

# Top 5 Ways to Be Healthy



*By Marilyn Zink*

# Top 5 Ways to Be Healthy

The trail in the cover photo is one of my favorite places to walk.

It is at Paradise Meadows right at Mount Washington on Vancouver Island.

The alpine trails are invigorating and most of us know that getting enough exercise, eating right, getting enough sleep and having a good mental attitude are important building blocks for good health.

But I want to tell you about more things you can do to be healthy and stay healthy.

I'm specifically talking about supplemental building blocks that will prolong your life and give you a quality of life that will make you feel good.

As a herbalist and publisher of the Herbal Collective magazine for more than 20 years, I am familiar with a variety of supplements and have narrowed it down to the top five.

These supplements address common healthy problems that many people suffer from; lack of energy, digestive concerns, and issues related to aging

## Enzymes

Disease often starts with what we put in our mouths. You are what you eat, as the saying goes. Eat the wrong foods and your body degenerates quicker. Eat the right foods and you stay healthy. But it isn't that simple.

Despite their importance, most people do not get the enzymes they need. This is because heat destroys enzymes, and most of our foods, whether cooked at home or processed, are heated and the enzymes destroyed.

As we age, we lose digestive enzymes and our bodies don't always absorb the nutrients from the foods

we eat. Our natural digestive enzymes are depleted, allowing food to ferment (rot) in the digestive tract.

Many experts believe that this undigested matter becomes quite toxic, causing many of the health problems associated with aging, such as joint distress, ulcers, bloating and constipation.

This is where enzymes come in.

They help break down foods so our bodies can more easily absorb it. Enzymes can help alleviate digestive difficulties – bloating, gas, constipation, etc. Many people also suffer from food allergies and sensitivities. Again, enzymes can help alleviate these difficulties.

Natural plant enzymes, like amylase, lipase, cellulase, lactase, protease, bromelain and papain (from pineapple and papaya) help us to digest starches, fats, cellulose, milk sugar and proteins, respectively. Raw foods, or foods processed below 108 degrees Fahrenheit, maintain their enzyme activity.

Of course, only man cooks his food. In contrast, animals eat a "raw" and therefore relatively more or less enzyme rich diet. When your body breaks down the food more efficiently, you'll feel more energetic, alert and healthy.

## Probiotics

Probiotics also play an important role in digestion as well as immune health, and can be used hand-in-hand with enzymes.

Probiotics are the good bacteria like acidophilus, bifidus and lactobacillus, etc. When the body's intestinal flora is imbalanced, we're more likely to get sick and have digestive difficulties that lead to food

# Top 5 Ways to Be Healthy

allergies and the ‘leaky gut syndrome.’

Eating improperly, going on a course of anti-biotics or taking the birth control pill can contribute to an imbalanced gut, with excessive bad bacteria. This can also make the gut more friendly to parasites.

Taking probiotics can reset the sensitive flora in the gut. This will lead to better digestion, improve immunity and an improved sense of well-being.

## Essential Fatty Acids

Essential Fatty Acids (EFAs) are the good fats derived from linolenic, linoleic and oleic acids that we need in our diets. These are oils such as flax seed oil, fish oils, evening primrose oil, hemp oil, olive oil and borage oil.

Good fats compete with bad fats by raising your HDL (High Density Lipoprotein) or ‘good cholesterol.’ The good cholesterol grabs the bad cholesterol, LDL (Low Density Lipoprotein) and takes it to the liver, where it is broken down and excreted.

These fats are the Omega 3 (linolenic acid), Omega 6 (Linoleic acid) and Omega 9 (Oleic Acid). Many people are deficient in Omega 3 due to our over-processed diets. One of the most common symptoms is depression. Flaxseeds have one of the highest contents of linolenic acid.

Other sources are hemp oil and hemp seeds, walnuts, pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds, avocados, brazil nuts, wheat germ oil and fish.

Essential Fatty Acids support the cardiovascular, reproductive, immune and nervous systems. A main function of EFAs is the production of prostaglandins, which regulate body functions such as heart rate, blood pressure, blood clotting, fertility, conception

and also plays a role in immune function by regulating inflammation and encouraging the body to fight infection. Essential Fatty Acids are good for the skin and the prostaglandins in an oil like Evening Primrose Oil can help balance hormones.

A deficiency of EFAs and the Omega 6/3 imbalance is linked with serious health conditions such as heart attacks, cancer, insulin resistance, asthma, lupus, schizophrenia, depression and postpartum depression, accelerated aging, stroke obesity, diabetes, arthritis, ADHD and Alzheimer’s disease.

As you can see, essential fatty acids are really critical to overall health and should be taken on a daily basis.

Important note: Essential fatty acids should not be confused with essential oils, which are the distilled oils of plants such as herbs.

## Antioxidants

We are all ‘rusting’ on the inside as our bodies oxidize, making us more prone to disease and the aging process. Anti-oxidants are another important supplement that should be taken on a daily basis for improved health and immunity.

Antioxidants reduce that ‘rusting’ or oxidation effect on our body’s cells and increase healthy aging. Antioxidants also de-activate the free radicals, such as those harmful trans fatty acids.

Free radicals are the natural by-products of many processes within the body’s cells. They are also created by exposure to environmental factors, such as tobacco smoke, radiation and toxins. These free radicals damage cell structure and genetic material leading to diseases such as cancer.

Antioxidants act like housekeepers, ‘mopping’ up

# Top 5 Ways to be Healthy

free radicals before they can harm your body. Antioxidants are several organic substances, including vitamins C and E, selenium (a mineral) and a group of carotenoids. Beta-carotene is the most popular carotenoid, which adds color to many fruits and vegetables.

