

# Health Hunter<sup>®</sup>

N E W S L E T T E R

## DHEA: what doesn't it do?

*Ron Hunninghake, M.D.*

**F**or the past thirty years, research has been accumulating on the topic of dehydroepiandrosterone or, for short, DHEA. DHEA is the most abundant hormone in the body made by the adrenal gland. Out of this one substance over 15 different hormonal structures and substructures can be made. For this reason, it is sometimes referred to as a master or mother hormone.

*The DHEA level of an 80 year old is only 10% of that of a 20 year old.*

The over 4,000 studies document a wide range of benefits that together have been described as "antiaging." Most of the diseases that modern civilization has to deal with are degenerative in nature, that is the body deteriorates as we age. Cancer and heart disease alone contribute to 80% of the cause of death in western civilization.

While modern medicine has had quite spectacular benefits in the area of infectious disease control since the turn of the century, the problem of progressive mortality and morbidity from degenerative illness has been quite another problem altogether. To this point, nutrition

and a healthy lifestyle have appeared to be the best ways of reducing one's risk for these chronic degenerative illnesses. Now with the advent of DHEA, an important hormonal handle looks quite promising.

The DHEA level of an 80 year old is only 10% of that of a 20 year old. There is a linear decline in DHEA levels as one ages, making it a quite reliable age marker. Many studies show that replacing DHEA back to blood levels equal to that of a 20 year old causes a dramatic lowering of risk for multiple illnesses.

DHEA reduces coronary artery disease symptoms and risk of heart attack. It appears to treat high cho-

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## Little Things Add Up

**Smokers require 39 weeks** for a fractured bone to heal.

**Nonsmokers heal in only 21 weeks.**

*American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons*

## The Bio-Center Laboratory

As The Center began to take shape in 1975, the first grant it received was to establish a laboratory to do medical testing unavailable from other laboratories. This grant came through in July of 1975 and the Bio-Center Laboratory was in place when The Center saw its first patient October 1 of the same year.

The early testing was aligned with the work of Carl Pfeiffer, Ph.D., M.D., who had been successfully treating patients at the Brain Bio Center in New Jersey. These first tests included assaying histamine and other polyamines, trace minerals, and kryptopyrrole levels. Cytotoxic food sensitivity testing, along with vitamin C assays, came early in 1976.

The next major milestone came with approval of the laboratory by Medicare. With this approval came the ability to accept samples from other doctors and hospitals around the country in addition to supporting the doctors at The Center. This gave the laboratory both state and federal approval.

Growth has been most evident in the last several years. According to Carol Guinn, the Bio-Center Laboratory manager, over the past

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# Nutritional Medicine

by Ron Hunninghake, M.D.

## The re-discovery of B vitamins

Good ol' B complex—we've all heard of it for years. "It's good for stress."

I first heard of B complex at a luncheon meeting several years ago in Minneapolis, Kansas. A cattle farmer sat next to me. Much to my surprise, he pulled out a small handful of pills and set them on the table in a little pile. One by one, he reverently took them all.

"What are those?" I asked.

"B complex," he replied. "Good for your nerves."


"How do you know that?" I replied.

"Because I gave them to my cows, and boy they really calmed down."

That was proof enough for him, back then. These days, however, a whole new level of sophisticated scientific evidence is emerging in the professional journals.

Large clinical trials, including a 38 study meta-analysis, have shown folic acid, B6, and B12 help prevent heart attacks. Other controlled studies show that the folic acid in multi-vitamins prevents birth defects like spina bifida.

B complex is moving out of the realm of anecdotal evidence into solid scientific validation.

One has to marvel though, that the cattle didn't have to have proof of how good the B vitamins were; they just knew they felt better. 

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lesterol and atherosclerotic hardening of the arteries.

DHEA boosts the immune system. Many studies point to enhancement of T-cell and B-cell function. This slows atrophy of thymus, even with chemical challenge, and improves survivability of the AIDS patient.

