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Natural Insights for Well Being®

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Memory, Mind, and Mood

Nutrients improved cognitive function and symptoms of depression in older adults

B vitamins

In earlier studies, B vitamins reduced homocysteine—high levels of which are a factor in Alzheimer's disease—and slowed brain atrophy, a symptom in those with mild cognitive decline. In this study, 133 people over age 70 with mild cognitive impairment took a daily high-dose B-vitamin supplement containing 800 mcg of folic acid, 500 mcg of B12, and 20 mg of B6, or a placebo. After two years, compared to placebo, homocysteine levels had decreased 30 percent, and executive mental function was stabilized. Those who started the study with the highest homocysteine levels benefited most.



more likely to develop dementia, and doctors said omega-3s may alleviate both cognitive decline and depression. In this study, 50 people over age 65 with mild cognitive impairment and depressive symptoms took a supplement containing mostly docosahexaenoic acid with eicosapentaenoic acid (DHA/EPA), the reverse, or an omega-6 linoleic acid placebo. After six months, compared to placebo, depressive symptoms improved in both omega-3 groups. In addition, the DHA/EPA group also had better verbal fluency and better self-reported physical health. The DHA/EPA supplement contained 1,550 mg DHA plus 400 mg EPA.

REFERENCE: INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF GERIATRIC PSYCHIATRY; 2011, ELECTRONIC PREPUBLICATION

Ginkgo biloba

In this study, 410 people with mild to moderate dementia took 240 mg of ginkgo biloba extract per day or a placebo. After 24 weeks, while there was no change for placebo, the ginkgo group improved greatly in symptoms of apathy and indifference, sleep and nighttime behavior, sudden shifts in emotion, abnormal body movements, and overall mood.

Omega-3

Those with mild cognitive impairment who become depressed are

FEBRUARY'S

Healthy Insight Chocolate Linked to Healthier Hearts

Researchers reviewed six studies that tracked all forms of chocolate in the diet. Participants reported how often they ate chocolate, from never to more than once per day. Overall, compared to those with the lowest levels, those with high levels of chocolate in the diet—in all forms—were 29 percent less likely to have a stroke and 37 percent less likely to develop cardiovascular disease. While one should be aware of the high calories of some chocolate confections, doctors said that cocoa contains flavonols and has antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and anti-clotting properties, which may help prevent cardiometabolic disorders.

REFERENCE: BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL; AUGUST, 2011, ELECTRONIC PREPUBLICATION

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Breast Health

Nutrients lower chances of developing breast cancer, and increase survival in those with the disease

Vitamin D

Doctors said earlier studies suggest breast cancer chances increase when vitamin D levels are low. In this study, researchers measured vitamin D in the diets of 3,101 pre- and post-menopausal women with breast cancer, aged 25 to 75, and compared them to 3,471 cancer-free women of similar ages, backgrounds, and menopausal status.

Overall, while there was no link between breast cancer and vitamin D from food, pre- and post-menopausal women who took a vitamin D supplement of more than 400 IU per day were 24 percent less likely to develop breast cancer compared to women who did not take a vitamin D supplement.

Although the study could not measure vitamin D in adolescence, researchers suggested that taking a vitamin D supplement during these formative years may be the most important factor in preventing breast cancer.

Lignan phytoestrogens

Flax and other seeds, vegetables, and wheat contain lignan phytoestrogens, hormone-like compounds which earlier studies found protected against cancer. In this study, researchers measured enterolactone, the form lignans take in the blood, in 1,140 postmenopausal women with breast cancer. After six years of follow-up, compared to those

with the lowest levels, women with the highest lignan levels were 42 percent more likely to have survived, and their cancer was similarly less likely to have progressed.

REFERENCE: JOURNAL OF CLINICAL ONCOLOGY; 2011, VOL. 29, No. 28, 3730-8



The Vitamin D Debate

New research explores raising levels to increase longevity and reduce disease, and tailoring recommendations to specific populations

Raising levels worldwide may prolong life

In a review of worldwide vitamin D and major disease studies, researchers estimated that by raising blood levels of vitamin D to 44 nanograms per milliliter of blood (ng/mL) from 20 ng/

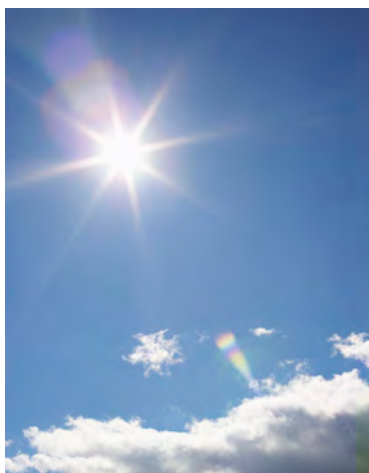
mL currently, annual worldwide deaths from major diseases would decrease by 20 percent, and increase average life expectancy by two years. According to study authors, vitamin D lowers chances of and increases longevity in the five major disease groups that account for over half the world's mortality rates. These include cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, tuberculosis, and respiratory diseases and infections. Doctors said to raise vitamin D levels, manufacturers should fortify foods, and people should take vitamin D supplements and get more sunlight.

