

# Dr. Marlene's NATURAL HEALTH CONNECTIONS

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## Real Flu Prevention: With or Without a Flu Shot

**Find out why you can get a flu shot and still get sick, and how to stay healthy throughout the winter season.**

The older you are, the less likely you are to get sick from the flu. This may be hard to believe because we're told that flu shots are especially important for older people, so I'd like to share some facts that may surprise you.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), children and teens up to age 18 are more than twice as likely to get the flu than people age 65 or older, and risk of flu decreases with age during adulthood.<sup>1</sup>

While this may seem like an overlooked benefit of aging, there's a catch: Older people are at higher risk of serious or even deadly complications of the flu.

Up to 70 percent of hospitalizations for seasonal flu-related illnesses occur among people age 65 or older. And between 70 and 90 percent of flu-related deaths occur in this age group.<sup>2</sup> That's why older people are assigned high priority for flu shots.

The problem is, flu vaccines are far from 100-percent effective. Although they can help to both prevent flu and

reduce its severity, results vary from one year to another.

Here's why: Flu vaccines are designed to increase your resistance to three or four specific flu viruses, depending on the vaccine. Meanwhile, there are hundreds of viruses in our environment that can cause flu or flu-like illnesses. If you're exposed to one or more viruses that are not targeted by the vaccine, a flu shot doesn't protect you.

This doesn't mean that you shouldn't get a flu shot. Vaccines do reduce the spread and severity of the flu, but I've found that many people are not aware of their limitations or side effects, which can be serious.

### How Flu Shots Are Formulated

Flu viruses change over time, so each year scientists and public health officials around the world examine the types of viruses that have infected people with flu. Based on that analysis, they predict which viruses will be most hazardous. Vaccines are then developed for the

next flu season, to help your body produce protective antibodies against those specific viruses.

The basic premise of any vaccine is to stimulate your immune system to be prepared to resist a specific invader. A vaccine tricks your body into thinking that it's already being infected. This doesn't give you the illness, but it helps your immune system to develop its defense against that invader, so that it's better prepared in the case of a real attack.

## Dr. Marlene's NATURAL HEALTH CONNECTIONS

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To give drug manufacturers time to produce and distribute vaccine for our flu season, which typically starts in October, the vaccine formula is usually determined by the previous February. The process involves analysis of a lot of medical data, but ultimately it boils down to a prediction — an educated guess.

## Why Flu Vaccines Provide Limited Protection

Imagine an open window through which many different insects are flying indoors. You know that one of these is especially harmful, and you have an insect repellent that kills only that bug. You use it and the targeted bug dies. But other harmful bugs can still hurt you.

Vaccines are like that narrowly targeted bug repellent. They target only three or four viruses, depending upon the vaccine, but hundreds of other viruses can still make you sick.

Scientists at the National Institutes of Health are working to

develop what they call a “universal” flu vaccine, one that would protect against many flu viruses. In my analogy with insects buzzing in through the window, this would mean that instead of constantly trying to zap a few harmful bugs, you could simply close the window and stop them all from invading. But the universal flu vaccine is in an early testing phase, and it isn't known when — or if — it will be finalized or available.

The effectiveness of the flu vaccine is also influenced by your individual reaction. The immune system doesn't always react as it should, especially among older people, and then the vaccine doesn't enhance your defenses as it should.

Despite their limitations, flu vaccines are a tool that helps to protect people against the flu viruses expected to be most prevalent and harmful during the winter season. But it's important to understand what the vaccines can and cannot do.

## How Effective Are Flu Vaccines?

It all depends on how well a vaccine is matched to major circulating viruses in a particular year. For viruses that are not well matched, there would be little or no protection. And for the hundreds of viruses that are not targeted by flu vaccines — including the rhinovirus that produces colds — there is no protection.

Studies that have examined the effectiveness of flu vaccines have only looked at flu from specific viruses targeted by vaccines. On average, they have found that the vaccines have reduced risk of hospitalization for flu by 14 to 43 percent. Among people

age 65 and older, odds of a doctor visit for flu were reduced by 24 percent and hospitalization was reduced by 33 percent.<sup>3,4</sup>

Since these studies did not look at *all* cases of flu — only those caused by viruses for which vaccines were protective — there were many other people who got sick with flu-like symptoms after getting a flu shot. But despite the seemingly low level of protection, studies have found that vaccines reduce the severity and spread of the flu, its complications, admissions to intensive care units, and deaths.<sup>5</sup>

# Flu Vaccine Types and Cautions

There are hundreds of viruses that can produce the flu and flu-like symptoms. Flu vaccines all used to be “trivalent,” meaning formulated to protect against three viruses, but most newer ones are “quadrivalent,” meaning formulated to protect against four viruses. This year, vaccines designed for people age 65 and older are trivalent.

