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Autumn 2023 Welcome



It can only be good news that the menopause is being discussed far more widely and openly these days. Understanding of quite how debilitating it can be for a woman, and the need for support at home and in the workplace, has certainly progressed, and this should be welcomed. But there is still so much more to do; whether it's increased research around the menopause, better support for women experiencing the difficult range of symptoms, and greater product availability to naturally ease their suffering, so much more needs to be done. This is evidenced by the data from GenM, which has found that 71 per cent of women fear the menopause, and 45 per cent feel invisible, lonely and dispensable. Concerningly, only two per cent are thriving during this time.

And this doesn't just impact women individually; when symptoms become so debilitating they struggle to get through a day, and facing normal tasks feels difficult, this impacts on relationships, home lives, friendships and work, and the knock-on effect of this cannot be underestimated.

The good news is that taking a holistic approach to the process can make a huge difference to a woman's emotional and physical wellbeing. When we talk holistically, we mean a balanced diet, one that is light on poor quality processed food, as well as focusing on time for you, getting adequate rest, taking restorative exercise, and ensuring you have plenty of key nutrients. This approach won't necessarily remove all symptoms for a woman, but it can make a huge difference to how severely you suffer, as well as putting your health in good shape as you move into the post-menopause phase.

And in this issue of *Natural Lifestyle*, we have gathered a panel of natural health experts, who explain the factors in your lifestyle that could be making symptoms worse, and offer their suggestions on a healthy and holistic menopause plan. You can read their recommendations on page 14.

Rachel Symonds,
Editor

The best bits

An insight into what the *Natural Lifestyle* team have been up to this month.



PHOTO: RICHARD LEGGE

It was the perfect conditions for a bike ride as Sales Executive, James, took to Marcher Castles Way in Shropshire.



It's been a time of celebration for Editor Rachel as she tied the knot with her new husband, Ben.

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Are you looking for a vitamin D supplement that is bioavailable and effective?

Get the proven benefits of sun exposure...

Without worrying about your skin

As you know, it is important to protect your skin when the sun is most powerful. Still, sun exposure is necessary in order for our skin to synthesize vitamin D, which contributes to a normal immune defense.

If we avoid the sun or somehow prevent the UV rays from reaching our skin, it will reduce our ability to make vitamin D. Just for the record, it is rather difficult to get enough vitamin D from your diet. Therefore, to maintain a reasonable amount of vitamin D in your system it may be a good idea to consider taking a supplement like D-Pearls.

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BACK TO SCHOOL WINS



back-to-school lunchbox wins.

Twin brothers, Dave and Steve Flynn, of The Happy Pear, are dads and founders of the plant-based food brand and are big believers in making healthy eating joyful, practical, and fuss-free. Here, they offer their suggestions for simple, plant-powered lunch and snack ideas:

● **How can parents reset after a sugar-heavy summer?** Don't panic or guilt-trip – just start adding colour and variety. Plan simple lunchbox routines, after school snacks and involve your kids in the

choices. Think swaps: granola for chocolate bars, fruit for sweets, hummus and crackers for crisps.

Organisation, good planning and being prepared is key!

● **Easy plant-based snacks for kids'** lunchboxes: Apple slices with nut butter/tahini or sunflower seed butter (if school is nut or sesame free), mini pots of hummus with veg sticks or wholegrain crackers, bliss balls made from oats, dates and peanut butter, granola clusters, and a handful of popcorn or roasted chickpeas.

● **Tips for veggie-hesitant kids:** Hide the veg (smoothies, blended sauces), dip the veg (with hummus), rename the veg ('superpower sticks' anyone?). And remember, modelling matters –



when you make healthy food choices at home, your kids are more likely to follow.

● **Prep-ahead, batch-friendly plant-based snacks:** Homemade granola bars, pasta pesto pots, mini savoury muffins, energy balls or our healthy chocolate chip cookie dough balls made with cashews and dates, roasted chickpeas and popcorn bags – one Sunday prep session equals snacks for the week.



Beating burnout, holistically

A Nutritional Therapist is helping to support people feeling stressed and burnt out with a new holistic guide.

Rosie Millen has penned *The Energy Reset Plan*, a holistic lifestyle plan designed to combat burnout, fatigue and poor mental health in just six weeks.

Drawing on her own experience from extreme fatigue and burnout, Rosie's plan will transform your lifestyle – from diet, sleep and exercise to mindfulness – through achievable strategies that can be easily maintained for ongoing mental wellness. The plan includes over 70 delicious recipes, designed to boost your energy through nutrient dense, high-protein, unprocessed food that is simple to make. A six-week meal plan makes it easy to incorporate these recipes into your daily life and start seeing the benefits.

The Energy Reset Plan was originally published as *Burnout's B*tch!* in 2021. This edition contains updates.

Inside... HEALTH



The power of parkrun

New research has revealed the number of people taking part in parkrun in the UK has increased by an impressive 200 per cent in the last 10 years.

Parkrun is a community-led initiative offering free, weekly, timed 5K runs in parks and open spaces. Open to runners of all abilities, Parkrun events are entirely volunteer-led and have become a beloved fixture in towns and cities across the nation.

And in research from footcare specialists, The Feets, it was found that 182,000 runners take part each week across 788 locations; that's in comparison to July 2015, when 336 events were held nationwide, welcoming just over 62,000 runners. That represents an increase of more than 190 per cent. The growth in volunteers is just as impressive, rising by 243 per cent to over 19,000 people giving their time each week to make the magic happen.

While Parkrun's simplicity and inclusivity are

key to its appeal, The Feets reminds runners

that proper foot health is essential to enjoying the experience to the fullest.

Logan Estop-Hall, Founder of The Feets, commented: "Running is one of the purest forms of exercise, and Parkrun has done something truly extraordinary by bringing it to the heart of our communities. But whether you're chasing a PB or simply jogging with friends, your feet are the foundation of every step. Without proper active footcare, runners risk injury, discomfort, and lost momentum."

"To stay on-track, it's vital to know that footcare is about prevention as much as treatment. Footcare can stop common ailments like blisters, sores, and athlete's foot from causing bigger, long-term issues. Due to the ways in which pain can force us to alter movements away from proper, safe form, it can increase our vulnerability to injuries like sprains, pulls, and fractures. That's why it's important to treat these common ailments early, or prevent them altogether."



WE LOVE

LAMBERTS COGNI-FOCUS – using an extract of galangal to provide non-addictive energy that is fast acting and lasts up to five hours. A caffeine-free option, without the energy drop or jitters associated with a cup of coffee, it contains added vitamin B5.

A.VOGEL MENOFORCE SAGE TABLETS –

symptoms of the menopause can be debilitating, and here to help is the herbal experts, A.Vogel, with this traditional herbal medicinal product used for the relief of excessive sweating associated with menopausal hot flushes, including night sweats, exclusively based upon long-standing use as a traditional remedy. HRT-friendly, and in a one-a-day dose, it contains fresh extracts of the herb, sage.

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Trust behind the label

Putting the spotlight on the power of certified natural and organic beauty is the theme for this year's Natural Cosmetics Week.

Natural Cosmetics Week, organised by international natural and organic cosmetics association, NATRUE, will run from November 17-23 and this year's theme is 'Natural Care, Real Impact: Trust What's Behind the Label'.

At a time when shoppers want products that deliver results and reflect their values, the campaign makes one thing clear: natural and scientific are not opposites, they are allies. With formulations grounded in nature and backed by science, truly natural products offer both performance and integrity. The campaign invites people to look behind the label and discover the impact that trustworthy, transparent, and certified cosmetics can have – for people, and for the future of beauty.

Inside...
BEAUTY

MAKING YOUR SKINCARE SUSTAINABLE

If you are on a quest to be more environmentally friendly with your skincare solutions, then look no further than Organic Works.

Originally launched as Organic Surge in 2005, Organic Works has evolved into a British beauty brand committed to natural ingredients, sustainability, and ethical practices. After rebuilding from a devastating warehouse fire in 2019, the company continues its mission of providing effective skincare, haircare, and body products that are 100 per cent cruelty-free, vegan, and ideal for all skin types, especially sensitive skin.

