

Dr. Marlene's NATURAL HEALTH CONNECTIONS

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New Winter Pitfalls: How to Avoid Them

Old and new health risks and the daily habits, diet, and natural remedies that can help you stay healthy throughout this winter season.

Winter used to be simpler: It was cold and flu season. Then along came the COVID pandemic. And while contact tracing and other emergency measures have ended, COVID still poses serious health threats and is unlikely to go away. On top of that, RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) is another viral infection to watch out for — one that I'll explain in more detail in a moment.

Yes, things are getting more complicated, and there are more vaccines to consider. But there's also some good news: The same diet, lifestyle, and supplement strategies help to protect you against *all* these viruses. They work by enhancing your natural ability to resist infection and, should you get sick, to recover as quickly as possible.

Before I start describing natural remedies and the specific diet and lifestyle steps you can take to protect yourself, let's look at the risks these different viruses pose to your health. Obviously, there's the discomfort of

getting sick, but there are also risks of hospitalization and complications from flu, RSV, and COVID and, in some cases, symptoms that linger for the longer term.

Long COVID — persisting symptoms after a COVID infection has subsided — can affect people of all ages. It doesn't seem to discriminate, and so far there is no proven treatment. What we do know is that COVID can cause damage to various organs, and the pattern varies among individuals.

The risk of long COVID is different from risks of hospitalization or death, which are known to be higher among older people and those with chronic health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, or obesity. Long COVID can strike people who

**IN THE NEXT ISSUE:
Supplements and
Drugs: Your Top
Questions Answered**



are young and healthy. And multiple infections may increase the odds of long COVID.

The best thing you can do is avoid COVID infection — or reinfection if you were infected in the past. And the current COVID vaccine is a tool, but not the only one.

Since COVID will likely continue to be around, it's smart to enhance your natural resilience to illness. But before I say more about COVID, let's look at RSV, the least familiar winter bug.

Dr. Marlene's
NATURAL HEALTH CONNECTIONS

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RSV Infection and Vaccines

RSV is a common respiratory virus that most often causes mild symptoms similar to a cold (see *Symptoms of Respiratory Infections* on page 3). However, it can cause severe, dangerous infections, among infants and older people.

This virus is not new, but in the last few years RSV infections among adults have increased by 10–20 times. Why? New strains of RSV are more likely to affect older adults, and many more people are immunocompromised as a result of earlier COVID infection.

RSV vaccines are now available for infants and adults over age 60. As with vaccines for flu and COVID, the RSV vaccine reduces risk for severe illness but it doesn't guarantee that you won't get infected. In a study of more than 34,000 people ages 60 and older, the vaccine reduced risk of RSV illness by about 62 percent.¹

COVID Vaccines

Attitudes toward vaccines differ. I understand this. However, I believe that it's important to be informed about your options.

Different strains of the COVID virus have been emerging. Consequently, the original vaccine and

booster shots are no longer available. Instead, the current COVID vaccine targets the current form of the virus.

Studies of the new vaccines show that they help to train or prepare the immune system to recognize and fight off new strains. This reduces the odds of transmission, infection, severe illness, and hospitalization.

If you were previously vaccinated or infected with COVID, you gained some added protection, but it wanes over time. The new COVID vaccine can help to restore some of that earlier enhanced resistance as well as protect against the currently circulating strains of the virus.

If you were recently infected with COVID, it's generally recommended that you wait about three months before getting the vaccine. However, the shot may be recommended earlier for people who are at high risk for the disease, are in close contact with someone who is at high risk, or live in an area where there is a high level of COVID hospitalizations.

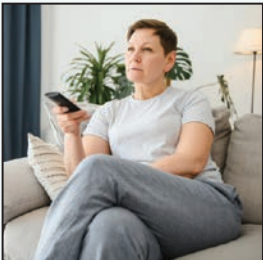
It doesn't matter if you received earlier COVID vaccine shots, or not. You can get the new vaccine.

Earlier this year, adults ages 65 and older made up nearly two of three hospitalizations for COVID. Only 23 percent had received the

Chronic Health Conditions Increase Risk

These are some of the conditions that increase risk for COVID:²

- Older age
- Obesity
- Physical inactivity
- Diabetes type 1 or 2
- Mood disorders
- Asthma
- Chronic lung disease
- Chronic kidney disease
- Chronic liver disease
- Cancer
- Poor immune function
- Heart failure
- Coronary artery disease
- Other heart conditions



recommended vaccine shots, and most of these patients had more than one underlying health condition.³ (See *Chronic Health Conditions Increase Risk* on page 2.)

