

Health & Healing®

YOUR DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO WELLNESS MEDICINE



NOVEMBER 2018 · VOL. 28, NO. 11

Debunking Food and Diet Myths

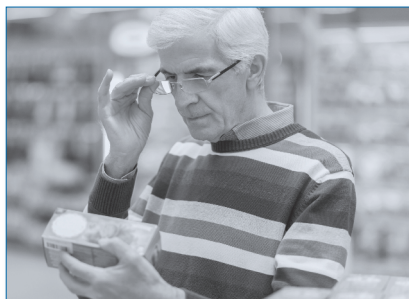
"In the 1960s, you could eat anything you wanted, and of course, people were smoking cigarettes and all kinds of things, and there was no talk about fat and anything like that, and butter and cream were rife. Those were lovely days for gastronomy, I must say." — Julia Child, chef, author, and TV personality, 1912–2004

Today there is no shortage of talk about food. Nutrition research has exploded, and the Internet gives us access to all that research plus the latest diet regimens, food crazes, celebrity trends, and expert advice that influence our perceptions.

We are much more knowledgeable about what's in our food and how it affects our health.

Information overload, however, makes it hard to sort fact from fiction. Eight out of 10 respondents in this year's Food and Health Survey are concerned about all the conflicting info on what foods to eat or avoid, and most of them say it makes them doubt their choices.

Making sound judgments requires sorting out opinions and agendas from facts, looking at the bulk of the research rather than just the latest headlines, and being willing to change your mind when new evidence challenges entrenched beliefs. That's easier said than done. There's a tendency, which psychologists call confirmation bias, to zoom in on information that supports existing viewpoints and ignore data that refutes them—which is one reason why we hang on to disproven beliefs. Let's bust some of the most persistent food myths.



HFCS Is Worse Than Sugar

No, it's not. These sweeteners have more similarities than differences. High-fructose corn syrup (HFCS) contains fructose and glucose in about a 50:50 ratio. Sucrose (white sugar) breaks down in the body into the same sugars in a similar ratio. The fructose component of both sugars is problematic. Fructose must

be metabolized in the liver, and a high intake contributes to fatty liver disease. It also reduces insulin sensitivity, increases triglycerides and uric acid levels, and like all sugars when eaten in excess, is converted to fat.

Although fructose is the main sugar in fruit, it's packaged with fiber, vitamins, and healthy phytonutrients. Sure, you can eat too much fruit, especially if you're dealing with blood sugar or weight issues. However, the 11 g of fructose in an apple pales in comparison with the 30 g that flood your body when you drink a 20-ounce soda. A little sucrose, HFCS, honey, or another "healthy" sugar isn't going to hurt you; a lot is a dietary disaster.

Salt Is Bad for You

Sodium raises blood pressure and increases cardiovascular risk, right? Wrong. Current research, including a large population study published in *The Lancet* in August 2018, concluded that only when sodium intake exceeded 5,000 mg per day was it linked with cardiovascular disease and stroke. Furthermore, a previous meta-analysis found that a very low intake, below 3,000 mg per day, actually increased risk.

continued on page 3

Inside This Issue

- Debunking Food/Diet Myths . . . 1
- Rhabdomyolysis, Cramping . . . 4
- Guarding Against Glaucoma . . . 4
- Works for Me 5
- Rethinking Penicillin Allergies. . . 5
- Monthly Health Quiz. 5
- Seasonal Infections 6
- Success Stories 7
- Did You Know? 8

Health & Healing

YOUR DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO WELLNESS MEDICINE

Julian Whitaker, MD, practiced medicine for over 40 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.

Author: Julian Whitaker, MD
Research Editor: Peggy Dace
Managing Editor: Larissa Long

© 2018, Healthy Directions, LLC. Photocopying, reproduction, or quotation strictly prohibited without written permission of the publisher. Subscription: \$69.99 per year. *Dr. Julian Whitaker's Health & Healing* is dedicated to providing timely, accurate information by drawing on Dr. Whitaker's expert opinion and experience. *Dr. Julian Whitaker's Health & Healing* cannot offer medical services; we encourage our readers to seek advice from competent medical professionals for their personal health needs. Dr. Whitaker will respond in the newsletter to questions of general interest.