Organic Works items are handcrafted in small batches. This

approach ensures optimal freshness, potency, and quality control. By limiting production quantities, the company maintains strict oversight of each product.

Every Organic Works product contains a minimum of 99 per cent natural ingredients, with at least 20 per cent organic in leave-on products and 10 per cent in rinse-off formulations.



Skin solutions

Weleda has grown its ever-popular Skin Food range by two.

Skin Food Lip Stick has been formulated for dry and chapped lips to nourish, hydrate and protect. It contains Skin Food's classic signature botanicals: extracts of calendula, camomile, rosemary and wild pansy, and is NATRUE-certified natural. Nutrient-rich organic sunflower oil, cocoa seed butter, candelilla wax, and glycerin soften lips and strengthen the skin barrier, protecting against wind and weather.

Also new is Shower Cream, made with biodegradable plant-based cleansers, including coco glucoside and disodium cocoyl glutamate (made from coconut oil and plant sugars).



MENOPAUSAL SKIN SUPPORT



As our skincare needs change during the menopause, one British brand is here to help guide women through the transition.

Antonia David, Head of Education at British spa brand, Elemental Herbology, explained that as skin changes during menopause, becoming drier, thinner, more sensitive and less resilient, so should our skincare.

Antonia advised: "Menopause is not the end of healthy skin, it's a new chapter. When we understand changes happening beneath the surface, we can work with them, not against them." Here, she shares her guide to menopausal skincare:

● **Reassess your routine:** During menopause, declining oestrogen affects hydration, elasticity and resilience, making it essential to upgrade your staples. Pause & Renew Serum is formulated specifically to meet the needs of mature, sensitised skin.

● **Focus on ingredients, not labels:** Don't be misled by 'menopause-friendly' claims, look at the ingredient list. Try to ensure your routine is packed with actives proven to soothe, hydrate, strengthen the skin barrier and support collagen production.

● **Treat reactive skin with care:** During menopause, many experience increased sensitivity, redness, and flare-ups. If skin feels reactive, switch to gentle application techniques. For those dealing with increased skin reactivity, rosacea, hot flashes or night sweats, avoid massaging serums and moisturisers vigorously into the skin, as overstimulation can produce excess heat and redness. Instead, look for sheer, lightweight textures easily absorbed, and either press them in or very lightly smooth them on.

● **Embrace cooling techniques:** From night sweats to hot flushes, temperature regulation can be a daily challenge. Cooling products are a simple, effective tool. One quick fix is to store certain products in the fridge.

B Good

to yourself



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Salus

Holistically HEALTHY KIDS

With children in need of key nutrients for their health and development, it is crucial for parents to ensure their young ones aren't missing out.



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The start of a new school year doesn't just signify the end of the summer holidays and all the fun and freedom that comes with it. It also marks the return to a busier way of life for young ones, and the onset of cold and flu season, which can hit children if their immune system isn't up to par.

All of this happens at a time when children's health is a cause for concern; rates of overweight and obesity are at an all-time high with NHS data showing in England, one in eight children aged two to 10 are obese. That's before you factor in issues with anxiety and other mental health problems, which also appear on the rise.

The good news is you can ensure your children are well-nourished in mind and body with a few simple strategies.

THE NEED FOR BALANCE

It's imperative that young people – at a time of much growth and development – have a balanced diet that features both macro and micro nutrients. It is also critical that ultra processed foods (UPFs) are kept to a minimum as they are devoid of nutrition, raise the risk of obesity and can affect blood sugar, which has a knock-on effect on things like learning and concentration.

Protein is essential for growth and repair, and should come from healthy sources, such as lean meat, fish, eggs, dairy (which also contains calcium), beans and pulses. If you have a vegetarian or vegan child, soya and tempeh are

good sources of protein.

Healthy carbohydrates are also crucial in the form of oats, grains, rice and pasta, but choose wholegrain options, rather than white, to keep blood sugar stable.

Children also need healthy fats from the likes of olive oil, nuts and seeds, and oily fish. Ideally, avoid saturated fats found in fatty meats and processed foods such as pizza, burgers, cakes and biscuits.

You should try to minimise sugar in foods and also in fizzy drinks as these can not only impact weight, they also send blood sugar spiraling, leading to a slump and be detrimental to oral health. Plain water is ideal for hydration.

Snack time needn't be boring for children; a fruit salad is a great choice, especially citrus fruits full of vitamin C and berries for their rich antioxidant content, while unsalted nuts and seeds are great for on the go, along with unsweetened peanut butter on rice cakes, and raw snack bars.

Meeting nutrient needs

Ensuring your young ones have key nutrients is so important for their wellbeing and to ensure healthy development. Here, we detail the key supplements you could consider but a visit to your local health food store will help guide you to the right ones for your child's needs.

• **For immune health:** At this time of year, with children around other youngsters as they head back to school, there is a higher chance of catching a cold. Ensuring immune health is strong is crucial, and you should include a vitamin D supplement during autumn and winter, along with vitamins A and C. Elderberry, zinc and selenium are also important for immunity, and echinacea is a wonderful herb for children over the age of 12.

• **For brain support:** It's imperative children are nourished nutritionally to allow their brains to develop well, and for concentration. Omega 3 essential fats are hugely important here and a supplement is recommended.

• **For energy:** Young people expend a lot of energy with busy lives and development happening constantly. B vitamins are important for this, as is iron, especially for girls as they approach their periods.

• **For the gut:** A healthy gut plays a role in many areas of health, including immunity and brain function, as well as helping maintain good digestion. A probiotic supplement designed for children is a good idea.

There are also minerals children need; calcium is crucial for healthy bones and teeth, while magnesium is excellent as a calming support, great if children struggle to unwind for sleep at night. Chamomile and lemon balm are great herbs to help ease anxiety.

Calling All Kids Warriors!

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Whatever →



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Galangal is a culinary herb used in cuisines of Southeast Asia also known as Thai ginger. Lamberts Cogni-Focus uses a unique extract of this herb, which has been shown to provide non-addictive energy that is fast acting and that lasts up to 5 hours. A natural, caffeine free option, without the energy drop or jitters often associated with a cup of coffee. Perfect for students (18+) and older adults looking to improve focus and mental agility, with no known interference with sleep. We have also included vitamin B5 to contribute to normal mental performance and a reduction in tiredness and fatigue and iodine for its effects on cognitive and neurological function.

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Your guide to MEDICINAL MUSHROOMS

There is good reason why medicinal mushrooms have stood the test of time over centuries, given their powerful health benefits.

Whether it's wanting to support your immune system, to looking for options to boost energy, or to keep your cognitive health in check, medicinal mushrooms offer the opportunity to pack in the nutrients.

Mushroom supplements contain a wide range of important compounds that are known to be beneficial to health, including polysaccharides and phytosterols. They are rich in important vitamins and minerals, while others contain beta glucans, which are crucial for the health of the immune system.

These days, you can find medicinal mushrooms in a range of formats, from capsules and powders, and the best place to source these is from your local health food store, as they will have ensured they are made to high standards and with the best quality ingredients.

WIDE-REACHING BENEFITS

Mushrooms are so beneficial to our health because of the rich profile of different nutrients they possess.

Let's start with the immune system; not only do they boast beta glucans, which are really important for immunity, they also contain antioxidants; these are needed to fend off bugs and to keep the immune system healthy. Certain mushrooms are also anti-viral and anti-inflammatory.

Let's then turn to cognitive function; not only can they help support general brain health, medicinal mushrooms are also known to specifically help with memory and nerve regeneration.

Other areas of benefit include the gut thanks to their prebiotic properties, energy levels, and helping with emotional and mental stresses. It is also believed some can support cardiovascular health.

