

The naturopathic advisor

Experts from the College of Naturopathic Medicine answer your health questions. This issue, you asked:



Q What are the top nutrients and supplements for winter wellness?

As we go into the darker days of winter, it's important to look at our nutritional support for a strong immune system, prevent nutritional deficiencies and to help balance mood.

Vitamin D is vital for the production of serotonin, a hormone which makes us feel happy, and melatonin, our sleep hormone, which helps us achieve deep restorative sleep. Eggs, oily fish, mushrooms and tomatoes are good sources of Vitamin D but supplementation can be useful.

Vitamins K2 and A are also important to ensure your fat-soluble vitamins are balanced and can be utilised properly. Including green leafy vegetables, such as kale, chard, spinach and broccoli, and orange vegetables, such as carrot, squash, sweet potato and pumpkin

will cover your needs. Carbohydrates found in these root vegetables are good mood food so avoid going low-carb over the winter months.

Good gut health is also essential for neurotransmitter production and balancing hormones so be sure to incorporate fermented foods, such as sauerkraut, kimchi, kombucha and kefir into your daily diet or supplement with a well-researched probiotic.

Top up on B vitamins, such as B12, B6 and folate found in eggs, bananas, spinach, parsley, liver, beef, lamb, tuna and salmon. These play a role in lowering homocysteine in the body, which, if raised, can lower mood amongst other negative health effects.

Lastly, lifestyle factors such as getting good



sleep, regular exposure to sunshine, daily movement, and being around friends will play a huge role in regulating mood.



Your expert

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Putting winter health TOP OF THE LIST

Get your diet and supplement regime in good order to avoid winter bugs, advises Health Stores Ireland.

Recently, there has been a great deal of media time given to vaccinations, the controversial Gardasil anti-cancer jab for teenage girls, as well as the 'flu vaccination. Whatever your opinion on either, winter always brings coughs and colds, and more customers to independent Health Stores Ireland (HSI) shops looking for advice on keeping healthy.

As individuals, everyone has their favourite remedies, and, of course, a good diet tops the list. Avoiding processed foods and cooking as much as possible from scratch with local seasonal produce, organic if possible for maximum nutrition, is the way to go. Watch out for sugar as eating or drinking too much sugar damages immune system cells for several hours after even a couple of sugary

drinks. For the times when sugar is a must, a good all-round type to use is rapadura; it is a less processed form than most others, and as it retains more minerals, it doesn't leach the same amount of nutrients from the body to be metabolised. Foods which are specifically useful for the immune system are garlic, which is antiviral, antibacterial, antifungal and reduces mucous, live yogurt, and fermented foods, such as sauerkraut, kimchi, kefir and kombucha, which feed good bacteria in the gut, where two thirds of our immune system is based.

Lifestyle habits can also affect immunity. Poor sleep, lack of exercise, undue stress and social isolation are

all detrimental, as, of course, is misuse of antibiotics when taken unnecessarily.

So, if your diet is sound, sleep is adequate, stress is controlled and you still need a boost, what can help?

Vitamin C is a basic, whether in powder, liquid, capsule or tablet form. The mineral which is most supportive of immunity is zinc, and the best known herbs are garlic and echinacea, which come in various guises. Vitamin D is a well-established favourite; raising sun-deprived moods in dark winter days and supporting the immune system are just two of its many properties. Everyone from newborns on can take probiotics to support gut health and immunity, and this is sound advice, especially after a course of antibiotics. Your local HSI member store can advise on the probiotic best suited to your needs.

Winter cooking – soups, casseroles, curries and veggie dishes, such as chickpea stews – would be far less interesting without spices, and many of these have strong immune-boosting traditions, with turmeric, cinnamon, cayenne and ginger topping the list. Come, buy, add flavour and good health!

Find out more at www.healthstores.ie



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