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Rheumatoid Arthritis:
Triggers and
Natural Remedies



How diet and environment can trigger rheumatoid arthritis and what to do to reduce symptoms and restore health to joints.

A number of readers have asked me what — if anything — they can do for rheumatoid arthritis other than rely on drugs to relieve pain, stiffness, and swelling of joints. Others have asked how to tell whether their joint pain is osteoarthritis or rheumatoid arthritis. So, I'll start by addressing each of these questions.

First, I want you to know that it is possible to relieve rheumatoid arthritis without drugs, or at least to reduce reliance on them. I've had many patients who came to me in despair after being diagnosed with the condition because their doctor told them there was no alternative to taking drugs for the rest of their lives. This isn't true.

In short, there's hope! But let me put this in context. With any health condition, the longer it has existed and the more damage it has caused, the harder it is to reverse it or to relieve symptoms and stop or slow its progression. This is true with

diabetes, any type of arthritis, and other health conditions.

The other key factor is a person's willingness to do what it takes. Doctors in today's healthcare system are neither trained in nutrition nor given the time to discuss the subject with their patients. Not surprisingly, not many of their patients know how to make therapeutic dietary and lifestyle changes or are willing to make the effort to do so. Consequently, doctors discount the possibility of any treatment other than lifelong drugs.

But here's what they don't know: An educated and motivated patient can often reverse rheumatoid arthritis. They just haven't seen what a determined patient can do, but I have. I've seen rheumatoid arthritis resolve with the right diet, lifestyle, and natural

IN THE NEXT ISSUE:
The Anti-Cancer
Lifestyle: Latest Update

remedies with many of my patients.

Sadly, when those patients went back to their rheumatologists — the medical specialists for this disease — the doctors didn't typically say, "Great job!" Rather, they were skeptical that the improvement would last, considering it a fluky, temporary remission that would, inevitably, relapse.

Arthritis and Inflammation

The word "arthritis" is used to describe an inflamed joint or joints.

Dr. Marlene's NATURAL HEALTH CONNECTIONS

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It comes from the Greek word for joint: "arthron." The suffix, "-itis," means "inflammation." (For example, colitis is an inflammation of the colon; appendicitis is an inflammation of the appendix.)

Inflammation of joints causes the pain, stiffness, or swelling in both osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. But there are also some differences between the two diseases.

You may have heard that osteoarthritis is caused by "wear and tear." But this doesn't make sense. Both younger and older sedentary people develop the disease while some seniors run marathons.

Joint inflammation is what causes the disability in osteoarthritis. It degrades the cartilage that cushions joints, which can eventually lead to so much damage that joint replacement is the only way to relieve pain. (But this doesn't have to happen.)

Where does the inflammation come from in osteoarthritis? Injury to a joint, if not fully healed, can lead to osteoarthritis. An inflammatory diet and lifestyle can cause chronic inflammation that hurts joints. And excess body weight can add physical stress to knees and hips and compound the problem.

I cover these mechanisms, and ways to reverse joint inflammation, in earlier newsletter issues listed in *Related to This Topic* on page 6. I encourage you to check them out after you've finished reading this one.

What Is Rheumatoid Arthritis?

Rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune disease. Joints become inflamed and painful because the immune system is attacking them. Finding out what

is triggering this enables healing. In a moment, I'll describe known triggers and drug-free remedies, including specific supplements. But first, I want to give you a couple of examples of how this approach can work.

One of my patients is a 59-year-old occupational nurse. She came to me as she was about to retire from a job at a coal-fired power plant. For years, she was exposed to mercury and other damaging pollutants at work, and these toxins were the underlying trigger of her rheumatoid arthritis.

I did blood tests for markers of rheumatoid arthritis, and she started on a regimen of a healing, grain-free diet, supplements, and stress reduction, which I'll describe in a moment. In addition, she started a mercury detoxification program that needs to be done with a health practitioner.

She experienced some relief within the first few months, and markers of the disease were reduced. But ultimately, the regimen produced greater relief after she retired and was no longer exposed to toxins every day.

Another one of my patients is a 28-year-old lawyer who has had flare-ups of rheumatoid arthritis on and off for years. Recently, a new job and a newborn baby increased the levels of stress in his life. In addition, he smoked cigars weekly — as with my other patient, he was exposed to toxins.

His program also comprised dietary changes, including elimination of grains; stress management; supplements; and removal of the toxic exposure: no more cigars. He also adopted a daily 7-minute exercise program. His symptoms, and blood

markers of rheumatoid arthritis, subsided within three months.

