












Natural Health Review

Proven Natural Health

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Welcome to the fourth Natural Health Review issue, the independent New Zealand natural health publication which only includes well researched facts.

This month we focus on some interesting benefits of garlic and ginseng. Also pine bark has been featured frequently in Natural Health Review and it shows promising results for people who have ADHD.

Welcome to all our new subscribers and thanks to all who have recommended us to others. We hope you enjoy this month's issue.

Dr Shaun Holt

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Omega-3 treatment of childhood depression

The facts:

- A small number (28) of children between 6 and 12 took part in this study investigating whether taking omega-3 fatty acid supplements (fish oils) had an effect on major childhood depression
- The children's symptoms were measured at intervals according to international scales used to rate how severe the depression was
- The results from those who completed the study showed some very significant benefits

Dr Shaun Holt:

Another month, another study showing a positive outcome from omega-3 fatty acid supplements. The average onset of clinical depression is in the late 20's and major depression can occur in children. This was a pilot study: these are small studies, not designed to give a definitive answer, but to see if there appears to be any effect, and whether bigger studies are warranted. Highly significant positive results were obtained and it will be fascinating to see results from bigger studies. Given the other benefits of omega-3 fatty acid supplements, it would make sense to try them if your child has been diagnosed with depression.

<http://ajp.psychiatryonline.org/cgi/content/abstract/163/6/1098>

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Consuming garlic may help lower blood sugar, cholesterol, and triglycerides

The facts:

- This study explored whether taking raw or boiled garlic affected blood sugar, blood cholesterol or triglyceride levels
- The results were measured over a short period of four weeks
- Raw garlic showed a major impact on reducing all three, whereas boiled garlic appeared to have little effect



Dr Shaun Holt:

This research provides more evidence for the potential benefits of garlic in preventing heart disease. High cholesterol (especially the small so-called "LDL" particles) is a strong risk factor for coronary heart disease, which can lead to angina and heart attacks. You can add garlic to your cooking, or take a supplement: some supplements are actually odourless! Pregnant or breastfeeding women may want to limit their garlic intake, as it can cause heartburn in the mother and an unpleasant milk taste for the baby.

<http://jn.nutrition.org/cgi/content/abstract/136/3/800S>

Calcium may help women keep weight in check

The facts:

- A massive study of over 10,000 men and women was undertaken to look at whether regular calcium intake by women had any effect on their long term weight gain
- The study compared women using a calcium supplement with those who relied on their normal dietary intake
- Over a ten year period women using a calcium supplement had significantly less weight gain

Dr Shaun Holt:

Most people know that many women need more calcium during midlife and beyond to prevent osteoporosis. This huge study shows a couple of interesting things. First, between the ages 45 and 54, women became an average of 6.9kg heavier. Second, weight gain was significantly reduced in women who took a supplement of over 500 mg/day of calcium. Reducing weight gain and risks of osteoporosis are two good reasons why women should consider a calcium supplement, from before menopause.

<http://www.adajournal.org/article/PIIS0002822306008728/abstract>

Effects of zinc on exercise performance



The facts:

- A small but well designed study was undertaken to explore whether the levels of zinc in men affected their performance during exercise
- Study volunteers were given a specific diet and some supplemented with zinc
- Testing their blood and exercise tolerance showed those with low zinc intake had lower levels of zinc concentration and retention and also reduced exercise performance


Dr Shaun Holt:

Zinc has been used by people for dozens of purposes, with mines operating since around 1200 BC. In terms of human health, zinc is essential element, and life is not possible without it. Dietary sources include meat, beans, nuts and grains and the recommended intake is around 10mg each day for adults. This study looked at whether zinc helped exercise performance, on the basis that zinc is present in many of the enzymes involved in the functioning of red blood cells and heart and lung function. It was a small study, but the results suggest that zinc does in fact help.

