to get a response over five. It breaks my heart to hear someone speak unkindly of themselves—yet I, too, would once have given a similar response. Ask yourself: If you talked to your best friend the way you talk to yourself, would they accept it? Many who struggle with mental wellness are hiding this conversation they are having with themselves, and living with shame.

EMOTIONS

For some, emotions can be elusive and hard to pinpoint, while for others, they can be clear, overwhelming, and incessant. As well, they can be different to you at different times. The emotional work I do with my patients follows a process of understanding what one is feeling in a very present, honest way, then working towards letting go of resistance and accepting one's emotions. Skills I teach along the way are recognizing one's own emotional sensitivity level, learning to set healthy boundaries, and mindfulness of the present moment. This work flows back and forth with the work on thoughts, behaviours, and emotional reactivity.

BEHAVIOURS VERSUS REACTIONS

Often in mental health conditions, there are cycles of behaviours that reinforce the illness: Isolating, sleeping too much or too little, blowing up or shutting down emotionally, eating too much or too little, etc. To address this, following closely behind the work on thoughts and emotions, comes the practice of behavioural change.

As one learns to lengthen the time between thoughts and reactions, there grows a window of opportunity for one to act in a different manner than simply reacting. We can learn to choose a healthy behaviour, as opposed to immediately reacting in a protective manner.

An example is if we have a negative thought, we can pause and say to ourselves: "I am thinking a negative thought." By doing so, we widen the gap between thought and emotion, and we have practiced recognizing exactly what the emotion is. With this, we can choose our response from a calm place. We can choose healthy and positive actions that do not reinforce the negative thoughts or feelings that are present with mental illness. We choose actions that dislodge negative cycles of thought and emotion, and lift us out of depression, anxiety, and other psychological spirals.

The incredible gift I get to share with my patients is how to learn to love oneself and, eventually, how to extend this love to the world. Using techniques like mirror work, reconnecting with one's body, affirmations, gratitude, self-compassion, and nonviolent communication, love is a skill that can be learned and improved upon.

CONCLUSION

Mental illness is a multifaceted condition, with no universal experience or manifestation. I firmly believe that there is no quick-fix or single solution to such multifactorial conditions. To truly heal, you must address each area: Diet, sleep, exercise, stress management, environmental detoxification, thoughts, emotions, behaviours, spirituality, love, and acceptance. Doing so addresses the root causes of mental illness and will restore your mental health. Recovering your mental health is possible and you can do it. Start by taking the first step!

For references and other great articles, visit NaturopathicCurrents.com

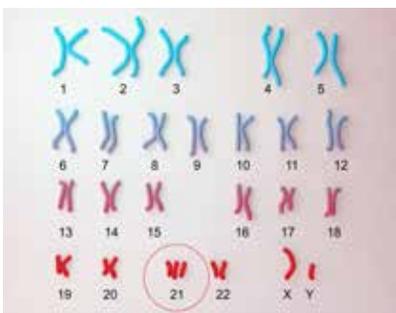


Christina Bjorndal, ND

Dr. Bjorndal has a clinical focus in the natural treatment of mental illnesses such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorders, eating disorders, OCD, ADD/ADHD, and schizoaffective disorders.



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Understanding and Treating Menstrual Mood Disorders - Naturopathic Approaches to PMDD



Give Seasonal Viruses *the Cold Shoulder*

by Gordon Raza, BSc

With about 200 variations of the common cold and a novel strain of flu marketed as the next epidemic every fall, all with no cure in sight, it's no mystery that a pot of chicken soup and binge-watching your favourite television series are as good a "cure" as many. However, there are plenty of natural options to strengthen and accelerate your immune response.

Andrographis paniculata, also known as common andrographis, is among the most effective. Native to Asia, this plant boasts antiviral, antibacterial, and anti-inflammatory action among its résumé of benefits. Double-blind clinical trials featuring an extract of *A. paniculata*, conducted by the Swedish Herbal Institute in Gothenburg, displayed a reduction of both severity and duration of typical upper respiratory symptoms of the common cold. The marker compound to look for is andrographilides, in a validated potency of at least 30%. The fact that pharmaceutical chemists have synthesized derivatives of this compound attests to its therapeutic potential.

Astragalus is among the most-revered adaptogens in traditional Chinese medicine. Studies demonstrate it to display antiviral properties and to strengthen immune performance. Astragalosides are recognized as the key compounds responsible for cold and flu resistance and in fast-tracking recovery from infection.

Echinacea is deep-rooted in Native North American culture for infection-fighting, with a particular focus on colds, flu, and upper respiratory infections. It had official status, with a listing in the U.S. National Formulary between 1916 and 1950 prior to the widespread use of antibiotics. Echinacea contains a diverse source of compounds responsible for its therapeutic effects which include polysaccharides, glycoproteins, alkamides, volatile oils, and flavonoids.

Mushrooms in the form of polysaccharide-rich extracts have emerged from the realm of folklore and traditional Chinese medicine to being available in convenient capsule form. Polysaccharides help the body adapt to a wide variety of stressors and stimulate immune function. The immune-enhancing benefits of maitake, reishi, and shiitake rank them among the preferred species for improving resilience to colds and flu, especially during winter.

By the way, Mom was at least part right when she yelled: "You'll catch a cold" when you left the house with no hat or gloves and an unzipped jacket. Shivering depresses the immune system and drains energy better invested in keeping well. So dress appropriately, and explore how you can cope with colds and flu this winter—naturally!

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SUPPLEMENT
THAT RIVALS
CHICKEN SOUP?



Cold & Flu delivers ten tenacious, scientifically tested nutrients that include; echinacea, goldenseal, astragalus and three species of immune enhancing mushrooms to fight hundreds of seasonal viruses. And if you're wondering, it can be taken safely with chicken soup!

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Autoimmunity

and the Role of Diet



by Philip Rouchotas, MSc, ND, and Heidi Fritz, MA, ND

The term “autoimmunity” encompasses a broad number of conditions, ranging from rheumatoid arthritis and lupus to inflammatory bowel disease, psoriasis, and various skin conditions. These conditions are all characterized by an immune process that inappropriately targets the body’s own proteins, rather than foreign proteins such as those of pathogenic bacteria and viruses. It is an immune response gone haywire. White blood cells and other immune cells identify the body’s cells as foreign, and

mount an immune response involving the production of inflammatory chemicals, antibodies, and cellular attack mechanisms. Medications such as prednisone, methotrexate, and others, that powerfully suppress immune function, are typically used to treat these conditions. Although the role of diet is often overlooked, there is a large body of literature that attests to the potentially exacerbating effect of various food proteins. We explicate several lines of reasoning to demonstrate the role of food sensitivities in these disorders.

Impaired Digestive Function

Firstly, there is evidence of gross alterations in digestive function in individuals with various autoimmune conditions. In fibromyalgia, for instance, there is an association with the presence of leaky gut. “Leaky gut” is a term that describes a situation where there is deterioration in the barrier function of the gut lining, allowing larger food particles to enter the bloodstream and trigger an immunological reaction. In a study of 40 patients with fibromyalgia, 17 patients with chronic regional pain syndrome, and 57 normal

controls, patients with chronic pain had significantly higher rates of increased intestinal permeability compared with normal controls. The presence of increased intestinal permeability, or “leaky gut,” has also been demonstrated in patients with juvenile arthrides. Another study found elevated intestinal permeability in a group of patients with lupus, ankylosing spondylitis (AS), and another condition called Behçet’s disease.

There is also evidence that dysbiosis, an imbalance of bacterial species

living in the gut, exists in patients with autoimmune conditions, and that this is mediated by the effects of diet. Furthermore, data shows that in patients with multiple sclerosis (MS), Sjögren syndrome, and rheumatoid arthritis, the extent of dysbiosis is associated with disease severity. Since diet is one of the key determinants of the microbiome composition, it follows that exposure to certain foods may be linked to dysbiosis and the development of an inappropriate immune response.