How It Starts

In rheumatoid arthritis and other autoimmune diseases, a combination of factors leads to a malfunction of the immune system. And then, instead of protecting you against illness, as the immune system is supposed to do, it turns against you or reacts in an exaggerated way that is harmful. The joints are one way this manifests; if this isn't addressed, that same mechanism can also damage other organs.

Underlying this phenomenon is a breakdown in barriers within the human body. In a healthy person, there are important barriers that prevent foreign substances from entering the blood, through the mouth, gut, and lungs. When these barriers break down, particles that should have been filtered out and eliminated, as a matter of course, can spread through the blood.

In such a situation, technically called "loss of tolerance," the immune system fails to tell the difference between the body's own tissues and other, harmful substances. Consequently, it attacks healthy tissues, such as joints, causing inflammation, pain, stiffness, swelling, and eventually, damage to joint structures.¹

Why does this happen? I'll describe what we know and what we can do about it.

Genes

Some people have a genetic predisposition to rheumatoid arthritis. This doesn't mean that they are doomed to develop the disease; it can be prevented or relieved without drugs. Rather, it's a reason to take steps to stay

healthy despite such genes, called HLA genes (short for human leukocyte antigen).

HLA genes are designed to help the immune system tell the difference between harmful substances that need to be attacked and healthy tissues that should be protected. When these genes don't work as they should, the immune system can get confused and attack healthy joint tissues.²

Risk for rheumatoid arthritis is somewhat higher among people with a first-degree relative who developed the disease, but only slightly. Tests of HLA genes are not routinely done, other than when someone is going to receive an organ transplant — to check for potential risk of organ rejection.

According to the American College of Rheumatology, environmental factors influence risk for rheumatoid arthritis more than HLA genes. The genes are more common

among people of European descent.

Our lifestyle influences how genes behave. If you happen to have HLA genes that predispose you to rheumatoid arthritis, you may react more strongly to environmental toxins and other potential triggers than others in the same environment. And you may be aware that this is the case.

If you get the right nutrients, avoid harmful toxins, and manage other lifestyle habits that can quell the autoimmune reaction, you will be in much better shape — regardless of your genes.

Environmental Toxins

Environmental toxins are a leading trigger of rheumatoid arthritis.³

My patient who worked for years in a coal-fired power plant had an obvious exposure to toxins, as did the lawyer who smoked cigars. Smoking, whether it's cigarettes or other tobacco products, is a major

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.



contributor to the disease. But other exposures may not be as obvious.

Many non-smokers are exposed to secondhand smoke, which is just as powerful a trigger of rheumatoid arthritis as smoking. One study of more than 21,000 American adults without a known family history of rheumatoid arthritis examined types of environmental toxins they were exposed to.

The research was done by scientists at the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio and other leading university research centers in this country. It found that the smoke from burning tobacco products is the chief trigger of rheumatoid arthritis, regardless of who creates the smoke or the specific type of tobacco that's burned. In other words, being in the vicinity of a smoker is enough to raise risk.⁴

This doesn't change the fact that smokers face increased risk for lung cancer and respiratory diseases. But among people who don't smoke, secondhand smoke may be overlooked in trying to identify triggers of rheumatoid arthritis.

Research conducted by Veterans Administration health systems around the country examined military personnel and the connection between exposure to smoke from burn pits or other types of military waste disposal and rheumatoid arthritis. The study found that such exposure significantly raised risk, even among veterans who didn't smoke and were otherwise in good health.⁵

Smoke from wildfires and pollutants in car, truck, and factory exhaust can also trigger or worsen rheumatoid arthritis. Try to avoid exposure as much as possible in your environment.

If you have been exposed to environmental toxins, the regimen I'll describe in a moment can help you heal joints and, if you're healthy, to stay that way.

Gum disease

Gum disease — harmful bacteria and inflammation in the mouth — is another trigger of rheumatoid arthritis. On the flipside, people with rheumatoid arthritis are more likely to have gum disease.

Early in the 20th century, gum disease was considered to be a trigger of other infections, including rheumatoid arthritis and appendicitis. Extracting diseased teeth was the only treatment. By the 1930s, the theory fell out of favor. But now, science is showing valid links between the two.⁶

Studies show that gum disease can break down the barrier between the mouth and blood vessels. As a result, bacteria can escape into the blood and circulate to joints and other tissues, altering proteins that are then viewed by the immune system as harmful, inflamed substances. Then, the immune system attacks these inflamed joints.

