

WHAT DOCTORS DON'T TELL YOU



**Healing hair
loss naturally**

How to get to the
root of the problem

**The best peptide
body builders**

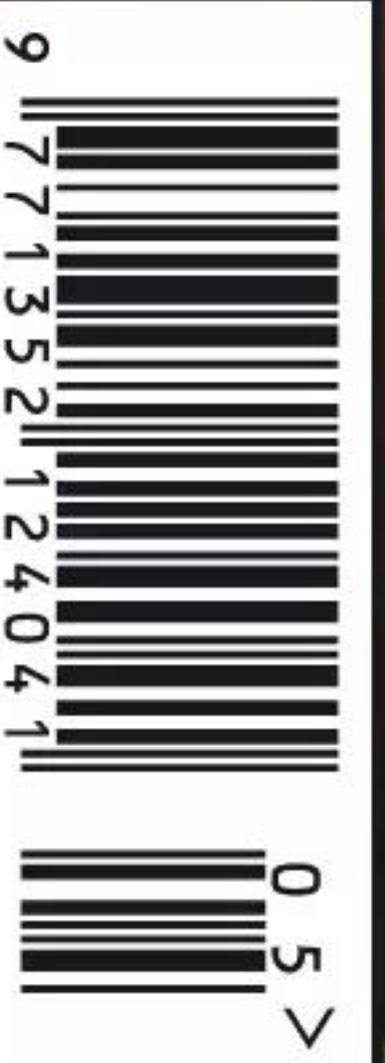
They make up proteins,
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PLUS The regenerative power of the heart • Homeopathy to
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• How to choose the best vitamin D supplements



The cure for (most) diseases

The lifesaving power of connection





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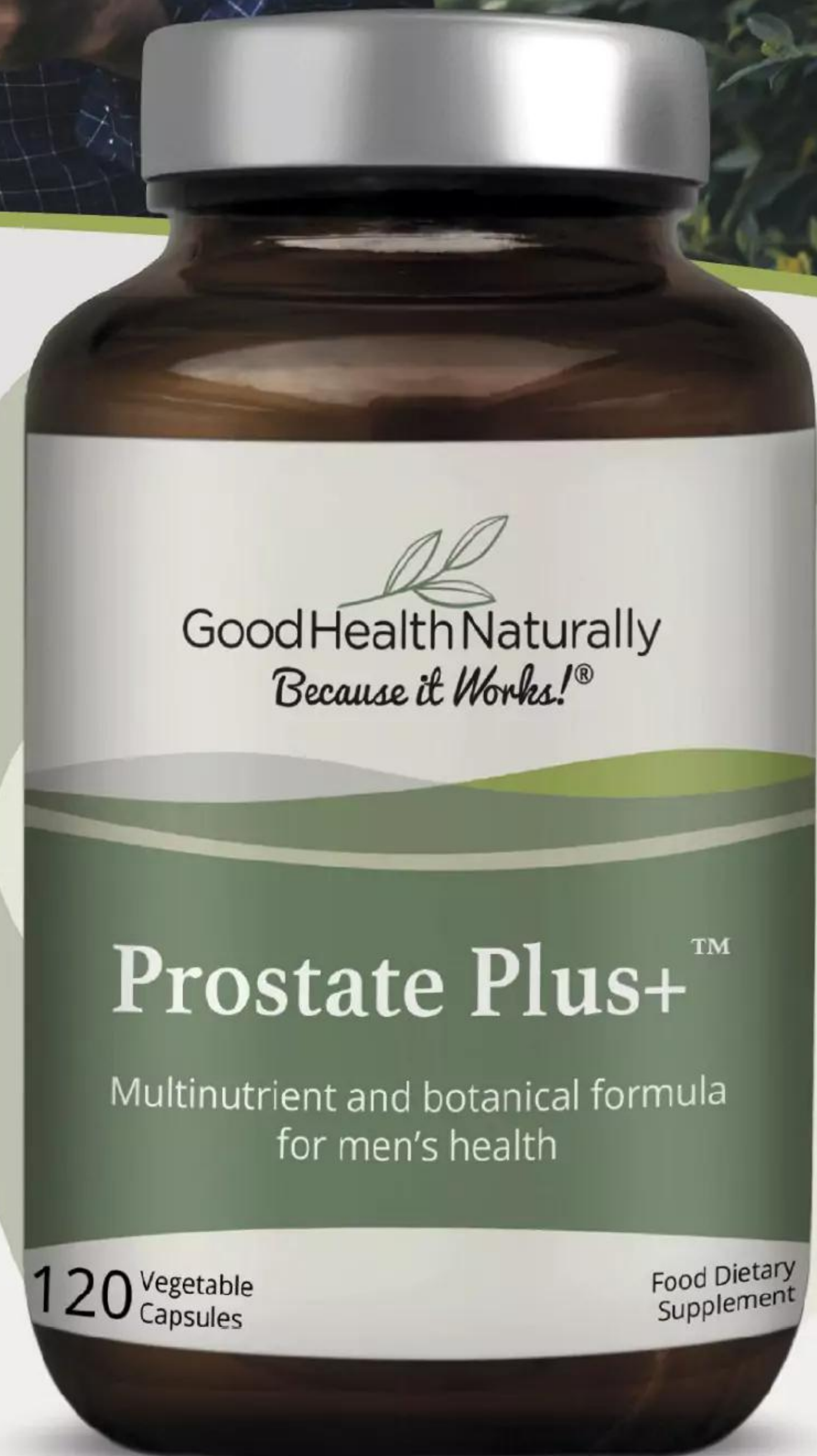
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H

ands up, anyone who wants to take a guess. What is the biggest risk factor for illness in modern times? Smoking? Big Macs? Alcohol?

None of them in excess is very good for you, that's for sure, but none of them may offer the health risks of one simple facet of modern life: being by yourself a bit too much.

As our cover story (page 40) details this month, loneliness and isolation are not just regrettable social situations; they're killers. They distort brain function, causing hallucinations and depression. They're the equivalent of smoking 15 cigarettes a day—worse for you than being obese, breathing polluted air or even being a couch potato.

Deep connection, rather than competition, is the quality most essential to human nature. As our reporter Celeste McGovern makes clear this month, it's one reason the Covid lockdowns were such a disastrous policy, far more dangerous than the virus itself.

Humanity is profoundly tribal; we feel most at home in small clusters in which we are a part of the whole. It's the most primal of human urges—not to stand apart but to connect, particularly with the people who immediately surround us.

It may well be so necessary to human existence that our failure to satisfy it can be a matter of life or death.

At the University of California, Berkeley, sociologist Lisa Berkman once examined the importance of social networks and social support in protection against heart disease. She assembled the health statistics of most inhabitants within an entire county by laboriously combing through nine years' worth of Alameda County Human Population Laboratory records.



Editors

Lynne McTaggart and Bryan Hubbard

COMMENT

ALL BY MYSELF

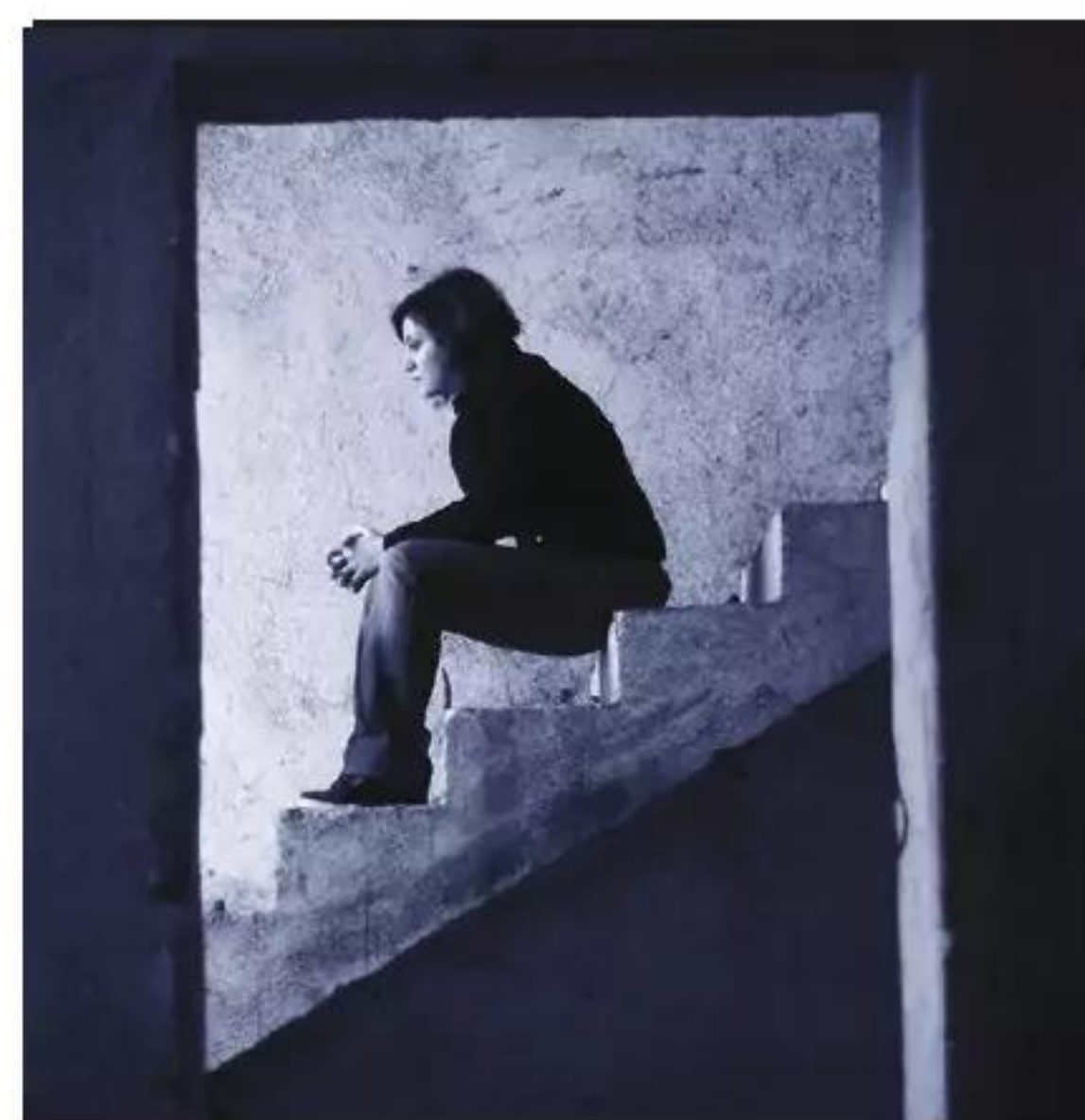
Eventually she was able to show that those who felt lonely and isolated socially were two to three times more likely to die from heart disease and other causes than those who felt connected to others.

These results were independent of risk factors such as high cholesterol levels or high blood pressure, smoking, and family history.

As Berkman was fascinated to learn, our biological responses

had no coronary heart disease or high blood pressure even after adopting Western diets and religious practices. This puzzled the researchers until they discovered the one factor that had remained constant: the social ties and roles within the family.

In that sense, heart disease can be viewed chiefly as a disease of emotional alienation. Healthy adults who have good support networks have been shown to have lower blood cholesterol



“Adults who have good support networks have lower cholesterol and stronger immune function”

to stress—the fight-or-flight mechanisms of our autonomic nervous and endocrine systems—are subdued when a companion is present, when we believe support will be present or even when we just think about having support.

And that can act like a bulletproof shield. For instance, a group of researchers studying the native populations of the Solomon Islands found they

levels and stronger immune function than those who don't have emotional support.

A similar situation occurs with stroke patients; those who are socially isolated are more likely to suffer from another stroke within five years.

Brigham Young University data from 148 studies came to an equally stark conclusion; relationships of any sort—good or bad—improve your odds of

survival by 50 percent. Isolation was equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day or being an alcoholic and was twice as harmful as obesity.

These sorts of social connections even protect us in hard times. One study showed a sampling of Americans in the lowest income bracket suffered from virtually no stress about the state of their finances so long as they had two means of support: a strong spiritual connection and a strong community.

The community connection was even more important than their spiritual beliefs; private prayer was not as protective as the support of their church group. Even when engaged in a daily struggle to survive, they were able to manage as long as they didn't do so alone.

This protection starts early. A close family structure and strong community support during childhood have been found to offer lifelong protection against heart disease and other illnesses.

As a simple antidote to the ever-increasing isolation of modern times, membership in social groups of every variety can act as one of nature's best preventive medicines. Social psychologists at the UK's University of Exeter discovered that the most important predictor of health—even more consequential than diet and exercise—is the number of groups to which you belong, particularly if you have strong relationships within them.

“As a rough rule of thumb,” writes Harvard political scientist Robert D. Putnam in his book *Bowling Alone* (Touchstone Books, 2000), “if you belong to no groups but decide to join one, you cut your risk of dying over the next year in half.”

The prescription against future illness of many varieties is simple: join a group—bowling group, book group, religious group, Power of Eight® group (see page 65)—and you immeasurably increase your chances of living a long and healthy life.

OUR LATEST REPORTS

NEW

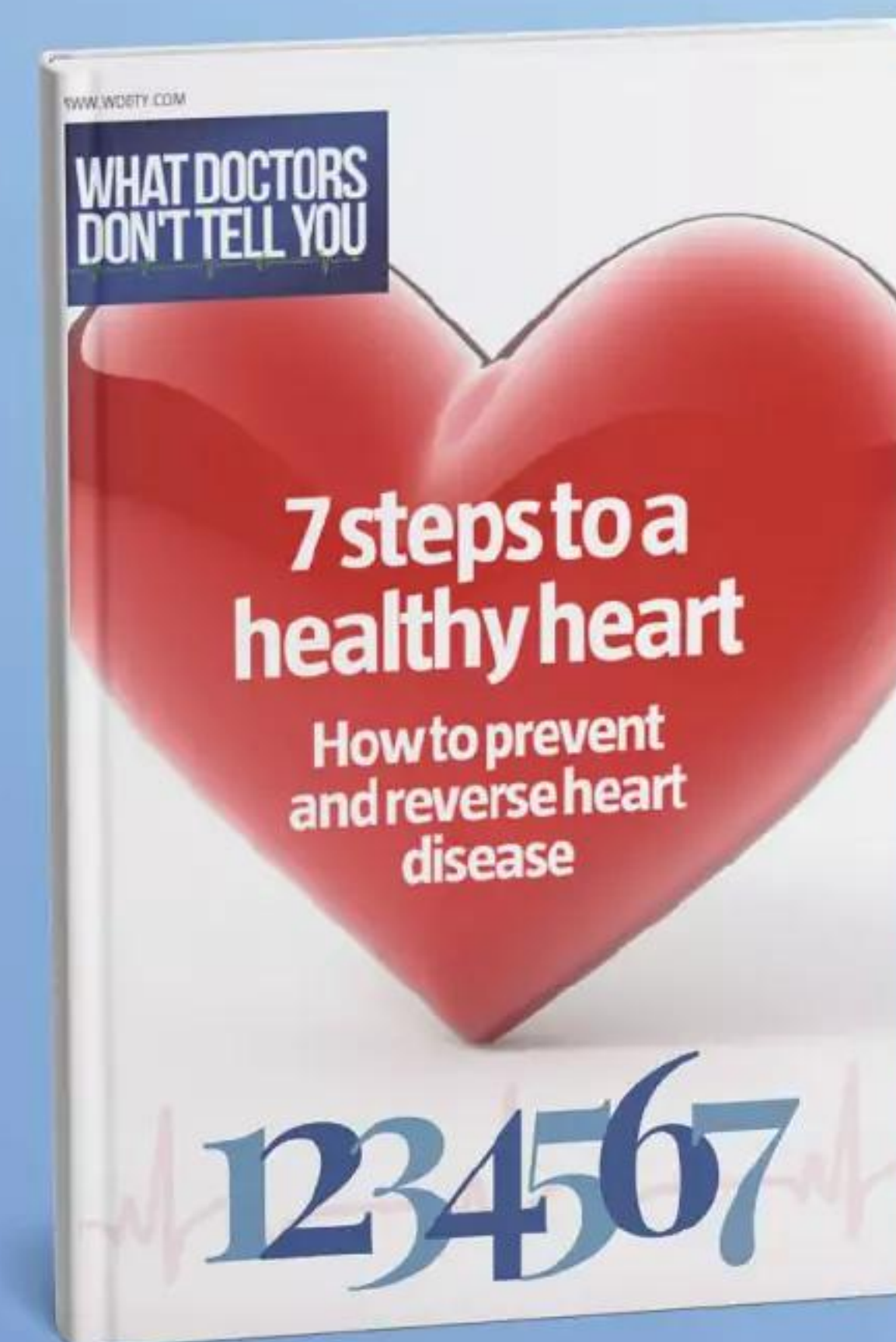


7 SECRETS TO LONGEVITY

We've trawled the *WDDTY* database—everything we've published since we launched as a magazine in 2012—to bring you what we consider the most important practices for living a long, disease-free life. Included in this handy PDF reference guide is advice on the best diets, supplements, simple but effective ways to stay fit, medical tests, drugs to avoid, and ways to detox your home and body from potentially disease-causing chemicals—all backed by scientific evidence.

7 STEPS TO A HEALTHY HEART

Heart disease kills one person every 34 seconds in the United States alone, but it doesn't have to be this way. Compiled from the best of *WDDTY* advice over the years, this report contains our top seven natural, practical recommendations you can put in place today to prevent and reverse heart disease.



MANAGING MENOPAUSE NATURALLY

Menopause is a natural part of aging and not something to be “fixed” or “cured.” But many women experience a multitude of symptoms as they go through this transition, which marks a time of tremendous change in a woman's hormonal balance. Here, we provide you with eight solutions to help you sail through the menopause drug-free.

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What you now get with your subscription



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).
- **Monthly *WDDTY* Talks:** you have free access to our monthly webinars. Each month we talk with a health pioneer, and you can ask a question about a specific health concern if you join the live session. Each talk is recorded, so you can watch at any time.
- **Search our database:** *WDDTY* has assembled one of the largest databases of alternative health information, and you can search every word of it.
- **Download e-books:** you can access 20 e-books, 12 reports and two fact sheets as part of your subscription, which you can download and store on your own PC.

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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Bodybuilding

Peptides make up proteins vital to the body's construction and function, Cate Montana reports. But do they make good medicine?

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Keep your hair on

Don't fret about thinning hair. Get to the root of hormone-related hair loss and restore full thickness and health with Marcelle Pick

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Out with gout

If you suffer from the legendary joint pain, get rid of it with these remedies and diet tips from homeopath David Needleman

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Asking for a friend

The effects of isolation are disturbing and dangerous, Celeste McGovern reports. Connection can save your health and even your life

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The art of coping

Germaine Hypher explores how creative expression and enjoyment can reduce stress and help you find your way through chronic illness



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Changing a habit takes two months to a year, not 21 days; daily sunshine benefits newborns' health; easing into peanut consumption can ease you out of peanut allergy

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A heart set on healing

Cardiac muscle heals without missing a beat after the mildest heart attacks, Bryan Hubbard says. Could this ability strike at the heart of the mega-killer heart disease?

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Go nuts for nuts

A handful of nuts every day can rev up your metabolism, fuel the brain, strengthen your bones and more

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The Cancer Doc

Diabetes and cancer have lots in common, says Dr Leigh Erin Connealy. But you don't have to be a party to that friendship



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Healthy shopping

Joanna Evans helps you seek out high-dose vitamin D, good company and your next creative outlet

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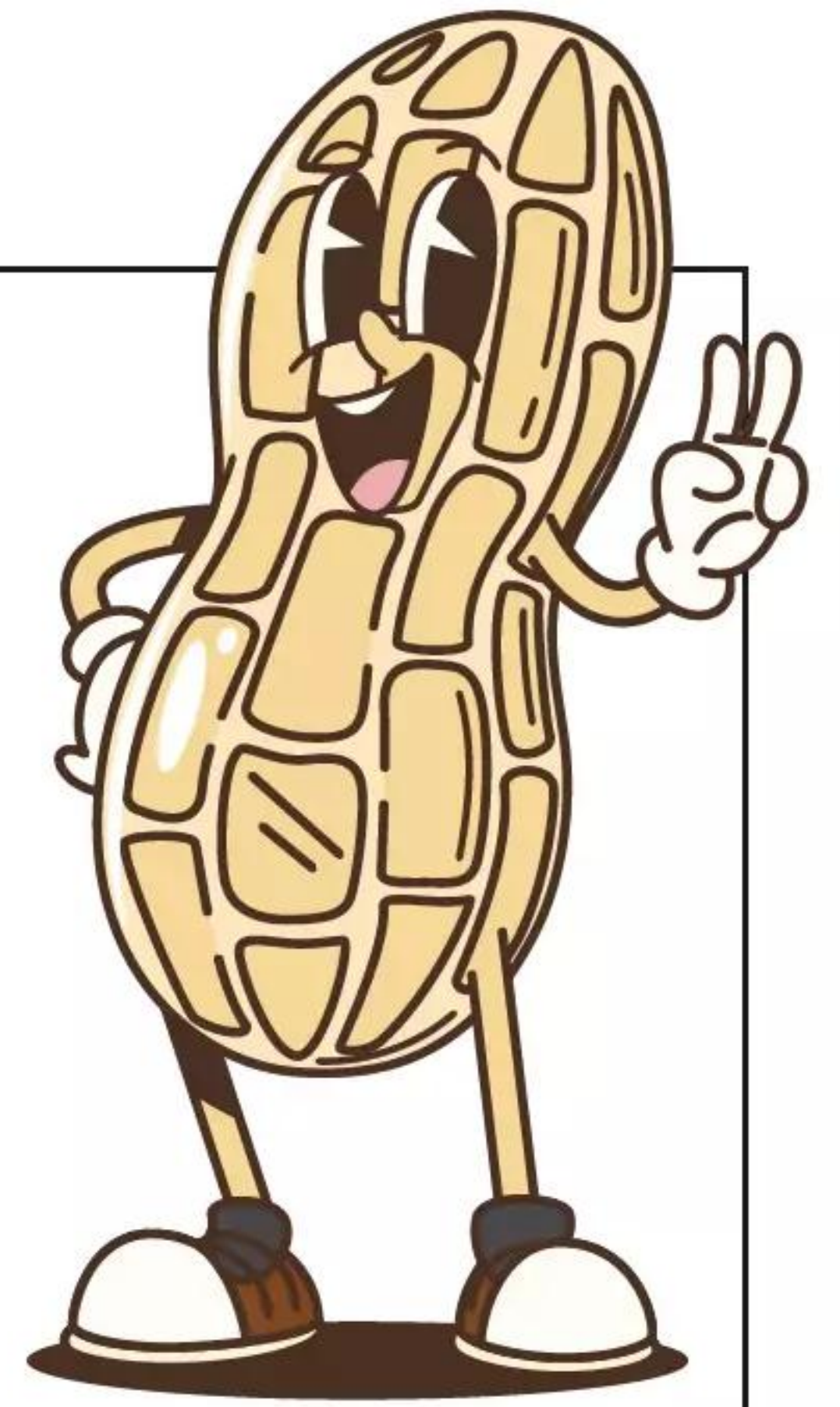
Members' offers

Discover the big discounts available to WDDTY subscribers and how to claim them

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The last word

The findings you read about in medical journals these days are unbelievable, says Bryan Hubbard. But not in a good way



Consuming small amounts of peanut butter can help people overcome a peanut allergy. It's a better strategy than avoiding any contact with peanuts because any accidental encounter could be fatal, researchers say

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Your views are important to us.

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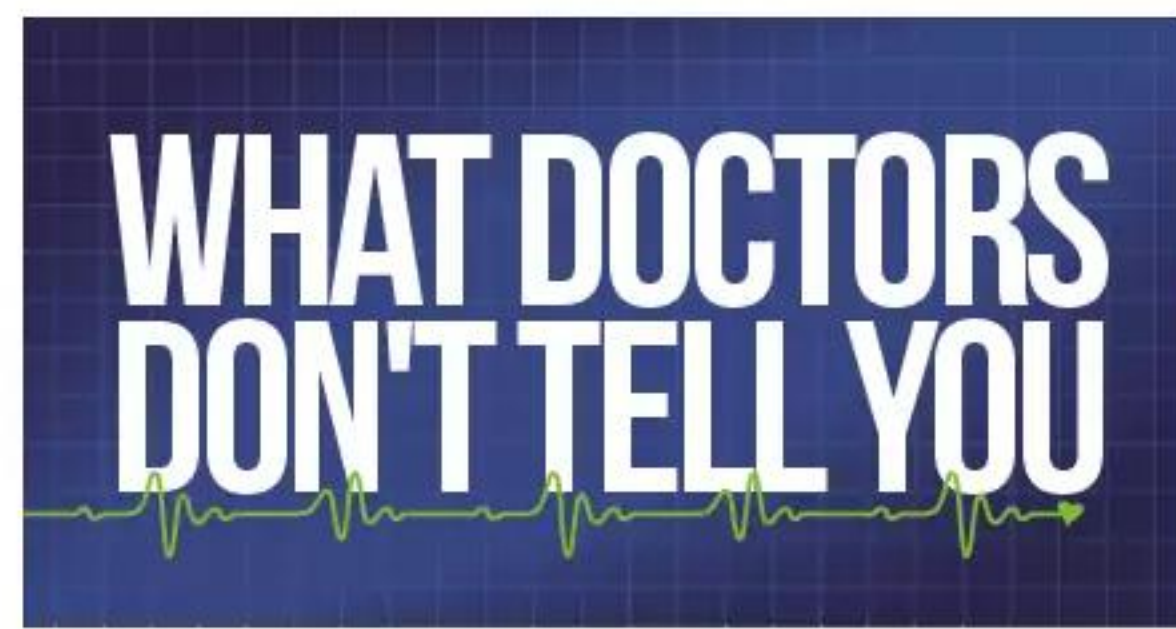
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EDITORIAL PANEL

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.



Dr Damien Downing, a specialist in allergy, environment and nutrition, is current president of the British Society for Ecological Medicine, on the editorial board of *Orthomolecular Medicine News Service*, Chief Medical Advisor of cancer charity Yes to Life (www.yestolife.org.uk), and author of numerous books including *The Vitamin Cure for Allergies*.



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



A cauldron of cures

Regarding your recent editor's letter "It's not science, but it works" (March 9, 2025), I agree with you with every fiber of my being.

Integrative healthcare is the way forward, and I speak as someone who is currently undergoing treatment for a condition which requires careful monitoring and expertise from a caring team of nurses and oncologists.

However, this didn't stop me using my years of homeopathic training during the radiotherapy sessions, etc. It was my decision, and mine alone. I wouldn't recommend others follow my path without consulting their medical team and/or a trained homeopath.

I also used Bach flower remedies during this time, and I'm a fully trained Reiki master teacher (now retired), but I'm still doing as much research as I need to. I've met a lot of practitioners over the years, and we even compiled a listing of tried and tested methods, so we had a wonderful network of treatment and information.

I do come up against the opinions and disbelief of others occasionally, but I'll leave you with this thought: My son-in-law, a runner in his spare time, decided to run home from the local Scottish pub instead of using his car one night, and it being dark, and he being a little unsteady, he fell into a ditch and damaged one of his toenails beyond repair (he thought).

When I arrived from Cambridgeshire the following day, he had already attended

the nearby hospital and scheduled an operation to remove the nail the next day. I tutted at him, as he always jokes that I've brought my "cauldron" when I arrive there.

I gave him homeopathic Arnica, several doses, and in the morning, all the damage was healed and there was no need for the operation.

What can I say? We saw it with our own eyes. That will have saved the NHS a packet, and my son-in-law was free to run another day! I have many more stories like this.

I started getting *WDDTY* many years ago because my uncle, a hypnotherapist, made me promise to subscribe to this magazine when he finally left the planet, and of course, I'm still fulfilling his wishes.

J Parkinson, via email

Come in from the cold

So the good effects of cold water therapy last "for just 12 hours" (Last Word, March 2025; also see page 18). I guess this is why I have the urge to swim every day (wave height permitting) and why I get a bit irritable if I can't.

