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ISSUE SIX | FEBRUARY | FREE



STRESS LESS, DIGEST MORE

KEEPING STRESS UNDER CONTROL
WITH HEALTHY CHOICES



FACING THE FACTS ON FODMAPS

DIETARY OVERHAUL DONE PROPERLY



B HEALTHY

THE MANY TALENTS OF VITAMIN B



BOWEL CANCER

A DELICATE TOPIC NEEDING SERIOUS ATTENTION

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EDITOR'S NOTE

After a busy holiday season and lots of entertaining, it's understandable if our bodies are having a little trouble coping with all the extra food and drink we've likely imbibed!

As we come to the end of summer, we thought it was about time for us to put together a delightful digestion issue - jam packed with content that will help you get in tip top shape and digesting easily. We look at how digestion affects stress and what you can do about it (page 7), how to become a pro with probiotics (page 10), as well as looking at just how much what you eat affects you (page 14).

Digestion plays into so many aspects of your health - that's why we take a look at the differences between allergies and intolerances (page 16), give some serious attention to bowel cancer (page 11), and look at how your genes have an impact on your digestion (page 20). Plus, there's plenty more goodies on everything from weight loss to the FODMAP diet to the magic of magnesium!

So as we enjoy the rest of the summer and look forward to a slow reduction in the heat, we'll make sure that your gut is well and truly working for you so you feel happy, healthy, and ready for anything.

Until next time, stay well,
Your Hardy's Team



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HEALTHFUL HINTS



PEPPERMINT OIL

Peppermint oil has a long history of medicinal use across China, Japan, and Europe. It is mentioned in Greek mythology and has even been found buried with pharaohs in their pyramids. With a three-thousand-year record to prove its effectiveness, it is definitely worth taking note of peppermint oil and perhaps keeping some at home.

One of the greatest benefits of peppermint oil is the way it aids digestion. Adding peppermint oil to your water or drinking it as a tea relaxes the muscles in your digestive system, which can help to ease indigestion and stomach aches. Peppermint oil can also be inhaled, which is known to relax and soothe the mind. Just a few drops can provide relief from stress, nausea, and headaches. Inhaling the oil has been known to stimulate mental activity, meaning it can help fight exhaustion and increase your ability to focus. You can even try applying the oil topically to aching joints and muscles to reduce swelling and relieve pain. The cooling properties give the same effect as an ice bath while you stay warm and dry!



DANDELION ROOT

Many of us think of dandelions as pesky weeds that we can't keep away from our lawns and gardens. However, they are also an excellent herbal remedy that can promote good digestion when taken as a supplement or in tea!

The Institute of Agricultural Medicine in Poland tested a variety of therapeutic herbs for kynurenic acid and found that dandelion root had the highest concentration. Kynurenic acid is an amino acid that provides digestive system support by increasing bile production. Because dandelion root has such high levels of kynurenic acid, it can significantly increase bile production, which aids digestion, stimulates appetite, and balances the natural and beneficial bacteria in the intestines.



LIQUORICE

Liquorice is the root of a legume plant, from which a sweet flavour can be extracted. It is therefore used to create a variety of lollies and treats, but liquorice is more than just a delicious flavour – it is surprisingly versatile, and has a number of other uses.

Over time, being under a lot of pressure can exhaust your adrenal gland, which is forced to work overtime to produce adrenaline and cortisol. Liquorice promotes a healthy level of cortisol in your body, and so can support your adrenal gland during times of stress. Liquorice is also great for treating respiratory problems and various digestive issues including stomach ulcers, heartburn, and inflammation.

Unfortunately, the amount of liquorice extract present in sweets is usually far too low to have any sort of impact on your health, so try adding some liquorice root extract into your diet or drinking liquorice tea. It's an effective and easy way to produce a wide range of health benefits!



DATES

We all know that dates are a tasty sweet treat – but they also have a range of impressive health benefits. They are packed full of vitamins and minerals to fuel your body and enhance your well-being.

Dates are rich in dietary fibre, which aids digestion and is essential for a healthy diet. They also contain antioxidants known as tannins, which possess anti-infective and anti-inflammatory properties. They are sources of vitamin A, helping to maintain good vision and healthy skin, and vitamin K, playing a vital role in blood clotting and growing strong bones. They also contain iron, potassium, calcium, and magnesium – in fact, dates contain so many important vitamins and minerals that it is impossible to list them all. Delicious, healthy, and easily portable – dates are the perfect superfood snack to take with you wherever you go!

KNEES TO CHEST

If you're experiencing bloating, constipation or general discomfort in your abdomen then this stretch is great. It's known to help push excess gas through the abdomen in order to expel it, which can be rather helpful when you're feeling a bit uncomfortable! Just avoid this exercise if you're recovering from abdominal surgery or a hernia though.

SO HOW DOES IT WORK?

- Lie on your back with your arms and legs extended
- Exhale and hug your knees to your chest
- Keep your back flat on the mat
- Begin rocking your knees from side to side

This can help massage your abdominal organs and get things moving, but is also good for keeping your lower back limber. Both a calming and comforting pose, it can be done pretty much any time of the day. If you experience any discomfort in your head or neck, just place a firm pillow or blanket under your head and you'll be good to go.



STRESS LESS, DIGEST MORE

In our last issue, we looked at ways to assuage stress over the summertime, and touched on the role stress plays in the battle against bloating. Here we explore more fully the impact that stress can have on our digestion.

It's likely you've already got some idea that your emotions are linked to your appetite and, quite likely, the food choices you make at different times (there is a whole activity termed "comfort eating" after all!) What you may be less aware of though is, internally, the impact that stress has on how our body works, how it digests food, and how it is able to utilise what we're consuming.

Kenneth Koch, MD, Professor of Medicine and Medical Director of the Digestive Health Centre in North Carolina believes stress can affect every part of the digestive system.

It's easy to see how he's right, as digestion is controlled by the enteric nervous system, which is made up of millions of complex nerves that are all communicating with the central nervous system. When stress triggers a 'fight or flight' response in our central nervous system, the body shuts down blood flow and decreases the secretions needed for digestion.

Stress also affects the contractions of our digestive muscles; it can cause the oesophagus to go into spasms, which is often to blame for heartburn and indigestion. Similarly, stress can cause the colon to react in a way that causes either diarrhoea or constipation and nausea. Not only that, stress can worsen other digestive issues, such as coeliac disease, inflammatory bowel disease and stomach ulcers.

THAT CHEMICAL CALLED CORTISOL

The chief cause of all these challenges comes down to a little thing called cortisol. Put simply, cortisol is a steroid hormone that's produced in the adrenal gland in response to stress. It has several functions in the body, including weakening the immune system (hence why we may be more prone to getting sick when we've been stressed). In the short-term, and in small amounts, cortisol plays an important role in breaking down and activating the use of glucose derived from carbohydrates, protein and fat. However, when it's done with that, or if we have high levels for a prolonged period of time, it can cause problems...

Because our bodies are so effectively hard-wired to survive, this clever cortisol is thinking ahead. Metabolically, cortisol allows the liver to take in any glucose not being used by peripheral tissue and store it to be used if the body then enters a state of starvation (which may have once been a possibility following times of extreme stress.) As most of us are unlikely, in modern times, to be faced with famine anytime soon however, this adaptive process commonly contributes to weight gain.

That's not all though; cortisol counteracts insulin, which can contribute to high blood glucose and, quite literally, can cause your cells to begin to starve. It also takes potassium out of our cells in exchange for more sodium ions, and can reduce the absorption of calcium, which decreases bone formation, and the synthesis of collagen – an important connective tissue used throughout the entire body. It affects our muscles too, by decreasing their amino acid uptake and inhibiting protein synthesis.