The solution is to get gum disease or other infections in the mouth under control. See a dentist to resolve the immediate situation, then use my dental protocol for keeping your teeth and gums in good shape. I've listed an earlier newsletter issue that describes that protocol in *Related to This Topic* on page 6.

The Basic Diet

My basic low-carb diet of whole foods is the foundation for good health. It helps to prevent or reverse type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure, and to reduce

chronic inflammation. Consider it the elementary first step.

This basic diet helps to lower elevated insulin and elevated blood sugar, both of which contribute to inflammation and rheumatoid arthritis. This approach, which I've described in earlier newsletter issues, doesn't require eliminating any category of food — only limiting carbs from the food sources that lead to carb overload and detract from overall health.

This is an approach that can be followed long-term and tailored to suit your own tastes and lifestyle. But if you eat this way and still suffer from rheumatoid arthritis, a stricter approach may be necessary to relieve symptoms.

The Autoimmune Protocol Diet

To stop the unhealthy autoimmune reaction that attacks joints, a more restrictive diet may be necessary. It helps to calm an autoimmune reaction and to identify which foods you can and can't tolerate.

There are reactive foods that are known to trigger a harmful or exaggerated autoimmune reaction for many people. However, each individual is unique. Not every food causes the same reaction in everyone, so you need to identify which foods are triggers for you. Many practitioners use this type of diet, generally described as an autoimmune protocol diet. It consists of two essential phases:

Phase 1: The first step is to eliminate many foods that are known to trigger autoimmune reactions (see the lists in *Autoimmune Diet Foods* on page 5). This may seem overwhelming, but here's the important

point: This isn't intended to be an eating plan for the rest of your life. It's designed to be followed temporarily, to help calm your system and find your personal trigger foods.

To accomplish this, all the prohibited foods need to be eliminated for four to six weeks, without cheating. This gives your system a clean start, like resetting a computer to its original state.

Phase 2: The second step is reintroducing one food at a time and seeing how you react. Do you

feel worse? If so, stop eating that food; put it on your personal list of things to avoid. But if you do okay with that food, then you should be able to continue eating it — just don't overdo it.

Some people tolerate small amounts of a food occasionally — grains, for example. But when they eat that food more often or in larger portions, their symptoms return. Bottom line, this is a strict diet in the first step. How strict it is after that depends upon your personal reaction to different foods.

A Common Question

I've had a number of patients ask me this: What if you have some mild rheumatoid arthritis, in a finger or wrist, for example, and you already know that a certain food causes flare-ups, but you keep eating it? Do you have to do the two steps of the autoimmune diet?

Grain foods, such as cake or pasta, are common ones in the scenario I just described. And here's my answer: It's much easier to abstain from one food that you know causes flare-ups than from a whole list of foods.

Basically, this raises the issue of willpower, a lack of which many people think is their problem. I don't believe that we're all weak-willed. I do think that our diets are too full of processed foods, whether in take-out or packaged food you prepare at home. Consequently, many people don't know what else to eat.

If you know that avoiding grains relieves joint pain, the thing to do is find an alternative to the grain dishes you like. If you like rice, try "riced" cauliflower or broccoli. If you like pasta, try zucchini ribbons. You can buy these ready to microwave or cook.

If you do that and the rheumatoid arthritis is resolved, just keep doing what works for you. There are also supplements that can help.

Supplements

Relieving rheumatoid arthritis always requires a healthy diet and reducing or removing exposure to environmental toxins, such as smoke from tobacco products. In addition to those steps, taking supplements can help to prevent or relieve autoimmune flare-ups.

Autoimmune Diet Foods

What to Exclude

These are foods to exclude during the first step of the autoimmune protocol diet:

- Grains (all types).
- Legumes, including beans, peas, and lentils.
- Nightshade vegetables, such as tomatoes, sweet peppers (any color), chili peppers (any type), regular potatoes (sweet potatoes are okay to eat), eggplant, tomatillos, and golden berries.
- Dairy products.
- Processed foods.
- Food additives and chemicals.
- Vegetable and canola oils.
- Refined sugars, natural sugar replacements, and artificial sweeteners.
- Nuts and seeds.
- Eggs.
- Coffee.
- Chocolate.
- Alcohol.
- Spices made from hot peppers.

