



## Going against the grain

*Don't be fooled—eating more bread and cereal WON'T make you live longer*

*“Do not go gentle into that good night.”*

This famous poem was published in 1953 by the Welsh poet Dylan Thomas, just a year before his untimely death at age 39.

I've been thinking recently about how the final line in the poem, “Rage, rage against the dying of the light,” is an apt description of the last gasp of the big bread, cereal, and grain industry.

Despite the scientific proof that refined carbs are killers, big grain isn't going to go out gently or quietly.

In fact, the industry is now clinging to a new “landmark” study on fiber that's been making the rounds “before the truth has [even had] a chance to get its pants on,” in the reportedly famous words of Winston Churchill.

Basically, it claims that fiber is the answer to chronic, deadly diseases like colon cancer, Type II diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. So, on the surface, it seems like a boon for big grain. But, as you might suspect, there are more than a few holes in this conclusion.

So read on, and I'll reveal the *real* science on fiber and grains you should be paying attention to. And I'll share my favorite ways to “go against the grain” so you can get the healthy fiber you need — without putting yourself at risk.

### New landmark study highlights the wrong fiber

The new fiber study was commissioned by the World Health

Organization (WHO).<sup>1</sup> WHO's main mission appears to be spreading big pharma and modern western technology—and mythology—around the world, concentrating on countries whose people can't afford it, and who don't really need or want it.

Researchers looked at 243 studies from the past 50 years, involving nearly 5,000 people from around the world. Many of the studies showed that more fiber in the diet is associated with reduced risks of certain cancers, heart disease, and early deaths.

In fact, researchers concluded that dietary fiber appears to have even more health benefits than they previously thought.

The study showed that the average person consumes about 20 grams of fiber a day. But researchers recommend increasing consumption to 25 to 29 grams a day.

Why? Because they found that a higher-fiber diet leads to a 30 percent lower risk of heart disease, a 22 percent reduced risk of stroke, and a 16 percent lower risk of Type II diabetes and colorectal cancer. Plus, eating an extra 15 or more grams of fiber a day could reduce incidences of those diseases by 2 to 19 percent.

Of course, you can imagine how excited this study made the big grain industry. This food monopoly has been zealously attacking low-carb diets for years (despite all of the science showing how healthy these diets are).

So you can be certain the new study

will be used by the grain industry and our crony corporatist government to get us back in the bread line once again.

### Separating the wheat from the chaff

The problem with this PR push is that the grain industry doesn't discriminate between whole grains and refined grains. In their opinion, all grains are great. But study after study shows this type of thinking is just flat-out wrong.

As you know, there are two types of grains: **whole** and **refined**.

When whole grains are milled, the nutrient-rich bran and germ layers are kept intact. But, refined grains are stripped of these layers, meaning they have very few nutrients—including fiber.

And sadly, over the last 50 years, our food supply has been flooded with packaged, processed bread, desserts, pasta, and other high-carb foods made

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from the white flour that comes from these useless refined grains.

Whole grains, on the other hand, are good sources of B vitamins and some trace minerals, and have been shown in a variety of studies to help reduce blood pressure and lower the risk of heart disease. And they contain large amounts of fiber.

But whole grains are also high in carbs, which means they're simply not as good for your health as low-carb beans, seeds, and more fibrous fruits and vegetables. And there's another problem...

### **Too much fiber from whole grains can actually create disease**

One thing the WHO study got right is that it put a limit on how much fiber you should consume.

The researchers suggest 25 to 29 grams of fiber a day. Meanwhile, the Institute of Medicine recommends 38 grams a day for men and 25 grams a day for women.

(I prefer to think of fiber consumption in terms of daily servings of food, rather than specific, weighed amounts. Refer to the sidebar on page 3 for the complete breakdown.)

Of course, some so-called nutrition experts say you can't eat too much fiber. But this simply isn't true. That's because there are two types of fiber, and you need balanced amounts of both.

The first kind of fiber, **soluble fiber**, dissolves in water, so it's easier for your body to digest. It's found in beans, lentils, nuts, seeds, peas, and some fruits and vegetables. Research associates soluble fiber with better control of blood sugar and lower levels of fats in the blood.

The second kind of fiber, **insoluble fiber**, *doesn't* dissolve in water. It's found in the outer, bran layer of whole grains and in the skin of many fruits and vegetables.

