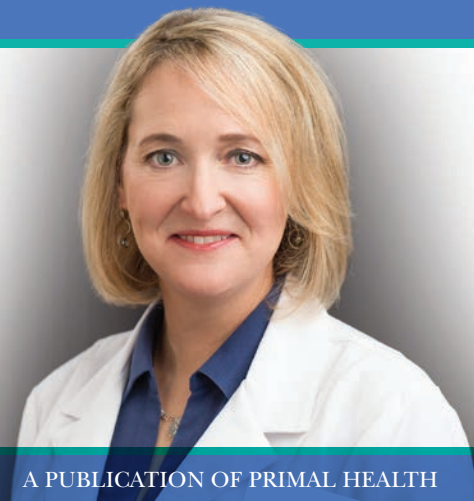


# Dr. Marlene's NATURAL HEALTH CONNECTIONS

VOLUME 4 | ISSUE 2

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## 5 Everyday Cancer Triggers and How to Avoid Them



**What you eat — and don't eat — combined with other daily habits can help to protect you against any type of cancer.**

The quest for a cancer cure gets a lot of media attention, and it can leave you feeling that, for the most part, there really isn't much you can do about it. I say "for the most part" because I'm sure you know that smoking increases risk for lung cancer, which kills more people than any other type of cancer.

However, in addition to not smoking, there are other ways in which we can adopt everyday habits to reduce our risk of developing cancer, including what we eat, how much we move, how much we sleep, and even the products we put on our skin and use to clean our homes.

The notion that humans suddenly "get cancer" is misleading. You can't catch it like a cold.

Cancer develops over time. Some cancers, such as pancreatic cancer, can be life-threatening by the time they're detected, but that doesn't mean they developed overnight.

Pancreatic cancer often doesn't get detected until it's progressed to a deadly stage.

On the other hand, it's well known that prostate cancer, which occurs most often in older men, takes years if not decades to develop. And in some cases, it progresses so slowly that it doesn't pose a health threat and doesn't require any medical treatment.

By adopting the right everyday habits, you can dramatically decrease your odds of developing any type of cancer or slow down the progression of any that has begun to develop. And if you've beaten cancer in the past, the same steps will also lower the risk of a recurrence.

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**IN THE NEXT ISSUE:**  
**Supplements for Diabetics  
and Prediabetics**

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## What Feeds Cancer

All the cells that make up a human body are continuously undergoing change. The process of staying alive produces waste products that must be eliminated, cells and DNA become damaged and are repaired, old cells die, and new ones grow.

When cancer develops, mutated cells start to grow and become tumors, or in the case of cancers in the blood or bone marrow, they displace healthy cells. Left

uncontrolled, the localized cancers can spread to other tissues and organs and become malignant.

This is the underlying mechanism of all cancers. Within the complex processes that go on inside our bodies, one or more cells may start to mutate, but they should be killed off and eliminated by a healthy system.

What determines whether mutated cells survive and harm you? It's a combination of things that sets up an internal environment that can be either pro- or anticancerous. The following five triggers are common ones that you can avoid and thereby tip your lifestyle in an anticancer direction.

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## Did You Know?

Nearly 9 out of 10 cancers are found in people age 50 or older. However, cancer can develop at any age.

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## Trigger #1: A Procarcinogenic Diet

As you might guess, eating an ideal, freshly prepared diet with no processed foods, added sugars, sodas, or chemical residues would be anticarcinogenic. But we don't live in a perfect world, so I want you to understand the top dietary drivers of cancer and how to avoid them.

**Excess sugar and starch:** Most American diets contain too much sugar and starch that drive up blood sugar and cause the pancreas to pump out extra insulin.

High insulin is procarcinogenic.<sup>1</sup> Since the 1980s, cancer studies at Tufts University in Boston and Weill Cornell Medical College in New York have found that high insulin alters the gene that is

most often mutated when cancer develops. Consequently, high insulin helps to initiate and feed 80 percent of cancers.

Eating more whole plant foods, especially vegetables that aren't starchy — not a lot of corn, potatoes, or grain — and steering clear of sugary drinks can lower blood sugar and insulin and put you on the right path.

**Too much animal protein:** When I mention limiting carbs to my new patients, they often say: "Oh, so I should eat more protein." This is a mistaken notion. Studies show that too much protein — as is common in this country — contributes to development of cancer and other chronic diseases. Limiting protein reduces risk.<sup>2</sup>

Where cancer cells have begun to develop, the amino acid glutamine is especially effective at feeding them.<sup>3</sup> Like other amino acids, glutamine is a building block of protein and is found in all foods that contain protein. But animal foods are the richest sources.

There's no need to abstain from all animal food. Instead, eat plenty of vegetables and omit animal foods from some of your meals.

**Lack of minerals:** There are two reasons our typical diets lack minerals: Processed food contains few minerals except sodium (in excess). And sugar — all too abundant — depletes minerals. A lack of minerals makes tissue unnaturally acidic, and this makes it easier for cancer cells to develop.

