



PANTRY POST

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Fairtrade Fortnight

This runs from 22nd February to 7th March this year and we will have some of the many such products we stock for tastings in the hope they may persuade you to swop from those that are not Fairtrade.



We are what we eat!

January saw the publication of 'The Ten Secrets of 100% Healthy People'. This drew on the findings of a questionnaire on health and nutrition completed by over 55,000 people. The aim of the survey was to identify what kind of diet is associated with high level health and just how unhealthy we as a nation are!

According to its author Patrick Holford, "Almost all of the 21st century's pandemic diseases - Alzheimer's, cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and obesity - are now well established to be diet related. The cost of medical treatment, which is often relatively ineffective, is becoming increasingly financially unsustainable as the numbers of people suffering from these conditions escalates. Therefore, the only valid option is prevention, not mass medication. And for that we need to understand the underlying triggers of disease before disease is established."

Two thirds of the respondents reported abdominal bloating and 83% were affected by constipation, eight in ten admitted to being frequently tired, with the highest caffeine consumers having the lowest energy. Those who complained most of tiredness and sugar cravings were most likely to be struggling with their weight.

Some of the diet results will not come as a surprise as sugary foods come out far the worst, as did salt, caffeinated drinks, red meat and refined food. However, so did wheat and milk as the more wheat a person consumed the less was their chance of being in optimum health. 62 per cent of those who consumed five portions or more of wheat per day were in poor health compared to

41 per cent who ate less than two portions. High wheat consumption was associated with low energy, gaining weight and feeling apathetic and unmotivated. If looking for an alternative, then try the spelt or rye breads we offer.



A similar pattern was seen with dairy products. Of people who consumed less than two portions of dairy per day, eight per cent were in optimum health as compared to only three per cent of those who consumed four or more portions per day. High dairy consumption was associated with headaches as well as weight gain. In addition to the usual soya alternatives, do not overlook the more natural goat and sheep, as well as soya cheeses.

The single best food group, most strongly associated with being in optimal health, is nuts and seeds, often shunned because of their fat and calorie content even though three or more servings per day tripled the chances of being in optimal health. The next best was fruit, oily fish, vegetables and water - oily fish only becomes positive once one is eating two or more servings per week. Those drinking at least eight glasses of water per day were almost twice as healthy as those drinking very little. Whereas those drinking very little water were far more likely to be in poor health.

Consumption of sugary snacks was by far the best predictor of poor health for every factor looked at - energy, digestion, immunity, hormonal and mental health. Alcohol did not come up as a negative as those drinking one unit of alcohol per day were less likely to be in poor health than abstainers! For more information go to www.patrickholford.com.

Close your eyes to relieve back pain!

Chronic back pain might be alleviated by closing your eyes and calming your mind.

In a US study conducted by the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC), patients with chronic lower back pain were taught meditation techniques. After eight weeks, overall pain was decreased and physical function improved. Three months later, when the UPMC team followed up on each patient, they found that most of them had continued their daily meditation regime because it provided ongoing benefits in managing pain. There are other steps you can take to alleviate lower back pain too:

The bark of the white willow (*Salix alba*) contains a compound called salicylic acid. Aspirin (acetyl salicylic acid) is a synthetic form of this chemical. Taking a supplement of white willow bark can provide all the pain-relieving benefits of aspirin without the drug's notorious side effect of stomach irritation.

In a placebo-controlled trial, 39 per cent of patients with lower back pain who took white willow bark extract reported a significant reduction in pain, in most cases within the first week of treatment. This compared with six per cent who reported an improvement while taking placebo. The advice is to take 100 to 250mg of white willow bark extract (standardised to 15 per cent salicin) a day.

Devil's claw (*Harpagophytum procumbens*) is a herb that is better known for treating arthritis. However, two clinical trials in Germany have shown that pain intensity, muscle spasms and muscle tenderness were all substantially reduced in patients suffering from lower back pain who took Devil's claw extract, compared with those who received placebo treatment. There was no evidence of side effects from taking Devil's claw in either



of these trials, but this herb is not recommended if you have a peptic ulcer since it can increase acid production. The advice is to take 600 to 900mg of Devil's claw extract (standardised to five per cent harpagosides) daily.

