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Natural Insights for Well Being®

April 2013

Smart Supplements

Nutrients help ensure healthy mental and physical life

Vitamin B12 helps keep minds sound

Doctors know mental ability declines when vitamin B12 is deficient, but this study found even moderately low vitamin B12 levels impair brain function, possibly affecting many more people than previously thought. Researchers divided 549 men and women, average age 75, into five groups based on blood levels of vitamin B12. Participants had taken cognitive performance tests during the previous eight years. Those in the two lowest vitamin B12 groups; deficient in, and very low in vitamin B12, saw cognitive performance scores decline equally rapidly over the eight-year study period, and much faster than those with higher vitamin B12 levels.

Discussing their findings, doctors said that although this study does not prove that low vitamin B12 causes cognitive decline, the two appear to be linked, and older adults in particular need to take extra steps to maintain healthy vitamin B12 levels.

Omega-3s help preserve cognitive function and cardio-metabolic health

Prior studies suggest omega-3s help preserve healthy cognitive function, and



heart and metabolic health. Doctors said metabolic disorders such as type 2 diabetes have a link to cognitive decline but few studies explore this relationship. Here, researchers sought a connection between omega-3s, cognitive performance, and cardio-metabolic factors in healthy men and women.

In the study, 40 participants, aged 51 to 72, took a placebo or a supplement containing 1,500 mg of EPA, 1,050 mg of DHA, and 450 mg of other omega-3 fish oils per day, in two alternating five-week phases. Doctors tested cognitive performance and measured metabolic markers after each phase.

Compared to the placebo phases, during the omega-3 phases, participants had a 5 percent decline in one marker of inflammation, had 6 mmHg lower average systolic blood pressure, an average decline in triglycerides of 16 mg per deciliter of blood, and scored better on cognitive assessment tests.

REFERENCE: JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN GERIATRICS SOCIETY; 2012, VOL. 60, NO. 8, 1457-64

APRIL'S

Healthy Insight Garlic Lowers Blood Pressure

In this study, 79 people with uncontrolled high systolic blood pressure took aged garlic extract in a dose of 240 mg, 480 mg, or 960 mg per day. After 12 weeks, those in the 480 mg garlic group saw systolic blood pressure decline an average of 11.8 mmHg. Doctors said a decline of about 10 mmHg could reduce chances of cardiovascular disease by 16 to 40 percent. After just eight weeks, those in the 960 mg garlic group saw 7.4 mmHg lower blood pressure. Doctors believe, had participants been able to more easily tolerate the higher dose of garlic, results would have continued to improve.

REFERENCE: EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF CLINICAL NUTRITION; 2013, VOL. 67, NO. 1, 64-70

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Healthy Men

Nutrients help maintain prostate health, as shown in two new studies

Coenzyme Q10 and omega-3s

Doctors wanted to test the ability of coenzyme Q10, omega-6, and omega-3s to alter prostate-specific-antigen (PSA) levels in healthy men with normal PSA levels, which can rise when the prostate is inflamed, enlarged, or cancerous.

In the study, researchers divided 504 healthy men with PSA levels at or below 2.5 nanograms per milliliter of blood into four groups. The men took a placebo, 400 mg of CoQ10 per day, 2,400 mg of the omega-6 GLA per day, or 4,480 mg of EPA plus 2,880 mg of DHA per day, in divided doses.

After 12 weeks, while there was no change for placebo, and a 15 percent increase in PSA levels in the omega-6 GLA group, those who took omega-3s saw a 30 percent reduction in PSA

levels, and those who took CoQ10 had 33 percent lower PSA levels.



Vitamin D

In this study, doctors wanted to see if taking 4,000 IU of vitamin D per day was safe, and if it would decrease PSA levels in 44 men with stable, slow-growing, non-aggressive prostate cancer.

Researchers measured PSA levels every two months for a year and took prostate biopsies at the start and end of the study. All the men took 4,000 IU of vitamin D per day. After 12 months, overall PSA levels had not changed. Biopsies showed 5 percent of the men were stable, 34 percent had an increase in abnormal prostate cells, and 55 percent had improved biopsies or fewer abnormal prostate cells. Doctors also said that vitamin D at 4,000 IU per day was safe.

REFERENCE: BRITISH JOURNAL OF NUTRITION; 2013, FIRSTVIEW ARTICLE, 1-8

Healthy Hearts

Nutrients help preserve and improve heart health

Coenzyme Q10 improves heart function after failure

In heart failure, the heart muscle weakens and doesn't pump enough blood to serve the body. Coenzyme Q10 is a powerful antioxidant that occurs naturally in nearly every cell in the body, and helps convert food into cellular energy. Doctors said CoQ10 may help improve blood flow in heart failure but several earlier studies were inconclusive.

Here, researchers reviewed 13 placebo-controlled trials involving 395 participants with heart failure. Dosages in the studies ranged from 60 mg to 300 mg of CoQ10 per day, and lasted from two to 24 weeks.

Combining results from all the studies, doctors found that CoQ10 increased by 3.7 percent the volume of

blood flowing through the large heart chamber to the body. Doctors concluded that, in heart failure, CoQ10 moderately improves the ability of the heart to pump blood.