Minerals are found in whole foods, including fresh vegetables, nuts, seafood, liver, and eggs. For insurance, I also recommend a supplement (see page 5 for details).

Dr. Marlene's

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**Nutrient insufficiency:** The right amount of essential vitamins and minerals — not too little or too much — equips your system to function at its best. Supplements such as a multivitamin and extra vitamin D don't directly prevent or reverse cancer but can provide nutritional insurance to help your body function well.

## Trigger #2: Exposure to Toxins

The link between toxic chemicals and cancer has been known for some time. Back in 2010, a government report found that “the burden of cancer from chemical exposures is substantial, while the programs for testing and regulation of carcinogens remain inadequate.”<sup>4</sup>

The same report noted that in addition to causing mutations that can become cancerous, environmental chemicals suppress the immune system, cause inflammation, and disrupt hormones. Sadly, I don't think things have changed much since then, so it's up to us to reduce our risk for cancer by limiting our exposure to toxins.

**Toxins in food:** Researchers in France tracked diet and cancer incidence in more than 68,000 people, between 2009 and 2016. Compared to those who never ate organic food, those who ate mostly organic food were much less likely to develop any type of cancer.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to pesticides, glyphosate (in some popular weed killers sold in garden stores) is carcinogenic. Research at the University of Washington in Seattle found that it can increase risk for non-Hodgkin's lymphoma

by 40 percent for workers spraying the chemical on farms or lawns.<sup>6</sup>

Glyphosate is prohibited in the production of organic food. Otherwise, it's widely used on corn, soy, wheat, and other grains.

The good news is that if you eat food without chemical pesticides and weed killers, levels of toxins in your body can drop very quickly. A team of researchers from Iowa and California measured levels of glyphosate in four families. They found that eating an organic diet for just six days

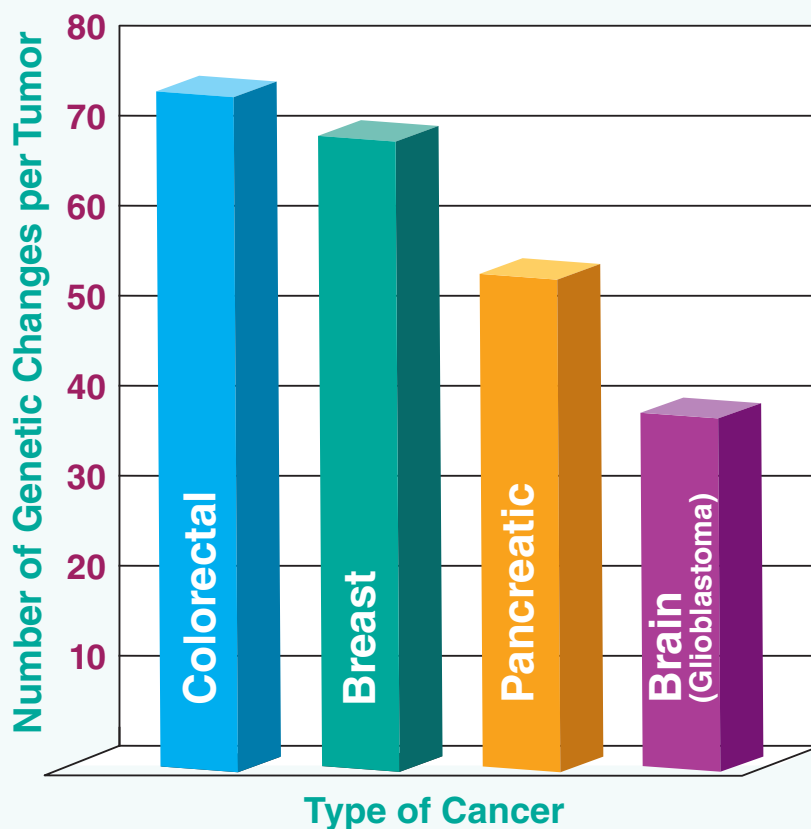
reduced levels of the weed killer by over 70 percent.<sup>7</sup>

**Toxins in beauty and household products:** “Fragrance” is a common ingredient in skincare, haircare, and household products, from laundry and surface cleaners to air fresheners. And it contains hidden toxins.

Breast Cancer Prevention Partners, a nonprofit organization, tested products and found that fragrance contains three-quarters of the toxic chemicals in skincare, haircare, and household cleaning products.<sup>8</sup>

## Genetic Changes and Cancer

Scientists at the Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center in Baltimore analyzed available research showing the numbers of genetic changes that lead to development of a tumor. Here's a snapshot of their findings:



Changes can take place quickly or during a period of years or decades.

Source: Vogelstein, B., et al. “Cancer genome landscapes.” *Science*. 2013 Mar 29;339(6127):1546-58.



The FDA doesn't require disclosure of ingredients in fragrance because they are considered trade secrets.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, labels list only "fragrance," but not the toxic ingredients it contains.

While there may be other toxins in consumer products, a good place to start is by avoiding those with "fragrance" listed as an ingredient. But beware: Even products labelled as "unscented" on the front of a package may list "fragrance" in the ingredients label on the back. (I assume that fragrance is used to mask unpleasant odors without imparting any recognizable scent.)

