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WHAT DOCTORS DON'T TELL YOU

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A good drug turned bad

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[1] In the U.S., among professional supplement brands surveyed, Nutrition Business Journal® 2016, 2020, 2023 [2] In the U.S., among practitioners and brands surveyed, The Institute for Functional Medicine® 2017

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Editors
Lynne McTaggart and Bryan Hubbard

COMMENT

WHEN A GOOD DRUG TURNS BAD

Big Pharma loves an all-purpose drug: statins for cholesterol but also for heart disease, HRT for menopause but also for Alzheimer's, Ozempic for diabetes but also for weight loss and God knows what else.

But of all the drugs out there used for multiple purposes, the prom queen by far is antibiotics.

Now, I profess a special interest here. I owe my life to them. If my mother hadn't had access to antibiotics as a young woman, she would have died, and I never would have been born.

And through the 35 years we've been running this publication, antibiotics are still the only drugs on the market that actually, some of the time, cure something rather than simply making the patient more comfortable or trying to prevent the condition from getting worse.

At your next dinner party, try playing the following game: Challenge everyone sitting around the table to name a single drug that can cure people of an illness, other than antibiotics. If anyone comes up with anything, stop whatever you're doing and write me.

In 1942, when my mother was 24 years old, her dentist unwisely extracted a wisdom tooth while she had the flu. Within days her neck ballooned with a streptococcus infection, and she was rushed to the hospital. My father, then her fiancé, wept helplessly at her bedside while a priest filed past him after administering the last rites.

And then the wonder drug arrived. As a last resort, my mother was given penicillin, still in experimental use then.

Within a day or two, the swelling that had almost obscured her face simply melted away. My ordinarily doubting father rushed off to the nearest church and humbly knelt before the altar, convinced that he'd witnessed a miracle.

In those early days, antibiotics were being tested to combat deadly bacterial infections. As a result of the work of Alexander Fleming and others, penicillin began to be used gingerly during the Second World War against such life-threatening illnesses as septicemia, meningitis and pneumonia. There is perhaps no other family of drugs that has so revolutionized—indeed defined—modern medicine.

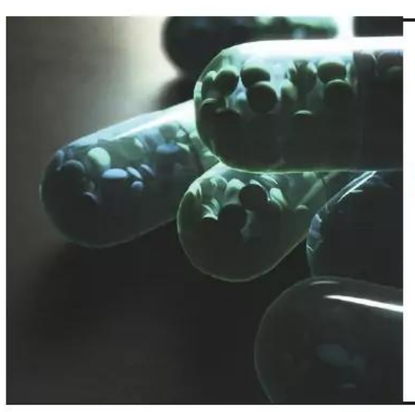
Nevertheless, fast-forward some 80 years to today, and the last century's wonder drug has become one of the most abused substances in modern medicine. What was once reserved for life-threatening illnesses such as lobar pneumonia is now routinely handed out at the surgery for athlete's foot or colds—anytime a benign infection is suspected or even might one day develop.

Up until now, unnecessary antibiotics were thought to cause only a tummy upset or a reaction in the approximately 5 percent of those truly allergic to them. But a growing body of evidence shows repeated courses of antibiotics can so disturb a person's internal ecology that it begins a disease process potentially ending in myalgic encephalitis, diabetes or even cancer.

Certainly, in the seven decades since the drugs healed my mother, both doctors and their patients have become well aware of antibiotic resistance. But what most people don't know—and our reporter Cate Montana has investigated in her Special Report (page 26)—is that antibiotic resistance is killing people.

Some three-quarters of a million people die every year due to antibiotic resistance, and the World Health Organization predicts that figure will multiply more than 10 times over the next 25 years.

But more astonishing is the number of people whose health is irrevocably damaged by taking antibiotics. Various antibiotics have been linked to diarrhea, jaundice, type 2 diabetes in children and adults, certain forms of colitis, liver cell death, psychiatric conditions like anxiety and depression, psychotic episodes, even hearing loss and anaphylactic shock.



"The last century's wonder drug has become one of the most abused substances in modern medicine"

The key reason has to do with perhaps the key to all diseases: the state of a person's gut. Some 38 trillion cells of "good guy" bacteria live in our gut, and that number comprises more than a thousand different strains. Each strain is linked in some way to the state of our health.

The purpose of any antibiotic is to kill bacterial cells or stop them from reproducing. Although many newer types of antibiotics are developed to target a narrower spectrum including only specific types of bacteria, most of those taken are "broad spectrum," meaning they blast away at bacteria indiscriminately, decimating the gut population.

The bottom line is that antibiotics can save your life—they saved my mother's life, which enabled her to go on and give birth to me. But so can some natural antibiotics.

Naturopath Harald Gaier, one of our editorial board members, broke his leg once and contracted MRSA in the hospital. Doctors gave him antibiotics, which did nothing to fight the antibiotic-resistant bug.

As an herbal specialist, he knew what to do. He asked his wife to smuggle in *Berberis vulgaris* and Goldenseal in a Lucosade bottle, and he alternated taking them. Within a few weeks, he was cured.

David Needleman, a homeopathic pharmacist who writes a column for this magazine, cured his abscessed tooth by taking a special homeopathic combination remedy for several weeks.

Save antibiotics for life-and-death situations (and use prebiotic foods and probiotics before and after taking them). For the rest of the time, consider our list of herbs, homeopathic remedies and other substances that will kill bacterial bugs (page 40) without also killing you.

Lynne McTaggart

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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.

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The way you log in has changed. With the previous site, you needed your email and password, but now you need to enter your subscriber number, which is on the address label on the envelope in which your issue was delivered. We've produced a series of videos that help you log in and navigate the site, which you can see at wddty.com/faqs.

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

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

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

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The drug industry breaks the rules of capitalism and yet somehow remains wildly profitable, observes Bryan Hubbard

Plenty of people like to add spice to their meals—and it reduces the amount you eat. Oral burn, as it's known, can help you cut down on calories by slowing down the rate at which you eat

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WHAT DOCTORS DON'T TELL YOU

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BOURNE, PE10 9PH

IN THE US
WDDTY PUBLISHING INC
1930 VILLAGE CENTER CIRCLE, #3-2042
LAS VEGAS NV 89134

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Available on the App Store

WHAT DOCTORS DON'T TELL YOU

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ISSN 1352-1241

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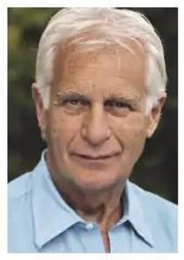
EDITORIAL PANEL

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*.

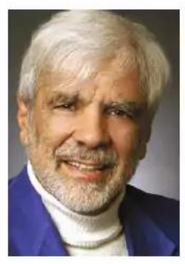
Bruce Lipton, PhD, is an internationally recognized leader in bridging science and spirit. Stem cell biologist, bestselling author of *The Biology of Belief* and recipient of the 2009 Goi Peace Award, he has been a guest speaker on hundreds of TV and radio shows as well as a keynote presenter for national 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 is a GP, homeopathic physician and academic tutor with a passion for integrative medicine. He is the immediate past president and fellow of the Faculty of Homeopathy. He is also a popular speaker at international conferences and a leading voice within the homeopathic profession.

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

Mind-body healing

Thanks for the article on back pain and TMS (tension myositis syndrome), or mind–body syndrome (*WDDTY* April 2025).

As a traditional Chinese medicine acupuncturist, I am well aware of this phenomenon. In fact, a traditional acupuncturist will usually treat both mind and body.

Anxiety and stress are common causes or contributors to physical pain. Medical acupuncturists not trained in traditional diagnosis sometimes may not be helpful for back or other pain conditions. Traditionally trained acupuncturists, however, will be able to address underlying mental issues, such as anger and anxiety, and thus tend to be more helpful.

Pia, via email

WHAT DOCTORS DON'T TELL YOU

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 respond to any posts, head to the Community.

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

Supplements for osteoporosis

I am 72 years old, recently diagnosed with osteoporosis. In researching supplements, I found about 10 different things that could lessen bone loss and even grow bone. However, I don't know if I can take them all at once, or if they could possibly contradict each other. And is it better to take vitamins with food?

Gwen

Replies from the *WDDTY* Community: Lynn, who also has osteoporosis, takes AlgaeCal's Bone Builder Pack. "It has all the vitamins and minerals needed and has instructions to take it with food," she says. "It also comes with strontium that is to be taken at bedtime." Lynn is yet to see results herself but has read of countless people seeing their osteoporosis reverse while taking it.

***WDDTY* replies** See our story in the September issue on strengthening your bones without taking drugs or doing long, heavy workouts. For more on osteoporosis and natural ways to treat it, see *WDDTY* September 2025, February 2024, May 2023, November/December 2022 and May 2020. You can also watch the *WDDTY* Talk "Healthy Bones After Menopause" (available from wddty.com).

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Mojo contains *Cordyceps* mushroom, which is known to increase aerobic capacity and oxygen flow around the body as well as to boost ATP, our energy molecule. You can read more about the blends and the adaptogens they contain at **londonnootropics.com.**

Why adaptogens and coffee?

There are good synergies between caffeine and adaptogens, and many people who are sensitive to caffeine find they enjoy these blends, especially Zen.

Adaptogens help balance physical and mental stressors in the mind and body. Caffeine can help increase alertness and attention by blocking adenosine receptors, which make us drowsy. It can also increase levels of cortisol (our stress hormone), which can result in jitters and anxiety.

Adaptogens can help balance cortisol levels, ensuring we get the benefits of coffee while minimizing any side effects. Caffeine is also absorbed quickly, which may result in a crash, and adaptogens can help sustain energy without a crash—plus they have additional health benefits, too!

London Nootropics aims to make best-in-class adaptogens easily accessible, convenient and delicious, helping more people benefit from their balancing properties, find their flow and be their most productive selves.

Enjoy 20% off London Nootropics adaptogenic coffees with code WDDTY via londonnootropics.com

Flavonoids: The F-word that leads to a long and healthy life

Want to live long and stay healthy? You can increase your chances with the F-word—that's flavonoids. The more flavonoid-rich foods and drinks in your diet, the greater your chances of living a long life without chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease (CVD), cancer and neurological disease.

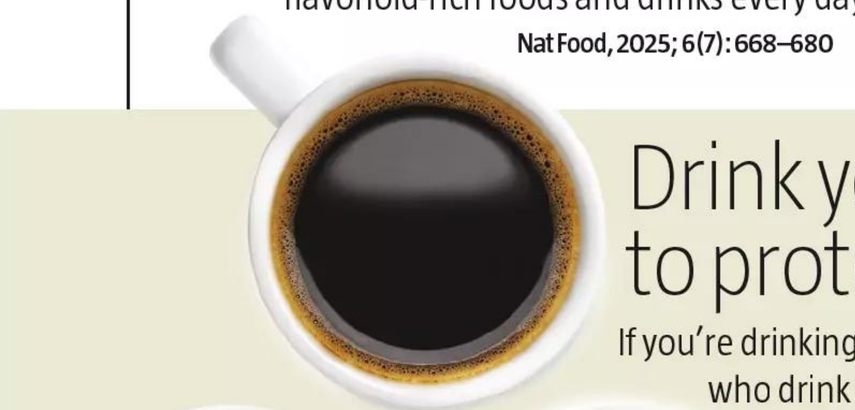
The key could be in the variety of flavonoids we consume—getting different colors and types also makes a difference and could have more impact than relying on just one type of flavonoid source, say researchers from Queen's University Belfast. Flavonoids are found in plant foods; powerhouses include tea, onions, berries, oranges, apples, grapes, red wine and dark chocolate.

To assess the health benefits of flavonoids, the researchers tracked nearly 125,000 participants aged 50–70 years for over a decade. They discovered that consuming around 500 mg of flavonoids every day—the amount in two cups of tea—lowered mortality risk by around 16 percent and lowered the risk of CVD, type 2 diabetes and respiratory disease by 9–13 percent.

Those consuming the widest variety of flavonoids had a 20 percent lower risk of diabetes.

Different flavonoids have different effects; some improve blood pressure, some stop cancer cells from multiplying and others decrease inflammation, for instance, so consuming plenty of different flavonoid-rich foods and drinks every day is the best approach.

Nat Food, 2025; 6(7): 668–680



Drink your coffee black and sugar-free to protect your health

If you're drinking your coffee black and without sugar, you are doing your body a favor. People who drink their coffee on the darker side reduce their chances of dying from a chronic disease by up to 17 percent compared to those who never drink the brew.

But these health benefits disappear if you add lots of sugar and fats like cream, say researchers from Tufts University after analyzing data from around 46,000 people.

If you keep the cream and sugar very light, you can still enjoy the health benefits, the researchers say. Stick to half a teaspoon or less of sugar and no more than 1 tablespoon of cream or half-and-half.

Ideally, drink one to three cups a day, the researchers say. One cup of coffee gives you an 11 percent lower risk of dying by any cause, and the risk drops by 17 percent with two to three cups a day.

But you can have too much of a good thing: Cardiovascular benefits start to fall when you drink your fourth brew of the day, they found.

J Nutr, 2025; 155(7): 2312–2321

Cannabis can be as bad for the heart as cigarettes

Smoking cannabis may be as dangerous for the heart as smoking cigarettes—and that's still true if you're consuming the edible form, which people chew to ease depression and anxiety.

As with most things, the poison is in the dose. If you're a "chronic" user—consuming it three days a week—your blood vessels are likely to show the same damage as in cigarette smokers. Vascular function is halved, increasing the risk of heart attack and hypertension (high blood pressure).

Researchers from the University of California at San Francisco noticed the damage to the cardiovascular system when they observed the effects on 55 people who had been consuming marijuana for the past 10 years, on average for three days a week.

Smoking the plant also lowered levels of nitric oxide, a heart-protective gas made by cells in the blood vessels (see *WDDTY* June 2025 for more about NO). But the edible form of THC (tetrahydrocannabinol), the main psychoactive compound in cannabis, didn't have this effect.

JAMA Cardiol, 2025; doi: 10.1001/jamacardio.2025.1399

Measles jab could be given to babies as young as four months

The measles jab could soon be given as early as the fourth month of life—five months earlier than babies receive it under the current recommendation.

Medical researchers are asking health agencies to review the current vaccine schedule, which includes giving babies their first measles jab at nine months and a booster between 15 and 18 months. The vaccine can be given at six months if there is a major measles outbreak.

Researchers from the Murdoch Children's Research Institute in Australia say only 30 percent of children are protected by their mother's antibodies by the time they are four months old, especially in developing countries.

They scanned 34 journal articles with data from 8,000 babies under nine months old in low- and middle-income countries and found the babies' measles antibody rates were highest at birth. The number of babies who still had antibodies decreased rapidly to 30 percent by four months and 18 percent by seven months.

They are asking the World Health Organization, which recommends vaccine schedules, to review its current advice on measles jabs, meaning babies as young as four months could soon be getting their first shot—even in richer, developed countries.

High antibody rates at birth occur because mothers pass antibodies to their children in utero. Antibody levels are higher in mothers who have had measles sometime before pregnancy than they are in vaccinated mothers. Breastfeeding can also help to increase antibody levels in babies as they grow older.

J Infect Dis, 2025; doi: 10.1093/infdis/jiaf177

Yes, singing helps to soothe a restless baby

Some blindingly obvious news just in—singing helps soothe and comfort your baby. Although it's been practiced by parents since the beginning of time, scientists have just proved it works.

An international team led by scientists at Yale University has established that singing "significantly" improves the baby's mood. They recruited 110 new parents and encouraged half of them to regularly sing to their baby.

If they weren't sure what to do, the parents were also sent how-to videos, some songbooks and a weekly newsletter. The researchers didn't suggest when the parents should sing; parents instinctively did it when their babies needed comfort.

During the four weeks of the study, parents answered questions about infant mood, fussiness, time spent soothing, caregiver mood and how many times they sang to their baby.

Child Development, 2025; 96(4):1555–1567

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Be better, naturally...

Sudden need to pee? Try mindfulness

It may not be all in the head—but "latchkey incontinence," a sudden and uncontrollable desire to urinate when you see running water or get to your front door, could be controlled by the mind.

Mindfulness meditation could reduce these embarrassing incidents, say researchers from the University of Pittsburgh, who tested mindfulness against noninvasive brain activation on 61 women who regularly suffered situationally triggered bladder leaks. The women either listened to a 20-minute mindfulness meditation, underwent tDCS (transcranial direct-current stimulation) or both while looking at triggering images such as a public toilet or a running tap.

After completing their assigned treatment four times within a week, participants in all three groups reported they had better bladder control in their trigger situations, fewer episodes of urgency and fewer leaks.

Situational urgency urinary incontinence, more casually called latchkey incontinence, is a bladder leak brought on by certain events or settings. People may suddenly need to go when they arrive home, encounter running water, get into a car or pass by public bathrooms.

According to lead author Cynthia Conklin, latchkey incontinence is a type of Pavlovian conditioning. Pavlov's dogs salivated when they heard a bell that they associated with food. In the same way, years of going straight to the bathroom after arriving home can cause a person to have strong bladder urges when they look at their front door. But it's an instinct that can be curbed with mindfulness techniques.

Continence, 2025;14:101765

Eat less—throw some chilies on the plate

We all know we should be eating less, but how do you cut back if you don't have the willpower? Try throwing some hot chilies onto the plate.

Plenty of people like to add spice to their meals—and it does reduce the amount you're eating. Oral burn, as it's known, really can help you cut down on calories by slowing down the rate at which you eat, say researchers from Penn State.

They tested the idea on 130 volunteers who were served either beef chili or chicken tikka masala, and both meals came in mild and spicy versions. The spiciness was controlled by varying the ratio of hot versus sweet paprika added to the dishes while keeping chili flavor constant.

The researchers recorded the participants while they ate their meals. From the videos, the researchers measured the amount of food and water consumed, meal duration, eating speed in grams per minute, bite rate and bite size.

As expected, the volunteers ate the spicier meals more slowly. A slower eating rate often means food is in the mouth longer, which can help signal fullness and lead to eating less. Those who ate the spicy food confirmed that they felt full even though they had eaten less than those who were given the mild meals.

Food Qual Prefer, 2025;131:105566

FORGET LOW-FODMAP: MED DIET COULD BE JUST AS EFFECTIVE FOR IBS

IBS (irritable bowel syndrome) sufferers are often put on the restrictive low-FODMAP diet—but the richer Mediterranean diet could have the same healing benefits for many of them.

Researchers at the University of Michigan tested the two diets on a group of 20 IBS sufferers. They found that both options helped to decrease abdominal pain intensity by 30 percent in a month.

Low-FODMAP was marginally better—it helped 81 percent of patients improve, compared to the 73 percent success rate of the Med Diet—but it's very restrictive and hard to maintain, the researchers say. There's also the danger that the diet can create nutritional deficiencies.

The Med diet is less restrictive, and fewer foods are eliminated.

Neurogastroenterol Motil, 2025; doi: 10.1111/nmo.70060

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Could sex help with menopause symptoms?

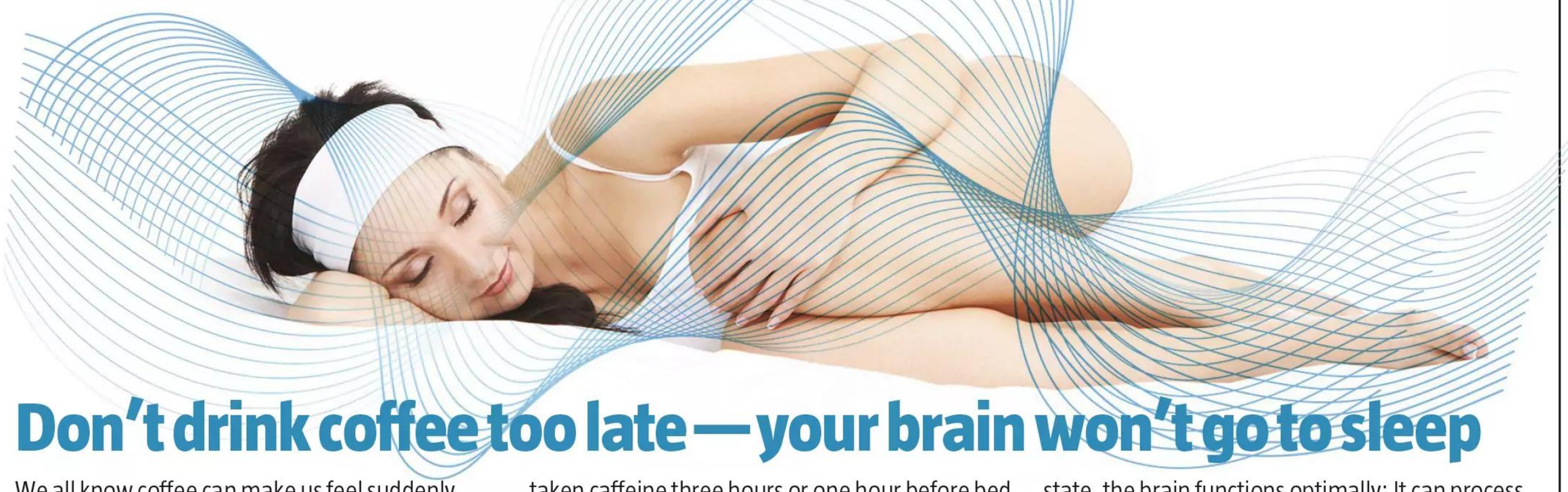
Regular sex might counter some of the more uncomfortable symptoms of menopause. Women who have it suffer fewer menopausal symptoms, such as itching, burning, decreased lubrication and changes in skin appearance.

Estrogen deficiency during and after menopause may reduce the life expectancy of women and lead to a range of unpleasant symptoms. Genitourinary syndrome of menopause (GSM) has been defined as a collection of symptoms associated with decreased estrogen and sex steroid levels. It includes genital, sexual and urinary symptoms that can affect the frequency of sexual activity for women from age 40 onward.

Researchers from Japan recruited around 900 women aged 40–79 and asked them about their sex lives. Women who had "regular" sex were defined as those who had it in the prior three months, and these women reported far less dryness, pain and irritation. Their orgasms and overall satisfaction stayed strong even though desire and lubrication may have waned.

However, the study couldn't determine which came first, the sex or the improvement in symptoms. In other words, the researchers aren't sure whether these women have more sex because they have fewer GSM symptoms, or the other way round.

Menopause 2025; 32(7): 592–600



Don't drink coffee too late — your brain won't go to sleep

We all know coffee can make us feel suddenly awake. But what's it doing to the brain when we're sleeping?

A sleeping brain remains active but is less able to rest when it's caffeinated. As a result, drinking coffee too close to bedtime could affect long-term memory. The same is true for tea, chocolate and energy drinks that contain caffeine.

A research team from the University of Montreal used EEG (electroencephalography) and AI to monitor the brains of a group of 40 volunteers while they slept, and after they had taken caffeine three hours or one hour before bed. The participants were also monitored a second night when they hadn't consumed any.

Besides the rest state, caffeine also affects a brain state known as criticality. "Criticality describes a state of the brain that is balanced between order and chaos," said Karim Jerbi, one of the researchers.

"It's like an orchestra: too quiet and nothing happens, too chaotic and there's cacophony. Criticality is the happy medium where brain activity is both organized and flexible. In this state, the brain functions optimally: It can process information efficiently."

In criticality, the brain is more alert and responsive. "While this is useful during the day for concentration," Jerbi explains, it "could interfere with rest at night: The brain would neither relax nor recover properly." The effect was stronger in people aged 20–27 than in the middle-aged.

If you're going to have a caffeinated drink, make sure the last one is well before bedtime, ideally in the morning or early afternoon.

