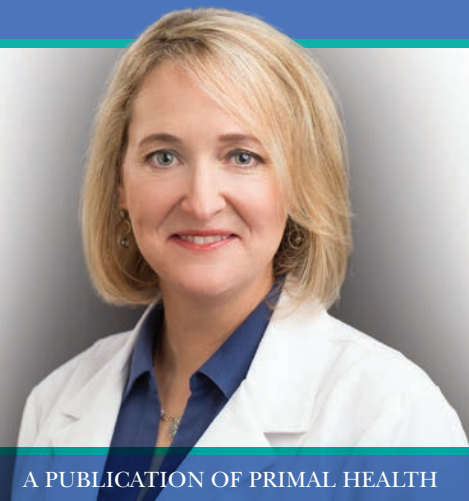


# Dr. Marlene's NATURAL HEALTH CONNECTIONS

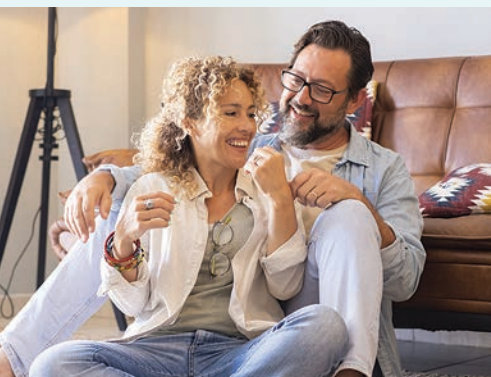
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## How to Reverse Pandemic Weight Gain and Unhealthy Habits



**Weight gain and unhealthy lifestyle habits have been side effects of the pandemic we have all been living through, but some simple steps can put you on a new path to better health.**

Many of my patients are struggling with weight gain, more so than before the COVID-19 pandemic, and many are feeling guilty about it. So, they are surprised when I tell them the most important first step: Be kind to yourself.

After I say that, there's usually a pause, and then I see an immense sense of relief in their faces. And it's no wonder.

The past year and a half has been really hard, more so for some people than for others. Even if weight is not a problem, I've had patients who just don't feel as well as they used to because they weren't able to maintain healthy eating and exercise habits.

In all these situations, there's a tendency for people to beat themselves up about eating food they know is unhealthy and not exercising enough. But there's no need to do that — no need to say that you should have done things differently.

And it's important to recognize that.

As pandemic lockdowns began around the country in March 2020, the world instantly changed. And as we hunkered down to shelter in place, we were forced to change many of our daily habits.

We didn't know how long lockdowns and other restrictions were going to last, and I don't know anyone who thought they would last as long as they did. No one really knew what to do. Bottom line, we all handled things as best we could, and comfort food helped us cope.

There were other issues with food, as well. Along with shortages of paper products and cleaning supplies, there were real concerns about

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**IN THE NEXT ISSUE:**  
**How to Defend Yourself  
Against Colds, Flu,  
and COVID-19**

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food shortages. Empty shelves in supermarkets are frightening. The natural response was to stock up on things with a long shelf life, such as packaged mac and cheese.

Not being able to go to work and not knowing if your job would be there in the future were pressing concerns for many. I'm acutely aware of what that felt like, as my offices had to close, and I had to scramble to set up a system to be able to continue working virtually with my patients.

Dr. Marlene's

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**Primal Health, LP**

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On top of that, we were cut off from those we care about if they weren't in our household. And for some, there was illness or loss of loved ones.

I'm mentioning all these things because it's important to acknowledge that we've lived through some major challenges — maybe the biggest challenges of our lives. We coped and adapted. And in doing so, we made changes in the way we live our daily lives.

For many people, weight gain has been one of the side effects. Weight loss is rarely easy, and given our recent experiences, it's important to view it in context. Being kind to yourself makes it easier to take stock of your personal situation and determine your best steps to a healthier future.

### You Are Not Alone

The isolation of lockdowns may have left you feeling as though you're alone in struggling with unhealthy habits and weight, but this isn't the case. In the spring of 2020, a few months after shelter-in-place strategies were implemented, researchers at Grand Canyon University in Phoenix carried out an online survey. They found that 22 percent of respondents had gained between 5 and 10 pounds.<sup>1</sup> And things got worse as the pandemic continued.

