

Dr. Marlene's NATURAL HEALTH CONNECTIONS

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10 Reasons Why You Gain Weight and Can't Lose It

The real blocks to weight loss are typically ignored. But if you know what they are, it's quite realistic to overcome them, lose weight, and keep it off for good.

About 7 in 10 Americans are carrying around extra pounds and there are plenty of opinions about why our girth has been growing in the last few decades. But the real reasons aren't often talked about.

"We don't exercise enough." "Processed food and soda are to blame." "Restaurant portions are too big." "Our electronic devices are making us sit too much." These are valid points but there are other, underlying reasons. And if those aren't addressed, it's virtually impossible for most people to lose weight and keep it off.

The latest government surveys show that around half of American adults — about 56 percent of women and 42 percent of men — are trying to slim down. Strict diets are not as popular as they once were because many people have experienced the pitfall of losing weight with

a strict regimen. It usually can't be sustained, and they regain lost pounds and then some.

The government surveys also found that the most popular strategies are exercise, eating less, eating more fruits and vegetables, and drinking more water. These are all good but guess what? Most of these well-intentioned efforts don't produce a healthy weight. Fortunately, the reasons why are not a mystery and they open the door to realistic, long-term success.

Why So Many Reasons

Weight problems develop from a combination of factors. By giving you 10 reasons, I'm not suggesting that you must suddenly do 10 things. Rather, I'd like you to understand the main factors that influence your metabolism and ability to have a leaner, healthier body.

I’m a big believer in educating and empowering my patients to take charge of their own health. And I aim to empower you, my readers, with the content in this newsletter. As you read through the reasons, some will be more important for you than others. Take note of these and see how you can use the information in your own life.

#1: We’re Designed for Feast and Famine

Today, we’re surrounded by food all the time but for most of human history, this wasn’t the case. Way back when, there was a feast after a hunt, but it didn’t happen every day. The human body was designed to survive until the next successful hunt, which could be days later.

As agriculture developed, food sources became more stable. But even then, all but the wealthy often had limited supplies of food. As farming and food distribution became industrialized, food became more plentiful, but eating didn’t become an all-day affair until quite recently.

Just a few decades ago, food was typically eaten at mealtimes with few or no snacks in between. When kids came home from school and reached for the cookie jar, their mothers would admonish them, “Don’t spoil your appetite.” And before food was sold in bulk, there were limited supplies of cookies in the home.

Now, food is everywhere in grab-and-go packages. We eat at our computers, in the car, while watching TV, and in the food court while shopping in the local mall. Except for a tiny minority of people who occasionally fast for

Good and Bad Fats

Bad fats contribute to weight gain, while good ones help you get and stay trim. Switch to good fats when cooking at home and check ingredients on product packages for the types of fat. Often, food products made with bad fats also contain other unhealthy ingredients, such as chemical food additives or preservatives.

The bad fats are processed vegetable oils that are treated with heat and chemicals and may be rancid. They trigger inflammation and are harmful.

Bad Fats Avoid processed vegetable oils such as these:	Good Fats Eat these fats instead:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Canola oil• Cottonseed oil• Soy oil• Corn oil• Safflower oil• Sunflower oil• Grapeseed oil• Peanut oil• Shortening• Buttery spreads that aren’t real butter• Olive oil that isn’t extra virgin• Vegetable oil (a mixture of some of the processed oils listed above)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coconut oil• Extra virgin olive oil (see <i>Warning</i> below)• Avocado oil• Organic butter (preferably from pasture-raised cows)• Lard• Sustainably sourced palm oil (the product label should note that fact)

Olive Oil Warning

The quality of olive oils varies quite a bit. Olive oil is made by pressing olives. Extra virgin comes from the first press, without heat or chemicals; it’s the healthy kind. In addition to healthy fat that is anti-inflammatory, it contains beneficial antioxidants.

After this first press, there’s still some oil left in the olives. But because it’s harder to extract, manufacturers use heat and chemicals to separate the oil from the olive solids. The heat and chemicals destroy antioxidants and create inflammatory substances in the oil. In other words, this is a processed form of olive oil, and it isn’t healthy.

