

TO YOUR HEALTH

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ACETAMINOPHEN

COPD is an acronym for *chronic obstructive pulmonary disease*. It is a term given to a group of diseases that block airflow during exhalation, making it increasingly difficult to breathe. It includes emphysema and bronchitis. Up to 24 million Americans show impaired lung function, which is common among those with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), the third leading cause of death in the United States. Research appearing in the May, 2005 issue of the *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine* contains research that connects acetaminophen use with asthma and COPD. "Oxidative stress may increase the risk of asthma, contribute to asthma progression, and decrease lung function," writes Tricia M. McKeever, MD, from the University of Nottingham, England, and colleagues. "Previous research suggests that use of acetaminophen, which is hypothesized to reduce antioxidant

capacity in the lung, is associated with an increased risk of asthma."

Increased use of acetaminophen was associated with COPD and asthma—the higher the use of the drug, the higher the incidence of these two lung diseases. Use of acetaminophen was also associated with a decrease of lung function in general. Daily users of the drug had lower forced expiratory volume (a measure of lung function) when compared to people who never took the drug.

Signs and symptoms of COPD include:

- Constant coughing, sometimes called "smoker's cough"
- Shortness of breath while doing everyday activities
- Producing a lot of sputum (also called phlegm or mucus)
- Feeling like you can't breathe or take a deep breath
- Wheezing

DO YOU NEED B VITAMINS?

People who eat a lot of sugar and refined carbohydrates tend to be deficient in various B vitamins. Supplementation with B vitamins can help to at least partially address a number of problems. According to a study ("Dietary Folate and Vitamins B₁₂, B₆, and B₂ Intake and the Risk of Postpartum Depression in Japan: The Osaka Maternal and Child Health Study," Miyake Y, Sasaki S, et al, *J Affect Disord.*, 2006 June 29), B vitamin intake may help to prevent postpartum depression. The subjects of the study were 865 Japanese women who filled out dietary data questionnaires during their pregnancy. Of the group, 121 developed depression between two and nine months postpartum (scored 9 or higher on the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale). Women who had diets high in riboflavin (vitamin B₂) were less likely to suffer from postpartum depression than those who had diets that were low in vitamin B₂.

Having an adequate intake of B vitamins may lower the risk of heart disease and stroke. Research appearing in the *Italian Heart Journal Supplement* (2005; 6(1):1-16) shows an inverse correlation between atherosclerosis and a deficit of some of the B vitamins, most notably folic

acid, B₁₂ and B₆. These vitamins are necessary to convert homocysteine to cysteine and taurine. Homocysteine is a toxic amino acid—linked to atherosclerosis and heart disease. It is synthesized from methionine, and converted with adequate B vitamins to cysteine or taurine (amino acids that are useful to the body).

A study in the November 26, 2006 issue of the *British Medical Journal* says the evidence from cohort, genetic, and randomized controlled studies is strong enough to support the idea that folic acid can help to protect from heart disease. Once again, this implies that the lowering of homocysteine can help protect from atherosclerosis. While the British researchers describe the effect as modest and that better studies are needed, they point out that folic acid is inexpensive and harmless.

Research in the past has shown various B vitamins to reduce pain. Vitamins B₁, B₆ and B₁₂ have been shown to reduce pain from nociceptors. Nociceptors are nerves that respond to damage in the body. Things like fractures, bruises, inflammation, burns etc. stimulate nociceptors. One study, presented

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to the American Physiological Society in April 2003, showed that sensory neurons in the spinal cord stimulated by nociceptors (carriers of noxious stimuli) were suppressed by certain B vitamins. This recent study shows that the combination of vitamins B₁, B₆ and B₁₂ can reduce pain that is triggered by an injury that involves actual damage to the nervous system (neuropathic pain). In mice, vitamins B₁, B₆ and B₁₂ reduced the response to pain. The level of pain was determined by measuring foot withdrawal after heat stimulation to the rear paw. The inhibition of the pain paralleled to the amount of B vitamins given.