Celiac Disease

Secondly, a number of studies suggest an overlap between various autoimmune conditions and celiac disease, a severe form of gluten intolerance where gluten triggers an immune response against the cells of the intestine itself. A large Danish cohort study using data from almost 12 000 patients from the years 1977–2016 found that in 2016, the number of patients with celiac disease who also had some other form of autoimmune disorder was 16.4%, compared with only 5.3% in the general population. This is a three-fold higher rate of autoimmunity in patients with celiac disease. There are also associations between celiac disease and type 1 diabetes, as well as with fibromyalgia, psoriasis, and lupus. In such patients, strict avoidance of gluten may result in significant improvements in the associated conditions.

Food-Specific Antibodies

Thirdly, food-specific antibodies have been identified in individuals with autoimmunity. A study on rheumatoid arthritis found that these patients have increased levels of food-specific antibodies present in their intestinal fluid, compared to normal subjects. The involved foods included proteins from cow's milk (*alpha*-lactalbumin, *beta*-lactoglobulin, casein), cereals, hen's eggs (ovalbumin), cod fish, and pork meat. Similar results have been shown by an older study of proteins from wheat and milk. Another study of patients with ulcerative colitis found that these patients exhibited antibodies against various cow's milk proteins, present in their blood. Similar results have been found in children with liver disease as well as patients with Crohn's disease.

Diet Restrictions

Fourthly, clinical studies have demonstrated that dietary elimination of certain foods via application of a hypoallergenic diet can alleviate symptoms and alter the course of various autoimmune diseases. One study of 94 patients with rheumatoid arthritis found that following a diet eliminating foods including milk as well as certain dyes resulted in marked improvements in a subgroup of patients. These patients exhibited objective signs of improvement, and experienced clear aggravations upon re-exposure to these foods. Another study examined 40 patients with rheumatoid arthritis, and administered skin-prick testing to identify food allergens. Customized diets were then designed, and patients were asked to avoid exposure to their food allergens. Upon re-exposure, patients with positive prick tests to those foods experienced clear aggravation in their symptoms as well as increases in inflammatory cytokines such as TNF- α , IL-1 β , and C-reactive protein. Another study found that adherence to a gluten-free diet resulted in significant improvements among patients with fibromyalgia, irritable bowel syndrome, and lymphocytic enteritis.

Non-Celiac Gluten Sensitivity

Finally, some researchers have gone so far as to create a new category of gluten intolerance called non-celiac gluten sensitivity (NCGS). This refers to cases of gluten intolerance where the patient tests negative for celiac disease. At present, there is no diagnostic test for NCGS, so it is currently defined as "a condition associated with . . . symptoms in response to ingestion of foods containing wheat, rye, and barley, and the resolution of symptoms on removal of those foods from diet in individuals in whom CD [celiac disease] and wheat allergy have been ruled out." The range of symptoms reported may be quite broad, and includes abdominal pain, headache, tingling or numbness in hands and feet, fatigue, musculoskeletal pain, skin rashes, as well as rarer psychiatric conditions. It may be that conditions that were previously thought to be categorized as various autoimmune diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis or fibromyalgia, may in fact be manifestations of severe NCGS. We hope that continued research may shed further light on this in the future.

In conclusion, several lines of evidence indicate that autoimmune diseases may be influenced by an immune response against food proteins. Patients with autoimmune diseases often demonstrate impaired intestinal barrier function and dysbiosis. There is a higher rate of celiac disease amongst patients with various autoimmune diseases. Food antibodies have been identified among patients with an autoimmune disease. Clinical studies suggest that a hypoallergenic diet may benefit patients with an autoimmune disease. Finally, the new entity of non-celiac gluten sensitivity points to the critical role of gluten in the etiology of some autoimmune diseases, and creates a category for further research and analysis in this area.

If you are affected by an autoimmune disease, or think you may benefit from more information regarding food sensitivities, please consult a licensed naturopathic doctor for personalized recommendations.

In Vitro Comparative Study of the Survival of Probiotic Capsules in a Simulated Gastric Environment

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Abstract

Three commercial probiotic products containing primarily *Lactobacillus* and *Bifidobacterium* species were investigated. They were identified as P15, P50, and P11. All three products are encapsulated in vegetable-sourced capsules, with P11 being enteric-coated. The objective of this study was to evaluate capsule disintegration and microbial survival of probiotic strains upon exposure to simulated gastric conditions. Capsule disintegration was performed respecting the protocol of the United States Pharmacopoeia (USP).

Probiotic samples were incubated for defined periods of time in a simulated gastric environment, then neutralized and plated on a suitable culture media. After 60 minutes, the results showed that enteric-coated probiotic capsules ensure that microorganisms better survive destructive gastric acidic conditions.

Introduction

Probiotics of the genera *Lactobacillus* and *Bifidobacterium* have the potential to provide therapeutic and health benefits to humans (Kailasapathy and Chin, 2000). Benefits include (i) immune response enhancement, (ii) prevention of diarrheal diseases, (iii) prevention of hypercholesterolemia, (iv) improvement in lactose utilization, (v) prevention of upper gastrointestinal tract diseases, and (vi) stabilization of the gut mucosal barrier (Kailasapathy and Chin, 2000). To maximize these benefits, probiotics must resist degradation by digestive enzymes, be resistant to the action of bile salts, and survive the gastric acidic conditions (Kailasapathy and Chin, 2000). The supplement industry employs various types of capsules with or without enteric coating. The objective of this study was to evaluate capsule disintegration

and microbial survival of probiotic strains upon exposure to simulated gastric fluid (SGF).

Materials and Methodology

Test Samples and Microorganisms

Three commercial probiotic products were selected for investigation. The products are summarized below.

Table 1. List of Bacteria Species Contained in Each Test Sample

#	Potency Claimed per Capsule	Product Composition	Expiration Date*
P15	15 billion CFU	10 <i>Lactobacillus</i> strains	02/2019
		5 <i>Bifidobacterium</i> strains	
		1 <i>Lactococcus</i> strain	
P50	50 billion CFU	10 <i>Lactobacillus</i> strains	12/2018
		5 <i>Bifidobacterium</i> strains	
		1 <i>Lactococcus</i> strain	
P11	11 billion CFU	7 <i>Lactobacillus</i> strains	08/2018
		3 <i>Bifidobacterium</i> strains	
		1 <i>Streptococcus</i> strain	

*Study carried out in April 2017

Simulation of the Gastric Conditions and Disintegration Testing

Gastric conditions were simulated by preparing simulated gastric fluid (SGF). The pH of the solution was 1.2. Capsules were randomly selected then incubated in the SGF for 30 min and 60 min. Disintegration test was conducted in compliance with USP protocol.

Results and Discussion

Disintegration Test

Up to 30 min, all capsules irrespective of the manufacturer withstood acidic conditions. P15 started to disintegrate at 45 min with one capsule, and completely disintegrated at

60 min. As for P50, all six capsules disintegrated at 45 min. All capsules of P11 resisted disintegration at the end of the 60-minute stay in SGF. This could be due to the enteric coating, which acts by protecting its contents prior to reaching the small intestine.

Results presented in **Table 2** suggest that products P15 and P50 may be exposed to acidic conditions that affect the viability of the probiotics they contain. Studies have reported that the average time of exposure of food including drugs to the action of gastric fluid is more than 60 minutes (Camilleri et al, 1989).

Table 2. Disintegration Test Results in Simulated Gastric Fluid

#	Potency Claimed per Capsule	Number of Capsules Disintegrated		
		30 min	45 min	60 min
P15	15 billion CFU	0	1	6
P50	50 billion CFU	0	6	6
P11	11 billion CFU	0	0	0

Note: A product intended to act in the intestine should be able to withstand acidic conditions of the stomach

Resistance to Artificial Gastric Fluid

The effect of exposure to simulated gastric fluid was tested at 30 min and 60 min. Results of this comparative investigation are shown in **Table 3**. On the other hand, **Figure 1** shows the percentage of reduction of total plate count (TPC) relative to the initial count of probiotics in the three tested products.