This is what you’ll see on labels:

Extra Virgin Olive Oil: This is the one you want. Labels sometimes also say “cold pressed,” or “first press.” It’s the highest in quality and in price. However, there are oils labeled “extra virgin” that are a mixture of this and lower-grade oil, which you shouldn’t buy. One way to tell is by learning about different brands, which you can do online, or by asking store personnel how their buyers choose olive oils and control quality. If you see an unusually low-priced extra virgin olive oil, it may not be the real thing.

Olive Oil or Pure Olive Oil: The “pure” in this context isn’t pure at all. Both these labels indicate that the oil has been processed. You don’t want either of these.

religious reasons or follow a strict dietary regimen by choice, our eating habits are all feasting and no fasting.

The problem is, your body wasn't designed to constantly digest food. It needs time to produce enzymes, break down nutrients, detoxify, and carry on all the other functions it performs around the clock. With a continual food overload, our systems break down and eventually, they're almost impossible to fix.

I'm not suggesting that you suddenly start fasting. Not at all. It would be counterproductive. However, I do recommend not eating anything after 7 or 8 pm, until the next morning.

#2: All Calories Are Not Created Equal

You've been given a false idea that weight is determined solely by the number of calories you eat minus the number of calories you expend in your daily life. Although calories in and calories out do play a role, it isn't that simple. Calories from different types of food have different effects.

Eating food that is dense in nutrients enables your system to work efficiently, whereas eating food that is high in calories but low in nutrients — large amounts of carbs in packaged foods and inexpensive restaurant options, such as pizza and fries — disrupts your metabolism and promotes weight gain.

If you eat bad fats, they have an inflammatory effect, which contributes to weight gain. On the other hand, calories from healthy fat help you absorb nutrients and support hormone balance, and can

efficiently be used up. (See *Good and Bad Fats* on page 2.)

Calories from sugar and starch trigger sharp upswings in blood sugar and your body reacts by producing high levels of insulin. The problem is, high insulin promotes fat storage.

In contrast, calories from foods that are naturally low in carbs work in your favor. For example, non-starchy vegetables don't trigger high insulin and deliver vitamins, minerals, a whole host of other nutritious plant substances, and fiber. The nutrients enable your metabolism to function well, and the fiber keeps you regular and helps to eliminate toxins.

In other words, the types of calories you eat make a big difference in how your body uses them. And, they affect your hunger. You'll get hungry more quickly after sugary and starchy foods, but healthy fats will keep you satisfied for longer periods with more stable energy.

A low-carb diet with plenty of non-starchy vegetables, healthy fat, and moderate protein leads to weight loss that's realistic to sustain. I've found this for over 15 years with my patients. For more details, see *The Guide to Healthy Eating* in Volume 1, Issue 8 of this newsletter.

Low-Carb Evidence

In case you're wondering about the merits of a low-carb way of eating, let me put it in context. Although various studies show that any type of reduced-calorie diet leads to weight loss, the evidence shows that a low-carb diet is most likely to work in the long term. For example, that's the conclusion of

a recent study of 164 overweight adults, ranging in age from 18 to 65, at Boston Children's Hospital.¹

People in the study had recently lost approximately 12 percent of their body weight by following various diets. The study then tested how many calories they burned on three different diets designed to maintain the weight loss. Each diet contained the same number of calories but differed in carbohydrate content: low, medium, and high.

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How to Avoid Hidden Toxins

You can't control what's in the air outdoors, but you can reduce your exposure to weight-promoting toxins in your home, food, and the products you put on your skin and hair. Choose nontoxic versions of these:

In your bathroom:

- Soaps and scrubs
- Shampoo
- Hair conditioner
- Body lotions and creams
- Face creams and serums
- Shaving cream
- Toothpaste
- Mouthwash
- Hair-styling products
- Sunscreen

In your kitchen:

- Foods and beverages (buy organic or naturally grown, without chemical additives)
- Glass containers instead of plastic ones (and never microwave in plastic)
- Cleaning products, laundry detergents, and fabric softeners
- Garbage bags

In the garden:

- Nontoxic fertilizer
- Nontoxic weed and pest-control products

Around the house:

- If you use scented candles or other scented products, choose nontoxic, naturally scented versions.
- Keep your home well ventilated.
- Use an air filter.
- Make sure heating and cooling vents are kept clean.

The website of the Environmental Working Group has detailed information about thousands of products, and apps to help you choose nontoxic versions. Visit www.ewg.org.