Commun Biol, 2025; 8(1): 685

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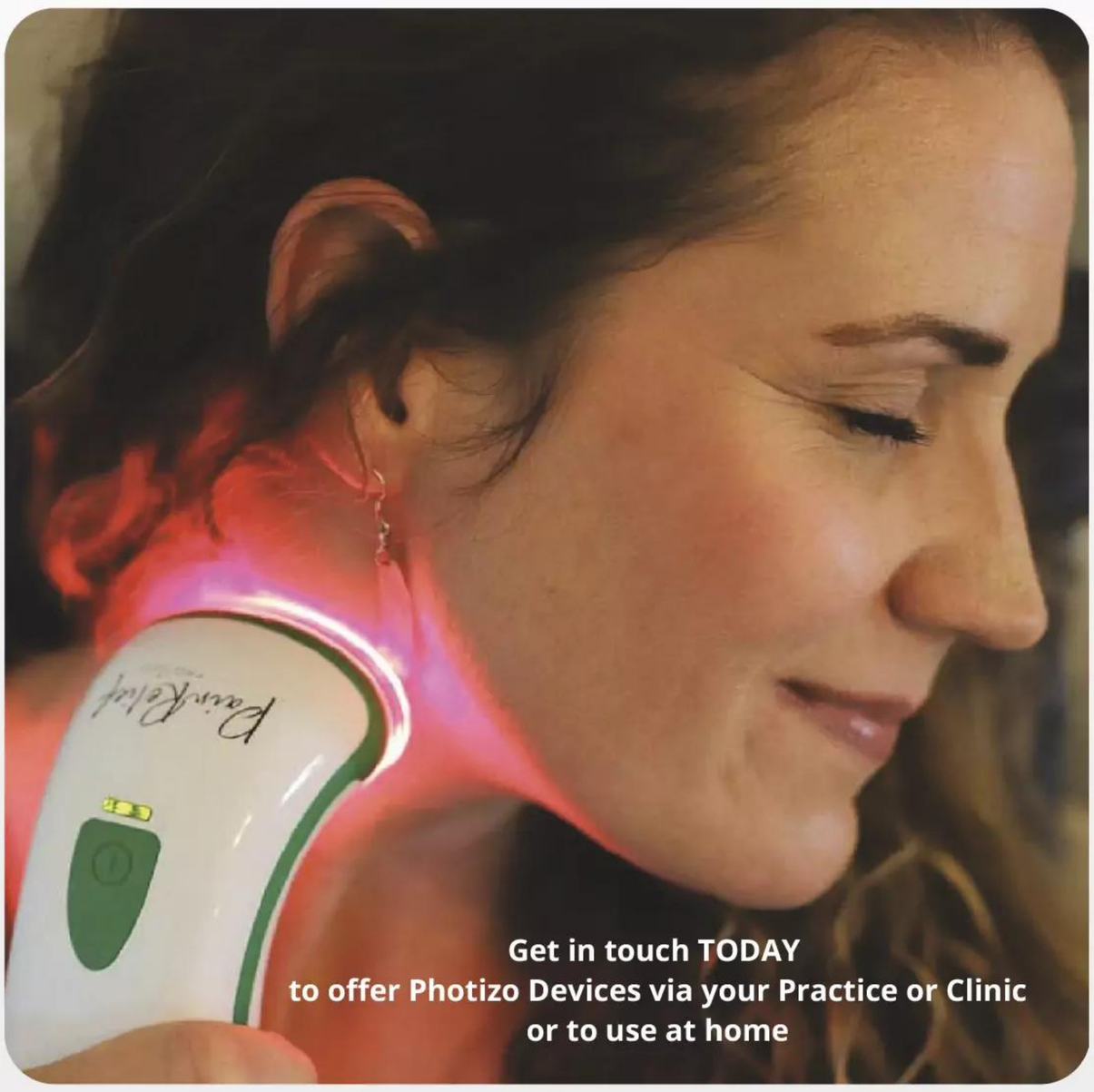

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Susan Prosser – Susan Prosser Holistic Therapy, Natural Health Consultant, Acupuncture, Reflexology and Holistic Therapies

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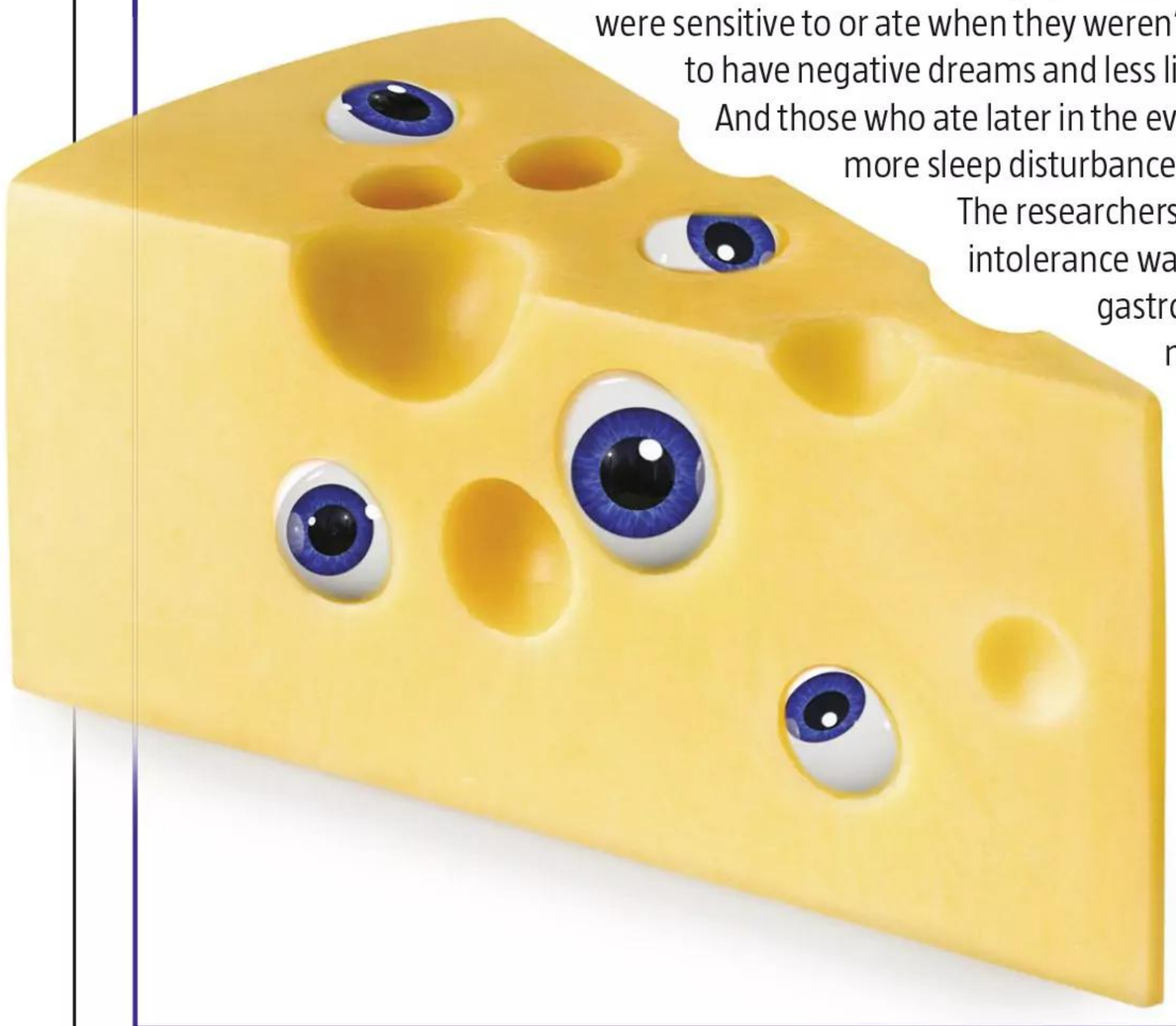
Yes, cheese can cause nightmares

The old wives' tale seems to be true: Eating cheese late at night really can cause nightmares.

In fact, it's true for all dairy products, which can be hard to digest when we eat them late in the evening. An upset stomach can cause us to have bad dreams and nightmares, say researchers from Montreal University.

They surveyed more than 1,000 students about their eating habits and the quality of their sleep. About a third of respondents reported regular nightmares; women were more likely to report poor sleep and nightmares and nearly twice as likely as men to report a food intolerance or allergy.



Students who ate desserts and spicy foods, ate foods they were sensitive to or ate when they weren't hungry were more likely to have negative dreams and less likely to remember dreams. And those who ate later in the evening or at night also had more sleep disturbances and nightmares.

The researchers found that lactose intolerance was associated with gastrointestinal symptoms, nightmares and poor sleep quality. They think eating dairy activates gastrointestinal disturbance, and this is affecting the type of dreams people have and the quality of their rest.

On the other hand, the students said having fruits, veggies and herbal tea helped them sleep better.

Front Psychol, 2025;16:1544475

One psychedelic trip keeps depression at bay for two years

A single dose of psilocybin, a naturally occurring psychedelic compound in certain types of mushrooms, can reduce both depression and anxiety, a new study has discovered.

Researchers from Sunstone Therapies, which produces psychedelic therapies, gave one 25 mg dose of psilocybin to a group of 28 cancer patients who were also suffering from depression.

They found 15 of the patients (53.6 percent) demonstrated a significant reduction in depression, and in a review carried out two years later, 14 (50 percent) were still enjoying a reduction or remission of depressive symptoms. Psilocybin significantly reduced anxiety for 13 patients, and 12 (42.9 percent) were still doing better two years later.

Cancer, 2025;131(12):e35889

THE AIRLINE INDUSTRY'S BIG SECRET

The airline industry has been keeping a secret from you for years, and it's one that can seriously affect your health.

Any flight can suffer a "fume event" when engine oil or hydraulic fluid fumes enter the cabin, causing breathing problems. Frequent exposure—which cabin crew members experience—can lead to long-term health problems affecting the nervous system and heart, and even death.

Fume events are happening every day, and the Global Cabin Air Quality Executive (GCAQE), which represents more than 100,000 pilots and cabin crew, has been created to advocate for cleaner cabin air.

Fume events are caused by a design flaw in most aircraft when air, which is fed into the cabin from engine compressors, contains oil that has leaked from the engine.

"The UK Air Accident Investigations Branch (AAIB) has twice recommended equipping all aircraft with contaminated-air warning systems, and the US Congress and US National Research Council have called for specialized air filters," GCAQE pointed out in a recent statement. "Crew member unions have asked for the same equipment for decades."

All these pleas have gone unanswered—at least in public. But behind the scenes, the airline industry is trying to improve things without having to deal with a public relations firestorm. Oil manufacturer NYCO unveiled a new oil with lower additives at the recent Paris Air Show, and newer planes are using a separate air filtration system that doesn't pass through the engines.

Meanwhile, GCAQE is trying to make passengers more aware of fume events and has helped produce a new film, *This Is Your Captain Speaking*, which premiered at the Raindance Film Festival last June.

To learn more about fume events, see *WDDTY* September 2023.

Press release, Jun 17, 2025, gcaqe.org

Our skin naturally starts to thin as we get older—but vitamin C reprograms our DNA to thicken it, new research has discovered. It directly activates genes that control skin cell growth and development.

Researchers from the Tokyo Metropolitan Institute for Geriatrics and Gerontology found that the vitamin was reversing skin thinning within a week. Using models of human skin in a laboratory, the researchers exposed the samples to air while nourishing them from beneath with a liquid that included vitamin C. This method replicates the way our skin gets nutrients from blood vessels.

The researchers applied amounts of the vitamin approximately equivalent to those in someone who eats a diet rich in vitamin C and may also be supplementing.

They found the vitamin aids skin cell growth by reactivating genes associated with cell proliferation. In a process known as DNA demethylation, it strips DNA of methyl groups that prevent copying or reading of its genetic information, which is necessary for cell division.

DNA methylation is a common factor in aging and can also be caused by a poor diet and environmental pollutants.

J Invest Dermatol, 2025; doi: 10.1016/j.jid.2025.03.040

Covid-19 did escape from a Wuhan lab, study says

Just in case you were still in some doubt, the Covid-19 pandemic did start from a lab leak in Wuhan, China, a major review has concluded. Anton van der Merwe, a researcher from Oxford University, and Matt Ridley, a scientist and journalist, have said the lab leak is by far the most likely source of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

In the years leading up to 2019, when Covid-19 was first identified, scientists at Wuhan had been experimenting with many different bat viruses. They "created genetically modified versions of viruses and tested them by infecting human cells and humanized mice, causing significant gains in infectivity and lethality in one known case. They did some of these experiments at inappropriately low safety levels," he writes in a paper co-authored with Ridley, of the Prosperity Institute.

"Around the time the Covid outbreak began, Wuhan closed its database and withheld key information about virus sequences and experiments. These facts amount to a strong though circumstantial case for suspecting that a laboratory leak started the pandemic," they conclude.

"The Preponderance of Evidence Suggests That the Covid-19 Pandemic Began as a Result of a Research Accident," Jun 2025, doi: 10.13140/RG.2.2.27710.60481

CANCER NEWS

The ginger that blocks cancer's growth

Ginger is a powerful cancer fighter; it disrupts the way tumors get their energy. Kencur, a type of ginger, blocks the major food source of cancer cells that gives them the fuel to grow and spread.

As the German physiologist Otto Warburg recognized more than 100 years ago, tumors don't make energy in the same way as healthy cells. All cells use glucose to produce ATP (adenosine triphosphate), an energy source necessary for life, but cancer cells stop after the first part of this process, glycolysis.

They never progress to the second step, which uses oxygen, even when it's available. Instead, they convert glucose into pyruvic acid and lactic acid. This means they need a lot more glucose to make the same amount of energy as healthy cells.

Kencur doesn't attack cancer's sugar supply directly but instead shuts down the cells' fat-making machinery, which causes them to ramp up their need for sugar even more, researchers from Osaka Metropolitan University in Japan have discovered.

Cinnamic acid ester ethyl p-methoxycinnamate is the component of kencur that has cancer-fighting properties, the researchers found. Kencur (*Kaempferia galanga*) is also known as aromatic ginger, sand ginger and cutcherry.

The discovery has the potential to open the doors to new and natural ways to combat cancer, they added.

Sci Rep, 2025; 15(1): 15317

Exercise could help you live longer after colon cancer

If you're recovering from colon cancer, start exercising—it could mean you're more likely to be alive years later. Regular exercise reduces the risk that the cancer will return and the chance of dying.

You don't have to overdo it. A brisk walk for 40 minutes a day should be enough, say researchers from Queen's University Belfast. Swimming or salsa dance lessons could work just as well.

They tested the benefits of exercise after chemotherapy on a group of 889 colon cancer survivors. Half of the survivors were enrolled in a personalized exercise program with weekly coaching that was tapered to monthly coaching over the three years of the study. The rest were advised about healthier living and diet but may not have adopted any of the recommendations.

After five years, 80 percent of the exercisers were still cancer free, compared to 74 percent in the other group, so the risk of dying or having cancer again reduced by 28 percent in the exercise group. After eight years, 10 percent of the exercise group had died compared with 17 percent in the health advisory group, which represents a 37 percent reduction in mortality risk.

The exercisers also reported less fatigue, greater physical strength and improved mood.

New Eng J Med, 2025; 393(1): 13–25

Our next great cancer fighter—the sea cucumber

Sea cucumbers, simple marine animals that clean the ocean floor, have sugars that stop cancer spreading. These sugars, known as fucosylated chondroitin sulfate, can block Sulf-2, an enzyme that cancer cells use to spread.

The sugar could become a safer alternative to current carbohydrate-based drugs that interfere with the body's blood-clotting abilities and can cause life-threatening bleeding, say researchers from the University of Mississippi.

Our cells are covered in tiny, hairlike structures called glycans that help with cell communication and immune responses and recognize threats such as pathogens. Cancer cells use glycans to spread by altering the expression of enzymes such as Sulf-2 and changing the structure of glycans.

Glycobiology, 2025; 35(6): cwaf025

Depression: The drugs don't work, so what now?

For years, psychiatrists have followed a strict four-step program of pharmaceuticals—but the approach is in tatters after new studies discovered it was based on bad science

How do we treat depression? Right now, modern psychiatry doesn't know after its drugs approach, which involves ever-increasing levels of potency and combinations of anti-depressants, has been found not to work.

Since 2006, psychiatrists around the world have followed the four-step program of juggling different doses and types of pharmaceuticals, convinced that the approach would achieve remission for around 70 percent of patients, but it does so for just half that many. And even those successes are suspect, a new study has found.

A psychiatrist who writes out a prescription for an SSRI (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor) antidepressant will be pretty sure the drug won't work. The dose could be too low, it could be the wrong SSRI for the patient or it may need to be taken along with another drug.

Just a quarter of antidepressant prescriptions get it right the first time, and even then, it's more likely the result of the placebo effect than the effectiveness of the drug. The theory that a chemical imbalance is the cause of depression and that SSRIs right that imbalance has never been proven. Most patients don't even have a placebo response—and for these, the psychiatrist increases the dose after about six weeks.

If that fails to ease the depression, the psychiatrist will likely try Step 2, a different antidepressant. Or they may augment the first drug with another antidepressant, typically Wellbutrin (bupropion) or the anti-anxiety drug BuSpar (buspirone).

Step 3 is basically the same as Step 2, another choice to either switch or try a different combination, usually including thyroid hormone. Lithium, an antipsychotic, used to be an option, but it has been abandoned because of the damage it can do to the kidneys and thyroid gland.

As a final throw of the dice, the psychiatrist may try, in Step 4, a combination of Remeron (mirtazapine) and Effexor (venlafaxine), although these have a poor safety track record.

Just a quarter of antidepressant prescriptions get it right the first time, and even then, it's more likely the result of the placebo effect than the effectiveness of the drug

An ill star

The four steps have been followed diligently by psychiatrists in the West for decades, partly because they are told to do so by their governing bodies and partly because they believe the influential STAR*D (Sequenced Treatment Alternatives to Relieve Depression) study proves that this method works.

The study mapped out the sequence to follow and the likely success rate at each phase: 33 percent of patients respond to the first phase, an SSRI, often Celexa (citalopram), at an initial or higher dose. The response rate rises to 57–63 percent of patients with a drug change or addition, and finally to 67 percent when the patient is switched to mirtazapine and venlafaxine.[i]

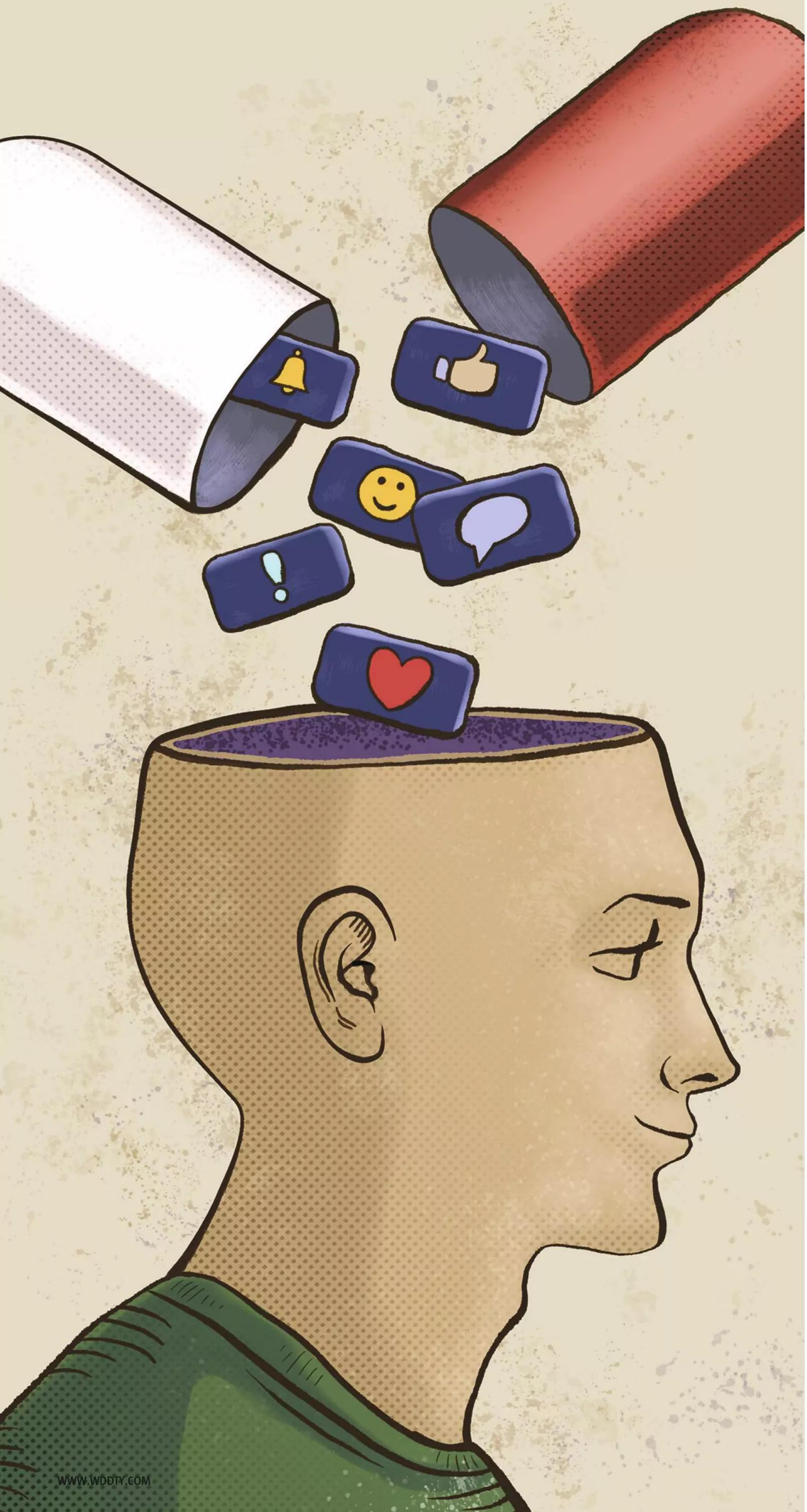
Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), the so-called talking cure, was the trial's only concession to a non-drug approach. But the therapy wasn't any better than an SSRI, and any positive results were slower to achieve, the trial concluded.

STAR*D, funded by the US National Institutes of Health to the tune of $35 million, has been described as the largest prospective clinical trial of treatment of major depressive disorder ever conducted. It started in 2000 and was shaped over four years by the responses of more than 4,000 patients with major depression who were being treated at 41 psychiatric centers and clinics across the US. Psychiatry adopted its protocols in 2006.

Placebo, if you please

The STAR*D study's authors pride themselves on grounding their work in "real-life" practice as psychiatrists worked with patients to navigate the best treatments. But while their method may have been pragmatic, it was not scientific, as a new analysis has demonstrated.

At no point did the participating psychiatrists test their protocols and methods against a placebo, so they had no way of knowing if what they were doing was any better than doing



nothing at all—especially as the placebo response plays such a major part in antidepressants' seeming effectiveness.

After two decades of the four-step process, researchers from Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center in Philadelphia were the first to point out the glaring omission. When they looked at other studies that had included a placebo control, they found none of the STAR*D protocols were supported by the evidence.[2]

Though it was the first to point out the lack of a control group, theirs was not the first dissenting voice. In 2023, Harvard University researchers took another look at the data from the original trial that inspired the four-step process.

Although the STAR*D researchers had estimated the process would achieve a remission rate close to 70 percent, the Harvard team found it was just half that.

The STAR*D trial had included 99 people whose depression went into remission even before the trial began, and the psychiatrists taking part in the trial hadn't followed the study protocol of using an independent and objective measure of remission, known as the Hamilton Rating Scale for Depression. Instead they had made their own assessments of the patients' progress, which also inflated the rate of success.

The true remission rate was around 35 percent, well below the 67 percent recorded by STAR*D, the Harvard researchers estimate.[3]

Do I hear 35 percent?

The latest critique from the Philadelphia researchers throws even the 35 percent remission rate into question as it was never tested against a placebo. In other words, would 35 percent of patients have gone into remission even without any treatment? Nobody knows.

These results have left psychiatrists very frustrated; the protocols they've been told to follow just don't work. "Patients who don't respond to the first antidepressant are often placed on a carousel of tweaks—higher doses, add-on pills, lateral switches—that produce side effects without providing real relief," Dr Hannah Nearney, a clinical psychiatrist, has said.

The new findings suggest these treatment steps may be driven more by

TRY THIS INSTEAD

Omega-3 fatty acids A diet rich in omega-3 fats—which are in oily fish and nuts—can help ease depressive symptoms. Don't take omega-3 supplements if you also have bipolar disorder because they may trigger manic episodes.

St John's wort This over-the-counter (OTCC) remedy is as effective as an antidepressant drug, new research from the Liverpool John Moores University discovered after assessing the efficacy of more than 60 OTC remedies for depression.[1]

Saffron This red herb used in cooking interacts with serotonin in the brain and can ease depressive symptoms.[1]

Meditation Meditation and mindfulness practices have been shown to ease symptoms of mild depression. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) Known as the "talking cure," it can help depressed people reframe the way they see the world and themselves.

Acupuncture This traditional Chinese treatment with very thin needles can ease symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Exercise Studies continue to show it works. One review of over 200 studies found walking, jogging, yoga and strength training were most effective. In a surprising twist, yoga worked best for men, and strength training worked best for women.[2]

Diet Some believe depression is a response to a poor diet. Start eating a healthy diet with fresh vegetables, fruits and olive oil—close to the Mediterranean diet—and your symptoms will ease, one study found. And cut out gluten, which could be an unsuspected culprit behind your depressive symptoms.[3]

Magic mushrooms A single dose of psilocybin, a naturally occurring psychedelic compound in mushrooms, can put depression and anxiety into remission for two years, one study found (see page 17).[4]

Light therapy Bright light has a strong positive impact on mood because of the body's many circadian and non-circadian processes. Bright light therapy has long been used to treat seasonal affective disorder (SAD), but it's effective for chronic depression as well.

To treat depression and SAD, spend 30 minutes in front of a light source with an intensity of 10,000 lux. Or expose most of your skin to the sun for about 20 minutes a day between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. See page 65 for where to buy light therapy lamps.

Transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) This therapy, introduced in the 1990s, involves pulsing magnetic fields through a small electric coil. It produces electrical currents in specific areas of brain tissue related to different disorders and can ease depression and anxiety, several studies have established. Clinical trials show repetitive TMS (rTMS) is effective in around 66 percent of patients, but it should be used only after other methods have failed.

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2. BMJ, 2024; 384: e075847
3. BMC Med, 2015; 13:197
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expectation and placebo effects than by real outcomes.

"This mirrors what we see every day in practice," confirms Dr Kultar Singh Garcha, a family doctor in the UK's National Health Service. "Patients are stuck in trial-and-error cycles not because we lack alternatives—but because those alternatives haven't been prioritized in funding or regulation."

Another psychiatrist, John Miller, agrees. "This is a huge setback, as all of the publications and policy decisions based on the STAR*D findings that became clinical dogma since 2006 will need to be reviewed, revisited and possibly retracted," he said.[4]

It's also forced psychiatrists down a narrow drugs-only path and blocked them from trying other approaches. Dr Miller, for instance, leads a meditation center, while Dr Nearney is CEO of Flow Neuroscience, a company that develops neuromodulation therapies for depression treatment.

"While tens of millions continue to cycle through barely effective drug combinations, validated neuromodulation therapies are still being overlooked or overregulated," Dr Nearney points out. "We must give patients options grounded in science, and it must stay up to date. We're living in a time where depression is becoming the next epidemic."

An epidemic it is. Some 280 million people around the world are suffering from depression today. In the US, this equates to around 8 percent of the population, and in the UK, it's about 16 percent. Gallup found nearly 30 percent of Americans have been diagnosed with it in their lifetime.

Astonishingly, after researching the condition for the best part of a century, we still don't know what it is—the fall of the chemical imbalance theory has been quietly ignored, so it's still the most popular explanation—and now conventional psychiatry doesn't know how to treat it. All we can be sure of is that the drugs don't work.

