

New Year's Resolutions!

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and reduce cigarette smoking by 11% (J Psychopharmacol 2014;28:804-9).

5. Increasing serotonin might help. The amino acid tryptophan increases serotonin, and adding tryptophan to a high carbohydrate diet helps people to smoke fewer cigarettes while reducing withdrawal symptoms like anxiety (J Behav Med 1991;14:97-110). When 24 people who averaged 20 cigarettes a day for the past 22 years were given 900mg of St. John's wort a day, 54% had successfully quit at the 3 week mark. 37% were still cigarette free after 12 weeks (Complement Ther Med 2006;14(3):175-84).

6. Traditionally, the herbs lobelia and oats have also been used.

Drink in Moderation!

Drinking too much negatively impacts heart health, liver health and cancer. Nature can help you to cut back if you drink too much or want to drink less.

1. Alkalinize your diet.

2. You can up your odds of quitting if you eliminate caffeine while stabilizing your blood sugar by reducing sugar and refined carbs and increasing complex carbs (J Am Diet Assoc 1991;91:463-66). Huge success has also been achieved by a similar program that also eliminates junk food and dairy (Int J Biosoc Res 1983;4:5-18). Chromium may help too.

3. Exercise (J Stud Alcohol 1982;43:380-66).

4. L-glutamine is a promising supplement for decreasing the desire to drink (Q J Stud Alcohol 1957;18:581-87).

5. Alcoholics are often deficient in B vitamins. Supplementing B vitamins, especially B1 and B3, may help alcoholics reduce their drinking.

6. A little discussed but exciting herb for cutting back on drinking is kudzu. Heavy drinkers who supplement kudzu drink significantly less (Alcohol Clin Exp Res 2005;29:756-62; Psychopharmacol 2013;226:65-73). The kudzu is sometimes standardized for isoflavones, and it may be the isoflavone puerarin that is doing a lot of the work (Drug Alcohol Depend 2012;126(1-2):251-6).

7. The herb skullcap has traditionally been used alcohol withdrawal.

Attain Your Healthy Weight!

The World Health Organization says that nearly two thirds of Europeans—and one in three kids—are overweight. And, they say, its worse in Canada and the States. Obesity is associated with cardiovascular disease, diabetes and 13 kinds of cancer. It is the fourth leading risk factor for death. There are lots of natural supplements that can help with this New Year's resolution.

1. Losing weight in the abdominal area may



be the most important kind of weight loss for a longer, healthier life (Ann Intern Med.2015 Dec 1;163(11):827-35). Green tea consistently shows the ability to target this weight loss in the waist (Revue De L'assoc Mondiale de Phytother 1985;1:36-40; J Nutr 2009;2:264-270) and to help with weight loss (Phytomed 2002;9:3-8; Obesity2007;15:1473-1483; Physiol Behav 2008;93:486-491).

The other great challenge of weight loss is keeping it off. Green tea may help here too. People who had lost weight saw their weight and waist circumference go back up more in a placebo group than in a green tea group (J Med Food.2015;18:698-705).

2. Though it is often said that you cannot target weight loss, several other natural supplements have also shown the ability to target abdominal fat, including

*coconut oil (Nutr Hosp 2015;32:2144-52; Lipids. 2009 Jul;44(7):593-601)

*rosehips (Diabetes Metab Syndr Obes 2015;8:147-56)

*cumin (Complement Ther Clin Pract 2014;20:297-301)

*probiotics (Endocrinol Metab. 2020 Jun;35(2):425-434)

*black seed (Complement Ther Med.March 2021;57:102653)

*spirulina (Complement Ther Med 2018;40:106-112)

3. Other great weight loss supplements include 5-HTP. 5-HTP raises serotonin, and serotonin signals your brain that you're full and should stop eating. If your serotonin is low, your brain thinks you're hungry and sends out a red alert for food. 5-HTP corrects the deficiency and helps you lose weight (J Neural Transm 1989;76:109-17). Overweight women who took 5-HTP lost 10.34 pounds in 6 weeks while a placebo group lost 2.28 (Adv Exp Med Biol 1991;294:591-3). In another study, the placebo group lost 1.87 pounds in 12 weeks, while the 5-HTP group lost 11.63 (Am J Clin Nutr 1992;56:863-7).

