

Santé!

Holistic Health News from Dr. Sarah Cimperman  
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Article

Holiday Survival Kit

Ask the Doc

Post-Exercise Muscle Soreness

Doctor's Pick

*Survival of the Sickest*

Recipe of the Month

Coconut Lime Sweet Potato Soup

Tangerine Teriyaki with Seitan

Quinoa Scrambled Eggs with Swiss Chard

Quote of the Month

"When we are unable to find tranquility within ourselves, it is useless to seek it elsewhere."

*Francois de La Rochefoucauld*

## **Holiday Survival Kit**

Is it the best of times or the worst of times? When it comes to the holiday season, the decision can be difficult. Some people look forward to the bustle of family, friends and festivities. Others dread the stress, travel and insomnia that often accompany. To minimize the negative effects, maximize the positive points and stay healthy this holiday season, get your survival kit ready.

### **Lavender Essential Oil**

Wherever the holidays take you this year, the essential oil of lavender should follow. The most versatile of essential oils, it is gentle enough to be applied directly to the skin. Lavender essential oil can be used as a fragrance, an antiseptic for cuts and scrapes, or an anti-inflammatory agent to relieve pain and itching associated with insect stings. It can also be used as aromatherapy to promote relaxation and good sleep. The quality of the oil has a significant impact on its therapeutic effects, so avoid "fragrance oils" and choose essential oils carefully. There are many ways to reap the benefits: place a drop or two on a cotton ball next to your pillow, add a few drops to a warm bubble bath or use an aromatherapy diffuser.

### **Rescue Remedy**

A homeopathic dilution of flower essences, Rescue Remedy is formulated to correct emotional imbalances. It is most commonly used in situations of acute anxiety, such as fear of flying and hosting in-laws. Rescue Remedy is safe, well-tolerated and available in most health food and supplement stores. It will not interact with pharmaceutical or natural medications, aside from other homeopathic remedies. Alternatively, a homeopathic doctor can prescribe a constitutional remedy tailored to meet your individual needs, from holiday stress to chronic ailments.

### **Multiple Vitamin and Mineral Supplement**

Whether you're at home or away, your body needs at least seven servings of vegetables each day. If you can't meet that goal, take a multiple vitamin and mineral supplement to ensure that your body gets the nutrients it requires to stay healthy, especially during times of stress when your needs are greater. However, don't use a supplement as an excuse to eat poorly. When holiday meals present a challenge, sample rich dishes in small portions to make room on your plate for healthier choices. Eat slowly, chew your food well and finish the meal feeling satiated rather than stuffed.

## **Walking Shoes**

Just as holidays are not an excuse to skip out on a healthy diet, neither are they a reason to skip regular workouts. But exercise doesn't always have to involve a trip to the gym. Walking, carrying packages and running errands can count too, as long as your heart rate increases, you are sweating and you're on your feet for at least thirty minutes. If you are traveling for the holidays, pack your walking shoes so you can exercise whenever and wherever the opportunity arises. Regular physical activity will improve energy, sleep, mood and your ability to handle holiday stress.

## **Green Tea**

Traditionally, green tea has been used to improve resistance to disease. Research studies concur and scientists have found compounds in green tea called catechins. They have antibacterial, anticancer and antioxidant properties. Catechins can lower cholesterol, improve lipid metabolism and protect the liver against harmful free radicals generated by drinking alcohol. If you'll be drinking at holiday parties, increase your green tea consumption before and after the event. And when you are short on time and sleep, choose green tea over coffee. Both contain caffeine, but green tea contains significantly less. Overuse of caffeine can have negative effects on your adrenal glands and the balance of stress hormones they produce. If you do drink coffee, limit yourself to one cup per day and drink green tea as well. If you are still tired, schedule more sleep.

## **Ginger**

Ginger has a warming effect that feels comforting when the weather is cold. It also helps to alleviate nausea and motion sickness associated with travel. Ginger stimulates digestion while protecting the lining of the stomach. It also has anti-inflammatory, antiparasitic and anticancer effects. For fresh ginger tea, add one half teaspoon grated ginger to a cup of boiling water, cover for fifteen minutes, then strain. Drink it hot or chill it for iced ginger tea. Encapsulated ginger supplements are convenient for travel, but they are also more potent. If you will be taking ginger in a concentrated form, first ask your doctor about the best dosage for you.

