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Newsletter: Spring/ April 2008

At last it appears that Spring is in the air, day-light hours are extending and our gardens are showing signs of life. I love to see the daffodils, tulips, snowdrops and crocus fighting through the grey days, eventually blooming into vibrant flowers. I

believe we should liken ourselves to plants, from seedlings we develop into beautiful beings but require nutrition, self-love and nurture to reach our best. With this thought in mind, here is a beautiful ritual which I would like to share.

## **An Act of Self-Love.**

*Plant a bulb or a seed in a pot and allow it to be a symbol of your intention to nurture yourself. Remember that you were once smaller than that small seed. Honour how amazing you have been to get as far as you have. Plant a piece of paper in the soil stating your intention to provide yourself with everything you need to continue to grow strong and beautiful. Each time you water the seed, or talk to it, or move it to a more beneficial location, you are honouring and fostering your own expansion.* Matthew James

## **Focus on Pre-Menstrual Syndrome (PMS)**

As many as 70-90% of women experience premenstrual symptoms, with about 30-40% having symptoms which cause some disruption to their lives whilst 3-4% suffer severe symptoms. Cramps, breast tenderness, bloating, weepiness and mood swings are usual whilst other symptoms include a general disinterest in daily activities, trouble with concentration, binge eating and sleep disturbances. Whilst the underlying cause of PMS is not completely understood it is thought that fluctuations in the hormone progesterone, and its interaction with the neurotransmitters, serotonin and GABA seem to be connected together with blood sugar imbalances and diets high in sugar, caffeine and alcohol. To ease PMS symptoms I would recommend:

Reduce blood sugar imbalances by eating little and often, choose meals based around complex carbohydrates combined with protein (e.g. porridge topped with nuts, chicken on granary bread or fish with sweet potato). Reduce your salt intake to reduce water retention and increase physical activity – as little as 30 minutes of moderate

exercise daily has shown an improvement in PMS symptoms – so get moving! Consider increasing your dietary intake of calcium, magnesium and B Complex. There is a link between a lower dietary intake of calcium and magnesium and symptoms of PMS. Calcium, in combination with magnesium, regulates muscular contractions whilst vitamin B6 is required for the synthesis of the “feel good” neurotransmitter serotonin. There is some evidence that vitamin B6 may improve symptoms of PMS such as breast pain or tenderness and PMS-related depression or anxiety but excessive doses of B6 should be avoided. Good food sources of the above include organic green cruciferous vegetables, sweet and baked potatoes, bananas, pulses, oats, chicken or pork, avocado, salmon, tuna, peanut butter, eggs and liver. Include omega 3 and 6 in your diet – both are used by the body to synthesise a hormone known to reduce inflammation and may help PMS sufferers. Omega 6/GLA is found in oily fish like salmon and mackerel but a richer source comes from starflower oil and evening

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primrose. Omega 3 is abundant in oily fish. The herbal remedy, chasteberry, also known as *Agnus Castus* is widely used to treat female hormone imbalances. A trial was conducted with 178 women suffering from PMS, in which the participants were given either 20mg of chasteberry or a placebo (dummy) tablet for 3 months. The researchers reported that in the chasteberry group, scores evaluating irritability, mood, anger, headache and breast fullness all

significantly improved compared to the placebo group - more than half of women had at least a 50% reduction in symptoms.

**This information is offered for general guidance only. It is recommended that you consult your GP and/or a qualified nutritional practitioner before embarking on a new regime or take any form of nutritional supplementation, especially if you use prescriptive medication.**

#### **Beetroot, Fennel and Lentil Salad (serves 6)**

3 medium beetroot, trimmed  
1 tablespoon olive oil  
1 medium fennel bulb  
400g can brown lentils, rinsed and drained  
100g wild rocket leaves  
200g traditional feta cheese, or cooked turkey/chicken breast – optional

Preheat oven to 180c. Combine beetroot in small baking tray with oil and bake for about 1 hour, or until tender. When cool, peel the beetroot and chop coarsely. Slice fennel bulb finely.

Toss fennel, lentils and rocket in a bowl, adding olive oil and lemon dressing. Place beetroot on top, with cheese or meat (optional).

#### **Olivia's Pea Soup (serves 4)**

2 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped  
1 litre vegetable stock  
1 onion, peeled and chopped  
1 carrot, scrubbed and diced  
1 potato, peeled and cubed  
500g frozen peas

Peas are a good source of vitamin A, vitamin C, folate, thiamine (B1), iron and phosphorus.

Place 1 litre of vegetable stock in large pan, add garlic, carrot, potato and onion. Simmer for about 10 - 15 minutes. Add frozen peas and simmer for further 5 minutes. Blend using the electric hand blender until the soup is smooth, or to a consistency you like. Add more water if required and re-heat gently. Season to taste.

Naturopathic health practitioner with over 10 years experience blending nutritional therapy with holistic body treatments. Specialising in fertility issues, pregnancy, children's health and stress related disorders.

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