



In touch

WITH JAN DE VRIES

'Naturally the best since 1955'

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Jan de Vries WRITERS

*"If you truly love Nature,
you will find beauty
everywhere."*

Van Gogh

...Medicine through the Ages, Part three

*Before any treatment, whether this is a traditional,
a homoeopathic or a naturopathic treatment, there
always has to be a diagnosis.*

Jan de Vries



Scientific progress makes it possible to trace even the smallest pathological changes which take place in the human body. On the basis of these findings, in combination with the case history of the patient and the medical examination, the traditionally trained physician can often make the right diagnosis. There are thousands of known diseases and it is not easy to make a diagnosis and often still more laboratory or other tests are required before it is possible to give the disease in question a name.

As soon as the physician is sure of a diagnosis, treatment can begin according to a specific programme which matches the illness in question. Within this programme there are several therapeutic possibilities and a choice of drugs, which is forever increasing. If one drug does not help,

perhaps some other drug will do the trick and eventually most of the symptoms will disappear and the patient can be sent home, because the illness has been 'cured'.

However, modern diagnostic methods can only establish chemical and physical processes, and the changes that happen in these sectors, but life and disease involve much more. In a living organism, within fractions of seconds, hundreds and even thousands of changes take place at the same time. Although we can register more and more details, we will never be able to re-enact natural processes in a laboratory, and there are many things about the human body we do not yet know and perhaps will never know.

In modern medicine the research of details has become far too important and the number of details a physician discovers even seems to be a criterion for the capability of the physician. Many patients believe that the more details the doctor knows the better he can heal.

However, in general the opposite is true, because a physician who is obsessed by too many details can often no longer grasp the entire problem of pathological processes.

Meanwhile the patient will be impressed by all the details, as by looking at all these figures, they can see which of the available data is within an acceptable norm. When there are

A Regular Bowel Function is Important

The physician should always ask his patients about the functioning of their bowels. Many people are still under the impression that digestive disorders have little or nothing to do with their state of health. However, irregular bowel movements can cause severe blockages and dangerous diseases, not only of the intestines but of the entire organism. Nowadays, 90% of the inhabitants of the industrial countries suffer from mild or serious gastric irregularities.

The Teeth

A further important indication of the state of health is the condition of the teeth. According to Dr Bircher-Benner (a Swiss physician and a pioneer in nutritional research), caries are a reliable sign of serious general health problems caused by wrong nutrition. Diseases of the gums and periodontitis (loose teeth) are also such signs. Even one carious tooth indicates that there is something wrong with the metabolism. Sweets not only damage teeth from the outside, but as any kind of industrially produced sugar causes a lack of vital substances, the teeth and the jawbones becomes weaker and the composition of the saliva changes.

Disease Provoking Living Habits

Swedish nutritional scientist, Are Waerland said "Diseases develop because of mistakes in nutritional and living habits; when you remove the mistakes the diseases disappear by themselves." Bircher-Benner stated that diseases are always caused by a disorder in the person's lifestyle and that such disorders often develop during childhood. By disorder, he meant all behaviour that offends against the natural laws of life. Only if the physician can find out about all the different aspects of disorder in the life of his patient will they be able to help. "Only in this way," said Bircher-Benner, "will it be possible to build a bridge from the diagnosis to the therapy."

Since the time of Bircher-Benner the disorders in people's lives have increased tremendously. Diseases which a hundred years ago were hardly known now threaten the health of millions of people. Only a physician who is able to make the right diagnosis will be able to build this bridge, which will make it possible to give patients real help.

The search for the real causes behind all the different symptoms is extremely important. As Professor Zabel said, "Behind a large number of diseases there are only a few causes. To reveal these causes and to eliminate them, instead of blundering about the symptoms, is the most important task of today's physician."

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NEWS



Passiflora will ease your anxiety, new study reveals

A new study from the Global Neuroscience Initiative Foundation, a non-profit charity organisation, revealed that the passion flower, (Passiflora) is effective in easing anxiety.

Researchers writing in BioMed Central's open access Nutrition Journal pooled the results of 24 studies involving a total of more than 2000 participants, showing that some nutritional and herbal supplements can be effective, without the risk of serious side effects.

The research was undertaken by Shaheen Lakhan and Karen Vieira from the Global Neuroscience Initiative Foundation, USA. Lakhan said, "Our review and summary of the literature on herbal remedies and dietary supplements for anxiety should aid mental health practitioners in advising their patients and provide insight for future research in this field."

Of the studies included in the review, 21 were randomized controlled trials. Of these, 15 showed positive effects from either a nutritional or herbal remedy and any reported side effects were mild to moderate. The research showed that based on their systematic review, strong evidence existed for the use of herbal supplements containing extracts of passion flower (Passiflora).

According to Lakhan, "For all three of the herbal supplements we reviewed, more research needs to be done to establish the most effective dosage and to determine whether this varies between different types of anxiety or anxiety-related disorders. Herbal medicines hold an important place in the history of medicine as most of our current remedies, and the majority of those likely to be discovered in the future, will contain phytochemicals derived from plants."

If you would like further information on Passiflora, or anxiety, please contact our helpline on 01292 318846.

NEWS



Jan de Vries Acupuncturist takes up Macmillan trekking challenge

Edinburgh Acupuncturist Charmaine Shepherd is facing the challenge of a lifetime as she prepares to trek the Yanshan mountains and Great Wall of China to raise money for Macmillan cancer.

Charmaine, 35, holds a community acupuncture clinic in the Edinburgh Jan de Vries clinic. She regularly treats patients who are undergoing cancer treatment and says the benefits are outstanding,

“There is ample evidence that acupuncture can reduce many side-effects including fatigue, nausea, hot flushes, neuropathy, breathlessness and a dry mouth.”

