

Alternatives[®]

FOR THE HEALTH-CONSCIOUS INDIVIDUAL

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Dr. David G. Williams With the passing of another Christmas holiday, I can't help but think how complex and complicated our lives have become in just a short period of time. Part of my feelings, no doubt, stem from the fact that I'm getting older. On the other hand, I can remember that when I was a kid, the most complex toy I received at Christmas was a big, red, metal fire truck with a semi-functional ladder—or maybe that small “nine-transistor” radio. Slinkys, cap pistols, bb-guns, miniature cars, and plastic army men were my other toys. A little imagination was all it took to make them work.

I have nothing against new technology and change, but it seems that sometimes we discard older ideas or methods not because they're ineffective or we have better solutions, but simply because they're old. There are dozens of such examples when it comes to health cures and remedies. Chlorophyll is a case in point.

In the 1950s, when I was still trying to figure out how to make the ladder work on my fire truck, chlorophyll was a huge industry. In fact, it had become a \$22 million-a-year business (and a million then was worth a lot more than a million now). More than 40 U.S. companies were marketing products featuring chlorophyll. At that time, chlorophyll was being promoted as a cure-all, and you could find it in everything from toothpaste and shampoo to dog food. (*Business Wk* 52;165:165)

Chlorophyll soon faded from the scene, and is now looked upon as an older folk remedy whose time is past. Nothing could be further from the truth. And fortunately, the health community is slowly beginning to rediscover some of the

“Plant Blood” Helps People Stay Healthy, Too

amazing benefits associated with the use of chlorophyll.

Green Tea for Skin Protection

One abundant source of chlorophyll is green tea. Researchers at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio recently reported that green tea applied topically exhibits both anti-inflammatory and anticarcinogenic properties. (*Arch Dermatol* 00;136(8):989-94) In other words, along with the benefits you get from drinking green tea—which most people know about by now—you can also benefit from applying it directly to your skin.

Green tea contains numerous antioxidants in addition to chlorophyll, which together provide significant skin protection. Whether taken orally or applied directly to the skin, green tea has been shown to prevent damage from ultraviolet light, which can lead to skin cancer and wrinkling of the skin.

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You will observe with concern how long a useful truth may be known and exist, before it is generally received and practiced on.

—Benjamin Franklin



MAILBOX

The Many Faces of Natural Depression Treatment

Question: "For years I've suffered from bouts of depression. Only recently have I discussed this with my doctor, and since there seems to be no underlying reason for my problem, he has recommended that I start taking Prozac. I know you generally only recommend drugs as a last resort, so could you at least give me a few natural alternatives I could investigate on my own. With all the recent publicity, I'm fully aware of the reported benefits of St. John's Wort, but in the past it didn't work for me. So any other suggestions or ideas would be appreciated." —Robin G., Chicago, Illinois

Answer: Your question deals with a very big subject that is difficult to cover in a typical "Mailbox" response. However, there are several things that you should know about this problem, and it affects millions of Americans, so I'll take more space than usual for this response.

It's important to realize that depression can stem from hundreds of things, which often makes it difficult to treat. As with most ailments, accurate diagnosis is the key. Unfortunately, most doctors nowadays seem to spend less time looking for the underlying cause of the problem and more time practicing "cookbook" medicine. (They simply compare the observed symptoms with those listed as treatable by various drugs and prescribe the drug that fits best. It has become accepted practice to treat only the symptoms, regardless of the cause of the problem.)

Before resorting to any supplement or drug, problems like hypoglycemia (low blood sugar), diabetes, weak adrenal function, and an underactive thyroid (hypothyroidism) or pituitary gland should all be ruled out. I've discussed each of these in detail in past issues and, when available, also explained simple self tests that help identify these problems. [Publisher's note: You can find summaries of many of these problems at drdavidwilliams.com, along with some of the self tests. The website also has an annotated list of back issues that you can search for the specific information you need. If you're not online, you can call Customer Service at 800-718-8293 for specific back-issue information.]

Hormone imbalances, chronic infections, pain, cancer, and vitamin deficiencies can cause depression as well. Also, one of the most commonly overlooked contributors to depression is the regular use of prescription and over-the-counter drugs. Blood pressure drugs are particularly notorious for causing depression. If you take any drugs on a regular basis, be sure to check their side effects.

