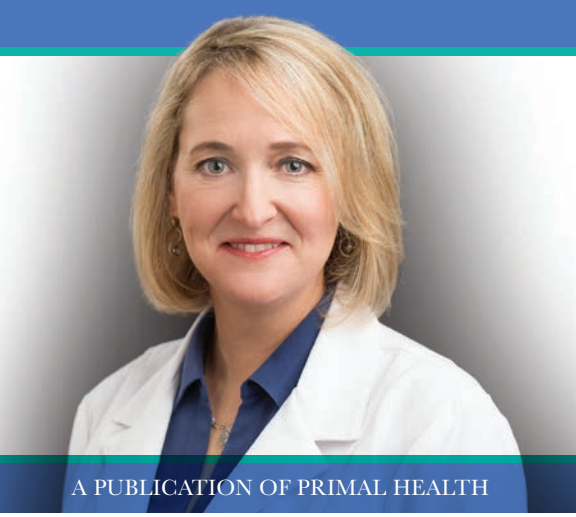
Dr. Marlene's
NATURAL HEALTH CONNECTIONS



VOLUME 4 | ISSUE 9

A PUBLICATION OF PRIMAL HEALTH

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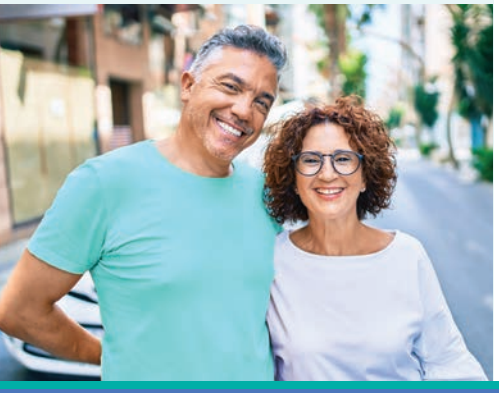

How to Defend Yourself Against Colds, Flu, and COVID-19

This cold and flu season is unlike any other. Learn what does or doesn't work to protect yourself against the different bugs that can harm you this fall and winter.

More is not always merrier, or better. That's certainly true of all the information we are constantly bombarded with about new developments in the ongoing pandemic.

It's confusing and it may well leave you feeling hopeless. So, let me shed some light on the subject, answer some basic questions, and describe the realistic steps you can take to protect yourself.

If you routinely take herbal and other supplements to shore up your defenses during the usual cold and flu seasons, can they still help you? Yes, but there's a catch when it comes to COVID-19.

We've been exposed to colds and different strains of flu throughout our lives. Little kids are more susceptible because it takes some time and practice for their immune systems to develop the skills to deal with these bugs.

As we grow up, our defenses improve. There have occasionally been some more serious flu bugs, and the elderly face greater risks from flu. But otherwise, most of us generally make it through the winter months relatively unscathed, even if we do suffer from occasional sniffles and stuffiness or a more uncomfortable, achy flu episode.

Here's the catch when it comes to COVID-19: Until last year, we had never been exposed to this virus. So, our immune systems had no clue about how to defend against it.

This fact — that our immune systems are natively incapable of defending against this virus — is the first thing to understand. As an

IN THE NEXT ISSUE:
7 Important Benefits of a Seasonal Cleanse

analogy, imagine that your immune system is like an army guarding a medieval castle.

The castle is surrounded by a tall wall, sentries are posted in protected spots at the top of the wall, and a big gate — the only entry — is shut tight. If attackers approach, on foot or on horseback, the castle troops fend them off with a shower of arrows. If enemy troops get close to the wall, the defenders can pour buckets of boiling water or oil on them.

Dr. Marlene's
NATURAL HEALTH CONNECTIONS

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Natural Health Connections is a monthly publication of Primal Health LP.

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Given enough troops and food in the castle, those inside can withstand an assault. But what if the attackers arrive in tanks and shoot missiles over the walls? No one had imagined, let alone seen, such weapons in medieval times, and the castle would be utterly defenseless. In much the same way, the immune system of an unvaccinated person is ill-equipped to fight the virus that causes COVID-19.

What Vaccines Really Do

No matter what you think about vaccines, I think it's important to understand what they do and don't do. I've found that the subject is not well understood, and this leads to confusion.

Vaccines against any infectious disease — whether they're designed to protect against COVID-19, smallpox, polio, chickenpox, or any other viral infection — don't kill the virus. Rather, they train your immune system to fight and kill it.