Charmaine has a strong connection to China as she did part of her acupuncture training in Shanghai. She has been searching for a way to support Macmillan Cancer.

She said; “Macmillan, at their own expense, gave me very comprehensive training to help me offer emotional support to patients during treatments. Having the skills to deal with the emotional issues that patients bring into the treatment room is essential. I’d like to help Macmillan offer this training to more acupuncturists in the UK. The training course has been life-changing for me as well as my patients. I have gained so much and now it’s time to give back to Macmillan.”

Charmaine is well known in Edinburgh for the community acupuncture clinic she holds in the Jan de Vries healthcare clinic. The clinic runs most Wednesdays and gives people treatment regardless of their financial situation.

“For many of the patients the treatment they receive is a lifeline. Many of them are very excited about the challenge and have volunteered to get involved in the fundraising.”

You can sponsor Charmaine by visiting her online fundraising page on www.justgiving.com/Charmaine-Shepherd. You can pay by credit or debit card, and the money will go directly to Macmillan cancer. Where supporters are UK taxpayers, the charity will automatically receive 28% extra in Gift Aid, which makes Justgiving the most efficient way of sponsoring Charmaine.

RESEARCH NEWS



Acupuncture shown to stimulate the brain

Acupuncture has been shown to prompt changes in the “mood regulation” area of the brain, pointing to a possible and potent treatment for depression, according to an article written for Public Library of Science (PLOS) Journal. The Australian-first research, conducted at the University of NSW, took in ten healthy patients who each underwent MRI brain scans while they received the ancient Chinese therapy.

Dr Im Quah-Smith said it was the first study to map acupuncture-related changes in brain functioning, while the study was designed to include an extra step to boost its scientific rigour. “This is the first time that a whole series of (acupuncture) points have been used together and the sum effect has been measured in the brain,” said Dr Quah-Smith. “... We were interested to see if we used these points, would it help any of our depressed patients - and it would because it is working in the part of the brain that is inherently involved in mood regulation.” Dr Quah-Smith said despite a growing body of evidence showing acupuncture to have a detectable effect on the body, there were many in the medical community who viewed it as a “highly alternative” therapy supported only by “poorly designed trials”.

One of the major stumbling blocks to conducting a gold-standard randomised, double-blinded and placebo-controlled trial is that it is very difficult to administer a “sham” version of acupuncture. “A true placebo has to be administered in such a way that you are not contributing to some of the real acupuncture effect,” Dr Quah-Smith said. She avoided this problem by using a form of laser acupuncture that can be turned down to a level where it does not produce a skin sensation, but still exerts the necessary pressure on the acupuncture point. “It is beautiful, because in a clinical situation you can have the delivery of the acupuncture without recipients knowing whether it is real or not real,” Dr Quah-Smith said.

The study participants showed significant differences in their brain functioning when they were unknowingly receiving the acupuncture treatment, compared to when they were not. Dr Quah-Smith said while the scans clearly demonstrated an effect in the brains of healthy people, it remained to be seen whether the results would be different in a sample of clinically depressed subjects. “We also cannot predict from these results whether any acupoint should be preferred over others for clinical use. Both of these questions warrant further investigation.”

The research results are published in the journal PLOS Online.

Confirmation of viral link with ME/CFS

So many years on and we still do not have the cause of ME (myalgic encephalitis), also known as chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), but as the research continues we may be getting a step closer. Recent findings have found a “strong link” with a retrovirus called XMRV.

Studies in 2009 found evidence of the xenotropic murine leukaemia virus-related virus (XMRV) in about two-thirds of the people with CFS and less than 4% of people without the disease. However, these findings alone do not prove that the virus causes CFS, because they do not show whether the infection occurred before or after CFS developed. The research paper is cautious in its conclusions, saying that XMRV “may” be a contributing factor to CFS, but the opposite may also be true: CFS may make people more susceptible to infection with this virus. The research lead by Dr Vincent Lombardi and entitled “Detection of an Infectious Retrovirus, XMRV, in Blood Cells of Patients with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome” was published in the journal Science.

The research found that blood from 67% of people with CFS contained XMRV DNA compared with 3.7% of controls. Overall samples from people with CFS were 54 times as likely to contain viral sequences as samples from healthy controls. This led the researchers to conclude that XMRV may be a contributing factor in the development of CFS. They suggest that infection with the XMRV virus could be responsible for some of the abnormal immune response and neurological problems seen in CFS.

In a recent development, a follow on study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) showed that evidence of XMRV virus (and related viruses called “MLV”) was present in 86.5% of CFS patients vs. less than 7% of healthy controls. This is a dramatic difference and supports the previous findings.

B vitamins slow brain atrophy in people with memory problems

At the time of writing In Touch, this was a hot topic on the helpline following a newspaper report where it caused some confusion regarding vitamin B9. The work was performed at the University of Oxford where the lead researcher, Prof Smith, commented that “This is a very striking, dramatic result. It’s much more than we could have predicted.”

Support for this work is reflected with comments such as those from Paul Matthews, Professor of Clinical Neurology, Imperial College, London who said: “This well-conducted study adds substantial new data to previous information suggesting that dietary B vitamins could have beneficial effects on neurodegeneration with ageing.”

The study demonstrated that, on average, taking B vitamins slowed the rate of brain atrophy by 30%, and in many cases reductions as high as 53% were seen. Prof Smith proposes that the treatment with B vitamins lowers homocysteine. Lower homocysteine reduces brain shrinkage and that is associated with a reduced cognitive decline.

