

PICKING UP THE PIECES OF OUR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Submitted by: Jungle Cat Solutions

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The pandemic continues to leave our health in tatters, with long lasting effects experienced by millions of Brits, such as fatigue, poor mental health, disrupted sleep, stress, shortness of breath and excess weight gain, according to a new report and poll commissioned by Alive! – the brains behind the evidence backed range of supplements for all life stages and Schwabe Pharma, makers of clinically proven herbal medicines and supplements.

Long Covid affecting half of those testing positive

The representative survey of British adults found that almost half of people (48%) who contracted Covid-19 during the past year are still suffering symptoms, with the most common complaints being:

Lack of energy/drive (15%)

Shortness of breath (14%)

Extreme tiredness (13%)

Lack of stamina (11%)

Chest pain or tightness (11%)

Gut health/digestive issues (10%).

In addition, a quarter of those polled (24%) say they are seeking more medical attention than usual for this time of year, while a fifth (22%) are extremely worried about loved ones contracting long Covid.

Mental health impacted

Not only this, the combined effects of lockdowns, reduced opportunities for social interaction and working from home has led to a myriad of health woes for many Brits.

More than a quarter (27%) feel more depressed or have a low mood compared with pre-pandemic, and this is far higher in women (42%). Well over half (54%) say that they experience a broken night's sleep on most nights of the week.

Clinical Pharmacist, Mike Wakeman – co-author of the new report - PICKING UP THE PIECES OF OUR HEALTH AND WELLBEING – says: “A study in the journal Nature Reviews Neuroscience shows that sleep abnormalities are strongly indicated in every major neurological and psychiatric brain disorder . That's why a good night's sleep is essential for positive mental health”.

Diet disasters and weight gain

Closed gyms, orders to stay in, and increased temptation to order takeaways and eat sugary fatty snacks has played havoc with the nation's waistlines over the last two years. The Alive! Poll found that more than half think their diet could be better, with only a fifth eating fruit or vegetables daily, but four in ten saying they've been diagnosed with a nutrient deficiency or been told by a healthcare professional to take a supplement. Nearly a third (28%) say they put on 1-2 stone during lockdown.

Co-author of the expert-backed report, Clinical Nutritionist from Alive! – www.feealiveuk.com - Suzie Sawyer, says: “The most common nutrient deficiencies reported by Brits are iron or vitamin D (37%),

folic acid or vitamin C (23%) and Vitamin B12 (21%). Yet, there was poor understanding of the role of key vitamins and mineral in delivering health maintenance. Around a quarter believe that vitamin A and B vitamins are not needed in the diet while, remarkably given all the coverage, 16% still think vitamin D isn't needed".

Stress 'heads' beware

As the Alive! poll shows, four in ten (40%) and a higher proportion of women (45%) say they feel more tense now compared with pre-pandemic. A fifth of men (19%) and more than a third of women (31%) have experienced panic attacks, with the most common causes being the death of a loved one, raw emotions, or money worries.

Report co-author, GP Dr David Edwards, comments: "With 18 months of stress and worry already behind us but still lots of uncertainty to face, it's no wonder that our mental wellbeing has taken a hit. Add to that, the increase in alcohol consumption for around a quarter – which has a negative effect on mood – and it's clear that we need to do something to curb stress levels".

Immune health under the spotlight

As many of us recently caught 'the cold from hell' doing the rounds, it's clear that the pandemic hasn't eliminated the usual winter infections. However, it has changed the way we treat this illness. The Alive! poll found that three in ten who caught a cough or cold asked their GP for antibiotics, despite the fact that these drugs are designed to treat bacterial, not viral, infections and two thirds (65%) are aware of the issue of antibiotic resistance.

Interestingly more people are opting to treat their respiratory infections with traditional self-care options, such as the herbal remedy Pelargonium (22%) or vitamin C (38%). Other respondents to the poll didn't know which nutrients or foods help to support immunity with around a third admitting they didn't have a clue.

Clinical Nutritionist Suzie Sawyer, adds: "Simple strategies can make a difference to immune support, such as eating a healthy diet, using the right supplements and boosting gut health with a probiotic".

Five tips to swap firefighting for positive health

So how do we pick up the pieces post-pandemic, and get ourselves back to health maintenance? The expert-backed report suggests five tips:

1. Get your diet on track. Clinical Nutritionist Suzie Sawyer says: "A good quality multivitamin supplement like Alive! is an easy way to top up your vitamins and minerals, while you can begin to rebalance your gut microbiota with a probiotic, such as Nature's Way Fortify Friendly Bacteria Gummies which contain *Bacillus coagulans*. Before the party season starts, aim to eat at least 5-7 fruit and vegetable servings a day and choose fish, eggs and pulses over processed meat products".

2. Stress bust your life. As well as taking time out to relax and regroup your energies, key supplements can help put stress back in its box. Try Karmamood St John's Wort, which is precision formulated in Germany to pharmaceutical standards, or Vitano Rhodolia – made from an adaptogenic herb which is used traditionally to relieve stress, fatigue and mild anxiety.

3. Sleep like a log. Magnesium has been found to improve sleep quality while a study in the American Journal of Medicine reported that taking valerian leads to deeper sleep without causing side effects . Bonuit Sleep Aid incorporates valerian root extract and passionflower herb extract and is used traditionally for the temporary relief of sleep disturbances due to symptoms of mild anxiety.

4. Bolster immunity to naturally fight infections. GP, Dr David Edwards, says: “Normal infections haven’t gone away so we need to ensure our immune systems are in tip top condition to see us into a healthier new year. Key nutrients, such as vitamin D, zinc, iron and vitamin C, all play a role in optimising immune function but so do the plant bioactives, resveratrol, lycopene and lutein”. These are provided in Alive! Ultra Immune Support Wholefood Plus, as well as Alive! Immune Support Gummies which are suitable for age 3 years and above.

5. Self-care for mild colds and coughs. Avoid overuse of antibiotics by treating mild respiratory woes with natural remedies. The herbal extract, Pelargonium sidoides EPs® 7630, is backed over 100 published trials involving more than 10,000 adults and children and is used traditionally to relieve the symptoms of upper respiratory tract infections, such as sore throat, cough, and blocked or runny nose. Try Kaloba Pelargonium Cough & Cold Relief which is available as oral drops, sugar-free syrup and tablets.

1 Perspectus Global; winter 2021; 1030 adult consumers; data on file

2 Krause et al. (2017). The sleep-deprived human brain. Nat Rev Neurosci 18(7): 404-418.

3 Bent et al. (2006). Valerian for sleep: a systematic review and meta-analysis. Am J Med. 119(12):1005-12.