The salt myth is particularly stubborn. Government guidelines continue to cap daily intake at 2,300 mg—an unrealistic goal that 90 percent of Americans fail to achieve. A small percentage of people with hypertension are sensitive to salt, and anyone with kidney disease or heart failure may need to limit sodium intake. However, the most comprehensive research suggests that 4,000–5,000 mg per day does not increase cardiovascular risk.

Carbohydrates Make You Fat

Carbohydrates have replaced fat as the nutritional boogeyman. It's true that carbohydrates are the primary nutrient in sodas, desserts, chips, and other junk food. But that doesn't mean carbs make you fat. They're also the backbone of vegetables, fruit, beans, and other healthy foods—as well as the body's preferred energy source. It's all about quality.

Low-carb is a tenet of today's most popular diets, and it's what I generally recommend for weight loss. In addition to eliminating sugar, refined carbs, and other high-calorie foods, it helps curb appetite by reducing insulin and blood sugar swings. But it's not the only effective way to lose weight. In a 12-month clinical trial, Stanford researchers comparing low-carb versus low-fat diets found that weight loss was similar in both groups. The best diet is the one you can stick with.

Eggs Raise Cholesterol

A 78-calorie egg is a nutritional powerhouse, with 6 g of protein plus choline, vitamin D, and eye-nurturing lutein and zeaxanthin. Yet egg yolks were a no-no for so long that that this myth is still hanging on. Even as conservative a group as the American Heart Association (AHA) has finally dropped their objections, admitting that although egg yolks do contain a fair amount of cholesterol (186 mg per egg), eating cholesterol-rich foods has little effect on blood cholesterol. Furthermore, there is no evidence that eggs increase risk of cardiovascular disease. Healthy people suffer no ill effects by eating as many as three whole eggs a day.

Saturated Fat Causes Heart Disease

Saturated fat has had a reputation resurrection as well. It is now clear that the widely held belief that saturated fat causes heart disease was based on shoddy research. It is also clear that partially hydrogenated trans fats, which in large part replaced saturated fats, most definitely increase risk. The institutional bias against all fats, which endured for decades, has been particularly harmful because it gave carte blanche to low-fat foods loaded with sugar and refined carbohydrates that helped usher in our epidemics of obesity and diabetes.

The AHA finally backed down from its strong anti-saturated fat stance last year and now acknowledges that these fats do not increase risk of heart attack or stroke. However, they still emphasize polyunsaturated vegetable oils, which are no healthier than saturated fats. Monounsaturated fats in olive oil and omega-3s in fish provide the most benefits, but there's no reason to be wary of saturated fats in meat and full-fat dairy.

Chocolate Causes Acne

Research makes it clear that chocolate does not cause acne, although the sugars in a chocolate bar could be a contributing factor. Sugars and other refined, high-glycemic carbohydrates cause spikes in insulin levels, which can trigger the release of hormones that stimulate the growth of skin cells and the production of excess oil in the skin. (Dairy is another likely dietary culprit in acne.)

Speaking of chocolate, cocoa does contain flavanols and other antioxidants that protect the cardiovascular system. But therapeutic amounts of these compounds are only found in dark chocolate (70+ percent cacao). A little dark chocolate is a healthy way to satisfy a sweet tooth, but be sure to weigh the benefits against the added sugars and calories.

Gluten Should Be Avoided

For anyone with celiac disease, a serious autoimmune disorder, even a speck of gluten (a protein in wheat, rye, and barley) can trigger pain, diarrhea, and other troublesome symptoms. Non-celiac sensitivity to gluten or wheat also affects a significant number of people. But for the rest of us, gluten is not an issue, and avoiding it is no ticket to weight loss and better health.

In light of the backlash against gluten and carbohydrates, I want to add a comment on bread. Many a dieter has fallen off the wagon for want of a piece of bread. A little bread is perfectly fine for most people. Just don't go hog wild or assume that whole-wheat bread is a health food. Yes, whole wheat has more fiber and a lower glycemic index than white bread, but aside from that they're quite similar. If you really want nutrient-rich bread, try sprouted grain.

More Myths

Soy has no place in a healthy diet. Nonsense. Asians have been eating soy foods for millennia. Soybeans are a good source of protein, fiber, and isoflavones and have mild protective effects against cardiovascular disease and breast cancer.