There are numerous natural remedies that are effective in treating depression. While St. John's Wort is one of the few that have been shown to be just as effective as Prozac, it's not the only alternative.

The following is a list of the more commonly known herbs and supplements that have been shown to help or alleviate depression.

L-Tryptophan: Tryptophan is probably the granddaddy of natural anti-depressants. I've covered it in detail in the past, and if you have the back issues I would suggest you read more about the controversy surrounding this amino acid. (Probably the most thorough article was in the March 1996 issue.) It was removed from the consumer market at almost the exact time in 1990 when the drug Prozac was being introduced (which, in my opinion, wasn't just coincidental). Tryptophan is still available from BIOS Biochemicals Corp. by calling

800-404-8185 or going to www.biochemicals.com on the Web. This company sells tryptophan for animal use, and is obviously not allowed to discuss human doses or anything related to use by humans.

5-Hydroxytryptophan (5-HTP):

5-HTP is a derivative of tryptophan. It is still available without a prescription, and one early study showed that it, too (when given at a dose of 100 milligrams, three times daily), was as effective as Prozac. As you may recall, Prozac stops the breakdown of the brain neurotransmitter serotonin, which affects your mood and behavior. Tryptophan and 5-HTP are both converted to serotonin by the body. Each of these substances works by increasing serotonin levels in the brain, which in turn improves mood, promotes better sleep, and helps decrease binge eating related to depression.

Not surprisingly, 5-HTP is also being used to help promote weight-loss and treat insomnia problems—much like tryptophan was in the past.

S-Adenosylmethionine (SAME):

SAME has received a great deal of publicity in the recent past. Although I haven't seen that it works very consistently, thousands of people swear that it works for them. It causes headaches in some people, but other than that it seems to have few, if any, significant adverse effects.

Phosphatidylserine (PS): PS is an essential fatty compound that helps the brain and nerves generate and transmit electrical impulses. It is very safe, being a naturally occurring building block in nerves and brain tissue. While it can be helpful in treating depression, most of the PS research has focused on memory improvement and the possible treatment of Alzheimer's disease.

PS was derived from cow brains in the 1980s, but was taken off the market following the European outbreak of mad cow disease. Now PS is made from soy, and tests have shown the new product to be just as effective as the old.

Ginkgo Biloba (Ginkgo): Ginkgo is also best known for enhancing memory, but you should really think of ginkgo anytime you have problems with micro-circulation (inner ear problems like tinnitus, circulation in the brain resulting in senility, Alzheimer's, etc.).

Acetyl L-Carnitine (ALC): ALC, another compound that can help with depression, is also being investigated for use in the treatment of Alzheimer's disease. Like many of the other compounds I've mentioned, it's a strong antioxidant. It also helps protect and rebuild nerve cell membranes. Like phosphatidylserine and fish oil, it has been referred to as "brain food."

Fish Oil: This is another "brain food" that has been shown to help treat depression. Fish oils and other highly unsaturated oils (e.g., flaxseed oil, hemp oil, borage oil, etc.) are very unstable and will quickly break down (turn rancid) when exposed to air, light, and heat. As I've mentioned numerous times in the past, these oils are essential for the development of nerve tissue.

Although it is rarely discussed, these essential fatty acids also provide a means by which the body can store light energy, or energy from the sun. Despite what most people have come to believe, sunlight is essential to good health. Light is made up of small particles of energy called photons. If your body has adequate amounts of essential fatty acids from sources such as fish oil, photons will pass through the skin and be stored with the help of these essential fatty acids.

It should come as no surprise that in areas of the world that have the least amount of sunlight, the tra-

ditional diet contained the highest amounts of essential fatty acids. For example, the Eskimos traditionally ate cold-water fish, such as salmon, and whale and seal blubber, which are some of the richest sources of essential fatty acids. When this type of diet was followed, there wasn't a problem in Eskimo society with depression, suicide, alcoholism, obesity, and heart disease. Only after the Standard American Diet (SAD) diet was introduced in place of the traditional diet did problems like these begin to surface.

In recent years, we've found that simple exposure to sunlight or high-intensity, full-spectrum lights can eliminate seasonal problems with depression. You'll find, however, that the treatment is far more effective and the results appear more quickly when the diet is also supplemented with either fish oils or fresh flaxseed oil.