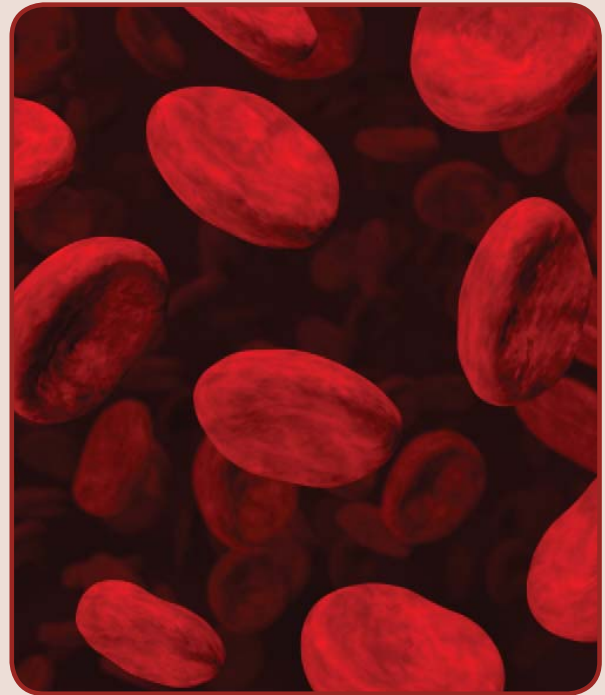
The dose of B vitamins in the study were;

Vitamin B6 20mg

Vitamin B9 (folate) 800mcg (0.8mg)

Vitamin B12 500mcg (0.5mg)

In some papers, folate was described as vitamin B9. This way of describing folic acid is not commonly displayed on vitamin labels but be assured; vitamin B9 is the same folic acid!



Metabolic syndrome improved by dietary inositol supplement

Adding inositol (found in the supplement IP6) supplements to diet therapy improves various aspects of metabolic syndrome in postmenopausal women better than diet alone, results of an Italian study indicate. In a nutshell, metabolic syndrome is a complex problem that involves obesity, elevated blood glucose, cholesterol and triglyceride levels combined with elevated blood pressure.

The lead researcher, Dr. Rosario D’Anna, cautioned that it should be “considered only a pilot study with preliminary data,” in an email to Reuters Health. “However, inositol seems to be an interesting supplementation, even if it is usually produced by our metabolism.”

The findings are reported in a September 8 online issue of Menopause by Dr. D’Anna at the University of Messina, and colleagues. The authors note that in previous studies “inositol has been reported to improve insulin sensitivity and ovulatory function in young women affected by polycystic ovary syndrome.” To test the effect of inositol in postmenopausal women with metabolic syndrome, the researchers randomized 80 women to receive either inositol 2g twice a day plus diet or placebo plus diet for 6 months.

The improvement in blood pressure, insulin resistance, cholesterol and triglycerides was significantly greater with inositol supplements than placebo, the investigators found.

The authors think certain people may respond more to inositol supplementation better than others. “Probably, people with genetic or metabolic impairment have a reduced production of inositol, and consequently might benefit from inositol supplementation,” Dr. D’Anna suggested.

Nonetheless, the research team concludes, “This first report concerning inositol supplementation for 6 months in postmenopausal women affected by metabolic syndrome demonstrated that it may improve some of the metabolic features of the syndrome such as carbohydrate metabolism, lipid profile, and blood pressure.” The study was funded by the University of Messina, USA.



Rhythm and Blues

Over 80% of women suffer some form of premenstrual syndrome (PMS). A carefully chosen selection of herbs, mineral, vitamin and food supplements can help the hormonal and chemical imbalances characteristic of this problem.

There are as many theories about PMS as there are treatments. Some see hormones such as progesterone, oestrogen and the milk producing hormone prolactin as the culprits. For others, vitamin and mineral deficiencies lie at the heart of the problem. Many sufferers have been placed on long-term antidepressant medication or hormone treatments in an attempt to resolve the associated mood swings and depression. In the majority of cases these measures are ineffective and often cause more long-term problems.

The syndrome can be split into four subtypes, although many women have symptoms that fall into all four categories.

PMS-A

Most commonly associated with high oestrogen and low progesterone levels, the main symptom suffered by this group is anxiety, something that over 80% of sufferers experience. Type-A sufferers commonly complain of mood and emotional disturbances. Related changes in the hormones adrenaline, serotonin and noradrenaline trigger the irritability, tiredness, water retention and palpitations so commonly reported.

Oestrogen can also affect mood. This hormone can actually block assimilation of vitamin B6, preventing the vitamin working in the liver to produce the hormone serotonin. This may explain the difficulties that PMS-A sufferers experience in keeping blood sugar levels balanced. Excessive oestrogen may aggravate the problem by increasing the release of prolactin, causing water retention.

PMS-H

Over 60% of PMS sufferers gain up to 3lb in weight over their period, a characteristic associated with this second group PMS-H. With symptoms of breast tenderness and a swelling of the abdomen, legs, arms, hands and face, the H in this group represents hyper-hydration (excessive water retention). Such a fluid problem can only be hormonal. The prolactin connection has been established in only a handful of studies, but what cannot be contested is the role of another hormone, aldosterone. This hormone increases the amount of fluid held in the body, which is vital to health. A number of aggravating factors such as excessive oestrogen, deficiency of dopamine and stress in the lead-up to the period, however, can mean an uncomfortable excess of water.

PMS-C

40% or more suffer from craving certain foods, in this group. Associated with PMS-C is an increased appetite, often for very sweet or savoury foods. Sufferers also complain of headaches, fatigue, fainting spells and palpitations. When tested for their ability to handle sugars in their blood, women with these symptoms showed a temporary inability to produce a balanced insulin-output. There is, so far, no adequate explanation for this problem, although a deficiency of both magnesium and chromium may be indicated.

PMS-D

Depression is a serious problem for this group. Thankfully it only accounts for 5% of PMS symptoms reported. It is thought that low levels of brain chemicals and oestrogen are responsible. Other theories hold that it is due to an excessive amount of progesterone, itself a central nervous system depressant. This sub-group is chemically opposite to PMS-A.