## Do Vaccines Contain Mercury?

One of reasons some people avoid flu shots is because they believe that all vaccines contain mercury, which is a well-known neurotoxin. In fact, mercury is found in some — but not all — flu vaccines.

Mercury is an ingredient in thimerosal, a preservative. Whether or not a vaccine contains this preservative depends upon the way it’s packaged.

Most flu vaccines are injected. They can be packaged in two ways: in single-dose syringes or in vials that hold multiple

doses. Vaccines in single-dose syringes are sealed and don’t need a preservative, so they don’t contain mercury. But the multi-dose versions contain the thimerosal preservative, and therefore they contain mercury.

To avoid mercury when getting a flu shot, you can request one that comes in a single-shot syringe, as it will not contain mercury.

## Egg Allergies and Flu Vaccines

Because most flu vaccines are cultured in an egg-based substance, people who are allergic to eggs may have an adverse reaction. If you have an egg allergy, check the chart below to see which brands of vaccines are not egg-based, and ask for an appropriate vaccine.

## This Year’s Vaccines

Based on information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC),

Name of vaccine	Recommended age group	Type	Contains thimerosal (mercury)	Egg-based
<b>Trivalent (3 viruses)</b>				
Fluad	65 years+	Shot	No	Yes
Fluzone	65 years+	Shot	No	Yes
<b>Quadrivalent (4 viruses)</b>				
Afluria	Depending on the version: 6 months+ or 3 years+	Shot	Maybe*	Yes
Fluarix	6 months+	Shot	No	Yes
FluLaval	6 months+	Shot	Maybe*	Yes
Flucelvax	4 years+	Shot	Maybe*	No
Fluzone	6 months+	Shot	Maybe*	Yes
Flublok	18 years+	Shot	No	No
FluMist	2–49 years	Nasal spray	No	Yes

\*These vaccines are produced in both single-dose syringes, which do not contain thimerosal (mercury), and in multidose vials, which do contain thimerosal.



the chart below gives a snapshot of vaccines for the 2019–2020 flu season.<sup>6</sup>

## Other Ingredients in Flu Vaccines

In addition to potential mercury or egg content, these are some other ingredients that may be present in vaccines:

- Stabilizers, such as sucrose (ordinary sugar), sorbitol (a sugar alcohol used as a sweetener in food), and monosodium glutamate (a flavor enhancer), which help to prevent loss of potency if vaccines are exposed to heat and light.
- Antibiotics, to stop bacteria from contaminating vaccine.
- Polysorbate 80, an emulsifier that keeps ingredients evenly distributed, rather than separating out.
- Formaldehyde, used during the manufacturing process to inactivate flu viruses in vaccine, is removed before vaccines are sent to doctors, but residual amounts may remain.

The quantities of these ingredients are very small and are considered harmless, but they may cause problems for some people. It’s best to discuss any concerns with your doctor or pharmacist.

Some People Shouldn't Get a Flu Shot

Like all drugs, flu vaccines can have side effects. And some people should avoid them.

Anyone who is allergic to any ingredients in the vaccines (see *Flu Vaccine Types and Cautions*) or has had Guillain-Barré Syndrome, a paralyzing illness, may not be eligible for vaccination against the flu. In such cases, talk to your doctor about your optimal course of action.

If you're going to get a flu vaccine, the best time is at the

beginning of the annual flu season, in October. But if you are already feeling ill or under the weather, check with your doctor if you should get vaccinated.

If you can't get a shot in October, getting one later may still be helpful. But keep in mind that after you're vaccinated, protection doesn't immediately kick in. It takes up to a few weeks for your body to develop its defenses.

Older People Need Special Vaccines

Flu vaccines are developed for different age groups. As you get older, the immune system generally does not work as well as it did in your younger years. To compensate, vaccines for people age 65 and older may contain a higher dose or an adjuvant: an extra ingredient believed to give the immune system added stimulation to kick in and develop flu defenses.

The Best Flu Protection

Between 3 and 11 percent of Americans get the flu in a winter season, according to an evaluation of national health data by CDC researchers at the National Centers for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases in Atlanta.<sup>7</sup> How do you stay out of that unlucky minority?

Even if you get a flu shot, your best defense is a strong immune system that can resist all the viruses in the environment. This is true at any time of year and especially during the winter months. To that end, there are several things you can start doing right away, with the right nutrition, herbs, water, and common-sense lifestyle habits. The same steps will also protect you against colds — something flu shots don't do.

