

Flourish

HEALTHY BODY, MIND, AND SPIRIT

*Guide to Slaying
Cold and
Flu Season*

**Borderline
Cholesterol?**

Omega

It's a Numbers Game

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Winter 2024

Editor's Letter



As we look forward to the start of another new year, I can't help but to reflect on the year that has passed. Have we succeeded in making the changes we set out last January? Do we even remember what they were? What if this year we were to make only one change, but apply it every day, in everything we do? Something that transcends traditional resolutions. I'm referring to simple acts of kindness. Be it towards our friends, our loved

ones, or perhaps a stranger in our community. And let's not forget how important it is to be kind to ourselves.

Kindness is something everyone can afford to give. We can voice our appreciation to those around us. We can pay attention and truly listen. Be a shoulder to lean on or provide advice, if asked. Provide words of encouragement, rather than criticism, to others and to ourselves. Lend a hand. Smile. Research suggests that engaging in acts of kindness creates a ripple effect, positively influencing the wellbeing of those we touch, and boosts our own mental and emotional wellbeing. A novel approach to health?

Each of us holds an incredible power within ourselves. In a world often filled with challenges, kind gestures reflect our connection to one another. Imagine what we could accomplish if every day we chose to be more compassionate, generous, and understanding.

Wishing you all a wonderful new year, in which we can *Flourish* in health and in kindness.

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Flourish

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Omegas

It's a Numbers Game

by Annick Moffat, ND



In the intricate realm of nutrition, the omega fatty acids play a pivotal role, each with its unique set of benefits. Omega-3, omega-6, omega-7, and omega-9, all members of the essential fatty acid family, contribute to our overall health in distinct ways. As we navigate the numbers game of omegas, it is crucial to understand their differences, their importance, and the potential consequences of deficiencies.

Understanding the Omegas: 3, 6, 7, 9

Omega-3

Importance: Crucial for heart health, brain function, and mental health; also helps reduce inflammation.

Sources: Fatty fish, flaxseed, chia seeds, walnuts, and some plant oils.

Deficiency Impact: Cardiovascular issues, cognitive decline, depressed mood, age-related macular degeneration, and increased inflammation.

Omega-6

Importance: Essential for skin health, female hormonal balance, and cellular function.

Sources: Plant oils, tofu, nuts, seeds, meats, and eggs.

Deficiency Impact: Most standard American diets provide too much omega-6; therefore, deficiency is rare and often creates an imbalance with omega-3, which can contribute to inflammatory conditions.

Omega-7

Importance: Supports healthy skin, hair, eyesight, cardiovascular health, and mucous membranes.

Sources: Avocados, olive oil, sea buckthorn oil, and macadamia nuts.

Deficiency Impact: Not well-documented; may contribute to higher cholesterol and triglyceride levels, skin, and digestive issue (found in some concentrations in mucous membranes, including those of the digestive tract).

Omega-9

Importance: Supports cholesterol balance, reduces inflammation, and improves insulin sensitivity.

Sources: Olive oil, avocados, and nuts.

Deficiency Impact: Rare, as the body can produce omega-9, but an adequate intake remains beneficial.

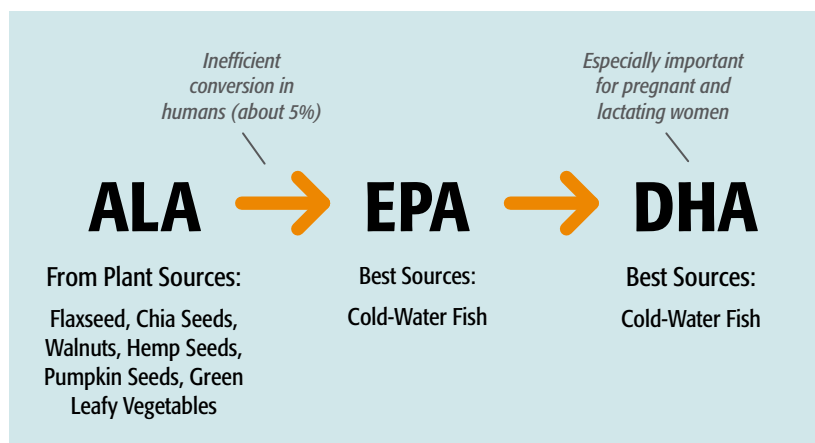
Most Frequent Signs and Symptoms of an Omega Deficiency:

Cardiovascular $\Omega-3, -6, -7, -9$ High triglycerides, total cholesterol, LDL and low HDL, vascular issues	Eyes $\Omega-3, -7$ Dry eyes and age-related macular degeneration
Skin Issues $\Omega-6, -9$ Atopic dermatitis, psoriasis, acne	Hair $\Omega-6$ Thickness, texture, and strength
Cognitive and Memory $\Omega-3$	Low Mood $\Omega-3$
Joint Pain and Stiffness $\Omega-3, -6$	Digestive Issues $\Omega-7$
Inflammation $\Omega-3, -9$	Hormonal Imbalance $\Omega-6$

The ALA Connection: Essential, but with Limited Conversion into EPA and DHA

alpha-Linolenic acid (ALA), found in flaxseed, chia seeds, and walnuts, serves as plant source of omega-3 essential fatty acid. The importance of ALA lies in its role as a precursor to EPA and DHA.

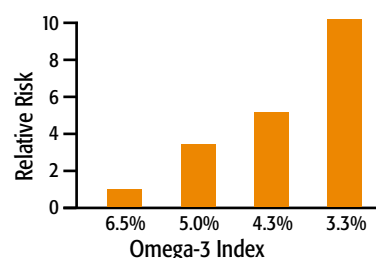
While plant sources of omega-3 that are rich in ALA are beneficial, the conversion to EPA and DHA remains limited—approximately 5–10%. Factors influencing this conversion include gender, genetics, and age. Therefore, relying solely on plant sources for omega-3 may not provide sufficient levels of the more potent EPA and DHA.



The Omega-3 Index: A Measure of Wellbeing

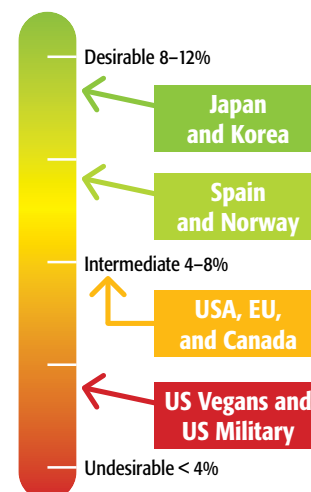
Determining if you are getting enough omega-3 can be assessed through the Omega-3 Index. This index measures the amount of EPA and DHA in red blood-cell membranes, expressed as a percentage of total membrane fatty acids.

Risk of Sudden Cardiac Death



Alarming findings from Canadian studies reveal that only 3% of the population obtains enough omega-3 through diet and supplementation to protect against cardiovascular disease. A significant 54% are at intermediate risk, while a concerning 43% are deficient, placing them at a higher risk of cardiovascular issues.

Red Blood Cell EPA+DHA (% of Total Fatty Acids)



The Ideal Dosage

For optimal health, it is recommended to have a well-balanced diet which incorporates a minimum of two servings of fish per week, with one of them being an oily fish. However, many individuals fall short of meeting this guideline. It is important to note that specific types of fish have suggested limits on their consumption, due to their potential contamination with mercury or hundreds of other environmental pollutants. These warnings are there to ensure you continue to have a healthy dietary balance.

Subpopulation		EPA+DHA (mg/day)	
		Minimum	Maximum ¹
Children	1–8 years	100	1,500
	9–11 years	100	2,000
Adolescents	12–13 years	100	2,000
	14–17 years	100	2,500
Adults ²	18 years	100	2,500
	19 years+	100	5,000

1. Adult maximum dose is supported by US FDA 1997. Children and adolescent maximum doses are calculated as a fraction of the adult dose and are relative to body weight and caloric intake.

2. Includes pregnant and breast-feeding women.

Another concern arises from the variability in omega-3 content among different fish. To illustrate, a 2.5 oz. serving of wild salmon yields approximately 1,600 mg of EPA and DHA combined, whereas a 4 oz. serving of cod supplies only around 250 mg of EPA and DHA. Therefore, for individuals who do not consume fish regularly, supplementation with omega-3 fish oil may be more realistic (read: necessary).

Which Fish is the Richest in Omega-3s?

