



Stay Healthy!

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Our April 2007 Newsletter for Healthy Living

Vitamin D and cancer

Three new studies from the Moores Cancer Center at the University of California, San Diego, have strongly linked vitamin D with lower risk for breast, colon, and kidney cancers.

In the breast cancer study, researchers analyzed the blood-fluid (serum) levels of vitamin D in 1,760 individuals and found that those who had the lowest levels of 25-hydroxyvitamin D had the highest rates of breast cancer, and that as the levels of vitamin D increased, breast cancer rates dropped.

Doctors noted that those who take 2,000 IU of vitamin D3 per day and spend 10 to 15 minutes per day in the sun—when the weather permits—will have levels of vitamin D similar to those in the study who were 50 percent less likely to get breast cancer. The body makes vitamin D3 from the ultraviolet (UVB) rays of the sun.

In the colon cancer study, published in the February 2007 issue of the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, scientists reviewed findings from five different studies that took blood samples from healthy volunteer donors, and then followed up for 25



years. Researchers divided 1,448 participants into five equal groups according to the serum levels of vitamin D and found that those who

had 34 nanograms of vitamin D per milliliter of blood (ng/ml) were 50 percent less likely to have colon or rectal (colorectal) cancer than were those with the lowest levels. In the studies, vitamin D levels ranged from below 13 ng/ml to 52 ng/ml. Doctors projected that those who get a total of 2,000 IU of vitamin D3 per day from diet, supplements, and sunshine will be 66 percent less likely to get colorectal cancer compared to those with the lowest vitamin D levels.

In the kidney cancer study, published in the *International Journal of Cancer*, researchers for the first time were able to use data from 175 countries and found that those who live closest to the equator—where sunlight is strongest—have the least kidney (renal) cancer.

Reference: *Journal of Steroid Biochemistry and Molecular Biology*; Feb., 2007, Vol. 103, No. 2.

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News & Research This Issue

- Vitamin D lowered risk for breast, colon, and kidney cancers.
- Magnesium decreased the risk for cardiovascular disease.
- Vitamin C reduced risk of heart disease and increased fertility.
- Omega-3 eliminated symptoms of depression in children.
- Micronutrients reduced the risk of AIDS.
- Calcium and magnesium help absorb sugar.
- Beta-carotene protected against mental decline.

Magnesium for healthy hearts

People with low levels of magnesium in the diet are more likely to have cardiovascular disease (CVD), and **those who take magnesium supplements have lower risk for CVD**, according to two new studies. Researchers from the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC), Charleston, noted that earlier studies showed a link between low magnesium levels and a type of protein (C-reactive protein, or CRP), that signals the acute inflammation doctors believe is a risk factor for CVD.

In the first study, researchers relied on data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), a nationally representative study which has been continuously monitoring the health status of the U.S. population since



1959. The scientists examined the diets of adults aged 17 or older who, from 1999 to 2000, did not take magnesium in supplement form and found that 68% consumed less than the recommended daily allowance (RDA) for magnesium—which for adults is 310 mg to 420 mg per day—and 19% consumed less than half the RDA.

Compared to adults whose diets contained at least the RDA for magnesium, those who consumed less than the RDA were 48% to 75% more likely to have elevated CRP levels. **Overweight adults over age 40 who consumed less than half the RDA for magnesium were more than twice as likely (124%) to have elevated CRP levels than were adults whose diets met or exceeded the RDA.**

In the second study, the MUSC researchers wanted to gauge CRP

levels in those who took magnesium supplements of at least 50 mg per day. Using NHANES data, doctors examined 10,024 adults and found that, from 1999 through 2002, 25.6% took a magnesium supplement of at least 50 mg per day. Those whose total magnesium from all sources was less than the RDA—from diet and/or supplements—were 40% more likely to have elevated CRP compared to those whose diets met the RDA. Among those whose diets had less than half the RDA for magnesium, **those who took magnesium supplements were 22% less likely to have elevated CRP than were those who did not take a supplement.** Doctors noted that only 21.9% of those who did not take magnesium supplements met the RDA compared to 60.2% of those who took a magnesium supplement.

Reference: *Nutrition Research*; 2006, Vol. 26, 193-6.

Men's health

Vitamin C reduced risk for heart disease and increased fertility in men in two new studies. In the heart disease study, reported in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, doctors in Britain recruited 3,258 men, aged 60 to 79, who had not been diagnosed with heart attack (myocardial infarction), stroke, or diabetes. Researchers measured the levels of fruits, vegetables, and vitamin C in the diet through a food questionnaire. To determine heart disease risk, doctors measured blood levels of a type of protein (C-reactive protein, or CRP) that signals acute inflammation; and a type of enzyme (tissue plasminogen activator, or t-PA),

which indicates that blood vessels may be stiffening.

Compared to men with the lowest blood fluid (plasma) levels of vitamin C, **men with the highest plasma levels of vitamin C were 44% less likely to have elevated CRP levels, and 21% less likely to have elevated t-PA.** Compared to men who ate the fewest fruits, men who ate the most fruit were 24% less likely to have elevated CRP or t-PA. **Men who ate the most vegetables were less likely to have elevated t-PA levels** compared to men who ate the fewest vegetables. The doctors noted that blood was less likely to abnormally

thicken and clot in men with the most plasma vitamin C.

In the fertility study, researchers recruited 13 otherwise healthy but infertile men, aged 25 to 35, who took 1,000 mg of vitamin C twice per day. After two months, **average sperm count had increased 129%, independent and spontaneous movement (sperm motility) increased 93%, and normal shape (sperm morphology) rose 55%.** Doctors concluded that **vitamin C supplements may improve the quality of semen and odds of conception.**



Reference: *Journal of Medicinal Food*; 2006, Vol. 9, No. 3, 440-2.

