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BottomLine Health

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>> BRINGING YOU THE WORLD'S TOP WELLNESS EXPERTS

Better diet for chronic pain

Some people with a gluten sensitivity (confirmed by a blood test) suffer from "gluten neuropathy," which can cause nerve pain or numbness that generally affects the hands and feet. In a study of 60 adults (average age 70) with gluten neuropathy, researchers found that those following a strict gluten-free diet (no wheat, barley or rye) were 89% less likely to have pain than those who consumed gluten.

Panagiotis Zis, MD, PhD, honorary senior lecturer, University of Sheffield, UK.

Oxygen for sleep apnea

Background: Blood pressure often spikes in the morning in people with sleep apnea, increasing risk for heart attack and stroke. *Recent finding:*

When continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP), the standard treatment for obstructive sleep apnea, was withdrawn, those who got supplemental oxygen didn't experience this spike, compared with the group who received regular air.

Chris D. Turnbull, DPhil, physician, Oxford Centre for Respiratory Medicine, University of Oxford, UK.

Aspirin update

In a five-year study of nearly 20,000 healthy, older adults with no history of cardiovascular events, those taking daily low-dose aspirin had similar life spans, rates of dementia and/or physical disability as those in a placebo group. *However:* Those who took low-dose aspirin versus a placebo had an increased risk of bleeding—3.8% versus 2.7%.

Takeaway: Healthy older adults should consult their doctors before taking daily aspirin therapy.

Raj C. Shah, MD, associate professor of family medicine, Rush Alzheimer's Disease Center, Chicago.

The Missing Link to Better Mood, Memory and More

Raphael Kellman, MD

Kellman Center for Integrative and Functional Medicine

Do you sometimes worry that your brain isn't working quite right? Maybe you feel depressed and anxious...suffer from mood swings...or have problems with poor memory and an inability to focus. Well, the problem is *not* "all in your head"—in fact, it may be largely in your gut.

WHAT MOST PEOPLE DON'T REALIZE: Your brain is more than the gray and white matter between your ears. It is part of a *system* that includes the gut and the microbiome, the community of bacteria that populate your digestive tract.

Bottom Line Health interviewed...

Raphael Kellman, MD, founder and medical director of the Kellman Center for Integrative and Functional Medicine in New York City, and author of several books, including *The Whole Brain: The Microbiome Solution to Heal Depression, Anxiety, and Mental Fog Without Prescription Drugs*. KellmanCenter.com

If your gut or microbiome isn't working right, you will feel as if your mind is deteriorating and your emotions are out of control.

IMPORTANT FINDING: In a recent study of depressed people who weren't helped by antidepressant medications, 75% had significant improvement in depression scores after two months of taking a probiotic, a supplement containing "friendly" gut bacteria. But when >>

Inside this issue...

- 3 Blood type and your health
- 5 Heart attack traps for women
- 8 Five natural testosterone boosters
- 9 Diabetes? How to protect your feet
- 10 Starbuck: Healthier road trips
- 11 Avoid the ER if you have cancer...
- 12 Inlander: Health insurance update
- 13 Self-hypnosis to improve health
- 15 What's missing from your workout

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EVEN BETTER: Web technology allows you to learn *directly* from the pros. When you log on to *Bottom Line Health Extra* this month, you can watch insightful video interviews offering daily brain exercises...and naturopathic physician Dr. Geo Espinosa’s advice on prostate health. You also can hear a podcast with hypnotherapist Grace Smith.

Plus, you’ll find daily brain-boosting recipes that broaden our cover story and show exactly how to put the ideas into practice. To complement Dr. Jamison Starbuck’s column, there’s a shopping list for a healthy road trip. You also can vote in our reader poll about Alzheimer’s disease. (We’ll publish the results in next month’s issue.)

So please make a point to visit our new web page often. See the box below for your exclusive log-on instructions.

>> the probiotics were stopped at the end of the study, depression returned.

THE GUT-BRAIN LINK

If you’ve never given much thought to a gut-brain link, the connection may be difficult to grasp. *Here are some of the key ways that the two are connected...*

- **Neurotransmitters.** Your gut and microbiome produce *neurotransmitters*—serotonin, dopamine, *gamma-aminobutyric acid* (GABA) and many others—biochemicals that your brain needs to process thought and emotion. In fact, a staggering 95% of serotonin, the “feel good” neurotransmitter, is made by

the microbiome and gut.

- **Neurons.** Your gut has its own neurons (nerve cells) that send messages to the neurons in your brain. There are actually more neurons in your gut than there are in your spinal cord. Those neurons—collectively called the “enteric nervous system”—also are responsible for digesting the food you eat, absorbing nutrients and expelling waste.

- **Immune system.** An estimated 70% of your immune system is located in the gut, regulating inflammation. Further, an imbalanced microbiome can lead to leaky gut, which allows food proteins, carbohydrates, fats, bacteria and other by-products of digestion that should stay in the gut to escape into the bloodstream, causing body-wide inflammation—including *neuroinflammation*, a primary cause of negative emotions and confused thinking.

- **Genes.** The bacteria in the microbiome optimize *gene expression* (epigenetics), helping to suppress

a genetic tendency to depression, anxiety and dementia.

