

naturalhealthreview.org

Proven Natural Health

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Research Review acknowledges the kind support of



PHARMACY GUILD OF NEW ZEALAND (PNG)

Welcome to naturalhealthreview.org Issue 14.

We hope you enjoy the exciting new look of the publication and website. This month we feature a very interesting study on Brazil nuts for the improvement of selenium levels. This study showed encouraging results proving the positive nutritional value of Brazil nuts. Also included is a study that looks at the use of acupuncture for IVF treatment. It shows amazing results in the success rate of IVF pregnancies.

I hope you enjoy this issue and look forward to receiving your feedback.

Kind Regards,

Dr Shaun Holt

shaun@naturalhealthreview.org

Fish oil capsules pack same omega-3 punch as fish

The facts:

- This study examined whether consuming equal quantities of omega-3 fatty acids as either 1–2 fish oil capsules per day or 2 servings of oily fish (salmon or tuna) per week provide similarly bioavailable amounts.
- After 16 weeks, omega-3 fatty acid content in red blood cells and plasma phospholipids improved significantly in both groups of healthy female volunteers, regardless of which form of fish oil they had consumed.
- The investigators concluded that daily consumption of fish oil capsules enriched blood lipids with omega-3 fatty acids as effectively as 2 servings of oily fish per week.



Dr Shaun Holt:

This study is important: I always recommend that essential nutrients should come from having a good diet wherever possible. Although only a small study, it appeared that the same average daily amount of EPA and DHA, whether taken by eating oily fish or by taking daily capsules, had the same effect in terms of enriching blood lipids. This means that the choice is yours: oily fish twice a week or daily capsules.

<http://www.ajcn.org/cgi/content/abstract/86/6/1621>

When it's winter outside Prepare yourself inside.



Vitamins are supplementary to and not a replacement for a balanced diet. Always read the label and use only as directed.

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For more information visit www.healthieries.co.nz

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Brazil nuts: an effective way to improve selenium status

The facts:

- Addition of selenium-rich Brazil nuts to the diet might improve selenium levels in New Zealanders, without the need for fortification or supplements.
- Consumption of 2 Brazil nuts daily for 3 months increased selenium levels by 64.2% in healthy volunteers participating in a well-controlled NZ trial.
- Improvements in selenium levels and plasma glutathione peroxidase activity were similar to those seen with selenomethionine 100mcg daily, and were significantly greater than those seen with placebo.

Dr Shaun Holt:

What a great study – selenium is an important nutrient, with some studies suggesting that it may decrease the chances of getting prostate cancer. Could it be that just 2 Brazil nuts a day would give you the selenium that you need? The answer was a resounding yes, with the increase in plasma levels from 2 nuts per day being similar to that obtained from taking a supplement. The largest exporter of Brazil is.....Bolivia! Brazil nuts are also a good source of magnesium and thiamine.

<http://www.ajcn.org/cgi/content/abstract/87/2/379>

Omega 3 for adolescents with ADHD

The facts:

- Adolescents with ADHD have abnormal essential fatty acid profiles that are like those seen in young children with ADHD, but quite distinct from those seen in healthy adolescents of the same age.
- A study of 11 adolescents with ADHD and 12 age-matched controls found that the ratio of omega-3:omega-6 fatty acids was lower in ADHD patients than controls despite the 2 groups eating similar amounts of essential fatty acids.
- Use of omega-3 fatty acid supplements to improve fatty acid profiles may potentially improve behaviour in adolescents with ADHD and needs to be investigated.

Dr Shaun Holt:

This was only a small study, and so all the usual caveats apply. The main finding was that adolescents with ADHD appear to metabolize fatty acids differently to people of their age group without ADHD. This in turn means that omega-3 supplements may possibly help with the behavioral issues associated with this condition. It is thought that around 4% of under 19's have this condition, and so safe and effective treatments are certainly needed.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1186/1475-2891-7-8>



Study backs berries for heart health benefits



The facts:

- Polyphenol-rich food has been shown to have beneficial effects on cardiovascular health; this well-controlled study investigated whether the same could be said of polyphenol-rich berries.
- 72 middle-aged patients with cardiovascular risk factors were given moderate quantities of berries or control products for 8 weeks, after which time they had their risk factors reassessed.
- Patients who ate berries had favourable changes in platelet function, HDL cholesterol and blood pressure, thus suggesting that regular consumption of berries may help prevent cardiovascular disease.

