



Natural Standard

The Authority on Integrative Medicine

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AHA: Omega-6 Beneficial for Heart Health



The American Heart Association (AHA) released a new science advisory recommending that at least 5-10 percent of daily calories come from omega-6 polyunsaturated fatty acids. Other groups, including the European Commission (EU) and World Health Organization (WHO), have similar guidelines.

According to the advisory, published in *Circulation: Journal of the American Heart Association*, human and animal trials have shown that consuming this amount of omega-6 is associated with a decreased risk of coronary artery disease.

The safety of omega-6 fatty acids has been debated, as some researchers suggested that they might actually increase the risk of heart disease. This is because a major component of omega-6 fatty acids is linoleic acid, which can be converted to arachidonic acid, a building block for some inflammation-related molecules.

William Harris, director of the Metabolism and Nutrition Research Center of the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine, led the AHA's two-year assessment. The authors analyzed a meta-analysis of randomized, controlled trials and more than two dozen observational, cohort, case/control and ecological studies.

The AHA committee found that in most trials, omega-6 fatty acids either did not change or lowered levels of inflammatory markers.

According to observational trials, people who consumed the most omega-6 fatty acids typically developed the fewest cases of heart disease. Other studies found that patients with heart disease generally had lower levels of omega-6 in their blood.

In controlled trials comparing the number of heart attacks in patients eating high or low levels of omega-6, those who ate more omega-6 fatty acids developed fewer cases of heart disease.

According to the AHA advisory, most Americans already eat the recommended amount of omega-6 fatty acids. Recommended daily doses range from 12 to 22 grams, depending on a person's age, gender and level of physical activity.

For more information about omega-6 fatty acids, please visit **Natural Standard's** [Foods, Herbs & Supplements](#) database.

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References:

1. American Heart Association (AHA). www.americanheart.org
2. Harris WS, Mozaffarian D, Rimm E, et al. Omega-6 Fatty Acids and Risk for Cardiovascular Disease. A Science Advisory From the American Heart Association Nutrition Subcommittee of the Council on Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Metabolism; Council on Cardiovascular Nursing; and Council on Epidemiology and Prevention. *Circulation*. 2009 Jan 26. [View Abstract](#)
3. **Natural Standard**: The Authority on Integrative Medicine. www.naturalstandard.com. Copyright © 2009.

Vitamin D and Cognitive Function

A new study, published in the *Journal of Geriatric Psychology and Neurology*, suggests that low levels of vitamin D may be linked to an increased risk of cognitive impairment in older adults.



Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium and phosphorous. Recent research also suggests that vitamin D may help prevent osteoporosis, high blood pressure, cancer and several autoimmune diseases. Two forms are important in humans: vitamin D2 (ergocalciferol) and vitamin D3 (cholecalciferol). Vitamins D2 and D3 are found in many dietary sources such as fish, eggs and fortified milk. The sun also helps the body produce vitamin D3.

As people age, their ability produce vitamin D from sunlight and to convert vitamin D into its active form decreases. Therefore, older adults have an increased risk of vitamin D deficiency.

The cross-sectional study included 1,766 adults in the Health Survey for England 2000 who were 65 years of age and older. The authors measured the participants' vitamin D blood levels and assessed their cognitive function using the Abbreviated Mental Test Score.

A total of 212 participants (about 12 percent) were considered cognitively impaired. Vitamin D levels were lower in these participants compared to those with normal cognition. In fact, about half of cognitively impaired participants had the lowest blood levels of vitamin D (8-30 nanomoles per liter of blood). According to the authors, individuals with the lowest vitamin D levels were 2.3 times more likely to develop cognitive impairment than those with the highest levels.

Early laboratory and animal studies suggest that vitamin D may have neuroprotective effects. However, human studies in this area are limited, and a potential mechanism for this effect is unclear.

This latest study is limited by its cross-section design. Additional research is warranted in this area to fully understand the potential neuroprotective effects of vitamin D.

For more information about vitamin D, please visit **Natural Standard's** [Foods, Herbs & Supplements](#) database.

To comment on this story, please [click here](#) to enter **Natural Standard's** blog.

References:

1. Llewellyn DJ, Langa K, Lang I. Serum 25-Hydroxyvitamin D Concentration and Cognitive Impairment. *J Geriatr Psychiatry Neurol*. 2008 Dec 10. [View Abstract](#)
2. **Natural Standard**: The Authority on Integrative Medicine. www.naturalstandard.com. Copyright © 2009.

Complimentary Webinars



Natural Standard is offering a series of upcoming complimentary webinars on integrative medicine. **Natural Standard** remains impartial and offers these educational webinars an informational public service. All webinars are recorded



and archived at www.naturalstandard.com.

