

# MIND & BODY

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The World Health Organization is seeking greater power to intervene and act within individual nations.

COMMENTARY

## New WHO Amendments Creating a Global Regime in the Name of Health

Another step toward globalism

SEAN LIN & JACKY GUAN

Since its establishment, the World Health Organization (WHO) has assumed the role of an advisory entity in the international health domain. The WHO established International Health Regulations (IHR) in 2005 as the main compliance tool to ensure that public health emergencies would be handled swiftly. The COVID pandemic perfectly illustrates how powerful the WHO already is.

However, a new set of amendments proposed by state members of the WHO was published at the end of 2022, seeking to enhance the WHO's power under the guise of the IHR. This, in addition to a newly proposed Inter-governmental Negotiating Body (INB) and the addition of a pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response clause in the INB, raises several red flags on the paradigm shift that the WHO is undertaking, from playing the role of an international health advisory body to becoming a global regime acting in the name of health.

### From Patient-Doctor Relationship to Powerful Conglomerate

Throughout history, people have relied on connections with friends, family, and neighbors to maintain a healthy social life. This is important not only for wellness, but also for building the trust upon which the foundation of relationships lies. Just as it's vital in relationships with family and friends, in regard to health, trust is vital in patient-doctor relationships.

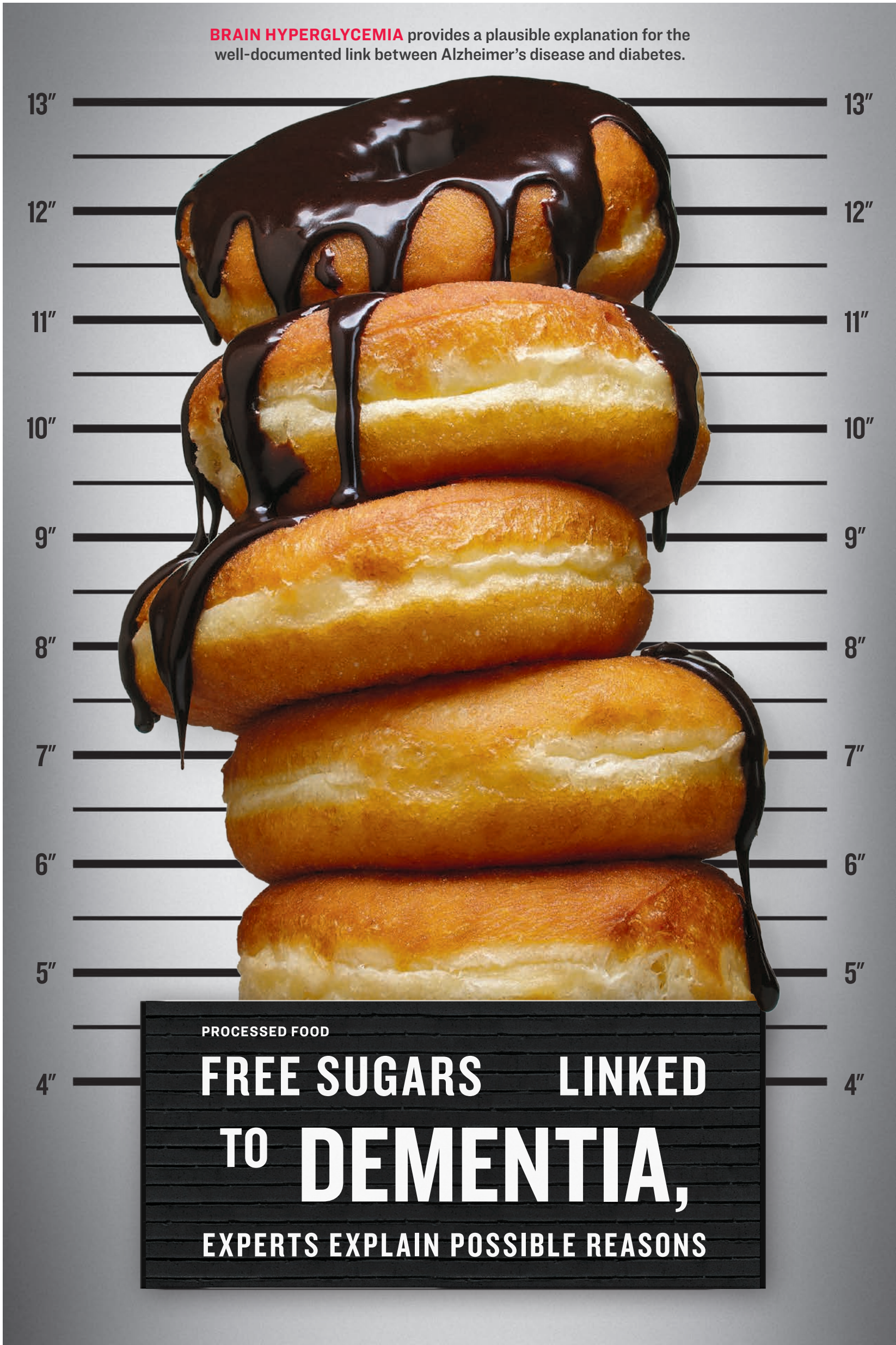
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JULIE ASHMEAD/SHUTTERSTOCK

The Chinese regime has repressed information about COVID-19.

**BRAIN HYPERGLYCEMIA** provides a plausible explanation for the well-documented link between Alzheimer's disease and diabetes.



Research suggests that consuming less food and drink with added sugar could dramatically reduce Alzheimer's risk

GEORGE CITRONER

The exact causes of Alzheimer's disease are still being investigated, but a growing body of research suggests that a common sweetener may play a role.

High-fructose corn syrup (HFCS) is a sweetener commonly used in processed

foods and beverages. It's made from corn starch and is typically used as a substitute for sucrose (table sugar) because it's cheaper and more shelf-stable.

A study published in June 2022 in the Public Library of Science found that rats consuming HFCS from a young age developed adverse changes in parts of the brain responsible for memory, emotion, and nervous system function. Eating HFCS long-term resulted in a prolonged reduction in metabolism in these brain regions, causing degeneration and cognitive decline typical of Alzheimer's disease.

A March 2023 review of studies published in The American Journal of Clinical

Nutrition also states that fructose may reduce metabolism in brain regions involved in higher cognitive functions.

The researchers involved in the review theorize that increased fructose levels in the brain may increase our risk for Alzheimer's disease.

However, they also emphasize that the consumption of glucose (a component of sucrose) and high glycemic index foods plays the greatest role in increasing fructose levels in the brain. A 2017 Yale study discovered that fructose can be created from glucose in the brain.

Continued on Page 3



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Mar 19	5:00 PM ET	WLMB	Sunday
Mar 19	10:30 PM ET	TCT	Sunday
Mar 19	6:30 PM ET	Walk Network	Sunday
Mar 20	11:30 PM ET	PTL	Monday
Mar 22	10:30 PM ET	WLMB	Wednesday
Mar 23	11:00 PM ET	PTL	Thursday
Mar 24	9:30 PM ET	Daystar	Friday
Mar 25	10:30 PM ET	WHT	Saturday
Mar 25	11:00 PM ET	PTL	Saturday
Mar 26	5:00 PM ET	WLMB	Sunday
Mar 26	6:30 PM ET	Walk Network	Sunday
Mar 26	10:30 PM ET	TCT	Sunday
Mar 27	11:30 PM ET	PTL	Monday
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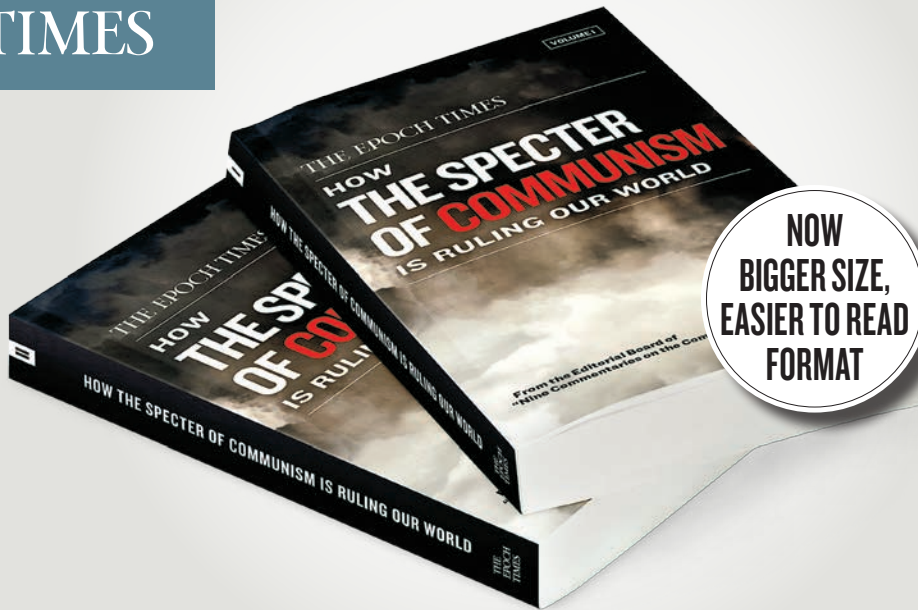
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### DRUG ISSUES

## You May Not Need Statins, Even With Elevated ‘Bad’ Cholesterol

Far more important than cholesterol levels is the amount of calcium plaque forming on artery walls, research finds

### ALLISON DEMAJISTRE

For decades, the answer to lowering cholesterol to prevent heart attack or stroke was a statin prescription. Unfortunately, many people who were prescribed statins stop taking them because of side effects, and others question their efficacy. One study even found that doctors worldwide have overprescribed statins, which is potentially harmful.

Is statin therapy suitable for you? A simple test that measures coronary artery calcium could give you a better idea of your risk for a heart attack or stroke.

### ‘Bad’ Cholesterol May Not Be Bad

The media and the food industry tout the importance of a low-cholesterol diet, and we often hear about “bad” and “good” cholesterol.

The “bad” cholesterol is the low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, and the “good” cholesterol is the high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol.

It’s important to note that without cholesterol, we couldn’t survive. It helps make up our cells and hormones. It’s crucial in the delivery of insulin into our cells, and it helps make up the essential vitamins A, D, E, and K.

The “bad” cholesterol isn’t necessarily bad. One theory is that one of LDL’s primary jobs in the bloodstream is to help repair artery walls from the damage caused by inflammation and bacteria. But when LDL builds up along artery walls over time, it can form hard calcium plaques that block blood flow to the heart, eventually causing a heart attack.

That’s why yearly blood tests usually include a fasting cholesterol level with a breakdown of LDL, HDL, and triglycerides.

The goal is for LDL to be below 100, HDL to be above 60, and triglycerides below 100. Doctors often prescribe a statin when these numbers stray from the norm.

### Statin Therapy

In 1987, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved the first cholesterol-lowering medication, lovastatin. Since then, several other statin medications have been developed by various drug companies, all claiming to lower the risk of heart attack and stroke by reducing cholesterol levels in the blood.

In 2018, an estimated 145.8 million people worldwide took statins, and between 2002 and 2018, an average of 21.35 million statins were purchased annually, with a cost of \$24.5 billion.

Throughout the years, the efficacy and safety of statin medications have come into question. Many people prescribed statins stopped taking them because of side effects, including:

- Muscle weakness
- Rhabdomyolysis ranging from mild to life-threatening
- Liver dysfunction
- Onset of diabetes mellitus
- Acute kidney injury
- Memory loss and poor cognition

Nearly all statin drugs are associated with musculoskeletal side effects. Myalgia is the most common symptom, and myositis is less common and associated with a rise in creatine kinase (CK). Rhabdomyolysis is the most severe musculoskeletal form observed, with a rise in CK greater than 10 times the upper limit of normal and associated myoglobinuria, renal impairment, and serum electrolyte abnormalities.

Others question whether statins reduce heart attack and stroke risk more than a healthy diet and regular exercise can.

At least one study has even claimed that statins can harm people and are overprescribed.

In 2019, the American Heart Association

(AHA) developed new guidelines about the primary prevention of cardiovascular disease, advising doctors to consider all risk factors rather than simply looking at cholesterol levels.

When risks are unclear, or if a patient’s bloodwork shows an elevated LDL but otherwise minimal risk factors, AHA guidelines direct physicians to consider the CAC score before deciding on statin therapy.

### When You May Not Need Statins

A coronary artery calcium (CAC) score measures the extent of calcified plaque in the coronary arteries with a heart CT scan.

It’s also known as the Agatston Score, named after Dr. Arthur Agatston, who developed the technique for measurement in the 1990s while working at Mount Sinai Hospital in Miami Beach.

The hospital had purchased an ultrafast CT scanner that could give a clear picture of the heart and, ultimately, of calcium deposits in the coronary arteries. Agatston created the scoring system by categorizing the risk of heart attack or stroke according to the number and size of calcium plaques in the coronary arteries.

While Agatston worked on his new CAC scoring system, the Framingham Heart Study was the gold standard for cardiovascular disease risk measurement. It considered age, gender, LDL, family history of heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. Statins were also becoming more readily available, and the medical community hailed them as the answer to reducing the risk of heart attack and stroke.

## It’s important to note that without cholesterol, we couldn’t survive.

Agatston, however, wasn’t convinced and was motivated by the realization that not everyone with elevated cholesterol needed to take statins. Statins were unnecessary if cholesterol was high but the CAC score was zero.

Agatston said that up to 50 percent of people who took a statin because of their high cholesterol level had a CAC score of zero and didn’t need statins.

He also said that several other people with normal cholesterol and no symptoms of cardiovascular disease had a high CAC score, revealing severe disease that needed aggressive intervention.

### How to Read CAC Score

Agatston suggests that men older than 40 and women older than 50 receive testing and that those with a strong family history of cardiovascular disease get tested even earlier. He suggests a follow-up CT scan after five years.

However, insurance doesn’t cover the CT scan to determine a CAC score, and the average cost of the test is \$75 to \$150.

Dr. Hillel Wirszel, an internist at Saint Francis Hospital in Wilmington, Delaware, still prescribes statins for patients with risk factors such as diabetes and a family history of cardiovascular disease. Still, he says, “I don’t look at cholesterol. Even before the new guidelines, I wouldn’t prescribe a statin simply because the cholesterol level was high.”

“The risk factors are more important, especially as patients get older,” he said.

Wirszel agrees that having a CT scan to assess a CAC score can be an essential tool and is underused, particularly in the United States, where preventative medicine is often not of primary concern.

Allison DeMajistre, BSN, RN, CCRN is a freelance medical writer for The Epoch Times. She is a registered nurse who previously worked in critical care. She specializes in cardiology-related topics.

### PROCESSED FOOD

# Free Sugars Linked to Dementia, Experts Explain Possible Reasons

Continued from Page 1

The current review’s lead author, Dr. Richard Johnson, cited earlier research that found that laboratory rats fed fructose for long enough develop tau and amyloid beta proteins in the brain. These proteins are linked to Alzheimer’s.

“We make the case that Alzheimer’s disease is driven by diet,” Johnson, a professor at the University of Colorado School of Medicine specializing in renal disease and hypertension, said in a statement.

Johnson suspects that a response he calls the “survival switch,” which helps humans survive during times of food scarcity, is stuck in the “on” position in a time of abundant food. This leads to overeating high-fat, sugary, and salty food, which prompts excess fructose production.

He suggests that dietary and pharmacologic trials to reduce fructose exposure or block fructose metabolism should be performed to find if there’s a benefit that will aid in the prevention, management, or treatment of Alzheimer’s disease. There is still limited research and insight into the roles fructose metabolism plays in the brain.

