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Natural beauty tips and advice, readers' health questions answered, fantastic giveaway prizes, plus all the latest news from the world of natural health and wellbeing

Your health

&A



You asked: "I've been feeling quite flat recently. Can you suggest any natural ways to boost my mood?"



MICHELLE SANCHEZ ANSWERS: "You need to determine what is making you feel this way. Quite often it can be due to life challenges or stress; however, hormone imbalances, nutritional deficiencies or illness can also be triggers. Diet and lifestyle play a huge role in regulating mood and keeping us upbeat. It's important to eat healthily and avoid gorging on sugar as it can deplete energy, crash your mood and spur anxiety."

Include mood-boosting foods in your diet such as leafy green vegetables (spinach, kale, rocket), broccoli, cauliflower, asparagus, mushrooms, almonds, walnuts, pumpkin and sesame seeds, bananas, oatmeal, beans, lentils and fermented foods like sauerkraut. These foods contain vital nutrients such as B vitamins and magnesium which support the nervous system and brain health.

Exercising regularly and staying connected to friends and family also bolsters mood. Natural remedies to lift mood include:

- Omega-3 (from fish oil or flaxseed oil). This provides the essential fatty acids needed for brain function and mood regulation.
- St John's Wort is a nerve tonic herb with anti-depressant properties that has been used for centuries to treat low mood and anxiety.
- Bach flowers remedies such as Rescue Remedy, Mimulus and Elm are excellent for stress, worry, fear and overwhelm."

Michelle Sanchez is a Naturopath, Nutritionist and Medical Herbalist. The award-winning College of Naturopathic Medicine is the No.1 Training Provider in Natural Therapies such as Nutrition, Herbal Medicine, Acupuncture, Homeopathy, Natural Chef and Health Coach. Train online or in-class. Call 01342 777 747 or visit cnmcourses.com



Q

You asked: "Do you have any tips for how I can begin following a plant-based diet?"



DR VIKKI PETERSEN ANSWERS: "If done correctly, a plant-based diet is satisfying, energising, mentally balancing, and a good way to shed extra pounds. Often, individuals are afraid to begin because they assume they will stop enjoying food and they will feel hungry all the time."

In fact, cravings will actually go away on a plant-based diet and, with some effort, food is incredibly satisfying.

Begin your plant-based journey with one day each week that you eschew animal-derived products. 'Meatless Mondays' actually evolved from this idea. Make sure that you eat enough and include healthy fats such as nuts, seeds, avocados and healthy oils so that you are not left feeling 'hangry'. Think a whole day is too much? Start with a single meal and go from there.

Be sure to identify some plant-based foods that you already enjoy. Include the fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, beans and legumes you have eaten and found enjoyable. Then, add the animal-based dishes that are your favourites to your list, so that you can begin to research plant-based alternatives.

Plan ahead for your meals and educate yourself on what a meal with adequate protein, healthy fats, and complex carbohydrates looks like. If you enjoy cooking, this journey is much easier for you. Find online resources for recipes and ideas for substituting plant-based products into your meals."

Dr Vikki Petersen is a Certified Clinical Nutritionist, Chiropractor and Functional Medicine doctor. For more information visit www.rootcausemedicalclinics.com

Q

You asked: "What are adaptogens and could they help with my stress levels?"



KIRAN BHONDI ANSWERS:

"Adaptogens are a special group of herbal pharmaceuticals that work to counteract the effects of stress on the body."

Adaptogens have been used for thousands of years in ancient Chinese and Ayurvedic medicine. Modern science has confirmed many of their benefits through clinical research, showing that adaptogens can improve cognitive performance and memory, enhance endurance, as well as boost energy, immunity, and our resilience to stress.

Ashwagandha is an adaptogenic herb that has been linked to those suffering from non-restorative sleep (NRS) – people who feel their sleep doesn't leave them feeling recovered or restored, meaning they remain tired throughout the day. Ashwagandha has been successful at treating many symptoms and markers which feed into NRS, such as falling asleep more quickly, a better quality of sleep, and less overall anxiety levels. Not only that, it helps regulate cortisol, the stress hormone in the brain, which can be helpful in terms of alerting us to threats and dangers. However, in modern day-to-day living we rarely encounter this and as a result, cortisol can be released in less 'dangerous' situations, such as an unexpected deadline with work. Adaptogens like ashwagandha help to regulate the release of cortisol and prevent it from doing long-term damage to our health."

Kiran Bhondi is the founder of adaptogen start-up Osenal London. To find out more, visit www.Osenalondon.com

Email your questions to liz@jfnproductions.co.uk

You can also write in with your queries: *Your Healthy Living* Q&A, JFN Productions, Unit G2, Blois Meadow Business Centre, Steeple Bumpstead, CB9 7BN.

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