True Natural Health

The Magazine of the Natural Health Society of Australia

Spring 2025

- Inflammation: Healing and Harming
- Migraine
- The 12-Minute Mind Reset
- Detoxing Heavy Metals
- Cultivating A Fertile Life
- Food as Medicine
- Your Questions Answered and More!

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Caruso's NATURAL HEALTH

Contents

Spring

This issue is particularly special as we celebrate the 65th anniversary of the Natural Health Society of Australia. Since founding in 1960, the Society has offered trustworthy information, inspiration and guidance on how to live well and empower people to create healthier lives. We are proud to be Australia's longest-running natural health organisation, and even prouder to have the ongoing support of such a committed community. Thank you to all of our members, the Societty wouldn't be turning 65 this year without your essential support.

Our annual general meeting (AGM) will be held on November 10 (see our Society page for details). Following the AGM, our business development group will be running a workshop session on future planning for the Society. We would love for members to join us for this session that will look at how the Society can adapt, grow and stay relevant for the next 65 years.

A heartfelt thank you to all who joined us at our 2025 Annual Seminar Day in Sydney. It was a joy to see so many of you engaging with the speakers, sharing stories with each other and contributing to the sense of connection that defines the Society. The day featured outstanding presentations from Bianca James on digestive health, Roger French on living well into later life, Candace Coughlan on the healing power of food and Contessa Hajinikitas on her 12-Minute Mind Reset technique. Each session offered practical insights and plenty of inspiration.

This issue of *True Natural Health* begins with an in-depth exploration of inflammation by Roger French. Dr Greg Fitzgerald (Allied Health) writes on the power of attitude and lifestyle changes, no matter your age, to radically transform your health. You'll also find fascinating contributions on migraine, detoxification, kidney energy, fertility, heavy metal exposure and chronic illness, food as medicine and much more. Our patron Roger French has provided another great Your Questions Answered section, answering readers' questions with the clarity and depth you've come to expect. For those interested in the latest research, our Natural Health News section covers topics like ultra-processed foods and Parkinson's, the hidden effects of alcohol and the link between chronic stress and ageing.

Thank you for being a part of our Natural Health community,
Rebecca and the NHSA 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.

INFLAMMATION Healing and Harming

By Roger French, Patron,
Natural Health Society of Australia

Inflammation is the body's primary defence mechanism against invasion and injury. If our bodies didn't have this inflammatory response, they would not be able to fight off infections or repair damaged tissue. On the other hand, excessive or prolonged inflammation can cause tissue damage and prevent healing; it is like a two-edged sword. Normally, it is very tightly controlled by the body.

Inflammation is the body's most intense effort to cleanse and restore itself. It has a warning signal which we cannot ignore – pain! This is not arbitrary pain, it has useful purpose. It's the body's way of saying, 'STOP!' for something we are doing. Of course, pain is not pleasant or comfortable, but that's the whole idea – it gains our attention. We don't need to like pain; we just need to understand it. This is the only way we can act to stop our destructive behaviour, which might progress on to more dangerous stages of disease, specifically ulceration and possibly eventually cancer.

For example, in wound healing, the inflammatory response rushes white blood cells to the injury site to help repair and regenerate tissues and promote healing. This type of acute inflammation, characterised by redness, heat and swelling of tissues and joints, is temporary and vital to the healing process.

Similarly, if you have a cold, flu or other illness, the immune system is triggered. It sends white blood cells to fight and destroy the virus and clean up the aftermath to restore balance and wellness.

Many years ago, I experienced a very neat example of how inflammation can repair an injury. I had a large wooden splinter in a finger, which became inflamed. I put a Band-Aid around the finger and did nothing else. After about ten days, pus had formed in response to the splinter and the germs on it. It soon reached the skin. With a light touch, the pus eased out taking the splinter with it. Before long, the wound healed and left no scar. That was a simple example, but it demonstrated how cleverly the body works – provided we don't interfere with the healing process.

Any condition ending in *'-itis'* means 'inflammation of'. For example, tonsillitis means inflammation of the tonsils, appendicitis – the appendix, hepatitis – the liver, arthritis – the joints, colitis – the colon. Similarly, dermatitis, sinusitis, conjunctivitis, cystitis, bursitis, nephritis, pancreatitis, etc., are all names for inflammation of various parts of the body. They all mean the same underlying thing – inflammation (including pain) from accumulating toxicity. There is also another cause of inflammation – physical injury.

The Mechanism

The process releases inflammatory chemicals that increase blood flow to the infected area and make blood vessels more permeable, so that white blood cells in the form of *phagocytes, mast cells* and *natural killer cells* can squeeze out of blood vessels and into infected tissue where they destroy whatever pathogen or irritant the body is dealing with.

Inflammation is *not* the disease; it is produced by the body in order to attempt to heal tissue that is being irritated by something, this 'something' being the true underlying cause of the disease. It is utterly irrational to use drugs to suppress this natural healing process and at the same time completely ignore the underlying causes. Except if the inflammation is part of a life emergency.

Germs, injury, toxic chemicals, toxaemia

In conditions like arthritis and rheumatism, in which germs are not the underlying cause, the inflammation is primarily in response to *acidity*, that is, acidic toxic waste products, with the irritation possibly being aggravated by a build-up of toxic man-made chemicals. When arthritis appears to spread from joint to joint, it is simply more joints succumbing to increasing toxaemia.

Regular high consumption of grain foods, including bread, cereal, cakes, pastries, pasta, muesli and rice, and too much starch and sugar combined (such as cereal and sugar or bread and jam), are typical contributors to toxaemia.

Strongly acid-forming are the grain foods, white sugar (with its total absence of minerals), red and white meats, coffee and chocolate. When

these foods form the greater part of the diet, which is common in Australia, their acidic waste products are usually formed faster than they can be eliminated, so they accumulate, setting the stage for a build-up of acidic toxaemia and disease. Stimulants like coffee, black tea, tobacco, salt, pepper and strong spices speed up the metabolic processes, increasing the toxaemia.

Emotional stress contributes to toxaemia by causing disruption to digestion, assimilation of nutrients and elimination. This applies particularly with prolonged loneliness and unresolved grief. Negative emotions such as hatred, anger, jealousy, fear, resentment, anxiety and worry squander nerve energy, as do overwork, overeating, insufficient sleep, prolonged exposure to cold and excessive sexual stimulation.

In the absence of regular physical activity, there is poor tone of the digestive organs, sluggish circulation and impaired elimination, all of which exacerbate toxaemia.

Coming back to arthritis, this disease is rare in rural Africa, where animal products are seldom eaten and the diet is based on vegetables, roots and unrefined grain foods (or has been until recently).

If inflammation is long-term chronic, it can wreak havoc in our body, possibly resulting in serious health conditions, including heart disease, arthritis, type 2 diabetes, cancer and even Alzheimer's disease. When an 'army' of white blood cells settles in one area for long periods of time, healthy cells, tissues and organs can be damaged. If not dealt with, chronic inflammation can even alter the DNA of previously healthy cells.

So, how do we know if chronic inflammation is occurring in our body? And what can we do about it?

An indicator, C-reactive protein

A highly sensitive indicator of inflammation anywhere in the body is a protein called *C-reactive protein*. A doctor can check CRP levels using a simple blood test. Produced in the liver, CRP is churned out whenever there is inflammation anywhere in the body, and the higher the level, the more inflammation is present.

High CRP levels indicate, for example, almost three times the risk of death from heart attack.

Generally, in healthy adults, a CRP level of less than 0.3 mg/dL is considered normal. Slightly elevated levels, 0.3 to 1.0 mg/dL, can be caused by conditions such as pregnancy, diabetes, a sedentary lifestyle, the common cold, cigarette smoking, periodontal disease and obesity. Moderate elevations in the range of 1.0 to 10.0 mg/dL point to systemic inflammation possibly related to rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, other autoimmune diseases, malignancies, heart attack, pancreatitis or bronchitis.

CRP levels of 3.0 mg/dL are considered high risk for developing cardiovascular disease. Levels greater than 10 mg/dL are critical and can be caused by major trauma, acute bacterial or viral infections or other life-threatening conditions.

Chronic inflammation-related diseases

Allowing inflammation to continue can have lasting detrimental effects on our health. Here are some of the most common conditions associated with chronic inflammation.

Cancer. One way cancer is caused is by the generation of oxidative stress and subsequent inflammation, which damages the genetic material inside cells (RNA and DNA). The mitochondria – the cells' energy-producing furnaces – can be damaged by inflammation and oxidative stress as well.

When the mitochondria are compromised, they can no longer efficiently produce energy for the cells and adopt glycolysis, which uses sugar as an energy source. This inefficient method can lead to further DNA damage and, ultimately, more fuel for cancer cells.

Heart disease. More recent research shows inflammation to be the real culprit, not high cholesterol levels. In landmark research published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, researchers found that greatly reducing CRP levels leads to significantly fewer repeat heart attacks – even without lowering cholesterol levels.

Arthritis. Several forms of arthritis involve inflammation, including rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis and gout.

In rheumatoid arthritis, stiffness, swelling and pain typically arise in the hands, wrists and feet, though the heart, lungs and eyes may also be affected. Psoriatic arthritis, characterised by scaly, raised patches of skin on the knees, ankles, wrists and fingers, develops in approximately 30 percent of people with psoriasis.

Gout occurs when excess uric acid levels accumulate and form crystals, often in the big toe but occasionally in the hands, wrists or knees. The crystals promote an extremely painful inflammatory response, which, left untreated, can become chronic.

Taking steps to reduce inflammation can reduce arthritic symptoms.

Type 2 diabetes. Inflammation can both contribute to the development of type 2 diabetes and be intensified by the disease itself. Living a sedentary lifestyle, eating a poor diet and carrying excess weight, particularly around the midsection, are all risk factors for type 2 diabetes. And extra fat in the abdominal area is loaded with inflammatory chemicals called *cytokines* that can alter the effects of insulin and cause blood sugar problems, including diabetes.

Dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Chronic inflammation can lead to the formation of the beta-amyloid plaques that appear in the brains of people with Alzheimer's disease. The plaques themselves appear to increase nerve inflammation and are linked to an increased risk of cognitive decline.

Other diseases linked to inflammation

- Inflammatory bowel disease
- Lung problems (asthma)
- Mental health concerns (depression)
- Fatty liver disease
- Obesity

Easing inflammation – Quenching the fire

How to detoxify

Detoxing is very effective for pulling the rug out from under inflammation, wherever in the body it may be. Detoxifying the system, even by a surprisingly small degree, can be expected to diminish the redness, heat and pain. In the case of inflammation associated with injury, the results should be similar, along with healing being enhanced. Recovery will depend on the severity of the condition, the robustness of the body and the effort put into it.

There is no doubt that great inroads into the level of toxaemia may be made by nutritional detoxification. How to do this is detailed in Chapter 15 of my book, *How a Man Lived in Three Centuries*.

A properly conducted fruit-and-salad diet, fruit diet, fruit-juice diet or water fast facilitates substantial detoxification – or 'spring-cleaning' – of the body. This initiates deep-seated healing processes which may otherwise never occur.

The key to self-healing is *energy conservation* – both physical and mental – that is, complete rest. The digestive system is rested by consuming exclusively fruit and salads, fruit only or water fasting.

As soon as inflammation or fever appears – or when appetite is lost for other reasons – it is appropriate to fast on water only, but be sure not to fast for more than two or three days without professional supervision. If there is a medical condition, such as blood-sugar-level disturbance, emaciation, etc, don't fast at all without professional guidance.

For the majority of people for whom water fasting would not be favourable or appropriate (or appealing!), a fruit juice diet is usually the most suitable alternative. The reasonable limit without supervision would then be five days. The softest option is a diet of fresh fruit or fruit and vegetable salads, with a limit of one week without professional supervision.

However, at any stage at all, if there is any uncertainty about progress, be prepared to seek professional advice. If this is not possible, *gradually* resume normal healthy eating.

The most pervasive symptom of inflammation is pain. This is particularly benefited by fasting, the easing of pain having been described by German researchers as remarkable.

Avoid any strenuous activity during a healing diet, and avoid even light activity when on a water fast. Any activity in the form of physical exercise, physical work, prolonged reading, prolonged watching of television or sunbathing beyond a few minutes, diverts vital nerve energy away from the healing process and is likely to impede or arrest healing.

Never deny water. Food is restricted during a detox diet, but never water. It is essential to always satisfy *true* thirst with pure water. With juice diets, their water content may be adequate or close to it.

If symptoms arise during cleansing, there is no need to panic. They are usually part of the healing process and, however much discomfort they may cause, are beneficial in the long run. Symptoms rarely last long, often only half a day. If they persist for a couple of days or more, seek professional guidance.

Stress can also add to toxaemia. Top of the list of techniques for dealing with *stress* is meditation, followed by stress management courses, yoga, relaxation tapes and even regular physical activity.

Hydrotherapy is marvellous for drug-free pain relief and for increasing local circulation. If an area is hot, a *cold pack* is appropriate – cold, moist strips of cotton sheeting completely covered by woollen fabric (it must be wool, not synthetic).

For a cold area, apply *hot and cold* by dipping the limb, hands or feet in a bowl or bucket of hot water for three minutes, followed by cold water (not icy water) for one minute, and repeat this process twice more. If the joint cannot be dipped in the water, bathing may suffice. Alternatively, hot-and-cold moistened cloths may be used in a similar way.

After the detox period, when eating is resumed, in order to maintain the benefits achieved, it is necessary to reduce the acid-forming content of the diet. This is done by increasing the amount of alkali-forming foods to between three-quarters and four-fifths of total food intake (by weight), which means for the average-sized adult around one kilogram daily of green, yellow, orange and red vegetables and fresh fruits.

Correspondingly, reduce the intake of acid-forming foods, which are most other kinds of foods. Aim towards a vegetarian diet (which may need careful monitoring for a heavy meat eater of many years), but be sure to maintain a balance of protein, carbohydrate and fat in the normal diet.

If foods of the *Solanum* family – potatoes, tomatoes, capsicum, chillies and eggplant – aggravate symptoms, omit them initially.

The omega-3 fatty acids in flax seeds, chia seeds and walnuts have significant anti-inflammatory effects.

Also good for reducing inflammation is the herb, *Boswellia*, which has been found to be as effectively as NSAIDs. The enzyme, *bromelain*, found in ripe pineapples, has a somewhat similar effect.

These dietary requirements are built into the Natural Health Society's *Dietary Guidelines.*

The oxygen supply to the body is important. Exercise pumps fluids around the body carrying oxygen. Suggested exercises are walking, cycling, jogging on a mini-trampoline, dancing or swimming. Exercise only to the point where pain is not made worse, and be sure NOT to exercise inflamed joints.

Also good for increasing the circulation is dry skin brushing (brush with a natural bristle brush when the skin is dry, not during showering) and/or massage, being sure to keep away from any inflamed joints.

The knowledge of how to gain relief from inflammation is embodied in the above guidelines. What is needed is the appropriate guidance, along with determination and persistence in removing the causes and facilitating self-healing.

Now that we know that it can be dangerous to have a lot of inflammation in our bodies, let's look at natural ways to dampen the flames.

Anti-inflammatory supplements

Taking supplements and herbs is best done under professional supervision. Also note that supplements and herbs should only be taken when eating normally, not during a fasting period.

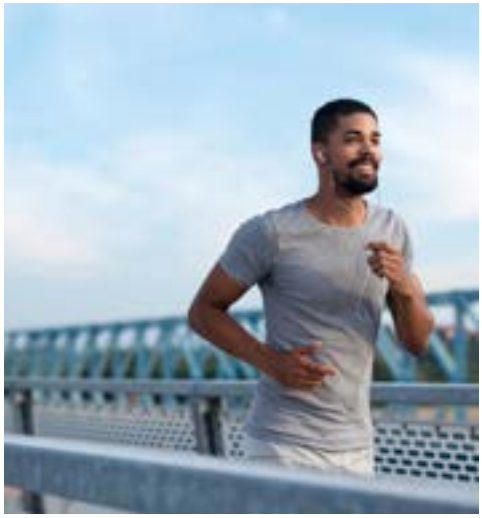
Here are four suggestions.

