

Our health news update for your better living

Folic acid cuts colon cancer risk



According to a new study from McGill University Health Centre-Montreal Children's Hospital, getting sufficient amounts of the B-vitamin folate (folic acid) may help decrease

your risk of colorectal cancer. In this study, researchers worked with mice fed either a folate-deficient or control diet (with sufficient folate).

While not one of the mice fed a control diet developed tumours, one in four mice on the folate-deficient diet developed at least one tumour. The researchers reported that folate deficiency was associated with increased DNA damage, which may lead to the development of tumours, and decreased production of two "helper" genes produced by the body in response to DNA damage. The researchers note that people should not consume excessive amounts of folate, but instead simply ensure they get the recommended daily amount through a healthy diet or a high quality multivitamin supplement. Folate is found in foods such as green leafy vegetables, chick peas and lentils.

Source: *Cancer Research* Vol 66, 10349-10356

Green tea linked to weight loss

Drinking green tea can help reduce weight without increasing heart rate or blood pressure, according to a mini-review by researchers at the Chinese Academy of Sciences. The authors reviewed experimental studies, clinical studies and in vitro studies.

The human studies reviewed (which involved a daily total of 375 mg of catechins with 270 mg of EGCG and 150 mg of caffeine) showed that green tea consumption led to a significant increase in energy expenditure, decrease in body weight, decrease in waist circumference, and no change in heart rate or blood pressure. In vitro studies show that green tea extract stimulates thermogenesis (energy production).

The results of this review suggest that consumption of green tea may have a role to play in reducing body weight. The authors conclude, "Further studies are necessary to evaluate the observed weight-reducing action of green tea extract, especially in patients with much greater obesity."

Source: *Journal of Medicinal Food*, 2006 Winter; 9(4): 451-8



Catechins, flavonoid antioxidants found in green tea, are thought to be responsible for many of its benefits.

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Sea buckthorn for a healthy heart

Researchers from the University of Turku, Finland, report that sea buckthorn berries may help reduce inflammation and lower the risk of heart disease.

A study involving 233 healthy volunteers indicated a sea buckthorn-supplemented group showed a significant decrease in serum C-reactive protein (CRP) concentrations, compared to subjects in a placebo group. The study authors conclude that "a reductive effect on CRP, a marker of inflammation, and a risk factor for cardiovascular diseases, was detected."

Source: *Eur J Clin Nutr*, 2007 Jun 27

Hair health

Symptoms

Healthy hair with bounce and a glowing sheen is a sign of inner health and beauty. When hair becomes dry and brittle, it tends to fly away easily, the ends become split and it is hard to manage. Conversely, greasy hair is also difficult to keep manageable. Although graying hair is a sign of aging, it is largely the result of individual genetic make-up.

Causes

Healthy hair depends on a healthy body and good nutrition. Inadequate nutrition is a problem in North America because many people eat refined, canned and packaged foods which lack the vitality and enzymes that fresh, raw, unrefined foods have. Almost any vitamin or mineral deficiency will become apparent in dry, lifeless hair. Dry hair is common because of the increased use of chemicals to perm, color or straighten hair. Hairspray, gel and mousse usually contain agents which dry out hair, and frequent washing and backcombing only add to the problem.

Dry hair also signals an internal disorder in some people, for instance a thyroid or hormonal problem. Hair can be most difficult during pregnancy, the menstrual period and menopause if the hormonal system is not well balanced. Oral contraceptives can also cause brittleness and even hair loss.

Greasy hair can have many of the same causes. Often, greasy hair is associated with an overproduction of glands in the skin and scalp, which is quite common with hormonal changes that occur during adolescence. Again, an unhealthy diet should be considered.

Early graying is usually not a problem but a genetic predisposition. Nutrient depletion due to extreme physical or emotional stress will affect the hair.

Nutrition

To help dull hair regain its shine, eat foods rich in silica, such as millet and rolled oats in porridge or Swiss muesli. Foods rich in vitamin A keep hair healthy and shiny. These include whole milk and fish. Beta-carotene, which the body converts to vitamin A, is also an essential nutrient for hair health, and is provided by carrots, yams, dark green, leafy vegetables, apricots, blueberries and cantaloupe.



