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Kids

Nutrients improved young children's bodies and minds

Prebiotics, microbiome, and immunity

Baby-formula makers have begun adding inulin fiber to promote regularity in infants. In this study, 219 boys and girls, aged three to six, took 6 grams of inulin per day, or a placebo.

After 24 weeks, kids taking inulin had 19.9 percent higher levels of the probiotic bifidobacterium, and 7.8 percent more of the probiotic lactobacillus, in stool samples, compared to placebo. The inulin group also had softer, more normal stools beginning at 12 weeks. Also for inulin, there were fewer fevers requiring medical attention, and far fewer episodes of sinusitis.

Doctors believe inulin may work by decreasing the acidity of the gut, boosting the intestinal barrier function, and strengthening gut immune cells. "By making small adjustments to your daily choices, you can achieve significant improvements in your health status from very early on," doctors said. "Using inulin, we can strengthen natural defense forces."

Omega-3s and cognition

Because omega-3 fatty acids are so important to health, doctors have begun measuring total omega-3s circulating in whole blood, in an assessment called the Omega-3 Index. In this study, doctors



measured omega-3s in 307 children from Ghana, aged two to six, where diets are high in carbohydrates and protein, but low in fat.

In a test of cognition, called executive function, doctors asked children to first sort a group of cards by color, then to resort them by the shapes of images on the cards. Older children performed better than younger, but children with the highest total omega-3 levels, and highest DHA levels, were three and four times, respectively, more likely to pass the test compared to kids with the lowest levels.

Discussing the findings, doctors said children with higher whole blood levels of omega-3s are more likely to have normal cognitive function and healthy brain development.

REFERENCE: JOURNAL OF NUTRITION; AUGUST 2018, VOL. 148, No. 8

NOVEMBER'S

Healthy Insight Vitamins D & K for Kids' Bones

Doctors cite "disturbing growth" in low-energy bone fracture—such as falling from a standing height or less—in healthy children and adolescents. Healthy kids may still be low in vitamins D and K, leading to poor bone development and early osteoporosis.

Recent studies show a majority of healthy pre-pubertal and pubertal children have excess circulating levels of inactive bone protein (osteocalcin)—instead of being in bone—signaling low levels of vitamins D and K, and especially vitamin K2 (menaquinone-7) which helps maintain calcium balance and a healthy skeletal system.

REFERENCE: JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF NUTRITION; JULY 2017, VOL. 36, No. 5, 399-412

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Skin

Nutrients protect against UV light damage, improve elasticity

Astaxanthin and UV rays

Ultraviolet radiation (UVR) from the sun and other sources can damage the skin, reducing its biological barrier function. In this study, 23 healthy Japanese men and women, aged 30 to 59, took 4 mg of astaxanthin per day, or a placebo.

At the beginning of the study, doctors tested participants' skin to determine the smallest amount of UVR that would induce reddening, yet still fully recover within 24 hours. After nine weeks, skin in the astaxanthin group could be exposed to UVR longer without reddening, compared to placebo. Those taking astaxanthin also retained more skin moisture in the area exposed to UVR. In areas not exposed to UVR, the astaxanthin group also

saw improved skin texture compared to placebo.

Collagen, antioxidants, and elasticity

The skin loses collagen, elastin, and hyaluronic acid with age, creating wrinkles, sagging, discoloration, and dryness. In this study, 60 healthy men and women took a daily liquid collagen supplement, or a placebo.

After 90 days, while the placebo group had not changed, those taking the collagen supplement saw skin elasticity increase by 7.5 percent, and skin texture improve. Participants reported being able to see and feel improvements to the skin.

The collagen supplement also contained glucosamine, chondroitin,

L-carnitine, hyaluronic acid, copper, zinc, B-complex vitamins, and vitamins C and D.

Discussing the findings, doctors said the bioactive peptides in collagen, plus other antioxidants, may help protect the skin from the effects of aging, and improve skin health.

REFERENCE: NUTRIENTS; 2018, VOL. 10, No. 7, 817



Circulation & Metabolics

Nutrients calm anxiety in angina, improve biometrics

Lemon balm, mood, and sleep in angina

When the heart muscle does not get enough blood—often due to narrow or blocked arteries—the chest pain that can occur is called angina. In this study, 80 men and women, aged 40 to 75, with chronic stable angina, took 3 grams of

lemon balm per day, or a placebo.

After eight weeks, those taking lemon balm reported greater decreases in anxiety, stress, and symptoms of depression, compared to placebo. Sleep duration, quality, and time in bed sleeping rather than lying awake, all improved.

Doctors believe lemon balm works by reducing levels of cortisol, the “stress” hormone, and by increasing gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA), the major nerve-signaling compound in the brain that helps prevent overstimulation and promotes calm.

Anthocyanin, insulin, lipids, and inflammation

In a review of 19 placebo-controlled clinical trials, doctors found those taking anthocyanins—the dark

red, blue, purple, and black colored antioxidants in fruits and other plants—saw reduced insulin resistance and improved insulin production. When the dose of anthocyanins was greater than 300 mg per day, in trials lasting at least 12 weeks, total cholesterol levels, and levels of LDL, the “bad” cholesterol, also declined.