A year later — last March — the American Psychological Association found that 42 percent of those surveyed had gained weight since the pandemic began. In this group, the average weight gain was 29 pounds, an amount that significantly increases risks for diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. In addition, nearly one in four of

those surveyed reported drinking more alcohol.<sup>2</sup>

Physical activity — just moving around in the normal course of the day — also dropped significantly. At the University of California, San Francisco, researchers used smartphones to track steps of more than 455,000 people in the United States and many other countries. They found that daily steps dropped by half where lockdowns were most severe. And the longer a lockdown continued, the more physical activity decreased.<sup>3</sup>

### Be Mindful of Changes

A pandemic isn't the only type of change that can lead to weight gain. And the effects of some changes sneak up on you.

When my husband was in grad school he rode a bicycle to and from school every day — 7 miles each way. He didn't think of it as "exercise"; it was just part of his routine. One day, someone stole his bicycle, and he replaced it with a motorbike. And he gained 20 pounds over the next few months.

People sometimes gain weight after they get married, have children, change jobs, or move to a different type of neighborhood. In each of these cases, changes in their routines, including the food they eat, how much they move, and even how much sleep they get can all contribute to weight gain.

Working from home instead of a separate workplace is a common recent change for many people. We often don't realize how much we move during an office workday. Walking in and out of buildings and from and to cars, walking over to speak with a colleague, going to and from a meeting or lunchroom

— all these add up during the course of a day — but not when you work from home.

Identifying the changes that led to the gain is one step. But it isn't always possible to go back to doing things the old way.

No young man, such as my husband in his school days, wants to trade his motorbike for a bicycle. As a result of the pandemic, many people will continue to work from home, at least some of the time, or face different life situations.

It's important to look at which of the changes that you made during the past year and a half worked against you and which ones were beneficial. In this way, you can learn from the experience and use it to live a healthier life.

## Break Comfort Habits

During lockdowns, we developed some unhealthy habits for comfort. Some people started drinking every night, and others baked a lot, snacked a lot, or spent hours on the couch, streaming television shows and movies.

As I said earlier, it's important to acknowledge that these were ways of coping with an unprecedented, frightening situation — something akin to movies about global catastrophes but unimaginable in real life. Now, it's time to break unhealthy comfort habits. But it needs to be done in realistic ways.

One of my patients had developed a habit of eating chocolate cookies every night. He didn't think it was a good thing to do but he was working long hours and wanted a treat at the end of the day. So, we came up with a healthier alternative that was equally satisfying.

It turned out that cookies

weren't important to him — the taste of chocolate was what he wanted. As you might know, chocolate contains beneficial antioxidants and other nutrients and can be a healthy food. The problem with most chocolate is the sugar.

The alternative? Sugar-free dark chocolate sweetened with stevia (Lily's dark chocolate is one). I suggested that this patient have a couple of squares of it with a little peanut butter on them instead of cookies — the fat in peanut butter makes a little chocolate more satisfying. He loves the healthier treat and feels better after switching to it.

## Maintain Good Changes

Some pandemic-related changes may have been beneficial. Staying home may have meant that you learned to cook delicious, healthy food. Perhaps you used the time saved from a work commute to go for a walk or do some other type of exercise.

Any positive changes you made while living under pandemic restrictions are keepers. And it's important to recognize and maintain these.

If you went back to work in an office and are skipping exercise that you did at home, I encourage you to work out a way to incorporate more physical activity into your new routine. Lockdowns led to some new options.

After gyms were forced to close last year, online fitness programs flourished. And many highly skilled fitness trainers — who were previously available only to select clients — started offering classes online. If you're the type of person who needs the structure of scheduled, live classes, there are plenty to choose from online. Or you can go to a local gym or yoga studio.

On-demand fitness training online is another option. If your schedule is tighter than it was while working from home, it may be a practical

## 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*.





choice. Some of my patients tried online fitness classes during a lockdown and discovered that they preferred the privacy of working out at home to being in a gym.

