

Healthy aging: You are what you eat, drink, sleep, exercises and practice: says Naturopathic expert, Ronnie Plant.

I retired from the day job 25 years ago. But in fairness I am not the retiring type, so I turned my hand to what had been one of my hobbies for the previous 30 years or so, natural healthcare. Over the years I had made notes of my findings on certain complaints, natural cures including home cures, the use of vitamins and herbs and so on. A phone call from somebody here and there combined with the odd article in the paper resulted in my building a near full time practice as a Naturopath which I continued up to two years ago. In the process I wrote and published two books. Now I only take phone calls from former clients.



Have I been healthy all those years? Yes, until last year, 2012 when I got pneumonia. Despite the pain I did not know I had it until April, when because of acute shortness of breath I was taken into hospital where I was kept for over 4 weeks. I had to have 3 litres of fluid removed from my lung. For months, from April to November I had no energy, felt terrible and could barely walk. Walking before that was my main hobby, sometimes walking up to 10 miles over a few hours. Despite eating and sleeping well I was not comfortable with life because of my exercise having been taken away.

I went into my local Health Shop as I had done many times over the years and told my story. The lady on duty that day is also a Therapist herself so I was extra lucky. She recommended I take Lung Liquecence each morning to support my lung and repair it following the stress it had undergone. Also take Mucous Liquecence in the evening to help do some drainage and clear excess mucous. For energy and immune system rebuilding, she then added Vibracell, a liquid multivitamin made from a selection of extracts of garden vegetables, fruits and herbs. Within a week I felt the difference, they not just helped, but later I came to the view that this combination were the key factors that helped me back to good health. In less than a month I walked 3 miles one day and gradually built it up. I was getting back to myself and my faith in what I believed in for 50 years had been restored. I had not previously known those particular products but I even felt proud when I found out later that the products were Irish made.

All this summer of 2013 I have done five miles a day in my favourite leisure spot, Kennedy Park Arboretum. What's more I have been back at yet another hobby, working with my fellow Pikemen, maintaining the park and other public places, works which we have done for more than 20 years. It's an important part of healthy aging. When I told my story to a colleague, he said 'you're a writer, people will want to hear from you. Now it's another hobby and pastime, writing, so back to the beginnings.

I was born and went to school in Co Wicklow. I had my first job as an apprentice in a drapers shop in Tinahely with a wage of two shillings and six pence per week. Happy to have it as I was big into athletics at the time. I ran in several track and field events and also did cross

country. There was no formal training like today, but you became fit as you cycled to events, sometimes as far away as 40 miles. I gave up tailoring and trained as an engineer. I think it was the internal energy level that prompted it, engineering and construction had more of the outdoors. I moved to live in North Clare. Kept up the athletics and ended up competing for titles in 5 Munster counties. I worked in Galway for a company that produced bitumen, in other words materials for taring roads. I worked hard, did well and in fact became works manager at the age of 26. It was a buzz time in Ireland, the roaring sixties. Cars were on the increase, as were televisions. County Councillors were on a roll as each one wanted not just the roads in their parish surfaced but the boreens also. Those new cars didn't like the traditional potholes.

As a competitive individual I was eager to win just like the companies owner. I was in every morning at 5.00am. Getting those trucks out on time to customers was the key objective. We wanted them to arrive at their destination before 10.00am and we had maybe up to 6 County Councils as customers at the time. It was also the period when the two big companies in the business merged, to form a national monopoly, which helped it become one of the great construction companies in the world today, CRH. So the few remaining independents had to work harder to remain competitive and win the business. After the trucks left the depot the few remaining including myself went to the canteen. Considering we were 3 hours or more at work we were able for the Full Irish. Good it was without doubt, but there was no extra virgin olive oil like today, it was a choice of lard or dripping that the food was cooked in.

A few years on I wasn't feeling so good, stomach pains, lower energy, not able for the track despite my interest. As wives do I was sent to the doctor. He prescribed antacids and something else. It was the era of the new pharmaceutical drugs, they were going to cure and solve everything. I talked about my stomach condition to my brother in law, Con O Riordan, he was a country GP in East Clare and would have had largely farm families as his patients. After a minute listening he said, hey you had better take it easier, shorten the day and give up that breakfast in the canteen. He added give up the canteen altogether and drive home for your dinner.

Well I took his advice. Soon after I packed up the job and moved to the UK. But I had learned something. Con was some years older than me he was already having doubts about the brilliance of those new medicines. He was big into ongoing education and went to lectures and conferences everywhere including the UK. All speakers at those events were either directly provided by or funded by pharmaceutical companies. They were selling a story but doctors were not finding the results they were promising. One UK based doctor he met remarked, you in Ireland still have traditional farming and clean food you should keep it that way. He was not exactly right, our farmers were replacing horse power with tractor power and fertilizer (then called bag manure) replaced farmyard manure. They were moving on.

My move to the UK gave me an interesting 30 years where I worked on a variety of engineering projects. But early on the most important outcome was the improvement in my health. The pains were gone my energy and enthusiasm was back. The health messages I received from Con had registered in my mind. As time spent on sports declined, time on reading and learning on health issues increased. Sadly we lost Con all too early. On his way to yet another conference he lost his life in a car accident outside Athlone. I talked to as many people in "the natural health sector", as I could find. They were few and far between in the 60s. They were thinkers outside the box going against the flow of the time. I made notes of everything new that I came across. That was invaluable when I came to write my second book, Health is Wealth. I met many, construction employees like myself, were also interested, they wanted to know more.