<http://www.ajcn.org/cgi/content/abstract/81/5/1045>



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



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Leg ulcer treatment with Manuka Honey dressings - trial results in Q3 2006

Results of Auckland University CTRU's 'Honey as an Adjuvant Leg Ulcer Therapy Trial' (HALT)¹ will be available from third quarter 2006. HALT¹ explores clinical efficacy of UMF® Manuka Honey in the treatment of mixed venous leg ulcers.

See <https://www.ctru.auckland.ac.nz/research/halt/index.html> for more details.

1 ISRCTN06161544 'HALT' is an open, multi-centre, randomised controlled clinical trial, assessing the effectiveness of UMF® Manuka Honey in healing patients with mixed venous leg ulcers. (Manuka Honey used as an adjuvant to compression therapy, in comparison to 'usual care').

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B vitamin effect on Parkinson's risk

The facts:

- Over 5000 people participated in this study to investigate the effects of dietary intake of folate, vitamin B12, and vitamin B6 on the risk of the development of Parkinson's Disease
- The study followed the participants who were all over 55 for an average of almost 10 years measuring their dietary intake of these vitamins
- The results showed higher intake of Vitamin B6 significantly decreased the risks of developing Parkinson's

Dr Shaun Holt:

This study can also be classified as a big, important study, published in an important medical journal. Parkinson's disease affects around 5 million people worldwide, with symptoms most commonly appearing between the ages of 55 and 60. Vitamin B6 can be obtained from the diet from liver, chicken, fish, green beans and bananas in particular, or can be taken as a supplement. Although the mechanism of action is unclear, this study found that Vitamin B6 may reduce the risk of Parkinson's disease.

<http://www.neurology.org/cgi/content/abstract/67/2/315>

Coffee may prevent diabetes



The facts:

- This was a huge study involving some 28,000 women over an 11 year period.
- Women who didn't drink coffee were about 5 times more likely to develop type 2 diabetes than women who drank 6 or more cups of coffee per day
- De-caffeinated coffee was found to be better than regular coffee as caffeine consumption itself was not linked to the disease.

Dr Shaun Holt:

Type 2 diabetes is a major health issue with 1 in 4 New Zealanders expected to develop the condition at some time in their life. This study suggests that increasing our coffee consumption, particularly de-caffeinated coffee, might help to reduce the risk. The decaffeination process involves steaming the unroasted (green) coffee beans, rinsing them in solvent <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solvent> and repeating the process 8 to 12 times until it meets the international standard of having removed 97% of the caffeine in the beans.

<http://archinte.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/full/166/12/1311>

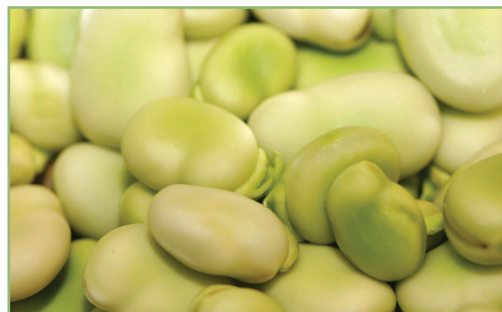
Research Review acknowledges the kind support of



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Soy isoflavones ease bone loss



The facts:

- 90 postmenopausal women between 45 and 60 were asked to take specific daily doses of isoflavones to see if it affected changes in bone density normally seen with this group of women
- The volunteers bone density was measured at regular intervals over a period of six months
- The results showed taking isoflavones may have a positive effect on bone density and the effects improved with with increased doses

Dr Shaun Holt:

Isoflavones are found in high levels in soya beans and other legumes such as fava beans. As around 1/3 of women over 50 have osteoporosis, the results of this study strongly suggest soy supplementation could be useful. The fact that a dose-dependent effect was found in this study (the bigger the dose, the bigger effect) adds weight to the study findings. Another strength of this study is the fact there is a plausible biological mode of action, given that osteoporosis is often due to reduced oestrogen, and isoflavones act like oestrogen.

