

Moonhawk's Musings

Greetings.

This month I am talking about the concept of wellness. Sadly western society is more focussed on ill-health than wellness, so I believe that promoting wellness to be an essential part of my practice. Next month I will touch on the subject of detox diets and programs, which is a necessary prelude to the wellness program.

The recipe this month is for a chicken and vegetable soup that will help you to meet the diet principles of a wellness program.

Wishing you many good things

Moonhawk

Wellness



Wellness is a concept that centres around diet, nutritional supplementation and exercise.

Diet

There are 7 principle to the wellness diet:

1. Eat a minimum of 3 cups of vegetables daily, with 2 of those cups being green vegetables. These should be low GI vegetables.

NB: The [glycaemic index](#) (GI) refers to how quickly a carbohydrate source is digested and the glucose/fructose etc released into the blood stream. Low GI foods are digested slowly and raise blood sugar slowly over a long period. High GI foods are digested quickly and raise

blood sugar quickly – think of the sugar high you get when you eat chocolate, highly refined grains (white bread), or foods high in added sugar. You can eat a small number of high GI foods, but balance these with mostly low GI foods to even out the GI bumps.

Low GI vegetables include beans, asparagus, broccoli, cabbage, celery, cauliflower, carrots, eggplant, lettuce, mushrooms, cucumber, parsnips, onions, radish, rocket, spinach, silver beet, squash, sweet corn, zucchini and tomato. Generally potatoes and pumpkin are high GI, with the exception of butternut pumpkin, which is low, so limit potatoes and pumpkin in your vegetable choices.

2. Eat a protein rich food with each meal or snack. This can be a challenge for those people who eat cereal and/or toast for breakfast. Options around this include eating an egg for breakfast with a piece of wholegrain toast, or having a protein shake with berries for breakfast, or making scrambled tofu. Protein bars make useful snacks, but should be eaten in moderation. A protein bar is not a diet food, it's part of a balanced wellness diet.
3. Aim for 2 servings of fruit each day. If you are not on a weight loss program, or exercise daily, then you can consume more fruit. Generally stone fruits and winter fruits (apples, pears, citrus), berries and bananas are low GI. Berries and bananas make great additions to a protein smoothie for breakfast. Tropical fruits tend to be high GI, pineapple is medium.
4. Minimise high GI carbohydrates. This includes pasta, cereal, rice and bread. Only eat one small serve of any of these per day. That means either have pasta **or** rice **or** bread **or** cereal

on any day. Another guideline is to eat the higher GI carbohydrates early in the day so you have time to burn off the calories.

5. Include healthy oils – mono or polyunsaturated – in your diet each day. Also include nuts and seeds daily. Raw or dry roasted nuts and seeds make a great snack and meet the protein rich low GI guideline for snacks. However, only have a small handful each day.
6. Drink water. You need a minimum of 1600ml, or 8 x 200ml glasses a day. Spread your water over the day. Start with a glass when you first get up, and have a glass every couple of hours and you'll quickly meet your water requirements. Remember that fruit juices, soft drinks, tea and coffee **are not water and do not count towards your water intake**. If you're not used to drinking water, then build up slowly over a few weeks. I recommend that clients start with a 600ml bottle of water daily, and gradually build up to 3 of these each day – refill the water bottle. Once you are regularly consuming water, you can switch back to a glass, just remember to refill it regularly.
7. Avoid excess alcohol, caffeine, and added sugar and salt. Alcohol consumed in moderation is ok, but in excess, or on a daily basis, is not. Alcohol contributes calories to the diet and no nutrients. Also, because of the way alcohol is given preferential treatment in the body, it is metabolised quickly and converted to fat stores.
Coffee and tea in moderation are allowed. Moderation usually means 2 cups a day. Drinking tea or coffee, or other caffeinated drinks, when you are thirsty **will not quench your thirst**. This is because **caffeine is a diuretic**, so you will excrete water rather than retain it.
Added sugar means just what it says, so limit, or even better avoid, sweets, chocolate, cakes, biscuits, soft drinks etc from the diet.
Added salt is a little tricky as salt is added to so many foods, particularly processed and takeaway foods.

