

# Natural Lifestyle

LOVE LIFE, LIVE WELL – NATURALLY

www.mynaturallifestyle.com July/August 2026



**BRAIN FUEL**  
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your brain sharp

**CHOLESTEROL  
CONTROL**  
Learn how to keep your  
levels in balance



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Establishing healthy habits in the young

**Plus** »

◆ YOUR SUMMER HOLIDAY ESSENTIALS ◆ RETAILER OF THE YEAR  
– NOMINATE YOUR FAVOURITE STORE ◆ HOW TO ADD MORE  
PLANTS TO YOUR DIET ◆ NATURAL LIFESTYLE GIVEAWAYS

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LOVE LIFE,  
LIVE WELL —  
NATURALLY

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# July/August 2026 Welcome



When considering the positive impact that health food stores have on their local communities, you only need to look at some of the comments we received last year during the search for the *Natural Lifestyle* Retailer of the Year.

One such comment in the nomination of our winner, Therapy Organics, epitomised their importance: "Every time I walk in, the team greet me with a smile and help me find exactly what I need. Their product knowledge is so impressive, and I always feel safe in their trusted hands."

In another nomination, one customer said: "Always leave feeling much better and listened too." And finally, another enthused: "They are most often my first port of call rather than go to the doctor, particularly on women's issues as their knowledge and holistic approach is so comprehensive. Lovely people who are clearly a passionate and dedicated team."

And it's such comments which make the whole team at *Natural Lifestyle* so passionate about our annual awards, which seek to offer recognition to the UK's best health store, as well as shine a light on the whole network of health shops. We are delighted to have launched our 2026 search, but we need our dedicated readers to get involved and nominate their favourite store.

All you need to do is head to [www.mynaturallifestyle.co.uk/awards](http://www.mynaturallifestyle.co.uk/awards), where you can make your nomination, and in doing so, you will be entered into a draw with the chance of winning a hamper of goodies from our sponsor, Bio-nature and the Terranova brand it distributes. You can find out more about the awards on page 15, and we thank you in advance for joining our search.

Also in this issue, we have a collection of fantastic natural health giveaways, as well as some plant-based inspiration for some quick and easy meals.

*Rachel Symonds,*

**Editor**

**The best bits**

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



There was some serious pedal power for our Sales Exec, James, who is pictured cycling back from Carcassonne, in France.



Editor Rachel cooled off in the Qatari heat during a kayak trip to the mangroves.

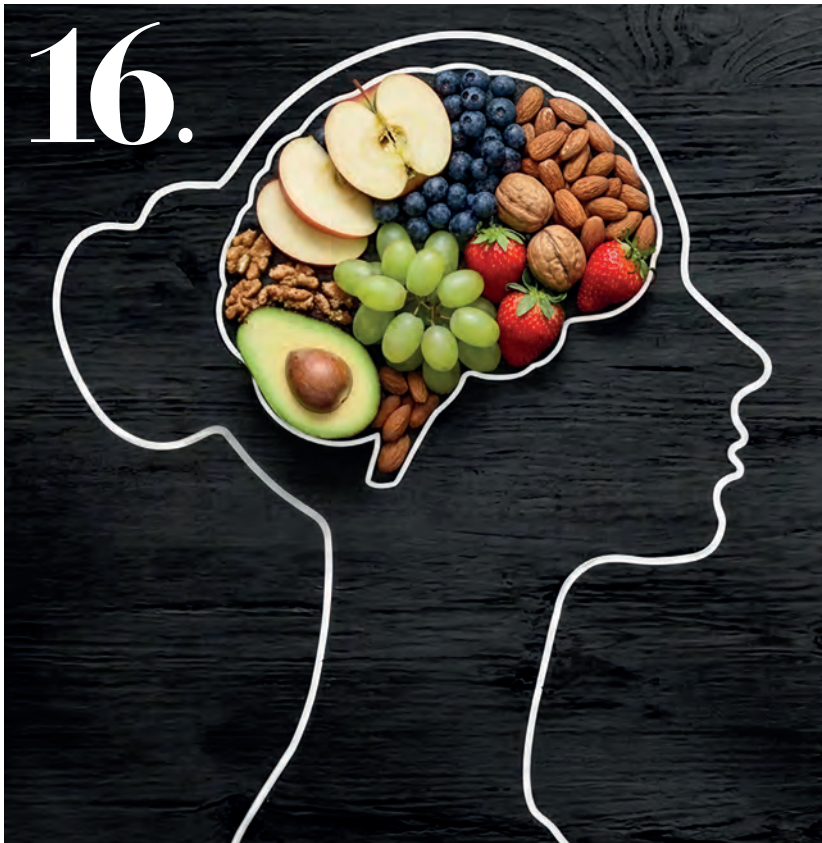


Sales Director, Ruth, added her support to the peace wall in Belfast during a recent trip to the city.

# July/August 2026

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VISIT OUR WEBSITE [www.mynaturallifestyle.com](http://www.mynaturallifestyle.com)



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## Making connections with soil and the gut

A leading nutritionist has penned a new book to educate people around the vital connections between soil, food, and gut health.

*Soil to Gut* has been written by Dr Lucy Williamson to provide clarity and much-needed hope in a time where we're bombarded with nutrition misinformation that leaves us confused and frustrated, and where dire warnings about what we're doing to the planet fill us with despair.

A Registered Nutritionist and former vet, Dr Williamson observes how our modern food system often works against our health and our farmers, but by looking at what we eat, and considering how it's been grown or reared, we can make a real difference to our own health and to that of the planet.

*Soil to Gut* is a practical handbook offering clear, jargon-free, evidence-based advice. Dedicated chapters discuss cereals, vegetables, fruit, beans, nuts, dairy and meat, connecting readers with the farmers who produce them. Each chapter dives deeply into the nutrition of that food source, discusses regenerative changes that improve health, answers common questions, and provides a ladder of sustainable choices that can be made.



## HALF OF BRITS NOW TAKE DAILY SUPPLEMENTS, POLL FINDS

A new poll has revealed 50 per cent of Brits take a daily supplement, with magnesium, collagen and probiotics among the most popular.

New research from product intelligence business, Vyp, found younger consumers are especially keen on supplements with half of those aged 18-24 taking supplements every day. Vyp's research suggests people are increasingly turning to supplements to improve their overall wellbeing rather than address specific medical concerns. Nearly half (47 per cent) said increased energy was the most appealing benefit when considering a supplement, followed by better sleep (46 per cent). More than a third (34 per cent) were attracted by anti-ageing benefits, while 29 per cent cited reduced anxiety and 26 per cent improved focus.

Multivitamins remain the nation's most widely used supplement, taken by 40 per cent of users, but Brits are increasingly turning to products linked to specific wellness concerns. Magnesium is the second most popular supplement (24 per cent), reflecting growing demand for better sleep and stress relief. Omega 3 (22 per cent), probiotics (18 per cent) and collagen (18 per cent) follow, highlighting rising interest in gut health, cognitive function and skin health, while protein powders (14 per cent) point to the continued influence of fitness and high-protein diets.

## Easing chemical concern

A new at-home test is helping Brits measure their exposure to common environmental chemicals.

UK-based testing brand, lastinghealth, has launched Everyday Chemical Test, designed to help measure exposure to chemicals in our environment. The test screens a single urine sample for 27 metabolite markers to indicate exposure to chemicals including phthalates, parabens, pesticides, herbicides, and VOCs we come into contact with, including glyphosate and BPA.

Founded by Bob Woods MBE, the business was inspired by his experience managing asthma. He explained: "I firmly believe that environmental toxicity could well turn out to be the biggest health issue of our age. There's growing awareness of plastic and atmospheric pollution but far less focus on the cumulative impact of everyday chemical exposure. We see this as the third emerging pillar of preventative health, alongside diet and exercise and we want to provide best-in-class information and testing to help people manage the risks and make the necessary lifestyle changes."

## Research reveals thousands dismissing signs of coeliac disease

A leading charity is urging people to take action after research revealed thousands of people are dismissing everyday symptoms that could signal coeliac disease.

To mark International Coeliac Awareness Day, Coeliac UK has warned thousands of people in the UK could be living undiagnosed after new research revealed many are brushing off persistent or recurrent symptoms as part of everyday life. Almost one in five UK adults (18 per cent) say they wouldn't speak to their GP about symptoms of coeliac disease. Meanwhile, 37 per cent dismiss persistent tiredness as normal, and almost 30 per cent say the same about brain fog or difficulty concentrating – despite these being common warning signs.

Coeliac disease affects one in 100 people; only 36 per cent of those with it are diagnosed, yet awareness remains low. While issues like bloating or diarrhoea are more widely recognised, others – including fatigue, anaemia and neurological symptoms such as brain fog – are frequently dismissed or misattributed.

The new YouGov research commissioned by Coeliac UK highlights this awareness gap: over half of UK adults (53 per cent) aware of coeliac disease don't realise it causes symptoms beyond digestion. Meanwhile, more Brits attribute symptoms to stress or lifestyle rather than a serious medical condition; 18 per cent blame diet/lifestyle, 17 per cent blame stress and 13 per cent think it's ageing. Only 11 per cent know how common the condition is in reality.

Hilary Croft, Chief Executive at Coeliac UK, advised: "This isn't a lifestyle choice or a food trend – it's a serious autoimmune condition. We're seeing people normalise symptoms and ignore their body's warning signs. Signs that could point to coeliac disease. The result is that many people end up waiting for over a decade before they find out what's causing their pain and discomfort.