This is also a good time to consider new types of activities, or those you used to enjoy earlier in your life. I'm going back to my gym for fitness classes but I'm also going to revive an activity I used to enjoy but haven't done for years: rock climbing.

### Take a Problem-Solving Approach

After looking at your changes, it's time to make a plan to lose weight that you may have gained and to adopt habits and routines that bring about better health. Here's a key point: Your plan needs to be realistic and tailored to your life and personal preferences.

One of my patients had been doing very well with my low-carb way of eating. When the pandemic began, he started a nonprofit organization and began working longer hours than ever before. His healthy eating habits fell apart, he gained some weight, and he started feeling run down.

When he came to see me, I knew that improvements needed to be tailored to his demanding work schedule, and we worked out some simple but beneficial changes. For example, instead of drinking a lot of coffee throughout the day, he's drinking green tea. It contains less caffeine, gives him more stable energy, and contains nutrients that are good for every aspect of health. And he sleeps better.

It isn't realistic for this patient to prepare meals at home, but he is making better choices from menus

or buffets at popular restaurant chains that he frequents. For example, he's skipping the rice and cutting back on tortillas when having Mexican food. He's eating salads with chicken, fish, or meat. And he's adding more vegetables, in place of starchy foods, at every opportunity.

### Diet Basics

I recommend a low-carb way of eating that is not extreme, but it's effective because it keeps your blood sugar stable. And that's important for maintaining energy and mental alertness and for controlling weight.

In addition to eating the right foods, which I'll cover in a moment, it's vital to eat often enough. A recent study of 1,070

people found that blood sugar can dip too low between two and three hours after a meal. This increases hunger and leads to overeating and weight gain. It's a common phenomenon among people who struggle with their weight.<sup>4</sup>

When this happens, the tendency is to eat sugary or starchy foods as a pick-me-up, such as cookies, chips, or pretzels. These lead to more upward surges and dips in blood sugar, perpetuating the hunger cycle.

Eating a low-carb snack with some fat, such as some celery and peanut butter, stabilizes blood sugar, appetite, and energy. With this type of snack in between low-carb meals, I recommend eating every three hours, or before you get hungry.

## Examine Pandemic-Related Changes

Take a look at the changes you made in response to pandemic restrictions and concerns. It's helpful to write them down.

### Food and Drinks

List changes in your typical meals, including the foods, quantities, and when you ate each meal. In addition, include the types of snacks and drinks, quantities, and how often you typically had each one, before the pandemic struck and afterward.

### Physical Activity

Make a note of when there were major changes, such as working from home instead of from a workplace, walks to do errands or for exercise, going to a gym or some type of exercise class, and exercise at home. If you were tracking your activity with a smartwatch or smartphone before and after the pandemic began, look at your history and compare your daily averages.



### Evaluate the Changes

For each one, ask yourself: How did that work for you? Did it improve or detract from your well-being? Make a note of which changes were positive and which were negative.

### Plan for Improvement

Pick one positive change to maintain and make sure that you keep doing what was beneficial for the next few days or a week. Once it's become part of your routine, pick one negative change, and work out a realistic way to eliminate it. Once it's part of your routine, repeat the process, alternating between a positive change and a negative one. Keep working your way down the list.

## Take an Inventory of Your Diet

Many types of diets can produce weight loss, but most people fail to maintain a lower weight. The way to succeed is to change your eating habits in a way that works for you.

Taking an inventory of your usual diet is the first step. I've found that eating too many sugary and starchy carbs is the most common cause of weight gain and dips in energy, and it paves the way to type 2 diabetes. For many years, my patients have benefitted from my dietary approach, which limits carbs from certain types of foods, described below, but leaves specific food choices up to you. I describe my approach in detail in an earlier newsletter issue, *The Guide to Healthy Eating* (see *Related to This Topic* on page 6).

