NATURAL THERAPIES TO COMBAT THE DEADLIEST DISEASES

NaturalHealthSherpa.com
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A Special Note from the Natural Health Sherpa Team…

If you have heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure or even cancer, you are likely being pumped full of expensive drugs that are simply masking the real underlying problems that are causing your chronic disease.

Sure, they may provide some short term benefit, but in your gut, you know that they are just an expensive way of giving you short term relief. Those friendly people on TV happily taking all sorts of red, yellow, green and purple pills simply don’t represent reality and you know it.

Fortunately, Mother Nature has provided us a cheaper, safer and more effective set of alternatives if you know where to look and that’s exactly where we can help.

Inside this special report you’ll discover a variety of natural these natural therapies for some of the most deadly diseases that plague our society today. A of these natural therapies are backed by multiple placebo-controlled, double-blind, randomized studies.

**WARNING:** To be clear, none of these natural therapies should be viewed as a cure-all or magic bullet – such a thing simply does not exist.

The single most important action you can take is to change your ENTIRE diet to be one full of nutrient-dense, whole foods, followed by engaging in daily exercise. Yes, I am sure you’ve heard that before and that’s because it’s true...there’s simply no avoiding that fact.

The food you eat and the exercise you engage in will be the predominant determinants as to whether you lead a vibrant, energetic life or one plagued by one health problem after another.

But, we have to be realistic – we are living in a world full of toxic foods and surrounded by lifestyle choices that inevitably lead us to becoming a sick, overweight couch potato.

To that end, we could all use a helping hand and that’s just what Mother Nature has provided us in these natural therapies.

From the entire team here at Natural Health Sherpa, we truly hope you enjoy this report. And if it’s something that you like, please feel free to share it using the Twitter and Facebook links you’ll find at the end.

Naturally yours,
The Natural Health Sherpa Team
You are sitting in traffic, inching along on your way home from work. You’ve already put in two hours of overtime and still have a long list of “to dos” for when you get home….you can already feel the agitation coursing throughout your veins.

Then your cell phone rings and it’s your spouse telling you that the pipes just burst and the plumber cannot get there until tomorrow morning. To add insult to injury, the next car over just cut you off.

Your heart starts racing, your head starts throbbing, and your blood pressure shoots through the roof. To make matters worse, this is not a position you can afford to be in.

You already have high blood pressure and lifestyle modifications haven’t helped much. Of course, if you’re being completely honest, you haven’t really been as diligent as you could be with the diet or the exercise.

Yet you don’t want to start taking blood pressure medication, which you’ve heard can have nasty side effects. So what can you do?

The answer is actually pretty simple. Sit back and brew some tea. That’s right, tea.

**Sip Your Way to Lower Blood Pressure?**

From Iran and Northern Africa to Sri Lanka and the tropics, the answer to lower blood pressure may be growing outside houses, in parks, and around office buildings. It’s the hibiscus flower.

This gorgeous flower, often associated with Hawaii, has been a traditional remedy for high blood pressure in many countries. Most often, the leaves are dried and then steeped in water to make hibiscus tea (or “sour tea” if you are in Iran).

But does this home remedy hold up to scientific scrutiny? Let’s find out.

**The Gold Standard Makes the Case…**

The research on the use of hibiscus for treating high blood pressure is quite impressive. In one randomized, controlled study, researchers tested to see how hibiscus tea compared to captopril, a well-known pharmaceutical blood pressure medication.¹

Researchers divided 75 people with high blood pressure into two groups. The first group drank 16 ounces of hibiscus tea each morning. The second group took 25 mg of captopril twice a day.

At the end of one month, 79% of the participants who drank the tea had a reduction of
at least 10 points in their diastolic blood pressure (the bottom number). 84% of the participants in the medication group also saw a reduction of at least 10 points in their diastolic pressure.

That means that the tea worked just as well as the medication. Naturally. The only aspect of this study that could be improved upon would be the small sample size.

Following up on this study, the researchers decided to do a second study to test the effects of hibiscus against lisinopril, another known blood pressure lowering drug, with a larger participant pool.²

In this randomized, double-blind study, researchers divided 193 participants with mild to moderate high blood pressure into two groups. The first received a hibiscus extract, standardized to 250 mg of total anthocyanins (the active component of hibiscus), each day. The second group received 10 mg of lisinopril daily.

At the end of four weeks, those receiving the hibiscus had a statistically significant decrease in blood pressure as compared to the medication group. In fact, they dropped an average of 17 points in their systolic (top number) pressure and 12 points in their diastolic (bottom number) pressure.

Plus, participants who took hibiscus saw their sodium levels decrease, but not their potassium. This is critical, as too much sodium can elevate blood pressure levels, while potassium is needed to keep blood pressure levels in check. Some high blood pressure medications can lower potassium to dangerous levels. And the hibiscus extract was found to be 100% safe and well tolerated.

This is all to say that a gold-standard study deemed the natural treatment not only safe, but more effective than the pharmaceutical. Now, that’s Mother Nature at her best.

Lastly, a third randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled study tested three 240 mL servings of hibiscus tea a day against an innocuous brew in 65 patients with mild to moderate high blood pressure.³

At the end of six weeks, those who drank the hibiscus tea had a statistically greater reduction in systolic blood pressure, as compared to the placebo group. Moreover, the higher a person’s systolic pressure was to begin with, the greater his or her reduction.

The diastolic pressure was also lower in the hibiscus group, but not significantly lower as compared to the placebo group.