Bryan Hubbard

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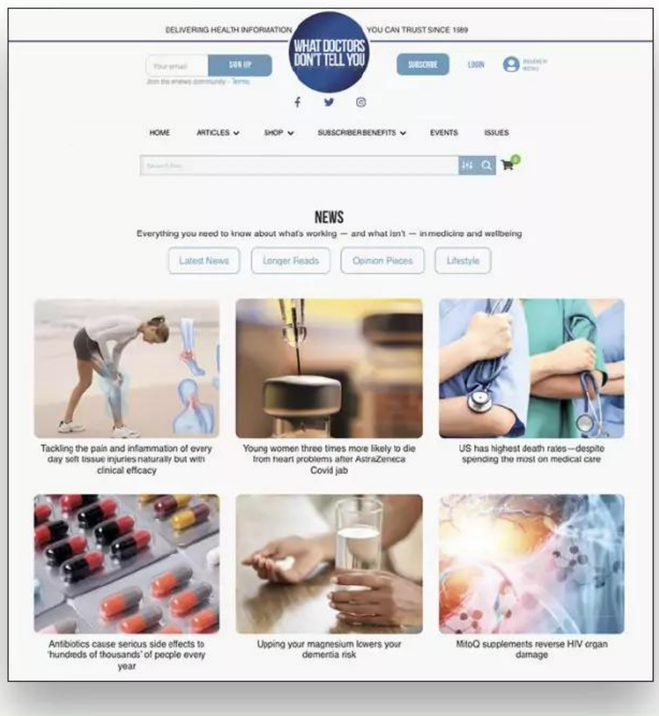

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A mad, bad world? Blame the leaders

Many world leaders had mental and physical health problems while they were in office—and it may have affected their judgment, say researchers

John Lennon once said the world is in such a mess because it's run by sociopaths. He may have been closer to the truth than he realized, at least according to a new study that has investigated the physical and mental health of world leaders through the years.

Many past leaders of the world's nine nuclear powers had serious health problems while in office, ranging from dementia and depression to addiction and chronic disease. These illnesses may well have impaired their ability to make rational decisions, even while they had their finger on the nuclear trigger, say researchers from the University of Otago in New Zealand.

They investigated the health of 51 deceased leaders of nuclear-armed countries—China, France, India, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States—and discovered that 23 had confirmed or possible health issues while they were in office. In every case, these serious health problems were hushed up.

The US has had more than its fair share of presidents with mental and physical health issues. Of the 37 presidents examined, 18 (49 percent) "met criteria suggesting psychiatric disorder."

Specifically, 24 percent suffered from depression, 8 percent had anxiety, and a similar ratio had bipolar disorder or were alcoholics. In 10 of the cases, the disorder was prevalent during their presidential term, which probably impaired the sufferer's job performance.

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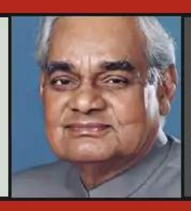
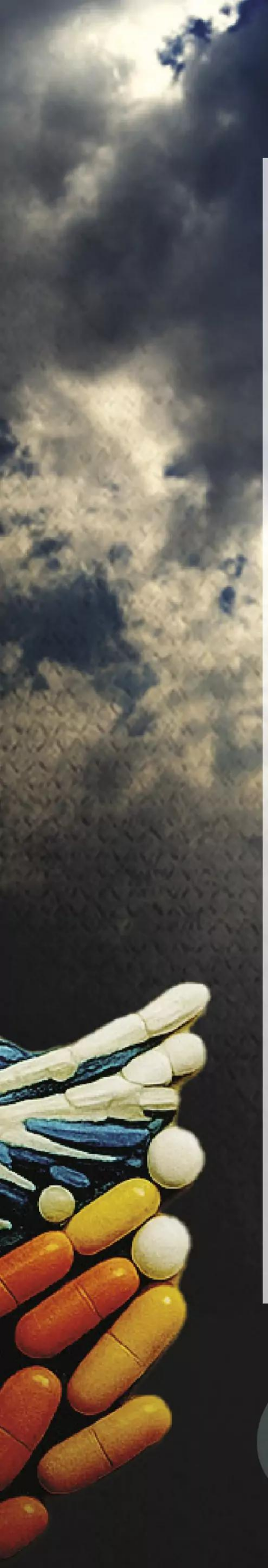
BMC Res Notes, 2025; 18(1): 278

INDIA			
Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee		IN OFFICE 1999–2004	Memory loss, periods of confusion and "indecipherable ramblings"
ISRAEL			
Prime Minister Ariel Sharon		IN OFFICE 2001–6	Comatose after a stroke while in office
Prime Minister Menachem Begin		IN OFFICE 1977–83	Severe depression, isolation at home during last year in office
Prime Minister Golda Meir		IN OFFICE 1969–74	Cancer
USA			
President Richard Nixon		IN OFFICE 1969–74	Bouts of heavy drinking after Watergate, even while negotiating a nuclear crisis in the Middle East
President Dwight D Eisenhower		IN OFFICE 1953–61	Heart attack mischaracterized as indigestion
President Harry S Truman		IN OFFICE 1945–53	Heart disease
President John F Kennedy		IN OFFICE 1961–63	Addison's disease and back pain, misuse of amphetamines and anabolic steroids
President Ronald Reagan		IN OFFICE 1981–89	Signs of dementia near end of term in office
UK			
Prime Minister Winston Churchill		IN OFFICE 1940–45 1951–55	Stroke
USSR			
Prime Minister Nikita Khruschev		IN OFFICE 1953–64	Poor mental health during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, which brought the USSR and the US to the brink of war
FRANCE			
President François Mitterrand		IN OFFICE 1981–95	Advanced prostate cancer leading doctors to conclude he could no longer carry out his duties
President Georges Pompidou		IN OFFICE 1969–74	Cancer

Killer cures



Antibiotics save lives, but they also come with a raft of potential serious side effects in children and adults. Cate Montana rounds up the evidence and offers some effective alternatives

In 2024, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in the US implemented its "Be antibiotics aware" campaign as part of US Antibiotic Awareness Week. The initiative aimed "to improve antibiotic prescribing and use among target consumer and healthcare professional audiences to protect patient safety and combat antimicrobial resistance."[1]

Today, doctors and many patients are aware of the growing issue of antibiotic resistance among many strains of quickly evolving bacteria. What they're not aware of is the staggering fact that 700,000 people worldwide die due to antimicrobial resistance every year, a number the World Health Organization (WHO) predicts could rise to 10 million per year by 2050.[2]

Antibiotic overprescription and overuse has risen to epidemic proportions since penicillin, discovered in 1928 by Scottish bacteriologist Alexander Fleming, was brought into mass production during World War II. Today, many adults in Western nations receive an antibiotic prescription as often as once a year. In the UK, nearly 480 metric tons of antibiotics were prescribed in 2019.[3] And in the US, pharmacies filled 252 million outpatient antibiotic prescriptions in 2023.[4]

Approximately 70 percent of US children receive at least one treatment with antibiotics for illness before age two—and they often suffer the consequences of ongoing conditions ranging from allergies to obesity.[5]

In US long-term care facilities, over 40 percent of residents receive an antibiotic every year.[6] However, an estimated 85–95 percent of antibiotics prescriptions are given in outpatient settings worldwide.[7] And of those prescriptions, about 30 percent in the US[8] and 20–30 percent in England[9] are not necessary.

People also aren't aware of the inherent risks of taking antibiotics. We tend to believe they are totally safe and totally harmless.

And yet a study at Johns Hopkins University in 2017 found one in five hospitalized adults suffers side effects after taking antibiotics prescribed by their doctor, nearly 20 percent of which were unnecessary in the first place.[10]

"We've been marketed to and sold the idea that we need an antibiotic anytime we don't feel well," says Piper Dobner, ND, founder of Biome Basics in Nampa, Idaho (drpiperdobner.com). "Antibiotics as a whole have saved countless lives," she emphasizes. "They're a blessing. But the long-term implications and outcomes of people taking them broadly are significant.

"I've seen people lose tolerance to food. I've seen people with increased neuroinflammatory symptoms. Some people get super anxious, some get insomnia, some get diarrhea.

"I've seen depression as a side effect of antibiotics; I've seen constipation, even tendon ruptures. Everybody reacts to antibiotic use and overuse in a different way."

A complex system

Why are the reactions to antibiotics so diverse? The answer is the gut. There are around 30 trillion

> 700,000 people worldwide die due to antimicrobial resistance every year, a number the World Health Organization predicts could rise to 10 million per year by 2050

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cells in the human body and around 38 trillion smaller bacterial cells, most of which live in the gut.[11]

The bacteria constituting the gut microbiome affect virtually all aspects of human health. The gut microbiota has a regulatory role over growth and development, the immune system, digestion, mood regulation, cognition and sensory processing via the gut–brain axis.[12]

Over 1,000 strains of bacteria have been identified in the gut microbiota, and the overwhelming majority of genes in our bodies are microbial; more than 10 million microbial genes are running the show. Keeping these bacteria and microbes in a state of balance—aka homeostasis—is essential for health.[13]

Antibiotics, of course, work specifically against live, single-celled bacterial organisms that reproduce independently. Antibiotics can be natural, produced by fungi, molds or other bacteria. They may be semi-synthetic and modified from natural compounds. Or they can be synthetic and designed entirely in the lab.

In any case, the sole purpose of all of them is to either kill problematic bacteria outright (bactericidal) or to stop them from reproducing (bacteriostatic). And most, especially those that are broad-spectrum, are not particular about which bacteria they kill. The basic attitude is "kill the Bad Guys now, figure out the consequences for the Good Guys later."

> Over 1,000 strains of bacteria have been identified in the gut microbiota, and the majority are microbial; over 10 million microbial genes are running the show

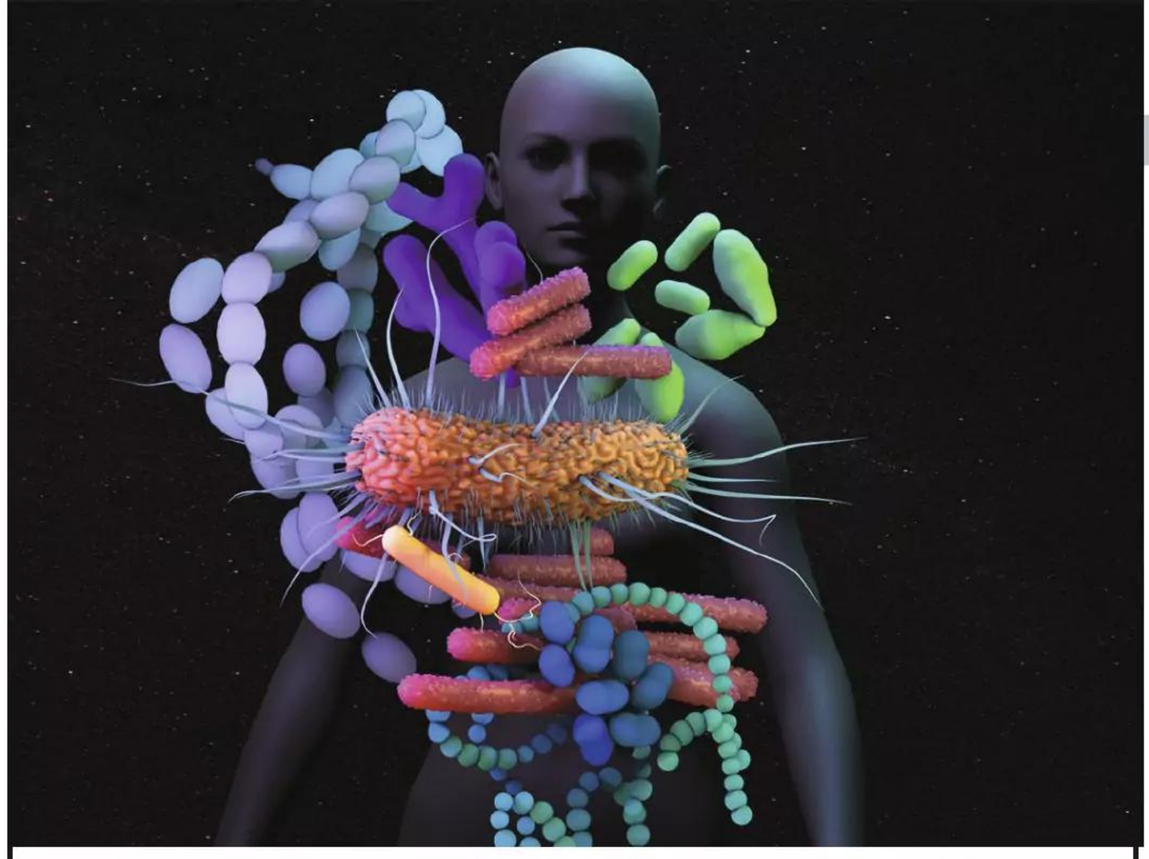
And those consequences are severe. "In my practice, I see a lot of complex chronic illness driven by a decimated gut microbiome that's accompanied by things like mast cell activation syndrome (MCAS), where people's immune systems are just exploding," says Dobner.

"They're having hyper-reactive expressions in the immune system—tissue swelling, hives, shortness of breath, intense and even life-threatening anaphylaxis—because they don't have that richness of the biome to tell the immune system to calm down, to help assist and aid in metabolic health. It's heartbreaking on a scale that I don't know how to articulate."

Side effects

It's taken decades for the adverse effects of antibiotics to be identified, partly because many common side effects are masked by the effects of the illness or infection the antibiotics are being used to treat. Some side effects don't show up until after treatment is complete.

And finally, the sheer number of side effects, from nausea and vomiting to decreased libido, abnormal weight loss, hepatitis, jaundice and liver cell death, makes direct causation difficult to determine.[14]



10 keystone species in the gut microbiome

1. *Faecalibacterium prausnitzii* is anti-inflammatory and fiber fermenting. It produces butyrate, a short-chain fatty acid (SCFA) that aids in blood sugar balance and increases insulin sensitivity. Its numbers increase when we eat high-fiber, plant-based foods like asparagus, bananas, onions, garlic, chickpeas and Jerusalem artichokes and drink red wine.

2. *Lactobacillus* spp. support gut health and fermentation and produce lactic acid. Its numbers are rich in fermented foods like yogurt, kefir, kimchi, sauerkraut and sourdough bread.

3. *Christensenella* is linked to maintaining lean body mass, has anti-inflammatory effects and is known to produce butyrate, a source of energy for the cells, providing a healthy gut lining barrier. High-fiber foods such as fruits, vegetables, legumes and whole grains can aid its proliferation.

4. *Ruminococcus* breaks down resistant starch and supports SCFA production. Good sources of resistant starch include beans, lentils and grains like oats and barley.

5. *Bacteroides fragilis* handles complex carbohydrate digestion and immune modulation. It thrives on a high-fiber diet of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and fermented foods.

6. *Bacteroides thetaiotaomicron* breaks down dietary fiber and modulates immune responses. Healthy fats like avocado, olive oil and coconut oil support this species in the gut.

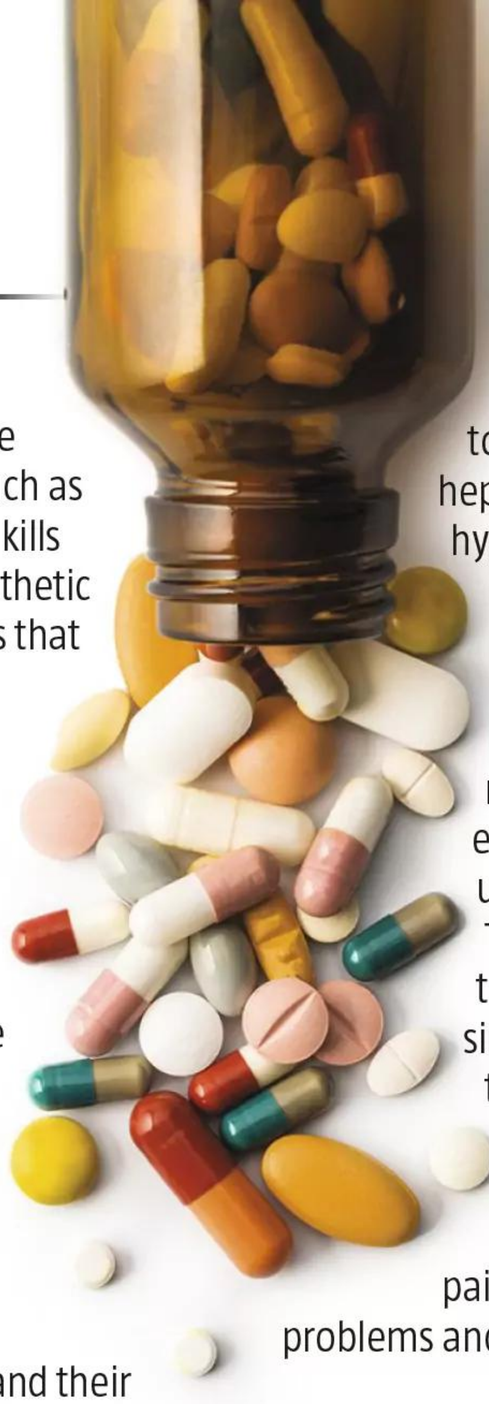
7. *Bifidobacterium longum* handles gut barrier/lining maintenance, produces SCFAs and thrives on fermented foods.

8. *Bifidobacterium adolescentis* supports the gut lining and produces beneficial SCFAs. It likes fermented foods and prebiotic foods like asparagus, bananas, onions, garlic and Jerusalem artichokes.

9. *Klebsiella pneumoniae* maintains gut balance, supports the microbiome and produces histamine. It feeds on starches and is balanced by prebiotic foods.

10. *Akkermansia muciniphila* maintains the gut lining, supports metabolic health, and reduces the risk of obesity and type 2 diabetes. It loves polyphenol-rich foods like red berries, pomegranate and green tea as well as fermented foods but may suffer on a low-FODMAP diet (see page 13).

Foods that help to increase some bacteria tend to decrease others. These balancing effects are a major reason it's important to eat a varied diet.



Types of antibiotics

A natural antibiotic is a substance produced by microorganisms, such as fungi and molds, that inhibits or kills other microorganisms. Semi-synthetic antibiotics are natural antibiotics that have been chemically altered to increase potency and decrease side effects.

Synthetic antibiotics, such as iboxamycin, are chemically designed in the lab. Different classes of antibiotics do their jobs in different ways. Some, like penicillin, attack the bacterial cell wall. Others reduce bacterial DNA replication or mimic bacterial "food" and poison them.

The following are the major classes of antibiotics, their uses and their side effects.

Aminoglycosides are broad-spectrum drugs including delafloxacin and gemifloxacin that inhibit protein synthesis inside bacteria. Effective against heavy hitters such as *Staphylococcus* and *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* bacteria, aminoglycosides are often combined with other antibiotics. Not well absorbed orally, they're often delivered via IV.
SIDE EFFECTS include impaired kidney function and hearing loss, which is often permanent.

Cephalosporins are derived from the *Acremonium* mold and work similarly to penicillins, binding to and blocking enzymes that build cell walls in various bacteria. They are broad-spectrum antibiotics commonly used to treat bone, ear, skin and respiratory infections as well as bacterial meningitis and urinary tract infections (UTIs).
SIDE EFFECTS include nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain and allergic reactions such as rashes, hives and swelling. In rare cases, they can cause anaphylaxis and colitis.

Fluoroquinolones inhibit the production and action of enzymes essential for bacterial DNA replication. They are commonly used to treat *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* bacteria, UTIs, chlamydia and respiratory infections.

Fluoroquinolones, such as ciprofloxacin (Cipro) and levofloxacin (Levaquin), are potent and are strongly associated with psychiatric and mood disorders, including anxiety, depression and delirium.
SIDE EFFECTS include severe hepatic (liver) toxicity, cardiac toxicity, renal (kidney) failure, hepatotoxicity, anemia and hypoglycemia, which have caused many fluoroquinolones to be withdrawn from the market.

Macrolides are mostly natural substances such as erythromycin and are primarily used as substitutes for penicillin. They're commonly used to treat infections like pneumonia, sinusitis, pharyngitis, and tonsillitis, simple skin infections and ear infections in children.
SIDE EFFECTS include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, cardiac arrhythmias, hearing problems and irreversible hearing loss.

Penicillins come from the fungi *Penicillium*. They're most commonly used to treat respiratory, ear, urinary tract, dental and skin infections.
SIDE EFFECTS include diarrhea, nausea, abdominal pain, skin rashes and hives. Severe side effects include rapid heart rate, anaphylaxis, lightheadedness and fainting.

Sulfonamides are made from a sulfur-containing chemical called sulfanilamide, and they work by inhibiting bacterial protein production. They are often used to treat eye and ear infections, UTIs, bronchitis, and bacterial meningitis.
SIDE EFFECTS include nausea, vomiting, dizziness, headache, lethargy, skin rashes, sun sensitivity and kidney damage. Sulfonamides can increase the blood-thinning effects of warfarin (Coumadin), a commonly prescribed anticoagulant medication.

Tetracyclines inhibit bacterial protein synthesis and are used to treat a wide variety of skin infections, including acne and rosacea. These antibiotics are also used to treat intestinal and respiratory tract infections, UTIs, chlamydia, syphilis and gonorrhea.

Tetracyclines can interfere with the action of birth control pills and are easily passed into breast milk, possibly affecting bone and tooth development in nursing babies.
SIDE EFFECTS include sores, swelling and itching in genital and rectal areas, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, mouth sores, swollen tongue and difficulty swallowing.

A common side effect of taking antibiotics is an outbreak of *Clostridioides difficile*, aka *C. diff*. One of the major causes of diarrhea in the Western world, "*C. diff* is usually dormant in most of us," explains Anu Simh, board-certified functional health coach and founder of 9 Arms of Wellness (9armsofwellness.com).

"They're like little spores that are just lying around in the gut along with beneficial bacteria, which normally convert primary bile acids from the liver into secondary bile acids. But when antibiotics come in and kill a lot of those good bacteria, the primary bile acids wake up the *C. diff* spores and they start causing havoc—diarrhea, colitis and a lot of issues that, ironically, are often treated with yet another round of antibiotics."

Antibiotic-associated colitis is almost always caused by *C. diff* proliferation and most commonly develops after using fluoroquinolones, amoxicillin/clavulanate, clindamycin and third-generation cephalosporins.[15] Hemorrhagic colitis is associated with the use of amoxicillin. And people who take antibiotics are nearly twice as likely to develop inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) as those who never take them.[16]

> People who take antibiotics are nearly twice as likely to develop inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) as those who never take them

Antibiotic use has been linked to gut microbiome dysbiosis and metabolic disorders, and recurring use has been linked to an increased risk of type 2 diabetes both in children[17] and in adults.[18] Aminoglycoside antibiotics affect neurotransmitter levels in the brain and alter blood flow in the inner ear, causing dizziness, hearing damage and hearing loss that can be irreversible.[19]

Sihm recounts the story of an uncle who irreversibly lost his hearing after taking gentamicin back in 2005. "His

Natural antibiotics and antimicrobials

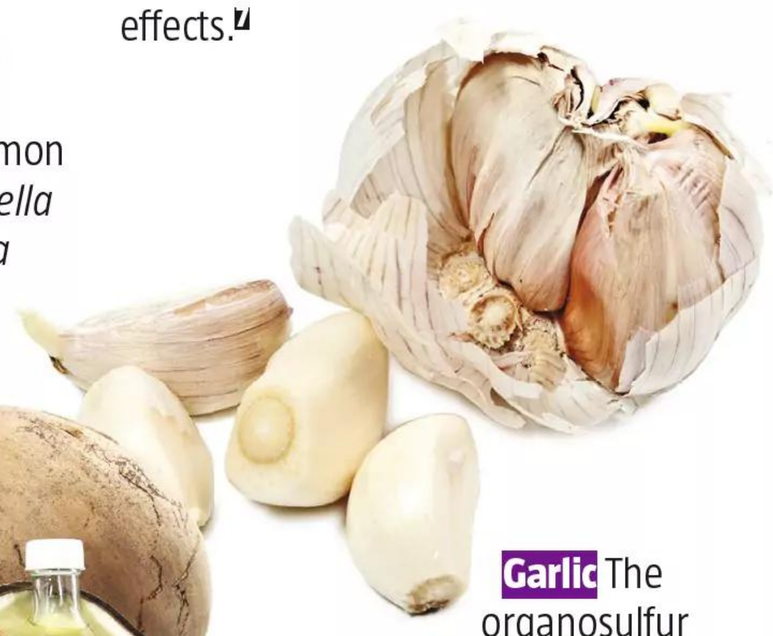
Green tea *Camellia sinensis* has been used for hundreds of years against microbial infections, and modern studies show its effectiveness against drug-resistant microorganisms such as methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and *Candida albicans* (yeast).[1]

Echinacea Echinacea extracts have been used traditionally to treat respiratory and immune system symptoms of bacterial infections as well as to promote wound healing. Lab testing shows they have proven antioxidant and antimicrobial effects.[7]

Mustard Mustard seed extract has high-level antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory effects for treating a variety of oral microorganisms.[10]

Myrrh An ancient treatment, myrrh is resin extracted from the *Commiphora molmol* gum tree. It is effective against the multidrug-resistant *S. aureus* and *P. aeruginosa*.[11]

Cinnamon As well as being neuroprotective and effective for treating diabetes, numerous studies show that cinnamon has antibiotic properties against *Salmonella typhi*, *Salmonella paratyphi* A, *Escherichia coli*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Klebsiella pneumoniae* and others.[2]



Coconut oil Virgin coconut oil is antimicrobial and has been found effective against *S. aureus*.[3] Frequently used as a topical antibiotic, coconut oil works against atopic dermatitis (eczema).

Rose oil extract With antibacterial and antifungal properties, rose petal extracts can be applied topically to treat skin infections and gargled to treat throat infections.[12]

Colloidal silver Silver was used to treat bacterial infections in ancient days. Colloidal silver has been proven to work against multidrug-resistant bacteria such as *Acinetobacter baumannii*, *P. aeruginosa*, *E. coli*, *K. pneumoniae* and *S. aureus*.[4]

Garlic The organosulfur compounds of garlic have antibacterial properties and are proven effective against a wide range of bacteria, including multidrug-resistant strains. They have "enormous potential to be developed into novel antibacterial agents."[8]

Thyme The common kitchen herb thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*) is known since ancient times to have anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial properties. Effective against bacteria caused by dental cavities, it reduces growth of *E. coli*, MRSA and many other bacteria.[13]

Turmeric The deep yellow rhizome turmeric (*Curcuma longa*) contains curcumin, a compound well known for its antimicrobial and antioxidant properties that can help eliminate antibiotic-resistant microbes.[5] Curcumin may be most effective within turmeric rather than isolated from it,[6] and it becomes more bioavailable with piperine, found in black pepper.