Self help plan

Start by mapping out your symptoms. Take the first day of your menstrual period as day one and make a daily record of your feelings, both emotional and physical. As the month passes by and you go through ovulation (about day 14 in a 28 day cycle) you may start to notice change in mood and physical symptoms. As you do, grade them using a simple rating system where one is a mild symptom and three means you are totally unable to function.

After a couple of cycles you will start to notice a trend; familiar symptoms will appear and disappear with predictable regularity. This will help you monitor your response to a natural treatment programme and any dietary changes.

The nutritional status of PMS-A women is quite unique. Studies of their eating habits have shown that they consume far more dairy and sugar-based foods than other women. Both types of food can cause the body to lose significant amounts of magnesium, which can lead to deficiency states.

Mood changes have long been associated with changes in brain chemistry. Vitamin B6 is involved with the production of the brain chemical dopamine. Dopamine has a calming effect on the nervous system and a deficiency of vitamin B6 may result in reduction of dopamine production. This situation can put the nervous system on edge.

Vitamin B6 may be responsible for additional benefits such as helping to increase the magnesium levels in the body's cells, increasing progesterone levels and helping to reduce oestrogen levels.

There are other brain chemicals involved in mood balancing. An amino acid found in green tea, L-Theanine, has a calming effect on the brain, enhancing the calming alpha waves, soothing the nervous system and relaxing the muscles. Known as Elthea-100, this can effectively help to control mood and reduce the number and severity of panic attacks and has no known toxic effects.

True PMS-C sufferers cannot avoid binges. The foods most often taken during the binges are sweet foods like chocolate, but a minority

crave savoury foods. We do know that hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar) is at the seat of many craving episodes. It has always been recommended that complex sugars like rice, pasta and potato are eaten at this time and simple sugars (sweets, honey, chocolate, cakes and so on) are avoided.

This makes good sense but the addition of a good quality chromium supplement, such as ChromaTab, which can regulate blood sugar levels can make all the difference. It builds a chemical bridge between the insulin and the cells of the body. By doing so, chromium can help improve its function.

For those suffering from PMS-H a daily dose of magnesium and potassium will help. (Anyone taking diuretics or suffering from kidney disease should consult their health professional before supplementing their diet with potassium.)

Magnesium problems again make an appearance in the PMS-D group of symptoms. It has been suggested that a deficiency of magnesium may contribute to an accumulation of lead in the body, which has an ability to block the binding of oestrogen to its cells, causing a relative excess of progesterone to build up. Taking magnesium, such a Magnesium and potassium Chelate (by Enzymatic Therapy) or MagSorb (by Lamberts Healthcare) with Alfred Vogels St Johns wort tincture may help. (seek professional advice before taking St John's Wort).

Top tips for beating PMS

- Reduce your intake of dairy foods
- Reduce your intake of animal fats and meat
- Increase your intake of fresh fruit and vegetables
- Increase you intake of pure water
(at least 1.5 litres per day)
- Increase your exercise level – start brisk walking or swimming three times a week
- Avoid foods containing caffeine
- Avoid foods containing sugar
- Eat more complex carbohydrates, such as pasta, rice or potatoes
- Cut down on meal size – eat smaller meals more regularly
- Stop smoking
- Cut out added salt
- Learn to relax and take some time to unwind



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It has long been suspected that highly coloured drinks can affect a child's behaviour, but evidence is mounting to support the concern that their physical development may be adversely influenced by the chemical cocktail found in most popular fizzy drinks.

A recent study of 594 children aged between 5 and 14 years old, revealed that a staggering 42% drank 2-3 glasses of fizzy drinks per day in the North of England. The survey, even more worryingly revealed that 245 of these children simply drank no water at all in favour of sweetened fruit juice or fizzy drinks. This, and other surveys are starting to paint a picture regarding our children's drinking habits – they are bad! The occasional fizzy drink will never do any harm but we are now witnessing children who have incorporated 2-3 cans of fizzy drinks into their daily diet. When taken over a year this adds up to many hundreds of cans of highly acidic, sweetened and chemically laden fluid on top of the everyday 'junk' our children consume.

Bearing in mind that two-thirds of our body is made from water, it would be fair to say that we could all benefit from a drop or two during the day. Water is vital to every chemical process; it lubricates our joints and bathes every cell in a warm, nutritious fluid. The very act of being alive burns off about 2 litres of fluid daily – this needs to be replaced and to do this you need to drink around eight glasses of pure water daily; this should replace 1.5-2 litres.

If you are a tea addict and drink a similar amount of cups per day, don't fool yourself that you are replacing this as water simply because your tea is made from boiled water. Tea and coffee are powerful diuretics; that means they stimulate your body to expel water and make for frequent trips to the toilet.

You simply cannot beat plain water but it is best taken once filtered. You will notice the difference if you take the time to invest in a water filter. Drinking filtered water cuts out the chlorine taste and improves waters general 'drinkability'. Don't be duped into drinking bottled water labelled 'tablewater' – this is simply tap water, and there are no regulations governing its source and it doesn't even have to be filtered. Mineral water, on the other hand, is highly regulated and comes from a single source and cannot be chemically treated in any way.

