

Alternatives[®]

FOR THE HEALTH-CONSCIOUS INDIVIDUAL

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Dr. David G. Williams

An Infectious Idea for Our Times

Last month I discussed a few of the many benefits associated with maintaining proper bacterial flora in the gastrointestinal tract. As I mentioned, one of my favorite tools for doing so is fermented foods. I particularly like yogurt and fermented vegetables, especially sauerkraut. The juice from sauerkraut is full of health-sustaining biomolecules formed during the fermentation process. (*J Agri Food Chem* 02;50(23):6798-803)

One particular use of sauerkraut juice that I neglected to mention is for healing canker sores. You can quickly get rid of the problem by swishing a tablespoon of the liquid in your mouth three or four times a day before swallowing. The beneficial bacteria have a way of “crowding out” and helping eliminate all kinds of pathogens.

In Europe, where natural remedies seem to gain favor more quickly among the medical profession, fermented foods and the probiotics they contain are studied and used more readily for a variety of health problems. I hope it's only a matter of time before the trend catches on in this country. Based on what I've seen however, I think that's being overly optimistic. Regardless of whether your doctor ever discovers the healing and protective powers of probiotics and fermented foods, you'll do yourself an enormous favor by making them a regular part of your diet.

Decades-Old Discovery

In this day of genetic therapy and all kinds of miracle cures, the therapeutic use of fermented foods probably sounds a bit archaic, but it will turn out to be one of the biggest “discoveries” of our time. The sooner you make the discov-

ery personally, the better off you'll be. In many instances these friendly bacteria could mean the difference between life and death.

Take hospitals, for example, which have become some of the most dangerous places you can frequent. Contracting an infection during surgery or a hospital stay is often life-threatening. Recently, a group of German physicians found that the risk of developing such an infection could be greatly reduced through the use of fiber and probiotics.

In this randomized clinical trial, the incidence of bacterial infections was observed in: a) patients given conventional nutrition, either orally or through feeding tubes; b) patients given conventional nutrition with added fiber and probiotics; and c) patients given conventional nutrition with a placebo (probiotics that had been inactivated with heat). The study involved 172 patients who underwent major abdominal surgery or

(Continued on page 163)



In This Issue

An Infectious Idea for Our Times	161
Mailbox	162
News to Use from Around the World	164
Health Hints from Readers	167
More Uses for the Slimming Fat	167
A Tea of a Different Color	168

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

Three Ideas for Addressing Angina Pain

Question: I suffer from angina pain and have for years. I've followed many of your recommendations and as a result the problem is much, much better. I take Heart Advantage, extra Coenzyme Q10, vitamin E, and L-carnitine. Do you have any other recommendations that might help? I also watch my diet now and exercise regularly. I plan to start chelation therapy, but right now I don't have the money to do so.

S.K., Cleveland, Ohio

Answer: There are a couple of items you might want to discuss with your doctor. First, the amino acid L-arginine has been shown to help many people with angina problems. L-arginine is a precursor of nitric oxide, the compound that opens or dilates blood vessels. It's difficult to make an accurate recommendation as to the dosage. Some individuals experience a difference when taking only 1 or 2 grams a day, while others need to take as much as 6 grams daily.

The nitric oxide produced by L-arginine also appears to inhibit aggregation, or stickiness, of blood platelet cells. This is one of the main reasons some people take aspirin regularly. L-arginine prevents the clumping of these cells without the increased risk of bleeding and stroke that aspirin causes. L-arginine has also been found to improve immune function, male fertility, and erectile dysfunction; shorten healing time; and fight cancer.

By the way, for you aspirin-a-day die-hards, there is evidence that vitamin C can help protect against—and maybe even reverse—the side effects

of regular aspirin use. At the University of Munster in Germany, researchers recently observed the effects of aspirin and aspirin with vitamin C on 10 males and 10 females between the ages of 18 and 28.

In just a three-day period, 400 mg of aspirin a day resulted in erosions in the stomach and an increase in the oxidation of fats. It also caused the suppression of gastric blood flow, vitamin C levels, super oxide dismutase (SOD), and glutathione peroxidase activities.