(per 4 oz. Cooked Portion)



> 1,000 mg

Anchovies
Herring
Mackerel (Atlantic and Pacific)
Oysters (Pacific)
Sablefish (Black Cod)
Salmon (Atlantic, Chinook, and Coho)
Sardines (Atlantic and Pacific)
Swordfish
Trout



500–1,000 mg

Alaskan Pollock
Barramundi
Crab
Mussels
Salmon (Chum, Pink, and Sockeye)
Sea Bass
Squid
Tilefish
Tuna (Albacore/White)
Walleye



250–500 mg

Catfish
Clams
Flounder/Sole
Grouper
Halibut
Mackerel (King)
Perch
Rockfish
Snapper
Tuna (Skipjack)



< 250 mg

Cod
Crayfish
Haddock
Lobsters
Mahi Mahi
Shrimp
Scallops
Tilapia
Tuna (Yellowfin)

Drawing from clinical research assessing the impact of EPA and DHA intake on the Omega-3 Index, it is advised that most adults aim for a daily consumption of 1,400 to 2,800 mg of these omega-3 fatty acids. For children, a minimum of 700 mg per 20 kg (40 lb) of body weight is recommended.

When selecting an omega-3 supplement, it is crucial to scrutinize the label for the specific EPA and DHA content rather than focusing solely on the total fish-oil content. Some economical fish-oil supplements may provide only 300 mg, falling short of the recommended daily dose of 1,000 mg of EPA and DHA.

Balancing the Omega-6-to-Omega-3 Ratio

Apart from considering individual omega fatty acids, the crucial factor lies in the balance between omega-6 and omega-3. Research on paleolithic nutrition proposes an ideal ratio of 1 to 2 parts omega-6 to 1 part omega-3 (or 1–2:1), yet contemporary diets often lean towards a ratio of 20 parts to 1 (20:1). Achieving an optimal ratio, preferably 2:1, is associated with better health and diminished inflammation, which ultimately emphasizes the importance of maintaining a balanced intake.





Diverse Personas, Diverse Challenges

Vegetarian Persona

Habits: Weekly consumption of flaxseed, nuts, and tofu.

Challenges: Suffering from low mood and depression.

Considerations: Despite a plant-based diet rich in omega-3 sources, the conversion to EPA and DHA may be insufficient, contributing to mood-related issues. Taking an omega-3 supplement or incorporating algae-based sources could be beneficial. Studies suggest that either pure EPA or a combination of EPA and DHA with a ratio of at least 2 in favour of EPA be used, while the suggested EPA dose is 1 to 2 g/day.

Standard American Diet, Man Persona

Habits: Typical American diet rich in meat and potatoes.

Challenges: Systemic inflammation and high cholesterol levels putting him at risk for cardiovascular disease.

Considerations: Reducing omega-6-rich processed foods and increasing omega-3 intake through fish or supplements can help restore a more balanced omega-6-to-omega-3 ratio, potentially alleviating inflammation and promoting heart health. The aggregation of data from 17 studies showed an 18% reduction in risk for any coronary heart disease event for those with higher dietary intake of EPA and DHA compared to those with lower intake. It was estimated that every gram of EPA and DHA daily corresponded to a 9% and 7% lower risk of myocardial infarction and total coronary heart disease, respectively, and to a 5.8% lower risk of CVD events.

Picky Eater Persona

Habits: Young child, a picky eater with less than 1–2 portions of halibut fish steak once a week with lots of sauce to mask it.

Challenges: Difficulties concentrating at school and memory issues.

Considerations: His omega-3 intake is estimated to be between around 250 mg per week, falling short of recommended levels of minimum of 100 mg/day. Several studies have reported lower levels of EPA and DHA in the bloodstream of children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder or autistic spectrum disorders than in control children.

In the symphony of nutrition, omegas harmonize to create a melody of wellbeing. Achieving balance, whether through diverse dietary sources or supplementation, is paramount. You can also take the Omega-3 Index test to determine your starting point. Monitoring potential symptoms of deficiency, understanding the omega-6-to-omega-3 ratio, and addressing deficiencies contribute to a comprehensive strategy for optimal health. The numbers game of omegas is not just about individual fatty acids: It is about orchestrating a symphony of nutrients that resonate with our wellbeing.



Annick Moffatt, ND

With more than 20 years of experience in the health domain, first in psychology, then as a naturopathic doctor, she brings a holistic approach to health problems.

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Just WEIGHT till You Turn 50!

Why Managing Weight Feels Harder as We Age and What Can Be Done about It

by Kim Abog, ND



Our bodies are constantly changing, and this can be especially noticeable as we age. One of the more common concerns people encounter as they approach their 50s is that weight management is increasingly hard. As it is a common-enough experience, weight issues are often thought of as normal, even more so as we age.

Understanding the Basics

Weight is a body's relative mass, or the quantity of matter contained by it, giving rise to a downward force. In essence, weight is the measure of how heavy a person or object is.

It is a simple and an objective marker, but how we use weight in the context of health management is complex.

Health-care practitioners generally use body mass index (BMI) and waist circumference to screen someone's risk of disease in relation to weight. These measures are inexpensive and convenient, but they provide a limited understanding of someone's health. They overlook significant factors such as muscle mass, ethnicity, body fat composition, and physical activity, all of which collectively influence body weight.

Understanding Fluctuations

People experience vastly differing circumstances throughout life. A variety of factors can influence body weight including genetics, sleep hygiene, emotional adaptability and resilience to stressors, hormonal fluctuations, medication usage, access to food and eating habits, level of physical activity, transitional life events, history of illnesses and medical conditions, as well as digestion and nutrient absorption.

The Menopause Effect

For people approaching menopause, notable changes in body composition are observed and sometimes associated with risks of development of osteoporosis and metabolic syndrome. The general decrease of endogenous estrogen levels—in combination with decreased androgen and growth hormone levels, lifestyle change, etc.—commonly results in weight gain and remarkable changes in fat distribution.



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Aging and Changes in Body Composition

Aging can influence digestive function, nutrient absorption, and shifts in energy storage. The gradual loss of lean muscle mass accompanied by an increase in body fat is characteristic of the natural aging process. Fat location or distribution and muscle quality also change with age. In general, most people maintain their body weight until a period of accelerated body-composition change occurs. Waist circumference and visceral fat increase with age at a greater rate than total weight.

Other markers of bodily function have also been examined in relation to aging, particularly resting metabolic rate (RMR) and substrate oxidation rates. The reductions in the mass of individual organs and tissues as well as in tissue-specific organ metabolic rates impart a reduction in RMR and, consequently, changes in body composition that lead to increased fat mass and reduced fat-free mass.

The cumulative effects of aging's impact on digestive function—such as reduced appetite and colonic motility; neurohormonal changes including insulin resistance; as well as psychosocial factors like isolation, dementia, and food insecurity—can have a direct impact on overall energy intake, nutritional status, body composition, and weight.



Impacts of Cortisol

Resilience to stressors may also be influential in body-composition changes. There are ongoing explorations of elevated exposure to cortisol—known as the “stress hormone” produced by the adrenal glands—and its relation to overall body composition. It seems that the overall dynamic as to how cortisol plays a role in weight management is more complicated than we thought.

In men aged 40 to 79 years old, a study noted that weight fluctuations drove changes in cortisol concentrations, rather than vice versa. Among women aged 18 to 45 years old, cortisol levels were also measured in relation to different ranges within the weight spectrum (anorexia nervosa, normal-weight controls, and overweight or obese). Extreme underweight and overweight states were shown to activate the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, and high cortisol levels may contribute to increased fat storage, decreased bone mineral density, and muscle wasting in both caloric restriction and excess.

How to Achieve a “Healthy” Weight

Nutraceuticals may be useful tools in achieving a healthy body weight. Some nutrients are known to exert actions which may improve factors that potentially influence body weight or body composition.



Ashwagandha Extract

Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*) extract has been noted to modestly improve fatigue, vigour, and testosterone levels in aging, overweight males. In another study, ashwagandha extract was shown to significantly reduce physical symptoms of fatigue, muscle pain, palpitations, and sleeplessness, as well as clinical markers of stress like serum cortisol, CRP, VLDL-C, and blood pressure.

Dietary Fibre Supplements

Fibre supplements are also used therapeutically in weight management for improving lipid profile, blood-sugar regulation, digestion, and potentially reducing inflammation. In a study investigating the impact of energy restriction (calorie deficit) in combination with dietary fibre supplements, results showed changes in body weight as well as other metabolic markers in overweight or obese men and women aged 40 to 60 years old. Hence, incorporating dietary fibre supplements could be a practical method to enhance both weight and metabolic health for people dealing with obesity and overweight conditions.