### Trigger #3: Poor Circulation

You know that you need good circulation in your arteries to keep the heart and other organs healthy. But there's also a lymphatic system that contains lymph, a colorless, watery fluid that is an essential part of your circulatory system. An efficient lymphatic system is essential for removing waste products and keeping your immune system working as it should.

Have you ever had "cankles" — puffy ankles? Maybe it was temporary after you sat or stood in one spot for a while or ate a lot of salty food. It's a sign that your lymph system was a bit backed up, and if it happens often or chronically, the situation needs attention.

Studies show that when the lymphatic system isn't working properly, it can contribute to high blood pressure, inflammation, development and progression of cancer, and other diseases.<sup>10</sup>

Exercise is essential to keep your lymphatic system working

efficiently. All types of exercise will help, from walking and stretching to yoga and resistance exercise. Movement helps lymph to circulate and regular bathroom habits and sweating purge toxins.

### Trigger #4: Lack of Sleep

Getting enough sleep can help to protect you against cancer. A European study tracked more than 23,000 middle-aged people for nearly 8 years, looking at the relationship between sleep and cancer. Compared to people who slept less than 6 hours, those who routinely slept between 7 and 8 hours per night were 43 percent less likely to develop cancer.<sup>11</sup>

### Trigger #5: Excess Weight

The CDC estimates that being overweight or obese plays a significant role in 40 percent of

cancers in this country.<sup>12</sup> And research shows that the more overweight an individual is, the higher the risk of cancer.<sup>13</sup>

Body fat is most harmful when it occurs in the abdominal area — belly fat — because it surrounds organs deep inside and generates harmful inflammation. And the inflammation raises risk for cancer.

If you're overweight, I realize that it isn't helpful to simply hear, "Lose weight." It's much easier said than done. My recommendations for avoiding the other 4 triggers will help you to shed excess weight. These are some ways in which the other triggers relate to weight:

- Lowering insulin levels by reducing sugar and carbs will reduce fat storage.
- Avoiding toxins will prevent disruption of hormones, including hunger hormones.

#### 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>TM</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*.



- Exercise and adequate sleep help to control blood sugar, insulin, and appetite.

One other element is necessary for weight loss: portion control. No matter how healthy your food, if you eat too much of it, you won't lose weight.

## Your Action Plan

The earlier newsletter issues listed in *Related to This Topic* below can help you work out a healthy low-carb diet that lowers blood sugar and insulin and normalizes weight. If you are dealing with any health conditions, check with your doctor before making any changes.

I also recommend getting your vitamin D level tested and taking enough to achieve a blood level of 50 ng/mL. Or take 5,000 IUs daily. To ensure that vitamin D is used in the most beneficial way, it's essential to also take vitamin K2, per product directions.

As insurance against vitamin or

mineral insufficiency, take a multivitamin that includes 400 to 800 mcg of folate and about 100 percent of the Daily Value of a range of minerals, including chromium, selenium, iodine, zinc, manganese, molybdenum, and vanadium.

Eat a variety of fresh vegetables, raw and cooked, and choose organic versions as much as possible. For meat and fish, eat a serving that is about the size of the palm of your hand, and aim to have one daily meal without any animal protein. Once you're routinely eating a healthy low-carb diet, your energy is stable, and you're feeling good, consider intermittent fasting, following the steps I outline in the earlier newsletter issue on the subject.

While improving your diet, start reducing the toxins in your home. Get rid of air fresheners with fragrance. Let in some fresh air or get a portable air filter for areas that can't easily be ventilated.

As you run out of skincare, hair-care, cleaning, and laundry products, make sure each replacement is free of fragrance. The nonprofit Environmental Working Group website and Healthy Living App can help you find nontoxic products. Visit [www.ewg.org](http://www.ewg.org).

If you don't get regular exercise, aim to walk for 30 minutes a day, which can be broken up into several shorter segments. Walk while you talk on the phone. Try to run errands on foot. And get 7 to 8 hours sleep per night.

## A Final Word

The triggers I've described can be avoided by making realistic changes in your everyday routines. And what you do daily can make a big difference in your risk for any type of cancer.

## Related to This Topic

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

Related Topic	Volume	Issue	Title
A Healthy Low-Carb Diet	1	8	The Guide to Healthy Eating
Healthy Carbs	3	6	The Diabetic's Guide to Eating Carbs
Healthy Meat	3	2	The Diabetic's Guide to Eating Meat
The Keto Diet	4	1	The Keto Diet for Weight Loss, Diabetes, Improved Memory, and More
Intermittent Fasting	3	7	Intermittent Fasting: The 3-Step Protocol for Vibrant Health
Detoxification	1	7	The 21-Day Energy Restoration Plan
Weight Loss	2	1	10 Reasons Why You Gain Weight and Can't Lose It