Table 3. Total Plate Count (TPC) After Exposure in SGF

#	Potency Claimed per Capsule	Billion CFU per capsule		
		0 min	30 min	60 min
P15	15 billion CFU	71	16	6
P50	50 billion CFU	156	47	20
P11	11 billion CFU	20	17	13

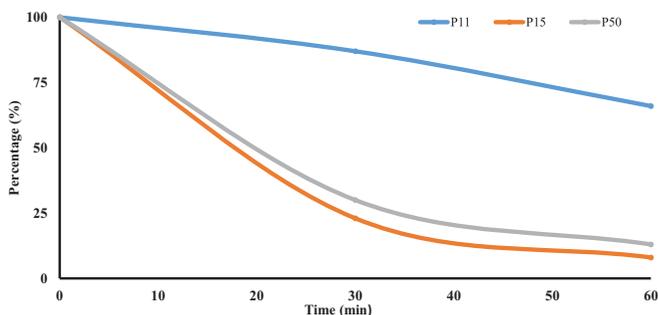


Figure 1: Cells Viability After Exposure to SGF

This illustration provides evidence of the impact of acidic conditions on probiotics. P15 and P50 exhibited 8% and 13% viable cells, respectively, versus 66% for P11 (**Fig. 1**) following 60 minutes of incubation. After 30 min, this viability was calculated to be 23%, 30%, and 87 % for P15, P50, and P11, respectively. These results show that *Lactobacillus* and *Bifidobacterium* species are sensitive to acidic conditions. These bacteria inhabit human intestines where the pH is neutral, between 6 and 7.5 (Maurer, J.M. et al, 2015). This demonstrates the critical importance of enteric coating for delayed release dosage.

The high loss rate observed in P15 and P50 might account for the considerable overbuilding during the production (473% and 312% for P15 and P50, respectively). Nevertheless, this overbuilding appears insufficient, as only about 40% of the claimed cells remained viable after 60 min in the simulated gastric fluid. In contrast, P11, with a more modest overbuild of 182%, still exceeded the claim, with 118% survival of viable cells.

Conclusions: Gastric acidic conditions are harsh and detrimental to most probiotic strains. As demonstrated in this study, survival of probiotic bacteria in acidic conditions is highly contingent on capsules surviving harsh gastric conditions. Non-enteric-coated capsules demonstrated poor efficacy, whereas enteric-coated capsules demonstrated higher viability. This was determined by both disintegration data and enumeration data following exposure to SGF.

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Autoimmunity

and Natural Health Products

by Philip Rouchotas, MSc, ND,
and Heidi Fritz, MA, ND

“Autoimmunity” refers to a category of health conditions characterized by the immune system inappropriately attacking the person’s own body. It is characterized by the production of antibodies and inflammatory mediators that produce swelling, redness, pain, and tissue damage. Autoimmune conditions may affect any organ of the body, including the joints, muscles, digestive system, skin, and more. Examples of autoimmune conditions include rheumatoid arthritis, fibromyalgia, ulcerative colitis, and psoriasis; even migraines are thought to have an autoimmune component. Several natural health products have been shown to modulate immune function and reduce inflammation in autoimmunity: probiotics, vitamin D, and eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) from fish oil.

Probiotics

Probiotic supplements are comprised of strains of bacteria whose presence in the human body, particularly the digestive system, is considered beneficial for human health. We now know that there are billions of bacterial cells in the human body, including the skin surface, oral cavity and mucous membranes, digestive tract, and reproductive system. In addition to their role in assisting with digestion, production of nutrients such as vitamin K, and protection against infectious bacterial species, beneficial bacteria are essential in the regulation of appropriate immune function. Probiotics present information to our immune cells that tells them how to respond appropriately to which stimuli.

One study found that administration of *Bifidobacteria* to humans resulted in increased production of Foxp3 T-regulatory cells in the blood. The researchers concluded that: “*B. infantis* administration to humans selectively promotes immunoregulatory responses, suggesting that this microbe may have therapeutic utility in patients with inflammatory disease.”

One study of uveitis, an autoimmune condition of the eye, showed that probiotics were able to reduce symptoms of uveitis, including retinal damage and insufficient tear production, in mice with induced uveitis. This coincided with a significant increase in T-regulatory cells and a reduction

in interferon-producing cells. T-regulatory cells are immune cells responsible for shutting down an inappropriate immune response, while interferon is an inflammatory mediator produced by immune cells.

Another study in patients with rheumatoid arthritis demonstrated that supplementation with a *Lactobacillus* and *Bifidobacteria*-containing probiotic resulted in a significant reduction in disease activity, measured as the Disease Activity Score of 28 joints (DAS-28) assessment. The study also found a reduction in insulin levels and in C-reactive protein, a marker of inflammation. This demonstrates the anti-inflammatory effects exerted by probiotics. A similar study in



rheumatoid arthritis patients found that probiotic supplementation was associated with a decrease in proinflammatory cytokines (tumor necrosis factor- α , interleukin-6, and interleukin-12) compared to placebo. There is also a wealth of information pertaining to probiotics' ability to modulate disease activity in digestive disorders such as ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease. A recent meta-analysis suggests that probiotics are as effective as aminosalicylate medications in the maintenance of remission of ulcerative colitis.



Vitamin D

Vitamin D is an essential nutrient, but also a steroid hormone. Vitamin D interacts with the vitamin D receptor (VDR), which is present on immune cells and promotes specific types of immune-cell function. It is widely accepted as having a critical role in influencing immune function, both with respect to fighting infection as well as promoting tolerance towards self. Low vitamin D status has been associated with a number of autoimmune conditions including autoimmune thyroid disease, rheumatoid arthritis, and vitiligo, among others. Synthetic analogs of vitamin D have gained widespread use as a topical treatment for psoriasis.

A study of healthy humans showed that supplementation with vitamin D₃ results in an increase in T-regulatory cells. Other immune cells—such as monocytes, dendritic cells, natural killer cells, natural killer T cells, and B cells—were not affected.

Vitamin D has also shown benefit in clinical trials of patients with systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE). A study of vitamin D supplementation in patients with lupus found that not only did the majority of lupus patients have suboptimal vitamin D levels (under 75 nmol/L), but after one year of vitamin D supplementation (2000 IU per day), patients had significantly better disease activity as measured by the SLE Disease Activity Index. Vitamin D-treated patients also had improvements in inflammatory markers and blood markers such as hemoglobin and white blood cell counts, compared to placebo.

A similar study in lupus patients found that vitamin D supplementation resulted in a “preferential increase of naïve CD4⁺ T cells, an increase of regulatory T cells, and a decrease of effector T_H1 and T_H17 cells,” indicating more balanced immune function. Vitamin D also decreased memory B cells responsible for producing antibodies, and decreased anti-DNA antibodies as well. During this time, no change in immunosuppressant medication was required, and there were no new flare-ups during the six-month observation period.