What to Eat

These are foods you can eat during the first step:

- Fish and seafood, preferably wild caught.
- Meats, preferably grass-fed, including organ meats.
- Herbs and spices such as oregano, ginger, cumin, garlic, salt, black pepper, and others not on the list on the left.
- Vegetables not on the list on the left, including sweet potatoes, cucumbers, zucchini, carrots, beets, parsnips, spinach, endive, broccoli, cauliflower, kale, and others.
- Natural sweeteners such as honey and maple syrup.
- Fermented foods that are not made with dairy or nightshade vegetables, such as sauerkraut, kimchi, and various types of pickles.
- Fresh fruit.
- Avocados.
- Extra virgin olive oil, coconut oil, and avocado oil.



Your Personal Diet

Based on what you've learned by doing the steps above, follow a diet that works for you to ward off autoimmune reactions.

Vitamins A, D, and K2. These help to regulate the immune system and calm down exaggerated immune reactions. You can take vitamin A in a multivitamin, but look for a product that lists “vitamin A” as an ingredient, not “beta-carotene.” The latter is a precursor to vitamin A, and not everyone can convert it efficiently.

For vitamin D, I always recommend basing dosage on blood tests. Otherwise, I’ve found that most people need to take 125 micrograms (mcg), which is equal to 5,000 IU. With this dose, also take daily vitamin K2. Vitamin D enhances absorption of calcium, and vitamin K2 makes sure that the calcium is used where it’s needed, in bones, and doesn’t get deposited in arteries.

These three nutrients: vitamins A, D, and K2, help to enhance your immune system’s ability to

distinguish between your own tissues and harmful substances. The net effect is reduced risk of your immune system attacking your joints or other healthy tissues.

Fish oil and SPM. Fish oil reduces inflammation. SPM is short for “specialized pro-resolving mediators.” When we consume fish oil, our bodies make SPM, a combination of substances that help our immune system work properly and lower inflammation.⁷ But concentrated SPM is also available in some fish oil supplements and may be more beneficial than regular fish oil alone.

For any inflammatory condition, including rheumatoid arthritis, I recommend taking 1,000–2,000 mg daily of fish oil and 1,000 mg of SPM. This or a similar combination is sometimes found in one supplement.

Herbs. One or more of these help to lower inflammation: turmeric, ginger, and Boswellia.

Gut Health. If you know or suspect that your digestion is below par, specific supplements can help heal the gut lining, reduce breakdown of the gut barrier, and help to reverse exaggerated immune reactions that cause inflamed joints. These include betaine HCL with pepsin at the start of each meal, digestive enzymes, a combination of prebiotics and probiotics, and l-glutamine.

A Final Word

In addition to all the points I’ve covered, managing stress, getting restful sleep, moderate exercise, healthy relationships with others, and sometimes, meditation, can all help to quell an errant immune reaction and inflammation.


I know I’ve given you a lot of information. I hope it helps you to tame joint problems. As always, do the best you can. You might be surprised by the results.

Related to This Topic

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

Related Topic	Volume	Issue	Title
Arthritis	2	5	The 90-Day Program to Relieve Arthritis
A Healthy Diet	7	1	My Low-Carb Diet — Fine-Tuned
Food Intolerances	7	6	Food Sensitivities: Are They Hurting You?
Inflammation	4	4	How to Calm Harmful Inflammation
A Cleansing Program	1	7	The 21-Day Energy Restoration Plan
The Gut Barrier	5	10	Leaky Gut: Hidden Cause of Digestive Woes
Dental Health	3	10	The 5 Simple Steps to Healthy Teeth and Gums
Gluten	2	3	How Gluten Can Cause More Than 30 Health Conditions

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



1 Kumar, P., et al. “Restoring self-tolerance in autoimmune diseases by enhancing regulatory T-cells.” *Cell Immunol.* 2019 May;339:41-49.

2 Nordquist H, et al. “Biochemistry, HLA Antigens. [Updated 2023 Apr 24].” In: StatPearls [Internet]. Treasure Island (FL): StatPearls Publishing; 2024 Jan-.

3 Adami, G. “Mining the pathogenesis of rheumatoid arthritis, the leading role of the environment.” *RMD Open.* 2022; 8(2): e002807.

4 Beidelschies, M., et al. “Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and risk of rheumatoid arthritis: a cross-sectional analysis of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 2007–2016.” *BMJ Open.* 2023 May 9;13(5):e071514.

5 Ebel, A.V., et al. “Association of Agricultural, Occupational, and Military Inhalants With Autoantibodies and Disease Features in US Veterans With Rheumatoid Arthritis.” *Arthritis Rheumatol.* 2021 Mar;73(3):392-400.

6 Brewer, R.C., et al. “Oral mucosal breaks trigger anti-citrullinated bacterial and human protein antibody responses in rheumatoid arthritis.” *Sci Transl Med.* 2023 Feb 22;15(684):eabq8476.

