

# Dr. Marlene's NATURAL HEALTH CONNECTIONS

VOLUME 7 | ISSUE 01

A PUBLICATION OF PRIMAL HEALTH



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## My Low-Carb Diet — Fine-Tuned

**New tips and tricks to help you follow  
and enjoy a healthy low-carb diet for  
better health and enhanced well-being.**



In all the years since I developed my low-carb diet, many of my patients and readers have succeeded in losing weight, preventing or reversing type 2 diabetes, lowering blood pressure, and resolving a variety of other health problems. And as many more embark on a journey to upgrade their diet for better health, I'd like to answer some common questions and fine-tune some of my recommendations.

My diet has not changed over the years, but our food environment is constantly evolving and new challenges are emerging. Food manufacturers keep producing many more convenience foods, some good and others not so good.

I've also seen some recurring misconceptions and questions that I'll address in this issue. These include the subject of willpower. As I'm sure you know, America's waistlines have been expanding, with approximately three out of four Americans now being overweight or obese.<sup>1</sup>

Many people mistakenly view

their weight gain, or failed attempts to lose weight, solely as a problem of willpower — an inability to resist a donut when you're starving mid-morning, for example. However, lack of willpower is not usually the underlying issue.

I'll explain what's really at the root of this dilemma, and the realistic way to avoid or overcome it. Eating the right foods, at the right times, will put you on a healthy path.

In addition, there's simply the issue of hunger. Even if you eat the right foods, if you don't eat enough, you *will* get very hungry, and likely irritable, mentally foggy, or tired. I had one patient who ate only one hardboiled egg for breakfast and a small handful of almonds for lunch. Later in the day, she was ravenous and couldn't stop eating whatever was in her vicinity.

**IN THE NEXT ISSUE:**  
**How to Unblock  
Weight Loss**



This type of approach is counter-productive and unrealistic, not to mention unpleasant and unsustainable. And I don't recommend it.

Other pitfalls include skipping meals, not eating enough fat, eating too much protein, and not planning meals and snacks to keep blood sugar and energy stable.

## The Carb Problem

Carbs are not inherently bad foods. They are one of the three essential

macronutrients we need to survive; protein and fat are the others. But our food supply has become oversaturated with carbs: sugars and starches. Supermarket aisles are full of refined cereals, breads, and high-carb snacks. And take-out and delivery foods, more popular than ever today, add more excess carbs.

This comes after decades of misguided expert advice to eat low-fat foods, in which sugar and starch replaced fat to enhance taste and texture. And giant sodas, smoothies, and coffees with sweet syrups add insult to injury.

These developments are driving weight gain, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and other ills. The human body just can't handle that much starch and sugar.<sup>2</sup>

As I said, carbs are not inherently bad — we need *some*. But the overload is killing us.

## How Carbs Should Work

You may already be familiar with this but just in case, let's review the mechanism that leads to health problems. Basically, excess carbs turn an essential metabolic process into a health hazard.

This is how the process works in a healthy body: When we eat carbs, blood sugar goes up. Blood sugar is our basic fuel for energy. To move the sugar from the blood into muscles and other tissues, where it's needed to produce energy, our bodies produce insulin.

You could think of insulin as the delivery service, taking blood sugar to places where it's needed for energy production. Once the delivery is complete — within an hour or two of eating — both blood sugar and insulin levels return to normal.

The next time you consume carbs, which include starchy and sugary foods and drinks, the cycle repeats. Once the insulin has finished its job of delivering blood sugar to various tissues, levels drop back to normal.

In a healthy body, the increases in blood sugar after eating are not extreme, and blood sugar returns to a normal baseline. The pattern is somewhat like a gentle wave, without extreme ups and downs. It doesn't lead to sudden cravings between meals because the level of blood sugar is pretty stable.

## How Carb Overload Harms

The normal American diet, with years of carb overload, has led to a different pattern: Blood sugar skyrockets, extra insulin is produced to handle the overload, and then, blood sugar crashes too low, like a rollercoaster,

Symptoms can include feeling hungry, cranky, or drained a couple of hours after eating, and craving a "fix" from sugary, starchy foods.

As time goes on, the carb overload leads to chronically elevated insulin — to compensate for the repeated spikes in blood sugar. And this leads to new problems.

Elevated insulin promotes fat storage,<sup>3</sup> especially in the belly area, triggering chronic inflammation<sup>4</sup> that underlies every chronic disease.