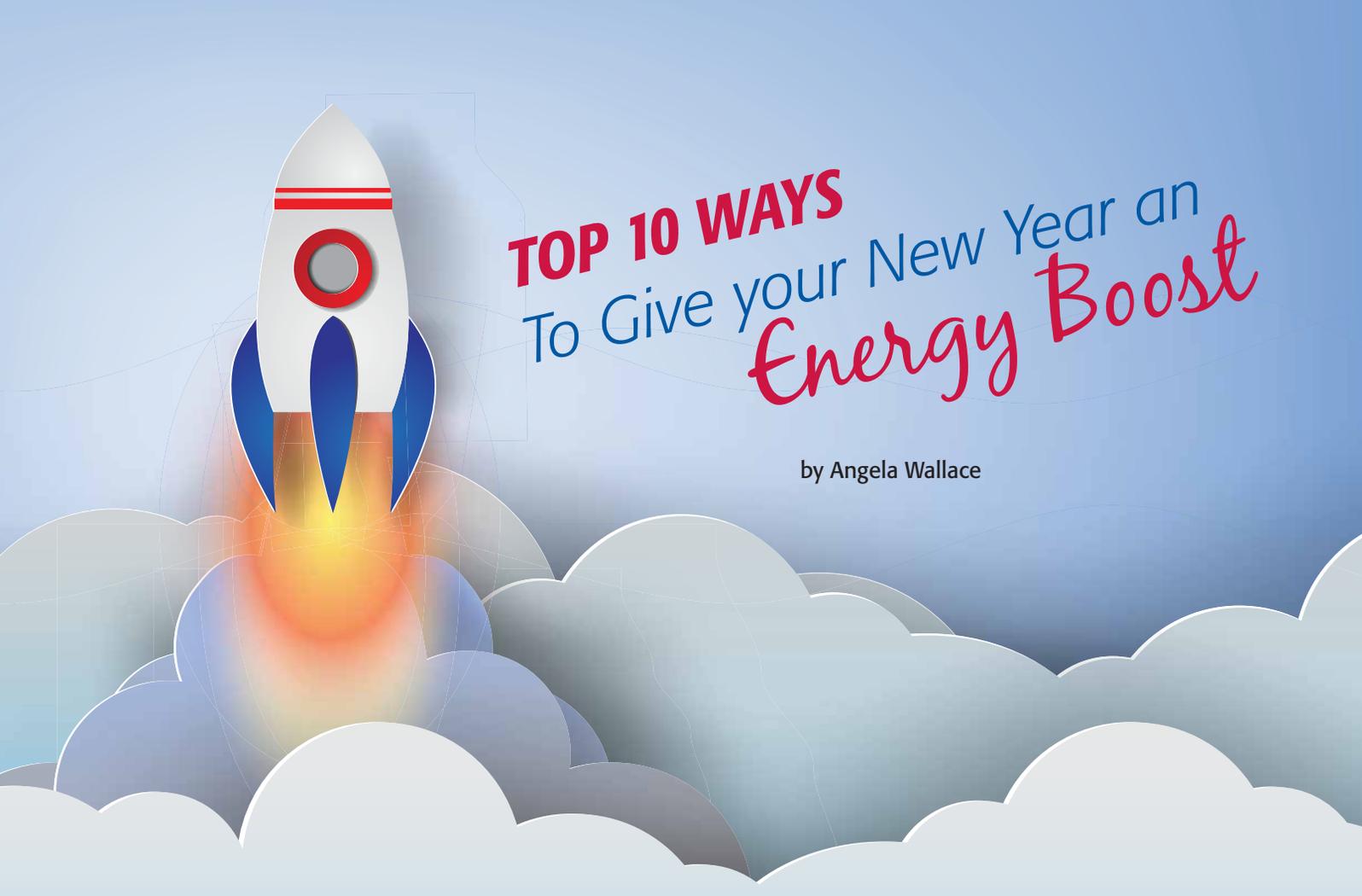
Eicosapentaenoic Acid

Eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) is one of the long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids present in fish oil. Of the fats in fish oil, EPA is the most anti-inflammatory. It blocks the production of proinflammatory cytokines by enzymes such as cyclooxygenase (COX) and lipoxygenase (LOX), and promotes the production of anti-inflammatory series of prostaglandins, leukotrienes, and resolvins. Fish-oil supplementation also lowers the inflammatory marker C-reactive protein.

Studies show that EPA supplementation can influence the function of dendritic cells and T-cells (immune cells), and that it can delay the onset of rheumatoid arthritis in animal models, as well as reduce the severity of arthritis. A systematic review of 23 studies concluded that in humans with rheumatoid arthritis, EPA supplementation in the form of fish oil shows a “consistent modest effect” on the reduction of joint swelling and pain, duration of morning stiffness, global assessments of pain, and disease activity, and use of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.

Supplementation with selected natural health products may have a role in the management of various conditions of autoimmunity.

Article including references on our blog: flourishbodyandmind.com



TOP 10 WAYS To Give your New Year an Energy Boost

by Angela Wallace

Are you feeling run down? The combination of holiday overindulgence and cold weather can leave you feeling tired and “sluggish.” Kick-start your new year with some natural energy boosters that will help you feel great and refreshed. The types of food and amount you eat throughout the day can greatly influence your energy levels; in fact, certain types of foods can boost your energy, while others can leave you feeling fatigued. I strongly believe that eating healthy whole foods and moving more is a great way to naturally boost energy. Read on to learn the top 10 things you can incorporate into your day to give yourself a natural energy boost and fuel your body this new year.

1. Fill Half Your Plate with Fruits and Vegetables

Filling half your plate with fruits and vegetables is a great way to fuel your body. Fruits and vegetables are full of vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients like fibre that keep our bodies healthy and working at their best. In addition, fruits and vegetables are great sources of antioxidants, which play an important role in reducing stress and inflammation in our bodies.

Tip: Aim to include at least one fruit or vegetable with your meals and snacks each day.

Example lunch: Spinach Pomegranate Salad (see page 37).

Example snack: Chocolate Smoothie (see page 37).

2. Eat Healthy Fats Regularly

Our bodies need fat in our diet to absorb fat-soluble vitamins (e.g. vitamin D) and to provide essential fatty acids (e.g. omega-3 and -6) which play important roles in our health like reducing inflammation in our bodies.

Including healthy fats in your diet regularly will provide your body with essential nutrients and support overall health. In addition, including healthy fats in your diet will help you feel satisfied postmeal, which can reduce overeating and weight gain.

Healthy fats include fatty fish (e.g. salmon, mackerel, tuna, sardines, etc.), avocado, vegetable oils, and nuts and seeds (e.g. almonds, walnuts, sunflower seeds, hemp seeds, chia seeds, etc.).



3. Get More Iron from Plant-Based Sources

Iron plays an important role in our energy levels, as it helps produce hemoglobin, which carries oxygen to different parts of our bodies. Sometimes, fatigue can be related to iron deficiency. If you are feeling extremely fatigued, check in with your health-care provider.

Whether you are deficient or not, including plant-based sources of iron in your diet regularly is a great way to ensure you are getting enough and making healthy food choices.

Iron is found in dark leafy greens like spinach and kale, legumes (e.g. kidney beans, chickpeas, lentils, etc.), potatoes, beets, iron-fortified grains (e.g. cereals, oatmeal, etc.), and soy foods like edamame beans.

4. Load Up on Fibre

Fibre plays many important roles in our body including promoting bowel regularity, supporting heart health, and controlling blood sugars.

Including fibre in your diet regularly will help support your overall health, keep you satisfied postmeals, and promote good energy.

Sources of fibre include beans and legumes, whole grains (e.g. oats, breads, brown rice, etc.), fruits and vegetables, and nuts and seeds.

5. Move More

Any form of physical activity can be a big energy and mood booster. Being active gets the blood flowing and ultimately better your heart health. The increase in blood flow will provide more oxygen to our bodies' cells, allowing for an increase in energy. In addition, it releases natural feel-good chemicals in our brain that help improve mood and reduce risk of anxiety and depression.

Bottom line: Next time you are feeling a little tired, engage in some low- to moderate-intensity exercise to give yourself a boost without overworking.

Tip: Low- to moderate-intensity exercise will look different for each person, but sometimes all you require is 10 to 20 minutes of a moderate exercise (e.g. walking, yoga, light weights, etc.) to give you the boost you need.

