

Improve Your Own Health? A Common Sense Approach

by Ann Cue, MA, MH

COMMON SENSE FACT #1: OUR HEALTH IS CONSTANTLY CHALLENGED. Is it possible to improve, or even maintain, good health in today's polluted and fast-paced world? Consider the odds: the air we breathe, the water we drink and bathe in, even the food we eat to sustain health- all frequently contribute to our health problems. Add to this our personal genetic weaknesses, constantly mutating strains of pathogenic bacteria, and the stress of daily living. It's no wonder that our physical, mental, and emotional well-being is seriously challenged; that getting through the day often substitutes for quality of life and fullness of joy.

COMMON SENSE FACT #2: MEDICAL CARE HAS ITS LIMITATIONS. Can it get better? For many people, the only course of action open is to wait until things become bad enough to see the doctor, get a diagnosis, and hope for the quick fix. But all too soon it turns out that the quick fix comes with a long-term high price tag: inevitably, all medical solutions deal mainly with symptoms; all medications have side effects; and all means of suppressing, stimulating, or substituting for natural body processes only create further weakness and imbalance. As many can appreciate, medical assistance is great for short-term, emergency relief, but not likely to restore or improve basic health.

COMMON SENSE FACT #3: WE CAN CHOOSE PERSONAL HEALTH IMPROVEMENT. Is there anything we can do for ourselves? Is it possible to take personal responsibility for health improvement before, during, and after consulting the health professional? Can we be trusted to make good decisions regarding our own health future? The answer is a resounding YES: because **our bodies are designed with an innate ability to adjust and readjust, to cleanse and repair, to rebuild and restore a large measure of lost health.** At some level, most of us still believe in this process. At some level, we suspect that remissions and "miracles" occur because the body "knows" how to make it happen. At some level, we all want to be involved in our own health care.

COMMON SENSE FACT #4: LIVING HEALTHY REQUIRES ATTENTION TO MANY FACTORS. But taking action to improve our own health can be an overwhelming challenge. The holistic health movement has made us realize how great our needs really are. We know that fresh air, pure water, and sunshine are basic health requirements, but we often have to settle for less-than-perfect variations of nature's "big three." Because we understand how thoughts and emotions relate to health, we also know that we must take positive action in these areas. We even have some understanding of how color, sound, and fragrance can affect us. And, of course, we are all too aware of the need for physical activity and good nutrition.

COMMON SENSE FACT #5: NUTRITIONAL APPROACHES TO HEALTH IMPROVEMENT OFTEN LEAD NOWHERE. So where do we start? It is highly probable that, of all the things we could be doing for ourselves, eating better is both the most necessary and the least understood. On the one hand, we identify with the common-sense maxim, "You are what you eat." On the other hand, we are faced with conflicting and confusing instructions about what to eat. Perhaps we even succeeded in maintaining low-fat, low-sodium, sugarless, high-complex-carbohydrate, vegetarian, or other healthy restrictions to our diets, only to find out, sooner or later, that the efforts were not worth the returns. And although eating healthy has probably been on our list of New Year's resolutions more than once, we may have become discouraged by less-than-spectacular results. Disappointed, we begin to doubt our will-power and the source of our information. Are we hopelessly addicted to poor food choices? Or could it be that modern nutritional science has failed to identify what it takes to mobilize the daily self-healing process and to support optimum good health? We are left with many questions. If nutrition is so important (and it is), why doesn't it work better? Has Mother Nature let us down?

COMMON SENSE FACT #6: GOOD FOOD IS HARD TO FIND. Before we throw up our hands in despair, it is helpful to understand what happens to "good food" from nature's table. Nutrient robbery begins with the hybridizing of plants and chemical fertilization of the soil (in the name of profit); accelerates with harvesting and storage procedures (in the name of profit); and reaches outrageous levels when food is refined and processed, whether in the factory, the restaurant, or the home kitchen.

Degraded, "dead" food is no food at all, for the purpose of replenishing the life-force. Add to these insults chemical "enhancements," pesticides, artificial colors and flavors, preservatives-and a great deal of "dead food" becomes positively deadly! Then, if all this is not bad enough, poor food combinations and absence of essential digestive "helpers" (HCL, digestive enzymes, and friendly intestinal bacteria, to name a few) can continue the "robbery" process even after the correct "food" is off the plate and in our bellies. Reflecting upon all of this, it seems astonishing that we manage to get enough nutrients to keep ourselves alive!

COMMON SENSE FACT #7: ADDING HERBS TO YOUR HEALTH PLAN REQUIRES CARE AND CAUTION. So how can we keep our bodies adequately nourished to both recover and sustain the best health possible? One approach getting a lot of attention these days is the use of herbs. There is historical precedent here, and the modern revival of herbs as health aids is enjoying great popularity, complete with testimonials, publicity, and a proliferation of competing products. But most consumers are not well educated in the selection and use of these highly specialized and unfamiliar plant substances, and may find the herbal approach to better health even more frustrating than trying to eat a good diet of familiar foods. In fact, it is easy to end up with questionable results, even subtle "side-effects," wasting both time and money. Herbal products are not hard to find; but selecting and using them wisely is a challenge.

