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(see page 5)



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Greetings from Natural Grocers

Welcome to the April edition of the *Health Hotline*! We've crossed the threshold of spring and entered a period of growth and regeneration... and pollen. If you are one of the millions who suffer through spring with a laundry list of miserable allergy symptoms, we have an article for you! "Nip Spring Allergies in the Bud" explains just why the body reacts the way it does to pollen and offers natural solutions to address the root cause of those annoying symptoms. And speaking of growth and regeneration, one of the most common questions we get asked here at Natural Grocers—by men and women—is how to stop hair loss. We've heard you and have an article especially for you folks on page 14. Finally, don't miss the informative article on how to maintain muscle mass as you age—an important topic for anyone.

And as always, you will find loads of amazing deals on the highest quality produce, grocery products, dietary supplements, and body care around.

Happy reading!

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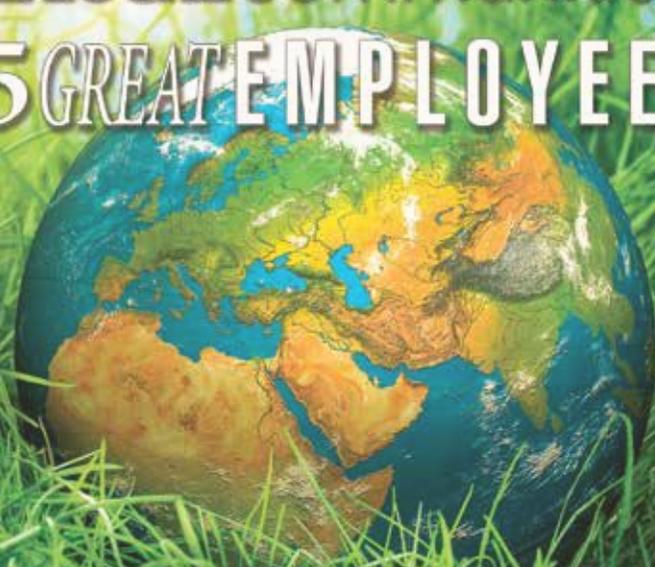
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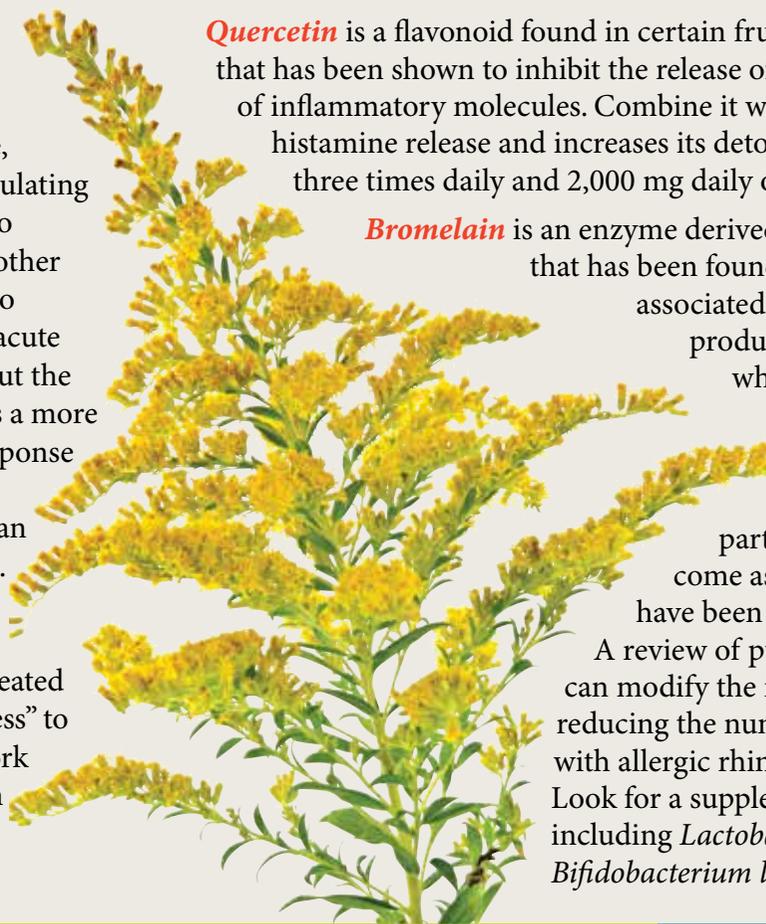
NIP SPRING ALLERGIES IN THE BUD

By Lindsay Wilson

Spring has arrived in all of her pollen-filled glory, and while many of you are enjoying the warm breezes and sun-drenched days outside, some of us are walking around in a cloud of pollen-fueled misery. Whether your symptoms include a sneezy, runny nose, itchy, watery eyes, a scratchy throat, sinus pressure, or headache (or maybe a miserable combination of all of the above), spring allergies are no fun. It's tempting to reach for over-the-counter medications, but these can come with unpleasant and even dangerous side effects—drowsiness, dizziness, dry mouth and sinuses, headache, anxiety, heart arrhythmias, and hypertension—and do nothing to treat the underlying cause. These types of medications are also not recommended for children, pregnant or breastfeeding women, and for those with diabetes, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and thyroid disorders. This spring, consider a new approach to nip allergies in the bud.

