



Ask our experts



SPRING SUPPORT

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

Q I always seem to get ill in the transition to Spring with a lingering cough and cold that stays with me for weeks. Is there any way I can protect myself with diet during the seasonal change?

A The mucous membranes of our respiratory system require vitamin A, zinc and vitamin C to stay healthy and resist disease. Some great choices include: kale, carrots, sweet potato and butternut squash for plant sourced, pro-vitamin A 'carotenes' which are transformed in the body. Animal products are also high in ready-made vitamin A. Pumpkin seeds, chickpeas, and mushrooms are great for boosting zinc.

Try red bell peppers, kiwi fruit and strawberries for vitamin C, pineapple, too, as it is rich in bromelain which can help break down mucus and reduce inflammation. After winter, immune-supporting vitamin D might be on the low side - have a blood test to check levels and

supplement accordingly with a D3 variety. The old classics such as garlic, horseradish and onions are also worth stocking up on. Ensure good hydration at all times by drinking filtered water and taking nourishing soups and broths with plenty of spices to encourage healing and reduce inflammation. Aim to have organic foods, particularly those on the Dirty Dozen (look that up) to reduce your toxic load and further support your immune system. Limit all processed foods, alcohol, refined sugars and sweeteners which stress the system and can inhibit immunity.

Q My infant son (two months) is producing smelly and very brightly coloured poos. Is there something in my diet (I'm exclusively breastfeeding) that I should cut out to protect his digestive system?

A It is important to see your healthcare provider if you are concerned about your baby's

health. A number of foods, herbs and supplements could be affecting the breastmilk and stool formation. If the stool is green, milk is the most common dietary issue - pasteurized dairy foods in the mother's diet can affect breast milk and cause stomach upset and other symptoms in the infant. Although any food can be the cause, the most common problematic foods include soy, peanuts, tree nuts, wheat and fish. Allergens generally cause more problems than just smelly, brightly coloured stools. It is possible baby isn't latching on properly or isn't feeding long enough. Taking too much of the sugary foremilk and not enough of the more fat-rich hindmilk can cause tummy upset and green smelly poos. Adjusting your breastfeeding technique with the help of a lactation consultant could be the solution. Medications, vaccinations, supplements and diet can all affect breastmilk and

baby's stools. If it is something you are eating, your baby may show responses between 4-24 hours after exposure, therefore, a rotation and elimination diet can help you identify triggers if it is not a feeding issue.

Q Can you recommend some alternatives to sugary treats over the Easter holidays please? Our extended family always seem to overdose on sugar and my six- and four-year-old don't handle it well (think meltdowns around the dining table!).

A I find the best thing to do is to make the holiday less about food and more about fun. If you do the traditional Easter Hunt, you can substitute some (or all) eggs for little gifts like crayons, paintbrushes, Lego figures, a cinema ticket, a puzzle. Food as a treat or reward is believed to be instrumental in developing the habit of comfort or emotional eating later on, so there's even more reason (other than just the meltdowns!) to try to limit food as reward. You can ask your family if they would support you in trying for a more 'sugar-free' Easter. Encourage family treats such as a game of chase through the house, face painting, hide and seek - much more lasting memories for kids than the fleeting enjoyment of a chocolate egg. Vegan 'sugar free' desserts made on soaked dates or maple syrup with lots of nuts, seeds and coconut oil can be easier for the body to metabolise and getting the kids involved in cooking can encourage them to try your 'alternative' treats. If you do get some chocolate eggs, aim for organic varieties with 70% chocolate solids, free from wheat, soy and refined sugars and sweeteners.

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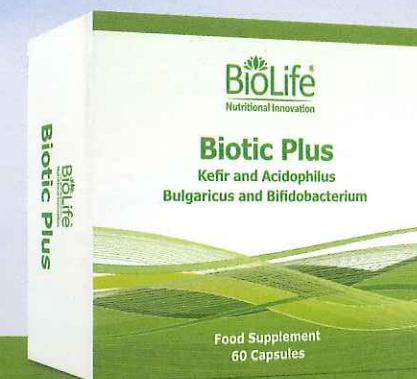
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