EAT YOUR WAY TO ENHANCED RELAXATION

Goethe, the great German writer and philosopher, believed that our gut was the seat of all human emotions and, in the same way that our emotions will impact on our digestion, how healthy (or otherwise) our digestive system is can also have an impact on our mood. That's right, your diet can play an important role in stress management.

What matters most here is keeping a sensible approach to food. "Your digestive system appreciates a healthy well-balanced diet," advises Koch. The concept of comfort food in general is not the problem, but most of us could do with some healthier alternatives.

Avoid simple sugars and starches (like chips and cakes), as these spike blood sugar and insulin levels, which – combined with high cortisol levels – can increase the risk of diabetes. Instead, choose complex carbohydrates, like beans, vegetables and wholegrains, as their slower release will help keep blood sugar levels steady and encourage the brain to release more mood-enhancing serotonin. Not only that, loading up on veges, fruits and other high-fibre foods will also give you a good dose of vitamins to protect against the immune-sapping effects of chronic stress.



FINDING WAYS TO RELAX — DO'S FOR DIGESTION



It's clear then that for optimum digestion, and overall wellbeing, we need to discover ways to stress less (especially around meal times!) and keep our cortisol levels in check. Luckily, we've compiled some of the top tips and dietary advice for doing just that.

- Adopt an unhurried approach to eating. Consider meal-times as an opportunity to dine in a relaxed atmosphere, as opposed to merely an essential refuelling. Light some candles, pack your meal as a picnic, or pop out onto the deck and sit for a while, enjoying it without rushing.
- Avoid smoking and alcohol as a way to deal with stress, as these – as well as a heavy reliance on pharmaceuticals for tension headaches – can be damaging to the digestive tract.
- Exercise regularly to relieve tension and stimulate the release of endorphins, which counter stress and help to improve your mood and frame of mind. As Professor Koch says: "One of the best ways to manage stress and maintain healthy digestion is moderate exercise."
- Engage in relaxation therapies such as yoga, meditation, hypnosis, progressive muscle relaxation, or even music. Whatever soothes your soul will have a stress-countering effect on your digestion too.

CRAVING COMFORT?

TRY THESE STRESS-BUSTING FOODS

- **Oranges:** Studies have found that this citrus fruit may be able to curb levels of stress hormones, while strengthening the immune system.
- **Spinach:** High in magnesium, spinach helps to counter the headaches and fatigue that compound the effects of stress and can result from too little magnesium.
- **Fatty fish:** With their natural omega 3 fatty acids, salmon and tuna can prevent surges in stress hormones.
- **Avocado:** A good option when you're craving a high-fat treat; half an avocado has more potassium than a medium-sized banana and may help to reduce high blood pressure.
- **Almonds:** With vitamin E to boost the immune system and B vitamins to make you more resilient to stress and low moods, these power-packed nuts are a great (and easily portable) nibble. Aim for quarter of a cup a day for maximum benefits.
- **Milk:** Remember when your mum gave you a cup of warm milk when you couldn't sleep? She was onto something! This time-honoured tradition has a helpful dose of calcium, which research shows can ease anxiety and mood swings.

If you are having symptoms of stress that are interfering with your digestion, come in and talk to one of the friendly and expert team at Hardy's.



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BECOME A PRO WITH PROBIOTICS

You would have to have been living under a rock in the last year or two to have not heard about probiotics – but how much do you really understand about what they are and how they help?

Effectively microorganisms that are introduced to the body for their beneficial qualities, probiotics are live bacteria and yeasts that are good for your health – especially your digestive system. While we usually think of bacteria as a bad thing, the 'pro' in probiotics clues us in to the good and helpful role that probiotics play in balancing out the bad bacteria in our bodies and keeping the gut healthy.

Although the term itself only came into common usage in the 1980s, probiotics were first conceptualised by Nobel recipient Elie Metchnikof in 1907, who looked at the increased lifespan of yoghurt-consuming Bulgarian peasants and concluded that they were modifying their intestinal flora by replacing harmful microbes with useful ones.

Nowadays, we know they're good, but how do they really help? And who should be taking them?



PROBIOTICS AND DIGESTIVE DIFFICULTIES

Many of those pesky digestive difficulties – like bloating, nausea, acid reflux, indigestion, constipation, or its unpleasant cousin diarrhoea – can often arise as a result of an imbalance in your intestinal microflora. Bad intestinal bacteria produces putrefactive and carcinogenic toxins, enabling candida yeast to grow out of control and decreasing the production of essential vitamins and enzymes in the body, both of which cause digestion to suffer.

From irritable bowel syndrome, leaky gut syndrome, inflammatory bowel disease and the niggly nasties listed above, probiotics are believed to help. By activating the bodies 'gut protection system', probiotics prevent pathogenic bacteria from proliferating.



DID YOU KNOW?

One of the super beneficial probiotics, *Saccharomyces boulardii* (*S. boulardii*) is actually a beneficial yeast, not bacteria, so is particularly useful here as antibiotics can't kill it.

PROBIOTICS TO COUNTER ANTIBIOTICS

Antibiotics treat bacterial infections by killing or inhibiting the growth of bacteria however – but unfortunately, they don't discriminate, so they tend to strip the so-called 'good' bacteria from your system along with the bad, causing a microbial imbalance that can often result in gas, bloating, cramps or diarrhoea.

Throwing your gut flora into turmoil upsets the lining and overall functioning of your digestive system – and it can also take a toll on your liver. A probiotic will replenish the gut with friendly bacteria, minimising the damage done by the antibiotics and encouraging not only regrowth of your gut flora, but also diversity within that flora as it redevelops. Using probiotics also reduces the chance of candidiasis, or candida overgrowth, which can occur following antibiotic use or if the intestinal tract becomes too alkaline.

There has been some speculation that taking a probiotic at the same time as an antibiotic will cancel out any beneficial effects, however studies have found that probiotics don't need to actually colonise the gut to be beneficial; in fact, even transient strains can have powerful therapeutic effects. To get the best out of your probiotics, take them at least two hours away from the time you take your dose of antibiotics, in order to maximise the amount of good bacteria that survive in the gut. It also pays to take probiotics after a meal, when your stomach acid is at its lowest.

PROBIOTICS FOR OTHERWISE HEALTHY PEOPLE

It's not only those with digestive difficulties, or taking antibiotics, that can benefit from probiotics. Probiotics stimulate the immune system by secreting proteins, both in your gut and throughout the body, which help you ward off viruses, bacterial infections, allergens and chemicals. By forming a barrier along your intestinal lining, probiotics prevent nasties from passing into your bloodstream. They are also able to resist translocation, meaning they can prevent pathogens from passing from the gastrointestinal tract to places like the spleen, liver, kidneys and mesenteric lymph nodes.

In this way, probiotics are preventative, telling your body to produce hydrogen peroxide, organic acids and bacteriocins to neutralise bacteria and viruses before they can make you sick. And that's not the only helpful function they perform for our health. Probiotics also enhance enzymes like lactase (which you'll see on page 12), sucrose, maltase, alkaline phosphatase and alpha-glucosidase in the body, all of which work to ensure food is well-tolerated and the maximum possible nutrients are absorbed from it.

It's not only about digestion either; studies have found some probiotics to be helpful in raising the levels of allergy-calming chemicals in the blood, easing allergic skin conditions like eczema. Due to the benefits probiotics have for the enteric nervous system, the bodies 'second brain', another study found that regular probiotic supplementation can improve memory, behaviour and cognition, even in those with developmental disorders like autism and ADHD.

There are more than 1,000 different types of probiotic strains, each with their own therapeutic benefits, so talk to one of the experts on the Hardy's team to determine the best one for you.

BOWEL CANCER

A Delicate Topic Needing Serious Attention

Every year about 3,000 Kiwis are diagnosed with bowel cancer, and nearly half of those diagnosed will succumb to the disease. One of New Zealand's disheartening statistics is the fact that we have one of the highest rates of bowel cancer in the world. We spoke to Executive Officer of Bowel Cancer New Zealand, Rebekah Heal, to find out what you need to know about bowel cancer, from symptoms to misconceptions.

