



Healthy living

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Your low-down on nutrition, wellbeing and feeling good.

VEG OUT

The healthy-eating message doesn't seem to be hitting home, with 90 per cent of us still failing to ensure we get our five-a-day, according to a new survey. Even more worryingly, 6 per cent of the UK population eat no vegetables at all.

The research, carried out by the British Association for Applied Nutrition and Nutritional Therapy (BANT) in conjunction with YouGov, examined the eating habits of 2,000 adults. The East of England was found to be the 'healthiest' region in the country for getting their five-a-day, while those in the North East and South West had the poorest intake of veg.

Age also plays a part in how likely we are to prioritise eating our greens. Only 7 per cent of 18-24-year-olds consumed five or more portions of vegetables a day, rising to 11 per cent of over

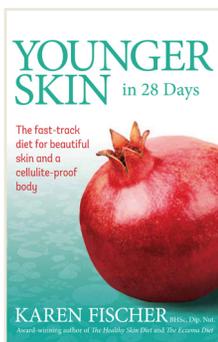


55s and students fared particularly poorly with just 4 per cent hitting the target.

The five-a-day campaign was launched 10 years ago but, in reality, BANT says that a healthy intake of veggies should actually be closer to seven-a-day with just a couple of portions of fruit. The organisation explains the emphasis on veg is due to it being more nutrient-rich than fruit gram per gram, and fruit can also be high in sugar.

SKIN DEEP

A healthy diet doesn't just help you feel better, it can make you look better too. A new book out this month, *Younger Skin in 28 Days*, written by nutritionist Karen Fischer (Exisle Publishing, £12.95) outlines how what you put on your fork can help your face.



There are chapters explaining how good nutrition can lead to a better appearance, as well as boosting your immune system and energy levels, along with a plan to follow and 80 recipes. Although not exclusively vegetarian, many recipes are, and Karen also explains how red meat particularly is something best avoided for great-looking skin and health generally, so veggies will already have a head start!

LOOKING GOOD

Three readers can each win a copy of *Younger Skin in 28 Days*. See page 59 for details of how to enter.



PASS ON THE SALT

High salt and sodium intakes are linked to health conditions such as heart disease and high blood pressure, and new research into the nation's salt habits reveals it is one of our top five food concerns.



Most people, however, are confused about just how much is safe to have. Although 84 per cent are aware that too much salt in general isn't healthy, three-quarters don't know that the Maximum Daily Recommendation for salt is 6g. As a nation, on average we are eating 8.4g.

The new research from reduced-sodium brand LoSalt – who are launching a chip shop initiative to encourage us to reduce salt intake – shows that fat, salt and sugar are our top three food concerns, with calories and artificial ingredients bringing up the rear. As a result, 35 per cent of people report they avoid adding salt to food when cooking and 26 per cent say they buy fewer processed foods. However, only 9 per cent take notice of red traffic-light labelling for salt on food and avoid those products as a result.

WHAT IS...? Nettle



Susan Curtis, director of natural health at Neal's Yard Remedies (www.nealsyardremedies.com), tells us more...



Nettle is one of the most versatile herbal remedies, and has been used in Europe since medieval times as a blood-cleansing herb and to treat joint pain. It has a pleasant taste as a herbal tea – simply add a heaped teaspoonful of chopped dried herb to a cup of boiling water and infuse for 5 minutes – and the young spring leaves also make a delicious soup.

The plant is well-researched as a remedy for hay fever and it has antihistamine properties too. Drink as a tea twice a day for a few weeks before and during the hay fever season. The leaves and stems of nettle have also been used historically to treat arthritis and for sore muscles. Studies suggest that some people find relief from joint pain by applying nettle leaf topically to the painful area or by taking an oral extract.

Stinging nettle root is used widely in Europe to treat enlarged prostate (BPH). Studies suggest that nettle root may be as effective at relieving symptoms as finasteride (a medication commonly prescribed for BPH). However, it is important to work with a doctor to treat BPH, and to make sure you have a proper diagnosis to rule out prostate cancer.

If you have any health questions you'd like answered, then send an email to: editorial@vegmag.co.uk, with 'Healthy Living' in the subject box. Or write to us at: Healthy Living, *Vegetarian Living*, PO Box 6337, Bournemouth BH1 9EH.