But 10 minutes in an ice bath, especially for someone who is not already used to cold water, is absolutely insane. A Finnish friend, already hardened by winter swimming and ice dipping in her home country, stays in iced water for about three minutes. Ten minutes is enough to put anyone off, and I would hazard a guess that it might be quite dangerous, too.

Bryan was right not to try it!
S Stallard, via email

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.

Perimenopause symptoms

I'm 50, a vocal coach and in perimenopause, which is having an effect on my vocal health. It's not ideal, but when life gives you lemons...

I'm using this experience to take time out to understand why this is happening, so the March 2025 issue ("Sail Through Menopause") was timely for me.

I'm experiencing a dry throat and lack of flexibility, so I'm experimenting with wild yam tincture, reducing inflammation in my body and taking collagen. Early days. Would love to know what others are doing.

Simone

WDDTY replies Check out *WDDTY*'s report *Managing Menopause Naturally* (available via wddty.com) for eight solutions to help you sail through menopause drug-free.

Help for childhood eczema

Can anyone suggest treatment for eczema? My 11-year-old grandson has had it from birth, and it's very debilitating.

Brian

Replies from the *WDDTY* Community Patty suggests you take your grandson to see a functional doctor specializing in skin issues. They might be able to identify food and environmental intolerances to avoid to help him heal. Dee Emm's advice is to try dietary restrictions, such as avoiding processed foods and dairy products.

WDDTY replies See our July/August 2022, June 2020 and March 2019 issues for effective natural ways to beat eczema, or visit wddty.com to search our entire database online.

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.



Mum, let your newborn sunbathe for 30 minutes a day



Mums like to keep their newborns in the shade when the sun is shining; it's a natural protective instinct. But just 30 minutes of sun on baby's face every day could make a big difference in their health.

Getting some sunshine in the first year of life is key, and the same goes for the mum-to-be, who should be doing a little sunbathing before the birth, especially during the second trimester. Like baby, she should be getting at least 30 minutes of

sun every day during the summer months.

Researchers from the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia looked at the impact of sunshine on multiple sclerosis (MS), although it can protect against a range of health problems. They recruited 334 children and adolescents aged four to 21 who had been diagnosed with MS and whose symptoms had come on within the past four years. During the three years of the study,

206 suffered a relapse—but it happened in only 34 of the 75 children who'd had 30 minutes to an hour of daily sun exposure in their first year.

Sun exposure reduced the risk of relapse from 65 percent to 45 percent, the researchers estimated. And mothers who also had sun exposure during their pregnancies reduced the risk of MS relapse in their child by 32 percent.

Neurol Neuroimmunol Neuroinflamm, 2025; 12(2): e200375

YOGURT REDUCES COLON CANCER RISK



Regularly eating yogurt could reduce your risk of colon cancer—a cancer whose rates are rising alarmingly in the young.

Eating yogurt at least twice a week over the long term slowly changes the gut microbiome. It may make people less susceptible to some types of colorectal or colon cancer, say researchers from Mass General Brigham.

Yogurt populates the gut with **bifidobacteria**, which seem to play a significant part in preventing the development of some types of colorectal cancer, especially proximal cancer, which affects the right side of the colon. Proximal cancer is also more lethal than distal, or left-sided, cancer.

The researchers looked at the impact of yogurt on colorectal cancer in more than 150,000 healthcare workers whose health has been tracked since 1975. Overall, those eating two or more servings of yogurt a week were 20 percent less likely to develop the cancer.

Gut Microbes, 2025; 17(1): 2452237

Probiotics help combat UTIs

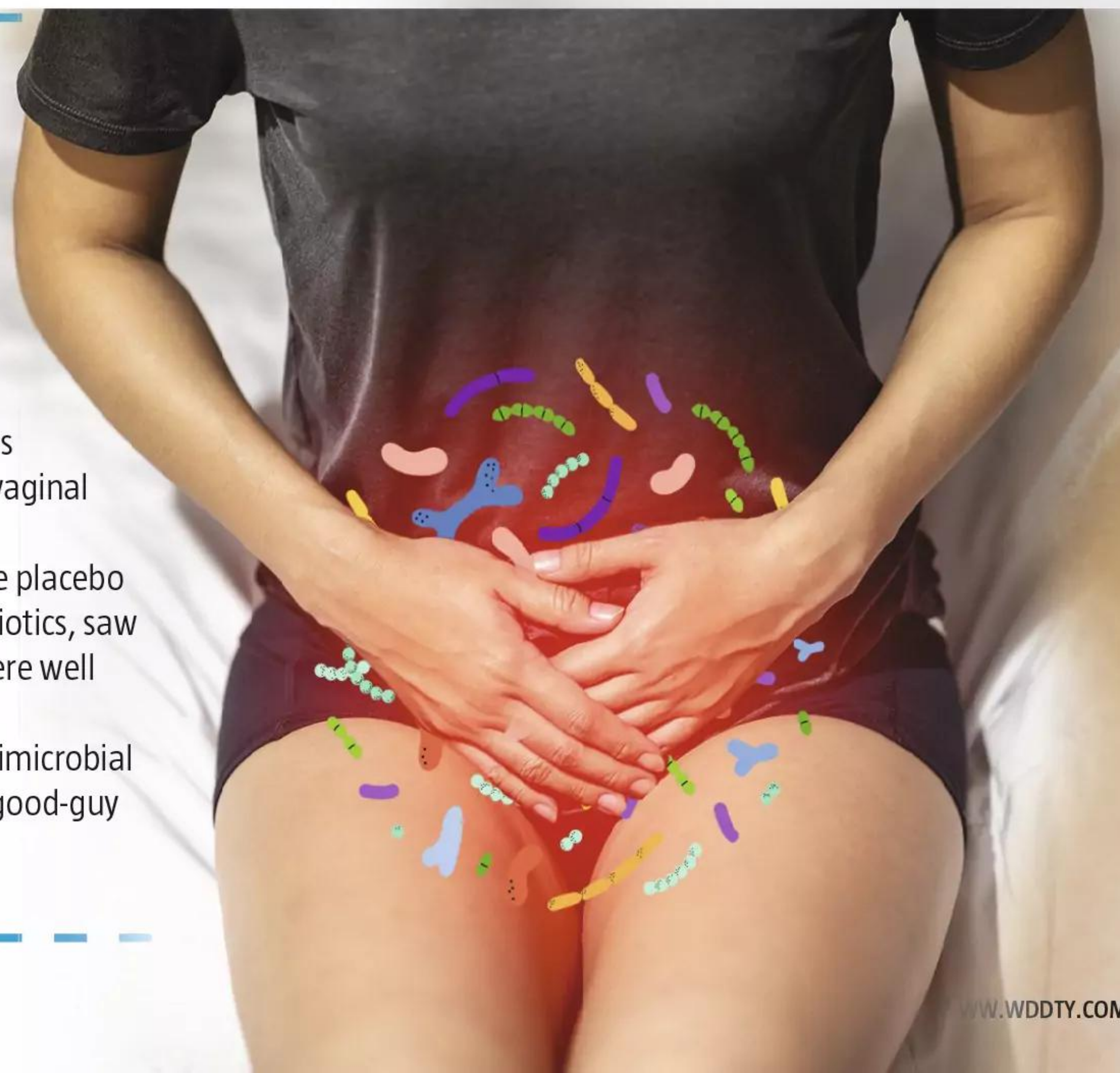
If you're prone to urinary tract infections (UTIs)—those nasty bacterial infections that typically cause burning pain when urinating—give probiotics a go to stop them coming back. A new study has found that probiotics containing **lactobacilli**, taken orally or vaginally, reduce the recurrence of UTIs and prolong the time between infections.

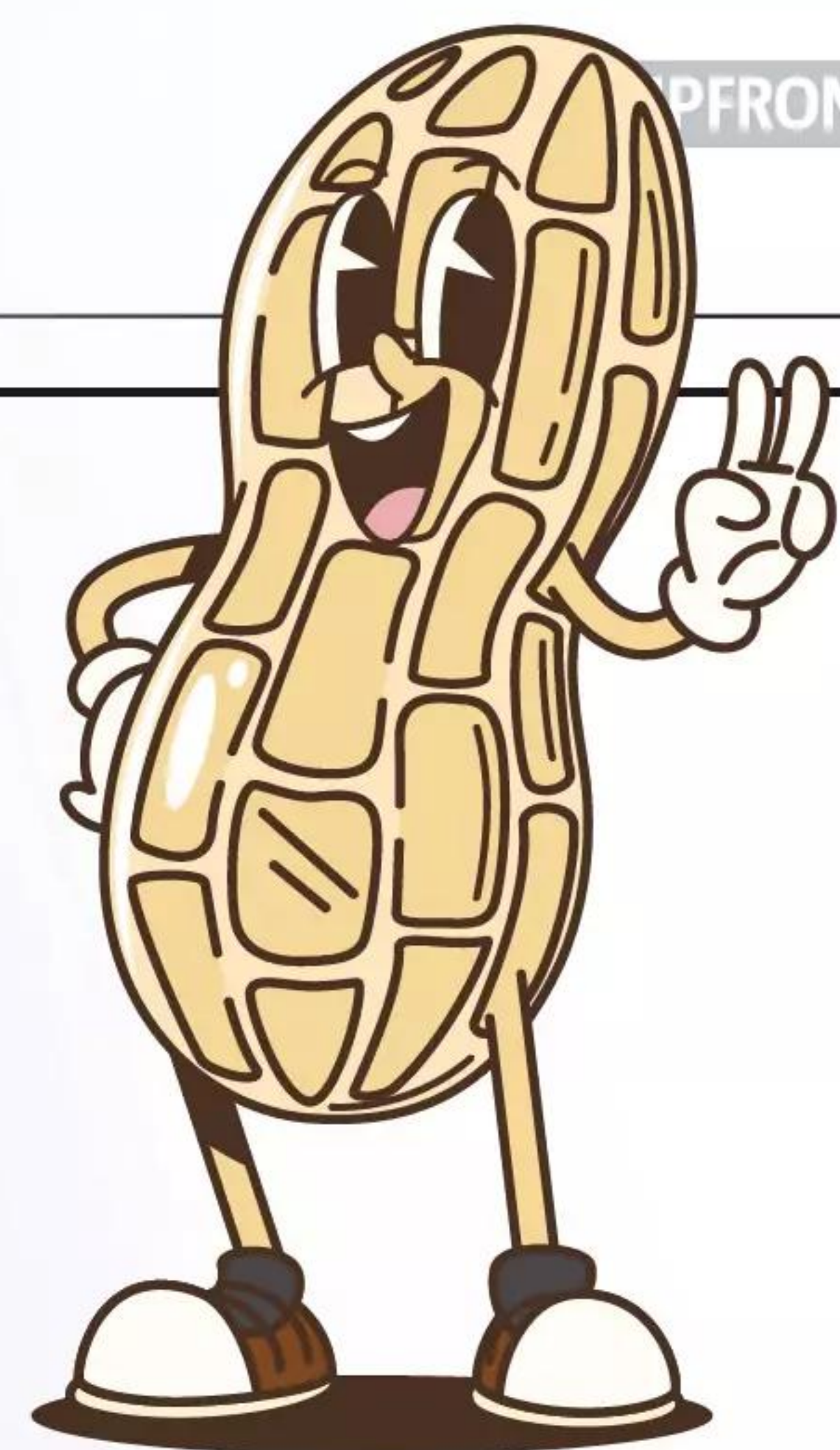
Researchers from the Government Medical College and Hospital in India enrolled 174 premenopausal women with a history of recurrent UTIs and randomly assigned them to four treatment groups: oral probiotics, vaginal probiotics, a combination of oral and vaginal probiotics, or a placebo.

The women in the probiotic groups all experienced fewer UTIs than the placebo group. But those taking vaginal probiotics, either alone or with oral probiotics, saw the greatest benefit. The researchers also reported that the probiotics were well tolerated with no serious adverse effects.

Lactobacilli are the most common bacteria in the vagina and have antimicrobial properties that help keep infections at bay, so it makes sense that these good-guy bacteria can help with UTIs.

Clin Infect Dis, 2024; 78(5): 1154–1161





Microdosing can reverse peanut allergy

Consuming small amounts of peanut butter can help people overcome the life-threatening allergy. It's a better strategy than avoiding any contact with peanuts because any accidental encounter could be fatal, say researchers from the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Hospital.

Microdosing—and slowly increasing the amount—is an effective therapy for people who can tolerate digesting half a peanut, considered a high-threshold peanut allergy that affects around 800,000 children in the US.

Around half of people who are allergic to nuts suffer from a high-threshold allergy, and they can be helped by microdosing. For their study, the researchers recruited 73 children, who either microdosed or avoided nuts. Those given peanuts started with 1/8 teaspoon of peanut butter every day, then increased the dose slightly every eight weeks until they were eating 1 tablespoon by the end of the 18-month study.

In a follow-up test, after avoiding peanut butter for eight weeks, all 32 of the children in the microdosing group were still able to consume 9 g, or almost 2 teaspoons, of peanut butter in one go.

NEJM Evidence, 2025; doi: 10.1056/EVIDoa2400306

Floss to reduce your risk of stroke

Even flossing just once a week reduces the chances of ischemic stroke (when a blood clot reaches the brain) by 22 percent, and of cardioembolic stroke (when a blood clot travels from the heart) by as much as 44 percent.

Good dental hygiene, which includes flossing and regular brushing, also reduces the threat of irregular heartbeat, or atrial fibrillation (AFib), which can lead to stroke, heart failure and other heart problems, say researchers from the University of South Carolina School of Medicine.

They have been tracking the dental habits of 6,258 people since 1987; of those who flossed, 4,092 had not suffered a stroke and 4,050 had not been diagnosed with irregular heartbeat.

Healthy gums and teeth reduce inflammation and keep the heart healthy, the researchers say.

Stroke, 2025; 56(suppl1): 19



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HCA Graduate Health Coach, Nicki

"Health coaching has opened up a whole new world for me; I have learnt so much at such an in-depth level about health and wellbeing for the whole body. My own health has improved massively. I'm graduating with paying clients and have launched health coaching at my existing Aromatherapy business to complement my clients health journeys!"

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COMPENSATION BOARDS NOT PAYING OUT ON COVID VACCINE INJURIES

Compensation boards aren't paying out to those who have been permanently injured by one of the Covid-19 vaccinations.

In the UK, around 17,500 people have applied to the Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme (VDPS) for compensation, but just 188 have received payments. Even those whose claims are believed still must demonstrate at least a 60 percent disability from the vaccine.

The US's Countermeasures Injury Compensation Program (CICP), a subset of the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Board, says less than 3 percent of claims are even eligible, suggesting the vast majority are thrown out in the initial stages of review. It has seen a 27-times rise in claims, mainly from the Covid mRNA and H1N1 flu jabs, but of the 13,333 injury claims it has received, the board has paid out on just 92.

The UK's languid Covid inquiry recently heard from victims of the vaccinations—mainly the AstraZeneca jab—and their family members. Kelly Hatfield, who set up the Vaccine Injured and Bereaved UK (VIBUK) campaigning group after her father died from a reaction to a Covid vaccine, told the inquiry, "We trusted the government, we trusted the science and we have suffered devastating consequences."

UK health secretary Wes Streeting wants to lower the bar for compensation far below the current level. In a letter to Kate Scott, the wife of a man who was left with permanent brain damage after getting the AstraZeneca jab, Streeting said he's planning an urgent review of the compensation scheme.

"There is no other word for this than ludicrous. If your injury equates to just 10 percent change, that's life-changing for you. It might mean you can't work anymore," he wrote.

Jim Wappes, "Review of US Vaccine Injury Reimbursement Program Shows Less Than 3% of Claims Eligible for Compensation," Dec 19, 2024, cidrap.umn.edu



Ventilators are spreading viruses in hospitals

Patients who weren't infected when they were admitted are catching viruses such as SARS-CoV-2—responsible for the Covid-19 pandemic—and seasonal flu during their hospital stays. Researchers from University College London suspect it's due to the use of ventilators.

They tracked the spread of aerosols around a typical clinic that was using mechanical ventilators and portable air cleaners (PACs). Ventilators increased aerosol spread nearly six times, while PACs increased it by 29 percent.

Even simple measures such as closing the doors to the clinic reduced the spread by as much as 97 percent, the researchers found.

AerosolSciTechnol, 2025; doi: 10.1080/02786826.2024.2446587

Heart disease is still the major killer in the US

Nobody is getting the memo: Heart disease is still the major killer in the US, and that's down to poor diets and lifestyle choices. The chronic illness kills more Americans than cancers and accidents combined.

Every 34 seconds, an American dies from heart disease, which is responsible for around 2,500 deaths every day in the US, researchers from the American Heart Association say.

According to the association's 2022 figures, the latest available, 941,652 Americans died from cardiovascular disease, an increase of around 10,000 from the previous year.

The death toll is unlikely to abate anytime soon. Around 47 percent of Americans have high blood pressure, 72 percent are obese or overweight, and 57 percent have type 2 diabetes or prediabetes, which are precursors of heart disease.

Circulation, 2025; 151(8): e41–e660



IN THE UK, AROUND 17,500 PEOPLE HAVE APPLIED FOR VACCINE INJURY COMPENSATION, BUT JUST 188 HAVE RECEIVED PAYMENTS.
IN THE US, 13,333 CLAIMS HAVE BEEN FILED, A 27-TIMES RISE, BUT THE BOARD HAS PAID OUT ON JUST 92

“This miracle gel cured my knee pain in just 1 week.”

No more knee pain for Rita, thanks to Advance 7 she can once again enjoy her beautiful garden



Report by M. Mackness

Mrs Rita Gravesande, London, aged 79

Sitting with Rita at her home in South London it is incredible to think that she turns 80 later this year.

A couple of years ago she suffered with excruciating knee pain, so bad that she could hardly walk and getting up and down stairs was agonising.

Yet today when she opened the front door and took me through to her living room I was in no doubt that this woman is as fit as a fiddle and clearly had no knee problems.

I was eager to find out more about the ‘miracle’ that turned her life around!

Mother of two, grandmother to six and great grand mother to four, she told me what happened...

“About two years ago I started to get pains in my left knee. I am not one to feel sorry for myself, so tried not to take any notice of it.

The pain had got worse and worse

“I am very active, always busy and on my feet most of the day. But as the weeks went by the pain got worse and worse, to the point where I couldn’t ignore it any more.

“It was painful to walk, I couldn’t bend my knee and getting up and down stairs was awful. My husband Laurel persuaded me to go to the doctors, who sent me to have an MRI scan.

“The MRI revealed that I had arthritis in my knee, the doctor said this was through general wear and tear and probably due to wearing high heels when I worked at the Stock Exchange years ago.

“The doctor prescribed me with anti-inflammatories and painkillers!

“I can tell you that was the last thing I wanted to hear, I don’t like taking pill, never have done – I grew up on a farm and we used to take natural remedies if we were ever poorly.

I prayed that I wouldn’t have to use a walking stick.

“I decided there and then that I was not going to touch the pills. But there were days when the pain got so bad, I was desperate to find some relief. I prayed that I wouldn’t have to use a walking stick.

“That’s when I heard about Advance 7 gel. I read a news paper article that said it contained all natural ingredients and that it could help with arthritis.

“I ordered a couple of tubes to try it out, the first few days I rubbed it on, but didn’t find much relief.

“I then read the instructions that came with it – it said it should be massaged in directly at the point of pain for a good few minutes, twice a day.

I massaged in the gel twice a day

“I did exactly what it said, every day, twice a day. Straight away I noticed the difference, and was very pleased. I thought, don’t expect miracles in just a week, but it was!

“And as the weeks went by the results were amazing, the swelling dramatically reduced and the pain disappeared.

I couldn’t believe it, it worked!

“This gel works wonders, I can now get up and down stairs no problem, the inflammation has completely gone and I can do all the things that I love doing.

“I am back exercising, I do lots of stretching, but now I can kneel on the floor, which I haven’t been able to do for years!

“I love this product, I tell every one about it, I sent some to my daughter in Canada who suffers with back pain, she loves it too.

“I’m always telling my friends to try it – if it works for me at 79, it will work for them too. “I tell them two things, there is no point just rubbing over the joint, that’s pointless, what you need to do, is massage it in so that it penetrates into the painful area.

Make it part of your daily routine

“The other thing I tell them is to persevere, make it part of your daily routine. I use it after I’ve had a shower in the morning and at the end of the day, when I have done every thing I need to do, I put my feet up and do the massage.

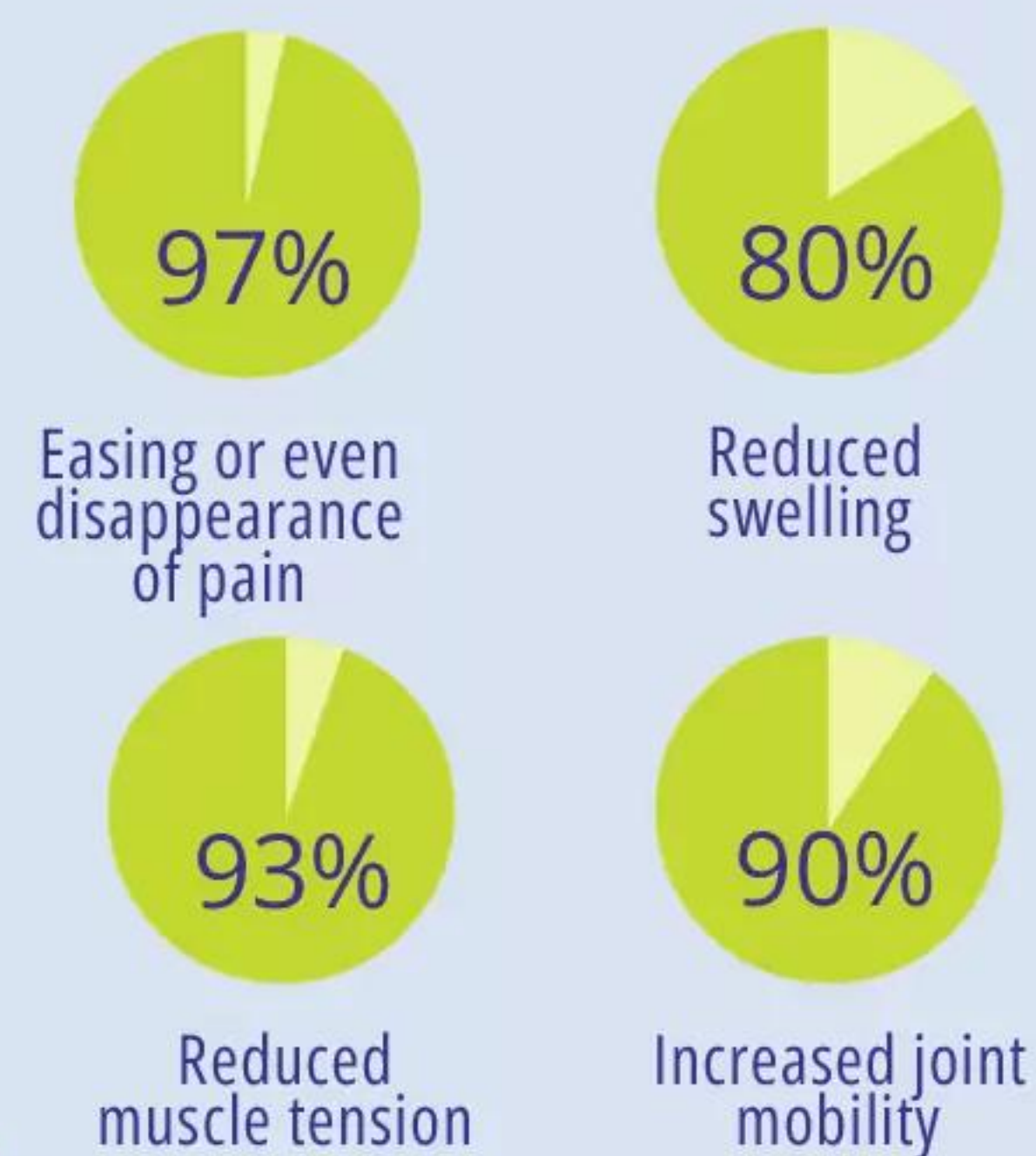
“Some people are looking for a quick fix and rely on taking pills, but what I say is persevere with this natural treatment, use it everyday, twice a day and it will work, don’t give up. I wouldn’t be without it.”



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Change your diet to improve PCOS symptoms

Many women suffer from PCOS (polycystic ovary syndrome), and medicine's response can be brutal. Oral contraceptives and the anti-diabetes drug metformin are standard treatments — but a change of diet can be just as effective, and without debilitating side effects.

As metformin typically causes gastrointestinal problems, the drug adds to the problems caused by PCOS, such as insulin insensitivity, irregular periods, excess facial and body hair, infertility and obesity.

Researchers from India analyzed 80 studies that had looked at the impact of various diets on PCOS and how they tackled insulin sensitivity, one of the key drivers of PCOS symptoms.

They discovered four diets could improve symptoms, and without the drugs:

A low-Glycemic Index (GI) diet focuses on limiting carbohydrate-containing foods according to how much they increase blood sugar. It can improve insulin resistance, reduce androgen levels and increase ovulatory cycles.

A ketogenic diet featuring high fat, adequate protein and low carbohydrates can lower androgen levels and improve reproductive hormone levels, insulin sensitivity and sex hormone-binding globulin (SHBG) levels. Low SHBG can lead to PCOS symptoms like facial hair and acne.

An omega-3-rich diet including foods like salmon, mackerel, sardines, nuts, chia seeds and flaxseed oil can improve insulin resistance as well as levels of adiponectin, a protein hormone known for its insulin-sensitizing and anti-inflammatory effects. PCOS sufferers often have low levels of this hormone.

A high-fiber diet including plenty of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds is associated with less insulin resistance and lower fasting insulin and androgen levels.

Besides dietary changes, other lifestyle modifications can have a significant impact on PCOS, the researchers said. Exercise, particularly aerobic exercise such as brisk walking, running, cycling or swimming; supplements including omega-3s, probiotics and vitamin D; and behavioral interventions like talking therapies and stress management techniques can all be beneficial.

Nutrients, 2025; 17(2): 310

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Thinking about being alone triggers depression

There's being alone—and then there's always thinking about being alone, and it's the latter that can cause depression. Lonely people who didn't have constant negative thoughts about being alone were far less likely to develop depression than those who did, researchers from the University of Hong Kong found.

They studied the effects of Covid lockdowns on 900 people in Hong Kong and China who lived alone and who followed the strict lockdown guidelines. Using psychological measures, they were able to identify those who ruminated about their loneliness and found they were much more likely to suffer from depression than those who didn't.

For more on loneliness, see page 40.

Nat Mental Health, 2024; 3: 46–57



21 days to change a habit? It's more like two months and counting

It's something every self-development guru likes to tell us—do something for 21 days, and you'll start a new and hopefully better habit. But the truth is it takes a lot longer; new habits start to develop only after two months or more, say researchers from the University of South Australia.

They can take between 59 and 66 days to form, and then you need to keep doing them for 335 days before they're fully embedded in your daily routine. It's important to

know that new habits take a long time to establish, and people shouldn't give up if they've reached the 21-day mark but still aren't seeing any benefits.

The researchers worked with 2,600 people who wanted to create better health habits, such as improving their diet. They found the morning is the best time to introduce your new habit, and it also helps if you enjoy the change. Planning can play a part, too, such as laying out your exercise gear the night before you go to the gym or preparing a healthy meal for tomorrow's lunch.

Healthcare (Basel), 2024; 12(23): 2488



A poor diet makes us biologically older than our actual age. Biological aging can start early in life, when we're just 20 years old, say researchers from the University of Jyväskylä and the University of Helsinki in Finland.

They carried out a unique study assessing the impact of a poor diet on 363 sets of twins aged 20–25. One twin ate a diet including lots of vegetables and fruits or an average balanced diet, while the other consumed mostly processed and fast food, sugary drinks, and processed meats.

