Dr. Marlene's
NATURAL HEALTH CONNECTIONS

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The Real Culprit of Chronic Disease — Part Four

Inflammation Has a Trigger

Blood Sugar Drives Pain, Nerves, and "Random" Symptoms

Over the last few weeks, we've been following blood sugar into places people don't usually expect it to go.

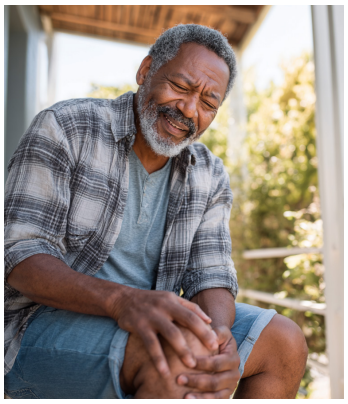
First, we talked about how blood sugar quietly shapes energy, cravings, and metabolism — long before anyone mentions diabetes. Then we looked at insulin, the hormone that decides whether the body stores, burns, or struggles with fuel. Last week, we took that conversation into the brain — where unstable blood sugar can show up as fogginess, mood changes, and mental fatigue. This week, we're going one step further — into pain.

Pain is another place blood sugar quietly shows up, even though almost no one connects the dots.

People tend to treat pain like it belongs in its own category. Joint pain is labeled "an aging thing." Nerve pain becomes "a nerve thing." Stiffness gets blamed on weather. Tendon issues are "wear and tear." Inflammation becomes "just something I have now." And yes — sometimes there's an injury. Sometimes there's arthritis. Sometimes there's a structural reason. But here's the part that often gets missed: the inflammatory environment your body is operating in can dramatically change how much things hurt.

Two people can have the same X-ray and very different pain levels. One moves through life relatively comfortably. The other feels like their body is filing a formal complaint. When I see that, I'm not just looking at joints or nerves. I'm looking at chemistry.

Blood sugar instability doesn't just affect weight or lab numbers. It changes how inflammatory your system is. And inflammation changes how sensitive nerves become, how quickly tissues recover, and how reactive the body feels to stress and strain.



In other words, blood sugar doesn't just influence energy and cravings.
It plays a major role in how pain is experienced. Yes — even the pain people assume is "normal for their age."

Once you see that connection, a lot of long-standing pain patterns start to make more sense. And instead of chasing symptoms one by one, you can finally start addressing one of the major drivers underneath them.

How the Body Actually Works: How Blood Sugar Amplifies Pain

Inflammation is not automatically bad. It's a normal biological process. You need it to heal. You need it to fight infections. You need it after exercise.

The problem is chronic, low-grade inflammation — the kind that never fully turns off.

Blood sugar instability can contribute to that in a few ways.

First, higher glucose levels tend to make tissues more inflamed and more reactive. When glucose is elevated often enough, your body is dealing with more oxidative stress, more inflammatory signaling, and more "wear" on blood vessels and nerves. That doesn't always show up as dramatic symptoms right away. It shows up as: you feel worse than you think you should.

Second, insulin just by itself is inflammatory. I remember a researcher once describing insulin as THE MOST inflammatory molecule in the body. So it's not just high glucose that is inflammatory, but also insulin, which rises in reaction to high glucose.

Third, blood sugar swings can irritate the nervous system. And irritated nerves do not behave politely. They amplify sensation. They increase pain sensitivity. They make "minor" issues feel loud.

This is why blood sugar issues often show up as nerve symptoms long before anyone is diagnosed with anything. Tingling. Burning. Numbness. Weird sensations in the feet. Restlessness. "My hands fall asleep." Those can have multiple causes, but blood sugar is one of the big ones that gets ignored until it's severe.

And here's the most frustrating part: people often try to manage pain by focusing only on the pain.

They'll take anti-inflammatories, try supplements, do physical therapy, get injections, stretch, ice, heat, buy the pillow, buy the shoes, buy the gadget and then wonder why it keeps coming back.

Because if the inflammatory environment is still being fed every day, the body never gets out of the loop.