Supplementation with vitamins and Silica is recommended to help promote beautiful, healthy hair.

To promote supple hair and to prevent graying, eat foods which supply vitamin B complex and choline. Wheat germ is a potent source which should become part of your daily diet.

Other good sources of vitamin B complex are white and green beans, whole grains, eggs, and fish. The fatty acids found in fish, such as salmon and mackerel, also help keep hair supple. Eggs are the best dietary source of amino acids containing sulphur, which are needed for strong hair.

Nutritional Supplements

A diet based on fresh, raw and wholesome foods provides nutrients for strong, healthy and shiny hair. A multivitamin can be added to ensure all nutrients are included.

In addition, silica helps build strong, healthy hair. It is available from an organic source in capsules and from a mineral source as a gel.

Vitamin D may block infection

Looking to cut your risk of catching a bacterial infection? A new study suggests vitamin D may be the answer. UK researchers report that for healthy people exposed to tuberculosis, a single oral dose of vitamin D enhanced their immunity against this bacterial infection.

*"Vitamin D was used to treat tuberculosis in the preantibiotic era," said Dr. Adrian R. Martineau and colleagues. In a clinical trial, they assigned healthy adults exposed to tuberculosis to receive a single oral dose of 2.5 mg (1,000 IU) of vitamin D, or a placebo. After 6 weeks, they found that the vitamin D supplement significantly enhanced the subjects' immunity to *M. tuberculosis* compared with those who received the placebo.*

Source: American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine, July 15, 2007.

Folic acid cuts breast cancer

Menopausal women who consume the most folate (folic acid), a B-vitamin, can dramatically reduce their risk of breast cancer, according to new research. In a prospective study, 11,699 postmenopausal women aged 50 years or more were followed for over nine years.

Researchers found that those with the highest dietary folate intake, including supplements, had up to a 64% reduced risk of invasive breast cancer, compared with those with the lowest folate intake.

Source: Am J Clin Nutr. 2007 Aug;86(2):434-43

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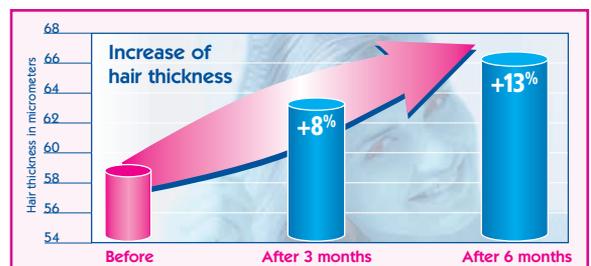
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Vitamin C: Cancer & heart disease

Data from clinical trials over the past several decades reveals that vitamin C may help prevent a variety of health disorders, including immune system deficiencies, cardiovascular disease, prenatal health problems, eye disease and cancer.

The review, conducted by Mark A. Moyad, MD, MPH of University of Michigan, examined over 100 studies. The data further suggests that certain vitamin C-containing metabolite formulations may be even more effective than C alone and provide longer-lasting immune enhancement with lower risk of side effects.

“Vitamin C has received more clinical and commercial attention than any other dietary supplement, and for good reason,” said Dr. Moyad. “The more we study vitamin C the more we appreciate its diversity in protecting our health.

For example a recently published meta-analysis showed vitamin C to be beneficial to those whose immune systems may be weakened due to stress, something common to most people in today’s society.”

Source: Seminars in Preventive and Alternative Medicine 2007;3(1):25-35



Vitamins boost fertility factors

Women who take a daily multivitamin and men who take vitamin C supplements can significantly improve their fertility, new research indicates.

Harvard School of Public Health researchers followed 18,000 women over eight years and found that those who took a multivitamin at least six days a week had a 40% lower risk of ovulation problems leading to infertility. Ovulation problems are the second leading cause of female infertility after blocked fallopian tubes.

“Multivitamins are packed with a large amount of nutrients so we looked at which were crucial, said Jorge Chavarro, the Harvard research fellow who led the study. “As best as we could tell, it looked as if folic acid was the nutrient that played the biggest role.”

