

Dr. Marlene's NATURAL HEALTH CONNECTIONS

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How to Unblock Weight Loss

Have you done your best to follow a low-carb diet but still couldn't lose weight? These are the top reasons why, and the remedies.



I'm not the only one who has seen many people lose weight by eating a nutritious, low-carb diet. Studies — which I described last month and in earlier issues of this newsletter — have proven the case. But what if this approach doesn't work for you?

Many people start following the low-carb way of eating that I recommend and immediately see results. If they step on a bathroom scale, they see the number start to drop within the first few days. And they feel better.

By the way, this nearly instant loss of pounds is a loss of excess fluid. Some people will say, "Oh, that's only water weight, not real weight loss." But the idea that this is not therapeutic is incorrect.

Fluid retention is caused by elevated insulin that is triggered by eating excess carbs. And fluid retention is not good for the heart, blood vessels, liver, or overall health. So, this initial loss of water weight is definitely therapeutic.

The process of losing fat is not as quick, but it will definitely occur if you continue on a low-carb path. The number on the scale will keep dropping more gradually as fat is lost — but it will drop. But sometimes, things don't progress as well.

Now, it could be that extra carbs have snuck into your diet. I described some of the pitfalls and ways to avoid them in last month's newsletter and will cover a few more in a moment. But it could also be that you're truly doing your best to follow the low-carb approach I recommend and you still aren't losing weight.

This has happened with some of my patients. The reasons vary from one individual to another, but over the years, I've been able to identify the most common ones and the remedies.

Below, I describe the most likely blocks first. So, if you're looking for

**IN THE NEXT ISSUE:
Lasting Relief for
Achy Joints**

what could be stopping or slowing your progress, start at the top and work your way down.

The Stress Block

You probably know that stress can cause or contribute to health problems, but its relationship to weight gain, or to difficulty with weight loss, is not well understood. And it's often an underlying — but overlooked — trigger.

In our bodies, the stress response

is a survival mechanism. When faced with danger, our levels of cortisol, the fight-or-flight hormone, rise. This is designed to put us on alert and focus our internal resources on overcoming an immediate threat to survival.

The mechanism works well if an oncoming car cuts in front of you and you have to slam on the brakes to avoid an accident. Once that's over, cortisol levels go down — at least they should, in a healthy person.

Where this protective response becomes harmful is with chronic stress. Let's say you spend a stressful hour driving to work each day in stop-and-go traffic. Although this isn't a sudden, life-threatening situation, your cortisol level rises.

Once you get to work, other situations are a bit stressful, and then there's another long drive home in heavy traffic. There's no period of recovery from the stress, and cortisol stays elevated.

How Cortisol Drives Weight Gain

In your body, excess cortisol can cause or contribute to weight gain, and it can prevent weight loss. Studies show that chronically elevated cortisol leads to obesity.¹

When cortisol rises, so do blood sugar and insulin. And insulin promotes fat storage, especially storage of fat in the belly area, which is inflammatory. When this is happening, belly fat is unlikely to budge, no matter what diet a person follows — until the stress is reduced and chronic cortisol levels drop.

Chronic stress also disrupts hunger and satiety hormones and feel-good chemicals in the brain. This can lead to overeating of sugary and

starchy foods.² “Stress eating” is one way people describe this, and it's quite a common phenomenon.

As if that weren't enough, stress can also slow down metabolism.³ This means that stress can reduce the number of calories you burn, whether you exercise or not. The difference is slight, but when it continues longer term, it's another way in which stress contributes to excess weight.

Stress can also make you feel tired, making exercise less appealing. All in all, I've found that we seriously underestimate the effects of stress on weight gain.

The Need to Reduce Stress

Whatever the source of chronic stress, it must be addressed. Otherwise, it will continue to block your progress. I've seen this countless times with my patients, and they've been amazed by the results when the stress has been relieved.

The first step is to recognize the stress and to identify the trigger or triggers. Then, you can manage it more effectively.

Work is one area of stress that many of my patients have had to deal with, sometimes by changing jobs or schedules or other aspects of their work lives. Financial situations, personal relationships, and moving to a new location are some other potentially stress-inducing circumstances.