As carb overload continues, even extra insulin can't keep up with all the extra blood sugar. And eventually, blood tests show elevated blood sugar — what's classified as prediabetes at first, and if it rises higher, type 2 diabetes.

This vicious cycle can be reversed by controlling carbs and eating healthy fats, protein, and a

Dr. Marlene's

### NATURAL HEALTH CONNECTIONS

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## Top Sources of Carb Overload

Meat, fish, and pure fats, such as butter or olive oil, contain no carbs. The overload of carbs in the American diet comes mainly from the categories of foods and drinks I've listed below.

### The Carb Counting Rule






Count and limit carbs *only* from the food categories in this list to:

- **No more than 30 grams per meal or snack**
- **No more than 60 grams per day**

Always count total carbohydrates listed in the Nutrition Facts on labels — not net carbs.

### Count These Carbs

I've included some examples of approximate carb content in each category, but individual products vary. Always check the serving size and total carbs on labels of foods and drinks you are considering buying or eating.

Food Category	Food or Drink	Serving Size	Grams of Total Carbs
<b>GRAINS</b> , including all foods made from them, such as cereals, pizza crust, breads, buns, cakes, cookies, pasta, rice, rice cakes, and nutrition bars made from grains. 	Burger or hot dog bun	1	15 to 30
	Pita bread, 7-inch	1	35
	Pasta	1 cup	30 to 40
	Bread, white or whole wheat	1 slice	12 to 20
	Bagel, medium	1	50
	Rice, white or brown	½ cup	22
	Tortilla, 7-inch	1	11
	Corn, cooked	½ cup	15
	Cereals	1 cup	25 to 55 or more
<b>SNACKS</b> , including all types of potato or other vegetable chips, corn chips, pretzels, popcorn, candy, or any other snack that contains grain or sugar. 	Popcorn	1 cup	6
	Popcorn, small movie theater bucket	11 cups	66
	Popcorn, large movie theater bucket	20 cups	120
	Potato chips	30	33
	Tortilla chips	10 to 15	20
	Jellybeans, small	10	10
	Jellybeans, large	10	26
<b>FRUIT</b> , including fresh, frozen, canned, and dried fruit. 	Berries	½ cup	7 to 9
	Banana, 6 inch	1	23
	Apple, small	1	21
	Grapes	1 cup	27
	Raisins, 1.5 ounces	1 small box	34
<b>STARCHY VEGETABLES AND LEGUMES</b> , including potatoes, sweet potatoes, yams, beans, peas, and corn (which is both a grain and a vegetable). 	Potato, medium, baked with skin	1	30
	Sweet potato, cubed	1 cup	27
	Fries, fast food	1 medium serving	48
	Fries, fast food	1 large serving	64
	Corn, medium ear	1	22
	Baked beans	½ cup	27
	Refried beans	½ cup	18
	Split peas	½ cup	20
	Canned garbanzo beans (chickpeas)	½ cup	20 or more
<b>DRINKS</b> , including those with natural sugar or any added sweeteners such as sugar, honey, agave, high fructose corn syrup, or others. 	Sodas, 12-ounce can (not diet versions)	1	35 or more
	Fruit juices	1 cup	26 or more
	Vegetable juices	1 cup	18 or more
	Milk (unflavored)	1 cup	12
	Some plant milks	See <i>Plant Milks</i> on page 5	

variety of plant foods. And results can occur quite quickly. Similar to what I've seen in my own practice, one study found significant improvement in four weeks.<sup>5</sup>

## The Diet Mistake

I'm sometimes asked for very specific prescriptions for meals and snacks, right down to how many grams of every type of food should be eaten in a meal or in a day. Many diets offer strict regimens that include such detailed instructions. These can work for a while, but they are difficult to maintain and typically don't lead to lasting changes in the way people eat.

This is understandable. Most of us can follow an unfamiliar, prescribed diet for a short while, even if we don't enjoy it. But eventually, we have to stop being preoccupied with every morsel we put on our plates and just enjoy our food.

Eating is a natural activity, one

that is essential for us to stay alive. Food is also a key part of all cultures. Meals are a form of entertainment and a reason that people get together, for special occasions or just to enjoy each other's company.

I realize that family dinners have become rare events for many people, given today's hectic lifestyles. But even if you eat alone, it should be a pleasant experience. Enjoying meals can help your body absorb more nutrients.<sup>6</sup>

## My Practical Solution

I sometimes refer to "my diet."

