Dear Health Enthusiast

This month’s health letter addresses three questions.

- How can you work with your body’s physiology to lower your risk for cancer?
- A lot of colds and influenza is going around. Are there any herbal remedies that can relieve your symptoms if you get ill?
- Can walnuts improve your health if regularly consumed?

Wildwood Lifestyle Center & Hospital

FEATURED ARTICLES

**Cancer Prevention Strategies**

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Cancer Prevention Strategies: DNA Repair

Approximately one in three Americans will develop cancer sometime during their lives. In this article we outline a lifestyle program which reduces the risk for cancer through DNA repair.

Cancer originates in genes which are encoded in DNA. Genes tell a cell what to do, when to divide, and even when to die! The start of cancer begins with the sabotage of DNA. Because of faulty genes and other factors, cancer cells react more aggressively than normal to growth factors. Consequently, cancer cells whose DNA has been irreversibly damaged divide out of control. Cancer cells also develop their own blood supply by creating new blood vessels to feed the tumor and mechanisms which allow them to invade tissues.

DNA Repair to the Rescue

The DNA in every cell in your body is under constant environmental and lifestyle assaults from various directions. Your body’s DNA repair genes produce many different proteins whose job is to recognize and repair damaged DNA. Some of these enzymes remove the damaged DNA while others sew up the microscopic holes caused by epinephrine, free radicals, and other factors. The DNA repair ability of a cell is essential to the integrity of its DNA and chromosomes, and thus is vital for not only the normal functioning of the cell but also of the whole organism. Many genes that influence longevity have actually turned out to be involved in DNA repair and protection. As of today, 130 genes have been identified as being involved in DNA repair. Please note: superior DNA repair would not only help to prevent cancer but many other diseases as well. Failure to correct these molecular lesions in the DNA leads to the introduction of mutations, and most mutations are not beneficial. Of course, DNA repair mechanisms must perform constantly and effectually to insure optimal protection.

Strategies that Improve DNA repair

1. **Skip caffeine and smoking.** Not only does caffeine usually interfere with DNA repair(1) leaving it more vulnerable to cancer-producing agents and/or viruses, it also decreases the production of melatonin, a hormone produced in the pineal gland that not only induces refreshing sleep but also exerts an antioxidant effect in the cells and DNA.

2. **Treasure temperance.** Alcohol drinking and cigarette smoking also inhibit DNA repair. Wise calorie restriction increases DNA repair while obesity inhibits it, especially in the liver and skeletal muscles. It’s not just the quality of the food we eat, but also the quantity that plays a key role in effective DNA repair. Wise caloric restriction helps the DNA work more effectively by inhibiting damage to it and proteins, and improving DNA repair.(2) Generally speaking, wise caloric restriction for most people consists of eating 15% less than a person would normally eat. To be the most effective this restriction should also be combined with moderate exercise. These two habits can activate genes which prolong life. Note that individuals with anorexia or those who are underweight would certainly not need to implement the caloric restrictions mentioned above. Malnutrition has a terrible impact on the brain and body. On the other hand, those who are morbidly obese would need to restrict their calorie intake by more than just 15% to get the combined effect of weight loss and reduced DNA damage.

3. **Get sufficient sleep.** Just one week of inadequate sleep disrupts over 700 genes that regulate the immune system, metabolism, and stress responses. Sleep deficiency reduces DNA repair in the brain.(3)

4. **Engage in regular moderate exercise.** Mild exercise training also activates a number of protective genes in the heart muscle. Animal studies show that regular exercise improves DNA repair in skeletal muscles(4) and liver cells(5) and reduces oxidative damage done to the DNA in the liver. Exercise also seems to enhance selective enzymes involved in detoxification of certain cancer-producing agents and can alter other biological processes that contribute to the beginning stage of cancer and its
Interestingly, studies show that strenuous, exhaustive exercise causes oxidative damage to the DNA in the heart muscle and in white blood cells (lymphocytes, to be precise).

