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In The NEWS

Cinnamon Promotes Healthy Blood Pressure

Cinnamon may help promote healthy blood pressure levels in those suffering from elevated blood pressure (hypertension), according to a report in the Journal of the American College of Nutrition.[2]

While cinnamon is known to help support healthy blood sugar levels, this study was the first to report its beneficial effects on blood pressure. High blood pressure commonly accompanies diabetes and increases the risks of cardiovascular disease and stroke.

Using an animal model, researchers investigated the blood pressure-modulating effects of both whole cinnamon and aqueous cinnamon extracts. Supplementing the hypertensive animals' diets with either whole cinnamon or aqueous cinnamon extract led to decreases in systolic blood pressure. While both extracts promoted beneficial changes in blood pressure, scientists have expressed concerns regarding the toxicity associated with long-term consumption of high doses of whole cinnamon.

Aqueous cinnamon extracts may thus provide an ideal way to safely capture the benefits of cinnamon.

—Elizabeth Wagner, ND

Lignans May Protect Against Breast Cancer

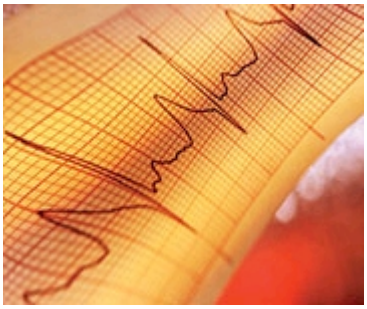
Plentiful intake of plant lignans could reduce the risk of breast cancer in pre-menopausal women, report researchers in Germany.[1]

Lignans, which are present in dietary sources such as flaxseed, sesame seeds, fruits, and vegetables, are metabolized by microorganisms in the colon to phytoestrogens such as enterolactone. Scientists found that premenopausal women with greater dietary intake of lignans and higher plasma enterolactone levels demonstrated a substantially decreased risk of breast cancer.

Since breast cancer diagnoses are on the rise, lignans may provide important support for optimal breast health.

—Elizabeth Wagner, ND

Two Cardiovascular Risk Factors Predict Mortality



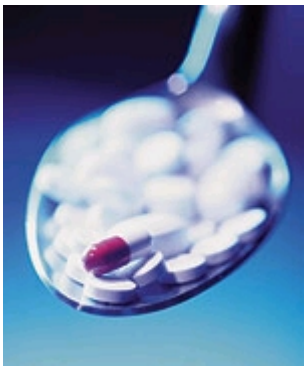
Mortality risk in older men can be determined using just two cardiovascular risk factors—plaque in the arteries of the neck and levels of interleukin-6 (IL-6), an immune system protein that promotes inflammation—according to a recent study from the American Journal of Medicine.[4]

In this study, 403 elderly men averaging 78 years of age were examined using ultrasound technology to assess plaque in the carotid arteries of the neck that supply the brain with blood and oxygen. The men were further evaluated for other conventional cardiovascular risk factors, as well as IL-6.

Over the course of four years, 75 men (19%) died. Cardiovascular disease was the cause of death in 31 men, or 41% of those who died. The combination of high levels of IL-6 and a greater number of carotid plaques was strongly associated with mortality risk in this group of elderly men. By contrast, conventional risk factors such as age, cholesterol level, blood pressure, and diabetes were poor predictors of mortality in this population.

—Robert Gaston

Tylenol® Damages Liver, Even at Recommended Doses



The pain reliever acetaminophen may cause liver damage in healthy adults, even when used at recommended doses, according to a recent report.[5]

When men and women took 4 grams of Tylenol®—equivalent to the maximum recommended daily dose of eight extra-strength Tylenol® tablets—each day for two weeks, nearly 40% demonstrated dramatic liver enzyme elevations, which doctors consider a possible sign of liver damage.

Acetaminophen, the active ingredient in Tylenol®, is widely used to manage pain and fever. An estimated one in five US adults uses acetaminophen every week. Since acetaminophen is found in over 200 pain relievers and cold remedies, many people may consume large doses by unknowingly combining medications.

Life Extension has warned about the dangers of acetaminophen poisoning since 1992. Acetaminophen overdose is the leading cause of acute liver failure in the United States.[6]

—Robert Gaston

Mediterranean Diet Better for Heart than Low Fat

A Mediterranean-style diet, rich in healthy fats from olive oil and nuts, may be better for the heart than a strict low-fat diet, scientists report in the Annals of Internal Medicine.[3]

Researchers studied 769 men and women, aged 55-80, who had type II diabetes or multiple risk factors for heart disease and stroke (such as smoking, high blood pressure, and obesity). For three months, the participants followed one of three dietary programs: a low-fat regimen, a Mediterranean diet with virgin olive oil as the primary fat source, or a Mediterranean diet rich in nuts.

