

# **A new year, a new diet?**

by *Mary-Jane Sharratt*

Many of us make resolutions to get fit, lose weight and eat more healthily when January approaches, particularly after the excesses of the Christmas and New Year celebrations.

You may, however, find that embarking on a strict detoxification regime in January is much harder than you expect – spring and autumn seem to be better seasons for undertaking radical changes in our eating habits. In our natural state, it is usual to gain a small amount of weight in the winter and to eat more carbohydrates (partly to ward off the winter cold and also because this is the food that is in season).

So be kind to yourself this January – make some changes to your lifestyle to help you maintain your energy levels through the short days and long nights of January and February, but leave that rigorous detoxification programme for a few months – it will be easier in the spring!

## **What can I do now?**

During December we consume more fatty rich food and alcohol than usual, and it can be difficult to cut down on these things when the festivities are over. Replacing sugary snacks of chocolate, biscuits and cakes with healthy substitutes such as oat cakes and rice cakes will balance your blood sugar and make you less prone to highs and lows of energy throughout the day. Cut the amount of tea and coffee you consume down to about 2 cups a day, and try to drink more water. Simple changes, such as buying brown rice and wholewheat pasta can make a difference with minimal effort, and they really do taste better.

Eat as much fruit and vegetables as you can, and try making homemade soup – it's really simple but satisfying and is much better for you than tinned soup. You can experiment with a range of different vegetables, and add herbs and spices to suit your taste.

Homemade juices are delicious and incredibly beneficial to health – you can buy a juicer for around £30 and within a week of drinking a freshly-made juice a day, most people feel much better. My juicer worked hard for around 6 years before finally being consigned to juicer-heaven and was an excellent investment.

Some people give up alcohol for the whole of January, but if this is too drastic for you, try to have 4 consecutive alcohol-free days a week. If you usually drink every day, within a short period of time you will notice that your head is clearer in the morning and your energy levels have increased.

## **How about fresh air?**

With the short days, it can be difficult to see any daylight at all, particularly if you work inside. Try to get outside for at least 30 minutes a day, even on a cloudy day, and if you wear glasses or contact lenses, remove them to allow some daylight to get through to

your eyes. This has been shown to have a remarkably beneficial effect on a number of health issues, ranging from arthritis to high blood pressure.

### **Can I use alternative remedies?**

Alternative treatments can certainly help with cleansing the body. Massage is a great way to boost circulation, while essential oils and herbal and homeopathic remedies can improve the function of the liver and kidneys (the main organs of detoxification). This in turn can result in improved circulation (particularly for those suffering from cold hands and feet), clearer skin, better sleep and more energy.

### **What does homeopathy do?**

All homeopaths work slightly differently but I often find that a sluggish digestion can result in a number of other health problems, such as skin and joint problems – the toxins build up in the body because they are not being properly excreted. I may prescribe remedies in a low dose to be taken frequently in order to get the kidney and bowel function working well.

I recently treated a woman in her 30s who was suffering from pain in her hips and was concerned that she may have arthritis. I suggested some dietary changes and gave her a remedy to take twice a day for a month which got her digestion working really well. When she returned a month later, the pain in her hip, which had bothered her for 4 years, had disappeared and she had masses of energy, clearer skin and had stopped getting periodic headaches.

I have also treated people who find it impossible to resist sugar, salt or alcohol. Homeopathy can be an excellent way to help break negative habits, as the treatment identifies the underlying cause of the craving and works on that, rather than just on the habit itself.

Many people seek treatment when they feel below par, rather than for a specific ailment, and homeopathy can provide a wonderful boost for the immune system as well as helping with those New Year resolutions.