



A Season of Happiness

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Welcome one and all to A Season Of Happiness and the first issue in our Healthy Living series. The idea is not to tell anyone what they should or shouldn't do with regard to getting fit and staying that way. As for eating, we have our own preferences and respect the rights of others to stick to theirs. What we would like to do is share our knowledge and experience in these areas. It's working for us, and we think some of it might work for you too.

Each issue, we will discuss different aspects of the food, fitness and lifestyle conundrum which many of us struggle with. Perhaps in an ideal world we'd be able to do the right thing by ourselves and our families, but individual circumstances often make that an impossible dream. Not all of us can afford to follow strict diet and exercise regimes unless we give up our day jobs, or get a second one to pay for the extras that aren't part of our established plan.

Having said that, just because there's no spare time or cash available, it shouldn't stop us trying to improve our situation. Even small changes can benefit overall health and need not compromise the budget. In fact, many of our suggestions will not only help you to find your own way to a healthier lifestyle, but can save money into the bargain.

We have succeeded in doing this, but we did have help - from our Doctor. Consider yours as a best friend, one who will guide and advise, a concerned professional who can overview your state of health objectively and ensure that whatever you plan to do is not going to cause you harm. A fuller explanation of this caution can be found in: [About Self-Help](#) which we invite you to read before leaving our Website.

For now, however, perhaps we can get on with the article. It should give you some idea of our viewpoint and may help you to decide if we're on the same wave-length, or an entirely different planet.

Who Knows Best?

These are the times of convenience. Labour-saving devices, take-home meals, the car, computers - all there to make life easier and help us live longer. But modern society's benefits come at a price, and even if we realise we aren't as healthy as we ought to be, deciding what to do about it based on available information is confusing. The TV, our in-house mentor, tells us that a fast-food chain is offering their latest "healthy" meal-deal; some professor's research indicates that if we eat this stuff we'll end up with all kinds of nasty medical conditions; another survey claims a couple of glasses of red wine is good for us; then a different one says it's rotting our teeth. It would seem that, when it comes to a healthy lifestyle, especially with regard to diet and nutrition, informed decisions are hard when those supposedly in the know keep changing their minds and often contradict each other.

Certainly, we should take notice of any advice that can promote health and longevity, but who's right, and who's wrong? The food giants are just there to make money by pandering to our taste buds and addictions. Believe them unreservedly and we'll probably regret it later. So, what about the so-called "experts"? Just because someone's got a string of letters after their name doesn't make them an oracle. But hopefully they've used their research grant well and the results ought to be worth consideration.

Then come the no-fail diet promoters and nutritionists with their free radicals and de-toxifying supplements. They sound as if they know what they are talking about, even if we don't; and here's the trap - we are fairly ignorant regarding scientific terminology, so any mumbo-jumbo containing plenty of "-omes", "-ites" and "-ins" tricks us into believing in the assurances of the self-confessed health gurus. Should we buy their product, course, or whatever their special is this month, the only thing we're guaranteed to lose is our money.

No doubt I've succeeded in upsetting more than a few "professionals", but I'm just an average Joe who gets a bit tired of being misled and ripped off into the bargain. I will admit, though, that not every promotion is a complete scam. Some have merit loitering amongst the pseudo-medical jargon. The odd one may even benefit general health. But, in the main, they offer very little that we couldn't work out for ourselves, or buy from the shops a darn sight cheaper.

As for the genuine medicos, I'm sure they have our well-being at heart and are constantly working to update and improve their advice to us. If they get it wrong from time to time, it is with the best of intentions and they do tend to come up with the right stuff eventually. Stacking the *educat-ed* against the *educat-ing*, there is a very big difference between the informed advice of scientists who are actually qualified and the hard-sell of those who simply appear on media commercials pretending to be. Personally, I'd rather listen to a Doctor than a quack every time!

At the end of the day, however, we have to decide for ourselves what is best for us. But how do we do that? A rule-of-thumb guide would be: avoid excess. If a fad diet recommends large amounts of any one food type at the expense of others, we should be wondering what it might do to us in the long run. Too much fat and carbohydrates are likely to produce more body fat; and if we have that already, why risk increasing it? Conversely, cutting these out altogether, even for those of us who lead a sedentary life, may reduce weight, but could also place our general health in jeopardy. Striking the right balance is the way to go.

The same rule applies to exercise – too much can be as harmful as not enough. It all depends on an individual's lifestyle and state of health. If an occupation requires sitting for most of the working day, participating in some physical pastime will help limber up those stiff muscles. Even manual labour doesn't necessarily provide all of the exercise the body needs to function properly. We may be on our feet all day, but how much of that time are we actually walking as opposed to shuffling or plodding?

In regard to general health, honesty is the best policy. There are plenty of charlatans out there ready to con us. We don't need to do it to ourselves. If we are prepared to admit there is room for improvement, we are well on the road to finding a solution. Better for us if it is sooner rather than later.

Because I want you to walk the safe road to happiness, I will repeat my former warning. Before starting out on that new diet and/or exercise program, there is one important first step to take – see a Doctor and get a check-up. Explain your intentions and present the plan you are thinking of following. There may be an existing medical problem which needs taking into consideration. On the other hand, and this is what we would all be hoping for, you could get the green light plus an offer of continuing support and advice so necessary for eventual success.

Start out right, take it in easy stages and you are more likely to live better, longer and happier.

Next issue: Junk-Food Habits – why do we *really* eat junk-food and how do we stop?

Learn to win back control of your life and enjoy doing it.



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