That said, chronic stress ultimately stems from the way we react to situations. Some people thrive in what others might see as a terribly stressful situation. A high-paced job may be exhilarating to one person while making another feel overwhelmed, highly stressed, and miserable. In any case, the *Stress*

Dr. Marlene's

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Reduction Tips on this page can help you start to de-stress.

If you've been reading this newsletter for a while, you might remember me discussing ashwagandha as an herb that can reduce the effects of stress. It can definitely be helpful but — and this is a big but — it isn't a substitute for developing better ways to deal with situations in your life that are causing chronic stress.

For example, if you're stressed because your boss or a client expects you to answer emails at all hours, long after your workday ends, ashwagandha is not a sub-

stitute for discussing the situation with the boss or client and working out a better way to deal with it.

The Exercise Block

I've found that some people can lose weight without adding more physical activity into their lives, while others can't. Of course, it depends on how active an individual is in the first place. If you already exercise regularly, that may be enough. If you don't, it's essential to move more. But there are some misconceptions about exercise and weight that I want to dispel.

I do recommend exercise for

losing weight and keeping it off, but not for the reason you may think. There's a notion that exercise will lead to weight loss because it will burn more calories. While this does happen, the number of extra calories burned is usually not that great and it isn't the reason I recommend exercise.

Huffing and puffing for 30 or 60 minutes on a treadmill or elliptical machine, or doing some other intense activity, is not realistic for most people. And for those who do it, the number of extra calories they burn may easily be replaced by eating a donut.

Surprised? Most people are. It doesn't seem fair that it takes so much effort to burn off something you can eat in a few minutes — or even less. Maybe that's why there's a saying that you can't outrun your fork.

In addition, it isn't uncommon for people who start an exercise program to mistakenly think that it's a license to eat more. Depending on how hard you exercise, it's possible that you do need a bit more food. But even then, it wouldn't mean you need more carbs, unless you're an athlete or you're training hard for a marathon.

Why Exercise Is Necessary

The human body is designed to move. Historically, we had to move quite a bit to survive: hunting wild animals for dinner, building shelters, finding edible plants and sources of water, and such. And physiologically, we haven't changed.

Meanwhile, our environment has removed most reasons to move. Order food and go to the door when it arrives, ready to eat, or pop a package in the microwave. Be endlessly

Stress Reduction Tips

These are some practical ways to relieve stress:

- ▶ Breathe in for 5 seconds and breathe out for 5 seconds. Repeat this a few times until you feel calmer.



- ▶ Take a break for 10 minutes. One study found that this is as effective as getting a light massage, such as a shoulder or neck rub.⁴



- ▶ Try tai chi, at an in-person class or online. Research shows that it reduces levels of cortisol as well as feelings of stress, anxiety, depression, and other mood disorders.⁵
- ▶ Yoga also works for some people. Studies show that it can reduce cortisol and feelings of stress. There are different types of yoga, so you will need to experiment to see if a particular type works for you.⁶



Identify Hidden Stress Triggers

If you aren't sure what might be triggering your stress, monitoring your heart rate variability — HRV for short — can help. HRV is not the same as heart rate, which you can measure with a finger on your pulse.

HRV is the time between each heart-beat, which naturally varies, and it is a good indicator of stress levels. You can't measure it with your finger on

your pulse. Smart watches, fitness trackers, and other devices can measure HRV and accompanying apps can guide you to use the measurement to better manage stress.

I described helpful devices for stress detection and management in more detail in an earlier issue of this newsletter, listed in *Related to This Topic* on page 5.

entertained in front of a TV, not even needing to get up to change channels, as people once did. And, of course, we typically drive cars instead of walking when we go out.

I'm sure you know this, but it bears mention because it's easy to forget that in our current world, the need to move is continually being reduced, with more and more gadgets to make life more convenient. There are robot vacuums and digital devices to turn lights and appliances on and off while you sit on the couch or to change TV channels without even picking up a remote.

You may not be using all the latest gadgets, but there's no doubt that being sedentary is a major health problem today. Meanwhile, our bodies are still designed to move.

Walking, being active around your house and garden, and any type of work or recreation where

you aren't sitting — all these are good for you.

Physical movement improves circulation and heart function, helps to remove toxins, enhances mood and mental function, and helps to keep blood sugar and insulin functioning properly.