After 20 weeks on these diets, researchers tested how many calories the subjects were burning. Those on the low-carb diet burned an average of 200 more calories daily than those who followed the high-carb diet.

When people lose weight, their rate of calorie burning typically drops, making it difficult not to regain weight. As well as helping you lose weight, a low-carb diet can help you overcome this obstacle.

#3: Toxins Promote Fat Storage

Toxins in our food and environment take a toll on our overall health and play a big role in weight gain. They affect the natural detoxification systems, especially the liver, which then affects hormone production and the ability to burn body fat.

Pesticides in food are a major source of toxins and can be avoided by buying organic food. I cover this in more detail, and other ways to reduce your intake of food toxins, in Volume 1, Issue 7, of this newsletter. But there are other sources of toxic chemicals that are less obvious, yet contribute to weight gain and block weight loss.

The nonprofit Environmental Working Group estimates that, on average, a woman applies 168 chemicals to her body in skincare and cosmetic products, and a man applies 68 chemicals. In addition, there are toxins in polluted air, plastic containers, paper receipts in stores, fabrics, carpets, and furniture.

One chemical, BPA (short for bisphenol-A), has gained a lot of recent attention. It's found in the lining of cans, paper

receipts, plastic containers for food and beverages, and skincare products. Studies show that it's a xenoestrogen, meaning it acts like estrogen in the human body, and it disrupts hormone balance. Using urine tests to measure levels of BPA, researchers have found that higher levels correlate with higher body weight.²

On the flipside, a study found that reducing BPA leads to weight loss. At the California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo, researchers gave women BPA-free cosmetics and skincare products, glass containers for food and beverages, and instructions for avoiding other sources of BPA. In three weeks, levels of BPA in their bodies (measured with urine tests) were significantly lower, and they lost up to about one pound — without changing anything else in their lives.³

Another common class of chemicals, phthalates, are found in soaps, skincare and cosmetic products, and home cleaning and laundry products that contain artificial scent, often listed as “fragrance.” Garden products, especially chemical weed killer, are also very toxic. Fortunately, there are nontoxic options of all these. (See *How to Avoid Hidden Toxins*.)

#4 Low Thyroid Sabotages Metabolism

Low thyroid, or hypothyroid, is becoming more and more common. Thyroid hormones regulate metabolism, and low levels slow it down. This may cause or contribute to weight gain and make weight loss impossible.⁴ Some of the top factors that affect thyroid function include exposure to toxins

in food and your environment, elevated insulin levels, stress, chronic inflammation, infections, nutritional deficiencies, prescription drugs, and repeated dieting to lose weight.

Elevated insulin, as a result of a constant diet that's overloaded

Symptoms of Low Thyroid Function

These are some common symptoms of nonoptimal levels of thyroid hormones:

- Constipation
- Heavy menstrual periods
- Brain fog
- Memory lapses
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling physically tired
- Feeling mentally tired
- Dry skin
- Thinning hair
- Loss of hair in the outer third of the eyebrows
- Cold hands and feet
- Slow reflexes
- Weight gain
- Morning stiffness
- Muscle or joint pain
- Puffiness in the face, legs, feet, or hands
- Swollen eyelids

To put this in context, having one or two of these symptoms doesn't necessarily mean your thyroid function is low. If you suspect it is, it's best to get your levels tested by a doctor who checks different forms of thyroid hormone, including T4, which is the inactive form, and T3, which is the active form. If your levels are low, a glandular thyroid supplement, available by prescription, can help to correct the problem. However, you should also address stress, toxins, and diet.

with sugary and starchy carbs, disrupts hormones, including thyroid. Reducing these types of carbs is a simple way to prevent problems. In addition, these are key nutrients needed for optimum thyroid function: vitamins A and D, selenium, zinc, iron, and iodine. You can get them all in a multivitamin, preferably one made from whole-food ingredients.

#5: The Wrong Exercise Is Not Effective

Many people start doing more exercise to lose weight, and they do the wrong kind. Go to any gym and you'll see plenty of people spending hours every week on treadmills or elliptical machines, but they never seem to slim down.

For years, we've been told that moderate exercise at a steady pace, such as brisk walking or jogging, is best for burning fat. But there's good evidence that this is not the case. Numerous studies have found

that interval training — short spurts of intense exercise, alternated with rest periods or low-intensity movement — is more effective.⁵

Compared to moderate exercise at a level pace, interval training produces more fat loss and improvement in insulin function. The insulin benefits can last for several days after an exercise session.

