

# Natural health



Look after your body and wellbeing naturally with **Jan Purser's** essential monthly guide to alternative medicine, health and nutrition.



## Hawthorn for hearts

Herbalists and naturopaths have known of its benefits for years, but now the ancient herb hawthorn has been scientifically proven to be useful in treating chronic heart failure. A recent review of 14 clinical trials found that patients who took hawthorn extract supplements, in addition to their usual prescription medication, showed significant benefits, including reduced fatigue, less shortness of breath and improved exercise tolerance.

Source: *Cochrane Reviews*, January 2008

## Good gall bladder health

### quick cure

People with gall bladder problems, such as gallstones, may have a deficiency of lecithin, a fatty component of bile that helps prevent the formation of gallstones. Improve the health of your gall bladder by adding a few teaspoons of lecithin granules to foods, such as soups, pasta sauces and breakfast cereals. Lecithin granules, found in health food stores, are usually derived from soybeans. Avoid fatty foods and eat a high-fibre diet to lessen the load on your gall bladder and improve digestion.

## Should I take ... EPA?

**Why would I need it?** Eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) are omega-3 fatty acids found in fish oil. EPA has proven anti-inflammatory effects, which is why fish oil supplements with a higher ratio of EPA to DHA may help treat conditions where inflammation is a key factor, such as asthma, psoriasis, eczema, premenstrual syndrome, rheumatoid arthritis and other autoimmune conditions. It's also shown promise in treating depression and schizophrenia.

**How much?** The average dose of EPA-rich supplements is two capsules two to three times a day. The average dose of EPA-rich liquid fish oil is five to 10ml per day.

**Anything I should know?** If you're on anti-coagulant medication, check with your GP before taking fish oil supplements.



## Not happy?

### Ask Jan

**Q** What's the best kind of breakfast to eat? I often feel really hungry by midmorning and then very tired in the afternoon.

J. Jackson, via email.

**A** The answer to your problem lies with getting the right mix of protein and low-GI carbohydrates. Here are some good breakfast options.

- Sardines, salmon or baked beans on toast.
- Two eggs on wholegrain toast with grilled tomato or mushrooms.
- Low-fat cheese, such as ricotta, with avocado and tomato on wholegrain toast.
- A bowl of natural muesli with extra nuts and seeds, plus a dollop of low-fat yoghurt.
- A protein powder smoothie made with low-fat milk or protein-enriched rice milk, whey protein powder and fresh or frozen fruit, such as berries.

To help with the afternoon energy slump, include a portion of protein in your lunch, with vegetables or salad and a small portion of low-GI carbohydrates, such as lentils or grainy bread. Protein foods include meat, eggs, tofu, chicken, legumes, seafood and low-fat cheese.

For an afternoon snack, choose nuts and seeds or low-fat yoghurt and fresh fruit. Skip sugary treats, such as chocolate biscuits, as these just make your fatigue worse.

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