Mothers lacking in folic acid during pregnancy have an increased chance of giving birth to children with spina bifida, and all women who are pregnant or trying to conceive are advised to take supplements.

For men, too, supplementation can make a difference. Researchers at Dubai Specialized Medical Center and Research Labs studied 13 infertile males who received 1,000 mg of vitamin C each twice daily. The men ranged in age from 25 to 35 years. Sperm counts, movement and structure each improved significantly after two months of vitamin C intake, the researchers found. They concluded that “vitamin C supplementation might improve sperm count, motility and morphology and might have a place as an additional supplement to improve semen quality towards conception.”

Sources: The Independent - London, Oct 25, 2006; J Med Food. 2006 Fall;9(3):440-42

Herb-drug issues unlikely

Ginseng and ginkgo biloba, two of the most widely used herbal supplements, are unlikely to interfere with the majority of prescription or over-the-counter drugs, according to a University of Kansas Medical Center study. Dr. Gregory Reed gave 72 healthy, non-smoking volunteers a “cocktail” of five drugs whose specific metabolic actions in the body are representative of over 90% of prescription drugs on the market. Some of the volunteers were then given one or both of the herbs. The scientists found no significant differences between those who received one, both, or none of the ginseng and ginkgo biloba supplements in how their bodies absorbed or metabolized any of the five prescription drugs.

Source: Federation of American Societies for experimental Biology, May 1, 2007

Anti-wrinkle answers

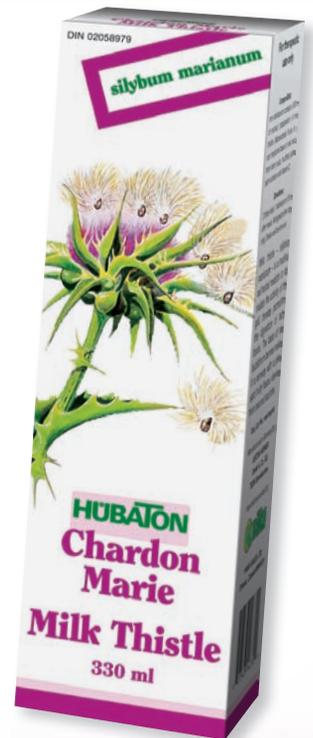
Middle-aged women looking to maintain healthy skin with a smooth appearance may want to consider cutting bad fats and carbs and taking vitamin C. A new study, involving 4,025 women aged 40-74, found higher vitamin C intakes helped lower the likelihood of a wrinkled appearance and skin dryness. Higher linoleic acid (omega-6) intakes were associated with lower likelihood of dryness and skin atrophy. A 17 g increase in fat intake was linked with a 28% increased likelihood of a wrinkled appearance, while a 50 g increase in carbohydrate intake led to a 36% increased likelihood of a wrinkled appearance.

Source: Am J Clin Nutr, 2007; 6(4): 1225-31

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How much of a good thing?

The amount of vitamin D you should take daily is a subject of great debate, Lappe notes. The US government's recommended daily allowance is 200 IU until age 50, 400 IU for 50-70 year olds, and 600 IU after age 70. However, many medical experts believe those recommendations are far too low.

The Canadian Cancer Society recently recommended that people with light skin take 1,000 IU of the vitamin supplement during fall and winter, while people with darker skin or limited sun exposure take that same amount throughout the year.

The society's recommendation coincided with the publication of the Creighton research in June. The four-year study involving 1,179 Nebraska women showed that women taking calcium supplements plus 1,100 IU of vitamin D3 daily, experienced a 60% decrease in their risk of developing cancer compared to a placebo group.

"Generally, medical experts consider it safe to take between 1,000 IU and 2,000 IU of vitamin D supplements daily," Lappe says.

Source: Creighton University, Nov 17, 2007

Q10 combo reduces cancer relapse

Breast cancer patients who take coenzyme Q10, riboflavin (vitamin B2) and niacin (vitamin B3) supplements along with the chemotherapy drug tamoxifen may reduce their risk of relapse, new research suggests.