The idea is that you can safely work at your top intensity level for a short time and then do relaxed movement. Your heart rate will spike and drop, then spike and drop again. One way to do this is to walk at your top speed for a minute, then stroll for a minute. Or, walk really fast for one block and stroll for the next block. Work up to doing this sequence for about 20 minutes, three times a week.

Weight training also produces fat loss. It helps to prevent age-related muscle loss and reduces risk for heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. Maintaining muscle improves

About Dr. Marlene

Dr. Marlene Merritt's passion for natural medicine is fueled by her drive to help others, and her own experience of overcoming a debilitating heart condition, diagnosed at the age of 20. A competitive cross-country cyclist at the time, she suddenly began experiencing severe chest pains. Forced to quit the sport, she suffered from extreme fatigue and constant pain for another 15 years, despite doing everything that conventional, Western medical doctors told her to do.

And then, the tide turned. A physician trained in naturopathic healing recommended a whole-food vitamin E supplement. A week after starting the supplement regimen, her energy began to return, and the pain began to disappear.

Dr. Marlene is a Doctor of Oriental Medicine, has a Master's in Nutrition, and is an Applied Clinical Nutritionist. She is Board Certified in Bariatric Counseling, and certified in the Bredesen MEND Protocol,TM a groundbreaking method of reversing Alzheimer's disease. She sees patients at the Merritt Wellness Centers in Austin, Texas, and Santa Fe, New Mexico, trains health practitioners nationwide, and is the author of *Smart Blood Sugar* and *The Blood Pressure Solution*.



metabolism, making it easier to avoid weight gain.⁶

#6: Poor Gut Health Leads to Weight Gain

Studies of gut bacteria in lean and overweight people show that some bacteria contribute to weight gain and obesity, while others contribute to a lean physique.⁷ The best way to develop and maintain a healthy balance of bacteria in your gut is to eat foods that naturally provide a variety of bacteria, meaning probiotics. And, eat foods that contains prebiotics: food that nourishes beneficial bacteria.

Probiotic foods include yogurt, kombucha, kefir, and naturally fermented vegetables such as sauerkraut (found in the refrigerated section of your supermarket, it should list live cultures on the label). Good prebiotic foods include leeks, onions, asparagus, chicory, and Jerusalem artichokes. Make a habit of including these in your meals.

In addition, the outdoors is teeming with beneficial bacteria. Going outside, walking barefoot, or doing things like gardening, where you're handling soil, will help to diversify your gut bacteria. And, don't be overzealous with antimicrobial cleaners or wipes, which can wipe out good bacteria.

#7: Antibiotics Pack on Pounds

Weight gain is not generally considered a side effect of antibiotics because it isn't an instant reaction. Antibiotics kill off good bugs, as well as bad ones, and they disrupt the natural balance of gut bacteria, which leads to weight gain.

Weight Gain: Side Effect of These Drugs

If you're taking any prescription drugs, check if weight gain might be a side effect. These are some drugs known to produce weight gain in some patients:

Class of Drugs	Brand Name	Generic Name
Antidepressants	Paxil	paroxetine
	Zoloft	sertraline
	Elavil	amitriptyline
	Remeron	mirtazapine
Mood Stabilizers	Clozaril	clozapine
	Zyprexa	olanzapine
	Risperdal	risperidone
	Seroquel	quetiapine
Seizure Drugs	Lithobid	lithium
	Depakene	valproic acid
	Depakote	divalproex
	Neurontin	gabapentin
Blood Pressure Drugs	Tegretol	carbamazepine
	Lopressor	metoprolol
	Tenormin	atenolol
	Inderal	propranolol
Diabetes Drugs	Norvasc	amlodipine
	Catapres	clonidine
	Actos	pioglitazone
	Avandia	rosiglitazone
Corticosteroids (oral)	Amaryl	glimepiride
	Various Brands	insulin
	Diabeta	glyburide
	Glucotrol	glipizide
Antihistamines	Deltasone	prednisone
	Medrol	methylprednisolone
	Solu-Cortef	hydrocortisone
Contraceptives	Allegra	fexofenadine
	Zyrtec	cetirizine
	Depo-Provera	medroxyprogesterone

If you're experiencing weight gain as a side effect of a drug, ask your doctor and pharmacist if there is an alternative that is less likely to cause the problem. In the case of insulin, for example, some types of prescriptions are less likely to cause weight gain than others. With any drug, individual reactions vary so it pays to ask your doctor about the options.

