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Natural Insights for Well Being®

December 2017

Healthy Newborns

Nutrients improved infant health, birth outcomes

Synbiotics reduced sepsis

Synbiotics combine probiotics and prebiotics to help promote a healthy gut microbiome. Sepsis is a bacterial infection that spreads to organs and tissues, with low-birth-weight and preterm infants particularly susceptible.

In this study, 4,500 infants from 149 villages in the Indian state of Odisha—where infant mortality rates are high, often due to sepsis infection—got daily synbiotics or a placebo beginning two to four days after birth.

After 60 days, infants who received the probiotic *lactobacillus plantarum* plus the prebiotic fructo-oligosaccharide inulin were 40 percent less likely to have developed sepsis compared to placebo. Because the results were so unexpectedly good, doctors stopped the trial and gave all the infants synbiotics. Synbiotics also reduced chances for lower respiratory tract infection requiring antibiotic treatment by 34.4 percent.

Vitamin D and preterm babies

Preterm babies are born with lower vitamin D stores. In the first of two studies, 121 preterm infants born between 24 and 32 weeks gestation got 400 IU, 800 IU, or 1,000 IU of vitamin D per day through what would have been their 36th week in the womb, the normal gestational age.

Before the supplement, 72 percent



of the babies were deficient in vitamin D—below 20 nanograms per milliliter of blood (ng/mL). At 36 weeks, vitamin D levels had risen significantly in each of the vitamin D dose groups, to 29.4, 40 and 43 ng/mL, respectively.

In a second study, 1,064 pregnant women between the ages of 18 and 45 who later gave birth to a single child were offered free vitamin D supplements. Women who took vitamin D and achieved levels of 40 ng/mL were 62 percent less likely to have a preterm birth compared to women not taking vitamin D whose levels were below 20 ng/mL.

REFERENCE: NATURE; 2017, Vol. 548, No. 7668, 407-12

DECEMBER'S

Healthy Insight

Almonds Improve Cholesterol

Almonds are a source of good fats, vitamin E, and fiber. In this new study of 48 men and women with elevated LDL—the “bad”—cholesterol, almonds promoted an especially beneficial larger form of HDL, the “good” cholesterol, called “alpha-1 HDL.” Participants ate an identical diet with 1.5 ounces of almonds per day, or a banana muffin with the same calories instead. After six weeks, alpha-1 HDL levels were 19 percent higher for the almond group but unchanged in the banana muffin group. HDL collects cholesterol from cells to deposit in the liver to break down, a function that improved 6.4 percent for almonds.

REFERENCE: THE JOURNAL OF NUTRITION; 2017, Vol. 147, No. 8, 1517-23

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Healthy Women

Nutrients ease and improve menopausal symptoms

Pomegranate seed oil

Folk and Ayurvedic medicine have used pomegranate seeds to treat many female health concerns. Pomegranate contains unsaturated fatty acids, linolenic acid, and phytoestrogens that doctors believe may help improve menopausal symptoms.

In this study, 78 women experiencing menopausal symptoms for an average of 46 months took 500 mg of pomegranate seed oil twice per day. The women reported their symptoms for four weeks before beginning to take pomegranate seed oil, and then again at the end of the four-week study.

Most symptoms were significantly reduced, with the greatest improvement in hot flashes, sleep quality, energy, and mood. The women also reported

a 35 percent improvement in vaginal lubrication.

Discussing the findings, doctors said that while the effects on hot flashes, sleep, and mood are important, pomegranate seed oil may be a new plant-based solution for vaginal lubrication concerns.

Fenugreek

Fenugreek contains estrogenic isoflavones and diosgenin, a phytosteroid similar to estrogen. Declining estrogen levels are the cause of menopausal symptoms. Earlier studies have found fenugreek may influence hormonal activity, leading doctors to believe it may have a beneficial effect on menopausal symptoms. In this study, 104 healthy women took 300 mg of fenugreek seed

extract twice per day, or a placebo.

After 12 weeks, while the placebo group had not improved, those taking fenugreek seed extract saw significant reductions in menopausal symptoms including daytime hot flashes and night sweats, improvements in mood and irritability, and fewer physical and sexual symptoms.

REFERENCE: ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES IN HEALTH & MEDICINE; 2017, VOL. 23, NO. 2, 28-34



Omega-3 Update

Fish oil improved insulin sensitivity and blood flow to the brain

Better insulin sensitivity

Earlier studies found omega-3 fish oil improves factors in metabolic syndrome and reduces chances for heart and circulatory diseases, but studies on how omega-3s might influence glucose

metabolism and insulin sensitivity are inconclusive.

Doctors reviewed 17 fish oil studies covering 672 participants over the age of 18 with metabolic syndrome or type 2 diabetes. Metabolic syndrome includes factors such as excess fat around the waist, high blood pressure, high blood sugar, high triglyceride levels, and low levels of HDL—the “good” cholesterol—all of which increase chances for developing type 2 diabetes.

While there were no effects in those who already had type 2 diabetes, those with metabolic syndrome who had taken omega-3 fish oil supplements saw a 47 percent increase in insulin sensitivity—meaning the body needed less insulin to metabolize glucose in the bloodstream. The longer people took omega-3s, the greater the increase in insulin sensitivity.

