n&Hea YOUR DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO WELLNESS MEDICINE

Sodium Restriction: Take It With a Grain of Salt

For decades, we've been told to eat less salt. **d** Government guidelines limit daily intake to no more than 2.3 g of sodium—about a teaspoon of salt—and the American Heart Association (AHA) recommends less than 1.5 g. The FDA has called on food companies and restaurants to comply with voluntary low-sodium targets, and there's even talk of

a "salt tax."

But what if I told you it's all nonsense, that there's little scientific support for these recommendations? People with heart failure and kidney disease, as well as a percentage of those with hypertension, do benefit from some degree of sodium restriction. However, these stringent levels, which are recommended for everyone, may be doing more harm than good.

Show Me the Research

In 2013, the scientific panel that develops the Dietary Reference Intakes, which form the basis of food guidelines in

the United States and Canada, reviewed all the pertinent studies on sodium intake. They concluded that there was no evidence to support the 1.5 g limit—and hinted that a very low intake may actually be harmful.

The following year, an international research group published two studies in the New England Journal of Medicine confirming that suspicion. Although 5 g or more of sodium per day was associated with rises in blood pressure and 3-5 g with modest increases—especially in older people and those with hypertension consumption of less than 3 g per day had no significant effect on blood pressure. Furthermore, only when daily sodium intake exceeded 6 g was there an increased risk of major cardiovascular events and death. In fact, there were more adverse events among people with a very low sodium intake (less than 2 g) than in those with a very high intake.

These findings were echoed in a 2016 Lancet

review of four studies involving more than 133,000 people. Individuals with hypertension who consumed 7 or more g of sodium per day had a 26 percent increased risk of cardiovascular death, heart attack, and stroke, compared to those with a daily intake of 4–5 g. Yet even this very high level of consumption had no adverse effects on individuals with normal blood pressure. Low sodium intake (less than 3 g), however, raised risk of death and cardiovascular events by 34 percent in the hypertensive group and 26 percent in those with normal blood pressure.



According to these studies, the "sweet spot" for sodium consumption is in the range of 4–5 g per day—far higher than the currently recommended 1.5–2.3 g and approaching the average US daily intake of 3.4 g. In other words, based on this research, we're eating about the right amount of salt.

As you can imagine, this contrarian conclusion has met with stiff opposition. The AHA has not only refused to reconsider its 1.5 g recommendation, but has soundly refuted study findings, calling them invalid

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Wellness Medicine

Health & Healing

Julian Whitaker, MD, has practiced medicine for over 35 years, after receiving degrees from Dartmouth College and Emory University. Dr. Whitaker has long been an advocate of living a healthy life. Dr. Whitaker is compensated on the sales of the supplements he formulates with Healthy Directions, LLC. He is not compensated for other companies' products that he recommends in this newsletter. He is the author of 14 health books including: The Mini-Fast Diet, The Whitaker Wellness Weight Loss Program, Reversing Hypertension, Shed 10 Years in 10 Weeks, The Pain Relief Breakthrough, Reversing Heart Disease, Reversing Diabetes, and Dr. Whitaker's Guide to Natural Healing.

Dr. Julian Whitaker's Health & **Healing®** (ISSN 1057-9273) is published monthly by Healthy Directions, LLC, 6710-A Rockledge Dr., Ste 500, Bethesda, MD 20817, telephone 800-539-8219. Please write to us at Dr. Julian Whitaker's Health & Healing, PO Box 11, Montoursville, PA 17754, or call if you have a question concerning your subscription. Periodicals postage paid at Bethesda, MD and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to Dr. Julian Whitaker's Health & Healing, PO Box 11, Montoursville, PA 17754.

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Remember, you can read current and past issues of *Health & Healing* when you create or access your account at drwhitaker.com.

Dear Reader,

Harvard researchers report that Americans spend 90 percent of their time at home or in other indoor environments, 5–7 percent in transit, and 5 percent or less outside. That means we average a little over an hour a day outdoors—and it's taking a toll on our health and well-being.

