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The latest in NATURAL HEALTH

Homeopathy ABC

Mani Norland, principal at the School of Homeopathy (homeopathyschool.com), says:

A is for agni

Agni is an important component of ayurvedic medicine, relating to the element of fire. Strong agni signifies good health, whereas weak agni leads to disease. There are many different types of agni but the most important is jathara agni, which controls the digestion. This is essential because partially digested food creates ama, or toxins, which ayurvedic medicine views as the cause of all disease within the body.



WELLNESS WARRIOR

Meet Astrid Carvel, the author of The Little Book of Crystals (£6.99, Summersdale)

NH: How does holistic crystal healing work?

AC: Crystals emit vibrations due to their piezoelectric and pyroelectric properties, which is why they're used in all sorts of everyday things, like watches and radios. We, as living beings, emit vibrations too – high when stressed and low when we're upset. When crystals are applied to the body or placed in our homes or offices, their energy has the effect of balancing these vibrations in our bodies and our environment, which can be restorative, as well as promote healing.

NH: How do you choose the right crystal for you?

AC: In the first instance, I would suggest discovering what you are drawn to instinctively. Hold a crystal in your hand and state your intention, whether you wish for a boost in confidence, creativity, love or luck, for example. Each crystal has different qualities, such as jade for wisdom and wealth, which would be ideal for an important business meeting, or opal for inducing a sense of tranquillity, perfect for setting the mood for a new relationship.

NH: What is the one crystal you couldn't be without?

AC: I think the most versatile crystal for wellbeing and positivity is quartz – either clear or rose. But for me, as I'm quite an anxious person, I always carry a piece of amethyst in my pocket or purse for its soothing and protective qualities. It gives me that tiny boost of confidence when I need it.



SUPP SPOT

Plant Profile: juniper berries

The Federation of Holistic Therapists (fht.org.uk) examines the health benefits of juniper berries

Dried or fresh juniper berries from the conifer *juniperus communis* are often used to add a spicy, aromatic twist to sweet and savoury dishes, but they are perhaps better known as the ingredient that gives gin its distinctive flavour.

Traditionally, sprigs of juniper were burnt to ward off infection and even today, it remains a popular ingredient in household cleaning products, thanks to its antiseptic properties. In terms of health benefits, juniper berry is believed to stimulate the appetite and Nicholas Culpeper, a famous 17th century botanist, herbalist and physician, observed that it 'expels wind and strengthens the stomach'. The essential oil produced from the juniper berry is also well known for its diuretic, detoxifying and decongestant



properties, making it potentially useful for those affected by cellulite, oedema and rheumatic conditions. In addition, it can offer relief to certain problems affecting the urinary system, such as cystitis, or help regulate the menstrual cycle. Other areas where juniper berry might be valuable include skincare (acne, eczema, psoriasis) and in reducing anxiety and nervous or mental fatigue.

Important safety note: *Never ingest plant essential oils or apply to the skin undiluted.*

"Often known as nature's tranquiliser, magnesium is a miracle worker when it comes to stress."
— page 66

WHAT'S THE BUZZ ABOUT?

Ikigai

The Japanese believe everyone has an ikigai which translates to: The reason you get out of bed every morning. It could be a person or your job – anything which helps you enjoy life. Your ikigai will be based on your life, values and beliefs and to help you discover yours, you need to think of what fills you with joy, purpose and a feeling of wellbeing. It could be through helping the community, your career, a hobby or taking care of your family. Ikigai is all about finding happiness in places we may not have considered or even noticed before. Be open to the idea, and start celebrating what truly matters to you.



Boost physical performance

Gut bacteria could help maximise physical performance, according to research. It is unclear how, but the microbe *veillonella* has only been found in the stool samples of athletes.

Seeing the doctor?

Scientists have suggested meditating in the doctor's waiting room because it will help you relax and pay more attention to the advice given.

Coffee benefits

The body's own fat-fighting defenses (brown fat) can be stimulated by drinking a cup of coffee. This could be the key to tackling diabetes and obesity.

The BAROMETER



Leafy greens

Researchers have warned raw leafy greens such as lettuce, may be hiding dangerous superbugs, and stressed people should realise it's not just meat they need to be careful with.

Cholesterol medication

A study involving thousands of patients' health records discovered they were at risk of developing type 2 diabetes through prescribed cholesterol-lowering medication.

Air pollution

Experts have suggested that the female reproductive system can be affected by environmental factors such as air pollution.