

&gt;&gt;YOUR SIX-PAGE WEEKLY SECTION

HERALD

## family &amp; health

## NUTRITION

## ASK ELSA

**Q** I'm trying to be healthy and eat more fruit. I tend to go for fruit juices instead of eating pieces of fruit, is there any difference from a health point of view?

**A** Yes, there is. In fact, there are many reasons why whole fruit yields more health benefits than fruit juice, particularly if the juice comes from a carton or plastic bottle.

In the processing of fruit juice the fruit is dehydrated and then reconstituted to produce the juice, this process means that many of the vitamins, minerals and antioxidants are lost in the heating process.

Whole fruit contains beneficial fibre for healthy bowel function, whereas juice has had the fibre removed. Fruits also encourage the health and strengthening of the teeth and gums (particularly apples) due to the action of chewing and the production of enzymes in the mouth.

Fruits contain natural sugars (fructose) to give energy whereas the sugars in fruit juice are concentrated with added sucrose, which can wreak havoc on our blood sugar levels. Imbalanced blood sugar levels can lead to energy dips, sweet cravings and weight gain.

If you want to continue drinking juices, I suggest that you make them yourself in a juicer and combine both fruit and vegetables into the mix. See my website for some healthy juice ideas.

**Q** I'd like to improve my gut and digestive health. I constantly see ads for probiotic yogurts and drinks which claim to improve digestion, bloating, etc. Can you explain what these products actually do and would you recommend them?

**A** The probiotic culture added to yogurt is essentially good bacteria. Your gut contains 'good' and 'bad' bacteria and the aim is to increase the amount of good bacteria to improve digestion, immunity and overall health. However, the drawback with the majority of these yogurt/drinks is that they also contain lots of added sugar which, in effect, cancels out the benefit of the probiotic cultures. This is because bad bacteria feed off sugar, so while you are putting in good bacteria, you are simultaneously feeding the bad. Some brands on the market offer a 'light' alternative in which sugar is replaced with artificial sweeteners, which are also bad news for health.

Stick to natural probiotic yogurts which have no sugar added; Glenisk do a good range. To improve gut health eat a diet which is low in sugar, yeasts and alcohol. Eat plenty of prebiotic foods such as oats, onion, leek, asparagus, garlic and legumes. These foods actually feed the good bacteria in the gut. Think of them as 'fertiliser' for good bacteria. You might also benefit from taking a good quality probiotic supplement.

*Elsa Jones is a nutritional therapist and presenter of 'How Healthy are You?' on TV3. Elsa offers one-to-one consultations and group nutrition courses.*

[www.elsajonesnutrition.ie](http://www.elsajonesnutrition.ie)

## TESTING THE ALTERNATIVES

SOMETIMES TRADITIONAL MEDICINE DOESN'T SOLVE ALL LIFE'S WOES, SO HOLLY WHITE LOOKED AT WHAT ELSE IS OUT THERE



**WHAT'S ON THE CARDS?** Holly with Christine Danielle who practises spiritual tarot reading

**H**AVE a friend who, following a bad break up, tumbled into a bout of depression. At first I assumed it was natural, but after a year it became harder to understand and sympathy turned to irritation. Little did I know she was doing everything she could to try to lift herself out of the daily sadness but was failing miserably.

Two years on, having done everything conventional medicine could prescribe, she found herself at the door of an energy healer, Rebecca Singleton in Kimmage, wondering what on earth she was doing.

Rebecca assessed the situation and stated that we all have bonds between the people we meet day-to-day, friends, family, co-workers and, of course, lovers. When someone directs ill will toward you, they can drain your energy. What followed was a process called 'cutting the ties', thereby releasing her from the sadness the situation had left her with.

My friend left feeling like a weight had been lifted from her shoulders and has never looked back. As much as I didn't quite 'get' what she had been through, I couldn't help but notice that my happy mate was back.

I was cynical and curious. The fact that Rebecca had 'cured' my friend in an hour, where other methods had failed, led me to explore more holistic therapies. So here's an outline of the therapies I've tried in the past year.

**>> ACUPUNCTURE**

**WHAT IS IT?** Acupuncture is a major part of Chinese medicine, which works in the knowledge that the body has 14 energetic meridians. When these become blocked, due to muscle tension, emotional pain, poor diet or poor lifestyle, the body is not functioning at its optimum.

Acupuncturist Anne Hughes places fine needles to stimulate the energetic channels.