It's not just because direct sun exposure is required for vitamin D production, although this is very important. Nearly half of the US population has suboptimal



Julian Whitaker, MD America's Wellness Doctor Director of the Whitaker Wellness Institute, Newport Beach, California

levels of this essential vitamin, and a primary reason is how little time we spend outside in the sun.

Nor is it only because we're more active when we're outdoors. Exercise is another key factor in health, and since walking is the most popular activity, staying indoors is indirectly linked with our dismal rates of exercise. Twenty-eight percent of people age 50 and over don't exercise at all!

There's another advantage of spending time outdoors that is often overlooked: getting in touch with nature. Never in history have humans been so disconnected from the natural world. "Nature-deficit disorder" is not a recognized medical diagnosis, but scientific studies demonstrate the therapeutic benefits of the great outdoors.

Hanging out in "green spaces" has been shown to improve attention disorders, depression, and behavior problems in kids, and it's an effective tool for stress management in people of all ages. Even small doses of nature are helpful. Japanese researchers measured significant reductions in blood pressure, heart rate, and stress hormones after a 15-minute walk in the woods.

Most of us have experienced the peace and tranquility of rustling trees, babbling brooks, wildflowers, beautiful sunsets, and a sense of oneness with nature. In today's world, urbanization, cars, limited leisure time, and the appeal of TV and smart phones have drawn us away from these simple pleasures. But we can seek them out.

I get my daily outdoor/nature fix by walking. I'm lucky to have walking trails, a park, the beach, and mild weather year-round, but even if you don't have any green spaces nearby, you'll still benefit from getting outside and exercising—and you can always plan outings to natural settings. Finally, don't let cold weather keep you cooped up. As naturalist John Burroughs wrote in 1866, "He who marvels at the beauty of the world in summer will find equal cause for wonder and admiration in winter."

To your health,



Sodium Restriction (continued from page 1)

and flawed. Shame on them! This solid research by esteemed scientists published in two of the world's most prestigious medical journals should at least be part of the debate.

This isn't the first time organizations like the AHA have bet on the wrong horse. Thirty years ago, dietary fat was declared persona non grata and carbohydrates king. Today, there's been a 180-degree shift, as we now recognize that foods low in fat but high in sugars, refined carbohydrates, and calories have sparked our epidemic of obesity.

Nevertheless, government bullies are plowing ahead with plans to force compliance. An appeals court recently upheld New York City's right to require restaurants to print warning signs on menus next to dishes that exceed sodium targets, or face stiff fines.

To Salt or Not to Salt

I'm not saying everyone should go hog wild on salt. It's true that processed items and restaurant meals are often loaded with the stuff—75 percent of the sodium we eat comes from these foods. It's also true that sodium restriction is therapeutic for some, as excesses can increase blood pressure and lead to fluid overload in patients with heart failure and kidney disease. But as the research suggests, you can go too low.

Rather than joining the super-low-sodium camp, I have always recommended eating more potassium—an approach that has been bolstered by these studies. The researchers found clear evidence that a high sodium

intake was more strongly associated with increased blood pressure when combined with low potassium. Higher potassium was also independently associated with a lower risk of death, stroke, and heart attack. They concluded "...the effect of sodium on blood pressure is dependent on the background diet," and suggested that a high-quality diet rich in potassium (vegetables, fruits, beans, etc.) might produce better health outcomes than aggressive sodium reduction.

I simply advise my patients to eat fewer processed and prepared items and more whole foods, which are naturally low in sodium and high in potassium and other nutrients. And don't be afraid of the salt shaker. Salt is an excellent flavor enhancer, and using it to perk up your fresh vegetables, fish, poultry, etc., is entirely appropriate. For those who do need to curb sodium for medical reasons, season your food with "Whitaker salt," a combo of three parts potassium chloride (NuSalt, NoSalt, or Morton's Salt Substitute) to one part regular salt (sodium chloride).