Insoluble fiber helps bulk up your stools, pushing the waste through your intestines in a timely manner. This type of fiber actually acts like little "brooms" on the inside of your colon, removing old and damaged cells, which is thought to reduce the risk of cancer.

But as with most other things in life, this "sweeping" needs to be done in moderation. As I revealed in a study I published 30 years ago, too much scraping and stimulation of the cells in the colon can signal the cells to proliferate, which is a risk factor for colon cancer.

That's why I recommend you get the bulk, so to speak, of your fiber from foods that contain a healthy balance of both soluble and insoluble fiber—fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts, and seeds—rather than whole grains.

### **Fiber alone can't keep you healthy**

Another big reason why fiber is so important in your diet is because it's a *prebiotic* that feeds the probiotics in your gastrointestinal (GI) microbiome, the environment where colonies of healthy bacteria thrive. (Plus, science now shows that your GI microbiome is critical for immune-system and brain-body health, which can help protect against all chronic diseases.)

But it takes more than fiber to keep your GI microbiome—and the rest of your body—healthy. Anyone who understands basic nutrition knows that fruits, vegetables, and other foods that contain a variety of nutrients are clearly associated with reduced risk of chronic diseases.

That's what makes the grain industry's claims so infuriating. They're incorrectly and deviously assigning all of the disease-fighting properties of these foods to fiber alone.

As you know, I exposed the same kind of ignorance back in the mid-1980s, when the National Cancer Institute attempted to ascribe the

cancer-fighting benefits of fruits and vegetables solely to their beta-carotene content.

My message was the same then as it is now—we eat food, not nutrients. And it takes a lot more than a *single* nutrient, whether it's beta-carotene or fiber, to fight disease and keep us healthy.

But the grain industry doesn't want us looking their gift horse in the mouth (although the mouths of horses are one of the few places where their grains really do belong). They conclude (incorrectly) that the new "landmark" study on eating fiber means eating more grains.

### 3 fiber facts the grain industry won't tell you

The truth is that as much as the grain industry wants to turn this study into an easily digestible, pro-grain manifesto, fiber is complicated. So much so that I've been writing about the relationship between fiber, grains, and carbs since my very first issue of *Insiders' Cures* back in 2012.

In the past seven years, I've seen myths about fiber perpetuated over and over again. Here are the three main takeaways you need to know when it comes to fiber:

**Fact #1:** Fiber doesn't necessarily have to come from grains. In fact, it's easy to get all the fiber you need from a totally grain-free diet.

Loading up on bread, cereal, and pasta (even if it's whole grain) is one of the


unhealthiest things you can do.

**Fact #2:** Non-grain foods with healthy fiber *also* have good levels of other nutrients. So those nutrients may very well be responsible for the health benefits of those foods, rather than fiber.

**Fact #3:** Not all fiber is healthy. Too much of the insoluble fiber that comes from grains can actually *cause*—rather than prevent—cancer and other diseases.

That's why I recommend you eat a

maximum of two to three servings of whole-grains per day (preferably less). And as I mentioned earlier, get most of your fiber from a low-carb, balanced diet—like the Mediterranean Diet—that contains at least six to eight servings of fruit and vegetables a day; a quarter cup of nuts or seeds per day; two or more servings of beans or legumes per week; and plenty of full-fat dairy, meat, and fish.

When it comes to fiber, we won't get fooled again. Especially now that the science is on our side (as it always is). 

### Get your fiber from these grain-free recipes

It couldn't be more simple, easy, and delicious to get plenty of fiber *without* consuming a single slice of bread, serving of pasta, bowl of cereal, or any other grain.

Here's one of my favorite daily menus, which supplies an optimal 32 grams of fiber. Not to mention eight servings of fruits and vegetables, and plenty of healthy fats and protein.

**For breakfast,** poach an egg in butter and add a quarter cup of mushrooms, a half cup of spinach and a quarter cup of tomatoes, all sautéed in a little butter.

**Total amount of fiber: 1 gram**

**For lunch,** make a raw, fresh salad of one sliced apple, a cup of shredded red cabbage, half a cup of shredded carrots, half a cup of sliced red radishes, and sliced, raw fennel to taste. Toss with lemon juice, olive oil,

and tahini, and sprinkle in a quarter cup of walnuts and a third of a cup of goat cheese.