Manuka honey Manuka honey is made by bees harvesting nectar from the Manuka plant. It's dark and rich in phenols that make it effective against a wide range of pathogens. Honey has a natural ability to inhibit cell growth by altering bacteria shape and size, and Manuka honey's other unique components enhance its effectiveness.[9]

For more natural antimicrobials, see page 40.

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whole life changed," she says. "He went from being this very articulate gentleman to being someone whose quality of life seriously decreased."

A recent study shows that up to 57 percent of children treated with aminoglycosides experience hearing loss.[20] Sulfonamides can cause painful scarring in the inner eyelid and whites of the eyes. Tetracyclines can irreversibly discolor the whites of the eyes. And fluoroquinolones increase the risk of retinal detachment.[21]

Side effects aren't limited to physiological conditions, either. Microbes in the gut impact brain function by acting on the vagus nerve and by changing the production of short-chain fatty acids, which affect the production of the amino acid tryptophan, the building block of serotonin. They also affect the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal axis, reducing levels of the feel-good hormone oxytocin in the brain.[22]

> Long-term and recurrent use of antibiotics is associated with an increased risk of depression

Antibiotic treatment with fluoroquinolones is closely related to increased psychiatric disorders, including anxiety, depression and delirium.[23] Long-term and recurrent use of antibiotics is associated with an increased risk of depression.[24] Quinolones such as ciprofloxacin, ofloxacin, pefloxacin, iprofloxacin and levofloxacin can induce psychotic episodes.[25] Animal studies also provide evidence that early antibiotic exposure may increase the risk of autism.[13]

Finally, lest we forget where we started, antibiotic and antimicrobial resistance is the most stunning side effect that has developed over decades of use and misuse of antibiotics—with major global ramifications.

Before, during, after

Antibiotics save lives. It's impossible to deny that fact.

But neither antibiotics nor patients are created equal. Here are some things to consider before, during and after treatment to make sure your body—especially your gut—suffers the smallest possible impact.

Before Prepare your body by feeding your gut a broad variety of plants. Make sure to get some fermented foods, like kefir and kimchi, into the mix.

Prepare questions to ask your doctor, such as these:

- Can you recommend any narrow-spectrum options, like doxycycline, instead of broad-spectrum antibiotics like ciprofloxacin, chloroquine, clindamycin and erythromycin?
- What is the shortest, most effective course to take?

Consider your unique patient profile. Do you have any cognitive or emotional issues that could be exacerbated by using fluoroquinolone antibiotics like gatifloxacin and temafloxacin, which are significantly associated with anxiety, depression and delirium?

Are you on proton pump inhibitors, steroids or SSRIs? All these substances significantly reduce gut health, and you can seriously impact your situation by taking an antibiotic on top of any of them.

During Take probiotics, especially if there's a risk of diarrhea. The *Akkermansia* group of bacteria is a great probiotic choice, as are *Saccharomyces boulardii* and *Lactobacillus rhamnosus* GG.

As well, take them several hours before or after taking the antibiotic so it doesn't immediately kill them. Ease off high-fiber foods to simplify digestion for the duration. Avoid alcohol and be careful with caffeine consumption, which can cause side effects when combined with antibiotics.

After For two to six weeks after finishing your course of antibiotics, Anu Simh advises recognizing food as "the biggest needle-mover when it comes to gut health." Be sure to start eating and adding foods that microbes like, especially a wide variety of vegetables. If you've struggled with antibiotic-induced diarrhea, work up to adding beans and lentils and other high-fiber foods that require a lot of digestive power.

"Start with a basic foundational layer of diverse veggies that will increase the diversity of your microbes coming from plant sources," Simh says. "Don't eat a mono-diet or the same three or four veggies. Think beyond that.

"Look at farmer's markets. Look at seasonal foods and explore international markets for more diversity. And then slowly add fermented foods like kimchi and sauerkraut and kefir—foods that, within a week or two, will facilitate an incredible blooming of new microbes."

Don't forget good fats like avocado, coconut and olive oils or herbs and spices like cloves, star anise, oregano and peppermint that are high in polyphenols. Dark berries help to build up polyphenol stores that support keystone bacterial species (see box, page 29) and increase insulin sensitivity. And be sure to consume functional beta-glucans from oat bran, shiitake mushrooms and barley to help grow and increase microbial diversity.

"Some bacteria and microbial species bounce back after a round of antibiotics, and others don't, which leaves gaps for pathogens to move in," says Simh. "Studies show the microbiome as 'mostly normal' around six weeks after a course of antibiotics.

"But keystone species are usually still missing, which is why some people feel 'off' long after a prescription ends. So, pay attention to getting those species back into your gut. They play a pivotal role in your health."

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Beat the burnout

Could stress be messing with your adrenal glands and progesterone levels? Here are some simple but powerful strategies from Marcelle Pick to balance your hormones and get your health back on track

The first time I saw Lisa, I could see immediately that she was totally exhausted and completely overwhelmed. Her despair was clear in her tired, flat eyes and her frustrated words: "I can't do this anymore."

The 38-year-old graphic designer, like so many women her age, was working herself into the ground. Her day often began at 5 a.m., and she didn't leave the office until after 8 o'clock many nights—especially when deadlines were looming.

On top of all that, she traveled for her job frequently and felt like she was never available for her preteen daughter. Forget quality mother-daughter time . . . Lisa wasn't even home to do the typical parental nagging! She felt guilty and sad most of the time but had no idea how to change things.

Not only was Lisa tired and stressed beyond belief but she also had an extensive list of health complaints. Her PMS symptoms were intense, and she had vaginal dryness, thinning hair and weight gain.

She was irritable and forgetful, and she had trouble concentrating and sleeping. She regularly woke up at 2 a.m. and felt like she needed a nap as soon as her alarm went off in the morning.

Does this sound familiar? Are you juggling so many responsibilities that you don't feel like you're doing any of them justice? I've heard from so many women who tell me they don't feel like themselves anymore; their lives have spun out of control with no relief in sight. And their health is suffering greatly because of it.

What Lisa and these other women don't know is that they're experiencing adrenal dysfunction and low progesterone. Hormonal imbalances are behind their issues, and their crazy pace of life isn't helping a bit.

The importance of progesterone

There's a lot of talk about estrogen, but many women don't have a clue about how important progesterone is. This essential hormone is a key player in the menstrual cycle, fertility and pregnancy.

Progesterone is one of those things we learn about during high school biology class, then promptly forget until something goes wrong. But for women, that's a big mistake.

Women often don't know how important hormonal balance is and how much control they have over it. Some lifestyle changes can make a huge difference in the symptoms they're experiencing if they just realize the root of their problem: progesterone deficiency and adrenal dysfunction.

Lisa knew something had to give. She listened carefully to my recommendations, addressed her low progesterone and adrenal dysfunction, and came out the other side feeling better than she had in years.

Somewhere along the way, she also learned to slow down a bit so the problem wouldn't return. And you can, too.

What is progesterone deficiency?

Progesterone is one of your major female sex hormones. The corpus luteum in your ovaries releases progesterone to prepare your endometrium for a potential pregnancy after ovulation. It helps thicken the womb lining to accept fertilized eggs, reduces muscle contractions that can lead to rejection of those eggs and stimulates glands that nourish the embryo.

Progesterone helps keep your body calm and healthy. Unfortunately, like Lisa, many women don't realize that progesterone deficiency is the culprit behind their anxiety, moodiness, PMS, heavy periods and other symptoms. Because of major hormonal shifts as you move beyond childbearing years, low progesterone may also cause symptoms during and after menopause.

Nothing in your body happens in isolation. For your body to function at its best, all its hormones need to be properly balanced. If one is out of whack, chances are, others will be too. Since progesterone is produced in your adrenal glands as well as your ovaries, it's not surprising that progesterone deficiency and adrenal dysfunction are often connected.

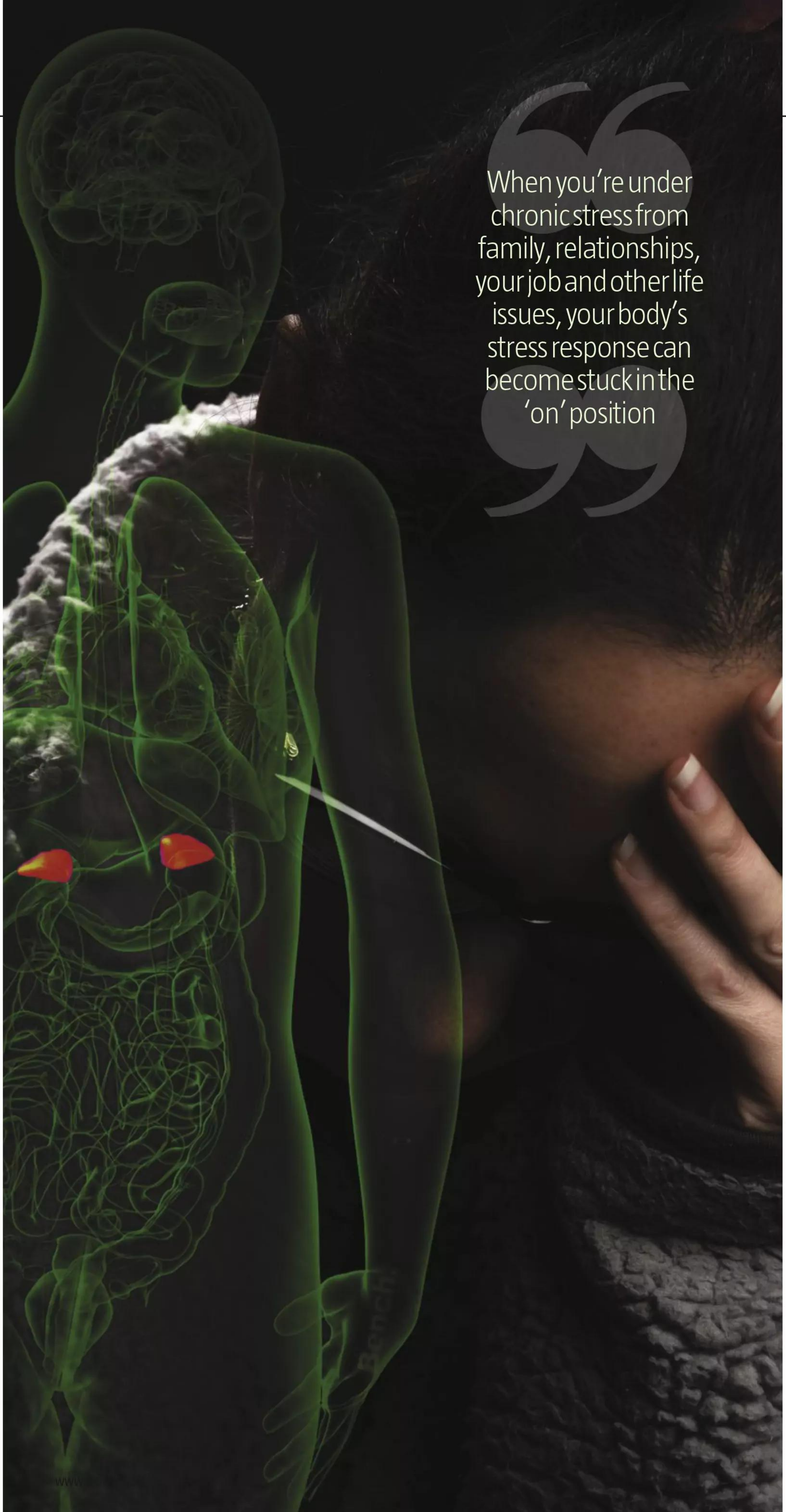
What is adrenal dysfunction?

Having adrenal dysfunction may feel like walking through a perpetual fog. You may feel groggy, irritable or anxious. You may have trouble concentrating, sleeping or losing weight. You may have digestive issues, PMS or severe menopausal symptoms. Life just feels like a chore.

Your adrenal glands are located just above your kidneys. They're responsible for producing and releasing a long list of hormones that your body can't function without. If your adrenals are dysfunctional, these hormones can get out of balance, leading to those uncomfortable symptoms.

The primary responsibility of your adrenals is to help your body respond to stress. They release adrenaline and cortisol to allow your body to survive.

Cortisol is also known as the stress hormone. It converts nutrients from



food into energy, reduces inflammation, supports the immune response, and regulates your blood pressure and cardiovascular function. It also activates the "fight, flight, or freeze" response under stress.

This comes in quite handy if you're facing a real threat. Our ancestors used cortisol to fight for survival when running from wild animals, fire or other danger. It's also the mechanism that can help you react appropriately and survive in a bad situation, like getting mugged or getting into a car accident.

But it's not exactly practical when you're experiencing constant everyday stress, such as being stuck in traffic, dealing with job frustration or reading the news. When you're under chronic stress from family, relationships, your job and other life issues, your body's stress response can become stuck in the "on" position.

Your body never gets the memo that everything is alright and it can relax and chill a little bit. Instead, your adrenal glands produce cortisol constantly, causing imbalances in your other hormone levels.

Eventually your adrenals may also get tired of the continuous cortisol demand and start producing too little cortisol instead. Too little cortisol can also lead to problems, including exhaustion and hormonal imbalance.

There are lists of symptoms for both progesterone deficiency and adrenal dysfunction on page 36. There's a lot of overlap, which can make it tricky to tease out exactly what you're dealing with. But at the root of them all is stress.

The link between the two

An ongoing stress response is not healthy. Your body shouldn't have a fight, flight or freeze response because of small daily stressors, like a traffic jam.

Chronic stress taxes your adrenals and leads to overproduction of cortisol. However, when your adrenals are working overtime to make excessive cortisol, they have to cut back on progesterone production, causing estrogen-progesterone imbalance (often called estrogen dominance).

At first, your symptoms may be slight: a little fatigue, trouble sleeping or a jittery feeling. But if your adrenal

Symptoms of progesterone deficiency

These are some symptoms many women experience when they have a progesterone deficiency:

- Migraines or headaches
- Mood disturbances, such as mood swings, irritability, anxiety and depression
- Bloating and water retention
- PMS and/or irregular periods
- Vaginal dryness
- Low or no sex drive
- Facial hair growth
- Dry skin and brittle nails
- Brain fog
- Sugar cravings
- Fatigue or exhaustion
- Weight gain
- Acne
- Hair loss

Symptoms of adrenal dysfunction

If these symptoms seem familiar to you, you may be experiencing adrenal dysfunction:

- Feeling tired in the morning even after a good night's sleep
- Trouble falling asleep at night despite struggling to stay awake in the evening
- Feeling both wired and exhausted
- Dozing off during quiet activities, such as reading or meditation
- Feeling dizzy or lightheaded when standing up
- Feeling dizzy in general
- Low or unstable blood pressure
- Indigestion, diarrhea and other digestive issues
- Heart palpitations
- Weakness
- Weight gain, especially around your waist
- Losing muscle and gaining fat
- Low exercise tolerance
- Feeling unwell
- Feeling cold a lot
- Frequent headaches
- Swollen ankles
- Water retention
- Dark undereye circles
- Dry mouth
- Sweaty hands and feet when you're nervous
- Low blood sugar after missing a meal
- Salt, sweet or high-protein food cravings
- Needing a frequent coffee or sugar fix
- Intense PMS, perimenopause or menopause symptoms
- Irritability
- Proneness to anger or rage
- Feeling constantly on the edge
- Feeling depressed or numb
- Low sex drive
- Frequent nightmares
- An overpowering urge to cry
- Trouble concentrating and brain fog
- Anxiety
- Feeling stressed all the time
- Feeling like everything is a chore

dysfunction goes unaddressed, you'll start experiencing more extreme fatigue and symptoms. Due to prolonged stress, your body then reaches that stage called "pregnenolone steal."

Pregnenolone is a hormone precursor—a compound the body uses to make cortisol, progesterone and dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA). DHEA helps produce two other critical sex hormones, estrogen and testosterone (to learn more about DHEA, see my article in *WDDTY* April 2024).

When you're experiencing chronic stress and pumping out cortisol around the clock, pregnenolone reduces progesterone and DHEA production to make space for the creation of more and more cortisol instead. Cortisol ultimately steals the space from progesterone.

Another problem during stress is that the production of 17,20-lyase (or 17 alpha-hydroxylase) gets blocked. This enzyme acts on pregnenolone and progesterone and is essential for hormone production, sexual development and reproduction.

Since 17,20-lyase is critical for hormone production, this can become a serious problem. It blocks the conversion of cholesterol to hormones, and progesterone levels get low. This leads to an imbalance in hormones including progesterone. It's why so many women have progesterone issues.

The insufficient production of progesterone leads to progesterone deficiency, estrogen-progesterone imbalance, other hormonal imbalances, worsened PMS, perimenopausal or menopausal symptoms, infertility, low sex drive, irritability, moodiness, fatigue, brain fog, blood sugar imbalances and other issues.

If your body continues to overproduce cortisol for a long time, eventually it will reach burnout. It will stop making cortisol while still making only low levels of progesterone and DHEA.

At this stage, your symptoms became even worse, making daily life very challenging. Your risk of digestive disorders, other hormonal imbalances, autoimmune conditions, infertility and other health issues also increases.

Natural ways to boost progesterone and adrenal function

Now that you know why balanced progesterone is important, what can you do about it? Most conventional doctors don't offer much advice. Lisa, like most of my patients, went from doctor to doctor without results. When she came to me, she finally found improvement with the help of some natural solutions.

It seems so simple, but your body is incredibly wise. Like Lisa, if you support it with the following natural strategies, it will repair itself.

Reduce your stress levels

If you don't give your body a break, your adrenals won't be able to slow down, either. Eliminating stress entirely is impossible, of course. But you can reduce stress and learn how to better respond when stressors do arise.

A good place to start is finding just one thing you can stop doing in your overloaded schedule. Every small step can eventually lead to big results.

Start your day with deep breathing

Breathwork is one of the most powerful ways to relax your body. Start your day with a few conscious deep breaths and stop throughout the day to practice deep breathing for a moment.

Practice meditation to release your feelings and identify negative patterns. Try meditation or yoga to calm your mind and body. Spend time in nature to slow down and connect with yourself.

Sleep plenty

Sleep deprivation is one of the main underlying causes of stress and adrenal dysfunction. Your body needs seven to nine hours of quality sleep each night.

Try to go to bed and wake up around the same time every day to support your natural sleep-wake cycle.

As bedtime approaches, avoid stress, heavy foods and electronics. Engage in relaxing activities that help your body and mind calm down. Reading fiction, journaling, coloring, crossword puzzles and meditation are great evening ideas.

Follow a hormone-friendly diet

Food is medicine. It's simple but true. Be conscious about what you put into your body. Avoid refined sugar, refined oil and processed foods.

Consume nutrient-dense whole foods, including lots of greens, vegetables, fruits, legumes, whole grains, wild-caught fish and seafood, and lean red meat. Choose organic whenever available and affordable.

Pay attention to how you eat as well. Don't rush your meals. Sit down comfortably and focus on your meal instead of scrolling on your phone or watching TV.

Slow down, chew your food well and stop between bites. Stop eating when you feel satisfied, before you become uncomfortably full.

Support your body with supplements

Vitamin B6 is great for optimal progesterone levels and helps to break down estrogen, reducing estrogen dominance.
Suggested dosage: 10 mg daily

Vitamin C helps boost progesterone and offers antioxidant benefits, such as lowering oxidative stress and reducing free radical damage.
Suggested dosage: 250–500 mg daily

Magnesium helps to maintain optimal progesterone levels and regulate your other hormones.
Suggested dosage: 400–800 mg daily of a bioavailable form such as magnesium glycinate

Zinc promotes progesterone production in your ovaries and helps you to maintain healthy progesterone levels.
Suggested dosage: 15–25 mg daily

To meet your vitamin and mineral needs, I recommend taking a high-quality multivitamin. Always check with your healthcare provider to make sure a particular supplement is appropriate for your unique needs. Testing for vitamin and mineral deficiencies may help you choose the right supplement.

Try herbal support

Adaptogenic herbs help to reduce stress and improve your adrenal health. Here are a few to try, but remember to check with your healthcare provider to make sure these herbal supplements are right for you.

Astragalus root helps to regulate your body's stress response, immune function and blood sugar levels.
Suggested dosage: 250–500 mg extract twice daily

Ashwagandha helps to lower stress and anxiety, reduce cortisol, and improve brain function.
Suggested dosage: 200–400 mg daily

Rhodiola rosea helps to reduce stress-related fatigue, improve immune function, boost mental clarity, reduce anxiety and depression, improve immune function and regulate blood sugar levels.
Suggested dosage: 200–400 mg daily

Licorice root supports adrenal balance, energy and endurance.
Suggested dosage: 400–500 mg in powdered form daily

Regain your health naturally

When Lisa returned to me a few weeks after making the shifts I suggested, she was no longer in despair. In fact, she was radiant! I couldn't believe the visible difference in just a short time.

She said she was learning to reduce stress (yes, she even said no to her boss sometimes), find joy by spending time with her daughter and support her health with natural strategies. You can improve your health the same way.

Supporting your diet with stress-reducing techniques, better sleep, a hormone-supporting diet, vitamins, minerals and adaptogenic herbs is a road worth taking.

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.

Easing the change

David Needleman shares 11 homeopathic remedies to help with the physical and emotional challenges of menopause—from hot flashes to low mood

When it comes to perimenopause and menopause, no doubt you will have seen many articles extolling the benefits of various supplements, herbal remedies and dietary changes. But homeopathy can also be a valuable tool to help with "the change."

It's not just useful for the many physical symptoms women can experience as they approach menopause, like hot flashes, night sweats, aches and pains, and menstrual changes. It helps with the psychological and emotional symptoms, too.

Here are my top 11 homeopathic remedies to help with the transition. Nothing will work as well as a constitutional remedy (which requires a consultation with a homeopath and an intense evaluation of you and your symptoms; see *WDDTY* May 2025 for more information). But on a first-aid basis, the following remedies are all easy to get hold of online or from your local homeopathic pharmacy, and they can make a big difference.

Just as the symptoms of menopause vary from person to person, so will the choice of remedies. Check the symptom picture for each remedy to see which one most applies to you.

For mental symptoms

Baryta Carbonica

This remedy is often associated with childhood and is helpful for changes such as learning to walk, starting school or going through puberty or adolescence. But it's also effective for any stage in life when significant change occurs. It can be especially useful for coming to terms with the changes that accompany perimenopause (the transitional period before menopause).

Suggested dosage: 30C or 200C weekly for a few months

Ignatia

Generally thought to be a grief remedy, Ignatia is excellent for dealing with feelings of loss. For many women, menopause brings feelings of loss related to their fertility, changing body, confidence, control and identity. So this remedy is ideal for any woman overwhelmed by these sorts of feelings.

Suggested dosage: 30C, three times a day for a few days whenever feelings of grief or loss arise

Aurum Metallicum

Many women are prescribed anti-depressants during various stages of menopause, but Aurum Metallicum is a safer option. It's used mainly to treat depression but also for any "change for the worse" or loss of confidence. It can really make a difference, especially in the darkest moments.

Suggested dosage: 30C three times a day when needed; stop when the depression lifts

For physical symptoms

Sepia

This is probably the most frequently used remedy for menopause as it covers most of the typical symptoms. In particular, it's useful for these:

- Hot flushes, especially those that move upward from the waist to the face and head and are accompanied by weakness and perspiration
- A bearing down sensation, as if everything might escape through the vulva
- Pelvic organ prolapse
- Irregular, unusually heavy or unusually light periods
- Feelings of tiredness and lack of energy, often eased by exercise
- Feelings of indifference toward loved ones and feelings of sadness
- Hair loss

Lachesis

This remedy is indicated for many of the symptoms mentioned under Sepia, but those needing Lachesis may experience other symptoms as well:

- Hot flashes that move from left to right accompanied by perspiration
- Hemorrhages
- Vertex headaches (headaches that affect the top of the head)
- Fainting spells
- Feeling that clothes are uncomfortable and too constricting
- Menstruation that's too short or scanty
- Feeling that the breasts are inflamed

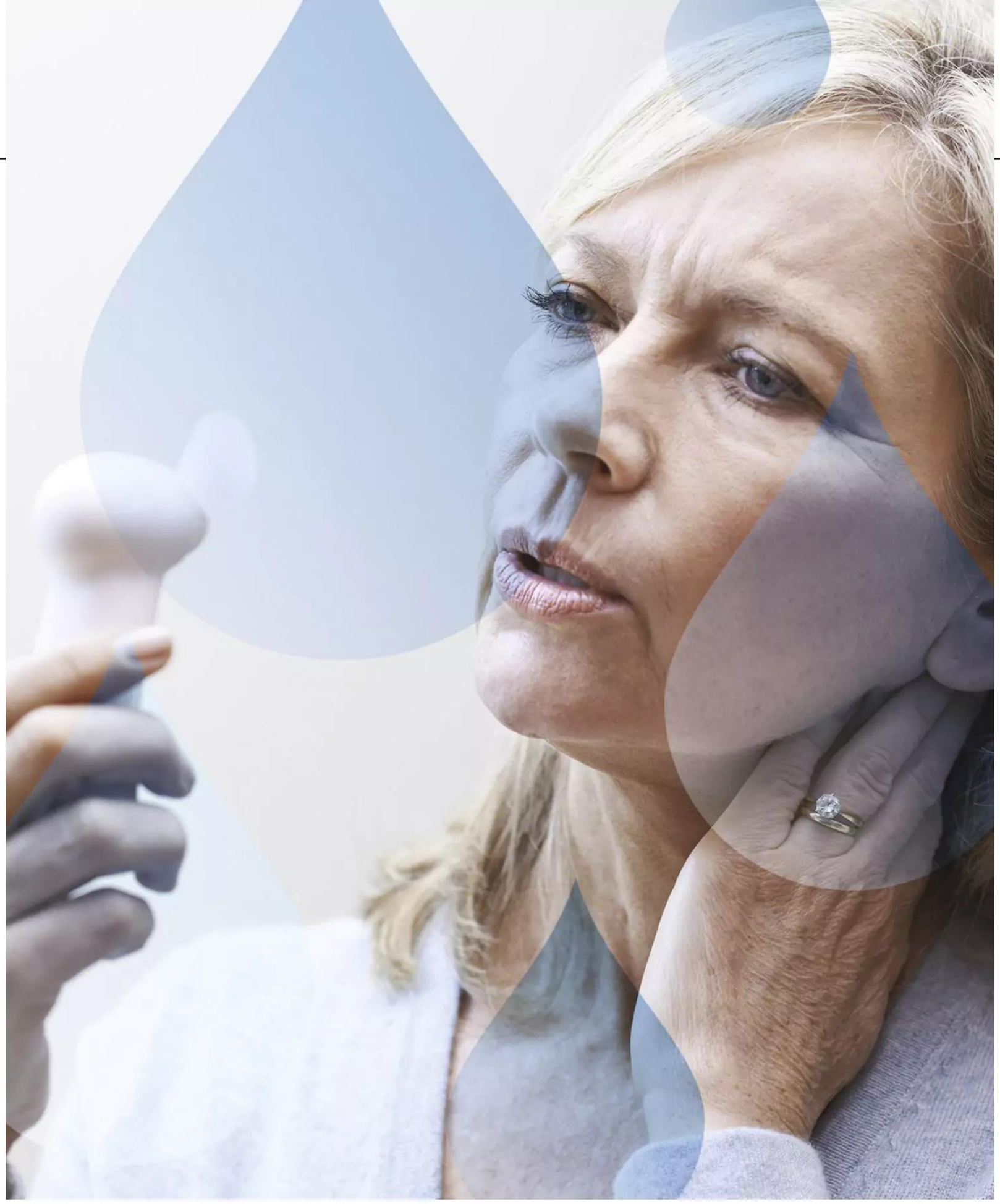
These symptoms are often worse after a sleep.