Researchers concluded, “These results suggest that daily consumption of hibiscus tea, in an amount readily incorporated into the diet, lowers [blood pressure] in pre- and mildly hypertensive adults.”

Once again, the gold standard strikes gold. Clearly hibiscus tea works to lower blood pressure levels naturally.

**So What’s the Catch?**

A randomized, placebo-controlled study from Iran tested the effects of hibiscus tea (called sour tea in their experiment) on 54 patients with moderate high blood pressure.⁴
Half of the participants drank hibiscus tea while the other group drank an arbitrary warm beverage. After 15 days, those who drank the hibiscus tea had an average of 11.2 percent decrease in systolic pressure and 10.7 percent decrease in diastolic pressure. These reductions were statistically significant when compared to the placebo group.

However, three days after the participants stopped drinking the hibiscus tea, their blood pressure levels began to slowly rise again. Their systolic pressure was elevated by 7.9 percent and the diastolic pressure rose by 5.6 percent from their post-treatment lows.

Again, a gold standard study makes the case for hibiscus tea. But it also shows that you must make the tea part of your daily life to enjoy the blood pressure lowering benefits.

**Enjoying the Warming Benefits of Hibiscus Tea**

What could possibly be easier, and apparently more effective, for lowering your blood pressure than drinking hibiscus tea?

The tea is generally made from the dried flowers of the plant. If you choose to give hibiscus a try, it is critical that you use pure *Hibiscus sabdariffa*, which is the type of hibiscus used in the studies.

You’ll also want to make sure the tea is organic, whenever possible, and that it is free of toxic chemicals and pollutants, such as synthetic fertilizers. Ideally, you’ll also want to buy from a manufacturer who supports and uses fair trade practices.

When making the tea, you can either add a heaping tablespoon of the dried plant infused into about a quart of boiling water or boil a couple of flowers gently in a saucepan of water until the water turns deep red (about 15 minutes). The tea can also be stored in the refrigerator.

So, if blood pressure is a concern for you, make hibiscus tea your new drink of choice. And while you’re at it, why not add a tiny umbrella to honor your heart-healthy beverage’s native roots.

But, as noted in the last study mentioned, sipping hibiscus tea is not a magic bullet—it only works to lower your blood pressure so long as you continue to drink it.

To permanently lower your blood pressure, you need to make fundamental changes to your lifestyle, including eating nutrient-dense, whole foods, engaging in moderate daily exercise, and, of course, learning to relax!

**References:**


Ask someone what disease they fear the most and many will answer diabetes…and for good reason.

One out of every 10 Americans has been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, and millions more are walking around undiagnosed every day.

And if the disease isn’t bad enough, there are the terrifying complications, including:

- Blindness
- Kidney disease
- Heart attack
- Stroke
- Peripheral artery disease
- Diabetic ulcers
- Amputation
- Death

The only thing more frightening than what can happen once you get type 2 diabetes is the startling ineffectiveness of the treatments that are most often recommended.

While doctors will tell you, often offhandedly, to lose weight and exercise, they are more likely to prescribe a drug or even insulin, which is a HUGE mistake.

If you have type 2 diabetes, you already have too much insulin in your system. So adding more insulin is like adding gasoline to a fire. It’s the LAST thing you need and it can have serious consequences.¹

For example, too much insulin has been shown to:

- Lead to weight gain;
- Increase inflammation in the body;
- Thicken the blood;
- Elevate blood pressure, LDL cholesterol, and triglyceride levels;
- Reduce HDL cholesterol levels;
- Worsen or even cause depression; and
- Increase your risk for Alzheimer’s and cancer.²

Ultimately, the single most effect thing you can do if you have type 2 diabetes is to modify your diet to include only nutrient-dense, low-glycemic load whole foods and to get moderate daily exercise.

But that requires fundamental changes to your lifestyle, which can take time; so in addition to that, you may consider using a treatment that helps your cells become more sensitive to the insulin that’s already in your body. This way, your body can naturally “hear” insulin’s message and start to lower your blood sugar levels on its own.

Fortunately, Mother Nature has provided you with a very safe and effective solution.
The Universal Antioxidant to the Rescue…

There is an amazing nutrient that has been attributed with everything from cancer prevention and skin rejuvenation to metal chelation and anti-aging properties. But its real claim to fame is how this antioxidant may help treat and prevent type 2 diabetes.

Originally thought to be a vitamin, alpha lipoic acid (also called lipoic acid or ALA) is a potent antioxidant that, unlike most antioxidants, is both water- and fat-soluble, making it active in virtually every cell in the body.

In addition to neutralizing harmful free radicals, alpha lipoic acid regenerates and increases levels of vitamin C, vitamin E, coenzyme Q10, and glutathione within the body.

But what does all this have to do with type 2 diabetes and insulin resistance? Let’s see what the research has to say.

Alpha Lipoic Acid and Type 2 Diabetes…

Alpha lipoic acid proponents claim that the antioxidant improves insulin sensitivity, lowers blood sugar, and helps treat complications related to type 2 diabetes, especially neuropathy.

In one study, alpha lipoic acid was indeed found to improve insulin sensitivity. Researchers gave 600mg of controlled-release alpha lipoic acid twice a day to six non-diabetic women with polycystic ovarian syndrome.

At the end of 16 weeks, the women enjoyed a 13.5 percent improvement in insulin sensitivity, as well as lower triglyceride levels.

