

WHAT DOCTORS DON'T TELL YOU



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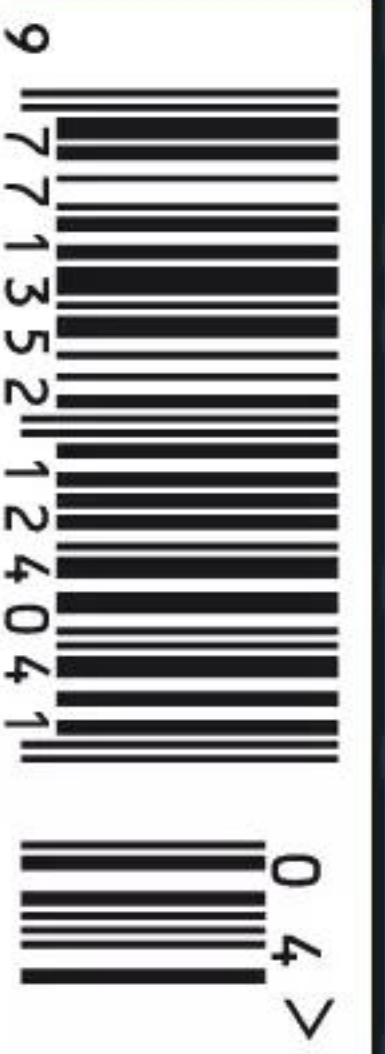
**Your anticancer
herbal heroes**
The 5 best treatments
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PLUS Stress yourself: the hardiest plants are the healthiest to eat
• Magic mushrooms: these varieties do wonders for your health
• Small but mighty: keeping the all-important pineal gland cancer-free
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The true cause of back pain

It's in your head





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T

he statistics tell a bleak story. For the 80 percent of us who have suffered from back pain at some point in our lives, some 15 percent of us chronically, conventional medicine just doesn't have any answers that consistently work.

Take painkillers or even opioids—the first-line treatment your doctor is likely to hand out. After reviewing 35 studies of simple painkillers like nonsteroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs) for back pain, a team of Australian researchers concluded that any benefits are slight and are hardly worth the more than doubled gastrointestinal problems that long-term use caused.¹

Acetaminophen (paracetamol) works no better than a placebo, says the latest research, and drugs of all varieties can lead to opioid use, which is highly addictive.

When the drugs don't work, or when manipulative therapies don't resolve issues, then there's surgery. As the late Scottish orthopedic surgeon Gordon Waddell once bluntly observed, back surgery leaves “more tragic human wreckage in its wake than any other operation in history.”

Waddell estimated only 1 percent of cases are dramatic successes. For the other 99 percent of us, medicine just doesn't have any answers. And of those who do choose to go under the knife, 15–20 percent emerge with what medicine likes to label “the failed back”—meaning, in most cases, that surgery has just made things worse.

Now we may know why. Medicine may be looking for a solution in the wrong area of the body.

That's exactly what the late Dr John Sarno discovered after noticing the pain and symptoms his patients experienced didn't match any of the results of their



Editors

Lynne McTaggart and Bryan Hubbard

COMMENT

AN ANGRY BACK

tests. MRI scans often fail to find any evidence for the idea that the pain should be attributed to arthritis or disc degeneration.

In fact, up to 90 percent of all back and neck pain cases are not linked to a specific pathology in the neck or spine. And only 10–15 percent of people who suffer from back pain can be correctly diagnosed using current medical tests.

Sarno was a professor of rehabilitation medicine at New York University's School of Medicine as well as a practicing

host of issues—migraines, heartburn, stomach ulcers, irritable bowel and more—all often the result of stress.

What if back pain is a side effect of chronic tension? Sarno thought. He gave this kind of pain a formal name, tension myositis syndrome, which was medicalese for “muscle pain caused by tension.” And he began treating it as an emotional or situational issue resulting from long-repressed emotions.

These emotions, he reasoned, would impact the vagus nerve,



“Medicine may be looking for a solution to back pain in the wrong part of the body”

doctor at the university's medical center. The body part he began looking at, and ultimately named as the cause of the pain, was the patient's head. More precisely, it was their emotions that had been suppressed—in some instances, for many years.

Sarno came to this conclusion in the 1980s after noticing that up to 88 percent of those who came to him with chronic back problems also suffered from

which controls the yin-yang of the autonomic nervous system: the sympathetic nervous system (fight or flight) and its opposite number, the parasympathetic nervous system (rest and digest).

Sarno's theory was that chronic stress, which unbalances the autonomic nervous system, causing continuous fight-or-flight activity and the constant release of cortisol, keeps the body in a permanent state of high alert.

This tension causes blood vessels to narrow, depriving muscles and other tissues of ample oxygen.

Ultimately, Sarno believed, a chronic lack of oxygen would end up creating the pain that people feel in ligaments, tendons and, of course, muscles of the back or neck. He was on the right track in recognizing that the source of the pain wasn't some structural issue but suppressed emotions, most of all anger.

Supporting his theory is the fact that most people experiencing back pain are of working age—members of the so-called sandwich generation between ages 30 and 50, a time of life when work, young families and sometimes aging parents all coalesce, often to mountainous pressure. The pain is less common later in life.

Although medicine never accepted Sarno's theory, his book, modestly titled *Healing Back Pain*, became a bible of sorts for patients for whom medicine had no answers. The thousands of patients suffering with chronic back or neck pain, who'd tried everything and failed to get relief, found Sarno's simple message life-transforming.

Among their number is the author of our cover story, Cate Montana, herself a victim of chronic pelvic pain. Within six weeks, following his simple program, she saw her lifelong pain disappear (see page 26).

As Cate discovered, medicine is only beginning to recognize the profound effect that adverse childhood events, the entire spectrum from shouty parents to incest, can have on the health of adults decades later. Only a handful of doctors are recognizing the truth of Sarno's discovery. If you have chronic back pain and are struggling to find answers, the best treatment of all may be to look to your past or present life circumstances for the source.

REFERENCE

1 Ann Rheum Dis, 2017; 76(7):1269–1278

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Lynne McTaggart and Bryan Hubbard

Dear *WDDTY* subscriber,

We went through an evolutionary shift in November 2022. Having been a print publisher for more than 30 years, with our website puffing far behind, we became a “web first” publisher. Not that the magazine was forgotten—if you’re a print subscriber, the fact you’re holding a copy in your hands is testament to that—but articles destined for a particular issue are now published first on the revamped website (wddty.com).

With the relaunch, we have also reduced the subscription types to just two: print and digital or digital-only. Print-only has disappeared, and to receive the actual magazine each month, you now opt for print and digital.

Choosing this option opens up the whole website and its many benefits to you. Yes, you’ll still get the magazine delivered to your door each month, but you’ll also enjoy:

- **Subscriber discounts:** we’ve negotiated great discounts on a range of health products and supplements. Biocare, one of the world’s leading suppliers of high-quality supplements, is the latest to offer discounts across its entire product range (see the latest offers on pages 48 – 49).
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The way you log in has changed. With the previous site, you needed your email and password, but now you need to enter your subscriber number, which is on the address label on the envelope in which your issue was delivered. We’ve produced a series of videos that help you log in and navigate the site, which you can see at wddty.com/faqs.

Once you’ve logged in, you can also access your own account, where you can change your address and see your subscriber status.

We hope that you like the changes and that you make good use of all the extra benefits your subscription now offers.

Lynne McTaggart *Bryan Hubbard*



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Past tense

Tension may be the cause of your chronic pain, Cate Montana reports. Resolve emotional stress to finally put the pain behind you

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Dermal decoding

Skin problems can be a sign of hormonal imbalance, Marcelle Pick explains. Here's how to read the signals correctly

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Hay presto!

Make your hay fever symptoms disappear with these reliable springtime remedies from homeopath David Needleman

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Herbal teams

The active compounds in an herb work together to achieve its anticancer effects, says natural medicine clinician Sam Watts

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Ill at ease

Modern life is too easy, says author Jeff Krasno, and that's ironically leading to chronic illness. But good stress leads to good health



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Leaded gasoline affected mental health of three generations; heart muscle cells can regenerate after heart failure; compound in shiitake mushrooms protects against fatty liver disease

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Tuna? Can it

It benefits from industry bias, but tuna has high mercury content, Bryan Hubbard notes. We might be wise to rethink regular consumption of it

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Magic mushrooms

Don't be kept in the dark about the many types of mushrooms that can do wonders for your health



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The Cancer Doc

The pineal gland's diminutive size is no match for its importance, says Dr Leigh Erin Connealy. Here's how to keep yours healthy and cancer-free

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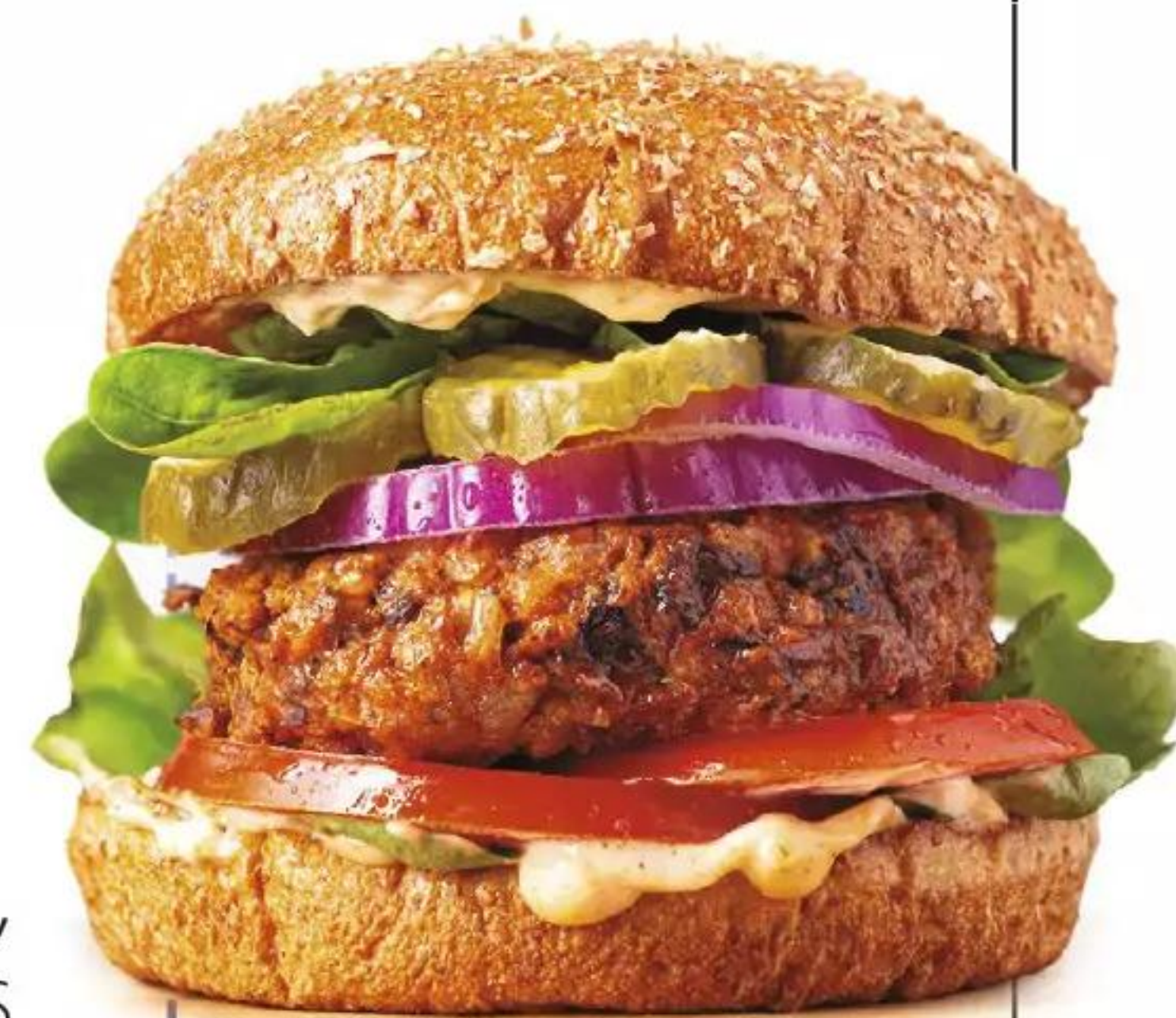
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The last word

Alternative medicine is quackery, the story goes. But listen to the narrative of "evidence-based" medicine and you'll hear a lot of ducks, Bryan Hubbard says



Vegetarians who crave meat should steer clear of plant-based meat alternatives (PBMs). Researchers reckon PBMs increase the risk of depression by 42 percent, and vegetarians who regularly eat the meals also have higher blood pressure

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EDITORIAL PANEL

What Doctors Don't Tell You is supported by some of the world's leading pioneers in nutritional, environmental and alternative medicine. Each is an authority in his or her field; many have broken new ground and inspired new practices in medicine.



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Bruce Lipton, PhD, is an internationally recognized leader in bridging science and spirit. Stem cell biologist, bestselling author of *The Biology of Belief* and recipient of the 2009 Goi Peace Award, he has been a guest speaker on hundreds of TV and radio shows as well as a keynote presenter for national and international conferences.



Dr Sarah Myhill has worked in the UK National Health Service and in private practice since 1981.

Honorary Secretary of the British Society for Ecological Medicine for 17 years, she is a frequent lecturer and author of *Sustainable Medicine* and *Diagnosis and Treatment of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Myalgic Encephalitis*.



Craig Sams is the co-founder of Whole Earth Foods and founder and president of Green & Blacks Organic Chocolate as well as director of Soil Association Certification, executive chairman of Carbon Gold Ltd., a carbon sequestration business, and a trustee of the Slow Food Trust UK. He has authored four books, including *The Little Food Book*.



Dr Harald Gaier is a UK-registered osteopath, homeopath, acupuncturist, naturopath and medical herbalist. Former director of medical research at The Hale Clinic and a committee member of the Prince of Wales' Foundation for Integrated Health, Dr Gaier has authored numerous scientific papers and *The Encyclopedia of Homeopathy*.



Dr Jonathan Wright, medical director of the Tahoma Clinic in Washington, pioneered nutritional medicine in the US. A board member of the American Preventive Medical Association and the International College of Advanced Longevity Medicine, he has published 11 books.



Dr Gary Smyth, a GP and homeopathic physician, is the president of the Faculty of Homeopathy, a fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine and a fellow of the Royal Society for Public Health. He advocates an integrative approach to medicine, offering patients the advantages of a range of treatment options.



Dr Nyjon Eccles, one of the leading integrative medicine physicians in the UK, has a reputation for his practice of evidence-based integrative medicine. Over the years he has developed specific and natural solutions for restoration of health, and these therapies are offered at The Natural Doctor, his clinic in central London.

HAVE
YOUR
SAY



Drug dangers

I am 73 years of age and want to share my experience regarding two prescription drugs. A few months ago, my cholesterol was 7.2. As my BMI was a bit high, the nurse suggested I lose some weight.

Two months later my GP called me in for a health check as I have osteoporosis. They discovered my cholesterol was 6.1 and tried to bully me to go on statins. I said no, my cholesterol was on the way down and I was going to lose more weight.

Three months later, it was 5.0. Great, I thought, it's within recommended limits. But I received a letter saying that, due to my age and government guidelines, the advice was that I go on statins!

I've ignored this because I don't like drugs and don't react well to many. I'm currently experiencing difficulties with an osteoporosis drug.

I've been on denosumab injections for five years now as I couldn't tolerate alendronic acid. I was also put on teriparatide but had to come off this after three months due to serious side effects.

I'm now experiencing a lot of side effects with denosumab and was horrified to learn that, since I started on it, the manufacturer has been involved in a court action and there's now a black box warning on the label and numerous other side effects are now listed.

I've never been told this as the box goes to my GP, who

gives the injection. It also appears you can't come off this drug safely without going on bisphosphonates, which I can't tolerate. If I stop, I could fracture every vertebra, die choking and/or fracture my hip and it might be game over, they've said.

The only alternative is a new drug, romosozumab, which seems to have many of the same side effects, and no one can tell whether you can come off this drug safely. I would also be advised to go on statins as this new drug has a risk of causing heart attack or stroke.

Having researched alternative osteoporosis treatments, I've more or less decided to go cold turkey and take my chances, but it's very worrying, particularly as I'm a carer for my husband.

Denosumab was thought to be a wonder drug, but no one thought of how to come off it. The clinical advice is that if older people are put on it and are likely to live only another 10 years, they should stay on it. Not very comforting for us older people!

S. Chapman, via email

WDDTY replies: *Denosumab is one of the world's deadliest drugs, according to the World Health Organization's VigiBase system (see Every Picture... in WDDTY October 2023). For more information on alternatives for osteoporosis, see the May 2020 and February 2024 issues or search for "osteoporosis" on wddty.com.*

WHAT DOCTORS
DON'T TELL YOU

COMMUNITY

The latest from the WDDTY Community

WDDTY's online community hub is now live. You can post questions or start discussions on any health topic as well as help out other WDDTY subscribers by sharing your own experiences and suggestions. Simply go to community.wddty.com and sign in with your subscription ID.

Here are some of the latest posts and discussions. If you want to reply to any of the posts below, head to the Community.

Lack of trust

I don't go to the doctor, I don't go for scans, I don't go for tests, I don't go for any vaccinations, and I'm really well.

I know my body and how it feels. I do use a large variety of wonderful remedies. I go for reflexology and other alternative treatments.

I'll stay this way until the medical profession thinks outside the box and is run on honesty and not power-grabbing greed and the creation of fear. The Covid pandemic is a good example of this, because we all know what fear does: control.

I don't want to be controlled. Do you?
Jane

EMF protection

A long time ago, WDDTY recommended a "tower" to put in one's home to negate the EMF radiation. But I can't find the article. Do you know what this is? What's the best device to negate EMF radiation?
GILLS.

WDDTY replies You can read all about how to protect yourself from EMFs (electromagnetic fields) in the February 2020 and July/August 2024 issues of WDDTY. Or search for "EMFs" on wddty.com.

Mane and the brain

I would like information on lion's mane and the brain in relation to cognitive decline please.
Gill

WDDTY replies There's some information on lion's mane in this month's Every Picture... (page 24). Also check out the March 2021 and January/February 2025 issues or search for "mushrooms" on wddty.com.

WHAT DOCTORS
DON'T TELL YOU

COMMUNITY

GET IN TOUCH: Share your views, questions and comments via the WDDTY Community. Visit community.wddty.com or scan the QR code below and sign in with your subscription ID.





Aromatherapy makes birth easier

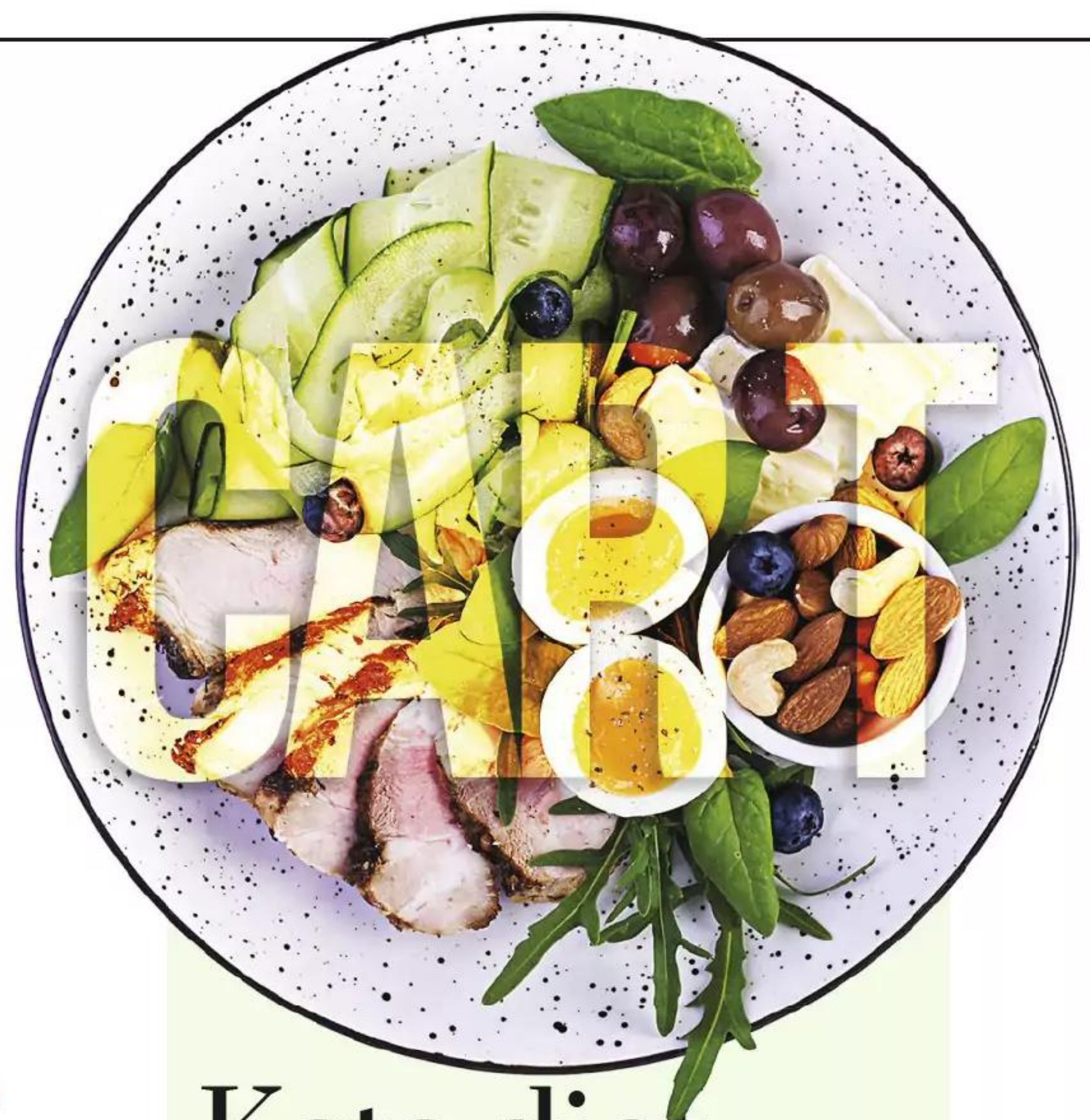
Aromatherapy can ease labor pains and even make the birth easier. Women who used aromatherapy that contained sweet orange oil (*Citrus sinensis* L) during labor reported “significantly reduced pain.”

It also helped improve dilation during the first stages of labor, especially for women who were having their first child. And it reduced the women’s anxiety.

Researchers from the Federal University of Sergipe in Brazil tested the oils on a group of 42 pregnant women. Half inhaled the actual oils, and the rest used a placebo of distilled water. Pain levels were recorded with a standard measure, and fetal heart rate was monitored.

As well as reducing pain levels and anxiety, the aromatherapy oils reduced blood pressure and respiratory and heart rates.

Explore (NY), 2025; 21(1): 103081



Keto diet boosts new cancer therapy

A new type of immunotherapy to fight cancer is boosted by a ketogenic diet. CAR T cell therapy, which genetically modifies samples of the patient’s blood, gains potency when it feeds off the metabolite BHB (beta-hydroxybutyrate), which is produced by the liver during a keto diet.

CAR T cells prefer BHB as a food source over glucose, or sugar, that the body gets from carbohydrates, explain researchers from the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine.

While assessing the way CAR T cells respond to various diets, they discovered that the low-carb keto diet makes them more powerful cancer fighters and helps the patient live longer. In laboratory tests on cancer cells, the researchers found that CAR T cells feeding off BHB supplements “obliterated” the tumors.

CAR T has so far been used on blood cancers, but the researchers think it could be used on other cancers if BHB supplements are added—or if the patient goes on a strict keto diet. The approach is simple and inexpensive, and it doesn’t have the toxicity of chemotherapy, said Maayan Levy, one of the researchers.

The therapy uses the body’s own T cells to fight cancer by genetically modifying blood samples and infusing them back into the patient.

Blood, 2024; 144(Suppl1): 4



Omega-3 oils stop the growth of prostate cancer

Men whose prostate cancer is in its early phase should start taking omega-3 supplements and eating more fish—it can stop the growth of cancer cells. At the same time, they should be cutting back on omega-6 fats, which are found in processed foods such as chips, cookies and fried food.

The combined effect can slow, or even reverse, the growth of prostate cancer cells, say researchers from University of California Los Angeles Health.

In a test of 100 men with early-stage prostate cancer—who all opted for “active surveillance,” or regular monitoring of the cancer’s progress before deciding on next steps—those who followed the omega-3 diet saw their cancer markers drop by 15 percent. But markers for those who followed their usual diet rose by 24 percent.

The dietary change could be enough not only to slow the cancer’s growth but also to delay or even prevent a need for aggressive treatment, said William Aronson, the lead researcher.

Eating more omega-3 fats is an ideal approach for men who have chosen active surveillance of their cancer. Usually, around half of men who opt for active surveillance end up having surgery or radiation within five years, but that ratio could be reduced if they adopt a high omega-3 and low omega-6 diet, he added.

J Clin Oncol, 2024; doi:10.1200/JCO.24.00608



A failed heart can heal itself

The heart can heal itself and regenerate new muscle and tissue.

Scientists have been astonished to witness the heart’s own recuperative powers after heart failure.

“Heart muscle cells can actually regenerate, which is really exciting because it solidifies the notion that there is an intrinsic capacity of the human heart to regenerate,” said Hesham Sadek, a cardiologist at the University of Arizona College of Medicine.

His team used carbon dating techniques to see if heart tissue, taken from people who had suffered heart failure, was creating new cells. But they saw the phenomenon mainly in tissue from patients who had artificial hearts, known as left ventricular assist devices, which were regenerating at six times the rate of healthy hearts.

This suggests the heart needs time to “rest” if it’s going to regenerate, but the discovery also raises questions. It suggests some patients could have their artificial hearts removed once their hearts have healed, but this regeneration occurs in only 25 percent of these patients, and the researchers want to understand why healing isn’t happening in all of them.