Skip the Most Harmful Foods and Drinks

When you eat sugar, your immune system's natural defenses

### Flu Vaccine Side Effects

Just like drugs, flu vaccines can have side effects. If you have had a bad reaction to a flu vaccine in the past, you may need to forego shots in the future.

**Shots:** Some side effects may be similar to the flu. They include:

- muscle aches
- low fever
- redness
- swelling
- trouble breathing
- dizziness
- high fever
- behavior changes
- hives
- weakness
- pale skin
- a rapid heartbeat
- soreness at the injection site

**Nasal Sprays:** Side effects may be similar to a cold or flu, including:

- muscle aches
- headache
- cough
- a runny nose
- nasal congestion
- a sore throat

If your past experience with flu vaccines makes you wonder if you should get one this year, check with your doctor. Pharmacists are also a good source of information.

### 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,<sup>™</sup> 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*.



immediately drop, and stay depleted for at least 5 hours, according to a study that tested different types of sugar in a group of volunteers.<sup>8</sup> Even one glass of orange juice produced this effect.

Any type of sugar weakens your immune system, including ordinary table sugar, natural sugar in fruit juice, honey, and glucose or fructose added to many packaged foods and beverages, including high fructose corn syrup. The same study found that abstaining from sugars for 36 to 60 hours gave a significant boost to natural defenses.

So, one practical winter strategy is to avoid sweetened foods and drinks. This may be difficult to do during holiday get-togethers, but there is a realistic way to do it.

It's easy to continually eat sweet treats between Thanksgiving and New Year's. Instead, reserve the actual holidays for indulgence — the specific *days* of celebration, such as Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.

When it comes to starchy carbohydrates, these don't have the same effect on your immune system as sugar. However, it's best not to overdo starchy foods, as an overload can lead to diabetes and other problems. For the details on the best way to eat, I suggest that you check out my earlier newsletter about a healthy diet (see *Related to this Topic* on page 7).

Here's another tip: On the special days of the holiday season, and any others when you attend a holiday party, consider only the event as an occasion for sweet treats. During the rest of the day, stick to essentials such as some protein, non-starchy vegetables, and drinks that aren't sweetened.

You'll be amazed at how much better you feel throughout the season and into the new year.

## Eat Plenty of Immune-Boosting Foods

Foods that are high in nutrients in general, and especially those that are high in vitamin C, will enhance your resistance. Fresh, locally grown, in-season fruits

and vegetables are your best bets. When fresh foods travel, they spend long periods in distribution centers and generally lose much of their nutritional content.

Although fruit juice is high in sugar, whole fruit is a good choice, in moderation. As an example, apples are in season in the fall and are grown in many parts of the country. But try to get organic

## Should You Use a Hand Sanitizer?

Hand sanitizers can't replace washing your hands with ordinary soap and water, but the right kind can help to reduce the bugs on your hands when washing isn't possible.

Here's what the CDC concluded after analyzing all the available research:

- To effectively get rid of bugs on your hands, you need to scrub all parts of your hands for at least 20 seconds, or the time it takes you to hum the "Happy Birthday" song twice.
- An effective hand sanitizer should contain between 60 and 95 percent alcohol. It can remove many — but not all — germs.
- Sanitizers without alcohol are less effective and can cause bugs to develop resistance to sanitizers. The CDC does not recommend alcohol-free products.
- If your hands are visibly dirty or greasy, sanitizers don't work as well, so you should wash your hands as soon as possible.
- Unlike handwashing, sanitizers may not remove harmful chemicals such as pesticides.

### How to Use a Hand Sanitizer

In the palm of one hand, apply the recommended amount of a sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol. And then, rub the sanitizer all over the surfaces of both hands until they're dry.

### When to Wash Your Hands

The obvious times are when your hands are visibly dirty or greasy. Oily substances such as cooking oil or liquid fish oil supplements can be stubborn. If you can't completely clean off oil with ordinary soap and water, use a dish soap designed to cut grease, such as Dawn. (Many veterinarians use it to remove crude oil that covers birds after oil spills in the ocean.)

Equally important, wash your hands at these times:

- Before eating.
- Before, during, and after preparing food.
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- After using the toilet.
- After taking out the trash.
- After touching an animal or handling its food or treats, and after cleaning up its waste.
- Before and after treating a cut or abrasion.
- Before and after caring for someone who has diarrhea or has been vomiting.
- After changing diapers or cleaning up after a child who has used the toilet.

The CDC considers handwashing so important that it's dedicated a website to the subject: [www.cdc.gov/handwashing](http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing).

apples, because conventionally grown ones are a top source of pesticides in our diets.

