Nutrition I-Mag
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RESEARCH AND EDUCATION FOR TOMORROW'S PRACTITIONER
SPRING 2026

Spring skin

The importance of nutrition and clean skincare

A pollen plan

Latest guidance to help manage hay fever

WEIGHT AND METABOLISM: A GUIDE

A protocol to support clients with healthy weight loss

PLUS: RECIPE SUPPORT TO EASE PCOS ■ *NUTRITION I-MAG* PRODUCT AWARDS – YOUR WINNERS REVEALED ■ IHCAN CONFERENCES – WHAT'S ON OFFER IN 2026 ■ THE ELEMENTAL DIET – A GUIDE ■ READER GIVEAWAYS

The Essence of Longevity

A journey into the cellular landscape of ageing

LIVE SEMINAR WITH ALESSANDRO FERRETTI

Our life expectancy is no longer threatened by predators or deadly infections. Today, it is the lifestyle diseases that cast the greatest shadow over our longevity.

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We'll be transporting you into that cellular world, zooming in on **cellular structure, energy metabolism, communication, repair & renewal**, and delving into mitochondrial function, DNA health, neuroplasticity, and more, with some concepts illustrated by a **comprehensive case study**. We will also examine the rise of '**biohacking**' such as red-light therapy and tracking devices, distilling the evidence and evaluating genuine clinical benefits.

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Seminar times are 10.00am-3.30 pm, except London (10.00 - 4.00pm). Registration opening from 9.15am.

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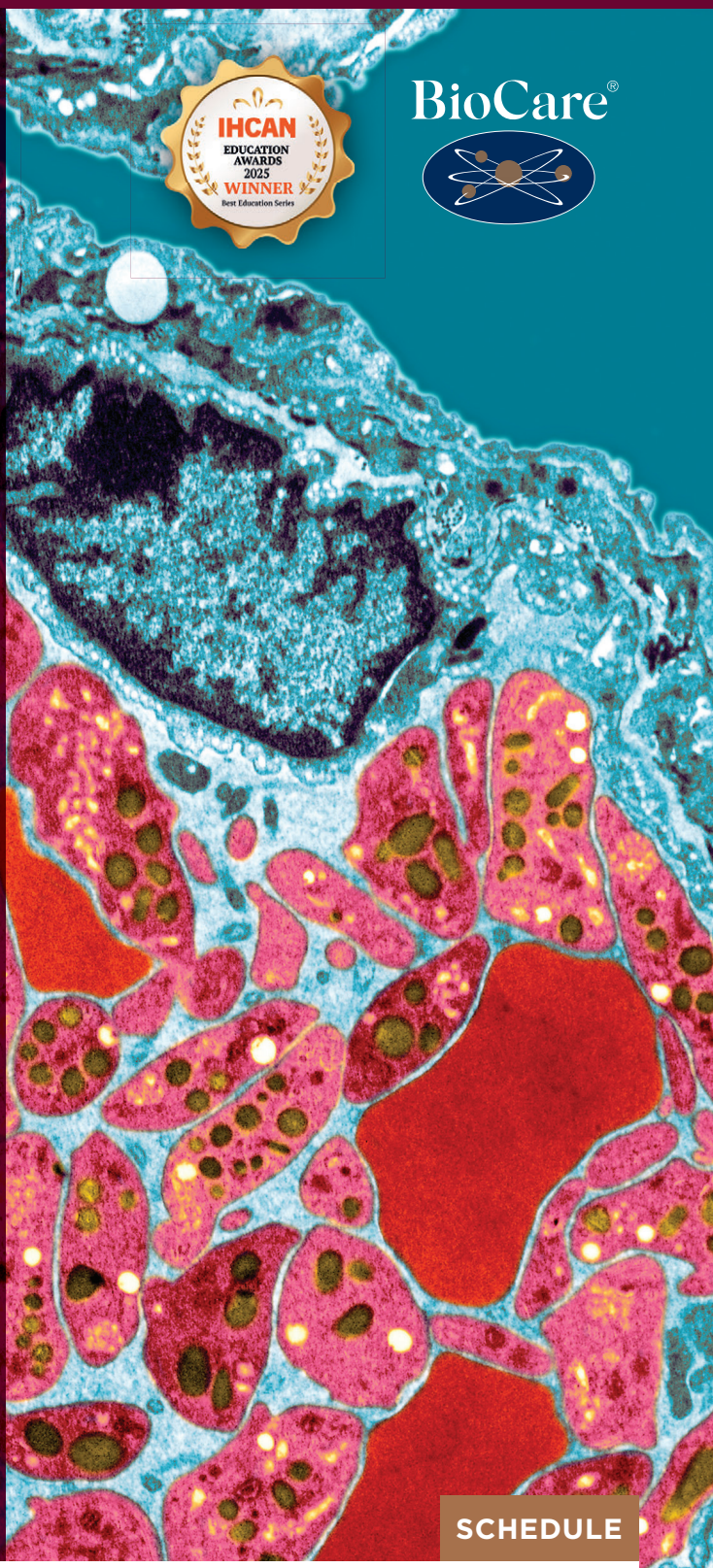


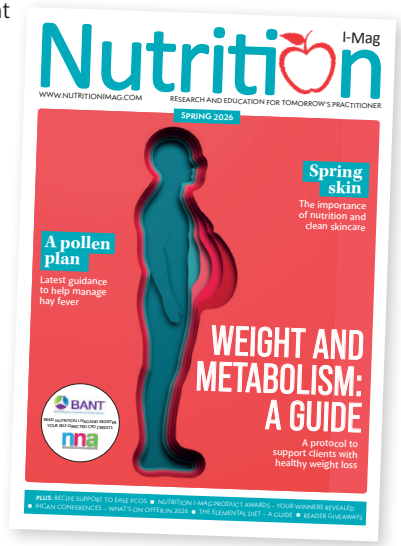
SCHEDULE

3 March	Cambridge	Cambridge University
14 March	London	Cavendish Conference Centre
14 April	Reading	Thames Lido
22 April	Tunbridge Wells	One Warwick Park Hotel
23 April	Brighton	Leonardo's Stroudley Rd
19 May	Cork	Clayton Silver Spring
20 May	Galway	Connacht
21 May	Dublin	Talbot
15 September	Birmingham	Becketts Farm
22 September	York	York Medical Society
23 September	Edinburgh	Apex Grassmarket
6 October	Bristol	Penny Brohn
20 October	Manchester	Manchester Art Gallery

WELCOME

The dramatic rise in the use of GLP-1 medication has shifted the weight loss sector beyond all recognition. While only relatively recently these drugs were used sparingly, recommended by medics to help those battling obesity, today, they are far more readily available and used much more widely than simply by those with vast amounts of weight to lose.

Of course, such medications have an important role to play in the nation's fight against obesity and all the health effects this can have. But we are also seeing a change in culture, in which we risk people seeing GLP-1 medication as a quick fix to weight loss – no matter the cost of health implications that can bring. Do we risk failing to learn how to lose weight the healthy way, how to adopt a healthy way of eating that encourages a positive relationship with food? And what of the risk of nutrient deficiencies if people are not learning about healthy diets?



It is a topic we turn the spotlight on in this issue with our special focus on weight loss and metabolism, where nutrition experts discuss the role of GLP-1s and striking the nutrition balance. And we bring you opinion from BANT's Claire Sambolino, who discusses how we ensure nutrition is at the forefront in this shifting diet culture. You can read her thoughts by clicking **here**.

On a different note, as nutritional therapy students progressing towards the end of your studies, understanding the importance of science-led supplement brands, those that you can recommend with confidence, is an imperative step in your journey. And it is also really important to this magazine to ensure we are championing those brands that are committed to quality and excellence – and we like to celebrate that with our annual Product Awards. In this issue, we are delighted to reveal our deserving winners – as voted for by you. We offer our congratulations to our winners and those highly commended and look forward to another year of product excellence.

Rachel

RACHEL SYMONDS, EDITOR

MEET THE TEAM

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As hay fever season nears, now is the time to help your clients prep their system to better defend against pollen

NUTRITION AND THE SKIN

Nourishing internal health to support healthier skin

INGREDIENT FOCUS

The critical role of digestive enzymes in supporting gut health and overall wellbeing

REGULARS

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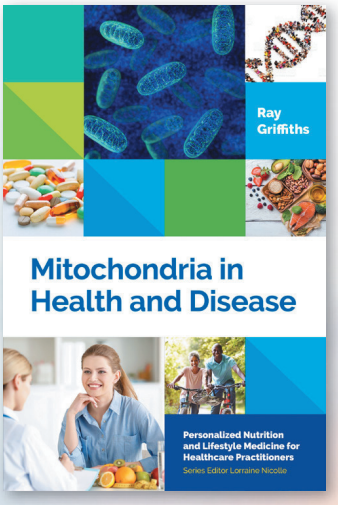
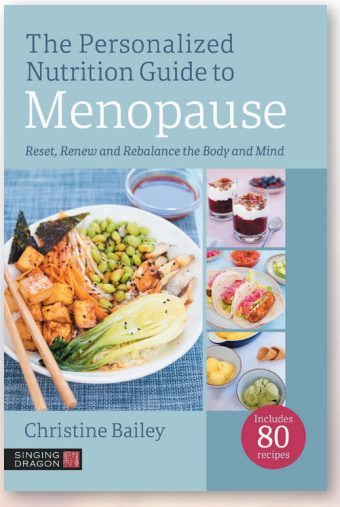
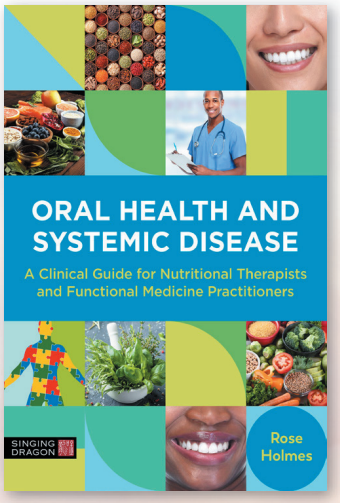
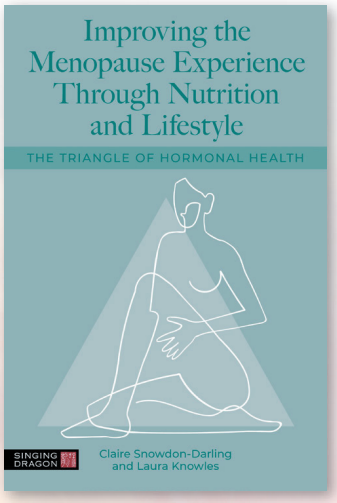
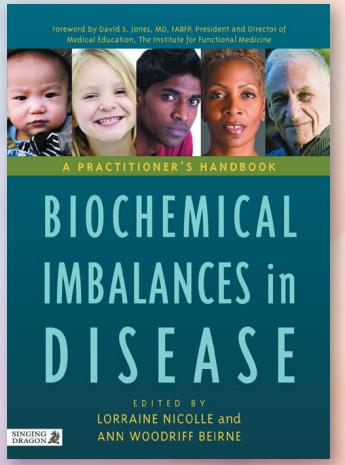
Core books for nutrition and lifestyle medicine study

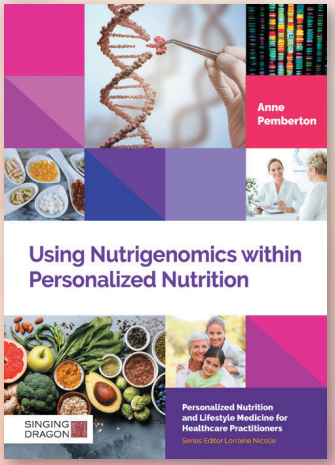


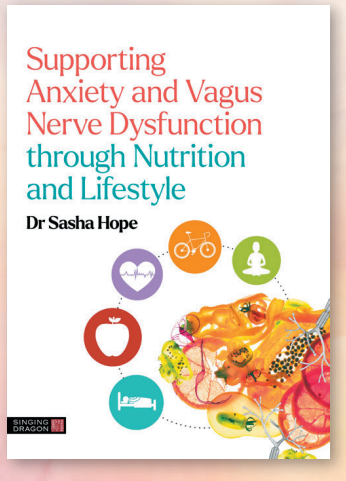


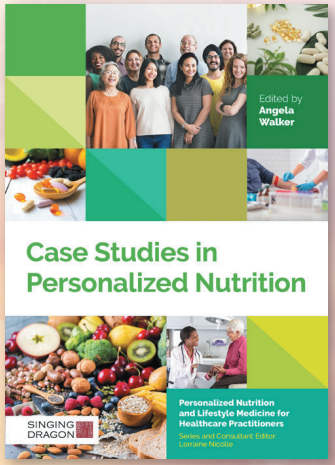












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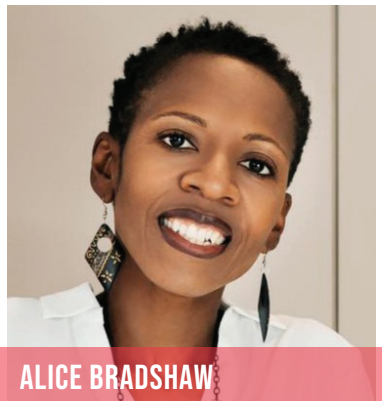
OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Each issue, *Nutrition I-Mag* enjoys contributions from many leading authorities in the nutrition world. This issue, our writers include:

DR KRISTY APPELHANS

Dr Kristy Appelhans, MSRA, NMD, MBA is a naturopathic physician and founder/CEO of a naturopathic medical corporation and private practice. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Clinical Nutrition, Master of Science in Regulatory Affairs, and an Executive Master of Business Administration. Dr Appelhans is currently leading global healthcare provider education and new product development regulatory affairs for the Active Living product category at Metagenics.



ALICE BRADSHAW

Alice Bradshaw is a qualified Nutritional Therapist with a passion for health writing. She has worked in the natural health industry for 25 years and is Head of Nutrition Education and Information at Terranova Nutrition.

GRACE KENWORTHY

Grace Kenworthy holds a first-class degree in neuroscience and is a dual-certified Health and Life Coach. Her background includes working in a health store, where she undertook training in nutritional and herbal science. She has a passion for holistic health, mental wellbeing, and the gut microbiome. Grace is a Nutrition and Education Advisor at ADM Protexin, manufacturers of Bio-Kult and Lepicol.

LINDSAY POWERS

Lindsay Powers is a qualified Naturopathic Nutritional Therapist and Head of Nutrition and Practitioner Services at Good Health Naturally. As well as supporting customers and practitioners, Lindsay contributes to product development, content creation and education.

LEYLA EL MOUDDEN

Leyla El Moudden, BA, Dip Herb, Dip Nat is Head of Education for Enzyme Science UK, and a practicing Naturopath and Metabolic Balance Coach.

SOPHIE BARRETT

Sophie Barrett is a Medical Herbalist and Mycotherapy Adviser at Hifas da Terra. Sophie studied Herbal Medicine and Naturopathy at The College of Naturopathic Medicine. Having learned healing traditions from around the world and realising the importance of living in harmony with nature, she set up her own practice to educate and serve patients seeking optimum health.

PRODUCT SHOWCASES

Nutrition I-Mag's top picks

NATURESPLUS BIOADVANCED THYROID COMPLEX

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www.naturesplus.co.uk - £24.95

O.N.E. MULTIVITAMIN WITH IRON

O.N.E. Multivitamin is a once-daily formula with a comprehensive profile of highly bioavailable vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients and other factors to support optimal nutrition for both men and women. Provides vitamins A, B, C, D, E and K in highly bioavailable forms. With active forms of B vitamins including folate as 5-methyltetrahydrofolate (5-MTHF), the universally metabolized and biologically active form of folate. Provides 2000 IU of vitamin D3 in each vegetarian capsule. Features sustained-release water-soluble CoQ10 as well as the carotenoids lycopene, lutein and zeaxanthin for greater daily nutritional support. Expertly formulated to provide optimal levels of each nutrient.

www.pure-encapsulations.co.uk

GUT-IMMUNE SUPPORT THIS WINTER

Winter brings lower temperatures, dry indoor air, shorter daylight hours and more time spent in enclosed spaces - factors that weaken immune defences and support viral spread. Cold air can reduce nasal immune responses, allowing rhinoviruses to easily invade, while "cold stress" may further suppress immune function. With over 70% of immune cells located in the gut, a balanced microbiome plays a central role in immune regulation. Consider supporting the gut during flu season with Bio-Kult Boosted; a high-strength, multi-strain live bacteria supplement, designed to promote microbial diversity with added vitamin B12 which contributes to normal immune function.

www.bio-kult.com

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www.microbiomelabs.co.uk
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NEWS BITES

A round-up of the news from the natural health industry.

Food Foundation launches campaign urging for action to improve school food

A powerful new campaign has been launched by the Food Foundation, calling for urgent action to improve school food.

The organisation has created a powerful animated campaign film narrated by Dame Emma Thompson and four young people from across the UK with lived experience of food insecurity. The film, *The Lunch They Deserve*, seeks to focus the nation on the need for better school food standards: there are currently 4.5 million children growing up in poverty in the UK and for many of them, a healthy diet is unaffordable.

Last year, government announced that from September 2026, the provision of free school meals will be extended to all children from households in receipt of Universal Credit. The government also pledged to improve school food standards, with Keir Starmer again publicly affirming his commitment to quality school food at an event at Number 10 Downing Street in November. The announcement of the expansion of free school meals was celebrated by Emma Thompson and the Young Food Ambassadors who campaigned on this issue for a number of years. They are now joining The Food Foundation's call for further bold action from government that will create a turning point in school food standards, and consequently in child health, in 2026 alongside the expansion of free school meals.

Mandatory school food standards do currently exist, but they do not take into account recent nutritional recommendations. Another key problem is that compliance with the standards is not monitored, so no one is checking the food schools are providing to children. Youngsters from the lowest income households suffer the most from diet related ill health and are on average shorter. The foundation says that currently in the UK, fewer than 10 per cent of teenagers eat enough fruit and vegetables, over a third of children are living with overweight or obesity by the age of 11 and young people's risk of type 2 diabetes has increased by 22 per cent in the last five years.

Anna Taylor, Executive Director at The Food Foundation, commented: "September 2026 is a huge opportunity to mark a step change in both access to free school meals and the quality of the meals served. Monitoring has to go hand in hand with new standards so that schools which aren't meeting standards can be given adequate support to improve. There are lots of wonderful examples of schools delivering fantastic food to children – that experience needs to be less of a postcode lottery and instead something which all children can benefit from.

"We've seen clear evidence that when school food standards have been updated in the past, the uptake of school meals has increased steadily over the following years. We now have the opportunity to make sure this goes further so that every child can enjoy a nutritious meal at lunchtime."

The film is created by multi-Bafta winning animators, The Tin Bear Project and funded by Trust for London and The National Lottery Community Fund.

Bio-Kult secures certification for menopause support

The probiotic brand, Bio-Kult, has been awarded the MTick certification, confirming its support of women at the menopause.

The brand, owned by ADM Protexin, has become the latest to partner with GenM, a collective of over 130 brands and retailers committed to transforming the menopause shopping experience through the creation of a new retail category.

Bio-Kult has earned MTick certification for a selected range, developed to support women through key stages of menopause by addressing common concerns such as digestive comfort, intimate health, mental wellbeing, energy, skin health and migraine support. Its range includes products such as Everyday, Boosted, Migrea and Women's Intimate Flora, which are relevant for women during menopause.

Demand for menopause-friendly solutions continues to grow, with the number of shoppers purchasing menopause-related products hitting a record high in 2024.

Chloe Oliver, Bio-Kult's Senior Marketing Manager, commented: "This certification is a big step for us, showing that we're committed to creating supplements backed by real science to support women with their health concerns. It's not just about meeting high standards of quality and transparency; it's about making sure we're here for women at every stage of their journey."

Heather Jackson, CEO and GenM Founder, added: "We are so proud that Bio-Kult joins more than 120 brands in the GenM collective, committed to empowering women through choice and trust – to understand, support and serve those in menopause better. United by the MTick, Bio-Kult and GenM are delivering trust, choice and visibility to menopause, truly transforming the menopause shopping experience and driving the growth of a purposeful new retail category."

Britain's fibre gap revealed in new research

New research has revealed that Brits are consuming around half the amount of fibre they need.

Nutritionists writing in a new paper, called *Bridge Britain's Fibre Gap*, from M&S, found that the average adult eats 16.2g out of the 30g daily requirement. A quarter of consumers struggle to identify fibre-rich food sources. It was also found that there is a lack of awareness on the health benefits of fibre, and 92 per cent of consumers want support on increasing their fibre intake.

The research also outlines the key barriers to consuming enough fibre, and what to do about them.