Choosing a supplement

There are a number of mushrooms that offer specific health benefits, including:

- **Lion's mane:** A great choice if you want to support cognitive function, it is also excellent for memory.
- **Cordyceps:** Useful if you take part in lots of sport as it can help with energy, endurance, and athletic performance.
- **Reshi:** This is a great one for immune support as it contains those all-important beta glucans. We also know reishi, along with chaga, is considered an adaptogen, which means it can help the body cope with stress and aid relaxation, along with cordyceps.
- **Chaga:** As well as aiding with stress, chaga is packed with antioxidants, which means it can protect from free radicals and has a role in cellular health.
- **Maitake:** A great choice for supporting healthy blood sugar.

When choosing a supplement, it is important to opt for those that are grown under organic conditions, free from pollution and chemicals, and that a dual extraction process is used to ensure all of those powerful compounds are released. You should also ensure that full spectrum extracts are used.

MENOPAUSE

The menopause is a time of huge transition, bringing with it often uncomfortable symptoms. But with a focus on hormone balance, it needn't be a time to dread, as our experts explain

balance

The menopause has become something that is feared by many women in the western world. Perhaps in part because there is now so much more discussion and awareness about what symptoms can be expected as part of the process, but it can also be argued that women may experience a worse range of symptoms because of the effects of modern living.

By way of example, it is generally accepted that women in other parts of the world, with diets not so reliant on processed foods, have a very different experience with menopause. Here in the western world, many have poor diets and rely on medication such as HRT. And while this may be suitable for some, for others, it may be that a focus on nutrition and lifestyle could make all the difference.

Ben Shouler, Co-founder at Living Planet Distribution, which has the Planet Paleo and Botanicals For Life brands, explained: "Modifiable factors like dietary choices and lifestyle play a significant role in the menopausal experience. How you experience it, the severity of your symptoms, and your overall wellbeing can be heavily influenced by what you eat, how you move, and how you manage stress."

Slawek Gromadzki, who works in Nutritional Support/Research & Development at HealthAid, added: "Unpleasant menopausal symptoms are often regarded as a normal stage of life, but there are reasons to believe they can be the result of years of nutritional deficiencies, unhealthy diet, chronic psychological stress, lack of regular physical activity and other elements of an unhealthy lifestyle. Women who maintain an endocrine-friendly lifestyle, including a balanced diet, regular exercise, stress management, and avoiding smoking or alcohol, experience fewer symptoms."

"In some cultures, menopause is viewed positively – as a transition to wisdom or freedom from fertility – which may psychologically reduce severity. Conversely, societies that stigmatise ageing or menopause may amplify symptom awareness due to stress or negative expectations. Women with positive attitudes toward ageing and menopause often report fewer symptoms."

The transition

The menopause is technically a quick phase, which marks the end of a woman's menstrual years. The

time before that, which often brings symptoms, is known as perimenopause.

Corin Sadler, Medical Herbalist and Nutrition Team Manager at Viridian, explained: "The menopause itself is when a woman has not had a period for 12 months, after which she is considered post-menopause and no longer has reproductive ability. Really, the menopause is a point in time, and what women mostly discuss in terms of symptoms is often related to the perimenopause lead-up, although symptoms do often continue into the post-menopause periods before gradually stopping."

And why does this occur in terms of the range of symptoms?

Alison Cullen, Nutritional Therapist and Education Manager at A.Vogel, advised: "Menopause is a natural transition. It is not an illness or a hormone deficiency, it's the gradual winding down of reproductive hormones as we age, like puberty in reverse. Oestrogen and progesterone start to decline, which affects many systems in the body, and eventually periods stop altogether. It's a normal part of being a woman. Hormones like oestrogen and progesterone have effects far beyond our reproductive systems, they influence the brain, mood, skin, joints, sleep, digestion, you name it. So, as levels start fluctuating, it can feel like everything is shifting. Some women sail through it, others feel knocked sideways."

Corin went on: "Oestrogen receptors on cell membranes are not just in the reproductive tract. They are across many tissues and organs, including brain, bone, skin, kidneys and the digestive tract including the liver. Oestrogen has numerous roles in the body, not just within the reproductive system. For example, it plays a role in the immune system. Fluctuating and declining progesterone plays a large role in perimenopausal symptoms too as it leaves oestrogen, which although declining, is still dominant, causing heavy periods, migraines and headaches, irritability, breast pain, anxiety and palpitations."

"Women are all different and the decline in hormones is not linear so each woman will have a unique experience from this dance of hormones. Add to that different amounts of stress, sleep and the multitude of other ways women differ in terms of general health, genetics, and menstrual history and it's easy to see how no two women will experience the perimenopause in the same way."



Symptom management

Being aware of the range of symptoms associated with this period of life is important, as there are some you may not initially think are related.

Alison commented: "Hot flushes, night sweats, low mood, irritability, brain fog, and irregular or heavy periods are the big ones. But there are lots of unusual symptoms that are surprisingly common as well, like itchy or crawling skin, a metallic taste in the mouth, weird smells, joint aches and pains, even feeling like you're not quite yourself anymore."

Slawek added: "Declining levels of female sex hormones may lead to hot flushes, night sweats, fatigue, sleeplessness, difficulty concentrating, mood swings, irritability, panic attacks, anxiety, feelings of sadness, depression, memory lapses, lack of motivation, tension, heart palpitations, headaches, weight gain, muscle tension, joint pain, vaginal dryness, and loss of libido. Hormonal changes may also play a role in lung function decline (causing shortness of breath and other symptoms) since they can lead to systemic inflammation and the bone-thinning disease, osteoporosis."

Corin continued: "Less talked about symptoms include a drop in libido and vaginal dryness, which can cause an increase in UTIs. Autoimmune conditions can be triggered, such as Hashimoto's thyroid disease, which underpins many cases of under-functioning or hypo thyroid. Thinning and wrinkling of the skin and thinning hair are common, as collagen production is reduced in response to lack of oestrogen. As fat redistributes, especially round the abdomen, weight gain is common."

The importance of nutrition

What we put in our body determines our health and can especially play a role in the menopause. Therefore, it's important to follow a hormonally-healthy diet.

Slawek commented: "The strongest negative influence seems to be an unhealthy, refined diet deprived of essential nutrients such as magnesium, zinc, B vitamins, vitamin E, and vitamin C required by the body to make hormones. It is believed the key reason why in Asian countries (such as Japan, Korea or China), a smaller percentage of women experience bad menopausal symptoms is that they do not share unhealthy Western diet and lifestyle habits."

"Eating plant foods rich in fibre (vegetables, fruits, legumes, and grains) helps increase oestradiol levels. Soya foods such as organic tofu and miso, and one tablespoon of raw sauerkraut (excellent source of probiotic bacteria required for the effectiveness of soya isoflavones) a day, seems to be best to safely increase oestrogen. Avoid sugar and refined foods as they cause a deficiency of vitamins B1, B3 and B12, magnesium, zinc, and calcium, leading to nervousness, anxiety, fatigue, and irritability."

Alison added: "A Mediterranean-style diet is a brilliant starting point, and research consistently finds it to be a great diet for women and our hormones. So, think loads of veg, fibre, healthy fats, good protein. Blood sugar balance is also key for hormonal balance, so regular meals, complex carbohydrates instead of refined ones, plenty of protein, and snacks that don't spike your energy then crash it. Simple hacks like eating your veggies first and opting for a savoury breakfast are game changers for blood sugar balance, and, in turn, hormones. Hydration is also hugely important and helps so many symptoms, so make sure you are drinking enough water. At least 1.5 litres a day, although many of us need more than that!"

Corin also pointed out: "A poor diet can lead to nutrient deficiencies like magnesium or low levels of omega 3, which can exacerbate symptoms. Low magnesium can mean a woman is more prone to hot flushes, low iodine could mean a predisposition to breast pain or tenderness, whilst low zinc is linked to increased vaginal dryness."

"Phytoestrogen foods may help to reduce menopause symptoms including hot flushes and night sweats. These natural occurring plant ►

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compounds are weakly oestrogenic and have a stimulating effect on oestrogen receptors. Including flax seeds, fermented sources of soya like tempeh and natto, pulses, especially chickpeas and lentils, celery, green beans, cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, kale, greens, and cauliflower) and wholegrains can be helpful. This supports the adrenal glands, which take over production of oestrogen and progesterone as ovarian production declines. Reducing caffeine can be helpful for adrenal health and encourages a better night's sleep. Alcohol, spicy and hot foods all trigger hot flushes."

