

BODY AND SOUL - KEEPING IT TOGETHER!

LET'S START WITH THE BODY . . .

SENIOR H E A L T H

It is said that the first thing a man does when he wakes in the morning is to look out of the window to see how the weather has changed overnight, and the first thing a woman does on waking is to look in the mirror to see what the night has done to her face. Enough said

. . . but if your look in the mirror is followed by 'Oh, my God . . . I could do with a face-lift, etc.etc.' (don't worry, we've all been there) before you start layering on more make-up and deciding to embark yet again on another diet/exercise regime (which will probably have been forgotten anyway by the weekend), let's stop wishing, and start by trying to make the best of what we have got.

We may not be able to recapture the healthy glow of youth, but we may be able to inject a little sparkle by giving as much thought to the inside of our bodies as we do to the outside. Just think of what would happen to a house if it were not built on firm foundations. Also how would our cars run if we filled them up with the wrong fuel? Similarly, how can we expect our bodies to function smoothly if we just worry about the paintwork and not concentrate on the engine? So analyse what you are putting into your body. Is it mainly 'comfort/grab-a-snack - I'm in a hurry' food, eg buns, crisps, chocolates etc., or is it nourishing food with all the vitamins and minerals the body requires to operate efficiently?

Many moons ago, a colleague of mine, who had a connection with a pharmaceutical company, said the idea had been muted within the company that as the elderly often start the day with a cup of tea and digestive biscuit, then a good way of ensuring that they receive all the necessary vitamins and minerals was to add them to the digestive biscuit. It seemed a great idea, but when you think of how we absentmindedly dip into a packet of biscuits, then we would probably overdose on vitamins. Although we need vitamins we can also have too much of a good thing. It is worth remembering that whereas the body will expel too much of say Vitamin C, the body will store Vitamins A & D and an overload of these vitamins can have a detrimental effect. So leave it to the experts to get the balance right. It is better to start the day (together with your nourishing breakfast) with a good multi-vitamin and mineral tablet. The tablet container will show the RDA (which stands for the 'recommended daily allowance'), and it will also show how the tablet equates with this.

A good multi-vitamin and mineral supplement is the Holland & Barrett's Formula for the 50 PLUS called ABC PLUS SENIOR (on half-price offer at the present time).

Another supplement I would recommend for those of us whose memory is not what it used to be is 'Ginkgo Biloba'. (Also on half-price offer at the moment). This has been in use for years on the continent as an aid to improving the circulation. It is said that it not only improves the supply of blood to the head and subsequently improves the memory (so hopefully we'll remember where we put the bottle of tablets) but it also improves the blood supply to the extremities, which is great if you suffer from cold hands and feet. Ginkgo, by the way, comes from the Ginkgo tree, which is one of the oldest trees known to man. You can therefore appreciate how vital it is that we do not allow plants to become extinct.

Remember the old wives' tale that 'fish is good for the brain'? (When I hear this saying, my mind always goes back to a lecturer jokingly saying that his mother was determined that he would do well and always made him eat fish before an examination, and, of course, to her delight he did do well). Well, now it has been proved that Omega 3 (pure fish oils) not only benefits the brain but the whole body. It is high in essential fatty acids, which help to maintain a healthy heart and circulation.

Another very good supplement is Selenium. This was naturally present in the earth and in our vegetables years ago, but sadly has become depleted over the years with intensive farming and chemicals. So we can put back this missing ingredient. I certainly felt a difference on taking this as a supplement.

Now, if you are prone to numerous infections, coughs, colds, etc., then your immune system needs a boost. In addition to the usual Vitamin C, a couple of good supplements for this are Zinc and Echinacea. It's a good idea to take Echinacea well before the 'flu time' is upon us in order to get it into the system.

We have always known the importance of making sure that we have enough calcium in order to maintain bone strength, but it is only in the past few years that Glucosamine has come to the fore as an aid to the joints. Glucosamine is believed to stimulate cartilage growth and prevent it wearing down and hopefully reducing the subsequent pain. I have a friend who swears this has helped her painful joints. Chondroitin is often added to the Glucosamine as this helps to attract fluid into the cartilage. Healthy Direct (www.healthydirect.co.uk) has a special offer on this powerful combination of Glucosamine, Chondroitin and Vitamin C. They also operate a free postage and packing with prompt delivery service, which is great if you have difficulty in getting to the shops.

Notice that throughout I have been using the word 'supplement' as no tablets are going to replace a healthy diet. I remember being told by a doctor when I was in my twenties that the way towards a healthy life was to eat a small amount of a wide variety of foods and that way the body would obtain the necessary vitamins and nourishment. Whilst I agree with the 'variety' advice, I am not sure with the present day treatment and overlong storage of foodstuffs (particularly fruit and vegetables) whether there are many vitamins left by the time they reach the table. It came as a shock to hear at one lecture that when they tested an orange for its Vitamin C content, the results came back as a surprising 'nil'. Still to end on a happy note, the fibre content was there, and we must eat plenty of FRESH fruit and vegetables not only for the vitamins but also for the fibre and enzymes necessary for the digestive process to function properly. But more on that - together with a breakdown of all the essential

vitamins and my favourite subject - FOOD - (I'll try not to think about or mention chocolate cake)

IT'S ...

'HOLD-BACK-THE-YEARS' FOOD next time

Looking forward to chatting to you again and also looking forward to hearing from you ...

