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April 2018

Healthy Moms & Kids

Folic acid and multivitamins have benefits in both

Folic acid and postpartum depression

Women who took folic acid supplements for more than six months while pregnant were less likely to have postpartum depression. In this study, doctors checked for postpartum depression in 1,592 women six to 12 weeks after giving birth. About half the women had taken a folic acid supplement during pregnancy.

Women who had taken folic acid for more than six months while pregnant were 24 percent less likely to develop postpartum depression compared to women who took folic acid for a shorter time or women who had not taken folic acid while pregnant.

Doctors also compared social, economic, family history, and individual health factors in the women and found that taking folic acid for more than six months while pregnant reduced postpartum depression regardless of any of these other factors.

Folic acid, multivitamins and autism

Women who took folic acid supplements or multivitamins either before or during pregnancy were less likely to give birth to a child with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). This large



study included 45,300 children born between 2003 and 2007 that doctors followed until 2015.

Doctors compared the vitamins and supplements in mothers of all 572 children diagnosed with ASD and in mothers of a random sampling of 14,760 children in the group who had not been diagnosed with ASD.

While pregnant, women who took either folic acid supplements or multivitamins were 73 percent less likely to give birth to a child later diagnosed with ASD compared to women who did not take folic acid or multivitamin supplements during pregnancy. Before pregnancy, women who took folic acid or multivitamin supplements were 61 percent less likely to bear offspring later diagnosed with ASD compared to women who took neither folic acid nor multivitamins.

REFERENCE: NUTRIENTS; 2017, VOL. 9, No. 11, PII: E1206; PUBLISHED ONLINE

APRIL'S

Healthy Insight

B-Vitamins Reduce Breast Cancer Chances

In this large, four-year study of 27,853 women, aged at least 45, those who got the most B-complex vitamin supplements were 33 percent less likely to develop breast cancer compared to women who got the least B-vitamin supplements. For individual B vitamins, women who got the most pyridoxine or thiamine from supplements were 39 percent less likely than non-users.

Women in the bottom half of alcohol consumers had the greatest B-vitamin supplement benefit: 40 to 53 percent lower chances. B vitamins from food were also beneficial, lowering chances by 24 percent for women who got the most B vitamins from diet.

REFERENCE: NUTRIENTS; 2017, VOL. 9, No. 5, 488

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Sound Sleep

Chamomile and probiotics improved sleep quality

Chamomile helps older adults

Older adults are more likely than younger ones to have problems falling and staying asleep, and prescription sleep medications can have harsh side effects. In this study, 60 older adults complaining of low-quality sleep and insomnia took 200 mg of chamomile extract capsules, twice per day, or a placebo.

After 28 days, compared to placebo, those taking chamomile reported better sleep quality including less time spent falling asleep, a greater percentage of total time in bed spent sleeping, fewer sleep disturbances, less need for taking sleep medication, and better daytime functioning.

While the total time sleeping did not increase, doctors said this may be because the study, at just one month,

was too short. Doctors think chamomile may work because compounds in the plant bind to nerve-signaling sites in the central nervous system, creating a natural sleep-inducing effect.

Probiotics improve sleep and waking

Students get nervous before taking an exam, and sleep quality suffers. This study took place over two consecutive years, with different participants each time. A total of 94 students took 100 mg of lactobacillus casei Shirota fermented milk or a placebo milk beginning eight weeks prior to, and continuing for three weeks after, a national standardized exam.

Everyone had increasing anxiety and decreasing sleep quality during

the two weeks leading up to the exam, peaking on exam day. Students taking the probiotic slept significantly longer than those in the placebo group, and reported feeling less sleepy when they woke up. Probiotics also helped students fall asleep more easily and have deeper sleep compared to placebo.

REFERENCE: COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES IN MEDICINE; DECEMBER, 2017, VOL. 35, 109-14



Healthy Heart

Vitamin D and omega-3s boost circulatory health

Vitamin D reduces artery stiffness

Stiff arteries contribute to circulatory problems, and recent research shows a link to low levels of vitamin D. In this study, 70 overweight African-Americans, aged 13 to 45, with deficient vitamin D levels at or below 20 nanograms per milliliter of blood (ng/

mL), took 600 IU, 2,000 IU, or 4,000 IU of vitamin D per day, or a placebo.

After 16 weeks, the placebo group saw a 2 percent increase in artery stiffness, and those taking 600 IU of vitamin D had a 0.1 percent increase. The 2,000 IU group saw artery stiffness decrease by 2 percent and, in what doctors said was a rapid improvement, the 4,000 IU vitamin D group had a 10.4 percent decrease in artery stiffness. Vitamin D levels improved to sufficient levels in both the 2,000 IU and 4,000 IU vitamin D groups, to 30 and 35.7 ng/mL, respectively.