### Fructose Changes Brain Metabolism

Fructose consumption has increased significantly because of the extensive use of HFCS in beverages and processed foods.

This sweetener has also been shown to cause negative health effects, especially diabetes.

“Research has suggested Type 2 diabetes can be a risk factor for Alzheimer’s disease and other types of dementia, like vascular dementia,” Claire Sexton, who holds a doctorate in psychiatry from the University of Oxford and is the Alzheimer’s Association senior director of scientific programs and outreach, told The Epoch Times.

She explained that this could be because the factors that increase the risk of Type 2 diabetes have also been shown to increase the risk of dementia. It could also be a result of the long-term effects of impaired sugar metabolism in the brain, which leads to low blood sugar, since the brain needs blood sugar to stay fueled.

In a double-blind study at the University of California–Davis, researchers observed increased liver fat and reduced insulin sensitivity in two groups that drank either three HFCS-sweetened or three sugar-sweetened beverages daily for only two weeks.

This doesn’t mean that eating fruit



## CHANGING BRAIN CHEMISTRY

Eating processed sugars can rapidly increase insulin resistance. Because insulin plays a critical role in brain function, insulin resistance contributes to cognitive decline.

### Research reveals that diabetic hyperglycemia (high blood sugar) causes brain hyperglycemia.

Because of this excess sugar, the blood-brain barrier may adapt by letting in less glucose, which the brain needs to function. This wreaks havoc on the brain’s energy supply.

### Researchers think this may explain the link between Alzheimer’s disease and diabetes.

A study published in Frontiers in Neuroscience in 2021 found that diabetic hyperglycemia (high blood sugar) can directly result in brain hyperglycemia. This may cause the blood-brain barrier to adapt by letting in less glucose, which the brain needs to function. The researchers concluded that brain hyperglycemia provides a plausible explanation for the well-documented link between Alzheimer’s disease and diabetes.

Poor metabolism of sugar over the long term may be contributing to Alzheimer’s disease and other types of dementia, like vascular dementia.

## ALZHEIMER’S LINK TO FRUCTOSE

is bad for our health. Fructose is only harmful in excess amounts, and fruit contains small amounts compared with many processed foods.

Fruits are also packed with nutrients and fiber that help us maintain a balanced diet that encourages good health.

The problem is our consumption of free sugars—fructose, glucose, and sucrose that are separated from their naturally occurring source. This includes sugars that are added to food and drinks during commercial processing.

Evidence shows that the health risks from sugars are related to consuming too many free sugars in the diet, not from eating sugars that are naturally present in foods such as fruits and milk.

### Is Alzheimer’s Disease a 3rd Type of Diabetes?

Scientists report a close association between Type 2 diabetes and Alzheimer’s, pointing out that Alzheimer’s disease is twice as frequent in diabetic patients. One popular theory suggests that Alzheimer’s may be a metabolic disorder, similar to Type 2 diabetes, in which the body is unable to properly process insulin.

Studies show that insulin plays a critical role in brain function, and insulin resistance in the brain plays a role in cognitive decline.

A study published in Frontiers in Neuro-

One study found those who drank beverages sweetened with high fructose corn syrup or sugar daily for only two weeks developed insulin resistance. Researchers have also found insulin resistance to be a critical risk factor for dementia, leading many experts to call Alzheimer’s disease “Type 3 diabetes.”

science in 2021 found that diabetic hyperglycemia (high blood sugar) can directly result in brain hyperglycemia. This may cause the blood-brain barrier to adapt by letting in less glucose, which the brain needs to function. The researchers concluded that brain hyperglycemia provides a plausible explanation for the well-documented link between Alzheimer’s disease and diabetes.

There has been a growing interest in the idea that Alzheimer’s disease may be a third type of diabetes. However, this theory has sparked disagreement about whether it’s really how the disease develops.

Sexton said she doesn’t think Alzheimer’s is diabetes, and that suggesting they’re the same doesn’t account for the complexity of either disease.

“While studies have shown a link between insulin resistance and risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease, the condition can still develop without the presence of excessive glucose in the brain,” Sexton said.

When asked if treating insulin resistance could potentially reduce Alzheimer’s risk, she said the idea is currently being explored in clinical trials.

“In fact, last year at the Alzheimer’s Association International Conference, T3D Therapeutics reported positive interim results from their phase 2 trial of T3D-959, which seeks to overcome insulin resistance in the brain and restore its metabolic health.”



## A COMMON INGREDIENT

High fructose corn syrup is a highly processed sweetener derived from corn. Like other sugars, it is relatively harmless when eaten in its source food, but disease causing after extraction. It is cheap, plentiful, and shelf stable, making it an ubiquitous ingredient in processed foods.

and weakness—it’s a delicious and nutritious food.

Dr. Martinez-Marmo, a research fellow at the Queensland Brain Institute and co-author of the paper, said the findings have significance for the treatment and prevention of degenerative cognitive diseases such as Alzheimer’s.

“Our idea was to identify bioactive compounds from natural sources that could reach the brain and regulate the growth of neurons, resulting in improved memory formation,” he said.

The research was published in January, in the Journal of Neurochemistry.

Research surrounding the effects of lion’s mane mushrooms on the brain has been making progress for the past several years.

A 2013 study in the International Journal of Medicinal Mushrooms found that two compounds contained in the lion’s mane mushroom can stimulate brain cell growth in the laboratory.

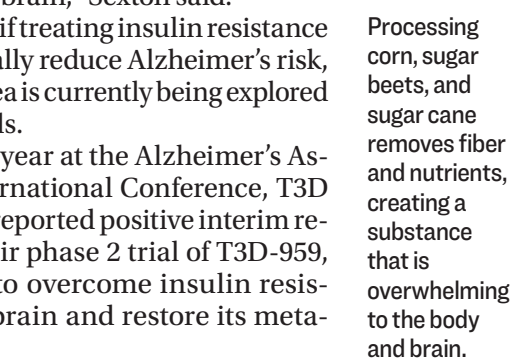
In a clinical study published in 2020 in Frontiers in Aging Neuroscience, patients with mild Alzheimer’s disease, after 49 weeks of taking three 350 mg capsules of

lion’s mane mushroom daily, showed significant decrease in cognitive decline compared with those who took only a placebo.

The medical mushroom has also been found to be effective in immune enhancement. A 2018 study published in the Journal of Medicinal Food showed that it has anti-anxiety and anti-depressant effects.

Another study in BMC Complementary Medicine and Therapies in 2013 proved that Hericium erinaceus has hypoglycemic, hypolipidemic, and antioxidant properties.

Research into the therapeutic and medicinal effects of lion’s mane mushrooms has surged in the last decade.



Research into the therapeutic and medicinal effects of lion’s mane mushrooms has surged in the last decade.



Sugar and corn syrup are added to many foods because people can be more easily triggered to eat sweet foods.



Processing corn, sugar beets, and sugar cane removes fiber and nutrients, creating a substance that is overwhelming to the body and brain.



# Pine Needles: An Ancient Ally for Human Health

A critical compound released in pine needle tea offers multiple important benefits

Pine needles have been an important medicinal for centuries but it's taken some time for scientists to figure out how they work.



ALENA FROLOVA/GETTY IMAGES

LANCE SCHUTTLE

Humans have long held a fascination with pine trees and their roles in the natural world around us. They are mysterious, beautiful, and ancient trees that can live to be hundreds, and in some cases, thousands of years old.

There are around 125 different pine species that have been identified. Among them are some of the longest-living trees and organisms in the world.

In fact, some trees from the Bristlecone Pine species (*Pinus longaeva*) have can live to be around 5,000 years old.

And while the human genome has over three billion base pairs, the Loblolly pine species has been shown to have 22 billion base pairs—more than seven times the amount of genetic material in us humans.

## History of Pine Needle Benefits and Compounds

Indigenous peoples have long used pine needles and various compounds from certain pine trees for at least hundreds of years. The consumption of certain pine needles impacts our immune, respiratory, and cardiovascular and neurological systems.

In more recent times, pine needles and tea from pine needles have garnered significant attention from scientists, doctors, and those within the health and wellness fields, due to the many compounds found in certain species.

Pine needles from eastern white pines (*Pinus strobus*), for example are known to provide nutrients, antioxidants, vitamin C, essential oils, amino acids, and flavonoids.

There are around 125 different pine species that have been identified—some among the longest-living trees and organisms in the world.



It was the bark and needles from pines that the Iroquois gave to Jacques Cartier's critically ill crew back in 1536, which helped to provide the vitamin C the crew needed at that time to treat their scurvy.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

One of the most fascinating compounds that scientists began re-discussing in 2021 is the naturally-occurring shikimic acid found within some pine species—like the eastern white pines.

## Pine Needles and Shikimic Acid

Researchers at the University of Maine found that steeping pine needles in hot water released shikimic acid.

Shikimic acid is a naturally-occurring compound known to induce several different physiological effects within the body. Some might be familiar with it due to the fact that it is the main constituent within the antiviral drug Osetamivir, also known commercially as Tamiflu.

Shikimic acid is a metabolite that helps plants metabolize important compounds. It is a critical element in the shikimate pathway, which was discovered first by Dutch chemist Johan Fredrik Eykman in 1885.

The shikimate pathway is crucial for life and is a seven-step pathway used by bacteria, fungi, archaea, algae, some protozoans, and plants for the biosynthesis of vitamins, folates, and the aromatic amino acids phenylalanine, tryptophan, and tyrosine. The first two are counted as essential amino acids, meaning human beings require them and cannot synthesize them in the body like we can with many other amino acids. Tyrosine is considered conditionally essential because its synthesis can be limited for some people.

These amino acids are important to humans and help produce our bodies neurotransmitters and compounds like serotonin, melatonin, epinephrine, dopamine, CoQ10, and thyroid hormone—specifically through the help of beneficial gut bacteria.

In other words, for human beings, shikimic acid plays an essential role in a long biochemical process that sustains our health and longevity.

Shikimic acid has been shown to support healthy platelet function and support healthy cardiovascular function in humans.

It has also been shown to help support the function of the gut and digestive system, as well as the myelin sheath in animal studies. The myelin sheath is the fatty substance that surrounds neurons and acts as "insulation" for all of the electrical communication that takes place between these neurons.

Shikimic acid is also known to exert anti-bacterial, anti-fungal, anti-viral, and anti-inflammatory properties, amongst other important properties. One study found it was effective in controlling several pathogenic food bacteria, including *Escherichia coli*, *Proteus vulgaris*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Bacillus subtilis* and *Bacillus cereus*.

## Shikimic Acid, Herbicides, and Digestive Functioning

As detailed earlier, shikimic acid is the end result of the seven-step metabolic process known as the shikimate pathway. This pathway is known to be negatively impacted by different herbicides, including glyphosate, the active ingredient in Roundup.

Glyphosate has been one of the most heavily used herbicides in the world and

many studies and lawsuits have detailed the controversial use of it over recent years, with the World Health Organization classifying it as a class 2A probable human carcinogen.

The herbicide creates a few different harmful and noteworthy effects, such as inhibiting the crucial cytochrome p450 enzymes as well as suppressing the function of the p53 gene. This particular gene is known loosely by scientists as the "Guardian of the Genome."

With respect to the shikimate pathway, glyphosate targets this seven-step process by inhibiting a key enzyme known as EPSPS (5-enolpyruvylshikimate-3-phosphate synthase). When EPSPS is inhibited, the building of the amino acids necessary for the production of proteins is blocked and the plant dies.

Although we humans do not contain the shikimate pathway directly, glyphosate still affects us because of its damaging effects on our beneficial bacteria. In 2021, the first-ever bioinformatics method was able to classify sequences from about 90 percent of eukaryotes and greater than 80 percent of prokaryotes in the human microbiome.

The scientists found that an astonishing 54 percent of the species in the core human gut microbiome are sensitive to glyphosate, but said that figure was conservative, suggesting many more could be affected.

Since glyphosate harms many beneficial bacteria in the gut, it is no surprise that health conditions like cancer, depression, obesity, diabetes, and digestive dysfunction have risen over the years and have been linked to the widespread use of glyphosate.

## Pine Needles and Herbicide-Free Farming

Shikimic acid and the shikimic acid pathway are important because of their essential role sustaining life on this planet and how they affect the human microbiome and our overall health.

Synthetic herbicides like glyphosate have dramatically affected humans in several ways, as well as pollinators like bees and butterflies. With our food, water, lawns, and grasslands now contaminated by this substance, it is important we understand what it is and what roles it plays beyond its intended use as weed control in industrial agriculture.

Choosing organically grown or sustainably wild-harvested foods, when possible, is one way to reduce consumption of synthetic herbicide-sprayed foods and help support the health of the microbiome. Another way to support the microbiome, gut, immune, and respiratory functioning is the consumption of pine needles and the active constituents found within.

Lance Schuttler is the CEO and owner of Ascent Nutrition, a unique holistic nutrition company. He is also a contributing health and wellness writer at *The Epoch Times* and *Video Advice*. His work also includes the topics of regenerative agriculture, resource-based economics, and quantum technologies. You can find him at [LanceSchuttler.com](http://LanceSchuttler.com)

## ESSENTIAL NUTRIENTS

# 9 Benefits of Zinc and Where to Find It in Food

This essential nutrient affects countless functions in the brain and body

JINGDUAN YANG

Many people complain about the inability to focus, emotional instability, and poor stress response. Other common complaints include weak immunity, hair loss, and acne.

Surprisingly, all of these problems can be related to one important micronutrient: zinc. In this article, we'll discuss how zinc benefits our health, how much we should take, and the potential side effects of over-supplementing.

## The 9 Functions of Zinc

According to a study published in *Scientific Reports* in 2015, 1 out of 7 people in the world suffers from zinc deficiency.

Zinc is an essential nutrient that our bodies can't manufacture or store. It must be continuously provided directly from food or supplied from nutritional supplements. That's why a lot of foods have zinc added to increase their nutritional value.

After iron, zinc is the most abundant trace element in our bodies. It exists in every cell and serves nine functions (that we know of):

**1 Regulates Gene Expression**  
Human genes can't be changed, but their expression can be regulated, and it's this regulation of gene expression that determines how healthy we are. Zinc is intricately involved in this critical process.

**2 Affects Activity of More Than 300 Enzymes**  
Zinc affects the actions of more than 300 enzymes, thereby influencing metabolism, nerves, digestion, immunity, and many other important physiological processes.

**3 Regulates and Enhances Immune Function**  
Zinc affects the development and function of immune cells and can directly inhibit the replication of viruses in cells. Therefore, zinc is often added to cold medicines. People with zinc deficiency often suffer from a variety of immune function problems and autoimmune diseases.

**4 Maintains Health of Hair, Nails, and Skin**  
Zinc affects the synthesis of protein and so has a significant impact on the health

of hair, skin, and nails, as well as the healing of wounds. If you want to reduce facial acne and grow beautiful hair, you should take extra care to not become deficient in zinc.

**5 Affects Body Growth and Development, Reproduction, and Sexual Function**

Whether you're young and want to grow to be tall and strong or you're middle-aged or elderly and want to maintain youthful vitality, zinc is indispensable. Zinc is abundant in the pituitary gland, which promotes the secretion of growth hormones. Growth hormone is not only related to the growth and development of young people but is also important for middle-aged and elderly people to burn fat and for the upkeep of their muscles.