Exercise

Exercise isn't a matter of joining a gym, or cycling to work. Aim for a minimum of 30 minutes of moderate exercise each day. I find that the best form of exercise is walking. Most people can fit in 30 minutes of brisk walking each day. If you drive to work, park in a carpark 20 minutes walk from work, then you'll more than meet your exercise requirements. If you take public transport to work, chances are you're getting this much exercise each day, or you could get off one stop earlier. The best way to check if you're walking briskly enough is to check if you are out of breath or not. You should walk at a pace that is sufficient to raise your heart rate, but not so fast that you can't comfortably hold a conversation with fellow walkers. The reason for this is that fat is only burnt aerobically i.e your body needs oxygen to burn fat. If you are out of breath, or panting, your body will automatically burn protein once your glycogen stores are gone, which takes around 20 minutes of physical activity.

Perhaps the hardest part of exercise is to schedule it in to each day. Many workplaces have a lunchtime walking group, or promote healthy activities in other ways. Find ways to include exercise each day and you'll notice the benefits.

If you have an injury or physical disability, then tailor an exercise program that meets your needs. Talk to your doctor or other health care professional before embarking on an exercise program to ensure that it does meet your needs and won't make your medical condition worse.

Supplements

Most adults in the western world do not have a diet that provides all the nutrients needed for ongoing health. This is where supplementation comes in. A wellness diet usually includes supplementation with a good multivitamin & mineral tablet daily, and EPA/DHA daily, particularly in the early stages when the person is adjusting their diet from a less healthy one to the wellness one.

Each client I have who starts the wellness program has supplements specific to their needs prescribed for them.

Many naturopaths and herbalists can assist in the development of a wellness program that meets your needs. Contact the [Australian Traditional Medicine Society](#) (ATMS) or the [National Herbalist Association of Australia](#) (NHAA) to find a naturopath or herbalist who can assist you.

This month's photo is on dandelion – *taraxacum officinale*. Dandelion is a well known, but often mis-identified herb. There is a dandelion that commonly grows in gardens that has leaves that sit flat or very close to the ground. While this is a dandelion, it is not the therapeutic dandelion, which, as the photo indicates, has leaves that point up and away from the ground. Dandelion is commonly used for its ability to assist with liver detoxification and function, and as a diuretic. Roasted dandelion roots are often the main ingredient of 'no coffee' coffee substitutes.

Reference: Herbs & Natural Supplements: An evidence based guide (2nd Edition), by Lesley Braun and Marc Cohen. Medicinal Plants of the World by Ben-Erik van Wyk & Michael Wink. In-Tele-Health © 2008 (from Hyperhealth Pro CD-ROM). Understanding Nutrition (11th Edition) by Ellie Whitney and Sharon Rady Rolfes.

Chicken and Vegetable Soup

This soup is only as good as the ingredients you use to make it. Choose organic chicken – it tastes so much better than factory grown. Organic vegetables are best as well.

Basics:

2 chicken thighs or 3 chicken legs.

1 medium brown onion 2 carrots 1 parsnip ½ head of celery

1-3 cloves garlic.

Brown the chicken in a little oil. Finely chop the onion, garlic, carrot, parsnip and celery and add to the chicken.

Add chicken or vegetable stock to cover the other ingredients.

Simmer (this means a gentle bloop bloop, not a wild hubba hubba) for 1 hour, or until the chicken is tender. Remove the chicken and take the meat off the bones. Return the meat to the broth. Warm through, eat.

Additional vegetables

I like to add a lot of vegetables to the soup, so in addition to the basic vegetables above, you can also add a selection of the following. Remember, if you add more vegetables, you may need more stock.

½ cauliflower broken into florettes 1 -3 small egg plant sliced

1 can chopped tomatoes 2 -3 small zucchini finely sliced 1 cup sliced mushroom

1 cup chopped orange sweet potato

1 cup fresh or frozen peas – added 10 minutes before serving.

The soup can be frozen for weekday lunches, or a quick and easy meal at night.