Although the twins had similar genetic backgrounds, only the one eating the bad diet started to age biologically, the researchers found.

Clin Nutr, 2025; 45: 10–21



New suicide warnings on SSRI antidepressants after royal family death

Warnings about the risk of suicide from SSRI (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor) antidepressants could be strengthened after a relative of the UK's royal family took his own life while on the drug.

Coroner Katy Skerrett, who was investigating the death of Thomas Kingston, said people should be better informed about the dangers of SSRIs, and especially the increased risk of suicide. She sent her warning to the UK's drug regulators and has urged them to "take action" to stop further deaths.

Thomas, the son-in-law of Prince and Princess Michael of Kent, committed suicide last year while taking Zoloft (sertraline), an SSRI. He had been on the drug for just three weeks when he shot himself.

Coroner Skerrett also questioned whether it was appropriate to persist with the drugs when there was no notable benefit.

SSRIs were developed on the theory that depressed people don't have enough of the "happy chemical," serotonin, in their brains, but the theory has never been proven. Nobody has been able to define the "right" amount of serotonin, let alone how to measure levels, and psychiatry's bible of mental disorders, the DSM, doesn't even mention a chemical imbalance as a possible cause of depression.

A landmark study by UK psychiatrist Joanna Moncrieff couldn't find any evidence that low serotonin had anything to do with depression, and she concluded that depression and anxiety have nothing to do with the brain itself but are natural responses to life's shocks, slings and arrows. People need to learn how to cope with disappointments and tragedies rather than pop a pill, she says.

The lack of evidence hasn't stopped the SSRI bandwagon. Around 35 million Americans and nearly 9 million Britons regularly take the medications, and any benefits are a placebo response, studies have demonstrated.

Victoria Ward, "Coroner Warns of Antidepressants Suicide Risk After Death of Lady Gabriella Windsor's Husband," Jan 10, 2025, telegraph.co.uk

Ice-cold bath benefits last just 12 hours

Cold plunges and cold-water therapy reduce stress levels, as their advocates avow, but the effects are fleeting. On the other hand, the health benefits of a cold shower—such as 29 percent fewer coughs and colds—can last longer, for up to three months, say researchers from the University of South Australia.

Paradoxically, an ice bath increases inflammation levels even though it's the go-to therapy for athletes who want to avoid muscle damage after a strenuous workout.

The researchers analyzed data from 11 studies that had tracked the impact of cold-water immersion on 3,177 people. They concluded that the therapy does lower stress,

improve sleep and boost quality of life—but only for a short while.

The researchers detected lower stress only at the 12-hour mark but not at one hour, 24 hours or 48 hours after the dip. However, taking a cold shower for up to 90 seconds improves overall quality of life, and this effect takes three months to wear off.

An icy bath initially increases inflammation levels, so people with preexisting health problems should think twice before plunging in. This paradoxical effect makes sense for a healthy athlete as it trains the body to cope with higher levels of inflammation, which helps the body recover after a workout.

PLoS One, 2025; 20(1): e0317615



Measles a disease of malnutrition that MMR can't stop

Measles is a disease of malnutrition—and especially inadequate levels of vitamin A—that vaccination can't prevent, a new study has discovered. Children who are malnourished don't have antibodies to protect them from measles even if they've been vaccinated.

Researchers from McGill University and the University of California at Berkeley analyzed measles antibodies in 600 children in South Africa who had all been given the MMR jab. By the time they were five years old, their antibody levels were at least 24 percent lower than in children who were well nourished, some of whom hadn't been vaccinated.

A healthy diet influences the MMR's level of protection, the researchers said.

Vaccine, 2025; 46: 126564



DEMENTIA NEWS



Visit a friend and reduce your risk of dementia

Get out and meet people. It can help ward off dementia and could add three years to your life.

People who socialize—such as by visiting friends, going to church or being part of a social group—are 38 percent less likely to develop dementia. They also reduce their

risk of mild cognitive decline by 21 percent.

Every five-year delay in developing dementia adds around three years to your life, say researchers from Rush University Medical Center. They tracked the health of 1,923 people who had an average age of 80 and were not suffering from any dementia or cognitive decline at the beginning of the study.

Over the following five years, 545 of the participants went on to develop dementia and 695 suffered cognitive problems. Those

who were the most socially active were the least likely to suffer either condition, the researchers found. Social activities they measured included dining out, going to sports events, playing bingo, taking short trips, visiting friends or family, and doing volunteer work.

The researchers aren't sure why social activity keeps us mentally sharp, but they suspect it involves complex interpersonal exchanges that strengthen neural circuits in the brain.

Alzheimers Dement, 2024; 21(1): e14316

Processed red meat increases your risk of dementia

If processed red meat—such as bacon and sausages—is a staple of your diet, you're more likely to suffer from cognitive decline and dementia when you're older.

The good news is that it's never too late. Replacing the meats with other protein sources can reverse some of the damage, say researchers from Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston.

They tracked the rates of dementia among 133,771 healthy people with an average age of 49. By the end of the 43-year study, 11,173 of the participants had dementia, and the researchers estimated the risk increased 13 percent for those who consumed the most processed meats—an ounce or more every day—compared to those who ate the least.

Similarly increased risks were seen in those who ate unprocessed red meat, such as lamb or beef. Those who ate red meat every day were 16 percent more likely to suffer cognitive decline than those who ate it less frequently.

Replacing one daily serving of processed meat with nuts and legumes lowered the risk of dementia by 19 percent and almost fully stopped brain aging. Substituting fish for a serving of meat lowered the dementia risk by 28 percent.

Processed meat may increase the risk of type 2 diabetes and heart disease, which in turn can affect brain health and cognition.

Neurology, 2025; 104(3): e210286

Dementia risk twice as high as believed

Dementia is on the rise in the US. People have a 42 percent risk of dementia once they reach age 55, say researchers at New York University's Langone Health.

The risk—double the estimates from earlier studies—translates into more than 500,000 new cases of dementia each year in the US, and this is anticipated to increase to more than 1 million new cases among the over-55s by 2060. By age 75, one in two people will develop dementia.

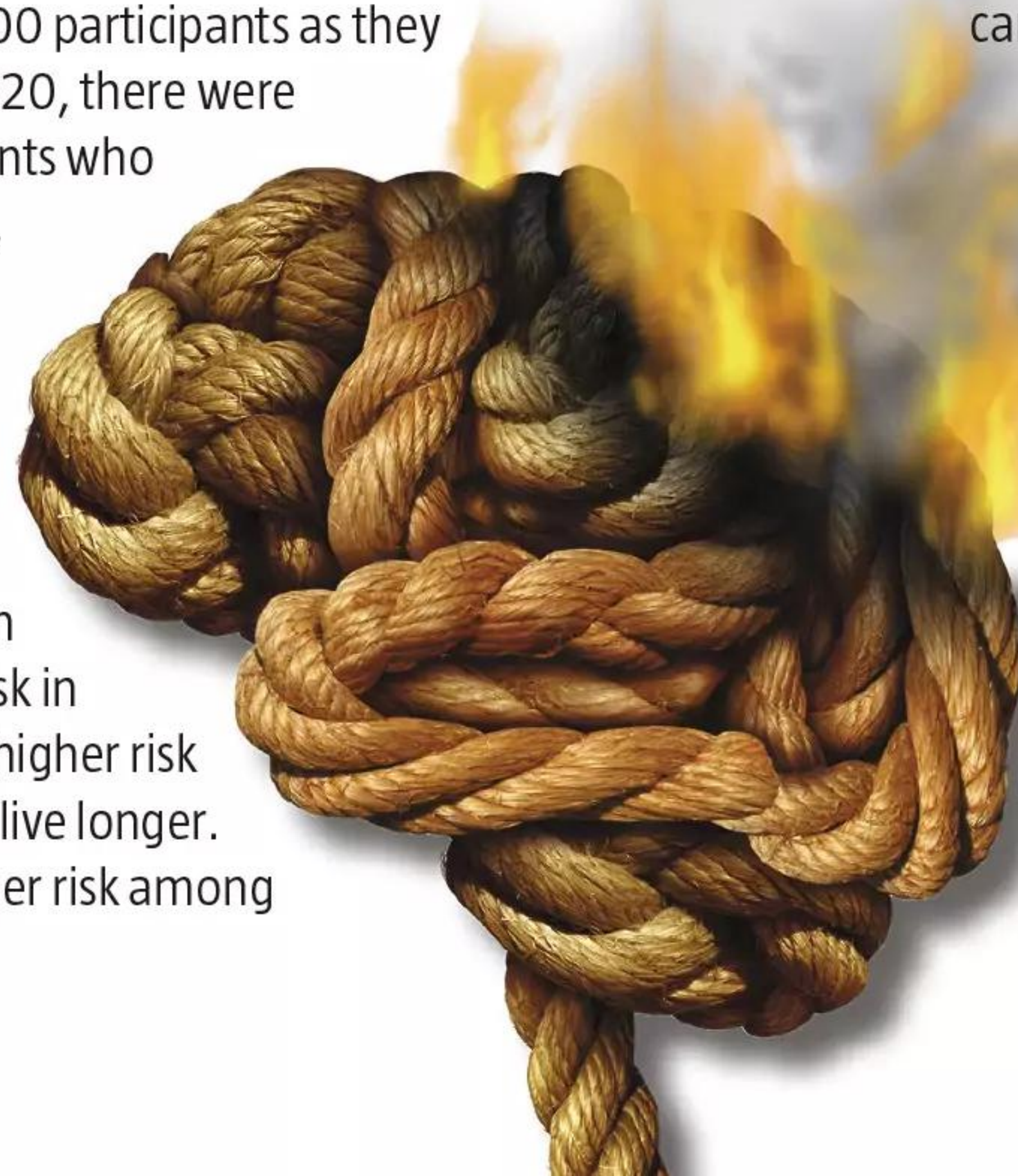
The researchers tracked the rate of dementia from the Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities

Neurocognitive Study (ARIC-NCS), which since 1987 has tracked the vascular health and cognitive function of over 15,000 participants as they age. From 1987 to 2020, there were 3,252 study participants who developed dementia, which translates into a lifetime risk of 42 percent.

The number is an average of the 35 percent risk in men and the 48 percent risk in women, who have a higher risk because they tend to live longer. There was also a higher risk among

Black adults and those who carried a variant of the *APOE4* gene, which codes for a protein that carries cholesterol and other lipids in the bloodstream. Having a certain version of *APOE4* is thought to be the single biggest genetic risk factor in developing late-onset Alzheimer's disease.

Nat Med, 2025; doi: 10.1038/s41591-024-03340-9



The broken heart that heals itself

The heart can naturally heal itself after a heart attack—and it happens in around 20 percent of all cases. Now researchers are investigating the phenomenon that could herald the end of the world's number one killer

One in five people who suffer a heart attack (myocardial infarction) never know they've had one. They go on living normally, and all the while the heart is repairing itself, a process that can take anything from two weeks to three months.

But this phenomenon doesn't happen to everyone who suffers a heart attack. The heart's ability to heal depends on the damage the attack causes in the first place. Of the roughly 805,000 Americans who suffer a heart attack every year, 604,000 suffer a catastrophic attack that results in death or permanent disability—the usual outcomes we associate with a heart attack. But more than 200,000 have a “silent attack” that causes mild damage and allows the heart to heal itself.

The heart can also be damaged after heart failure—when the heart can't pump enough blood around the body—and this is far more common, affecting more than 64 million people around the world.

These silent survivors are intriguing medical researchers. What conditions are needed to allow the heart to heal itself, and how come some hearts

THE PHASES OF A HEART ATTACK

A heart attack isn't usually a sudden, catastrophic incident. It's often far more gradual and passes through four phases. The phase when the heart attack happens could also be a key factor in the heart's ability to start healing.

- 1. Fixed coronary stenosis: narrowing or constriction of a coronary artery**
- 2. Acute plaque change: a change in any plaques lining the artery, by either rupture or hemorrhage**
- 3. Coronary artery thrombosis: development of a blood clot that cuts off some or all blood flow to the heart**
- 4. Vasoconstriction: a constriction of blood vessels that increases blood pressure by slowing or blocking the flow of blood**

switch on this ability, which naturally stops the moment they start beating?

No multitasking

Knowing these answers opens the door to new therapies and offers hope to others whose heart attacks weren't so silent. Right now, researchers know a badly damaged heart needs to be relieved of its pumping duties.

The help of an artificial heart, more technically known as a left ventricular assist device, allows it to focus on regeneration, as it was exclusively doing in the womb. A mildly damaged heart, on the other hand, seems to be able to beat and heal at the same time.

A team from Karolinska Institutet in Sweden used carbon dating technology to witness cells, taken from people who had suffered heart failure, regenerate and form new, healthy cells. They obtained most of the samples from people who had artificial hearts fitted, but they think the same phenomenon could happen in anyone who has suffered heart failure or a heart attack.¹

“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 Health Sciences, who has been working with the Karolinska team.

The idea throws open a whole host of exciting possibilities. For one, people could have their artificial heart removed after the real heart has healed, but

there's an even more tantalizing idea—could a healthy heart regenerate and renew while it's pumping, and so never suffer an attack, thus eliminating the world's number one killer?

As Olaf Bergmann, one of the Karolinska researchers, put it, “There might be a hidden key to kick-start the heart's own repair mechanism.”

Although the assist device is an artificial stimulant that starts the healing process, the researchers believe there could be a natural way to encourage new growth in



HOW YOU CAN HELP THE HEART HEAL

Without any lifestyle change, such as a better diet, the heart can heal damage caused by a mild heart attack in as little as two weeks to three months. But you can speed up the process by eating a heart-healthy diet—or keep it healthy in the first place.

Eat whole, unprocessed, organic foods. Seek out those grown locally and in season and cook them using traditional methods.

Follow a Mediterranean-style diet. This diet is rich in fruits and vegetables and olive oil, with meat as a condiment rather than the centerpiece of meals. Make sure raw and cooked vegetables occupy most of your dinner plate.

Eliminate processed foods. Especially avoid ultra-processed, packaged foods including bagged breads, cookies, crackers, cakes, breakfast cereals, granola bars, fast foods and anything that contains heat-destroyed, processed vegetable oils.

Avoid added sugar. The processed kind is the worst. Sugar fuels diabetes, and soaring blood sugar levels are behind insulin resistance, which has been implicated in heart disease. When you want something sweet, have a piece of fruit or a square of organic dark chocolate.

Eat nuts. Have a handful of unroasted, unsalted nuts every day. The more often you eat nuts, the less likely you are to die from heart disease. See page 24 for more about nuts.

Eat fish. Seafood is a good source of heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids. But choose carefully to avoid consuming harmful contaminants like mercury and dioxins. Avoid fish from the North Sea, large predator or deepwater fish like tuna and swordfish, and farmed fish.

Eat legumes. Well-cooked (several hours or more) lentils and kidney beans contain valuable nutrients and fiber.

Consume unprocessed dairy. Ditch homogenized or low-fat dairy products.

Avoid hydrogenated fats. This includes hydrogenated margarine and all hydrogenated oils, but don't limit saturated fats.

Eat organic eggs liberally. They're among the richest sources of antioxidants, which can help protect against heart disease.

Drink red wine in moderation. One or two glasses a day seems to be protective (but you should avoid it, of course, if you're pregnant).

Drink green tea. It has several heart-protecting effects.

the heart for everyone, whether or not they've suffered a heart attack.

Right now, they're baffled by the phenomenon. "In the existing data we cannot find an explanation for the effect, but we will now continue to study this process at a cellular and molecular level," Bergmann added.

The kick-starter

A research team at University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas has been exploring the heart's healing abilities for the past decade, and they think it may be further down the research road. In 2021, they applied to patent a drug formulation that could kick-start the heart's healing mechanisms, and their work has also attracted the interest of four drug companies researching heart regeneration implants, injections and tissue patches.²

They've also been looking at viral and stem cell technologies that act as reminders to the heart to revert to its ability, last practiced in the womb, to generate new cells.

It shouldn't be so surprising. Most muscles heal themselves after injury, and the heart is the same—especially in the womb—but it seems to be a poor multitasker after birth.

From the moment we're born and take our first breath, the sudden inrush of oxygen changes the heart from a growing and renewing muscle to one that pumps. Heart muscle cells, known as cardiomyocytes, take over, and the heart stops regenerating.

Oxygen produces two proteins, Meis1 and Hoxb13, that stop cell division in the heart after birth. But the UT researchers have seen how division starts again when the genes that code for these proteins' production are removed from heart muscle cell samples.

Less oxygen

If oxygen stops the heart's regenerative abilities, could a lack of oxygen restart its healing abilities? The UT researchers have been looking at hypoxia therapy, or prolonged periods of low oxygen, as a way to do this.

They reckon that an oxygen level of 7 percent—the same ratio found at the top of Mount Everest, which is just one-third of that at sea level—could be the sweet spot that gets the heart healing



SUPPLEMENTS FOR THE HEART

Nutritional supplements can play an important role in heart health. Here's a quick guide to what to take daily alongside a healthy diet:

A multivitamin, including minerals, of good quality and produced by a reputable manufacturer

B vitamins—all are important, but especially these:

- B1, 50 mg
- B3, 50 mg
- B6, 100 mg

Vitamin D made in the body by exposing your skin to the sun for about 15 minutes early in the day without sunscreen, or at least 600–1,000 IU from a supplement (see page 64 for tips to choose a good one)

Antioxidant vitamins:

- Vitamin A, up to 25,000 IU as beta-carotene or 10,000 IU as retinol
- Vitamin C, 1–3 g or more
- Vitamin E, 1–3 g or up to 600 IU as tocotrienols

Minerals:

- Zinc, 10–50 mg
- Selenium, 200 mcg
- Magnesium, 200–600 mg
- Chromium, 100 mcg

Coenzyme Q10, 60–100 mg or more with supervision

L-carnitine, 250–750 mg

L-theanine, 400 mg

A high-quality probiotic supplement, follow the label instructions

Omega-3 fatty acids, such as from fish or flaxseed oils, 1,000–1,500 mg

itself. They put damaged cardiomyocytes in a dish at that low oxygen level, and after two weeks, they observed the cells starting to divide and regenerate.

The researchers are teaming up with the German Aerospace Center to test whether the same phenomenon happens in people. They're enlisting mountaineers and extreme sportsmen, who have already been acclimatized to lower oxygen levels, to take part in clinical trials.

The researchers recognize that this is not a practical way forward. It would be challenging for every heart patient to have hypoxia therapy, and it wouldn't be

cost-effective to build hypoxia centers around the globe. For another thing, the therapy can also damage other organs, such as the kidneys and brain.

Nonetheless, silent heart attack survivors are providing clues that could lead to the heart's ability to spontaneously heal itself, even before a heart attack has happened.

Bryan Hubbard

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- 2 Hesham Sadek, "Helping the Heart Heal Itself: The Science of Regeneration," Feb 16, 2022, utswnmed.org/medblog

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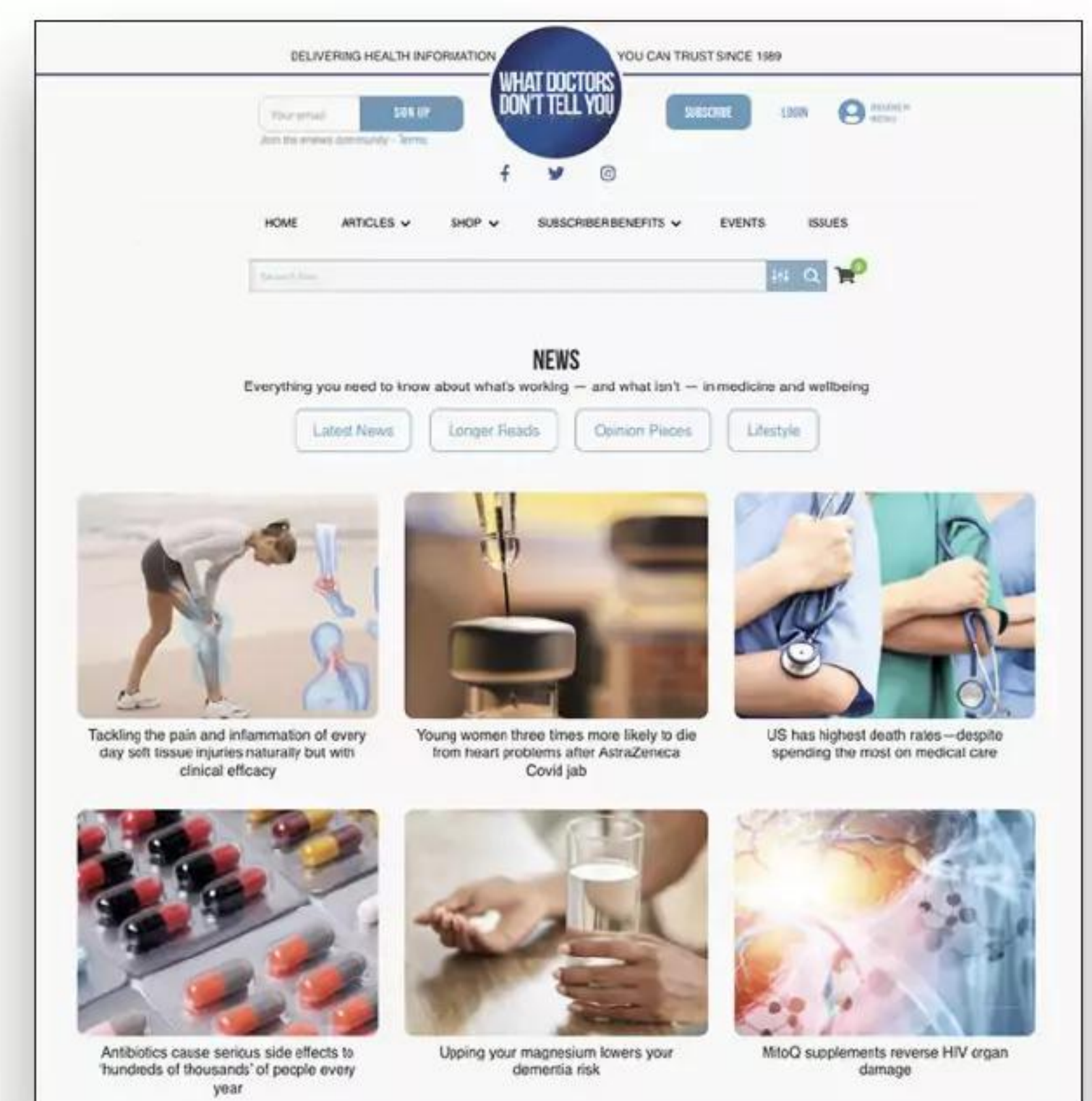
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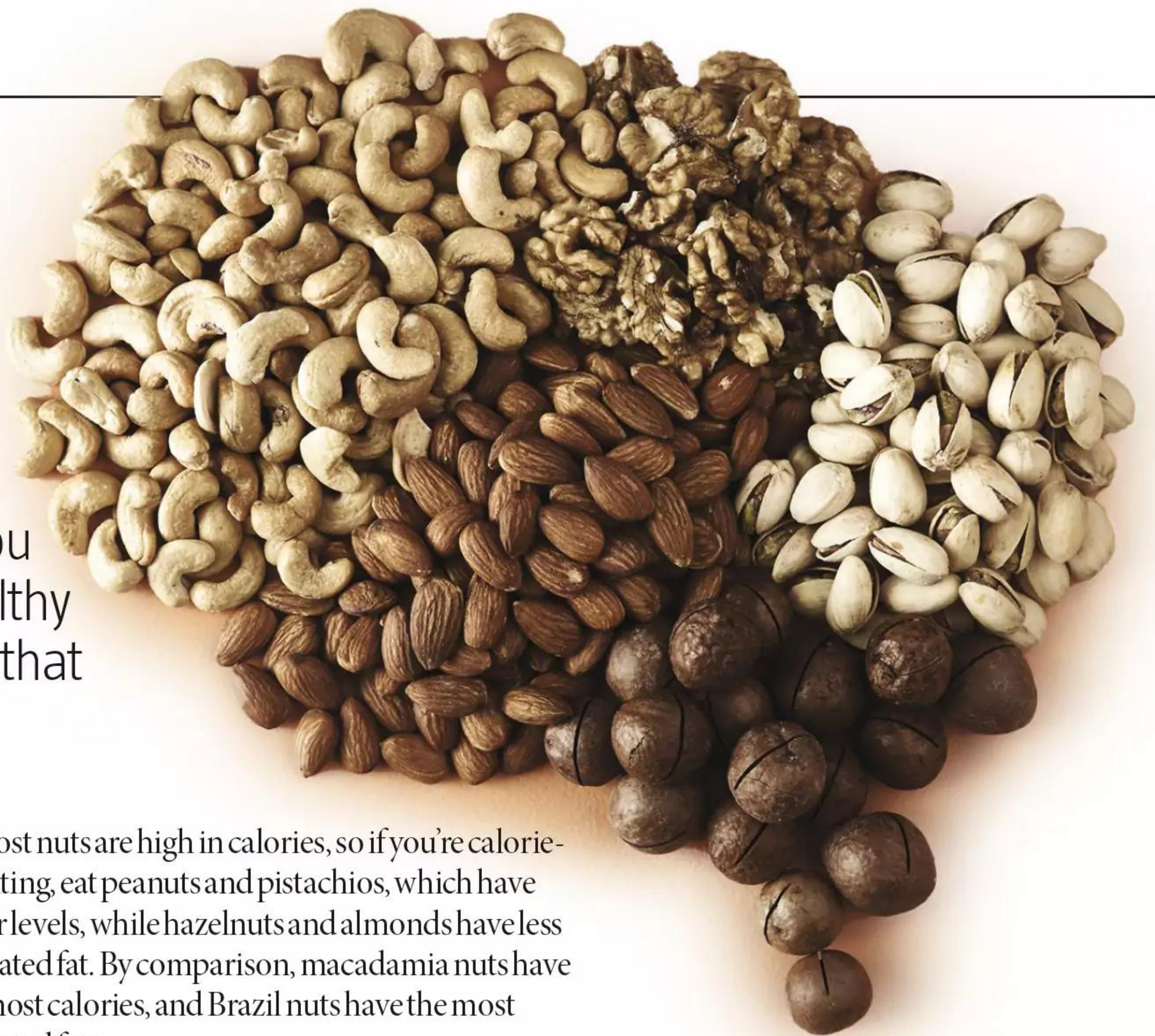


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Everyone's going nuts

Nuts are about the best healthy snack you can eat. Most types help maintain a healthy heart, but some have special properties that are good for specific health issues



A handful of nuts is one of the healthiest snacks you can have. It almost doesn't matter which nuts you choose, because all of them have some health benefit, and most keep the heart and cardiovascular system healthy.

Although they can help with weight control, a little goes a long way. A couple of ounces (around 56 g) will be enough to keep you going between meals and give your body a health boost.

Most nuts are high in calories, so if you're calorie-counting, eat peanuts and pistachios, which have lower levels, while hazelnuts and almonds have less saturated fat. By comparison, macadamia nuts have the most calories, and Brazil nuts have the most saturated fats.

And it goes almost without saying: Eat nuts in their raw, natural state, and avoid any that contain added sugars, salt or additives.

Here are nine nuts that pack a healthy punch:



1. Almonds: good for the heart and gut

Almonds contain vitamin E, magnesium and manganese, which support the immune system and protect the cardiovascular system. A study found people eating 2 oz (56 g) of almonds a day had lower cholesterol and inflammation levels.¹

As we're discovering, heart health begins in the gut, and almonds support the growth of "good" gut bacteria from the *Bifidobacterium* and *Lactobacillus* groups.