The Need for a Holistic Approach to Weight Loss

Achieving a healthy body weight is a complex undertaking and is not as straightforward as just meeting an “ideal weight” goal. A person’s “healthy weight” should always be evaluated in the context of other parameters that determine health and disease risk such as blood pressure, blood sugar levels, lipid panels, waist and hip circumferences, self-esteem, quality of life, nutrition status, and physical activity. This method of promoting health follows a weight-neutral approach that is supportive, achievable, sustainable, and individualized—just as how uniquely our bodies change.



Dr. Kim Abog, ND

Dr. Kim Abog is a registered naturopathic doctor and doula based in Toronto, Ontario. She has a special interest in fertility and reproductive health. She helps people by facilitating health-management plans with them, connecting them to evidence-informed integrative health solutions, and helping them thrive.

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Winter Blues

Is It SAD or Something Worse?

by Dasha Leneva, ND



Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a mental-health condition usually brought on by the changing of seasons, particularly during the fall and winter months. Those affected by SAD may experience feelings of depression, sadness, hopelessness, difficulty in daily activities, and changes to appetite and sleep patterns. SAD is diagnosed when someone meets the criteria for major depressive disorder via the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition (DSM-5). There is a connection between the time of year and feelings of depression. Moods improve as the specific season ends. Your doctor will likely do a PHQ-9 scale for depression with you and ask about your personal and family history of depression.

While SAD can affect anyone, certain people are more at risk. Those who live in areas that experience longer and darker winters, adolescents, those with a family history of SAD, and people assigned female at birth. If depressed mood does not resolve itself with the transition out of winter, you may be experiencing depression or another mental-health condition. It is essential to speak to your doctor to figure out if what you are experiencing is SAD or another condition.

Seasonal affective disorder can manifest in various ways. Symptoms can include a persistent low mood, weight fluctuations, sleep-pattern changes, a lack of interest in daily activities, feelings of worthlessness or guilt, difficulty concentrating, and recurring thoughts of death. These feelings typically set in when the colder and darker days roll in, influencing changes to our circadian rhythm and mood.

Although we cannot control the weather and changing seasons, there are things we can do to prevent the slip into SAD. These things include exercise, diet, proper sleep, and surrounding yourself with a supportive community.

What Has Been Known to Help?

Barring any physical or medical restrictions, consider finding an aerobic exercise you genuinely enjoy and feel accomplished doing.





Exercise can help alleviate symptoms of depression, anxiety, and other forms of mental distress. No medication can offer the benefits of consistent physical activity.

In terms of diet, it is essential to eat a balanced diet with sufficient proteins, complex carbohydrates (like fruits and vegetables), and healthy fats. Decreasing foods that are processed and high in sugars is always beneficial.

Other than improving your diet, getting enough sleep, and increasing physical activity, it is crucial to integrate activities you genuinely love into your daily routine. While the latter may seem obvious, seeking out joy and having fun is necessary to boost your overall quality of life and wellbeing. The power of fun is often overlooked, but it can lead to reduced emotional distress, improved self-worth, and stronger social bonds.

You Can Also Try These...

Vitamin D helps with symptoms of SAD due to its role in serotonin and dopamine synthesis, our happy hormones, which are critical for mood regulation. Lower sunlight exposure during fall and winter can lead to vitamin D deficiency. This impacts our mood and disrupts the body's circadian rhythms that influence sleep-wake cycles.

As we discussed earlier, these are thought to be the reasons why people experience SAD.

Omega-3 essential fatty acids help to support mood, improve concentration and focus, and lessen anxiety; they might also help to ease stress-related symptoms.

Lastly, another option that can be helpful in treating SAD is using a light-therapy lamp. These are used as artificial sunlight and have been shown to improve mood in 70% of people with SAD with 30 minutes of use per day.

Seasonal affective disorder is a significant mental-health issue that comes with the transition of seasons, hitting many individuals hard during the darker, colder months. The symptoms, similar to those of major depression, can profoundly affect one's life. However, we are not powerless against this condition. If you are facing persistent low mood, it is vital to consult with a health-care practitioner to distinguish SAD from other mental-health conditions and to find the proper treatment for you.

Remember: With the right strategies and support, it is possible to add a little sunshine to these gloomy months.



Dr. Dasha Leneva, ND

A naturopathic physician based in British Columbia helping people understand their bodies so they can be more confident about their health. She believes that even small practical habits can make astounding differences in people's lives.

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Oh Poop—Stuck Again?

by Angela Wallace, MSc, RD

Are you feeling stuck again?

Constipation can be difficult to live with and manage. In this article, I will be discussing some lifestyle factors and supplements to consider to support a healthy digestive system.

What Is Constipation?

Constipation is characterized by infrequent bowel movements, difficulty passing stools, or the passing of hard, dry stool. It happens when your colon absorbs too much water from the food in your digestive system, causing the stool to become dry and hard and therefore difficult to pass. The excessive retention of water can result in bloating, a common symptom among individuals with constipation. Additional indicators of constipation may include infrequent bowel movements (three or fewer per week), straining during bowel movements, the sensation of incomplete bowel emptying, abdominal discomfort, a feeling of fullness, and the presence of hard, small stools.

The Causes

There are a variety of reasons why you might be experiencing constipation.

- Inadequate dietary fibre in your diet
- Dehydration
- Lack of physical activity
- Medications: Some pain killers and antidepressants will have constipation as a side effect
- Pregnancy or other hormonal changes in women
- Medical conditions: Conditions like irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), thyroid disorders, and other medical conditions can lead to constipation
- Ignoring the urge to go: Over time, not listening to your body's signals can lead to constipation

Having adequate fluid intake plays an important role against dehydration. When your body is dehydrated, it will absorb more water from the waste in your colon; this will create harder stools, making it more challenging to pass. Addressing dehydration is important; however, other factors need to be addressed to manage constipation. Regular physical activity promotes healthy bowel function. Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week. It is also a good idea to establish a consistent routine for meals and bathroom breaks. Regularity in daily activities can help regulate bowel movements.

How Often Should You Poop?

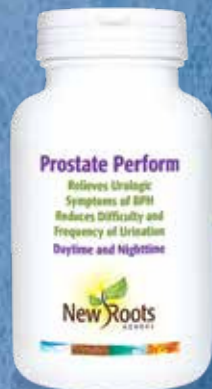
I wish I had a solid answer for this, but unfortunately my answer is that it varies. The amount someone poops depends on their individual physiology, diet, physical activity, and overall lifestyle. For many, it can be normal to have a bowel movement after each meal, or once per day, or even 3–4 times per week.



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Once per day tends to be the most common; however, what's most important is to monitor for symptoms. For example, you might not go daily, but if you aren't experiencing any constipation symptoms then you likely aren't constipated.

What About Fibre: Can That Help?

To help alleviate or prevent constipation, it is important to eat foods rich in fibre. Fibre can help soften stools, making them easier to pass. There are two types of fibre—soluble and insoluble—and each influences your digestive system differently.

Soluble Fibre	Insoluble Fibre
Dissolves in water to form a gel like substance in your digestive tract.	Does not dissolve in water and remains mainly intact as it moves through the digestive system.
Helps to soften and bulk up stool making it easier to pass.	It adds bulk to your stool which can help prevent and relieve constipation by promoting regular bowel movements.
Slows digestion and absorption of nutrients in the small intestine. This can stabilize blood sugars, promote fullness, and help to manage appetite.	Speeds digestion. Insoluble fibre moves through the digestive tract quickly.
Is a prebiotic, which means it nourishes and feeds your gut bacteria. This helps keep your digestive system healthy.	Because of its fast movement through your system, it can help "clean" out your intestines.
Some soluble fibres help reduce LDL "bad" cholesterol.	It has no caloric value, as it passes through your system without being absorbed.
Foods Rich in Soluble Fibre	Foods Rich in Insoluble Fibre
Oats	Whole grains
Legumes	Vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower, dark leafy greens, celery, cabbage)
Fruits (apples, berries, prunes)	Fruits with the skin on (apples, blueberries, pears, grapes)
Nuts and seeds	Nuts and seeds
Sweet potatoes	Corn
Brussel sprouts	Wheat bran
Carrots	Avocado
Barley	Note: Some foods provide both insoluble and soluble fibre
Psyllium husk	

Women need 25 grams of fibre per day, while men need 38 grams of fibre per day.

Fibre should come from a variety of sources. If you are dealing with constipation, incorporating daily fibre into your diet and maintaining proper hydration are crucial initial measures to help address this issue.



Can Supplements Also Help Reduce or Prevent Constipation?