Get moving

If you experience symptoms associated with the menopause, and especially if you are fatigued, exercise may be the last thing you want to do. But it's important as being active can ease symptoms and support you in the next phase of life.

Alison commented: "The basics such as getting enough sleep, drinking plenty of water, eating well, moving your body, and managing stress can shape how perimenopause feels and presents for each woman. The more you support your body through the change, the smoother the ride tends to be."

Corin went on: "Research shows exercise can help manage many menopausal symptoms, including irritability, insomnia, depression, fatigue and hot flushes. Stress hormones interfere with female hormone balance and can make symptoms such as hot flushes, brain fog and poor sleep worse. Finding ways to manage stress with tools like yoga, meditation and exercise can play a role in ensuring a smooth menopause experience. Journalling can be an excellent way to help manage stress levels and a good way to keep track of symptoms too."

Slawek added: "Exercise has been shown to help reduce the frequency of panic attacks. It uses up any excess energy, promotes better sleep, helps with hormone regulation, and encourages good breathing techniques."

What next?

When you transition through the menopause, and symptoms ease, it's important to consider the additional nutrient needs your body has.



Corin advised: "Post menopause, many symptoms gradually decline but women can still find sleep and hot flushes a problem so many of the same nutrients and dietary advice still apply. More problematic in this period can be vaginal atrophy and bladder issues, including some degree of incontinence, weight gain and hair loss. Continuing with a healthy Mediterranean diet which includes phytoestrogens and minimises sugar and ultra processed foods should still be a priority. Additional support from herbs like angelica, pumpkin seed, and cranberry can be helpful, as can D-mannose if urinary symptoms are problematic."

"Bone health requirements are also vital to

address the increased risk of osteopenia or osteoporosis that comes as the protective effects of oestrogen are lost. Magnesium, calcium, boron, vitamin D and K play a bigger role than before. Increasing risk of dementia, cardiovascular disease and metabolic problems should be addressed too, but here again the Mediterranean diet is protective."

Alison added: "Once you're through menopause, the focus shifts a bit. Bone health becomes really important, so calcium, magnesium, vitamin D and vitamin K2 are key. Heart health is also more vulnerable, so think good fats, omega 3s and lots of colourful plant foods for antioxidant support. And don't forget protein, because we need more of it as we age to maintain muscle, mood and metabolism."

Should you supplement?

There are key nutrients needed to manage symptoms and keep you healthy, and a supplement can be a useful way of ensuring you have adequate amounts.

Ben explained: "Taking the right supplements can support your nutritional needs and help balance hormones. Collagen supplements are a great addition, as natural collagen levels drop sharply during this phase of life. Supporting skin, joints, bones, muscle mass, and recovery with a high-quality collagen supplement can help ease the transition, Collagen is also rich in glycine, which plays a key role in metabolism of oestrogen in the liver. Glycine can also mimic some benefits of oestrogen, such as supporting bone health. Type I and III are great for skin, hair, joints, and bones, while Type II supports inflammation. You'll also want to choose between grass-fed bovine or marine collagen, depending on your dietary preferences."

Corin added: "For women taking HRT, nutrient deficiencies in vitamins C and E, folic acid and magnesium, and possibly zinc and vitamins B6 and B12 are more likely. Supporting perimenopausal women should begin with a multivitamin and mineral. This provides vitamins C and D for immune health, B vitamins for neurotransmitter and energy production, and zinc for mood, skin and vaginal health. Magnesium is key for mood regulation and low levels increase depression and anxiety risk. It also influences the body's circadian rhythm, in part by increasing melatonin, reducing the time it takes to fall

asleep and improving sleep quality. It may also reduce frequency of hot flushes. Saffron can be beneficial for perimenopausal mood swings, anxiety and poor sleep, but research shows it is helpful in reducing hot flushes. Brahmi or Bacopa monnieri might be useful for women experiencing brain fog."

Alison went on: "Sage can help intense night sweats and hot flushes. Agnus castus is brilliant for heavy, flooding periods or PMS symptoms. Devil's claw helps with aches and muscular pain."

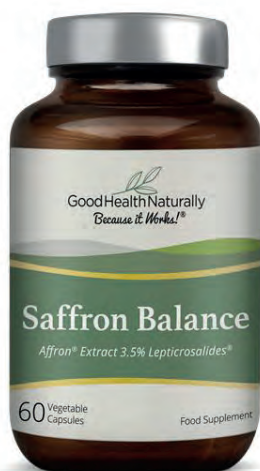
And Slawek advised: "Soya isoflavones (daidzein and genistein) are famous for their safe oestrogen-regulating properties. A meta-analysis revealed an average intake of 54mg a day between six weeks and 12 months was associated with a 21 per cent reduction in frequency of hot flushes, compared with placebo. Red clover contains isoflavones, which work as phytoestrogens, with possible benefits for menopause. It may help reduce cholesterol and protect against osteoporosis by reducing bone loss. In one study, ashwagandha was beneficial in helping to normalise oestrogen and ease hot flashes, mood fluctuations, sleep issues, irritability and anxiety. Maca is used for female hormone imbalance, menstrual problems, tiredness, and signs of menopause and osteoporosis. Evening primrose oil and star flower oil (both high in gamma linolenic acid) have beneficial effects on hormonal balance, immune and nervous system."

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Natural Lifestyle Top Picks



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www.nutratea.co.uk



Perimenopause Balance

Perimenopause Balance is a strawberry-flavoured, powdered food supplement providing a source of easily absorbed essential nutrients: Magnesium, Zinc, Calcium and Vitamin D3. You can mix a sachet with water, milk, a smoothie or protein shake to make a fruity drink. It helps target 10 common perimenopausal symptom areas during times of fluctuating hormones, such as tiredness & fatigue and nervous system support. Available from health food stores and

www.avogel.co.uk



Perimenopause Focus

Refocus your mind with Perimenopause Focus Passiflora Complex tablets, containing extracts of Passiflora, Lemon Balm and Valerian as well as Magnesium and Zinc. Magnesium supports the nervous system and helps reduce tiredness and fatigue while Zinc contributes to normal cognitive function and the protection of cells from oxidative stress. Take twice daily to support focus and keep a clear mind. Suitable for vegans. Available from health food stores and

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*The research was conducted between 18 September - 26 November 2020 with 77 women aged 18-65 years. The study was conducted by Cue Consumer Research. The study group took 6 x 500mg capsules a day for 12 weeks.

The oil used is carefully extracted from specially cultivated Rigel Evening Primrose, the seeds of which contain up to 33% more GLA than other Evening Primrose Oils (For more information visit efamol.com). Food supplements should not be used as a substitute for a balanced diet or healthy lifestyle.

Ask the experts



Q I want to switch to a natural deodorant – can you explain the ingredients used to make it as effective as a conventional deodorant?

Thomas Laird advised: Natural deodorants work brilliantly when you understand the clever science behind them. At Salt of the Earth, we've been perfecting our formulations since 1993, combining powerful natural actives that tackle odour from multiple angles.

Potassium alum, our star ingredient, is a natural mineral salt that creates an invisible barrier when dissolved in sweat. It forms a slightly acidic environment that's unfriendly to odour-causing bacteria like *Corynebacteria* and *Staphylococcus*, preventing them from thriving whilst remaining safely on your skin's surface.

Triethyl citrate (derived from citrus) works alongside your skin's natural enzymes, transforming into citric acid that subtly lowers your skin's pH. This disables the bacterial enzymes responsible for turning sweat into unpleasant smells, delivering long-lasting freshness without clogging pores. Magnesium hydroxide provides gentle moisture absorption and odour neutralisation whilst maintaining a skin-friendly pH.