To see if your diet is too rich in sugary and starchy carbs, I suggest tracking what you eat for a while. Studies show that keeping a food diary leads to greater weight loss.<sup>5</sup>

You can write down all your foods and drinks on paper or use an app such as [www.myfitnesspal.com](http://www.myfitnesspal.com). For an accurate picture, it's best to record your meals, snacks, and drinks when you have them, rather than waiting until the end of the day.

## Count These Carbs

Once you have a list of what you're eating and drinking, count the carbs *only in the foods I describe below*. These are the major sources of carb overload, which causes erratic and rising blood sugar and weight gain. You don't need to count carbs in other foods, such as meat, fish, poultry, most vegetables, nuts, seeds, cheese, and unflavored

yogurt, as these don't lead to carb overload. The carbs to count are in these foods:

- **Grains:** Any food made with grains, including wheat, oatmeal, other types of cereal, rice, pasta, and corn. We may think of corn as a vegetable, but it is really a grain. Popular corn foods include tortillas, cornbread, and popcorn. Other grain foods include all the goodies you find in a bakery, such as bread, buns, donuts, cakes, cookies, scones, and croissants. Pretzels, crackers, and flour tortillas and wraps are also grain foods.
- **Gluten-Free Packaged Foods:** These contain starch from gluten-free plant sources, such as tapioca, and are generally high in carbs.
- **Starchy Vegetables and Legumes:** All types of potatoes, including chips, sweet potatoes, yams, beans, and peas.
- **Fruit:** Fresh, frozen, canned, and dried fruit; fruit juices and smoothies; and jams, jellies, and fruit syrups.
- **Candy and Frozen Treats:** These are all rich in sugar. They include all types of candy, candy bars, ice cream, Popsicles, and other frozen treats.
- **Drinks:** Any drinks with natural or added sugar, including sodas, energy drinks, tea and coffee sweetened with sugar or syrup, milk (it contains lactose, a natural sugar), beer, liqueurs, dessert wines, and mixed drinks. By themselves, distilled spirits such as gin and vodka don't contain carbs.

## Types of Sugar

These are some forms of sugar that you may see listed as ingredients on food labels. All of these should be included in your daily carb count and should be eaten only in moderation:



- |                           |                            |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| • Agave syrup             | • High fructose corn syrup |
| • Barley malt             | • Honey                    |
| • Beet sugar              | • Invert sugar             |
| • Brown rice syrup        | • Lactose                  |
| • Brown sugar             | • Malt syrup               |
| • Cane sugar              | • Maltodextrin             |
| • Corn syrup              | • Maltose                  |
| • Date sugar              | • Maple syrup              |
| • Demerara sugar          | • Molasses                 |
| • Dextrose                | • Raw sugar                |
| • Fructose                | • Rice syrup               |
| • Fruit juice concentrate | • Sorghum syrup            |
| • Glucose                 | • Sucanat                  |
|                           | • Sucrose                  |

If you like a sweet taste, try xylitol, stevia, or monk fruit, in packets or flavored liquids. These are natural, sugar-free sweeteners that don't have a negative effect on blood sugar or weight.

## Carb Quotas

I recommend eating no more than 60 grams of carbs per day from the foods and drinks listed above. In a single meal or snack, I recommend no more than 30 grams of carbs from these foods. I also recommend including some fat in each meal and snack, because it is satisfying and provides stable energy.

An example of a meal would be an assortment of non-starchy vegetables and some meat, fish, or poultry. The vegetables could be steamed, roasted, stir-fried, or sauteed, but not deep-fried. You could include a small serving of potato or rice — it's up to you — but make sure to count those carbs as part of your 60-gram daily quota.

My approach doesn't exclude any food. If you want to have some ice cream, just make sure that the carbs from other carb-rich foods and drinks are low enough for the day to leave room for the ice cream.

In case you're wondering, I do follow my own diet. Freshly baked,

warm cookies are one of my personal favorites, but when there's a whole batch sitting around, it's too easy to overindulge. So, I make my cookie dough, scoop it into single-cookie servings, and freeze it. When I want a cookie, I take a one-cookie portion out of the freezer and bake it. And I have my fresh-baked cookie! (I also make sure I leave room in my daily carb allowance for the cookie carbs.)