As you know, I recommend the use of either freshly ground flaxseed or fresh flax oil on a daily basis. The number-one comment I receive from those who follow this suggestion is that their mood has improved and they feel more energy throughout the day. (And those who grind their flaxseed fresh each morning find that bowel irregularity has quickly become a thing of the past.)

Other than ruling out the problems I mentioned in the beginning of this article, adding freshly ground flaxseed to your diet each morning, and regularly enjoying some sunshine each day, would be my first recommendation for overcoming mild to moderate problems with depression. And depression alleviation is only one of dozens of health

benefits you'll experience with this simple, inexpensive routine.

Inositol: Inositol is part of the vitamin B family, and can help with depression, insomnia, and nerve problems such as diabetic neuropathy. (A dose of 500 milligrams of inositol taken about an hour before bedtime works almost as well as tryptophan for insomnia problems.)

This is a particularly good supplement to be taking if you have diabetes, which very often leads to nerve degeneration, or what is called diabetic neuropathy. Nerves start to degenerate when blood sugar levels are high and myoinositol (a blood-sugar alcohol) levels are low. Diabetics can help stop nerve degeneration by regularly taking inositol, which will increase levels of myoinositol in the body. The suggested dosage for depression and diabetes would be 500 milligrams three times a day. (And I would also strongly suggest taking 500 to 1000 milligrams a day of acetyl-L-carnitine (ALC), which can also help prevent diabetic neuropathy.)

You can find inositol at any health food store, or you can order it from Freeda Vitamins, 800-777-3737. Freeda offers *ALTERNATIVES* subscribers a 20 percent discount.

Vitamins B6, B12, and Bc (Folic Acid): A deficiency in any one of these B-family vitamins can result in depression. B6 and folic acid are generally not the culprits in depression. However, when a person's mood improves dramatically after taking a multi-B vitamin complex, these two elements are often the reason.

For decades, nutritionally oriented doctors have recognized and treated depression with vitamin B12



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Dr. Williams works closely with Mountain Home Nutritionals, a division of Doctors' Preferred, Inc. and subsidiary of Phillips Health, developing his unique formulations that supply many of the hard-to-find nutrients he recommends. Dr. Williams is compensated by Doctors' Preferred, Inc. on the sales of these nutritional supplements and health products, which allows him to continue devoting his life to worldwide research and the development of innovative, effective health solutions.

injections. The results can be quite dramatic and almost immediate. Vitamin B12 deficiencies are one of the most common vitamin deficiencies in the elderly, leading to depression, chronic fatigue, nerve problems, and memory loss.

Oral doses in the range of 500 to 1000 micrograms have been shown to restore vitamin B12 levels. You can also purchase B vitamins from health food stores or from Freeda Vitamins.

Dimethylglycine (DMG): DMG was first utilized by the Russians to improve the performance of athletes. At the time, it was called pangamic acid, or vitamin B15.

Numerous studies have shown that it improves the function of the immune system; I haven't seen any published research proving that it's helpful in treating depression. I have, however, heard dozens of anecdotal and personal reports that DMG has dramatically improved depression. I have personally used DMG on numerous occasions, and experienced very positive mood changes.

Changes will often be noted within a week to ten days after taking 125 milligrams daily. I personally think that DMG is one of those "sleepers" that very few people know about. If you're new to *ALTERNATIVES*, I would suggest reading the September 1994 issue to acquaint yourself with this product. A 60-tablet, 125 milligram-per-tablet bottle is available for \$30 plus \$4.50 for shipping from Progressive Laboratories, 1701 W. Walnut Hill Lane, Irving, Texas 75038, at 800-527-9512. This company gives *ALTERNATIVES* sub-

scribers a 25 percent discount on purchases (not shipping); just be sure to let them know that you are a subscriber.

Bacopa monniera (Brahmi): Brahmi is another sleeper. Few people outside the Indian Ayurvedic healing community seem to know about Brahmi. Most of the research has been conducted in India.

