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Editor's Letter



Turn on the news lately, and it's hard not to feel overwhelmed. Political tension, conflicts, rising costs... When will things improve? And so much of it is beyond our control! But here's what is within our reach: How we treat ourselves. How we move our bodies, nourish them, rest them, and care for them. How we show up, for our families, our friends, and especially for ourselves.

This summer, I want to challenge each of us to shift our focus inward. Not in a selfish manner, but in a sustaining way. Because we cannot pour from an empty cup. Our community needs us at our best, and that starts with making our health a genuine priority. Not someday, not after the chaos settles, but now.

And to help you dig a little deeper into the subjects that matter most to you, we are introducing something new: **Harvesting Health and Wellness**. You'll notice this at the end of select articles throughout this issue, inviting you to discover more from our blog. Scan the QR code, and you'll be taken directly to the mentioned article.

So step outside. Feel the warmth of the sun. Breathe in the warm air. Take that walk, book that check-up, cook your favourite meal. Choose yourself, a little more, every single day. Because when we tend to ourselves with intention and care, we don't just survive: we thrive and we *Flourish*.

Happy reading!

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Flourish

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Table of Contents

07	Medicinal Mushrooms Digging Deeper
11	Stretching Food Budgets
14	Unexpected Benefits of Probiotics
17	Kidney Stones Small Crystals, Big Discomfort
21	How California's Prop. 65 Could Affect Your Favourite Brands
23	Zinc L-Carnosine Beyond Your Basic Zinc Supplement
27	Why Women's Heart Health Deserves More Attention
31	My Journey with Sjögren's Disease
34	Culinary Corner
38	Ask an Expert

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Medicinal Mushrooms

Digging Deeper

by Ludovic Brunel, ND



Medicinal mushrooms have captured the attention of researchers, clinicians, and health-conscious consumers alike... and for good reason! From bolstering immune defenses to protecting aging brain cells, the scientific literature increasingly supports what traditional Chinese medicine has known for millennia: fungi are among nature's most potent healers. Species such as lion's mane (*Hericium erinaceus*), reishi (*Ganoderma lucidum*), chaga (*Inonotus obliquus*), cordyceps (*Ophiocordyceps sinensis*), shiitake (*Lentinula edodes*), and turkey tail (*Trametes versicolor*) contain a remarkable array of bioactive compounds. These include *beta*-glucans, triterpenoids, ergosterol, and polyphenols. Each of these are linked to meaningful therapeutic effects.

But here's the inconvenient truth: not all mushroom supplements deliver on these promises. Given their premium price point, consumers deserve to understand exactly what they're buying—and why the part of the mushroom used, and how it's processed, makes an enormous difference in whether they receive any real benefits at all.

The Science behind Medicinal Mushrooms

The therapeutic effects of medicinal mushrooms are well-documented across hundreds of peer-reviewed studies. *beta*-Glucans, specifically β -1,3/1,6-D-glucans, are considered the primary immunomodulatory compounds, stimulating macrophages, natural killer cells, and lymphocytes to mount a more effective defense against pathogens and abnormal cell growth. A landmark meta-analysis of 17 cancer studies found that consuming as little as 18 g of mushrooms daily was associated with a 45% reduction in cancer risk, attributed largely to ergothioneine, a powerful antioxidant amino acid.

Beyond immunity, lion's mane contains unique compounds called hericenones and erinacines that stimulate nerve growth factor (NGF) synthesis, offering genuine neuroprotective potential relevant to Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases. Reishi's triterpenoids have

demonstrated anti-inflammatory and adaptogenic properties. Chaga boasts anti-inflammatory, antitumor, immunomodulatory, and antioxidant activities thanks to its content in polysaccharides, betulinic acid, and melanin pigments. Shiitake contains lentinan, a *beta*-glucan studied for its ability to lower LDL cholesterol and inhibit tumour growth. The evidence is compelling—provided, of course, that you're actually consuming the compounds the research is based on.

Fruiting Body v. Mycelium: A Critical Distinction

When you purchase a mushroom supplement, you are typically getting one of three things: an extract of the fruiting body (the visible "cap-and-stem" mushroom), an extract of the mycelium (the thread-like root network), or (most problematically) mycelium that has never been separated from the grain substrate it was grown on.



This distinction matters profoundly from a biochemical standpoint. Multiple peer-reviewed analyses have confirmed that fruiting bodies contain significantly higher concentrations of *beta*-glucans and triterpenoids than mycelium. A comparative study of *Ganoderma lucidum* found that fruiting-body extracts contained substantially greater levels of bioactive triterpenoids, the compounds most associated with reishi's anti-inflammatory and hepatoprotective effects, with some triterpenoids essentially absent from mycelium altogether.

Mycelium is not without value. Research has identified meaningful concentrations of ergosterol (a precursor to vitamin D), lovastatin (a natural cholesterol-lowering compound), and certain prebiotic fibres in mycelial preparations. The problem is not just the mycelium itself; the problem is how it is being sold.

The Grain-Substrate Problem

Commercial mycelium is almost universally grown on grain substrates—this is typically millet, oats, or rye—because grain provides a cheap, scalable growing medium. Once the mycelium colonizes the grain, the two become biologically inseparable. Manufacturers then dry and powder the entire mass: mycelium plus grain, together.



The resulting product is, by weight, a significant portion of starch, not mushroom. Studies analyzing commercially available mycelium-on-grain products have found *beta*-glucan levels dramatically lower than those found in fruiting-body extracts, with *alpha*-glucan content (from grain starch) making up a disproportionate share of total polysaccharides. This is not a minor quibble: *alpha*-Glucans are dietary starches with no meaningful immunological benefit. The most important and valuable information is not the total amount of polysaccharides, but rather specifically the amount of *beta*-glucans.

This creates a serious problem for consumers. A label that reads “40% polysaccharides” may sound impressive, but if a substantial portion of those polysaccharides are *alpha*-glucans from rice starch rather than immunoactive *beta*-glucans from mushrooms, the therapeutic value is a fraction of what's implied. Consumers should specifically look for products that disclose *beta*-glucan content, not merely total polysaccharides, verified by methods capable of differentiating fungal *beta*-glucans from grain-derived starches.

Why Hot-Water Extraction Is Nonnegotiable

Even a supplement made from genuine fruiting bodies may fail to deliver its benefits if it hasn't been properly processed. The bioactive *beta*-glucans in mushrooms are physically bound within chitin—the tough structural polysaccharide that makes up fungal cell walls. Human digestive systems do not produce chitinase, the enzyme required to break chitin down. Raw or simply



dried mushroom powder, regardless of quality, passes largely through the gut, with *beta*-glucans locked inside the chitin matrix and thus made unavailable for absorption.

Hot-water extraction is the solution. When fruiting bodies are subjected to sustained high-temperature water extraction, the chitin matrix is disrupted and *beta*-glucans, polysaccharides, and other water-soluble compounds are liberated in bioavailable form. This is the method used to produce the concentrated extracts that underlie the vast majority of positive clinical research on medicinal mushrooms.

This has a direct implication for consumers: stirring raw mushroom powder into a cold smoothie, no matter how premium the source, is unlikely to provide meaningful therapeutic benefits. Hot water-extracted powders are necessary to replicate the conditions under which the science was conducted.

