

Surviving the “brave new world” of telemedicine

5 simple tips for getting the most from your virtual doctor's appointments

As I predicted all last year, government response to the coronavirus pandemic is resulting in massive health consequences—in addition to economic and political consequences.

Societal shutdowns have resulted in a year of increased drug abuse (prescription and non-prescription), unmanaged pain conditions, and both intentional and accidental overdose deaths.

Of course, the opioid drug epidemic was already a national crisis well before the coronavirus arrived on the scene. And now, it's only getting worse. In fact, according to a recent report from the American Medical Association, more than 40 states have reported increases in opioid-related deaths during the pandemic.¹

And in my view, government is partly to blame. After all, they blocked access to safe and effective non-drug treatments for pain like acupuncture, bodywork, massage, meditation, spinal manual therapy, swimming, and yoga for *months*. Which means more and more people turned to dangerous prescription drugs.

The fact is, however, pain is often poorly managed by drugs. And leads to accidental or intentional drug overdoses.

But pain isn't the only condition being overlooked throughout this pandemic. Fear and isolation have increased

depression and anxiety. Missed, *real* cancer diagnoses are climbing. And neglected heart disease remains the No. 1 cause of death in the U.S.

So, here's what you can do about it...

More Americans stopped seeing their doctors

According to an analysis of health insurance claims from nearly 17 million Americans between Jan. 1 and June 16, 2020, routine in-person doctor visits for preventive care and well-being plummeted during the pandemic.² (For both mainstream *and* holistic health practitioners.)

The analysis found that total in-person outpatient doctor's appointments fell from 102.7 visits per 1,000 people to 76.3 visits per 1,000 people. And I think this is just the tip of the iceberg, especially as the pandemic continues to rage on.

Plus, fears of contracting coronavirus from a visit to a doctor or a hospital—and concerns about overtaxing an already burdened healthcare system by a “routine” doctor's visit—are keeping people from important preventive care check-ups.

This means fewer cancer screenings, fewer blood screens for diabetes and other problems, fewer blood pressure readings, and other lapses in routine preventive care. All of which leads to countless conditions being left undiagnosed and untreated.

In fact, a RAND Corporation study of 6.8 million people with private health insurance found that during the first pandemic shutdowns in March and April of last year, colon cancer screenings declined 70 percent and breast cancer screenings dropped 67 percent, compared to 2019.³

Plus, during those two months, blood sugar testing for diabetes dropped more than 50 percent, as did routine blood pressure tests. Cataract surgeries fell by 50 percent, and orthopedic surgeries decreased by more than 45 percent.

There's no doubt that some patients were spared unnecessary, inappropriate procedures and treatments—but what about the subset of people who really needed care?

In this issue:

The Valentine's Day treat that boosts energy levels, heart health, vision, and more.....4

The winter weather may be frightful—but it could be delightful for losing unwanted fat5

The best-kept secret behind ultimate brain health.....6

[BREAKING NEWS] Study reveals five foods that can lower blood pressure naturally8

Marc S. Micozzi, M.D., Ph.D., is a worldwide leader in nutritional and complementary/alternative medicine. He has had a distinguished career as a researcher and physician executive at the National Institutes of Health and Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Washington, DC, and the College of Physicians in Philadelphia PA. He has published over 30 medical and trade books, and founded and edited the first scientific journal, and the first textbook, on complementary/alternative and nutritional medicine, now available in a 6th edition and continuously in print since 1995.

Dr. Micozzi's *Insiders' Cures* is published monthly by OmniVista Health Media, L.L.C., 100 W. Monument St., Baltimore, MD 21201 for \$74 per year (\$6.16 an issue).

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Insiders' Cures*, 100 W. Monument St. Baltimore, MD 21201.

Author: Marc S. Micozzi, M.D., Ph.D.
Publisher: Katherine Wheeler
Executive Editor: Amanda Angelini

All material in this publication is provided for information only and may not be construed as medical advice or instruction. No action should be taken based solely on the contents of this publication; readers should consult appropriate health professionals on any matter relating to their health and wellbeing. The information provided in this publication is believed to be accurate and sound, based on the best judgment available to the authors, but readers who fail to consult with appropriate health authorities assume the risk of any injuries. The opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect the views of the publisher. The publisher is not responsible for errors or omissions.