Omega-3s lower heart rate

New evidence suggests how fast the heart beats while at rest is a key factor in

circulatory and all other causes of death. In this review of 51 placebo-controlled omega-3 studies covering 3,000 participants, compared to placebo, those who took an omega-3 supplement had a small—but significant—average reduction in heart rate of 2.23 beats per minute.

Individually, there was no separate benefit for EPA, but DHA provided a significant benefit: an average of 2.47 fewer resting heartbeats per minute. Doctors said this is important because most participants had normal resting heart rates, and calculate that 3.2 fewer beats-per-minute would lower chances for a sudden fatal heart event by 7.5 percent.

REFERENCE: PLoS ONE—JOURNALS; DECEMBER, 2017, 0188424, PUBLISHED ONLINE



Circulation

CoQ10 benefits in type 2 diabetes and in inflammation

CoQ10 improves factors in diabetic kidney disease

In this study, 50 people with diabetic kidney disease took a placebo or 100 mg of CoQ10 per day. After 12 weeks, doctors discovered several benefits.

For those taking CoQ10, insulin levels decreased by 3.4 mass-international units per milliliter of blood (μ IU/mL), while increasing 0.8



for placebo. Also for CoQ10, insulin resistance and long-term average blood sugar levels decreased while increasing for placebo.

Doctors also found fewer signs of oxidative stress in the CoQ10 group, but more signs of oxidation for placebo. In one of the most important findings, levels of a blood vessel-damaging protein that forms when blood sugar is chronically elevated—a factor in diabetic kidney disease—were lower for CoQ10 while increasing for placebo.

CoQ10 lowers chronic inflammation

Cells in the body make coenzyme Q10, a prime factor in creating cellular energy. Certain tissues in the body, such as heart, kidney, liver, and

skeletal muscle, have especially high energy requirements, and need lots of CoQ10. The aim of this review of seven CoQ10 studies was to measure the effects of taking CoQ10 supplements on C-reactive protein (CRP), a sign of systemic inflammation.

Overall, CoQ10 moderately lowered CRP levels. In addition, doctors also found that CoQ10 significantly lowered levels of another inflammatory factor, interleukin-6 (IL-6), which promotes CRP.

Discussing the findings, doctors said that CoQ10 has a moderately favorable effect on lowering CRP, a significant effect on lowering IL-6, and that taking CoQ10 supplements likely reduces mild chronic inflammation.

REFERENCE: JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF NUTRITION; NOVEMBER, 2017, PUBLISHED ONLINE

Cognition

Nutrients preserve cognition, protect against brain damage

Lutein speeds nerve-cell response time

Recent studies reveal a role in healthy brain function for the colorful carotenoids normally found in the eye. Lutein, one of the yellow-orange-red pigments in the retina, also accumulates in the brain. Doctors can estimate brain levels of lutein without invasive procedures by measuring amounts of lutein in the retina.

In this study, doctors gauged lutein levels in the eye, and then measured nerve-cell activity in the brain while participants performed an attention test. The study tracked cognitive performance in 60 adults, aged 25 to 45.

Because the study included both younger and older adults, doctors could compare nerve-cell activity—which

slows with age—between the two groups. Nerve-cells in the older adults with higher levels of lutein performed at a faster rate normally found in younger people, and better than their peers with lower levels of lutein. And those with more lutein were able to use more cognitive resources to complete the task.

Ginkgo benefits after stroke

In this study, 333 men and women who had had a stroke due to a blockage of blood flow to the brain within the past seven days took 100 mg of aspirin per day, with or without 450 mg of ginkgo biloba extract in three divided doses per day, for six months.

Doctors measured cognition at 12, 30, 90 and 180 days and found those taking aspirin plus ginkgo biloba

had higher scores at all four points compared to aspirin alone. The ginkgo group showed a significant slowdown in cognitive decline, better attention, working memory, and cognitive flexibility—the ability to switch between two concepts.

REFERENCE: FRONTIERS IN AGING NEUROSCIENCE; 2017, 10.3389, PUBLISHED ONLINE



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Selenium Reduced Ovarian Cancer Benefit in African-American women

Prevention is key because early-stage symptoms are few

Doctors were especially interested to find a selenium benefit because of the low chances of survival. In this study of African-American women, doctors compared the diets of 406 women with ovarian cancer (OC) to 632 women of similar age and geographic location without OC.

Women who took selenium supplements of more than 20 mcg per day were 30 percent less likely to develop OC compared to women who did not take supplements. Among women smokers, those who took selenium supplements were 87 percent less likely to develop OC than those who didn't take selenium supplements.

The benefit appeared only in women who took selenium supplements, and not in those who only got selenium from diet. Doctors said that to their knowledge, this is the first study to find a potential link between antioxidants like selenium and reducing OC in African-American women.

REFERENCE: THE JOURNAL OF NUTRITION; 2017, VOL. 147, No. 4, 621-7



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.

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