NATURAL RELIEF... WITHOUT THE SIDE EFFECTS

Allergies are an inflammatory immune response to a foreign invader, in this case, pollen. When pollen makes its way up your nose, antibodies spring into action, stimulating specialized cells called mast cells to release histamine and an array of other inflammatory molecules, leading to those annoying symptoms. These acute symptoms are the most obvious, but the reaction that caused them initiates a more complex allergic inflammatory response that can trigger a recurrence of symptoms many hours later and can lead to system-wide inflammation. This inflammation is also associated with an increased sensitivity to the allergen after repeated exposure and “hyper-responsiveness” to other irritants. The take-away? Work toward reducing the inflammation associated with allergies.



Quercetin is a flavonoid found in certain fruits and vegetables like apples and onions that has been shown to inhibit the release of histamine and reduce the production of inflammatory molecules. Combine it with **vitamin C**, which also helps prevent histamine release and increases its detoxification. **Try:** 250-600 mg of quercetin, three times daily and 2,000 mg daily of vitamin C daily.

Bromelain is an enzyme derived from the stem of the pineapple plant that has been found to reduce the inflammation and swelling associated with allergies. It works by stimulating the production of anti-inflammatory prostaglandins while simultaneously inhibiting the production of pro-inflammatory prostaglandins.

Try: 400-500 mg, three times daily.

Probiotics are known to play an integral part in the immune system, so it should come as no surprise that a number of strains have been found to alleviate allergic symptoms. A review of published studies found that probiotics can modify the immune response to allergens in part by reducing the number of inflammatory molecules associated with allergic rhinitis, helping to ease symptoms. **Try:** Look for a supplement that contains a variety of strains, including *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, *L. casei*, *L. rhamnosus*, *Bifidobacterium longum*, and *B. lactis*.

STICK A NEEDLE IN IT

Could acupuncture ease your allergy symptoms?

An important element of Traditional Chinese Medicine, acupuncture uses tiny needles to balance the flow of energy through the body (*chi*). It is commonly used to treat everything from pain to infertility, and now research is finding that it can also be an effective tool in combating the symptoms of seasonal allergies. A recent review of the research, including 13 randomized controlled trials and 2,365 patients, found that those receiving acupuncture for their allergies had a significant reduction in nasal symptoms, a lesser need for medication, and lower serum levels of immunoglobulin E (IgE), an antibody associated with allergic reactions.



STRESS LESS, SNEEZE LESS?

Feeling stressed out? It may be making your allergy symptoms worse. A study published in the *Annals of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology* found that hay fever sufferers who reported higher stress levels experienced more allergy flare-ups over two 12-day periods. “Stress can cause several negative effects on the body, including causing more symptoms for allergy sufferers,” allergist and lead researcher Amber Patterson, MD said.

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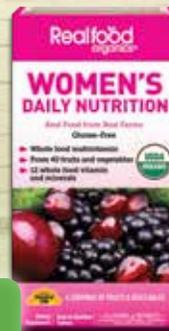
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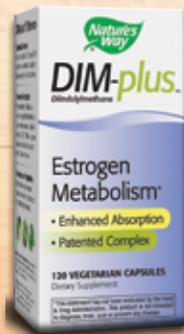


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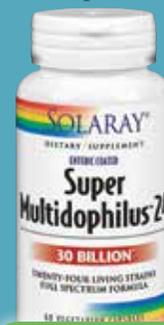
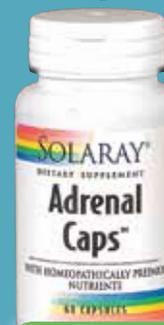
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STAY STRONG & MUSCLE ON

The steps to take now to maintain your strength, mobility and physical independence

By Jack Challem

Lossing physical independence may be the hardest part of aging. Caring for an elderly parent who has lost their independence can be equally as hard. Sarcopenia, or age-related loss of muscle mass and strength, can lead to frailty, falls, and broken bones—and is one of the leading causes of loss of mobility and independence in older adults. Whether you are in your 40s or 50s and just beginning to experience a bit more flab than muscle, or moving into your 60s or 70s and need a little extra support, by taking an integrated approach that includes nutrition, exercise, and supplementation you can build and maintain muscle to better your chances of an active and independent life down the road.

From around age 30 onward, we begin to lose 3 to 8 percent of muscle mass each decade—which accelerates sharply after age 60, and more so after 70. Poor nutrition and lack of physical activity hastens the progression, so eating sufficient protein and nutrient-dense foods and regular physical activity are vital. In addition to good nutrition and exercise, a number of dietary supplements have been shown to maintain muscle synthesis and reduce muscle loss related to aging. Muscle loss starts in middle age—get ahead of the game and start building muscle mass now. Prevention is easier than treatment.



Good Nutrition is Critical

A nutrient-dense diet built on a variety of quality proteins, healthy fats, and plenty of fruit and vegetables is the foundation for good health throughout life, but becomes critically important for building and maintaining muscle as we age. Eating a well-rounded diet will ensure that you get enough protein and other nutrients necessary for muscle health. Sustaining a healthy diet may become more of a challenge as we grow older, but whether it's a busy schedule that leaves little room for preparing healthy meals, the inability to make your own nutritious meals, or simply a loss of appetite, it is important to make good nutrition a priority.

Of the three macronutrients (fats, carbohydrates, and protein), protein is the most important for muscle tissue growth and repair. Some research suggests that the recommended dietary allowance for protein (0.8 grams per kg of body weight; for a 140-pound woman this translates to about 51 grams/day) may not be enough to maintain muscle mass in people 55 and older. A recent review published in the journal *Osteoporosis International* suggests that a protein intake of 1 to 1.2 grams per kg of body weight is more optimal for older adults (64-77 grams/day for a 140-pound woman).

