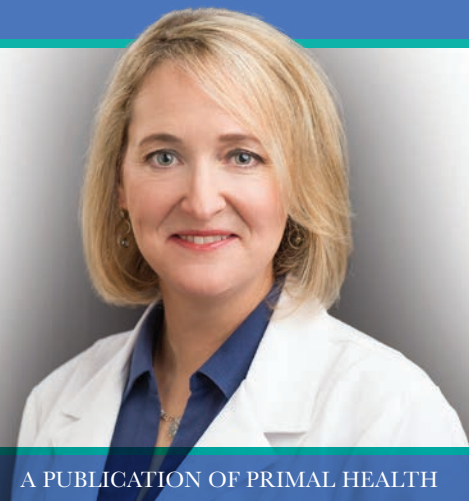


Dr. Marlene's NATURAL HEALTH CONNECTIONS

VOLUME 5 | ISSUE 5

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How to Improve Balance and Prevent Falls

Good balance is an essential component of good health and independence during a long life. Learn about steps you can take to maintain and improve your balance and live a more active life.



Health risks may or may not be visible to the naked eye. High blood pressure, for example, is called the “silent killer” because it doesn’t produce noticeable symptoms in most cases. But belly fat, which is a sign of harmful chronic inflammation, is often quite visible.

Poor balance lies somewhere in between. Some people are well aware that they have difficulty with balance while others are not. Yet, balance problems are a major cause of falls, which can lead to disability, loss of independence, and death.

One in three adults over the age of 65 will suffer from a fall — the biggest reason for emergency-room visits among Americans in this age group. After age 75, falls account for more than 90 percent of hip fractures and accidental deaths.¹

As with many health situations, our medical system is very good at dealing with big problems after the fact — repairing a broken hip or other broken bone, for example. But

there isn’t enough done to prevent these situations.

When it comes to balance, it isn’t likely to be checked in routine physicals unless a patient has already experienced a fall, complains of dizziness or other serious symptoms, or presents some other, obvious reason for a healthcare professional to suspect balance issues.

Meanwhile, I know from my years of practice that people often restrain themselves from being physically active because of more subtle symptoms of poor balance that make them feel less confident in their stride and overall movement. Fear of falling is not uncommon.

It boils down to feeling unsteady, and there are very real, physical reasons why this happens. The two

**IN THE NEXT ISSUE:
New Blood Sugar
Dangers: What to Do**



biggest ones I see are weak muscles and insufficient connections to the brain.

Fortunately, these factors can be improved. The right exercises can strengthen muscles, rebuild brain connections, and bring about better balance. But before I describe what you can do, I want to give you a bigger picture of balance.

How Balance Affects Us

If you feel unsteady, you will instinctively hold back from moving,

to a greater or lesser degree. For example, you may be less likely to walk faster or run to cross the road at a crosswalk before the light changes, and more likely to stand and wait until the next time the “walk” sign lights up. And you’re likely to move more slowly or more carefully in everything you do throughout the day.

In addition, many people give up sports or recreational activities as they get older because they don’t feel confident about doing them and staying on their feet. Dancing, tennis, or other sports are some examples.

I’m sure I don’t need to tell you that being less active predisposes you to all manner of ills, from poor circulation and stiff or achy joints to heart disease, diabetes, and mental decline.

Other signs of being unsteady are holding on to things or someone’s arm while walking or using a walker or cane. I’m not saying that such assistance should never be used; it should when necessary. But even in those cases, it’s usually possible to improve balance and steadiness to some degree.

Balance deteriorates gradually as we get older. Subtle signs can be overlooked, or more obvious ones can be taken for granted as inevitable aspects of aging. But you can — and should — take steps to improve your balance.

How Steady Are You?

When you want to make an improvement, it’s always good to have a baseline so that you can see where you started from and how you’re progressing. Even if you know your balance could use improvement, a few simple

Drugs that Increase Risk of Falls

Some medications can make you dizzy or unsteady and are known to increase the risk of falls. These include drugs for:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Insomnia
- High blood pressure
- Seizures
- Schizophrenia
- Pain
- Diabetes (insulin, if blood sugar drops too low)

If you take medications for any of these conditions, check the side effects. If your prescription may be impairing your balance, consult with your doctor to see if there are better options. For drug-free remedies for some of these conditions, check earlier issues of this newsletter, listed in *Related to This Topic on page 6*.

tests can help to motivate you to incorporate simple balance exercises into your daily routine — and to recognize progress.