Dr Shaun Holt:

Several types of berry such as blueberry, cranberry and pomegranate are classified as “superfruits” due to their health properties and commercial success – they offer value beyond basic nutrition. This study adds more weight to this description, showing that berries, when consumed in moderate amounts, can alter blood several components and blood pressure in a beneficial way in terms of reducing the chances of heart disease.

<http://www.ajcn.org/cgi/content/abstract/87/2/323>



Independent commentary by Dr Shaun Holt, BPharm (hons), MBChB (hons)

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For better health, take your tea with a twist



The facts:

- Catechins found in tea are believed to reduce the risk of chronic disease, but their stability under digestive conditions is low, with less than one-fifth remaining after passing through the stomach.
- An in vitro study found that the stability of catechins in green tea was improved by the addition of citrus juice (orange, lemon, grapefruit or lime) or milk (cow, soy or rice).
- These data suggest that tea consumption practices are likely to affect catechin stability and may lead to diverse physiological profiles.

Dr Shaun Holt:

The commonest source of catechins is from drinking tea, and they make up around a quarter of the dry weight of tea. Research studies have shown possible health benefits in terms of reducing heart disease, cancer and diabetes, although the evidence is not definitive. This quirky little study showed that adding some citrus to your tea, such as a twist of lemon, will reduce the amount of catechin that is digested in the stomach, leaving more available for its positive health effects.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/mnfr.200700086>

Probiotics may ease gut problems in people with HIV/AIDS

The facts:

- A Nigerian study has shown that probiotic yogurt has beneficial effects on quality of life in women who have diarrhoea associated with HIV/AIDS.
- In the study, 24 African women with HIV/AIDS (CD4 count >200) who had moderate diarrhoea but who weren't taking antiretroviral therapy received about half a glass of probiotic-supplemented or unsupplemented yogurt daily for 15 days.
- Diarrhoea, flatulence and nausea resolved within 2 days in all of the women who received probiotic yogurt, compared with only 2 out of 12 women receiving unsupplemented yogurt.

Dr Shaun Holt:

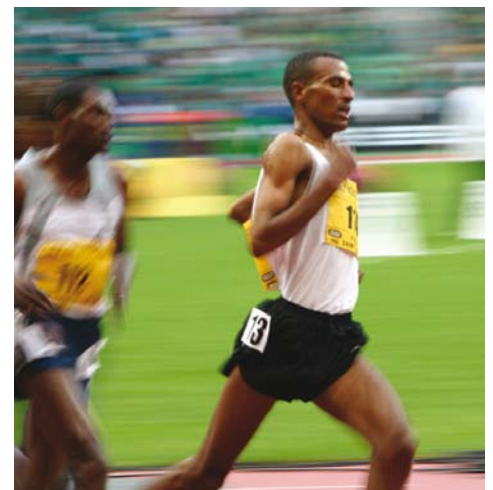
HIV infection and diarrhea is very common in many sub-Saharan countries such as Nigeria. Expensive medications are many years away from being affordable and so cheap, simple effective treatments are needed. Probiotics are live microorganisms that are available from fermented dairy foods such as yoghurt. This small study, which urgently needs to be repeated on a larger scale, found a 100% resolution in gastrointestinal symptoms in a group of 12 women within 2 days.

<http://www.jcge.com/pt/re/jcngastro/abstract.00004836-900000000-99982.htm>

Probiotics give endurance athletes' immune boost: study

The facts:

- Probiotics may effectively boost the immune system in endurance athletes, according to a well-controlled study conducted in 20 elite long distance runners.
- Daily doses of the probiotic *Lactobacillus fermentum* VRI 003 for 4 months at least halved the number of days of respiratory symptoms and reduced illness severity compared with placebo.
- It was suggested that the effects of the probiotics on interferon gamma levels in the athletes contributed to the positive outcome.