When you move more, both cortisol and insulin drop. Lower levels of these two hormones enable glucose to be more efficiently absorbed by tissues, resulting in lower levels of glucose circulating in the blood. This helps to reduce the odds of type 2 diabetes or reverse it. In a nutshell, studies show that exercise enhances health in many ways and may help with losing weight and maintaining a lower weight.⁷

Walking is good, but I recommend making it more effective by varying intensity. For example, walk as fast as you can for a minute or a city block, then walk at a

leisurely pace for the next block or for a couple of minutes; keep repeating this cycle for about 20 minutes. Or, walk in a hilly area for more of a challenge. And do some resistance exercises, with weights or using your own body weight for resistance.

The Sleep Block

Insufficient sleep is another block to weight loss that is often overlooked. However, studies show that people who don't get enough sleep are more likely to overeat, especially high-carb snacks, and they are more likely to be overweight and have difficulty losing weight.⁸

Lack of sleep disrupts blood sugar, insulin, and other hormones that influence appetite. Another obvious downside is being tired, so you are less likely to be physically active.

Adults generally need between 7 and 9 hours of sleep per night. Most importantly, get the amount that you need.

If you allow enough time but can't get restful sleep, some things that can help include:

- Getting outdoors in the morning
- Letting daylight in through the windows during the day
- Blocking light in your bedroom with window shades at night
- Using a weighted blanket
- Giving yourself time to wind down before bedtime
- Taking a warm evening bath
- Reading a book before bed instead of using a computer or phone

If you have or suspect sleep apnea, get it checked and treated. I cover sleep remedies in more detail

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 an earlier newsletter issue, listed in *Related to This Topic* below.

Personal Deal Breakers

Some of my patients have habits that make it impossible to lose weight. Such habits will sabotage all their other efforts — that’s why I call them deal breakers. Not everyone has a personal deal breaker, but when one exists, it’s essential to address it.

One example is eating sugary foods. My low-carb recommendations (described in last month’s newsletter) limit them, rather than insisting that they be eliminated. But this doesn’t work for some people. Once they start eating cake, for example, they can’t stop. In such a case, I recommend abstaining from cake, at least for a while.

As you follow my eating approach and lose weight, your blood sugar, insulin, and other hormones that influence appetite will function in a healthier way, and it will become easier to control your appetite. And you *may* be able to include a small piece of cake now and then without going overboard.

Another example is alcohol. Without any mixers, distilled spirits contain no carbs, but cocktails can contain a lot. Wine contains only 4 grams of carbs in a 5-ounce glass but if you drink a few glasses, the carbs add up, and wine coolers can contain more than 30 grams of carbs in a can. Beer, with or without alcohol, can range from 0 carbs to 25 carbs per can.

As with other foods, my eating plan doesn’t eliminate alcoholic drinks, but the carbs in them do need to be counted and limited. However, some people can’t stop once they start, and the carb

overload becomes a block to their weight loss.

As in the cake example above, the only remedy in some cases is to abstain from all alcoholic drinks. After you’ve been eating a low-carb diet and losing weight for a while, you *may* be able to reintroduce them in smaller amounts that don’t derail your eating plan and weight loss.

If you have a personal deal breaker, it’s essential to recognize it and deal with it. Then, your weight loss can be unblocked.

Chronic Inflammation

If you’ve addressed the blocks I described above and continue to have trouble losing weight, chronic inflammation is the next one to consider. Two common triggers are untreated infections and sensitivity to gluten or other foods.

The most common infections are in the teeth and gums, urinary tract, or sinuses. One marker of chronic inflammation is a blood test for C-reactive protein: CRP for short.

A reading of 5 or higher indicates that an untreated infection is likely and needs to be addressed.

Sensitivity to gluten can be another inflammation trigger. If you suspect it may be a problem, eliminate it for a few weeks and see if you feel better and are able to lose weight. If so, stay off gluten.

As with my cake example, some people are able to reintroduce small amounts of gluten down the road, once their system is in good shape. But this isn’t always the case.

Dairy, soy, or eggs are other common foods that can be problematic. Less often, some other food can cause issues. If in doubt, eliminate that food for a few weeks and see what happens. If it’s a trigger, you’ll be able to tell.