Fizzy drinks and thin bones

There is a growing concern that certain drinks may actually affect our children's physical development. The harsh reality is that the more phosphate your fizzy drink contains, the more calcium is lost from your bones. The recommended dietary ratio of calcium to phosphate should be equal, but the current trend in the UK has moved to about 900mg calcium for every 1450mg of phosphate. Even at these levels some authorities maintain that there is a gross underestimation regarding phosphate intake. Phosphorus is present in a wider range of food and drink than calcium and is commonly added to drinks such as cola in the form of phosphoric acid. These additional dietary phosphate loads may even damage the development of strong, healthy bones in children. It is interesting to note that our bodies have a natural phosphate cycle that peaks in the mid afternoon and at night. Scientists have now determined that the afternoon peak is greatly affected by diet. In our children this corresponds to their breaktime and lunchtime fix of cola or other fizzy drinks. By increasing the amount of phosphate in the blood a reduction in the circulating vitamin D occurs. Low vitamin D level reduces the amount of calcium that is absorbed from the gut. Since this affects the circulating levels of calcium yet another hormone is released that stimulates the release of calcium from the bones to balance this apparently low blood calcium level. The end result is poor dietary calcium absorption and increased mobilisation of bone calcium. This type of biological balancing trick plays havoc with the delicate processes involved in developing bones and increases the risk of that child never attaining their peak bone mass. In other words, there is a real worry that high phosphate food, and especially carbonated drinks, can predispose a child to developing osteoporosis at a prematurely early age. This relationship was highlighted in the Journal of Adolescent Health back in 1994. The authors concluded that a high phosphate diet was strongly associated with a higher than normal rate of fractures in girls (but not boys) aged 8 to 16 years old.

Sweet nothings

When it comes to sweet drinks there is no such thing as a free lunch! Especially when you consider the staggering amount of sugar in a

Water *the stuff of life!*

"Water is the driver of nature" – Leonardo da Vinci

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regular can of cola for example. To put some numbers to this, your typical can of cola (355ml) contains a shocking 39g of sugar. This equates to 10 average sized sugar cubes per can or put another way 156 calories obtained from pure sugar. With the diet industry becoming more and more influential it's not surprising that the drinks manufacturers were keen to cash in on a way of giving us the sweet drinks we love with the calories removed; a win-win situation you would think! Sadly, with the advent of artificial sweeteners things started to take a controversial turn for the worse. From the onset, the media were quick to raise worries over the theoretical issue of safety. With stories of cancer links to sweetener intake the headlines were buzzing with reports and stories. We could fill an entire issue of In Touch with this aspect of the sweetener problem without even touching on the reports of sweetener related aggravation of migraine, ADHD and hyperactivity to name a few. However, one health problem that we can briefly touch on involves tricking the brain to expect sweet and not delivering the goods! Consider this situation; you take a gulp of a sweet tasting drink. Your tongue senses the sweet taste that is normally accompanied by an elevation in blood sugars soon after you swallow. To prepare the body the sugar regulating hormone insulin is released but... where is the sugar? The now circulating insulin does what it is supposed to do and reduces the blood sugar level despite there not being an elevated level because the artificial sweetener has tricked the bodies regulatory mechanisms. As the levels drop the appetite centres in the brain detect this lowering of the blood sugar levels and send out a message that prompts the person to go and eat something to push the levels back up again. This is not what a dieter really needs! Drinking 'diet' drinks may actually make you eat more or seek sugars even subconsciously. There is not such thing as a free lunch!

Water as a Nutrient

The nutritional importance of water is without question. However, water can deliver an added bonus since it may be a valuable source of calcium; but this depends on where you live! Soft water is more acidic than hard water and slowly dissolves metals such as lead and copper. If your house is old and the pipes are made of these metals, you may be drinking unhealthy levels of toxic metals.

Simple ion exchange filters can filter out most of this, but running a bowlful of water off first before drinking will reduce the risk of contamination substantially.

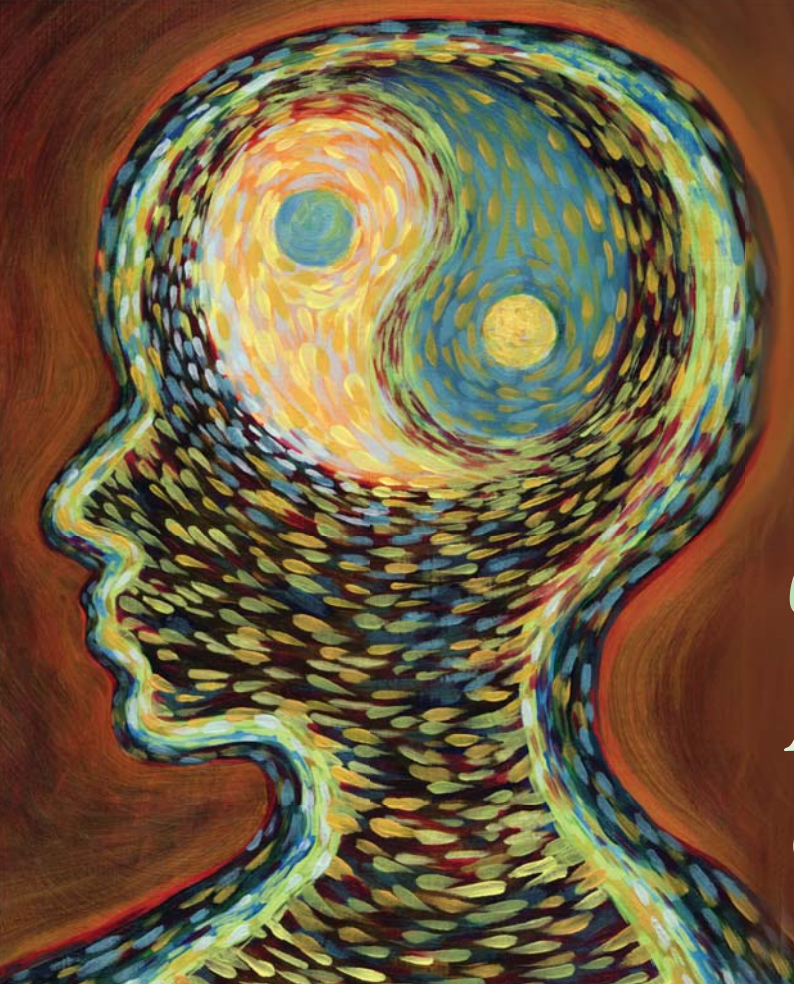
Hard water, on the other hand, can cause other problems since its high calcium content can result in permanent or temporary hardness. If you boil your hard water and it does not leave any deposits behind you have permanent hardness. If a scale is left behind you may have temporary hardness due to calcium carbonate.