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



- 1 Cantley, L. "Seeking out the sweet spot in cancer therapeutics: an interview with Lewis Cantley." *Dis Model Mech*. 2016 Sep 1; 9(9): 911-916.
- 2 Mirzaei, H., et al. "Protein and amino acid restriction, aging and disease: from yeast to humans." *Trends Endocrinol Metab*. 2014 Nov;25(11):558-66.
- 3 Nguyen, T., et al. "Glutamine metabolism in cancer therapy." *Cancer Drug Resist* 2018;1:126-138.
- 4 Kripke, M., et al. "Rethinking Environmental Carcinogenesis." *Cancer Epidemiol Biomarkers Prev*. 2020 Oct;29(10):1870-1875.
- 5 Baudry, J., et al. "Association of Frequency of Organic Food Consumption With Cancer Risk: Findings From the NutriNet-Santé Prospective Cohort Study." *JAMA Intern Med*. 2018 Dec 1;178(12):1597-1606.
- 6 Zhang, L., et al. "Exposure to glyphosate-based herbicides and risk for non-Hodgkin lymphoma: A meta-analysis and supporting evidence." *Mutat Res*. Jul-Sep 2019;781:186-206.
- 7 Fagan, J., et al. "Organic diet intervention significantly reduces urinary glyphosate levels in U.S. children and adults." *Environ Res*. 2020 Oct;189:109898.
- 8 Breast Cancer Prevention Partners. "Right to Know: Exposing Toxic Fragrance Chemicals in Beauty, Personal Care and Cleaning Products." September 2018. <https://www.bcpp.org/resource/right-to-know-exposing-toxic-fragrance-chemicals-report/>
- 9 [www.fda.gov/cosmetics/cosmetic-ingredients/fragrances-cosmetics](http://www.fda.gov/cosmetics/cosmetic-ingredients/fragrances-cosmetics)
- 10 Padera, T.P., et al. "The Lymphatic System in Disease Processes and Cancer Progression." *Annu Rev Biomed Eng*. 2016 Jul 11; 18: 125-158.
- 11 Von Ruesten, A., et al. "Association of sleep duration with chronic diseases in the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition (EPIC)-Potsdam study." *PLoS One*. 2012;7(1):e30972.
- 12 CDC. "Vital Signs: Trends in Incidence of Cancers Associated with Overweight and Obesity — United States, 2005–2014." *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. 66(39):1052-1058.
- 13 Basen-Engquist, K., et al. "Obesity and Cancer Risk: Recent Review and Evidence." *Curr Oncol Rep*. 2011 Feb; 13(1): 71-76.

# Vicki wanted to lose weight, but she hated exercise – so how the heck did she **drop 32 pounds** in two months?

If you're having trouble losing 15 pounds or more, just see what happened to Vicki...

**L**ike most of us hitting middle age, Vicki started packing on a few extra pounds each year. Her weight crept up so gradually she hardly noticed. But eventually, Vicki, her husband, and her doctor became concerned. As you might imagine, Vicki's self-esteem took a big hit.

Vicki tried to lose weight by depriving herself of all her favorite foods. She forced herself to eat boring salads and tasteless frozen diet meals. And she exercised like crazy (even though she hated it). But the extra pounds just wouldn't budge.

That's when a friend suggested Vicki try **Smash-It!** This nutrient-infused slimming shake was developed by Primal Labs – a leader in nutritional supplementation.

In the first month alone, Vicki lost 3.5 inches from her belly and 2 inches from her waist, hips, and thighs. And when you hear Vicki tell the story, you'll see why she feels like a different person. "I have so much energy. Oh my gosh, my co-workers noticed within two weeks I was dropping weight," she said. "I was walking around with a big smile on my face."

**It's easy to see why Vicki had a big smile. She lost 18 pounds in just 30 days merely by substituting one meal a day with Smash-It! But she wasn't done...**

In the second month, Vicki lost an additional 2.5 inches off her belly and waist, and 1.75 inches off her hips. **In only two months, Vicki lost a grand total of 32 pounds!**

What's more, Vicki lost all this weight with only minimal exercise. Which just shows you proper nutrition is 90% of successful weight loss. Because if you're eating the wrong foods, you can't exercise enough to get rid of unwanted fat.

And that's the secret of **Smash-It!**, the delicious meal-in-a-glass that works better than any diet or weight loss program.

**Smash-It!** has been scientifically formulated to fix the #1 reason most people can't lose weight: **TOXIC FAT CELLS**. Most people get stuck with unwanted pounds, not because of *too much* fat, but rather because of too much of the *WRONG* kind of fat.

This was proven in a landmark study at Temple University. Researchers studied fat cells of overweight people and found them to be toxic, inflamed, and unhealthy. Worse yet, these toxic fat cells "affect blood pressure, blood sugar, triglycerides, and cholesterol," according to *Future Medicine*.

Fortunately, a delicious **Smash-It!** meal replacement shake is an amazing improvement over any meal replacement, protein supplement, or "nutrition shake" you may have tried. In fact, by drinking a daily **Smash-It!** shake, you can:

1. FIX those toxic fat cells for good...
2. FIRE UP your metabolism and supercharge your health...
3. TAKE INCHES AND POUNDS OFF your hips, thighs, and waist, giving you the body you've been dreaming of...