In other words, you can eat and drink anything — just manage your daily carbs so that you stay within 60 grams from the foods on the list above.

## Weight-Loss Blocks to Avoid

Motivation is an essential part of making changes. Find something that creates action. It could be an upcoming event, such as a wedding or vacation, or a desire to meet new challenges or overcome health issues. But beware:

If it's something you've sort of wanted to do for a while but were never moved to action, you need some new motivation — something that will truly give you an incentive to go for a walk or trade some pasta for vegetables.

Lack of sleep can lead to weight gain or block weight loss. Studies have found that sleeping less than 5 hours per night increases the odds of obesity by 55 percent.<sup>6</sup> Moderate, rather than intense exercise can improve the quality of sleep, leaving you more rested.<sup>7</sup>

If you have a dental or other lingering infection, the inflammation it generates can be a block to losing body fat. See the appropriate health professional and get it taken care of.

## A Final Word

As I said at the outset: Be kind to yourself. But do take steps to forgo unhealthy comfort habits that may have helped you get through difficult times. The world hasn't conquered COVID-19 yet, but we're in a new and better situation. I view this as a good time to reinvent yourself into a healthier person. It can make you happier, too.



## 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                                |
| Supplements for Healthy Blood Sugar | 4      | 3     | Supplements for Prediabetics and Diabetics                         |
| Sleep                               | 2      | 2     | The 10-Minute Sleep Solution                                       |
| Keto Diet                           | 4      | 1     | The Keto Diet for Weight Loss, Diabetes, Improved Memory, and More |
| Blocks to 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 Zeigler, Z., et al. "Self-quarantine and weight gain related risk factors during the COVID-19 pandemic." *Obes Res Clin Pract.* 2020 May-June; 14(3): 210-216.

2 American Psychological Association. *Stress in America* 2021. March 11, 2021.

3 Tison, G.H., et al. "Worldwide Effect of COVID-19 on Physical Activity: A Descriptive Study." *Ann Intern Med.* 2020 Jun 29 : M20-2665.

4 Wyatt, P., et al. "Postprandial glycaemic dips predict appetite and energy intake in healthy individuals." *Nat Metab.* 2021 Apr;3(4):523-529.

5 Harvey, J., et al. "Log Often, Lose More: Electronic Dietary Self-Monitoring for Weight Loss." *Obesity (Silver Spring).* 2019 Mar; 27(3): 380-384.

6 Beccuti, G., et al. "Sleep and obesity." *Curr Opin Clin Nutr Metab Care.* 2011 Jul; 14(4): 402-412.

7 Wang, F., et al. "The effect of physical activity on sleep quality: a systematic review." *European Journal of Physiotherapy.* 2019 Jun; 23(1): 11-18.



# 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



# How to Benefit from Turmeric

Turmeric has been used in Asia for thousands of years to treat many ailments, from digestive problems and arthritis to viral and bacterial infections. And in recent decades, studies have shown that turmeric extract supplements can be used both to treat various conditions and to improve overall health. Here are some research highlights:

**Diabetes prevention:** In a study of 240 people at high risk for diabetes, half took a turmeric supplement and half took a placebo, for 9 months. Among those who took the supplement, insulin sensitivity improved, and none developed diabetes. In the placebo group, 16 percent of participants developed diabetes.<sup>1</sup>

**Pain relief:** One review of studies with a total of nearly 800 people found that turmeric supplements significantly reduced knee pain in people with osteoarthritis.<sup>2</sup> Other research found that the supplements also reduced pain in people with rheumatoid arthritis.<sup>3</sup>

**Reduced chronic inflammation:** An evaluation of clinical trials with nearly 350 people found that turmeric supplements — when taken for at least 4 weeks — can reduce chronic inflammation, which underlies diabetes, heart disease, dementia, and other ills.<sup>4</sup>

**Better memory and mood:** At the University of California, Los Angeles, researchers compared the mental effects of a turmeric extract and a placebo in healthy people between the ages of 51 and 84.

