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Dr. Jennifer Salib is available for complementary 15- minute consultations if you would like learn more about Naturopathic Medicine. New patients are always welcome.

# Naturopathic News

## Folic Acid and High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure, also known as hypertension is on the rise. High blood pressure is one of several risk factors for cardiovascular disease, including heart attacks and stroke. New research, published in the January 18<sup>th</sup> edition of the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) indicates that folic acid (a B vitamin) may help prevent and treat individuals with high blood pressure.

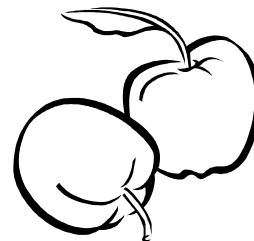
Among 93,803 women aged 27 to 44, those who consumed at least 1,000 micrograms a day of total folate (from foods and supplements) had a 46 percent decreased risk of hypertension compared with those who consumed less than 200 micrograms a day, the study found. In a second group of 62,260 women aged 43 to 70, those with a high total folate intake had an 18 percent reduced risk of hypertension.

For women in the study who did not use any folic acid supplements, getting the substance from foods alone failed to lower the risk of high blood pressure, the study found.

Folic acid supplements of at least 400 micrograms per day are recommended for women before and during pregnancy to prevent neural tube defects, severe fetal growth problems afflicting the brain and spinal cord that often result in stillbirths.

Folic acid occurs naturally in substances such as orange juice and leafy green vegetables and is added to some products, but only high-dose supplements seem to affect blood pressure.

Multivitamins usually provide between 400 micrograms (.4 mg) and 1000 micrograms (1 mg). Taking a B complex vitamin formula in addition to a multivitamin will usually ensure that you are getting at least 1000 micrograms. Because folic acid is a water soluble vitamin, there is no need to worry about toxicity when taken within the recommended dosage ranges. As with any supplement, talk to your health care provider (Naturopathic of Medical Doctor) if you are currently taking any prescription medication.



## It's Cold and Flu Season! Are you Ready?

The cold and flu season is upon us, and while it may seem like everyone around you is sick, there are a few things you can do to keep your immune system healthy and strong.

First, let's review the basics. Hand washing, is by far one of the key strategies for preventing viruses from spreading. Viruses are easily

spread from person to person. Think of how many times a day you touch a doorknob, keypad or pick up the telephone. Wash your hands in soapy warm water for at least 30 seconds are try to avoid touching the faucet after doing so. Paper towels, although less environmentally friendly are more hygienic than cloth towels.

Nutrition, nutrition, nutrition. Proper nutrition is the key to a healthy immune system. Would you put dirty gas in your car? Eating fried, sugary or highly processed foods can hinder your immune system. Brightly colored and dark green leafy vegetables are loaded with immune boosting phytonutrients. Phytonutrients are nutrients that come from plants. Bioflavonoids, found in fruits and vegetables work with Vitamin C to help strengthen the immune system.

Sugar, consumed in even moderate amounts can impair the immune system's ability to fight off infection. Our white blood cells, which engulf bacteria and viruses, can't function optimally when we eat high amounts of sugar, especially white refined sugar. Drink lots of water and herbal teas when you're under the weather no sugary sports drinks. 100% fruit juices are a good source of vitamin C, but still contain sugar. Limit the amount of juice you drink and dilute with water.

**Herbs and Immune Health**

There are a variety of herbs which can be used to prevent and treat mild viral illness, such as colds and flus. Many people have heard of *Echinacea*, but there are many herbs that are similar and potentially more effective than *Echinacea*. As you may have heard, *Echinacea* works best when used at the first

sign of a cold. So if you're in the thick of it, you probably won't benefit from taking this herb. *Astragalus membranosus* and *Usnea barbata* are examples of two other herbs that are known to have anti-viral properties.

When treating any illness, herbs are best used in a combination that is individually tailored to you and your symptoms. For example for a cold with a wet cough, you would want a combination that would have expectorant as well as anti-viral properties. *Glycerrhiza glabra* (Licorice) is an example of a reflex expectorant (should not be used by people who have high blood pressure), but there are many more.