1. If your diet is lacking in fibre, you might consider a fibre supplement. Psyllium husks is a fibre that can be purchased as a powder (to add to smoothies, cereal, oatmeal, or yogurt) or in the form of capsules. It can help soften stools, increase bulk, and help move waste through your digestive tract.
2. Magnesium citrate acts as an osmotic laxative, drawing water into the intestines and softening stool: This can help alleviate constipation. Be cautious of the amount you take because it can also cause diarrhea if you take too much.
3. Herbal supplements. Several different teas can be considered to help alleviate symptoms of constipation.
 - Peppermint tea can help relax the muscles of the digestive tract, which may relieve gas and help with abdominal pain.
 - Ginger tea has been traditionally used to support digestion and offer relief.

- Dandelion root tea acts as a mild laxative and diuretic. This can potentially help with constipation and bloating.
- Fennel tea can relax the digestive tract and reduce bloating.
- Senna tea is an herbal laxative that can be used to relieve constipation. This tea should be used with extreme caution and short term; prolonged use will lead to dependence.

4. Probiotics have beneficial bacteria that can help regulate your gut microbiome and promote a healthy digestive system. Make sure you take one that requires refrigeration and is enteric-coated, which simply means it is encapsulated with a protective barrier to not degrade as it passes through stomach acid on its way to the intestines.

Although supplements and herbal remedies might provide some temporary support and relief, it is important to remember that they are not addressing the root or underlying cause of your constipation. If you have been experiencing regular constipation, I highly recommend seeing your health-care practitioner to have your situation evaluated and have a treatment plan created that meets your individual needs.



Angela Wallace, MSc, RD

A registered dietitian with the College of Dietitians of Ontario, personal trainer, and family food expert who specializes in women and child nutrition and fitness, she loves helping families get healthy together.

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As the chill of autumn makes way for winter, our battle against the annual cold-and-flu season is underway. With health being at the top of everyone's mind, it's more important than ever to keep our immune systems healthy and ready for what the season has in store.

To understand the best ways to support our immunity, we first need to understand our immune system. At its core, the immune system acts as our little army, protecting us from anything that can harm us from our external environment. There are two branches of the immune system: the innate system and the adaptive system.

The innate system is composed of our immune soldiers on the front lines. This part of our immune system is constantly surveying what we are exposed to, making sure whatever comes our way is not harmful to us. This branch of the immune system reacts quickly but has no memory. This means that the response is the same regardless of whether the body has encountered the same pathogen before. This branch includes chemical barriers like stomach pH and physical barriers like the lining of the skin and gut.

The adaptive immune system is highly specific. It is like the special operations team of the immune system: They recognize pathogens and mount a specific response to each of them. Since this branch of the immune system is highly adaptive, it needs to be primed and activated, but sometimes, this can take a while. Thankfully, the adaptive immune system also has immunologic memory, which means that the more we are exposed to that pathogen, the stronger and faster the response time.

The most crucial part is that these two branches communicate through immune cells called dendritic cells—these are found in places that have the most contact with the outside world, like our skin epithelium and

gastrointestinal mucosa. When dendritic cells are exposed to pathogens, they enter the lymph, travel to the closest lymph node, and present the antigen (a marker for the pathogen) to a T cell, which is a part of your adaptive immune system. You can think of this as an interaction between a messenger and a commander of an army. The messenger relays information about the pathogen, and the commander T cells activate the proper forces to fight that pathogen.

Lifestyle

We can help support our little army in many ways, and the easiest way is through lifestyle habits. Having a good routine regarding sleep, exercise, and diet will help our body and immune system function optimally and have a positive impact on immunity.

Food can be a daunting subject. Many people need support when it

comes to which foods to choose. Since dietary patterns can either enhance or depress our immune system, one of the most important things we can do is eat well-balanced meals. For example, eating colourful vegetables, protein, and healthy fats can supply our bodies with phytochemicals and critical nutrients that support immune-cell development and function, like vitamin C, vitamin D, zinc, selenium, iron, and protein. Along with all those benefits, diets high in fruits and vegetables also provide fibre, which supports our gut. Gut health is important because 70% of your immune system is in the gut! Our microbiota and immune cells work together to defend us from external pathogens. Although our GI tract is inside our body, the interior of our gut is technically on the outside. Foods that we eat have a significant impact on the diversity and composition of our gut bacteria, which directly affects our immune system.

On the other hand, eating foods that are processed or high in sugars can negatively impact our immune system by promoting the growth of pathogenic gut bacteria, creating inflammation, and not making us feel our best!



Sleep

Good sleep hygiene is another important habit that we can utilize to support optimal immune function. Sleep is the time that our body heals and rejuvenates itself. Without proper sleep, it is nearly impossible for our immune system to run at 100%, leaving us vulnerable to infections and illnesses. Some habits that can be helpful include winding down a few hours before you plan to go to bed and doing things like reading a book or having a cup of tea. Heading to bed earlier on the dark winter nights will also allow you to get adequate sleep—usually, seven to eight hours per night is the sweet spot!

One thing that I always remind myself of is that the things we do consistently affect us the most. For example, the food we eat and our lifestyle will always be a tremendous support. However, it never hurts to have extra support; this is where supplements can be helpful.

Vitamin D

Maintaining sufficient vitamin D levels is very important for immune function; however, it is difficult during the winter months, especially for those living in Canada. Studies have shown that those with vitamin D deficiency are eleven times more likely to get sick than

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those with adequate levels, and supplementing with vitamin D may reduce the chances of developing a cold or flu by 42%. Before supplementing, it is helpful to see your doctor to get your vitamin D levels checked to ensure proper dosages for your body. Blood levels of vitamin D should be above 30 ng/dl, but optimal levels are closer to 50 ng/dl.

Zinc

Zinc has been studied extensively for immune function. It is essential for innate and adaptive immunity, and those who are zinc-deficient are at a higher risk of viral infections. Zinc aids with the development of immune cells and cytokines—cytokines help the immune cells communicate so they can respond adequately. Zinc helps produce a balanced number of these cells. Zinc is also an antioxidant vital for barrier integrity and function, which keeps pathogens from entering our bodies. Lastly, zinc has a role for inhibiting viral replication and modulating inflammation. Simply said, this little mineral plays a massive role in our immune systems.

Probiotics

A healthy gut supports a healthy and functional immune system. There are many probiotics for different conditions. Most research for immune function has been on probiotics that have a high number of colony-forming units—you will see these labelled as CFUs. Depending on what strains your doctor recommends, probiotics have various functions. For example, *Lactobacillus acidophilus* is one of the most commonly recognized probiotics and is present in the intestines naturally.



It aids in producing lactic acid, which helps inhibit the growth of harmful bacteria. By preventing the colonization of harmful bacteria and enhancing the intestinal barrier, it indirectly supports immune function. *Lactobacillus rhamnosus* has been shown to boost the production of antibodies in the body. It also can have anti-inflammatory effects. *Bifidobacterium longum* is one of the first bacteria to colonize our bodies at birth. It aids in breaking down carbohydrates and fighting off harmful bacteria, which can support overall immune function. *Lactobacillus casei* can enhance the number and activity of macrophages and natural killer cells, key components of the immune system. It also can stimulate the production of cytokines, which play a role in immune responses.

Bifidobacterium bifidum helps maintain the integrity of the gut lining by producing mucin, a glycoprotein that forms a protective layer on the surface of the intestinal lining. This mucous layer helps create a physical barrier that can reduce the adhesion of harmful microorganisms to the gut lining, preventing infections. When looking for a probiotic, it is crucial to go with one that is enteric-coated and refrigerated—this ensures that the probiotics survive the harsh stomach acid and can work their magic where they need to go!

NAC

N-Acetylcysteine (NAC) is an acetylated form of the amino acid L-cysteine that eventually converts to the antioxidant glutathione. It has antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and mucolytic properties, which means that it helps break down mucus in the lungs. NAC also can modulate inflammation and enhance immune-cell function. With its multifaceted role, it can not only help reduce the severity of symptoms we experience when we get sick but also help manage long-term lingering symptoms.

Medicinal Mushrooms

While different mushroom species have distinct characteristics and advantages, they share a consistent trait: They all significantly bolster immune health. This effect is amplified when various mushrooms are combined, as their metabolites harmoniously interact and enhance one another's benefits. In a broader sense, mushrooms do not strictly "amplify" the immune system; instead, they assist in achieving a balanced response by fostering the stable regulation of immune cells, specifically balanced T helper cells. The purpose of incorporating mushrooms, recognized for their subtle yet effective properties, is to assist in immune modulation. The immunomodulating properties of mushrooms may help prevent us from getting sick, support us during recovery, and help with persistent symptoms. People with autoimmune conditions should talk to their doctors before trying medicinal mushroom supplements. Some examples include:



Ganoderma lucidum, also called reishi, is known for its anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and immunomodulatory properties. It works primarily by regulating the immune system: It can tone down an overactive system or enhance a weakened one. Generally, it amplifies the count of active immune cells.

