











In this issue:

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Welcome to Natural Health Review Issue 31.

In this issue we have promising news for people with drippy noses, as well as a study showing that zinc does indeed reduce the duration of a cold so long as you take a high enough dose. And omega-3 fatty acids are proving as useful as ever, this time potentially reducing harmful clots in patients with heart disease.

We hope you enjoy the latest issue of Natural Health Research Review, and welcome your feedback.

Kind Regards,

Prof Shaun Holt

shaun@naturalhealthreview.org

Capsaicin-containing nasal spray gives sinus relief

The facts:

- Forty-two people with non-allergic rhinitis used a homeopathic nasal spray containing capsaicin (Sinus buster®) or placebo twice daily for 2 weeks to assess its effects on sinus pain, sinus pressure and sinus congestion.
- After 2 weeks, those who used the capsaicin spray felt much better than those who used the placebo spray, with sinus relief reported as early as 1 minute after application.
- The authors concluded the capsaicin-containing spray was safe and effective for the treatment of non-allergic rhinitis.

Prof Shaun Holt:

Lots of people have a drippy nose for no good reason, it's an annoying symptom and there's usually not much you can do about it. We know that an extract from chilli peppers, capsaicin, can help reduce certain types of pain when applied as a cream. This small study found that inhaling capsaicin powder for just 2 weeks reduced the symptoms of nasal inflammation not due to allergy in a good proportion of those who tried it. Disclaimer: however tempting it may be, I would recommend waiting until a product is available and not try sniffing chilli pepper extracts!

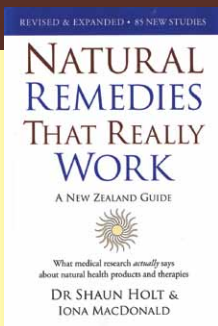
[http://www.annallergy.org/article/S1081-1206\(11\)00383-8/abstract](http://www.annallergy.org/article/S1081-1206(11)00383-8/abstract)

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Regular brisk walks may slow progression of prostate cancer

The facts:

- The impact of brisk walking on prostate cancer progression was examined in 1,455 men diagnosed with clinically localised prostate cancer.
- Men who walked briskly for at least 3 hours a week had a 57% lower rate of prostate cancer progression than men who walked at an easy pace for less than 3 hours a week. A brisk pace was found to be better than an easier pace regardless of the time spent walking.
- Regular brisk walking after diagnosis of clinically localised prostate cancer may therefore inhibit or delay progression of the disease.

Prof Shaun Holt:

Prostate cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in males. This study of nearly 1500 men with this disease found that, compared with men who walked at an easy pace for less than 3 hours per week, those who walked briskly for at least 3 hours per week had a 57% lower rate of disease progression – a remarkable finding. Impressive though these findings are, the case is not proven, it could be that those who did brisk walking did other things that prevented their cancer spreading. But given that exercise is good for many reasons, it is highly recommended that men with prostate cancer try to incorporate brisk walking into their routine.



<http://tinyurl.com/3nc2z5s>

High-dose zinc reduces common cold duration

The facts:

- Thirteen studies that evaluated the use of zinc for common cold symptoms were reviewed to see if the efficacy of zinc might be due in part to its dose.
- Trials that used less than 75mg zinc daily found no effect on common cold duration whereas trials that used daily doses greater than 75mg almost halved the time spent with a cold.
- The effect of zinc on common cold duration therefore depends on dose, with doses greater than 75 mg/day needed for a significant effect.

Prof Shaun Holt:

When it comes to reducing the duration of the common cold, most people think about vitamin C (not very helpful) and echinacea (quite helpful) and zinc usually gets overlooked. This will now change after the publication of this meta-analysis which found that the dose of zinc (usually given in the form of a lozenge) was crucial - the trials using zinc acetate in daily doses exceeding 75mg showed a 42% reduction in the duration of colds, whereas a dose less than this was not effective.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.2174/1874306401105010051>

Fish oils might prevent heart attacks

The facts:

- Patients with stable coronary heart disease were randomised to take omega-3 fatty acids 1 g/day or placebo in addition to their regular medications (aspirin and clopidogrel) for 1 month.
- After 1 month, patients taking fish oils had signs of beneficial anti-clotting effects over and above those attributed to aspirin or clopidogrel.
- Fish oils may therefore help prevent clots in heart disease patients, and further studies are called for.

Prof Shaun Holt:

For people with coronary heart disease who are prone to clots in the arteries that supply blood to the heart muscle, preventing these clots is the key to preventing heart attacks. Aspirin and other drug are usually prescribed in order to prevent this. The key finding from this study is that for people in this situation, even if they are taking one or more drugs to reduce future clots, it is still worth taking omega-3 fatty acids as well, at a dose of 1g per day. The reason: the omega-3 supplement appears to work in a different way to the drugs and so can give additional benefits.

<http://tinyurl.com/42kyarr>

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Calcium in moderation for bone health

The facts:

- More than 61,000 older Swedish women were followed for nearly 20 years to evaluate the association between long term dietary calcium intake and risk of fracture.
- During follow-up, women with the lowest daily calcium intake (<750mg) had an increased risk of fractures, as did those with the highest calcium intake (>1100 mg/day).
- Based on these findings, moderate levels of calcium intake are best for bone health in women.