More lycopene, less heart disease

Lycopene is an antioxidant in red and pink colored fruits and vegetables. Doctors said earlier studies that measured lycopene blood levels found a heart benefit, but studies of lycopene in the diet were inconclusive, probably because of inaccurate measurement.

To correctly identify lycopene in the diet, researchers in this study measured lycopene levels over 10 years in 314 people who were prone to cardiovascular disease, coronary heart disease, or stroke.

After 10 years of follow-up, while there was no link to stroke, compared to those who consumed the least lycopene, those who got the most lycopene were 17 percent less likely to develop cardiovascular disease, and 26 percent less likely to develop coronary heart disease, suggesting lycopene protects heart health.

REFERENCE: AMERICAN JOURNAL OF CLINICAL NUTRITION; 2013, VOL. 97, NO. 2, 268-75



Healthy Lipids

Nutrients help preserve healthy lipid balance

Curcumin improves many health measures

Curcumin is the yellow-orange antioxidant in the Indian spice turmeric. Earlier lab studies have found many health benefits, but because curcumin is hard to absorb, doctors have questioned its usefulness in humans. In this study, researchers used a curcumin-lipid mixture that would improve absorption, allowing a relatively low dose.

In the study, 38 healthy men and women, aged 40 to 60, took 80 mg of curcumin per day, or a placebo. After four weeks, while there were no changes for placebo, compared to the start of the study, those who took curcumin had an average decline in triglycerides of 15 mg per deciliter of blood and significantly higher blood levels of nitric oxide, which helps lower blood pressure. Doctors also

found lower levels of a molecule linked to artery clogging, higher levels of an antioxidant enzyme, lower levels of an enzyme linked to liver disease, and a small drop in beta amyloid protein, which is linked to brain aging and Alzheimer's disease.

Vitamin B6 can help balance fatty acids

Doctors know that severe vitamin B6 deficiency can harm lipid balance, and wanted to test moderately low vitamin B6 levels. In the study, 23 healthy adults ate a two-day diet with adequate vitamin B6, and then ate a vitamin B6-restricted diet. After 28 days, circulating vitamin B6 levels had dropped by more than half. While cholesterol levels did not change, concentrations of EPA and DHA

decreased and the ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 increased, changes which doctors said may raise chances of cardiovascular disease when vitamin B6 is moderately low.

REFERENCE: THE JOURNAL OF NUTRITION; 2012, VOL. 142, No. 10, 1791-7



Healthy Knees

Nutrients improve knee osteoarthritis

Glucosamine, chondroitin, quercetin

Osteoarthritis (OA) is the most common cause of chronic pain and disability in older people, and involves progressive “wear and tear” deterioration of joint cartilage that is linked to



oxidative stress. In this study, 40 people with knee OA took a placebo or a supplement containing 1,200 mg of glucosamine, 60 mg of chondroitin, and 45 mg of quercetin glycosides per day. After 16 weeks, compared to placebo, those who took the supplement had significantly less pain walking and climbing stairs. Doctors also found a small trend toward rebalancing the natural process of forming and breaking down a protein, type II collagen, that is the basis of cartilage.

Vitamin E protects against oxidative stress in OA

Doctors said vitamin E may help the body regulate oxidative free radicals and maintain antioxidant reserves. In the study, 40 people with OA of the

knee, aged 50 to 70, took 200 IU of vitamin E per day. Compared to 40 similar healthy adults before the start of the study, those with OA had lower levels of several antioxidant enzymes and greater signs of inflammation than the healthy participants.

After three months of taking vitamin E, while signs of inflammation had not changed, the OA group had significantly higher levels of antioxidant enzymes.

Discussing their findings, doctors said these results confirm that vitamin E protects against the deteriorating effects of knee OA due to oxidative stress, and for its potential role in reducing the inflammation that occurs in OA, call for further study of vitamin E.

REFERENCE: JOURNAL OF THE SCIENCE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE; 2012, VOL. 92, No. 4, 862-9

Stay Healthy!
840 S. Rancho Drive #14
Las Vegas, NV 89106
(702) 877-2494

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Free from Fibromyalgia

Doctors find link to cellular stress

Fibromyalgia is a group of symptoms that includes body-wide pain, tender joints, muscles, tendons and other soft tissue, with links to fatigue, insomnia, depression, anxiety, and headache. Doctors suspected a link to excess oxidation, where the body lacks the antioxidants to prevent oxidative cell damage.

Doctors compared 15 healthy people to 20 participants with fibromyalgia and found 64 percent lower levels of the antioxidant CoQ10, 610 percent higher oxidative stress levels, and energy reserves in the cells 70 percent lower than in healthy people.

Doctors then gave 10 of the fibromyalgia participants 300 mg of CoQ10 per day. After three months, circulating levels of CoQ10 had

increased 63 percent, oxidative stress levels decreased 83 percent, and cell energy reserves more than tripled.

Participants reported overall fibromyalgia symptoms declined by half, and headache severity was 40 percent lower after taking CoQ10.

REFERENCE: PUBLIC LIBRARY OF SCIENCE; 2012, VOL. 7, No. 4, 1



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