Brahmi is an herbal preparation that has been used for centuries in India to treat nervous disorders, improve learning, and provide nourishment to the brain. Clinical trials in India have shown that Brahmi does indeed help with depression, decrease fatigue, improve memory, and increase learning ability. Its antioxidant activity also provides a protective factor against neurological damage. (*Altern Med Rev* 99;4(3):144-61)

Numerous herbs in the U.S. are referred to and sold as Brahmi, yet most are not *Bacopa monniera*. This practice makes shopping for the product somewhat difficult. There are a couple of suppliers that sell the herb *Bacopa*, but, as far as I know, the extract that was studied extensively at the Centre for Drug Research, India (CDRI), isn't yet being sold in this country. In the U.K., Australia, Malaysia, and India, the extract is being sold under the name MemoryPlus. You can order the capsules of the whole plant from a company called Himalaya USA at 800-869-4640. It markets a product called *Bacopa* and a combination product called *Mind Care*, which contains several Indian herbs associated with promoting mental

awareness and improving memory. A thirty-day supply currently runs about \$15.

As more people learn about the Brahmi plant, you can expect to see it showing up in more and more products. It should remain very cost effective because it grows extensively throughout India and other parts of the world in marshy areas.

Don't Trade One Problem for Another

Just for the record, there is one herbal remedy that has been used and recommended repeatedly for the treatment of depression and anxiety: valerian root. I don't recommend the use of this herb. While it may work initially, I have found that over time it seems to place an extra burden on the adrenal glands. With continued use, it's not uncommon for a person to experience symptoms such as fatigue, dizziness upon rising from a seated or lying position, shakiness, headaches, irritability, and all the other problems associated with decreased adrenal function (hypoadrenia) and blood sugar fluctuations.

I'm sure that, with this many options to choose from, most people will be able to find a non-drug solution that will help them overcome their depression. It's a good idea to include fish oil and flaxseed oil or ground flaxseed in your diet anyway, and most of the rest of these remedies are easy to find and use. Just make sure that you rule out physical or drug causes before you proceed to these therapies.

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In one study, green tea was applied topically to mice for one week prior to exposing them to known carcinogenic chemicals. These mice were less likely to develop skin tumors than mice that were not treated with green tea. Other studies have shown that, applied topically to various skin lesions, green tea acted as an anti-inflammatory agent.

Based on these recent findings, I have no doubt that we'll now start to see green tea and green tea extracts showing up on the ingredient lists of many skin creams. Research on the topical use of green tea is still fairly new, so no one is exactly sure just what conditions it might be able to help. However, the research on chlorophyll, one of green tea's primary active ingredients, is

abundant and immediately usable. (And if you prefer to experiment with green tea itself, it's readily available, inexpensive, and easy to do. Just brew some of the tea, perhaps a bit stronger than usual, and apply it topically.)

The Chlorophyll Advantage

Chlorophyll, as we were all taught in chemistry class, is "plant blood." The chlorophyll in plants absorbs sunlight and, through a process called photosynthesis, converts sunlight into energy. It is the basis for life on the planet.

The chemical structure of chlorophyll is almost identical to that of the human blood component hemoglobin, except that the central atom of chlorophyll is magnesium and the central atom of hemoglobin is iron. This characteristic has given chlorophyll the reputation of being a "blood builder," although that doesn't seem to be one of its primary strengths.

From a practical standpoint, research and decades of clinical experience have shown that chlorophyll can be 1) a very effective tool to help heal external wounds and lesions, and 2) a good, safe dietary source of vitamin K. Let's take a closer look at these two benefits.

Wound and Lesion Healing: During World War II, chlorophyll ointments were used on combat wounds with a great deal of success—even in cases where sulfa creams and penicillin weren't effective. (New York State J Med July 15;Vol.55:2041) Hopefully, you won't find yourself in need of a therapy for foul-smelling, draining, open wounds, but that was the type of wound on which chlorophyll ointment proved to be effective.

Keep in mind that chlorophyll doesn't work as a strong antibiotic. However, it does break down carbon dioxide and release oxygen, which can be lethal to certain forms of bacteria. Chlorophyll's strong suit tends to be its ability to accelerate the formation of granulation tissue that forms the base for new tissue growth in wound healing.

On a less intense scale, chlorophyll can be used on skin and leg ulcerations, especially those related to poor circulation, rectal lesions, surgical wounds, abscesses, and burns. I'm currently working with a four-year-old girl who has extensive eczema. Chlorophyll ointment is one of the tools I'll be using to help clear up the pustules and alleviate the intense itching. Chlorophyll is non-

irritating, soothing to the skin, and totally non-toxic. At worst, it may leave a temporary green stain on the skin.

