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Enjoying a Long and Healthy Life

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Time for another one of those well-worn clichés that also happens to be eternally true! We are what we eat. . .

Our human body is the chosen vehicle we use to travel around this bluey-green planet of ours. It is a bit of a no brainer then to take the best possible care of it and give our body the best chance to serve us well until it is time to leave.

It makes sense that the fewer stresses we put on our physical body and digestive system, by choosing carefully what is taken into it, the easier time it is going to have.

Personally, I have found over the course of the last couple of decades that my own body reacts better to mostly unprocessed food. The more natural my chosen food is, the smaller the list of ingredients is on any kind of label gracing the packaging and the healthier and happier my body is.

Eating food free from artificial colours, flavour enhancers, e-numbers and preservatives means our digestive system is going to have an easier time in processing it.

Further along the same principal, artificial sugars or too many natural, yet highly refined sugars, ask a lot

from our bodies to absorb and process. These alien intruders have only really become a part of our daily diet (to the extent they are today) in the last fifty years or so.

Over-burdening our body — and this applies equally to even the healthiest food or drink if we over eat — puts unnecessary stress and burden on our finely tuned digestive system.

If you take on heavy fuel, chances are you are going to get heavy!

I am vegan, occasionally raw vegan, which is eating only uncooked fruits/nuts, and have found this diet works wonderfully well for me, although I equally accept that this lifestyle choice may be considered a little too extreme for some. I have weighed seventy-two kilos (158 lbs), give or take a kilo, for the last two decades and my general health is excellent. I never over-eat; having partaken of a reasonable lunch, I follow it later with a light evening meal. If I snack at all, it is on fruit or nuts. I drink plenty of water (but not too much) and get plenty of exercise. If I cannot get out and take a walk (my favourite form of exercise), then I enjoy a swim. I also ensure that I take the time to have a 15-20-minute workout with weights at home every day.



Vitamins

We all have easy access to just about any and every type of vitamin, mineral or supplement conceived of or imagined. All we need to do is hit the high street or click a mouse. Yet, how many of these vitamins do we genuinely need to be taking and how many are simply passing through our bodies, serving little useful purpose?

During the last twenty years or so I confess, as a health-conscious vegan, I must have sampled at one time or another pretty much all the myriad of differ-

different during the summer months as opposed to winter. Again, if your instinct is suggesting you would benefit from supplementation, a visit to your general practitioner or choice of healthcare professional allows you to know for sure. Facts are always preferable to guesswork when it comes to our well-being.

Juice

“Five a day” have become the watchwords when it comes to our intake of fresh fruit and vegetables. This is a generally recognised standard to maintain a natural balance in our diet. Although more is always

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ent vitamin and mineral concoctions; the promised goal is to replace the essential elements vegans apparently miss out on through avoiding meat, dairy and fish. Last year I decided it was time to truly find out where my body was in terms of how vitamins were affecting it. Off I went to my chosen health professional for a complete medical review. The pleasing conclusion was that I lacked only a little vitamin B2. She recommended I take this short term in the form of a high-potency supplement and add extra almonds, mushrooms and sesame seeds into my diet for the long-term fix.

If you genuinely feel you could use some extra vitamins over and above your usual diet, take the time to go and get checked out by a health professional. This way you ensure you are supplementing with something you need short term. Look at what can be added into your diet for the long-term fix.

If you are vegetarian or vegan, it is almost mandatory to have your B vitamin levels checked periodically as a matter of course and for peace of mind. A nicely balanced diet might leave further supplementation obsolete. The other point to bear in mind here is that our needs are more than likely going to be entirely

preferable to less so why reach only the minimum recommended amount?

Juicing fresh fruit and vegetables is an excellent way of increasing our valuable intake of their beneficial vitamins and minerals. Pre-packed cartons of juice from the supermarket are okay, if there is no other option. To truly get a good balance of nutrients, juicing for ourselves is the way to go. Perfectly serviceable juicers have dropped in price recently, becoming accessible for most budgets. The wonderful thing about juicing for ourselves is that we do not need to add extra preservatives or any of the other stuff commercially produced juice often contains.

For more information about starting out with juicing combinations I recommend the book *Juicing for Health* by Caroline Wheeler or something similar. You can also find a juicing website that is trustworthy concerning the validity of information they provide.

Organic

There is organic produced food and then there is ethically produced organic food.

Some of the animal waste-based organic fertilizers, such as chicken pellet manure, commercially used by growers and directly available to us via garden stores, has been produced as a by-product of factory farming in one form or another.

The same applies with pesticides; rather than drenching our food in chemicals, there are more natural ways of doing things. Permaculture is one example, the planting of sympathetic plants to protect one another from likely pests. Using essential oils like citronella as a repellent to avoid crops being eaten by insects or lavender to discourage weeds from growing are becoming more widespread forms of protection for produce. There is a wealth of reliable information on the internet from various organizations, such as the Organic Consumers Association, which exists in one form or another in most countries.

If you are buying most of your food from grocery stores, a little investigation into where the products come from and how they are grown can pay dividends. There is a wealth of information available via the internet and if you ask the store employees directly they are generally quite helpful. Alternatively, growing your own fruit and vegetables puts you in control of what products go onto them and there are many ethical organic options out there, either for fertilizing or pest control. We are what we eat. . . €



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