

Alternatives[®]

FOR THE HEALTH-CONSCIOUS INDIVIDUAL

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Dr. David G. Williams

Prevention, Pharmaceutical Style

I first started writing this newsletter twenty years ago, and I vividly recall the words said as a warning by another alternative practitioner. He told me that cures were easy to sell, but trying to sell prevention was almost impossible. For the most part, I agreed with him. I took the plunge into publishing anyway, and each month I try to share ways to prevent bad health—and protect or restore good health.

Although “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” makes perfect sense, human nature is such that most individuals don’t think about their health until they start to lose it. When they’re “feeling well,” or simply have “an increased risk” of developing a disease or health problem, they show little interest in changing their lifestyle or habits in an effort to prevent a problem. And then, when a threatening disease or health problem arises, they want immediate results. They want cures, at any cost.

The pharmaceutical companies have understood this attitude and relied on it for years. They’ve made billions of dollars marketing as “cures” drugs that only help mask symptoms and give a false sense of well-being. And when it comes to marketing, they are the masters. No one does it better.

For many years, the pharmaceutical companies left the concept of prevention to the “health nuts.” After all, the majority of the population had swallowed the tale—hook, line, and sinker—that our food supply, drinking water, and diets were safe and monitored, which provided the highest degree of health of any place in the world. They would have you believe that there wasn’t any need to make any sacrifices or changes in our lifestyle. And for those who unfortunately became diseased, the pharma-

ceutical companies were on the cutting edge of developing cures for every problem imaginable.

At some point, the general attitude of our society began to change. I suspect it happened when problems such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes started to become commonplace. Something apparently wasn’t working. You would think this obvious fact would have triggered a huge backlash against the government agencies and pharmaceutical firms that had been duping the public into a false sense of security. Sure, there have been some muffled outcries, but nothing of the magnitude you might have suspected.

I think you can attribute the high degree of apathy to the sheer marketing genius of pharmaceutical companies. Very subtly, they started to promote “preventive medicine.” They quickly discovered that more money can be made selling drugs to the healthy majority than to the sick minority. (But if you believe the drug companies, the majority of people are at least “pre-sick” in some way.)

To make this marketing plan work, risk factors had to be relabeled as diseases. States such as high



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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

blood pressure, obesity, osteopenia, menopause, and indigestion are now considered diseases for which drugs are prescribed. And this marketing strategy is obviously working.

Though I haven't seen figures for the US, in the United Kingdom seventy percent of the population is taking medicine to treat or prevent ill health or to enhance well-being. (*BMJ* 05;330:954-956) This same report points to other studies that found that, after a certain point, the more money that is spent on pharmaceuticals, the worse the overall health of the population becomes. (*CMAJ* 02;167:363-364) (*BMJ* 02;324:860-861) And another recent report found that "the more people are exposed to contemporary health care, the sicker they feel."

It will probably take at least two or three decades before the general public recognizes what is happening. By then, I'm sure, the pharmaceutical companies will have reinvented themselves with the support of their propaganda-producing government agencies.

If you take a closer look around you, the truth should be pretty obvious: the more that drugs are relied upon in our society, the sicker our population becomes. You only have to read the headlines to see the proof. As one example, in just the last few months it's been revealed that common painkillers increase the risk of heart attack and kidney failure. There are hundreds more.

It's Not Augmenting Anything

There are so many problems stemming from drugs that you could write a book every month on the topic. And information about most of the problems is not even being made available to the public. A good example involves the use of the antibiotic Augmentin. The drug (composed of amoxicillin

and clavulanate potassium) has been given to children since the late 1980s for ear infections.

When researchers examined 206 children under the age of three diagnosed with autism, they found that not only did the autistic children have a higher number of ear infections than other children, they also received an average of 12 courses of antibiotics—with Augmentin accounting for about one third. In fact, it's one of the most widely prescribed drugs for children.

One of the problems is that large amounts of urea/ammonia are used in the manufacturing of Augmentin. And ammonia has been shown to injure the intestines, brain, and nervous tissue of small children—even in small amounts. (*Med Hypotheses* 05;64:312-315)

It appears that by relying on antibiotics to help treat ear infections, many parents may have unknowingly put their children at a greater risk for developmental disorders such as autism. (If you know parents of young children, please pass this information along.)