A high DHEA level has been shown to correlate with a lower risk of various type of cancers, including lung cancer and colon cancer. These studies have been done in large population groups. In addition, patients with these cancers, when allowed to take DHEA and raise their blood levels of DHEA, have shown improved survival times.

One of the areas that is generating much interest is that of memory dysfunction and the ability

of DHEA to reverse it. Many elderly patients are more afraid of Alzheimer's than they are of death. A good DHEA level has proven itself as a means of reducing one's risk of developing Alzheimer's.

DHEA apparently is helpful for chronic fatigue syndrome and autoimmune disorders such as lupus and rheumatoid arthritis. DHEA reduces anxiety and depression as well. Patients on DHEA report a greater sense of well-being and improved energy levels with greater results in their normal day to day activity.

The best way to begin DHEA is under a doctor's supervision. It is a medical prescription and a blood test is needed to assess one's current level. If the blood test comes back less than that of what would be

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expected for a young adult, it is reasonable to start a low dose and gradually build on an every day basis until a repeated blood level shows improvement into the young adult range. Men who are at risk for prostate cancer should have a PSA level and consider taking supplemental saw palmetto as a protection against prostatic hypertrophy from the increasing amount of testosterone that accompany more DHEA intake.

Post-menopausal women who can benefit from DHEA as a means of strengthening their bones, if they are on estrogen, take melatonin in order to block the excessive uptake of estrogen by breast estrogen receptors. Women with uterine fibroids or history of uterine bleeding or a tendency to viralization should also be wary of DHEA, since it can have these side effects.

All in all, DHEA has been described as the medical discovery of the decade in that it can help alleviate and/or reduce one's risk for multiple chronic degenerative illnesses of the type that characterize the majority of patients now seeking medical care. DHEA holds both the ability to reduce risk and to potentially improve functioning for those who are already afflicted with many of these illnesses. [H]

If we all worked on the assumption that what is accepted as true really is true, there would be little hope of advance.

Orville Wright

## HEALTH HUNTERS AT HOME

### Cholesterol—seeing the light

Just the other day I talked to a couple who came to The Center wanting to see if we offered anything that could help one of them.

The husband had had some chest pains several months ago and went to the doctor to see what caused them. The doctor found seven obstructions in his coronary arteries. He then ballooned out three of the blockages and sent the husband home feeling better.

When the couple came here, the husband's pain was coming back. To this point it was a familiar story. Then he said, "The odd thing is my cholesterol is 194 and my wife's runs in the 280's and she hasn't had a minute's trouble."

This sent me to thinking about articles in prior *Health Hunter* newsletters on cholesterol.

In last month's *Health Hunter*, for instance, Dr. Verlangieri asked, "Is cholesterol the culprit in this disease process or is atherosclerosis free radical mediated damage? This data would say that cholesterol may be secondary, may be an innocent bystander in the atherogenesis."

Back in January of 1992 and 1993, Dr. Don Davis, at the University of Texas at Austin, not only suggested that cholesterol has been much oversold as a solution for heart disease, but went further to say it may turn out to be a scientific boondoggle. He believes that we have overlooked some excellent solutions such as diet and antioxidants, for preventing heart problems.

Other *Health Hunter* articles dating back to 1988 try to put cholesterol into perspective. With all the material supporting the Under-200-Cholesterol push, I feel at times

like *Health Hunter* is the only voice in the wilderness.

Then I opened the new edition of the *Tufts University Diet and Nutrition Letter* and found an article entitled "More to Life Than Just Lowering Your Cholesterol."

In the second sentence it said, "But even if [your cholesterol is] down to, say, 190, you're still almost twice as likely to die of a heart attack or other heart-related malfunction over the next 25 years as someone in Greece or southern Italy whose cholesterol measures 250—squarely within the high risk range."

It went on to support the advantages of beta carotene and vitamin E, along with flavonoids gained from the diet of the Greeks and southern Italians. That sounded like what we have been saying since *Health Hunter* first began.

It further quoted Dr. Kenneth Anderson of the University of Kentucky who promotes soy beans as a potential aid in lowering heart disease. He points out, "people who add soy-based foods to their diets will probably in large part be substituting them for animal foods, which contain a lot of saturated fat," the *Tufts Letter* said.