Julia Child once said, "I think one of the terrible things today is that people have this deathly fear of food: fear of eggs, say, or fear of butter." She could easily have added salt to that list of unreasonable fears.

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STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION (As required under Act of August 12, 1970: Section 3685, Title 39, United States Code). 1. Publication Title: Dr. Julian Whitaker's Healing, 2. Publication no.: 1057-9273. 3. Filing Date: September 2016. 4. Issue Frequency: Monthly, 5. No. of Issues Published Annually: 12. 6. Annual Subscription Price: \$69.99. 7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: Healthy Directions, 6710-A Rockledge Drive, Suite 500 Bethesda, MD 20817. Contact Person: Joshua Danetz. Telephone: (240) 744-7971. 8. Location of the Headquarters or General Business Offices of Publishers: Healthy Directions, 6710-A Rockledge Drive, Suite 500 Bethesda, MD 20817. 9. Names and Addresses of Publisher, Editor and Managing Editor: Publisher: Matt Kinnahan, Healthy Directions, 6710-A Rockledge Drive, Suite 500 Bethesda, MD 20817. Editor: Julian Whitaker, M.D., Healthy Directions, 6710-A Rockledge Drive, Suite 500 Bethesda, MD 20817. Managing Editor: Larissa Long, Healthy Directions, 6710-A Rockledge Drive, Suite 500 Bethesda, MD 20817, 10. Owner (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1% or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given.) Healthy Directions, 6710-A Rockledge Drive, Suite 500 Bethesda, MD 20817; Helen of Troy L.P., One Helen of Troy Plaza, El Paso, TX 79912. 11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1% or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages or Other Securities: None. 12. Not applicable. 13. Publication Title: Dr. Julian Whitaker's Health & Healing. 14. Issue date for circulation data below: October 2016. 15. Extent and nature of circulation: a. Total no. copies printed (Net Press Run): Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 45,293; No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 43,700. b. Paid Circulation (By Mail and Outside the Mail): (1) Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies): Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 40,723; No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date 39,470. (2) Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies): Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: None; No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: None. (3) Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS®; Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 2,825; No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 2,534. (4) Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS (e.g. First-class Mail®): Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 224: No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 216 c. Total Paid Distribution [sum of 15b. (1). (2). (3) and (4)]: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 43,772; No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 42,220. d. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution outside the Mail (Carriers or other means): (1) Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies Included on PS Form 3541: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 55; No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 55. (2) Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies Included on PS Form 3541: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: None; No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: None. (3) Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS (e.g. First-class Mail®): Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 216; No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 208. (4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers Or Other Means): Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 490; No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 490. e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution [Sum of 15 (1), (2), (3), and (4)]: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 761; No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 753. f. Total distribution (sum of 15c and 15e): Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 37,344; No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 32,585. g. Copies Not Distributed: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 640; No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 415. h. Total (Sum of 15f and g): Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 37,894; No. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 33,000. i. Percent Paid (15c/15f x 100): Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 98%; No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 96%. 16. Publication of Statement of Ownership: November 2016. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. Joshua Danetz, September 20, 2016.

Dear Dr. Whitaker

I have read that taking vitamin D supplements causes magnesium levels to drop. Is this true? — K.C., via Facebook

Magnesium is a cofactor for the synthesis, transport, and activation of vitamin D, and studies show that people with high magnesium levels are at reduced risk of vitamin D deficiency. However, I can find no research suggesting that supplemental vitamin D depletes magnesium. Like many nutrients, they simply work together in a synergistic fashion. That's why my number-one supplement recommendation is a high-quality multivitamin/mineral—it covers all your bases. Suggested dosages of these two nutrients are 250-500 mg magnesium and 2,000–5,000 IU vitamin D, taken daily in divided doses.