Flu Vaccines

Flu viruses differ from year to year. The flu vaccine aims to protect against the specific viral strain of the season, and it does a better job in some years than others.

Before our flu vaccine is formulated for each fall and winter season, virus surveillance centers around the world track the current types of flu bugs and identify the specific strains that are making people sick in other parts of the globe. Based on that data, experts in this country formulate the vaccine to target specific strains of flu that are expected to be circulating during our coming flu season.

In other words, each year's flu vaccine is an estimate — a scientific version of a best guess — as to which flu strains will be rampant in the United States. The accuracy of such estimates, and the efficacy of flu vaccines, varies from year to year.

It's difficult to precisely measure the effectiveness of a flu vaccine because no one knows how many people get the flu. After all, not everyone who gets sick sees a doctor. But over a period of years, flu vaccines have reduced hospitalizations by 14 to 48 percent.⁴ They also help to reduce severe illness and death.⁵

One study, in New Zealand, found that flu vaccine was especially effective at keeping patients out of the intensive care unit. During the years the study examined (2012–2015), getting a flu shot

reduced the odds of needing intensive care by more than 70 percent.⁶

Even if you're vaccinated, you need to take the other steps I'll describe to reduce your risk of illness.

When to Test for COVID

If you experience respiratory symptoms, the only sure way to tell if it's COVID is to test. Does it matter? Yes! People can still get very sick or die from a COVID infection — especially seniors.

You may also want to get tested if you've been exposed to someone who had COVID. Let's say you learn that someone at last weekend's family gathering had COVID. How likely are you to be

infected? It depends on the event and the type of contact.

Activities where people are expelling a lot of breath, such as singing or cheering at a sports event, are more likely to transmit the virus. Being in close contact with an infected person for some time, such as sharing a meal in a restaurant, is another way the virus can be transmitted. On the other hand, if the cashier at your local supermarket was ill and you spent a few minutes getting your groceries checked out, the risk is not that high.

If you are concerned about a possible infection, another reason to get tested for COVID is that there are treatments: oral medications that must be taken within 5 days of the first symptom.

If you don't have insurance, this website can help you find free local testing and, if necessary, treatment: <https://testinglocator.cdc.gov>

For testing at home, you can get free home tests delivered to you by the post office. Order your free tests at <https://www.covid.gov/tests>

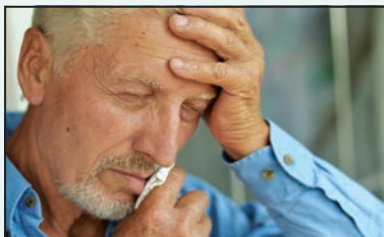
Protection Against All Winter Illnesses

I started by talking about the risks because it's easy to become complacent or assume respiratory symptoms are just a cold. And some people go around as though nothing is wrong, even though they know or suspect they have COVID, which spreads the virus.

The fact is, anyone with any respiratory symptoms, especially if they're coughing or sneezing, should stay home. If that isn't possible, wear a mask. And at all times, steer clear of others who are coughing and/or sneezing.

Symptoms of Respiratory Infections

Symptoms of colds, flu, RSV, and COVID are similar and can include any of these:



- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing
- Wheezing
- Sore throat
- Congestion
- Runny nose
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Diarrhea
- Nausea or vomiting
- Reduced appetite

The only way to tell if an illness is COVID is to test.

That said, COVID is the most important thing to avoid, because it can cause organ damage, even with mild or no symptoms. You can protect yourself by your actions — what I call external protection — and by enhancing your internal defenses from the inside.

External Protection

These are basic, common-sense precautions that can help you stay healthy during this winter season.

- Stay alert for news of rising hospitalization rates for COVID in your local area or any place you plan to visit. And if they are rising, wear a mask when you go out.
- In all situations where you are gathering with other people, do so in spaces that are well ventilated. If you live in a climate where you can get together outdoors, that's ideal. Otherwise, increase the indoor ventilation as much as possible by opening windows and doors, if the weather allows, or turning up the heating or cooling system.
- For indoor heating or cooling, the fan should be strong enough to generate a bit of a breeze. For example, it should make a candle flicker or make the area feel slightly drafty. This is a good way to tell if a restaurant or other indoor space is well ventilated.
- When planning indoor gatherings, try to avoid crowding.
- When eating in an indoor restaurant, look for establishments that have some space between tables rather than being crowded together.
- If you're traveling, wear a mask

in airports, especially in lines or near gates where people are gathered.