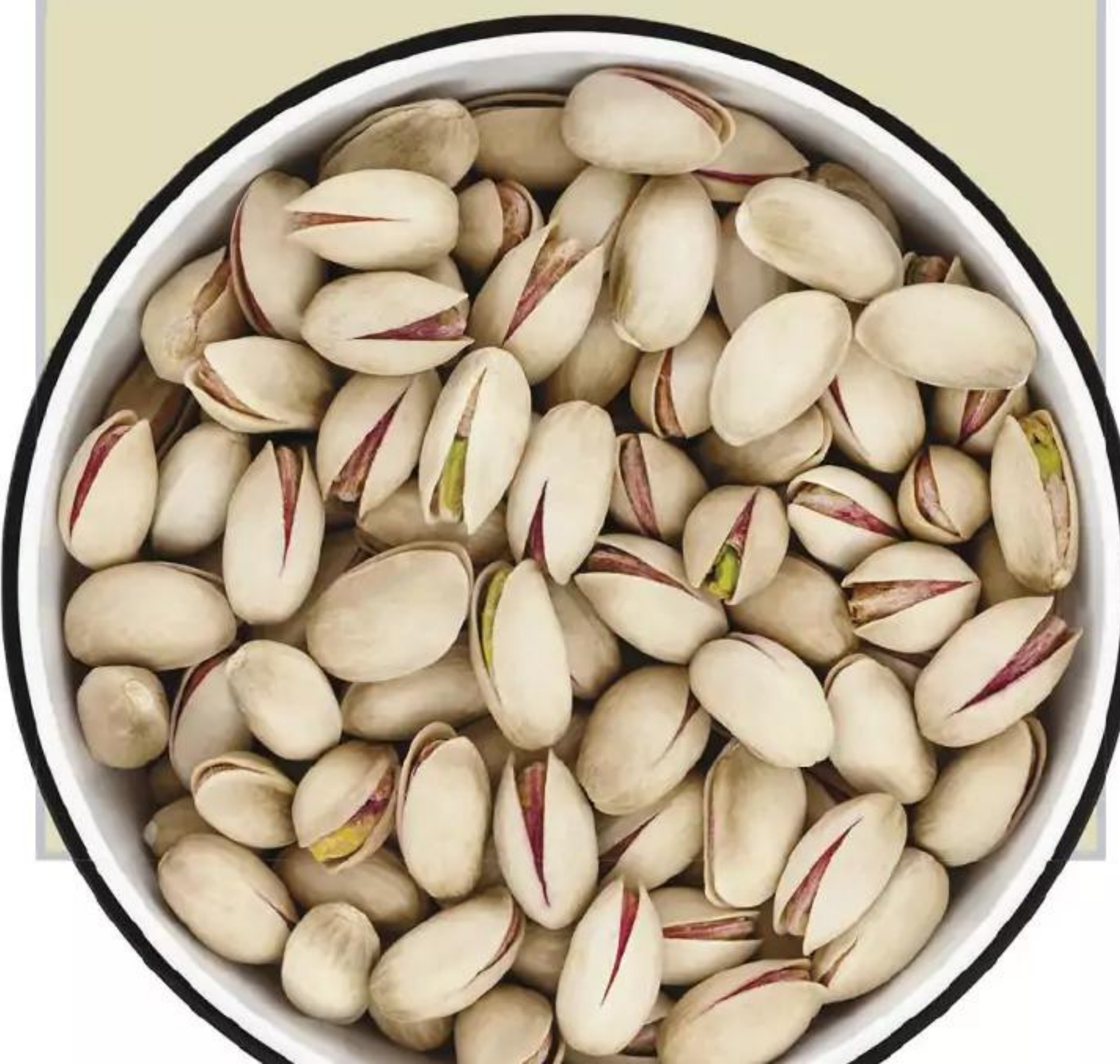
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2. Pistachios: good for weight loss and heart health

Pistachios are lower in calories than most nuts and contain B1 (thiamine), B6 (pyridoxine) and phosphorous, which help manage metabolism and immune function. They also contain the carotenoids lutein and zeaxanthin as well as flavonoids.

If you're looking to lose weight while eating healthily, pistachios are a great choice. They support the cardiovascular system and help rebalance blood pressure levels.



3. Walnuts: good for the immune system and brain

Walnuts are one of the healthiest nuts and are rich in magnesium and manganese. They're also a good source of copper, which helps to maintain our energy levels and immune function.

They are the top choice for heart problems, including high blood pressure, with the highest levels of omega-3 fatty acids of any nut. Eating 2 oz a day is also good for the brain and neurodevelopment and may reduce the risk of dementia.



4. Cashews: good for bone health

Cashews contain vitamin K, magnesium and manganese and are good for the heart. They may improve triglyceride (blood fat) levels and reduce high blood pressure (hypertension). They are the best nut for bone health and could reduce the risk of osteoporosis.

Cashews have gotten bad press because they contain saturated fats, but these come from stearic acids and don't negatively affect the cardiovascular system. In fact, the evidence points the other way: These nuts are good for your arteries and heart health.



5. Pecans: good for the immune system and wounds

Pecans are rich in vitamin B1 and manganese. Best of all, they're a good source of zinc, which plays a vital role in immune function, growth and development, and wound healing. Along with every other nut, pecans are also good for the heart and help maintain healthy cholesterol levels.

6. Macadamia nuts: good for reducing blood sugar levels

Macadamia nuts contain vitamin B1, manganese and copper. These nuts are high in healthy fats and lower in carbs than many other nuts, and studies show they're good for maintaining heart health and reducing blood sugar levels.



7. Brazil nuts: good for thyroid health

Brazil nuts contain vitamin E and magnesium, which help control blood sugar levels and maintain nerve health and energy production. They also include selenium, an antioxidant that helps maintain healthy thyroid function.

But don't eat too many: You can overdose, and this may be something to think about if you're already taking selenium supplements.

8. Hazelnuts: anti-inflammatory powers

Like most nuts, hazelnuts contain vitamin E, magnesium and manganese. But unlike the others, hazelnuts are loaded with plant compounds, including gallic acid, epicatechin, caffeic acid and quercetin, which gives them extra antioxidant and anti-inflammatory qualities. They also reduce heart disease risks.



9. Peanuts: reduce your stroke risk

Although technically a legume rather than a nut, peanuts have the health-giving qualities of nuts and include vitamins B3 (niacin) and B9 (folate) and magnesium. They're packed with polyphenol antioxidants that protect your cardiovascular system. They could also reduce your risk of stroke. Their folate content makes them a good snack for pregnant women.

Peptides: Molecules that pep up your health

Considering that proteins are the building blocks of the body, and peptides are the building blocks of proteins, as tiny as they are, peptides are a mighty force. So far, researchers have discovered that the human body makes over 7,000 different peptides for specific purposes.

They aid in everything from DNA replication to sexual arousal, from cell division to cognitive function. Mood, memory, muscle mass, mitochondrial function, metabolic activities, aging and longevity—name the bodily function, and you'll find peptides are at work.

Short chains of amino acids (organic compounds) linked together by peptide bonds (a type of chemical bond), peptides play vital roles throughout the body such as cell signaling, enzyme and hormone activity, and immune system regulation. The simplest peptides are dipeptides containing only two amino acids, followed by tripeptides (three amino acids), et cetera.

If a peptide chain contains more than 50 amino acids, it's called a protein. If it has fewer than 20, it's called an oligopeptide. Polypeptides contain 10–100 amino acids.

How peptides work

Epigenetically, peptides act by turning gene expression on and off. They interact with hundreds of healing pathways in the body. And because they're made up of short amino acid chains, they can easily bind to receptor sites on the surface of cells, so they have a critical role in cellular communication.

Pleiotropic in nature, which means they produce more than one effect, peptides work best in combinations. According to one of the leading peptide specialists in the US, Regan Archibald, LAc, FMP (reganarchibald.com), they have a healing response up to three times faster than diet, lifestyle and supplements alone. Because they're involved in cellular and molecular signaling and follow so many pathways throughout the body, they "talk" to the body in a holistic, self-amplifying way.

"Peptides regulate most known processes and systems in the body in a tissue- and cell-specific manner," says Archibald. "They don't tend to have toxic accumulation based on their short half-life. Contrast that with some supplements, such as fat-soluble vitamins, which can accumulate in the body and lead to toxicity and harmful side effects."

Compared to medications and hormones, Archibald says, peptides tend to be more selective. And because they hit their cellular receptor site targets

more effectively than drugs or supplements, they have very few adverse side effects.

"They don't set off an immune alarm or histamine response," he says. "And as a medication, they can be given in up to 100 times greater doses without any known side effects, which is unheard of. The amount of supplementation you'd have to take to match the power and effectiveness of peptides could be insurmountable in terms of cost and volume."

A plurality of peptides

Endogenous peptides are created in the human body and maintain our natural biochemical balance. They can work as hormones released from the endocrine system, regulating reproductive processes and helping balance metabolism. Insulin is an endogenous peptide that helps regulate the amount of glucose within cells and the blood.

Cell-penetrating peptides carry protein and nucleic acid molecules across the cell plasma barrier. Short-chain signaling peptides carry information for protein

secretion, reproduction and protein targeting throughout the body. Antimicrobial polypeptides fight pathogens in the body. And finally, neuropeptides like oxytocin play a role in brain activity and behavioral processes.

Natural peptides come from animals, plants and microorganisms. For example, dynorphins are a class of opioid peptides first isolated from the pituitary gland of pigs but also made in the human body.

Like endorphins, they're inhibitory neurotransmitters that reduce pain.

Snake venom peptides are non-enzymatic polypeptides that have distinct pharmacological functions and different bioactivities. They're useful for treating conditions ranging from diabetes to heart disease to chronic pain. Plant-derived peptides, such as cyclotides from coffee plants, are antimicrobial.

Fungi produce cyclosporine A, an immunosuppressant. Bacteriocins produced by bacteria are useful for treating infections.

Synthetic peptides are also called peptide therapeutics. They're created in laboratories and can be designed to mimic endogenous and natural peptides. They can also be designed to have novel amino acid sequences and structures for highly tailored purposes, such as targeting one kind of receptor site and delivering one specific effect.

For example, oxytocin is an endogenous neuropeptide and hormone made by the hypothalamus to support lactation and maternal bonding after childbirth. It's also produced in a lab

Peptides, the building blocks of proteins, are a formidable force in the body—essential to everything from keeping your DNA in smooth order to keeping your brain sharp. Cate Montana investigates their use as therapeutics

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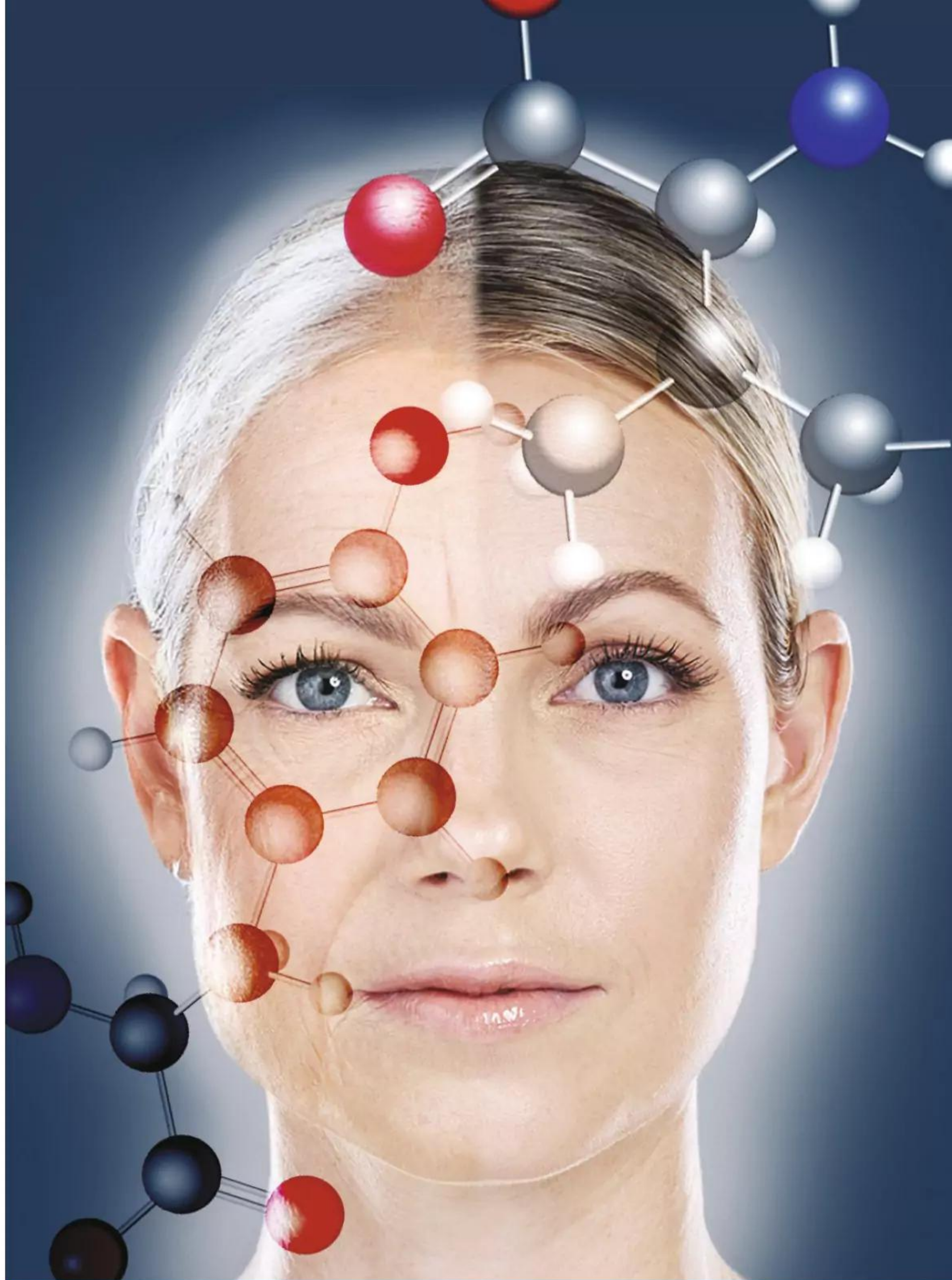
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Peptides for longevity

There are currently over 250 known anti-aging peptides that work through multiple mechanisms, mostly fighting inflammation and promoting cellular repair. The rest have antioxidant properties or various specific roles, such as enhancing learning and memory.

Most anti-aging peptides are relatively small, containing between six and 25 amino acids (which gives them greater penetrating power). They're rich in the amino acids proline, tryptophan and glutamine.

Of all the anti-aging peptides studied so far, the large majority have been clinically studied for their effects on skin aging. These are some popular anti-aging peptides:

Epithalon/epitalon. Synthetically derived from the bovine pineal gland, it supports the production of the enzyme telomerase in the body, positively affecting the health of the telomeres, the protective "end caps" on chromosomes preventing DNA deterioration and cell aging. It may also activate the pineal gland to produce melatonin, calm the adrenal response and stabilize the parasympathetic nervous system.

L-glutathione. An endogenous antioxidant that supports cell regeneration.

FOXO4-DRI. A synthetic peptide that slows cellular aging and supports cell regeneration.

Selank. This synthetic analogue of the endogenous human peptide tuftsin is immunostimulatory. Selank increases the calming neurotransmitter gamma amino-butyric acid (GABA) and reduces brain inflammation. In addition, it stabilizes central nervous system autoimmune pathways and has antimicrobial properties, all of which aid in longevity.

(one brand name is Pitocin) and altered to create a different effect, namely inducing labor and reducing bleeding after delivery.

"The line between synthetic and non-synthetic peptides has got more to do with the structure than the purpose of the peptide," explains Dr Chris Maclay, medical director at MedBridge Global in Charlotte, North Carolina. His private practice focuses on functional, anti-aging and regenerative medicine (maclaymedical.com.au).

"We can make anything for the purpose, but the structure is native. Therapeutic peptides look like the native hormone. They may not be identical. But they are structurally so similar to what is endogenous that the body doesn't react to it.

"And for that reason, it doesn't have side effects. But because it doesn't look exactly like the native molecule, it's patentable. It's a new molecule, but it's an 'analog peptide' that's analogous to the endogenous version."

Endogenous human peptides are totally safe even at high doses. But because of their analogous structure, therapeutic/synthetic peptides are also relatively safe, or so the practitioners claim.

"From the point of view of the clinical literature, on balance, the demonstrated safety is high," says Maclay. "I've not had a single patient who's had a life-threatening reaction. And I could count on one hand the number of patients who were upset by a reaction. Like feeling a bit of a hot flash after an injection, which is actually part of the appropriate mechanism of action. Or perhaps a bit of fatigue, which is also part of the mechanism of action."

It's important to keep in mind that the medical industry has also claimed synthetic vitamins and hormones are just as good as the real thing, but the evidence reveals otherwise (for examples, see our stories on HRT, GMO foods and homemade bread in *WDDTY* September 2022, November/December 2022 and January 2024 respectively).

Popular use

More than anything, peptides are support molecules that build and maintain health rather than treat disease. They work best when used in combination under the supervision of a health specialist who is familiar with peptide therapy.

They should also be used in tandem with a healthy eating regimen that includes regular exercise and lots of organic whole foods: meats (more protein!), vegetables and fruits. Moderate supplementation may be helpful when necessary.

The most effective delivery system for peptides is subcutaneous injection, permitting direct absorption into the bloodstream to achieve maximum impact and efficacy. Topical application is used to target specific areas of the skin that require anti-aging and regenerative effects.

Peptides can also be administered through the nasal passages for rapid absorption. Least effective is oral

Peptides to boost your immune system

Immunosenescence is the gradual deterioration of the immune system as we age. It's characterized by signs of aging such as a weakened immune system, chronic inflammation, cancer development, and cardiovascular and neurodegenerative diseases.

A strong causative factor in immunosenescence is the lack of thymus function and a decrease in its production of regulatory thymic peptides as the years go by. These are some peptides that help to establish a healthy immune system:

Thymulin. An immunoregulatory peptide that also links the immune system with the neuroendocrine system, influencing the differentiation and function of T cells, white blood cells that are key to the adaptive immune response.

Thymosin alpha-1. A powerful immune system modulator that helps fight infections.

Thymosin beta-4. Augments wound healing, boosts cardiovascular health, and aids in tissue regeneration.

BPC-157. Aids digestive function, strengthens the immune system, normalizes blood pressure, and improves bone and joint health.

Anticancer peptides

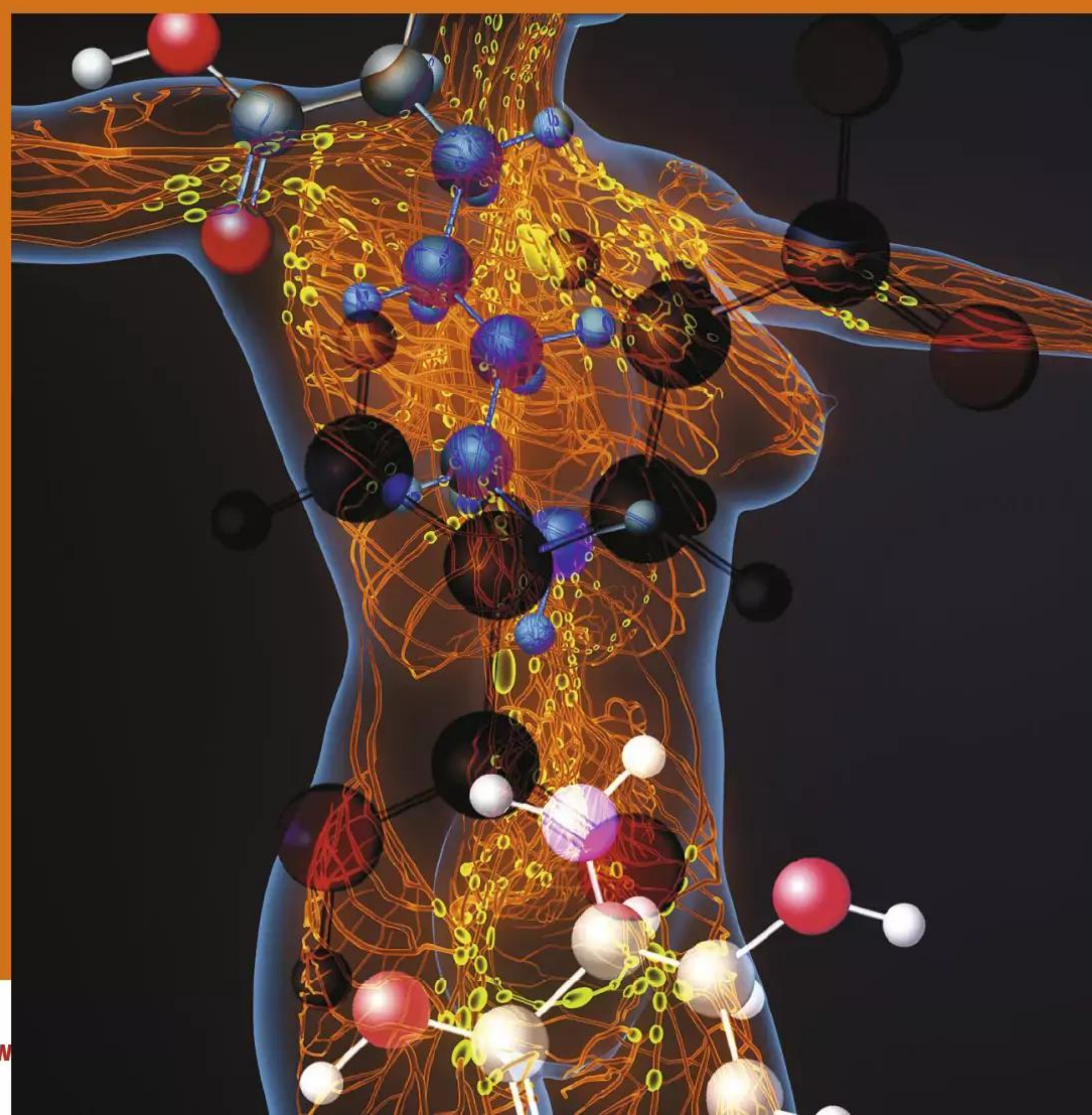
These peptides work by inducing cell death (apoptosis) in tumors, disrupting cancer cell membranes, inhibiting the production of tumor cells and serving as a type of vaccine against self-tumor antigens:

Lactoferricin B. Synthetically derived from milk protein and has antimicrobial and anticancer properties.

NRC-3. A synthetic antimicrobial peptide that induces apoptosis in squamous cell carcinomas.

NRC-7. A synthetic antimicrobial peptide effective for treating multi-drug-resistant cancers.

Carfilzomib. A synthetic chemotherapy enzyme used to treat multiple myeloma.



administration because the digestive system can break down the peptides before they're absorbed.

Because of their specificity, selective interactions, highly refined ability to attach to receptor sites on target proteins (known as "docking") and purportedly high levels of safety, synthetic peptides—which are available only by prescription and are injectable—have emerged as the darlings of modern pharmaceutical and biochemical research.

They're highly popular for their therapeutic and money-making potential, and their bonding capacity makes them useful for drug delivery. In addition, their enhanced stability and longer-lasting effects in the body allow them to work effectively at lower doses than natural peptides—making them more cost-effective.

Since the first therapeutic peptide, bovine insulin, was introduced in 1922, government regulators have approved more than 100 peptide drugs worldwide. More come online every year, and hundreds more are being tested. Studies show they may be effective for a wide range of uses:

- Accelerating healing processes¹
- Boosting hormone levels²
- Improving cognitive function³
- Strengthening the immune system⁴
- Building muscle mass and strength⁵
- Relieving joint and muscle pain⁶
- Boosting energy levels⁷
- Improving sleep quality⁸
- Treating cancer⁹
- Lowering blood pressure¹⁰
- Reducing signs of aging¹¹
- Stimulating hair growth¹²

This purpose-oriented approach generally aligns with the traditional allopathic medical model more closely than with functional and integrative medicine and more natural approaches.

"Synthetic peptides are very much a part of natural medicine. They're just a part that requires biomedical science," argues Maclay.

"That said, because peptides' natural role in the body is to promote a metabolic pathway of homeostasis (steady-state, optimal functioning), while functional medical practitioners may use patentable peptides like semaglutide (brand name Ozempic or Wegovy), they may also consider peptides that support more functional concerns.

"For example, they might use peptides not so much to focus just on reducing sugar levels but on increasing the body's ability to burn sugar or increasing muscle mass so that the basal metabolism is preserved."

Regarding practitioners of naturopathy, homeopathy, acupuncture, Traditional Chinese Medicine and other more natural approaches, Maclay says most tend to be less inclined to use or recommend peptide medicines because most lack prescriptive license. As well, he explains, numerous alternative medicine practitioners still lack knowledge and awareness of the peptides and their many uses.



Tissue-building peptides

Growth-hormone-releasing peptides (GHRPs). Peptides such as GHRP-2 and GHRP-6 that trigger the production of growth hormone, which supports fat loss, muscle growth and faster recovery from injuries.

BPC-157. A highly regenerative synthetic growth hormone used to heal muscle, tendon and ligament injuries. It's also effective for treating inflammatory conditions.

Thymosin beta-4. A synthetic peptide effective for tissue regeneration and repair and used for healing wounds. It's also effective for reducing inflammation.

CJC-1295. A synthetic peptide that augments growth hormone production and is effective for building muscle mass and strength.

Weight loss peptides

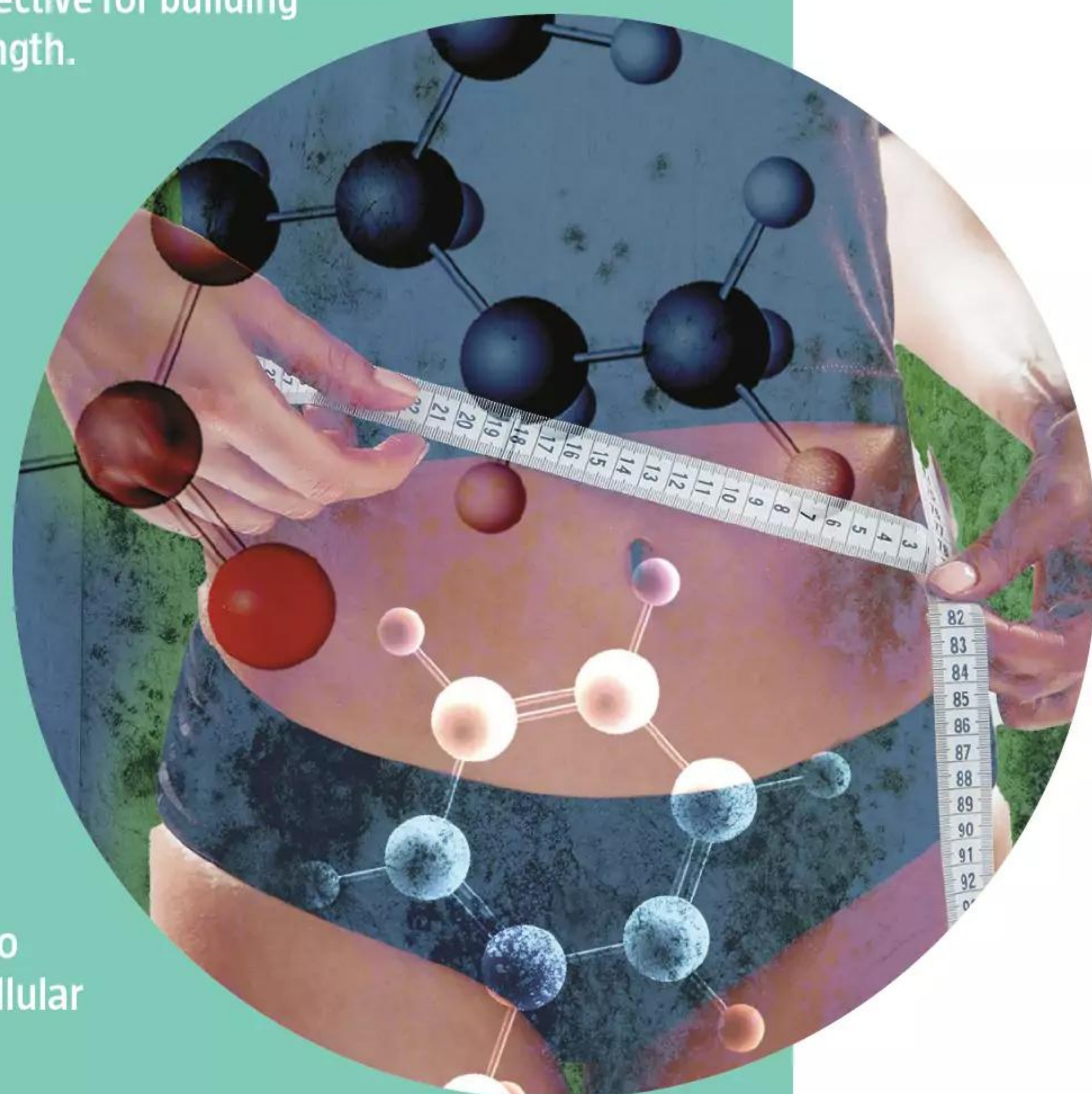
Semaglutide. A synthetic peptide molecule almost identical to the body's endogenous hormone GLP-1. It's an antidiabetic medication that is widely used to combat obesity.