One word of warning: If you aim to eliminate a food but eat it once or twice a week, it will derail the whole process. If you can’t tolerate a food, it takes your system a while to calm down. If you eat a little of the

Related to This Topic

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

Related Topic	Volume	Issue	Title
A Healthy Low-Carb Diet	7	1	My Low-Carb Diet — Fine Tuned
Stress	4	6	How to Conquer Hidden Stress (page 8)
Tai Chi	3	3	Tai Chi: Gentle Exercise Head to Toe (page 8)
Sleep	5	4	Restful Sleep: How to Get Enough
Infections	6	8	Bacterial Infections: How to Treat and Prevent Them
Gluten	2	3	How Gluten Can Cause More Than 30 Health Conditions
Thyroid	2	7	The 30-Day Thyroid Restoration Protocol

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



offending food now and then, your body never gets the chance to stop reacting. So, be diligent when eliminating a problematic food.

Low Thyroid

Some of my patients have hoped that low thyroid function would explain their excess weight, and that correcting their thyroid would magically lead to weight loss. But it doesn't usually work this way.

Low thyroid can contribute to weight gain and prevent weight loss, and it should be corrected. But it's rarely the main underlying cause of a weight problem. Given today's diets, excess carbs are usually the bigger issue.

This doesn't mean that low thyroid function shouldn't be addressed — it should — and correcting it will improve the results of a low-carb diet. But it isn't the first thing to look for, as even a healthy thyroid can't

eliminate the harmful effects of excess carbs.

Food Shopping Pitfalls

Much of traditional cooking at home has been replaced by eating out, having meals delivered, or buying ready-to-eat food in supermarkets. While convenient, these options tend to be high in carbs, and portions are too large.

For take-out, aim for low-carb options, such as vegetables without pasta or rice, and meat, fish, and poultry that isn't covered in starchy crusts — a whole rotisserie chicken rather than breaded and fried chicken pieces, for example. And consider splitting restaurant meals with a companion or take half home for another meal.

Shopping without a plan is another pitfall. It's hard to envision what you're going to do with fresh produce, meat, or fish as you're walking around the store. That's when packaged or prepared foods can look more convenient and appealing. Plan your meals and snacks, make a healthy shopping list, and stick with it in the store.

Shopping while hungry is another no-no. It makes you susceptible to impulse buy high-carb snacks.

When buying packaged foods, always look on labels for "total carbohydrates." Avoid "net carbs," which is a marketing term that has no legal or scientific definition. Foods that are low in "net carbs" can indeed raise blood sugar and contribute to weight gain.

Ultimately, preparing fresh ingredients at home is the best way to lose weight and enjoy better health. Research shows that highly processed foods — those that contain chemicals and food

additives that you would never have in your kitchen and that usually have long ingredient lists — lead to weight gain.

At the National Institutes of Health, 20 people lived in a health center while eating fresh foods for two weeks and highly processed foods for another two weeks. On the processed diet, they instinctively ate 500 more calories daily and gained two pounds. On the fresh-foods diet, they spontaneously lost two pounds in two weeks, without trying.⁹

A Final Word

Most of the time, following my low-carb way of eating starts to improve the way you feel and helps you drop some excess weight quite quickly. And it enables you to continue eating in a way that keeps you trimmer and healthier in the long term.

In working with patients for many years, I've found that the points I've described are the most common blocks to weight loss. I hope this helps you progress on your path to a healthier and more vibrant life.

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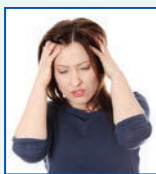
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Your Checklist

Start by following my low-carb diet, described in last month's issue of this newsletter. If you aren't making progress, these are the blocks to check for, in the order listed below:

- ☐ Stress
- ☐ Lack of exercise
- ☐ Sleep
- ☐ Personal deal breakers
- ☐ Chronic inflammation
- ☐ Low thyroid
- ☐ Food shopping pitfalls



If you continue to have difficulty losing weight and have questions, let me know at drmarlene@naturalhealthconnections.com. I will answer them in future issues of this newsletter.

Is your memory getting worse?

If you're over 50, chances are your brain isn't functioning like it did in your younger years.

