

Not just a plate of limp lettuce



It was just the kind of news I like to read: exercise is bad for you. One of my perennial new year's resolutions is 'to do less gardening' and each year I have stuck to that resolution unflinchingly, however tempting it is to break it.

I now read that those who undertake prolonged strenuous exercise are more likely to be ill than those who do not. A study at Loughborough University concludes that those who participate in this way have an increased chance of upper respiratory tract infections.

So, I thought smugly to myself, I am doing fine. Pushing a few keys on my computer, getting up to make myself a cup of tea and energetically pressing the television

In other words: take exercise and don't be an office chair potato. And that is when it gets serious.

The vegetable solution

I have come across two inspirational American doctors whose ideas might help us all keep our minds and bodies in fine shape for a little longer: Dr William Meggs and Dr Terry Wahls.

Dr Wahls suffered from progressive multiple sclerosis and had to use a wheelchair. I met Dr Meggs in 1996 when investigating the causes of Gulf War Syndrome. It was at the tail end of a hurricane and as we chatted in his office at the East Carolina Medical School the windows and doors were rattling

Both of these doctors advocate simple effective steps: eat fresh fruit and vegetables. Take most other things sparingly (except oily fish) – and take exercise. Dr Wahl went to extremes, eating several plates of fruit and vegetables a day. She is now cured of her 'incurable' multiple sclerosis and has gone on to help cure others.

Killer ingredient

So, as a new 2012 venture we tried it. Two or three times a week we have a vegetarian or near vegetarian meal with mainly raw vegetables. When you get away from the idea that vegetarian must consist of limp lettuce you find that there is a cornucopia of delicious tastes and textures. It is no doubt entirely psychological, but I do feel better for the experience.

But there is one more killer ingredient that we must all tackle. Many fellow solicitors are suffering from intolerable stress – and this is something we must all address if you are to keep reading my musings and I am to keep writing them.

This article is written under just such stress – because I have just spent more than a working day compiling information to enable my accountant to tell me how much tax I will not be able to afford to pay. As I concluded my task I thought of several more words beginning with 'S' but not one of them could be printed here.

If these good practices catch on, then there should be scope for paying our taxes in vegetables. A few stalks of celery and a sack of carrots should surely soften the heart of (and provide much needed roughage for) the meanest tax inspector. The only drawback will be that I shall have to break my resolution – and do more gardening. Why is nothing in life ever simple?

If you want details of either of the books I have referred to, check the website version of this piece.

"Little did I know it but 'my vegetarian partner' held in his hands the solution to many of our health problems"

remote control were all that were needed for a happy and healthy life.

But then in the same paper I discovered that mental decline is now thought to set in much earlier – at 45 not 60 as was previously believed. Another study had looked at civil servants (and do not reply "ah well that explains it". Hear me out). Seven-thousand of those who are paid out of our taxes were invited to take part (presumably during working hours?). They had to recall as many words beginning with 'S' as they could and also the names of animals read from a list. Ten years later the 45 year olds had suffered a 3.6 per cent decline in their abilities.

Still feeling smug, I started to assemble my list of words beginning with 'S' (scrofulous, salpiglossis and sudatorium immediately sprang to mind along with several obscene words) and concluded that my 60+ year-old brain is still functioning reasonably well – that was until I got to the next part of the article, which quotes the Centre for Research in Epidemiology and Population Health in France and University College London (try saying that when your brain is wasting away): "There is emerging consensus that what is good for our hearts is also good for our brains."

so hard that I began to think: "To hell with it, I want to get out of here alive." Such cowardly thoughts would never pass through the minds of other SJ readers I am sure. He told me then about the role of inflammation in almost every disease and how much bearing our lifestyle and environment have on our health in general and inflammation in particular.

Dr Meggs has now written a must-read book entitled *The Inflammation Cure*, which sets out in a very readable way what he looks on as sensible steps for reversing such conditions as arthritis, diabetes, asthma and heart disease.

Dr Wahls used her medical knowledge to seek a cure for her multiple sclerosis. She reasoned that the little powerhouses in all our cells – mitochondria – function correctly only if provided with the correct nutrients. If they are damaged, chronic illness takes hold. That is the theme of her book, *Minding My Mitochondria*.

I used to write mockingly about a former partner of mine as "my vegetarian partner", who never seemed to be without a carrot, stick of celery or apple on his desk. Little did I know it but he held in his hands the solution to many of our health problems.



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