

Beat the blues

Up to one in five people suffer from depression but you can beat the blues with 5-HTP. Short for 5-hydroxytryptophan, a derivative of the amino acid L-tryptophan, it is found in high-protein foods such as red meat, poultry, fish, eggs, dairy products and in the seeds of the plant *Griffonia simplicifolia*. The body converts this compound into serotonin, a hormone which regulates mood, appetite, sleep and certain cognitive functions. Unlike other mood-enhancing herbs such as St John's Wort, 5-HTP can be taken alongside the Pill and other prescribed medication. We like Nature's Best 5-HTP (£11.50, naturesbest.co.uk)

INSIDER TALES

with Terry Cullen

There has been a huge increase in the popularity of complementary medicine. There seems to be two main reasons for this. The first is that in the early days of Prince Charles and Diane's marriage, their enthusiasm for complementary treatments had the expected effect of encouraging the rest of us to give more consideration to this approach in resolving health problems. Somehow, western medicine ignored the 4,000 or more years of complementary healthcare history, well documented in countries such as China and India, as well as the current Indian national ayurvedic medicine that embraces naturopathy, acupuncture and herbalism. However, there is a much greater acceptance within the medical fraternity of many therapies including acupuncture, chiropractic, reflexology and Bowen technique.

But what does this surge in popularity mean to you and me? A lot of us know people who have had some form of complementary treatment and usually been very pleased with the results. Personal referrals like this make it easier to try something yourself but if you don't know anybody there is a bewildering world of choices and mixed opinions. Complementary medicine is like any other in that what works for one person may not work for another. The good news is that with complementary medicine there are negligible side effects and so you have nothing to lose other than the fee charged.



Terry Cullen is the chairman of the British Complementary Medicine Association. For more info go to bcma.co.uk.

WELL OILED

Omega 3 oils found in oily fish could help to prevent colorectal or bowel cancer, according to new research by the American Association for Cancer Research. In a study involving 1,878 participants, patients who consumed more long-chain omega 3 fatty acids were found to reduce their risk of cancer by 39 per cent. The data showed that omega 3 fatty acids played a role in reducing tumour growth, as well as suppressing the development of dormant tumours and inhibiting the spread of the cancer.

Treatment of the month:

Magnetic therapy



Cleopatra used to do it, Elizabeth I loved to do it and US President Bill Clinton had a go at it too, which left me pretty determined to give it a shot. No, I'm not talking about ruling the world (chance would be a fine thing), I'm talking about magnetic therapy, which involves passing low-frequency waves through the body to do everything from boost energy to heal sports injuries.

With this in mind, off I trotted with my 'runner's knee' to the Bemer centre where, before lying on the bed of electromagnetic coils, you fill out a health form and learn a bit about magnetic therapy. I discovered that it's non-invasive and available to most – animals, children, the elderly, the lot! Plus, in my head at least, it makes logical sense – every ion contained in our cells produces an electrical pulse that makes an electromagnetic field, which responds to the magnets.

My session began with a 20-minute energy boost on the mattress, which left me sceptical as I could not feel a thing! But, after a few minutes, tingling swept through my body and stilled my inquisitive mind. Next, an additional magnet was placed on my bad knee to draw fresh oxygenated blood to the area. It's a pure and simple approach, but did I feel different? Initially, yes, but soon the niggling pain came back – unsurprisingly as, like a battery, the body needs a regular recharge. Fortunately, the magnetic bed is available to buy, and, if I'm honest, the idea of a holistic reboot from the comfort of my home really appeals. **SI**

Cost £25 for 30 minutes.

For details call 020 3111 9288 or go to bemerhealthcentre.co.uk.

Popularity stakes

The market in complementary therapies and remedies has grown by 18 per cent in two years and is worth £213million a year, according to Mintel analysts. They predict sales will increase by 33 per cent to £282million over the next four years as more patients reject prescription drugs in favour of natural remedies. The rise can be explained by growing official acceptance of many treatments such as acupuncture, which is available on the NHS.