**6 Improves Taste and Smell**  
Zinc has an important relationship with the hormone for taste and smell.

When zinc is deficient, the senses of taste and smell won't work properly. Therefore, people with zinc deficiency often like to eat things that have a strong taste. If you've been infected with COVID-19, your body uses up a lot of zinc, which will likely result in an abnormal degradation in the senses of smell and taste. Supplementing zinc at this stage can speed up recovery.

**7 Acts as an Anti-Inflammatory and Antioxidant**

Zinc takes part in the fight against the cytokine and free radical storms that cause the severe symptoms of COVID-19 and is an essential nutrient for the prevention and treatment of the virus. Also, chronic inflammation and oxidative stress both induce aging and chronic diseases in the body.

People with zinc deficiency often suffer from a variety of immune function problems and autoimmune diseases.

**8 Regulates the Nervous System**  
Zinc is involved in the synthesis of neurotransmitters in the brain, the conduction of nerve signals, and the functional regulation of neurotransmitter receptors. These neurotransmitters directly affect our regulation of emotions, ability to withstand stress, memory, attention, learning ability, motivation, and task execution. Zinc deficiency is present in many people diagnosed with various mental illnesses.

**9 Promotes Brain Development**  
Zinc promotes the growth and maturity of brain cells. When zinc is insufficient, brain cell growth decreases and



Shellfish like mussels and oysters are high in zinc.

## 9 Foods That Provide the Most Zinc

Some foods are high in zinc and can be found in your daily diet. Zinc-rich foods include:

- Shellfish: oysters, crab, lobster
- Meat: beef, pork, lamb, chicken, turkey
- Fish: cod, sardines, salmon
- Beans: black beans, peas, soybeans, mung beans, lentils
- Nuts: pumpkin seeds, flax seeds, cashews, almonds
- Dairy products: milk, yogurt, cheese
- Eggs
- Whole grains: oats, black rice, quinoa
- Vegetables: mushrooms, green beans, asparagus, leafy vegetables, cabbage, beets

apoptosis (cell death) accelerates, which in turn leads to some degenerative brain diseases, such as Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's disease.

## Symptoms Related to Zinc Deficiency

There are several potential symptoms of zinc deficiency:

- Slow body growth and development
- Decreased sexual function and fertility
- Hair loss
- Acne and skin problems
- Poor wound healing
- Chronic diarrhea
- Mood swings
- Poor resistance to stress
- Poor concentration
- Other psychobehavioral problems

## People Likely Prone to Zinc Deficiency

- Patients with chronic gastrointestinal diseases, such as Crohn's disease
- Vegetarians
- Pregnant and lactating women
- Babies raised exclusively on breast milk
- Patients with sickle cell anemia
- Malnourished people
- Patients with chronic kidney disease
- People struggling with alcoholism
- Pyro disorder patients

## Side Effects of Too Much Zinc

People with zinc deficiency need to find appropriate dosages for their zinc supplements.

For the prevention of illness during the COVID-19 pandemic, it's safe for healthy adults to take supplements of about 40 to 60 milligrams per day.

Taking more than this amount may cause nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, diarrhea, stomach pain, headache, and other symptoms.

Dr. Jingduan Yang is a faculty member at the University of Arizona's Center for Integrative Medicine, former assistant professor of psychiatry, and director of the Oriental Medicine and Acupuncture Program at the Jefferson-Myrna Brind Center for Integrative Medicine at Thomas Jefferson University. He completed a research fellowship in clinical psychopharmacology at Oxford University, residency training in psychiatry at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia, and a Bravewell Fellowship in integrative medicine at the University of Arizona. You can find out more about Dr. Yang at his website [www.YangInstitute.com](http://www.YangInstitute.com)



MOYO STUDIO/GETTY IMAGES

Dairy products like yogurt, milk and cheese are all rich in zinc. A cup of yogurt with some nuts, seeds, and oats is a perfect snack or light meal.

## TOXINS

# Nitrates in Tap and Bottled Water Pose Prostate Cancer Risk: Study

NAVEEN ATHRAPULLY

A lifetime of consumption of bottled or tap water containing nitrates could be a risk factor for prostate cancer, a Spanish study has found.

The study, published in *Environmental Health Perspectives* on March 8, was led by the Barcelona Institute for Global Health (ISGlobal). It looks at the link between waterborne nitrate and trihalomethanes (THMs) and prostate cancer risk. Both nitrate and THMs are some of the most common contaminants in drinking water. Nitrate in drinking water is the result of fertilizers and manure from livestock farming washed by rainfall into rivers and aquifers, and THMs are byproducts of water disinfection.

The research team studied 697 cases of prostate cancer between 2008 and 2013, including 97 aggressive tumors. The control group was composed of 927 men between the ages of 38 and 85 who at the time hadn't been diagnosed with cancer.

The team then estimated the average nitrate and THM exposure of all individuals from the age of 18. The analysis found that a higher intake of nitrate was associated with prostate cancer.

Individuals classified as having higher waterborne nitrate ingestion were found to be 1.6 times more likely to develop me-

dium-grade or low-grade prostate cancer. They were also three times more likely to develop an aggressive prostate tumor when compared to individuals with lower nitrate intakes.

"It has been suggested that aggressive prostate cancers, which are associated with a worse prognosis, have different underlying aetiological causes than slow-growing tumors with an indolent course, and our findings confirm this possibility," ISGlobal researcher Carolina Donat-Vargas said in a press release.

## Diet Effects

The link between nitrate ingestion and prostate cancer was found only among men who had a low intake of fiber, vitamin C, fruits, and vegetables in their diet. Among participants who consumed less than 11 grams of fiber per day, higher nitrate intake was found to have raised the likelihood of prostate cancer by 2.3 times.

In comparison, among those who consumed more than 11 grams of fiber, higher nitrate intake wasn't associated with a greater likelihood of prostate cancer.

"Antioxidants, vitamins, and polyphenols in fruits and vegetables may inhibit the formation of nitrosamines—compounds with carcinogenic potential—in the stomach," Donat-Vargas said.

"Moreover, vitamin C has shown signifi-

## Nitrates and trihalomethanes are some of the most common contaminants in drinking water.

Researchers found people who drank more waterborne nitrates faced a higher risk of prostate cancer.



IAN THAWATRE/SHUTTERSTOCK

cant anti-tumor activity. And fiber, for its part, benefits the intestinal bacteria, which protect against food-derived toxicants, including nitrosamines."

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer among men in Spain, accounting for 22 percent of all tumors diagnosed in this demographic.

## Prostate Cancer in US, Low Vitamin D Risk

The American Cancer Society (ACS) estimates that there will be about 288,300 new cases of prostate cancer in the United States this year, with 34,700 deaths. About one in eight men is estimated to be diagnosed with prostate cancer during their lifetime.

Older men and non-Hispanic black men are more likely to develop prostate cancer, according to the ACS. About 60 percent of cases are among men aged 65 or older, and the cancer is rarer in men younger than 40. A 2017 study found a link between low vitamin D and prostate cancer. Men who were deficient in vitamin D were found to have more aggressive prostate cancer.

Adam Murphy, an assistant professor of urology at Northwestern University and lead investigator in the study, said: "Men with dark skin, low vitamin D intake, or low sun exposure should be tested for vitamin D deficiency when they are diagnosed with an elevated PSA or prostate cancer. Then a deficiency should be corrected with supplements."

Earlier research by Murphy and colleagues found that black men who live in areas with low sunlight have up to 1.5 times more vitamin D deficiency than white men.

## Health Benefits of Pine Needles

When steeped in hot water, pine needles release vitamin C and shikimic acid.

Shikimic acid has been shown to have anti-fungal, anti-viral, and anti-inflammatory properties.

Shikimic acid has also been shown to have attributes that support healthy cardiovascular function.



White pines (*Pinus strobus*), are known to provide many different compounds and nutrients, including antioxidants, vitamin C, essential oils, amino acids, and flavonoids.

Pine needle tea offers health-sustaining nutrients, antioxidants, amino acids, and polyphenols.





## NATURE IS MEDICINE

## The Biophilia Hypothesis

## Are We Hardwired to Be

There is mounting evidence that all the time we have spent indoors over the past 2 years is making us sick. Are our minds and bodies wired to heal themselves by simply going outside?

JEFF GARDNER

There's an adage that goes, "If you want to boil a live frog, don't turn up the heat too quickly, or the frog will jump out of the pot." Aside from why you would want to boil a frog, the point is that we may not notice incremental life-threatening changes until the damage is severe.

If that's true, the lockdowns and shut-ins of the past two years may have boiled our collective well-being to shoe leather.

Beginning in 2022, The Epoch Times reported widely on the devastating effects of the COVID-19 lockdowns. From increases in obesity and depression to delayed learning and cognitive development in children, the evidence is overwhelming that the COVID-19 lockdowns caused significant harm.

As bad as the effects of the lockdowns were, the greatest harm to our health might well be the long-term increase in the time we spent—and continue to spend—indoors.

Starting in the 1980s, the amount of time Americans spend indoors has been steadily climbing. Even before the lockdowns, data showed that Americans were spending a

whopping 90 to 93 percent of their time indoors. That isn't healthy.

Years before governmental COVID-19 mandates forced people indoors, a mountain of evidence revealed a nasty slew of negative physical and psychological effects from too much time indoors: depression, cardiovascular disease, respiratory ailments, inflammation, and much more.

Although our health has clearly suffered from being "locked in," there's good news: A substantial body of evidence suggests that our bodies are hardwired to be cured by nature. Just 20 minutes a day spent outside has been shown to improve health dramatically.

In the early 1980s, a Japanese researcher named Tomohide Akiyama began publishing findings about how our bodies responded to being in a natural environment. In a series of studies, Akiyama encouraged participants to go out into a forest or a park and slowly, mindfully, spend short periods of time there, a process he called shinrin-yoku, or "forest bathing." Akiyama found that being out in nature lowered blood pressure, improved heart function, and suppressed the release of stress hormones.

**Thompson asserts that the joy, even the wellness that we feel when in nature, comes from a deep connection with our metaphysical origins.**

Why do our bodies respond so well when we spend time outside?

In 1984, American biologist Edward O. Wilson published a book called "Biophilia," in which he speculated that we are genetically designed to be attracted to nature and natural things. Wilson proposed that our bodies and minds adapted to living outside and thus don't respond well to being kept indoors.

"The biophilia hypothesis boldly asserts the existence of a biologically based, inherent human need to affiliate with life and lifelike process," he wrote.

Wilson's biophilia hypothesis seemed to support Akiyama's work, but nonetheless sparked a 20-year debate within the scientific community.

In 2005, journalist Richard Louv published "Last Child in the Woods." In the book, Louv coined the term "nature-deficit disorder" to describe what he believed was happening to children as the time they spent indoors increased.

Louv chronicled exploding rates of obesity, skyrocketing adolescent depression, and a whole host of negative effects brought on by "an increasing divide between the young and the natural world."

Louv agreed with Wilson that we are genetically wired to be outside and wrote that our children were suffering from a gross

## Cured by Nature?

deficiency of nature, which he called "Vitamin N." The response to "Last Child in the Woods" was nothing short of sensational, and the book was praised by a chorus of leading thinkers, writers, clinicians, and politicians.

**Biological Nature or Divinely Nurtured?**

Centuries before we began gathering clinical data about the benefits of being outside, people knew that the natural world held the power to heal. From the ancient Greeks to the Romans to the native peoples of the Americas, there's a long history of extolling the benefit of being in and around nature.

While Akiyama, Wilson, and Louv theorized that this healing response is linked to evolutionary biology, others such as theologian and ecologist Christopher Thompson claim that we are drawn to nature because of our divine origins.

While Thompson doesn't deny the physical benefits of being outside, he emphasizes that the driving force of these benefits is that nature, with its order, structure, and predictable rhythms, has been created as our first "classroom" in which we learn about the Creator and how we fit in the created order.

In his book "The Joyful Mystery," Thompson takes issue with the theory that we

feel better when in nature because of a connection to a "biologically driven unconsciousness... remnants of a past now long forgotten through the centuries of evolution and progress."

Instead, Thompson asserts that the joy, even the wellness that we feel when in nature, comes from a deep connection with our metaphysical origins—an insight "into our status as a creature within the cosmos, created by God who is love." Put plainly, Thompson writes that we feel better in nature because we feel a sense of awe, which is "a glimpse of the gift of being."

Whether the benefits of being outside arise from our biology or a connection to a creator, the evidence of those benefits is clear and conclusive. These benefits are especially strong during the winter months, during which daylight hours are shorter and, as the temperature drops, we tend to spend increased time indoors.

According to some studies, during the cold winter months, we spend nearly twice as much time indoors as during summer. While this isn't surprising, more time indoors increases our exposure to allergens—such as dust mites—known to cause respiratory difficulties such as asthma, especially in children.

When we combine our increased time indoors with shorter winter days, we decrease

our exposure to sunlight, which in turn reduces our levels of vitamin D, an essential for fighting infections such as COVID-19. Taken together, the drop in sunlight during winter, increased exposure to allergens, and a lack of vitamin D take a toll on our mental and physical health.

However, there is good news: Just 10 to 20 minutes spent outside during the winter months has been shown to improve physical and mental health, according to a study published in *Frontiers in Psychology* in 2019. And the benefits of being outside aren't connected to any particular activity—walking, building a snowman, or just standing outside can all help improve health during the winter months.

On colder days, when the temperature is below freezing, be sure to dress appropriately. Layers of clothing work best, and clothing made from natural fibers such as wool and down tend to work better than synthetics. Cotton clothing will keep you warmer than polyester, but since it's a natural fiber, it tends to absorb and hold moisture (from the weather or perspiration), and it's a poor insulator when wet.

Lockdowns left us shut inside, missing out on the elevating effects of the great outdoors.



Dressing well and staying warm can make going outdoors in winter a pleasure rather than a chore and help ensure you actually want to get outside. As the old Scandinavian saying goes, "There is no bad weather, just bad clothing."

Dr. Jeff Gardner, Ph.D., has a background in biology and teaches and researches at Regent University. His interests include the relationship between media use and our physical and spiritual well-being. An avid backpacker, when not writing, lecturing or traveling, he can be found somewhere on trail. You can reach him at jeffgar@mail.regent.edu



From the ancient Greeks to the Romans to the native peoples of the Americas, there's a long history of extolling the benefit of being in and around nature.

## New WHO Amendments Creating a Global Regime in the Name of Health

Continued from Page 1

Doctors across many countries and diverse regions have a plethora of different methods to treat something as simple as a cold. Some may give you a flu shot, some may prescribe you some minor medication, and some might even tell you to drink hot soup and get lots of rest. There may also be an unfamiliar remedy from Latin America or Southeast Asia that works just as well as something you could pick up in a U.S. pharmacy.

This is all to say that well-trained doctors know what they're doing, given the methods available to them.

The one-on-one patient-doctor relationship has traditionally been the tried-and-true way to establish a health system in any society. Advice from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, or other health agencies serves as nonbinding recommendations to doctors that give them the right to make their own decisions based on their knowledge of the patient—even under evidence-based medicine.

People make their own final health-related decisions; hence, doctors need consent from their patients for treatment or surgeries. The trust that people give to their

doctors is sacred and demands that doctors practice medicine grounded in ethics and based on genuine medical knowledge, skills, and experience—all things that most doctors still have.

Notwithstanding what has been the norm for generations, the advancement of modern medicine and biotechnology has turned the fields of health and medicine into huge industries. As a result, the quality of health care has become increasingly dependent on the allocation of resources and distribution of wealth.