**Discover everything you will get with Smash-It! on the next page!**





# Here's What You'll Find in Smash-It!

First, you'll get 21 grams of **quality protein** in a proprietary Quadsource Blend. This includes whey and pea protein, and even cranberry seed protein to help boost your metabolism and give you the nutrition you need.

Next, a patented *Spectra Blend* contains 29 of nature's most powerful, health-boosting fruit, vegetable, spice, and herbal extracts, including green tea, turmeric, broccoli, bilberry, cinnamon, blueberry, acerola, and many more.

You'd have to eat several servings of fruits and vegetables to get the **antioxidant power** you'll find in *Spectra Blend*. As you know, antioxidants fight the free radical damage that comes with aging. Plus, they increase nitric oxide production to support healthy blood pressure levels and brain function.

In **Smash-It!**, you'll also get:

- ✓ 3 grams of gut-healthy **fiber**, including oat fiber, xanthan gum, and blue agave inulin to help support healthy lipid levels
- ✓ 8 special **enzymes** to help you better digest your food
- ✓ 6 special **probiotics** — "friendly" bacterial strains to support regularity and immune function
- ✓ Biotin and chromium to help maintain healthy blood sugar levels
- ✓ Vitamins A, C, E, B, and D for more health benefits, including support for bone and brain health, as well as healthy blood pressure
- ✓ L-leucine, an amino acid that helps minimize the loss of lean muscle tissue — something to guard against as you age (and when losing weight)
- ✓ And many more vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients to maintain your good health

But what about fat? You know you need fat to feel full and satisfied, so you won't be tempted by unhealthy carbs and sweets. But it has to be *good* fat, not the bad fats typically found in fast and processed foods.



Well, **Smash-It!** contains the absolute **best kind of fat** — medium chain triglycerides found in coconut oil that your body easily burns for energy. And as an added bonus, these fats help support cognitive health.

What's more, the Primal Health team knew that if it didn't taste great, you wouldn't drink it. So, **Smash-It!** comes in rich chocolate, strawberry, and vanilla caramel flavors. It's sweetened with monk fruit that's actually sweeter than sugar. **Smash-It!** contains just one gram of sugar per serving. Compare that to Ensure, with its unhealthy 15 grams of sugar.

With **Smash-It!**, you can **safely and easily melt off up to 15 pounds in just one month**. And enjoy all these benefits in just 30 seconds a day — with minimal exercise and NO impossible-to-maintain diet. What's not to love?

And no worries... Try **Smash-It!** completely risk-free with a no-questions-asked 100% money-back guarantee.

Just like Vicki, now YOU can start shedding those unwanted pounds. Imagine looking and feeling years younger... Fitting into your skinny clothes again... Sounds amazing, doesn't it? Say hello to your new life.

**TRY IT TODAY! Smash-It! Nutrient-Infused Slimming Shake**  
**GetSmash-It.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

# Should You Get a Covid-19 Vaccine?

Social distancing, hand washing, and mask wearing are currently essential for reducing the risk of becoming infected with Covid-19, but they are only part of the solution. Vaccines offer a way to stamp out the spread of the disease and allow us to return to a pre-pandemic way of life.

As vaccines become available to more Americans, I know that some of you may be wondering whether you should be vaccinated. Are the vaccines safe and effective? Could the side effects be dangerous?

With any vaccine, side effects are always possible. Some discomfort or pain at the site of an injection, beyond the initial jab, is a common one. The important question is, do the benefits outweigh any risks?

Long before Covid-19, there have been concerns that vaccines can be toxic. It's important to understand what led to these concerns and how the first two Covid-19 vaccines are different.

## How Traditional Vaccines Work

Traditional vaccines contain a tiny dose of an infectious substance, such as a flu virus. The injected virus is inactivated, meaning in a weak form, so that it can't infect you with the disease.

The underlying theory is that this will stimulate your immune system to produce antibodies against that specific virus. And then, if you encounter a larger,

stronger dose of the active virus in the environment, your immune system will be prepared to defend you against infection or, at worst, significantly reduce the severity of illness if it develops.

This is how all vaccines — such as those for polio, smallpox, and measles — have always worked. And they have eradicated major diseases and saved millions of lives around the world.

However, the tiny amount of an inactive virus is not enough to trigger the desired immune



response by itself. To solve the problem, traditional vaccines contain additional ingredients, technically called “adjuvants,” to help kickstart the immune system to build its antiviral defenses.

Where there have been harmful vaccine side effects, these are usually a reaction to an adjuvant. In addition, thimerosal, a mercury-based preservative, has been phased out of vaccines for children but is still in traditional vaccines for adults.

## Covid-19 Health Risks

Covid-19 is viewed as a respiratory disease that attacks the lungs. However, an analysis of data led by Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis shows that it can trigger diabetes and cause serious organ damage.<sup>1</sup>

Researchers compared the effects of Covid-19 with those of the flu. They looked at medical records of 3,641 people hospitalized with Covid-19 between February and June 2020, and people who were hospitalized with the flu between January 2017 and December 2019. The average age of patients in both groups was 69.