Fatigue, brain fog or ongoing digestive issues shouldn't just be dismissed as part of a busy life or getting older."

Coeliac UK is urging people to take the free online self-assessment, Is It Coeliac Disease, at [www.coeliac.org.uk](http://www.coeliac.org.uk)



TERRANOVA ENERGETIC SYNERGY – a unique blend of traditional botanicals and a clinically validated, caffeine-free nootropic extract, enXtra, from alpina galanga root, to help support attentional performance. A multi-layered formula featuring additional synergistic compounds for energy metabolism such as CoQ10, creatine and NADPro, optimised by BioSNEDS technology, which increases bioavailability of certain compounds by up to 22 times.



FUSHI TURMERIC GLOW DROPS – be a natural beauty with this creation from the Ayurvedic experts, Fushi. Turmeric has been at the heart of Ayurvedic ritual for centuries, revered for its role in nurturing a natural, lasting glow. The drops also feature saffron, and helps to brighten, nourish and restore radiance.

# HealthAid®



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For five thousand years, the ancient Indian practice of Ayurveda has understood something the beauty world is only just catching up with: that a real glow starts from within.

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No shortcuts. No synthetics. Just five thousand years of knowledge, bottled.

This summer, glow from the inside out.  
The way Ayurveda intended.





## ECO BEAUTY CHOICES

Making some simple switches to your daily beauty routine can help support the planet – and Evolve Organic Beauty is here to help.

At Evolve, sustainability isn't a trend or a single initiative, it's something the brand considers every day, from the ingredients it sources to the packaging the products come in.

Many of its 250ml products are packaged using Prevented Ocean Plastic (POP), high-quality recycled plastic collected from coastal areas at risk of ocean plastic pollution. By collecting plastic before it reaches the ocean, the programme helps reduce marine pollution while supporting local communities through improved waste collection and recycling infrastructure.

You'll find POP packaging across many of the brand's favourites, including shampoos, conditioners, body washes, body lotions and Sunless Glow 3-in-1 Gradual Tan.



## NaturalLifestyle

### RECOMMENDS

Our focus for the top picks in this issue is reviving sun-stressed hair throughout the warmer months.

#### Green People Protein-Boost Hair

**Care collection** – a trio of nourishing hair heroes designed to strengthen, smooth and revive sun-stressed hair throughout the warmer months.

Formulated with strengthening quinoa protein, antioxidant-rich artichoke extract and deeply nourishing botanical oils, the collection helps protect against the effects of UV exposure, chlorine, salt water and humidity while boosting shine, reducing frizz and improving manageability – all without silicones, sulphates or synthetic fragrances. The collection includes Protein Boost Shampoo & Shower Wash, Conditioner, Hair Serum, and Organic Hair Essentials Set.

#### Naturtint Hair Food Masks

– the ammonia-free permanent colouring brand has developed these masks to not only nourish but also revolutionise hair care with four treatments designed for every hair need. They feature quinoa, goji, chia, and purple rice, rich in vitamins, minerals, amino acids, and antioxidants. The best part? They are formulated with 99 per cent natural origin ingredients.

## Get the natural look



Lavera is making it easier to be a natural beauty with the creation of new high-performance make-up.

The certified natural and organic brand has added to its Colour Cosmetics range with improved formulas, lightweight textures, and long-lasting wear.

Developed with lavera's steadfast commitment to natural ingredients and sustainability, the new collection offers a seamless beauty routine, from flawless daytime application to a gentle, effective evening removal.

New to the range is Hyaluron Liquid Foundation; by blending valuable hyaluronic acid with organic almond oil, this foundation provides an intense boost of hydration, leaving skin feeling soft, supple, and never masked. Also new is Satin Compact Powder, along with Melt Off Cleansing Balm, a balm-to-milk texture that gently melts away make-up, stubborn daily grime, and sunscreen, leaving the skin feeling deeply hydrated and free from the discomfort of dryness.



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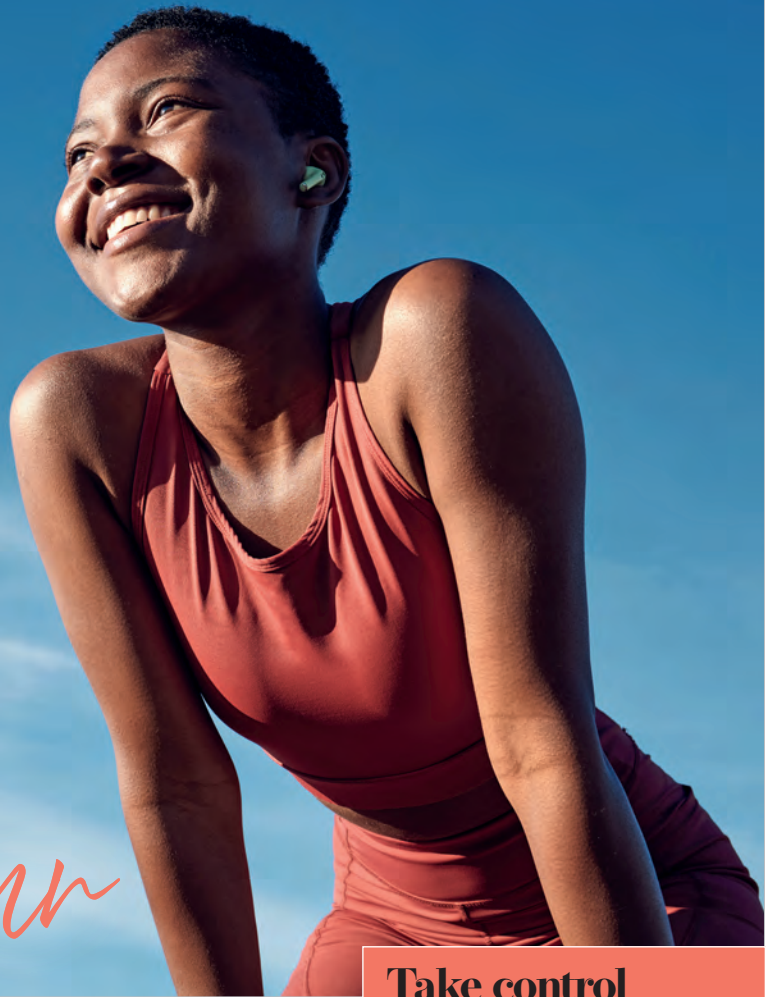
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\* Features Ubiquinol, the active antioxidant form of Co-Q10 that has been shown to be better absorbed.



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Count your

# CHOLESTEROL

Knowing what your cholesterol is, and how to keep it in balance, can support your cardiovascular health and beyond.

**H**igh levels of cholesterol can be a risk factor to a number of health complaints. But with often little telltale signs of elevated levels, it's really important that you know what a healthy cholesterol profile is.

The good news is, lowering your cholesterol to healthy levels is straightforward through diet, with a particular focus on certain foods, and reducing intake of saturated fat. Some nutrients are also beneficial, when taken hand in hand with a nutritious and balanced diet, and being physically active.

## Cholesterol explained

Cholesterol is a fatty substance in your blood that's produced naturally in the liver. While the body requires some cholesterol, when levels in the blood get too high, it can narrow your arteries and cause fatty material to build up, known as atherosclerosis. This can raise your risk of cardiovascular problems, such as heart attack or stroke.

What can be confusing is there are two types of cholesterol: non-high-density lipoproteins (non-HDL) is referred to as 'bad' cholesterol, as it takes cholesterol from your liver to cells around the body. The British Heart Foundation explains that too much and it can get stuck to the walls of your arteries and

lead to a heart attack or stroke. It is mostly made up of LDL cholesterol, which is a type of bad cholesterol; on the other hand, high-density lipoproteins (HDL), also called 'good' cholesterol, take cholesterol not needed back to your liver and gets to get rid of bad cholesterol. The liver breaks it down and it's passed out of your body. For a healthy heart, you need a high level of HDL, and lower non-HDL.

There are certain factors that can raise our risk of high HDL, some being modifiable, like diet, but others include age, ethnicity, family history and genetics, as well as an underactive thyroid.

## Know your levels

There are often no signs that you have raised cholesterol, which makes it crucial you keep your levels under control. If you are concerned, you can have them tested by your GP.

According to the British Heart Foundation, below 4.0mmol/L is considered a healthy level of non-HDL cholesterol. For the specific LDL, healthy levels are below 3.0mmol/L. Meanwhile, for HDL, above 1.0mmol/L is a healthy level for men and above 1.2mmol/L for women. You can make it easier by taking a total cholesterol level, which is your good and bad cholesterol combined. Healthy total levels are below 5.0mmol/L, or 4.0mmol/L if you've had a heart attack or stroke.

## Take control

There are some easy daily switches that can maintain non-HDL cholesterol and keep HDL under control.

Saturated fat raises bad cholesterol so cut back on junk, processed and sugary foods as these contain higher levels, as does alcohol. Foods to instead focus on are in line with the Mediterranean diet and include oily fish, such as mackerel and salmon, wholegrains, nuts and seeds, and plenty of fruits and vegetables. It's also important to be active; at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity a week is recommended.

Your friend to cholesterol is fibre, ideally the soluble kind, which can be lacking in the UK. Fibre helps reduce the amount of cholesterol absorbed into the blood stream. Focus on fruit and veg, pulses such as lentils, beans and chickpeas, and wholegrain foods. You could also try a psyllium husk supplement.