Oranges are a good source of vitamin C, and their skin helps to seal in nutrients in the fruit. Broccoli is also a top source of vitamin C and is very versatile. Cooked and chopped, it makes a good base for spaghetti sauce in place of pasta. You can mix it with other vegetables in salads, eat it as a side dish, or by itself as a snack, warmed with some extra virgin olive oil and sea salt.

I always recommend eating fresh foods instead of packaged ones. But in winter, this becomes one of your main defenses against seasonal bugs that can make you sick.

Keep Your Nose Hydrated

Mucus gets a bad reputation because we associate it with congestion, but mucus has another, beneficial side. In your nasal passages, mucus is a barrier that traps pathogens. You can think of it as a filter, much like filters in a car engine or in your home’s forced-air system that trap and prevent dirt from circulating.

Heating during the winter can easily dry out mucus, eliminating that filter and allowing flu bugs to enter your respiratory system. Then, they find a home in your lungs, where it’s much harder to get rid of them — and you get sick.

To keep the mucus in your nasal passages moist and in good working order, there are two things you can do: Drink plenty of water. And a few times a day, use a saline nasal spray or, better yet, irrigate your nose with a Neilmed Sinus Rinse Kit, which you can find in drugstores or online.

A humidifier can also counteract dry air. But if you use one, make

sure to clean it out once a week to avoid growth of mold and bacteria that can pollute your indoor air and make you sick.

Boost Immunity with Supplements

There are some nutritional deficiencies that are quite common and will reduce your natural defenses. Taking specific nutrients in supplements will make up for the shortfall and boost your body’s natural immunity, helping to prevent flu and flu-like illness.

For overall nutritional insurance, take a multivitamin with about 100 percent of the Daily Value for each nutrient. In addition, take cod liver

oil, vitamins C and D, extra zinc, and CoQ10. You can find daily dosages for each of these in *The Flu Prevention Protocol* on page 8.

If you currently take fish oil, it’s best to switch to cod liver oil because in addition to providing healthy, anti-inflammatory fats, it is a food source of vitamins A and D — vitamins not found in regular fish oil. You may remember your mother giving you cod liver oil, and it’s also a traditional immune booster for older people.

Take Herbs Daily for Extra Prevention

Echinacea is sometimes used as a treatment for colds or flu, but

Should You Take Flu Drugs?

Antibiotics do not treat the flu or colds because colds and flu are viral illnesses. Antibiotics kill bacteria, not viruses. Although bacteria and viruses are all “bugs” that can make us sick, they are different life forms and don’t respond to the same drugs.

It is sometimes possible that an individual can have a bacterial infection on top of a cold or flu, and antibiotics will treat the bacterial illness — but not the viral one. But this is not usually the case.

If you see a doctor for flu symptoms and want to know if you also have a bacterial infection, ask for a test but don’t demand antibiotics. Misuse of antibiotics is a key reason why bacteria become resistant

to the drugs and make them ineffective when we really need them.

When it comes to drugs to treat flu, there aren’t any good options. Tamiflu, the oldest and best known, has been called a “costly mistake” by researchers who reviewed its performance and liabilities since its approval in 1999.<sup>9</sup> It poses too many risks and delivers too little benefit. It does not reduce complications from the flu such as serious upper respiratory infections and doesn’t prevent transmission.

All these flu drugs are designed to be taken within 48 hours of the first sign of a flu symptom.

Drug	Known Side Effects Include:
Tamiflu	Nausea, vomiting, fatigue, diarrhea, dizziness, headache, nosebleed, red or irritated eyes, insomnia, cough, other respiratory problems. Other side effects, especially in children and teens, include psychiatric disorders, seizures, confusion, and abnormal behavior.
Rapivab	Serious skin reactions, hallucinations, delirium, and abnormal behavior.
Xofluza	Nausea, headache, diarrhea, bronchitis, and colds.

I’ve found that it works best when taken daily for prevention during the flu season. If you do get sick, having the herb in your system can help you recover more quickly. Research shows that echinacea activates the immune system<sup>10</sup> to ward off invaders and helps to stop viruses from replicating.<sup>11</sup>

Echinacea supplements are available in pills and tinctures, made from different parts of the plant. I recommend taking an extract of echinacea root in an alcohol-based tincture. Take one serving, twice daily.

It takes a couple of weeks for your defenses to build up from taking echinacea. For best results, start taking it in October and keep taking it until the end of the flu season, which can last until March or later.

It’s important to take a good-quality echinacea tincture that contains the plant’s potent ingredients. You can test a tincture by tasting it; a potent one will make your tongue tingle. To test echinacea capsules, break one open, put some of the contents on your tongue, and see if it tingles. If not, try another product.

