

Foodsense Have an immune New Year



Nutritional therapist **Beata Rachowiecka** has worked in many private clinics in and around London, including Harley Street, written for local publications and lectured to a variety of interest groups and organisations as well as running her private practice Focus Nutrition + based in Berkshire, website: (www.focusnutritionplus.co.uk), tel: 01753 814228.

IN WINTER, most of us feel like sleeping in longer and taking things slower. From an evolutionary perspective this was supposed to lower our metabolic rate and lay down some fat reserves to survive the coldest spells ahead.

As civilisation developed there were new challenges: being active enough both outside and indoors and consuming the right foods to maintain optimum health and vitality. These two challenges are intertwined since both are crucial for immunity. To optimise the immune system function bear these in mind:

1 It all starts with the gut and healthy mucus membranes of the nose, eyes, and throat as well as on the skin. These are the barriers that naturally abound in secretions which prevent any invading pathogens from getting in, provided they are healthy and intact. So if

you have had or are having any skin problems, sore throat, runny nose or itchy eyes for longer than five days, consult a qualified nutritional therapist to help you identify what is irritating your body and lowering your immune readiness before you need to act fast

2 Remember that many types of the medication you are taking may be altering your mucous membranes so check with your doctor. Ask for a vitamin D test, ensuring your reading is at the higher end of its 'normal' range

3 Different foods you eat regularly may drain your immunity, especially if you experience any discomfort after eating - so avoid the suspects for a few days to narrow it down. Keeping a variety of foods in your menus is key here

4 If you had a flu jab, observe your body carefully as sometimes symptoms may arise, despite the jab. These can range from catarrh, sore throat and achy bones to severe diarrhoea, vomiting or headache - albeit short-lived. Try Sambucol syrup or herbal tea and a good probiotic

5 Remain active even on 'bad weather'..... days. It is better to work up some heat and sweat rather than catch a chill. Moving outdoors will provide you with oxygen help synthesise extra vitamin D, and enhance delivery of nutrients through the body

6 Watch your sugar intake, especially in alcohol and fruit juices - as they are great food for the bugs and, in excess, can lower your immunity. Have a healthy and..... happy New Year.

Yoga class

Gail Willis continues her series of simple hatha yoga moves

YOGA INSTRUCTOR Gail Willis has recruited her mother Janet Rogers to help demonstrate yoga exercises in *Choice* every month.

In each picture Janet, who is 79, illustrates the basic position for each exercise - the easiest one for the beginner. Gail illustrates the maximum position for each exercise.

You should start following Janet's position and try to increase gradually towards Gail's advanced level.

"Only build up to a level that you are comfortable with," says Gail, who is a full-time yoga instructor in Kettering. "With some exercises you will be able to do the maximum level

of stretch, but with others you will achieve only the basic move. It doesn't matter - even the easiest will be good for you and make you feel good."

Find out more

■ To contact Gail, tel: 01536 515311, mobile: 07762 575118

■ To find a yoga class where you live, ask at your local library, county council offices, tourist information centre, sports centre, a local school or anywhere that runs evening classes.

Leg workout

This simple exercise gives real benefits as it uses your leg muscles properly, helps with balance and strengthens your back. Gail is demonstrating alone this month as the move is identical for Janet.

How to do it

Sit on a chair without arms so you have nothing to grab hold of. If you are not confident enough for this, then use a chair with arms to start with so if you do need to grab hold of the arms for balance they are there for you.

Have your feet hip-width apart to give you more balance. Sit tall (picture 1) and pull your belly button in, then, without using your arms, deliberately allow your weight to move into your feet as you start to lean forward to come up (picture 2).

Keeping equal weight in both feet stand tall with your arms by your sides (picture 3).

Sit back down and repeat four more times, gradually building up the repetitions to where you feel comfortable.

The legs are more than capable of doing this job of going from sitting to standing. As always carry these moves out slowly and therefore safely.

Next month: Special - yoga for travelling

