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JUNE 2024

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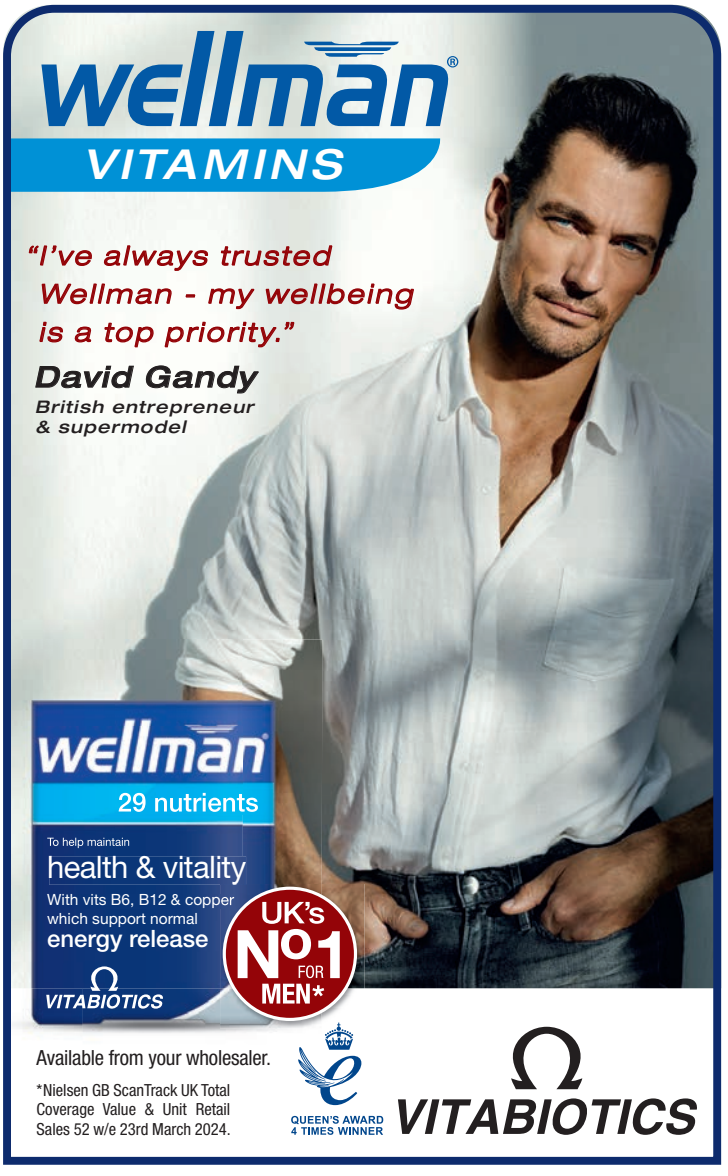
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[1] According to health care professionals in the U.S., among brands surveyed, Nutritional Business Journal® 2016, 2020, 2023; Kaiser Associates 2014

Editor's note



Building genuine loyalty

The data is showing that the economy is going in the right direction; inflation is continuing to fall, with the latest drop of 2.3 per cent being announced just as *Health Food Business* went to press (albeit sllighty slower than had been hoped), we are officially out of recession, while there is also growing confidence that interest rates will start to fall soon.

These factors will undoubtedly help to restore some more confidence among shoppers, which has certainly taken a battering in recent years with a range of challenges facing the world. Indeed, our own retail panel continue to report buoyant trade and good footfall in this issue.

However, it is not simply falling inflation that will help drive consumer spend and this is something our retail expert, Tim Radley, discusses in his column in this issue of *Health Food Business*. Tim makes the point that retailing is harder these days because we are operating in saturated markets, where customers are spoilt for choice in terms of where to buy products.

Ensuring that when customers do spend, they choose to shop with you requires a multi-faceted approach and certainly for our special trade, it goes back to that superior service that health stores are so well-known for, coupled with a product range that is unique to you, and backed up with a well-trained team of staff offering customers something they simpy can't get from mainstream stores. And it is these elements that collectively add up to a lot and are the factors that we should be promoting.

As Tim points out in his column on page 44, in this world of deafening choices, it is about being noticed and appreciated. And that is about creating loyalty.

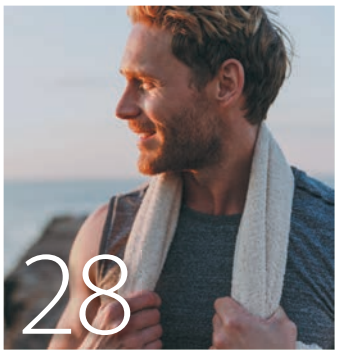
Also in this issue, we were delighted to bring the story of a new retailer to our trade. Tracey Ferns was a long-term health store shopper who has ended up acquiring Carmel's Health Store, over in Co. Clare, Ireland. She talks about her passion for the industry and her desire to support her community – we look forward to seeing her newly named store, Ferns Wellness Health Store, thriving in the future.

Rachel Symonds, Editor

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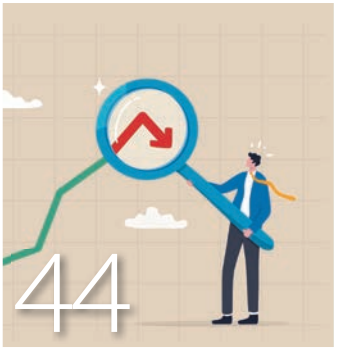
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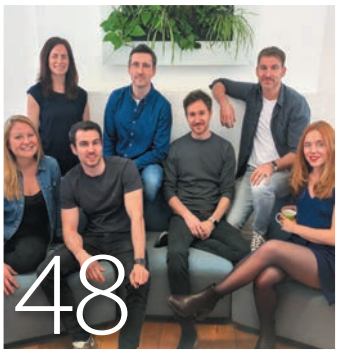
MEN'S HEALTH



EXPERT OPINION



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HEALTH FOOD BUSINESS

Health Food Business is sent free of charge to all named retailer buyers of health foods who register for readership

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IN FOCUS

FSA moves forward with Novel Foods applications for CBD with two safety approvals

Two CBD brands have taken a step forward in the Novel Foods authorisation process after the Food Standards Agency (FSA) issued its first positive safety assessments.

Pureis and Cannaray have both been issued with a Positive Safety Assessment by the FSA as part of the Novel Foods approval process for an acceptable daily intake (ADI) of 10mg a day. It's the first time a CBD product has been granted such an opinion, which means it now moves to the next stage of approval.



To support the FSA and Food Standards Scotland (FSS) in their evaluations of the application, the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP) was asked to review the dossier and supplementary information provided by the applicants.

The FSA and FSS concluded based on the advice of the ACNFP, that the applicants had provided sufficient information to assure the novel food was safe under the proposed conditions of use. The anticipated intake levels and the proposed use in foods and food supplements was not considered to be nutritionally disadvantageous.

In both the assessments, the FSA and FSS said it has undertaken the assessment and "concluded that the novel food is safe under the proposed conditions of use and does not pose a safety risk to human health. The anticipated intake levels and the proposed use was not considered to be nutritionally disadvantageous".

In a blog on its website, Pureis, which is owned by Chanelle McCoy Health, says it is an equally positive sign for the wider industry as it marks a watershed moment for CBD gaining legitimacy to be sold as a bona fide food supplement.

"Where consumers can take the most reassurance however is that both now, and in the future, only brands who undertake the most rigorous Safety Clinical Studies will gain this FSA Positive Safety Assessment," the blog said.

This opinion from the FSA Scientific Committee indicates that Pureis Ultra Pure CBD has successfully fulfilled the criteria necessary to progress to the final stage of the Novel Food Licensing process.

Pureis Ultra Pure CBD is lab-made, meaning it is created from a formula using natural extracts of citrus fruit, rather than being made from the cannabis plant.

Cannaray also posted a statement on its Instagram page stating: "This is a huge deal in the CBD world – only brands meeting the highest product standards will pass the assessment. So we're thrilled to have made history today as we continue to our mission to bring you gold standard CBD."

Also commenting was Martin Last, Director General at the Health Food Manufacturers' Association (HFMA), which has long been engaged in the process of Novel Food regulation around CBD. He told *Health Food Business*: "The HFMA welcome the announcement of the FSA approval of two CBD novel foods ingredients on May 1, as expected. Clearly, how these changes affect the management of the CBD public list is still uncertain and we understand that further announcements will most likely follow shortly when such approvals extend to finished products. The HFMA remains open to the consultations and dialogue with the FSA as matters progress."

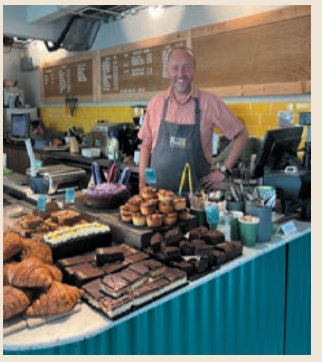
Café makeover unveiled for independent retailer

Better Food has unveiled a makeover and new menu at its café.

Better Food says the aim of the work on the café on Gloucester Road, Bristol, was to improve the customer experience. The service area has been moved towards the café entrance so customers are immediately welcomed by the friendly team but can also see what daily offering is available. There's more seating with comfier bench seats and a couple of booths, as well as a high bar and stools in one window. There's also new wooden tabletops from Bristol Wood Recycling Project to give some more warmth to the café, as well as more plants and a small gallery wall showcasing the history of Better Food.

The brunch menu is inspired by the fabulous array of herbs and spices from Better Food's seasonal and daily changing salads, perfectly combined with beautiful organic fresh produce.

Better Food is an independent organic food store and café, with four sites across Bristol. Established by Phil Haughton MBE in 1992, Better Food's ambition is to build a better, fairer food community, making good food accessible and celebrating all in our food chain.



Industry brands celebrate with King's Award



OptiBac is among the industry brands to be awarded a King's Award for Enterprise for 2024.

The company won the King's Award for International Trade in recognition of its impressive international growth.

The most prestigious business award in the country, The King's Awards for Enterprise recognises and celebrates the success of exciting and innovative businesses across the UK, with recipients demonstrating outstanding success in their field. Recipients of The King's Award are recommended by the Prime Minister, and personally approved by His Majesty The King.

Posting on its website, Managing Director, Jalal Janmohamed *(pictured below with his co-founders and sisters, Farah and Soraya)*, commented: "This win is even more gratifying than the first as it reaffirms our unwavering commitment to expanding our global presence and getting the very best in friendly bacteria to people wherever they are in the world. Since our first award in 2019, we have continued to build our efforts internationally across the whole business, from sales and marketing to logistics, operations and technical. This achievement really is testament to the collective passion and expertise across our entire team."

Also winning a King's Award for Enterprise was the green cleaning company, Bio-D.

The independent business was honoured with a King's Award for Enterprise for Sustainable Development. It was one of just 29 businesses to win a King's Award for Enterprise for the Sustainable Development category in 2024, underlining its environmental credentials.

Lloyd Atkin, Managing Director at Bio-D, commented: "We are both honoured and delighted to receive such a prestigious award. Having spent 35 years dedicating ourselves to sustainability and reducing the impact of our products and operations on our precious and fragile environment, it is wonderful to be recognised for our efforts."

Heather Nixon, Bio-D's Sustainability, NPD and Regulatory Manager: added: "I am absolutely thrilled with this latest award, confirming the hard work we do on our sustainability journey. To be recognised in this way by such a prestigious award is a tribute to good leadership and the efforts of the whole team. Sustainability has to be a key focus in all our businesses as an ethical way forward and to reach Net Zero. We are passionate in our quest and will now fly The King's Award flag with pride."



Lloyd will be attending a reception for The King's Award for Enterprise recipients, which is hosted by His Majesty The King at Windsor Castle.

Meanwhile, Viridian Nutrition has been presented with its accolade that was awarded in 2023.

The ethical vitamin company has been presented with the prestigious King's Award, receiving a specially designed glass trophy and Royal Warrant Certificate from the HM Lord-Lieutenant of Northamptonshire, James Saunders Watson, at the company's offices. Viridian was presented the accolade for excellence in International Trade. Awarded in 2023, Viridian was among the first to receive the award by King Charles.

Managing Director, Holly Thallon Steenson, commented: "We are passionate about helping our communities to greater health and wellness by developing supplements that make a difference to people's long-term wellbeing. Viridian wouldn't be here today without the support of our suppliers, distributors, retailers and Viridian friends and are grateful to them all."

Bira raises concern at drop in footfall

Low footfall in April has prompted the British Independent Retailers Association (Bira) to express its concern.

Bira was commenting following the BRC-ShopperTrak Footfall Monitor report for April, which showed that footfall had decreased over the month.

Key findings from the BRC footfall monitor include total UK footfall decreased by 7.2 per cent in April (YoY), down from -1.3 per cent in March, high street footfall decreased by 6.9 per cent in April (YoY), down from -1.5 per cent in March, while retail park footfall fell by 6.2 per cent in April (YoY), down from -3.5 per cent in March. Shopping centre footfall decreased by 7.2 per cent in April (YoY), down from 0.3 per cent in March.

Bira has expressed concern about the drop in footfall and its potential impact on smaller retailers.

Andrew Goodacre, CEO of Bira, commented: "The timing of Easter last year (April vs March this year) distorts the figures, but there are still some very worrying signs for the independent retailer. Consumer confidence is still low and fragile, and we need economic growth to bring people back to the high streets. We also need the newly elected councillors and mayors to ensure that high streets are safe, attractive and accessible to everyone if we are to reverse the decline in footfall."

Helen Dickinson OBE, BRC Chief Executive, added: "While UK footfall was impacted by poor weather last month, this was artificially exacerbated by the comparison with 2023, when Easter was in April. All locations saw declines on the previous month, and nearly all major cities performed similarly poorly. However, there was good news in Edinburgh, where footfall was positive once again owing to the investment in local shopping locations in the Scottish capital over the past few years.

"It is now vital that elected councillors, mayors and Police and Crime Commissioners all play their part in designing the right planning, transport and neighbourhood safety policies to create thriving shopping destinations in communities across the country. These actions, locally and nationally, can contribute to boosting footfall and revitalising retail centres."

Nine out of 10 parents concerned about toxic chemicals in baby products

A new report has called for a sustainable and toxic free future for babies and children after a report revealed 90 per cent of parents are concerned about chemicals in baby products.

Wen, the Women's Environmental Network, is calling for a sustainable and toxic free future for babies and children on Green Baby Day, taking place on June 12.



The Green Baby survey from Wen shows parents are concerned about toxic chemicals in baby products with nine out of 10 concerned or very concerned they can harm health. Respondents thought harmful chemicals in baby products should be banned (89 per cent) or assumed they had been already (11 per cent), with over three quarters (77 per cent) thinking the UK government is not doing enough to protect us from harmful chemicals.

The vast majority (95 per cent) of the respondents to the online survey thought we have a right to a toxic free future and exposure to toxic chemicals, air pollution and the impacts of climate change are top concerns in relation to babies and children's health.

This is the second year of Wen's Green Baby campaign, and the focus for Green Baby Day 2024 is toxic chemicals, especially those present in baby products. The campaign is calling for toxic chemicals to be on the public health agenda, while ensuring governments and companies safeguard our health and that of future generations.

Green Baby Day, supported by Weleda, empowers parents and carers to make healthy, eco-friendly and affordable choices to minimise exposure to toxic chemicals, and focuses attention on the need to ensure effective chemicals regulation to protect current and future generations, especially post Brexit. A review of UK chemicals regulations three years post Brexit reveals the UK is virtually at a standstill when it comes to banning and regulating toxic chemicals. In some areas, the UK has gone backwards, meaning EU citizens are better protected than we are in Britain.

Wen's Expert Health Advisor, Helen Lynn, commented: "We are sleepwalking into the next health emergency, with the government and business ignoring the clear link between exposure to toxic chemicals and adverse health impacts for babies and children. The UK now lags behind in regulation of toxic chemicals and so it is key that we lobby our governments and policy makers to make the right decisions to keep us safe."

Jayn Sterland, Managing Director of Weleda UK, added: "Of particular concern to Weleda, as a pregnancy and baby skin care manufacturer, are the Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals (EDCs) found in personal care products, which have the potential not only to negatively impact our own hormones (for example thyroid health) but that of future generations. For example, the EDC triclosan can still be found in some antibacterial washes and oral care products – exposure during pregnancy is of particular concern as it has been shown to cross the placenta."

Growth in farmer training under Fairtrade

A new report has confirmed that more cocoa farmers benefit from Fairtrade training.

Fairtrade has released the fourth edition of its *West Africa Cocoa Programme (WACP) Monitoring Report* that shows significant growth in training in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Sierra Leone. In 2023, a total of 48,876 participants, of which 11,812 were female, 24 per cent participated in training. This represents a 22 per cent increase when compared to data gathered in 2022.

The organisation says the increase reflects the success of a 'cascading' approach in which Fairtrade Africa trains a set of cooperative managers and farmers, who then bring the information back to their organisations and communities to replicate the trainings themselves. This expands the number of participants, while also entrenching the knowledge and skills more deeply within organisations.

Key training topics included human rights and environmental due diligence, deforestation, and traceability and transparency. These modules are specifically designed for the West African cocoa context and are regularly updated due to the evolving cocoa landscape.

As the WACP grows positively and progressively, Fairtrade will continue to work with small producer organisations on the ground as they prepare for the next challenges that await them in the cocoa sector, especially new regulatory demands of the EU Deforestation Regulation and the human and environmental rights due diligence.

Heathy packed lunch costs a worrying 45 per cent more than unhealthy choices

Concerning data from The Food Foundation has revealed that healthy packed lunches cost an average 45 per cent more than unhealthy options.

The analysis was released from The Food Foundation as part of its Kid's Food Guarantee, and also found prices of healthy options have risen by up to nine per cent over the last six months in four out of five major retailers, despite a slowing in food price inflation since last November.

The Food Foundation is calling on retailers to ensure any falls in price of food are passed onto consumers and nutritious items that are staples for a healthy diet are prioritised. It is also calling or Government to extend Free School Meals so the most deprived children can still have a nutritious lunch.

Across five retailers analysed (Morrisons, Sainsburys, ALDI, Asda and Tesco), unhealthy packed lunch was substantially cheaper. Tesco came out best, with a healthy lunch being nine per cent more expensive than the unhealthy packed lunch. Aldi had the biggest discrepancy, with healthy lunch being 77 per cent more expensive than unhealthy.

Unhealthy lunchbox items generally contain more sugar, and less fibre and micronutrients than the healthy lunch. There is no fruit and veg in the unhealthy lunch compared to four in healthy.

Shona Goudie, Policy and Advocacy Manager at The Food Foundation, commented: "Children from families with incomes not low enough to qualify for a Free School Meal and yet unable to afford lunch from the school canteen are left reliant on unhealthy packed lunches. No one should be priced out of being able to provide healthy food for their children and retailers need to do more to support families to afford the food they need."

Holland & Barrett reveals new format for Irish store

Holland & Barrett is continuing its €7m investment in Ireland with the opening of a new format store.



Located in the Jervis Shopping Centre, Dublin, the store is the brand's first kiosk store. The kiosk will offer cashless purchases on a range of wellness solutions, with the new format curated to showcase the top 1,000 products. It is also the first H&B store in Ireland to trial digital shelf-edge labelling. The business is also trialling new delivery and stock maximisation solutions that are supported by a new remote storage solution.

The company says the investment has seen all stores refitted, as well as new store openings in Cork, Tullamore, and Dublin.

Holland & Barrett has launched a new food range of over 500 products into Irish stores, using Plant Points on food labelling, encouraging customers to incorporate a diverse range of different plants into their diets for comprehensive wellbeing.



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Bira announces launch of podcast for independents

The retail organisation, Bira, has launched a new podcast to support independent retailers.

High Street Matters is a new series to provide expert insights, trends and practical tips for thriving on the high street and is being run by the British Independent Retailers Association (Bira).