I have always had a rapid heartbeat, usually in the high 80s to mid 90s. My doctor says it's in the normal range but I am concerned. Is there anything that can be done to slow it down? — B.W., Chico, CA

Although a resting pulse rate in the range of 60–100 beats per minute (bpm) is considered normal, it isn't ideal. Studies in recent years suggest a higher heart rate may be linked to a greater risk of heart attack down the line. Since you regularly find yourself in the high-normal range, you may want to get it checked out. But before you dash off to the doctor, I suggest you try natural methods for slowing heart rate. Dehydration and excess caffeine are associated with a faster rate, so make sure you

drink lots of water and go easy on caffeine. As we discussed last month, stress hormones raise heart rate and blood pressure. Yoga, meditation, and other relaxation techniques; calming supplements such as GABA and magnesium; and anxietyreducing biofeedback and neurofeedback may help. Regular exercise is also recommended. Although exercise temporarily raises heart rate, it improves cardiovascular fitness and increases heart efficiency. Well-trained athletes usually have lower resting heart rates—sometimes as low as 40 bpm. If these approaches don't make a difference and your pulse regularly approaches 100 bpm, it may be genetic, but it's also a good idea to rule out other causes.

I understand that drugs should not be taken with citrus juices. Your website says to take mealtime supplements with a glass of water. Does that mean that we should not drink orange juice with our supplements at breakfast? — R.A., via email

I don't recommend fruit juice at all—with supplements or as a beverage—because of its high sugar content. (Low-Sodium V8 is the only juice I endorse.) Orange juice as well as other juices, foods, and supplements that contain vitamin C increase the absorption of iron, but interactions with other supplements have not been documented. Drugs, as you know, are a different story. Grapefruit juice affects the metabolism of quite a few drugs, and more recent research suggests apple and orange juice also affects some meds. Stick with water.



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From My Blog

The Health Benefits of Aromatherapy and Essential Oils

Blog

There's more to aromatherapy than a pleasant scent. Many readers swear by the medicinal benefits of essential oils. Lindsay diffuses lavender oil in her room at night to help her sleep, and Louise dabs it on her temples when she has a headache. Sam uses peppermint and wild orange oils at work to keep him alert and increase productivity. Claudia rubs a drop of grapefruit oil on her palms and inhales deeply whenever a food craving hits her. Josh uses a blend of peppermint, lemon, and lavender to help with congestion and other allergy symptoms. And Erin swears by the combo of grapefruit, Roman chamomile, and peppermint to reduce stress and elevate mood. For more on the health benefits of aromatherapy and essential oils—and how to use them-visit my blog.



Get the rest of the story—and share your opinion—by visiting my blog at "Connect with Dr. Whitaker" on drwhitaker.com.

Works for Me...

▶ Wrist Pain I was having trouble with my wrists, so my doctor at Whitaker Wellness treated me with infrared light. Right away I noticed that it helped the pain and got rid of the tingling. So I bought one of the infrared machines and took it home. In the wintertime I am outside every day, and as soon as the temperature drops, the wrist pain returns. So at night, I started giving myself infrared light treatments. It's the only thing that keeps me going through the cold winters. — M.W., Canada

The infrared devices we use at the clinic are by HealthLight. Home units are pricey, but they work. Call 800-810-6655 to learn more.

▶ Natural Deodorant I am hooked on PiperWai natural deodorant—I've never found anything like it. I feel fresh all day and there's no stickiness like other natural deodorants I've tried. I sweat my face off in yoga every evening and it still works. One small tub lasts at least six months. I'll never go back to regular deodorant again! — E.N., Newport Beach, CA

PiperWai, which contains activated charcoal and a proprietary blend of essential oils, seems to be the real deal. A few people at the office have tried it and so far, all the reports are positive. To learn more, visit piperwai.com.

▶ Sore Throat/GERD Years ago, Dr. Whitaker recommended that older individuals with GERD avoid antacids (Tums and Rolaids). He wrote that we no longer produce enough acid to break down food and recommended taking hydrochloric acid (HCl). Soon after I read that newsletter, my family doctor sent me to a specialist because of a persistent sore throat. He diagnosed me with GERD and recommended antacids. As he was talking, Dr. Whitaker's advice came to mind. I started on HCl and haven't had GERD or a sore throat ever since. — R.A., via email

To use HCl, take one capsule with a meal and increase the dose by one capsule at each subsequent meal until you get a warm sensation in the upper part of your stomach. When this occurs, cut your HCl dose back by one capsule. Never take more than five capsules per meal. Look for HCl in health food stores or online.

