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Natural Insights for Well Being®

July 2017

Feeling Better

Nutrients ease emotional stress

Ashwagandha and OCD

People with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) have uncontrollable, recurring thoughts and the urge to repeat behaviors. The obsessive thoughts cause anxiety, and the compulsive behaviors are an attempt to ease the anxiety.

Standard prescription drug treatment is selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors (SSRIs), but only about three in 10 respond with a significant decrease in symptoms. Ashwagandha, the Ayurvedic herb, is an adaptogen that helps the body adapt to stress and helps normalize body processes.

In this study, 30 people with OCD continued taking SSRIs with or without 120 mg of ashwagandha extract capsules per day. After six weeks, those taking ashwagandha saw a 20 percent improvement in symptom severity on a standard OCD rating scale, compared to a 5 percent improvement for placebo.

Doctors said ashwagandha is safe and may be an effective complementary treatment for OCD.

Omega-3s and PTSD

People with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have seen or experienced a severely disturbing event, reminders or recall of which can trigger physical and emotional symptoms including increased heart



rate. In this study, 83 survivors of an accidental injury began taking 1,470 mg of DHA plus 147 mg of EPA per day, or a placebo, within 10 days after the accident. Participants in both the omega-3 and placebo groups had begun the study with similar heart rates.

After 12 weeks, to evoke memories of the event, participants performed a scripted reenactment of the accident while doctors measured changes in heart rate. Those taking omega-3s had significantly lower heart rates at rest and during the reenactment of the event compared to placebo.

Doctors said that even though PTSD symptoms in most participants in this study were not serious, supplementing with omega-3s may help prevent some of the psycho-physiological symptoms of PTSD, including raised heart rate.

REFERENCE: COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES IN MEDICINE; 2016, VOL. 27, 25-9

JULY'S

Healthy Insight Stay Sharp with Tea

This long-term study followed 957 adults, age 55 with healthy cognitive function at the start, over an eight-year period. Compared to those who consumed one cup of tea or less per week, those who consumed at least one cup of brewed leaf black, green, or oolong tea per day were 50 percent less likely to have developed cognitive decline, with the greatest benefit in those with a gene (APOE-e4) that raises chances for Alzheimer's disease.

Doctors said the bioactive antioxidant compounds in tea including catechins, theaflavins, thearubigins, and L-theanine may help protect the brain from vascular and nerve impairment.

REFERENCE: JOURNAL OF NUTRITION, HEALTH & AGING; 2016, VOL. 20, No. 10, 1002-9

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Healthy Heart

Vitamin D improves heart function, reduces chances for heart and circulatory events

Re-synchronizing heartbeat

The left chamber of the heart is responsible for pumping blood to the body, while the right chamber pumps blood only to the lungs. In systolic heart failure, the left chamber does not contract normally and fails to push enough blood into circulation.

To treat the condition, doctors send small electrical impulses to the lower chambers of the heart to re-synchronize the heartbeat, enabling the heart to pump efficiently, a procedure called cardiac resynchronization therapy, or CRT. About one-third of those who receive CRT typically do not respond.

In this study, 57 people with systolic heart failure received CRT, with 60 percent responding. Doctors found the responders had significantly higher circulating levels of vitamin D

compared to non-responders; 26.17 vs. 21.15 nanograms per milliliter of blood, respectively.

Improving heart function

People with chronic heart failure (CHF)—when the left heart chamber does not pump sufficient blood to the body—are often low in vitamin D. In this study, 163 people with CHF and vitamin D deficiency, below 20 nanograms per milliliter of blood, took a placebo or 4,000 IU of vitamin D per day. After 12 months, those taking vitamin D saw a 6.07 percent increase in left-chamber pumping capacity and, compared to placebo, greater improvement in chamber dimensions and volume. Doctors said vitamin D may be an inexpensive, safe treatment option for CHF.

Fewer heart and circulatory events

In this review of long-term heart studies covering 180,667 people, doctors discovered that for every 10 nanograms per milliliter of blood increase in vitamin D, chances for fatal and non-fatal heart events decreased by 10 to 12 percent.

REFERENCE: TURK KARDIYOL DERN ARS; 2016, VOL. 44, No. 8, 670-6



Healthy Aging

Nutrients extend life, boost strength and energy

Omega-3s extend life in women

In the largest study of omega-3s and longevity, doctors measured EPA and DHA levels in 6,501 women, aged 65 to 80 at the start of the study, and followed up for 15 years.

The doctors used what they call the “omega-3 index,” which measures the



total concentration of EPA and DHA in red blood cells. After accounting for differences in lifestyle, including physical activity, smoking, and history of heart and circulatory disease, women with the highest levels of omega-3 were 20 percent less likely to have died from any cause compared to women with the lowest omega-3 levels.

Doctors estimated that it takes a combined total of 1,000 mg of EPA and DHA per day to raise omega-3 levels from the lowest in the study—3.6 percent—to the highest, 7.1 percent.