At the study's end, the researchers found that both Mediterranean diet groups exhibited increases in beneficial high-density lipoprotein (HDL), as well as improvements in blood pressure and blood sugar. By contrast, the low-fat group demonstrated decreased levels of HDL and no change in blood pressure and blood sugar levels.

A Mediterranean-style diet, which also includes plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, thus produces numerous improvements in cardiovascular risk factors.

—Robert Gaston

Omega-3 Fatty Acids May Lower Eye Disease Risk

New research suggests that intake of fatty acids found in fish oil may help prevent age-related macular degeneration, a deterioration of the eye's retina that can lead to blindness.[7]

In a new study published in the Archives of Ophthalmology, Australian researchers who followed more than 3,600 older adults for five years found no evidence that dietary fat of any kind increased the risk of age-related macular degeneration. People who ate fish at least once a week were 40% less likely to develop early age-related macular degeneration than those who ate fish less than once a month. Those who ate fish three times a week had a substantially lower risk of advanced macular degeneration.

A diet rich in omega-3 fats, the researchers noted, may also help lower the risks of high blood pressure, diabetes, and obesity.

—Matt Sizing

Prevalence of Diabetes Skyrockets in US

A new study indicates that more than one of every three people in the US has either impaired fasting glucose or diabetes.[9]

Diabetes incidence was estimated at 9.3% of the population (6.5% diagnosed and 2.8% undiagnosed), and impaired fasting glucose at 26%. Impaired fasting glucose greatly increases the risk of diabetes, which in turn dramatically raises heart disease risk.

While the prevalence of diagnosed diabetes has increased significantly over the past decade, the researchers noted that an estimated one third of all US diabetics remain undiagnosed—a troubling statistic that could be remedied through routine blood testing.

The importance of maintaining healthy blood sugar levels cannot be overstated. Life Extension urges all adults to undergo regular blood screening as part of a comprehensive health maintenance program.

—Robert Gaston

Older Adults with Low Testosterone Prone to Anemia

Men and women above the age of 65 with low testosterone levels are at increased risk of being or becoming anemic, researchers report.[8] Anemia is defined as a lower-than-normal number of red blood cells in the blood, and is usually measured by a decrease in the amount of hemoglobin, the oxygen-carrying component of red blood cells.

In an Italian population-based study published in the Archives of Internal Medicine, testosterone and hemoglobin levels were measured in 905 adults aged 65 or older. At the start of the study, 31 men and 57 women had anemia. Men with the lowest levels of testosterone were five times more likely to be anemic than men with the highest levels. For women, low testosterone doubled the likelihood of anemia.

According to scientists, low testosterone levels should be considered a potential contributing factor to anemia in older men and women, especially when other causes have been excluded, and in patients with nutritional deficiencies in whom nutritional supplementation with iron and vitamins has been ineffective. Understanding the causes of anemia in this population is important, since anemia in older persons is associated with a high risk of disability and accelerated decline in physical function.

—Matt Sizing

Sleep Deprivation Tied to High Blood Pressure

Obesity, heavy drinking, and taking birth control pills all increase risk for high blood pressure (hypertension). New research reveals that inadequate sleep is a significant risk factor for hypertension as well.[10]

In a just-released study, researchers followed 4,810 adults with no apparent sleep disorders for 8-10 years. On average, the subjects slept six to eight hours each night. Subjects between the ages of 32 and 59 years who had five or fewer hours of sleep each night had a significantly increased risk for developing high blood pressure. This risk remained elevated even after controlling for variables such as depression, alcohol consumption, obesity, and diabetes.

While heart rate and blood pressure normally decline during sleep, this may not occur when people do not get enough sleep, causing structural and functional alterations that can adversely affect cardiovascular health.

The researchers concluded that short sleep duration is a significant risk factor for high blood pressure, but that sleeping more than average did not provide any additional health benefit.

—Heather S. Oliff, PhD

In The NEWS

Grape Seed Extract Promotes Bone Formation

Grape seed extract combined with calcium is more effective at building healthy bone mass than calcium alone, according to recent findings.[12]

To study the effects of proanthocyanidin-rich grape seed extract on bone health, researchers used an animal model of decreased bone mass. After the test subjects consumed a low-calcium diet for several weeks, they were fed a high-calcium diet, either alone or in combination with grape seed extract.

The addition of grape seed extract to the calcium-rich diet produced dramatic results, including significantly higher bone mineral density, bone mineral content, bone cross-sectional area, and bone resistance to stress and strain.