In my medieval example, here's what the battle would look like if you could vaccinate the castle: Its troops would know all about tanks and missiles, and they would have the weapons and skills necessary to put up a strong defense and win.

How Effective Are Vaccines?

The efficacy of vaccines differs, depending upon the virus. Smallpox vaccines eradicated the disease around the world. Routine vaccinations of children for polio, measles, and chickenpox have eliminated virtually all cases of these illnesses, except for occasional outbreaks among children who are not vaccinated.

Flu vaccines are not as effective because there are many strains of flu viruses. Each year, the flu vaccine is designed to protect against the strain that is predicted to be the dominant one — a best-guess estimate from scientists who study flu-like infections around the world. And the degree of vaccine success varies from year to year.

The number of hospitalizations is a measure of vaccine success, as it's impossible to count every person who develops flu symptoms. Flu vaccines have reduced hospitalizations by 14 percent to 48 percent,[1] depending on the year, and can help reduce risk of severe illness and death.[2]

Vaccines against the virus that causes COVID-19 work much better. Initial trials found that the vaccines prevented more than 90 percent of serious illnesses and deaths. Since the vaccines became

Vaccine Effectiveness Compared

Here's a comparison of flu and COVID-19 vaccines:

Flu vaccines: Reduce hospitalizations by 14 to 48 percent.

COVID-19 vaccines: Reduce hospitalizations by more than 99 percent.

In other words, if you get vaccinated against COVID-19, there's a less-than-1-percent chance, on average, that you'll end up in the hospital, and even lower odds of dying from the infection. It doesn't mean that you can't get a more mild or asymptomatic infection — the "breakthrough" infections that have made the headlines — but you are far less likely to get *really* sick.

broadly available, vaccinated Americans have made up less than 1 percent of COVID-19 patients who were hospitalized.[3]

COVID-19 Variants: What They Mean

Any virus can mutate, and the more people who are infected, the more likely that mutations will occur. So far, COVID-19 vaccines have been effective in protecting against the original form of the virus and against its variants.

You've probably heard a lot about the Delta variant. It's transmitted more easily and can cause more severe illness than the original form of the virus. The sooner most Americans are vaccinated, the lower the risk of other, possibly more harmful, variants emerging.

Your Natural Defenses

Bottom line, getting the COVID-19 vaccine is the first, essential step to protect yourself. It's the only way to enable your immune system to recognize and fight this virus. And then, your natural defenses can go to work.

Some individuals have a greater response to the vaccine than others. A study in Israel looked at nearly 1,500 vaccinated health workers and found that 39 of them developed an infection; most were mild or with no symptoms.

Upon looking further, researchers found that those who became infected had produced lower levels of antibodies: proteins produced by the immune system to fight the virus. Having more antibodies means that you have a bigger army to defend you against illness.[4]

There are practical steps you can take to strengthen your immune system and help it work more efficiently. But they are not a replacement for a COVID-19 vaccine.

I've spent some time talking about vaccines because I want to make this point clear: If you are not vaccinated, the immune-enhancing steps I'm about to cover will not protect you against COVID-19 infection and severe or deadly illness. But if you are fully vaccinated, the steps I recommend will give you a greater advantage, and they will also help to protect you against colds and flu.

The Immune-Boosting Diet

My basic low-carb diet (see *Related to This Topic* on page 4 for earlier newsletter issues that give details) helps your immune system by avoiding its biggest enemy: too much sugar. In this sense, starch has the same effect as sugar, as both raise blood sugar.

Studies show that elevated blood sugar suppresses immune function and triggers harmful chronic inflammation.[5] Diabetes is known to be a risk factor for infection. But even without diabetes, elevated blood sugar increases the risk of getting sick from whatever bugs are in the environment.

Get into the habit of eating plenty of fresh vegetables, some protein, and healthy fats. Research has shown that when you eat sugary food or have a sweet drink — even a glass of orange juice — your natural defenses drop and can stay suppressed for 5 hours or more.[6] If you like sweet drinks, try green tea sweetened with stevia, xylitol, or monk fruit, as these won't elevate blood sugar.

Essential Nutrients

Lack of essential vitamins and minerals inhibits your immune system from working as it should.[7] The essential nutrients include things you find in a multivitamin, such as

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,™ 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.*

vitamins A, B6, B12, C, D, and E; folate; selenium; zinc; and copper.