What I really mean is a way of eating that I recommend, because I've found it to work for people facing all types of challenges, including limited budgets, frantic schedules, different tastes in a household, individual food sensitivities, and limited cooking skills.

So, when I say, "my diet," please keep in mind that I'm referring to

a way of eating. One of the reasons that it works is that I have only a few basic rules, allowing you to customize your foods to your own personal tastes and lifestyle.

The rules are based on two key elements: One is the science of human physiology, in particular the mechanisms I described in the section above about how carbs work and how an overload harms.

The other element comes from my years of experience. By working with many patients, I was able to develop a practical way to put the science to use in realistic ways, to prevent health problems and enhance well-being. This way of eating will lead to weight loss, lower blood sugar and blood pressure, and improvement in many chronic health conditions.

Given most of the food that surrounds us, it's challenging to limit carbs to healthy levels. But it really can be done — without eliminating entire categories of foods.

## Controlling Food Carbs

The trick is to reduce carbs from the foods and drinks that contribute the most to carb overload, which I've listed in *Top Sources of Carb Overload* in the chart on page 3. I recommend counting and limiting carbs *only in the foods and drinks that are on that list*.

In a nutshell, these are all foods made from grains, all types of potatoes (including sweet potatoes and yams and potato chips), legumes (beans and peas), and corn (which is also a grain). These are all rich sources of starch, which acts just like sugar in your body.

Fruit, which contains natural sugar, and drinks with natural or added sugar are other categories

## 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.



in which carbs need to be counted and managed.

Popcorn deserves special mention. It's sometimes considered to be a healthy snack because by itself, it's low in calories, and a cup of popcorn contains about 6 grams of carbs. That doesn't sound like much, but few people eat only one cup. A small bucket of movie popcorn contains 11 cups: about 66 grams of carbs that drive up blood sugar. And if it's caramel corn, the added sugar drives blood sugar even higher.

This doesn't mean that you can't eat popcorn. You can — but not too much. If you can be satisfied with a small quantity, that's fine. However, if you find that once you start eating popcorn, you can't stop, I suggest finding an alternative snack, such as a tablespoon of nut butter or avocado on celery or with another crunchy vegetable, or on a low-carb cracker made with almond flour or cauliflower (often labeled as “keto crackers”).

Finding Tasty Alternatives

You can take the same approach with other foods on my list of carbs to count. If you can occasionally enjoy a small piece of cake or some other treat without the urge to eat a large amount, enjoy it. But if you can't stop eating it, find a low-carb alternative or skip it altogether.

Dessert, as an example, could be some berries with real whipped cream, which is high in fat but low in carbs. You'll notice that whipped cream is not on my *Count These Carbs* list in the chart on page 3.

Instead of potatoes or rice, try riced cauliflower with some butter, seasonings of your choice, or a little parmesan sprinkled on top. And you

can get “pasta” made from vegetables, such as spiralized zucchini.

As for vegetables that are not on that list, it's true that some contain more carbs than others, but you don't need to count carbs in these. I haven't seen people develop blood sugar issues or gain weight from eating too many leafy greens and vegetables of every other color in the rainbow.

Controlling Carbs in Drinks

Excess carbs in drinks come from sugar, which may be added or naturally present — in milk and fruit juice, for example. Theoretically, if you can enjoy a small amount, go ahead and count the carbs toward

your daily carb total. But I haven't found this to be realistic.

I suggest aiming for no more than 15 grams of the carbs on my list per meal or snack. Given that a 12-ounce can of regular soda can contain 35 or more grams of carbs, you would need to drink less than half the can to stay below 15 grams. And that's assuming that you aren't eating anything else in which carbs need to be counted.

This isn't a practical approach. Instead, try soda, tea, or coffee sweetened with stevia, monk fruit, or xylitol. For cold, bubbly drinks, try plain carbonated mineral water, or add some fresh lemon juice or flavored liquid stevia.

### Carbs in Plant Milks


For many people who can't digest milk, plant milk is a good alternative. In the past, I have not included plant milk on my list for counting carbs, although I've recommended unsweetened versions, which have lower carb content. But plant milks are now being made from more food sources and carb content can be high in some unsweetened versions.

Below are some different sources of popular plant milks and approximate carb content. Products vary, so always check serving size and total carbs in the Nutrition Facts on the product label.

Food Source	Type of Plant Milk	Unsweetened, Carbs (grams) per cup	Sweetened, Carbs (grams) per cup
Legumes	Soy	4	20 or more
Nuts	Almond	3	8 or more
Seeds	Hemp	0	20 or more
Fruit	Coconut	6 to 13	25 or more
Grain	Oat	9 to 22	31 or more
Blends	Combination	Check total carbs in Nutrition Facts, as content varies.	

