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The warmer weather makes us all feel happier.
Charmaine Yabsley taps top holistic health experts for
how you can enjoy optimum energy and wellness.

Have a sumptuous summer!

Eat the rainbow

“A great summer diet is all about enjoying fresh, colourful foods, and hydration,” says nutritionist Tracie Hyam. “The summer season delivers a variety of tasty fruits and vegetables to enjoy, such as juicy pineapples, berries, lemons, mangos, coconuts, cucumbers, snow peas, beans, and more, all of which provide high amounts of antioxidants, fibre, vitamins and minerals needed to sustain energy, vitality, and glow. When the outside temperature rises, remember to keep hydrated and drink plenty of fresh water. Even air-conditioning is dehydrating! Aim for an average of six to eight glasses each day to keep energised and avoid fatigue, bloating, illness and over-eating.”

Sip iced tea

“Just because the temperature is rising doesn’t mean you need to forego all of the beautiful therapeutic herbal teas you were drinking over winter,” says naturopath and nutritionist Kate Johnston. “Many are just as delicious chilled, and are a great way to ensure we stay hydrated in the warmer months while still benefiting from their medicinal qualities. Try iced green tea with a squeeze of fresh lemon, or even fruity flavours

like rosehip or rooibos. Peppermint is fantastic for its cooling properties, or try using iced dandelion tea as the base of your smoothie.”

Savour salads

“With so many fresh fruit and veggies in season, it’s easy to throw together a salad in under 10 minutes,” says Jodie Blight, author of interactive cookbook Hello Table. “The more colours in your salad the better, so mix it up. Try pumpkin and feta, orange and fennel – which are perfect with fish or lamb – beetroot and quinoa, or my favourite: fig, prosciutto and goats cheese salad.”

D-I-Y dressings

“Make your own salad dressings; it takes less than two minutes and is so much healthier, with no additives and sugar, and tastes so much better than bought ones,” adds Blight. “Just mix one part vinegar to three parts olive oil. Of course, you can add all sorts of other ingredients - try honey, mustard, garlic, orange juice - to add variety. You don’t even need to bother with a measuring spoon – just pour the vinegar into a jar with a lid and add oil until it looks like three times more oil than vinegar. Shake and pour.”

Summer means parties, which can mean a few too many drinks; give your liver a helping hand with a freshly-made beetroot and lemon juice.



Meet our experts



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Cool from within

“According to traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), summer is the time to eat cooling foods that don’t go deep into the body,” says Karina Stewart, co-founder of Kamalaya Wellness Retreat and TCM doctor. “During summer, foods should encourage upward and outward expansion, growth, brightness, and lightness. Summer fruits and vegetables should be fresh and bright in colour. Cooking should be very light with a little pungent spice added to promote sweating and circulate energy. Salt should be limited and water and steaming should be encouraged with cooking. Cooling foods like cucumber, tofu, sprouts, salads, should be increased, while herbs such as mint and chrysanthemum are recommended. Fruit - especially apples, watermelon, lemon and lime - also clear summer heat. Small amounts of pungent-flavoured herbs like chilli, pepper, and ginger are indicated during this time to encourage the body to sweat and disperse summertime heat.”

Go lighter

“Too much hot, heavy, or slow-to-digest food at this time can diminish the body’s ability to stay cool,” adds Stewart. “Heavy foods like meats or an excess of nuts and grains can also cause sluggishness and should be limited.”

Protect digestion

“In TCM, summer heat, combined with cold-natured foods, can weaken the digestion because cold causes a contraction and slowing of digestion,” says Stewart. “Limit ice cream and too many iced foods because this may block sweating and trap heat inside the body, leading to health problems in the cooler months.”

Pick purple

“Add antioxidant-rich purple acai berries to your diet,” says Dwayne Martens, CEO of Amazonia. “Try the snap-frozen packs, which are sealed immediately after harvesting for unmatched nutritional value. Acai bowls make a great breakfast or lunch or even dessert.”

Be amazing

“Add some amaranth to your pantry,” says Violet Sky Hueston, owner of Violet Sky Nourish. “Amaranth is an amazing South American super grain. Like its more famous counterpart quinoa, it is gluten-free and a complete protein source - but amaranth trumps quinoa with more protein, calcium and iron per serve; it’s also a high source of manganese, vitamin B6, and folate. It is very versatile and can be used in both sweet and savoury dishes, just like quinoa or rice. With its high protein and iron content, it makes an ideal post-workout meal. Try substituting couscous with amaranth for a light, gluten-free summer dish.”

Love your liver

“We can often indulge in a few too many drinks during the summer months,” says nutritionist and naturopath Katherine Maslen. “Help your liver out by drinking fresh juice made with beetroot, lemon and green leaves. If you are drinking alcohol, keep hydrated by alternating each drink with a glass of water.”