Big Pharma, powerful health agencies, and dominant health insurance enterprises are all intertwined, forming a tremendous conglomerate of power. In the name of protecting the people, this manifestation of power has reached an unprecedented level, which was on full display during the pandemic in the form of lockdowns, mandates, the rush of drugs and vaccines, insurance policies determining diagnosis, etc.

**WHO: A Global Regime in the Name of Health?**

Then, we have international organizations such as the WHO, with a role many people deem too arbitrary to consider an eminent element in their life. It was created within the United

Nations and historically played a coordinating role in global health issues and resources, in helping with public health threats like polio, AIDS, and COVID. However, its latest proposed reform raises a serious concern over whether the WHO is turning into a global quasi-regime.

The newest changes the WHO is pursuing are amendments to the International Health Regulations agreement. The World Health Assembly first adopted the IHR in 1969 to cover six diseases and it has since been revised several times. A fully updated version was implemented in 2005 after China's SARS outbreak in 2003, after the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) refused to maintain transparency during the outbreak. This 2005 edition of the IHR is now facing stark changes.

The IHR demands WHO nations detect, assess, report, and respond appropriately in regard to public health emergencies that can spread on an international scale. During



The vaccine passports gave governments the opportunity to install a system to control and monitor citizens' movement.

the COVID-19 pandemic, especially during its onset, China demonstrated an aptitude for disinformation and a lack of transparency toward the international community with regard to sharing data, allowing a probe into the origins of the virus, and issues involving the most recent unprecedented spike of infections and death after the country lifted its zero-COVID restrictions.

Not unrelated to these international incidences, the WHO has published a number of amendments to the IHR that will strengthen the WHO's power considerably pertaining to global health emergencies. For example, the WHO will have the power to act upon potential rather than actual emergencies and allow the director-general of the WHO control over the production of medication that may be allocated as he or she deems fit.

One concern is that the WHO will have the authority to override health measure decisions made by individual nations and grant the organization the capacity to censor what it considers misinformation and disinformation, should the amendments be adopted. This is a serious threat to the sovereignty of every WHO member nation.

Another startling change was the removal of "respect for the dignity, human rights, and fundamental freedoms of persons" in Article 3 of the IHR, replaced with the terms "equity" and "inclusivity."

At the same time, the WHO's new

amendments change the advisory nature of the IHR to that of law, meaning that the organization will hold just as much power—if not more—compared with a governing body with legally binding jurisdiction and enforcement capabilities.

The aforementioned changes, and many more, are troubling because the amendments are vague in nature and leave much room for interpretation. For example, the amendments don't specify the amount of funding countries need to contribute, which could lead to an escalation of corruption in underdeveloped countries.

**Global Health Certificate System With Multiple Risks**

During the pandemic, there have been a number of health certificate systems set up across some parts of North America, Europe, and other countries, yet none was as pervasive and heavily enforced as the health QR-code system in China. Throughout China's three years of extreme zero-COVID measures, the color of a code on your phone decided whether you were allowed to leave the community grounds, eat in restaurants, or even be admitted to a hospital to give birth.

The QR-code system was able to track your movement and used an algorithm to determine if you were considered at risk of being infected. If you were at risk, your code would turn yellow and authorities would send you to a quarantine camp at your own expense. This QR-code

system was also attached to your personal bank account so that your mandatory quarantine in a hotel could be paid for before you arrived.

Implemented by a regime that has little regard for human rights, codes were allegedly turned yellow or even red (indicating infection) for citizens who complained about the strict pandemic measures. Such an invasive system has immense potential to abolish privacy and self-determination, forcing residents to live under an Orwellian regime.

The superficial intent of the health certificate system is benign, yet it could be a convenient tool for driving the establishment of an overarching global government. It could be an integral component in achieving a globalist agenda without requiring support from the masses.

Health certificates aren't the only thing the WHO wishes to add to the world government. The agency also demands an International Negotiating Body (INB) with the power of pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response incorporated into its duties.

**INB Might Be Another Excuse for Control**

Citing the "catastrophic failure of the international community in showing solidarity and equity in response to the... pandemic" in its preamble, the zero draft for the INB initiated in 2022 and revised as of February 2023 calls for an international organization with authority

exceeding some, if not most, governments across the world that are able to act in response to the next global health emergency.

At the same time, the INB also includes the "One Health" initiative, currently a five-year plan aimed at tackling zoonotic epidemics around the world. It can be interpreted that the INB would be the acting arm of the WHO "superpower," while the IHR would provide the legal basis for the arbitrary government. Funding for these measures, as proposed, would come from the World Bank.

**One of the most pressing issues here might be the WHO's lack of transparency.**

While the WHO prepares to balloon its power with these amendments, one question begs an answer: Were people satisfied with how the organization handled the pandemic? Global public opinion seems to be divided on this topic. While European and North American developed nations seem to be supportive of the WHO's efforts, some Asian countries such as Japan and South Korea are voicing their dissatisfaction.

Meanwhile, the policies the WHO is trying to enact are also sources of potent social tension and division. Many seem to be divided between

enacting a private health passport and a government-operated health passport that can be used as proof of vaccination or for similar causes.

Like any good government with checks and balances, doesn't the WHO also need an objective post-COVID evaluation before the amendments are adopted? This brings up the issues of what kind of supervising entity the WHO falls under, and whether legal mechanisms exist so the WHO can be held accountable should it fail to handle a critical public health crisis. These issues need to be addressed before any changes are adopted.

Therefore, one of the most pressing issues here might be the WHO's lack of transparency and proposed accountability measures. The language used in the amendment document is extremely vague and leaves much room for interpretation. At the same time, there seems to be a concerning lack of checks and balances within the proposed new order.

All 194 nations in the WHO are set to vote on the amendments and finalize the new INB by May 2024, which could bring sweeping changes to the livelihood of generations to come. Have people been well-informed and educated about these changes? Shouldn't there be more public and open debates for more transparency to show what is coming if the amendments are adopted? Why is the mainstream media not picking up on this?



INTENTIONAL LIVING

# Why Walking Is Underrated

This simple, uplifting activity connects you with your community and a calmer, more contented mind

MIKE DONGHIA

Walking, one of life's simplest pleasures, has somehow become underrated. How do I know this?

Well, I walk every day for nearly an hour. I start from my house in town and set out in different directions through neighborhoods, parks, and trails. I walk in the morning, afternoon, and evening. I walk during the week and during the weekends. And when I travel somewhere, I walk there too.

But sadly, I don't run into many other people while on my walks, especially when the weather is anything less than perfect.

This observation isn't meant to guilt trip those of you who don't walk. It's just a call to reconsider. Walking is one of my absolute favorite things to do, and I want to spread the word about how great it is.

Here are a few specific things I enjoy about my daily walk. There's nothing stopping you from enjoying them too!

**It gets me outside and into the sun.** I love the feeling of the warm sun on my skin when I walk on a brisk morning. That narrow band of temperature at which you can feel both sensations at once is a simple pleasure I savor. As an added bonus, the sunlight helps me to get my daily dose of vitamin D, and avoid being part of the 40 percent of Americans who are deficient.

**It gives my mind space to wander.** There are precious few spaces in this busy, modern world to think without rushing, or to let your mind explore an idea without a particular goal in mind. Walking is one activity that always provides this space. Something about the rhythm and light exertion tunes out the world without requiring my focus.

**I get to really know a place.** With the many miles I've walked through my town, I feel that I have truly come to know its rhythms. I notice little things such as which homeowners keep their yards looking nice, which businesses are busiest, and what my town looks like through the various seasons of the year.

**I don't need any equipment.** I love that I can put on a pair of shoes, any shoes, and walk out my front door at a moment's notice. The sidewalk in front of my house connects me to any place I'd want to go. There's no planning or equipment needed, just a simple decision to go for a walk.

**It's good for me physically.** People who don't consider walking to be "proper" exercise are really missing out. The Mayo Clinic documents a long list of health benefits of taking a brisk daily walk. These include lower risk of heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, cancer, and Type 2 diabetes—just to name a few. In the short term, I can also attest that my daily walks make me feel great and full of energy.

**It's good for my brain.** Not only does walking help me to relax and clear my mind, it's also good for the long-term health of my brain. Research published in *NeuroImage*, a peer-reviewed journal, showed that a six-month walking intervention improved episodic



ANDREA OBZEROVA/EYEEM/GETTY IMAGES

Walking will help you relax and clear your mind. It's also good for the long-term health of your brain.

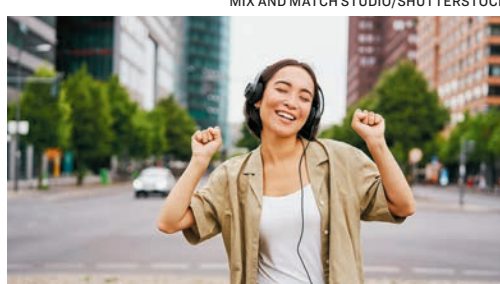
**40 PERCENT**

A walk in the sun will help you get your daily dose of vitamin D and help you avoid being part of the 40 percent of Americans who are deficient.

**I can easily dial in my walks to just the perfect level of effort on any given day, a quality that makes me much more likely to get out the door.**



Make your walk productive by inviting a colleague or friend to come along. Then you can socialize or problem solve in an invigorating way.



You can relax on your walk, let your mind wander, or pump yourself up by listening to some of your favorite music.

memory in older adults and increased brain plasticity compared with a control group.

**I can be productive while I walk.** When you walk, your hands are usually free, you aren't out of breath, and your mind isn't completely occupied by the effort—that opens up all sorts of interesting opportunities to multitask. Some things I like to do while I walk: think through a problem, outline an article, talk to a friend on the phone, pray, and occasionally listen to a podcast or audiobook.

**I can be delightfully unproductive.** That last point being said, there are many times when I just like to relax my mind and let it wander wherever it wants to go. Sometimes, that means completely zoning out and not thinking about anything at all. I just enjoy the weather, the sounds, and the sights as they happen. This can be a kind of pleasure of its own.

**It's just the right amount of effort.** For me, walking really hits the sweet spot when it comes to exertion. If I want, I can go for a leisurely stroll with my nice clothes on and not worry about getting sweaty or disheveled. On the other hand, there are some very hilly routes near my home that I often like to tackle with vigor, which leaves me quite out of breath. I can easily dial in my walks to just the perfect level of effort on any given day, a quality that makes me much more likely to get out the door.

**I see a friendly side of humanity.** As I mentioned already, I don't see a lot of walkers on my walks, but I do see a number of other faces: crossing guards, construction

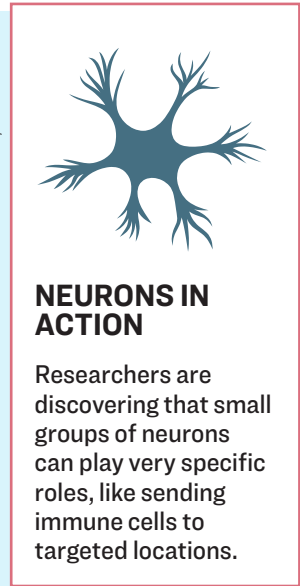
workers, children playing, people on bikes, people in cars, people on porches, people standing in their yards, and more. And despite all the negative headlines you read about the world, so many of these people greet me with a smile, a wave, or a friendly nod. It encourages me and makes me glad for these simple interactions.

**It puts me in a good mood.** I have never, in all my walking, returned from a walk in a worse mood than when I started. It's nearly impossible! It isn't that I come back from my walks skipping with joy—it's more like a pleasant, relaxed mood comes over me and gently pushes aside my concerns. This has even been my experience when I start my walk as a grump.

**I get to see interesting things.** When you spend time walking around, you never know what you'll get to see. Recently, for example, I watched a box truck drive straight off the road, over an embankment, and into a corn field. Everyone was OK, but it's a memory I won't soon forget. I also get to see other, less dramatic events unfold, such as the progress of various construction projects throughout our town.

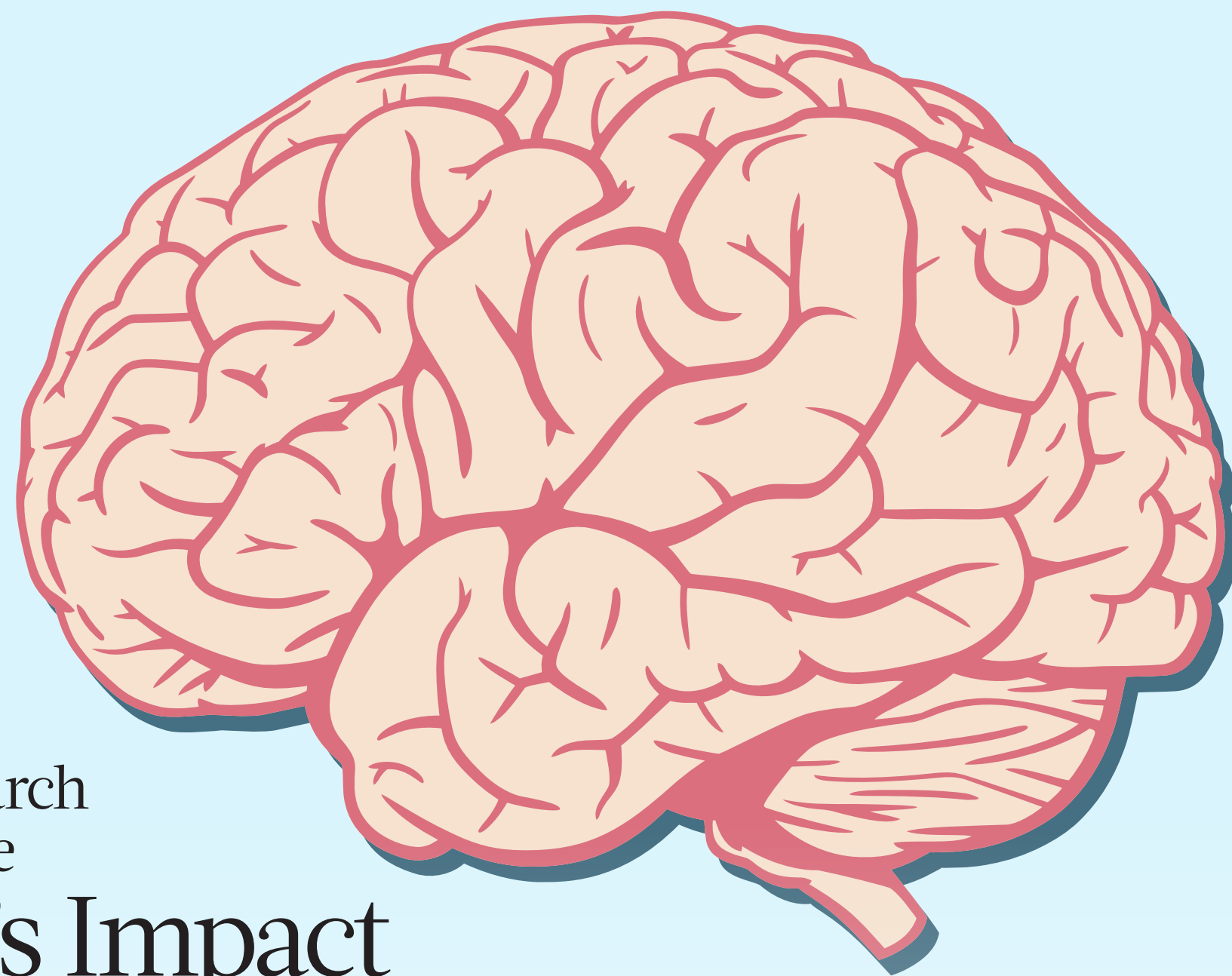
In summary, walking is a simple, no-cost activity that adds so much value to my life. Based on how great it's been for me, I think more people should be walking. At least give it a try—you've got nothing to lose!