Grace Ricotti, Head of Nutrition at M&S Food, commented: "There is clear evidence linking fibre to improved health outcomes, which is why we're sharing our research and insights about Britain's Fibre Gap, and what to do about it. We support collaboration between government and industry to prioritise fibre-rich products, effective communication around fibre and its public health benefits. Our report includes practical steps to drive fibre consumption, including clearer labelling on pack, fibre-enrichment of products like bread and more flexibility for retailers to make fibre claims so that it's easy for customers to see which products are high in fibre."

Elaine Hindal, Chief Executive of The British Nutrition Foundation, added: "The low fibre intakes that we see in the UK population reflect poor dietary patterns with a lack of fruit and vegetables, wholegrains, pulses and other plant foods. Evidence shows that low fibre diets increase the risk of diet-related disease including heart disease, type 2 diabetes and bowel cancer and so increasing fibre intakes is vital to improve population health. We welcome this new report, encouraging industry to take action to support consumers in bridging the fibre gap and making fibre-rich choices easier and more appealing."

Metagenics welcomes Christine Bailey to the team

Christine Bailey has been announced as the new Education Manager at Metagenics UK.

The award-winning Registered Performance Nutritionist, with over 20 years' experience in nutrition, supplements and health, is one of few nutritionists to receive two Catey Awards within two years for her work in mental health and corporate wellbeing. Christine is trained in Functional Nutrition through the Institute of Functional Medicine and the Institute of Performance Nutrition and has authored over 14 books, including *Five Weeks to Gut Health* and *The Personalised Nutrition Guide to Menopause*, and regularly contributes to magazines, including *True Health*, the sister magazine to *Nutrition I-Mag*.

Christine commented: "I'm thrilled to be part of a science-focused supplement company that is deeply committed to evidence-based nutrition and to supporting practitioners and consumers with high-quality, clinically relevant education. There are some exciting education initiatives and events ahead, with a clear focus on delivering robust, practitioner- and consumer-led education that supports clinical excellence, research, and the ongoing advancement of the nutrition profession.

"In a rapidly evolving and often noisy space, strong education and a connected professional network are essential – helping practitioners stay informed, confident in their recommendations and aligned around credible, science-based practice. Whether you're an experienced practitioner or just starting out, I'm passionate about supporting your work and helping build a strong, connected nutrition community that advances knowledge, elevates standards, and supports one another."

Cordyceps compliance over Novel Food status

Medicine mushroom brand, Hifas da Terra, has highlighted its compliance over enforcement of the Novel Foods Act.

Hifas da Terra said its Cordyceps-based products are not affected by enforcement of the Novel Foods Act, which applies to *Cordyceps militaris* supplements. Hifas da Terra says it uses *Cordyceps sinensis* (CS-4 strain) in its formulations. As a result, its products remain fully compliant.

Catalina Fernández de Ana Portela, CEO and Founder, commented: "*Cordyceps sinensis* and *Cordyceps militaris* are two distinct strains of the Cordyceps species, with different historical data of use as well as regulatory statuses. *Cordyceps sinensis* has a recognised history of use and is authorised for commercialisation for human consumption in the EU and UK. In contrast, *Cordyceps militaris* is classified as a novel food and is therefore not permitted on the market without prior authorisation. Conscious of this situation and respecting the law, Hifas da Terra has always chosen to work exclusively with *Cordyceps sinensis*, in full compliance with current legislation."

Martin Last, Director General at the Health Food Manufacturers' Association (HFMA), added: "With regard to the regulatory status of *Cordyceps militaris* in food supplements, the mushroom is not authorised, and is marked as a novel food in the EU Novel Food Catalogue. Currently, there is no entry in the UK Novel Food Register, and we expect the FSA to adhere to the EU status."

Jenny Carson Regulatory Manager at HFMA CLEAR CHECK, went on: "We would remind manufacturers that the entry concerns the mycelium and fruiting body of *Cordyceps militaris*. It is a species of fungus belonging to the family *Cordycipitaceae* and to be aware that *Cordyceps sinensis* is authorised for use in food supplements and considered a novel food in all other food categories."

IN RESEARCH

Nutrition I-Mag rounds up the latest research studies in the nutrition world.

Oxford researchers find stopping weight loss jabs is linked to faster regain

A new study from the University of Oxford has suggested that stopping weight loss drugs is linked to faster regain than ending diet programmes.

According to the new systematic review and meta-analysis from researchers in Oxford's Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, and published in *The BMJ*, across 37 studies including 9,341 adults, weight increased by an average of 0.4kg (0.9 pounds) per month after weight management drugs were stopped. Researchers estimate that, at this rate, people would return to their starting weight within 1.5 to 2 years. For newer medicines such as semaglutide and tirzepatide, regain averaged 0.8kg (1.8 pounds) per month, with projections indicating return to baseline by approximately 1.5 years.

Crucially, weight regain after stopping drugs was faster than after ending behavioural weight loss programmes such as diet and exercise support by approximately 0.3kg (0.7 pounds) per month – independent of how much weight was initially lost. While behavioural support alongside medication was associated with greater weight loss, it did not slow the rate of regain afterwards. Cardiometabolic markers including HbA1c, fasting glucose, blood pressure, cholesterol and triglycerides improved during treatment but are estimated to return to baseline levels within approximately 1.4 years after medicines stopped.

Lead author, Dr Sam West, postdoctoral researcher at the Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, at the University of Oxford, commented: "These medicines are transforming obesity treatment and can achieve important weight loss. However, our analysis shows that people tend to regain weight rapidly after stopping – faster than we see with behavioural programmes. This isn't a failing of the medicines – it reflects the nature of obesity as a chronic, relapsing condition. It sounds a cautionary note for short-term use without a more comprehensive approach to weight management."

Senior author, Associate Professor, Dimitrios Koutoukidis, went on: "This faster regain could be because people using drugs don't need to consciously practise changing their diet to lose weight, so when they stop taking the medication they might not have developed the practical strategies that could help them keep it off. Our findings also have implications for cost-effectiveness. NICE's initial estimates assumed weight would return to baseline over two to three years – our data suggests this happens in around 18 months. This doesn't mean these drugs aren't valuable, but it does support the NHS approach of prioritising people with severe and complex obesity who are most likely to benefit."

The research points out that an estimated nine in 10 people currently using weight-loss medicines in the UK are purchasing them privately, often without the comprehensive clinical oversight and behavioural support that accompanies NHS prescribing.

Professor Susan Jebb, joint senior author, added: "Obesity is a chronic, relapsing condition, not a short-term problem with a quick fix. When people lose weight through changes to their diet and activity, they're practising the skills that help maintain that loss. It may be that with medication, the weight comes off without necessarily developing those skills. These findings underscore the need for a more holistic and long-term approach to weight management, and increased emphasis on the importance of primary prevention of weight gain. For practitioners prescribing, patients receiving, and people choosing to purchase these medications privately, it's important to understand the risks of rapid weight regain if treatment ceases – and the value of wraparound behavioural support."

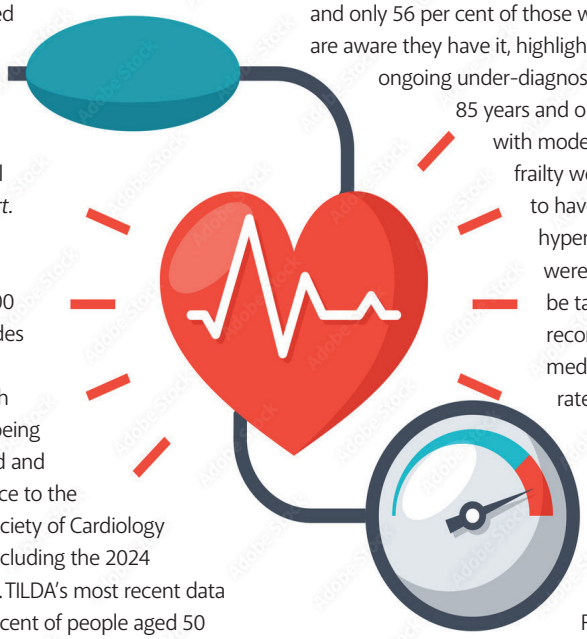
The research was funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Oxford Biomedical Research Centre.

■ **Click here** for BANT's opinion piece on weight loss medication.

Under-diagnosis of high blood pressure in Ireland

New data suggests an under-diagnosis of high blood pressure in the over 50s in Ireland.

High blood pressure becomes more common after age 40 years, yet new research from The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) at Trinity College Dublin has revealed that many people in Ireland with hypertension are still not optimally diagnosed or treated based on European guidelines. The study is published in the international journal, *Open Heart*.



The 12-year longitudinal study, involving over 8,000 participants, provides a detailed national picture of how high blood pressure is being managed in Ireland and examines adherence to the latest European Society of Cardiology (ESC) guidelines, including the 2024 recommendations. TILDA's most recent data shows that 62 per cent of people aged 50 and over (approximately 445,000 people) have high blood pressure that is not being managed leading to serious potential health risks. When the lower blood pressure target of <130/80 mmHg, as advised by the 2024 ESC guidelines, is applied, this figure rises to 77 per cent – meaning more than three out of every four older adults with hypertension in Ireland are not optimally managed.

Drawing on more than a decade of TILDA data, the researchers show that unmet need in hypertension care is not a new problem, but one that has persisted over time.

Other key findings include that hypertension prevalence remained consistently high, increasing from 63 per cent to 71 per cent over 12 years, and only 56 per cent of those with hypertension are aware they have it, highlighting substantial ongoing under-diagnosis. People aged 85 years and older and those with moderate to severe frailty were less likely to have undiagnosed hypertension and were more likely to be taking guideline-recommended medications similar rates of blood pressure control when compared to the wider population.

Dr Caoimhe McGarvey, Research Fellow at TILDA, Specialist Registrar in Geriatric Medicine at St James's Hospital Dublin and lead author on the study, commented: "This study highlights a significant unmet need in the management of high blood pressure in Ireland. Systematically addressing this need has the potential to dramatically reduce avoidable complications and improve the health outcomes for older adults across the country."

Magnesium study highlights power in brain health

Researchers have found magnesium offers improvements in cognition, brain age and physiological stress markers.

Magtein, a patented proprietary form of magnesium L-threonate, was used in a new randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial, where 100 healthy adults (aged 18-45) with self-reported dissatisfied sleep supplemented with 2g daily of Magtein or a placebo for six weeks.

Cognitive performance was measured by the NIH Cognitive Toolbox, while a wearable sleep-tracking device (Oura Ring) provided data on physiological stress markers, including heart rate (HR) and heart rate variability (HRV). Sleep quality was also measured through self-report questionnaires such as PROMIS Sleep, while reaction times and hand-eye co-ordination were assessed by a digital aim trainer.

Participants in the magnesium group demonstrated improved overall cognitive performance, greater improvements in working and episodic memory, a 7.5-year reduction in estimated brain cognitive ageing, faster reaction times, reduced resting heart rate and increased heart rate variability, and improvement in PROMIS sleep-related impairment.

The study was conducted by researchers at Clinical Research Australia, Perth. It is published in *Frontiers in Nutrition*.

Year-long ashwagandha study concludes safe use

A 12-month study has concluded the long-term safety of ashwagandha in healthy adults.

Writing in the journal, *Phytotherapy Research,* the research team explained that they carried out a prospective, multi-centre, observational clinical study evaluating the safety (clinical and laboratory) of a standardised ashwagandha root extract (ARE) on long-term administration over 12 months.

Male and female adults aged between 18 and 65 were included in the study. Clinical assessments were done at baseline, followed by monthly for 12 months, whereas laboratory and other study assessments were done at baseline, six and 12 months. The primary outcome was the clinical adverse events reported by the patients, whereas secondary outcomes were Clinical Global Impression-Improvement scale (CGI-I), health-related Short Form-12 Quality of Life (SF-12 QoL), and laboratory estimations of serum for cortisol, hepatic, renal, and thyroid function.

The results revealed that ARE administration for 12 months reported 18 mild adverse events, which were resolved without intervention. The study reported no clinically significant changes in serum alanine transaminases, aspartate transaminases. Serum cortisol levels decreased significantly, while lipid profile and plasma glucose levels remained unaffected. Serum testosterone (free and total) significantly increased. SF-12 scores demonstrated significant improvements at 12 months, indicating enhanced health-related quality of life. CGI assessment indicated overall improvement in 68.7 per cent of patients, particularly notable in those aged ≥ 50 years.

"This study validates the long-term safety of ARE use over 12 months," the researchers concluded.

NEW TO MARKET

Nutrition I-Mag brings you the latest product developments in the nutrition world.

Nootropic brand launches drinks range

A new range of nootropic drinks to support specific health goals has launched.

VitClear is a UK company offering nootropic drinks tailored for brain health, gut health and active health.

There are currently three drinks in the VitClear range: Brain Health Nootropic Soda in Tropical Peach flavour, which contains lion's mane mushroom, panax ginseng, taurine, L-theanine, ashwagandha, turmeric extract and ginkgo biloba; Gut Health Nootropic Soda in Mango and Lychee flavour with ginger extract, L-glutamine, cranberry extract, prebiotics, probiotics, ashwagandha extract, aloe extract and turmeric extract; and Active Health Nootropic Soda in Guava and Passion Fruit flavour and made with branch chain amino acids (BCAAs), creatine, L-carnitine, taurine, ashwagandha, L-theanine and Celtic sea salt.

The brand was founded by Ralph Burrows, who was serving as a firefighter when he noticed a need for convenient, on-the-go hydration that delivered essential vitamins and minerals. More importantly, he saw the need for drinks that targeted key areas of the body; brain, gut and active health. Ralph teamed up with leading scientists and formulators to find a smarter way to stay refreshed, replenished, and keep alert without resorting to caffeine.

All three products are naturally low in sugar, contain only natural extracts and are naturally sweetened. They also include no artificial additives, preservatives, colours or flavours.

Vitamin D and K focus for BetterYou launch

A new high strength vitamin D and K supplement has been launched by BetterYou.

Vitamin D3 4000iu + K2 Oral Spray has been scientifically formulated for faster absorption into the bloodstream and comes in a peppermint flavour. The oral spray technology has been developed by the brand with Cardiff University to deliver nutrients in a measured dose.

Vitamin D and K2 combine to improve calcium absorption and direct it to where it's needed most: your bones, not your arteries. It is suitable for adults and children aged 13 and over, vegetarians, and those on gluten-free, dairy-free, and sugar-free diets.

Iron brand expands with high strength drops

BlueIron has announced the expansion of its range with new high strength drops.

High Strength Drops are a liquid iron supplement that builds on BlueIron's established presence in liquid iron supplementation.

High Strength Drops deliver 20mg of iron per daily dose (142 per cent of the Recommended Dietary Intake) in a liquid pipette format, allowing precise and flexible dosing. The formulation uses a patented micro-encapsulated ferric (Fe^{3+}) iron, designed to release iron in the more alkaline environment of the intestine. This targeted release approach is intended to support tolerability and be gentle on the stomach.

The formulation also includes vitamin C, which contributes to increased absorption, and Nordic blueberry juice, harvested in Finland, to provide a naturally pleasant taste.

Emily Garfield, Product Manager for BlueIron at Lanes Healthcare, commented: "BlueIron High Strength Drops were developed to provide a higher iron intake in a format that is easy to dose, gentle on the stomach and practical for everyday use. This launch allows us to broaden the BlueIron range while addressing a real consumer need for flexibility and tolerability within iron supplementation."

Australian brand joins forces with Mahi Naturals

Qsilica has teamed up with Mahi Naturals as its new UK distributor.

Qsilica was Australia's first ingestible beauty brand and launched in the UK in 2008. The range started with colloidal silica supplements to support skin, hair and nails and has grown to include vegan collagen, hyaluronic acid and hair formulations. All formulas are vegan with no nasties.

The brand is made by Planet Health, a family-owned business. Managing Director and Founder, Peter Harwood, commented: "Mahi shares our passion and commitment to clean beauty and to providing high-quality, effective products. We look forward to working closely together to grow the brand and continue supporting people to look and feel their best, from the inside out."

Mahi Naturals MD, Meghna Patel, added: "We are delighted to be representing Qsilica and it is a fantastic addition to our portfolio of premium natural beauty and personal care brands. The new additions are at the forefront of beauty nutrition and we look forward to presenting those to our customers."

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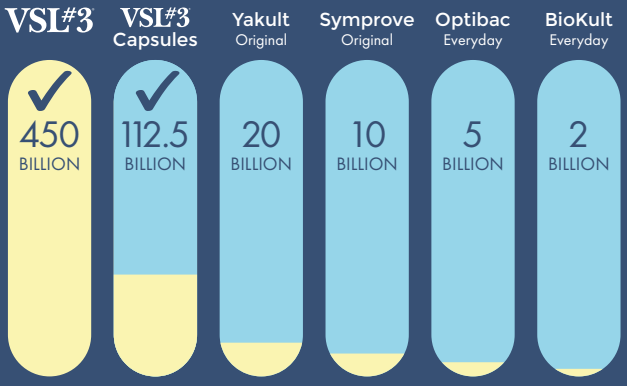
Bacteria per dose[4]



Explore the VSL#3 range on The Natural Dispensary

UK-VSL3-2400033 | October 2025

1. DoxaPharma Research. Data on File, March 2022.
2. VSL#3 Clinical Summary, March 2023.
3. Vecchione A, *et al. Front Med.* 2018;5(59).
4. Based on companies websites accessed July 2024.

A NEW PEAK FOR THE IHCAN SUMMIT

We take a look back at an incredible year or education, and look ahead to what's on offer for 2026.

London's 155 Bishopsgate welcomed a sell-out IHCAN Summit last November, bringing together more than 300 delegates and over 50 exhibitors. Not only did the event sell out, it exceeded expectations, generating a wave of enthusiasm among attendees.

The speaker line-up was outstanding: Lucinda Miller delivered a powerful exploration of immune dysregulation and neurodivergence; Dr Victoria Sampson, BDS, offered a fascinating deep dive into the oral microbiome; Eleni Panzeri shared emerging insights on microbiome testing; and Dr Alex Wilber, PhD, encouraged delegates to rethink the role of AI in clinical practice. Each session brought fresh perspectives, practical tools, and genuine inspiration.

Yet the true highlight of the day was the atmosphere. Across the exhibition spaces, practitioners reconnected with colleagues, exchanged stories of clinical breakthroughs, and discovered new products, tools, and innovations.

Delegate, Catherine Smith, captured the spirit perfectly: "I left feeling energised, motivated and genuinely grateful for this community and the continued evolution of nutrition science." (@catherinesmithnutrition on Instagram).

Her words reflect more than a single event – they embody a thriving, supportive movement of professionals committed to learning, collaboration, and delivering exceptional client care.

• If you couldn't attend, you can still purchase the video and presentation downloads at www.ihcansummit.co.uk/november-2025.

BACK FOR 2026

We're already looking ahead and early-bird booking is now open for both IHCAN Summits in April and November 2026.

• **Saturday, April 25 – speaker line-up confirmed:** Dr Georgia Ede, Dr Jen Unwin, Dr David Unwin, and Pete Williams.

• **Saturday, November 21 – programme to follow:** Dr Nathan Bryan, PhD, Sarah Osborne, plus two additional speakers to be announced.

The team is already working to elevate the experience even further. Secure your place at the best rates at **www.ihcansummit.co.uk/book**.

Join us in 2026 to deepen your professional network, engage with transformative content, and help shape the future of integrative nutrition. The energy generated last November has set a powerful tone – let's build on it together.

Reduce tiredness and fatigue

Everyday life can be quite exhausting but Bio-Quinone Q10 can help you in a natural way. The combination of the vitamin-like compound coenzyme Q10 and vitamin B_2 that contributes to normal cellular energy turnover is the perfect boost when your batteries are low.

Bio-Quinone Q10's good absorption and bioavailability are documented in multiple scientific studies, which is why it is the leading Q10 brand on the market.

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Pioneers in Nutritional Healthcare

A celebration of nutritional excellence

We are delighted to honour excellence in our industry with the results of the annual *Nutrition I-Mag* Product Awards.

BEST ALTERNATIVE PRODUCT

Terranova Super Skin Drink

Nourish your glow from within with Terranova Super Skin Drink, the advanced, plant-based solution. Designed for those seeking a collagen alternative, this vegan-friendly powder features Vollagen, hyaluronic acid, and biotin to support the maintenance of normal skin, hair, and nails. The formula is rich in antioxidants from blueberry, cocoa, and grape seed, providing protection against oxidative stress.

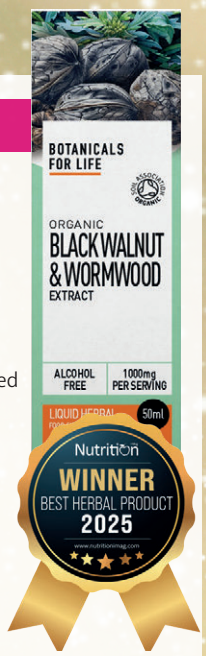
Easily mixable into water or smoothies, it's the clean way to promote balance. It is vegan additive-free and clean label.