The side effects of drugs came up very frequently. We spent 8 years on the Channel Tunnel. It was a worrying time for many, they were away from home, a spouse or parent at home might be having treatment for cancer or some other disease. The employers were good, they had a good health service for workers, but it was all based on prescriptions.

On retirement I relocated to Wexford. Still full of energy I gave all my non-leisure time to health. I learned that the curiosity of the Irish had not changed but it had focused, they want accurate information. I had come to learn the importance of the basics and that became my mantra, **food, drink, sleep, exercise and spirit.**

Principle 1 -Food.

I often asked how land loving people on a green island become so disconnected from its source. Why did farmers give up kitchen gardens and buy their cabbage in a supermarket? Well I put it down to illusion. Hand outs from Brussels, cash transfers and subsidies were provided and intensification was encouraged, bigger farms and more output. Traditional Co-Ops became multinationals and the small artisan producers were forced out. International trade was a buzz word. Big multiple retailers wanted big producers only so industrial or factory farming developed on a widespread basis. I have looked at it over time and I believe it is grossly indecent for us as a society to treat animals for food production as we have done for the last 50 years. On the farm fertilisers and antibiotics are the norm then chemicals for colour, taste, shelf life are added during the processing. We all paid a price, toxic food. Obesity, diabetes, cancers, blindness, heart disease are all outcomes and they are all growing.¹ The solutions are in our own hands, big business and government always listen to consumers, but only when enough consumers speak. The word – euro- is the most powerful;

- Eat good food, buy organic if possible and ideally make sure it comes from your own or neighbouring county. Place emphasis on alkaline foods and minimise acidic foods.²
- Keep adequate balance between meat and vegetables and eat your vegetables raw if possible or in a lightly cooked state. Eat some fresh seasonal fruit every day.
- Avoid breaded and deep fried foods if at all possible.
- Use supplements they are important, as the extensive growing and processing deplete nutrients from the soil and natural enzymes from the food. Furthermore the body loses essential minerals and vitamins which need replenishment.
- Visit a suitable practitioner every year and have a test to identify detoxification needs and foods that are not suitable.

Principle 2 -Drink

Water is crucially important for good health.³ The body is 70% water which is utilised and needs replenishment continuously. So take in at least a litre a day and increase that during dry periods. But you need good quality water. Our water supplies are contaminated firstly by the State with fluoride.⁴ then we have nitrates from farms, chemicals from industry and medications such as oestrogens from the health sector. Business has responded to this with bottled water. In my view this could be worse situation than the kitchen tap, as water sits in

plastic bottles maybe for months on end. It's dead. There are many good books on water and its importance to health.

Solutions are available at very reasonable prices. Install a small home filter under the kitchen sink. Up to 90% of the toxic matter can be filtered out. You can then add a Vitaliser which will return the water to its original natural structure. The entire job lot can be done for about €1250. In the long run it is far less costly than bottled water.

Principle 3 -Sleep.

Recuperation and rejuvenation are essential. A good night's sleep is crucial to good health. If you cannot sleep well, try and think your way through why not. Is it some anxiety or worry on your mind or something you eat late that keeps you awake? Tired or distressed Adrenal Glands are key causes giving rise to sleeplessness. There is a homoeopathic called Adrenal Liquescence that will help your adrenal glands. Camomile tea can also be very helpful as a relaxant.

Principle 4 -Exercise.

This is very important no matter what your age. If you are not a regular exerciser do not rush into anything. A daily walk has the added advantage of fresh air, meeting the neighbours and keeping the brain active. Do some gardening if you can. Go out to the countryside as often as possible and connect with nature. But exercise of the body is not enough, you also need to do the same for the mind. Read the paper or books. Do the crossword, play bridge, activate your memory or engage in any pastime that activates and challenges the mind.

Principle 5 -Spirit

What do I mean by spirit? It is our connection with God. I think we have to practice spirit. We are all spiritual, and the spirit must be nourished and nurtured. It is not the same as religion. I think its dose not matter what religion you believe but I would say whatever religion you have or believe in, practice it. All the religions that I know are good in themselves, all have a good message. If its Church you attend, do so with commitment, if its praying you are, do so with purpose, if you want to make money it's a noble objective but ensure it is for the greater good. If you're a parent, recognise the privilege and if you are in employment do a fair days work. That's what I understand by spirituality.

This Principle is connected with all 4 above, it is consciousness, in other words practicing conscious living. Practicing spirit includes nourishing ourselves, nourishing our bodies, caring for our environment, our ecosystem, caring for the planet and all beings, plants and animals it sustains. Practicing spirit promotes internal wellbeing, promotes happiness, which in turn diminishes illness. Even the scientists tell us that now.

References

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About the Author

Ronnie Plant worked in the engineering and construction sectors. From the age of 30 he was interested in Naturopathic Practice and on retiring from industry set up in practice concentrating on natural nutrition. He is the author of two books, **Selling Sick** and **Health is Wealth**. He can be contacted by email at plantrf@eirccom.net

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