This doesn't mean blood sugar is the only cause of pain. It means blood sugar can be the reason pain doesn't calm down the way it should.

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PUTTING THIS INTO PRACTICE: Where to Start

If you've been dealing with chronic pain, stiffness, or nerve irritation, here's a useful question: "Am I treating the symptom, or am I changing the environment that keeps the symptom alive?" Or another way to put it: "Am I treating the symptom? Or the root of the problem?"

When blood sugar becomes steadier, many people notice improvements they weren't even aiming for. Less stiffness. Less swelling. Less tenderness. Better recovery. More tolerance for movement. Fewer flare days.
Not because lowering blood sugar is magic. But because inflammation is chemistry, and chemistry responds to changes.

If you're eating in a way that spikes glucose and insulin repeatedly, you're essentially reminding your immune system and nervous system to stay reactive. If you stabilize that pattern, the system can quiet down.

And I'll say something even more important: this is one of the reasons people get discouraged with exercise. If someone is inflamed and insulin-resistant, exercise can feel harder than it should. Recovery can feel slower than it should. And then they conclude, "My body can't handle exercise." Sometimes the body can handle exercise just fine. It just can't handle exercise on top of unstable fuel and chronic inflammation. So if movement has felt punishing, it may not be because you're weak. It may be because your physiology is asking for a different foundation first.

Try This Today: Reducing Inflammation

Stabilize the Meal That Triggers Your Pain the Most

Most people already know which meal tends to make them feel worse — the one that leaves them more tired, achy, puffy, or inflamed later in the day. Start there. You don't need to overhaul everything at once. Just pick one meal and build it around protein and fat, while pulling back on starches and sugars.

This isn't about being "good" or eating perfectly. It's about creating one clear comparison. When you change only one variable, your body gives you much better feedback. If you can make it a clean example — a meal with protein, vegetables, and fat, without bread, pasta, noodles, potatoes, or sweets — the difference is often surprisingly obvious. Many people notice less joint stiffness, less swelling, or less overall achiness within hours, not weeks. That's valuable information, because it tells you how much blood sugar is influencing your inflammatory baseline.

Move Gently — and Watch Your Pain Change

This one catches people off guard, but gentle movement is one of the fastest ways to reduce inflammatory signaling. When muscles move, they pull glucose out of the bloodstream, circulation improves, and the nervous system gets a signal that things are more stable. Pain often softens as a result.

This does not mean pushing through a hard workout. In fact, intense exercise can sometimes spike cortisol and temporarily worsen inflammation, especially if blood sugar is already unstable. Instead, think small and consistent. A short walk after meals, a few minutes of light stretching, or easy movement throughout the day can be enough to change how your body feels. Pay attention to how your pain responds when blood sugar swings are smaller — many people are surprised by how quickly things quiet down when the system is supported rather than stressed.

Series Wrap-Up: Blood Sugar Isn't Just a Diabetes Topic

Over the last four weeks, the goal was not to turn you into someone who fears carbohydrates or obsesses over numbers. The goal was to show you something most people never get told: Blood sugar levels don't only matter if you have diabetes.

They matter because it quietly drives the terrain that chronic disease grows in.

When blood sugar and insulin are chronically elevated — even "mildly," even "not diabetic," even "just borderline" — it affects how your body functions everywhere. Not in theory. In real life. It influences inflammation, circulation, nerves, hormone signaling, brain fuel, immune behavior, and how your body repairs itself.

This is why blood sugar problems can show up as things people don't associate with blood sugar at all: stubborn weight gain, fatigue, cravings, mood swings, high blood pressure patterns, brain fog, memory issues, neuropathy, joint pain, slow healing, and chronic inflammation that never fully settles. And yes — long term, it's part of the conversation around dementia risk, because the brain is not immune to unstable fuel and inflammatory chemistry.

Most people keep treating these issues like separate battles. One supplement for joints. One medication for blood pressure. One plan for weight. One strategy for fatigue. But the body doesn't work in separate departments. It's one system — and blood sugar affects the whole system.