Tirzepatide. Similar to semaglutide, a synthetic antidiabetic medication used for weight loss.

Amino-1MQ. A short-chain synthetic peptide used to balance cell energy and speed up fat metabolism.

CJC-1295. A synthetic analogue of growth-hormone-releasing hormone that promotes the breakdown of fat in the body.

MOTS-C. A synthetic peptide that helps to boost glucose metabolism and cellular energy production.

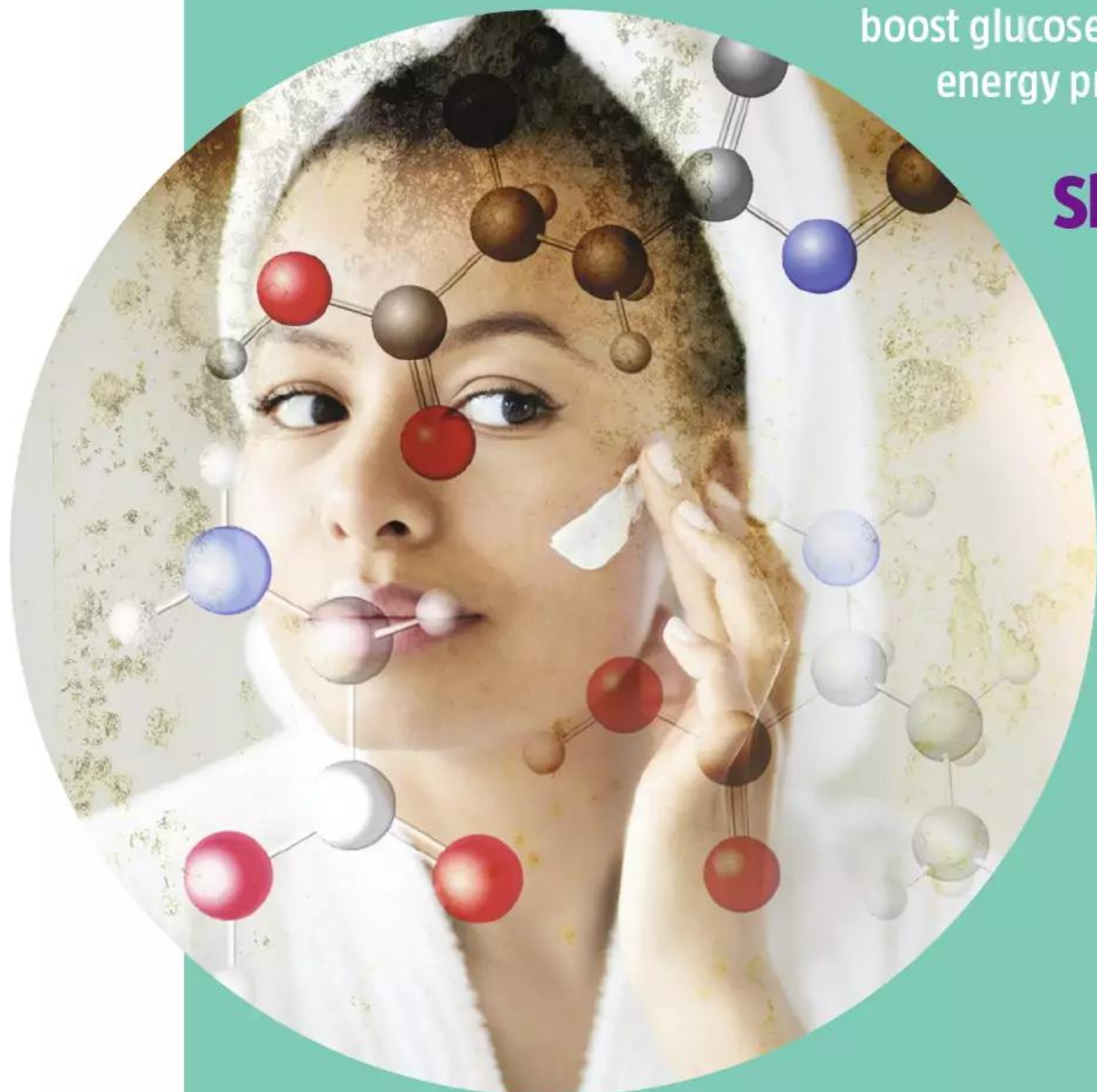


Skincare peptides

GHK-Cu. A naturally occurring copper peptide that stimulates collagen formation and tissue regeneration.

Argireline. A synthetic peptide that mimics botulinum toxin, helping facial muscles relax and thus reducing wrinkles.

Tripeptide-29. A synthetic signaling peptide that tells skin cells to produce more collagen.



Supplementary peptides: Uncharted territory

While we provide long lists of available peptides and their believed effects here, many lack substantial research in humans to determine their actual effects and the outcomes of long-term use. They may also have side effects, so it's wise to be cautious and to consult with your practitioner before using them.

Synthetic peptides in particular should be approached with caution. For example, semaglutide has been available for only a short time, but its serious adverse effects are already coming to light (see *WDDTY* January/February 2025).

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Far infrared heat.

The mat heats the body with far infrared heat. It uses FIR radiant carbon heating wire to heat the crystal materials which creates far infrared heat at the most beneficial wavelength to human health, over 90% in the 5-15 micron range. Far infrared is often referred to as the light of life, for its importance in growth and nature. It's similar to sunshine but without the ultraviolet. It can provide a deep heating thermal energy to the body which can improve blood flow and the happy neurochemicals such as serotonin and dopamine. The temperature intensity and session length is adjustable with the user friendly remote.

Photon lights.

The mat incorporates a photo function with 6 photon diodes (3 red light diodes 660nm, 3 near infrared diodes 850nm (invisible)). Photon bio modulation using the specific light frequencies is often associated with improving mood, boosting cellular energy, wound healing, soothing aches and pains and skin improvement through increasing collagen production. To use the photon function simply press the photon button at any time during the session.

Crystal therapy.

The mat includes thick layers of crushed crystals including tourmaline and white crystal quartz. It's ideal for alignment and in holistic terms "raising the bodies' vibrational energy". Simply lying on the crystals may help the body restore balance and provide a restorative grounding energy.

Negative ions

When the crystal is heated with far infrared, healthy negative ions are released into the atmosphere. These are positively charged atoms which can be healthy and energising to breathe. Negative ions have a fresh purifying quality and are apparent at waterfalls, near crashing ocean waves or following thunderstorms. Negative ions are reported to aid mental clarity and energy.

PEMF

The mat incorporates PEMF, pulsed electro-magnetic field therapy. It uses 2 copper coils to produce magnetic fields at beneficial frequencies to health. It has 30 different hz frequencies to choose from 0-30 hz. People often use PEMF to relieve pain, promote deep relaxation, boost endorphins, focus, improve sleep, energy and mood.

Specifications

Dimensions 100 x 50 cm (unfolded)
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6 Photon Diodes Red Light 660nm and Near Infrared 850nm
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PEMF categories and associated benefits:

Delta (1-4 Hz) Frequencies in this range are associated with deep relaxation, enhance restorative sleep and support the body's regenerative abilities. They may assist in reducing stress and promoting a sense of rejuvenation.

Theta (4-8 Hz) Frequencies in this range can help induce a state of relaxation, enhance mental clarity and support creative thinking. They may aid in reducing anxiety and promoting a sense of calmness.

Alpha (8-12 Hz) Frequencies in this range can assist in promoting relaxation, improving focus and concentration, and supporting stress reduction. They may enhance mental clarity and aid achieving a state of mindfulness.

Beta (12-30 Hz) Exposure to frequencies in this range may help increase mental alertness, promote cognitive function and support productivity. They may aid in improving mental performance, memory and overall mental acuity.

Generally, lower frequencies are more relaxing while higher frequencies can be more stimulating.

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“Naturopaths and natural medicine practitioners will use natural peptides and endogenous peptide bioregulators, which are shorter amino acid chains than most therapeutic peptides,” says Maclay. “Many of them are only two or three amino acids long, but they actually often have specific receptors deep inside the cell because they’re so small.”

“When we see a healthy gland, there are a lot of peptide bioregulators. But when we see an aged or sickly gland, we see few of them. So, when they’re replaced, the youthful, healthy functions tend to be replicated.”

EPIC triggers

According to Archibald, four triggers turn off peptide signaling properties in the body and thus turn off the maintenance of human health. He uses the acronym EPIC to list them.

Emotional triggers “Try to get healthy when you’re angry all the time or when you’re stressed out all the time or you’ve got chronic grief,” says Archibald. “Diseases build up based on these emotional imprints that we have in our body. You can track the neuropeptides that change in the body based on these emotional triggers and emotional trauma.”

Physical pain Any kind of physical trauma, old or new, as well as chronic pain, wreaks havoc on peptides and cellular signaling.

Infections Infectious elements are everywhere, always affecting us. “There’s Lyme, there’s Epstein-Barr, there’s Covid,” says Archibald. “Mycotoxins are a big deal because of the moldy environments that we live in. At least 60 percent of the toxicity we’re impacted by comes from inside our own homes.”

“There are parasites, *Candida* infections, small-intestinal bacterial overgrowth (SIBO). All these little microbes that we collect along the way never really leave our bodies. They just wait until the environment’s right, and then they start proliferating.”

Chemicals This is the trigger that drove Archibald into the health field and into studying peptides in the first place.

“I was raised on a farm,” he says. “By the time I was in my 20s, the glyphosate from Roundup and all the other chemicals we consider necessary had completely compromised my health. And the traditional medical model was

ineffectual in getting it back. Which meant I had to find another way.”

Heavy metal toxicity, chemical preservatives in our food, industrial pollution, agricultural herbicides and pesticides—removing these triggers and mitigating the other three EPIC triggers allow people to experience significant reversals of a myriad of health issues, claims Archibald. However, he points out, without adjunct peptide therapy, these reversals can be agonizingly slow and can even eventually reverse.

“A lot of times people do these big cleanses to deal with EPIC triggers, and they detox and they end up really sick and tired. They never really get through the process because they didn’t build up the cellular energy that they needed to do it.”

“And that’s where peptides like the mitochondrial peptides come in. When you remove the cell danger response signaling (stress response) and get rid of EPIC interferences, people have a reversal of significant issues in their health. And it’s permanent. And they don’t have to stay on the peptides long term.”

He’s found that people on peptide therapy who also maintain good sleep rhythms, hydration, nutrition, exercise, some type of mindfulness and some type of temperature variation to stimulate hormone activity usually start feeling better within the first two weeks of therapy.

They remark on how their energy is better and they’re sleeping better, losing weight and feeling calmer. These are all typical signs they’re getting back on the track to better health.

“It’s not an overnight, magic-bullet approach,” says Archibald. “But people experience a restoration of their former athletic self, which is when they can start diving into the age-reversal process. It’s truly remarkable. And peptides support this process every step of the way.”

Testimonials

Dr Chris Maclay tells stories about two patients he treated strictly with peptides. The first was a tradesman who’d injured his wrist 15 years previously. Over the course of 13 years, the patient had undergone surgery, and doctors had prescribed cortisone injections and physiotherapy, but nothing had helped.

“I injected a ‘bundle,’ a combination of therapeutic peptides,” Maclay says, “and two weeks later, he contacted me to tell me that he was able to use his wrist again for the first time in 13 years.”

Another patient took a holiday in Thailand and developed post-infectious irritable bowel syndrome. They had gone to medical doctors and “tried everything.” They had also used natural therapies, including broad-spectrum probiotics and prebiotics, peppermint oil and a variety of quercetin, and nothing had worked.

“The symptoms resolved within about a month after they started BPC-157 (gastric pentadecapeptide, a 15–amino acid oligopeptide) also known as the ‘body protection compound,’ Maclay says. “When I spoke to them again about 12 months later, the symptoms hadn’t returned, which makes me believe it had restored the gut lining and the flora. It was a dramatic symptomatic improvement for this person.”

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Healing hormonal hair loss

Hair loss in women is often caused by hormonal imbalances, says Marcelle Pick. Here's how to identify and address underlying issues for a healthier head of hair

Hairstyle options are endless and, for many women, are a way to express individuality. That's why it can be so startling and emotional when clumps of hair suddenly begin to fall out without warning.

This problem is more common than you may think. I see so many women in my practice who are in tears because they're losing their hair and they don't know why.

Sometimes women tell me they feel silly for reacting this way. "It's only hair," they say in the midst of their breakdown. But I reassure them that there's more to their reaction than vanity. Hair loss can be one of the earliest signs of hormonal imbalance, nutritional deficits and disease. So understanding how hair grows and being sensitive to changes in that growth is a good thing.

The good news is, often this kind of hair loss is temporary, and there are ways you can make it stop. But first you need to know what's behind hormonal hair loss. Often, rebalancing your hormones can help bring back your full head of hair.

The growth cycle of hair

Hair is made up of keratin, a tough protein. Each hair is held in place by a hair follicle, with a hair bulb at its base.

Inside this hair bulb, living cells are at work dividing and growing to form the hair shaft. These cells are fed through blood vessels, which also release hormones that change hair growth at different stages.

Like any living thing, hair has a growth cycle with distinct phases. There are three main phases: anagen (growth), catagen (transition), and telogen (resting).

The growth phase usually spans many years, two to six on average for hair on the head, but it can extend to as many as nine years. This is when hair is getting nourished and can flourish.

The transition phase usually lasts two to three weeks. This phase is exactly what it sounds like: a time of change and preparation to shed. As cells become inactive, the roots cease growth.

In the resting phase, hair doesn't grow, and it easily sheds during washing or brushing. Sometimes it doesn't fall out in the telogen phase, and when the anagen phase begins again, it will be pushed out by new hair in that same follicle.

Hair growth is continuous, but not all strands are in the same phase at the same time. That's why you usually don't notice normal hair loss; it doesn't all happen in one spot. However, if too many follicles in the same area are resting at the same

time, bald patches can appear, or you might notice a large clump of hair falling out at once.

Normal vs hormonal hair loss

Typical hair loss in humans is 50–100 strands per day. But these strands are distributed throughout your scalp, so it's unlikely you'll even notice. If you're seeing huge clumps of hair in your drain after showering, bald patches or noticeably thinner hair all of a sudden, it's time to pay attention.

Sadly, many conventional healthcare practitioners dismiss hair loss as part of getting older. Typical treatments are topical products—and while these may make your existing hair appear fuller, they do nothing to stimulate new growth or address the root cause of the hair loss.

That means your hair will continue to thin, and you'll have to keep trying to mask it. But so often, something is going on—particularly during menopause—that can be resolved when you look at the whole picture.

Now I certainly can't say I know the magic cure for hair loss. And I advise you to be very skeptical of anyone who claims to have the secret.

But women who find themselves balding shouldn't think their only solution is to wear scarves or hats or to go out wig shopping. There are ways to promote natural hair growth and halt excessive loss, especially when we're talking about hormonal hair loss.

What causes hair loss in women?

Why can some women endure so many issues and still have a full, healthy head of hair, while others start finding clumps in their brush after the slightest bit of stress? And why can hair thin on your head while growing lush and thick in other (perhaps unwanted) areas?

Just like hairstyles, the causes of hair loss in women are highly individual. Genetics can play a role, as can many health problems, including autoimmune diseases, slow poisoning, psoriasis, anemia, thyroid disorders and polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS).

Dramatic weight loss in a short period of time can prompt hair loss. So can physical trauma, like surgery or extreme illness, and extreme stress.

There are so many possibilities, it can take a while to determine what you're

Hair loss test

Try this test to determine whether you're losing more hair than you should be. Take a small section of hair and pull firmly but gently.

With normal hair loss, you can expect five to eight hairs to come out if the section is approximately 60 strands; on average, 10 percent of hair follicles are in the transition phase at once. But if you pull substantially more strands loose (more than 15), you may be facing a more serious issue.

dealing with, especially since hair loss can result from some of these events weeks or even months after the fact.

The issues I'd like to focus on are changes in hormonal levels brought on by any number of things: stress, androgen sensitivity, insulin sensitivity, hormonal birth control, thyroid disorders and nutritional deficiencies, to name a few.

Symptoms are your body's way of letting you know something isn't right, and excessive hair loss is no exception. But remember that some hair loss is normal, and your hormones naturally fluctuate, particularly during different phases of your menstrual cycle. So for you, it may be typical to lose more hair at particular times of the month—or even in different seasons.

That's why it's so important to pay attention and know what your normal is. But here are some of the key hormones to look at if you're suddenly experiencing greater hair loss.

Thyroid hormones Your body knows when things aren't right, and it intuitively tries to make up for imbalances caused by stress, poor nutrition or other issues. When your system detects fluctuating levels of thyroid hormones, it will channel its energy toward critical matters like getting those levels under control.

That means processes like hair growth, which aren't essential to survival, are left behind. Often the thinning hair women experience as part of aging can be attributed to low thyroid hormone levels.

Estrogen Estrogen, when properly balanced, helps women feel amazing. When you have the right amount, you'll have more energy, a stable mood and a healthy sex drive.

But too much estrogen can be a real problem. And the balance can be tipped by so many things: endocrine disruptors (see my article in the July/August 2024 issue of *WDDTY* for the main ones to avoid), weight gain, perimenopause and much more.

If you have too much estrogen, your hair may begin to thin. Pregnancy is a great example of a time when women often see this happen—estrogen levels peak and then fall quickly, causing many pregnant women to experience sudden hair loss.

Testosterone This one may come as a surprise since testosterone usually makes

people think of men—big, strong, hairy men. But women make testosterone, too, and when they make too much, many undesired effects occur.

The most common are changes to hair growth. When too much testosterone is at play, you might end up with hair where you don't want it (such as your chest or face) and less where you do want it—on your head.

Insulin Insulin is an essential hormone responsible for regulating your blood sugar levels. But it's involved in a lot of other body functions as well, including hair growth.

One Finnish study showed that women who have some insulin resistance



markers are at greater risk of female pattern baldness, known as androgenic alopecia (AGA).¹

Reversing hormonal hair loss

The good news is that hormonal hair loss doesn't have to be permanent. Understanding that shifting hormonal levels lead to hair loss allows you to consider what comes next.

You—not your hormones—can be in control. But you may need to put in some hard work and gain some knowledge of what could be throwing your hormones off in the first place.

Stress is one of the biggest factors in hormonal imbalance—and little

everyday stressors can be as impactful as one large, traumatic incident.

Nutrition is also closely related to hormone levels in your body. And while fluctuations during perimenopause and menopause are normal, you don't have to just suffer through the symptoms.

Remember, the resting phase of hair growth is supposed to be temporary, but stressors like poor diet, illness or traumatic events can send your hair follicles into this phase all at once. So removing those stressors is key to reversing the problem.

At the same time, it's important to note that there could be more serious underlying health problems. That's why I look at the whole picture when I treat patients for any symptoms, including hair loss.

Understanding how hormones impact hair growth is the first step in turning things around. If you want to rejuvenate your full head of hair, you must address what's throwing your hormones off.

That's why turning to topical solutions for hair loss—despite what their advertisements boast—is not the answer. They won't promote hormonal balance or new hair growth, so at best they'll change the appearance of your hair while doing nothing to solve the underlying issues.

What works better is taking a hard, honest look at lifestyle and dietary choices you're making. How much stress are you under? And how do you support your body through that stress?

If the answer is comfort foods filled with simple carbs or other unhealthy habits, it's time to make a change. Here are a few small steps to get you started.

Eat to promote hair growth A well-balanced diet rich in whole foods is a great place to begin. Be sure to eat plenty of protein and avoid refined sugar and simple carbohydrates. See the box on page 37 for some general guidelines.

Correct deficiencies Vitamins C, D and E, plus B vitamins like biotin, promote healthy hair. Calcium, magnesium, copper, zinc and iron are all important nutrients for hair health as well.

Not getting enough of these nutrients could therefore play a role in hair loss. Consult with a qualified practitioner who can recommend the right tests for you and the best supplements to address any deficiencies.



Eating for hormonal balance

These suggestions are based on years of research into healthful eating for hormonal balance.

- Eat three meals a day and two or more snacks.
- Eat protein at every meal.
- Eat a vegetable or fruit at every meal. In fact, eat as much as you want when it comes to organic greens and vegetables, as long as they aren't coated with unhealthy fats.
- Include healthy fats in your diet, particularly foods rich in omega-3 and omega-6.
- Avoid trans fats.
- Target no more than 60 g of carbohydrates a day (15 per meal and seven per snack) while your metabolism heals.
- Limit dairy to four servings a day, preferably organic.
- Avoid soft drinks (including diet sodas) and juices with high-fructose corn syrup.
- Limit use of artificial sweeteners.
- Drink six to 10 glasses of filtered water or herbal tea a day.
- Eliminate or taper sugar, sweets and junk food from your diet.
- Eliminate or taper alcohol.
- Eliminate "white food" — white sugar, white flour, white cereal, white rice, etc.

Address hormonal imbalances You might need to dig a little deeper with your practitioner to discover exactly which hormones are behind your hair loss. Once you know what you need, you can talk to your practitioner about the best approach to fixing it.

Improve your emotional health Have you ever heard someone say they were so stressed they were "tearing their hair out"? If stress is constant, they probably don't have to tear too hard—the hair will fall out all on its own.

Finding ways to relax and reduce stress can be so impactful when it comes to hair loss. And allowing yourself to express your feelings in healthy ways, rather than keeping them bottled up inside, can also go a long way.

Try alternative therapies Stimulating blood flow to your scalp supports normal follicle functioning. Scalp massage and acupuncture are two gentle ways to get this blood flowing.

You should see a fairly quick (within six months) resolution to your hair loss through reduced stress, healthier habits and optimal nutrition. If you don't, be sure to talk to your practitioner again and explore testing if you haven't already done so.

When hair loss is severe

The tips above can help improve mild to moderate hair loss. But if you have bald patches and more dramatic hair loss, you may need to look further. In this case, I recommend discussing a range

of tests with your practitioner, including a full hormone panel, thyroid testing, a metabolic panel to look at kidney and liver functioning, ferritin stores to determine iron levels, allergy testing, a fasting insulin test and a complete blood count with differential.

If you aren't seeing a functional medicine practitioner, it's also important to note that conventional doctors often consider a much wider range of results "normal." But let's think about that.

If there's a range from one to 100, and anything in between is considered normal, even women with levels at the top or bottom of the range are told they're within the normal range. And while that may be true, when you get that close to the edge, I'd prefer to keep you from falling off.

When I do testing, I'm looking for numbers to be somewhere in the middle. If they aren't, I'll take a closer look.

Healthy hair reflects a healthy life

I always remind my patients who are bemoaning hair loss that what's happening on the outside is a good indication of what's happening inside the body. And you can't be truly healthy until you address both.

It only makes sense to consider natural options that nurture your whole health before spending a lot of money on expensive shampoos, conditioners and hair-thickening products. Nurturing yourself from the inside out, including emotionally, should improve the quality and quantity of your hair as well as your overall quality of life.

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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.

Goodbye, gout

Homeopathy combined with the right diet and lifestyle changes can work wonders for gout, says homeopath David Needleman

A condition I'm often asked about is gout, a type of inflammatory arthritis caused by the buildup of uric acid crystals in and around the joints.

The big toe is the most common site (we've all seen those period dramas when the head of the household has a red, inflamed big toe raised on a stool and blames it on too much port). But gout can also affect the fingers, wrists, knees and other joints.

Gout attacks are usually treated with a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAID) drug like ibuprofen. Colchicine and allopurinol are also commonly prescribed for gout.

Colchicine is typically used first to tackle the pain and inflammation. Then allopurinol—used to prevent or lower high uric acid levels in the blood—may be prescribed for long-term treatment.

But if you, like my clients, would prefer a drug-free solution, homeopathy combined with the right diet and lifestyle changes can be an excellent option.

Treating gout with homeopathy

As gout is a chronic situation, it always requires constitutional treatment to

reduce the frequency and intensity of attacks. This involves a full in-depth consultation to determine the correct constitutional remedy.

However, gout attacks (also called flares—sudden, intense episodes of pain, swelling, tenderness and redness) also respond well to the right acute remedies (see box, page 39, for what I mean by constitutional and acute remedies).

I therefore recommend a three-pronged regime for gout:

1. Constitutional homeopathic treatment
2. Diet and lifestyle changes
3. Acute homeopathic remedies as needed

In my experience, this treatment approach can significantly alleviate the unpleasant symptoms of the condition.

Remedies for gout

Here are the key remedies I prescribe for dealing with gout, for both immediate and more long-term treatment. They're widely available from homeopathic pharmacies but work best alongside a constitutional remedy, which you can get by consulting with a homeopath.

Colchicum Almost 100 years ago, homeopaths were treating the acute symptoms of gout successfully with Colchicum. One of the *Materia Medicae* published in 1927 notes that Colchicum “affects markedly the muscular tissues, and synovial membranes of joints. Has specific power of relieving the gouty paroxysms. It seems to be more beneficial in chronic affections of these parts.”

Today Colchicum is the main homeopathic remedy for gout. It's used at the first onset of symptoms or for a flare-up of old symptoms.

I usually prescribe it in a 30C potency and give it three times a day until either symptoms are gone or the pain and/or swelling is significantly reduced.

Benzoic Acid For longer-term treatment, I often prescribe another homeopathic remedy called Benzoic Acid. This is best in 30C potency and can be given daily or twice a day for long periods if required.

Benzoic Acid is known for having a marked action on metabolism, symptoms of high uric acid (such as nausea, frequent urination and cloudy urine) and “gouty symptoms.”

Galium Aparine Recently I've also been prescribing Galium Aparine to support the kidneys, which play an important role in filtering uric acid from the blood and excreting it in the urine. I usually suggest 6X or 12X potencies taken twice a day (morning and evening) for some time.



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.

Diet and lifestyle changes for gout

Here are a few simple steps you can take to help prevent and treat gout.



Pass up purines

Certain foods are known to play a role in gout because they are high in purines—chemicals that the body converts to uric acid. These foods include organ meats, shellfish, anchovies and sardines.

A diet high in these foods can lead to uric acid buildup in the blood, which in turn leads to the formation of crystals in a joint. These sharp crystals cause the pain and inflammation characteristic of gout. Switching to a purine-free diet can significantly reduce uric acid levels in just a few days.¹

Avoid alcohol and sugar

Alcohol, especially beer, is high in purines and raises the risk of gout.² Also watch out for sugary soft drinks and even some fruits and fruit juices (rich in fructose).³



Drink plenty of water

Water dilutes uric acid levels in the blood, so drinking six to eight glasses a day may help.



Eat cherries

Eating cherries—half a pound to a pound a day—is a traditional remedy for gout and even has some evidence to back it up. US researchers found that patients with gout who ate cherries over a two-day period had a 35 percent lower risk of attacks than those who didn't.⁴



Watch your weight

Being overweight increases the risk of gout, and losing weight can reduce uric acid levels and gout attacks.⁵ If you need to lose weight, make sure you do so safely (see Marcelle Pick's articles in the January/February and March 2025 issues for some pointers).