Better brain blood flow

This is one of the first studies to explore the effects of omega-3s on cognition and brain physiology. In the study, doctors divided 166 participants into low- and high-levels of the omega-3s EPA and DHA. Researchers then scanned 128 regions of each participant’s brain, and everyone completed computerized tests of memory and cognition.

As blood flow to the brain—and levels of omega-3s in the brain—increased, participants did better on tests of cognition and memory. Doctors said the findings revealed a direct link between lower omega-3 levels and reduced brain blood flow to regions important for learning, memory, depression, and dementia.

REFERENCE: LIPIDS IN HEALTH AND DISEASE; 2017, VOL. 16, NO. 131, PUBLISHED ONLINE



Healthy Skin & Nails

Nutrients protect from sun damage and reduce brittle nails

Collagen improves brittle nails

In this open-label, non-placebo trial, 25 people took 2,500 mg of bioactive collagen peptides per day for 24 weeks. Doctors measured nail health before, during, and after the study.

After 12 weeks, nail growth had increased by 10 percent, by 12 percent after 24 weeks, and continued increasing



by 15 percent four weeks after stopping collagen. Before the study, participants reported breaking nails 10 times per month, and just six times per month at 24 weeks. Nail peeling, irregular edges, and roughness declined by half at 12 weeks.

At the end of the study, 80 percent of the women were totally satisfied with collagen, and 46 percent rated overall improvement as a 9 or 10 on a scale of 1 to 10. Most participants also said they believed their nails were longer, stronger, and grew faster.

Astaxanthin provides sun protection

Skin exposed to the sun secretes enzymes that degrade collagen and

elastin, causing skin aging and inflammation. In this study, 65 healthy women took 6 mg or 12 mg of astaxanthin per day, or a placebo.

After 16 weeks, wrinkles increased and moisture declined for placebo while remaining stable for astaxanthin. Inflammation in the top layer of the skin increased significantly for placebo, slightly for the low-dose group, but not at all for the high-dose astaxanthin group.

Separately, in the lab, doctors exposed skin cells to sun-like ultraviolet-B radiation. Untreated cells became injured and inflamed, while cells treated with astaxanthin remained healthy.

REFERENCE: JOURNAL OF COSMETIC DERMATOLOGY; AUGUST, 2017, 12393, PUBLISHED ONLINE

Mood

Saffron and B-vitamins may improve depressive symptoms

Saffron and postpartum depression

Doctors wanted to compare the effects of saffron with that of Prozac on symptoms of postpartum depression. The study included 68 women, four to 12 weeks after giving birth, with moderate depressive symptoms according to a standard depression rating scale.

The women took 15 mg of saffron or 20 mg of Prozac, each twice per day, while not taking any other psychotropic drugs or receiving any behavior therapy during the trial.

After six weeks, 18.8 percent of those in the saffron group, and 21.9 percent of those in the Prozac group were in remission. While all the women in both groups reported at least a partial response, women taking Prozac reported more frequent headache, dry mouth,

drowsiness, constipation and sweating.

B-vitamin deficiency

Vitamin B12 and other B-vitamins play a role in producing brain chemicals that affect mood and other brain functions. Recent evidence suggests a link between the nervous system and the immune system, and that the immune system plays a significant role in depression.

Doctors reviewed studies from 2008 through 2016 on B-vitamins, immune system, inflammation, and the links between these and depression. Overall, there is a clear link between B-vitamins, the immune system, and depression. Low levels of vitamins B1, 2, 3, 6, 9, and 12 are common in depression.

One of the major findings: B-vitamin supplementation reduced depressive symptoms. Doctors also

discovered a link between pro-inflammatory profiles and depression, and that anti-inflammatory nutrients improve depression outcomes.

Discussing the findings, doctors said, "It is clear that deficiency in B-vitamins results in symptoms of depression that affect the health and well-being of individuals."

REFERENCE: PHARMACOPSYCHIATRY; 2017, VOL. 50, No. 2, 64-8



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Raw Oat-Almond Bars

While you enjoy this cool, crunchy nutrition blast, please see page 1 for a new study that found people who ate almonds boosted levels of HDL – the “good” cholesterol.

Ingredients:

1 c pitted Medjool dates (about 7.5 oz)
1½ c rolled oats
1 c roasted unsalted almonds, coarse chopped (about 4 oz nuts)
¼ c honey, maple syrup, or agave nectar
¼ c creamy salted almond or peanut butter
Parchment paper



Directions: Using a food processor, process dates into small pieces. Place dates, oats, and almonds in a large bowl. Warm the sweetener and nut butter in a small saucepan over low heat. Stir until combined, then pour over the oat mixture and mix to break up dates, and combine well. Place mixture in an 8x8 inch baking dish lined with parchment paper. Press down firmly until flattened uniformly. Cover with parchment paper or plastic wrap and let it firm-up in refrigerator or freezer for 15-20 minutes. Remove bars from pan and chop into squares and store in an airtight container for a few days before enjoying.

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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