There might be other chlorophyll ointments on the market, but the one I'm most familiar with and have used repeatedly is simply called Chlorophyll Ointment. It is made and distributed, to doctors only, by Standard Process Laboratories. However, you can order from The Apothecary, which has a physician in residence, at 800-869-9159 or www.the-apothecary.com.

A Great Source of Vitamin K: Chlorophyll is also a very good non-prescription source of vitamin K. Unfortunately, this vitamin receives little attention. Few people, including doctors, ever treat vitamin K deficiencies.

Vitamin K was discovered by Danish scientist Henrik Dam, and we have identified three forms of it. Two are natural and the third is synthetic. In nature, vitamin K is an oil-soluble vitamin found mainly in green vegetables (vitamin K1) and also formed by bacteria in our lower bowel (vitamin K2). Vitamin K3 is the synthetic form.

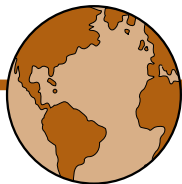
Within the human body, the liver uses several steps to convert Vitamin K into a compound called thrombin. This compound aids in blood clotting, or coagulation. The Danish spelling of "coagulation" begins with a "k" instead of a "c," which is why the substance was named vitamin K.

It's difficult to accurately determine whether a person is getting adequate amounts of vitamin K from the diet and intestinal bacteria. But there are several symptoms and conditions that might indicate a shortage of vitamin K in the body.

Since vitamin K is linked to blood coagulation, many of the deficiency symptoms are related to excess bleeding of one kind or another. One of the most common signs of a deficiency is bleeding under the skin. In the elderly, who are very often vitamin-K deficient, it is fairly common to find huge black and blue marks, called purpura, just beneath the skin. Purpura can also be a sign of vitamin C and vitamin P (bioflavonoid) deficiencies, but I've found many times that adding those two vitamins alone won't correct the problem.

Other bleeding problems that can be a result of lower-than-normal levels of vitamin K include:

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News to Use from Around the World

Propolis for Herpes

LVOV STATE UNIVERSITY, UKRAINE. _____

Researchers have found that an ointment containing 3 percent propolis was more effective at treating genital herpes than the commonly prescribed drug acyclovir.

For some reason, most of the research on propolis seems to come out of the former Soviet Union. While the majority of people in this country don't have a clue what propolis is, it has become almost as common in the former Soviet bloc as aspirin is here.

Propolis is produced by bees from tree resin. It has strong anti-bacterial, anti-fungal and anti-viral properties. It is, without a doubt, one of nature's wonder cures. Bees use it to seal and help sterilize every crack and cranny of their hives. Human studies have shown that it can help knock out colds, external lesions, and infections in the throat and mouth.

The Ukrainian researchers tested 90 men and women with recurrent genital herpes. The subjects were divided into three equal groups. One third received the 3 percent propolis cream. One third received a placebo, and the other third received the acyclovir ointment.

The treatment started during the blister phase and lasted for a total of 10 days. In the men and in those women with exterior lesions, the creams were applied topically to the lesions four times daily. In women with vaginal or cervical lesions, a tampon with the appropriate ointment was inserted four times daily for the 10 days.

At the end of three days of treatment, the subjects in the propolis group had significantly fewer symptoms than those in the placebo group, but not fewer than those in the acyclovir group. However, after 10 days of treatment, the subjects using the propolis cream had far more healed lesions than people in either of the other two groups. The news even gets better.

At the initial examination, 66 percent of the women had vaginal superinfections. At the end of 10 days, the incidence of vaginal superinfection in the women using the propolis cream was reduced by 55 percent. There was no reduction in either the acyclovir or placebo groups. (*Phytomedicine* 00;7(1):1-6)

I don't know of any 3 percent propolis creams currently being marketed in this country. However, after this article comes out, I'm sure there will be a few. After all, genital herpes has become a major problem in this country—especially among our young people. It wouldn't be hard to make such a product on your

own, if you wanted to do so. Propolis is readily available from numerous suppliers. I have recommended CC Pollen Company (800-875-0096) in the past, or you can do an Internet search for propolis and find a half-dozen companies that carry it. I wouldn't think that you would have to mix exactly 3 percent propolis with the cream. Anywhere in the ballpark would give excellent results, I'm sure. (Use a hypoallergenic cream for the base—Vaseline Intensive Care or Johnson's Baby Lotion would probably be good choices for most people.) This study also illustrates a very effective method of dealing with vaginal infections through the use of propolis cream.