Fresh food is better than frozen. Actually, frozen fruits and vegetables tend to have superior nutritional value. Fresh produce is often picked green and stored for prolonged periods, which increases nutrient loss.

Organic foods are more nutritious. Some organic produce is more nutritious, and if you can find and afford organic, great. If not, washing and peeling fruits and vegetables gets rid of most pesticide residues.

Processed foods are bad. Many, though not all packaged, prepared foods are loaded with unhealthy additives and fillers. On the other hand, processing gives us access to a larger variety of foods with a longer shelf life—and there's something to be said for convenience. Read labels carefully.

Microwaves kill nutrients in food. Nope. It's one of the best ways to cook vegetables because the short cooking time and little water required preserves nutrients.

Diet soda helps with weight loss. In reality, it stimulates appetite and may contribute to weight gain.

Turkey makes you sleepy. Don't blame the lethargy and drowsiness you experience after Thanksgiving dinner on turkey. It's probably a result of the blood sugar drop that occurs after eating mashed potatoes, pumpkin pie, and other fast-burning carbs.

Julia Child may have thought the 1960s were "lovely days for gastronomy," but I believe we live in the best of times. We have enough choices to suit any palate and more than enough information about the health effects of various foods to make wise decisions. Let the feasting begin!

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 Health & Healing. 2. Publication no.: 1057-9273. 3. Filing Date: October 2018. 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: Breanna Brower. Telephone: (240) 744-7988. 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: Sandy Haynes, 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 Dr., Suite 500, Bethesda, MD 20817; Adaptive Health, 615 S. College St., Suite 1300, Charlotte, NC 28202. 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 2018. 15. Extent and nature of circulation: a. Total no. copies printed (Net Press Run): Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 20,010; No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 18,014. 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: 17,744; No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 16,140. (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: 1,348; No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 1,208. (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: 17; No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 11. c. Total Paid Distribution [sum of 15b. (1), (2), (3) and (4)]: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 19,108; No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 17,359. 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: 175; No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 170. (4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers Or Other Means): Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 213; No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 164. e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution [Sum of 15d. (1), (2), (3), and (4)]: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 443; No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 389. f. Total distribution (sum of 15c and 15e): Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 19,551; No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 17,748. g. Copies Not Distributed: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 459; No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 266. h. Total (Sum of 15f and g): Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 20,010; No. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 18,014. 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: 98%. 16. Publication of Statement of Ownership: November 2018. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. Breanna Brower, September 20, 2018.

Dear Dr. Whitaker

Q *My husband was incorrectly placed on simvastatin (Zocor) 80 mg and Cardizem. He developed rhabdomyolysis. His simvastatin was discontinued two months ago, but he is still suffering a great deal of pain. Is this uncommon and is there anything we can do for him? He is taking coenzyme Q10. — C.M., via email*

A I am very sorry to hear this. Medication errors like this are shockingly common. According to a 2015 government report, 8 million occur every year among outpatients, and 500,000 of them are life threatening. Rhabdomyolysis is a rare but serious side effect of statin drugs caused by rapid breakdown of muscle tissue. The greatest danger is kidney damage, but lingering muscle pain is not uncommon. Because inflammation is an underlying issue, I suggest adding curcumin (500 mg of a bioavailable form like Meriva) and fish oil (1,000–2,000 mg EPA/DHA). A good diet, plenty of rest, regular exercise, and physical therapy are also helpful. A reminder for everyone: Whenever you get a new prescription, review it carefully, ask lots of questions, and if any new symptoms arise, assume they are adverse drug effects and contact your doctor.

Q *I often awaken at night with painful foot and calf cramps. I already drink a lot of water and get plenty of electrolytes (potassium in produce and a multivitamin with extra calcium and magnesium). Do you have any other suggestions? This is happening more and more often. — D.D., Oklahoma*

A I suggest trying these home remedies, which get enthusiastic reviews and have some scientific backing. A small study showed that a shot of pickle juice shortened the duration of muscle cramps by 49 seconds—which doesn't sound like much unless you're writhing in agony. Pickle juice's "noxious taste" is believed to stimulate nerves in the mouth and throat that inhibit the firing of neurons in the muscles. A spoonful of mustard is another kitchen cure that may work in the same way. For prevention of nocturnal leg cramps, try sleeping with a bar of soap under the covers. Researchers have proposed that limonene and other essential oils in soap may inhibit pain signals, but even if it's a placebo effect, a surprising number of people swear by it. If any of you have favorite home remedies for any common health concerns, let me know and I'll share them in future issues.