- When airplanes are up in the air, their ventilation is usually good. However, when you are boarding, and just before you start to disembark, the ventilation systems are turned down, which is why the air can feel stuffy at those times. And that's when bugs can easily spread — so wear a mask.
- Wash your hands often, using soap and water and lathering long enough to sing “Happy Birthday” twice. Most of us did this during the pandemic and it helped to reduce colds and flu to record-low levels.

Now, let's look at what you can do to enhance your internal defenses.

Keep Your Nose Moist

You might think of mucus as a short, round, little monster in commercials for cold medicine. And too much of it in your nasal passages can be one symptom of a cold or other respiratory infection. But in the right amounts, mucus is an essential, friendly substance that helps you stay healthy.

In your nose, mucus creates a barrier that stops pathogens from getting further into your body. Consider it as a gatekeeper or filter. But if it dries out, it can't do its job.

In the winter, heated air often dries out mucus, and then viral bugs can get past that gate and set up house inside your respiratory system, all the way down into your lungs. And you get sick.

It's much harder to get rid of a virus that's deeply embedded. But it's not too difficult to stop

bugs from getting in if your nasal gatekeeper is doing a good job.

To keep the mucus moist in your nose, drink plenty of water and, if the air in your home is dry, consider getting a humidifier. Be sure to clean your humidifier once a week to prevent bacteria from accumulating or mold from growing inside, which would worsen your indoor air quality.

In addition, you can give your internal nasal filter some extra support by using a saline nasal spray a few times a day to keep the protective mucus moist. Use it per product directions.

Avoid the Most Harmful Food

Sugar is a leading suppressor of your immune system — your natural ability to resist infection. The sugar can be in sweetened drinks, baked goods, and even fruit juice. Although fruit contains valuable nutrients, when turned into juice, its fiber is eliminated and its natural sugar becomes concentrated, much like in candy or soda.

Eating sugar immediately suppresses your natural defenses. A study that tested the effects of sugar on immune function found that the greatest suppression occurs in the first one or two hours after having a sweet drink or eating sugary food. But immune function continues to stay depleted for at least five hours. Just one glass of orange juice can produce this effect.⁷

This immune-depleting effect can be caused by any type of sugar, such as table sugar, cane sugar (organic or not), high fructose corn syrup, and sugar sources we consider to be healthy, such as honey and maple syrup.

The same research showed that abstaining from sugar for 36 to 60 hours significantly enhanced our natural defenses. Given that sugar is added to so many foods, especially baked items such as cakes, cookies, and other desserts, it requires a bit of planning to steer clear of it. Foods and drinks with sugar-free sweeteners are an option.

Make Smart Choices of Holiday Treats

Holiday times are especially challenging, with extra treats and traditional family recipes for holiday cookies, cakes, and pies. Yet this is the time of year that we really need our internal defenses to be strong against respiratory bugs.

One way to navigate the holiday treat environment is to steer clear of goodies except during actual special events, such as holiday dinners. Savor the flavor of a small portion rather than throwing caution to the wind during a special holiday meal. But avoid sugar the rest of the day and on the days between celebrations.

Another option is to buy or make desserts with natural sugar-free sweeteners such as stevia, xylitol, or monk fruit. You can find versions that are designed for baking.

Eat an Immune-Boosting Diet

A diet that includes too much starch, as well as sugar — the typical American diet of processed food — also suppresses immune function. Studies show that this type of diet elevates insulin and blood sugar, which leads to harmful, chronic inflammation and a depressed immune system. And this makes you more susceptible

to infection by whatever bugs are circulating in the environment.⁸

The solution is to follow a low-carb diet of whole foods with plenty of fresh vegetables (frozen ones are good, too), healthy fats, and some protein. If you like sweet drinks, add some monk fruit, stevia, or xylitol to green, black, or herbal tea, or coffee. Or add some liquid flavored stevia to sparkling mineral water.

Manage Sleep, Stress, and Exercise

No matter what else you do, research shows that lack of sleep will impair your body's natural ability to resist infection from bugs in the environment. Inadequate sleep shuts down parts of the immune system.⁹ Insufficient sleep also makes vaccines less effective.

Stress also reduces optimal immune function. Studies show that stress alters the functions of

the brain and microorganisms in the gut in a way that makes you more susceptible to viral infections. Both chronic and acute stress can have this effect.¹⁰ Ashwagandha supplements can help to balance your system and reduce harmful effects of stress.