When these same individuals were given 480 mg of vitamin C with the aspirin, the damage to the stomach lining was reduced and the existing damage actually reversed. The vitamin C also helped bring SOD and glutathione back to normal levels. Vitamin C's strong antioxidant capabilities seem to be the reason it can help counteract these effects of aspirin. (*Aliment Pharmacol Ther* 01;15:677-687)

What wasn't addressed in the study was the fact that aspirin interferes with the production of certain prostaglandins and whether vitamin C could help counteract that activity as well.

Another item that might help your angina is creatine. I've discussed this compound in the past. It's a favorite of body builders because it helps improve muscle function and recovery time from exercise. Daily recommended dosages are about 5 grams of the powder. Sometimes a week of "loading" with 20 grams per day precedes the 5-gram maintenance dose. (JoMar Laboratories sells both L-arginine and creatine, 1-800- 538-4545, www.jomarlabs.com.)

One last substance that is underused in the treatment of angina is the sugar D-ribose. D-ribose is necessary in the re-synthesis of the nucleotide ATP, or "energy molecule." ATP can become depleted if there are inadequate amounts of D-ribose. Although most of the research has been done with animals, a few human studies have found that 6 grams a day of D-ribose can often stop exercise-induced angina. (*Int J Cardiol* 00;75(2-3):205-10)

(*J Cardiovasc Pharmacol Ther* 00;5(4):249-58) D-ribose is available from mail-order places like Nutrition Express, 800-338-7979, www.nutritionexpress.com. You can also find it in larger health food stores.

Relief for Painful Menstrual Cramps

Question: I have numerous young female patients, and a common complaint among this group is severe and painful cramping at the start of their menstrual cycle. Although most of their periods are regular, the discomfort and excessive cramping is a problem. Being in the natural health field, I've been reluctant to recommend an over-the-counter pain reliever, but I'm at a loss as to what natural substance I can recommend. Do you have any suggestions or recommendations?

Dr. T.B., San Diego, California

Answer: Indian researchers obtained remarkable results several years ago using vitamin B1 (thiamine). The study involved 556 girls between the ages of 12 and 21. All were suffering from moderate to severe spasmodic dysmenorrhea (menstrual cramps). Half the group was given 100 mg of vitamin B1 orally each day for 90 days.

After just 90 days, 87 percent of those in the treated group were cured, and 8 percent were relieved (their pain was almost nil or greatly reduced). In 5 percent there was no change at all. The positive effects remained for two additional months, although the B1 was no longer being given. (*Indian J Med Res* 96;103:227-331)

It is not uncommon for those in this age group to be deficient in one or more of the B-vitamins. Physical and mental stress, high intake of refined carbohydrates (sugars), skipping meals, dieting, etc. can lead to low B-vitamin levels. I would suggest adding a B-complex vitamin to their program, as well as the thiamine.

As you probably know vitamin E, calcium, and magnesium are other supplements that will often help stop severe menstrual cramping.

(Continued from page 161)

a liver transplant. Among those undergoing the abdominal surgery, 31 percent of those receiving conventional nutrition and 13 percent of those receiving the placebo developed infections. Only 4 percent of those receiving the probiotic and additional fiber developed infections.

Of the 95 patients who received liver transplants, 48 percent of those on conventional nutrition and 34 percent of those receiving the placebo developed infections. Only 13 percent of those receiving the probiotic and additional fiber developed infections. (*Z Gastroenterol* 02;40(10):869-76) (*Transplantation* 02;74(1):123-7)

When Will They Learn?

Based on the results above, I personally think it should be considered malpractice for surgeons not to place all of their patients on probiotics and additional fiber. The difference in infection rates is phenomenal! This simple therapy can reduce suffering, lower death rates, decrease antibiotic use, and shorten the duration of hospital stays, dramatically reducing medical expenditures in this country.

Similarly, an Italian study demonstrated the beneficial effects of probiotic use in animals with induced acute pancreatitis. Acute pancreatitis is a serious problem that can progress rapidly. An invasion by pathogenic bacteria normally precedes the inflammation, toxicity, and tissue destruction associated with the disease. Infection is the most common cause of death.

Researchers induced pancreatitis in 40 animals. Twenty were given no treatment, and 20 received a liquid containing the probiotic *Lactobacillus plantarum*. They were examined four days later. In the group that received no treatment, pathogenic bacteria were found in 14 animals. Of those receiving the probiotic, only 4 had pathogenic bacteria. (*Chir Ital* 99;51(3):221-6)

Another recent study at the Petz Aladar Teaching Hospital in Gyor, Hungary, further sup-

ports the use of probiotics in the treatment of acute pancreatitis. In a double-blind investigation involving 45 patients, 22 were given a probiotic (1 billion live bacteria twice daily) and oat fiber, and 23 were given a placebo.