Prof Shaun Holt:

As with all supplements, too much calcium can be as bad, or even worse, than too little. We know that calcium supplements have been linked to an increased risk for cardiovascular events, vascular calcification, and kidney stones. This study gives the same message but from a different angle – there is no point taking too much calcium as it will not give any additional protection from osteoporosis anyway. Getting enough calcium from your diet is the best option, and if not, a small supplement is useful, but don't overdo it.

<http://www.bmj.com/content/342/bmj.d1473.full>



Independent commentary by

Prof Shaun Holt,
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Music interventions improve mood in cancer patients

The facts:

- The results of 30 trials involving nearly 2000 cancer patients who underwent music therapy interventions as part of their treatment were reviewed to assess the effects of music therapy on mood in this patient group.
- Patients who received music interventions reported less anxiety, better mood and less pain during cancer-related procedures, although no effects on depression, fatigue or physical status were seen.
- Music therapy may therefore be a useful complementary treatment in people with cancer.



Prof Shaun Holt:

According to a recently published Cochrane Review of the subject, listening to music can reduce anxiety and pain in cancer patients and help improve mood and quality of life. Of the 30 studies included in the review, 17 trials involved a medical professional playing pre-recorded music for the patient, which is referred to as "music medicine," and 13 trials involved "music therapy" in which trained music therapists actively engaged the patient in a personally-tailored music and therapy experience, which may have included listening to live music or playing an instrument.

<http://www2.cochrane.org/reviews/en/ab006911.html>

Folate boosts the effects of antidepressants

The facts:

- 223 adults with treatment-resistant depression were randomised to take L-methylfolate 15 mg/day or placebo in addition to regular antidepressant therapy in 2 separate studies that assessed the effects of folate on treatment-resistant depression.
- One study found no difference in depression outcomes between folate and placebo groups after 2 months but the other showed improvements in depression scores in patients who received folate.
- L-methylfolate boosts the body's own production of dopamine, norepinephrine and serotonin, thereby enhancing the effects of antidepressants.

Prof Shaun Holt:

Only around a third of people with major depression respond well to antidepressant medications, but interestingly, around 70% are deficient in folate. These studies find that by taking a folate supplement, in the form of 15 mg/day of L-methylfolate, a better response to antidepressants can be achieved by some patients. Bigger studies are needed, but there is other evidence that folate and other B vitamins can reduce symptoms of depression and so for those who are unfortunate enough to have depression and are not having a good response to treatment, adding folate and other B vitamins is well worth trying.

<http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/739246>

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Yoga relieves abdominal pain in children



The facts:

- 20 children with irritable bowel syndrome or functional abdominal pain underwent 10 yoga sessions to see if yoga might improve their symptoms.
- Yoga therapy reduced both pain intensity and pain frequency, with younger children reporting a better response than older children. Parent-reported children's quality of life also improved.
- The benefits of yoga were maintained for 3 months after treatment was stopped.

Prof Shaun Holt:

Abdominal pain is common in children. Known causes include viral or bacterial infections, allergies, or even surgical conditions such as appendicitis. When the cause is not known it is labelled as "functional abdominal pain" and this small study suggests that yoga may be worth trying. The mechanism is not known but there was a significant reduction in pain intensity and frequency.

<http://tinyurl.com/3fbgand>

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Valerian improves poor sleep associated with menopause



The facts:

- 100 postmenopausal women with insomnia were randomised to take either 2 valerian capsules (each containing 530mg valerian root extract) or 2 placebo capsules daily for a month.
- Nearly a third of the women who took valerian compared with only 4% who took the placebo reported an improvement in sleep quality i.e. they fell asleep faster than usual and woke less often during the night.
- Valerian may therefore improve sleep quality in some postmenopausal women with insomnia.

Prof Shaun Holt:

Sleep problems are so common when we get older that it is almost normal. For menopausal women, hot flashes and night sweats often contribute to poor quality sleep. The hypnotic properties of valerian are well known and this moderately large study from Iran found that many women at this stage of life had good improvements in sleep quality when they took valerian. Like all sleep aids, long term use is not recommended and for valerian there is a lack of safety data for long-term use.

<http://tinyurl.com/3c7bpje>

Chondroitin effective for hand arthritis

The facts:

- 162 patients with hand arthritis were randomised to take chondroitin 4&6 sulfate 800mg or placebo once daily for 6 months to determine the effects of the preparation on hand pain and function.
- Significant improvements in hand function and hand pain were reported in the chondroitin group, but grip strength and paracetamol consumption did not differ between the 2 groups.
- It took up to 3 months for the benefits of chondroitin to emerge.

Prof Shaun Holt:

Most studies of natural products for arthritis focus on the large lower limb joints, the hip and knee. However arthritis in the hand and fingers is also common and this study looked at the use of the popular supplement chondroitin. The results were positive, with the lead researcher commenting: "When I started this study I had no preconceived opinion. We used a state-of-the-art approach – a randomized, placebo controlled study ... and the improvement was significant on both global pain and hand function".

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/art.30574/abstract>

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