7 Souza, P.R., et al. “Enriched Marine Oil Supplements Increase Peripheral Blood Specialized Pro-Resolving Mediators Concentrations and Reprogram Host Immune Responses: A Randomized Double-Blind Placebo-Controlled Study.” *Circ Res.* 2020 Jan 3;126(1):75-90.

Say “Good Bye” to those Senior Moments

PREVENT, STOP, AND REVERSE MEMORY LOSS & DEMENTIA FOR LIFE!

“Within two weeks my memory came back, and the confusion I had experienced went away. It was a miracle.”

— Cathy D. Carson City, NV

Do you turn to jelly when you try to remember someone's name... someone you've known for a long time? Maybe it's suddenly asking yourself, 'WHERE AM I?' when you're at a store... or you have to take a few extra moments to add 100 to 75.

Perhaps you're suddenly feeling bored when you're the most excited person on the planet. Are you repeating yourself like a broken record? Maybe you don't seem like your normal super-focused self.

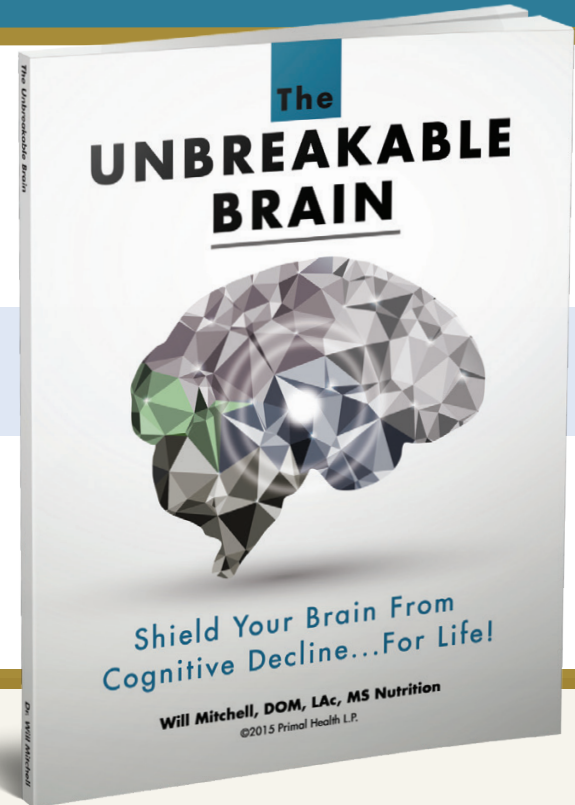
Yes—these are senior moments...and they are the first signs of dementia. The Alzheimer's Association recently admitted it, “Memory loss that disrupts daily life may be a symptom of dementia.”

How long will these “senior moments” continue? If you think memory loss will “go away” like a bad case of the flu... think again. They won't... unless you start taking some simple steps.

That is why world-renowned brain expert Dr. Will Mitchell has recently released his best-selling book, **The Unbreakable Brain**. This simple, but powerful 121-page book gives you a 28-day plan for brain health you can start right away. The plan gives you 7 powerful strategies you can easily adopt, and in the next 4 weeks, you'll be able to...

- Protect your brain
- Keep your mind razor-sharp for as long as you live
- And keep your independence by not spending your final days in a facility.

Here's what Cathy D. from Carson City, NV wrote to Dr. Mitchell after reading **The Unbreakable Brain**, “Within two weeks my memory came back, and the confusion I had experienced went away. It was a miracle.”



Yes—in just 2 week's Cathy's memory was back! Its results like this that have made **The Unbreakable Brain** a national best-seller. It's even popular in the medical community. Beverly C. from West



Renowned Health
Expert, Dr. Will Mitchell

Des Moines, IA wrote to say, “I took your book to my doctor's office, and he knew of it and said it was one of the best. My doctor is on board with this plan.”

Dr. Will Mitchell put everything you need to prevent and even fight dementia in this easy-to-read book. In addition to his 28-day plan to a sharper brain, you'll also find...

- 1 simple trick to finding the true cause of your memory loss—and how to fix it...
- 14 prescription drugs that kill your memory...
- 5 things your brain needs every day to super-boost memory...
- Complete list of inexpensive nutritional supplements that revive the brain...
- At-home test that reveals if you'll get full-blown dementia...

Over 180,000 copies **The Unbreakable Brain** have already been sold to folks like Dorothy from Shelton, WA. who said, “I am delighted with my results, and I would highly recommend this book to anyone struggling with memory problems as they age.”