Also consider berberine, which works on blood sugar control with chromium and cinnamon, and positively affects lipids. Vitamins B, C, E and D play a role in cholesterol balance, while red yeast rice contains monacolins, which lower bad cholesterol. Beta glucans are known to lower cholesterol, while coenzyme Q10 can be helpful; research has shown it is supportive of heart health and helps with the side effects of statins, medication taken to control cholesterol.

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[www.nutratea.co.uk](http://www.nutratea.co.uk)



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Food supplements should not be used as a substitute for a balanced diet and healthy lifestyle.

## METABOLIC WEIGHT SUPPORT

Curb the cravings with Metabolic Weight Support! Metabolic Weight Support is one of the first supplements in the UK formulated with Metabolaïd, a blend of natural Hibiscus sabdariffa and Lemon verbena extracts. This blend has 20 years of research and several trials to support its use. We have combined it with chromium and vitamin C, which contribute to the maintenance of normal blood glucose ensuring you feel energized and ready to tackle your fitness goal. Metabolic Weight Support is designed to complement a healthy diet and regular exercise, empowering you on your weight management journey.  
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NATURAL LIFESTYLE

# TOP PICKS

## GOOD GUT HEALTH

A.Vogel Molkosan® Fruit Gut Health is a refreshing daily tonic made with lacto-fermented whey, L+ lactic acid and natural fruit juices. Designed to support gut health, it contains calcium, which contributes to the normal function of digestive enzymes. With a delicious aronia berry and pomegranate flavour, it's a light, fruity drink that's low in calories, lactose free and free from artificial colours or preservatives. Simply dilute with water for a convenient and refreshing addition to your daily wellness routine. Available from independent health stores nationwide. For further information please visit [www.avogel.co.uk](http://www.avogel.co.uk) or call **0845 608 5858**.



## NATURALLY SUN-SAFE

The ORGANii SPF 30 sun lotion is suitable for children and adults and will protect the most delicate skin from the harsh rays of the sun. This mineral natural and organic sun lotion blends effortlessly and is quickly absorbed into the skin, leaving more time for fun in the sun and less time waiting for the product to dry. Enriched with natural and organic extracts, zinc oxide and titanium dioxide to protect against UVA and UVB rays, naturally. ORGANii is available from health stores, independent pharmacies and online at [www.organii.uk](http://www.organii.uk)



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[www.hopes-relief.com](http://www.hopes-relief.com)



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Osavi's Liposomal form of vitamin C is more bioavailable due to liposomes protecting vitamin C from digestive enzymes, oxidation, and facilitating absorption into cells, also making it easier on the stomach. Available at [olivit.co.uk](http://olivit.co.uk)



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# A HOLISTIC summer

Whether you're jetting abroad or staying in the UK, your health needs shift during the summer – and now is the time to discover how your local health food store can support you.

**F**or many people, the lead-up to summer kickstarts prep for holidays, but even if you are staying in the UK during the warmer months, your health needs still shift from the cooler months.

And for the common over-the-counter medicines and chemically-heavy products available for summer health, there are many natural alternatives to keep you and the family well – and your health food store is the best place to source these natural and holistic wellbeing solutions.

## Seasonal shifts

There are a range of ways our health needs change in summer, starting with your gut; traveller's diarrhoea is a common problem abroad and occurs when our usual pattern of eating changes, and we indulge in heavier, less nutritionally-rich foods and alcohol. All of this can upset the balance of our gut microbiome.

The other factor around digestive issues is food quality in the country you travel to, which can raise the

risk of a stomach bug. Don't drink tap water and try to avoid ice and salads that have been washed in tap water as this can add bad bacteria to your gut.

It's a good idea to take a probiotic supplement designed for travel and try to take a little in advance of going. One of the best is *Saccharomyces boulardi*, a yeast well researched for its positive effects during travel. Ensure whatever you take doesn't need to be refrigerated so you can take it abroad with you. You could also consider psyllium husk as a supplement as it will help to keep your digestion regular.

Even if you're not travelling abroad, your gut still needs care as the summer can be a common time to overindulge. Digestive enzymes are a good idea taken with meals, while peppermint and aloe vera can both aid digestion.

In warmer weather, you also need to ensure you stay hydrated; drinking two litres of water a day is advisable in the summer, but you might also benefit from an electrolyte supplement to replenish any lost minerals. This is especially the case if you take part in exercise and sweat more.



## Skin support

Whether you're abroad or in the UK, the summer brings heightened risk of sunburn, and this can have a big impact on your skin.

We would always recommend a natural or organic sun cream as this will be free of undesirable chemicals, such as mineral oils and silicones, which can irritate the skin, especially in the heat. Look for those with certification such as COSMOS or NATRUE as these are reputable labels for natural and organic. In terms of more natural products, brands will use titanium dioxide and zinc oxide as alternative ingredients, while edelweiss can add extra UV protection, and cocoa butter is soothing. If you do get burnt, be sure to cover up, stay out of the sun and apply a natural aloe vera cream or gel to ease the inflammation.

There are certain supplements to consider too, although these must go hand in hand with adequate skin protection and never replace it; astaxanthin may help protect the skin from harmful UV rays, while beta-carotene and lutein have been shown to reduce inflammation and redness of the skin.

There are also more bugs around in the warmer months, and many people protect themselves using DEET-based repellents. Although these are effective, they can be chemically heavy on the skin. A good alternative is a repellent made with citriodiol, which is a more natural solution. Neem can also be useful to act as a natural repellent.

If you do get bitten, calendula and chamomile can ease itching, and if you are going abroad, you can avoid being bitten as much by taking vitamin B1; it lets off a scent on the skin that mosquitoes don't like but needs to be taken for a few weeks in advance for it to be effective.



NATURAL LIFESTYLE

# TOP PICKS

## NEW ORGANIC MATCHA CRAFTED BY HERBALISTS

Discover Pukka's NEW organic matcha range. For a moment of revitalising bliss, experience Pukka Matcha Tulsi Lemon, combining rich matcha with bright lemon notes and aromatic tulsi. Or dive into Pukka Vanilla Matcha Chai, a harmonious blend of pure matcha, warming chai spices, and smooth vanilla for herbal zen. 100% organic and Fair for Life Certified. Each cup offers a calming daily ritual, with no additives or added sugars, enjoyed hot or cold with milk of your choice. Fully recyclable packaging and reusable tin with up to 30 servings. @pukkaherbs for more information.



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Alliderm Gel is suitable for all skin types and is ideal for using on your hands and other areas. The gel is readily absorbed and leaves the skin moisturised. The perfect companion for AllicinMax™ capsules. Available from your local health food shop or call our helpline for your local stockist 0345 241 0505



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# Natural Lifestyle

Retailer of the year 2026

CHAMPIONING INDEPENDENT HEALTH STORES

BACK  
FOR  
2026

## DON'T FORGET TO NOMINATE

With nominations now open for the *Natural Lifestyle* Retailer of the Year, now is the time to vote for your favourite store.

**H**ealth food stores represent a crucial part of local communities right across the UK. Far more than just being a retail business, not only do they recommend products that can support our health and wellbeing, the staff there also offer excellent advice to help their customers better understand their health.

If your local health store has made a difference to your health and wellbeing, we would love to hear from you as part of the *Natural Lifestyle* Retailer of the Year. We are calling on our dedicated readers to nominate their favourite health food store, explaining the reasons why, and the impact it has had on your life.

It only takes a few minutes to tell us how a particular store has supported your health, or your family's. Simply nominate them by visiting [www.mynaturallifestyle.co.uk/awards](http://www.mynaturallifestyle.co.uk/awards). Any information you provide will be used solely for judging purposes and won't be shared with third parties. And, as a thank you for nominating, we'll enter you into a prize draw to win a hamper of goodies from our sponsor, Bio-nature, which distributes the Terranova brand, worth £100.

The nominated stores will be shortlisted by our panel of

judges, with the winning store awarded the coveted Retailer of the Year 2026 trophy, a winner's logo to use and a prize from our sponsor.

Rachel Symonds, Editor at *Natural Lifestyle*, commented: "We are delighted to once again be running our Retailer of the Year Award to heap praise not just on the best health store in the UK, but also to shine a light on the wonderful network of health shops that are making a difference to the health and wellbeing of their local communities across the country.

"Health store owners and their staff work hard to offer customers responsible, qualified advice and to recommend beneficial products that will support their health, and we believe this commitment and dedication should be recognised. If you know a store that you feel is deserving of this accolade, we want to hear from you."

Liz Smith, Director at Bio-nature, added: "As a business, we are committed to championing independent health food stores, and we believe they deserve recognition for the service they provide to their local communities.

*Natural Lifestyle* shares this commitment to health stores, and we are delighted to be partnering with the magazine for the awards."

**Nominate at [mynaturallifestyle.co.uk/awards](http://mynaturallifestyle.co.uk/awards)**

Deadline for entries Wednesday, July 15, 2026

Championing independent health stores  
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# Fuel THE BRAIN



Nutrition and a healthy living can make a big difference to our cognitive function and long-term brain health.

**M**any factors that affect our brain health are, unfortunately, common in modern living; low intake of oily fish can mean we lack essential fats that are critical for cognitive function and memory, while low iron can impact concentration, yet is known to be deficient among Brits.

It is clear, therefore, that focusing on what you're eating, and adopting a healthy routine, is crucial to brain longevity.

