



Megan Sheppard

Do you have a question for Megan Sheppard?

Email it to feelgood@examiner.ie or send a letter to **Feelgood**, Irish Examiner, City Quarter, Lapps Quay, Cork.

I KNOW it's summer but I want to prepare for the shorter days ahead as I suffer from seasonal affective disorder (SAD). I would be grateful if you would let me know where light therapy boxes can be bought.

A. Traditional white light full-spectrum light boxes replicate mood-lifting sunshine — sunlight is made up of the full spectrum (hence the appearance of rainbows). The boxes are very effective, particularly in treating light-deficiency disorders. There has also been recent research into blue light spectrum treatment for depressive disorders, which has uncovered the effectiveness of a specific bandwidth of blue light. Both white and blue light boxes are proven to be effective in treating SAD, and other mood imbalances.

To buy a therapeutic light box, check out Brightbox Ltd (www.brighterday.ie; 01-2711877).

The organisation, www.sads.org.uk, endorses the use of natural products over drugs to treat SAD, and lists light box products which have been successful in clinical trials. According to its website, a light box must shine the correct levels of therapeutic light towards the user, using medically proven and certified, fully researched technology to provide a light treatment — the user must be awake at all times through the light treatment, and all bulb-based products must emit 10000 LUX at 15cm or more away from the user to be classed as a treatment device.

Q. I've had two hip replacements followed by a knee replacement. At present I have a lot of backache and pain down my right leg. My GP has prescribed Difene and Micardis Plus for blood pressure. I have started to attend an osteopath and he suggested glucosamine and chondroitin. My GP has referred me to an orthopaedic specialist for my right hip. I am 70 years old, active and have a good diet. I would like to discontinue the Difene. What do you think?

A. Chronic pain certainly takes a lot out of you — not only is it taxing on the body while you are up and about, it also prevents you from getting beneficial rest and recovery during the night. It certainly sounds as if you are on the right track with your GP and osteopath. Osteopathy and similar modalities can really help in cases where misalignment impinges on blood flow, nerve health, and ease of movement. The recommendation of glucosamine and chondroitin sounds like a good idea, since these supplements are more effective when taken together.

■ **NOTE:** The information contained above is not a substitute for medical advice. Always consult a doctor first.

Megan puts the spotlight on:

CATARACTS are believed to be a symptom of oxidative damage to the eye, so it makes sense to eat high-antioxidant dark berries such as blueberries, bilberries, and blackberries. These berries are great for eye health and work to prevent as well as stop the progression of cataracts.

Cataracts occur when the protein of the lens of the eye becomes damaged, which results in a clouding of the lens and vision. Far more common in smokers and diabetics, you can prevent further damage by taking a bilberry supplement.

Bilberries contain a bioflavonoid called anthocyanoside, which works to protect the retina and lens from oxidation. Anthocyanoside also improves

night vision, which is why it was popular with British air force pilots during the second world war. One study found that a supplement containing bilberry extract combined with vitamins C and E was able to reduce the progression of cataract formation in 97% of patients diagnosed with senile cortical cataracts.

Vitamin C works by activating vitamin E which then activates glutathione. Tripeptide is considered to be the most important antioxidant in the body. Not only does it regulate and regenerate immune cells, it is also crucial for DNA synthesis and



LIGHT FANTASTIC: Shorter days ahead may bring on seasonal affected disorder (SAD), but light therapy boxes can help in averting the symptoms. Picture: iStock

Glucosamine sulphate helps by providing the joints with elements to repair cartilage, tendons, and ligaments while chondroitin sulphate attracts the nutrients and fluids to the joints. Glucosamine and chondroitin are produced in our bodies naturally, but after injury a supplement can help maintain joint health.

Before you stop taking Difene, you will need to talk to your orthopaedic specialist. Coming off anti-inflammatory medication is typically very straightforward and there are some excellent herbal alternatives which have been shown to work as effectively as prescribed anti-inflammatory and pain relief meds.

Powerful herbal aids include turmeric, boswellia, ginger root, white willow bark, liquorice root, and cayenne. Arnica montana can be useful when applied externally, but should not be used internally unless it is in homeopathic form.

Q. A relative was diagnosed with acute onset scleroderma about two years ago. She has responded well to chemotherapy. Can you suggest any supportive therapies?

repair, detoxification, antiviral activity, amino acid transportation in the body, and protein and prostaglandin synthesis.

Vitamin E in itself is now seen to be of specific interest with regard to cataracts, since studies show that inadequate levels of this vitamin increase the risk of developing cataracts by four times.

Nuts, seeds, wholegrains, olives, leafy greens, and cold-pressed oils are good sources of vitamin E in the diet.

Lutein and zeaxanthin are two other antioxidants that are key nutrients in maintaining healthy vision and signif-

Her main problems are: back and joint pain, loss of mobility and reduced mobility in her fingers, alimentary canal is also affected. She has particular problems with inflamed gums. She is currently on pain medication — Butrans Patch 20mg plus Solpidine.

A. Scleroderma is named for the most visible aspect of this condition, a hardening of the skin. It is actually an autoimmune disorder which impacts all connective tissue within the body. The Little Herbal Company has put together a herbal supplement called Simba, containing Hypoxis Hemerocallidea (also known as African Potato). This supplement is used in treating autoimmune disorders such as lupus, chronic fatigue, asthma, and multiple sclerosis, because it is an immune modulator — it works to balance the immune system to become more or less active, depending on needs. Follow the directions carefully.

It will take around a month or two for her immune system to respond to Simba, and is worth taking for at least six months for best results. Simba costs £27 for 90 capsules from The Little Herbal Company (www.littleherbal-international.co.nz; 00-44-1484-689807).

Autoimmune disorders are triggered by the immune system identifying the tissues, organs, and natural substances within the body as pathogenic, so instead of defending against foreign bodies, it is working against itself. By addressing underlying causes, you can assist the body in normalising the immune response.

Underlying factors include infections, even those which occur without the host being aware of them. Candida albicans overgrowth is a common problem in autoimmune disorders. Also, environmental pollutants such as heavy metals, pesticides, etc.

To address infection, detoxification and deficiencies, it's important to supplement with vitamins C and D3. Vitamin D3 is available from health stores. Vitamin D is a hormone and most people in Ireland have a vitamin D deficiency, thought to be a factor in conditions such as alopecia areata, psoriasis, IBS, diabetes, sleep troubles, asthma, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, gum disease, mood disorders, thyroid imbalance, multiple sclerosis (MS), some cancers, and a decrease in bone density and immune functioning. Supplementation with D3 may also help with the gum inflammation you mention.

Choose a high quality vitamin C supplement, such as Solgar's Ester-C Plus 500 mg (100 vegcaps cost €23.01), and take 3-4g daily (3000-4000mg) in 500mg increments.

Coping with Cataracts

icantly reduce the rate of macular degeneration.

Leafy green vegetables are high in lutein, while eggs and brightly coloured vegetables and fruits are rich in zeaxanthin.

Bilberry products are available from Nature's Way stores (056-65896), in both capsule and liquid form.

Orthomol's Vision AMD is a supplement which has been put together to help treat both age-related macular degeneration and cataract development.

These capsules not only contain vitamins A, C, E, lutein and zeaxanthin, but also the crucial B-vitamins, vitamin D3, a lot of bioflavonoids, beta-carotene and lycopene, trace elements, essential fatty acids and amino acids.