One size doesn't fit all

Doctors said that recommendations to prevent vitamin D deficiency should consider physical and environmental factors. In this study, researchers

measured vitamin D levels in 492 men aged 40 to 79, living in Chicago, a low-sunlight region, and found that 93 percent of African American men and 70 percent of European American men were deficient, with levels below 30 ng/mL. Doctors said that the melanin in dark skin blocks ultraviolet rays, reducing the amount of vitamin D the body can produce from sunlight. Because there are many special populations in the U.S.; those with darker skin, those who customarily cover their skin, and those who live in low-sunlight areas, the government should provide more than one recommendation for the proper dietary level of vitamin D, researchers concluded.

REFERENCE: EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF CLINICAL NUTRITION; 2011, VOL. 65, No. 9, 1016-26



Cancer Update

Nutrients lower chances of cancer and inhibit cancer growth

Glucosamine

Inflammation plays an important role in developing lung cancer, and previous studies have linked anti-inflammatories such as glucosamine, chondroitin, and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) to lowering the chances. In this study, researchers asked 76,904 people to report the glucosamine, chondroitin, and NSAIDs they had taken during the previous 10 years. Doctors found no links to chondroitin or NSAIDs, but compared to those who did not take glucosamine, those who had taken glucosamine at least four days per week for at least three years were 51 percent less likely to develop lung cancer (adenocarcinoma).

Curcumin

Researchers thought curcumin might work in the mouths of people with head and neck malignancies to reduce activities that promote cancer growth. In this pilot study, 21 people with head and neck cancers gave saliva samples before and after chewing two curcumin tablets containing a total of 1,000 mg of curcumin. Curcumin suppressed a signaling process that tells cancer cells to grow, and reduced inflammatory molecules in the saliva that promote cancer growth.

“The curcumin had a significant inhibitory effect, blocking two different drivers of head and neck cancer growth,” doctors said, going on to suggest that

curcumin could combine with other treatments such as chemotherapy and radiation to treat head and neck cancers, and might help prevent these cancers in tobacco smokers and chewers, as well as help prevent the recurrence of oral cancers.

Although turmeric, which contains curcumin, is a common cooking spice, the dosage to achieve a clinical effect is much higher. Researchers are planning a longer study, beginning a few weeks before cancer surgery, to see if curcumin produces a larger inhibitory effect.

REFERENCE: CANCER CAUSES AND CONTROL; 2011, VOL. 22, No. 9, 1333-42

FEBRUARY'S

Ahead of the Curve

Early-stage nutrition discoveries: Metabolic Syndrome, Antioxidants

Good results in the lab can lead to larger human trials. Here are some of the most promising recent findings.

Metabolic syndrome

Lack of adequate oxygen during gestation restricts growth and increases the chances of metabolic syndrome later in life. Resveratrol helps sensitize the body to insulin, and doctors in this study wanted to see if resveratrol could prevent metabolic syndrome in those born with restricted growth. After weaning, growth-restricted male rats ate a high fat diet alone or with resveratrol. After nine weeks, those on resveratrol had less severe metabolic syndrome, including better glucose tolerance, less insulin resistance, reduced abdominal

fat, and fewer total circulating fats.

Antioxidants in hazelnuts

Researchers in this study analyzed the amount of antioxidant polyphenols in the skins of hazelnuts, from several samples. Doctors wanted to find the total antioxidant capacity (TAC); the ability to neutralize the oxygen free-radicals that cause oxidative damage. TAC is a way to compare the antioxidant power of different types of foods. The hazelnut skins had TAC about three times that of whole walnuts, seven times that of dark chocolate, 10

times that of espresso coffee, and 25 times that of whole blackberries.

REFERENCE: JOURNAL OF AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD CHEMISTRY; 2011, VOL. 59, No. 18, 9935-41



Chocolate Rice Pudding

You'll love this heart-warming dessert so much, you'll want to make a double batch! Please see page 1 for new research on how those who ate more chocolate had healthier hearts.

Ingredients:

4 c vanilla soy milk
1/2 c brown rice
1/4 c cane sugar
1/4 c maple syrup
1/4 c peanut butter
1/4 c cocoa powder
*Reduce sugars as desired

Directions:

Combine soy milk, rice, sugar and maple syrup in a medium sauce pan. Bring to a slow boil, then reduce to simmer and cook for about 1 hour, stirring frequently. When volume is reduced by about half, use a fork to blend in the peanut butter, then sift in cocoa. Use a whisk to remove any lumps. Cook for another 30 minutes until thick and creamy. Serve warm or chilled.



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