

Health & Well-being

RoodlaneMedical
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Dr Gill's Blog



Yoga, meditation, food and summer sun.

For the third year running I am attending a yoga retreat in Portugal. That sounds very luxurious but the reality is something much more informal and relaxed than that. And it is delightfully familiar, the same people (mainly) same place, same room.

A familiarity which means I can sink into the relaxation immediately wasting no time at all finding my bearings. This year we began that feeling when we bumped into a friend at Gatwick who needed a lift to the retreat and it was as if we had seen her yesterday and not 12 months ago.

A reminder that too much change can be draining. The formula is simple:

- Get up and go to class, meditate, spend 90 minutes focused and doing exactly what Paul (instructor) tells you
- Eat the food you are offered
- Drink lots of water
- Relax and spend some time in the sun
- Go to class, meditate, spend 90 minutes doing what Paul tells you
- Eat the food you are offered
- Drink lots of water
- Repeat x 6



I regard this as my week in the year to restore my physical and mental equilibrium. I firmly believe we should all try to look after ourselves every day so that restoration is not necessary but that is easier to say than do and it is wonderful to have a whole week of being reminded about what matters.

So at the risk of being repetitive (did I mention repetition can be a good thing...) there are a series of health benefits:

- Meditation improves mood, reduces anxiety, improves concentration and creativity. It helps with problem solving and is a great tool to help reduce stress and keep a clear and balanced mind
- Yoga has a meditative element. Believe it or not we are heating the room even though it is very hot here so it is quite hard work and puts the heart rate up. Great for strength, flexibility, core stability and cardiovascular fitness

- Wonderful vegetarian food. Fantastic nutrition for my gut microbiome which will come out of the week in great shape from the exercise and wonderful diet and making lots of serotonin to lift my mood
- No alcohol at all for the week –a reminder to me to have one week completely off each month as a minimum
- Sunshine to make lots of Vit D being careful of course not to risk sun damage and wrinkles as well as the very real risk of skin cancer
- Blue light (sunshine) also improves mood as a direct effect
- Socialising with likeminded people from different walks of life. I have said many times that humans are essentially social animals and we like to feel safe and included in a community. I love the low key relaxed social environment of the retreat
- Sleeping more than my usual 7.5 hours – a healthy 9 hours a night which will boost my energy and immunity.

And a final benefit: I spend my life making decisions, endless decisions at work and at home. We see the wealth of choice we have as a wonderful thing and it is, but it is also exhausting! It is absolutely wonderful to have that responsibility taken away. There are no choices here, I do as I am told for the week and that leaves my mind free to play.



Looking after your Lifestyle

Half-baked or well done? Be safe in the sun!

With many of us starting to enjoy the warm weather, whether it be UK or an overseas holiday, it's important to remind ourselves of the damage the sun can do to our skin if we don't use adequate protection against harmful UV rays.

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the UK which results in over 100,000 new cases and 2,500 deaths every year. The following simple measures can help avoid putting yourself at risk of developing any serious health issues:



- Clothing. Protect your skin with appropriate clothing, including hat and sunglasses
- Sunscreen. Choose sun protection which has a high SPF and protects against UVA and UVB rays. It is recommended that you apply sunscreen at least 30 minutes before sun exposure. There are many different types of sunscreen, some that indicate one application is sufficient, however- if you swim, do remember to check the time limit outlined on the bottle as re-application is always advised with waterproof protection. Sweating can also remove sunscreen so always remember to re-apply every 1-2 hours.

People with fair skin who are prone to burning or those with moles should take extra care and ensure full protection is applied. You should also seek the shade of a parasol and avoid sun exposure between the hours of 11-3pm if this is possible. If not, just remember to ensure you are protected with the appropriate level of sunscreen.

It's important to keep an eye on moles and check for any changes at least once a month. You can do this by following the ABCDE rule which covers:

- A=Asymmetry: Normal moles or freckles are typically symmetrical so you may notice a

change and some irregularity. Shape alone will not indicate a malignancy as some birth marks have irregularity in their shape.

- B=Borders: Moles are typically round and of no cause for concern. Those with a with blurry and/or jagged edge can be a potential risk.
- C=Colour: Normal mole are usually one colour. A mole that has more than one colour could be suspicious. These can include the darkening of a spot (sometimes to dark purple to black) or a lightening in certain parts of the growth
- D=Diameter: If a growth is larger than around 6mm, it should be investigated. This includes areas that do not have any other abnormalities in relation to the above points.
- E=Evolving moles: The mole or growth may be raised with an uneven surface.

Should you have any concerns, please arrange to book an appointment with a Doctor who will assess and advise whether the mole requires further investigation.

Enjoy the sun (safely) and if you are planning a vacation, have a restful and relaxing break!

Doctors Corner

Dear Doctor,

We are planning our summer holidays and are concerned about food and waterborne illnesses. We recently had a friend who returned from Mexico with cyclosporiasis which we have never heard of before.

What would you advise?

Cyclospora, are spread by contaminated food and water in certain parts of the world. Occasionally contaminated food and water can be associated with outbreaks affecting travellers, for example in 2015 and 2016 Cyclosporiasis affected a number of UK travellers who had returned from Mexico.

Cyclospora is a parasite that is spread by eating and drinking contaminated food and/or drinks. Infection can cause diarrhoea, cramps, nausea, flatulence, loss of appetite, fatigue, low-grade fever and weight loss. Cyclospora infections in those with immune system problems can be more severe. Cyclospora is not spread by direct contact with animals or person-to-person.

It most often occurs in tropical and subtropical regions of the world including South and Central America, South and South East Asia, the Middle East and Africa. It can be a cause of diarrhoea in travellers to these regions

Prevention

Follow good food and water hygiene advice at all times on holiday, even if staying in high-end, all-inclusive resorts. Foods often involved in Cyclospora outbreaks include soft fruits like raspberries and salad products such as coriander, basil, and lettuce. Where possible, avoid buffets and choose freshly prepared, thoroughly cooked food that is served piping hot. Avoid fresh uncooked berries, unpeeled fruit and any leafy salad items since these are difficult to clean. Remember that drinks may also contain uncooked herbs, vegetables or fruit. Choose bottled water (with an intact seal), or water that has been boiled or filtered with a special filter designed for purifying drinking water. Chlorine disinfectants are not effective against Cyclospora. Avoid ice and don't drink tap water or use it to clean your teeth. Tea and coffee

made with boiling water and served steaming hot and drinks in cans or bottles with intact seals such as carbonated drinks and commercially prepared fruit drinks are usually safe.

Recreational water such as swimming pools, the sea and freshwater rivers and lakes may also be a source of water-borne infection. In swimming pools, infection may occur if treatment and disinfection of the water are inadequate. Don't swim in the pool if you have diarrhoea, ensure babies and infants are wearing suitable swimwear, and avoiding ingesting the pool water where possible

Treatment

Get medical advice for any symptoms, either during your holiday or after you return.

Symptoms: frequent watery diarrhoea, but may also include appetite loss, stomach cramps/pain, bloating, increased wind, weight loss, nausea or tiredness. If you are ill when you get home, remember to tell your GP about your travel history. Test can be done to determine if you are indeed infected and treatment is with an antibiotic.

This month's Doctor's Corner was provided by Roodlane GP Dr Reval Sukkhu



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