



Exercise

A NEW YEARS RESOLUTION YOU CAN KEEP!

Diet

THE WRONG DIET CAN MAKE YOU DEPRESSED

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HELLO AND WELCOME TO OUR FIRST NEWSLETTER OF 2010 - DEALING WITH THE HEALTH ISSUES AT THE FOREFRONT OF MOST PEOPLE'S MINDS AFTER CHRISTMAS. WE HOPE YOU FIND IT USEFUL AND FOR OUR CORPORATE CLIENTS WE HOPE THE MATERIAL CAN HELP YOUR WELLNESS PROGRAMMES AND BE INFORMATIVE FOR YOUR EMPLOYEES.

KIND REGARDS
GILL BOWES MACLEOD, CE ROODLANE MEDICAL

exercise - it doesn't have to be hard work

SO IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN WHERE MANY OF US WILL SIT DOWN AT OUR DESKS, WAISTBAND SLIGHTLY TIGHTER THAN A FEW MONTHS AGO, AND GO THROUGH THE POST FESTIVE SEASON SELF REPROACH ROUTINE - "I PROMISED MYSELF I WOULDN'T OVER INDULGE THIS CHRISTMAS AND LOOK WHAT HAPPENED...AGAIN!"

Well try to look at it from the bright side. It was an exceptionally cold winter and so we needed some of those extra calories to help keep us warm...and we managed not to say or do anything too embarrassing at the office party. Christmas/New Year is fun and it's only once a year. So enough of the guilt and time to start looking forward to the Spring and getting lean and mean...or alternatively just getting a little fitter than before.



Exercise and increased aerobic fitness is a brilliant way to help keep us healthy, feeling good and increases our resilience against a huge range of physical and psychological stressors

that we can encounter in everyday life.

In amongst lots of New Year resolutions is usually the promise "must get fit". Unfortunately, like lots of resolutions, this one tends to stall usually after we've signed up for the expensive 12 month direct debit contract with the gym and had the single induction session. Reasons?... "no time", "kids", "work", "commute" "boredom".

The problem is we often haven't really thought through the process and so have set ourselves imaginary goals that are not only unrealistic but also not enjoyable and so counter productive.

So the first step is to set ourselves short term achievable and realistic goals. If you've done no regular exercise before, start with simple changes to your routine - take the stairs rather than lift/elevator, carry the shopping from the supermarket to the car rather than use a trolley, or better still walk home with it if practical (and for many living in Central London it can be). Think about your commute - is there a part of it you could walk, cycle or run rather than take the train/bus/car?

Many people would regard 30 minutes total exercise 5 days a week as perfectly achievable - but start at say 50% of this and gradually increase it - remembering that this can include activities such as brisk walking. Over time our overall improved fitness will tend to make us more mentally as well

as physically alert, focused and productive during the day as well as improving our sleep quality at night.

Try and do some exercise with friends or in a group - it's more fun and sociable and is usually a motivator. Sponsored walks etc are a great way of getting more involved with this.

Make sure that you have the right clothing - you don't need to spend thousands on the latest star athlete sponsored outfit but good running/training shoes and breathable/wicking clothing that can be layered are essential. The right trainers for you and your needs fitted at a specialist e.g. running shop can help avoid overuse/strain injuries as well as making you more lightfooted and agile.

"Exercise" can be anything active that raises your pulse rate and makes you a bit out of breath. So anything from Salsa classes to Iron Man training or just walking the dog (briskly). It doesn't need to be "boring" exercise.

Don't get discouraged if you have a week or two where you lapse into old habits - this is normal - just pick up again at a slightly lower level and build up.

Keep a diary of your activities - again it'll help with motivation and allow you to track progress.

If you do go to the gym ask the instructor to set you a fitness programme which is suited to your goals and review it with them regularly.

And once you have managed to get into a routine and have achieved some of your goals, go and treat yourself to something indulgent...just not everyday maybe!

This article was written by Dr Shakeel Ahmed. Dr Ahmed heads up the Roodlane Medical office in Glasgow and has been based there since 2008.



junk food and depression

THERE HAS BEEN A STUDY REPORTED RECENTLY WHICH INDICATES THAT EATING JUNK FOOD CAN MAKE YOU DEPRESSED.