Another sign that points to Lachesis as a suitable remedy is a tendency to talk a lot. Sepia, on the other hand, is better for those reluctant to talk.

Pulsatilla

This remedy is suitable if you have the following symptoms:

- Periods that have stopped, are delayed or are too scanty
- Menstrual blood that's thick, dark and clotted
- Diarrhea during or after menstruation
- A feeling of downward pressure with a painful flow
- Creamy, unpleasant-smelling discharge that can feel like it's burning
- Back pain
- Tiredness



Sulphur

This remedy is widely available and can be used to treat almost anything. In menopause, however, there are specific symptoms that indicate it's the right remedy for you:

- A burning sensation in the vagina
- Itching in the genital area
- Menses that's delayed, too short or scanty, with blood that may be thick or black and have an unpleasant smell
- Premenstrual headache, which can stop suddenly
- Whitish, yellowish or greenish vaginal discharge
- Cracked nipples that may smart or feel burnt
- Night sweats, leading to getting up in the night to find a cold place to stand, such as a tiled floor or a shower
- A burning sensation in the soles of the feet, especially at night

Sabina

This remedy is suitable if you have the following symptoms:

- Menses that's profuse and bright red
- Bleeding between periods
- Uterine pain extending into the thighs
- Increased sexual desire
- Pains in the pelvis and shooting up the vagina
- Lower back pain

Gelsemium

With this remedy, there are fewer menopausal symptoms, but they can be more intense, such as these:

- Vaginismus (a painful muscular contraction or spasm of the vagina)
- Period pain that can extend into the back and hips
- Scanty, delayed or absent periods
- A squeezing sensation in the uterus

Cimicifuga

Also known as Actaea Racemosa, this remedy is suitable if you have the following symptoms:

- Pain immediately before your period, usually in the ovarian region, which may shoot upward and be accompanied by pain down the front of the thighs
- Menses that's profuse, dark and coagulated
- Back pain during your period
- Irregular periods
- Pain after your period, often along with discomfort in the left breast
- An intolerance to pain—no discernible pain threshold

Calcarea Carbonica

This remedy is suitable if you have the following symptoms:

- Premenstrual headaches along with abdominal pain, chilliness and milky vaginal discharge
- Cutting pains in the uterus during menses
- Menstrual bleeding that's excessively long and heavy
- Burning and itching sensations before and after menstruation
- Increased sexual desire and easy conception
- Swollen, tender breasts before menses
- Perspiration, which can stain bedclothes yellow

Suggested dosages: For all these remedies, take 30C three times a day for a few days until the symptoms ease or until you have had a consultation with a homeopath and been prescribed constitutionally

David Needleman is one of the founding directors of the Alliance of Registered Homeopaths. Qualified as both a pharmacist and a homeopath, he has worked in community pharmacies for most of his professional life and lectured on homeopathy in the US, the UK and Japan as well as treating 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.

ONCE BITTEN

Lyme disease can be a puzzling condition, even for experts. But medical herbalist Julia Behrens has been using plants to treat it, with powerful results. Here are four of her top healing herbs for Lyme and how to use them effectively

For over 20 years, it's been my privilege to work with doctors and hundreds of clients who have found herbal medicine is an effective way to treat Lyme disease.

Herbal practitioners use diagnostic methods similar to those in conventional medicine, but they treat patients with remedies made from whole plants. In contrast, conventional doctors typically use isolated plant compounds, aka synthetic drugs.

An herbal practitioner also treats the whole person rather than just the symptoms, based on the philosophy that the suppression of symptoms alone does not lead to complete health because it doesn't address the underlying problem.

As each person is so different, no one prescription fits all. When formulating a prescription, herbalists take the whole person into account and alter their prescription as the symptoms change.

When it comes to Lyme disease, herbal medicine can be used in a wide range of ways: to reduce inflammation, manage co-infections, regulate hormones, detoxify and replace nutrients depleted in the body.

Herbal medicine can also help protect the body by enhancing the immune system's function, reducing the side effects of medications, alleviating symptoms resulting from ill health and helping to relieve stress.

The power of plants

A study published in 2020 looked at 12 herbs used to treat Lyme disease by testing them in the lab against *Borrelia burgdorferi*, the bacterium that usually causes it. The study listed the following seven plants as the most effective:

1. Ghanaian quinine (*Cryptolepis sanguinolenta*)
2. Black walnut (*Juglans nigra*)
3. Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica* / *Polygonum cuspidatum* / *Reynoutria japonica*, Hu Zhang)
4. Cat's claw (*Uncaria tomentosa*)
5. Sweet wormwood (*Artemisia annua*)
6. Mediterranean rock rose (*Cistus creticus*)
7. Chinese skullcap (*Scutellaria baicalensis*)

It provides the first convincing evidence that these herbs "have potent activity against Lyme disease bacteria, especially the dormant persister forms, which are not killed by the current Lyme antibiotics."[1]

I first came across these plants in 2005 in Stephen Buhner's book *Healing Lyme*. Since 2009, I've been using many of the plants mentioned in his protocol in my practice, with amazing results.

Here's a closer look at four of them—which I use on a regular basis (in combination with many others) when treating clients with Lyme disease.

Black walnut

Juglans nigra

Traditional use

You may be familiar with this large tree—one of its primary uses has been for wooden cabinets and furniture. Native Americans used walnut husks as a treatment for parasites and bacterial infections such as diphtheria and syphilis, as well as for deterring mosquitoes.

Use in Lyme disease

Black walnut is being used in Lyme therapy for its antispirochete (see box, page 43) and antiparasitic effect. There is evidence that it's effective against biofilms, the slimy structures that bacterial communities build to protect themselves, which many immune system cells and drugs can't penetrate.[1] It also works against other co-infections, including viruses.[2]

Its immune-modulatory effect combined with its broad anti-inflammatory properties may relieve symptoms for some people suffering from long-term Lyme disease.

Black walnut's laxative effect means it's often used in a cleanse to expel intestinal parasites.

People with Lyme disease have often had a history of antibiotic use and are susceptible to yeast overgrowth. The antifungal properties of black walnut can help reduce fungal overgrowth as a side effect of taking antibiotics.[3]

Black walnut also aids digestion. It protects the liver[4] and contains fats that improve bile flow.[5] It's high in vitamin B5, vitamin B6, vitamin B9 (folate) and omega-3 fatty acids.

How to use

Tincture: 1:3 strength (45 percent alcohol), 10–60 drops three times a day or 500 mg three times a day for 30 days. Take two hours before or after medication or supplements.

Caution/contraindications

Black walnut can have a laxative effect. Long-term doses have a purging effect, so the herb is usually suitable for only short-term use. Avoid if you're allergic to nuts or pregnant.

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Ghanaian quinine

Cryptolepis sanguinolenta

Traditional use

This plant was used in central and western Africa to manage various forms of malaria, fevers, jaundice, hepatitis, digestive disorders and bacterial infections. In addition, it was used to relieve stomach complaints, amoebic dysentery (a gastrointestinal illness caused by a parasite infection) and diarrhea. In Ghana, it's grown specifically to support people who suffer from malaria.

Use in Lyme disease

Ghanaian quinine demonstrates a wide range of antimicrobial activity, making it a popular herb in the Americas against *Borrelia* and opportunist infections associated with Lyme disease, such as *Babesia*, viruses and fungi. It's often compared to the antibiotic cefuroxime.

Preclinical test tube studies have shown a seven-day treatment with 1 percent Ghanaian quinine could eradicate *B. burgdorferi*.[4]

Ghanaian quinine has been used to treat a number of inflammatory conditions, including arthritis. It can help with many aspects of Lyme disease: fever, respiratory or stomach complaints, malaria-type symptoms, and inflammation of the brain and joints like in arthritis and rheumatism.

The bark of the root or root extracts shows greater antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties than the leaf, which is used as an antifungal agent.

Ghanaian quinine was one of the first antimalarial drugs. Malaria and Lyme disease are both caused by spirochetes. Some symptoms of malaria, such as fevers, chills, aches and pains, are very similar to those of Lyme disease, so it's not surprising the two diseases have similar treatments.

Ghanaian quinine can also support Lyme patients by regulating blood glucose. Cryptolepine, a chemical compound in the root, has been shown to reduce fasting blood glucose and body weight and to help regenerate pancreatic cells in rats.[5]

How to use

Higher concentrations of alcohol (60–90 percent ethanol extracts) have a better inhibitory effect. Roots and leaves can be chewed.

Tincture: 1:2 strength, 10–20 drops four times a day maximum (1:5 strength, 65 percent alcohol) or 5 mL three times a day for 60 days.

Ghanaian quinine is considered to have the effect of an antibiotic for some people, and they may respond very strongly to it, so it is important to adjust the dose accordingly.

Caution/contraindications

Avoid during pregnancy. Avoid if wanting to conceive, as it may lower testosterone levels. It may have a purging effect.

What is Lyme disease?

Borreliosis—widely known as Lyme disease—is a bacterial infection spread to humans by infected ticks. Ticks are tiny arachnids found in long grass or woodland areas; they feed on the blood of mammals such as deer, mice, rats, cats and dogs as well as humans.

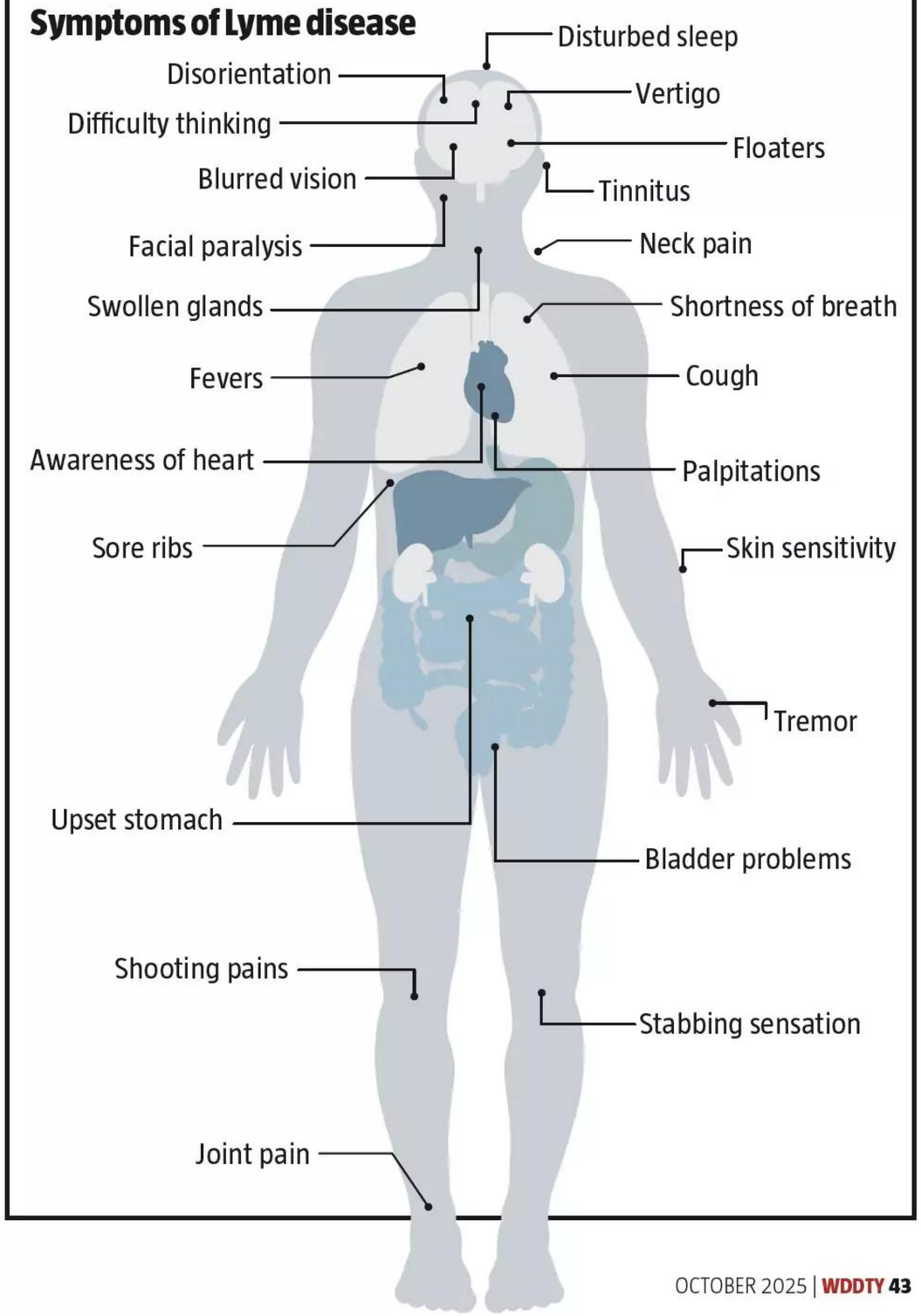
Ticks can be very small and their bite is not painful, so you may not realize you have one attached to your skin. However, there is a higher risk of becoming infected if the tick remains attached to your skin for more than 24 hours.

The most common cause of Lyme disease in Europe and North America is the *Borrelia burgdorferi* bacterium, which is passed to humans through the bite of a tick. Several other Borrelia species also cause the disease, including *B. afzelii* and *B. garinii*. Another species, *B. miyamotoi*, causes a disease similar to Lyme.

Borrelia is a spirochete bacterium that infects ticks; it has many species, all behaving like parasites, which explains why antiparasitic herbs like black walnut or berberine-containing plants are often used in treatment.

The screw-shaped spirochetes begin to break down collagen in the body and attach to the vascular endothelial cell surface. There they stimulate flagellin (a protein that all bacteria contain), which activates the release of NF-κB, a protein important for cell survival. This causes an inflammatory and immune response, so herbs like red sage (*Salvia miltiorrhiza*), cordyceps (*Ophiocordyceps sinensis*) and cat's claw (*Uncaria tomentosa*) are often combined, as they are potent NF-κB inhibitors.

Symptoms of Lyme disease



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LYNNE MCTAGGART & BRYAN HUBBARD

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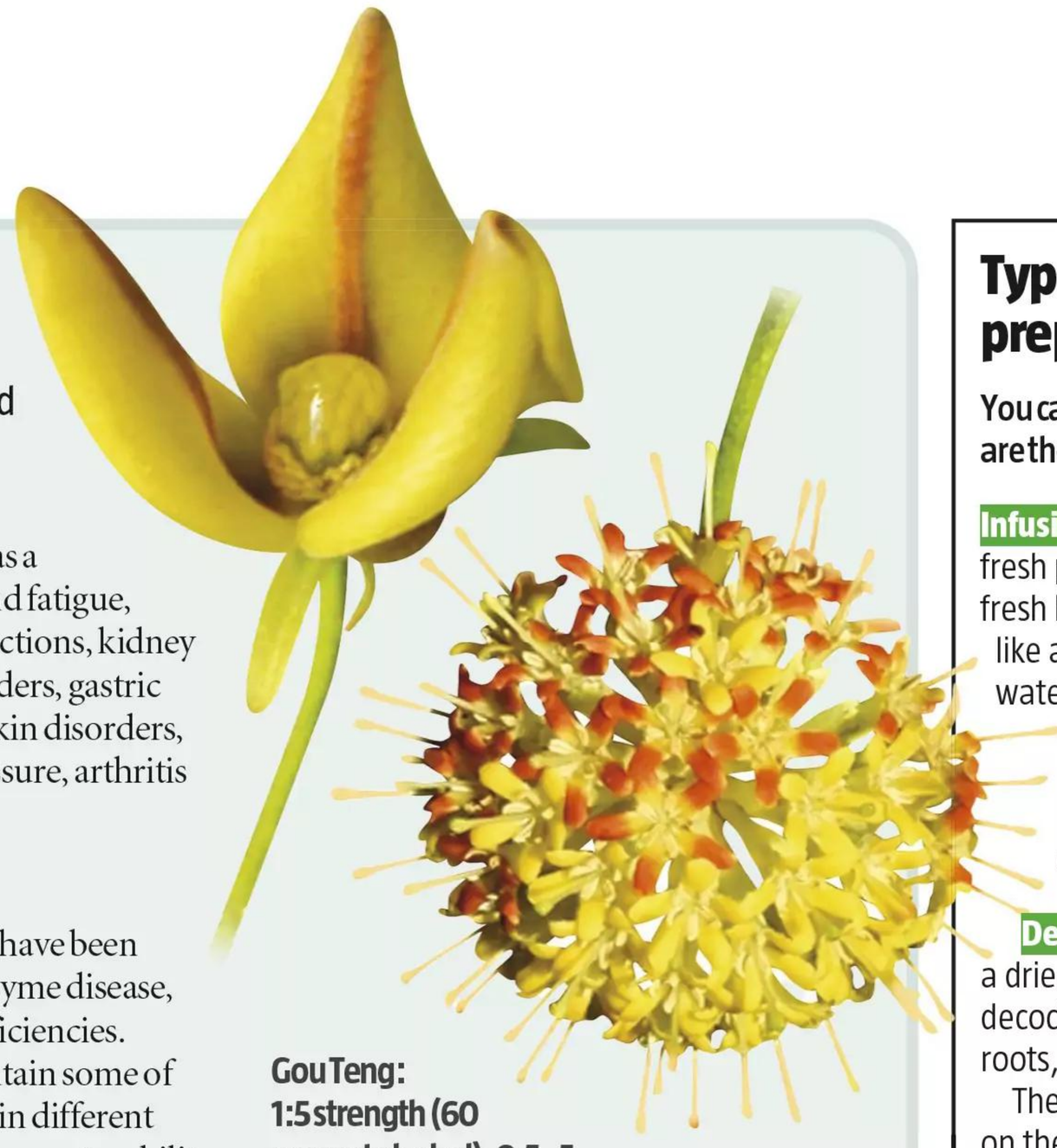
SCAN ME TO BOOK

Cat's claw and Gou Teng

Uncaria tomentosa and *Uncaria rhynchophylla*



Traditional use

Cat's claw has been used as a tonic to treat weakness and fatigue, asthma, urinary tract infections, kidney disorders, digestive disorders, gastric ulcers, cancer, shingles, skin disorders, cirrhosis, high blood pressure, arthritis and muscle pain.

Use in Lyme disease

Cat's claw and Gou Teng have been used in the treatment of Lyme disease, arthritis and immune deficiencies.

Both of these herbs contain some of the same alkaloids, albeit in different quantities. Gou Teng has a greater ability to reduce neurological symptoms such as dizziness, vertigo, tremors, fevers, seizures, high blood pressure and headaches.

There is some evidence that cat's claw raises the number of white blood cells in the body,[1] and Stephen Buhner has found it also raises numbers of $CD57^+$ natural killer cells in some Lyme patients. Low $CD57^+$ levels are used as a diagnostic marker for some chronic conditions, including Lyme disease.

Some research suggests cat's claw is useful for reducing pain and inflammation. A four-week trial in 45 people with knee pain due to osteoarthritis showed significant improvement in the group treated with cat's claw compared to the group given a placebo. Their pain scores and inflammatory markers were reduced after the first week.[2]

Due to its vasodilating properties, cat's claw can also lower blood pressure, reduce clotting, and lower heart rate and cholesterol levels.

How to use

Tincture: 1:5 strength (60 percent alcohol) or administered as a decoction. As little as 1–10 drops may be needed, depending on personal response.

Cat's claw: 0.5–5 mL three to six times a day, for its anti-arthritic properties and to reduce inflammation.

Gou Teng: 1:5 strength (60 percent alcohol), 0.5–5 mL three to six times a day; can be increased if neurological symptoms are present; should be reduced with low blood pressure.

Decoction: Traditional dosage is a decoction of 10–15 g, three times a day.

Capsules: Three or four 500 mg capsules, three to four times a day, maintained for 18 months.

Caution/contraindications

May cause digestive complaints such as loose stools (reduce dose or discontinue if symptoms persist). Do not use if you are pregnant or about to undergo surgery, you are taking blood thinners or immunosuppressant drugs, or you have low blood pressure.

There is some debate about standardizing cat's claw supplements to contain a specific percentage of pentacyclic oxindole alkaloids (PAOs), a group of compounds that are believed to be responsible for the medicinal properties of the herb.

Some argue that PAO standardization ensures consistency and potency, while others argue that it ignores other bioactive compounds in cat's claw. There is also debate about the best method of measuring PAO content in cat's claw supplements. As a result, consumers should be cautious when purchasing them and consult a healthcare professional before using them.

Types of herbal preparations

You can take herbs in a variety of ways. Here are the main ones.

Infusions Infusions are made from dry or fresh plant material (1 tsp dried = 3 tsp fresh herb). Infusions can be prepared like a pot of tea: Simply pour boiling water over a spoonful of herbs, usually 30 g dried herb to 500 mL water, and leave to infuse for 5–10 minutes before straining and drinking as specified.

Decoctions The transformation of a dried herb to a liquid form is called a decoction. These are usually made using roots, wood, bark, seeds and/or nuts.

The dried material (2–30 g, depending on the plant) is placed in a pan of water and simmered for 15–20 minutes to make sure all constituents are transferred to the water before straining. The decoction can be kept in a fridge for up to two days.

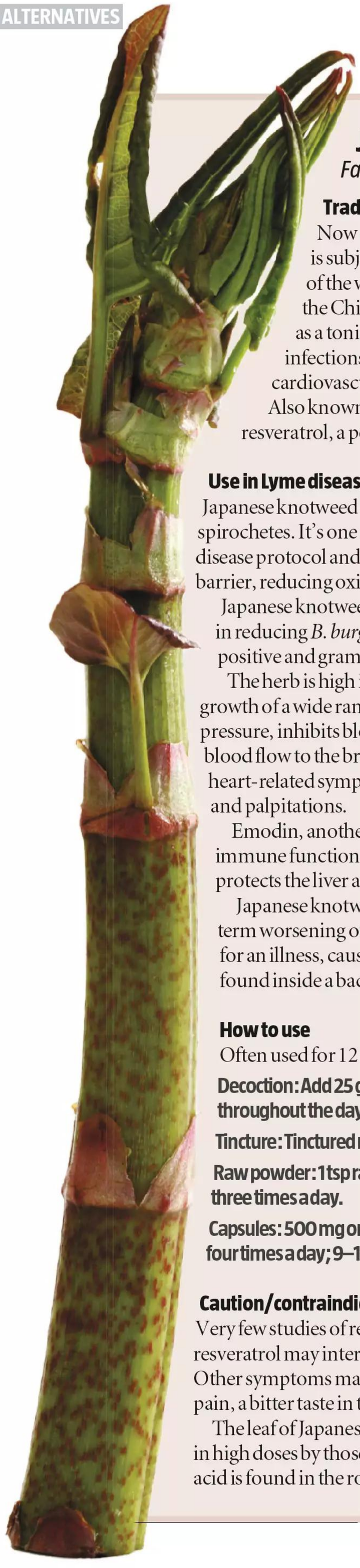
Tinctures Tinctures are alcohol-based preparations of medicinal plants; they are the most commonly prescribed form of herbal medicine. They keep well and are convenient to take. Alcohol is a better solvent for plant constituents than water and also acts as a preservative.

The percentage of alcohol used (e.g., 45 percent) depends on the type of constituents extracted. The quantity of the herb used compared to the amount of alcohol is usually 1:4 or 1:5—in other words, for every gram of herb, we use 4 or 5 mL of alcohol. For more details about how to interpret these numbers, see the box at the end of the book excerpt from Samantha Almond, "Healing in the Hedgerows," *WDDTY* September 2025.

Glycerites Glycerites can be used if you want to avoid alcohol. Follow these steps to make one:

1. Dilute the glycerin with distilled water, three parts glycerin to one part water.
2. Fill two-thirds of a jar with fresh herb/root, or half the jar with dried herb/root.
3. Pour the glycerin and water into the jar to cover the herb and/or root. Leave in a dry, dark place for six to eight weeks; shake the jar every couple of days.
4. Strain before using.