When taken daily for 12 weeks, the turmeric supplement improved memory, attention, and mood, and brain scans showed a decrease in plaque in the brain.<sup>5</sup>

**Improved overall health:** A study at The Ohio State University in Columbus compared the overall health effects of a turmeric extract and a placebo on healthy people between the ages of 40 and 60, taken for 4 weeks. Results showed that the supplement, but not the placebo, enhanced natural nitric oxide production, which dilates blood vessels and helps to control blood pressure. Other health markers showed reduced risk for heart disease, reduced triglycerides, and reduced levels of brain plaques.<sup>6</sup>

**Other benefits:** Studies have also found that turmeric supplements can enhance digestive health, reduce the incidence of seasonal allergies, and may help to prevent cancer.

## The Best Way to Benefit from Turmeric

In its natural state, turmeric is not well absorbed by the human body. To solve this problem, some supplement companies have developed turmeric root extracts that are specially formulated to enhance bioavailability. These are some that have been scientifically shown to enhance absorption:

- CurcuWin
- CurQfen
- LongVida
- Meriva
- NovaSol
- Theracurmin

Each of these is a patented form of turmeric root extract. They will be



listed by name in the Supplement Facts, and sometimes on the front of the label.

To get the health-promoting benefits of turmeric, I recommend taking one serving of an absorbable form daily in a supplement. You probably won't feel any different, but internally things will be working better.

If you're trying to treat pain or other ailments, you may need to take two servings daily. The exact dosages vary, depending upon the extract.

The chief active ingredient in turmeric is curcumin. Supplements may be called "turmeric root extract" or "curcumin." The important thing is to choose a product that is well absorbed, such as one of the patented forms I listed above.

1 Chuengsamarn, S., et al. "Curcumin extract for prevention of type 2 diabetes." *Diabetes Care*. 2012 Nov;35(11):2121-7.

2 Onakpoya, I.J., et al. "Effectiveness of curcuminoids in the treatment of knee osteoarthritis: a systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized clinical trials." *Int J Rheum Dis*. 2017 Apr;20(4):420-433.

3 Amalraj, A., et al. "A Novel Highly Bioavailable Curcumin Formulation Improves Symptoms and Diagnostic Indicators in Rheumatoid Arthritis Patients: A Randomized, Double-Blind, Placebo-Controlled, Two-Dose, Three-Arm, and Parallel-Group Study." *J Med Food*. 2017 Oct;20(10):1022-1030.

4 Sahebkar, A. "Are curcuminoids effective C-reactive protein-lowering agents in clinical practice? Evidence from a meta-analysis." *Phytother Res*. 2014 May;28(5):633-42.

5 Small, G.W., et al. "Memory and Brain Amyloid and Tau Effects of a Bioavailable Form of Curcumin in Non-Demented Adults: A Double-Blind, Placebo-Controlled 18-Month Trial." *Am J Geriatr Psychiatry*. 2018 Mar;26(3):266-277.

6 DiSilvestro, R.A., et al. "Diverse effects of a low dose supplement of lipidated curcumin in healthy middle aged people." *Nutr J*. 2012; 11: 79.

# How to Shop at Farmers Markets

There are thousands of farmers markets around the country, and they're great places to shop for food. Because produce is harvested right before being sold, it can be picked at its prime when its nutritional content — and flavor — are at their best. But it pays to have realistic expectations and a plan.

**Walk the market.** Before you buy anything, walk through the entire market and see what's available.

**Be flexible.** Buy produce that is on your shopping list, but also be willing to try new things. If you see unfamiliar vegetables and fruits, ask the farmer about how to eat them and consider experimenting.

**Time your visit.** If you go when the market opens, you will have the greatest variety. If you want the lowest prices, it's possible (but not guaranteed) that some vendors will offer discounts shortly before the market closes. Markets are generally less crowded right after opening and just before closing.

**Bring a bag.** A cloth bag is the best way to carry your purchases. Some vendors may offer plastic bags, but these aren't big enough or strong enough to carry everything you buy.

**Bring cash.** Although many vendors take credit cards or digital payments, not all do. And there may be an extra charge or minimum purchase if you aren't paying with cash.