In a second review of 17 placebo-controlled clinical trials, those taking anthocyanin supplements saw significant reductions in triglycerides, and LDL cholesterol, as well as increases in HDL, the “good” cholesterol. Signs of inflammation, including tumor necrosis factor alpha (TNF α), interleukin-6 (IL-6), and high-sensitivity C-reactive protein (hs-CRP), also improved.

REFERENCE: CLINICAL NUTRITION; AUGUST 2018, VOL. 26, 47-52



Cognition

Polyphenols and spearmint improve memory

Grape, blueberry polyphenols

Doctors in this study included 215 healthy men and women, aged 60 to 70, with mild to advanced cognitive decline, excluding others with powerful recall abilities, those who consumed lots of polyphenols from fruits, tea, and dark chocolate, and those taking omega-3 supplements, all of which might improve memory. Participants took a placebo



or 300 mg of polyphenol extract from grapes and blueberries, per day.

After six months, those taking polyphenols had improved their ability to recall random items from a list. Looking at participants with the most advanced cognitive decline, those in the polyphenol group were better able to recall the times, places, and emotions associated with events they had experienced.

Spearmint

Memory naturally declines with age. In this study, 90 men and women, aged 58 to 60, with age-related memory impairment took a placebo, or 600 mg or 900 mg of spearmint extract containing 24 percent total polyphenols.

After 90 days, compared to placebo, those taking the 900 mg dose of spearmint saw a 15 percent improvement in working memory—the ability to remember and evaluate information in order to make decisions or reach conclusions. Participants also saw a 9 percent improvement in spatial memory—the ability to remember one's location or environment, a sort of cognitive map. The 900 mg group also reported better mood, ease of getting to sleep, and better alertness on waking.

Discussing the findings, doctors said they believe it is the antioxidant content of spearmint that may reduce cell damage in the hippocampus, the area of the brain responsible for memory.

REFERENCE: JOURNALS OF GERONTOLOGY; BIOLOGICAL AND MEDICAL SCIENCES; JULY 2018, PUBLISHED ONLINE

NOVEMBER'S

Ahead of the Curve

Early-Stage Discoveries: Ginkgo Biloba, Quercetin, Tocotrienol

Good results in the lab can lead to larger human trials. Here are some of the most promising recent findings.

Ginkgo biloba and Alzheimer's

Doctors don't know what causes Alzheimer's disease (AD), but Chinese medicine has used ginkgo biloba to treat cognitive disorders for centuries. In this study, doctors identified six proteins associated with AD that may have protective and preventive effects when networked with compounds in ginkgo biloba. In a computer generated mathematics and statistical model, doctors integrated these proteins with compounds in ginkgo biloba and found several beneficial effects, including ginkgo biloba dissolving a particular protein called "tau," before it could form into the type of plaque found in AD. The results suggest a possible AD therapy using ginkgo biloba.

Quercetin and senolytic drugs

As normal cells age, they stop dividing, a condition called senescence, a major factor in aging and disease. Senolytic drugs selectively eliminate these dying cells. In the lab, with naturally aging mice, doctors combined the senolytic drug, dasatinib, with the antioxidant quercetin, and found the combination prevented cell damage, delayed physical dysfunction, and extended lifespan. In a second phase of the study, dasatinib plus quercetin selectively killed senescent cells and slowed deterioration in walking speed, endurance, and grip strength. Doctors said senolytics including quercetin may enhance lifespan in older people, cancer survivors, and in other senescence-related conditions.

Tocotrienol vitamin E and AD

In the lab, doctors gave mice with Alzheimer's disease (AD) 27 mg of palm-oil derived tocotrienol vitamin E per pound of body weight, per day, or palm oil with no vitamin E. After 10 months, the groups performed daily tasks such as swimming and running over a two-week period.

Those in the tocotrienol group showed improved exploratory activity, better memory, object recognition, and increased learning capacity. The tocotrienol group also had fewer abnormalities in brain tissue. Discussing the findings, doctors said tocotrienols may help regulate chemical reactions in the metabolic pathways of cells associated with AD.

REFERENCE: NUTRIENTS; MAY 2018, PUBLISHED ONLINE

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Losing Body Fat

Betaine plus exercise helped women lose body fat

Increased exercise capacity

This is the first attempt to measure the effect of betaine supplements on women undergoing supervised resistance training, according to doctors. In the study, 23 women college athletes, with body mass index scores of 25, took a placebo or 2,500 mg of betaine per day.

On non-consecutive days, the women did lower body training twice per week, and upper body training once per week, continuing each set of exercises until momentary muscle failure. None had previously resistance trained.

After eight weeks, women in the betaine group had lost an average of 3.3 percent body fat compared to 1.7 percent for placebo, and 4.4 pounds of

fat mass compared to 0.8 pounds for placebo. Women taking betaine were also able to perform more total exercises before muscle failure, compared to placebo.

Discussing the findings, doctors said women taking betaine along with resistance training had enhanced body composition compared to women using resistance training alone.

REFERENCE: JOURNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF SPORTS NUTRITION; 2018, VOL. 15, No. 37, s12970



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