Numerous studies have found that when infants are given multiple rounds of antibiotics, they're more likely to grow up obese. Most people have taken at least a few rounds of antibiotics during their lives, and some take them longer-term. A study of adults taking an antibiotic for 18 months, for an infection that affects the heart, found that they gained between 5 and 30 pounds as a result of the prescription.⁸

It's best to take antibiotics only when they are clearly necessary and eat the foods I mentioned for restoring a healthy balance of gut bacteria. Weight gain is a known side effect of many other drugs, such as those listed on page 6.

#8: Lack of Vitamin D Promotes Weight Gain

For some years, studies have found that people with low levels of vitamin D are more likely to gain weight, and low vitamin D is especially prevalent among people who are obese. In addition, studies have found that correcting a vitamin D deficiency enhances weight loss and insulin function, with⁹ or without a weight-loss diet.¹⁰

One trial used 2,000 IU of vitamin D daily and others used higher dosages. However, the key is to get the right amount of vitamin D for *you*. The only way to accomplish this is to get your blood level of the vitamin tested by your doctor. And then, take enough to get your levels up to about 50 ng/mL (nanograms per milliliter).

#9: Lack of Sleep Boosts Appetite

You might have experienced this when you've been sleep-deprived:

You want to eat more. Many studies have found a connection between lack of sleep, weight gain, and obesity.

One study looked at 1,024 people with sleep disorders and their levels of the chief hormones that regulate appetite and satiety. It found that insufficient sleep raised levels of ghrelin, the hormone that increases appetite, and lowered levels of leptin, the hormone that signals you've had enough to eat.¹¹ In addition, lack of sleep disrupts insulin, which makes your body store more fat.

There's no substitute for getting enough sleep. I recommend aiming for 7.5 to 9 hours per night.

#10: Stress Fuels Fat Storage

Last, but certainly not least, stress leads to chronic weight gain because it disrupts hormone balance. Stress raises levels of cortisol, the fight-or-flight hormone. When cortisol is elevated, your body is preoccupied with the stress and can't efficiently respond to insulin. As a result, insulin levels eventually become elevated.¹²

Chronic stress leads to chronically elevated insulin, which leads to more fat storage. In addition to life situations, a poor diet, lack of sleep, lack of exercise, and toxins all contribute to stress. Getting outdoors for some regular exercise is a good way to reduce stress and start breaking the cycle.

Other Reasons for Weight Gain

Foods that you can't digest well—most often gluten, dairy, or eggs—disturb your digestive process

and trigger inflammation, which contributes to excess pounds. If you suspect one or more, try eliminating them from your diet for about three weeks. If you feel better, reintroduce a small amount of one food and see how it goes. You may be able to eat it occasionally or in small amounts without producing a reaction.

Other triggers of chronic inflammation can include persistent infections. These can be dental, urinary tract, or low-grade sinus infections, or viral infections.

To unblock your ability to control your weight, the most important thing is to find what works for you. Then, make it a habit to do the things that help you feel and function well.

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Zinc for Cold Relief and More

Got a cold? Zinc lozenges can help you get rid of it more quickly. Studies with a total of nearly 600 people found that zinc lozenges shortened the duration of a cold by 30 to 40 percent,¹ as well as relieving coughs and sore throats. And, adequate levels of zinc can protect you against catching a cold in the first place. But that's not all.

Zinc is an essential mineral your body uses for about 300 enzyme reactions. It helps you resist infections and other illnesses. In addition, zinc is necessary for healthy function of insulin, thyroid, other hormones, and taste buds. It acts as an antioxidant and helps to lower unhealthy levels of chronic inflammation that underlie most chronic diseases.

Among the elderly, it's estimated that about one in three are zinc-deficient.² In addition, anyone who is avoiding animal foods or eating a lot of processed foods is likely to lack zinc.