For questions regarding your subscription, please contact reader services at www.drnicozzi.com.

Copyright © 2021 OmniVista Health Media, L.L.C., 100 W. Monument St., Baltimore, MD 21201. Reproduction in whole or in part is prohibited without written permission of the publisher.

Telemedicine patient consultations kicked in

According to the analysis I mentioned above, the long-discussed option of telemedicine physician consultations finally got a jump-start during the pandemic.

Between last January and June, weekly telemedicine consultations increased from 0.8 per 1,000 patients to 17.8 per 1,000 patients. These numbers translate to an increase of more than 20 times for telemedicine visits...although *total* doctor's visits still declined by nearly 10 percent.

The analysis also showed that telehealth visits varied widely from state-to-state. Massachusetts had the highest proportion of telehealth versus in-patient visits—at 48 percent—while South Dakota had the lowest, at 8 percent.

Which isn't great news. In small, densely populated, urbanized states like Massachusetts, most people are physically quite close to doctors as well as high-tech tertiary medical care, so they don't need telehealth as much as rural states like South Dakota do.

Plus, as Dr. Michael Barnett of the Harvard School of Public Health told Reuters: "I think the major takeaway is that telemedicine is a new normal for healthcare delivery, but that, as a country, we will have a huge amount of healthcare to catch up on given the large drop in doctor visits that we saw."⁴

Dr. Barnett added that one way to "catch up" on healthcare is through telemedicine...and he's certainly not the only medical professional saying so. After all, it looks like telemedicine is here to stay, and you may find yourself virtually "visiting" your doctor more often in the future.

While I don't believe telemedicine will or *should* replace all doctor's

visits—many times you need a hands-on examination—it can have some benefits. Whether those benefits outweigh the negatives remains to be determined. But it can be helpful to know exactly what telemedicine entails, and how best to survive in this brave new virtual world.

So, here's how you can make the most out of your telehealth visits...

How telemedicine works

Telemedicine is a broad term that encompasses phone calls, video chats, emails, or text messages with doctors or other healthcare professionals.

These appointments are still set up through your doctor's office, just like in-person appointments. And the staff can walk you through any technological requirements they have to ensure a successful visit.

A benefit to an online visit is that most doctor's offices will now set up an individualized patient portal that contains handy health stats like your blood pressure reading history, test results, and other information you can access electronically, around the clock. It also provides you with an outlet to email your provider.

This is particularly helpful if you run out of time, think of something later, or were simply too uncomfortable to ask about certain subjects during a doctor's visit (either in-person or virtually). Plus, sending questions privately and securely through your patient portal allows you to review answers in the convenience and calm of your own home.

Your patient portal can also include information and instructions provided by your doctor regarding the background and treatment recommendations for your condition(s). This allows you to read up on your healthcare plan whenever it's convenient for you.

Another benefit to your patient portal is that it may allow you to upload photos of rashes, suspicious moles, or anything else you want your doctor to “see” electronically. Your doctor can also share images with you, like ultrasounds or x-rays.

In addition, you can “virtually” share home readings like blood pressure or blood sugar levels with your doctors, without having to take the time and effort to go into their office. And you can schedule some time to chat with your doctor about those readings.

If you have an earache, a sore throat, or other ailments that don't seem serious, a telehealth consultation can also save you a trip to your doctor's office. And during cold and flu season—and the coronavirus pandemic—telemedicine eliminates the risk of contagion in medical waiting rooms.

Plus, some private health insurance plans charge less for these types of telemedicine visits than they do for in-patient consultations, which can save you money on routine medical care.

Get the most out of your doctor's visit

The key to using telemedicine is to make the most of your time with your doctor, just as you would with in-person doctor's visits. In fact, the “low-tech” approach to medicine is becoming a bittersweet memory, when patients typically spend more time in the waiting room than the exam room.

As I wrote in the June 2017 issue of *Insiders' Cures*, a survey of nearly 20,000 physicians nationwide found that a whopping 70 percent of all doctors spend just *10 to 20 minutes* with each patient.⁵ And another study found that patients talked for only a minute and a half, on average, during their doctors' visits.⁶

Even worse, the researchers noted, “the average patient visiting a doctor in the United States gets 22 seconds for his initial statement, then the doctor takes the lead. This style of communication is probably based on the assumption that patients will mess up the time schedule if allowed to talk as long as they wish to.”