This isn't surprising. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control warns that over 16 million Americans now live with cognitive impairment. This includes not only memory problems, but also difficulty in learning new things, concentrating, and making important decisions.

Unfortunately, age is the greatest risk factor for cognitive impairment. By age 65, 40% of folks in the U.S. have age-associated memory issues. So as the years go by, it wouldn't be unusual for you to forget things. Or notice how difficult it is to stay focused during a conversation or TV program.

But I have good news. It doesn't have to be that way...

Primal Labs is proud to introduce **CogniForce**, a ground-breaking nutritional supplement for optimal brain support.

CogniForce is an easy-to-swallow gel cap containing 10 powerful nutrients to help you improve cognitive function, memory, and brain health:

- ✓ **Ginkgo:** Improves blood flow to the brain. This supports memory, mood, and focus — and exerts a positive effect on the brain's processing speed to help avoid "senior moments."
- ✓ **L-theanine:** This amino acid stimulates brain neurotransmitters to boost concentration and mood — and promote relaxation.
- ✓ **Acetyl-L-carnitine:** Research shows this amino acid can significantly improve memory and focus — and lift you out of those occasional "blue moods."
- ✓ **The B vitamins riboflavin, vitamin B6, folate, and B12:** Studies show these crucial vitamins help prevent the brain shrinkage many people experience as they grow older.
- ✓ **Sensoril®:** This patented extract of the ancient Ayurvedic herb ashwagandha helps lower cortisol — the stress hormone.

✓ **L-tyrosine:** Another amino acid crucial for production of brain neurotransmitters involved in memory and cognition.

✓ **Bioperine®:** Patented extract of black pepper fruit helps improve absorption of nutrients.

Today, people from all walks of life are protecting their brains with **CogniForce**. Here's what a few of them had to say:

"I have been taking **CogniForce** for about 5 weeks now. I noticed a positive result fairly early. I am feeling more alert and better able to handle tedious work that used to overwhelm me."

— Lee Miller from Austin, TX

"I started taking **CogniForce** fifty-two days ago, and my own forgetfulness has slowed down."

— Hayley Burns from Richmond, VA

"I've been taking **CogniForce** just a little over a month now, and it has helped me improve my thinking and mood swings."

— Barbara Sherwood from Leesburg, FL

If you want to maintain your memory and protect your brain into your 60s, 70s, 80s and beyond... the time to do it is NOW. Join thousands of satisfied users experiencing the brain-boosting effects of **CogniForce**.

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Test Your Strength and Fitness

Strength and fitness play a major role in how well and how long you live but, sadly, they are not tested in routine check-ups. So, I encourage you to try the tests below and use the results for motivation to get or stay strong and fit.

The 30-Second Chair Test

This test measures leg strength and endurance, which are essential for balance, mobility, and to prevent falls. Here's how to do it:

- Sit on a sturdy chair with a seat about 17 inches high and no arm rests. Sit with your rear in the

middle of the chair seat and your feet flat on the floor.

- Put each hand on the opposite shoulder, with your arms crossed at the wrists, and keep your arms against your chest while doing the test.
- Stand up and sit back down as many times as you can in 30 seconds. Set a timer or have someone time you.

Compare your results to the average for your age in the chart below. To build strength, do this as a daily exercise, without a timer, and re-test yourself in a few weeks.

knee and a hand to push yourself off the floor, you would lose two points. A score of 8 or more is very good.

I realize this is a difficult movement. But if you score low, don't despair. Rather, alternate spurts of slow and fast walking or other exercise. The pace should be fast enough to raise your heart rate and get you a bit out of breath — the challenge strengthens your heart. Do some resistance exercises, such as push-ups against a wall, or full push-ups on the floor, if you can, and arm curls with weights. And do the sit-stand chair exercise above.

How Fast Do You Walk?

People who walk faster age slower and live longer, according to a review of studies with more than 34,000 older people. In these studies, researchers tracked walking speed and lifespan of older adults for 6 to 21 years. And they found that faster walkers lived significantly longer and in better health.³

Walking speed, the researchers noted, is a good test to predict survival because it requires energy, control of movement, and healthy function of the heart, lungs, and other internal organs. If you notice that you aren't walking as fast as you used to, make sure you're eating a healthy diet and get regular exercise.