Bowel cancer is also known as colorectal cancer, or colon cancer, and affects the colon (large bowel) and the rectum (back passage). Bowel cancers often start as benign growths, called polyps, which sit on the wall of the bowel. As we age, polyps become more common, however, most are not pre-cancerous. The polyp that can become cancerous is called an adenoma. If it is left untreated, cancer cells multiply, to form a tumour, and once the cells are in the bowel wall, they can make their way into the bloodstream, lymph nodes, and then other parts of the body. Common places for bowel cancer cells to spread to are the liver and lungs.

However, it's not all bad news.

If bowel cancer is caught in its early stages, it is largely easy to treat. 75 percent of bowel cancer is curable if it is caught early, which is why it is so important to be aware of symptoms.

FAST FACTS:

- While bowel cancer is more common in people over 50, people of all ages can be diagnosed.
- Kiwi women have the highest rate of bowel cancer in OECD countries, while Kiwi men have the third highest rate.
- You can check out the risk calculator for bowel cancer to find out if you are at risk, at beatbowelcancer.org.nz



BEING VIGILANT

Rebekah says symptoms can vary, with some people simply suffering from tiredness, and others who display all the symptoms. "Bleeding without any obvious reason, or symptoms such as straining or pain, changes in your bowel habits, abdominal pain, especially if it's severe, or any lumps or masses in the tummy are signs of bowel cancer. Weight loss and tiredness are also symptoms."

"Be vigilant with your health and make sure if you have any concerns, see your doctor straight away, and if anyone in the family has had it, go get it checked."

One of the biggest misconceptions of bowel cancer is that only older people get it, which is a dangerous way of thinking, says Rebekah. "People don't recognise the symptoms, and believe that it's an older person's disease, but it's becoming more common and people are getting it younger and younger."

She says researchers aren't sure why New Zealanders seem to be diagnosed with bowel cancer at higher rates compared to the rest of the world.

"We unfortunately don't know why, it's one of the most frustrating things, is that we don't know why it's particularly prevalent here."

However, the healthier you are, the more you reduce your likelihood of bowel cancer.

"[You can help reduce your risk by] eating lots of veges and fruits and cereals and lean meats like fish and poultry, drinking lots of water and limiting fat intake, red meats and processed meats.

"Limit your salt and alcohol, quit smoking, and exercise."

REDUCE YOUR RISK

By eating plenty of vegetables, legumes, fruits, cereals, lean meat and low fat yoghurts and milks, as well as keeping hydrated with lots of water, are key factors in helping to prevent bowel cancer. Things to limit are saturated fat, only having a moderate total

fat intake, limiting red meat (especially processed meat), salt and alcohol, and it's also important to consume moderate amounts of food containing sugar.

Fruit and vegetables are especially important when it comes to helping prevent bowel cancer, due to them containing carotenoids, vitamin C, vitamin E and dietary fibre, as well as flavonoids and antioxidants, which destroy harmful free radicals.

You should aim for a wide range of fruit and vegetables each day, which will help increase the different vitamins, minerals, fibre and other benefits that you receive. As a guide, you should be enjoying two serves of fruit, and five serves of vegetables each day.

Having plenty of fibre is also known to reduce the risk of bowel cancer. Soluble fibre – found in fruits, beans and lentils, feed intestinal bacteria and provide nutrients to the cells of the large intestine, which possibly helps heal the large intestine, as well as cutting the risk of bowel cancer. On the other hand, insoluble fibre, from wheat bran, whole grains and vegetables, is thought to deactivate toxins in the intestines, and possibly reduce bowel cancer.

Women should aim for 25g of fibre every day, while men should have 30g. Most people don't have enough fibre in their diets, so a sprinkle of wheat germ over a cereal high in fibre can help, as well as eating fruit and vegetables raw, or steamed, rather than boiled. For good measure, only eat wholegrains, and add bran cereal to muffins and other baking.

Physical exercise is also an important part of reducing your risk for bowel cancer. People who are obese are more likely to develop bowel cancer, as well as those with a larger waistline, despite their height or build.

KEEPING AN EYE ON THE BOWL

The Bristol Stool Chart is a handy indicator as to what types of bowel habits may be cause for concern. You can refer to it for your own purposes, or you can use it as a point of reference when discussing bowel concerns with your Health Professional.

BRISTOL STOOL CHART			
	Type 1	Separate hard lumps	Very constipated
	Type 2	Lumpy and sausage like	Slightly constipated
	Type 3	A sausage shape with cracks in the surface	Normal
	Type 4	Like a smooth, soft sausage or snake	Normal
	Type 5	Soft blobs with clear-cut edges	Lacking fibre
	Type 6	Mushy consistency with ragged edges	Inflammation
	Type 7	Liquid consistency with no solid pieces	Inflammation

WHAT ARE THE TREATMENT OPTIONS?

Treatment of bowel cancer can include a range of options, depending on the type and severity. Surgery can be performed to remove the cancerous part of the large intestine, as well as surrounding lymph nodes, to see if the cancer has spread to them. Chemotherapy is often suggested after surgery if there is evidence that the cancer has spread.

In severe cases, chemotherapy or monoclonal antibody therapy is used to control the cancer, rather than cure it. For severe cases, there are also other treatments, however these are not funded. Radiotherapy is also used to control secondary cancers as a result of bowel cancer, and help relieve symptoms.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

For people who do not have a family history of bowel cancer, or any obvious symptoms, they can go through bowel screening, which can detect bowel cancer in its early stage, or any dangerous polyps that will need to be addressed. This involves a faecal occult blood test (FOBT), which can detect tiny amounts of blood in stools, before they are visible to the naked eye, or before any other symptoms are displayed. Anyone can do this test at home, and it is recommended you do this every two years, particularly if you are over the age of 50. Some bowel cancers do not bleed, or only bleed occasionally so this is not a reliable negative result, however, it helps detect positive results earlier, resulting in being able to treat the cancer earlier.



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YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT



It may sound like a bit of a cliché, but it is so true – we really are a product of what we consume. What – and how much – we eat and drink affects our energy levels, how well our brains work, our metabolic performance and our ability to digest and utilise nutrients. Therefore, when looking to keep on top of stress, or manage our weight, it's important to consider everything we're putting into our bodies.

EATING YOUR WAY TO PEAK PERFORMANCE

Athletes know the importance of fuelling their body for their sport, but what about the 'sport' of living? If you want to be on top of your game, at home or at work, nutrition experts suggest thinking of yourself as an athlete of your workplace (or family) – and therefore eating like one. First and foremost, this would suggest lots of lean protein, fruits and vegetables, as well as a variety of slow-release complex carbohydrates. However, the reality is that when your brain is working hard, and you're experiencing stress or additional pressure, its nutritional demands are also greater.

For one thing, you produce a lot of oxidants in your brain, especially when you're confronting challenging mental tasks. This highlights the important need for added antioxidants – like berries, dark chocolate, pecans, beans and green tea. When pursuing an antioxidant kick, choose carefully, as a recent UCLA study found that a diet high in fructose can slow the brain and impair memory and learning. For this reason, nuts, berries or carrot sticks may be a better option than dark grapes and apples. Foods that are high in omega 3 fatty acids like walnuts, salmon and flaxseed, can also help to counteract this effect.

Another compelling finding for boosting brain power is cutting down on fatty foods. If you're a constant chip muncher you may not immediately relate, but try cutting them out and see whether your productivity picks up. Conversely people that don't eat much saturated fat, find a fry-fuelled binge can induce a sleepy state and lower mood. A University of Cambridge study supported this, finding that lab rats began to falter on a test they had been trained on, and had their treadmill performance cut in half, when they were fed a high fat diet.

