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Natural Insights for Well Being®

January 2018

Better Blood Pressure

Nutrients help maintain healthy blood pressure

Magnesium in prediabetes

In prediabetes, blood sugar levels are chronically high, and the body may also become less sensitive to insulin, a condition called insulin resistance. Doctors reviewed 11 recent placebo-controlled magnesium studies covering 543 people with prediabetes or insulin resistance. Doses in the studies ranged from 365 to 450 mg of magnesium per day and lasted from one to six months.

Overall, those taking magnesium supplements saw systolic and diastolic blood pressure decline by 4.18 and 2.27 mmHg, respectively. Doctors said the magnitude of improvement in blood pressure has great clinical significance not only in prediabetes but for those with type 2 diabetes and chronic heart problems. Magnesium appears to improve the flexibility of blood vessel linings, helping to lower blood pressure.

Vitamins D and K

Earlier studies found a link between low levels of vitamin D, or vitamin K, separately, and chances for heart and vascular problems, but new research suggests when both nutrients are low, chances for developing high blood pressure increase.

Doctors analyzed levels of vitamins D and K in 231 people participating in a long-term aging study that began in 1992 and continues today. Those whose levels of vitamin D were below 20



nanograms per milliliter of blood and whose vitamin K levels fell below 323 picomoles per liter of blood had systolic and diastolic blood pressure 4.8 and 3.1 mmHg higher, respectively, compared to those with better levels of vitamins D and K.

Discussing the findings, doctors said the combination of low vitamin D and K was linked to increased blood pressure, and that this relationship could play a role in developing high blood pressure.

REFERENCE: AMERICAN JOURNAL OF CLINICAL NUTRITION; JULY, 2017, No. 155291, PUBLISHED ONLINE

JANUARY'S

Healthy Insight Avocado for Eye and Mind

Lutein is a carotenoid—the colorful antioxidant pigments in fruit and vegetables—that is essential to the eye and brain. In this study, 40 healthy adults, age 50 or older, ate one avocado per day, or a medium potato or one cup of chickpeas instead, as part of their regular diet. Each avocado provided about 369 mcg of lutein.

After six months, lutein levels had increased 15 percent in the non-avocado group and 25 percent for avocado. The avocado group also saw a 26 percent increase in macular pigment density of the eye, and had improved attention and memory in cognitive tests.

REFERENCE: NUTRIENTS; 2017, VOL. 9, No. 9, 919

This Issue

PROBIOTICS PROMOTE GOOD DIGESTION, REDUCE INFECTION	2
NUTRIENTS IMPROVE SYMPTOMS IN HEART AND CIRCULATORY CONDITIONS	2
NUTRIENTS SPEED EXERCISE RECOVERY, BURN FAT	3
VITAMIN K IMPROVES CIRCULATION, REDUCES KIDNEY STONES	3
AVOCADO BLACK BEAN SALAD	4

Healthy Gut

Probiotics promote good digestion, reduce infection

Probiotics relieve constipation

With age, changes in the gut microbiome can increase chances for constipation. Treating the condition in older adults is a challenge. The typical drug therapies prescribed by doctors have had inconsistent results, and sometimes produce harmful side effects. Here, researchers reviewed the literature for constipation studies in older adults that used probiotics as a remedy.

Doctors identified nine probiotics trials covering 778 men and women, aged 65 to 102, who were complaining of constipation. The studies lasted from two weeks to six months, with the most frequent probiotics being *B. longum*, *L. casei shirota*, or *S. thermophiles*. Overall, probiotics reduced constipation by 10 to 40 percent compared to placebo.

Probiotics reduce *C. difficile* infection

Earlier studies found that probiotics reduce the chances of developing the bacterial infection *clostridium difficile* (*C. diff*) while taking antibiotics, but few studies have tested probiotics with antibiotics during an initial *C. diff* infection. *C. diff* is the most common hospital-acquired infection, and is also common during courses of broad-spectrum or long-term antibiotics, particularly in older adults.

In this study, 33 people with an initial mild to moderate *C. diff* infection took a standard antibiotic treatment with or without 17 billion total colony-forming units of the probiotics *L. acidophilus* and *paracasei*, and *B. bacterium lactis*.

After 28 days, those taking

probiotics saw symptoms ease 24 hours sooner than placebo. Discussing the findings, doctors said even a small decrease in the length of infection can have a large benefit in the cost of care and can improve the quality of life.

REFERENCE: ARCHIVES OF GERONTOLOGY AND GERIATRICS; 2017, JULY, 2017, VOL. 71, 142-9



Healthy Heart

Nutrients prolong life, improve symptoms in heart and circulatory conditions

Living longer with vitamin C

Vitamin C is one of the best antioxidants on the planet, and plays a key role in preventing the oxidative changes that can lead to heart and circulatory problems. This 11-year follow-up study covered 13,421 participants who answered a food questionnaire every two years.

Doctors measured vitamin C in the diet, as well as other nutrients and lifestyle factors. Overall, those who got the most vitamin C from all sources were 70 percent less likely to develop a heart or circulatory condition such as cardiovascular disease, heart attack, or stroke, compared to those who got the least vitamin C.

Those who got the most vitamin

C were also more likely to get more dietary fiber, follow a Mediterranean-style diet pattern, and take vitamin C supplements.