Hosted by journalist, Steve Dyson, the podcast series will explore the crucial issues, consumer trends, legislation and operational strategies impacting independent retailers today.

Andrew Goodacre, CEO of Bira, explained: "Our goal with *High Street Matters* is to equip business owners with trusted insights and practical tips to help them stay ahead of the curve in a rapidly evolving retail landscape. We'll discuss everything from consumer behaviours to rates and staffing challenges – shining a spotlight on what truly matters for high street success."

The podcast will feature conversations with Bira's cross-section of retailer members, from single shops to small chains and large department stores across sectors like hospitality and leisure. Listeners will also hear directly from Bira's independent retail experts, including Andrew, as well as Commercial Director, Jeff Moody.

The premiere episode was released on Monday and tackles the escalating issue of retail crime. It dives into one trader's first-hand experience being targeted by brazen thieves, as well as potential solutions like facial recognition security systems, with insights from guests like Liam Ardern of FaceWatch.

Steve added: "*High Street Matters* gives retailers an easily accessible forum to share perspectives and learn from one another's successes, as well as challenges. We're looking forward to creating some insightful discussions that uncover tactics for thriving in today's competitive environment."

Independent retailers across the UK can subscribe to the *High Street Matters* podcast through major streaming platforms. New episodes will be released throughout the year and feature issues including the sale of hazardous substances, the cycle to work scheme and many other themes relevant to retailers today.

Suma secures first approval under ethical label



Suma's new range of Italian pasta is the first to be awarded Ethical Consumer's Best Buy Label under a newly expanded certification scheme.

Launched almost 20 years ago, the Best Buy Label scheme has signed up almost 50 of the UK's most ethical companies based on the results of Ethical Consumer's product guides. Thanks to continued growth of the UK's ethical market, Ethical Consumer is expanding the scheme to include products which aren't currently covered in their regular product guides. Products will still be rated according to Ethical Consumer's unique scoring system, which specifically looks at a company and its product's environmental and ethical credentials.

The certification of Suma's organic pasta marks a unique triple for Europe's co-operative movement as Ethical Consumer, Suma and the Italian manufacturer of the pasta are all worker-owned co-operatives.

Stephanie Motzek, Suma's Commerce Compliance Coordinator, commented: "Here at Suma, we are individual members of our co-operative and also consumers. Working together with Ethical Consumer was insightful. We greatly respect the work they undertake as researchers, enabling the public to make better-informed buying decisions. Suma had the honour of contributing to this process review and development; it isn't just about our products but about the ethical market as a whole and that's something we're very pleased to have been able to assist with."

King Charles retains patronage of Soil Association

It has been announced that His Majesty King Charles is retaining his patronage of the Soil Association as part of his long-standing support for organic and nature-friendly farming.

King Charles has supported the charity since first becoming patron as Prince of Wales in 1999 and he has also supported hundreds of farmer-led research trials with the charity's Innovative Farmers network, which helps farmers to test sustainable solutions on real farms and has been funded by King Charles III Charitable Fund (formerly known as The Prince of Wales's Charitable Fund) since it was launched 12 years ago.



Soil Association Chief Executive, Helen Browning, commented: "We are delighted that His Majesty King Charles will remain our patron. At the Soil Association, we have been very fortunate to have worked closely with King Charles during his many years of extraordinary charitable work as the Prince of Wales. I feel privileged to know him as a fellow organic farmer with a lifelong dedication to healthy, sustainable food, and as a champion for nature, the countryside and its people.

"King Charles III Charitable Fund has supported more than 120 farmer-led research trials with our Innovative Farmers network – but his support goes far beyond financial generosity. He follows the work of pioneering farmers with avid fascination and takes inspiration from them. We look forward to sharing more with the King as the Soil Association pursues a nature-friendly future with his support."

Speaking at a 10-year anniversary event for Innovative Farmers held in 2022, the former Prince of Wales said he was "very proud" to have been able to support Innovative Farmers.

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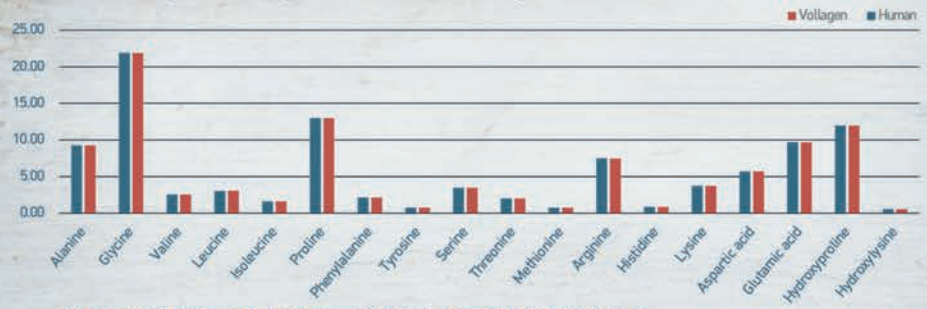


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FOR YOUR STORE

Health Food Business takes a look at the latest launches for your store.

Biona expands condiments range

Two new mustards have joined the range at Biona.

The organic food supplier has introduced two new high-quality and authentic French mustards, a traditional Wholegrain variant and a hotter French Dijon, which will both be available to retailers from May onwards.

The French Dijon Mustard boasts an authentic intense and spicy taste and a smooth texture that adds a touch of French flair to dishes. The French Wholegrain Mustard is made using classic French recipe techniques, which give it a uniquely coarse texture and bold flavour, which really sets it apart. Both mustards are free from harmful pesticides, preservatives or colourings and are made traditionally, with the French mustard seeds being carefully grounded, then blended with just spirit vinegar and seasoning.



Osavi expands range

Ashwagandha KSM-66 is the latest addition to the product range at Osavi.

The new supplement contains KSM-66, a standardised extract, with an extensive set of scientific studies and clinical trials, extracted exclusively from ashwagandha root. The recommended daily serving (one capsule) contains 200mg of KSM-66 standardised to five per cent withanolides (10mg). It is available in 60, 120 or 180 capsules.



Firm favourite

Weleda has announced the launch of its new Firming Face Care range using pomegranate and maca peptides.

Described as a range of clinically proven age-resilient skincare, Weleda's most scientifically advanced innovation in 100 years is regenerating Pomegranate & Maca Peptides Firming Face Care. This regenerative skincare provides long-lasting moisture and is clinically proven to slow down the ageing effects on the skin, protecting from the negative oxidative effect of blue light exposure.

Enriched with organic plant oils, butters and waxes including shea butter, nourishing pomegranate and macadamia seed oil, and precious peptides from organic Peruvian maca root for future-proofing skincare. The range is formulated to activate cell renewal, support skin regeneration and counter perimenopausal skin changes, leaving skin feeling firmer and looking more radiant, and lines less pronounced.

Also new is Blue Gentian & Edelweiss Contouring Face Care, featuring a unique patent-pending, natural Collagen+ Active Complex to boost collagen, reduce deep wrinkles, and bring greater definition to facial contours.

Enriched with organic plant oils, butters and waxes including shea and cocoa butters, nourishing sacha inchi oil, and skin-smoothing olive oil. The carefully crafted formulas stimulate collagen synthesis, balance skin pigmentation, hydrate and nourish the skin, brighten up skin tone, reducing the impact of menopausal changes. Each collection includes a day and night cream, face serum and eye cream.



Pravera expands portfolio with brand additions

A number of new products have been added to the Pravera line-up of brands.

New to the lavera range is an extension of its natural and organic make-up.

The brand has launched new products in the Colour Cosmetics range perfect for creating a dose of glow for the summer. The range is certified vegan and includes products for the complexion, creating the perfect brows and a primer and setting spray.



Vitamin Skin Tint combines skin care with a lightly tinted moisturiser that gently evens out skin imperfections. The natural and organic formula is enriched with organic aloe vera, organic sea buckthorn, vitamin E and squalane to soothe and protect the skin from environmental stressors.

Also in the range is Glow Setting Spray, Glow Serum Primer, Brow Control and Multi Balm, a multi-purpose stick that can provide natural colour around the eyes, on the lips and cheeks, formulated with organic carrot, vitamin E and organic matcha.

Over at benecos and the brand has launched new Nail & Cuticle Oil.

Following the success of the benecos Nail Care range, Nail & Cuticle Oil is COSMOS certified, is an intensely hydrating and fast absorbing oil that helps to restore and promote healthy nails and cuticles. Enriched with organic plant extracts, organic olive, coconut, and argan oils, this plant based, vegan, cruelty-free and certified organic nail and cuticle oil helps to nourish, moisturise, soften and rejuvenate nails and cuticles.

And finally, Ben & Anna has unveiled what it describes as the world's first poly potato deodorant creams.



The sustainable deodorant brand is now in packaging made from potato starch, paper, and natural fibres, which is fully compostable and will start to decompose after a few weeks. Available in fresh and uplifting scents, Love Me, and a sensitive version in Green Balance, the deodorants have a light, creamy texture that is highly effective against odour. Natural ingredients such as nourishing shea butter and valuable oils gently care for your armpits. This extraordinary vegan deodorant allows you to love yourself and love the environment.

Natures Aid grows ranges

Two new ranges have been added to the brand portfolio at Natures Aid.

The new MCT Range is targeted at fitness enthusiasts looking to take workouts to the next level. Natures Aid keto support and energy boost supplements are the perfect addition to a daily routine. Designed to aid fitness goals, while also supporting a healthy ketogenic diet, Natures Aid MCT range supports with energy, endurance, and focus needed to power through any workout and includes MCT Creamer, Sachets, and Oil in hazelnut and caramel flavours.

Also new is the Sprays range, designed for people looking for a convenient, hassle-free way to stay healthy on-the-go. The vitamin sprays come in a range of flavours and includes Multivitamin Spray, B12 Spray and D3 Spray.



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The HFI explains

The power of plants



Ray Hill, Honorary Secretary of the Health Food Institute, takes a look at the latest health headlines.

Nothing surprises me when it comes to the abilities of animals. Earlier in my health food career in the 1960s, I was managing a health store in Hove, West Sussex, and one of our customers was the well-known vet, Buster Lloyd-Jones.

Despite the fact that he was part paralysed and in a wheelchair when I knew him, he still went about his business. Work which included a variety of wild animals that would turn up on his doorstep with a variety of problems, not least those with damage to the body.

How these animals got to know that they would get help by arriving on his doorstep leaves me looking for answers. I find it quite extraordinary. However, he did have a special gift.

I was reminded of this when I read the story and saw the photograph of a male orangutan, who resides in a Sumatran jungle. He was seen selecting leaves from a plant which orangutans hardly ever eat, putting them in his mouth chewing them and methodically taking the juice from his mouth and applying it to a deep wound just below his right eye. He then packed the wound with the chewed leaves, giving it the appearance of a plaster, which, like a plaster, it seemed to help the wound heal, according to Isabelle Lauder from the Max Planck Institute of Animal Behaviour in Germany. Needless to say, according to the article in *The Times,* the wound healed and a second photo of him was there to see.

Local healers confirmed the liana plant had long been used in traditional medicine and a number of studies have confirmed its effect as an antibacterial, antifungal and anti-inflammatory agent. It would seem he knew what he was doing, so it may be that he had learned and used it before. Additionally, the plant also has analgesic properties.

Just an interesting example of the intelligence of animals and their knowledge of plants that aid their way through life. To one who has an interest in herbal medicine, it is a pity that the modern human generations rely so fervently on pharmaceutical drugs and their side effects when there are plants in nature's treasury that will often heal without adverse effects.

Just in case anyone has ideas of a trip to Sumatra to bring back and add the liana plant to the herbalists and health store formulae, it is worth mentioning that due to its analgesic properties, it will require a Marketing Authorisation from the MHRA, which will require an inordinate amount of your time and a significant bill at its conclusion!



HEALTH FOOD INSTITUTE

HFI PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMA PART ONE

MODULE 1 -
Introduction to the Natural Products Industry
MODULE 2 -
Effective and Legal Selling
MODULE 3 -
Product Awareness and Quality Issues
MODULE 4 -
Health and Safety
MODULE 5 -
Body Systems
Part One Final Assessment

HFI PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMA PART TWO

MODULE 1 -
Basic Food Commodities
MODULE 2 -
Herbal Medicine
MODULE 3 -
Sports Nutrition
MODULE 4 -
Homoeopathic Medicine
MODULE 5 -
Alternative/Complementary Therapies
MODULE 6 -
Food Supplements
MODULE 7 -
Non-Food Products
Appendix 1 - A Code of Practice
Appendix 2 - Legalities of Selling
Part Two Final Assessment

enquiries@healthfoodinstitute.org.uk

PRODUCT showcases

HFB's guide to the essential products for your store

NEW - EXTRA STRONG FOOD INTOLERANCE ENZYME FORMULA

CuraZyme Tolerance™ is a specialised blend of 14 pharmaceutical-grade, vegan enzymes which are specially formulated to tackle food intolerances quickly and effectively, particularly gluten, lactose, casein, phenols, beans, soy, legumes and lentils. An intolerance reaction happens when food triggers tummy troubles like gas, bloating, constipation or diarrhoea, usually within 3-5 hours of eating, and can be caused by healthy and unhealthy foods alike. Cura Nutrition's Tolerance formula contains enzymes that target the intolerance molecules that most often cause digestive problems. Take 1-2 capsules with the first bite of a meal.

www.curanutrition.com



CLEARSPRING EXPANDS 'FLAVOURS OF THAILAND' RANGE



Organic fine foods specialist Clearspring has added three delicious new products to its popular Organic Thai range: Organic Gluten Free Black Rice Noodles, Organic Gluten Free 100% Brown Rice Vermicelli Noodles and a UK-first organic and plant-based Pad Thai Sauce. Maria Dawson, Managing Director at Clearspring said: "Over the past few years, we have seen demand grow for our existing noodles from Thailand and wanted to offer our customers more choice in the category with the addition of two new noodles. We are also thrilled that we are launching the UK's first organic and vegan Pad Thai Sauce, which not only delivers on quality and flavour but is incredibly convenient.

www.clearspring.co.uk

CELEBRATING THEIR TENTH YEAR



Feel Supreme remains dedicated to promoting holistic wellness by utilising top-quality natural products. Ethically sourced from suppliers who share their enthusiasm for natural ingredients, Feel Supreme's offerings are tailored to complement the demands of modern lifestyles. A core component of Feel Supreme's range is their mushroom-based supplements, utilising mushrooms like Reishi, Cordyceps, and Lion's Mane. Their range support immune health, cognitive enhancement, and stress resilience. With Feel Supreme, you're not just embracing a product, but a promise of purity, efficacy, and a step towards a naturally empowered life. Contact info@feelsupreme.co.uk for information

www.feelsupreme.co.uk

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For more information call 01535 611446 or email: info@bionature.uk.com

ECOLEAF BY SUMA



As we refresh our Ecoleaf Range, we've improved and expanded our laundry options. We've said goodbye to a few old scents and welcomed in Jasmine and White Musk as a duo of Laundry Liquid and Fabric Conditioner. Our Fragrance-Free Laundry Liquid has been dermatologically tested to be kind to sensitive skin. And we've launched a brand-new fragrance to the laundry collection. Bamboo and Lotus Flower joins both Laundry Liquid and Fabric Conditioner. The concentrated options have had a refresh too, with the introduction of Vanilla and Almond Blossom to Laundry Liquid and Fabric Conditioner. Choices, choices!

www.wholesale.suma.coop

PRODUCT showcases

HFB's guide to the essential products for your store

ARCHTURUS FORMULAE - THE BALANCED CHOICE



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www.archturus.co.uk

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www.terranovahealth.com

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www.nuasan.com

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www.bestcare-uk.com/microrganics

ECOLEAF BY SUMA



We're making exciting changes to some of our bestselling Ecoleaf products. Some are being reformulated, while others are being re-named to help customers choose scents they love. Additionally, we're launching a few fresh new scents to increase the range. Some of the products are now officially dermatologically tested, making them ideal for those with sensitive skin. Of course, the Ecoleaf credentials you'd expect remain the same, an effective range of plant-based, biodegradable and eco-friendly household products. Our bottles are made from 100% recycled plastic and are all recyclable. Most ranges come in bulk sizes, to help reduce plastic consumption.

www.wholesale.suma.coop

PRODUCT showcases

HFB's guide to the essential products for your store

BIOADVANCED MONTHLY SUPPORT



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www.naturesplus.co.uk

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email: trade@pravera.co.uk Tel: 01557 870203

www.praveratrade.co.uk

THE BIG STORY

Review recommends personalised vitamin D dosing

A new review has suggested that a personalised approach to vitamin D supplementation could help with intakes.

The researchers, writing in the *Nutrients* journal, reported that in the last few decades, vitamin D has been one of the most studied nutrients. Despite our ability to produce vitamin D through sunlight exposure, its presence in several natural food sources and fortified foods, and its widespread availability as a dietary supplement, deficiency is a serious public health problem, affecting nearly 50 per cent of the global population.

They explained that although the association between vitamin D status and health is well-established, the exact beneficial effects of vitamin D are still inconclusive and indefinite, especially when considering the prevention and treatment of different health conditions and the determination of an appropriate dosage to exert those beneficial effects in various population groups. Therefore, further research is needed.

"With constant improvements in our understanding of individual variations in vitamin D metabolism and requirements, in the future, precision nutrition and personalised supplementation plans could prove beneficial," the review concluded.



Ubiquinol study finds benefits for alleviating menopausal symptoms

A new European study has found that ubiquinol helps alleviate menopausal symptoms.

The study was carried out by French research institute, Expansion Consulteam, earlier this year in collaboration with French lifestyle influencers, Virginie Florin and Nathalie Simon, who helped to recruit 200 female participants aged between 45-55 years.

Participants were asked to take a 200mg/day dosage of Kaneka Ubiquinol over two months, monitor the effects and report back on their observations before, during and after the supplementation period.

The findings revealed that eight out of 10 participants found it to be effective in alleviating symptoms, with 80 per cent reporting reduced stress, irritability and sensitivity. What's more, 80 per cent of participants reported an improvement in mood and feeling more emotionally stable within 30 days of supplementation and 70 per cent reported better quality of sleep, less muscular pain and improved wellbeing.

Nutrient quality of plant-based products studied

Researchers from the Quadram Institute have assessed the nutritional quality of plant-based products on sale in the UK as part of a comprehensive survey.

Dr Maria Traka and her team in the Food & Nutrition National Bioscience Research Infrastructure (NBRI) looked at more than 2,500 plant-based products and compared them with their animal-based counterparts.

They found that in general, plant-based products were higher in fibre, but lower in protein, with a small percentage of the products supplemented with essential vitamins and minerals. However, overall, there is a huge amount of variation in the nutritional qualities of plant-based products on the UK market. In terms of overall energy levels, there was very little difference between plant- and animal-based foods. Importantly, many of the products would be classed as ultra-processed due to the inclusion of additives or the way they are made.

The most commonly supplemented plant-based products were milks and creams, ready meals, yogurts and drinks. Vitamin B12 was the most widely supplemented nutrient, followed by calcium, vitamin D and iron. But vitamin B12 was only added to 15 per cent of products, with the majority of plant-based foods lacking any nutrient fortification.

The researchers said this represents a missed opportunity, especially to increase vitamin B12 levels for people following a vegan diet, as vitamin B12 is only found naturally in animal-based foods. Increasing supplementation in plant-based foods would help address this, but this does need to take into account the stability of those nutrients in the food, and how well the body absorbs them.

"Overall, we've identified trends that plant-based foods are higher in fibre and lower in protein, but we can't give an overall blanket answer to whether plant-based food products are healthier than their animal-based counterparts," commented Dr Maria Traka. "This very much depends on each product's formulation, so it's important that manufacturers provide this information and share it correctly with consumers so that they can make informed decisions."