*Mike (and his wife, Mollie) blog at This Evergreen Home where they share their experience with living simply, intentionally, and relationally in this modern world. You can follow along by subscribing to their twice-weekly newsletter.*



**NEURONS IN ACTION**

Researchers are discovering that small groups of neurons can play very specific roles, like sending immune cells to targeted locations.



ALL ILLUSTRATIONS BY GETTY IMAGES UNLESS NOTED OTHERWISE

# New Research Reveals the Brain's Impact on Immunity and Disease

Insights from the cellular and molecular levels show how mental health, heart disease, and more are shaped by changes in the brain

DAVID CHARBONNEAU

New research is discovering a complex and intimate connection between our state of mind and the functioning of the immune system.

Yet-to-be-published research recently summarized in the journal *Nature* unearthed a fascinating connection between the brain and recovery from heart attacks in mice.

Examining scarring on the hearts of the rodents, researchers at the Technion Israel Institute of Technology in Haifa discovered a significant difference in the level of

damage between one group of mice that had received stimulation of a brain area involved in positive emotion and motivation, and the control group that received no stimulation.

The control group showed significant evidence of damage to heart cells under the microscope while the brain-stimulated mice had a far less detectable injury.

"In the beginning, we were sure that it was too good to be true," Hedva Haykin, a doctoral student conducting the research, told *Nature*. It was only after repeating the experiment several times, Haykin said, that she was able to accept the effect she was seeing as real.

**A Deeper Understanding**

Haykin's work is part of a growing boom in medical research exploring the connection between the brain and the immune system. Scientists are discovering mul-



Researchers were shocked by how much brain stimulation affected rodents' recovery from heart attack.

**“In the beginning, we were sure that it was too good to be true.”**

*Hedva Haykin, doctoral student, Technion-Israel Institute of Technology in Haifa, on her research findings.*

tiple lines of communication between the nervous and immune systems and different parts of the brain communicating different instructions to our body's defensive systems.

"This field has really exploded over the last several years," Filip Swirski, director of the Cardiovascular Research Institute at Mount Sinai in New York, told *The Epoch Times*.

Swirski pointed out that the immune system and the nervous system are "arguably the only two systems of the body that we know have the capacity to learn."

"The immune system can, for example, acquire memory of previous infection," Swirski said, "which allows it to rapidly respond to new infections."

Swirski and other researchers published findings in *Nature* in May 2022 that explored how distinct regions of the brain shape immune response on a granular level—with different cells of the immune system being directed by different regions of the brain.

*Continued on Page 14*

# Menopause, Blood Sugar, and Weight Management

Understanding how menopause affects blood sugar can help you focus on effective strategies to stay healthy and lose weight

ASHLEY TURNER

Glucose is an important fuel for the human body. Every individual processes glucose differently, influenced by both physical and environmental factors. During menopause, glucose levels are shown to become significantly more challenging to control, due to shifting and changing hormonal balances.

**Insulin Resistance**  
Insulin is a hormone that helps to control the

amount of glucose (blood sugar) in an individual's blood. Glucose is the main source of fuel in the body. Insulin works to pull glucose from the bloodstream and insert it into the body's cells. Insulin resistance occurs when the cells in the liver, muscles, and body fat ignore or resist insulin's signaling attempts.

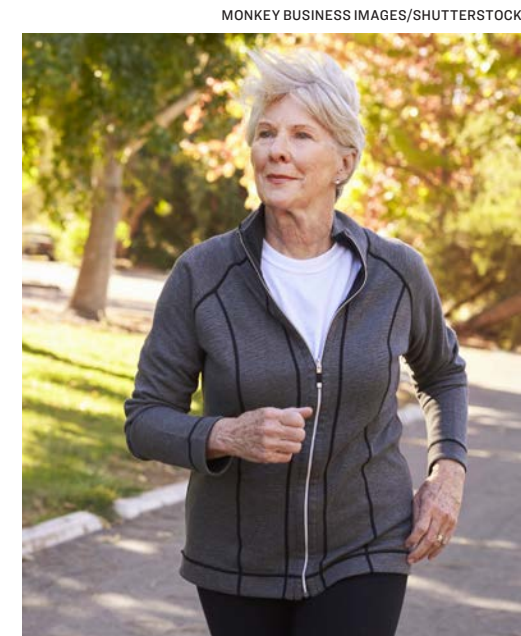
If the cells in the body don't respond correctly to signals from the insulin, sugar stays in the blood. The result is high blood sugar, or too much glucose, pumping through the bloodstream.

**Estrogen and Its Relationship With Menopausal Weight Gain**

Many women experience weight gain as they go through menopause. This is typically due to a lack of estrogen because estrogen helps to optimize insulin. Estrogen and progesterone production slow down gradually over time as a woman goes through each stage of the menopausal process. As this happens, the body has a greater potential to develop insulin resistance.

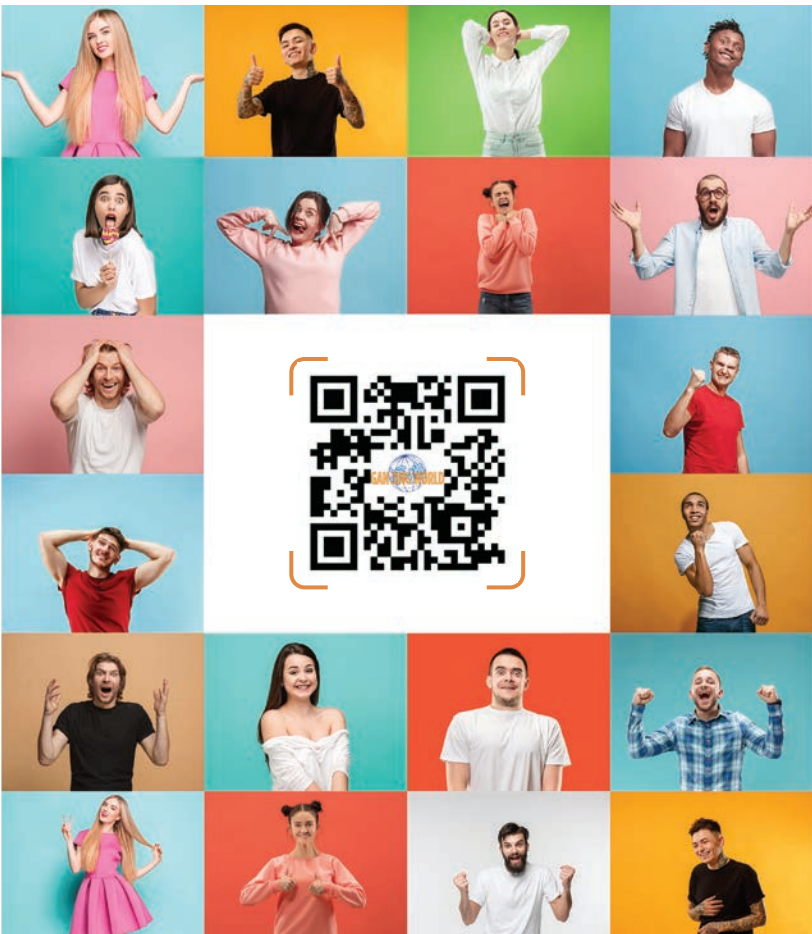
Estrogen also has an impact on hunger and satiety signals, so as estrogen levels plummet, a woman's appetite often increases. A menopausal woman who at one time had no significant issues with overeating or recognizing when she was actually hungry may find herself feeling constantly hungry and consuming a much higher number of calories, resulting in weight gain.

*Continued on Page 12*



MONKEY BUSINESS IMAGES/SHUTTERSTOCK

As we age, we need to make a more conscientious effort to keep moving the body or it will deteriorate, gain weight, and more quickly develop disease.



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According to traditional Chinese medicine, eggplant is a food with a cool nature so it's good to eat during the warmer months to cool your body.

FOOD AS MEDICINE

## From Superfood to Medicine: The Incredible Health Benefits of Eggplants

Research suggests that this nutritious fruit can do everything from help us lose weight to combat cancer

ELLEN WAN

The spongy eggplant is classified as a berry or fruit but is typically used as a vegetable in dishes around the world. For centuries, people have relied upon this food for its nutritional and medicinal value.

An encyclopedia of traditional Chinese medicine from China's Ming Dynasty, the "Compendium of Materia Medica," claims that the eggplant uniquely treats fever accompanied with chills, enhances blood circulation, relieves pain, reduces swelling, and broadens the intestines (to prevent constipation).

Modern nutritionists say eggplant is a superfood because it's low in calories and sodium and is rich in dietary fiber, vitamins, and minerals. Every 100 grams of eggplant contains:

- 25 calories
- 5.3 grams of carbohydrates
- 2.7 grams of dietary fiber
- 221 milligrams of potassium
- 16 milligrams of calcium
- 29 milligrams of phosphorus
- 15 milligrams of magnesium

It also contains vitamin B, vitamin C, and "vitamin P"—plant compounds called flavonoids. Eggplant contains citrin, rutin, hesperidin, flavones, and flavonols.

Dr. Yalan Tsai of Taiwan's Taichung Veterans General Hospital listed the following benefits of eating eggplant to The Epoch Times.

### Rich in Antioxidants and Helps Prevent Dementia

The bright-purple color of eggplant comes from flavonoid glycosides, antioxidants that are useful in combating dementia. These help protect brain cells and prevent age-related memory loss and cognitive degeneration.

A study published in the Journal of Food Biochemistry found that a diet supplemented with eggplant modulates the activities of the enzymes in purinergic, monoaminergic, and cholinergic enzyme systems associated with Alzheimer's disease-like symptoms. The authors concluded that "eggplant fruits could serve as a holistic measure in the prevention of diabetes-related complications such as neurodegenerative disease."

### Prevents Macular Lesions in Eyes

Eggplant is rich in lutein, a deep-yellow pigment found in plants and egg yolk that has anti-inflammatory properties. It helps to inhibit free radicals and prevent macular lesions. It also reduces the harmful effects of blue light on the eyes caused by the sun, fluorescent lighting, and LED devices.

A study published in Nutrients found that Solanum melongena L. (EPX), an extract of eggplant, "protected A2E-laden ARPE-19 cells against blue light-induced cell death via attenuating reactive oxygen species." According to the study authors, "EPX administration in BALB/c mice reduced the fundus damage and degeneration of the retinal layer in a blue light-induced retinal damage model."

### Helps to Lose Weight and Prevent Diabetes

Since eggplant is low in calories and high in nutrients and fiber, it's an excellent aid for weight loss. The fiber contained in eggplant helps slow digestion and adds a sense of satiety, which reduces overall caloric intake.

A review paper published in the Iranian Journal of Basic Medical Sciences showed that eggplant can control diabetes through its antioxidative properties and inhibition of alpha-amylase and alpha-glucosidase activity. Also, eggplant may show protective effects on hyperlipidemia and obesity via the induction of lipoprotein lipase activity and the reduction of pancreatic lipase activity. Eggplant can also be used to treat metabolic syndrome and its complications.

### Beneficial in Fighting Inflammation and Cancer

Eggplant contains a compound called solasodine rhamnosyl glycosides (SRGs). Some animal studies have shown that SRGs can kill cancer cells and reduce the recurrence of certain types of cancer. In addition, anthocyanins in eggplant can inhibit tumor angiogenesis, reduce inflammation, and inhibit the enzymes that spread cancer cells.

A study published in Mutation Research mentioned that, in response to hydrogen peroxide, cells treated with six eggplant extracts prevented DNA human lymphocytes. The study authors concluded that eggplants have the potential to provide health benefits associated with prevention or reduced risk of developing chronic diseases, such as cancer.

### Precautions About Eggplant

Despite the benefits of eating eggplant, Chinese medical doctors have also cautioned against eating too much because doing so could potentially be detrimental for some people.

For insight into this opposing view, The Epoch Times spoke with Dr. Zhen Lixue, the director of Japan's Heisei Acupuncture Therapy Center in Okayama. He said that while eggplant is beneficial to the body, it should be eaten in moderation.

Zhen said the focus of traditional Chinese medicine is to keep the body in balance. For example, eggplant is a food with cool nature and is ideal for consumption during warm months to help cool the body and relieve the summer heat. Eggplant is especially good for people with constipation, bleeding hemorrhoids, and damp fever and those who are prone to heat rash and boils.

According to Zhen, "Chinese medicine views women as yin in nature, and tend to have cold constitutions, so they should not eat foods of cool nature regularly."

"People who have a weak spleen and stomach, and are prone to diarrhea and loose stools, should also watch how much eggplant they eat," he added. Zhen warned that eating eggplant before surgery isn't a good idea since doing so may affect the speed of recovery.

A second medical encyclopedia from China's Ming Dynasty, the "Dian Nan Ben Cao," contains much the same precautions about the eggplant as Li Shizhen's in "Compendium of Materia Medica." While this inherently cold food is beneficial to the body, eating too much has the potential of "causing chronic diseases, sores and scabies, abdominal pain, and diarrhea, and may also be harmful to a woman's uterus."



Eggplant is low in calories and sodium, and rich in dietary fiber, vitamins, and minerals.

# A Powerful Herbal Tea for Chronic Pain

Traditional Chinese medicine offers a unique perspective on chronic pain and safe ways to treat it

According to Chinese medicine, long-term pain is mostly caused by blood stasis.



MAY CHENG & TERESA ZHANG

It's estimated that about 20 percent of adults worldwide suffer from some sort of pain disorder. Many patients are unable to recover after repeatedly seeking medical treatment, and sometimes the cause of the pain can't be fully diagnosed.

Dr. Tse See-li, a Hong Kong-registered traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) practitioner, said that long-term pain is mostly caused by blood stasis, and the use of Chinese herbal medicine that promotes blood circulation and removes blood stasis can resolve the pain once and for all. He also recommends one Chinese herbal tea which can help improve the body's microcirculation and remove blood stasis.

"Blood stasis" is a common concept in TCM. TCM believes that physiological activities of the human body not only rely on blood circulation to supply nutrients, but also depend on the energy inside the body—the movement of qi.

Tse points out that qi (energy) stays in the blood, and the movement of blood is driven by qi. Only with qi can the blood be pushed to the capillaries and flow around the whole body. If the body doesn't have enough qi, the microcirculation will become poor and blood stasis will easily occur.

He likened the movement of qi and blood to the water flow in a river. Sandbars are formed at the turns when the speed of the water slows down and the sediment gradually settles. When qi and blood circulation are blocked, pain will also occur, which is described as "pain if there is no flow" in TCM theory.

Modern-day research also links chronic pain with cardiovascular problems. A study based on Taiwan's National Health Insurance Research Database found that people with chronic pain have a significantly higher risk of developing cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases than others. After adjusting for the effects of diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, and hyperlipidemia, the risk of stroke and other cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases in patients with chronic pain is still 30 percent higher.

### Old Wounds Bring New Pain

The cause of blood stasis is not only caused by one's specific constitution, but also by external or internal injury. An injury causes blood to leave a vessel, forming localized bruising. If the blood stasis cannot be absorbed by the body, it will also affect the microcirculation of nearby tissues, and the blood stasis thus formed could enlarge with time, which in turn affects the tissue function of the body.

Tse once treated a patient with complaints of chest pain. He had difficulty breathing, and the pain was so stressful that he couldn't sleep at night. He tried painkillers and acupuncture but to no avail. He also tried stacking a hot pack stuffed with herbal medicine on the visibly affected area and found many bruises floating to the skin surface. Tse found it very strange and asked him if his chest had ever been injured.