(A typical country western song can take 10 times that long to list all the troubles and woes of the singer...so just imagine what that song would be like if it lasted only 22 seconds!)

This draconian limit certainly doesn't give a doctor much time to listen to you—let alone probe for any less-obvious health issues you might have. And sadly, this is highly unlikely to get any better with telemedicine, as doctors *still* have to adhere to timelines set by insurers rather than medical professionals.

But there are things you can do to ensure you get the most out of every doctor's visit...

My top 5 tips for a successful doctor's visit—either virtually or in-person

1.) Do your homework. Before your appointment, do some homework. Make a list of every symptom or concern you have. This will help save time and reduce the chance of miscommunication, or incomplete communication, during the visit itself.

You can even ask if you can email your written list to your doctor's office, or upload it to your patient portal before your appointment to help save time during the visit and to help your doctor prepare beforehand.

And remember, if you have a problem that has arisen since your last visit, make sure your list includes it. Never accept that any new symptom is just another sign of aging.

2.) Put yourself to the test. When you

schedule your appointment, ask what medical tests you can do at home, and which need to be done in your doctor's office (if any).

And remember—doctors often want to subject you to unnecessary screens. (They can also be cagey about their results.) So always ask your doctor why they are recommending a certain test—and always ask them to explain your results clearly. Don't be afraid to put them to the test, too.

3.) Break the ice. Once your appointment begins, there's certainly nothing wrong with a little conversational ice-breaker. In fact, I encourage it.

Asking your doctor how his or her own day is going, or even telling a joke, serves as a subtle reminder that you're more than just another body to be examined (and potentially forgotten) during a doctor's busy day.

4.) Phone a friend. If you're unclear about any information regarding your diagnosis or treatment, ask your doctor to go over it again—and make sure to take notes so you can consult them later or share them with others. If you're visiting with your doctor via computer, it's easy to create and keep handy a document where you can make notes as you go along, in real time.

You can even have a family member or close friend sit next to you during your tele-visit. A second set of ears is particularly valuable when your doctor is discussing a serious diagnosis or complication, as it's common for patients to emotionally shut down in these situations.

5.) Ask for an explanation. The time you've saved by doing advance prep *before* your appointment should be spent on getting answers from your doctor *during* your appointment about the recommendations he or she makes.

For instance, doctors may not be

aware of the costs of the follow-up treatments they prescribe. Or they may suggest onerous exercise routines or drastic diets that can feel impossible to achieve. So you'll want to fully understand the reasoning behind their recommendations.

Further, as you know from reading *Insiders' Cures*, most doctors don't really understand nutrition and lifestyle—and tend to repeat faulty, politically correct diet and lifestyle recommendations from public health or crony-corporatist medical and health organizations.

So don't be afraid to ask your doctor to suggest an alternative to a recommendation you can't afford, or flat out can't do or don't want to—for

any reason.

And if your doctor prescribes a drug, always ask if a generic is available. Generics are not only less expensive, but they have also stood the test of time—meaning their side effects have been uncovered and evaluated, and the drug has been permitted to remain on the market (which is not true of all drugs, especially new ones!).

Also, make sure you have clear instructions about any medications (and, preferably, dietary supplements) your doctor recommends. Ask about potential side effects, so you can anticipate whether certain treatments will make you feel worse before they help you feel better (if ever). These instructions can also be delivered to

your patient portal, where you can access them at any time.

At the end of the day, even in today's pressure-cooker medical environment, there are still doctors who treat their patients as individuals—rather than putting them into a one-size-fits-all pigeonhole. And the same is true with telemedicine.

So...be wary of doctors who want to consult with you *only* electronically. But also be aware that there are times when telemedicine visits are just as good as in-person visits, for both you and your doctor. And no matter how you "visit," the key to success is actually being able to *talk* to your physician—and putting your health first, all year long. **IC**

The Valentine's Day treat that boosts energy levels, heart health, vision, and more

Chocolate has long been associated with Valentine's Day. But its origins are much more prosaic than romantic.

Chocolate comes from the beans of the cacao tree native to Central and South America. Although chocolate is now available in just about any form imaginable, originally it was a beverage. And it *wasn't* sweet.