Dr Liangzi Zhang, first author of the study, added: "Currently, there is a large amount of variation in how healthy these products are, but this presents an opportunity for food manufacturers to up their game and improve their formulations, including through fortification with essential vitamins and minerals."

The analysis has now been published in the journal, *Food Chemistry*. The study was supported by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, part of UKRI.

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The wonderful world of Ferns Wellness

A dedicated health food shopper, Tracey Ferns has switched to the other side of the till after buying Carmel's Health Store. Renamed Ferns Wellness Health Store, Tracey detailed her journey and her plans for the future.

Tracey Ferns was very familiar with Carmel's Health Store, having been a dedicated shopper there for years, but little did she know a regular shopping trip would totally change the course of her career.

The store, which can be found in the town of Ennis, Co. Clare, has been in existence for more than two decades, run by Carmel Downes. But Carmel decided the time was right to retire, and this is where Tracey's journey began.

She explained: "I walked into Carmel's Health Store in September 2023, where I had come for many years to buy my family's health supplements. The wonderful owner, Carmel, whose knowledge, experience and expert advice I had treasured over the years, told me she was retiring. After congratulating her and wishing her well, I began to think about what a great loss she and the store would be to the local community. Owning my own health store was something I had always wanted to do and I thought maybe now was the right time. Coincidently, I had taken a job share at my school where I work with children with additional needs so I would have extra time on my hands.

"My family had also recently suffered a heart-breaking loss with the tragic death of my beautiful cousin and best friend, Fiona. Life is short and with sudden loss, perspectives often change. I decided to be brave and with the help of my husband James, and sister, Laura, training from Carmel and Laura Downes, Ferns Wellness Health Store was up and running four weeks later."



A passion to help

As well as a health store customer, Tracey has long been passionate about natural health through personal experience.

She explained: "When my daughter, Jaime, was born 15 years ago, she was very unwell and I, as a worried mother, became frustrated with the lack of information and conventional options. I began my own research and found Susan McDermott Flynn of the Seabrook Clinic, who, after one session of craniosacral therapy, relieved Jaime's suffering so much. By the second session, Jaime was fully better. I had never heard of craniosacral therapy before – what else did I not know about? I went down many learning and research rabbit holes, nutrition, herbal remedies, supplements, organic gardening, human design, bio energy, kinesiology, yoga, Pilates. I felt owning a health store would be a great opportunity to be of service to my community and help inform them of the choices, backed by scientific research and centuries of use, that could enable them to have a better quality of life.

"Information and then connection was my second motivation. Online shopping can be really easy and convenient, but it has eroded, in many cases, the chance to call in for a friendly chat, lend a shoulder to cry on or an opportunity for people to feel listened to. We often see people at their most vulnerable and it is with great respect and care we offer them support. It is incredibly important to me that people leave the store feeling helped and valued."

Tracey thrives on supporting the local community and on customer service.

She advised: "We are delighted that people have continued to support us and we have built up some real connections and relationships within our community. I enjoy meeting people and hearing their story. I love it when people swing in the door to tell us they have followed the advice and suggestions and feel like themselves again.

"I love meeting the reps and trainers from the different suppliers. They have all been so helpful and kind. I also love working with my husband, James, and my sister, Laura, who lived away for many years. We all have second jobs, and each bring a unique perspective and energy to Ferns Wellness Health Store."

And the team all bring their own unique skills to the business.









"James' expertise lies in fitness and community development. He runs Ferns Fitness Gym, which offers classes to all age groups, abilities and various community groups, including Eire Og Senior Classes and COPD Ireland," Tracey explained. "Laura, a retired counselling psychologist and the Caretaker Manager of Sunyata Buddhist Centre, brings a learned wisdom of plant-based medicines from Shamanic Amazonian Tribe, The Honey Queen. She went to live with them for two weeks and ended staying nearly four months! My contribution comes from my knowledge and experiences of being a parent, a social care worker specialising in additional needs and my love of herbs and traditional remedies. We continuously train in many areas and our knowledge deepens. Together, we manifest the sacred trinity and use this energy to be of the highest service to people."

In-store offering

The store can be found on the charming and historic Francis Street in Ennis.

"Ferns Wellness is located right across the road from the Franciscan Friary circa 1250 and the Poor Clare's Monastery, where nuns who have taken a vow of silence pray for the entire community. There is a deep sense of history in the area," Tracey explained. "Our customers range from babies to people in their 90s. Many local sports teams come in, parents with children, and James' COPD Ireland classes are great customers and great craic! People are starting to become aware of how important whole organic foods are to our longevity and good health. We really are what we eat."

Tracey stocks well-known brands, and champions a range of local suppliers.

She commented: "We have partnered with local enterprises like Keith from SourdoFarrell, who supplies fresh, delicious sourdough bread on Fridays. On the rare occasion we have any left over, we sometimes give them to the Poor Clare's for their tea. We have also become known for our random acts of kindness, where we give the last loaf to whoever passes the door next. Our kids love getting involved.

"Ute from Poultaggle supplies the most delicious organic eggs, Barry, our local beekeeper, provides the purest local honey, wild Irish seaweed from Quilty and Kilkees Wild Atlantic hemp are massively popular too. Moss Boss is our favourite tonic, and it is made right down the road from us. We are so grateful to be connected to so many wonderful people."

When it comes to other brands, team members have personal favourites.

Tracey explained: "Laura is all about the mushrooms, Terranova's Mushroom Synergy and Mushrooms for Life being her favourites. BioCare's Vitamin C and Magnesium are also a must in her supplement box. She loves this combination for increasing cognitive function, energy levels and bringing lightness and easing tension in the body.

"James loves the One Nutrition range, Stressvada and Moss Boss Tonics. I love the skincare range from Trilogy. It has zero nasties, and my skin looks and feels so fresh and soft. I also really align with Somega, Terranova and Planet Paleo's brilliant range of supplements. They are people--centred brands, ethically sourced and follow the highest sustainability standards. Scientifically researched, no fillers, binders. Our customers love them and we offer a Terranova Loyalty Card Scheme. For my teenage children, Kaitlyn, Bobby and Jaime, I wouldn't be without Sambucol. They all play sports, recently tried out for RTEs *Ireland's Fittest Family*, studying for exams, not to mention growing so need extra support. Their self-care routine includes spending time in nature, family time, volunteering, eating organic whole foods as much as possible and supplementing with Eskimo Oil, magnesium, OptiBac Probiotics, NaturesPlus Immune Boost and Source of Life Gold."

And what are the key issues that customers are seeking help for?

Tracey reported: "In the early days, we did some energy work in the shop with our good friend, Noel Casey, of Casey Therapies, and the energy showed the shop's main purpose was to be of service to those experiencing the menopause. This turned out to be so true! Many women are suffering needlessly and in silence. Men are thankfully starting to increase and improve their self-care routines. Prostate health and preventative care is on the rise. Unfortunately, isolation, even this far after Covid, is still a huge issue. Many people often wander in to have a look and leave so delighted with the conversation, information and connection made. There is often lots of laughter in Ferns Wellness Health Store."

Now in the driving seat, Tracey has plenty of plans to develop: "We have started to provide a local delivery service, free of charge to those who can't make it into town. We are hoping to expand on this service. We want to continue to deepen and strengthen our customer connections and rapport. We hope to create more awareness and connection through fun avenues on local social media.

"We will also be adding two additional pillars to our service to the community. The first being designing and delivering community workshops on important topics like the menopause, parenting, men's health and future proofing. The second is to continue to partner with other local business and practitioners to create community events that raise health awareness and are also fun and entertaining. We have a lot of energy to manifest many more ideas and we are only getting started!" **hfb**

WHOLESALE TRENDS

ON THE PANEL



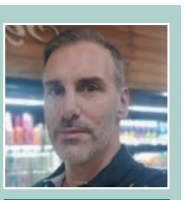
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Wholefoods

WHOLEFOODS WHOLESALE

Recently, we have travelled far and wide to look at global trends when it comes to health and wellness. We went to California to visit Expo West, which in the past has always been a source of insights for us as we see trends emerging before they hit Europe! This time around there were less revelations but rather a confirmation that we are closer than ever with what is happening in other markets. The largest need state right now is gut health and our trip to the US confirmed this as we were presented with a sea of gut health products. The main type of product would be gut health beverages and I think we must have seen 50 separate and strong brands, including the market leader, Poppi. Back home, we are seeing a growing level of interest in this type of product with many brands on the market right now. We are seeing success with the Fhirst brand, which has only been on the market 18 months but is capturing customers across our independent health channel and should finish out the year in a very strong place. It has just launched a Lemon and Lime flavour, which will bring more customers to try the brand with this popular flavour. The gut health category is continuing to lead our sales figures and OptiBac continues to shine as the leading brand within the Irish market. We have been supplying OptiBac to health stores since 2014 but in recent years with growth not just in health stores but other channels, the brand has had a phenomenal trajectory in the Irish retail space and is now a household name synonymous with good gut health. Recently OptiBac was awarded the King's Award for International Trade as recognition of their commitment to increasing their global footprint by providing the highest quality friendly bacteria to a rapidly increasing customer base. As OptiBac's partner for Ireland, we are delighted they have had this recognition, and we are happy to play a part in their success. Congratulations to all in OptiBac!

BEST SELLERS:

VMS: OptiBac for Everyday, FabU R&R Relax, Prizmag Bisglycinate, A.Vogel Milk Thistle, Eskimo

BodyCare: Rosalique 3in1 Anti Redness Miracle Formula, Kinvara Rosehip Face Serum, Kinvara Cleansing Oil, Arnicare Arnica Cooling Gel, Aloe Pura Aloe Gel

Food: Minor Figures Barista Oat, Pukka Night Time Tea, Braggs ACV, Marigold B12 Yeast Flakes, Deliciously Ella Nutty Granola

Household: Ecover Non-bio Laundry Liquid, Dishwasher Tablet, Lilly's Washing-up Liquid (Essential Oil Lemon), Ecover Zero Laundry Liquid, Lilly's Spray Cleaner (Essential Oil Citrus)



Suma
CO-OPERATIVE SINCE 1977

SUMA

Summer might be in full swing but we're still seeing the effects of the winter washout in some places. With news of UK crop harvests such as wheat, barley, oats and oilseed rape suffering from record rain in particular, it's clear that the effects of climate change are happening on our doorstep. Hopefully, more support for farmers in green farming schemes will help, but consumers could see price increases. Here at Suma, we're enjoying fresh ingredients and seasonal produce. Suma Agave Syrup continues to be a favourite addition, loved by bakers and also ideal for jazzing up cocktails and mocktails. For that holiday feeling, it just has to be classic coconut. Stock your shelves with Suma Coconut Cream, Suma Coconut Milk and Suma Coconut Oil to give your customers all the options to recreate beachside aromas and holiday memories in their kitchens. In new product news, we're proud to have launched our new Suma Jasmine Rice. Jasmine rice goes with practically everything, making it the perfect base for all cuisines. It's also an affordable luxury, offering high-quality goodness at a reasonable price point. Our Ecoleaf household cleaning range is having a refresh, with lots of laundry products being joined by new fragrances to offer customers more choice. Of course, the Ecoleaf credentials you expect remain the same. Ecoleaf is an effective range of plant-based, biodegradable and eco-friendly household products. Our bottles are made from 100 per cent recycled plastic and are all recyclable. Most ranges have the option to buy in bulk sizes, to help reduce plastic consumption and cut carbon emissions. This July, we're unveiling not one, not two, but four brand new Ecoleaf Hand Soaps. Our new hand soaps come in all sizes, and we're pleased to say our 500ml size is packaged with Prevented Ocean Plastic (that's waste plastic collected from rivers and beaches before it has a chance to enter the seas). And the best part, the fragrances, of course. With four to choose from, your customers will be spoiled for choice. Invigorating Grapefruit and Mandarin, Fruity Pomegranate and Goji Berry, Relaxing Coconut Water and Hibiscus, and Floral Rose and Magnolia. It's been a busy trade show season for us too, the latest being the Food and Drink Expo, where we enjoyed showcasing all our favourite ranges and new products, and of course having lots of conversations and seeing the latest trends.

BEST SELLERS:

Ambient: Oatly Barista Style, Suma Chopped Tomatoes, Suma Chickpeas

Chilled: Clearspring Tofu, Naturli Vegan Butter, Suma Sunflower Spread

Frozen: One Planet Pizza Vegan Three Cheese, Clive's Nut Roast, Beyond Meat Meatballs, Linda McCartney Onion and Rosemary Sausages

Bodycare: Alter/Native by Suma Lavender and Geranium Shampoo, Kingfisher Toothpaste Fennel, Alter/Native by Suma Clear and Simple Shampoo and Conditioner

Household: Ecoleaf by Suma Toilet Tissue, Ecoleaf by Suma Laundry Liquid bulk, Ecoleaf by Suma Kitchen Roll, Ecoleaf by Suma Multi-surface Cleaner, Ecoleaf by Suma Dishwasher Tablets



DUNDEIS

It's been quite a whirlwind of activity here at Dundeis. In March, we showcased at the Natural Health Trade Summit in Manchester, followed by Natural and Organic Products Expo in London in April, and we even ventured out to PLMA in Amsterdam in May. Our latest endeavour involves the launch of our summer catalogue, which now integrates indulgence brands previously found in the Minton & Donello catalogue, along with our current range of natural, organic and grocery brands listed in the Dundeis catalogue. The combined catalogue will allow us to offer our customers a broader selection of products, simplifying their cross-category purchases, giving access to a further 1,000 plus products across various brands.

Additionally, we have our prepack brochure, which has now been expanded to include a wide range of bulk commodities, and these will be available in organic or conventional with the option for private label. Look out for our new Christmas catalogue too, which contains some amazing seasonal product, which will be delivered to you along with our other publications in June. For the complete line-up, visit our website at www.dundeis.co.uk

BEST SELLERS:

Food & drink: Clearspring, Biona, Bobs Red Mill, Dash

VMS: Together Health, Bio Kult, Floradix

Bodycare: Natracare, Fushi, Faith in Nature

Household: Bio-D, Eco-Max, Ocean Saver

ESSENTIAL TRADING

The last Monday of the month heralds the beginning of Co-op Fortnight, and we're thrilled to be partaking alongside numerous other co-operatives and organisations nationwide. It's truly gratifying to contribute to such a remarkable movement, especially as a workers' cooperative with a legacy spanning over five decades. As we head into Co-op Fortnight, we're reminded of the profound impact of cooperation in building resilient communities. At Essential, we believe in the power of collaboration to effect positive change, whether it's within our own cooperative or through partnerships with like-minded organisations. Together, we're not just sharing products and services, we're sharing values and aspirations, creating a more inclusive and sustainable society for generations to come. Join us in celebrating the spirit of cooperation and let's continue to work together towards a brighter, more equitable future. As summer unfolds, anticipation for the Summer Solstice fills the air here at Essential. We're gearing up for the season's outdoor festivities by curating an array of delightful seasonal recipes on our website. These culinary inspirations are tailor-made for sharing with loved ones, adding a unique touch to your gatherings and making those moments truly unforgettable. Make sure you check out the latest additions to our range, like the innovative Bower Collective. They offer refillable, all-natural home and personal care products, prioritising quality, vegan, and sustainable ingredients to enhance your daily routines. Their dedication to refilling reusable containers underscores their commitment to reducing landfill waste. Finally, we have lots of great content added regularly to the Essential website. Here, you can find a treasure trove of inspiring recipes, informative news, and engaging articles. All of these features – and more – can be found at www.essential-trading.coop

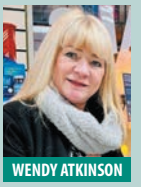
BEST SELLERS:

Ambient: Oatly Barista, Minor Figures Oat M!lk, Essential Tinned Coconut Milk, Essential Chopped Tomatoes, Essential Baked Beans, Campo Passata, Zapatista Ground Coffee, Essential Porridge Oats, Essential Basmati White Rice

Chilled: Naturli Vegan Block, Tofu Wiener Sausages, Sojade Natural Soya Yoghurt, Taifun Smoked Tofu, Violife Epic Mature Block, Delphi Foods Classic Houmous, Clear Spot Plain Tofu, VBites Lincolmmmshire Sausages

Frozen: Booja Booja Ice Creams, Clive's Pies, Moving Mountains, Plantside Vegan Yorkshire Puddings, Natural Cool Frozen Fruit, Natural Cool Frozen Peas

DISTRIBUTOR EYE



WENDY ATKINSON

In a regular column, *Health Food Business* hears the opinions of key distributors in our industry about the trading patterns they are seeing. This issue, we hear from **Wendy Atkinson**, who distributes a range of brands under her Modern Herbals business, including her own Syno-Vital range.

Retail sales in independent health stores nowadays often seem to be driven by many social media trends and influencers. To name a few, products such as collagen, mushrooms and speciality oils are currently very popular products in the health trade. The retailers rely on us as distributors to source these products swiftly and maintain stock levels to keep up with these moving trends and keep the products on their shelves.

As distributors, we have to keep our eye on the ball, looking for the next social media trend, whilst continuing to grow our own long-term successful brands. A packaging revamp this summer will see our brand, Syno-Vital, relaunch with a promotion to independent health stores, complete with staff incentives, window display competitions and training.

What is important to our retailers is that they can get supplies quickly to be reactive to consumer demands and maintain stock levels of the best sellers. Some of our most successful retailers are also themselves proactive on social media platforms, posting products, testimonials, interacting with other stores' social media platforms by sharing information and products too.

Retailers also like the personal touch and communication, which tends to be lacking with some suppliers. They like to speak to someone at the end of a phone, and also be made aware of up-and-coming trends and new products. As a distributor, we mailshot our trade customers on a regular basis, keeping them up to date with new products, promotions and these current trends.

We all know the High Street has seen a decline in footfall due to internet selling sites, but thankfully in our health industry, there remains those individuals who don't always like or trust using these sites and they like the personal touch and to speak to someone in person with knowledge, in the health stores in particular, when they are buying products to benefit their health, and long may this continue!

RETAIL FILE Around the stores

ON THE RETAIL PANEL



KATE SEGAL
Inside Out Health, Reigate



VICKY PERKS
Beanfreaks, Cardiff



MARIE LONGMAN
Peak Health Food, Rugeley



JOANNE HILL
Amaranth, Bramhall, Cheshire



URSULA GOTHARD
The Eighth Day, Manchester



CLAIR WHITTY
Natural Health Store, Wexford and Kilkenny



MARK HAMILTON
The Little Supplements Company, Paignton



HANNAH DARE
Organico, Bantry, Co Cork

KATE SEGAL

Inside Out Health, Reigate

April has passed quickly with Easter falling at the start of the month, but we have progressed well with our projects in-store and online. In store, we have a new team member, a trainee Nutritional Therapist, to boost the support to our technical team. We have a good base of Nutritional Therapists to cover each day, with a very enthusiastic supporting team of aromatherapists, health coaches and foodies! The shop is looking revitalised and fresh for the spring with the recent decorations, alongside us regularly reviewing our food stock by looking at new suppliers as well as potential new supplement brands. We will be launching our new loyalty card next month after much deliberation, which will be fairer to all shoppers. We have held a couple more in-store events and attended a group to deliver a talk this month. These events have proved very successful and reminded us that things are much more as before Covid, with a keen interest to attend events in person. We hope to have an injection of funds from our local council to enable the development of our online offering, which – with the additional team member – means this can be manned regularly so providing a more complete 'remote' shop offering. We are excited to be working with a graphic designer to make our website slick and easy to use, so encouraging more online business. There is real camaraderie with the team, and now we are quite a large team, we don't often get to all work together. I want to have more team days so that we can all meet together when time allows for me to show my appreciation as I do feel truly blessed.