Those of you with permanent hardness in the water actually have more nutritious water! A substantial amount of calcium can be obtained from hard water but it needs to be of the permanent type. Water filters will remove most of the hardness that causes scale or scum but it will not remove permanent hardness which can be a valuable supply of dietary calcium.

A final word of advice

As in most things, moderation counts. There is a body of evidence linking sweetened and chemically laden drinks with health and behavioural problems just as there is growing worries about phosphate levels in fizzy drinks and bone health. It would appear to be prudent to offer our children a glass of water when they are thirsty rather than the popular alternatives. By keeping tastes simple you can influence a child's choice and keep the fizzy stuff for special days out when it will do no harm and be a real 'treat'!

Drinking is probably one of our most important biological functions. Without water our bodies rapidly suffer from the effects of dehydration that can, in extreme circumstances, result in damage to delicate tissues such as the kidney. However, it is now becoming clear that not all drinks carry the same health benefits and some can be quite unhealthy when consumed on a daily basis. Worries are now being raised over the effects of certain drinks on the health and wellbeing of our children.



Getting the point across

An introduction to Chinese Acupuncture

For well over 2,000 years, acupuncture has been used to treat people with a wide variety of conditions. Its history and use can be traced through the writings of ancient Chinese scholar in the Yellow Emperor's Book of Medicine, known as the Nei Ching. Unfortunately, the origins of the ancient art are not made any clearer by the fact that the Yellow Emperor himself was a rather mysterious character. It was once well-accepted that he lived in the 27th Century BC, but many historians are now contesting the fact that he actually existed at all. The origins of the Nei ching now lie between 481 and 221 BC.

The Energy Around Us

Ancient Chinese medicine looks at the body and health in a different way to Western medicine. According to Chinese wisdom we are all part of the universe and share in its energy. The energy of the universe, Chi, surrounds everything and acts as the driving force for all life; a body with no circulating Chi is therefore dead! At death the Chi is said to re-circulate with the external (environmental) energy – it cannot just disappear. Chi can be seen to be in a constant state of flux, moving from the environment, universe and body.

The Yin-Yang Connection

Just like positive and negative, yin and yang need each other to exist; even though they act in opposite ways, they are interdependent. The Chinese symbolized yin and yang with physical elements they experienced in everyday life; yin represented water while yang was seen as a fire element. In general, yang was seen to be associated with all things hot, bright and fast moving and yin, being its opposite, with all things cold, dim and slow.

Our bodies contain both yin and yang energies but in varying amounts. A balance is needed for health to exist, and excess in, say yang will cause a relative deficiency in yin.

Energy Imbalances

Excessive yin damages yang, and cold symptoms are felt. Excessive yang damages yin and symptoms of heat are felt. A deficiency of yin causes yang to become over-active. If a prolonged condition of excess or deficiency of either yin or yang occurs then disease will result. This could be disease with characteristics of yin or yang, depending upon the energy levels and symptoms that are being expressed.

The Chinese Perspective

The internal organs hold very different functions in traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) compared to Western medicine, which is based on knowledge of anatomy and physiology. It is the philosophy and not all the organs that are seen as important. The liver is said to store the blood and be involved in the release of bile. Any disruption to the liver energy leads to depression, loss of weight and many more apparently unconnected problems such as migraine. The heart dominates the circulation of blood and is said to 'keep' the mind. Digestion is governed by the functioning of the spleen which transforms the food into the appropriate energies. The spleen is said to 'command' the blood.

The lungs dominate the hair and skin and regulate the balance of body water. Urine flow and the distribution of nutrients are, therefore, associated with the lung.

The main organ in TCM is the kidney. It dominates the growth of the body, reproduction and development. The kidney produces the marrow that represents the brain and spinal cord. As in the West, the kidneys also control the body's fluid levels.

These organs are known collectively as the yang organs and have functions that are unconnected to their Western physiology. Other organs used in TCM are the small and large intestine, gall bladder, stomach and bladder. These have functions similar to Western ideas and are

collectively known as the Fu organs. Extra organs exist, the brain being known as a sea of marrow that is dependent on the kidney for its health. In TCM the functions of the mind are controlled by the heart. The uterus has similar functions, controlling the menstrual cycle and nourishing the foetus.

Blood and Fluids

The health and functions of the organs depend on the circulation of the blood, fluids and Chi. Nutrition transformed by the spleen and transported to the heart and lungs is turned red by the Chi. There is a very close relationship between the Chi and the blood because the formation of the blood depends on Chi. In return, the distribution of Chi relies on the effective circulation of blood. If blood flow stagnates or becomes congested, Chi slows and disease can result.

The Right Balance

The body's Chi is said to flow through energy channels known as meridians. There are twelve pairs of meridians and two un-paired meridians (known as Du and Ren) which run down the front and back of the body. There are another six extra meridians which are made up of points from the twelve major meridians and form links between them.

Each of the twelve meridians represents an organ (such as the lung meridian) and each receives energy from another meridian so allowing Chi to circulate.

If the Chi in the lung meridian is blocked or uninterrupted, disruption of that organ's functioning will occur. This may be associated with symptoms such as asthma, cough, wheezing and chest tightness.

The treatment of the disease using acupuncture involves inserting needles into specific points along the meridians. Acupuncture needles are solid and come in many different lengths. Unlike hypodermic needles, which have a cutting edge and are hollow, acupuncture needles very rarely cause pain, bleeding or bruising. Once inserted, the needles are left in place for variable amounts of time according to the condition being treated.