I reported several years ago that butylated hydroxytoluene (BHT) could be used successfully to prevent recurrent outbreaks of genital and oral herpes, as well as shingles. One 250-milligram capsule taken daily with the meal that has the highest fat content seems to do the trick. BHT is available from either Wholesale Nutrition, P.O. Box 3345, Saratoga, CA 95070 at 800-325-2664 (\$19 for 500 capsules) or Vitamin Research Products at 800-877-2447 (\$7.95 for 100 capsules). BHT is a safe synthetic antioxidant with numerous uses. (**Publisher's note:** For more detailed information on BHT please refer to the May 1992 issue of *ALTERNATIVES*.)

Hibiscus for High Blood Pressure

EVEEN-TEHRAN, IRAN. _____ Hibiscus tea has been found to be an effective method of lowering high blood pressure.

Hibiscus tea has been a traditional remedy for high blood pressure in many countries around the world, such as Iran. To determine if there was any merit to the remedy, a total of 54 individuals with hypertension were selected to receive either a regular tea or hibiscus tea.

Individuals taking more than one hypertensive drug were not selected. All subjects were in their early 50s and all stopped taking their high blood pressure medication for one week prior to the study.

Each of the participants drank hibiscus tea one hour prior to having their blood pressure taken, which was done three times throughout the 15-day study.

After just twelve days, the subjects taking the hibiscus tea had an average 11.7 percent drop in systolic blood pressure and a 10.7 percent drop in diastolic blood pressure from the initial readings. (*J Ethnopharmacol* 99;65(3):231-6)

News to Use Continued...

It's obvious that hibiscus tea works. However, it might be a remedy that must be used continuously to maintain its positive results. And even though, based on my past experiences, hibiscus tea does seem to drop blood pressure rather quickly, in some individuals it doesn't seem to stay down for an extended period of time. When the study group participants stopped the tea for a period of three days, their blood pressure began to creep upwards again. Their systolic pressure was elevated by 7.9 percent and the diastolic pressure rose by 5.6 percent from their post-treatment lows.

Cramming for Your Blood Pressure Test

As an interesting aside, some people take hibiscus tea an hour before a physical examination to lower their blood pressure readings. I'm not advocating this practice, nor do I have any firsthand knowledge of or experience with it. But hibiscus tea taken an hour before an examination can have a very dramatic effect on blood pressure.

For example, someone with a normal blood pressure of around 160/115, which would be on the high side, might reduce that to the neighborhood of 145/95 by drinking a cup of tea an hour prior to the examination.

I'm sure that insurance companies, company physicians, and the Federal Aviation Administration probably won't be too happy with me for passing along this information. But it's a health tidbit you'll never learn about anywhere else, and passing along my research is what you pay me to do.

The hibiscus tea I'm talking about here is also referred to as "sour tea" in Iran. The plant is *Hibiscus sabdariffa* and is native to many tropical areas of the Americas. It is also found in Northern Africa, Sri Lanka, Java, and Malacca. The tea is generally made from the flowers and fruit of the plant. A heaping tablespoon of the dried plant infused into about a quart of boiling water can be used to make the tea. Dried hibiscus flowers to make the tea can be purchased by phone from Penn Herb at 800-523-9971.

(Continued from p. 149)

- Excessive menstrual flow and clotting
- Nose bleeding
- Bloody vomit
- Bloody stools
- Eye hemorrhages.

One other symptom that is often overlooked is the occurrence of stroke—especially in the form of several "mini-strokes," which seem to be a growing problem these days. I can't help but believe that a large number of these problems are linked to low levels of vitamin K.

Vitamin K is also necessary for the calcification of bone. Women with osteoporosis, especially those who have experienced fractures, have been shown to have lower levels of vitamin K. Such deficiencies also appear to be a factor in the development of hardening of the arteries (atherosclerosis).

When you step back and take a look at the broader picture, it's not hard to see why vitamin K is a fairly common deficiency. Keep in mind that it is a fat-soluble vitamin, like vitamins A, D and E. If a person has had their gallbladder

removed, or has difficulty digesting fats, getting sufficient vitamin K could easily be a problem.