Food-based multivitamins. Very few people consume enough antioxidant-rich fruits and veggies, and modern farming methods have compromised nutrient levels anyway. Topping up with a multivitamin can help fill any nutritional gaps. Studies show that multivitamins can reduce inflammation - if diet is conventional.

Curcumin. Derived from the spice turmeric, curcumin is a potent antioxidant and anti-inflammatory, possibly one of the most powerful available for curbing inflammation. To increase the bioavailability of curcumin, supplements should contain the agent *piperine* (from black pepper). Suggested dosage: 500 – 2,000 mg daily.

Omega-3s. The omega-3 fatty acids, EPA and DHA, are an excellent natural remedy for inflammation. Suggested dosage – plant-based – from supplements of micro-algae: 2,000 mg EPA/DHA daily.

Zinc. This mineral is an essential immune system booster and also an anti-inflammatory powerhouse. Suggested dosage: 12 to 50 mg daily.



Exercise

The health benefits of physical activity are myriad, including contributing to decreased inflammation. Aim for 30-plus minutes of moderate activity most days of the week (whether or not inflammation is an issue for you). If joints or muscles are inflamed, go easy on the exercise.

Summary of how to reduce inflammation

1. Eat lots of anti-inflammatory foods, especially fruits and vegetables.
2. Cut or cut back on pro-inflammatory foods. These include processed foods, foods high in trans fats and deep-fried foods.
3. Control your blood sugar.
4. Prioritise exercise. Aim for 30 – 45 minutes of aerobic exercise and 10 – 25 minutes of resistance training four to five times each week.
5. Lose weight.
6. Manage stress.

Eight herbs which can lower inflammation

Inflammation is behind a vast range of chronic conditions, says naturopathic herbalist Christine Herbert. Here are eight of her favourite herbs to help dampen the flames.

It appears that most herbs have a positive influence on inflammation in one way or another. But the following are among the top inflammation-mediating herbs.

Herbalists use the term *inflammation-mediating* rather than *anti-inflammatory*, as the action of the herbs is not usually directly anti-inflammatory. These herbs are mediating the inflammatory reaction to bring it to resolution rather than trying to stop it. This results in a gentler, safer action that's not as strong as medication, but comes with far fewer side effects.

Frankincense resin (*Boswellia serrata*)

Frankincense resin inhibits COX-2, an enzyme involved in inflammatory reactions. Studies of *boswellic acid*, a component of frankincense, have shown that it can modulate many different chronic inflammatory diseases – from cancer and diabetes to asthma, inflammatory bowel disease and psoriasis.

How to take: The tincture tastes vile, but frankincense can be taken as an aromatic water or as powder in capsules. Avoid during pregnancy.

Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)

Yarrow improves blood circulation and therefore has many uses. It acts as a peripheral vasodilator (dilating blood vessels in the surfaces of the body) and inflammation mediator. Yarrow acts as an inflammation-mediator systemically and is often included in herbal formulas to reduce inflammation and improve function in the lungs, liver and digestive system.

How to take: Yarrow can be taken as a tea or tincture and is best made with fresh herb in flower.

Cat's claw (*Uncaria tomentosa*)

Cat's claw has a strong inflammation-mediating action. It's been shown to modulate cytokines – proteins that help control inflammation in the body.

How to take: Cat's claw can be taken as a tea, powder or tincture. Avoid it if pregnant, breastfeeding or taking anticoagulant medication.

Gotu kola (*Centella asiatica*)

Gotu kola is a calming and cooling adaptogenic (increases resistance to stress) nervine tonic with strong inflammation-mediating action on the whole bodily system. A review found that it also reduces oxidative stress and improves mitochondrial function, which are all important factors in the treatment and prevention of Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases. It's also useful for wound healing when used topically.

How to take: It's best used as fresh leaf or can be taken as a tincture or tea. It's a very safe herb with no restrictions.

Goldenseal root (*Hydrastis canadensis*)

Goldenseal has an inflammation-mediating effect on mucous membranes. It's restorative for all membranes and digestive organs and may be used where there is inflammation in the liver, intestines and pancreas. It's also excellent for treating infections or inflammation in the eyes or mouth.

How to take: Goldenseal should be taken short-term only, up to about four weeks. Avoid if pregnant or breastfeeding. It's generally taken as a tincture or powder in small doses as part of a formula.

Eyebright (*Euphrasia officinalis*)

Eyebright is an astringent and inflammation-mediating herb with an affinity for the eyes and upper respiratory tract. It helps to calm and cool irritated mucous membranes, especially when caused by seasonal allergies or infections.

How to take: Eyebright is mostly used as an infusion, especially when applied to eyes.

Schisandra (*Schisandra chinensis*)

Schisandra is an adaptogenic, inflammation-mediating antioxidant herb with anti-cancer and anti-diabetic effects. It has been shown to improve insulin resistance by inhibiting inflammation. Schisandra aids memory, concentration and learning ability. It can also inhibit inflammatory bowel disease and is well recognised as a herb that protects the liver.

How to take: Best taken as a decoction or tincture. Avoid during pregnancy or acute infection.

Nettle leaf (*Urtica dioica*)

Nettle leaf is a fundamental of Western herbal medicine. It has many useful properties and is a nutritionally exceptional food. It is a circulation enhancer and inflammation mediator.

How to take: Nettle leaf makes a good infusion and can be eaten in the same way as spinach or in soup. Nettle leaf can also be taken as a powder or tincture.

About the author: Roger French is a writer, researcher and passionate advocate for Natural Health. Roger has dedicated over 55 years to exploring and promoting holistic approaches to health. As Health Director of the Natural Health Society of Australia, Roger played a pivotal role in guiding the organisation's mission to educate and empower people to live healthier lives through natural means. Now retired, Roger serves as the Society's Patron, where he generously continues to share his deep knowledge of Natural Health. Roger's book,* How a Man Lived in Three Centuries. The Complete Guide to Natural Health *is a book that has changed many lives for the better. Roger recently completed the City2Surf for the 50th time! What an inspiration!

Book Review: *The 12-Minute Mind Reset* A Prescription for Change

By Contessa Hajinikitas

A Timely Invitation to Pause

In a world saturated with demands, distractions and social media overload, true stillness has become both elusive and essential. *The 12-Minute Mind Reset* by Contessa Hajinikitas enters this landscape not as another wellness trend, but as a sincere companion for those craving mental clarity, emotional ease and a return to self.

This is not a book to read once. It is a tool. A pocket-sized sanctuary. *This isn't just a book — it's a reset button for your mind.* In just 12 minutes a day, the program offers a path to peace. Whether you're new to meditation, returning after a long break, or seeking something refreshingly practical, this book invites you into presence, with grace, simplicity and no spiritual jargon.

Grounded, Interactive and Transformative

Structured across 12 key themes — Direction, Grounding, Gratefulness, Power, Prosperity, Communication, Awareness, Sleep, Confidence, Love, Zoom (a moving meditation) and The 5-Minute Fix.

Every theme includes:

A brief **quiz** that helps readers assess their emotional and mental state.

A **guided meditation or breathwork practice**, designed to be done in just 12 minutes.

The quizzes gently prompt readers to reflect on questions like "Where am I feeling stuck?" or "How am I communicating right now?" — grounding the practice in real-world awareness. This self-inquiry sets the tone for deeper engagement with the meditation that follows.

The 12 Themes

Each of the themes serves as a window into a vital dimension of the human experience. Collectively, they offer a holistic foundation for emotional regulation, inner clarity and spiritual resilience. All the meditations can be listened to online at www.12minutemindreset.com.

1. Direction

This theme opens the journey with a gentle nudge: *Where are you headed — and does it still feel true?* In an age of constant doing, this meditation offers a rare moment to reconnect with intention. The reader is guided to pause and realign with their deeper path — not in terms of goals, but in terms of soul-level direction.

2. Grounding

This chapter is a must for anyone feeling scattered, anxious or 'in their head.' Through breath and body awareness, *Grounding* helps calm the nervous system and restore a sense of stability. The quiz is designed to help identify subtle signs of disconnection, which often go unnoticed until burnout hits.

This practice feels like barefoot contact with the earth. Simple, powerful and deeply connecting.

3. Gratefulness

Rather than listing three things you're grateful for, this chapter asks you to *feel* gratitude, to let it live in the body. This is a reminder that gratitude is not just an attitude but a physiological state. The quiz reveals how often we operate from lack and how to shift towards appreciation. This theme is especially useful in moments of overwhelm or resentment.

4. Power

What does it mean to be powerful in a balanced way? This chapter explores personal power not as control or dominance, but as presence, clarity and energetic sovereignty. The meditation helps clear away the noise of external expectations so you can reconnect with your core strength.

The quiz invites readers to notice where their power is leaking — often through over-giving or chronic self-doubt.

5. Prosperity

This is not just about financial abundance. Prosperity includes time, peace, creativity, connection and joy. The quiz surfaces limiting beliefs or scarcity mindsets, while the meditation uses visualisation and breath to create internal spaciousness — the first step toward attracting external flow.

A quietly radical reframing of what it means to be rich.

6. Communication

This chapter goes beyond speaking clearly — it's about listening, pausing and aligning words with truth. The quiz is revealing, asking how often we speak from fear or avoidance rather than clarity. The practitioner is invited to use breath as a buffer between stimulus and response.

It's a meditation that supports graceful boundaries and deeper, more conscious expression.

7. Awareness

Awareness is the heart of mindfulness, but here it's made delightfully accessible. The quiz encourages noticing mental patterns, not judging them. The companion meditation supports witnessing without reacting. 'Awareness' helps dissolve emotional reactivity and cultivates compassionate observation.

8. Sleep

In a society where sleep is often the first casualty of stress, the sleep meditation soothes the mind and signals the body to release tension. The quiz helps readers understand the emotional root of their insomnia, which is often overlooked.

9. Confidence

True confidence isn't loud. It's calm, grounded self-assurance, and this theme beautifully reinforces that. The quiz identifies areas of self-doubt, while the meditation reconnects readers with their inner worth, reminding them they don't need to 'earn' validation.

This chapter is ideal before interviews, presentations or any moment that calls for courage.

10. Love

The love chapter doesn't write about love as only romance. Love is an energy of connection, compassion and self-regard. The meditation includes gentle affirmations and breathwork that foster self-love and empathy. The quiz helps unearth emotional walls or outdated beliefs around love and vulnerability.

This is a soft and expansive chapter, equally healing for the heartbroken and the heart-hardened.

11. Zoom (Moving Meditation)

This chapter introduces a movement-based meditation, perfect for those who feel restless in stillness. Walking, swaying or dancing, the movement becomes the mindfulness. *Zoom* reminds us that stillness isn't always about sitting still. It's about being present in motion.

12. The 5-Minute Fix

Short on time? Overwhelmed? Panicking? The *5-Minute Fix* is the emergency button. No incense, no silence needed. Just breathe, focus and re-ground.

The *5-Minute Fix* is designed to be used on-the-go, in waiting rooms, before difficult conversations, or even during an emotional spiral.

Why 12 Minutes?

Twelve minutes may sound short, but research shows even brief daily meditations can significantly impact brain chemistry, emotional regulation, and stress reduction. In truth, it's easier to *start* a practice that doesn't demand 45 minutes or silence or incense. The 12-minute frame removes the biggest barrier to change: the belief that we don't have time.

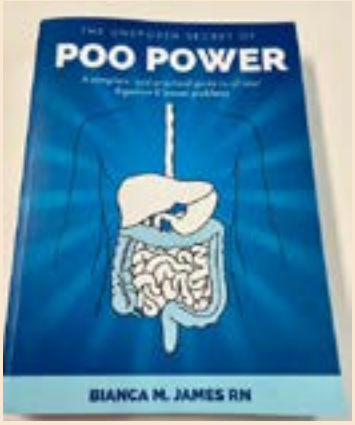
A Pocket Reset

The 12-Minute Mind Reset doesn't shout. It doesn't lecture. It simply sits beside you, breathes with you and reminds you who you are beneath the noise.

To order a copy for $29.95 posted, visit **www.12minutemindreset.com** The audiobook is available from all audiobook sellers.

About the author: Contessa Hajinikitas is a wellness and meditation coach. Contessa presented at our recent Sydney seminar where she led us through a mind reset using the 12-minute method. It was a great way to reset after a day of learning.

Poo Power – Take Control of Your Digestive Health!



Unlock the secrets to a healthier you with Bianca James, RN. With over 55 years as a Registered Nurse and more than 30 years running the Sydney Colon Health Clinic, Bianca shares her wealth of knowledge in bowel and digestive health.

* Understand how your bowel works, what can go wrong and why.
* Learn how nutrition and positive lifestyle changes can transform your health.
* Become empowered to take control of your wellbeing.
* Discover natural methods, remedies and holistic solutions from A to Z to restore digestive balance.

Your journey to better bowel health starts here!
Order now by emailing bj@colonhealth.com.au

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

BY ROGER FRENCH

BEST SUNSCREEN TO USE:

Q. Which sunscreens should I use, given that I have to spend long periods working in the sun? – P. B., email

A. Even in the middle of winter, when I was sent this question, sun protection is necessary for people working outdoors for long periods with some skin exposed. This is beneficial for vitamin D production in the skin, but only up to the point before sunburn might commence.

I have presented a lot of information below, but it is interesting to see that we have plenty of choice for safe, relatively natural sunscreens.

Besides their benefits, sunscreens can commit three sins

In contrast to their benefits, sunscreens can do us a disservice in three ways – they prevent vitamin D production; they still allow sun damage; and many of them contain toxic chemicals.

Because most sunscreens block out UVB, they effectively block the synthesis of vitamin D in the skin and contribute to the widespread vitamin D deficiency.

To make matters worse, many sunscreens allow UVA through and so don't stop sun damage from occurring. All they stop is the burning, which otherwise acts as a warning that it's time to cover up or get out of the sun.

Worse still, a person believing they are protected by sunscreen is likely to stay out in the sun longer. If the sunscreen does not provide adequate UVA protection, this can further increase the risks of wrinkles and melanoma, Fortunately, more brands are now including UVA protection, including all the brands which I have reviewed here.

If a person has no choice and must be out in the sun long enough to burn, then sunscreen use is appropriate, with a product that protects against both UVA and UVB. Sunscreens based on titanium dioxide or zinc oxide reflect away both types of rays and have been used worldwide for a century with relative safety.

The US Environmental Working Group, a non-profit Washington DC-based organisation, reports in its *2009 Sunscreen Guide* that many brand-name sunscreens are ineffective or contain hazardous chemicals, or both. Some are powerful free-radical generators with the potential to damage health in many ways, including increasing the risk of cancer.

Examples of some of the worst chemicals used in regular brand sunscreens are:

Oxybenzone – can cause photoallergic reactions;

Octocrylene and Ensulizole– both produce free radicals when exposed to UV light;

Padimate O – a derivative of the once-popular PABA sunscreen ingredient, releases free radicals and damages DNA;

Menthyl Anthranilate – produces free radicals when exposed to sunlight;

Sulisobenzone – can cause skin and eye irritation.

The Green Edit awards

The Green Edit is an organisation that assesses standards in beauty products. Each brand is vetted to ensure it's cruelty-free, operates sustainably, utilises responsible packaging and is formulated without potentially harmful ingredients.

Below are descriptions of a number of the safer, natural sunscreens on the market. Note that they all depend on zinc for UV protection, as this is the best alternative to using toxic chemicals.

The Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of a sunscreen refers to the strength of protection and the length of time a sunscreen product will allow your skin to be in the sun without burning, given that the average person can remain in the sun for 10 minutes only without burning.

Guidance about the roles and merits of the ingredients are given at the end of this question.

UV NATURAL SUNSCREEN SPF 30+

Many years ago, the Society was selling this brand from our bookshop. UVNatural uses natural ingredients that are closest to the oils we lose from our skin; hence there is no clogging of the pores of the skin.

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

UV Natural is:
Free of synthetic preservatives
Not tested on animals
Suitable for the whole family
As with all sunscreens, it is recommended that you apply it liberally and evenly and allow to dry for 15 – 20 minutes before sun exposure.

