True Natural Health

The Magazine of the Natural Health Society of Australia

Autumn 2025

- The Natural Health lifestyle
- Meditation
- Vertigo
- Navigating menopause
- Culinary herbs for health
- Your questions answered and more!

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Contents

Autumn

Welcome to the Autumn 2025 edition of *True Natural Health*, the magazine dedicated to promoting a holistic and natural approach to health and wellbeing. As autumn begins to unfold, we bring you a wealth of information and inspiration to help you navigate this season with vitality and balance.

In this issue, Roger French shares his five 'secrets' to uncommonly good health, distilled from his 50 years of researching natural health. These insights are designed to simplify the often overwhelming topic of health, making it easy for us to benefit from his wisdom. Roger also addresses common health queries in his 'Your Questions Answered' segment, providing clarity on topics like fish oil supplements, dental floss and sleep apnoea.

Dr. Greg Fitzgerald (Allied Health) offers his wisdom through memorable quotes that can guide your health decisions, while Candace Coughlan introduces us to the healing power of autumn's culinary herbs. Lyn Craven explores natural therapies for vertigo and Nat Evans provides strategies for managing menopausal symptoms naturally.

We also delve into recent health news, the benefits of meditation and the role of free radicals in health and illness. Our recipes section features delicious and health-boosting dishes that were served during our November Wallacia Wellness lunch.

The Natural Health Society of Australia continues its mission to inform and empower individuals to achieve long-term health and happiness through drug-free, self-help methods. We are grateful for the support of our members and donors, and we invite you to join us in promoting a healthier, more natural way of living.

Thank you for being part of our community. We hope this issue inspires you.

Yours in health,
Rebcca and the Natural Health Society of Australia team

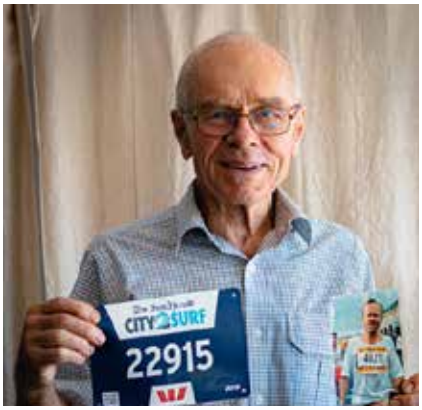
Acknowledgement
The Natural Health Society gratefully acknowledges the continuing and generous support of the Australian Youth and Health Foundation, which established the Society.

About the Natural Health Society

The Natural Health Society is Australia's longest-established organisation that is dedicated to informing people about issues that affect their health, happiness and quality of life. Established in 1960 the Society is not-for-profit, with no vested interests. Recognising that prevention is far better than cure, the Society's objective is to explain how best to achieve genuine long-term health and wellbeing using drug-free self-help methods as far as practicable. The result can be greater enjoyment of life the result and enhanced peace of mind.

Natural health guidelines have been influenced by the experience gained at the now closed Hopewood Health Retreat at Wallacia, NSW, which was owned by the Australian Youth and Health Foundation. The Foundation is a registered charitable organisation and the founder of both the Natural Health Society and Hopewood.

The Natural Health Lifestyle in Brief or Reinforcing Healthy Resolve



By Roger French, Patron, NHSA

I am a great believer in regular revision of the basic facts of any issue which is important to us, especially if it is to do with our health and wellbeing. This article is all about reinforcing the basics of the Natural Health lifestyle.

For me at age 84, I find (somewhat to my surprise) that I am the oldest member of my Rotary Club, the oldest member of my gym, the oldest runner/walker in Parkrun and recently the oldest cyclist in a 440 km organised bike ride which my wife, Elizabeth and I completed in November. If anyone had told me when I was in my 20s or 30s that I would eventually in my 80s be described as 'amazing', I wouldn't have believed them.

People ask, "What's your secret?" to which I reply that there are five 'secrets'.

But in reality, there are no secrets, as the main aspects of the Natural Health lifestyle are plain facts related to the prevention of illness and premature ageing.

However, this article is not actually about me; it's about the bigger picture of health-building lifestyle.

The five 'secrets' which ain't secrets at all are:

1. What we put in our mouths in terms of food and drink
2. Regular physical activity
3. Minimising exposure to toxic man-made chemicals
4. Handling stress so as to minimise harm
5. Obtaining vitamin D from sunshine.

Let's look at some of the key details of the Natural Health lifestyle.

1. What we put in our mouths in terms of food and drink

A whole-food plant-based way of eating is the starting point for adequate nutrition.

'Plant-based' doesn't necessarily mean entirely plant foods, although that is probably the ideal. It does mean that the large majority of the diet is plant foods.

In a non-strict vegetarian diet, there may be small quantities of free-range eggs and unprocessed cheese, although cheese is now getting bad press in healthy eating.

Fundamentally, we need a balance between foods in which the alkaline minerals predominate and foods in which the acidic minerals predominate. The foods rich in the alkaline minerals – potassium, magnesium and calcium – are the fresh, bulky, water-rich fruits and vegetables. Those which are rich in the acidic minerals – chlorine, phosphorous and sulphur – are most of the remainder.

Achieving a balance between alkaline and acidic minerals means that we need to allow for the fact that the fresh fruits and vegetables are mostly water. For example, grapes and bananas are close to 80 percent, while watermelon and lettuce are around 95 percent water. In contrast, the concentrated foods – grains, legumes, nuts, seeds and animal products – are relatively low in water.

Making allowance for this requires that the fresh fruits and vegetables comprise approximately three-quarters or more of the diet by weight, while the concentrated foods comprise the remaining quarter.

Speaking of water, we need to drink water every day and the only way we can get it by drinking pure water. Drinks, including coffee and soft drinks, contain sugar and other compounds which need water to be processed in the body, so they don't give us a net supply. This also applies to some degree to fruit juice and herbal teas.

If we are challenged that humans are omnivores needing some flesh foods rather than being vegetarian eaters, here are some fundamental facts which make it clear that we are not meat eaters.

CARNIVORES	**HERBIVORES**
Most have retractable claws and long canine teeth for holding and killing prey	Don't have claws, and have grinding teeth for crushing plant foods
Have very short bowels for rapid expulsion of putrefactive bacteria associated with flesh foods	Have very long bowels for containing the fermentative bacteria involved in the digestion of plant foods
Have jaws which open only up and down	Jaws can move sideways for chewing and grinding fibrous foods
Don't sweat through the skin, but control body heat by rapid breathing and extruding the tongue	Sweat through the skin for heat control and the elimination of toxins
Their saliva lacks the enzyme ptyalin, so cannot pre-digest the starch in plant foods	Saliva contains ptyalin for the pre-digestion of the starch in plant foods
Stomachs secrete hydrochloric acid up to 10 times stronger than that of herbivores, sufficient to dissolve bones	Have weaker acid and cannot digest bones
Lap water the way a cat or dog does	Drink by suction

We humans are obviously not carnivores, but are plant-food eaters specially adapted to eat mainly fruits.

All of this brings in the 'Five percent rule' which is designed to make life liveable for those of us who need it:

It's not what we do five percent of the time that governs our health, it's what we do 95 percent of the time that counts.

2. Regular physical activity

Brisk walking is thought to be the best form of exercise. There is no need to be an Olympic athlete – in fact, the Olympic level of physical activity involves so much oxidation that it may eventually do more harm than good.

Pictured above: NHSA Vice president, Margaret Stepniewski and Dawn Fitzgerald enjoying an alpine walk at our Thredbo weekend last year.

All that may be required to achieve and maintain a moderate level of fitness is to walk briskly for half an hour for six or seven days a week. Other effective forms of exercise include jogging, running, swimming, cycling, dancing and even gardening if it involves effort. These are all aerobic exercises which increase oxygen delivery to the muscles.

Anaerobic exercises are those which involve short bursts of intense activity, increasing muscle mass and strength. The most common forms are weight training, sprinting and high-intensity interval training.

A good example of this came from a 1990 Danish study. The fitness world was shocked when it was discovered that exceptionally fit runners and swimmers, who averaged 69 years of age and had been training for at least a dozen years, had no more muscle mass or strength than 'couch potatoes'. In contrast, 67-year-old men who had been training with fairly heavy weights for about the same time, were not only much stronger than the runners and swimmers,

but were even stronger than typical males in their late twenties.

Another early study demonstrated the extraordinary benefits of weight training. A study at Tufts University, Boston USA, found that strength training enabled people in nursing homes, who had been confined to beds or wheelchairs or walked with sticks, to eventually be up and about, playing with their great-grandchildren and walking unassisted.

A physiological difference between the two forms of physical activity is that aerobic exercise develops slow-twitch muscle fibres, whereas anaerobic exercise develops fast-twitch muscle fibres.

Researchers have found that strength training builds and maintains both major forms of muscle fibre, whereas aerobic activity alone allows fast-twitch fibres to wither away. Slow-twitch fibres are used during low-intensity activity like distance running, while fast-twitch or type 2 fibres lend a muscle instant strength for very high intensity activity like dashing out of the path of a car or weightlifting.

At last it was understood why weightlifters become muscly, while runners get thinner and thinner. This in no way diminishes the value of endurance (aerobic) training; it simply means that strength training is just as important ... so much so that even frail, elderly people can improve in strength significantly.

You are never too old for physical activity, provided there is no underlying health problem that would preclude exercise. A slow walk is as beneficial to an older or out-of-condition person as is running to a younger, fitter person.

But if not already exercising regularly, don't rush into a program without considering the following precautions.

Consider seeking the advice of a health practitioner. This is especially relevant to anyone who has any doubt about the condition of their heart or arteries or general physical condition.

Commence a program at a very modest tempo, appropriate to your age and health, and build up gradually in intensity.

Be sure to avoid exercising during acute illness, including colds and flu, as this exhausts energy supplies and diverts energy from the healing process. Also avoid exercising joints or muscles that are inflamed.

3. Minimising exposure to toxic man-made chemicals

I am covering this topic in some detail because most toxic chemical exposure is insidious and invisible to us and because the consequences of long-term exposure can be disastrous, including cancer and other nasty degenerative illnesses.

"We are living in a sea of carcinogens," wrote biologist Rachel Carson in *Silent Spring* in 1963. But nothing could have prepared Rachel Carson for the explosion of chemicals into the environment that has occurred since.

Hundreds of thousands of artificial chemicals have been unleashed into the environment. Approximately 4,000 are used in food processing alone. It has been impossible to have meaningful controls over toxic chemicals because of synergism – the combined effects of different chemicals in which the combination may be many times more toxic than any of the originals alone.

Because most of these chemicals accumulate in our fatty tissue and that the brain is high in fat, the potential for harm from prolonged exposure is very high.

However, there is good news. According to environmental medicos, if we avoid the chemicals we can avoid, our bodies can probably cope with those that we can't avoid.

Man-made toxic chemicals affect the energy production of every system in the body including the immune system. The consequences may be allergies, chronic fatigue syndrome, multiple chemical sensitivities, infertility, birth defects, artery disease, stroke, cancer or other conditions. There is now evidence that the overall intelligence of school children is decreasing.

Where the Chemicals are

There are broadly four sources of toxic chemicals – atmospheric pollution, our food and water and the chemicals in our homes and workplaces.

Air Pollutants. Air pollutants include carbon monoxide, oxides of nitrogen and oxides of sulphur, and some very nasty ones such as carcinogenic benzene.

But don't stop breathing! Forget about air pollution. Worrying simply makes two problems out of one.

To keep away from the worst air:
Use trains in preference to roads where possible;
If living near a busy road, shut the windows in peak hours and open them during the night;
If moving home, choose a locality where the prevailing winds are from the sea, mountains or deserts and where there is no industry or agricultural spraying.

Smoking. Cigarette smoking is a major cause of both lung cancer and heart disease. Passive smoking – breathing in someone else's smoke – can be just as dangerous, especially to foetuses, young children and anyone suffering respiratory problems. To quit smoking, there are government-run QUIT Campaigns in most States and numerous privately run programs. To avoid passive smoking, if necessary install a high-grade air filter.

Pesticides. There is now a move in agriculture to use less toxic and less persistent chemicals and use more integrated pest management.

Many pesticides are linked to cancer. Some pesticides mimic oestrogen and are also believed to contribute to infertility. They include DDT, PCBs, dioxins, BPA and some phthalates. Fortunately, the levels of pesticide residues in Australian foods have been found to be very low.

We can purchase organically-grown food wherever possible;
Grow our own vegetables if possible;
To remove surface residues, wash fruit and vegetables in a safe, low-toxicity cleanser such as Tri Nature Chamomile Cleanser;
Select only in-season fruit and vegetables;
Consume entirely or mostly plant foods – these tend to be much lower in residues than animal products.

Food Additives. Some food additives appear to be safe, but we can never be certain of their effect in the body. When buying packaged foods, read the list of ingredients. Source an additives guide from an Australian Government bookshop.

Drinking Water. The most prevalent harmful chemicals in town water are chlorine, fluoride compounds and aluminium.

Fluoride is an enzyme poison, which means it can interfere with every system in the body. Aluminium is sometimes added in the form of alum to cause sediments to settle out. Because of the link between aluminium and Alzheimer's disease, Sydney Water and some other State authorities are no longer using it.

To obtain pure water, we need either a rainwater tank equipped to bypass the first 10 to 20 ml of rain to avoid the bird poo and motor vehicle pollutants on the roof or we need a filter to remove the chlorine, fluoride and other toxic chemicals in tap water. Cheap activated carbon filters remove chlorine and chloroform but not fluorides. Reverse osmosis (RO), the method used by industry, removes most of all pollutants. RO purifiers are expensive and require servicing, but are worth the cost and trouble, considering we drink a lot of water over the years.

Hot Showers. Long hot showers can generate a lot of chloroform. Install a shower filter or have the bathroom window wide open.

Indoor Swimming Pools. Especially if heated, indoor pools may expose swimmers to high levels of chloroform.

Avoiding Chemicals in the Home

Pesticides. First and foremost, don't bring the toxic ones into your home. Make your home unattractive to pests by keeping it clean and ensuring food storage containers are airtight.

For do-it-yourself pest control, use non-chemical, relatively safe methods. Details of these are given in my book, *How a Man Lived in Three Centuries*, Chapter 11.

Cleaning products. These are generally made from petrochemicals. Use the tried-and-true, simpler, safer cleaners such as pure soap, bicarbonate of soda, vinegar, eucalyptus oil, etc.