**How Much Is Too Much?**

Count the carbs in your daily total when your serving of plant milk is at or close to 15 grams. Exceeding this amount at one time makes it difficult to keep your daily total of the carbs on my list (on page 3) at or below 60 grams.



The natural sugar in milk and fruit juice works the same way as added sugar in your body. That’s why the carbs in these need to be counted and limited. Plant milks are more complicated to assess; see *Carbs in Plant Milks* on page 5.

Protein Myths and Facts

Low-carb diets are often equated with large amounts of protein. I do not recommend eating large steaks or giant servings of other types of protein. Excessively large amounts of protein can trigger an insulin response like carbs do, which is counterproductive.

On the other hand, you do need enough protein. The recommended amount for adults is approximately 0.36 grams of protein per pound of body weight. For example, for someone weighing 180 pounds, that would be about 65 grams of protein daily. However, we don’t absorb protein as well as we get older. As a result, older adults may need about 0.5 grams of protein per pound of body weight — 90 grams for a 180-pound person — or more.<sup>7</sup> Extra protein is also needed when recovering from injury, illness, or surgery, and by athletes.

Spread out your day’s protein into several meals, with not more than 30 grams at one time. This prevents an insulin response.

By the way, protein doesn’t harm kidneys for healthy people. But when someone already has kidney disease, they should follow their doctor’s advice about protein.

Timing Your Food

If you need to lose weight or lower blood sugar or blood pressure, or if you crave starchy or sugary foods between meals, it’s a sign

that your blood sugar and insulin are not stable. To correct this, you need to eat about every three hours or before you get hungry. Doing this will stabilize blood sugar and energy and enable you to have better control over your appetite.

At each meal and snack, track the carbs on my list on page 3. My daily recommended carb total (from the list of carbs to count) is no more than 60 grams. This is generally easier to achieve if single meals or snacks are within a 15-gram limit, although you could go as high as 30 grams at one sitting. This way, you can spread out those carbs and more easily stay within 60 grams for the day.

Skipping meals is counterproductive, as it allows blood sugar and energy to drop and makes it more difficult to control what you eat for the rest of the day. Consistency is key. Once your blood sugar is stable, you won’t need to eat as often.

Willpower: The Real Story

Willpower is your ability to control what you do or don’t do. It includes making decisions about

what you eat and drink and the countless other things you control in the course of the day, from what you do at work, with family and friends, and in whatever time you might have for yourself.

Most of these things are just everyday life. You decide whether to wash the dishes or put them in the dishwasher, rather than leaving them on the kitchen counter or in the sink; to complete various work tasks instead of putting them off; to go for a walk instead of spending more time in front of the TV or computer.

If you don’t have a practical eating plan, you have to exert more willpower to try and steer clear of a mid-morning donut or mid-afternoon high-carb snack to satisfy a craving, for example. If you try to do that throughout the day, along with all the other things you need to control, the attempt to eat a healthy diet becomes a tough battle.

Instead, plan what you’ll be eating every three hours. Then, it isn’t that difficult to follow through and you won’t have cravings.

Fat is the key

### 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
Diabetes and Carbs	3	6	The Diabetic’s Guide to Eating Carbs
Diabetes and Meat	3	2	The Diabetic’s Guide to Eating Meat
Multivitamins	2	8	Do You Really Need a Multivitamin?
Sleep	5	4	Restful Sleep: How to Get Enough
Stress	4	6	How to Conquer Hidden Stress (page 8)

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

to satisfying snacks; every snack should contain a little fat. For example, if you have a small packet of nut butter — about two tablespoons — you can just open it, have the nut butter, and get on with your day. No fuss, no muss.

That snack could also be a small handful of nuts; some ranch dressing or hummus and a few baby carrots; or a few slices of apple and some cheese. These are satisfying, the choices are yours, and the options are limited only by your imagination.

Planning your meals for the week will also make it easy to follow through with a low-carb way of eating. Pick a protein, such as meat or fish; a sauce or seasoning you like; a variety of vegetables that aren't starchy; and add some extra virgin olive oil or butter and seasoning.

It will take a bit of effort to figure out what to eat at first, but then it will become second nature.