But what about herbs in your kitchen? *Garlic* is one of nature's most potent remedies. Not only does it add wonderful flavour to foods, it is a powerful anti-microbial. Studies have shown that not much can grow in a garlic rich environment. Add it to soups or stir-fry's, or make a tea sweetened with ginger and honey (see below). Ginger can help to reduce the aches and pains that often come with the flu. Studies have shown that Ginger acts as an anti-inflammatory and as such, can play a role in reduction the pain of inflammation. Don't forget about onions either. Onions contain bioflavonoids and are anti-microbial as well.

**Homeopathic Remedies**

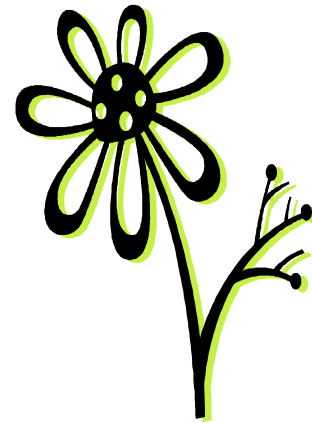
Homeopathic remedies contain very very dilute amounts of substances that are used to stimulate the body's natural healing processes.. The remedies are selected based on an individuals symptoms. For instance, a different remedy would be given to a person who felt chilly at night than a person who felt warm and moist.

Homeopathic remedies can be used individually or in combinations. One combination, *Oscillocochinum* can be taken to help prevent the flu. It can be found at most health food stores. However, in the case of an acute illness, have a naturopath or homeopath select a remedy based on your individual symptoms.

**Anti-Viral Tea**

- 3 large cloves of garlic (minced)
- 2 tbsp. grated ginger
- 4 cups of water

Boil water and add grated ginger and simmer for 15 minutes. Remove from heat and add garlic. Add honey to taste. The taste takes some getting used to, but it will give your immune system a powerful boost!



## Fish or Fish Oil?

Most of us would rather get our medicine from food than from a supplement. But new research indicates that fish oil supplements may be safer than eating fish due to the contamination present.

According to a study published in the January edition of the *Archives of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine* "Fish oil supplements are more healthful than the consumption of fish high in organochlorines," the authors write. "Fish oils provide the benefits of omega-3 fatty acids without the risk of toxicity. In addition, fish oil supplements have been helpful in a variety of diseases, including bipolar disorder and depression."

The authors note that of the PCBs

produced in the U.S. before 1976, 1.2 billion pounds entered rivers, lakes, and oceans, where they accumulate in bottom-feeding fish and become more concentrated higher up on the food chain (0.6-20 parts per million [ppm] in edible fish high in the food chain). In 1984, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) lowered the limit to 2.0 ppm for edible fish.

Although consumption of 200 to 400 g of oily fish each week has been recommended to protect against cardiovascular disease, regular fish intake presents potential problems, particularly in children and pregnant women.

The authors estimate that compared with fish oil supplementation, regular consumption of fish from the Great Lakes would expose humans to at least 70 times more PCBs and 120 times more OC pesticides.

When buying fresh fish, look for "wild" or "pacific". This indicates that the fish are not farmed and will have lower levels of harmful contaminants.

Pregnant women and very young children should avoid tilefish, shark, swordfish, and tuna steaks. Because these are large fish, they tend to have very high levels of mercury. Consumption of canned tuna, whitefish, pollack, cod, mahi mahi and pike should be limited.

Research into food and health is changing. In my opinion, food is still the best medicine. However, there are times when we need to balance potential benefit with potential harm. We should still eat fish, but in moderation. Fish is still an excellent source of essential fats (omega 3 fatty acids), however consuming the required amounts may pose potential for harm. Therefore, if wild or pacific fish is not available, supplementation may be necessary.

### *Recipe of the Month*

#### Greek Salad

For one serving, combine the following ingredients:

Equal amounts of chopped tomatoes and cucumbers.

Small slivers of red onion to taste.

