Save Your Mind from Neurodegenerative Disease

In recent years there has been an increase in the number of people who develop neurodegenerative diseases. These disorders occur when nerve cells in the brain or peripheral nervous system lose function over time and ultimately die. Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease are the two most common neurodegenerative disorders. Others include Huntington's disease, multiple sclerosis (MS), and Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig's disease.

Symptoms of neurodegenerative disease frequently include apathy, anxiety, insomnia, fatigue, rigid muscles, problems with balance, sexual dysfunction, changes in speech, tremors and difficulty with movements that used to come automatically like blinking. Researchers are uncertain what is causing the dramatic increase in these problems, but we do know that the risk increases with age. Factors like environmental pollution, poor diet and exposure to increasing levels of electromagnetic radiation may all be factors.

No one wants to lose their mind or their ability to control their body, so it's important that people take early action to reduce the risk of neurological decline. In this issue of *Sunshine Sharing* we'll discuss these disorders, their possible causes and what you can do to reduce your risk of getting them. We'll also talk about what can be done to try to reverse the damage and help rebuild a healthy brain and nervous system.

Neurodegenerative Diseases

Let's start by learning more about the major neurodegenerative diseases—what causes them and their major symptoms.

Alzheimer's Disease

Named after the German neurologist Alois Alzheimer, this is a progressive, degenerative disease of the central nervous system. In Alzheimer's, abnormal protein deposits form plaques in the spaces between the nerve cells, while twisted fibers of a protein called tau build up inside the cells. These proteins damage and kill nerve cells. The disease begins in the area of the brain responsible for memory and gradually spreads to other parts of the brain.

Initial symptoms involve difficulty remembering newly acquired information. As the disease progresses the person develops more severe memory loss, disorientation and changes in mood and behavior. It can eventually affect motor control causing problems with speaking, swallowing and walking.

The risk factors for Alzheimer's include head injuries, low cholesterol (yes, low), high blood pressure, high blood sugar and advancing age. Exposure to environmental toxins, including metals like aluminum and mercury, may also be contributing factor.

Parkinson's Disease

Named for English physician James Parkinson, this is a chronic, progressive disease of the nervous system, usually occurring later in life. It involves the destruction of neurotransmitters that produce dopamine. Its four main symptoms are trembling, rigidity, slow movement and loss of balance and coordination. It may also cause depression, fatigue, difficulty sleeping, sexual dysfunction and trouble speaking or eating.

Risk factors include age, being male, exposure to pesticides, damage to the substance nigra in the brain and possibly water contaminated with chemicals. Medical therapy is primarily based on drugs that increase dopamine levels in the brain. There is currently no medical cure.

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Important Notice

The information in *Sunshine Sharing* is for educational purposes only and should not be used to diagnose and treat diseases. If you have a health problem, we recommend you consult a competent health practitioner before embarking on any course of treatment.

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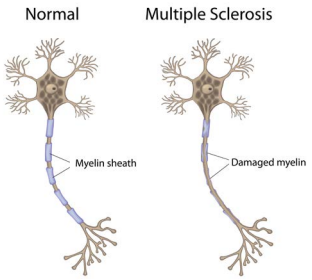
Multiple Sclerosis (MS)

This disorder is believed to be an autoimmune disease where the immune system attacks the insulating coverings (myelin sheath) of the nerves and brain cells. In effect, this causes the nerve cells to short circuit. Symptoms often include weakness, fatigue, debility and numbness and occur in varied regions of the body depending on the nerves affected. Risk factors include being female, having certain viral infections, living in a temperate climate, having low levels of vitamin D, and having other autoimmune diseases. There is currently no medical cure.

Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)



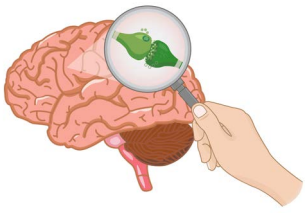
Originally called Lou Gehrig's disease after the famous baseball player afflicted with it, ALS is a rare, fatal, progressive and degenerative condition that affects nerves in the brain and spinal cord that control muscles. As the muscles get weaker, it becomes harder for the afflicted person to walk, talk, eat or breathe. It usually begins in middle age and is characterized by increasing and spreading muscular weakness that eventually leads to paralysis. There is currently no medical cure.

Possible causes are neurotoxicity due to over activation of glutamate. There may also be an autoimmune component, where the immune system is attacking the nerve cells. Mitochondrial dysfunction and oxidative stress may also be involved. Some potential risk factors for developing the disease include exposure to lead or other heavy metals, head injuries, pesticides and exposure to excessive electromagnetic radiation.

Huntington's Disease

This is a progressive neurodegenerative disease believed to be genetic in nature. It affects motor coordination, causing involuntary jerking movements. It also leads to dementia and disability. At present there is no known cure.

Risk Factors and Prevention



It's important for people to recognize that all chronic and degenerative diseases are interlinked and have similar causes. The manifestation of these diseases are different in each person and one may have symptoms of more than one of these diseases at the same time. For instance, people with Parkinson's often have symptoms of Alzheimer's and vice-versa.

