

Festive season SOS

Life can be stressful, and even more so as the silly season approaches. Dip into Mother's Nature's pharmacy to survive and stay sane.

HERB teas are a wonderful way to soothe and nourish your mind and body. Try kava for tension and anxiety that prevents sleep; chamomile for jangled nerves and exhaustion; oats for insomnia; and valerian to relax you when you're feeling wired and uptight. Catnip isn't just for kitties, either – it contains nepetalactones, which settle restlessness and calm anxiety. Essential oils are also excellent for countering seasonal stress, especially chamomile, clary sage, geranium, lavender, melissa, neroli, rose, and ylang ylang. Add six drops to warm bathwater, or inhale deeply from the bottle.

Hangovers

An all-too-frequent occurrence at this time of year they result in dehydration and hypoglycaemia, because alcohol is a diuretic and high in sugar. Drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids when imbibing – aim for twice as much water for each alcoholic drink you have. Try a glass of orange or

tomato juice the morning after – the natural sugars in the fruit juice help the body metabolise alcohol faster. Ensure you eat before drinking alcohol, because alcohol is absorbed more slowly on a full stomach. Thiamine and vitamin B6 help clear the liver of acetyldehyde, which eases hangover symptoms. St Mary's thistle protects liver cells from alcohol by preventing toxins from entering.

Heartburn

Overeating and eating rich, heavy foods can play havoc with your digestive system as well as your waistline. Choose carefully: there are many delicious foods available in summer – peaches, cherries, mangoes, watermelon – that will satisfy your sweet tooth and are actually good for you. Go easy on coffee, chocolate, beer, and red wine, which can all be culprits behind an upset stomach. If you have overindulged, herbs can come to your rescue. Marshmallow root and slippery elm are two of the oldest remedies for heartburn. They both work by coating and therefore protecting the oesophagus and the digestive tract. To make this soothing drink, add a teaspoon of either herb powder to a cup of hot water and drink a few cups throughout the day. Another heartburn-easing tea is made by adding a teaspoon of freshly grated ginger to a cup of boiling water; steep it for 10 minutes then drink. For bloating, a tea made from caraway, fennel seed, anise or chamomile should do the trick - add two teaspoons of any one of them, or a mixture of all three, to a cup of boiling water. Steep for 10 minutes, then strain and drink.

Finally, be kind to yourself. Don't neglect the self-care you practise on a regular basis during the year when the busy holiday season hits. Keep up with your healthy habits of getting enough rest, relaxation, and exercise, and mental health strategies like journaling and meditation. Respect your budget. Once you've decided what you can spend on gifts, events or special food, honour that. Lastly, cancel any events you really don't want to attend, so as to make room in your heart for the true magic of the holiday season to unfold. ❄️

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