Balance tests aren’t done only on older people who are at risk for falls. When fitness trainers begin working with clients of all ages, a comprehensive fitness assessment should include some balance tests, and better balance should always be among the goals of any good fitness program. In addition to being essential for daily life, good balance is vital for athletes in any sport.

Simple Tests to Try

Below are some simple tests you can do at home to see if you are at higher risk for falls. Each test is timed for 10 seconds. If you can’t hold a position for 10 seconds,

Dr. Marlene’s

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don't try the others. Instead, start doing daily exercises to improve your balance, and try the tests again in a week or so.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, if you can't do each of the steps below for 10 seconds, this indicates increased risk for falls.

When doing each of these tests, have someone else give you a "start," time you with a stopwatch or app on a smartphone for 10 seconds, and then give you a "stop." In each test, keep your eyes open. If needed, you can put your arms out to your sides for balance, but don't move your feet. Don't hold on to anything while doing the test, but be sure to have a sturdy chair or tabletop nearby to hold on to if you should lose your footing. Be sure to do each step safely.

	Stand with your feet side-by-side.
	Stand with the big toe of one foot touching the instep of the other foot.
	Switch feet and repeat the last step.
	Stand with one foot in front of the other, with the heel of one foot touching the toe of the other.
	Switch feet and repeat the last step.
	Stand on one foot.
	Stand on the other foot.

If you were easily able to do each of the above steps for 10 seconds, that's good. But you can — and should — get better. As a baseline to measure future progress, you can try doing each step above with your eyes closed and have someone time how long you can hold each position. Or you can just move on to doing balance exercises.

Two Goals of Balance Exercises

Although all types of exercise are beneficial for overall health, exercise that improves balance needs to effectively address two aspects: lower body strength and connections between muscles and the brain.

Without the right type of exercise, both muscles and brain connections deteriorate as we get older. If your lower-body muscles are weak and frail, they can't support you. The weaker muscles are, the more work it will take to strengthen them, but improvements can quickly become noticeable.

Connections to the brain are equally important. If you stop and think about walking up or down stairs, for example, there are many processes involved: estimating where to put your front foot, supporting yourself on your back foot as your weight transitions to the front, judging how far up or down to go to land on the next step, controlling your speed, judging whether to hold on to the handrail, being aware of whether there are any obstacles ahead, and so on.

Above, I mentioned using your feet, but there are many more muscles involved, including those in your calves, thighs, buttocks, arms, and around the middle part

of your body that help to keep you upright. And all those need to have good connections with the brain so that your movement is coordinated.

Fear of Falling

Fear of falling is one reason why many older people refrain from moving more, or they move more slowly and in a more guarded way. But the less you move and use your ability to balance, the faster that ability deteriorates, making falls more likely.² It's a downward spiral.

Fortunately, balance exercises can enhance balance and reduce fear of falling. In one study, for example, a 12-week program of balance exercises significantly improved balance and reduced fear of falling.³

The exercises included strengthening hip and leg muscles, marching in place, stepping over a bench, standing up from a chair with arms folded, and walking heel-to-toe in a straight line.

The Best Types of Exercise

We take a lot for granted, but our bodies are complex organisms, and the premise of "use it or lose it" holds true. By doing movements that challenge many aspects of balance and strength — taking a "use it" approach — muscles get stronger, brain connections are restored, and new pathways to the brain can even develop.

The best type of balance exercise works many parts of our body and challenges our brain to coordinate and control movements. Below are some simple things you can do several times a day while watching TV, waiting for food to heat up in the microwave, or literally any time.

Standing on One Leg

Practice standing on one leg, and then the other leg. If you have trouble balancing, hold on to a sturdy piece of furniture to stay safe, but aim to gradually hold on less and less. For example, get yourself steady while holding on firmly, and then try to hold on with only four fingers, then three fingers, then only one finger, and then none.



This progression, from holding on tight to balancing without holding on, may take a while. It needs to be done gradually.

You can err in two ways: Progress too quickly and lose your footing or even fall over. I rarely see this happen. The other mistake is to keep holding on tight and never challenging yourself, which means your balance won't improve much, if at all. I see this a lot.

When exercise is effective, there is some degree of discomfort. With this one-legged standing exercise, the discomfort could well be fear of falling. But discomfort means you are challenging yourself, and that's what produces benefits. If there's no discomfort at all, there's no challenge and no benefit.

If you can easily stand on one leg or get to a point where it's easier, try it with your eyes closed. And follow the same gradual progression to keep challenging yourself.

Other Ways to Stand

If you don't have difficulty standing, practice standing with your eyes closed. If you feel unsteady, hold on to something sturdy but

gradually wean yourself off the support, as I've described above.