Commercial environmentally-friendly cleansers are available, such as in the Planet Ark, NeoLife, Herbon and Tri Nature ranges.

Cosmetics and perfume. Choose the safer products.

Deodorants. Use aluminium-free herbal deodorants or crystal sticks, or try wiping the underarms with a slice of lemon. Remember that body odour declines as we become healthier.

Solvents. Found in many household products, including cleaning products, pesticides, liquid paper, marker pens, glues and paints.
Use people-friendly cleaning products and safer methods of pest control. Replace caps of marker pens, liquid paper and glue bottles immediately after use.

Use non-toxic sealers for flooring etc. The prominent brand is Livos (due to be available in Australia soon). A Sydney retailer of sealers is Eco at Home, phone 02 9958 0412.

Volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Normally outgas from newly painted walls and ceilings and sealed floors, glued carpets, vinyls, particle-board benches and shelves and plastics. Ensure that the house is always well ventilated. Including in winter, make sure that the house is not 'hermetically sealed'.

Use floors of timber, tile and linoleum that outgas very little. Buy solid-timber furniture.

Particularly avoid formaldehyde gas, which may evaporate from particle-board, plywood, synthetic carpets, upholstery and sometimes wallpaper.

Dry-cleaned clothing. Dry-cleaning uses powerful solvents.
After bringing home dry-cleaned clothes, blankets or curtains, air them well away from the bedroom and living rooms for 24 hours.

Fibreglass insulation. Listed by the US government as "Reasonably anticipated to cause lung cancer". Prevent any flow of air from the ceiling into rooms by sealing any gaps. If working in the ceiling, be sure to wear a mask.

4. Taking the distress out of stress

Handling stress so as to minimise harm

Not All Stress Is Harmful

Emotional stress is a normal part

of being alive. It is impossible to live a completely stress-free existence – and you wouldn't want to. Stress adds excitement to many of the things we do – whether we are watching a thriller movie or playing tennis. It's the stress of a reasonably demanding job that keeps us on our toes, performing well.

Stress is only harmful when we are not handling it properly. It is not the events around us, but rather how we react to those events.

A Sea of Stress

"We are like a person weighed down carrying two heavy suitcases all day," says chiropractor, Paul Galbraith, in *Meditate Rejuvenate*. "One is filled with thoughts of the past (regrets and guilt) and the other is filled with thoughts of the future (worries and expectations). A person who carries two heavy bags all day will be tired all day." Tomorrow usually won't be any better, because sleep is disturbed.

In modern society we are living in a sea of potential stressors, with the number and intensity growing as technology expands.

There are emotional states that, if persisting for months or years, are potentially dangerous. They are anger, hostility, fear, hatred, resentment, anxiety and repression of feelings. Also very destructive are social isolation, alienation and loneliness. More benign are overwork and regularly too late to bed.

The latest insidious form of stress is techno-stress – when the automatic teller machine gobbles up our plastic card, when we can't remember a pin number or when a computer gets us thoroughly exasperated. It also occurs when we are confronted with too much information, courtesy of the internet, etc.

How to Take the Distress Out of Stress

One of our greatest needs for staying alive and well is warm supportive contact with other people. Be part of a large family or have plenty of contact with other people outside the home.

Tips for dealing with anger and anxiety are:
Do something, don't stew;
Develop empathy – look at the other person's point of view;
Practise meditation/deep relaxation;
Physical exercise;
Change the way you think;
Talk to someone; get the issue off your chest;
Meditation, deep relaxation and deep breathing.

How to calm the mind

A two-minute meditation for busy people
This highly effective mind-calming technique can be practised almost anywhere, sitting or lying down, although it is most effective in the sitting position.

Sit comfortably in a chair with feet flat on the floor, hands resting on your thighs, back straight and upright, and head balanced without strain. Close the eyes.

Feel the floor pressing upwards on your feet. After 5 – 10 seconds, let the attention go to the buttocks and feel the pressure of the chair there. Still be aware of the floor pressing on the feet.

Now become aware of your clothes contacting the skin all over your body. You had been oblivious to this until now.

Now become aware of sound; note each sound you can hear.

Finally, be aware of the breath going through the nose and down into the lungs.

Practise keeping all these mentally in view together and hold this state for two minutes.

If your mind wanders onto other things – as it will at first – don't get worked up about it, simply bring your attention back to the exercise and continue.
Do this two-minute exercise two or three times a day, preferably on an empty stomach.

Eye relaxation technique
Sit comfortably, let the eyelids fall shut and relax the little muscles surrounding the eyes. Progressively locate other little muscles around the eyes and let these go also. With practice, more and more eye muscles will be located and can be relaxed.

Because the eye muscles are triggers of tension throughout the body, you can expect to feel muscles everywhere relaxing.

Focus on your breathing

This is a very easy form of meditation. Simply be aware of the breath going through the nose and down into the lungs, and keep this awareness going for many minutes.

Laughter

Laughter is one of the best stress circuit-breakers we have. A good bout of laughter coaxes the body to release endorphins, which over-ride pain and ease some of the physical effects of stress. It stimulates the immune system, lowers high blood pressure, thoroughly oxygenates the body and assists respiratory conditions. And it's said that ten minutes of laughter can give us two hours of pain-free sleep.

Look on the positive side

The difference between positive and negative thinkers is that negative people focus on their problems and fears; while positive thinkers focus on the good things they have, see problems as challenges and look for the good in people.

Not only do positive people live positive lives, they attract more positivity to themselves. Negative people live negative lives and attract more negativity.

In overcoming negativity, the key requirement is to stand guard over your mouth and never say anything negative about other people – or yourself! To feel good about yourself, give as much praise and appreciation to others as you can. Catch a person doing something right – instead of wrong.

Be philosophical for a more peaceful life

Worry only about those things you can do something about, and do it, and forget all the rest!

Never worry about things beyond your control. This is not being callous; if you can't do anything to make a difference to the situation, worrying yourself sick is only harming yourself.

Adequate, sound sleep

'Early to bed and early to rise makes one healthy, wealthy and wise.' This is so true!

People who sleep for less than six hours a night have shorter lifespans than those who sleep for seven or eight hours.

What causes insomnia?

- Lack of activity. Exercise tires us physically;
- Going to bed on a full stomach. This stimulates the circulation;
- Exposure to bright screens before you go to bed;
- Too hot or too cold in bed;
- Caffeine, smoking and alcohol. While a few drinks can send us off all right, the sleep will be restless and deep sleep is disturbed;
- Sleeping pills can cause insomnia – once the body develops a tolerance to the drug;
- Mental stresses like anxiety, depression, paranoia and obsessive-compulsive disorder;
- The mind churning like a can of worms.

How to get to sleep without pills

If the cause of insomnia can be rectified, the insomnia will often evaporate.

- Beware of coffee, nicotine and alcohol;
- Sound nutrition can contribute to sound sleep;
- Postpone worrying; if something is worrying you, write it down and deal with it next morning;
- Exercise regularly;
- Sex promotes sound sleep;
- Count sheep;
- Have pleasant thoughts or fantasies;
- Use a relaxation technique;
- Take a bath a warm, not hot, bath;
- Herbs for sleep – valerian, passionflower, skullcap, gentian and/or hops;
- If still awake after 30 minutes, do something! Get up and walk around, bounce lightly on a rebounder, write a letter, read, tidy your desk, etc.

5. Obtaining vitamin D from sunshine

We all love to sunbathe – and sunshine is good for us. It enhances vitality and produces vitamin D in the skin. Vitamin D is manufactured when the ultraviolet radiation acts on cholesterol in the skin.

Vitamin D has roles in an incredible array of systems and functions in the body. In addition to its well-known role in strong, healthy bones, it is essential for heart health, cancer prevention, skin health, the pancreas, slowing ageing, proper sleep, the eyes and hair, reproductive health, the vascular system, the respiratory system, the immune system, feelings of wellbeing, weight management and proper digestion and food absorption.

People with the lowest blood levels of vitamin D have been found to be about twice as likely to die from any cause compared to those with the highest levels.

Because of the standard advice to stay out of the sun or else slip, slop and slap, most Australians (up to 85 percent) are deficient in vitamin D without knowing it.

The current understanding is that serum vitamin D_3 (25(OH)D) levels should be in the range of 125 – 162 nmol/L (50 to 65 ng/ml in American terms) for optimal health and cancer prevention. Deficiency is when the level is less than 125 nmol/L. The level should never be below 80 nmol/L, while below 50 nmol/L is a serious deficiency state. Excess is greater than 250 nmol/L. The only way to determine 25(OH)D levels is through blood tests.

The best way to sunbathe is with as much of the skin uncovered as possible, but always cover the head and face. Exposure needs to be anywhere from 15 minutes to two hours a day,

depending on skin type, environmental factors, season and time of day.

Fortunately, sunshine provides optimal levels naturally because the body has a built-in 'fail-safe' mechanism which shuts down production of vitamin D when blood levels are optimal. When we are outdoors and getting both ultraviolet A and ultraviolet B rays, the two rays balance each other to prevent overdosing on vitamin D.

The alternative to sunshine for vitamin D is a supplement, but overdosing is then a risk, so regular blood tests are essential.

It is only sunburn that is dangerous for skin cancer. Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in Australia. However, it cannot be all sun caused, because mortality rates from melanoma are higher in Tasmania than in North Queensland, and Brisbane also has higher rates than North Queensland. Further, there is a higher incidence of melanoma among people who work indoors and on parts of the body least exposed to sunlight.

Part of the reason may be that the beneficial UVB component of sunshine is blocked by window glass and reading glasses, whereas the harmful UVA can pass through. Sunscreens also block the beneficial UVB.
UVB are the rays that produce vitamin D_3 in the skin, but they are also the primary cause of sunburn. This acts as a warning to get out of the sun.

If you've ever become sunburned on a cloudy day, it is from the deeply penetrating UVA, which causes burning more slowly than UVB, but will eventually cause burning.

Dark-skinned people, who nature designed to live under a tropical sun, have higher levels of the pigment melanin in the skin, which blocks some of the UV radiation and reduces the production of vitamin D_3. Australian Aborigines need considerably more sun than Caucasian people to generate sufficient vitamin D.

An exception to sunbathing is people with very fair skins which do not tan. The only safe course for these people may be to stay out of direct sunlight entirely, in which case they would need to depend on supplements of vitamin D.

Sunburned skin is red, hot and sore because it is inflamed. If it occurs often enough, there is a real danger of skin cancer. When skin turns the slightest shade of pink, the person has had enough sun, and should move indoors – or at least 'slip, slop and slap'.

Sun spots (solar keratoses) are not cancer but may precede it.

True skin cancer falls into three kinds:
Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC) is the least dangerous form. It rarely spreads to other parts of the body and is seldom fatal.
Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC) is less common, but tends to be more dangerous than BCC. It must be treated immediately as it can spread through the body.
Malignant Melanoma (MM) is the least common but most dangerous kind. It behaves like an internal cancer and will spread to other parts of the body unless treated early. It initially looks like a mole, unusual freckle or birthmark, and warning signs are changes in colour, texture, size or shape. Regular skin checks by a skin specialist will look for melanoma.

The dramatically decreasing vitamin D levels in our population are now believed to be a major cause of the rising melanoma rates.

Besides sunburn and low vitamin D, other possible causes of skin cancer include:

- Many commonly used drugs;
- Chemicals and nutrients which make the skin sensitive to light – deficiency of vitamin B_6 which is removed during refining of grains; synthetic riboflavin (B_2) which is used to fortify cereals;
- Over-consumption of (refined) omega-6 oils in processed foods – sunflower, safflower, soya and corn oils;
- Ethyl alcohol in alcoholic drinks;
- Lack of antioxidants, which are abundant in fresh vegetables and fruits;
- In spite of what we are currently told, having regular sun exposure, *while avoiding sunburn*, should actually decrease the risk of melanoma and also the risk of numerous other cancers.

Sunscreens that are meant to prevent skin cancer can actually have the opposite effect. They prevent vitamin D production, some allow through the harmful UVA, and they can easily provide a false sense of security by encouraging people to stay out in the sun longer. To add insult to injury, most sunscreens contain toxic chemicals, some of which are actually cancer causing.

One other guideline

Managing illness

Degenerative disease and premature ageing are the almost inevitable result of an unnatural lifestyle over many years. Their development is hastened by suppressing minor ailments like colds and flu, which are natural detoxifying processes.
The way to treat a minor ailment is to listen to our own body:

Lack of energy tells us to rest to conserve energy for the healing process.
The absence of hunger tells us to eat lightly – meaning fresh fruit or juices – or nothing at all except pure water.
Mental tiredness tells us to rest the mind.
If there is a fever, it is critically important to fast, consuming nothing but pure water until the fever has passed. Hard research has found that when there is fever, 'food is as indigestible as lead'. This means that if we do eat during fever, in the warm, moist environment inside the intestines, proteins will putrefy and carbohydrates will ferment producing alcohol. These toxic byproducts are the kind of toxic load for which the body has brought on the minor ailment in the first place. Listen to our bodies, they tell us exactly what to do and when. When a properly managed fever subsides, the body will feel as though it has had a genuine spring clean.

Finally

Remember that there is no disease caused by age alone. Illness is more common as we age only because the in-built causes of disease have accumulated and finally produced consequences. By having a lifestyle which treats the body and mind the way they are designed to be treated and understanding the purpose of minor so-called 'infectious' ailments, we can expect to enjoy life essentially illness free with good longevity.

Pictured below: Roger enjoying the giant slide at the NHSA Thredbo weekend last year.

The Complete Guide to Natural Health
by Roger French.

Member price $20 plus $14.95 postage.
All proceeds from the sale of this book help contribute to the Natural Health Society's goal of becoming cost neutral.

The Natural Health Society of Australia
Helping people live healthier lives for the past 60 years

We want to continue to help people live happier, healthier lives. Our aim is to become cost-neutral so we can promote the Natural Health approach for years to come. If you would like to help us, here are some options.

Donate
Some members generously provide us with donations, any donation great or small is gratefully received. You can donate via our website at www.health.org.au, call our office on 0432 396 701 or send a cheque to the "Natural Health Society of Australia" PO Box 22 Lawson NSW 2783.

Help us expand our membership
Do you have a friend you think would enjoy our magazine? Lend them a copy of *TNH* or perhaps buy them a gift subscription? Let your friends know of upcoming events and share our socials posts to help spread the word.