We blend these with plant-based antimicrobials like sodium anisate, soothing aloe vera, and carefully chosen essential oils. This multi-layered approach ensures maximum protection whilst meeting strict natural standards. The result? Effective deodorant that lets your body sweat naturally (as nature intended) whilst keeping you fresh all day. Clever, natural chemistry that actually works.

Collagen choice...

by Ben Shouler

Can you explain why it is beneficial to take a collagen supplement?

Collagen is the most abundant protein in the body, and as we age, our body's ability to produce it diminishes. This can impact us in many different ways, and poor collagen production is a factor in various degenerative health conditions, including osteoarthritis and osteoporosis.

Collagen peptides are essentially hydrolysed collagen protein, meaning it's been broken down into peptides for easier absorption and digestion. This is also what makes the powder so soluble.

There's a lot of industry nonsense about collagen products needing to be hydrolysed, but they're all hydrolysed, otherwise, they wouldn't be collagen peptides. So, any brand claiming their collagen being hydrolysed is a USP just demonstrates they don't understand what they're selling. Hydrolysed simply means the protein has been broken down into peptides.

This then provides easy access to the amino acids in collagen protein, which can be used to build our own collagen tissue wherever it's needed. We can do this from other protein sources, but it's not as energy efficient, as the body needs to create those specific amino acids itself – and that takes a

lot of energy. This becomes more of a concern as we age and our metabolism slows. Collagen would have been naturally abundant in our diets, but that's something that has diminished as dietary habits have evolved, particularly over the last century.

Can you offer advice on the factors to consider when choosing a collagen supplement?

I would say it's always best to take grass-fed certified collagen, as this is truly grass-fed rather than a claim made with light evidence. It comes from higher animal welfare cattle fed their natural diet. I would also suggest taking it in powder form for best absorption and value. Capsule doses are typically too low to be meaningful.

Marine collagen is another great source, and I'd opt for MSC-certified products to ensure quality and avoid some of the by-products present in fish-farmed collagen.

I would always look out for these certifications, because otherwise you really don't know where it was sourced from. There are some appalling practices in the collagen industry, so certification can give you some confidence in the supply chain.



BEN SHOULER

is the founder of Planet Paleo, and is a nutritional therapist and naturopath with extensive experience in nutrition science and herbal medicine.



THOMAS LAIRD

is Managing Director of Salt of the Earth Natural Deodorants, a family-owned and run, multi-award-winning UK natural deodorant brand, honoured with the prestigious Kings Award for Enterprise: International Trade 2025.



ADRIENNE BENJAMIN

is Nutritionist at Pro-Ven Biotics and specialises in understanding and sharing the ways in which our gut and microbiome help to support our health.



PHIL BEARD, BSC (HONS), MSC,

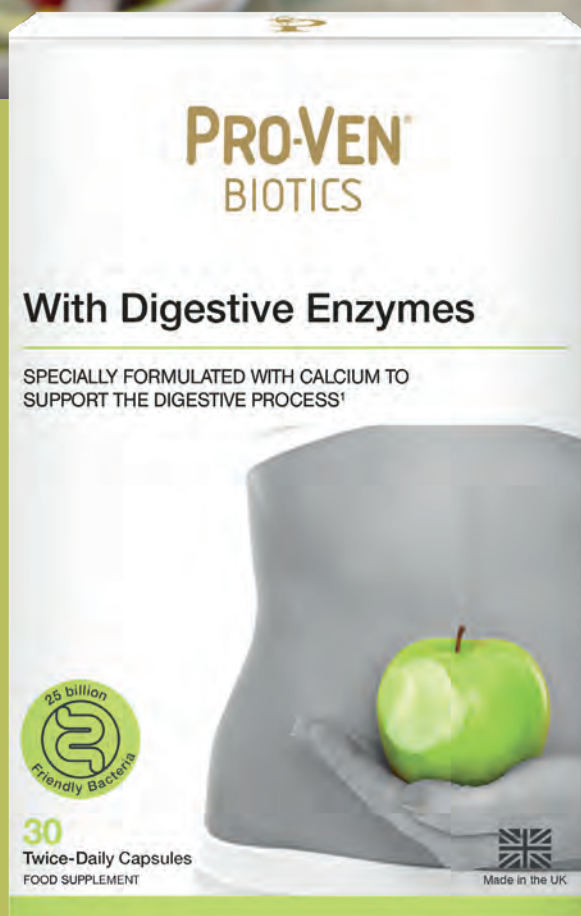
is a Nutritionist, Speaker and Nutrition Trainer at Viridian Nutrition. He holds a Master's degree in Nutrition and Health.

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Ask the experts



Nutrition in the young...

by Adrienne Benjamin

What are the most common health issues children can experience at the start of a new school year, and why is it important to focus on their health at this time?

As children go back to school, it is important to support them in as many ways as possible as the change in environment can lead to a variety of illnesses.

Health issues experienced most often include coughs and colds and related symptoms like sore throats and headaches, digestive issues, and anxiety and emotional challenges. These can impact sleep and energy levels and lead to a vicious cycle of symptoms and days off school that can seem never-ending, particularly through the autumn school term.

Can you suggest a healthy plan for a child that involves diet and also their daily routines?

Here are my top tips for a healthy diet, key supplements and lifestyle suggestions for children:

- Start the day with a healthy, filling breakfast that combines complex carbohydrates with protein and fat (Greek yoghurt with berries and low sugar granola), to ensure they stay full until lunchtime.
- Focus all meals and snacks on natural, nutrient-dense foods and minimise (or eliminate) processed and sugary snacks. Soups, smoothies, and wholemeal pasta with sauces are good options.
- Fat is particularly important for children to support

their developing brain and foods with healthy fats include real butter, nuts/nut butters, oily fish and eggs.

- Sustaining energy throughout the day requires foods that release energy slowly, such as complex carbohydrates like wholegrain pasta, beans, and vegetables.
- Ensure your child has access to water all day long, as even mild dehydration can lead to lack of energy and inability to concentrate.
- Developing bodies and minds need a good night's sleep and a familiar wind-down routine and dark, cool sleeping environment can help.
- Any stress your child is feeling might manifest as stomach ache, headache, anger or irritability and techniques to support them can include quiet deep breathing or boisterous playing, laughing and shouting.
- All children need daily exercise and going to the park or playing in the garden for an hour after school can help them to let off steam and get their daily movement.

Are supplements important for children?

Our digestive system is closely linked to our brain and mood and foods containing probiotics and prebiotics can support gut function, as can a friendly bacteria supplement. Other supplements I'd suggest include omega 3 oils to support brain health, and a general multi-nutrient, particularly if your child is a picky eater.

Q Can you explain how nutrition can support those with neurodiversity?

Phil Beard advised: Nutrition is a fundamental element for everyone's health, whether neurotypical or neurodivergent. Diet can play an important role in supporting neurodivergent individuals by influencing brain function, mood regulation, and energy metabolism. Specific nutrients have been studied for their potential to impact areas such as cognitive performance, attention, and emotional wellbeing.

• **Omega 3 fatty acids:** Omega 3s, particularly EPA and DHA found in oily fish (for example, salmon, sardines), flaxseeds, and walnuts, are critical components of brain cell membranes. They support neurotransmission, reduce inflammation, and promote healthy neural development. Research suggests that omega 3 supplementation may improve attention, hyperactivity, and emotional regulation in individuals with ADHD, and enhance social responsiveness in some who have autism.

• **B vitamins:** B vitamins, especially B6, B9 (folate), and B12, are essential for neurotransmitter synthesis (serotonin, dopamine, GABA) and myelin production. Deficiencies can impair concentration, memory, and mood. For example, adequate folate and B12 levels help maintain methylation processes critical for gene expression and brain function. Vitamin B6 has been studied for reducing irritability and improving behaviour in children with autism, especially when combined with magnesium.

Other key nutrients include magnesium, zinc, iron, vitamin D and antioxidants, such as vitamins C, E, and polyphenols.

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Some simple tweaks to your nutrition and lifestyle can ensure your immune system is fighting fit ahead of the cold season. Let *Natural Lifestyle* guide you through the basics.