Other helpful herbs include astragalus, especially if you easily get sick, and Korean ginseng, also called Panax ginseng. Some flu-prevention formulas combine these with echinacea and are another option to help you stay healthy throughout the winter months.

**Lifestyle Habits for Flu Prevention**

There are three other basic but underrated ways to prevent flu and colds: Get enough sleep, get some regular exercise (but not so much that it leaves you stressed or exhausted), and wash your hands often.

Sleep is highly undervalued in our culture. In winter months, it’s vital to get enough and best to get extra rest. This way, you’re enabling your immune system to work well, rather than impeding it with sleep deprivation.

Exercise that relaxes or invigorates you — depending on your personal needs — is another immune booster. But when it’s too intense or done for too long, it can work against you. Use your common sense.

Handwashing is surprisingly effective. Bugs are so easily transmitted on doorknobs, money, receipts, and literally anything that more than one person can touch. We mindlessly touch our mouths and noses — or things that go into our mouths, such as forks or pen tops. This makes it very easy for bugs to travel from one person to another and into your respiratory system, where they make you sick.

**Herbs to Take if You Get Sick**

Preventive strategies reduce the odds of flu, but they can’t guarantee that you won’t catch it. If that happens, two herbs can help you recover: andrographis and olive leaf extract.

Andrographis is a strong antiviral, and I recommend it as the first treatment for flu. Once you feel a symptom beginning, take it right away and keep taking it until you’re completely symptom-free for a day or two. Viruses replicate quickly. Therefore, the sooner you take the herb, the less the virus will have multiplied, and it will be easier to eliminate.

Olive leaf extract is another good antiviral herb. It can be taken alone or with andrographis, starting at the first sign of symptoms.

If you take either or both herbs, take one serving every 2 to 3 hours, which adds up to 4 or more times a day. You want to continuously keep significant levels of the herbs in your system to fight off a virus. If you take took much in one dose, you can get loose stools, which indicates that you’ve taken more than your body can absorb and utilize. In such a situation, simply cut back on the dosage.

**Related to This Topic**

These are some earlier issues of this newsletter that address related topics:

Related Topic	Volume	Issue	Title
A Healthy Diet	1	8	The Guide to Healthy Eating
Multivitamins	2	8	Do You Really Need a Multivitamin?
Vitamin D	1	6	How Much Vitamin D to Take (page 10)
Zinc	2	1	Zinc for Cold Relief and More (page 8)
Sleep	2	2	The 10-Minute Sleep Solution
Flu Prevention	1	6	Flu Prevention Checklist (page 7)

Access these online by logging in to [www.NaturalHealthConnections.com](http://www.NaturalHealthConnections.com).

## What Else to Do to Recover from Flu

Take extra vitamin C: 1,000 milligrams daily. At the same time, I can't emphasize enough how important it is to get extra rest.

Don't try to be a hero by going to work when you're ill. It will take you longer to recover and, equally important, you can infect other

people. Staying home is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of infectious illnesses such as the flu and get a speedy recovery.

Chicken soup and bone broth, made the traditional way from animal parts and simmered with vegetables for hours, contain immune-boosting substances. They can be delicious, soothing comfort

foods or beverages that make you feel better right away while helping your body to fight off bugs and recover more quickly.

## A Final Word

In my years of practice, I've observed a general belief that flu shots provide much more protection than they really do. And side effects are not widely known but are more prevalent than promotions for flu shots would have you believe.

Underlying these misconceptions is the fact that no flu vaccine today can protect you against the hundreds of viruses that can produce the flu. What can protect you is a healthy immune system.

By following my recommendations, many of my patients have experienced healthy winter seasons. At worst, they got sick less often than they used to and recovered more quickly than they expected.

I hope you try my protocol to prevent flu (it works for colds, too) and enjoy a healthier winter.

## The Flu Prevention Protocol

These steps can help you steer clear of the flu (and colds) during the winter season.