The patient recalled that he once fell on his back—nine years ago. At the time of the injury, the pain was relieved by massage with Diedajiu (Chinese medicinal liniment), and since then, he had forgotten about it. Tse speculated that when he fell, he injured his thoracic spine area, resulting in minor blood stasis, but as the tissues near the blood stasis couldn't be nourished by fresh blood, it in

turn affected other body functions over time.

"TCM believes that if blood stasis does not go away, new blood will not be produced. Because of the accumulation of blood stasis, fresh blood cannot reach that area, and the stasis will spread further and further," Tse said.

Tse's treatment is to use Chinese herbal medicine to make a medicinal bag, boil it with wine, and then place the bag on the affected area. Under the action of temperature and medicinal power, the blood stasis will be loosened and becomes easier for the body to absorb. The whole process takes about half an hour to an hour. For bruises from fresh injuries, it can be recovered after two or three treatments, while for the old and more stubborn ones, it takes five to 10 treatments for a full recovery.

## A bruise the size of a grain of rice is already big enough to cause pain if it slips inside a joint.

### Joint Pain From Bruising

Modern-day scientific research has also found that many Chinese herbal medicines can improve pain. A meta-analysis study found that patients with knee arthritis can improve their pain by soaking the affected area in a Chinese herbal solution, with an effective rate 20 percent higher than conventional treatment.

Tse has been using this stasis-removal therapy to treat many patients with long-term joint pain. He said that he once came across a patient who had sought medical treatment everywhere and had been seeing many Chinese and Western doctors both locally and abroad, yet his joint pain just became more and more serious, and he was unable to work in the end.

Some doctors advised him to have an artificial joint replacement, while others suggested he be referred to a neurologist. The patient finally found Tse, and after five treatments of blood stasis removal, the patient was able to return to his work.

Why didn't other doctors see the problem of bruising? Tse explained that a bruise the size of a grain of rice is already big enough to cause pain if it slips inside a joint. However, Western medicine mainly uses X-rays to diagnose syndromes, which can only see the bones and often miss the minute blood stasis. Because of that, it's often misdiagnosed as joint aging or bone spurs being the main culprit.

### Cold Drinks Can Induce Blood Stasis

Apart from blood stasis caused by bruises from injury, Tse pointed out that there's another kind of injury called an "internal injury," which may be caused by food or medicine.

He believes that one of the reasons why modern-day people are more prone to pain is that they often take cold drinks, which can easily affect blood circulation and make pain symptoms appear at a younger age. In particular, women drinking too many cold beverages are prone to dysmenorrhea, and even uterine fibroids, leading to infertility.

Tse also pointed out that when people get older, the flow and circulation of qi and blood slow down, making it easier to form blood



Astragalus nourishes qi and strengthens heart contractions.



Angelica invigorates qi, activates blood, and relaxes the bowels.



Peach kernel moves blood and breaks up stasis.



Chuanxiong rhizome is a medicinal root used to improve circulation.



Peony root is bitter with a cooling nature that helps reduce swelling.

stasis. Therefore, in addition to keeping up with workouts to promote blood circulation, one can also take Chinese herbal tea to help regulate the body.

### Chinese Herbal Tea to Promote Blood Circulation, Remove Blood Stasis

**Ingredients:** astragalus 75 grams (2.7 ounces), angelica 7.5 grams (0.27 ounce), red peony root 7.5 grams (0.27 ounce), Chuanxiong rhizome 3.75 grams (0.13 ounce), peach kernel 3.75 grams (0.13 ounce), safflower 3.75 grams (0.13 ounce).

**Preparation:** Wash all the above and boil in 1 to 2 liters (2 to 4 pints) of water for half an hour. It can be taken in portions throughout the day.

**Note:** Women shouldn't take it during pregnancy and menstruation. People with yin deficiency and internal heat constitution should take it in moderation.

According to Tse, this prescription is based on the "Buyang Huanwu (yang-supplementary and five-returning) Decoction" by Wang Qingren, an eminent TCM practitioner in the Qing Dynasty, and adjusted to the appropriate amount for daily health care purposes. He often drinks it himself.

"Buyang Huanwu Decoction" is a commonly used formula in the treatment of stroke in TCM, and its efficacy has been confirmed by several studies. Apart from treating ischemic stroke, it is also beneficial for other vascular diseases, such as diabetic nephropathy and angina pectoris.

Tse pointed out that this prescription uses a large amount of astragalus, focusing on nourishing qi and blood, combined with other medicinal materials that can promote blood circulation, it has the effect of dispelling blood stasis.

Astragalus nourishes qi, can strengthen heart contraction, reduces thrombus formation, promotes bone marrow hematopoiesis, and regulates blood sugar.

Angelica invigorates qi, activates blood, moistens the intestines, and relaxes the bowels.

Paeoniae Rubra has an inhibitory effect on platelet aggregation and thrombus formation, can increase coronary artery flow, and expand the pulmonary blood vessels. Chuanxiong rhizome can strengthen the heart and can treat angina pectoris. For example, it can treat dementia in the elderly when combined with ginseng.

Peach kernel promotes blood circulation and removes blood stasis, moistens the intestines, and relieves constipation. Safflower can enhance capillary microcirculation.

However, it should be noted that Chinese medicine classifies people's constitutions into different types. With such a difference in constitutions, the corresponding medicinal materials needed are also different. Tse advised that if you are a person who often feels dry and hot in cold weather, you belong to the "yin deficiency and internal heat" group. In that case, you should not take too much of this tea.

\*Some herbs mentioned in this article may be unfamiliar, but they are generally available in Asian supermarkets.

**Note:** Because different people have different body constitutions, it is recommended to consult your doctor or TCM experts.



# Menopause, Blood Sugar, and Weight Management

Continued from Page 9

As estrogen and progesterone wane during menopause, a woman may also identify changes in how her body distributes fat. Instead of weight gain accumulating around a woman's hips or thighs, the weight may begin to accumulate in the abdominal region, resulting in a larger belly. This fat is called visceral fat and is often referred to as "menopause belly." Visceral fat secretes a protein called retinol-binding protein 4, which is associated with insulin resistance. High amounts of visceral fat can lead to Type 2 diabetes.

## Risk Factors for Menopausal Weight Gain

There are a variety of risk factors associated with menopausal weight gain. Some are physiological and are considered to be nonmodifiable factors. However, psychological and lifestyle-related risk factors can be modified in a variety of ways.

## Physiological Factors

- Aging.
- Decrease in basal metabolic rate and lean mass: Excess weight gain over a short period of time is often observed to coincide with a decline in lean mass. As a menopausal woman's metabolic rate slows down, she may struggle to burn calories effectively enough to maintain an appropriate caloric balance.
- Secondary causes: Conditions such as polycystic ovary syndrome, hypothyroidism, or musculoskeletal disorders such as osteoporosis or osteoarthritis can all be recognized as a primary contributing factor to menopausal weight gain.

## Psychological Factors

- Negative emotional state (depression, stress, anxiety, or mood disorders): Menopausal women may experience these forms of psychological distress, often influenced or triggered by body image concerns. Menopause brings about so many physical changes over time, and some women may find this particularly challenging on an emotional level.
- Emotional eating: Food is comforting, and some menopausal women may turn to food as they combat insecurities and challenges.

## Lifestyle Factors

- Excessive calorie consumption.
- Excessive amounts of sugar and processed foods.
- Lack of physical activity.
- Lack of sleep.

**A simple activity, such as walking 30 minutes per day or 10 to 20 minutes after each meal, can make a huge difference in keeping blood sugar stable throughout the day.**

- Smoking and alcohol consumption.
- Low dietary fiber.

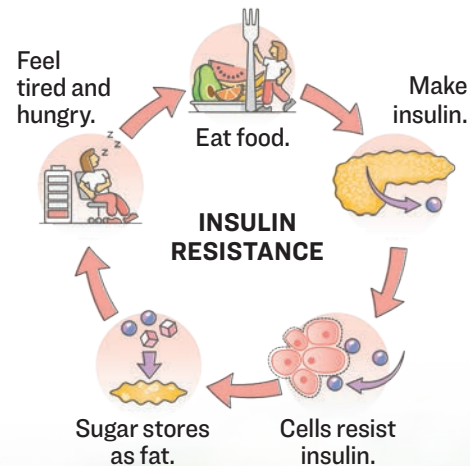
These lifestyle factors work together to create a "perfect storm" of concerns for menopausal women. The quality of food consumed is just as important as the quantity. While caloric consumption is a leading cause of hormonal weight gain, the quality of food matters just as much. Consuming a diet of highly processed foods full of sugar, low-quality fats, and salt won't nourish the body properly, leading to weight gain.

When the body isn't properly nourished, it can cause sluggishness and lack of energy to exercise or be active day-to-day. This can also lead to disrupted sleep patterns.

*Dr. Ashley Turner is a traditionally trained naturopath and board-certified doctor of holistic health for Restorative Wellness Center. As an expert in functional medicine, Turner is the author of the gut-healing guide "Restorative Kitchen" and "Restorative Traditions," a cookbook comprised of non-inflammatory holiday recipes.*

## Tips for Managing Blood Sugar During and After Menopause

Proper blood sugar stabilization and ongoing management of blood glucose levels are key to avoiding weight gain during menopause and beyond.



## Exercise

Exercise is vitally important to maintaining stable glucose levels. It can also help the body to learn how to use insulin in an effective way. There are a variety of reasons women may become less active during menopause, such as physical limitations, lack of energy, and lifestyle changes that don't require them to be as active day-to-day. Carving out intentional time each day to move the body can go a long way.

Regular daily exercise to burn sugar in the body can be done in a variety of ways based on physical ability and preference. A simple activity such as walking 30 minutes per day or 10 to 20 minutes after each meal can make a huge difference in keeping blood sugar stable throughout the day. Other forms of moderate aerobic exercise such as swimming, jogging, or biking can help add variety to an exercise routine, and adding resistance training exercises can help maintain bone density and mass and avoid conditions such as osteoporosis.

Daily exercise can help with keeping caloric intake balanced and relieving common menopausal symptoms such as hot flashes and difficulty sleeping.

## Ensure Proper Thyroid Function

Menopause's decreasing estrogen levels can affect the thyroid hormone at the cellular level and therefore affect metabolic health. Hypothyroidism is when the thyroid gland isn't producing enough thyroid hormone.

This causes the metabolism to slow down, which could further cause weight concerns in menopausal women. A skilled provider should run a thorough thyroid panel and know how to correct any imbalances.



## Drink Water

Keeping hydrated each day helps to flush excess blood sugar through the kidneys and out of the body through urine. Drinking properly filtered water is recommended, and it's beneficial to add a pinch of unrefined salt to help keep minerals and electrolytes balanced. People often mistake thirst for hunger and eat extra calories but remain dehydrated.



## Supplement With Berberine and Cinnamon

Supplementing with berberine and cinnamon can significantly help to control blood sugar.

Berberine, traditionally used in Chinese and Ayurvedic medicine, is a compound found in plants such as Phellodendron, European barberry, and goldenseal. By activating the AMPK protein, berberine helps the body learn to effectively process insulin, which awakens fat-burning enzymes and helps to reduce body fat over time.

Cinnamon is also an effective way of controlling blood sugar. This common aromatic spice is easy to incorporate into a diet each day by adding a small amount to beverages, smoothies, or other foods. Cinnamon helps to slow the breakdown of carbs, helping the body avoid a blood sugar spike, while also increasing insulin sensitivity. It's recommended to only consume about a quarter teaspoon of cassia or up to a teaspoon of Ceylon cinnamon each day.



## Low-Carb Diet

A low-carb diet to minimize glucose intake is highly recommended for women in menopause and postmenopause. Limiting carbohydrate consumption can also make a significant impact on weight loss and blood sugar regulation.

Consuming a nutrient-dense diet full of nourishing foods including grass-fed meat, fish, fruits and vegetables, raw dairy, fermented foods, seeds, and healthy fats will not only keep the body feeling full and satisfied but also help to reduce cravings and keep the blood sugar stable.

Equally important as eating a nutrient-dense diet is avoiding processed foods filled with sugar, inflammatory industrial seed oils, and artificial ingredients. These food products will not only leave the body unsatisfied and generate cravings, but they'll also cause blood sugar spikes and put stress on the body.

It's important to note that a nutrient-dense diet that avoids processed foods doesn't mean a low-calorie diet. Calorie restriction has been linked to a decrease in metabolic rate and can cause weight gain and insulin resistance. Proper food is fuel.



## Manage Stress

Day-to-day stress management is an effective method to keep glucose levels under control. When the body is experiencing stress, cortisol levels begin to increase, signaling the body to produce more glucose.

It's important to work to identify the causes of stress and seek to eliminate or decrease those stressors whenever possible. While that may not be an option at times, there are a variety of ways to manage stress, such as spending time outdoors, engaging in your favorite hobby, talking about your stress with a trusted loved one or therapist, and allowing time for prayer or meditation each day. Finding ways to relax deeply using breathing techniques or practicing yoga can be helpful in daily stress management and easing anxiety.

Close management of blood sugar levels throughout a woman's menopausal years is an effective way to identify any potential issues with insulin resistance and what might be triggering glucose spikes.



KAROLINNY IMAGES

## Calcium Supplements Linked to Brain Lesions

Overlooked study raises disturbing concerns about supplements often recommended to older people

SAYER JI

Taking calcium supplements—even at low doses—has been linked to brain lesions in an overlooked first-of-its-kind study.

Most calcium supplements are just plain bad news. The idea of taking calcium in pill or tablet form to "keep the bones strong" just doesn't make that much sense given that we are designed to get our calcium from food and our bone is a living tissue that requires vitamin C, amino acids, magnesium, silica, vitamins D and K, etc., not to mention regular physical activity, just as much as it does calcium. Taking calcium to the exclusion of these other critical factors doesn't make sense—nor does it make sense to look at osteoporosis or osteopenia as a deficiency of calcium supplements!

As we have reported on extensively in the past, not only is consuming limestone, bone, and the shells of oysters and eggs not a good idea because the calcium can deposit in our soft tissues, leading to heart attacks and strokes, but even the goal of maintaining bones as dense as a 25-year-old late into life is fraught with danger. In fact, a meta-analysis published in Breast Cancer Research and Treatment in 2013 found "a higher BMD [bone mineral density] was found to be associated with a significantly higher risk of breast cancer in postmenopausal women."

Instead of pathologizing aging and focusing on making the bone denser by any means necessary, the focus should be on bone quality and agility, and bodily self-awareness late into life, which helps the elderly prevent the falls that lead to

**The problem with low-quality, inorganic calcium supplements doesn't stop with their potential contribution to cardiovascular disease.**

fracture in the first place. Simply having a gait or vision disorder can be as important as bone mineral density when it comes to fracture risk.

The problem with low-quality, inorganic calcium supplements, however, doesn't stop with their potential contribution to cardiovascular disease. A combination of factors including low magnesium, vitamin K2, and the presence of fluoride in the water and diet can lead to calcification of the pineal gland and other brain structures, which recently has been hypothesized to be a contributing factor in the pathogenesis of Alzheimer's disease.

The provocative, overlooked study mentioned above was published in the British Journal of Nutrition in 2014. Though the authors wrote that clinical trials should examine the issue more closely, somehow the study slipped through the cracks and didn't receive mainstream medical reporting at the time of its release.

