



# THE **BIG** CRUNCH

If stress is taking its toll on you physically and mentally, you might find your pick-me-up in a vitamin pill

BY KERRY DIMMER



**T**here's no denying that nature has provided for us very well. Had we continued to live a primitive lifestyle we would

be eating an abundance of fresh fruit, berries, vegetables, fish and meat, and as an added benefit, we would have kept fit by foraging and hunting for our food.

Our sophisticated and modern lifestyle is, however, enormously unhealthy due largely to the highly processed, refined and manufactured foodstuffs we consume; the easy availability of ready-prepared take-home meals in plastic containers; and the limited time available for shopping and cooking. A booming industry developed as a result, with the solution of providing vitamins and minerals lacking in the body, with a tablet, a quick fix if you like, but with long-term benefits.

Business people are among the most targeted group of those requiring vitamins and minerals. Manufacturers of nutritional replacement products are aware of the long hours and mental fatigue experienced by those who work in stressful and cut-throat environments. They are also cognisant of the fact that most business people tend to overexert themselves physically at the gym or participate in competitive sports to take the so-called edge off the pressures they face.

But even following a balanced diet and exercising regularly cannot guarantee perfect health given the amount of radioactive radiation we are exposed to from the use of cellphones, wireless devices, microwaves and global positioning systems. We cannot see, feel or hear radio waves but medical reports suggest that these instruments affect our brain activity, blood pressure, heart rate, even fertility. Worse are the effects of fatigue and possible insomnia.

The point is that you can crunch the numbers, crunch the abs and crunch the lettuce and you still won't achieve optimum health and that is precisely why nutritionists, like Vanessa Ascencio of OTC Pharma, highly recommend vitamins and supplements and, in particular, as she refers to it, the miracle that is Spirulina.

'The nutritional profile of Spirulina is like nothing I've seen before. The research that has been undertaken on this food source is remarkable, from successfully treating Chernobyl victims who endured radiation exposure to a comprehensive independent study by NASA looking at Spirulina as a food source for astronauts. The UN and the World Health Organisation have both declared the product as the best food for tomorrow and greatest superfood on earth.

'NASA's initial reports found that 1 kg of Spirulina is the nutritional equivalent 1 000 kg of assorted vegetables or simply put, one gram of Spirulina is equivalent to 1 kg of vegetables,' explains Ascencio.

'The study further proved that Spirulina has dramatic results in combating the effects of radiation exposure, improves the functioning of the thyroid and, in fact, the entire endocrine system. When the endocrine system is suppressed the body manifests symptoms of burnout, adrenal fatigue and stress, and loses the ability to absorb nutrients effectively.'

These indicators accurately reflect the general business professional's health status but, as Ursula Struwig, consulting pharmacist for the Dis-Chem group of pharmacies points out: 'We have become used to feeling fatigue and stress, and perhaps are no longer able to recognise the signs of a body in distress.

'Complementary aids like vitamins are an extremely safe way of looking after your health over a long period. There are so many studies and clinical trials that our knowledge about complimentary medicine has increased substantially, proving that vitamins and supplements can prevent diseases, effectively control body function and improve the quality of life.'

But critics say that we're stimulating optimal functioning of the body with an unnatural version of the mineral or vitamin supplement because so many are synthetically produced. ➔



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**PATRICK HOLFORD**  
INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED HEALTH GURU

'I don't differentiate between organic vitamins and synthetic ones,' says Struwig. 'The molecular structure of vitamin C is almost the same whether it is copied or natural. The difference is so marginal that it's just not worth the worry.'

The choice of which vitamin to choose is difficult as it is without being confronted with shelf on shelf of a myriad mixtures and dosage recommendations. Ascencio is pro those products that are closer to natural form and Struwig recommends slow-release capsules. Both options translate into more nutrients being absorbed by the body as opposed to the body only taking what it needs at the time of dosage and disposing of the excess.

Yet another aspect that Ascencio considers important is packaging. 'Glass is the ideal manner in which to store vitamins because it offers the best protection against the damaging UVA and UVB rays of visible light.'

Most nutritionists agree that without professional advice, knowing what vitamins your body lacks is somewhat difficult but all agree that a good starting point is a multivitamin, combined with, suggests internationally acclaimed health guru, Patrick Holford, vitamin C and essential fats twice a day.

'That's the cornerstone of a good supplement programme,' he told me. 'But it's vital to get the right dose. For example, a good multivitamin should give you 10 mg of zinc, at least 100 mg of magnesium, plus 20 mg or more of the main B vitamins, 10 mcg of B12 and 15 mcg of vitamin D. These are the vitamins we are most often deficient in.'


There are times, however, when the body is put under more strain and a multivitamin just isn't enough to counteract the effects of stress, physical endurance and recovery from illness, not forgetting mental agility.

When a body is under stress, Holford points out that blood sugar levels are all over the place. 'Chromium helps to stabilise blood sugar, especially in combination with cinnamon,' he says. 'If you're looking for the best supplements to keep your mind sharp and flexible, you'll need essential fats and

phospholipids which make up 60% of the dry weight of the brain.' Such fats and phospholipids can be found in omega 3 and 6.

'If you participate in demanding or excessive sport, the immune system may become depressed if you don't take in enough antioxidant nutrients. The same is true after an infection,' says Holford. He recommends two grams of vitamin C daily as well as zinc, black elderberry and an African ginger extract called Immune C. Extreme burnout can be treated with the amino acid tyrosine for a natural boost while promoting sleep, and relaxation can be achieved with the amino acid GABA to switch off adrenalin.