In a study based in India, researchers randomly divided 84 women with breast cancer into various groups to study the effects of these supplements taken in combination with tamoxifen. For 45 days, one group received 100 mg per day of coenzyme Q10, 10 mg per day of riboflavin and 50 mg per day of niacin, along with 10 mg of tamoxifen twice per day.

Another group underwent the same regimen for 90 days. In each case, researchers found significant reductions in two substances that serve as circulating breast cancer tumour markers. This indicated reduced risk of relapse, the researchers pointed out, because metastases at distant sites rather than the primary tumour are the main cause of death among breast cancer patients.

Giving coenzyme Q10, riboflavin and niacin supplements, along with tamoxifen, to breast cancer patients "reduces the serum tumour marker level and thereby reduces the risk of cancer recurrence and metastases," the researchers concluded.

Source: Biol Pharm Bull. 2007 Feb;30(2):367-70

Cranberry studied in arthritis, cancer

Cranberries have always been colourful and festive but now it appears they also help fight cancer and arthritis. Scientists are pointing to cranberry juice as a useful tonic for people with rheumatoid arthritis and to the cranberry fruit as having possible anticancer effects.

UK Researchers at Kings College London observe a strong link between rheumatoid arthritis and microbial infection, such as urinary tract infection. People with rheumatoid arthritis, they suggest, could benefit from antibacterial measures including "the use of antibiotics, vegetarian diets and high intake of water and fruit juices such as cranberry juice in addition to currently employed treatments."



Sub-clinical urinary tract infections, these same researchers propose, are what trigger rheumatoid arthritis: a chronic, disabling disease affecting mainly older women. Across the Atlantic, meanwhile, a University of Massachusetts review looked at the anticancer properties of cranberries. Researchers reviewed a number of trials and concluded that specific cranberry extracts "can inhibit the growth and proliferation of breast, colon, prostate, lung and other tumours...."

Among other ways in which they may fight disease, cranberries appear to be anti-inflammatory and to play a role in the disintegration of tumour cells.

Sources: Clin Dev Immunol. 2006 Mar;13(1):41-8; Journal of Nutrition 137:186s-93s, 2007



Top 10 everyday super foods!

According to health writer Fran Berkoff, many common grocery store foods are loaded with goodness—the trick is to find them.

Here's her list of the top 10, alphabetically:

1. **Blueberries:** anthocyanins, fibre, vitamins, minerals
2. **Broccoli:** beta-carotene, vitamin C, protein, calcium
3. **Flax:** soluble fibre, Omega-3, plant estrogens
4. **Legumes:** protein, fibre, folate, low glycemic index
5. **Nuts:** monounsaturated fats, vitamin E, protein
6. **Oatmeal:** soluble fibre, low glycemic index, vitamins
7. **Salmon:** omega-3, low in saturated fats, good protein
8. **Tomatoes:** lycopene, vitamins A, C and potassium
9. **Sweet potatoes:** vitamins A, C, potassium, folate, fibre
10. **Yogurt:** calcium, B vitamins, probiotics

Source: Sun Media, Jan 7, 2007



Liquid Assets: Why you should consider a liquid multivitamin supplement.



Like most adults looking to maintain good health, you faithfully take a one-a-day multivitamin tablet and assume you've covered the most important nutritional bases. Mission accomplished, right? Well, maybe not.

Many experts now believe that consuming vitamin supplements in liquid form is substantially more beneficial than relying on solid pills—a belief that is supported by research studies. According to Gerhard N. Schrauzer, DSc, FACN, Professor Emeritus at the University of California, San Diego, “liquid supplements contain the nutrients in a more highly bioavailable form, are gentler to the stomach, and sometimes are more suitable than solid supplements, especially for children and elderly patients.”

No matter how good the quality of a multivitamin, the fact is that many people may not be able to adequately break down a hard, compressed tablet and allow its contents to be fully absorbed through the digestive tract and into the bloodstream.