Q *I have been taking Forward multivitamins for years. Since I cannot take capsules or softgels as they will not go down my throat, I open them up and mix the powder with water or juice. Is this okay? Could I open other supplements as well? — Gloria E., Florida*

A Emptying capsules or crushing supplement tablets and mixing with drinks (or foods) is perfectly fine. They all end up mixed together in the stomach anyway. The only possible exception is timed-release and enteric-coated products, which are designed to dissolve and be absorbed more slowly.

 Read more at drwhitaker.com, and send your own questions to drwhitakerquestions@drwhitaker.com.

New Online: Guarding Against Glaucoma

Glaucoma, which is marked by increased pressures in the eye, affects nearly 3 million Americans and is a leading cause of blindness. Although progression can be slowed with drugs, laser treatment, and surgery, this condition is considered incurable—which is why two new studies on omega-3 fatty acids caught my eye.

In the first study, UCLA researchers evaluated data on 3,865 participants in the government-sponsored NHANES study. They discovered that individuals with a high dietary intake of omega-3 fatty acids were considerably less likely to have glaucoma, while those who ate a lot of omega-6s had a three-fold greater risk. The second study, an Australian review of placebo-controlled clinical trials testing the effects of omega-3 supplements on eye pressures, concluded that taking fish oil supplements (1,000 mg EPA/500 mg DHA) for three months significantly lowered intraocular pressures.

The take-home message, especially if you have a family history of glaucoma: Eat more salmon and other omega-3-rich foods, fewer omega-6s in vegetable oils, and take fish oil supplements. To learn about more natural therapies for glaucoma, dry eye syndrome, macular degeneration, and other eye diseases, visit drwhitaker.com.



Works for Me...

- **Sensitive Skin** *I have always had sensitive skin with scattered patches of redness and mild acne. Several months ago, a salesperson at Sephora recommended Evercalm Anti-Redness Serum by Ren. I finally found something that really works. It quickly reduced the redness, and my skin is now much clearer. — Kelly, Texas*
- **Medication Reminder** *I was dining with a friend when he looked at his watch then discreetly pulled something out of his pocket and put it in his mouth. He explained that he had set silent reminders on his Apple Watch to let him know when it was time to take his medication. I thought this was a great idea for meds and supplements, since it is easy to forget to take them. I do not have an Apple Watch, so I looked for smartphone apps and found a free one called Medisafe that does the same thing. It also has other features, but the only one I use is the reminder to take my pills. I think Medisafe is something your readers may be interested in. — Louise M., California*

- **COPD/Chronic Cough** *I developed COPD due to secondhand smoke and earning a living raising and dressing thousands of chickens (dust in the chicken house). I was hospitalized several times and used inhalers to no avail. I read in your newsletter about using a nebulizer with glutathione and got some from a compounding pharmacy. Oh, what a relief it is to no longer have this incessant cough! I have asked several health professionals about this and they're unfamiliar with it. I have not needed to use the nebulizer for nearly a year. A slight cold triggered the cough a year ago, but glutathione again brought relief. — H.J., Michigan*

Oxidative stress is an underlying factor in respiratory diseases, and antioxidant levels tend to be depleted in patients with COPD. Glutathione is the premiere antioxidant in the lungs but is not well absorbed orally. Inhaling glutathione, however, delivers it to the lungs where it's needed. This therapy, available at compounding pharmacies, does require a prescription as well as a nebulizer that changes liquid meds to inhaled mists. To learn more, visit drwhitaker.com or call Wellness Pharmacy at 800-227-2627.

📧 Do you have a Health Tip to share? We'd love to hear it! Send it to worksforme@drwhitaker.com.

Health Hack: Rethinking Penicillin Allergies

Ten percent of Americans believe they have a penicillin allergy—but 90 percent of them are wrong. Most were labeled in childhood, when a rash, diarrhea, or other common side effects were reported as a penicillin allergy. More extensive testing, however, reveals that less than one percent are actually allergic, and severe reactions are very rare. Why does this matter? Because it decreases the use of effective, inexpensive penicillin-type antibiotics and increases use of more powerful, toxic, pricier alternatives. If you believe you are allergic to penicillin, talk to your doctor about further testing to determine if you really are.