It also opens up an even bigger question of how a healthy heart could generate new cells and stay biologically young as well, as the scientists have demonstrated it has the capability.

Circulation, 2024; 151(3): 245–256

New drugs—great for the drug company, less so for the patient

Drug companies love new drugs—that’s where their profits come from. But when it comes to getting value for money and even extending life, the drugs often fall short.

Researchers from the London School of Economics have been looking at the benefits of new drugs approved for use in the UK’s National Health Service (NHS) over the last 20 years, costing around £75 billion (\$94.5 billion).

New drugs are more expensive and achieved 3.75 million more years of good health, the researchers reckon. But if the NHS had stuck with the older and cheaper drugs, it would have achieved around 5 million more years of healthy life.

New drugs and treatments must be approved by the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) before they can be adopted by the NHS, and the decision weighs cost against effectiveness and safety.

Lancet, 2025; doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(24)02352-3



HEALTH FACT

People eating high-protein meals were 25 percent less hungry than those eating typical amounts of protein

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Be physically active today to feel sharp tomorrow

Feel sharper after some physical activity? That buzz of feeling more alive and aware can last

through the next day too, say researchers from University College London. We can sense a feeling of greater cognitive awareness after exercise, but nobody has tracked just how long the feeling lasts until now.

The researchers tested a group of 76 people, aged 50–83, after moderate to vigorous physical activity. They discovered the participants still had greater mental sharpness the following day. Aside from sitting around less and being more active, the participants also enjoyed deeper sleep and improved memory skills the following day.

It works the other way too. People who were more sedentary and weren't physically active had poorer cognitive skills the following day.

Any exercise or activity that raises the heart rate—such as taking a brisk walk, dancing or climbing a few flights of stairs—can have a positive effect on cognitive abilities because it increases blood flow to the brain and stimulates neurotransmitter release. It's something most people can do, and it doesn't require going to the gym or doing structured exercise, said Mikaela Bloomberg, one of the researchers.

J Formos Med Assoc, 2024; 123(12): 1239–1245



Processed food is a major cause of colon cancer

Colon, or colorectal, cancer is one of the deadliest cancer types—and it could be driven by a diet of processed food. The diet causes chronic inflammation, and this triggers the cancer, say researchers from the University of South Florida.

They've even seen the inflammation in the cancer cells. "Cancer is like a chronic wound that won't heal—if your body is living off of daily ultra-processed foods, its ability to heal that wound decreases due to the inflammation and suppression of the immune system that ultimately allows the cancer to grow," explains Timothy Yeatman, one of the researchers.

The cancer epidemic means it's time to reevaluate the standard Western diet, which is made up of added sugars, ultra-processed food, chemicals and inflammatory seed oils, he said. But the diet isn't only driving cancer; it's also behind other widespread chronic conditions, such as Alzheimer's disease, diabetes and heart problems.

Gut, 2024; doi: 10.1136/gutjnl-2024-332535

Shiitake mushrooms stop liver disease

Add some shiitake mushrooms to your daily diet—your liver will thank you. Compounds in the mushrooms stop a process known as steatotic liver disease, which around one in three of us have and never know it, researchers from Osaka Metropolitan University have discovered.

Shiitakes contain active hexose correlated compound (AHCC). By extracting AHCC from the mushrooms and giving it to mice with induced liver disease, the researchers discovered that it protects the liver and stops the disease from progressing.

The disease signals an abnormal accumulation of lipids or fats and is the start of hepatitis and fibrosis.

The endpoint could be liver cancer or cirrhosis, both of which can be fatal.

To learn more, see "Dr Mushroom," page 24.

Am J Physiol Gastrointest Liver Physiol, 2024; 327(6): G741–G753



promotion

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Show your aching joints who's boss and stay young, fit and healthy with Syno-Vital

The older you get, the harder it becomes to exercise and keep healthy. Your joints become stiff, you feel tired and it's hard to get motivated to exercise. However, you can overcome these signs of ageing with the help of hyaluronic acid.

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There's loads of science behind the role that hyaluronic acid (HA) plays in keeping you feeling – and looking – young and healthy. Found naturally in the body, HA is a vital component of the synovial fluid that lubricates your joints. This fluid creates a cushioning effect, to help withstand the impact of exercise without pain – all thanks to hyaluronic acid!

As you age, however, especially when you get to over 50, the body's natural HA levels diminish, which reduces the effectiveness of synovial fluid, leaving you with aching joints.

CAN SUPPLEMENTS HELP?

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HA levels and keep your joints healthy. It's easy to use, no matter how busy you may be – just mix a sachet of Syno-Vital into a drink of your choice and enjoy.

Research shows that taking HA supplements may also be useful for patients with osteoarthritis, helping to reduce inflammation and pain to support them with their daily mobility and overall lifestyle.

ANY OTHER BENEFITS?

As well as reducing joint pain and mobility problems, HA is essential for keeping your skin looking young and fresh. As natural HA levels drop with age, your skin appears less smooth and supple, with fine lines, wrinkles and uneven tone. Taking HA supplements daily may help keep your skin looking youthful.

It's also ideal for anyone who suffers with dry, itchy, tired eyes – HA helps keep them moisturised and hydrated, helping you maintain that sparkle in your eye.



“I CAN BEND MY KNEES WITHOUT PAIN!”

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Liz Parkin, Huddersfield

Most children are suffering from depression and anxiety

Around 75 percent of adolescents are suffering from chronic depression and anxiety. Girls are especially at risk—up to 84 percent aged 10–18 years are likely to suffer at least one bout of depression or anxiety, while it affects around 60 percent of boys.

For 64 percent of children, the problem is chronic, with three or more episodes recorded during the adolescent years. Educational stress seemed to be the biggest trigger; cases rose during the transition from primary to secondary education, at exam periods and at the end of compulsory education.

Although Covid-19 lockdowns have also been blamed, most cases during the pandemic involved children who had already suffered one bout of depression or anxiety before social isolation measures were introduced.

Researchers from Murdoch Children's Research Institute in Australia tracked the mental health of 1,239 adolescents. The study claims to be one of the first to assess children over such a long time span—and what it has discovered is very worrying.

"This high incidence of common mental health problems suggests that even the most well-resourced country would struggle to provide adequate treatment if every young person sought help," said Susan Sawyer, one of the researchers.

Lancet Psychiatry, 2025; 12(1): 44–53

UP TO 84 PERCENT OF GIRLS AGED 10–18 YEARS ARE LIKELY TO SUFFER AT LEAST ONE BOUT OF DEPRESSION OR ANXIETY

No such thing as good and bad cholesterol

Doctors have for years been prescribing statins to promote "good" HDL cholesterol—but scientists have discovered it's not so good after all and may even be a cause of heart disease.

For decades, medicine has believed only "bad" LDL cholesterol causes heart disease by building up on artery walls. But scientists from Houston Methodist Research Institute have discovered that both types of cholesterol have two forms—"free" and "bound." The free type could need a closer look, whether it's from LDL (low-density lipoprotein) or HDL (high-density lipoprotein) cholesterol.

In a research study, the scientists discovered that HDL with high amounts of free cholesterol is "dysfunctional" because it accumulates in white blood cells known as macrophages, which is associated with heart disease.

The discovery is a complete reversal of current theory that holds that HDL is beneficial and removes excess cholesterol from tissues.

It's the start of a new path to treating heart disease. New diagnostics and treatments need to be developed, the researchers say, and the emphasis needs to shift to HDL-lowering therapies and away from just reducing LDL levels.

JLipid Res, 2025; 66(1): 100707

Meat alternatives can make you depressed

Vegetarians who crave meat should steer clear of plant-based meat alternatives (PBMA). These ultra-processed foods could cause a host of health problems, and especially depression.

Researchers from the University of Surrey reckon PBMA increase the risk of depression by 42 percent, and vegetarians who regularly eat the meals also have higher blood pressure and C-reactive protein, a marker of inflammation.

They're not all bad. They do at least reduce the risk of IBS (irritable bowel disease) by 40 percent, the researchers found when they analyzed data from the UK Biobank survey.

The takeaway is to eat PBMA sparingly and as part of a more balanced diet, or as a tool to transition to a vegetarian diet.

Food Frontiers, 2024; 6(1): 590–598



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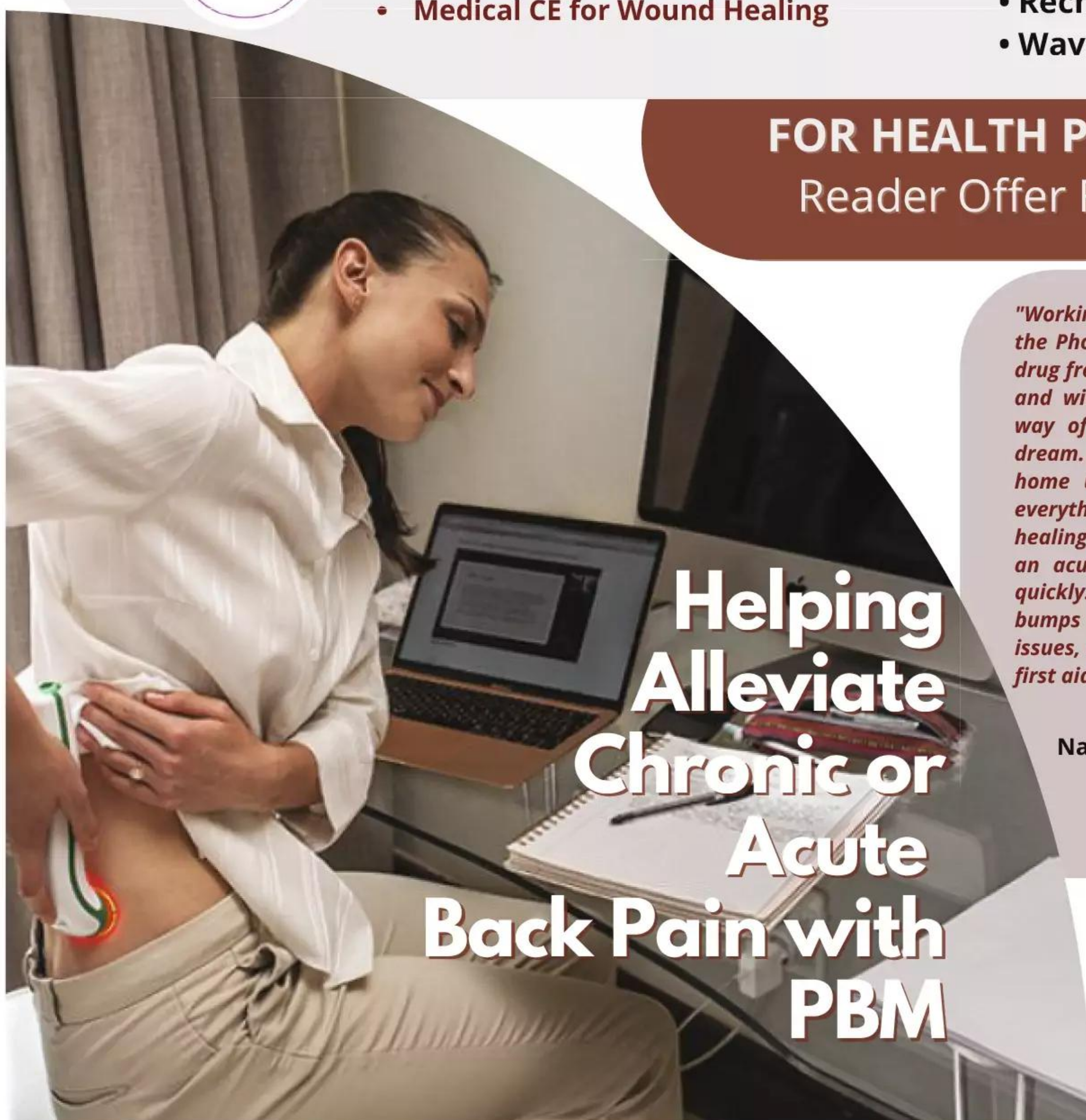
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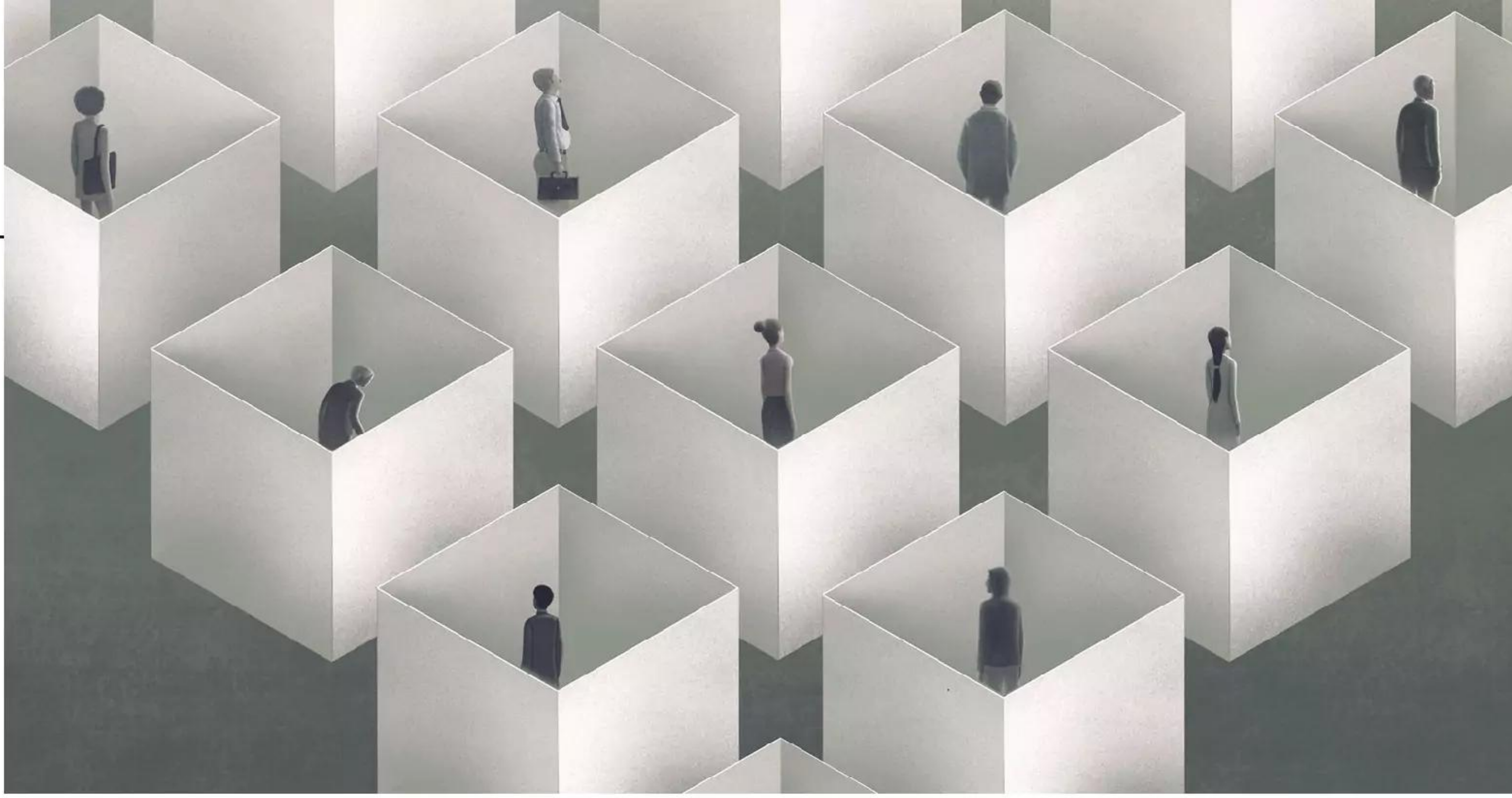
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Loneliness is an unrecognized health risk

Loneliness is one of the biggest health risks—it increases our chances of heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes, a new study has found. It's an overlooked cause of chronic illness, and social contact is just as important as a healthy diet and exercise.

Researchers from the University of Cambridge and Fudan University in China looked at the impact of

social isolation on around 42,000 participants in the UK Biobank survey. They analyzed blood samples and social activity of participants aged 40–69 years.

The researchers identified proteins occurring at higher levels in the blood samples of those who experienced loneliness and social isolation. Many of these proteins have also been linked to heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke and premature death.

The researchers then narrowed the field to five proteins whose high numbers were caused by loneliness. One of these proteins, ADM, is produced in response to stress. It regulates stress hormones and

“social” hormones such as oxytocin, the so-called love hormone. And it's also associated with a higher risk of early death.

Other proteins they found were related to heart disease; shrinkage of the brain region related to emotional, social and reward processes; insulin resistance; and cancer progression.

“They give us clues to the biology underpinning poor health among people who are socially isolated or lonely, highlighting why social relationships play such an important part in keeping us healthy,” said researcher Jianfeng Feng.

Nat Hum Behav, 2025; doi: 10.1038/s41562-024-02078-1



Eat calcium to reduce your risk of bowel cancer

People who have plenty of calcium in their diet are less likely to suffer from bowel cancer. Consuming around 300 mg every day from dairy lowers the risk by around 17 percent, researchers from Oxford University have discovered.

It was one of the standout ingredients with the greatest protective effect, the researchers say. They analyzed 97 different nutrients in human diets and their impact on colorectal cancers among 542,778 women, 12,251 of whom developed the cancer.

They found that fruits, whole grains, carbohydrates, fiber, folate and vitamin C also protected against the cancers, but to a lesser extent than calcium.

Nat Commun, 2025; 16(1): 375



Learning difficulties caused by car exhaust fumes

Lead from car exhaust is a primary cause of learning difficulties and mental health problems, a major new study has concluded.

More than 150 million cases of psychiatric disorders over the past 75 years in the US alone can be directly attributed to car exhaust fumes, say Duke University researchers. These include depression, anxiety and ADHD (attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder).

The researchers reckon that Americans born before 1996—when lead was banned as an additive to gasoline—experienced “significantly higher rates of mental health problems” because of lead exposure. As a result, they experienced personality changes that would have made them less successful in life and less resilient to challenges.

Lead—which was first added to petrol in 1923—had its highest concentrations in the environment during the 1960s and 1970s.

Lead is a neurotoxin that can reduce brain cells and change neurological function, so there's no such thing as a safe level, said Aaron Reuben, the head investigator. Lead also comes from water pipes, and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued regulations only last October that give cities 10 years to identify and replace lead piping in the public water supply.

Although anyone can suffer from lead exposure, children are especially vulnerable, Reuben added.

J Child Psychol Psychiatry, 2024; doi: 10.1111/jcpp.14072



Reach age 90, and health risks disappear

Something strange happens to us if we're lucky enough to reach the grand old age of 90—all the usual cognitive health risks seem to vanish. High blood pressure and diabetes, which are usually linked to cardiovascular disease, don't appear to be risk factors anymore once we reach our 90s.

Researchers from the University of California at Irvine discovered the phenomenon when they tracked the health of 267 participants in the National Institute on Aging 90+ study. They found blood vessels in the brain weren't being harmed by the usual risk factors seen in younger people, and age also seemed to supercharge some medications, such as diuretics and beta blockers, making them more effective.

Alzheimers Dement, 2025; doi: 10.1002/alz.14454

The best time of the day to drink coffee

A cup or two of coffee may do us good—but it also depends on when we drink it. The morning seems to be the best time of the day to reap the health benefits, but they start to disappear if you drink coffee in the afternoon or evening.

Morning coffee drinkers were 31 percent less likely to die from heart disease than non-coffee drinkers, and they also had a 16 percent lower risk of dying from any health problem, say researchers from Tulane University in New Orleans.

In a study of 40,725 people, the researchers concluded that morning coffee drinkers were healthier than those who drank it all day or didn't drink it at all. Around 36 percent of the participants were morning coffee drinkers, and 14 percent drank it all day.

During the 10 years of the study, 4,295 of the participants died, including 1,268 from heart disease and 934 from cancer. But far fewer in the morning-coffee group died, and the most significant factor was the time of day they drank their coffee. Having another cup or two also helped reduce the risk of heart disease and cancer, as long as they consumed it in the morning.

Eur Heart J, 2025; doi: 10.1093/eurheartj/ehae871

At the desk all day, sleep poorly at night

Sitting around all day doesn't do us much good—and it could also be affecting our sleep. Around 80 percent of us sit at a desk to work, and this makes it harder to get to sleep at night, say researchers from the University of South Florida.

Desk work increases the risk of insomnia by around 37 percent and raises the need for the weekend catch-up sleep by up to 66 percent, the researchers found.

They analyzed lifestyle data from around 1,300 office workers and categorized them as either good, catch-up or insomnia-like sleepers. Most fell into the insomnia-like category, which featured problems with falling asleep, interrupted sleep and frequent daytime tiredness.

It's important to start moving during the day and not to continue working into the evening and night, but these changes may not have an immediate effect, the researchers say. Most of the insomnia-like sleepers were still suffering some of the issues up to 10 years after they had retired from their deskbound work.

J Occup Health Psychol, 2024; 29(6): 409–430



Entrepreneur “proves” vaccines cause autism

Entrepreneur Steve Kirsch—who is offering \$1 million to any scientist who can establish childhood vaccines don't cause autism—has carried out his own research study that establishes an association. Up to 60 percent of children suffer rapid-onset autism (ROA) within seven days after a vaccination, he says.

He has collated 62 responses so far from parents whose children had been vaccinated. Of these, 34 developed ROA, and 19 of 33 children given the MMR jab—around 58 percent—also started showing signs of autism for the first time.

“If vaccines don't cause autism, we should be seeing approximately the same number of kids developing ROA the week before their shot vs. the week after their shot. We don't. It's not even a close call,” he writes on his Substack page (kirschsubstack.com).

Kirsch says he's astonished that no scientist is interested in confirming the data or duplicating it in a separate study. “It took me about 15 minutes to write the survey and I waited 24 hours to collect the results.”

Kirsch made his fortune from developing the optical mouse for PCs. He has been labeled an anti-vaxxer since founding the Covid-19 Early Treatment Fund (CETF), which funded research into off-label treatments for the virus, and later the Vaccine Safety Research Foundation (VSRF), which has questioned the safety of childhood vaccines.

Next-generation weight-loss drug fails

The world domination plans of drug giant Novo Nordisk have hit a bump in the road. The Danish company became one of the world's fastest-growing corporations after releasing its weight-loss drug sensation, Wegovy—but the results from trials of its next-generation obesity therapy, CagriSema, have been disappointing.

The news wiped \$125 billion from the value of the company in a single day, making it one of the biggest ever one-day wipeouts on stock markets.

CagriSema was trumpeted as the future of obesity therapy until late-stage trials revealed it achieved weight loss of around 22 percent after 68 months. This makes it no more effective than Wegovy's rival, Eli Lilly's Zepbound, aka Mounjaro.

In the phase 3 trial, 3,400 people with a BMI (body mass index) score of 30 or more were injected with CagriSema every week for nearly six years, and more than half were on the highest dose by the end of the trial. The participants reported

adverse reactions similar to those with Wegovy, including gastrointestinal problems.

The results are a big blow to Novo Nordisk, which had achieved a market capitalization of \$460 billion on the back of the Wegovy phenomenon. But, last December, Eli Lilly stole some of its thunder when it demonstrated Mounjaro was more effective, achieving a 23 percent weight loss.

Maggie Fick and Jacob Gronholt-Pedersen, “Novo Nordisk Shares Plunge After CagriSema Obesity Drug Trial Disappoints,” Dec 20, 2024, reuters.com



UP TO 60 PERCENT OF CHILDREN SUFFER RAPID-ONSET AUTISM WITHIN SEVEN DAYS AFTER A VACCINATION

Is it time we stop eating tuna?

Fish may be good for us, but regulators allow levels of methylmercury, a neurotoxin, up to three times higher in bigger fish, such as tuna and swordfish — and they could be higher still in canned tuna

Should we stop eating tuna? It contains more methylmercury—a neurotoxin from the mercury in our environment—than smaller fish, and some canned varieties have levels that are way above safe limits, a new study has discovered.

A can of tuna is a staple in most kitchens, but the argument that tuna is still a healthy option because of its omega-3 oils is questionable as it contains lower amounts than smaller, oilier fish such as sardines, herring and mackerel.¹ Canned tuna—one of the most popular ways we consume fish—can contain more methylmercury than a tuna steak, although opting for a “lighter” variety, such as skipjack, can reduce the amount.

Bloom, the marine conservation group, analyzed 148 cans of tuna that it bought in supermarkets in England, Germany, Italy, France and Spain. It found over half exceeded the safe limit for smaller fish, and one had almost four times the limit for tuna.²

Tuna’s free pass

Health agencies have given tuna something of a free pass because

it’s higher up the food chain and is a predator that consumes smaller fish. They set a tolerable weekly intake (TWI) of methylmercury from tuna nearly three times the safe upper limit from smaller fish, such as cod. The overall safe limit for each serving of fish is 0.3 mg of methylmercury per kilogram of body weight, they say—but following that logic, a heavier person can consume more mercury.

The TWI for tuna and other large predatory fish, such as swordfish and shark, is 1 mg/kg, which doesn’t make a great deal of sense as it’s the amount of methylmercury we consume that counts, not the fish we’re eating. Compared to small fish at the bottom of the food chain,

The overall safe limit for each serving of fish is 0.3 mg/kg of body weight, but once it’s canned, tuna’s methylmercury level can rise to 2.7 mg/kg

tuna can contain 10 times the amount of methylmercury.

One can of tuna that Bloom analyzed contained 3.9 mg/kg of methylmercury, and the agency argues that the canned fish industry is exploiting a legal loophole that measures levels only in fresh fish. Canned tuna is never checked, and yet Bloom’s scientists reckon methylmercury is more concentrated in cans because canned tuna contains less water than a tuna steak. Once it’s canned, tuna’s methylmercury level can rise to 2.7 mg/kg from the 1 mg/kg permitted in fresh tuna.