Making an Informed Choice

Medicinal mushrooms represent a genuinely exciting realm in nutritional science, with a body of evidence that grows more compelling each year. But in the supplement market, the gap between the best science and the worst products can be staggering. Consumers investing in these supplements should ask three questions before purchasing: Is this made from the fruiting body? Does the label specify *beta*-glucan content (not just polysaccharides)? Has it been hot water-extracted?

If a manufacturer cannot answer all three clearly, that silence is informative. The mushrooms themselves have earned their reputation: it's the supplement that simply needs to deliver them.



Dr. Ludovic Brunel, ND

Dr. Brunel has 15+ years of experience as a naturopathic doctor and practices in Calgary. His approach has always been to improve health outcomes by relying on the best research available.

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The Mushroom Marketing Mirage
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Stretching Food Budgets

by Angela Wallace, BSc, MSc, RDN



With food prices continually increasing, we need to find ways to stretch every dollar while prioritizing our nutrition. In this article, I will share five ways you can stretch your food budget and continue to eat healthy.

Reduce Food Waste

According to research conducted by the National Zero Waste Council in 2022, the average Canadian household will waste approximately 140 kg of food each year. This wasted food ends up costing a household a staggering \$1,300 yearly. Research suggests that 63% of the food wasted is avoidable—which means it could have been eaten. Keep these tips in mind to minimize waste.

- Plan your meals ahead of time. Take a few minutes at the start of the week, before shopping, to plan what you and your family will eat. Look at what you have on hand and what needs to be used, and prioritize making those meals earlier in the week.
- Plan one night per week as the fridge “clean-out” night. Your meal can be a mix of leftovers, or throw all your almost bad produce into a soup.
- Freeze leftovers you likely won’t be eating before they sit too long in your fridge.
- Fruits that have gone soft—like apples, peaches, plums, and blueberries—make for delicious sauces. Overripe bananas can be frozen for baked treats later.
- Repurpose leftovers into lunches or another meal. For example, use your leftover roasted chicken to make quesadillas or chicken wraps the following day.

Ways to Use Eggs as a Protein Booster

- Cook into rice or quinoa
- Mix into soup meals
- Cook and mix into oatmeal

Protein Stretching

This is a strategy that means using less meat per meal while still focusing on keeping the meal nutritious and protein-rich.

- Adding beans to dishes to reduce the amount of meat used. For example, adding lentils to ground beef, white beans to sausage meat, or black beans to ground chicken/turkey.
- Use eggs as a protein booster. These can be cooked into casseroles, soups, or rice, or even added to bowls. Boil a few eggs at a time for easy and nutritious breakfasts on-the-go.
- Use protein-rich pasta (for example, bean- or quinoa-based pastas).
- Use cheese and Greek yogurt to add to the total protein of the meal. For example, making sauces with Greek yogurt or adding cheese to a bean dish.



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Purchase the Least Expensive Cuts of Meat

These cuts tend to be cheaper and when cooked properly can be just as tasty.

- Ground meat
- Meat with the bone in, like chicken drumsticks or chicken thighs
- Chuck roast
- Pork shoulder
- Pork loin
- Ribs
- Canned or frozen options like canned salmon and tuna, frozen salmon, or shrimp

Tip: Slow cook, braise, or marinate these meats before cooking. They will come out deliciously tender.

Ways to Use Beans as a Protein Booster

- Mix lentils into ground meats
- Add beans to soups
- Add beans to salads
- Mix beans into pasta sauces (option to blend them into the sauce)
- Snack on dry-roasted chickpeas or edamame beans

Use Canned or Frozen Fruits and Vegetables

According to Canadian research by Love Food Hate Waste, vegetables account for 30% of the total food wasted in each household, with fruits accounting for 15%. Together, fruits and vegetables make up the largest amount of food wasted in homes.

If you find yourself wasting fruits and vegetables regularly, or not finding what you need on special, try using frozen or canned options more often. Frozen fruits and vegetables are just as nutritious as fresh and are often the cheaper option.

Add in Nutrition Boosters That Are Budget-friendly

These are foods that are rich in nutrients, vitamins, and minerals, but also cost-effective.

- Ground flaxseeds or chia seeds. These can be added to yogurt bowls, oatmeal, and smoothies.
- Nuts and seeds or nut/seed butters that can be used in smoothies, oatmeal, or yogurt; served on sliced bread, toppers for salad; and so much more!
- Cabbage, carrots, onions, potatoes, sweet potatoes, squash.





Eat Seasonally

Eating seasonally costs you less. When a fruit or vegetable is in season, there is more supply of that product, and more supply means lower prices for the consumer (aka you)! For example, asparagus is always significantly cheaper when it's in season in Canada in May and June, as are apples in the fall.

During peak season, the fruits and vegetables will have less spoilage and maintain their freshness longer, which also leads to less food waste—a win-win situation!

Here are some signs that the produce is in season: lowered prices, placed on display near the front of the store, labelled product of Canada, and mentioned in grocery fliers.

Another way to access local fresh produce is by visiting your local farmers markets. This is a great way to support local farmers and eat more local produce.

The next time you head to the grocery store, take inventory of what you have available first, make a list of what you need, and plan. This will save you time, stress, and money!

See page 36 for a quick, easy, and delicious Greek-style chicken recipe.



Angela Wallace, BSc, MSc, RDN

Angela is a registered dietitian, family food expert, and personal trainer with a passion for helping women and kids thrive through better nutrition. She specializes in weight management and digestive health.

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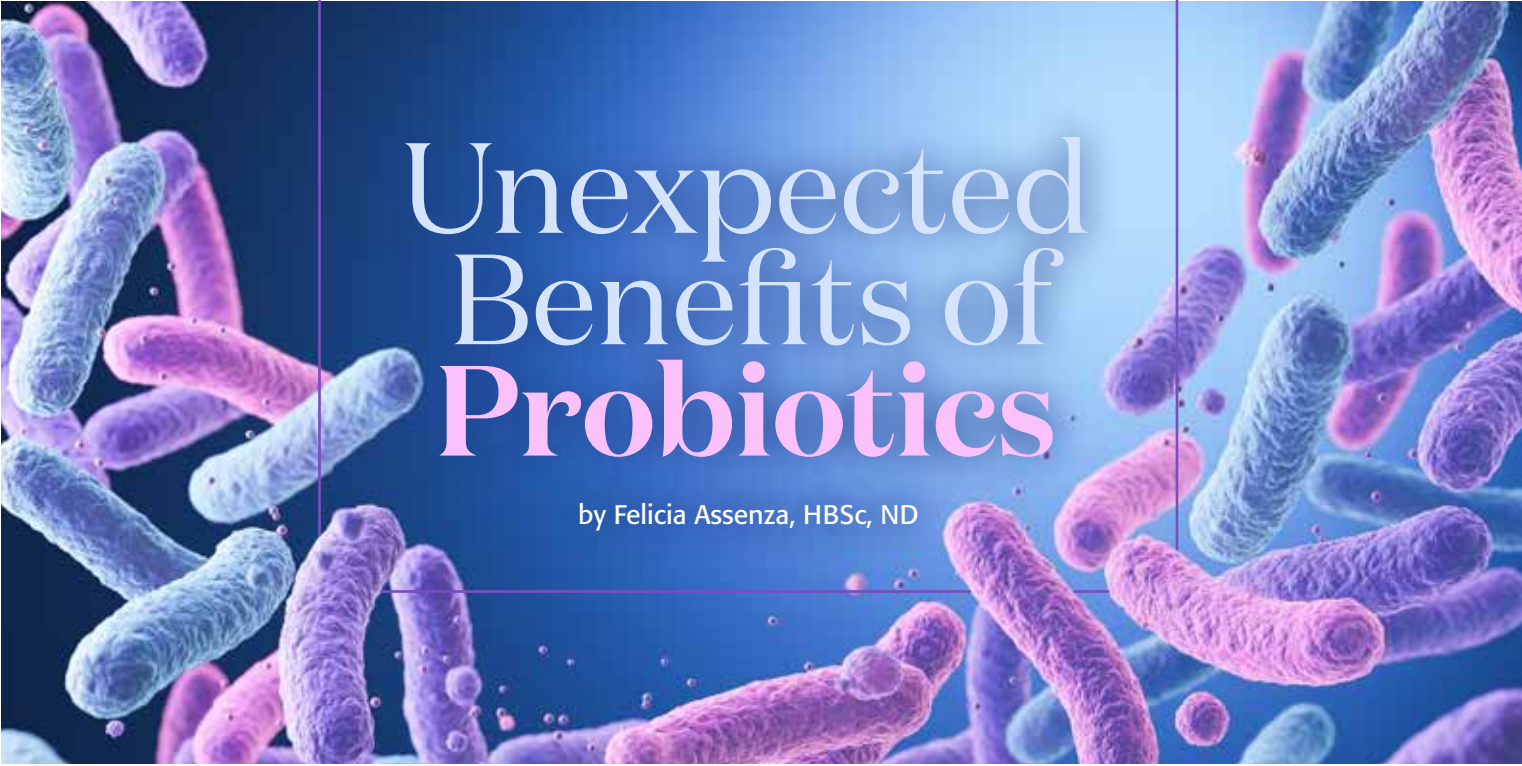
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Unexpected Benefits of Probiotics