6. Drink Plenty of Water

Dehydration can leave you feeling extremely tired, even if you are only slightly dehydrated. If you notice yourself getting tired part way through the day, check in on how much water you've been drinking.

Aiming for eight cups a day isn't ideal for everyone, but find what works for you. You know you are dehydrated if your urine is a darker colour and you feel thirsty.

Tips:

- Take "walk" breaks at work to fill up your water bottle.
- Drink ½ cup of water before you eat anything to ensure proper digestion and hydration.

7. Save Your Caffeine for Midday

Although caffeine is often used first thing in the morning to help wake you up, this can often lead to a quick crash. Research suggests you would get the biggest "bang for your buck" if you had your coffee in the late morning or early afternoon. By that point in the day, you are starting to unwind and slow down, and therefore could likely benefit from a little energy boost.

Bottom line: If you drink coffee, do it when it works for you. However, a late-morning or early-afternoon coffee gives you the best energy boost. Ideally, you should keep coffee to 2-4 cups per day as a maximum.





8. Soak Up the Sun (and Vitamin D)

The winter months can naturally have you feeling less energized. Make a point to soak up the sun for at least 10–20 minutes each day. The natural light and dose of vitamin D can boost your energy levels and help you beat the winter “blah” feeling.

How to get out during the winter?

- Park further away, so you are forced to walk to and from your car.
- Take a short walk on your lunch.
- Engage in winter activities on your free time (e.g. skating, skiing, snow-tubing, winter hiking, etc.).

9. Reduce Screen Time Before Bed

Getting a good night’s sleep plays a critical role in your energy levels, as it directly influences both your physical and mental health. Poor sleep can lead to decreased energy and productivity, weight gain, and bad mood. Research suggests that melatonin (a naturally occurring hormone) is controlled by light exposure and helps regulate our sleep cycle. Screens emit a blue light that can be very disruptive to our sleep cycle, so current recommendations include eliminating screens for 1–2 hours before bed.

What can you do instead? If two hours seems like too much, start small. Perhaps eliminate screens for 30–60 minutes before bed. During this time, try reading, listening to a podcast or music, colouring, doing crosswords, etc.

10. Limit Sugars

Keeping your blood sugar levels in control is a key aspect of regulating energy. When you eat high-sugar foods, you get a spike in your blood sugar and an initial burst in energy. However, that quickly crashes, and the spike-and-crash cycle is what creates more fatigue.

Bottom line: Eat more whole grains and foods high in fibre like fruits and vegetables, while limiting your sugar intake. This will help stabilize your blood sugar levels by providing a slow release of energy throughout the day, rather than a spike and crash.

If you are looking to boost your energy over the winter, try implementing a few or all of these strategies, and enjoy feeling refreshed!



Angela Wallace

A registered dietitian with the College of Dietitians of Ontario, personal trainer, and family food expert who specializes in women and child nutrition and fitness, she loves helping families get healthy together.

eatrightfeelright.ca

A serene winter scene featuring a snow-covered park. In the foreground, a wooden park bench with metal armrests sits on a thick layer of snow. The background is filled with tall, thin trees, their branches heavily laden with snow. A bright sun is visible through the trees in the distance, creating a warm, golden glow that filters through the white landscape. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and quiet.

Energy Crisis? *Not Here!*

by Gordon Raza, BSc

January is an awesome time of year: daylight hours are getting longer; and the postcard-perfect snow cover stirs memories of tobogganing, skating, snowshoeing, and winter revelry. All you need is the “activation energy” winter mornings demand. Truth is, the cliché of breakfast being the most important meal of the day bears snow-tire traction, whether you’re gearing up for a day of fun or simply clearing a path to the car and scraping the windshield.

Along with a well-balanced breakfast of healthy fats and proteins, there are several nutrients worth consideration. For those of us that plow through the morning with a drive-thru coffee, caffeine is a great stimulant, but your body and mind may crave more...

Medium-Chain Triglycerides

Medium-chain triglycerides are terrific nutrients for hectic mornings, with caprylic (C8) and capric (C10) acids being the principal components of this versatile oil. MCT oil delivers approximately 100 calories per tablespoon, and goes great with coffee, oatmeal, or yogurt, or even in a morning smoothie. MCTs are easily digested and metabolized, don’t get stored as fat, and are preferred fuel for the brain.

D-Ribose

Here’s another suggestion: D-ribose is a simple five-carbon sugar with a niche market for chronic fatigue syndrome and cardiac patients. It serves as fast fuel for the generation of energy and endurance at the cellular level. A teaspoon or two in your coffee or tea will energize, without spiking blood glucose levels.

Maca Root

Maca root, in powder or convenient capsule form, is another way to energize winter mornings. It contains a mosaic of nutrients great for energy, stamina, and mood. This trio’s beneficial traits are definitely worth tapping into.

Ginseng

Looking to harness your newfound morning momentum? There are several botanicals that can help with mental clarity and focus as you chart your road map for another great day. A tandem of products—Siberian ginseng and *Panax ginseng*—are among the side effect-free botanicals worth exploring.

Good morning and good day, whether you’re schussing down powder-drenched slopes or strolling sandy shores... Spring will be here sooner than you can imagine!

Using Mind-Body-Spirit Wisdom to Overcome Depression

by Dr. Joan Samuels-Dennis, PhD



Depression

Everybody experiences “ups and downs” in their lives. When a period of low mood or lack of interest in things we use to enjoy lasts more than two weeks, it’s time to take notice and take action. About 3.2 million (11.3%) of all Canadians are likely to experience depression over their lifetime. Some of the more common symptoms of depression include a persistent low mood or markedly decreased interest in things we enjoy, change in appetite or unexpected weight loss/gain, sleep disturbance, agitated mood, fatigue, feeling guilty or worthless, poor concentration or memory, and recurring thoughts of death or suicide. Experts suggest if two to four of these symptoms are present for two or more weeks, the person is likely experiencing depression.

Depression and Spiritual Health

It is not often that we think about depression as an opportunity to spiritually awaken. However, counsellors and psychotherapists whose approaches combine Eastern and Western understandings of the mind, body, and spirit are challenging us to think about mental illness in a whole new way. They suggest that depressive states are indicative of a misalignment between our beliefs, thoughts, and daily living; and our higher calling to love, live fearlessly, and fulfil a divine purpose connected to our lived experiences. They ask the question: “What if depression is simply an internal yearning to become our true selves—a vibrant, healthy, fully energized spirit?”

For centuries, Western spiritual/religious traditions have held the belief that we all possess a personal spirit, the eternal part of our being. There is the belief, for example, that the physical body of the first human beings did not come to life until a spirit—breath of life—was placed inside them and established a living soul. Similarly, for centuries, traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) has understood the body to be energetic and sustained by Qi or Chi—a vital force that encompasses the sense of both life and breath. According to TCM, an energy network—called the meridian system—exists in the body, along which Qi flows and maintains life. Fourteen major meridian channels follow the cardiovascular circulatory system, with a network of progressively finer branches (collaterals and subcollaterals), permeating and supplying Qi to all the cells of the body. Much like blood, Qi flows through the interspaces of muscles or the interstices between different tissues such as bones, muscles, and blood vessels in a complete cycle every 24 hours.

Spirit Imbalances and Illness

We often seek physiological explanations for our health problems. However, the merging of Eastern and Western traditions opens the door to finding spiritual explanations for illness. If the “personal spirit” and Qi are one and the same, then—much like the physical body—the spirit exists in states of health or illness. In the early 1980s, Dr. John Diamond, a psychiatrist based in Australia, studied and identified the primary emotions connected to each meridian. The liver meridian, for example, is correlated with emotions of happiness and unhappiness. If Qi is diminished in that meridian for any reason, the person will feel unhappy.