Bequeath
Another way people support the Society is through bequest. Should you consider doing this, the following wording may be helpful. "I bequeath to the Natural Health Society of Australia (NSW) Inc. ABN 91 080 087 725 the sum of $_____ (or part or all of residue of Estate) free of all duties to be applied for the purposes of the Society (or as directed by the donor) and the receipt of the Secretary of the Society shall be sufficient discharge for the same." It may be wise to consult a solicitor to ensure that the bequest is valid.

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

BY ROGER FRENCH

If you have a question, please send it to rfrench@health.org.au
We regret that it is not possible to answer questions personally, nor can all questions can be answered.

As always, seek your health profesional's advice for health conditions.

Q. FISH OIL – DOES IT PROTECT THE HEART?:

I would like to take supplements of omega-3 fatty acids, and I don't want to use fish oil for obvious reasons. Unfortunately, the plant-based micro-algae source of omega-3s is fearfully expensive. Is it worth compromising to have the benefits of fish oil supplements – R. F., Gympie Qld

A. A well-researched account of the benefits or otherwise of fish oil is given by Dr Michael Greger in his newsletter dated October 28, 2024, Volume 67. To answer your question – in short, no!

Thanks in part to the American Heart Association's recommendation that individuals at high risk for heart disease consider omega-3 fish oil supplementation, fish oil pills have grown into a multibillion-dollar industry. We now consume more than a hundred thousand tons of fish oil every year (unbelievable!).

Where did we get this idea that the omega-3 fats in fish and fish oil supplements were good for us? There was a notion that Eskimos were protected from heart disease, but that appears to be a complete myth.

Some early studies, however, looked promising. For example, the famous DART trial in the 1980s involving two thousand men found that those advised to eat fatty fish had a 29 percent reduction in mortality. That's impressive.

But people seem to have forgotten about the sequel, the DART-2 trial, which found the exact opposite. Run by the same group of researchers, the DART-2 trial was an even bigger study – three thousand men – in which the participants were advised to eat oily fish. They had a higher risk of cardiac death, particularly those who were supplied with fish oil capsules.

Concerns about the potential pro-arrhythmic (irregular rhythm inducing) effects of fish oil has led to reviews containing titles like 'Can Fish Oil Kill You?'.

There are also concerns about persistent pollutants in fish oil supplements, such as dioxins and PCBs, even in 'distilled' fish oil supplements.

Toxic oxidation by-products have been found throughout commercial fish oil supplements. Surveys of popular omega-3 supplements have found that 24 – 92 percent exceeded the voluntary safety standards set by the industry. The country of origin didn't seem to matter, perhaps because most fish oil products sold globally are evidently sourced from the same region (off the West coast of South America).

However, the public health implications of consuming oxidised fish oil are unclear. Animal experiments suggest that chronic exposure can cause inflammation, organ toxicity and accelerated atherosclerosis, but no long-term human studies have been done, one of the reasons being the ethical concerns of knowingly exposing people to oxidised fats.

After putting all the studies together in a landmark meta-analysis, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA 2012;308(10):1024-1033), the authors concluded that there was no longer justification for the use of omega-3s.

It's possible that some fish oil formulations will eventually prove to be helpful, but for now, meta-analyses "unequivocally demonstrate that there is no cardiovascular benefit" from fish oil supplements.

Q. DENTAL FLOSSING – IS THERE A RIGHT WAY?:

I have read comments that flossing may not be good for the gums, but would the benefits outweigh any possible harm? – M. M., Canberra ACT

A. It seems that there is a right way to floss, but not all people do it, according to Jennifer Margulis, writing in *The Epoch Times*, 24th April 2022.

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

"Don't forget to floss," she says is a reminder we often hear. And it sounds like very good advice. After all, flossing helps remove particles of food from between our teeth.

In addition, flossing removes dental plaque, the soft sticky film which is the acidic waste product of the bacteria that live in our mouths. The problem is that plaque can build up, harden and lead to tooth decay and other oral health problems. So we should floss once or twice every day. Or should we? Is there more to it?.

It is possible that incorrect flossing can hurt our gums. There are delicate connections between the gums and the teeth, and it's possible that aggressive flossing can separate part of the gums from the teeth. This can cause gum recession.

Further, flossing too roughly or too often can also cause gum irritation. The right technique can make all the difference.

Regular floss can contain toxic chemicals. Some floss is made with non-stick chemicals to help the floss glide smoothly between the teeth. While non-stick floss makes flossing easier, if the compound is Teflon (poly-tetra-fluoro-ethylene (PTFE)), it is a chemical which has been associated with a host of health problems, including endocrine disruption.

A 2019 study published in the *Journal of Exposure Science & Environmental Epidemiology* found that women who flossed with a certain 'glide' brand had higher levels of problematic chemicals in their blood than women who didn't use that brand. Other brands tested were found to contain PFAS compounds (the notorious 'forever chemicals').

Other forms of dental floss may also be problematic. Most nylon and silk flosses are coated with petroleum-derived food-grade wax. Petroleum-based products have been found to be contaminated with benzene, a well-known carcinogen which can cause leukaemia, central nervous system defects and damage to reproductive organs, even at very low levels.

You can look for non-toxic, biodegradable, eco-friendly dental floss that is unwaxed or is made with a non-petroleum-derived wax, which would make correctly used flossing very beneficial.

An alternative to flossing is to orally irrigate your teeth. Oral irrigation uses pressurised water to clean in between the teeth. The equipment comes as either a standing unit for the sink or a hand-held water pick that you use like a toothbrush over the sink or in the shower.

While conventional dental wisdom might scowl at the idea that oral irrigation is as effective as flossing, a study published in 2005 by a team of dentists in Nebraska USA concluded that both methods are equally effective for removing plaque and reducing gum inflammation and gum disease.

Q. SLEEP APNOEA:

I keep waking up at night short of breath, and the doctor said it could be sleep apnoea. If it is sleep apnoea, what are the implications and can it be treated without drugs?
– P. P., Emu Plains NSW

A. If a person snores, then becomes silent because breathing has stopped, then makes a loud snort or gasp or choking sound during sleep before they begin breathing again, this is sleep apnoea. The name employs the Greek word, apnoea, meaning 'want to breathe'.
A Sydney medical practitioner says that sleep apnoea typically affects two to four percent of middle-aged adults, and in some cases the snoring can be so loud that it almost rivals a jackhammer.

The person stops breathing for 10 seconds or longer, even up to two minutes, and this may occur once or twice during the night or hundreds of times.

Very occasionally children can suffer sleep apnoea if they are overweight or have enlarged tonsils and adenoids.

The disturbances to sleep may result in abnormal sleepiness during the day (you could fall asleep while driving a car), waking up with a dry mouth, difficulty staying asleep, difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness, anxiety, depression and, not surprisingly, irritability.

Add to this the lack of oxygen from the interrupted breathing and the result could be high blood pressure with the eventual risk of heart failure, heart attack and stroke.

How It Occurs

During sleep the muscles of the body relax quite normally and naturally, and this applies to the muscles of the throat and top of the windpipe. However, if the muscles of the soft palate at the base of the tongue and the adjacent area relax and sag, they can obstruct the airway causing laboured breathing and snoring.

If these tissues relax even further, they can close off the entrance to the windpipe and block breathing entirely. As the body feels the need to breathe, sleep is temporarily interrupted which activates throat muscles and clears the airway so that breathing resumes. This type of

breathing difficulty is called obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA). It typically occurs in overweight men and often causes blood pressure to rise because the heart must pump harder to deliver enough oxygen to all parts of the body. Women tend not to suffer OSA until after menopause, and it is not as common as in men.

The other type of sleeping disturbance is central sleep apnoea (CSA). The windpipe remains open, but the muscles responsible for breathing cease working temporarily, perhaps because they have relaxed far too much. The cessation of breathing sounds warning bells in the brain which causes the sleeper to wake and resume breathing.

CSA is more common in older people, perhaps affecting one in every four people over 60 years of age.

People with sleep apnoea tend to have 'dream deficit' sleep, that is, they don't have adequate rapid-eye-movement sleep during which dreaming occurs – which is very important.

Heart Disease and Stroke

The greatest concern with sleep apnoea is when it leads to heart trouble or stroke – which often do not occur.

A sleep laboratory in Gothenburg, Sweden, conducted a seven-year study that was completed in 1998 and found that in sleep apnoea sufferers, the CVD incidence was 57 percent. In contrast, in those who were efficiently treated, the incidence was just under seven percent.

High blood pressure is significantly associated with sleep apnoea. A study at John Hopkins University, Baltimore, in 2000, found that the incidence of high blood pressure was 37 percent greater in people who stopped breathing at least 30 times per hour, compared to those who ceased breathing less than 1.5 times per hour.

Treatment

After discussing symptoms with a doctor, it may be desirable to visit a sleep disorders centre and sleep for a night or two in a 'sleep evaluation laboratory' where the staff monitor your sleep and make a diagnosis.

If you have sleep apnoea, be aware that muscle tone is excessively reduced by alcohol, sleeping pills and tranquillisers, and that taking these at bedtime is asking for trouble. Avoid alcohol within at least two to three hours of bedtime and avoid sleeping pills altogether as these tend to depress breathing and make sleep apnoea worse. Techniques for overcoming insomnia without pills are described in detail in the article, 'The Natural Health Lifestyle in Brief', at the beginning of this issue. If you decide that you must take drugs for whatever reason, check to make sure they will not affect sleep and breathing.

Sleep on your side! In many people with apnoea, it occurs only when sleeping on the back and not when on the side. You can prop yourself on your side with pillows, or sew a pocket on the middle of the back of your pyjama top and stuff into it a sock or tennis ball. You will then most certainly prefer to be on your side!

A couple of herbs that promote sound sleep, including the beneficial REM sleep are valerian and passionflower. Chamomile can help but should not be used on an ongoing basis.

For serious sleep apnoea, a widely used, effective – though costly – treatment is to employ a device which pumps air into the lungs and prevents the airway from closing. It's called Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP). An air compressor delivers air to the airways via a mask worn over the mouth and nose during sleep. The pressure is gentle, but enough to keep the airway open, allowing the person to sleep and breathe normally.

It may be possible to rent a CPAP machine for a trial period or just purchase one at the outset. You might need to try more than one type of mask to find one that's comfortable.

A study at the University of Toronto in 1998 found that a CPAP machine significantly reduces the risk of heart failure and heart disease.

Alternatively, there are oral appliances designed to keep the airway open during sleep, although not as effective as a CPAP machine. Some are designed to open your throat by bringing your jaw forward, while a dentist might suggest other possible devices. You might need to try different devices before finding one that works for you.

Surgery can be used to correct physical abnormalities such as nasal polyps, abnormal nasal septum bones or malformations of the jaw, upper throat or upper palate. Surgery rarely cures severe forms of sleep apnoea. Doctors would probably recommend removal of enlarged tonsils or adenoids, but in Natural Health we would strongly suggest using cleansing diets to facilitate self-healing.

[I thank the firm, ResMed Ltd of North Ryde NSW, a manufacturer of CPAP machines, for providing information about these machines and also studies regarding heart disease.]

State of the Climate 2024: Increased fire weather, marine heatwaves and sea levels

CSIRO news release, 31st October 2024

The *State of the Climate Report 2024* has found Australia's weather and climate has continued to change, with an increase in extreme heat events, longer fire seasons, more intense heavy rainfall and sea level rise.

The report, prepared every two years, was released by Australia's national science agency, CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology.

Scientists found that the oceans around Australia are continuing to warm, with increases in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere leading to more acidic oceans, particularly south of Australia.

CSIRO Research Manager, Dr Jaci Brown, said warming of the ocean has contributed to longer and more frequent marine heatwaves, with the highest average sea surface temperature on record occurring in 2022.

"Increases in temperature have contributed to significant impacts on marine habitats, species and ecosystem health, such as the most recent mass coral bleaching event on the Great Barrier Reef this year," Dr Brown said.

"Rising sea levels around Australia are increasing the risk of inundation and damage to coastal infrastructure and communities.

"Global mean sea level is increasing, having risen by around 22 centimetres since 1900. Half of this rise has occurred since 1970.

"The rates of sea level rise vary across the Australian region, with the largest increases in the north and south-east of the Australian continent."

The amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere continues to increase, contributing to climate change, with 2023 the warmest year on record globally.

Dr Karl Braganza, Climate Services Manager at the Bureau of Meteorology, said Australia is continuing to warm, with eight of the nine warmest years on record occurring since 2013.

"This warming has led to an increase in extreme fire weather and longer fire seasons across large parts of the country," Dr Braganza said.

The report describes the shift towards drier conditions between April and October across the south-west and southeast. Reduced rainfall in south-west Australia now seems to be a permanent feature of the climate.

"The lower rainfall in the cooler months is leading to lower average streamflow in those regions, which can impact soil moisture and water storage levels and increase the risk of drought. Droughts this century have been significantly hotter than those in the past," Dr Braganza said. "However, when heavy rainfall events occur, they are becoming more intense, with an increase of around 10 percent or more in some regions.

Although Australian emissions have declined since 2005, Australia is projected to see continued warming over the coming decades, with more extremely hot days and fewer extremely cool days.

The 2024 report can be found on the CSIRO and Bureau of Meteorology websites.

Recipes

The Natural Heath Society hosts lunches in Wallacia NSW. These 'Wallacia Wellness Events' always include a wholefood plant-based lunch. Sometimes we have a health talk, cooking demonstration or simply a friendly discussion about a health topic. Here are some of the recipes from a Wallacia Wellness event held in November last year. Keep an eye out on our website for our next Wallacia Wellness lunch and come along.

RAW VEGAN MANGO AND CHIA DESSERT

For the crust:
1 cup almond meal
½ cup raw walnuts
1 cup dates pitted
¼ teaspoon sea salt
1 teaspoon water or more if needed

For the fruit layer:
2 mangos, peeled and diced (about 500 grams)
80 grams chia seeds
2 tablespoons maple syrup
1 can coconut milk

For garnish:
Fresh mango

1. For the crust: Add all the ingredients to a food processor and process until a sticky but still crunchy paste is formed. If the dough is too dry and doesn't stick together, add a little bit of water.
2. Press the dough into rectangular dish. Set it aside in a freezer or fridge while making the fruit layer.
3. To make the fruit layer, add mango to a food processor and process until very smooth.
4. Add chia seeds and coconut milk to the mango mix to combine.
5. Pour the mango layer over the crust and place it in a freezer for at least 1 hour.
6. Decorate with fresh mango.