In fact, the Mayans of Central America, and perhaps earlier cultures, drank thick, frothy, bitter, natural chocolate drinks with many of their meals, at celebrations, or to finalize commercial transactions. The Aztecs of Central Mexico also consumed chocolate as a beverage, although they reserved it for the upper classes. They even used cacao beans as a currency, and considered it more valuable than gold.

The legendary Aztec ruler Montezuma was said to drink gallons of chocolate every day, believing it gave him

energy. And modern science shows he wasn't wrong.

Many studies show that compounds in cacao called flavanols have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties (as I discuss on page 8). In fact, research shows flavanol-rich foods like chocolate benefit vascular function, flexibility, and blood circulation.

And as Montezuma discovered, all of those benefits help boost your overall energy—as well as your heart health.

There's also research showing that chocolate's ability to increase blood flow can offer a significant temporary boost in eyesight (as I discussed in last February's *Insiders' Cures* ["Four simple lifestyle changes that will naturally sharpen your vision and boost your hearing for years to come"]).

We often find that what's beneficial for the eyes is also good for the brain since both tissues develop from the

same embryological cells. So, it's not surprising that there's evidence that chocolate supports brain health, too...

Chocolate oxygenates your brain and improves cognition

I often write about the importance of maintaining good circulation and healthy blood supply to the brain for energy, nutrients, and oxygen. A new study demonstrates that the flavanols in chocolate boost brain oxygenation and cognition in healthy adults.¹

Researchers recruited 18 men who had no documented brain, circulatory, heart, or respiratory disease. Each participant underwent a brain scan and cognitive testing, and then drank a cup of cocoa rich in flavanols. The men also underwent the same scan and testing before drinking cocoa that was lower in flavanols.

Two hours after consumption of each type of cocoa, the participants

breathed in air with 5 percent carbon dioxide (CO₂)—which is about 100 times the normal concentration of CO₂ in the air at sea level. This is the standard method for challenging blood circulation. The heart typically reacts by increasing blood flow to the brain in order to bring in more oxygen and eliminate more CO₂.

The researchers then measured oxygenation in the participants' brains and asked each man to perform complicated cognitive tasks.

Results showed that 14 of the 18 participants had *triple* the brain oxygenation after drinking the high-flavanol cacao, compared with those who drank the low-flavanol cocoa. The oxygenation response time was also one minute better in the high-flavanol group versus the low-flavanol group.

In addition, the high-flavanol participants performed better on cognitive-function tests, correctly solving problems 11 percent more rapidly than the low-flavanol group.

The researchers noted that the four participants who didn't respond to the cocoa flavanols already had the best oxygenation responses at the beginning of the study, so they already had little room for improvement.

But for the rest of the participants (and potentially many other people), this study shows that high-flavanol

chocolate can significantly improve brain oxygenation—which, in turn, improves cognitive performance.

Don't go cuckoo for this type of cocoa

If you're wondering what high-flavanol cocoa is, you're not alone. Some people think *any* type of chocolate is good for you. But before you down an entire heart-shaped tray of truffles, there are some key concepts you need to know about chocolate and its flavanols.

Most studies have found that *dark* chocolate is beneficial for your health. This type of chocolate contains *at least* 50 percent cacao—if not more.

Meanwhile, milk chocolate contains as little as 10 percent cacao—plus plenty of added sugar. And so-called “white chocolate” is basically milk, sugar, and cocoa butter—in other words, a nutritional nightmare.

So before you reach for just *any* type of chocolate this Valentine's Day, be sure to look at the cocoa content. Again, you'll want *at least* 50 percent cacao—but I recommend 70 to 90 percent.

And remember, when it comes to chocolate, a little goes a long way. Just one or two squares (or ounces) of dark chocolate per day can have significant health benefits. Any more, however, and you're unnecessarily boosting your

calorie intake when partaking for the holiday (especially when reaching for anything less than the recommended 70 to 90 percent cocoa). **IC**

Valentine's Day through the ages

The exact origins of Valentine's Day haven't been pinpointed, but it's thought to date back to ancient Rome.

As early as the 6th century BC, Romans celebrated the feast of Lupercalia from Feb. 13th to 15th.² The men sacrificed goats, then ran through the streets whipping naked women with the hides—believing this would make the women more fertile.