Coriolus versicolor, or turkey tail, is among the most researched mushrooms. It promotes the production of immune cells, including T cells and natural killer (NK) cells. It modulates the immune system, boosting it when needed, making it valuable for persistent infections and postinfection fatigue. Its high fibre content is a prebiotic, nourishing our beneficial gut bacteria.



As we trudge through the cold and flu season, it is important that we do not simply rely on reactive strategies but on proactive ones that allow us to build a solid foundation of health. By supporting our immune system through lifestyle choices, nutrition, and targeted supplements, we provide our internal army with the tools it needs to thrive. By doing this, we make a commitment to wellbeing, embracing habits that not only protect but enhance our overall health.



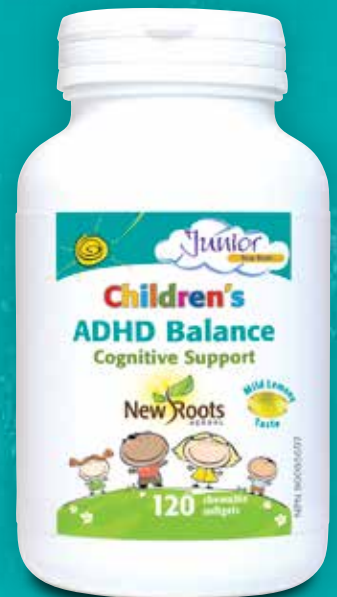
Dr. Dasha Leneva, ND

A naturopathic physician based in British Columbia helping people understand their bodies so they can be more confident about their health. She believes that even small practical habits can make astounding differences in people's lives.

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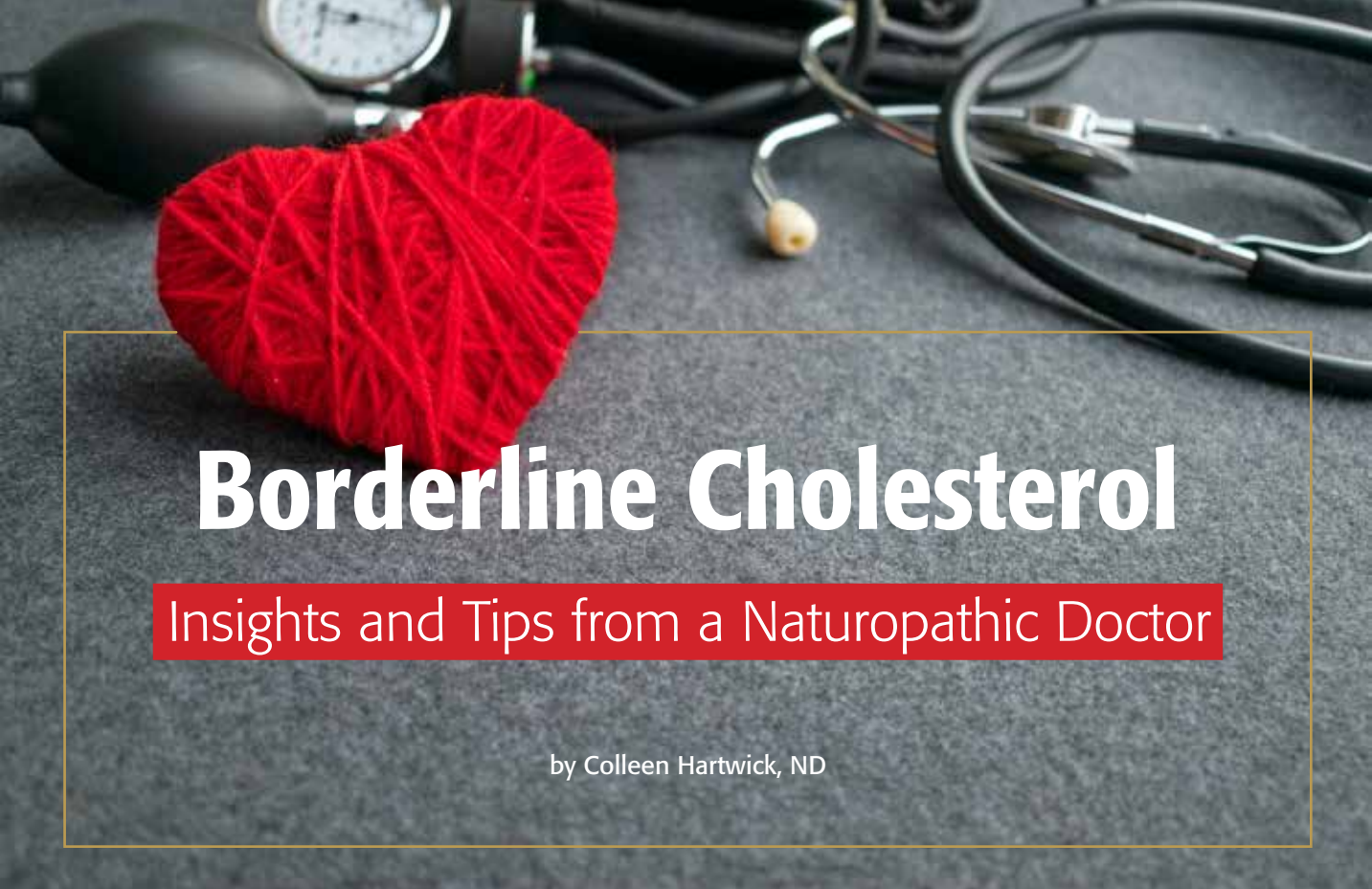


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Borderline Cholesterol

Insights and Tips from a Naturopathic Doctor

by Colleen Hartwick, ND

The Role of Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a type of fat which can be obtained from food sources and is also produced by the liver. Cholesterol is essential for health: It is the building block for cell membranes (the walls that envelop every single body cell); is a component of bile (a digestive juice that is crucial for fat digestion); and is the framework for various hormones, including vitamin D, cortisol, aldosterone, and the sex hormones testosterone, progesterone, and estrogen.

Because cholesterol is a fat, it does not dissolve in water, so it cannot travel through your bloodstream independently, due to blood being 90% water. Thus, cholesterol requires a transporter to help distribute it throughout the body. The cholesterol transporters, known as lipoproteins, are made in the liver, and there are two main types: low-density lipoprotein (LDL) and high-density lipoprotein (HDL). Each type carries cholesterol to different parts of the body, which is how they received their “good” and “bad” classifications.

LDL, the “bad cholesterol,” is the lipoprotein that delivers cholesterol from the liver to a target tissue. If there is an excess of LDL in the bloodstream, it can lead to the buildup of plaque in the arteries, potentially causing atherosclerosis (hardening and narrowing of the arteries). This can increase the risk of heart disease and stroke.

HDL, the “good cholesterol,” is the lipoprotein that removes cholesterol from the tissues and returns it back to the liver for recycling and elimination. By doing so, it reduces the risk of plaque buildup in the arteries.

The Symptoms of Elevated Cholesterol

Elevated LDL cholesterol typically does not produce obvious signs or symptoms, although sometimes, very rarely, fatty deposits will form on the eyelids; these are called xanthomas. Unfortunately, without routine screenings through blood tests, the first symptom of elevated cholesterol is often angina (chest pain), heart attack, or stroke.

The Causes

Some people already have very high cholesterol as children because of their genes; this is known as familial or primary hypercholesterolemia.

But for most people, cholesterol levels are mainly influenced by lifestyle factors such as diet and exercise habits; this is called acquired hypercholesterolemia. Dietary factors would include

a diet high in trans fats and saturated fats as well as high sugar intake. The latter can lead to chronically elevated insulin and insulin resistance. High insulin stimulates the liver to overproduce LDL cholesterol. Lack of physical activity, obesity, and tobacco smoking have also been associated with elevated total cholesterol, which is high “bad” LDL and low “good” HDL.

Sometimes, cholesterol levels increase because of underlying medical conditions like hypothyroidism, a condition in which the thyroid gland does not produce enough thyroid hormones to meet the body’s needs. Thyroid hormone impacts cholesterol metabolism and elimination; when the thyroid function is impaired, we can see rises in LDL.

Taking certain medications—such as thiazide diuretics, anabolic steroids, or amiodarone—can also contribute to raising LDL cholesterol levels.

What Should My Numbers Look Like?

HDL Cholesterol	LDL Cholesterol
Desirable Level: 1.04 mmol/L or higher for men; 1.29 mmol/L or higher for women.	Optimal Level: Less than 2.00 mmol/L
Optimal Level: 1.55 mmol/L or higher (considered protective against heart disease)	Near Optimal/Above Optimal: 2.00–2.49 mmol/L
	Borderline High: 2.50–2.99 mmol/L
	High: 3.00–3.39 mmol/L
	Very High: 3.40 mmol/L and above

How to Lower Your LDL

Here are six things to consider doing if your LDL cholesterol is borderline or elevated.