Have a Health Tip to share? Send it to worksforme@drwhitaker.com. Read more tips at drwhitaker.com/works-for-me.



I've been warning about triclosan—a known endocrine disruptor—for years. Finally, the FDA has banned this and other antibacterial agents from hand soaps and personal care items. Plain old soap and water is more effective—and won't contribute to our epidemic of antibiotic-resistant "superbugs."



Like my Facebook page at facebook.com/WhitakerMD to receive daily healing tips and join the conversation.

Monthly Health Quiz: Vinegar

Which of these folk remedies for vinegar actually work?

- A) Helps with blood sugar control
- B) Aids in weight loss
- C) Lowers cholesterol



A and B. When taken with meals, vinegar inhibits the breakdown of starches, slows glucose absorption, and reduces post-meal blood sugar by 20–35 percent. It also has modest effects on weight management. The jury's still out on cholesterol. I recommend Bragg's apple cider vinegar, 1–2 tablespoons twice a day with meals. Dilute with water (adding stevia or xylitol will help it go down) or mix with with water (adding stevia or xylitol will help it go down) or mix with

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Thanksgiving Quote

Reflect upon your present blessings—of which every man has many—not on your past misfortunes, of which all men have some.

- Charles Dickens, Bell's Life in London, 1835

No computer? Mail your question or health tip to Health & Healing, 6710-A Rockledge Dr., Ste. 500, Bethesda, MD 20817.

Viral Infections: What Works/What Doesn't

Viruses are strange critters. Scientists debate whether they are even alive, since they lack the machinery of living cells and can't produce energy or replicate on their own. Nevertheless, these miniscule microbes, which are 100 times smaller than bacteria, are the most abundant biological entities on the planet.

Most viruses are harmless and some are beneficial, but others are virulent. Plant viruses are responsible for billions of dollars in crop losses. Parvovirus, distemper, and rabies afflict animals, and mite-borne viruses are linked with honeybee colony collapse. Human viral infections run the gamut from annoying (warts and fever blisters) to chronic (herpes and hepatitis) to potentially lethal (Ebola, HIV, and cancer-causing papillomavirus) to tragic (Zika, a mosquito-borne virus associated with serious birth defects).

Then there are our most familiar viral infections: colds, flu, upper respiratory infections, sore throats, runny noses, congestion, bronchitis, and coughs. You'd think by now science would have made some headway against these common afflictions, but viruses present a unique challenge.

Ineffective Conventional Treatments

Antibiotics kill bacteria by damaging their cell walls or disrupting their replication. Viruses, however, have no cell walls, and they reproduce by infecting host cells, hijacking their molecular machinery, and turning them into assembly lines that churn out thousands of new viruses, which invade other cells. Within days of a flu infection, your body is home to trillions of viruses!

Although drug companies have developed antivirals for HIV, hepatitis, and herpes, they've struck out against the common cold. Three antivirals (Tamiflu, Relenza, and Rapivab) have been approved for influenza, but they're not very effective. They reduce symptom duration by a day or two at best—at a cost of \$150!

Antibiotics are often prescribed, even though they are 100 percent ineffective against viruses. Patients may think they help, but any improvements are in spite of the antibiotic, not because of it. Inappropriate prescribing only harms patients and contributes to antibiotic resistance. Conventional medicine's favorite weapon against influenza is flu shots. Vaccines prime your immune system to recognize particular viruses so you can effectively fight them off. However, viruses mutate so rapidly that the viral strains in the vaccine often don't match the prevailing flu viruses. According to the CDC, vaccination reduces risk of flu by about 50 percent if—and it's a big if—the match is spot on. A particularly poor match offers zero protection. I don't get flu shots or recommend them for my patients.