Monthly Health Quiz:

Tall Tales: True or False

- A) Average height in developed countries has increased by 4" over the past 150 years and it is expected to increase by 2" over the next 150.
- B) The world's tallest people are Dutch men (average just shy of 6') and Latvian women (5'6").
- C) The tallest person ever measured was an 8'11" American.
- D) Being tall is linked with increased risk of dying of cancer but reduced risk of heart disease, stroke, and diabetes.



Answer:

All are true but A. The 4" increase is true, largely due to improvements in childhood nutrition. But increases are leveling off, and experts believe we may have reached our genetic max.

Now Available at drwhitaker.com

- [Six Steps to a Longer Life](#)
- [Natural Treatments for COPD](#)

Visit drwhitaker.com and enter the article names into the search bar at the top. Click on the Content tab to find your results.

Thanksgiving Quote

“It's not a surprise, we knew it was coming—make the most of it. So you may not be as fast on your feet, and the image in your mirror may be a little disappointing, but if you are still functioning and not in pain, gratitude should be the name of the game.”

— Betty White, 96-year-old actress

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

Arm Yourself Against Seasonal Infections

The flu season is here, and if it's anything like last year's, it could be a doozy. The CDC reports that the 2017–2018 season was one of the longest in recent years and the first to be classified as “high severity across all age groups.” They blamed it on the predominant virus, influenza A (H3N2), which tends to cause more serious illness—and the fact that the flu vaccine was only 25 percent effective against this particular strain.

Truth is, even in a good year, flu shots aren't very effective. This is not a personal opinion. Three 2018 reviews of all the clinical trials on flu vaccines concluded that benefits for healthy adults have “little or no appreciable effect on hospitalizations or number of working days lost.” Protection is “probably” greater in children ages 3–16, but there isn't enough data to draw a conclusion in younger kids. The vaccine appears to modestly reduce risk for those age 65 and older, but the available research provides no clear guidance regarding efficacy and safety.

Influenza Isn't the Only Threat

These researchers, who are affiliated with the respected and unbiased *Cochrane Reviews*, stressed the importance of developing more effective ways to control not only flu but also other upper respiratory viral infections. “Over 200 viruses cause ILI [influenza-like illness], producing the same symptoms (fever, headache, aches, pains, cough, and runny nose). Without laboratory tests, doctors cannot distinguish between viruses, as they last for days and rarely lead to serious illness. At best, vaccines are only effective against influenza A and B, which represent about 5 percent of all circulating viruses.”

Yet year after year, we get the same old spiel: Flu shots are the best way to avoid getting sick. This myopic focus just doesn't make sense. I am not saying you shouldn't get a flu shot—that's up to you. But whether you do or not, you need to take additional steps to protect not only against flu but all respiratory infections and influenza-like illnesses.

Don't Dismiss Vitamin D

Have you ever wondered why flu is seasonal? One reason is that influenza viruses thrive in colder,

drier weather, and infections have a greater chance of spreading when people spend more time indoors in close proximity to others. Another, perhaps more important reason is because wintertime's shorter days and reduced sunlight exposure depress vitamin D production, which weakens the immune system and leaves us more vulnerable to illness.

Vitamin D activates antimicrobial peptides that respond to both bacteria and viruses, and low vitamin D status is clearly linked with increased risk of respiratory tract infections (flu, colds, sore throats, bronchitis, pneumonia, etc.). In a 2017 study, an international group of researchers reviewed the data on 11,000 participants in 25 randomized controlled trials evaluating supplemental vitamin D for preventing acute respiratory infections. They found that daily or weekly supplementation was indeed protective, especially in individuals with low vitamin D status.

This study highlighted the number needed to treat (NNT), an easily understandable statistical measurement that estimates how many people would need to be treated with a given therapy for one person to benefit. The lower the NNT, the more effective the therapy. The NNT for vitamin D—the number who would need to take it to prevent one person with a low vitamin D status from having an acute upper respiratory infection—was 4. For those with higher baseline levels, the NNT was 20. In comparison, the NNT for the influenza vaccine in the studies discussed above was 71 for healthy adults and 42 for older people.