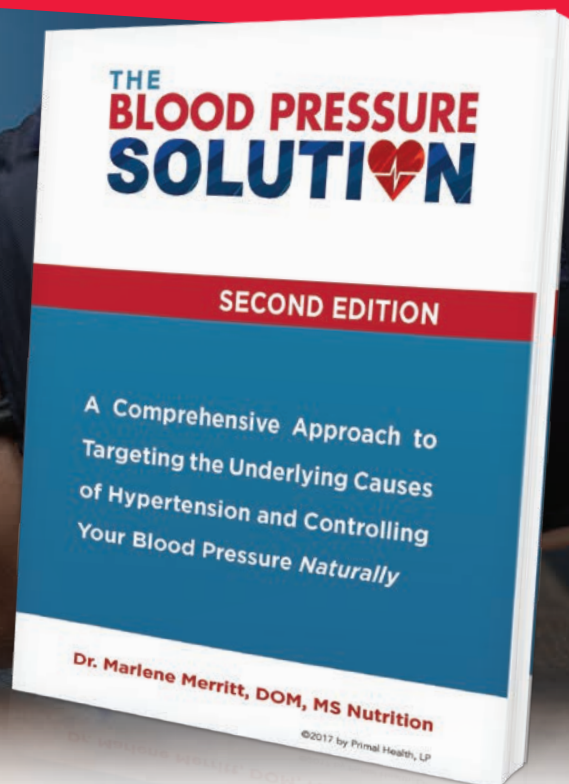
1. Get extra sleep on a daily basis.
2. Avoid sugary foods and drinks.
3. Take these supplements daily:
  - a. Multivitamin: 1 serving daily.
  - b. Cod Liver Oil: 1 serving daily.
  - c. Vitamin D: 5,000 IU daily total, from cod liver oil, multivitamin, and an additional vitamin D supplement.
  - d. Vitamin C: 500 mg daily.
  - e. Zinc: 20 to 30 mg daily, from a multivitamin and an additional zinc supplement.
  - f. CoQ10: 100 mg daily.
  - g. Echinacea Root: The best form is an alcohol-based tincture. Take one serving, twice daily. If you don't like or can't tolerate tinctures, take one serving in capsule form, twice daily.
4. Wash your hands often, and always after touching doorknobs or other surfaces that are touched by others.
5. Keep your nasal passages well hydrated by drinking lots of water, and irrigate your nose with a Neilmed Sinus Rinse or a saline nasal spray several times a day.
6. Buy some andrographis and/or olive leaf extract and have it on hand in case you get a symptom of a cold or flu. For example, if you wake up during the night and feel a slight scratchiness in your throat, take one or both these herbs immediately, again when you get up in the morning, and throughout the day. This can help to stop a full-blown flu or cold from developing.

### If You Get Sick:

1. Get plenty of rest and stay home from work and other activities where you come in contact with others.
2. Take a serving of andrographis and/or olive leaf extract every 2 to 3 hours throughout the day.
3. Take 1,000 mg daily of vitamin C.
4. Consume chicken soup and/or bone broth, made the traditional way.

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# Get Dr. Marlene's Best-Selling Book... **Blood Pressure Solution!**



**Dr. Marlene has been sounding the alarm about dangerous blood pressure drugs for the last 15 years — and offering a safe, natural alternative.**

She has worked with hundreds of patients who were suffering high blood pressure—many were taking two, three, even four medications and going through awful side effects...

Just like Kathleen Kelly, whose ankles swelled up from the prescription blood pressure drugs she was taking. She also suffered an awful cough from using Lisinopril. By the time she read Dr. Marlene's best-selling book, **Blood Pressure Solution**, Kathleen's doctor had her on three blood pressure medicines combined—and her blood pressure was still high!

"My patients are always surprised to see how easy it is to use my natural Blood Pressure Solution," said Dr. Marlene. "The diet is not restrictive. Many of the foods you thought were taboo are perfectly ok—like steak is ok, butter is ok, natural sea salt is ok, even several carb foods are good. Part of the solution is to get good fats into your diet."

After reading **Blood Pressure Solution**, Kathleen made simple lifestyle changes found in the book and began to see immediate results...

***"My blood pressure came down right away...I just feel great. I'm ecstatic. I go around telling everybody I found the fountain of youth. I have much more energy now. My concentration and focus are better. I can walk around my block without getting winded anymore. I am 100% off my medication."***

Did you see that? Kathleen reports she is 100% off her medications. And so can you!

Yes! You too can be off these anti-hypertensive drugs... maintain blood pressure in the normal range... and feel good again!

Dr. Marlene Merritt's **Blood Pressure Solution** is working for people all across America. And she believes it can work for you, too. Here's how...

Dr. Marlene originally developed her unique solution for her patients at the Merritt Wellness Center in Austin, Texas. And after seeing just how successful it was for people in her own community—she decided to put her entire natural solution, with step-by-step guidance, into an easy-to-use book called, **Blood Pressure Solution**.

This is a comprehensive approach to targeting the underlying causes of hypertension and controlling your blood pressure naturally.

Dr. Marlene's book has been sweeping the country with over 330,000 copies sold in the U.S., and even 32,000 copies shipped overseas.

So, are you ready to bring your blood pressure back to the normal range? Gain more energy? Drop a few unwanted pounds? And feel better than you have in years, just as Kathleen did?

Great! Get your copy of Dr. Marlene's best-selling book, **Blood Pressure Solution** today! Go to the website listed below, and you'll see a complete review of the book, watch videos from people just like Kathleen and order your copy of **Blood Pressure Solution**!