I recommend choosing a multivitamin with 400 mcg to 800 mcg of folate and around 100 percent of the Daily Value (%DV in Supplement Facts) of other vitamins and minerals. You will need extra vitamin D because multivitamins don't contain enough.

Get a total of 125 mcg (5,000 IU) of vitamin D daily. In addition, take a daily serving of vitamin K2, to ensure proper utilization of vitamin D. Vitamin K2 is not typically found in multivitamins but is sometimes combined with vitamin D, or you can get a separate vitamin K2 supplement.

I don't recommend taking high doses of individual nutrients unless you have symptoms. And then, 1,000 mg of vitamin C, one to three times daily, can help. If you get diarrhea, it means you took more than your body can absorb — take less. Zinc lozenges can also be helpful, but I don't recommend taking extra zinc for prevention.

Herbs for Prevention

Echinacea helps to prevent flu viruses from replicating and enhances your immune system's effectiveness.[8] It takes a couple of weeks for the herb's beneficial components to build up to therapeutic levels in your system, so take it daily for prevention when infectious bugs are around.

Research has looked at echinacea's effect on flu viruses, but its ability to prevent viral replication may also be helpful in protecting against other viruses or aiding in recovery from illness.

If you decide to take echinacea, I suggest testing a product for quality and potency this way: If you taste a tincture, it should make your tongue tingle. Or you can break open a capsule to do the taste test. If your tongue doesn't tingle, try a different product.

If you generally get sick quite easily during winter months, other herbs that can shore up your defenses include astragalus and Panax ginseng (also called Korean ginseng). You can take a daily serving of either one of these or take them in a formula designed for immune support.

Herbs for Symptom Relief

If you get a stuffy nose or other symptoms of a cold or flu, or just feel like you're coming down with something, andrographis can help. The herb has a long history of use, and double-blind, placebo-controlled trials with a total of nearly 900 people found that it relieves symptoms of upper respiratory infections and may help to prevent them.[9]

Start taking andrographis as soon as you get an inkling that some type of infection is on its way. Take one serving every 2 to 3 hours (a total of 4 times per day). And keep taking it until you feel better. Olive leaf extract is also helpful and can be taken along with andrographis.

Sleep and Immune Function

People who routinely don't get enough sleep get sick more often. To rule out the effect of genes, a study at the University of Washington in Seattle compared immune function of twins when one twin got enough sleep and the other one did not. They found that in the twin with insufficient sleep, certain parts of the immune system shut down.[10]

Earlier research found that sleep deprivation made vaccines less effective. When vaccinated people who didn't sleep enough were exposed to a respiratory virus, they were more likely to get sick.

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
Multivitamins	2	8	Do You Really Need a Multivitamin?
Sleep	2	2	The 10-Minute Sleep Solution
Flu Prevention	2	10	Real Flu Prevention: With or Without a Flu Shot
Immune Function	3	9	The Guide to a Healthy Immune System for Life

Access these online by logging in to www.NaturalHealthConnections.com.

Stress and Exercise

Stress predisposes people to sickness of any type. Exercise that is too intense can be a stress trigger and can have a negative effect on the immune system. In contrast, more moderate exercise can have a calming effect that reduces stress and enhances your natural defenses.

Helpful Supplements for Stress and Sleep

Theanine (also called l-theanine) can reduce stress without making you drowsy if you take it during the day. If you take it before bedtime, it can help you sleep. Theanine is a natural component of tea but is more concentrated in supplements.

Ashwagandha is categorized as an adaptogen in herbal medicine, which means that it helps your system adapt to different challenges. It has a balancing effect in stressful times, which can help you get better sleep.

Limit Your Exposure to Bugs

Colds and flu became relatively scarce with social distancing, the use of masks, and frequent handwashing during last year's cold and flu season. And we can learn from that experience.

Do make a habit of washing your hands often, with regular soap. It's simple but effective, and has always been recommended during cold and flu season. Now, it's especially important.

Masks can be a touchy subject, but the fact is, they do prevent the spread of infectious disease. With the Delta variant, it's easier than ever for people to transmit the virus that causes COVID-19, and there may be other variants that are even more infectious. Many infections have no symptoms, and even vaccinated people can be infected and transmit the virus. So, masks are a common-sense measure when a lot of people are sick in your area and you're out and about in indoor spaces.