What about symptom relief? Judicious use of aspirin and Tylenol may make you feel better, but most over-the-counter remedies work no better than placebo. Studies show that antihistamines, cough suppressants like Robitussin, and phenylephrine decongestants such as Sudafed and Neo-Synephrine are worthless. Pseudoephedrine (which is stashed behind the counter and requires an ID to purchase) and decongestant nasal sprays do relieve congestion, but they have adverse side effects and shouldn't be used for more than two or three days. Be particularly wary of combo cold/flu formulas that contain multiple meds. Why take drugs that don't work for symptoms you don't have?

Natural Symptom Relief

It's normal to want to "take something" when you're feeling miserable, but sleep, extra fluids, chicken soup, and other natural remedies are more effective than the cold and flu meds sold in drugstores.

When you're sick, don't be a martyr. Stay home and rest for a few days. If you're congested, try my wife's trick of sprinkling cayenne pepper in your soup. Now, that'll open you up! N-acetyl cysteine (600 mg twice a day) helps break up mucus, and nasal rinses with saline in warm water also relieve congestion.

For a sore throat, I recommend gargling with salt water (1 teaspoon in a cup of warm water), medicated cough drops, or sprays that numb the throat. Honey is a proven cough suppressant, and zinc lozenges have been shown to reduce the duration of cold symptoms by two to three days. *Echinacea*, elderberry, aged garlic, and Oscillococcinum and other homeopathics also have a well-deserved reputation as cold and flu remedies.

As for vitamin C, I've always followed Linus Pauling's advice: "If you take a reasonable amount of vitamin C regularly, the incidence of the common cold goes down. If you get a cold and start immediately [500 mg every hour or two], as soon as you start sneezing and sniffling, the cold just doesn't get going."

Speaking of vitamin C, if you're really sick, find a clinic that administers intravenous vitamin C. A high blood level of this vitamin, which can only be achieved through IV delivery, actually kills viruses, bacteria, and cancer cells while leaving normal tissues unharmed.

Researchers from Puerto Rico, which is in the midst of a serious Zika outbreak, recently published a case report of a 54-year-old woman with a full-blown case of Zika—fever, chills, headache, the whole nine yards—who was treated for three days with increasing doses of IV vitamin C. She began to feel better after her first treatment, and by day four, she was completely symptom-free.

Prevention First

Your immune system is quite good at defending against viral infections, but it can always use extra support, especially this time of year. Vitamin D plays a key role in immune function, and natural production falls during the darker days of fall and

winter. I recommend taking enough supplemental vitamin D3 to maintain a blood level of 50–80 ng/mL. For most of my patients, this requires 2,000–5,000 IU per day.

A 2015 review of placebo-controlled studies found that probiotic supplements reduced the frequency and duration of upper respiratory infections, as well as cold-related school absences in children. N-acetyl cysteine not only improves symptoms but has antiviral and antibacterial activity; 600 mg twice a day was shown to dramatically reduce the risk of developing flu in older people exposed to the virus.

One of these days scientists will discover effective treatments for common viral infections, but so far, their ability to "hide" inside host cells and their rapid rate of mutation makes viruses an elusive target. Until then, minimize your exposure to infection, support your immune defenses, and, if you do get sick, remember the wise words of Darrell Huff: "Proper treatment will cure a cold in seven days, but left to itself, a cold will hang on for a week."

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Whitaker Wellness Success Story

"I Got My Spark Back With Neurofeedback and Hyperbaric Oxygen"

"My name is Curtis Arvay. When I was eight years old, I was hit by a half-ton truck while riding my bike home from a friend's house. I was sent flying 25 feet and ended up in a coma, with a broken left femur and pelvis and road rash burns on my face and hands. I also had injuries to the right side of my brain and brainstem that left me with temporary paralysis of my left arm and partial paralysis of my left leg.