FAMOUS FRENCH GREEN SALAD AND VINAIGRETTE

INGREDIENTS:
For the salad:
8 cups mixed leaves (approximately 120 grams)
2 medium Lebanese cucumbers (approximately 120 grams)
2 large avocados (approximately 300 grams)
1 apple
½ cup of edamame

For the Vinaigrette:
4 tablespoons finely chopped French shallots (also known as eschallots)
4 tablespoons red or white wine vinegar
4 teaspoons Dijon mustard
8 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS:
For the salad:
Wash the salad leaves and either pat dry or spin dry in a salad spinner. Wash, trim and peel your cucumber leaving alternate green strips then cut it into rounds. Peel and dice your avocado. Slice apple. Refresh edamame under boiling water. Put all the salad ingredients into a large bowl and toss well to combine.

For the Vinaigrette:
Combine vinegar, maple syrup, shallot, salt and pepper in a small sauce pot. Mix well. Slowly drizzle in the olive oil, whisking continuously. Heat on the stove over medium-low for a few minutes to warm, whisking often.

When dressing is warmed through, pour over salad. (Use as much or as little dressing as you like. Store leftovers in an airtight container in the fridge for a couple days). Toss everything together to combine.

KALE APPLE SALAD

INGREDIENTS:
For the salad:
1 bunch curly kale chopped into small pieces
⅓ cup raw pecans chopped
⅓ cup raw pepitas shelled pumpkin seeds
¼ cup dried cranberries
2 apples, sliced
2 cups of baked pumpkin, chopped into squares

For the vinaigrette:
¼ cup apple cider vinegar
1 tablespoon pure maple syrup
1 teaspoon shallot minced
½ teaspoon salt or to taste
¼ teaspoon pepper or to taste
¼ cup + 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
(makes about 1½ cups)

To make the dressing, whisk all the ingredients together in a small bowl until completely blended. Pour the dressing over the kale mixture and stir until the mixture is evenly coated in dressing. For best flavour, allow the salad to marinate for 20 minutes before serving. Toss again before serving. This salad keeps well in the refrigerator, covered, for a few days.

NATURAL HEALTH NEWS

LEAD AND ARSENIC AMONG METALS FOUND IN TAMPONS

A recent study found more than a dozen metals, including lead and arsenic, in tampons. The study did not cite which brands were tested, however it is concerning to note that every tampon tested, including some organic tampons, tested positive for at least one metal. For example, lead was found in all 30 of the tested tampons.

The analysis looked for concentrations of arsenic, barium, calcium, cadmium, cobalt, chromium, copper, iron, manganese, mercury, nickel, lead, selenium, strontium, vanadium and zinc. All 16 metals were detected in one product.

This study did not look at the absorption rate of these metals from tampons, however, the skin of the vagina is more permeable than other parts of the body and substances entering the bloodstream from the vagina are not filtered by the liver.

The organic tampons tested were shown to have less lead and more arsenic than non-organic ones. Tampons sold in the U.S. had higher concentrations of lead than European brands. Although the researchers purchased the test tampons from the US and Europe, this study still raises questions about tampons sold in Australia.

Source:
'Tampons as a source of exposure to metal(loid)s' *Environment International.* Volume 190, August 2024. Shearston et al.

MICROPLASTICS AND HEART DISEASE

Microplastics are increasingly being discovered in the human body. Microplastics, and even smaller nano-plastics, are tiny particles that are formed when plastics break down in the environment.

Research published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* looked at microplastics as a risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Researchers tested fatty material taken from the main blood vessel in the neck and monitored participants for three years.

Researchers found participants who tested positive for two or more micro or nanoplastics in their sample were four-and-a-half times more likely to have a heart attack, stroke, or die from any cause during those three years.

Although this study only shows correlation, given the rate of micro and nano plastic release into our environment, this finding is worrisome.

Source:
'Microplastics and Nanoplastics in Atheromas and Cardiovascular Events' *The New England Journal of Medicine*. March, 2024. Marfella et al.

LARGE ANALYSIS SHOWS EATING PROCESSED FOODS IS HIGH RISK

In the UK and US, more than half of the average diet now consists of ultra-processed food. Ultra-processed food (UPF) is directly linked to 32 harmful effects to health. According to the world's largest review of its kind these harmful effects include increased risk of: heart disease, cancer, type 2 diabetes, adverse mental health and early death.

The review, published in *The British Medical Journal* concluded that there was convincing evidence that higher UPF intake was associated with about a 50 percent increased risk of cardiovascular disease-related death, a 48 to 53 percent higher risk of anxiety and common mental disorders and a 12 percent greater risk of type 2 diabetes.

As if that isn't enough, the review also concluded that having a high intake of processed foods was associated with a 21 percent greater risk of death from any cause.

The review also highlighted associations between ultra-processed foods and asthma, gastrointestinal disease and some cancers.

Source:
"Ultra-processed food exposure and adverse health outcomes: umbrella review of epidemiological meta-analyses" *The British Medical Journal* 2024;384:e077310. Lane et al.

Society News

www.health.org.au
admin@health.org.au
PO Box 22, Lawson.
NSW 2783
0432 396 701

OUR BANK DETAILS HAVE CHANGED:
For any deposits please use the following details and don't forget to include your name in the description.
BSB 082-356
Acc 768 111 461

If you have recently made a deposit to our account details, don't worry those are still active for now.

Seeking volunteers

Are you interested in becoming a volunteer for the Natural Health Society?

Perhaps you have a particular area of health expertise you could share by presenting at one of our events or writing for our magazine?

Do you enjoy working with technology and could help with AV support at one of our in-person or online events?

If you are interested in getting more involved with the Society, please email us at admin@health.org.au

Auto-renewal of memberships now available!

To set up auto-renewal visit the **members/renew section** of our website www.health.org.au and choose your membership type from the '**Save with automatic subscription**' section.

Membership Pricing

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Auto-renew concession membership $49
1 year concession membership $53

An Australian Wellness Movement: Cultivating Connection and Community Nationwide

By Hedda Koenig

Meditation

Meditation is an invitation to pause, breathe and give your mind a rest. It can help reduce stress, improve sleep, make you happier and bring about new perspectives. This is crucial with the million things we tackle every day.

But how to incorporate a regular practice into a busy schedule, when many of us rush from one thing to the next?

How MeditationHQ started

In 2017, Jason Partington, founder of meditationHQ noticed a heightened rate of suicide in his local area, Avalon NSW[1]. Due to this alarming cause, he wanted to do something meaningful to help foster mental health and wellbeing. He started with a simple weekend practice. He sat and meditated at his local beach, with a flag, every Saturday morning at sunrise. It didn't take long for people to join him!

This is how 'Sunrise Saturdays,' an initiative by the not-for-profit MeditationHQ, was born. MeditationHQ has a simple yet profound mission: "To make meditation mainstream and accessible to everyone".

MeditationHQ recognises the transformative power of meditation in fostering happiness and community connection. It seeks to create a consistent, welcoming space for individuals to gather, meditate and build meaningful relationships.

A simple concept, accessible to everyone

The concept was straightforward: Free weekly sunrise meditation sessions held every Saturday. Rain, hail or shine. These sessions are inspired by themes of gratitude, sharing, kindness, earth-care and mindfulness.

The sessions are open to everyone, from seasoned meditators to curious newcomers. We emphasise inclusivity across all ages, cultures and backgrounds.

What does a session look like?

The structure of each session is consistent. We begin with a welcome circle, followed by a 20-minute meditation and conclude with a completion circle. This format ensures a positive ripple effect throughout participants' weekends – and beyond.

Fifteen locations to date

Starting with a single location, 'Sunrise Saturdays' resonated deeply within the community, leading to rapid growth. Today, there are over 15 locations where these sessions take place, including: Currumbin, Wamberal, Avalon, Bathers Beach Fremantle, Bondi Beach, Manly North and Dee Why Beach. Each location is carefully selected to provide a serene natural environment, enhancing the meditation experience.

The expansion reflects a growing recognition of the importance of mental wellbeing and the desire for communal spaces that promote mindfulness.

Our purpose

The purpose of 'Sunrise Saturdays' extends beyond individual meditation practice. By bringing people together in beautiful outdoor settings, it fosters a sense of belonging and purpose. This encourages participants to connect with themselves, each other and the environment.

The initiative also supports mental health awareness and environmental consciousness, aligning with MeditationHQ's broader mission to inspire positive change through meditation and mindfulness practices.

Never underestimate the ripple effect

As 'Sunrise Saturdays' flourish, MeditationHQ remains committed to creating a happier, more connected world. Through consistent practice and community engagement, we aim to inspire individuals to embark on their meditation journeys. We believe this will then contribute to a collective ripple effect of positivity and mindfulness much more broadly.

For those interested in joining, no pre-registration is required. Simply show up at one of the many locations at 6.30 am on Saturdays to participate in this enriching experience.

What's next?

In 2023, we partnered with The University of Sydney and The University of Technology Sydney to undertake an Australia-wide study on the benefits of meditation. We are hoping that this data, which is to be published during 2025, will inspire people across Australia to more mindfulness activities and build community, to create more mental health and true human connections[2].

Calling for volunteers

If you would like to find one of our beach meditation locations near you, or if you feel like your local beach should be our next meditationHQ hub, please visit meditationHQ's official website, www.meditationhq.com.au or scan the QR code below:

About the author

Hedda Koenig, M.A.

Hedda organises high-calibre events in her day job. In her pastime, Hedda is an inspiring yoga and mindfulness teacher and health and wellbeing coach. For 12 months she was teaching at Qantas running 15-minute relaxation classes for long-haul passengers and "minefulness" to corporates in the mining industry.

As a local beach crew leader at Bathers Beach, WA, since June 2022 and part of the leadership team with meditationHQ, she focused on growing her local meditation community and is currently looking to recruit more volunteer leaders. Get in touch if this speaks to you – training is provided and no experience required!

[1]According to AIHW statistics, almost 9 Australians per day took their life in 2023. Source: https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/data/suicide-self-harm-monitoring-data

[2] More people aged 15–24 now report feeling lonely than people aged 55 and over, with young females most likely to experience loneliness. P. 26 Source: https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/c47cb232-4f6f-4eb0-853e-d6018f6ee01c/aihw-aus-246_chapter_2.pdf

NATURAL THERAPIES CAN HELP SOME VERTIGO CASES

By Lyn Craven

Vertigo can occur for many reasons including, but not limited to:

- Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo (BPPV)
- Bacterial or viral infection of the middle ear
- Trauma, including falls, whiplash (not necessarily hitting the head), direct head impact, dental work and surgery
- Brain diseases
- Stroke
- Anxiety
- Panic attacks
- Migraines

Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo (BPPV) is the most common cause of vertigo, especially in people over 65 years old. BPPV occurs when crystals, normally located in one part of the balance system of your inner ear, become dislodged and collect in another part of the inner ear balance system. As your head moves, the dislodged crystals also move and incorrect messages are sent to your brain. The brain receives the messages that the head is moving although the head has only moved position slightly. This will cause symptoms such as an illusion of movement or spinning with common movements or changes in position such as rolling over in bed, getting in or out of bed, or looking up or reaching up (for example to the top shelf or to put drops into your eye).

Meniere's Disease affects the inner ear due to a buildup of fluid and changing pressure in the ear. You may experience periods of vertigo and ringing in the ears often referred to as tinnitus.
Labyrinthitis is an inner ear disorder of inflammation within the inner ear. It is usually due to viral infection.

More serious issues contributing to vertigo could be brain injury or a tumour.

What would I experience if I had vertigo?

People often describe a feeling of spinning, turning, tilting, or feeling of being pulled in one direction – they feel very unstable as if they may fall over. You may experience nausea, and some individuals may vomit. Other symptoms include sweating, headaches, jerking eye movements, panic attacks and ringing in the ears.

Vertigo can significantly limit daily activities, so it's important to seek help to address the issue. It's worth noting that what works for one person may not work for another, as vertigo can be caused by a variety of factors. It's essential to identify and address the specific underlying trigger for effective treatment.

Medical approach

The medical approach will depend on the underlying cause. For instance, specific exercises may be used to reposition the crystals in the ear, which can shift due to impact or whiplash. These crystals are tiny calcium deposits that need to be moved from the canal into the inner ear chamber, where they can be absorbed by the body.

Physical therapy may be used to strengthen the vestibular system. This system sends signals to the brain, head and body movements especially when turning around, looking side to side and bending down.

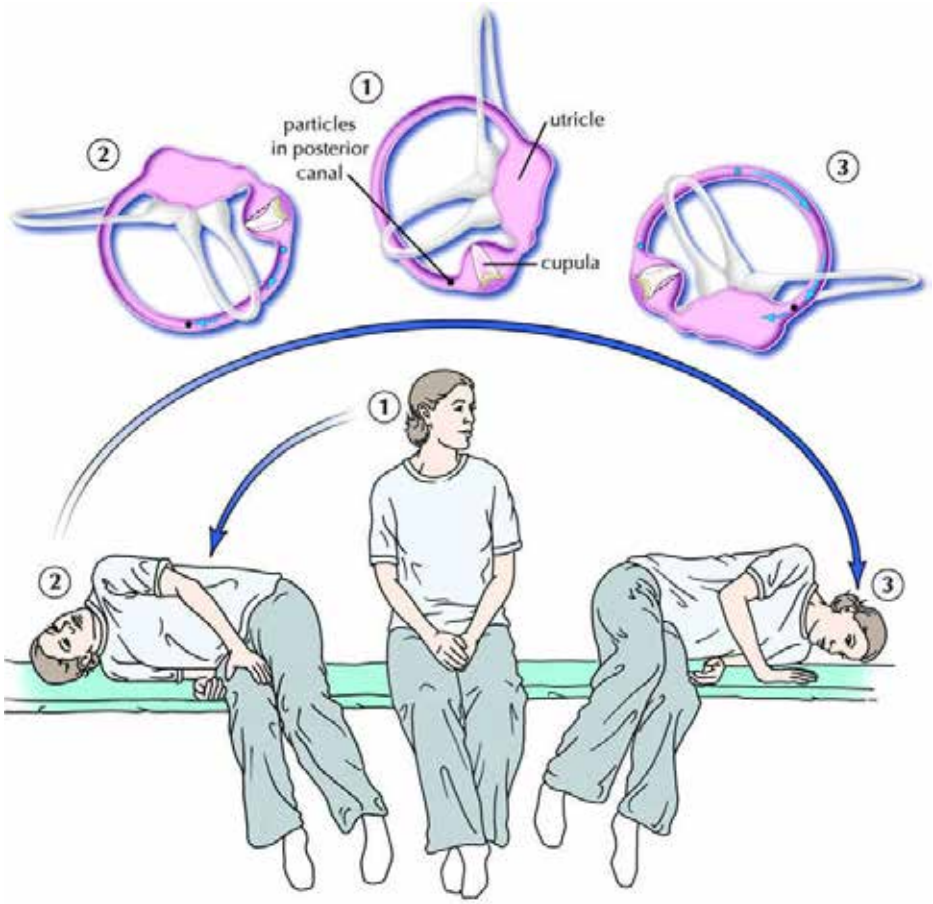
Various medications could be prescribed if inflammation is present, including antibiotics if bacterial infection is present. If there is fluid build-up, then diuretics may be offered.

