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Natural Insights for Well Being®

August 2021

Good Sleep

Nutrients help rebalance and improve sleep

What are sleep disorders?

There are many, but the four most common are insomnia, a temporary halt to breathing, irregular sleep-wake cycles, and restless leg syndrome. Doctors also consider a sleep disorder regularly getting more than nine or less than seven hours of sleep a night.

Omega-6:3 ratio may predict disturbed sleep

In this large study, doctors measured the ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 fatty acids in the diets of 39,463 men and women. Overall, those who consumed high amounts of omega-6s, and who had greater omega-6:3 ratios were more likely to report sleep disorders and abnormally short sleep duration.

In men, those who consumed higher amounts of omega-3s were more likely to report normal sleep duration, and were less likely to have short or long sleep periods.

Compared to those without sleep disorders, those with sleep disorders tended to be older, be smokers, have depressive symptoms, be diabetic, and consume more alcohol and caffeine.

Melatonin reduced sleep disorders

In this study, doctors reviewed 23



random placebo-controlled clinical trials of melatonin on those with sleep disorders, including some who also reported respiratory diseases or metabolic disorders.

For those reporting sleep disorders only, compared to placebo, those taking melatonin saw a 3.2 percent improvement in sleep-quality scores. For those who also reported respiratory diseases, the melatonin group saw a 10.5 percent improvement in sleep-quality scores. And for those reporting metabolic disorders, such as diabetes, those taking melatonin saw a 13 percent improvement in sleep-quality scores.

Getting good sleep

Discussing the sleep process, doctors said many factors, including aging, can reduce sleep efficiency, delay the onset of sleep at bedtime, and reduce the amount of the most restful deep sleep—known as slow-wave sleep. In this non-rapid-eye-movement (n-REM) phase, slow delta brain waves promote the release of hormones that help restore and rebalance bodily functions.

REFERENCE: NUTRIENTS; 2021, VOL. 13, NO. 5, 1475.

AUGUST'S

Healthy Insight Mushroom Anticancer

The health benefits of mushrooms are attracting more research attention. Here, doctors reviewed 17 observational cancer studies that measured mushrooms in the diets of 19,500 participants.

Overall, those who consumed about a half-ounce a day of any kind of mushrooms were 45 percent less likely to develop cancer compared to people who did not eat mushrooms. Doctors found the strongest evidence for mushroom's anticancer benefit in breast cancer.

In addition to vitamins, nutrients, and antioxidants, mushrooms contain the amino acid ergothioneine—also found in king crab, and in meat from animals that have grazed on grasses containing the amino acid—which doctors say has cell-protective properties.

REFERENCE: ADVANCES IN NUTRITION; 2021, NMAB015, PUBLISHED ONLINE

This Issue

VITAMIN D AND MELATONIN IMPROVE SLEEP IN CHILDREN AND ADULTS	2
PYCNOGENOL AND COLLAGEN IMPROVED SKIN	2
CURCUMIN AND VITAMIN A LINKED TO BETTER GUT HEALTH	3
EARLY-STAGE DISCOVERIES IN NUTRITION	3
GRILLED MUSHROOM ANTIPASTO	4

More Good Sleep

Vitamin D and melatonin improve sleep in children and adults

Vitamin D key to daytime wakefulness

Children who are often sleepy during the day may have excessive daytime sleepiness (EDS), and vitamin D and exercise can help. Earlier studies found a link between low levels of vitamin D and EDS. In this study of 618 school children, aged 10 to 12, doctors found 18 percent had EDS.

When vitamin D levels fell below 20 nanograms per milliliter of blood and levels of HDL, the “good” cholesterol, fell below 40 milligrams per deciliter of blood, kids were 73 percent more likely to develop EDS.

Girls with EDS tended to reach puberty earlier, and all kids with EDS were more likely to have chronic cough, and skin and nasal allergy. Of all factors

with links to EDS, low levels of vitamin D, lack of exercise, and high body mass index scores were the most important.

Melatonin improves sleep in cancer

Sleep helps the body heal, so is especially important in cancer. In adults, during sleep is the only time the body produces human growth hormone (HGH), which helps cells repair and reproduce, promoting overall healing. Also, sleep boosts the immune system, helping to restore immune function that may be impaired by chemotherapy medicines.

Here, doctors reviewed six melatonin studies on cancer patients, who took doses ranging from 3 to 20 mg, usually at night before bedtime,

over 10 days to four months. Four of the studies found melatonin improved sleep quality and reduced insomnia. In two other studies, melatonin shortened the time it took to go to sleep, or to fall back to sleep.

REFERENCE: SLEEP MEDICINE; 2021, VOL. 77, 51-7



Skin

Pycnogenol and collagen improved skin

Pycnogenol protected skin outdoors

The skin has several layers that keep water moisture from evaporating, but environmental factors like pollution can



damage this “barrier” function. In this study, 76 adult outdoor workers took a placebo or 50 mg of Pycnogenol® twice per day, for 24 weeks during spring and autumn.

During the dry season, the Pycnogenol group saw a 14 percent improvement in barrier function—less water evaporation—and a 3.3 percent decrease in moisture compared to 4.5 percent and 14 percent, respectively, for placebo. During the wet season, skin elasticity and firmness improved 7 percent each for Pycnogenol compared to 0.1 and 0.3 percent for placebo.