While this study is intriguing, there are a few questions that need to be raised. Firstly, the sample size (six) is quite small. Also, while a classic marker of polycystic ovarian syndrome is insulin resistance, women with this condition are not considered type 2 diabetics. It would be interesting to see this type of study performed on people with type 2 diabetes.

To answer this very question, researchers from Germany developed a randomized, placebo-controlled, multi-center study to see how alpha lipoic acid performed in people with type 2 diabetes.

They divided 74 type 2 diabetics into four groups. One group received 600mg of alpha lipoic acid a day, one received 600mg twice a day (1,200mg total), another received 600mg three times a day (1,800mg total), and the fourth group received a placebo.

At the end of four weeks, all groups receiving the alpha lipoic acid, regardless of dosage, exhibited significantly greater insulin sensitivity as compared to the placebo group. Researchers concluded, “Oral administration of alpha lipoic acid can improve insulin sensitivity in patients with type 2 diabetes.”

While the design of the study is quite good, we would just like to see the study duplicated with more participants over a longer period of time to really underscore the results.
Finally, a gold standard study—multi-center, randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled—tested alpha lipoic acid’s benefit for type 2 diabetics with neuropathy.\(^5\) (Neuropathy, a common complication of type 2 diabetes, is marked by damage to the nerves of the peripheral nervous symptom.)

Researchers divided 181 diabetics into four groups. As in the aforementioned study, the first received 600mg of alpha lipoic acid a day, the second received 1,200mg a day, the third received 1,800mg a day, and the fourth group received a placebo. However, this group received their dosages all at once, rather than divided throughout the day.

After five weeks, those patients taking the alpha lipoic acid enjoyed significantly greater symptom relief than the placebo group, with an average of 50 percent greater decrease in symptoms across all three alpha lipoic acid groups, as compared to just a 32 percent decrease of symptoms in the placebo group.

Researchers concluded “oral treatment with [alpha lipoic acid] for five weeks improved neuropathic symptoms.”

This is a well executed study with a fairly large study group and impressive results... exactly what’s needed to support a natural therapy.

Given the findings of all three studies, it appears safe to say that alpha lipoic acid is an effective, natural treatment option for type 2 diabetes and its related neuropathy.

**Caution: Not All Alpha Lipoic Acid is Created Equal...**

If you decide to use alpha lipoic acid, make sure you do your homework. There are two forms of alpha lipoic acid: R-alpha lipoic acid and S-alpha lipoic acid.

The R form is alpha lipoic acid in its natural state. It is this form that contains the powerful antioxidant and type 2 diabetes-fighting benefits.

The S form is the evil, inefficient clone of alpha lipoic acid. It doesn’t even exist naturally. Rather, it is the “byproduct” of commercial production of alpha lipoic acid. And, as a result, it is completely ineffective.\(^6\)

Unfortunately, many commercial alpha lipoic acid products are a 50/50 combination of the R and S forms. So be sure to do your homework and make certain you are getting 100 percent R-alpha lipoic acid.

If the manufacturer doesn’t list the form and appears to be more interested in hype than research, move on to another product.

Also, make sure the manufacturer uses good manufacturing practices (GMP) for the product and be sure you can find all ingredients contained in the product before purchasing. And, if the product contains a trademarked extract, research that extract. Is it safe? Has it been through clinical trials?

Finally, be sure the product you choose is free of preservatives, fillers, binders, excipients, flow agents, shellacs, coloring agents, gluten, yeast, lactose, and other allergens. Ideally you’ll also be able to find independent analysis done by a third party to verify the active ingredients and identify any contaminants.
Once you have selected a high quality product, the recommended dosage, based on the studies referenced above, is 600mg of alpha lipoic acid a day.

Some side effects have been noted with alpha lipoic acid, including nausea, vomiting, and skin rash, but are more commonly seen at high dosages.

Additionally, alpha lipoic acid can intensify type 2 diabetes medication, causing low blood sugar, or hypoglycemia. It may also interfere with some thyroid medications, so check with your doctor before using alpha lipoic acid if you are taking either of these medications.

These well-designed studies, and just simple common sense, say that it’s far more effective to train your body to be more insulin sensitive using a natural therapy such as ALA rather than pumping your body full of excess insulin, which can then wreak havoc on your biology.

But remember, just like all other natural therapies, ALA is no magic bullet and the key to overcoming type 2 diabetes, as with most health problems, is to focus on eating a nutrient-rich, whole foods diet and to engage in moderate daily exercise.

By following a healthy diet, getting regular exercise, and regaining insulin sensitivity with alpha lipoic acid, you can put yourself on the path to reverse your type 2 diabetes once and for all.

References:


6. Hagen TM, et al. (R)-alpha-lipoic acid reverses the age-associated increase in susceptibility of hepatocytes to tert-butylhydroperoxide both in vitro and in vivo. *Antioxid Redox Signal.* 2000 Fall, 2(3), 473-83.
Oh great. You knew something was off, you even suspected what it was, but it couldn’t happen to you...yet.

You are having trouble sleeping, sex is the last thing on your mind, and every sappy commercial on television has you wallowing in a pool of tears.

Still, you tell yourself it’s just a phase. Then, the hot flashes hit. At first, you think everyone was just insistent on cranking the heat, and then you realize...it’s you.

And suddenly it hits you like a ton of bricks -- yep, you are in menopause.

For many women, menopause can mean a trip to the doctor and, likely, a prescription for estrogen and progesterone or other synthetic hormone replacement therapy (HRT).