Grapefruit Isn't the Culprit Here

And just recently it was reported that grapefruit and grapefruit juice can interfere with the breakdown of antibiotics by the liver. Other citrus fruits don't seem to pose a problem, but grapefruit has been shown to stop the breakdown and removal of the antibiotic erythromycin. As a result, blood levels can actually increase high enough to injure the heart muscle. Increased levels of erythromycin can cause tachycardia (a rapid heartbeat that doesn't allow the heart to fill with blood), which can result in sudden death.

Other antibiotics, particularly those chemically related to erythromycin, may be similarly affected. For this reason, the medical community highly

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NEWS TO USE FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Sunshine in the Sickroom

PITTSBURGH, PENN—While the public has practically been brainwashed into believing we would be healthier without sunlight exposure, nothing could be further from the truth. Moderate exposure to sunlight is essential to optimal health. New research has shed some interesting light on the topic.

Pennsylvania researchers studied the effects of sunlight exposure on patients who had recently undergone spinal surgery. The use of pain medication was monitored in 89 patients who recently underwent elective surgery to the cervical or lumbar regions of the spine. Medication use was then compared to intensity of sunlight in each of the patients' rooms. Apparently, the recuperating patients were housed on either the "bright" or "dim" side of the same hospital unit. (Sunlight intensity was also measured daily in each of the rooms.)

Patients staying on the bright side of the hospital unit were exposed to 46 percent higher intensity sunlight. These patients experienced less perceived stress and less pain, and took 22 percent less pain medication per hour than those on the dim side of the hospital. As a result, their cost of pain medication was 21 percent lower. (*Psychosomatic Med* 05;67:156–163)

I see no reason why one wouldn't experience similar results while recuperating from an illness in a home setting. With our current situation of rapidly escalating medical costs, we should be taking advantage of simple things such as sunlight and proper sleeping habits to speed up the healing process and the return to better health. If you have to be in the hospital, try to choose the "bright" side of the unit.

Herbal Treatment for Diabetes

COLUMBUS, OHIO—I'm writing this issue while in Australia, and last night I had dinner with a friend who had just returned from Sri Lanka. He was telling me about an herb there called Saptrangi that has been used for centuries for treating diabetes. I wasn't familiar with the herb, but had some recent research data in my files and started checking it out. (In Ayurvedic medicine, the same name may apply to several different species. Saptrangi is one of those cases; make sure you get the species used in the research, *Salacia oblonga*, if you're looking for this product.)

The latest research was performed in the US by Steve Hertzler at Ohio State University. Thirty-nine healthy adults participated in four separate meal-tolerance tests. The meals, given in beverage form, were spaced from 3 to 14 days apart. Each study participant fasted for at least 10 hours before consuming the test beverage. Two cups of the chilled beverage were consumed and contained either zero, 500, 700, or 1,000 mg of *Salacia oblonga*

extract. Then blood glucose testing was done every 15 to 30 minutes for the next three hours.

The beverage containing 1,000 mg caused the biggest reduction in insulin and blood glucose levels. Compared to those drinking the beverage with no herb extract, the blood levels of those consuming 1,000 mg of the extract exhibited a 29 percent lower level of insulin and a 23 percent lower level of blood glucose.

It appears that compounds in the herb bind with intestinal enzymes that break down carbohydrates or sugars in the body. These carbohydrates are normally converted to glucose that then circulates in the bloodstream. By binding with the enzyme, less of your carbohydrate intake is converted and less glucose reaches the bloodstream.

The reduction of insulin and glucose in the above study is similar to the results achieved by most diabetic medications on the market today. The herb appears to be safer, however, in that the only side effect noted was occasional intestinal gas in some individuals. (*J Am Dietetic Assoc* 05;105:65–71) Research is continuing, to help determine the most effective dose of the herb and how it should be taken.