Checklist for Immunity

These are the basic steps that can help your immune system ward off infections and, if you do get sick, to recover more efficiently.

1. If you aren't already vaccinated against COVID-19, do so right away. Make this a priority.
2. Unless COVID-19 rates are very low in your area, wear a mask indoors when you are in stores and other public places, and as recommended by public health organizations.
3. Eat a low-carb diet with plenty of fresh vegetables, some protein, and healthy fats.
4. If you have any symptoms of illness, stay home.
5. Avoid sugary and starchy foods, and sweetened drinks, unless they are sweetened with stevia, xylitol, or monk fruit.
6. Take a daily multivitamin, extra vitamin D, and vitamin K2.
7. Take echinacea, one serving daily, for extra protection.
8. Manage stress and get enough sleep. Theanine supplements can help with both.
9. Do some exercise daily, but not to the point where you feel exhausted or stressed.
10. Keep andrographis on hand. If you begin feeling unwell, start taking it right away.
11. Keep extra vitamin C and other helpful herbs on hand to take as needed.

A Final Word

Many of my patients want natural remedies in place of medications, and I can often help them to achieve that goal. But I can't emphasize this one point enough: For protection against COVID-19, the vaccine is essential. Without it, you are vulnerable.

I've seen unvaccinated people of all ages, who seemed to be in good health, suffer serious COVID-19 illness, persistent symptoms, and organ damage. There is no natural substitute for the vaccine.

All the other things I've described can enhance your natural ability to steer clear of COVID-19 infection, or if you get infected, to improve recovery — if and only if you are also vaccinated. If you've already had your shots, thank you. And if you haven't, please get vaccinated as soon as possible.

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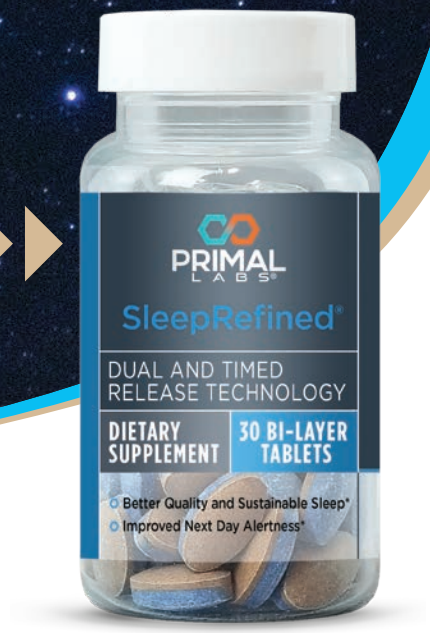

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5 Reasons for Swollen Feet and Ankles

Do your shoes or socks feel tighter as the day wears on? Have you noticed that your feet and ankles have been getting puffy more often as you get older? These things are quite common but not inevitable.

Generally, fluid retention in your feet and lower legs can be prevented or relieved by addressing these common causes:

#1: Gravity

If you stand for too long, fluid accumulates in your lower legs and feet simply because of gravity. The fluid is lymph, a clear liquid that you can see when you get a cut. Lymph nourishes tissues and carries out waste. You could think of it as insulation in your body.

Lymph can also accumulate in your lower legs and feet when you sit for too long, especially if you're sitting on a chair that puts pressure under your thighs and cuts circulation. Bar stools often do this. Sit in a chair that allows your feet to be planted comfortably on the ground in front of you.

For quick relief, put your feet up. The best position is to have your feet elevated higher than your heart, to reverse the effect of gravity.

To prevent fluid accumulation, vary sitting and standing, and move around. Walking, jogging, running — any movement on your feet that creates a pumping action will help to get your lymph moving instead of pooling in your lower legs and feet. Compression socks can also help. I find them very useful on long flights.

#2: Salt

Some people are salt-sensitive, meaning they easily retain fluid when they eat too much salt. Too much sodium and too little potassium can also be problematic, as these two minerals need to be balanced.

About 80 percent of the salt most people consume comes from processed foods in supermarkets and restaurants, and these foods lack potassium. Breads and other packaged grain products and processed meats, such as sausages, pepperoni, and cold cuts, are some top sources.

Typical take-out pizza combines commercial bread and meats and packs a big salt punch: 2 or 3 slices usually contain more than a teaspoon of salt. You would never add that much salt to a plate of food prepared from fresh ingredients at home.