At last, some of the "main line folks" are beginning to say what needs to be said. It is more than just lowering your cholesterol. It is antioxidant nutrients and the way we eat that makes a difference.

It will be a long time before most doctors make this move away from just looking at cholesterol as the problem, but a move towards diet and antioxidants is starting, as shown by the people at Tufts. [H]

Richard Lewis

## INFORMATION WORTH KNOWING

What do people with cancer need to do in order to stimulate their immune system and improve their chances for survival? What psychological techniques might give people a slight edge in their treatment? Psychotherapist Lawrence LeShan has worked with people with cancer for over thirty-five years and has learned to recognize areas that people need to work on. *Cancer as a Turning Point: A Handbook for People with Cancer, Their Families, and Health Professionals* is a book that can be beneficial for all people rather than just people with cancer. The questions this month are taken from his book.

1. One of the most important points to remember, according to Dr. LeShan is
  - a. you are not responsible for becoming ill.
  - b. you are not responsible for your recovery.
  - c. Once you are sick you are responsible to do your best to get better.
  - d. all the above.
2. In order to help the body heal, we have learned that certain kinds of psychological actions can affect the immune system
  - a. negatively.
  - b. positively.
  - c. minimally.
  - d. not at all.
3. The same psychological steps that lead to a full and happy life are the ones that can lead to greater effectiveness of the immune system.
  - a. True
  - b. False
4. When assessing a person with cancer, one of the basic questions that Dr. LeShan asks is
  - a. What is right with this person?
  - b. What is wrong with this person?
  - c. How did they feel about toilet training?
  - d. none of the above
5. Thoughts and feelings do not cause cancer and cannot cure cancer.
  - a. True
  - b. False
6. We may all get cancer many times a day but the cancer defense mechanism, in some manner, takes care of the cancer cells. The strength of this mechanism is thought to be originally set by our \_\_\_\_\_ system.
  - a. immune
  - b. metabolic
  - c. genetic
  - d. sound
7. To enjoy life and help the functioning of our \_\_\_\_\_, it is helpful to develop an attitude that we are worth caring for and to take care of ourselves.
  - a. self esteem
  - b. ego
  - c. immune system
  - d. circulation system

• FOR ANSWERS, SEE PAGE 7 •

## Case of the month

A 24-year-old female came to The Center with a four year history of chronic fatigue and depression. She had experienced a bout of mono in college, from which she feels like she never recovered. Ever since age 12, though, she had been on antibiotics for severe acne and had not felt completely normal since then.

She had experienced a recent job change and was stressed by relationships at work. Also, she had severe cramps and symptoms of P.M.S. These conditions contributed to severe allergic reactions on her skin. She also had recurring vaginal yeast infections.

Her nutrient testing revealed 0 vitamin C in her urine, a low normal white blood cell C saturation, low normal chromium, and B6 saturation. Her cholesterol was 279—quite high for a 24-year-old. Urine pyrroles were 40. The normal is less than 20. Plasma vitamin C was in the scurvy range. Potassium in the urine was markedly low, and candida I.G.G. antibody titer was 94, with normal being 0-25.

After testing, she was started on Latero Flora, Zinc Boost with B6, Emergen-C, High B, and Vitamin C, gradually increasing the straight vitamin C to bowel tolerance.

At her follow-up appointment recently, the patient/co-learner reported that she felt like a different person—more stamina, better concentration, no longer depressed, more stable emotionally without P.M.S. symptoms or period cramps. Plus, she had experienced an attitudinal shift due to some spiritual journaling that she had done on her own. She felt that the whole program together was making a marked difference in her life quality, along with resolution of her symptoms. ☐

Continued from page 1

eight years the laboratory has more than doubled in the number and types of tests it can do. The Bio-Center Laboratory is only one of a few laboratories in the U.S. that has the capability to look at levels of fatty acids in red blood cells. Ten tests are listed in the *Directory of Rare Analyses* that lists commercial and university laboratories where clinicians and researchers alike can find tests not done elsewhere.

