

Women's Health

LETTER

Vol. XIV • No. 9

September 2008

Inside This Issue



Nan Kathryn
Fuchs, PhD
Editor

If you have cancer – or want to avoid it – taking these two easy steps can help kill cancer cells ..p. 2

You can lower your risk of dying prematurely by 26% simply by adding this to your morning routinep. 4

If you're using one of these popular moisturizers, it could give you skin cancer.....p. 7

Coming Next Month

- How professional athletes keep their energy levels high ... it can work for you too.
- Does this sweetener actually help you lose weight and fight cholesterol? Sounds too good to be true, but it's not.
- The “do nothing” treatment that makes chemotherapy more effective ... and safer.

The Non-Hormonal Solution to Hot Flashes and Night Sweats

Works so effectively it can take the place of HRT

I've waited three years to write this article. I was initially intrigued with its possibilities. But there were no human studies to back up the claims some people made about it. Yes, I knew it had a history of reducing menopausal symptoms. It was said to increase libido as well. But I didn't know how this root that grows high in the Andes worked. Or why.

Before I can recommend anything to you, I need to be convinced that it's safe and that it works. That's where scientific studies come in. Studies preferably conducted on women, not men or rats. Now there are a few good human studies on this root, and they explain how it works.

Although it affects hormone levels, this plant contains no hormones at all. It's an adaptogen that helps the body make and regulate its own hormones. So don't confuse it with red clover, soy isoflavones, or black cohosh. Its action is very different from any plants with phyto-estrogens or any other hormones.

This root is called *Lepidium peruvianum*, or Maca. It grows high in the Andes. The Peruvians traditionally have used it as an energizing vegetable and to treat many female-related conditions. These include vaginal dryness, hormonal imbalances, and menopausal symptoms.

In my opinion, Maca has been mis-marketed. In this country, sellers have touted it as an aphrodisiac for both men and women. It's not. Maca is an adaptogen that helps regulate and balance hormone production. The results may *feel* like an

(continued on page 2)

aphrodisiac, but that's just one of its possible side effects.

So what do the studies say about Maca?

In a four-month double blind, randomized, placebo-controlled study – the best kind – Maca significantly stimulated estradiol production, helped regulate the thyroid, increased bone density, and suppressed cortisol production. (If you remember from previous articles, high cortisol is a huge risk factor for stress-related illnesses, belly fat, and heart disease. Researchers are now looking at it as a contributing cause of age-related memory problems.)

The participants in this particular study were all early-postmenopausal women. All of them had their hormones, lipids, and minerals tested every month through blood tests in a gynecological clinic. The researchers measured bone density before and after the study. Each day the women took either a placebo or two capsules of the standardized Maca product Maca-GO twice a day with meals.

The results were better than expected. There was an 84% reduction in menopausal symptoms. There was also a significant improvement in bone density at the end of the four months. Women taking Maca-GO had fewer hot flushes and night sweats than before taking Maca. They also had no increase in weight, depression, or mood swings – common side effects from taking hormones. They were less depressed and irritable and had an easier time falling asleep at night.

Why your results may differ

It sounds like Maca is a miracle for menopausal women. It is, for some. But there are a few things you should know about this plant before rushing out to buy it.

Not all forms of Maca are alike. This study used Maca-GO, a patented and standardized form of the root. It's also known as Femenessence™ and is available through Natural Health International (NHI). Whenever there are studies that use a particular product, I suggest you use it. There's more opportunity for success. So if you decide to try Maca, I suggest you use this product. For more information on Femenessence and studies mentioned in this article, call the people at NHI (888-668-3661).

There's another reason why your results may differ from those in the studies. All of the study participants were early-postmenopausal women in good health. None of the studies focused on women over 60 who have had menopausal symptoms for years. Does Maca work for this age group? I suspect it will. But we just don't know for sure. There aren't enough studies to indicate any cut-off dates.

Regardless of your age, give Maca a try and let me know how it works for you. It's completely safe and definitely worth a try. If you have postmenopausal symptoms, it may be able to save you from taking hormones of any kind. ■

Meissner, H.O., et al. "Hormone-balancing effect of pre-gelatinized organic maca (*Lepidium peruvianum* Chacon): (III) Clinical responses of early-postmenopausal women to Maca in double blind, randomized, placebo-controlled, crossover configuration, outpatient study," *Int'l Journ of Biomedical Science*, December 4, 2006.