**Total amount of fiber: 12 grams**

**For dinner,** make a hearty lentil stew. Brown a pound of cubed steak with six cloves of garlic, a cup of chopped onion, and a cup of carrots in a little butter and/or olive oil. Add 2 cups of cooked lentils. Pour the stew into two bowls and garnish with parsley, rosemary, and oregano.

**Total amount of fiber per serving: 19 grams**

What's your favorite high-fiber recipe? I'm always searching for new ways to get my daily amount. Feel free to share your go-to meals by dropping me a line at [feedback@drmicozzi.com](mailto:feedback@drmicozzi.com) or leaving a comment on my *Insiders' Cures* Facebook page.

## URGENT ALERT: The life-saving reason why you need to get outside this month

In the post-World War I era and throughout most of the 1900s, a suntan was a sign of health and prosperity. Only the more affluent could afford to vacation on warm, sandy beaches, or engage in outdoor

recreation like golf and tennis.

When I was a child in New England in the 1960s, I remember seeing the commercial for Eastern Airlines to fly from Boston to Florida. I wanted to be

“the man with the Florida tan.” And today, I am.

But the sunshine-phobics who took over the mainstream dermatology and sunscreen industries a quarter

century ago think I'm crazy for going outside my Florida home without first slathering on multiple layers of sunscreen (which, by the way, contains toxic chemical ingredients).

These anti-sun worshippers would have us all believe that the sun is a carcinogenic, skin-burning ring of fire (with apologies to the late, great Johnny Cash). Especially the sun's supposedly "deadly" ultraviolet (UV) rays.

Over the years, I've shared studies with you showing that this solar fearmongering is grossly inaccurate. And today, I have even more convincing evidence.

Two big studies show that sunlight exposure *almost never* causes premature death or disease. In fact, the researchers found that not getting enough sun is the real risk factor...

### Sunshine enthusiasts have lower cancer rates

The first study, known as the NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study, involved more than 450,000 men and women, ages 50 to 71.<sup>1</sup>

Researchers administered surveys to AARP members asking them a series of diet and lifestyle questions, including their level of sun exposure. The researchers then followed up with the survey respondents for a period of nine years, tracking how many were diagnosed with cancer.

During the same time frame, researchers used high-tech ozone mapping data from NASA satellites to determine the level of daily UV ray exposure during each participant's residence.

The researchers were no doubt astonished to find that more sun exposure actually *reduces* your risk of common cancers.

In fact, study participants who got the most UV radiation (UVR) exposure experienced:

- 18 percent fewer diagnoses of

- Hodgkin's lymphoma
- 17 percent less kidney cancer
- 14 percent less lung cancer
- 12 percent less bladder cancer
- 12 percent less colon cancer
- 9 percent less prostate cancer

Meanwhile, a report from the World Health Organization (WHO) goes even further...

### More time in the sun equates to more years of your life

The report is titled "Health consequences of excessive solar UV radiation," and it tries to cast the usual doom and gloom on sun exposure.<sup>2</sup> But if you study the research more closely, it also notes that sun exposure dramatically reduces the risk of several types of cancers, as well as autoimmune diseases, bone diseases, depression, diabetes, and other chronic conditions.

The report found that too much sun accounts for only one-tenth of one percent of all diseases worldwide. And most of these are benign. The only exception is malignant melanoma.

This skin cancer occurs mostly in older people who lack protective skin pigment. This lack of pigment is mainly genetic.

But it can also be caused by not getting enough natural sun exposure to maintain a healthy tan, and then getting burned when sun exposure eventually does occur.

What's interesting about the WHO report is that it estimates that 3.3 billion disability-adjusted life years (DALY) worldwide are caused by lack of sunlight.

DALY estimates how much a person's average life expectancy is reduced by death or disability caused by certain diseases.

Among these diseases are autoimmune disease, bone disease, and cancer. And all of these diseases have one thing in common—lack of sufficient vitamin D in the bloodstream.

### Sunshine: your best disease preventative

According to reams of scientific evidence, the most clearly established benefit of sunlight is boosting natural production of vitamin D. Most cases of vitamin D deficiency are directly linked to lack of sun exposure.

Along with the diseases I just

### Centuries of chasing the sun

Historically, as human populations migrated to colder northern climates, they got less sunlight and ultraviolet light exposure. By the 1600s (during what was known as the Little Ice Age in Europe and North America), people wore clothing covering their entire bodies, even during summer.