Given vitamin D's safety profile and multiple benefits, it makes sense to take this supplement, especially during the darker days of winter. An optimal vitamin D blood level is in the 50–80 ng/mL range, which may require daily doses of 5,000 IU or more.

Broad-Based Immune Support

Vitamin C plays an active role in the immune system as well. Studies show that people who regularly supplement with vitamin C have shorter and less severe colds. In one study, athletes who took it were half as likely to catch a cold! Zinc is also famous for its immune-boosting properties, as



are vitamin A, selenium, and other antioxidants. These essential nutrients, which are standards in most multivitamins, should be a central part of any infection-prevention program. Aim for daily doses of 1,000 mg vitamin C, 30 mg zinc, 15,000 IU vitamin A/beta-carotene, and 200 mcg selenium.

I also recommend probiotics. The gut microbiota, the collection of microbes residing in the intestinal tract, works hand in hand with the immune system, and replenishing beneficial bacteria with probiotic supplements has been found to reduce frequency and severity of acute upper respiratory infections. Intriguing research suggests that probiotics also improve the immune response to the flu vaccine and make it more effective.

Finally, do your best to keep the bad guys out. Viruses and bacteria generally enter the body through the nose and mouth. When an infected person coughs or sneezes, germ-laden aerosols may travel as far as 13 feet, and microbes can survive on hard surfaces for hours. We often transfer germs to ourselves when we touch our faces, which according to observational studies we do multiple times per hour.

You can't always avoid sick people, so follow the old-school advice and wash your hands often. In addition, flush germs out of your nose with periodic nasal sprays or rinses. Saline is a standby, but my favorite product is Xlear Nasal Spray, which also contains xylitol, a natural sugar with antimicrobial properties.

These are by no means the only natural therapies for staving off colds and flu (see below). However, these oldies but goodies have endured for a reason. No one can guarantee that any therapy—including the flu vaccine—will keep you out of harm's way. But these safe, affordable, proven supplements will most certainly increase your odds of getting through the season unscathed.

References

- Demicheli V, et al. Vaccines for preventing influenza in healthy adults. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev*. 2018 Feb 1;2: CD001269. doi:10.1002/14651858.CD001269.pub6.
- Hao Q, et al. Probiotics for preventing acute upper respiratory tract infections. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev*. 2015 Feb 3;(2):CD006895. doi: 10.1002/14651858.CD006895.pub3.
- Martineau AR, et al. Vitamin D supplementation to prevent acute respiratory tract infections: systematic review and meta-analysis of individual participant data. *BMJ*. 2017;356:i6583.

Subscriber Success Stories: “How I Stave Off Colds and Flu”

“I swear by Zand’s Insure Immune Support tincture, which contains echinacea and other herbs. I take a dropper a day during the winter and when I travel and believe it makes a difference.” — Bret D.

“I have three young children, and it seems like they’re always coming down with colds, which they inevitably pass around to the whole family—including mom and dad. Last school year, we started taking Lypo-Spheric Vitamin C. For the first time in years, neither of us got sick.” — Catherine B.

“Almost everyone in my family and circle of friends has been hit hard with colds and flu—except for me. I am convinced it is because of LDN (low-dose naltrexone). I read in your newsletter that it boosts the immune system. I got my doctor to write a prescription three years ago, and I never get sick.” — Patti L.

“I have used cranberry capsules twice a day for almost 20 years to prevent bladder infections. I believe they have also helped keep me from getting colds, flu, etc., because I’ve haven’t been sick in all that time! Go cranberry!” — A.A.

“After reading your recommendation to take colostrum and echinacea to ward off colds, I decided to give it a try for a few months. That was seven

Wisconsin winters ago. I have gone all that time without catching a cold or flu. Whenever I feel a cold coming on, I take a bit extra and it just stops. I’ll keep on taking this combination forever.” — B.D.

“I get IV vitamin C drips when I first begin to feel achy or stuffed up. I rarely get much worse, and I haven’t missed work in five years.” — Marie F.

“Probiotic lozenges (*Streptococcus salivarius* K12) are responsible for reducing my son’s ear infections and sore throats. He used to get them three or four times a winter, but since I have been giving him these lozenges every day, they have been much less frequent.” — S.D.