Stephen Terrass, founder of Terranova, commented: "We are delighted that Super Skin Drink has been recognised as the Best Alternative Product by *Nutrition I-Mag*. For a formulation built on the principles of synergy and wholefood nutrition, receiving this recognition from the practitioner community is deeply rewarding. We extend our sincere thanks to the Nutritional Therapists and health professionals who value the integrity of our ingredients. We remain committed to developing evidence-based, botanical-rich supplements that support your clinical work and your clients' health goals. Thank you for your continued support."

HIGHLY COMMENDED: LAMBERTS COGNI-FOCUS

BEST HERBAL

Botanicals For Life Black Walnut & Wormwood



A standout in modern herbal innovation, Botanicals For Life's Organic Black Walnut & Wormwood unites two renowned botanicals with cleansing and hepato-protective qualities.

Extracted from organically grown herbs and suspended in natural glycerine, this vegan, alcohol-free formula is pure, potent, and fast absorbing. Delivering 1,000mg of active plant material per serving, this dual extract reflects Botanicals For Life's commitment to scientific precision and plant-based purity.

Ben Shouler, Naturopath and Founder of Botanicals For Life, enthused: "We're delighted to accept the *Nutrition I-Mag* Product Award for Best Herbal. This prestigious recognition reflects the dedication and expertise behind the development of our Black Walnut and Wormwood formula, part of our new Botanicals For Life range. Created through our Research and Development department under my leadership as Founder and Naturopath, this award acknowledges our commitment to innovation, integrity, and our core values, particularly our respect for nature, reflected in the way our plants are grown, sourced, and sustainably maintained."

HIGHLY COMMENDED: GOOD HEALTH NATURALLY PUMPKIN SEED EXTRACT

BEST NEW

Wild Nutrition Weight Management Support

Redefining weight management, this formula combines trusted ingredients to replenish nutrient gaps for sustainable results.

Hero ingredient, Metabolaid, is a UK-first, supporting optimal metabolism, hunger hormone and blood glucose regulation. It increases meal satisfaction by up to 50 per cent with results in just weeks. Combined with personalised Nutritional Therapist guidance and a holistic handbook, it's next-generation weight support.

Sam Simmons, Head of Practitioner Growth at Wild Nutrition, said of the award: "We're absolutely delighted to see Weight Management Support recognised as Best New Product. This award is a powerful reminder of what happens when women's voices and practitioner expertise lead the way. Every year, we listen to and learn from over 30,000 women, alongside the practitioners who support them. Those real-world insights feed directly into our NPD, shaping formulations that are clinically grounded, practical in practice, and genuinely effective. We create products for women, and for the practitioners who care for them, and this recognition reinforces the power of building alongside that community."

HIGHLY COMMENDED: METAGENICS METARELAX NIGHT

BEST VMS

Pure Encapsulations Metabolic Xtra

Metabolic Xtra with Svetol Green Coffee Bean Extract features a blend of ResVida resveratrol, alpha lipoic acid and chromium. Svetol is a clinically studied decaffeinated green coffee bean extract providing chlorogenic acids.

Featuring the recommended amount of 400mg Svetol per daily dose, with ResVida resveratrol providing high purity trans-resveratrol and alpha lipoic acid. Highly bioavailable chromium picolinate contributes to the maintenance of normal blood glucose levels.

"The team at Pure Encapsulations is absolutely thrilled to be the recipient of *Nutrition I-Mag* Best VMS award for Pure Encapsulations Metabolic Xtra," commented Joanna Dziedzic, NT and Business Development Manager at Pure Encapsulations. "It's incredibly exciting to see that *Nutrition I-Mag* HCP readers share our passion and trust in our commitment to providing the largest range of free-from, professional food supplements. Metabolic Xtra is not just a great product; it's a preferred choice among health professionals and our loyal customers, and this prestigious award truly reflects that. A huge thank you to everyone for your votes."

HIGHLY COMMENDED: ELETE WATER ELECTROLYTES

COGNI-FOCUS

Galangal, a culinary herb also known as Thai ginger, is featured in Lamberts Cogni-Focus. This unique extract provides non-addictive energy that acts quickly and lasts up to 5 hours, making it a perfect, caffeine-free option without the energy drops or jitters often associated with coffee. Ideal for students (18+) and older adults seeking to enhance focus and mental agility, it has no known interference with sleep. We've also added vitamin B5 for mental performance and iodine for cognitive function. We are honored to receive the highly commended recognition and would like to thank the readers who took the time to vote for Cogni-Focus.

www.lambertshealthcare.co.uk

NATURAL NORDIC ENERGY

The only iron supplement formulated with delicious Nordic blueberries, BlueIron is highly bioavailable and fast acting. It's patented micro-encapsulated iron means it's easily absorbed and gentle on the stomach, setting a new standard for efficacy and convenience, even through pregnancy and breastfeeding. BlueIron provides the full recommended intake of iron for reduced tiredness and fatigue, whilst supporting the normal function of the immune system. It is the only iron supplement made with vitamins and Nordic blueberry juice to offer a pleasant flavour, while reducing the unwelcome side-effects commonly associated with other iron supplements. It is also suitable for vegetarians, vegans and includes no artificial colours.

www.blueiron.co.uk

WEIGHT MANAGEMENT SUPPORT BY WILD NUTRITION

A nourishing, science-backed alternative to traditional weight loss approaches - focusing on replenishment, not restriction. This UK-first formula features Metabolaid®, a clinically studied botanical complex shown to support satiety hormones (GLP-1, leptin), activate AMPK, and promote cardiovascular and gut health. Backed by eight gold-standard studies, results include a 56% reduction in hunger and a 50% increase in meal satisfaction. Also ideal for clients using or transitioning off GLP-1 medications, this formula supports sustainable metabolic health and long-term energy balance. Click here for more information

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Why Try O.N.E. Multivitamin with Iron?

- ✓ A comprehensive, once-daily multivitamin mineral formula with sustained-release CoQ10 for daily wellness support
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At Pure Encapsulations®, we know it's what's inside that counts. Uniquely formulated products made with high-quality, pure ingredients, backed by verifiable science to complement your healthy lifestyle.

pure encapsulations®

See what's in our products, and what's not, at pure-encapsulations.co.uk

Food supplements should not be used instead of a varied and balanced diet and a healthy lifestyle.

STUDENT LIFE

In a new series of features, we hear from students as they progress through their Nutritional Therapy degrees. This issue is the turn of Danielle Hurley, who explains how personal experience led her to study nutrition.

Q CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR CURRENT STUDIES?

I am studying a BSc (Hons) Nutritional Therapy with the Institute for Optimum Nutrition. The course appealed to me because of its focus on understanding the underlying physiological mechanisms that can contribute to ill health, whilst learning how nutrition and lifestyle interventions can be utilised to support individuals. I am currently in my final year of the part-time BSc course, which is four and a half years long.

Q WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO STUDY NUTRITION?

In 2008, I studied adult nursing at the University of Chester and qualified in 2011. My first role was on a busy urgent care unit, although I had always aspired to work in intensive care following two student placements. I later achieved this goal and, despite its challenges, I loved my role working with critically ill patients. I worked in intensive care for several years before taking a career break to follow my husband to the UAE and to grow our family.

My husband was diagnosed with coeliac disease nine years ago, which triggered a whole life overhaul with how we approached food, particularly at a time where gluten free choices were limited. I later experienced a devastating 16-week miscarriage, after which I was diagnosed with autoimmune thyroiditis. These experiences, alongside the physiological state I was in at the time, led me to reassess my habits and make meaningful changes to improve my health. During this period, I lost 24kg during Covid, which further deepened my interest in how food nourishes us and how to support bodily systems.

Q HOW DID YOU DECIDE ON THE COLLEGE TO STUDY WITH?

It happened largely by chance; my husband came across the course online and everything just seemed to align perfectly. Living in the UAE, having the option to study online was ideal, allowing me to pursue something for myself whilst also being present to support my family. I applied and was accepted onto the September intake just weeks before it began. The process felt very organic, as though it was meant to happen for me. I was also reassured by the course's accreditation with the University of Portsmouth, which further supported my decision to apply.

Q WHAT HAVE YOU ENJOYED ABOUT THE COURSE SO FAR?

I have absolutely loved learning the intricacies of human biological mechanisms and understanding why our bodies respond the way they do. I am excited to continue to build on this knowledge.

Q AND WHAT HAVE YOU FOUND CHALLENGING?

I have always been driven to succeed, and this has presented challenges throughout the course. Stress has been a significant factor but learning how to support myself holistically has been invaluable. Balancing study alongside family life has been difficult, especially around assessment deadlines. However, I feel the process has helped me to grow as a person, teaching me when I need to set boundaries and when I need to rest. I am also grateful for the support of my family and wider network, who have helped me through the challenging times.

Q IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WISH YOU'D KNOWN BEFORE YOU STARTED STUDYING THAT YOU COULD ADVISE OTHER STUDENTS ON?

I would encourage students to play to their strengths, whilst also to not be afraid to step out of their comfort zone. I wish I had been braver earlier on in my course, but the journey has been a transformative one for me and invaluable for building my confidence.

Q WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS WHEN YOU FINISH YOUR STUDIES?

Once I qualify in 2027, I plan to focus on continuing professional development (CPD) to increase my clinical knowledge and confidence as a newly qualified Nutritional Therapist. Following this, I plan to develop and launch my online practice to support and empower clients. I would also like to apply for an MSc in the near future to advance my academic and professional development.

Q DO YOU HAVE AN AREA YOU WOULD LIKE TO SPECIALISE IN? IF SO, WHY?

When I qualify, I would initially like to support a wide range of health concerns within my professional remit. However, I do have a particular interest in the complexity of the gut microbiome. I find it fascinating how integral it is to health and being able to support clients to optimise their gut health can be really impactful.

Q WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO STUDENTS AS THEY ARE STARTING THEIR COURSE?

One piece of advice would be to get to know your classmates. Even though the course is online and it might feel a bit awkward initially, peer support is so valuable – I genuinely don't think I would have continued without it. The course can be challenging and having others who understand, as well as having someone to bounce ideas off, makes a world of difference. I would also encourage students not to feel guilty for taking time off from their studies. When assignments are due, it can be hard to switch off but I've found these breaks are essential to help refocus the mind.

■ **If you are a student and would like to share your story, we would love to hear from you. Email rachel.symonds@targetpublishing.com to be featured in a future issue.**

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WEIGHT MANAGEMENT AND METABOLISM – *an update*

Weight management has never been more in the spotlight thanks to the rise of GLP-1 medication. As nutritional therapists, the role to play is clearly an educational one around healthy weight loss and metabolism, as our experts explain.

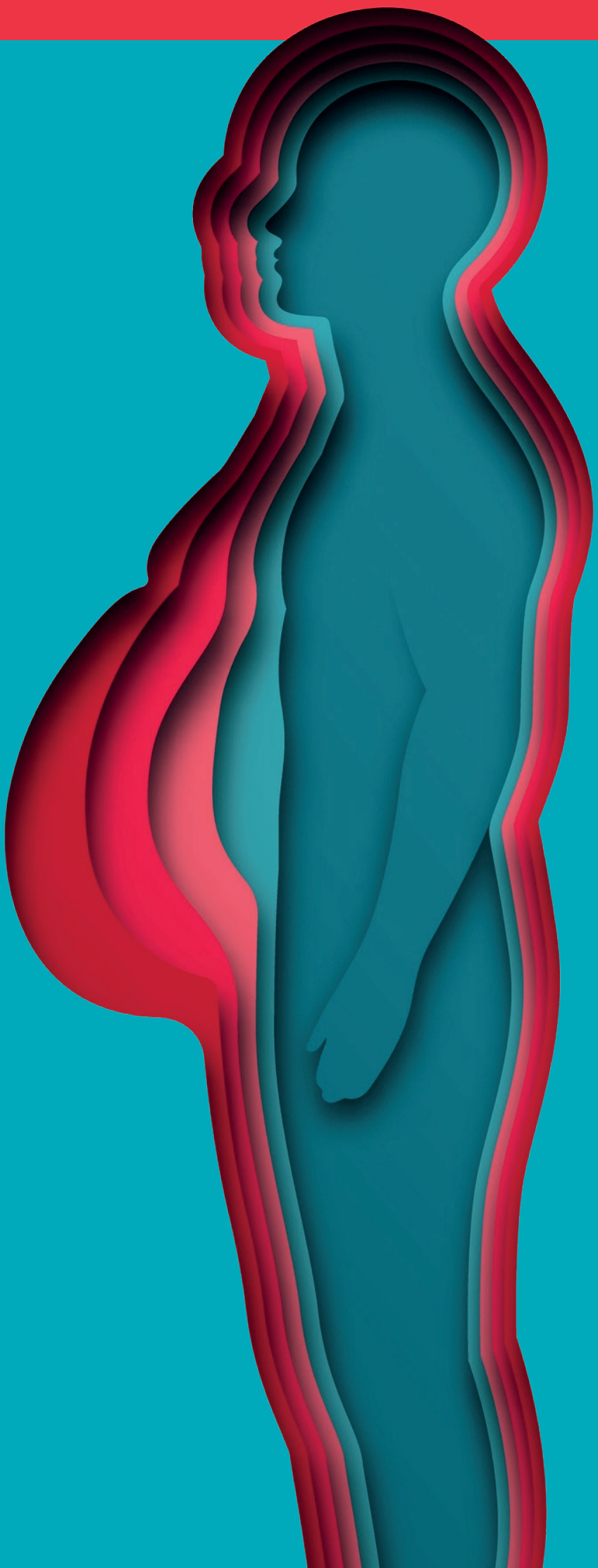
The data confirms that the size of our collective waistlines is a growing cause for concern. In the UK alone, some one in four adults and one in five children are known to be obese, and the statistics don't forecast a fall in these numbers any time soon.

It is perhaps understandable then why so many people are turning to weight loss medication, better known as GLP-1. For those who have a lot of weight to lose, there is no doubt they have a place in a controlled setting, but the trend we are increasingly seeing is towards people seeing this approach as an easy, quick fix. It may not only encourage a bad attitude to food, but could fail to educate people on how to eat healthily. There is also the issue around stopping the drugs and, in turn, the effect on weight.

Alice Bradshaw, Head of Nutrition Education and Information at Terranova, commented: "Overweight and obesity remain one of the UK's most pressing health challenges. Current figures show that nearly two-thirds of adults are above a healthy weight, with more than a quarter classified as obese. Childhood obesity is also rising, with one in five children aged 10-11 affected. This scale of prevalence places enormous pressure on the NHS and highlights the urgency of effective, sustainable interventions that go beyond short-term fixes."

Lindsay Powers, Nutritionist at Good Health Naturally, continued: "According to gov.uk, over 60 per cent of men and women in the UK are currently classed as overweight or obese. This figure has been steadily rising over the past decade. More men than women fall into this category, with the numbers rising with age."

Meanwhile, James Pugh, Nutrition Advisor at Viridian, pointed out: "The rise in overweight and obesity levels is a real cause for concern, particularly in the UK. According to the British Heart Foundation, around 29 per cent of adults are obese and around 65 per cent are overweight. This can be caused by living a sedentary lifestyle, with a lack of exercise and poor dietary choices. In the UK, the rise of ultra-processed foods is thought to play a role in overweight and obesity. It is thought that the modern western diet consists of nearly 60 per cent of ultra-processed foods, compared to the Mediterranean diet, which is less than 20 per cent."



CONCERNING HEALTH CONSEQUENCES

Being overweight or obese is not simply about appearance – the health effects, especially if over a long period of time, can be devastating, and can lead to a cycle of yo-yo dieting, medication, and a poor quality of life.

Martina Della Vedova, Nutritional Advisor at NaturesPlus, explained: "Obesity places strain on the body at many levels, and over time, can contribute to a wide range of complications, including breathing difficulties, pain, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, infertility, and cardiovascular concerns. Obesity does not need to be severe to significantly increase health risks, and if left unaddressed, it can lead to long-term issues. Because obesity is associated with a chronic inflammatory state, it affects cells throughout the body. In addition, abdominal adiposity has a strong endocrine role, actively producing and releasing hormones. This combination of heightened hormonal activity and inflammation creates a powerful biochemical stress."

Bradshaw continued: "Carrying excess weight affects almost every system in the body. It increases the risk of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, joint problems, sleep apnoea, and certain cancers. But the impact isn't only physical – mental health is often compromised, with higher rates of depression, anxiety, and stigma-related stress. Obesity also reduces quality of life, limiting mobility and energy, and may contributes to wider social issues such as reduced workforce participation and productivity."

Pugh also commented: "Being overweight or obese is linked to an increased risk of cardiovascular disease. Being overweight causes further strain on our organs caused by a build-up in excessive fat. This can further increase the risk of issues with our heart, lungs and other organs. Obesity can also impact fertility in both men and women. In females, being overweight can cause hormonal imbalances and ovulatory dysfunction. In men, sperm quality can be impacted, causing increased risk of infertility. Many people are also taking some form of medication, particularly for cardiovascular related issues, but also obesity. This can lead to depletion of essential nutrients. When paired with a poor diet, this can result in nutrient deficiencies that cause further health issues."

THE ROLE OF METABOLISM

Metabolism plays a key role in our waistlines, yet many people don't understand its function and why this is important.

Powers explained: "Metabolism is the collection of chemical processes that relate to how the body functions. It's how we turn the food we eat into energy, building blocks, and signals that the body needs every day. This includes breaking down carbohydrates, fats, and proteins for fuel, as well as using nutrients to repair tissues, produce hormones, and support immune function. Metabolism also plays a role in blood sugar regulation, body temperature, detoxification and even brain function. In simple terms, it's the engine behind how efficiently the body produces energy, maintains balance and adapts to daily demands.

"Metabolism influences how efficiently the body uses and stores energy from food. When metabolic processes are working well, they help us maintain a healthy weight. If metabolism is sluggish or out of balance, energy may be stored more readily as fat."

And what factors can affect its function, and, in turn, weight?

"Metabolic function is influenced by a range of factors, including age, genetics and hormone balance," Powers advised. "Lifestyle plays a key role too. Physical activity, muscle mass, sleep quality and stress levels all affect how efficiently the body uses energy. Diet is also important, particularly overall calorie intake, protein levels and key nutrients involved in energy production. Illness, medications and long periods of under-eating or dieting can also alter metabolic function over time.

"A large part of metabolic function is shaped by modifiable factors such as diet, activity levels, muscle mass, sleep and stress. These can all be influenced over time. Elements largely outside a person's control include genetics, age, and certain hormonal changes. That said, lifestyle choices can still support metabolic health at every stage of life, even when some underlying factors cannot be changed."

GLP-1 – A DISCUSSION

There are differing opinions about the role of GLP-1 in weight loss, including among nutrition experts.

Bradshaw commented: "The introduction of GLP-1 receptor agonists such as semaglutide (Wegovy/Ozempic) and tirzepatide (Mounjaro) has had a profound impact on weight management and metabolic health. Clinical trials consistently show average weight loss of 10-15 per cent of body weight, which is significantly greater than lifestyle interventions alone. For many individuals, this translates into meaningful improvements in blood sugar control, blood pressure, cholesterol, and markers of cardiovascular risk. Patients often report reduced appetite, smaller portion sizes, and less frequent snacking, which can help break cycles of overeating.

"Beyond physical health, there are notable psychological effects: many users describe increased confidence, improved mobility, and reduced anxiety around food. Importantly, GLP-1s also reduce the risk of progression from pre-diabetes to type 2 diabetes, and early evidence suggests they may lower cardiovascular event risk. Side effects such as nausea, constipation, or diarrhoea are common, particularly in the early stages of treatment, and require careful dietary management."

Pugh added his thoughts: "It is thought that over 1.5 million adults in the UK are taking this type of medication to support weight loss. This is also due to obesity levels rising and people looking for a faster solution to lose weight. Whilst this medication can be useful in some cases, it is also important to be aware of the risks associated with taking it. Current research suggests taking GLP1 medication can result in the depletion of key nutrients. GLP-1 agonists can reduce food intake by suppressing the feeling of hunger or appetite. Naturally, this leads to lower intake of essential micronutrients, but also macronutrients like protein and fats. The medication can also reduce the production of stomach acid and slow down gastric emptying, which also impacts nutrient absorption, leaving people malnourished. It is also known that taking GLP-1 medications can cause several side effects including fatigue, skin changes and impaired immunity."

Della Vedova agreed, adding: "GLP-1 medications are designed for individuals with specific health conditions, and can play a valuable role when used appropriately. These treatments are powerful tools that can help support and improve biochemistry when someone is unwell. When used responsibly and under proper guidance, GLP-1 medications offer meaningful benefits; challenges tend to arise not from the medication itself, but from situations where it is used outside its intended purpose."

And let's look in detail about how they work in the body in terms of weight loss and metabolism.

