



Healthy Living with *Cujo*

Because your pup needs
you to be in fine fettle...



YOUR GUIDE TO LIFELONG HEALTH GUIDELINES & INFORMATION





From Head Coach

Ally van de Pol

Certified Holistic Nutritionist, Naturopath In Training & Certified Fitness Expert

As well as eating well and exercising regularly, there are a number of lifestyle practices that affect our overall health, that we need to be aware of. I talk about it in terms of layers of an onion; no one health practice will guarantee lifelong health, however implementing a number of these will help to keep your health on an even keel for the rest of your life.

www.dragonfitnessandcoaching.com

ally@dragonfitnessandcoaching.com

Water

Water is essential for life on earth and for human health. Drinking 1.5-2 litres of water every day (more if it's hot or you are exercising) is one of the most important things you can do every day to keep you healthy. It's important that you drink filtered water as most tap water often contains chemicals, heavy metals and even antibiotics. Adding a filter to your shower is a simple improvement that you can make to reduce absorption of chemicals through your skin.

Dehydration can cause the following; irritability, mental fuzziness, depression, anginal pain, fibromyalgia, cravings, hypertension, diabetes, lupus, psoriasis, anxiety, headache & migraine, heartburn, joint and back pain, constipation and colitis, cramps, allergies, autoimmune diseases, asthma, metabolism reduction which can lead to weight gain and chronic fatigue.

Sleep



Rest

As well as prioritising sleep, getting adequate rest and taking your body into the parasympathetic nervous system (the rest and digest mode), rather than the sympathetic nervous system (fight or flight), regularly is important. Interspersing your day with meditation or mindful activities can help. Taking up a creative hobby often enables people to calm down from their stressful busy lives.

Sleep is when we rest and repair and process our feelings and emotions from the day. Many people think that they can ‘sleep when they are dead’, however a reduction in sleep duration and quality can cause the following; high blood pressure, diabetes, heart attack, heart failure or stroke. Other potential problems are obesity, depression, weakened immune system, trouble with thinking and concentrating, impacting short and long term memory and lower sex drive, as well as irritability and moodiness

A lack of sleep stresses your body and affects your hormones which control feelings of hunger and fullness, you might also feel too tired to exercise. You also release more cortisol and insulin, both can promote fat storage.

Sleep quality is just as important as spending enough time in bed, computer and phone screens can interrupt your circadian rhythm, suppressing the release of melatonin, making it more difficult to fall asleep and stay asleep.

Alcohol

Alcohol is a socially acceptable drug, but a drug nonetheless. It is used to bond people, is a relaxant and is at the heart of many social situations particularly celebrations. However it is a known carcinogen, damages the heart and liver and can cause depression. It can increase the risk of osteoporosis, disrupt sleep patterns and can lead to weight gain. Alcohol can cloud judgement, leading to destructive decisions such as smoking or eating less than healthful food.

Alcohol, ideally should be drunk only in moderation and in celebration. If you feel that your consumption exceeds this, it may be worthwhile to keep an alcohol diary, noting why you drink and the quantity. Letting go of alcohol completely or for a set amount time, can help you to re-evaluate your relationship with drink.



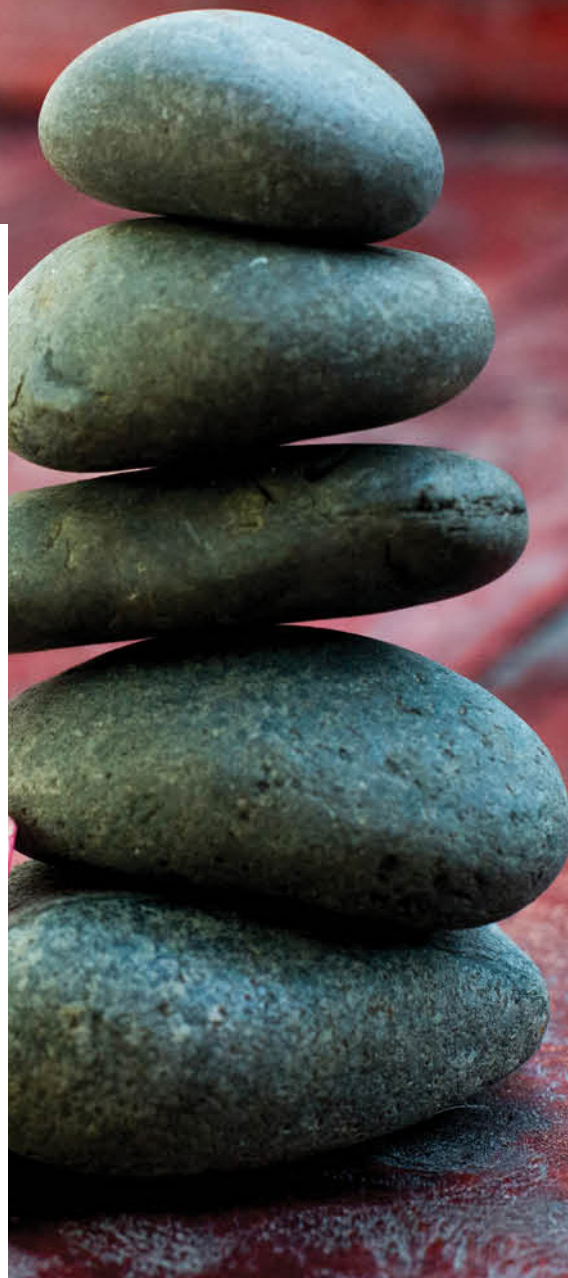
Reducing Chemicals

Chemicals are endocrine disruptors and carcinogens. Reducing the chemical load on our bodies by using only natural products on our skin and to clean our houses can again peel away one more layer of the onion.