Keeping our immune system strong and able to defend against invaders becomes even more important as we head towards the common cold season. And doing so needn't be difficult, or overly onerous; it simply takes a little focus on what you put into your body, the lifestyle choices you make, and ensuring your nutrient levels are where they should be.

And these steps come back to the basics; a balanced diet featuring plenty of fruit and veg of different colours, cutting right back on refined sugar and processed food, and nourishing your health through good sleep, keeping stress levels low, and being active.

But first, let's understand what the immune system is, and how it can affect your health if it's under par.

Alice Bradshaw, Head of Nutrition Education and Information at Terranova, explained: "The immune system is a complex and coordinated network of cells, tissues, and organs that work together to protect the body from harmful invaders such as bacteria, viruses, and parasites. It identifies foreign substances and triggers a targeted defence response, while retaining a memory of previous threats to respond more efficiently in the future. A well-functioning immune system plays a vital role in preventing illness, supporting recovery, and maintaining long-term health. Sustained low immunity can lead to frequent infections and slower recovery, which may increase risk of more persistent or serious health issues. These may include ongoing respiratory infections, digestive disturbances, or chronic inflammatory conditions. Consistent immune support is important not only for short-term protection but also for long-term wellbeing."

Lola Biggs, Dietitian at Together Health, added: "Our immune response, its speed and efficiency to turn on and off, known as modulation, and its long-term memory capacity and complexity can determine how often we catch bugs, pathogens and viruses, or react to allergens and influence the time taken to heal and recover. Having a low or malfunctioning immune system can lead to repetitive incidences of ill health, through unwanted pathogens, viruses and bacterial overgrowths taking hold, which can leave us drained, fatigued, malnourished and disrupt other systems, triggering health issues."



STEP 1

Identify the culprits

There are some obvious elements of our lifestyle – and particularly common in modern living – that can lower our immunity, and managing these is really important.

“To support our immune system, how we nourish, rest, move, and what we are exposed to makes an impact, as well as genetic predispositions,” Lola commented. “Managing stress and balancing mood, giving time for rest and recovery, quality sleep, and physical activity can have a positive impact on our immune function.”

Alice added: “Several everyday factors can compromise the immune system. These include chronic stress, poor-quality sleep, inadequate nutrition, sedentary habits, and exposure to environmental toxins. The typical Western lifestyle often intensifies these challenges, with highly processed diets, prolonged screen time, reduced physical movement, and high stress levels. Over time, such habits can deplete nutrient reserves, disrupt the gut microbiome, and weaken natural immune defences.”

And Keri Briggs, Senior Brand Specialist at Lamberts, also advised: “Chronic stress and elevated levels of the stress hormones can have effects on immunity and inflammation. Chronic stress can also lead to behaviours which further deteriorate the body’s normal reaction, poor dietary choices, overconsumption of alcohol, reduction of physical exercise and sleep disruption. Sleep is strongly linked to immune function. Regular or long-term sleep disruption can have a significant effect on inflammation and immunodeficiency.”

“Covid-19 has also had lasting effects on immunity. Studies suggest those who had severe Covid had some lasting changes to the function of the innate immune system. There have also been suggestions that the periods of lockdown have caused issues with the development of immunity to certain common infections, with the rise of the ‘super cold’. This seems to be particularly relevant to babies and young children, who may not have been exposed to common infections during lockdown.”

STEP 3

Is your lifestyle healthy?

Truly assessing how healthy your lifestyle is can be hugely helpful to get your immune system functioning properly.

Lola suggested: “Make time to walk each day, ideally surrounded by nature when you can. Prioritise good sleep, try to stop poor habits like bedtime screen time and eating late, which can trigger disturbed sleep due to digestion. Increase physical exercise; there is a general consensus that regular bouts of short-lasting (up to 45 minutes) moderate intensity exercise are beneficial for our immune defences. These are some lifestyle habits and routines which can signal to the body that you are calm and safe, which can directly influence a correct immune response.”

Alice added: “Regular physical activity, restorative sleep (seven to nine hours per night), stress-reduction techniques (such as mindfulness or time in nature), and limiting alcohol and ultra-processed foods all contribute to stronger immune defences.”

STEP 2

Feed the immune system

The foundation to good health comes back to diet, and building your nutrient intake from there.

“An immune-supportive diet includes a variety of nutrient-rich whole foods. Colourful fruits and vegetables provide antioxidants and vitamin C, while lean protein from animal and plant sources supplies the amino acids and zinc needed for immune cell repair and defence,” Alice explained.

“Examples include poultry, meat, eggs, oily fish, beans, lentils, tofu, and tempeh. Healthy fats from nuts, seeds, avocados, and olive oil help maintain the integrity of cell membranes. Fermented foods like kefir, kimchi, and live yoghurt help support a diverse and balanced gut microbiome, which plays a vital role in immune regulation.”

Lola went on: “Alike with overall health, immunity can be supported with good nutrition. And this can be found by prioritising lots of nutrient-dense and whole foods, good fats and adequate protein and avoiding food that lacks beneficial macro nutrients, essential vitamins and minerals and is overly processed.”

“During times when you have an active immune response, increasing intake of micronutrients like vitamin C, zinc, and selenium has been shown to have a benefit in the short-term. Long-term benefits have been linked to good vitamin D status, and ensuring you have enough complete protein daily, as the cells that make up the immune system are made of amino acids, the building blocks.”

STEP 4

Top up your nutrients

We can lack key nutrients during colder weather when we are outdoors less and diets can be less healthy. Therefore, it’s worth bridging any nutrient gaps by taking supplements.

Keri highlighted vitamin D: “Studies show that a sufficient level of vitamin D is essential for the production of anti-microbial peptides and has significant effects on production, maturation and regulation of immune cells including T-regulatory cells, often due to the presence of vitamin D receptors in these cells. Low vitamin D is associated with an increased rate of infection and more sick leave. A study showed that supplementation with vitamin D reduced the incidence of ‘flu by 42 per cent.”

“There are herbs and nutrients which can support immune function. Perhaps the best known is echinacea, which has been shown in trials to reduce duration and severity of the common cold. It also has positive effects on wound healing and inflammation. Elderberry is used for the immune system, which seems to be mainly linked to its content of anthocyanidins, plant polyphenols in dark purple and red fruits. It has been shown to inhibit ‘flu viruses and reduce symptom severity in URTIs.”

Alice added: “Vitamin C contributes to normal immune function and helps protect cells from oxidative stress. Zinc is involved in immune cell development and helps defend against infection. Microflora supplements, which support a healthy balance of gut bacteria, have been linked in emerging research to improved immune response and resilience. Other helpful nutrients include selenium, which plays a role in cell protection, and omega 3 fatty acids (from flaxseed or fish oils), which help maintain the normal functioning of immune-related cells. Botanicals like elderberry, echinacea, and garlic are commonly used during the colder months for additional seasonal support.”

And Lola recommended: “For long-term support, you want modulating nutrients, that have been shown to balance an overactive or underactive response. Beta-glucans, a polysaccharide, have been shown to work well; functional mushrooms like chaga and reishi are rich sources and also offer other biologically active components linked to improving immune response.”

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AllicinMax Immune for normal immune function

AllicinMax Immune provides stabilised allicin from garlic, with beta glucan along with vitamin C and Zinc. Vitamin C and Zinc contribute to normal functioning of the immune system. It makes a perfect addition to your wellness regime. The easy to swallow, vegan capsules are odour free and suitable from age 12. Two capsules provide 180mg Allisure (Allicin) Powder, 150mg Vitamin C and 10mg Zinc. Part of the AllicinMax™ range, the brand leader in stabilised allicin supplements, you will find the range in your local independent health food store. www.allimax.co.uk



Immune Defence from the Power of Mushrooms

Support your immune system naturally with Mushrooms For Life Organic Mycomplex—a powerful blend of three immune-supporting mushrooms: Reishi, Cordyceps, and Maitake. Used for centuries in traditional wellness practices, these organic mushrooms work in harmony to help your body stay strong, balanced, and energised. Reishi calms and restores, Maitake helps maintain healthy defences, and Cordyceps supports energy and stamina when you need it most. With no fillers or additives, this clean and convenient daily capsule is ideal for keeping your immune system resilient—especially through the colder months. Visit mushroomsforlife.com for more info.