Dr Rashmi Acharya, Ayurvedic physician and Advisor to Ayurvediq, explained: "High blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, chronic stress, poor sleep quality, physical inactivity, and social isolation have been associated with a greater risk of cognitive decline. Chronic inflammation and untreated nutritional deficiencies may further contribute to

reduced cognitive performance. Importantly, many of these factors are modifiable, meaning that proactive lifestyle changes can significantly influence long term brain health."

Schia Mitchell Sinclair, Medical Herbalist and Chief Herbalist at The HerbTender, added: "Typical Western dietary patterns (higher in ultra-processed foods, refined sugars and saturated fats) have been linked to poorer cognitive outcomes and increased risk of chronic disease. In contrast, dietary and lifestyle patterns that support cardiovascular health also tend to support brain health. This reflects the relationship between blood flow, inflammation, and neuronal function. This means cognitive health is not predetermined, it is something that we can meaningfully influence over time."

## Know your risk

Age is a key factor in cognitive decline but that is far

from the whole story.

Schia advised: "Increasingly, research highlights that many drivers are modifiable. Key contributors include cardiometabolic health (for example, blood sugar, blood pressure), physical inactivity, poor sleep quality, chronic stress, smoking and excessive alcohol intake, social isolation, and dietary patterns. It's thought that a significant proportion of dementia cases could be delayed or prevented by addressing these lifestyle factors."

Catherine Gorman, Nutritionist and Health Advisor at Good Health Naturally, went on: "Chronic conditions like type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, depression, obesity, poor eyesight and hearing loss have been associated with increased risk of cognitive decline. Studies consistently link diets of mainly processed foods with a higher risk of dementia. These diets are simply not providing the nutrients to nourish the brain."

And Keri Briggs, Senior Brand Specialist at Lamberts, continued: "Insomnia, broken sleep and sleep-inducing medications appear to be associated with cognitive decline, while 44-62 per cent of perimenopausal women mention brain fog or cognitive issues as a major symptom, linked to changes in follicle stimulating and lutenising hormones and oestrogen. Those with cardiovascular disease have a 45 per cent higher risk of cognitive impairments, probably due to the fact many risk factors of CVD are also linked to cognitive decline, including diabetes and smoking. High cholesterol and blood triglycerides are also health concerns that can have significant effects on cognitive function."

## A brain healthy diet

Never has it been truer that you are what you eat than when it comes to the brain.

Schia explained: "Current evidence points

## Understanding cognitive signs

We can all be forgetful from time to time, but this can be an early sign that cognition isn't so good.

Nicola Sainty, Nutritional Therapist and Education Manager at Revive Active, explained: "Early cognitive changes can be surprisingly subtle and are often mistaken for normal ageing. Common signs include increased forgetfulness (such as misplacing items or struggling to recall names), difficulty concentrating, slower thinking, and occasionally feeling mentally overwhelmed by tasks that once felt simple. Some people also notice changes in mood, motivation or decision-making.

"As cognitive decline progresses, symptoms may become more noticeable, such as repeating questions, struggling with planning or

organisation, or mild confusion in unfamiliar settings. It's important to remember that everyone experiences occasional lapses; persistent changes are what truly warrant attention and support."

Catherine added: "The most common symptoms experienced with cognitive decline include forgetfulness, difficulty with problem-solving, trouble finding the right words, struggling to understand complex instructions or directions and feeling overwhelmed about making decisions and plans. These have been all associated with mild cognitive impairment. Progressive problems with memory, thinking and behaviour are associated with dementia."

towards Mediterranean-style dietary patterns as the most supportive for long-term cognitive health. These approaches typically emphasise vegetables (especially leafy greens) and fruit, whole grains, pulses and legumes, nuts and seeds, olive oil as the primary fat, regular intake of oily fish, and minimal ultra-processed foods and added sugars.

"Variants such as the MIND diet (a hybrid of Mediterranean and DASH) have been developed for brain health and have shown promising associations with slower cognitive decline. Rather than focusing on single nutrients, these patterns work through synergy, combining fibre, polyphenols, healthy fats and micronutrients that support vascular health, reduce inflammation and nourish the gut-brain axis."

Nicola went on: "Western lifestyles – often characterised by highly processed foods, sedentary behaviour, chronic stress and insufficient sleep – can significantly increase the risk of cognitive decline. Diets high in sugar, refined carbohydrates and unhealthy fats are associated with inflammation and poorer vascular health, both of which can negatively impact the brain."

Dr Acharya added: "Vegetables should form the foundation of a brain-supportive diet. Dark leafy greens such as spinach, fenugreek leaves, moringa leaves, kale and mustard greens are rich in folate, vitamin K, magnesium and antioxidants that have been associated with slower rates of cognitive ageing. Cruciferous vegetables including broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage and Brussels sprouts contain compounds that help reduce inflammation and support cellular detoxification pathways. Beetroot may improve blood flow to the brain through its naturally occurring nitrates. Carrots, pumpkin, and sweet potatoes provide carotenoids that contribute to antioxidant protection and healthy brain ageing."

"Among fruits, berries such as blueberries, strawberries, blackberries and raspberries are beneficial due to their high concentration of anthocyanins, compounds that have been shown to support memory, learning and communication between brain cells. Pomegranates are rich in polyphenols that help combat oxidative stress and may support healthy blood flow to the brain. Oranges, sweet lime, amla (Indian gooseberry) and other vitamin C-rich fruits contribute to the production of neurotransmitters while protecting brain tissue from free radical damage. Avocados provide healthy monounsaturated fats that support circulation and help maintain the integrity of brain cell membranes. Walnuts, while technically a nut, are also worth highlighting due to their omega 3."

Keri continued: "Polyphenols such as those in cocoa, red wine, green tea and citrus fruits have been shown to improve cognitive function in the elderly. Nutrients such as curcumin, found in turmeric, and catechins in green tea appear to have multiple roles in brain health and cognitive function. It is important, regardless of the specific diet followed, to consume adequate levels of high-quality protein, to ensure a consistent and sufficient supply of amino acids."

### Bridge the gap

Gaps in nutrition can leave you deficient in key

## Botanicals for the brain

Certain botanicals are also important, with Dr Acharya recommending: "Brahmi is widely regarded as one of Ayurveda's most valuable cognitive-supportive herbs and has been traditionally used to enhance memory, learning and concentration while providing antioxidant protection to the nervous system. Ashwagandha is beneficial when chronic stress is contributing to cognitive symptoms, as it helps support healthy stress responses, sleep quality and overall mental resilience. Tulsi is known for promoting mental clarity and helping the body cope with stress."

Schia added: "As a herbalist, I always begin by looking at the foundations, identifying and correcting nutrient deficiencies that may be contributing to cognitive symptoms. From there, my focus shifts towards herbs and medicinal mushrooms that work more holistically, supporting the brain across multiple pathways."

"One area I prioritise is reducing neuroinflammation and supporting healthy blood flow to the brain. Herbs such as rosemary, lemon balm and gotu kola are particularly helpful, traditionally used to sharpen focus and support mental clarity. When it comes to deeper cognitive support, lion's mane mushroom is a cornerstone. Often described as nature's nutrient for the neurons, it has a long history of use for supporting memory, focus and overall brain function."

brain nutrients and it is really important you address this through supplements.

Dr Acharya explained: "Nutritional deficiencies are an often-overlooked contributor to cognitive symptoms and can mimic more serious neurological conditions. Deficiencies in vitamin B12, iron, vitamin D, magnesium, folate and omega 3 fatty acids have all been associated with impaired memory, poor concentration and mental fatigue. For example, vitamin B12 deficiency may present with forgetfulness, brain fog, fatigue and tingling sensations in the hands and feet. Iron deficiency can lead to poor concentration, low energy and reduced mental stamina, while vitamin D deficiency may contribute to fatigue and low mood."

In terms of what is most important to supplement with, Catherine recommended: "Vitamin D helps regulate immune responses and reduce inflammation. Low vitamin D has been linked to Alzheimer's disease. Research suggests vitamin D may help protect brain cells from damage and support memory. Additionally, polyphenols like curcumin and resveratrol show promise as neuroprotective compounds. These plant-derived substances have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects, which may help reduce oxidative stress and inflammation, two major factors associated with cognitive decline."

Keri, meanwhile, highlighted essential fats: "One of the most important nootropic nutrients is the omega 3 fatty acid, docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), found in algae and oily fish. This fatty acid is almost impossible to make from dietary intakes of alpha linolenic acid, the parent compound of the omega 3 group. Studies suggest that to obtain the 250mg of DHA required per day for normal brain function, an individual would need to consume 12.5-50g (12,500- 50,000mg) of flax seed oil. DHA is the main fat in brain tissue and has many different roles to play in improving brain function and cognition."

"DHA is also involved in regulating and supporting the synthesis and accumulation of other important nootropic compounds, including phosphatidyl serine (PS). Supplementary PS can cross the blood-brain barrier and has effects on the formation and consolidation of both short- and long-term memory, as well as positive effects on retrieval, learning, recall, attention, concentration,

reasoning, problem solving and language skills."

B vitamins are also critical.

"B6, B9 (folate) and B12 are important for the methylation cycle and therefore homocysteine regulation. Raised homocysteine levels have been linked to the development of a number of degenerative conditions, including dementia. Raised homocysteine may also affect blood vessels supplying the brain, reducing the transport of oxygen and nutrients," Keri explained. "Furthermore, these three B vitamins are also heavily involved in the production of neurotransmitters such as dopamine (B6, B9, B12), adrenaline (B9), serotonin (B6, B9, B12), GABA (B6, B12), acetylcholine (B12), noradrenaline (B6, B12) and melatonin (B6)."