So, a person weighing less than 70 kg (154 lb) could exceed their safe weekly intake by consuming just 3.5 oz (100 g) of tinned tuna that was at the upper end of TWI for fresh tuna, as defined by all the health agencies in the West. That includes the European Food Safety Authority, the UK Food Standards Agency, and the US Environmental Protection Agency and Food and Drug Administration.

It’s the money, stupid

The European Parliament has started to question the decision that allows us to consume tuna, swordfish and shark with more than three times the levels of methylmercury allowed in smaller fish. Bloom reckons it’s down to money: Global tuna sales are around \$40 billion (£31.7 billion) a year, and it’s an industry that’s vital to Europe. European countries own 39 of the 50 largest tuna fishing operations, which account for 20 percent of all tuna catches around the world.

This has helped shape European regulations, which in turn have been aided by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). Some members have a conflict of interest and are receiving payments from the tuna industry, while the Codex Alimentarius, which the FAO and WHO launched in 1963 to establish international food standards, is also under the influence of the tuna lobby.

The group responsible for monitoring food contaminants, the Codex Committee on Contaminants in Foods (CCCF), is led by the Netherlands, a major player in commercial fishing. Moreover, tuna giants regularly have direct representation among the national delegations at CCCF meetings.

SAFETY FIRST

All fish contain some amount of methylmercury, but to avoid higher levels, the maxim is to eat smaller fish and avoid large predatory fish such as tuna, swordfish and shark. If you do want to eat canned tuna, choose varieties such as skipjack, which is a smaller member of the tuna family.

Health agencies recommend we don't eat more than four cans of tuna, or two tuna steaks, a week, and that's for a grown adult. To be safe, it's advisable to give far less to small children, whose brains are still developing.

A central actor in the health scandal and an institution still largely unknown to the public is the European Union's PAFF Committee (Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed), which is responsible for setting maximum levels of contaminants in food products. Made up of representatives from EU member states, the committee operates with total opacity: The European Commission refuses to reveal the identities of its members, its voting results or the details of its discussions.

This lack of transparency also affects the working groups advising the PAFF Committee. Meeting minutes and reference documents are not disclosed, a policy actively maintained by the Commission, which denies access even in response to formal transparency requests. The European Parliament, kept out of discussions and decisions related to food safety standards, has been attempting for years, without success, to regain some oversight of the PAFF Committee's choices.

It's reasonable?

Overall, the level of methylmercury we can safely consume is determined by the ALARA (as low as reasonably achievable) method. So, the safe levels in cod are lower because, as a species, it has absorbed less mercury from the oceans. Tuna and swordfish naturally have higher levels, and so the allowable amount is higher because it's still "as low as reasonably achievable."

It's a policy adopted by the UK's Food Safety Agency, which maintains it regularly checks tuna stocks for ALARA

NOT FOR THE KIDS

Nurseries have started to ban canned tuna. Acorn Nurseries, which runs 11 nurseries in South Wales and southwest England, has stopped giving tuna to the children it cares for and has replaced the protein with pilchards and mackerel.

"We are offering other oily fish such as pilchards and mackerel, which support the growth and development of children," said Cherie Wilson, a director, who described the tuna ban as "an easy decision."

SO, WHAT IS METHYLMERCURY?

Mercury is one of the top 10 substances of "major public health concern," according to the WHO.

Mercury gets into our atmosphere from various natural phenomena, such as volcanic eruptions and forest fires, and due to human activity such as coal burning and mining. Once in the atmosphere, it spreads around the planet and into the oceans. Bacteria in low-oxygen areas of the seas transform it into methylmercury, its most toxic form.

Fish are bio-accumulators that ingest the methylmercury and can store it indefinitely. Predatory fish accumulate the greatest amount and can have methylmercury levels that are 10 times those of the smaller fish they eat.

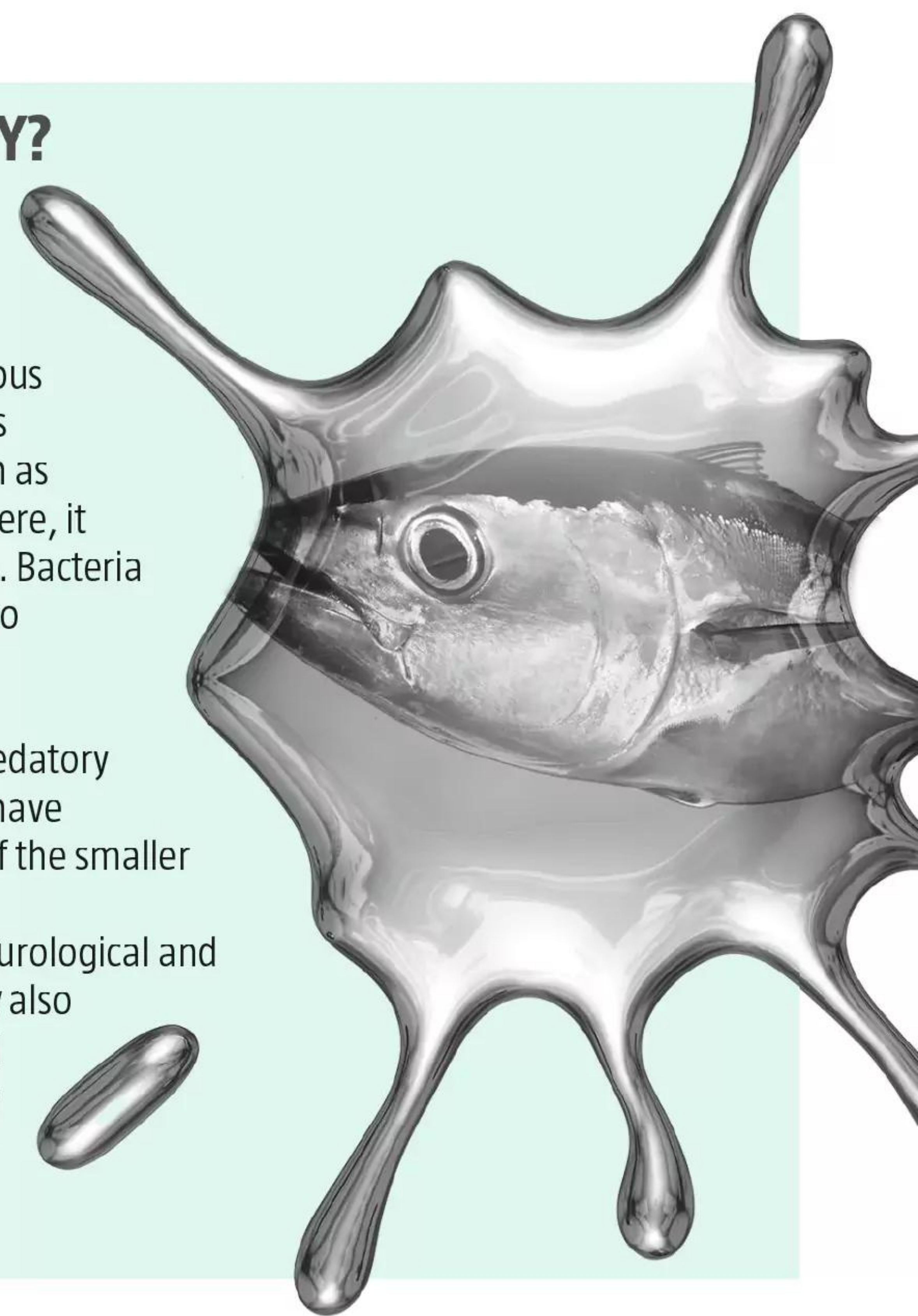
In humans, methylmercury can affect the neurological and cognitive functions of the growing fetus. It may also affect children's cardiovascular, immune, renal and reproductive systems. Methylmercury may also cause cancer. The International Agency for Research on Cancer has classified it as "a possible carcinogen."

levels through spot checks carried out by trading standards authorities. But it emphasizes that businesses are responsible for ensuring their products contain amounts below the maximum level, suggesting it's down to the tuna industry to monitor itself.

Food lobby groups have responded to the Bloom report. *About Seafood*, a US National Fisheries Institute blog, argues that "scare reports" about methylmercury discourage people from eating fish, a rich source of omega-3 oils that support cardiovascular health. Pregnant women should be eating up to three servings of fish every week, according to dietary guidelines.¹

The safe upper limit has a 10-times built-in tolerance, and so we would need to eat far more than the recommended amounts to see any adverse effects, the institute argues. Even then, researchers haven't found any direct neurotoxic damage caused by eating fish, it says. But these studies have excluded tests on newborns and small children, whose developing brains and nervous systems are the most likely to be affected by methylmercury, a neurotoxin.

The fish industry is losing the PR war over methylmercury, the Institute says. Christina Vogel, director of the US Center for Food, Nutrition and



Agriculture Policy, agrees. "The government's communications strategy on the risks and benefits of eating fish has not worked. People are confused."

"What has been lost in the emphasis on risk from mercury... is the fact that many types of fish, especially those high in omega-3 fatty acids, have significant health benefits. People lose out on those benefits if they decrease fish consumption because they're getting a mixed message," she says.

This may be true, and fish is certainly an important element in any carnivore's diet. But the agencies and lobby groups fail to answer the concern that tuna is allowed to have far higher levels of methylmercury than smaller fish.

So, if fish is good for our health, why eat tuna? Why, indeed, take the risk?

Bryan Hubbard

See the October 2024 issue for the best omega-3 supplements if you'd rather avoid eating fish.

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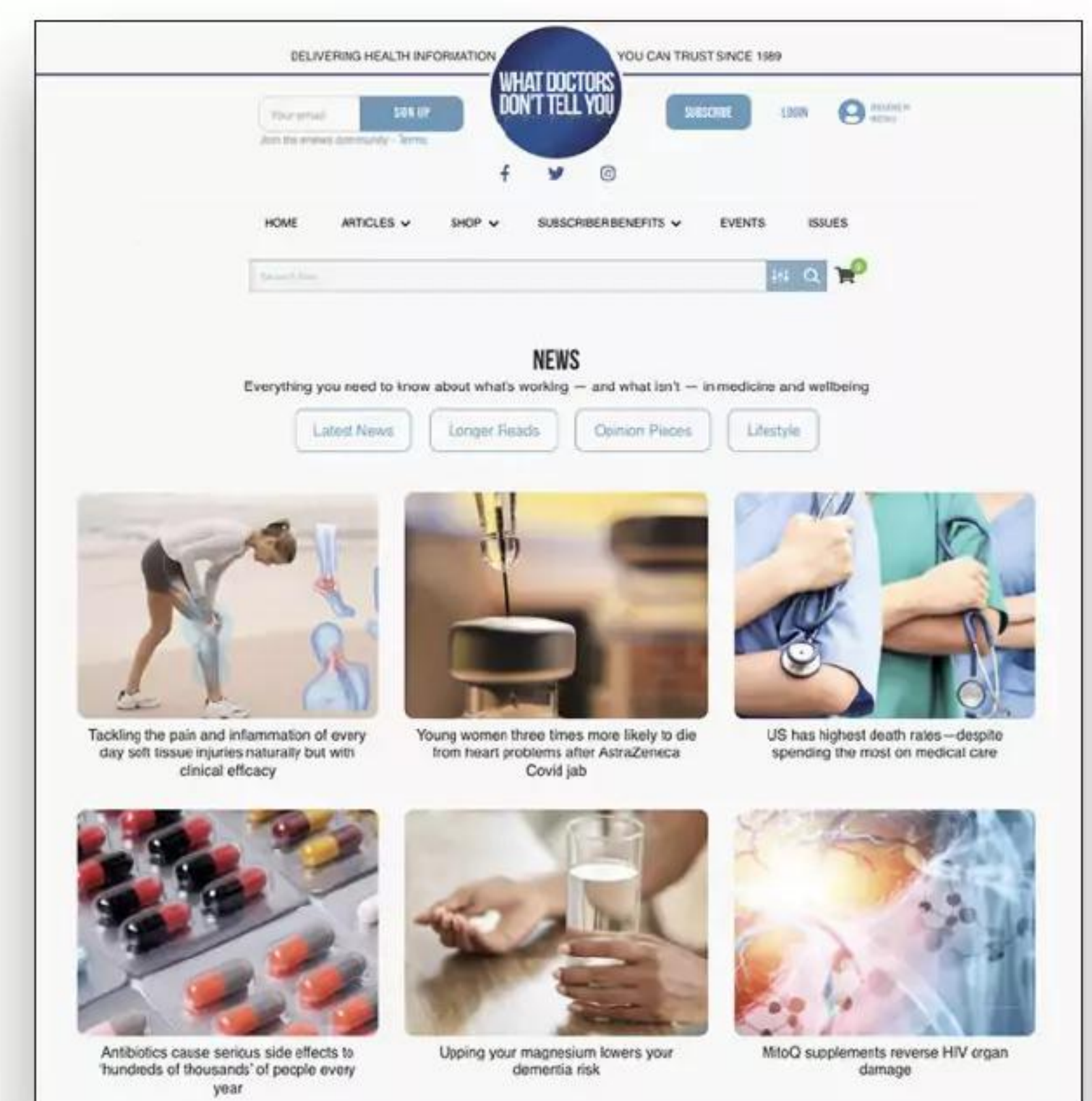
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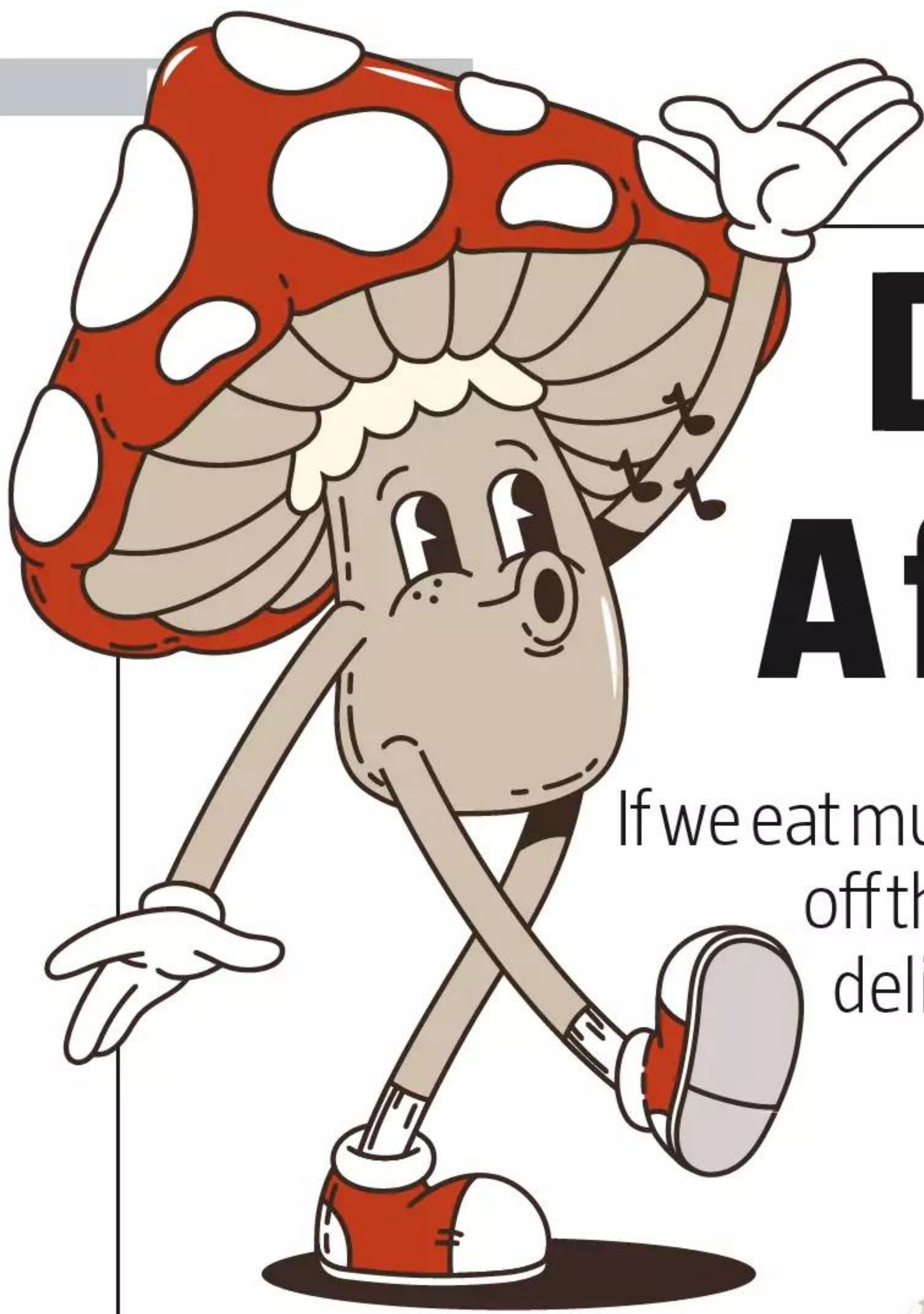
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Dr Mushroom: A fun guy who heals

If we eat mushrooms at all, they're probably the button variety. But get off the beaten track, and you'll discover many other types that deliver powerful boosts to our physical and mental health

We've been eating mushrooms for thousands of years. They're full of antioxidants and a rich source of vitamin D, making them an essential ingredient during the long winter days.

Most of us eat button mushrooms, the most common variety found in supermarkets. But there's more to mushrooms than buttons, and their health-giving properties are being harnessed by functional and nutritional medicine, which encourages the use of mushroom supplements and even coffees. One type, psilocybin mushrooms—better known as magic mushrooms—is being used in microdoses to ease depression and anxiety.

When it comes to mushrooms, you can't go far wrong, as all have some health benefit, from balancing blood sugar levels to supporting the immune system and boosting energy. Here are the top seven medicinal mushrooms, according to Real Mushrooms (realmushrooms.com).



Lion's mane

Hericium erinaceus

The mushroom for the mind

The key ingredients in lion's mane are compounds like beta-glucans that protect the brain and nerves.

People with mild memory problems saw an improvement when they regularly ate this mushroom, and they fared better on memory tests than those who didn't eat them. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), which calls it *hou tou gu* (monkey head mushroom), uses it to improve spleen function and digestion.

Reishi

Ganoderma lingzhi

The mushroom of immortality

The polysaccharides in reishi mushrooms support the immune system and help improve sleep and reduce anxiety and restlessness.

They can even enhance lung and respiratory health and balance blood sugar levels. Reishi's use in the East has been documented for over 2,000 years; for instance, Chinese royalty used it to promote longevity, describing it as the "mushroom of immortality."





Chaga

Inonotus obliquus

More canker than mushroom

Chaga is one of the most widely researched mushrooms for its abilities to treat skin and stomach

disorders. It's rich in antioxidants that support our digestion and immune system, and it controls inflammation. Unlike most mushrooms, chaga hasn't been adopted in the East, but Russians recognized its value in the 16th century and used it as a tea to help with digestion. In fact, it's not a mushroom at all but a canker that grows on birch trees in the cold far North.



Cordyceps

Cordyceps militaris

The caterpillar fungus

If you're low on energy, *Cordyceps* is the mushroom for you. In animal studies, it boosts ATP, the compound that energizes our cells. In human trials, it improves exercise levels in older people. If you're looking to start a family, *Cordyceps* improves sperm quality and counts and increases libido.

One variety is the most expensive mushroom in the world: *Cordyceps sinensis* costs more than \$8,000 (£6,300) a pound, and it's a rare combination of a caterpillar and a mushroom. Fortunately, the *militaris* variety isn't so rare or expensive.



Turkey tail

Trametes versicolor

Our T-cells' best friend

If you really want to boost your immune system's killer responses, turkey tail should be on your shopping list. Of all the mushrooms, turkey tail is the immune system's best friend, promoting the function of our killer T-cells. TCM takes a slightly different view of turkey tail, using it to support digestion, lung health, body fluid regulation and vitality.



Maitake

Grifola frondosa

The immune booster

Maitake offers similar benefits to turkey tail mushrooms, but perhaps with a little less potency. It supports immune function by stimulating the immune system's natural killer cells, monocytes and T-helper cells. If you've heard of maitake mushrooms, it's probably down to the research of Dr Hiroaki Nanba, who in the 1990s isolated their polysaccharides as immune boosters.

Shiitake

Lentinula edodes

The popular elixir

Who doesn't like shiitake mushrooms, probably the best known of all the medicinal mushrooms? It's good for the immune system, supports the liver and protects the cardiovascular system. In particular, it can also keep our cholesterol levels in check. The Chinese call it the "fragrant mushroom," and the Ming Dynasty described it as "the elixir of life."



WHEN PAIN IS ALL IN YOUR HEAD

The majority of back pain resists any sort of treatment or diagnosis because it's an emotional pain, says Dr John Sarno. Cate Montana investigates

In February 1991, Warner Books published the unassuming title *Healing Back Pain* by John E. Sarno, MD (sarnoclinic.com), a professor of rehabilitation medicine at the New York University School of Medicine. An attending physician in the Department of Rehabilitation Medicine from 1965 until his retirement in 2012, at first Sarno had no idea his book and seminars about what he labeled “tension myositis syndrome” would change the lives of thousands.

He certainly didn’t anticipate hearing from hundreds of readers that years, and sometimes decades, of crippling back and neck pain had miraculously disappeared after they read his book and followed its suggestions. Certainly, this writer didn’t anticipate that choosing to read his book and write about this syndrome for *WDDTY* would result in a 90 percent reduction of crippling pelvic and buttock pain that had resisted every treatment under the sun and had been steadily worsening for the last seven years—a pain reduction that, to date, has taken only six weeks.

It all started in the early 1980s, when Sarno had become increasingly frustrated with treating patients for back pain according to the classical model. To this day, that model views back pain as primarily due to structural abnormalities of the spine, most commonly arthritic or disc disorders, compression of nerves due to poor posture, lack of exercise, etc.

“Over the years I became increasingly troubled with the fact that frequently the pattern of a patient’s pain and the findings on physical examination didn’t match the presumed pathology,” he writes. “For example, pain might be attributed to degenerative arthritic changes at the lower end of the spine, but the patient might have pain in places that had nothing to do with the bones in that area. Or someone might have a lumbar disc that was herniated to the left and have pain in the right leg.

“Even more important was the observation that 88 percent of the people seen had histories of such things as tension or migraine headache, heartburn, hiatus hernia, stomach ulcer, colitis, spastic colon, irritable bowel syndrome, hay fever, asthma, eczema, and a variety of other disorders, all of which were strongly suspected of being related to tension.

“It seemed logical to conclude that their painful muscle conditions might also be induced by tension. Hence, the name tension myositis syndrome (TMS).”



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Tension myositis syndrome, tension myoneural syndrome, mind-body syndrome, neuroplastic pain, psychophysiological disorders (PPDs)—the labels are many, but the results of treating specific chronic back and neck pain (and other related conditions) as a brain-induced pain syndrome rather than as structurally based conditions continue to impress.

Sarno's initial physiological explanation for intractable chronic pain was that TMS begins with highly specific emotions and psychological conditions. These states trigger activity within the autonomic nervous system, resulting in local vasoconstriction (narrowing of blood vessels) and mild oxygen deprivation of certain muscles, nerves, tendons and ligaments. Sarno hypothesized that the lack of oxygen was responsible for the pain.

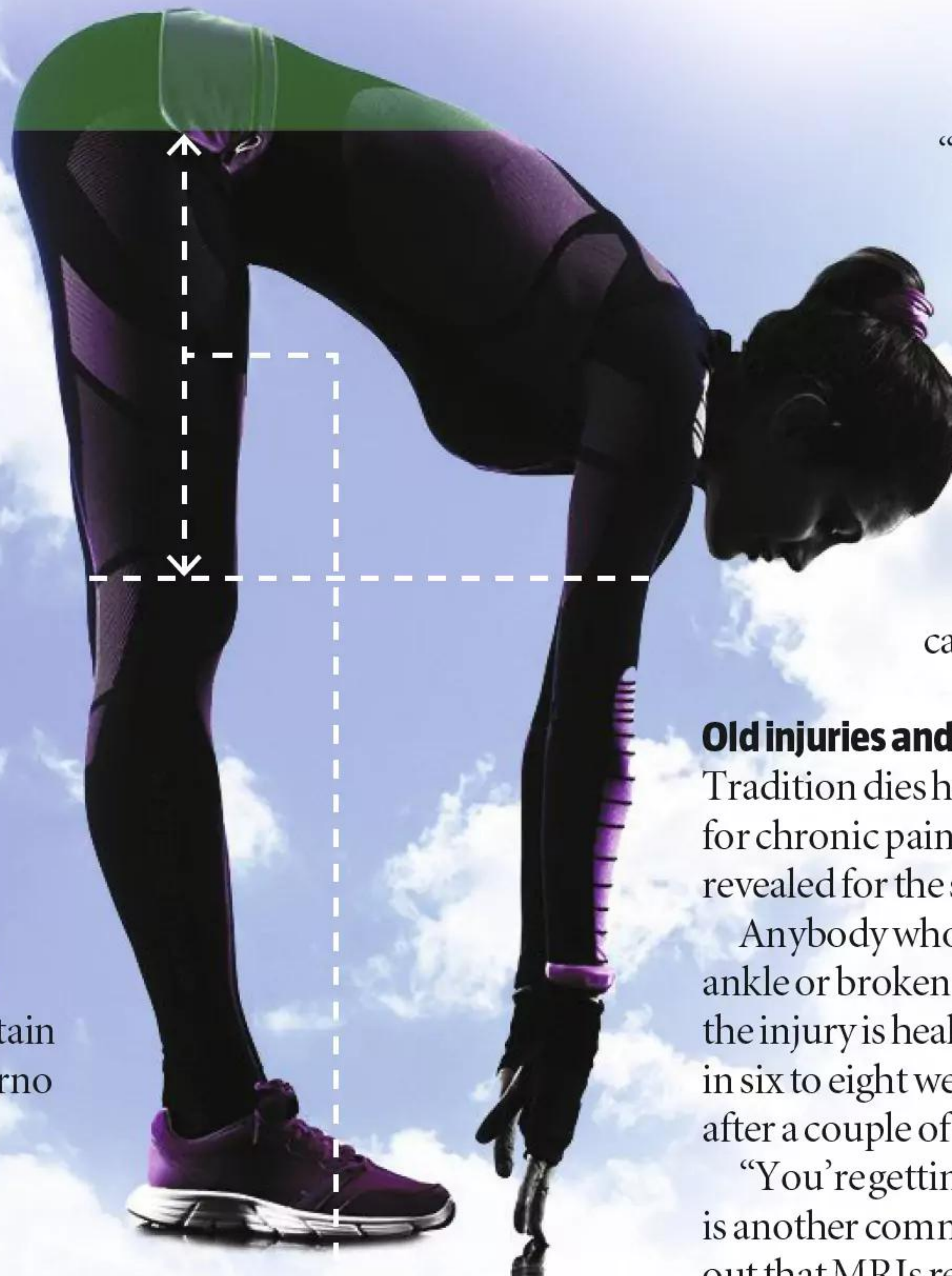
This correlation has never been proven and has subsequently been dropped as an explanation as more and more studies reveal that “the reign of pain lies mainly in the brain,” as Howard Schubiner, MD (unlearnyourpain.com), put it. He's a clinical professor at Michigan State University College of Human Medicine.