Numerous techniques including natural remedies, food, laughter, exercise, meditation, and acupuncture have been used to balance the meridians; however, the effects are temporary. In the early 1990s, Dr. Kandis Blakely, a psychotherapist based in the US, made a fresh discovery that forgiveness of the events that triggered an imbalance in Qi lead to permanent rebalancing of the meridians.

More recently, a simple yet profound understanding of the process through which illness and disease develop in the human body has come to light. All moments in life are filtered by our spirit and experienced as either loving or fearful. Loving moments generate thoughts and emotions that foster a deep sense of connection to ourselves, others, and a divine higher power. Unloving moments generate thoughts and emotions that foster persistent fear, leading to a disconnection from ourselves, others, and the divine. A moment that is perceived as unloving becomes a mental or physical stressor that triggers a thought or emotional reaction that is both fear-based and toxic in nature. Inevitably, toxic fear-based thoughts compromise the health of the spirit and register as meridian imbalances. Through a process called “cellular mechanics,” a persistent imbalance in the flow of energy without appropriate intervention causes illness and/or disease.



Forgiveness and Spiritual Balance

Forgiveness is the path to love. It appears that the spirit exists in states of health when we love completely and experience the love of others. Love ensures a complete and unhindered flow of light and energy throughout the body. Alternatively, fear promotes states of illness by creating blockages and imbalances in the flow of light and energy in the body. In our day-to-day lives, love is exemplified by behaviours such as kindness, patience, calmness, and flexibility. Fear is exemplified by behaviours such as anger, boasting, pride, violence, and control.



The power of these new approaches lies in their ability to use a muscle-performance test to quickly identify which of the 14 meridians are imbalanced, and the specific year and month an event occurred that caused the imbalance. Particularly in the early stages of the therapeutic process, priority is given to a thorough assessment of imbalances in the thymus, circulation-sex (CSX), and heart meridian.

The thymus regulates the immune system and is associated with love-based emotions of faith, gratitude, trust, and courage, as well as fear-based emotions of hate and envy. The CSX regulates the adrenal and reproductive glands, and is associated with love-based emotions of generosity, relaxation, and letting go, as well as fear-based emotions of jealousy, sexual tension, and remorse. The heart meridian regulates the supply of energy to the heart. It is associated with love-based emotions of affection, connection, and forgiveness, and fear-based emotions of anger. Once the event is identified, the therapist moves the individual through a forgiveness process and offers spiritual guidance that increase their individual’s capacity to authentically let go. Using this approach, most individuals recover from depression after three to eight sessions.

Love and Living Fearlessly

These approaches create opportunity for each individual to connect their life experiences with a spiritual call that resonates with religious/spiritual traditions around the globe—the call to love and live fearlessly. Every individual is introduced to a profound truth; our unique moments of feeling unloved, disconnected, and fearful have a purpose: They teach us what love is, by first teaching us what it is not. Our greatest life challenge is to overcome the fear created by our most unloving moments and permanently live in a place of love as a vibrant, healthy, and energetic spirit.



Joan Samuels-Dennis

Dr. Joan Samuels-Dennis is the Director and Founder of Becoming Canada. She is an adjunct professor at Trinity Western University, and a counsellor who combines the best of Eastern and Western understandings of health and wellbeing. She is also the co-editor of *Becoming: The Journey to Self-Love*.



Winter Darkness

Time of Renewal, Passion, and Purpose

by Theresa Nicassio, PhD, Psychologist

Immersion into the darkness of winter may be our best opportunity to discover and nurture the vital seeds of our becoming.

Appreciation

There is something profoundly existential about the cyclic reminders that the four seasons represent. They are great teachers, keeping us honest and in-tune with the impermanence of life as we know it, while simultaneously offering the intoxicating opportunity to live fully, one moment at a time. Perhaps that was the inspiration that gave birth to Vivaldi's masterpiece concertos, *The Four Seasons*.

Having grown up in sunny Southern California, and then moving to colder climates in my adulthood, has given me the opportunity to appreciate the seasons in a way that I might never have known had I always lived in Canada. The world that I grew up in, first in the Los Angeles area and later in Rancho Cucamonga, had pretty much three seasons: spring, summer, and fall. Winter was more of an idea than a reality.

When I was preparing to move to Ohio to attend my doctoral program in psychology, winter was such a foreign concept that my family and friends were genuinely anxious about my move. This response was magnified a thousand-fold when they learned that I was moving to Canada and later became a citizen here.

A Funny Observation

In hindsight it makes me chuckle, but the concerns of my loved ones about me living somewhere where there were real winters with cold, dark, and snowy days were very real. There is something about the chill and the darkness that naturally arouses feelings of fear and vulnerability. Interestingly, this response is not that dissimilar to the response I frequently witness when I mention to clients the prospect of meditation—of creating an inner place of quiet and discovery, devoid of the common distractions of daily living, as a place for transformation, discovery, and healing.

Shamanic Perspective of Winter

Ever since reading Jerome Frank's seminal book *Persuasion and Healing: A Comparative Study of Psychotherapy* while a graduate student at Ohio State University, I have been curious and entranced by the possibilities of healing that are not typically explored here in North America. So, back in 2001, while amidst my most difficult life challenges, I decided to take a big leap into learning more about the healing practices used in other cultures. Most notably, I enrolled in a cutting-edge three-year program that was being launched as a collaborative health initiative by Vancouver Coastal Health and Langara College, called the *Integrative Energy Healing Practitioner Certificate Program*. The core vision of this unique program—that has been evolving in a variety of ways since—explores ways to bridge the gap between modern health practices and the wisdom from ancient Aboriginal and Eastern healing practices.

The program was a gift in more ways that I can express with a faculty of brilliant professors. One of my favourite parts of the program was learning about the Incan Shamanic healing traditions, practices, and philosophy from Lois Ross, who had spent decades in this unique world, helping countless people along their life journeys with her wisdom, skill, and experience.

One of the most pronounced gifts of this philosophy relates to “Calling in the Directions,” which is a central practice of many Aboriginal communities. Each season represents lessons and guidance for us. The autumn represents the time of shedding our outmoded ways of being, so that we can be reclaimed by life. The winter follows, where in our nakedness after shedding our familiar old skins, we enter the quiet darkness. In that darkness, we face our greatest fears, so that we can go deeper within ourselves to discover the power, courage, and clarity of purpose that resides deep within us. Because we are stripped of our regular distractions and former beliefs, this time can bring forth fears, especially because of the implicit necessity of venturing out of our comfort zone. Again, the parallel with meditative practice is uncanny, as it is often when we move inward to our most basic humanity and humility that our ego can feel most threatened. Following this time where clarity and courage are harvested, we enter the time of spring when our resurgence of life is at its peak. This is good news, since the passion that is made possible by our renewed sense of our “why” becomes the wind beneath our wings that we need to transform and continue on our purpose-driven path. The summer is when we can reap the benefits of the wisdom gleaned from this process, where, like the eagle, we are able to see the big picture as well as the details.



Invitations for Reflection

1. How might thinking about winter as an opportunity for renewal change your relationship with the cold dark days?
2. Is it possible to imagine the possibility that there may be even just one aspect of your life that may be “outmoded”? If so, what do you notice inside yourself when you imagine shedding it as you move forward and courageously face your life without its familiar comfort?
3. In this time of introspection, is there an aspect of who you are that is feeling like it is wanting to sprout into being as you move towards spring? If so, can you imagine giving yourself permission to nurture this seed of your becoming in an even more impassioned way than you have in the past?

As you ponder these invitations, allow yourself to notice the sensations and thoughts that arise within you. Remember that there are no “need to,” “have to,” or “should” implied in these invitations. We are all on a journey. We all have the opportunity for purposeful living. During this time of deliciously indulgent and pensive respite, know that you are worthy of this haven of nurturance that lovingly prepares the essence of your being to one day sprout and come to fruition.



Theresa Nicassio, PhD, Psychologist

Theresa is a kindness advocate, chef, wellness educator, and the award-winning author of *YUM: Plant-Based Recipes for a Gluten-Free Diet*.