Salacia oblonga has a long history of use in the field of Ayurvedic medicine. It isn't that well-known in this country...yet. The primary supplier is a company in India called Botanika. They sell the powdered herb in 1,000-mg capsules and recommend taking two daily (one with each of the larger meals of the day). The price, which includes international shipping, is \$45 for 90 capsules of the herb and \$75 for 200 capsules. You can order over the Web at www.SalaciaOblongaCapsules.com or contact them at Botanika, 34 Old Cannought Place, Dehra Dun-248001, Uttaranchal, India. Their phone is 91-135-2715222, and a fax number is 91-135-2650944. Send e-mail to info@SalaciaOblongaCapsules.com.

The Know-Carbs Diet

WORCESTER, MASS—On the weight-loss front there is new research to support the fact that not all carbohydrates are the same. I've mentioned this in the past, and the differences between carbohydrate foods in relation to their glycemic index. This index basically indicates how quickly a food raises blood sugar levels. Those foods with a low glycemic index (55 or less), such as most vegetables, don't elicit as much of an insulin response and don't lead to the deposition of fat the way those with a high index (70 or higher) do—foods such as white bread, potatoes, and pasta.

This notion was shown to be the case again in a study of 572 adults. Researchers at the University of Massachusetts Medical School collected reports from these individuals concerning their food consumption and

physical activity from 1994 to 1998. Once again, it was determined that the daily carbohydrate intake and total calories from carbohydrates aren't the prime determinant when it comes to weight gain or loss. The determining factor is the type of carbohydrates. High-glycemic carbohydrates were shown to increase insulin production and increase fat storage. (*Am J Epidemiol* 05;161:359–367)

The fad of cutting out all carbohydrates from the diet in favor of an all-protein-and-fat diet isn't a good idea, nor is it a diet that can be safely or easily sustained for the long term. The truth of the matter is that you need to eat the right proteins, the right carbohydrates, and the right fats. It's both the type and *quality* of these components that matter more than the quantity.

Most people don't realize what's driving their weight loss on the Atkins diet. Studies have shown that once they begin to eat more nutrient-dense proteins and fats, they felt more satisfied. When the carbohydrates are removed from the diet (or restricted to, say, 20 grams a day in the diet), they spontaneously reduced their energy consumption by 1,000 calories. Even though the amount of protein and fat they are allowed to consume is basically unlimited, they didn't compensate for the loss of calories by eating more of those type foods. Not only do simple carbohydrates stimulate the appetite, they are not "nutrient-dense" enough to create a feeling of fullness and satisfaction. (*Ann Intern Med* 05;142(6):144)

In a nutshell, to lose weight and, more importantly, to be able to maintain the proper weight without constant dieting and/or starving, one has to eliminate sweets and sweeteners (which have been shown to interfere with the body's ability to feel satisfied). And counting calories is no longer necessary once you begin to listen to your body and feed it the complex low-glycemic carbohydrates, high-quality protein, and natural, non-processed, non-rancid fats that it craves.

You can find charts of high-, medium-, and low-glycemic foods on the Web. One reliable source is www.mendosa.com/gilists.htm. More complete versions of the list can be found in books—particularly *The Complete Guide to Fat-Storing Carbohydrates*, which lists 1,000 foods by glycemic rating. It's available from the Glycemic Research Institute, 727-894-0042. Basically, items like potatoes, most breads, rice, cereals, sweets, and grains fall into the high-glycemic category and should be avoided and/or minimized. And you can eat as many of the low-glycemic foods such as vegetables, legumes, beans, and whole grains as you want.

The Fatty Acid Balancing Act

BETHESDA, MD—On a similar note, a paper that was recently published in the journal *Lipids* compared diet trends and crime in five Western countries. From all

indications, it appeared that as a population consumes more vegetable oils, the homicide rate increases.

This connection has been suspected for years because various fatty acids in vegetable oils are known to dampen the calming effects that omega-3 fatty acids have on the nervous system (omega-3s are found in such foods as fish, avocados, and nuts). The paper even went so far as to suggest that reducing our consumption of such oils might be an easy way to combat rising crime rates. (*Lipids* 04;39(12):1207–1213)

I have no doubt that diet does play a part in violent behavior, and there's probably an element of truth to the paper's thesis. More than likely, however, it's the imbalance of omega-3 oils to the omega-6 oils in the diet that is causing the problem. Corn, soybean, cottonseed, sunflower, and safflower oils are used extensively these days, and contribute to the imbalance. I've discussed this numerous times in the past. [*Publisher's note: See Vol. 10, No 21, March 2005.*] Again, it's a balance issue.