VICKY PERKS

Beanfreaks, Cardiff

Mabel the musical artist (not my aunt) has a new song out – vitamins! This catchy little tune brightened my morning yesterday, the 'yute' (young people) are singing about vitamins! OK, so the context may be off but I'll take it! It's like every time I see our local bus supporting the Viridian no junk campaign, my heart does a little dance that people are talking about vitamins! And in a world where everything feels a little off, it's good to know people still think vitamins are relevant.

I've definitely noticed an increase in younger customers, millennials to gen Z are definitely looking for more nutritional support. They really like to do their research, and it feels that natural health customers are starting to understand absorption, and why the form of a nutrient can have a real impact on their health. However, customers still need health food shops to keep them on the straight and narrow and guide them through the minefield of information overload. I've always offered a nutrient amnesty service, which is helpful to all ages, where customers can bring a carrier bag in of supplements they have in their cupboards, and I can remind them of why they bought that nutrient or herb, and best time to take it, and if it's relevant for their health need or what might be a better option – win, win! At a time when people feel lost in the health service, offering a service, and pointing our customers in the right direction, even if it is back to their GP, helps build trust in our business. Our drinks fridge is a particular area of growth with gen Z customers. You probably noticed the many prettily decorated cans available from your wholesaler – I often think our drinks fridge looks like a work of abstract art, with some amazing illustrations gracing our shelves. Obviously, it's important that what's inside is as good as the outside, but new companies such as Counter Culture, Hip Pop, Fhirst, and Liquid Death are definitely slaying it (to do something spectacularly well!).

MARIE LONGMAN

Peak Health Food, Rugeley

Well, what a fabulous, and very welcome month April has been! Each week has been a busy week and sales progressed further towards the end of the month especially. It seems that the 'waiting for pay day' worry has left most customers. Maybe there is a little more to spend now the weather has warmed and heating is no longer needed so much? Talking of weather, there has been a distinct improvement, and this has brought more people into town, especially on market days. It's so good to hear chatter outside the shop and to see people sitting on the benches outside. The busy town is a vast improvement to the cold and wet days that we've had plenty of where it's been quiet outside. This month particularly we have seen more cash sales too compared to card sales and this has continued throughout the entire month. The warmer weather has seen slower sales in glucosamine products and related topical treatments. We have seen a small increase in digestive health issues and, of course, sleep products. With the cold, wet weather, our hay fever season was very much delayed. We usually start our hay fever season as early as the end of February, but there were no sales until the first week of April! Rather encouragingly, we have received a few great testimonials from our customers recently. Two customers in particular had been recommended products by us in order to help their ongoing and unresolved health issue and it was great to see them return, having overcome their issues and so happy with the result. They also decided to speak to us about further issues they were encountering. It's always lovely to hear good news such as this and, of course, it helps us to help others too. There is, sadly, still a dissatisfaction with the service customers are getting from our GP surgeries locally and this brings customers to us. We were rather touchingly told from one lady that she had received more help and empathy from us than from any of the health professionals she had seen. Onto May, this year is going so fast! We are rapidly approaching a birthday milestone for our shop – 30 years trading at our current site, 15 of those with founder, Jim, and the last 15 years with myself at the helm. We will be planning a suitable celebration. On May 24, there will also be a celebration for Jason and myself too. We will be getting married after 18 years together. We have planned a family celebration and have enlisted our local traders to provide all the essentials to make the day happen! Our local family businesses really are the best.

JOANNE HILL

Amaranth, Bramhall, Cheshire

It was a very miserable month for weather in the north west but we still saw good growth on the year in terms of shop revenue. I'm a little unsure how as some days it looked as though nobody would leave their house. I have just been looking at the retail footfall figures reported by Bira and they report that footfall was down 7.2 per cent nationally in April year on year (although Easter was in April last year, which distorts things). This is a worry for the high street in general, but I think that health stores continue to be a magnet for the high street and that we can continue to thrive, despite fluctuating footfall. The Amaranth team made a quick trip to London for NOPE and came home happy with bags full of products



and heads full of ideas. We've taken on a few new brands from the show and had a change round in the shop. It's always exciting to freshen things up a bit and have new products to talk about. We try to keep on top of what is trending, and which brands our customers are looking for, which help us to seek them out at the show. We were also able to take advantage of show deals from a couple of our main suppliers. This has a big positive impact on profitability over the next few months. The duller part of the month has been another cost review. Staff costs have risen again with pay rises to reflect the change in living wage and most of the services we use have seen price increases at greater levels than inflation. It also seems to have been a month of maintenance and improvements, everything always seems to come at once. I've been having a look through all our costs to see if there are any savings to be made, every little helps.

URSULA GOTHARD

Eighth Day, Manchester

April was a fairly busy trading month for us with the universities and colleges in the area in full swing. We have had consistently good sales on general groceries with eggs, coffee, honey and oil making our top four sellers. In our herbal and VMS section, mushrooms are still very popular, along with NaturesPlus Source Of Life Gold Liquid and the Vitamin D3 & K2 and Algae Oil from Bare Biology. In our bodycare section, Amour Naturals Castor Oil and Rosewater are consistent top sellers, along with Kingfisher toothpaste, bars of soap and liquid soap refills.

CLAIR WHITTY

Natural Health Store, Wexford and Kilkenny

We were busy in both stores in April. There were lots of tourists around, which always makes a difference to our sales. We had Peter Harney and Grace Kinirons from Natural Medicine Company in with us for in-stores. Peter came to our Wexford store and Grace to Kilkenny and we booked people in to come and chat with them on a one-to-one basis. This was very successful, our customers loved the chat, information, and advice that they were given. Peter and Grace will come back for a follow on with these customers in June and we will invite new customers to come and chat with them too. Holos Skincare, which is a natural Irish skincare company that is extremely successful, came to do free mini facials for our customers. This was very special and they all enjoyed the experience and the advice they got from Niamh, who is the founder of the company. We will have Niamh back in again later in the year. The sales were very good on the day too, which is fantastic, and hopefully this will lead to follow on sales and friend referrals to the brand too. Patrick got to the NOPE exhibition, he enjoyed it, he met with old and new suppliers and hopefully in the near future we will see some exciting new products on our shelves. He met with Nigel Grosse, from Solo Nutrition, who is celebrating 25 years in business this year. Congratulations to you Nigel, we have been working with Solo Nutrition since we opened 10 years ago, and we have had an excellent relationship together. Nigel showed Patrick around and they had a great trip together. We will see Nigel soon here in Ireland, where we will be able to celebrate his birthday with him. We have started into the hay fever season, it's exam time, and the foreign holidays have started too. As a result of this, we have seen an increase in sales on A.Vogel Pollinosan, One Nutrition Ashwagandha, and B1, garlic, and Incognito Mosquito Repellent Spray. So, overall, we are busy and happy, all is well at Natural Health Store.

MARK HAMILTON

The Little Supplements Company, Paignton

Here at The Little Supplement Company, sales have continued to be vibrant and we have been pushing some new ideas and lines since May and they have worked really well. The biggest new sellers for us have been LSC Lion's Mane and also LSC Shilajit. We have pushed the education side on these products, as we always do, and have had some great sales from them. We have really talked up our own label to our customers due to the continuing battle with online pricing and lack of policing by all the companies. I could see this happening eight years ago and am surprised it's taken this long to start really affecting independent health store business sales. I started to make the transgression towards own label around five years ago and it now equates to over 50 per cent of our sales, with guaranteed return sales when people buy the product again. This approach has been a no-brainer for me and it's certainly paying the dividends a few years on. Biggest sellers continue to be the same kind of products, with tongkat ali and ashwagandha still leading the way in our herbal sales. Protein and creatine are still flying from our sports nutrition department. Viridian High Five Multivitamin and Terranova Living Multi-nutrient from our multivitamin sales, alongside our own label krill oil. We have just set our customers an eight-week summer holiday body challenge where we do them a diet and workout program and also suggest supplements to take in order to achieve better results faster. We run these through the year and are always popular, particularly the social media banter and updates on them. Our sales across the suggested supplement list have all gone up significantly, but we do have over 50 customers taking part so that's some great additional sales for us.

HANNAH DARE

Organico, Bantry, Co Cork

April was a buzzy month. We had Oliver McCabe down to do an in-store with Plent and Plantforce, which worked really well – and was a lot of fun! Oliver also gave some good training to our staff. We are also trying to lobby the Government

RETAIL FILE

about changing the VAT rate to support small food businesses – it's mainly a social media campaign and involves sharing stories and trying to show the public that it's not the business' fault that food is getting more expensive. There's been a satisfying response, and the point was taken well, though we didn't yet get the VAT reduction we're looking for. Salus juices continued with strong sales this month, and we've been getting positive feedback from customers (especially on the Dandelion Juice). The videos we made for social media really worked and the attention meant that a lot of staff have been trying various juices as well. We've had the first local asparagus, which is always my favourite time of year, and we're also hiring for the summer, which is far from my favourite thing! But overall, we had a good month.







VMS

Amaranth: Viridian High Potency Magnesium, Planet Paleo Pure Collagen, Terranova Magnesium Complex, Udo's Choice Super 8 Hi-Potency Probiotic, Bare Biology Life and Soul, Viridian Vitamin D3 1000IU, BetterYou DLux Vit D+K Spray, NaturesPlus Collagen Peptides, Viridian Vitamin D3 2000IU, NaturesPlus Liquid Source of Life

Beanfreaks: Wiley's Peak EPA, BioCare Methyl Multi Nutrient, Natures Aid Bio 360 Probiotic, Viridian High Potency Magnesium, NaturesPlus Collagen Powder, Terranova Magnesium 100mg, vitamin D 2000iu, BioCare Female Multi, Together Algae Omega, Terranova Life Drink, Floradix Floravital, Mushroom For Life Lion's Mane

Eighth Day: NaturesPlus Source Of Life Gold Liquid, Bare Biology Beam & Balance Vitamin D3 & K2 Spray, Nutri Advanced Magnesium Glycinate, Viridian Magnesium High Potency 300mg, NaturesPlus Magnesium NightTime, Bare Biology Vim & Vigour Omega 3 & Astaxanthin, Flora Udo's Choice Ultimate Oil Blend, NaturesPlus BioAdvanced Menopause Support, Together Health Coenzyme Q10, HealthAid Ultra Probio 100 Billion with FOS

Inside Out Health: Terranova Magnesium 100mg, Lamberts Omega 3 Ultra 1300mg, Nutri Advanced Eskimo Bright Kids Jelly Splats, OptiBac Every Day Extra Strength, Terranova Living Multi Woman

Natural Health Store: Rescue Remedy, Natures Aid B1, One Nutrition Black Seed Oil, Source of Life Gold

Organico: NaturesPlus Source of Gold Multivitamin Liquid, Wiley's Finest Alaskan Fish Oil Peak E, Active Edge CherryActive Concentrate, NaturesPlus Collagen Peptides, MAG365 PrizMag, NHP Omega 3, Viridian High Potency Magnesium, MA365 PrizMag Magnesium Bisglycinate, MAG365 PrizMag Plus Capsules, Patrick Holford ImmuneC, Nordic Naturals Ultimate Omega D3

Peak Health Food: Quest Super Once a Day, Quest D3 2500iu, Natures Aid B12 Spray

The Little Supplement Company: Viridian High Five Multivitamin and Terranova Living Multi-nutrient

BODYCARE

Amaranth: Soakin Epsom Salts, BetterYou Magnesium Flakes, Salcura Zeoderm Skin Repair Moisturiser, BetterYou Magnesium Sleep Lotion, Kingfisher Aloe Vera, Tea Tree, Mint Fluoride Free Toothpaste, Oliva Olive Oil Soap, Faith in Nature loose soaps, Dr Hauschka Hand Balm, NEOM Real Luxury Bath Foam

Eighth Day: Faith In Nature Soap Loose Various, Dr Bronner's Castille Liquid Soap Refill, Eden Perfume N°255, Amour Naturals Castor Oil Organic, Kingfisher Mint Fluoride Free Toothpaste, Amour Naturals Rose Flower Water Organic, Weleda Wild Rose Harmonising Body Lotion, Weleda Skin Food Body Butter, Eden Perfume N°470, Kingfisher Fennel with Fluoride Toothpaste, Kingfisher Mint with Fluoride Toothpaste, Alternative by Suma Glycerine Soap Loose, Amour Naturals Castor Oil Organic, REN Overnight Glow Dark Spot Sleeping Cream

Inside Out Health: Faith in Nature unwrapped soap bars, Kingfisher Flouride Free Mint Toothpaste, Balmonds Skin Salvation, Soakin Magnesium Bath Flakes, Kingfisher Flouride Free Fennel Toothpaste

Natural Health Store: Weleda Skin Food, Holos Anti-Ageing Facial Oil, Jason Vitamin E Oil

Organico: Fushi Castor Oil, Weleda Arnica Massage Oil, Dr Hauschka Rose Day Cream Light, Weleda Calendula Nappy Change, Weleda Revitalising Hair Tonic, Dr Hauschka Rose Day Cream, Dr Hauschka Quince Day Cream, Trilogy Line Smoothing Day Cream, Green People SPF 30 No Scent Sun Lotion, Dr Hauschka SPF 30 Tinted Face Cream

Peak Health Food: Antipodes Vanilla Pod, Antipodes Avocado Pear Night Cream, Kingfisher Fluoride Free Mint Toothpaste

FOOD AND DRINK

Amaranth: Rheal Energy Bars, Living Foods Spicy Kimchi, Pulsin Choc Fudge Peanut Keto Bar, Booja-Booja Almond Salted Caramel Two Chocolate Truffle, Protein Ball Co. Keto Peanut Butter, Yogi Tea Women's Tea, Hu Cashew and Vanilla Dark, Hu Almond Butter & Crispy Quinoa Dark Chocolate Bar

Beanfreaks: Welsh honey, Just Natural Organic Porridge Oats, Oatly Cream, Sojade Greek Style Soya Yoghurt, Raw Sauerkraut, Tartex Mushroom Pate, organic apricots, Loving Foods Kimchi, organic walnut halves, Marigold B12 Yeast Flakes

Eighth Day: The Lakes Free Range Eggs Medium Organic, Mayflower Apiaries Cheshire Honey Clear, Dark Woods Under Milk Wood Espresso Blend Coffee Beans, Arcadia Olive Oil Organic, Clear Spot Tofu Organic, Oatly Oat Drink Foamable Barista Organic, Mayflower Apiaries Cheshire Honey Set, Zaytoun Palestinian Dates, Sojade Natural Soya Yoghurt, Marigold Engevita Yeast Flakes with Vitamin B12, Olivi Greek Olive Oil Organic, Wild About Honey Raw Serra De Estrela Mountain Honey, Sojade Soya Milk Unsweetened, Clear Spot Tofu Organic

Inside Out Health: Nourish 'The Nutty One' Bar, Sojade Soya Yoghurt, Rookery Farm Eggs, Linwoods Milled Flaxseed, Infinity Foods Omega 3 Seed Mix

Natural Health Store: Surreal Cereal, local honey, Biona Apple Cider Vinegar, Misfit Bars, Pukka Peace Tea

Organico: Oatly Foamable Barista, Oliva Greek Olive Oil, Phyterberry Aronia Tonic Superfood, Irish organic eggs, Sojade Organic Soya Milk Unsweetened, Spoonful Botanicals, Red Strand Coffee Beans, Clipper Everyday Tea, Vertmont Maple Syrup, Ekoplaza Organic Peanut Butter Salted, Ekoplaza Eko Coffee Regular Beans,

Peak Health Food: Queenswood Jumbo Oats, Doves Farm Digestives, St Dalfour assorted spreads

HERBAL

Amaranth: Mushrooms For Life Lion's Mane, Viridian L-Theanine and Lemon Balm, NaturesPlus Magnesium NightTime, Wild Nutrition KSM-66 Ashwagandha, Cytoplan CytoProtect Liver, Balanced Curcumin (Turmeric Extract)

Beanfreaks: Viridian L-Theanine & Lemon Balm, Shilajit, Taka Organic Turmeric Capsules, Viridian Ashwagandha Capsules, A.Vogel Echinaforce, Kiki Aloe Ferrox Juice, A.Vogel Dormeasan, Terranova Dandelion Complex

Eighth Day: Hybrid Herbs Shilajit Mineral Pitch, Biona Tart Cherry Pure Superjuice Organic, Dr Fungi Mushroom Powder Chaga + Cordyceps, Pharma Nord BioActive Omega 7 Sea Buckthorn Oil, Mushrooms For Life Lion's Mane, AllicinMax, Viridian Black Seed Oil Organic, Hifas da Terra Reishi AntiOx Powder, Healthstrong Mushroom+ Powder, Hybrid Herbs Lion's Mane Mushroom Organic, Natures Aid Saw Palmetto Complex

Inside Out Health: Viridian L-Theanine & Lemon Balm, Pukka Elderberry Syrup, Terranova Turmeric and Ginger, Lamberts Liquid Imuno Strength, Lamberts Sea Buckthorn Berry Oil

Natural Health Store: One Nutrition Ashwagandha, A.Vogel Pollinosan

Organico: Salvestrol Platinum 2000 Point, NaturesPlus Pro Berberine, Taka Turmeric Organic Turmeric & Black Pepper, Wild Nutrition KSM-66 Ashwagandha, NaturesPlus Stress Support, Viridian Organic Comfrey Balm, One Nutrition Black Seed Oil, Solgar Full Spectrum Curcumin 185x, A.Vogel Milk Thistle Complex, Comvita Olive Leaf Extract, A.Vogel Echinacea Throat Spray, North American Herb & Spice Oregano, Salus Dandelion Juice

Peak Health Food: Viridian Curcumin Complex, Quest Cranbiotix, A.Vogel Dormeasan

The Little Supplement Company: LSC Lion's Mane, LSC Shilajit.

SPORTS NUTRITION

Amaranth: Supernova Protein Woman 01, Vivo Life Creatine Powder, Viridian Sports Electrolyte

Eighth Day: Raw Sport Plant Protein Wild Berry Flavour, Raw Sport Mass Gainer Chocolate Fudge, Raw Sport Mass Gainer Vanilla, Hifas da Terra Cordy-Sin Sport, Pulsin' Keto Choc Orange & Peanut Snack Bar Gluten Free, NuGo Dark Chocolate Almond Protein Bar, Pulsin' Pea Protein Unflavoured, The Organic Protein Company Cacao Maca Whey Protein, The Organic Protein Company Unflavoured Whey Protein

Inside Out Health: Active Edge CherryActive Concentrate, Viridian Electrolyte Fix, Pulsin' Maple Peanut Keto Bar, Zen Herbal Massage Liniment, Pulsin' Pea Protein

Natural Health Store: Vital Proteins, MAG65 Magnesium, BetterYou Magnesium Spray Oil

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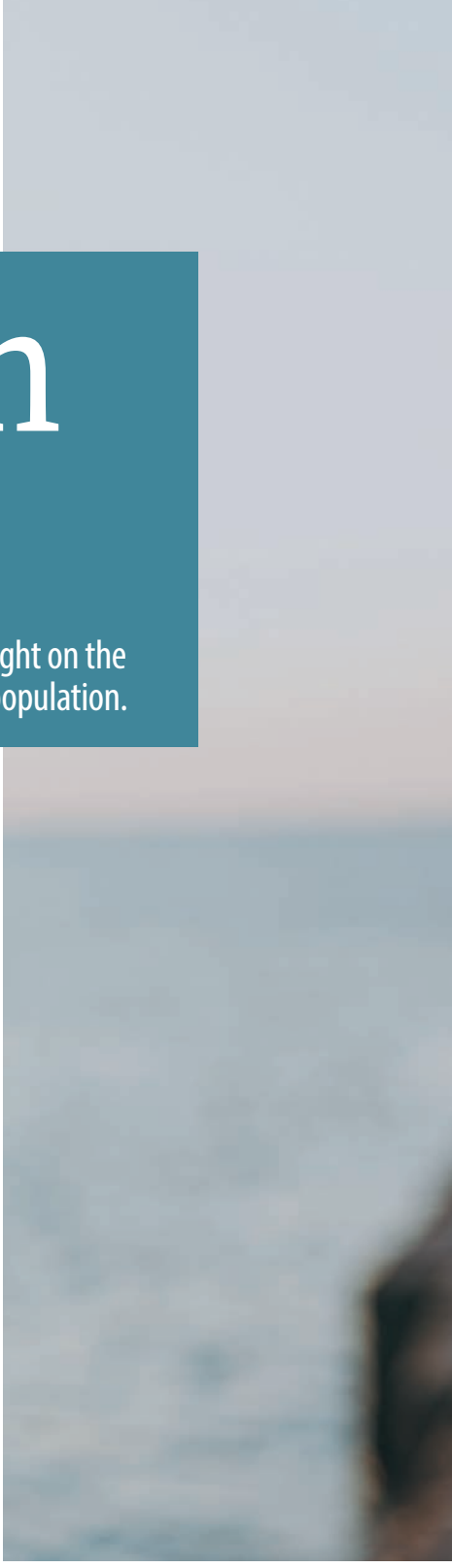
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Men's health matters

Ahead of June's Men's Health Awareness Week, now is the time to shine the light on the advice and product range in health stores that can help to support the male population.