After a week, only one of the 22 patients receiving the live probiotic was found to have tissue destruction and abscesses in the pancreas. Among those receiving the placebo, seven were found to have pancreas destruction and abscesses. Additionally, those on the probiotic were released from the hospital on an average of 13.7 days, compared to 21.4 days for those on the placebo.

Overall, the probiotic treatment resulted in an 85 percent reduction in pancreatic infections serious enough to require surgery. It also was responsible for a 36 percent reduction in the duration of hospitalization. (*Brit J Surg* 02;89:(1103-1107)

Common Sense, Little Proof

Unfortunately, you won't see many research studies that evaluate the enormous benefits of probiotics, particularly in the U.S. The studies above used a patented lactobacillus strain called LP 299v from the Swedish firm Probi AB. Although LP 299v isn't being sold yet in the U.S., you can find it throughout Europe in a drink called Pro Viva.

Several companies have isolated and patented various probiotic strains, and that's the only reason they can fund this type of research. Without any chance of recouping the necessary funds by being able to sell an exclusive product, it's highly unlikely that companies will ever test most of the common beneficial strains of probiotic bacteria. As a result, no one can say with 100 percent certainty that other probiotic strains would have the same effects as this patented strain. We do know, however, that many probiotic strains of bacteria, like those found in yogurt, sauerkraut, and other fermented foods, behave in the same manner.

(Continued on page 165)



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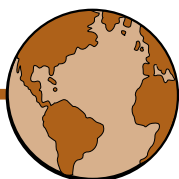
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Author: Dr. David Williams; Publisher: Glynnis Mileikowsky, Editor: Meg de Guzman

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News to Use from Around the World

Taurine for Iron-Poor Blood

GAZA STRIP, PALESTINE—In a study involving 51 college-age women, researchers found that taurine could help increase iron stores significantly in anemic patients.

Female students from the Al Azhar University were treated orally with either 325 mg of slow-release iron sulfate or iron in addition to 1,000 mg of the amino acid taurine daily. After two weeks, not only were the total body iron stores significantly higher in those taking the taurine, but their blood-cell levels of iron had increased to a level that would be equivalent to having another 3/4 pint of blood. (*Eur J Haematology* 02;69:236-4)

Anemia is oftentimes hard to treat since it takes so long for the body stores and blood-cell levels of iron to improve. Taurine is a very safe and relatively inexpensive method to speed up the process. Exactly how it works isn't understood. Taurine is known to help strengthen cell walls, so it's possible that it may be extending the normal 120-day life of red blood cells.

Iron makes up the "heme," or iron, portion of hemoglobin. Almost 70 percent of the iron in your body is found in red blood cells. Hemoglobin, as you know, is responsible for carrying oxygen around the body.

If you've ever experienced anemia, I'm sure you can understand the need for restoring iron reserves as quickly as possible. With anemia, a lack of oxygen leads to difficulty in concentration, constant fatigue, low energy levels, the feeling of "pins and needles" in the feet and hands, and dozens of other problems stemming from a lack of tissue oxygen. While an overall paleness is common with anemia, one of the other signs you can look for is a loss of the red "flares" that shoot out from the white half-moons on your fingernails. Keep in mind that the only sure and safe way to know if you're low on iron is through blood testing, not by solely looking to see if various symptoms are present. Not everyone needs additional iron.

In the above study, taurine wasn't taken at the same time as the iron supplement, so I wouldn't take them together either. Several items are known to interfere with iron absorption, including coffee, tea, calcium, and soy products. Also, certain types of iron bind with vitamin E, so it's best not to take vitamin E at the same time you take iron. Iron requires acid for absorption so it's generally a good idea to take iron with a meal, especially one that includes meat, and taking your vitamin C at the same time might also help.

While I'm on the topic, there are a couple of other uses for this amino acid that most people aren't aware of.

Taurine is often useful for stopping the recurrence of seizures. Although a considerable amount of animal research has been done in the area over the

last 30 years or so, dosages for humans haven't been established. It's also not a sure-fire solution. I've seen reports which show that taking anywhere from 500 mg to 2 grams of taurine three times daily (a total of 1.5 grams to 6 grams daily) will often bring about some improvement within two to three months—if it's going to work for an individual.