The most important thing to remember is that neurodegenerative diseases are not inevitable problems associated with aging. By taking note of the risk factors and doing something about them now, you can improve your chances to live a healthier and longer life. Here are the major risk factors of which we should be aware.

Sedentary Lifestyle

A sedentary lifestyle increases the risk for many diseases, including neurological disorders. Regular physical activity has been shown to reduce the risk of dementia, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease. We're not talking about heavy duty workouts at the gym either, just moderate exercise such as walking or swimming for 30 minutes three times a week.

Lack of Mental Activity

Just like the body needs exercise, the brain needs exercise. People who regularly engage in challenging mental activities have a lower risk of neurological disorders, particularly Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia. This can be as simple as playing challenging games like chess or solving crossword puzzles. Even better, one should be constantly expanding one's mind by investigating new ideas and learning new skills. The old saying, "use it or lose it" applies to both the body and the mind.

Lack of Sleep

Many adults struggle with sleep as they get older. Sleep is necessary for the repair and maintenance of the body and especially the nervous system. Lack of sleep may be a contributing factor in developing neurological disorders, but drugs are not the answers. In fact, some of the drug medications used to help people sleep may actually be contributing to the development of neurological disorders. If you're having trouble sleeping try some natural solutions instead of drugs.

Natural remedies that can aid sleep include magnesium, vitamin C, l-theonine, melatonin, 5-HTP and herbs like valerian, hops, skullcap, passionflower and kava kava. Look for an ***Herbal Sleep Aid Formula*** containing these types of ingredients. Also, make the room where you sleep as dark as possible, as any kind of light in the room also inhibits sleep.

High Carbohydrate Diet

A high carbohydrate diet is linked with increased inflammation throughout the body, including the brain. As we'll discuss shortly, eating a diet high in low glycemic carbohydrates (mostly fruits and vegetables) and eating good fats may be one of the most important keys to both keeping the nervous system healthy and being able to slow or reverse neurological diseases.

Excess Weight

People who have excess weight, especially on their abdomen, are at higher risk for neurodegenerative diseases. This is probably because excess weight around the waist is a major sign of metabolic syndrome, a problem associated with high carbohydrate diets. Losing weight by adopting a healthier diet is a good thing to do no matter what health problems you have.

Searching for Answers

In conditions like neurodegenerative diseases, where modern medicine offers only symptomatic relief and has no cure, there is little risk in experimenting with natural remedies and much to potentially be gained. For people who have already been diagnosed with these diseases, here are some strategies to try which may slow the progress of the disease and in some cases even reverse it.

1. Replace Refined Carbohydrates With Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

Refined carbohydrates are problematic for the nervous system for two reasons. The first is that they elevate the blood sugar too rapidly and high blood sugar overexcites the brain and increases inflammatory responses.

Secondly, they lack the vitamins and minerals necessary to properly convert sugars into energy. Brain cells have thousands of mitochondria, which are necessary to fuel the constant activity of the brain. Refined carbohydrates cause the mitochondria to malfunction and increases oxidative damage in the tissues.

These factors, chronic inflammation and oxidative stress, linked with mitochondrial dysfunction, are major problems in neurodegenerative diseases, as well as degenerative diseases in general.

So, replacing refined carbohydrates (sugar, white flour, white rice and high fructose corn syrup) for the complex carbohydrates found in fruits and vegetables is the first step in both preventing and reversing these diseases. The carbohydrates in fruits and vegetables are absorbed more slowly and they contain the nutrients needed by the mitochondria to process the sugar in them. In addition fruits and vegetables contain antioxidants that reduce oxidative stress related to these disorders.

2. Eliminate Bad Fats and Eat Good Fats

Processed vegetable oils, like refined carbohydrates cause damage to the nerves in two ways. First, vegetable oils are high in omega-6 essential fatty acids and low in omega-3 essential fatty acids. This increases inflammatory responses in the body.

Secondly, the hydrogenation of fats causes fatty acids to change their structure. When incorporated into brain tissue (which is about 50-60% fat) they cause the tissues to function abnormally. This is a big factor in all neurological problems, but especially in neurodegeneration.

Avoid using processed vegetable oils, including corn, sunflower and canola oils. Also don't eat deep fried foods or use margarine or shortening. To get the right kind of fats, eat deep ocean fish (harvested from mercury-free waters), organic butter and cream, avocados, nuts and some olive oil. Use lard, coconut or palm oil for cooking.

3. Take Coconut Oil

Coconut oil is especially valuable for neurological disorders. Many people have reported improvements in brain function with neurological disorders by taking coconut oil. Doctors who have worked with it find that it helps virtually all people suffering from dementia (especially Alzheimer's and Parkinson's patients) and it may be helpful for other neurological conditions as well, including ALS, epilepsy, schizophrenia and autism.

Coconut oil contains medium chain essential fatty acids which may help rebuild nervous tissue. It also contains ketones which help the brain. Ketones are produced naturally when diets are very low in carbohydrates.

You can start by taking one tablespoon of coconut oil three times daily with food. Over a period of weeks you can increase the amount up to three or four tablespoons three times a day. Make sure you use organic, extra virgin coconut oil.