And she added: "CoQ10 supports the production of energy and decreases as we age. CoQ10 appears to reduce inflammation and acts as an antioxidant, as well as having effects on the dilation of blood vessels, via production of nitric oxide. Decreases in CoQ10 and the resulting increase in oxidative stress causes declines in attention and executive function (which defines the ability to plan, focus attention, remember instructions, and juggle multiple tasks successfully) and depleted CoQ10 levels are also associated with cognitive impairment."

### Healthy living guide

Hand in hand with good nutrition is a holistically healthy lifestyle.

Keri recommended: "Regular physical activity is closely linked to a reduction in cognitive impairment and appears linked specifically to faster processing speed, better executive function and memory, and a lower chance of developing dementia. Other studies have found exercise improves memory and attention. There is also good evidence for the role cognitive engagement plays in brain function – the concept of 'use it or lose it'. Taking part in activities such as mentally demanding work, leisure activities (such as reading, crosswords and sudoku, playing an instrument or learning a new language) and social activities are all associated with a reduced risk of cognitive decline."

Schia added: "Sleep is a non-negotiable. The brain relies on quality sleep for nightly repair and 'housekeeping' processes, and without it, cognitive function simply can't perform at its best. In these cases, I turn to calming botanicals such as ashwagandha, holy basil, reishi, chamomile and passiflora to support deeper, more restorative sleep."

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NATURAL LIFESTYLE

# TOP PICKS

## BRAHMI: THE HERB FOR A CLEARER, SHARPER MIND

Reading the same paragraph three times. Walking into rooms and forgetting why. The name on the tip of your tongue that won't quite come. Brahmi has been used in Ayurveda for centuries for exactly this kind of week, and exactly this kind of mind. Where Tulsi and Ashwagandha work on stress, Brahmi works directly on focus and clarity, the herb students have turned to for generations. Whole-leaf, certified organic, formulated with Ayurvedic doctors. 500mg per capsule, one to two daily. £17.99 for 60 capsules. Available at independent health stores and online at [ayurvediq.co.uk](http://ayurvediq.co.uk)



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Created to promote mental clarity, memory and concentration, Herbtender's Focus Drops are perfect for people who want cognitive support without swallowing pills. Formulated by a medical herbalist, this brain-loving blend combines Lion's Mane, Holy Basil, Bacopa, Gotu Kola, Lemon Balm, and iodine from Seagreens® - a portable companion for fuelling productivity and clear thinking. With botanicals dissolved into bioavailable compounds, drops offer fast absorption and flexible dosing. One pipette under the tongue, or add to a splash of water, and you're ready to focus. Perfect for exams, deadlines and when brain fog slows you down. [www.the-herbtender.com/](http://www.the-herbtender.com/)



## SUPPORT HEALTHY BRAIN FUNCTION

The brain is the body's most vital organ and requires a constant supply of nutrients to perform at its best. The demands of modern life, including stress and mental pressure, can affect concentration, focus and alertness. BrainVit® has been specially formulated by HealthAid® to help support cognitive performance and overall brain health. This advanced formula contains key ingredients including Phosphatidyl Serine, CoQ10, Ginkgo Biloba and Alpha Lipoic Acid, along with other essential nutrients that help maintain healthy blood flow to and from the brain. BrainVit® is free from common allergens and is suitable for vegetarians. BrainVit® retails at £22.99 for 60 tablets. Contact HealthAid Ltd on **020 8426 3400** for purchase and stockist information or visit [www.healthaid.co.uk](http://www.healthaid.co.uk)





# Don't let menopause leave you feeling dry

Dry and sensitive mucous membranes are a hallmark of female menopause, but a daily supplement of sea buckthorn can provide valuable relief.

**M**enopause is the natural phase in a woman's life that marks the end of menstrual cycles. It is typically between the ages of 45 and 55, and a lot of biological changes happen as a result of declining oestrogen levels.

One of the most common and often very burdensome symptoms of menopause is the drying of delicate tissues that can result in dryness in the eyes, mouth, and intimate area. This can cause discomfort, irritation, and a reduced quality of life.

## Mucous membranes become thinner

When oestrogen is reduced, the epithelial surfaces of the body become thinner and less hydrated, losing their natural elasticity. Not only is this uncomfortable, but it can also lead to irritation, inflammation, and an increased susceptibility to infections. For many women, managing these symptoms is essential for comfort and wellbeing during menopause.

## Sea buckthorn oil offers relief

One of the promising nutritional approaches to tissue dryness is daily supplementation with omega 7 fatty acids extracted from sea buckthorn oil.

Omega 7 is found in high concentrations inside the berries and seeds of the sea buckthorn plant. Unlike other omega fatty acids, omega 7 has been shown to have a particularly strong influence on the health of epithelial tissues, which include the mucous lining of the eyes, mouth, and intimate area.

## Restores hydration and elasticity

According to published studies of sea buckthorn oil, daily supplementation can help restore the hydration and integrity of dry and sensitive membranes by supporting the production of natural mucous and oils in the body. This is highly useful for reducing symptoms like vaginal dryness, dry eyes, and dry mouth.

In a study<sup>1</sup> from 2014, daily use of sea buckthorn extract offered significant improvement of intimate dryness, especially the itching and burning sensation.

Ninety-eight women completed this randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled study that lasted three months and is published in the science journal, *Maturitas*.

## A natural, hormone-free choice

Perhaps the biggest appeal of omega 7 is that it's a hormone-free option. Many women prefer to avoid hormone replacement therapy or can't take it due to medical reasons. Omega 7 offers a gentle, natural alternative that supports the body's own moisture-regulating systems, without affecting hormone levels.

## Simple and safe to use

Omega 7 supplements are widely available in capsule form. Look for high-quality products that contain pure sea buckthorn oil from both the berries and the seeds, as this ensures a richer omega profile. It may take a few weeks of regular use before the effects become noticeable, but many women describe it as a real game-changer.

• References available on request.

# Ask the experts



## Teenage trials...

by Nicola Sainty

### What are the biggest issues affecting teenage health in our modern world?

Adolescence is a period of rapid growth, yet modern lifestyles are creating unique health challenges. One of the most concerning is the rise in ultra-processed food (UPF) consumption, contributing to reduced wholefood intake. This has a compounded effect: lower intakes of healthy fats, protein and fibre, alongside higher consumption of sugar, refined carbohydrates and additives, can negatively impact energy, hormonal balance, mental wellbeing and development. At the same time, social media shapes behaviours and perceptions, influencing body image, disrupting sleep, increasing anxiety and reducing physical activity.

Vitamin D deficiency is another growing issue. Around 20 per cent of UK adolescents are deficient year-round, rising to 40 per cent in winter, reflecting how widespread the problem is. With more time spent indoors, studying, gaming or scrolling, teenagers miss vital sunlight exposure, essential for normal bone development, calcium absorption and immune function.

### Can you offer some tips on how to keep teenagers in good health?

Supporting teenage health starts with consistent habits. A balanced diet is key; regular meals with vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean protein and healthy fats support growth and development.

Daily movement is equally important, particularly when combined with social interaction to encourage connection away from smartphones. This needn't be structured; walking, sports, dancing or any enjoyable activity can boost fitness and mood. Sleep also deserves priority (no easy task —I have a teenage daughter!). A consistent routine and reduced evening screen time can improve sleep quality and emotional resilience. Encouraging time outdoors further supports vitamin D levels and overall wellbeing.

### Do you recommend supplements? If so, what are important for teens?

While a whole-food diet remains the foundation, a high-quality multi-nutrient including vitamin D, with nutrients such as magnesium, can act as a useful safety net during this demanding life stage. During periods of increased pressure, such as exams or sport, additional magnesium may support muscle function, energy levels and resilience to stressors. For teenage girls, iron becomes especially important once menstruation begins, helping to prevent fatigue, support energy and maintain cognitive performance. A simple GP test can identify low levels.

Used alongside good nutrition, sleep, movement and time outdoors, key nutrients in a credible, science-backed supplement can help teenagers not only meet the demands of adolescence, but to thrive.

**Q** Now I am in my mid-30s, do I really need a separate eye cream and why shouldn't I use just a general day cream for my eyes?

**Elizabeth King advised:** Introducing eye care is important, however, applying a general cream around the eyes can overload the area, causing puffiness, and the potential for milia, which are little white bumps that sit beneath the skin.

The skin around the eyes is much thinner and less protected compared to the rest of the face. It contains less collagen and less fatty tissue. Fewer oil and sweat glands also means the outer protective coating – the hydrolipidic film responsible for protection against allergens and preventing moisture loss – is also practically non-existent. This delicate eye area, is, therefore, prone to faster ageing and skin sensitivity and requires especially formulated care that targets specific needs, is easily absorbed, non-fragranced, and safe for contact lens wearers.

For someone in their 30s, I would recommend looking for a certified natural eye cream that delivers intense hydration, targets fine lines, offers antioxidant cell protection, tackles dark shadows and puffiness, and improves the skin's resilience.

For tired eyes and activating micro-circulation, begin your day with a cool facial rinse, followed with alternating a warm and cool facecloth, applied directly over the eye area for several seconds. Apply eye cream using the soft pads of your ring fingers. Gently press and roll from the inside of upper and lower lids, outwards. These outward, rolling motions follow the lymphatic pathways and awaken the flow, key for reducing puffiness and dark under-eyes.