1. Schedule an appointment with your primary health-care practitioner to check your blood sugar and to do a full thyroid panel.
2. Keep your insulin balanced through regular exercise. Both aerobic exercise—such as walking, running, or cycling—and resistance training or weightlifting have been shown to be beneficial. Exercise can also help raise HDL cholesterol (the “good” kind) and improve overall cardiovascular health.

3. Reduce your intake of simple carbohydrates, like syrups, white sugar, white flour, and white rice.

4. Increasing consumption of dietary fibre—aim for at least 30 g of fibre per day from nuts, seeds, legumes, fruits, and vegetables.

5. Reduce your *trans*- and saturated-fat intake. Commercially baked foods, fried foods, and packaged snack foods tend to be high in *trans* fat, while processed foods and meats often contain saturated fat in the form of partially hydrogenated oils.

6. Increase your daily omega-3 fatty acid intake by consuming algae, fish, flaxseed, chia seeds, and hemp seeds.

Supplements can play a crucial role in preventing borderline numbers from rising. Achieving sufficient fibre and omega-3 intake solely from our diets can be challenging, especially given the increasing costs of food. Supplements offer precise doses, ensuring consistent and adequate intake every day. I often recommend berberine, a supplement that can assist in managing cholesterol levels and addressing insulin resistance, as well as plant sterols, since they have been shown to reduce total cholesterol and LDL levels.



Dr. Colleen Hartwick, ND

Dr. Colleen Hartwick is a licensed naturopathic physician practising on North Vancouver Island, BC, with a special interest in trauma as it plays a role in disease. campbellrivernaturopathic.com

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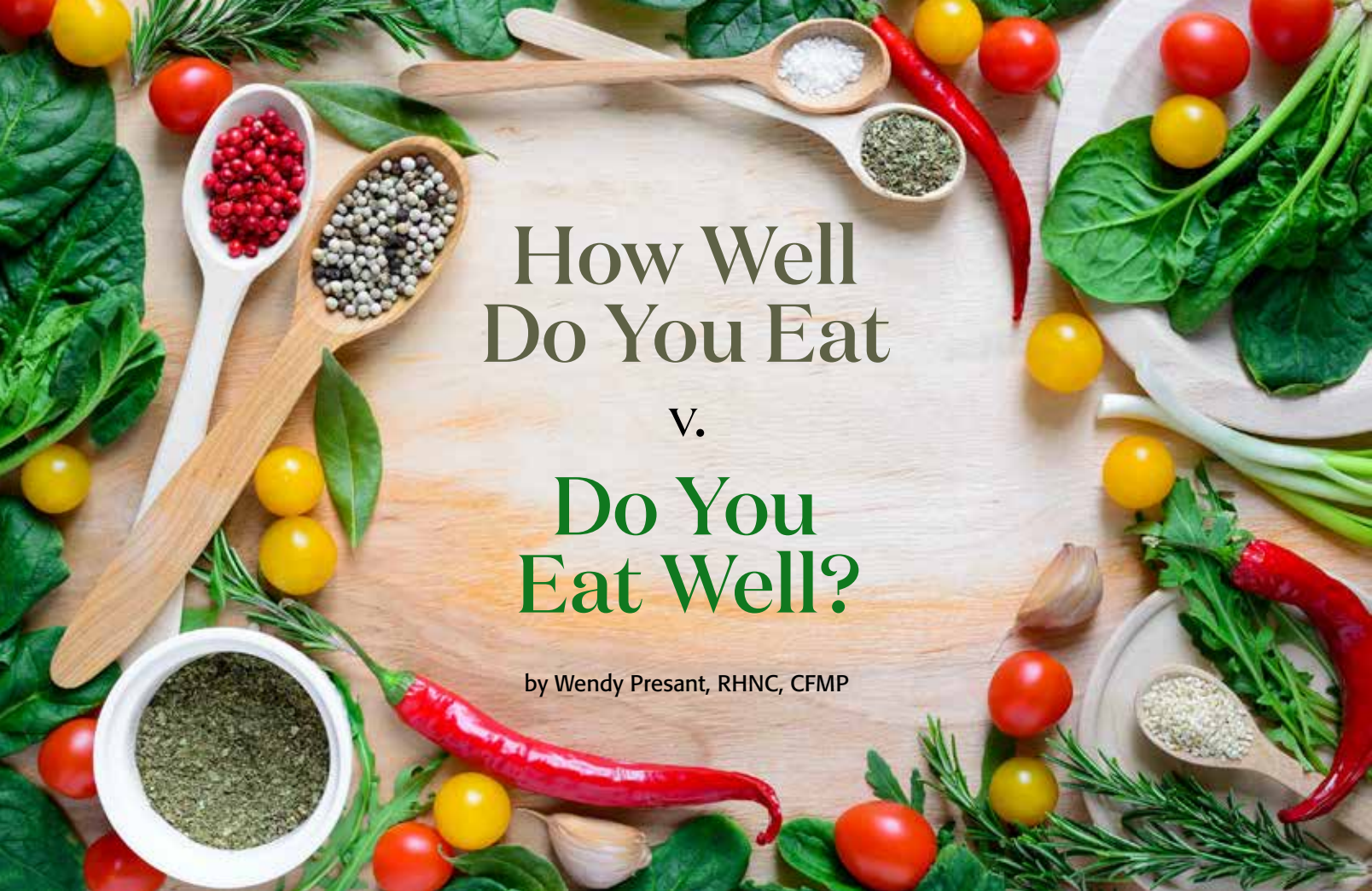


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How Well Do You Eat

v.

Do You Eat Well?

by Wendy Presant, RHNC, CFMP

Nutrition is a vast subject and experts differ on what eating well means. You may have a “perfect” diet, but how well are you eating it? Maximizing your digestion and preventing health issues is not just about what you eat but also about how you consume your food.

Try this short Yes or No quiz and see how well you are eating:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. When I eat, I am almost always sitting down and not distracted by a screen. | 6. I eat until I am full or almost full, then I stop. |
| 2. I eat my meals at the same time each day. | 7. I enjoy the process of eating, rather than looking at meals as a chore. |
| 3. I eat fast food once a week or less. | 8. My plate is filled with a variety of different foods. |
| 4. I rarely skip a meal (unless it is part of deliberate fasting). | 9. As a rule, I don't drink sugar-sweetened beverages. |
| 5. My food gives me energy, v. making me feel lethargic and sleepy. | 10. I regard my personal nutrition as an important part of staying healthy. |

If you answered yes less than 5 times, prepare to feel better after making a few simple changes! If you answered yes 5–8 times, you're doing OK, but there is always room for improvement!

If you answered yes 8–10 times, great job, but still read on: There may be something new for you here!

Eating while staying calm and focusing on our food is a key to managing both the amount of food we eat and how well we digest it. A number of studies have shown that people who use their smartphones while eating eat more calories than people who simply eat their food. Regular eating times are also important because our bodily functions run on a series of internal clocks which rely on regular eating, sleeping, and movement to work properly. When these internal timepieces are out of sync, our risk of chronic disease increases.

Fast food is loaded with sugar, inflammatory fats, and salt. Adults who eat out more than twice a week are less successful



with weight loss or maintenance. While skipping meals can mess up your internal clocks and lead to chronic health issues, fasting can be of benefit if done properly. In a study done on adults who regularly skipped breakfast due to intermittent fasting, the decrease in glucose intake and overall calories led to decreased risks of cardiovascular disease. Be aware, however, that with fewer eating opportunities, high-nutrient foods are especially important to eat during your meals to prevent deficiencies.

If you find you don't feel well after eating, you may be eating too much or too quickly. A sleepy feeling after a big meal usually means that your pancreas has had to secrete a lot of insulin to handle the sugars you have eaten. This is followed by a big dip in your blood sugar, which makes you feel tired and lethargic. One way to manage this is to save most of your dense carbohydrates—such as root vegetables, grains, and beans—for your evening meal.

Doing this allows your energy to be supported through the day, while the dense carbs can help you fall asleep more easily at night. You might also need some digestive support from digestive enzymes and a good probiotic to take at bedtime.

Sometimes it can be hard to tell when we are full. We think we are, but then dessert lands on the table and we suddenly still have “room”! Many of our processed foods are designed to suppress the chemicals in our brain telling us we are full. If a particular food feels like your “kryptonite” (mine is ice cream), it is better not to keep large amounts of it in the house, and only eat a little, occasionally outside the home.