## **Melatonin**

Whether you're going by bus, train or plane, bring along an eye mask and ear plugs if you will be traveling during nighttime hours. Getting as much of your regular sleep as possible makes it less likely that you will suffer from jet lag, a common side effect of time zone changes. The bigger the difference between your home zone and the one you

visit, the bigger disruption in your daily circadian rhythm. To minimize the effects, never take a nap on the day you arrive in a new time zone. Stay awake until after dark to let the natural sunlight recalibrate your internal clock. If jet lag progresses to insomnia, melatonin can help your body get back on track. If you anticipate the need, talk to your doctor before you leave about the best dosage for you and any potential interactions with other medications or supplements you may be taking.

### **Probiotics**

Healthy bacteria, generally referred to as probiotics, are another important addition for travelers. They help digest food, produce vitamins, aid in the absorption of nutrients and reduce risk of infection. Regular use of probiotics can help prevent colds and flu as well as gastrointestinal disturbances that can be associated with food borne illness and travel to places with unfamiliar microbes. If you're traveling to distant lands, educate yourself on any particular health risks in the area(s) you plan to visit.

### **Ask the Doc: Post-Exercise Soreness**

*I've started working out regularly and mostly I feel great, but after I exercise my muscles get very sore. How can I prevent this?*

*Will*

*Forest Hills, NY*

Post-exercise soreness can be normal and necessary for positive physical changes, like increased muscle strength and endurance. But it should never be painful. You should be aware of the muscles you worked in the previous day or two, but pain or soreness that last more than 48 hours can be a sign of injury, indicating that your workout was too strenuous.

Aside from using proper technique and exercising at an appropriate intensity for your level of fitness (as opposed to your desired level of fitness) there are some simple ways to minimize post-exercise soreness. First, allow your muscles to warm up and cool down when you're working out. Before exercising, always warm up the muscles you intend to use for at least five to ten minutes. At the end of your workout, cool down with light aerobic activity, such as walking (and swinging your arms if you've done upper body work) for another five

to ten minutes and until your heart rate drops below 100 beats per minute.

Stretch muscles after they have warmed up and again at the end of workouts. Gradually ease into stretches, never bounce, and hold each pose for at least fifteen seconds. Not only can stretching reduce muscle tension after exercise, it also improves flexibility and reduces risk of injury.

Increasing blood flow to sore muscles can speed recovery. Muscle soreness is caused by microscopic tears in muscle fibers, which is a normal result of exertion. The repair of these tears helps muscles heal, making them stronger and more able to withstand future forces. Increased blood flow provides the necessary materials for repair: nutrients to rebuild tissues and white blood cells to remove metabolic waste products. The two best ways to increase circulation to affected areas are massage and heat, which can take the form of a hot water bottle, hot bath, steam room or sauna.

Additionally, cherry juice can make a difference. It contains antioxidants and anti-inflammatory compounds that can help reduce pain, swelling and soreness associated with exercise. Researchers in Vermont followed fourteen male college students who drank twelve ounces of tart cherry juice or placebo twice per day for eight days. They evaluated the effects of eccentric exercise and found that compared to placebo, the individuals who drank tart cherry juice reported significantly less soreness and loss of strength following exercise.

### **Doctor's Pick: *Survival of the Sickest***

In his book *Survival of the Sickest*, Sharon Moalem, PhD explores relationships between evolution, illness and survival. He discusses historical theories as well as new research and outlines how certain diseases – such as high cholesterol and diabetes – were critical adaptations that allowed our ancestors to survive environmental threats. Fascinating and accessible, this book changes the way we look at health, disease and our relationship to the environment and other living creatures. A page-turner for anyone interested in health and disease, it makes the perfect holiday gift for bookworms and health nuts alike.

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## **Coconut Lime Sweet Potato Soup**

*Conserve energy if you can by roasting the sweet potatoes in advance when your oven is already on.*

2 large sweet potatoes  
1 medium red onion  
4 stalks celery  
1 bay leaf  
2 tsp fresh grated ginger  
½ tsp curry powder  
Dash freshly ground nutmeg  
Ground peppercorn to taste  
2 to 3 cups cooking liquid: chicken stock, vegetable stock or water  
1 tbsp dark rum (optional)  
½ tsp sea salt  
1 tangerine, juiced  
1 cup coconut milk  
½ lime, juiced  
Chopped cilantro to garnish

Preheat oven to 400F. Scrub sweet potatoes, skin intact, and poke several holes in each one with a fork before wrapping in aluminum foil. Bake for one hour, then turn off oven. Once cool, dice them with their skin on and reserve.