To support the growth in tests, the number of laboratory instruments has doubled. Instruments are replaced or upgraded as technology increases.

The laboratory contributes to research here at The Center and at Universities. Researchers have found the Bio-Center Laboratory to be efficient and accurate.

Experience and knowledge are the two words that describe the staff of the Bio-Center Laboratory. All are certified and licensed by the state of Kansas or professional organizations. The seven members of the laboratory staff bring over 85 years of experience to their work. One volunteer adds over 50 years of laboratory management to this. Two physicians from China, along with one Ph.D. chemist, add their knowledge and experience to the laboratory operation. Another adds a master's degree in medical technology, while one more contributes two bachelor's degrees, one in biology and the other in medical technology, along with his 23 years of experience to the staff knowledge base.

The Bio-Center Laboratory, with its diverse and talented staff, is poised to make great strides in the next 20 years just as it has in the last 20 years. [H]

## Mental Medicine

by Jon Sward, Ph.D.

Fall is here. Winter is just around the corner. We are entering the "cold" season. Almost everyone in America by now has heard about using vitamin C to prevent colds as well as to fight one. Some people believe it; others do not.

At the British Common Cold Unit, volunteers allowed researchers to try to give them colds. The study, reported in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 1991, involved 400 healthy men and women.

After medical and psychological testing, they were exposed to either cold viruses or a placebo. For several days afterwards their blood was tested for antibodies and they were monitored for clinical symptoms.

The findings of the study were clear. Those who were under stress at the time of the study were six times more likely to become infected with a cold virus and twice as likely

to develop full symptoms than those who weren't. The higher the level of stress, the higher the susceptibility.

In an unrelated study, patients with adrenal insufficiency were treated with low doses of hydrocortisone. During treatment it was noticed that they did not get colds when exposed to the virus while untreated family members got infected.

What's interesting about the two studies is that the highest concentration of vitamin C in the body occurs in the adrenal cortex—which controls the hormones that help us with stress. So perhaps one reason vitamin C works against colds is because of its ability to help the body deal better with stress.

Give colds a double whammy this year: grab some extra vitamin C and combine it with a daily stress reduction exercise. [H]

## Exercising to eat; is there a better way?

*Health Hunter* readers know that exercise is an excellent and enjoyable way to regain or keep the size you want.

But a recently released Gallop poll found that 34% of those responding said they exercise to make up for bad food choices. In the 18 to 30 year old class, the percentage rose to 44%, with 12% exercising daily to compensate for their bad selections. This changes exercise from fun to work one has to do to pay for past sins.

At least these junk food jocks know that it is a case of fuel in versus fuel expended that makes the difference. It takes 3500 calories to make or lose a pound. By making wise food choices and adding

some exercise to your routine, you can often start losing weight.

Say you end up with a deficit of 500 calories by eating more whole foods and taking an enjoyable walk each day. The walk burns about 350 calories an hour. At the end of the week you have lost a pound.

Junk food jocks who punish themselves with exercise to pay for poor food choices are doing their bodies no favor. You wouldn't put poor quality fuel in your car and expect it to operate at top performance for thousands of miles.

So the message is still the same. Enjoy your daily walk for peace of mind and good food for maximum performance out of your body for a long time to come. [H]

# Beat The Odds Update

## Nutrients boost elderly's immune system

"Recent studies demonstrate that cellular immunity in older people can be enhanced by short-term administration of relatively high doses of B-6 (Talbot, et al) or vitamin E (Meydani et al)."

"High doses of beta-carotene have been reported to...increase percentages of T helper and natural killer lymphocytes in older adults (Watson et al)."


These statements appeared in *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* and a paper by John D. Bogden and associates of the New Jersey Medical School.

The research team went on to show, even more conclusively, what increasing selected micronutrients in the older adults will do. Using delayed-hypersensitivity-skin-tests (DHST) to test the immunity to seven different diseases from tetanus to streptococcus and measuring the levels of the nutrients in the blood, the researchers found

that those taking the nutrients showed definite improvement, while those on the placebo either stayed the same or fell behind. The nutrients given were a modest dose of vitamins A, C, and D along with an assortment of B vitamins, copper, zinc and iron.