Those who regularly eat high-fat foods, processed meals, desserts and sweets are almost 60 per cent more likely to suffer depression than those who choose fruit, vegetables and fish.

The study, in the British Journal of Psychiatry, used data on 3,486 male and female civil servants aged around 55. Each participant completed a questionnaire about their eating habits and a self-report assessment for depression five years later. The researchers found that those with the highest consumption of processed food were 58 per cent more likely to be depressed five years later than those eating the least amount.

The researchers suggest several reasons for the protective effect of a healthy diet. They believe that high levels of antioxidants in fruits and vegetables protect against depression, as does the folate found in broccoli, cabbage, spinach, lentils and chickpeas.

Eating more fish may be protective due to high levels of polyunsaturated fatty acids, it is claimed. However, it is possible the effect comes from a 'whole food' diet that has many nutrients from different types of food rather than one single nutrient.

Dr Brunner, a reader in epidemiology at UCL, said the reverse was also important, that poor eating habits put more of a strain on the body. He said: 'If your diet is high in foods that make blood sugar levels go up and down like a yo-yo, then it's not good for your blood vessels and is bound to have an effect on the brain.'



This article was written by Dr Sheena McRae. Dr McRae has been with Roodlane Medical since 2000 and is now one of our Associate Directors.



we all need the sun

THERE HAVE BEEN A NUMBER OF RECENT PRESS ARTICLES ABOUT VITAMIN D AND WE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO RUN OVER A FEW FACTS ABOUT THIS TOPIC WHICH IS BECOMING MORE WIDELY RECOGNISED AND DISCUSSED THAN EVER BEFORE.

Vitamin D is essential for health. It is known to regulate calcium levels in the body and to maintain the strength of our bones and muscles so preventing conditions such as rickets and osteomalacia which are caused by severe Vitamin D deficiency.

There has been an increasing amount of research indicating that Vitamin D could play an important role in maintaining our immune system balance so helping to reduce risk of inflammatory and auto-immune disease and cancers. There is some discussion that mild/moderate deficiency of Vitamin D might impair this role.

A recent nationwide study indicated that possibly more than 50% of the adult population in the UK have insufficient levels of Vitamin D for optimum health with 16% demonstrating severe deficiency during winter with an increasing prevalence the further north you go.

We obtain 90% of our Vitamin D from ultraviolet B (UVB) sunlight which converts the inactive form of Vitamin D in our skin to the active form which our body needs. During winter the amount of sunlight in most of the UK is generally thought to be insufficient to provide adequate Vitamin D production in the skin. Exposure will also be reduced by cloud, pollution and concealing clothing. People with darker skin absorb much less UVB than fair skinned so are at particularly increased risk of deficiency. Factor 15 sunscreen blocks 99% of Vitamin D production in the skin.

Only about 10% of Vitamin D comes from our diet in foods such as oily fish. Research indicates that a fair skinned person requires approximately 20 to 30 minutes of sunlight exposure on the face and forearms at midday

two to three times a week to achieve healthy Vitamin D levels in summer. Darker skinned people are estimated to require at least double that level of exposure to maintain adequate levels.

Professional bodies now recommend dietary supplementation of Vitamin D intake certainly for at risk groups and possibly for all at least during the dark winter months. In several European countries Vitamin D supplementation drops for infants and pre-school children during the winter months has been a well established principle for several years.

Although there is some ongoing debate about what the optimum supplemental dose should be, the Department of Health in the UK now advises supplement drops of 400 IU/day for infants and pre-school children. For healthy adults 400-1000 IU/day appears to be safe.

Yet again the issue highlights the importance of maintaining a healthy diet and as active and outdoor a lifestyle as possible for ourselves and our families.

This is a fascinating area of nutrition that we suspect will become increasingly recognised as being of major importance to our mental and physical health. There may be more than just collective psychology at play when we commonly exclaim in depths of winter (or in mid summer for those of us in Scotland)....."All I need is some sunshine!"

Another contribution from Dr Ahmed.



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