Chronic back or neck pain (CBNP) is the leading cause of disability in the United States and in most other Western nations. The overwhelming majority of doctors and patients believe pain is almost entirely the result of structural issues, but some studies now suggest 85–90 percent of CBNP cases are nonspecific, with no clearly identifiable peripheral cause.¹

Indeed, functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) studies show that the pain response in the brain from an actual injury (for example, a burn) is basically the same as from hypnotic suggestion of a burn or from simply imagining being burned.²

In alignment with this new research revealing the brain's role as both transmitter and creator of pain, the World Health Organization, in association with the International Association for the Study of Pain, has recently proposed classifying chronic pain as either primary or secondary in nature. Primary pain is defined as neuroplastic or “nociplastic” in origin, meaning it originates in the brain, because there is no clear evidence of actual or potential tissue damage. Secondary pain is defined as neuropathic or “nociceptive,” meaning the brain is responding to a painful physical stimulus with appropriate pain sensations.

“Traditional medical treatments for chronic pain are geared toward correcting an underlying structural pathology in the body,” says Schubiner. “In mind-body syndrome (TMS), there are reversible physiological changes to the brain and nerve pathways, but there is no underlying tissue breakdown.



STUDIES SHOW 56–90 PERCENT OF ASYMPTOMATIC PATIENTS GIVEN MRIS HAVE BULGING DISCS AND OTHER COMMON BACK ISSUES, BUT NO PAIN OR DYSFUNCTION

“Standard treatments don't address the true causes of these symptoms but try to cover them up. Pain medication, surgery, physical therapy, acupuncture, vitamins, herbs and all the other therapies recommended for these disorders will often provide at most partial or temporary relief because the person has not understood what caused the problem in the first place.”

Old injuries and other excuses

Tradition dies hard. But many common explanations for chronic pain, such as “old injuries,” are now being revealed for the specious explanations they are.

Anybody who has ever cut themselves, twisted an ankle or broken a bone knows the pain goes away once the injury is healed. On average, a broken bone mends in six to eight weeks. A pulled muscle usually feels fine after a couple of weeks.

“You're getting older, and your spine is degenerating,” is another common misdiagnosis. Schubiner points out that MRIs reveal 88 percent of asymptomatic patients at age 60 have disc degeneration, and 69 percent of them have disc bulges. But they experience no pain.

“Everybody experiences spinal degeneration as they age, starting in their 20s,” he says. “But that doesn't mean there's automatically going to be pain as a result.”

Studies back up this observation, showing that 56–90 percent of asymptomatic patients given MRIs have bulging discs, degenerative discs, herniated discs, arthritis, spinal stenosis and other common back issues, but no pain or dysfunction. This was true even among those aged 15–30.³

On top of that, a 1992 study controversially showed that only 10–15 percent of people with back pain could be accurately diagnosed using available medical tests,⁴ and today, over 30 years later, there's still no gold standard test.

Additionally, Sarno, Schubiner and other researchers have discovered that the majority of patients suffering from CBNP do so during their peak earning years, between ages 25 and 50. The rate of people experiencing it sharply decreases after that—the exact opposite of what would happen if it were age or degeneration related.

Emotional stress

So, if not structural issues, what causes the brain to start emitting pain signals, especially to the low back, pelvic and neck regions? Like Sarno, family and sports medicine physician Dr David Schechter in Los Angeles, California (schechtermd.com), points to emotional stress and anxiety.

“Functional MRI studies show that acute pain is experienced in the one part of the brain where you'd expect to see it—in the somatosensory cortex,” he says.

TESTIMONIAL



Jane's story

"Jane," age 71, suffered debilitating, "life-altering," costly back pain starting at age 29. Over the course of 11 years, the Southern California native saw many traditional doctors and received many different diagnoses, including, spondylolisthesis, a bulging disc, a pinched nerve, a herniated disc, different forms of arthritis including gout, even endometriosis.

In addition to allopathic doctors and physical therapists, she also saw alternative medical practitioners including acupuncturists, herbalists, chiropractors, masseuses and a biofeedback specialist. "The message I kept hearing from my doctors and other health practitioners was that I needed to learn to live with this back pain and that it was likely to just get worse with age," she says.

Then, in 1994, after her most recent neurologist advised she be placed in a body

cast for six months, she sat down and read Dr John Sarno's book *Healing Back Pain*.

"I was a desperate skeptic at that point, with two young children," she says. "Both were at school for a few hours, and I lay on the couch, racing through the book.

"And with every paragraph, light bulbs flashed in my brain and I kept thinking, 'This is me. This is it! Yes, this makes total sense!' By the time I finished the book, I knew I was cured."

And she was. She got up, pain free, called her husband at work and announced the miracle. Then she gathered up all her back pain equipment—support pillows, back braces, medications, etc.—and tossed them in the trash. Except for a few twinges after extra-strenuous activity like gardening,

hiking and such, she says she's never had back pain since then.

That said, she quickly points out that "TMS is never one and done because it's still a reflection of your temperament, your personality." She says that every few months some sort of symptom will show up.

"But I know the characteristics," she says. "For example, I was on a deadline and suddenly got an intense earache. At first,

I thought it was an ear infection. So I went to the doctor, and she told me, 'You have trigeminal neuralgia.'

"And then it hit me: 'Wait a minute. I'm stressed on a deadline. My kitchen is being remodeled. This is just a stress response. Okay.' And that earache disappeared within half an hour."

"Light bulbs flashed in my brain ... By the time I finished the book, I knew I was cured"

Chris Pizello's story

A professional photographer in Southern California accustomed to lugging around heavy camera equipment, Chris, age 55, says he was fortunate to have no back issues until he hit his 40s. Then, after getting off a super intense amusement ride at a park one day, his back went out.

"It got worse and worse and eventually led to sciatica," he says. "I got an MRI done, and it showed an 8 mm disc protrusion that I was convinced for a long time was the fault of that ride.

"And I went through the whole cycle that everyone goes through. I did the physical therapy, then I did the chiropractor, then I did the acupuncture. Finally, after all of that failed, I started thinking about the



"It took about a year or so, but the pain gradually started to diminish and finally it left"

surgery my doctor kept recommending to me."

He was on the phone making the appointment for a microdiscectomy when his doctor casually mentioned he couldn't lift anything for three or four months after the procedure. Because that would mean he'd have to quit work, it stopped him cold. Out of treatment options, he just tried to live with the increasingly debilitating pain.

Then, one day his wife mentioned Sarno's book *Healing Back Pain*. He got a sample chapter, read it and got really angry. "I was like, damn it, this guy is saying it's all in my head, but it's not. The pain is real!

"But then I kept on reading and realized that wasn't what he was saying. And then he started talking about the type of people that this affects. Perfectionist. People pleaser. Someone who's excessively conscientious. It was all me."

He read the book. And the pain persisted. So, he read it again. And again. And again. "I had to really stick with it because the knowledge has to really sink into your subconscious," he says.

"And then I read more books on TMS. I think it took about a year or so, but the pain just gradually started to diminish and finally it left. It was really amazing. This knowledge changed my life."

Since then, Chris says, he's had little "flare-ups." But between the books he still reads and the subsequent work he's done under the supervision of Dr David Schechter, he's learned how to get a handle on what's driving any pain when it shows up.

"You have to plumb the depths of what's really bothering you," he says. "And it tends to be really, really existential kinds of things. Like the first episode of back pain was all about me and my wife having trouble having a kid, you know?"

"It doesn't get deeper than that. And we eventually did succeed. So, if something shows up and causes pain now, I can usually pinpoint what the real cause is. And that's all it really takes."

“But chronic pain is really experienced more in the amygdala, the prefrontal cortex and other parts of the brain that are linked more to the psychological centers of the brain, executive functioning and other areas that relate to our thought processes, our worries, stress and that sort of thing.”

Sarno believed tension, stress and suppressed emotions lay at the foundation of TMS. “We have a built-in tendency to repress unpleasant, painful, or embarrassing emotions,” he wrote in his book. “Anxiety and anger are two of those undesirable emotions that we would rather not be aware of, and so the mind keeps them in the subterranean precincts of the subconscious if it possibly can.”

“The longer I work with TMS, the more impressed I am with the role of anger. We have all learned to repress it so completely that we are totally unaware of its existence in many situations.”

“In fact, I have begun to wonder if unconscious anger is not more fundamental to the development of symptoms than anxiety and, indeed, whether anxiety itself may be a reaction to repressed anger.”

One of the most common things doctors hear from CBNP patients is there seems to be “nothing to explain all this pain.” But as Sarno, Schubiner, Schechter and other physicians familiar with TMS point out, once the patient is led to expose and discuss the trials and tribulations of their life, it’s usually clear that the person has been creating a lot of anxiety. Over time, emotional stress gradually builds up until it reaches a threshold, at which point the symptoms suddenly begin (see box, right).

“I haven’t published this yet in the medical literature, but I’m creating a new taxonomy of TMS with different categories of causative stressors,” says Schechter. “One of them is obviously the emotional abuse of childhood category, which represents 10–25 percent of all TMS patients. Another category is the acute stressor, like the loss of a loved one or a divorce or career challenges.”

“Then there’s the chronic stressor—for example, a musician who’s working as an accountant. It’s not a healthy fit for them. They deal with it to a certain degree, but eventually it comes out. Then there’s the classic personality-driven TMS cases that perfectly match what Sarno discovered.”

Worrier, perfectionist, hard on themselves, often a people pleaser, highly sensitive, somebody who’s concerned about fixing the whole world, who’s very responsible for others—these are the basic personality traits Sarno found in the vast majority of the thousands of TMS patients he worked with over the years. Again and again, he found these traits reliably created unconscious tension and an overall buildup of stress in their lives and their bodies.

Over time, emotional stress builds up... the emotional abuse of childhood category represents 10–25 percent of all TMS patients

Signs you have tension myositis syndrome (TMS) or mind-body syndrome

Statistically, the low back–buttock area is the most common location of TMS. But it also affects other centralized (trunk) areas, such as the neck and trapezius regions.

Symptoms usually start out mild or intermittent and eventually develop into a chronic pattern. Sarno identified different kinds of pain when muscles, tendons and/or nerves are affected.

It may be sharp, burning, shock-like and stabbing. Or it may feel like pressure, pins and needles, tingling and/or numbness. There may be weakness in your arms or legs.

And these symptoms can interchange and vary. Sometimes there may be no pain or sensations at all. Sometimes there may be shifting symptoms and inconsistent pain all over the body.

People with TMS usually receive multiple diagnoses over time but get little or no relief no matter what diagnosis is made and what treatment approach is taken. Another indicator is that they’ve typically experienced other tension-related illnesses, such as tension or migraine headaches, heartburn, hiatus hernia, stomach ulcers, colitis, spastic colon, irritable bowel syndrome, hay fever, asthma, eczema, hives, and chronic constipation or chronic diarrhea.

Other common TMS symptoms are fibromyalgia, tinnitus, dizziness and vertigo, heart palpitations, eating disorders, OCD, urinary tract issues, temporomandibular joint disorder (TMJ), brain fog, depression and anxiety.

The TMS personality requires love, admiration and respect and strives hard to receive it. They have a powerful drive to achieve and often high levels of competitiveness. They also tend to be highly responsible, self-critical perfectionists who suffer quietly in an effort to avoid being a burden.

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Many studies show that psychological stress can create “health-damaging behaviors.”¹ Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) has long been associated with the development of chronic back pain² and is known to increase the severity of pain experienced in the body.³

And an article released in the US National Institutes of Health publication *Pain Reports* in 2023 states that how well or poorly a person mentally and emotionally responds to stress is directly linked to their odds of developing chronic pain.⁴

Unfortunately, TMS or mind-body syndrome is misdiagnosed in 60–70 percent of patients suffering from CBNP, Schechter says, based on his experience. The patient receives a scary diagnosis of a herniated disc or spinal stenosis that can be helped only by surgery or not at all, causing their stress to skyrocket and the pain to worsen.

And that, apparently, is one of the reasons a proper TMS diagnosis and knowledge about what they’re really dealing with sometimes results in a “miraculous” reduction and even the total elimination of their long-term pain “overnight.” The stress is identified, the “disease” is eliminated, suddenly life becomes bearable and hope blossoms.

Although TMS remains poorly studied and almost completely unknown in both allopathic and alternative health circles, some studies show “psychosocial trauma” has a pronounced impact on neural processes and predicts the later presence and severity of chronic pain.

They also show that psychophysiologic symptom relief therapy is highly beneficial for patients with nonspecific back pain.⁵

“Few patients and even fewer doctors realize that real and severe pain can be caused by stress and unresolved emotions,” says Schubiner. “It’s extremely difficult for people with severe pain, anxiety, depression or fatigue to grasp the idea that their condition is not caused by some kind of terrible physical damage or injury. It’s hard getting that message across, which is the main reason this condition, after over 30 years, remains so poorly known.”

The good news, however, is that more and more people are finally getting a proper diagnosis for chronic pain and other emotionally triggered, stress-related illnesses. “We’re not managing pain, we’re helping people to recover from it,” says Schechter.

“Not everybody gets 100 percent. But some do, and many people get close to it. And if you get even 70 percent relief from pain and dysfunction, you’ve gotten a lot more than anybody else is offering. You have a functional life at that point. And that’s a blessing.”

Studies show ‘psychosocial trauma’ has an impact on neural processes and predicts the later presence and severity of chronic pain

How to treat TMS

The first step in dealing with chronic pain is to get a correct diagnosis. “If there’s a tissue breakdown disorder, then go with traditional medical treatments,” Schubiner recommends. “But if you’ve been suffering for a long time, the doctors haven’t been able to adequately explain why you’re in so much pain, and your only option is pain medication, then you’re likely to have mind-body syndrome.”

“It helps to have your brain cleared of the other fallacious diagnoses you’ve gotten from your medical doctor or your chiropractor or your acupuncturist,” says Schechter. “It helps to then read and educate yourself about this condition through books and videos and online courses. There are a lot of free materials available.”

Talk to your brain When there’s pain, move through it as best you can, reminding and reassuring your brain and body that there isn’t anything physically wrong.

Discontinue old therapies, medications, etc. They’re not working because they’re not needed. Continuing their use tells the brain you need them when you don’t.

Get the feelings/emotions out of your head and onto paper Journaling is very helpful. So is therapy.

Consider the timeline of stresses and your symptoms Do they coincide? Are you under stress now? Consider your childhood. Are your current stresses related to childhood stresses and traumas?

If there was childhood abuse and trauma, Sarno highly advises therapy to help deal with recovered memories and support healthy integration.

Slowly resume physical activity “I emphasize that people should start slowly but resume their physical activity,” says Schechter. “It’s vital for reframing your brain’s old messaging that ‘This is going to hurt!’”

“I sometimes have people swim or walk for five minutes. That sounds like very little, but if you add a minute every other day, suddenly you’re at 30 minutes after four to six weeks, and you’re doing a reasonable amount of exercise.”

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Save your skin

Hormonal imbalances can cause all sorts of skin issues, from acne to psoriasis, says Marcelle Pick. Here's how to improve your skin from the inside out

Janet had all the usual symptoms of hormonal issues: hot flashes, irritability and weight gain. She'd almost anticipated them as the average age of menopause approached.

What she didn't expect, though, was the way her skin was changing. When she had an outbreak of acne that rivaled the ones from her teen years and developed rough, itchy patches on her arms and hands, she worried that there may be a serious problem.

Because she'd never heard that hormonal shifts can cause skin issues, she thought she might have an autoimmune disease. It was a reasonable question, especially with all the press autoimmune diseases have been getting as the number of diagnosed conditions skyrockets.

It's true that some skin conditions result from autoimmune diseases. But Janet, like most women, was surprised to hear that a hormonal imbalance may have been triggering her issues.

When I treat women, I look at the whole picture, and that's why I

recommend a lot of testing. But the first thing I consider is the possibility of underlying gastrointestinal or hormonal imbalances. I try a lot of natural solutions to see whether the symptoms subside; these are always my preference before turning to prescriptions.

How hormones and skin conditions are connected

Some women are very familiar with skin changes that occur regularly around their monthly cycle, such as an increase in acne (sometimes known as hormonal acne). Fluctuating hormones are normal throughout the month. Estrogen levels dip to their lowest point just before your period begins, then rise slowly to their peak mid-cycle and drop again in the second half of your cycle.

Progesterone follows an opposite schedule. Levels are low in the first half of the cycle. The hormone reaches its highest point a week before your period, then rapidly drops just before menstruation begins.

Your epidermis and dermis contain both estrogen and progesterone receptors, which means these changes can have a large impact on your skin, including its moisture levels, elasticity and texture.

The sebaceous glands in the skin produce sebum, a natural oil, and secrete it through your pores. When androgens are out of balance, these glands produce too much sebum, which can lead to inflammation and acne.

Estrogen impacts collagen production, hydration and skin texture. When its levels are low, sensitive skin and visible changes like fine lines, dry skin and wrinkles may result.

DHEA, another important hormone, has been shown to increase collagen production, helping keep skin healthy. That means low DHEA levels can lead to skin problems.

Both thyroid hormones and cortisol can also affect your skin's appearance. Cortisol boosts oil production, which can result in clogged pores and increased acne. The connection between imbalanced thyroid hormones and skin problems is well established although not entirely understood.¹

Common hormone-related skin problems

Underlying hormonal imbalances can prompt a vast range of skin conditions. While many other conditions also affect the skin, hormonal imbalances are a great place to start looking. Here are some specific issues that result from imbalanced hormones.

Acne Acne is the direct result of excess sebum (body oil) production, which clogs the pores, leading to pimple formation. Researchers have found that testosterone (which both male and female bodies produce) is a significant factor in acne development.²

One study looked at 207 women with acne and found 72 percent of them also had excessive levels of androgens, including testosterone.³ High androgen levels can result from high stress, which affects the adrenal glands and the secondary hormones.

Other hormones can affect acne as well. For instance, research has shown that women nearing menopause who have acne outbreaks have normal androgen levels but low estrogen.⁴

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72 percent of women
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Psoriasis Psoriasis is a disease in which skin regenerates faster than normal, causing a range of uncomfortable symptoms, most commonly red, itchy, scaly patches on the skin. The consensus is that it's an immune response gone wrong, and hormones might play a role. Flare-ups are common during puberty, after pregnancy and during menopause, and many women's symptoms subside during pregnancy.

Hives Chronic urticaria (hives) occurs much more frequently in women than in men. Flare-ups are common during hormonal fluctuations resulting from the menstrual cycle. Research has shown that estrogen seems to trigger histamine production by mast cells,² which can increase the occurrence of hives.

Dark circles If you're constantly being asked if you're tired due to the shadows under your eyes, you may have hormonal issues. Both lack of sleep and food sensitivities produce this effect on sensitive under-eye skin.

That lack of sleep can directly result from hormonal imbalance, specifically high cortisol. Chronically high cortisol wreaks havoc on your sleep cycle, leaving you with visible evidence of chronic sleep deprivation. Food sensitivities can also wreck your hormones, so those dark circles may be telling you even more than you know.

Skin tags Skin tags are very small lesions that occur most commonly on the neck or in the armpits. They can also form in other areas, including on the eyelids and under female breasts. Research has shown an association between skin tags and insulin resistance.³ When insulin levels are out of balance, a decrease in estrogen can result. Poor elasticity allows skin layers to overlap, resulting in skin tags.

Dry skin While dry skin is a common issue with many causes, it can be related to hormonal imbalances. When sex hormone levels drop, oil production decreases and skin dries out. Thyroid hormones can also impact sebum production and blood circulation, leading to dry skin.

Balance hormones naturally

Ensuring your hormones are well balanced can help clear up skin problems when nothing else has helped. And you

Top 5 hormone-balancing foods

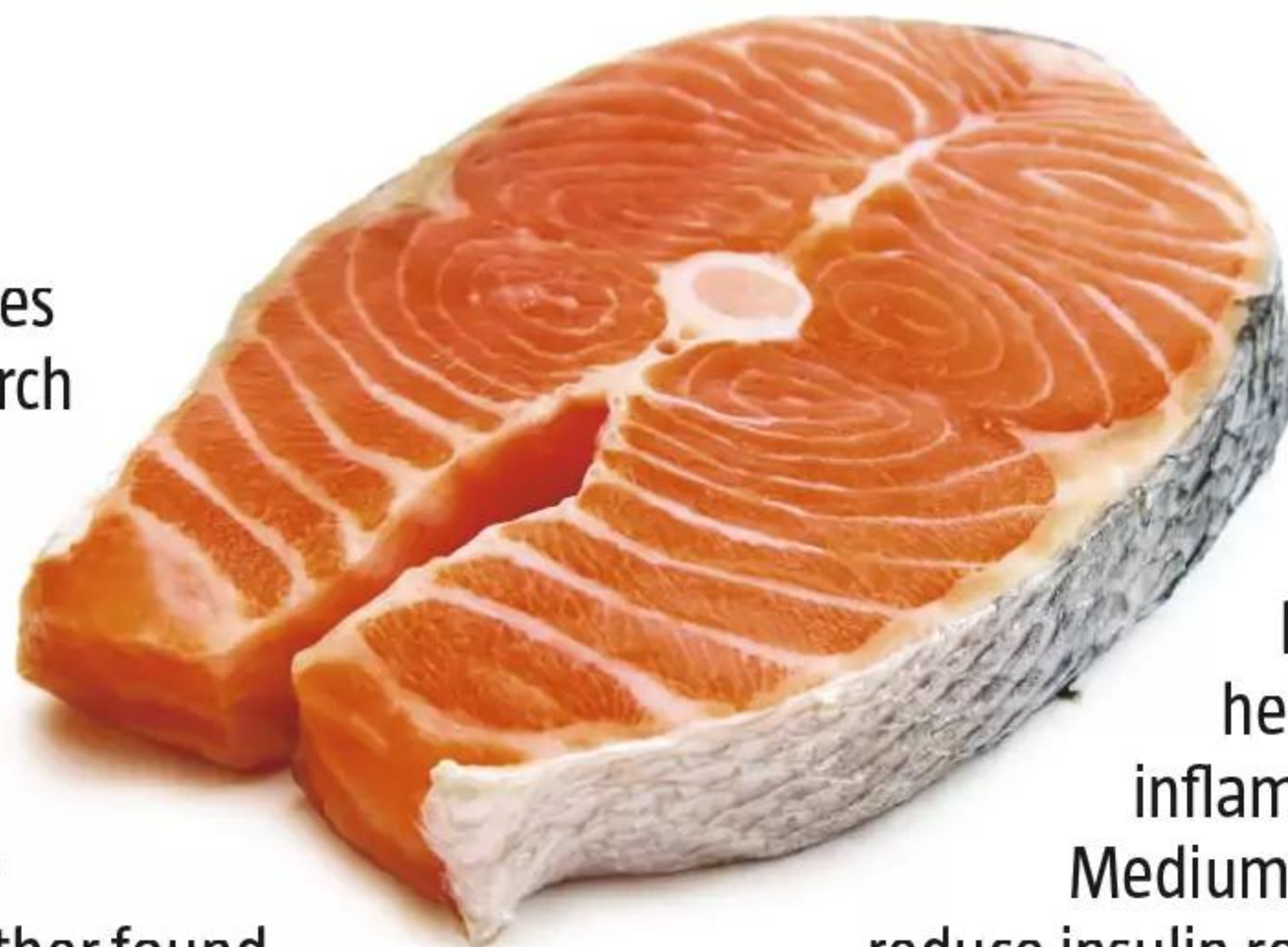
Here are five things to include in your diet regularly to heal hormonal imbalances.

1. Protein

We need adequate protein to release hormones that regulate food intake and appetite. Research shows protein lowers levels of ghrelin (the “hunger hormone”) and stimulates the production of other hormones that help you feel full.

One study showed that people eating high-protein meals were 25 percent less hungry than those eating normal-protein meals.¹ Another found women eating a diet of 30 percent protein felt fuller and had higher levels of GLP-1 (a hormone that helps you feel full) and a faster metabolism than those eating a 10 percent protein diet.²

Besides meat, particularly organic, there are plenty of other great options: nuts and seeds, oats, quinoa, lentils, cottage cheese and Greek yogurt. Whole eggs (white and yolk) are great not only for protein but to promote healthy levels of appetite-regulating hormones.³



2. Healthy fats

I hope you know by now that fat is not the enemy. Your body needs different types of fat to make hormones. Healthy fats also help you feel satiated, fight

inflammation and boost metabolism.

Medium-chain triglycerides (MCTs) reduce insulin resistance,⁴ and some of the best sources are coconut oil, palm oil and pure MCT oil (add it to your morning coffee for an extra energy boost). Other top sources of healthy fat are avocados, coconut oil and grass-fed butter.

Fatty fish like salmon are an amazing source of omega-3 fatty acids, which lower inflammation, boost cognitive function, lower cortisol and adrenaline, and increase insulin sensitivity.⁵

3. Green tea

Beverages can do just as much as food for hormone health. Water is the best choice for hydration, but green tea is excellent, too. An antioxidant, epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG), in green tea provides significant health benefits.