4. From the fruit of the Malibar tamarind (*Garcinia cambogia*) comes hydroxycitrate. Hydroxycitrate inhibits appetite, so less calories go in, and inhibits fat production from carbohydrates, so less of those calories become fat. Double-blind research says that's a winning formulation (JAMA1998;280:1596-600; Physiol Behav 2000;71:87-94).

5. Calcium and vitamin D might also help. Postmenopausal women who get less than 1,200mg of calcium a day are less likely to gain weight when they take 1,000mg of calcium and 400IU of vitamin D (Arch Intern Med 2007;167:893-902). And people on a low-calorie diet lose significantly more weight when they take 800mg of calcium than when they are given a placebo (Obes Res 2004;12:582-90). Vitamin D has been shown to help you lose weight and shrink your waist (European Congress on Obesity. May 6-9,2015).

6. New weight loss help comes from the herbal combo of lemon verbena and hibiscus. According to recent double-blind research, they significantly lower appetite, leading to significantly less calories and reduced fat mass (Eur J Nutr 2022;61:825-841).

About Linda Woolven & Ted Snider



The *Natural Path* is written by Ted Snider & Linda Woolven, a master herbalist, registered acupuncturist, reiki practitioner and solution-focused counselor with a practice in Toronto. For a virtual appointment, call 416.782-8211.

Their newest books are *The All-New Vegetarian Passport Cookbook* and *Chocolate: Superfood of the Gods*. This newsletter is intended for educational purposes only and is in no way intended for self-diagnosis or self-treatment. For health problems, consult a qualified health practitioner.

THE NATURAL PATH

Your Guide to Good Health & Vitality
Cutting Edge Research Made Easy

by Linda Woolven, B.A., Master Herbalist, Acupuncturist and Ted Snider, B.Ed., M.A.

New Year's Resolutions!

By now you've probably already shattered most of your New Year's resolutions. Here's a helpful guide to getting back on track.

Quit Smoking!

Quitting smoking is a great New Year's health resolution. Smoking leads to heart disease and cancer, but also to a host of other health problems from depression, bone loss and wrinkles to losing your hair and teeth. Quitting is hard to do. But these natural tips will help.

1. Alkalinize your body by focusing on vegetarian foods.

2. When you feel a craving to smoke, suck a lime and chew the skin. It works as well as chewing nicotine gum, but it's safer (J Med Assoc Thai 2012;95:S76-82).

3. Replacing cigarette filters with green tea filters containing theanine can reduce smoking by 56.5%. It helps 31.7% of smokers to quit and a further 13.9% to cut down to 1-5 cigarettes a day from 14. Another study found that long time smokers with heavy cravings could cut down their smoking by 91% after 3 months. They went from 24 cigarettes a day to 3 (Sci China Life Sci 2010;53:533-41). So, green tea or theanine might be worth a try.

4. Omega-3 EFA's can significantly reduce nicotine cravings (Eur Addict Res 2016;22:153-62). Double-blind research shows that taking EPA and DHA omega-3 fatty acids can significantly reduce cravings for nicotine

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The Many Things Ginger Can Do



Photo by Ted Snider

Ginger is an incredibly valuable and versatile herb. New research is starting to show why.

Killing Pain

Ginger is useful for killing pain. It is a powerful antiinflammatory herb that safely improves period pain. A systematic review and meta-analysis of 6 controlled studies of ginger and painful periods found that, in all 6 of them, ginger was better than placebo and as effective as drugs (Evid Based Complement Alternat Med 2016;2016:6295737).

When it comes to migraine pain, ginger is as effective, but safer, than drugs (Phytother Res 2014;28:412-5).

Several studies have shown that ginger relieves arthritis. A systematic review and meta-analysis revealed that ginger reduces pain significantly better than placebo for rheumatoid or osteoarthritis and similarly to the NSAID diclofenac while, again, being safer (Nutr J 2015;14:50). When people with rheumatoid arthritis added ginger to a disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drug that fights rheumatoid arthritis by suppressing the immune system, the ginger significantly improved disease activity scores and markers of both inflammation and immunity (Gene 2019;698:179-185).

Powerful Antiinflammatory

That ginger is an effective antiinflammatory has recently been

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Lifesaver: Can Folic Acid Prevent Suicide?

Recent research has surprisingly shown that when people are taking folic acid, rates of suicide are reduced by almost half (JAMA Psychiatry. 2022 Nov 1;79(11):1118-1123). But does it work as well in people at higher risk because of prior suicidal behaviour, psychiatric illness or treatment with psychiatric medication? A new study has shown that it does. Rates of suicide were reduced just as much in the higher risk group. This study suggests that folic acid reduces the risk of suicide even in people who are at high risk (BJPsych Open. 2023 Sep;9(5):e159).



