

Health & Wellbeing Clinic

Got a health or wellbeing worry? Send in your questions to our panel of experts for some professional help and ideas



Beating depression

Q Following the news that Prozac may not work, I read that the WHO lists acupuncture as a treatment for depression. How can it treat the condition?

Dougie Macaulley

Yes, many people are surprised that acupuncture can help with mental and emotional problems as well as physical ones. The report you mention from the World Health Organisation (in 2001) found that clinical trials consistently demonstrated acupuncture can effectively treat depression. Chinese medicine understands the mind and body are inextricably linked and better health means greater wellbeing. Some common causes

of depression are depletion after childbirth, shock or trauma, poor diet, overwork, stress or unresolved grief or frustration.

It's common for those who are depressed to have obstructions in their underlying energetic balance. Once acupuncture clears these blockages, the debilitating feelings of lethargy, sadness and futility decrease with a corresponding increase in strength, ease and vitality. Depending on the severity of the depression, some patients respond to treatment very quickly, others take longer. If you have been severely depressed, it is worth staying with treatment for at least three months to give it a chance to take effect.

ANGIE HICKS

Energy booster

Q Although my job isn't really very stressful, I end up feeling tired every night: I don't have children yet, so am worried that when I do eventually start a family, I'll be too exhausted to be a good mum. Is there anything I can do to stay awake or boost energy levels? I try and go to the gym once a week and sometimes feel a bit better afterwards.

Eleanor Wakefield

Exercise can be great to combat fatigue. What I would recommend is instead of "working out", try "working in". This kind of exercise works on the principles of boosting or cultivating the energy that's a

KATE ARNOLD

Kate trained as a nutritional therapist at the Institute of Optimum Nutrition in London under Patrick Holford, and she is a member of the British Association of Nutritional Therapists. Kate offers workshops on nutrition in a home or office environment, and is based in East Sussex. She offers telephone consultations for those outside the area. www.katearnoldnutrition.co.uk



ANGELA HICKS

Angela has been an acupuncturist for over 31 years, and she co-founded the College of Integrated Chinese Medicine in Reading in 1993. She is also a qualified herbalist and advises clients on diet, qi-gong and many other complementary health areas. Find a qualified acupuncturist near you through the British Acupuncture Council, 020 8735 0400, or via their website. www.acupuncture.org.uk



BRETT SANDERS

Life coach Brett's aim is to "build health from the ground up", and focus on the fundamental causes of ill health. He is a CHEK-qualified holistic lifestyle coach and exercise coach, looking at nutrition, lifestyle, stress management and conditioning. He is also a big fan of the freshest organic food, experiencing nature, rest and relaxation. www.nutritionconditiontuition.com



part of you already. Good exercise choices are yoga, pilates, tai chi or qi-gong. Rather than the occasional long session at the gym, spend 10-20 minutes each day doing these exercises and you will feel more energised almost instantly. Top this off by eating a high quality (organic) diet and getting to bed by 10.30 – and I'm sure you'll have enough energy to be a great mum.

BRETT SANDERS

Medicinal chocolate

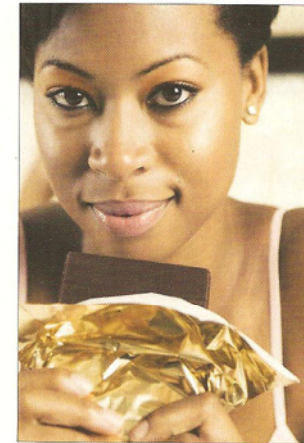
Q My friend swears by eating dark chocolate to beat period pain – I've tried it and it seems to work, but is there actual evidence for this, or is it a placebo?

Kerry White

You don't say how much chocolate you're taking... but dark chocolate does contain a number of health benefits. These include: antioxidants, iron, magnesium, mood-enhancing chemicals that release serotonin and a substance that can actually mimic the effects of marijuana, and heobromine – a form of caffeine that is a natural antidepressant.

Although it seems to be working for you, the probable cause might be the elevated mood enhancement and magnesium, which works as a muscle relaxant and has a beneficial effect on painful periods and lower back pain. I would advise upping levels of magnesium in your diet throughout the month, rather than relying solely on chocolate, which may affect your blood sugar.

Magnesium also has the ability to lower the bad prostaglandins that may be causing the womb to overcontract. It can be found in dark green leafy vegetables and most nuts. Always try and take B6 and magnesium together. B6 is needed to help produce 'good' prostaglandins that help relax and



widen blood vessels. A good quality multivitamin and mineral supplement would be a foundation, and you can add helpful nutrients in higher amounts, such as a good B complex supplement.

Up to 70 per cent of women have found extra vitamin E to be useful in treating painful periods. Vitamin C and bioflavonoids are helpful with period pain because they help relax muscle and reduce inflammation. Bilberry is one of the best bioflavonoids for this. Include berries of any kind (including blackberries, blackcurrants, raspberries and even grapes) in your diet.

Essential fatty acids are also extremely important in the treatment of painful periods. These can be found in oily fish like salmon, herring and mackerel, as well as in linseeds and walnuts.

KATE ARNOLD

Staying motivated

Q I try to eat healthily, but go through phases of losing motivation and pigging out on naughty things as I don't see much difference. Any tips on willpower?

Amy Sutcliffe

Willpower is so important – without power you will never get forward motion! Firstly, have a dream, and this should be your reason for doing what you are doing – eating healthily. Always refer back to your goal when you feel you're losing motivation. Next, create a detailed plan of how to get to your goal: a roadmap. What you will eat, when and where. If you are not seeing much difference, you may need to try a different diet or different exercises to suit you – everybody is unique. It's easier to stay motivated when you start getting the results you desire.

BRETT SANDERS

Good taste

Q I love garlic, onions and lemon in food to stave away colds and flu, but I'm having to steer away from them because my baby doesn't like the taste in my breast milk. Is there anything I can use as (odourless!) alternatives?

Alison Wood-Kaczmar

I would suggest large salads including "seed" vegetables like broad beans, broccoli, grated carrot, beetroot, courgettes, lettuce and avocados. Eat plenty of berries, including blueberries, raspberries and strawberries. Try homemade carrot soup with tomatoes and watercress. During the summer months, eat as much raw food as possible, especially red and yellow foods. It might also be worth you taking acidophilus, vitamin C and echinacea to boost your immune system and help protect you from bugs and viruses.

KATE ARNOLD

Got a health or wellbeing query for our experts to answer in the magazine? Then simply email it in to katec@thegmcgroup.com, marked "Health & Wellbeing Q&A"; or send it to the following address: Health & Wellbeing Clinic, *Healthy & Organic Living*, GMC Publications, 86 High Street, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1XN www.healthyandorganicliving.com