Get your copy of The Unbreakable Brain today and protect your brain in just 28-days!

Get The Unbreakable Brain for Just \$27!
www.SimpleBrainFix.com/NHC2

Pool Exercises to Stay Cool and Fit

With the kinds of extreme temperatures many of us are experiencing this summer, exercise in a pool is a good option, especially if you do it early or late in the day — the cooler times. In addition to fitness benefits, being in water cools you down and is a good place to relax for a bit after a workout.

So, what types of exercise can you do in a pool? Research with older adults found that the ideal regimen would include a combination of movements, including some strength training and aerobic exercise to get your heart pumping.¹ Here are some options:

Laps, walking, or jogging: While swimming laps is one way to go, it isn't the only way. You can get an aerobic workout by walking or jogging across the length or width of the pool. That way, the water provides some natural resistance that challenges your body — more than you might think — and you give the major muscles in your lower body a good strength workout as well.

This is really good for you. And it doesn't stress your joints or pose a risk of falling.

My personal recommendation is to do aerobic exercise in intervals: work harder for a few minutes to get your heart rate up, and then go slow for a few minutes and let your heart rate drop. Keep alternating intensity that way for about 15 or 20 minutes. The intense periods give your heart a better workout, and the slow periods in between make sure you don't overdo it.

The other component is strength training. Although there are weights designed for use in water, you don't have to use props. These are some moves you can try:



Treading water:

To exercise your whole body, go to the deep end and tread water for 30 seconds or as long as you can. Be sure to stay near the edge of the pool or wear a flotation device so that you can safely stop and rest.

For upper arms and shoulder muscles: Stand in water that is chest-deep, arms straight, by your sides. Move your arms so that they make a figure-eight shape, in front and slightly behind you. Do that for 30 to 60 seconds.

For chest muscles: Stand in water that is shoulder deep, with your arms straight out in front of you and crossed at the wrists. Imagine your arms are scissors. Swing them out to your sides and behind you, and then back to the starting position in front. Repeat for 30 to 60 seconds.

Once you're done, spend another five or more minutes in the water to stretch and relax. You've earned a break!

Preventive Statin Use Is Changing

Statin drugs are prescribed in two types of situations: To treat those with cardiovascular disease and to prevent such disease in adults who are healthy. Now, a new study of more than 3,700 American adults has found that as many as half of the preventive prescriptions may not be necessary. This is especially true for adults between the ages of 70

and 75 and those who are Black.

Statin use for prevention is based on an estimate of risk for heart disease, using a formula that takes into account a patient's age and health markers. The formula was developed in 2013 and, it turns out, is out of date. A more accurate formula was developed last year by the American Heart Association,

but official guidelines have not caught up yet.²

I wanted you to be aware of this because statin prescriptions are one of the things many of my patients want to avoid. And to recap, the new study does not change any recommendation about the use of statins to *treat* cardiovascular disease — only for prevention.

1 Farinha, C., et al. "Impact of Different Aquatic Exercise Programs on Body Composition, Functional Fitness and Cognitive Function of Non-Institutionalized Elderly Adults: A Randomized Controlled Trial." *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2021 Aug 25;18(17):8963. 2 Anderson, T.S., et al. "Atherosclerotic Cardiovascular Disease Risk Estimates Using the Predicting Risk of Cardiovascular Disease Events Equations." *JAMA Intern Med*. 2024 Jun 10:e241302. doi: 10.1001/jamainternmed.2024.1302.

Supplements for a Leading Eye Disease

Over a decade ago, research overseen by the National Eye Institute found that a specific vitamin formula (see *AREDS2 Eye Formula* at right) could slow the progression of age-related macular degeneration (AMD) when the disease was not too advanced. Now, a new study has found that the same supplement can help even more people with the disease.

AMD can cause loss of central vision, essential for seeing people's faces, reading, driving, and many other everyday activities. It is a leading cause of vision loss among older adults.

Earlier research, the Age-Related Eye Disease Study 2 (AREDS2), was completed in 2013. The study, which was overseen by the

National Eye Institute, tested the vitamin formula against a placebo on 4,000 people. And it found

AREDS2 Eye Formula

This is the vitamin formula that has been shown to slow progression of age-related macular degeneration:

- Vitamin C: 500 mg
- Vitamin E: 400 IU
- Copper: 2 mg
- Zinc: 80 mg
- Lutein: 10 mg
- Zeaxanthin: 2 mg

Products with this exact formula are typically labelled as an AREDS2 supplement.



that the supplement could slow progression of AMD and help to preserve central vision, but only when the disease was at an intermediate stage — not if it had advanced further.