Titled "Elevated Brain Lesion Volumes in Older Adults Who Use Calcium Supplements: A Cross-Sectional Clinical Observational Study," the study looked at the possibility that calcium supplements may be associated with the occurrence in older adults of brain lesions (visible as bright spots called "hyperintensities" in MRI), which are known to be caused by lack of blood flow (ischemia) and subsequent neurological damage. Earlier studies had already linked calcium supplements with vascular pathologies associated with cardiovascular disease, the authors wrote.

"These lesions are common in older

adults and increase the risk of devastating health outcomes, including depression, cognitive decline, dementia, stroke, physical disability, hip fracture, and death. Postmortem studies have determined that these lesions form primarily due to ischemia, especially larger lesions (.3mm) and lesions found in depressed individuals," the researchers wrote.

The observational study enrolled 227 older adults (60 years old and older) and assessed food and supplemental calcium intakes. Participants with supplemental calcium use above zero were categorized as supplement users. Lesion volumes were assessed with MRI scans.

Key findings were:

- Greater lesion volumes were found among calcium supplement users than among non-users.
- The effect of calcium supplements was similar to that of high blood pressure (hypertension), "a well-established risk factor for lesions."
- The study found that the amount of calcium didn't seem to matter. "The use of ... even low-dose supplements ... by older adults will be associated with greater lesion volumes."
- Even after controlling for food calcium intake, age, sex, race, years of education, energy intake, depression, and hypertension, the association between calcium supplements and lesion volumes held strong.

The researchers concluded: "The present study demonstrates that the use of calcium-containing dietary supplements, even

low-dose supplements, by older adults may be associated with greater lesion volumes. Evaluation of randomized controlled trials is warranted to determine whether this relationship is a causal one."

**Why Are Lesions and Calcium Linked?** By the time of the study, there was already an established link between calcium supplementation and increased ischemic stroke risk, indicating that calcium supplementation may contribute to calcium deposits in the vasculature (i.e., arterial calcification), mainly in the fatty deposits that contribute to blocking the opening of the blood vessels.

The researchers stated that this process can lead to lack of blood flow and subsequent oxygen deprivation, ultimately leading to the development of brain lesions. Another mechanism by which excess calcium may have a direct neurotoxic effect on the brain is the influx of excess calcium into brain cells, which leads to cell death. This possibility is greatly increased if the blood-brain barrier is compromised.

The researchers also highlighted the importance of the finding that calcium supplementation may have as significant a deleterious effect on brain lesions as high blood pressure (hypertension).

"If this finding is confirmed in longitudinal studies, it could have important health implications—because it is obviously much easier to cease calcium supplement use than to medically manage hypertension."

In summarizing their findings, the researchers pointed to the significance of the problem.

"The use of [calcium]-containing dietary supplements by older adults was found to be associated with greater brain lesion volumes, even after controlling for the usual amount of dietary [calcium] intake. Interestingly, neither the amount of supplemental [calcium] nor the duration of supplemental [calcium] use was associated with lesion volume. These findings indicate that adverse biochemical effects of supplemental [calcium] use may exist in older adults, regardless of the dose."

While this study was the first to look at calcium supplements and brain lesions, an earlier study had already implicated calcium in certain neurological issues. That study, published in 2010 in the journal Medical Hypothesis, linked Alzheimer's disease to brain calcification of structures such as the pineal gland.

## What Do We Do About Calcium Supplements?

First, consider why you think you need calcium supplements. Is it because of the dairy industry promoting for decades the concept that we need calcium (from milk)? Or is it because your doctor is throwing around terms such as osteopenia and osteoporosis without explaining to you that the present-day bone mineral density (BMD) reference ranges assume

that aging is a disease and that you should have the BMD of a 25-year-old young woman even if you are 65—an absurd and dangerous idea?

The exposé "Osteoporosis Myth: The Dangers of High Bone Mineral Density" shows how millions of healthy women were made to believe that aging is a disease, with worse health outcomes as a result of overdiagnosis and overtreatment.

Now, when it comes to calcium, focus on food sources. The site NutritionData.com has a tool that lets you search for foods highest in calcium, with about 1,000 foods categorized by food group. Consider that kale, for instance, has higher concentrations of calcium (and far higher magnesium and silica) than milk per milligram. Also, remember that the accelerated bone loss that occurs later in life in women is triggered by hormonal changes associated with the exhaustion of the ovarian reserve. Nature, however, provides "backup" support for the ovaries in the form of pomegranate. Other hormone-modulating foods include the fermented soy food miso, prunes, and even vitamin C, which has recently been found to regenerate steroid hormones.

Sayer Ji is the founder of GreenMedInfo.com, a reviewer at the International Journal of Human Nutrition and Functional Medicine, co-founder and CEO of Systeme Biomed, and vice chairman of the board of the National Health Federation. This work is reproduced and distributed with the permission of GreenMed-Info LLC. Sign up for their newsletter at [GreenMedInfo.com/newsletter](http://GreenMedInfo.com/newsletter)

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## Exercise Can Help Get Rid of Dangerous Liver Fat

MAT LECOMPTÉ

Liver fat can be pretty dangerous stuff, yet the only way to get rid of it is by losing weight.

But now, there may be another way. New research shows that exercise may help reduce fat around the liver, potentially making a healthier liver more accessible to millions of people with nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD).

NAFLD can be quite dangerous to long-term health. Liver fat can cause inflammation and scarring, leading to liver fibrosis, cirrhosis, and end-stage liver disease. There's no cure for these conditions except for limiting liver fat storage.

A new study shows that about 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity exercise—the exact amount recommended by public health experts—can significantly reduce liver fat in people with NAFLD.

For the study, researchers considered a 30 percent reduction in liver fat—measured by MRI scans—to be a meaningful improvement. They also reviewed 14 randomized controlled trials, so the work included a total of 551 participants.

The researchers found that exercise was 3 1/2 times more likely to achieve this 30 percent reduction in liver fat independent of weight loss compared to standard care.

They then found the optimal dose of exercise. They learned that 39 percent of patients who exercised briskly for 150 minutes per week or more achieved a greater treatment response than 26 percent who exercised less.

Moderate exercise would be a brisk walk where you might start getting sweaty but can still converse with a walking partner. Light cycling is another example.

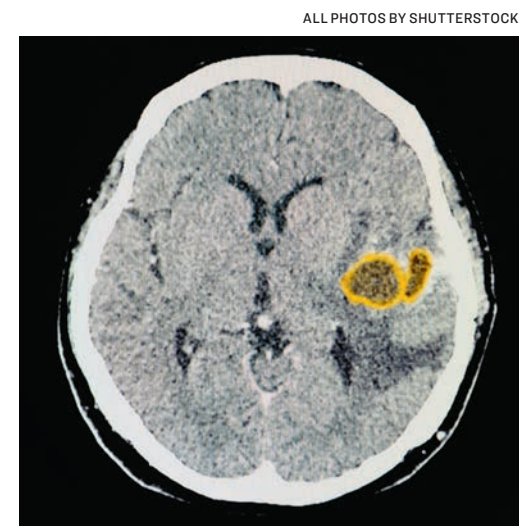
If you've got NAFLD or would like to give yourself a better chance at preventing it, start moving more. Don't get caught up on all the numbers. Focus on making exercise a part of your daily routine.

The more physical activity you're getting, the better, even if it doesn't lead to weight loss.

Mat Lecompté is a health and wellness reporter for Bel Marra Health, which first published this article.



A fatty liver can lead to liver fibrosis, cirrhosis, and end-stage liver disease.



A study found more lesions on the brains of those who took calcium supplements—no matter the amount.





# New Research Reveals the Brain's Impact on Immunity and Disease

Continued from Page 9

While circuits in the motor cortex of the brain rapidly mobilize leukocytes (a type of white blood cell) to the site of an acute infection or injury, another part of the brain, the hypothalamus, essentially down-regulates immune response by returning leukocytes to the bone marrow where they're produced and, apparently, "housed" for future deployment. "One of the things we are seeing is that the brain can modulate, or calibrate, the immune system," Swirski said.

"We are now recognizing that the brain has this very close conversation with the immune system."

Swirski's research, he said, "mapped some of the brain's remarkable ability to control the distribution of all the main immune cells in the body. Small clusters of neurons in specific regions of the brain, responding to stress, can dictate where the immune cells will appear in the body."

He said this granular level control isn't something we're aware of in our daily lives.

"It doesn't enter our consciousness. If

**“We are now recognizing that the brain has this very close conversation with the immune system.”**

*Filip Swirski, immunologist and director of the Cardiovascular Research Institute at Mount Sinai in New York*

you experience a stressful or traumatic event in your life, you have a felt physical response to that—but you aren't aware that your brain is telling your body where to send the immune cells in response to that event."

Swirski explained that while the immune system's response to acute illness or injury is necessarily intense and rapid, too much of that kind of response can lead to the exhaustion of the immune system itself.

"This is why his team's research showed that when specific regions in the brain re-distributed immune cells throughout the body in response to stress, the body was less prepared to fight off acute infections, like COVID-19. On the other hand, acute stress protected against the acquisition of autoimmunity. While this doesn't mean that stress is good for you as a therapeutic

against autoimmune disease, it does highlight the remarkable control the brain has over the immune system.

## The Delicate Balance Within the Immune System

"The immune system exhibits something called 'anticipatory inflammation'—for example, the body responds to a viral infection by having certain immune cells congregate in the lymph nodes and show that virus to T cells and B cells that then generate immune response to that virus that is more immediately available to be mobilized should the infection return," Swirski said.

In a follow-up email, Swirski said that anticipatory inflammation is the idea that the "immune cells 'anticipate' an infection or injury by relocating to organs that are in potential danger. It's a handy term to describe how the immune system is 'strategizing' against a possible assault."

But there's a danger in this anticipation on the part of the immune system as well; this anticipation can "set the threshold for auto-immune" reaction higher.

"When we exposed animals to a model of multiple sclerosis [an auto-immune disease], and then stressed those animals, we found fewer B cells and T cells in the lymph nodes, and thus a less severe manifestation of disease," Swirski said. "But when we exposed animals to a viral infection and then stressed them we also found fewer B and T cells, which, in this case, led to a worsened outcome because the immune system was less efficient at clearing the virus. The same phenomenon (redistribution of immune cells in the body) led to a different outcome depending on context. This kind of duality often exists in the immune system."

"This balance also applies to the im-

mune system in relation to the external environment. The immune system is always distinguishing between "self" and "not-self" in the body, Swirski said. "There is this idea that if the immune system is not adequately engaged with the environment, it may start to make mistakes and act against antigens that are not inherently harmful."

"A certain amount of stress may actually be good for the immune system. It keeps the immune system busy" and may help to develop resilience in the system.

"The immune system operates optimally somewhere between engagement and exhaustion," he said.

An under-engaged immune system may become susceptible to attacking the body itself (conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, MS, allergies, and, to a certain extent, asthma are examples). Conversely, an overtaxed immune system simply becomes exhausted and suffers a catastrophic failure.

Swirski gave an example of what happens with sepsis—a serious condition in which the body responds improperly to an infection.

"Sepsis is an overwhelming immune response to overwhelming infection. The problem with sepsis is not only the cytokine storm we heard so much about with severe COVID (in ER, we can often mitigate the effects of this process) but the fact that following the cytokine storm, the immune systems can shut off—and then nothing can be fought."

In fact, doctors and scientists noted relatively early in the pandemic that individuals who were hospitalized with COVID had an immune system that responded in a markedly different way to the virus than others who had milder cases. Researchers at the University of California-San Francisco, noted this phenomenon in the university's periodical.

Early in the pandemic, doctors noticed that compared to forms of acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) caused by other respiratory infections such as flu, some features of COVID ARDS were atypical. Patients weren't only slower to develop ARDS but also slower to recover, in some cases spending weeks on a ventilator. Often, their immune systems continued a ruinous battle against their own bodies—ravaging their lungs and choking them of oxygen—even after SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, had cleared their systems.

"It was very strange," University of California-San Francisco's Dr. Carolyn Calfee, a critical care physician and one of the world's leading experts on ARDS, told UCSF magazine. "I thought, 'What kind of ARDS does this? This is not normal.'"



Stress affects the body at a deep biochemical level. Meditation is one way to train the mind to better regulate emotions.

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES



Inflammation is like a fire the body uses to burn off pathogens. Stress is like a false alarm that triggers unnecessary flames.

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

**“A certain amount of stress may actually be good for the immune system—it keeps the immune system busy.”**

*Filip Swirski, immunologist and director of the Cardiovascular Research Institute at Mount Sinai in New York*

In searching for answers, Calfee and other researchers are finding that COVID-19 unhinges the immune system in ways no one expected, going so far as to turn the body against itself. Some people who get especially bad or unusual symptoms, for instance, harbor "rogue antibodies"—similar to those seen in autoimmune diseases—that disrupt the body's normal immune response and can attack the body's own tissues. These discoveries could explain how the virus causes such extensive outcomes; they could also help predict who, if infected, will develop severe symptoms. This may also help identify effective treatments. Potentially, these discoveries could also change scientists' fundamental understanding of human immunity and how it can malfunction.

## The Hygiene Hypothesis

Another fascinating example of the interplay between immunity and the environment as a means of calibrating optimal stress for the immune system is something called the "hygiene hypothesis."

"The immune system must engage with the world and relies on that engagement," Swirski said.

The hygiene hypothesis suggests that the reason we're seeing the rise of allergies and asthma in children is that more contemporary lifestyles have eliminated many of the childhood diseases and pathogen threats humans have always faced. As a result, the immune system doesn't get properly trained.

It's like having an army stuck in a base that never learns what an enemy combatant looks like. After a while, different platoons can start to look like potential threats. In the body, the result is that the immune system can exhibit a "breakdown of tolerance" to the body and recognize something that isn't a pathogen as a pathogen.

In such a case, according to Swirski, the immune system "has learned, but in the wrong way."

When asked if this were a case of the immune system having too little to do and getting itself into trouble, Swirski said, "Metaphorically, you could put it that way."

## Possible Applications for Future Treatments

"The body and the brain talk to each other," Swirski said. "Research is now starting to look at how regions of the brain talk to the immune system and how they may serve as a kind of rheostat, regulating the immune system's actions so, ideally, it neither overheats nor underperforms."

Researchers are also discovering that mental health has cellular and molecular dimensions. This is an important insight that changes how we look at ailments such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

"When you examine the history of PTSD, how it was approached in the culture, ideas have changed. It was once thought that someone suffering from it (say a "shell-shocked" war veteran) was just weak: 'This is just in your head—get yourself together.' But now we are understanding there are real physiological consequences to the stressors that lead to these conditions," Swirski said.

That shift in understanding has come about as a result of research capable of measuring how the body responds at microscopic levels of cells and molecules.

"Now we have tools that we didn't have before that allow us to test some of these hypotheses. PTSD has manifestations in the brain—rewiring of the brain architecture, changes in the immune system—in the inflammatory set-point. When you can measure these differences and see statistical differences, you can then start to envision more effective medical interventions while relieving patients of the stigma of blame that previously had been attached."

Swirski concluded that as we begin to map the biomarkers that communicate between the brain and the immune system, we enhance our ability to design more effective interventions for these conditions.

He cites the example of transcranial magnetic stimulation, a noninvasive procedure that uses magnetic fields to stimulate nerve cells in the brain to improve symptoms of depression.

"With therapies like this, we may be able to precisely target neural clusters to reprogram or stimulate neurons to do the things we want them to do; change mood, even alter the reward system in the brain so that it's easier to engage in healthy habits, like getting a good night's sleep, eating better, and exercising."