In a soup pot, heat olive oil over medium heat and sauté the onion and celery until soft, about ten minutes. Add the bay leaf, ginger, curry, nutmeg and pepper. Stir for a minute, until the vegetables are coated in spices, then add the cooking liquid, sweet potatoes and rum. Bring to a gentle boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 30 minutes or more, adding more liquid if necessary.

Remove the sweet potato mixture from the heat, discard the bay leaf and cool slightly. Pour into a blender with the tangerine juice and coconut milk, then puree until smooth. Add lime juice and sea salt, taste and adjust seasoning if necessary. Serve immediately or cool to room temperature and store in the fridge for future use, gently re-heating before serving.

To serve, ladle into bowls or cups and garnish with chopped cilantro.

## **Tangerine Teriyaki with Seitan**

*If you are avoiding nightshades, substitute carrots for the red pepper. Contains soy, citrus and gluten.*

16 oz seitan  
1 to 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil  
¼ cup pineapple juice  
¼ cup fresh tangerine juice  
3 tbsp maple syrup  
2 tbsp tamari  
1 tbsp grated ginger (or more to taste)  
1 tsp sesame oil  
1 clove garlic, crushed (or more to taste)  
Dash cayenne to taste (optional)  
1 handful pea pods  
1 red pepper, sliced  
2 scallions, thinly sliced

Drain the seitan and slice lumps into strips ¼ inch wide. In a small bowl, whisk together the pineapple juice, tangerine juice, maple syrup, tamari, ginger, sesame oil, garlic and cayenne until well-combined. Pour the teriyaki sauce over the seitan and set it aside to marinate. If you have time, make this up to 24 hours in advance for fuller flavor (and toss occasionally to evenly coat the seitan in the sauce).

In a skillet over medium heat, warm the olive oil and sauté the red pepper slices and pea pods for five minutes. Add the scallion, tempeh and teriyaki sauce. Reduce heat and cook over medium-low heat until the vegetables are crisp-tender and the seitan is heated through.

Serve on a bed of whole grain, such as brown rice or quinoa. Make extra quinoa and use the leftovers in the next recipe.

## **Quinoa Scrambled Eggs with Swiss Chard**

2 organic chicken sausages, cooked and diced (optional)  
1 to 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil  
1 small red onion, diced  
1 bell pepper, any color, diced  
2 cloves garlic, crushed  
Pinch red pepper flakes (optional)  
Sea salt to taste

Ground black pepper, to taste

4 eggs

¼ cup organic milk

1 cup cooked quinoa or other whole grain

2 cups shredded Swiss chard leaves, any color, chopped, leaves and stems separated

If using chicken sausage, begin by sautéing links until thoroughly cooked (no longer pink inside) and slightly brown. Cool, dice and set aside. Re-use the same pan for the following steps. If the chicken sausage is already fully cooked, simply dice it.

Sauté the onion and bell pepper over medium heat for five minutes, or until soft and translucent. Add the chopped Swiss chard stems, garlic, red pepper flakes, salt and pepper; stir and cook for two more minutes. Tip the vegetable mixture into a bowl and set aside.

Add another tbsp olive oil to the sauté pan. Whisk together the eggs and milk with a pinch of salt and pepper, then pour into the pan over medium heat. Use a rubber scraper to stir until eggs are scrambled but still soft, it should take just a few minutes.

Add the reserved chicken sausage, vegetables and the quinoa to the eggs; stir to combine. If the quinoa is a little dry, add a splash of water and stir again. Top with the Swiss chard and cover the pan to let the greens steam until tender, about two or three minutes.

Toss everything together until the chard is evenly mixed in. Taste and adjust seasoning if necessary. Serve immediately for breakfast, lunch, brunch or dinner.

### **Vegetarian Variations**

- Substitute water chestnuts for the chicken sausage.
- Top with crumbled feta cheese or goat cheese just before serving.