When it comes to exercise, a regular, moderate type of exercise helps to enhance the function of the immune system and resistance to viral and other illnesses.¹¹ But extreme exercise that is too intense for an individual can be a source of stress that works against you.

Essential Nutrients and Protective Herbs

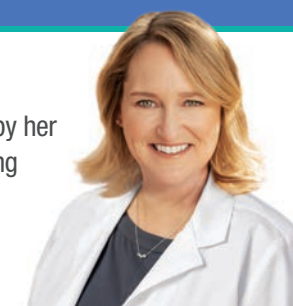
To nourish your immune system, take a multivitamin with 400 mcg to 800 mcg of folic acid and around 100 percent of the Daily Value of all the other vitamins, plus some minerals. And take 1,000 mg of fish oil daily. Adequate vitamin

About Dr. Marlene

Dr. Marlene Merritt's passion for natural medicine is fueled by her drive to help others and by her own experience of overcoming a debilitating heart condition, diagnosed at the age of 20. A competitive cyclist at the time, she suddenly began experiencing severe chest pains. Forced to quit the sport, she suffered from fatigue and chest 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 degree and is board-certified in Nutrition, and is board-certified in Functional Medicine. She is certified in the Bredesen MEND Protocol™, a groundbreaking method of addressing Alzheimer's disease, and is a Proficiency Diplomate in the Shoemaker CIRS protocol for treatment of mold-related illness. She is the author of *Smart Blood Sugar* and *The Blood Pressure Solution*, and co-author of *The Perfect Sleep Solution*. After 31 years in private clinical practice, she now focuses on writing and educating health professionals and consumers to reach more people and positively impact their health.



D, based on testing and your personal needs, is also essential for good immune function.

In addition, some herbs can provide more support for your immune system. Studies show that echinacea can be taken daily to help prevent respiratory infections and, should you get ill, to reduce symptoms and speed recovery.¹² I suggest using a tincture that you mix with water. It should make your tongue tingle; if it doesn't, the product is not effective so try a different product.

Ban lan gen is an herb that is widely used in Traditional Chinese Medicine, both to prevent respiratory infections and to treat them. In supplements, you can find it as a single herb or in formulas designed to support healthy immune function. Either way, it can be taken daily, per product directions, to improve your resistance to bugs that cause respiratory illness.¹³

Two other supplements, Epicor and Wellmune, have been shown to strengthen the immune system. Each one is a different type of

trademarked yeast extract. Epicor, which is widely available as an individual supplement, works best when taken for at least 90 days. Wellmune is often found in formulas for immune support.

Natural Remedies

If you get sick, these can help you recover:

Vitamin C: Take 1,000 mg, one to three times daily. If you get diarrhea, it's a sign that you took more than your body can absorb, so take less. Once you recover, don't continue taking high doses. The recommended daily amount for healthy people is only 65 mg.

Zinc: Chew lozenges, per product directions. Once you recover, don't take extra zinc — just take a multivitamin that includes zinc.

Andrographis: Keep it in your medicine cabinet so that it's handy if and when you need it. If you notice any symptom, even if it's slight and occurs in the middle of the night, immediately take one serving of andrographis. Keep taking it

every two to three hours, until you feel better.

A Final Word

I've covered a lot of ground and have given you some choices of herbs and other supplements that can improve your natural defenses. The basic diet, lifestyle, common-sense precautions, and essential vitamins and minerals I described are the foundation of good immune health. Additional supplements, such as echinacea or one or more of the others I mentioned, can provide extra protection.

I hope this helps you stay healthy through the winter months.

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Related to This Topic

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

Related Topic	Volume	Issue	Title
A Low-Carb Diet	6	1	Your 2023 Guide to Better Health: Part 1
A Low-Carb Diet	6	2	Your 2023 Guide to Better Health: Part 2
Multivitamins	2	8	Do You Really Need a Multivitamin?
Sleep	5	4	Restful Sleep: How to Get Enough
Ashwagandha	6	1	Ashwagandha Relieves Stress and Rejuvenates (page 9)
Stress	4	6	How to Conquer Hidden Stress (page 8)

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

Get Back Out There...

STOP LETTING FATIGUE AND LOW-ENERGY ROB YOU OF THE ACTIVITIES YOU ENJOY!

Do you feel drained all the time, unable to do the things you love because you have no energy and no motivation?

Do you feel tired and run down... like you're running on empty, even when you get plenty of sleep?