When choosing proteins, it is important to consider whether or not it is a “complete” protein, one that contains an adequate proportion of all nine essential amino acids (those that cannot be made by the body and must be obtained from food). Animal products provide the highest quality complete protein, and the best sources include pastured and naturally-raised meat, pastured eggs, and pastured dairy, including whey protein. Plant sources like legumes can contribute to total protein intake, but it should be noted that most are not complete proteins—that is, they do not contain the nine essential amino acids in adequate ratios or concentrations, and must be combined with other foods to ensure the right balance. Eating a natural foods diet that includes a variety of complete, high-quality proteins, in addition to plenty of plant foods, will ensure that you are getting the nutrients you need to support muscle growth and maintenance.



Strength Training is Key

Exercise, especially strength-training exercise, is key in building and maintaining muscle mass and strength, coordination, and balance, while physical inactivity is an underlying factor in the development of sarcopenia. A number of studies also have found that physical activity amplifies the benefits of muscle-building supplements. If you're relatively young, it is important to start building your muscle reserve now. The more muscle you have by the age of 30, the more likely you'll limit your age-related muscle loss. But it's never too late to develop a regular routine of strength training exercise—studies have found that strength training for 45 minutes, two to three times a week, increases muscle mass, strength, and power and promotes other physical activity,



even in the very old and frail. And the exercises need not be intense; most studies have focused on simple movements such as knee extensions and gentle seated weight lifting. Start slowly. A light set of hand weights is a good place to start, but as evidenced in the studies, you can use your own body weight as resistance. Once you feel stronger, begin to include other activities, such as regular walking, using a rowing machine or exercise bike, yoga, or tai chi. With improved muscle mass and strength, you are less likely to become frail or experience physical limitations that can ultimately affect your independence and quality of life.

Optimize Muscle Mass with Supplements

BCAAs. BCAAs, or branched-chain amino acids, consist of three essential amino acids—leucine, isoleucine, and valine—that are vital for muscle production and suppressing the breakdown of muscle. Their benefits increase when combined with several other amino acids, specifically alanine, aspartate, and glutamate. Another option is a multi-amino acid supplement containing the nine essential amino acids. Studies have found that amino acid supplements stimulate muscle production in both older and younger subjects. A study of seniors, reported in the *American Journal of Cardiology*, found that daily multi amino acid supplements led to significant increases in muscle and strength after as little as six months. Try 4 grams of BCAAs or 8-10 grams daily of a multi-amino acid supplement.

Leucine. Of the BCAAs, leucine may be the most important because it plays a critical role in converting protein to muscle. A Dutch study found that leucine supplements (3 grams/d) helped increased muscle synthesis in older men almost to the same level as in young men. According to an article in *Clinical Nutrition*, leucine increased muscle even when combined with a low protein diet. Other research has found that leucine-rich amino acid supplements lead to more muscle production immediately after moderate exercise. And another study, published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, found that leucine supplements countered muscle loss during 14 days of bed rest. Try 1 to 4 grams daily.

Whey protein. Derived from dairy, whey protein is available as a powder to mix in drinks and shakes. It is one of the best sources of branched-chain amino acids (BCAAs), particularly leucine, which is especially important in synthesizing muscle. It is quickly absorbed and utilized by the muscles, giving them the food they need to stop muscle breakdown and shift to growth and repair and can be a good option for those who have a hard time getting sufficient amounts of high-quality protein from their regular diet.

Omega-3s. The omega-3s might protect against muscle loss through

their anti-inflammatory effects. Researchers at the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, Missouri, conducted a study with 60 seniors, 60 to 85 years of age, who were given either omega-3 supplements or placebos each day for six months. The omega-3 supplements provided 1,860 mg of eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and 1,500 mg of docosahexaenoic acid (DHA). They underwent several measurements of muscle mass and strength at the beginning and end of the six-month study. Lead researcher Bettina Mittendorfer, PhD, reported that the omega-3s “slows the normal decline in muscle mass and function in older adults and should be considered a therapeutic approach for preventing sarcopenia and maintaining physical independence in older adults.”

Vitamin D. Most people think of vitamin D simply in terms of bone health, but it is proving to be just as important in muscle health. Researchers in Brazil asked 160 postmenopausal women who had a history of falls during the previous 12 months to take either 1,000 IU of vitamin D or placebos for nine months. By the end of the study, women taking vitamin D supplements benefited from a 25 percent increase in leg muscle strength.

Women taking placebos had an almost 7 percent decrease in muscle strength. The researchers wrote that vitamin D provided a “significant protective factor against the occurrence of sarcopenia, with significant increases in muscle strength and control of progressive loss of lean [muscle] mass.”

Several studies have found that vitamin D supplementation reduces the likelihood of falls. Researchers at the Wake Forest School of Medicine, North Carolina, analyzed vitamin D levels in 2,099 people and tracked them for a total of six years. At the beginning of the study, two-thirds of the subjects—elderly men and women—were either marginally deficient or had clear cut deficiencies of vitamin D. People with low vitamin D levels had about a 30 percent greater risk of having some physical limitations and almost twice the risk of disability, compared with people who had higher vitamin D levels. Three of every four Americans are deficient in vitamin D, and seniors have a particularly high risk of deficiency because they spend a lot of time indoors and away from the vitamin D-promoting benefits of sunlight. Try 2,000 to 5,000 IU daily.