The home Epley manoeuvre is a type of exercise that helps to treat the symptoms of benign paroxysmal positional vertigo (BPPV).

The Epley manoeuvre

For symptoms of vertigo occurring from the right side and right ear:

- Sit on the edge of a bed and turn the head 45 degrees to the right.
- Lie down quickly and face head up on the bed at a 45-degree angle.
- Maintain the position for 30 seconds.
- Turn head halfway, 90 de-



The Epley manoeuvre: seek professional advice before performing, particularly if trauma has been part of your history.

grees to the right without raising it for 30 seconds.

- Turn the head and entire body to left side, looking downward for 30 seconds.
- Slowly sit up. Remain sitting for few minutes.

If vertigo starts on the right side in the right ear, follow the above for opposite side.

Natural Therapies:

I use Bowen Therapy and acupressure on all vertigo cases. Then we look at the individual triggers. These would require a different approach with herbal formulas or any homoeopathics.

Centre of balance is very important to take care of.

TRAUMA:

If you fall and twist your neck or hit your upper shoulder you can impinge a nerve. There are many small nerves and cappilaries that run across the face and eyes from the neck; damaging these can contribute to vertigo. All neck muscles need to be gently exercised (homework I give people in-between treatments). Body work would address head acupressure points, lymph drainage and the entire spine.

Posture alignment through education of the body with appropriate exercises and sitting positions.

INFECTION:

Bacterial infection elsewhere in the body, especially in the kidneys, can contribute to this problem. The ears and kidneys are connected, and damage to the nerves including the inner ear can occur if the kidneys are not treated. However, some research indicates that some medications given to treat kidneys can be ototoxic and contribute to hearing loss.

Kidney herbal formulas or homeopathic's are a must if infection is in the kidney. The body is all connected and we must not just treat the problem area. Treating the symptoms will not resolve the problem, we must look at the entire body.

Don't put off treatment for issues that can impact your ears or kidneys. High blood pressure and diabetes are two disorders that come to mind.

pH balance and hydration:

Over acidity can also affect kidneys so pH balance needs to be addressed. Hydration is also very important.

Case example:

I had a client who presented with ovarian pain. Upon assessing her, I noticed that one shoulder was drooping more than the other when she was seated, a result of a previous fall. This fall had also displaced her neck, leading to intermittent vertigo since the incident. Additionally, this woman experienced pain in her ovaries. Her kidneys were heavily infected with bacteria, which caused inflammation in her surrounding organs, specifically her ovaries. These issues can really impact your qaulity of life so please do not delay treatment.

Lyn Craven is a practitioner of naturopathy, Bowen therapy, reiki and meditation.

She is also a health researcher and writer.

Lyn runs a clinic in Sydney and can be contacted on 0403 231 804 or via lyncraven@bigpond.com
www.lyncraven.com

instagram @lyncravennd
FB @NaturopathandBowenTherapy

Menopause: Navigating Symptoms with Natural Strategies

By Nat Evans

Menopause is a natural stage of life, but it can bring a variety of symptoms that impact daily life, including hot flushes, night sweats, mood swings and fatigue. While hormone therapy and medications may be used by some, many prefer to manage these symptoms using natural, lifestyle-based strategies.

The good news is that making simple changes to your routine can help you feel more balanced, energised and in control.

What Are Menopausal Symptoms?

Menopausal symptoms vary from person to person, but the most common include:

- Hot flushes
- Night sweats
- Sleep disturbances
- Mood swings
- Fatigue
- Weight gain
- Decreased libido.

These symptoms are triggered by changes in the levels of hormones like oestrogen and progesterone, which can impact everything from mood to metabolism. While these hormonal shifts are a natural part of life, it's important to take an active role in managing symptoms through lifestyle adjustments and holistic strategies.

How Can You Manage Menopausal Symptoms Naturally?

Here are a few natural, easy-to-implement lifestyle shifts to help manage the symptoms of menopause:

1. Eat a Balanced Diet

What you eat plays a significant role in how you feel during menopause. As oestrogen levels fluctuate, the body's insulin response is affected, which influences metabolism, blood sugar regulation and energy levels.

Nourishing your body with a variety of whole foods is one of the most effective ways to support hormonal balance and minimise symptoms.

Focus on phytoestrogens: Foods like soy, flaxseeds and legumes contain natural plant compounds that mimic oestrogen in the body and may help reduce symptoms like hot flushes.

Incorporate healthy fats: Omega-3 fatty acids, found in walnuts and chia seeds (or for non-vegetarian sources, wild-caught salmon and sardines), help reduce inflammation, support heart health and improve mood (Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 2018).

Stay hydrated: Dehydration can exacerbate symptoms such as hot flushes and fatigue. Drink water throughout the day to stay hydrated.

Add fibre: A high-fibre diet, rich in fruits, vegetables and whole grains, helps regulate blood sugar, supports digestion and promotes hormone balance.

By focusing on these key dietary changes, you can better manage menopausal symptoms while supporting overall health.

2. Exercise Regularly

Exercise is a powerful tool for managing menopausal symptoms and maintaining overall health. Regular physical activity improves mood, boosts energy levels and helps reduce hot flushes, sleep disruptions and anxiety.

Engage in a well-rounded exercise routine that includes:

Strength training: Research shows that strength training is vital for maintaining bone density and muscle mass, both of which can decline during menopause, increasing the risk of osteoporosis and muscle loss (Shen et al., 2018). Regular weight-bearing exercises can help offset these changes, though it's important to tailor exercises to your individual needs.

Cardio: Cardiovascular exercise, such as walking, helps maintain a healthy weight, regulates blood sugar levels and improves heart health. Studies suggest that regular aerobic exercise improves insulin sensitivity and reduces the risk of metabolic syndrome (Almeida et al., 2021).

Mind-body practices: Moving with intention can help reduce stress, ease anxiety and improve resiliency. Mindful movement lowers cortisol levels, promotes relaxation and supports better sleep, enhancing both physical and emotional wellbeing. By integrating a mix of these exercise types into your routine, you can support hormonal balance, enhance mood and reduce the physical discomforts commonly experienced during menopause.

3. Prioritise Sleep

Menopause can disrupt sleep patterns, but quality rest is crucial for managing symptoms like mood swings and fatigue.

To improve your sleep naturally, consider:

Creating a relaxing bedtime routine: Avoid screens and opt for calming activities like reading or listening to soothing music before bed.

Managing hot flushes at night: Keep your bedroom cool and use natural, breathable fabrics to reduce discomfort.

Limit caffeine: Caffeine can exacerbate sleep disturbances, so try to limit intake, especially after midday.

4. Manage Stress

Stress is one of the biggest triggers for menopausal symptoms, so it's important to incorporate strategies to manage stress effectively.

Consider:

Taking regular breaks: Short, frequent breaks throughout the day can help you reset, improve focus and lower stress levels.

Deep breathing: Taking a few minutes for deep breathing exercises can help calm the nervous system, reduce anxiety and enhance mental clarity.

Staying organised: Keep a to-do list or use a planner to reduce mental clutter and avoid feeling overwhelmed.

Staying active: Exercise, even a short walk or a dance in the kitchen, can reduce tension, improve mood, and help you feel more relaxed.

These simple, accessible techniques can help manage stress without adding extra pressure or complexity to your routine.

5. Build a Supportive Network

Navigating menopause can feel isolating, but connecting with others going through similar experiences can make a huge difference. Join online forums, attend events like *The Menopause Summit Brisbane 2025*, or start conversations with friends and family members. Sharing tips, strategies and stories can help you feel empowered and less alone.

Taking Charge of Your Health

Menopause doesn't have to be a time of struggle. By making small, intentional changes to your lifestyle, you can manage symptoms naturally and embrace this new phase of life with confidence. Events like *The Menopause Summit* provide access to holistic practitioners, valuable education and resources to help you better understand your body and take charge of your health.

Remember, menopause is a new chapter in your life. With the right knowledge and strategies, you can thrive during this transition.

Nat Evans is a highly respected Menopause Health, Fitness and Nutrition Coach with over 17 years experience in the industry. She is dedicated to guiding women through all stages of menopause using evidence-influenced strategies, helping them embrace this transformative phase with renewed confidence and vitality. Nat is also the Founder of The Menopause Summit which will be held in Brisbane on 29-30 March, 2025.

www.themenopausesummit.com.au

Life Journeys

By Professor Tim Roberts

My science journey

My science journey began at Adelaide University in 1963, then took me to Flinders Uni to do a PhD in immunology, then to research in Belgium, Cambridge and on to a position in the Biology Department at the University of Newcastle.

For the last 40 years, Hugh Dunstan and I have been studying chronic fatigue syndrome and other debilitating conditions. We are now both in 'retirement' and putting our patented amino acid products on the market. These can markedly assist with fatigue, energy, concentration and recovery from exercise.

Over the last 40 years we have followed the research on what one needs to do to live longer and happier. In this article, I will share some of my thoughts on that topic, not as a clinician giving you medical advice, but as a biologist and a scientist.

Getting old

For me, the scary thing about getting older is the thought of losing my independence. These fears are brought home as I begin to notice small changes in myself, such as loss of strength, loss of hearing and urination problems. I also know that some of the statistics are frightening. One I'm conscious of is that 25 percent of your muscle mass is gone by age 70. Lowered muscle mass, and the associated strength and stability problems, is a major reason people lose their independence. One key example of this is that the majority of people who break a hip never fully regain their independence.

My message

Each and every day, exercise for an hour, lift weights, eat adequate protein, take your full range of vitamins, minerals and omega-3's to ensure your body and immune system are in the best place to keep you well into your 90s.

You might wonder about the supplements, but many people in our society are not receiving enough in their daily diet to allow the body to prepare for optimal ageing. When there is an absence of these components, then we see the deficiency diseases of scurvy, rickets, etc. But when there is a deficiency, the body has a built-in triaging system that favours the production of proteins needed for immediate survival rather than produce proteins needed for long-term health. Impairment of the function of these longevity proteins results in an acceleration of the risk of diseases associated with ageing. (Ames 2018)

Why I walk for an hour before dawn

The short answer is that walking has been shown to be one of the most powerful medicines available. Also, if I start at 5am my son will come with me before he starts work. Sometimes we start out in the moonlight, see the sunrise and are rewarded with views of the ocean, historic Fort Scratchley and the sun shrouded in fog.

Winter or summer, rain or not, the short-term effects of exercise are easily felt in one's heart, legs and lungs, but the long-term effects on healthy ageing and longevity are what we hope to achieve.

The science is clear

Exercise can help keep your memory sharp and lower your odds of dying of heart disease. Those who walk 8000 plus steps per day have a better chance of living over the next decade.

Simple exercises will help keep your weight under control, improve your balance and range of motion, strengthen your bones, protect your joints, ward off memory loss and even help reduce bladder control problems. The adage that we start in nappies and end up in nappies is increasingly relevant as we age. Strengthening your pelvic floor muscles should be part of your daily exercise routine.

Resistance exercise and weights

Lifting light weights will keep you strong and help put calcium into your bones. Resistance exercise increases muscle protein synthesis in both the young and old. The increased muscle building (anabolism) occurs within two to three hours of a single bout of heavy resistance exercise and remains elevated up to two days fol-

lowing the exercise. Be sure to seek professional advice from a trainer to develop the appropriate routine for your levels of fitness and strength.

Amino acids, protein and ageing

Proteins are chains of amino acids linked together just like a string of beads. Proteins form your muscles, bones, skin, hair, connective tissue, your hormones, your immune cells, your enzymes and your brain chemicals. However, these are not obtained straight from our food.

First, the protein from food must be digested in the gut to release amino acids in a free and available form for absorption. These amino acids are then absorbed and circulated to those areas where they can be joined together to make the proteins where the body needs them.

Amino acids are the building blocks that make up protein. They are needed to build the various proteins used in the growth, repair and maintenance of body tissues. Our own research has shown that six of the amino acids are in high demand and play a pivotal role in our metabolism outside of just protein synthesis.

As we age, our ability to break down protein into their component single amino acids decreases due to less stomach acid and a reduced capacity to secrete digestive enzymes.

Supplementing with free form amino acids, such as in our product (OptimAAte), can be effective in preventing muscle loss and stimulating muscle protein synthesis in the elderly, in diabetics and in elderly patients with chronic heart failure. The amino acids provided in OptimAAte® are designed to replenish those that are in high demand by the body to better maintain muscle integrity and immune function.

Body weight

As we age, we also tend to put on too much weight. I recommend that you measure your body mass index. We should all aim for the normal range but take heart as a recent Norwegian study of BMI data of men at 65 years of age showed that 25 years later it was the 'slightly overweight' individuals (BMI 25 to 30) that had the lowest mortality. However, make sure that your ratio of muscle to fat stays high.