The Many Things Ginger Can Do



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demonstrated. A systematic review and meta-analysis of 16 controlled studies showed that ginger significantly lowers inflammatory cytokines. Specifically, ginger significantly reduces C-reactive protein, high sensitivity C-reactive protein and tumor necrosis factor-alpha. High sensitivity C-reactive protein is a more sensitive test that can detect even slight increases of CRP that are within the normal range (Cytokine. 2020 Nov;135:155224).

Important New Study: Ginger & Autoimmune Disease

A new study has further validated ginger as an anti-inflammatory, introduced an explanation as to why it is so effective, and added an important new consequence: ginger could have widely applicable promise for autoimmune diseases.

A variety of autoimmune diseases may be driven by a common factor. Through a process called NETosis, neutrophils, a type of white blood cell involved in immunity, propel inflammation and blood clotting. That destructive process can contribute to several autoimmune diseases, like lupus, antiphospholipid syndrome (APS), arthritis, and even to COVID. NETosis can also lead to autoantibody formation.

But when healthy people were given 100mg of ginger extract, standardized for 20mg of gingerols, for 7 days, there was a decrease in NETosis and in the NET levels that result.

This study suggests that ginger could prevent inflammation, blood clotting and autoantibody formation, making it a potentially valuable and versatile herb for several autoimmune diseases (JCI Insight. Sept 22, 2023;doi:10.1172/jci.insight.172011).

What Else Can Ginger Do? Lots!

Recently, a systematic review of 109 controlled studies revealed the versatility of this well studied herb (Nutrients 2020;12(1): 157).

Nausea & Digestion

Starting with the best known use of ginger,

the review found 14 studies on the nausea and vomiting of pregnancy, including the severe form known as *hyperemesis gravidarum*. Every one of the studies found ginger to be better than a placebo and as good as or better than a drug: every one of them! And it did it safely.

But ginger can help more than just nausea when it comes to digestive health. A convincing 6 out of 7 studies of gastric emptying proved that ginger enhances digestion. Gastric emptying is the speed at which your stomach empties its contents. The test is usually given to people with frequent nausea, vomiting, heartburn, abdominal pain or feeling of fullness, meaning ginger could help all of these people.

Diabetes

At least 3 studies found that ginger benefits



Photo by Ted Snider

diabetics by significantly lowering all of fasting blood sugar, HbA1c (the most important marker of long term diabetes and blood sugar control), insulin sensitivity and insulin resistance. Diabetics also saw their LDL cholesterol, triglycerides, inflammation and antioxidant activity improve.

Though not included in the systematic review, ginger has also been shown in double-blind research to help the gestational diabetes of pregnancy (BMC Complement Med Ther 2020;20:116).

Weight Loss

Ginger also helps obese women to lose weight while improving insulin resistance and sensitivity. For cardiovascular risk factors related to obesity, ginger lowers body fat, waist circumference, waist-to-hip ratio, total cholesterol and insulin resistance.

Respiratory Diseases

When patients with acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) were given ginger, they had to spend less time on mechanical ventilation and less time in intensive care. Asthmatics also experience benefit with ginger.

Breast Feeding

One study also found that ginger significantly increases breast milk compared to a placebo.

Still More Uses of Ginger Hay Fever

Not included in the systematic review is a recent double-blind study that found that ginger works better for hay fever than the drug loratadine. Total nasal symptom scores improved as well on both, but ginger alone helped nasal pressure and airflow during breathing. Ginger was also better because it was safer (BMC Complement Med Ther. 2020;20(1):119).

Heart & Head

Taking ginger daily reduces your risk of coronary heart disease (Nutrition 2017;36:79-84).

It also makes you smarter. Double-blind research shows that when people between the ages of 50 and 60 take ginger for 2 months, memory, attention and other cognitive functions significantly improve (Evid Based Complement Alternat Med. 2012;2012:383062).

Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease

2g a day of ginger taken by people with NAFLD significantly improves the liver enzyme ALT, liver function, accumulation of fat in the liver cells, inflammation and insulin resistance (Hepat Mon 2016;16(1):e34897).