## 4 Basic Rules

1. Count carbs in the foods and drinks listed on page 3. Websites such as [www.myfitnesspal.com](http://www.myfitnesspal.com) and [www.carbmanager.com](http://www.carbmanager.com), or apps from these, can simplify the process.
2. From foods and drinks on that list, eat no more than 60 grams of carbs per day, and not more than 30 grams in one meal or snack. However, a 15-gram limit for each eating occasion often makes it easier to stay within 60 grams for the day.
3. Eat every 3 hours or before you get hungry.
4. Eat some fat with every meal and snack.

## The 60-Gram Daily Carb Total

When most people think of controlling and reducing carbs, they assume it means counting *all* carbs, including those in every morsel of food you eat and everything you drink. This is not what I recommend. The *only* carbs you need to count are those in the foods and drinks on the list on page 3.

In other words, if a food or drink isn't on that list, you don't need to count any carbs in it. These are some questions I've been asked:

- Count carbs in carrots? No.
- Count carbs in eggs? No.
- Count carbs in cheese? No.
- Count carbs in nuts? No, although eating too many can be problematic — see the section on calories below.
- Count carbs in hot or cold black coffee, black tea, green tea, or herbal tea? No, but if you add sugar or honey, rather than stevia or another sugar-free sweetener, then count the carbs in the sugar or honey.
- Count carbs in nut butter? Not if it's just nut butter. But if it contains a sweetener, then do count the carbs.

You don't count carbs in the examples above, and in other foods not on my carb list, because they don't contain significant carbs.

## Do Calories Ever Count?

I don't generally recommend counting calories, but occasionally, eating too many calories can be a stumbling block for weight loss. For example, one of the snacks I suggest is a small handful of nuts,

which are high in calories. Some people are satisfied with a small handful. But for others, once they start eating nuts, they can't stop. And the nuts become too much of a good thing.

I've mentioned that whipped cream on berries can be a good dessert. But for anyone who can't stop eating whipped cream once they start, this could be a problem. They could be eating a low-carb diet with a huge amount of whipped cream — often. Doing this will prevent weight loss.

Consistently eating too much — getting “stuffed” — can also stop weight loss or even lead to weight gain. And it can cause digestive discomfort and problems.

## A Final Word

If you're new to my style of eating, I suggest checking out some of the earlier issues I've listed in the chart on page 6. If you're familiar with my diet, I hope this article helps to clarify some points and give you more tools to work with.

Consistently eating a healthy low-carb diet can quickly improve health and well-being, with more benefits in the longer term.

1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “Obesity and Overweight.” <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/obesity-overweight.htm>

2 Ludwig, D., et al. “The Carbohydrate-Insulin Model of Obesity: Beyond “Calories In, Calories Out.” *JAMA Intern Med.* 2018 Aug 1;178(8):1098-1103.

3 Kolb, H., et al. “Insulin translates unfavourable lifestyle into obesity.” *BMC Med.* 2018 Dec 13;16(1):232.

4 Bawadi, H., et al. “Abdominal Fat Is Directly Associated With Inflammation In Persons With Type-2 Diabetes Regardless Of Glycemic Control - A Jordanian Study.” *Diabetes Metab Syndr Obes.* 2019 Nov 22;12:2411-2417.

5 Foley, P.J. “Effect of low carbohydrate diets on insulin resistance and the metabolic syndrome.” *Curr Opin Endocrinol Diabetes Obes.* 2021 Oct 1;28(5):463-468.

6 Soolman, J. “Meal Enjoyment and Nutrient Absorption.” <https://soolmannutrition.com/2013/10/meal-enjoyment-and-nutrient-absorption/>

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

# The Secret to Successful Aging



We know that diet, exercise, sleep, and stress management are all parts of a healthy lifestyle that can improve and extend life. But a recent study found that another aspect also plays a big role: a positive or negative perspective on how well you're aging.

The study was done at the New Jersey Institute for Successful Aging at Rowan University in Stratford, New Jersey. It tracked more than 5,400 New Jersey residents who were between the ages of 50 and 74 at the outset.<sup>1</sup>

Researchers compiled data on various factors that are known to influence lifespan, including participants' health conditions, lifestyle, educational levels, and financial circumstances. When the study began in 2006, they interviewed each individual, asking them to self-rate their life satisfaction and aging experience on a scale of 0 (the worst) to 10 (the best).