Taurine has also recently been shown to help prevent the effects that smoking has on blood vessels. While I'm certainly not suggesting that taurine is the answer to smoking (the answer is to quit), it may help negate one of its side effects.

After smoking, blood vessels constrict, increasing blood pressure and impeding blood flow. In a study to be published in an upcoming issue of the journal *Circulation*, researchers in Dallas found that when smokers took 1.5 grams of taurine a day, their blood vessels functioned the same as those of non-smokers.

Taurine is a safe, naturally occurring amino acid most commonly found in fish, and most of us are probably getting adequate amounts of it from our diet. But for those who need a boost in their iron stores, supplementing with taurine appears to make sense. I've never heard of anything else that works so quickly and effectively for those with anemia. (JoMar Laboratories, 1-800-538-4545, www.jomarlabs.com, sells taurine in both powder and capsule form.)

Leach Pain from Arthritic Joints

ESSEN, GERMANY—Researchers have now found that leeches can be used to relieve the pain from osteoarthritis. Osteoarthritis is the form of arthritis also known as "wear and tear" arthritis.

Doctors at the University of Essen hospital recruited 16 patients with osteoarthritis of the knee joint. Ten in the group were treated with leeches while six served as controls.

Four leeches (*Hirudo medicinalis*) were applied topically to the most painful spots around the joint. There were no complications. The patients were evaluated for any changes in pain for each of the following 10 days and then at 28 days. All of those treated with leeches reported rapid pain reduction and sustained improvement at the 28-day mark. (*Altern Ther Health Med* 02;8(5):84-8) This is not surprising. While sucking blood, leeches release both an anticoagulant and an anesthetic compound into the host's bloodstream.

Leech therapy has been around practically forever. It's still being used successfully in parts of Asia, Africa, and some Arabic countries. I don't know if it will ever gain widespread acceptance in this part of the world, but it works. Leeches are sold through Leeches U.S.A. (www.leechesusa.com) and other providers, but they're

News to Use (continued)

available only to medical personnel and hospitals, so you'll need to obtain them through your doctor.

When a Shirt Is More Than a Shirt

Here's another potential survival tip that may, but hopefully won't, be something you need to know in the future.

Cholera is a bacterial infection of the colon that results in severe diarrhea and vomiting. The subsequent rapid fluid loss results in severe dehydration and frequently death. When you hear about cholera, it's generally in places like India or Africa. The infection is caused by the bacteria *Vibrio cholerae*. It thrives and spreads when water or food supplies become contaminated. The contamination can result from natural disasters or human causes. Natural disasters like floods and other emergencies, which result in overcrowding at places like refugee camps, significantly increase the risk of cholera epidemics.

The obvious solution is to avoid raw, undercooked, or contaminated food, and drink only purified or boiled water. But this may not always be possible.

Researchers studying the problem in the remote villages of Bangladesh have found that water supplies contaminated with cholera bacteria can be adequately filtered using cloth. When they filtered their water through old, folded saris (the cloth drapes worn by the women in the region), the cloth trapped more than 99 percent of the harmful bacteria. After this technique of filtering was introduced, the incidence of cholera dropped to half its former rate. (*Proc Natl Acad Sci USA* 2003)

I've covered recommended water filtration devices and purification techniques in detail in past issues, most notably in July 1997 (*Vol. 7, No. 1*). However, I wasn't aware that folded layers of old cloth could effectively remove pathogenic bacteria such as cholera. It appears that although the cholera-causing bacteria are tiny enough to pass through the cloth, they cling to larger particles of plankton, which are too big to pass through the weave.

This simple filtering technique probably wouldn't do much to remove pesticides, harmful chemicals, or most other forms of pathogens, but if you're ever faced

with cholera, the shirt off your back may be all you need to help you get through the situation.

A Tasteful Treatment for Psoriasis

Several years ago in Australia, I was visiting an avocado farm with a small gift shop at its entrance. In it, small vials of avocado oil were being sold along with a brochure claiming the oil would reduce skin wrinkles and cure psoriasis. The brochure even listed several research studies. I was intrigued, to say the least. That is, until I learned that the research studies didn't exist. I did buy and try the oil, but didn't find it to be anything special.