Studies show green tea can increase insulin sensitivity and lower insulin levels. A detailed analysis of 17 studies linked it to significantly lower fasting insulin.⁶ Try having one to three cups daily.



4. High-fiber foods

Fiber increases insulin sensitivity and boosts hormones, such as leptin, that keep you feeling full.

Soluble fiber, in particular, has the strongest impact on appetite and eating habits.

Fiber affects estrogen levels and reduces the risk of certain cancers. One review of 17 studies concluded a high-fiber diet could greatly reduce ovarian cancer risk, compared to a low-fiber diet.⁷

Adding fiber to your diet is easy when you consume a range of fruits and vegetables. Some of the best sources are apples, pears, strawberries, avocado, bananas, sweet potato, lentils, chickpeas, broccoli and beets.



5. Probiotic foods

Probiotics help balance gut bacteria. The good bacteria in your gut metabolize and recycle hormones, helping to control

symptoms of menopause, PMS and perimenopause, so having enough of them is essential.

You can boost the numbers of these helpers with a daily

probiotic supplement, but eating fermented foods also helps. Add foods and drinks like sauerkraut, yogurt, kimchi, tempeh, kefir and kombucha to your diet.



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don't need a prescription to do so. These small changes can make a big difference in your journey toward balanced hormones, clear skin and a healthier life.

Choose clean beauty products Additives in cosmetics have been proven to interfere with metabolism of sex hormones.⁴ Despite claims that they promote a youthful appearance, many chemicals the beauty industry uses can actually cause inflammation, leading to older-looking skin and blemishes.

Read the labels on your beauty products and avoid any that contain synthetic chemicals. A number of companies are committed to providing natural alternatives. Check the Environmental Working Group's database of skin care and beauty products (ewg.org/skindeep) to find options that are safe and natural. And see page 65 for more shopping tips.

Eat a hormone-friendly diet A healthy, natural diet filled with organic whole foods is the best option for hormonal balance. See the box on page 36 for my top five hormone-balancing foods.

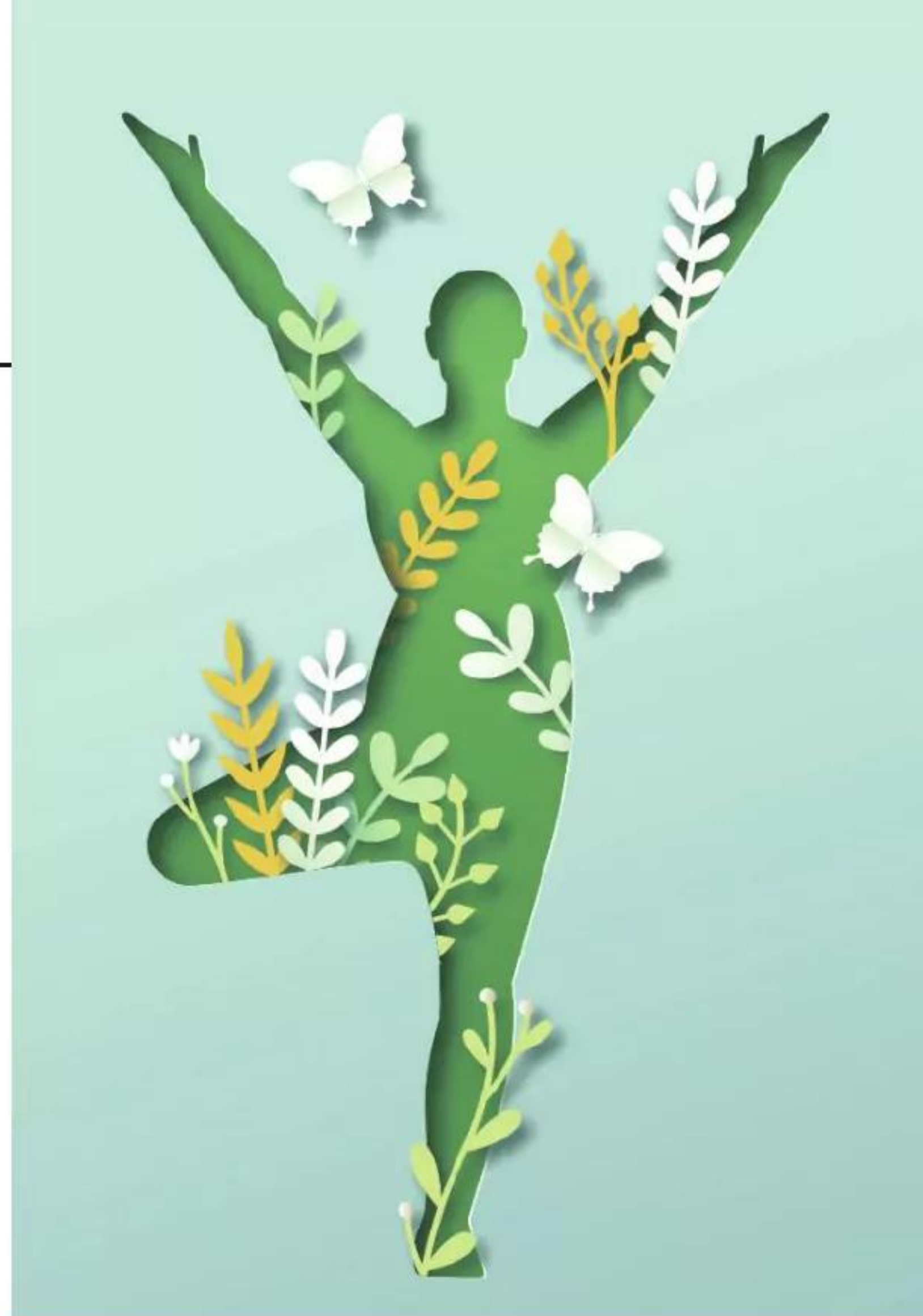
On the other hand, processed foods and sugar-laden products cause blood sugar spikes, which lead to insulin resistance over time. Avoid drinking alcohol as much as possible, and pay attention to potential food sensitivities (gluten, dairy, etc.).

But don't try to change everything at once. Instead, for example, add one extra serving of vegetables to your plate, or reduce your carb-heavy sides by half. If you phase out the less healthy choices slowly, you might not even miss them.

Hydrate properly Did you know sex hormones affect hydration?⁵ When estrogen and progesterone are in flux, you might need even more water than usual to stay properly hydrated. Dehydration can lead to dry, itchy, dull skin and an uneven complexion.

Prioritize sleep Your body needs adequate sleep to perform its essential duties of removing toxins, repairing tissue and producing hormones, among other things. Just one sleepless night can disrupt hormonal balance, so make it your goal to sleep well every night.

Be sure your environment is conducive to restful sleep. A cool, dark, electronics-free room is best. A nightly routine can also help. If you wake up during the night and don't fall back asleep easily, don't



Why is balancing hormones important?

Your endocrine system is made up of glands responsible for secreting and regulating hormones, which carry important messages throughout your body. These chemical messengers include sex hormones, thyroid hormones, adrenaline and cortisol, and insulin. There's an optimal level of each hormone, and even slight imbalances between them can cause big health issues.

That's because hormones work together to keep you in a state of homeostasis, or balance. They target specific body tissues or cells when they bind to receptors inside or on the surface of these cells.

But if hormone levels are a little out of balance, the messages they send become jumbled. This can cause other chemical levels to also become skewed, making it more and more difficult to bring your system back into balance. And when that happens, those imbalances cause a wide range of symptoms.

reach for electronics. Sip a cup of herbal tea, meditate, read a book or write in a journal until you feel sleepy again.

Boost your nutrients It would be fantastic if we could get all the essential nutrients we need from food, but industrial farming and depleted soil have made that nearly impossible.

I recommend that all women take a daily, high-quality multivitamin and an essential fatty acid supplement (see Healthy Shopping in the April 2024 and October 2024 issues of *WDDTY* for some suggestions). Fatty acids help keep your skin deeply moisturized.

Keep calm and move on Finding ways to destress and stay physically active will both boost hormonal balance and help keep your skin looking its best. Exercise is one great way to reduce stress, and keeping stress levels low keeps cortisol low as well.

Exercise can also reduce your inflammation levels and help your body naturally detoxify. Other stress relief practices, such as meditation, gratitude, deep breathing and mindfulness, can keep hormones stable, too. A great place to begin is to find an activity you love and commit to doing it every day.

Find your healthy glow

If your skin is healthy, the rest of your body probably is too. Janet tried my suggestions and was thrilled with their impact on her skin (and the rest of her symptoms as well).

Skin problems can start small. If you handle them quickly, you can avoid the major issues that occur when you let them go on too long. Issues with your skin can also be an important clue that something larger is going on inside, so it's critical to pay close attention to any changes on the surface.

Keeping your hormones balanced can help keep you looking (and feeling) great, inside and out.

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Marcelle Pick (marcellepick.com), ob-gyn nurse practitioner, is passionate about transforming the way women experience healthcare through an integrative approach. She cofounded the world-renowned Women to Women Clinic in 1983 with the vision not only to treat illness but also to support her patients in proactively making healthier choices to prevent disease. She has successfully treated thousands of individuals through her unique approach to wellness.

Nothing to sneeze at

Put an end to hay fever symptoms by taking the right homeopathic remedy, says homeopath David Needleman

Springtime signals the start of hay fever season for many. And while you may find you're being bombarded with adverts for antihistamines everywhere you look, if you'd rather sidestep side effects like drowsiness, dizziness, blurred vision, headaches, dry mouth and impaired thinking, consider homeopathy.

Here are my top 10 single remedies for hay fever. Check the symptoms described for each remedy to work out which one will be most effective for you.

1. Allium Cepa

Also known as the common onion, this remedy is useful if your symptoms include burning or smarting eyes, sensitivity to light, and watery discharge from the nose, which may also feel stuffy or itchy.

You might also notice a tickling sensation in the back of your throat and feel better in the open air. These are all symptoms you might experience when peeling an onion.

2. Natrum Muriaticum

Choose Nat Mur if you experience violent sneezing alongside watery nasal discharge. You may also feel irritable and depressed.

3. Arsenicum Album

Ars Alb is suitable if you're experiencing burning sensations in the eyes, nose and throat (which may be made worse by asthma) along with watery nasal discharge. You may also suffer from restlessness, anxiety and exhaustion.

4. Arsenicum Iodatum

Similar to Ars Alb, Ars Iod works well for any symptoms featuring burning sensations. Consider this remedy if you have burning, watery eyes; sneezing; sore nostrils; and a sore, burning throat with a dry, irritating cough.

You may also have a sore philtrum (the groove between your nose and your upper lip).

5. Gelsemium

Go for Gelsemium if you have heavy, swollen eyes, sneezing with a watery discharge, and a sore throat, similar to a lump in the throat. You may also feel apathetic or listless and experience giddiness or trembling.

Gelsemium is also useful for colds and flus that include aches and pains in the limbs or shoulders.

6. Euphrasia

Euphrasia, or eyebright, is the right remedy for you if you have swollen,

burning eyes with a thick discharge and feel better indoors. There's often watery discharge from the nose and a phlegm-producing cough.

As well as taking the remedy orally, you can bathe the eyes with Euphrasia eye drops. Make your own by adding one drop of Euphrasia tincture to an eyebath full of boiled and cooled water. This remedy is useful for cleansing the eyes after you've been outside in a high-pollen environment. It's also good for treating conjunctivitis.

7. Kali Iodatum

This remedy, also called Kallium Iodatum, is appropriate if you have swollen, smarting, watery eyes along with sinus pain and sneezing with acrid discharge. You may also experience violent coughing, be worse in the morning and have a throat that feels raw. You'll likely feel better in the open air.

8. Sabadilla

Opt for Sabadilla if you have burning, watery eyes with red eyelids. You may also experience chilliness and sneezing spasms, a runny nose and a sore throat, which improves with warm drinks.

9. Arundo

This little-known remedy is useful for the first signs of hay fever—before full-blown symptoms have started. You may notice your eyes burn or are sensitive to light, the roof of your mouth itches, or you have an itchy nose and sneezing. You may also have pain in your ears extending into the mouth.

10. Wyethia

Like Arundo, this remedy is helpful for the early signs of hay fever, like burning eyes, sensitivity to light and itching in the back of the nose or throat. You may also have a dry, hacking cough and a sensation of a burnt tongue.

Combination remedies

You may be able to use one of the single remedies above to tackle your hay fever symptoms. But don't be afraid to combine remedies if you feel your symptoms aren't covered by just one.

Many people are wary of multiple or combination remedies, but a single remedy can't address or resolve some circumstances. In hay fever, there are

Combination hay fever remedies

The following are all good combination remedies for hay fever. Check whether your homeopathic pharmacy of choice has them in stock or whether they can make one of them for you.

AGE Arsenicum Iodatum, Gelsemium and Euphrasia

Narayani Hayfever Mix 19 (6X) Allium Cepa, Nat Mur and Sabadilla

Itchy Hay Fever Allium Cepa, Arundo, Wyethia and mixed pollens, a remedy I designed about 25 years ago

Reduce the dose to three times a day as symptoms improve or as the pollen count declines. You can then take one dose a day for maintenance, increasing as needed.

For best results

As hay fever symptoms are an indication of a chronic, or constitutional, problem, it's best to treat hay fever out of season, constitutionally. Constitutional homeopathic treatment takes into account every detail of your individual health experience.

I've found that an individual constitutional remedy, taken at the right time, invariably works better than a routine remedy. So ideally consult with a homeopath—weeks before the hay fever season begins—to determine the most suitable remedy for you.

Failing that, you should still get significant relief from the remedies mentioned here.



David Needleman is one of the founding directors of the Alliance of Registered Homeopaths. Qualified as both a pharmacist and a homeopath, he worked in community pharmacies for most of

his professional life and has lectured on homeopathy in the US, the UK and Japan and treated clients in 24 countries.

In 1996, David set up the Homeopathic Helpline, a 15-hour-a-day, 365-day-a-year acute advice service manned by him and other qualified, experienced homeopaths. They have successfully helped 350,000 callers to date. You can reach the Homeopathic Helpline at +44 (0)9065 343404.

To have David answer a question in WDDTY, write to info@wddty.co.uk.

often overlapping symptom pictures, so it's sensible to mix and match remedies where appropriate.

Homeopathic pharmacies often stock combination remedies for hay fever; see the box above for some good ones. These may contain early pollens (usually from trees), late pollens or "mixed pollens." Bear in mind that the pollens will differ depending on where you are in the world. For example, mixed pollens in the UK will not be the same as those in the US, and the pollens will also vary across the US.

Get advice from a homeopath or from your homeopathic pharmacy to find the best remedy for your symptoms.

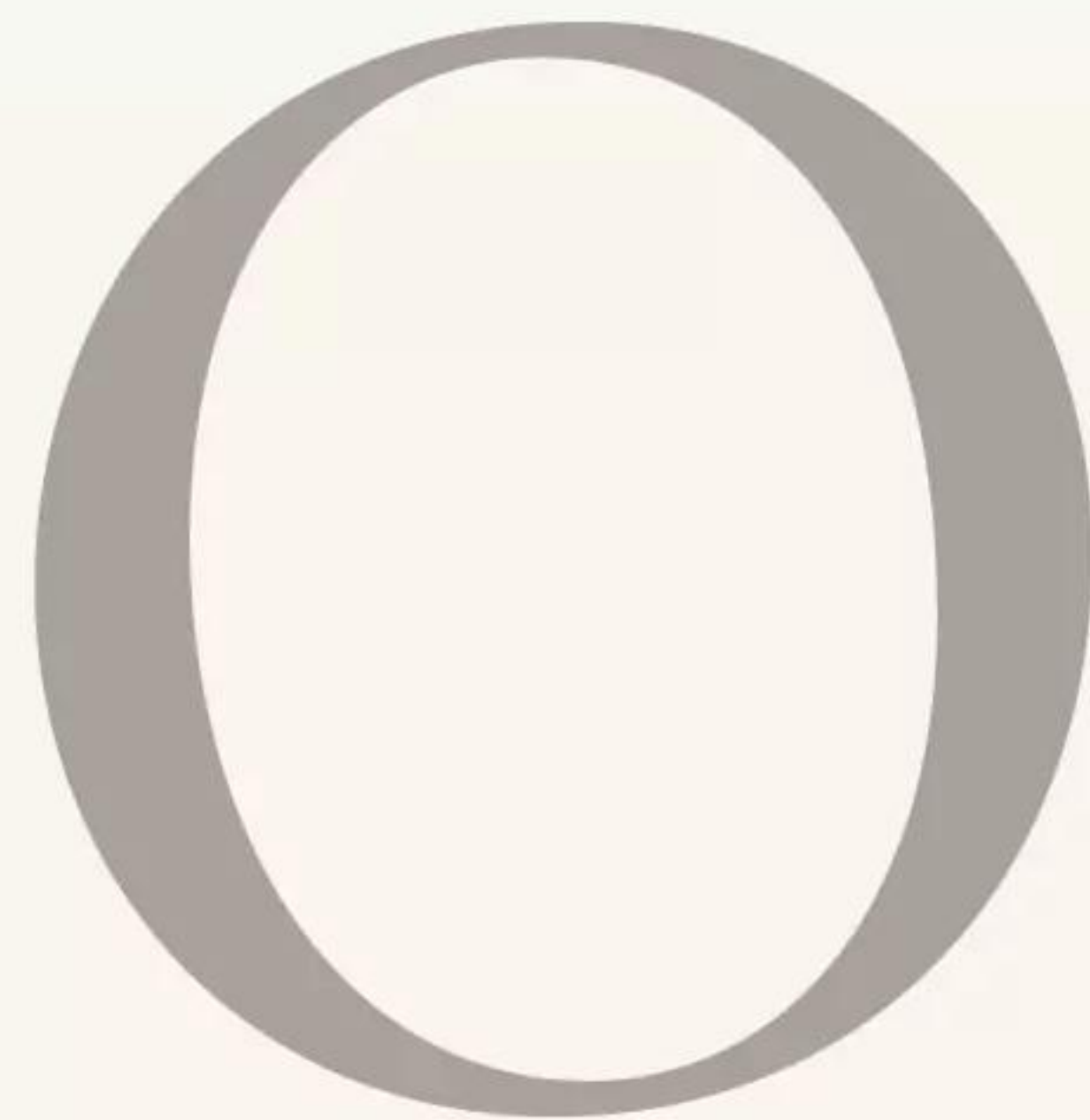
Suggested dosages

Apart from Narayani Mix 19 (see box above), which is a combination of 6X potencies, I usually recommend 30C potencies for all the hay fever remedies mentioned here, including the combination remedies. Take at the first signs of hay fever symptoms and start with a loading dose of four to six doses spread over the first day.

Whole-herb healing

Ayurvedic and natural medicine clinician Sam Watts, who has a PhD in cancer research, shares five of Ayurveda's most celebrated anticancer herbal remedies and how best to harness their healing power





Over the last two decades, there's been an explosion of research into the anticancer impacts of a huge array of herbs, including those central to Ayurveda, one of the world's oldest holistic healing systems.

The evidence clearly shows these herbs possess immense potential to support the collective health and well-being of those living with cancer. But so often this potential remains unknown and untapped by those who need it most.

Here's an evidence-based exploration of a selection of the most important anticancer herbs available to us: how they work, the evidence to support them and how best to use them safely.

The importance of synergy

Before we get onto my selection of herbs, we need to change the lens through which we understand them and the uniquely synergistic ways in which they work in the face of cancer.

Herbs are not chemically engineered pharmaceutical medicines, nor do they work in the same way. When the pharmaceutical industry creates a new drug, it typically identifies a whole herb that shows promise in treating a particular health issue, then isolates the specific compound responsible for this action. It then finds ways to concentrate this compound to increase its bioavailability in the body so that it works more powerfully and effectively.

Take the common foxglove plant, for instance, which has been used by traditional healers to treat heart failure, congestive artery disease and arrhythmias for centuries. Upon detailed investigation, these benefits were attributed to the cardiac glycosides found within foxgloves. Drug makers isolated and developed the glycosides into the licensed pharmaceutical drug digoxin, one of the most widely prescribed heart drugs in the world.

The process of isolating, removing and concentrating individual plant-based compounds in this way is not necessarily a bad thing, but this is not how herbal medicines work. Herbs are incredibly complex in design, and any given herbal medicine typically contains hundreds of individual bioactive compounds that account for its healing capacity.

As soon as we extract one particularly important compound and ignore all the others, we immediately lose the synergistic and unique healing potential of that herb.

A great example is arguably the most famous Ayurvedic anticancer herb of them all: turmeric. In the Western clinical understanding, an isolated compound from within turmeric, called curcumin, is responsible for the potent anticancer actions observed in clinical research.

But curcumin accounts for less than 5 percent of the bioactivity found within turmeric root, which contains more than 300 additional bioactive components. These other compounds are vital to activating the anticancer activity of curcumin—so much so that when curcumin is tested in clinical studies in isolation, it consistently underperforms in comparison to when it's used as a whole herb.

For example, researchers have observed that, compared to isolated curcumin, turmeric without curcumin still had a significant impact on regulation of inflammatory markers, blood sugar levels and cell division.¹⁴ All three of these variables play an important role in cancer biology.



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In another study, an extract of whole turmeric, in its pure and unadulterated form, significantly outperformed isolated curcumin in regulating perforin.^[2] Perforin is a protein that plays an integral role in controlling immune activity, including in the tumor microenvironment. It also helps regulate cell replication, which makes it a key regulator of cancer cell proliferation.

While this is a single example of one particular herb, the same principle applies to all herbs in all contexts. When using herbs, we need to recognize their unique holism and stay true to the authentic practices of traditional systems of medicine like Ayurveda. This is why I endorse the use of pure, whole, unadulterated herbs rather than supplements derived from isolated compounds.

The potency problem

As well as greater efficacy, another benefit of using only whole herbs is better safety profiles. When you isolate an individual compound from an herb and package it as a supplement, you create an incredibly potent product that contains much greater amounts of phytonutrients than nature intended.

These isolated and concentrated herbal supplements, in an unnatural form, are far more likely to cause side effects and adverse reactions than whole-herb equivalents in the forms in which nature gave them to us.

But when used properly, herbal medicines can be of immense value within the arena of cancer survival. Wise use of herbal medicines is one of the nine most common practices among those who experience exceptional cancer survival, particularly in those who are dealing with advanced and incurable cancers.^[3]

Your anticancer herbal pharmacy

Hundreds of herbal medicines possess proven anticancer activity. This means they can suppress cancer cell growth and proliferation via a multitude of mechanisms. They might activate immune activity within the tumor microenvironment, stimulate the death of cancer cells or block the ability of cancer cells to divide.

Here are five of the most celebrated Ayurvedic anticancer herbal remedies. All are easy to find, have robust evidence to support their use, have clear safety data and can be combined into a single herbal prescription for daily use (see box, page 45).



Amla

Emblica officinalis

Aka Indian gooseberry or amalaki

Amla is the gooseberry-sized fruit of the *Emblica officinalis* tree indigenous to India and the Middle East. It's one of the most valued and worshipped plants in Ayurveda, from both medicinal and spiritual perspectives, and its use goes back thousands of years.

According to the Charaka Samhita, thought to have been composed as early as 400 BCE, of all the rejuvenating and strengthening tonic herbs in Ayurveda, amla is the most important, effective and powerful.

There's plenty of Western evidence to support this claim, not least that amla is officially regarded as the richest natural source of vitamin C in the plant kingdom. One fruit (the size of a small grape) contains more vitamin C than three to four oranges.

The amla berry also contains a variety of vital phytonutrients, such as phenolic acids, flavonoids and tannins, along with calcium, potassium, iron and B vitamins.^[4]

Anticancer evidence In ovarian cancer cells, amla has been shown to prevent cancer spread by suppressing the ability of cells to invade neighboring tissues.^[5] The same study found amla inhibits angiogenesis, the process of creating new blood vessels to fuel tumor growth.

Amla also suppresses a key cancer growth promoter called IGF-1 (insulin-like growth-factor 1), an action that has been linked to better outcomes in many cancers.^[6] It contains a massive volume of plant-based polyphenols that protect against DNA damage, regulate cancer-specific inflammatory mechanisms and stop the cell cycle in many different types of cancer.^[7]

Plus there is mounting evidence in animal studies that amla can help

protect against the side effects and toxicity of both radiotherapy and chemotherapy.^[8]

Test tube studies have also revealed that amla is clinically effective in killing a wide variety of different cancer

cells, including lung, ovarian, cervical and breast cancers.^[9] It's a potent immune stimulant that can optimize the overall function of the immune system, largely due to its high antioxidant levels.^[10]

Although much of this research has been done mainly in laboratory and rodent studies, it explains why this potent anticancer herbal medicine is so valued and so revered within the Ayurvedic framework.

Ashwagandha

Withania somnifera

Aka winter cherry or Indian ginseng

As one of the most important herbal medicines in Ayurveda, ashwagandha has been used in India for thousands of years. While all parts of the plant reportedly have medicinal value, the roots are most commonly used as medicine. They contain a myriad of medically active compounds, including the celebrated withanolides responsible for many of the plant's healing impacts.

The roots also contain a treasure trove of other powerful compounds, including the antioxidants superoxide and glutathione (which possess proven



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anticancer actions), iron, amino acids, choline, alkaloids, and anticancer lignans and tannins.

Anticancer evidence Ashwagandha has been employed as an anticancer herb within Ayurvedic medicine for millennia. And modern-day clinical research shows that ashwagandha and the compounds it contains act against many of the hallmarks of cancer.

The herb can help block cancer cell proliferation, reactivate tumor suppressor genes, and suppress angiogenesis. It inhibits metastasis, stabilizes DNA, suppresses pro-cancer anti-inflammatory pathways and improves cancer-specific immune system activity.^[1]

Ashwagandha has also been shown to reduce chemotherapy-induced neutropenia, a low number of a type of white blood cell.^[2] While the research was conducted in mice, it provides early evidence for the use of ashwagandha alongside chemotherapy to help reduce treatment side effects.