If you're not living the active, fun-filled life, you were meant to live, please pay close attention: You can now get your energy back, boost your mental clarity, calm your nerves and enjoy all-day endurance that will make your life fun again!

That's why I'm excited to introduce the safe and natural energy booster designed for people just like you...

It's called, **ActivAdapt Energy Drink Mix**.

There's truly nothing else quite like it on the market today because one of its ingredients has been proven in a double-blind study to increase energy by 107% within 60 minutes. And even better, this caffeine-free boost of energy lasted 5 hours WITHOUT increasing heart rate or blood pressure!

ActivAdapt is an easy to use drink mix that contains 6 powerful nutrients to help you regain your energy, strength, and stamina:

EnXtra is a brand-new, patent-pending extract from *Alpinia Galanga*, a plant in the ginger family. It's a safe, natural energy-boosting compound that boosts energy levels by 107% and lasts 5 hours!

Rhodiola Root Extract boosts energy levels by increasing ATP, the "energy molecule" inside your cells. Rhodiola has been used by astronauts and military personnel to increase energy levels, boost alertness and sharpen mental focus during long missions.

Schizandra Berry increases endurance and working capacity under stress. Researchers have also found it enhances your reflexes and mental sharpness while calming you down if you're feeling anxious.

Ginseng is well studied for boosting brain function and short-term memory while promoting calmness. A new analysis published last year confirms it also reduces fatigue after exercise and physical activities.

Matcha extract is from a special form of green tea loaded with EGCG, a potent antioxidant that helps flush dangerous toxins from the body—while its amino acids promote a state of relaxation and well-being.

Palatinose is unique because it provides your body with a slow, steady release of energy with no spike in blood sugar—which helps keep insulin levels low. It delivers more energy and increases fat burning.

Here's how **ActivAdapt** works...

Simply add one scoop to water, stir, and it dissolves quickly and easily.

It's caffeine-free and only contains 20 calories. You'll notice a substantial change in your physical and mental energy almost immediately after you drink it... with no jitters, no increased heart rate, no blood sugar spikes, and absolutely no crash.

ActivAdapt is ideal if you want to regain your energy and feel more vibrant and alive than you have in years...

- More physical energy, strength, and stamina
- Increased mental energy and focus
- Greater concentration and better moods
- Deeper, more restorative sleep
- Lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol
- Enhanced weight control, and fewer sugar and carb cravings

It's time to get back out there and start enjoying the activities you've always loved—and with the help of **ActivAdapt**, it's never been easier. Boost your energy levels, bust stress, banish brain fog, and stop fatigue, while increasing your concentration, attention, and mood.

**Get Your Bottle of
ActivAdapt Today and
Start Living the Life You
Were Meant to Live!**



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Our Healthcare System

Among industrialized nations, the United States is the only one with a for-profit healthcare system. And it doesn't work well. We spend far more on healthcare, but the results are tragically inadequate.

Among developed countries, we have the lowest life expectancy at birth, the highest death rates for avoidable or treatable conditions, the highest rate of people with multiple chronic conditions, and nearly double the average rate of obesity.¹

During the COVID pandemic, our death rate, per capita, was the highest among developed countries. And our miserable health outcomes didn't start there.

A report by the World Health Organization in 2016 ranked the United States 34th in life expectancy, and 40th in "healthy" life expectancy — years lived without disease or disability — among *all* countries of the world.²

We are the only industrialized nation without universal health coverage. Instead, for-profit business interests drive our system.³

The topic of universal health coverage is a hotly debated one, with critics arguing that it would lead to astronomical tax rates. However, two economics professors at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in Cambridge, discovered a different situation.

These economists compared our actual healthcare costs and taxes in this country with those in countries that have universal coverage. They factored in our existing healthcare taxes — for Medicare and other government programs — plus our

insurance premiums and all other medical bills. And they estimated that we are already paying for what universal coverage would cost. But we aren't getting it.⁴

A friend of mine moved to Portugal and pays \$120 per month for very good health insurance coverage. When she went to fill a prescription, the pharmacist apologized for the co-pay — which was only \$11!

Progress?

You may hear that we've made progress in recent years, and in some ways we have. Before the passage of the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) in 2010, health insurance companies could deny coverage to people who had pre-existing conditions, which was an inhumane practice. Now, they can't do that. There are more government subsidies for health insurance premiums for people in certain income brackets, and health plans include routine screenings without a deductible or co-pay.