**NICOLA SAINTY,**

Dip.NT mFNTP mSoN, is a Nutritional Therapist and Education Manager at Revive Active, as well as a speaker at corporate and wellness events.



**KERI BRIGGS**

is Senior Nutrition and Technical Advice Specialist at Lamberts Healthcare. She has a BSc in Human Nutrition and is involved with training, clinical trials and writing, as well as advising consumers.



**ELIZABETH KING**

is Weleda's Skincare Expert, a facialist, esthetician and massage therapist. Elizabeth has designed Weleda's signature treatments, drawing on a century of Weleda wisdom and building on techniques developed by Dr Ita Wegman, Weleda's founder.



**THERESA CUTTS**

is a nutrition expert and an independent nutritional consultant to the allixin-based supplement brand, AllixinMax.

## «ABOUT THE EXPERTS»

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# Ask the experts



## Q What is allicin and how can it support my health and wellbeing?

**Theresa Cutts explained:** When garlic is crushed or chopped, alliin and allinase are combined, creating allicin, part of garlic's own defence system in protecting the bulb from infection and attack. Allicin is short-lived and breaks down into other sulphur containing compounds, considered the mother compound in garlic. It is also what gives garlic its strong smell.

Being short lived, it needs to be stabilised to be viable in a supplement using a unique process that preserves the integrity and activity of the allicin. Many garlic supplements contain very little, if any, allicin. Some supplements are labelled as having 'allicin potential', meaning your body may be able to gain some from digesting the tablet. However, the digestive system will often destroy it.

Stabilised allicin supplements survive the digestive tract, allowing the body to utilise the allicin. It is virtually odourless and can be used in capsules and liquids, as well as creams and gels for topical application.

Alliin has been studied for its benefits since the 1940s, with much of the focus on the antibacterial and antiviral activity. Other studies have looked at the effect of allicin on shortening the duration of the common cold and reducing reinfection and most recently one looking at the effect of allicin on *Neisseria gonorrhoea*<sup>1</sup>

Many users take a capsule as part of their daily wellness regime and it is safe to take every day. Just one capsule a day will provide approximately as much allicin as present in 40 bulbs of garlic!

● Reference available on request.

## Fibre fact-finding...

by Keri Briggs

### What are the different types of fibre, and what roles does it play in our health?

When most people think of fibre, they think of prunes and bran. But there are a variety of forms of fibre, all of which have different benefits in the body. The main forms are insoluble and soluble fibre, prebiotic fibre and resistant starches.

Insoluble fibre, found in wholegrains, fruit and vegetable skins and nuts and seeds, remains intact in the gut, making it a useful option for bulking up waste materials and maintaining regularity. Soluble fibre, found in oats, fruits and legumes, dissolves to form a gel, which has effects on feelings of fullness, as well as supporting blood sugar control and normal cholesterol. Cooling foods such as potatoes, rice and pasta and consuming them cold actually turns much of the digestible starch into a much more resistant form, which acts in a similar way to fibre.

### How common is it to be low in fibre, and what are the reasons for this?

Fibre is considered to be at least as important as protein when it comes to general health but 90 per cent of UK adults fail to meet the 30g

recommendation. This can be at least partly attributed to a reliance on processed foods and grains and low fruit and vegetable intakes.

### How can people top up their fibre intake?

There are many supplements offering a quick fix, with fibre gummies for sale. But these are often low in fibre, providing 1-2.5g per gummy, loaded with sweeteners or sugar and only provide one form of fibre.

So, what is the alternative? Fibre-maxxing has been the buzz word in the last few months with people trying to cram as much fibre into their meals as possible, which can cause some digestive discomfort. Some people are preferring 'fibre-layering' – moving towards a greater variety of fibre-rich foods and ensuring that all forms – insoluble and soluble fibre, prebiotic fibre and resistant starches – are all included for maximum benefits with less of the side effects that a sudden increase in fibre can cause. Including a wide range of different fibre sources can also increase the diversity of the gut microbiome, which in turn has been reported to be useful for both general health and specific concerns.

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# NUTRITION

Good nutrition must begin from an early age to ensure children can thrive as they grow. Here, our natural health experts explain how.

*foundations*



Children in our modern age face certain health challenges that a generation ago simply didn't exist. For one, we have the concerning effects that western diets are having on children, with rates of obesity and overweight in the young at a worrying level. Then we have the mental health impacts of excessive social media use, not to mention the effects the pandemic had.

We should also consider the impact the cost-of-living crisis has had on children's diets, as Keri Briggs, Senior Brand Specialist at Lamberts, pointed out: "A report by Barnardos indicates over 50 per cent of parents have cut their spending on food, with one in five unable to provide sufficient food for their children. An increased reliance on food banks will often limit children's diets to more processed, long-life food and cause significant disruptions to children's access to balanced nutrition."

Will Jordan, Nutrition Advisor at Viridian, continued: "Obesity and overweight issues are alarming, with statistics from the National Child Measurement Programme revealing one in five of reception-aged children and almost two in five year 6 students fall into these two categories. Alongside this, there has been a

rise in allergies in children. There are various hypotheses for this, from early-life antibiotic use disrupting microbiome development, increased indoor living, vitamin D deficiencies, timing of introduction of solid foods, and higher awareness and better diagnosis of these allergies. The mental health of children has seen a drastic worsening, with a 65 per cent rise in mental health hospital admissions since 2012. Approximately one in five children aged eight-16 likely have a mental health issue.

"From the 1970s-90s there were large improvements to children's health, including in nutrition and health outcomes, however, in the 2000s, these improvements began to stagnate, and from the mid-2010s, a drastic worsening and step backwards has been seen. Obesity, mental health, chronic conditions, and preventable diseases have exponentially grown.

"An issue associated with worsening of health is the decline in physical activity levels. There is no one reason causing this. In the 1970s, schools had on average five hours per week of games lessons. In 2025, this had declined to 90 minutes. Increased screen time and digital living have both contributed to the decline of physical activity."

## The health picture

There are some key concerns affecting children's health and a range of reasons why.

Will explained: "Poor eating habits established from a young age, such as 'finish your plate' set the expectation to eat past the point of being full and normalise over-eating in later life. Portion control is important for parents to learn to properly gauge how much their child should be eating and promote helpful eating behaviours. Poor sleep can negatively impact children's immune systems, and is linked with increased frequency of infections, and slower recovery. There is no one cause for poor sleep, but increased screen time is a factor, especially before bed. Increased screen time is linked to an increase of myopia, near sightedness, among children."

Alice Bradshaw, Head of Nutrition Education and Information at Terranova, went on: "Modern routines strongly shape how children eat, move, sleep, and recover. Prolonged sedentary time, limited daylight exposure, and constant digital stimulation can disrupt circadian rhythms, affecting appetite cues and stress regulation. From a dietary perspective, the biggest challenges arise from frequent snacking, high sugar intake, refined carbohydrates, and low fibre – all of which can displace nutrient-dense meals. These patterns may destabilise blood-sugar levels, influence gut health, and affect mood. When combined with reduced physical activity and shorter sleep duration, they make it harder for children to maintain stable energy and robust immune function.

"A further consideration is the decline in outdoor play, which naturally exposes children to diverse environmental microbes – an experience thought to support the development of a resilient immune system. In parallel, the increased use of antibacterial cleaning products and high-strength household sanitisers may reduce bacterial exposure even further, contributing to a less varied interaction with the natural microbial environment during early childhood."

Slawek Gromadzki, from Nutritional Support/ Research and Development at HealthAid, added: "When we look at the young generation today, the biggest threats to their health have shifted from simple childhood infections to chronic physical and mental struggles. At the forefront is an unprecedented crisis in mental health, with children experiencing alarming rates of anxiety, depression, and emotional distress.

"Alongside this, we are seeing a dramatic rise in metabolic issues, including childhood obesity, early-onset type 2 diabetes, and fatty liver disease. Chronic inflammatory conditions like asthma, severe eczema, and food allergies are also high. Furthermore, neurodevelopmental hurdles like ADHD and autism are diagnosed more frequently, while severe tooth decay remains one of the top reasons young children are admitted to hospital. Today, medicine is overwhelmed by long-term, lifestyle-driven, and environmental conditions. The rapid rise of smartphones and social media has fundamentally altered childhood, replacing outdoor play with screen time and severely disrupting sleep cycles, which fuels the mental health crisis. The modern environment has also become so chemically altered that children's immune systems are becoming hypersensitive, leading to the modern allergy epidemic we see today."

## Nutrition gaps

Children require a steady intake of nutrients to fuel growth, repair, and brain function, among much more. But there is concern that youngsters can be lacking. ▶

## CHILDREN'S HEALTH

Keri explained: "The recent National Diet and Nutrition Survey highlights some of the biggest obstacles regarding nutrition for children in the UK in recent years:

- **Low fibre:** Only 14 per cent of children aged four to 10, and four per cent of those aged 11 to 18 are meeting the recommended fibre intake.

- **Saturated fat:** This contributes 12.5 per cent of energy intake for children aged 18 months to 18. Notably, 85 per cent of children failed to keep to the UK government's recommended limit of 10 per cent of total energy intake from saturated fats.

- **Free-sugar:** The average intake of free-sugars was 10.5 per cent of the total energy intake for children, which is over double the recommended percentage of five per cent the government suggests.