"GLP-1 medications, or glucagon-like peptide-1 receptor agonists, work by reducing the secretion of glucagon, the hormone responsible for raising blood sugar when the body needs it," Della Vedova explained. "By limiting the release of glucagon, less sugar enters the bloodstream, which naturally slows stomach emptying and reduces the amount of sugar absorbed from food. This leads to a noticeable decrease in appetite and lower glucose absorption overall. However, over time, these effects can also influence the absorption of other nutrients, potentially creating additional challenges."

In terms of deficiency risk, this should be a key focus in any protocol.

Della Vedova advised: "Medications can deplete the body from nutrients, and it is very important to assess the status of a patient before

"When used responsibly and under proper guidance, GLP-1 medications offer meaningful benefits; challenges tend to arise not from the medication itself, but from situations where it is used outside its intended purpose."

administering the drug as the consequences can be very serious.

"A paragraph from an article on British Society and Lifestyle Medicine says: *'Food insecurity is increasing, particularly in the UK. Suppressing appetite by using new glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) receptor agonists such as tirzepatide and semaglutide in people with nutritionally poor diets could lead to serious and likely underestimated nutritional complications. Evidence shows that the use of GLP-1 agonists is associated with adverse events, and people with severe malnutrition have been reported in the US. The common condition of malnutrition risks being overlooked due to an assumption that people with obesity are 'over-nourished'. Malnutrition, defined by both muscle wasting and nutrient deficiencies, is as common in people with obesity as in those who are underweight.'*"

Bradshaw also advised: "Because GLP-1s suppress appetite and slow gastric emptying, food intake often drops. This can lead to reduced consumption of protein and micronutrients, particularly vitamin D, B12, iron, calcium, magnesium, and potassium. Over time, this raises the risk of muscle loss, fatigue, and compromised bone health. Malnutrition is increasingly recognised as a real-world complication, especially if individuals rely on smaller portions of calorie-dense but nutrient-poor foods. For consumers, the key message is that medication should be paired with nutrient-rich meals and, where appropriate, supplementation to safeguard against deficiencies."

Pugh added: "There are two types of weight loss medication, which have different mechanisms. GLP-1 agonists and lipase inhibitors. The most common GLP-1 agonist on the market is Ozempic. Currently, there is limited evidence and research due to the GLP-1 medication being new to the market. However, recent research suggests that nutrients most at risk of depletion are iron magnesium, choline, potassium and vitamin D. However, these foods can also be low because of poor diet, so more research is needed to clarify this."

Recommended protocols

Ideally, a client would be seeking weight loss support naturally, but even if they are taking GLP-1 medication, there are healthy protocols to recommend to ensure they stay remain nutritonally healthy.

Della Vedova advised: "Safety always comes first. As we know, supplements can interfere with medications, so it is good and responsible practice to refer clients to GPs and healthcare practitioners if they are on medical therapy before giving them the green light on any supplement regime. Cases differ greatly each other and a personal approach needs to take place."

Away from those taking medication, what are the key points to consider when developing a plan for someone wanting to lose weight?

Pugh suggested: "Many people often resort to extreme diets which restrict intake and key macronutrients. However, a diet which consists of wholefoods such as meat, eggs, fish, fruit, vegetables, nuts, beans and legumes is a good way of getting variety of nutrients by not consuming high fat and high sugar, ultra-processed foods. Staying hydrated by drinking two to three litres of water every day is a great alternative for fluid consumption. Dietary fibre can help reduce the risk of obesity. It helps to slow digestion and absorption, slowing the release of glucose and insulin responses. This can help to increase satiety and encourage fat to be used for energy production. It is important to note that body weight refers to the overall mass of the body, which includes fat, muscle, water and bone. Therefore, it is important to ensure we maintain healthy body composition by consuming adequate macronutrients like protein and healthy fats.

"When combined with a balanced diet, exercise can temporarily boost metabolism, reducing the likelihood of excess calories being stored in the body as fat. Thirty minutes a day of walking, jogging or resistance training can be a great way of burning calories but also building muscle, which can ultimately improve body composition and lead to better metabolism."

And Bradshaw recommended: "The science shows that many dietary approaches can be effective, from keto, low-carb, vegan, and intermittent

fasting to more flexible balanced diets. Restrictive frameworks can deliver results, but higher-carbohydrate or plant-based diets are equally successful when they create an energy deficit. The crucial factor is sustainability, nutrient density, and fit with the individual's lifestyle.Online diet wars often exaggerate superiority, but in reality, effectiveness is highly individual. The most successful strategies protect nutrient intake, support mental wellbeing, and avoid the anxiety or disordered eating risks that arise when food groups are demonised.

"Across all approaches, reducing ultra-processed foods and prioritising whole, unprocessed options improve satiety and metabolic health. Moderating alcohol is important, as it adds empty calories and disrupts sleep. Equally, sleep and stress management are critical pillars: poor sleep alters appetite hormones, while chronic stress drives cravings and emotional eating. In practice, sustainable weight management rests on wholefoods, healthy movement, adequate protein, restorative sleep, and stress resilience."

SUPPLEMENT SUPPORT

Key nutrients are beneficial on a weight loss plan, while there are also supplements known to be useful if people are taking GLP-1.

"GLP-1 is a gut hormone released after eating. It stimulates insulin secretion, suppresses glucagon, slows gastric emptying, and signals satiety in the brain, reducing appetite and improving blood sugar control. While no natural compound fully replicates this, dietary strategies such as high-protein meals, fibre-rich foods, and resistant starches can enhance satiety and mimic some GLP-1 effects. Certain botanicals (such as bitter compounds) and probiotics are being studied for their role in appetite regulation, though evidence is still emerging," Bradshaw advised.

"There are emerging supplements marketed as GLP-1 mimetics. These often combine fibres (like glucomannan or inulin), protein blends, or bioactive plant compounds to slow gastric emptying and enhance satiety signals. Some formulations include bitter melon, berberine, or specific peptides that may influence insulin sensitivity and appetite regulation. While the science is still developing and these products cannot replicate pharmaceutical GLP-1 activity, they represent a growing category in weight management."

Powers went on: "Reduced appetite and slower digestion can increase the risk of nutrient shortfalls when people opt to take weight loss drugs. Protein becomes especially important to help preserve muscle mass. Healthy fats like krill oil have also been studied in relation to muscle preservation during weight loss. Supporting the diet with additional B vitamins, magnesium, and iron may be helpful, as intake can fall short when meals are smaller or less diverse."

Pugh recommended: "Taking a multivitamin alongside GLP-1 agonists can be beneficial to fill in any nutrient gaps caused by medication depletion. Whereas those taking lipase inhibitors may benefit more from taking fat soluble nutrients like vitamin A, D, E and K as this type of medication can cause deficiency in these nutrients."

And if we look to natural solutions to support weight loss with or without GLP-1, what is recommended?

Della Vedova recommended: "When it comes to supporting healthy weight loss, I focus on optimising the body's natural metabolic processes, energy production, and overall wellbeing. My favourites are protein and fibre, magnesium and minerals, omega 3, chromium, B vitamins, and healthy flora."

Pugh also advised: "Fenugreek contains the compound, N55. This acts as a modulator for GLP-1 and may help to suppress the feeling of hunger. Nopal, also known as prickly pear cactus, is another natural ingredient which has the potential to promote satiety. This is due to the high fibre content, as well as the ability to aid glucose regulation and reduce fat absorption. Chromium has been shown to reduce food cravings by influencing neurotransmitters involved with mood and appetite. When compared to placebo, chromium has been shown to significantly reduce food intake, hunger levels, fat cravings and decreased body weight. This can be paired with cinnamon, which has also been shown to support sugar cravings through its action of managing blood sugar levels.

"Green tea has been shown to be beneficial for stimulating thermogenesis. This is the production of heat by the body which leads to increased metabolism from food. Saffron has been shown to help reduce stress-related overeating by increasing satiety. Ashwagandha is an adaptogenic herb known to support stress and weight management. By reducing stress, this can also lead to a reduction in stress-related overeating and therefore helps to manage healthy weight. L-carnitine has been shown to transport fatty acids into the mitochondria, ultimately supporting weight loss by using fat for energy production."

Bradshaw added: "Supplements can play a valuable role in protecting nutritional status for those on GLP-1 medications. Vitamin D, B12, iron, and calcium are common considerations, as reduced intake can compromise bone health, energy metabolism, and red blood cell function. Magnesium and potassium may be relevant, given their role in muscle function and electrolyte balance. Fibre supplements can support satiety and digestive health, while omega 3 fatty acids may support multiple aspects of wellbeing."

And Powers suggested: "Research suggests that butyrate may play a role in underlying metabolic pathways and in how the body converts nutrients into energy at the cellular level. This is particularly through its interactions with mitochondria, the energy-producing parts within cells. Research also suggests that it may influence energy balance and appetite regulation. Studies show that butyrate may stimulate the release of gut hormones such as glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) and peptide YY (PYY), involved in appetite signalling and feelings of fullness."

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What happens when the GLP-1 MEDICATIONS WEAR OFF?

In an opinion piece, Claire Sambolino MSc, BANT Communications Manager and Registered Nutritionist, discusses nutrition as the cornerstone to lasting health and weight management.

Few other drugs have hit the market with the speed and ferocity of the GLP-1 weight loss medications. The rapid increase in users has led to an estimated 1.5-1.6 million people in the UK using either Wegovy (semaglutide) or Mounjaro (tirzepatide) for weight management, with 95 per cent accessing them privately (1). This last point is cause for great concern. With so many people accessing these medications privately, there is no governance for safe dosing or the necessary wraparound care and support needed to ensure patient safety. The remaining five per cent of prescriptions issued by NHS England have grown by 900 per cent since 2020, far surpassing available primary care resources (1).

In March 2025, BANT issued a joint statement with The British Society of Lifestyle Medicine (BSLM) and the College of Medicine and Integrated Health (CoM), urging policy makers, health care leaders and regulatory bodies to ensure that anti-obesity medications (AOMs) be used safely, effectively and sustainably. We recommended a cautious roll-out of these new

"A recent study of 12,000 UK households revealed that one in five respondents say they would be willing to use GLP-1 medication for life."

medicines with more real-world data to inform safer practice. Nine months later and GLP-1 use has moved forward at an alarming pace, throwing all caution to the wind.

These drugs are dominating headlines and conversations, thanks in part to celebrity culture and endorsements. A recent study of 12,000 UK households revealed that one in five respondents say they would be willing to use GLP-1 medication for life – despite the risk of debilitating side effects, injection fatigue, or financial outlay – highlighting the growing acceptance of medication as prevention in place of traditional nutrition and lifestyle interventions (2). Yet it is precisely this wraparound nutrition and lifestyle support that BANT calls for to ensure sustainable and safe weight loss, support symptom management, and prevent weight gain when people come off medications.

Side effects and weight rebound

The many unpleasant side effects of GLP-1 medications extend to loss of taste, nausea, vomiting, gastro-intestinal problems, diarrhoea, muscle loss and malnutrition, to more serious issues affecting the pancreas, gallbladder, and kidneys. BANT questions whether there has been any serious financial modelling of the on-cost of treating these symptoms on the NHS. This is where BANT nutrition practitioners are perfectly placed to support clients with wraparound nutrition care, as well as broader lifestyle overlays to promote lasting behaviour change both for those on GLP-1 medications or those seeking to come off them and maintain the weight loss. It is inconceivable that people are self-medicating and putting themselves in harm's way without any nutritional guidance for what can only be described as a diet-related problem.

Soaring costs and risk factors

A recent analysis of 11 randomised trials involving people coming off GLP-1s showed people start to regain weight as early as eight weeks after stopping treatment. Patients typically regained approximately two thirds of the weight they had lost within a year of stopping using the medication (1,3).

A Medscape article hit the nail on the head when it referred to a fundamental flaw with these 'miracle drugs – they stop working when you stop taking them' (4). This sets a dangerous incentive to stay on them indefinitely without any medical evaluation. Given the high cost of private prescriptions, averaging between £100-300 per month, this is also a major financial outlay if lifelong. If we model an average 30 years' use, this could amount to an eye-watering £36,000-£108,000 per person – an outlay most individuals cannot sustain privately, and, in truth, nor can the NHS. Money that would arguably be better invested to fund lasting nutrition and lifestyle support at a fraction of the cost, with practitioners in primary care and neighbourhood hubs.

It is equally difficult to capture the immensity of public support for a relatively 'new' medication in regard to its repurposed use in weight loss and obesity-management, especially considering the short time frame since pandemic scepticism towards pharmaceutical innovations. However, whilst the public is seemingly willing to embrace GLP-1 medications, no questions asked, for the speed and efficacy with which they facilitate weight loss, it appears some medical professionals are uneasy.

Dr Annette Bosworth was recently quoted in a popular podcast episode as saying: "If you wanted to have legs with no hair, how would you accomplish that? Shave. You would not jump straight to chemotherapy, the most powerful form of hair removal. Is there a price to pay for using GLP-1 medications?" (5).

Similarly, General Practitioners at the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) Annual Conference 2025 have called for prescribing to come with 'dedicated funding, resources, and multidisciplinary input, including nutritional and psychological support' (6). BANT echoes their call for greater clinical stewardship in prescribing GLP-1 medications, with structured monitoring and wraparound nutrition care. If the NHS is to roll out GLP-1 medications more widely and erode the privately purchased prescriptions, it is critical that nutrition practitioners are employed within primary care networks to ensure client safety.

Multi-factorial causes of obesity

There is also the need to address underlying factors of weight management, diet, food poverty and the multi-factorial causes of obesity, all of which GLP-1 medications fail to act upon. If the people taking these medications fail to change their diets or optimise daily habits, then when the drugs stop working, they have nothing to fall back on.

Nutrition practitioners can provide the foundational dietary education that is currently lacking at a national level and can support individuals to approach weight-loss from all angles. This is critical for the four out of five people surveyed who choose not to stay on the medication for life.

The speed with which GLP-1 medications are being rolled out has left a gap in service provision for wraparound care. Whilst GPs are providing some support, there is a recognised shortage of dietitians within the NHS and not enough practitioners to meet demand. Yet BANT represents over 3,000 Registered Nutritional Therapy Practitioners who are currently not working within a primary care setting due to lack of joined-up-thinking. In BANT's opinion, this is an intentional failure to address the needs of patients by omitting nutrition practitioners qualified to deal with diet and lifestyle related illness.

Nutrition practitioners and wraparound care

BANT nutrition practitioners are specifically trained in sustainable weight loss and behaviour change and can provide the necessary support to ensure safe use of GLP-1 medications, and safe transition from medications to long-term weight maintenance.

General Practitioners can already refer to any practitioner who is on the Voluntary Accredited Register held by the Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care (PSA). These services have historically been chargeable to the patient, exacerbating health inequalities, but GPs can and should use the ARRS funding to engage Registered Nutritional Therapy Practitioners – the cost of which will be offset by the longer-term savings of relieving the burden of obesity and obesity-related conditions.

Claire Sambolino is Communications Manager at BANT, a Registered Nutritional Therapy Practitioner rCNHC, and BANT Registered Nutritionist.

Pollen protocols

As spring brings the onset of hay fever season, *Nutrition I-Mag* offers a comprehensive protocol for supporting clients.

Hay fever is known to be increasing in incidence, not to mention the season appearing to last longer as pollution and climate change take their toll. This means there are vast numbers of people heading towards the spring, gearing up for the onset of the uncomfortable effects of pollen.

From a nutritional therapy point of view, this is an area of health in which a sound protocol – both in advance of and during the season – can have positive results.

Catherine Gorman, Nutritional Therapist and Health Advisor at Good Health Naturally, explained: "Data suggests the UK has one of the highest rates of hay fever in the world. According to Allergy UK, 10-15 per cent of children and 26 per cent of adults are now experiencing symptoms of seasonal allergies. Other research points to the figures being even higher. It certainly does seem to be a problem which is getting worse; a recent study by the University of Manchester found that the number of people suffering from hay fever has risen by 33 per cent during the last 20 years.

"No one knows for sure why the incidence of hay fever is increasing, but factors like climate change and pollution are believed to play a part. Milder winters and warmer springs often mean longer growing seasons and earlier pollination, which will extend the hay fever season, exposing people to pollen for longer periods. Pollution interacting with pollen may also be making hay fever symptoms worse. Interestingly, symptoms tend to be more severe in urban areas compared to rural places. A 2023 study published in the open-access journal, *Scientific Reports*, found that in urban areas, hay fever symptoms were not only more intense but also lasted longer. These symptoms were strongly correlated with various gaseous pollutants, whereas in rural areas, they were mainly linked to grass pollen."

William Jordon, Nutrition Advisor at Viridian, added: "Some experts do suggest that lack of exposure to pollen over lockdown periods has caused heightened symptoms in existing sufferers but has also caused an increase in people suffering from it for the first time as immunity and tolerance has dropped through lack of normal exposure to pollen.

"There are several factors that can make hay fever worse. The first is environmental factors. Warm and humid weather and windy days with increased pollen count can flare symptoms. Additionally, air pollution can also trigger reactions. Longer seasons caused by a mild winter and warm springs can lead to extended pollen release from trees, grass, and weeds. Additionally, longer seasons mean that tree and grass pollens can overlap.

"Lifestyle also factors into exacerbating hay fever. Pets can cause increased dander in your home, and this can trigger symptoms. High-histamine drinks, such as alcohol, can also worsen symptoms. High stress levels can also exacerbate symptoms of hay fever. Insufficient vitamin D levels from low sun exposure can also impact immune health and increase risk of symptoms worsening. Histamine intolerance, a condition where your body cannot metabolise histamine, either from food or from the immune system. This can make symptoms worse as the histamine does not get removed effectively from the body."

Keri Briggs, Senior Brand Specialist at Lamberts, went on: "Evidence does suggest that hay fever is on the rise and there seems to be several reasons for this. Changes in plant species and climate change mean we are exposed to new pollens and for a longer period of the year than previously. In fact, a new syndrome, called Autumn Sneezing Syndrome, has been identified and appears to be related to changing pollen patterns, as well as an increase in ragwort.

"Ragwort pollen is prolific later in the year, which leads to hay fever symptoms which continue well beyond the normal season of March to August. Increases in pollution and carbon dioxide in the air causes more pollen to circulate, particularly in urban areas, and this is made worse by the planting of male trees and plants, which are easier to maintain but more prolific pollen producers."

RAISING RISK FACTORS

There are various factors as to why a person suffers with hay fever.

Briggs explained: "Hay fever is a common term for allergic rhinitis, which occurs seasonally or perennially. Allergic rhinitis is associated with a reaction to a variety of triggers including dust, mould or pollen, and when the trigger is pollen, the terms hay fever or seasonal rhinitis are used. The cause was first identified in 1873 and thought to be due to changes in agriculture and increases in industrialisation and urban living. There is a significant proportion of sufferers who have a related food allergy, often referred to as pollen related food allergy. Common cross reactions include foods such as fruits, vegetables, peanuts, tree nuts and soya and symptoms include tingling, swelling, or itching of the mouth, tongue, throat, and lips."

Gorman also commented: "For those predisposed to hay fever, poor immune health can greatly influence severity of symptoms. Research also suggests poor gut health can exacerbate symptoms. Food sensitivities, a poor diet high in inflammatory processed foods or frequent antibiotic use can all cause alterations to the microbiome, which may affect the immune response. Studies have also highlighted that the hygiene hypothesis may play a part. It is suggested that reduced exposure to bacterial endotoxins may be preventing our immune systems from developing tolerance to natural environmental allergens like pollens. People with existing respiratory issues like asthma or chronic bronchitis may experience worse symptoms when pollen levels are high because their airways are already sensitive or inflamed."

Jordan added: "Chronic hay fever can be worsened by many different areas of health, including poor sleep, fatigue, related conditions such as asthma, and even mental health, such as anxiety, depression, and stress can weaken the immune system. A diet that is high in sugar and alcohol can increase inflammation and potentially worsen the histamine response. It can also negatively impact the gut microbiome. A poor and non-diverse gut microbiota is associated with poor immune health and potential increase to allergy risk.

"Poor immune health can influence someone's risk of suffering from hay fever. Low vitamin D levels are associated with dysfunction with immune health. This can exacerbate symptoms as the immune system can overreact and increase the histamine response to triggers."

THE ROLE OF THE IMMUNE SYSTEM

Central to protocols around hay fever is supporting the immune system.

Briggs advised: "The root cause and the reason why some people develop it, and some don't, is due to the immune response. Pollen is incorrectly identified as an invader and antibodies called immunoglobulin E (IgE) are released. IgE then activates mast cells found in the respiratory tract and the pollen will then trigger the release of histamine, causing allergy like symptoms. Genetics play a role in the development of this condition and if a family member has hay fever then an individual is more likely to experience similar symptoms. Those with asthma or eczema are also more likely to be affected."

