



# Natural Insights for Well Being®

December 2021

## Eyes

Nutrients preserve vision in aging

### Lutein, zeaxanthin improved night vision

Driving at dusk and at night is difficult for many, especially older adults, as the useful field of view (UFOV)—the area visible without moving the head or eye—shrinks with age. Evidence suggests carotenoid pigments in the macula of the eye that support healthy vision may play a role.

In this study, 33 men and women, average age 63, with 20/25 vision or better, took a placebo or two carotenoids: 7 mg of lutein plus 14 mg of zeaxanthin, per day. After six months, while the placebo group had not changed, those taking lutein and zeaxanthin recovered vision in both eyes more quickly under glare conditions, and had better vision in low-light conditions. Also, macular pigment optical density—the amount of carotenoids in the macula—improved in both the left and right eyes of those taking lutein and zeaxanthin, but did not change for placebo.

### EPA and DHA reduced early-stage AMD

People with age-related macular degeneration (AMD) gradually lose sight in the center of the field of vision. In addition to carotenoids, fatty acids such as EPA and DHA appear to be protective.



In this review of 11 AMD studies covering 167,581 participants, and ranging from three to 28 years, doctors compared the amounts of EPA and DHA in the diets and the chances for developing early-stage AMD. Overall, those with good amounts of EPA and DHA in the diet were less likely to develop early AMD. Doctors found a direct link: each 1 gram per day increase in EPA and DHA reduced chances for early AMD by 60 and 50 percent, respectively.

Discussing the findings, doctors said EPA and DHA—found in fish oil—were the only polyunsaturated fatty acids they studied that delivered a benefit in reducing chances for early AMD.

REFERENCE: NUTRIENTS; 2021, VOL. 13, No. 9, NU13093191

DECEMBER'S

## Healthy Insight Avocado Reduces Bad Fat

Avocado contains healthy monounsaturated fats, dietary fiber, carotenoids, and other metabolically beneficial nutrients. In this study, 105 overweight or obese adults, aged 25 to 45, ate a similar diet with or without avocado. Doctors explained there are two kinds of abdominal fat: subcutaneous, right below the skin, and deeper, visceral fat that surrounds organs and increases chances for diabetes.

After 12 weeks, while there was no change in men, women who ate avocado had less visceral fat, and less of it in relation to subcutaneous fat. Doctors said avocado appeared to redistribute fat away from organs, reducing chances for diabetes.

REFERENCE: JOURNAL OF NUTRITION; 2021, VOL. 151, No. 9, 2513-21

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# Women

## Nutrients help vegan and other women

### Vitamin D, calcium reduce fracture in vegans

Meat- and dairy-free vegan diets can provide all essential nutrients, and



have many health benefits, but may lack key nutrients including vitamins B12 and D, calcium, iron, and zinc. Food manufacturers are beginning to fortify non-dairy beverages with calcium and vitamin D, but this is a relatively recent practice.

In this study of hip fracture, doctors followed 34,542 non-Hispanic, white, men and peri- and post-menopausal women, aged at least 45 years, for an average 8.4 years and determined that female vegans were 55 percent more likely to have had a hip fracture than non-vegetarians.

When doctors compared calcium and vitamin D in the diets, female vegans taking both supplements had no greater chances for hip fracture than those with other diets, including non-vegetarians.

### Folate protects against colorectal cancer

Some doctors are concerned too much folate can increase chances for cancers, particularly after the 1998 U.S. mandatory food-fortification laws. In this study, doctors measured all forms of folate in the diets of 86,320 women who had entered a larger study in 1980.

Each increase of 240 mcg of folate per day, measured from 12 to 24 years prior, reduced chances for colorectal cancer by 7 percent, and 20 to 24 years prior, by 13 percent.

Doctors concluded folate—taken much earlier in life—reduced chances for colorectal cancer developing later, and that higher folate levels after 1998 did not increase chances.

**REFERENCE:** AMERICAN JOURNAL OF CLINICAL NUTRITION, 2021, VOL. 114, No. 2, 488–95

# Circulation

## Vitamin K and flavonoids improve heart and circulatory health

### Vitamin K reduced hospitalizations in circulatory conditions

Fats and cholesterols can build up on artery walls, reducing blood flow, in a type of heart condition called atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease (ASCVD). In this study, doctors analyzed findings from a large trial covering 53,372 adult men and women over a 23-year period.

Overall, those who got the highest amounts of vitamins K1 and K2 were 21 percent less likely to be hospitalized with ASCVD. For vitamin K2, chances were 14 percent lower. The benefits of vitamin K appeared in all forms of heart and circulatory conditions, but were particularly beneficial in peripheral artery disease—arteries other than those serving the heart and brain—reducing

these hospitalizations by 34 percent.

Doctors believe vitamin K protects against calcium buildup in arteries, and recommend increasing current daily intake guidelines.

### Flavonoids improve blood pressure

Beneficial bacteria in the gut microbiome break down flavonoids and enhance their capacity to protect the heart and circulatory system. In this first flavonoid-microbiome-blood pressure study, doctors measured flavonoids in the diets of 904 men and women, aged 25 to 82, and compared them to DNA microbiome bacteria samples.