Dr Shaun Holt:

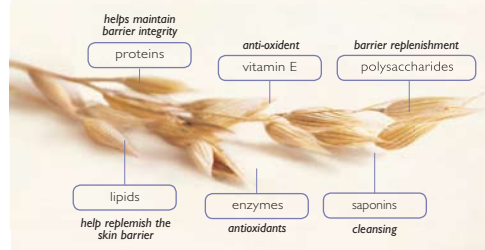
Small study, but a very interesting finding. Elite athletes are prone to infections, with extreme exercise known to reduce the effectiveness of the immune system. This study demonstrated that prophylactic probiotic supplements may be able to reduce the number of infections. Further, this study also showed a possible mechanism for this action: the maintenance of certain factors in the blood that are important for an effectively functioning immune system.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bjism.2007.044628>

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Olive extract may protect against AMD



The facts:

- Hydroxytyrosol (a polyphenol found in large quantities in olive oil) appears to have protective effects against smoking- and age-related eye degeneration.
- The results of an in vitro study showed that the protective effects of hydroxytyrosol were as potent as that of established antioxidant nutrients.
- Dietary supplementation with hydroxytyrosol may therefore effectively reduce or prevent smoking- or age-related degenerative eye problems.

Dr Shaun Holt:

95% of the global olive production comes from the Mediterranean region. There are many possible health benefits and these are thought to mostly be due to natural polyphenols, particularly hydroxytyrosol. This study, undertaken in the laboratory and using cells derived from human retinas, found that hydroxytyrosol prevented certain types of damage in the cells from an extract of cigarette smoke, which is known to cause damage. This means that olives may be able to help prevent eye problems due to ageing or smoking.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-4159.2007.04954.x>

Acupuncture and Success of IVF

The facts:

- Acupuncture may improve pregnancy and live birth rates when used within 1 day of embryo transfer in women undergoing in vitro fertilisation, according to pooled results from 7 trials.
- Complementing the embryo transfer process with acupuncture almost doubled the likelihood of pregnancy in the women studied.
- Information on live births was only available from 4 studies but again showed a significant improvement compared with sham acupuncture or no acupuncture.

Dr Shaun Holt:

An early contender for one of my choices for the most important natural health studies of the year. The success rate for in vitro fertilization depends on the age of the woman: below 35 the pregnancy rate is around 43% per cycle, falling rapidly to only 4% for women over the age of 42. Despite acupuncture not being explained in terms of conventional western medicine, this meta-analysis of 7 studies, published in the prestigious *British Medical Journal*, found that acupuncture within 1 day of the embryo transfer improves the success rate.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.39471.430451.BE>

Pomegranate juice boosts sperm quality



The facts:

- The results of a trial in rats suggest that drinking pomegranate juice may improve sperm quality.
- Varying concentrations of pomegranate juice were given orally to rats for 7 weeks, after which time sperm characteristics and antioxidant levels were examined.
- Compared with no treatment, pomegranate juice was found to increase sperm concentration and motility, as well as vitamin C levels.

Dr Shaun Holt:

Infertility is a common problem and is defined as a couple who have not conceived after 12 months of contraceptive-free intercourse if the female is under the age of 34, or 6 months if the female is over the age of 35. Suboptimal sperm quality is one of the main causes and this study showed that pomegranate juice improved the sperm quality in rats. Human studies are of course needed, and would be easy to do. Perhaps this is another benefit of this "superfruit"?

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.clnu.2007.12.006>

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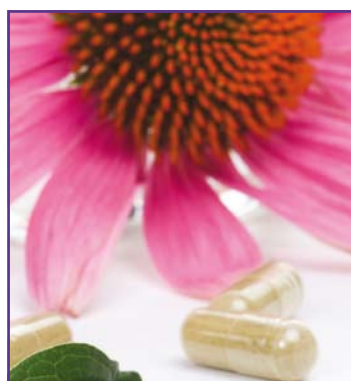
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