See page 64 for where to buy ready-made herbal remedies.



Japanese knotweed

Fallopia japonica

Traditional use

Now considered a gardener's nightmare, this invasive weed is subject to legal control measures in the UK and other parts of the world. However, it's one of the most popular herbs in the Chinese pharmacopeia and has traditionally been used as a tonic to improve vitality and health and to treat fungal infections, burns, cancers, diabetes and hair loss as well as cardiovascular, respiratory and neurodegenerative disorders.

Also known as Hu Zhang, Japanese knotweed is a rich source of resveratrol, a powerful antioxidant.

Use in Lyme disease

Japanese knotweed has broad-spectrum antibacterial activity against spirochetes. It's one of the main ingredients in Stephen Buhner's Lyme disease protocol and is particularly useful in crossing the blood-brain barrier, reducing oxidative stress and inflammation in the brain.

Japanese knotweed shows significant results, at least in test tube studies, in reducing *B. burgdorferi* and *B. garinii* biofilm and breaking down gram-positive and gram-negative bacteria.

The herb is high in resveratrol, which can suppress the replication and growth of a wide range of viruses. It also acts as a vasodilator, lowers blood pressure, inhibits blood clotting, improves microcirculation, and enhances blood flow to the brain and other organs. It can reduce heart-related symptoms such as shortness of breath, lightheadedness and palpitations.

Emodin, another compound in Japanese knotweed, may improve immune function by influencing the production of white blood cells. It protects the liver and the brain from inflammation as well.[1]

Japanese knotweed can help reduce Herxheimer reactions—the short-term worsening of symptoms and/or co-infections following treatment for an illness, caused by the release of endotoxins. Endotoxins are toxins found inside a bacterial cell that are released when the cell disintegrates.

How to use

Often used for 12 months, or until symptoms resolve.

Decoction: Add 25 g root to 1 L water, simmer for 20 minutes, and drink throughout the day.

Tincture: Tinctured root, ½ tsp two to three times a day.

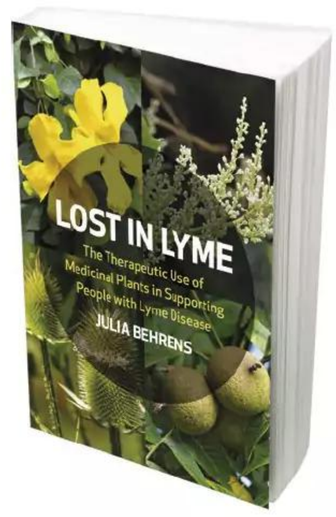
Raw powder: 1 tsp raw powder can be added to smoothies or liquid and taken three times a day.

Capsules: 500 mg one to three times a day, slowly building up to three capsules four times a day; 9–15 g whole herb can be taken a day.

Caution/contraindications

Very few studies of resveratrol have been conducted in humans. But resveratrol may interact with blood thinners and lower blood sugar levels. Other symptoms may include dry mouth, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, a bitter taste in the mouth and diarrhea.

The leaf of Japanese knotweed contains oxalic acid and should be avoided in high doses by those with a history of kidney stones or arthritis. Less oxalic acid is found in the root.



Adapted from *Lost in Lyme: The Therapeutic Use of Medicinal Plants in Supporting People with Lyme Disease* by Julia Behrens, with Daphne Lambert (Aeon Books, 2023). To get 20 percent off the book, valid until October 31, use code LL20 at health.aeonbooks.co.uk.

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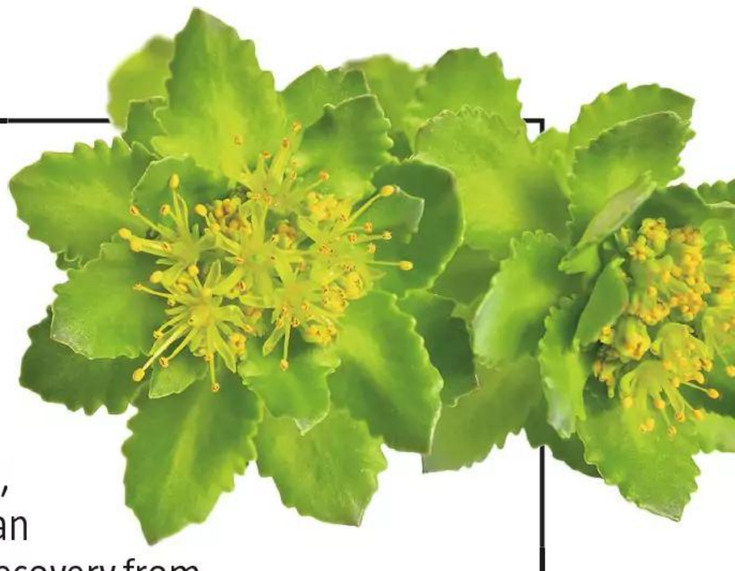
Other helpful herbs

Here are some more herbs useful in the treatment of Lyme disease. They can be taken for 60 days at a time and then reintroduced later if needed.

Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*). This herb is an immune modulator but is also high in iron, so it helps to improve oxygen transport and symptoms of fatigue from anemia. It's also an adaptogen, a substance that helps the body adapt to stress.

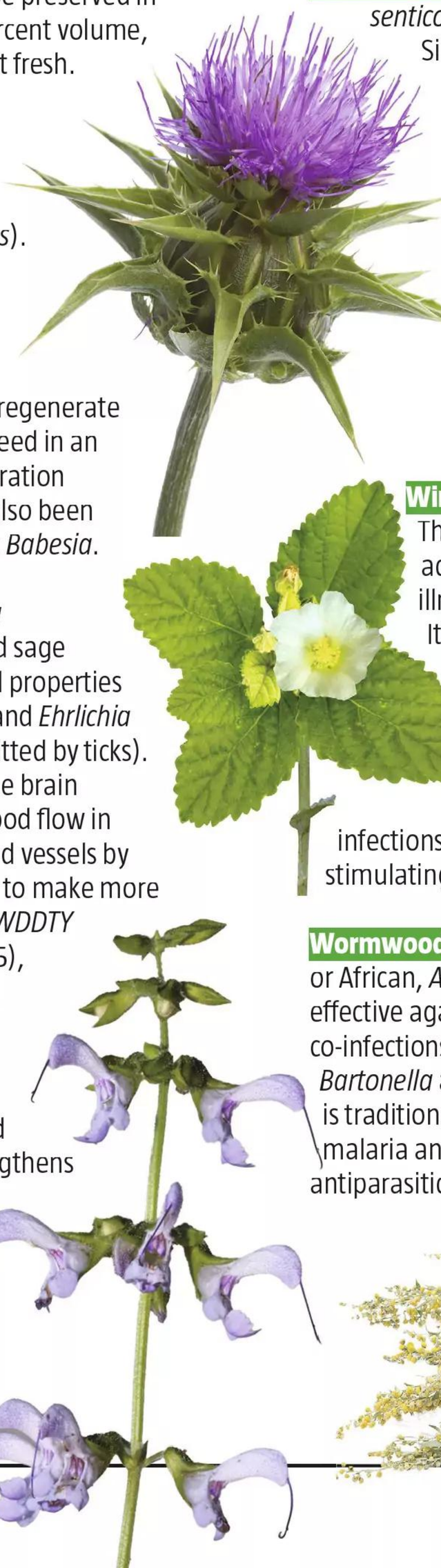
Cleavers (*Galium aparine*). Cleavers have traditionally been used as a blood cleanser and to drain the lymphatic system. A very effective juice can be made from the fresh plant with a juicing machine; it can be preserved in glycerol at 50 percent volume, or you can drink it fresh.



Rhodiola (*Rhodiola rosea*). As an adaptogen, *Rhodiola* can help with recovery from debilitating illness. It reduces fatigue, mitochondrial dysfunction, depression, infections and nervous exhaustion and improves concentration.

Siberian ginseng (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*). Another adaptogen, Siberian ginseng or eleuthero works in a similar way to *Rhodiola* but is not as stimulating.

Beggar's tick (*Bidens pilosa*). *Bidens* protects mucous membranes, red blood cells and liver cells and helps to regulate the immune system. A ½ teaspoon dose has been used for conditions such as malaria, arthritis and urinary tract infections as well as for heart problems and respiratory issues.



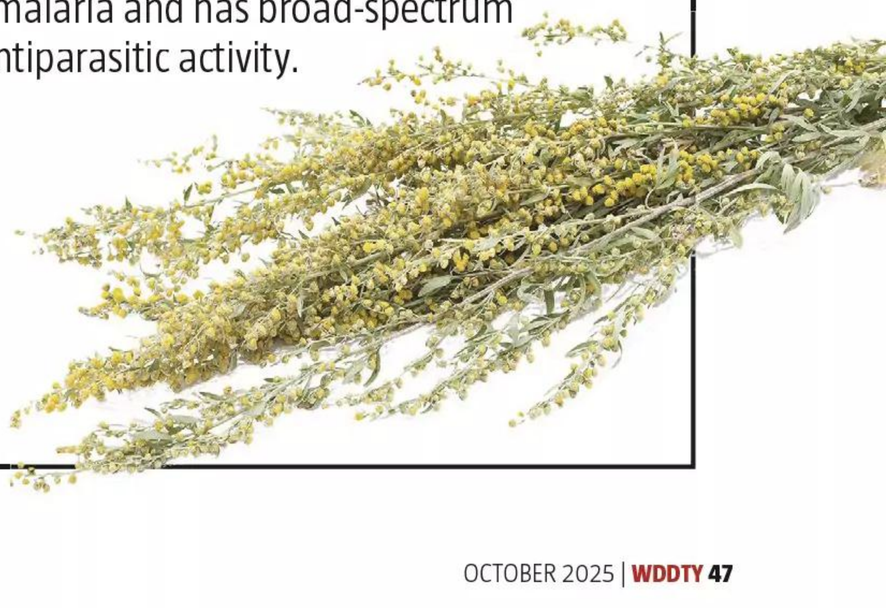
Milk thistle (*Silybum marianum* / *Carduus marianus*). Milk thistle seed can be used to support, protect, detoxify and regenerate the liver. The seed in an alcoholic preparation (tincture) has also been shown to fight *Babesia*.

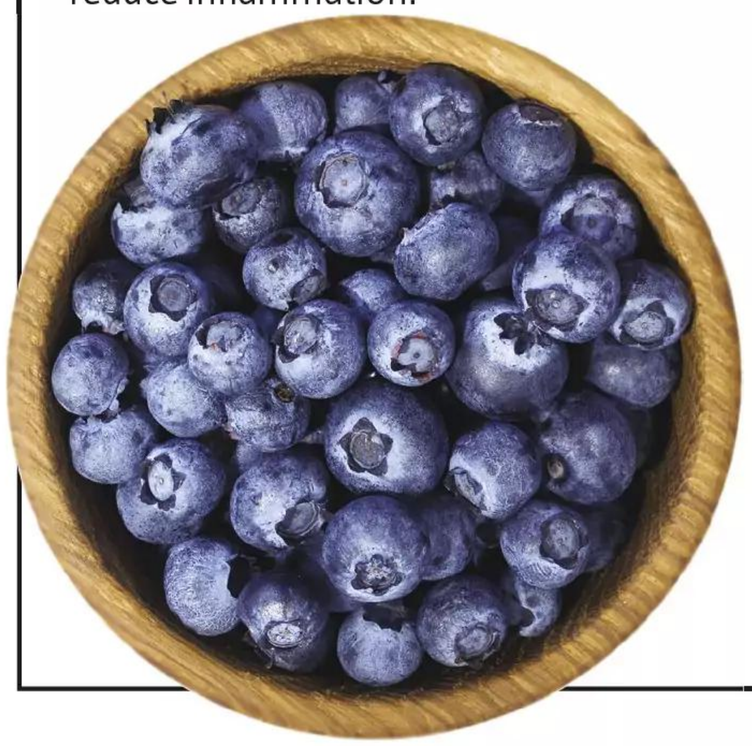
Red sage (*Salvia miltiorrhiza*). Red sage has antimicrobial properties against *Babesia* and *Ehrlichia* (bacteria transmitted by ticks). It also protects the brain and improves blood flow in the smallest blood vessels by helping the body to make more nitric oxide (see *WDDTY* July/August 2025), which dilates the blood vessels.

This benefits and protects the spleen, heart and liver. It also strengthens the gut lining and helps to reduce pain.

Wireweed (*Sida acuta*). This plant has broad-spectrum activity against all types of illness-causing organisms. It's particularly useful for protecting red blood cells and has been used in a low dose by people with babesiosis, bartonellosis and mycoplasma infections (although it may be too stimulating for some).

Wormwood (sweet, *Artemisia annua*, or African, *A. afra*). Artemisia can be effective against Lyme disease and co-infections like *Babesia*, *Ehrlichia*, *Bartonella* and mycoplasma. *A. afra* is traditionally used in Africa to treat malaria and has broad-spectrum antiparasitic activity.





Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*). Known as blueberry in Europe, these berries are high in anthocyanin phenols, which have stronger antioxidant properties than many other berries. They help to strengthen capillaries around the eye and reduce inflammation.

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HUNGRY FOR CHANGE

Struggling with weight loss and fed up with diets? According to WILDFIT founder Eric Edmeades, understanding the six human hungers and how best to respond to them is essential to a healthy relationship with food

At the heart of food psychology lies a powerful question: Why do we eat what we eat, when we eat it? This question has guided me through years of working with thousands of people from all over the world as part of my health education and coaching company WILDFIT®. Ultimately it's led to a discovery that has shaped WILDFIT's entire approach to health and eating: the six human hungers.

In observing patterns, behaviors and common struggles around food, I noticed something intriguing—most eating decisions weren't purely based on physical hunger. Instead they often stemmed from a complex mix of psychological, biological and emotional drives that weren't always aligned with the body's actual needs.

This realization revealed a critical insight: What we often think of as "hunger" can actually be triggered by any of six distinct motivations.

1. Thirst
2. Nutritional deficiency
3. Desire for variety
4. Low blood sugar
5. Empty stomach
6. Emotional needs

Each of these six human hungers has the power to influence when, what and how much we eat. Understanding which of these hungers is at play allows you to reclaim control over your eating choices so you can make intentional and informed decisions rather than simply responding to cravings or impulses.

Hunger and fulfillment

These hungers represent the range of forces that shape our food choices. Recognizing them—and learning to respond to each one thoughtfully—is the first step toward a more empowered and fulfilling relationship with food.

These hungers dictate our eating patterns, and their influence only intensifies when several of them are triggered at once. When three or more coincide, cravings can feel nearly impossible to resist. This is because intense hunger engages an ancient survival instinct: as hunger grows, so does our urgency and adaptability in choosing foods.

Prolonged hunger might have driven our ancestors to hunt more dangerous prey or to experiment with unfamiliar plants—a strategy that, while risky, was sometimes safer than facing starvation. This instinct to eat what was available may have saved lives in times of scarcity, but in today's world of abundant, easily accessible food, it often works against us.

This is a key reason so many diets fail. Although they're often nutrient-deprived despite consuming high-calorie, low-nutrient foods, people attempt to adopt restrictive diets. Before long, intensified hunger overrides discipline, pushing them to make poor food choices. Feelings of guilt or shame may follow, ironically sparking even more consumption and creating a cycle of overeating and self-reproach.

Each of the six hungers can affect us independently, but when multiple types of hunger are active, their combined force can overwhelm even the strongest willpower.

Here's an in-depth look at the six human hungers as well as how to respond to each effectively, giving you tools to navigate your relationship with food in a new way. Rather than being driven by unconscious impulses, you'll be guided by awareness, choice and a relationship with food that truly serves your well-being.

1. THIRST

Thirst may not immediately come to mind as a form of hunger, but it's one of the most foundational drivers of our desire to eat. For our ancestors, thirst and hunger signals were closely linked, and as they approached dehydration, their bodies often triggered a craving for food rather than just water.

In nature, most of the food available—such as root vegetables, fruits and fresh meat—was water-rich and provided essential hydration. So when water wasn't readily available, their craving for food functioned as an effective survival tool.

Today, however, this once-functional signal often leads us astray. Modern foods, particularly processed snacks, are often low in water and high in salt or chemicals, which can actually worsen our dehydration.

A cycle develops: Dehydration triggers the instinct to eat, leading us to reach for foods that provide little to no hydration and can even exacerbate thirst. Eating these foods only intensifies the body's craving, creating a feedback loop that leaves us continuously unsatisfied. Perhaps this explains why, as Pringles famously says, "Once you pop, you can't stop"—dehydrated and nutrient-poor foods don't satisfy, so we keep reaching for more.

How to manage thirst-driven hunger

Recognize thirst cues When you feel hunger, consider that it may be thirst in disguise.

Drink water first Before reaching for food, drink pure water, as options like coffee, tea, soft drinks and reconstituted juices lack the hydrating power of water.

Eat water-rich foods Fresh fruits, vegetables and even meats like fish are naturally water-rich and can help satisfy both hunger and hydration needs.

"Training to become a Health Coach has helped me transform years of illness into a powerful new purpose."

Ann-Marie, HCA Health Coach Graduate

After a sudden collapse at work in 2009, Ann-Marie Goodbody's life was turned upside down by a diagnosis of severe chronic fatigue syndrome. Once a vibrant, fitness-loving legal professional, she spent over a year bedridden before beginning a long recovery. Over 15 years, she rebuilt her life step by step through nutrition, mindset tools, and gentle wellness practices. The turning point came when Ann-Marie trained with the Health Coaches Academy.

"HCA didn't just give me knowledge – it gave me clarity, confidence and direction. I realised my experience could help others."

Since completing her Level 5 Diploma in Health & Wellness Coaching, Ann-Marie has launched a coaching business helping professionals avoid burnout. She's also writing a book, growing an online community, and speaking out about chronic illness and wellbeing.

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Stay proactive with hydration Don't wait until you feel thirsty; staying hydrated can prevent thirst from masquerading as hunger in the first place.

By addressing thirst first, you can reduce unnecessary cravings and sidestep the cycle of dehydration-driven hunger. Supporting hydration at its root means experiencing fewer cravings and a better balance in your daily food choices.

2. NUTRITIONAL DEFICIENCY

Of the six types of hunger, nutritional hunger is the only one that signals a true physiological need for food. It occurs when our bodies are deficient in specific nutrients, such as certain vitamins, minerals or macronutrients like protein or fats.

Unlike other forms of hunger that may respond to general hunger cues or emotional triggers, nutritional hunger directly reflects our body's need to restore essential nutrient levels.

Historically, this type of hunger didn't usually lead to specific cravings. Our ancestors adapted to seasonal food cycles, meaning they might go months without certain types of nutrients and had to make do with whatever was available. Because of this, nutritional hunger typically shows up as a general desire for certain food qualities—such as salty, sweet or fatty—rather than cravings for specific foods.

The body's drive for foods with these qualities is a protective mechanism. For example, salt cravings might arise when sodium levels are low, while a craving for sweetness may signal a need for quick energy.

These cravings help ensure we seek out foods that can restore nutrient balance. However, in today's world, processed foods can complicate this instinct.

Salt, sugar and fat are now common additives in processed snacks and meals, yet these foods lack the accompanying vitamins, minerals and proteins our bodies truly need. The result is a craving cycle that begins with a genuine need for nutrients but leads us to foods that only worsen the problem, leaving us craving even more without fulfilling our nutritional needs.

Ultimately this leads people to eat more food than they need but still end up missing key nutrients; in a very real sense, many people in the developed world are simultaneously overfed and undernourished. Current diet trends and "miracle" drugs that curb appetite only make this situation worse as they reduce overall food intake, including the intake of nutritionally important foods.

How to manage nutritional hunger

Recognize the signal When a vague craving hits, consider whether your body might be seeking nutrients rather than calories alone.

Focus on nutrient-dense foods Fresh fruits, vegetables, healthy fats and lean proteins give your body the range of vitamins and minerals it needs to be satisfied.

Listen to general cravings If you're drawn to salty, sweet or fatty foods, prioritize whole foods that naturally contain these elements, like nuts, meat, fish, eggs and fruits.

Avoid processed snacks Processed foods often fail to satisfy nutritional hunger and can make cravings stronger over time, perpetuating the cycle of nutrient deficiency.

Understanding nutritional hunger is key to breaking the cycle of vague cravings and giving your body what it truly needs. By focusing on nutrient-dense foods and tuning in to these deeper hunger signals, you can restore balance in your body and reduce the persistent desire for non-nutritive foods.

3. DESIRE FOR VARIETY

The desire for variety is a distinct type of hunger that has deep evolutionary roots. This craving for diverse foods once helped ensure that our ancestors ate a balanced diet, gaining a wider array of nutrients by sampling different plants, meats and available foods. It was essential for survival in environments where no single food source could meet all nutritional needs.

In today's world, however, the desire for variety can easily be overstimulated. Food producers have tapped into this instinct, offering countless flavors, forms and combinations of processed foods—often without much nutritional value.

This can lead to an endless cycle of craving in which our pursuit of variety is disconnected from our true nutritional needs. Instead of guiding us to a balanced diet, it often leads us to consume more food, but not necessarily more nutrition.

Our variety-driven cravings might feel strongest when we're not fully nourished, as the body's need for different nutrients amplifies the desire for diverse tastes and textures. This can create a loop of continually seeking novelty in food without feeling truly satisfied because the foods we reach for often lack the nutrients that our bodies need.

How to manage variety-seeking hunger

Ensure you're well-nourished When your body's nutritional needs are met, the drive for variety becomes less frequent and intense.

Introduce healthy variety Satisfy this hunger with diverse, nutrient-dense foods like colorful vegetables, different protein sources and seasonal fruits. Exploring nutritious options provides the benefits of variety without compromising your health.

Be mindful of processed "variety." Recognize that most flavored, packaged snacks exploit your natural craving for diversity without providing any true nutritional benefit.

By tuning in to the hunger for variety and choosing foods that genuinely nourish, you can enjoy a satisfying and balanced diet that aligns with your body's needs, not food industry tactics.

4. LOW BLOOD SUGAR

Low blood sugar, or hypoglycemia, can trigger an intense hunger that feels urgent and powerful yet isn't necessarily tied to a need for more nutrients. When blood sugar drops too low, the body reacts with a series of signals designed to restore glucose quickly. Symptoms can include fatigue, shakiness, sweating, irritability, dizziness and even heart palpitations—all of these are signals that the body needs energy fast.

Though especially relevant for those with diabetes or insulin resistance, low blood sugar episodes can affect anyone, particularly those who rely heavily on processed or low-quality carbs. When we consume foods high in refined sugars, blood sugar spikes and then crashes, creating a cycle in which the body is constantly searching for quick energy.

This pattern can be especially challenging for people who are not "fat adapted," meaning their metabolism has become reliant on glucose as a primary fuel source and struggles to switch to fat-burning in times of need.

How to manage low-blood-sugar hunger

Become fat-adapted Gradually train your body to switch between glucose and fat for energy by reducing reliance on sugary foods and increasing healthy fats. This metabolic flexibility helps you avoid intense sugar cravings during low blood sugar episodes.

Avoid empty carbs Minimize foods high in refined sugars and low-quality carbs, which can cause dramatic blood sugar fluctuations, worsening this cycle of hunger and fatigue.

Undertake aerobic exercise Aerobic exercise—exercise you can do while still able to have a conversation—promotes fat-burning, particularly when you have dramatically reduced or taken a break from carbohydrate-rich foods.

Building a balanced metabolism and reducing dependence on sugar as a primary fuel source can help stabilize blood sugar levels. By promoting this metabolic flexibility, you can reduce intense hunger episodes and create a more consistent, sustainable energy pattern.

5. EMPTY STOMACH

An empty stomach often triggers feelings of hunger, but it's primarily a physical sensation rather than a signal that the body needs immediate nourishment.

Throughout human history, periods of emptiness in the stomach were common, and our bodies adapted to use these times to carry out essential internal processes, such as burning older or damaged proteins. This cleanup process, known as autophagy, plays a critical role in cellular repair and renewal. It clears out damaged cells and recycles resources for other functions.

Periods of fasting, whether intentional or due to food scarcity, naturally stimulate autophagy. While beneficial, fasting isn't to be taken lightly, particularly by those who may already be nutritionally deprived or have never fasted previously.

For many, though, experiencing an empty stomach can offer a renewed sense of body awareness and a chance to reconnect with hunger cues. Learning to differentiate between a naturally empty stomach and true nutritional need is key to navigating this type of hunger.

How to manage empty-stomach hunger

Recognize emptiness as a natural state An empty stomach is not an immediate signal to eat but a natural part of the digestive cycle.

Understand the benefits of fasting While fasting can promote autophagy, make sure you're well nourished before you try extended fasting

practices. The goal is to support your cellular health without compromising your nutritional needs.

Distinguish from emotional hunger

Reconnect with the sensation of an empty stomach as a simple physical state separate from cravings or emotional eating triggers.

Embracing the sensation of an empty stomach as part of a natural rhythm can help clarify hunger signals and support the body's regenerative processes. With this understanding, you can make informed choices about when and why to eat, fostering a balanced approach to health and hunger.

6. EMOTIONAL NEEDS

Emotional hunger is the drive to eat as a way to soothe emotional discomfort rather than to meet a physical need. This form of hunger is among the most complex and potentially disruptive, as it often doesn't respond to typical hunger cues and can create a feedback loop that intensifies emotions rather than soothing them.

Emotional hunger is unique in that it can magnify or escalate other forms of hunger. For instance, if you're already experiencing low blood sugar or dehydration, emotional stress can make those cravings feel overwhelming, prompting you to reach for comfort foods with little or no nutritional value.

Consider a mother shopping with her kids: She's focused on her tasks, dealing with the demands of the day and maybe running on caffeine after missing breakfast. Her energy is low, her blood sugar's dropping and the kids are restless, asking for her attention while she rushes through the store.

Then one of her children accidentally breaks a jar of sauce. Frustrated and tired, she finishes the shopping and wrestles through traffic to get home. While unpacking her purchases, she suddenly feels both emotionally drained and overwhelmed.