A Life-Saving Baby Oil

Preterm infants are always at high risk of developing life-threatening infections because their skin doesn't yet possess the protective biofilm called vernix. In developing countries, these babies have mortality rates of 50 percent or higher. A recent study in Bangladesh involving 497 preterm infants found that if they were massaged with sunflower seed oil daily, their risk of developing an infection dropped dramatically.

Infants whose skin was massaged with sunflower oil were 41 percent less likely to develop infections, and the risk decreased to 56 percent if the treatment began within 24 hours of birth. This approach is one low-cost solution to a worldwide problem.

It has been a common practice in parts of South Asia for newborn babies to routinely be massaged with mustard oil at birth. The problem, however, is that mustard oil is toxic and can delay the formation of a natural barrier. Hopefully, this use will now decline. There are special formulations of mustard oil available in the US, but sunflower seed oil works almost as well and is far less expensive. (*Lancet* 05;365(9464):1039–1045) (*Pediatr Infect Dis J* 04;23(8):719–725)

The Curcumin Cure

ANN ARBOR, MICH—Very few people would be able to answer correctly if I were to ask them what the leading cause of death and disease worldwide was. That's because the million or more people who die of it every year are generally outside this country. The World Health Organization estimates that *each year* 300–500 million cases of malaria occur. Most of the deaths from this mosquito-transmitted disease occur in young children. In

Africa, for example, every 30 seconds another child dies from malaria

Readers of *Alternatives* who live or routinely visit areas of the world where malaria is a problem might benefit from research showing that curcumin, the compound that gives turmeric its yellow color, can help in the treatment of the disease. Indian studies involving mice show that five oral doses given to mice for a day reduced the number of parasites in their blood by over 80 percent. Additionally, after 20 days, one-third of the mice given the curcumin were still alive while all of the mice not given the curcumin were dead by day 13. (*Biochem Biophys Res Comm* 05;326:472–474)

Curcumin may turn out to be an adjunctive treatment to more traditional drugs, since the parasite has developed a resistance to those. Artemisinin is another plant-based compound that has shown promise in this area. [*Publisher's note: See Vol. 4, No. 10, April 1992.*]

As I've reported in the past, curcumin has both anti-bacterial and anti-viral properties. Preliminary laboratory research has shown that it can even stop the HIV virus from replicating.

It can also help prevent cervical cancer, which is associated with the human papilloma virus (HPV) in over 90 percent of the cases. Curcumin binds with the proteins that make cervical cells cancerous and prevents the event. I was recently informed that human trials will begin in New Delhi in a couple of months. (One-third of the world's cases of cervical cancer occur in India.) For a period of 3 to 4 weeks, a daily capsule of curcumin will be inserted in the vagina of women infected with HPV. The capsule will dissolve, releasing the curcumin and, hopefully, stopping the cancer from developing. It will be interesting to see the results of this study.

How Do You Want Your Fish Today?

BOSTON, MASS—There's a saying that "a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing." It applies to many things, including our health. It seems nowadays that most people want the abbreviated, quick version of the story. The Atkins diet I mentioned earlier is a good example. I've come to believe that, rather than read the book themselves, most people rely on the advice of their friends and family and simply cut out all carbs and start a high-protein, high-fat diet of their own.

This way of thinking also holds true when it comes to fish consumption. I can't tell you how many people order fried fish or a fish sandwich thinking that it's the healthy thing to do. In reality, how a fish is prepared is just as important as whether you eat it in the first place.

A recent study has shown that eating fried fish or fish sandwiches one to four times a week *increases* the risk of stroke by 37 percent. Eating baked or broiled fish one to four times a week lowers the risk of stroke by 28 percent and improves other cardiovascular risk profiles. The study followed the health of 4,774 individuals age 65–98 for a 12-year period. (*Arch Intern Med* 05;165:200–206)

Alzheimer's Impostor

SAN FRANCISCO, CAL—Alzheimer's disease has been in the news more and more often lately, particularly with the passing of President Reagan. Alzheimer's may affect as many as 4 million people in the US alone. It usually appears after age 60, and the first symptoms are often memory loss and confusion. Knowing the initial symptoms and how they differ from another condition called normal pressure hydrocephalus (NPH) could be the key to saving a loved one's life.