Multiple Sclerosis

Recent research shows that ginger improves disability and quality of life in people with MS (Food Funct. 2023 April 24;14(8):3701-3711). It can also improve the common constipation as well as nausea, bloating and heartburn in people with MS (BMC Complement Med Ther. 2023;23:383).

COVID

Ginger has also been studied for COVID. The combination of 2g of ginger with the herb ashwagandha is significantly better than conventional treatment for eliminating symptoms, testing negative, viral clearance and speed of recovery (Complement Ther Med. 2023 Sep;76:102966).

Spotlight: Aloe Vera Soothes Radiation Dermatitis

Here's the Problem

Around 50% of all people being treated for cancer will receive radiation therapy either alone or with chemotherapy or surgery. About 95% of them will experience the side effect of radiation dermatitis, including redness, ulcers and necrosis.

Conventional treatments, including topical treatments, are limited by their side effects.

Here's the Answer

Aloe vera is a remarkable herb for skin healing, including atopic dermatitis, or eczema, and radiation dermatitis.

This new study set out to see just how good aloe is in the prevention and treatment of radiation dermatitis.

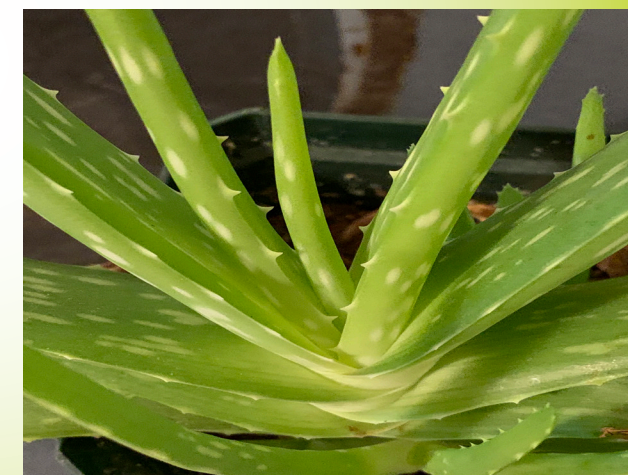
The systematic review and cumulative analysis included 14 studies of 1,572 people. Aloe was compared to control groups that included either people treated with placebo or with conventional treatment.

The large study found that people who were pretreated with aloe vera had a significant 24% lower risk of radiation induced dermatitis. The reduction of risk for grade 2 radiation induced dermatitis was a significant 42%, and the reduction of risk from grade 3 dermatitis was a significant 73%.

The researchers conclude that pre-

treating the skin with aloe vera significantly reduces the risk of radiation induced dermatitis compared with conventional treatment.

Front Pharmacol. 2022; 13: 976698.



NATURAL PATH NEWSFLASH



Overweight? Green Tea to the Rescue

A new systematic review and meta-analysis of 59 studies included 3,802 people.

It found that green tea extract significantly reduced body mass, body fat percentage, body mass index, oxidative stress, total antioxidant capacity and the hormone adiponectin, which helps regulate insulin sensitivity and fat metabolism.

This study again shows the benefits of green tea for weight loss.

British Journal of Nutrition. Nov 2023;doi.org/10.1017/S000711452300260X.

Ashwagandha Calms Your Stress

A new systematic review of 9 studies—8 double-blind and 1 controlled—found that the herb ashwagandha successfully reduces cortisol levels in stressed people.

In the 7 studies that measured plasma cortisol, as opposed to salivary cortisol, the decrease ranged from 11%-32.63%.

This study suggests that ashwagandha has a stress reducing effect by lowering cortisol.

Nutrients. 2023,15(24),5015

Ageless!



Smoothing Out the Wrinkles

Wrinkles are a natural part of aging. They are the trails made by your experiences and memories. They are the beauty won from wisdom. But, if you want to take a few steps back, antioxidants can help because oxidative damage is an important factor in wrinkles. Many supplements loaded in flavonoid antioxidants have been shown to help.

In a new study, 4 weeks of standardized pomegranate extract produced a significant decrease in wrinkles compared to placebo (J Clin Med. November 2022;11(22):6724).

When postmenopausal women took pine bark extract, skin elasticity and hydration improved significantly, probably because of increased hyaluronic acid and collagen (Skin Pharmacol Physiol. 2012;25(2):86-92).

Though maybe hard to find, more proof for flavonoids comes from a study that found that fermented blackberry has a "remarkable" effect on reducing wrinkles (Cosmetics May 2022, 9(3),50).