



# Natural Insights for Well Being®

July 2020

## Mind and Circulation

Nutrients improve cognition in PD, and in postmenopause

### Pycnogenol reduced symptoms in Parkinson's

Parkinson's disease (PD) affects nerve cells in the brain that control movement, memory, and thinking. Normally, these cells produce dopamine, a chemical messenger that sends movement signals to the body. PD impairs these cells, reducing dopamine. In this study, 43 people with mild, slow-progressing PD for at least one year continued to take the standard PD treatments carbidopa-levodopa, with or without 150 mg of Pycnogenol® per day.

After four weeks, those in the Pycnogenol group had significantly better motor control of body movements, more stable posture, and improved cognitive function compared to those not taking Pycnogenol.

A common symptom in the group was fluid retention and swelling in the extremities, called edema. By the end of the study, 14 percent of those not taking Pycnogenol were free from edema compared to 81 percent of those taking Pycnogenol.

### Resveratrol boosts cognition in postmenopause

Blood flow in the brain naturally declines with age, and maintaining good cerebral circulation can preserve cognition. In this study, 129 women,



postmenopausal for at least one year, took a placebo or 75 mg of resveratrol twice per day for 12 months, then switched groups for another 12 months.

Compared to the placebo phases, while taking resveratrol, cognitive performance improved, and the decline in brain blood circulation slowed. Doctors also saw lower fasting blood sugar levels for resveratrol.

In two tests of cognition, during the resveratrol phases, participants had faster information-processing speed, and could more easily switch between two different concepts, and think about multiple concepts, compared to placebo.

Discussing the findings, doctors said during the resveratrol phases, resting brain blood flow improved, and brain blood vessels were more flexible compared to placebo, suggesting resveratrol may slow age-related cognitive decline, and preserve cognitive function.

**REFERENCE:** JOURNAL OF NEUROSURGICAL SCIENCES; JANUARY, 2020, PUBLISHED ONLINE

JULY'S

## Healthy Insight Saffron for Insomnia

In this study, 58 healthy adults aged 18 to 70, who complained of sleep problems, took a placebo or 14 mg of saffron extract twice per day. None were being treated for depression, nor were any taking medication except for contraceptives during the prior four weeks.

After one week and continuing throughout the 28-day study period, while the placebo group did not report any improvements, those taking saffron reported 25 percent fewer insomnia symptoms including difficulty falling asleep, which was the most common study complaint. Sleep was also more continuous and less interrupted. Saffron was safe, and there were no side effects reported by any of the participants.

**REFERENCE:** JOURNAL OF CLINICAL SLEEP MEDICINE; FEBRUARY, 2020, PUBLISHED ONLINE

### This Issue

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# Circulation

## Nutrients improve blood flow

### Cocoa flavonols reduced PAD

Peripheral arteries—those serving the arms, legs and torso—can narrow due to plaque, a condition called peripheral artery disease (PAD). In this study, 44 adults with PAD added a packet of flavonol-rich, unsweetened cocoa powder or a placebo powder to milk or water, three times per day.

After six months, those taking cocoa flavonols were able to walk 13 feet more than the placebo group in a six-minute walking test, while the placebo group walked 7.5 feet less than they did at the start of the study. In a biopsy of calf muscle, the cocoa group had greater cellular energy activity, more capillaries feeding the muscles, and greater blood flow.

### Lutein complex increased blood flow to the eye

To clearly focus the images we see, nerve cells in the retina of the eye need a constant supply of blood delivering oxygen and nutrients. Diabetes, high blood pressure, and other health conditions can reduce retinal blood flow, impairing vision.

In this study, 16 healthy women took a placebo or a combination of 10 mg of lutein, 500 mg of vitamin C, 364 mg of vitamin E tocopherols, 2.5 mg of carnosic acid rosemary extract, 2 mg of zeaxanthin, and 2 mg of copper per day, for three weeks. Pausing for three weeks, the women then switched groups.

Compared to the placebo phases, the lutein phases showed significantly

greater retinal capillary blood flow, and reduced systolic and diastolic blood pressure, which declined an average 4.06 and 3.69 mmHg, respectively.

**REFERENCE:** CIRCULATION RESEARCH; 2020, VOL. 126, NO. 5, 589-99



# Diabetes Update

## Omega-3s and B-complex improve kidney function in diabetes

### Diabetes types 1 and 2

Type 1 diabetes usually appears early in life when the pancreas cannot produce insulin, and is not preventable. Type 2 diabetes usually occurs later in life, most often due to lifestyle factors



that impair the ability of the body to use its insulin effectively. Both affect kidney waste-filtering function.

### Omega-3s improve kidney function in type 2 diabetes

This review of 10 placebo-controlled clinical studies covering 344 participants with both types of diabetes found that taking omega-3 supplements for at least 24 weeks reduced protein in the urine, an early sign of kidney disease. Those with type 2 diabetes saw the greatest benefit. Also, systolic blood pressure tended to decline in those taking omega-3s.