Standing on your toes is another way to challenge yourself. You don't have to go all the way to tip-py toes; just put your weight on the balls of your feet, let your knees bend a little, and hold that position. This enhances your strength and brain connections in different ways than regular standing.

Standing on an unstable surface is another good exercise. A balance trainer, which looks like a ball chopped in half, is an inexpensive piece of equipment you can buy and use at home. BOSU is one brand name, but there are many others. Simply standing on a balance trainer is beneficial, and you



can do a variety of other exercises, usually described in product instructions.

Small trampolines have been popular as home exercise equipment over the years and they, too, offer an unstable surface on which you can practice standing on one or two feet or standing with one foot in front of the other, as well as jogging or jumping. One study found that such trampoline exercises were effective at restoring balance after a stroke.⁴

Without equipment, you can also challenge yourself by using unstable surfaces such as sand, gravel, a cushion, or a bed.

Walking on a Line

You can walk heel-to-toe along a real or imaginary line, in your home or garden, in a playground or tennis court, along the edge of a sidewalk or driveway, or literally

anywhere. Try walking backwards as well as forwards.

Parking lots that aren't busy offer painted lines and concrete blocks at the heads of parking spaces. You can challenge yourself by walking along the top of those blocks, as though you're walking along a tree trunk to cross a stream.



Stepping Over Obstacles

Hiking trails with different elevations, rocks, and unstable surfaces on paths are great for using your balance abilities. They can be quite challenging, which is why hiking poles are popular. But you can experience some similar challenges by stepping over objects, even if they're quite small.

If you have a garage that needs cleaning out and you need to step



over boxes, or a garden with rocks or small, low bushes you can step over, these

are good balance exercises. Or you could spread out some empty boxes along a path and practice stepping over them.

Squats for Strength and Balance

Squats are a simple exercise to strengthen all the muscles in your lower body and trunk and improve your ability to balance.

If you aren't familiar with squats, an easy way to start is with a chair. Stand in front of a sturdy

chair with your feet hip-width apart and start moving as though you were going to sit down. Using your legs, buttocks, back, and abdominal muscles, move your buttocks back over the seat of the chair. You can extend your arms in front of you for balance and lean forward from the hips, but don't hunch over at the waist. Your knees should stay over your toes, not in front of them.

Keep moving your buttocks back and down as far as you can while



controlling the movement. Before your buttocks touch the chair, stand up. Repeat that movement as

many times as you can.

It doesn't matter how low you squat at first. The important thing is to stay in control of the movement. As you progress, you will be able to do a deeper squat.

Doing squats over a chair can help you overcome fear of falling. But once you get used to the exercise and feel more stable, do your squats without a chair.

Tai Chi Reduces Risk and Fear of Falls

Tai Chi is an ancient system of movement that originated in China more than a thousand years ago as a form of martial arts training. In the past few decades, it has evolved into a popular type of exercise that protects against falls and improves balance, strength, focus, and mental and physical well-being.⁵

Tai chi movements are done slowly and mindfully, without jarring joints, and can even help to relieve joint stiffness and pain.



Dozens of studies around the world, with thousands of participants, have found that tai chi is effective in reducing risk of falls among older adults.⁶ And when studies compared tai chi with other forms of exercise for fall prevention, tai chi consistently proved to be much more effective.⁷

A study of 670 older adults in Oregon tested an hour-long tai chi regimen, done twice weekly, for 24 weeks. It compared tai chi with benefits of two other exercise programs done for the same time period: one regimen of only stretching, and another that combined aerobic and strength training. And the differences in balance benefits were striking.

Tai chi reduced the risk of falls by 60 percent more than stretching exercises, and by 31 percent more than the combination of aerobic and strength training.⁸

Most of the studies have been done on older adults who are generally healthy but have some risk of falling because of their age or an earlier fall. However, some of the research has looked at people with different conditions that impair balance.

One study tested tai chi in people with mild cognitive impairment. Researchers found that tai chi improved their mental function as well as slightly reducing risk of falls.⁹ Another study found that tai chi improved balance and function and reduced falls in people with Parkinson's disease.¹⁰

A Combination of Exercises Is Best

I recommend that you do a variety of exercises. If you already follow

About Dr. Marlene

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

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

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



an exercise regimen that you like, keep doing it. But consider adding some tai chi and balance exercises that I've described above.

Where to Find Tai Chi Classes

Tai chi movements are slow, flowing, and mindful. They are quite different from movements in other types of exercise and are unfamiliar to most people. To do them correctly, it's best to join an in-person class.