by Felicia Assenza, HBSc, ND

By now, you have likely heard of the many benefits of probiotics, especially about how great they are for digestive health, immune health, and even mental health. As probiotics continue to be studied, they are being linked to other body systems as well. Here is a look at some exciting new research observing some lesser-known benefits of probiotics on heart and sexual health.

What Exactly Are Probiotics?

Before we dive into the unexpected benefits of probiotics, let's start with a quick definition. Probiotics are living bacteria and yeast that, when consumed in adequate amounts, provide health benefits and support the balance of the microbiome, the community of microorganisms found throughout your body. Keep in mind your microbiome spans your entire body, with microorganisms living both inside you and on your skin. They can come from many sources like food, environment, or supplements.

While a probiotic supplement presents a way to control the number of specific bacteria and yeast you are bringing into your body, microbes are nevertheless everywhere, and probiotics can come from many natural sources. They can be found in fermented foods like kimchi, pickles, yogurt, cheeses, fruit vinegar, or sauerkraut. Even in the garden, when you have your hands in the dirt or while sitting on a beach, they are all around you and on you.

Probiotics and the Heart Connection

Recent research points to probiotics being helpful in the treatment of heart failure. This refers to a chronic or ongoing condition affecting 750,000 Canadians where their heart is not functioning optimally. There are different stages of heart failure as it often progresses depending on the cause. As one of the top reasons for hospital admissions in Canada and having a lower survival rate than some common cancers, having another potential approach to managing heart failure and supporting the heart is very exciting.

How Do Probiotics Support the Heart?

A meta-analysis showed that patients with heart failure who took probiotics were less likely to be readmitted to the hospital. They also showed lower inflammation markers in their blood, specifically the hs-CRP, IL-6, and TNF- α . They also had better measures of heart function.

The good news is there is no need to wait for a diagnosis to benefit from the heart-protective effect of probiotics. You can start incorporating probiotic-rich foods and spending time in nature to support your heart

and overall health anytime! In fact, a study found that probiotic intake was linked to lower risk factors for heart disease such as elevated cholesterol, body mass index, and inflammatory markers.

Probiotics and Sexual Function

Now that we have uncovered some of the positive effects of probiotics on heart health, let's take a closer look at some of the valuable effects of probiotics for sexual health, especially in women in various life stages. One of the most common reasons women in their 40s and over reach out to me is concern around perimenopause, menopause, and associated symptoms. Many women start noticing weight and mood changes, vaginal dryness, and a lower libido. While it is completely normal (and healthy!) to go through changes as we age, as our bodies prepare for the next stage of life, there are lots of supportive options to help with this transition. One of these appear to be probiotics.

A study looked at the impact of probiotics, specifically the bacteria *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, on quality of life and sexual function in women aged 40–60 and noticed an improvement in both. This study is the first randomized, placebo-controlled study to look at the impact of probiotics on female sexual function using a standardized reporting tool, and the results look promising!



The *Lactobacillus acidophilus* they used in the study is commonly found in yogurt and kefir as well as in fermented soy products like miso or tempeh, which may also be helpful with the menopause transition due to their high phytoestrogen content. It can be found in probiotic supplements as well.



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A Hamilton-based naturopathic doctor whose goal in every patient visit is to share the knowledge and experiences that she gained on her own journey.

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Visit our blog for the full article including references: newrootsherbal.com/en/blog

While this study focused on women, there is good news for men as well when it comes to sexual health and probiotics. It appears probiotic use has been linked to improved sperm quality, and, while there is still limited research, exploring the role of the microbiome in male sexual function and prostate health seems to be a promising avenue.

Does This Mean Everyone Should Take Probiotics?

As a naturopathic doctor, I recognize that all body systems work together. Since a diverse microbiome seems to coincide with positive health outcomes, I was not all that surprised to see research connecting probiotics with heart health and sexual health. It is also encouraging to have new evidence supporting specific probiotic benefits. This being said, the body is an integrated system, everyone is unique, and probiotics may be just one piece of your overall health story. They are definitely something worth exploring with your own naturopathic doctor.

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Probiotics: Strong Foundations Stemming from Birth
by Krista Mackay, BSc, ND



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Kidney Stones

Small Crystals, Big Discomfort

by Annick Moffatt, ND



Summer is finally here. Most of us are now spending long hours outside in the bright sun, feeling the warmth on our skin, firing up the BBQ, grilling juicy meat or poultry, and reaching for cold soda pops, beer, or punch to cool down after a hot, sweaty day. Next to the meat, a colourful spinach-and-beet salad may also land on the table with a sprinkle of salt, followed by a slice of strawberry-rhubarb pie. It sounds like the perfect summer meal—and, for most people, it is. But for those prone to kidney stones, a few of these seemingly harmless habits can quietly add up: more sweating, less water, more sodium, more animal protein, more sugar-sweetened drinks, and more high-oxalate foods. Together, they can create a urinary environment where minerals are more likely to concentrate, crystallize, and form stones.

Each year, around 0.3% of Canadian adults have a kidney-stone episode serious enough to appear in hospital, emergency, or procedure data, and about 4 in 10 of those recorded episodes require some type of intervention. This does not include milder stones passed at home or managed outside hospital settings, meaning the true number of people forming stones may be higher.

What Are Kidney Stones?

Kidney stones are hard mineral deposits that form inside the kidneys when certain substances in urine become too concentrated and begin to crystallize. They may stay in the kidney without causing symptoms, or they may move into the ureter, where they can trigger severe pain, nausea, blood in the urine, or urinary blockage.