While male health in terms of life expectancy has made positive shifts in recent years, the general male population are still considered to be at a disadvantage compared to women, for a variety of reasons. One is the fact that while women generally have more contact with medical professionals, particularly during their reproductive years, men have less reason to seek help.

This means they can be more reluctant to see a GP even when a problem does occur, and in a similar way, they are often not great at opening up to friends and family if they have a health concern. And while this is a more generalised picture, we do know that male health is a cause for concern in some specific areas; mental health issues are thought to be higher in men than women, while issues around heart ill health are also more of a problem in men.

Lindsay Powers, Nutritional Therapist at Good Health Naturally, commented: "In recent times, the men's health picture has shown signs of improvement in terms of health outcomes and life expectancy, although challenges persist. Improved awareness, access to healthcare, and changes in lifestyle habits have positively influenced men's health outcomes. For instance, there's been greater emphasis on regular health check-ups, increased awareness about mental health, and campaigns targeting men's specific health issues like prostate cancer and heart disease and around mental health.

"However, men are still more likely to have poorer outcomes in relation to certain diseases like cancer, heart disease and diabetes type 2, than women. They are also more likely to die by suicide. According to the UK Government, women live on average four years longer than men, and while this gap was closing, the pandemic has recently widened it.

"Traditionally, men have been less likely to seek medical help, leading to late diagnoses of health conditions. Societal norms around masculinity and stoicism have discouraged men from expressing vulnerability or seeking emotional support, impacting mental wellbeing. Lifestyle factors such as higher rates of smoking, alcohol consumption, and occupational hazards in certain male-dominated industries have contributed to poorer health outcomes among men. Closing the gender health gap requires continued efforts in promoting health-seeking behaviours among men, addressing social norms around masculinity, and providing tailored healthcare interventions that consider men's specific health needs."

> "Closing the gender health gap requires continued efforts in promoting health-seeking behaviours among men, addressing social norms around masculinity, and providing tailored healthcare interventions..."

Keri Briggs, Senior Brand Specialist at Lamberts, continued: "There have been several male-specific health initiatives in the last 20 years, which have aimed to improve areas such as weight loss, exercise and activity and mental health. However, despite this improvement in reaching out to men, figures from a working group which includes The Men's Health forum and the Mankind Initiative, show that one in five men die before the age of 65. The causes are often preventable or treatable and include cancer, heart disease, diabetes and alcohol related issues.

"Covid has also had a significant effect, with two-thirds of those hospitalised being male, and men being 60 per cent more likely to die from the virus. Men are also 32 per cent less likely to seek help from their GP and access services like talking therapies and NHS Health Checks, which can identify early signs of heart disease and diabetes, less often than women.

"Studies suggest men have lower health literacy than women, finding it harder to access, comprehend and use information and services to aid health related decisions. Early studies in the 1990s and 2000s suggested this may be due to an ongoing adherence to traditional 'masculine' values of stoicism and self-reliance, and public health initiatives are starting to try and breakdown the barriers to men's health.

"Data also suggests that men tend to have much less healthy lifestyles than their female counterparts, with women on average living for five years longer than men. Men are more likely than



women to be overweight or obese than women (68.6 per cent versus 59 per cent), more likely to smoke (14.6 per cent versus 11.2 per cent) and more likely to drink alcohol on a daily basis (eight per cent versus five per cent). Men also tend towards eating less fruit and vegetables and more than 50 per cent more red and processed meat than women (89g/d versus 56g/d)."

And Will Jordan, Nutrition Advisor at Viridian Nutrition, added: "Social media's 'ideal' body image has started to impact men, which can be helpful or harmful depending on how the message is received. One side is that men are taking ownership of their health, moving more, and being more thoughtful with their diets. On the flipside, unrealistic body expectations are being chased, which has led to an increase in the use of performance and image enhancing drugs in men in the last few years. Despite all of this, life expectancy has been on a consistent rise, from 74 in 1994, to 78 in 2024, likely due to advances in modern medicine and accessibility too it, at least in the United Kingdom."

Isabelle Nunn, Nutritionist at DR.VEGAN, agreed with the issues around men addressing health needs.

"One of the main challenges with men's health is getting men to talk about health issues and seeing someone about any concerns they have. While women's health rightly has and should continue to have a lot more funding and attention, we still need to look at easy ways to address the biggest men's health issues, which includes prostate cancer. For example, women are required to have an annual cervical smear test, and receive reminders from their GP for this – why do we not require men to have an annual prostate test after the age of 45 or 50 in the same way? It would be an effective way to improve early diagnosis of prostate issues," she commented.

HEALTH AWARENESS

So, when dealing with male customers, what are the most common health issues we are seeing in society today?

Jordan commented: "In the UK, it is more likely that a man will be overweight or obese than not as 70 per cent of male adults fall into this category, compared to 59 per cent of adult women. This has led to a drastic increase in metabolic disease, such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure. Being male is considered a risk factor for type 2 diabetes, however, due to the greater number of elderly women than men and association of ageing and diabetes, there are more women with the disease than men.

"Cardiovascular disease, diabetes, prostate health, and even mental health are strongly linked with weight, with a reduction in weight showing a significantly reduced risk. Mental health is one of the bigger, previously unspoken about, health issues in men, as depression rates have dramatically increased in both younger and older males. Mental health is linked to physical health, and both are commonly a reflection of each other."

Briggs went on: "There are a number of conditions which will affect a proportionally higher level of men, or even men only. One of the most significant of these is cardiovascular disease (CVD). This condition affects one in eight men and one in 14 women in the UK and develops at a younger age in men. Men also have a higher risk of coronary heart disease (CHD), which has been partially attributed to the protective effects of oestrogen on women's' hearts; this hormone is known to contribute to regulation of lipids, coagulation, inflammatory markers and vasodilation. Some experts also consider differences in stress levels or the way it is dealt with, less adherence to a healthy diet and less overall understanding of their health and wellbeing may also be linked to a higher risk in men.

"Other conditions significantly affecting men are prostate and erectile problems. Benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) affects 50 per cent of men aged 50-60, increasing to 90 per cent in men aged 80+, according to the Urology Foundation. Erectile dysfunction (ED) affects over four million men in the UK and is particularly significant as it can be an early marker for the development of other conditions. One study has positively corelated ED with CVD and shown that those with ED are more likely to develop dementia.

"Men's mental health is also a significant concern in the UK: statistics show that three-quarters of suicides are male, and men are three times more likely to become dependent on alcohol than women, according to Public Health England. These issues can also be causative for other conditions; depression, anxiety and stress can lead to physiological changes such as increases in blood pressure and cortisol and a decrease in blood flow. These make the development of heart and metabolic diseases more likely."

Powers added: "In the UK, some of the most commonly seen health issues affecting men include cardiovascular diseases such as heart disease and stroke, which remain the leading causes of death. Mental health concerns like depression, anxiety, and suicide rates also impact men significantly. Prostate cancer is another prevalent issue, with high diagnosis rates among older men. Lifestyle-related conditions such as obesity, diabetes, and high blood pressure continue to be significant health challenges. Additionally, there's a growing awareness of men's reproductive health issues like erectile dysfunction and infertility."

And when looking at these health issues, what should we be aware of in terms of the factors that can raise a man's risk?

Lott commented: "Stress, poor diet and lifestyle, and physical inactivity are all contributory risk factors to our heart, gut and bowel health. These can lead to conditions including an imbalanced gut microbiome, high blood pressure, high LDL cholesterol, insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes. Studies also show that an unhealthy gut microbiome increases risk of colorectal and bowel cancer."

And Powers advised: "Several risk factors contribute to men's health issues, including smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, poor diet high in saturated fats and sugars, lack of physical activity, and stress. Additionally, genetic predispositions and environmental factors play roles in various health conditions.

"Men can improve their health outcomes by making lifestyle changes such as quitting smoking, moderating alcohol intake, adopting a balanced and nutritious diet, engaging in regular physical activity, managing stress through relaxation techniques or therapy, getting regular health check-ups, and addressing mental health concerns openly. These proactive steps can significantly reduce the risk of chronic diseases and improve overall wellbeing."

Jordan added: ""Modifiable lifestyle choices have an undeniable influence on risk factors to many preventable diseases. Arguably the most important change to lifestyle should be increasing movement and activity levels. With sedentary lifestyles becoming more and more common, from sitting in school to sitting in an office, increasing movement, or even using sit/stand desks can improve health when used regularly. Small, meaningful, and consistent changes to diet can also help reduce risk of metabolic disease. Increasing fruit and vegetables, reducing processed foods, and choosing wholemeal over 'white' grains can all support weight management, blood glucose management, and provide adequate amounts of nutrients to support all aspects of health.

"As men age, the risk for prostate problems become more and more common, and regular check-ups are strongly considered as to avoid health complications down the line. It is estimated that one in eight men will be diagnosed with some form of prostate health issue by the time they are 60 years old."

Managing nutrient needs

We all have a general requirement for nutrients, but men do have greater needs for certain ones, and very often, these can be lacking in the diet, making supplements an important addition.

Briggs recommended: "A good multivitamin and mineral should probably be the first option for male health support. This should also include B vitamins as an adequate intake of B vitamins, especially B6, B12 and folic acid, will all be useful for supporting normal homocysteine, an excess of which is associated with heart disease, cognitive impairment, and depression.

"Additional magnesium supplementation is also strongly advisable due to its association with heart health, as it can contribute to normal muscle function. Studies have found magnesium supplementation to be effective in lowering high blood pressure. This may be via several different mechanisms including the reduction of vascular stiffness, reduction of vascular resistance and lowering of circulating volume. Low magnesium status is also associated with erectile dysfunction, as magnesium is involved in the metabolism of nitric oxide, which then controls penile blood flow.

"Omega 3 fatty acids, especially EPA and DHA found in oily fish, should also be considered to support heart health. Again, NDNS data shows intake of oily fish is low in the UK and omega 3 intakes are particularly poor when compared to other fats. A combined intake of 250mg of EPA and DHA can contribute to normal heart function and an intake of 3g of these two fatty acids a day can contribute to the maintenance of normal blood pressure. Numerous studies have found a strong link between the use of fish oil and improvements in CHD mortality, and these effects may be due to several mechanisms including the reduction of inflammation and the stabilisation of cell membranes. Evidence suggested that a sufficient intake can normalise triglycerides, reduce blood pressure, reduce inflammation and reduce the formation of plaques in the arteries.

"Saw palmetto is also commonly recommended for benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) or prostate enlargement. This plant provides compounds known as beta sitosterol, which have been shown to reduce the conversion of testosterone to another androgen known as dihydrotestosterone

PRODUCT showcases

HFB's guide to the essential men's health products for your store

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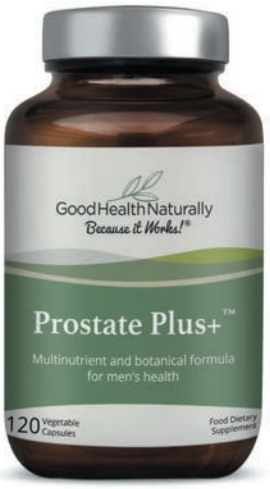
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(DHT). This is achieved by the inhibition of the enzyme, 5-alpha-reductase and beta sitosterol also appears to reduce the ability of DHT to bind to its receptors. As high DHT in adulthood is associated with an enlargement of the prostate, saw palmetto and beta sitosterols have been widely researched to help to relieve symptoms of BPH, including urinary urgency, difficulty in urination, dribbling and slow urination and nocturia."

Jordan also advised: "Low magnesium intake is linked with increased risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure and other metabolic diseases. Furthermore, magnesium plays an important role in general health as it utilised in over 300 metabolic processes in the body, including muscle function, energy production and sleep.

"Vitamin C and zinc work synergistically together with supporting the immune system. Zinc plays a very important role in male fertility as it has been shown to improve sperm health and increase testosterone levels. In addition, there is evidence to suggest that vitamin C can help support sperm health as it's a powerful antioxidant. Selenium, a trace mineral that functions as an antioxidant, helps increase sperm motility. When paired with vitamin E, this can decrease damage from free radicals and improve overall sperm health."

And Powers suggested: "From a nutrient perspective, several essential nutrients are crucial for men's overall health and wellbeing. Adequate protein intake is necessary for muscle maintenance, repair, and overall body function, especially for men who are physically active or engage in strength training. Omega 3 fatty acids support heart health, reduce inflammation, and promote brain function, which are essential for cognitive performance. Vitamin D is crucial for bone health and immune function, with many men being deficient, especially in regions with limited sunlight exposure.

"Vitamin D supplementation is important in the UK as it is challenging to get enough through sunlight exposure. Omega 3, as found in fish or krill oil supplements, are beneficial, especially if dietary sources are low. Additionally, men may consider supplementing with zinc, which plays a role in immune function, testosterone production, and reproductive health. A good men's multi can often be an excellent solution for men who like a simplified supplement routine. Plus, older men can benefit from supplements with saw palmetto, pumpkin seed extract and other botanicals, which are helpful for prostate and urinary tract health."

And Lott also recommended: "Vitamin B12 is central for the production of red blood cells and supporting the body's nerve function, maintaining healthy brain function and energy. Probiotics through diet and supplements are important for maintaining a healthy gut microbiome which plays a central role in hormone regulation, and in supporting a healthy colon.

"While a healthy, balanced diet is always the first place to start, taking a comprehensive, high quality daily multivitamin, which includes probiotics and doesn't include additives, can ensure men are receiving the essential nutrients each day to support their prostate, gut health, testosterone levels, mental performance, daily energy and immunity. A daily multivitamin can also ensure no deficiencies build up when not able to have a balanced diet, or at times of heightened stress, which can put additional demands on the body and can lead to deficiencies in key nutrients."

FOCUS ON DIET



Dietary basics are the same for men and women, but similar to nutrient needs, there are certain considerations that a male should be making.

"A healthy diet for men should include a variety of food groups," Powers explained. "Start with protein-rich foods such as lean meats like chicken, turkey, and fish and plant-based sources like legumes, tofu, and tempeh. These foods provide essential amino acids for muscle maintenance and repair, especially for physically active men.

"Additionally, incorporate plenty of fruits and vegetables of different colours to obtain a range of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and fibre crucial for overall health and disease prevention. Whole grains like brown rice, quinoa, and wholewheat bread should also be included for their fibre content, vitamins, and minerals essential for heart health and digestion.

"Healthy fats from sources like avocados, nuts, seeds, and olive oil are essential for obtaining omega 3 fatty acids, which support heart and brain health. Ensure adequate calcium and vitamin D intake through dairy products, fortified plant-based milk, leafy greens, spending time outdoors for natural vitamin D synthesis, or considering supplements if needed. Limiting sugar intake from sugary foods and drinks and reducing sodium from processed foods can help maintain overall health. Lastly, drinking water throughout the day is crucial for optimal hydration and body function."

And Briggs went on: "A Mediterranean style diet is probably one of the most relevant one for men to consider. This diet focuses on polyphenol, potassium and magnesium-rich fruits and vegetables, foods such as nuts and seeds, which contain both omega 3 and 6 fatty acids, olive oil and lean meats and oily fish, such as herring, mackerel, salmon and sardines, which are also rich in omega 3 fats. They recommend that processed foods are avoided, and the emphasis is on the consumption of fresh, unprocessed or minimally processed foods which are naturally much lower in sugar, salt and trans and hydrogenated fats. Both diets are associated with an improvement in CVD risk, with the Mediterranean diet showing reduced instances of CHD and stroke. Adherence to this diet is also associated with a decreased risk of depression, cognitive decline, obesity (especially abdominal obesity), type 2 diabetes and improvements in overall mortality.

"National Diet and Nutrition Surveys indicate that there are some nutrients which are likely to be lacking in the diets of some men. Some of the lowest intakes can be seen for vitamin A (55 per cent of men consume levels below the recommended intake), magnesium (50 per cent) and zinc (45 per cent). Zinc is well known for its effects on testosterone production, fertility (via spermatogenesis) and reproductive health. Magnesium is recognised for psychological function via its effects on the functioning of the central nervous system and can also contribute to a reduction in heart health risk factors such as blood pressure, metabolic syndrome and dyslipidemia."

Meanwhile, Jordan also suggested: "A balanced and varied diet is very important in order to get adequate intake of key nutrients for health. Increasing the amount of colour on your plate from fruits and vegetables to get your five a day at least, ideally from two fruits and three vegetables. Opting for wholemeal over refined grains will help add more nutrients to your diet as a lot of important vitamins and minerals are stripped away during the refining process. If it is not possible to eat five different fruits and vegetables per day, choosing some fortified foods, such as golden rice or some breakfast cereals may be a suitable alternative. Fortified foods provide nutrients that are either not naturally occurring or replace nutrients that were lost during the manufacturing process." hfb

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Holistic holiday prep

Whether people are jetting off abroad or holidaying in the UK, the annual summer getaway season is approaching – but what should form part of your in-store offering?

The excitement of the annual summer holiday can end up leaving people in less than good health when they finally jet off, feeling frazzled, stressed and fatigued in the race to get it all done. And with the busyness of getting ready to go away, often, people can forget that their health could do with some prep too.

This is an area health stores can do well with, given the range of solutions your shelves offer. From probiotics for tummy troubles, to supplements to ease jet lag and support immunity, through to natural sun protection, now is the time consumers are seeking holiday health products.

Adrienne Benjamin, Nutritionist at Pro-Ven Probiotics, explained: "Known as 'leisure sickness', it is common for people to get ill whilst they are on holiday. One study found that three per cent of people are likely to feel sicker at weekends and on holiday, although there is no clear explanation for the reasons this happens. Another study put the figures much higher however, reporting travellers' diarrhoea in 25.7 per cent of travellers, sunburn in 24.4 per cent and respiratory infection in 7.6 per cent. The likelihood is the figure is somewhere between these two figures and is potentially a result of the change of scenario allowing travellers to relax, giving their body a chance to 'heal' and express symptoms, such as headaches, fatigue, nausea and respiratory issues. This is also sometimes referred to as the 'let-down effect'."

Catherine Gorman, Nutritional Therapist at Good Health Naturally, added: "It seems pretty common for people to fall ill on holiday with relatively minor illnesses like upset tummies or summer colds. There often seems to come a point in the run-up to a holiday where people feel they have so much to do that they start wondering if it's even worth it. It all takes its toll and could make people more susceptible to holiday illness."

James Pugh, Nutrition Advisor at Viridian Nutrition, went on: "Falling ill on holiday is common, particularly in hot climates, high altitudes, and different cultural foods. Many of us can be unprepared when travelling abroad as we underestimate the impact of different environments on our health. Exposure to new food, drink and warmer weather can cause illnesses for people on holiday. It is more common in children and those with weakened immune systems."