Some early signs of B vitamin deficiency include: sensitivity to light, sound, smell, chronic need for HCl, night sweats, burning feet, redness of hands or eyes, cracks in the corner of the mouth, red or swollen tongue, glycemic problems, or general lack of energy.

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TWO SURPRISING IMMUNE BOOSTERS

There are a number of studies that show probiotic supplementation to be beneficial for the immune system. Research appearing in the journal, *Vaccine* (Volume 24, Issues 44-46, 10 November 2006, Pages 6670-6674) looked at probiotic supplementation and its effect on upper respiratory tract infections (colds and the flu). The double-blind, placebo-controlled study took place during two winter/spring periods. The subjects were 479 healthy adults who were supplemented with a vitamin/mineral supplement containing probiotics (Lactobacilli and Bifidobacteria) or a placebo that contained only the vitamin/mineral supplement. Taking the probiotic did not reduce the number of upper respiratory infections, but it did significantly shorten the duration of the illness (by nearly two days, compared to the placebo group). Also, the symptoms were less severe in the probiotic group. Taking the probiotics also increased the number of immune cells (cytotoxic T plus T suppressor cell counts and T helper cell counts).

Another study appearing in the *International Journal of Sports Nutrition, Exercise and Metabolism* (2011 Feb; 21 (1): 55-64) looked at the use of probiotics and their effect on the immune systems of 58 athletes. The 58 subjects of the study were randomly assigned to receive either a probiotic supplement (*Lactobacillus casei Shirota*) or placebo for a period of 16 weeks. The

placebo group had 36% higher incidence of upper respiratory infections (URTI) compared to the group receiving the supplement. According to the authors, "Regular ingestion of LcS appears to be beneficial in reducing the frequency of URTI in an athletic cohort, which may be related to better maintenance of saliva IgA levels during a winter period of training and competition."

You don't even need to take probiotics every day, according to research appearing in the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* (2011 Aug; 30(4): 259-64). In this study colonization and persistence of *Lactobacillus reuteri* DSM173938 was determined. The colonization count was the same for daily supplementation and for supplementation every other day. Colonization declined when supplementation was discontinued.

The second surprising thing that helps the immune system is green tea. It turns out that drinking green tea may also reduce the chances of coming down with the flu. In one study, researchers looked at questionnaires about green tea consumption taken twice during flu season. Drinking between one and five cups of green tea per day reduced the incidence of influenza. Researchers found that there was a correlation between tea consumption and the incidence of influenza (confirmed by antigen testing) (*Journal of Nutrition* (201 Oct; 141(10): 1862-1870.)

"The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science."

Einstein

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ANOTHER USE FOR B VITAMINS: ADHD

A study published in the *Journal of Learning Disabilities* (May, 1982;15(5):258-264) looked at B vitamin supplementation and hyperactivity. The subjects of the study were 100 children who were either hyperactive or had cerebral dysfunction. They were given 100 mg of thiamin qid, calcium pantothenate (source of B₅) twice daily, and 50 mg of B₆ twice daily or a placebo for three days. If the subjects responded to the vitamin therapy, they were given the supplements a second time, this time for a week, then alternating between supplementation and placebo. Those who did not respond well to the initial vitamin therapy were given large doses of B complex, niacinamide or elimination diets.

Hyperkinetic cerebral dysfunction exists for many and varied reasons. Different subjects responded to different aspects of the therapy. Eight of the 100 children in the initial sampling responded to the high-dose thiamin, with four of them needing continued doses of thiamin. Nine of the children responded to the B₆, with five more responding to an even higher dose of the vitamin. Eight of the children responded to a hypoallergenic diet (the Feingold diet). The point is that different children respond to different therapies and there is no “one size fits all” solution for this particular health issue.

Many children eat a lot of sugar and refined food. Considering that a highly refined diet depletes B vitamins, supplementing with a good B complex is often a very good idea.