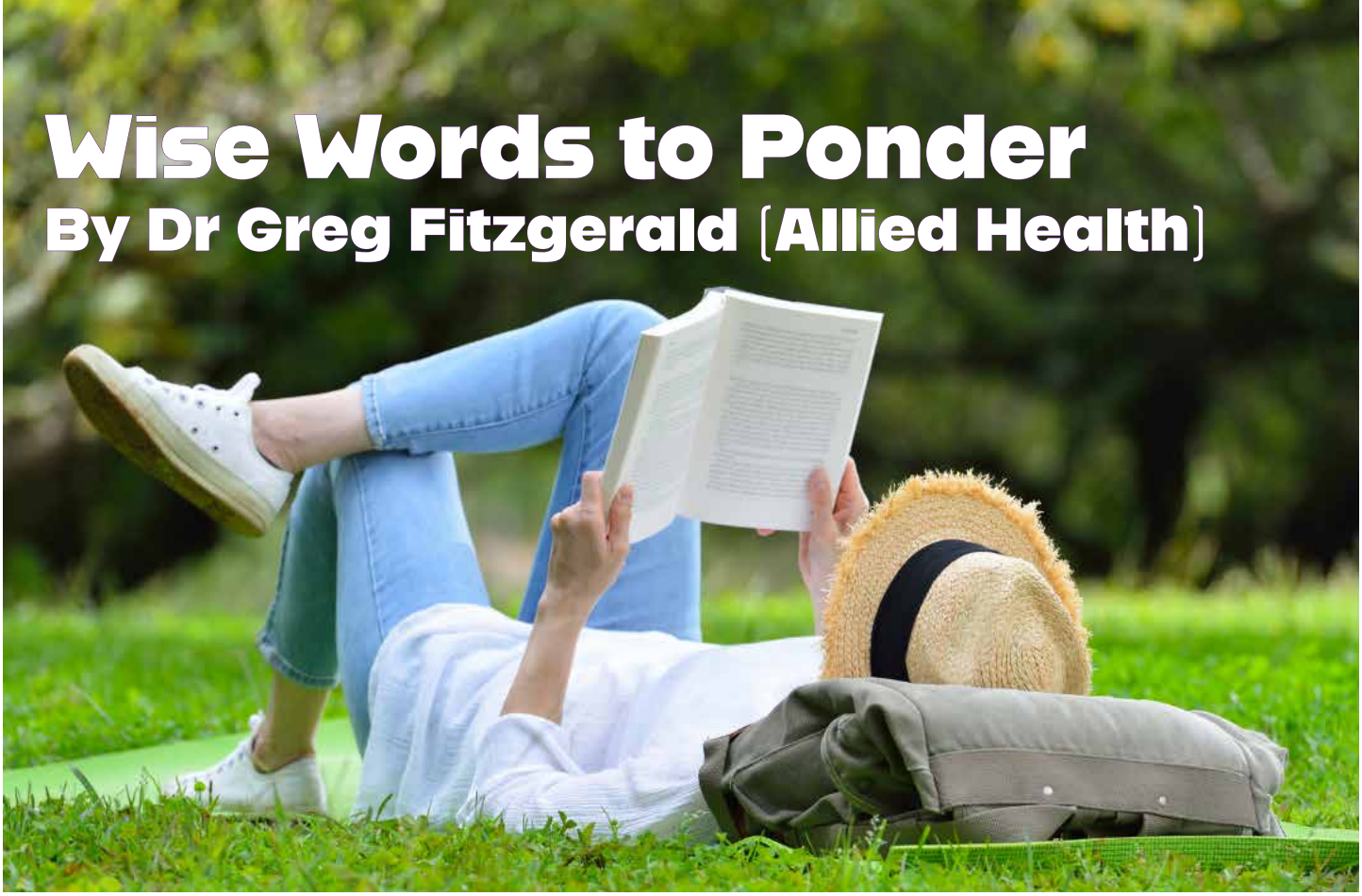
Retirement life

After 50 years I am retired from my job at the University of Newcastle but am working harder than ever to start a new biotech business. Learning the intricacies of Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn is definitely much harder than doing experiments. Only time will tell if these High Demand Amino Acids will unlock new dimensions of patient care and performance optimisation.

Tim Roberts is an Emeritus Professor at the University of Newcastle and a Director of InnovAAte Pty Ltd

Wise Words to Ponder

By Dr Greg Fitzgerald (Allied Health)



On Worry

"I have been through some terrible things in my lifetime, some of which actually happened" Mark Twain

What a great insight this is, put in a very funny way by Mark Twain (1835-1910), the famous American author who wrote the classics *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*.

Our minds can be our friend or foe and can make a hell of heaven or a heaven of hell. Many people make the mistake of thinking health is simply eating a healthy diet and exercising, but this is far from the case.

The power of our minds in determining the quality of our lives is often overlooked in the frenetic rush of the modern world, and we pay a hefty price for this.

When our thoughts often involve worry, we need to examine these thoughts and ask ourselves: where is the evidence this will happen? Often there is little or no evidence. When we look back, we ask ourselves why we worried so much in the first place.

The "terrible things" Twain refers to in his life were not actual events, but mind events.

We all hold such false fears and worries to some degree. We need to be mindful of our mental tendencies just as much as our physical tendencies, such as overeating, sedentariness, addictions and so on. Self-awareness is key.

Continually dwelling on potential problems drains the nervous system and can lead to anxiety, depression and neuroticism, all of which detract from our quality of life. The ancient Indian Verdic saying encapsulates this: "Nothing holds more power over the body than thoughts held in the mind."

The fake news we hear about today is mostly internal. I have literally seen patients who worried themselves sick. The habit of worrying can be greatly helped by a conscious decision, just like lack of fitness can be helped by a conscious decision, both of course requiring action.

Asking "where is the evidence this will happen?" is a good start. We need to challenge our own thinking. If there is little or no evidence, verbally (or mentally) dismiss the thought. Like a bad tenant, it deserves evicting.

Asking ourselves if there is something we can do to negate or lessen the worry, and then taking action is also important. If there is nothing we can do, then worrying about it only hurts ourselves and does nothing to solve the problem. It is out of our control.

Many years ago, I used to worry about what other people thought of me. Then, after reading self-improvement books and giving this tendency some conscious thought, I realised that people's opinions were out of my control and none of my business.

The practice of daily meditation helps the mind stay balanced and has a multitude of other mental, spiritual and physical benefits as well. As does EFT (Emotional Freedom Technique) or tapping, which can help retrain the mind. Robyn Chuter, a regular contributor to this magazine, is an expert in this technique and has written articles on it.

This short article is nowhere near exhaustive on the subject, but hopefully Mark Twain's quote will provide inspiration, as well as some humour.

On Disease

"It's more important to know what sort of person has the disease, than what sort of disease the person has" Hippocrates.

Over the 42 years of my practice, I have seen many people with the same disease come in. Without equivocation, I can honestly say that the ones who displayed a positive attitude towards implementing any changes in their mode of living, were the ones whose health improved the most.

Some people when faced with a diagnosis will accept not only the diagnosis, but the prognosis given by their doctor. They believe they are the experts, and their words are to be believed. I had one friend some years ago who was told by his specialist that, because of his prostate cancer, he had no more than five years to live. He accepted that as gospel and died on time. I attended his funeral. He had not made one change to his diet or lifestyle. He did nothing to help himself, relying on the cut, burn and poison arsenal of modern medicine to save him.

Another friend, Dr Kevin Coleman, also had prostate cancer diagnosed. Kevin has talked about his situation at a Natural Health Seminar in public, so I am not betraying his confidence. Kevin became empowered to do his own research and made a number of positive changes to his way of living such as meditation, prayer, dietary modifications and targeted supplementation. He also listened to and learned from many people, including various health professionals. He was not prepared to just sit back and be a passive recipient of his prognosis. Instead, he became an active participant in his own continuing recovery.

This is what Hippocrates meant in the above quote. Those who become ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS in their own recovery and not just PASSIVE RECIPIENTS, will have a far greater chance of success in healing from their illness.

This is not to say that those who engage proactively in their own recovery (active participants) reject medical treatment. Whether someone accepts medical treatment for their disease or rejects it, the most important thing is what they do for themselves.

Even accident victims who require surgery do better in healing and repair when they take an empowered and proactive role in their post-surgical recovery, looking at all areas of their lives which could help improve their situation.

This is what the Natural Health Society is all about, educating and empowering people to take greater control of their health with wisdom and knowledge of things like nutrition, fasting, exercise, sleep, rest, sunshine, fresh air, positive outlook, etc. This also applies to disease reversal.

The sad thing about our health-care system (really, it's disease-care) is that the vast majority of medical doctors are not trained in Natural Health. Patients must take that responsibility themselves.

On Food Addiction

"At first, they eat to feel good. Later, they eat not to feel bad!" Dr Joel Fuhrman

This profound understanding of the nature of food addiction speaks to the 'feel good' effect some foods and substances have on our brains. When compounds like sugar, oil and salt (SOS) are added to foods, they trigger the release of dopamine, a feel-good chemical released in the brain. This is why chocolate, with its combination of sugar, oil and caffeine, is addictive. Potato crisps have the combination of salt and oil which combine for what food technologists

call 'mouthfeel', enticing consumers to overeat. Other substances like coffee, caffeinated tea, cola drinks, alcohol and other recreational drugs also stimulate the release of dopamine, which makes people feel good temporarily.

Sweet fruit is more appealing than say lettuce for most people because of its dopamine-releasing effect. Salty foods are likewise more appealing than bland foods because of the same pathway. "No salt, no sale!" has long been a motto in the food industry, which is why many processed foods are loaded with salt (sodium).

Initially, the person eats such foods because they feel good. They go back for more because they enjoy the 'high' that follows.

It's important to understand that these foods and beverages are acting as drugs, not nutrition. Non-adulterated food like salads, vegetables, fruits, legumes, etc do not have the same 'kick.' I have never seen someone eat a whole cabbage because they just could not stop; but I have seen people eat a whole block of chocolate, a whole pack of crisps or drink a full bottle of wine.

The drug-like effects of foods and drinks are why people become addicted. However, over time, the addict will feel bad IF they do not have their regular 'hit.' The discomfort is a sign of drug withdrawal.

So, as Dr Fuhrman states, they then eat NOT to feel bad.

This is why many people addicted to coffee or tea (with caffeine) will experience headaches and other body discomforts when they miss their regular 'hit.' The person who habitually drinks a morning coffee when they wake up to go to work will often experience a headache when they sleep in on the weekend, having withdrawn from their usual early morning shot of caffeine.

The effect of substance addiction is brilliantly explained in the book by Drs Goldhamer and Lisle called *The Pleasure Trap*. I rate this as one of the top five books I have ever read. The food and beverage industries have mastered the art of adulterating foods to fool our taste buds and create repeat customers. This has led to the tsunami of overweight and obesity and the sundry diseases associated with excess weight and metabolic dysfunction. Further, this is the reason that there are only three animals in the world which are overweight…humans, dogs and cats. Guess who feed the dogs and cats?

Animals in the wild are never overweight because they eat when they are hungry and stop when they are satiated. They are not pleasure-trapped.
The Natural Health Society encourages people to eat 'direct-from-nature' foods and drinks when hungry and thirsty and eschew drug-like pseudo foods like processed foods, alcohol and caffeine-laced foods and drinks. When this way of eating is adopted, food addiction vanishes, body weight is normalised, and better health ensues.

On Children's Health

"It's bizarre that the produce farmer is more important to my children's health than their paediatrician" Meryl Streep

How true!

Tragically, we are witnessing a modern-day calamity in children's health. Chronic illness is at an all-time high in children, and the situation is not improving. Why is this? The famous actress's words carry much truth, but there are other reasons why kids are so sick these days.

Firstly, the foods that many babies and kids are fed are often highly processed, with added sugar, oil, salt (SOS) and a myriad of other chemicals. Kids are more food-addicted than ever before.

They are fed far too much animal protein, including dairy foods. They are deficient in 'direct-from-nature' foods like vegetables, salads, fruits, nuts, seeds, legumes and whole grains.

They are drugged more than at any time in history, from multiple vaccinations commencing on day one to the rampant over-prescribing of antibiotics.

They are less active than any previous generation in history. Technology has captured them via the habit of

'sitting, snacking and sucking' while hypnotised by screens. This is highly destructive to their health.

They are more overweight than ever.

They are often deficient in fresh air and sunlight.

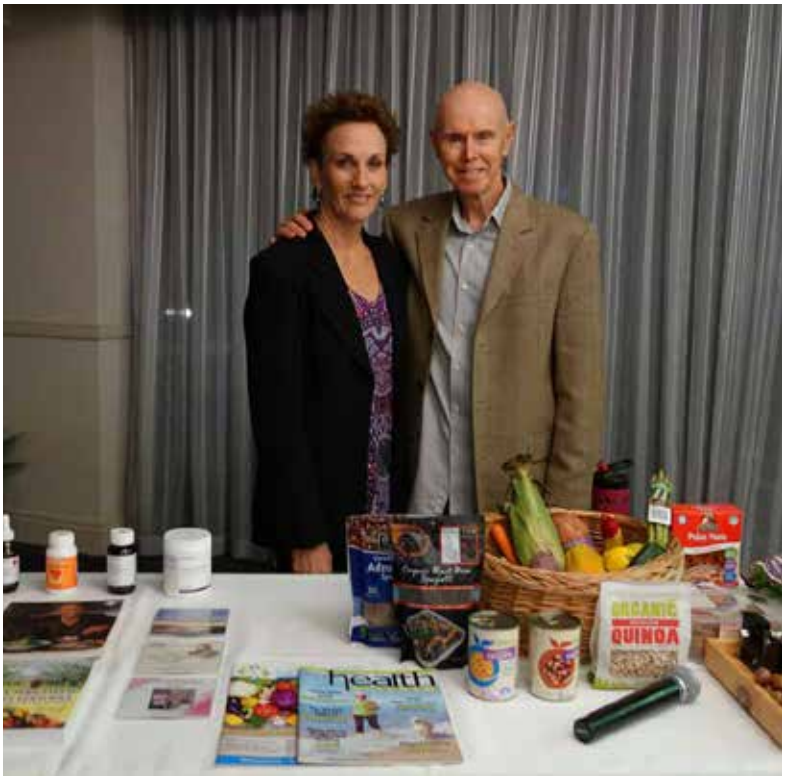
Today's teenagers are more sleep-deprived than at any time in history.

The result is what we see today, where it is viewed as normal for kids to become sick and get taken to the doctor regularly. The average child is taken to the doctor five times per year.

Kids are dependent on adults to educate them and guide them in their choices in life. This includes the foods they eat, the movement they get, the sleep they need and all the other biological needs.

We have become a society easily fed and easily led.

Our kids deserve better.



HealthFORLife

About the author: Dr Greg Fitzgerald (Allied Health) is a naturopath and osteopath. Greg is a fantastic clinician, health advocate and educator. He speaks nationally and internationally on the subjects of health and wellness.