Issues to prepare for

There are many different ailments that can be common on holiday, and prepping before people go, along with packing the right health essentials, is important.

In terms of the most common issues shoppers will be seeking support for, Gorman advised: "Often, holiday destinations are a lot hotter than the UK, so adapting to warmer climates can be a problem. Soaring temperatures can cause excessive sweating, cramping, dehydration, sunburn and heat stroke. Where there is heat, there can be rashes too, often caused by clogged-up sweat ducts. Puffy feet and ankles are another common problem in warmer weather, as heat can trigger fluid retention, especially if people are a little dehydrated.

"Watch out for insects too, especially midges and mosquitos which can both cause itchy misery. If travelling by plane, the whole experience can be stressful, flying is often exhausting, and uncomfortable seats, with recycled air zapping energy, drying out skin, and causing dehydration. Plus, if you are switching time zones, jet lag can be a problem for the first few days of the trip. Sitting in such close proximity to other passengers on a plane, coach or train means bugs and germs can be easily spread."

Keri Briggs, Senior Brand Specialist at Lamberts, added: "One of the common issues when traveling is stomach or digestive upsets, which is often called travellers' diarrhoea. It is estimated that between 30-70 per cent of those travelling abroad will experience this issue, and this affects 12 million people per year. It is normally caused by bacteria such as *E. coli, camphylobacter* or *salmonella*, and viruses such as rotavirus or parasites. The main symptom is diarrhoea, with stomach cramping and nausea in some cases.

"Unsurprisingly, sunburn is one of the top holiday complaints, whether travelling in the UK or abroad; 46 per cent of those travelling outside the UK get sunburnt, according to a survey conducted by the British Association of Dermatologists. But even in the UK, over 30 per cent of people got sunburn, and we are less likely to use any kind of suncream when holidaying in the UK. Incorrect use of sun cream is also a huge factor – applying less than is recommended and less frequently, using expired products or the incorrect sun protection factor (SPF) often means that we are poorly protected from this painful condition."

And what kind of prep could you be advising your customers of before they head off?

"It can be useful to 'prepare' for a holiday in a number of ways, spending more time outside, exposing our skin to the sun, getting adequate rest and sleep if you are travelling to a different time zone and introducing practices to support digestion and ensure regular bowel movements. These can include light exercise, eating regularly, drinking lots of water and introducing some gut-supporting supplements, particularly daily probiotics at least a week before travel," Benjamin advised.

Gorman went on: "Make sure the immune system is in tip-top condition, so you have a fighting chance of avoiding getting sick. Eat plenty of foods rich in vitamin C, zinc and selenium like citrus fruits, red bell peppers, broccoli, spinach, seafood, egg yolk, whole grains, nuts, pumpkin and sunflower seeds. Strengthening immunity will also help protect against allergens like hay fever.

"Don't forget, that around 70 per cent of our immune system is located in the digestive tract. To support the gut, make sure the diet includes plenty of fibre and prebiotic foods such as artichokes. A



A HEALTHY HOLIDAY ROUTINE

When people are on holiday, sticking to a healthy approach is a good recommendation to make.

Briggs explained: "Many people find they overdo food and drink on holiday, which can lead to indigestion, nausea and weight gain. Most nutritionists try to encourage the 80:20 rule – with 80 per cent of what you eat being nutrient dense foods such as lean meats, fish and proteins, fruits, vegetables and wholegrains, with 20 per cent less healthy options. Eating pro and prebiotic foods such as onions, chicory, garlic and yogurts may be useful for encouraging good bacteria. Having 30 different plant-based foods a week can also help to create a diverse gut microbiome, which may reduce the risk of any pathogenic bacteria colonising the gut."

Gorman went on: "Holidays often mean indulging in rich food, with beers or glasses of wine in the sunshine. It is important to support the liver so it can cope with this extra burden. Eat plenty of cruciferous vegetables such as cabbage, broccoli and kale, alliums (onions, garlic, leeks), vitamin C-rich food like oranges and red peppers, plus asparagus, avocado, nuts especially walnuts, legumes and beans. If travelling to warmer climates, antioxidants such as vitamins C and E, and polyphenols may help protect skin from UV damage caused by sun exposure, and assist in healing skin afterwards. Tomatoes and watermelon provide lycopene, which can mitigate the harmful effects of UV light. Red grapes contain resveratrol, a beneficial antioxidant polyphenol which protects skin. Ellagic acid in raspberries, strawberries, cranberries, and pomegranates can help repair skin damage following sun exposure."

Pugh added: "Astaxanthin, which gives food its pink pigment, is known to protect skin against sun damage and help retain moisture so consuming foods rich in this nutrient, such as salmon and prawns, will help protect us from sun-induced skin damage. Consuming this nutrient, alongside other antioxidant carotenoids will not only help protect us from the sun, but also from illness."

Benjamin went on: "Focus on eating healthily – eat lots of fibre to help keep your bowels moving. Include vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, beans and healthy fats and protein. And don't over-eat. Avoid local water - drink only bottled or boiled water and be aware of ice in drinks. Local water can include bacteria our body is not used to and ingesting them can lead to digestive issues. Limit alcohol and caffeine intake – this can help avoid dehydration and constipation. Caffeine and alcohol can speed up digestion and lead to diarrhoea."

healthy gut microbiome plays an important role in regulating the immune system so that it can respond to infections and even allergens. Increasing the diversity of 'good' bacteria is vital. Research shows probiotics can reduce the risk of traveller's diarrhoea by 15 per cent and help with constipation and bloating. Start taking probiotics at least a week before travel."

In-store selection

When it comes to specific product recommendations for your customers, there is a wide range to keep in mind and probiotics will be among the most important.

Briggs advised: "Taking a good probiotic prior to travelling has been widely investigated for this issue and a meta-analysis of 12 studies showed that a variety of probiotics, including *Lactobacillus acidophilus, Lactobacillus rhamnosus* and *Saccharomyces boulardii* prevented 85 per cent of cases of traveller's diarrhoea. *Sacchaomyces boulardii* is a particularly useful product to consider as it is often room temperature stable, making it ideal for travelling as it does not require refrigeration. It has also been shown to reduce the incidence of traveller's diarrhoea by over 20 per cent if used just prior to, and during travel."

Benjamin went on: "Taking live bacteria (probiotic) supplements helps to maintain healthy bacterial balance and they have been shown in research to offer a safe and effective way of helping to prevent traveller's diarrhoea. They help to reduce the ability of toxins to attach to the gut wall, support immunity through supporting microbiome balance and helping to maintain a balanced microbiome.

"As well as probiotics, there are a number of other supplements that can help to support healthy bowel habits and to support overall health. Magnesium helps to calm the nervous system and is also a muscle relaxant so can help with constipation. Prebiotics help to feed the beneficial bacteria in our guts to support digestion and digestive enzymes help to break down the food in our digestive system."

Gorman also suggested: "A good multivitamin and mineral can be helpful to ensure you are getting all the nutrients you need on a daily basis, as sometimes food choices can be limited, or we find ourselves indulging in less healthy options because we are on holiday. Travelling between different time zones can disrupt our natural circadian rhythm, causing sleep disruption and fatigue. To help promote a good night's sleep and get yourself back on track, consider supplementing with calming and relaxing magnesium or L-theanine. If you are travelling to warmer countries or are particularly prone to sunburn, supplementing with astaxanthin could be a good option. This powerful antioxidant is believed to protect the skin from UV damage."

Pugh also recommended: "The warmer temperatures will cause us to sweat more, causing loss of salts. It may be a good idea to take an electrolyte supplement, as well as drinking plenty of fluid, to replenish salts we lose from sweating and prevent bad dehydration side effects. Bitters such as gentian naturally stimulates the digestive system to prepare it for food. When taken with peppermint, this can help to add a softening effect on the stomach. Many people when on holiday increase their alcohol intake, therefore some additional liver support can be beneficial. A popular supplement for this is milk thistle, which is often used for liver detoxification.

"Some of us can be nervous flyers or anxious when in different environments and cultures. Taking some herbal extracts which have a calming effect can help to control these symptoms. L-theanine and lemon balm is a popular combination used for anxiety and feelings of stress. Many often feel nausea when travelling, a solution for this would be to take ginger, which not only has anti-nausea properties but also antibiotic."

You might also want to consider immune support, both before and during a break.

Briggs added: "Studies show that a sufficient level of vitamin D is essential for the production of anti-microbial peptides and has significant effects on the production, maturation and regulation of immune cells including T-regulatory cells, often due to the presence of vitamin D receptors (VDR) in these cells. Zinc is considered to be relevant for the immune system to function normally.

"There are also several herbs and other nutrients which can support immune function in various ways. Perhaps the best known is echinacea, which has been shown in repeated trials to reduce the duration and severity of the common cold. Beta glucans are a group of naturally occurring compounds. It is the form β-1,3/1,6 glucans which have been most widely studied and the effects on the immune system are multiple."

Pugh added: "Elderberry is a popular supplement as it is a rich source of vitamin C too. This can come in the form of a spray or a liquid, so it is easy to consume. This fruit has been shown to reduce the risk of infection or illness when flying."

> "Understanding SPF is vital as many people do not understand which option to choose."



Sun protection education

It's also critical to educate shoppers around what they need for safe sun care.

"Understanding SPF is vital as many people do not understand which option to choose. SPF will indicate how well a suncream will protect you from sunburn: for example, if you would normally burn in two minutes unprotected, an SPF of 30 will increase this time to 60 minutes and an SPF of 50 will increase it to 100 minutes," Briggs advised.

"However, this only works if the cream is applied in sufficient amounts with the current recommendation from both the FDA in the US and COLIPA (The European Cosmetic and Perfumery Association) is a thickness 2 mg/cm2 or two tablespoons for the whole body and face. Multiple studies as well as anecdotal evidence shows that this recommendation is rarely followed, with most people only using a quarter to half of this amount. This can reduce a cream with an SPF of 15 to as little as SPF 3-5. Poor application and failing to reapply regularly or after swimming and drying can also make painful sunburn more likely.

"A good cooling after sun, with aloe vera is often recommended. Supplements can also be of some benefit but need to be taken prior to travelling. Several different plant compounds, including carotenoids and flavonoids such as those found in green tea, seem to be useful for reducing sun damage, both long-term issues and shorter-term sunburn. The use of carotenoids such as beta-carotene and lutein have been shown to reduce UV-induced erythema of the skin.

"Other studies have shown that polyphenols from green tea and grapeseed have similar photoprotective effects can also reduce inflammation and act as antioxidants, reducing the overall damage that excessive sun exposure can cause. A combination of grapeseed, bilberry, lutein and green tea taken orally has shown the equivalent of an SPF of 10 after 12 weeks and SPF 15 after 24 weeks of use."

HOMEOPATHIC CHOICE

A gentle product recommendation, there are a great many homeopathic remedies that are useful for holiday – and they are easy to pack.

Paula Dowson, Homeopath at Helios, advised: "Homeopathic remedies can be extremely effective in aiding the symptoms of the most common ailments that we may experience when away. There are many remedies that could be very useful in the treatment of the ailments:

- **Arsenicum/Arg-nit/Aconite:** This is a fantastic and commonly used combination of remedies for stress and anxiety. It is therefore a great remedy for anyone feeing stressed in the run up to a holiday or for fear of flying.
- **China:** Helps restore fluid balance after diarrhoea or vomiting.
- **Arnica:** Number one remedy for bruises and minor injuries. It is often used alongside Rhus Tox and Ruta, especially when an injury involves tendons and ligaments too. Arnica can also be an effective remedy to help with the effects of jetlag.
- **Apis:** For bites and stings where there is much redness and swelling.
- **Urtica urens**: For allergic reactions to insect bites and stings with pricking and burning pains with itching.
- **Cocculus:** One of the top remedies for travel sickness. Symptoms include nausea, vomiting and dizziness. Also useful for insomnia from jetlag.
- **Hypericum and calendula cream:** Known for its antiseptic and pain relieving quality, this topical application is traditionally used to treat cuts, grazes, bites and stings." hfb

PRODUCT showcases

HFB's guide to the essential holiday health products for your store

HAY FEVER? DUST OR PET ALLERGY?



June is peak hay fever season. HayMax is the original, 100% natural prevention for hay fever sufferers. The organic drug-free allergen barrier balm is proven in university studies to trap over 1/3 of pollen before it enters the body. 80% said HayMax works! A winner of over 60 awards, including a BOOM award and a second Global 100 Award. Suitable for children and adults, including pregnant and breast-feeding mums, drivers and machine operators. HayMax Triple Tins and HayMax Frankincense remain exclusive to independent retailers – with the Triple Tins 3 for 2 offer margin maintained. Certified organic and Vegetarian Society approved.
www.haymax.biz

STRESS FREE TRAVEL FROM HELIOS



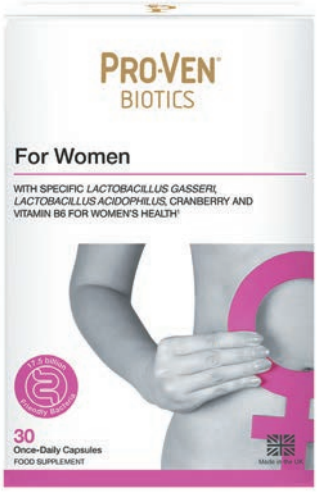
Award winning Stress Relief from Helios Homeopathy contains three homeopathic remedies, Aconite, Arg nit and Arsenicum. This combination has a long history of traditional use for all manner of symptoms associated with stress and anxiety, such as fear of crowded places and especially fear of flying. Helios Stress Relief comes in organic, sucrose pill form in our easy-to-use, single dose dispenser. For more information on our range of combination remedies covering childhood teething, fevers and earache, hay fever, injuries and sleep please contact us.
www.helios.co.uk

FINALIST AT AWARDS



Salt of the Earth's latest launch – the Clary Sage and Mint deodorant range – was a finalist at this year's Organic and Natural Innovation Awards. With its beautiful fragrance and its carefully selected ingredients, this deodorant doesn't only smell great, but it has specifically been created to help with the effects of menopausal sweating. Clary sage is known for its calming effect on body and mind, whilst mint brings a cooling and refreshing touch.
www.saltoftheearthnatural.com

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Questions about conception

With at least one in six people estimated to be having problems conceiving, and with many dietary and lifestyle factors involved, health food stores can offer a critical helping hand to support male and female fertility.

There are a range of factors involved in fertility issues these days, and the problems can involve both the man and woman. While getting to the root of the problems can be difficult, what isn't in doubt is fertility issues appear to be much more prevalent in modern society.

The reasons for such a rise are varied, but could certainly include our modern lifestyles, the fact couples are having children later in life, and perhaps the fact that more couples are seeking medical help than they would have generations ago.

Of course, there is a key role for conventional medicine in the area of fertility but first and foremost, both the man and woman need to be focusing on their own health, and a big part of this is around their nutrition, ensuring they are getting adequate levels of key fertility nutrients. And this means there is a clear role for health stores to play in both educating and recommending the most appropriate and researched supplements.

Keri Briggs, Senior Brand Specialist at Lamberts, advised: "It is estimated that one in seven couples in the UK will have problems with infertility, which is widely accepted to be a failure to conceive after one year of unprotected sex if the woman or conceiving partner is under 35 or six months if they are older. Data from NICE suggests that there has been a slight increase in the prevalence of infertility, which may be partially due to increases in those seeking help for these issues."

Alice Bradshaw, Head of Nutrition Education and Information at Terranova, added: "With an estimated one in six couples finding it difficult to conceive, fertility issues are more common now than in recent history. According to the British Fertility Society, approximately 30 per cent of fertility problems are due to the woman, 30 per cent due to the man, and 30 to 40 per cent to both or to unknown causes. It is estimated that around 80 per cent of couples will conceive within a year of trying for a baby, but this figure declines with age. After the woman reaches the age of 35, it may take longer and become more difficult to become pregnant within this time frame. The effect of ageing on men's fertility is not as clear cut."

Will Jordan, Nutrition Advisor at Viridian Nutrition, also advised: "Infertility is defined as failure to achieve clinical conception in 12 months or more of regular unprotected sexual intercourse and is suggested to affect between 15-25 per cent of Western couples. In the 1950s, the worldwide average of children per woman was five in a lifetime, but in 2020, the average has fallen to two children, according to the United Nations.

"There are several reasons that factor into increased rates of infertility such as significant lifestyle and diet changes now compared to 50 years ago. Lower amounts of physical activity and increased rates of obesity in the population have negatively impacted fertility rates. Socioeconomic factors such as cost of living and employment opportunities have been pushing couples to start



THE SCIENCE AROUND FERTILITY

While not offering a biology lesson, it's important that people understand the issues that can contribute to fertility problems, in respect of both man and woman.

Bradshaw advised: "Although there are numerous physiological factors contributing to infertility, such as low sperm count, body weight imbalances, failure to ovulate and hormone imbalances, it is thought that our modern, fast paced living may also be affecting our ability to conceive. Eating on the run, poor nutrition, lack of exercise, poor sleep and stress management and our over-reliance on technology are some factors that throw our bodies out of balance."

And Jordan continued: "When infertility was investigated, it was evident that female infertility contributes to 35 per cent of overall infertility cases, 20 per cent of cases are related to both women and men, 30 per cent involve problems only on the part of men, whereas 15 per cent of infertility cases remain unexplained. Common causes included lack of regular ovulation, poor semen quality, blocked or damaged fallopian tubes and endometriosis so it is fair to say that it is both a male and female issue.

"Obesity is said to cause approximately six per cent of infertility, as unfortunately data shows that individuals with a BMI greater than 30 have up to 68 per cent less chance to have a live birth following their first assisted reproductive technology compared to women with lower BMIs. Equally, low BMI and underweight individuals are suggested to be associated with lower pregnancy rates also. In addition to this, regular exercise has been found to increase general health and a reduction in risk of ovulatory infertility.

"The western diet predisposes to bodyweight gain and obesity and is linked to mitochondrial dysfunction, oxidative damage, inflammation, and multisystem disease, which can affect the reproductive organs and impact fertility and pregnancy outcomes. The western diet tends to be high in refined grains, processed foods, and sugars, and low in healthy fats, which can lead to inadequate nutrition and therefore fertility issues in both males and females."

Briggs went on: "Infertility can be primary (difficulty conceiving with no prior pregnancies) or secondary (difficulty conceiving after a previous pregnancy). There are numerous potential causes of infertility, and two thirds will originate with just one partner, with a final third relating to issues with both. Causes include disorders with ovulation, damage to fallopian tubes, conditions affecting the uterus or peritoneal disorders, male infertility and unexplained infertility.

"One of the main identifiable causes of infertility in women is polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS). This is a condition where the ovaries become enlarged and develop many follicles or cysts. PCOS inhibits the ability of the follicles to release eggs and one in 10 women in the UK are affected by PCOS. Initial changes in hormones related to anovulation can then cause an increase in androgens. This can trigger increased insulin production and insulin resistance, which in turn can stimulate androgen production, making conception more difficult.

"There is also evidence to suggest that some lifestyle and environmental factors may be responsible for issues with fertility. These include obesity, which has been linked to lower sperm counts and decreased motility of sperm in men and ovulation issues and a higher rate of miscarriage in women.

"Lifestyle factors such as smoking and the use of drugs, both recreational and prescribed, can also affect fertility and the ability to conceive. Smoking affects both male and female fertility, reducing sperm count and motility, reducing ovarian reserve and disrupting hormones such as follicle stimulating hormone (which allows egg development and ovulation) and progesterone (which prepares the uterus for a fertilised egg and supports pregnancy after implantation). A wide variety of drugs, including cannabis, antibiotics, blood pressure medications and non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs) can also have effects on a number of areas associated with fertility, including sperm production and motility, ovulation and hormone regulation and function."

families later in life, which can reduce the chances of conception. Lifestyle choices such as smoking, alcohol and caffeine consumption, and recreational drug use has all been shown to impact fertility rates. Limited diets and increased amounts of ultra-processed foods commonly found in the western diet have led to nutrient deficiencies which can also impact chances of conception."

