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## Natural Insights for Well Being®

May 2022

### Immunity

Vitamin D, omega-3s, and probiotics support immune function

#### Vitamin D, omega-3s reduce autoimmune disorders

The immune system sometimes mistakenly attacks healthy cells, resulting in autoimmune disorders such as rheumatoid arthritis, thyroid impairment, psoriasis, and inflammatory bowel. In this large study, doctors reviewed records of 25,871 men and women, average age 67, who took 2,000 IU of vitamin D per day by itself, with a placebo, or with 460 mg of EPA plus 380 mg of DHA; took the omega-3s with a placebo; or took a placebo only, for an average of 5.3 years.

Those taking vitamin D were 22 percent less likely to develop an autoimmune disease compared to placebo, and those taking omega-3s were 15 percent less likely. During the final three years of the study, those who combined vitamin D with omega-3s saw 30 percent fewer cases than placebo.

Doctors said, "Until now we have had no proven way of preventing autoimmune diseases, and now for the first time, we do."

#### Probiotics reduce viral load in Covid

Doctors wanted to know if probiotics influence Covid through changes in the gut, or by interacting directly with the immune system. In



this study, 293 outpatients with mild Covid symptoms took a placebo or a combination of four lactobacillus probiotic strains for 30 days.

All participants survived, none were hospitalized, with 53 percent of those taking probiotics in complete remission compared to 28 percent for placebo. The probiotics group also reported fewer days with symptoms including fever, aches, cough, shortness of breath, and gut discomfort.

The probiotics group also had higher levels of SARS-CoV-2 immune antibodies IgG and IgM, as well as lower levels of the inflammatory factor, high-sensitivity C-reactive protein.

Rather than change the microbiome, probiotics activated immune antibodies in IgG and IgM that neutralized the Covid spike proteins.

REFERENCE: THE BMJ; 2022, PUBLISHED ONLINE, ARTICLE ID 066452

MAY'S

### Healthy Insight Pecans Improve Lipids

People who ate pecans saw lower cholesterol levels. In this study, 56 adults with high cholesterol did not eat pecans, added pecans to their regular diets, or substituted pecans for other carbohydrates and fats.

At the start of the study, and after eight weeks, everyone ate a high-fat meal, with doctors testing lipid and sugar levels four hours later. Both pecan groups saw total cholesterol decline about 5 percent, and LDL decline about 9 percent. Triglycerides declined more in the pecan-added group, and glucose declined more in the pecan-substitute group. Eating pecans may be a more consistent, sustainable way than drugs to reduce total and LDL cholesterol, doctors concluded.

REFERENCE: JOURNAL OF NUTRITION; 2021, VOL. 151, NO. 10, 3091-101

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# Lipids

## Garlic and probiotics improve blood pressure, lipids

### Aged garlic extract improved blood pressure

People with high cholesterol often have elevated blood pressure, a major factor in heart and circulatory conditions. In this study, 67 adults with moderately elevated total cholesterol levels, and high LDL cholesterol levels, aged at least 18, took a placebo or 250 mg of aged garlic extract per day for six weeks. Participants paused for three weeks, then switched groups.

After the first six-week phase, those taking the garlic extract saw lower diastolic blood pressure (DBP) levels. Men in particular, with DBP levels above 75 mmHg, saw an average decline of 5.85 mmHg compared to placebo.

Commenting on the findings, doctors said a 5 mmHg decrease in

DBP reduces chances of dying from stroke or other circulatory events by 30 to 40 percent and, “To the best of our knowledge, this is the first report of the DBP-reducing effect of aged garlic extract based on diet and healthy lifestyle without the mandatory use of drugs.”

### Lactobacillus plantarum improved lipids

In this study, 16 adults with high cholesterol took a placebo or 10 billion colony-forming units of the probiotic *Lactobacillus plantarum* per day.

After six weeks, those in the probiotics group saw total cholesterol levels decline by an average of 34.6 percent; LDL cholesterol decline by 28.4 percent, and non-HDL cholesterol

decline by 17.6 percent. The main protein in LDL, Apolipoprotein B (ApoB), which doctors use to gauge chances for heart and circulatory events, declined by 28.6 percent.

REFERENCE: NUTRIENTS; 2022, VOL. 14, NO. 3, 405



# Circulation

## Omega-3s and selenium extend life

### Omega-3s reduced low-grade chronic inflammation

Doctors wanted to see if low-grade, chronic inflammation, known as “subclinical” inflammation (SI), raised chances for heart and circulatory events



in older, otherwise healthy adults. In this study, doctors measured omega-3s in the diets of 4,804 men and women, aged at least 60, whose levels of the inflammatory factor—high-sensitivity C-reactive protein—ranged between 3 and 10 mg per liter of blood (mg/L). Chances for heart and circulatory events increase at these levels, according to the American Heart Association and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control.

Doctors divided participants into four groups: those with circulating omega-3 levels below 0.3 percent; from 0.3 to below 0.6 percent; from 0.6 to 0.9 percent, and 1.0 percent or above. For men and women, the tendency to have SI began as omega-3 levels fell below 0.8 percent, with chances for SI decreasing as levels of omega-3s increased.