3 Natural Tips

for Healthier Hibernation This Winter

When the temperature drops, many of us are tempted to hibernate. This means staying indoors, not getting our daily exercise, and eating junk food in front of the TV. There's a reason why winter is the season when we typically gain weight and accumulate all the toxins that come with unhealthy and unbalanced diets.

Don't wait for spring to get back to a healthier routine! Now is the time to use the momentum of your New Year's resolutions to kick-start a simple and safe routine to rid your body of all those unwanted contaminants.

These unwanted substances can enter our bodies through the foods we eat and even through the products we put on our skin, like makeup or laundry detergent residue. While our liver can metabolize these substances, it's always a good idea to support its function by making small changes to your lifestyle so your liver doesn't go into overdrive.

If you're hibernating this winter, try these simple tips to keep your body fit.



Help Your Digestion

To promote a healthy digestive tract and liver function, remember to get enough fibre and stay hydrated. The most common advice is to drink at least eight cups of water a day, but this number can actually vary from person to person. On top of that, consider taking a probiotic supplement (good bacteria) to boost your digestive health and maintain a happy gut. It's all about finding a routine that works for you — one that clears your body of waste and makes room for the healthy foods and nutrients you want — and sticking to it.

Eat Clean

Many Canadians understand the benefits that come with switching to organic food. When you choose organic, you're ensuring that your body isn't exposed to harmful pesticides, insecticides and other chemicals, so that you only get the nutrients of the foods you love. You can easily find organic options for common fruits and vegetables that are high in detoxifying properties and are not only clean themselves, but help clean your body too.

When grocery shopping, look for the Canada Organic logo before buying to make sure you're only getting foods that are up to Canada's high organic standards.



Complement Your Diet

There are many natural supplements that can help you maintain your healthy summer body, even through the winter hibernation. For example, milk thistle contains the unique flavonoid silymarin, which is an antioxidant that can help increase levels of glutathione — an important liver detoxifier — in the liver cells. Other antioxidants, such as vitamin C and vitamin E, play a vital role in the detoxification process at the cellular level. You can also get both of these in many forms, such as through supplements, gummy chews, droplets and powders.

Hopefully, these simple reminders will help you get through winter without losing all the healthy progress you made through the summer. Remember to always consult your health-care practitioner when making changes to your diet or supplement regime.



Michelle W. Book

A graduate in holistic nutrition and spokesperson for the Canadian Health Food Association (CHFA), she focuses on living life and raising a family focused on holistic health and wellness.



Winter Recipes for Satiny, Silky Skin

by Marie-Jo Mercier

Ah! Winter... What a wonderful time of year! I love this season where nature freezes and lays dormant under a thick white coat of snow. Whether it's snowshoeing in the woods, enjoying a good book by the fire, or the calm that reigns after a big snowfall, winter always finds a way to warm my heart. However, I understand that for some, the cold weather may bring about small inconveniences: Dry hands; a dull complexion; chapped lips; and even cracked, itchy skin. To help you enjoy this beautiful cold season, try these easy recipes to hydrate and moisturize your skin this winter.

Moisturizing Lavender Bath Bomb

- 1 cup baking soda
- 20 drops New Roots Herbal's Organic Lavender Essential Oil
- ½ cup citric acid
- Dried lavender flowers (optional)
- 1 tbsp. cocoa butter

Mix the baking soda and citric acid together in a bowl until the mixture is smooth, and ensure that there are no lumps. Add and mix the dried lavender flowers (optional) as well as the cocoa butter. Add in the drops of essential oil, and mix again; it is very important to mix everything well. Press the mixture as firmly as possible into a muffin pan*, and let dry overnight. Remove the bath bombs from the pan, and let them dry on a flat surface for a day or until they are solid.

*If you want to make a ball shape rather than a disc, you can use a spherical mold.

Frosty Winter Scrub

- 4 tbsp. coarse sea salt
- 3 to 4 drops of New Roots Herbal's Organic Peppermint Essential Oil*
- 1 tsp. sweet almond oil
- Dried mint leaves (optional)

Mix ingredients together and use immediately. You can add more sweet almond oil if the salt seems too dry and is not sticking together well. Massage the mixture over your entire body in a circular fashion, starting at the feet and ending with the top of the neck, placing emphasis on the rougher areas (heels, knees, elbows). Rinse your skin and pat dry with a towel. Finish by applying sweet almond oil.

*You can replace the peppermint essential oil with lavender essential oil for a more relaxing exfoliation.

**You can triple or quadruple the recipe and place it in an airtight glass container. It can be kept for several months in a cool and dry place. If there is separation between the oil and salt, simply mix again.



Weight Loss

How to Stay Motivated

by Sharisse Dalby, RNC

With the New Year comes new excitement and a fresh perspective on your health. It encourages you to reflect on your previous goals, and to begin focusing on some new ones.

After the thrill of overindulging throughout the holidays, often comes a resolution for weight loss. This excitement helps you to wake up for that early morning workout, squeeze in time to meal prep, and even say no to the pastries in your office lunch room.

But after the excitement settles down and weight loss stalls, how do you stay motivated? As a nutritionist, the following tips are what I recommend or my clients to stay focused as their initial motivation wears off.

Focus on One Change at a Time

New goals bring a lot of excitement, as well as a need to make all the changes at once. But maintaining multiple changes in habits at the same time leads to feelings of overwhelming guilt, and, eventually, throwing in the towel. And back to your old habits you go!

To see success in weight loss and maintain motivation, it takes patience and a willingness to go at it from a different angle.

Begin by focusing on one small change that you feel confident you'll succeed at quickly. This will give you your first win, which leads to the encouragement you need to keep going. When you take the necessary time to build on each habit, they will start to stick. As you master

each habit, the more difficult changes will not be as hard as you first expected.

Here are a few changes I get my clients to start with:

- Drink 8–10 glasses of water a day.
- Add 30 minutes of exercise to your daily routine.
- Eat 1–2 cups of vegetables at each meal.

Try Something New Weekly

Often, motivation gets lost simply because weight loss has stalled, but if you switch things up by trying new things, you can keep your body guessing and the pounds falling off.

Boredom is another reason why motivation dies down. By adding new things in weekly, you keep yourself excited and focused—even when the scale isn't moving. That's an important step in changing habits!

I always encourage my clients to pick one of the following new habits to add to their routine each week:

1. Pick out a new fruit or vegetable.
2. Try a different exercise class or workout video.
3. Find a new recipe to add to your meal plan.



Look for Small Wins That Add up to Big Changes

Have you ever noticed how easy it is to lose perspective when you lack excitement and motivation? You work so hard to make a little progress, and then quickly forget why you started in the first place. Those big wins keep you motivated, but being able to stay motivated when it feels like you aren't moving forward is even more important.

Becoming aware of each win, big and small, helps you maintain perspective when you're feeling discouraged or tired of putting in the effort. Learning to celebrate everything is one of the most critical steps in successful habit changes.

I encourage my clients to keep track of the following:

1. Write down three big goals you want to accomplish: One physical, one mental, and one habitual.
2. Keep a weekly progress report where you write down three wins from the week, no matter how big or small they may seem. This is also a great way to keep track of your progress on your big goals.
3. Every month, reflect on your big goals to keep yourself on track, and reflect on your weekly progress reports to remind yourself of how hard you've worked, and how far you've come.

When it comes to weight loss, the initial motivation is great for getting you started, but that motivation needs to flex your willpower muscle over and over until these changes become your new habits. If one of your goals this year is weight loss, try these tips to keep you on track to meet your 2018 goals!

