

KEEP TAKING THE PILLS!

As you get older, it's well known that men get colds far worse than women. In fact we don't get colds: we get flu. And when flu is around, we get pneumonia or pleurisy. Last year I had two colds and with all that suffering, I think I was lucky that I didn't end up in hospital. My family think so too, but for a different reason.

My family suggested that I might want to start taking some health supplements to improve my overall immunity and constitution. They don't usually take so much interest in keeping me alive so I suspect their motives. Anyway, for my own well-being, I decided to heed their advice and sent off for a brochure.

The brochure duly arrived. Be warned. You need to be fit to pick it up - it weighed a ton. I actually felt a twinge in my back when I picked it up, but I felt comforted by its mere presence. Leafing through, I saw that they seemed to sell something for everything that could possibly go wrong. There was even something specifically for women so they can 'be in control' when they sneeze, laugh, cough or pick up heavy weights. I didn't quite understand that bit, as women always seem to be in control.

I wasted no time in detailed reading of the catalogue, particularly as I felt a sniffle coming on. It would be nice to nip it in the bud so to say. But the more I read then the more perplexed I became. It was complex.

The catalogue started off in the intestinal area. To start, there were the friendly bacteria that we apparently need. How do we tell that they are friendly when we can't see them? I selected 'Acidophilus Super 20 Billion', equivalent to 40 full pots of live yoghurt in each capsule. Dose, two capsules a day. Daily cost 60p. Another highly recommended product was soluble fibre to keep your gut regular. Daily cost 20p. These were closely followed by Turmeric tablets for 'bloating and runny tummy', two a day at a cost of 40p, Artichoke to help the system tackle rich food, 3 a day at 20p a day; Ginger Capsules to keep a settled digestion, 3 a day at 25p a day; Bromelain capsules to aid digestion, 3 a day at a cost of 75p; Peppermint Capsules to sooth the gut at 3 a day at a cost of 15p. Finally, they recommended two capsules a day of natural plant extracts to 'maintain a healthy balance in the gut', but not your bank account, at a daily cost of 50p.

To help the memory, (you'll need it just to remember to take which tablet for what for your gut), Ginko Biloba with other herbs was suggested, 2 tablets a day at a cost of 22p. Allied to this is are antioxidants: high strength Lutein tablets, 2 a day at 50p; Selenium, 1 tablet a day at a cost of 20p and Green Tea Tablets, 2 a day, cost 50p.

The vitamins proved just as difficult. High strength vitamin C at two tablets a day cost 20p. The complete range of Vitamin B entails 12 capsules or tablets at a daily cost of 71p. Vitamin E adds another 2 capsules and 20p a day.

By this time I was ready to throw in the towel but there were still the miscellaneous things that were recommended for a healthy life and a boosted immune system. They must work. All the models in the brochure looked healthy and were smiling. For the joints I needed 3 tablets a day of Glucosamine. Cost 18p. A combination of magnesium and calcium tablets at 2 a day at a cost of 22p was also needed. Three garlic tablets, guaranteed to be odour free were necessary at a cost of 9p. A zinc capsule a day at 3p was a snip I thought. Ging Seng, 2 a day at 30p seemed reasonable, as did 1 Echinacea a day at 19p. Co-enzyme Q10, 1 a day at 45p was apparently essential. How I've managed without it until now, heaven knows. I felt better just ordering it. Even I knew that high strength fish oil was essential at 3 capsules a day for 30p.

There were of course more exotic things. One that did catch my eye was for 'men's problems'. Recommended was Saw Palmetto, to 'keep your prostate happy'. Saw Palmetto sounds to me the sort of thing you might find in a Mexican B&Q. But how do you know if your prostate is unhappy in the first place? And what if your prostate is quite happy at the moment and doesn't want to be any happier and you take the tablets? 'Mike to prostate, are you receiving me, over?' No response. Perhaps I'll e-mail. Is this what they mean by communicating with your body? I've ordered some anyway, 3 a day at 40p.

I'm now waiting for the order to arrive. It's worrying me sick as to where I'm going to store them all and how I'm going to remember to take all of the 59 tablets a day. I'm quite worried about the cost as well, £7.54 a day. That's £226.20 a month or £2714.4 a year. Perhaps I should order some St John's Wort to get over my depression. On the other hand, if I cancel the order that will be £2714.4 I'll save. I've lived without them until now, so what difference will a few more years make? I feel better already! Where's the travel brochures, I'm off to Tenerife. Ciao!