The conception plan

When it comes to diet, there are some obvious changes both sexes need to make to ensure they are getting an adequate intake of fertility-friendly nutrients.

"Nutrition also plays a key role in fertility, with several nutrients being strongly associated with improved outcomes when trying to conceive," Briggs explained. "A Mediterranean style diet is probably one of the most relevant. It focuses on polyphenol-rich fruits and vegetables, foods such as nuts and seeds, which contain both omega 3 and 6 fatty acids, olive oil and lean meats and oily fish, such as herring, mackerel, salmon, and sardines which are also rich in omega 3 fats. They recommend that processed foods are avoided, and the emphasis is on the consumption of fresh, unprocessed, or minimally processed foods which are naturally much lower in sugar, salt, and trans and hydrogenated fats. Close adherence to this type of diet is associated with improvements in body weight and metabolic issues as well as increases in fertility and better outcomes in assisted reproductive techniques (ART).

"Conversely, a typical Western style diet, which is lower in fruits, vegetables, fish, and unrefined grains and higher in refined carbohydrates, sugars, junk foods and red and processed meats has been associated with infertility, an increased time to become pregnant and alterations in hormones. This type of diet is also associated with specific changes in semen quality and sperm count and quality, which is likely due to the proinflammatory nature of the diet, increases in oxidative stress linked to poor intake of antioxidants as well as the dearth of some nutrients in highly processed foods."

Jordan agreed, adding: "The Mediterranean diet should be adopted by both the future mother and father as the diet is rich in omega 3 fatty acids, plant-based proteins and vitamin and mineral dense vegetables which have a positive impact on both male and female fertility. It has been found to improve sperm quality and increased possibilities of better pregnancy outcomes. DHA, a type of omega 3 fatty acid, choline, and iodine all play a key role in baby brain development, so it is important to have safe intakes at least three months prior to conceiving.

"Reducing intake of ultra processed foods has been found to reduce the risk of infertility, gestational diabetes, and preeclampsia. Ultra processed foods are proinflammatory and elevate insulin levels, which may disrupt reproductive hormones, which can affect ovulation

"Xenoestrogens are environmental oestrogens that can make their way into food and water supplies. These chemicals have been shown to disrupt endocrine and hormonal balance and possibly lead to fertility issues such as sperm abnormalities and oestrogen imbalances."



in women and sperm production in men. Eating whole grains, such as wholemeal bread and pastas, healthy fats from oily fish and fruits such as avocados, and proteins. Eating at least five fruits and vegetables per day is also very important as it provides the body with a wide range of vitamins and minerals."

Bradshaw also suggested: "Foods can either positively or negatively affect fertility. Alcohol consumption is associated with low sperm count in men and a lower rate of conception in women. Xenoestrogens are environmental oestrogens that can make their way into food and water supplies. They can be found in tap water, food and drink stored in plastic and pesticides and herbicides. These chemicals have been shown to disrupt endocrine and hormonal balance and possibly lead to fertility issues such as sperm abnormalities and oestrogen imbalances. A high caffeine intake is associated with reduced fertility, so couples should be mindful of their intake of coffee, green tea, soft drinks and chocolate. Avoiding dietary sources of free radicals, saturated fats and trans fats will also help to maximise fertility.

"In a recent study, it was shown that a Mediterranean-style diet was best for those looking to enhance fertility. Such a diet would be rich in whole plant foods, fresh fruit, vegetables, oily fish, olive oil, nuts and seeds and devoid of the excess sugars, refined carbohydrates, and caffeine containing beverages that are abundant in many Western diets. Making dietary changes, along with adopting healthy habits such as keeping active and minimising stress, can be supportive to enhancing fertility."

In-store support

When making recommendations for supplements, it's key to focus on the nutrients that are well-researched for being important for fertility. This is particularly important given how much misinformation there can be across social media and faddy products can often be recommended, targeting a more vulnerable consumer. So, what to recommend?

Bradshaw advised: "There are many nutrients that are involved in optimising fertility for both men and women. Essential fatty acids, particularly omega 3, zinc and vitamin E, are nutrients that may be deficient in those struggling to conceive.

"The B vitamins are important during conception, but one in particular is absolutely essential for any woman planning a pregnancy. Vitamin B9 or folic acid should be taken by any woman at least three months prior to planning to conceive, right up to the third or fourth month of pregnancy. This is needed to help ensure the proper development of the nervous system and specifically to prevent spina bifida and ensure a healthy birth weight. Research has shown that calcium L-methylfolate is a more bioavailable form of this B vitamin, which

PRODUCT showcases

HFB's guide to the essential fertility products for your store

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www.laneshealth.com

*BlueIron contains naturally-sourced Nordic blueberries for flavour plus Iron which contributes to the reduction of tiredness and fatigue. Food supplements should not be used as a substitute for a varied and balanced diet and healthy lifestyle. substitute

TERRANOVA PRENATAL MULTIVITAMIN COMPLEX

Terranova Prenatal Multivitamin Complex is a comprehensive vitamin and mineral complex that's been formulated for women who are planning on getting pregnant, are already pregnant and for breastfeeding mothers. Contains a high amount of necessary vitamins for pre-, post- and during pregnancy such as folate, calcium and vitamin E. Made from all natural antioxidant rich superfoods and botanicals. Highly bioavaliable, synergistic complex of botanicals and superfoods. Gluten, dairy and soy-free. Suitable for vegetarians and vegans.
www.terranovahealth.com





is why it's often used in supplements (rather than folic acid)."

Briggs continued: "There are several nutritional interventions which may be useful for improving outcomes. A multivitamin and mineral would be an excellent starting point as several of the B vitamins, B6, B12 and folic acid, are associated with a lower homocysteine level. Raised homocysteine is associated with recurrent miscarriage, can affect the interaction between oocyte and sperm and increases oxidative stress, which can affect fertility. It can also disrupt the processes in the body which influence sperm production. Vitamin D status is also associated with improved results with assisted reproductive techniques (ART) and deficiency has been tentatively linked to endometriosis and supplementation may improve endometrial tissue. Deficiency in men is associated with poorer sperm motility. Other nutrients linked to fertility include:

- **Vitamin A** – linked to egg quality.
- **Folate** – linked to egg quality and maturation, fertilisation, and implantation.
- **Zinc** – associated with normal ovulation and normal sperm production, motility, and viability.
- **Selenium** – inadequate levels associated with lower rate of implantation. Also essential for sperm production.
- **Antioxidants and zinc, copper, and manganese** (involved in SOD) linked to oxidative stress, which can be associated with infertility.

"CoQ10 is another nutrient which is frequently used for fertility issues. It acts as an antioxidant and is required by every cell of the body for normal mitochondrial function and energy production. CoQ10 status decreases as we age and is associated with ovarian ageing and decreases in fertility in the 30s. CoQ10 supplementation may protect ovarian reserves, reduce ovarian ageing, and can improve response to ART. It has been shown to improve oocyte and embryo quality in those with low ovarian reserves and increases rates of clinical pregnancy in women with infertility undergoing ART. In men, CoQ10 is linked closely to semen quality and sperm motility, again due to its role in energy production and as an antioxidant."

If we place the focus on male fertility, there are also a range of considerations to make here.

"Several amino acids have also been associated with male fertility, including L-carnitine and N-acetyl cysteine (NAC). L-carnitine has a significant role in energy as it transports fatty acids into the mitochondria of the cells. This therefore means that it plays a role in the production, maturation, and motility of sperm. NAC has a significant antioxidant effect and is associated with improving sperm count and modulating hormones such as testosterone," Briggs explained.

And when looking at PCOS and the support to recommend to women, Briggs also advised: "As one of the key issues in PCOS is the two-way relationship between insulin and androgens, breaking the cycle where both are overproduced and affect the over-production of the other, is important. Myo-inositol has been shown to play a role in insulin signalling and studies suggest that supplementation with myo-inositol can improve menstrual regularity, support weight loss, improve follicle maturation and reduce androgen levels. The dose can vary but a level of 4g daily would be recommended for PCOS related issues," she recommended.

"Several vitamins, including vitamins D and K, have also been shown to be useful for PCOS; 67-85 per cent of women with PCOS are deficient in vitamin D and this can exacerbate symptoms such as menstrual and ovulatory irregularities, high androgen levels and infertility. Vitamin E has also been shown to influence PCOS symptoms, including menstrual irregularities."

Jordan also recommended: "Both men and women should consider supplementing omega 3, either plant-based or marine-sourced, and ideally choose an organic product to ensure its high quality and sustainable. Omega 3 has been associated with aiding hormone regulation in women, which is essential for ovulation and improved quality in men.

"Vitamin D plays a prominent role throughout the development stage of fertilisation, continuing through each stage of pregnancy. Women with low vitamin D status have been linked with an increased risk of infertility. It is recommended between the end of September to the start of April everyone should supplement 400-1000IU (10-25mcg) of vitamin D to maintain healthy levels as we cannot produce it in our skin through the autumn and winter months.

"L-Carnitine, an amino acid with antioxidant properties, has been suggested to be a general therapy for male infertility. L-Carnitine is known to increase fatty acid transport, which is required for sperm energy production. In addition to this, additional antioxidant supplementation, such as grape seed extract, should be considered as it can protect sperm from oxidative stress. Selenium has been shown to increase sperm motility and improve function, which can increase the chances of conception, and zinc is an antioxidant element which also protects sperm from oxidative stress and contributes to improving sperm count and quality."

THE EFFECT OF MODERN LIVING

There are certain aspects of modern society that can be detrimental to fertility and these are important to change ahead of trying for a baby.

Jordan advised: "Reducing stress in our lifestyle, either from work or other external factors can significantly help improve fertility. Decreasing anxiety and depression symptoms has also been associated with higher pregnancy rates. Increasing physical activity, from resistance training to just walking more each day, and reducing sedentary behaviours may improve fertility in women. This can help maintain or achieve a healthy body weight. However, a balance must be found as over training and not allowing rest can inhibit ovulation.

"Alcohol consumption is widely accepted to negatively impact fertility in males and females. There is no 'safe dose' of alcohol that can be consumed when trying to conceive or during pregnancy as it has been found to negatively impact every stage, from implantation to birth. For males, alcohol consumption and abuse can reduce sperm quality and count through decreased testosterone production. Smoking is known to have a plethora of negative health effects, one of which is impacting hormone production, which can harm the reproductive system in both males and females. In males, smoking can damage the DNA in sperm and hinder sperm production and in females, it can reduce egg numbers and quality."

Bradshaw added: "The most obvious is cleaning up the diet and avoiding alcohol, excessive caffeine and recreational drugs (including cigarettes). Keeping fit with regular activity will be beneficial in not only the pre-conceptual period, but also throughout pregnancy and beyond. Staying within a healthy weight range will also benefit both parents to be and increase the likelihood of a healthy pregnancy. Trying for a baby can be stressful, so it's important to be mindful of managing stress levels and getting adequate 'down-time' and rest.

"Some tips specifically for men include avoiding tight underwear and hot tubs/hot baths etc. It's been shown that sperm counts are higher when genitals are kept at cooler temperatures. It's also thought that sperm counts may be higher in the morning, so this might be a better time to attempt to conceive if possible. There is a research study that suggests that having a mobile phone switched on in a trouser pocket can significantly lower sperm counts and risk reducing fertility, so that's something to also take into consideration." **hfb**

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RETAIL EXPERT
TIM RADLEY

We can no longer rely on lower inflation and more disposable income to bring our customers back

In a bi-monthly column for *Health Food Business*, retail expert, **Tim Radley**, will offer his insights and advice. This issue, he focuses on falling inflation and how independent retailers can drive their business.

Let us hope that the predictions of lower inflation and reduced interest rates have become a reality by the time this article is printed. The omens are good.

In the traditional cycle of things, our customers regularly go through times of financial hardship and relative freedom to spend. It is just a matter of managing our own retail businesses across our own cycles of sales and profits. When the economic sunshine finally comes out then our customers will return and begin spending more with us once again. And so, we hope again.

Of course, people with more money in their pockets is good for business. Their increased spending is good for the wider economy, however, sadly, this does not mean that this will automatically reflect in our own shop economics anymore. The reason, and the difference, is that we are all now operating in saturated markets.

Customers are not short of choices of where to buy. Digital commerce now means that there are more 'retailers' to choose from than ever before. And in the physical world, the emergence of pop-ups and more flexible rental agreements means that new physical shops can appear on any high street like new shoots after the storm.

So, how can we ensure that when customers are ready to spend, they spend with us? The answer is about having a unique and distinct proposition. It is about being authentic and genuine. But even then, in this world of deafening choices, it is about being noticed and appreciated. And that is about creating loyalty.

I was recently at the Retail Technology show in London and listened to speakers in the food and healthcare sector talking marketing. On the one side were voices passionate about the need to build genuine loyalty with customers, whilst others were equally enthusiastic about promotions and price reductions to drive footfall and sales.

For some, the decision is a no-brainer. Promotions work, and they work quickly. Of course, promotions lose margin, but they drive sales volume, which is all important. On the other hand, building genuine and lasting loyalty takes time, and it is complicated. It requires an omni-channel approach where trust is gained through integrated actions ranging from dedicated product developments and innovations, customer-centric services, community interaction, and shop experiences based on creating quality personal time.

Building loyalty requires patience, commitment, and generosity of spirit. For some businesses and owners, this is simply not an attractive option. But the dangers of a purely promotional approach are written large on every shuttered shop on the high street, and in the stories of both familiar and new brands that are increasingly closing their businesses.

Promotions can easily descend into a spiral of ever-increasing reductions, which in turn have increasingly less impact on generating sales. Margin is lost without the compensation of increased volume. If price is the only weapon you have in a fiercely competitive brand landscape, then there is only one end to these stories.

Of course, the answer is to have a combination of marketing that builds brand authenticity, integrity, and differentiation, as well as sensible promotions that drive sales.

I am reminded of a conversation with a very major healthcare retailer about the choices of promotional mechanisms from BOGOF to mix and match and everything in-between. My conclusion was that it is a fine line in customer perception between promotions where the customer thinks the retailer is doing them a favour if they buy, or in fact they are doing the retailer a favour if they buy.

That is the key to successful promotions. They must be based in a wider brand story of customer appreciation, care, and a commitment to a long-term future together.

So, how do customers view your promotions? As self-interested sales opportunities, or as rewards towards a long and healthy relationship. The answer will largely define whether the refreshing proposition of customers with pockets full of disposable income will empty them into your tills, or into someone else's.



TIM RADLEY is a retail consultant with 30 years' experience. He has worked with retail companies on a wide variety of strategic and operational projects, from back-end product development to front-end customer experience. His role has always been to introduce 'new' retail thinking and processes, to improve both the financial performance KPIs, and the human experiences of retail businesses. In 2007, Tim set up VM-Unleashed to create a company that specialises in developing world-class customer experiences in physical and digital shops. He collaborates internationally as Director of Retail Experience at Ispira, in Italy, and with agencies throughout Europe. Tim is a popular and well-regarded speaker, presenting at retail conferences across the globe and is a judge on the VM&RD Retail Design Awards panel for Asia. He advises, lectures and collaborates on student courses with the LCF (London College of Fashion,) Leeds Beckett University and other colleges.



HEALTH STORES IRELAND UPDATE
ALAN MCGRATH

Some green shoots but the battle for a more sustainable business landscape continues

Alan McGrath, National Organiser for Health Stores Ireland, discusses the critical need for government strategy to support small and medium-sized businesses.

The Irish small and medium business community is vigorously lobbying political representatives to improve trading conditions for small enterprises and achieve a fair and sustainable business environment. While retailers who applied for the new Increase Cost of Business grants will receive up to 50 per cent of their annual rates bill back in cash, the issues surrounding escalating labour and social costs still demand attention.

There is a mounting concern that the shift of social responsibility from the government to small businesses is fostering an unsustainable environment. The transition towards a national living wage is something that all members support in principle, but the mechanics involved could inadvertently destabilise the business landscape, rendering it unsustainable for small family-run concerns.

Ireland has, by EU standards, an abnormally high proportion of high-flying international corporations that skew the median wage to which the proposed living wage is to be benchmarked.

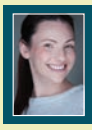
Although the term 'holistic' is often overused and abused, it must be central to all future employment and social policy; otherwise, Irish median-paid workers won't have a coffee shop to meet their friends or a home to entertain their families. Small and medium-sized businesses account for 60 per cent of total employment, and a strategy that doesn't support this sector is doomed to fail.

Supply chain disruptions and increasing costs are compelling retailers to seek new brand alternatives. Manufacturers who fail to maintain efficient production and delivery times risk losing their place within the sector. It has been well-documented that impending price hikes due to climate change and geopolitical issues, specifically for ingredients like cocoa and sugar, are already impacting consumers. As a result, many retailers are returning to the drawing board to seek more affordable and sustainable alternatives.

The request from retailers to producers is straightforward: create a sustainable supply chain policy, share it with us, and apply the necessary measures to ensure continuity. Yes, there will be shocks and disruptions, but Irish retailers and their dedicated suppliers are often frustrated by a lack of planning and a failure to recognise changing regulatory demands. A fast-acting indigenous manufacturing sector will step in swiftly when 'big brands' fail to plan or overstate their own importance to the market.

New store openings and relocations in Dublin, Cork, and Tullamore have reminded us that change is the only constant. While there has been no overall increase in the number of health food stores operating in Ireland, and it has been evident for some time that we may have reached an upper sustainable threshold in store numbers, opportunities for new openings are still presenting themselves as demographics change and the constant ebb and flow of circumstance continues.

Colleagues in health food retail are wishing continued success to Aideen and Kieran Hurley with Evergreen's new state-of-the-art fulfilment centre, training rooms and company HQ, the Philpot family in Cork with their new city centre Here's Health Café/Store, Licorice Healthfoods with their new outlet in Tullamore, and Garrett and his team at Health Matters with their Dublin city centre store relocation to the iconic Stephen's Green Shopping Centre.



Vicinity
Sophie Carrick

Harnessing chatbots: Revolutionising customer service in e-commerce

In a regular column for *Health Food Business*, **Sophie Carrick**, Marketing and Business Development Manager at the retail app, Vicinity, formerly known as LoyalFree, explains advances in technology to support your e-commerce operation.

In the dynamic world of e-commerce, where convenience and efficiency reign supreme, integrating cutting-edge technologies is no longer an option but a necessity. One that has been reshaping the landscape of customer service is chatbots. These AI-powered assistants are not just a trendy addition, they are indispensable tools for providing exceptional customer service in today's fast-paced digital marketplace. Chatbots offer a myriad of benefits to e-commerce businesses, from streamlining customer enquiries to enhancing the overall shopping experience. Here's how incorporating chatbots can revolutionise your customer service strategy and drive success in your e-commerce venture.

Instant support

Chatbots excel in providing instant support around the clock, eliminating the frustration of waiting in long queues or navigating through complex phone menus. Whether it's answering product enquiries, order tracking, or resolving simple issues, chatbots are always at the ready, ensuring a seamless customer experience.

Personalised recommendations

A key advantage of chatbots is their ability to deliver personalised recommendations tailored to each customer's preferences and browsing history. By analysing past interactions and purchase behaviour, chatbots can suggest relevant products, promotions, and discounts, thereby enhancing the shopping experience and driving conversions. This personal touch not only fosters customer satisfaction but also boosts sales and customer loyalty.

24/7 availability

Chatbots are available 24/7, ensuring uninterrupted support to customers in different time zones and regions. This around-the-clock availability caters to the needs of global customers and reduces response times, enhancing customer satisfaction and retention.