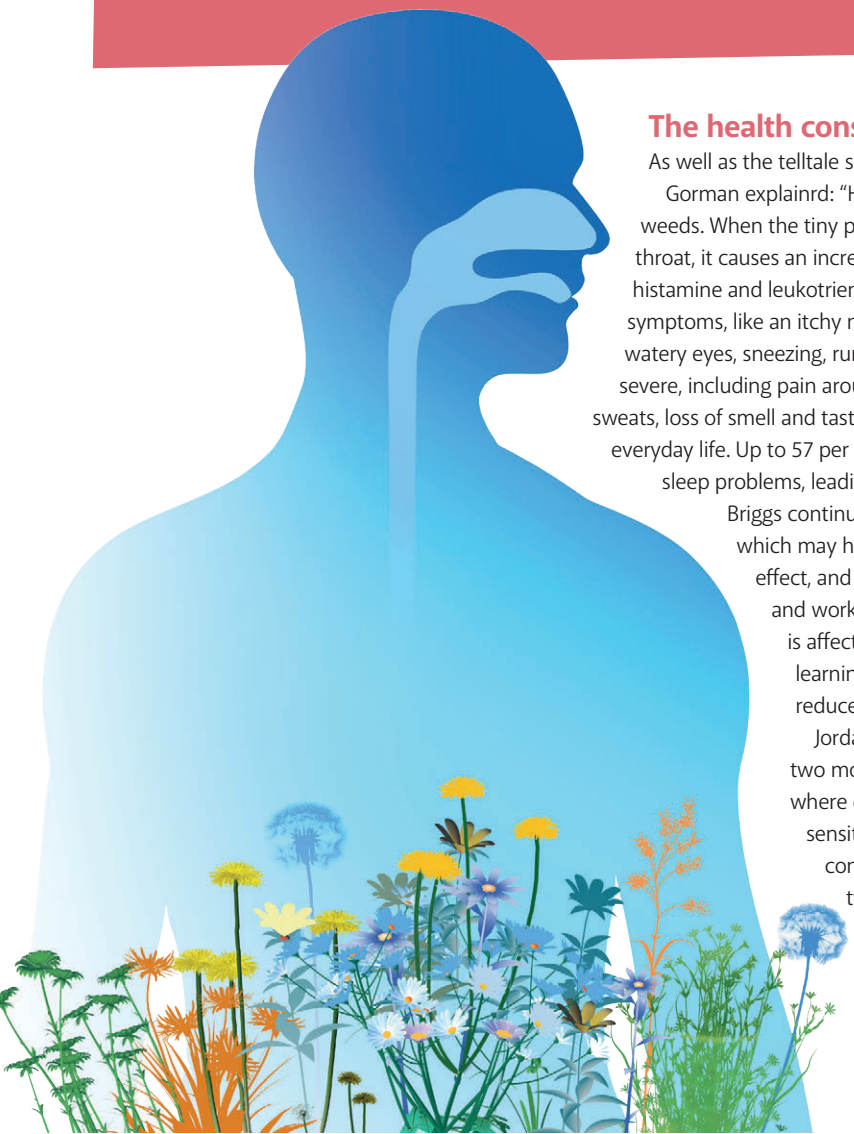
Going into greater detail, Grace Kenworthy, Nutrition and Education Advisor at ADM Protexin, manufacturers of Bio-Kult and Lepicol, went on: "Hay fever, or seasonal allergic rhinitis, occurs when the immune system reacts to pollen – a normally harmless substance – as if it were dangerous. In sensitised individuals, pollen exposure activates a Th2-dominant immune pathway, leading to the production of allergen-specific IgE antibodies. These antibodies bind to high-affinity FcεRI receptors on mast cells located in the nasal and ocular mucosa.[1,2]

"When pollen is inhaled again, it cross-links IgE on the surface of mast cells, activating FcεRI-dependent signalling pathways that trigger mast-cell degranulation. This results in the release of inflammatory mediators, including histamine, leukotrienes and prostaglandins. These mediators act on blood vessels, mucus-secreting glands and sensory nerves, causing vasodilation, increased mucus production and nerve stimulation.[1,2]

"Together, these cellular processes produce the characteristic symptoms of hay fever, such as sneezing, nasal congestion, rhinorrhoea and itchy or watery eyes. Although pollen itself is not harmful, the immune pathways it activates lead to inflammation of the nasal lining, which explains the intensity and persistence of symptoms during the pollen season.[1]

"The immune system plays a central role in hay fever because it functions as a biological surveillance system, continuously monitoring the body for potential threats. In allergic individuals, this surveillance system misclassifies harmless environmental substances, such as pollen, as dangerous.[2]At a cellular level, this misclassification reflects a Th2-dominant immune pathway, characterised by increased production of cytokines including IL-4, IL-5 and IL-13. These signals drive IgE production, mast-cell activation and eosinophil recruitment in the nasal mucosa, sustaining allergic inflammation.[2] Hay fever is therefore not caused by immune weakness but by inappropriate immune prioritisation. Regulatory mechanisms that normally suppress unnecessary responses fail to fully dampen Th2 signalling, leading to persistent inflammation in response to a non-threatening stimulus.[2]"

Jordan went on: "Hay fever is a type of allergy, meaning the immune system is intrinsically linked. The immune system will overreact to normally harmless substances, such as pollen, and cause symptoms such as sneezing, itching and congestion, alongside inflammation. The irritated and inflamed lining of your respiratory tract becomes less effective at preventing pathogens entering your body such as the flu virus, common cold, or infections in your sinus, ears and upper respiratory tract."



The health consequences

As well as the telltale signs of hay fever, it can be linked to other health issues.

Gorman explainrd: "Hay fever is an allergic reaction to pollen from trees, grasses and weeds. When the tiny particles come into contact with cells lining the mouth, nose, eyes and throat, it causes an increase in IgE antibodies in sufferers. This causes the mast cells to secrete histamine and leukotrienes, triggering an inflammatory response which causes all the unpleasant symptoms, like an itchy nose and streaming eyes. The most common symptoms are itchy, red or watery eyes, sneezing, runny and blocked noses. For some people, symptoms can become more severe, including pain around the temples and forehead caused by blocked sinuses, headaches, sweats, loss of smell and taste. In some cases, they can cause sleep problems and interfere with everyday life. Up to 57 per cent of adults and up to 80 per cent of children with hay fever have sleep problems, leading to daytime fatigue and decreased cognitive functioning."

Briggs continued: "A significant proportion also experience secondary symptoms which may have an impact on their quality of life. Disturbed sleep is a common side effect, and daytime drowsiness and fatigue is also an issue. Sick days from school and work are increased in those with hay fever and studies suggest productivity is affected. Research has also shown that hay fever symptoms can affect verbal learning, decision making and other markers of cognitive function, as well as a reduced ability to learn and poor school and exam performance."

Jordan added: "Hay fever is linked to increased risk of other diseases. The two most common are eczema and asthma. This is known as the atopic march, where conditions develop in sequence, starting with eczema, leading to food sensitivities, and ending with asthma and hay fever. Having one of these conditions is a significant predictor for developing one or both of the other two. Each condition shares similar causes, such as an overactive immune response to harmless substances such as pollen causing symptoms."

"Specific live bacteria strains have been shown to reduce pro-allergic cytokines such as IL-5 and IL-13, as well as increase the regulatory cytokine IL-10, helping shift the balance toward a less Th2-dominant response."

THE IMPORTANCE OF PREPARATION

A good hay fever protocol needs to involve a period of preparation ahead of the pollen season starting.

Jordan advised: "It is always a good idea to prepare for the hay fever season about a month or two before symptoms would normally start. A healthy gut microbiota is one way to prevent overgrowth of bad bacteria which are implicated with the development of allergic diseases; include fermented foods in your diet such as sauerkraut, kimchi, and live yoghurts, and consider supplementing with a live bacteria supplement.

"Topping up levels of omega 3 fats is also a good idea as lower levels are implicated with developing allergic disease. This can be done by adingd in fresh oily fish to the diet or by suppling with a high-quality fish oil. Vitamin D is vital for correct functioning of the immune system and there is some evidence to suggest its effectiveness in reducing the symptoms of hay fever in both children and adults. Making sure you are not deficient, especially coming out of the winter months, is important as the body can't make its own so supplementing should be considered to avoid this."

Kenworthy went on: "Preparation for hay fever is most effective when it begins before pollen exposure, targeting both allergic inflammation and immune regulation. Pre-seasonal use of antihistamines has been shown to suppress nasal symptoms and down-regulate key allergic pathways, including histamine H_1 receptor expression and Th2-associated cytokines such as IL-5 in the nasal mucosa.[3,4] This data supports continuous, preventative use of medication rather than treating symptoms once they are established.

"Alongside pharmacological intervention, the gut microbiome plays a key role in modulating immune responses relevant to hay fever. The gut houses 70 per cent of the body's immune cells and is a major site of immune surveillance, where interactions with resident microbes can help shape systemic immune activity.[5] In allergic rhinitis, the immune system is skewed towards Th2-driven pathways, promoting IgE-mediated inflammation.[2] Specific live bacteria strains have been shown to reduce pro-allergic cytokines such as IL-5 and IL-13, as well as increase the regulatory cytokine IL-10, helping to shift the balance toward a less Th2-dominant response.[6,7]

"Clinical studies also indicate that live bacteria supplementation can reduce nasal congestion, sneezing and itching, although effects may vary by strain and individual response.[8–11] While not a replacement for antihistamines or other pharmacological treatment, live bacterial supplements can be a useful adjunct to standard therapy."

Recommended protocols

When it comes to strategies to ease symptoms during hay fever season, there are important triggers to remove, and supportive foods to add in.

From a dietary perspective, Jordan recommended: "High levels of histamine in the body can cause an overreaction in the body to allergens, such as pollen, leading to hay fever symptoms. Some foods naturally contain histamine, including alcoholic drinks, dried fruits, raw fruits, avocado, aubergine, shellfish, and processed or smoked meats. Additionally, processed foods that are high in sugars, fats, and additives can increase inflammation and therefore symptoms. Drinking high amounts of alcohol can trigger symptoms as it dilates blood vessels, contains histamines, and may increase symptoms. High caffeine levels may also worsen symptoms."

Briggs also advised: "Some people find that foods high in histamine can make an existing bout of hay fever worse and avoiding these foods, particularly on high pollen count days, may be useful. Foods which are high in histamine include shellfish, processed meats, aged cheese, and alcohol. Equally, there are foods which may be useful for reducing hay fever symptoms. Foods rich in vitamin C such as citrus fruits and tomatoes, are frequently suggested. Onions, apples, and capers contain quercetin, which has been shown to inhibit the release of histamine by mast cells. Therefore, from a dietary perspective, it is important to include plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables. This will also improve the diversity of the gut microbiome, as those with hay fever have been shown to have less variety and an altered microbiome compared to those without this condition. Including spices such as turmeric and ginger can also help to reduce the inflammation and irritation associated with seasonal rhinitis.

"Several studies have suggested following the Mediterranean diet, particularly during pregnancy and childhood, can lead to a reduced risk of developing hay fever and other allergic conditions. The closer the adherence to this diet, the less likely it was to develop hay fever symptoms, and this is attributed to the high intake of local fruit and vegetables as well as a high nut intake. This diet is also rich in olive oil and oily fish, such as herring, mackerel, salmon, and sardines, which provide high levels of omega 3 fats, which can also encourage the production of compounds that reduce inflammation."

Gorman went on: "Optimising gut health is a great place to start, as around 70 per cent of the immune system resides in the digestive tract. Support gut bacteria by eating lots of colourful vegetables, plenty of fibre-rich wholefoods, nourishing bone broth and fermented products like kefir. Increasing foods containing immune-supporting nutrients like vitamin C, zinc, antioxidants and bioflavonoids are also helpful in the run-up to hay fever season. Vitamin C is a natural antihistamine and can help calm down allergic reactions. Good sources include berries, kiwi fruit, oranges, peppers, and blackcurrants. Quercetin is also a powerful antihistamine. Rich sources include garlic, onions, blueberries, apples and parsley. Local honey, which can contain trace amounts of pollen, may also help desensitize the body.

"Certain nuts, like cashews, pistachios, walnuts and almonds, are high in histamine. Instead, opt for hazelnuts, pecans and macadamias, which are less likely to trigger symptoms. Reducing foods which are mucus-producing, such as dairy products, can also make a huge difference in nasal congestion. Instead, opt for nut milk, coconut or oat yoghurts and non-dairy spreads. Cut back on processed food, too. If the diet is full of sugar and refined carbohydrates, which generally increase inflammation, then allergy symptoms may get worse. Instead, encourage natural whole foods, a rainbow of fruit and vegetables, beans, pulses and good fats like oily fish, nuts and seeds."

> *"Vitamin D plays an important role in lung and immune health, and it is theorised it may influence the development and severity of allergic diseases. Deficiency is widespread, and may partly explain the increase in asthma and allergies observed over the last 50-60 years."*

And then onto the nutrients considered crucial during hay fever season, both in terms of risk reduction but also symptom management.

Gorman advised: "Omega 3 fatty acids can be helpful; the increase in allergic conditions in the Western world has been associated with the over-consumption of pro-inflammatory omega 6 fatty acids compared to anti-inflammatory omega 3. Helping redress the balance by increasing omega 3 may help. N-acetylcysteine (NAC) is a modified form of the amino acid, cysteine, known for its respiratory benefits. It has mucolytic properties, meaning it can help thin and break down mucus, making it easier to expel from the respiratory system. This may be particularly useful for those with nasal congestion.

"Vitamin D plays an important role in lung and immune health, and it is theorised it may influence the development and severity of allergic diseases. Deficiency is widespread, and some believe it may partly explain the increase in asthma and allergies observed over the last 50-60 years. The main source is sunlight on the skin, so most people living in the Northern Hemisphere need to supplement, certainly during the winter months, to prevent a deficiency.

"Consider taking a probiotic, as research suggests people who suffer from hay fever often have a lack of diversity in the gut microbiome. A paper published in *The International Archives of Allergy and Immunology* in 2021 found adults who suffered from allergic rhinitis had a reduced microbial diversity, but particularly lower levels of *Oxalobacter* and *Clostridiales* and increased levels of *Bacteroidales*. The researchers suggested that targeting these imbalances might help improve or prevent allergies.

"Butyrate may be helpful too. It is a short-chain fatty acid, produced

when gut bacteria break down fibre. It has an anti-inflammatory effect, which may help calm disruption in the gastrointestinal tract and support healing. Bromelain, a proteolytic enzyme in pineapples, has anti-inflammatory and immune-supporting properties, helping relieve the pain and congestion of inflamed tissues, especially in the nasal and respiratory tract."

Jordan added: "Black seed, botanically known as *Nigella sativa,* has been shown to have anti-allergic effects, reducing nasal congestion, sneezing, and itchiness. The active, thymoquinone (TQ), is responsible for the potential health benefits. Vitamin C should be considered as it contributes to normal functioning of the immune system and protects cells from oxidative stress. It also acts to lower histamine. Grapeseed extract is rich in polyphenols and may help mediate the inflammation present in allergy. It has been shown to also be favourable to modulate the gut microbiome too. If leaky gut is a factor, then the amino acid, L-glutamine, might be useful as the cells of the gut lining use it for repair and fuel."

Briggs continued: "Some of the main nutrients to be aware of when experiencing hay fever are those which support normal immune function, which include vitamins C and D and the minerals, iron, selenium, and zinc. Using pro- and prebiotic supplements is also advisable to maintain a healthy and diverse microbiome. A disrupted microbiome can make immune cells overreactive and reduce the excretion of allergens, making it more likely that hay fever symptoms will occur. Studies have shown that several strains of probiotic bacteria can be useful for reducing both symptoms and the need for the use of medication.

"Quercetin is a plant compound which has been studied widely for its effects on inflammation and allergy and as previously discussed, can be obtained in small amounts from foods such as apples and onions. However, studies have also investigated the use of higher, supplemental doses for the symptoms of hay fever, with positive results on symptoms such as itching, sneezing and sleep, as well as improvements in quality-of-life scores. Its effects stem mainly from the ability to stabilise mast cells and prevent them from releasing histamine when IgE is present."

A WORD ON TESTING

Although hay fever isn't technically an allergy, it may be that some clients benefit from testing to identify any potential triggers.

Jordan commented: "Identifying triggers for hay fever will be different for everyone. Tracking when and where hay fever symptoms occur, noting common causes such as trees, grass, pet dander etc., can help identify. Logging symptoms and avoiding exposure to the triggers can help manage the condition.

"Food can also potentially cause histamine responses similar to hay fever. Noting reactions to high histamine foods, the time of year and areas that reactions occur, and other factors such as stress and medications, can help identify them. Following this, eliminate and reintroduce these foods one by one. This is not a definitive or perfect test, but it can help potentially manage triggers and reduce symptoms. Clients should consult their GP if symptoms are persistent or if they are severe. They may do a skin prick test to identify the specific allergies, including hay fever."

The science of SKIN HEALTH

From what you put in the body to what goes on it, nutrition and lifestyle choices can show in the skin. Here, experts offer insights into skin nourishment this spring.

The skin is going through constant changes and can be hugely affected not just by the external toxins it faces every day, but also through the fuel we put into our body. Such a poor diet and lifestyle can show in our skin health in a variety of ways.

But skin is also affected by seasonal changes; during winter, it can become drier due to shifts in temperature, moving from the cold outside into central heating, and, speaking generally, diets can be less nutritionally-rich during the colder weather. Therefore, as we come into the spring, our skin health can be in need of some attention, both topically and nutritionally.

Alice Bradshaw, Head of Nutrition Education and Information at Terranova, advised: "Seasonal transitions can significantly influence how the skin behaves. Winter's cold, dry air often reduces moisture levels and weakens the barrier, while lower sunlight exposure may affect vitamin D status and mood. As spring arrives, increased UV exposure, humidity shifts, and higher pollen counts can trigger sensitivity, congestion, or flare-ups in reactive skin. These changes mean the skin's needs aren't static across the year. Supporting clients through the seasons involves anticipating shifts in hydration, antioxidant demand, and barrier resilience, and adjusting nutrition and routines to match."

Keri Briggs, Senior Brand Specialist at Lamberts, continued: "The skin is the largest organ of the body and has many diverse functions. Primarily, it controls what leaves the body, playing a significant role in detoxification, and what can get into the body, as the biggest barrier to pathogens, allergens and xenobiotics. This means it is constantly in contact with both external stressors and variables, including environmental pollutants and internal toxins. No other body system is subject to such extremes, and it is no wonder that our skin often becomes a direct reflection of how well the body as a whole is functioning.

"Changes in season can often bring about some noticeable changes in both the appearance and function of the skin. As the weather changes, trans-epidermal water loss (TEWL) may increase, which then affects skin hydration and dryness, even in those with 'normal' skin initially."

Skin warning signs

When skin is in less-than good health, this can show in some obvious ways. But first, we should address how the skin functions and the factors that can affect its health.

Briggs explained: The outer layer of the skin, the epidermis, has a very thin outer sub-layer known as the stratum corneum, and it is this layer which provides the first line of protection from external factors and from moisture loss from the skin. The stratum corneum is made up of two distinct parts in a 'bricks and mortar' type arrangement; cells called corneocytes are surrounded and held in place by a lipid-rich medium, which contains free fatty acids, ceramides and cholesterol. The corneocytes are involved in protecting the lower layers of the skin from UV rays and regulating inflammation and hydration, whilst the lipid-rich medium contains a host of microbes which can communicate with the immune system and act as a barrier to pathogens, as well as regulating permeability, excluding toxins and allowing for some chemicals to be absorbed.

"This layer of the skin also contains a group of compounds, collectively known as natural moisturising factors (NMF). These are primarily made up of free amino acids and their derivatives, such as PCA (pyrrolidone carboxylic acid), as well as urea and various mineral salts. NMF is needed to maintain hydration of the stratum corneum, as well as supporting barrier function and skin elasticity and strength. Low NMF levels have been correlated with skin concerns such as dry skin (xerosis), psoriasis and atopic dermatitis.

"An increase in bathing in the warmer months can also have significant negative effects on water loss and barrier function of the skin. One of the main causes of low NMF levels in the skin is overwashing and bathing generally and the use of soaps and drying skincare. Ageing also leads to a decrease in NMF and this may mean that winter skin is much more of an issue for older people."

Silvana Jacome, Marketing Manager at the natural skincare brand, Salcura, went on: "The skin is impacted by a combination of environmental, lifestyle, and chemical factors, the below are just a few top three we regularly ask people to think about:

- **Environmental stressors:** Pollution, UV exposure, and extreme weather can cause flare ups and damage skin cells.
- **Lifestyle factors:** Chronic stress, poor sleep, dehydration, smoking, and an imbalanced diet can weaken the skin's natural barrier.
- **Harsh skincare ingredients:** sulfates, parabens, alcohols, and synthetic fragrances can strip and irritate the skin."

And to the key signs that can show skin health isn't in the best of health.