How to Test Your Zinc Level

To get an idea of whether you're getting enough zinc in your diet, you can do a test at home with a specially designed liquid dietary supplement called the *Liquid Zinc Assay*, available from Amazon for about \$15. Here's how to test yourself:

- Hold one teaspoon of the *Liquid Zinc Assay* in your mouth for 15 seconds.
- If you can immediately taste it, you likely have enough zinc.
- If there's a delay before you can taste it, or you don't taste it at all, you likely lack zinc.

In addition to the test, you can take this product as a dietary supplement to enhance your levels of zinc.

Other Liquid Zinc Supplements

There are other brands of liquid zinc supplements you can buy in stores or online. They are certainly fine to take as a supplement, as are zinc pills. But to the best of my knowledge, none of the other supplements are

designed to be used for testing zinc status. The *Liquid Zinc Assay* is made with purified water and contains no added ingredients that could affect your taste, block the effects of the actual zinc, or invalidate the test.

Other companies that make zinc supplements designed for testing zinc status, with a liquid supplement or lozenges, do not sell these directly to consumers. They are available only to patients of licensed health practitioners.

How to Use Zinc Supplements

To support ongoing immune function and overall health, zinc can be taken in a multivitamin or as a separate supplement. Long-term use of zinc supplements, without also taking copper, can lead to a copper deficiency. The normal zinc:copper ratio is approximately 10:1, meaning if you take 10 mg of zinc, you should also get about 1 mg of copper. Multivitamins usually contain both in a healthy ratio. Most zinc supplement are pills, but liquid forms are also available.

To treat a cold, take zinc lozenges several times a day and let them dissolve in your mouth. They work by neutralizing viruses in your mouth and on the surfaces of your throat. If you chew lozenges, they will quickly disintegrate, reducing time for the zinc to fight the viruses — which defeats the purpose.

Food Sources of Zinc

The Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for zinc, which is designed to meet the nutritional requirements for almost all healthy people, is 8 mg for women and 11 mg for men. These are some top food sources of zinc:

Oysters, 6 medium	32 mg
Beef chuck roast, 3 ounces	7 mg
Alaska king crab, 3 ounces	6.5 mg
Beef patty, 3 ounces	5.3 mg
Lobster, 3 ounces	3.4 mg
Pork loin chop, 3 ounces	2.9 mg
Chicken, dark meat, 3 ounces	2.4 mg
Cashews, 1 ounce	1.6 mg
Chickpeas, ½ cup	1.3 mg

¹ Hemilä, H. "Zinc lozenges and the common cold: a meta-analysis comparing zinc acetate and zinc gluconate, and the role of zinc dosage." *JRSM Open*. 2017 May 2;8(5):2054270417694291.
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Loneliness: Reversible Health Hazard

Being lonely increases levels of stress hormones and inflammation, and these speed up physical and mental decline.

Risks increase for arthritis, depression, dementia, high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, early entry into a nursing home, and earlier death.¹

You can feel lonely because you're alone too much of the time, or because you lack companionship with others who share your interests. Researchers call lack of human contact "social isolation," and it's as dangerous for your health as smoking or obesity.

One option is seeing family and friends more often — getting together for meals, for example, rather than eating alone. Another is seeking out other, like-minded people and spending time with them



in activities you enjoy, whether it's playing golf or card games, gardening, dancing, or pursuing another enjoyable hobby.

In addition to your own circle of friends and family, local community centers, and faith-based groups, these are some resources to find new activities in your area:

Meetup

The biggest collection of available group activities for people of all ages, from cooking and other classes to groups that get together to practice a language, visit scenic spots to take photos, go for a walk or hike, or pursue just about any hobby. www.meetup.com

Eldercare Locator

Lists activities and services for people age 50 and older, with links to local agencies. www.eldercare.gov or 800-677-1116

Volunteer Match

The largest online listing of nonprofit groups that are looking for volunteers. Causes include enhancing the arts, children, seniors, animals, literacy, health, and human rights. www.volunteermatch.org

Memory Booster: Drawing Is Better than Writing

If you want to remember new information, drawing instead of writing notes can improve your ability to recall it. That's what a Canadian study found. Researchers gave a list of nouns to a group of people of different ages and asked them to either write notes or draw an image. Drawing improved recall of the words among all ages, but more so among older individuals.²

Can't draw? It doesn't matter. Artistic ability didn't affect the

memory-boosting effect of creating images instead of written notes. Just drawing for pleasure can also enhance memory. In addition, people who are suffering from dementia can often communicate better by drawing rather than writing.