Tai chi classes are often done outdoors, in parks, so you get the extra benefit of being out in nature. The easiest way to find classes is by searching online for local ones. But if that doesn't work, online classes are another option. The Tai Chi Foundation at www.taichifoundation.org is a good site to check out. It lists classes online — some free and others for a fee — and in different parts of the country. And check if your health plan includes in-person or online classes as one of your benefits.

What About Yoga for Improving Balance?

I'm sometimes asked if yoga works as well as tai chi. Yoga is certainly beneficial, and if you enjoy practicing it, I encourage you to continue. However, yoga has not been as widely studied as tai chi for balance benefits.

For healthy older adults who are just starting an exercise program, research shows that yoga does produce small improvements in balance, but it is not known if this is enough to reduce risk of falls.¹¹ So, I recommend tai chi.

Balance Pitfalls to Avoid

This may seem like a no-brainer but it deserves mention: Your balance suffers if you are sleep-deprived, so make sure to get enough rest each night.

If you find yourself feeling lightheaded when you get out of bed or stand up after sitting, it's a sign of low blood pressure. If you take medications to lower blood pressure, discuss this with your doctor, as your

dosage may need to be adjusted, or perhaps a different prescription may work better for you.

If you have diabetes and use insulin, dizziness or shakiness can be a sign of blood sugar that is too low, as a result of too much insulin. If this happens, get help to adjust your insulin dosage.

At the same time, try to follow a diet that helps to control blood sugar and blood pressure with as little medication as possible.

A Final Word


If you've been exercising regularly and are doing well, I encourage you to continue. But it's still a good idea to test your balance and make sure that your regimen includes exercises that will help to keep you steady for the rest of a long life. And if you haven't been getting regular exercise, tai chi and other balance exercises are a great way to start.

Related to This Topic

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

Related Topic	Volume	Issue	Title
Sleep	2	2	The 10-Minute Sleep Solution
Joint Pain	2	5	The 90-Day Program to Relieve Arthritis
Blood Pressure	2	9	4 Steps to Healthy Blood Pressure
Blood Pressure	4	6	Top Blood Pressure Supplements and How to Use Them
Type 2 Diabetes	2	4	Type 2 Diabetes: The Roadmap to Recovery
Type 2 Diabetes	5	2	How to Use Supplements to Prevent and Reverse Diabetes

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



1 Fuller, G.F. "Falls in the Elderly." Am Fam Physician. 2000 Apr 1;61(7):2159-2168.

2 Alghwiri, A.A., et al. Chapter 18 - Balance and falls. Geriatric Physical Therapy (Third Edition). Mosby. 2012;331-353.

3 Thiamwong, L., et al. "Effects of Simple Balance Training on Balance Performance and Fear of Falling in Rural Older Adults." Int J Gerontol. 2014;8(3):143-146.

4 Hahn, J., et al. "The effect of modified trampoline training on balance, gait, and falls efficacy of stroke patients." J Phys Ther Sci. 2015 Nov;27(11):3351-4.

5 Hu, Y-N., et al. "Effect of Tai Chi Exercise on Fall Prevention in Older Adults: Systematic Review and Meta-analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials." Int J Gerontol. 2016;10(3):131-136.

6 Lomas-Vega, R., et al. "Tai Chi for Risk of Falls. A Meta-analysis." J Am Geriatr Soc. 2017 Sep;65(9):2037-2043.

7 van Vugt, V.A., et al. "Tai chi reduces the number of falls." Ned Tijdschr Geneesk. 2019 Feb 15;163:D3592.

8 Li, F., et al. "Effectiveness of a Therapeutic Tai Ji Quan Intervention vs a Multimodal Exercise Intervention to Prevent Falls Among Older Adults at High Risk of Falling: A Randomized Clinical Trial." JAMA Intern Med. 2018 Oct 1;178(10):1301-1310.

9 Sungkarat, S., et al. "Effects of Tai Chi on Cognition and Fall Risk in Older Adults with Mild Cognitive Impairment: A Randomized Controlled Trial." J Am Geriatr Soc. 2017 Apr;65(4):721-727.

10 Li, F., et al. "Tai Chi and Postural Stability in Patients with Parkinson's Disease." N Engl J Med 2012; 366:511-519.

11 Youkhana, S., et al. "Yoga-based exercise improves balance and mobility in people aged 60 and over: a systematic review and meta-analysis." Age Ageing. 2016 Jan;45(1):21-9.

70-Year-Old Man Feasts on Pasta, Cheese, Bread, and Wine...

...and wakes up with a normal blood sugar reading of 84!