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Chair Stand Averages

These are average numbers of stands in 30 seconds. A below-average score means there's a greater risk for falls.¹



Average Score

Age	Women	Men
60-64	12-17	14-19
65-69	11-16	12-18
70-74	10-15	12-17
75-79	10-15	11-17
80-84	9-14	10-15
85-89	8-13	8-14
90-94	4-11	7-12

The Floor Sit-Stand Test

This is a more challenging test. Stand barefoot with your legs crossed at the ankles and lower yourself to the floor, so that you are sitting cross-legged. Then, get back up. Try to sit and rise without using a hand, forearm, knee, or side of your leg to support yourself.²

You can watch a video, posted by the Brazilian researchers who developed this test, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MCQ2WA2T2oA>. The narration is in Portuguese but captions are in English, and it's easy to follow.

Here's how to measure your performance: There are 5 possible points for sitting and 5 for standing. If you do both perfectly, with no support on the way down or up, you get a perfect score of 10.

For each arm or leg you use to help you sit down or stand up, subtract one point. For example, if you sat without extra support and used a

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If your knees, hips or joints are aching, chances are good it's due to too much inflammation.

Now, you can get rapid relief with a unique, highly targeted form of **Boron** called FruiteX-B®. This patented ingredient is nature-identical to the boron found in fruits, vegetables and certain beans.



Now, get better relief than from glucosamine and chondroitin.

In double blind clinical study, 60 people with knee discomfort got 220 mg of FruiteX-B® boron or a placebo daily for 14 days.

The results? Those taking the unique Boron got relief in as little as 7 days, with less joint discomfort, reduced stiffness and improved flexibility, mobility and range of motion.¹²

Why such soothing comfort?

Because this special form of boron supports a normal inflammatory response by reducing the inflammation marker, C-reactive protein.

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Plus, this unique formula includes a patented

collagen ingredient called **UC-II® collagen**, which has been shown to “reprogram” a faulty immune response that can cause activity-related joint pain.

In one study, people suffering from moderate to severe pain due to exercise took 40 mg of UC-II collagen or 1500 mg of glucosamine and 1200 mg of chondroitin. Overall, people taking UC-II improved on the WOMAC pain scale by 39% which was 19% better than glucosamine-chondroitin.¹³

In another study, healthy people taking UC-II were able to exercise longer before experiencing pain than the placebo group and significantly improved range of motion.¹⁴

TriFlexarin® also includes selenium to reduce joint tenderness and a blend of ginger, turmeric and boswellia serrata to reduce occasional joint swelling and inflammation.

“**TriFlexarin**® is great. You feel relief quickly after taking it. I highly recommend it.”

—Georgianna



“I had pain at the gym, pain while sitting, pain while sleeping. **TriFlexarin**® works for me. The other night I was out to dinner and realized I was pain-free.”

—J. Sanders, CA



Soothe and rejuvenate your stiff joints in just 7 days—get your bottle of **TriFlexarin**® today!

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Your Teeth and Your Heart

If your blood pressure isn't being checked when you go to the dentist, that could change. The American Heart Association has started a campaign to educate dentists about the connection between dental health and heart health, and to encourage them to check blood pressure and, when necessary, refer a dental patient to their primary care doctor.

The new campaign, "Healthy Smiles, Healthy Hearts," also aims to increase awareness of the links between the mouth and heart among consumers.

Gum disease is the top cause of tooth loss, but that's not all. For years, studies have shown that inflammation in the mouth due to gum disease contributes to chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes.¹

In addition, bacteria from the mouth can move through the bloodstream to the heart, which can lead to endocarditis, an infection of the inner lining of the heart or heart valves. Although endocarditis can be cured with early treatment, it can also lead to permanent damage to the heart. Chronic inflammation from mouth bacteria can also increase the risk of stroke.

Studies have also found these dangers of gum disease:

- The bacteria from gum disease can travel to the brain, where it can contribute to Alzheimer's disease.
- Gum disease increases risks for osteoarthritis, including severe forms of the disease that require knee or hip replacement.
- In people with rheumatoid arthritis, gum disease contributes to chronic inflammation.
- Diabetics are more susceptible to gum disease

because diabetes makes people more prone to any type of infection.