Herbs and Your Health: Questions You Should Be Asking

Q Why should I be asking questions about herbs?

A Because your future health depends upon how well you supply your body with the nutrients required for daily maintenance, and for protection from pollution and disease. Herbs, chosen wisely, provide thousands of nutrients (phytochemicals) not available in even the best of diets. These important nutrients cannot be efficiently supplied by the chemical isolates which are in common use today.

Q I have heard of herbs for cooking, and herbal medicines, but I do not know much about herbs for nutrition. Should I be cautious when adding herbs to my daily diet?

A Yes. Many well-meaning "experts" recommend herbal preparations for daily use that are actually medicinal, and should be prescribed by licensed and experienced health professionals, for short-term use only. Get your advice from those who know the difference between herbal foods and herbal medicines.

Q Are there some herbs that I should not be taking on a daily basis?

A Some of the currently popular herbal preparations with known side effects include green tea, various algae, ginkgo biloba, ephedra (ma huang), psyllium, aloe vera, pau d'arco, echinacea, guarana, melaleuca, and goldenseal. Given the absence of quality control standards in the herbal industry, there are many others that can cause problems, depending on how they are handled. For example, soybeans, a rich herbal (plant) source of many important nutrients, are usually handled in a way that destroys their benefits and actually makes them harmful to health. The same is true of many essential oils used in today's skin care products.

Q How can I recognize which herbal products are good for my health?

A It helps to understand how important the preparation process is. We take this for granted when we use more familiar foods: we know what parts to keep and what parts to throw away; we know whether a food is under-ripe, spoiled, or just right; and in general we know how to fix the food to make it edible. When it comes to herbs, especially unfamiliar ones, it is even more important to have understanding of preparation processes. For this knowledge, most of us need to rely on herbal health food experts. Whoever prepares the herbs for nutritional purposes must know what parts of the plants to use, how to harvest at the right stage, and how to customize the herbal food for balance and assimilation. This is a very exacting science.

Q Does anyone know how to do this?

A While some "folk wisdom" exists, most cultures experienced in the use of herbs did not keep adequate written records. There is one exception. The ancient Chinese kept very precise records for thousands of years, detailing hundreds of thousands of herbs that could promote long life and maximum health. For

the last 2000 years, these records were lost. However, they are currently in use as the foundation for the restoration of herbal nutritional science by the herbal experts at **Sunrider International** in Torrance, California. At this time, we know of no other company with Sunrider's level of information, technical expertise, and resources. They now have 24 years of experience combining the best of ancient herbal knowledge with modern technology.

Q Is this the same as the Chinese Traditional Medicine I have heard about?

A Definitely not. Herbal nutrition is a separate science from herbal medicine. Herbal medicines correct symptoms, and should not be self-administered. Herbal nutritional products are foods that supply what your body needs but your ordinary diet cannot provide. They can be used safely, the same as regular foods. Even if you are using medications, herbal or pharmaceutical, herbal foods will help you overcome side effects and improve your total health picture. They do not require a doctor's supervision.

Q What should I expect in herbal nutritional supplements designed by "experts"?

A You should look for these things:

- ! Evidence that the company distinguishes between **medicinal** and **nutritional** herbs. A product that makes claims that it will "cure" a certain symptom or disease is always an herbal **medicine**, and ought to be labeled as such.
- ! Control over the growing, harvesting, and storage conditions of raw plant materials.
- ! Rigorous quality control and scientific testing of contents and potency of all raw materials and consumer-ready products.
- ! Expertise in combining various herbs to provide the consumer with a final product where the weaknesses of some herbs are balanced by the strengths of others. Combination is a basic principle of effective herbal nutrition, but it is often done without accurate knowledge.
- ! Concentration processes to assure that the consumer gets enough of the required nutrients to allow the body to actually improve itself
- ! Absolutely sterile conditions in processing and packaging, with zero allowance for chemical or bacterial contamination.

Q What can I expect herbal nutritional supplements to do for me?

A Because herbs will immediately begin to supply nutrients your body has probably never had before, you never know what to expect! Your body will use these long-forgotten foods to restore various functions, cleanse and purify, balance various systems, and in general improve your health. Some benefits are immediately apparent; some appear after long and regular use. What people report regularly are benefits such as:

- More energy**
- Less sickness, and improvement in chronic conditions**
- Better emotional balance and clearer thinking processes**
- Looking younger**
- Strength, endurance, and improved muscle tone**
- Health-centered weight loss**
- Control over addictions and food cravings**

Q How do I get started?

A We can help you. We have over 30 years of experience in this important health field, and would like to invite you to learn more about Sunrider. You might want to visit Sunrider at www.sunrider.com .

Ann and Jim Cue, Sunrider Independent Distributors, Madison, Wisconsin

A brief presentation about nutrition and your health: <http://userpages.chorus.net/cues/Srininvite.pdf>

Ann's website: www.cuesforhealth.com