I've now found new research that indicates the brochure's claims may have some merit after all. Thirteen patients suffering from psoriasis vulgaris were randomly selected to receive a prescription vitamin D3 analogue or a cream containing avocado oil and vitamin B12. (The cream contained 700 mg of B12 per kilogram of cream, which consisted of methyl glycoside stearate, avocado oil, and distilled water.) The two creams were applied twice daily to psoriasis patches on different sides of the body, and the results were observed for a period of 12 weeks.

For the first eight weeks, there was more rapid improvement in the areas where the prescription cream was used. The maximum efficacy of the prescription cream peaked during the first four weeks and then began to subside. By contrast, the effects of the vitamin B12 and avocado cream remained constant throughout the entire 12 weeks, and it was still working when the trial was stopped.

The effects seen with the prescription cream are typical of most psoriasis medications. They work well at first, but then lose their effectiveness. Based on this small study, it appears that vitamin B12 and avocado oil might provide a better long-term benefit. It would be easy to make your own using a natural cream and simply adding the vitamin B12 and avocado oil. (*Dermatology* 01;203:141-147)

(Continued from page 163)

Beneficial bacteria from these foods have been shown to strengthen the immune system, which can improve all types of health problems. When given a chance, these beneficial strains of bacteria can gain a dominant foothold in the gastrointestinal tract, the urinary tract, and other areas of the body and out-compete pathogenic strains of bacteria, which cause infection and wreak havoc throughout the body. I can't stress enough

the importance of continuously re-supplying beneficial bacteria to your intestinal tract.

Keep the "Good Guys" Well Fed

In addition to the bacteria, it's important to also supply your body with compounds that promote bowel motility, mucus formation, and blood flow to the mucosal lining of the GI tract. Nitrate-rich foods like lettuce, spinach, and other

“greens” are helpful, as are the essential fatty acids contained in fish and flax oil. Making sure a large percentage of your diet consists of raw vegetables and fruits will help replenish your stores of enzymes and improve your ability to digest more difficult proteins and fats.

Antacids, hydrochloric acid blockers (Pepcid, Tagamet, Zantac, Axid), proton-pump inhibitors like Prevacid and Nexium, and medications that cause “dry mouth” can often make it particularly difficult to regain health. Saliva contains important antimicrobial compounds, and adequate amounts of stomach acid are crucial for destroying harmful bacteria that enter the GI tract.

For probiotics and beneficial bacteria to work and proliferate, they need their own “food.” Fiber serves this purpose. Indigestible fiber not only helps bowel motility, but it also serves as base media for fermentation. Rarely do you see it mentioned, but roughly 10 percent of the body’s calories are produced by fermentation in the colon’s mucosa. The vitamins and nutrients produced feed the good gut bacteria and prevent infections, which would otherwise start in the area. Increasing the fiber in your diet with raw and cooked fruits and vegetables will make any probiotic work more effectively.

One other factor that is very often overlooked is the source of one’s water. A chlorinated water supply can make it next to impossible to maintain the ideal bacterial flora in the gastrointestinal tract. It doesn’t matter if the bacteria are good, bad, or indifferent; chlorine kills them. If you’re still drinking chlorinated water, it’s time to change. As you probably know, I recommend drinking distilled water, and the Waterwise 9000 Distiller is one product that can be used to “brew” safe, clean water. It costs \$379.99 and is available from Mountain Home Solutions, 1-800-211-8562 (code 18189-I).

If you can’t get distilled water, then at least let your drinking water sit in a pitcher overnight to allow some of the chlorine to dissipate. Better still, add a teaspoon or two of powdered vitamin C to every gallon to help break down the chlorine and its byproducts. (An excellent source of vitamin C is Wholesale Nutrition’s Ascorbic Acid Crystals. Wholesale Nutrition can be reached at 1-800-325-2664; price lists and product information are on their Web site, www.nutri.com.)

If you ever have to undergo any type of surgery to the gastrointestinal tract (including

dental surgery), start on a probiotic (if you’re not already taking one) and increase your consumption of fermented foods as quickly as possible. This is a proven, low-cost method to decrease your chance of developing an infection. Hospital-borne infections are more common than ever. And, with the ever-increasing number of antibiotic-resistant bacteria strains, getting an infection can often mean the difference between life and death.

Continue Taking Charge of Your Health—Now More Than Ever

At the meeting of the Critical Care Congress on Feb. 3, researchers reported that sepsis is on the rise in the United States. Sepsis is technically defined as systemic inflammatory response syndrome (SIRS). In simple terms, it is an overwhelming infection of body tissue by toxin-producing organisms.