Most kidney stones are calcium-based, with calcium oxalate stones being the most common. Other types include calcium phosphate, uric acid, struvite, and cystine stones. Each type has its own pattern, but many share

the same basic starting point: urine that is too concentrated, too high in stone-forming compounds, or too low in natural protective factors.

Why Do Kidney Stones Form?

The body does not produce kidney stones on purpose: They form when the balance of urine chemistry shifts. Urine naturally contains minerals and waste compounds. When there is enough fluid, these substances stay diluted and are flushed out more easily. But when urine becomes concentrated, crystals can begin to form. Over time, these crystals can grow, clump together, and become stones.

This is where a typical summer day can play a role. Hot weather increases sweating, which means more fluid is lost through the skin. If that fluid is not replaced with enough water, urine becomes more concentrated.



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Large-cohort research has also found that sugar-sweetened soda and punch were associated with a higher kidney-stone risk—by 23% and 18%, respectively—making water a much better everyday choice for urinary-tract wellness.

Diet can also influence stone-forming substances. Foods such as spinach, beets, rhubarb, Swiss chard, and almonds are high in oxalates. These are nutritious foods, but in people prone to calcium-oxalate stones, very high oxalate intake may contribute to stone formation. Large amounts of animal protein—such as red meat, poultry, eggs, and seafood—can increase uric acid and may reduce citrate, a natural stone inhibitor in urine. Salt is another important factor: high sodium intake can cause the kidneys to release more calcium into the urine, which may increase the risk of calcium-based stones. The Canadian Urological Association recommends that recurrent calcium-stone formers limit sodium to about 1,500 mg daily when possible and not exceed 2,300 mg per day. That is roughly $\frac{2}{3}$ to 1 teaspoon of table salt total from all foods, not just the salt shaker.

Other factors can also increase risk, including family history, higher body weight, type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome, inflammatory bowel disease, chronic diarrhea, gastric bypass, malabsorption, and certain medications.

Simple Ways to Tip the Scale in Your Favour

The first and most important step is hydration. Drinking enough water helps dilute the urine so minerals are less likely to bind together and form crystals. A practical sign is pale yellow urine throughout the day. People who sweat heavily, exercise outdoors, or spend time in hot weather may need more fluids than usual.

Citrate-rich drinks may also help. Lemon or lime added to water can provide citrate, a natural compound that helps keep certain minerals more soluble in urine. This does not mean lemonade should be loaded with sugar, but adding citrus to water can be a simple, refreshing habit.

Protein balance matters, too. For those prone to stones, it may be helpful to moderate large portions of animal protein and include more plant-based protein options. Reducing sodium is another high-impact step.

Since most sodium comes from processed foods, restaurant meals, deli meats, canned soups, sauces, crackers, and packaged foods, choosing lower-sodium options can make a bigger difference than simply putting away the saltshaker.

Calcium is often misunderstood. Many people assume that calcium stones mean they should avoid calcium, but normal calcium intake from food can actually help bind oxalate in the digestive tract and reduce how much oxalate is absorbed. For someone prone to calcium-oxalate stones, pairing higher-oxalate foods with calcium-containing foods may help reduce oxalate absorption.



Where Chanca Piedra Fits In

Chanca piedra, Spanish for “stone breaker,” is a botanical traditionally used for urinary-tract and kidney-stone support. Today, it is one of the best-known herbs in this category and is often featured in natural kidney stone–support formulas.

Modern research suggests that *Phyllanthus niruri*, the plant commonly referred to as chanca piedra, may influence several steps involved in stone formation. Proposed mechanisms include reducing calcium-oxalate crystallization, reducing crystal aggregation, modifying crystal structure and density, supporting urinary mineral balance, and promoting urinary flow through mild diuretic activity.

Human evidence is promising but still limited. A 2018 clinical study in 56 people with kidney stones under 10 mm found that 12 weeks of *Phyllanthus niruri* supplementation was associated with reductions in urinary oxalate and uric acid in certain participants, along with improvements in stone parameters.

A 2020 systematic review and meta-analysis found that *P. niruri* was associated with reductions in average stone size and number of stones

compared with placebo or no treatment, but only two studies met the inclusion criteria, meaning the evidence base remains small. A more recent (2025) review also described *P. niruri* as a promising supportive botanical in urinary stone management, particularly as an adjunct to conventional approaches, while emphasizing that stronger clinical evidence is still needed.

In other words, chanca piedra should not be seen as a replacement for medical care, especially if someone has severe pain, fever, blood in the urine, vomiting, or trouble urinating. But for those interested in natural kidney-stone support, it is a compelling feature supplement to consider alongside hydration, dietary changes, and guidance from a health-care practitioner.

The Takeaway

Kidney stones may be small, but they can cause major discomfort. The good news is that many everyday habits can help support a healthier urinary environment: drinking more water, reducing sodium, moderating animal protein, being mindful of high-oxalate foods, and adding citrate-rich citrus to water. For extra urinary stone support, chanca piedra stands out as a traditional botanical with growing scientific interest. Paired with smart lifestyle choices, it offers a natural way to support urinary-tract wellness and help keep your summer plans moving comfortably.



Annick Moffatt, ND

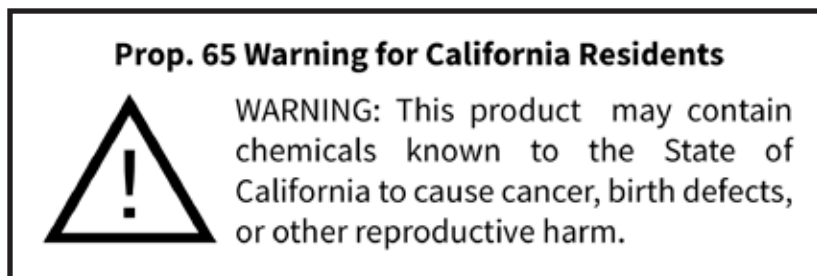
With more than 20 years of experience in the health domain, first in psychology, then as a naturopathic doctor, she brings a holistic approach to health problems.

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How California's Prop. 65 Could Affect Your Favourite Brands

If you've shopped online or travelled to California, you may have seen warnings on health products that look something like this:



Seeing this kind of warning on a bottle of vitamins or a health supplement can feel alarming. How can a product meant to support your health contain dangerous chemicals? And why are California residents being warned? What about the rest of the United States? The story behind that warning is rather complex.

What Proposition 65 Actually Is

California's Proposition 65 is state law which passed in the 1980s, giving consumers the right to know about exposure to chemicals the state determined may cause cancer, birth defects, or reproductive harm. The list now includes over 900 chemicals. The intent was good. But here's where it gets interesting.

The Unattainable Threshold Problem

California set the threshold on cadmium at 4.1 mcg/d, and on mercury at 0.3 mcg/d, both of which are more restrictive than the standards set by US Pharmacopeia (USP) and Health Canada. But that's not the biggest issue. It set its lead threshold at 0.5 mcg/d. This is $\frac{1}{20}$ th or only 5% of what the USP and Health Canada have concluded to be safe.

Why This Creates Issues for Natural Products

Lead, cadmium, mercury, and other trace elements occur naturally in soil and water within our environment. They are not intentionally added: our ecosystem inherently contains these elements. Because of this, supplements



derived from herbs, mushrooms, algae, grains, roots, and other plant-based ingredients may contain these in trace amounts. Naturally grown vegetables like spinach, carrots, and sweet potatoes contain trace amounts as well, and they are considered safe to eat—but if they were to be measured against California’s threshold, they would require warnings.