Losing muscle mass, and the resulting frailty and disability that can come with it, can be a devastating blow to your independence. But the research shows that severe muscle loss doesn't have to be inevitable with aging. While eating habits and exercise are fundamentally important, so are the supplements that research has shown to enhance muscle mass and strength, regardless of age. With a comprehensive routine that includes all of these components, you can optimize your muscle mass, supporting strength, mobility, and overall health and wellbeing, well into your golden years.



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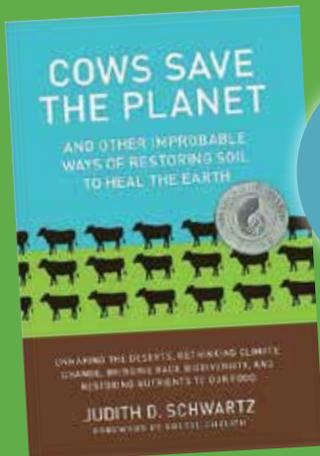
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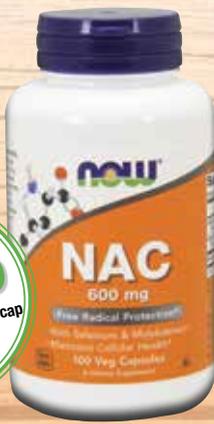
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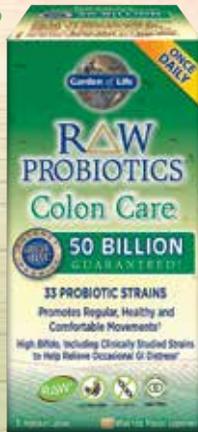


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WHY IT'S SO IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND B-COMPLEX VITAMINS AND "EPIGENETICS"

Most people understand a little about genetics—that we inherit 20,000 or so genes from our parents and other ancestors. These genes determine much about us, such as our skin, hair, and eye color. But while our genetic code may be permanent, our biology allows genes to adapt to changing situations. In other words, things aren't as permanent as people thought when the structure of our genes was discovered in 1953.

In the 1990s, researchers started to gain a clearer understanding of epigenetics, a subspecialty in the field of genetics. If our genes are our computer hardware, so to speak, epigenetics is our modifiable software. Epigenetics influences the fine tuning of how our genes actually function. And there are a great many factors that influence our epigenetic software, including hormones, toxins, and diet.

Specifically, several of the B vitamins, along with a few other nutrients, influence the epigenetic regulation of genes through a process called methylation. Some of the B vitamins are precursors to "methyl groups," which can attach to genes and modify their programming.

Animal studies have clearly shown that some B vitamins play major roles in regulating genes through epigenetics. Some human research on twins has found that epigenetic changes account for many of their individual physical differences as they grow. And recently, human studies of epigenetics have provided clues to just how powerful nutrition is when it comes to regulating the functioning of genes.

In one study, Paula Dominguez-Salas, PhD, of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, and her colleagues studied 84 Gambian women who became pregnant during their nation's rainy season, 83 women who became pregnant during the dry season, and 20 women who did not become pregnant. The researchers noted significant

differences in B-vitamin intake during the different seasons, and they measured how the different amounts of B vitamins affected "methylation" in a small number of genes.

Dominguez-Salas reported that women who conceived at the peak of the rainy season had higher intake of B vitamins and higher levels of methylation in six genes. In contrast, when women conceived at the peak of the dry season, they had lower levels of B vitamins and methylation.

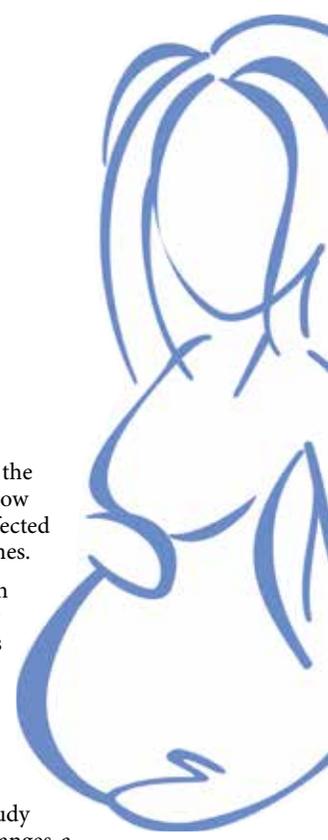
Although Dominguez-Salas did not study the implications of those epigenetic changes, a different group of researchers did.

Michelle Trivedi, MD, of Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, studied the relationship between B vitamin intake during pregnancy, methylation, and children's later risk of asthma.

Trivedi and colleagues calculated the B-vitamin intake of 1,052 women during their first and second trimesters of pregnancy. Of their 1,052 children, 21 percent were diagnosed with asthma at age seven.

After analyzing the data, Trivedi reported that mothers who consumed relatively large amounts of dietary vitamin B12 and choline during the first trimester had children with a lower risk of asthma.

References: Dominguez-Salas P, Moore SE, Baker MS, et al. Maternal nutrition at conception modulates DNA methylation of human metastable epialleles. *Nature Communications*, 2014; doi 10.1038/ncomms4746. Trivedi M, Sharma S, Rifas-Shiman S, et al. Maternal intake of dietary methyl donors in pregnancy and childhood asthma at 7 years. Abstract #54675, presented at the American Thoracic Society International Conference, San Diego, Calif., May 2014.