Eating regular meals with plenty of diverse foods can be more challenging when you are on a tight budget, living on your own, working shifts, or dealing with food restrictions. It is still important even in these situations to source as wide a variety of food as you can, and taking the time to eat as regularly as possible. Community-supported agriculture and cooperatives provide access to food that is typically more affordable, and fresher compared to grocery stores. Additionally, food banks and community food pantries offer free food options. You may have space for a garden or a few pots to grow herbs. A variety of food, especially plant food, will add diversity to your gut microbiome, will benefit your immune system, and will help prevent chronic disease. Next time you sit down to eat a meal, be as mindful of how you are eating it as of what you are eating.



Wendy Presant, RHNC, CFMP

With a background in nursing, naturopathic, and functional medicine, Wendy Presant is currently registered as a health-and-nutrition counsellor. She provides virtual coaching services to individuals looking to optimize their health.

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Could My Child Have ADHD?

Signs, Causes, and Natural Treatments

by Kaitlyn Zorn, HBSc, ND



Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a common neurodevelopmental disorder that affects children, adolescents, and adults. It can cause issues with attention, impulsivity, hyperactivity, and executive functioning. Let's review the signs and possible causes of ADHD in children in particular, as well as the effects of diets and supplements on reducing symptoms.

Signs to Look For

Some signs of ADHD in children are:

- Difficulty staying focused on tasks or activities
- Being easily distracted by external stimuli
- Having trouble following instructions or completing assignments
- Being forgetful or losing things
- Fidgeting, squirming, or moving around excessively
- Talking too much or interrupting others
- Impulsivity
- Having difficulty organizing, planning, or prioritizing

If you notice these traits in your child and they interfere with their academic, social, or emotional functioning, it is advised to consult a pediatrician or a mental-health professional; they can help you determine if your child has ADHD and what treatment options are available.

Conventional treatment may include medication, behavioural therapy, parent training, or a combination of all these approaches.

Many parents are concerned about the side effects of medication and wonder if there are alternatives or complementary treatments. To add to this, studies have shown that ADHD may be overdiagnosed, and your child could be dealing with other factors that are creating ADHD-like symptoms, such as poor diet, heavy metal or toxin exposure, nutrient deficiencies, thyroid imbalance, other mental-health conditions, or learning disabilities. Lack of play and inability to express or engage in their true interests and nervous-system hypersensitivity are other factors that can create ADHD-like symptoms. With proper support and guidance, children with ADHD can thrive and succeed in life.



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Possible Causes

The exact causes of ADHD are not fully understood, but researchers believe that a combination of genetic, environmental, and biological factors play a role. Some possible risk factors for ADHD are:

- Family history of ADHD or other mental-health disorders.
- Exposure to toxins, infections, or injuries during pregnancy or early childhood.
- Low birth weight or premature birth.
- Coexisting conditions such as learning disabilities, anxiety, depression, or autism spectrum disorder.
- Lack of exercise, play, or creativity and not enough healthy social interaction.
- Hormonal imbalances or nutrient deficiencies.

A Closer Look at Diet

Studies have suggested that certain dietary factors may play a role in the development or management of ADHD symptoms. Some of the dietary treatments that have been proposed for ADHD include:

1. **Elimination Diets:** These diets involve removing foods or ingredients that may trigger or worsen ADHD symptoms, such as artificial colours, preservatives, sugar, gluten, dairy, or specific allergens. However, elimination diets can be difficult to follow and may cause nutritional deficiencies if not supervised by a health-care practitioner. This is a common practice done by medical and naturopathic doctors to see if any food sensitivities could be worsening symptoms.
2. **Feingold Diet:** This is a type of elimination diet that excludes artificial colours, flavours, and preservatives, as well as some natural foods that contain salicylates, such as apples, grapes, tomatoes, and oranges.

An elimination diet, a Feingold diet, or a combination of both may be helpful.

Supplements to Consider

According to some studies, the following supplements may be beneficial for children with ADHD:

- 1. Omega-3 Fatty Acids:** These essential fats, found in fish and plant oils, are necessary for proper brain development, function, and mood regulation. By reducing inflammation, omega-3 fatty acids can reduce ADHD symptoms and enhance cognitive performance and mood.
- 2. Minerals (Zinc, Iron, Magnesium):** Many children may be picky eaters, which can lead to the development of nutritional deficiencies. Zinc and iron are both involved in energy production, with iron being helpful for oxygen transport throughout the body. Low iron can also lead to restlessness, especially at night. Magnesium, an essential mineral, is involved in various physiological processes, including muscle function and the regulation of neurotransmitters in the brain. It has muscle-relaxing properties, which may help reduce tension in the body.
- 3. B Vitamins:** B6 and B12 act as cofactors for neurotransmitter production of serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine. These neurotransmitters play crucial roles in mood regulation and attention, which are areas of concern in ADHD.
- 4. Probiotics:** It is well known now that healthy brain function starts in the gut. Gut microbiome imbalances can create irritability, low mood, and anxiety as the unhealthy bacteria create less serotonin and GABA, an inhibitory neurotransmitter associated with the calming effects. Adding in the proper variety of probiotic bacteria can help reduce mood imbalances.

A naturopathic doctor (ND) can help determine which supplements may be most beneficial for your child.

Before trying any natural supplements or remedies for your child, you should consult with a health-care practitioner to determine the appropriate dosage, safety, and potential interactions with other medications. You should also monitor your child's response to the supplements or natural remedies and report any adverse effects or changes in symptoms to your doctor. Adding in a naturopathic doctor to your health team can help determine the root causes of ADHD and ADHD-like symptoms and provide complementary dietary and supplement recommendations to ensure that the unique needs of your child are being well-managed and cared for.



Dr. Kaitlyn Zorn, HBSc, ND

A Guelph naturopathic doctor who uses a blend of modern science and traditional healing therapies to treat the whole person. Her journey has helped her develop an interest in brain health, pain management, and critical illness relief.

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From *Panic* to "I Will Be All Right"

Flourish Testimonial

Read about the honest and emotional journey of a 59-year-old Montrealer who confronted and navigated the complexities and taboos of prostate-health issues.

Stage 1: Panic! The Bathroom Shuffle

For a time, my life revolved around rushing from one bathroom to another. At work, I would rotate between the different restrooms to avoid detection from colleagues. My weekend grocery shopping revolved around hardware stores—not for the tools, but because they had restrooms readily available. Hiking and other activities included mandatory pauses to “water the trees” (sorry for the visual). Driving anywhere required not only checking for traffic ahead of time but also for locating fast-food restaurants for pit stops every thirty minutes. Nights were not spent counting sheep but rather the number of times I barely made it to the bathroom. I was overcome by an overwhelming sense of shame and urgency. “This isn’t living.” “I am too young for this.” “Do I have prostate cancer? I couldn’t. I don’t even have a will yet.”

Stage 2: Help Me, Doc! A Diagnostic Crossroads

So, I did it: I made the appointment. The dreaded rubber-glove exam. The PSA test confirms it’s not prostate cancer. “But, doctor, I still have all these symptoms,” I told him. Unlike me, my doctor remained calm and said: “It’s probably just BPH. Take this written test (Prostate Score Index) and come back next month.” Easy for him to say, I thought...

Stage 3: A Mirage! My Information Odyssey

Parked in front of my computer, I did a deep dive on the meaning of all the acronyms that took over my life. But all this research still doesn’t cure my problem. In a big-box store, I found a product that promised to relieve BHP symptoms by taking a single pill every day.



Desperate for some relief, I tried it. I finally saw some improvements, however marginal. Looking at the written PSI test, my score went down from severe to borderline moderate-severe within a month. When I went back to my doctor, I was pleased to report this progress. This enabled me to avoid medication that warns of side effects that can be, let's say, "harmful to a man's ego" (if you catch my drift).

Stage 4: Relief Is Triumph

I know I am not alone. Other men my age tell me they, too, struggle with this, and out there, it's every man for himself. In all the chatter, I heard a few guys say they tamed the beast with a natural product called Prostate Perform. Scepticism set in when I heard this, but really, what I did I have to lose? My pride was already shot. While it is a little expensive, I was also tired of my "restroom world tour" routine. So, I gave the product a try, and wouldn't you know, my PSI score went down to mid-moderate within two weeks.



I now drive past my usual pit stops, for a change. I don't have to do nature's work when out hiking. I can mow the lawn without having to rush back inside three times. Sure, I still get up once a night, but that's not nearly as often as before. And when I go to the hardware store on the weekends, it's not to use the restrooms: It's for the power tools. While I may not be a young buck anymore, I know I will be all right.