We know that NPH is rarer than Alzheimer's, but there are no good estimates of how many people actually have the problem. It can go unreported or get misdiagnosed as either dementia or Alzheimer's.

NPH is a condition in which spinal fluid builds up in the brain and creates pressure—resulting in neurological problems. The first symptoms generally associated with NPH are the feeling of one's feet being "glued to the floor," resulting in a shuffle when walking; urinary incontinence; and mild memory loss. Unlike Alzheimer's, severe memory loss and confusion appear later in NPH. And unlike Parkinson's, NPH normally isn't associated with tremors.

Unfortunately, because of misdiagnosis it generally takes between 7 to 9 years before it's discovered that an individual actually has NPH and not Alzheimer's. However, it can be detected through the use of brain scans or through a spinal tap. There is no cure for Alzheimer's, but NPH can be treated successfully by draining the extra fluid surrounding the brain.

The Hydrocephalus Association feels that as many as 375,000 of the 4 million individuals diagnosed with Alzheimer's may actually be suffering from treatable NPH. If you know of someone diagnosed with Alzheimer's, make sure his or her doctor has ruled out NPH. Because of a misdiagnosis, some patients have suffered for as long as 20 years with the belief that they had Alzheimer's disease. And during that period, they gradually begin to suffer from the same type of symptoms—such as losing their memory or their ability to walk or speak, and experiencing progressive dementia. Once the pressure on the brain is relieved, their whole symptom picture improves and they begin to recover.



MAILBOX

Hair Loss and Thyroid

Question: *Alternatives* has helped me with a number of health issues, and hopefully you can shed some light on another problem of mine. I'm in my early 40s and I've started losing my hair. I've tried past recommendations and I realize that it might be hereditary, so there may be nothing else I can do. If there is, however, I'd like to nip it in the bud.

I am otherwise healthy. I've just noticed having less energy over the last couple of years and I've gained a little weight, but I guess that comes from not exercising and getting older. I also think my skin is drier, but maybe it's just my imagination. For the most part, I'm just concerned about my hair loss at this point. Any suggestions?

Martin S.
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Answer: It's difficult to say if the problem is hereditary without knowing your family history. But it's possible you're experiencing the effects of a gradually developing hypothyroidism (an underactive thyroid).

I've described in past issues how to test for an underactive or under-functioning thyroid using the Broda Barnes axillary temperature test, and how it can best be treated with an oral iodine product (be sure not to use the antiseptic kind) and specific glandulars such as Thyrophin from Standard Process Laboratories. (The company sells through healthcare providers only; your doctor can call them at 800-558-8740.) [*Publisher's note: See Vol. 8, No. 10, April 2000 for the thyroid test.*]

Hypothyroidism can result in dozens of symptoms, including an

increase in cholesterol levels, high blood pressure, weight gain, severe fatigue, mind "fogginess," depression, mental fatigue, poor circulation (particularly in the hands and feet, resulting in an intolerance to cold), brittle nails, infertility, the need for increasing amounts of sleep, facial puffiness, a loss of hair (often noted on the outside of the eyebrows), dry skin, and often cracking skin on the backs of the heels. Since these symptoms can come on gradually (and since hypothyroidism is so common), many people mistake them for normal aging. They are not.

When treating hypothyroidism, I've found that oral iodine plus the Thyrophin is usually enough to increase thyroid hormone production and correct the problem. Occasionally, patients need to add hormone supplementation—such as Armour Thyroid. I've also found it works best when the daily dosage is split into two doses a day. This regimen seems to help combat the highs and lows often associated with single-dose hormone therapy.

The importance of oral iodine supplementation is usually overlooked. It is mistakenly thought that iodized salt provides adequate amounts to the diet. The fallacy of this belief is evident in many of the other common problems we see both in the US and abroad.

Other Thyroid Trouble

For instance, healthy breast tissue is especially dependent on adequate amounts of iodine. Iodine deficiency is one of the factors that have allowed fibrocystitis to manifest in at least 30 percent of the women in the US alone. While there are several factors that need to be addressed with problems like fibrocystic breast disease, oral iodine has been shown to both help prevent the problem and aid in its treatment. Iodine works by making cells in the milk ducts less sensitive to the effects of estrogen.