FISH AND FISH OILS GREATLY REDUCE THE RISK OF VENOUS THROMBOSIS

Eating a lot of fish or taking omega-3 fish oil supplements can significantly lower the risk of venous thrombosis, that is, the risk of developing blood clots in leg veins.

Sigrid K. Brækkan, PhD, of the University of Tromsø, Norway, and her colleagues analyzed data from a study of 23,621 people who were age 25 to 97 years when the study began. They were followed up for an average of 16 years, unless they died.

People who ate fish three or more times weekly were 22 percent less likely to develop venous thrombosis, compared with people who ate fish only once or twice a week.

When people ate fish three or more times a week and also took fish oil capsules, their risk of venous thrombosis decreased by 48 percent.

Reference: Hansen-Krone IJ, Enga KF, Sudduth-Klinger JM, et al. High fish plus fish oil intake is associated with slightly reduced risk of venous thromboembolism: the Tromsø study. *Journal of Nutrition*, 2014;144:861-867.

RESEARCHERS FIND THAT CHOCOLATE HAS AN ANTI-STRESS EFFECT

Stressed by work or life at home? A new study has found that eating a tiny bit of dark chocolate can reduce both feelings and biochemical markers of stress.

Petra H. Wirtz, PhD, and her colleagues at the University of Bern, Switzerland, recruited 65 healthy men, ages 20 to 50 years, for the study. The research was funded in part by the Swiss Cocoa and Chocolate Foundation.

Thirty-one of the subjects received 50 grams (a little less than 2 ounces) of a 72-percent dark chocolate, while 34 subjects received the same amount of a look-a-like fake chocolate. The researchers took blood and saliva samples for later analysis, and two hours later the subjects underwent a psychosocial stress test. The test included a mock job interview and a mental arithmetic task in front of an audience. Another blood and saliva sample was taken one hour after the stress test.

Levels of several stress markers, including cortisol, epinephrine, and adrenocorticotropic hormone (ACTH), increased in all participants. However, people who had consumed the dark chocolate experienced a reduced stress response.

Wirtz wrote that the dark chocolate reduced the adrenal gland's "stress reactivity."

The dark chocolate contained 125 mg of an antioxidant flavonoid known as epicatechin, while the placebo chocolate contained none.

Reference: Wirtz PH, von Kanel R, Meister RE, et al. Dark chocolate intake buffers stress reactivity in humans. *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*, 2014; doi 10.1016/j.jacc.2014.02.580.

VITAMIN D SUPPLEMENT BENEFITS PATIENTS WITH HEART FAILURE

Ejection fraction refers to the amount of blood the heart pumps with each beat. For example, an ejection fraction of 60 means that 60 percent of the blood in the heart's left or right ventricle is pumped out.

In people with heart failure, the ejection fraction is below 55, which is often referred to as a percentage. Some drugs, as well as coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10), can improve the ejection fraction of people with heart failure.

Vitamin D levels are typically low in patients with heart failure, so Andrea Dalbeni, PhD, and his colleagues at the University of Verona, Italy, conducted a small study in which 23 chronic heart failure patients received vitamin D or placebos over six months. When the study began, all of the patients were deficient in the vitamin, with

blood levels of vitamin D ranging from about 12 to 20 ng/mL.

Vitamin D3 was administered as a single oral 600,000 IU dose, with additional 100,000 doses at the 10th and 20th week of the study. The doses averaged out to the equivalent of 4,000 IU daily.

By the end of the six-month study, the patients receiving vitamin D had a 6.71 percent improvement in their ejection fraction, while those taking placebos had a 4.3 percent decrease. In addition, patients taking vitamin D had an average seven point decrease in their systolic blood pressure, from 129 to 122 mm Hg.

Reference: Dalbeni A, Scaturro G, Degan M, et al. Effects of six months of vitamin D supplementation in patients with heart failure: a randomized double-blind controlled trial. *Nutrition, Metabolism & Cardiovascular Diseases*, 2014; doi: 10.1016/j.numecd.2014.02.015.

GUT BACTERIA ESSENTIAL FOR NORMAL IMMUNE SYSTEM FUNCTION



Although some bacteria can be deadly, most of them are actually good for our health.

“The vast majority of our interactions with bacteria are symbiotic in nature, consisting of colonization by a complex and diverse microbiota that inhabit humans for life,” wrote Sakis K. Mazmanian, PhD, and his colleagues in the journal *Cell Host & Microbe*. “Rather than causing inflammation, commensal microbes largely direct beneficial immune functions and often engender health.”

In a series of experiments with laboratory mice, Mazmanian showed just how crucial normal gut bacteria are for revving up the immune system to fight infections.

In one of the experiments, Mazmanian compared mice born without gut bacteria to mice that had normal gut bacteria. The animals missing gut bacteria had fewer innate immune cells—the types of white blood cells that immediately go into action to fight infections.

Next, Mazmanian exposed the mice to *Listeria monocytogenes*, a potentially deadly type of bacteria. The normal mice survived, but those lacking gut bacteria died.

Finally, the researchers gave antibiotics to the healthy mice, while at the same time injecting them with *L. monocytogenes*. Antibiotics destroy both good and pathogenic species of bacteria. The antibiotics reduced the ability of the mice to fight the infection.

Reference: Khosravi A, Yanez A, Price JG, et al. Gut microbiota promote hematopoiesis to control bacterial infection. *Cell Host & Microbe*, 2014;15:374-381.

