

Ask our experts



WILD GOODNESS

We invite our readers to ask a natural therapist their burning questions. **Gemma Hurditch** is our expert for this issue, for the College of Naturopathic Medicine

Q Please can you tell me what benefits we receive from eating foraged berries like blackberries and elderberries?

A Berries are a wonderful nutrient-rich burst of flavour, with a surprisingly low impact on our blood sugar levels. Because of this, berries are suitable for people with blood sugar control issues such as diabetes, infections such as candida and other conditions which require a low sugar diet. Berries are rich in antioxidants such as flavonols and anthocyanins. Organic produce is frequently found to be richer in these health-promoting compounds. Foraged berries (from clean sources) are therefore likely to be higher in these properties.

Oxidative stress is a problem for every system of our body - our cardiovascular, immune, and nervous systems etc. Anti-

oxidants combat this problem. The varied antioxidant and anti-inflammatory compounds found in berries have application for the full spectrum of body systems, thereby increasing our resistance to stress, infection, inflammation and disease. Berries are also a rich source of vitamin C, to support our immune system, adrenal function and skin. For best benefits elderberries should be cooked to remove undesirable alkaloids. Blackberries can be eaten raw. Additionally, berries contain antibacterial compounds such as tannins and hydroquinone. So eating them whilst out walking may improve oral health, too!

Q My daughter is coeliac. I want to ensure that she has fun at friends' birthday parties without worrying about food. What do you recommend?

A Gluten is so prolific in our diets, and particularly in party food that it is unrealistic to expect there to be a great deal of choice for your daughter without you providing it. We cannot recommend the gluten-free versions of foods such as biscuits and cake, because they are generally highly processed, devoid of nutrients and very high in sugar, plus the rice flour in these products is increasing our arsenic consumption. Your daughter could choose (or with your help make) a few special treats so she may feel less left out of the party vibe. Could she take with her a special party food lunch box that has all the treats she can safely have? Provide a few extras in case friends want to try what she is eating. When it's your turn to host, you could make it all coeliac friendly, using a coloured plate system

where, for example, all of the foods that are gluten-free are on green plates, and the foods she must avoid are on red.

Q Can you suggest what I can do to help boost my twelve year old son's immune system as we go into autumn. He seems susceptible to all the colds and bugs out there?

A Puberty can be a difficult time for kids (and parents!). Nutrients are taxed for developing and maturing the body which may leave the body a little depleted in other areas. Zinc is an important mineral for young men and it is very important for immune functioning as well. Vegetables rich in zinc include spinach, asparagus, shiitake and crimini mushrooms, pumpkin and sesame seeds. Oysters are our richest food source. Beef is an excellent source too, but choose grass fed, organic meats for maximum nutrition and minimum toxins.

Probiotics are a great way to boost the immune system. Look for billions of colony forming units (CFU) - they should include both the species and the strain on the label, such as *Bifidobacterium lactis* B1-04. Adding garlic, onion and leeks to his diet will ensure the good bacteria have plenty of their preferred 'prebiotic' fuel.

Include lots of peppers, kiwi fruit, broccoli, strawberries and papaya, carrots, sweet potato, spinach and kale for vitamin C in his diet. Also beta carotene which is both an antioxidant and precursor to vitamin A. Vitamins A and C encourage immunity. Ensure adequate sleep for rest and repair!

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