Very often, supplementing with food-grade iodine will also help

lower blood sugar levels when other therapies have failed.

Dr. Broda Barnes found that thyroid underactivity and iodine deficiency are instrumental in the development of heart disease.

According to the World Health Organization and the International Council for the Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders, iodine deficiency is the single most common cause of preventable mental retardation and brain damage. It is also responsible for miscarriages and stillbirths throughout the world. They state that 38 percent of the world's population live in areas of iodine deficiency and risk developing complications.

Iodine Displacement "Therapy"

Even in areas where the soil appears to contain adequate iodine levels, various environmental problems can deplete or displace bodily stores of iodine.

Fluoride in our water supply is one example. Another compound that has been shown to deplete iodine in the body is perchlorate, which now contaminates the drinking water of over 11 million people in this country. I'm sure there are more environmental contaminants we are unaware of at this time that do the same thing.

Additionally, zinc, manganese, selenium, copper, and iron are all necessary in the body's production and transport of thyroid hormones. Lower levels contribute to the problem.

Based on the symptoms you're experiencing, Martin, I would suggest testing yourself for an underactive thyroid. I wouldn't be surprised if it were at least partially responsible for your recent loss of hair. In most cases, the problem can be effectively treated with the natural products I've mentioned, but some more stubborn cases may require using the prescription Armour Thyroid hormone. Whatever you do, don't neglect addressing the problem.

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recommends that you not consume grapefruit or grapefruit juice while taking erythromycin (and probably other antibiotics as well). The effects of grapefruit appear to subside after about three days of not eating it.

I'm sure this information will trigger the response that grapefruit should be excluded from our diet. Some have already made that suggestion because grapefruit interferes with the popular anti-cholesterol statin drugs (which is so in some individuals), but grapefruit isn't the general culprit everyone would like us to think. It's actually the drugs that need to be avoided whenever possible.

I recently received a very interesting report from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem showing how the consumption of grapefruit and grapefruit juice increases the activity of certain enzymes in the liver that are responsible for breaking down various chemicals known to cause cancer. It has also been shown to help clean arteries of circulation-blocking plaque; aid in weight loss and the ability to maintain proper weight; and increase antioxidant levels.

I know I've repeated it dozens of times, but don't fall for the hype that you see or hear in drug advertising. While imprisoned on the island of St. Helena, Napoleon was on the mark when he said, "Take a dose of medicine once and, in all probability, you will be obligated to take an additional hundred afterward."

Berries to the Rescue

I love berries. They provide a long list of health benefits, and taste so fantastic that when you're eating them you feel like you're doing something wrong...but you're not. I eat them any way I can get them—fresh, frozen, or powdered. Now researchers at the University of Kentucky and Ohio State University have tested the effects of a gel made from freeze-dried black raspberry powder on oral cancer.

Earlier work has shown that at least 99 percent of oral lesions that are the result of alcohol or tobacco use eventually develop into cancer, resulting in over 8,000 deaths a year.

HEALTH HINTS FROM READERS



Grapefruit Seed for Cold Sores

You've written about many of the uses of grapefruit seed extract, and this prompted me to purchase a bottle. I've used it for many things, but one of the best uses I've discovered is for treating cold sores (Herpes simplex). It starts to knock the problem out very quickly.

I generally mix a drop with a couple of drops of olive oil and apply it directly to the sore. The quicker I get it on, the more effective it seems to be. If the sore has ulcerated I may have to add more oil to keep it from stinging. I'm sure other oils would probably work just as well, but I just happen to have olive oil.

Cynthia T.
New York, New York

That's an excellent idea. It might be less messy and easier to keep on if the extract were mixed with coconut oil or even one of the natural lip balms.

Unfortunately, the herpes virus seems to be like many viruses that can lie dormant in cells, to emerge when some form of stress (such as poor diet) makes conditions right. And, even after the problem seems resolved, the virus can be reactivated and the problem will recur at the same location.