Why Cancer Cells Are Addicted to Sugar ... And What You Can Do About It

You've probably heard that sugar feeds cancer cells. This is why knowledgeable doctors tell their cancer patients to eat a sugar-free or low-sugar diet. It also explains why so many people with cancer crave sweets. You

see, like all living things, cancer cells want to stay alive, and eating sugar helps them do just that. But we're finding out that sugar does much more than feed tumors. There's another reason why cancer cells are addicted to sugar.

Sugar keeps cancer cells alive. I've shown you in the past how sugar feeds cancer cells. But it does more than that. Glucose – the “safe” form of sugar found in most fruits and tomato products – also affects the programmed death of cancer cells. Let me explain.

All cells contain programs within them that determine the length of their life and death cycle. And all cells use glucose as food. Healthy cells contain growth factors that regulate glucose metabolism and cell survival. When you remove these growth factors, it impairs the cells' ability to metabolize glucose. When that happens, the cells die. Healthy cells, that is.

But cancer cells are different. Cancer cells can avoid this programmed cell death, and stay alive, by making a protein called Akt. Akt is a molecule used to send signals from cell to cell. These signals help cancer cells use glucose, which, in turn, regulates the proteins that cancer cells need to live. So Akt needs glucose to stay alive. The Akt then allows cells to survive when they shouldn't. And the cells bring in more glucose for the Akt. It's a cycle that allows the cancer cells to short-circuit the normal process that ends in cell death.

You haven't heard about this before because researchers just discovered this association between cancer cells and glucose. Jonathan Coloff, a graduate student in Duke University's Department of Pharmacology and Cancer Biology, led the study that came to this conclusion. He and his research team presented his findings at the American Association of Cancer Research Annual Meeting this past April.

Women's Health Letter (ISSN 1062-4163) is published monthly by Soundview Communications, Inc. **Publisher:** Wallis W. Wood; **Editor:** Nan Kathryn Fuchs, PhD. Subscriptions \$49 per year; foreign addresses add \$13 U.S. per year. Send new subscriptions or changes of address to our Business Office: P.O. Box 8051, Norcross, GA 30091-8051, 800-728-2288 or 770-399-5617.

Women's Health Letter is a newsletter containing general comments on health, nutrition, and medicine. Readers are advised to consult with their own physician before implementing any health idea they read about, whether here or in any other publication. Copyright © 2008 by Soundview Communications, Inc. All rights reserved. Unauthorized reproduction of this newsletter or its contents by xerography, facsimile, or any other means is illegal.

I expect we'll hear more about this important and exciting connection in the future. Meanwhile, you can protect yourself by limiting your glucose intake and taking a supplement.

Two-step solution

We're heading into holiday season, a time when we're surrounded by sugar. Health-minded people may substitute fruits and fruit juices for desserts made with refined sugar and believe that's all that's necessary. However, these new studies suggest this is not a good idea for cancer patients or people at high risk for getting cancer.

Be smart. Begin by reducing your intake of all sugars, including fruits and juices. Only drink diluted fruit juices or eat one or two pieces of low-sugar fruits a day. Berries are low in glucose; pineapple is high.

Then, consider taking a resveratrol supplement. Resveratrol is the substance found in grape skins I talked about just last month. In that update, I explained how resveratrol makes tumor cells sensitive to radiation. Well, it also blocks glucose metabolism in ovarian cancer cells.

In a recent study, researchers found this plant chemical greatly reduces the absorption of glucose. It also reduces Akt and promotes cell death in ovarian cancer cells. In fact, ovarian cancer cells are particularly sensitive to cell death caused by glucose destruction.

In time, I expect we'll see additional research on resveratrol and other cancers. No doubt there will also be more studies on the cancer/sugar connection. Meanwhile, it's safe, and prudent, to cut down on your total sugar intake – including fruits. And this could be a good time to consider adding a good quality resveratrol to your daily supplement regime. Until there are human studies, take the amount suggested on the bottle. ■

www.dukemednews.org/home/

Kueck, A., et al. "Resveratrol inhibits glucose metabolism in human ovarian cancer cells," *Gynecol Oncol*, December 2007.

The Answer to All Your Household Odor Problems

There's a big difference between masking an odor and eliminating it. I grew up with the former. I remember that my mother used the best solution she could find: Air Wick. But all that did was leave a chemical smell that combined with cooking odors or the "accidents" our pets left for us.

Since then, there hasn't been a real, safe, natural odor eliminator until now. It's PureAyre. And it's made from plant enzymes that break the molecular bonds of all naturally occurring odor-causing compounds. This includes everything from cigarette smoke and cat urine to the odors from mildew and new carpet VOCs. You smell it, PureAyre can probably eliminate it quickly and permanent-

ly. Even if your dog gets skunked!