Ingredients
Broad spectrum and provides two hours water resistance.
Zinc oxide 24.8%
Zinc stearate
Grape seed oil
Macadamia oil
Natural vitamin E
Green tea extract
Grape seed extract
Colloidal silica
Iron oxide

UVNatural Sport Sunscreen
This unique formula has the subtle natural aroma of a blend of Australian sandalwood, patchouli and lavender.

UVNatural Baby
SPF 30+ broad spectrum, 2 hours water resistant

SUNBUTTER SUNSCREEN

SPF50 protection – broad spectrum against UVA and UVB; sensitive-skin friendly; reef safe; family friendly; free from harmful chemicals and ocean-damaging ingredients
Packaged in plastic-free, reusable tins.

Active Ingredients
Non-nano zinc oxide 227.5mg/g
Inactive Ingredients
Medium chain triglyceride (from coconut oil)
Castor oil
Coconut oil
Candelilla wax
Hydrogenated castor oil
Stearic acid
Polyglyceryl-3 polyricinoleate
Vitamin E

EDIBLE BEAUTY BASKING BEAUTY NATURAL SUN-SCREEN

SPF 50 – broad spectrum protection against UVA and UVB

Winner of 'Best Sunscreen & Tanning', in Best of The Green Edit.

Suited to all skin types; plant-based ingredients; pure enough to eat (but don't!); packaged in recyclable bioplastic tubes made from sugar cane resin; ocean-friendly; preservative-free; Australian-made

How To Use!
Reapply every 2 hours, especially after swimming, sweating or towel drying, to maintain continuous sun protection. Apply evenly onto the skin 20 minutes prior to sun exposure. Use a small amount of the cream and rub in well. Avoid contact with eyes. Suitable for face, body, children and babies.

Key active ingredients
Zinc oxide, camellia seed oil and vitamin E.
Inactive ingredients
Medium chain triglycerides,
Castor oil
Coco-caprylate (derived from coconut alcohol and caprylic acid),
Coconut oil
Candelilla wax
Hydrogenated castor oil
Polyglyceryl-3 polyricinoleate
Stearic acid
Rosehip and lemon oil
Kakadu plum fruit extract

ETHICAL ZINC

SPF 50+ Broad Spectrum protection

Natural clear zinc sunscreen; suitable for sensitive skin; reef safe; mineral water resistant; suitable for children's face and body; Australian made.

Ingredients
Zinc oxide
Medium chain triglycerides
White beeswax
Coco-caprylate
Castor oil
Coconut oil
Polyglyceryl-3 polyricinoleate
Stearic acid
Vitamin E
French vanilla

AVOCADO ZINC

SPF50 Mineral Sunscreen

- A 100% natural, locally-made physical sunscreen
- Non-nano zinc oxide
- Effective UVA and UVB protection
- Enriched with avocado oil, vitamin E and calendula oil
- 3-in-1 formula: sunscreen, moisturiser and primer
- Rubs in clear – no white or greasy finish
- Safe for sensitive skin, babies and pregnant mums
- 100% natural, vegan, cruelty-free and reef-friendly
- Water-resistant for up to 2 hours
- Packaged in recyclable tubes made from recycled material
- Made in Perth, Western Australia

Active Ingredient
Zinc oxide 22.75%
Other ingredients include:
Medium chain triglycerides
Castor oil
Coco octanoate/decanoate
Coconut oil
Candelilla wax
Hydrogenated castor oil
Polyglyceryl-3 polyricinoleate
Vitamin E
Stearic acid
Avocado oil
Calendula oil

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Guidance about the roles and merits of the ingredients

Zinc Oxide (Non-Nano)
This mineral provides broad-spectrum UVA and UVB protection by forming a physical barrier on the skin. It is reef-safe and ideal for sensitive skin, without the skin irritation or hormone disruption found in chemical sunscreens. Zinc Oxide helps to keep moisture locked into the skin.

Medium Chain Triglycerides (MCT) derived from coconut oil. Highly moisturising and easily absorbed, it also makes the sunscreen smooth and easy to apply, without leaving any greasy residue.

Candelilla Wax
Harvested from the leaves of the candelilla plant, this wax helps keep the sunscreen on the skin by enhancing water resistance.

Vitamin E is a powerful antioxidant that neutralises free radicals caused by exposure to UV light and pollution. If there is sunburn, it helps to reduce any redness and soothe and repair the skin. It also provides deep hydration.

Camellia Seed Oil provides exceptional hydration and absorption without greasiness. It is abundant in nutrients which provide deep nourishment to the skin.

Kakadu Plum Extract. Kakadu Plum is native to Australia and is very rich in vitamin C. Consequently, it helps combat free radical damage and provides protection against UVA and UVB.

Rosehip Seed Oil. This is one of the richest plant-based sources of beta-carotene, a precursor to vitamin A. It is known for its ability to enhance skin repair and reduce inflammation.

Castor Oil. This moisturises and soothes the skin while offering anti-inflammatory benefits.

Coco-Caprylate/Caprate. Sourced from coconuts, this natural ingredient conditions the skin.

Coconut Oil. Extracted from coconut flesh, it provides deep hydration and has soothing properties. It also has natural SPF properties.

Polyglyceryl-3 polyricinoleate. A natural emulsifier derived from castor oil. It provides moisturising while helping to produce a clear finish.

Stearic Acid. Sourced from natural fats, stearic acid improves texture and helps the sunscreen spread easily over the skin.

Shea Butter. Rich in vitamins, shea butter is deeply moisturising and helps to soothe an infant's skin. Also provides protection against UV.

Q. ARE SOME VEGETABLES TOXIC?

The following vegetables are supposed to be very good for you, but not according to Dr Michael Colgan, who says:

- **Potatoes, tomatoes, capsicum and eggplant contain solanine which can cause aches and arthritis and should therefore be avoided;**
- **Spinach rhubarb, broccoli and asparagus interfere with calcium absorption and can therefore contribute to osteoporosis;**
- **Cabbage, turnips and watercress contain 'goitregenic' chemicals which impair thyroid function, and should only be eaten cooked, as cooking destroys the toxins;**
- **Parsnips contain psoralens which can cause cancer.**

Should all these be avoided, or does the Natural Health Society have other information? – C. M., Fivedock NSW

A. Fresh vegetables are among our most nutritious foods.

All plant foods contain 'poisons', or to use the technically correct word, toxic substances. These are there for good reason; they are nature's pesticides, reducing the plants chances of being destroyed by insect pests. Intriguingly, about 99.9% of the toxic chemicals we consume are not man-made pesticides, but natural pesticides.

Nature knows all about this and has adapted our bodies almost perfectly

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

to cope with these toxins by giving us large livers with the capacity to degrade significant amounts of natural toxic substances and render them non-toxic. The key point is that in most of the vegetables we eat, the natural pesticides are at extremely low levels and well within the capacities of our livers to deal with them without any harm to ourselves.

Consider the above groups of foods.

Potatoes, tomatoes, capsicum, eggplant and chilies are members of the Solanum family (nightshade family) and contain the toxic compound solanine. Tomatoes and capsicum are excellent vegetables and potatoes are one of the best starchy foods. The solanine is not normally a problem unless a person already has arthritis, in which case, if symptoms are aggravated, it would then be appropriate to avoid this family of foods.

Ripeness is very important. Tomatoes should be eaten only when dead ripe and preferably ripened on the bush. When capsicum ripens it turns from green to red, and this is how it is best eaten. Potatoes are a very good food, but if stored exposed to light, the level of solanine in the skin increases rapidly, turning part of the potato green and toxic. Green potatoes can cause nausea, diarrhoea and vomiting, and in extreme cases miscarriage.

Spinach and rhubarb contain oxalic acid which binds iron, calcium and other minerals, making a portion of them unavailable to the body. I doubt whether broccoli contains significant oxalic acid because it doesn't taste bitter. In Australia, what we call 'spinach' is actually silverbeet, which also contains significant levels of both oxalic acid and iron. If the leaves are bitter, the oxalic acid level will be high and the silverbeet is better avoided. In the case of rhubarb, the leaves are so high in oxalic acid that they are toxic and should not be eaten. There are lower levels in the stems which are still very bitter, though some people love them. But I wouldn't eat them.

Cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, bok (pak) choy, collard greens, kale, kohlrabi and watercress are members of the Brassica family and contain indoles, which are anti-cancer (a marvellous quality), and also goitrins, which are the compounds to which Michael Colgan refers. Goitrins interfere with the thyroid gland and can exacerbate goitre. However, this is usually only a problem in areas of long-term iodine deficiency and if large quantities of Brassica vegetables are eaten.

If parsnips, which are members of the carrot family, do contain psoralens, the levels must be so low as to be harmless, because parsnips have been eaten by Greeks and Romans for thousands of years.

If the toxins in these vegetables mean that they shouldn't be eaten, then we are in big trouble because these are our best foods. Study after study … after study has shown that people who eat high levels of green, yellow, red and purple vegetables and fruits have much lower levels of cancer. The reasons are well known – fresh vegetables and fruits are our only natural sources of vitamin C and our major sources of carotenes (or carotenoids), both of which are powerful antioxidants. In addition, there are large amounts of other antioxidants in vegetables and fruits and also high contents of alkaline minerals.

A specific example is tomato, which is so high in the carotenoid, lycopene, that eating tomatoes is known to reduce the risk of prostate cancer in men, and no doubt other cancers as well. Watercress and silverbeet are also particularly high in carotenes, as are many other vegetables, especially carrots and parsley. Red capsicum is the richest common food in vitamin C, containing about five times the amount in oranges, while broccoli contains about three times as much and cabbage similar amounts to oranges.

So, unless the vegetable is rhubarb or bitter spinach, or there are individual sensitivity problems, enjoy and take advantage of these and other green, yellow, red and purple vegetables, because they are the very best foods that we have.

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.

***How A Man Lived In Three Centuries*, By Roger French.**
RRP $30
Member price $20 PLUS POSTAGE

This book is designed to give you a complete overview of Natural Health Principles and how to implement them.

It includes detailed information on fasting and natural health dietary guidelines.

Two Key Qualities For a Healthier and Happier Life

By Dr Greg Fitzgerald

My wife, Dawn, and I are sometimes asked about the most remarkable health recoveries we have ever witnessed in our 40-plus years in the health field. Our response is quick and in agreement. It is, without doubt, the recoveries we have witnessed in people aged over 80.

If someone had told me this 40 years ago when I started my career, I would not have believed them. I thought then that healing was confined more to the younger person; that age was a barrier to major health improvement.

What a revelation this has proved, and how lucky that I was wrong.

This is not testimony to me as a practitioner, but to the remarkable powers of self-healing that reside in us our entire lives. Aged tissue retains a remarkable ability to regenerate (become younger again). Two qualities are required for us to improve our lives at any age, in any area, including health. One is a willingness to learn, and the other is a willingness to change.

Don't Imitate Yourself!

The basic reason people do not improve their lives, or their health, is that they imitate themselves day after day, year after year. When nothing changes, nothing changes! This confirms the popular adage: the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result.

The people in their eighties who remarkably turned their health around (even to our surprise) were all willing to learn and willing to make some changes to their daily eating and living habits. They wanted to live as long as possible in better health and were fed up with their ailments and the treatments they were subjected to. These patients viewed their ages as irrelevant. They asked questions and listened closely, demonstrating a genuine desire to learn and improve. They understood that imitating themselves had been a strong determinant of their predicaments in the first place, and that they needed a new game plan.

Another large obstacle to improved health is the belief that someone, or something, can bestow health upon us. This is a common belief today, where people truly think that modern medicine will rescue them, no matter what the health problem. Certainly, there are occasions where this occurs, such as specialised surgery and surgery for trauma and accidents. This is modern medicine at its best. The danger is that most people extrapolate this to all areas of health, which is the main reason why modern medicine itself is the third leading cause of death in the world, according to the *British Medical Journal* (BMJ), the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA) and *the Institute of Medicine* (IOM).

For example, the person who suffers from gastric reflux goes to the doctor wanting to be 'fixed'. Nexium is prescribed, a proton-pump inhibitor which reduces gastric acidity. Or they just take some supplement like slippery elm powder and expect miracles. The person then goes home and consumes the same food and drink they've been consuming for many years, or overcommits their energies and continues to be enervated, and waits for the 'magic' to work.

If Nexium doesn't 'work', the doctor gives a different pill, and there is nothing learned. If slippery elm fails to 'work' another supplement is tried. The only thing that changes is the brand of drug or supplement. As good as slippery elm is in giving some relief, it does not remove the causes. Hence, slippery elm, when used to solve a problem that has several causes (nutritional, mental, etc.) can quickly become a slippery slope!

This is not to say that things like drugs and supplements have no place. That would be churlish. The issue is the response of the person experiencing the problem. The first response is to seek an *outside-in* answer. This is what we have become indoctrinated to believe as a society. Take something and give a Hail Mary that it works! I am suggesting the first response should be the *inside-out* approach.

This rests on the foundational questions of:

Am I willing to learn and change?

What do I need to do to improve my health?

What role have I played in my own health issues?

Self-imitation is a barrier to growth in every area of our lives, from our health, to our careers, to our relationships.

Learning from Experience

When we have a desire to grow, to become better people, to be healthier and to be happier, we need to learn from our personal experiences and from other people's experiences. Wise people learn from others and their own experiences.

I recall the famous business philosopher Jim Rohn, say at a seminar that he would pay good money to hear someone give a lecture on how they have completely mucked up their own lives! He would take copious notes and then go and do the opposite. The comment was intended to be humorous, but it was a good teaching hook.

Such growing attitudes make life less complicated and far less difficult. Problems shrink, and health and happiness grow. We become more open and trusting of ourselves, others and the future. We have less fear and anxiety. We become more empowered.

Attitude Determines Altitude!

Our attitudes can lubricate our lives and allow them to flow more smoothly with less resistance, or they can be a hindrance to our wellbeing, causing us repeated and unnecessary physical and mental discomfort. Sadly, many people self-sabotage, becoming their own worst enemies. They stick to attitudes and habits of living which become 'mooring lines', keeping them stuck in ruts and preventing them from sailing to 'new seas and vistas', metaphorically speaking. I have seen many people suffer unnecessarily defending their own behaviours.

Our attitudes are the only thing we can each fully control, an insight so beautifully written in one of the great books called *Man's Search For Meaning* by Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl.

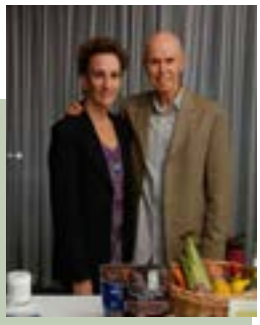
We would all benefit by learning from those in their eighties who turned their health around by being open to new ideas and changing what was necessary.

We grow old only when we stop growing!

We are never too old to become healthier, grow and improve!

The choice is ours.

HealthforLife



Dr Greg Fitzgerald (Allied Health)
Osteopath and Principal at the Health for Life clinic in Gymea Bay.
info@healthforlife.com.au

During Dr Fitzgerald's 40 years of clinical practice, he has helped many Society members live healthier lives. Anyone who has had the pleasure of watching one of the many presentations Greg has done for the Society would know that his knowledge and passion for health is second to none.

A note from Greg and Dawn Fitzgerald

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Dr Michael McInerney on Thursday, the 10th of July. He passed away peacefully with his wife Judith, his two children and brother by his side. Michael worked at Hopewood Health Retreat for a few years early in his career and was a strong advocate for Natural Health principles. He and Judith ran very successful Allied Health Clinics in both Hurstville and Cronulla, Sydney.

I had the privilege of working with Michael at my clinic in Cronulla for many years and learned so much from his inspirational and indomitable attitude, and his wonderful sense of humour. He will be sorely missed, and Dawn and I and the Natural Health Society pass on our sincere condolences to his family.

Dr Greg Fitzgerald

COMMON MEDS SECRETLY WRECK YOUR MICROBIOME
By Eli Paes

The list of drugs that can directly alter the gut microbiota is long. In addition to antibiotics, antivirals, antifungals, anthelmintics, proton pump inhibitors, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), laxatives, oral antidiabetics, antidepressants, antipsychotics, statins, chemotherapeutics and immunosuppressants can trigger dysbiosis.