The initial infection can start anywhere in the body, but commonly begins in the urinary tract, bowel, lungs, liver, gallbladder, or lesions on the skin. For hospital patients, it also typically occurs at the site of intravenous lines, surgical wounds, surgical drains, bedsores, or skin ulcerations. The standard treatment consists of broad-spectrum intravenous antibiotic therapy. But even with the best treatment, the death rate can run as high as 60 percent.

The researchers, who met in my “backyard,” San Antonio, Texas, told us that the rate of severe sepsis cases increased by 6.2 percent annually—from 635,000 cases in 1992 to 965,000 cases in 1999. Also, an increasing number of these cases (6.9 percent) now involve the failure of more than one organ. While the uninformed public may not be worried about this trend, those close to the situation feel differently.

Dr. Derek Angus, the principal investigator, said, “The incessant growth of the severe sepsis epidemic in this country ought to be cause for grave alarm. This condition has long been one of medicine’s greatest foes, taking more lives each year than breast, colorectal, pancreatic, and prostate cancers *combined*. Mounting numbers and more complex cases will only make severe sepsis a more formidable adversary.”

If that’s not chilling enough to make you avoid hospitals like the plague, I don’t know what is.

HEALTH HINTS FROM READERS



A Simple Solution for Puritis Ani

I have almost all of the past issues of *Alternatives* and they've become one of my best resources for health information. When I need something, I just head for the index. It's been a great help for me, as well as my family and friends.

I recently looked up your suggestions for puritis ani (rectal itching). There's one remedy that I found long ago that other readers would probably like to know about. And it comes from your neck of the woods.

I haven't suffered from the problem for years, so frankly I'd forgotten all about it until just recently. I used to exercise more vigorously and that would sometimes bring on the problem. What has always taken care of the problem in just a couple of days is Dr. Smith's

Diaper Ointment. (I think they also now have an "adult" product with the same formula, but I've only used the diaper product.) I have a 3-ounce tube, and it's enough to last a lifetime. Like they used to say about another product, "a little dab will do you."

I highly recommend it. You can find it around here in most pharmacies and they also have a number to call: 1-800-434-2382. It's distributed by Beta Dermaceuticals; Web site, www.doctorsmith.com. I hope this helps other readers as much as it's helped me. Keep up the good work!

Ross G., Houston, Texas

Yet Another Probiotic

A member of my immediate family recently had to undergo a very intense program of intravenous antibiotic therapy. It resulted in severe problems with diarrhea. I read

with interest your article concerning probiotics and how they should be taken along with antibiotic therapy. At the time, we were fortunate enough to have a doctor who knew about the importance of probiotics. He was limited, however, in what he could prescribe that would be covered by our insurance.

The product he prescribed was [an over-the-counter supplement] called Culturelle. It contains a patented bacterial strain called *Lactobacillus GG*. It worked extremely well and apparently has a good deal of research to support the claims the company makes for it. They have a number you can call to get more information (1-888-828-4242), and they can be reached at CAG Functional Foods, P.O. Box 2820, Omaha, NE 68102, or on the Web at www.culturelle.com.

—Anonymous

Not a day passes that I don't see at least a dozen articles about the rising cost of health care. Hospitals, employers, governments, and insurance companies all claim to be searching for ways to cut costs and improve the system. Yet research studies like those above seem to go totally unnoticed. If you have any hope of maintaining or restoring your health, it's obvious that you must continue to take an active role in doing so.

I hope that someday administering probiotics to patients admitted to a hospital or scheduled for surgery will become routine. I can only imagine the number of lives that would be saved and the suffering that could be eliminated. However, until that happens, these are steps you'll have to take on your own. And since most hospital cuisine consists of mystery meats, lifeless vegetables, white bread, margarine, sugar-laden desserts, and chlorinated tap water, you could do yourself another favor by having a friend bring in a daily serving of real sauerkraut (don't forget to drink the juice). If that's not possible, then in addition to your probiotic supplement, pack a few jars of home-prepared sauerkraut or pickled vegetables to take with you.