Indeed, in those with breast cancer, ashwagandha was shown to alleviate chemotherapy-induced fatigue and improve quality of life.^[3]

Astragalus

Astragalus membranaceus

Aka milk-vetch root

Astragalus, an herbaceous perennial that grows in grassy regions and on mountainsides, originates in China, where it has long been revered as one of the most important herbal medicines.

Within Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), astragalus is known as *huang qi*, “yellow leader.” This name refers to the yellow interior of the root but more so to the plant’s position of prestige among Chinese medicine practitioners, who often refer to it as

the “leader of all other herbal medicines.”

Astragalus contains a selection of powerful constituents, such as triterpenoid saponins, polysaccharides, isoflavonoids, phytosterols and essential oils. Both individually and collectively, these are responsible for the health gains associated with the use of astragalus.

Anticancer evidence Clinical research shows that astragalus fights lymphomas and colorectal, ovarian, stomach, liver, lung, cervical, breast and nasopharyngeal cancers.^[4] It has been shown to induce aggressive apoptosis (cell death) in many types of cancer lines while blocking angiogenesis and tissue invasion.^[5]

Similarly, astragalus has potent immune-modulating impacts. It has been shown to increase anticancer immune activity in the tumor microenvironment.^[6] It’s probably due to a combination of these mechanisms that the herb is linked to longer survival times in certain types of cancer, such as acute myeloid leukemia.^[7]

What’s more, it may reduce the side effects of both chemotherapy and radiotherapy treatments.^[8] For example, it counters immune suppression,^[9] nausea and vomiting,^[10] and fatigue^[11] caused by cancer and/or chemo and improves survival rates and quality of life.^[12]

Triphala

Triphala is, without a doubt, the most famous Ayurvedic herbal formula. It’s not a single herb but an equal mix of three dried superfruits: amla (*Emblica officinalis*), bhibitaki (*Terminalia bellirica*) and haritaki (*Terminalia chebula*). Each of these herbs

is incredibly powerful in its own right, but the combination is much greater than the sum of its parts.

Triphala possesses an abundance and broad variety of phytonutrients.

Specifically, it contains high levels of antioxidants because of the flavonoids, polyphenols, saponins and high volumes of vitamin C within the fruits. It also has high concentrations of three further antioxidants—gallic acid, ellagic acid and chebulinic acid—all of which have been shown to act against cancer.

Anticancer evidence Triphala is anti-proliferative and apoptosis-inducing in a variety of cancers, including breast and prostate cancers.^[13] In laboratory studies, it has also been shown to slow the growth and migration of human gastric cancer cells.^[14]

A unique action of triphala is its ability to kill cancer cells even when *TP53* is deactivated. *TP53* is the gene that tells the body how to make the protein p53, a tumor suppressor.^[15]

Evidence shows it’s very difficult for a healthy cell to become cancerous unless it deactivates the gene, but most cancers have evolved to achieve this. Early research suggests triphala may be able to reactivate it, but further research is required.

The high antioxidant levels in triphala have multiple anticancer actions, such as inducing cell death in breast cancer cells.^[16] Another key research highlight is that triphala suppresses the activity of the inflammatory compound NF-κB, which fuels the growth of cancer cells and supports virtually every action they use to promote their own survival.^[17]

Lastly, triphala possesses important and proven immune-modulatory benefits, both generally and specifically within the tumor microenvironment.^[18]



How to use the herbs

When using herbal medicines to treat cancer, personalized advice and care can make all the difference. I strongly recommend you seek the advice of a qualified Ayurvedic clinician or medical herbalist so they can support and advise you in an individualized and safe way.

Also see “Using Herbal Medicines Safely” (page 47) before using any of these herbs, particularly if you’re undergoing any form of conventional cancer treatment. With that covered, here’s a simple and easy way to integrate these herbs into your daily self-care regime.

Your anticancer herbal formula

The simplest way to harness all the benefits of the anticancer herbs mentioned here is to combine them into a single formulation. This makes them quick and easy to use and maximizes their therapeutic impact. Here’s what to do:

1. Source the herbs

Purchase herbs only from certified and reputable companies that can guarantee their quality and safety standards (see *WDDTY* May 2024 for a list of reputable herb suppliers).

Here’s what you’ll need:

- 100 g (3.5 oz) triphala powder**
- 100 g ashwagandha powder**
- 100 g astragalus powder**
- 100 g turmeric powder**
- 40–50 mL (1.5 oz) amla juice or**
- 100 g amla powder**

2. Blend the herbs

Add the dried herbs to a clean, dry mixing bowl; do not add the amla juice or powder at this point. Slowly and methodically mix until fully combined.

3. Decant the herbs

Place your blended herb mix into a clean, dry glass jar (such as a large jam jar or a Kilner-style jar) and seal it with an airtight lid.

4. Use the herbs

Measure 1 teaspoon of the herb blend into a glass and add a good pinch of freshly ground black pepper. Then, if using fresh amla juice, pour it into the glass. If using amla powder, mix with 40–50 mL water and add to the glass. Stir well and drink each morning and evening with food.



Turmeric

Curcuma longa

Aka Haridra

Turmeric, one of the most prized and revered herbs within Ayurveda, is commonly called *jayanti*, which translates from Sanskrit as “the one that is victorious over disease.” This is an apt title as turmeric is one of the most clinically investigated herbal medicines in the world, showing efficacy in the management and prevention of a whole raft of diseases.

It’s also the celebrity of anticancer herbal medicine research, with decades of evidence to highlight its efficacy in the suppression of cancer cell biology.

Turmeric is a perennial rhizome (an underground stem much like a root) that grows abundantly across India and Sri Lanka. Peeling the fresh rhizome reveals an explosion of orange/yellow due to the yellow pigment in curcumin, one of the most active compounds in the plant.

Within the rhizome is an abundance and complex array of phytonutrients responsible for its health-giving abilities. These include essential oils, such as sesquiterpene bisabolones, zingiberene, phellandrene, sabinene, cineole and borneol, as well as terpenes and curcuminoids such as curcumin.

Anticancer evidence Extensive research over the last two decades has produced compelling evidence that turmeric, and the active compounds within it,



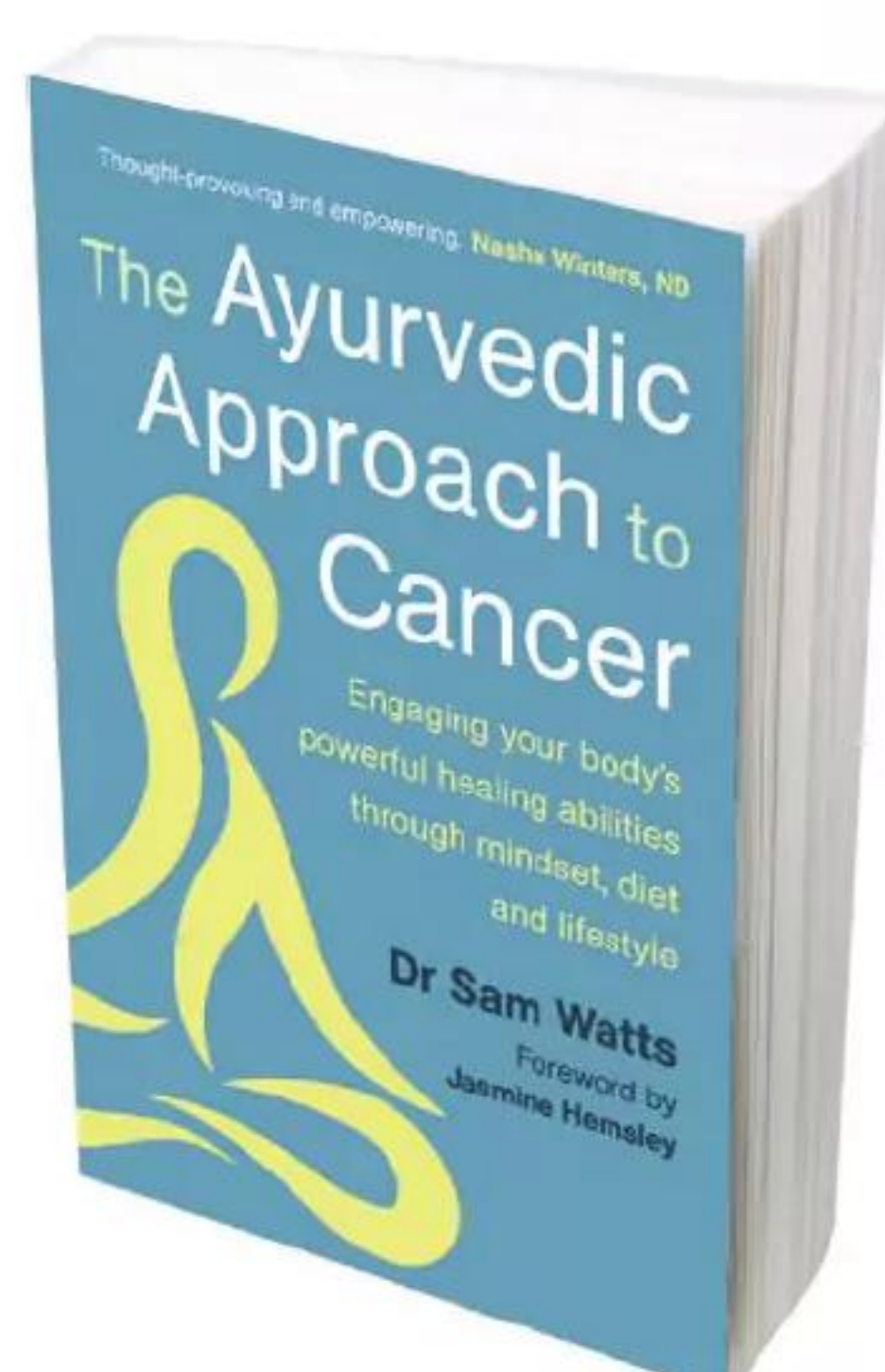
can interrupt multiple cell signaling pathways to suppress the development, growth and progression of cancer.^[24]

This includes promoting apoptosis in cancer cells, suppressing angiogenesis, inhibiting proliferation, blocking the mechanisms of tissue invasion and spread, reducing pro-cancer inflammatory mechanisms, increasing antioxidant defense and blocking cancer-promoting NF- κ B.

A therapy including turmeric also worked to reduce pain and inflammation in breast cancer patients taking aromatase inhibitors, a hormonal treatment.^[25] Currently, clinical trials are underway to test turmeric's effectiveness as a supportive therapy for blood cancers such as multiple myeloma.^[26]

However, there is clear evidence that turmeric can negatively interact with certain types of chemotherapeutic drugs, so it's essential to check with your clinical care team before using this herb in any capacity.

Adapted from Sam Watts's new book *The Ayurvedic Approach to Cancer* (Chelsea Green Publishing, 2025) and printed with permission from the publisher



Using herbal medicines safely

In the face of cancer, everyone's body, immune status, liver functionality and myriad other physiological variables are different. When deciding to use these herbs, it's vital to ensure they're safe for you.

The best way to do this is to maintain complete transparency with your consultant and clinical care team. Meet with them and tell them you're thinking about starting an evidence-based herbal medicine regime as a supportive therapy to your conventional cancer care. Tell them the specific herbal medicines you're looking to start and your rationale for doing so.

To allow your consultant to make an informed decision about your request, point them to an incredibly helpful online resource managed by one of the world's leading cancer research centers, the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC) in the US. MSKCC leads the way in integrative cancer management that combines the best of both conventional and complementary medicine.

To support this objective, it runs an exceptionally well-researched and up-to-date herbal medicine database that you can easily find online by typing "MSKCC herbal database search" into your search engine. This database provides detailed and evidence-based explorations of all the primary herbal medicines used in cancer care and has sections for both patients and healthcare professionals.

All the herbal medicines discussed in this article are included, along with all their potential side effects, safety issues and drug interactions. Giving your consultant access to this database will allow them to assess the safety and merits of using these herbs in your unique clinical circumstances.

If your consultant is happy for you to use the anticancer herbal formulation I've described here (see box, page 46), then you can do so with confidence that your care team is fully aware of this and has deemed it safe.

This greatly reduces the risk of any adverse reactions or negative drug interactions. However, if your consultant doesn't think these herbs are safe for you, please follow their advice. They are best placed to make this decision based on their in-depth knowledge of your clinical status.

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WHAT DOESN'T KILL YOU...

The right kind of stress can bring big benefits to both plants and people, says author, podcaster and wellness platform founder Jeff Krasno. Here's how to harness the power of stressed plants for better health and longevity

For my utter surprise, in 2018 I was diagnosed with a chronic disease. Along with brain fog, chronic fatigue, insomnia and a jelly belly, I now had diabetes and a leaky gut. This diagnosis prompted a five-year inquiry not just into how to turn my health around but also into what's wrong with our health in the modern world.

On this journey I've interviewed hundreds of the world's most prolific doctors, neuroscientists, nutritionists, yogis, spiritualists, mystics and sages and read over 400 books and endless scientific papers, primary source data and clinical research. What I discovered is our culture of "chronic ease" is leading directly to the scourge of chronic dis-ease.

Over the past century, Western culture has evolved primarily for ease and convenience, resulting in an overabundance of highly processed calories, sedentariness, temperature neutrality and indoor living. It's also led to a near-total reliance on digital devices, increased social isolation and a perpetual drip of cortisol-dysregulating blue light from our omnipresent screens. These artifacts of modernity lead us directly to obesity, depression, sleep disruption and the panoply of our current epidemics.

Humans evolved over millennia to thrive in conditions where stress and discomfort are normal. But our modern lifestyle hijacks our biology and renders our hard-wrought adaptive mechanisms maladaptive.

On a biological level, we're simply not engineered for lives of uber-convenience, and now we're paying the price. But there's a way to counteract this chronic ease.

Good stress

Acute, short-term "good stress" in the human body confers a health benefit and activates pathways that promote longevity and resilience. This phenomenon is called hormesis. By harnessing hormesis, we can bring our bodies, which have been ravaged by our reliance on modern conveniences, back into balance.

To this end, I developed Good Stress, a curated program of deliberate short-term acute stress protocols that realign us with our biology. These protocols include intermittent fasting, resistance training, heat and cold therapy, meditation and breathwork, cultivation of social connections, and rewilding—immersing yourself in nature, going barefoot and squatting instead of sitting.

You can think of them as the protocols of inconvenience to meet a world obsessed with convenience.

These protocols have yielded uncommonly good results for me. I was able to reverse my diabetes and insulin resistance while also losing 60 pounds. I've largely curbed my insomnia, which has been my Achilles' heel for much of my adult life.

My chronological age is 53, but according to numerous tests, my bio-age—which measures the health of my cells—

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Good stress vs bad stress

Acute stress can be either thrilling (like riding a roller coaster) or distressing (like narrowly avoiding a car accident). It's the body's immediate involuntary response to a perceived threat, challenge, or scare—the classic fight-or-flight response.

This type of stress is typically resolved quickly and doesn't have time to do the extensive damage associated with long-term stress. In many cases, acute stress is actually beneficial.

Chronic stress, on the other hand, is a state of ongoing physiological arousal. This condition occurs when the body experiences stressors with such consistency or intensity that the autonomic nervous system doesn't have a chance to activate the relaxation response. You never return to homeostasis.

Chronic "distress" can be due to ongoing pressures, such as work deadlines, sustained heavy workloads, family tumult or poverty, but it can also be attributable to traumatic experiences. Chronic stress can lead to serious health problems, including heart disease, cancer, diabetes and dementia.

Good stress, or eustress, is a form of deliberate acute stress. This is the type of stress I set out to explore to address my litany of infirmities. I adopted dual roles as an amateur biologist and the willing, if sometimes reticent, subject of my experimentation. I tampered and tinkered with many protocols until I saw results.

In my search to become healthy, I began to examine my behaviors through the lens of these questions: How did I evolve? And how do I align my life with evolution's wisdom? Across five years, I harvested the adversity practices that led me back to well-being and codified them as Good Stress.

In interview after interview with everyone from sleep experts to neuroscientists, from immunologists to psychotherapists, I kept hearing the same prescriptions to address a wide range of disorders. Meditation, breathwork, yoga, movement, time in nature, deliberate cold and heat immersion, and fasting were among the most common recommended therapies.

The reason these ancient modalities function so well today is because they calibrate our style of life with the adaptive mechanisms that have been a product of hundreds of thousands of years of evolution. In short, doing hard things makes doing other hard things easier. Through adversity, you build resilience—in both body and mind.

is 45. My energy levels and stamina are stellar, and my biomarkers all fall within the optimal ranges.

You may be thinking you're already awash in stress and wondering why you'd choose more. But there's a gargantuan difference between modern chronic stress and good "eustress" (see box, left).

As Paracelsus, the Swiss physician, quipped, "the dose makes the poison." The right level of stress, or eustress, elicits hormesis, a positive psychological or physiological response to adversity.

And some of my Good Stress protocols are surprisingly simple. Here's one that's easy to incorporate into your daily life so you can start enjoying the benefits of good stress today.

Eating stressed plants

In response to short-term stress, humans have evolved adaptive mechanisms that result in greater resilience. Hormesis is the biological phenomenon in which a beneficial effect—such as improved health, stress tolerance, growth or longevity—results from exposure to low doses of an agent that's otherwise toxic or lethal when given at higher doses.

It turns out that plants also have a hormetic response to stress. In response to hostile growing conditions—such as frigid temperatures, scorching sun, blistering wind and drought, or pests—plants grown in an organic environment generate protective compounds known as xenohormetins. These phytochemicals, also referred to as polyphenols, help to keep the plant alive.

The protective qualities of xenohormetins are then transferred to humans when we consume them. These compounds have been associated with anti-inflammatory, antioxidant and anticancer effects.

By contrast, conventional agriculture with its chemical fertilizers, heavy irrigation, pesticides, and herbicides produces brittle and nutrient-deficient plants. Industrial agriculture is to plants what McDonald's is to people.

Yes, it's convenient for a plant to grow in the absence of weeds and pests, with abundant water and neatly organized rank on rank. But a dearth of struggle will turn a russet potato into a . . . couch potato.

This is why eating stressed plants is a key part of my Good Stress program.

Himalayan tartary buckwheat

Dr Jeffrey Bland, who brought the field of functional medicine to the fore in 1991, claims to have found the world's most stressed plant. It's called Himalayan tartary buckwheat (HTB). It evolved unsurprisingly in the Himalayas, a notoriously inhospitable place for plants.

For millennia, this gluten-free food crop, which has no relation to wheat, has weathered harsh climes, high altitudes and poor-quality soil. Yet HTB has become more robust—physically and genetically—as a direct result of these suboptimal conditions.

When we eat HTB, we unlock a treasure trove of unique nutrients, including antioxidant polyphenols like quercetin, rutin and luteolin that contribute to an effective

immune response. HTB also contains 2-HOBA, a rare plant nutrient that has been found to protect the human body's proteins from harmful biological aging processes.

More potent plant compounds

Other examples of xenohormetins are resveratrol from red wine, curcumin from turmeric and sulforaphane from cruciferous vegetables.

Resveratrol developed naturally in grape skins to fight fungus. Many winemakers deliberately stress their grapes, often growing them in arid conditions. They do this not for phytochemical purposes but for taste.

When humans ingest it, resveratrol activates SIRT1, one of the proteins in the sirtuin family. Sirtuins influence a wide range of cellular processes like

aging, transcription, apoptosis, inflammation, stress resistance, energy efficiency during low-calorie situations and mitochondrial biogenesis.

Curiously, the most stressed grape is the pinot noir varietal. By extension, you'll find the greatest concentration of resveratrol in a glass of pinot. But don't pop the cork just yet. You'd need to drink 1,000 bottles of wine a day to get the recommended dosage of resveratrol. This is not recommended. You could try a resveratrol supplement instead.

Sirtuins are unique because they require a coenzyme called nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide (NAD) to function. NAD levels decline as we age, and this decline is thought to be one of the contributing factors to aging and age-associated diseases. This is why it's increasingly popular to supplement with NAD or its precursor nicotinamide mononucleotide (NMN).

Much of the research on sirtuins has been done by Australian biologist Dr David Sinclair. Sinclair is a professor in the department of genetics at Harvard Medical School and co-director of the Paul F. Glenn Center for the Biology of Aging. He's best known for his research on aging and longevity, particularly in relation to activating the sirtuin pathway in yeast.

Whether resveratrol has the same impact on human longevity that it does on yeast remains a very open question.

Going green (and blue)

Another overly anxious plant is green tea. Japanese matcha is a type of powdered green tea grown in a traditional way. Growing the plants in the shade stresses



What are xenohormetic plants?

In response to harsh environmental circumstances such as wind, cold, scorching sun and compromised soil, plants generate protective mechanisms to ensure survival. These xenohormetic plants develop certain antioxidant compounds that we call polyphenols, which shield them from threat. Their protective attributes are then transferred to humans when we eat them.

them, causing them to make biologically active compounds including theanine, caffeine, chlorophyll and various types of catechins, including epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG), that boost the activity of defense enzymes such as SIRT1.

Sipping matcha helps burn fat, protects the kidneys, improves memory, decreases inflammation and is anti-carcinogenic.

Stressed plants abound in the blue zones. The blue zones, originally identified by author Dan Buettner, are the five places in the world that have the greatest prevalence of centenarians:

- Okinawa, Japan
- Sardinia, Italy
- Nicoya, Costa Rica
- Ikaria, Greece
- Loma Linda, California¹

These longevity hubs all share certain characteristics, including limited technology, healthy diets, active outdoor

cultures, community, hilliness and—yes—stressed plants. Not only do the denizens of the blue zones eat a plethora of nutrient-dense plants, but the animals they eat graze on these plants as well.

You may notice two of the world's blue zones are islands in the Mediterranean Sea. The famed Mediterranean diet has been associated with longevity.

Extra-virgin olive oil is a staple of the regimen. A bioactive compound in olive oil, oleocanthal, has potent anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties and may inhibit cancer-promoting genes. The oil has also been shown to activate a cellular pathway known as AMPK (AMP-activated protein kinase).

Aging is highly associated with an imbalance

between AMPK and mTOR

(mammalian target of rapamycin), the pathway for cellular growth. This disequilibrium is driven by the overactivation of mTOR and by a decline in responsiveness to the activation of the energy-sensing protein AMPK, the body's cleanup and repair pathway.

The term *superfood* isn't always helpful; it

can lead people to overconsume a specific food at the expense of eating the rainbow. I try to eat 30 different types of vegetables per week. Still, there's a good case to be made for olive oil as a member of the food pantheon.



Sprouting inconvenience

If you really want to inconvenience yourself into better health, then allow me to unveil the world's most nutrient-dense food: sprouts. I was introduced to the

Eat the rainbow of stress

Here's my list of some well-known xenohormetins, their benefits, and their "stressed" hosts:

RESVERATROL

Source: Grapes (especially the skins), red wine, peanuts and berries

Benefits: Anti-aging effects, cardiovascular health and neuroprotective properties

QUERCETIN

Source: Onions, apples, grapes, berries, tea and Himalayan tartary buckwheat

Benefits: Antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and potential cardiovascular benefits

PICEATANNOL

Source: Grapes, berries and passion fruit

Benefits: Similar to resveratrol, with potential anti-inflammatory and anticancer activities

OLEUROPEIN

Source: Olive leaves and olives

Benefits: Cardiovascular benefits, antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties

KAEMPFEROL

Source: Tea, broccoli, kale and beans

Benefits: Antioxidant and potential anticancer properties

SULFORAPHANE

Source: Cruciferous vegetables like broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbages and broccoli sprouts

Benefits: Antioxidant and detoxification properties, potential anticancer effects

CURCUMIN

Source: Turmeric root

Benefits: Anti-inflammatory, antioxidant and potential neuroprotective effects

EPIGALLOCATECHIN GALLATE (EGCG)

Source: Green tea

Benefits: Antioxidant properties, weight management and cardiovascular health

SALIDROSIDE

Source: *Rhodiola rosea* (an herb)

Benefits: Stress resistance, anti-fatigue and potential neuroprotective properties

FISETIN

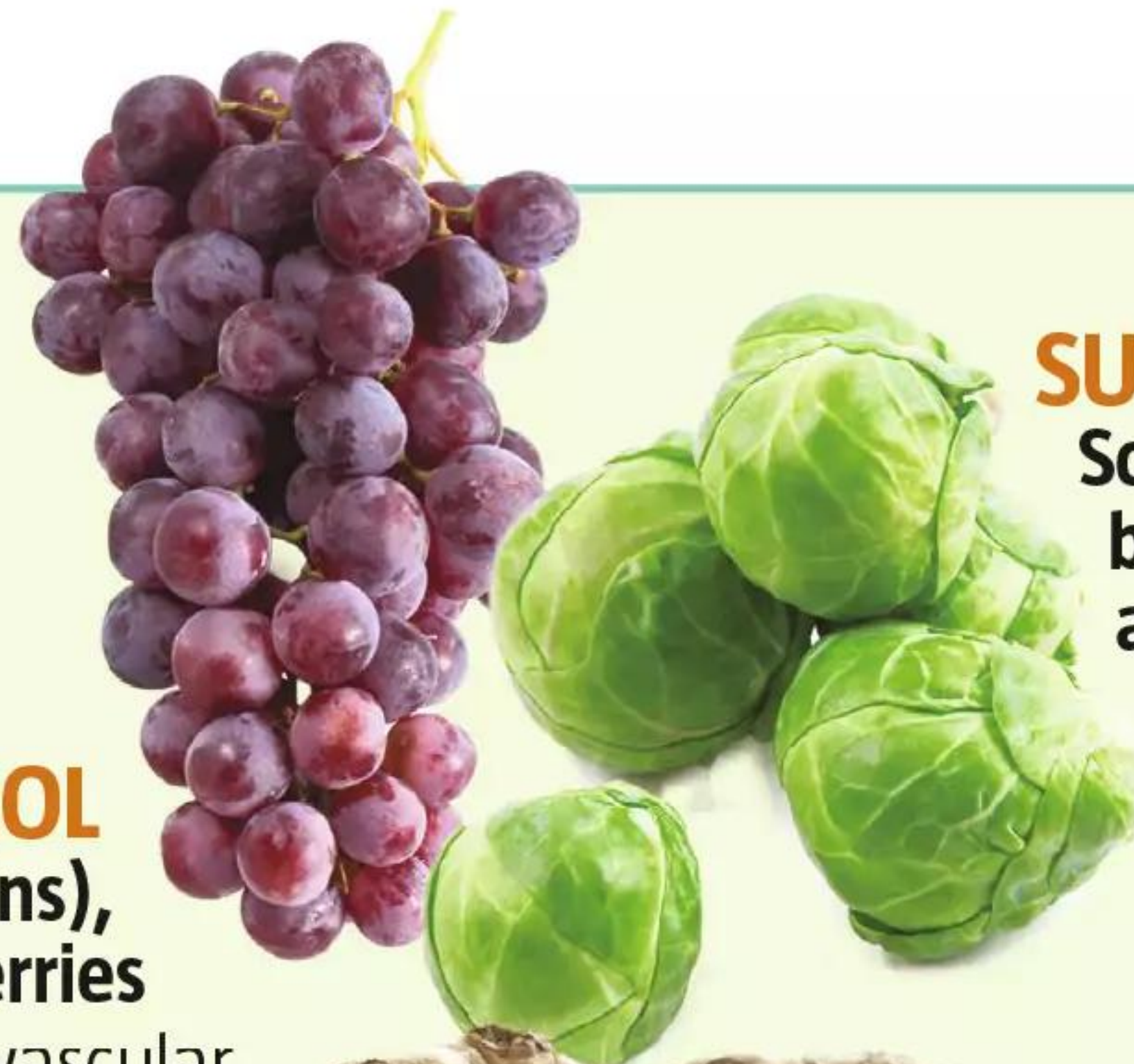
Source: Strawberries, apples and persimmons

Benefits: Antioxidant, neuroprotective and potential anti-aging effects

LUTEOLIN

Source: Peppers, carrots, celery, olive oil and Himalayan tartary buckwheat

Benefits: Anti-inflammatory, antioxidant and neuroprotective effects





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A day in the life of good stress

Here's an outline of a typical "stressful" day in my life. This schedule demonstrates how various Good Stress protocols can stack across a day.

