

The Natural Pharmacy Newsletter

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In The News

Helpful Supplements to Deal With Holiday Stress

As if the economy wasn't causing enough stress, we're rapidly approaching one of the most stressful times of the year-the holidays. Stress makes us all feel awful, tired, and irritated. But there is much more at stake than just a short temper. Stress can reduce hormones necessary for reproduction such as the gonadotropin releasing hormone (GRH) or luteinizing hormone (LH). Also, male and female sex hormones like testosterone, progesterone, and estrogen can be decreased causing an imbalance affecting everything from sleep to libido. Chronic stress can reduce the natural immune response increasing the chance of colds and infections. Stress may even raise your heart rate, blood pressure, or cause chest pains and heart palpitations. When the body experiences chronic stress the adrenal glands release epinephrine, norepinephrine, and cortisol. Excessive cortisol can cause an imbalance in blood sugar levels, insulin resistance, and inflammatory conditions. The constant burden on the adrenal glands can cause them to stop functioning properly, leading to a malfunctioning immune system.



For example, Amino acids may alleviate some of these adverse effects caused by stress. GABA, an amino acid transmitter, and L-theanine, an amino acid, promote a relaxed feeling that could reduce the stress response of the body. A study showed that L-theanine lowered heart rate and boosted immune response. L-tyrosine, another amino acid, is a building block for dopamine, norepinephrine, epinephrine and thyroid hormones essential for overall health. Specifically, L-tyrosine has been used in the treatment of depression and anxiety. Another amino acid used for these conditions is S-adenosylmethionine (SAM-e). SAM-e works by increasing the receptor sensitivity of dopamine and serotonin. Finally, Taurine works to decrease anxiety by suppressing the release of dopamine and norepinephrine, which can cause excitability in the nervous system.

Another way to help reduce the side effects of stress or the stress response is through the use of certain herbs. For instance, Valerian and Kava can create a relaxed feeling. Valerian targets GABA receptors much like the use of pharmaceutical drugs such as Valium or Ativan. Kava, works its magic indirectly by affecting the brain's limbic system that then bind to GABA receptors creating a sedated or anxiety free feeling. Unlike these two herbs, rhodiola rosea acts upon the sympatho-adrenal-system (SAS). SAS responds to acute stressors. Studies have shown that the active component called rosavins can decrease stress on the heart, fatigue, and cortisol.

Panax ginseng can also help to reduce physical and mental stress by lowering stress hormone and inflammatory messenger levels in the brain and by helping with appropriate function of the adrenal gland according to animal studies. Phosphatidylserine (PS) is not an actual herb, but is a lipid derivative of soy lecithin. PS can help brain cells metabolize glucose and bind with neurotransmitters, improving communication. PS can also reduce exercise-induced stress by reducing the resultant level of cortisol normally produced.

Lastly, stress can also be relieved by simple vitamin and mineral supplementation including B vitamins, calcium, and magnesium.

Vitamin Retailer. Germano, Carl. "Stress Relief." June 2009. VRM, Inc. pp. 56-57,68.

A Washed Apple a Day, Keeps the Germs Away

The next time you go to bite into a fresh apple or green pepper, consider giving it a bath first. The truth is, these delicious treats are not cleaned at the grocery store and travel to your kitchen carrying dirt, chemicals, and bacteria from the farm where they were grown. But eating healthy and staying healthy isn't hard. According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, simply follow these few steps:

1. Wash your hands first
2. Remove any damaged areas from your produce
3. Rinse the item with plenty of tap water, scrub firmer fruits or veggies with a brush or sponge (NO SOAP!)
4. Pat dry

Now you're ready for fruit salad or stuffed peppers!

Medical Mutual of Ohio Introduces health-E-Tips Newsletter for Members. Retrieved on October 22, 2009. Retrieved from electronic mail on the internet.

Eat Your Heart Out ...of Harms Way

We live in a busy world and eating right is sometimes not easy. In particular, falling into the practice of quick, easy, processed foods seems inevitable some days. But, maybe a few small changes could improve your health. For instance, consider cooking with olive oil. Olive oil produces nitric oxide, which helps decrease plaques that can cause blockage in blood vessels. Cooking tomatoes with olive oil also aids in the absorption of lycopene, a natural antioxidant found in tomatoes. Antioxidants can help reduce free radicals in our body that may be involved in the development of heart disease and cancer.

Natural Products Marketplace. Almendarez, Sandy. "Eating for the Heart." Virgo Publishing. November 2009. pg. 19.

Vitamins A and C May Be a Breath of Fresh Air

Many studies have shown that children with asthma have a lower dietary intake of vitamin A compared to those without asthma, suggesting a correlation between this supplement and easy breathing. In addition, a study found that children with low levels of Vitamin C in their bloodstream showed a 12% risk of developing asthma. Though the cause and effect relationship between these vitamin deficiencies and asthma has yet to be proven without a doubt, it wouldn't hurt to make sure your kids are getting these vitamins in a daily multivitamin.

Vitamin Retailer. "Vitamin A, C Deficiency Linked with Asthma." VRM, Inc. June 2009. pg. 65.

**Our Staff Wishes You A
*Happy Thanksgiving!***



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