### B-complex improves kidney function in type 1 diabetes

In this study, 80 children aged 12 to 18 with type 1 diabetes for at least five

years took a placebo or a combination of vitamins B1, B6, and B12 daily. The children had albumin protein in the urine and high homocysteine levels, both signs of kidney damage, and were taking angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors. Elevated homocysteine levels can signal B-vitamin deficiency.

After 12 weeks, while the placebo group did not change, children taking B vitamins saw significant decreases in homocysteine levels and urinary albumin. Also, fasting and long-term average blood sugar levels declined. Triglycerides and total cholesterol levels both decreased compared to placebo and compared to the beginning of the study. Doctors noted B vitamins were safe and produced no adverse side effects in any of the children.

**REFERENCE:** PLOS ONE; 2020, 0228315, PUBLISHED ONLINE

# Metabolism

## Nutrients improve metabolism in HIV, help control lipids

### Vitamin E improves liver function in HIV

Those living with human immunodeficiency viruses (HIV) are more likely than healthy people to have severe liver disease, known as non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH), and



there is no treatment. Earlier studies found vitamin E improved fatty liver in the general population.

In this study, 27 people with HIV and NASH took 800 IU of vitamin E per day while continuing antiretroviral treatment. After 24 weeks, a sign of liver function, alanine transaminase (ALT), improved significantly, and fatty liver levels and the rate of liver cell death declined.

Discussing the findings, doctors said the liver improvements after taking vitamin E were greater in this group of HIV participants than earlier studies had found in non-HIV populations.

### Probiotics improve lipids and the microbiome

This study followed 70 men and women, average age 48, with average triacylglyceride and total

cholesterol levels of 133.8 and 201.5 mg per deciliter of blood, respectively. Participants took a placebo or 800 mg of lactobacillus plantarum per day.

After 12 weeks, compared to placebo, lipid and low-density lipoprotein (LDL)—the “bad” cholesterol—levels were significantly lower six hours after a meal. A protein called apolipoprotein-B that makes up very-low-density lipoprotein (VLDL) and LDL, was also significantly lower for those in the probiotics group.

Probiotics also improved the microbiome by reducing the amount of a bacterium in the gut, called Eggerthella spp, which is linked to higher triglyceride and lower high-density lipoprotein (HDL) levels. Unlike LDL, doctors consider HDL cholesterol to be beneficial and protective.

REFERENCE: AIDS; 2020, VOL. 34, NO. 2, 237-44

# Bone

## Vitamin D reduces back pain, increases mobility after hip fracture

### Low vitamin D increases back pain in postmenopause

Bone density declines with age, a trend that accelerates after menopause. In this study, doctors measured vitamin D levels in 232 postmenopausal women, average age 65, with low back pain and lumbar spine degenerative disease. The average level of vitamin D was below the optimal range of 20 to 60 nanograms per milliliter of blood (ng/mL) or 50 to 150 nanomoles per liter (nmol/L).

Women who were severely deficient in vitamin D, with levels below 8 ng/mL or 20 nmol/L, reported the most back pain, had the greatest degeneration in lumbar discs, and the lowest bone mineral density. As women progressed from normal density to osteopenia and osteoporosis, levels of vitamin D declined.

### Vitamin D improves mobility after hip surgery

When older people are deficient in vitamin D, they are less likely to regain the ability to walk independently after hip fracture surgery. This study involved 290 men and women, average age 82, with average body mass index scores of 25, 73 percent of whom had a surgical hip fracture repair.

Compared to those with vitamin D levels below 12 ng/mL or 30 nmol/L, those with higher vitamin D levels had higher rates of walking independently at 30 and 60 days after hip surgery. Those with lower-quality diets had reduced mobility 30 days after hip surgery compared to those with higher quality diets.

Discussing the findings, doctors said vitamin D is a stronger predictor than

diet quality in recovering independent mobility after hip surgery.

REFERENCE: MENOPAUSE; FEBRUARY, 2020, E97235, PUBLISHED ONLINE





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# Skin

## MSM reduced visible signs of skin aging

### Good for more than joints and sports performance

Sports doctors have long used MSM, or methylsulfonylmethane, to boost athletic performance. In this two-phase study, MSM improved skin hydration and appearance.

In the first pilot-study phase, 20 participants took a placebo or 3 grams of MSM per day. Over 16 weeks, participants taking MSM self-reported significant reductions in facial wrinkles and skin roughness compared to placebo.

In the second phase, participants took either 1 gram or 3 grams of MSM per day for 16 weeks. In addition to participants' reports, doctors used clinical skin grading and measurement

instruments to test skin hydration, firmness, and elasticity. Both groups saw significant reductions in the severity of wrinkles, improved skin firmness, elasticity, and hydration. Those in the high-dose 3 gram MSM group had better skin elasticity and hydration than the low-dose group, but doctors said the 1 gram dose was "sufficiently effective in reducing the facial signs of aging."

**REFERENCE:** INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR VITAMIN AND NUTRITION RESEARCH; FEBRUARY, 2020, PUBLISHED ONLINE



## Your Good News!®

We're dedicated to discovering the benefits of good nutrition and healthy lifestyle, and hope this issue of Natural Insights for Well Being® informs and inspires you to take an active role in your health. Please ask us to assist you with any natural products you would like to know more about.

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