During the next 15 years, researchers kept track of everyone in the study and repeated the interviews periodically to get self-ratings up to five more times. They then correlated participants' responses

## What You Can Do

Studies have shown that these are some ways to enhance your own satisfaction with life and foster a more positive outlook:

- Staying in touch with family and friends, by phone, video calls, and in person.
- Spending time in nature.
- Performing acts of kindness for others.
- Volunteering to do charitable work.
- Spiritual practices or meditation, especially in a group.
- Engaging in hobbies, such as crafts, gardening, or belonging to a book club.
- Doing creative activities, such as writing poetry or stories, drawing, painting, or expressing yourself in a journal.
- Being part of a theatrical group or choir.
- Playing a musical instrument.
- Dancing.
- Watching sports if you're a fan.
- Spending less time watching, reading, or listening to news.
- Taking a break from social media.

with how long they lived.

The results were surprising. High self-ratings correlated with a longer life, regardless of the presence or absence of physical problems, levels of education, or financial status.

## Study Details

Among people with similar health conditions, those who consistently rated their own aging experience and life satisfaction high — at or near 10 — lived an average of nine more years than those whose ratings were consistently low — closer to 0.

For example, if two people were in peak physical condition, one whose self-ratings were consistently around 10 lived about 9 more years than another whose ratings were consistently low, such as around 3. The same held true among people who were confined to wheelchairs: Those who were satisfied with their lives and consistently felt they were aging very well (with self-ratings around 10) also lived an extra nine years.

## Avoid Winter Woes

As we went to press in mid-December, hospitalizations for the flu, COVID, and RSV were skyrocketing. I highly recommend that you take precautions. Wash your hands thoroughly and often. Use hand sanitizer when you get back into your car after shopping. If you're traveling, wear a properly fitted mask in crowded situations. And in any indoor space where people congregate, be mindful of ventilation and wear a mask if you can't feel air movement.

These precautions are especially important if rates of hospitalization rise in your area. You can check this CDC page for local information: [https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#maps\\_positivity-week](https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#maps_positivity-week). And if you have symptoms, stay home, away from other people.

Other ways to protect yourself include using a saline nasal spray to keep your nose moist and taking echinacea or other supplements daily. I cover these and other natural remedies to help you recover from viral illnesses in Volume 6, Issue 11, of this newsletter: *New Winter Pitfalls: How to Avoid Them*.

<sup>1</sup> Pruchno, R., et al. "Subjective Successful Aging Predicts Probability of Mortality Over 9 Years Among Adults Aged 50-74." *Gerontologist*. 2023 Oct 26:gnad148.

# Fall Asleep Faster and Stay Asleep Longer!



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**SleepRefined®** takes the proven better-sleep supplement melatonin to a whole new level of effectiveness.

Melatonin has been clinically shown to reduce the time it takes to fall asleep... improve sleep quality... reset your nighttime sleep cycle... and improve next-day alertness.

But typical melatonin clears out of your body quickly, so it may not work all night long.

Yet **SleepRefined®** provides two layers of melatonin to mimic "all night" melatonin production. The first 2.5 mg is released when you go to bed to activate your natural sleep cycle. Then, throughout the night, the remaining 1.5 mg is gradually released to help you sleep longer and deeper.

That's not all. **SleepRefined®** includes...

- **Suntheanine**, a proprietary form of the amino acid L-Theanine, found in green tea. Its "quick release" dose helps calm your mind and prepares it for sleep.
- **Venetron**, a plant prized in Chinese medicine for calming the mind and soothing anxious nerves. It is also clinically shown to improve sleep quality in the middle of the night and later in the sleep cycle.

With **SleepRefined®**, you'll fall asleep faster... stay asleep longer... and wake up refreshed and energized, with no groggy feelings. Safe, natural, non-habit forming.

*"With **SleepRefined®**, I sleep better and do not have that sleepy feeling in the morning." — Barbara*

*"**SleepRefined®** works better than any sleep aids I've used!" — Bets*

Fall asleep faster and stay asleep longer when you get your bottle of Primal Labs' **SleepRefined®**!

**Order Your Bottle Today!**  
**GetSleepRefined.com/NHC6**

**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

# Ashwagandha Relieves Stress



Having recommended ashwagandha as an herbal remedy to manage stress for many years, I was glad to see a new review of research that adds to the evidence of its effectiveness. Stress isn't only a subjective state. Internally, it leads to elevated levels of cortisol, the fight-or-flight hormone.

The recent review analyzed results from nine human studies, each lasting between 30 and 112 days. Altogether, there were 673 participants. The review showed that taking ashwagandha supplements effectively reduced stress, lowering

levels of cortisol by as much as 32 percent. There were no significant adverse effects.<sup>1</sup>

In herbal medicine, ashwagandha is classified as an adaptogen. This means it balances your system, having a calming or revitalizing effect, depending on what's needed at a given time.