The good news is that this is one of the most responsive systems in the body. When fuel becomes steadier, a lot of "mystery symptoms" get quieter. Not because you found the perfect diet. But because you removed one of the most common drivers underneath the chaos.

So if you take nothing else from this series, take this: stabilizing blood sugar isn't about diabetes. It's about building a body that is less inflamed, less reactive, and more resilient — for decades.

What's Next?

Movement Matters More Than You Think

Next month, we're shifting gears into something that becomes more important with every decade: movement — the right kind, at the right intensity, for real-life bodies.

Because exercise doesn't need to be extreme to be powerful. In fact, for many people (especially if you're older, dealing with joint issues, or on medications), the goal isn't punishment — it's preserving strength, balance, circulation, and independence.

About Dr. Marlene

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

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

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

5 WAYS DUOMEGA 3&7 FISH OIL MAY SAVE YOUR LIFE.

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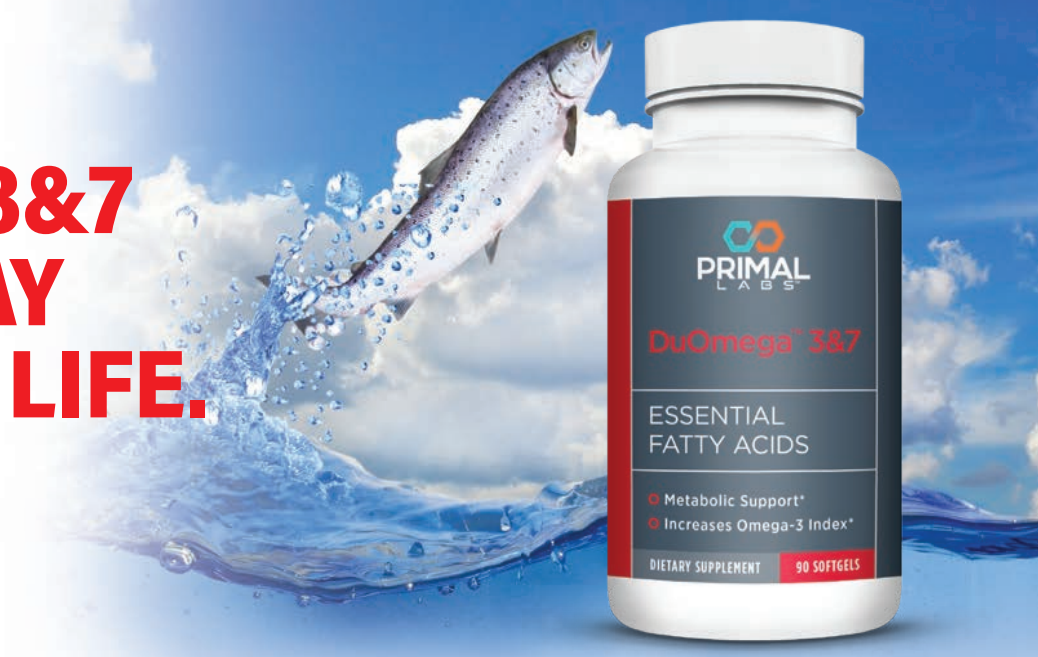

#1 Provides missing Omega for a healthier heart

In the 1970s, Danish researcher Dr. Jorn Dyerberg discovered Alaskan Eskimos' hearts were 7 times healthier than his fellow Danes, in spite of mainly eating oily fish. This discovery led to the billion dollar Omega 3 fish oil industry. But what was lost in the original research was Eskimo blood was rich in Omega 3 *and* Omega 7. And yet, 99% of fish oils sold today don't have Omega 7. **DuOmega 3&7** corrects this error and provides the missing Omega 7 for heart health!