Julia Vearncombe, Co-founder of SkinGENIUS, advised: "Your skin is incredibly good at signalling when something's not quite right nutritionally. Some common signs to watch for are:

- Dry, flaky, itchy skins often indicates a lack of essential fatty acids (omega 3s), vitamins D or E. Your skin's protective barrier needs these fats to lock in moisture effectively.
- Slow wound healing or persistent breakouts can suggest insufficient vitamin C or zinc. These nutrients are crucial for skin repair and fighting the bacteria that cause acne.
- Pale or dull-looking skin might point to iron deficiency or lack of B vitamins, which are essential for healthy blood circulation and oxygen delivery to skin cells.
- Inflamed, red or irritated skin often worsens with poor nutrition."

Bradshaw went on: "Nutrient insufficiencies can show up as dryness, flaking, slow healing, increased bruising, breakouts, or a general loss of radiance. Low essential fats may lead to rough or tight feeling skin; low vitamin C can affect firmness and repair; zinc insufficiency may contribute to acne or dermatitis; and low B vitamins can present as redness, cracking, or irritation. These signs are often subtle but valuable for practitioners, offering early clues that the body may need more nutritional support or that absorption may be compromised."

Issues related to the skin can also point to other aspects of health that may not be functioning so well.

Bradshaw commented: "The skin often reflects what's happening internally, and changes can point towards issues with digestion, hormones, immunity, or metabolic balance. Digestive inefficiencies, such as poor stomach acid, sluggish motility, or irritation in the gut lining, can influence nutrient absorption and inflammatory signalling, which affects the skin. Hormonal shifts may alter oil production or sensitivity, while blood sugar swings can contribute to breakouts or dullness. Stress, poor sleep, and reduced circulation can also slow repair."

NUTRITION AND THE SKIN

Looking in greater detail at nutrition and the skin, Vearncombe explained: "Your skin is your body's largest organ, which needs proper nutrition to function at its best. What you eat literally becomes the building blocks for new skin cells. Skin completely renews itself every 28 days or so and this process requires vitamins, minerals, proteins and healthy fats to work efficiently. Without adequate nutrition, this renewal slows down, leaving you with dull, lacklustre skin. It's important to recognise the vital gut-skin connection. What you eat affects inflammation, which impacts skin conditions like acne, eczema and rosacea. A diet rich in whole foods, healthy fats and plenty of water supports both gut health and clear skin."

Bradshaw added: "The skin is constantly renewing, and this process depends on a steady supply of protein, healthy fats, vitamins, and minerals. When intake is suboptimal, the skin often shows it quickly through dryness, dullness, or slower healing. Skin is particularly sensitive to dietary gaps or periods of stress. A nutrient-rich diet helps maintain a strong barrier, supports collagen and elasticity, and improves the skin's ability to cope with environmental changes throughout the year.

"High sugar foods, ultra processed meals, excessive alcohol, and poor quality fats can all undermine skin health. These dietary patterns can drive inflammation, disrupt the skin barrier, and accelerate collagen breakdown. High glycaemic diets, in particular, can worsen breakouts and dullness, while alcohol dehydrates the skin and reduces antioxidant capacity. Diets low in whole foods and fibre can also influence inflammatory signalling and detoxification pathways, indirectly affecting the skin. Over time, these factors contribute to premature ageing, uneven tone, and reduced resilience."

Briggs went on: "Poor nutrition can have fundamental effects on the overall health of the skin. A diet low in fruit and vegetables is likely to be lacking in vitamin C, which is required for the conversion of the amino acid, proline, in the production of collagen, an essential structural protein. Collagen provides strength and elasticity to the skin.

"Fruit and vegetables also provide a number of other nutrients such as carotenoids and polyphenols, which have been linked to an improvement in skin barrier function and reduction of TEWL. Compounds found in dark red and purple fruits, red wine, green tea and coffee have all been reviewed for their effects on skin health, with procyanidins, typically found in red and black grapes, bilberries, blueberries and red wine, being shown to increase the water content of the stratum corneum. Initial studies also suggest anthocyanidins (also known as pro-cyanidolic oligomers/PCOs or procyanidins) can increase collagen (which in itself can improve skin hydration) and also increase hyaluronic acid production in the skin. This is significant as hyaluronic acid is part of a group of compounds known as NMF, which regulate hydration and TEWL in the skin.

"A diet low in essential fatty acids, particularly omega 3, can also lead to issues

"Digestive inefficiencies, such as poor stomach acid, sluggish motility, or irritation in the gut lining, can influence nutrient absorption and inflammatory signalling, which affects the skin."

with the skin and particularly the lipid matrix, which forms part of the stratum corneum. For this layer of the epidermis to function properly, there needs to be the correct balance of nutrients and 10-20 per cent of this matrix is made up of essential fatty acids (omega 3 and 6). It is preferable to have a higher ratio of omega 3 in the form of alpha linolenic acid (ALA) from seeds and nuts and docosahexanoic acid (DHA) and eicosapentanoic acid (EPA) from oily fish.

"Poor diets can also be high in sugar, which has the potential to lead to increased glycation in the body. Glycation occurs when a sugar molecule binds to a protein, altering its structure and function. This may affect collagen and keratin, which play a role in skin barrier function. Highly processed foods can also lead to an excessive intake of sodium, in the form of salt, which is associated with many health concerns, including the dehydrating effect it can have. In terms of skin health, there is evidence to suggest an excess intake of sodium can lead to an increase in inflammation, particularly in the dermis. The inflammatory process can then lead to issues with skin barrier function and a worsening of dryness and dehydration, as well as a deterioration in existing skin issues. There are studies to support the theory that a typical Western diet can compromise skin barrier function and worsen existing skin conditions."

And so to a dietary protocol that supports skin health.

Bradshaw recommended: "A supportive protocol focuses on whole foods, steady blood sugar, high quality protein, and healthy fats, while reducing inflammatory triggers. Colourful vegetables, berries, nuts, seeds, and oily fish provide antioxidants, collagen supportive nutrients, and barrier building lipids. When digestive imbalances are present, the priority is to soothe and stabilise the gut rather than aggressively feeding bacteria, using gentle, well tolerated fibres, calming foods, and strategies that reduce irritation. Moderating alcohol, sugar, and processed foods helps protect the skin's structure and clarity. The aim is a balanced, nutrient dense pattern that supports both the skin and the systems that influence it."

Briggs advocated the Mediterranean diet for its skin benefits.

"This diet focuses on polyphenol-rich fruits and vegetables, foods such as nuts and seeds, which contain both omega 3 and 6 fatty acids, olive oil and lean meats and oily fish, such as herring, mackerel, salmon and sardines, which are also rich in omega 3 fats," she explained.

"It recommends that processed foods are avoided, and the emphasis is on the consumption of fresh, unprocessed or minimally processed foods, which are naturally much lower in sugar, salt and trans and hydrogenated fats. Although it has not been specifically studied with regard to skin issues, skin barrier or TEWL, the overall results from clinical trials show a benefit on general skin health and for some specific skin conditions. This type of diet also includes foods which are rich in nutrients such as zinc, vitamin A and fatty acids."

SUPPLEMENTS FOR SKIN HEALTH

Many people live with nutrient gaps, often without realising, and these can show through our skin. So, what supplements should be recommended?

Bradshaw suggested: "Key nutrients include vitamin C for collagen and brightness, vitamin A for healthy cell turnover, vitamin E for protecting skin lipids, and zinc for repair and inflammation control. Omega 3 fats help calm the skin and strengthen the barrier, while protein provides the amino acids needed for structure and healing. Polyphenols from colourful plant foods offer additional antioxidant and protective benefit."

Vearncombe continued" B vitamins, including biotin, are crucial for healthy skin tone and barrier function, while vitamin D plays a role in immune balance and inflammation control. Minerals like zinc and selenium aid in healing and antioxidant defence."

And Briggs advised: "There are specific nutrients that may be useful for skin health, some of which may be easily obtained from a good diet but all of which can be added in supplement form, if higher levels are required or if the diet does not provide an adequate intake. The first is the addition of omega 3 fatty acids, particularly for those who cannot or do not consume oily fish in their diets. Choosing a supplement based on fish oil, which is naturally rich in EPA and DHA, or a vegan DHA product, derived from algae, will ensure a good balance of omega 3:6 in the stratum corneum and allow this layer of the skin to function effectively. These fatty acids are also inversely correlated with inflammation, which is an underlying factor in many common skin conditions.

"It is also important to ensure a good intake of the correct omega 6 fatty acid, namely GLA. Whilst most UK diets are weighted firmly in favour of omega 6, at a ratio of almost 1:20, instead of the advised 1:2, most diets do not contain enough GLA, which is the compound considered to be most active, and the conversion from dietary components such as linoleic acid can be poor. Furthermore, GLA is specifically linked to improvements in the production of ceramides in the epidermis and also with reduced production of inflammatory compounds, a reduction in TEWL and improved barrier function. Sea buckthorn, which provides mainly omegas 7 and 9 fatty acids, is another nutrient which should be considered for skin health. These fatty acids can reduce water loss via the skin and also have an effect on the production of hyalurons, which retain water in the skin.

"Pycnogenol, a marine pine bark extract which is rich in proanthocyanidins, has been shown to have benefits for skin health, during seasonal changes in temperature and humidity. Regular use reduced TEWL and loss of hydration and also improved skin elasticity, most likely due to the effects the PCOs have on collagen production. Similar effects are likely to be seen with other anthocyanidin-rich supplements, such as those using grapeseed and bilberry as their source.

"There is also good evidence for the effects of the carotenoid, astaxanthin, which is also known as a xanthophyll. This means that it remains as a carotenoid and is not depleted by conversion to vitamin A. It is not a nutrient widely found in the diet, although it is responsible for the distinctive colour of salmon, prawns and lobster, therefore, supplementation is often recommended for skin health. Like many plant compound,s it acts as an antioxidant, but unlike most other nutrients of this type, it can bridge the cell membrane, working both inside and outside of a cell. Supplementation with natural, rather than synthetic, astaxanthin can reduce TEWL, skin texture and smoothness and improve elasticity. It also appears to preserve the collagen in the skin, by decreasing the production of compounds called matrix metalloproteins (MMP), which cause damage to this structural tissue."

And the gut also needs a focus in terms of skin health.

"There is evidence to suggest that maintaining a good gut microbiome may be useful for skin health," Briggs advised. "One study has suggested that the strain, *Lactobacillus plantarum,* can improve hydration and reduce water loss via the skin. This study also showed an improvement in wrinkle depth, skin elasticity and appearance. The inclusion of fermented foods, such as kimchi, sauerkraut, pickles, sourdough breads and some cheeses, can provide this strain of lactic acid bacteria, which is relatively resistant to stomach acid. However, supplementation will provide a standardised level, more appropriate to dealing with specific skin issues."

Topical matters

What goes on the skin also plays a crucial role in its health. This is an area that should form a key part of any skin health protocols you offer to clients.

Vearncombe commented: "Seasonal changes call for a skincare refresh. As winter gives way to spring, temperatures warm, which means heavy creams can be too thick and clog pores. Switching to lighter moisturisers helps maintain balance without overloading the skin. With increased sun exposure, you need to protect the skin with an SPF. Spring often brings more outdoor activity and pollen, so cleansing and moisturising ensures your skin stays healthy and radiant through the season shift."

Jacome added: "You don't always need to make drastic changes but a few small adjustments can make a difference to the skin. As temperatures rise and humidity increases, sensitive, eczema-prone, or acne-prone skin can become more reactive due to sweat, increased oil production, and seasonal allergens. Keep the routine gentle and don't overdo it:

- **Cleanse gently** – use mild, non-stripping cleansers, gentle enough for everyday use.
- **Hydrate** – use lightweight moisturisers or hydrating sprays, however, hydrate as often as you need.
- **Protect** – use a gentle, fragrance-free, SPF sunscreen.
- **Wear breathable fabrics** – 100 per cent cotton to reduce irritation and let the skin breathe."

And to the chemicals of caution.

Vearncombe advised: "Sulphates (SLS/SLES) are harsh and strip the skin of their natural oils, leading to dryness and irritation. Phthalates and some parabens, often used as preservatives or hidden in fragrances, are linked to hormone disruption and reproductive concerns. Petroleum-derived, petrolatum, mineral oil, paraffin wax can be irritating. Some sunscreens may contain oxybenzone and benzophenone, which are absorbed into the body and may affect hormonal balance. Formaldehyde-releasing agent, Triclosan, is a commonly used antimicrobial which can extend shelf life. Fragrance (parfum) can cause allergic reactions and headaches."

Jacome went on: "A few undesirable chemicals include:

- **Sulfates** – harsh cleansers that strip natural oils.
- **Synthetic fragrances and dyes** – can trigger allergies and sensitivity.
- **Mineral oils and silicones** – may block pores and prevent skin from breathing.

"These can compromise the skin barrier, trigger inflammation, and affect skin health, especially if you have sensitive, reactive skin. Look for ingredients rich in antioxidants, vitamins, and essential fatty acids, such as omega-rich oils, which repair and strengthen the skin barrier, sea buckthorn, packed with antioxidants and vitamins, aloe vera, which is deeply hydrating and calming for sensitive or irritated skin, chamomile, gentle and soothing, ideal for redness or inflammation."

Vearncombe also suggested: "Look for products containing plant-based ingredients including red clover, nettle and Oregon grape to balance oil production and target breakouts. Babassu and macadamia oils deeply nourish without clogging pores. Tea tree, lavender and chamomile provide natural antibacterial, anti-inflammatory and calming properties, which are perfect for acne, eczema and sensitive skin. Shea butter and sunflower oil offer intense hydration."

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The elemental diet in digestive health: an underused but powerful clinical tool

Nutritional Therapist, Alice Bradshaw, examines the elemental diet, and discusses when healthy food becomes a burden.

In the modern digestive health landscape, many clients arrive in clinic exhausted by restrictive elimination diets, high-potency probiotics, and aggressive antimicrobial protocols. Despite their dedication, these individuals often remain trapped in a state of high reactivity, where the act of eating itself becomes a source of physiological stress. They frequently present with digestion so compromised that they react to almost every food, a cycle that increases the risk of nutrient deficiency and psychological burnout.

When the digestive tract is this sensitised, practitioners face a significant clinical paradox: the client needs restorative nutrition to heal, but their gastrointestinal system is too reactive to process it. The mechanics of digestion – gastric acid secretion, stomach motility, and enzyme release – can exacerbate an inflamed mucosa and prevent recovery. In these instances, the elemental diet serves as a transformative tool. It is a versatile, evidence-supported strategy that calms the gut rapidly, supports mucosal repair, and creates the essential conditions needed for deeper therapeutic work.

Defining the elemental concept

To appreciate this efficacy, we must understand the elemental concept. The term refers to nutrients provided in their most fundamental forms; unlike standard meal replacements or protein shakes, an elemental formula requires virtually no mechanical or chemical breakdown by the digestive system.

The protein component is delivered as free-form amino acids, which are the individual building blocks the body normally has to work hard to extract from complex food matrices. Carbohydrates are provided as simple molecules like glucose or maltodextrin, while fats consist of essential fatty acids and medium-chain triglycerides (MCTs). Because MCTs do not require bile salts for emulsification, they are absorbed directly into the portal vein. The formulation also includes a full spectrum of vitamins, minerals, and trace elements in readily absorbable forms, ensuring the micronutrient profile is complete without relying on extensive digestive processing. This nutritionally complete fuel source bypasses the complex labour of the digestive tract, ensuring nutrients reach the bloodstream even when digestive capacity is severely diminished.

The biological mechanism: physiological rest

This leads to the primary biological mechanism of the diet: physiological rest. Nutrients are absorbed almost immediately within the proximal small intestine, usually within the first 100 centimeters of the duodenum. This rapid uptake ensures the remaining small intestine and colon are effectively vacated, reducing the metabolic demand on the gastrointestinal tract.

This lack of residue is a critical key to success in managing Small Intestinal Bacterial Overgrowth (SIBO) and Intestinal Methanogen Overgrowth (IMO). By utilising an elemental diet, the practitioner provides 100 per cent of nutritional needs while effectively starving microbial overgrowth further down the tract. Beyond microbial management, this quiet period allows the intestinal mucosa to focus on repair. When the gut is not required to manage the friction of fibre or the chemical irritation of complex proteins, pro-inflammatory cytokines such as TNF-alpha and IL-6 move toward baseline. This reduction in inflammatory load improves barrier integrity and reduces the systemic immune activation that keeps many clients in a state of chronic illness. Studies show the elemental diet supports systemic benefits, including improved energy, reduced immune burden, and better metabolic resilience.

Modern formulations

Historically, elemental diets had a reputation for poor palatability and clinical rigidity, but modern formulations have transformed this landscape with improved flavours and hypoallergenic options. A significant advancement is the rise of semi-elemental formulas, which contain partially hydrolyzed proteins known as peptides, rather than individual amino acids. While they require

minor enzymatic activity, clinical studies show they deliver therapeutic outcomes similar to fully elemental diets, particularly in Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, and malabsorption syndromes. Their familiar texture and improved taste make them a valuable alternative when compliance or tolerance are limiting factors.

Many effective semi-elemental and elemental formulas utilise whey as a primary protein source due to its exceptional amino acid profile and rapid absorption. Some practitioners avoid these, assuming they are inappropriate for dairy-sensitive clients, yet it is essential to distinguish between dairy as a food and purified whey in clinical-grade formulas. In these specialised products, whey is processed to remove lactose and casein, the specific components associated with immune reactivity. When this whey is further hydrolyzed into peptides, it leaves a clean, hypoallergenic protein source significantly smoother than vegan amino acid blends. These offer a useful bridge for clients who find traditional elemental powders unpalatable.

Clinical versatility and implementation

While the 14-day SIBO protocol is the most studied indication, the diet is increasingly used as a flexible multi-tool. For clients with Inflammatory Bowel Disease, it can induce remission by lowering the antigenic load on the gut wall. Short-term resets of three to five days are effective for managing acute flares, gastrointestinal infections, or post-holiday dysregulation. Even ad hoc meal replacement can provide a window of digestive rest, allowing a client to manage a high-stress day without triggering symptoms. Post-surgical recovery is another area where diet maintains nutritional status without taxing a healing tract.

Practical implementation, however, requires careful guidance. Because the formula is predigested, it has a high osmolality; if consumed too quickly, it can draw water into the intestines, causing transient bloating or osmotic diarrhea. The fundamental rule is to sip, not gulp. Clients should consume their serving slowly over one to two hours to optimise absorption and prevent discomfort.

Ultimately, the goal is always to act as a bridge back to a diverse, whole-food diet. It is a temporary intervention that lowers the background noise of the immune system, allowing the practitioner to reintroduce foods systematically. This process often reveals that the client can now tolerate items that were previously significant triggers. For non-therapeutic use, formulas can be blended with nut milk or hypoallergenic alternatives to ease integration into daily routines.

The future of elemental therapy

Access to high-quality formulations has expanded into the functional medicine clinic. The elemental diet is an evidence-based, clinically powerful tool. By acknowledging the gut sometimes needs to stop working to start healing, practitioners offer their most reactive clients a reliable path toward recovery. For many, this structured form of digestive rest is the missing link between persistent symptoms and a sustainable, diverse diet.

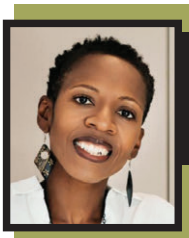
Summary: the elemental diet multi-tool

The elemental diet is a versatile clinical strategy centred on physiological rest. By delivering nutrients as free-form amino acids and simple carbohydrates, it bypasses the labour of digestion, allowing the gut lining to repair and the immune system to 'stand down'.

- **Efficacy:** Starves microbial overgrowth (SIBO/IMO) by absorbing nutrients in the proximal small intestine.
- **Options:** Semi-elemental formulas (utilising purified whey peptides) offer improved palatability and texture while maintaining hypoallergenic, clinical outcomes.
- **Flexibility:** Ranges from 14-day therapeutic protocols to three-day resets or ad hoc meal replacement for intermittent gut rest.

Further resources

- Jini Patel Thompson – *Absorb Plus & Bowel Rest Protocols*. Founder of Listen To Your Gut, Jini has developed widely used practitioner-led elemental protocols for Crohn's, colitis, and severe gut inflammation. Her work includes structured bowel-rest programmes and extensive case-based guidance.
- Dr Allison Siebecker – *SIBO Elemental Diet Protocols*. A leading authority on SIBO, Dr Siebecker provides detailed guidance on full and modified approaches, dosing, and troubleshooting.



ABOUT THE EXPERT

Alice Bradshaw is a qualified Nutritional Therapist with a passion for health writing. She has worked in the natural health industry for 25 years and is Head of Education and Nutrition Information at Terranova Nutrition.

EXPERT ADVICE

Our panel of nutritional experts offer readers advice on dealing with a variety of issues.

Q When advising a client about fibre supplementation, can you advise on the best type to look for and what else it should be combined with for the best benefits?