These ancient Roman “Romeos” were drunk and naked too, so, not surprisingly, the Lupercalia fete included a matchmaking lottery in which the men drew the names of women from a jar. The couples would then be matched up for the duration of the festival—or potentially longer.

Fast forward to the 3rd century AD, the Roman Emperor Claudius reportedly executed two men named Valentine on Feb. 14th, in different years. The Catholic Church honored their martyrdom by decreeing that Feb. 14th be called “St. Valentine's Day.”³

In the 5th century AD, as part of the church's effort to eradicate pagan rituals, Pope Gelasius combined Lupercalia and St. Valentine's Day. In the Middle Ages, the first Valentine's Day cards were exchanged. And as the years went on, the holiday grew much sweeter—figuratively and literally.

The winter weather may be frightful—but it could be delightful for losing unwanted fat

We all know how important taking a walk in Nature is for our physical, mental, and emotional health. And yet, if you live in a cold climate, February can be the cruelest month for a walk around the neighborhood—or just leaving the house in general.

But a pair of new studies shows that if you make the effort to get outside when the temperatures drop, you may actually drop some pounds as well.

That's right—the studies found that just being outside in the cold for a short period of time can help you burn

15 percent more calories than if you stayed inside. And surprisingly, it all has to do with vitamin A production.

What cold does to your body's fat

Last July, Austrian researchers published a study showing that short

exposure to cold weather may help people with brown fat burn 15 percent more calories than people who don't have any brown fat.¹

To help make sense of this, it's necessary to understand the two types of fat your body makes.

More than 90 percent of human fat is typically white fat. This stores energy and helps keep your organs warm. But too much white fat leads to obesity.

Meanwhile, brown fat is "good" fat. The more you have, the less likely you are to struggle with being overweight—and all of the chronic diseases associated with obesity.

Babies are born with brown fat, but it can disappear as we age. Like white fat, brown fat stores energy. But unlike white fat, brown fat literally burns calories to make heat, through fatty acid oxidation and caloric production.

The good news is, over the years, scientists have discovered that it's possible to actually turn white fat brown. One potential way is through moderate exercise. And another way is through cold exposure.

Which leads me to the second new study...

The missing ingredient: Vitamin A

After they published their July study, the Austrian scientists did more research on how cold exposure helps us burn more calories. What they

discovered was surprising...

Low temperatures appear to increase vitamin A production in both humans and animals. And that allows us to burn more calories when the temperatures fall.

Here's how it works. Most of our bodies' reserves of vitamin A are stored in the liver (as with vitamin D). Cold exposure appears to send vitamin A from the liver out to fat tissues, where it stimulates conversion of white fat to brown fat—triggering a high rate of calorie burning and heat generation.

And that, of course, helps you lose weight...or helps slam the brakes on becoming overweight in the first place.

My two-step plan for winter weight loss

So, what we've learned from these new studies is that the "old wives' tale" that going out in the cold causes your body to burn fat for heat is actually true. *But* your body needs vitamin A to make it all happen.

So rather than cocoon inside when the temperatures plummet, here's what I suggest you do instead to manage your weight and stay healthy:

1.) Walk through the winter wonderland. As we just learned, even a few minutes of outdoor, cold-weather activity can be highly beneficial. Remember, science consistently shows that 140 to 150

minutes total *per week* of light-to-moderate exercise does the trick for health and longevity—without wearing down your heart, joints, eyes, gastrointestinal tract, or genitourinary system like excessive exercise can.

Your weekly exercise doesn't need to be done daily, all at once, *or* in a sweaty, indoor gym. Instead, why not do something fun outdoors, like ice skating, sledding, tobogganing, building a snowman, or simply strolling and communing with Nature?

2.) Eat your vitamins. Because vitamin A is fat soluble, I don't advise taking supplements. (You can actually build up too much in the fat stores in your body if you supplement too much.) Instead, I recommend you get vitamin A directly from your diet.

Fortunately, that's easy to do. There are plenty of foods rich in vitamin A, including eggs, meat, fish, and dairy. Plus, yellow and orange fruits and vegetables like sweet potatoes, pumpkin, squash, carrots, and cantaloupe are loaded with carotenoids (as I discuss on page 7), which your body naturally and safely converts to vitamin A.

I've long said that we need a more sophisticated understanding of how the body works when it comes to fitness and weight loss. And studies like these are helping improve our knowledge... and hopefully our actions. **lc**

The best-kept secret behind ultimate brain health

Quick...what comes to mind first when you think of brain health?