The Practical Problem

Manufacturers are expected to test their products and label accordingly when selling into California. So numerous health products, globally accepted as safe, are shipped to California with dangerous-looking warning labels. Other health products that inadvertently reach California without warning labels could end up being targeted by advocacy groups. If they are flagged as failing to meet these unattainable thresholds, public disclosure can spread online, tarnishing a reputation before the brand even knows what happened. Either way, consumers are no closer to knowing what is truly safe to choose.

What Canadian Consumers Should Know

Detectable doesn’t equal dangerous. If you do see a Prop. 65 warning, ask yourself: What’s the actual exposure? And how does it compare to reliable Health Canada standards? Choose Canadian brands that manufacture responsibly and test thoroughly. And if you see alarming posts online about a product or brand, pause and look for context. Is this really a concern, or is it opportunistic noise?

Not all warnings carry the weight they appear to.



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Zinc L-Carnosine

Beyond Your Basic Zinc Supplement

by Colleen Hartwick, ND

When most people hear “zinc,” they think of immune support, faster wound healing, healthy hair, skin and nails, or even testosterone production. But zinc L-carnosine is not your ordinary zinc supplement. It is a distinctly different form of zinc with a far more targeted clinical application: protecting and helping repair the mucosal lining of the gastrointestinal tract (GI tract).

What Makes Zinc L-Carnosine Different

Zinc L-carnosine, also known as polaprezinc, is a chelated compound formed from zinc and L-carnosine in a 1:1 complex. Unlike standard zinc salts, like zinc gluconate or citrate, this form is designed to remain stable in the stomach, which may enhance its local effects.

Both the zinc and carnosine adhere to damaged mucosal tissue, delivering zinc directly where it’s needed. This “targeted delivery” is what differentiates it from other forms. Rather than being digested, absorbed, and dispersed systemically throughout the body, zinc L-carnosine has been shown to adhere to and remain in contact with the gut lining, particularly in areas of irritation or injury. Zinc L-carnosine is not an antisecretory, not an antacid, and it does not interfere with the mucous lining of the stomach.

Why the Gut Lining Matters

Your GI tract isn’t just a tube for breaking down food—it’s also a protective barrier. The lining of the stomach and intestines helps control what gets absorbed into the body and what stays out, including bacteria and endotoxins.

When that lining becomes irritated or damaged, it can lead to symptoms like:

- Burning or discomfort in the stomach
- Bloating and indigestion
- Increased sensitivity to foods
- Acid reflux or heartburn



In more severe cases, damage to this lining can contribute to ulcers or increased intestinal permeability, often referred to as “leaky gut.” This is where zinc L-carnosine stands out—it doesn’t just mask symptoms: it helps support the body’s natural repair process.



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Targeted Support for Gastric Mucosal Health

Research suggests zinc L-carnosine works in several ways to protect and restore the GI tract. Once bound to the damaged mucosa, zinc L-carnosine helps stabilize the gut lining and protect it from oxidative damage. Specifically, it helps scavenge superoxide and hydroxyl radicals, and it increases the expression of antioxidant enzymes, thus helping to protect cells from oxidative damage. It does this all while helping to protect the gastric mucosal barrier, without suppressing the stomach's natural acid secretion. By neutralizing free radicals, zinc L-carnosine reduces damage to the epithelial lining of the GI tract.



Clinical Uses for Zinc L-Carnosine

Gastritis and Peptic Ulcer Support

Much of the research on zinc L-carnosine comes from Japan, where it's used as a prescription treatment for gastric ulcers. Clinical trials show improved healing rates and symptom reduction compared to placebo. An animal study on alcohol-induced gastric ulcers in rats confirmed that pretreatment with zinc L-carnosine resulted in significantly lower ulcer indices in a dose-dependent manner. Expression of inflammatory chemical messengers in the gastric mucosa was also significantly decreased by zinc L-carnosine in a dose-dependent manner.

H. pylori Infection Defence

H. pylori is a bacterium that can infect the lining of the stomach, resulting in gastric (stomach) ulcers. A randomized clinical trial compared a 14-day triple-therapy regimen (twice daily amoxicillin 1 g plus clarithromycin 500 mg plus omeprazole 20 mg) with or without zinc L-carnosine (150 mg twice daily). The authors found a significantly higher *H. pylori*-eradication rate in the zinc L-carnosine plus triple therapy group compared to triple therapy alone.

Intestinal Permeability and Barrier Function

Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) use, intense or prolonged exercise, and hyperthermia have all been associated with disrupting intestinal tight junctions which may contribute to increased intestinal permeability. A study showed that treatment with zinc L-carnosine prevented intestinal permeability normally induced by the NSAID indomethacin. In another study, zinc L-carnosine helped reduced exercise-induced intestinal permeability by roughly 70%, likely by upregulated heat-shock proteins and helping maintain intestinal tight junction integrity.

Emerging Research in Hemorrhoidal Disease

Preliminary research looks promising for the use of zinc L-carnosine in hemorrhoidal disease. A recent multicentre, open-label, uncontrolled clinical trial evaluated zinc L-carnosine for symptom relief in hemorrhoidal disease. Patients treated with zinc L-carnosine showed a marked reduction in bleeding rates, pain scores, and overall severity of symptoms as measured by the Hemorrhoidal Disease Symptom Score, as early as week 2. The positive response was maintained at the 4-week follow-up assessment.



What to Know before Adding Zinc L-Carnosine to Your Routine

Overall, zinc L-carnosine is a compound that acts locally and directly on the damaged mucosa, through multiple anti-inflammatory and antioxidant pathways, showing negligible systemic effects at usual therapeutic dosages.

It's also generally well tolerated at typical doses (often around 75 mg twice daily of the compound, not elemental zinc). That said, it's always best to work alongside a trained health-care practitioner before implementing a new supplement.

A Smarter Zinc Strategy for Digestive Health

Zinc L-carnosine sits at the intersection of nutrition and pharmacology.

It's not just about correcting a deficiency—it's about delivering targeted support to the gut lining, promoting repair, reducing inflammation, and strengthening one of the body's most critical barriers.

For people dealing with chronic digestive irritation, medication- or exercise-induced gut damage, or impaired mucosal integrity, zinc L-carnosine offers a clinically supported, mechanism-driven option that goes well beyond what most people associate with "zinc."



Dr. Colleen Hartwick, ND

Dr. Colleen Hartwick is a licensed naturopathic physician practising on North Vancouver Island, BC, with a special interest in trauma as it plays a role in disease. campbellrivernaturopathic.com

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Why Women's Heart Health Deserves More Attention

by Odessa Gill, ND



While cardiovascular disease is often perceived as more of a male concern, it remains a major threat to women's health. In fact, heart disease and stroke are the leading cause of premature death among women in Canada. Additional research and education for female-specific strategies are essential.

A 2025 study from the Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre in Toronto found that poor cardiovascular health status was associated with a higher risk of future cardiovascular disease events in both women and men, but the impact appeared stronger in women. Specifically, poor cardiovascular health was linked to an almost fivefold higher rate of cardiovascular events in women, compared to a 2.5-fold higher rate in men.