Bear in mind that there is no quick fix when it comes to vitamins – the best result comes from extended use. Vitamins too, are becoming increasingly popular not just for the protection they offer against the effects of hectic lifestyles but also the anti-aging properties that come from being as close to optimum health as possible.

If you multiply the health-stimulating benefits by the number of studies that are well-documented proving that vitamins and supplements can, and do, protect us against heart disease, cancer and other debilitating diseases and discomforts, then who wouldn't want to benefit from them? 



## A BETTER PILL TO SWALLOW

Sapa reported in March that the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has joined an EU consortium to research the safety of plant food supplements, including vitamins. This is currently an unregulated industry in SA. It is hoped that better guidelines and a more regulated environment will help to curb the advertising of plant food supplements as cures for medical conditions such as HIV/Aids or TB.

CSIR project co-ordinator Paulo Meoni says this four-year study will also analyse the benefits and risks associated with plant food supplements. CSIR noted that one of the risks associated with plant food supplements is their effect on prescription drugs. 'Sometimes food supplements may interact with the activity of drugs ... they could decrease the effect of the drug or increase its side effects,' says Meoni.



# IN THE MARKET

A round-up of the latest JSE news, by Kerry Dimmer

## FAST, FASTER, FASTEST

Imagine executing transactions at 400 times faster than is currently possible! In February the JSE announced that it had concluded a licensing agreement with technology solutions provider MillenniumIT to move its equity market trading activity onto Millennium Exchange.

The agreement will see the JSE's trading system relocated from London to Johannesburg, enhancing operational efficiencies and ensuring trading optimisation for market participants.

Leanne Parsons, JSE COO and head of the Equity Market, is confident that the adoption of the new trading system in 2012 will increase the equity volumes traded – and therefore liquidity – on the JSE.

'In our experience, whenever we take a step forward with our trading technology, trading volumes also follow,' she says. 'If we want to remain a world-class and relevant exchange in a highly competitive industry, we must remain abreast of technological advances.'

One of the reasons behind the decision to relocate the trading engine to Johannesburg was for the increased operational stability that this move would offer.

## SHOWING ON A SCREEN NEAR YOU

Existing on-screen derivatives rules at the JSE have been expanded to include a further 10 instruments that will boost trade in the equity derivatives market. This is in a bid to improve transparency and honour a maturing market that has an ever-expanding product range.

'On-screen trading is an important step in growing and deepening our market,' says JSE director of Derivatives Trading, Allan Thomson. 'As seen in other derivatives environments, the implementation of a central order book, resultant transparency and increased competition fuels the growth of a market.'

All trades smaller or equal to the stated minimums will now have to be traded on Nutron, the equity derivatives trading platform. Minimum off-market trading rules already apply to certain equity derivatives contracts that are derived from constituents of the FTSE/JSE Top 40 Index.

## FRIPPING GOOD SECURITY

The financial statements of all JSE-listed companies will be reviewed at least once every five years. This equates to 80 organisations being reviewed annually by the Financial Reporting Investigation Panel (Frip). Previously, reviews were conducted on the JSE's own initiative or motivated by a complaint or query.

The JSE's market securities regulation has already been judged best in the world, so upping the standard will ensure it not only maintains high levels of integrity, but provides shareholders with the benefits that come from an improved regulated market.

'This will also further protect the interests of investors. The provision of a fair and structured regulatory service also means issuers will find it an effective means to ensure they are complying with reporting requirements,' says Russell Loubser, CEO of the JSE.

Frip, an advisory panel of 16 accounting firms, is to be assisted initially by the Department of Accountancy at the University of Johannesburg and may be expanded to include assistance from other universities.



# THE BEE BUZZ

Sasol's Inzalo BEE share programme is the first to list on the JSE's new BEE Share Scheme Trading Facility. Created to serve the needs of SA-listed companies that comply with legislated BEE principles, the BEE scheme shares listing will provide shareholders with access to regulated market benefits, including greater transparency with regards to traded price, anonymity between trading parties, improved price discovery, guaranteeing of settlement and ease of transfer of ownership.

The JSE will only list shares that companies indicate are held by people defined as BEE-compliant and that comply with the JSE listing requirements. This means that companies must know their obligations when listing BEE scheme shares and are required to provide proof that they belong to the designated groups.

Nolitha Fakude, Sasol's executive director, says that the listing of Sasol Inzalo is in line with its commitment to broad-based shareholder development. 'By listing on the JSE, many Sasol Inzalo shareholders will be exposed to the trading process on the JSE for the first time, empowering them with the knowledge to use in future share trading.'

BEE schemes shares will be classified under the FTSE/JSE Africa Index Series Ground Rules and may ultimately result in a new index being created specifically for BEE traders.

# ANY DAY IS GOOD

Wholesale investors looking to hedge currency risk with increased precision now have the flexibility of choosing the expiry date of currency futures and options contracts within the foreign currency framework. Called Any Day Expiry it's been designed for investors trading a minimum exposure of one million of the foreign underlying – for example, \$1 million or £1 million.

'Any Day Expiry,' says JSE general manager of Derivatives Trading Warren Geers, 'satisfies the needs of hedge fund managers working on a short-term currency strategy particularly well, or those in the import and export environment who would like to match exact expiry dates with those of the delivery of goods.'

As the contract is traded on exchange, the Any Day Expiry reduces risk management. In contrast, traditional over-the-counter derivatives have a number of counterparty risks coupled to opaque pricing.