I don't always perfectly adhere to this schedule. Life happens. Maybe you're traveling. Maybe you're a shift worker. Maybe your regular work schedule doesn't remotely allow for this layout. Maybe it changes a bit depending on the time of year. Maybe you go through a life change that derails you for an extended period.

That's fine. The protocols are waiting for you to return. There's no need to be neurotic about it. In fact, orthorexia—an obsession with being healthy—is its own type of pathology. Consider this a general game plan with flexible margins.

- 6:00 a.m.** Wake up. Drink room-temperature water (add lemon if you like).
- 6:30 a.m.** Get outside for 20 minutes or use a therapeutic lamp to get blue light. Combine with meditation or breathwork.
- 7:00 a.m.** Have a coffee or tea without milk or sugar.
- 7:30 a.m.** Get hot in a sauna or under a sauna blanket for 20 minutes.
- 8:00 a.m.** Get cold in a plunge or shower for three minutes.
- 8:30 a.m.** Go to work (if you work).
- 11:00 a.m.** "Break" fast with fiber, healthy fat and protein.
- 11:30 a.m.** Take a short walk—barefoot if you can.
- 12:00 p.m.** Take five minutes to call someone you love.
- 2:00 p.m.** Take a break and get outside without your phone. Slow down and notice things.
- 5:00 p.m.** Move your body—preferably in nature. Mix aerobic exercise, resistance training and flexibility work.
- 6:00 p.m.** Make dinner with plenty of protein and vegetables, and eat it with someone if you can.
- 7:00 p.m.** Take your last bite of food and take a short walk or do 20 push-ups.
- 7:15 p.m.** Kick back. Read or watch a movie with your blue-light blockers while on the floor stretching and squatting.
- 9:00 p.m.** Shut off all electronics. Make your bedroom cool and dark. Use only amber light. Read a book. Count your blessings. Journal your gratitude.
- 9:30 p.m.** Engage in some simple parasympathetic breathwork.
- 10:00 p.m.** Nighty-night.

It's not all that stressful. It's good stressful. We so often associate health with downward spirals. After four weeks of Good Stress, you'll begin experiencing an upward spiral. The momentum builds atop itself.

There may be no greater experience in life than witnessing your own transformation. It's completely within your grasp through doing hard things.



wondrous world of sprouting by the self-appointed "sprout king," Doug Evans.

As Doug explains, "The process of sprouting, especially broccoli sprouts, embodies the hormetic effect, where a little stress at the cellular level triggers powerful health benefits, including boosting our body's defenses and activating sulforaphane production."

You can sprout seeds of myriad species, including alfalfa, clover, fenugreek, turnip greens, wheatgrass, wild rice, green peas, radish, adzuki beans, lentils, chickpeas, mung beans and red cabbage.

The equipment requirements for sprouting are negligible: a wide-mouthed quart-sized mason jar, some cheesecloth and a rubber band. Sure, you can purchase kits that incorporate metal holsters to secure the mason jars at a 45-degree angle to facilitate proper drainage, but it's hardly necessary.

You can stack your sprouting jars on a dish-drying rack, among other improvisations. Two tablespoons of these minuscule broccoli seeds will yield a pound of sprouts in just four to six days.

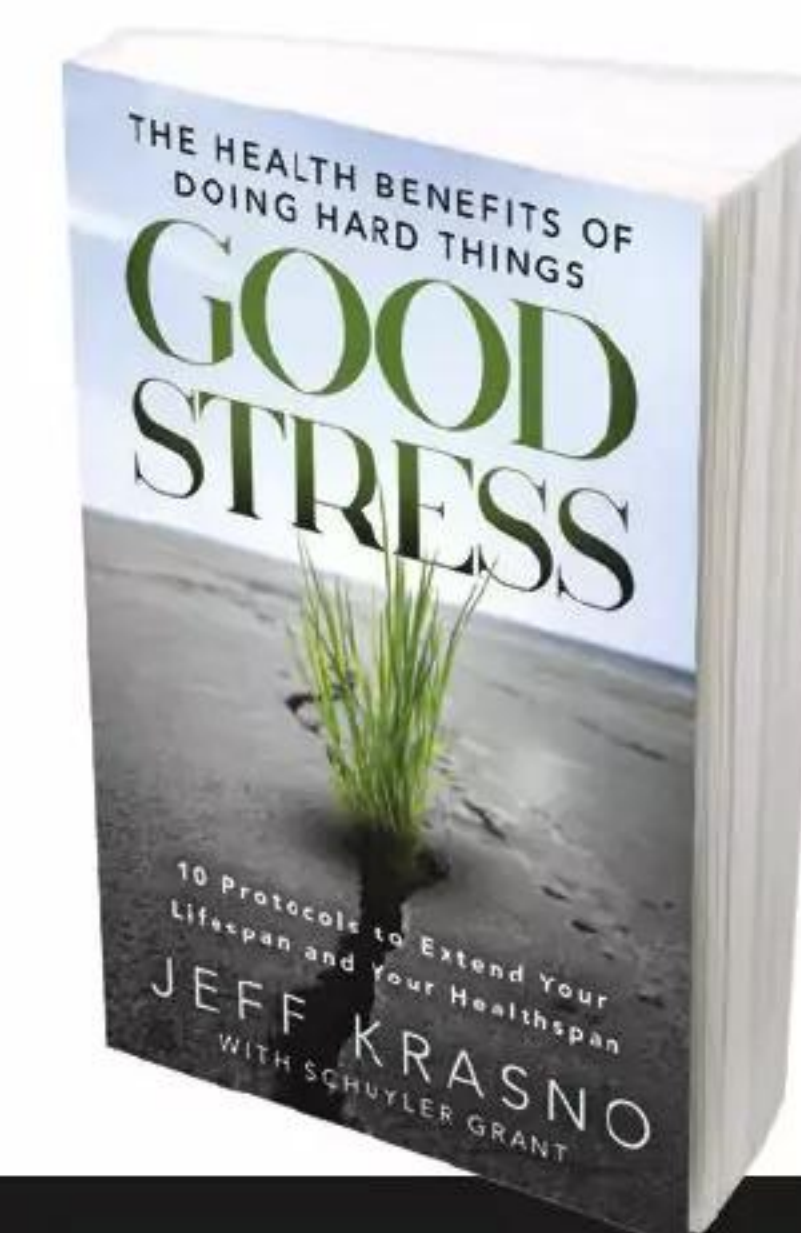
You soak the seeds for six to eight hours, put the jars in a cool and shady spot, and then simply rinse and drain

them twice per day. It's immensely gratifying to watch the seeds push forth their tiny white stems and green dollhouse-sized leaves.

This process of germination is pre-photosynthetic. The seedling is leveraging warehoused energy, a small parcel of food stored in the endosperm of the seed. These stockpiled nutrients—starch, fats and proteins—can lie dormant within the seed for thousands of years. But given the right conditions—moisture, air, and a moderate temperature—the embryo will be activated to grow, cracking through the dampened seed coat.

Sprouts, specifically broccoli sprouts, are considered the most nutrient-dense food in the world. The concentration of phytochemicals in broccoli sprouts is 40 times that of broccoli florets.² They are also low calorie, organic and fiber-rich. What's more, they may be Earth's most anti-carcinogenic food due to the compound sulforaphane.

Adapted from *Good Stress: The Health Benefits of Doing Hard Things* by Jeff Krasno (Hay House, 2025)



See Healthy Shopping on page 64 for where to get matcha and HTB

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HEALING CANCER

Tiny but mighty

Although it's small, the pineal gland plays a massive role in your health, says Dr Leigh Erin Connealy. Here's how to take care of yours naturally

Nestled deep in the middle of the brain, just above the thalamus, where the right and left lobes meet, lies the pine-cone-shaped pineal gland. This minuscule structure, measuring approximately 0.8 cm and weighing around 0.1 g, is roughly the size of a grain of rice.

Known clinically as the epiphysis cerebri, the pineal gland may be tiny, but it boasts multiple crucial functions and has a central impact on our health and well-being.

What does the pineal gland do?

The pineal gland's primary role is regulating the sleep-wake cycle or circadian rhythm. It does this by taking in external light and dark signals received by the retinas and then creating and secreting the hormone melatonin based on these inputs.

As darkness falls, the gland releases melatonin, preparing the body for sleep. On the other hand, as light is introduced, it halts melatonin production, prompting wakefulness.

For our ancestors, this sleep/wake cycle began around sundown and ended with the rising sun. Unfortunately, modern technology—including electric devices and their constant onslaught of melatonin-disrupting blue light—wreaks havoc on the natural cycles nature intended (more on this later).

Classified as both an organ and a gland because it produces a hormone

that's delivered into the bloodstream, the pineal gland is one of many organs that make up the endocrine system (see the box below).

Together, these organs and glands influence and regulate multiple biological functions, beginning in the womb and continuing into old age. The hormones they release aid in proper organ and system development and help regulate mood, sleep, growth, blood sugar and metabolism.

As you can imagine, when any organ in the endocrine system falters, the balance or homeostasis in the body is disrupted. This can lead to several health issues and diseases, including cancer.

The endocrine system

The pineal gland is one of many organs that make up the endocrine system. These are some of the others:

Hypothalamus

Pituitary gland

Thyroid

Parathyroid glands

Adrenal glands

Pancreas

Ovaries

Testes

Pineal gland cancer

Tumors in the pineal gland are quite rare, accounting for less than 1 percent of brain tumors, and most cases occur in children.¹ The World Health Organization uses a grading system of 1–4 to classify tumors based on their rate of growth (Grade 1 is the slowest).²

These are the five most common types of pineal tumors:

Pineocytomas These Grade 1 tumors are slow-growing and typically occur in people aged 20–60. Outcomes are usually good after removal.

Pineal parenchymal tumors with intermediate differentiation (PPTID)

Classified as intermediate (Grade 2 or 3), PPTID tumors can happen at any age but are most common in people aged 20–70.

Papillary pineal tumors Mainly affecting those in middle age, papillary pineal tumors are intermediate grade (2 or 3).

Pineoblastomas Aggressive, fast-growing (Grade 4) and almost always cancerous, pineoblastomas have often metastasized into surrounding tissues by the time they're discovered. These tumors primarily affect young children.

Mixed pineal tumors These tumors are made up of a mix of slow-growing and fast-growing cells.³

Pineal tumors aren't always cancerous. But even benign ones can cause issues since they put pressure on the brain and block the flow of cerebrospinal fluid.

Pineal gland calcification

Much more prevalent than pineal gland tumors is calcification of this gland. It occurs when calcium and phosphorus build up in the pineal gland. While it can occur at any age, the risk increases for older individuals, males and those of Caucasian ethnicity.⁴

Symptoms of calcification are somewhat rare but can mimic those of tumors: fatigue, sleep disturbances, headaches and cognitive issues.

Decalcification is possible with a handful of lifestyle measures.⁵

Avoid fluoride Many studies have linked pineal gland calcification to excess fluoride, or fluoride toxicity. Therefore, one option is to avoid it: Stop consuming fluoridated water and look for fluoride-free toothpaste.

Be careful with calcium There may also be issues with excessive calcium ingested via supplements, so you should

Decalcifying your pineal gland may boost your melatonin production, helping to prevent cancer or to fight it





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be mindful of this as well if you've been diagnosed with pineal calcification.

Reconsider prescription drugs Many contain fluorine, including statins, antidepressants, antacids and anesthesia.

Don't cook with Teflon This nonstick cookware coating is made with perfluorinated chemicals, which can leach into your food. Try cast iron or stainless steel.

Detox Supplements known to help detox fluoride (and other toxins) include zeolite and chlorella. Talk to a qualified practitioner about proper dosages and reputable brands.

Also see the box on the right for more ways to support the pineal gland.

Pineal calcification can lead to health issues like migraines and Alzheimer's disease. And since it lowers melatonin production, it can interfere with sleep, leading to more health problems.¹

Decalcifying your pineal gland may boost your melatonin production, helping to prevent cancer or to fight it if you've already been diagnosed (whether it's in the pineal gland or elsewhere).²

Signs you may have a pineal tumor

Pineal tumors are rare and, if caught early, have an excellent prognosis. Because the symptoms associated with pineal tumors can often result from other health issues, it's important to work with your doctor to figure out the root cause. If your symptoms worsen quickly, it could indicate calcification of the pineal gland, a fast-growing tumor or another serious problem.

These are some of the most common complaints:

Headaches

Nausea and vomiting

Vision changes

Trouble with eye movements

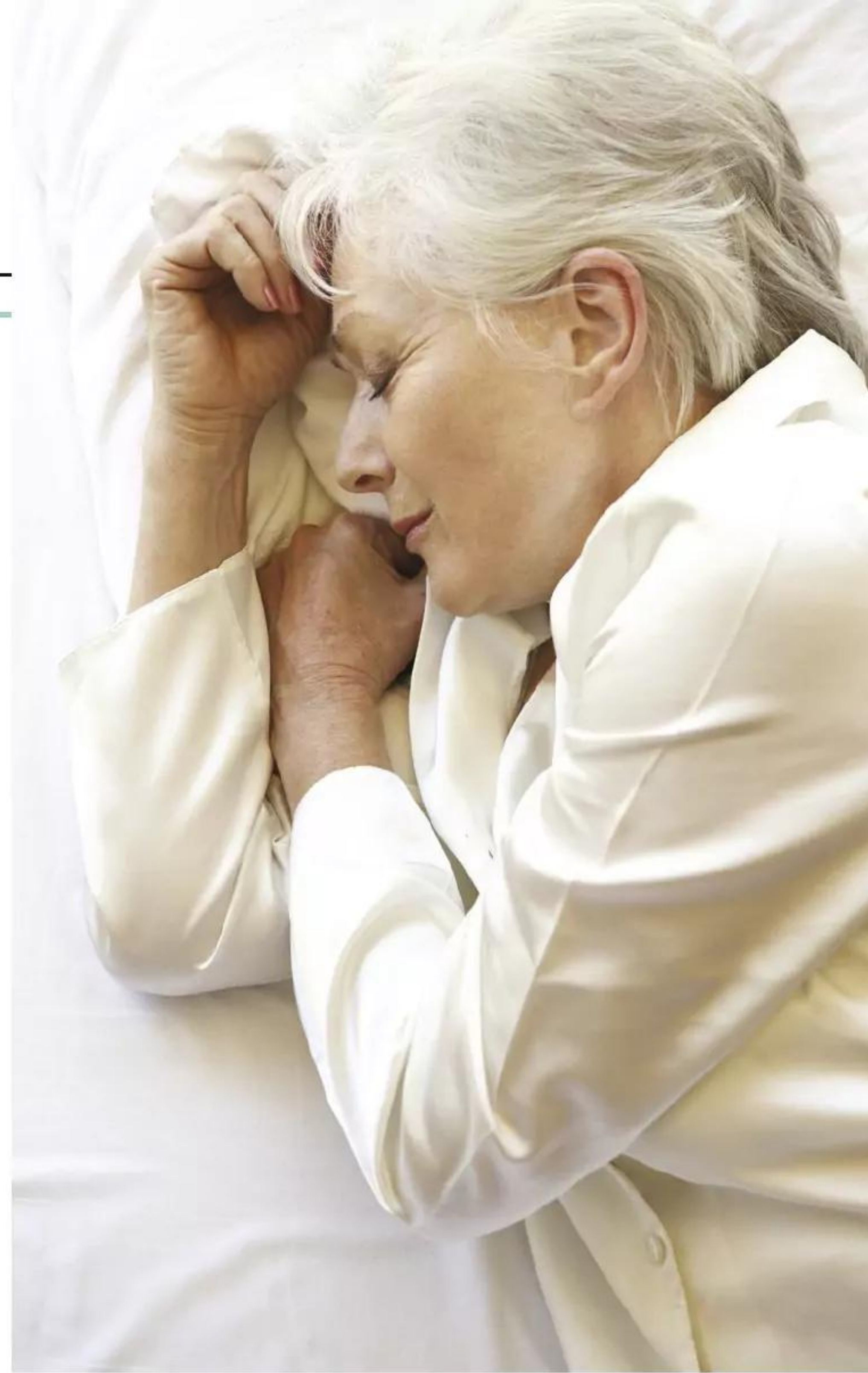
Tiredness

Memory problems

Trouble walking

Balance or coordination problems

Growth and developmental delays in infants and children



How to look after your pineal gland

Whether you have cancer or not, getting a good night's sleep and ensuring proper pineal gland function are critical to your health.

A handful of methods have been shown to stimulate and support this crucial gland.

Supplement with peptides We recommend the pineal peptide complex Endoluten and the supplement Epithalon, a synthetic blend of amino acids that mimics epithalamin, the naturally occurring peptide found in the pineal gland (use as directed).

Listen to sounds at 963 Hz This frequency, called a Solfeggio frequency, is said to awaken and stimulate the pineal gland. You can listen to it through YouTube videos, Apple Music or Spotify.

Choose nontoxic foods and care products The pineal gland is especially sensitive to environmental toxins, including aluminum and the main ingredient of the herbicide Roundup (glyphosate).³ To lower your exposure, avoid antiperspirants and cosmetic products containing aluminum, and make sure you visit a biological dentist who doesn't use aluminum in fillings or dental implants. Choose organic produce whenever possible, and wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly before consuming them.

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1 AgricSci, 2015; 6(1):42-70

“A landmark meta-analysis found melatonin reduced the risk of many cancers by up to 34 percent”

The anticancer effects of melatonin

Known as the “sleep hormone,” melatonin is a powerful bioregulator produced and secreted by the pineal gland to control the body's sleep/wake cycles. Many people don't realize it's also a potent antioxidant, scavenging free radicals and preventing the damage they do throughout the body. In the process, it neutralizes inflammation and combats oxidative stress.

Melatonin has proven cytotoxic effects on different cancer types, including some liver, breast, prostate, lung and brain cancers. A landmark meta-analysis of 10 studies published in the *Journal of Pineal Research* revealed that melatonin reduced the risk of many cancers by up to 34 percent.¹ This may mean it can help treat cancer.

That study was published in 2005, and since then, the research has continued to support melatonin's anticancer potential. In 2022, a group of researchers noted several beneficial functions of melatonin in cancer treatment and prevention. They also pointed out some hindrances that may slow conventional medicine's acceptance and use of this powerful therapy.

The authors showcased melatonin's multiple benefits: regulatory effects on tumors in different stages of cancer, including its start, progress and spread. They went on to say, “Melatonin exhibits its anticancer effects by modulating the immune system and shifting the immune response toward cancer cells in the tumor microenvironment.”² In other words, melatonin might be useful for regulating how immune system cells around a tumor respond to it.

Nearly all clinical trials that have explored melatonin use, as either a standalone or an adjunct therapy for cancer, have had beneficial outcomes, the researchers point out. The studies showed that using melatonin led to “positive impacts on the anticancer treatment, including alleviating the chemotherapy-related side effects, reducing the incidence of depressive symptoms, and improving the quality of sleep of patients with cancer.”

Sounds like a win-win, right? So, what's the holdup?

The number one reason you won't see corporations rushing to create a melatonin-based pharmaceutical is that

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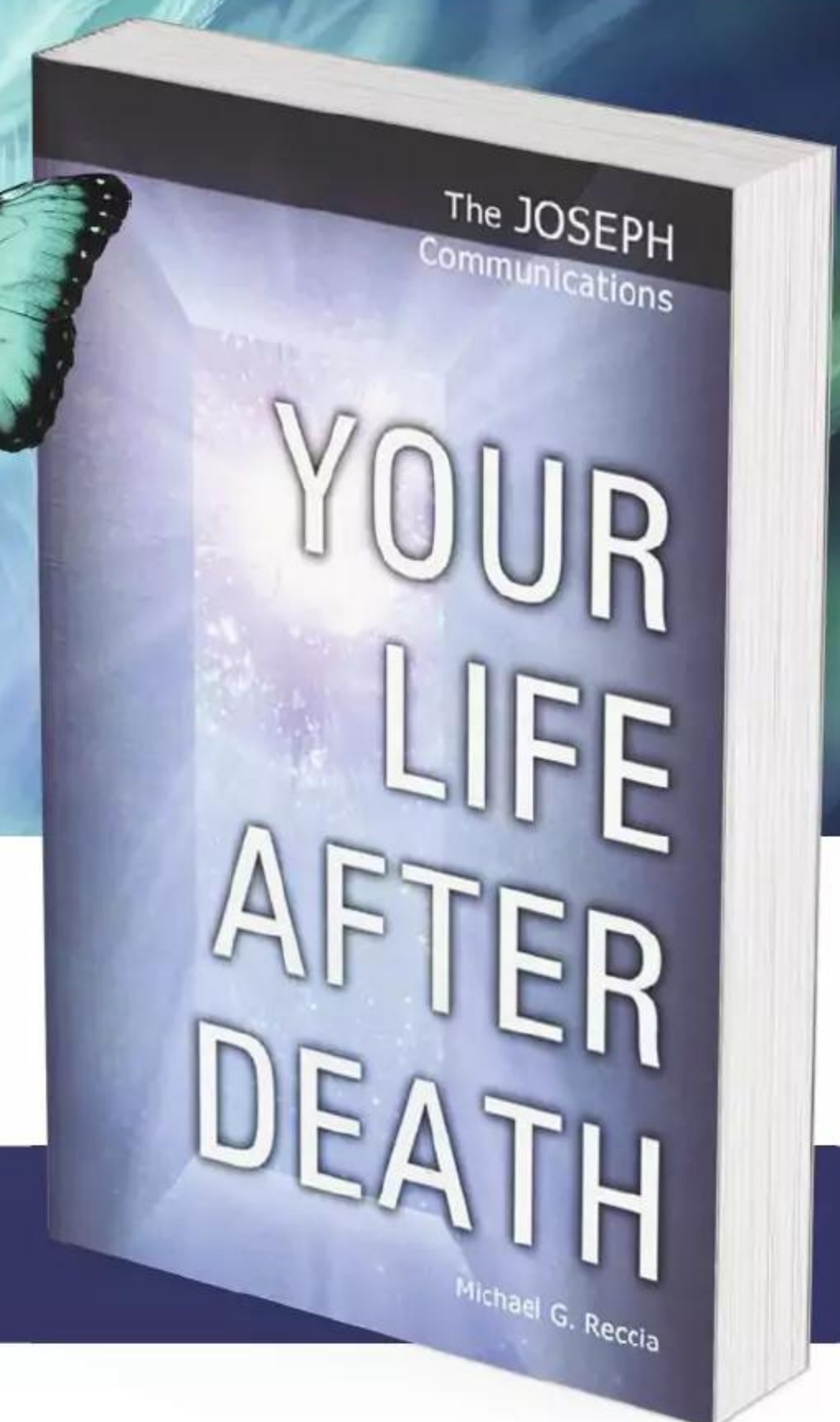
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EDDIE BEARNE

"It blew my mind - in a wonderful way."

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there simply isn't big money in it. In the 2022 article previously mentioned, the authors state that even though melatonin works well against cancer and doesn't cause harm, drug companies won't pursue it because it can't be patented.

Melatonin can't be sold as a drug, so it isn't surrounded by the dollar signs necessary to attract the pharmaceutical giants with their deep pocketbooks.

How to boost melatonin levels

Instead of waiting for Big Pharma to create a melatonin-based medication, let's shift gears and focus on things we can do to naturally increase our own melatonin levels.

Avoid melatonin disruptors We know the introduction of light through the retinas signals melatonin production to halt, so the obvious solution is to do what you can to avoid bright lights and other melatonin disruptors several hours before bedtime.

Smartphones, computers, tablets and TVs all emit blue light, which is well known for disrupting melatonin production and wreaking havoc on sleep.¹⁰ Data strongly suggests we should avoid these devices for at least 90 minutes before turning in for the night. At the very least, you can wear blue-light-blocking glasses to cut down on the amount of blue light you absorb.