A 2020 study published in Nature Communications analysed the impact of common medications on the composition and metabolic function of the gut bacteria. Researchers found that 19 were associated with changes in the microbiome, most notably antibiotics, proton pump inhibitors, laxatives and metformin.

"Loss of microbial diversity alters interspecies interactions and changes nutrient availability, which can undermine the ability to fend off pathogens," said Segantini, noting the role of microbiota in vitamin K and B-complex production.

"The microbiome may lose its ability to prevent pathogens from taking hold. This is due to the loss of microbial diversity, changes in interactions between species, and the availability of nutrients," she added.

Souce: MEDSCAPE, 1-7-25

NATURAL HEALTH NEWS

PARKINSON'S DISEASE AND ULTRA-PROCESSED FOODS

By Deborah Brauser

High intake of packaged snacks, hot dogs, sugary soft drinks and other ultra-processed foods (UPFs) is linked to increased risk for early signs of Parkinson's disease (PD), according to new research.

Data analysis of nearly 43,000 individuals showed that those who consumed an average of 11 or more servings of UPFs per day were twice as likely to have at least three prodromal PD features [prodromal means symptoms preceding full development of a condition] compared with those who had less than three servings per day.

For PD, prodromal features would precede more characteristic symptoms, namely, tremors and movement problems.

Higher UPF consumption was also linked to an increased chance of having individual PD prodromal features, including rapid eye movement sleep behaviour disorder, body pain, depressive symptoms and constipation.

The co-investigator, Xiang Gao, MD, PhD, dean and professor, Institute of Nutrition, Fudan University, Shanghai, China, told *Medscape Medical News* that these findings suggest that "A healthy dietary pattern – high in fruits and vegetables and low in UPFs – could be beneficial against risk of PD, a [so-called] incurable neuro-degenerative disease,"

The study was published online on 7th May 2025 in *Neurology.*

Source: Medscape, 28-5-25

[*Note by Roger French: Even three serves of ultra-processed foods daily is still a lot of 'junk' foods*.]

CHRONIC STRESS SLOWLY SPEEDS UP IMMUNE AGEING AND DEPRESSION

By Bettina Micka

Karin de Punder, PhD, a researcher at the University of Innsbruck, has conducted research on how chronic stress accelerates the ageing of the immune system and its connection to depression. She recently presented her findings during a session titled *Stress and Ageing: A Biological Basis of Trauma and Depression Symptoms?* She noted that "Chronic stress affects the immune system by accelerating its ageing."

The molecular toxic properties of chronic stress promote:

Changes in stress reactivity, such as decreased sensitivity of cortisol receptors.

Increased inflammation, particularly low-grade inflammation caused by chronic overactivity of the innate immune system, particularly when trauma is experienced early in life.

Oxidative stress results in increased free radical production due to inflammation, which damages cells.

Reduced mitochondrial function leads to less energy available for the repair and regeneration processes.

Accelerated telomere shortening due to increased oxidative stress and inflammation. Telomeres, which are the protective caps of chromosomes, shorten during cell division. Stress accelerates this process. When the telomere length falls below a critical threshold, cell death and senescence occur. Senescent cells cannot divide but continue to secrete pro-inflammatory signalling molecules. Accelerated telomere shortening has been linked to a shorter lifespan and various diseases, including coronary artery disease, atherosclerosis, type 2 diabetes, autoimmune diseases and mental disorders, such as depression.

Source: MEDSCAPE, 30-5-25

ALCOHOL NOW: THE LATEST EVIDENCE

In a recent *Medscape Masters* event, moderator Tamaan Osborne-Roberts, MD, was joined by Noelle LoConte, MD; Kristine E. Torres-Lockhart, MD; and Nathaniel Chin, MD, to explore how alcohol affects health. Below is a summary of the key takeaways from this great discussion.

Alcohol as a Carcinogen

Although alcohol's link to some cancers is well known, fewer people are aware of its connection to prostate, pancreatic and gastric cancers. Dr LoConte emphasised that awareness among both patients and physicians remains low. "Alcohol is a carcinogen," she said. "The guidelines haven't caught up yet, but the data is there."

Unhealthy Use, Not Just Disorder

Most patients who drink at risky levels don't have a formal alcohol use disorder.

Cognitive Risks and Reversibility

Dr Chin highlighted alcohol's long-term effects on the brain, noting that cognitive decline may start decades before symptoms appear. "For older adults and those with memory issues, the recommendation is clear: less alcohol, or none at all." But there's hope: "The brain can regenerate to a degree," he said, pointing to research on neurogenesis after cessation.

The 'Healthy' Myth of Moderate Drinking

Dr LoConte addressed the myth that moderate alcohol use benefits heart health, tracing it back to flawed data and outdated messaging. She clarified that never-drinkers, not light drinkers, show the lowest risk. "Most people don't even know alcohol is a carcinogen," she said. "That's where we need to begin."

Source: MEDSCAPE, 31-5-25

Society Pages

Get in touch:
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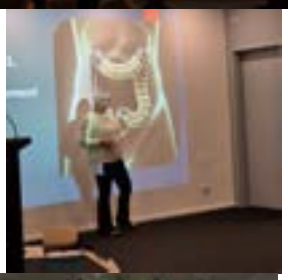
0432 396 701
www.health.org.au

The Natural Health Society's Annual Seminar Day was a vibrant gathering of community, learning and inspiration. Thank you to everyone who attended and helped out on the day. We are lucky to have such a wonderful community. The day brought together a diverse group of attendees: members, health enthusiasts, old friends and curious newcomers.

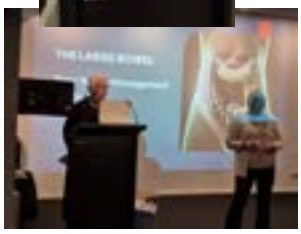
The seminar featured four outstanding speakers, each offering a unique perspective on how we can build a healthier life:



Bianca James opened the day with an engaging presentation, "The Amazing Journey through Your Digestive System." Drawing from more than 35 years of clinical practice, Bianca guided us through the complexities of the digestive system, from mouth to bowel. Her empowering talk was entertaining and informative.

Next, Roger French took the stage with his motivational session, "How the Natural Health Lifestyle has Given Me Exceptional Quality of Life at 84." Roger shared key principles from his 57 years of living the Natural Health lifestyle, offering practical advice grounded in decades of research and personal experience. Roger's vitality is a testament to the lifestyle he advocates. The Society is incredibly lucky to have Roger as our Patron.

After socialising over lunch, Candace Coughlan brought her energy and expertise to her session, "Food as Medicine: A Strategic Approach to Wellness and Vitality." Her practical tips, provided simple ways to elevate the way we nourish ourselves through food. You can read more about Candace's approach to the therapeutic power of food on pages 22 to 26 of this edition.



The day concluded with a calming and uplifting session led by Contessa Hajinikitas, author of *The 12-Minute Mind Reset*. She introduced attendees to her mindful living technique through a guided reset exercise, helping to ground and focus the mind. Her presentation was a wonderful, calming way to finish off a great day.

Throughout the day, and particularly while we ate our salad lunches, the venue buzzed with connection and conversation. It was great to see our attendees connect with our speakers and each other throughout the day.

We can't wait to do it again next year, and hope to see you there!

Join us for the 2026, NHSA Retreat in Tahmoor, NSW. April 11-12.

After the wonderful success of our 2025 retreat, we are delighted to announce our next immersive weekend in a fresh new location: Tahmoor, just an hour from Sydney. Designed for those who value health and community, this retreat offers an accessible escape to nourish your body, mind and spirit.

Our previous attendees describe the weekends as memorable gatherings where great food meets inspiring company. One participant shared, "I really enjoyed myself. There were beautiful people and great food. Wonderful company." These weekends are crafted to inspire and empower your health journey with engaging talks, inspiring activities, communal meal preparation and plenty of opportunities to connect.

Wholefood, plant-based meals will be provided, with opportunities to join in the meal prep for those who are inclined. Attendees will be treated to a tour of an organic garden boasting 70 fruit trees. We will also be hosting health talks and activities. Whether you come alone or with friends, this is a chance to reset, rejuvenate and build connections with like-minded people.

Accommodation options range from twin-share, group-share and individual accommodation. This year we are also offering day-only passes for Saturday's activities.

If you seek an inspiring, energising weekend dedicated to health and happiness, this retreat is for you. This year we are happy to be able to offer a variety of ticket options:

Twin share: $495 for 2 people ($445 early bird)
Group accommodation (you will be allocated a room to share with up to 3 other ppl): $235 per person ($215 early bird)
Individual room: $325 for 1 person ($300 early bird)
Saturday day-only ticket: $85 ($80 early bird)
*Booking fee: Prices include a $20 non-refundable booking fee per person

We have a limited number of early bird tickets available. Book today to grab a bargain!

www.health.org.au 0432 396 701

Notice of the 2025 Annual General Meeting Natural Health Society of Australia (NSW) Inc.

Notice is hereby given that our next Annual General Meeting will be held Monday the 10th of November at 9.30 am AEDT via zoom. Members wishing to join the meeting please visit www.health.org.au to register.

Business:

- Reports from the President, Manager and the Treasurer
- Election of the National Committee members

Following the AGM, we will be having a forward-looking discussion considering what the Society wants to achieve in future years. All are welcome.

MEMBER REQUEST

We were recently contacted by a member who had been disappointed that their favourite veggie delights offerings were discontinued. If you have been disappointed by this also, perhaps you could consider contacting Sanitarium to see if they are willing to keep producing their full range? p. 1800 673 392

Auto-renewal of memberships are available!

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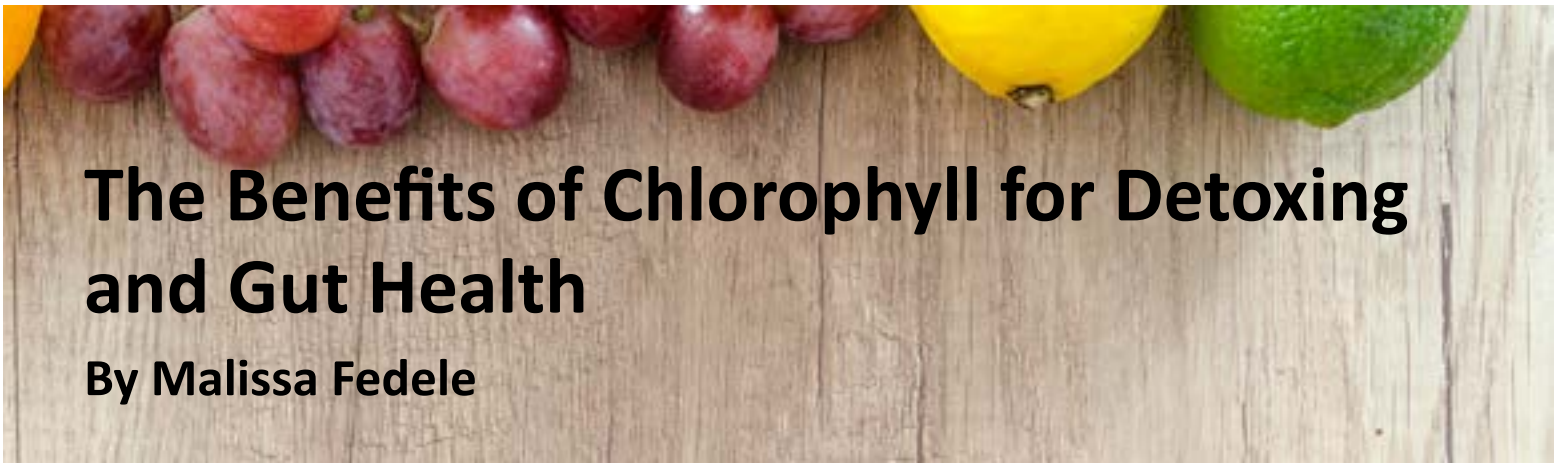

The Benefits of Chlorophyll for Detoxing and Gut Health

By Malissa Fedele

Chlorophyll, Your Green Friend

Chlorophyll is the natural compound that gives plants their deep green colour. As a general rule, green fruits and vegetables provide dietary chlorophyll. Rich sources include spinach, Tuscan kale, flat-leaf parsley and edible seaweeds.

Chlorophyll is becoming a popular food-based supplement, and for good reason. As a clinical nutritionist, I love simple, effective tools that support the body's natural processes. Nature's Sunshine Chlorophyll Detoxifying Sticks do exactly that. From gut health to detox support, it's one of my go-to products.

Here are just a few ways chlorophyll can support your gut and help your body detox, naturally:

1. Chlorophyll Supports Natural Detoxification

Chlorophyll acts like a gentle internal cleanser. It helps to bind and eliminate toxins from the body, especially heavy metals and harmful environmental pollutants. It supports your liver without the need for a harsh cleanse. Studies have even shown that chlorophyll may help reduce the bioavailability of certain toxins in the digestive tract, essentially stopping them from being absorbed and making their way into your system. It provides a simple way to support your body's natural detox pathways every day.

2. It Promotes a Healthy, Balanced Gut

A happy gut = a happy mind and body. Chlorophyll has been shown to help reduce inflammation in the digestive system and promote the growth of good bacteria. It's gentle, soothing and supportive, especially if you struggle with bloating, irregular digestion or a sluggish system. Many people notice improved digestion and regularity after incorporating chlorophyll into their daily routine, and that's likely because it helps to balance the gut microbiome, that affects everything from your immune system to your mood.

3. It Helps with Odour Control

Chlorophyll is very well known for its deodorising properties. It helps neutralise body odours and can also reduce bad breath by improving gut health and detoxifying from the inside out. Personally, since using chlorophyll on a daily basis, this has been one of the very first benefits I experienced.

4. It's a Natural Energy Booster

Chlorophyll is naturally rich in magnesium, a mineral that helps energise the body, support muscle function and mood and reduce fatigue. Plus, when your gut is functioning well and your body is efficiently detoxing, your energy levels get a boost. Instead of reaching for coffee, I have been reaching for chlorophyll for that energising boost.

5. A Simple Addition to Your Routine

One of the best things about chlorophyll is how easy it is to use. I like to add chlorophyll to a glass of water first thing in the morning or in the afternoon as a refreshing pick-me-up. If you're looking to support your gut, help your body detox gently, boost your mood and feel more energised overall, chlorophyll might just be the secret weapon you're looking for.

About the author:

Malissa Fedele (BHSc) is a clinical nutritionist who is passionate about foods that make you feel good.

Migraine Through the Ages

By Josie Carin

When you're stuck in the fog of a migraine attack, history is probably the last thing on your mind. (Fair enough!) But migraine isn't just a modern-day problem caused by smartphones and stress. It's been part of the human experience for thousands of years — and the journey of how we've understood and treated migraine is honestly fascinating.

Let's travel back in time...

The First Records of Migraine: 3000 BCE
The very first descriptions of migraine-like symptoms go all the way back to ancient Mesopotamia, around 3000 BCE.

Even back then, people were documenting episodes of intense head pain, visual disturbances, nausea and vomiting — symptoms that still sound very familiar today.

The word 'migraine' also has ancient roots. It comes from the Greek word 'hemikrania' meaning 'half the skull.' The Roman physician Galen (around 200 AD) helped popularise this term, describing the one-sided nature of many migraine attacks — a feature many of us still recognise today.

Middle Ages: Migraines and Mysticism
By the Middle Ages, migraine had taken on a more mystical meaning. Some believed migraine attacks were punishments for sin; others thought they were signs of divine communication. Treatments back then were ... creative, to say the least. Herbal remedies were common, but so were extreme practices like bloodletting and trepanning — literally drilling a hole into the skull to try to 'release' the pain. Thankfully, migraine treatment has come a long way since then.

The Scientific Turn: 17th Century Onwards
The 1600s marked a shift toward more scientific thinking. Physicians like Thomas Willis proposed that migraines were connected to changes in blood flow and disturbances in the nervous system — groundbreaking ideas that paved the way for the neurological understanding we have today.