If you answered cognitive function, you're right. But *emotional health* can be just as important for ultimate brain health—especially as we age.

In fact, a surprising new study shows that having a positive attitude can have positive effects on your memory as you get older.

And, because diet plays such an important role in emotional, mental, and physical brain health, I'm

going to reveal additional research showing how some common fruits and vegetables can offer powerful protection against Alzheimer's disease (AD) and dementia.

Let's dive right in...

The power of positive thinking

Over a nine year period, researchers analyzed emotional and mental health data in nearly 1,000 middle-aged and older men and women.¹

The study was divided into three assessments. For each assessment, participants described different positive emotions and feelings (like enthusiasm or cheerfulness) they had experienced during the prior 30 days. For the final two assessments, they also completed memory performance tests, including recalling words immediately and then 15 minutes later.

Taking into account mitigating factors like age, sex, education, depression, and introverted and extroverted personalities, the researchers analyzed the associations between positive feelings and memory.

They found that memory declined with age during the course of the study, but wasn't uniform among the participants. Indeed, people with *higher* levels of positive feelings had *less* memory loss over the nine-year period.

This study adds to the growing evidence regarding the benefits of a positive mental attitude for stopping memory decline and supporting brain health. In other words, along with stress reduction, relaxation, and engaging in leisure and recreational activities, cultivating happiness may be part of a virtuous cycle for good brain health, cognitive function, and memory.

Of course, one way to achieve a positive mental attitude is through your diet. Plenty of research shows a balanced diet that's rich in fruits and vegetables can help reduce depression, anxiety, and other key factors that influence mental health.

And two studies in particular show that certain fruits and vegetables can also have a big impact on cognitive

function and prevention of dementia and AD...

The most colorful way to promote brain health

In the first study, researchers analyzed data on nearly 50,000 female nurses who had an average age of 48 years in the year 1984.² Specifically, the researchers looked at the nurses' intake of carotenoids, which are the pigments that give red, yellow, and orange fruits and vegetables their color.

As I've reported before, carotenoids act as powerful antioxidants and are also converted into vitamin A in your body. They've been shown in numerous studies to improve eye and heart health, and to help prevent lung and skin cancer. But, until recently, there has been less research on carotenoids' effects on brain health—which is what makes this large and lengthy new study so impactful.

Between 1984 and 2006, researchers gave the study participants seven food frequency questionnaires. The participants also filled out questionnaires that assessed changes in memory and cognition. Each participant underwent telephone-based neuropsychological tests as well.

Results of these assessments were categorized as good cognitive function (41 percent of participants), moderate function (47 percent), or poor function (12 percent).

The researchers then compared the food questionnaires with the cognitive results. They found that the women who had a higher intake of carotenoids were 14 percent less likely to have moderate (rather than good) cognitive function. And they were 33 percent less likely to have poor cognitive function.

While that's excellent news for carotenoid-rich fruits and vegetables like apricots, cantaloupe, carrots, corn, grapefruit, peaches, pumpkin,

squash, tomatoes, watermelon, and yams, research shows that even produce that *doesn't* fall into the yellow-orange-red category can also be beneficial for the brain.

The small but powerful purple fruit

As I've often reported, UCLA has been a mainstay of showing the natural approaches to reversing AD and dementia in clinical studies for the last several years. That includes research revealing that grapes can prevent the memory decline that leads to AD.

Researchers gathered 10 men and women, with an average age of 72 years. Each participant had mild declines in cognition.³

The participants were divided into two groups. One group consumed a powdered grape extract daily for

The healthy Mediterranean drink

Greece is the ancient center of the Mediterranean—and is home to plenty of healthy foods. But Greeks also make one of the healthiest beverages, too...**retsina**, a white wine containing natural pine extract.

When making retsina, the grapes are processed in the usual manner. But then a small amount of resin (always taken from the Aleppo pine) is added at the start of fermentation and removed once it has released its flavors. This process goes back to the earliest days of ancient winemaking, where the Greeks used pine resin to line and seal terracotta amphoras (or wine barrels made of pine, more recently).

Pine resin has beneficial effects for joint inflammation. Old timers would even rub turpentine (distilled pine tar) on sore joints!