Acute vs constitutional prescribing

You may have heard homeopaths talk about acute and chronic illnesses, or acute and constitutional remedies, but what do these terms mean?

Acute illnesses are a little bit like a thunderstorm; they arrive quickly with high intensity, and then they're gone (although sometimes they can lead to chronic conditions). These short-lived illnesses include chicken pox, tummy bugs, coughs, colds and flus.

They usually respond quickly to an acute remedy, which considers the current symptoms and focuses on providing immediate relief. This type of remedy tends to be given frequently in a 30C or 200C potency until the symptoms resolve.

Chronic conditions, on the other hand, such as eczema, asthma and rheumatoid arthritis, go on for some time and are most effectively treated using constitutional remedies.

Constitutional prescribing requires a more intense evaluation of the patient and their symptoms, taking into account every detail of their individual health experience. It may include a more detailed assessment, such as a family history, likes and dislikes of food and drink, sleep patterns and energy patterns.

Happily, in my experience a lot of chronic problems can be resolved using homeopathic remedies, which may need to be changed over time.

I prefer higher potencies (1M or 10M, which are the same as 1,000C or 10,000C). These are usually given less frequently than acute remedies but act more subtly and on a deeper level.

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Friends with benefits



My phone rang on a sunny afternoon in the summer of 2020, and I saw it was my son calling from Alberta, Canada, 3,000 miles away. Normally cheerful and laid-back, he sounded agitated. After a few minutes he said, “Mum, do you remember the time you talked to the high school guidance counselor about me being suicidal?”

For a second, I thought—or hoped—it was a bizarre joke. No such thing had ever happened.

He had been very well liked in high school, which was years earlier, and he’d never had any issues. He was never even melancholy, let alone suicidal, but always very grounded, easygoing and quite funny.

But he wasn’t joking. He was calling from a room where he’d been confined for weeks, isolated under strict lockdown protocols put in place by the government and zealously enforced by thoughtless officials.

Celeste McGovern investigates the deadly effects of loneliness and how our social habits might add years to our lives

He had been living at a college, working as a groundskeeper and part-time on one of the ski hills in the popular mountain resort town. I’d asked him to come home repeatedly, but he was young and optimistic that the lockdowns would end “any day.”

During the Covid pandemic, Alberta was supposedly freer than we were on the UK’s rural east coast, where there was absolutely nothing to do. He’d be back home with his parents and younger sisters with every gym, bar, cinema, mall and school closed and with no work prospects.

At that time, you needed to register with the government even to leave the province, and quarantine for two weeks if you came in. People were snitching to government hotlines if they saw extra cars parked in driveways.

My son sent me videos of elk and the mountain scenery from walks in the national park. He didn’t tell me that staff were segregating people when they ate downstairs and patrolling the grounds to prohibit socializing. Though he sounded impatient and bored, it was nothing unexpected, considering the absurdity of the situation.



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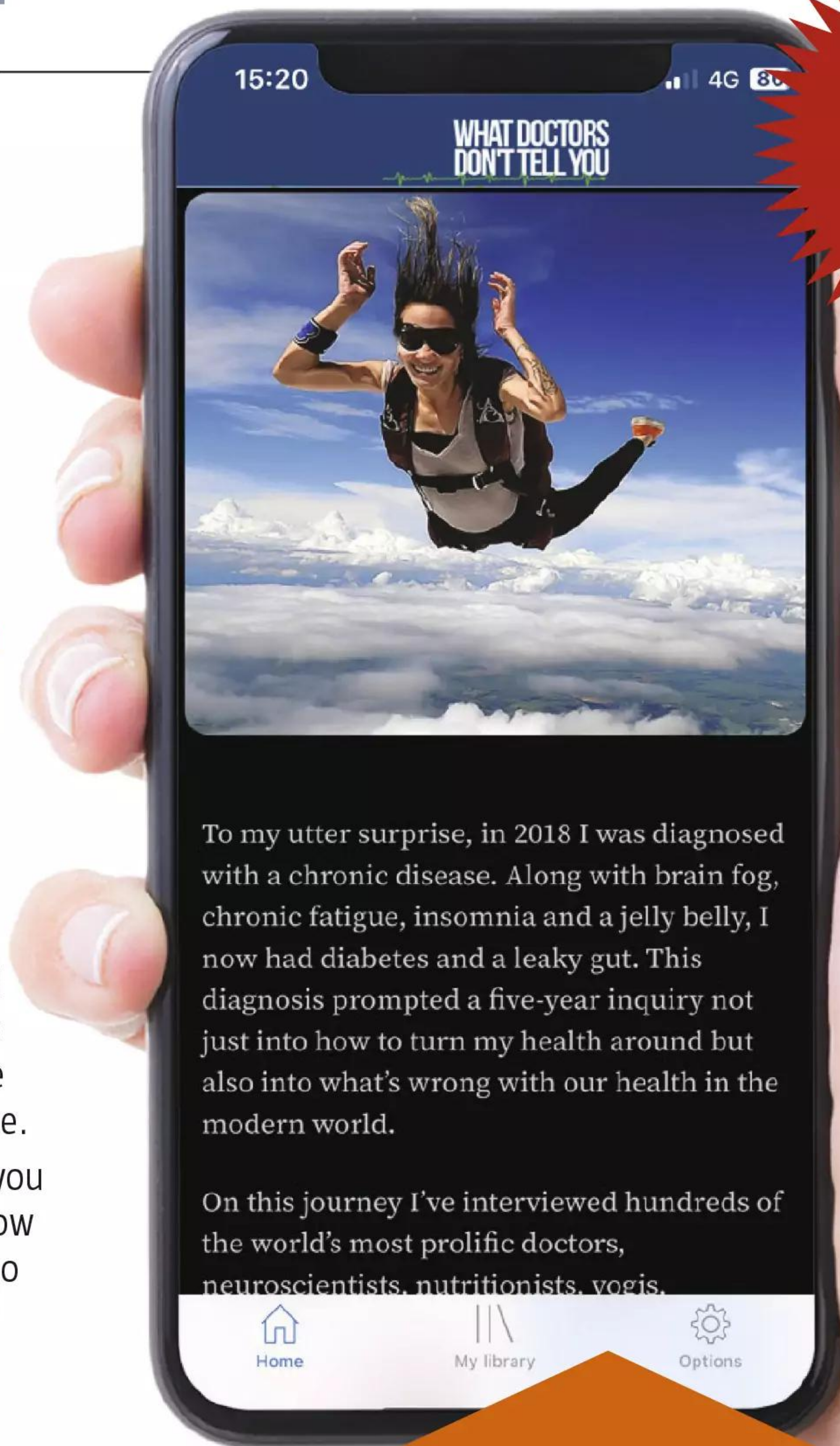


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This day he didn't sound good, though. He whispered that he couldn't shake the feeling that there were cameras watching his every move. I felt my stomach drop like a stone as I realized the isolation was warping his mind.

"Listen, you're going to focus on packing your bags right now, okay, hon?" I said, trying to reassure him as I felt panic rising in my chest.

How could I be so stupid? I asked myself for the first time of a thousand that followed. Why hadn't I seen this coming? How could they do this to people?

A known hazard

If I had only looked, a ton of research had already piled up about the dangers of isolation. Public health officials imposing the lockdowns knew about it. Studies have long shown that prolonged social deprivation can trigger severe psychological distress, including paranoia, hallucinations and cognitive distortions.

Among other methods, the animal model of human psychosis is created by isolating animals from their peers.¹ Isolated rodents show alterations in neurotransmitter systems, including dopamine dysregulation, as well as neurochemical and pharmacological changes that mirror schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders.²

Research in both human and animal models shows social isolation alters brain function, particularly stress regulation and perception of reality. Individuals deprived of normal interaction exhibit increased activity in the brain's threat detection centers, heightening paranoia and reinforcing delusional thought patterns.

The human brain is wired for connection, and when that connection is severed, the consequences can be devastating. As far back as 2011, United Nations Special Rapporteur Juan E. Mendez said solitary confinement is so psychologically damaging that it "cannot be justified for any reason, precisely because it imposes severe mental pain and suffering," and that it can only be construed as "torture."

An epidemic of loneliness

Recently, social isolation and loneliness have been making headlines, partially because the research has been pouring in about the pandemic fallout and because the problem of human loneliness, despite our hyperconnected digital world, isn't going away.

Ironically, the same agencies that imposed stay-at-home orders with an iron fist (and might again without notice) now cite loneliness and social isolation as a "significant public health concern" with profound implications for physical, mental and societal well-being.

The World Health Organization (WHO), for example, currently has a Commission on Social Connection promising solutions such as "broad national policies" to get people more connected. In 2023, then-US President Joe Biden's surgeon general, Vivek Murthy, issued a public advisory about the "epidemic of loneliness."

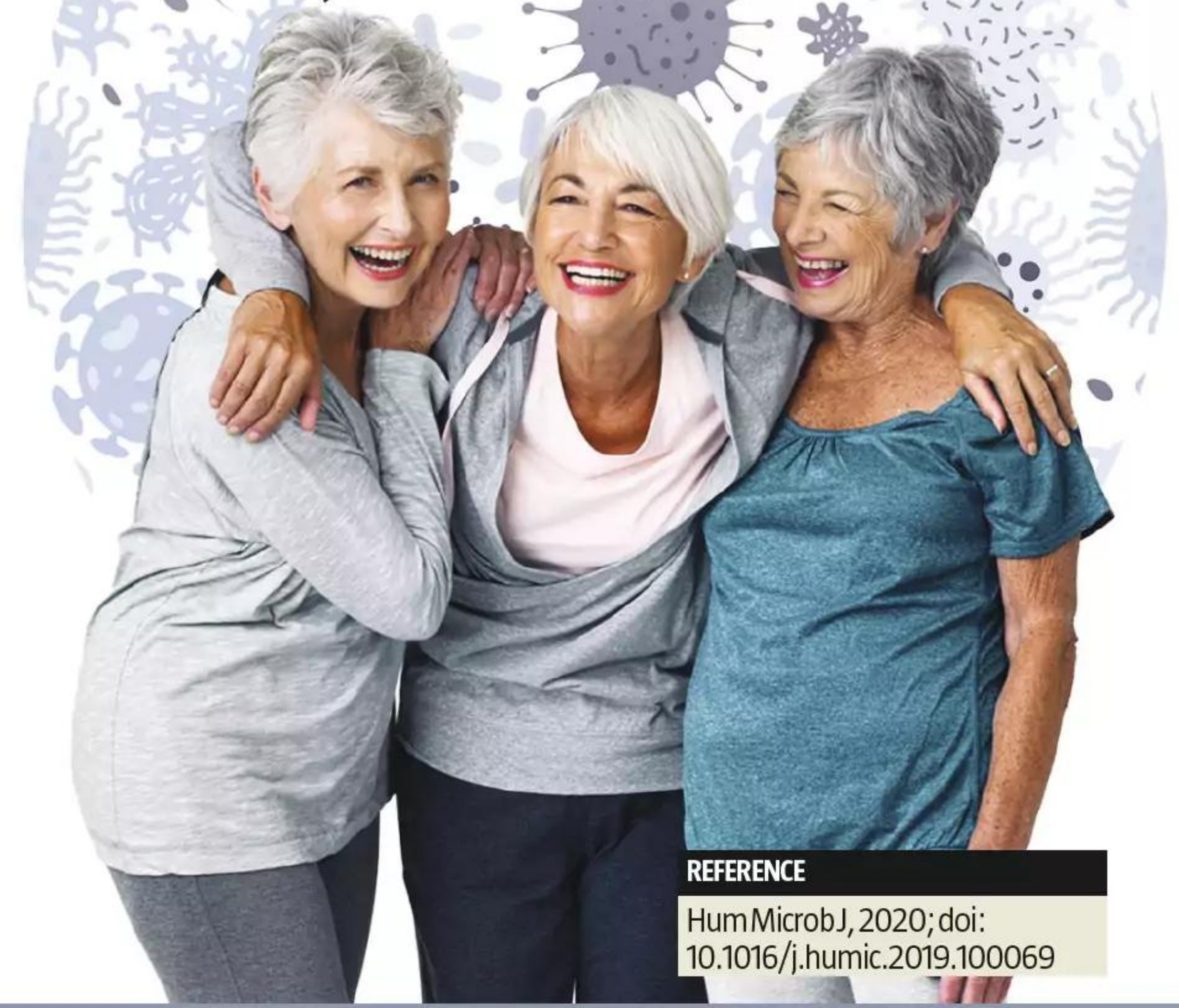
The WHO estimates one in four elderly people are socially isolated and 5–15 percent of adolescents feel lonely.³ However, other polls are more pessimistic.

Gen Z (born approximately 1997–2012) spends more time in the digital world than any other generation, and their social life is

The unhappy gut

Recent research has pointed to the microbiome to explain how social isolation can cause mental and physical illness.

One 2020 study showed people with larger social networks tended to have a more diverse collection of gut microbiota, which is favorable to overall health. Anxiety and stress are related to reduced diversity.



dominated by platforms like TikTok, Snapchat and Instagram. They've been dubbed the "loneliest generation" due to rising levels of social isolation, declining in-person connections and widespread mental health struggles.

They came of age during the pandemic measures that cut them off from key social experiences and opportunities, and they report feeling lonely more often than aging baby boomers. A 2023 poll found 61 percent of Gen Zers said they felt lonely or isolated "often," compared to just 36 percent of their grandparents' generation.⁴

Impact on health

"Loneliness is far more than just a bad feeling—it harms both individual and societal health," according to the US surgeon general's advisory. "It is associated with a greater risk of cardiovascular disease, dementia, stroke, depression, anxiety and premature death."

Murthy cited research showing social isolation is associated with 29 percent higher mortality. He compared loneliness to smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day, an even greater risk than that for obesity, lack of physical activity and poor air quality.⁵

Experts have known isolation and loneliness are deadly for half a century. A landmark study published in 1979 followed nearly 7,000 individuals for nine years and found the most isolated men, with weak

or nonexistent social networks, were twice as likely to die within the study period than those with a strong social network, regardless of their previous state of health.

Lonely and isolated women fared even worse; they were almost three times more likely to die than their connected peers.

“ A LANDMARK 1979 STUDY FOUND MEN WITH WEAK OR NONEXISTENT SOCIAL NETWORKS WERE TWICE AS LIKELY TO DIE AS THEIR CONNECTED PEERS; LONELY WOMEN WERE ALMOST THREE TIMES MORE LIKELY TO DIE ”

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The impact of social ties was greater than the participants' socioeconomic status, smoking and drinking habits, weight, physical activity levels and access to preventive healthcare. For staying alive, having meaningful friendships and loved ones mattered more than all these health factors.¹²

Since then, decades of research have confirmed the link. Actual or perceived loneliness raises the risk of death by 30 percent.

Those with weak or no social connections are about 30 percent more likely to have heart disease and stroke. They're more susceptible to obesity and type 2 diabetes.¹³

We know now that isolation can weaken the body's immune responses, leaving us more vulnerable to infections (which makes the abandonment of the at-risk elderly in nursing homes during the pandemic seem even more cruelly absurd).¹⁴

In 2022, UK and Chinese researchers published their study based on UK Biobank data from 462,619 individuals followed for about 12 years. They found social isolation came with a 26 percent higher risk of dementia and changes in brain structure, including lower gray matter volume in some brain regions.¹⁵

These same researchers followed up their study with new research that explains for the first time how isolation is linked to mental and physical health problems. It examined 2,920 blood proteins that might be playing a role in this pathology of social isolation.

Using UK Biobank data again, this time from 42,062 people, they investigated the link between the blood proteins and self-reported loneliness and social isolation. They reported the presence of five proteins (GFRA1, ADM, FABP4, TNFRSF10A and ASGR1) that may result from isolation. These proteins have been implicated in inflammation as well as poor antiviral and immune responses in previous studies.

People who felt lonelier tended to have higher levels of the five proteins than those who didn't, and research over the course of 14 years linked the proteins to heart disease, infections, diabetes, stroke and death.¹⁶

"Based on our findings, having good social relationships and not feeling lonely may promote health by reducing the levels of certain harmful proteins," the researchers concluded in an article about their work, noting that social stress may also be a factor.¹⁷

What's increasingly clear from all this research is that connection to other people is critical to health and well-being.

"Decades of research have proven that connection is as essential as food and water, but this knowledge hasn't yet made its way into the mainstream understanding of health—and without it, we're suffering," says Kasley Killam, author of *The Art and Science of Connection: Why Social Health Is the Missing Key to Living Longer, Healthier, and Happier* (HarperOne, 2024).



The 5-3-1 Guideline

More friends and connections—a bigger network of people—makes for better social health and longer, happier years of life. But what does a happy social life look like? In her book *The Art and Science of Connection*, Kasley Killam says national survey data from Canada provides a good social guideline for those with the highest happiness index, which she calls her 5-3-1 guideline:

- ⑤ Connect with five people each week, be they family, coworkers or friends.
- ③ Maintain at least three close relationships in general. The people in your tightest circle might include a spouse, family and friends.
- ① Spend at least one hour each day in engaging social time with someone. "Remember the principle 'quality over quantity,'" says Killam. "A few minutes of meaningful connection may be more rewarding than a few hours around people you don't particularly like or interacting superficially on social media."

Don't be shy about stretching the guidelines. The more you socialize with people, whether you're inclined to at first or not, and the deeper your conversations, the happier you're likely to be.

Killam points to figures showing that behind the loneliness epidemic is a society of people who are consciously or unconsciously pulling away from each other. In the past two decades, the amount of time people spent alone increased by an average of 24 hours per month.¹⁸ Over the past 10 years, participation in communities such as churches, book clubs, sports leagues and neighborhood associations fell by nearly 20 percent.

Although women seem to have more trouble with social isolation, men are more isolated than they used to be. Thirty years ago, most men (55 percent) reported having at least six close friends. Today that number has been cut in half. Slightly more than one in four men (27 percent) have six or more close friends today, and 15 percent have no close friendships at all—five times more than in 1990.

A 2019 national survey (before the pandemic) was sadly telling: About half of US adults felt no one knows them very well.¹⁹ "You can't be fully healthy if you don't have a name to write down as your emergency contact," says Killam.



Fake it till you make it

Considering the importance of social connection to health and happiness, it's hardly surprising that research shows extroverts are happier.¹

Introverts who naturally prefer solitude and quiet may feel drained by lengthy social interactions. But research shows just stepping out of their comfort zone to do something a natural extrovert would do—like signing up for dance lessons or a networking club—can generate a big mood boost. Pushing yourself to be more outgoing can improve emotional well-being, boost happiness and even reduce stress.

University of California researchers found that when introverts acted more extroverted, such as by engaging in conversations, expressing enthusiasm and being more assertive, they experienced more positive emotions and life satisfaction. Doing so for just one week led to feeling happier and more energized.²

The connection between increased social interaction and oxytocin (the “love hormone”) release is well established. Socializing and positive social connections can stimulate oxytocin production, helping regulate stress and improve mood.

Like with exercise, it seems even if they don't feel like doing something extroverted, introverts can feel the benefit of it. You're more likely to act yourself into feeling than to feel yourself into action, as famed Harvard psychologist Jerome Bruner said.

Practicing extroversion may even help maintain brain function, which prevents cognitive decline as you age.³

If you're introverted, you don't need to become a social butterfly overnight. Start by initiating small conversations, joining group activities or spending more time with friends. Over time, taking these small steps can enhance both mental and physical well-being, making you feel more connected, happier and healthier. Also see page 65 for details of one way to counter loneliness.

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But *why* are people pulling away from each other? And what can we do to curb the phenomenon and cultivate our own friendships and social connections?

Prioritize connection

Killam points to our modern “busyness,” the fact that more people at younger and younger ages feel rushed and pressured to earn money or achieve goals. As an example, she holds up a famous 1970s experiment that sent 40 theology students to a building to give a presentation either about the Good Samaritan (a Bible story about helping an ill stranger on the road) or about work opportunities.

On the way to the presentation, the researchers had placed an actor posing as a sick homeless person, coughing and moaning. Remarkably, whether the students were cued to the Good Samaritan story or not didn't affect their response to the “homeless” man. Their time constraints did.

Of the 40 percent who did help in some way, only 10 percent were from the group that was told they were “running late,” compared to 45 percent of those who were “on time” and 63 percent of those who were in no hurry.^{1EJ}

Social connections are no longer on people's radar, which is now crammed with the ever-increasing pressures of the day. “If you're preoccupied with your tasks, you have less mental bandwidth to pay attention to the people around you, let alone connect with them in a meaningful way,” says Killam. “If you often or always feel busy, it's worth pausing to ask yourself: What—or whom—are you so busy for?”

Invest time in friendship

It takes time, and contact, to make friends. Dr Jeffrey Hall of Kansas University found it takes 40–60 hours of interaction within about three months to form a casual friendship, one in which you stick to surface-level conversation but do things together occasionally.

Ninety hours of contact with someone you like will lead to a moderately close relationship that allows for deep conversations. For a close or “best” friend, it takes an average of 200 hours together to gel.^{1EJ}

If your health and well-being depend on it, it's a worthwhile investment of time that might be dawdled away on less precious things than the gift of friends.

Lots of studies have shown that spending quality time in person speeds up the formation of friendships. Activities such as sharing hobbies or meals and attending events together promote stronger bonds.

Not surprisingly, people who live together, like siblings or students in dorms, and those who travel somewhere new together (as in team training) or go through a bad experience together tend to bond faster. Distance does not make the heart grow fonder. It's self-disclosure, laughter and shared experiences that build rapport more quickly.

Some people are more comfortable disclosing feelings or experiences online, and sharing vulnerable details helps friendship develop. But research shows digital interactions (texting, video calls, social media) usually take longer to develop closeness and trust than in-person interactions and are weaker.

That said, once an in-person friendship has been established, texting can help bolster it so long as it's punctuated with face-to-face get-togethers.^{1EJ}

Cut screen time

In 2021, when the mental ravages of the pandemic were becoming too obvious to ignore, the UK's Minister for Loneliness (Japan has one, too) announced millions in spending during Loneliness Awareness Week to combat isolation. In a typical government vein, this included sponsorship of a chatbot service from the tech giant WhatsApp and a partnership with the social media platform TikTok, billed as a community for “shared enjoyment and connection.”

Once again, the governments were out of step with the research showing apps and social media add to loneliness more than they

alleviate it. Dozens of studies show that the more people scroll social media, the more likely they are to be depressed, anxious and lonely. One study reported teens spending more than five hours daily on digital devices are 70 percent more likely to have suicidal thoughts or actions than those who spend less than an hour a day.¹

Conversely, cutting back on social media time has mental health benefits. Researchers at Iowa State University found college students limiting their social media usage to 30 minutes a day scored significantly lower for anxiety, depression, loneliness and “fear of missing out” than the control group.

They also scored higher for “positive affect,” the “tendency to experience positive emotions described with words such as ‘excited’ and ‘proud.’” In other words, they had a brighter outlook on life.

“It surprised me to find that participants’ well-being did not only improve in one dimension but in all of them,” said Ella Faulhaber, lead author of the 2023 paper.²

Even those who sometimes exceeded the 30-minute limit felt benefits. “The lesson here is, it’s not about being perfect but putting in effort, which makes a difference. I think self-limiting and paying attention are the secret ingredients, more so than the 30-minute benchmark,” says Faulhaber.

Participants in the Iowa study, like many people trying “digital detoxes,” said it was difficult to cut back on scrolling time for the first few days, but then they noticed they became more productive. Others said they found themselves sleeping better and spending more time with people in person.

There may be a negative feedback loop with technology as well. A recent study found that people with weaker social connections were more likely to become addicted to their smartphones.³

Smartphone addiction then draws people away from real-life experiences, leaving them with fewer social connections. It becomes a vicious, lonely loop.

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The Covid pandemic: A case study in loneliness

Despite the classification of solitary confinement as torture, during the pandemic, people supposedly concerned about public health zealously imposed similar conditions on millions of people globally.

My brother, a psychiatrist, was working at a large hospital in the southern US in 2020. “The Covid ward is nearly empty,” he told me on the phone, “but our wing is packed. There’s a lot of young kids in their 20s. Their schools shut down. Their plans are all on indefinite hold. They’re not working. They’re disconnected from friends. It’s a disaster.”

Psychiatric disorders⁴ and drug overdoses⁵ skyrocketed. Boston College researchers found anxiety and depression rates spiked to 39 percent and 32 percent, respectively, by November 2020 — four times the 2019 rates.⁶

Research identified a rise in new-onset psychosis or mania cases during the initial phase of the pandemic, up 45.5 percent compared to 2019.⁷ Some individuals developed symptoms strikingly similar to those seen in solitary confinement studies.

People were shocked by stories like that of Hayden Hunstable, who hung himself in his bedroom during the Covid-19 lockdowns, three days before his 13th birthday. “He didn’t like the isolation. He didn’t like being at home,” said his heartbroken father, Brad Hunstable.⁸

Studies reported such cases weren’t rare. Global suicide and suicide attempts soared by tens of thousands during the pandemic due to strict quarantines, rising rates of domestic violence, financial loss, depression and anxiety.⁹

Besides young people, the elderly also saw ill effects, such as long-lasting cognitive impairment.¹⁰

But the younger the adults, the more likely they were to suffer from mental ill-effects of stay-at-home measures. Gen Z (46 percent) was the most likely to say their mental health had worsened since before the pandemic, followed by Gen X (33 percent), millennials (31 percent), boomers (28 percent) and older adults (9 percent).¹¹



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CRAFTY PRESCRIPTIONS

Germaine Hypher, who learned to navigate her severe myalgic encephalitis and fibromyalgia using creativity, reveals how arts and crafts can be powerful remedies for all sorts of health symptoms and conditions, both mental and physical

Did you know?

Enjoying arts and crafts has been found to positively affect the amygdala and medial prefrontal cortex of the brain, which are critical to a balanced stress response, feelings of reward and emotional processing.

As such, this genre of activities helps to alleviate emotional distress, anxiety and depression while enhancing communication skills, involvement in the community and a sense of self-identity—all aspects of life that can be dented by long-term ill health.

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Arts and crafts have been used within medical and healing systems throughout the history of humanity. In the modern world, hospitals, support groups, clinical studies and people in their homes have

repeatedly found arts and crafts beneficial for both physical and mental health problems.

It's widely accepted that engaging with visual arts, musical arts and expressive writing (both as an active participant and as an appreciator of others' work) can reduce stress levels. But it's less well known that creative practices can have a positive impact on patients' vital functions, nutrient levels, immune function, motor skills, mental agility, physical pain, insomnia and depression.

Here's how creativity in general impacts the brain and the specific creative practices that can bring big benefits to your health, especially if you're living with a chronic condition.

Arts and neuroplasticity

Neuroplasticity is the brain and nervous system's ability to change through exposure to experience. This ability is enhanced by practicing any new skill, and many people use foreign languages, crosswords, sudokus or strategic games like chess to maintain their brain health.

However, it turns out that engaging in any creative activity, including cookery or reading other people's creative works, can have a similar effect on cognitive strength. Arts and crafts, it seems, can structurally change your brain.

The areas in the brain we need to maintain concentration, planning, memory, spatial awareness, sensory input, precision of motor skills and timing of movement are all activated through engagement with various creative pursuits.

Practicing a gently challenging craft while using as many senses as possible relaxes the nervous system while strengthening these different departments and the connections between them. By doing this, we may be able to mitigate some of the cognitive impairment that can accompany chronic health conditions.

A 2011 study by the Mayo Clinic lends weight to this hope. It found that if older people with early-stage age-related dementia and cognitive impairment participated in activities such as knitting, quilting, reading, computer use and game-playing, they were 30–50 percent less likely to have mild cognitive impairment later than those who didn't take part in these activities.¹

There are so many skills and techniques to be discovered within the varied world of arts and crafts that it's an almost limitless way of keeping your brain as responsive and healthy as possible.

The one downside is that learning new skills can be hard work for those with existing cognitive impairment. However, we can work with this by beginning with a very simple craft and being gentle with our expectations.