I gave samples to a group of my testers and every one of them loved it. They tried it on baby odors, their dogs, fertilizer, carpet and fabrics, bathroom odors, and smoke. A few sprays and smelly odors were gone.

PureAyre comes in spray bottles for babies, pets, home and car, and marine odors. Don't know which to buy? This may help you: *they're all the same!* That's right. The folks at PureAyre have just packaged their enzyme formula in different bottles and sizes. So go to your health food store and pick some up. Or call them toll-free at 877-787-3297 and ask them for the current best deal and for the store nearest to you that carries their products. You may not need it today, but the next time you're around some nasty smells, you'll be glad it's in your cupboard.

This Medical Test Can Save Your Life – But Only If It's Done Correctly

It was a sobering experience. The day of my colonoscopy, a friend's husband was having his colon resectioned to remove a large malignant tumor. He hadn't had a colonoscopy, even when he noticed signs of a problem. This could have been the biggest mistake of his life.

Colon cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in this country. And it's the most preventable. Colonoscopies save lives by finding growths that are potential problems and removing them on the spot. The most commonly known growths are called polyps. They're easy to find and simple to remove. Now new research has identified flat growths or depressions called nonpolypoid (flat) lesions. These are more difficult to identify than polyps because they're not as easy to see. And they're much more dangerous.

Size is not a factor

Small flat lesions, which can just look like a little bulge or a depression in the colon wall, are often the same color as the rest of the colon. They also tend to be smaller in size than polyps. This makes them difficult to find, especially if the person performing your colonoscopy is not looking for them or is a little rushed. This is unfortunate, because flat or depressed lesions are more likely to be cancerous than polyps.

Today, I want to give you some hints to help you get the best results from your next colonoscopy so it's as accurate as possible. Please share them with your friends and your doctor.

To get the most benefits from your colonoscopy, insist on the following:

A Simple Way to Prevent Heart Attacks and Stroke?

In June, I told you about healthy drinks that are a waste of money. Now I'd like to remind you about an inexpensive beverage that could boost your health.

A recent 11-year study of more than 40,000 Japanese adults published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found that drinking green tea protects against death from heart disease and stroke. And it works better for women than for men. The protection is dose-dependent, so having one cup in the morning may not be enough. The more green tea you drink, the greater the benefits.

Death from all causes was 26% lower in women who drank five or more cups a day

over those who drank less than one cup. This is a huge reduction in mortality from just drinking more of an inexpensive, pleasant-tasting beverage. Surprisingly, deaths from cancer were not affected.

I know that green tea is good for me, but I like a heartier beverage in the morning. So I start my day with a small pot of tea that's half green and half black. If you prefer the taste of herb teas, add green tea to peppermint, chamomile, or chai.

Do you carry a water bottle with you during the day, or sip something at work? Switch over to green tea. In time, it will become a habit. And this is a habit that could save your life!

Kuriyama, S, MD, PhD, "Consumption of green tea associated with reduced mortality in Japanese," *JAMA*, September 12, 2006.

- **Have your procedure done by a gastroenterologist.** Studies show that an internist or family doctor is more likely to miss cancers – especially if they are flat or depressed lesions. Your risk for getting a false negative result is almost twice as great when a family doctor does the procedure.

- **Have the procedure done in a hospital.** There's a two to three times greater risk of missing a suspicious growth if your procedure is done in a doctor's office. Once again, the flat and depressed lesions are more likely to be missed.

- **Get an early appointment.** Doctors are more alert – and accurate – in the morning than in the afternoon. I mentioned this to the nurses attending me at my colonoscopy, and all of them agreed that morning appointments were best for everyone. Studies back this up. One found a 2% higher rate of inaccuracy for colonoscopies done in the afternoon. This is a small percentage – unless you're one of this 2%.

- **Take it slow.** Doctors can take three to 15 minutes to withdraw the wand and look for polyps and lesions. It's easy to remove small, benign polyps. Leave them alone and many of them will become malignant. Ask your doctor if he or she takes the time to look for flat or depressed lesions. You want someone who is familiar with both types of growths to take care of you. Seven minutes is standard for withdrawing the colonoscopy wand. Make sure your doctor takes at least seven minutes. Mine did.

After your colonoscopy, your intestines need to be repopulated with probiotics (healthy bacteria) to replace the ones that were flushed away during your preparation day. Be sure to choose strains of beneficial bacterial that are known to adhere to the lining of the colon where they can repopulate. I took two capsules of Advanced Probiotic Formula (800-728-2288) a day for two weeks. There's good data to support this formula's ability to adhere to the intestinal walls and flourish.