Collagen boosts skin moisture

The outermost layer of the skin, the stratum corneum, has three major functions: maintaining skin plasticity,

shedding dead skin cells, and preventing pathogens in the environment from entering the skin, which is known as its “barrier” function. To achieve these goals, the skin must maintain adequate hydration, which it does through its natural moisturizing factor (NMF): highly efficient substances in skin cells, called humectants, that attract and bind with water from the atmosphere.

In this study, 99 healthy women, aged 35 to 50, took a placebo, or 1 or 5 grams of collagen peptides per day. After 12 weeks, both collagen groups saw increases in the water content of the stratum corneum, and increased levels of NMF, compared to placebo and to the start of the study. The collagen group also saw less water evaporation.

REFERENCE: SKIN PHARMACOLOGY AND PHYSIOLOGY; 2021, VOL. 34, No. 3, 135-45

Gut

Curcumin and vitamin A linked to better gut health

Curcumin reduced gut complaints

Studies are beginning to find digestive benefits for curcumin. In this study, 77 adults with digestive complaints who also reported on mood, anxiety, and quality of life, took a



placebo or 500 mg of curcumin per day.

After eight weeks, while there were no differences in the gut microbiome between the curcumin and placebo groups, those taking curcumin saw a 28 percent improvement in gut symptom scores including reflux, abdominal pain, indigestion, diarrhea, and constipation, compared to 18 percent for placebo. The curcumin group also reported 52 percent less anxiety vs. 16 percent less for placebo.

Vitamin A and gut effects in autism

Many people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) also report gut symptoms. In this study, doctors compared 323 children with ASD to 180 kids without.

Children with ASD and gut

symptoms had lower levels of vitamin A compared to kids with ASD but no gut symptoms. In children with both ASD and gut impairments, core ASD symptoms were more serious than in kids without gut complaints, including relating to people, emotional response, body use, adaptation to change, listening responses, taste, smell, and touch response, and verbal and non-verbal communication.

Discussing the findings, doctors said kids with autism may tend to develop gastrointestinal symptoms due to eating only a few foods, preferring highly processed foods, and eating fewer fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Kids with ASD may therefore have nutritionally poor diets, raising chances for vitamin A deficiency.

REFERENCE: BMC COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINE AND THERAPIES; 2021, VOL. 21, ARTICLE NO. 40

AUGUST'S

Ahead of the Curve

Early-Stage Discoveries: Kefir, Green, Black Tea, Strawberry and Honey Polyphenols

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

Kefir, Covid-19, and cytokine storms

Yeast molecules in kefir yogurt disrupted communication among cholera bacterial cells, suggesting a promising approach to antibiotic-resistant bacteria. Doctors later found the kefir yeast molecules had an anti-inflammatory effect in several pathological and disease conditions. In the lab, kefir yeast eliminated the Covid-19 cytokine storm in mice, and restored immune system balance. "Our research illuminated the mechanism by which milk fermented probiotics protect against pathogenic infections and aid the immune system," doctors said.

Green and black tea lower blood pressure

Doctors have discovered EGCG flavonoids in green and black tea activate a protein in the body, KCNQ5, which regulates the tone and helps relax the smooth lining of blood vessels, helping to lower blood pressure. Besides its role in circulation, KCNQ5 regulates electrical activity and signaling between brain neurons. When KCNQ5 is impaired, epileptic seizures can develop. Because tea catechins can cross the blood-brain barrier and activate KCNQ5, they may be able to repair or restore broken nerve channels, reducing chances for developing brain excitability disorders.

Strawberry and honey polyphenols reduce oxidative stress and inflammation

Poor diet can trigger oxidative stress and chronic inflammation. This review of the research literature evaluated the effects of strawberry and honey on oxidative stress and inflammation, both in the lab and in human subjects. Overall, strawberries and honey decreased the amount of reactive oxygen species the body produces, reduced levels of oxidative biomarkers, and restored antioxidant enzyme activity by regulating the specific molecules that control levels of chronic inflammation.

REFERENCE: MICROBIOME; 2021, VOL. 9, ARTICLE NO. 70



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Grilled Mushroom Antipasto

While you enjoy this scrumptious mushroom dish, please see page one for a new study that found those who ate mushrooms daily were much less likely to develop any type of cancer compared to those who did not eat mushrooms.

Prep time: 10 minutes Grill time: 3-6 minutes Serves 4-6 as appetizer

Ingredients:

2 lb assorted mushrooms, cleaned, trimmed	1 tsp dried oregano
7 tbsp extra virgin olive oil	1-2 cloves garlic, finely grated
Salt to taste	2 oz Parmigiano Reggiano, shaved
2 tbsp white wine or Champagne vinegar	Black pepper to taste
1 tsp dried Aleppo-style pepper	$\frac{1}{2}$ c Italian olives
	Pickled sweet peppers for garnish
	Fresh organic mixed greens

Directions: Prepare the grill for high heat. Toss mushrooms with 3 tbsp olive oil to coat. Grill, turning until lightly charred. Place into a large bowl and salt to taste. In a separate small bowl, whisk vinegar, Aleppo pepper, oregano, garlic, and the remaining olive oil to combine into a vinaigrette. Season with salt and black pepper, pour over mushrooms, add Parmigiano, olives, and sweet peppers. Toss to combine then serve over mixed greens.

Your Good News!®

We're dedicated to discovering the benefits of good nutrition and healthy lifestyle, and hope this issue of Natural Insights for Well Being® informs and inspires you to take an active role in your health. Please ask us to assist you with any natural products you would like to know more about.

These articles provide nutritional information only and do not replace professional medical advice.

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