Dim all your household lights and consider taking a warm bath by candlelight or practicing relaxation techniques to help your body prepare for slumber. Try doing some light yoga stretches, deep breathing or meditation in a darkened room.

Make more melatonin There are also natural ways to increase your melatonin levels. One is eating foods that contain melatonin. Good options include eggs, salmon, nuts and seeds (pistachios, almonds, walnuts, pumpkin seeds), tart cherries, dairy products (milk, cheese, yogurt) and goji berries.

You'll also want to turn your bedroom into a sleep sanctuary by cutting out all light sources and making the room cool and comfortable. Unplug or cover all devices that emit light, use blackout shades or consider wearing a sleep mask if total darkness isn't possible.

If you must get up at night and need a little light to see, use a red-spectrum light. Red wavelengths are the least disruptive

The third eye

In Hinduism, Buddhism and other spiritual contexts, the pineal gland is often referred to as the third or invisible eye and is associated with the sixth chakra of the body. Its correlation with light and circadian regulation, coupled with its location deep in the middle brain, is said to connect the spiritual world to the physical one.

Many holistic and spiritual practitioners believe that activating the third eye can lead to spiritual awakening, increased intuition, an improved sense of one's surroundings, improved mental health and even boosted creative abilities. Common practices they use for opening or activating the third eye include yoga, meditation, mindfulness, deep breathing and chanting.

Whether or not you buy into the idea of balancing chakras, everyone can benefit from slowing down, taking a mindful approach to life, and practicing yoga and other mind-body exercises.



to circadian rhythms, so using a dim red-hued light as a nightlight is acceptable.

Try to get out in the sunshine every day, preferably in the morning, to help regulate your natural cycle of melatonin production. Going to bed at the same time every night and waking at the same time each morning also helps synchronize your circadian rhythms and promotes better sleep overall.

Supplement with melatonin To facilitate sleep and help regulate your circadian rhythms, low doses of melatonin ranging from 1–3 mg typically do the trick. As a

cancer therapy, higher therapeutic levels are required.

You'll need to work closely with your physician or oncologist to determine the proper dose for you (and in the UK, melatonin is a prescription-only medicine). For my patients, I typically prescribe 10–20 mg—and sometimes even higher doses—depending on their specific needs.

Melatonin is generally safe, well tolerated and beneficial for most people. However, it's contraindicated in a handful of situations.

Again, work with a practitioner well versed in functional medicine to determine whether melatonin is right for you. To find a doctor near you, search the physician directories at the Institute for Functional Medicine (ifm.org) and the American College for Advancement in Medicine (acam.org).

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Leigh Erin Connealy, MD, is the medical director of the Cancer Center for Healing and the Center for New Medicine in Irvine, California. Dr Connealy's multidisciplinary treatment protocols, team of healthcare professionals, and holistic approach to health and healing have made the Centers the largest integrative/functional medicine clinic in North America, visited by more than 70,000 patients worldwide.

Author of *The Cancer Revolution and Be Perfectly Healthy* and a sought-after speaker who has appeared on numerous TV and radio shows, webinars and podcasts, Dr Connealy has been named one of the Top Functional & Integrative Doctors in the US.



HEALTHY SHOPPING

Joanna Evans rounds up this month's resources: how to pick the best matcha, choose nontoxic beauty products and get hold of Himalayan tartary buckwheat

Meet your matcha

Drinking Japanese matcha, a type of powdered green tea made from the leaves of the *Camellia sinensis* plant, is an excellent way to add a little "good stress" to your life, as Jeff Krasno explains in "What Doesn't Kill You..." (page 50).

Matcha tea plants are grown in the shade, which stresses them and activates survival mechanisms that boost production of biologically active compounds such as theanine, chlorophyll and catechins like epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG). These antioxidant compounds, especially ECGC, have anticancer, anti-inflammatory, antiviral and brain-boosting properties. That means they can have big benefits for humans when we consume them. ¹

But with so many matcha products out there, how do you pick one you know is high quality?

If you're looking for great-tasting, top-grade matcha with maximum health benefits, here's a quick guide to buying matcha—plus how to judge it once you've bought it.

Before you buy

Purity Check the ingredients list to make sure it's just 100 percent pure matcha. What you don't want to see is added fillers, anti-caking agents, sugars, sweeteners or colorings.

Grade Matcha comes in different grades. Ceremonial matcha is considered the highest quality, and culinary matcha, typically used in cooking and baking, the lowest.

Origin Although matcha originated in China, the general consensus is that the best matcha comes from Japan, where there are strict farming and processing techniques for matcha production. According to the Japanese food labeling standard, matcha must be made from *Camellia sinensis* plants grown in the shade. Then it has to be steamed, dried without being rolled and ground into a fine powder.

Organic If you don't want a mouthful of pesticides along with your matcha, go for organic varieties. Look for organic certification on the product label.

Testing Is the product tested, ideally by a third party, to ensure it's free of harmful contaminants like heavy metals and pesticides? If it's not clear from the company's website, get in touch with them to check.

Packaging Make sure your matcha is packaged in an airtight, light-proof container to protect it from the elements.

Price Watch out for overly cheap matcha as it may not be the real deal.

After you buy

Color A vibrant green powder is a good indicator of quality. Lower qualities tend to have a more yellowish or brownish hue.

Texture High-grade matcha has an incredibly fine, smooth, powdery texture. It will dissolve easily in hot water and create a frothy, velvety finish when whisked. Gritty, grainy matcha can be a sign of lower quality.

Taste High-quality matcha will have a subtle, sweet, vegetal taste with little to no bitterness.



A perfect matcha

To save you the hard work, we've scanned the virtual shelves for some top-tier matcha products available to buy in the US and UK. All are ceremonial grade, certified organic and lab-tested for purity and safety.

Matchaful

Kiwami Single Cultivar Matcha
\$39.00/£35.99 (1oz/30g)

US: matchaful.com

UK: healf.com

All Matchaful matcha is certified organic and undergoes extensive third-party testing for radiation, heavy metals, and over 700 pesticides and herbicides. Kiwami is Matchaful's highest-grade matcha, crafted from hand-picked tea leaves of a single cultivar, sustainably grown in the hills of Shizuoka, Japan, and shaded by solar panels. It's also stone-ground to order in small batches for optimal freshness.

Perfect Ted

Uji Matcha Powder
\$11.00/£9.95 (1oz/30g)

perfectted.com

International shipping available

This single-origin, ceremonial-grade matcha is made from shade-grown, hand-picked, air-dried, stone-ground and non-GMO green tea leaves from farms on the foothills of Uji, Japan—a region famous for its top-quality matcha. It's tested for radiation and heavy metals and certified organic by Japanese Agricultural Standards (JAS).

Soar Organics**Uji Ceremonial Matcha****\$32.99 (1oz/30g)**

soarorganics.com

US shipping only

This first-harvest matcha, made by meticulously stone-grinding only the youngest shade-grown leaves picked in spring, is grown in renowned Uji, Japan, and certified organic by the USDA and Canada Organic. Like Soar Organics' other matcha offerings, this matcha is third-party tested for radiation, heavy metals, pesticides and other contaminants, and certificates of analysis are readily available to view on the company's website.

OMGTea**Organic Matcha AAA+****\$47.00/£34.95 (1oz/30g)**

omgteas.co.uk

International shipping available

Sourced from Japan's Kagoshima prefecture, this premium matcha is made exclusively with leaves from the top of the plant and first harvest, then ground using a traditional granite stone mill. It's certified organic with Organic Farmers and Growers (OF&G), tested for heavy metals and radiation to ensure safety, and has received a 3-Star Great Taste Award.

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Where to buy HTB

Another stressed plant Jeff Krasno recommends in "What Doesn't Kill You..." (page 50) is Himalayan tartary buckwheat (HTB), introduced to him by functional medicine pioneer Dr Jeffrey Bland. But how do you get hold of this polyphenol-packed plant food?

The good news is that US readers can get it from Jeffrey Bland's company Big Bold Health (bigboldhealth.com), which sells 100 percent organic HTB flour as well as HTB sprout powder, an HTB superfood powder blend and an HTB nutritional supplement.

However, shipping to the UK is not currently available. Big Bold Health's HTB flour does seem to be available on Ebay from private sellers, though.

How to choose nontoxic beauty products

In "Save Your Skin" (page 34), Marcelle Pick recommends choosing clean beauty products to protect not just your skin but also your overall health. Here are a few tips for picking nontoxic beauty and personal care products.

Choose all-natural ingredients Go for products made only with 100 percent natural ingredients whenever possible. Check the list of ingredients on the label or the website you're buying the product from and look up any you're not sure of (the Environmental Working Group's Skin Deep Cosmetics Database, ewg.org/skindeep, is a useful resource).

As a general rule, choose products with a short list of simple, natural ingredients you've heard of rather than a long list of unpronounceable, unrecognizable ingredients.

Go organic Look for products certified organic by reputable bodies, such as the Soil Association, Cosmos or USDA, to reduce your exposure to potentially harmful pesticides.

Forgo fragrance Avoid products with "fragrance" or "parfum" on the ingredients list unless it comes from a natural source like pure essential oils. Added fragrance could mean a long list of synthetic chemicals, including hormone-disrupting phthalates, are hiding in the product.

Watch out for these, too Other ingredients you'd be better off avoiding include parabens, sodium lauryl/laureth sulfate, petrolatum (petroleum jelly) and synthetic sunscreen ingredients like oxybenzone.

If you want to steer clear of microplastics, avoid anything with *poly* in the name (like acrylates copolymer, polyacrylamide and

polypropylene). But if you choose all-natural formulations, you shouldn't have to worry about synthetic nasties like these.

Go for trusted brands There's an abundance of beauty brands out there committed to making only naturally derived, nontoxic products.

These are a few we love:

Weleda: weleda.com, weleda.co.uk**Odylique:** odylique.com, odylique.co.uk**Green People:** greenpeople.co.uk**Inika Organic:** us.inikaorganic.com, uk.inikaorganic.com**Dr. Bronner's:** drbronner.com, drbronner.co.uk**UpCircle Beauty:** us.upcirclebeauty.com, upcirclebeauty.com**100% Pure:** 100percentpure.com

Try one-stop web shops There are now a number of online stores selling a carefully vetted selection of natural beauty and personal care products for the conscious consumer, from various brands. They do most of the hard work of tracking down clean products for you, but you can also check the full ingredients list of a product on the websites and look up any you aren't sure about.

These are a few sites to try:

The Detox Market: thedetoxmarket.com**Content:** contentbeautywellbeing.com**Naturisimo:** naturisimo.com

Most conventional therapies aren't proven to work

The quackery of medicine

Bryan Hubbard

I've seen the wasteland of alternative medicine. It's a web page on Wikipedia titled "List of Topics Characterized as Pseudoscience," and it covers all the various sciences.

But the gloves really come off when it comes to alternative medicine, which it defines as "quackery." By contrast, conventional medicine is "evidence-based."¹

Nothing is spared. The quack therapies include acupuncture, acupressure, Alexander Technique, any and every alternative cancer treatment (214 at the last count), anthroposophical medicine, applied kinesiology, aromatherapy, Ayurvedic medicine . . . and that's just the A's.

Others that get a beating include homeopathy (natch), chiropractic, detoxing, faith healing, Bach flower remedies, iridology, macrobiotic diets, naturopathy, osteopathy, reiki, Traditional Chinese Medicine, reflexology and functional medicine. You get the picture.

So, in a similar spirit, here are some areas of conventional medicine that deserve the "quackery" accolade.

Chemotherapy. It's not pretty, but then anything based on deadly mustard gas—which kills all fast-growing cells, including cancers—isn't going to be a day at the beach. Although it can have a devastating effect on the immune system, chemotherapy is still the go-to therapy for most cancers.

It can work if it gets to the right cancer in the early phase of its development, but its overall success rate is just 5 percent. Anything that's effective only five times out of 100 hasn't been scientifically proven to work. And it can even make the cancer come back stronger.²

Cholesterol/diet theory. It's a theory of two halves: "Bad" LDL cholesterol clogs up the arteries, causing heart disease, and cholesterol is the result of a fatty diet. The

only antidote, other than low-fat foods, is cholesterol-lowering statins.

Despite the widespread adoption of the theory, there's no evidence that fats in the diet contribute to cholesterol in the body. From that, statins don't reduce the rate of coronary heart disease. It's also false to claim that "bad" cholesterol is bad: In fact, it repairs damage to the arteries caused by inflammation.

Covid-19 vaccines. It's an ill wind . . . and the icy blast of the Covid pandemic accelerated the new mRNA technology that had been sitting on a laboratory shelf these past seven years. It was harnessed to combat the Covid-19 virus, with the longer-term aim of adapting it to fight cancer and a range of other chronic conditions.

The Covid mRNA vaccine redefined what a vaccine is. Now, vaccines don't stop you getting a virus or spreading it. Healthcare authorities cast a blind eye over mRNA's dubious safety records, allowing it to be rushed through to rescue the reputations of our governments.

Drug trials. Conventional medicine enjoys a special, trusted place in our society because it's a "science," and its beating heart is the double-blind drug trial, which demonstrates the efficacy (and safety) of pharmaceuticals over sugar-

pill placebos. The trouble is there's often no difference beyond a few percentage points (and the sugar pill doesn't come with the risk of life-destroying adverse reactions).

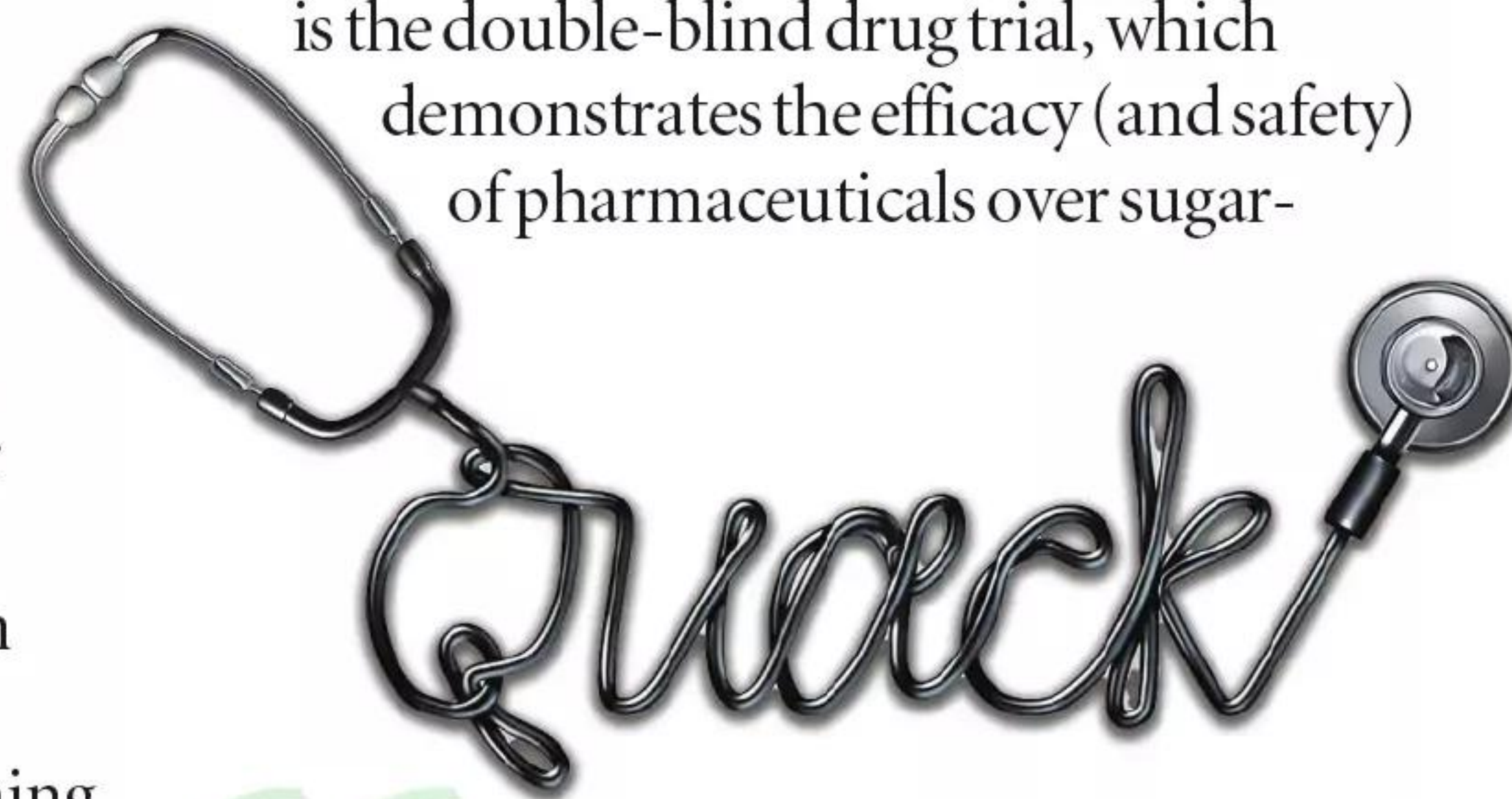
Even then, the trials often achieve those precious few percentage points by data manipulation, paid for by the drug company itself. Indeed, *The Lancet* once estimated over 70 percent of all drug trials were fraudulent.

Gene therapy. Gene therapy offers hope to people with rare genetic disorders, but the idea that it can help with common problems such as cancer, heart disease and longevity could be for the birds. Replacing our inherited faulty genes with healthier versions works, sort of. Gene therapy claims around a 30 percent "success" rate (whatever that means).

But the real bummer is that genes have surprisingly little to do with our health. Just 4 percent of cancers have a genetic factor, and our genes have a mere 10 percent influence on our longevity. So, if gene therapy has a 30 percent positive effect on cancer, just 1 percent of cases will see any benefit.

Vaccines. By the time the program of childhood vaccines started to be rolled out more than 50 years ago, most infectious diseases were in terminal decline. Aside from the occasional blip in cases of measles, for instance (which vaccines were unable to prevent), we've witnessed a steady reduction in rates of most childhood conditions since the 1860s, when the Victorians started to improve sanitation and nutrition.

We could go on, and in the 35 years since we launched *WDDTY*, we have. In that time, we've demonstrated there is evidence for alternative medicine, and a surprising lack of it for conventional therapies. Not that you'd read that on Wikipedia.



Drug trials often achieve 'success' by data manipulation . . . *The Lancet* once estimated over 70 percent of drug trials were fraudulent

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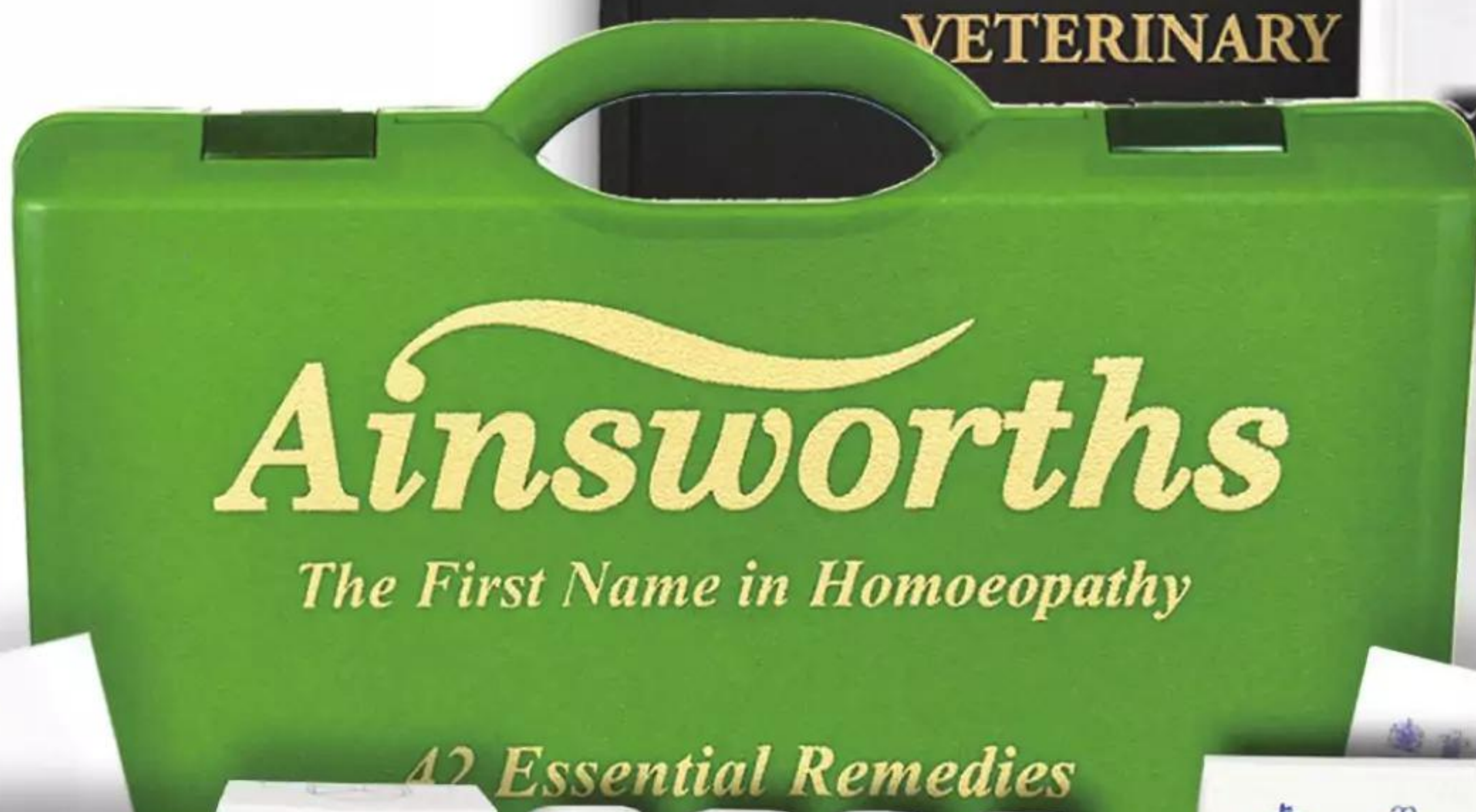
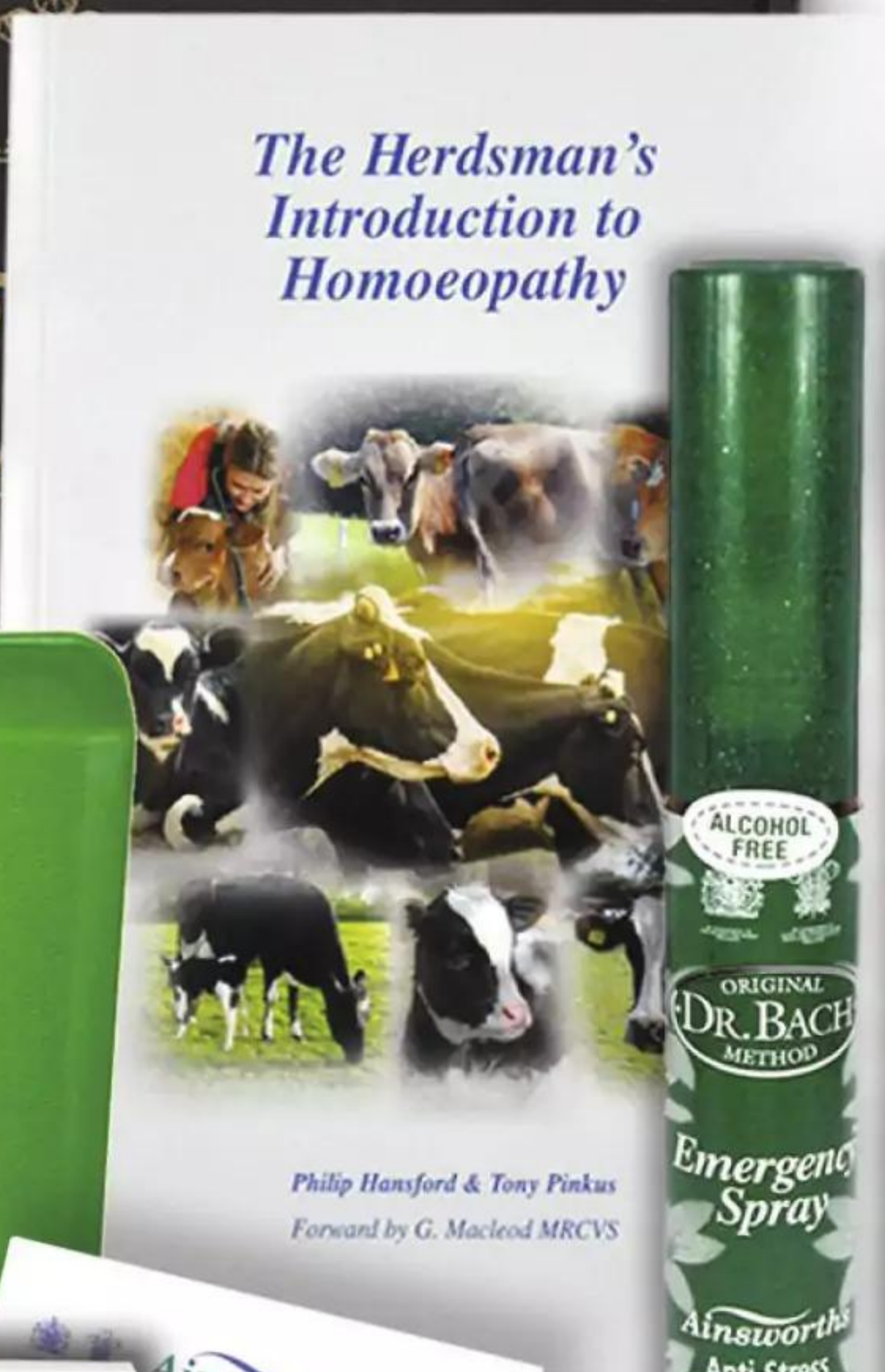
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