## How to Benefit

Strength and efficacy of different ashwagandha products varies. To get the full benefits, I recommend looking for a patented form, meaning a specific formulation of

the herb that has been tested in human studies for effectiveness and optimum dosages of that specific supplement.

Patented forms and tested dosages of ashwagandha include KSM-66 (300 mg, twice daily) and Sensoril (500 mg, twice daily).

The names of patented forms may be listed by name on the front of a product or only in the Supplements Facts section of the label. The herb works best with adequate sleep, some exercise, and a nutritious diet.

# Good Health and Financial Scams

Here's yet another reason to take charge of your health and do what you can to stay in the best possible shape: Older adults who are in good health are less likely to become victims of financial scams, according to a recent poll by the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.<sup>2</sup>

On the flip side, older adults who are in poor health are more than twice as likely to fall prey to mail, email, phone, or text scams that lead to compromised credit cards, hacked bank accounts, lost money, or identity theft.

Unfortunately, older adults are a prime target for fraudulent schemes. The new poll surveyed more than 2,600 Americans between the ages of 50 and 80. It found that 75 percent had experienced an attempt to defraud them.

This percentage is likely higher in real life, because many people don't realize that they have been on the receiving end of an attempted scam. In addition to scam phone calls and mailings, unsolicited emails or texts with dramatic, deceptive subject lines and malicious links are, unfortunately, all too common.

For example, they can claim that your bank account will be closed if you don't click on a link and confirm

your information. And the link goes to a malicious website that tricks you into revealing personal information. An email that looks like it's from your computer manufacturer can falsely claim that you must "click here" to avert or correct damage to your system. And there are various insurance scams.

The poll also found that 30 percent of those being surveyed had actually been defrauded at least once in the previous two years. Among those who were scammed, 25 percent had a bank, credit card, or other type of account compromised, 15 percent had an account hacked, 9 percent lost money, and 3 percent had their identity stolen.

Taking steps to stay in good health will keep you more alert. And if you aren't sure if a solicitation is genuine, it's best to get the advice of someone you trust.

For tips to protect yourself, here's a helpful article from Bankrate.com (ignore the ads): <https://www.bankrate.com/retirement/costly-scams-that-target-seniors/>. The National Council on Aging is another source of helpful information about the types of scams targeting older adults, and how to avoid them, at <https://www.ncoa.org/older-adults/money/management/avoiding-scams>.

1 Della Porta, M., et al. "Effects of *Withania somnifera* on Cortisol Levels in Stressed Human Subjects: A Systematic Review." *Nutrients* 2023 Dec 5;15(24):5015. 2 Kullgren, J., et al. "Experiences with Scams Among Older Adults." University of Michigan National Poll on Healthy Aging. November 2023.

# HOW TO STOP NERVE DISCOMFORT and Get Normal Feeling in Your Hands and Feet Again



*Are you annoyed by occasional nerve discomfort? That's putting it mildly. It's probably driving you crazy – making simple tasks difficult and preventing you from enjoying life.*

*Well, here's good news, even if you've tried everything and are ready to give up...*

**The only way to silence nerve discomfort is to actually nourish and repair your nerve network.** How? By giving your nerves the exact nutrients they need to thrive.

If you're a gardener, you're no doubt familiar with a product called *Miracle-Gro®*. It provides the precise nutrients that plants need to thrive. And to gardeners who see their plants come alive and stay healthy, it does seem like a miracle.

It's the same for your nerves. If you're suffering occasional nerve discomfort, you need specific nutrients that can bring your network back to good health. Restore that normal feeling. And make life enjoyable again.

How? That's easy. Use Primal Labs' **Advanced Nerve Support**.

**Advanced Nerve Support** contains a special form of vitamin B1 called Benfotiamine. Studies show **Benfotiamine helped patients feel greater "touch" sensory perception, and a lower level of nerve discomfort.**

**Advanced Nerve Support** also contains vitamins B6 and B12. **Vitamin B6** ensures the messengers along your nerve network – your neurotransmitters – can communicate properly. Here's how...

**Vitamin B6** helps soothe tender nerves by helping them maintain healthy coverings. You see, your nerves are covered by a special material called the myelin sheath. It's like the insulation on electrical wires. If this insulation gets frayed or broken, the signals to the brain will be garbled.