The reason for this is two-fold. One, the vitamin tablet may be formulated using materials that interfere with proper dissolution and absorption. Two, the person taking the vitamin supplement, especially if an older adult, may be lacking the digestive function necessary to effectively break it down. In cases where one or both factors are at play, the end result is an unfortunate waste of money and an unexpected shortage of needed nutrients.

That is not to say that all supplements offered in tablets or capsules are necessarily a bad choice. Indeed, many reputable manufacturers go to great lengths to maximize absorption from pills and will have conducted testing to ensure adequate dissolution. In addition, certain vitamins, minerals and herbs are simply not suitable for a liquid format due to unpleasant taste, oral or digestive irritation, a need for refrigeration, and so on. While liquid formulations may be the format of choice, sometimes it just isn't possible.

The problem with pills

To maintain their shape and consistency, tablets may contain a range of fillers and binders, and some utilize coating materials to improve the appearance, taste, texture or ease of swallowing. These extra ingredients (excipients) only add to the challenge the digestive system already has of thoroughly breaking down the solid structure to allow the dissolution and absorption of nutrients.

The problem is well illustrated in a recent study on the dissolution of 27 brands of calcium carbonate tablets. Using United States Pharmacopeia (USP) standards for testing dissolution rates, the researchers found that 17 (63%) of the products were still less than 50% dissolved after 90 minutes. They also found that the amount of filler material in the tablets correlated with the decreased dissolution.



For those with the most healthy and robust digestive systems, breaking down solid tablets may be relatively efficient. However, digestive capacity can be hampered temporarily or persistently by a number of factors, including stress, sickness, medications, yeast overgrowth and stomach acidity, to name a few. Moreover, as we age our production of both stomach acid and digestive enzymes decreases dramatically. Therefore, the 50+ population who likely need a multivitamin supplement the most, may be the very same ones who stand to lose the most by taking that multivitamin in a solid form.

Missing the mark

Another shortfall of solid-form multivitamins was illustrated by scientists at the School of Pharmacy, University of Maryland at Baltimore. They studied the dissolution of folic acid in 9 brands of prescription prenatal multivitamin tablets. They found that only 3 met the USP standards for the release of folic acid, a nutrient well known to help prevent birth defects. In fact, “folic acid dissolution from 2 products was less than 25%.”

The researchers further explained that certain nutrients have a particular location along the gastrointestinal tract at which they are best absorbed. Therefore, if dissolution is incomplete by the time the tablet reaches that area, the absorption of the nutrient may be significantly decreased. As usual, Europe has been ahead of other countries in the availability of liquid vitamin and herbal products, as liquid format products have been a mainstay there for decades. Fortunately, interest among both consumers and medical practitioners is now spurring the manufacture of quality liquid supplements here in North America.

The liquid advantage

A liquid multivitamin supplement offers a number of benefits over solid forms for people of all ages, but especially for older adults or those with known digestive issues. Among the benefits are the following:

- Liquids are quickly and readily absorbed, as they do not first need to be broken down.
- Liquids contain no fillers, binders or coatings that may interfere with proper dissolution.
- Liquids are fully dissolved upon ingestion, and allow for absorption of key nutrients along the entire gastrointestinal tract.
- Liquids are a welcome alternative for people who have trouble swallowing solid pills, particularly children, the elderly and those who are ill or convalescing.
- Due to enhanced absorption of nutrients, liquids may allow for lower general dosing than with solid pills.

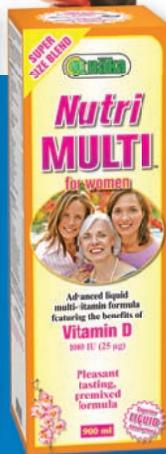
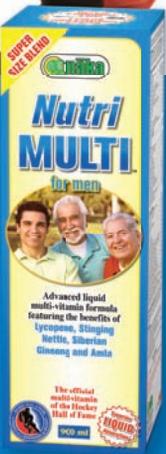
Sources: Journal of Medicinal Food, 1998 1(3); Calcif Tissue Int 1991 49:308-312; J Am Pharm Assoc (Wash). 1997 Jul-Aug; NS37(4):397-400; Prescription for Nutritional Healing by James Balch, MD and Phyllis Balch, CNC, Avery:1997

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