A Landmark Case: A Nurse with a Hole in Her Skull and Modern Migraine Science
Fast forward to the early 20th century. In 1936, a remarkable case helped push migraine research even further.

A 26-year-old nurse, who had suffered from migraines since childhood, was treated by Dr Alfred Goltman. Her symptoms included a heavy, languid feeling before attacks, pain starting over her right eye and intense vomiting. Interestingly, she had noticed that eating wheat triggered her migraines — an early clue into the role diet could play in migraine management.

When Dr Goltman examined her, he discovered a depression in her skull. It turned out she had previously undergone a 'craniocerebral exploration' — a surgery where doctors made a burr hole in her skull to relieve intracranial pressure. Although no tumour was found, this case symbolised the evolving medical interest in how brain structure, pressure and blood vessels relate to migraine symptoms.

It also highlighted something migraine sufferers have always known intuitively: migraine isn't "just a headache." It's a complex, systemic condition involving the brain, blood flow, nerves and more.

Today: A Holistic Understanding of Migraine
Today, we know migraine is a complex neurological condition. Factors like genetics, hormonal shifts, nervous system sensitivity, inflammation, gut health and environmental triggers all weave into the migraine story.

And the good news?
There's now a far deeper toolkit for supporting migraine naturally — focusing on nervous system regulation, balancing hormones, calming inflammation and finding personal triggers (including foods like wheat for some people).

Learning about migraine through the ages is more than just trivia.
It reminds us that:

- Migraine is real — it's a complex neurological condition.
- You're not alone — people have lived with this experience for thousands of years.
- There's hope — today, we have better tools, insights and support options than ever before.

About the author: Josie Carin is a Clinical Naturopath with an interest in women's health and migraine.
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Josie is presenting in our next NHSA webinar series. Find out more on page 40.

CULTIVATING A FERTILE LIFE

By Cathy Bell

In my work as an acupuncturist, I see many women in my clinic who are at various stages along their fertility journey. As they turn their attention to motherhood, a whole new world opens, one filled with cycle tracking, research, timed sex, having acupuncture, dietary changes and monitoring stress. It is very easy to become consumed with details. What begins as an exciting and hopeful time can quickly become a source of disappointment and despair.

In this article, you will see how shifting your perspective, looking at the bigger picture, letting go and learning to trust the process can help you approach this chapter of your life with more joy and less pressure.

At the heart of all this action is the stillness of becoming pregnant. Pregnancy begins in stillness, in the womb, where new life quietly takes root. It's not something to rush into, or a box to be ticked off the 'to-do' list. Your mind may feel ready, but your body and spirit have some catching up to do.

Like anything, preparing for pregnancy requires some effort and letting go of your current ways of doing things – whether that's burning the candle at both ends, skipping meals, indulging in caffeine hits or boozy weekends. As a society, we like results but get bored with process; we love to gaze at destinations but don't have the patience to hear about the journey. We're conditioned to strive rather than surrender. Motherhood, however, will ask of you a deep presence and selflessness.

ACTION VS INACTION

In nature, the seasons transition gradually, and so do we. Slowing down and lowering the volume on your life is the way to begin hearing what your physiology and emotions are trying to say, to attend to their needs and to dream yourself into the future you long for. In an era of exaggerated *doing*, where most of us are rushing, thinking, watching and scrolling ourselves away from who we really are, it requires conscious choice and a strong will to jump off the hamster wheel of action and quieten down.

Can you ... Resist checking your phone? Sit quietly instead of turning on the TV? Say no to the epidemic of busyness?

At the heart of quiet is rest. Rest is not optional. The ancient traditions of Ayurveda and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) understood that the masculine and feminine have different ways of replenishing our reserves and that we create in different ways too. For women, it is essential to decrease stress, action and activity before we can attempt to create something new. We produce from a rested state. This can be a tough concept for many women to accept, as modern society doesn't give us a lot of room to recharge. When we feel depleted, we are encouraged to push through, to hurtle ourselves into a second, third or fourth wind. We may succeed, seeming to get it all done, but there is an energetic price that will always catch up with us.

MAKING ROOM

There's no way around it. To access your creative power and potential, you must make room for rest, every single day.

In the noise of modern life, we lose something: our ability to tap into our inner wisdom, one of the great gifts of feminine consciousness. When you regularly put the brakes on ***doing*** (including thinking, worrying, planning and strategising) you start ***being***. This will cultivate mental and emotional spaciousness, allowing you to sink into the deeper waters of who you are. Then you can tune back into that wisdom and trust the subtle signals that nature gives us. Slowing down will take some practise as you shift away from the external, action-oriented tasks to a more inward-facing focus.

It's in this space that you can begin to dream and envision the life you are creating. This is also the time to gently examine the emotional and spiritual roadblocks that may be lingering beneath the surface.

Many of these roadblocks are tied to your beliefs, subconscious stories formed over a lifetime. Take pregnancy: perhaps you spent years avoiding it, repeating to yourself, "I can't get pregnant." Now that the desire has changed, those old beliefs may still be lurking in the dark recesses. Shifting these inner narratives takes time and conscious intention. These are your beliefs – the thoughts you keep thinking. They are mostly subconscious and have a huge influence on what transpires in your world.

A powerful way to rewrite them is through dreaming and visualising. Feel what it is like to be a mother. Don't think about it, *feel* it. Imagine your swollen belly, the sway of your walk, the scent of your baby's head, the warmth against your skin, the weight of them against your chest. This resonance factor is seen in

traditions that encourage women who hope to become pregnant to eat foods that represent the female egg – orange segments, chicken eggs, sesame seeds and pomegranate fruit. These symbolic acts quietly tune your body to the reality you're inviting in. They are small, potent rituals that help shift your internal frequency from avoidance to openness.

ALLOW YOURSELF TO BLOOM

Allow yourself to feel the desire for a child strongly – really feel it! Take good care of yourself, and then let it go.

Remember that your body is always in communication with nature's rhythms – the sun and moon, light and dark and the changing seasons. Your hormones, energy and fertility all dance with these cycles. Seeing yourself as part of this larger rhythm invites awe, trust and reverence for the wisdom of nature.

Ask yourself: is your garden already flourishing, popping with energy and ready for sowing seeds? Or could a few months of tending and nourishing lead to a better growing season?

This applies to both partners. In Chinese medicine, the man's fertility is evaluated with equal scrutiny. Rest assured, if you're experiencing reproductive issues, *you are NOT broken!* There are many factors that can shift, and many ways to restore balance.

There's no fast track to pregnancy. Outcomes can't be controlled. But what you can do is listen to your body, trust your instincts and honour the process.

LETTING GO

Are you anxious about having difficulty becoming pregnant? Worried about giving birth? Afraid of what you might have to give up?

I often see women in my clinic who are high achievers, they are organised, in control and always striving. This is not how nature works. It does not work on deadlines. It unfolds in its own time. These women are the masters of the late-night scrolling for data to perfect the quest for conception. *How long should it take? Have I consumed the exact proportion of everything and super-expensive superfoods to build the perfect human? Wait – this is taking too long – do I need intervention, experts and treatments?*

Herein lies the paradox, conceiving a child involves the ability to surrender and receive. The nervous system needs to feel soothed, settled and safe to divert energetic resources to reproduction. Yet everyday life demands that women do more, be more and produce more.

In that quietness, dare yourself to be radically honest with yourself. Notice how you feel just sitting with the question. What happens in your body when you ask it? Is your heart heavy? Does your belly flip-flop? Is there tightness in your throat? Your body knows the truth before your mind can catch up.

If upon reflection, you find that you are gripping so fiercely to the dream of motherhood that it has eclipsed your ability to be peaceful and happy with what you have right now, it's a good idea to consider loosening your grip. Creating space around the dream doesn't mean you're letting go of it – it means you're making room for it to arrive, allowing for nature to organise itself. The spaciousness you generate in your mind and heart represents the softer, receptive yin qualities that we in TCM attribute to conception. Imagine cupping the dream of motherhood in your hand as if it's a baby bird you want to protect – with a light touch and gentle trusting energy. Not squeezed tightly, not caged – just held, cupped, protected.

LIVING A FERTILE LIFE

Fertility is about so much more than what's happening in your body. It's about regarding your life as a landscape that you're inviting your baby into. A fertile life is one rich with appreciation – one that values the present moment as much as the desired future. Many women get pregnant after they stop trying. WHY? Because they stop striving and start living. They release the pressure and suddenly a door opens. It may seem counterintuitive, but by shifting their laser beam focus from the dream of having a baby, they made room for the baby to come.

"May your choices reflect your hopes, not your fears" Nelson Mandela

Cultivating a fertile life does not mean that you need to release the dream of motherhood. It's about finding balance and creating a little room for yourself and your partner to connect, rest and daydream.

When you release the tight grip of striving, you invite possibility in. It's no coincidence that many couples conceive naturally on holidays.

You can have a rich engagement with the life that you have now while nurturing a desire for something more. It's a yes and yes situation – *yes,* I'm enjoying my life and *yes,* I look forward to what's waiting around the corner for me.

About the author: Cathy Bell is an Acupuncturist and Doctor of Chinese Medicine with almost 20 years of experience. Her clinic, Yin Studio is situated in Brisbane.

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Cathy is presenting on menopause and perimenopause at our next NHSA webinar series. For more information please see page 40 of this magazine.

From Plate to Purpose:

How Food as Medicine Can Transform Your Health This Spring

By Candace Coughlan

Shifting the Wellness Conversation

The phrase *Food as Medicine* has never been more relevant or more necessary. The answer to our health isn't the next supplement or the newest trend. More probably, it lies in our kitchens, our habits and our ability to go back to the natural cycles of nourishment.

In the wellness world, we're constantly told what to cut out. But what if energy came not from restriction, but from *inclusion*? What if food wasn't something to fear or obsess over, but something to apply, in season and with joy as self-care?

Food as Medicine is not about perfection or complexity. It's about using real foods to feed our bodies in enduring ways.

It's about synchronising with nature's inherent wisdom and cooperating with what each season provides to support us physically, mentally and emotionally.

As we move into the season of renewal, spring, new herbs, bitter greens, sprouts and cleansing foods can nourish the liver, digestion and mind. This season is ideal for changing the conversation from lacking to possibility.

Daily Food Choices

Food is so much more than fuel. It's a messenger that informs everything from our immune function, gut microbiome, hormones, cognition and emotional resilience. The systems we like to think of as separate; digestive, immune, endocrine and neurological are deeply intertwined.

When it comes to reclaiming our health, it's often the small, consistent choices that make the biggest difference. While we're frequently told what to avoid, it is empowering to learn what we can *intentionally include.* These are the choices that can nourish our bodies, calm inflammation and build long-term resilience.

Emerging research in nutritional psychiatry and integrative health confirms that food influences far more than digestion; it plays a role in hormonal balance, mood, immunity, metabolic function and even brain clarity[1]. The compounds found in plant-based whole-foods do more than provide energy; they deliver information. They signal your cells, influence your microbiome, regulate inflammation and shape how you feel and how well you function.

This isn't about restriction or perfection. It's about choosing meals built from whole, nutrient-dense ingredients, used with creativity, seasonality and purpose. It means diversity over monotony, colour over beige and nourishment over numbers.

Long-lived populations across the globe have shown us what this can look like. Studies of the world's 'Blue Zone' regions, where people live the longest, provide clues. The healthiest populations reveal a pattern of eating focused on fibre-rich plants, legumes, whole grains, seasonal greens, herbs and natural fermentation[2]. These diets aren't extreme. They're intuitive, local and sustainable. They offer a roadmap we can adapt to modern life.

Every plate you build has the power to be your first line of defence and your daily nourishment strategy. When meals are crafted from colourful plants, healthy fats, whole grains and healing herbs, we're not just feeding hunger, we're feeding function.

This approach doesn't have to be complicated. Rooted in real-life rhythms, this framework is made up of four foundational pillars:

Nutrient Density
Microbial Diversity & Fermentation
Culinary Apothecary
Seasonal Eating

Together, these pillars offer a food-first path to feeling stronger, more focused, more energised and more in

tune with your body, one nourishing bite at a time.

Why Spring is the Ideal Time to Reset

Spring is wake-up time for both nature and for our bodies. With longer days and warmer temperatures, our circadian rhythms begin to shift, subtly influencing everything from energy and sleep, to digestion, hormones and mood[3]. After winter's denser energy and lower metabolism, this shift requires us to lighten up biologically and emotionally.

Chronobiology has found that exposure to spring light cycles reshapes cortisol and melatonin levels, bringing with it enhanced sleep, clearer thinking and more stable mood[4]. Traditional health systems like Ayurveda and Traditional Chinese Medicine have long recognised spring as a time to support liver function, gently detoxify and reintroduce vibrant, cleansing foods that reflect the season.

The foods that thrive in spring, leafy greens, herbs, sprouts, radish, citrus and asparagus are no coincidence. Many are rich in bitter compounds, fibre and antioxidants that help stimulate digestion, regulate bile flow and reduce internal inflammation[5]. These ingredients don't just lighten our plates; they help recalibrate our systems from the inside out.

Emotionally and energetically, spring symbolises forward momentum, clarity and growth. It's a powerful time to reset the gut-brain axis, rebuild microbial diversity and reboot daily routines that support energy. Small shifts like adding lemon water in the morning, tossing fresh herbs on salads, or batch-cooking light broths can ripple through your system.

You don't need a total overhaul. Instead, spring offers a natural invitation to adjust your meals, rhythms and rituals in alignment with the season's upward energy. In the next four sections, we'll explore how to make this shift using food as your foundational wellness tool.

Pillar 1: Nutrient Density

Nutrient density is the foundation of any *Food as Medicine* approach. It means choosing foods that deliver the highest concentration of vitamins, minerals, phytonutrients, fibre, and healthy fats per calorie. These foods that do more than just fill you up. They fuel, protect and repair your body all at once.

This isn't about restriction, it's about abundant inclusion. Instead of asking "What should I cut out?", try asking, "What can I add in that will nourish me?" That small shift in mindset changes the entire landscape of how we approach food. Every bite becomes an opportunity to support resilience, immunity, hormone health, gut repair and cognitive clarity.

Modern research supports this view. Diets rich in colourful plant foods especially leafy greens, legumes, nuts, seeds, berries and cruciferous vegetables are linked to reduced rates of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, neurodegenerative conditions and some cancers[6]. These foods contain fibre to feed beneficial gut bacteria, antioxidants to neutralise oxidative stress, and thousands of phytochemicals that regulate inflammation, detoxification and cellular repair.

The good news … nature provides us with what we need. Spring offers us a bounty of fresh, nutrient-rich foods that are light, cleansing and revitalising - perfect for assisting in seasonal change and metabolic reset. Think about:

Leafy greens – Rocket, silverbeet, spinach and Asian greens. (Rich in folate, magnesium and chlorophyll.)
Cruciferous vegetables – Broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower and radish. (To support liver detox pathways.)
Pulses – lentils, chickpeas, split peas (providing fibre, plant-based protein and minerals)
Nuts and seeds – Flaxseeds, sunflower seeds and pumpkin seeds. (Rich in healthy fats, lignans and micronutrients.)
Fresh herbs – Parsley, dill, coriander and mint. (These support digestion and detoxification and are anti-inflammatory.)

The key isn't just nutrient density, but also **diversity**. A 2021 analysis from *The American Gut Project* found that people who ate **more than 30 different plant foods per week** had far higher microbial diversity than those who ate less than ten[7]. That means that better immunity, digestion, mood and metabolism are powered by dietary variety.

So how do you start? Focus on colour. Aim to 'eat the rainbow' each day, using vibrant ingredients as a visual and nutritional guide. A rainbow salad, a bowl of miso-lentil soup or a smoothie with berries, greens and flaxseed. These foods aren't just nourishing, they are medicinal.

Remember: These shifts don't need to be extreme. Simply upgrading what's already on your plate by swapping beige carbs for greens, adding herbs, tossing in seeds or building meals around legumes creates real change over time. With consistency, nutrient density becomes not just a principle, but a practise.

Quick Fact
People who eat 30+ plant foods a week have significantly more diverse gut bacteria than those who eat ten or fewer.