5. **Have your vitamin D level checked.** Vitamin D and its receptors play an important role in DNA repair.(7) As many as 50% of North Americans and Western Europeans have insufficient amounts of vitamin D levels. Obesity decreases its bioavailability.

### Good Foods Aid DNA repair

1. **Enjoy cruciferous veggies.** Broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, and Brussels sprouts boost DNA repair. Don’t like broccoli? Try adding broccoli florets to potato soup. Or put chopped kale into your lentil soup. Cabbage and bok choy add more health benefits to a delightful vegan stir fry dish. Cruciferous vegetables also help the liver to detoxify cancer-producing agents.

2. **Eat orange fruits and vegetables.** Carotenoids (8), (9) from orange fruits and vegetables and leafy greens also improve DNA repair.

3. **Eat an ounce of Brazil nuts several times a week.** Their selenium helps to maintain DNA repair. Sunflower seeds, whole wheat and rye also provide selenium. Whole grains, leafy greens, and sprouted legumes also provide zinc. A deficiency in zinc impairs DNA repair. Phytic acid found in whole grains promotes DNA repair.(10), (11)

4. **Enjoy citrus fruit and cooked tomatoes.** Kiwis are one fruit that is also known to significantly increase the rate of DNA repair when three are eaten daily. Citrus fruits and cooked tomatoes contain naringenin which stimulates DNA repair in prostate cancer cells.(12)

While this lifestyle program helps improves your DNA repair, cancer is serious business. Get regular preventive checkups. Judicious surgery and medical treatments are essential in conquering cancer.

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**Works cited.**

Herbal Remedies for the Common Cough

You probably know how it is. Suddenly you or a family member comes down with a cold and its symptoms appear at night. You don’t feel like getting out. Don’t worry. There is no need to go to the drug store. If you cook, you have effective remedies in your kitchen. First, two definitions: An **antitussive** agent either relieves or suppresses coughing. An **expectorant** agent promotes the secretion and expulsion of phlegm or mucus from the respiratory tract. Since coughing removes mucus and foreign matter from the lungs and upper respiratory tract, it is a protective mechanism that we usually do not want to suppress by using drugs. But we do need to sleep at night!

**Herbal Teas for Coughing**

- **Thyme**: Because of its antitussive and expectorant effects, thyme is a natural cough medicine because it reduces spasm in the bronchial tubes. It also improves clearance of excess mucus in the respiratory tract. A double-blind, placebo controlled study showed that thyme with evening primrose helps bronchitis. (1)
- **Fennel** reduces inflammation of the mucous membrane in the upper respiratory tract while its antheole and fenchone provide its expectorant properties.
- **Mullein** flowers contain anti-inflammatory and anti-viral properties and act as an expectorant.

**Herbal Cough Suppressants**

For cough suppressants, use ginger or anise seed. **Ginger** also contains sesquiterpenes which fight rhinovirus (the most common cold virus). **Anise seed tea**: Steep 1-2 teaspoons of crushed anise seed in 1 cup of boiling water. Strain after cooling. Take at night as this tea acts as a cough suppressant.

One caveat here: Be sure to keep you herbs stored in dark containers and in a dry place. Light and humidity can reduce the effectives of many phytochemicals.

**Bronchitis**

Chrysoeriol, a bioactive flavonoid in **red tea (rooibos tea)**, possesses antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, antiviral, and free radical scavenging activities and has demonstrated bronchodilator effects. (2) Red tea also contains an expectorant. Sipping red tea with a little honey in it may well be beneficial if you have a cough from bronchitis.