DRINKING YOUR WAY TO PEAK PERFORMANCE

You may have heard people talk about the fact that our bodies are made up of 70–80% water – and the same percentage holds true for our brains. When our grey matter is active, it creates metabolic waste, which needs removing – hence the need for optimum hydration to keep us sharp. A 2011 study in the British Journal of Nutrition found that even mild dehydration in men reduced vigilance and memory and increased tension, anxiety, and fatigue. Kick-start the day with two cups of water when you first get up and, at the first sign of that dreaded feeling of 'brain fog', make sure you rehydrate. Avoiding 'dehydrators', like processed and sugary foods, as well as caffeine and soda, can also help.

Coffee does have its place, but it can deplete serotonin, which we need for optimal levels of wellbeing. Coffee in the morning in particular can lead to higher levels of anxiety and stress because, when consumed on an empty stomach, caffeine is quickly delivered to the bloodstream.



LOOKING THE PART

So, we know what to eat and drink to really get our the inner workings of our bodies doing what they should – but what about getting things on the outside doing the best they can too? According to Samantha Heller, MS, RD, a leading clinical nutritionist at NYU Medical Centre, "Everything we eat becomes a part of not only your inner being, but the outer fabric of your body as well. The healthier the foods that you consume, the better your skin will look."

A balanced diet is one of the key ways to keep your skin looking luscious, but there are some particular things to make sure you're getting enough of, especially if your diet is limited by digestive issues or specific dietary choices. Vitamin A is an essential from a micronutrient standpoint – but you don't want to go overboard. Natural sources can include eggs, whole milk and liver – and vegetarian and vegan options include carrots, kumara, spinach and apricots. So amp your uptake accordingly – and as ever, if you need any advice on the best way to make sure your intake is ticking all the boxes, talk to a Hardy's expert.

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ALLERGIES VS. INTOLERANCES

The number of people with allergies is on the rise throughout the world, but it's not yet known why. We had a chat to Allergy New Zealand's Allergy Advisor, Penny Jorgensen about the ins and outs of allergies.

Penny says that there are a number of studies at the moment, looking into what could be contributing factors to allergies becoming more common, but there is still plenty of work to be done before we are likely to have a well-researched answer.

"Allergies are known to be increasing globally but it is not yet known why except for genetic factors interacting with our changing environment and lifestyle. There are many aspects being looked at including migration, epigenetics, the hygiene hypothesis, vitamin D, and microbial exposure."

The hygiene hypothesis is a theory that states exposure to certain germs and infections early in life are important for the immune system to recognise foreign threats to the body. Because people are more consciously aware of being clean, and want to be extremely hygienic, children don't get exposed to these germs and infections, which could result in their immune systems becoming over-reactive.

Epigenetics is the study of organisms caused by modification of gene expression – i.e. how genetics are influenced by outside factors, including lifestyle and environment – rather than an alteration of the genetic code itself.

Penny explains the difference between allergies and intolerances, which can be often be confused.

"An allergy involves the immune system, where it mistakes an otherwise harmless substance for a threat and sets up an allergic reaction to it. This happens usually within minutes every time the person encounters the allergen. Allergic reactions can cause mild to life-threatening (anaphylactic) reactions.

"An intolerance doesn't involve the immune system and can be due to a number of things. In the main, they are caused by the digestive system not able to digest a food or a component, e.g. a naturally occurring chemical in the food. Lactose intolerance is caused by the person not having enough lactase enzymes which are needed to digest lactose – the sugar in milk.

"Some symptoms are similar but symptoms of food intolerance are usually delayed

and dose responsive. For example, a small amount won't cause a problem but a large amount, or small amount regularly, will. Food intolerances do not have the potential to be life-threatening."

People with allergies often need to avoid processed foods due to them having a greater risk of containing allergens. This could mean they needed to worry about their weight less than other people who regularly consume processed foods. However, it is always best to cut out processed foods whether you have allergies or not – and eat lots of fresh fruit and vegetables for snacks, rather than sugary treats.

Food allergies can be diagnosed based on clinical history, and supported by a skin prick test – but there are no diagnostic tests for food intolerances. In this situation it is recommended to visit a dietician to trial elimination diets.



YOU ARE WHERE YOU EAT

Penny says that the type of food allergy can include regional variations.

"About 90 percent of food allergies globally are caused by cows' milk, eggs, peanuts, tree-nuts, soy, wheat, fish & shellfish. However, there are regional variations, usually to food common in the local diet. Sesame allergy is common in Australia, and kiwifruit is common in New Zealand."



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BACK TO BASICS

Weight management done properly

When it comes to weight management, people all too commonly work hard to reach their 'goal', only to then have the weight pile back on when they readjust to normal life. This yo-yo-ing can cause additional stress, as well as wreaking havoc on your digestion. At Hardy's we advocate a balanced and gradual approach that fits with your lifestyle and enables you to successfully manage your weight in the long-term. Here's why...

THE IMPACT OF EXTREME DIETING

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to realise that severely limiting your calorie intake, or completely cutting out any food group, will deprive the body of vital nutrients. Fats, carbohydrates and protein are all building blocks for body tissue so, when these are in short supply, the body reserves what is available for the most important parts, like your heart and brain, at the expense of your hair skin and nails. The result? An appearance that's far from glowing.

It's not just your looks that can be affected either; women who go on extreme diets often produce less oestrogen, which can cause bones to become weak and can have a negative impact on fertility. It's unlikely that you feel 'on form' when you're hungry either. Not only can low blood sugar lead to depleted energy, dizziness and trouble concentrating, crash diets increase the brain's level of the stress hormone, corticosterone and, in the long term, a lack of nutrients can lead to depression, as the body can't produce the neurotransmitters like serotonin, which boost mood.

When you restrict calories, carbohydrates, or both, the first source of energy your body burns – even before fat – is glycogen, a form of carbohydrate stored in the liver and muscles. Attached to each gram of glycogen is water, which the body loses first, making it appear that you're losing weight while you're actually just getting dehydrated. Less food intake often means less fibre and water from fruits, vegetables and grains too, which can slow down the digestive system and lead to constipation and bloating.



PREVENTING THE YOYO EFFECT

Loss of muscle is also, in large part, to blame for the rebound weight, or common yo-yo effect that dieters fear. Less muscle mass lowers your metabolic rate (the number of calories you burn at rest) contributing to the vicious cycle that makes weight management tough. With a lower metabolic rate, your body burns fewer calories doing normal activities and your brain, thinking that food is in short supply, triggers your body to hold onto the calories you give it, meaning your weight returns.

According to the experts, adults should consume between 1,200 and 2,600 calories per day, depending on their gender, age and activity level. Key to preventing weight cycling is to stay within this range and find a healthy and balanced combination of diet and exercise that fits with your lifestyle and works for your body type. Sensible eating should be a way of life, not something you do for just a few weeks or months.



THE NEED FOR NATURAL FOODS

Processed foods, with all their chemical processing, heavily refined ingredients and artificial additives can have a negative impact in the following ways:

- Processed foods are packed full of refined carbohydrates, which increase insulin and leptin levels, contributing to insulin resistance that's a primary underlying factor in weight gain.
- Because it takes less time and energy to digest processed foods, not only do you use less calories doing so, your brain gets fooled into thinking those foods don't contain any calories, so you keep eating.
- Processed food overrides the body's natural regulation of how much you eat and how much energy you burn by stimulating a strong reward response in the brain that makes it easy to overeat.
- As well as overloading your sense of satiety, processed foods stimulate dopamine, a neurotransmitter that makes you feel good and triggers food cravings and addictions.

TIME TO BUST SOME MYTHS!

When it comes to the world of natural health, there is a lot of misinformation around. At Hardy's, we believe in a balanced and educated expert approach to helping you look and feel your happiest and healthiest best, so here we bust some of the more common myths around...