Rather than obsessing about salt, I recommend eating food that isn't on take-out menus and doesn't come in packages. Instead, prepare fresh food from scratch, with salt and other seasonings as called for in recipes. Vegetables will naturally provide you with potassium. Adding salt at the table is fine, too, if it suits your taste buds.

If you can't avoid eating restaurant food often, try to choose menu items with fresh vegetables. And if you need to add seasoning, try a potassium-based salt substitute. It will help to balance extra sodium in restaurant dishes.

On the other hand, if you sweat a lot from exercise or heat, you can become salt-depleted because the sodium evaporates with sweat. And this, too, can lead to fluid retention. When I was cycling across the country, spending many hours on my bicycle every day, I knew I was salt-depleted when I could see indentations from my socks.

#3: A Weak Heart

I had a patient who had puffy ankles and high blood pressure, and easily got out of breath when climbing a flight of stairs. She wasn't walking much or doing any other type of exercise and, as a result, her heart was weak.

Like any muscle, when the heart doesn't get regular exercise, it gets weaker and weaker. And then, it can't pump efficiently, leading to poor circulation and fluid retention in ankles and feet.[1]

The Water Myth

Some of my new patients have the idea that drinking water leads to water retention — this is not so! You need to drink water to flush out waste and prevent lymph from becoming stagnant. Your body can absorb only so much at a time, so don't drink a large bottle all at once. Instead, sip smaller amounts of water throughout the day.

When this patient started walking, her heart gradually got stronger, her circulation improved, and the ankle puffiness disappeared. Her blood pressure dropped, and she felt much better.

A heart can become weakened by a heart attack or clogged arteries, and the damage may not all be reversible. But I've found that more often, lack of exercise is a major reason for a weakened heart and poor circulation that underlies fluid retention. And even when the heart muscle is damaged by disease, exercise can still improve its function.

Keep in mind that exercise such as walking is not just strengthening the heart muscle. The pumping action of walking is also helping to move lymph and counteract gravity. It's a multi-pronged treatment for fluid retention.

#4: High Insulin

It's been known for many years that fluid retention in the lower legs and feet is a side effect of treatment with insulin.[2] Oral diabetes drugs can also contribute to fluid retention, which becomes more common and severe when combined with insulin.[3]

This fact tends to get overlooked by many physicians in treating type 2 diabetics. But it is, nevertheless, true. And this isn't the whole insulin story.

In people who are not diabetic, elevated insulin also increases fluid retention and blood pressure, and is a major contributor to weight gain and obesity.

Insulin is a vital hormone that enables our bodies to convert carbohydrates to blood sugar and to produce energy. But when our bodies are overwhelmed by the quantity of carbohydrates in our diets, too much insulin is produced. And as with many things, while the right amount is good, too much is not.

If you've been reading this newsletter for a while, you may recall that high insulin is the first step toward type 2 diabetes, even before blood sugar becomes elevated. In addition to causing fluid retention, high insulin from a high-carb diet generates chronic inflammation in your body, increases fat storage, and raises blood pressure.

When people who are severely overweight go on a keto diet, which is very low in carbs and rapidly reduces insulin levels, they initially lose a lot of retained fluid. This can produce a weight loss of 10 pounds or more in the first week or two.[4]

Critics often tout the fluid loss as a negative: "It's only water weight." But the retained fluid is not just uncomfortable; it also puts stress on the kidneys and heart. So, this fluid loss is beneficial.

#5: High Blood Pressure

When blood pressure is elevated, it creates resistance. And your heart must work harder to pump blood against that resistance. This interferes with normal circulation and promotes fluid retention. When the situation continues unchecked, the heart eventually becomes stiffer and less able to pump properly.

Medically speaking, most cases of high blood pressure have an unknown cause. In fact, high insulin, provoked by a diet that is overloaded with sugar and starchy carbs, is the most common cause,[5] combined with obesity and lack of physical activity.

Cautions

If you do the things I've mentioned and continue to experience puffy feet and lower legs, it could be a sign of more serious problems, such as blood clots in your legs or a kidney problem. Get yourself checked out by your doctor.

What to Do

Unless you spend your day doing a lot of physical activity, the best way to prevent and relieve fluid retention in your lower legs and feet is to move more. Specifically, walk, jog, run, or do some other type of exercise on your feet that creates a pumping action and increases circulation in your lower body. This type of movement keeps your lymph from becoming stagnant and makes your heart stronger and more efficient at circulating blood.