- **Limited dietary diversity:** There is a high reliance on cereals and cereal products, and it was the highest energy contributor, with 39 per cent of energy intake from this food group in children aged 18 months to three. This highlights a lack of dietary diversity, and a reliance on processed foods.

"Excessive sugar consumption is linked to obesity and can lead to conditions such as type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease in adulthood. Moreover, a lack of dietary diversity may restrict essential nutrients necessary for proper growth and development, potentially causing deficiencies that could impair immune function and overall health. Low fibre intake disrupts gut health by negatively affecting the microbiome, which is crucial for digestion and nutrient absorption."

Slawek also advised: "The modern Western diet is dominated by ultra-processed foods, which are industrial formulations packed with synthetic ingredients that completely disrupt a child's metabolic signalling and damage their delicate gut lining. Refined sugars and hidden high-fructose syrups are everywhere, causing massive insulin spikes, feeding harmful gut bacteria, and overloading the liver. Another highly damaging element is the overconsumption of heavily processed industrial seed oils, such as sunflower and rapeseed oils. Because these oils are highly oxidised and loaded with inflammatory omega 6 fatty acids, they throw the body's natural inflammatory balance out of window. When you combine these with artificial chemical



additives, preservatives, and synthetic food dyes, you get a diet that triggers behavioural issues, disrupts hormones, and promotes systemic inflammation."

### Dietary focus

So, what does a healthy diet for kids look like?

Alice suggested: "A strong dietary foundation centres on predictable eating rhythms, whole foods, and balanced meals that provide steady energy and essential nutrients. Regular meal times help stabilise appetite and mood, while reducing reliance on sugary drinks, refined snacks, and ultra-processed

convenience foods. Prioritising a variety of colourful fruits and vegetables, quality proteins, healthy fats, and whole grains support growth, immunity, and cognitive development."

And Slawek recommended: "Building a rock-solid foundation for a child's health requires a dual approach of removing metabolic toxins and flooding their bodies with vibrant, cell-building nutrients. The first step is

to cut back on refined carbohydrates, sugary drinks, commercial breakfast cereals, and deep-fried fast foods that contain damaged trans fats. It is equally important to steer clear of foods loaded with artificial colourings and chemical preservatives that aggravate the nervous system.

"In their place, we must prioritise whole, unprocessed plant foods. Transforming a child's diet

means adding an abundance of colourful vegetables, fresh fruits, legumes, nuts, and sprouted seeds. To build a powerful immune system, which is anchored in the gut, we should introduce fibre-rich and fermented foods like sauerkraut or live yogurt. Finally, replacing sugary juices and sodas with pure, hydrating water, and ensuring they get plenty of essential fats from avocado, cold-pressed olive oil, and clean omega 3, provides the ultimate fuel for their growing brains and bodies."

Keri added: "Fruit and vegetable intake should be increased to five portions a day and ideally would be more vegetables than fruits. It can include dried fruits sparingly and with a meal, as well as tinned and frozen fruits and vegetables and fruit juice (which can only be counted once). Starchy foods are important and include potatoes, pasta, rice, bread and cereals. Dairy, such as milk, cheese and yogurt, or fortified plant alternatives are important for providing nutrients such as protein, calcium and vitamins A and D. Eggs, meat, fish and their plant alternatives are useful for providing not just protein but trace nutrients such as iron and choline. These are of importance in children as they are involved in cognitive development. Fish is also vital for the iodine it provides and at least one portion per week should be an oily fish such as salmon, sardines, herrings, mackerel or pilchards."

Will went on: "It is essential for children to consume a healthy diet from a young age so they learn to incorporate healthy eating habits into later life. Involving children in the cooking process can teach vital life skills, introduce and encourage new foods, build the bond between parent and child, and build healthy eating habits in later life."



### Choosing supplements

There are some critical nutrients children require and supplements are often recommended to ensure they get adequate amounts.

Alice advised: "Gaps commonly arise when oily fish, iron-rich foods, and a spectrum of plant foods are limited, and when refined or ultra-processed options dominate. This can leave children low in nutrients such as vitamin D, iron, omega 3 fatty acids, magnesium, iodine, and fibre, which play essential roles in growth, immunity, cognitive development, and energy."

Will added: "Nutrient deficiencies are a widespread concern, but pose an even greater challenge for children. A food first approach is always best, however, this may not always be possible. Multivitamins ensure nutritional gaps from diet avoid deficiencies. Vitamin D should be included in a multivitamin or as a standalone supplement. It is recommended to supplement 400IU per day. Vitamin D is not only important for bone health but also helps support the immune system and normal muscle function.

"Adequate vitamin C is vital for immune and bone health, as well as other areas. Magnesium should be considered, as a significant proportion of children do not meet recommended amounts. A liquid magnesium is an easy form and

can be mixed into cold drinks. This may support energy or sleep.

"Omega 3 fatty acids, EPA and DHA, are crucial for brain development and cognitive function. Omega oils also support eye health and is linked to reduced allergies. Good gut health is the foundation for a strong immune system, and live bacteria supplements may help maintain a balanced gut microbiome, supporting immune function and digestive wellness. Brahmi may help with concentration and focus. California poppy can be taken to support sleep, as there is research suggesting it may act as a mild sedative in young children. L-theanine and lemon balm could be considered to help support anxiety and stress."

Keri also recommended: "Folate (or folic acid) is required for normal psychological function, energy production and immunity. If a child is brought up in a vegetarian or vegan household, there may be more risk of deficiency of nutrients, such as vitamin B12."

Slawek added: "Iron deficiency is a major culprit behind childhood fatigue and delayed cognitive development. We can boost iron absorption by serving plant-based iron foods like lentils, beans, and dark leafy greens alongside vitamin C-rich fruits and vegetables, while avoiding dairy or tea during meals, as they block absorption."



Cheer!



Hop!



Smile!



Twirl!



Skip!



Jump!

# Clean Kids' Vitamins

TO FEEL GOOD ABOUT





# Bringing balance to the microbiome

If you want to nourish your gut microbiome, synbiotics could be a useful addition to your daily routine.

**O**ur microbiome refers to the diverse colonies of living microbes residing on our skin and within our gut.

The most common signs people notice if the microbiome isn't functioning well are bloating, excess wind, and irregular or unpredictable bowel habits. Some feel sluggish or run down, or find they pick up every bug going, which makes sense given how closely the gut and immune system work together.

Persistent digestive symptoms, any change in bowel habit, or anything that worries you should be checked by a GP, partly to rule out anything that needs attention; think of these signs as a reminder to look at your overall diet and lifestyle, rather than a verdict on your gut health.

## UPSETTING THE BALANCE

Our gut bacteria feed on fibre, particularly the soluble form, yet UK adults eat only around 20g a day, against a recommended 30g, and only about nine per cent actually hit that target. On top of that, diets heavy in ultra-processed foods tend to be low in the plant fibres our microbes thrive on. But it is not only food. Antibiotics can significantly disrupt gut bacteria balance. Chronic stress, poor sleep, a sedentary lifestyle and excess alcohol take a toll, too.

A large proportion of our immune system resides in and around the gut, so the balance of bacteria there plays a role in how well our immune defences function. There is also the gut-brain connection, the two-way communication between the digestive system and brain, which helps explain why gut

health appears linked to mood and wellbeing. A less diverse microbiome has been associated with markers of inflammation and with metabolic conditions such as obesity and type 2 diabetes.

## FEEDING THE GUT

A microbiome is a bit like a garden; the wider the range of plants you eat, the richer and more resilient the ecosystem you are feeding. A target is 30 different plant foods a week, as research links that kind of variety to a more diverse microbiome. What I love about this approach is it is about abundance, rather than restriction.

A synbiotic combines two things: probiotics and prebiotics. Probiotics are live beneficial bacteria. Prebiotics are the specific fibres that feed those bacteria. In plainer terms, it is the friendly bacteria plus the fuel they need, working as a team. When gut

bacteria ferment these fibres, they produce by-products, such as short-chain fatty acids like butyrate, which helps nourish the cells lining the gut. So, a well-designed synbiotic is not just delivering bacteria and hoping for the best – it is arriving with its own packed lunch, which gives those microbes a better chance of doing their job.

You can get probiotic benefits from live fermented foods such as natural yoghurt, kefir, sauerkraut, kimchi, miso and kombucha. For prebiotics, think onions, garlic, leeks, oats, bananas, apples, asparagus, beans and lentils. If taking a supplement, look for a good range of bacterial strains rather than a single one, since variety is valuable in the gut. Check the bacteria are robust enough to survive stomach acid and reach the gut alive, and ideally, that a prebiotic fibre is included to feed them. This is where a fermented format earns its place.

## READER GIVEAWAY

Together Health Multibiotic is made to balance trillions of friendly gut bacteria, kickstart your digestive system and improve health. Multibiotic comes from 36 farm-grown pesticide-free fruits and vegetables, delivering 11 strains of live bacteria, yeasts, and acetic acid bacteria. When it enters your digestive system, it encourages rapid growth of substrains of friendly bacteria. After fermentation, the whole foods contain highly absorbable vitamins, minerals, trace elements, amino acids, antioxidants, and phytochemicals. An additional five bacterial strains are blended, offering a total CFU of 13bn. *Natural Lifestyle* has five to give away. See page 30 to enter.