Greg has written many articles for various health publications, including the Australian Natural Health Society and the American National Health Association.
As part of his mission to educate the public, he has also produced CD's and DVD's on subjects such as osteoporosis, immunity, fasting and digestive disorders.

Greg and Dawn live in the Sutherland Shire with their three children, all of whom have been raised along the same principles Greg teaches his patients and students. Over the years, many osteopaths and naturopaths have started their careers under Dr Fitzgerald and subsequently established successful practices of their own.

As well as providing individual consultations to countless people over the years, the Health for Life centre, under the leadership of Greg, has also conducted many seminars and health programs, for professionals and the public alike.

The Health for Life Centre, run by Greg and his wife Dawn, is in Gymea Bay NSW. Appointments can be made via their website www.healthforlife.com.au of by calling 9540 1962.

Health News

Growing Evidence Suggests Plant-Based Diets Reduce Cancer Risk

By Tara Haelle, sub-edited by Roger French

When it comes to naming the dietary patterns offering the most protection against cancer, plant-based diets emerge as the winner for reducing the risk for several cancers sensitive to lifestyle factors.

Though most research into dietary patterns over the past few decades has compared the Mediterranean diet with the Western diet, meta-analyses in the past five years have brought more attention to the benefits of plant-based diets. One of the leading hypotheses for the association between plant-based diets and reduced risk for certain cancers is how eating diverse plants affects the microbiome.

Most recently, for example, a study published on January 6 in *Nature Microbiology* [See the results of this study to the right of this item.] compared the microbiomes of vegans, vegetarians and omnivores. The findings suggest that eating a diet emphasising plants may be even more helpful for preventing cancer than cutting out meat.

Decades ago, the idea that changing lifestyle behaviours could have an impact on cancer risk was so radical that many dismissed it as 'false hope' sold by 'snake oil salesmen', according to Nigel Brockton, PhD, the vice president of research at the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR).

Today, it's far better understood that lifestyle factors play a major role in many different cancers, but researchers are still working to disentangle precisely how. Nowhere is that more complex than with diet.

"Particularly over the last 10 years, there's been a push in the research for investigating dietary patterns rather than individual foods or macronutrients," Brockton said. The problem is, "If you just tell someone to eat a healthy diet, that means different things to many different people." But as the evidence accumulates, it increasingly points to one over-arching theme: more plants, less cancer.

The study was published online in Medscape Medical News, 25th January 2025

[NOTE THAT we Natural Health people were among the 'snake oil salesmen' referred to above. We now see that medical so-called scientists are waking up to the fact that we were right all along. Perhaps this says that we are the true scientists – Roger French]

Diet and Microbiome Health

By Marilynn Larkin

People who ate more plant-based and less meat-based foods – whether on a vegan, vegetarian or omnivorous diet – had more favourable microbiome compositions than those who did not follow a healthy dietary pattern, new research suggests.

For example, red meat was a strong driver of omnivore microbiomes, with corresponding signature microbes which, as they increase in number, cause increases in cardio-metabolic diseases [heart attack, stroke, obesity and type 2 diabetes].

In contrast, the signature microbes found in the gut microbiomes of vegans were correlated with favourable cardio-metabolic markers, and were enriched in omnivores who ate more plant-based foods.

"From the viewpoint of the impact of diet on the gut microbiome," said the author of this Italian study, "what seems to be more important is the diversity of healthy plant-based foods that are consumed. Whether this comes within a vegan or an omnivore diet is less crucial, as long as there is no specific over-consumption of unhealthy food categories, such as red meat."

Excluding broad categories of foods can also have effects, he added. "For example, we saw that … avoiding meat or dairy products does not necessarily have a positive effect if it does not come with a variety of quality plant-based products."

The study was published online in Nature Microbiology, 6th January 2025 and reported in Medscape Medical News, 25th January 2025

Adelaide's Vegan Festival 2024

Adelaide's Vegan Festival was held on December 7th and 8th in 2024. Originally the Festival was always held in November, closer to World Vegan Day but, due to bad weather a couple of years ago, it was moved into December. This year, despite forecast showers, the weather was mild with a sunny, peaceful atmosphere. Even so, numbers were down on previous years, especially on the Saturday. (Perhaps some people were off Christmas shopping.) Bonus! Shorter queues than usual for your midday plant-based snack.

The festival is a family friendly event for people of all ages. As well as activities for children in the dedicated Kids Zone, there were cooking demonstrations and talks by well-known activists. Among the speakers were Dr Heleen Haitjema and Rebecca Stonor from Doctors for Nutrition, emphasising that a plant-based diet can lead to considerable health advantages.

One of the pleasures of the festival is getting to talk to some of the many stallholders. Among the sixty or so were animal rights and animal rescue groups from SA and interstate, including Free The Bears, Forever Farm, Animal Liberation SA, Edgar's Mission, Farm Transparency Project, Captain Paul Watson Foundation, Sea Shepherd Australia, Animal Justice Party SA and The Greens SA. It was particularly good to meet people from Animal-Free Science Advocacy (formerly Humane Research Australia) as moving science away from experimenting on animals is especially problematic.

Pictured above: Animal Liberation SA's team with activist Chris Delforce

Among the food stalls it was good to see regulars like Stazzi & Co, Nagev, Later Gator, Totally Vegan by Charlie, Gofalafull and Sassi Ice Cream. Many of the other food stalls are not vegan in their normal venues although some are vegetarian (i.e. meat free). It was surprising to see that some of the major sponsors also serve meat in their venues!

The vegan festival is a peaceful space where like-minded people can come together and share their ideas and their feelings about an animal-free diet and lifestyle.

Information on the 2024 stallholders and presenters, including access to their media sites and this year's recipes is on the vegan festival website: https://www.veganfestival.info/welcome

Other useful sites are:
https://www.doctorsfornutrition.org
https://animalliberation.org.au
https://animalfreescienceadvocacy.org.au/about-us/about/

SA Open Season to shoot native ducks and quails update

The Vegan Festival offered a good opportunity to gather signatures on a South Aussies for Animals petition asking the SA Government to halt the annual open seasons to shoot native ducks and quails. Volunteers, particularly aided by Animal Liberation SA, were able to collect over 1000 signatures on the petition with more added later.

Sadly, the Government chose to ignore this and is allowing an open season from 23rd March to 29th June. Shooting five species of ducks with a maximum bag of six ducks per day will be allowed. How can this continue when over 70 percent of people independently surveyed are against it?

PO Box 311, Kent Town, SA 5071

0466 972 112

info@vegsa.org.au

Culinary Herbs for Health: Harnessing the Power of Autumn's Healing Herbs

By Candace Coughlan

As autumn ushers in cooler temperatures and vibrant foliage, it's an ideal time to embrace the season's bounty of herbs that not only enhance the flavours of our meals but also offer numerous health benefits. Incorporating these herbs into a plant-based diet can support digestion, boost immunity and promote overall wellbeing. This article explores some of the most beneficial autumn herbs and provides practical ways to include them in your daily routine.

1. Rosemary: The Memory Herb

Rosemary *(Rosmarinus officinalis)* is a fragrant evergreen herb native to the Mediterranean region, celebrated for its culinary versatility and medicinal properties. Rich in antioxidants, particularly *rosmarinic acid* and *carnosic acid*, rosemary helps combat oxidative stress, which is linked to chronic diseases such as heart disease and cancer. These antioxidants neutralise free radicals, thereby protecting cells from damage.

Beyond its antioxidant properties, rosemary has been traditionally used to enhance cognitive function. Studies suggest that compounds in rosemary may improve memory and concentration, making it beneficial for cognitive health (1).

Rosemary also has anti-inflammatory effects, which can help alleviate muscle pain and soreness. Its rich content of *rosmarinic acid* contributes to its anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects, which can help protect against chronic diseases.

Tip: To preserve the potency of essential oils, store fresh sprigs in a damp paper towel inside a sealed plastic bag in the refrigerator. This method can extend their freshness for up to two weeks.

Culinary Uses:
Roasted Vegetables: Enhance the flavour of root vegetables like carrots, potatoes and parsnips by tossing them with olive oil and fresh rosemary before roasting.
Grain Dishes: Stir chopped rosemary into cooked grains such as quinoa, farro, or rice for added depth of flavour.
Herb-Infused Oil: Create a rosemary-infused olive oil by gently heating olive oil with fresh rosemary sprigs, then using it as a drizzle over salads, pasta or roasted vegetables.

2. Thyme: The Respiratory Ally

Thyme *(Thymus vulgaris)* is a perennial herb known for its antimicrobial properties, making it effective in combating respiratory infections. Its essential oil contains *thymol*, a compound studied for its potential to reduce inflammation and alleviate respiratory symptoms (2). Thyme is also rich in vitamins C and pre-vitamin A, supporting the immune system. Traditionally, thyme has been used to relieve coughs and bronchitis.

Tip: To maximise the flavour of thyme, add it early in the cooking process, as its robust flavour can withstand longer cooking times.

Culinary Uses:
Soups and Stews: Add fresh thyme sprigs to vegetable soups or lentil stews for a robust flavour.
Marinades: Combine thyme with olive oil, lemon juice, garlic and spices to marinate tofu, tempeh or vegetables before grilling or roasting.
Herb Butter: Blend softened plant-based butter with minced thyme, garlic and lemon zest. Spread this on warm bread or steamed vegetables.

3. Sage: The Digestive Aid

Sage *(Salvia officinalis*) is a perennial herb with a long history of medicinal use. It contains compounds that have been shown to soothe digestive issues, such as indigestion and bloating (3).

Sage also has antimicrobial properties and can enhance cognitive function. Additionally, sage has been traditionally used to alleviate symptoms of indigestion and bloating.

Tip: Use sage sparingly, as its strong flavour can overpower dishes. Start with a small amount and adjust to taste.

Culinary Uses:
Stuffing: Incorporate fresh sage into plant-based stuffing mixtures with ingredients like quinoa, wild rice, breadcrumbs, vegetables and nuts.
Pasta Sauces: Sauté sage leaves in olive oil and toss them with pasta and a plant-based cream sauce for a comforting dish.
Herb-Infused Vinegar: Steep fresh sage leaves in apple cider vinegar for a few weeks to create a flavourful addition to salad dressings and marinades.

4. Oregano: The Immune Booster

Oregano *(Origanum vulgare)* is rich in antioxidants and has strong antibacterial properties. It's effective in supporting the immune system and combating infections. Oregano contains the compounds *carvacrol* and *thymol*, which have been studied for their antimicrobial effects (4).

Additionally, oregano has been traditionally used to relieve symptoms of respiratory infections and to support digestive health.

Tip: Dried oregano is more potent than fresh, so use it sparingly. Add it early in the cooking process to allow its flavours to meld with the dish.

Culinary Uses:
Pizzas and Flatbreads: Sprinkle dried oregano over plant-based pizzas or flatbreads before baking for a classic Italian flavour.
Salads: Add fresh oregano leaves to salads, especially those featuring tomatoes, cucumbers or olives, for a Mediterranean touch.
Herb Blends: Combine oregano with other herbs like basil, thyme and rosemary to create a versatile seasoning mix for various dishes.

5. Parsley: The Detoxifier

Parsley *(Petroselinum crispum)* is a versatile herb native to the Mediterranean region, celebrated for its culinary versatility and medicinal properties. It is rich in essential nutrients including pre-vitamin A and vitamins C and K, as well as minerals including iron and potassium.

A ½ cup (30 grams) of fresh, chopped parsley provides an impressive 547 percent of the Recommended Daily

Intake (RDI) for vitamin K, 53 percent for vitamin C and 108 percent for pre-vitamin A (5).

Beyond its nutritional profile, parsley contains powerful antioxidants such as flavonoids (including *myricetin* and *apigenin*) and carotenoids (like *beta-carotene* and *lutein*). These compounds help combat oxidative stress, which is linked to chronic diseases such as heart disease and cancer (6). Parsley has been traditionally used to alleviate symptoms of indigestion and bloating.

Tip: To preserve the potency of parsley's essential oils, store fresh sprigs in a damp paper towel inside a sealed plastic bag in the refrigerator. This method can extend their freshness for up to two weeks.

Culinary Uses:
Tabbouleh: Mix chopped parsley with bulgur wheat, tomatoes, cucumbers, mint and lemon juice for a refreshing Middle Eastern salad.
Pesto: Blend parsley with nuts, garlic, lemon juice and olive oil to create a vibrant green pesto, perfect for pasta or as a sandwich spread.
Garnish: Use fresh parsley as a garnish for soups, stews and grain bowls to add a burst of colour and freshness.

6. Lavender: The Calming Herb

Lavender *(Lavandula angustifolia*) is a fragrant herb known for its calming effects, aiding in stress reduction and promoting better sleep. Its essential oil contains compounds such as *linalool* and *linalyl acetate*, which have been shown to reduce anxiety and reduce blood pressure (7).

Beyond its mood-enhancing properties, lavender has antimicrobial effects, making it useful in treating minor burns and insect bites. Additionally, lavender has been traditionally used to alleviate symptoms of anxiety and insomnia (8).

Tip: To enjoy lavender's calming effects, add a few drops of lavender essential oil to a diffuser before bedtime. This can help create a relaxing atmosphere conducive to sleep. If you want to use lavender as a cooking or cake-decorating herb, be sure it's designated as culinary grade. Start out with a small amount; lavender can overpower a dish if you use too much.

Culinary Uses:
•Desserts: Incorporate dried lavender into baked goods like cookies, cakes or scones for a floral note.
•Infused Syrups: Create a lavender-infused simple syrup to sweeten beverages like lemonade, iced tea or cocktails.
•Salads: Add a few lavender buds to salads, especially those with fruits like strawberries or citrus, for a unique flavour profile.

7. Mint: The Digestive Soother

Mint *(Mentha)* is excellent for soothing digestive discomforts, such as indigestion and nausea. Its *menthol* content provides a cooling effect and can relieve headaches. Mint has been traditionally used to alleviate symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and to promote digestion.

Mint contains compounds that may help improve brain function and reduce stress (9). Its antioxidant properties contribute to overall health and wellbeing.

Tip: To preserve freshness, store sprigs upright in a glass of water in the refrigerator, covering the top loosely with a plastic bag. Change the water every couple of days to keep it fresh.