More Uses for the Slimming Fat

There's more good news concerning the fatty acid known as conjugated linoleic acid (CLA), which I discussed a while back. (*Vol. 8, No. 21, March 2001 and Vol. 9, No. 1, July 2001*) The studies I reported on earlier found that taking CLA could help lower body fat levels while lean muscle tissue increased. CLA, you may recall, is a fatty acid that comes primarily from beef, lamb, and dairy products, and is sold under the name Tonalin. The latest research shows that CLA can not only lower body mass (weight), but also help lower blood sugar levels in individuals with adult-onset diabetes.

A group of 21 individuals with adult-onset diabetes was given either a placebo or a CLA supplement (8 grams of 76 percent pure CLA) to take every day for eight weeks. Blood tests at the end of the eight weeks revealed that the fasting glucose levels decreased in 9 of the 11 individuals taking the CLA supplement, but only in 2 of the 10 taking the placebo. Fasting blood glucose levels decreased almost five-fold in those taking the CLA compared to those in the control group.

All the individuals participating in the study were asked not to change their diet. Still, those on the CLA supplement lost an average of 3.5 pounds, while those on the placebo neither gained nor lost weight. Blood tests revealed that those taking the CLA also had a reduction in their levels of leptin, the hormone recently associated with increased body fat storage and weight gain. (*J Nutr* 03;133(1):257S-60S)

I've used and recommended CLA for quite some time now, and based on the research and what I've seen, it can be a very beneficial supplement. Some preliminary evidence indicates that it may also be helpful in preventing cancer. (*J Nutr* 02;132(10):2995-8) As more information becomes available in that area, I'll be sure to pass it along.

Not surprisingly, many people are still looking for the magic bullet when it comes to weight loss. CLA isn't that magic bullet. There is no magic bullet. And just as with other supplements, you'll see the quickest and best results when CLA is used in conjunction with a regular exercise program and healthy diet.

A Tea of a Different Color

In the next few months you can expect to start seeing more information about the benefits of white tea—not tea with cream, but a rare variety of Chinese tea that has been shown to have an even higher concentration of antioxidants than green tea. (I still regularly consume green tea, however.)

White tea is grown on China's East coast, in the Fujian province, and is the least processed of all teas, which probably accounts for its strong antioxidant capabilities. Preliminary research from the Pauling Institute suggests that it may be effective in the prevention of cancer. Before I share the results with you, let me underscore that this research is new, and a lot more work needs to

be done. I'm currently planning a trip to China to learn more about the tea and its uses.

This very interesting study, just released, indicates that an extract of white tea applied topically can boost immune capabilities within the skin and protect it against sun damage. Scientists applied the extract to the skin on one buttock and left the other unprotected. After being exposed to artificial sunlight, the two patches of skin were carefully analyzed.

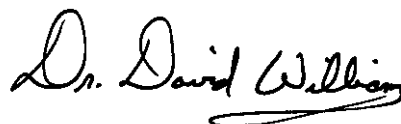
The white tea extract protected the Langerhans cells in the outer layer of the skin, which is the immune system's first line of defense in detecting invading germs and mutated proteins produced by cancerous cells. The scientists also discovered that DNA damage to cells was very limited where the extract was applied compared to the unprotected areas. Not only did the extract protect against the sun damage, it could also help reduce wrinkling and aging of the skin.

I'm still trying to learn more about the extract and the tea itself, and will share more information as it becomes available. In the meantime, there are several mail-order sources for white tea:

- Generation Tea, www.generationtea.com, 1-866-742-5668, \$15–\$25 for 4 oz.;
- Tribute Tea, www.tributetea.com, 1-415-641-8381, \$18.75–\$33 for 4 oz.;
- Adagio Teas, www.adagio.com, \$24–\$33 for 4 oz.

The white tea I tasted was somewhat pale in color but very flavorful. And since the chemical structure is similar to black and green teas, I suspect there would be a noticeable benefit to topically applying the tea as well as drinking it.

Take care,



If you have questions or comments for Dr. Williams please send them to the mail or email addresses listed to the right. 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 61010, Potomac, MD 20859-1010 or mailbox@drdavidwilliams.com
- For Customer Service matters such as address changes, call 1-800-527-3044 or write to custsvc@drdavidwilliams.com
- To get important information between issues, sign up for email dispatches at drdavidwilliams.com
- To order nutritional supplements from Mountain Home Nutritionals, call 1-800-888-1415 or visit drdavidwilliams.com
- To order back issues or reports, call 1-800-718-8293
- To sign a friend up for *Alternatives*, call 1-800-219-8591