Don't put pressure on yourself to uncover your inner craft genius or master artist if you want the full therapeutic value. For the best effect, you want to both relax and very gently exercise your brain and body.

Keep practicing your starter skill until experience kicks in and you expend less energy performing it before moving on to the next stage. Procedural memory will gradually ensure that the various stages come more naturally, and you may soon be wondering what you found so difficult.

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Doodling, drawing, coloring and sculpting

An endeavor that requires no practice or learned technique is the art of doodling. According to Girija Kaimal, a professor and chair of creative arts therapies at Drexel University, who has published over 80 peer-reviewed papers and two books, doodling is an undervalued tool for improving memory.²¹

Drawing and sculpting can also activate memory processes and spatial-temporal processing, thanks to their effects on gamma and theta power in specific parts of the brain.

Along with drawing, sculpting and coloring, doodling increases blood flow to the brain's prefrontal cortex, potentially igniting pleasurable feelings of reward.²² So how about coloring in your doodles?

The effects of coloring can be further enhanced by choosing to color mandalas while sitting outside in nature. Doing so has been shown to lower cortisol levels and pain intensity.²³ If getting outside isn't an option, then try using houseplants and flowers indoors to replicate the effect.



Textile crafts

Yarn crafts have seen a resurgence in popularity over recent years. And much of the research on the therapeutic benefits of crafting has focused on knitting and crochet.

A study published in the *British Journal of Occupational Therapy* noted that more frequent knitters reported better cognitive function than those who knitted less often.²⁴

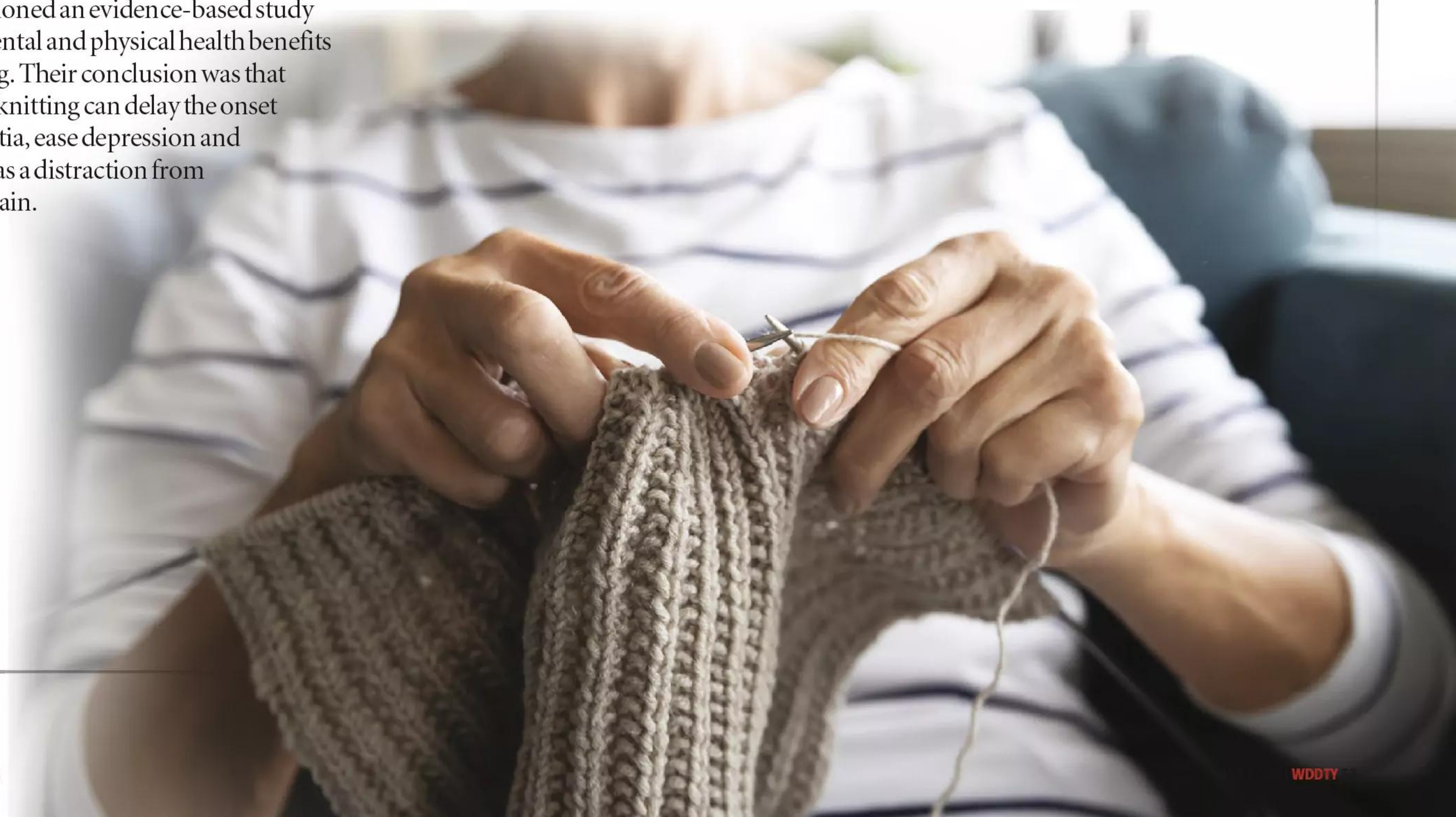
Meanwhile, the charity Knit for Peace commissioned an evidence-based study on the mental and physical health benefits of knitting. Their conclusion was that the act of knitting can delay the onset of dementia, ease depression and function as a distraction from chronic pain.

Specifically, they learned from one survey that 92 percent of the participants who reported being in very poor health felt knitting had a beneficial effect on their health and improved their mood, while 82 percent said they found it relaxing.²⁵

Studies have also shown that knitting and crochet can lower blood pressure.²⁶ British comedian Jenny Eclair noted this physical benefit when she recalled being advised to take up knitting to help combat the high blood pressure that she was experiencing during perimenopause.

The health benefits of knitting and crochet generally focus on the relaxing action of rhythmic movement as well as easing conditions that require gentle exercise to keep joints supple. Embroidery, cross-stitch and all types of needlework, as well as many other textile or mixed media crafts, lend themselves to this outcome, too.

Engaging in textile arts has also been shown to encourage the lowering of inflammatory markers released by the immune system, thus potentially reducing inflammatory symptom flares in the body.²⁷





riting

Creative writing has long been used by art therapists, counselors and individuals as a cathartic act. Releasing emotions that have no other safe channel through which to be directed is good medicine, helping to lighten the load of stress the body is carrying.

Indeed, expressive writing has been demonstrated to increase heart rate variability—a sign that the heart is responding better to stress—and to lower elevated blood pressure.¹¹

Practiced regularly, creative writing can help alleviate depressive feelings,¹² which in turn can put you in a mental space better equipped to follow medical advice and health regimes. Even just listening to poetry can reduce pain intensity¹³ as well as loneliness.¹⁴

More surprisingly, a study with HIV patients showed that 30 minutes a day of expressive writing for four days resulted in a drop in viral load.¹⁵ This suggests a particularly strong link between stress levels and our immune function.

The effect may not be maintained over time and could be influenced by how freely patients already consciously express themselves. Nevertheless, it's a worthwhile tool to have in your creative supply box.



Suggested activity: Pressure points

Grab a sheet of plain paper and a pencil. Now doodle, draw, practice shading, write freely or copy a loved verse. It doesn't matter what you do, but do it firmly. Apply pressure with the pencil.

Then repeat the action, but this time gently. Use a light touch and see if your body's reaction, your mind's response or the results on the paper differ. Experiment with a variety of different pressures and observe the effects.

Now consider how this could be applied to your creative hobbies. Try partaking in something a little lighter than you might usually, and then something a little harder, just to test your ultimate comfort zone and how these different efforts affect you.

Do you want to continue with either of these directions or return to where you were before? Perhaps your choice will vary day to day.



usic

It's well known that learning a musical instrument at a young age can enhance cognitive abilities and encourage continued neuroplasticity. What many don't realize is that playing an instrument at any age helps the brain to continue nurturing these connections.

But even just listening to music can have a beneficial effect. Classical music, especially, is recommended for combating high blood pressure¹⁶ and muscle tension, and it has been shown that the gray matter of the brain in people who have had strokes is changed for the better by listening to music.¹⁷

Anecdotal evidence shows that the brain waves of patients with severe myalgic encephalomyelitis / chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS) have similarities to those of stroke patients. This further suggests the benefits music could bestow.

In fact, exposure to rhythmic music has been seen to have a notable positive effect on a variety of conditions including multiple sclerosis (MS), chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), brain trauma, Parkinson's disease, Huntington's disease and spinal cord injuries.¹⁸

According to Dr John Graham-Pole, a retired pediatric oncologist and professor who co-founded Arts in Medicine (AIM) at the University of Florida, a leading university hospital arts program, music can aid recovery from heart attacks, speed up growth and development in newborn babies, stimulate mental clarity, improve tolerance to painful treatments and reduce attention to painful symptoms. Separate research also suggests auditory stimulation can reduce pain, especially for cancer patients.¹⁹

An experiment conducted at Massachusetts General Hospital with a group of critically ill patients showed that exposure to Mozart's music caused growth hormone plasma concentrations to increase significantly and stress response hormones to drop, which resulted, to a degree, in immune system regulation.²⁰ And at least two studies (one focusing on postoperative nausea, the other on patients undergoing chemotherapy) have shown that listening to music can reduce nausea and vomiting.²¹

Music is also believed to speed up slow gastric motility and therefore to enhance digestion.²² Physiotherapy to improve standing and walking is enhanced when music is playing,²³ and mindfulness-based dance movement therapy has been shown to lessen pain levels of chronic headache sufferers.²⁴

In conditions that require you to push yourself to increase mobility, music is beneficial in its ability to encourage more physical movement. However, I mention this with the caveat to always stay within your own



Play that soothing music

Retired pediatric oncologist and healing arts expert Dr John Graham-Pole maintains that music improves the lives of patients with long-term (and terminal) illness by reducing anxiety.

Both listening to and playing music can have calming effects on neural activity in the brain, which in turn affects the hypothalamus and amygdala, calming the nervous system, including heart rate, breathing and digestion.

When choosing what to listen to or play, the most important factor is what appeals to you and how it makes you feel. But it's worth bearing in mind that slow music written in the key of C major, A major or E flat major can have a particularly peaceful, calming effect.

Alpha brain waves (the waves associated with relaxation) synchronize with music played at 60 beats per minute, while delta brain waves (those involved with falling asleep) attune to even slower music, so select your tunes in accordance with your desired result.

When I'm suffering with cortisol and adrenaline imbalances that result in extreme physical agitation, a racing and pounding heart, twitching, shaking and a sensation of abject terror, playing the piano gives me moments of enough respite to recoup some strength for the next onslaught of symptoms.

I've found the act of engaging both my mind and fingers in playing a piece that I'm familiar with enables me to move very slightly beyond what my body is experiencing. It takes me into a space that soothes me just enough to feel I can cope.

My favorite genres of piano music to play are jazz and blues, but the piece that soothes me the most in the throes of a severe adrenaline attack is Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavichord*—a gently flowing piece that's relatively easy to play.

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John Graham-Pole, *Illness and the Art of Creative Self-Expression* (New Harbinger Publications, 2000)

safe limits. Some chronic illnesses are worsened by movement or energy use. In these cases, music can have a stimulating effect that may increase symptoms.

In my experience, because hyperacuity makes me sensitive to sounds and my heart rate is raised by musical beats, the music I most enjoy can leave me feeling dizzy, nauseated and physically exhausted. In contrast, careful choice of classical piano or cello music, peaceful flute compositions, or pieces composed for relaxation have a calming effect.

These examples clearly demonstrate that you don't need to be able to make your own music. Enjoying other people's creative output can be just as positive for those living with severe conditions.

If, however, you'd rather be an active participant, you may like to know that singing and playing some wind and brass instruments can increase lung function and breath control. You could also try simply humming. Multiple studies have demonstrated it may help keep sinuses clear and healthy.²³

Humming is also thought to stimulate and tone the vagus nerve, which can have a positive effect on an overreactive stress response in the body and conditions such as postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome (POTS). In POTS, the heart rate increases suddenly after getting up from sitting or lying down, causing dizziness, shortness of breath and other symptoms.

Suggested activity: Express yourself

Choose a blank-paged book that you'll enjoy using and give yourself permission to fill it freely. This book is not meant to be saved for your best work. It's your creative expression diary. In it you can write or draw your darkest feelings, brightest hopes and strangest dreams.

Doodle, draw patterns to color in, jot down interesting words, record half-formed thoughts and ideas, create verse, sketch what you see, stick things in, cut out shapes and turn the pages into an extension of yourself.

A range of pencils from soft to hard, colored pencils or crayons, a favored writing pen and a couple of fine-line pens in different thicknesses will help you vary the way you express yourself on the page. You may also want to gather old magazines and papers for collaging. If so, a pair of scissors and a basic glue stick will come in handy, too.

When stuck for ideas, start with an observation of something you can see, hear, smell or feel and see where it leads you emotionally. You might also find it interesting to sing or hum to yourself, either just before or while working on your diary. Notice whether your choice of music affects what arrives on the page.



Introducing the *WDDTY* Community!

Community matters

WDDTY proudly presents the launch of its brand-new online community hub. This is going to be an incredible space to connect with like-minded people from all around the world. It consists solely of *WDDTY* subscribers, and you can join the discussion about health queries, treatments and recommendations. It will also serve as a community notice board where you will find updates on *WDDTY* Webinars, Talks and Special Reports.

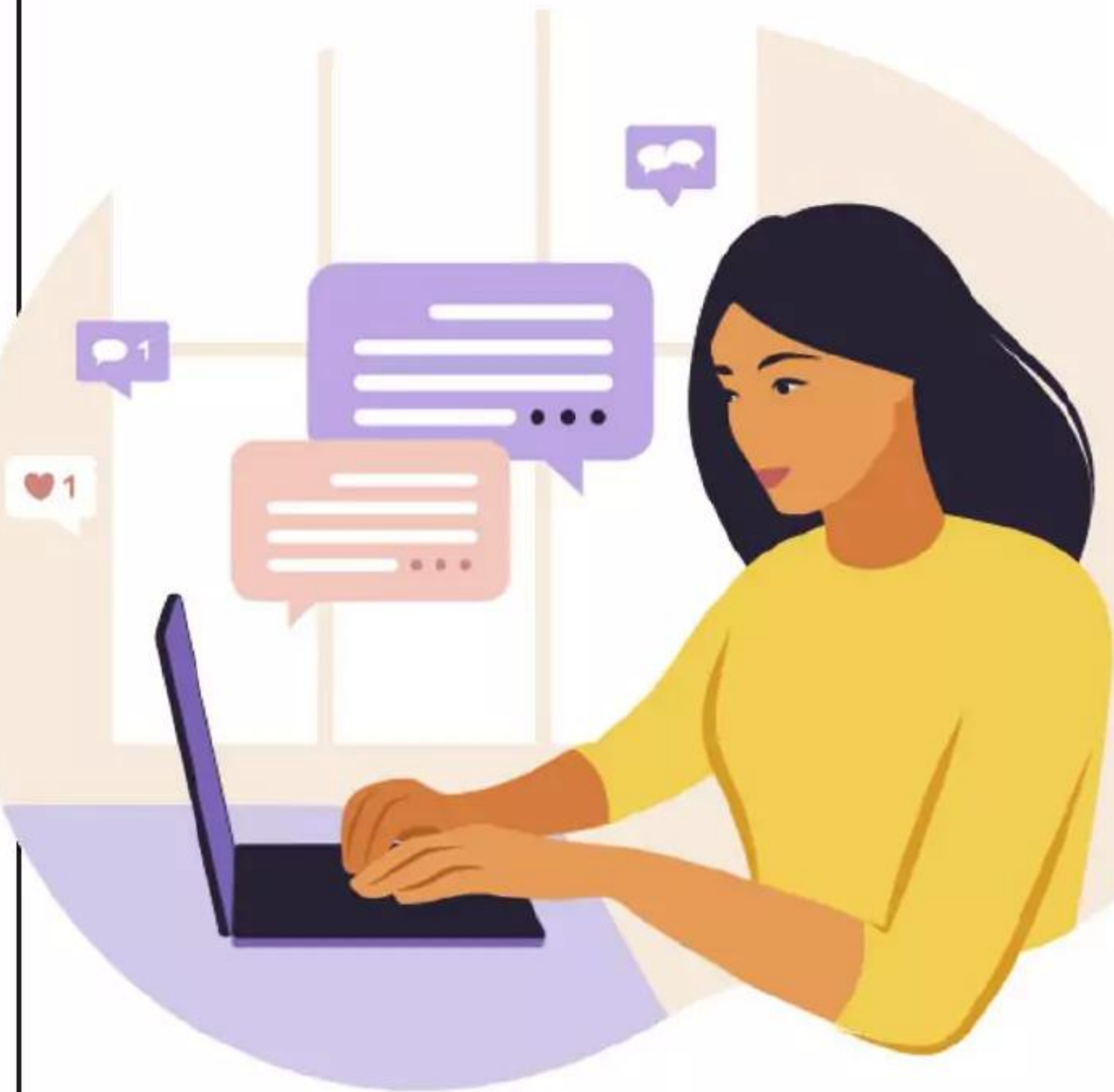


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Gardening

The neurologist Oliver Sacks noted that the balance and harmony that we respond to in music are also present in natural forms such as

flower displays, however elaborate or simple they may be. Our brains find this sensory input calming and naturally organizing. For this reason, he cited gardens and music as valuable nonpharmaceutical therapies in chronic neurological illness.

Gazing at plants provides gentler stimulation for the brain than looking at most manmade objects or

architecture. Fractal patterning, often occurring in nature, is a design in which the pattern is repeated endlessly in different sizes.

Because of this inbuilt predictability, the human brain can relax and the eyes make fewer movements when gazing at such objects as Romanesco broccoli, pinecones, leaf veins or vistas like river deltas that contain fractal patterns.

Gardening (described as “landscape painting” by the poet Alexander Pope), photographing and depicting plants, and arranging cut or living flowers all unite personal creativity with the natural world.

Craft yourself calm

Whether anxiety and depression are key clinical symptoms for you or side effects of coping day-in and day-out, night-in and night-out, with a misbehaving body, there’s no denying that physical and mental health conditions are often enforced companions.

So it’s worth knowing that the repetitive and often rhythmic hand movements required in crafting can trigger the release of serotonin, dopamine and other feel-good chemicals in the brain. These influence hormonal secretions to precipitate a calmer state of being.

A study that surveyed over 3,500 knitters from around the world revealed that the more frequently the participants knitted, the more calm and happy they felt.¹

The researchers deduced that knitting and crocheting not only distract from pain and provide a

relaxing opportunity to express creativity (especially at times of reduced physical capacity) but also reduce depression and anxiety.

A small 2009 study on how knitting affected women hospitalized with anorexia found that knitting for an average of one hour and 20 minutes a day for a few weeks resulted in 74 percent feeling less anxious or preoccupied by their condition.²

The combination of occupying your hands while directing your attention toward a specific, achievable task particularly helps to channel the nervous energy of agitation that can come with anxiety. Jittery fingers and negative thoughts are steered away from urges to self-harm as an alternative focus is provided.

Simple projects often prove the most effective remedy for concentration levels impacted by anxiety and depression. Even

those who don’t generally suffer from anxiety can benefit from the calming effects of rhythmic crafts, such as crochet, cross-stitch or knitting, while they wait for medical appointments or anticipate test results.

Combining these crafts with exposure to nature can bring greater benefits. Being in a garden or having flowering plants within sight increases alpha waves in the brain.³ This, in turn, releases serotonin along with its calming and mood-lifting benefits.

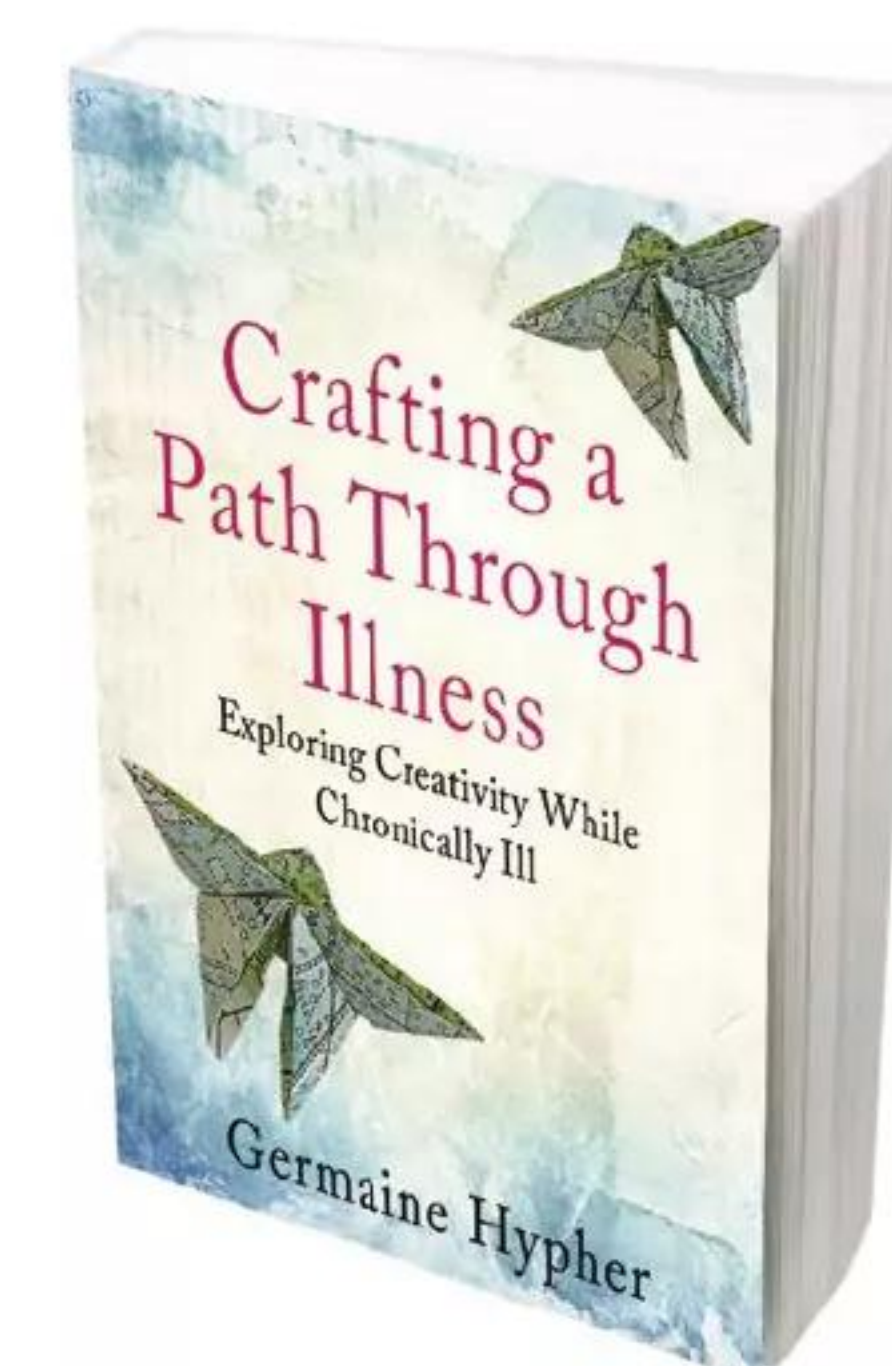
So whether you choose to admire, embroider, paint, photograph, arrange or grow plants, a natural subject matter for visual arts and crafts offers added mental health benefits.

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Adapted from *Crafting a Path Through Illness* by Germaine Hypher (Hammersmith Health Books, 2025)

The cancer—diabetes connection

Cancer and diabetes are intricately linked, says Dr Leigh Erin Connealy. Here's how diet and lifestyle changes can help you sidestep both

If you've noticed your blood sugar levels slowly creeping up over the last few years, you might be tempted to think it's not that big of a deal. But in reality, regular blood sugar spikes could be setting the stage for more than insulin sensitivity, metabolic disorders and diabetes. Another debilitating chronic illness shares common ties with blood sugar concerns: cancer.

While the medical world seeks to uncover the definitive link between these two insidious diseases, let's examine integrative medicine's approach to treatment and—more importantly—to prevention.

Diabetes 101

Type 2 diabetes is characterized by the body's inability to properly produce and/or use insulin, which causes chronically elevated blood sugar levels that destroy the body over time. In the short term, type 2 diabetes can cause intense thirst, frequent urination, blurred vision, slow-healing wounds, neuropathy (tingling or numbness in the extremities), itchy skin and yeast infections, to name a few of the most common symptoms.

Uncontrolled high blood sugar over the long term can impact health on a much larger scale. Undiagnosed or untreated type 2 diabetes can lead to chronic inflammation, loss of limbs, kidney problems, blindness and

cardiovascular complications, including heart attack and stroke. This disrupted body state is also a breeding ground for all types of cancer. Now is the time to start taking blood sugar control and diabetes prevention seriously.

Diabetes on the rise

Type 2 diabetes is running rampant across the globe. Worldwide, its incidence has skyrocketed over the last three decades.

According to the World Health Organization, the disease affected 220 million individuals worldwide in 1990 and a whopping 830 million in 2022.¹

Cancers linked to diabetes

Per the American Diabetes Association, these cancers may be linked to type 2 diabetes:

- liver
- pancreas
- uterus
- colon
- breast
- bladder

REFERENCE

"Know the Diabetes-Cancer Link," accessed Mar 25, 2025, diabetes.org

This fourfold-plus increase is alarming, to say the least, and numbers are still on the rise.

Once called adult-onset diabetes, type 2 diabetes is now being diagnosed in younger and younger people. Diets full of processed foods, a sedentary or largely inactive lifestyle, and excess weight or obesity are some of the main contributing causes. They're also preventable ones.

Diabetes and cancer

While one is a metabolic disorder and the other the product of unmitigated, malignant cell reproduction, the link between type 2 diabetes and several cancer types is complicated but very real (see box, left).

Understanding how these two conditions are related is an ongoing endeavor, but we know that both involve systemic inflammation, hormonal imbalances, oxidative stress and lifestyle choices. Here are some of the main controllable risk factors the two conditions have in common.

Alcohol use One alcoholic beverage a day for women and two for men has been shown to increase both diabetes and cancer risk. And in January, the US surgeon general suggested adding warning labels to alcoholic beverages explicitly noting that consumption increases the risk of cancers of the mouth, throat, voice box, esophagus, breast, liver, colon and rectum.

Inactivity Regular physical activity positively impacts all areas of health. People who are active on a regular basis decrease their chances of being diagnosed with both cancer and diabetes.

Obesity Being significantly overweight or obese throws off hormone levels, increases inflammation throughout the body, and can create insulin resistance—all factors that increase diabetes and cancer risk.

Smoking Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death and a significant risk factor for cancer and diabetes.

The role of chronic inflammation

Chronic systemic inflammation is also a shared symptom of diabetes and cancer. In fact, inflammation is at the root of nearly every single chronic disease.

The body produces a natural inflammatory response as a result of

“
People who are active
on a regular basis
decrease their chances
of being diagnosed
with both cancer
and diabetes



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injury or damage. It's necessary and required for healing.

Imagine the redness, swelling, heat and other symptoms that accompany a scraped knee or a sprained ankle. The acute inflammatory response aids in repair and recovery and goes away once healing has occurred.

However, problems arise when that inflammatory response is ongoing for months—or even years. In this imbalanced state, unrelenting inflammation creates cellular dysfunction and can compromise organs and whole body systems over time.

The good news is straightforward lab work can measure levels of C-reactive protein (CRP) in the blood to determine whether inflammation is present and to what degree.

Minute levels of CRP (under 0.3 mg/dL) are considered normal or healthy. Levels ranging from 0.3 to 1.0 mg/dL fall in the normal to minor elevation category. They can be caused by obesity, pregnancy, gum disease, the common cold or an inactive lifestyle.