After getting “the lecture” from his doctor, 70-year old Bob Bianchi finally decided to eat better to help control his blood sugar. And while he wasn’t happy about it, he’d been doing pretty well...

Then recently, Bob’s son wanted him to celebrate his birthday together at a favorite Italian restaurant. How could Bob turn him down? “I’m just gonna take a night off and go for broke,” Bob decided.

And boy did Bob *feast*. He ordered the linguini with shrimp, layered in gooey mozzarella cheese and buried under heaps of sauce. Add in some bread and red wine, and it was heavenly!

So when Bob went to test his blood sugar the next morning, he was ready for bad news. But when the numbers popped up on the screen, he couldn’t believe it... His fasting blood sugar **was a mere 84** — smack dab in the middle of the normal range!

How the heck could this happen? Well, Bob had been eating sensibly most of the time, following his doctor’s orders. And he’d also been protecting his blood sugar by taking **GlucoBurn** from Primal Labs, a leader in nutritional supplements.

In fact, after just two days of taking Primal Labs’ **GlucoBurn**, Bob was shocked to see his morning fasting numbers at 63!

GlucoBurn is an easy-to-swallow gel cap containing four powerful nutrients to help with blood sugar control:

- 1 **White Mulberry Leaf Extract (the “Sugar Blocker”):** Prevents carbohydrates from getting broken down into sugar, so they never make it to your bloodstream.
- 2 **Banaba Leaf Extract:** Acts like an insulin copycat because it mimics the way insulin works at the cellular level. This allows your body to burn more sugar.

3 **ALA (Alpha Lipoic Acid):** Deep inside the energy factories in your cells, ALA helps break down sugars and amino acids into raw fuel — giving you more energy.

4 **Gymnema Sylvestre (the “Sugar Destroyer”):** This powerful nutrient slows down the digestion of carbs and sugar, making it harder for glucose to reach your bloodstream.

Here’s How GlucoBurn Works:

Just take one capsule with each meal. You’ll receive an optimal dose of the pure form of all four nutrients. Their effectiveness is supported by over 25 scientific research studies, including 11 randomized controlled trials, the gold standard of scientific research.

These clinical findings show that the four ingredients in **GlucoBurn**:

- ✓ Support **healthy blood sugar metabolism**
- ✓ **Reduce blood sugar spikes** after meals
- ✓ Support **healthy fasting blood sugar** levels
- ✓ Support **healthy HbA1c** levels
- ✓ **Stimulate insulin** release
- ✓ **Mimic** naturally occurring insulin

YES! You can do all these things with **GlucoBurn**. With blood sugar in the normal range, you’ll also enjoy better concentration, more energy, and a brighter mood. Put **GlucoBurn** to the test, and you’ll be convinced.



Get GlucoBurn Today!
GlucoBurn.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

Protein Powder: Best Way to Use It

Protein powder can be part of a healthy diet, but it isn't always used correctly. I find that some people view it as a calorie-free food that will automatically help you lose weight, and this simply isn't true.

Although the number of calories in protein powder is relatively low — usually about 100 to 200 calories per serving — this certainly isn't zero. And when protein powder is blended into smoothies with a lot of fruit and fruit juice, as it often is, the calories go way up. Equally important, such fruity concoctions are high in carbs that raise blood sugar and insulin and increase fat storage.

So, what's the right way to use protein powder? First, recognize that protein powder is not calorie-free. Second, consider protein powder as one convenient source of protein in a nutritious diet. And third, don't believe anyone who tells you it has magical properties.

Why We Need Protein

Protein is essential for repairing and maintaining muscle. It becomes especially important as we get older, because our muscle mass gradually declines over the years. Loss of muscle makes your metabolism less efficient, contributes to fat gain, and eventually leads to a weakened, frail condition.

Resistance exercises are effective for maintaining muscle — if you do them. Eating enough protein also helps to maintain muscle, with or without resistance training.

Two things make it more likely that we need extra protein later in life: Older people sometimes avoid eating meat because they have trouble digesting it, due to low stomach acid. And the human body becomes less efficient at using dietary protein to maintain and repair muscle and other tissues.¹

How Much Protein Is Enough?

Scientifically speaking, the answer to that question is not clear cut, but studies do show that the optimum amount increases as we get older. I recommend that you divide your body weight in half and get roughly that number of grams of protein per day. For example, for someone who weighs 100 pounds, that's 50 grams of protein per day.



For a 150-pound person, that's 75 grams of protein per day.