Elevating your legs, ideally above your heart, counteracts gravity and relieves puffy ankles and feet. Compression socks also help, especially on long flights or car trips.

Eating a low-carb diet with plenty of fresh vegetables helps to keep insulin at a healthy level, control weight and blood pressure, maintain a balance of sodium and potassium, and reduce fluid retention.

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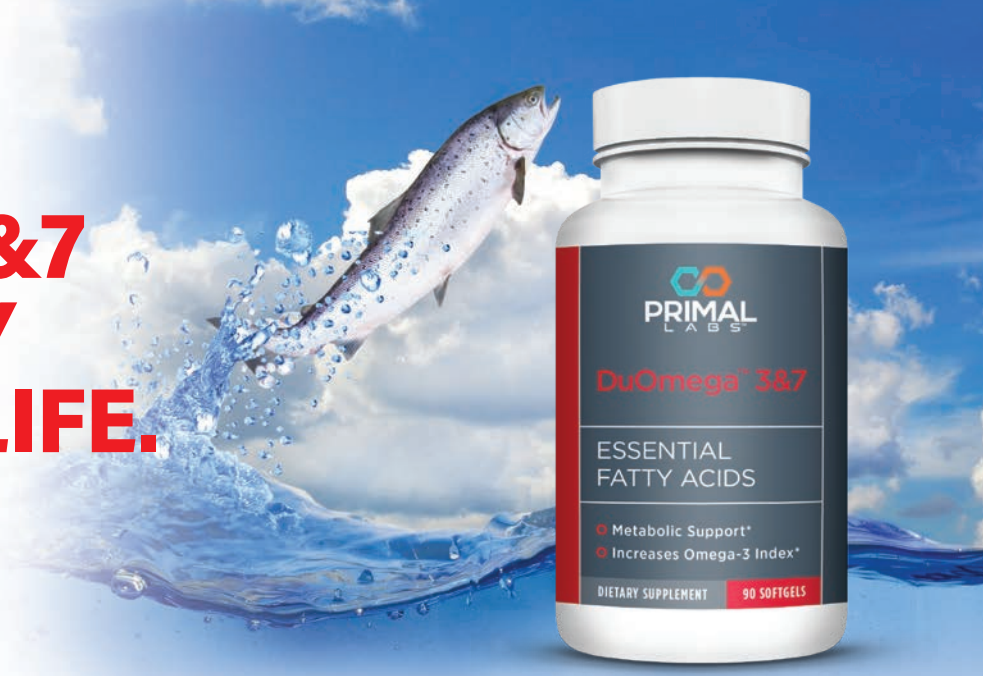

#1 Provides missing Omega for a healthier heart

In the 1970s, Danish researcher Dr. Jorn Dyerberg discovered Alaskan Eskimos' hearts were 7 times healthier than his fellow Danes, in spite of mainly eating oily fish. This discovery led to the billion dollar Omega 3 fish oil industry. But what was lost in the original research was Eskimo blood was rich in Omega 3 *and* Omega 7. And yet, 99% of fish oils sold today don't have Omega 7. **DuOmega 3&7** corrects this error and provides the missing Omega 7 for heart health!

#2 Cleveland Clinic finds Omega 7 vital to heart health

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#3 Harvard study shows lower incidence of blood sugar issues

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Monday-Friday 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. CST

Why You Should Eat Fermented Foods

My patients often ask me if they should take probiotic supplements for digestive health. There isn't a one-size-fits-all answer, as it depends upon individual circumstances. But there's another, perhaps more important question with a simple answer: Should you eat fermented foods? Yes, absolutely! Fermented foods should be your basic sources of probiotics.

Probiotics are beneficial bacteria that live in your gut. There are many species of them, and the greater your variety of these good gut bugs, the better. You get that variety from eating different fermented foods.

Good Gut Bugs Are Essential

A healthy collection of these beneficial bugs — microbes, technically speaking — is essential. They influence the immune system and the chronic inflammation that underlies diabetes, heart disease, weight gain, and today's other chronic conditions.