Stimulation of acupuncture points using needles can either excite the point, allowing Chi to flow into it, or can inhibit or slow the flow of Chi. Occasionally energy can be introduced to a point by stimulating it using the moxa herb. This can be burnt over the area or attached to the needle allowing a deep penetrating heat to be delivered into the acupuncture point.

Migraine

Treatment using TCM ideas is aimed at reducing the excess yang, bringing the yin back into balance. This will have the effect of cooling a condition of heat that has resulted from an excess of yang. It is interesting to note that the head pains felt during a migraine follow the gall bladder meridian, this organ being involved in conditions where congestion is a problem.

Acupuncture treatment is often given during an attack and in many cases can even stop an attack going any further if it is caught in time.

Joint Pains and Arthritis

Joint pains and arthritis may be inflammatory (due to excess yang) or non-inflammatory (due to excessive yin). In Western medicine these would represent rheumatoid arthritis (a Yang disease) and osteoarthritis (yin excesses). In either case, the TCM concepts consider that the blockage of chi causes the swelling and pains experienced.

Recipe



*Another delicious recipe from
The Vegetarian Society.*



Leek and Cheshire Cheese Crumble

Serves 4 • Preparation and cooking Time: 35 minutes

Ingredients

- 500g leeks (trimmed)
- 400ml light stock
- 100ml single cream
- 1 tbsp wholegrain mustard
- 100g breadcrumbs (white)
- 30g skinned hazelnuts
- 2 tbsp parsley, roughly chopped
- 125g vegetarian Cheshire cheese, finely grated or crumbled

Method

Pre-heat oven to Gas 6/200C/400F

1. Slice the leeks into thick circles (no larger than 2 cm) and place in a large saucepan with the stock, cream and mustard. Cook gently for 15 minutes until starting to soften.
2. Transfer to a ceramic baking dish, saving 2 or 3 tbsp of the stock mixture.
3. Place the breadcrumbs, nuts and parsley in a food processor and whizz together until finely chopped.
4. Scatter the crumble and cheese over the leeks and drizzle the remaining stock mixture over the top. Bake for 10 to 15 minutes until starting to turn crisp and golden. If necessary finish under the grill.

© The Vegetarian Society 2004
(recipe created by the Cordon Vert cookery school)
For more information visit www.vegsoc.org



Probiotic Confusion?

Probiotics have become pretty mainstream now. New food products emerge on grocery store shelves every week with at least some kind of probiotic ingredient and we're not just talking yogurt anymore. They seem to be one of those things we know "we're supposed to like." But why?

First, bear in mind that in addition to the word "probiotics" they can be called by many different names, which you'll probably see in health literature or product labels. These other terms include:

Microflora

Beneficial bacteria

Intestinal flora

These good bacteria, by any of these names, colonize inside the digestive tract. They stick to the walls of the colon and take up residence. In other words, they live down there. However, they don't stick around forever, and need to be replenished, either from food or supplement sources.

The Benefits of Probiotics Go Beyond Digestion

While probiotics are definitely important for healthy digestion (which many would say is the source of good health in general) they do a lot more than that, including:

- Keep nasty fungus and yeast cells at bay.
- Help keep bowel movements soft, well-formed, and easy to pass and preventing constipation.
- Help us absorb nutrients like calcium properly, which in turn, helps the body build healthy bones.
- Produce lactase, the enzyme that digests lactose in milk, ice cream, yogurt, and cheese.
- Prevent cholesterol from leaving the intestines and entering the bloodstream.
- Help eliminate embarrassing gas and bloating.
- Support the immune system and the way the body responds to inflammation.

So, while the idea of whether or not you use probiotics might seem like a light one, it may be wise to not take it too lightly and to check the ingredients carefully.

Lactobacillus acidophilus & Bifidobacteria longum

Look at most food or supplement labels, and usually two probiotics

stand out; there's a good reason for this. *Lactobacillus acidophilus* and *Bifidobacteria longum* are well-researched and provide significant health benefits. If these two names sound familiar, it's because they are the species most often found in yogurt.

Interestingly, even though associated with dairy, *Bifidobacteria longum* assists in the breakdown of lactose and relieves some of the symptoms of lactose intolerance, including gas and bloating. Lactose intolerance is fairly common, especially in non-European individuals, and accounts for at least 50 million Americans.

While our microflora can naturally replenish, if we are stressed, on vacation, sick, overworked, or just feeling overwhelmed, it can take a long time. Without giving probiotic numbers a boost now and then, some digestive concerns – or possibly others – could reassert themselves in their absence.

So whether you prefer the food-based form, or have a favourite supplement in mind (or use both – there's nothing wrong with that!) the important thing is to get that beneficial bacteria on board. It makes for a much easier journey.

Immune focus

70% of your immune system is in your digestive tract, which means healthy digestion actually promotes your natural defense system! For the ultimate in immune protection, Pearls Immune contains superior probiotics, plus the biologically-active power of Activ-Ferrin™ brand of lactoferrin.

Pearls Immune: a simple and unique one-a-day probiotic supplement Pearls Immune contains a highly-concentrated form of lactoferrin (called Activ-Ferrin™) that naturally strengthens your immune health. Lactoferrin is a powerhouse antioxidant, so it can help knock out the free radicals that can cause damage to your body's cells and stress out your immune system. The supplement also delivers probiotics to balance your immune system by restoring digestive health that includes *Lactobacillus acidophilus* and *plantarum*, plus *Bifidobacterium lactis* and *longum*. These strains are the "heavy hitters" of digestive support and immune response. Taking this supplement for a course over one or two months can be followed up by its sister product known as Acidophilus Pearls for daily all-round support.

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If you have missed an issue, some previous issues are still available for £1.30 for one copy and £1.25 for each additional copy.