This amount would be your total protein for the day, from all sources. If you do intense exercise or heavy physical labor, or are recovering from an illness or injury, you may need extra protein. On the other hand, if you have any medical conditions that require limiting protein intake, check with your doctor for your optimal amount.

How to Choose and Use Protein Powder

These are some good ingredients to look for in protein powders:

- Whey concentrate, which is an effective ingredient for healthy muscle mass in people of all ages. Whey concentrate is a less processed form than whey isolate. Since whey comes from milk, avoid it if you are sensitive to dairy.
- Pea protein and other plant proteins.
- Concentrated greens, such as spinach and kale.
- Fiber.
- Enzymes and probiotics to enhance digestion.
- Medium chain triglycerides, which are healthy fats; look for coconut sources.

- Natural sugar alternatives such as monk fruit or stevia.

I don't recommend soy protein because it is hard to digest and can impair thyroid function. Egg protein works well unless you have trouble digesting eggs.

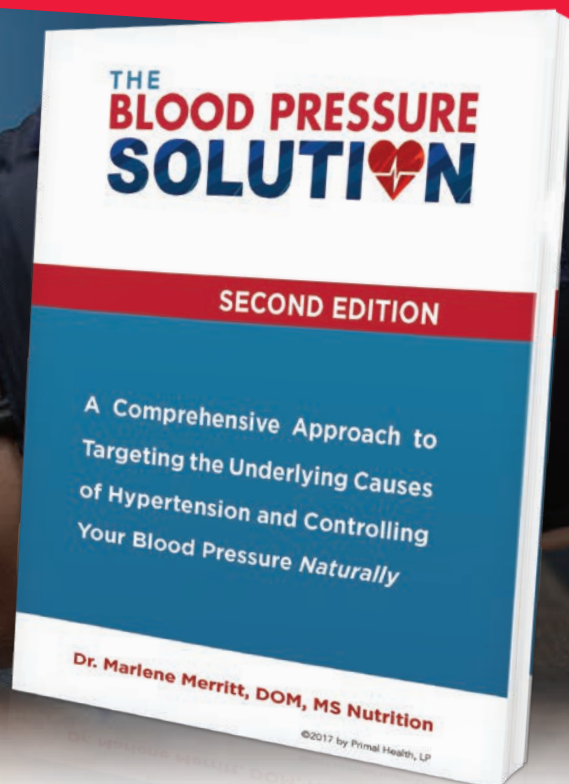
The Basic Smoothie Recipe

Get between 10 grams and 20 grams of protein per serving. Choose a product with pleasant flavoring, combine the powder with 10 ounces of filtered water, and mix it with a hand-held blender.

If you prefer, mix protein powder with an unsweetened plant milk. If you like extra flavoring, try adding vanilla extract or cinnamon. And for extra anti-inflammatory power, add some turmeric.

¹ Baum, J.I., et al. "Protein Consumption and the Elderly: What Is the Optimal Level of Intake?" *Nutrients*. 2016 Jun; 8(6): 359.

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Get Your Copy Today! Go To:
www.PrimalLabs.com/BPS

When to Buy Organic Vegetables and Fruit



My patients have sometimes been surprised because I don't insist that all their fruits and vegetables should be organic. The fact is, I do favor organic produce and organic food in general, but I also aim to be practical when I make recommendations.

It isn't always possible to find organic versions of foods, or the prices may be higher than what you're used to paying. However, if you know which foods are likely to contain the most pesticides, you can prioritize buying organic versions of these. And there's a simple way to do that.

Each year, the nonprofit Environmental Working Group puts together lists of non-organic produce with the highest levels of pesticides — the *Dirty Dozen* — and the lowest levels — the *Clean Fifteen*. The information comes from

the latest lab tests of thousands of produce samples in supermarkets around the country, performed by the United States Department of Agriculture. I'm including these lists here to make it easier for you to be a smart shopper and reduce your intake of toxins.

Important to Know

Pesticide residues persist even after washing or peeling produce. On average, such residues were found on more than 70 percent of the non-organic fruits and vegetables, and some items were especially troubling. Pesticide residues were on 90 percent of strawberries. And by weight, spinach contained nearly twice as much pesticide residue as any other crop tested.