Selenium is a trace metal that is required for proper functioning of the body's antioxidant enzyme systems, and is sometimes included as an antioxidant.

**Vitamin E :** d-alpha tocopherol. A fat soluble vitamin present in nuts, seeds, vegetable and fish oils, whole grains (esp. wheat germ), fortified cereals, and apricots. Current recommended daily allowance (RDA) is 15 IU per day for men and 12 IU per day for women.

**Vitamin C :** Ascorbic acid is a water soluble vitamin present in citrus fruits and juices, green peppers, cabbage, spinach, broccoli, kale, cantaloupe, kiwi, and strawberries. The RDA is 60 mg per day..

Beta-carotene is a precursor to vitamin A (retinol) and is present in liver, egg yolk, milk, butter, spinach, carrots, squash, broccoli, yams, tomato, cantaloupe, peaches, and grains.

Because beta-carotene is converted to vitamin A by the body there is no set requirement. Instead the RDA is expressed as retinol equivalents (RE), to clarify the relationship. (NOTE: Vitamin A has no antioxidant properties and can be quite toxic when taken in

Antioxidants are also found in food sources such as grapes, mangoes, blueberries, mangosteen, raspberries, wolfberry, green tea.

Antioxidants are thought to be effective in helping to prevent cancer, heart disease, and stroke as well as improving immunity.

## Greens

Our mothers often made us eat our greens and nowadays we hear about the importance of eating dark, green leafy vegetables. But there is another source of greens that is very effective in improving our health. These are greens like spirulina, chlorella, barley grass and wheat grass, which are being touted as the 'superfoods' for our diets.

Studies have shown that green foods have a well-established benefit for our health including eliminating toxins (such as heavy metals), boosting levels of good bacteria, boosting immunity, increasing energy and balancing the Ph levels in the gut to reduce inflammation and disease.

In oceans and great lakes, these super foods are once-celled organisms called spirulina and chlorella, the oldest, most resistant organisms. On land, these greens are the shoots of green grasses and herbs such as barley grass and wheat grass.

Spirulina is the micro blue-green algae which contains more than 100 vitamins, minerals, amino acids and phytonutrients. It also contains high amounts of antioxidants including chlorophyll, alpha and beta carotene and phycocyanin.

Spirulina is 65-70% amino acid proteins, which is greater than steak. It also has vitamin B12, iron, chromium, selenium and essential fatty acids. Like most edible, dark green plants, spirulina is highly alkaline, which means that it helps restore the acid-alkaline balance in the gut. Spirulina helps neutralize the acidity caused by eating excess meats, starches, sugars, soft drinks and processed foods, alcohol, coffee, excess stress and toxins that cause acidity in our bodies, leading to disease.

Chlorella is a unique single-celled fresh water green algae, contains high concentrations of chlorophyll, nucleic acids, amino acids, enzymes, antioxidant

## Top 5 Ways to be Healthy

carotenes, and vitamins and minerals, especially zinc.

Chlorella actually contains twice as much chlorophyll as spirulina, the phytonutrient that makes plants green, deodorizes, detoxifies and promotes the body's natural healing.

Chlorophyll has also been studied for its potential in stimulating tissue growth, and in stimulating red blood cell production. Perhaps most remarkable is the similarity between chlorophyll and the red pigment in blood. Chlorophyll is a hemoglobin molecule with magnesium in the middle instead of iron!

Chlorella is the most researched "green product" resulting in proof of numerous health benefits including improved immune system function, heavy metal and pesticide detoxification, "anti-tumor activity", and, because of CGF, chlorella growth factor, enhanced white blood cell activity and quicker wound and ulcer healing! .

Please note that as chlorella, unlike spirulina, has a cellulose wall that humans cannot digest, it is important that "cracked cell wall" chlorella be used.

Barley grass is considered the most nutritional of the green grasses. Green grasses undergo contain about the same vitamins and minerals as dark green vegetables.

When these grasses are harvested at a young age, they have a different chemical makeup from their adult counterparts. For example, wheat grass has 32g of protein per 100g, while wheat flour has only 13g per 100g.

Wheat grass has about 23,000 International Units (IUs) of Vitamin A per 100g, while wheat flour has none. We can see, then, that the young grasses offer us much greater nutrition.

Barley grass juice powder is a green powerhouse that provides nutrients like chlorophyll, live enzymes, as well as antioxidants.

Green barley leaves contain a multitude of the body's spark plugs, enzymes.

Wheat grass is commonly grown and then juiced to obtain the full benefits. It is a great detoxifier and energizer.

It contains most of the vitamins and minerals needed for human maintenance, a complete protein with about 30 enzymes and is approximately 70% crude chlorophyll. Wheatgrass is also an excellent source of calcium, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, sodium, sulphur, cobalt, and zinc.

Wheatgrass juice has been proven to build red blood cells quickly after ingestion. It normalizes high blood pressure and stimulates healthy tissue cell growth. It helps in weight control, because one ounce of juice equals two pounds of produce nutritionally, it naturally shuts off the appetite sensors in the brain.

### **Other benefits of wheat grass include:**

Improved digestion

Reduced blood pressure

Improved ability of the body to heal wounds

Chlorophyll found in wheatgrass can prevent the growth of harmful bacteria.

Helps prevent tooth decay

Has anti-ageing abilities and can keep the hair from greying.

When you've done all these 5 steps, you will feel much healthier and energized.

Then you may be ready to tackle alpine trails!

Marilyn Zink is a writer and publisher of The Herbal Collective magazine, found at [www.herbalcollective.ca](http://www.herbalcollective.ca)