

# NATURE'S BIN

Naturally

## Natural Insights for Well Being®

July 2013

### Healthy Heart

Good micronutrient levels help ensure a hearty life

#### Beta-carotene in men

Carotenoids, the brightly colored pigments in fruits and vegetables, appear to lower chances for heart trouble. These two studies measured circulating levels of carotenoids and chances of cardiovascular diseases.

In the first study, researchers sought a link between carotenoid levels and congestive heart failure (CHF); when the heart weakens and does not pump enough blood to the body. Doctors followed 1,031 men, aged 46 to 65, for 18 years and found those with the lowest levels of beta-carotene were nearly three times as likely to develop CHF as men with the highest levels of beta-carotene.

In the second study, following the same group of men for 16 years, researchers sought a link between carotenoids and sudden cardiac death—an unexpected failure of heart function. Again, doctors found a link to the carotenoid beta-carotene: those with the lowest beta-carotene levels were twice as likely to have sudden cardiac death compared to men with the highest beta-carotene levels.

Discussing their findings, doctors said they are not sure if low beta-carotene levels are a cause of heart trouble or a result of the chronic inflammation in coronary artery disease, which may also lower antioxidant levels such as beta-carotene.



#### Vitamin D in men and women

In this study of 10,899 heart patients, doctors found 70 percent were deficient in vitamin D and 30 percent had normal levels, defined as below or above 30 nanograms of vitamin D per milliliter of blood. Those who were deficient were more likely to have high blood pressure, coronary artery disease, weakened heart muscles, and diabetes, and over the course of six years, were 164 percent more likely to die from any cause compared to those with normal vitamin D levels. Also, those who were deficient were able to increase their chances of survival by 61 percent by supplementing with vitamin D.

REFERENCE: INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CARDIOLOGY; JANUARY, 2013, ELECTRONIC PREPUBLICATION

#### JULY'S

### Healthy Insight Avocado for Better Health

Doctors reviewed the diets of men and women participating in the long-term U.S. National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey and found healthful trends for avocado eaters. Compared to those who did not eat avocado, those who ate an average of one-half avocado per day got 36 percent more dietary fiber, 23 percent more vitamin E, 13 percent more magnesium, 16 percent more potassium, and 48 percent more vitamin D. Avocado eaters also were half as likely to develop metabolic syndrome, got more “good” monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, had higher levels of good cholesterol, lower body mass index scores, and smaller waist size.

REFERENCE: NUTRITION JOURNAL; 2013, VOL. 12, No. 1, ELECTRONIC PREPUBLICATION

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# Beating Metabolic Syndrome

## Nutrients improve syndrome health factors

### Pycnogenol

There are five main factors in metabolic syndrome: central obesity—excess fat around the abdomen, high triglycerides, low levels of HDL—the good cholesterol, high blood pressure, and elevated fasting blood sugar levels.

In this study, 64 men and women aged 45 to 55, with all five syndrome factors, took 150 mg of Pycnogenol® per day, while another similar group of 66 people took no treatment. After six months, while the non-treatment group improved in some measures but not in others, men and women taking Pycnogenol had an average 8 percent smaller waist size, 24 percent lower triglycerides, 25 percent increase in HDL cholesterol, a five to six percent decrease in systolic and diastolic blood pressure, and a 14.6 percent decrease in

fasting blood sugar levels. Women and men who took Pycnogenol had similar rates of improvement.

### Green tea

Those with metabolic syndrome often have high levels of cellular damage from oxidative stress, and lower levels of circulating antioxidants. In this study, 35 people with metabolic syndrome took four cups of green tea per day, two capsules of green tea extract with four cups of water per day, or a placebo of four cups of water per day.

After eight weeks, while there were no changes for placebo, the two green tea groups had much lower levels of oxidative stress and much higher levels of circulating antioxidants. For those who had taken the extract form of green tea, iron levels declined compared to

the start of the study, while copper, selenium, and zinc levels remained stable. Doctors said green tea may help reduce the cellular damage from metabolic syndrome.

**REFERENCE:** PHYTOTHERAPY RESEARCH; 2013, ELECTRONIC PREPUBLICATION



## More on Metabolic Syndrome

### Plant-based nutrients ease syndrome factors

#### Olive leaf extract and blood sugar

Those who are overweight can have blood sugar problems similar to those with type 2 diabetes, where the body



does not produce enough insulin or does not use insulin to efficiently metabolize glucose. In this study, 46 overweight men took four olive leaf extract capsules per day or a placebo, in two alternating 12-week phases.

While there were no improvements during the placebo phases, after each olive leaf phase, insulin sensitivity—the ability of cells to use insulin to metabolize glucose—improved 17 percent. Also, cells in the pancreas responsible for secreting insulin improved by 28 percent, a benefit that does not occur with the diabetes drug metformin, doctors said.