To comment on a recent webinar or to suggest future webinar topics, please [click here](#) to enter **Natural Standard's** blog.

Natural Standard Database Training Webinar

Presented by: Chief Editor Catherine Ulbricht, PharmD

- Complimentary access: February 1-28, 2009
- To log in, please visit www.naturalstandard.com/webinars.

Dr. Ulbricht will provide an in-depth look at **Natural Standard's** database. The research collaboration provides evidence-based, consensus-based and peer-reviewed monographs on a wide-range of health and wellness topics, including herbs, supplements and integrative modalities. With more than seven databases, information can easily be cross referenced, enabling clinicians, patients and healthcare institutions to make more informed and safer therapeutic decisions.

Integrative Care Cases

Presented by: Chief Editor Catherine Ulbricht, PharmD

- **Obesity:** complimentary access February 1-28, 2009
- **Lipid Disorders:** complimentary access March 1-31, 2009
- **Cancer:** complimentary access April 1-30, 2009
- To log in, please visit www.naturalstandard.com/webinars.

Dr. Ulbricht will discuss adjunct and alternative herbal treatment and prevention strategies. The presentations will include treatment goals, integrative care plans and patient care cases.

UCONN Enduring CE Program: Scientific Evidence on Docosahexaenoic Acid (DHA)

Presented by: Chief Editor Catherine Ulbricht, PharmD and UCONN Alum

Using the **Natural Standard** Grading Scale™ as a guide, Dr. Ulbricht will discuss the available evidence of effectiveness for DHA, an omega-3 fatty acid.

- 1 CE credit for Pharmacists and Technicians
- Complimentary access: June 1-30, 2009
- To log in, please visit www.naturalstandard.com/webinars.

Building Economic Strength with a Healthy Workplace and Community

The [HealthEnomics Summit Program](#) aims to identify and implement solutions to the economic obstacles that hinder health in the United States.

The Summit will bring together community health stakeholders, including employers, government agencies, educators, non-profit and service organizations and healthcare practitioners from various backgrounds. The goal is to set an integrated course to achieve the economic and social advantages of a healthy workplace and healthy community.



The Chicago HealthEnomics Summit is fundamentally important to foster discussion among health professionals and industry leaders. The two-day program will focus on the importance of viewing health in the broad context of its connection to productivity, its relationship to its community as an employer and economic engine and the importance of the determinants of health, including education, socio-economics, culture, lifestyle and the environment.

The Chicago summit dates, March, 19-20, have been set to coincide with NBC's annual Health and

Lifestyle Expo (March 21-22), which will include about 65,000 attendees. The other venues for 2009 include:

- Los Angeles, CA: April 16-17
- Miami, FL: April 23-24
- San Diego, CA: May 5-7
- Raleigh, NC: May 28-29
- Austin, TX: June 22-23
- Boston, MA: June 25-26
- Dallas, TX: Aug. 6-7
- Columbus, OH: Oct. 1-2
- Orlando, FL: Oct. 15-16
- Sacramento, CA: Oct. 22-23

If you would like **Natural Standard** to post your event(s) online, please e-mail news@naturalstandard.com.

Mercury Detected in Products Containing High-Fructose Corn Syrup



Two new studies suggest that some foods and drinks made with high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS) may contain detectable levels of mercury, a toxic metal historically used as an antimicrobial.

Mercury is a neurotoxin, and high levels of exposure can damage the brain, heart, kidneys, lungs, and immune system. Infants and young children are especially vulnerable to mercury toxicity.

In the first study, published by the *Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP)*, researchers collected HFCS samples from 55 products rich in HFCS.

Of the 55 products tested, 17 (or nearly 31 percent) had detectable levels of mercury. These products include:

- Quaker Oatmeal To Go Bars: 350 parts per trillion (ppt)
- Jack Daniel's Barbecue Sauce (Heinz): 300ppt
- Hershey's Chocolate Syrup: 257ppt
- Kraft Original Barbecue Sauce: 200ppt
- Nutri-Grain Strawberry Cereal Bars: 180ppt
- Manwich Gold Sloppy Joe: 150ppt
- Market Pantry Grape Jelly: 130ppt
- Smucker's Strawberry Jelly: 100ppt
- Pop-Tarts Frosted Blueberry: 100ppt
- Hunt's Tomato Ketchup: 87ppt
- Wish-Bone Western Sweet & Smooth Dressing: 72ppt
- Coca-Cola Classic: 62ppt
- Yoplait Strawberry Yogurt: 60ppt
- Minute Maid Berry Punch: 40ppt
- Yoo-hoo Chocolate Drink: 30ppt
- Nesquik Chocolate Milk: 30ppt
- Kemps Fat Free Chocolate Milk: 30ppt

However, the results are limited because the authors only tested one sample of each product. In addition, the type of mercury present in the samples is unknown. The lab only tested for *total* mercury levels, not methylmercury (typically found in seafood) or other specific types of mercury. The authors also noted that although the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has established a "reference dose" for methylmercury, there is currently no such standard for total mercury. Therefore, it is unclear how, if at all, these detected levels would affect human health.