As a result of these and other changes in insurance laws, the number of uninsured Americans has decreased. One in six were uninsured in 2010 and now one in fourteen are uninsured. But that still leaves over 25 million people without health insurance. And those numbers don't tell the full story.

Rising Costs and Insurance Shortfalls

As I'm sure you know, the costs of healthcare and insurance premiums keep rising. Out-of-pocket



costs for deductibles, uncovered services, and medications also keep rising. And many people have to jump through hoops to get the medical care they need — if they get it at all.

I recently read about a man who needed surgery to correct a broken ankle. He had health insurance but with a very high deductible because that's all he could afford. This deductible was so high that he couldn't pay for it; as a result, he couldn't get the surgery and was left with a chronically painful limp.

Such situations are truly tragic — and things don't have to be this way. You may have been aware of sky-high insulin prices that prevented many diabetics from getting needed insulin — until the federal government recently negotiated lower, affordable prices. It goes to show that it's quite possible for companies to drop prices. However, the profit motive is a strong driving force.

Sometimes, insurance companies outright deny payment for needed treatment, without even examining the merits of the case. When a doctor requests payment for a treatment to be approved, an insurance company may have a protocol of denying approval as a matter of course. If the patient goes through a series of additional, complex steps,

payment may — or may not — be eventually approved.

Not every case runs into such obstacles, but too many do.

Medical Debt

Medical debt is the direct cause of two-thirds of personal bankruptcies in the United States. And many more Americans are shouldering crippling debt as a result of health-care bills — often, for services that their health insurance didn't cover. Medical debt also causes or contributes to homelessness.

Credit cards designed specifically for health and dental costs have generally replaced direct-payment plans that hospitals and doctors used to offer. Such credit cards are often made available at doctors' and dentists' offices. They often charge zero interest for a short period of time, followed by a very high interest rate of up to 30 percent. This is another, increasing form of medical debt.

What to Do

Hopefully, our system of health insurance will change in the future. For the longer term, you can help by supporting efforts to improve it. Meanwhile, there are some steps you can take to manage the existing system to work in your best interest, so that you take good care of your own health.

Assess Your Doctor. Some doctors assume that their patients can't get better. "You'll always be like this." That's the message they convey. And too many people accept it.

If this happens to you, I don't

want you to just lie down and take it. I'm vehement about that. I really want you to understand that you can do quite a bit on your own.

Many doctors don't believe that type 2 diabetes can be reversed or improved and that it's possible to reduce or eliminate the need for diabetes drugs. You'll have to do some work, but your doctor should be supporting your efforts, not discounting or challenging them.

One of my patients asked for a prescription for a continuous glucose monitor (CGM), which is the most effective way to track blood sugar. Her doctor argued that it wasn't necessary. She managed to convince him to write the prescription, but because he was unfamiliar with the device, he didn't order the correct supplies. So, she had to go back and get the prescription corrected.

Some doctors have refused to reduce drug dosages when the patient made diet and lifestyle improvements and their markers improved. Others were offended when their patients asked questions about possible ways to improve their condition or brought in information about alternative or additional treatments.

One of my patients was told that she needed to increase the dosage of a drug for an autoimmune condition. After she saw me, she stopped eating dairy products and gluten, and followed a low-carb diet that reduced her blood-sugar levels — and her autoimmune condition resolved.

Until this patient took matters into her own hands, her doctor didn't believe that she could

improve at all. Sadly, this is not an isolated incident.

Don't put up with these types of attitudes. Find another doctor who will help you on your journey to better health.

Get the Right Blood Tests.

I've outlined all the essential blood tests in an earlier newsletter issue: Volume 6, Issue 6, *Blood Tests: Which Ones Do You Really Need?* Your doctor may think some of these are unnecessary or they may not be covered by your insurance. If this happens, you can — and should — get these tests by working directly with a lab. These labs offer direct-to-consumer tests and are inexpensive:

www.ultalabtests.com

www.lifelinescreening.com

www.directlabs.com

Consider Telemedicine. If you live in an area where there are few doctors, or it's difficult to get to the doctor's office, consider online consultations when a physical exam isn't necessary. Insurance plans generally offer a telehealth option.

Despite our problematic health-care system, you can empower yourself by taking the steps I've described and following a healthy diet and lifestyle. I encourage you to take charge.

1 Gunja, M.A., et al. "U.S. Health Care from a Global Perspective, 2022: Accelerating Spending, Worsening Outcomes." Issue Briefs. January 31, 2023.