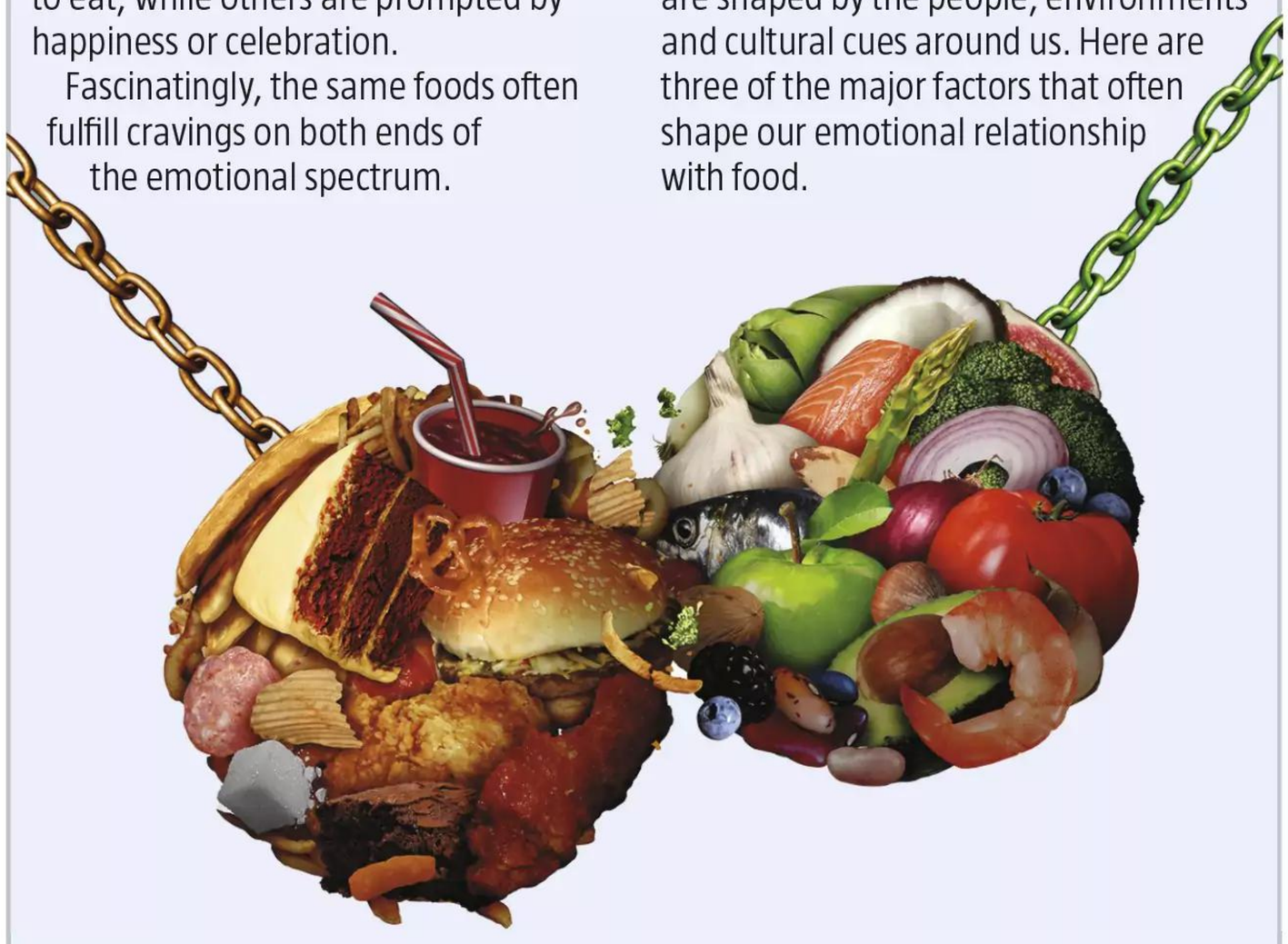
This perfect storm of physical and emotional hunger cues often drives us to reach for quick, comforting snacks—ice cream, chocolate or potato chips. But afterward, rather than feeling satisfied,

How emotional associations with food develop

During WILDFIT group retreats and coaching, I ask people what emotions typically drive them to eat. It quickly becomes clear that almost any emotion—good or bad—can spark cravings. For some, feelings of sadness, anger or frustration trigger the urge to eat, while others are prompted by happiness or celebration.

Fascinatingly, the same foods often fulfill cravings on both ends of the emotional spectrum. Chocolate, pizza or ice cream, for example, may serve as rewards in moments of joy or as comforts in times of distress.

How do we develop these associations between emotions and certain foods? Many of them form in childhood and are shaped by the people, environments and cultural cues around us. Here are three of the major factors that often shape our emotional relationship with food.



1. First impressions

Early experiences with certain foods can make a lasting impression. For instance, I avoided tapioca for years after someone jokingly told me it was made from fish eggs.

That initial impression stayed with me even after I'd come to enjoy actual fish eggs on sushi. These initial experiences shape how we relate to food on a deeper, often unconscious, level.

2. Emotional responses

As children, we often learn to associate certain foods with specific feelings or memories. For instance, a child given a cookie to comfort them after a fall may associate sweets with relief or love. Or if a parent consoles children with pizza and ice cream after a disappointing sports game, those foods may later become their go-to for comfort.

These formative experiences shape our adult responses. So when that child grows up and has a bad day at work, they might instinctively crave pizza and ice cream to "fix" their mood.

3. Food industry influence

Many food companies take advantage of these early experiences by embedding themselves into our first food memories. Sugary cereals are placed at children's eye level on grocery shelves and packaged with colorful mascots, and fast-food chains create play spaces that tie their brands to fun and reward.

Some food companies even sponsor major celebrations and sporting events, fostering a connection between their products and our happiest memories. This tactic not only influences children's requests but builds strong brand loyalty that can last a lifetime.

Food marketers, well aware of our emotional hunger cues, deliberately design foods and branding that appeal to these early associations, sidestepping our rational decision-making in favor of instant gratification.

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we may feel regret or guilt, which can deepen the cycle, sparking cravings later in an attempt to soothe these newly added emotions.

These situations show that many of us tend to avoid unpleasant emotions by reaching for food instead of recognizing them as valuable signals.

Rather than tuning in to feelings of frustration, sadness or joy as potential motivators to learn, grow or take action, many of us turn to food, TV, social media or other distractions to numb or deflect them. See page 55 for the three major factors that often shape our emotional relationship with food.

Emotional hunger is dangerous because it's an attempt to satisfy an emotional need with food, which ultimately can't provide the comfort or resolution we seek. It can leave us feeling even more unsatisfied, intensifying the very emotions we were trying to avoid.

To address this cycle, it helps to engage in a self-reflection process that redirects emotional hunger into more constructive actions.

How to manage emotional hunger

Identify the craving When you feel the urge to eat, pause and identify the specific food you're craving.

Recognize the emotional trigger What emotion are you feeling that's fueling this craving? Is it sadness, stress, boredom or maybe even joy?

Anticipate the outcome Ask yourself what kind of emotional relief you think the food will provide.

Seek alternative comforts Brainstorm other ways to find relief or to address the emotion underlying the craving.

For example, if I'm craving ice cream because I feel trapped or confined (see box, right), I recognize that what I'm seeking is a sense of freedom or control. Instead of indulging in the ice cream, I could go for a run, call a friend or try a new activity—ways to create that sense of liberation without relying on food.

This type of introspection can help us distinguish between genuine nutritional needs and emotional cravings. The goal isn't just to avoid comfort foods but to reframe emotional eating as an opportunity for self-awareness and growth.

By understanding the roots of our cravings and choosing alternate forms of comfort, we can achieve a sense of food freedom, relying on self-awareness rather than willpower alone. This process empowers us to make conscious choices that align with our needs, giving us control over our relationship with food instead of allowing our emotions to dictate it.

A personal story

One example from my own life highlights how deeply ingrained food associations can be. When I was 13 years old, my father sent me to a boarding school in northern Canada. It was a unique place where our first week wasn't spent in the classroom but on a "new boy hike"—a weeklong trek through the wilderness.

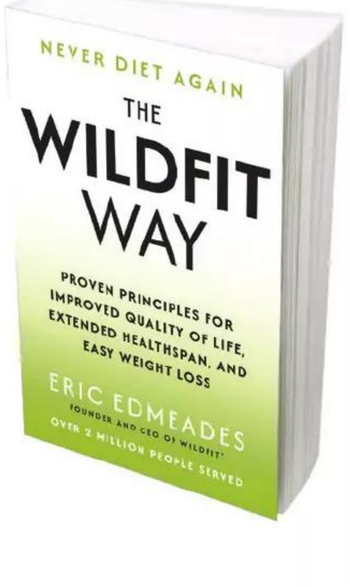
The school environment itself was strict, and between regimented schedules, winter sports training and even corporal punishment, I often felt trapped and isolated. Yet every Tuesday night, the school canteen opened, allowing us to buy treats.

We weren't allowed to bring food from outside, so this weekly opportunity to purchase treats became a small freedom. I gravitated toward the limited supply of ice cream, relishing every bite as a momentary escape.

Many years later, after delving into food psychology, I realized that this simple ritual had a lasting impact. On particularly hard days, I'd catch myself eating ice cream in dim lighting, recreating that fleeting feeling of freedom I once associated with those relaxed Tuesday nights.

A similar story came up in a WILDFIT class. One participant shared that she had a craving for icing. When we explored this further, she realized that the craving was tied to memories of sneaking canned icing while her mother baked.

She associated those moments with fun and laughter, especially now that her mother was dealing with early-stage dementia. Recognizing her craving for icing as an attempt to reconnect with those cherished memories was transformative for her.



Adapted from *The WILDFIT Way: Proven Principles for Improved Quality of Life, Extended Healthspan and Easy Weight Loss* by Eric Edmeades (Hay House, 2025), £16.99

A head start in the race against cancer

Cancer rates are on the rise in young people, says Dr Leigh Erin Connealy. Here are her top tips for getting ahead of it early in life and at any age

A 32-year-old mother of three with invasive breast cancer. An active, healthy 28-year-old man facing colorectal cancer. A 21-year-old college student battling metastatic melanoma. A teenager fighting for life and limb against Ewing's sarcoma.

These are not isolated incidents. They are heartbreaking, real and increasingly common. Cancer is striking younger people more often and more aggressively. It's tragic. It's alarming. And it's more than a little frightening. So, what on earth is going on?

Early-onset cancer trends

According to the American Cancer Society, about 20 million cancer cases were diagnosed in 2022 and 9.7 million people died from cancer globally. The group says that "by 2050, the number of cancer cases is predicted to increase to 35 million based solely on projected population growth."[i] However, the increase in cancer cases is not just about more people populating the planet.

A study published in *BMJ Oncology* revealed that "global incidence of early-onset cancer increased by 79.1 percent and the number of early-onset cancer deaths increased by 27.7 percent between 1990 and 2019." In this study, "early-onset" means it's happening in people under age 50. The most common early-onset cancers the researchers found were breast, tracheal, bronchus and lung, stomach, and colorectal.

The researchers acknowledged, "Dietary risk factors (high in red meat, low in fruits, high in sodium and low in milk, etc.), alcohol consumption and tobacco use are the main risk factors underlying early-onset cancers."[ii] But there is much more to this story. And it begins before the beginning.

Prevention starts before the womb

Women of childbearing age can set the stage for their future children's health. I regularly tell my patients that if they want to get pregnant, there are several ways to prepare their bodies.

First and foremost, they must set their spiritual and emotional intentions. Next is maternal nutrition. What Mom eats is literally the building blocks for every cell in the baby's body.

> Global incidence of early-onset cancer increased by 79.1 percent between 1990 and 2019

I also have them take a close look at their personal care products, including makeup, skin care lines, laundry detergent and cleaning supplies. Many of these products are loaded with xenoestrogens that can cause fertility issues and other health problems.

The Environmental Working Group has databases of thousands of personal care products (ewg.org/skindeep) and household cleaning items (ewg.org/cleaners) graded A–F. I strongly recommend that everyone take a survey of what is in their cabinets and drawers.

Another area to consider is the entire endocrine system, from the adrenal glands and thyroid to the ovaries and pancreas. A fetus is reliant on Mom's hormones, and even mild deficiencies can increase the risk of autism, chronic disease and cancer.

Ensure adequate vitamin D levels by spending a little time in the sun each day. You can also take vitamin D3 supplements if your blood levels aren't in the optimal range, at least 50 ng/dL. Vitamin D is vital for a baby's bones, immune system and brain, and if Mom's levels are high, the risk of pregnancy complications is lower.

Additionally, moms-to-be must take care of their emotional health. Rest daily. Destress often.

Let go of past emotional hurts and traumas or work through them. All your thoughts and emotions can affect fertility and the health of your baby while you're carrying them.

And finally, if you're pregnant or planning to become pregnant, keep an eye on your progesterone levels (see page 34 for details about how to spot a deficiency and natural ways to boost your body's production).

Future fathers aren't off the hook. Sperm quality, DNA integrity, toxin exposure and proper nutrition are all critical components of the health of children both in the womb and beyond.

Toxins are everywhere

Early-onset cancers are also likely influenced by the 2 million toxins we're exposed to every day. The sad reality is that our water, air and soil are more polluted than ever before.

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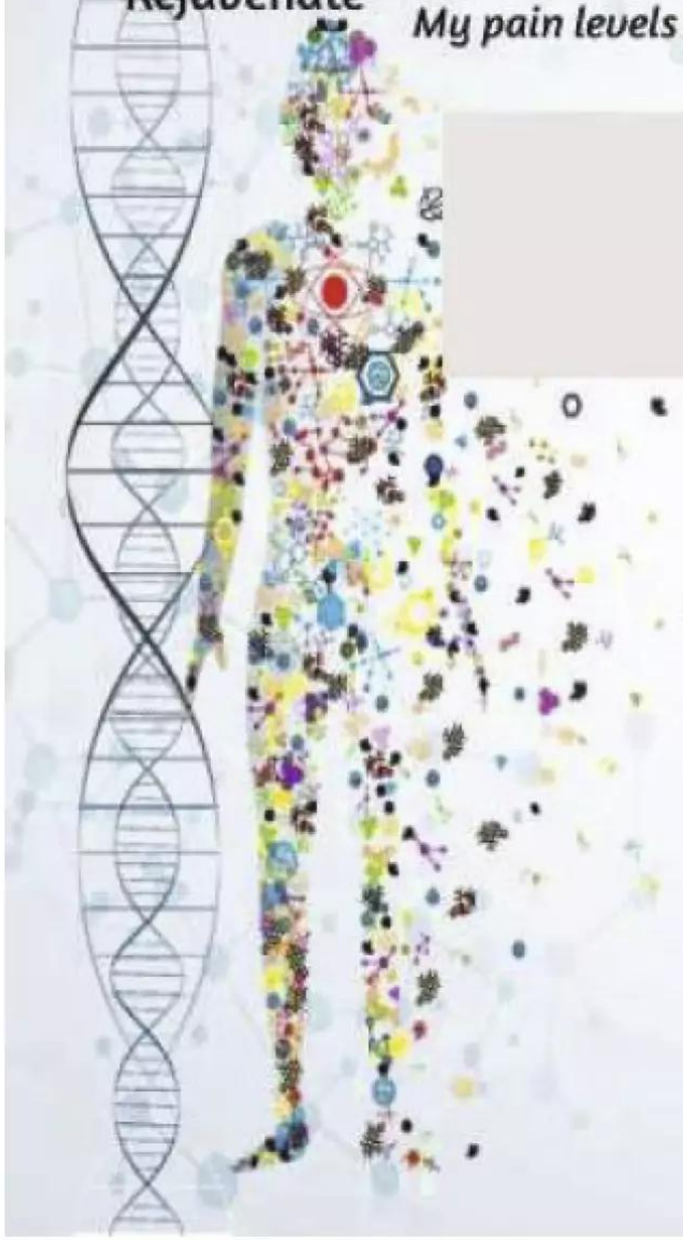

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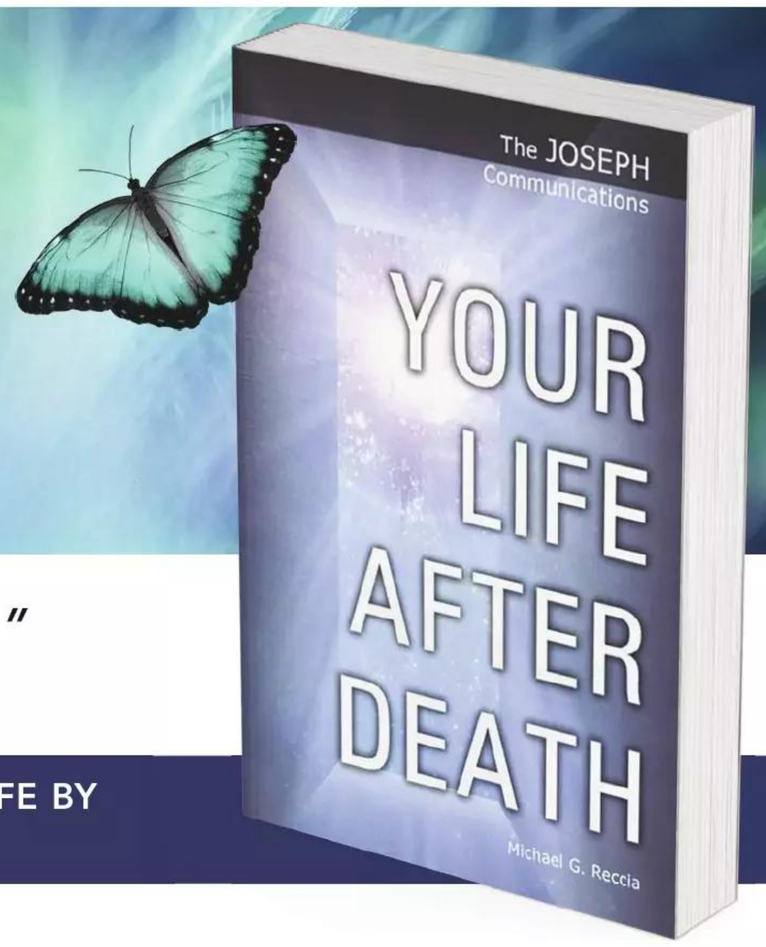

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Increasingly, microplastics are bombarding our bodies, pesticides and preservatives are coating our produce, and toxic heavy metals are lurking everywhere. Children and young adults are especially vulnerable to these damaging toxins because of their still-developing detoxification systems.

You can protect yourself and your children by taking the following precautions, starting today:

- Buy organic produce and choose grass-fed, pasture-raised protein as often as possible.
- Avoid articles of clothing or furniture treated with flame retardants.
- Don't cook with nonstick cookware; choose ceramic, stainless steel or cast iron instead.
- Fill your home or office with air-purifying plants, such as spider plants, snake plants, peace lilies, English ivy, aloe vera and philodendrons.
- Opt for glass food storage containers instead of plastic.
- Drink from glass or stainless steel water bottles and cups.
- Have old amalgam fillings replaced by a knowledgeable holistic dentist.
- Take a high-quality chlorella supplement daily to detox.
- Use a HEPA or propolis air filtration system in your home (see Resources in *WDDTY* July/August 2025 for some good propolis diffusers).
- Choose a natural deodorant free of aluminum and other chemicals.
- Drink filtered water; hydrogen water is an excellent option.
- Detoxify with Epsom salt baths, infrared sauna therapy and lymphatic drainage methods (massage, exercise, dry brushing) as often as possible.
- Reduce your exposure to electromagnetic fields from technology (see box, page 63).

The gut microbiome and cancer

Over the past several years, increasing attention has surrounded the gut microbiome's role in chronic disease. An overgrowth or imbalance of gut bacteria can trigger chronic inflammation, impair immune function and generate metabolites that may contribute to the development of cancer cells.

On the other hand, optimal gut health supports and regulates the immune system, helping the body detect and destroy abnormal cells before they become problematic. Maintaining a proper balance of good bacteria is essential to keeping inflammation at bay and ensuring the immune and gastrointestinal (GI) systems work effectively. See the box above for simple ways to support your gut microbiome.

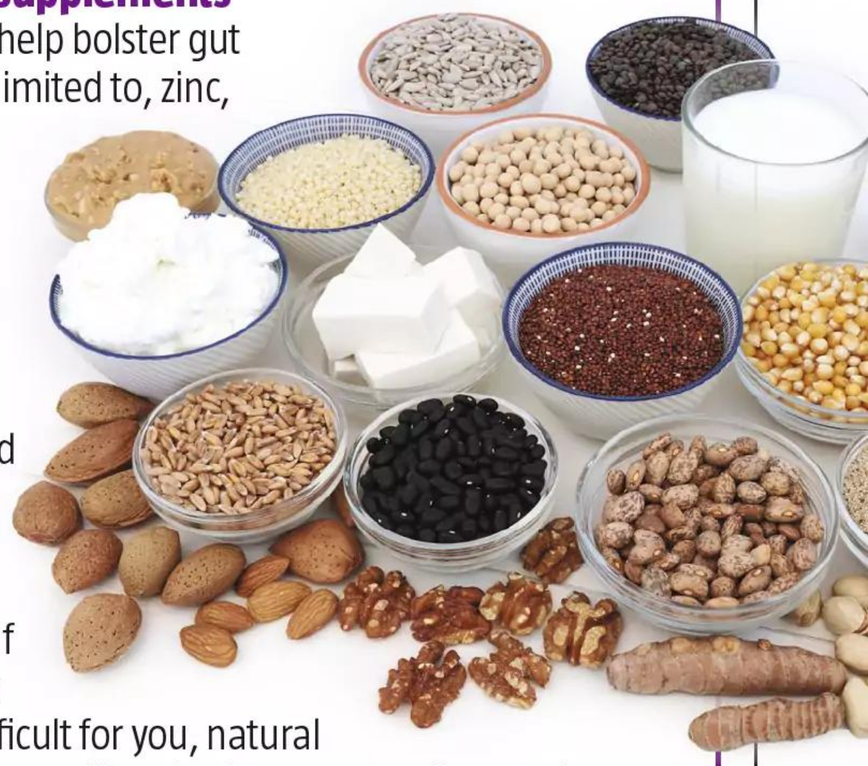
5 ways to support your gut microbiome

1. Avoid antibiotics

Antibiotics, while sometimes necessary, destroy all the good bacteria along with the bad. Take them only when necessary, use them precisely as described and make sure to replenish the good bacteria with a quality probiotic supplement when your treatment course is finished. See page 26 to learn more.

2. Support gut health with supplements

Several nutrients and herbs can help bolster gut health. These include, but are not limited to, zinc, glutamine, L-carnosine and slippery elm. Talk to your doctor about which supplements are right for you.



3. Eat a fiber-rich diet

Getting enough fiber in your daily diet is crucial for "feeding" the good gut bacteria and aiding proper digestion and regular bowel movements. Everyone should aim to get at least 25 g of fiber every day. If eating fiber-rich foods proves difficult for you, natural supplements such as psyllium husk are an excellent option.

4. Consume gut-boosting foods

Eating prebiotic, probiotic and fermented foods is an easy way to support gut health. These foods nourish the helpful flora in your GI tract and boast myriad health benefits.

Prebiotic foods: garlic, onions, leeks, asparagus, bananas, apples, oats and legumes

Probiotic foods: yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, kimchi and kombucha

Fermented foods: tempeh, miso, sourdough bread, pickled vegetables, apple cider vinegar and raw-milk cheese

5. Avoid sugar and processed foods

Harmful bacteria are fueled by sugar and processed foods, so avoid them or severely limit your intake of both. Neither are good for you, and in addition to providing only empty calories, they wreak havoc on gut health. Good sugar alternatives include stevia, monkfruit and allulose.

Please note that these are general guidelines. To fine-tune your nutritional plan, work with a nutritionist or dietitian.

5 cancer prevention tips to live by

I've had to be extra vigilant about preventing a cancer diagnosis myself. When my mother was pregnant with me, she experienced some bleeding. Her doctor prescribed the drug diethylstilbestrol (DES), often used back then to prevent miscarriages.

In subsequent years, it became clear that DES was causing serious—sometimes fatal—complications in children exposed to it in the womb. The laundry list of side effects included hormonal imbalances, infertility, anatomical abnormalities and an increased risk of cancer.

