



The NK Wellbeing Zone



Edition No.2
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Welcome to the second edition of The NK Wellbeing Zone!

A New Season

It is amazing just how quickly Nature's shifts take place. Only a short time ago we were basking in what felt like tropical temperatures and now, we find ourselves in what poet John Keats called a 'season of mellow mists and fruitfulness', with crispy brown leaves underfoot and a definite chill in the air. Just as the natural world has its seasonal shifts, so do we humans. We are constantly adapting to the changes going on around us. You may have noticed that you probably have a bit more energy on a warm June day than on a cold November night. And during the colder months, you may have more of an appetite for warming soups and casseroles than the chilled fruit smoothies you enjoyed during summer. It is not for nothing that we feel this way.

I admit that prior to my Nutritional Therapy training, I hadn't really thought about such things. Like most people, in responding to the demands of daily life, my tendency was to push on regardless, 365 days a year, rather than being aware of any direct connection between myself and the created world around me. As part of God's Creation, the seasonal changes we observe in the outer world are reflected in our inner, bodily world. From around this point in the year, our bodily fluids will start to thicken and will move more slowly around the body. Our cells may also decide to use this time to cleanse away some unwanted toxins, a process which can sometimes manifest as colds or other seasonal ailments. Not all illness comes directly from an external source. As I mentioned in last month's edition, our body always does its best for us, even though it may not always seem like that. In Nature, at this time, some animals will be going into hibernation and indeed our Stone Age ancestors probably did too. Unfortunately, that is not an option for most of us!

Being empowered

I was more than three decades into my life before it occurred to me that perhaps I should be taking some responsibility for my own health. As far as I was concerned, I lived and ate healthily, and illness, should it occur, was the responsibility of health professionals to cure. A combination of factors led me to start adopting a different approach and I started to notice that my GP

appointments for those ‘niggly’ health issues were much reduced – and I could only equate this with the dietary and lifestyle changes I had started to make.

Of course, there are most definitely times when it is essential to consult a health professional and we need to recognise that. Obtaining a medical diagnosis enables us to know what it is that we are dealing with before taking a course of action. In my own case, I realised that there were things that I could have done earlier to have helped myself and perhaps avoid certain issues. In realising this, I began to feel more empowered in respect of my health and I hope that during my years in Nutritional Therapy practice, I helped others to feel empowered in respect of their health too.

A gut feeling

Simply put, our Immune System is our body’s amazing defence system, working hard to protect us during every second of our lives. Because our Immune System operates in a range of different ways and within other bodily systems, it can sometimes be seen as slightly vague and nebulous – floating around somewhere – though we may not be exactly sure of its location. One location we *can* be sure of is our Digestive System – or our ‘gut’. This key department is far more than simply a food processing plant. Indeed, we talk of having a ‘gut feeling’ or a ‘gut reaction’, illustrating the strong connection between our mind and body. As around 70% of the cells that make up our Immune System reside in our digestive tract, maintaining a healthy gut is vital to an efficient immune system. There is so much more to say about our amazing gut, and we will be looking at this topic again in future bulletins. You may already have your own favourite seasonal ‘immune boosters’ but here are just a few extra ideas that could help to support your Immune System, digestive health and general wellbeing during autumn and into winter.

- Just as in summer, keeping hydrated is very important, with 4-6 glasses of water daily, alongside other drinks. Build up to this slowly if you are not a regular water drinker and don’t drink more than one pint of water in any hour. Herbal and fruit teas can make a pleasant alternative to regular hot drinks.
- A tablespoon of fresh lemon juice or apple cider vinegar in a glass of warm water, taken first thing in the morning, can help to gently cleanse the liver and digestive tract. Although lemon juice and apple cider vinegar might taste ‘acidic’, they actually break down as ‘alkaline’ during the digestive process.
- Vitamin D has an important role to play in supporting the Immune System. Shorter days and cooler temperatures mean that with less available daylight, we may need to top up our Vitamin D levels through

our daily diet. Sources include mushrooms, soya milk, oily fish, egg yolks and fortified breakfast cereals.

- Vitamin C, like Vitamin D, is also famously important for supporting immunity and can be found in many fruits and vegetables. Sources include green leafy vegetables, peppers, potatoes, parsley, peas, blackcurrants, strawberries and citrus fruits.
- Fruits and vegetables contain many of the nutrients we need for immune and digestive health, including vitamins, minerals and essential fibre to assist with gut motility. In the previous edition I quoted the old saying, 'Eat what grows around you when it grows around you', adding that I would say more about this in due course. There is a view that says that in observing this philosophy, we can better support our body's slower, seasonal energy by choosing the most appropriate foods. So, dense root vegetables rather than salad leaves and freshly ripening berry fruits, plums and apples, rather than oranges, pineapples and mangoes. This is only a suggestion of course.
- It would be fair to say that we cannot easily measure the amounts of vitamins and minerals in our fresh produce and some experts believe that today's fresh produce may contain far lower levels of vitamins and minerals than in previous decades. Whilst food should be our preferred source of nutrition, some people may choose to take nutritional supplements, and other nutrients as well, especially during the colder months.
- Fermented foods can also play an important role in digestive health. They are full of 'friendly bacteria', also known as pro-biotics. Sources include live yoghurt, Miso paste (great as soup stock), sourdough, almonds, bananas, garlic and ginger.
- Maintaining health and wellbeing isn't only about food. Whilst this is not feasible for everyone, some form of regular exercise or gentle movement where we can, helps to keep our Lymphatic System moving.
- The connection between mental and physical health has received a lot of extra attention in recent months. Proverbs 17:22 tells us that 'A cheerful heart is a good medicine, but a downcast spirit dries up the bones'. Keeping in touch with our friends and family; enjoying hobbies; doing what is creative, positive and life-giving and avoiding what is life-draining; making time to relax – can all make a positive contribution to overall health, wellbeing and immunity.

It is best to avoid making any sudden major dietary or lifestyle changes, but rather, just try introducing one or two new ideas to start with and see how things go, taking particular note of how you feel and what your body is telling you.

Wesley's Wisdom

In the previous edition of The NK Wellbeing Zone, I wrote about Methodism's founding father, John Wesley, and his role as an 18th century advocate of naturopathy and natural remedies. Wesley's book 'Primitive Physic: or an easy and natural method of curing most diseases', is an 18th century treasure trove of remedies for every imaginable medical condition and Wesley was clearly passionate about making good health both accessible and affordable. As promised, here are a few more of John Wesley's remedies, purely for historic interest, so please don't try these at home!

No.21 – A Bruise – Immediately apply treacle spread on brown paper.

No.66 – A Cut – Keep it closed with your thumb a quarter of an hour. Then double a rag five or six times; dip it in cold water and bind it on – OR – bind on toasted cheese. This will cure a deep cut.

No.71 – A Settled Deafness – Take a red onion, pick out the core: fill up the place with oil of roasted almonds. Let it stand a night, then bruise and strain it. Drop three or four drops into the ear, morning and evening, and stop it with black wool.

If there is something in this edition that you would like to ask about or have further information on - or if there is a topic you would like to read about in a future edition, just get in touch.

Wishing you all the very best until next time.....

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The information contained in this bulletin is not a substitute for personal medical advice, diagnosis or treatment and does not take into account any individual's specific health conditions, medications or other requirements. New or concerning medical symptoms should be referred to a GP or relevant health professional. The references from John Wesley's 'Primitive Physic' are included for interest only and should not be undertaken.