As a result, by the 1800s, some reports show that up to 80 percent of children in Europe and North America suffered from vitamin D deficiency of the bones (more commonly known as rickets).<sup>3</sup>

Also in the 1800s, there was another D-related international pandemic: tuberculosis (TB).

Vitamin D has been found to substantially reduce the risk of TB. In fact, during the latter 1800s, "nature cures" were routinely prescribed for people with TB—which meant leaving dense, dirty, and dark urban areas and getting clean air, water, and plenty of sunshine. But no one understood the link between vitamin D and these nature cures.

Sun also became a popular and successful treatment for arthritis, diabetes, gout, ulcers, and wounds. In addition, doctors noticed that people living further from the equator (with less natural sun exposure), died more frequently from breast, colon, ovarian, pancreatic, prostate, and other cancers. They also had higher risks of multiple sclerosis and other neurologic conditions—although the real reason (lack of vitamin D) was neither understood nor accepted.

mentioned, low levels of vitamin D can also lead to deadly chronic conditions like cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and Alzheimer's disease.

Plus, studies show that people with higher D levels who do get the one cancer attributed to sun exposure—*melanoma*—have much smaller, less dangerous, and more treatable cancers.

The major problem is that for people who live north of Atlanta or Los Angeles, the sun isn't high enough in the sky to produce adequate UV rays in the winter. So from October to March, your body simply isn't capable of making enough vitamin D from sunlight. And that can become a real issue...

### Simple, low-cost ways to boost your vitamin D right now

Because vitamin D is fat soluble, you can store up to a three-month supply in your body's fat reserves. But if you haven't supplemented with D

throughout the winter months, you run the risk of being dangerously deficient as spring finally approaches.


That's why it's especially important to ask your doctor to measure your vitamin D levels this month. Be sure to ask for the 25(OH)D test—a quick, simple blood test. Anything 30 nanograms per milliliter (ng/mL) and below is deficient. Levels of 55 to 60 ng/mL have been shown to massively cut your risk of cancer and other chronic diseases. The ideal level is around 70 to 80 ng/mL.

And of course, make a point to go outside and soak up some sun as the temperatures heat up. But keep in mind that wearing too much clothing and slathering on sunscreen makes it virtually impossible for your skin to absorb the sunlight that activates vitamin D production in your body.

However, it's important to make sure you take certain precautions in order to prevent the sunburn that can lead to melanoma...

I recommend you start with 15 minutes of sun exposure on your bare arms or legs (without sunscreen) the first day. Then add a few minutes each day until you've worked up to half an hour. After that, you can increase the time you spend outside until you've reached a comfortable amount of time that fits into your daily regimen, without getting a sunburn.

If you have the kind of skin pigmentation that just doesn't tan, use protection such as a hat, sunglasses, and long sleeves during the hottest parts of the day (10 a.m. to 3 p.m.). And everybody should wear UV-protective sunglasses to shield their eyes when they're out in the sun.

Finally, to make sure you maintain adequate levels of this crucial vitamin in your bloodstream, I recommend also supplementing with 10,000 IU of vitamin D every day, rain or shine. You can find D in an easy-to-take liquid form, together with the potent marine carotenoid astaxanthin. 

## What you REALLY need to know about Medicare

### *My tried-and-true tips to getting the coverage you need—without wasting any of your precious time OR money*

Six months ago, I had my 65<sup>th</sup> birthday. Appropriately enough, I'm writing this from Florida—although unlike many of my neighbors, I'm a long way from retirement.

My neighbors and I do share one thing, however. Like every other American who's reached their 65<sup>th</sup> birthday milestone, I fulfilled the requirement of signing up for Medicare Part A and Part B with the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA).

But, after careful and thorough investigation, I decided *against* Medicare Part D—and all of those overhyped and unnecessary Medicare “supplement” insurance plans.

Today, I'm going to explain why I think you should do the same. And I'll also tell you what I recommend instead. But first, I'd like to tell you how Medicare Part A and B are working out for me so far.

### Finally, some good, old-fashioned major medical

Long before I turned 65, I was more than ready to get rid of my private, overpriced health insurance... and its measly benefits.

The laughably and dishonestly titled “Affordable Care Act” forced me to pay for medical care I didn't want or need—in order to subsidize others in

the “insurance pool.” Plus, over the past seven years, my health insurance rates had doubled—even though the Obama administration told us that inflation and annual cost of living increases were supposedly near zero.