Although the study does not prove that HFCS is the source of the mercury, the authors note that mercury can be used to make caustic soda. Yet, Audrae Erickson, president of the Corn Refiners Association, released a statement saying that this technology is no longer used in the United States.

In the second study, published in *Environmental Health*, researchers found detectable levels of mercury in nine of 20 samples of commercial HFCS. This study also did not specify the form of mercury present in the HFCS.

The Corn Refiners Association questions the relevancy of this trial. "This study appears to be based on outdated information of dubious significance," according to a public statement released by Erickson. "Our industry has used mercury-free versions of the two re-agents mentioned in the study, hydrochloric acid and caustic soda, for several years. These mercury-free re-agents perform important functions, including adjusting pH balances."

Additional studies are needed to fully understand the possible link between HFCS and mercury as well as how this contamination may affect human health.

For more information about mercury, please visit [Natural Standard's Environmental Resources](#) database.

To comment on this story, please [click here](#) to enter [Natural Standard's](#) blog.

References:

1. Dufault R, Leblanc B, Schnoll R, et al. Mercury from chlor-alkali plants: measured concentrations in food product sugar. *Environ Health*. 2009 Jan 26;8(1):2. [View Abstract](#)
2. **Natural Standard**: The Authority on Integrative Medicine. www.naturalstandard.com. Copyright © 2009.
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Cutting Calories may Boost Memory

In a recent study, older adults who reduced their calorie intake by about 30 percent performed better on memory tests.

Some animal studies suggest that low-calorie diets rich in unsaturated-fatty acids, like nuts, avocados and olive oil, may be beneficial for brain function in aging rats. In this latest study, published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, researchers aimed to determine if these same effects apply to humans.



The authors studied 50 older adults (average age: 60) whose weight ranged from healthy to overweight. The participants were divided into three groups. One group reduced their calorie intake by up to 30 percent. The second group increased their unsaturated fatty acids intake by up to 20 percent, and the third group served as the control and did not change their eating habits.

The researchers tested the participants' memory at the beginning and end of the three-month-long study. They found that verbal memory scores significantly increased an average of 20 percent by the end of the study in the reduced-calorie group. These memory improvements were also associated with decreases in insulin levels and C-reactive protein (a marker of inflammation). No significant changes in memory were reported in the other two groups.

Although these early results are promising, additional well-designed trials are needed to fully understand how a low-calorie diet may affect brain functioning.

For more information about a low-calorie diet, please visit [Natural Standard's Health & Wellness](#) database.

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1. **Natural Standard**: The Authority on Integrative Medicine. www.naturalstandard.com. Copyright © 2009.
2. Witte AV, Fobker M, Gellner R, et al. Caloric restriction improves memory in elderly humans. Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A. 2009 Jan 26. [View Abstract](#)

Natural Products Expo West



The [Natural Products Expo West](#) is a trade show for the natural, organic and healthy products industry. More than 52,000 industry professionals from around the world are expected to attend the event, which will take place in Anaheim, California, on March 6-8, 2009.

Participants will have the opportunity to visit more than 3,000 exhibits, sample new products, network with colleagues and vendors and attend seminars and workshops.

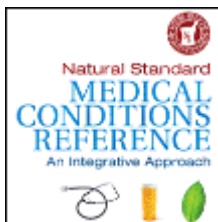
Natural Products Expo West is co-located with SupplyExpo, the Nutracon conference, the Healthy Baking Seminar and the Fresh Ideas Organic Marketplace.

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[The Integrative Healthcare Symposium \(IHS\)](#), which will take place February 19-21, 2009, at the Hilton in New York City, aims to provide a comprehensive education program in integrative medicine and product innovation. To learn more about **Natural Standard's** services, please visit booth #228.



Natural Standard's has published a new book, titled [Natural Standard Medical Conditions Reference: An Integrative Approach](#). The book provides comprehensive information on more than 100 common medical conditions. Unique to this book are integrative therapies that are categorized by level of evidence: Strong, Good and Unclear or Conflicting Scientific Evidence, as well as Fair Negative or Strong Negative Scientific Evidence. To order a copy of the book, please [click here](#).

Welcome!

Natural Standard would like to welcome the following PharmD students: Shawn Edward Fellow from Ohio Northern University, Katherine Scheidt from Drake University, as well as Rita Mubashir and Elma Omeragic from Massachusetts College of Pharmacy.

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