The focus for cardiovascular health and prevention has often targeted men, in part because heart attacks have traditionally been viewed as a male issue.

This study highlights the need for women to assess their cardiovascular health status and work on preventable lifestyle strategies. Factors such as smoking, poor sleep, and unhealthy diets can all play a negative role in cardiovascular health.

The Sunnybrook study references the following key strategies as important factors in preventing cardiovascular disease. The American Heart Association refers to these as Life's Essential 8 for women. They include:

- **Eat better:** Focus on a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, nuts, legumes, whole grains, and lean proteins.
- **Be active:** Exercise regularly. Engage in weekly activities that include 150 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity per week. Good examples include brisk walking, swimming, or cycling.
- **Quit tobacco:** Stop smoking and vaping, and avoid second-hand smoke.
- **Get healthy sleep:** Aim for 7 to 9 hours of sleep per day.
- **Manage weight:** Maintain a healthy weight with a body mass index (BMI) in the optimal range (18.5–25).
- **Control cholesterol:** Evaluate yearly to maintain healthy cholesterol levels.
- **Manage blood sugar:** Evaluate yearly to know your numbers for blood sugar levels.
- **Manage blood pressure:** Aim for an ideal blood pressure of 120 over 80 mmHg or below.



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In addition to these factors, stress reduction is so important. Chronic stress can lead to increased inflammation in the body. When the stress hormone cortisol is elevated, blood pressure and heart rates can increase. Sustained levels of cortisol can cause higher levels of bad cholesterol and blood sugar. In addition, we know that stress can lead to unhealthy lifestyle choices, such as increase in alcohol consumption, smoking, poor diet choices, overeating, and craving sugar. These all increase your risk of developing heart disease.

Oftentimes, it can be overwhelming or even stressful to consider making changes in all these areas. Ideally, begin with the lifestyle strategies that appeal to you. If you like to exercise and have not been as active for a while, start there. Begin by walking every day for at least for 30 minutes. Changing one behaviour often leads to other positive life choices.

Health educators—including your family doctor, naturopathic doctor, physiotherapist, occupation therapist and others—can assist you with your health goals. An individualized treatment plan and counselling can support your overall health status.

Starting at 20 years old, regular screening can begin for blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol levels. Other screening options include looking at additional markers for heart health. These blood tests can be ordered through your family doctor or naturopathic doctor (in accordance with applicable provincial regulations).

A laboratory test called C-reactive protein (CRP) measures the level of inflammation in the body. It is used to detect infection and inflammation, and it measures the risk of cardiovascular diseases. This inflammatory marker is not often incorporated in routine yearly screening.



A genetic test called lipoprotein A is another one that can be used for screening overall cardiovascular health. Lipoprotein A is a cholesterol-carrying protein in the blood. It is usually performed only once, as the level is mostly inherited. It is not incorporated with the common testing of cholesterol levels. When lipoprotein A is high, it can mean that there is a greater risk of developing cardiovascular disease. Elevated levels of this lipoprotein can cause cholesterol to build up in artery walls and cause plaques which can lead to potential blockages in the blood vessels.

A homocysteine test can also help identify the overall risk of cardiovascular disease. It measures the level of the amino acid homocysteine in the blood. Higher levels can cause damage to blood vessels, increasing the risk of forming blood clots that can lead to a stroke or cardiovascular disease.



These tests are not often used for screening purposes but can be ordered by your health-care practitioner. Having a conversation with your family doctor or naturopathic doctor about your family history and possible genetic predisposition is recommended to see what tests might be appropriate.

Education about lifestyle factors, developing an individualized care program for heart-health promotion, and regular screening are recommended for women of all ages. Having a health-care practitioner that listens to you and helps you determine your risk is key. Understanding your current health status with yearly monitoring is essential for preventing cardiovascular disease.



Dr. Odessa Gill, ND

Dr. Gill has been in practice for 20 years and is the co-owner of a naturopathic clinic in Bloor West Village, Toronto. She has a focus on stress management, fertility, and hormonal health.
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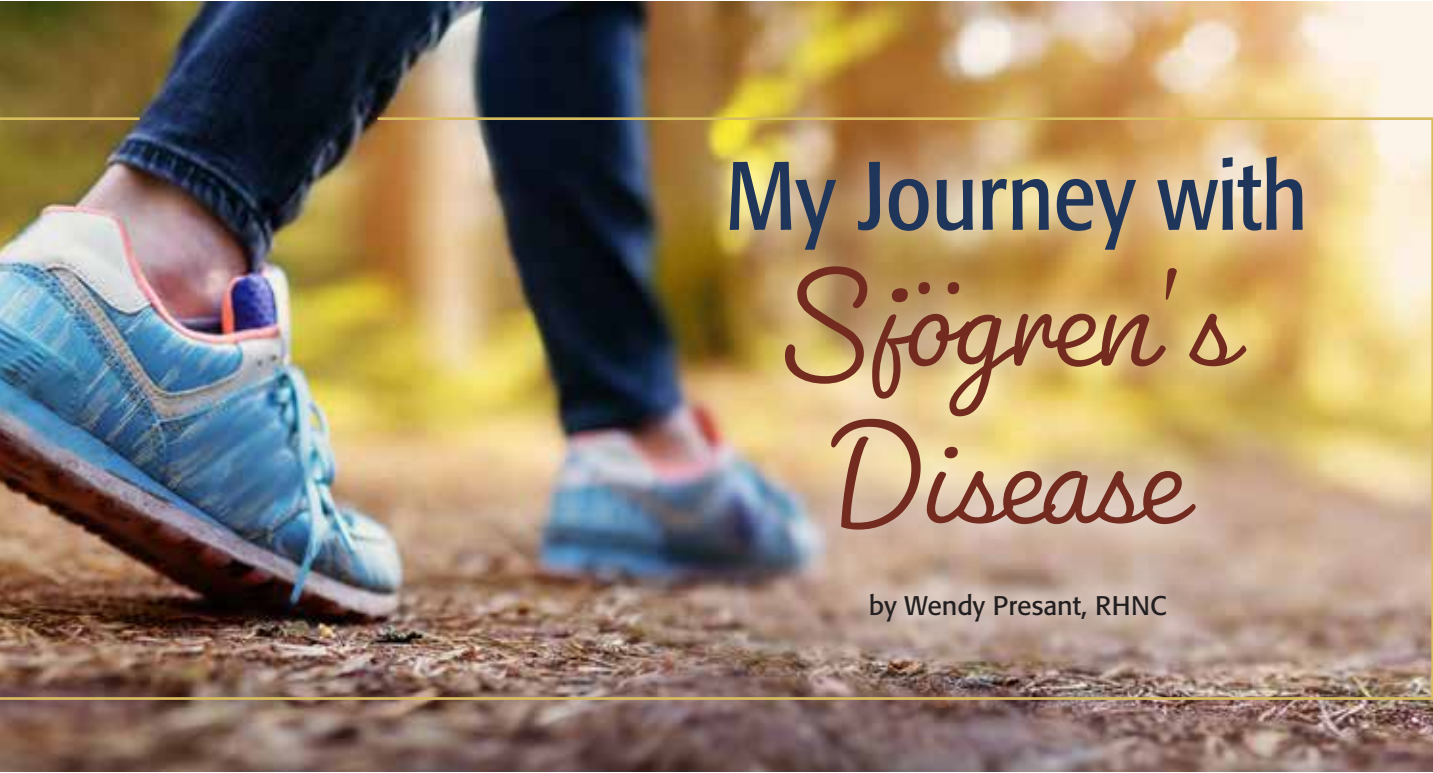
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My Journey with Sjögren's Disease

by Wendy Presant, RHNC

Do you have dry eyes? A dry mouth? How about fatigue? Aches and pains? Me too! These common symptoms can be part of several health conditions ranging from simple dehydration to chronic diseases. One of the most serious of these ailments is Sjögren's disease (formerly called Sjögren's syndrome). Here is my story.