Plan a detox

“Summer is a great time to detoxify your body after a long winter, or perhaps after an indulgent Christmas,” adds Maslen. “Set aside at least two weeks where you eliminate sugar, dairy, wheat, coffee, alcohol, and refined foods. Base your diet around leafy greens, fruit, vegetables, quinoa, buckwheat, brown rice, eggs, nuts and seeds, organic meat or legumes. Try to eat only organic during this period.”

Jazz up your water

“Lemon, lime, cucumber, and mint are all alkalising foods, which boost your energy and health while simultaneously flushing toxins out of your system,” says Maria Scarpato, co-founder of Health School. “Not only will they help keep you hydrated in hot weather, but they will also reduce your appetite in general, and your appetite for high fat, sugary foods in particular. As a result, you keep your belly flat and slim, while feeling amazing and revitalised. Make a delicious drink as follows: combine 1 thinly sliced lemon and 1 thinly sliced Lebanese cucumber with a handful of mint leaves in 2 litres of water; refrigerate, and sip it throughout the day.”

Add nutritional insurance

“I take a probiotic twice daily to promote good gut health, zinc for additional immune support, and I also make a conscious effort to stay hydrated,” says Peta Shulman, founder and director of GoodnessMe Box. “For work, I prepare fresh salads daily so I know what’s going into my food and I’m not splurging on ‘take outs’ which often have hidden ingredients.”

Cleanse and replenish

“Detoxify and hydrate your body with cooling cucumber, lemon, celery, and grapefruit,” says Casey-Lee Lyons, a nutritionist at Live Love Nourish. “These cleansing foods contain an impressive water content that helps to flush out toxins, promote liver health, improve digestion, and reduce bloating. They also help to alkalise the system, stimulate digestion and detoxification, and, as a bonus, provide an anti-inflammatory effect. These foods all provide a generous source of natural electrolytes, including calcium, potassium and magnesium, which replenish important minerals often lost through

excessive body heat, sweating and dehydration in summer. Boost your health by adding fresh mint to aid digestion.”

Get some zzzs

“Also known as summer squash, the zucchini is the ultimate summer vegetable,” says Jaime Rose Chambers, Eat Fit Food’s dietitian and nutritionist. “They are packed full of antioxidants like vitamin C and carotenoids, eye-healthy lutein and zeaxanthin, and B-group vitamins and fibre which help to manage blood sugar. Zucchini holds its shape well and is very low in calories so it’s a great alternative to pasta in the form of ‘zoodles’, that make for fantastic light summer dishes.”

Eggs are excellent

“Eggs are they one of the most versatile foods – they can be eaten hot or cold, as a snack or as any main meal,” adds Chambers. “They contain what’s considered the gold standard in highly bio-available sources of protein, which is essential for building and repairing body tissue and regulating appetite. Eggs also contain a wide variety of other nutrients, including all the B-group vitamins, omega 3 fats, selenium and fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K. Make sure to eat the whole egg – not just the whites!”

Go nuts

“Nuts are rich in mono- and poly-unsaturated fats, making them the ultimate on-the-go summer snack as they’re easily transportable or can be added to a salad or main,” says Chambers. “They’re filling, nutrient-dense, and delicious. Avoid salted varieties and don’t overdo it as they are still rich in calories: stick to 12-20 nuts as a serving.”

Cheer for cherries

“Rich in the antioxidant anthocyanin, cherries have been shown to have cardiovascular benefits and to reduce inflammation and joint issues like gout,” says Chambers. “Enjoy them fresh or frozen, as a stand-alone snack, or added to smoothies or cereals.”

Get on the pulse

“Beans and lentils are a nutritional powerhouse - and an inexpensive one at that,” says Chambers. “Very rich in fibre, plant protein, iron, zinc, folate, and magnesium, they can help to reduce cholesterol, blood pressure; plus, they are low on the glycaemic index (GI), so they can help regulate blood sugar and insulin levels. Tinned pulses are a fantastic, easy carbohydrate and protein source to add to salads, or replace meat in pasta sauces, or processed into healthy dips like hummus.”

Love olive oil

“Opt for cold-pressed extra virgin olive oil (EVOO), which forms the basis of the Mediterranean diet,” says Chambers. “Olive oil’s benefits are very much determined by its production methods, which have been well-established in reducing the risk of many cancers, lowering inflammatory markers in the blood, and retaining strong levels of polyphenols, which protect blood vessels from damage. It also helps to do wonderful things to our skin’s appearance, making it supple and dewy. Cooking with olive oil is fine; just avoid getting it to smoke point - but high quality olive oil will have a relatively high smoke point anyway.”

Go for the crunch

“Crisp, sweet and refreshing, red capsicums are great as a snack or added to salads,” says Chambers. “The bonus is they also contain high amounts of flavonoids and more than 30 different carotenoids, twice the vitamin C of an orange, plus they have anti-inflammatory properties.” ✱

Eat more cooling foods like cucumber, tofu, sprouts, salads, and herbs such as mint and chrysanthemum tea.