“I read about N-acetyl-cysteine for preventing flu and started taking 600 mg twice a day. I cannot say for sure that NAC is responsible, but last winter I was the only one left standing when everyone around me got sick. I now take it year-round.” — Mark M.

“One of my favorite natural products is Acute Rescue. I have three young children, and whenever they start coming down with a cold, I put a few drops of Acute Rescue under their tongues three times a day. It makes them feel better and also helps calm them down. My husband and I use it too.” — Silvia C.

Innovations in Wellness Medicine

Glutamine for Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Abdominal cramping, bloating, gas, diarrhea, constipation... Irritable bowel syndrome is a real pain in the gut. Because IBS is considered to be a functional disorder—no abnormalities show up on testing—there are a lot of unknowns. However, intestinal permeability (leaky gut), infections, disruptions in gut bacteria, and gut-brain interactions are believed to play primary roles. Diet changes, stress management, and probiotics all help, but if I had to choose just one therapy for IBS it would be glutamine.

Glutamine is an amino acid that has multiple functions in the gut, including reducing inflammation, promoting the growth of cells lining the intestines, and maintaining tight junctions between those cells. In a recent study, patients who developed IBS after an infection were randomly assigned to take either glutamine, 5 g three times a day, or a placebo for eight weeks. At the study's conclusion, the IBS-SSS (Severity Scoring System, which includes pain, distension, bowel dysfunction, and quality of life) significantly improved in 80 percent of the glutamine group compared to just six percent of the placebo group. Markers of intestinal permeability also normalized in those taking glutamine. The suggested dosage is 5 g two to four times a day.

Tai Chi for Physical and Mental Fitness

Although tai chi, an ancient Chinese mind-body and martial arts discipline, isn't nearly as popular as yoga, it is gaining ground—and with good reason. Tai chi's coordinated movements and stretches involve enough physical exertion to improve cardiorespiratory fitness and muscle strength. Equally important, the controlled breathing and slow, deliberate poses focus the attention and calm the mind.

Benefits of tai chi are well documented. Studies show it improves balance and dramatically reduces risk of falls in older people. Regular practice has therapeutic effects on hypertension, diabetes, Parkinson's disease, arthritis, fibromyalgia, and chronic pain. It has been tested as a therapy for patients with COPD, and improvements in breathing were similar to those of pulmonary rehabilitation. It's also an excellent stress reliever and has been shown to relieve depression and to help manage symptoms in veterans with PTSD. Tai chi is exceptionally safe and can be practiced by people of all ages and states of health. It doesn't require any equipment, and although you can find online instruction, group classes at community centers and studios also provide a social outlet.

Did You Know?

- Opioids are no more effective than NSAIDs and acetaminophen for chronic back, hip, or knee pain.
- A compound in ginger slashes levels of sulfur compounds in the mouth that cause bad breath.
- More than 10,000 chemicals are used in food processing and packaging.
- Mozzarella is Americans' most-consumed cheese; most of it is eaten on pizza.
- Taking probiotics while on antibiotics reduces risk of *C. difficile* infections, which sicken 500,000 Americans and kill 29,000 annually.
- A recent study involving half a million people linked coffee (even 8+ cups per day) with reduced risk of death.
- Curcumin eye drops are being studied as a therapy for glaucoma.
- Taking fish oil and probiotics during pregnancy and breastfeeding lowers risk of eczema and food allergies in offspring.
- The first marijuana-derived drug has been approved for rare seizure disorders.
- Americans spend about 13% of their income on food, 44% of which is prepared or eaten outside the home.
- Lavender aromatherapy is a proven therapy for calming horses.

Health & Healing Resources

- **Renew Your Subscription** .. 800-539-8219 (M–F 9 AM–5 PM EST)
- **Buy Supplements**.....800-722-8008 or drwhitaker.com
- **Sign Up for My Free E-News**drwhitaker.com

Happy Thanksgiving

When I count my blessings, I always include *Health & Healing* readers. It has been an honor to “spend time” with you every month for the past 27 years. Your loyalty is much appreciated. Happy Thanksgiving to you and yours.



Become a fan on Facebook at
facebook.com/WhitakerMD



Follow Healthy Directions
on Twitter at twitter.com/HealthyDir



Watch me on YouTube
at youtube.com/user/drwhitakerinfo