Four years ago, I was sitting in my doctor's office while she reviewed my latest round of bloodwork. This was a follow-up visit from the week before, which was based on a referral letter from my optometrist. In this round of tests, the doctor included inflammatory markers and some specific antibody indicators. She looked up from the test results and said: "I think you have Sjögren's disease." All I could remember from a brief lecture I sat in on at school was that Sjögren's was a dry disease.

The rheumatologist confirmed Sjögren's disease six months later. I felt relieved that I didn't have one of the more serious autoimmune

diseases. That feeling was short-lived. I learned that it isn't as benign as I had thought. It is a progressive systemic disease which can wreak the same havoc on the body as rheumatoid arthritis or systemic lupus erythematosus. Simply put, in Sjögren's disease, the body attacks its own moisture-secreting glands and small-fibre nerves. All organs and systems in the body can be affected. The risk of developing lymphoma, a type of cancer, is 44 times more common in someone with Sjögren's disease.

How did I get this? I knew there had to be three factors in place to develop an autoimmune disease: the autoimmune genes, a disease-conducive environment, and a trigger. There were no known autoimmune diseases in my family, although my grandmother had low thyroid function, which was likely Hashimoto's. In hindsight, I think I did have early signs of Sjögren's. As a teen, my eyes were dry—an optometrist once told me I didn't blink enough. More recently, my current optometrist diagnosed dry-eye disease and put me on eye drops. I also recall struggling to speak at times when I taught groups and having to clear my throat and drink water often. Then, there were those mysterious aches and pains, and the decades of feeling exhausted. I thought it was nothing serious. And besides, my routine bloodwork and vital signs were always fine.

Then in my mid-fifties, I was hit with a lot of stress. I moved to a different province and changed jobs, then there was the pandemic and I became unemployed. My parents' health changed, then I became an empty nester. I had a really bad reaction to the COVID vaccine, too. My lack of restorative sleep was leaving me feeling constantly fatigued and was now affecting my memory and thinking ability. Something was not right.

Nevertheless, I was lucky to be diagnosed in a timely manner. Sjögren's is often missed as it shares symptoms with many other health conditions and there is no definitive blood test. Antibody tests can reveal the disease, but



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some people can have the disease without the antibodies. Because of this, it takes an average of three years to be diagnosed. It was once considered more of a “middle-aged woman’s disease”; these days, younger women as well as men and children are being diagnosed. All my symptoms could easily have been missed or explained away as menopause or aging. I was fortunate to have doctors listen to me and order the right tests.

So, after discussing medication options with the rheumatologist, I decided to take the “wait-and-see route,” since even the safest drug offered for Sjögren’s has potential side effects. Having worked with lots of autoimmune patients in my former career as a naturopathic doctor, I was confident I could substantially influence the course of my own disease.

The first step was to update my knowledge of Sjögren’s disease and find out what the current conventional and complementary therapies used to treat it were. I rushed off to my local library and, to my surprise, I found a couple of books on Sjögren’s disease, but they were outdated. I checked online and found that recent books contained only the conventional medical approach. What I needed but could not find was a book that incorporated both the standard medical and holistic approaches to Sjögren’s disease.



My second step was to start working on treatment. I began with an elimination diet, as I had done with so many patients in the past. I already knew two of my food sensitivities—gluten and dairy—but after doing the autoimmune protocol (AIP), I also discovered eggs were causing symptoms. After a few days on the diet, my joints felt better. A couple of weeks later, my eyes and mouth were less dry. A month passed and the fatigue had lifted a little. I added in a few natural anti-inflammatory supplements such as curcumin, ginger, and omega-3.

Next, I tackled my nutrient deficiencies, which are common for those living with Sjögren’s disease. These can include vitamin D, omega-3, vitamin A, zinc, vitamin B₁₂, folate, and iron. Deficiencies are specific to

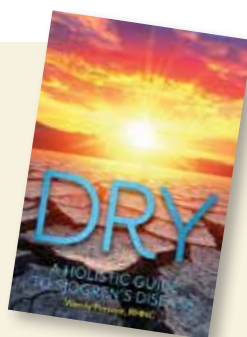


the person. I used a food-diary app (Chronometer), recording everything I ate for a couple of weeks. This gave me oversight on what nutrients I was routinely missing out on, so that I could target my nutrition or use supplements to fill gaps to meet my daily nutritional needs. Gut health is also important in treating Sjögren's disease. Working with a naturopathic doctor, we focused on healing my leaky gut. I made sure to eat a variety of fibres and fermented foods (probiotics). A caveat here: If your immune system is seriously compromised, check with a health-care practitioner before starting any probiotic foods or supplements.

In the end, the book I couldn't find on Sjögren's disease, I wrote it. *Dry: A Holistic Guide to Sjögren's Disease* is meant to help you learn more about the disease and how to incorporate safe, evidence-based measures. My book contains nearly 200 current references, to help you understand your symptoms and condition better.

There is a lot you can do on your own to relieve your dry eyes, dry mouth, fatigue, and joint pain; whether the symptoms are part of Sjögren's disease or another chronic disease. A diagnosis was a shock at first, but I've learned to manage Sjögren's disease. You can, too.

If you are interested in finding out more, my book is available through a variety of online distributors. It is published by Friesen Press.



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Wendy Presant, RHNC, CFMP

A former registered nurse and a retired naturopathic doctor with credentials in health and life coaching, Wendy is passionate about helping people over the age of 40 optimize their continuing journey through life. She enjoys writing and is the recent author of *Dry—A Holistic Guide to Sjögren's Disease*.

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Cold Brew Wake-up Smoothie

Try this refreshing smoothie on a sunny morning or anytime you need a little extra boost.

Ingredients

- ½-1 frozen banana
- 2 dates, ideally frozen
- 1 cup cold brew coffee
- 1 cup milk of choice
- Ice cubes
- ½ tsp. cinnamon powder, divided
- ½ tsp. vanilla powder, extract, or sugar, divided (see recipe below for homemade option)
- A good pinch of sea salt

Instructions

Sprinkle a tall glass with half of the vanilla and cinnamon.

Blend remaining ingredients on high speed until you get a smooth consistency.

Pour your smoothie. Add more vanilla bean powder and cinnamon on top. Grab a straw and enjoy!

Homemade Vanilla Bean Sugar

This recipe is a bit of work but will last you for a while and can be used in smoothies, coffee, baking, etc.

Ingredients and Tools

- 1 cup of granulated sugar
- 2 whole vanilla beans
- A long slim Mason jar with a tight lid
- A sharp small kitchen knife or fork

Instructions

Pour the sugar into your Mason jar.

Slit the vanilla beans open lengthwise and scrape out the tiny black seeds with a sharp knife or a fork. Scrape them directly into the sugar. Stir. Then take the vanilla bean shells and stick them into the sugar. Close the lid tightly, shake well, and let it sit for several weeks (the longer the better) to infuse the vanilla bean flavours into the sugar.