Quick Reviews of Recent Research

Inflammation increases vitamin B6 needs

The use of vitamin B6 and other B vitamins in the treatment of arthritis and other inflammatory diseases goes back to at least the 1980s. In a study at the University of Bergen, Norway, researchers analyzed levels of pyridoxal-5-phosphate (PLP) and various inflammatory markers in 3,088 subjects. They found that chronic inflammation led to an increase in the body's breakdown of vitamin B6. The vitamin plays roles in more than 100 enzymatic reactions, including the formation of neurotransmitters.

Ulvik A. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 2014;100:250-255.

Gluten-free diet may prevent type-1 diabetes

Researchers at the Rigshospitalet in Copenhagen, Denmark, fed pregnant laboratory mice either a standard diet or a gluten-free diet. The mice continued to eat their respective diets during lactation. The gluten-free diet resulted in a significantly lower incidence of type-1 diabetes and insulinitis, the latter a prelude to diabetes. The gluten-free diet led to changes in the animals' gut bacteria and a reduced inflammatory immune response.

Hansen CH. *Diabetes*, 2014; doi: 10.2337/db13-1612.

Inflammatory molecule influences glucose

Interleukin-6 (IL-6) is generally considered pro-inflammatory, but like so many other natural compounds in the body, it has multiple roles. Apparently it plays an important role in regulating blood sugar. In a study conducted at Laval University, Canada, researchers studied an omega-3 byproduct known as protectin DX. Protectin DX stimulates the release of IL-6, which apparently plays a role in regulating blood sugar levels. IL-6 sends signals to the liver to lower glucose production and also tells muscles to boost their glucose uptake.

White PJ. *Nature Medicine*, 2014; doi: 10.1038/nm.3549.

Soft drinks increase risk of stroke

Researchers at the Karolinska Institute in Sweden analyzed data on 68,459 men and women who ranged from their mid-40s to early 80s in age. Over 10 years of follow up, 3,510 cases of stroke were reported. The researchers found that people who had consumed two or more servings of soft drinks daily had about a 20 percent greater risk of suffering a stroke.

Larsson SC. *Journal of Nutrition*, 2014; doi: 10.3945/jn.114.190546.

Low vitamin D linked to prostate cancer

Researchers from Northwestern University in Chicago analyzed vitamin D levels and the risk of aggressive prostate cancer in 667 men. They reported that vitamin D deficiency was associated with a greater risk of being diagnosed with the aggressive form of the disease.

Murphy AB. *Clinical Cancer Research*, 2014;20:2289-2299.

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THROUGH THICK & THIN

THE BEST SUPPLEMENTS TO TRY NOW TO PREVENT HAIR LOSS, FOR WOMEN AND MEN

By Heather Pratt, MNT

If your bouffant isn't as big, or your pompadour not as poufy as it used to be you might be one of the 21 million women or 35 million men suffering from hair loss. And while there is no physical harm in losing your mane, in a culture that values youth and appearance, it can be emotionally devastating. Unfortunately the treatment options can be equally devastating: drugs with undesirable side effects, painful (and pricey) procedures, and promises of easy fixes that just don't work. But the answer may be as simple as giving your body extra nutritional support. So before you commit yourself to the dreaded comb-over, or expensive extensions or hair plugs, consider some nutritional approaches to preserve the hair you've got, and possibly regain some of what's been lost.

Part of the reason that hair loss can be so difficult to treat is that there are so many possible causes. Thyroid problems, low-calorie dieting, nutrient deficiencies, stress, prescription drugs, hormone imbalances, and an autoimmune condition known as alopecia areata can all cause hair loss. But the majority of adults who experience hair loss are likely to be diagnosed with androgenetic alopecia, or hereditary hair loss, believed to be driven by androgens (male hormones). In men this type of hair loss is likely to show as male pattern baldness or thinning of the hair line and crown, while in women it is mostly likely to be diffuse thinning over most the scalp. In either case the hair follicles begin to shrink, which shortens the life cycle of the hair and leads to shorter, thinner hair. Eventually the hair follicle will stop growing hair entirely, leading to baldness. The real question though, is why does this happen?

Much of the research on androgenetic alopecia has focused on

the enzyme 5-alpha-reductase, which converts the hormone testosterone to dihydrotestosterone (DHT). It is DHT that is believed to be responsible for shrinking the hair follicles, so many treatments are focused on blocking 5-alpha-reductase in an attempt to stop the conversion of testosterone to DHT. While this approach has been somewhat successful for men, it generally isn't as effective for women, leading some to suggest that female pattern hair loss should not be categorized as androgenetic alopecia. But DHT isn't the only hair loss theory out there. Another theory that has emerged from the research is the notion that hair follicles are susceptible to oxidative damage and inflammation, both of which appear to contribute to hair loss. DHT may still play a role, as it appears that oxidative stress facilitates the entry of DHT into the cells and promotes 5-alpha-reductase enzyme activity and higher DHT formation. Broadening our understanding of the possible causes of hair loss helps to more effectively treat it, especially in cases when androgens don't overtly appear to be the cause.

After you rule out and/or address other causes, such as medication use or hormonal imbalances, start with these basic nutrients that are appropriate for anyone suffering from hair loss.