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NATURAL LIFESTYLE

# Giveaways

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



**Pharma Nord BioActive Omega 7**  
Struggling with dryness, whether it affects your eyes, skin, mouth, or intimate areas? BioActive Omega 7 from Pharma Nord contains sea buckthorn oil SBA24, a natural source of omega 7, alongside omega 3, 6 and 9. It also provides vitamin A, which contributes to the maintenance of normal skin, vision and mucous membranes. This vegan formulation is extracted from both the berries and seeds of sea buckthorn and has been used in human clinical trials. *Natural Lifestyle* has three 60-capsule packs to give away.



### Herbtender Organic Drops

*Natural Lifestyle* is offering readers the chance of winning one set of Herbtender's Daily Ritual Set. The set includes four Organic Drops, worth £118 – supporting energy, focus, calm and sleep. Formulated by a medical herbalist for people looking for fast and flexible wellness without swallowing pills, these drops couldn't be easier to incorporate into your daily routine. With botanicals dissolved into bioavailable compounds, drops offer fast absorption and flexible dosing. Alcohol-free, great tasting, the range is 100 per cent organic and suitable from age 12 upwards. *Natural Lifestyle* has never been simpler.



### AYURVEDIQ MIND BUNDLE

Some days your thoughts race and your focus drifts. Two of Ayurveda's most treasured herbs can help. Brahmi has been turned to for centuries by students and thinkers for memory, focus and clear thinking. Tulsi, known as holy basil, is valued for easing everyday stress and bringing a steady sense of calm. Brought into your daily routine, they support a mind that feels sharper and more settled. Both are 100 per cent certified organic, vegan and free from fillers. Three winners will each receive an Organic Brahmi and Organic Tulsi duo, worth £34.

### A.VOGEL YARROW HERBAL BITTERS COMPLEX

*Natural Lifestyle* has teamed up with A.Vogel to offer readers the chance of winning one of 15 bottles of the brand's Yarrow Herbal Bitters Complex oral drops. This complex is made up of extracts of organically grown yarrow, dandelion, lemon balm, gentian and blessed thistle. Take the dose in a little water before meals. It is the distinctive, bitter taste of the yarrow herb which makes this a great option before meals. Suitable from the age of two and above.



**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: September 1, 2026. Or you can enter online – visit [www.mynaturallifestyle.com](http://www.mynaturallifestyle.com)

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# PLANT

*powered*

Henry Firth and Ian Theasby make cooking with plants easier with a selection of healthy dishes from their new book, *BOSH! More Plants*.

## Coconut, basil and broccoli noodle broth (with spicy peanut rayu)

A fragrant, feel-good noodle soup with a creamy coconut and basil broth, zingy aromatics, and just-charred long-stem broccoli, then finished with a punchy peanut rayu for extra heat and crunch. It's comforting, nourishing, and full of vibrant, slurp-able goodness.

**Serves 2**

**Plant points per portion: 7**

### INGREDIENTS:

- 4 banana shallots
- 4 garlic cloves
- 5cm (2in) piece of fresh ginger
- 400g (14oz) can coconut milk
- 70g (2¼ oz) basil (or Thai basil)
- 2tbsp neutral oil of your choice
- 750ml (3 cups) vegetable stock
- 150g (5½ oz) long-stem broccoli
- 200g (7oz) dried ramen noodles, preferably wholewheat
- Sesame seeds, to serve

### FOR THE SPICY PEANUT RAYU:

- 1 lime
- 100g (3½ oz) roasted unsalted peanuts
- 2tbsp crispy chilli oil
- 1tbsp light soy sauce
- Generous pinch of sugar
- Sea salt

### INGREDIENTS:

- You will need a high-speed blender, a large saucepan, a medium frying pan (or wok), and a medium saucepan.
- Peel and finely chop the shallots. Peel and grate the garlic and ginger. Blend the coconut milk with the basil until smooth and set aside.
- Heat half the oil in a large saucepan over a medium-high heat. Add the shallots and ginger and cook for six to seven minutes, until golden. Add the garlic and cook for another minute. Remove half of the shallot mixture to a small bowl and set aside. Pour the stock into the pan and bring to a simmer. Turn the heat to low and keep the broth on a gentle simmer, topping up with a splash of water, if needed, while you continue with the rest of the recipe.
- Make peanut rayu. Juice half the lime and cut the other half into wedges. Roughly chop the peanuts. Add the crispy chilli oil, soy sauce, and peanuts to the reserved fried shallot mixture. Taste and adjust the seasoning with sugar, salt, and the lime juice. Set aside.
- Heat remaining 1tbsp of oil in a medium frying pan over a high heat. Add broccoli with a pinch of salt and stir-fry for two to three minutes, until tender and slightly charred in places. Keep warm.
- Meanwhile, cook the noodles, then drain.
- Divide the coconut basil mixture between your serving bowls, then pour in the hot broth. Add the cooked noodles and top with the charred broccoli. Drizzle generously with the peanut rayu and sprinkle with sesame seeds. Serve with lime wedges for squeezing over.



## Creamy, leek and butter bean fillo pie

This golden fillo pie is creamy, savoury, and full of goodness. The leeks, beans, and coconut milk make the filling rich and comforting, while the crisp fillo pastry topping adds a satisfying crunch.

**Serves 4**

**Plant points per portion: 8.25**

### INGREDIENTS:

#### For the filling:

- 3 large leeks
- 3 garlic cloves
- 1 unwaxed lemon
- 2 x 400g (14oz) cans butter beans
- 2tbsp olive oil
- Pinch of sea salt, plus extra to season
- 2tsp dried thyme
- 2tbsp plain flour
- 250ml (1 cup, plus 1tbsp) vegetable stock
- 400g (14oz) can coconut milk

- 2tbsp white miso
- 2tbsp nooch (aka nutritional yeast), optional, for extra savoury flavour
- 100g (3½ oz) baby spinach leaves
- Freshly ground black pepper

### FOR THE FILO TOPPING:

- 4-5 sheets plant-based fillo pastry
- 2tbsp olive oil
- 1tbsp fennel seeds

### TO SERVE:

- Parsley leaves
- Salad or seasonal greens

### METHOD:

- You will need a large, deep, ovenproof frying pan. Preheat your oven to 220°C (200°C fan/425°F/Gas 7).
- Prep filling ingredients. Finely slice the leeks. Peel and mince the garlic. Zest and juice the lemon. Drain and rinse the butter beans.
- Cook filling base. Heat the olive oil in a large, deep, ovenproof pan over a medium heat. Add the leeks and a pinch of salt and cook for five minutes, stirring often, until soft and translucent. Add the garlic and thyme and cook for another minute.
- Build sauce. Add the flour and cook one minute, stirring. Gradually, pour in the stock, stirring to avoid any lumps forming. Add the coconut milk, miso, and nooch, if using, then season with salt and pepper. Simmer the sauce for five minutes, until smooth and thickened. Tip in the butter beans and spinach, stir, and cook until the leaves wilt and the beans are heated through. Add the lemon juice and zest. Taste and season with extra salt and pepper, if needed.
- Remove the pan from the heat. Scrunch each sheet of fillo loosely and arrange them over the filling until they cover the top. Brush or spray with olive oil and sprinkle with fennel seeds.
- Transfer the pan to the preheated oven and bake for 18 minutes, or until the fillo is crisp and golden. Chop the parsley and scatter over the top of the pie before serving with a salad or seasonal greens on the side.

## Ginger and berry black bean brownies

Brownies with benefits. These rich, fudgy bites are packed with protein and fibre. Their plain chocolatey flavour is lifted by warming ginger and bursts of juicy blackberry. Curious, but undeniably delicious.

Serves 16

Plant points per portion: 4.25

### INGREDIENTS:

- 110g (3¾ oz) crystallized ginger
- 100g (3½ oz) 70% plain chocolate
- 90g (3¼ oz) rolled oats
- Large pinch of sea salt
- 45g (1½ oz) cocoa powder
- 1tsp baking powder
- 400g (14oz) can black beans
- 240ml (1 cup) plant-based milk
- 5tbsp coconut oil, plus extra for greasing
- 100g (3½ oz) maple (or agave) syrup
- 1tbsp vanilla extract
- 75g (2½ oz) blackberries

### METHOD:

- Before you start, you will need a high-speed blender. Line the base of a 20cm (8in) square brownie tin with baking paper and grease the sides. Preheat your oven to 200°C (180°C fan/400°F/Gas 6).
- Prep dry ingredients. Finely chop the crystallized ginger. Roughly chop the chocolate. Add the oats to a blender and blitz to a powder. Tip the blitzed oats into a large mixing bowl. Sift the salt, cocoa powder, and baking powder into the bowl with the blitzed oats. Add in two-thirds of the crystallized ginger and all the chocolate.
- Drain the black beans, rinse under cold running water, then drain again. Put the black beans, plant-based milk, coconut oil, syrup, and vanilla extract into the blender and blend to a smooth, runny consistency.
- Make cake batter. Add the blended black bean mixture to the oat mixture in the bowl and stir with a wooden spoon until well combined. Gently tip the brownie mixture into the prepared brownie tin, spread out evenly, and scatter the remaining ginger over. Gently press the blackberries evenly over the top.
- Cook in the preheated oven for 20 minutes, until just set but still a little gooey in the middle. Leave to cool before cutting into squares. Enjoy straightaway or the brownies will keep for up to four days stored in an airtight container in the fridge. Alternatively, wrap individually and freeze in a freezer proof container for up to three months.



*BOSH! More Plants* by Henry Firth and Ian Theasby. Published by DK, £22.

# Natural Lifestyle

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