This is shocking, considering the stacks of medical data showing the truly fatal potential of prescription HRT.

What’s worse is that there is a natural therapy that is far more effective that you aren’t hearing about. And it’s got a long history of being used safely.

Let’s investigate...

**Welcome to the Danger Zone...**

Reports on the risks associated with conventional HRT have filled medical journals for more than 20 years. But the summer of 2002 forever removed the curtain of doubt surrounding the dangers of HRT.

On July 17, 2002, the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) reported on the findings from one part of the Women’s Health Initiative (WHI), an 8.5-year project funded by the National Institutes of Health.¹

Researchers found that women taking estrogen/progestin for five years or more had an increased risk for blood clots, coronary heart disease (CHD), strokes, and breast cancer.

More specifically, the data indicated that if 10,000 women took the drugs for a year and 10,000 did not, women in the first group would have eight more cases of invasive breast cancer, seven more heart attacks, eight more strokes, and 18 more instances of blood clots.

Researchers felt so strongly about the negative implications of long-term combined HRT, especially the unacceptably high risk for breast cancer, that they ended the study three years early! Participants were contacted and instructed to stop taking the drug—immediately.
Sadly, given overwhelming evidence of HRT’s dangerous side effects, many doctors still continue to prescribe it. The reason given? There are no other effective alternatives.

Really? Does that make any sense given the hundreds of natural therapies that have been discovered over the years for everything from high blood pressure to cancer to heart disease?

Not every health problem can be cured and not every health problem has a safe, effective natural therapy, but that assumption simply fails the common-sense test.

But what natural therapy is the most promising replacement for HRT? Which has been proven to be both safe and effective?

**Snakeroot is No Snake Oil…**

Our Native American ancestors have used the herb black cohosh for centuries to treat everything from fatigue and arthritis to sore throats and rattlesnake bites. In fact, it’s this latter use that led to its nickname “snakeroot.”

Similarly, it was also referred to as “squawroot” because of its abundant use and effectiveness in treating female menstrual disorders, including pain relief during menstruation and childbirth, as well as to ease symptoms associated with “the change,” or menopause.²,³

While traditional and historical use of a nutrient is valid proof, it’s ideal to see studies that back it up. And, when it comes to black cohosh, there are plenty.

**The Native American Herb Goes Global…**

Clinical studies the world over have shown that black cohosh extract not only relieves hot flashes, but also depression and vaginal atrophy.

This research has prompted several well-publicized studies on the standardized extract of black cohosh and its ability to treat menopausal symptoms.⁴ Let’s take a look at three.

In the first, a randomized study, researchers examined 55 women who were given black cohosh, estrogen, or diazepam (a drug similar to Valium) for 12 weeks.⁵ At the end of the study period, all groups showed a significant reduction in mood symptoms, such as depression, headaches, and heart palpitations. Plus, those women in the black cohosh and estrogen groups also enjoyed relief from hot flashes, night sweats, and vaginal dryness.

Once again, black cohosh is found to be as effective as estrogen at relieving menopause symptoms. While these results are encouraging, this study was not double-blind or placebo-controlled, which is the gold standard when it comes to research.

Fortunately, the second study was a randomized, placebo-controlled, double-blind study that tested the effects of black cohosh, estrogen, or placebo on 80 menopausal women.⁶ The women were divided into three groups. The first took 8mg of black cohosh a day. The second took 0.625mg of estrogen a day, while the third group received a placebo.

At the end of 12 weeks, those women in the black cohosh and estrogen groups noted...
significantly better relief from their menopause symptoms than the placebo group. And those in the black cohosh group had a bit more relief than even the estrogen group.

Specifically, daily hot flashes decreased from 4.9 to 0.7 in the black cohosh group, as compared to 5.2 to 3.2 in the estrogen group and 5.1 to 3.1 in the placebo group.

That means a gold standard study found that black cohosh actually worked better than synthetic estrogen at relieving menopause symptoms, and pretty much blew everyone away when it came to easing hot flashes. Now that’s solid science.

The third study is also a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled study. This time, researchers tested the use of 40 mg of black cohosh or placebo on 69 breast cancer survivors.\(^7\)

After two months, those using the black cohosh enjoyed a statistically significant decrease in excessive sweating as compared to the placebo group. They also had fewer and less intense hot flashes.

That’s two gold-standard studies that show black cohosh works to relieve menopause symptoms.

But how, specifically, does it work, and is it safe?

How Black Cohosh Works Its Magic…

There are two schools of thought on how black cohosh helps ease menopause symptoms.

The first is that an active ingredient in black cohosh—fukinolic acid—has estrogenic properties. However, there is conflicting research on this front and most studies have been in the laboratory.\(^8\)

That lack of clarity has led to the other hypothesis that black cohosh works through an entirely different avenue—the brain and hypothalamus.

It does so by affecting the neurotransmitters dopamine and serotonin, which may also be why black cohosh has also been shown to alleviate irritability and mood swings.

Is It Safe?

Given that black cohosh has been shown to be very effective at treating menopause symptoms, the next question we had to ask was, “Is it safe?” After all, there’s no sense in jumping from the proverbial frying pan into the fire.

Fortunately, black cohosh appears to be quite safe.\(^9\) The most common complaints associated with the herb include:

- Occasional gastrointestinal disturbances,
- Headaches,
- Heaviness in the legs, and
- Possible weight problems.