- Nutrient deficiencies such as zinc, selenium, biotin, and vitamin C can all result in hair loss. A **high potency multi vitamin and mineral supplement** is a good way to help ensure you are getting all the vitamins and minerals you need to grow healthy, full hair.
- Since oxidative stress is an emerging factor in the hair loss process, getting adequate antioxidants may help to protect the hair follicle from damage and preserve its function. Antioxidants that may have hair specific protective actions include: EGCG found in **green tea**, **mixed tocotrienols** (members of the vitamin E family), the amino acid **N-acetyl cysteine (NAC)**, **proanthocyanidins** (found in grape seed extract and Pycnogenol), **vitamin C**, **vitamin E**, and **lycopene**.
- Supplements that reduce inflammation throughout the body, and specifically in the hair follicle, may also help to preserve hair and promote hair growth. The **omega-3s** found in fish oil are a good starting place, but you might also want to consider adding some **gamma-linolenic acid (GLA)** to the mix (from blackcurrant seed, evening primrose, or borage oil) to further reduce inflammation and support hair growth. One study found that 62% of women who took a combination of fish oil (460 mg), blackcurrant seed oil (460 mg), vitamin E (5 mg), vitamin C (30 mg), and lycopene (1 mg) daily for six months saw an increase in their hair density, while 90% reported a decrease in overall hair loss.
- **Polygonum multiflorum**, also known as Fo-ti or He Shou Wu is a Chinese herb with a long reputation as a hair growth promoter. It appears to work by increasing the cells that produce hair and encouraging the existing hair cells into the growth phase. It also contains compounds that act as antioxidants to help work against oxidative stress.

For the Ladies Losing Their Locks

If you're a woman facing female pattern hair loss, it is critical to delve further into the possible cause, since it may not be androgen dependent. Even if hair loss is not androgen driven, it may still be hormone related. For instance, women are far more likely to experience thyroid problems than men, and dry, thinning hair can be a symptom of low thyroid function. Women may also lose hair from the hormonal imbalances that come with polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), so it is important to get a thorough check of your hormones and take steps to balance them naturally. Iron is essential for good follicle health and hair growth, but many women, especially those of childbearing age who are regularly menstruating, have chronically low levels. The hair follicles contain ferritin, the storage form of iron, and low levels can lead to loss of hair growth, and dry, brittle hair. Have your serum ferritin concentrations checked to rule out iron deficiency, and take an *iron supplement* if your levels are low (levels between 50-70 ng/mL are required for adequate hair growth).

Is Your "Healthy" Diet Causing Hair Loss?

Much of what we know about hair loss and nutrition comes from what we have learned from people who are starving, such as those without access to adequate food, and those with eating disorders, in other words, those with severe nutritional deficiencies. In these instances it is well known that the hair may become thin, lose its color, or stop growing altogether. But what is less recognized is that often the diets we deliberately undertake with the best of intentions can negatively affect the growth and thickness of our hair. Diets that severely limit or restrict any of the macronutrients (protein, fat, or carbohydrates) or severely restrict calories aren't able to deliver the nutrients and energy the body needs to grow healthy hair.

Even with adequate calories some diets may still lead to hair loss. For example, protein is essential to normal hair growth and people on low-protein diets are more likely to notice negative changes in their hair. Very low-carbohydrate diets may also affect the hair because they can cause the thyroid to slow down, which will also result in decreased hair growth and thickness. If you've recently made big changes to your diet and find your hair is not what it used to be, you might want to take a closer look and make sure you are getting enough calories and nutrients. Should you find that your diet isn't supporting healthy hair growth, this type of hair loss is usually easily restored once the deficiency is corrected, and you'll likely have gained valuable insight into the type of diet that is right for your body.

Early Hair Loss May Be an Early Warning Sign of Cardiovascular Disease

If you suffer from hair loss it might be an early warning sign of more serious issues. A large meta-analysis including nearly 37,000 men found vertex balding (hair loss on the crown of the head) to be associated with coronary heart disease. Several other studies have found that both males and females with androgenetic alopecia are more likely than their normal hair counterparts to have signs of an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, such as elevated triglycerides, cholesterol levels, and blood pressure. They are also more likely to have elevated glucose levels, and increased insulin levels, both signs of metabolic syndrome (a.k.a. prediabetes). The connection between cardiovascular disease and metabolic syndrome is well recognized, but exactly how hair loss fits in is less clear. One plausible theory is that the blood vessels that supply the scalp with nutrients and oxygen can also become clogged and calcified in the same way other blood vessels can. Without proper blood supply, the scalp doesn't receive the nutrients it needs and isn't able to clear away the things it doesn't need, like toxins and excess hormones. While we still have more to learn about the connection, those suffering from early hair loss may want to consider taking proactive steps to protect their hearts as well as their hair.

For the Dudes Whose Dos Are Disappearing

If you are a male and experiencing typical male pattern hair loss, there are many natural products that are recognized for blocking the 5-alpha-reductase enzyme and thus the formation of DHT. Most of these have been researched for their effects on benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), in which DHT is believed to be the hormone responsible for the cell growth that leads to prostate enlargement. Of all of these options *saw palmetto* is the only one that has had specific research performed on its effects on hair loss. In one small study 60% of the men taking saw palmetto combined with beta-sitosterol (a compound naturally found in saw palmetto) experienced improvement in their hair loss.

In Sum...

As distressing as hair loss can be, remember that stopping its progression can take some time. Even the most popular prescription products take months to see noticeable benefits. Dietary supplements are no different, as it takes time to build optimal levels, so plan to take your supplements of choice for at least three to four months to determine if you've found the right combo. While the causes can be varied, extra nutritional support can often be the missing link in addressing hair loss. 🍏

References available upon request.