<http://springerlink.metapress.com>

Ginseng benefits for breast cancer patients

The facts:

- Almost 1500 breast cancer patients took part in a Chinese study to explore whether ginseng had any positive effect on breast cancer survival, recurrence or quality of life
- Around one quarter were regular ginseng users before diagnosis, some began using it after diagnosis and the study adjusted for these factors
- The results showed regular ginseng users had a reduced risk of death and rated better on quality of life measurements, particularly with regards to psychological and social well-being

Dr Shaun Holt:

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women and many want to use natural treatments in addition to those from their doctors. This was a huge study published in a top medical journal, and so the results can be taken seriously. Good research studies with ginseng are rare; one reason for this is because it can not be patented, there is little incentive for a pharmaceutical company to invest in large, well-conducted trials. Women with breast cancer (and even those without), should give serious consideration to taking a ginseng supplement based on these results.

<http://aje.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/kwj087v1>

ADHD treatment with pine bark extract

The facts:

- ADHD is the most common psychiatric disorder in children
- This small study looked at the use of a French maritime pine bark extract, Pycnogenol® in children with ADHD symptoms and tested their response at regular intervals to see if the supplement affected their attention, concentration and hyperactivity
- The study showed after a month of use, the children experienced significant benefits unlike the placebo (sugar pill) group which showed no benefit. Also, one month after they stopped using the supplement the previous symptoms returned

Dr Shaun Holt:

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) affects around 1 in 25 people and leads to symptoms which include hyperactivity, forgetfulness and being easily distracted. There is a lot of speculation, but the cause of the condition remains a mystery. This study looked at whether a pine bark extract was of benefit; the researchers undertook the study after seeing reports that it was helping children with the condition. It was only a small study, but used a robust design of having half the children on the treatment and half taking placebo. The treatment appeared to be effective and safe and can therefore be cautiously recommended pending further research.

<http://www.springerlink.com>

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Please see Dr Shaun Holt's new Natural Health Column at www.pharmacydirect.co.nz and in the Bay of Plenty Times every Tuesday

Transcendental meditation can reduce risks of heart disease

The facts:

- The metabolic syndrome is thought to contribute to coronary heart disease and this study explored the possibility that meditation could reduce some of the factors thought to contribute to the syndrome
- A variety of measures including blood pressure and insulin resistance were measured in over 100 people with stable heart disease who either received educational advice or participated in this type of meditation
- The results showed a clear advantage for the group undertaking transcendental meditation

Dr Shaun Holt:

Transcendental Meditation or TM is a trademarked form of meditation and the name of a movement led by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Advocates of TM claim that scientific research shows its meditation techniques produce a variety of positive effects. In this study, patients using the technique saw an improvement in blood pressure and other factors related to coronary heart disease including insulin resistance. This is consistent with other published studies over the last 35 years and makes TM an interesting option for patients who are worried about their heart disease. Whether the same effects would be seen with other types of relaxation technique or just TM remains to be proven.

<http://archinte.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/abstract/166/11/1218>

Combining light therapy and antidepressants for seasonal depression

The facts:

- Many separate studies before have shown light therapy or antidepressants can produce similar benefits for those with seasonal affective disorder but this study makes a direct comparison of the two treatments
- Almost 100 people with the disorder received light treatment or antidepressants and results showed a similar effect
- Light therapy appeared to make a quicker impact with better responses over the first week and produced less side effects



Dr Shaun Holt:

Seasonal affective disorder, or SAD, is a mood disorder, causing depressive symptoms in the winter. Interestingly, SAD is rarely seen in the tropics, and is almost always in people living at latitudes of 30°N or S and higher. This study directly compared light therapy and the antidepressive drug fluoxetine. Both treatments were effective but the light therapy had additional benefits of a quicker onset of action and less side effects. For people with SAD, it may be a case of using the treatment which they are most comfortable with.

<http://ajp.psychiatryonline.org>

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