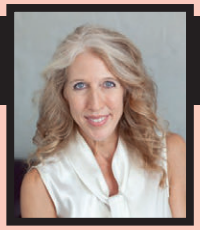
DR KRISTY APPELHANS ADVISED: Customised fibre recommendations should consider personal wellness goals and existing nutritional status to optimise potential benefits and the overall product use experience.

Fibre supplements include soluble and/or insoluble fibre, which can also be consumed through food sources. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) recommends a minimum of 25g of dietary fibre per day for adults. This intake is considered adequate for normal bowel function and is associated with a reduced risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and colorectal cancer.[1] The guidance is for total dietary fibre intake as both soluble and insoluble types are important for health. It is significant to note, however, that fibre supplementation can be a key healthy lifestyle choice as approximately 60-70 per cent of Europeans do not consume the recommended amount of dietary fibre each day, according to the European Food Information Council (EUFIC).[2]

Food sources of insoluble fibre include whole grains, nuts, seeds, and vegetables. This type of fibre adds bulk to stool and supports bowel regularity. Soluble fibre food sources include oats, legumes, fruits, and vegetables.[3] Certain types of soluble fibre, such as partially hydrolyzed guar gum (PHGG), can help promote a healthy microbiome by serving as a food source for different types of beneficial gut flora.[4-10] Furthermore, this type of fibre is typically well-tolerated compared to other common sources of soluble fibre (for example, psyllium) and has even been shown to help relieve occasional digestive discomfort, including bloating and irregular bowel frequency.

It is also important to be aware of possible barriers to fibre consumption, including personal intolerances that may contribute to gastrointestinal discomfort. Reactions to fibre may be associated with the source of the fibre, to which a person is intolerant, allergic, or sensitive. For example, some people may be sensitive or intolerant to wheat, but also intolerant to psyllium fibre sourced from wheat. Additionally, fibre from wheat or other sources may contain gluten. These types of fibre are not appropriate for consumers with coeliac disease or other known gluten intolerances. Intolerance can also occur if excessive amounts of fibre are present in a single serving of food or supplement product. For this reason, total fibre consumption should be divided among various sources throughout the day in doses known to be well-tolerated by healthy adults.

Last but not least, fibre supplementation in combination with a nutrient-rich diet, may be further complemented with other ingredients such as probiotics (for example, *Lactobacillus plantarum* Lpla33), electrolytes (calcium, magnesium, and potassium), protein and/or amino acids, and essential fatty acids (omega 3) to support an active and healthy lifestyle.



ABOUT THE EXPERT

Dr Kristy Appelhans, MSRA, NMD, MBA is a naturopathic physician (NMD) and the founder/CEO of a naturopathic medical corporation and private practice. Her practice predominantly serves a patient base seeking healthy ageing solutions as well as gastrointestinal and women's health treatment options. Dr Appelhans holds a Bachelor of Science in Clinical Nutrition, Master of Science in Regulatory Affairs (MSRA), and an Executive Master of Business Administration (MBA) with three specialisations – US employee law, global organisational strategy, and business communications. She has spent the majority of her career as a global consumer safety executive and international nutrition, science, regulatory, pharmacovigilance, and medical educator. She is currently leading global healthcare provider education and new product development regulatory affairs for the Active Living product category at Metagenics.

Q What are the essential nutrients to support muscle growth and how can I incorporate them into a client protocol?

KYLIE NETHERY EXPLAINED: Muscle growth relies on more than just training stimulus alone, it requires the right nutritional building blocks to support repair, recovery and long-term maintenance.

Protein is a key driver of muscle growth, providing the essential building blocks needed to build, repair and maintain muscle tissue. For most adults, the NHS recommends 0.75g per kg of bodyweight, but for those who train more intensely, a higher intake of around 1.2–1.5g/kg/day may be beneficial. Protein plays an important role across the lifespan, helping to maintain muscle mass as we age and supporting recovery following illness or injury.

While protein is essential, it does not work on its own. Muscle growth performs best when supported by several key nutrients, such as carbohydrates, magnesium, calcium and vitamin D. When combined within a balanced diet, you can help your muscles to thrive.

Carbohydrates provide the primary fuel for training by replenishing muscle glycogen stores. Adequate carbohydrate intake supports training performance and, when consumed alongside protein, can enhance muscle protein synthesis and recovery.

Magnesium plays a central role in energy metabolism, muscle contraction and relaxation, and protein synthesis. Research has shown that higher magnesium intake is associated with greater muscle mass, as well as bone density and muscle strength. Adequate magnesium intake may also support exercise recovery by reducing muscle soreness and inflammation. Calcium and vitamin D are well recognised for their role in bone health, but they are also important for muscle function. Calcium can support normal muscle function, while vitamin D helps support the body to absorb calcium.

These key nutrients for muscle growth can be found in a wide range of everyday foods. Below are some examples:

- **Protein:** Lean meat, fish, eggs, dairy products, beans, lentils, legumes, nuts and seeds.
- **Carbohydrates:** Bread, pasta, rice, potatoes, and oats.
- **Magnesium:** Nuts, seeds, wholegrains, leafy green vegetables and legumes.
- **Calcium:** Dairy products, sesame seeds, and chia seeds.
- **Vitamin D:** Oily fish, mushrooms and fortified foods, for example, breakfast cereals.

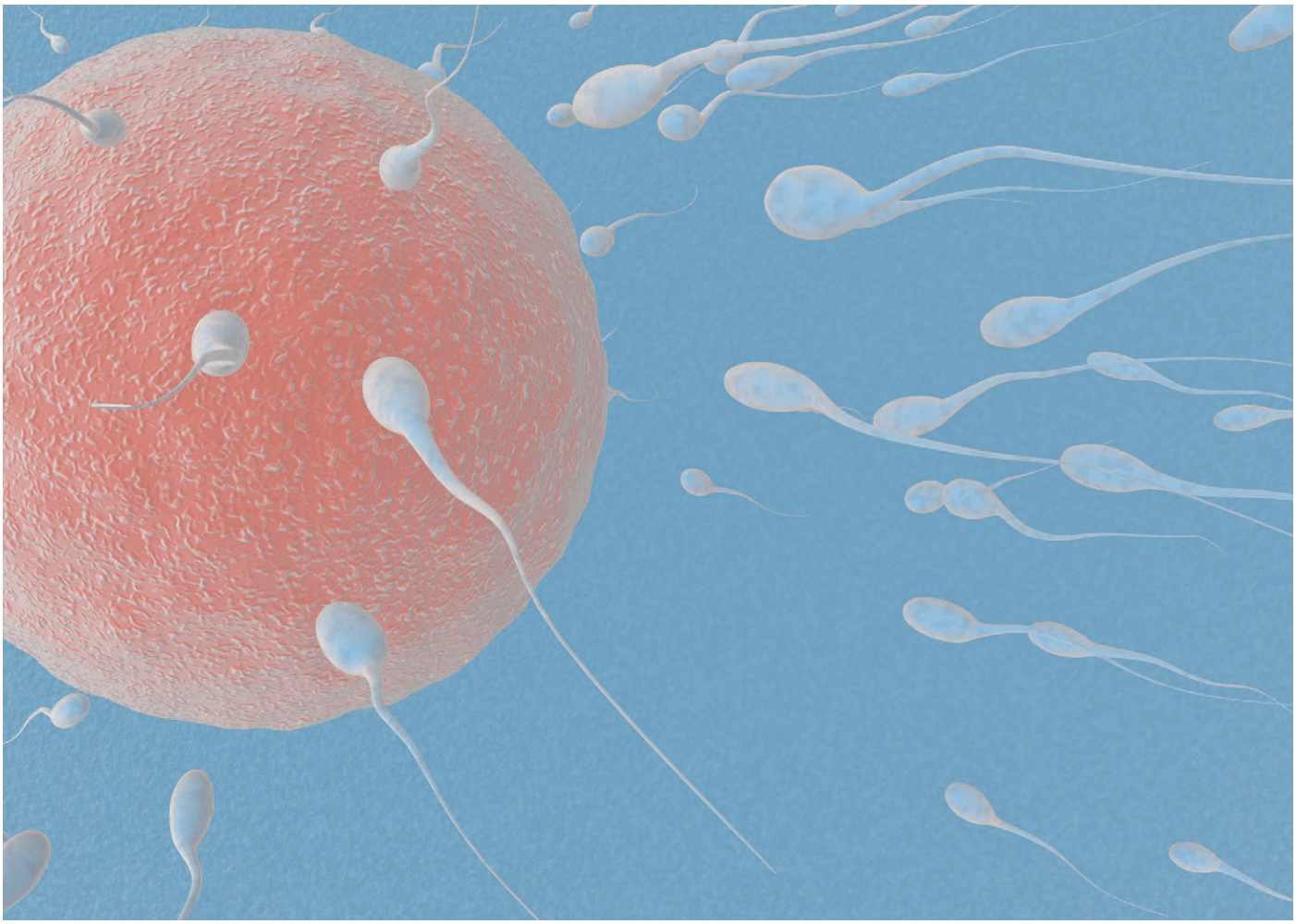
Nutrition from seeds that can help support muscle growth include:

- Flaxseed provides 4.6g protein and 17 per cent of your reference intake for magnesium per 20g serving.
- Chia seeds provide 4g protein per 20g serving and are a source of magnesium and calcium.
- Shelled hemp is a complete plant protein which contains all nine essential amino acids and provides 6.7g protein and 30 per cent of your reference intake for magnesium per 20g serving.

They are nutritious and easy to incorporate into your everyday diet by simply adding a couple of spoonfuls to your meal of choice. You can add them into porridge, yogurts, soups, salads and smoothies.

ABOUT THE EXPERT

Kylie Nethery is NPD and Packaging Technologist at Linwoods with a BSc. (Hons) in Food Design and Nutrition. Kylie's role involves developing new products, researching trends in health and nutrition and reviewing nutrition related content for the marketing team. Linwoods has a range of plant-based health food products, mainly cold milled seed blends that can be easily incorporated into people's daily diets.



Q When developing fertility protocols, can I incorporate medicinal mushrooms?

SOPHIE BARRETT ADVISED: Medicinal mushrooms are increasingly being explored within integrative and natural fertility care. While they should never replace medical investigation or evidence-based fertility treatment, certain mushroom species may offer supportive benefits for hormonal balance, metabolic health, stress resilience and reproductive vitality when used appropriately and under professional guidance.

Cordyceps has been traditionally valued in Asian medicine for enhancing energy, libido and reproductive strength. Modern research suggests that *Cordyceps sinensis* may support healthy hormone production by influencing oestrogen and testosterone pathways, as well as improving cellular energy production within reproductive tissues. In male studies, cordyceps has demonstrated improvements in sperm count, motility and antioxidant protection, which are important markers of fertility. In women, its effects on ovarian hormone signalling and mitochondrial function may support follicular health and overall reproductive resilience.

Reishi (*Ganoderma lucidum*) is widely recognised for its calming, immune-supportive and stress-modulating properties. Chronic stress and inflammation can negatively impact ovulation, menstrual regularity and implantation. Reishi's bioactive compounds help regulate inflammatory pathways and support nervous system balance, which may indirectly support hormonal harmony and cycle regularity. While traditionally used as a tonic for women's wellbeing, safety data during pregnancy remains limited, so professional guidance is essential.

Maitake (*Grifola frondosa*) has shown promise in supporting insulin sensitivity and metabolic balance. This is particularly relevant for women with polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), where insulin resistance can disrupt ovulation. Small clinical studies suggest that maitake extracts may improve ovulatory function by supporting healthy glucose regulation and endocrine balance.

Medicinal mushrooms are best viewed as supportive tools within a holistic fertility plan that also addresses nutrition, stress management, sleep, environmental exposure and medical care. Quality sourcing, correct dosing and practitioner oversight are essential. Anyone actively trying to conceive or undergoing fertility treatment should always consult a qualified healthcare practitioner before introducing new supplements.

When used thoughtfully, medicinal mushrooms may offer gentle yet meaningful support for reproductive health, resilience and hormonal balance. Ongoing research continues to clarify their role in fertility care, making them an exciting area within integrative women's health.

ABOUT THE EXPERT

Sophie Barrett is a Medical Herbalist and Mycotherapy Adviser at Hifas da Terra. Sophie studied Herbal Medicine and Naturopathy at The College of Naturopathic Medicine. Having learned healing traditions from around the world and realising the importance of living in harmony with nature, she set up her own practice to educate and serve patients seeking optimum health.

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The proven benefits of DIGESTIVE ENZYMES

Naturopath and Metabolic Balance Coach, Leyla El Moudden, discusses the crucial role of digestive enzymes in client protocols.

Enzymes are excellent aids for breaking down food. They are also foundational regulators of nutrient bioavailability, microbial balance, immune signalling, and long-term gut resilience.

These fascinating proteins increase the speed of processing by reducing the activation energy required to complete a task [1]. Foods are processed rapidly with less energy when enzymes are added. If you were to leave a few lentils in a glass of water, you would be facing many weeks, potentially even months, for them to dissolve. Add in the correct enzyme and poof, the lentils are gone. Enzymes have sped up the breakdown process [2].

They are also safe. Enzyme activity is highly specific; an enzyme will not break down anything other than its substrate, and only activates in its optimal digestive pH [3], [4]. After completing their work, digestive enzymes are broken down like any other protein into amino acids and excreted via the body's natural pathways [5].

Enzymes increase bioavailability

Compared with digestion alone, multiple double-blind, randomised, placebo-controlled trials have shown that co-digesting meals with enzyme supplements reduces food viscosity, increases the release of amino acids, branched chain amino acids, leucine, simple sugars and fatty acids, thus significantly improving overall nutrient bioavailability in a dose-dependent manner, even with difficult-to-digest proteins such as pea and whey [6], [7], [8], [9].

Enzymes act as prebiotics

Human digestion operates on a host-first, microbe-second principle. The body is designed to extract and absorb nutrients for its own needs before any remaining material reaches the gut microbiome [10]. Digestive enzymes make this possible by hydrolysing food and breaking large macromolecules into smaller, absorbable units. What remains then passes to the microbiome for controlled fermentation [11].

Enzyme activity determines what reaches the microbiome and where fermentation occurs by converting meals into substrates for gut bacteria. Ninety per cent of dietary nutrients should be absorbed by the time chyme reaches the large intestine, where most of the human microbiome resides [12].

When enzyme activity is insufficient, digestive activity in the small intestine shifts from digestion (enzymes and secretions) to fermentation (by gut microbes). Fermentation occurs too early in the small intestine. The resulting rapid lactic acid production lowers pH and impairs enzyme efficiency further [13]. This irritates the intestinal lining and increases the production of irritating metabolites such as branched-chain fatty acids, ammonia, and phenolic compounds outside of their optimal environment [14]. This type of fermentation is healthy in the colon, where the very same microbial metabolites suppress pathogens, support epithelial integrity, and contribute to immune regulation [15].

Enzymes alleviate digestive complaints

Enzyme replacement therapy is well supported by clinical trials, with fungal and microbial-derived enzymes showing significant benefits in subclinical pancreatic insufficiency, lactose intolerance, functional dyspepsia, food intolerances and IBS [16], [17], [18], [19], [20]. In these trials, enzyme replacement has led to improvements in symptoms and quality of life, with measurable reductions in bloating, gas production, abdominal distention, stool quality and gut bacteria profiles [21], [22], [23], [24].

The benefits of enzyme supplementation exist even in the absence of dietary adjustment. In a January 2023 study, 20 healthy adults with self-reported bloating or abdominal distension consumed a pizza meal with or without an 18-enzyme blend. Within one week, 80 per cent had reduced waist distension and 65 per cent reported less abdominal discomfort when enzymes were included [25].

For medical enzyme needs, such as pancreatic insufficiency, pancreatic cancer, and genetic enzyme deficiency syndromes, medical-grade, pharmaceutical enzymes of high potency (Creon) are usually prescribed [26], [27].

Enzymes reduce antigenic exposure

Antigenic exposure is the degree to which the immune system encounters intact or partially digested food proteins at the intestinal lining. Efficient digestion breaks protein down into small peptides and amino acids that are unlikely to trigger an immune response [28].

When digestive capacity is compromised, larger protein fragments are more likely to reach and cross the intestinal lining, increasing immune activation within the gut-associated lymphoid tissue [29]. This heightened exposure can then develop into food sensitivities, low-grade inflammation, and reduced immune tolerance [30].

By supporting more complete protein

digestion earlier in the digestive process, digestive enzymes help reduce antigenic load at the gut lining, supporting tolerance rather than reactivity [31], [32], [33], [34].

Enzymes handle food intolerances

Intolerances are not allergies, but arise when carbohydrates, proteins, or fats are poorly digested and reach the gut in forms that are difficult to absorb and instead, generate symptoms such as increased osmotic pressure, gas, wind, abdominal cramps and bloating [35].

Primary enzyme insufficiency occurs when the client does not produce an enzyme, the most prevalent being lactase, to digest lactose [36]. Secondary enzyme insufficiency is when digestive enzyme activity is reduced because of a separate dysfunction, such as low grade inflammation, infection, or impaired brush-border integrity [37].

When we replace the missing or insufficient enzymes, digestion of lactose, FODMAPs, proteins, and other challenging food constituents is improved [38], [39], [40]. The results are increased tolerance to foods and smoother dietary expansion [41].

Do enzymes damage the gut lining?

Concerns that digestive enzymes may damage the gut lining are largely based on confusing different biological processes that are fundamentally different from oral enzyme supplementation.

Certain microbes such as *Escherichia coli*, *Klebsiella*, *Enterobacter*, and *Candida*, produce their own proteases and mucus-degrading enzymes, which can compromise barrier integrity in states of dysbiosis [42], [43], [44], [45]. The same is not true of digestive enzymes, which act on food alone [46].

Damaging enzyme-producing microbes tend to thrive when undigested dietary protein reaches the colon [47]. In this context, supplemental digestive enzymes are not harmful but therapeutic, as they improve protein digestion further upstream and reduce the amount of fermentable substrate available to protease-producing microbes [48]. They protect, not damage, the gut barrier [49].

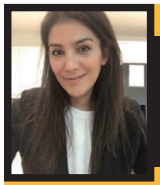
Will digestive enzyme use make the pancreas 'lazy'?

Pancreatic secretion is triggered by small intestinal CCK release in response to undigested nutrients [50], [51]. Supplemental digestive enzymes break down the volume of undigested proteins and fats earlier in the digestive process, leaving fewer intact macronutrients to reach CCK-sensing cells, which in turn, reduces pancreatic output [52]. It's a normal negative-feedback mechanism. Adequate enzymatic activity in the intestinal lumen signals that further pancreatic stimulation is unnecessary, lowering pancreatic secretion, gallbladder contraction, and overall digestive workload [53]. This effect is dose dependent [54]. Once the enzyme is removed, the pancreas resumes pre-supplement secretion in response to meals [55].

In medical settings where there is heavy, high dose enzyme use such as in primary pancreatic insufficiency and cystic fibrosis, pancreatic extracts at pharmacological doses maintain nutrition, prevent weight loss, and correct malabsorption [56], [57]. In pancreatitis and pancreatic cancer, even higher doses alleviate ductal pressure and reduce inflammation [58]. Trials on pharmacological enzyme use in medical settings find that pre-enzyme pancreatic secretion resumes when supplementation stops and normalises to its baseline within two weeks of discontinuing enzymes [59]. In individuals with normal pancreatic function, there is no evidence that standard digestive enzyme use leads to long-term suppression or dependence [60].

Are there any contraindications?

Active gastritis or stomach ulcers are made significantly worse with protease enzymes, particularly pepsin [61]. Clients at risk of high uric acid levels, such as those with kidney disease or gout, should avoid high doses of protease enzymes with meals [62].



ABOUT THE EXPERT

Leyla El Moudden, BA, Dip Herb, Dip Nat is Head of Education for Enzyme Science UK, and a practicing Naturopath and Metabolic Balance Coach.

Pure for practitioners

Pure Encapsulations is a popular practitioner brand with a focus on premium ingredients, integrity, and science.

The nutritional supplements category is fast-moving and ever-growing as the research base continues to evolve. At the forefront of the science is Pure Encapsulations, a brand well-regarded among the practitioner community for its commitment to product excellence.

One of the core principles of Pure Encapsulations is centred around making professional food supplements that are backed by science, rather than trends and fads. And this approach is seeing the brand grow, with a range of exciting NPD.

Joanna Dziedzic, Nutritional Therapist and Business Development Manager at Pure Encapsulations, advised: "Pure Encapsulations is dedicated to providing professional food supplements designed with integrity, using premium ingredients backed by verifiable science and held to the highest industry standards. The key difference is that we manufacture in our own state-of-the-art facility to ensure the highest quality standards.