Since I've been on Medicare, I've found that one of its best aspects is that I *finally* no longer have to deal with health insurance companies at all. I was sick and tired of all the wasted time—and humiliation—my doctors and I had to go through just to get insurance companies' permission and payment for necessary medical treatments.

That's one big reason why I like

Medicare. And here are the other two:

### 1. It won't hurt your pocketbook.

Medicare Part A covers in-patient hospital and nursing home care, lab tests, and surgery. It's similar to the old hospitalization insurance, or "major medical." So, you won't go bankrupt—or wipe out your savings account—because Medicare Part A takes care of any major health event.

Frankly, Part A is all you should need or want if you're conscious about healthy living and natural approaches to preventing and reversing chronic conditions. But for those who aren't as diligent about their health, or want a little extra peace of mind...

### 2. There's an automatic backup plan.

Medicare Part B is medical insurance that's similar to what you've probably had for decades. It covers doctors' visits and outpatient care, as well as medical equipment, home health care, and some preventive services. But, unlike private health insurance, it has reasonable "premiums" and copays.

I view Medicare Part A and Part B as a "belt-and-suspenders" approach. Together, they help protect you for virtually anything that ails you—and at a reasonable price.

That's why I find it so ridiculous that the government and health insurance companies push Medicare Part D and supplemental insurance. It's like adding a second set of belts and suspenders. And who in their right mind needs that?

### D is for deluded

Medicare Part D exists because the crony, corporatist health insurance industry and big pharma just couldn't leave "well enough" alone. They had to dig their hands deeper into the pockets of the 60 million older Americans on Medicare.

President George W. Bush, along with Louisiana Rep. Billy Tauzin, proposed Medicare Part D, and Bush signed it into law in 2003. (And the next year

Tauzin quit Congress and became head of the drug manufacturers' lobbying arm, PhRMA, at an annual salary of \$2 million. Gee, what a coincidence...)

The supposed goal behind Part D is to close the "donut hole" for prescription drug coverage. But I think it's really a wealth-transfer program from you—the patient and the taxpayer—to big pharma. Big pharma gets the donut, and we get the hole.

Medicare Part D made the federal government the biggest buyer of drugs in the world.<sup>1</sup> But it also *forbade* the government from negotiating drug prices. Meaning that if you sign up for Part D, you're subsidizing big pharma's obscene price markups for prescription drugs—and the government is helping you do it.

I know this personally because my poor mother ended up living mostly on Social Security, and the cost of Medicare Part D was deducted directly from her meager monthly check before she ever saw it. It was another "withholding tax," which is something the government is *very* good at.

### What about supplemental insurance?

As if the relentless pressure to sign up for Part D wasn't bad enough, insurance companies spend a lot of money trying to convince you that you need so-called "supplemental" insurance to go along with the Medicare alphabet of options.

But don't be fooled by their relentless, insipid commercials and AARP sales pitches. Insurance companies prey on uncertainty and fear to get you to buy "coverage" you don't want or need—in addition to your Medicare declarations.

This supplemental health insurance is part of the same scam perpetrated by big pharma and the corrupt "health" care system. And I don't believe in subsidizing it any more than

absolutely required.

Frankly, if the SSA did a decent job of informing and educating people, you wouldn't have to run the gauntlet of insurance salespeople when all you're trying to do is find out basic information about Medicare.

Imagine if the government, which has known *all about you* for decades—including the exact day you're going to turn 65—put its time and money into actually helping you navigate the complexities of Medicare!

What if the SSA actually contacted you to help you figure out Medicare, rather than sending threatening notices that you'll be penalized if you don't sign up?

Because this simple solution has apparently never occurred to government bureaucrats, or perhaps they're just there to further the interests of the crony corporatist insurance industry.

Instead, you end up wasting enormous amounts of time and worry just to discover that all you really need is Medicare Part A and B—which has been the real point of the whole program from the beginning!

The *entire idea* behind Medicare is that you no longer need to bother with private health insurance (including "supplemental" insurance).

### My simple, common-sense plan to get the most out of Medicare Part A and B

After I did my research on Medicare, I outlined a simple, three-step plan to ensure I'll never need Part D or supplemental insurance. And the same steps can work for you:

**1. Avoid costly drugs.** Big pharma and countless conventional doctors are in love with (and in bed with) fancy, brand new drugs. Drugs that usually don't work as well as the older ones they replace. (For more about this, see my January 2014 *Insiders' Cures* article "Why Big Pharma's

'latest, greatest' wonder drugs usually aren't your best bet.")