These important findings suggest that grape seed extract may help to support strong, dense bones.

—Elizabeth Wagner, ND

Ashwagandha May Fight Cancer by Suppressing NFkB

The stress-relieving herb ashwagandha may offer powerful protection against cancer by inhibiting the activation of nuclear factor-kappa beta (NFkB), a protein that may contribute to inflammation and disease by activating certain genes.[11]

For the first time, scientists showed that ashwagandha compounds helped to suppress the activation of NFkB by a variety of agents that can provoke inflammation or cancer, such as pro-inflammatory cytokines, cigarette smoke, and certain medications. Since the activation of NFkB may stimulate the onset, proliferation, and spread of cancer, methods of modulating NFkB's activity offer promise as anti-cancer strategies. Furthermore, ashwagandha constituents helped promote gene-expression patterns that support cancer cell self-destruction (apoptosis) and prevent cancer's spread to other tissues.

These findings help elucidate how ashwagandha may help to optimize well-being and life span.

—Elizabeth Wagner, ND

Silibinin May Inhibit Growth of Lung Cancer

Silibinin, a flavanone compound from milk thistle, inhibits the growth and progression of lung cancer in an animal model of the disease, according to a new study published in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute.[13]

To investigate the cancer-fighting effects of silibinin, researchers injected mice with a cancer-causing agent, and then supplemented the diets of the some of the mice with varying amounts of silibinin.

After 18 weeks, the silibinin-supplemented subjects exhibited up to 38% fewer tumors than those that did not receive silibinin. By week 29, the protective effect of silibinin was even more pronounced, with the silibinin-supplemented animals demonstrating up to 70% fewer tumors. The test subjects that received the highest dose of silibinin had a remarkable 93% fewer large tumors

than the unsupplemented group. Also, tumor cells from the silibinin-supplemented group showed decreased levels of markers related to the ability to spread throughout the body.

The research team concluded that silibinin may help inhibit the growth of lung tumors, in part due to its ability to inhibit the formation of blood vessels that feed growing tumors (angiogenesis). These encouraging preliminary results suggest that milk thistle-derived silibinin may hold promise in preventing the progression of deadly lung cancer.

—Robert Gaston

Gary Null, Life Extension Join Forces to Promote Health Freedom

Life Extension's William Faloon joins co-producer and director Manette Loudon and writer, producer, and director Gary Null, PhD, in accepting the coveted Platinum Award for the documentary film Prescription for Disaster at the 39th Annual WorldFest-Houston Film Festival on April 29, 2006.

TIME magazine has called him "The New Mr. Natural," and with good reason: for over 30 years, Gary Null has passionately committed himself to sharing the gift of vibrant health while trying to make a real difference in the lives and well-being of millions of Americans. Now, Gary is teaming with the Life Extension Foundation to bring the power of natural healing and the message of health freedom to the broadest possible audience.

"For decades, Life Extension and I have been working toward the same goal: to provide consumers with freedom of choice on health care issues," notes Null. "We've both taken on the FDA repeatedly, and had it not been for our combined efforts, it is unlikely that Congress would have enacted the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act (DSHEA) in 1994. This legislation has enabled millions of Americans to enjoy access to safe, effective, and affordable dietary supplements."

Gary, a nationally syndicated talk show host and producer of PBS television specials, is also a consumer advocate, investigative reporter, New York Times bestselling author, and an award-winning documentary filmmaker. Life Extension collaborated with Gary on a recent film entitled Prescription for Disaster. This documentary takes a close look at patented drugs, why they are so readily prescribed, how insurance companies and HMOs promote compliance with drug therapy, and the problem of rising health care costs. It also explores alternatives to traditional pharmacology and drug therapy, such as vitamins and nutritional supplements, and why they are often perceived as a competitive threat by drug manufacturers. Prescription for Disaster was awarded a Platinum Award at last April's 39th Annual WorldFest-Houston Film Festival.

Gary also collaborated with Life Extension on an earlier report entitled "Death by Medicine," which can read in its entirety on the Life Extension website. This fully referenced look at virtually every area and specialty of American medicine estimates that the total number of deaths caused by conventional medicine in the US is nearly 800,000 a year—making the American medical system the leading cause of death in the United States.

Gary notes that both Prescription for Disaster and "Death by Medicine" have run into a "wall of silence" in the mainstream medical community and news media. He urges Life Extension members to order a copy of the film, read the report, and share this valuable information with friends and family because "it could literally save their lives."

—Robert Gaston

***Editor's note**: Prescription for Disaster is available to Life Extension members for just $12 a copy (DVD or VHS). For more information, please click here.*

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