

Self-Care in the New Year

January, 2022

It is a new year, traditionally, a time to start fresh and to make resolutions. Self-care is usually the basis of these resolutions whether it is to lose weight, to get more exercise, or just to eat healthier. As part of that self-care program, we thought it was timely to talk about supplements. Winter is always a good time to boost one's immune system and given world events, especially so again this winter. The following are supplements that can be extremely helpful to fortify you for the winter months.

Vitamin C: a powerful antioxidant that is needed for close to 300 metabolic functions in the body as well as enhancing immunity and providing protection against infections.

Vitamin D3: another vitamin with many jobs. Some of which include amplifying the fighting abilities of the white blood cells in the immune response. It also protects the lungs against infection by stimulating peptides that live in the respiratory tract. It is very difficult to get sufficient amounts of vitamin D from one's diet. Even 15 minutes of sunshine, while beneficial on several levels, is not enough. A good supplement is the best bet. It is also a good idea to have your levels checked every few years even if you are supplementing as your body may require much more than the RDA.

NAC (N-Acetyl Cysteine): has antioxidant properties and specifically targets the respiratory cells. NAC has its own detoxifying properties and is a very important precursor (building block) to the essential amino acid glutathione. Glutathione is made in the liver and is absolutely necessary for healthy detoxification and to prevent damage from free radicals and other toxins.

Quercetin: A bioflavonoid that helps with the absorption of vitamin C. Quercetin is not produced in the body and must be supplemented. Besides promoting circulation and stimulating bile production, quercetin also has anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, antiviral properties, and can help with asthma.

Zinc: a mineral that promotes a healthy immune system and the healing of wounds. Zinc increases the absorption of vitamin A (from eating our veggies) and specifically addresses respiratory tract infections and speeds the healing process.

Supplements are an important way to help your body be at its best anytime, but especially so in winter. If you are going to invest your money in supplements, do the research to make sure that you are buying a good quality product. For example, not all vitamin C comes from the same source. In fact ascorbic acid, which is the most common form of vitamin C sold, is synthetic and can be derived from GMO corn. Someone with corn sensitivities might be better served with a food-derived vitamin C which can also be more bioavailable. Find out which one works best in your body and purchase from a company that has a good reputation, not just a good deal.

Working with herbs can be another means to support our bodies. Elderberry syrup is a wonderful tonic for the winter months. Elderberry has antiviral properties to support the immune system. Studies show that even if one contracts the flu that if elderberry is consumed before, the severity can be lessened and if taken during an acute situation, can shorten the duration. Elderberry syrup can be expensive to buy but is relatively easy to make. The following is a recipe to make your own.

Elderberry Syrup Tonic:

2 cups dried elderberries

4 cups cold water (not tap)

2-3 teaspoons dried ginger root

1 cup raw honey or maple syrup

Combine berries with cold water in a pot and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and allow to simmer for 30-40 minutes. Remove from heat and let sit for one hour. Strain through cheesecloth or strainer. Once it is cooled to almost room temperature, add the raw honey and stir well. Store in the refrigerator for up to 3 weeks. For added shelf life, stir in 1 cup of brandy or vodka. Yields 3-4 cups based on whether or not you add alcohol. Take 1-2 teaspoons daily as needed.

One good local resource for supplements is the Groton Natural Market. During the month of January, if customers mention having read this blog, or that they are a client of Body Mind Spirit Salon and Day Spa, they will receive 15% off of their purchase at the Natural Market, so please stop in to visit!