These toxins are known to disrupt hormones and brain chemicals. Fortunately, levels of pesticides drop quickly in the human body if you switch to organic produce. And studies have shown that eating more organic produce is linked to less obesity, type 2 diabetes, non-Hodgkin lymphoma, and other ills.¹

The Dirty Dozen

The foods on this list contain the heaviest loads of pesticides and are most important to buy organic:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Strawberries | 7. Bell and hot peppers |
| 2. Spinach | 8. Cherries |
| 3. Kale, collard, and mustard greens | 9. Peaches |
| 4. Nectarines | 10. Pears |
| 5. Apples | 11. Celery |
| 6. Grapes | 12. Tomatoes |

The Clean Fifteen

When tested, nearly 70 percent of the foods on this list contained no detectable levels of pesticides; some contained low levels. These are safest to buy non-organic:

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Avocados | 9. Kiwi |
| 2. Sweet corn | 10. Cabbage |
| 3. Pineapple | 11. Mushrooms |
| 4. Onions | 12. Cantaloupe |
| 5. Papaya | 13. Mangoes |
| 6. Sweet peas (frozen) | 14. Watermelon |
| 7. Asparagus | 15. Sweet potatoes |
| 8. Honeydew melon | |

For a complete list of 46 fruits and vegetables that were tested and more details about toxic residues, visit www.ewg.org and look for *EWG's 2022 Shopper's Guide to Pesticides in Produce*.

Alcoholic Drinks Do *Not* Protect the Heart

For years, we've been hearing that moderate drinking is good for the heart. But it turns out that this is not the case. In fact, alcoholic drinks don't deliver any health benefits. But a moderate amount is not likely to cause significant harm.

What happened is this: Researchers studied diets and habits of people who lived long and healthy lives, and it *seemed* as though red wine or other alcoholic drinks were beneficial. However, when more data accumulated and was examined more closely, it turned out that

other habits, such as eating a diet of fresh food, being continually physically active, and having strong social connections, were producing the health benefits. In that context, moderate amounts of red wine or other alcohol did not cause significant harm.²

The new conclusion is that up to 7 drinks per week may not be significantly harmful, but more than that is likely to cause damage. Most important, be mindful of what works for you and do those things that enhance *your* well-being.

1 Vigar, V., et al. "A Systematic Review of Organic Versus Conventional Food Consumption: Is There a Measurable Benefit on Human Health?" *Nutrients*. 2019 Dec 18;12(1):7.

2 Biddinger, K.J., et al. "Association of Habitual Alcohol Intake With Risk of Cardiovascular Disease." *JAMA Netw Open*. 2022 Mar 1;5(3):e223849.

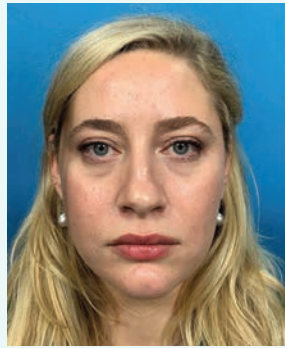
Beware of Selfie Distortion

A recent study found that selfies can distort faces to such a degree that they provoke some people to seek cosmetic surgery. Rhinoplasties to change the appearance of noses are the most common surgery requests, usually from younger people.¹

Even if you would never consider cosmetic surgery, it's good to be aware that the alteration of your appearance in a selfie can be quite startling. And if you know someone who likes to take selfies and is upset by their appearance, perhaps these research findings can help to put things into perspective and alleviate their concerns.

Selfie Distortions

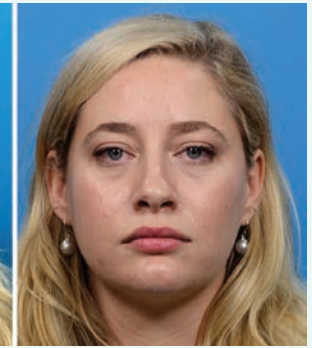
These are photos of the same person, taken minutes apart by researchers.



Selfie taken with a bent elbow, about 12 inches away.



Selfie taken with the arm extended, about 18 inches away.



A realistic photo, taken with the camera 5 feet away from the person.

Does Your Blood-Pressure Cuff Fit?

Getting an accurate blood-pressure reading requires the right-sized cuff, because arm sizes vary. A cuff that is too small will produce a reading that is artificially high, and a cuff that is too big will produce a reading that is artificially low.

Although this has been known for some time, many clinics use the same size cuff for everyone. Now, a new study has found that wrongly sized cuffs can distort readings more than previously believed — enough to sometimes mislead doctors in assessing whether treatment for hypertension, such as medication, is needed.²

If you take your blood pressure at home, your device likely came with a regular-sized cuff. It's a good idea to check if the cuff is the right size; if not, get one that fits your arm.