You should not use black cohosh if you are pregnant, as there is the possibility of premature birth due to overdose.
Also, there have been very rare instances when black cohosh can cause liver damage. However, millions of people have taken the herb with no adverse effects.\textsuperscript{9}

**Choose Your Black Cohosh Carefully…**

If you, like thousands of women before you, decide to pitch your HRT and give black cohosh a try, you’ll need to make sure you are getting what you paid for.

According to an article in the *Journal of Agricultural & Food Chemistry*, three of 11 black cohosh supplements researchers tested didn’t even contain the herb!\textsuperscript{10} Instead, they contained less expensive extracts of a similar Chinese herb.

To make sure this doesn’t happen to you and that you get actual black cohosh, be sure to buy your product from a reputable retailer. You can also look for black cohosh’s Latin name *Cimicifuga racemosa*.

If the manufacturer is more interested in hype than research, move on to another product.

Make sure the manufacturer uses good manufacturing practices (GMP) for the product and be sure you can find all ingredients contained in the product before purchasing. And, if the product contains a trademarked extract, research that extract. Is it safe? Has it been through clinical trials?

Also be sure the product you choose is free of preservatives, fillers, binders, excipients, flow agents, shellacs, coloring agents, gluten, yeast, lactose, and other allergens. Ideally you’ll also be able to find independent analysis done by a 3rd party to verify the active ingredients and identify any contaminants.

Once you have a true black cohosh product, the research indicates that you should aim for 40–80mg twice a day, which should contain 2 to 4mg of the active components (triterpenes, calculated as 27-deoxyacteine). At this dosage, most women see results within four weeks.

Lastly, if you are currently taking HRT, be sure to discuss your plans with your physician before changing your regimen.

Then you can start enjoying cooler days and more enjoyable nights without fear for your safety. And all thanks to our Native American friends!

**References:**


\textsuperscript{2}Foster, S. Black cohosh: *Cimicifuga racemosa*: a literature review. *HerbalGram*. 1999,45,35-49.


Iodine: Cure for Hypothyroidism Or Hidden Danger?

If you are like most Americans, you’ve likely struggled for years with your weight. No matter what you do, you just cannot seem to drop those extra pounds.

On top of that, you are tired all the time and get frequent muscle aches, so forget about dragging yourself to the gym. Plus, you suspect your hair is thinning, or at least it’s really dry, as is your skin. And the cold just rips right through you.

No wonder you are irritable, depressed, and have no sex drive. Who would?

But what if all this wasn’t just a series of coincidences? What if these were symptoms of an underlying condition named hypothyroidism, or underactive thyroid?

Do You have Hypothyroidism?

Nearly 1 in 10 women over the age of 60 have subclinical hypothyroidism,¹ which means they have several symptoms, but have not been diagnosed with the disease.

Hypothyroidism occurs when you have low levels of blood thyroid hormone. Clinical hypothyroidism includes many of the symptoms described earlier, as well as constipation, irregular menstrual cycle, infertility, and even high cholesterol levels.

A thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH) test is most often used to determine if you have hypothyroidism. However, the medical community is divided on what that number or range should be.

Some conventional doctors and labs say anything from 0.5-5.5 (or even 6.0) is “normal.” The American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists (the thyroid people) say 0.3-3.0 should be the range. The more alternative-minded folks say 0.5-2.0 is more accurate.

Regardless of the mixed signals, the key information to take away here is that even if your TSH is 3.2, you may have a hypothyroid condition, but you will likely go undiagnosed. Even a 2.5 could fall under the radar.

Common sense says that a TSH over 2.0 may indicate, at the least, subclinical hypothyroidism, and would warrant a conversation with your doctor on how to gain additional testing (T3 and T4 readings) and insights into your thyroid health.

Once you get your TSH status figured out, you will likely start researching thyroid treatments. Maybe that’s what led you to this article.

Your doctor also likely recommended that you start a thyroid replacement therapy plan, such as one that uses Synthroid — or, if you are really lucky, a natural option such as Armour. While these may work, they don’t really address the underlying issue or issues of WHY your thyroid is going haywire in the first place.
Here’s where it really gets tricky. There can be many causes of hypothyroidism, including iodine deficiency. In fact, many health experts preach that supplementing with iodine can help eradicate hypothyroidism.

But, like everything involving thyroid function, the answers aren’t so simple...or agreed upon.

**The Iodine Controversy...**

The only thing more controversial in the thyroid world than how to properly interpret TSH readings is the use of supplemental iodine for treating hypothyroid.

Iodine is the most critical nutrient for proper thyroid function. It is essential for the production of the hormone thyroxin, which your thyroid uses to regulate many bodily functions, including metabolism.

If you don’t have enough iodine, your body cannot produce adequate levels of thyroxin. This leads to the symptoms commonly associated with hypothyroidism. In fact, even small iodine deficiencies can have profound effects on thyroid function.

For example, in the 1920s, there was an increasing incidence of goiter. This is a circumstance in which the thyroid enlarges as it works to kick out more and more thyroxin without the necessary raw materials (namely iodine) to make the hormone.

To counteract this, U.S. health officials dictated that all table salt had to be fortified with iodine. (If you always wondered why you have iodized salt, now you know!) Soon after, the prevalence of hypothyroidism decreased.

While all of this is common knowledge, and quite interesting, does the research back it up or is this simply folklore? Let’s find out.

**Iodine’s Role in Thyroid Health...**

One study from the University of Tennessee Health Science Center details the cases of three women, aged 24 to 38 years of age. All three lived in iodine-rich areas, yet exhibited signs of iodine-deficiency disorders. Two of the three had hypothyroidism with a goiter.