Once it tastes great to you, take the beans out and discard. Use your fancy sugar in as many recipes as you like. Enjoy!



Inga Bohnkamp

Inga holds a diploma in Psychology with postgraduate training in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Dialectic Behavioral Therapy, and Mindfulness. She is a graduate from the Strala Yoga (200 h) Ready-to-Lead Yoga Teacher Training and Tai Chi with Tara Stiles and Mike Taylor, as well as a certified yoga instructor for children and adolescents.

ingabohnkamp.com

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Maple and Zucchini BBQ Turkey Burgers

Because Canadian summers are meant to be enjoyed to the fullest. These burgers are so easy to make and are family friendly.

Ingredients

- 500 g ground turkey
- 1 small zucchini, grated; or 1 cup grated
- 1–2 tbsp. maple syrup
- ½–1 tsp. dried thyme (if you like this flavour add the full tsp.)
- ½ tsp. garlic powder
- Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions

Grate zucchini until you get 1 cup's worth, squeeze out the excess water.

Add grated zucchini to the ground meat.

Add salt, pepper, garlic powder, thyme, and maple syrup. Mix together well.

Divide into four equal parts and freeze for at least 30 minutes before cooking. This keeps your patties from falling apart, helps prevent sticking, and traps juices in to keep them moist.

Place on heated BBQ at 200–220 °C (400–425 °F) and cook 5–6 minutes per side.

Yields 4 standard-sized patties

To save time

Double the recipe and keep four patties tightly wrapped in the freezer for a quick and easy diner protein.

In winter months

You can pan fry these (using 1–2 tablespoons of coconut or avocado oil). Sear on high for 2 minutes without moving patties to form a golden crust. Flip and reduce heat to medium, cooking covered for about 5 minutes or until they reach an internal temperature of 74 °C (165 °F).



Angela Wallace, MSc, RD

A registered dietitian with the College of Dietitians of Ontario, personal trainer, and family-food expert who specializes in women and child nutrition and fitness, she loves helping families get healthy together.

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Greek-Style Chicken

This is my go-to recipe for easy “Greek-style” chicken. The marinade works perfectly on bone-in chicken thighs or drumsticks, which are less expensive poultry options. My recommendation is marinating for at least one hour (or more) prior to cooking.

Marinade Ingredients

- 3 tbsp. olive oil
- 2 tbsp. balsamic vinegar
- 1 tbsp. maple syrup
- 1 tbsp. lemon juice
- 3–4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tsp. dried oregano
- Salt/pepper to taste

Chicken

- 800 g of chicken thighs or drumsticks

Instructions

Mix marinade ingredients together in a bowl and whisk until combined. Add the chicken and coat well. Ideally marinate for a few hours, but even one hour before eating is helpful!

Preheat oven to 220 °C (425 °F). Line a baking tray with parchment paper and place chicken thighs or drumsticks on the baking tray.

Cook for 35–45 minutes or until the chicken reaches an internal temperature of 74 °C (165 °F).

These can also be grilled on the barbecue during the warmer months.

Serves 3–4 people.

Pairs perfectly with Greek salad, lemon-roasted potatoes, and grilled veggies.

Tip: Double up the recipe and debone extras for fast delicious protein to add in salads, wraps, and sandwiches



Angela Wallace, MSc, RD

A registered dietitian with the College of Dietitians of Ontario, personal trainer, and family-food expert who specializes in women and child nutrition and fitness, she loves helping families get healthy together.

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Did You Know?

Collagen v. Elastin

Collagen and elastin are two key structural proteins that help keep skin looking firm, smooth, and resilient. Collagen acts like the skin's support framework, giving skin strength, density, and structure. Elastin gives skin its stretch and "snap-back," allowing it to move with facial expressions and return to its original shape. Together, they help support skin firmness, flexibility, and a healthy-looking complexion.

Collagen gets most of the attention in skin-health and beauty products, partly because it is easier to study, easier to measure, and more actively renewed by the body. Elastin is more complicated. Healthy elastic fibres are highly organized, long-lasting structures, and once they are damaged by time, UV exposure, pollution, smoking, or oxidative stress, the body does not replace them easily. This makes elastin one of the trickier areas of skin-aging research.

That is also why developing products or treatments that truly target elastin is much more difficult than creating collagen-focused formulas. Supporting collagen production is one thing; rebuilding a functional elastic-fibre network is another. Elastin is not just about making more protein—it is about forming fibres that are properly assembled, flexible, and integrated into the skin's structure.

The good news? Research on elastin is ramping up. Scientists are increasingly looking at how the skin's elastic network changes with age, how certain ingredients may influence elastin biology, and how future treatments may help support skin resilience more directly. A recent (2024) study showed daily intake of 100 mg of elastin peptide improved several wrinkle measurements, increased skin hydration, and lowered melanin index, suggesting potential benefits for smoother, more hydrated, and more elastic-looking skin.

So, while collagen may be the current celebrity of skin care, elastin is the powerful agent behind skin that is supple, lifted, and resilient.

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Ask an Expert



Annick Moffatt, ND

I keep seeing posts and videos about adding electrolytes to water in the summer. Is this really important, or is plain water enough?

Plain water is often enough for daily hydration, especially if you are eating a balanced diet. But electrolytes can be helpful when your body is losing more fluid than usual, such as during intense exercise, hot summer days, outdoor work, sauna use, or activities that make you sweat.

When you sweat, you lose more than water. You also lose electrolytes—including minerals like sodium, potassium, and magnesium—which help support fluid balance, nerve function, and normal muscle function. That is why an electrolyte drink can be a practical option when hydration needs are higher.

For most people, electrolytes do not need to be added to every glass of water. Think of them as targeted hydration support: useful when you are sweating, active, travelling in heat, or feeling depleted after fluid loss. For regular day-to-day sipping, plain water and mineral-rich foods are usually a great foundation.

Do I still need vitamin D in the summer if I spend time outside?

Sunlight can help your skin produce vitamin D, but it does not guarantee that everyone gets enough. Midday sun exposure is generally when UVB rays are strongest, and in fairer skin, short periods of exposure may help support vitamin D production—often estimated at about 5–15 minutes when enough skin is exposed. However, this should not be treated as a guaranteed daily dose.

Vitamin D production can vary widely from person to person. Darker skin may take longer to produce vitamin D, older skin becomes less efficient, and sunscreen use, UV-protective clothing, cloud cover, limited outdoor time, or medical reasons for avoiding sun exposure, can all reduce how much vitamin D your body makes, even during the summer months. Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium and supports the maintenance of bones and teeth. Health Canada notes that if you do not eat vitamin D-containing foods daily, a supplement containing 400 IU may be helpful. Food sources include egg yolks, fatty fish, fortified milk, and fortified plant-based beverages.

So, while some people may get enough vitamin D during sunny months, others may still benefit from supplementation. A health-care practitioner can help determine what is appropriate, especially for children, older adults, people with limited sun exposure, or anyone already taking higher-dose vitamin D.



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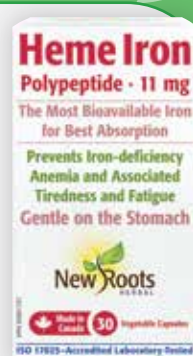
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