How to Check Blood-Pressure Cuff Size

Measure the circumference of your arm with a flexible tape measure, halfway between your elbow and shoulder. And then, use this chart to determine the right-sized cuff for you:

Arm Measurement in Centimeters	Correct Cuff Size
22–26	Small adult
27–34	Adult
35–44	Large adult
45–52	Extra-large adult

Music Lifts Spirits

Many studies have shown that music is good for your health, and a new review of the data has provided more insights. Researchers analyzed 26 earlier studies with a total of nearly 800 older people, including some who were healthy and others who suffered from pain or other uncomfortable physical and/or mental symptoms.³

Effects of music were measured with detailed medical questionnaires. These showed that both listening

to live or recorded music and making music by singing or playing an instrument significantly improved mood, mental function, and emotional health — often as much as drugs or weight-loss or fitness regimens. Physical health also improved, but to a lesser extent.

If you enjoy singing, don't hold back. Consider joining a choir or having some singalongs with your friends. If you used to play an instrument, perhaps you should start playing it again, and if you always wanted to learn how to play one, maybe this is the time to do just that.

¹ Pressler, M.P., et al. "Size and Perception of Facial Features with Selfie Photographs, and Their Implication in Rhinoplasty and Facial Plastic Surgery." *Plast Reconstr Surg.* 2022 Apr 1;149(4):859-867.
² Brady, T.M., et al. "One Size Does Not Fit All: Impact Of Using A Regular Cuff For All Blood Pressure Measurements." Presented at the AHA EPI Conference. March 1, 2022. ³ McCrary, J.M., et al. "Association of Music Interventions With Health-Related Quality of Life: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis." *JAMA Netw Open.* 2022;5(3):e223236.

Q&A

Q: I have recently developed knee swelling and stiffness, confirmed by MRI as mild to moderate osteoarthritis. Are there foods and/or supplements that might help minimize these symptoms and the intermittent pain as well as prevent the need for a possible knee replacement? — Michael S.

A: You have a window of opportunity to stop the progression of osteoarthritis and reduce pain and damage to your joints. Taking advantage of this window can help you avoid the need for a knee replacement — if you take the right steps.

For immediate relief, I recommend icing your knee. Take a resealable plastic bag — the kind used to store food in the fridge or freezer — and fill half of it with ice and half with tap water. Seal it tight and squeeze any air out of it. Then use it to ice your knee.

Keep the bag on for 20 minutes, off for 20 minutes, and on again. Repeat this until you get some relief, replacing the ice as it melts. The combination of water and ice creates a temperature that is sustainable, so that you can put it directly on the skin without causing too much discomfort or needing to wrap it in a towel.

Sometimes heat is needed instead, so if ice makes your knee more uncomfortable, try heat, or alternate ice and heat. Usually, ice is more effective but see which works for you.

After a few minutes, your skin will turn red because the cold stimulates blood to flow to the area. This has a healing effect.

To fully treat the osteoarthritis, you need to calm underlying inflammation. Although the pain and swelling appear in the knee, it's potentially a manifestation of inflammation that occurs throughout the human body.

Anti-inflammatory supplements, including fish oil, Boswellia, and turmeric, will help. But they won't do the whole job. The underlying causes of inflammation also need to be addressed by eating an anti-inflammatory diet that is low in carbohydrates and consists of whole, rather than processed, foods and healthy fats. Healthy fats include butter, coconut oil, extra virgin olive oil, and the fats that occur naturally in fresh meat, poultry, and fish.

It's also essential to avoid inflammatory foods. Chief among these are refined oils, such as corn and soybean oil, and hydrogenated fats that are used for deep frying in restaurants and many packaged foods. If a food label includes the word "hydrogenated," skip it.

Other things that can cause chronic inflammation include food intolerances — to gluten, for example — and untreated health conditions. Dental, sinus, and urinary tract infections are some common inflammation triggers.

For more details about how to put all these steps together, I encourage you to log in to www.NaturalHealthConnections.com and check out *The 90-Day Program to Relieve Arthritis* in Volume 2, Issue 5, of this newsletter.

Q: Why do you recommend counting total carbs, rather than net carbs? — Amy C.

A: Net carbs are calculated by looking at the total grams of carbs in a food and subtracting the number of grams of fiber. The rationale is that while carbs cause a rise in blood sugar, fiber counteracts that rise, so some of the carbs don't count.

This sounds good in theory, but does not work in practice. The fiber may temper the rise in blood sugar a bit, but you still get a rise.

A spike in blood sugar triggers insulin to be released, and the insulin is inflammatory and promotes fat storage. The fiber in the food doesn't prevent that from happening.

I've had many patients who, before seeing me, had counted net carbs to resolve high blood sugar without success. When they switched to counting total carbs, they finally got their blood sugar into a healthy range.

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@primal-healthlp.com or call 877-300-7849.