Quick Fact

Six small servings a day of fermented foods can dramatically increase your gut's microbial diversity and reduce inflammation. That could be a simple as one and a half cups of yoghurt and three tablespoons of kraut in a day[3].

Pillar 2: Microbial Diversity and Fermentation

Your gut is not just a digestive tube, it's a command centre for health. Within, resides your microbiome: a thriving, complex community of trillions of bacteria, fungi and microbes that influence not only digestion, but also your immune responses, hormonal balance, mood and even how your brain functions[11].

The more diverse your microbiome, the stronger your microbiome. The broader the range of microbial species that live in your gut, the better your body can adapt, protect and repair. Unfortunately, our modern lifestyles marked by highly processed food, stress, environmental toxins and frequent antibiotic use have greatly decreased this diversity[12]. But here's the empowering part: we can rebuild microbial diversity, one bite at a time.

Feed and Seed Your Gut

The most influential tool we have is food. Specifically, **plant fibres, polyphenols and fermented foods**. These not only feed your existing microbes (prebiotics), but also help reintroduce beneficial strains (probiotics), and foster an internal environment where good bacteria can thrive.

Spring is an ideal time for microbiome nourishment. With plenty of greens, herbs, citrus and fibre-rich vegetables around, nature is providing the perfect fuel for gut wellbeing.

Here's Where to Begin

Prioritise prebiotic fibres: Found in garlic, onions, leeks, asparagus, oats, apples and legumes. These compounds feed beneficial microbes and support gut lining integrity.

Include polyphenol-rich foods: Berries, cocoa, green tea, olive oil and colourful vegetables help regulate inflammation and increase microbial diversity.

Consume fermented foods regularly: Even small amounts daily can shift your microbiome. Think sauerkraut, kimchi, miso, yoghurt, kefir or kombucha. Variety and consistency matter more than volume.

A landmark 2021 Stanford study found that individuals who consumed six servings of fermented foods per day for ten weeks had greater microbial diversity and far lower inflammatory markers[13]. And no, that isn't about downing litres of kefir, just a spoonful of kraut, a glass of ginger soda or a spoonful of miso is sufficient.

How to Begin with Ferments

Start small and blend fermented foods into your existing diet.

Try one of the suggestions below today:

Add one to two teaspoons of kimchi or sauerkraut to your lunch or dinner.
Use yoghurt or kefir in smoothies.
Swap sweet drinks with kombucha or naturally fermented ginger sodas.

Fermentation isn't just functional, it's empowering. When we learn to make these foods ourselves, we reconnect with our food as a living ecosystem. A jar of homemade sauerkraut can be both a microbial powerhouse and a mindfulness practise.

Pillar 3: Culinary Apothecary – Herbs and Spices as Daily Medicine

Your kitchen might just be your most powerful wellness centre, and your spice rack, a shelf of daily medicine. Herbs and spices have been used for centuries in every healing tradition. These aromatic herbs are rich in compounds that assist digestion, detoxification, hormonal balance, mental clarity and immune power.

Unlike isolated supplements, culinary spices and herbs provide therapeutic benefits in their wholefood form. Most are more concentrated in antioxidants per gram than fruits and vegetables[14]. As they're consumed on a regular basis, often several times a day, their effect builds over time.

Consider **turmeric**, its active compound, *curcumin*, is known for its anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects, particularly for the support of joint health and liver detoxification[15]. Blended with black pepper, the absorption of curcumin is increased by up to 2000 percent[16].

Garlic helps with immunity, blood pressure and has antimicrobial effects[16].

Ginger soothes digestion, stimulates circulation and can reduce nausea and inflammation[17].

Cinnamon helps regulate blood sugar and may support insulin sensitivity[18].

Rosemary has been shown to enhance memory, mental clarity and even offer neuroprotective effects[19].

Quick Fact
Herbs and spices generally contain more antioxidants per gram than fruits and vegetables.

Here are six key spices and herbs to focus on this season and how to use them:
Ginger: Add to teas, stir-fries, or soups for digestive and circulatory support.
Turmeric: Use in curries, lentils, golden milk or dressings to regulate inflammation.
Garlic: Include raw or cooked in dips, sauces and sautés for immunity and heart health.
Cinnamon: Sprinkle on porridge, yoghurt, baked goods or into stews to support blood sugar.
Parsley: Rich in chlorophyll and vitamin C, it helps clear toxins via the liver. Add fresh to salads, grains or sauces.
Rosemary: Roast with veg, infuse into oil or brew as tea to support focus and memory.

These are not exotic or expensive remedies, these are everyday ingredients. The trick is using them consciously and habitually.

Think Synergy. Pairing ingredients can amplify their effects.

Experiment with:
Ginger + Turmeric + Black Pepper: for inflammation and circulation.
Garlic + Parsley + Lemon: for detox support and liver health.
Rosemary + Thyme: for antioxidant and antimicrobial power.

This layered approach creates beautiful flavours and yields powerful therapeutic value.

Want to go further? Create your own culinary apothecary. Keep a rotating shelf of herbs and spices on hand and include at least one in every meal. You can also create spice blends, infused honeys, herbal vinegars or tea blends to deepen your connection with these medicinal companions. Herbs and spices invite us to be creative and empowered in the kitchen. With just a pinch, you're not just making your food more delicious, you're building resilience, one meal at a time.

Pillar 4: Seasonal Eating – Living in Harmony with Nature's Rhythm

Nature understands what we require and sends it right on cue. Seasonal eating coordinates your diet with the natural cycles of the earth, consuming foods that are locally grown, fresh and appropriate for the season. It's a conscious yet simple means of taking care of your body as it shifts cycles.

In winter, our bodies tend to crave warmth, grounding and nourishment. Root vegetables, legumes, stews, warming spices and fermented foods support immunity, digestion and energy during colder, darker months. As we move into spring, the energy shifts. Our bodies feel ready to lighten up, cleanse and reset. This is where bitter greens, citrus, sprouts and fresh herbs come into play.

These spring foods are more than seasonal flavours, they serve a functional role. They support liver detoxification, stimulate digestion, encourage lymphatic flow and deliver hydration after the slower pace of winter. Leafy greens like rocket, silverbeet and dandelion are rich in fibre, magnesium, folate and chlorophyll. Citrus fruits provide vitamin C and flavonoids. Fresh herbs such as parsley, mint and dill offer digestive and anti-inflammatory benefits.

Across Australia (with regional variation), spring highlights include:
Leafy greens – rocket, spinach, silverbeet, dandelion.
Cruciferous veg – broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower.
Fresh herbs – parsley, mint, dill, coriander.
Citrus – lemon, lime, grapefruit, mandarins.
Spring veg – asparagus, fennel, cucumber, radish, green peas.

From a gut health perspective, this seasonal diversity plays a critical role. Each season introduces new fibres, polyphenols and prebiotic compounds that feed different species of beneficial microbes in the gut[20]. This helps maintain microbial diversity and resilience. Traditional cultures around the world naturally built microbiome diversity by eating in tune with the seasons, preserving surplus harvests through fermentation and rotating ingredients year-round. It's a rhythm that modern life has disrupted, but we can begin to reclaim it one plate at a time.

Eating seasonally also offers environmental and social benefits. Foods grown and eaten in season are typically more nutrient-dense, fresher and lower in cost. A 2017 review found that produce harvested in-season may contain significantly higher levels of vitamins and polyphenols compared to off-season counterparts[21]. Plus, choosing local, seasonal produce supports community agriculture and reduces the carbon footprint of your meals.

How to begin?
Visit a local farmers' market or join a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture).
Build your meals around what's available that week.
Create a seasonal swap sheet, for example, sweet potatoes in winter become zucchinis in summer.
Grow your own herbs or leafy greens; even a balcony or windowsill can work.
Start a seasonal recipe journal to build a personal library of dishes.

This isn't about rigid planning or strict rules. It's about tuning in. Observing what's growing around you, noticing how your cravings shift, and responding with meals that nourish, energise and inspire.

The Kitchen as a Wellness Tool

When we shift our view of our kitchens from a place of obligation to potential, we create food that nourishes us. You don't need a fancy room, high-end equipment or much free time. What matters most is creating simple systems that support creativity and consistency. This is about working with your kitchen, not against it.

PRACTICAL TIPS:

Batch-prep: Set aside time each week to make a few essentials: a big pot of soup, a probiotic-rich ferment, a vibrant dressing or a roasted veggie tray. These can act as building blocks for speedy, nutrient-dense meals.

Use glass jars and clear containers: Visibility creates intention. Seeing your ingredients, herbs and ferments lined up in glass jars makes them more inviting.

Create convenience: Freeze chopped herbs in olive oil or broth using ice trays. This preserves both flavour and nutrients. Drop into soups, stews or grains when needed.

Soak your pulses: Keep lentils, chickpeas or mung beans soaking or sprouting on the bench. It's a low-effort way to boost digestibility and nutritional availability and it connects you back to the living energy of food.

Build a custom blend: Mix a signature spice blend that works with your health goal and taste preferences, whether it's antiinflammatory (turmeric, ginger, cumin), digestive (fennel, coriander, black pepper), or calming (cinnamon, cardamom, vanilla). Keep it near the stove to inspire daily use.

Quick Fact
Seasonal fruits and vegetables can contain up to 3 times more nutrients than out-of-season ones.

More Than A Routine

When your kitchen feels like a supportive space, stocked with ingredients you love, prepared in ways that save time and reduce stress, it becomes easier to cook with confidence, presence and joy. The goal is not perfection, it's rhythm. Let your kitchen become your apothecary, your creative space and your sanctuary.

Reclaiming Rhythm Through Food

As we awaken into spring, this season invites us to realign. The path to better health is not found in extremes or quick fixes. It's in the cumulative power of day-to-day choices: the diversity on your plate, the herbs in your soup, the spoonful of kraut beside your lunch and the way you engage with food not just as fuel but as a conversation between your body, the earth and your intentions.

Food as Medicine isn't a doctrine, it's a rhythm. One rooted in tradition, supported by science and shaped by your daily decisions.

Here's how to begin:

Start with one seasonal swap. Replace a packaged snack with raw veggies and hummus or add a handful of fresh herbs to your meal.

Batch-prep one item a week. A soup, a dressing or a kraut. Keep it visible and reachable.

Pick a herb or spice to use daily. Rotate weekly to build variety and function.

Aim for diversity, not perfection. 30-plus plant foods per week may sound like a lot but it could be as simple as lentils in your soup, rocket in your salad, a sprinkle of seeds and a herbal tea.

Most of all, come back to your kitchen. Not with pressure but with curiosity. Spring is the season to begin. Start small. Start simply. But start.

For a list of references, email admin@health.org.au

About the author: Integrative nutrition health coach, culinary nutrition expert, functional microbiome specialist. Candace presented on Food as Medicine at our recent annual seminar. It was a great talk that had our culinary creative juices flowing - thank you Candace! To find out more about Candace's workshops, visit wildhealthhub.com

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Your Complete Guide to Detoxing Heavy Metals Naturally

By Dr Joseph Mercola

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- **Heavy metals like lead, mercury and arsenic enter your body from various environmental sources and cause numerous health issues, including gastrointestinal problems and neurological symptoms.**
- **Heavy metal toxicity is diagnosed through blood tests, urine analysis and hair/nail samples, though regular testing isn't usually done as most people naturally have trace amounts.**
- **A comprehensive detox plan includes cleansing the gastrointestinal tract with binders, optimising glutathione levels and upregulating Nrf2 to enhance cellular defence against toxins.**
- **Research shows sweating through exercise and sauna sessions is one of the most effective natural methods for removing heavy metals from the body.**
- **For optimal detoxification, combine detoxing with high-intensity exercise (limited to 75 minutes weekly) and regular sauna sessions while maintaining proper hydration.**

In today's highly industrialised world, the global population is exposed to toxic substances. From pesticides to additives found in food, your body is facing an assault on all fronts.

To make matters worse, heavy metals, which come from practically anywhere, are undermining your health. These naturally occurring elements impede important cellular functions, making optimal liver health — as well as familiarising yourself with other natural detox methods — even more important.

The Liver — The First Line of Defence Against Toxins

What does the liver have to do with removing heavy metals? As it turns out, it metabolises heavy metals, which are transported into your intestines via bile. From there, toxins are excreted.

The primary filtration system — According to *Columbia Surgery,* "All the blood leaving the stomach and intestines passes through the liver, which removes toxins, byproducts and other harmful substances."

Choline is key for a healthy liver — Choline is a nutrient produced by your liver in small amounts, but you also need to get enough of it from your diet. This is important because if you have a choline deficiency, your risk for fatty liver disease (FLD) increases. For context, your liver turns choline into phosphatidylcholine, which is used to transport fat away from the liver.

When you have FLD, it triggers inflammation and oxidative stress that damage liver cells. Once the liver becomes damaged due to fat accumulation, it will not be able to perform at its best, including its ability to detoxify heavy metals.

Boost your choline levels for a healthy liver — To keep your liver healthy, it's important to take steps that prevent fat accumulation. One way to do that is by increasing your choline intake, which is found in one of the healthiest foods you can eat — pasture-raised eggs.

Another way to boost your choline intake is to take a citicoline supplement. The reason why I prefer this supplement is because other forms of choline supplements have poor bioavailability.

Now, if your liver is healthy, you don't need to undergo an extensive detox plan because your liver will be able to do the heavy lifting. But if this isn't the case, I'll go over several natural strategies below to help you safely detox while you work to improve your liver health.

What Are Heavy Metals?

Heavy metals are elements found in the environment that have a high atomic weight. While commonly found in nature, they've become more prevalent due to industrial or agricultural practices, which release them into air, soil and water.

The most common examples are listed below:

- Arsenic
- Iron
- Nickel
- Cadmium
- Lead
- Selenium
- Chromium
- Manganese
- Thallium
- Copper
- Mercury
- Zinc

Not all heavy metals are equal
Some heavy metals like zinc and iron are beneficial to human health (in trace amounts), but become toxic when there's too much in your body. Conversely, some heavy metals are downright harmful to your body and serve no biological purpose.

Sources of heavy metal exposure
Heavy metals enter your body in different ways. Common examples include vehicle emissions, wastewater, smoking cigarettes and food.

Symptoms of heavy metal toxicity
When heavy metals become elevated in your body, gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain and diarrhoea appear. Tingling in your hands and feet, chills, muscle weakness or memory loss may also appear.

Diagnosing Heavy Metal Toxicity

Testing for heavy metal toxicity is often challenging because it presents general symptoms. To come up with an accurate diagnosis, your doctor will ask you to outline your diet, general lifestyle and work environment.

Blood tests help detect heavy metal toxicity. A blood test is usually the first step in confirming heavy metal toxicity. Your doctor will ask you to stop eating fish and shellfish for two days because these foods typically contain mercury. Note, however, that blood tests do not always paint an accurate picture. That's because certain heavy metals are removed from your system quickly while some are stored in your tissues.

Other tests are also done. If your blood work shows medium to low levels of heavy metals but you're still showing symptoms, other samples will be needed. Your urine, hair, skin and fingernails will be tested to ensure accurate diagnosis.

Downside of blood tests. While blood tests provide an overview of your blood composition, the American College of Medical Toxicology warns against regular heavy metal testing because most people have trace amounts in their system all the time.

Common Strategies to Detox Heavy Metals

Once heavy metal toxicity has been confirmed, several strategies are employed to put your health back on the right track:

Chelation therapy. If imminent treatment for heavy metal toxicity is needed, your doctor will administer chelating agents that bind to toxins and remove them from your system. However, it is quite costly and must be done under the guidance of an expert to avoid severe side effects.

Dietary changes. Switching to a healthier diet will provide your body the defence it needs against the effects of heavy metals. For example, leafy greens contain folate that helps with arsenic metabolism. Vitamin C found in various fruits and vegetables also helps protect your tissues from heavy metal damage.

Supplements. Research shows that certain supplements will help manage heavy metal toxicity. For example, a study published in 2022 noted that probiotics act as a binder to heavy metals, which are then removed via excretion. In a 2020 meta-analysis, researchers noted that spirulina helps alleviate heavy metal toxicity in humans, particularly arsenic, cadmium, lead and mercury.