MYTH: BODY MASS INDEX (BMI) IS AN ACCURATE MEASURE OF HEALTH

Body mass index is based on a simple equation that considers a person's weight and height and is supposed to measure body fat. Although for many years it has been a standard metric to determine the healthy weight for our height or who is underweight, overweight or obese, it doesn't take into account muscle mass, bone density, overall body composition or ethnic differences. Because the BMI equation can't distinguish between fat and muscle, it tends to tip more toned individuals into the overweight category, despite their fat levels being low. In fact, researchers believe that 54 million Americans are wrongly labelled as overweight or obese.

MYTH: MUSCLE WEIGHS MORE THAN FAT

Although commonly believed and espoused, this is patently untrue. Muscle is much more dense than fat so, by volume, it appears to weigh more. What it actually comes down to is that a pound of fat takes up about four times the space of a pound of muscle, meaning it's possible to look much leaner or trimmer, while your body weight may actually stay the same or even increase slightly.



MYTH: IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT YOU EAT AS LONG AS YOU EXERCISE

Unfortunately, no-one has quite cracked this one; it's just not possible to out-train a poor diet. Whichever way you look at it, weight management still comes down to the amount of calories you consume, not only the energy you expel. The reality is, most of us are not professional athletes, which means we simply cannot get the amount of exercise in that we would need to counteract our high-fat, carb-laden intake. Not only that, it's impossible to push to the levels of exercise required to change your physique if you're fueled with not enough food – in which case your body will draw on muscle mass for energy – or the wrong foods. Extremely high amounts of carbohydrates or fibre can cause digestive issues that stop you from performing well and an abundance of high-fat foods not only translate to a LOT of calories but, when consumed in the evening, can disrupt your sleep, which can leave you too tired to put in your best efforts at the gym.

MYTH: WHAT YOU EAT ONLY IMPACTS YOUR BODY

More and more research is pointing to the fact that our diet and, subsequently our digestion, all have a profound impact on our mood and the way that our brain functions. On page 15 we saw that too much fructose can decrease brain function and page 18 points to the fact that a heavy reduction of calories causes an increase in the brain chemicals that make us feel stressed. It's not only how much we eat, but the foods we choose that can have an impact on our response to stress. Take a look at some of the top stress-busting foods on page 7. The same is true though for healthy food choices and our motivation levels towards healthy habits. Jennifer McDaniel R.D.N., spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics explains it.

“Diet and exercise are a feedback loop. When you eat well, you are motivated to move, and when you move, you are motivated to eat better.”

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DIGESTION AND YOUR GENES

A lot of how well (or poorly) our digestion works comes down to the foods and drinks we consume; we know that probiotic-packed and high fibre foods are nurturing on the digestive system while excess sugar or alcohol can cause problems. However, it's not all just about what we put into our mouths – our genetic make-up also has a role to play in our digestion.

A GENETIC VIEW OF BODY WEIGHT

Genetic studies surrounding digestion are still in their early stages, but already they are bringing about some interesting findings. A recent study published in Nature Genetics found a link between obesity and the AMY1 gene that's responsible for an enzyme known as salivary amylase. As the first thing to be encountered by food when we eat, this enzyme begins the process of digesting starches, which then continues further along our digestive tract.

Most people have two copies of each gene, however it is thought that we've evolved to have more copies nowadays, as our diets have shifted to include more starches. That said, some people still have a lower number of copies than others and those who carry a low number are at greater risk of being obese. While other genetic studies looked at brain activity and appetite as they relate to obesity, this one shed interesting light on how our genes may affect how our body physically handles the digestion of carbohydrates.



A GENETIC TOLERANCE FOR GELATO

It seems that whether you're among the few who enjoy a dish of ice cream or a cold glass of milk, or whether that delivers all sorts of unpleasant digestive effects (cramping, bloating, flatulence and nausea) comes down to genes also. You will have heard of lactose, which – put simply – is the primary sugar in milk. What you may not have heard so much about is lactase, the protein that effectively acts as a pair of molecular scissors and breaks down lactose so that we can digest it.

Virtually all of us once drank milk happily as a baby, however an estimated 65% of people's bodies decrease the production of intestinal lactase after weaning. Continued production of lactase throughout adult life is a genetically determined trait, which comes from allele, effectively a mutation of the lactase tolerance gene.

Historically, in parts of the world with domesticated cattle, natural selection would have favoured the lactose tolerance mutation and, hence, it spread – which points to the fact that some ethnic backgrounds have higher incidences of intolerance. For example, it is thought that lactose intolerance occurs in about 10% of Americans, 50% of Spanish and French and 99% of Chinese people.

OTHER CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR DIGESTION

The ability to happily digest dairy products is not the only thing that our ethnic and genetic backgrounds might account for. Our digestive systems adapt (within reason) to whatever they get on a regular basis, so the local nutritional opportunities of a region lead to related genetic differences among the populations of the world.

Another case in point is among the Inuit of Alaska and Northern Canada; because their diet historically consisted mainly of fat, their gastrointestinal systems are able to digest and break down more fat than other peoples'. Conversely, Native Americans and other desert dwellers have bodies that are effectively hard-wired to store and use calories of a very lean diet. Because they need to consume less than others in order to maintain the same weight, obesity can be a common problem for these people nowadays.

There are also difference in the ability of certain cultures to metabolise and tolerate alcohol. Different people not only eat different foods but their backgrounds and genetic make-up creates differences in how effectively their bodies process particular foods.

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The Natural Advantage

MAGNIFICENT MAGNESIUM

No discussion of stress and digestion could be complete without a look at the macro mineral, magnesium. Magnesium may not be the most abundantly present mineral in our bodies (in fact, it's the fourth – adult bodies typically have about 25g of magnesium) but it is one of the most crucial to overall health and wellbeing.

This is because magnesium plays a part in over 300 enzyme systems that regulate different biochemical reactions in the body, including muscle and nerve function, blood glucose control, blood pressure regulation and the synthesis of protein. It also plays an important role in transporting calcium and potassium across cell membranes, which is important to nerve impulses, muscle contraction and normal heart rhythm.

KNOWING YOUR NEEDS

According to the Institute of Medicine's Food and Nutrition Board based out of Washington DC, the recommended dietary intake of magnesium increases as we get older, and sits around 310–360mg a day for women and between 400–420mg for men. However, population studies in the US found that less than 30% consume enough and that nearly 20% get only half of the intake they need to remain healthy.

In fact, it's estimated that more than 80% of people are deficient in this vital mineral and those with gastrointestinal difficulties or type 2 diabetes, as well as those who consume a lot of alcohol are more at risk of deficiency. Similarly, as we get older our body's ability to absorb magnesium from the gut decreases.



RISKY BUSINESS

Life factors that can also put people at risk of lowered levels. These can include:

- Eating too much sugar. Refined sugar is stripped of molasses, which removes any magnesium content entirely. However, not only does it contain no magnesium, it also causes the body to excrete magnesium through the kidneys. Experts are calling sugar an 'anti-nutrient', a food that replaces whole, nutritious food in the diet and actually consumes nutrients when digested, adding to the negative effects.
- Drinking lots of tea and coffee (or other caffeinated drinks). The kidneys, which filter and excrete excess minerals in the body, play a large part in magnesium levels. Caffeine causes the kidneys to release extra magnesium, which can lead to deficiency.
- Drinking carbonated beverages. Most dark coloured sodas contain phosphates, which bind to magnesium, making it unavailable to the body while it's being digested. Unfortunately even with a balanced diet, soda will be flushing magnesium from the body.
- Drinking excessive alcohol. In much the same way that caffeine increases the excretion of magnesium by the kidneys, so too does alcohol, lowering the levels available to the cells. So how much is too much? Studies have found that more than seven alcoholic beverages per week can cause problems.
- Too much calcium. When magnesium intake is low, the body retains calcium. Extra calcium at this time can cause an abnormal rise in levels within the cells, reducing magnesium absorption and retention. Subsequently, while too much calcium can negatively affect magnesium levels adequate magnesium supplementation can improve the body's use of calcium, so it pays to get the balance right.