That's when normal sensation is compromised and the feeling can be off, or even the opposite of what it should be. The result is discomfort.

**Vitamin B12** aids in the normal repair of the myelin sheath. And it also nourishes the precious nerve fibers inside the sheath. Studies show B12 increases nerve regeneration, while reducing ectopic nerve firings – those acute, random sensations that seem to have no source.

When you combine B-12 with Benfotiamine and vitamin B6, *it's like Miracle-Gro® for your nerves*, helping to bring about rejuvenation and soothing relief. **Advanced Nerve Support** also contains **Acetyl-L-carnitine and Alpha Lipoic Acid** – two more nutrients that nerves need for healthy function.

Studies show that Acetyl-L-Carnitine "promotes a healthy nervous system and normal nerve response." And Alpha Lipoic Acid, taken daily, may significantly reduce nerve discomfort in as little as 3 weeks.

As you can see, **Advanced Nerve Support** has everything you need to soothe your nerves and restore normal feeling.

**Advanced Nerve Support** contains no egg, milk, peanuts, tree nuts, shellfish, fish, soy, wheat, gluten, sugar or preservatives.

Ready for relief? Good, because right now you can get 15% off any size order of **Advanced Nerve Support**. Simply visit the URL below to lock in your special savings.

Don't wait. Order now.  
Your nerves will be glad you did!



**Visit [PrimalSpecials.com/Nerve](https://PrimalSpecials.com/Nerve)  
to Save 15% on your order**

# Q&A

**Q: You often recommend peanut butter as a snack, but doesn't it contain aflatoxins? I've read that these toxins can make you nauseous or really sick and can harm the liver. Should I worry? — Doris B.**

**A:** If you are buying peanut butter in a jar or single-serve packet in the United States, there's no need to worry about aflatoxins. To the best of my knowledge, there has never been an outbreak of illness caused by aflatoxins in this country. But there have been outbreaks in developing countries.

Aflatoxins are produced by a mold that grows not only on peanuts but also on tree nuts, seeds, corn, and legumes. The toxins on peanuts are a problem in some parts of Africa and Asia, notably when they are grown in backyards or on small farms where there are no regulations for safe food production and no tests of crops.

The situation in this country is completely different. The production of all crops, including peanuts, must adhere to specific regulations to reduce the risk of toxins, including those that occur in nature, such as aflatoxins. And foods must be tested to ensure that they meet stringent requirements.

Our peanuts are tested for aflatoxins by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. And peanut butters



are tested by the FDA

Even so, it's impossible to remove all aflatoxins from foods. But due to our regulations, the amount of these toxins — in peanut butter and other foods — is so miniscule that it is not harmful.

Something else to be aware of is that food manufacturers usually add other fat to peanut butter as a stabilizer. This prevents the oil in peanuts from separating and floating on top. The separated oil would look unappealing to most consumers and would mean that you have to stir the contents of a jar to get the texture we expect.

The added fats are most often hydrogenated soy, cottonseed, or rapeseed oils, which are inflammatory. If fat is added to peanut butter, a product with palm oil is a better choice (Justin's is one example).

Ideally, peanut butter would contain only peanuts, and perhaps a touch of salt. Some peanut butters are made this way. You just have to look harder to find them — and stir.

**Q: I feel good and at a recent health check, my test results were good except for blood pressure, which was suddenly high. I was really surprised because it's never been high before. Why could this be? — Marvin M.**

**A:** The first thing I wonder is whether your blood pressure was high only in the clinic where you received your health check. If so, it could be “white coat” hypertension, due to stress in that setting. Or maybe it wasn't taken correctly — mistakes sometimes happen.

I suggest getting your own blood pressure monitor. Following the

instructions, check your blood pressure every morning for several days and record your readings. If they are not high, show your numbers to your doctor and get your pressure rechecked in the clinic.

If your blood pressure really is suddenly high, it's a sign that something has changed. For example, did something happen in your life that triggered stress, such as losing or starting a job, moving into a new environment, losing a loved one, getting married or divorced, or something else?

Some other things that can trigger high blood pressure include an injury or illness with some residual symptoms, even if they seem minor. An infection — in a tooth, for example — can make blood pressure rise and would not be detected by routine medical tests. Changes in diet or exercise habits could also be contributing factors.

I cover these elements in more detail in Volume 6, Issue 5, of this newsletter: *Blood Pressure Control: What Matters Most*.

## Do you have a question for Dr. Marlene?

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