Pictured above: Dandelion has been shown to enhance levels of antioxidants such as glutathione.

Another study noted that curcumin helps protect against heavy metal-induced lipid peroxidation.

Lifestyle changes. While the strategies listed above will help, research shows that exercise is an effective way to remove heavy metals from your body. The great thing about this approach is that you can implement it right away, and it doesn't cost you a single cent. I'll discuss the benefits of this approach in greater detail below.

Purge Heavy Metals with this 3-Step Detox Plan

Initiating a heavy metal detox plan will do wonders for your health. However, doing it haphazardly won't maximise results. I recommend you follow this three-step plan:

1. Cleanse and clear your gastrointestinal (GI) tract

I recommend you use charcoal to bind endotoxins, as well as calcium bentonite clay to capture aflatoxins. Ideally, you'll want to use a combination of all to cover all your bases. Make sure to support your kidneys and liver, as these are crucial detox organs — herbs like dandelion and burdock work well in this regard.

2. Optimise your glutathione levels

Glutathione is your body's front-line defender and primary detoxifier, especially when it comes to clearing mercury and other heavy metals from tissues. Boosting your glutathione production helps your body neutralise and eliminate these toxins more effectively.

When everything is running smoothly, it's usually better to support your body's own glutathione production by taking precursors like N-acetylcysteine (NAC). But in cases where your body needs more direct support — or you're dealing with elevated toxic burden — supplementing with glutathione itself can be a powerful strategy.

Most standard oral glutathione supplements fall short because your body breaks them down before they can be absorbed. That's where advanced delivery systems come in.

Nanoliposomal glutathione is taken under the tongue for rapid, high-impact support — This sublingual route bypasses your digestive tract entirely, sending glutathione straight into your bloodstream. Clinical studies show it delivers up to three times more glutathione into circulation compared to regular oral forms. You'll feel the difference quickly, making this option ideal when you need a fast antioxidant boost — like during acute detox, illness or high-stress periods.

For steady, long-term support, liposomal oral glutathione is a strong choice. Liposomal encapsulation protects glutathione from being destroyed in your gut, increasing how much actually gets into your system. While its absorption isn't as fast as sublingual forms, it's a practical daily tool to maintain healthy levels over time and support immune health, mitochondrial function and detox resilience.

Whichever form you choose, the goal is the same: give your body the glutathione it needs to clean house, fight oxidative stress and keep you running strong.

3. Upregulate Nrf2 levels

Nrf2 is a transcription factor that turns on genes that help your cells fight against toxins and oxidative stress, making it an important part of a heavy metal detox plan. To upregulate it, use R-lipoic acid (also called R-alpha-lipoic acid), polyphenols and sulphur-based compounds found in cruciferous vegetables and alliums. *Haritaki,* an Ayurvedic herb, is also helpful, as well as sulforaphane and allicin from garlic.

If still not feeling well.

If you've implemented this three-step detox plan and you're not feeling well, that means you need to remove more toxins out of your GI tract and blood. But before you do it, pull back on upregulating Nrf2 and take more GI binders as well as herbs that support your liver and kidneys. Don't forget to drink plenty of water, and when you're feeling better again, restart your Nrf2 upregulators.

Finally, remember that detoxing is a marathon and not a sprint. Start with low doses and work your way up. The entire process will take anywhere from three to 12 months, and sometimes it takes longer. Shade also recommends pulsing your detox or else it will lose its effectiveness.

Exercise and Sauna — Effective Adjuncts for Heavy Metal Detoxification

Regular exercise is one of the healthiest habits you can adopt. It's been shown to help improve sleep quality and sleep disorders, improve cancer survival and boost brain health. Now, a study published in the *Journal of Thermal Biology* shows that sweating is a natural and effective way to detox your body from heavy metals. The researchers selected 29 men who were divided into two groups — test and control. The test group went through nine sessions of high-heat temperature combined with exercise, mimicking scenarios where individuals will use saunas or engage in exercise to enhance detoxification.

Sweating significantly boosted lead excretion — Compared to the control group, the test group showed that sweating effectively detoxes heavy metals through your skin. When the group was also subjected to sauna baths, urinary cadmium levels rose, indicating excretion.

The most efficient detox route is sweating — A supporting study noted that the human body eliminates heavy metals via different pathways, and that sweating produced higher concentrations of heavy metals like chromium, zinc and lead compared to urine.

Repeated heat exposure enhances the excretion process — After completing nine sessions, the test group participants were able to remove lead and cadmium better from their bodies. This finding shows the importance of committing to a regular exercise regimen along with sauna sessions to boost your overall health. The great thing about sweating is that it goes beyond heavy metal detoxification. For example, sweating boosts skin health, body temperature regulation and cardiovascular function. So, don't be afraid to get sweaty every now and then — it's good for you in many ways.

How to Incorporate Sweating Into Your Detox Routine

The three-step detox plan I outlined earlier is one piece of the puzzle. According to published research, sweating through regular exercise and sauna sessions is an effective "chelator" of heavy metals, so to speak. Not to mention, your overall health improves when you work up a sweat. But, like detoxing, exercise must be done in a methodological way to maximise your results.

Here are my recommendations:

1. Incorporate small amounts of high-intensity training While I have espoused the importance of moderate-intensity exercise for overall health, engaging in high-intensity exercise for up to 75 minutes a week is effective for removing heavy metals. I don't recommend going beyond 75 minutes, as you will begin to lose the longevity benefits and harm your health further.

2. Sauna Like exercise, saunas are great for detoxing heavy metals because of the amount of sweat you produce. I recommend keeping your sessions to 20 to 30 minutes to prevent your body from overheating and becoming dehydrated. In addition, make sure to drink enough water before entering the sauna and rehydrate when stepping out. Don't forget to add electrolytes to your water as well.

3. Exercise and Sauna Both exercise and sauna are good for your health in their own ways. But combined, the results will synergise and amplify your body's ability to detox toxins because you're constantly sweating.

I recommend you alternate between sweat-inducing exercise and sauna sessions throughout the week. Alternatively, you can do a quick sauna session right after exercising to maximise your body's detox capabilities. Make sure to drink enough water and replenish lost electrolytes.

4. Monitor your body and adjust the process as needed Pay attention to your body's response once you've started exercising and going into a sauna. Most importantly, remember the signs of dehydration — dizziness and excessive fatigue.

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Inside the chimpanzee medicine cabinet

We've found a new way chimps treat wounds with plants

By Elodie Freymann

As it turns out, chimpanzees make pretty good doctors.

For decades, scientists have been studying what chimpanzees do when they fall ill. This search has led to the identification of medicinal behaviour, which often involves the ingestion of plants with chemical or physical properties that can help the animal's recovery.

My team's recent study in the Budongo Forest of western Uganda found its chimpanzees show a range of healthcare behaviour – one of which, applying chewed botanical material to wounds, had never before been documented in chimpanzees.

Previous studies have shown that wild chimpanzees appear to treat their wounds and maintain sexual hygiene using medicinal plants found in their environment. What's more, they treat other group members, even ones who are unrelated to them.

In 2022, a study in Gabon, west Africa found that wild chimpanzees catch and apply insects to their wounds as well as the wounds of non-kin community members. A previous study had reported that chimpanzees in the Kibale Forest of Uganda occasionally dab the wounds of unrelated group members with leaves.

Now our research, published in *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution*, shows the chimpanzees of the Budongo Forest engaging in topical healthcare, both on themselves and others.

To figure out whether the Budongo chimpanzees practise first aid, we combed through more than three decades of hand-written observations from field staff and researchers who have worked in this forest, and searched video archives by Budongo primatologists. We also headed into the field to collect eight months of our own behavioural data. The aim: to accumulate all the cases we could find of external healthcare behaviour and see if a pattern emerged.

What we found surprised us. The Budongo chimpanzees appear to have quite a diverse behavioural toolkit for tending to their own wounds and maintaining hygiene in the wild. This behaviour ranges from simple actions like wound licking, to more complicated behaviour such as applying plant material to an injury.

In some cases, chimpanzees dabbed their open wounds with leaves. In rarer cases, they chewed up plant material (like leaves or stem bark) and applied it directly to the affected area with their mouths. Similar behaviour was shown in Sumatran orangutans in 2024.

But these chimpanzees don't limit their self-care to treating wounds. We recorded them freeing themselves from wire snares set by hunters, and cleaning their genitals with leaves after mating. In one notable case documented in the forest's logbook from 2009, a chimpanzee wiped herself with a leaf after defaecating.

We also wanted to determine which plants the Budongo chimpanzees were selecting. We discovered that some of these plants, such as *Alchornea floribunda* and a species of *Acalypha*, have traditional medicinal uses and chemical properties related to wound-healing or infection prevention. Whether this is a coincidence, or an indicator that chimpanzees can identify medicinal plants helpful for wound care, is a question for future research.

Chimpanzee doctors

Buried in logbooks and video archives, we also found seven cases of chimpanzees providing healthcare for others in their community. Even more interesting, the demographics of the providers and receivers of this healthcare varied dramatically – occurring between both genetically related and unrelated chimpanzees.

Our study includes cases of chimpanzees licking each other's wounds and applying plant material to the wounds of injured group members. This kind of wound care, directed toward others, is considered "prosocial" as it offers no obvious or immediate benefit to the carer. In fact, this kind of direct interaction with the wounds of others can pose risks for the carer, exposing them to infectious pathogens or infections.

As far as we know, this is the first time prosocial wound care has been reported among chimpanzees in the Budongo forest reserve. We also noted cases in which chimpanzees helped free others from nylon

snares, and one case in which a female wiped the genitals of a male in her group with leaves after mating.

Our findings add this site to the growing list of places where altruistic healthcare has been observed among non-kin, advancing our understanding of chimpanzees' capacity for compassion and empathy.

Survival of the kindest?

Chimpanzees are often painted as aggressive, Machiavellian and self-interested, especially in comparison to their peace-loving bonobo cousins. But it appears that these highly social animals have a softer side.

Chimpanzees are not the only animals who have been observed administering first aid to others. Recently, a US study found that mice help pull the tongues out of the mouths of unconscious cage companions, clearing their air passages. The carer mice were more likely to do this if they were familiar with the incapacitated mouse.

Even Matabele ants from sub-Saharan Africa will help treat nest mates' infected wounds with self-generated antibiotic secretions.

Non-human healthcare may take different forms, but it appears that animals throughout the animal kingdom can administer first aid to themselves and others. It may not be such a dog-eat-dog world after all.

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THE CONVERSATION

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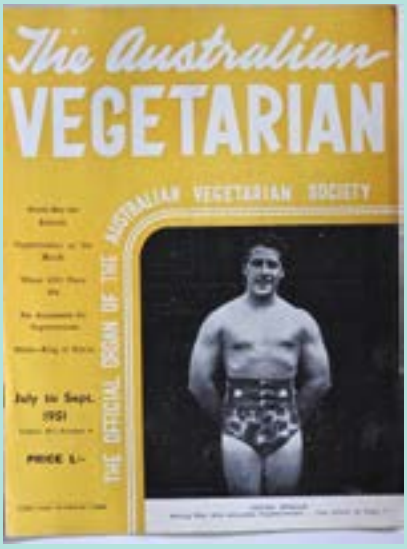
PAST, PRESENT AND WHERE TO NOW?

According to VegSA's records our organisation began early in 1950 as a branch of the Australian Vegetarian Society. From the beginning, the Vegetarian Society had a newsletter/mini magazine which went out across Australia through its member groups. In 1957, the organisers in New South Wales found they had difficulty managing this publication and asked the South Australian branch to take over the role, which it did on and off until the 1980s.

The publication had articles of interest to members on a wide range of topics, information on local resources, eateries and gatherings. As there were naturopaths involved in the setting up of the Vegetarian Society and its associated groups there was naturally considerable attention to health issues.

Although these mini magazines had served the vegetarian communities well, in 1991 the Vegetarian Society together with the Vegan Society in NSW moved on to a new, glossy format: ***New Vegetarian***. This continued much the same formula, including recipes and, of course, many more adverts to fund the venture. It also featured regular interviews with prominent vegans. In 1995 the Vegan Society left the partnership, but fortunately the Natural Health Society of Australia stepped in and partnered with the Vegetarian Society to produce ***New Vegetarian and Natural Health,*** later renamed ***Natural Health and Vegetarian Life.*** The Natural Health Society then went on to produce ***True Natural Health*** as a solo venture when the Vegetarian Society pulled out of magazine production in 2011.

When the Vegetarian Society was established in 1948 its objects included: To advocate, extend and organise vegetarianism in Australia and "To facilitate the supply of vegetarian food." Since then the SA branch has been joined by several other related groups including **Animal Liberation SA** (established 1982), **Adelaide Vegans** (2005), **Vegan Festival** (2007) **Doctors for Nutrition** (2018), **South Aussies for Animals** (**SAFA** 2021), **Adelaide Animal Rights Coalition** (2023) as well as a number of meet up groups.



As for animal-free food, we are spoilt for choice. We just need to convince the money-making producers that we would like things to be healthy as well as animal-free! With so much information online there is not the same need for groups like ours.

Some people are also happy to just meet via social media. However, there is still much work to do, especially in the areas of the environment and animal rights. Can VegSA adjust to this, or should we leave it to other groups?

Kidney Energy

By Lyn Craven

Kidney Energy

The term 'kidney energy' is often used in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). For example, 'kidney Yin' refers to the female energy of the body on the left side and 'kidney Yang' refers to the male energy of the body on the right side. The energy of the organs and body viewed via the meridian system and energy field can be referred to as 'aura'. Even when the organ is removed, the energy field is still there.

Kidney Function

We experience fatigue and discomfort when the physical kidney is inflamed or not functioning well. In TCM, we say that your kidney energy is draining you, making you feel tired.

On a physical level, the kidneys manage fluids, filter toxins and regulate blood pressure. Poor kidney function can lead to excess fluid build-up, also known as 'oedema'. This can lead to a feeling of weakness, lethargy and difficulty concentrating. Ankles and lower legs may puff up. If there is only one kidney that is not working correctly, let's say the left kidney, then the left ankle and lower leg will be more swollen than the right.

Anaemia, with its feelings of fatigue, can result from the kidneys' inability to produce the hormone erythropoietin. Erythropoietin stimulates red blood cell production.

Kidney Yin

When I talk of kidney energy, I am not just referring to the physical function of the kidney, but also the energetic function of the kidney. The kidneys are Yin organs; they govern the water element and regulation of fluid in the body. Kidneys also govern the quality and strength of your hair and ears.

Kidney Energy Depletion

As we age, our kidney energy can become depleted, or maybe we have excess kidney yang energy. Both biological sexes require a balance in kidney yin and yang.

A deficiency of kidney yin can result in dizziness, tinnitus, blurry vision, frequent urination, hair loss, night sweats, insomnia and poor memory. Women may present with infertility or disturbed menstruation, while men may experience low libido with impotency.

Kidney yin deficiency can also affect the communication between the kidney and heart.

Some examples where kidney energy depletion can occur include hormonal fluctuations such as menopause/andropause, excessive stress, protracted illness and surgery.

Kidney energy imbalance can be helped with acupuncture or bodywork that focuses on the meridian system. I use Bowen therapy, acupressure and point laser on various acupuncture points.

If there is a mineral deficiency or imbalance, particularly between potassium and sodium, it can lead to a depletion of kidney energy or overstimulation. This imbalance may affect the cardiovascular system and blood pressure. If potassium levels are too low, you may experience dizziness. Conversely, if potassium levels are too high, it can create a state of heightened excitation, making it difficult to fall asleep at night despite feeling tired.

Emotions

The energetic side of healing cannot be separated from the physical healing as we are energy beings. Energetically, the kidneys take on the emotion of fear. Some people are very fearful of many things in life; others may experience a state of fear due to a specific situation or crisis. Experiencing fear continually will weaken the energy and function of the kidneys.

We must work at releasing fears. Acknowledging that fear is the opposite of love will help you heal from within. Metaphysically, they say, "Love your fears." When you send loving energy to your fears, you lower their intensity.

Homoeopathy and Bach flowers may help while working on mindset changes. Hypnotherapy can be helpful for intense fears. I have found affirmations with meditation to be very helpful for most people.