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Cannellini Bean Pasta Bake

Cannellini beans are packed with nutrients. They are rich in fibre, iron, calcium, and protein. They make for a great addition to soups, stews, salads, and pasta dishes. This plant-based pasta bake is great for the entire family. You can prep the sauce ahead of time and then use it to make the pasta bake on another day.

Ingredients

- 1 box (375 g) pasta of choice
- 2 cans cannellini beans (398 ml), well rinsed
- 1 small white onion, minced
- 3 cups baby spinach
- 3 cups tomato sauce
- 1 cup mozzarella, grated
- ½ cup parmesan cheese, grated
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 3-4 fresh sage leaves
- 3 tbsp. olive oil, divided (1 tbsp. to coat baking dish)
- Salt and black pepper to taste

Instructions

On medium heat in a pan, add olive oil and minced onion. Sauté until onions are softened (2–3 minutes). Add minced garlic and sage leaves, sauté for an additional minute.

Add rinsed beans and stir until the beans begin to absorb the oil, onion, and garlic mixture, as well as some salt and pepper to taste.

Add tomato sauce, cover, and simmer on low for 20–25 minutes. After 20 minutes, add baby spinach. Cook for additional 5 minutes or until the spinach is wilted. Remove sage leaves.

In a pot, boil water and cook pasta of choice following the box instructions. I recommend cooking approximately 375 g for this pasta bake, and slightly undercooking the pasta, as it will be baked. Once pasta is cooked, strain to remove water.

Preheat oven to 205 °C (400 °F) and coat an oven-safe baking dish with oil (I used an 8"-by-8" dish). Add a layer of bean sauce to the bottom, add a layer of pasta, add some more sauce, and a layer of mozzarella cheese. Add more pasta, more sauce, mozzarella cheese, and parmesan. The parmesan cheese should be on the top.

Bake for 20–30 minutes or until warmed through.

Note: You can also make the bean sauce (steps 1–4 above) and use that over rice or in another way that you might enjoy.



Angela Wallace, MSc, RD

A registered dietitian with the College of Dietitians of Ontario, personal trainer, and family food expert who specializes in women and child nutrition and fitness, she loves helping families get healthy together.

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Talapeño Poppers

If you're looking to spice up a friendly gathering or wanting to excite your taste buds, try this recipe made from real ingredients. Comfort food can be made healthy so that everyone can benefit!

Ingredients

- 7-10 jalapeño peppers, sliced in half (makes 14-20)
- 1 medium white onion
- 1 cup cashews, soaked overnight
- 2-3 garlic cloves
- ½ squeezed lemon or lime
- 4 tbsp. nutritional yeast
- ½ cup hot water or coconut milk
- 1 tbsp. red pepper flakes
- Sea/rock salt and pepper, to taste

Instructions

Prepare jalapeños by washing them and vertically slicing them in half. Remove the seeds carefully (gloves are recommended) and begin to place them on the baking rack. Preheat the oven to 190 °C (375 °F).

Begin to dice the white onion and heat it over a medium pan with oil, beginning to caramelize the onion until translucent or brown.

Place a cup of cashews in a blender or food processor, add cooked onion, garlic, lemon, nutritional yeast, spices, hot water or coconut milk (more creamy), and mix until a creamy consistency is made.

Fill the jalapeños peppers with about 1 tbsp. of mix until they are all full and ready to be placed in the oven for 20-25 minutes.

If desired, add bread crumbs on top before baking and green onion or bacon bits after for garnish!



Megan Luder, CNP

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Baked Porridge-in-a-Jar

What I love about this healthy breakfast is how it makes eating well on the run possible. If you are a person who does not eat breakfast until you arrive at work or school, this portable aromatic jar of goodness is a real time saver, as you can make it on the weekend and enjoy it during the week. I adore the flavour options, which keep your mornings exciting so that you are likely to stick with this healthy breakfast choice.

Ingredients

- 1 cup unsweetened coconut, shredded
- 3 tbsp. ground flax or chia seeds
- ½ tsp. baking powder
- 1 cup unsweetened coconut beverage
- 1 tbsp. pure vanilla
- ½ tsp. pure monk fruit extract (or ¼ tsp. chocolate-flavoured stevia or 1 tbsp. raw honey, or coconut nectar)
- ¼ tsp. unrefined pink salt

Instructions

Preheat the oven to 175 °C (350 °F). Set out six ½-cup mason jars or three 1-cup mason jars.

In a large bowl, mix together the coconut, flax or chia seeds, baking powder, and salt. Add the coconut beverage, vanilla, and monk fruit. Stir until well combined.

Add the ingredients for your preferred flavour option (on the right), stirring to combine. Set aside for 5 minutes to allow the mixture to meld together. Evenly divide the mixture among the mason jars, leaving about 2.5 cm (1") at the top. If any milk remains at the bottom of the mixing bowl, divide it equally among the jars.

Place the jars on a small baking sheet and bake for 22 to 24 minutes, or until slightly firm and golden on top. Enjoy immediately or let cool completely. Seal with a lid and store in the fridge for up to 5 days or in the freezer for up to 3 months.

Tip: If you prefer a higher carb option and enjoy gluten-free grains, you can swap the coconut for rolled quinoa, millet, or buckwheat flakes.

Serves 6.



Julie Daniluk, RHN

Julie Daniluk is a highly sought-after anti-inflammatory expert, speaker, and award-winning author of four bestselling books. Her passion is to speak in venues where she blends her skills and experience in fun and positive ways to provide breakthrough results with her audiences.

JulieDaniluk.com

No Sugar Added Option: Use pure monk fruit extract or stevia.
Vegan Option: Omit the honey.

Flavour Options

Apple Cinnamon: 1 cup cored and chopped apple, ⅓ cup raw pumpkin seeds or chopped raw almonds, 1 tsp. cinnamon and ¼ tsp. ground nutmeg. (Omit the apple to make it keto-friendly.)

Blueberry Nutmeg: 1 cup wild blueberries (fresh or thawed), ⅓ cup hemp hearts, ½ tsp. cinnamon and ¼ tsp. ground nutmeg.

Ginger Peach: 1 cup pitted and chopped peaches (fresh or thawed), ⅓ cup chopped raw pecans, ¼ to ½ tsp. ground ginger and ½ tsp. cinnamon.

Cherry Chocolate: 1 cup pitted cherries cut in half, 2 tsp. cocoa powder and ¼ cup sugar-free chocolate chips.

Banana Walnut: 1 cup sliced banana, ⅓ cup raw walnuts, ½ tsp. cinnamon and ¼ tsp. ground nutmeg.

More delicious recipes are available in Julie's recipe book: *Becoming Sugar Free*



AskGord



We're heading south for our winter vacation. What sort of probiotic do you recommend for travelers' sickness?

There are plenty of moving parts to this question. Let's begin with an essential component for probiotics in general: They have to be enteric-coated for protection from your own stomach acid; you have enough to worry about with suspect drinking water and novel foods.

Look for a formula with the probiotic yeast *Saccharomyces boulardii*; it crowds out harmful microbes while neutralizing their toxins. Robust *Lactobacillus rhamnosus* and *acidophilus* strains are also well-researched for travelers' sickness. Shoring up the intestines with some of the earlier colonizing species of the gut, such as *Bifidobacterium infantis* and *longum*, can also help stabilize gut health.

Keeping probiotics refrigerated is always preferred; however, a week or two around 21 °C in an air-conditioned environment will not compromise therapeutic potential.

I recently had a couple of wisdom teeth removed; my dentist recommended serratiopeptidase for the swelling. Is it worth paying significantly more for an enteric-coated version?

Great recommendation, serratiopeptidase is a potent proteolytic enzyme which will fight postoperative inflammation and break down dead and damaged tissue at the site of injury or trauma. The problem is these potent therapeutic enzymes are also extremely sensitive to acidic conditions within the stomach.

Most manufacturers sell serratiopeptidase in regular capsules, which dissolve within a few minutes of hitting your stomach acid. Others use delayed-release capsules, which simply "delay" the inevitable exposure to stomach acid by about 20–30 minutes. U.S. Pharmacopeia, the universal testing standard, suggests anything you swallow takes an average of 60 minutes before moving to your intestines. Enteric coating is the only form of real protection from stomach acid—some withstanding gastric acid for as long as 90 minutes—to guarantee therapeutic benefits. Enteric coating may be an added expense, but it allows you to get the benefits you expect. Consider it an investment in your health.

These products may not be right for you. Always read and follow the label.
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You have a question you would like answered about your health and supplements? Gord would be happy to answer them! We could even feature them in this page if others could benefit from the information.

Reach out to him at facebook.com/newrootsherbal or call 1 800 268-9486 ext. 237

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