2 Becker, T., et al., editors. National Academies of Sciences. "U.S. Mortality in an International Context." National Academies Press (US); 2021 Mar 2.

3 Crowley, R., et al. "Financial Profit in Medicine: A Position Paper From the American College of Physicians." *Ann Intern Med.* 2021 Oct;174(10):1447-1449.

4 Einav, L. and Finkelstein, A. "We're Already Paying for Universal Health Care. Why Don't We Have It?" *New York Times.* July 18, 2023.

When Light Helps You Sleep Better

If you want to get a restful night's sleep and wake up refreshed and alert, light can work for or against you. It depends on the timing and intensity of the light

You may be aware that being exposed to digital screens and other bright lights before bedtime makes it harder to fall asleep and get good rest. Bright evening light interferes with your natural production of melatonin, the sleep hormone.

On the other hand, being exposed to morning light helps to reset and maintain a healthy circadian rhythm: your natural sleep-wake cycle. Our bodies are designed to sleep when it's dark and be awake when it's light.

A recent British study confirmed this pattern and unearthed some additional, helpful data.¹

Researchers gave a group of 59 people small, wearable devices that measured each person's exposure to various levels of light throughout the day and night. Participants wore these devices on their wrists while they were awake and kept them on their nightstands while sleeping. And they kept track of their sleep

for a healthy sleep-wake cycle.

- The worst time to be in a brightly lit area, or to use electronic screens, is during the half-hour just before bedtime. But bright light during the three hours before bed also disrupts sleep.

What to Do

Make an effort to spend time outdoors, in the morning and at other times of day. If it's cold, bundling up and going for a walk is very refreshing and good for you both physically and mentally — in addition to any sleep benefits.

Inside your home, don't block daylight. Let it in. I know all too well that in hot, sunny climates, window coverings can be essential to control heat and light that can be too bright and fade furniture and rugs. We open and close our blinds by the clock. When the sun is heating the house, they are closed. When it is not shining on



the floor anymore, we open them. Electronic blinds can open and close automatically, on a timer.

If you work in an office with no windows and can't control the lighting, use the lunch hour and any other breaks to get outdoors. It will be more uplifting than spending time in a windowless lunchroom and can help you to stay alert for the rest of the day.

As the days get shorter and shorter, it's a good idea to take advantage of whatever daylight is available. And you can supplement it by using an indoor lamp that simulates sunlight.

New Sleep Data

Here's what the study found:

- Although outdoor morning light is definitely beneficial, we need bright light throughout daylight hours to sleep well and be alert after waking up in the morning.
- Workplaces often lack windows and are too dimly lit to provide enough bright light during the day

Vitamin D and Psoriasis

Vitamin D is essential for many reasons, including helping to regulate blood sugar and blood pressure and keeping bones, muscles, arteries, and the immune system working well. Now, research is showing that vitamin D also plays a role in psoriasis.²

Researchers at Brown University, in Providence, Rhode Island, analyzed vitamin-D blood levels in nearly 500 people suffering from psoriasis. And they found that people with the highest blood levels of the vitamin had the least amount of skin surface affected by psoriasis. They believe that vitamin D has a therapeutic effect on the skin by enhancing the ability of the immune system to repair skin cells.

Be sure to get your vitamin D level tested and take enough in supplements to achieve a level of 30–50 ng/mL.

1 Didikoglu, A., et al. "Associations between light exposure and sleep timing and sleepiness while awake in a sample of UK adults in everyday life." *Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A*. 2023 Oct 17;120(42):e2301608120. 2 Kim, R.K., et al. "(PTFS12-04-23) Association of Serum Vitamin D Levels and Psoriasis Severity: An Analysis of the US National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey." Presented at Nutrition 2023, July 23, 2023, Boston, Mass.

TAKE COLLAGEN PEPTIDES FOR Smooth and Comfortable Aging



When you're young, you have collagen galore. You can run, jump and bend with ease. But as you age you steadily lose it. And then you begin to have problems.

Starting at age 25, you lose 1% to 2% of your collagen each year. And at the same time your body's natural collagen production steadily declines.

By the time you're 55 or 60, your levels are significantly reduced, and you're making very little new collagen.

This shortfall sets the stage for the ailments we associate with aging—achy joints, weak bones and muscles, stiff arteries, and wrinkled and sagging skin.

Low levels of collagen can also cause leaky gut and digestive issues. That's because the lining of your intestines rely on collagen for structural integrity. The same is true for your arteries.