Swirski also said that such research can help us better understand how behavioral choices such as meditation or cultivating gratitude or selflessness can have a measurable and significant impact on our brain and body chemistry and thus also reveal the scientific basis for the anecdotal efficacy of these interventions.

*David Charbonneau, Ph.D., is a freelance journalist who has also taught literature and writing at the college level for 25 years. In addition to The Epoch Times, his work has appeared in The Defender, Medium, and other online and print platforms. A staunch advocate for medical freedom, he lives and works in Pasadena, Calif.*

## ACTIVATING THE IMMUNE RESPONSE

When we get sick, the brain can micromanage the immune system according to information it is receiving. Like a command center in a military campaign, the brain has clusters of neurons that direct immune cells to specific areas of the body.



## A HEALTHY EQUILIBRIUM

The immune system has to mount an intense and rapid defense during acute illness or injury. Then it needs to wind down and recharge. If the immune system is constantly activated due to stress or acute conditions, it can wear out.

# Music and Mental Health: Then and Now

The fascinating parallels between Victorian asylum treatments and modern social prescribing

ROSEMARY GOLDING

Music has a powerful effect on the listener. It's linked to better mental health and has been shown to alleviate loneliness, pain, anxiety, and depression.

For this reason, it's increasingly being prescribed by doctors as a form of medicine. This practice—of referring patients to various activities such as running groups, art classes, and choirs—is known as social prescribing, and it's fairly well established in the United Kingdom.

Music-based activities may be prescribed to help support patients' mental health, combat isolation, encourage physical activity, and keep the brain active.

While social prescribing is a relatively new practice, the use of music as a therapeutic tool is not. The first widespread use of music as a therapeutic tool was in the 19th century in Victorian asylums, where it was used to support patients' treatment.

## Music in Asylums

Victorian asylums are usually associated with poor sanitation, overcrowding, danger, and patients held against their will. Indeed, the Victorians had little understanding of mental illness and the brain, which meant that many treatments considered barbaric today were used on patients—including bleeding, leeching, shaving the head, and bathing in ice.

From the end of the 18th century, however, practitioners moved away from the worst types of physical restraint. A new practice emerged, known as "moral management," which placed a focus on using employment, diet, surroundings, and recreational activities as forms of therapy.

When state-run asylums were first introduced in Britain in the early 19th century, music soon became included as a form of moral management to distract patients outside of working hours and keep them occupied. Both music and dance were efficient ways of entertaining large numbers of patients.

By the middle of the 19th century, almost all the larger asylums in the UK had their own band and would often organize dances attended by more than a hundred patients. Asylums also hosted concerts and events with traveling performers, from comic sketches to solo singers and amateur choirs. Dances and concerts were usually the only opportunities for patients to meet

in a large group, providing important social interaction.

Among the smaller asylums, chiefly catering to wealthier patients, patients had more options to create music as part of their treatment. They would often bring instruments with them, and small concerts put on by patients and staff were common.

## The first widespread use of music as a therapeutic tool was in the 19th century in Victorian asylums.

### The Benefits of Music

Much of the therapeutic value of music was attached to its social function. Accounts suggest that patients benefited from the anticipation of these social engagements and that events were used to reward good behavior. Music was also used to break up the monotony of asylum life.

For example, at one private asylum, Dr. Alfred Wood wrote: "These entertainments involved a great amount of trouble in their preparation and arrangement and, I may add, considerable expense; but they are invaluable as a relief to

the monotony of life in an Asylum. The pleasure they afford as well in anticipation as in reality is ample to compensate for the efforts made to present them ..."

Dances, in particular, offered exercise and enjoyment, and even patients who were unable to dance enjoyed the music and watching fellow patients.

Musical events also carried strict expectations of behavior. Patients needed a good deal of self-control to participate and behave appropriately. It was this process of conforming to expectations that formed an important part of rehabilitation. William A.F. Browne, one of the most noteworthy asylum doctors of the era, wrote in 1841 about the self-control needed before, during, and after amusements.

Others suggested that music would help remind patients of happier days and give them hope and pleasure during their treatment. Browne also cited the "powers of music to soothe, enliven, rouse, or melt." He suggested that even difficult patients may benefit from music, writing, "There is or may be a hidden life within him which may be reached by harmony."

The writer James Webster recorded in 1842 that "in many, the effect produced by the music upon their countenances and behavior was often quite apparent." Records include many stories of patients seemingly cured by music.

Webster cites the example of a young girl, previously "morose" and "stupidified," who under the influence of music seemed "pleased" and "cheerful"—appearing "altogether a

changed creature." Browne also wrote in one of his books of the miraculous effect music had on one patient who awoke, cured, the morning after listening to a performance of Scottish traditional melodies.

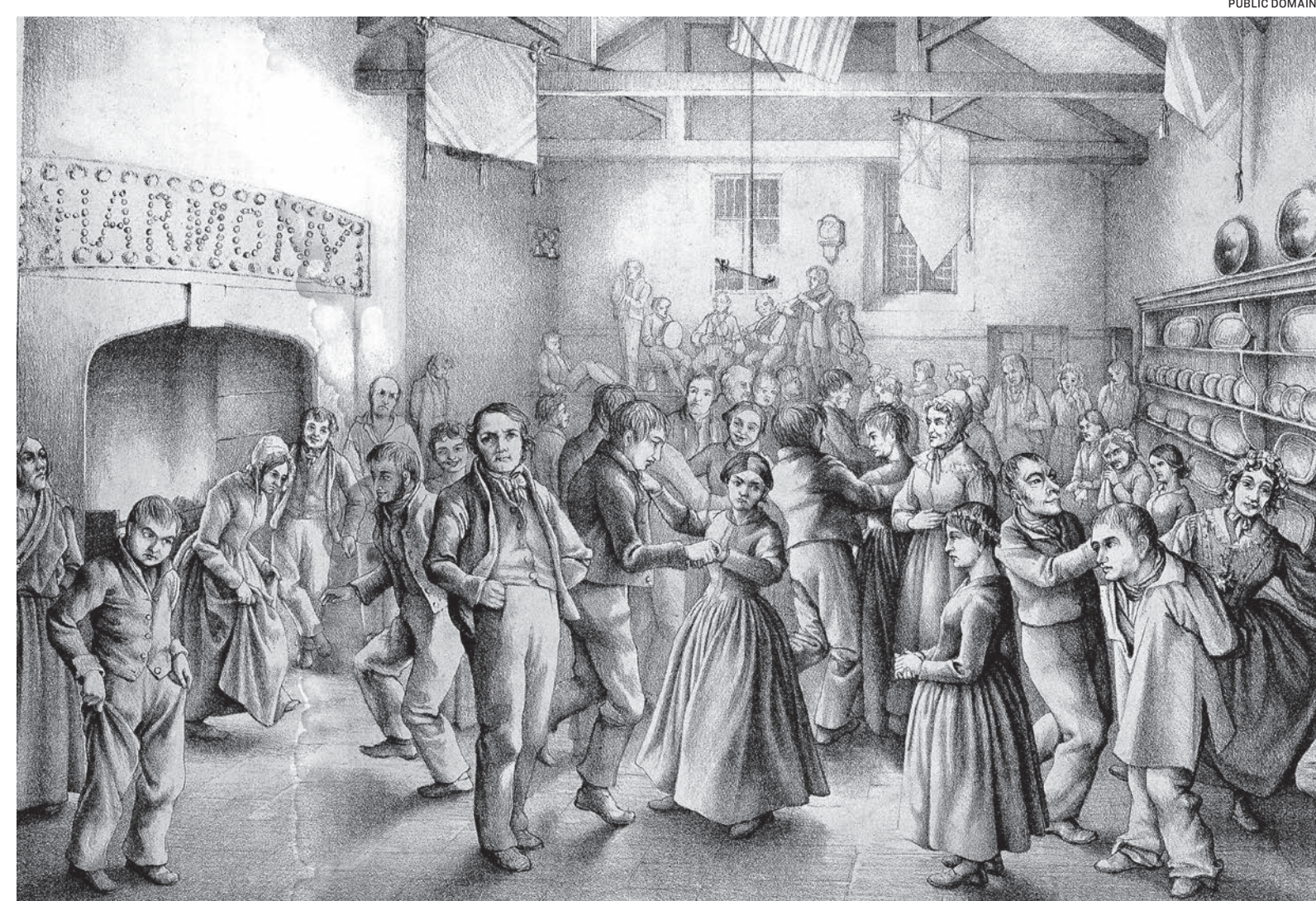
## Music as Treatment

In the 1890s, many doctors carried out experiments on the relationship between music and mental illness. Herbert Hayes Newington, medical superintendent of one of the era's most prestigious asylums, used music to diagnose patients and help develop theories on how the brain works. The Rev. Frederick Kill Harford, who campaigned to provide music in public hospitals during the early 1890s, believed music could treat depression, alleviate physical pain, and help with sleep.

Although music remained in asylums as a form of therapy, interest in it as a large-scale treatment waned as innovations such as electroconvulsive therapy emerged in the 20th century.

For patients in Victorian asylums, therefore, music was an important part of mental health treatment—not only providing an opportunity for creative engagement but also fulfilling a range of social, emotional, and intellectual needs. Given what we know now about the benefit of music on mental health, it's no wonder doctors are making use of it again.

*Rosemary Golding is a senior lecturer in music at The Open University in the UK. This article was originally published on The Conversation.*



Dances were an essential therapeutic event at Victorian asylums that patients eagerly anticipated.



## INTENTIONAL LIVING

# Want Less Stress? Limit Your Child's Screen Time

Uses these 7 tips to help your children pull their minds out of screen-based worlds

**JOSHUA BECKER**

According to important new research, when kids watch a lot of television, their parents' stress levels increase.

The research is helpful because it seems counterintuitive.

In fact, many parents turn on the television specifically when they're stressed—just hoping for a little downtime or an opportunity to catch up on work or household chores. And there's no doubt that a child preoccupied with a screen in front of them brings short-term relief. I've been there.

But in the long run, this decision may be adding to our stress levels more than we realize.

The research, conducted in 2020 at the University of Arizona, specifically explored the effects of children's television-watching habits on their parents' stress levels.

They discovered that "the more advertising children see, the more they ask for things and the more conflict is generated." The effects of this conflict continue long after the shopping trip.

Additionally, the researchers are quick to point out that streaming services haven't changed the equation.

"Commercial content is there for a reason: to elicit purchasing behavior ... In general, more television exposure means more exposure to commercialized content. Even if I'm streaming, if I'm watching more of it, I'm likely seeing more integrated branding," Matthew Lapierre, one of the researchers states.

Given the rise in the amount of time chil-

dren are watching screens, this research is important for parents to consider. Some studies indicate young children spend twice as much time in front of screens as they did 20 years ago!

The research draws a direct line between television and consumeristic desires—which is absolutely true.

But I'd argue that increased television watching among kids (and adults) results in increased stress levels in more ways than one. Here's a short list of some of the negative effects of television and screen time (beyond increased consumerism):

**Physical Health:** Too much screen time results in a range of negative physical health outcomes: obesity, poor sleep, and vision problems (just to name a few).

**Mental Health:** Screen time is associated with a range of negative mental health effects, including depression, anxiety, and decreased social skills.

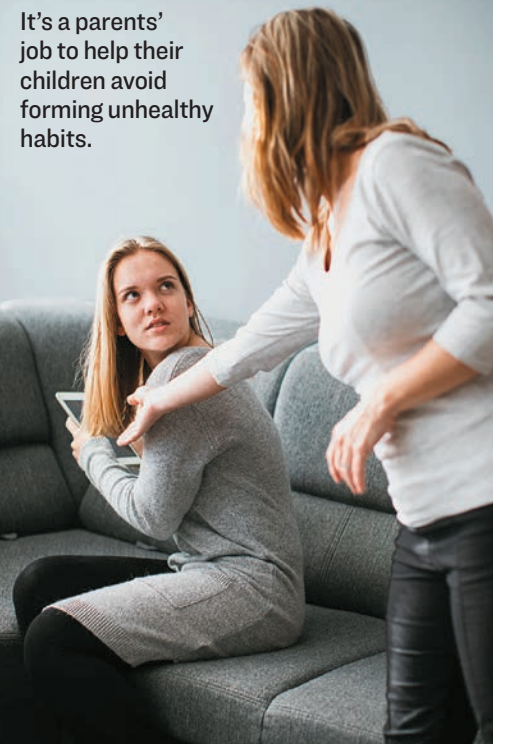
**Academics:** Children who spend too much time on screens are more likely to struggle academically.

**Family Bonding:** When children spend too much time on screens, they miss out on important, life-giving family time and relationships.

**Social Connections:** Screen time has also been proven to interfere with a child's ability to develop social skills and form meaningful relationships with others.

With all the data and what we know to be true (both by study and by personal observation), are there steps we can take to limit our child's time in front of the television or screen? Absolutely.

*Joshua Becker is an author, public speaker, and the founder and editor of [Becoming Minimalist](#), where he inspires others to live more by owning less. Visit [BecomingMinimalist.com](#)*



It's a parents' job to help their children avoid forming unhealthy habits.

## 7 Ideas to Limit Your Child's Screen Time

### 1. Set the Example

Sorry to start with the toughest one, but there's nowhere else to start.

Children will always gravitate toward the modeled behaviors of their parents. If they see you reading a book, they're more likely to read. And if they see you watching television, so will they.

### 2. Believe It's Possible

It's possible to raise children—even today—without relying on a screen. Parents accomplished it in the past and they're accomplishing it today.

No doubt, screens are far more prevalent today than 20 years ago. Nobody was carrying them in their pockets back then. But just because they're more ubiquitous today doesn't mean we have to rely on them.

It might be more difficult today, but it isn't impossible.

### 3. Be the Parent

It's your job to encourage healthy behaviors and limit unhealthy ones. Sometimes this means making unpopular decisions like limiting your children's screen time.

Make these tough decisions for your children. And when possible, go the extra step of explaining why you've made the decision.

This will help them follow through and someday choose it for themselves.

### 4. Set Limited Viewing Times

Allowing no screen time at all is probably not reasonable. (Although, depending on the age, I still think it's possible.)

Instead, choose the appropriate television and screen viewing levels for your kids and communicate them clearly.

It's much easier to limit their viewing habit if they understand that they can only watch one show in the morning and one show after school, for example. Or one hour on weekdays and two hours on the weekend, etc.

### 5. Establish 'No TV' Periods

More than two-thirds (70 percent) of young people report watching TV during meals. That's too bad. Some of the family's richest conversations happen during meals—or in the car.

Value those times with your kids. Don't let the screen steal them from you.

Set a culture in your home that screens aren't present during dinner or in the car or on "Friday Family Game Night" or whatever period you choose for your family.

### 6. Find a Mantra

A mantra is a sound, word, or group of words that are considered capable of creating transformation. While the words may not be magic in themselves, the consistent use of them can be.

Every parent should have them and use them effectively. My "too-much television" mantra goes like this, "There's been too much screen time in this family."

And every time my kids hear me say it, they know what it means. They know the TV is getting turned off and we're about to spend some quality time together doing something else.

### 7. Get Creative

Find new and exciting ways to keep your child entertained that don't involve screens. This might include playing board games, doing arts and crafts, heading out to a local park, or simply going on a family walk around the neighborhood.

It's tempting to rely on screen time as a way to keep your child entertained or remove a little bit of stress from your day, but apparently, that decision is having the opposite effect.

And as a general rule, it's never wise to trade short-term benefits for a heavier burden in the future.

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