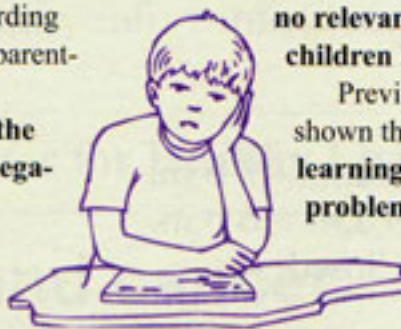
Omega-3 for kids

Omega-3 fatty acids significantly reduced or eliminated symptoms of major depression in children, according to results from a new study. Doctors from the Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Israel, noted that previous studies showed positive effects of omega-3s on adult depression, but that there were no studies of omega-3s in childhood depression. Researchers recruited 28 children with major depression between the ages of 6 and 12 and randomly assigned omega-3 fatty acids—an over-the-counter combination of eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA)—or a placebo for 16 weeks.

Twenty of the children remained in the study for at least one month, and doctors measured symptoms of

depression at the beginning of the study, and at two, four, eight, 12, and 16 weeks. The symptom tests included interviews with parents and teachers, reports by the children themselves, and evaluations by clinicians. According to results from the parent-teacher interviews, **seven out of 10 of the children in the omega-3 group had 50% fewer symptoms**, including four of the children who went into complete remission. There were no changes in parent-teacher depression scores for children who took the placebo.

The children who took omega-3s also reported significantly fewer symptoms themselves, as



did clinicians who interviewed the children. Children who had taken the placebo did not report feeling any better, nor did clinicians find that symptoms improved in this group. **The doctors also observed no relevant side effects, and the children reported no side effects.**

Previous studies have shown that **omega-3s reduced learning difficulties, behavioral problems, and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in children.** Several

studies have shown that those with depression have reduced blood flow to the brain, and doctors believe that omega-3s increase this blood flow.

Reference: *American Journal of Psychiatry*; 2006, Vol. 163, 1098-100.

Micronutrients reduced AIDS risk

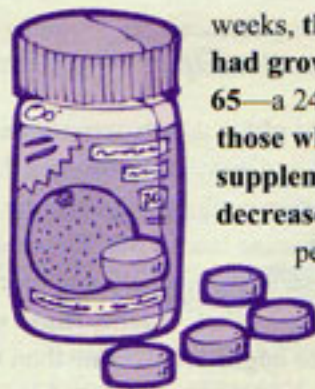
In a new study, broad-spectrum multivitamin-minerals increased the type of white blood cell (CD4) that is critical to combating acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). Doctors recruited 40 patients infected with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)—the condition that precedes AIDS—who were taking highly active anti-retroviral therapy (HAART). In the 12-week double-blind trial, patients took a placebo or a supplement twice per day that contained vitamins A, B, C, D, and E; acetyl-l-carnitine, alpha lipoic acid, chromium, copper, N-

acetyl cysteine, selenium, and zinc.

Researchers collected data every four weeks and found that, at 12

CD4 cells weaken and die, and that the health and number of CD4 cells is the primary way doctors

“Micronutrient supplements can improve CD4 cell strength and count in HIV-infected patients.”



weeks, **the number of CD4 cells had grown by an average of 65—a 24 percent increase—in those who had taken the supplement compared to a decrease of six cells—a two percent decline—among those who had taken the placebo.** Researchers noted that as HIV progresses,

determine what therapies to use, and if HIV is progressing toward AIDS. Doctors concluded that micronutrient supplements can significantly improve CD4 cell strength and count in HIV-infected patients taking HAART, without side effects, and may be an effective complementary therapy.

Reference: *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome*; 2006, Vol. 42, No. 5, 523-8.

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Better blood sugar

People who have higher calcium and magnesium levels from diet and/or supplements can better absorb sugar (glucose) and convert it to energy (insulin sensitivity) than can those who have lower calcium and magnesium levels. Researchers examined a multiethnic group of 1,036 U.S. adults who took part in the Insulin Resistance Atherosclerosis Study, and who did not have diabetes at the outset of the study in 1992. At the start of the study, and after five years, doctors measured the levels of dairy, calcium, and magnesium in the diet through a food questionnaire, and assessed the level of supplemental calcium and magnesium by reading the supplement labels. The scientists tested insulin sensitivity using a glucose tolerance test and found that those who had more calcium and magnesium from all sources had better insulin sensitivity, and that **the effect appeared most reliably in those who had at least 325 mg of magnesium per day.**



Reference: *American Journal of Epidemiology*; 2006, Vol. 164, No. 5, 449-58.

This Month's **HEALTHY Tip**

The antioxidant **beta-carotene protected** genetically susceptible **older adults from mental (cognitive) decline**, according to a new study from the School of Medicine at the University of California, Los Angeles. Scientists followed 455 high-functioning older adults, 106 of whom had a gene (apolipoprotein E4, or APOE 4) which is unusually frequent in those who develop Alzheimer's disease late in life. Researchers noted that 249 participants experienced mental decline, and that decline was more likely and more severe in those who had the APOE 4 gene. However, among individuals with the APOE 4 gene, **those who had the highest levels of beta-carotene were 89% less likely to experience cognitive decline** than were those with the lowest levels of beta-carotene.



Reference: *The Journals of Gerontology: Series A, Biological Sciences and Medical Sciences*; 2006, Vol. 61, 616-20.

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