For decades, there's been a lot of marketing hype about specialized pine-bark extract supplements. But instead of chasing after single-ingredient "magic bullets," once again, you can get all of the benefits with the whole extract of pine, as used in retsina. Cheers!

six months, while the other group consumed a placebo powder.

Brain scans showed that the group taking the grape powder maintained healthy levels of metabolic activity in the regions where AD would typically appear. Meanwhile, the placebo group showed declines in brain activity in these regions.

This study looked at the whole fruit (as a powdered extract), instead of trying to pull out isolated “magic bullet” ingredients like resveratrol. Which is key. As I often explain, the magic lies within the whole fruit. Trying to isolate specific ingredients is typically a waste of time and money.

That's why I encourage you to stick with organic, whole foods. Not to mention, the UCLA researchers think the rich polyphenol content of whole grapes has the antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties that help

promote healthy blood flow to the brain and boost overall brain health.

More ways to get your grapes

One way to get even more brain benefits from grapes is by looking for a specialized blend of blueberry and grape extracts that works together, synergistically, to help enhance mental functioning and maintain memory, even as you age.


Another of my favorite ways to get the brain benefits of whole grapes is by drinking wine. As I've written before, moderate wine and alcohol consumption is associated with brain and heart-health benefits, especially among older people.

Wine enhances blood flow to the brain, carrying more oxygen, energy, and nutrients to highly metabolically active brain cells. Of course, wine is also excellent for relaxation and stress reduction—another common

denominator behind brain and mental health.

Studies typically show that red wine has the most health benefits. But a special white wine made in Greece has plenty of healthy aspects as well. (See the sidebar on page 7.)

So, throughout the year, be sure to enjoy a healthy, balanced diet full of whole foods—including plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables, and *moderate* wine. Your mood and memory will thank you!

For additional natural approaches to preventing and reversing AD and dementia, check out my *Complete Alzheimer's Fighting Protocol*. To learn more about this innovative, online learning tool, [click here](#) or call 1-866-747-9421 and ask for order code EO3X200. 

Citations for all articles available online at www.DrMicozzi.com

NEWS BRIEF

[BREAKING NEWS] Study reveals five foods that can lower blood pressure *naturally*

There are reams of research showing that simple diet and lifestyle modifications can result in meaningful reductions in your blood pressure—*without* drugs.

Of course, I'm referring to the lifestyle approaches that help reduce the stress that can wreak havoc with blood pressure—like meditation, yoga, guided-imagery, and massage. And when it comes to what you eat, hundreds of studies show that the Mediterranean diet is a powerful way to help keep your blood pressure in check.

But there's less research on how individual foods affect blood pressure. That's why I was interested to see a new study which found that plant compounds called flavanols can significantly lower blood pressure.¹

Researchers looked at just over 25,600 participants in the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer (EPIC) Norfolk U.K. study, and correlated their diets with their blood pressure levels. In contrast to

prior studies that relied on self-reported diets, these researchers measured the participants' flavanol intake directly by examining indicators present in the blood.

Results showed there was a 2 to 4 mmHg reduction in systolic blood pressure (the top number on a reading) in the 10 percent of participants with the highest flavanol intake, compared to the 10 percent with the lowest intake. That's considered a significant drop in blood pressure—simply by eating more foods with flavanols!

Flavanols are found in a variety of plants, but the researchers noted that the study participants' flavanol biomarkers were highest after they ate five particular foods or beverages: apples, berries, chocolate, red wine, and tea.

But even among these foods, the researchers cautioned that not *all* flavanols are created equal. They noted that there's a large degree of variability in the quality and composition of foods

that are considered main sources of flavanols.

For example, the researchers cited food-composition data for black tea showing that flavanol content can range from 3 mg to 64 mg per cup. That's just one reason why I advise choosing organic foods, which have been shown in studies to have higher and more consistent nutritional content.

(And, when it comes to tea, there are many other nutrient uncertainties depending upon cultivation, harvesting, processing, packaging, and brewing procedures. In addition, tea is high in tannic acid, which is irritating to the gastrointestinal tract, and oxalic acid, which causes kidney stones.)

That's why I recommend you get your flavanols, and other beneficial plant constituents, mainly from chocolate (see page 4), berries, apples, and red wine instead. After all, it's another easy—and delicious—way to naturally lower your blood pressure! 