#### Berberine

In this study, 37 people newly diagnosed with metabolic syndrome

took 300 mg of berberine three times per day. After 12 weeks, body mass index scores decreased by an average of four points, systolic blood pressure declined 8 percent and diastolic blood pressure declined 7 percent, long-term average blood sugar levels declined 15 percent, fasting blood sugar levels fell 16 percent, and participants lost an average of two inches in waist size.

Central obesity—excess fat around the abdomen—is one of five main factors in metabolic syndrome. In a lab phase of the same study, a significant number of immature fat cells exposed to berberine did not grow to maturity. This finding suggests berberine may be able to help control central obesity, doctors said.

**REFERENCE:** PUBLIC LIBRARY OF SCIENCE; 2013, VOL. 8, No. 3, E57622

# Women's Wellness

## Nutrients help preserve bone, treat infection

### Vitamin K2 preserves bone

Bone is a living tissue, constantly forming and breaking down by binding or releasing calcium. As long as bones



form more than break down, bones stay strong. Vitamin K is essential for binding calcium to bone

In this study, 244 healthy postmenopausal women took 180 mcg of vitamin K2 per day or a placebo. After three years, lumbar-spine bone mineral density in the placebo group had declined by 1.5 percent while the vitamin K2 group had lost less than one-half percent.

In order to bind calcium, bone produces a protein called osteocalcin. Doctors measured levels of circulating inactive osteocalcin, where high levels signal bone is breaking down. After the three-year study, there was a 4 percent increase in inactive osteocalcin levels for placebo while the vitamin K group had a 50 percent decrease, signaling better bone formation.

### Probiotics for vaginal infection

In healthy women, there is a natural balance of bacterial microbes present in the vagina which, when unbalanced, causes infection. In this study, 544 women aged at least 18, diagnosed with vaginal infection, took a daily oral probiotic or a placebo. After an average of 44 days, 27 percent of women in the placebo group had returned to normal compared to 62 percent in the probiotics group.

The women then stopped taking probiotics or placebo. After another 44 days, doctors tested again and found one in five of the women in the placebo group had normal vaginal microbes present compared to more than half the women who had taken probiotics.

**REFERENCE:** OSTEOPOROSIS INTERNATIONAL; MARCH, 2013, ELECTRONIC PREPUBLICATION

## Healthy Eyes

### Nutrients improve eye health in AMD

#### Lutein, zeaxanthin, omega-3 and AMD

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is the progressive loss of sight in the center of the field of vision, the most common form of blindness. To filter the harmful light that can trigger AMD, the eye requires the carotenoid pigments lutein and zeaxanthin.

In this study, 145 people with dry AMD, where the layer of pigment in the eye has thinned, took a placebo or a combination of lutein, zeaxanthin, and omega-3. There were two doses: 10 mg of lutein, 1 mg of zeaxanthin, 100 mg of DHA, and 30 mg of EPA; or double these doses.

After 12 months, while there were no changes for placebo, both lutein/zeaxanthin/omega-3 groups had

similar increases in the density of the pigment layer of the eye, with benefits beginning at one month and continuing throughout the study.

#### Lutein, zeaxanthin and meso-zeaxanthin

Meso-zeaxanthin is the yellow pigment in the eye that contains lutein and zeaxanthin. Doctors wanted to achieve the highest combined concentrations of these carotenoids in 27 volunteers with normal vision and 27 with AMD, and tested three dosage levels.

All three groups took 2 mg of zeaxanthin per day. Group one also took 20 mg of lutein; group two 10 mg, and group three 3 mg of lutein. Group one took no meso-zeaxanthin; group two

10 mg, and group three 17 mg of meso-zeaxanthin per day.

After eight weeks, circulating levels of meso-zeaxanthin had increased in all three groups, while group two had the highest combined concentrations of all three carotenoids.

**REFERENCE:** JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION - OPHTHALMOLOGY; 2013, ELECTRONIC PREPUBLICATION







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JULY'S

**Recipe**

**Glorious Guacamole**

While you enjoy this scrumptious dip, please see page 1 for a new study that found those who regularly eat avocados tend to have better diets, favorable lipid levels, healthier weight, smaller waist size, and are less likely to develop metabolic syndrome.

**Ingredients:**

- 3 ripe avocados
- 1 tbsp fresh lime juice
- 1/2 tsp sea salt
- 1/2 c red onion, diced
- 1/2 Serrano or similar chile, seeded and minced
- 3 tbsp fresh cilantro, minced
- 2 Roma tomatoes, seeded and diced



**Directions:** In a medium bowl, mash together the avocados, lime juice, and salt. Mix in onion, chile, cilantro, and tomatoes. Taste, adjust seasoning to your liking, serve, and share!

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