Lutein reduces inflammation

Earlier research found that carotenoids such as lutein offer anti-inflammatory protection. Many people with coronary artery disease (CAD) have low-grade chronic inflammation. In this study, doctors measured levels of the six most common carotenoids in 193 people with CAD, and compared to levels of the inflammatory marker, interleukin-6 (IL-6).

Of all the carotenoids, lutein was the only one with a direct link to IL-6: as levels of lutein increased, levels of

inflammatory IL-6 decreased.

In a follow-up leg of the study in the lab, doctors took inflamed cells from people with CAD and exposed them to lutein and found that inflammatory activity decreased significantly. Doctors said that these findings, taken together, show that lutein can resolve chronic inflammation in people with CAD.

REFERENCE: NUTRIENTS; 2017, VOL. 9, No. 9, 954



Better Performance

Nutrients speed exercise recovery, burn fat

Branched-chain amino acids aid recovery

Earlier studies found the three branched-chain amino acids (BCAAs)—leucine, isoleucine, and valine—have positive effects on moderate muscle damage after exercise, but results vary across studies. In this review of eight placebo-controlled BCAA trials, doctors combined results from 70 healthy men, average age 23, who took BCAAs while participating in heavy resistance training, soccer, marathon, and other drills such as drop-jump testing.

After exercise, doctors looked for signs of muscle damage in blood samples. Compared to placebo, men in the BCAA group had far lower levels of a type of enzyme—creatine kinase—that signals muscle damage, up to and including 24 hours after exercise.

Discussing the findings, doctors said BCAAs are better than passive recovery or rest after exhaustive, muscle-damaging exercise, and help restore full muscle function and strength sooner.



Phenylalanine burns fat

Earlier exercise studies found that taking a combination of amino acids speeds fat burning, but trials of single amino acids have been unclear. In this study, six active, healthy men, aged 20 to 40, with healthy weight, took a placebo or 3,000 mg of the single amino acid phenylalanine 30 minutes before a cycle ergometer test. The test lasted one hour while the men maintained an exercise rate of 50 percent of their maximum oxygen consumption.

Compared to placebo, the men in the phenylalanine group used much less oxygen to complete the cycling test. Doctors also found higher levels of glucagon, the main hormone that increases glucose and fat in the bloodstream, signaling a greater fat-burning rate.

REFERENCE: NUTRITION; OCTOBER, 2017, VOL. 42, 30-6

Kidney Update

Vitamin K improves circulation, reduces kidney stones

Vitamin K2 in kidney transplant

Prior studies have shown as many as 80 percent of those who undergo kidney transplant are low in vitamin K, which increases chances of hardening of the arteries and heart problems. This study measured changes in artery flexibility in 60 people who took vitamin K2 supplements after a kidney transplant.

After eight weeks of taking 360 mcg of vitamin K2 as menaquinone-7 per day, doctors measured both central and peripheral blood pressure over 24 hours and found arterial stiffness had improved significantly. Also, vitamin K levels had normalized in 55 percent of participants. Discussing the findings, doctors said, “The results in this trial are staggering, especially as the statistically significant effect was seen very quickly.”

Vitamin K reduces kidney stones

Good levels of vitamin K help keep calcium from building up excess amounts in the blood and along artery walls. Doctors thought chances for developing kidney stones would increase when vitamin K levels are low.

In this study of 1,748 men and women, doctors measured levels of a protein that inhibits calcium buildup—matrix gla protein (MGP)—but that needs vitamin K to activate. One-third of the participants began the study with high levels of inactive MGP. Over the 12-year follow-up period, those with the highest levels of inactive MGP were 31 percent more likely to have developed kidney stones than those with lower inactive MGP levels. The findings

suggest that increasing vitamin K in the diet or adding vitamin K supplements may help keep kidney stones from forming.

REFERENCE: JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF HYPERTENSION; 2017, VOL. 11, NO. 9, PUBLISHED ONLINE



Shop Local

Shifting just 10% of your shopping to locally-owned businesses adds

\$128 million a year
to our local Tri-Cities economy.

For every \$100 you spend at a national chain, the total local economic impact is only \$13, yet the same amount spent with local merchants yields \$45.

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A marketplace of more locally-owned businesses ensures greater innovation, competition and diversity in products and services.

Natural Foods Market has been locally-owned for more than 30 years.

Avocado Black Bean Salad

Good health never tasted so good! While you're enjoying this fresh, hydrating salad, please see page 1 for a new study that found those who ate an avocado a day had more protective eye pigment and better cognition.

Salad Ingredients:

2 ripe avocados, peeled & cubed
1 pint cherry tomatoes, halved
 $\frac{2}{3}$ c cooked black beans, drained and rinsed
 $\frac{1}{2}$ c cooked corn
 $\frac{1}{2}$ medium red onion, finely chopped
1 jalapeño pepper, seeded and minced
2 tbsp fresh cilantro, chopped

Dressing:

$\frac{1}{4}$ c extra virgin olive or preferred oil
1 organic lime, juice and zest only
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp cumin
fresh ground pepper & sea salt to taste
Optional: shake of red pepper flakes or dash of hot sauce

Directions: Combine salad ingredients in a large bowl. Separately, whisk together oil, juice and zest, cumin and fresh pepper and sea salt. Toss with salad until well combined. Enjoy immediately.

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.

These articles provide nutritional information only and do not replace professional medical advice.

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