That's why I always recommend—and take—only generic drugs when really needed. And there's the added benefit of never having to fall into the "donut hole" that Medicare Part D is supposed to "protect" you from.

**2. Rethink your doctors' visits.** The older you get, the more likely you are to receive referrals to unnecessary specialists. As a result, you could potentially end up seeing a doctor as often as once a week if you aren't careful.

And all those copays can add up—to the point that you may be tempted to just go ahead and buy supplemental insurance to try and save a little money. But what a great deal for the insurance industry! The government is at risk for almost all the costs, and they get almost all the benefits.

As I wrote in the February issue of *Insiders' Cures* ("The 3 biggest threats to safe, holistic health care"), medical specialists—especially cardiologists, urologists, and orthopedists—tend to over-diagnose and overtreat, especially when it comes to older adults.

But primary care physicians, including internal medicine doctors, look at you as an individual. And they take into

account the health of your "whole" body rather than just the "parts" they specialize in. That often equates to better care, fewer doctors' visits, and less out-of-pocket costs for you.

**3. Avoid useless "preventive screenings."** Unless you have specific risk factors, yearly mammograms and prostate screenings aren't really necessary. Same with colonoscopies (as I've often reported).

Not only can these tests actually be dangerous for your health, but they can also lead to fake "cancers" or other diagnoses that require expensive drugs or surgeries.

In fact, if your doctor recommends any kind of test, I suggest checking the American Board of Internal Medicine's Choosing Wisely website ([www.ChoosingWisely.org](http://www.ChoosingWisely.org)). It gives you well-researched explanations of many common tests, along with the pros and cons of undergoing each test.

### **Staying healthy and vibrant into your golden years**


The bottom line is that your time and money are precious, especially as you get old enough to go on Medicare. So why subject yourself to a corrupt private health insurance system or useless Medicare Part D when you don't have to?

Plus, if you opt only for Medicare Part A and B, you'll have more money for healthcare that *really* boosts your well-being—like massage or acupuncture—which insurance doesn't usually pay for.

No matter what your age, it's important to take your health into your own hands. But it's especially key to do this *now* if you want to stay vibrant, youthful, and healthy well into your 70s, 80s, 90s—and beyond.

So instead of wasting your energy and brain cells agonizing over Medicare Part D and supplemental insurance, simply sign up for Medicare Part A and B when you're required to.

And then you'll have plenty of time to devote to what you *really* need—a healthy diet, exercise routine, nutrition, and lifestyle interventions. Fortunately, I've outlined these in an easy-to-follow daily guide.

Simply refer to my best-selling protocol, *The Insider's Ultimate Guide to Outsmarting "Old Age"* for science-backed, all-natural recommendations to increase your longevity and enrich your quality of life. To learn more about this online learning tool, or enroll today, simply visit [www.OVHLearning.com](http://www.OVHLearning.com), or call 866-747-9421 and reference order code: EO3V400. 

## **Pretty and practical: The nine best pest-repelling plants for your garden this spring**

This month marks the beginning of spring, where we can finally enjoy watching plants and trees bloom back to life. But of course, this also means insects will soon be making an appearance too.

Plants and insects have long had an uneasy relationship. The Earth was covered with plants for 100 million years before the first arthropods (insect family) emerged from the oceans.

These bugs had the plants all to themselves. But, over time, the plants developed natural defenses to keep themselves from being devoured by these new inhabitants.

There's no doubt that humans have benefitted from this plant evolution. For millennia, our ancestors used certain plants to protect themselves from pesky bugs like mosquitos and fleas. But, as with many other

botanical-based remedies, that ancient knowledge was eventually bypassed in favor of more "modern" chemical methods.

These days, people use toxic insecticides and chemical bug sprays that not only harm their health, but also pollute the environment.

The good news is that with a little strategic gardening, you can protect yourself—and your surroundings—

from unwanted bugs, *without* nasty, commercial insect repellants.

### Mother Nature's own pesticides

If you're an avid gardener like me, it can be frustrating when the plants you've been tending to all spring become ravaged by insects. Below, I've listed nine plants that will divert some of the most common, destructive insect species so you can literally enjoy the fruits (and vegetables and herbs) of your labor.