"Throughout my years growing up I had problems learning and being creative and confident. I did not hear about the Whitaker Wellness Institute until I was 22 years old, in my second year of college. My parents were on vacation in California, came upon the clinic, and found out that hyperbaric oxygen and neurofeedback could help victims of brain injuries, strokes, and anxiety. They thought they should bring me there to see if this would help.



Curtis Arvay's health improved with hyperbaric oxygen and neurofeedback

"Before I went to Whitaker Wellness, I had trouble following conversations, as my mind would be caught on previous things and I could not keep up. Exams were too fast for me, as I didn't have enough time to read and answer questions. I was becoming concerned about my ability to get my diploma to work as a land surveyor.

"When I was in California, I did hyperbaric oxygen treatments and neurofeedback twice a day for one week. I continued with neurofeedback for another two months once I returned home to Calgary, Alberta.

"Back home, some family and friends started to notice I had my spark back. I was able to tell stories with excitement and follow what others were saying. Taking on challenges became easy to me. My coordination was immensely better and I started to notice myself using my left hand to hold items more. Whitaker Wellness was an amazing opportunity for me, and I highly recommend it to anyone."

To make an appointment at the Whitaker Wellness Institute, call 800-488-1500 or visit whitakerwellness.com.

Innovations in Wellness Medicine

EECP for Diabetes

Enhanced external counterpulsation (EECP) is best known as a treatment for heart disease. This noninvasive therapy, often referred to as a "natural bypass," creates collateral blood vessels that bypass arterial blockages, enhance circulation, and decrease chest pain. It turns out that EECP is also an excellent therapy for high blood sugar—welcome news since heart disease is the leading cause of death for people with diabetes.

In a recent study, participants with type 2 diabetes underwent 35 one-hour sessions of EECP. Fasting glucose levels, post-meal glucose levels, and hemoglobin A1C were measured prior to treatment, 48 hours post-treatment, and two weeks after completing the course of EECP. Fasting and post-meal glucose decreased by 14 percent two days after treatment and 12–13 percent after the full treatment course. A1C levels—an important long-term marker of glucose control—was also significantly lower after three months. To find an EECP provider near you, visit eecp.com. To make an appointment at Whitaker Wellness, call 800-488-1500.

Increased Chewing for Appetite Control

As the old saying goes, you shouldn't bite off more than you can chew—but chewing more of what you bite off can be beneficial, at least when it comes to appetite control and food intake. Researchers examining all the studies on chewing have uncovered some interesting data. Several studies showed that the more people chewed their food, the fuller and more satisfied they felt. More mastication was also linked to decreased food intake, which over time could help with weight loss. Furthermore, participants who increased the number of chews per bite of food produced higher levels of two key gut hormones involved in appetite control.

Consciously chewing each forkful or spoonful of food a few extra times is something anyone can implement, and once you've done it for a while, it will become habit. Plus, most people tend to eat their meals very quickly. Slowing down and practicing methodical chewing will give your stomach time to send satiety signals to your brain that you are full and to stop eating. Bottom line—chew more, eat less.

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Did You Know?

- Two-thirds of Americans are overweight and 80 percent don't eat enough produce, yet 75 percent rate their diets as good to excellent.
- Platelet-rich plasma, best known for enhancing healing, promotes hair growth in male pattern baldness.
- Omega-3 supplements may reduce risk of stroke.
- Episodes of intense anger more than double risk of an acute heart attack over the following two hours.
- Exercise improves impulsivity and other ADHD symptoms in children and adults.
- More than one million people die every year from mosquito-borne illnesses.
- Sequences of viral DNA, remnants of ancient infections, are scattered throughout the human genome.
- Cancer has surpassed heart disease as the leading cause of death in 12 European countries.
- Drinking a can of soda a day is linked with a 20 percent increased risk of fatal or nonfatal heart attack.
- In a 2016 study, patients with heart failure who took 4,000 IU of vitamin D per day had a 26–34 percent improvement in heart function.

To All Veterans

Hats off to everyone who has served in our armed forces. We appreciate your service and honor the sacrifices made by you and your loved ones.



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