After an overnight fast, doctors took three blood pressure measurements, three minutes apart. Those with the highest levels of flavonoids had lower

blood pressure and greater microbiome diversity compared to those who got the least flavonoids in the diet.

Doctors said microbiome diversity from high flavonoid levels accounted for about 15 percent of the improvement in systolic blood pressure.

**REFERENCE:** JOURNAL OF AHA; 2021, VOL. 10, No. 16, E020551



# Kids

## Probiotics aid autism, colic, and crying

### Probiotics improved autism symptoms

Those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) often have gut and digestive imbalances, and because of this, recent research has begun to focus on the role of non-psychiatric factors. This study included 112 boys and 19 girls, average age seven years, 86.3 percent with severe ASD Clinical Global Impression (CGI) scores of 5 or higher. Also, 39.7 percent had gastrointestinal symptoms, mostly constipation with or without pain.

Doctors gave lactobacillus plantarum to 105 participants and different probiotics to the other 26 children, at doses of 3 billion colony-forming units per day up to 66 pounds, and 6 billion CFUs if over that weight.

After six months, CGI scores

declined to 3 or lower in 77.1 percent of participants, with side effects of irritability and temporary diarrhea in six participants, mostly those taking the non-lactobacillus plantarum probiotics.

### Probiotics reduced colic and crying

Doctors don't know what causes infant colic—crying for more than three hours a day, more than three days per week, and resolving after four months—but suspect that gastrointestinal discomfort may play a role. This study included 90 exclusively breastfed or mixed-fed infants, under two months, with colic but otherwise healthy, who took a daily probiotic or placebo.

All had similar crying episodes at the start of the study. At seven days, 83 percent of those taking probiotics had

improved vs. 36 percent for placebo; 96 percent vs. 43 percent at 14 days, and 90 percent vs. 64 percent at 21 days.

REFERENCE: NUTRIENTS; 2021, VOL. 13, No. 6, NU13062036



# Sleep

## Saffron and probiotics improved sleep

### Saffron increased evening melatonin levels

Melatonin is the hormone that controls the sleep-wake cycle, with the pineal gland producing and releasing melatonin at night. In this study, 120 adults who reported having insomnia and poor sleep, took a placebo, 14 mg or 28 mg of saffron, one hour before bed. Doctors used standard scales to measure sleep quality, mood, and biological factors.

After 120 days, those taking saffron saw significantly greater improvement in all sleep measures compared to placebo. Sleep quality improved an average of 23.43 percent in both saffron groups compared to 8.43 percent for placebo. Rating mood after awakening, the low and high saffron groups improved

7.26 and 14.42 percent, respectively, compared to 1.58 percent for placebo. The saffron groups saw similar improvements compared to placebo for insomnia. Salivary melatonin levels increased in both saffron groups.

### Probiotics improved sleep, reduced depression

This study included 40 otherwise healthy adults who reported chronic



insomnia without sleep apnea. On one night preceding treatment, participants wore an electrocardiogram patch to objectively measure the sleep-wake cycle, and for two nights, had a medical technician monitor brain activity, eye movements, muscle activity or skeletal muscle activation, and heart rhythm, during sleep, in a test called a polysomnogram (PSG).

Participants then took a placebo or 6 billion colony-forming units of lactobacillus plantarum after dinner. After 30 days, compared to placebo, the lactobacillus group experienced fewer depressive symptoms, less fatigue, awakening, and arousal, a decrease in high-frequency brain wave activity, and improved quality of deep sleep.

REFERENCE: SLEEP MEDICINE; OCTOBER, 2021, VOL. 86, 7-18



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## Avocado Toast with Smoked Salmon

While you enjoy this scrumptious, satisfying toast, please see page 1 for a new study that found those who added avocado to the diet reduced the amount of bad fat surrounding organs.

Prep time: 15 minutes

Serves: 2

**Ingredients:**

2 slices sourdough bread $\approx$ 1/2 inch thick, toasted	8 slices of tomato
1 large avocado	8 slices of cucumber
1/4 tsp lemon juice	2 oz. smoked salmon or lox
1/4 tsp kosher salt	Red onion, sliced (to taste)
1/8 tsp black pepper	1 tbsp capers
1/4 c cream cheese	2 tsp dill (or to taste)

**Directions:** Scoop out avocado flesh into a small bowl and add lemon juice, salt and pepper. Lightly mash, leaving some chunks. Spread the cream cheese over the toasted bread, then spread the avocado mixture onto the toast. Layer slices of tomato, cucumber, smoked salmon, red onions, capers, and sprinkle dill over top. Season to taste with freshly ground black pepper and enjoy immediately.

## Your Good News!®

We're dedicated to discovering the benefits of good nutrition and healthy lifestyle, and hope this issue of Natural Insights for Well Being® informs and inspires you to take an active role in your health. Please ask us to assist you with any natural products you would like to know more about.

These articles provide nutritional information only and do not replace professional medical advice.

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