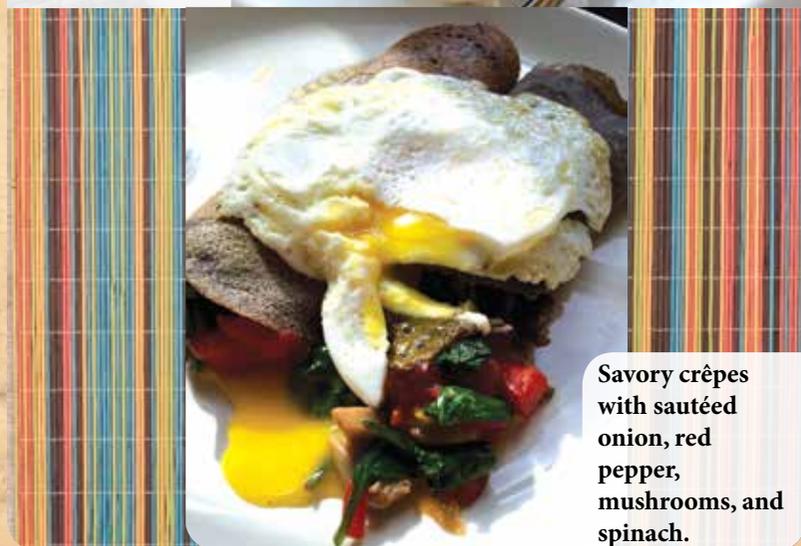
BREAKFAST *du Jour*

We all look forward to leisurely mornings off, easing into the day with a slow breakfast shared with family. But all too often those breakfasts center on carb and sugar-heavy pancakes or waffles, drowned in syrup. While comforting and delicious, it isn't a healthy way to start the day and can set you up for unstable blood sugar, crankiness, and cravings. The good news is that you don't have to deprive yourself or your family! These crêpes will satisfy your craving for a "sweet" breakfast (or savory, if that's what you prefer), while providing you with protein, fiber, and the energy you need to power through your day. Rather than relying on processed white flour, we use fiber-rich buckwheat flour, a grain-free and gluten-free option, and one that is rich in minerals, including magnesium. The whey powder and eggs provide an extra protein punch.

Whether you make them sweet or savory, these crêpes deliver on both flavor *and* nutrition!



Sweet crêpes with whipped coconut milk and dark chocolate ganache.



Savory crêpes with sautéed onion, red pepper, mushrooms, and spinach.

Easy Buckwheat Crêpes

*Makes about 15 - 20 crêpes,
depending on the size of
the skillet*

Think of crêpes as delicate pancakes that can be made either sweet or savory, depending on what you choose to fill them with. For a sweet twist, try whipped coconut milk and dark chocolate ganache (simply melt equal parts dark chocolate and heavy cream over low heat). For a savory option, fill them with sautéed onion, baby spinach, peppers, and mushrooms and top with an over-easy egg. Crêpes keep well in the refrigerator—make enough so you will have leftovers for the week. Simply stack cooled crêpes and wrap in plastic wrap. Reheat for a few seconds in the microwave before adding the fillings of your choice.

Visit www.naturalgrocers.com for more sweet and savory filling ideas!

- 1 cup NG bulk buckwheat flour
- 1/4 cup NG bulk whey protein
- 1 tablespoon NG bulk coconut sugar (omit if making the savory version)
- 1 tablespoon matcha powder (optional, provides an antioxidant boost)
- 1/4 teaspoon NG bulk sea salt
- 3 NG pastured eggs
- 3/4 cup unsweetened almond milk
- 1 1/4 cup water
- 1/4 cup melted coconut oil, plus additional for skillet

Warm the oven to 200° F and line a baking sheet with foil.

In a medium bowl, sift together the buckwheat flour, whey protein powder, coconut sugar, matcha powder (if using), and salt. Whisk dry ingredients until well combined. In a large bowl, whisk together eggs, almond milk, water, and coconut oil until well combined and just slightly frothy. Add dry ingredients to wet, whisking until well combined.

Warm a small amount of oil over medium heat in a 6-8-inch skillet. Add about 3 tablespoons crêpe batter (or enough to cover the bottom of the pan in a thin layer) to the hot skillet and tilt to coat bottom. Cook until the crêpe releases from the pan to flip easily, about 1 minute. Flip and cook other side until done, about 30 seconds. Depending on your stove, you may need to reduce the heat to prevent burning as you cook the crêpes. Repeat until all batter has been used, adding a small amount of oil in between each crêpe if necessary. To keep the cooked crêpes warm, place them on the foil-lined baking sheet and place in the preheated oven.

Fill crêpes with your choice of sweet or savory fillings.

Despite its name, buckwheat is not related to wheat. This relative of rhubarb is actually a seed, making it a great gluten-free option!



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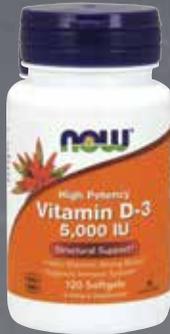


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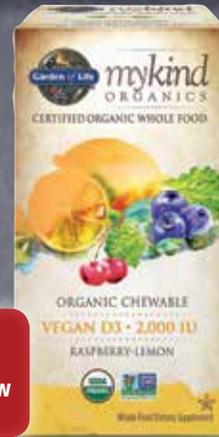
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