Now, a new study has found that the same vitamin formula can also slow progression of one type of the disease — dry AMD — even when it has advanced to a late stage.¹ It's estimated that 90 percent of people with AMD have the dry form (the other form is wet AMD).

Beware of Toxic Icy Treats

Ice cream and popsicles are typically rich sources of sugar, and it's easy to overindulge on a hot day. But they can also contain toxic chemicals.

The nonprofit Environmental Working Group (EWG) points out that many of these products contain two toxic chemicals that can damage DNA and have been shown to cause cancer in animals.

These are the toxins: a food coloring known as Red No. 3 and titanium dioxide. The former is used to make foods look more colorful and appealing, and the latter is used to give treats a smooth finish and to add shine and brightness to other colors. These chemicals are also found in candy.

These chemicals have been banned for years in Europe but are legal here. In 1990, the FDA banned Red No. 3 from use in cosmetics and topical drugs but

allows it in food. California has banned Red No. 3 and other states are attempting to restrict its use. Some states are also working to stop the use of titanium dioxide in food.

Healthier icy treats do not contain these toxins. But be aware of the carbs such treats contain and rather than relying on them to cool off, be sure to drink cool water, flavored with a spritz of lemon or a dash of flavored liquid stevia, if you prefer. To learn more about avoiding toxins in food, visit www.ewg.org.



1 Keenan, T.D.L., et al. "Oral Antioxidant and Lutein/Zeaxanthin Supplements Slow Geographic Atrophy Progression to the Fovea in Age-Related Macular Degeneration." *Ophthalmology*. Epub July 16, 2024. doi: 10.1016/j.ophtha.2024.07.014.

How to Prevent Kidney Stones

A number of readers have asked me how to prevent the most common type of kidney stones: calcium oxylate stones. So, here's a primer on the topic. While some people are more prone to kidney stones, these steps always help.

Drink Enough Water

Dehydration is a major contributor to kidney stones. If your body is short on fluids, minerals and other deposits in urine can't be diluted, making it much easier for them to crystallize into kidney stones.

What you drink matters. Make it a habit to drink filtered water throughout the day rather than soda or other sweetened beverages.

Manage Oxylates

Oxylates are naturally occurring substances found in many plant foods, in different amounts. Foods that are especially high in oxalates can contribute to kidney stone formation in some people. See the list of high-oxylate foods in the *Prevention Snapshot* on the right.

Equally important to know: Oxylates don't work alone, and avoiding them is not enough. You also need sufficient calcium.

With enough calcium in a diet, oxylates should not be problematic for most people. In the digestive system, oxylates bind with calcium and are eliminated as waste. Ideally, your meal would contain calcium to make it easier for oxylates to bind with the mineral.

If there isn't enough calcium in a diet for the binding to take place,

some oxylates will get into the bloodstream and then into urine. And then, they can form kidney stones. It's best to get your calcium from food, but if this is difficult, take a bit of calcium — any type except calcium carbonate — with a meal that contains oxalates.

Watch Sodium

Eating too much sodium can contribute to kidney stones. Here's how: Sodium and calcium are flushed out at the same time through the kidneys. Eating more sodium means that more calcium will be excreted with it. And as the extra calcium passes through the kidneys, it's more likely to contribute to kidney stones.

Most sodium in American diets comes from processed food, so a simple way to eat less sodium is to eat more whole, fresh food instead of processed fare.

Vitamins A, D, and K2

Adequate vitamin A protects against kidney stones. I suggest taking a multivitamin with "vitamin A," rather than beta-carotene, which is a precursor that not everyone can efficiently convert into active vitamin A. Vitamin D is also necessary for healthy kidney function.

Vitamin K2 is essential to prevent calcium from being deposited in the wrong places, such as arteries or kidneys. Studies show that people who are more prone to develop kidney stones are likely to have lower levels of vitamin K2.¹ Supplements of vitamin K2 are the best source,

as common foods in our Western diet are not rich sources.

Helpful Herbs

Milk thistle is known for enhancing liver health, but it can also protect kidneys. Research shows that it is especially beneficial for people with type 2 diabetes, which causes damage to kidneys.²

Chanca Piedra, an herb whose name means "stone breaker," is traditionally used to break up kidney stones and gallstones. But sometimes, it can cause painful urination, nausea, or stomach pain.