Viridikid Multivitamin, new larger size

Viridikid Multivitamin, now available in 150 capsules for growing families. Specially formulated for the needs of children aged 2–14 to support optimal growth and long-term health with no additives. Featuring vitamins C, B, D, E and K along with zinc, iron and other key minerals. The inclusion of a natural beta carotene mix in this clean formulation supplement, enables the body to produce vitamin A which is a particularly important vitamin for children's vision, skin and immune health. With easy-to-swallow mini capsules that is free from sugars and preservatives. The new 150 capsules size features alongside the 90 capsules. Vegan friendly and sourced to Viridian's strict ethical criteria. www.viridian-nutrition.com



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QUALITY REDEFINED:

Planet Paleo's premium Multi Collagen formula

With Planet Paleo launching its new Multi Collagen, Co-founder, Ben Souler, highlights the importance of ingredients and sourcing practices.

With multi-collagen supplements becoming increasingly common, Planet Paleo is setting new standards for quality and ethical sourcing. Take its latest

multi-collagen formula, which stands out for its commitment to superior ingredients and certified sourcing practices. The formula delivers all five essential collagen types from three premium, sustainably sourced ingredients. It's also blended with vitamin C and silica, which help support collagen production and promote healthy skin, hair, and nails.

The power of multiple collagen

What are the benefits of a multi-collagen supplement? This advanced formula delivers all five essential collagen types:

- **Type I:** The most abundant collagen type, crucial for skin strength, bone density, and healthy hair and nails.
- **Type II:** For joint health, found in fish cartilage. Clinical studies show Type II collagen's ability to support cartilage structure, reduce joint discomfort, and improve mobility.
- **Type III:** Works synergistically with Type I for enhanced skin elasticity and cardiovascular health.
- **Type V:** Supports cell surface conditions, hair quality, and placental tissue.
- **Type X:** A specialised form of collagen found in growing and healing cartilage. Essential for healthy bone development and repair, cartilage regeneration and joint resilience.

Planet Paleo's Multi Collagen is designed to help the body build and maintain collagen where it's needed most. Alongside the powerful collagen types, it includes vitamin C and silica, key nutrients that support collagen formation and boost visible results for skin, joints, and bones.

Vitamin C helps the body naturally form collagen, supporting smooth skin, supple joints and strong

bones. It also protects collagen from everyday stress and ageing.

Silica, from bamboo extract, works with collagen to enhance skin elasticity, hair strength, and nail resilience. By combining collagen with these nutrients, it offers visible and lasting result, perfect for anyone looking to feel stronger, move easier and feel healthier.

Health benefits

While multi-collagen supplements aren't new to the market, Planet Paleo's commitment to certified, ethical sourcing sets a new quality benchmark. The combination of Type II collagen from wild-caught fish cartilage with free-range eggshell membrane and certified grass-fed certified bovine collagen, creates a synergistic effect.

Recent clinical research validates the importance of quality sourcing and demonstrates impressive results: a 2023 study on fish cartilage hydrolysate, rich in Type II collagen, showed remarkable joint benefits, including:

- Significant improvement in knee function.
- Reduced pain at rest and while walking.
- Improved quality of life scores.
- Decreased inflammatory markers.
- Protected cartilage components.
- Excellent safety profile.

Then there is eggshell membrane; a comprehensive randomised trial demonstrated high-quality eggshell membrane delivers:

- Significant reduction in joint discomfort within eight weeks.
- Enhanced muscle strength and mobility.
- Improved daily function and physical performance.
- Better sleep quality.
- Dose-dependent benefits at clinical dosages.



Why quality matters

Ethically sourced, premium ingredients deliver:

- Higher nutrient density.
- Superior amino acid profiles
- Greater bioavailability and absorption.
- Sustainable and environmentally conscious production.
- Full traceability from source to supplement.

What distinguishes Multi Collagen is its exceptional sourcing to ensure optimal efficacy:

- **Industry-first free-range eggshell membrane:** Ethically sourced from free-range chickens, ensuring quality and animal welfare.
- **Certified grass-fed bovine collagen:** Going beyond grass-fed claims with full certification, guaranteeing authentic pasture-raised sourcing.
- **Wild-caught fish cartilage collagen:** Rich in Type II collagen and chondroitin sulfate, specifically targeting joint health.

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Saffron – THE PRECIOUS SPICE

Why saffron is stepping into the spotlight as a natural solution for emotional wellbeing and hormonal harmony.

Saffron, the world's most precious spice, has long been prized for its vibrant colour, delicate flavour and remarkable health benefits. Harvested by hand from the bright red stigmas of the *Crocus sativus* flower, it has a history spanning thousands of years, deeply rooted in the traditional medicines of Persia, India, and the Mediterranean.

Today, modern science is uncovering just how powerful this golden spice can be, particularly for supporting mood, hormonal balance and restful sleep.

How saffron works in the body

Saffron's therapeutic power lies in its unique plant compounds, including crocins, safranal, and picrocrocin, which interact with the brain's neurotransmitters, such as serotonin and dopamine. These brain chemicals influence how we feel, think and cope with stress. By gently helping to rebalance them, saffron appears to promote a more positive mood and a greater sense of emotional stability.

One notable 2017 double-blind, randomised, placebo-controlled trial found that 28mg of Affron saffron extract daily for four weeks significantly reduced anxiety, stress and depression in healthy adults with low mood. Participants also reported increased vigour and less fatigue, with no significant side effects. This makes saffron a promising and well-tolerated option for those seeking alternatives to conventional medications.

A gentle mood booster

Saffron's potential as a natural antidepressant is also impressive. A 2025 trial involving 202 adults with subclinical depression found that taking 28mg of Affron saffron extract daily for 12 weeks reduced depressive symptoms by 72 per cent, compared to 54 per cent

with placebo. Earlier research has even shown saffron to be as effective as the antidepressant, citalopram, for major depressive disorder, with fewer unwanted effects.

Easing life's hormonal transitions

For women, hormonal shifts can bring their own set of challenges – whether in the form of PMS, perimenopause or menopause. Research suggests saffron can help smooth these transitions.

In 2007, a double-blind, randomised, and placebo-controlled trial found that daily saffron supplementation eased the symptoms of premenstrual syndrome, with notable benefits for mood regulation. For perimenopausal women, a 2021 study found that 28mg of Affron saffron extract daily for 12 weeks lowered anxiety and depression scores by around a third, helping participants feel calmer and more in control.

Benefits extend to sleep

In a 2020 study, adults with poor sleep who took 28mg of Affron saffron extract daily experienced significant improvements in sleep quality, offering a welcome natural option for those with self-reported sleep complaints. This can be particularly helpful during menopause, which is commonly disrupted during this transitional period.

With its combination of mood-lifting, hormone-balancing and sleep-enhancing effects, saffron offers a gentle yet powerful way to support emotional wellbeing. Choosing a high-quality, standardised extract ensures you are getting consistent levels of the active compounds used in clinical research.

For anyone navigating stress, low mood, hormonal changes or restless nights, saffron may just be nature's precious gift for restoring balance and vitality.

● References available on request.

READER GIVEAWAY

Win one of three bottles of Saffron Balance from Good Health Naturally, featuring Affron, a premium, standardised saffron extract clinically studied for mood, stress and sleep support. Known as the world's most precious spice, saffron's unique compounds help promote emotional wellbeing, hormonal balance and healthy vision. Each vegetarian capsule delivers 30mg of high-quality Affron for consistent results. Enter now for your chance to experience saffron's natural benefits in one easy daily dose – and *Natural Lifestyle* is offering readers the chance of winning one of three. Turn to opposite page to enter.



Giveaways

NATURAL LIFESTYLE

Natural Lifestyle is about giving back to our readers, and each month this page will showcase a selection of giveaways.