#2 Cleveland Clinic finds Omega 7 vital to heart health

Dr. Michael Roizen, chief Wellness Officer at Cleveland Clinic, conducted a study of Omega 7 on adults at risk for cardiovascular events. After 30 days of taking a purified form of Omega 7 called Provinal,® the subjects showed a 44% reduction in inflammation…an 18% reduction in triglycerides… an 8% reduction in LDL (bad) cholesterol… and a 5% increase in HDL (good) cholesterol.

#3 Harvard study shows lower incidence of blood sugar issues

Research at Harvard School of Public Health showed that people with the highest blood levels of Omega 7 had a 60% lower incidence of blood sugar issues. Study subjects had lower body mass index (BMI), healthier triglycerides, and lower inflammation. Omega 7 also improved glucose metabolism and insulin sensitivity. **DuOmega 3&7** contains Provinal,® the purest and best studied of all Omega 7s.

#4 Double Strength Omega 3 promotes normal blood pressure and brain health

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> *"I've been taking **DuOmega 3&7** for a number of month now, and my triglycerides are back to normal." — M.C.*

> *"I love **DuOmega 3&7**. Last time I had blood work they called to ask what I was doing for my cholesterol. They were amazed!" — Wayne G*

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Q&A

Q: **Can gut issues affect brain fog? — Melissa R.**

A: Absolutely. The gut and brain are in constant communication through the nervous system, immune signaling, inflammation, and neurotransmitters. In fact, a large portion of serotonin and other brain-active chemicals are produced or influenced in the gut. When digestion is irritated, inflamed, or out of balance, the brain often feels it.

An unhealthy gut lining or disrupted microbiome can increase inflammatory signaling and interfere with how nutrients are absorbed — both of which affect mental clarity, focus, and energy. This is why people with bloating, reflux, irregular stools, or food sensitivities often also report brain fog or mood changes, even if they don't immediately connect the two.

So when brain fog is persistent, it's worth looking below the neck. Improving digestion, calming gut inflammation, and supporting the microbiome can sometimes clear mental fog more effectively than focusing on the brain itself — because the signal is often coming from the gut first.

Q: **Is it true that eating late at night causes weight gain? — Carlos M.**

A: It can — but not because food suddenly turns into fat after a certain hour. Calories don't have a bedtime. What does change at night is your physiology. In the evening, your body naturally wants to shift out of "fuel-burning mode" and into repair, recovery, and hormone regulation. Late meals — especially larger or carb-heavy ones — push insulin higher at a time when the system isn't designed to handle it as efficiently.

That insulin rise can interfere with sleep quality, even if you fall asleep easily. Many people don't connect their late dinner or nighttime snacking with waking up tired, restless, or unrefreshed the next day — but blood sugar swings during the night can quietly disrupt sleep architecture. Poor sleep then raises cortisol, makes insulin resistance worse, and increases cravings the following day, particularly for quick carbohydrates.

Over time, this creates a feedback loop. Late eating leads to disrupted sleep, disrupted sleep makes blood sugar harder to regulate, and unstable blood sugar makes late-night eating more likely. Weight gain doesn't come from one late meal — it comes from repeating this cycle over and over.

Late eating also tends to happen when the nervous system is already tired, which affects appetite signals and portion awareness. It's not about discipline — it's about timing. When possible, eating earlier and giving your body a longer overnight break allows insulin to settle and recovery processes to do their job.

Q: **Do probiotics help everyone? — Hannah K.**

A: Not always. Probiotics can be helpful for some people, but they're not a one-size-fits-all solution. The microbiome is complex, and simply adding more bacteria doesn't automatically mean things will improve. In fact, some people feel worse on probiotics — especially if they have issues like small intestinal bacterial overgrowth (SIBO), histamine intolerance, or a very sensitive gut.

Probiotics can increase gas, bloating, brain fog, or discomfort in those cases because the problem isn't a lack of bacteria — it's where the bacteria are, how they're behaving, or how the immune system is reacting to them. This is why "take a probiotic" isn't always the right first step.

For many people, supporting digestion, calming inflammation, and healing the gut lining needs to happen before introducing probiotics. Once the environment is healthier, probiotics are often better tolerated and more effective.

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.