B-vitamin supplements can prevent relapses of common kinds of back pain. In two independent trials, a combination of 50-100mg each of vitamins B1 and B6, with 250-500mcg of B12, three times a day, not only reduced the number of lower back pain episodes but also reduced the level of medication needed during each episode. The dosages used in these trials were higher than those normally recommended. Take a balanced B-complex supplement that gives you at least 50mg each of vitamins B1 and B6 per day. Higher doses should only be taken under medical supervision.

What you do when lower back pain strikes is just as important as the supplements you take. The advice is do not be tempted to lie in bed all day in order to rest your back. Instead, try and stay active and carry on as normally as possible, while taking care not to aggravate the problem. Studies have found that supervised exercise programmes can significantly reduce lower back pain, while bed rest may actually delay recovery.

Physical therapies such as osteopathy and physiotherapy can help to relieve muscle tension and reduce pain. Acupuncture has also been shown to be an effective treatment - in controlled clinical trials, it significantly reduced pain and improved mobility when compared with placebo treatment ("fake acupuncture"). However, a more recent study has found that therapeutic massage is even better than acupuncture as a long-term solution to chronic low back pain.



Are you sitting comfortably?

A recent study from the University of Munster in Germany in collaboration with Italian scientists from G D'Annunzi University, has added treatment of haemorrhoidal pain and bleeding to the growing list of benefits of the pine bark extract, Pycnogenol. With studies conducted over the last 35 years confirming its numerous health benefits against inflammation, cardiovascular disease and diabetes it has well and truly proved its worth as a safe and effective natural remedy.

Considering that over 50 per cent of the population will suffer from haemorrhoids at some point in their lives, the potential of Pycnogenol to ease the condition is welcome news. Commenting on the findings, Professor Peter Rohdewald of the University of Munster said: "This study clearly indicates that Pycnogenol is an effective, natural solution in controlling this common, disabling problem and may contribute to relieve haemorrhoidal attacks and offer pain relief." Prevention can be helped by eating plenty of fibre and fruit and vegetables as well as drinking plenty of water!



Free range is still the best source

If you only needed one reason to eat products from free-range livestock, omega-3 content would be an excellent reason.

Grass-fed animals produce meat that is very high in omega-3 fatty acids compared to factory-farmed animals that are fattened with grain feed. This is one reason why meat-eaters of a century ago were generally in better health than meat-eaters of today. Omega-3 is just one of the healthy benefits. Here are five more reasons to choose grass-fed beef over factory-farmed beef: higher vitamin E content; higher vitamin A content; higher conjugated linoleic acid content; lower caloric content; and lower levels of chemical pesticides and herbicides

In addition, when animals are free to move about in large pastures, disease risk is much lower, so the need for antibiotics is dramatically reduced. But in factory farming, disease is so common that virtually all animals are given antibiotics. Then antibiotics end up in the meat, consumers eat the meat, and this contributes to our society-wide resistance to antibiotics. That alone is disturbing enough, but there is more: *E. coli* — the bacteria with certain strains that prompt severe illness. A Cornell University study, in the USA, found that grain-fed animals contain about 300 times more *E. coli* than grass-fed animals. Also, something about the grain feed makes *E. coli* more acid resistant, so the bacteria



are more likely to survive the trip through our stomach acids. Harmful *E. coli* in grass-fed beef is neutralised more efficiently in the stomach.

Rather like beef, the egg has received a bad press over the past couple of decades. But nutritionally, the egg is a thing of beauty. Alternative medicine pioneer, Dr. William Campbell

Douglass II, considers a farm-fresh egg to be a "perfect food." And there's plenty of evidence to back that up. Eggs provide a powerhouse of nutrients: essential amino acids, riboflavin, vitamins B and D, and minerals, including calcium, potassium, and iron.

By "farm fresh," Dr. Douglass means free-range, of course - which makes a big difference. The results of four egg studies have shown that free-range eggs contained: 50 per cent more folic acid and 70 per cent more vitamin B12 compared to factory-farmed eggs; 13 times more omega-3 fatty acids compared to factory-farmed eggs; higher omega-3 and vitamin E levels compared to factory-farmed eggs; and three times more omega-3, twice as much vitamin E, and 40 per cent more vitamin A compared to factory-farmed eggs

Free-range eggs are also less likely to contain salmonella, the bacterium that is the primary culprit behind most cases of food poisoning. A recent UK government survey of chicken operations shows that nearly 25 per cent of farms that cage their birds tested positive for salmonella, while only 6.5 per cent of free range flocks tested positive, and less than five percent of organic flocks tested positive. The highest levels of salmonella were detected in the largest flocks. Factory farms often have 30,000 birds or more, and the largest farms may have as many as half a million chickens — all kept in cramped conditions if you recall the River Cottage campaign.



