

PR UPDATE



What's hot this summer?

CCD PR's **Justin Clark**, identifies some new trends set to hit health stores this summer.

With the sunshine comes outdoor activities and many people start to think about being fitter, healthier and more energised.

In this digital age, everyone now looks for support that is very personalised. We want something that is designed specifically for the particular activity that we have chosen to do, such as the right shoes, the right clothing and the right instruction. If people could find nutrition that has been selected for them for their exercise/sport, then this would be a compelling reason to buy.

So, why not create a chart with a nutritionist that selects the type of products and food/drink that would be really beneficial for each summer sport/exercise? You could also add how these help with cardiovascular, muscle building, hydrating, recovery, endurance, pre-training etc.

You could also select a sport each week through the summer, perhaps in the lead up to big events, for example, tennis in the week before Wimbledon, and post through your social media different nutrition aspects for that sport/exercise each day.

If you have a blog, your social media posts could have links to your chart on a blog. If you don't have a blog, then you can create one very easily through one of the blogger websites – search for 'best blogging sites' on techradar.com to read reviews of the main ones.

It is worth then checking the Google Analytics of who visits the blog to see where they are coming from and then focusing on these sources (to learn how to set this up, search for 'Google Analytics' and it will take you through set up and use).

Once this is set up, then you could take it a step further by finding out about the activities that the local gyms and clubs in the area offer. These gyms and clubs would be delighted with links from your site and would probably give reciprocal links in return and post about you on their social media, giving you a much wider reach in the local area and support your website SEO.

If you have a good following on your social media channels, you could do a Facebook Live or Twitter question and answer session with you and/or a nutritionist on the sport of the week, perhaps giving away a number of packages of products, collected for that sport/exercise, to entice people to join in.

Google and other search engines reward websites that refresh their content regularly and new blogs are a great way to do this. Your website will then appear much higher up the list on the search pages.



The time to come together

Phil Costigan, General Secretary of the Irish Health Trade Association (IHTA), discusses the current healthcare crisis and the importance of the natural health industry.

Health policy makers and the natural health industry, is it time to be reading from the same page?

The European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Vytenis Andriukaitis, spoke recently in Dublin to the Oireachtas (Irish parliament) Health Committee. In his speech, he said: "I believe the time has come to focus efforts on promoting good health; so that people can live and work in good health, and continue contributing to society as they grow older."

He went on to state that investing in people's good health pays off in terms of fostering a productive workforce, preventing avoidable chronic diseases with its accompanying healthcare and social costs.

The natural health industry for decades has been a staunch advocate of health maintenance and disease prevention, promoting consumer education in store and through health related media channels. We believe that the wise old adage that 'prevention is better than cure' has never been out of date.

Are the policy makers beginning to take note? The coffers of governmental departments are constantly under siege, budgets overrun, and income sources dry up. Isn't it time for our healthcare policy makers to acknowledge that the current sole treatment model does not work? Isn't it time now for them to display common sense and place some focus on health maintenance and disease prevention?

Our own Department of Health's Mission Statement is to improve the health and wellbeing of people in Ireland by keeping people healthy, providing the healthcare people need, delivering high quality services and getting best value from health system resources.

The aspiration is in shambles, with patients waiting on trolleys in hospital corridors, treatment waiting lists of weeks, months and years in some instances. Everyone knows it is an unworkable system using unsustainable resources. History tells us that healthcare policy makers have not heeded the message that prevention is better than cure, however, now that the coffers are low, it is an opportune time for them to sit up and take note.

Natural health readers will be familiar with various studies and reports commissioned and published over the past several years

which clearly displays evidence that dietary supplementation is beneficial to your general health, can be specific in focus and allows the end user control over the caretaking of their own health. For far too long, healthcare policy makers have ignored the growing trend of self-reliance and determinations made by well-informed consumers who have faith in natural health products, old reliable favourites and exciting new players on the market.

To ensure consumer safety, policy makers have ensured that food supplements on the European markets are robustly regulated in relation to composition, manufacture and control; not only has our industry worked within this remit, we have also led the path on self-governance. For example, the IHTA has representation on the European Federation of Associations of Health Product Manufacturers (EHPM), which has published a Quality Guide promoting best practice, the guide covers all aspects of production across the European Union, from product concept through to manufacturing, quality control, packaging, distribution and storage.

And listen healthcare policy makers; health prevention and maintenance offers significant savings in healthcare costs. Taking just one example, ageing is one of the greatest social and economic challenges of the 21st century for European societies. While the 65 or over population in Ireland is growing annually by 20,000, by 2025 more than 20 per cent of all Europeans will be 65 or over.

Market researcher's Frost & Sullivan carried out a study commissioned by Food Supplements Europe (FSE) on osteoporosis and the benefits of using calcium, vitamin D and magnesium. The report states that greater use of calcium and vitamin D supplements could save nearly €4bn a year in healthcare costs in Europe by avoiding bone fractures caused by osteoporosis. As stated, this is just one example, healthcare policy makers take note.

A prudent healthcare system should be focused to care take all its citizens needs, unfortunately the current healthcare crisis situation does not lead to much faith that provision is in place to provide adequate care that is financially sustainable. Health policy makers, take note of the natural health industry, it is time to be reading from the same page.

Phil Costigan is General Secretary of the Irish Health Trade Association (IHTA), which represents the interests of manufacturers, importers and distributors of natural health products in Ireland. The principal aim of the IHTA is to assist member companies in promoting the wellness of all people in Ireland. For more information on the IHTA, visit www.ihta.org