New research indicates that there may be a way to interfere with the reactivation of viruses. Researchers found that the compound glycyrrhetic acid (GA) in licorice kills cells that are infected with certain viruses (thus eradicating latent viral infections). The initial work that was performed at the New York University School of Medicine was done on the viral condition call Kaposi sarcoma, which is an infection that shows up most often in HIV patients. Hopefully, we'll have more details and research in this area in the very near future. For years, researchers have been hunting unsuccessfully for anti-viral agents that can treat latent infections (such as herpes), and now we find it resides naturally in licorice. (J Clin Invest 05;115(3):591-593)

The problem, however, is that when GA is taken orally, the digestive juices transform it into an inactive compound. When given intravenously, it has been shown to be effective against chronic hepatitis B or C infections, and laboratory studies show it may be effective against other herpes-type viruses such as HIV, SARS, and Epstein-Barr. If some form of oral extract could be made that could be absorbed intact, it might be the answer to a lot of health problems. I mention all of this because I know there are dozens of innovative chemists, laboratories, and manufacturers that subscribe to, and read, Alternatives.

In earlier testing, when the powder was fed to animals it inhibited the formation of not only oral cancer, but esophageal and colon cancer as well. Then 20 human patients with precancerous oral lesions were given the gel to apply four times daily for six weeks. The lesions in those using the gel didn't completely disappear, but the gel appeared to slow or stop the process of the lesions turning cancerous (based on a comparison to 10 control patients). Additional studies are planned to determine if the effects can be enhanced using improved gels or other forms of black raspberries.

Black raspberries (one of my all-time favorite berries) are rich in two compounds, anthocyanins and ellagic acid, that have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. I thought it was interesting that by freeze-drying and grinding the berries into a powder, the researchers were able to increase the concentration of the berries' cancer-preventive compounds tenfold.

A Vessel of Cranberries

One of the berries that's a little harder to take for some people is the cranberry. They're pretty tart. My kids like cranberry powder straight from the jar, though, and mixed with a little xylitol it's quite tasty. New animal research suggests that cranberry powder could possibly be a godsend to anyone suffering from atherosclerosis (clogging of the arteries). It is probably a food you want to become familiar with—particularly if your blood vessels could use some extra support.

Most animal studies on clogged arteries are done using pigs. When certain breeds are fed human diets, they develop the same type of atherosclerosis and vascular dysfunction as humans. Instead of taking years, however, disease develops in as little as eight months.

However, researchers at the University of Wisconsin were studying the effects of cranber-

ries on pigs whose arteries were already damaged and dysfunctional. Their goal, obviously, was to find something that would not only prevent heart disease, but also help protect patients with existing heart disease from consequences such as stroke or heart attack. What they discovered was quite amazing.

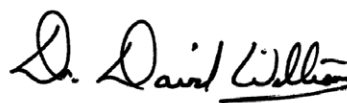
After the pigs ate cranberry juice powder (made from whole cranberries) for six months, their arteries were able to relax—resulting in very pronounced increases in blood flow. In fact, the vessels acted more like those of normal, non-diseased pigs.

They weren't cured of the disease, but the improvements in their circulation made them far less susceptible to problems such as heart failure and stroke. While these findings are preliminary, and their usefulness in humans is still to be determined, the researchers are now beginning to study what effects cranberries have on cholesterol levels, inflammation, and overall cardiovascular health.

I have little doubt that cranberries promote overall cardiovascular health—especially when used with dietary changes, exercise, and other supplements. It could be one factor (along with coenzyme Q10, nattokinase, vitamin E, and others) that could help people turn their lives around. Another form of "cheap insurance," as my dad would say.

There hasn't been enough research yet to determine how much cranberry you should have. If I wanted additional heart support, I'd probably be eating the stuff like candy for a while. As it is, I pretty much do that anyway with a variety of berries. I'll keep you updated as more research becomes available. (*Crit Rev Food Sci Nutr* 2002;42(3 Suppl):301-316)

Take Care,



If you have questions or comments for Dr. Williams, please send them to the mail or e-mail addresses listed to the right. Of course, practical and ethical constraints prevent him from answering personal medical questions by mail or e-mail, 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.

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- For Customer Service matters such as address changes, call **800-527-3044** or write to custsvc@drdavidwilliams.com.
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