What else can you do?

Very warm foot baths with Epsom salts or sea salts. Don't mix the two: Epsom salts are magnesium sulphate and sea salts contain sodium chloride. Mixing them is counterproductive due to their chemical composition and structure. Epsom salts are a relaxant for tired muscles and can help with sleep, anxiety and constipation. Sea salts are cleansing to the skin and can help with mild inflammation and some skin conditions. Sea salts are also useful in some hydrotherapy foot/calf baths, relaxing in warm water, or good for

circulation when mixed with cold water.

You can add two to three drops of essential oil to your foot baths. Eucalyptus for anti-bacterial, rosemary can be uplifting but is not suitable if have high blood pressure, or lavender for stress relief. Be mindful of which oils you choose, or just use the salts.

Warmth

One thing to be aware of, especially during the winter season, the kidneys must be kept warm. Fashion encourages people to wear shorter tops or jackets that do not cover the kidney area well enough. Walking barefoot on cold pavements or floors can contribute to chills affecting the kidneys. The kidney meridian starts under the sole of the foot.

Always wear socks in winter and keep your feet warm. I am a firm believer in wearing footwear, even sandals in summer, unless you are walking barefoot on safe, clean sand or grass.

Diet and Lifestyle

Minimise stress as much as possible. Try to get seven to eight hours of sleep each night.

Follow a healthy, fresh food diet with a variety of plant foods and clean spring water.

Try to include some of the following foods daily:

- Asparagus
- English spinach
- Celery
- Zucchini
- Cucumber
- Black kidney beans
- Adzuki beans
- Barley
- Millet
- Black sesame seed oil
- Walnuts
- Chestnuts
- Cashews
- Goji berries
- Blueberries
- Blackberries
- Pears
- Grapes (especially dark ones)
- Watermelon

If you include any dairy in your diet, goat's milk is a better option than cow's for nourishing yin energy. Eggs can also be supportive.

This list is not exhaustive, but highlights some of the most important foods that help maintain kidney yin balance.

About the author:

Lyn Craven is a Naturopath. She practises Bowen, Reiki and energy therapies. Lyn is also a meditation teacher and corporate health consultant. Lyn has a clinic in Sydney and can be contacted on 0403 231 804 or lyncraven@bigpond.com

News from Dr Greger

KETO DIETS

In 1921, a distinguished physician at the Mayo Clinic suggested trying what he called a ketogenic diet, a high-fat diet designed to be so carbohydrate-deficient it could effectively mimic the fasting state. Oddly, the success of ketogenic diets against pediatric epilepsy seems to get conflated by keto diet proponents into suggesting it is beneficial for everyone.

By eschewing carbohydrates, you force your body to burn fat. And indeed, the amount of fat you burn shoots up when you eat a keto diet. At the same time, however, the fat you take in shoots up when you eat a keto diet. What happens to our overall body-fat balance? Body fat loss slows upon switching to the ketogenic diet.

Just looking at the scale, the ketogenic diet seems like a success, but what happens inside bodies tells a different story. On the keto diet, rates of body fat loss may slow by more than half, so most of what is lost is water. The reason less fat is burned on a ketogenic diet is presumably the same reason people who start fasting may start burning less fat: Without carbohydrates, the preferred fuel, our bodies start burning more of our own protein.

Inadequate intake of 17 micronutrients has been documented in those on ketogenic diets. Children have gotten scurvy, and some have even died from deficiency of the mineral selenium, which can cause sudden cardiac death. Bone fractures disproportionately plague children on ketogenic diets, along with growth stunting, kidney stones and constipation. Keto diets have also been shown to reduce the richness and diversity of our gut flora. A meta-analysis of four cohort studies following the diets, diseases and deaths of a quarter million people found that those who eat lower-carbohydrate diets suffer a significantly higher risk of all-cause mortality, meaning they live, on average, significantly shorter lives.

TURMERIC

In recent years, more than five thousand articles have been published in the medical literature about *curcumin*, the yellow pigment in turmeric. Curcumin was first isolated more than a century ago. Since the turn of the century, more than 50 clinical trials have tested curcumin against a variety of diseases, and more are on the way.

Since 1987, the National Cancer Institute has tested more than a thousand different compounds for chemopreventive, or cancer-preventing, activity. Only a few dozen have made it to clinical trials, and curcumin, is among the most promising. Chemopreventive agents can be classified into different subgroups based on which stage of cancer development they help to fight: Carcinogen blockers and antioxidants help prevent the initial triggering DNA mutation, and antiproliferatives work by keeping tumours from growing and spreading. Curcumin is special in that it appears to belong to all three groups, meaning it may potentially help prevent and/or arrest cancer cell growth.

The anticancer effects of curcumin extend beyond its ability to potentially prevent DNA mutations. It also appears to help regulate programmed cell death. Our cells are preprogrammed to die naturally to make way for fresh cells through a process known as apoptosis. In a sense, our body is rebuilding itself every few months with the building materials we provide it through our diet. Some cells, however, overstay their welcome—namely, cancer cells. By somehow disabling their own suicide mechanism, they don't die when they're supposed to. Because they continue to thrive and divide, cancer cells can eventually form tumours and potentially spread throughout the body.

So how does curcumin affect this process? It appears to have the ability to reprogram the self-destructing mechanism back into cancer cells. All cells contain so-called death receptors that trigger the self-destruction sequence, but cancer cells can disable their own death receptors. Curcumin, however, appears able to reactivate them. Curcumin can also kill cancer cells directly by activating 'execution enzymes' called *caspases* inside cancer cells that destroy them from within by chopping up their proteins. Unlike most chemotherapy drugs, against which cancer cells can develop resistance over time, curcumin affects several mechanisms of cell death simultaneously, making it potentially harder for cancer cells to avoid destruction. For reasons not fully understood, curcumin seems to leave noncancerous cells alone.

Curcumin may play a role in preventing or treating lung disease, brain disease and a variety of cancers. It may also help speed recovery after surgery. It also may be effective in treating rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis and other inflammatory conditions.

With few downsides at culinary doses and myriad potential health benefits, I'd suggest trying to find ways to incorporate turmeric into your daily diet.

News from Dr Mercola

EATING CERTAIN FOODS HELPS LOWER YOUR RISK OF TINNITUS

Tinnitus is the perception of sound often ringing, buzzing or clicking without any external source. It's not just annoying, it's debilitating. Common symptoms include persistent phantom noise in one or both ears, sleep disturbances, anxiety and difficulty concentrating.

Over time, if ignored, tinnitus will fuel depression, increase stress hormones, and severely impact your quality of life. The global prevalence now hovers around 14.4 percent in adults and 13.6 percent in children, with some estimates even higher in specific populations. Despite its growing impact, most people are still told there's no known cause and no effective treatment.

However, recent studies provide a practical insight into tinnitus prevention — simply including certain nutrient-dense foods in your meals will help influence nerve health and blood flow, reducing its symptoms.

A large-scale meta-analysis found that people who ate more fruit had significantly lower odds of developing tinnitus than those with low fruit intake. Dairy, fibre and caffeine showed protective benefits as well. Moderate intake of these foods improved circulation, reduced inflammation and supported inner ear stability.

A separate study also found that consuming legumes helped calm tinnitus symptoms and stabilise auditory nerve activity. MSG and aspartame aggravated symptoms by overstimulating nerves. These common additives disrupt your brain chemistry, heighten auditory sensitivity and worsen tinnitus by triggering excitotoxic reactions, especially in sensitive individuals.

Eating whole foods and avoiding excitotoxins is a key strategy. Eliminate processed foods and focus on nutrient-rich meals to reduce nerve overload, balance blood sugar and protect your auditory system.

BOOSTING MAGNESIUM LEVELS COULD SLOW BRAIN AGEING AND REDUCE DEMENTIA RISK

The brain relies on magnesium to regulate energy, nerve function and blood flow. Both low and very high magnesium levels increase dementia risk, while optimal levels support brain health by reducing inflammation and preserving nerve function.

What's troubling is that magnesium deficiency rarely announces itself. We might notice brain fog or memory lapses, but write it off as normal ageing.

People who consume more magnesium have measurably larger brains with fewer damaged areas. The people with the highest intake have brain structures that appear nearly one year younger than average.

Magnesium works synergistically with vitamin D for cognitive benefits, with studies showing better memory and processing speed in people who have sufficient levels of both nutrients.

Modern farming methods have led to soil depletion, resulting in reduced magnesium in foods. Compounding this is the fact that typically only 30 to 40 percent of dietary magnesium is absorbed due to stress and common gut issues, which makes supplementation beneficial for most people.

Although many people don't get enough magnesium, overdoing it also creates problems with dementia risk. Our brain doesn't just need magnesium; it needs it in the right range consistently.

Once that balance slips, our nervous system is likely to pay the price. The recommended supplement forms are magnesium glycinate and magnesium malate.

SOURCE: Enewsletter by Dr Joseph Mercola, 25th June 2025

WEIGHT TRAINING PROTECTS AGAINST DEMENTIA IN OLDER ADULTS

A study conducted at Brazil's State University of Campinas found that twice-weekly weight training for six months preserved brain regions vulnerable to Alzheimer's in older adults who had mild cognitive impairment.

In this research, five of the 22 people in the resistance training group improved enough to no longer meet clinical criteria for cognitive impairment. This represented a remarkable improvement.

Exercise protects the brain through multiple mechanisms. It stimulates growth factors, reduces inflammation, improves cerebral blood flow and regulates stress hormones that contribute to cognitive decline.

For optimal longevity benefits, research suggests limiting strength training to 40 to 60 minutes weekly. If the training exceeds 130 to 140 minutes weekly, this may actually reverse health gains and even shorten longevity.

Mind-body exercises like yoga and Tai Chi also benefit brain health. They lower the stress hormone cortisol, reduce anxiety and improve executive function, attention and processing speed.

Source: Enewsletter by Dr Joseph Mercola, 24th May 2025

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SPRING INTO WELLNESS

A Natural Reset for the Season Ahead

By Hopewood Lifestye

As winter's chill begins to lift, spring offers a gentle invitation to renew, reset and realign with nature's rhythm. At Hopewood, we believe this seasonal shift is the perfect time to embrace natural cleansing and lay the foundation for vibrant health in the warmer months ahead.

After a season of hearty meals, slower movement and more time indoors, our bodies often crave lightness and vitality. Spring is nature's detox – buds bloom, energy rises and the air feels fresher. We can mirror this renewal by gently supporting our body's natural cleansing processes and reawakening our commitment to wellbeing.

Start with your plate. Focus on fresh, seasonal produce – leafy greens, sprouts, citrus and herbs like parsley and dandelion. These foods support liver function and digestion, helping to clear the heaviness of winter. Hydration is key too: sip warm water with lemon in the morning and enjoy herbal teas like nettle, peppermint or ginger throughout the day to aid circulation and detoxification.

To truly put a spring back in your step, consider a gentle juice or water cleanse. This simple yet powerful practice can help reset your system and inspire positive changes in other areas of your lifestyle – especially your approach to movement and self-care.

With over 55 years of experience guiding juice and water therapy at our natural health retreat, Hopewood's practitioners observed remarkable improvements in a wide range of health conditions. These included enhanced liver and kidney function, clearer skin, improved immunity, reduced chest congestion, better cholesterol and blood pressure levels, relief from fatigue and digestive issues, and even greater mental clarity.

A thorough seasonal cleanse can be a catalyst for transformation, leaving you feeling lighter, brighter and more energised as you move into the warmer months. To learn more about natural cleansing, visit hopewoodlifestyle.com.au. And for delicious, revitalising juice recipes, explore our book *Lifestyle – Hopewood's recipe for wellbeing* – your guide to nourishing the body and uplifting the spirit.

Movement is another essential pillar of spring wellness. As the days grow longer, take advantage of the sunlight with morning walks, gentle stretching or outdoor yoga. Moving your body in nature not only boosts circulation but also uplifts mood and reconnects you with the natural world.

Spring is also a time for reflection and intention. Consider simplifying your physical and emotional routines. Declutter your space, prioritise sleep and create quiet moments for mindfulness or journaling. These small rituals help clear mental fog and make space for new energy and purpose.

Finally, think ahead. Spring is the ideal time to set wellness goals for summer. Whether it's improving your diet, cultivating a new habit or simply spending more time outdoors, now is the time to plant those seeds.

At Hopewood, we see spring not as a rush to "get fit," but as an opportunity to set yourself a gentle awakening routine – a chance to nurture your body, mind and spirit with kindness and care. Embrace the season's energy and let it guide you toward a more vibrant, natural you.

NHSA Webinar Series

Join us in learning from our fabulous line up of speakers this October 14 to November 11

Tuesday, October 14 at 7.30pm Managing Migraine Naturally, Josie Carin
Migraine affects more than 4.9 million Australians, impacting work, relationships and quality of life. In this webinar, Clinical Naturopath Josie Carin—known as The Migraine Naturopath—will share practical ways to reduce the frequency and severity of migraines through lifestyle changes and natural treatment approaches.
About the presenter: Josie has a special interest in women's health and migraine, and understands how migraines often occur alongside other health concerns such as hormonal imbalance, weight gain, digestive issues, anxiety and fatigue. Her holistic approach aims to address the root causes and help you reclaim your wellbeing.

Tuesday, October 21 at 12pm Understanding Gut Health with Naturopath and Holistic Colon Hydrotherapist, Ela Gold
In this session, Ela will guide you through the essentials of gut health and the microbiome. Drawing on over 25 years of holistic practice, she'll share practical insights into how stress, diet and lifestyle impact gut balance—and how to restore it naturally.
About the presenter: Ela is the founder of the Vitalis Health Colon Wellbeing Clinic and Colonic Training Centre. She has supported thousands of clients in overcoming gut health issues, chronic fatigue and parasite-related conditions. Her approach blends modern colon hydrotherapy with principles from Ayurveda, acupuncture and natural detox therapies.

Tuesday, October 28 at 7.30pm Menopause and Perimenopause, The Traditional Chinese Medicine Perspective, Cathy Bell
Join Cathy Bell, Acupuncturist, Doctor of Chinese Medicine and women's hormonal health specialist, for an enlightening session on how Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) can support women through the transitions of perimenopause and menopause. Discover how ancient wisdom can help you restore balance, manage symptoms and embrace this stage of life with vitality.
About the presenter: Cathy Bell has almost 20 years of clinical experience and runs Yin Studio in inner-city Brisbane. Her compassionate, holistic approach has helped countless women navigate hormonal changes with greater ease and wellbeing.

Tuesday, November 4 at 7.30pm Dementia and Alzheimer's Disease: Dr Peter Johnston (Dietician)
Are you concerned about cognitive decline? Want to learn how natural health can support brain health at every age? Join us for an eye-opening webinar with Dr Peter Johnston, as he explores the links between diet, lifestyle and dementia. Dr Johnston will unpack how food, gut health and daily habits influence brain function.
About the presenter: Dr Peter Johnston is an accredited practising dietitian with a Masters in Nutrition and Dietetics and a PhD in Human Genetics. Peter is also a fellow of the Australasian Society of Lifestyle Medicine, runs a private practice: Perfect Human Food Consulting, and is an a member of the advisory council for Doctors For Nutrition.

Tuesday, November 11 at 7.30pm Harnessing the power of light and colour for general and eye health: Dr Jenny Livanos (Optometrist and Nutritionist)
Join us for a fascinating webinar exploring the powerful influence of light and colour on your body and mind. Discover how different wavelengths of light impact sleep, mood, vision and even your immune system. Learn practical ways to use natural light, reduce harmful exposure and bring healing colour into your daily routine. Whether you're looking to protect your eyesight or support whole-body wellness, this session is not to be missed.
About the presenter: Dr Jenny Livanos is a holistic optometrist and nutritionist. Dr Livanos has written many wonderful articles for our magazines over the years and we are so pleased to have her presenting.

Tickets are $50 for the series. You can book online at www.health.org.au
All registrants will receive a recording of each presentation so you can watch and learn at a time that suits you. While we try to avoid it, the speaker line-up is subject to change. Speaker's views presented are their own and should not be used in place of professional health advice.

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