

Natural health



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



SHOULD I TAKE ... GOTU KOLA?

Why would I need it?

Gotu kola (*Centella asiatica*) is a pretty little herb that has the capacity to strengthen weakened connective tissue. It's often used for burns, wounds, skin conditions, neuropathy, ulcers, varicose veins, dermatitis, psoriasis and cellulitis (a bacterial infection under the skin's surface). It also has a role to play in reducing leg cramps, soothing restless legs syndrome and promoting better health in osteoarthritic joints.

How much?

Take 3ml liquid extract two times per day or 2g to 4g of dried herb supplement twice a day. Its ointment form should be applied twice daily around wounds, and to heal burns and relieve varicose veins.

Anything I should know?

Gotu kola may not be suitable for pregnant women and for people with coeliac disease or fat malabsorption problems, or for those with deficiency of vitamin A, D, E or K. Don't apply gotu kola to open wounds.

Skin firming treatment

While you can't hope to get rid of cellulite with creams and topical treatments, this soothing oil blend can help improve the appearance of problem areas by reducing the fluid retention associated with cellulite. Combine



50ml cold-pressed sweet almond oil and six drops each of fennel, rosemary, cypress and juniper pure essential oils in a small bottle. After your shower each day, rub a little of the blend between your hands, then massage firmly into your skin in an upward motion. Massaging helps improve lymphatic drainage from the area and the essential oils help reduce fluid retention. (Don't use this blend if you're pregnant.)

quick
cure

Jan Purser Dip.Nutr., DRT, is a naturopathic nutrition consultant, remedial therapist and public speaker. If you have any questions on diet, natural health or nutrition, write to Natural Solutions, PO Box 3, South Fremantle WA 6162, or email ns@foodbodyandhealth.com.au We regret Jan is unable to personally answer letters.

Not happy?

Ask Jan

Q I've recently been diagnosed with mild depression and I don't want to take medical drugs. Is there a naturopathic approach for my condition?

R.I., via email.

A Naturopathic treatments are excellent for depression. A naturopath will assess all of your symptoms as well as your diet and lifestyle habits. The treatment would start with improving your diet if necessary, and exercise would also be high on the list of priorities because it increases the release of endorphins (feel-good hormones).

Supplements and herbs prescribed would depend on your symptoms and type of depression. Whatever you do, don't self-medicate – seek the help of a naturopath because not all herbs are suited to all kinds of depression. Your naturopath may include some of the following in your treatment: withania, licorice, damiana, ginseng, bupleurum, passion flower and St John's wort. Nutrients that are also often prescribed include zinc, magnesium, tryptophan, coenzyme Q10, good-quality fish oil and vitamin B complex.

Wonder weed

Who would have thought that a humble weed could garner so much interest?

Milk thistle (*Silybum marianum*), which has been used in traditional herbal medicine for at least 2000 years, has received a lot of attention in the past five years, and for good reason. Studies show the weed is beneficial in the prevention and treatment of chronic liver disease. It's also effective in lowering cholesterol levels and may have anti-cancer fighting properties. Even better news is that this herb is safe to take. Consult your naturopath about the best supplement for your condition, as the quality determines the efficacy.