- Gum disease makes it more difficult to control blood sugar, and among diabetics it increases the odds of complications.
- Bacteria from gum disease can be drawn into the lungs as you breathe in and it can contribute to respiratory illnesses such as pneumonia.
- Gum disease has been linked to a higher risk for cancer.

If you're mystified by the wide range of consequences of gum disease, keep this in mind: It generates chronic inflammation, which is an underlying factor in just about any illness.

Bottom line, dental health is no small matter. But because dental and other types of healthcare are not coordinated, opportunities to address and reduce risks for chronic diseases early on are often missed.

What to Do

As you may know, I've always emphasized the need for good dental health. See a dentist if your gums bleed when you brush or they feel irritated or sore. An infected tooth will also generate inflammation. I've found that most people with a dental issue are aware that all is not well, but unless the discomfort or pain becomes too much to bear, they often ignore it.

Don't wait until you're in pain. And to maintain a healthy mouth, I encourage you to check out Volume 3, Issue 10, of this newsletter: *The 5 Simple Steps to Healthy Teeth and Gums*.



Another Upside of Grassfed Meat

Grassfed meat is known for its healthy, anti-inflammatory fat: omega-3, the type found in fish. Now, recent research has found that it also contains a nutrient that helps to fight cancer: "trans-vaccenic acid," or TVA for short.

TVA activates cancer-killing cells in the immune system. Cancer patients with higher blood levels of TVA responded better to immunotherapy treatment for lymphoma or leukemia.²

Grassfed meat comes from

animals that graze on grass, rather than being fed grain and antibiotics in cramped feedlots, as conventionally raised animals are. Grassfed meat is now in many supermarkets and superstores. If you can, give it a try.

¹ Liccardo, D., et al. "Periodontal Disease: A Risk Factor for Diabetes and Cardiovascular Disease." *Int J Mol Sci*. 2019 Mar 20;20(6):1414. ² Fan, H., et al. "Trans-vaccenic acid reprograms CD8+ T cells and anti-tumour immunity." *Nature*. 2023 Nov;623(7989):1034–1043.

Multivitamins Improve Memory



There are those who scoff at multivitamins, insisting that we should get all our nutrients from food. But that's assuming we all eat a perfect diet. In the real world, multivitamins offer some insurance against shortfalls of essential nutrients, and they can be very beneficial.

A recent study found that taking a daily multivitamin can significantly improve memory and other aspects of mental function. The research was led by Mass General Brigham, a non-profit healthcare and research organization based in Boston.¹

Researchers analyzed data from 5,000 people who were tracked for a period of two-to-three years. They estimated that compared to taking a placebo, taking a daily multivitamin slowed mental aging by two years. That's a pretty good benefit.

Multivitamins taken by study

participants contained at least 20 essential nutrients. And they were taken daily — consistency is vital.

Some of my patients who start taking a multivitamin complain a few weeks later, “I don't feel different.” And despite my best efforts to encourage them to keep taking it, they stop. And then a little while later, they realize they don't feel as good as they did when they were taking the multi. So, they start again, and this time they stick with it.

What to Look for in a Multivitamin

Look for a product with 100 percent Daily Value (%DV on labels) of all the vitamins and minerals except for calcium and magnesium. These two minerals are too bulky to fully fit in a multi,

so you will need to get more from food or another supplement.

You'll also need more vitamin D: enough for a total of 5,000 IU daily. If your multi doesn't contain vitamin K2, take an extra K2 supplement. When you take high-dose vitamin D, it significantly increases calcium absorption. Vitamin K2 makes sure that the calcium is used in your bones rather than being deposited in arteries.

One thing that can limit benefits is a pill that doesn't dissolve in your stomach. You can test any product by placing the pill in a glass of room-temperature water. If it breaks down in 30 minutes, you're good to go. If not, try a different product.

Hearing Aids Extend Life

People with hearing loss can live longer if they use a hearing aid, according to a new study led by the University of Southern California in Los Angeles.² Earlier research has shown that using a hearing aid reduces risk for dementia.

For ten years, the new study tracked more than 1,800 people who had been diagnosed with hearing loss. It found that risk of premature death was 25 percent lower among those who wore hearing aids at least some of the time, compared to people who never used them.