Compared to the flu, those with Covid-19 were:

- Nearly 5 times more likely to die.
- 4 times more likely to require breathing machines.
- 2.5 times more likely to require treatment in an intensive care unit.

- More likely to develop diabetes while in the hospital, requiring insulin therapy.
- More likely to suffer kidney damage and severe sepsis shock.
- In need of more medications to treat low blood pressure, which can lead to organ damage and death.
- At higher risk of damage to the brain, liver, heart, and blood-clotting systems.

## Lasting Symptoms

Many people who have recovered from Covid-19 are described as “long haulers,” because they experience symptoms long after recovering from the actual infection. Surveys have found that three months after being infected, 50 to 80 percent of patients have symptoms such as fatigue, concentration problems, shortness of breath, headache, body aches, sleep problems, and difficulty exercising.



## New Technology for Covid-19 Vaccines

The first two Covid-19 vaccines approved in this country, from Pfizer and Moderna, use new technology that works in a completely different way. Both require two doses, a few weeks apart. Clinical trials have found that with the required two doses, the Pfizer vaccine is 95 percent effective<sup>2</sup> and the Moderna vaccine is 94.1 percent effective<sup>3</sup> in preventing Covid-19 infection.

These vaccines do not contain any virus. Also, they do not contain any adjuvant additives, so there is no risk of a reaction to an adjuvant. Instead of containing preservatives, the new vaccines require refrigeration at specific temperatures, so there is no risk of receiving the mercury-based thimerosal preservative.

These Covid-19 vaccines work through a mechanism called “mRNA,” which is a genetic blueprint that triggers your own immune system to defend itself against Covid-19.

The reason this virus has been able to infect so many people — and be so deadly — is that it is new. Human immune systems have never seen it before and had no built-in defenses against it. The mRNA vaccines solve this problem.

In simple terms, an mRNA vaccine provides information about a virus for your immune system. Using this data, the immune system can build its defenses, even if it has never been exposed to the virus.

The mRNA data is somewhat like intelligence gathered about an enemy in a war. If you know what

your enemy looks like and how it is planning to strike, you can stop it from attacking or, at worst, suffer minimal casualties.

Scientists have been working on mRNA technology for over 30 years, and the Pfizer and Moderna Covid-19 vaccines are the first in history to harness the technology to prevent an infectious disease. Even though these vaccines became available in record time, they followed all the usual testing steps for efficacy and safety.

This applies only to the vaccines I’ve mentioned. There may be other vaccines that become available that work in a different way.

## Risks of Vaccine Side Effects

Some people don’t experience any side effects. Among those who do, common ones include soreness or pain at the injection site, fatigue, headache, and/or fever. These may last a few hours or a day and while unpleasant, they indicate that the immune system is working on building defenses — this is a good thing.

Among the hundreds of thousands of people who were early recipients of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, only a handful of severe allergic reactions have been reported as we go to press with this issue of the newsletter.

Among these, most occurred in people who had severe allergies. Several cases reported in the media noted that the individuals routinely carried an injectable form of epinephrine (an EpiPen), because they were susceptible to severe allergic reactions.

Situations where someone would use an EpiPen could be a life-threatening allergy to shellfish or another food, where accidentally ingesting it would cause anaphylactic shock. People who have these types of allergies are usually aware of them.

That said, keep in mind that severe adverse reactions to the first two US-approved vaccines have been extremely rare. Given the life-threatening danger of Covid-19 infection and all too often, lasting adverse health effects, the benefits of a vaccine clearly outweigh the risks of vaccine side effects for most people.

## Vaccine Cautions

Medical guidelines recommend that most people receive a Covid-19 vaccine. However, the vaccine is not recommended<sup>4</sup> for anyone who has:

- An allergy to polyethylene glycol (PEG) or polysorbate.
- An active Covid-19 infection. Vaccination is recommended after recovery to prevent reinfection.

If you have had an immediate allergic reaction to any other vaccine or injected medication in the past, the CDC recommends consulting with your doctor. As we go to press, it is unclear whether women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, or anyone with HIV or another condition that suppresses the immune system, should get the vaccine. However, allergies to foods, latex, or other substances not related to vaccines or injectable medications should not cause problems with the mRNA vaccines.

1 Xie, Y., et al. “Comparative evaluation of clinical manifestations and risk of death in patients admitted to hospital with covid-19 and seasonal influenza: cohort study.” *BMJ*. 2020 Dec 15;371:m4677. 2 Mahase, E. “Covid-19: Pfizer vaccine efficacy was 52% after first dose and 95% after second dose, paper shows.” *BMJ*. 2020 Dec 11;371:m4826. 3 Baden, L.R., et al. “Efficacy and Safety of the mRNA-1273 SARS-CoV-2 Vaccine.” *N Engl J Med*. 2020 Dec 30. doi: 10.1056/NEJMoa2035389. Online ahead of print. 4 CDC. “COVID-19 Vaccines and Allergic Reactions.” Updated December 31, 2020.

