



WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

BANISH HAY FEVER

Hay-fever sufferers will tell you that they often have to carry a surfeit of different remedies to tackle individual symptoms. So why not get a head start on the hay-fever season with an all-round treatment at The Spa at Chancery Court in London that will help decongest blocked-up noses, soothe sensitive eyes and diminish redness on the face and neck. The relaxing facial and floral foot soak, which use desensitising plant extracts and Espa aromatherapy oils, will also provide relief from the strain and lethargy that hay fever induces.

Hay Fever Happiness Treatment, £90 for 55 minutes (including a free Espa Botanical Rescue product), available from May 1. The Spa at Chancery Court, WC1; 020 7829 7058

WHAT YOU SHOULD TRY

ECOFRIENDLY WATER

As if the furore surrounding the environmental shortfalls of plastic water bottles wasn't concerning enough, when you take a sip, you may also be ingesting toxins that the plastic has leached into the water. The good news is that there is now a less harmful way to take your H₂O on the go. Aquapax, a new water carton made out of paper from sustainable tree sources, is recyclable by most local authorities.

If, however, it does end up in a landfill, it is biodegradable too, so you can be sure it won't add to your eco-guilt.

Aquapax water, 79p for 500ml, from Fresh & Wild



WHAT YOU SHOULD BUY

CYCLING GEAR

When it comes to biking attire, cyclists inevitably fall into one of two categories: safety-conscious, garish neon brights or sleek, invisible black, which makes it virtually impossible to look halfway decent and conspicuous enough to be spotted by car drivers at the same time. Sugoi has put paid to this with its jersey designs that ooze cheerful feminine style and will catch the eye of other road users.

Skippy jersey, £50, by Sugoi, from Sheactive; 0870 766 3227



Joanna McGarry

[WHAT'S THE ALTERNATIVE?]

JENNIFER HARPER-DEACON



I WOULD LIKE TO EMBARK ON A DETOX PROGRAMME THIS SPRING. I FEEL MY BOWELS ARE SLUGGISH, MY SKIN AND HAIR ARE DULL AND I HAVE A GREATER LEVEL OF ACHEs AND PAINS. HOWEVER, I TRIED A ONE-WEEK FRUIT FAST AFTER CHRISTMAS, BUT FELT LOUSY SO I GAVE UP. DO YOU HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS TO KEEP ME ON TRACK THIS TIME? HEATHER R, BERKSHIRE



As you have found, following a fruit-only diet in the winter is difficult. According to Traditional Chinese Medicine, you are working against nature: your body needs warm foods (soups, stews and so on), not raw fruit at this time of year. Winter is the season to restore energy levels.

As the sap rises in spring, our body energy increases, signalling that this is a time to renew and detoxify. A detox programme is not simply about avoiding certain foods. Its focus should be on strengthening the digestive system and ensuring the organs of elimination (the skin, lymphatic system, intestines, liver and kidneys) are functioning at their optimal level to get rid of toxins swiftly.

The Holford 9-Day Liver Detox by Patrick Holford and Fiona McDonald Joyce (Piatkus £10.99) includes inspiring recipes to keep you on track, along with an explanation of how organs such as the liver detoxify. The Patrick Holford 9-Day Detox Pack (£34.95; www.biocare.co.uk) contains nutritional supplements for this period, along with glutamine powder, an amino acid that helps heal the gastrointestinal tract and calm inflammation.

I also recommend taking a colon-cleansing formula for your sluggish bowels before you embark on a liver programme. Nutrigold Colon Support Formula (£16.95 for 120 capsules; 0845 603 5675) contains psyllium husk and bentonite clay, along with traditional cleansing herbs, which possess a mild laxative, and warming spices to balance the formula. Take 2-4 capsules with a large glass of room-temperature water at 3pm, avoiding food for an hour on either side.

Burdock & Silver Birch Formula (£28 for 250ml; www.herbshandshealing.co.uk) is a herbal alternative for the liver that contains cleansing herbs, including silver birch (traditionally used to accelerate elimination), nettle, ginger, cayenne, dandelion, milk thistle, rosemary and burdock (for its antibiotic, detoxifying properties). These have been carefully chosen so the detox process happens at a gentle pace, keeping any reactions (headache, nausea and tiredness) to a minimum. Take 5ml twice daily in a small glass of water.

Jennifer Harper-Deacon is a registered naturopathic physician and was voted Health Journalist of the Year 2008 by the Health Food Manufacturers' Association; www.jenniferharper-deacon.com

If you have any questions, write to: What's the Alternative? Style, The Sunday Times, 1 Pennington Street, London E98 1ST. We can only provide replies to published letters.

Before following any recommendation, consult your GP