For lots of people, low levels of magnesium causes noticeable negative symptoms, which could include muscle aches or spasms, trouble sleeping, poor digestion and anxiety. Others may experience loss of appetite, fatigue and weakness.

SO WHAT'S THIS GOT TO DO WITH STRESS?

The interplay between magnesium and stress is two-fold; not only has stress been found to be a cause of magnesium deficiency, low levels of magnesium also magnify the stress reaction, so it becomes a vicious cycle. With prolonged stress, the continued state of hypervigilance of our bodies and cells can make our health suffer.

Magnesium supports our adrenals and the energy system of the body, so when these are overworked, energy depletion and fatigue can occur. Without sufficient magnesium, nerve cells within the body become excitable (not in a good way!) and over-reactive, which can add to feelings of stress. Our bodies respond to stress with an influx of calcium into cells. Normal cells at rest contain 10,000 times more magnesium than calcium, but if magnesium falls, more calcium flows in and the imbalance puts the cell into a hyperactive state. It's essential to get the balance back in order to relax.

One of the ways that magnesium helps is by binding to, and stimulating, gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA) receptors in the brain. These receptors are primary inhibitory neurotransmitters, meaning they can put the brakes on brain activity. You may recognise the sensation of always feeling like your brain is racing, making it impossible to relax. This and other stress-related disorders, like generalised anxiety and irritable bowel syndrome, are associated with low GABA.

Helpfully, magnesium restricts the release of stress hormones, like adrenaline and cortisol, and acts as a filter to prevent these from entering the brain. Magnesium is also one of the few nutrients known to increase neuroplasticity in the brain – its ability to heal itself, form new neural connections and create new brain cells. In this way, magnesium can help to rewire an anxious brain.



MAGNESIUM'S IMPACT ON DIGESTION

We know that our brain is closely linked to what's happening in our gut, and magnesium has an important role to play here also. The body uses magnesium to aid digestion and regulate calcium, potassium, copper, zinc and vitamin D levels in the body. It also activates the enzymes the body needs to absorb and utilise fats, proteins and carbohydrates; without it we would be unable to properly digest food.

Because the digestive tract is essentially one long muscle, and magnesium relaxes and supports the normal functioning of muscles, it can be helpful for digestion. Studies have found that taking magnesium citrate also increases the water in your intestines, which helps to initiate peristalsis – the wave-like motion that pushes food into your stomach and waste through your intestines – all essential for digestion.

THE MATTER OF ENOUGH MAGNESIUM

While magnesium is present in most high-fibre foods, such as green leafy vegetables, wholegrains, legumes, nuts and seeds, our modern reliance on processed food can lead to deficiencies, as some types of food processing lower magnesium content substantially. Not only that, it is believed that only 30–40% of the dietary magnesium we consume is absorbed by the body.

It is here that magnesium supplements come in. However, not all of these are created equal and magnesium is available in a variety of forms – including magnesium oxide, sulphate, chloride, lactate, carbonate and citrate – each with differing levels of absorption. As a general rule, forms of magnesium that dissolve well in liquid are absorbed more completely in the gut and studies have found that magnesium citrate, lactate and chloride are more soluble and absorbable forms.

Some experts believe that magnesium is one of the most under-utilised but most necessary supplements there is. If you think you, or someone in your household, could benefit from magnesium supplementation, talk to one of the experts at Hardy's.

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FACING THE FACTS ON FODMAPS

In the world of health there are a lot of acronyms, but in the world of digestion there aren't many you would see more commonly than FODMAPs. You'd be forgiven if some of you have not realised that this was, in fact, an acronym – but for those who haven't been committing highly scientific names to memory, FODMAP stands for 'Fermentable Oligosaccharides, Disaccharides, Monosaccharides and Polyols'... so it's certainly a mouthful!

Put simply, FODMAPs are the indigestible sugars or short-chain carbohydrates that many people struggle to utilise and absorb well. Because of this, these food components tend to ferment with in the bowel, drawing in more fluid to cause bloating and excess gas. They're also a leading culprit in functional gastrointestinal disorders and the commonly experienced irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

'Saccharide' is another word for sugar and polyols are so-called sugar alcohols – sugar molecules with an alcohol side-chain – both of which are common in many meals. FODMAPs don't occur in fats or oils, nor in animal-based proteins, such as red meat, chicken, fish or eggs; instead, they typically occur in carbohydrate-based foods.

These pesky parts can cause havoc in the digestion process, as they are not easily absorbed in the small bowel, which means they continue their journey along to the large bowel, where they are quickly broken down in a process that produces hydrogen, carbon dioxide and methane gases. Because all of the FODMAP offenders cause fairly well the same reaction in the gut, a cumulative effect occurs based on the total FODMAPs consumed in any one meal. It also points to why we have to consider all the FODMAPs when it comes to countering the negative effects of IBS.

FODMAP-FRIENDLY FOOD

The low FODMAP diet was developed by a team of researchers at Monash University in Melbourne as a means of controlling gastrointestinal symptoms such as bloating, wind, lower abdominal pain and altered bowel habits. In testing a range of different

Fermentable – rapidly broken down by bacteria in the bowel
Oligosaccharides – fructans and galacto-oligosaccharides (GOS)
Disaccharides – lactose
Monosaccharides – fructose
And
Polyols – sorbitol, mannitol, xylitol and maltitol

foods for their FODMAP content, they put together a list of those fruits, vegetables, grains and proteins that have lower amounts, and are as such less likely to cause unpleasant digestive symptoms.

The diet suggests excluding all FODMAP-containing foods for 2–6 weeks, before gradually reintroducing different FODMAPs to see how well these are tolerated. The main aim of the diet is to achieve good control over gastrointestinal symptoms. Many people can eventually return to something closer to their usual diet, with a few high FODMAP foods that they need to avoid in large amounts.

A list of high and low FODMAP foods is included below, however some of the simple rules of thumb include the fact that onion and garlic are bad triggers, as well as many wheat products and too much high-fructose fruit. In fact, the diet suggests keeping fruit to one portion per sitting and allowing time between each serve. It is also much easier to eat low FODMAP if you are largely avoiding processed foods.

For vegetarians, special considerations may be needed, as legumes can cause problems for digestion, however tofu is low in FODMAPs, so can be supplemented at times as a good protein source. A strict gluten-free diet is not always necessary for IBS sufferers, however it can improve the symptoms of IBS as it removes fructans, one of the types of FODMAP, from the diet. When it comes to fructan-containing grains, rye is also high in fructans; spelt bread, however, can sometimes be better tolerated.

A CASE FOR PROBIOTICS

Recent research has found that a strict low FODMAP diet in the long term can reduce levels of certain beneficial bacteria in the gut, so probiotics may help here. However, there is some merit to trying just one management strategy at a time, so talk to a Hardy's expert about how best to introduce probiotics if you are following the low FODMAP diet.

LOW FODMAP RECIPES

GLUTEN-FREE BUCKWHEAT BREAD

Ingredients

- 1 ½ cups of gluten-free plain flour
- ½ cup of buckwheat flour
- 3 tsp gluten-free baking powder
- ½ tsp pink Himalayan salt flakes
- 2 Tbsp caster sugar
- 2 egg whites
- 1 cup lactose-free milk
- ½ cup vegetable oil (canola is a good option)
- 2 Tbsp seed mix with pine nuts

Instructions

- Preheat oven to 180°C and grease a loaf pan.
- Sift flours, baking powder and salt into a large bowl and stir in sugar.
- Using an electric mixer, lightly beat egg whites until just frothy and stir in the milk and oil.
- Add egg white mixture to the flour mixture and beat for 2–3 minutes or until smooth.
- Pour batter mixture into prepared pan and smooth the top with a spatula.
- Press the seed mix lightly into the top of the mixture.
- Bake for 55 minutes to an hour, or until a skewer inserted into the middle comes out clean.
- Stand in pan for 10 mins, then cool on a wire rack and enjoy.