Equally important, a diverse collection of gut microbes — collectively called the microbiome — is essential for breaking down and absorbing nutrients. For example, one study of older men found that they didn't fully utilize vitamin D without a variety of good gut bugs.[1]

Best Sources

Probiotic supplements can sometimes be helpful — after taking antibiotics, for example, because those drugs kill off good bacteria. But fermented foods are the basic, essential source of beneficial bacteria. Each type of fermented food contains a different combination of beneficial bacteria, so eating a variety of these types of foods is the best way to go.

Add Fiber

Gut microbes need fiber; it's their food. A recent study found that eating plenty of fermented foods plus fiber from plants is the best combination for establishing and maintaining a variety of beneficial gut bugs, good digestion, and overall health.[2]

Fermented Food Choices

At least a few times a week, eat a variety of fermented foods. These are some good choices:

- **Sauerkraut and dill pickles made the traditional way in brine — fermented in salt and water.** These are found in the refrigerated section of a supermarket. Labels may say "cultured" or "naturally-fermented." Many sauerkraut and pickle products are made with vinegar and are not fermented, so they are not a source of probiotics.
- **Kombucha:** fermented tea.
- **Kimchi:** fermented vegetables traditionally eaten in Korea and now popular in this country.
- **Fermented soy foods:** tempeh, natto, and miso.
- **Plain yogurt or kefir** (fermented milk). Avoid flavored products because they contain sugar.
- **Kvass:** a fermented beverage made from grain or beets, originating from Eastern Europe.
- **Cultured cottage cheese.** The label must say that it's cultured; otherwise, cottage cheese is not fermented and is not a source of beneficial bacteria.

Exercise Turns on Protective Genes

Why is it that exercise reduces risk for virtually all chronic diseases? It turns out that exercise rewires some of your DNA in a protective way.

DNA, found in all our cells, is the human body's genetic instruction manual. Although we inherit genes, how we live determines which genes are switched on or off. When researchers recently tested DNA before and after an exercise program, they found that exercise turned on significantly more genes that protect against chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and dementia.[3] More than any other stimulus, exercise turns on the brain's most important repair gene.

If you haven't had enough reasons to get some regular exercise, this is certainly a good one.

1 Thomas, R.L., et al. "Vitamin D metabolites and the gut microbiome in older men." Nat Commun. 2020 Nov 26;11(1):5997. 2 Wastyk, H.C., et al. "Gut-microbiota-targeted diets modulate human immune status." Cell. 2021 Jul 6;S0092-8674(21)00754-6. 3 Williams, K., et al. "Epigenetic rewiring of skeletal muscle enhancers after exercise training supports a role in the whole-body function and human health." Mol Metab. 2021 Jul 10;101290.

Can Taking Photos Blunt Your Memory?

We take photos of special moments in our lives — birthday parties, beautiful sunsets, people we care about — because we want to remember them. But could taking photos have the opposite effect, impairing our ability to remember the event or scene?

It's possible, according to a recent study. But it depends on how you take your photos and what you do with them afterward.

The latest study on this subject involved 525 students at Binghamton University, State University of New York. Participants viewed artwork; some took photos while others did not. Afterward, researchers tested the students' recall of the artwork they had seen, without letting them see their photos.

It turned out that those who did not take photos were better at remembering what they had seen. Researchers believe that when taking photos, students may have relied on their camera to remember the information, and that this may have worsened their own recall.[1]

Earlier, similar studies have found that memory of events or scenes depends on how you take a photo and what you do with it later. People who zoomed in on the details of an artwork when taking a picture had better recall of the experience later. In addition, photos did enhance memories of events when people took the time to look at the images later.

Making the Most of Photos

Smartphones make it so easy to take pictures today. Some people accumulate many photos on their phones but never look at them. When we needed a camera to snap pictures, and film had to be developed afterward, we paid more attention to the images, putting them in scrapbooks or in frames.

With smartphones, it's easy to get distracted from an event or scene by fiddling with photo settings and trying to get the best shot. If you like to take photos, get to know your gadget before you're at a special event.

Sharing digital photos with others is one way to memorialize a special occasion or person. But don't forget about old-time scrapbooks and frames. And most of all, don't forget to appreciate special moments while they're taking place.

The Power of Leafy Greens

Small changes can produce meaningful improvements in your health. Eating just one cup of leafy greens daily can reduce risk for heart disease, according to a Danish study that tracked more than 53,000 people for 23 years.[2]

The greens are a good source of nitrates, nutrients that help blood vessels to dilate by promoting production of nitric oxide. And dilated blood vessels make it easier for blood to circulate, reducing blood pressure and improving heart function.