L-carnitine improved strength and energy

Muscle strength naturally declines

with age. Doctors proposed that the amino acid L-carnitine might help maintain and improve strength by enhancing mitochondrial function, the primary energy mechanism in every cell.

In the first study of its kind, 50 older adults took a placebo or 500 mg of L-carnitine three times per day. After 10 weeks, 34.4 percent of those taking L-carnitine saw significant improvement in strength scores compared to 2.1 percent for placebo. Handgrip strength increased 7.2 percent vs. a 3.6 percent decline for placebo. Also, 42.3 percent of those in the L-carnitine group reported feeling more energetic compared to 16.7 percent for placebo.

REFERENCE: LIPID JOURNAL; 2017, VOL. 11, No. 1, 250-9

Circulation

Magnesium and vitamin K improve arteries

Magnesium improves artery flexibility

Long-term observational studies suggest magnesium has heart-health benefits, but studies that administer magnesium supplements have been inconsistent. In this study, 52 overweight or obese men and postmenopausal women took a placebo or 350 mg of magnesium, in three 117-mg doses per day.



After 24 weeks, those taking magnesium saw a significant improvement in arterial flexibility while the placebo group was less flexible. Doctors measured “pulse wave velocity”—how quickly blood travels through the arteries—from the large artery in the neck to the large artery in the thigh. The placebo group saw an increase in velocity of 5 meters per second—signaling stiffer, less flexible arteries—while the magnesium group had a 5-meters per second decrease in velocity, meaning softer, more elastic arteries.

Vitamin K may improve arteries in type 2 diabetes

The body contains a specific protein—Matrix Gla Protein, or

MGP—that keeps calcium from building up in and stiffening arteries. But MGP requires vitamin K to become active in the body. Those with type 2 diabetes have arterial stiffness, and doctors thought they might find higher levels of inactive MGP in diabetics, suggesting a deficiency in vitamin K in type 2 diabetes.

In the study, blood flow from the large artery in the neck to the large artery in the thigh had a direct link to MGP: as levels of inactive MGP increased, arterial stiffness—measured as faster blood flow velocity—also increased. Doctors said activating MGP with vitamin K supplements could reduce arterial stiffening in type 2 diabetes.

REFERENCE: AMERICAN JOURNAL OF HYPERTENSION; 2017, VOL. 30, No. 2, 196-201

Gestational Diabetes Update

Prebiotics and probiotics improve metabolism in gestational diabetes

What is gestational diabetes?

Gestational diabetes occurs when women without diabetes develop high blood sugar levels while pregnant.

Synbiotics, insulin, and lipids

Synbiotics combine prebiotics and probiotics. In this study, 70 women with gestational diabetes took a placebo or a combination of *L. acidophilus*, *L. casei*, and *bifidobacterium*, at 2 billion colony-forming units each, plus 800 mg of inulin per day.

After six weeks, insulin levels had decreased significantly for those taking synbiotics while increasing for placebo. Also, the synbiotics group became more sensitive and less resistant to insulin while the placebo group did not. Triglyceride levels and very-low-density cholesterol (VLDL) levels also

declined for synbiotics while increasing for placebo.

Discussing the findings, doctors said synbiotics may improve blood sugar handling by rebalancing gut bacteria and reducing production and absorption of intestinal toxins.

Probiotics, insulin, and inflammation

In this study, 72 women with gestational diabetes took a placebo or a combination of eight probiotics including *S. thermophiles*, *B. breve*, *B. longum*, *B. infantis*, *L. acidophilus*, *L. plantarum*, *L. paracasei*, and *L. bulgaricus*.

After eight weeks, while the placebo group had not improved, women taking the probiotics saw insulin levels decline, and insulin resistance decrease.

Researchers also measured inflammation and found significant decreases in a sign of systemic inflammation: high-sensitivity C-reactive protein, and in two other inflammation markers, IL-6 and TNS alpha.

Doctors said the findings suggest probiotics can reduce inflammation and benefit glycemic control in women with gestational diabetes.

REFERENCE: BRITISH JOURNAL OF NUTRITION; 2016, VOL. 116, No. 8, 1394-1401



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Raspberry Green Tea-Key Lime Popsicles

While you are enjoying this cooling treat, please see page 1 for a new study that found people who drank tea regularly were less likely to develop cognitive decline than non-tea drinkers.

Ingredients:

2¹/₄ c filtered water
6 green tea bags (or equivalent loose tea)
Organic cane sugar, honey, or stevia, as desired
¹/₂ c fresh or frozen raspberries
2 tsp key lime juice
Supplies: 1 pack popsicle molds



Instructions: Bring water to a boil, remove from heat, add tea, sweetener, ¹/₄ c of berries, and lime juice. Steep for 6-8 minutes, remove tea bags or strain loose tea, and liquefy mixture in a blender. Strain if you wish to remove raspberry seeds. Place the remaining whole berries into the popsicle molds and pour cooled tea into mold. Freeze at least 12 hours. Makes 4 to 6 popsicles.

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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