Sharisse's Easy Detox Juice

Ingredients

- 1 beet
- 1 red apple
- 1 red pepper
- 1 lemon
- 2 carrots

Directions

Peel your beet and carrots, and cut them into large pieces. Core and seed your pepper and apple, and cut them into large pieces. Juice in your juicer, add the lemon juice, and serve immediately. Or, place in a high-speed blender until smooth (you may need to add a little water to get the desired consistency).

Serves 1.



Sharisse Dalby, RNC

Registered nutritional counselor; she helps families and children beat their health struggles, focusing on digestive and emotional issues.

sharissedalby.com

Culinary Corner

Slow-Cooker Hearty Vegan Lentil Soup

Flourish Original Recipe



Ingredients

- 15 ml (1 tbsp.) olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 garlic clove, chopped
- 1 sweet red pepper, diced
- 3 carrots, diced
- 6 cubed tomatoes or 796 ml tinned diced tomatoes
- 1 cup of dry lentils
- 2.25 litres (9 cups) vegetable broth
- 15 ml (1 tbsp.) Italian spices
- Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
- Chopped parsley (to garnish)

Instructions

Fry onion and garlic in a skillet until translucent. Add sweet pepper and carrots, and fry for about 2 minutes. Transfer fried vegetables to slow cooker. Add tomatoes, lentils, broth, spices, salt, and pepper. Cook at low for 8 h or until the lentils are soft. Serve in bowls and garnish with parsley.

Chocolate Smoothie



Ingredients

- 1 cup almond milk
- 1 banana
- ¼ avocado
- 2 tbsp. hemp seeds
- 2 tsp. cocoa powder
- 1 tsp. peanut butter
- 1 tsp. honey
- Ice cubes

Instructions

Combine all the ingredients, add some ice cubes, blend together, and enjoy!

Spinach Pomegranate Salad

Ingredients

- 5 cups fresh spinach
- 2 cups sweet potatoes, cubed
- 1 cup pomegranate seeds (arils)
- 1 cup cooked quinoa
- ¼ cup tahini
- ½ cup apple-cider vinegar
- Salt and black pepper to taste
- 1 tbsp. olive oil (for sweet potatoes)
- 1 tbsp. honey



Instructions

Preheat oven to 175 °C (375 °F) and place cubed sweet potatoes in a baking pan. Mix with olive oil, black pepper, and salt. Bake for 35 minutes or until tender.

In a bowl, mix together spinach, pomegranate arils, quinoa, and sweet potatoes.

In a separate bowl, mix together tahini, honey, apple-cider vinegar, and salt/black pepper to make the dressing.

Dress salad just before serving, and enjoy!



Angela Wallace

A registered dietitian with the College of Dietitians of Ontario, personal trainer, and family food expert who specializes in women and child nutrition and fitness,

she loves helping families get healthy together.

eatrightfeelright.ca

Vegan Chocolate Zucchini Cake

(Gluten Free and Nut Free)

Today, I'm sharing a healthier chocolate cake version that is *so good!* It's vegan, gluten-free, nut-free, and has no added sugar!

This cake is entirely sweetened with dates (unless you make the alternate frosting, in which case it uses maple syrup), and it's so darn healthy that you can treat yourself to a big ol' piece and feel good about it!

Cake Ingredients

- 1 cup oat flour*
- ¼ cup cacao powder (I like a scant ¼ cup)
- 1½ tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- ¼ tsp. Himalayan salt
- ⅔ cup pitted packed dates (130 g)**
- ¾ cup warm water
- 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- 3 tbsp. melted coconut oil
- ⅔ cup lightly packed shredded zucchini
- ½ cup dark chocolate chips (optional, but makes it even better!)
 - *Simply grind oats in a blender, coffee grinder, or food processor.
 - **You can also use date paste, but it needs to be made without any water.

Frosting Ingredients

- ⅔ cup pitted lightly packed dates
- ¼ cup full-fat coconut milk
- 1 tbsp. tahini
- ½ tsp. pure vanilla extract
- 3–4 tbsp. cacao powder
- 3 tbsp. melted coconut oil

Frosting Ingredients (Alternate Version)

- ½ cup warm water
- ⅔ cup maple syrup
- ⅔ cup tahini or almond butter
- 3 tbsp. melted coconut butter
- 2 tbsp. melted coconut oil
- 3–4 tbsp. cacao powder (depending on how chocolatey you want it)
- ½ tsp. pure vanilla extract



Cake Instructions

Preheat the oven to 175 °C (350 °F).

Whisk together all dry ingredients in a bowl. Blend the dates, water, vanilla, and coconut oil in a blender until smooth. Add the liquid mixture to the dry, along with the zucchini and the chocolate chips. Gently stir it all together.

Scoop the batter into a greased 8" × 8" pan. Bake for 20–22 minutes, or until a toothpick comes out clean when inserted into the middle. Let cool completely before adding the frosting or slicing it. It should be very moist!

Frosting Instructions

Blend the dates and coconut milk until smooth in a blender. Add the remaining ingredients, and blend until smooth. Pour the frosting over the cool cake. Place into the fridge for 2–4 hours, or until it firms up (speed up the process by sticking it in the freezer for 1 hour).

Frosting Instructions (Alternate Version)

Blend all ingredients in a blender until smooth. Pour over the cooled cake. Place into the fridge for at least 3 hours, or until it has thickened.



Heather Pace

A classically trained chef turned raw-dessert chef, she is a travel bug, a chocoholic, and a certified yoga instructor.

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flourish

February Blog Preview

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For more articles on health, lifestyle, and wellness—add to that delicious recipes!—all in a more dynamic and accessible format, visit our *Flourish* blog at flourishbodyandmind.com



Green Tea and L-Theanine

Green tea is made from the leaves of the plant *Camellia sinensis* and has been used as a medicinal herb for over 4000 years. Many health benefits are attributed to the catechin and caffeine content, as well as that of the compound L-theanine, accounting for about 50% of the total amino acids from these tea leaves. [. . .]



Healthy Starts – How to Begin When Starting Your Health Journey

How do you start when the party's over and when you are physically and mentally spent from planning, organizing, preparing, cleaning, delegating, coordinating, presenting, and appearing and... all the endless to do's? [. . .]



Gluten-Free Chocolate Lava Cake

Either to comfort yourself during a cold winter evening, or simply as a Valentine's Day treat, what's better than a good chocolate dessert? This gluten-free version of a molten center chocolate cake will surely satisfy you! [. . .]



Strengthen immune performance to sideline colds and flu this winter...

Exposure to seasonal colds is inevitable. How we resist infection and accelerate recovery directly affect how we “enjoy” winter. There are many ways we can prepare our immune system from the cellular level up to keep healthy this winter. [. . .]



Natural Nootropics – Because We Could All Use a Boost!

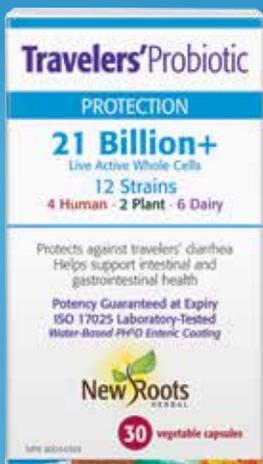
When it comes to energy levels, mood, memory and concentration, we all seem to have good days and bad days. But when the bad days seem to constantly outnumber the good ones, it might just be a sign that your body is calling out for help. Nootropics are a class of treatments intended to [. . .]



Nutrients to lower your cholesterol, naturally!

Cholesterol management is among the major lifestyle adjustments you can make to improve cardiovascular status and reduce the risk of heart attack or stroke. There are many side-effect free natural alternative alternatives to prescription drugs to control your cholesterol. [. . .]

DOES MY ALL-
INCLUSIVE HAVE TO
INCLUDE DIARRHEA?



You should be basking in the sun, not suffering in the bathroom. Our **Travelers' Probiotic** packs all kinds of probiotics into our all-natural water-based PH⁵D enteric-coated capsule to ensure you're making memories, not trips to the bathroom.

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