# Pretty Food Can Fool You

When food looks pretty, you're likely to think it's healthier than it really is. That's the conclusion of research at the University of California, Los Angeles, which looked at how perception of food drives consumer choices and spending.<sup>1</sup>

In one experiment, 800 people were asked to find pictures of pretty and ugly food online. The images they chose included ice cream, lasagna, omelets, and sandwiches. They were then asked to rate whether each food was healthy and nutritious or not. Both men and women rated pretty food as being healthier, even when this was not the case.

In another experiment, 400 people were asked to rate two images of avocado toast. In one, the avocado was beautifully sliced and arranged on the toast, while in the other, an unattractive avocado mush was spread on the toast. Participants believed that the pretty version was more nutritious and healthier — even though the two images depicted identical ingredients.

When shown a cosmetically perfect green pepper and an ugly one, people perceived the perfect pepper to be healthier. And they were willing to pay 56 percent more for it.

## How Food Looks So Good in Ads

Food manufacturers take advantage of our perceptions. When food is photographed, it's "styled" by professionals, just like a celebrity would be for a magazine cover or Instagram post.

Instead of makeup, careful hair styling, and fashionable clothing, food stylists have other tools. Although



a burger, for example, may be made with its usual food ingredients, it may be undercooked to look bigger. And the tools to make it look perfect may include glue, pins, paint, tweezers, scissors, small blowtorches, hidden toothpicks, paper, tape, oil, and glycerin.

Recipe books likely use the same methods. So, if you've ever wondered why a dish you prepared didn't look as beautiful as it did in the photo accompanying a recipe, now you know.

## Why This Is Important

On average, we are exposed to about 7,000 food and restaurant ads per year — about 19 per day. And three-quarters of these are promoting fast food. Attractive images can make you think it's more nutritious and healthier than it really is. Ads are, after all, designed to make you want a product, regardless of its quality.

You can use this premise to make healthy homemade food more appealing, to yourself and your family. For example, steaming vegetables until they're just cooked — not overcooked — brings out bright colors made by the plants' beneficial nutrients. We instinctively like strong food colors, flavors, and aromas because in nature, these indicate high nutritional value.

# The Power of a 10-Minute Massage

Stress can take the joy out of life and lower your resistance to all types of illnesses. Managing schedules and other life situations helps to prevent stress from becoming harmful, but a short mas-

sage or rest period can also help.

A study of 60 healthy women tested massage and simply resting for 10 minutes and monitored changes in heart rate as an objective measurement of

physical stress. A gentle neck-and-shoulder massage for 10 minutes significantly reduced physical stress, and participants reported feeling less mentally stressed. A 10-minute rest, such as putting one's head down on a desk, worked almost as well.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hagen, L. "Pretty Healthy Food: How and When Aesthetics Enhance Perceived Healthiness." *Journal of Marketing*. September 14, 2020. <sup>2</sup> Meier, M., et al. "Standardized massage interventions as protocols for the induction of psychophysiological relaxation in the laboratory: a block randomized, controlled trial." *Sci Rep*. 2020 Sep 8;10(1):14774.

## Stopping Diabetes

In my practice, I've found that the risk factors for diabetes, such as high blood sugar and insulin, can be reversed for most people. And where type 2 diabetes has developed, the right changes in diet and lifestyle can reverse the disease, or at least improve health to a degree where the need for medications can be eliminated or reduced.

In our healthcare system, the power of diet and lifestyle changes is not recognized or harnessed nearly enough. But every now and then, there's some research that helps to make the connection.

A British study of more than one thousand people with prediabetes, meaning those at high risk for

diabetes, found that weight loss of just a few pounds, along with regular exercise, nearly halved the risk of developing diabetes.<sup>1</sup>

Weight loss averaged between 4.4 and 6.6 pounds and was maintained for at least two years. Exercise consisted of 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity movement (the equivalent of 30 minutes per day) and two or three sessions of muscle-strengthening exercise per week.

Participants were also counseled to reduce saturated fat in their diet. This is a faulty diet strategy, as sugar and starch are the real culprits that drive diabetes. In fact, a low-fat diet can lead to higher sugar and carb intake, which is harmful. But despite this, the combination of a little weight loss and regular exercise produced benefits.

## Avocado Is Good for the Gut

A popular source of healthy fat, avocado adds flavor and creamy texture to salads and dips. Now, a study at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has found that it's also good for the gut.

In a group of 163 overweight people, half ate a diet without avocado, and the other half ate one meal each day that included a whole avocado (which is a lot at one sitting). Both diets contained the same number of calories as the avocado replaced other food; it was not an extra source of calories.

During the study, which lasted 12 weeks, blood, urine, and fecal samples were taken to analyze the gut bacteria of all participants. The tests showed that among those eating avocado, the diversity and quality of gut bacteria improved, which is beneficial for digestion and overall health.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to healthy fat, avocado contains a variety of vitamins,

minerals such as potassium and magnesium, carbohydrates, and fiber, and they help to control appetite because they are filling.