Additionally, many of these plants can be used topically as all-natural bug repellants. Many pesky insects, like mosquitos and fleas, target their victims mainly by scent. And the following flowers and herbs have developed odors that these bugs simply can't stand.

So if you apply these scents directly to your skin, or surround outdoor areas like patios with these plants, you'll directly benefit from their natural insect-repelling properties.

Without further ado, here are seven of my favorite herbs and flowers that have evolved into natural—and effective—pest repellants:

**Basil.** Not only do mosquitos and fleas hate the odor of this popular culinary herb, but basil also contains an oil that may kill mosquito eggs. It can also ward off flies and beetles.

You can grow basil in your garden or in pots inside and outside your home—just make sure it gets plenty of sun.

**Chrysanthemums.** This iconic Asian flower contains a special chemical called pyrethrum, which naturally repels ants, bedbugs, fleas, Japanese beetles, lice, roaches, silverfish, and ticks.

Mums (as they're commonly called) bloom in the fall, making them a welcome late-season addition to your natural insect-fighting arsenal. I enjoy planting some of both in my garden and in pots by my front door.

**Lemongrass.** You may have heard of citronella—an essential oil found in lemongrass that effectively keeps mosquitos away. You can buy citronella sprays or candles, but the fresh lemongrass plant is just as good—if not better.

In the U.S., lemongrass only grows naturally in south Florida, where it's commonly used in Thai dishes. If you're in another part of the country, you can grow lemongrass as a spring and summer annual in the ground, or in pots in your home and yard.

**Lavender.** This herb's soothing scent is used to calm and relax you, but it drives fleas, flies, mosquitos, and moths completely mad. Lavender is a hardy perennial in many parts of the country, so all you need to do is plant it around your outdoor hangouts and wait for it to bloom in the summer.

Dried lavender sprigs will also keep insects out of your house. When I went to Provence, France, in the summer of 1996, I visited my grandfather, whose companion picked bunches of lavender from huge pots growing outside her windows. She stuffed the lavender into some old blue stockings, and I brought them back home. I still keep them in my dresser drawers to keep my clothes fresh.

**Marigolds.** These beautiful, fragrant flowers produce a scent that chases away sap-sucking aphids, cabbageworms, mosquitos, and tomato hornworms. As a medicinal plant, it's a standby remedy for cuts, bruises, and burns. This plant also helps eliminate inflammation, throbbing, and infection, and expedites your body's healing process.

**Mint.** This strong-smelling herb is related to basil and lavender (as well as rosemary, sage, savory, marjoram, oregano, hyssop, and thyme). So it's no surprise that like its botanical cousins, mint oil is quite potent and repels ants, fleas, flies, mosquitos, and moths.

Mint is a hardy and tenacious plant,

which means it can spread like a weed if you plant it in the ground. That's why I prefer to put mint in pots around my outdoor seating areas.

As an added bonus, you'll always have a sprig available to muddle in your favorite cocktail. The alcohol will extract the flavor and oils for added health benefits.

**Nasturtiums.** These beautiful flowers release a fragrance that protects itself and surrounding plants from insects. Plants such as broccoli, cabbage, cucumbers and tomatoes greatly benefit from planting a few decorative nasturtiums. Be sure to plant them in scattered plots to ensure additional protection for your entire garden.

**Petunias.** These common and colorful flowering plants are particularly potent against insects—especially destructive, sap-sucking insects like aphids, leafhoppers, and squash bugs. But unlike the other plants on this list, they don't rely solely on their scent to repel pests.

Instead, insects become trapped in the sticky stamens of petunia flowers until they die—kind of like a domestic version of the Venus flytrap.

**Rosemary.** Like mint and basil, this culinary herb repels insects by its scent—particularly beetles, cabbage moths, cockroaches, mosquitos, snails, and slugs. And like lavender, rosemary can be dried, stuffed into socks or pillowcases, and tucked into drawers or cupboards to keep fleas and moths away for many years.

Rosemary is a perennial in warmer parts of the country, or can also be planted in pots. Its spiky, tree-like shape makes it a beautiful contrast to spring and summer flowers. And it's available in a variety of colors, including blue, silver, and even yellow.

The bottom line is that keeping insects at bay can be done *entirely* naturally, safely, and humanely—all without chemical repellents or pesticides. **IC**

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