ALMOND, PARMESAN AND DILL CRACKERS

NB: These are low (not no) FODMAP, so should still be limited to just 4 crackers per serving.

Ingredients

- 1 cup almond flour
- 1 cup parmesan cheese, grated
- 1-2 Tbsp fresh dill, thyme, or rosemary, chopped fine
- ¼ cup unsweetened almond milk or 1-2 Tbsp Greek yogurt

Instructions

- Mix almond flour, Parmesan cheese and herbs in medium bowl. Add in milk or yogurt until blended.
- Roll out dough between 2 pieces of baking paper until very thin. Remove the top layer of paper and cut the dough into squares with a knife or pizza cutter.
- Place on lightly oiled cookie sheet and bake at 150°C for about 15–20 minutes depending on how thin you rolled out the dough. (Thinner crackers will take less time.)

EXAMPLES OF LOW AND HIGH FODMAP FOODS

(Source: www.med.monash.edu)

FOOD CATEGORY	HIGH FODMAP FOODS	LOW FODMAP FOOD ALTERNATIVES
Vegetables	Asparagus, artichokes, onions(all), leek bulb, garlic, legumes/pulses, sugar snap peas, onion and garlic salts, beetroot, Savoy cabbage, celery, sweet corn	Alfalfa, bean sprouts, green beans, bok choy, capsicum (bell pepper), carrot, chives, fresh herbs, choy sum, cucumber, lettuce, tomato, zucchini.
Fruits	Apples, pears, mango, nashi pears, watermelon, nectarines, peaches, plums	Banana, orange, mandarin, grapes, melon
Milk and dairy	Cow's milk, yoghurt, soft cheese, cream, custard, ice cream	Lactose-free milk, lactose-free yoghurts, hard cheese
Protein sources	Legumes/pulses	Meats, fish, chicken, tofu, tempeh
Breads and cereal	Rye, wheat-containing breads, wheat-based cereals with dried fruit, wheat pasta	Gluten-free bread and sourdough spelt bread, rice bubbles, oats, gluten-free pasta, rice, quinoa
Biscuits (cookies) and snacks	Rye crackers, wheat-based biscuits	Gluten-free biscuits, rice cakes, corn thins
Nuts and seeds	Cashews, pistachios	Almonds (<10 nuts), pumpkin seeds

BAKED OATMEAL CUPS

An easy breakfast or snack while you're on the go, these also make a good lunchbox filler!

Ingredients

- 2 eggs
- 2 Tbsp canola oil
- ½ cup water
- 1 cup lactose-free milk
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 1/3 cup brown sugar
- 2 ½ cups oats
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- Optional toppings: sliced strawberries and almonds, cranberries and walnuts, blueberries, banana chips, a dollop of peanut butter.

Instructions

- Preheat the oven to 180°C and line your muffin tray with paper cupcake liners.
- Whisk together eggs, oil, water and milk.
- Blend in vanilla, brown sugar, oatmeal, baking powder and cinnamon.
- Let batter sit for a couple minutes to thicken a bit and stir again.
- Pour batter evenly into muffin tin cups, almost to the top of the liner and sprinkle on desired toppings.
- Bake for 20–25 minutes, until cooked through and slightly browned on edges.
- Store in the fridge in an airtight container and eat cold, or heated.



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B HEALTHY

If we're going to get technical – and who doesn't love a bit of getting technical – 'vitamin B' doesn't really exist. Instead, B vitamins are a class of eight different vitamins, each of which fill a different need in body processes.

So we've come up with eight different facts about B vitamins. Read on to find out how you can 'B' as healthy as possible!

1. COMPLEX – BUT NOT COMPLICATED

The word 'complex' may imply something tricky and troublesome – but really, there's not much to unravel. The 'complex' in B complex is just there to encompass all of the different B vitamins – as opposed to specifically talking about one kind.

2. WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Originally, 'Vitamin B' was thought to be just one thing, existing in rice, liver or yeast. But as time went by and scientific understanding broadened, it was realised that this 'one' nutrient' was actually a whole lot of different things.

3. FEELING ON FORM

Together, the B vitamins are a vital part of forming some of the brain's most important chemicals – serotonin, dopamine and epinephrine

4. DAILY DUTY

Our bodies can't store B vitamins like they can certain other micronutrients – so it's really important to make sure that you get an adequate intake each and every day.

5. BEST B BUDDIES

While they are all important in their own individual ways, some of the different B vitamins are dependent on other B vitamins to be properly used by the body. B2 – better known as riboflavin – plays a role in converting carbohydrates into energy among other things. But it's also needed to enable B6 – pyridoxine – to carry out its vital functions.

6. UP AND AT 'EM

Vitamin B9 is better known as folic acid – but also has a few extra names like vitamin M or vitamin B-c. As well as being a vitamin of many names, it's particularly talented at improving alertness and focus.

7. EASILY DIGESTIBLE

Many of the different B vitamins have important roles to play when it comes to digestion. B1 is a vital part of regulating appetite, a B3 deficiency can cause nasty symptoms like vomiting and diarrhoea through a disease called pellagra, and B6 plays an important role in processing protein. And the other numbers have important functions too!

8. CAN YOU REMEMBER THESE FACTS?

Vitamin Bs play an important role in various parts of brain health – but one key benefit that they can create is an improved memory! So make sure you're getting enough B vitamins and you'll be able to remember these important bits and pieces in no time!

8 OR 12?

You may have noticed that there are only 8 B vitamins listed, but the numbers attached to the different types go all the way up to 12! Nutrition isn't always an exact science – 4 different nutrients have been classed as B vitamins in the past, but as the understanding of them has developed, they've been recategorised. The two key factors that must be met in order for a substance to be considered a vitamin are that the substance must be essential for life and that it is not manufactured by the body. So that's why in vitamin B land, counting goes 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 12!

KNOWING YOUR BS

Two of the B vitamins are mostly known just by their numbers (B6 and B12). But all of them do have full scientific names too.

- B1 – Thiamin
- B2 – Riboflavin
- B3 – Niacin
- B5 – Pantothenic Acid
- B6 – Pyridoxine
- B7 – Biotin
- B9 – Folic Acid
- B12 – Cobalamin



NEWS AND EVENTS

RARE DISEASE DAY – FEBRUARY 28

Some conditions have whole months dedicated to fundraising. Others have weeks, or a day. Those illnesses are the ones that people hear about, that they have some level of understanding about – but there are a great many diseases that are less well-known, that don't have the name recognition. Rare Disease Day aims to raise funds and awareness for the over 7000 rare diseases that affect 8% of the population. The New Zealand Organisation for Rare Disorders calls rare disease patients 'rare gems' – a beautiful way to look at a difficult situation. Visit rare diseaseday.org.nz to find out about how you can contribute.

THE HEART FOUNDATION ANNUAL APPEAL – FEBRUARY

Each February, New Zealand's Heart Foundation bands together to collect funds to continue the organisation's fight against heart disease. Despite increased understanding of heart disease and more and more conversation about heart-friendly foods and the like, heart disease is still the leading cause of death in New Zealand. Do your part to help improve the lives of the 169,000 Kiwis living with heart disease – and to change our future. heartfoundation.org.nz

IHC ANNUAL APPEAL – FEBRUARY

February is a popular month for fundraising – but it's worth finding a what you can spare to share the love around. The IHC Annual Appeal seek to raise money to improve the quality of life of the 75,000 Kiwis with intellectual disabilities and/or autism. Take the chance to make a change in the lives of a whole lot of Kiwi families. Visit ihc.org.nz to find out more.