1 tbsp of goat feta cheese

3-4 Olives (whole or chopped)

1 tbsp fresh basil cut on top of salad

Splash with organic red wine vinegar

1 tsp of extra virgin olive oil.

## Naturopathic Approaches to HRT

The termination of a major study on hormone replacement therapy by the Women's Health Initiative has brought to public awareness issues about which naturopathic medicine has long been concerned. The Women's Health Initiative study concluded that women taking the most common conventional hormone replacement therapy, a combination of Premarin (0.625 mg of conjugated equine estrogens) and Provera (2.5 mg of medroxyprogesterone acetate) were at increased risk for breast cancer, heart attacks, strokes, and blood clots in the lungs and legs. These risks outweighed the benefits of fewer hip fractures and reduced risk of colon cancer. And the widely promoted benefit of heart disease prevention was not substantiated.

There are many points to consider. First of all, the hormones used in the study (and by somewhere in the neighborhood of 6 million American women) are not bio-identical. They are synthesized to be different than those hormones your body produces, in order that they might be patented and sold. Premarin comes from a hormone produced by pregnant mares and excreted in their urine. Provera is a progestin, not true progesterone. One would expect that these substances which are foreign to our bodies would have different effects than our natural hormones. And they do.

Often we can address menopausal symptoms through a combination of dietary change, nutritional supplements, plant medicine and energy medicine.

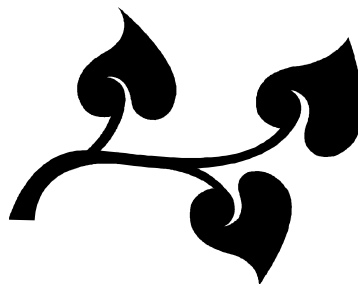
In addition to working with obvious menopausal symptoms such as hot flashes, vaginal dryness, and perimenopausal arthritis, we can help ascertain individual risk factors for silent conditions which often occur in perimenopause, such as cardiovascular disease and osteoporosis.

These are the ways of working with menopause that naturopathic medicine has been promoting, expanding, and offering for years. The findings of the Women's Health Initiative are no surprise to us, as they are no surprise to many patients. We have long held that conventional hormone replacement therapy is one of the most lucrative and scary examples of medical experimentation on human subjects known in our time. And we are pleased to see that questions are being asked, and that the situation has come to the attention of the public.

## In the News

A recent study published last week in the *British Medical Journal* found that St. John's Wort was as effective in the treatment of depression as a commonly prescribed anti-depressant, Paroxetine. One half of the 251 patients who took St. John's Wort reported an improvement in depressive symptoms. Only one third of the group taking the drug reported similar improvements. St. John's Wort was also associated with fewer side effects than paroxetine. St. John's Wort should only be taken on the advice of a qualified professional as it may interfere with many commonly prescribed drugs.

A recent article in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* found that diet can be as effective at lowering cholesterol when compared to statin drugs, commonly prescribed to lower blood cholesterol levels. The researchers found that a diet high in fruits, vegetables, soy protein and almonds. After one month, cholesterol levels were 30% lower in the diet only group, compared to 33% in the statin group.



## Principles of Naturopathic Medicine

Naturopathic Medicine is a natural approach to health and healing that recognizes the integrity of the whole person.

### 1. First Do No Harm

Therapeutic actions should be complementary to and synergistic with the healing process.

### 2. The Healing Power of Nature

The body has an inherent ability to establish, maintain, and restore health. The healing process is ordered and intelligent; nature heals through the response of the life force.

### 3. Identify the Cause

Illness does not occur without cause. Symptoms express the body's attempt to heal, but are not the cause of disease. Causes may occur on many levels including physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual.

### 4. Heal the Whole Person

The harmonious functioning of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects are essential to recovery from and prevention of disease.

### 5. Doctor as Teacher

A cooperative doctor-patient relationship has inherent therapeutic value. The physician is a catalyst for healthful change, empowering and motivating the patient.

### 6. Prevention is the Best Cure

The ultimate goal of any health care system should be prevention of disease. This is accomplished through education and promotion of life-habits that create good health.