Being aware of these side effects sparked my early interest in health, wellness and cancer prevention, and I

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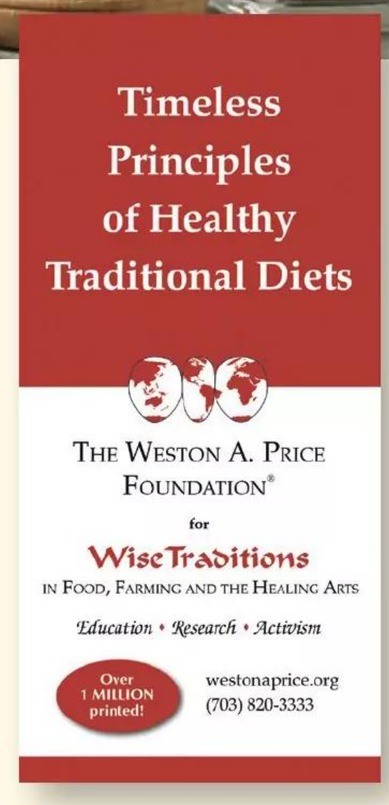

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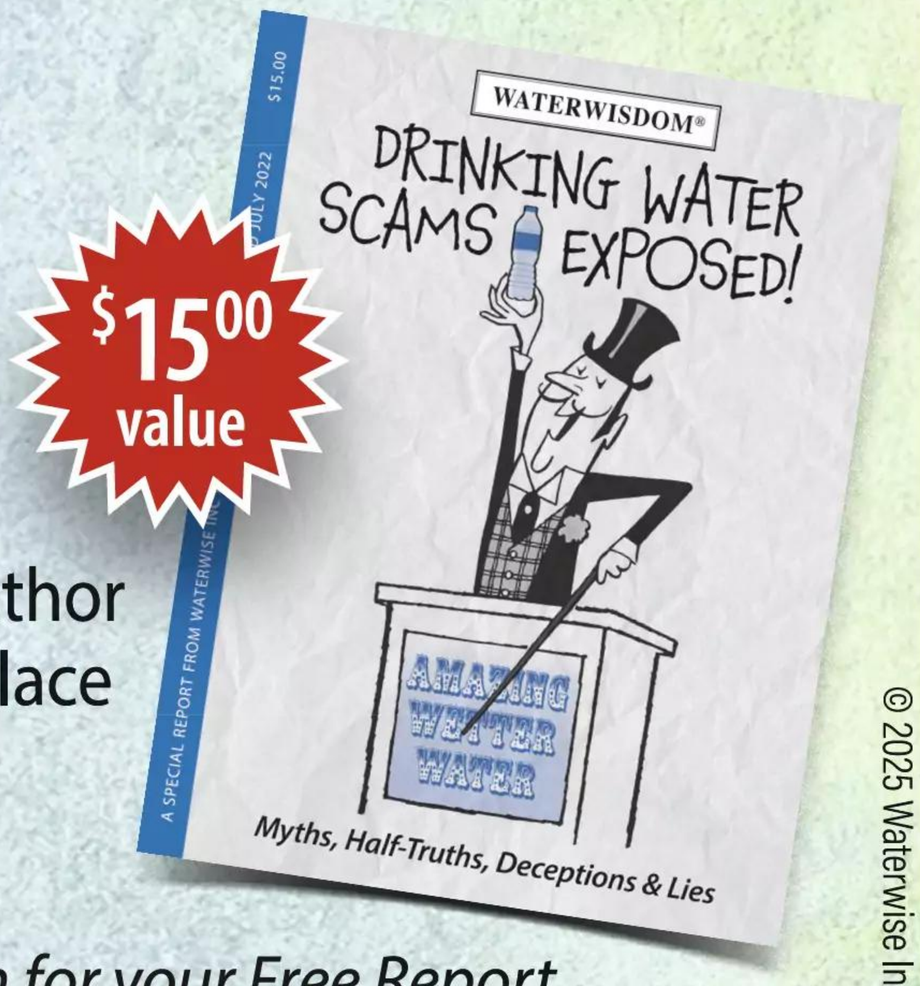

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made it my mission to help anyone who would listen sidestep a cancer diagnosis. Here are my top five practices and preventive measures to help you ward off cancer, maintain your health and thrive.

1. Aim for a balanced body Cancer doesn't just show up. It's the result of a body out of balance.

Imbalance can result from long-term stress and anxiety, inflammation, hormonal imbalances, exposure to toxins, elevated blood sugar or nutrient depletion. Keeping your body in balance by addressing these issues can go a long way toward preventing cancer and other chronic diseases.

2. Keep hormone levels in check Many cancers are fueled by hormone imbalances. Make sure your practitioner keeps an eye on all of them annually, including sex hormones, stress hormones and thyroid hormones.

3. Embrace total-body wellness Staying healthy encompasses all aspects of your being—body, mind and spirit. In addition to taking care of your physical health, you must also relax, destress, find quiet in the chaos and nurture your spiritual side. There's no way to stay well if one of these areas is lacking.

4. Recognize your body is adaptable and incredible The human body is capable of amazing things, especially healing. And a positive mindset is crucial if you want to prevent disease, engender health and restore vitality.

5. Understand that if nothing changes, nothing changes I often tell my patients, "You can't heal in the same environment that made you sick." It's imperative to reassess your food choices, relationships, daily habits and self-perception.

And please be kind to yourself. There's no room for negativity in a successful healing process.

Considerations for any age

Whether you're 25, 45, 65, 85 or 100 years old, it's essential to remember one thing: Ultimately, you—and only you—can take charge of your health. Even a cancer diagnosis or another chronic health condition is not a death sentence. Your body wants to heal. And you have the tools to set this healing in motion.

Patients are sometimes surprised to hear that cancer cells can revert to normal cells. They just need the right environment or terrain to do so.

Are EMFs to blame?

Young people today have grown up in a literal sea of electromagnetic pollution. These electromagnetic fields (EMFs) are everywhere, from Wi-Fi in our homes to smartphones (which are rarely out of hands and pockets) to microwaves, smart meters, cell towers and even electric vehicles.

I've written entire articles on the dangers of EMF exposure (see *WDDTY* June 2025) and do not doubt that these invisible threats are contributing to early-onset cancers in young people. Modern conveniences like Wi-Fi are not going away and will likely become even more prevalent in the coming years.

That said, here are some ways to limit and reduce your EMF exposure:

- **Hardwire everything.** This includes laptops, printers, routers, etc.
- **Keep your distance.** Hold and store devices away from your head and body. Use the speakerphone option, don't set your laptop on your lap, and don't keep your cell phone in your pocket, shirt, or bra. Use air tube headphones instead of wireless earbuds.
- **Sleep safe.** Use a "kill switch" to turn off your Wi-Fi at night.
- **Avoid smart meters.** Ask the utility company to replace it with a regular meter.
- **Be aware.** Buy a hand-held meter to measure EMFs in your home, office, car, etc.
- **Practice grounding daily.** Walk barefoot in the grass, dirt or sand to rebalance your body's voltage and reconnect with the earth's natural energy (see my column in *WDDTY* March 2024).

Nourish yourself by getting enough sleep, eating clean and healthy foods, shifting to a positive mindset, moving your body and burning calories every day, and taking the time to destress and find peace of mind daily. Good health is a cumulative balance of all these factors.

A new generation of hope

I don't intend to scare you or paint a doom-and-gloom picture of the health of future generations. Instead, I hope to inspire people of all ages to make changes today that can lead to a better future.

Yes, cancer rates are on the rise in younger people, but my sincere hope is that we can change that and reverse this trend now. Educate yourself and others on ways to prevent cancer and promote overall health. Take meaningful steps to clean up your air, water, home and food. And embrace holistic health approaches that can benefit you from head to toe.

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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 90,000 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 helps you find antibiotic-friendly probiotics, herbal tinctures and light therapy lamps

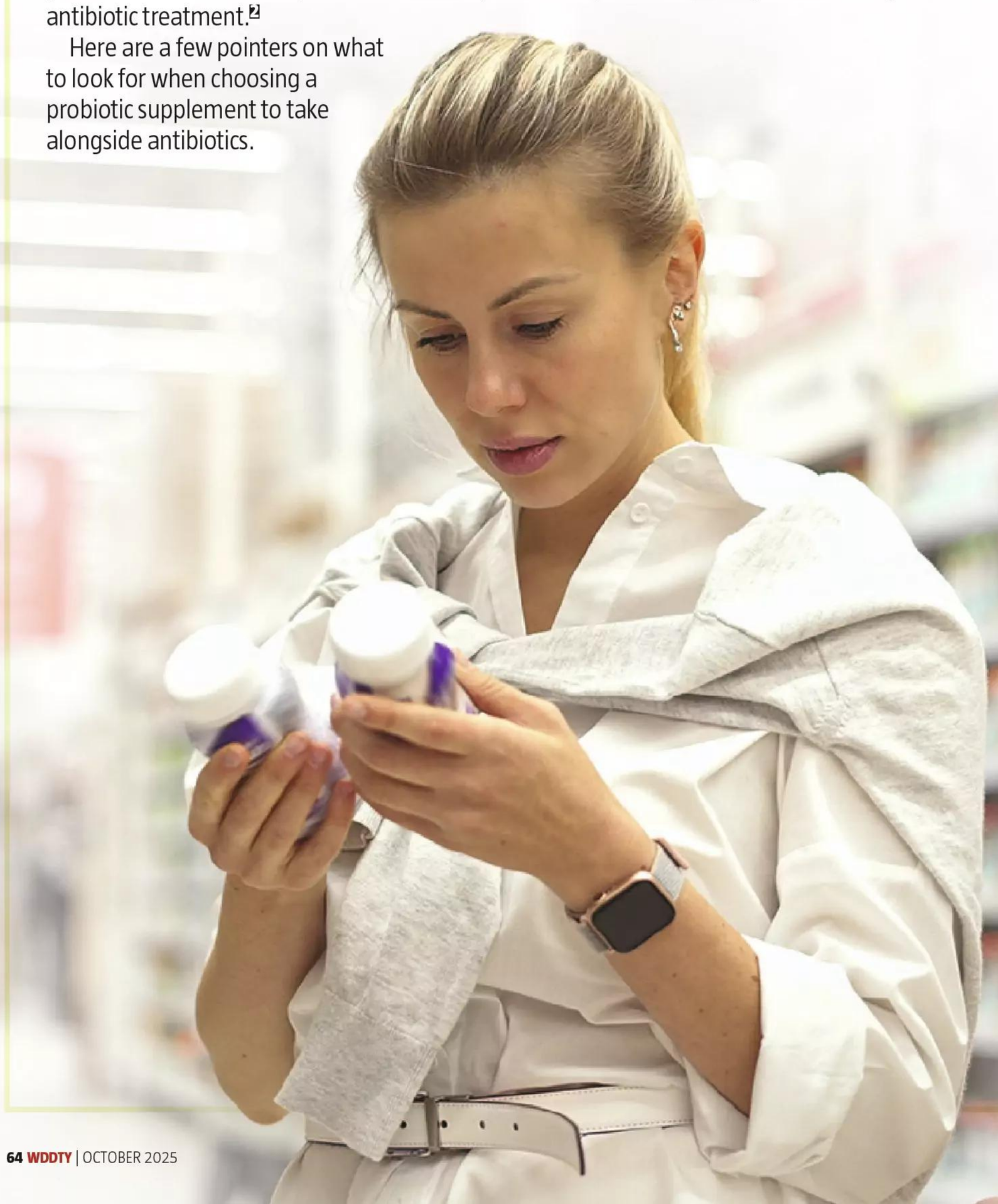
Probiotics for when you're on antibiotics

There are plenty of promising natural alternatives to antibiotics, as Cate Montana reports in "Killer Cures" (see page 26). But if you do need to take antibiotics, supplementing with probiotics can help to ease some of the side effects.

Antibiotics are notorious for disrupting the gut microbiome, wiping out good bacteria as well as bad, and this commonly causes diarrhea and other gastrointestinal symptoms. In the past, people were advised not to take probiotics while on antibiotics—to wait until afterward because it was widely believed that the antibiotics would kill the ingested probiotics.

But research now shows that taking certain probiotic strains, like *Lactobacillus rhamnosus* GG and *Saccharomyces boulardii*, during antibiotic treatment can reduce the risk of antibiotic-associated diarrhea (AAD) by 50 percent.[1] And as *S. boulardii* is a yeast rather than bacteria, it's not affected by antibiotics, so it's especially useful during antibiotic treatment.[2]

Here are a few pointers on what to look for when choosing a probiotic supplement to take alongside antibiotics.



What to look for

Science-backed strains Look for well-researched probiotic strains specifically shown to work during antibiotic treatment. Besides *L. rhamnosus* GG and *S. boulardii*, some of the ones proven to prevent AAD are *Lactobacillus bulgaricus*, *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, *Lactobacillus casei*, *Bifidobacterium longum* and *Bifidobacterium subtilis*.[3]

An effective dose Clinical trials suggest daily doses of 5 billion CFU (colony forming units) or higher are better at preventing AAD than lower doses.[4] Check how many CFU you're getting per capsule and per strain, if possible.

Clean formulas Check the ingredients list on the label to see if the product is free of unnecessary extras, like sugars, sweeteners, bulking agents, and artificial colors, flavors and preservatives. Also watch out for allergens if you have any allergies or intolerances.

Quality control Has the product been tested, ideally by a third party, to ensure potency (the dosage is what it claims to be on the label) and purity (it's free of potentially harmful contaminants)? If you're not sure, get in touch with the company to check.

Products to try

Here's a handful of high-quality probiotic products containing strains known to be helpful for AAD. Just remember that the usual advice is to leave a gap of at least two hours between taking probiotics and antibiotics (although *S. boulardii* can be taken at the same time).

All products apart from Smart Strains are available in the US and UK, and none require refrigeration, so they are suitable for use when traveling.

Inessa
Advanced Biotic Complex, $54.99/£38.99 (30 capsules)
inessawellness.com
This multi-strain formula contains 50 billion live organisms from seven well-studied strains, among them *S. boulardii* (5 billion CFU), *L. rhamnosus* GG (7.5 billion CFU) and *L. acidophilus* (7.5 billion CFU). It's third-party tested for potency, free of unnecessary ingredients and supplied in a delayed-release

capsule to ensure the live cultures survive the acid in your gut. A single-strain *L. rhamnosus* GG supplement is also available.

Seeking Health
Saccharomyces Boulardii, $22/£14.49 (60 capsules)
US: seekinghealth.com
UK: healf.com

This heat- and acid-resistant supplement features a proprietary strain (Lynside® Pro SCB) of the probiotic yeast *S. boulardii* at a dose of 5 billion CFU per capsule. It's third-party tested and free of genetically modified ingredients as well as all the common allergens and artificial colors and flavors.

AMMD by Amy Myers, MD
Probiotic 100 Billion, $51.97/£43.49 (30 capsules)
US: amymyersmd.com
UK: healf.com

Developed by functional medicine doctor Dr Amy Myers, this high-strength probiotic blend contains 14 clinically studied strains, including several known to be helpful for AAD, such as *L. acidophilus*, *L. rhamnosus* and *B. longum*. It's third-party tested and compliant with Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), and it provides 100 billion CFU per capsule.

Smart Strains
For When You're on Antibiotics, £22.99 (30 capsules)
smartstrains.com

Formulated by The Gut Health Doctor® Dr Megan Rossi, this single-strain probiotic contains *L. rhamnosus* GG, a widely studied strain recommended by the World Gastroenterology Organisation guidelines on probiotics for when you're on antibiotics. There are no added sugars, sweeteners, emulsifiers, bulking agents, flavors or preservatives, and each batch is quality tested to ensure every capsule provides 10 billion CFU right up to the expiry date.

The supplement is currently available only in the UK, but you can register your interest to be notified when the company makes international shipping available.

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Where to buy herbal tinctures

Tinctures, alcohol-based preparations of medicinal plants, are a convenient way to take herbal remedies like the ones mentioned in medical herbalist Julia Behrens's article on healing herbs for Lyme disease ("Once Bitten," page 40).

You can make them yourself at home, but if you'd rather save your time and effort, here's a selection of reputable online stores selling ready-made herbal tinctures, including the Lyme-fighting herbal remedies that Behrens mentioned here.

Remember, though, it's always best to use herbal remedies under the guidance of a medical herbalist. And you'll benefit most from an individual prescription, especially if you're dealing with a complex condition like Lyme disease.

US

Mountain Rose Herbs
mountainroseherbs.com

As well as offering hundreds of herbs and spices to buy in bulk, all organically grown or wild-harvested, Mountain Rose Herbs sells a vast range of tinctures expertly made in-house to strict standards using only certified organic alcohol and either farm-fresh botanicals or organic dried herbs. Black walnut and cat's claw tinctures are both available here.

Herbie's Herbs
herbies-herbs.com

Although it's based in Canada, Herbie's Herbs ships worldwide and offers an extensive range of tinctured herbs, including all the ones mentioned in "Once Bitten." All tinctures are made in a 1:2 ratio using distilled cane sugar alcohol. Customized formulas are also available from 100 mL sizes and up.

UK

Napiers
napiers.net
International shipping available

Founded in 1860 by Duncan Napier, one of Scotland's most respected herbalists, Napiers offers a huge range of tinctures, including black walnut, cat's claw, Ghanaian quinine, Gou Teng and Japanese knotweed.

Dried herbs, herbal teas and glycerites are also available, and Lyme sufferers may want to check out the Napiers CLAID (Covid, Lyme and infectious diseases) Clinic, a cooperative group of herbalists who specialize in treating the long-term effects of bacterial, viral and fungal infections.

Caley's Apothecary
caleysapothecary.co.uk

Japanese knotweed, cat's claw and a variety of other herbal tinctures are available from Norfolk-based Caley's Apothecary, along with an excellent selection of certified organic dried herbs. Company founder Stephanie Caley, a medical herbalist, can also custom-make herbal remedies for you following a one-to-one consultation.

Other options

These are some other sites where you can buy single-herb tinctures online:

US

Avena Botanicals
avenabotanicals.com

Nature's Answer
naturesanswer.com

NutraMedix
nutramedix.com

UK

Bristol Botanicals
bristolbotanicals.co.uk

Neal's Yard Remedies
nealsyardremedies.com

G. Baldwin and Co.
baldwins.co.uk

Where to buy a light therapy lamp

If you're looking to try bright light therapy, mentioned as a treatment for depression in "Depression: The Drugs Don't Work, So What Now?" (page 20), here are a few brands offering a variety of high-quality light therapy lamps.

US

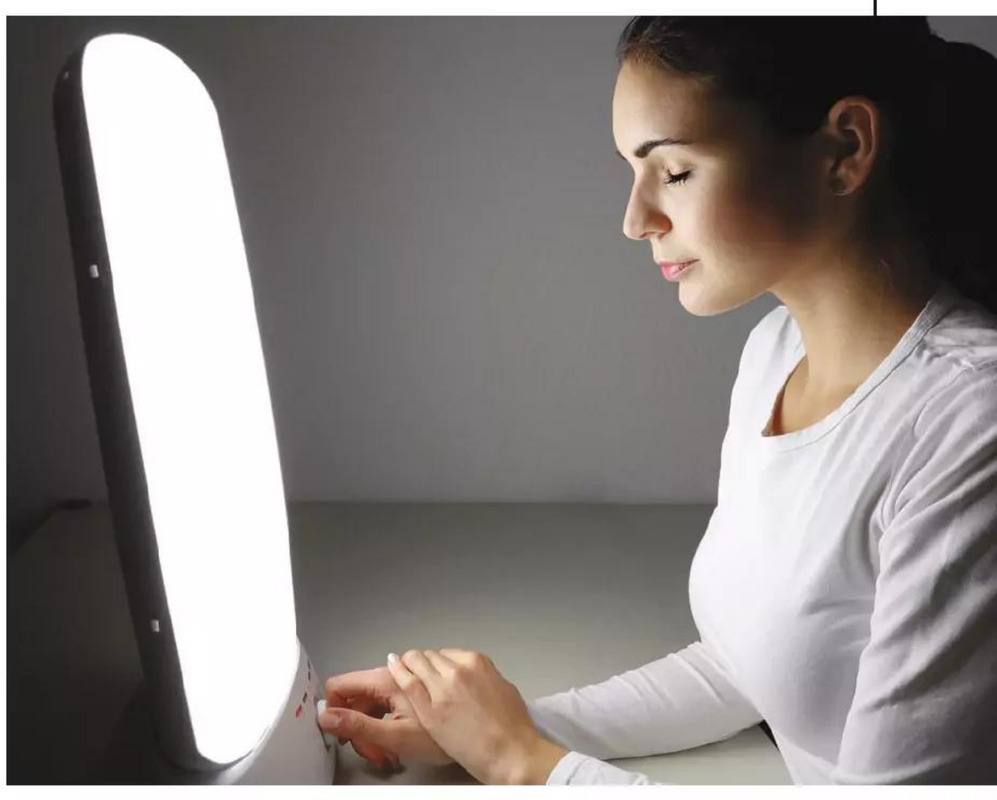
Verilux
verilux.com

Circadian Optics
circadianoptics.com

UK

Lumie
Lumie.com

Beurer
beurer.com



Big Pharma breaks all the rules of capitalism—and still makes the biggest profits

First, do harm (and make money)

Bryan Hubbard

Just in case you've gotten a little rusty, here's a quick primer on capitalism. Private enterprise provides services or products for the benefit of society for a profit—and if you're unsure what that looks like, explore the workings of one of its biggest and most successful exponents, the pharmaceutical industry.

Drug company profits are regularly twice that of other big corporates, and one study discovered that they were achieving gross profit margins of 76.5 percent compared to a meager 37.4 percent among the companies listed on the S&P 500 index. Gross profits are what's left after all direct costs of making the product have been deducted—which means each drug is super profitable.

Implicit in our definition of capitalism is the idea that the service or product being provided actually works. Even a loaf of bread "works" in the sense that it sates hunger pangs and theoretically doesn't harm the eater—and the product or service should enhance the life of the purchaser in some way.

Yet, Big Pharma is one of the most profitable industries in the world, and it makes products that don't work, or not properly, and most certainly can harm. The SSRI antidepressants work hardly better than placebo—that is, than doing nothing at all—as a new study has revealed (see News Focus, page 20). And if we dare tread on the sacred ground of vaccinations, several recent reports point out their ineffectiveness.

In the first study, researchers from Stanford University did some number-crunching of data from the Covid-19 vaccines, which, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), saved 20 million lives over the first year of the pandemic.

Not quite, said the Stanford team. The true number was closer to 2.5 million lives—not bad, for sure, but nearly 10 times less than the WHO's calculations, over four years rather than just one. And remember all the hoopla about getting the young vaccinated? Well, the vaccine saved the lives of just 299 people under age 20—that's globally, by the way.[1]

It doesn't get much better among the 20-to-29-year-olds. Just 1,800 of them can thank one of the vaccines that they're still around today, and, again, that's around the world.

The young weren't vulnerable, of course, but the elderly in care homes were. So how many had their lives saved by being vaccinated? Just 2 percent, it seems, which suggests the vaccines were nowhere near as effective as we had been told by those running Project Fear.

The Stanford team was crunching numbers, just as the WHO researchers didn't. They also built certain assumptions into their calculations, such as that, er, the vaccines worked, at least to some extent.

But when we look at real-world data, we have to question that assumption. The UK's Office for National Statistics tracked the death rate among the vaccinated and unvaccinated in England between April 2021 and May 2023—pretty much the time when the pandemic was at its peak and when everyone was rolling up their sleeves to get a life-saving shot. And the ONS came up with some surprising findings.

During that period, there were 8,853 deaths among the unvaccinated and 51,975 Covid-related deaths among the vaccinated. You could argue that more vulnerable people had the vaccine, and this would explain the higher death rate—however, the Stanford statistics tell us that the vaccines saved less than 2 percent of lives in care homes (about 300,000 out of about 2 million[2] residents of nursing homes and residential care facilities around the world).

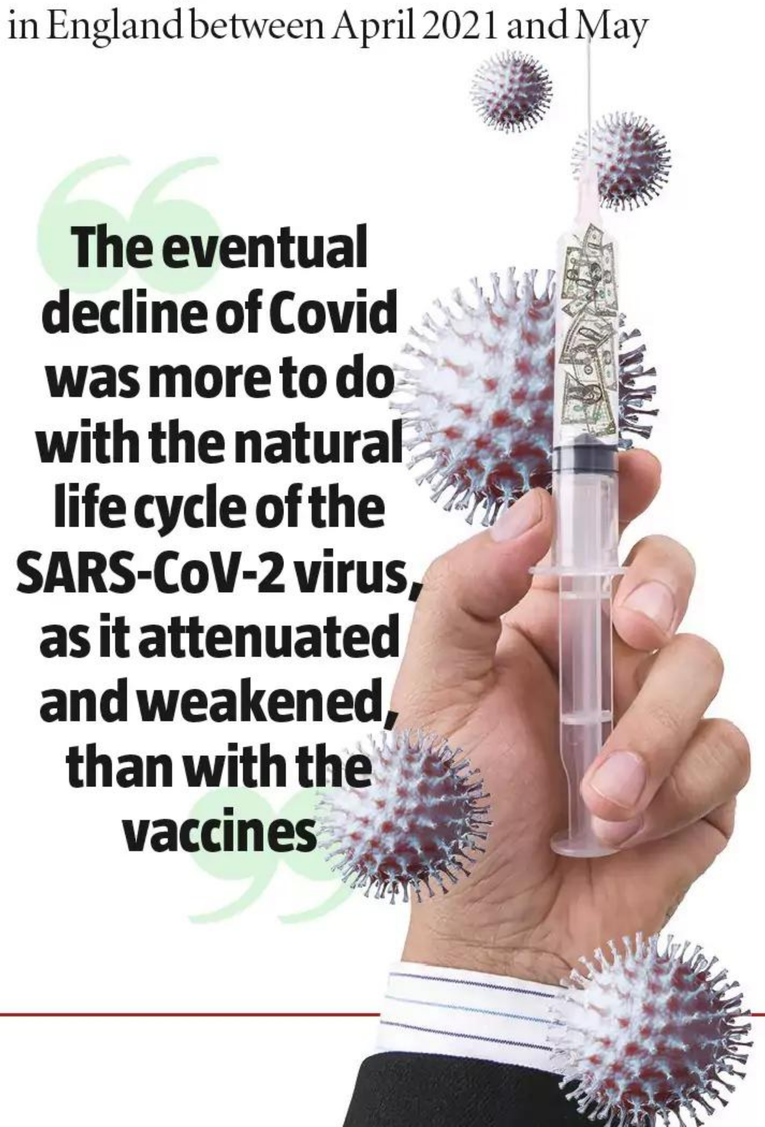
In truth, the eventual decline of Covid was more to do with the natural life cycle of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, as it attenuated and weakened, than with the vaccines themselves.

The Stanford researchers didn't look at the harm the vaccines caused, but at least 850,000 serious adverse reactions have been logged with America's vaccine reporting system, VAERS. That includes life-changing harm to the young, of whom just 2,000 lives were saved by the vaccine.

The seasonal flu jab is hardly more effective, as a new report from the UK's Health Security Agency makes clear. *Influenza in the UK: Annual Epidemiological Report*, winter 2024–2025, revealed that around 75 percent of elderly patients listed with doctors had a seasonal flu shot.

Not that it did them much good. Its effectiveness against infection was just 36 percent, the agency estimates, which means about two-thirds of older people who thought they were protected weren't.

It's capitalism, Jim, but not as we know it.



The eventual decline of Covid was more to do with the natural life cycle of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, as it attenuated and weakened, than with the vaccines

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2. Trishita Deb, "Long-Term Care Statistics 2025—by Age, Facilities, Country, Source," Jan 13, 2025, media.market.us

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