**Honey**

Honey may be better than the cough medicine diphenhydramine in the symptomatic relief of cough. It may be as effective as dextromethorphan in reducing cough frequency. (3)

**Herbal Vapor Therapy**

In low humidity dry nasal passages are more susceptible to cold viruses. Add 2 Tbs. thyme, 1 Tbs. rosemary, 1 Tbs. peppermint, and 1 tsp. eucalyptus leaves to 1 liter of boiling water. Remove from the stove. Hold your face 6-12 inches from the steaming water. Drape your head with a towel while breathing in the vapor. Eucalyptus loosens phlegm and possesses antimicrobial properties. Its cineole controls airway
mucus hypersecretion and can even inhibit certain pro-inflammatory compounds in asthma. It is easily absorbed by the respiratory tract. (4) The menthol in peppermint is a decongestant and a good expectorant. (5)

**Food Power to the Rescue**

**Garlic and onions** contain anti-viral and other phytochemicals that help to clean mucus. The World Health Organization recommends onions for cough, colds, bronchitis, and bronchial spasms.

**Another remedy:**

Keep your extremities covered, especially your arms. This really helps.

**Important to know**

A cough is a symptom. Common viral illnesses such as colds, influenza, lung infections, allergies, sinusitis, COPD, gastric reflux disorder, and lung cancer all produce coughing. Coughs accompanied by wheezing or shortness of breath need prompt evaluation. Coughing may also be an important sign of congestive heart failure. If your sputum is colored or tinged with blood, see your doctor immediately. Contact a health care professional if you have a chronic illness like COPD or diabetes, if you are taking an immune-suppressant drug, or if you are not better within five days.

A pregnant or lactating woman should also check with her pharmacist before using herbal remedies. If you are taking any medicine, please check with your pharmacist before taking herbs in medicinal amounts. For most of us, the above remedies are safe and effective.

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**References**

5. www.umm.edu › Medical Reference › Complementary Medicine, peppermint.

Walnuts to the Rescue

Posted on January 9, 2014 by wildwoodhealth

By Alberta Cook and Helen B. Jacobs

If you are obese, have a pot-belly, metabolic syndrome or diabetes, daily consumption of walnuts will help you. Why? Like most nuts, walnuts are rich in fiber, anti-oxidants, unsaturated oils and blood vessel health-promoting minerals such as magnesium and potassium. Unlike other nuts, walnuts provide the omega-3 fat, alpha linolenic acid. Like other omega-3 fats, alpha linolenic combats inflammation. All these factors help promote health, but there is something more.

Help Your Blood Vessels

The conditions listed above impair the endothelial cells in your blood vessels to make vasodilators which keep your blood vessels open and your blood pressure within normal range. These conditions also increase inflammation within your body. Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center in Connecticut conducted an eight week study using obese individuals, who were non-smokers, with at least one risk factor for pre-diabetes. Two groups were chosen and were told to eat their normal diet, but half the group was given a measured amount of walnuts to eat with his/her meals, or for a snack. Those who daily ate the walnuts for eight weeks showed definite improvement in the ability of the blood vessels to dilate and reductions in systolic blood pressure.(1)

Walnuts for Diabetes

More intakes of nuts (as well as whole grain and low-fat dairy) and less intake of meat can reduce diabetes risk by as much as 35 percent. Higher consumption of walnuts two or three times a week is associated with significant reduced risk for diabetes type 2 in women.(2) But what about if you already have diabetes? Diabetes substantially increases the risk for cardiovascular disease. Daily consumption of walnuts also improves the ability of the blood vessels in individuals who have diabetes type 2. Even though walnuts added calories to these diabetic study participants, they did not gain weight.(3)

Aid for Cardiovascular Health

In a randomized-controlled trial, researchers gave 15 participants with elevated blood cholesterol one of four walnut products. They found that the ones who were given walnut oil showed a particularly good outcome at preserving the function of endothelial cells, which play an important role in cardiovascular health. Those that consumed whole walnuts showed improvement of their HDL, the good cholesterol. The HDL performed more effectively in transporting and removing excess cholesterol from the body. (4) Other studies show that when walnuts provide 10% of the daily total calories, total cholesterol and LDL (the bad cholesterol) and certain inflammatory markers decrease. (5)

Along with a good heart healthy diet and regular exercise, the frequent addition of walnuts to your diet may help your cardiovascular health. Be sure to use unsalted walnuts. Add them to entrées to enhance the flavor of vegetable based burgers, and grain dishes.

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References

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