Why you need more collagen

Collagen is essential to your mobility, your muscle strength, and your joint comfort. It's also the key to smooth and flexible arteries. Youthful looking skin. Stronger hair and nails. And a healthy digestive system.

In fact, it makes up 75% of your skin. 80% of your ligaments. 90% of your tendons. 67% of your cartilage. And 30% of your bones.

Think of it as the glue that holds everything together. If you don't have enough, the whole system starts to break down.

Fortunately, there's an easy way to get the replacement collagen you need every day.

Introducing Primal Labs *Collagen Peptides*.

This high-collagen nutritional supplement is unflavored and mixes easily in water, tea, juice, soup and, of course, smoothies.

Each serving of **Collagen Peptides**...

- Provides 12.2 grams of high quality collagen from 3 sustainable sources, all non-GMO!
- Hydrolyzed for easy absorption and fast digestion
- Keto-friendly with no sugar and zero carbs
- Mixes clump-free in hot or cold beverages

Primal Labs **Collagen Peptides** is ideal for replacing the collagen you've lost. **And right now, you can try our superior product at 20% off with a 100% money back guarantee.**

Please try Primal Labs **Collagen Peptides** risk-free for 60 days and see for yourself just how great the benefits are!

You don't have to be unhappy with what you see in the mirror. Or hindered by aches and pains. We've got your solution to graceful aging, right here...



**Get 20% Off Today
Through This Special Link:
www.PrimalSpecials.com/Collagen**

Q&A

Q: I've been told that I've developed non-alcoholic fatty liver disease and I'm overweight. Can supplements that lower blood sugar help?

— Andrew S.

A: Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) is the most common type of liver disease. It occurs when fat accumulates in the liver.

Most often, it's caused by insulin resistance, when cells don't respond properly to insulin; the result is a rise in blood-sugar levels. Diabetes increases risks for fatty liver, and it's estimated that at least half of type 2 diabetics have developed the condition.

Theoretically, supplements that lower blood sugar could help. But to be realistic, the fatty liver won't improve unless you make pretty strict diet changes. These changes will also help you lose weight.

The most important step is to eliminate sugar and follow a low-carb diet (see the list of earlier issues on this topic on page 6). Sugar worsens a fatty liver. All types of sugar do this, including table sugar, cane sugar, beet sugar, honey, maple syrup, high fructose corn syrup, or any other form of sugar listed on food labels.

Agave is another type of sugar that should always be avoided. All sugars contain a combination of glucose and fructose, usually in equal or close-to-equal amounts. But agave is different because it contains 90 percent fructose, and this has an

even more detrimental effect on the liver than the other sugars.

Another thing to avoid is alcohol, which is a cause of fatty liver among heavy drinkers. Although alcoholic and non-alcoholic fatty liver diseases have different causes, they are exactly the same liver condition. I realize that alcohol is not the cause in your situation, but drinking any amount of alcohol will make it worse.

If you make these changes, the supplements you mention can enhance the results of your efforts. In addition, milk thistle protects liver cells, and choline helps to clear out fat from the liver. But by themselves, supplements can't cancel the effects of sugar and a high-carb diet. It would be like pouring gasoline on a fire and trying to put it out at the same time.

It's really important to make dietary changes and maintain a low-sugar, low-carb way of eating, because fatty liver can develop into more serious liver disease. And the sooner you make those changes, the more you can reverse any damage that has already occurred.

Q: When you get type 2 diabetes, do beta cells die or do they just not function properly? Can beta cells be brought back to life?

— Amy T.

A: Beta cells, which reside in the pancreas, make insulin. By the time type 2 diabetes is diagnosed, some of the beta cells — perhaps as many as half, by some estimates — have died. But this isn't an exact number, and it doesn't happen in the blink of an eye.

Here's a more realistic way

to look at the situation: It takes decades for type 2 diabetes to develop. And during that time, the function of beta cells gradually declines. At the point of a diabetes diagnosis, some may be dead while others are functioning to some degree but not fully. They're in a state of sleep, so to speak. And they can be revived by changing diet and lifestyle to stably lower levels of blood sugar — naturally.

If changes aren't made to revive beta cells, they will continue to decline. Eventually, they will be unable to make enough insulin, and that's when insulin shots become necessary.

Drugs don't revive beta cells. But diet and lifestyle changes can restore function to many of these cells, while also improving other internal processes. And this approach can eliminate or reduce the need for drugs. It requires consistently following a low-carb diet — something that is quite possible. Many of my patients and readers have succeeded.

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.