Mental Health

With today's stressful lifestyle, mental health issues such as depression and anxiety are often pushed under the carpet. Many people carry around baggage from past emotional events (consciously or subconsciously) and having to process those feelings on a daily basis can be stressful and exhausting. They may also acidify the body so much that chronic conditions appear, or refuse to disappear. Examining all aspects of your life to see which areas are negatively impacting your mental health are advised, often just improving diet, increasing exercise and reducing alcohol can make a big difference. Sometimes psychotherapy is required and can be beneficial to work out the root causes of past stressors.



Positive Relationships Sense of Community

Surrounding oneself with positive people can make a big difference to stress and dopamine levels. Extricating from negative relationships can have a positive long term effect on overall health. Having a good sense of community is also important, knowing that you can rely on your neighbours and that they will support you in your endeavours is key.

Sense of Purpose

Having meaning in your life, the reason to get up in the morning, feeling like you make a difference to the world is important. If you feel like you are flip-flopping through life, leaving your soul at your work door every day, gradually it will take a toll on your mental health. If this is how you feel, develop a game plan to change; this may take time and retraining but it will be worth it in the long run. Too many suffer chronic health conditions which can be blamed upon their jobs.



Living in the Present

We are constantly on the go, running from one task and project to the other. Rarely do we appreciate and accept our current moment. Often we resist what is happening to us right now, causing stress. Life is never always perfect and joyful, that is not what life is all about, but periods of stress and unhappiness do pass. Changing mindset and accepting that the situation is happening can really help. In addition, if we can enjoy or be enthusiastic about our experiences, it makes our lives just that little bit more happier.



Being Aware When Things Just Aren't Quite Right in Your Body

All too often people neglect to address pain or issues that are crying out for a visit to the doctor, or to change the lifestyle. Pain and minor conditions are often the warning light on your car's dashboard, metaphorically speaking. We carry on as usual, eating badly, sleeping poorly, drinking too much, not exercising etc and then wonder why we get a chronic health condition a number of years later.

Chronic Health Conditions

If you have a chronic health condition, especially if you are taking drugs for it, it's wise to see if you can correct the issue through correcting your diet and lifestyle. The drugs you are taking for your health condition are unlikely to cure it, they will subdue the symptoms and only give you side effects. It's like popping a piece of tape over the warning light that's coming on your car dashboard.

Listen to your body; if something doesn't feel right, it typically isn't and try not to take drugs unless absolutely necessary. Drugs are just a band-aid and will rarely fix the underlying problem. Seek out a holistic practitioner, like a naturopath or functional medical practitioner, who will look at you as a whole person and will seek to find the root cause of any issue you are experiencing.



My Story



I've been athletic my whole life. Starting with gymnastics as a child, onto track and field as a teen(high jump and 400-1500m). In my twenties running was replaced by the gym and step aerobics. In my 30s running made a re-appearance, this time increasing distances all the way to half marathons, as did dragon boating, boxing and more gym. When I arrived in HK I discovered the joys of trail running. In my 40s I retrained as a personal trainer, taking my love for training friends into a business, shortly after qualifying as a holistic nutritionist.

My interest in food was there early on - I took a Home Economics A level (along with English and Biology)and was cooking decent cakes at the tender age of ten.

However eating fruit and veggies regularly didn't appear until later on. My mum would often keep me at the dinner table until I'd eaten a spoonful of cabbage! I stubborn and I was there a long time! I would only willingly eat raw carrots , oranges and apples as a child, however in my 20s when I lived with my first husband, I started hosting dinner parties and my repertoire developed. By my 30s I was interested in making recipes healthier and using whole ingredients.

I ate animal products up until June 2017, when I finally decided to experiment with taking them out. I had been

diagnosed with Hashimoto's Thyroiditis in March 2017 and I wanted to cure myself. The documentaries I was watching, the studies I was undertaking all pinpointed in the same direction; animal products cause inflammation, acidity and ultimately disease.

"I wanted to follow a diet that was anti inflammatory, made me feel great, gave me the nutrition I needed and would also fuel my training."

I lost 3 kg in the first month, becoming leaner than I had in a long while, all effortlessly while enjoying the food and never going hungry... I felt great and didn't miss anything.

This flew in the face of the advice I'd been receiving from other trainers, the powers that be and 'common science'. But slowly I found other sources out there; athletes and trainers who were plant based, looked great and performed amazingly. I also armed myself with a lot of scientific knowledge which proved to me I was on the right path.

At the time of writing I'm two years shy of fifty and I'm in the shape of my life, better than in my 20s, greatly assisted by my plant based diet, along with running, dog walking (we have five!) and functional strength training. My numbers for my Hashimotos have been reducing steadily and I want to get the condition into remission within the next two years.

This guide is all about transitioning to a more plant-based way of eating; be it 100% or 25%. Adding more plant foods into your diet will only do your health and your waistline good.

Who Is Cujo?

Cujo is my nine year old fifty kilo German Shepherd who we rescued from the government kennels (just days away from being put to sleep). His first 5 years were kept outside on a chain. When we adopted him he was in a bad way; his skin was terrible, he had to have two teeth removed, he was under nourished and just plain sad.

Roll the clock forward four years and he's a pampered pooch who snores a lot and loves riding in the car. As he's never far away when I'm working, this guide is dedicated to him.