The benefits come from eating these vegetables routinely. If they aren't part of your daily fare, it's never too late to start. Try them raw, steamed, lightly sautéed, or roasted. And remember to season greens with your favorite herbs and spices.

The Downside of Diabetes Drugs

Blood-sugar control in people with type 2 diabetes is getting worse, according to a recent analysis of statistics, published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.[3] Diabetes medications, the go-to method of lowering blood sugar, are problematic: The drugs can drive blood sugar dangerously low, and they don't improve heart health as doctors had expected. Most important, they don't address insulin malfunction that is the underlying cause of diabetes.

There is plenty of evidence that making lifestyle changes can address the cause of high blood sugar. Lowering it naturally poses no risks and does improve heart function and overall health.

1 Lurie, R., et al. "Photo-Taking Impairs Memory on Perceptual and Conceptual Memory Tests." Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition. 2021 Jun 10(2):289-297. 2 Bondonno, C.P., et al. "Vegetable nitrate intake, blood pressure and incident cardiovascular disease: Danish Diet, Cancer, and Health Study." Eur J Epidemiol. 2021 Apr 21. doi: 10.1007/s10654-021-00747-3. Online ahead of print. 3 Fang, M., et al. "Trends in Diabetes Treatment and Control in U.S. Adults, 1999-2018." N Engl J Med. 2021 Jun 10;384(23):2219-2228.

Q&A

Q: My blood sugar is high in the morning and after I exercise. And sometimes if I take two readings, one after another, there can be a 20-point difference. What can I do? *— Andy S.*

A: There are several things that could be happening in these situations. One important thing is to make sure that your strips are compatible with your meter. If you aren't sure, check with a pharmacist at a store where you can buy them.

The wide variation between two readings so close together could be an error in the way you're using the glucose meter. Perhaps the drop of blood is too small, or the strip is not correctly inserted into the meter. Or there may be something wrong with the strips or meter.

You can check the accuracy of your meter by taking it with you the next time you have a lab check your blood sugar. Have someone watch you take a reading on your own meter, with your own strips, to check your technique. Once you've confirmed that your procedure is correct, compare your readings to the readings taken by the lab.

After testing, if your meter isn't working as it should, I suggest contacting the manufacturer to get it resolved. Meters are considered accurate if readings are within 20 percent of lab readings.

The most accurate way to monitor your blood sugar is with a continuous glucose monitor (CGM), which is also more convenient and less painful since you don't have to keep pricking your fingertips. And you can more easily see how different foods and activities during your day affect your glucose levels.

These are some other things that can skew readings: Heat, moisture, and humidity can affect strips. If you haven't washed and dried your fingers thoroughly before a test, dirt, food, grease, or some other type of residue on your fingertip can interfere with a reading.

Some people routinely have higher blood sugar in the morning. Your body naturally produces more cortisol — the stress hormone — early in the morning, to help you wake up. And the cortisol boost can make your blood sugar rise.

Stress, exercise, or some other sudden exertion, such as walking up a flight of stairs, can also trigger elevated cortisol, which then leads to higher blood sugar.

Q: I have to blow my nose frequently because it's runny all day long. Why could this be and what can I do? *— Ted G.*

A: One common cause could be a histamine reaction. Histamine is a substance your immune system makes when it senses an allergen, to help eliminate the allergen from your body.

Allergens can be pollen, dust, mold, or foods that your system can't tolerate. If you know you're sensitive to dust or pollen, make an effort to avoid these and see if you get any relief. Wearing a mask when you may be exposed to pollen is one way to avoid it. To learn more about mold, you can check out Volume 2, Issue 11, of this newsletter: *Mold: The Hidden Trigger of More Than 40 Ailments*.

Among foods, dairy and gluten are two common ones that can trigger histamine or other reactions in some people. For more details about gluten, you can check Volume 2, Issue 3, of this newsletter: *How Gluten Can Cause More Than 30 Health Conditions*.

To see if dairy or gluten is your trigger, abstain from them for two weeks. If either of these is a trigger, it takes time for your system to calm down. However, these aren't the only possible problematic foods.

To clear your nose of possible allergens and get some instant relief, you can flush out your nasal passages with a saline solution, using a neti pot or a NeilMed Sinus Rinse Kit. You can find these in any drugstore.

Do you have a question for Dr. Marlene?

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