Depending upon where you live, farmers markets may be open only during warmer months. If that's the case and you would like to have direct-from-the-farm produce during other months, a CSA is an option.

CSA is short for Community Supported Agriculture, a system where consumers subscribe to receive boxes of produce that's in season.



## A Word of Warning

Vendors at farmers markets may include bakeries and other purveyors of tempting treats — hard to resist. If you're trying to stay on a healthy path, don't get caught up in impulse buying of sugary or starchy foods that weren't part of your plan. If you decide to indulge, buy a small portion and cut back on other sugary or starchy foods or drinks later in the day.

Most of all, keep your eyes on the veggie prize. The flavor of a simple, freshly harvested carrot can be so amazing that you may forget about your usual sugary treats.

## How to Find Farmers Markets

If you aren't familiar with farmers markets in your area, keep your eyes open for signage or announcements in local media, and ask your friends if they shop at any. Online, Local Harvest is a nonprofit organization that maintains a directory of over 40,000 family farms and farmers markets.

To find your local farmers markets and family farms that sell directly to the public, visit [www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org).

# These Fats Reduce Pain

Omega-3 fats — anti-inflammatory fats found in fish and some plants, such as flaxseeds and walnuts — can help to prevent and reduce pain, according to a couple of recent studies. More specifically, these fats are most beneficial when they replace inflammatory fats in refined vegetable oils, used mostly in processed foods, from onion rings and fries to many packaged foods.

One study, led by the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, found that switching to anti-inflammatory fats can significantly reduce nerve pain in diabetics and pain from arthritis, trauma, and surgery.<sup>1</sup> Another study found that this type of dietary change reduces the incidence and severity of migraines.<sup>2</sup>

1 Boyd, J.T., et al. "Elevated dietary -6 polyunsaturated fatty acids induce reversible peripheral nerve dysfunction that exacerbates comorbid pain conditions." *Nat Metab.* 2021 Jun;3(6):762-773.  
2 Ramsden, C.E., et al. "Dietary alteration of n-3 and n-6 fatty acids for headache reduction in adults with migraine: randomized controlled trial." *BMJ* 2021;374:n1448.

# A Good Reason to Take the Stairs

Faced with a choice of climbing stairs or taking an elevator, not many people head for the staircase. But they should. Given how much time we typically spend sitting, this is one of those things I consider a no-brainer. And I'm not alone.

A recent Canadian study tested the effects of climbing stairs after a high-carb meal on people who were overweight or obese. To examine the impact, researchers



measured various health markers, including insulin levels. Elevated insulin is a key sign of diabetes risk or worsening of the disease and its complications.

Compared to sitting after consuming carb-rich food, climbing stairs significantly reduced insulin levels, thereby reducing health risks. In the study,

participants were observed and tested during a 9-hour period. During that time, they ate three high-carb meals, and once per hour they climbed three flights of stairs.<sup>1</sup>

What can we learn from this? If you eat high-carb meals, it takes a fair bit of physical activity to counteract negative effects on insulin levels.

On a positive note, this research is additional evidence that shows physical activity is therapeutic. It also shows that exercise “snacks,” meaning short bouts of physical activity, can make a significant difference in your health. And you don't have to go to a gym to benefit.

Although this study tested stair climbing, any form of physical movement helps to keep insulin (and blood sugar) at healthy levels. And if you eat a low-carb diet *and* exercise — which I highly recommend — you'll be in much better shape.

The next time you're about to take an elevator, check if there's a flight of stairs nearby. And if there is, take advantage of the opportunity to get a little extra exercise and enhance your health.

# Should You Get a COVID Vaccine?

You may be aware that I've addressed this question in earlier newsletters, but some of my readers are still curious about my perspective. My answer: Yes!

This is the other question I'm often asked: Did I get vaccinated? Yes! My husband and I were vaccinated as soon as we were eligible.

I'm aware that some people are hesitant to get vaccinated for personal reasons. But when I'm asked for my view, I make no bones about it.