After receiving dietary iodine supplementation, all three had complete remission of their iodine-deficiency disorders, including the two women with hypothyroidism. Researchers concluded, “These cases underscore the need for considering iodine deficiency in the etiologic diagnosis of goiter and hypothyroidism, even in iodine-sufficient regions.”

Although this study profiled only three subjects, this is a real world example of how a lack of iodine can lead to hypothyroidism, and how adding the iodine supplements can bring thyroid levels back to the normal range. Still, it would be nice to see a gold-standard, large-scale study that evaluated the effects of iodine versus placebos on people with hypothyroidism.

One of the reasons we haven’t seen any, at least that we could find, is that it appears that supplemental iodine, in some cases, can cause hypothyroidism.
Too Much of Anything Can be Bad…

While iodine-deficiency can lead to hypothyroidism, taking iodine when not deficient can, ironically, have the exact same effect.

A study from China exemplifies this well. Researchers followed more than 3,000 people from three different regions of China. All of these people had differing levels of iodine intake, which ranged from mildly deficient to adequate or excessive.

At the end of the five-year period, researchers observed an increase in hypothyroidism and autoimmune thyroiditis in those areas with more than adequate or excessive iodine intake.

In other words, those with some iodine (mildly deficient) didn’t show the disease, while those groups with the above average intake of iodine had significantly higher incidences of the disease.

Another study looked at iodine restriction and whether or not it could reverse hypothyroidism in people with Hashimoto’s thyroiditis, a condition caused when the body’s own immune system accidentally attacks the thyroid.

Researchers randomly divided 45 people with hypothyroidism due to Hashimoto’s thyroiditis into two groups. Half were on iodine restriction (less than 100 mcg/day) and the other group had no restrictions.

At the end of three months, more than 78 percent of those people in the iodine-restriction group regained a normal thyroid state, as compared to 45 percent in the non-restricted group.

That’s a pretty compelling result. Still, it would be interesting to see the study done with hypothyroidism from any cause, not just limited to Hashimoto’s thyroiditis.

A retrospective study from Denmark looked at thyroid disease in general and the role iodine may or may not play. They found that epidemiological studies (a fancy way of saying the study of a disease in a population) have shown that “hypothyroidism is more prevalent in populations with a high iodine intake.”

Similarly, they observed that in populations with a high iodine intake, the average thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH) level tends to increase with a person’s age. Remember, high TSH often corresponds to hypothyroidism as your pituitary gland, which is what secretes TSH, senses that you have low thyroid production. It then cranks up production of TSH in an attempt to get your thyroid to secrete more thyroid hormones.

They concluded, “Iodine intake of a population should be kept within a relatively narrow interval where iodine deficiency disorders are prevented, but not higher.” In other words, if there is a deficiency, fix it. But don’t overdo it or you can tip the scales the other way.

Lastly, research from the Institutes of Medicine’s Food and Nutrition Board has reported similar findings. They too have found that excess iodine intake is most commonly associated with elevated blood levels of thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH), hypothyroidism, and goiters.

In fact, in iodine-sufficient adults, elevated TSH levels have been found at iodine intakes...
between 1,700 and 1,800 mcg/day.

To help minimize the risk of developing hypothyroidism, the Food and Nutrition Board set a tolerable upper level of intake for iodine at 1,100 mcg/day for adults.

**So, is Taking Iodine a Go or No-Go?**

So, given all this, what the heck are you supposed to do? Too little and you may develop hypothyroidism. Too much and, BAM, the same thing!

The key, not surprisingly, is balance and moderation. First and foremost, iodine deficiency is a rarity in the U.S. There are a large number of commonly consumed foods that contain iodine, including:

- Baked potato (with skin)
- Cow’s milk (from grass-fed cows)
- Cooked navy beans
- Seaweed
- Clams
- Oysters
- Lobster
- Sardines
- Saltwater fish

Plus, there is the whole “iodine in salt” thing, and we know how much Americans like their salt! Most multivitamins contain the recommended daily allowance of iodine (150 mcg). Therefore, unless you have a known iodine deficiency, there is no reason to supplement with iodine.

The only time when iodine supplementation seems to make sense is if you have hypothyroidism and are sure you also have an iodine deficiency.

In this case, you may want to consider short-term iodine supplementation. If you aren’t sure whether this applies to you, ask your doctor to test your thyroid antibodies (thyroid peroxidase and thyroglobulin).

Remember, while correcting an iodine deficiency can help improve hypothyroidism, it’s important to note that an excess of iodine can also limit the body’s production of thyroid hormone. Therefore, do not exceed 1,000 mcg of iodine for any length of time (i.e., more than three months).

At the end of that time, have your urine iodine level tested to determine if you are still deficient or in the normal range.

Determining thyroid disease is not easy — nor, unfortunately, is the treatment of it. However, by becoming an educated advocate for your own health, you will quickly discover the difference between what is purely hype, and what is backed by science. You’ll then know what path to choose for optimal health and wellness.

As always, make sure you consult with your doctor before embarking on any new treatments — natural, conventional or otherwise.
References:


You’ve been lied to for years. Decades, really.

Everywhere you turn, someone is telling you to watch your cholesterol, telling you that one form or another of cholesterol is either “good” or “bad,” and that if it gets too high, you are at serious risk for heart disease or even death.

Even worse, they are selling you drugs to lower your cholesterol… drugs that actually deplete your heart of the very nutrients it needs to run effectively.