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Recipes – provided by the vegetarian society



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Questions & Answers

Q I have been plagued with severe muscle cramps at night. My doctor reassures me that it's nothing to worry about but the pain can be intolerable. Is there a natural cure?

A. Night cramps can be devastating. Not only are they painful but they disrupt your sleep pattern and make nighttime simply miserable. I would suggest ensuring that you are drinking enough water and that your intake of fresh fruit and vegetables are adequate. The correct balance of potassium, magnesium and calcium are vital to healthy muscular relaxation. To ensure that the muscles are in a relaxed state I recommend using Magnesium oil spray. This is simply applied to the lower legs, massaged in before bed and used as needed should you be awakened at night. The oil formula makes the magnesium readily absorbed into the tissues where it helps ease the cramp directly.

Q My problem involves thinning bones but being a Vegan I am very limited in what I can take. So many products contain gelatin capsules or other ingredients I can't take. Is there something that can help because I can't tolerate the conventional drugs?

A. Thin bones (osteoporosis) is a serious problem that needs careful attention. Some natural remedies are showing great benefit in helping to slow the bone loss and one of them, Natto-K2, may be perfect for you. Natto-K2 is a supplement that contains vitamin K2, a nutrient with known beneficial effects on bone development. Natto is a fermented soya bean food product that has been consumed in Japan for thousands of years. Studies have always shown that the bones of Natto eaters to be healthier than non-Natto eaters. Modern science has now demonstrated that this is due to its high vitamin K2 content. Taking 2 capsules of Natto-K2 delivers the recommended dose of vitamin K2. Just so long as you are not on blood thinning drugs Natto-K2 is perfectly safe and may be the answer to your thinning bones.

Q Can you suggest something to help lower my cholesterol? I have tried a low fat diet but this has not shifted it much.

A. The very best remedy is Red Yeast Rice. This has been used in Chinese cooking for centuries and gives many dishes their characteristic red colour. Studies have confirmed that when used as a food supplement Red Yeast Rice can have very positive effects on the cholesterol level and may be a sensible option for those unable to take conventional cholesterol lowering drugs. Normally, just 2 capsules per day is all that is needed, best taken with breakfast and dinner. It's wise to continue with the low fat diet and vital that you attend regular checks with your doctor. As safe as Red Yeast Rice is, it should never be taken at the same time as prescribed cholesterol lowering drug preparations.

Q My hair has been thinning and I am getting worried! I know it may be typical male pattern hair loss but is there anything that can be done?

A. There is no 100% guarantee but I have seen good results with a scalp lotion known as Stabil tonic. We all lose around 40-100 hairs a day but this loss is never actually visible. When baldness starts to be noticed it is normally the effect of a toxic reaction in the scalp as the hair follicles

are destroyed by inflammatory chemicals, bacteria and hormones. Stabil tonic contains important amino acids needed for hair health as well as herbal extracts that stimulate the scalp circulation and regulate bacterial growth on the scalp. It is suitable for men and women and is easy to use; simply massage into the scalp daily after washing the hair. For additional help, take one tablet a day of MaxiHair to ensure that all your key hair dependant nutrients are topped up.

Q Is there any truth behind the news that red wine is good for your heart? Sadly, because of migraines I can't drink red wine but I have heard of a supplement that is just as good.

A. Yes, it is quite true. Red wine contains many powerful antioxidants that are unique to wine and possess a protective effect on the heart and circulatory system. In the early 1990's one compound known as Resveratrol was identified to be a key player in the protective effects of red wine and it is this ingredient that found its way into food supplements. There are many theories regarding Resveratrol and how it helps the circulatory system with the most convincing evidence involving its antioxidant actions and apparent ability to help mobilize and breakdown fatty deposits. When taken as a supplement I tend to recommend a blend of Resveratrol along with grape seed extract and red wine polyphenols.

Keep in touch with Jan de Vries

For a small annual fee of just £5.00 per year, secure your copy of In Touch every quarter. With your subscription you will be the first to receive news and views direct from Jan de Vries and the world of complementary and integrated medicine as well as exclusive deals and discounts on many popular natural remedies, supplements, health foods and book offers. We aim to deliver new and innovative products to our In Touch club readers as they become available.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO WRITE TO
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PLEASE SEND YOUR ARTICLE
OR LETTER TO:



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TROON, AYRSHIRE,
KA10 7EL.

Letters

Dear Mr de Vries,

Thank you once again for your care and kindness given to me. Just knowing someone is trying to help is a big thing, and counts for a lot.

AH

Dear Jan,

I want so much to thank you for your wonderful help. The effect of Traumeel on the Aberdeen 'hard nut' has been beneficial. I'm working away at it – can brush my hair painlessly. I am swimming, doing yoga as usual, enjoying my outings and the bike helmet is in the pipeline for this week.

No trite comment this; it was an unforgettable privilege to have a consultation with you. I so strongly believe in "Physician heal thyself". I know you understand, it takes so much to keep fear and imagination at bay. The sense of relief and ensuing peace of mind were overwhelming.

All in all a salient and gently amazing experience, from which as ever I gratefully deduce that I am so very, very lucky.

JB

Aberdeen

Dear Jan,

I want to let you know how much you helped me last month. I was in terrible pain in my left leg and knee was very badly swollen; but oh! how you gave me relief with the acupuncture!

Thank you so much for easing the pain and swelling and helping me to feel better. I look forward to seeing you again.

ER

Glasgow

Dear Jan,

I wanted to thank you for everything you have done to make me better. I had lost hope of ever feeling myself again and with your help I have found myself again. I feel so much stronger now and a lot of great things have come out of me feeling well and more confident including a promotion which I really wanted. Thank you again, you have changed my life for the better.

LM

Dear Mr de Vries,

I want to thank you so much for your kindness in corresponding with me during my illness and advising me what medicine to take. I am feeling much better and I hope it continues. I sincerely thank you for your help.

MC

Ireland

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