### Selenium improved longevity in type 2 diabetes

Selenium is a component of proteins that help synthesize DNA and protect from oxidative damage and infection, among other essential functions. In this study, doctors measured selenium in 3,199 participants with type 2 diabetes, and followed up for an average of 12.6 years. Selenium levels were between 89 and 182 mcg per liter of blood.

Overall, as levels of selenium increased, chances for dying from any cause decreased, including heart disease, with those with the highest selenium levels 64 percent less likely to die compared to those with the lowest levels.

REFERENCE: NUTRIENTS; 2021, VOL. 13, NO. 2, 338

# Mind & Mood

## Flavonoids extend life; vitamins A, B1, and B3 for depression

### Flavonoids in Parkinson's disease

Doctors in this study measured flavonoids in 1,251 men and women newly diagnosed with Parkinson's disease (PD) and followed up for an average of 33 years. Every four years, participants completed a food-frequency questionnaire from which doctors calculated flavonoids. Flavonoids ranged from 134 to 673 mg per day.



Compared to those with the lowest levels, those who got the most flavonoid anthocyanins were 66 percent less likely to have died during the study. Good levels of flavan-3-ols, polymers, berries, and red wine also increased chances of survival.

In this first diet study to examine mortality in PD, “It is possible flavonoids lower chronic neuro-inflammation levels and interact with enzymes to slow neuron loss, protecting against cognitive decline and depression,” doctors concluded.

### Vitamins reduce depression from heavy metals

Populations in South Korea have experienced rapid industrialization and urbanization, exposing them to

high concentrations of heavy metals such as cadmium, lead, and mercury. In this study, doctors measured metals exposure and diet through surveys of 16,371 participants between 2009 and 2017.

Women with high exposure were more likely than men to be depressed. Overall, when cadmium levels doubled, chances for depression increased by 21 percent, but when levels of vitamins A, B1, and B3 doubled, chances for depression decreased by 8, 17, and 20 percent, respectively.

“The rapid decrease in depression from vitamins A, B1, and B3 in those with cadmium exposure is remarkable,” doctors concluded.

**REFERENCE:** NEUROLOGY; 2022, VOL. 98, NO. 10, ARTICLE ID 13275

MAY'S

## Ahead of the Curve

### Early-Stage Discoveries: Tomato, Seaweed, Goji Berry

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

#### Tomato concentrate reduced inflammation in HIV

In HIV, the intestinal walls are inflamed, and leak bacteria into the bloodstream. In the lab, mice with HIV on a diet including tomato concentrate had lower levels of pro-inflammatory cytokines and chemokines compared to those on a regular diet. Levels of a protein that triggers inflammation in chronic HIV infection were also lower.

Doctors found increased levels of Apolipoprotein A-1—a particle in HDL cholesterol that protects against heart and circulatory diseases—in biopsies of gut tissue in those on the tomato diet.

#### Ulva seaweed extract stopped Covid

Ulva seaweed is a diet staple in Hawaii, Japan, and New Zealand. Doctors in this study grew the seaweed, ulva algae, in the lab, then exposed cells in test tubes to coronavirus and to ulvan extract.

Cells exposed to coronavirus and ulvan extract did not become infected with SARS-CoV-2. Discussing the findings, doctors said the sulfated polysaccharides in ulva show promise. They hope to develop new antivirals to combat the continually mutating coronavirus strains that resist current antivirals and vaccine-based immunity.

#### Goji berry promotes eye health

In this small pilot study, 27 healthy people, age 45 to 65, took a commercial eye supplement containing 6 mg of lutein and 4 mg of zeaxanthin, or took an ounce of goji berries, five times per week for 90 days.

In the goji berry group, but not in the commercial supplement group, levels of the protective carotenoid pigments lutein and zeaxanthin increased in the macula of the eye. Next, doctors hope to test goji berries in people with early-stage age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

**REFERENCE:** PLoS PATHOGENS; 2022, VOL. 18, NO. 1, E1010160

## Savory Roasted Pecans

While you munch on these delicious prepared pecans, please see page 1 for a new study that found those who regularly ate pecans lowered total and LDL cholesterol levels.

Prep time: 5 minutes    Cook time: 10 minutes    Servings: 16

### Ingredients:

16 oz pecan halves  
6 tbsp butter, melted  
1/2 tsp kosher salt  
1/2 tsp freshly ground black pepper  
1/2 tsp crushed red pepper flakes  
1/2 tsp chili powder  
1/4 tsp paprika  
1/4 tsp ground cumin



**Directions:** Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Coat pecans in melted butter. Combine salt, pepper, red pepper flakes, chili powder, paprika, and cumin in a clean, heavy paper bag. Add pecans and shake well to coat. Spread nuts on baking sheet and roast for about 10 minutes until lightly browned and fragrant. Do not allow to burn. Let cool to enjoy warm; then store remainder in an air tight container.

## 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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