Fewer allergens in organic apples

Researchers in the US trying to find out why food allergens are becoming more prevalent around the world focused on apples in their attempt to find out why.

The team found that organically grown apples had two to six times lower levels of the allergen Mal d1. The team speculated that the pesticides applied to conventionally grown apples were to some degree phytotoxic to the trees, imposing stress and triggering the production of the Mal d1 allergen in response.



A quick recap of the benefits of Pycnogenol:

- **Help diabetics control blood pressure:** A randomised, double-blind, placebo- controlled trial with parallel-group design study in 2008 found that a significant number of subjects using Pycnogenol experienced blood pressure control, defined as attaining a stable systolic blood pressure. Improvements in measures of diabetes control were also recorded, with a 23.7 mg/dL reduction in fasting blood glucose levels in the Pycnogenol group, compared to only 5.7 mg/dL in the placebo group.



- **Significantly improves symptoms of varicose veins:** In one study, 40 participants were divided into two groups. One group was given 100 milligrams of Pycnogenol three times a day for two months. The other group was given a placebo. At the end of the study, 60 percent of the patients taking Pycnogenol showed complete disappearance of swelling.

- **Benefits cardiovascular disease:** In another study, 30 subjects were given Pycnogenol, while 10 were given placebo. When compared with the placebo group, those in the Pycnogenol group had significant reduction in venous pressure, capillary leakage and blood vessel inflammation. Researchers concluded that Pycnogenol should be recommended for the prevention and treatment of chronic venous insufficiency (a condition which causes blood to pool in the veins of the lower legs, causing ankles and calves to become swollen, achy, tired and heavy feeling). This research also reported no danger of side effects or changes in blood biochemistry.

Dr. Ronald Watson, (a research professor at the University of Arizona Health Sciences Centre in the US) makes the case that Pycnogenol, 'has the potential to counteract all important cardiovascular risk factors simultaneously.' "".

Provides lasting relief for arthritis sufferers: Based on Pycnogenol's known anti- inflammatory qualities, an international team of US researchers led by scientists at the University of Arizona mounted an intervention trial to test this extract as a knee osteoarthritis treatment. After 90 days, subjects receiving Pycnogenol reduced self-reported pain by 43 per cent, stiffness by 35 per cent, and composite WOMAC score by 49 per cent compared to placebo.

"No other treatment for liver toxicity exists."

A statement made by a cancer researcher - Dr. Kara Kelly of New York's Herbert Irving Comprehensive Cancer Center, in the



US. The comment was made as part of the recent publication of a study based on 50 children with liver inflammation. Each child was undergoing chemotherapy to treat leukaemia. Her statement is amazing because she was referring to milk thistle - a botanical that has been used to treat liver problems for centuries. Despite a century of modern drug development, it has not produced a single treatment as effective as milk thistle for treating liver toxicity.

Though in fact, there is another very effective treatment for liver toxicity - an amino acid known as NAC. All cancer patients who receive chemotherapy need to know about NAC and milk thistle as liver toxicity is one on the main side-effects. Our liver does a remarkable job in neutralizing toxins that enter your body. But the liver can be overwhelmed fairly easily. For instance, overuse of acetaminophen creates a potentially fatal burden.

For 28 days, half the group received a milk thistle supplement and half received placebo. Four weeks after the intervention period, markers indicating liver inflammation were significantly lower among children in the milk thistle group.

Dr. Kelly said that she believes milk thistle will reduce liver inflammation in patients receiving other types of chemotherapy for other cancers. She and her team also plan additional research to determine if milk thistle, taken at the beginning of chemotherapy, can actually prevent liver inflammation from occurring.

Intravenous NAC has become standard emergency room protocol for the treatment of hepatotoxicity - liver damage due an overload of chemicals, such as acetaminophen. NAC as an anti-inflammatory antioxidant that promotes blood flow and enhances oxygen delivery.