As if this wasn’t enough, they are also ignoring the REAL reasons that so many people die unnecessarily of heart disease each year—reasons you likely haven’t heard from your doctor before.

Fortunately, there is an extraordinary natural solution that’s likely sitting inside one of your kitchen cabinets right now, and it’s been proven to help reduce your risk of developing heart disease.

Before we reveal what this natural solution is, let’s start to reverse the brainwashing process by taking a closer look at what REALLY causes heart disease.

The REAL Culprits in Heart Disease…

For years the medical establishment has had us believing that “bad” cholesterol will be our undoing. That evil, dangerous, high cholesterol is one of the leading causes—if not THE leading cause—of heart disease in the United States, despite a preponderance of evidence to the contrary.

There are a million possibilities for WHY doctors are still pushing the cholesterol issue: lack of knowledge, lack of understanding, the fact that it’s easier to stick with what’s “known,” and perverse financial incentives.

However, you don’t have to fall victim to their ignorance. By looking at the research, we find that there are really two primary causes for heart disease, each of which feed off of the other to make a bad situation worse.

The first cause we’ll start with is inflammation – a necessary process that occurs in each of our bodies to help us heal, but when it spins out of control, it can have devastating consequences.

A study from as far back as 2002 has shown that inflammation is one of the primary predictors of coronary artery disease… not cholesterol.¹

¹ For further reading on this topic, refer to the original source or a more detailed scientific study. The text here is a simplified explanation for the purpose of the document.
Researchers tested both LDL cholesterol levels and C-reactive protein levels or CRP (a marker for inflammation) in 28,000 healthy postmenopausal women. They followed the women for about eight years and noted those who had a stroke, heart attack, or blood clot, as well as those who died from cardiovascular causes.

They found that elevated CRP was the best indicator of risk of cardiovascular issues. In fact, they concluded that “the C-reactive protein level is a stronger predictor of cardiovascular events than the LDL cholesterol level.”

In other words, high inflammation is more problematic than high cholesterol when it comes to risk of heart disease. As you’ll see in a second, this makes perfect sense.

But inflammation itself doesn’t act alone – it acts in concert with the second most important cause of heart disease: oxidative stress.

And because it’s the way that oxidative stress interacts with cholesterol that has caused all of the confusion and brainwashing over the years, we need to first take a closer look at cholesterol.

**Cholesterol: A Building Block, Not Road Block…**

Cholesterol is not the demon most doctors make it out to be. In fact, it is a necessary raw material made by your liver, brain, and virtually every cell in your body, and without it you’d die.

It is critical for the creation of hormones and cells, and it is a major component of the membranes surrounding cells, as well as the structures within them.

If that’s the case, then common sense would have us question conventional medical wisdom that tells us we should reduce our cholesterol levels at all costs. Does this make ANY sense at all?

Of course not – but through a series of somewhat unbelievable events that have spanned nearly half a century, we’ve all been brainwashed into thinking that cholesterol is bad.

Worse yet, as part of this brainwashing, we’ve been told that HDL is “good” cholesterol and “LDL” is bad cholesterol, but nothing could be further from the truth. Take either of those out of your body and you’d literally collapse.

To see why that would happen, consider these simple mechanics. Your liver produces and regulates cholesterol, acting like a central switching station, pushing cholesterol to where it’s needed… which is everywhere.

The problem is, cholesterol is a fat and your blood is mostly water, and fat doesn’t mix well with water. Therefore, cholesterol needs a “shuttle” to help it navigate through your bloodstream to where it’s needed. This is where HDL and LDL come into play.

To create this type of “shuttle,” your body coats the cholesterol with a special protein and the resulting combined substance is called LDL, or low density lipoprotein, which is then zipped on its way through your bloodstream to wherever it’s needed.

Once your cells are done processing the LDL cholesterol, HDL (or high density lipoprotein) then comes in and, like a garbage collector, scoops up the processed or unused cholesterol,
coats it in another special protein to prepare it for transport, and zips it back to your liver where it’s either recycled into new cholesterol or excreted from your body.

It’s a pretty simple process, but probably something you haven’t heard before. In that context, it’s clear that LDL and HDL are both critical components of our biology and neither is good nor bad.

That said, there IS, in fact, something that can happen to LDL that mutates it into something that can indeed cause heart disease... and this is where we find the connection between oxidative stress, inflammation, cholesterol, and heart disease.

**The REAL Problem with LDL…**

You’ve likely heard of free radicals. Free radicals are unbalanced molecules that are missing an electron (don’t worry; no degree in physics is required to understand this).

They seek to rebalance themselves by “stealing” that missing electron from other weaker molecules in your body, thus “oxidizing” those molecules and turning them into free radicals as well. This is the “oxidation process.”

This may sound like something that’s not good for you, but this oxidation process is actually a normal part of your biology and involves breaking down the foods you eat and turning that food into energy for your body to use.

Your body has a built-in coping mechanism that automatically rebalances these free radicals by using antioxidants either generated from within your body or derived from the foods you eat (think blueberries, cherries, etc.).

These antioxidants are very generous, biologically speaking, and carry around extra electrons that they happily donate to the free radicals and thus neutralize them.

However, excessive free radicals caused by a variety of toxic lifestyle choices (a diet high in sugar and trans fats, high emotional stress, smoking, lack of exercise, etc.) can overwhelm your body’s ability to keep these free radicals in check, and that can lead to heart disease as well as a whole host of other chronic diseases.