Culinary Uses:
•Smoothies: Blend fresh mint leaves into fruit smoothies for a refreshing twist.
•Salads: Add chopped mint to salads, particularly those with watermelon, cucumber or citrus fruits, for a burst of flavour.
•Dips: Mix chopped mint into plant-based yogurt or hummus for a refreshing dip.

By incorporating these herbs into your plant-based diet, you can enjoy their unique flavours while reaping their numerous health benefits.

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Candace Coughlan is a gut-focused culinary and holistic nutritional practitioner. Candace runs practical workshops and educational sessions. Find out more by scanning the QR code below, or get in touch via candace.coughlan@gmail.com

Recipes for Autumn, By Candace Coughlan

Rosemary and Thyme Roasted Vegetable Medley

Rosemary and thyme are both packed with antioxidants, which help combat oxidative stress and support overall immune function. Rosemary enhances memory and concentration, while thyme offers respiratory benefits. This roasted vegetable dish provides a wholesome, nutrient-dense meal full of fibre and vitamins from root vegetables.

Ingredients:
600 grams mixed root vegetables (e.g. carrots, potatoes, parsnips), cut into chunks
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 teaspoons fresh rosemary, chopped
2 teaspoons fresh thyme, chopped
Salt and pepper to taste if desired

Instructions:
1. Preheat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan)/400°F.
2. In a large bowl, toss the vegetables with olive oil, garlic, rosemary, thyme, salt and pepper until evenly coated.
3. Spread the vegetables in a single layer on a baking tray.
4. Roast for 25-30 minutes, or until tender and golden brown, stirring halfway through.

Tips:
- Ensure the vegetables are cut into similar-sized pieces for even cooking.
- You can add a squeeze of lemon juice or a sprinkle of nutritional yeast just before serving for extra flavour.

Sage-Infused Pasta with Roasted Cherry Tomatoes

Sage is well known for its digestive benefits, helping to soothe indigestion and reduce bloating. It also contains antimicrobial properties that contribute to overall wellness. Sage has been traditionally used to support cognitive health, and its anti-inflammatory effects can help alleviate discomfort from conditions like muscle pain and arthritis.

Ingredients:
200g wholewheat pasta (or any pasta of your choice)
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 cloves garlic, minced
¼ cup fresh sage leaves, chopped
200 grams cherry tomatoes, halved
Salt and pepper, to taste if desired
1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar (optional)

Instructions:
1. Cook the pasta according to the package instructions. Drain and set aside.
2. Preheat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan)/400°F.
3. Toss the halved cherry tomatoes with 1 tablespoon olive oil, salt and pepper, and spread them out on a baking tray.
4. Roast the tomatoes for 15-20 minutes, or until soft and slightly caramalised.
5. In a large pan, heat 1 tablespoon olive oil over medium heat. Add the minced garlic and sauté for 1-2 minutes until fragrant.
6. Add the chopped sage leaves and cook for another 1-2 minutes, allowing the flavours to infuse the oil.
7. Add the cooked pasta to the pan with the garlic and sage oil. Toss to coat the pasta evenly in the flavoured oil.
8. Gently fold in the roasted cherry tomatoes.
9. Season with salt and pepper to taste, and drizzle with balsamic vinegar if desired.

Tips:
- For an extra protein boost, add sautéed tofu or tempeh to the dish.
- If you prefer a creamier texture, you can add a spoonful of plant-based cream or a sprinkling of nutritional yeast.

Mint and Cucumber Salad

Mint is renowned for its digestive benefits. It soothes indigestion, alleviates nausea, and helps with bloating. Paired with the hydrating properties of cucumber, this refreshing salad aids digestion and is perfect for a light lunch or as a side dish to any meal.

Ingredients:
1 cucumber, peeled and thinly sliced
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 tablespoon lemon juice
½ teaspoon ground cumin
¼ cup fresh mint leaves, chopped
Salt and pepper to taste if desired

Instructions:
1. In a large bowl, combine the cucumber, olive oil, lemon juice and cumin.
2. Toss the mixture gently until the cucumber is evenly coated.
3. Add the fresh mint leaves and mix again.
4. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
5. Serve immediately or refrigerate for up to an hour before serving to allow the flavours to meld.

Tips:
• For extra crunch, add a handful of almonds or sunflower seeds.
• This salad is best enjoyed fresh, but can be stored in the refrigerator for up to 24 hours.

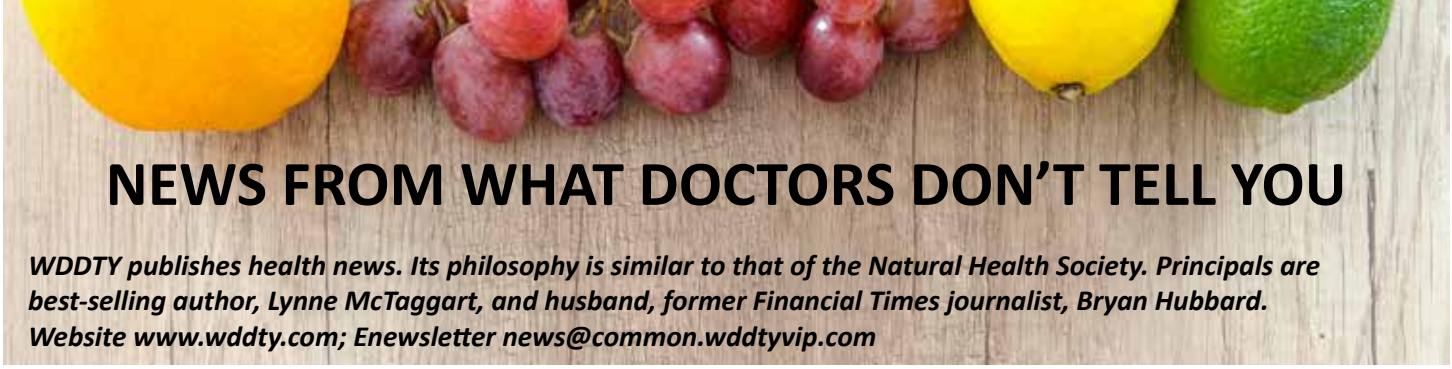
Oregano-Infused Tomato and Lentil Stew

Oregano is a powerful herb with antibacterial and antioxidant properties, making it excellent for supporting the immune system and fighting infections. Its high levels of carvacrol and thymol help combat oxidative stress and promote digestive health. This hearty tomato and lentil stew is the perfect way to incorporate oregano into your diet while benefiting from its natural immune-boosting properties.

Ingredients:
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 small onion, chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 tablespoon dried oregano
1 tablespoon tomato paste
1 can (400 grams) chopped tomatoes
1 cup (200 grams) dried lentils, rinsed
4 cups (1 Litre) vegetable broth
1 teaspoon smoked paprika
Salt and pepper, to taste if desired
Fresh oregano, for garnish (optional)

Instructions:
1. Heat olive oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add the onion and cook for 3-4 minutes until softened.
2. Add garlic and oregano, and cook for another 1-2 minutes until fragrant.
3. Stir in the tomato paste and cook for 1 minute to enhance its flavour.
4. Add the chopped tomatoes, lentils, vegetable broth, smoked paprika, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil.
5. Reduce the heat, cover and simmer for 25-30 minutes, or until the lentils are tender and the stew has thickened.
6. Serve hot, garnished with fresh oregano if desired.

Tips:
• For a spicier version, add a pinch of red pepper flakes along with the garlic.
• This stew pairs beautifully with crusty bread for dipping.
• Make a double batch to have leftovers for the next day – the flavours deepen overnight!



NEWS FROM WHAT DOCTORS DON'T TELL YOU

WDDTY publishes health news. Its philosophy is similar to that of the Natural Health Society. Principals are best-selling author, Lynne McTaggart, and husband, former Financial Times journalist, Bryan Hubbard. Website www.wddty.com; Enewsletter news@common.wddtyvip.com

Some of you may recall a few run-ins we've had with Simon Singh down the years. Singh has been our nemesis, who worked tirelessly to get our magazine removed from supermarket shelves. [As an aside, he'd previously worked tirelessly for free speech in medical reporting, and so we guess that irony isn't his strong suit]

He had something of a fall from grace when he was caught accepting money from Coca-Cola to help spread the lie that their sugary concoctions had nothing to do with the obesity epidemic. While everyone knew this was propaganda dressed up as science, Singh was happy to take his 30 pieces of silver.

This week, health writer, Dr Chris Van Tulleken, revealed that he has more integrity.

Van Tulleken wrote the best-selling book, *Ultra-Processed People,* and since its publication last year he has been offered around £1 million [$A 1.96 million] in bribes from the fast-food industry to stop spreading the truth. One was from a well-known company that offered him £20,000 for a one-hour Zoom call, which required him to never say anything again that might damage the company's reputation or products. He has turned them all down, which makes Van Tulleken unique.

More than half the 'experts' who advise the UK government on nutrition are in the pay of the fast-food industry, while the British Nutrition Foundation is funded by Coca-Cola, Nestle, PepsiCo and Mars. Laughingly [except it's so serious], the Foundation's 'healthy eating week' in 2023 was sponsored by Coca-Cola!

That same year, 'experts' on a panel organised by the Science Media Centre announced that ultra-processed foods were being unfairly demonised. What wasn't revealed was that three of the five panel members had close ties to the fast-food industry.

The one saving grace is that nobody listens to experts, whatever they may say. Instead, the truth is that lovers of fast foods are addicted to the stuff, and the manufacturers have made sure of that. In one test using a brain scanner, Van Tulleken discovered that the reward centre in the brain 'lit up like a furnace' when volunteers were eating ice cream, and that's a primitive reflex that bypasses the rational brain.

He reckons the fast-food industry costs the UK alone around £100 billion [$A 196 billion] a year from lost working days and hospital care to tend to obese people, diabetics and heart disease patients.

His point has been emphasised by a new report this week that has revealed that UK hospital admissions for vitamin deficiencies have increased tenfold since the turn of the century. The most common problem is iron deficiency, but there's also been a fourfold increase in problems arising from folate deficiencies.

The Royal College of GPs, which published the report, agrees that the problem is easily remedied by eating a healthy diet and taking supplements – but then commits the old canard that healthy food is beyond the reach of most folk because it's just too expensive.

This myth was laid to rest last year by a study that demonstrated that eating fresh fruit and vegetables costs no more than a pizza or hamburger.

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Free Radicals : Our Friends and Foes

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In the bustling city inside our bodies, free radicals are the wild, energetic citizens that play a pivotal role in maintaining the balance of health. These tiny molecules, with their unpaired electrons, roam around in search of stability, making them both helpful and harmful.

With their dual nature, free radicals are a fascinating aspect of our biology. By understanding their roles and maintaining a balance through a healthy lifestyle, we can harness their benefits while protecting ourselves from their harmful effects.

The role of free radicals

Free radicals are natural by-products of metabolic processes, created when our cells convert food into energy. They are also introduced through external sources like pollution, radiation and tobacco smoke.

Despite their wild nature, free radicals have essential roles.

Immune defence
Free radicals are like the soldiers of the immune system. They help destroy invading pathogens, keeping us safe from infections.

Cell signalling
They play a role in cell signalling, helping cells communicate and perform vital functions.

The dark side of free radicals
While free radicals are beneficial, their high reactivity can also cause harm:
1. Oxidative stress: When free radicals outnumber antioxidants, they can cause oxidative stress, damaging cells, proteins and DNA. This contributes to ageing and diseases like cancer, neuro-degenerative disorders and heart disease.
2. Inflammation: Excessive free radicals can trigger chronic inflammation, further contributing to various health issues.

Balancing free radicals for wellbeing

To harness the benefits of free radicals while minimising their harm, we need a balance. Here's how to manage this delicate equilibrium:

Antioxidant-rich diet
Consuming foods high in antioxidants can neutralise free radicals. Berries, dark leafy greens, nuts and seeds are particularly rich in antioxidants especially vitamins C and E, selenium and flavonoids – so be sure to include these foods in your diet.

Avoid toxins
Reduce exposure to external sources of free radicals. Avoid smoking, limit processed foods and minimise exposure to pollution and radiation.

Exercise moderately
Regular exercise boosts the body's natural antioxidant defences. However, avoid excessive exercise which can increase free radical production.

Hydration
Drink adequate water to help flush out toxins and support overall cellular health.

Stress management
Chronic stress can increase free radical production. Practise relaxation techniques like meditation, yoga and deep breathing to manage stress levels.

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Dr Greg Fitzgerald (Allied Health): Greg has been kind enough to speak multiple times at our webinars. Search 'Fitzgerald webinar' in our online shop to see our full collection.

Dawn Fitzgerald: Whole-Food Plant-Based Diet (WFPB) Made Simple. Dawn explains her practical approaches to starting and sustaining a healthy diet.

Dr Sandra Tuszynska: Dirt and Nutrition How the soil microbiome affects our microbiome. Soil microbiologist Dr Sandra Tuszynska takes us on a deep dive into the world beneath our feet and teaches us the relationship between the soil microbiome, plant health and our health.

Dr Gavin Levy: Achieving Your Optimal Health Dr Gavin Levy is the NSW ambassadoc for Doctors For Nutrition. Prior to undertaking medicine, Dr Levy worked as a physiotherapist and played tennis at an international level. Gavin has a strong interest in the role of whole-food plant-based nutrition in both the prevention and reversal of disease. Having encountered a huge array of preventable diseases in his work, Gavin is passionate about educating others on the importance of plant-based nutrition and other lifestyle factors in achieving optimal health outcomes.

Abby Rees: The Art and Science of Becoming Intentional
Abby Rees discusses the potential pitfalls of living life on auto-pilot and provides strategies for creating the life you want to lead.

Roger French: Ageing with Vitality
In this webinar, Roger draws on his 50 years of experience as a health researcher to highlight the most practical and powerful ways to support healthy ageing.

Dr Alan Goldhamer: Can Fasting Save Your Life?
Dr Goldhamer's True North clinic is world-famous and home to some truly exciting fasting research. Listen to his unique perspective on the role of fasting in health.

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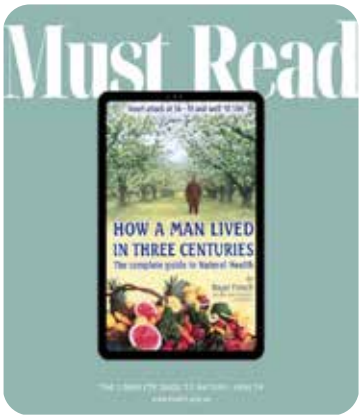

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