Prevention Snapshot



- Drink plenty of water.
- Get adequate calcium from food (check Nutrition Facts of foods for calcium content per serving).
- Avoid high-oxylate foods or eat them with calcium-rich foods.
- Get adequate vitamins A, D, and K2.

High-Oxylate Foods

Although many plant foods contain oxylates, these are top sources:

- | | |
|---------------|----------------------------------|
| • Spinach | • Chocolate |
| • Soy foods | • Navy beans |
| • Peanuts | • Raspberries |
| • Almonds | • Sweet potatoes |
| • Rhubarb | • Potatoes (especially the skin) |
| • Beets | |
| • Swiss chard | |

If you're prone to calcium oxylate kidney stones, limit or avoid the above foods or make sure to eat them with calcium-containing foods in the same meal.

1 Chmiel, J.A., et al. "Vitamins as regulators of calcium-containing kidney stones — new perspectives on the role of the gut microbiome." *Nat Rev Urol.* 2023 Oct;20(10):615-637. 2 Rafieian-Kopaei, M., et al. "Silymarin and diabetic nephropathy." *J Renal Inj Prev.* 2012;1(1):3-5.

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**.

We're so confident in the brain and memory-supporting power of **CogniForce**, we offer a 60-day **RISK-FREE** 100% money-back guarantee. You have nothing to lose.

Don't lose your precious memories... get your own bottle of **CogniForce** today — experience life with a sharper, quicker, and more focused brain!



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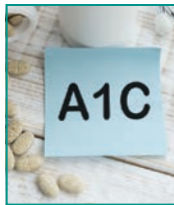
Monday-Friday 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. CST • Saturday-Sunday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. CST

Q&A

Q: I take two drugs for type 2 diabetes — Janumet XR and Jardiance — and a blood-pressure drug. What supplements can I take to lower my A1C so that I can get off my medications or at least lower my dosages? — Linda B.

A: I applaud you for seeking out natural alternatives.

Janumet is a combination of metformin (originally from French lilac) and sitagliptin, a drug that mimics the benefits of eating bitter foods. Although the designs of these



drugs are based on substances that occur in nature, the drugs are more concentrated and more powerful than their natural origins.

Jardiance is a drug that tricks your kidneys into peeing out more glucose. In a few people, this causes kidney stones, but a more common side effect is urinary tract infections because the extra sugar in the urine feeds bacteria. Staying very well hydrated helps to prevent both problems.

Here are the most important things to know: Supplements are not designed to replace a specific drug. Rather, they can enhance the effects of lifestyle changes that work to naturally lower your levels of blood sugar, and those improvements will lead to a lower A1C level.

What will work to reverse diabetes is lowering carbs, increasing

exercise, and improving sleep. These are the most important things you can do. Without any changes in your diet, supplements probably won't produce the results you are looking for because they will be working uphill.

Given that you are on two diabetes medications, I suspect that your diabetes is difficult to control. I recommend starting with the eating approach I describe in Volume 7, Issue 1, of this newsletter: *My Low-Carb Diet — Fine-Tuned*. It's a way of eating that you can adapt to your own tastes. Monitor your blood sugar to see how your new eating habits affect it and keep a record of your readings.

The simplest way to do this is with a continuous glucose monitor and an app to track your readings, but you can also use the traditional finger-prick method and manually record readings. The record is essential. You will need to show your doctor that your blood sugar is going down, and then you can get your drug dosages lowered.

Getting good sleep and doing some exercise are equally important. You can also start taking supplements at the same time. Gymnema sylvestre, banaba leaf extract, white mulberry leaf extract, and alpha-lipoic acid can help to lower blood sugar. I describe how these work and how to use them in in Volume 6, Issue 12, of this newsletter: *Diabetes Drugs and Supplements: Your Top Questions Answered*.

I encourage you to check out those earlier newsletter issues and to make the changes I've described. By taking those steps, you will be starting on a healthier path.

Q: I've lowered my blood pressure to 119/80 without drugs. But when I go to the cardiologist, it's way high — around 160/105. I don't want to take drugs. Any suggestions for handling this anxiety spike? — Wayne C.

A: Great job on bringing down your blood pressure!



Most reasonable doctors understand white coat hypertension and will accept your home readings.

For the anxiety spike, it depends on what lowers *your* stress level. It could be listening to your favorite relaxing music instead of radio news on the way to the doctor, taking a short walk before your appointment, breathing exercises, meditation, or something else that you find relaxing. For stress-control practice, you could also try a free blood pressure check at a local drugstore. Meanwhile, I wouldn't worry too much about the white-coat effect.

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.