In the study, participants ate a whole avocado at one meal every day to enable researchers to study specific effects. But in real life, a more realistic approach would be to eat smaller quantities on more occasions: perhaps add one-half to a big salad, spread a little on some celery for a snack, or make an avocado dip for crunchy vegetables.



### Avocado Nutrition Facts

One-half of a medium avocado contains:

- Calories: ..... 120
- Fat: ..... 12 grams
- Carbohydrates: ..... 6 grams
- Fiber: ..... 4.5 grams
- Protein: ..... 1.5 grams

## Fitness Fights Dementia

Being physically fit lowers your odds of developing dementia. "Fit" doesn't mean looking like a weightlifter; it's how well your lungs and circulatory system supply oxygen. If you get out of breath easily walking up stairs or down the street, your fitness level is low.

In a recent study, brain scans showed that people with higher fitness levels have better memory and overall mental function.<sup>3</sup> Earlier research found that fit women were nearly 90-percent less likely to develop dementia.

You can improve your fitness level by doing any type of exercise that gets you somewhat out of breath, such as walking fast or uphill, or doing calisthenics such as running on the spot, doing jumping jacks, or skipping rope. If you're not already exercising, start slowly, and build up to more intense movement.

1 Sampson, M., et al. "Lifestyle Intervention With or Without Lay Volunteers to Prevent Type 2 Diabetes in People With Impaired Fasting Glucose and/or Nondiabetic Hyperglycemia: A Randomized Clinical Trial." JAMA Intern Med. 2020 Nov 2;e205938. doi: 10.1001/jamainternmed.2020.5938. Online ahead of print. 2 Thompson, S.V., et al. "Avocado Consumption Alters Gastrointestinal Bacteria Abundance and Microbial Metabolite Concentrations among Adults with Overweight or Obesity: A Randomized Controlled Trial." J Nutr. 2020 Aug 17;nxaa219. 3 Castells-Sánchez, A., et al. "Sex Matters in the Association between Physical Activity and Fitness with Cognition." Med Sci Sports Exerc. 2020 Dec 23. doi: 10.1249/MSS.0000000000002570. Online ahead of print..



# Q&A

**Q: I've always been healthy but now I'm at an age where I'm starting to experience hot flashes. How can I stop them?**

— Rena S.

**A:** Hot flashes occur when estrogen levels drop as a woman approaches menopause, but not all women experience hot flashes. Stress plays a major role in determining whether hot flashes occur, and it can be generated by life situations and diet.



When something stressful happens, adrenaline levels rise and can trigger hot flashes. Major changes in life — including good changes — can generate this type of reaction. I've had patients experience ongoing stress after a job promotion, marriage, or the birth of a grandchild a year ago.

Simply recognizing and acknowledging that such an event had a stressful impact can be helpful. And where a stressful situation requires some reorganization in schedule or other aspects of life, dealing with it is also helpful.

The way you react to life situations also makes a difference. When a car breaks down in traffic, some people calmly call a road service, arrange for repairs, and carry on with their day. But others become frustrated, angry, or upset — stressed — and it takes a toll.

Cortisol is another stress

hormone that, when elevated, can contribute to hot flashes, and diet can be a trigger. With changes in hormone levels, you may find that you can't eat the way you used to. Sugars and carbs cause a spike in blood sugar and then a crash, and when levels of blood sugar drop, cortisol goes up.

Trading sugary and starchy foods for nonstarchy vegetables and some healthy fat and protein can prevent dips in blood sugar and keep cortisol levels stable. This can help to reduce hot flashes, plus it helps to lower chronic inflammation and enhances overall health for years to come.

As a starting point, I recommend looking at your diet and seeing how you can manage any stressful life situations. If hot flashes continue to be a problem, bioidentical hormone therapy is an option. By “bioidentical,” I mean prescription hormones that are made from plants and are chemically identical to your own hormones. They are widely used by integrative physicians.

The other, traditional types of prescription hormones are made from either pregnant mare's urine or synthetic substances and are not an exact chemical duplicate of your own hormones. Such synthetic hormones can increase the odds of weight gain, blood clots, heart disease, and cancer. Correctly prescribed bioidentical hormones do not pose such risks.

If you decide to try hormone therapy, I recommend working with a physician who has specialized training in bioidentical hormones. You can find one through the Institute for Functional Medicine at [www.ifm.org](http://www.ifm.org).

**Q: I'm starting to follow your diet and am trying to eat less starchy foods and sugar. Do I have to give up diet soda?**

— Alan W.

**A:** Ultimately, you should wean yourself off diet soda. However, it isn't realistic to make a lot of changes in your diet at one time.

First, I suggest focusing on reducing sugary and starchy food. Once you've become accustomed to some new, lower-carb eating habits and are doing well, try replacing one of your diet sodas with green tea, or plain carbonated water with fresh-squeezed lemon juice or some liquid flavored stevia. And then replace another diet soda, and so on.

The most successful way to transform the way you eat is in baby steps. Make one change at a time, turn it into a habit, and then take on another change.

## 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.