The researchers concluded that, "the present study demonstrates that modest daily doses of micronutrients given for one year can enhance cellular immunity and can also prevent the development of biochemical evidence of micronutrient deficiencies in healthy, independently living older people."

"These results suggest that the dietary micronutrient intake of older people and/or the current RDA's for one or more micronutrients may be too low to support optimal immunity in older individuals."

These results agree with Beat The Odds. It is important to know one's levels of nutrients by testing, as we do. 

## Homocysteine, a recent player in coronary artery disease


Blood plasma homocysteine has shown up lately as a player in the development of arterial plaque, not only in the coronary arteries, but in the cerebral and peripheral arteries as well.

The higher the homocysteine level, the higher the chance of developing artery blocking plaque. A few researchers have known about this since the 1960's, but it remained in relative obscurity until the 1990's when more research into its effect on arteries gained interest.

Carol Boushey, Ph.D., MPH, RD, and her team of researchers at the University of Washington recently pulled all of the latest research together into one large study to determine the total effect of homocysteine and what can be done about it. The results were published in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*.

This is what they found from their analysis. Folic acid is the best way to reduce homocysteine and the damage it does.

Why folic acid? "Low serum folate levels are often associated with high homocysteine levels and can be reduced by administration of folic acid. Thus arteriosclerotic lesions related to [high homocysteine levels] might be prevented with a higher folic acid intake," the researchers found after reviewing 38 different studies.

The best dietary sources of folic acid are brewer's yeast, black-eyed peas, rice germ, soy flour, wheat germ, most beans, beef, and pork and lamb liver. 

## CENTER UPDATE


### The fine art of eating cold bean sandwiches and other questions

I received many comments about the cold bean sandwiches I mentioned in the last issue. These comments ranged from absolute disgust at the idea to deep interest in the blending of subtle flavors involved in crafting cold beans this way.


One letter came from Ruth Cooper who wrote, "Do you mash the beans first or try to catch them as they slither out from under your cucumber slices and alfalfa sprouts?!"

Sometimes I do mash the beans a little, but the true answer to this

question comes in the cooking. When we cook beans at home, we cook them until they are more the consistency of thick stew rather than just soupy. This way, the beans once cooled, can almost be sliced like a layer of bean paté.

If you have any more questions on the fine art of making cold bean sandwiches or the biochemistry of the human body, write me. I will be glad to find the answers for you and share them with others in *Health Hunter*. 

Answers from page 4

1. d. Getting good medical treatment and changing your life so your inner healing abilities are utilized.
2. b. There are certain psychological steps that one can take to increase self-healing.
3. a. Health and happiness may go together.
4. a. Focusing on a person's strengths can help him/her use those skills to make lifestyle changes leading to better health.
5. a. Thoughts and feelings are only one factor to be taken into account. Genetics, environment, and other factors play an important part. We do not know the exact percentage that thoughts and feelings play in the disease; maybe as little as 5%—an important 5%.
6. c. While we may be born with a certain strength of cancer fighting mechanism, it can be weakened by various factors.
7. c. Becoming our own best friend, one who has our welfare at heart, can lead to better health. 

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by Lawrence LeShan, Ph.D.

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## Vitamin E helps prevent blood clots, too

Well known for its antioxidant role in helping prevent heart disease and cancer, vitamin E has recently shown new talents that may prove more important.

Taken in large doses, vitamin E also "makes you prone to bleed," Paul Dowd of the University of Pittsburgh told *Science News*. He suspects this anticoagulant effect may help prevent blood clots that cause heart attacks and strokes.

Vitamin E, as it is exposed to oxygen in the body, forms vitamin E quinone that actually has the anti-clotting ability. Dowd believes vitamin E quinone would be a safe anticoagulant to replace Warfarin, marketed as Coumadin, for this purpose.

## INSIDE THIS MONTH'S ISSUE . . .

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