Earlier this year, a study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that at least half of COVID-19 infections are transmitted by people without symptoms.<sup>2</sup> Some infected people never experience symptoms, while

others can be infected — and contagious — for several days before symptoms appear. In such situations, you may think that people around you are healthy when, in fact, they are contagious. Or you may be the contagious one.

The United States is in a minority of countries that have more vaccine supply than demand, and I recommend taking advantage of this situation. The longer we have a significant number of people unvaccinated, the more opportunity there is for the virus to mutate, which makes it harder to keep the pandemic at bay.

You probably know that the Delta variant is more infectious than the original COVID-19 virus strain, and it's more dangerous.



This makes vaccination more urgent than ever. As we go to press, there are three times as many COVID-19 infections where vaccination rates are low, compared to areas where vaccination rates are high.

If you have concerns about getting vaccinated, I encourage you to talk to your doctor or any physician who is experienced in dealing with infectious diseases. Consider all the available data and be sure to make an informed choice.

1 Rafiei, H., et al. "Metabolic Effect of Breaking Up Prolonged Sitting with Stair Climbing Exercise Snacks." *Med Sci Sports Exerc.* 2021 Jan;53(1):150-158. 2 Johansson, M.A., et al. "SARS-CoV-2 Transmission From People Without COVID-19 Symptoms." *JAMA Netw Open.* 2021 Jan 4;4(1):e2035057.



# Q&A

**Q:** I have been following your advice for over a year with diet and supplements. My A1C has dropped from 8 to 5.6, my blood sugar has dropped from 183 to 114, and my eyesight has improved. My doctor does not acknowledge my improvement and told me that my beta cells are still dying. Is this true?

— Mark M.

**A:** I'm so glad to hear about your progress. Keep up the good work. Your A1C is at the upper end of normal and does not indicate that beta cells are dying.



Beta cells in the pancreas make insulin, which regulates blood sugar. Beta cells die off when A1C, which indicates average blood-

sugar levels during the past few months, becomes elevated. In prediabetes, A1C is between 5.7 and 6.4 and above that, it's classified as diabetes.

On average, at the point where most people are diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, about half their beta cells are "dead." But some of these cells are not permanently destroyed — they're in a coma, so to speak. And some of them can be resuscitated with lifestyle changes. It takes work, as you know, but improvement is possible.

The underlying mechanism is

this: When blood sugar is riding high, it puts more stress on the beta cells to produce more insulin, and they burn out and die or become dormant. A low-carb diet reduces the stress, reduces blood sugar, and allows at least some of the beta cells to come back to life.

Type 2 diabetes has traditionally — and incorrectly — been considered irreversible. But the possibility of it going into remission is now being recognized. The problem is, diabetes remission requires significant lifestyle changes, as you know.

Medical training typically does not cover how to help patients make lifestyle changes, and most people either don't know how or are reluctant to change their diet and exercise routines. As a result, the incidence of type 2 diabetes continues to rise.

Again, I want to acknowledge you for making changes that have improved your health. I hope many other people follow a similar path.

**Q:** In the December 2020 issue you recommended taking Panax ginseng with 10 to 15 mg of ginsenosides. Most products contain hundreds of milligrams. How can I find one with the low dose you recommend? — Ann O.

**A:** I understand why this can be confusing. First, for anyone who didn't read the earlier newsletter issue, I recommend Panax ginseng (also called Korean ginseng) for reducing stress and inflammation, improving immunity, and helping



to reduce blood sugar and fatigue.

Ginsenosides are the active component of Panax ginseng. They make up a small percentage of the content of a Panax ginseng supplement, which can vary between 2 percent and 10 percent. For example, in 100 mg of Panax ginseng there could be between 2 mg and 10 mg of ginsenosides, depending on the product.

Some products list only the quantity of Panax ginseng, and do not state the amount of ginsenosides. However, I recommend looking for products that list both.

The Supplement Facts portion of the label will list the amount of Panax ginseng per serving, and then, the amount ginsenosides, as a percentage and in milligrams. You don't have to do any math. In rare cases, a product may list the amount of ginsenosides on the front of the label.

## 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.