**Get Your Copy Today! Go To:**  
**[www.PrimalLabs.com/BPS](http://www.PrimalLabs.com/BPS)**

# There's Plastic in Your Food!

Did you know that we all eat plastic? Technically called microplastics, these are miniscule plastic particles — much too small to see with the naked eye — that leach from bottled water and food containers into the food we eat.

Researchers in British Columbia, Canada, analyzed the plastic content of our common foods and beverages and estimated that we each consume, on average, between 39,000 and 52,000 tiny plastic particles per year.<sup>1</sup>

The full health effects of these particles are not understood. However, plastics contain chemicals that are known to disrupt hormones and are linked to various health problems, including disorders of the nervous system, cancer, and hearing loss. Fortunately, there are things you can do to reduce your intake.

## What to Do

Major sources include bottled water, other drinks packaged in plastic containers, all types of plastic food packaging, and canned foods and drinks — most cans are lined with plastic. Plastic food containers in your kitchen can also leach tiny particles into your food, especially if you microwave food in them.

It isn't realistic to totally avoid these. However, these are some practical ways to reduce your intake of plastic:

- Instead of drinking bottled water, use a good-quality filter to filter tap water.
- When buying beverages, try to choose products in glass bottles.
- As much as possible, buy fresh, unpackaged vegetables from the bins in the supermarket.
- Never microwave food in



plastic containers — use plates or glass containers instead.

- In your kitchen, use glass containers to store food, or plastic ones without harmful chemicals.

## Different Types of Plastic Containers

Plastic food containers should have a number on the bottom, embossed or imprinted in the plastic. These are codes used in recycling. The numbers 3, 6, and 7 indicate that the plastic contains harmful chemicals — avoid these and replace any that are in your kitchen. Containers with other numbers are safe to use — but you still shouldn't use them to heat food.

# Drugs and Fracture Risk

With age, bones can become more frail, increasing risk for fractures that can rob the ability to live independently. But medications can increase the risk of fractures even more.

Researchers at the Dartmouth Institute for Health Policy and Clinical Practice in Lebanon, N.H., analyzed data from more than 168,000 people on Medicare who had suffered a fracture of the wrist, hip, or shoulder. They found that doctors and hospitals don't pay enough attention to the influence of drugs on fracture risk — even after patients have already suffered fractures.<sup>2</sup>

Side effects of medications that can lead to falls and fractures include dizziness, lightheadedness, impaired judgment, reduced alertness, or drowsiness. And some drugs can impair balance by affecting the inner ear.

These are the types of drugs that were found to contribute to fractures:

- Drugs to lower blood pressure.
- Antihistamines.
- Sedatives.
- Sleeping pills.
- Drugs for depression and anxiety.
- Drugs used to treat stomach cramps.
- Diabetes drugs, including insulin.
- Drugs for heart conditions, to dilate blood vessels, or treat irregular heart rhythm.
- Drugs for pain, including opioids and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs).

As a general rule, the more medications an individual takes, the greater the risk of side effects, drug interactions, and fractures.

<sup>1</sup> Cox, K.D., et al. "Human Consumption of Microplastics." *Environ. Sci. Technol.* 2019;53:127068-7074. <sup>2</sup> Munson, J.C., et al. "Patterns of Prescription Drug Use Before and After Fragility Fracture." *JAMA Intern Med.* 2016 Oct 1;176(10):1531-1538.

# Is your memory getting worse?

If you're over 50, chances are your brain isn't functioning like it did in your younger years.

This isn't surprising. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control warns that over 16 million Americans now live with cognitive impairment. This includes not only memory problems, but also difficulty in learning new things, concentrating, and making important decisions.

Unfortunately, age is the greatest risk factor for cognitive impairment. By age 65, 40% of folks in the U.S. have age-associated memory issues. So as the years go by, it wouldn't be unusual for you to forget things. Or notice how difficult it is to stay focused during a conversation or TV program.

But I have good news. It doesn't have to be that way...

Primal Labs is proud to introduce **CogniForce**, a ground-breaking nutritional supplement for optimal brain support.

**CogniForce** is an easy-to-swallow gel cap containing 10 powerful nutrients to help you improve cognitive function, memory, and brain health:

- ✓ **Ginkgo:** Improves blood flow to the brain. This supports memory, mood, and focus — and exerts a positive effect on the brain's processing speed to help avoid "senior moments."
- ✓ **L-theanine:** This amino acid stimulates brain neurotransmitters to boost concentration and mood — and promote relaxation.
- ✓ **Acetyl-L-carnitine:** Research shows this amino acid can significantly improve memory and focus — and lift you out of those occasional "blue moods."
- ✓ **The B vitamins riboflavin, vitamin B6, folate, and B12:** Studies show these crucial vitamins help prevent the brain shrinkage many people experience as they grow older.
- ✓ **Sensoril®:** This patented extract of the ancient Ayurvedic herb ashwagandha helps lower cortisol — the stress hormone.