The degree of hearing loss did not influence the effectiveness of hearing aids, nor did medical history, income, education, ethnic background, or other lifestyle factors that can affect health. Hearing aids were beneficial in all cases.

Hearing loss interferes with social relationships,

which are essential for good health. It also impairs a person's awareness of their environment, which

can lead to accidents. When the brain doesn't receive sound signals, part of it atrophies, much like a muscle will shrink and weaken if it isn't used.

Hearing aids help to restore these connections. However, many people are reluctant to use them or even to have their hearing checked. Meanwhile, hearing loss interferes with the ability to live a full life.

If you or someone you care about suffers from hearing loss, the first step is to get a hearing exam. If you need a hearing aid, the healthcare provider who does the exam should be able to advise you about your options.



1 Vyas, C.M., et al. “Effect of multivitamin-mineral supplementation versus placebo on cognitive function: Results from the clinic sub-cohort of the COSMOS randomized clinical trial and meta-analysis of three cognition studies within COSMOS.” *AJCN* 2024 Jan. DOI: 10.1016/j.ajcnut.2023.12.011. 2 Choi, J.S., et al. “Association between hearing aid use and mortality in adults with hearing loss in the USA: a mortality follow-up study of a cross-sectional cohort.” *Lancet Healthy Longev.* 2024 Jan;5(1):e66-e75.

Q&A

Q: I'm prediabetic. I drink distilled water to avoid toxins. Will it help to lower my blood sugar?
— *Janice W.*

A: I don't recommend distilled water. Water in nature contains electrolytes: essential minerals that include sodium, potassium, chloride, and others. These help to keep you hydrated and regulate many internal processes, such as the functions of nerves, muscles, and blood pressure, and are used for repair of damaged tissues.

Distillation removes minerals that are naturally present. And when you drink distilled water, it pulls minerals out of your system. So, some of the minerals that you are getting from foods or supplements will be removed by the distilled water. This can lead to mineral deficiencies.

The best way to remove toxins from water is by filtering it at home. A reverse osmosis filter is best, but countertop models are also helpful and inexpensive. I suggest switching to filtered water right away, to prevent further loss of minerals.

If you've been drinking distilled water for a while, it's likely that you are deficient in minerals that are necessary for overall health. And some minerals — such as chromium and vanadium — are essential for healthy blood sugar.

I suggest that you start taking a mineral complex, a supplement that contains a variety of minerals.

Make sure that it contains chromium and vanadium, as well as calcium, magnesium, and others.

My patients typically prefer to take minerals in pills. Although there are various powders and drops, these have a taste that most people dislike.

Take your minerals consistently — every day — to replenish and maintain healthy levels. In addition, follow a low-carb diet to help get your blood sugar into a healthy range. Regular exercise will also be beneficial.

Q: I have some round, bulging areas in the veins of my leg, the size of a marble, which sometimes hurt when I walk. Are these varicose veins? What herbs can help? — *Joe C.*

A: Varicose veins develop when the walls of the veins are weak or damaged, and this causes blood to pool. The situation you describe does sound like varicose veins, but I recommend seeing your doctor to get a diagnosis and discuss possible treatment.

There are herbal remedies that can help to prevent varicose veins, such as horse chestnut and Pycnogenol, an extract of French maritime pine bark. These are often labeled as supplements for leg veins. Horse chestnut has a long history as a remedy for leg cramps. In studies, Pycnogenol has been shown to enhance circulation in the legs and protect against problems in leg veins.

Prevention is essential in your situation. When you have one bulging vein, it's a sign that a disease process is underway. Other veins are

almost certainly unhealthy and can soon progress to a bulge, discomfort, and pain. The herbs can help to stop or slow that process and prevent damage to more veins.

Once a bulge has developed, it usually needs to be treated medically. Treatments for varicose veins include injections, lasers, and other nonsurgical approaches, as well as surgery in some cases.

Home remedies to reduce discomfort and pain include wearing compression stockings and raising your legs when sitting or lying. Equally important, exercise such as walking can help to reduce symptoms and prevent further problems.

The symptoms that you describe are a sign that your circulatory system is not operating optimally. Getting regular exercise, eating a nutritious diet, and the herbs I mentioned will help to prevent things from getting worse in the future. But I do recommend that you get a firm diagnosis and explore the medical options.

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.