"Our products don't go to market without meeting the most stringent criteria to ensure the highest quality. We ensure the integrity of every product with the promise of premium sourced ingredients, backed by verifiable science, and significant testing by accredited and cGMP-compliant laboratories of our raw materials and final products, to verify potency and purity so our customer can feel confident knowing only the best of the best make it into their hands. We don't follow every industry trend; we carefully evaluate the strength of academic evidence to support our next steps and business decision. Pure Encapsulations doesn't stray from its founding philosophy, which will continue into its future. The brand was developed over 30 years ago by two practitioners who wanted products that didn't contain unnecessary additives or allergens commonly found in food supplements, as well as products that were clinically effective. Since then, Pure Encapsulations has become the leading brand in functional medicine due to its commitment to purity, quality, and efficacy."

An exciting portfolio

Today, the range stands at 160, meaning practitioners have access to a wide range of supplements for many different health needs.

"Our portfolio includes a variety of food supplements, from simple nutrients like vitamins, minerals and amino acids in the most effective and bioavailable forms, to expertly designed formulas that cover most clinical needs," Joanna advised. "Our top sellers include Magnesium Glycinate, the O.N.E Multivitamin, Daily Support Formula (which assists a busy and demanding lifestyle), MenoVive (for optimal menopause support), Metabolic Xtra (for maintaining blood glucose levels), Epi-Integrity (for optimal digestive health), plus many other professionally formulated products."

And NPD is a key focus, ensuring Pure stays at the forefront of not just the science but to the needs of practitioners and their clients.

Joanna commented: "It's an exciting time for us as we are about to announce the launch of our new product, which will complete our digestive category. I'll pause, as I wouldn't want to spoil the excitement for the launch. We have also announced the launch of our best-selling multivitamin in a new portable and convenient size. The O.N.E Multivitamin with Iron is now available in a 30-capsule size.

"This year is shaping up to be very exciting for new product development. We have decided to focus our investments on the fastest-growing categories. There is a growing body of evidence and research in the longevity sector and health optimisation, particularly concerning biological ageing, which is becoming a priority for many proactive health experts and clinicians. Our NPD plans always align with ongoing research, so we are thrilled to be launching new products in these areas and support clinicians and clients with the highest quality and most innovative products."

In terms of formulations, this is carried out by an experienced team.

Joanna advised: "Our dedicated team is vital to the evolution and the success of the business. Every member brings incredible and unique value to our growth. Experience in the

sector is essential, encompassing clinical, academic, and specialist knowledge, as well as expertise in marketing, event organisation, and industry partnerships. The long-term market knowledge and involvement are essential to our business; working in such a dynamic and challenging industry demands in-depth experience. Of course, none of this would be possible without a huge passion for health and helping others. We all recognise the impact we have on shaping healthier, cleaner, and more informed choices.

"Pure Encapsulations is proud to be grounded in science every step of the way. To guide us on this journey, we have assembled an extensive and experienced Scientific Advisory Board in key nutritional health areas, including genomics, mental health, emotional wellbeing, weight management, immunology, gastrointestinal health, and more. We truly value these relationships, as our key opinion leaders help us stay on top of evolving science, address common controversies, and assess research supporting new product launch decision."

Quality standards

Pure Encapsulations makes its own products, and this offers benefits.

Joanna explained: "Production employees receive extensive, ongoing training in safe handling of raw materials and finished products. Machine operators inspect the capsules every 15 to 20 minutes, while quality assurance specialists conduct inspections every 60 to 90 minutes. To ensure products meet the highest standards, our raw materials are scientifically tested before use, and every formula is evaluated to confirm its quality. Raw materials are tested for identity, potency, microbial contaminants, heavy metals (including mercury, arsenic, cadmium, and lead), 32 solvent residues, and allergens, depending on risk. Herbal ingredients are tested for 70 pesticide compounds, and essential fatty acids and fish/krill oils are tested for dioxins, furans, PCBs, and other agents. All suppliers undergo rigorous qualification procedures and audits."

Another important aspect is allergen control.

"We have a comprehensive Allergen Standard Operating Procedure that prevents ingredient cross-contamination. Any product containing allergens such as soy, dairy, fish, or shellfish is clearly labelled," Joanna advised. "Many of our products are certified gluten-free and manufactured in facilities audited by the Gluten-Free Certification Organisation (GFCO). The GFCO is an internationally recognised and trusted symbol, signifying that a product meets the highest quality standards for gluten-free certification."

The practitioner relationship

Pure is well-regarded in the practitioner sector, and this is an important relationship for the brand.

"Healthcare practitioners (HCPs) are and always have been our primary focus," Joanna advised. "We truly treasure the relationship and value their impact on customer health. We want our products to be used appropriately, which can only come from someone who comprehends the complexity of human health. Our formulas can sometimes be complex from a consumer's perspective, and this is a good example of where an experienced HCP becomes a key element. We believe in educating and investing in HCPs, as they are trusted professionals, and their opinions truly matter to the public. While browsing websites and blogs might be helpful, it will never replace professional advice."

From a support perspective, Pure goes the extra mile: "Pure Encapsulations is committed to sharing our ever-growing knowledge of nutrition science through educational events and on-demand learning from world-leading experts. From monthly webinars by trusted experts and international speakers to our in-person seminar series held across the country, we aim to educate. We also have a section on our website dedicated exclusively to health providers. The Professional Education website is packed with clinical resources and information, along with an extensive archive of webinars, product videos and more.

"We maintain an open clinical support line where a dedicated team of nutritional therapists answer questions from health providers. We sponsor key industry events where we have the opportunity to meet wonderful HCPs who continually challenge us and share their feedback. We love to support them with our knowledge, experience, product samples, and new professional literature, and want them to know that we are here for them. Monthly webinars are very popular, and we strive to keep them versatile and focused. We want to ensure our loyal HCPs learn from the best global experts, who offer strong academic knowledge and practical clinical experience. Our Seminar Series aims to cover a lot of ground in the UK and Ireland to reach as many busy HCPs as possible. We take their feedback on board and focus on important health topics relevant to their practice and client needs. All our educational content is CPD approved."

Extending this support, Pure Encapsulations has developed the PureGenomics platform to further educate on nutrigenomics.

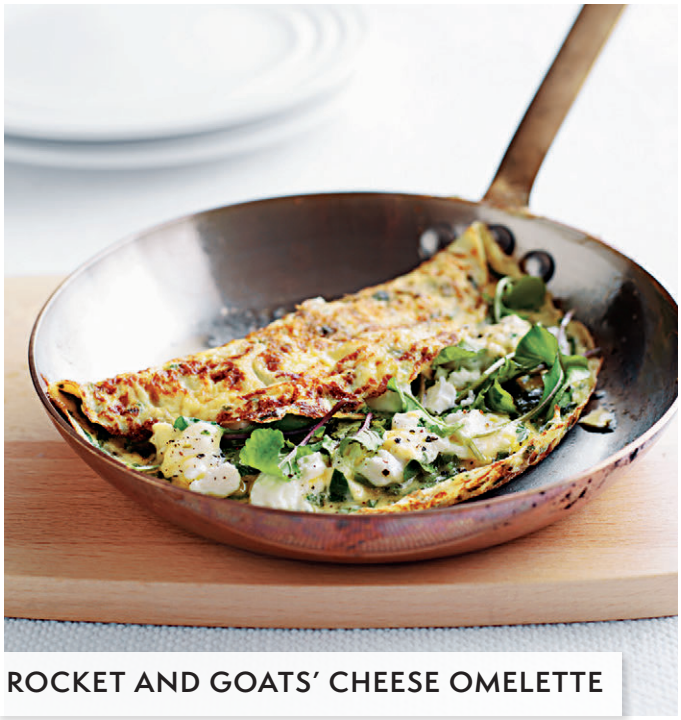
Joanna went on: "PureGenomics is our nutrigenomics service, empowering healthcare providers to make informed lifestyle and supplement selections tailored to each client's unique wellness needs and goals. The platform was created by global experts in nutrigenomics and with busy HCPs in mind, allowing them to obtain vital health information without increasing costs and complexity for clients. This is our way of thanking our loyal HCPs; we wanted to equip them with an easy-to-use and, most importantly, complimentary yet advanced clinical tool to support their busy practice.

"PureGenomics offers many benefits to a practice and provides deep personalisation of lifestyle and supplement recommendations based on clinically relevant information with guidance from HCPs. PureGenomics is not only a nutrigenomics tool for translating genetic information, we also provide a Nutrigenomics Course, where HCPs can learn the science and clinical fundamentals of nutrigenomics. This complimentary, self-guided course offers four hours of lectures, quizzes, and animations on core academic material for effective interpretation of nutrigenomic data and its application. We also offer a Practitioner Onboarding Program that combines the self-guided nutrigenomics course with a sequence of consultations and coaching to meet practice needs."

Nutritional support for PCOS

Help clients with PCOS thrive with this selection of simple, healthy and delicious recipes, curated by nutritional therapist, Megan Hallett.

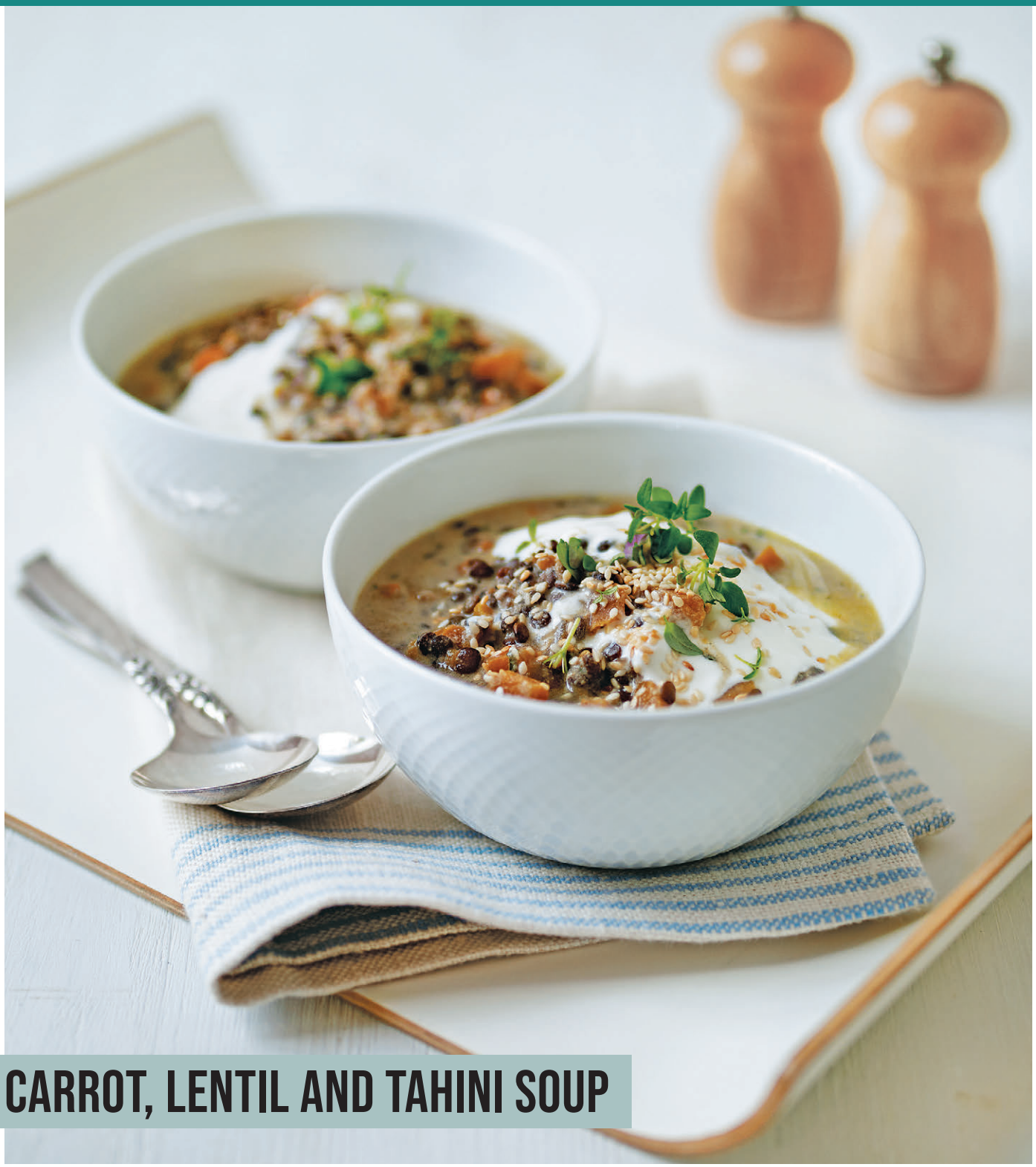
FRUIT GRANOLA BARS



ROCKET AND GOATS' CHEESE OMELETTE

CARROT, LENTIL AND TAHINI SOUP

SEEDED OATCAKES



CARROT, LENTIL AND TAHINI SOUP

Serves 4

Soups are a great way to pack in a number of different nutrient-dense plants, protein and healthy fats, and they can be meal-prepped ahead of the week. Adding tahini or Greek yogurt to a veggie-packed soup is a great way to add a little creaminess and extra healthy fats to keep you full and satisfied.

INGREDIENTS:

- 2tbsp sesame seeds, plus extra for sprinkling
- 2tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 500g (1lb) carrots, chopped
- 1 litre (1¾ pints) vegetable stock
- 2tsp chopped lemon thyme leaves, plus extra for sprinkling
- 150g (5oz) dried green lentils, rinsed and drained
- 5tbsp tahini paste
- Greek yogurt, for topping
- Salt and pepper

METHOD:

- Heat the sesame seeds in a large dry saucepan until lightly toasted. Tip out into a small bowl.
- Add the oil to the pan and gently fry the onion and carrots for 10 minutes until softened. Add the stock and thyme and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat, cover and cook very gently for 10 minutes.
- Tip in the lentils, cover and cook gently for a further 20 minutes, or until the lentils are soft.
- Remove from the heat and leave to stand for five minutes, then stir in the tahini paste. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
- Ladle into bowls and top with spoonfuls of Greek yogurt. Serve sprinkled with extra sesame seeds and thyme leaves.

FRUIT GRANOLA BARS

Makes 9

Using high-fibre staples, such as fresh fruit and dates, is a great way to sweeten your desserts and keep blood glucose levels stable. Flaxseed and oats provide two extra prebiotic fibre sources to keep the good bugs in your gut, while peanut butter gives these bars a lovely nutty flavour and healthy fats at the same time.

INGREDIENTS:

- 225g (7½ oz) peeled, cored and roughly chopped dessert apple
- 1tbsp lemon juice
- 1tbsp maple syrup
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- Olive oil, for oiling

GRANOLA:

- 125g (4oz) rolled oats
- 125g (4oz) ready-to-eat dried apricots
- 125g (4oz) fresh Medjool dates, stoned and roughly chopped
- 2tbsp ground flaxseed (linseed)
- 2tbsp smooth peanut butter (not a fan of peanut butter? Switch for almond butter or tahini
- 55ml (2fl oz) agave syrup

METHOD:

- Line a baking sheet with baking parchment. Toss the apple with the lemon juice, maple syrup and cinnamon in a bowl, then spread out on the lined baking sheet and roast in a preheated oven, 160°C (325°F), Gas Mark 3, for 20 minutes. Remove from the oven and leave to cool.
- Increase the oven temperature to 180°C (350°F), Gas Mark 4.
- Pulse all the ingredients for the granola together in a food processor a few times until mixed and mashed. Fold in the cooled roasted apple, then spoon into a lightly oiled 20cm (8in) square shallow cake tin and level with the back of a spoon. Bake in the oven for 20 minutes.
- Leave to cool for 15 minutes before cutting into nine squares to serve.

SEEDED OATCAKES

Makes 20

These seeded oatcakes make for a super versatile snack and the perfect base for guacamole, nut butter or hummus. Seeds are a nutritious staple to incorporate into your PCOS-friendly diet, as not only do they help to boost the fibre content of your meal or snack with little thought, they also contain a number of beneficial micronutrients, such as vitamin E, zinc and antioxidants.

INGREDIENTS:

- 125g (4oz) medium oatmeal
- 75g (3oz) plain flour (or substitute with wholemeal flour), plus extra for dusting
- 4tbsp mixed seeds, such as poppy seeds, linseeds and sesame seeds
- ½ tsp celery salt or sea salt flakes
- ½ tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 50g (2oz) unsalted butter, chilled and diced
- 5tbsp cold water

METHOD:

- Put the oatmeal, flour, seeds, salt and pepper in a bowl or food processor. Add the butter and rub in with the fingertips or process until the mixture resembles breadcrumbs. Add the measured water and mix or blend to a firm dough, adding a little more water if the dough feels dry.
- Roll out the dough on a lightly floured surface to 2.5mm (⅛ in) thick. Cut out 20 rounds using a 6cm (2½ in) plain or fluted biscuit cutter, re-rolling the trimmings to make more. Place slightly apart on a large greased baking sheet.
- Bake in a preheated oven, 180°C (350°F), Gas Mark 4, for about 25 minutes until firm. Transfer to a wire rack to cool. Serve with guacamole.

ROCKET AND GOATS' CHEESE OMELETTE

Serves 4

This herby, green omelette will set you up perfectly for the day ahead. It doesn't take long to make, but the high protein content will keep you satiated and prevent dips later on, helping you take on whatever the day throws at you.

INGREDIENTS:

- 12 eggs
- 4tbsp milk
- 4tbsp chopped mixed herbs, such as chervil, chives, marjoram, parsley and tarragon
- 2tbsp olive oil
- 125g (4oz) soft goats' cheese, diced
- Small handful of baby rocket leaves
- Salt and pepper

METHOD:

- Beat the eggs, milk and herbs together in a large bowl along with some salt and pepper.
- Heat the olive oil in an omelette pan, then swirl in a quarter of the egg mixture. Cook over a medium heat, forking over the omelette so that it cooks evenly.
- As soon as the omelette is set on the underside, but still a little runny in the centre, scatter a quarter of the cheese and a quarter of the rocket leaves over one half of the omelette. Carefully slide the omelette on to a warmed serving plate, folding it in half as you go. For the best results, serve immediately.
- Repeat to make three more omelettes and serve each individually. Alternatively, keep warm in a moderate oven and serve together.

The PCOS Recipe Book by Megan Hallett. Published by Hamlyn.

I-MAG GIVEAWAYS

We showcase a selection of giveaways on offer to readers this issue.

Good Health Naturally The Krill Miracle

We're pleased to offer three readers the chance to win a bottle of The Krill Miracle, a premium Antarctic krill oil supplement made with Superba Boost. Providing EPA and DHA in phospholipid form, it is better absorbed than standard fish oil and naturally delivers astaxanthin and choline, making it a true multi-nutrient marine oil. Sustainably sourced using Eco-Harvesting methods and fully traceable, it stands out within the omega 3 category. A well-considered choice for those looking to upgrade their marine oil intake.

I:Win: We have three to give away.

Bio-Kult Boosted

Bio-Kult Boosted is a high-strength, multi-strain live bacteria supplement designed for times when extra support is needed. Formulated with 14 carefully selected strains, it helps maintain gut microbiome balance and supports normal digestive and immune function. The addition of vitamin B12 contributes to normal energy metabolism and immune health. Suitable for everyday use, alongside antibiotics, or during periods of stress or travel, Bio-Kult Boosted requires no refrigeration and is free from artificial colours and flavours – a trusted, clinically informed option for nutritionists seeking targeted microbiome support.

I:Win: We have five to give away.

A.Vogel Yarrow Herbal Bitters Complex

The use of herbal bitters (and foods) to balance the production of gastrin and thereby regulate the production of digestive enzymes is long-standing in naturopathic and herbal medicine, hence the term 'bitter tonic' and the use of bitters as 'aperitifs'. A.Vogel's Yarrow Herbal Bitters Complex contains extracts of fresh, organically grown yarrow, dandelion and lemon balm and is a popular food supplement in the digestion category.

I:Win: We have 15 to give away.

Green People organic hand and body care duo

Three lucky winners will each receive the Age Defy Organic Pure Luxe Duo, a premium certified organic hand and body care set designed to nourish, protect and rejuvenate mature and sensitive skin. Formulated with antioxidant-rich botanicals and advanced natural actives, this indulgent duo helps support smoother, firmer-looking skin. Each set includes Age Defy+ Pure Luxe Hand & Body Wash, and Age Defy+ Hand & Body Lotion (300ml) – a perfect opportunity to experience high-performance organic skincare from one of the UK's most trusted ethical beauty brands.

I:Win: We have three to give away.

BioCare Immune Complex

Immune Complex is a comprehensive, synergistic formula designed to provide everyday immune support, particularly for those with busy or stressful lifestyles. It combines key immune-supporting nutrients including vitamins A, C, D and zinc with elderberry, a rich source of potent antioxidants used to support the immune system and help ease common cold symptoms. With highly concentrated maitake and shiitake mushroom extracts for immune support, alongside beta glucans, lysine and nucleotides, which the body has higher requirements for during times of stress or infection. Highly absorbable, vegan nutrient forms ensure optimal effectiveness and gentle daily support at two capsules per day.

I:Win: We have three to give away.

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