✓ **L-tyrosine:** Another amino acid crucial for production of brain neurotransmitters involved in memory and cognition.

✓ **Bioperine®:** Patented extract of black pepper fruit helps improve absorption of nutrients.

Today, people from all walks of life are protecting their brains with **CogniForce**. Here's what a few of them had to say:

"I have been taking **CogniForce** for about 5 weeks now. I noticed a positive result fairly early. I am feeling more alert and better able to handle tedious work that used to overwhelm me."

— Lee Miller from Austin, TX

"I started taking **CogniForce** fifty-two days ago, and my own forgetfulness has slowed down."

— Hayley Burns from Richmond, VA

"I've been taking **CogniForce** just a little over a month now, and it has helped me improve my thinking and mood swings."

— Barbara Sherwood from Leesburg, FL

If you want to maintain your memory and protect your brain into your 60s, 70s, 80s and beyond... the time to do it is NOW. Join thousands of satisfied users experiencing the brain-boosting effects of **CogniForce**.

We're so confident in the brain and memory-supporting power of **CogniForce**, we offer a 60-day **RISK-FREE** 100% money-back guarantee. You have nothing to lose.

Don't lose your precious memories... get your own bottle of **CogniForce** today — experience life with a sharper, quicker, and more focused brain!



**Order Your Bottle Today!**  
**GetCogniForce.com/NHC3**

**For Faster Service, call 1-888-309-0629**

Monday-Friday 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. CST • Saturday-Sunday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. CST

# Q&A

**Q: I know that you recommend eating organic food as much as possible. Should I also buy organic vitamin supplements?**

— Sharon K.

**A:** The problem with food that is not organic is this: It's typically sprayed with pesticides and herbicides, and it can contain chemical residues. When a food is labeled "organic," it means that it was produced on a farm without such toxic chemicals. This doesn't necessarily apply to supplements because many popular ingredients aren't produced on farms.

Most vitamins are synthetic — made in a lab. Even some "food-based" products are grown in a yeast culture. In these cases, there's no need to use pesticides or herbicides. But since such vitamins weren't produced on a farm, they can't legally be labeled "organic."

I don't recommend routinely taking high doses of synthetic vitamins because this isn't the way they exist in nature, but moderate amounts can provide insurance against shortfalls. (Details about this are in Volume 2, Issue 8, of this newsletter: *Do You Really Need a Multivitamin?*)

Minerals come from soil or water, not farms. So they also can't be labeled "organic."

Some supplements contain extracts of real food, which can be organic, and organic methods can be used to grow herbs. But here's something else to consider: There's

a limited supply of such organic ingredients, and restricting your choices to organic products may not be practical.

Most important, I recommend informing yourself about a company whose products you're considering, by looking at its website. Look for information about how they source raw materials, whether they test ingredients for purity, and how they ensure product quality.

**Q: My podiatrist suggested laser treatment for my toenail fungus. What do you think of that?**

— Edward D.

**A:** Laser treatment can be an effective remedy for toenail fungus. But I would recommend taking additional steps to prevent the fungus from recurring.

Lasers emit specific wavelengths of energy that are absorbed differently by different tissues. In the case of a toenail, this means that the energy from the laser can destroy fungus under the nail without harming the nail itself. It sounds magical but toenail fungus is stubborn, with any treatment.

The FDA has approved several types of lasers for a "temporary increase in clear nails." This basically means that in studies, lasers have reduced or eliminated fungus, but there's no guarantee that the fungus won't recur.

The other downsides are lack of insurance coverage and cost. The cost of laser equipment is high, and so is the treatment.

Keep in mind that there are two aspects to permanently getting rid of the fungus: You want to



eliminate it as quickly as possible, but you also want your body to be able to resist its recurrence.

There are basic hygiene steps that you're probably familiar with, such as making sure your feet are dry before you put on socks and shoes. In addition, your micro-circulation — circulation in tiny blood vessels — plays an important role in keeping your toenails healthy. I cover this in more detail in *How to Get Rid of Toenail Fungus* on pages 7–9 of Volume 2, Issue 8, of this newsletter.

## Do you have a question for Dr. Marlene?

Send your health-related questions to [drmarlene@naturalhealthconnections.com](mailto: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](mailto:support@primalhealthlp.com) or call 877-300-7849.