A.Vogel Perimenopause Balance

Perimenopause Balance is a strawberry-flavoured, powdered food supplement providing a source of easily absorbed essential nutrients, magnesium, zinc, calcium and vitamin D3. You can mix a sachet with water, milk, a smoothie or protein shake to make a fruity drink. It helps target 10 common perimenopausal symptom areas during times of fluctuating hormones, such as tiredness and fatigue and nervous system support. *Natural Lifestyle* is offering readers the chance of winning one of five.

PHARMA NORD BIO-QUINONE Q10 GOLD

Natural Lifestyle has teamed up with Pharma Nord to offer readers the chance of winning one of two packs of its Bio-Quinone Q10 GOLD 100mg 60-capsule packs. Naturally occurring CoQ10 is crucial for energy metabolism, but levels can decline as we age. Coenzyme Q10 supplements are a popular way to ensure good levels, but it's difficult for the body to absorb without help. Bio-Quinone Q10 GOLD from Pharma Nord uses a patented delivery form to ensure the product is absorbed well in the body. Used in numerous clinical trials, Bio-Quinone is the gold standard in coenzyme Q10 supplementation.



Together Health immune bundle

Win these immune system-boosting favourites from Together Health. Made with whole foods and natural source ingredients, the nutrients retain their food matrix and are recognised by the body and better absorbed. They act quickly, bolstering defences as seasons shift and our body needs additional support to maintain optimal health. Every Together Health nutritional supplement is 100 per cent clean, pure, and sustainably sourced. Their ingredients are minimally processed, and they never use artificial chemicals to manufacture their products. All of this combines to make them the most natural supplements in the UK – and *Natural Lifestyle* has 10 bundles to give away.



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We're giving three lucky winners the ultimate beauty boost with New Nordic's Beauty Gummy bundle – featuring three delicious products: Skin, Hair & Nail Gummies, Biotin Gummies, and C-Vitamin Gummies! Nourish your glow from within with these tasty, vegan-friendly, beauty-enhancing supplements. Whether you're looking to support radiant skin, strong nails, or shiny hair, this bundle has you covered.

ENTER HERE Please indicate below which giveaway you are applying for, complete form and post back to us at 'Reader Offers', *Natural Lifestyle* magazine, The Old Dairy, Hudsons Farm, Fieldgate Lane, Ugley Green, Bishops Stortford CM22 6HJ. Closing Date: October 1, 2025. Or you can enter online – visit www.mynaturallifestyle.com

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OATY

inspiration

Olympic silver medal cyclist, Emma Pooley, shares some of her favourite recipes for tasty, nutritious, oat-based snacks, bakes and treats.

Cheese, apple and rosemary loaf

Apple with cheese is my favourite sweet-salty combination! The sweetness from the apple is quite subtle in this recipe.

INGREDIENTS:

- 200g (¾ cup) apple purée (ready-made, or purée 1 large/2 small apples)
- 350g (1 cup) natural yogurt (dairy/plant-based)
- 3tbsp fresh rosemary, finely chopped
- 90g parmesan or strong gruyère cheese (finely grated/¾ cup) – vegan parmesan works fine
- 250g (2½ packed cups) fine oatflakes (quick-cooking oats)
- ½ tsp salt
- 2tsp baking powder
- Optional: freshly-ground black pepper to taste

EQUIPMENT:

- Grater
- Rectangular tin (20 x 25 x 5cm) lined with baking parchment

METHOD:

- Preheat oven to 160 °C (320 °F).
- Grate the cheese.
- Mix all the ingredients; stir to combine. Spoon into tin; smooth with the back of a spoon.
- Bake for 40-45 minutes; the bread will firm up slightly on cooling.
- After cooling, store in the refrigerator and consume within three days

VARIATIONS:

- You can make this bread in any shape. For small buns, use a silicone muffin tray with 12 x 7cm moulds and reduce the cooking time by 10 minutes.



Bircher muesli muffins

Bircher muesli is famous for being a healthy as well as delicious breakfast, and there are many different versions of the recipe. According to my research, this is close to the 'echt' Swiss recipe. One crucial innovation is that the muffins are much more portable than a bowlful of muesli. They make the perfect on-the-go breakfast snack – no spoon needed.

Makes 12 muffins

INGREDIENTS:

- 200g (approximately 1 large/2 small) apple, cored but not peeled (1²/₃ cups after grating)
- 300g (1¹/₄ cups) natural yogurt (dairy/plant-based)
- 1tbsp fresh lemon zest (approximately ¹/₂ lemon)
- ¹/₂ lemon juice (4tbsp)
- ¹/₄ tsp salt
- 1tsp ground cinnamon
- 150g (1¹/₂ packed cups) fine oatflakes (quick-cooking oats)
- 100g (1 cup) coarse rolled oats – the bigger grains add texture. If unavailable, use quick oats instead
- 2tsp baking powder
- 125g (1 cup) raspberries, fresh or defrosted
- 125g (³/₄ cup) blueberries, fresh or defrosted

OPTIONAL CRUNCHY TOPPING:

- 3tbsp (45g) brown sugar
- ¹/₂ tsp ground cinnamon
- 3tbsp (20g) coarse rolled oats

EQUIPMENT:

- Medium fine grater and coarse grater/zester
- Silicone muffin tray with 12 x 7cm moulds (if using a metal tray, grease/line with paper muffin cases)

METHOD:

- Preheat oven to 160 °C (320 °F).
- Coarsely grate the apple, including the peel.
- In a large bowl, mix all the ingredients, except the raspberries, blueberries, and topping; stir to combine. Stir in the fruit, gently. Divide between 12 muffin moulds; smooth with the back of a spoon.
- Mix topping ingredients and sprinkle over. Bake 35-40 minutes until firm on top. Wait until cool to remove from the moulds – the poffins will firm up slightly.
- Eat warm, or refrigerate and consume within three days.

VARIATIONS:

- Try using other seasonal fruit such as pears, peaches, nectarines, apricots, strawberries or figs instead of raspberries and blueberries. Chop larger fruit into 1-2cm chunks.
- For an even richer muffin, you could use fruit yogurt instead of plain.
- If you want to make this as a traybake, use a rectangular tin 25 x 20cm, line with baking parchment, and bake for 10-20 minutes longer. It will be quite sticky when sliced into chunks, so in this form, it's more of an eat-at-home treat than an on-the-go adventure snack. ➤





Chocolate peanut butter cups

An oatly muffin version of the famous candy! When you take them outside as adventure snacks, the peanut-butter filling won't make a mess of the wrapping or your pocket.

INGREDIENTS:

- 400g (1½ cups) natural yogurt (dairy/ plant-based)
- 100g (scant ⅓ cup) runny honey (or maple syrup)
- ¼ tsp powdered vanilla bean (natural)
- ¼ tsp salt
- 60g (½ cup) pure cocoa powder (unsweetened)
- 200g (2 packed cups) fine oatflakes (quick-cooking oats)
- 2tsp baking powder
- 120g (½ cup) peanut butter (I prefer

crunchy, but each to their own! Any kind of PB works well)

- Optional: extra salt to taste
- Optional crunchy topping: 50g salted peanuts

EQUIPMENT:

- Sieve
- Silicone muffin tray with 12 x 7 cm moulds (if using a metal tray, grease/ line with paper muffin cases)

METHOD:

- Preheat oven to 160°C (320°F).
- In a large bowl, mix the yogurt, honey, vanilla, and salt. Sift in the cocoa and combine until no lumps remain. Stir in the oats and baking powder.
- Divide ¾ of the chocolate oat mix between the muffin forms, then make a small hole in each centre (use the back of a teaspoon). Divide the peanut butter between the muffins to fill the hollow centres (approximately 1 heaped teaspoon in each).
- Sprinkle with extra salt if you like. Cover with the rest of the chocolate oat mix; smooth with the back of a spoon. For a crunchy topping, chop the peanuts and sprinkle over.
- Bake 40-45 minutes until firm on top. Wait until cool to remove from the tray – the muffins will firm up slightly. Store in the refrigerator and eat within three days.

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