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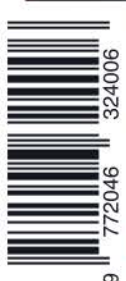
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Your health

& A



You asked: "How can I keep my family healthy now the seasons are changing?"



GEMMA HURDITCH ANSWERS: "Keeping our family healthy has come into much sharper focus in 2020. Below are some top tips for the whole family.

Eat a plant-based diet of predominantly whole and unprocessed foods. Breads should be wholegrain and have no numbers in their ingredients list. Brown rice is preferable to white rice. Beans, legumes, nuts and seeds are excellent protein sources, especially presoaked or fermented.

Try fermented foods. The healthy microbes within us are health supportive, so maximise them by enjoying natural, unpasteurised fermented foods such as kombucha, water kefir and sauerkraut, as well as raw dairy offerings such as raw cheeses, live yogurt and milk kefir.

Vitamin D is important for immunity and mood. Get at least 15 minutes of daily sun when your shadow is no longer than your true height to be sure you are creating a good supply.

Moderate exercise boosts immunity and helps maintain a healthy weight – 30 minutes per day is a minimum. Our body needs water for all essential processes so support healthy functioning by sipping filtered water throughout the day.

Our bodies repair as we sleep, so make sure good quality sleep is high on your family's priority list. Reducing all stimulants like black tea or coffee, and no screens for at least an hour before bed are a good start.

Now the fun stuff – laughter and relaxation. Funny movies and games are your daily medicine; laughter and togetherness are marvellous tonics to our immune system!"

■ Naturopath Gemma Hurditch is a CNM (College of Naturopathic Medicine) lecturer. CNM trains successful practitioners in natural therapies. Visit www.cnmcourses.com or call 01342 777 747.



You asked: "I often crave sugar. Why is this and what can I do about it?"



DR RACHEL EVANS ANSWERS: "When we are hungry, we tend to think about food a lot more because our brain is trying to alert us to the fact that we need to eat. If this feeling comes on suddenly and intensely, then it is a craving. If we have gone for a long period of time without food or if we are following a low-calorie diet and cutting out certain food groups whilst trying to be 'healthier', then our blood sugar can drop and our body produces neuro-peptide Y, which increases our appetite and motivation to eat.

To prevent cravings, ensure meals are balanced, satisfying and include protein, complex carbohydrates and healthy fats. It's also a good idea to incorporate a balanced afternoon snack for a pick-me-up. If we automatically crave sugar at a certain time each day, the craving could be habitual. Common timings for sugary cravings include the 4pm slump, after dinner or first thing in the morning. Habits can also include going to the cinema and feeling the need to eat popcorn. Habits are automatic patterns of thoughts or behaviours that have developed over time in response to triggers, because the thought or behaviour provided a reward e.g. the sugar rush from a sweet treat. To combat this, it's important to work out triggers and avoid or remove them. Try and swap the behaviour for one that still ensures a reward, just not sugary foods."

■ Dr Rachel Evans is a psychologist specialising in eating disorder recovery. For more information, visit eatingdisordertherapist.co.uk

You asked: "I'm keen to support my immunity over the autumn and winter. What are the natural agents that I should consider taking?"



DR JOHN BRIFFA ANSWERS: "There's a few herbs and nutrients that have a role in supporting immunity. One of my favourites is *Andrographis paniculata*. This Asian herb has been shown to stimulate the immune system and several studies show it can safely combat infections, including both upper and lower respiratory tract infections such as cough, bronchitis and pneumonia. Another immunity-boosting herb is *Sambucus nigra* (black elderberry). This has a long history of use in Europe as a treatment for fever. Laboratory studies have found that *Sambucus nigra* has the ability to inhibit several strains of the flu virus, and other research shows the herb can help flu symptoms. Nutrient-wise, I like to use zinc for the immune system. This is known to play an important role in supporting broad immune function. I like to use zinc in combination with herbs as this helps 'cover our bases' when supporting the immunity and resistance to infection."

■ Dr John Briffa BSc MBBS (Lond) is a medical doctor and health expert with 30 years' experience in natural medicine. Visit www.virillin.co.uk

Email your questions to liz@jfnproductions.co.uk

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