Scalability and efficiency

As your business grows, so does the enquiries. Chatbots offer scalability and efficiency by handling a large number of enquiries simultaneously without compromising quality. Whether you're dealing with a handful of customers or a surge in traffic during peak seasons, chatbots can manage the workload, ensuring prompt and efficient service.

Data-driven insights

Beyond just resolving queries, chatbots are invaluable sources of data and insights that can inform strategic decision-making. By analysing customer interactions and feedback, chatbots provide valuable insights into preferences, pain points, and trends, allowing businesses to optimise product offerings, marketing strategies, and customer experience.

Human touch integration

While chatbots excel in handling routine enquiries and tasks, they are not meant to replace human interaction entirely. Instead, they complement human customer service by handling repetitive tasks, freeing up human agents to focus on more complex issues and providing personal assistance. This seamless integration of chatbots and human support ensures a harmonious balance between automation and human touch, delivering the best of both worlds to customers.

Incorporating chatbots is not just about embracing latest technology, it's about enhancing the customer experience, driving efficiency, and staying ahead of the competition in today's digital age. By leveraging the power of chatbots to provide instantaneous support, personalised recommendations, and 24/7 availability, e-commerce businesses can elevate their customer service to new heights, fostering loyalty, satisfaction, and long-term success.



HFMA UPDATE
by Martin Last, Director General

What is new?

Our industry thrives on innovation. New products, new approaches, new concepts are all important to us, to our businesses and to our consumers. The Novel Foods Regulation (EU 2015/2283) was introduced to streamline the introduction of innovative foods into the EU market while upholding stringent food standards and safety. But as we move further away from when the regulation was first established in 1997, rather than be innovative, the regulation instead maintains hurdles to bringing product to market.

There are several major hurdles to this regulation, not least the cut-off date of May 19, 1997. An apparent arbitrary date chosen by when it came into force rather than any significance to a product's ability to be 'new'. It falls on the business operator to demonstrate evidence of significant consumption before that date, and this will then deem that the product is not to be novel and can be sold in the EU. If not, then the products need to demonstrate safety and conduct clinical trials to defend its use, which currently is estimated to cost in the region of around 250,000 Euros to take it through these novel foods applications.

Considering the date is pre-digitalisation, it means that companies now must rely on hard stored data to still be available to demonstrate previous significant use. So, it may follow that the product was used significantly before the cut-off date but that, after 27 years, the evidence is no longer available. After all, even HMRC use a cut off only seven years for company records to be retained.

In addition, for food supplements in 1997, there was no legal definition of a food supplement, such definition did not emerge until the Food Supplements Directive in 2002. Therefore, the hurdles to identifying data that relates becomes ever scarcer. More worrying is that now there are more retrospective classifications of foods as being novel, a move which increasingly undermines industry and consumer confidence.



The investment for a company to establish the safety of an innovative food is substantial, which is why being able to demonstrate significant evidence as a food before the 1997 date is so important. However, such investment when followed is not based on certainty, there is no pre-guide process as there is in other areas to help steer innovative food through this process. This serves to deter industry from following the application process and unfortunately, this has the effect of stifling innovation.

Suggested solutions to simplify or eliminate this cut-off date possibly by implementing a procedure based on the type and length of use instead could provide a workable solution to the Novel Foods issue. The Commission, however, would need some innovative thinking to consider such options.

In the UK, as part of the retention of EU law, the Novel Foods Regulation has been passed into UK legislation. The UK's FSA recognised the issues with novel foods and in 2023, published a summary of findings conducted by the consultants, Deloitte. This report proposes five alternative models for the management of Novel Foods, all of which could be implemented alone or in combination.

These include: The removal of pain points on interpretation and better accessibility and transparency; triaging novel foods into high, medium, and low risk categories with tailored applications for each; take a lifecycle-based approach with staged authorisation, allowing further safety data to be gathered; global collection that uses knowledge and insight from other organisations as to their approach to risk and safety of foods; or an innovation centric approach to allow an open door for some foods with consumer awareness on their associated risks.

There are no immediate developments from the FSA yet on which approach may be followed in future, but it is promising that alternatives are being considered.

There is a lack of legal certainty surrounding novel foods and this in itself presents significant challenges, including ambiguity in defining what constitutes a novel food per se as well as variations among Member State authorities in interpreting criteria, plus variances as to what determines adequate significant proof. All of which leads to major inconsistencies in interpretation.

The HFMA continues to work with the EHPM Task Force to try and address these issues and to campaign for clear procedures through member state authorities to assess the status of ingredients, products, and processes. Furthermore, if a Member State deems an ingredient to be non-novel, it should be considered as meeting the necessary criteria, fostering agreement and consistency among all Member States. Such solutions can then be considered for the UK.

The Novel Foods Regulation demonstrates the complexity of keeping at the forefront of the regulatory and political agenda, and the HFMA will continue to help defend our industry and represent the interests of our members. If you would like to know more about the benefits of membership to your company, simply visit our website, www.hfma.co.uk ,to learn more, or contact me directly at martin@hfma.co.uk

HFMA membership is vital to ensure that your company keeps abreast of the fast-changing regulatory environment. The HFMA is the UK's best source of information and most effective defender of our industry's interests. To help the HFMA defend your business at this most critical time, contact hfma@hfma.co.uk or call 020 8481 7100.

hfma
THE VOICE OF UK NATURAL HEALTH



HEALTH STORES UK UPDATE

by Len Glenville

healthstoresUK

Are you ready to shake it up bit?

Surveys consistently show that a high percentage of people – typically 70 per cent and more – want to eat more healthily, adopt healthier lifestyles and be healthier. And yet, according to research carried out last year by Health Stores UK partner, Viridian, just five per cent of Britons are regular health store customers. Moving that figure up to 10 per cent or 20 per cent would clearly make a massive difference to the independent health food trade.

So, what do we need to do to get more of the 70 per cent of 'health aspirational' adults into our stores? It's a question we regularly address in our own Shop Talk and Mastermind Forums – and, of course, one discussed at trade show roundtables and seminars. But occasionally, it's valuable to hear what well-placed people outside of the trade think about health stores. So, at this year's NOPEX exhibition, we took the opportunity to put this question to the retail guru, Mary Portas.

Those of you who have watched the TV series, *Mary Queen of Shops*, will know that Mary is often forthright in her views, so this was done with a little trepidation!

So, what did Mary have to say about health stores? "Well, I love what you are doing, because at the heart of it it's about 'good for you and good for the planet'," she said, adding: "To me, it doesn't matter whether I'm buying fashion or supplements, I want to buy them both for the right reasons." She also encouraged stores to "think laterally, innovate and collaborate as much as you can" and to "shake it up a bit". And she said health store owners should be completely confident on social media about "showing you are a business, and a person, that really cares".

Mary also laid down a challenge for health stores. She said we should be "more upbeat and joyful, because what you are about is the future". And she believes we should aim to be "more inclusive" if we want to successfully attract more people and families into our stores.

We'd love to hear your thoughts on Mary's advice, which we've reported on more fully on our website (www.healthstores.uk) – please leave your comments in the 'Leave a reply' box. We'll share a selection of your feedback in our next newsletter.

Live from Daventry

Last month's Health Stores UK Mastermind Forum offered some great tips on how to plan, market and stage successful in-store events – and turn your store into a community education hub. The session concluded with an inspiring livestreamed in-store event from Sheaf Street Health Store in Daventry, featuring a trio of brilliant speakers talking on the theme of nutritional and physical wellbeing during menopause, and a lively Q&A. Thanks to Cheryl Thallon for hosting, and everyone who took part.

Don't forget to join us on Webinar Wednesdays

Finally, remember to keep an eye out on our website for information about our upcoming Shop Talk and Mastermind Forum webinars. They take place on the last Wednesday of the month at 6pm. All you need to do is pop the kettle on, log on and enjoy!





BIRA UPDATE

by Andrew Goodacre

bira
British Independent Retailers Association

Cyber crime – a growing threat for independent retailers

In a regular column for *Health Food Business*, **Andrew Goodacre**, the CEO of the British Independent Retailers Association (Bira), turns the focus on the ever-increasing problem of cyber crime.

While concerns around shrinkage and stock loss are ever-present for independent retailers, another insidious threat that cannot be ignored is cyber crime.

The 2024 Cyber Security Breaches Survey from the UK Government highlights that cyber attacks and breaches remain incredibly common, with half of all businesses having experienced an incident in the last year.

For independent retailers operating online, either through an e-commerce platform or just processing payments digitally, the cyber risk is heightened. More indies are trading online than ever before, exposing them to phishing scams, malware, and other cyber threats. But even traditional bricks-and-mortar shops without an online presence can fall victim through email phishing schemes, compromised payment terminals, or data breaches.

Alarmingly, criminal hackers may actually be focusing more attention on smaller businesses like independent retailers. While large corporations have invested heavily in cyber defences, independent shops can make tempting targets that are perceived to have more vulnerabilities. The survey found medium and large businesses experience higher rates of cyber attacks and breaches compared to smaller firms.

The costs of cyber crime can be devastating for an independent retailer operating on thin margins. The most disruptive breach cost the average business more than £1,200 last year, with costs over £10,000 for medium and large businesses. These expenses from system downtime, lost sales, recovery fees and more could potentially shutter some independent shops.

So, what can independent retailers do to protect themselves? A multi-layered approach is crucial:

- Use multi-factor authentication everywhere, combining passwords with additional verification steps.
- Deploy proven internet security software and keep it updated.
- Provide cyber security awareness training for all staff.
- Speak to IT experts to identify and address vulnerabilities.
- Take advantage of government guidance and support resources.
- Use complex passwords and protect customer data rigorously.

Independent retailers face enough challenges just keeping the lights on day-to-day. But cyber crime represents a serious and growing threat that cannot be ignored. By taking proactive steps to improve cyber hygiene, indie retailers can mitigate risks and focus on serving their communities. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure when it comes to cyber security.

Naturally effective nutrition

A family-run business, Together Health was launched with a mission to bring clean and effective supplements to a busy category. Here, Phil Robertshaw, one of three brothers leading the business, explains what sets the brand apart.

The supplements market has grown exponentially in recent years as consumers have become more aware of their own health and how to support it. Within our own independent sector, we have many quality brands but within the wider supplements market, we have seen a vast amount of poor-quality products arrive on UK shelves, many of which play on fads and trends, and often contain a raft of undesirable ingredients.

This is something that Together Health was set up to change and to challenge; one of its key principles is to make supplements that are clean, free of poor-quality ingredients and unwanted additives, and one that was healthy in every sense of the word.

Set up by Lee Robertshaw, today, his brothers, Phil and Daniel, are also on board. And explaining the journey to how the company was founded, Phil explained: "It all began when Lee was on the hunt for a daily multivitamin. This should have been a fairly simple task, but it soon became clear that health supplements were anything but healthy. In fact, he realised they were mostly made up of mega dose isolated vitamins with lots of artificial additives.

"After a lot of searching, he eventually settled for an expensive product in a fancy glass bottle that seemed to have the fewest chemicals. But there was still this nagging feeling that it wasn't very natural or healthy. Plus, it really didn't seem to be doing much for his body. He knew he couldn't be the only person who experienced these challenges. So, he set about creating a company to develop a healthier supplement – one that he'd be happy for his family and friends to also take, and that others could benefit from too. He wanted to give people something new; products that were naturally effective, affordable, and honest. And that's how Together Health began."





And the business is working hard to develop and support its independent health store network, which has a natural fit with the Together Health ethos.

Phil commented: "Independents have been close to our hearts since the beginning. They tend to be specialised in their knowledge and able to educate the customer properly. They understood what made us unique when our proposition was new for the market. We've really stepped up our support recently and we have launched a dedicated website that offers information and in-store point-of-sale items, such as display stands and customer leaflets. We also have a team doing their best to build direct relationships with stores."

A family trade

Lee's background prior to founding Together Health was in the dental industry, and his brothers joined gradually until they were all working together full-time; Lee's youngest brother, Daniel, was the first to join after finishing his university studies. Phil joined full time later, and he and Lee had already co-founded another health company before Together Health, which specialised in superfoods. Phil had also been busy working in digital advertising for a large media company, but he always knew that he wanted to work full time with his brothers.

"As the founder, Lee stills runs the business, with Daniel supporting in a technology role and I am in marketing," Phil commented. "It feels very natural working together as brothers. It brings an added level of care because we are all invested in the success of the company and supporting each other as family. Lee's good friend, Bob, has been involved from the very early days and he feels like family too now!"

When launching the business, Lee had a clear vision of what he wanted to achieve, and those foundations still stand today in terms of the strict requirements that are applied to the products.

Phil commented: "Right from the start, the message has been simple; vitamins

and minerals in their natural form are healthy, and artificial additives and processing aids are not.

- **"Kind to the body:** This means no harmful artificial chemicals and no artificial processing aids used in the production of each nutrient. It sounds simple enough, but we soon found there is a reason companies add chemicals to their products. With an expert team, we persevered and achieved their goal of bringing 100 per cent clean vitamins.
- **Naturally effective:** We wanted to give our customers a more natural option that truly works for the health of their body. Using science-backed nutrients, always made with real ingredients, we are able to create products complete with all the co-nutrients, delivering the key nutrients to the right place and helping them be absorbed and utilised in a much more gentle way than the standard isolated ones you'll find on the market today.
- **Environmentally friendly and cost-effective packaging:** We knew there had to be a better way to package our nutrients than the standard expensive bulky glass or plastic bottles. This meant a lower cost protective packaging that allowed us to offer the highest quality products at a better price. We're really proud of our latest plastic-free compostable pouches, which keep the products fresh and convenient."

Today, the range stands at 34 products, which is growing.

Phil commented: Magnesium, Omega 3 and Vitamin D have always been staples but we're seeing an increased demand from our women's range of products. Also, our unique products such as the new Folate (from spinach) and Bio-Zinc (from guava leaf) do very well.

"We've recently launched a range of Functional Mushrooms. The unique beneficial compounds that are only found in these mushrooms really caught our attention for their remarkable health benefits. And amongst the hype around ingredients like lion's mane and reishi, we've made sure that we're able to deliver mushroom supplements we know will work, achieved through a combination of expert growing techniques, advanced extraction methods and detailed testing."

Real ingredients

Looking in greater detail at the company philosophy around ingredient use, Phil advised: "Our dietician, Lola made a great comment which alludes to the ethos nicely: 'The body's designed to maintain its functions by capturing and utilising essential vitamins and minerals which are bound within the food we eat. So why should our supplements be any different?'.





"Right from the start, the message has been simple; vitamins and minerals in their natural form are healthy, and artificial additives and processing aids are not."

"Most supplements currently available in the market use a chemical process that produces isolated nutrients, containing only a single part of the nutrient, unlike how nutrients are found in nature. At Together Health, we use real ingredients to ensure that your body recognises each nutrient as food. The vitamins and minerals come complete with a complex mix of bioactive compounds, just like food, that work together and result in the following benefits: better absorbed, retained longer, reach the places they're needed most, gentle on the body, and effective at lower doses.

"Here are a few examples of our complete nutrients:

- **Vitamin C made with citrus fruits** – it sounds obvious but we actually use oranges and lemons (herbicide and pesticide-free) in the production of our whole food vitamin C, which comes with naturally occurring bioflavonoids and other co-nutrients.
- **Iodine from seaweed** – our iodine comes from seaweed which is sustainably wild harvested from remote areas in Britain and the Nordic region. It's rich in iodine and all the necessary trace minerals and micronutrients needed to deliver and metabolise iodine.
- **B12 from mushroom** – this one might be surprising – we get our vitamin B12 from mushrooms! They are organically grown in south India using unique and proprietary conditions to ensure active forms of B12 are present."

Another key part of the brand's ethos is that it is British made – something that is important to the team.

Phil commented: "We're proud to be British made but the real reason to make it at home was that we felt it was the responsible choice for the planet and the only way to ensure quality. The choices we make as businesses and individuals are our most powerful tools when it comes to combating global warming and preserving our planet and cutting down on transport is key to that. From a quality standpoint, having the products made locally means that we can be close to the process and we're able to third party test them, with companies that we trust." hfb

Marc Flanagan

UK Product Trainer, Solaray

Each month, the Grafter looks at an individual in the natural health industry. This issue is the turn of Marc Flanagan, who provides ongoing education and support to independent health food retailers on behalf of the Solaray brand.



From discovering Ayerveda during a time in Sri Lanka to working at health food stores in the UK, Marc Flanagan has certainly had a good grounding in natural health.

Today, he puts all his previous experience into his role as the UK Product Trainer for Solaray, a job he was approached to take on during last year's NOPE show.

"At the time, I was considering my next career move and product training sounded like a new and interesting challenge – it all just fell into place from there," he explained.

"The role was a fresh challenge and the brand had always been on my radar through my work with distributors. As I considered the offer, I recognised their commitment to education, quality and efficacy, and this sealed the deal for me."

But where did his journey start, and how did he come into the natural health industry in the first place?

Marc recalled: "I have worked in the natural health industry for more than 18 years. Prior to that, I worked in fashion and in running nightclubs. My natural health journey began when I was visiting Ayurvedic farms in Sri Lanka. It sparked an appetite to learn more about the benefits of alternative health products and therapies.

"After that, I took a massage and aromatherapy training course and moved into retail, continuing my learning and development alongside my work. I've worked in a host of health food stores, including Fresh & Wild, Health Zone in Wimbledon, and Alara in Bloomsbury, at all levels from shop floor to management. Most recently, I was an advisor at Oliver's Wholefoods in Kew."

In his new role, he supports independent retailers, explaining: "I am now responsible for training and advising all Solaray retailers on new and existing products, through monthly meetings, as well as working with distributors to promote Solaray's education tools and services that are available for independent retailers and pharmacies."

Having spent so many years in the natural health industry, what is it that motivates Marc in his work?

He commented: "Researching new information pertaining to natural ingredients and how they aid us in our quest for good health, then being able to share and discuss it with others. I am always amazed by the way the human body works."

And what about his biggest achievements in terms of his working life in natural health?

Marc added: "Working as an advisor, I would say it was gaining people's trust and confidence. There are a lot of people in this industry who will tell you anything for profit but there are others like me who are able to put themselves mentally in that person's shoes or draw off personal experience to help and try to understand what they are going through, in order to give them the best advice.

"In my training role for Solaray, gaining trust and confidence is still important, but the win for me here is tailoring quite technical information in a way that makes it enjoyable and memorable. Our aim is to have a streamlined and focused range of 75 SKUs that are the unique, potent and specialist formulas that the brand is globally recognised for, and to continue supporting independent health stores through education and marketing support. My role in that is training them so that they are armed with valuable product knowledge that they can even better advise their customers with." hfb

Quick questions

What is the best thing about your job?
It has to be the people that I meet in the stores, whether it's staff or customers, as everyone has an interesting story to tell.

What is the worst?
A lot of my work is out on the road so travelling long distances in the car isn't fun and when the weather is horrid, it can be very unpleasant.

Describe yourself in three words:
I find it hard to answer this myself, so I put this question to 10 of my closest friends and we came up with loyal, funny and kind.

Musical tastes?
Because I love all different types of music, my record collection is all over the place. My father was a bit of a singer back in the day and he taught us all how to appreciate a great voice and a good melody, so this has stayed with me throughout my life. I grew up in the '80s and so groups like the Cocteau Twins, Human League and the Tourists/Eurythmics were big musical influences. But then I clubbed all over the world and my musical tastes moved with the times. I've recently been enjoying Norden artists like Freda Sundemo and Jonsi.

What's your greatest ambition?
I would like to see more of the world and experience its different cultures. A lot of people talk about cultural appropriation, but I think that we should change that to cultural appreciation. In a truly multicultural society, we share ideas, health tips, fashions, recipes, hair styles and so on. By doing this, hopefully, life becomes richer for everyone.



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Food supplements must not be used as a replacement for a healthy diet and lifestyle