4. Take B-complex, Vitamin D3 and Vitamin E

B-vitamins play a critical role in the formation of neurotransmitters and in the production of energy within the cells. Research results are mixed, but they may be helpful in preventing or slowing neurodegenerative disorders. So, try taking a B-complex vitamin supplement or simply a multiple vitamin and mineral supplement daily.

The fat soluble vitamins are extremely important for the brain. They act as antioxidants to prevent fats from damage and since the brain is mostly fat, they are critical for keeping nervous tissue healthy. Vitamin D3 and vitamin E are particularly helpful.

Vitamin D3 helps protect the brain from inflammation and may help damaged neurons regenerate and the majority of the population is deficient in it. Vitamin E may also help with Alzheimer's and other neurodegenerative disorders. It may help prevent or slow the decline in the nervous system by protecting the fatty tissues of the brain.

5. Take CBD

There's a growing body of literature showing CBD has a protective effect on brain tissue. CBD helps receptors in the endocannabinoid system (ECS) to function better. For example, researchers discovered that the ESC system up regulates when the brain is injured (as in a concussion). It helps to inhibit the release of inflammatory chemicals that cause secondary brain damage. (https://www.nature.com/articles/35097089)

A study where participants where given CBD or a placebo showed that a single dose of CBD enhanced blood flow to the key regions of the brain involved in memory processing, particularly the hippocampus.

The ECS also stimulates neurogenesis (development of new neurons), especially in the brain's hippocampus. Furthermore, they reduce inflammation of the neurons. In patients with Alzheimer's they reduce aggregation of beta-amyloid peptide and the phosphorylation of the tau protein, which are key indicators of the disease.

There is research that suggests CBD may be helpful in ALS, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, Huntington's disease and Multiple Sclerosis. It may help with pain, spasms, anxiety and other disease symptoms but may also slow the progress of these diseases due to its anti-inflammatory and neuroprotective effects.

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6. Take Herbs to Support the Brain

There are a number of herbs that can help support the nervous system, which may help to prevent or slow the progress of neurodegenerative processes. These include:

Turmeric contains **curcumin**, which can help reduce inflammation in the brain, making it potentially useful for preventing and slowing the progress of neurodegenerative disease.

Ginkgo aids circulation and helps protect the brain against the effects of aging. It can help enhance mood and improve memory and concentration in the elderly. It can also help to stabilize the brain with dementia or Alzheimer's disease.

Studies on **Bacopa** have found this herb helps increase the retention rate of newly acquired information. It improves visual process and enhances verbal learning. It also helps with the consolidation of memories.

There is research suggesting that **gotu kola** decreases anxiety and depression, aids sleep and has neuroprotective effects that may be beneficial in people with Alzheimer's or Parkinson's disease. And have you ever heard the saying, "an elephant never forgets?" Well, whether that's true or not, gotu kola has been reported to be a favorite food of elephants.

7. Try Some Brain-Enhancing Formulas

One of the best ways to get the benefit of these herbs and other nutrients is by taking a formula to support healthy brain function that contains them. To aid memory and mental ability try a ***Memory Enhancing Formula*** containing gotu kola, bacopa, gingko and a special form of magnesium known as magnesium threonate.

Magnesium threonate is a special form of magnesium developed at MIT which allows magnesium to more readily cross the blood-brain barrier. Magnesium not only supports energy production in the brain, it also helps with the development of new synapses, which aids learning and memory. Research suggests magnesium threonate improves memory and general cognitive function.

To prevent oxidative damage to the brain try a ***Brain and Memory Protection Formula*** containing phosphatidylserine, phosphatidylcholine, gingko, alpha lipoic acid and huperzine A from Chinese club moss. This formula supports the brain cells responsible for producing acetylcholine, the neurotransmitter involved in memory. The alpha lipoic acid is an antioxidant that readily crosses the blood-brain barrier to protect brain tissue.

Huperzine A is a key ingredient in this formula because it helps prevent the break down of acetylcholine. In one US study, where 29 Alzheimer's patients were given huperzine A, more than half seemed to show improvement. Research in China suggests that 60 percent of people with Alzheimer's disease show significant cognitive improvement when given huperzine A. It may help protect brain cells from certain types of toxic chemicals.

8. Research, Experiment and Have Faith

Don't be afraid to do your own research and have the faith to experiment with what you uncover. Although there is no guarantee that any of the above natural strategies will stop a given neurodegenerative disorder, there is a strong possibility that they may bring some relief and improvement. Examine the overall lifestyle, diet and health of the individual and work towards overall improvement rather than looking for a magic bullet for a specific disease.

Additional Help and Information

For more information about preventing neurodegenerative disease and supporting people with natural remedies contact the person who gave you this newsletter. You can also consult the following resources:

Stop Alzheimer's Now by Dr. Bruce Fife

CBD: A Patient's Guide to Medical Cannabis by Leonard Leinow and Juliana Birnbaum

https://lifesavinghealth.org/dr-bruce-fife-interview-coconut-oil-expert.html

https://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2014/05/22/alzheimers-disease-prevention.aspx

https://www.alchimiaweb.com/blogen/cannabis-alzheimer/

https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0269881120936419