The richest food sources of vitamin K are greens like kale, spinach, endive, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, lettuce, and cabbage, which are not most people's favorite foods. To add to the problem, polyunsaturated fatty acids decrease the absorption of vitamin K. So if you eat a nice mixed spinach salad, but use a typical salad dressing (made from polyunsaturated oils), chances are you won't absorb much of the vitamin K from the spinach.

Sulfa and aspirin (which is now consumed by the boatload in this country) both destroy vitamin K. Keep this in mind if you're taking aspirin on a routine basis. It could help explain why you bruise so easily.

Getting adequate amounts of vitamin K from the bacterial flora in the lower bowel is not an adequate alternative to dietary vitamin K for most people. Constipation, chronic diarrhea, colon inflammation, and a general lack of fermented foods in the diet all interfere with the proper growth of intestinal flora.

Get Your K Each Day

All of this is to say that our society is prone to experience vitamin K deficiencies. Obviously, to correct or prevent the problem, you need to regularly eat some of the foods mentioned above, along with fermented foods like sauerkraut, borscht, yogurt, buttermilk, etc. And if you have any of the symptoms I've covered, or a family history of stroke, osteoporosis, or atherosclerosis, you should seriously consider increasing your vitamin K intake.

Natural vitamin K is safe. Doses up to 15 milligrams aren't a problem. Generally 1 to 6 milligrams is adequate for those who are showing signs of a vitamin K deficiency. However, there are two things you should keep in mind.

First, since vitamin K functions to help coagulate the blood, it should not be taken if you're using anticoagulants like the drug Coumadin.

Second, since vitamin K is fat-soluble, you might need to take bile salts to help assimilate it. If you're not digesting your fats, you won't be able to digest vitamin K.

Not surprisingly, there aren't too many suppliers that sell vitamin K directly to the public. Scientific Botanicals, a Seattle, Washington company, sells Vitamin K Drops that contain 2 milligrams per drop. This company also sells only to physicians. You can have your doctor order the drops by calling 206-527-5521. For years I have used a product made by Standard Process Laboratories, called Chlorophyll Perles, to help with anemia and detoxification problems. However, this product contains only 2 mcg of vitamin K, so I would recommend the Vitamin K

Drops from Scientific Botanicals for people who are deficient in this vitamin.

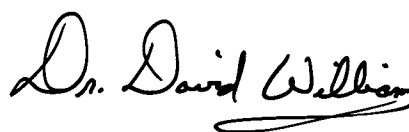
Other Reasons to Consider Vitamin K

Although there hasn't been much research into chlorophyll in the last couple of decades, there have been small clinical trials and independent reports of several other benefits stemming from its use. I'll mention some of those benefits in passing, as some of you might find them helpful. Again, there's not a lot of supporting research in these particular areas, but there's no downside to taking chlorophyll either. If you see a benefit here that applies to you, I'd encourage you to do some of your own experimentation.

Chlorophyll taken internally may help heal stomach and gastrointestinal ulcerations and/or damage. Some people have reported that it has lessened intestinal gas and constipation problems. Early on, it was used as a treatment for anemia.

There are also a couple of early studies suggesting that chlorophyll might help retard the formation of kidney stones. (*Investigative Urology* 80;18(2):86-89,90)

And lastly, Vitamin K (5 milligrams) along with vitamin C (25 milligrams) has been shown to effectively treat the nausea and vomiting associated with pregnancy. (*Am J Obstetrics Gyn* 52;64:416)



We Hope to Hear From You!

Dr. Williams greatly appreciates hearing from you, and gears his research to the concerns you express to him in your letters. Of course, practical and ethical constraints prevent him from answering personal medical questions by mail or email, but he'll answer as many as he can in the Mailbox section of *Alternatives*. For our part, we'll do our best to direct you to his issues, reports, and products related to the subject of your interest.

Here's how you can reach us:

- To send in Mailbox questions or Health Hints, write to P.O. Box 829, Ingram, TX 78025 or mailbox@drdavidwilliams.com
- For Customer Service matters such as address changes, call 800-527-3044 or write to custsvc@drdavidwilliams.com
- To get important information between issues, sign up for email dispatches at www.drdavidwilliams.com
- To order nutritional supplements from Mountain Home Nutritionals, call 800-888-1415 or visit www.drdavidwilliams.com
- To order back issues or reports, call 800-718-8293
- To sign a friend up for *Alternatives*, call 800-219-8591

Let us hear from you soon! —The *Alternatives* Customer Service Team