**Now we come full circle.**

One of the major causes of heart disease occurs when free radicals oxidize smaller LDL particles. After the arteries are damaged by the oxidized LDL particles, inflammation – your body’s natural healing process – then kicks in to help heal the damage by creating scar tissue, more commonly known as plaque.

But this same inflammation intended to heal actually causes more damage to the arteries and then a vicious cycle ensues in which inflammation leads to more oxidative stress and vice versa.

More plaque begins to builds up, blocking the blood flow through the arteries even further, making it more likely that blood clots will form, potentially leading to a heart attack.

So the key point is this: LDL is just a mid-point in this entire process and it is not the core underlying reason for heart disease; instead, we should be focused on oxidative stress.
and inflammation.
The primary way to combat those two causes is to eat a healthy diet full of nutrient-dense whole foods, exercise, minimize stress, and avoid toxic substances. But in today’s hectic world with the lifestyles that most people lead, it can be difficult to make those changes quickly.

Fortunately, Mother Nature has provided us with a cheap, effective, natural therapy to help immediately reduce oxidative stress and inflammation while we work on making long-term changes to our lifestyle.

**Ginger: The Spice of Life…**

Ginger has been used medically for decades to treat a variety of cardiovascular conditions, including blood clots and high cholesterol. In theory, this then helps to reduce your risk for heart attack and stroke.

But how does ginger do this?

Studies have shown that ginger contains anti-inflammatory properties that work much like the more common non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, often referred to as NSAIDs. Specifically, ginger inhibits the action of several of the genes involved in the inflammation process. For those of you who are more scientifically minded, these are the genes that encode cytokines, chemokines, and the inducible enzyme cyclooxygenase-2.

Ginger helps to reduce inflammation by actually blocking the very genes needed to create inflammation in the first place. But how does this work?

In a placebo-controlled animal study, researchers gave both a low dose (50 mg/kg) and a high dose (500 mg/kg) of ginger extract to rats for four weeks. Researchers found that rats given the higher dosage of ginger extract orally exhibited a statistically significant reduction in blood-clotting factors and cholesterol levels, as compared to the placebo group. They also had a reduction in inflammation markers.

Researchers concluded that ginger may be useful as a cholesterol-lowering, anti-inflammatory blood thinner.

But, aside from pointing out the inflammation-fighting properties of ginger, the study doesn’t really show WHY ginger had this effect. Could it have anything to do with preventing oxidation?

Another study tries to answer this question.

In a randomized, placebo-controlled animal study, researchers divided 60 mice into groups of three. One group received 25 mcg of ginger extract in their water. The second group received 250 mcg of ginger extract in their water, and third group were not given any ginger.

At the end of 10 weeks, those mice that had 250 mcg of ginger extract had significantly lower cholesterol and triglyceride levels than the other groups. More importantly, however, was the fact that both ginger groups exhibited lower oxidized LDL cholesterol.
In other words, not only did the ginger lower cholesterol levels when given at the higher dosage, but BOTH dosages helped prevent cholesterol from oxidizing, which as we reviewed before, is really one of the true underlying causes of heart disease.

While the researchers didn’t comment on why this was the case, common sense says the antioxidants and phytochemicals found in ginger somehow neutralize free radicals (remember, those are what oxidize the LDL particles) which either directly or indirectly then reduces inflammation.

This is great, but those were animal studies. What about humans?

In a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled study of 40 people (20 were healthy and 20 had a history of coronary artery disease), participants were equally divided into two groups. One group received five grams of ginger powder each day, while the other received a placebo.

At the end of four weeks, those people taking the ginger enjoyed statistically greater reductions in lipoprotein oxidation than the placebo group.

Specifically, it decreased oxidation by 18 percent in the “healthy” participants and 23 percent in those with a history of coronary artery disease. The placebo group showed no significant change in oxidation status in either group.

Or, to say it bluntly, the ginger worked. This is the type of gold standard, human trial that truly helps make the case for nutriceuticals over prescriptions.

**How to Use Ginger the Right Way…**

To get the amazing cardiovascular benefits of this power-spice for yourself, there are several ways to use ginger.

The two most obvious are to cook with it or to make ginger tea. When cooking with ginger, try to use the actual root to maximize the amount and quality of the phytochemicals that you’ll benefit from.

After peeling off the tough outer skin, you can slice or grate ginger and add it to soups, stir fries, and virtually any chicken, fish, or bean dish for a great shot of flavor, as well as health.

To make ginger tea, peel ginger root and dice a one-inch slice into 15 to 20 pieces. Steep in boiling water for half an hour then enjoy. You can also add a dash of honey and lemon for a little extra zing.

Lastly, you can take ginger in capsule form. The research suggests that you take up to five grams of powdered ginger a day in capsule form (you can divide this dosage up by taking 2,500 mg twice a day or 1,250 mg four times a day.)

When choosing a ginger extract product, make sure the manufacturer uses good manufacturing practices (GMP) for the product and be sure the product actually contains real ginger.

Ideally it should also be free of preservatives, fillers, binders, excipients, flow agents, shellacs, coloring agents, gluten, yeast, lactose, and other allergens. Try to find an
independent analysis done by a third party to verify the active ingredients and identify any contaminants.

No matter how you use ginger, your heart will thank you.

And, as always, remember that there are no magic bullets when it comes to health. To change your health for good, including overcoming cardiovascular disease, you need to permanently change your lifestyle for the better, including eating nutrient-rich whole foods and getting moderate daily exercise.

References:


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