On Metformin? Get this Test to Reduce Nerve Damage

Metformin is the most popular pharmaceutical treatment for type 2 diabetes. It's prescribed

to 65 percent of people newly diagnosed with the disease. If you or someone you care about takes metformin, you should know that it depletes vitamin B12. This side effect contributes to anemia and irreparable nerve damage in extremities, leading to numbness, pain, and increasing risk for loss of balance and coordination.

The problem can be prevented with routine testing of B12 levels and enough B12 supplementation—with pills or B12 injections—to restore and maintain healthy levels of the vitamin.³ If you take metformin, ask your doctor to regularly monitor your B12 levels.

1 Perissinotto, C. M., et al. "Loneliness in older persons: a predictor of functional decline and death." *Arch Intern Med.* 2012 Jul 23;172(14):1078-83. 2 Meade, M.E., et al. "Drawing as an Encoding Tool: Memorial Benefits in Younger and Older Adults." *Exp Aging Res.* 2018 Oct-Dec;44(5):369-396. 3 Mulla, K., et al. "Routine vitamin B12 screening may prevent irreversible nerve damage in type-2 diabetes." Society for Endocrinology Annual Conference. Glasgow, Scotland, 2018.

Q&A

Q: My doctor told me not to eat egg yolks because they contain cholesterol, but I know that they also contain important nutrients. I don't have high cholesterol, but my blood pressure is inching up. Can egg yolks raise blood pressure? — Mary T.

A: Generally, egg yolks don't raise blood pressure. There is a possible exception, but it has nothing to do with fat content in the yolks. Some people just don't tolerate eggs very well. In this case, the reaction can generate internal inflammation, which could possibly contribute to elevated blood pressure.



If you can't tolerate eggs, you might get bloated, feel full after eating very little, or just not feel right after eating them. If you suspect this is the case, try eliminating eggs for about three weeks, to give your body a chance to calm down from any reaction. Then, try eating an egg and see if your symptoms return. If they don't, eggs weren't causing a problem.

Other than this type of reaction, whole eggs don't raise risk for heart disease. In fact, a Canadian lab study found that proteins in eggs may help to lower blood pressure.

Other important things to

consider: Eggs are a healthy, low-carb source of protein and fat. One egg contains 6 grams of protein, 5 grams of fat, and 0 grams of carbs. And, whole eggs are a top food source of choline, which is necessary for healthy formation of every cell membrane. Choline is essential for a healthy brain and nervous system, and plays a key role in memory, mood, and muscle control.

Two eggs contain 340 mg of choline. Liver is the only richer source, with 356 mg in 3 ounces. Both these foods deliver a big chunk of the daily choline requirement: 425 mg for women and 550 mg for men.

Q: I know I should be eating yogurt for beneficial bacteria, but I don't like it and I don't really eat other fermented foods. Should I take a probiotic supplement? — Stevie B.

A: If you have some digestive discomfort, probiotics could be helpful, especially if you've taken antibiotics more than three times during your life. Antibiotics kill good bacteria as well as harmful ones, and the effect can last for many years. If you're currently taking an antibiotic, taking probiotics may help to prevent or reduce diarrhea and can help to maintain a healthy balance of gut bacteria.

Otherwise, my first suggestion is to make fermented foods part of your usual diet. You don't have to eat yogurt. 1–2 tablespoons of sauerkraut or some pickles, made with live cultures and found in the refrigerated section of the store, are good sources. Kimchi — a



condiment made of fermented vegetables — is another option. Or try kombucha, a fermented, slightly frothy black or green tea.

If you decide to try a probiotic supplement, the real test is how it works for you. If you take one and feel better, keep taking it as long as it's beneficial. For overall health, I generally recommend a low-dose product with about 4 or 5 billion CFUs (short for "colony forming units"). Most of my patients experience greater benefits from fermented foods than from probiotic supplements.

Do you have a question for Dr. Marlene?

Send your health-related questions to drmarlene@naturalhealthconnections.com. Please include your first name and the initial of your last name. Although she cannot answer each question directly, Dr. Marlene will select a few in each newsletter and will address other questions and concerns in articles in future issues. Answers are intended for educational purposes only and should not be viewed as medical advice. If you need help with your subscription or have questions about Primal Health supplements, email support@primalhealthlp.com or call 877-300-7849.