Levels between 1.0 and 10.0 are moderate elevations and reveal systemic inflammation potentially triggered by an autoimmune disease, serious infection, heart disease, or cancer.

If CRP levels are higher than 10.0 mg/dL, an acute bacterial or viral infection, vasculitis or significant trauma is likely to blame. Extremely elevated levels, 50.0 mg/dL or higher, could indicate sepsis or other lethal bacterial infections.²⁴

Luckily, a variety of lifestyle changes (coming up soon) can counter systemic inflammation and lower your risk of both cancer and diabetes.

Restoring balance in the body

To regain or maintain optimal health and stave off diseases such as cancer and diabetes, the body must be in a balanced state, called homeostasis. In my updated and fully revised second edition of *The Cancer Revolution* (available this summer), I discuss this balance at length.

In the case of diabetes, uncontrolled blood sugar levels disrupt and create dysfunction in the cells and organs. Similarly, in cancer, malignant cells mutate and proliferate, creating multiple issues. I use the analogy of an earthquake in your body because of the chaos that cancer creates.



Vital vitamin D

Vitamin D3 (the most bioavailable form of this fat-soluble vitamin) is one of the most potent anticancer supplements found in nature. And vitamin D deficiency has been linked to an increased risk of type 2 diabetes. Yet many people suffer from woefully low levels of this life-giving vitamin.

Behaving more like a hormone than a vitamin, this

nutrient is produced naturally when ultraviolet B (UVB) rays of sunlight are absorbed through the skin. Just 15–20 minutes of daily midday sun exposure can produce roughly 8,000–10,000 IU.

This isn't always realistic due to time constraints, poor weather or contraindicated health conditions, so supplementation is another safe option (see page 64

for high-quality vitamin D supplements). Most people can benefit from 5,000–15,000 IU of vitamin D3 daily.

But the only way to accurately check your levels is to ask your doctor to do a blood test. Aim for the top half of the testing range, ideally 50–70 ng/mL. Be sure to work with your physician to come up with the proper daily dose based on your lab findings.

It can take teams of physicians years to repair the damage and restore balance, which is why it's imperative we take steps now to keep or regain homeostasis. That's when lifestyle changes and prevention come into play.

Prevention: The best medicine

Addressing the controllable factors that raise your risk of diabetes and cancer can help to prevent these diseases. And even if you've already been diagnosed with one of them, don't despair. You can start making real, lasting changes today that can improve your health and even reverse disease.

Here are five diet and lifestyle changes that can make a massive difference to your health.

1. Lose weight with the right nutrition

Carrying around excess weight is one of the biggest contributors to diabetes, and it can also create a breeding ground for cancer. Aside from the physical strain on the body, the excess hormones contained

in adipose (fat) tissues are damaging to all the body's systems.

Many people think exercise is the biggest factor in losing weight, but long-term successful weight loss begins in the kitchen. Whether your goal is blood sugar control or cancer prevention, my nutritional advice is similar.

Prioritize quality protein Eat plenty of organic, clean, lean protein from grass-fed, pasture-raised animals. Excellent options include chicken, beef, lamb, turkey, bison, low-mercury fish, eggs and egg whites.

Eat your veggies and fruits Include lots of organic low-starch, low-glycemic vegetables and fruits too. Great choices are leafy greens, artichokes, asparagus, green beans, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, mushrooms, zucchini, berries and citrus fruits.

Choose good fats Avoid heavily processed and heat-treated seed oils such as canola, corn, cottonseed, soy, sunflower, safflower, grapeseed and rice bran. Instead, consume plenty of

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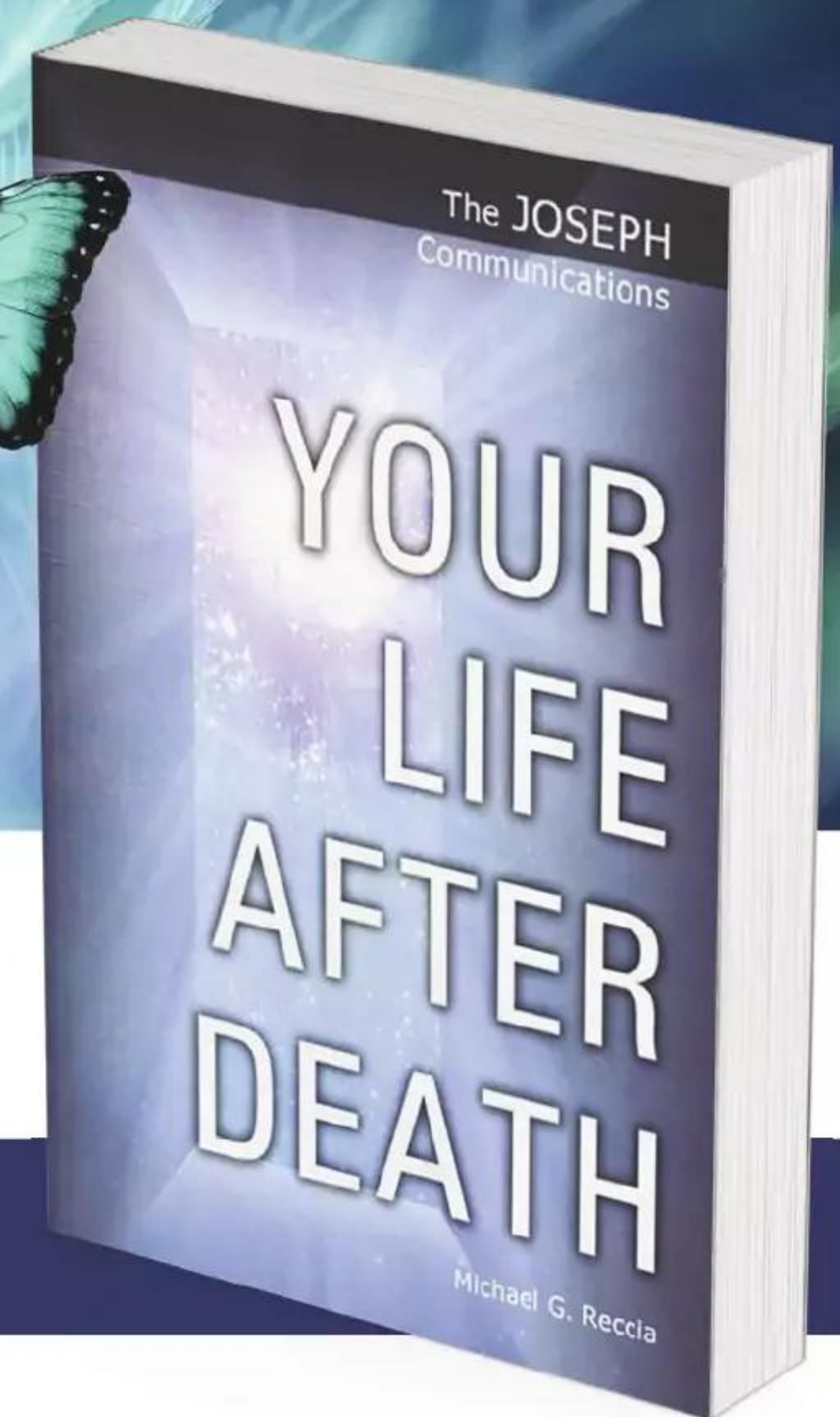


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healthy fats from avocados and avocado oil, coconuts and coconut oil, MCT oil, almonds, macadamia nuts, walnuts, olives and pumpkin seeds.

Fill up on fiber Dietary fiber is an excellent way to prevent and manage diabetes. Fiber isn't absorbed or broken down in the body in the same manner as other carbohydrates, so it doesn't increase blood sugar in the same way.

Additionally, fiber helps you feel full longer, aiding in satiety and weight management.¹ Getting enough fiber can also help stave off cancer.

The American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) recommends at least 30 grams of dietary fiber each day as part of a healthy diet to lower cancer risk. According to the AICR, each 10 g increase in dietary fiber is linked to a 7 percent lower risk of colorectal cancer.²

Skip the starch and sugar Avoid processed and sugary carbohydrates such as bread, pasta, crackers, baked goods, desserts and candy. These foods cause blood sugar spikes, contribute to weight gain and are generally best avoided on healthy diet plans. The same goes for sugary sodas and sports drinks.

2. Move more

You don't have to join a gym or run marathons; every bit of movement counts. The American Diabetes Association and most other health organizations agree that 150 minutes of moderate physical activity per week is a good goal.³

What does that look like, exactly? Here are a few examples of moderate-intensity exercises you can do in whatever time increments work to add up to those 150 weekly minutes:

- Walking briskly
- Playing doubles tennis
- Cycling at a leisurely pace
- Dancing
- Water aerobics
- Mowing the lawn

Another easy way to avoid being sedentary is to set a timer so you'll get up to walk and move a bit every hour if you regularly sit at a desk or computer. You can also park in the far corners of the parking lot when shopping to increase your step count and take phone calls while out on a walk instead of on the couch or at your desk. Whatever you do, just keep moving.



“Good emotional health coupled with a positive mental outlook is crucial to overall health, disease prevention and healing”

3. Kick the habit

If you smoke, do everything in your power to quit. Discuss alcohol use with your physician and/or nutritionist, as even small amounts can disrupt blood sugar levels, add extra calories and create a breeding ground for disease.

4. Take care of your mental health

Most doctors outside the integrative/functional field never ask patients how they're doing mentally or emotionally. This is a travesty because good emotional health coupled with a positive mental outlook is crucial to overall health, disease prevention and healing.

Regardless of your health status, surround yourself with friends, family or loved ones who nourish your soul and make you happy. Engage in self-care activities daily that “fill your cup,” whether that's repeating positive affirmations in the mirror in the morning, practicing yoga or meditating, or taking a relaxing bath at night.

Do what you can to eliminate unnecessary stressors, address unresolved conflicts and remove

negativity from your life. Whether you're facing a health issue or not, this focus on self-care will better your health.

5. Find the right practitioner

Conventional medicine's knee-jerk answers for weight loss and blood sugar control are almost always prescription medications. These meds do little more than slap a Band-Aid on the issues and are rife with side effects that do more harm than good.

Conversely, a program of well-thought-out lifestyle changes that encompasses all your diet, exercise and supplement needs is safe and effective. It can be crafted by a knowledgeable integrative physician to meet your specific needs.

Finding a plan that you can easily implement and stick with for the long term is your best bet for preventing or treating diabetes and cancer. To find a practitioner near you who is well versed in these head-to-toe wellness methods, search the 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 takes a deep dive into the best vitamin D supplements, resources for getting creative and a powerful way to counter loneliness

The best vitamin D supplements

Vitamin D is vital for warding off chronic conditions like cancer, diabetes and heart disease, as mentioned in this month's Healing Cancer column and News Focus (see pages 58 and 20). But many of us aren't getting enough of this much-needed nutrient, which the body makes naturally when our skin is exposed to sunlight.

In fact, vitamin D deficiency affects over a billion adults and children worldwide and has been linked to all sorts of short- and long-term illnesses, from dental problems to infectious diseases to neurological disorders.¹

Rarely getting out in the sun, regularly wearing sunscreen, living in northern latitudes, having darker skin pigmentation, being overweight or obese, smoking, and having certain medical conditions are just a few factors that can increase your risk of vitamin D deficiency. Even just getting older can raise your risk, as the skin's ability to produce vitamin D from sunlight declines with age.²

Many functional medicine practitioners recommend getting your vitamin D levels tested regularly and supplementing to make up for any shortfalls. According to Dr Leigh Erin Connealy, it's important to work with a doctor or qualified health practitioner to work out your ideal daily D dosage based on your lab findings and individual needs. But most people can benefit from taking 5,000–15,000 IU of vitamin D3 daily, she says (see page 61).

Finding a high-dose—and high-quality—vitamin D supplement can be tricky, though. Here's a quick guide to what to look for and a few top products to try.

What to look for

Form Go for vitamin D3 (cholecalciferol) as it's the form your body naturally produces and is considered more effective than D2.³

Ingredients Check the ingredients list to make sure the formula is free of fillers and unnecessary additives like sugar, sweeteners, or artificial colors and flavors.

If you suffer from allergies, look for allergens on the label and seek out hypoallergenic formulas.

Formulation and dosage Think about what type of formula and dosage will work best for your needs. For example, a one-a-day capsule may suit your lifestyle or schedule better than a vitamin you need to take several times a day. Always check the dosage per capsule or softgel, or per drop if it's a liquid formula.

Testing Is the product tested, ideally by a third party, for potency and purity? In other words, does the label description match what's actually inside, and is the product free of harmful contaminants like pesticides and heavy metals? If it's not clear from the label or the company's website, get in touch with them to check.

High manufacturing standards Is the supplement manufactured according to stringent quality standards? Look for certifications from trusted bodies such as NSF (National Sanitation Foundation) International, the world's authority on good manufacturing practices (GMPs).

Price Watch out for overly cheap products, as you usually get what you pay for.



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3 products to try

Here's a small selection of high-quality, high-dose vitamin D supplements available in the US and UK.

HUM Nutrition

Here Comes the Sun, \$15/£15.46 (30 softgels)

US: humnutrition.com

UK: uk.iherb.com

Triple-tested for purity and quality, HUM supplements are GMP compliant, non-GMO verified and certified by the Clean Label Project, which independently tests for hundreds of contaminants like heavy metals, pesticides and plasticizers.

This vegan D3 supplement, derived from lichen, supplies 2,000 IU of the vitamin per serving and is free of what HUM calls the "tricky 12," ingredients like titanium dioxide, hydrogenated oils and artificial sweeteners, flavors and preservatives, which you'd be better off avoiding.

Thorne

D-5000, \$19/£15.34 (60 capsules)

US: thorne.com

UK: uk.iherb.com

Providing 5,000 IU of vitamin D3 in a single capsule, this supplement is NSF Certified for Sport®, which means it's tested for compliance with the label claims and to ensure the absence of more than 200 substances that have been banned by many major athletic organizations.

Like all Thorne supplements, it's also been formulated without unnecessary and potentially harmful ingredients, manufactured according to strict standards, and subjected to rigorous in-house testing. For those who want a higher or lower dosage, 1,000 IU and 10,000 IU capsules are available as well.

Pure Encapsulations

Vitamin D3 Liquid, \$31.60/£22.25 (22.5 mL)

US: pureencapsulationspro.com

UK: purebio.co.uk

Unlike many liquid supplements, this formula contains no unnecessary nasties like artificial sweeteners, colors and flavors—there are just two ingredients: vitamin D3 and medium-chain triglycerides (fats).

Each drop of the liquid supplies 1,000 IU of vitamin D3, which means you can easily increase the dose to fit your needs (400, 1,000 and 5,000 IU capsules are also available). And all Pure Encapsulations products undergo testing by accredited and GMP-certified laboratories to ensure product purity and potency.

A cure for loneliness

Being lonely can be seriously bad for your health, says Celeste McGovern in "Friends with Benefits" (page 40).

One excellent way to counter loneliness is to meet regularly with a small group. Jolanda Jetten, a social psychologist at the University of Exeter in the UK, has examined many social networks and discovered that the most well-adjusted first-year university students and those with the lowest rates of depression are those who belong to the most groups.

One great option is to join a Power of Eight® group, one of the intention groups launched by WDDTY editor Lynne McTaggart. To find out how to run such a group, check out Lynne's book *The Power of Eight: Harnessing the Miraculous Energies of a Small Group to Heal Others, Your Life, and the World* (Atria Books, 2017), her website lynnemctaggart.com or her forthcoming course, Intention Essentials (learn more at lynnemctaggart.com/courses/intention-essentials).

How to get creative

In "Crafty Prescriptions" (page 50), Germaine Hypher details the health benefits of doing creative activities like drawing, writing and knitting. Here's a handful of online resources she shares in her book, *Crafting a Path Through Illness* (Hammersmith Health Books, 2025), to help get your creative juices flowing.

Craftsy: craftsy.com

This online learning platform offers over 2,000 expert-led classes, mostly video-based, in more than 20 categories, including quilting, knitting, baking, painting and photography. There's a mix of free and paid content, and a yearly subscription currently costs \$123 (£95).

Creative Bug: creativebug.com

Subscribe to Creative Bug (\$71.40 or £55 annually) for access to thousands of art and craft video lessons as well as live events and downloadable patterns and recipes. There's also plenty of free content to explore.

Stitchlinks: stitchlinks.com

Created to support those who enjoy the therapeutic effects of crafts, especially knitting, Stitchlinks offers free knitting patterns as well as resources for setting up your own knitting group. There's also a Facebook group you can join to connect with fellow crafters.

Health Story Collaborative: healthstorycollaborative.org

Sharing real-life health stories in any creative medium, Health Story Collaborative believes artistic expression of your personal story can help you find hope and healing. Check out the free monthly "creative meetups," where you can explore your creativity and self-expression with activities like reflective writing and watercolor painting.



Fraud is endemic in medical research

Double-blind fraud

Bryan Hubbard

Every so often, we get accosted by a self-proclaimed skeptic who tells us things like, “There’s nothing better than a robust double-blind placebo study.” Indeed not, but aside from revealing the aridity of their lives, our skeptics cling to the ideals of medical science, which regular readers will know is an oxymoron. Medicine is a craft that dresses itself in the raiment of science, and even then, science isn’t what it used to be.

In case you’re still in doubt, take a look at a new book that came to our attention recently. Despite its sleep-inducing title, *Unreliable: Bias, Fraud and the Reproducibility Crisis in Biomedical Research* (Columbia University Press, 2025), the book is dynamite, and it’s written by one of the biggest cheeses in medical research: Csaba Szabo.

He’s the head of the pharmacology section and president of the Department of Oncology, Microbiology and Immunology at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland. And he also happens to be one of the world’s most cited researchers.

He paints a worrying picture. So-called medical research is too often a farrago of comedy, mistakes, fraud, gain and aggrandizement, and its fuel is pharmaceutical money and career advancement. Pure science is left bleeding and dying at the laboratory door.

For instance, Szabo tells us about cell lines, the building blocks of biomedical research. Sometimes the cells come from humans, sometimes from animals.

But in 5 percent of instances, the lines are mixed up—for example, what lab researchers thought were cells from the lungs of a human in fact came from the pancreas of a mouse. No going back from that, and so any results will be meaningless (not that that has ever been an impediment to a drug company pushing a new drug).

Szabo has been a regular spectator of medical fraud. He’s often asked to peer-review papers that clearly contain fraud, and his own research has been plagiarized and republished in dodgy publications run from a basement in some downtown suburb somewhere in the Far East.

He has also had direct experience of fraud. One of the junior members at his lab faked images repeatedly for studies that were published in several medical journals.

But fraud isn’t the preserve of the junior researchers. Marc Tessier-Lavigne was promoted to president of Stanford University before it was discovered that several studies he’d published as a lab researcher contained fake data. Faced by this damning evidence, he resigned in 2023.

Then there’s the Nobel Prize–winning cancer researcher who has had 13 papers retracted, all for potentially fraudulent results.

The papers were “peer reviewed” before they were published, so why weren’t these fraudulent data picked up then? As Szabo points out, reviewers are busy people who

maybe more focused on getting their own research published, fraudulent or otherwise. As reviewers don’t get paid for their labor, there isn’t much incentive to spend time on the work of others.

Fraudulent research suggests willfulness rather than sloppy mistakes, and Szabo theorizes that it’s done to get researchers a Green Card granting them entry to the US. The more papers to your name, the more prestigious a researcher you must be, and so the greater benefit you will be to the US of A. Give that academic his Green Card.

It may be worse even than Szabo suggests. Fraud is so endemic that whole papers have been made up, as the former editor of *The BMJ*, Richard Smith, revealed in a famous blog article from 2021 entitled “Time to Assume That Health Research Is Fraudulent Until Proven Otherwise?”

In one incident, he relates how “Ian Roberts, professor of epidemiology at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, began to have doubts about the honest reporting of trials after a colleague asked if he knew that his systematic review showing that mannitol halved death from head injury was based on trials that had never happened.

“He didn’t, but he set about investigating the trials and confirmed this. They all had a lead author who purported to come from an institution that didn’t exist and who killed himself a few years later.

“The trials were all published in prestigious neurosurgery journals and had multiple co-authors. None of the co-authors had contributed patients to the trials, and some didn’t know that they were co-authors until after the trials were published.”

Back to the plaint of our typical skeptic, who says there is nothing better than a double-blind placebo study. As Gandhi said about Western civilization, it might be a good idea.



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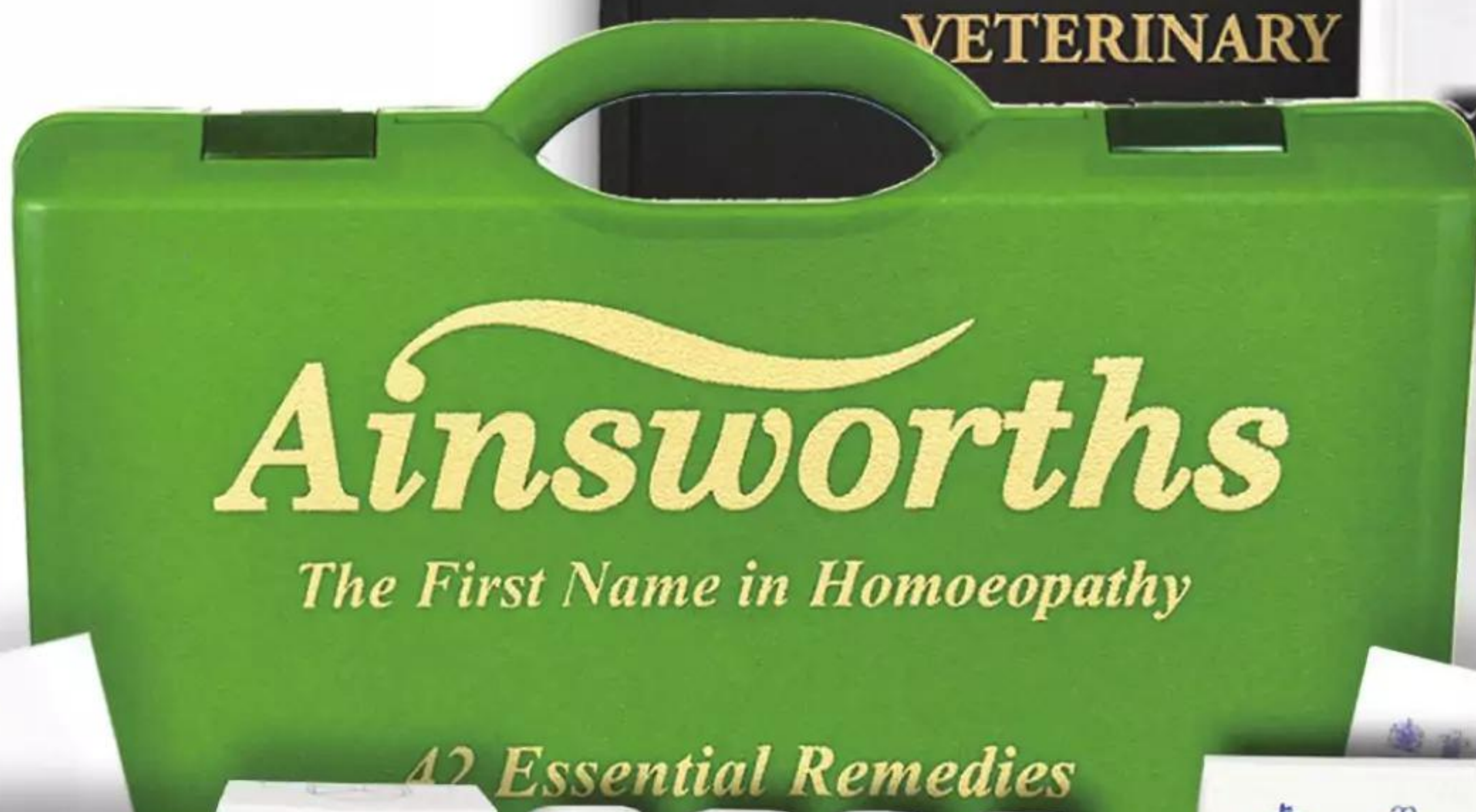
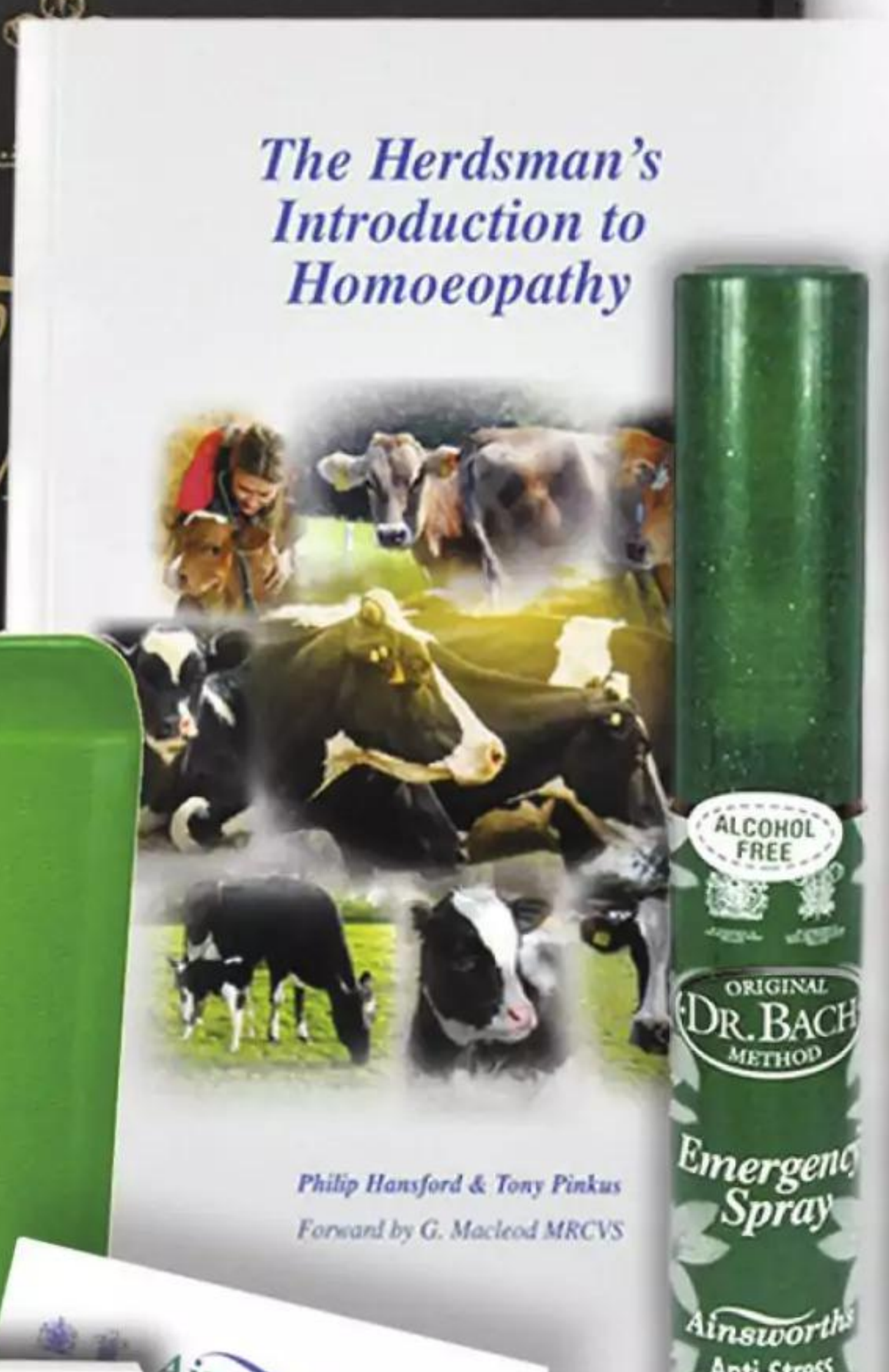
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