When I went to my colonoscopy appointment, I brought one of my Health Secrets books for my doctor. I hoped he would be open to some of my cutting-edge information. Still, I knew that many doctors don't look that closely at their patients' diet.

My procedure was the second one of the morning, and people were booked for the whole day. Still, Dr. Allan Hill managed to find time between my procedure and the next person's to look through my book. In fact, he had written some dietary instructions to me on my discharge paper: "See '456 Health Secrets,' #335 and #397." Those secrets were about eating a Mediterranean

diet and getting plenty of antioxidants from fruits and vegetables – two things I do on a daily basis. Now, Dr. Hill's a doctor I can talk to! My final suggestion is to find a smart doctor like him with a good sense of humor. ■

www.cancerdecisions.com

Bressler, B., L.F. Paszat, Z. Chen, D.M. Rothwell, C. Vinden, and L. Rabeneck. "Rates of new or missed colorectal cancers after colonoscopy and their risk factors: a population-based analysis." *Gastroenterology* 2007;132:96-102.

Sanaka, M.R., N. Shah, K.D. Mullen, and T.C. Ferguson, and A.J. McCullough. "Afternoon colonoscopies have higher failure rates than morning colonoscopies." *Am J Gastroenterol* 2006;101:2726-2730.

Soetikno, R.M., et al. "Prevalence of nonpolypoid (flat and depressed) colorectal neoplasms in asymptomatic and symptomatic adults." *JAMA*, March 5, 2008.

When You Need a Meal and Can't Get One

Janice had a three-day flu complete with a high fever and no appetite. When it was over, she had lost nine pounds. And Janice didn't have nine extra pounds to lose. Weakened from a lack of food, and without enough motivation to fix a meal, Janice was in trouble. She didn't even have the energy to call a friend or neighbor, or to open up a can of soup. Janice also needed more calories than she could get from soup. And she needed something to stimulate her taste buds.

Fortunately, there was something in her cupboard that was healthy, tasty, and high enough in calories to support her return to health. She had a few whole food meal replacement bars from Probar.

There are lots of "natural" energy bars on the market, but many of them are made with sugar. And even raw sugar, feeds bacteria and cancer cells. Most nutrition bars are lower in calories because they're more like a snack than a complete meal. And I haven't eaten a healthy organic food bar that comes close to Probars for flavor.

Probars are organic, vegan, and high in protein – around 9 grams per bar. They're made with such ingredients as raw nuts, dried berries and fruits, and dark chocolate. What's more, they're surprisingly delicious. I especially like their new line of sweet and savory bars, which are lower in natural sugars and have just a touch of salt. The salt (420 mg per bar) means they can help replace electrolytes lost through fasting, fever, or exercise. But if you want less salt, they have bars to fit that criterion as well (30 mg).

A Probar contains around 400 calories – enough to take the place of a meal. If you like

In between our monthly visits, be sure to check in online!

- Simple, clean design. New content now easy-to-find
- Now search every issue of the newsletter, PLUS every Health Alert
- Search term highlighted in yellow on screen to make it simple to see

Login information:

User Name: protect
Password: health

www.womenshealthletter.com

them, but want to use them as a lower-calorie snack, cut them in half as soon as you bring them home, and stash them in the freezer. Can't resist eating the whole thing? Have one for breakfast or lunch. You can, because this is real food, not a candy bar for the health food market. The trade magazine *Whole Foods* recently named Probar the best nutrition bar for 2008.

I like companies that listen to consumers, and the folks at Probar do just that.

They received such good feedback about their sweet and savory line that they've promised to make more meal replacement bars with this difference. I hope they send me some to taste test so I can tell you about them from personal experience!

For more information, go to www.theprobar.com, or check them out at sports equipment stores, such as REI, and natural food stores, such as Whole Foods.

Does Your Moisturizer Cause Skin Cancer?

A group of scientists at the University of New Jersey found a possible cause of some kinds of skin cancer. This discovery was a complete accident. They were looking at whether or not caffeine, used topically in many skin-care products, could cause cancer. Instead, they found that two other ingredients in four popular moisturizers caused non-melanoma tumors.

When the researchers used these moisturizers on mice, they developed more basal cell and squamous cell carcinomas than mice that didn't get the moisturizers. The tumors also grew larger and faster than usual.

These moisturizers are the same ones that many dermatologists recommend frequently.