SHAVE FOR A CURE

Ready to take the plunge and get the chop? Why not go all in and Shave for a Cure? Hair grows back, after all – and who hasn't considered lopping of their tresses after a sticky, sweltering summer? Shave for a Cure supports those suffering from leukaemia and blood cancer in New Zealand – and as their website points out, a shave can cure a fair few other things too: bad haircuts, battles with knots in the morning. Even if you're not up to doing the shave yourself, there are plenty of people to support! shaveforacure.co.nz

THAT AUTUMN FEELING!

March 20th is the autumn equinox in our part of our world. And autumn is traditionally associated with the harvest. Even if many of us have more urban or suburban lifestyles, you can still do a bit of a harvest yourself – you just need to make it an inner harvest! Jot down all of the achievements and major experiences that you've had or felt over the last little while – and bring a little gratitude into your life that way.

NORTHWEST NU ZEST SUCCESS

Here at Hardy's, we love a healthy success story! One of Hardy's Northwest customers has had an amazing result with the Nu Zest Healthy Body Kit.

Kim Alexander, who works at Rodney Wayne Northwest, has now lost an amazing 20kg through a continuous journey. She's replaced 2 meals per day with NuZest Clean and Lean Protein and Good Green Stuff. The kit included a food and tracking diary which has been a fantastic help to keep her on track and reach new goals.

Kim says she has more energy, her digestive system is a lot happier, and through pure determination and motivation she has achieved some amazing results. Kim has regular weigh ins and advice from the Hardy's Northwest team who have helped her on this journey.

Kim would like to say a special thank you to Kirsty at Northwest for all her support and help!



STORE LOCATIONS

NORTH ISLAND

NORTHLAND

HARDY'S KERIKERI 69 Kerikeri Rd, (09) 401 7126
HARDY'S WHANGAREI The Strand Arcade, 23-25 Vine Street, (09) 438 3188

AUCKLAND

HARDY'S GLENFIELD Westfield Glenfield, Glenfield Rd and Downing St, Glenfield, (09) 443 1896
HARDY'S LYNNMALL LYNNMALL, 3058 Great North Road, New Lynn, (09) 827 670
HARDY'S MANUKAU Westfield Manukau City, Great South Rd and Manukau Station Rd, Manukau, (09) 262 1827
HARDY'S NEWMARKET Westfield Newmarket, 277 Broadway, (09) 529 0864
HARDY'S NORTHWEST Northwest Shopping Centre, 1-7 Fred Taylor Drive, Massey, (09) 416 9605
HARDY'S PAKURANGA Pakuranga Plaza, Aylesbury St, Pakuranga, (09) 576 5843
HARDY'S ST LUKES Westfield St Lukes, 80 St Lukes Rd, St Lukes, (09) 846 4477
HARDY'S SYLVIA PARK Sylvia Park, 286 Mount Wellington Hwy, Mount Wellington, (09)573 0310
HARDY'S VULCAN LANE 31 Vulcan Lane, Auckland, (09) 379 7847
HARDY'S WHANGAPARAOA The Plaza, Whangaparaoa Rd, (09) 424 3882

HAMILTON

HARDY'S CHARTWELL Westfield Chartwell, Cnr Comries and Hukanui Rds, (07) 854 8342
HARDY'S CENTRE PLACE Centre Place, 501 Victoria St, (07) 839 2522
HARDY'S THE BASE The Base, Maahanga Drive, (07) 847 0340

BAY OF PLENTY

HARDY'S BAYFAIR Bayfair Shopping Centre, Cnr Maunganui & Girven Roads, (07) 574 3430
HARDY'S BETHLEHEM Bethlehem Town Centre, 19 Bethlehem Rd, (07) 570 6088

TAUPO

HARDY'S TAUPO 37 Horomatangi Street, (07) 378 9057

TARANAKI

HARDY'S NEW PLYMOUTH Centre City Shopping Centre, 11 Gill St, (06) 759 4342

PALMERSTON NORTH

HARDY'S FEILDING 102 Ferguson St, (06) 323 8301
HARDY'S PALMERSTON NORTH The Plaza Shopping Centre, Church St, (06) 356 7860

WELLINGTON

HARDY'S COASTLANDS Coastlands Shoppingtown, State Highway 1, Paraparaumu, (04) 296 1227
HARDY'S LAMBTON SQUARE 180 Lambton Quay, (04) 472 6969
HARDY'S QUEENSGATE Westfield Queensgate, Queens Dr and Bunny St, Lower Hutt, (04) 586 2098

SOUTH ISLAND

NELSON

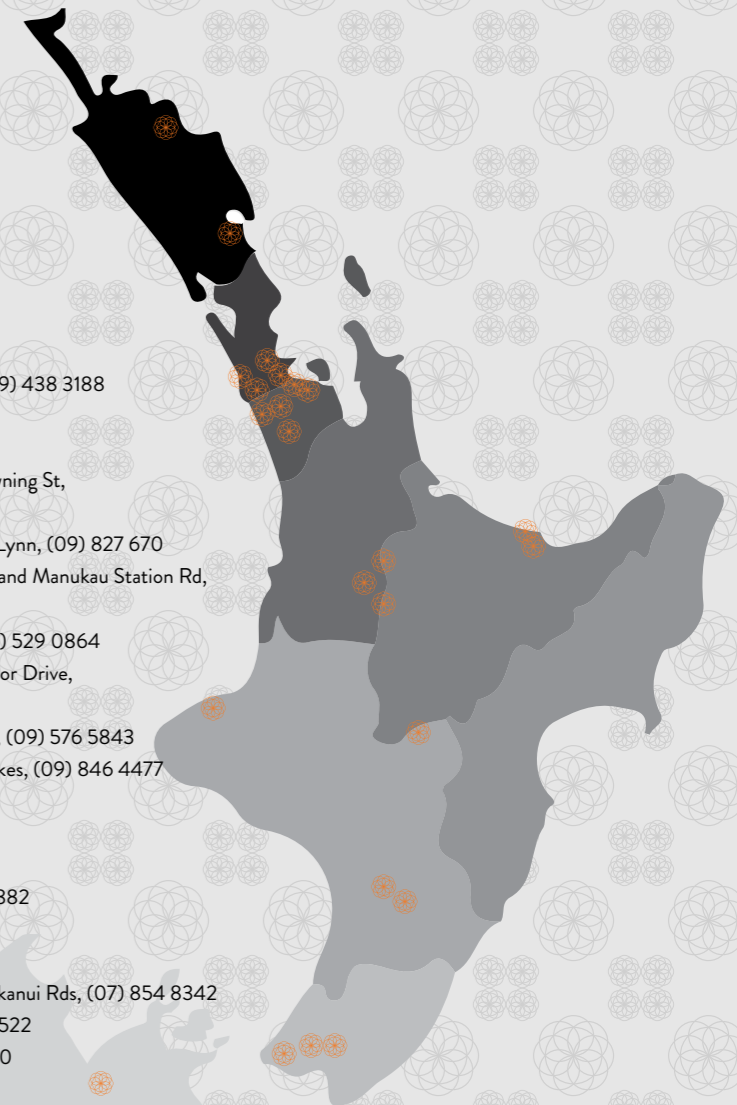
HARDY'S RICHMOND Richmond Mall, 216 Queen St, (03) 544 5769

CHRISTCHURCH

HARDY'S NORTHLANDS Northlands Mall, Main North Road, Papanui, (03) 354 1630

QUEENSTOWN

HARDY'S FIVE MILE Five Mile Shopping Centre, 32 Grant Rd, Frankton, Queenstown, (03) 441 4225



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