Now, these researchers want you to know that they conducted their study on mouse skin. And mouse skin isn't the same as ours. But if mouse skin is good enough to test the carcinogenicity of topical caffeine, this study should apply to humans, as well. Seems to me these researchers are just trying to avoid a panic.

I say, don't panic. Just check your moisturizer. If it contains either mineral oil

or sodium lauryl sulfate, find another one. These are the ingredients that caused skin cancers. We've known for a long time that mineral oil causes tumors in other animal studies. And sodium lauryl sulfate, used as a thickener, is an irritant.

The researchers of this study got smart after making this discovery. They made their own moisturizing cream without mineral oil or sodium lauryl sulfate. It didn't cause skin cancer. Still, they insist that this one mouse study isn't enough to draw conclusions. Human studies are needed before these ingredients are pulled off the shelves.

Meanwhile, if you're at all concerned, err on the side of caution and use products without these chemicals. The Z Mei line of skin-care products I've talked about before has no ingredients that have ever been linked to cancer. For more information, call 800-728-2288.

By the way, the moisturizers found to contain the chemicals in question are Dermabase, Dermovan, Vanicream, and Eucerin.

Lu, Yao-Ping, et al. "Tumorigenic effect of some commonly used moisturizing creams when applied topically to UVB-pretreated high-risk mice." *Journal of Investigative Dermatology*, August 14, 2008.

Q: I have a question about probiotics. I take acidophilus for my Candida. Should I take more varieties of good bacteria cultures? I found one product with 14 strains of cultures, but can't find information to guide me. Can you help? – G.F., Indianapolis, IN

A: Probiotics, or friendly bacteria, live in our digestive tract and help destroy pathogenic (bad) bacteria, such as E. coli. They support our immune system so it can fight viruses and assist in our digestion. More than 400 species of bacteria – both good and bad – live in the 30 feet of your digestive tract. There's more to good intestinal health than acidophilus alone – or choosing a product according to the number of strains it contains.

Acidophilus, one form of the Lactobacillus family, is primarily found in the small intestines. It is your first line of defense against foreign invaders. But the large intestine has the highest concentration of bacterial microorganisms. And bifidobacteria is the most prolific probiotic in it. Bifido (for short) attach themselves to the walls of your large intestine to keep bad bacteria from getting a hold and multiplying. With enough bifido, the bad guys have to just keep moving out of your body. Bifido also helps make vitamin B12. So people with a deficiency should take bifido even before taking supplemental B12.

These are two of the most important friendly bacteria, but they don't live well together. They fight like cats and dogs, destroying one another in the process. For this reason, I suggest you not take the combined formulas unless you know that the strains don't fight with one another.

You can take a pure acidophilus once a day and bifidobacteria at another time. Or you can use a product containing both, like Advanced Probiotic Formula (800-7288-2288). I've used it for years. The strains it contains are compatible and adhere well to the intestines, where they thrive and grow.

Treney, Natasha. *Probiotics: Nature's Internal Healers*, Avery Publishing, 1998.

Q: What causes diverticulitis, and why does it recur? What can I do to alleviate the symptoms and to cure it? – C.T., e-mail

A: Diverticula are pouches that form in the lower intestines. They occur in about half the population over the age of 60. When these pouches become infected and inflamed, doctors call it diverticulitis ("itis" means inflammation). This inflammation can cause pain, often in the lower left side of your colon. You could also have a fever, nausea, cramping, and constipation.

A high-fiber diet and taking oral magnesium to bowel tolerance can keep you symptom-free. But when you have an attack, it's important to reduce irritation and cool down the inflammation. This means you should avoid a lot of fiber and drink water with cooling lemon juice. Oat bran and rice bran contain non-irritating fiber to help move wastes out of the pouches.

Your doctor could give you antibiotics to reduce a bacterial infection. This may be necessary. But you may not need them. With your doctor's permission, you can try probiotics instead, two to four times a day. They can often fight pathogenic bacteria successfully. Probiotics can be a useful daily supplement if you've had diverticulitis repeatedly. Take it for 6-12 months accompanied by a high-fiber diet (plenty of vegetables, fruits, and whole grains). You may find this keeps you totally asymptomatic.

Have a question? Send it to: Ask Dr. Nan, P.O. Box 8051, Norcross GA 30093. Or e-mail to womenshealthletter@soundpub.com. While I can't diagnose or treat your illness by mail, I'll answer as many questions as I can in the newsletter.

New to Women's Health Letter? If a friend has given you this issue and you like it, why not get your own subscription? It's only \$49, and you'll receive a free library of health information. Call now at 800-728-2288.