FORTIFYING YOUR GUT-BRAIN AXIS

The *gut-brain axis* is what scientists call the two-way street through which your gut sends instructions to your brain—and vice versa. Messages on the gut-brain axis help determine whether you feel depressed or buoyant...anxious or calm...mentally foggy or sharp.

There are simple, effective ways to improve communication along your gut-brain axis—and, in turn, improve your emotional well-being and mental clarity. *What to try...*

STEP #1: Prebiotics are high-fiber foods that nourish the healthy bacteria (probiotics) in your microbiome. There are three key fibers important for your microbiome—*arabinogalactan*, *inulin* and *resistant starches*. *Important:* Try to get two or three servings of these high-fiber foods in your diet every day.

Arabinogalactan feeds your *lactobacillus* and *bifidobacterium*, two types of bacteria that are crucial to your microbiome. This type of prebiotic also has strong antibacterial properties, helping to keep disease-causing bacteria in check. *Best food sources:* Carrots, kiwis, onions, pears, radishes, tomatoes and the spice turmeric.

Inulin is believed to help your microbiome produce B vitamins—must-have nutrients to manage emotions, think clearly and cope with stress. *Best food sources:* Asparagus, garlic, Jerusalem artichoke, jicama and onions.

Resistant starches help your gut bacteria produce *butyrate*, an “information biochemical” that feeds your microbiome. Additionally, butyrate lowers inflammation—which helps reduce anxiety, depression and cloudy thinking. *Best food sources:* Grains such as millet, quinoa and rice...legumes (beans, garbanzos and lentils)...nuts (including almonds, Brazil nuts, walnuts, nut butters and nut flours)...and seeds (including chia seeds, flaxseeds and pumpkin seeds).

Life Changers in this issue...

The heart attack test to ask for in the ER
Page 6

Men: Sleep these hours to improve your sex life
Page 8

Get new benefits from your health insurance
Page 12

Safer nighttime driving: Simple steps to take
Page 16



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ALSO HELPFUL: For nutritional insurance, take one to two capsules daily of a prebiotic supplement. I recommend apple pectin, a prebiotic supplement that increases butyrate and other substances that benefit the microbiome.

STEP #2: Fermented foods are rich in friendly bacteria, making them a natural probiotic. They include kefir, kombucha, kimchi (a fermented cabbage from Korea), miso, pickles (and other pickled fruits and vegetables), sauerkraut, tempeh and yogurt. *Important:* Try to eat at least three to four weekly servings of fermented food.

IMPORTANT RESEARCH: When 70 people consumed probiotic-rich yogurt for six weeks, they had a 44% decrease in depression, anxiety and stress, according to a study published in *Nutritional Neuroscience*. They also had a 25% improvement in general health. *Caution:* Many people are sensitive or allergic to yogurt from cow's milk. That's why I recommend goat's or sheep's milk yogurt to my patients.

STEP #3: Probiotics. You'll get plenty of probiotics in fermented foods—but, as with prebiotics, a supplement provides nutritional insurance. And the best probiotic supplement is one with *multiple* strains of gut-healing bacteria—the key to the health of the microbiome is *diversity*. *Note:* Two strains of probiotics are uniquely effective in fighting depression and anxiety—*bifidobacterium* and *lactobacillus*.

KEY EVIDENCE: In a study published in *British Journal of Nutrition*, depressed or anxious people who received either the probiotics *bifidobacterium* and *lactobacillus* or a placebo, the probiotic group fared better with a 50% decrease in depression after one month, along with a 60% decrease in anger and hostility and a 13% decrease in urinary cortisol—a sign of reduced stress. **BLH**

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Mary Cushman, MD
University of Vermont

Your Blood Type Offers Clues About Hidden Health Risks...

...for heart attack, stroke, memory problems and more

Your blood type is as fundamental as your eye color, determined by genes and equally unchangeable. But while you may have learned long ago which of the four principal blood types you possess—A, B, AB or O—mounting evidence suggests that your specific type may actually influence your health risks.

THE RISKIEST TYPES

Scientists first began theorizing about links between blood type and disease risks decades ago, but now the research is stacking up. An increasing body of evidence shows that people with certain blood types do, in fact, have higher odds of developing an array of common medical conditions, including heart attack, stroke and other serious health problems.

To be clear, no specific blood type *causes* a health problem to develop—researchers have uncovered an *association*, meaning that some medical conditions are more likely to occur in people with certain blood types.

When it comes to health risks, type O appears to be the least hazardous. Non-O blood types—that is, A, B or AB—are linked to significantly higher risks for certain health problems.

So what is it about these blood types that leads to greater health risks? It's not the blood type itself that's the problem...it's the enzymes associated with non-O blood types that affect other substances

in the body known as clotting factors. Type AB, in particular, appears to have the highest clotting potential, meaning it sometimes clots when it shouldn't.

Non-O blood also tends to have higher levels of proteins called *cellular adhesion molecules* that can serve as a “glue” between cells in the inner lining of blood vessels, effectively trapping white blood cells as they stream by. When white blood cells burrow under the inner lining of blood vessels, they promote the kind of inflammation that's considered a hallmark of atherosclerosis (narrowed arteries that can wreak havoc in the brain, heart or other key areas) or even form a dangerous blood clot.

KEY SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE

Here are common conditions for which your blood type may play a role...

• **Blood clots.** People with non-O blood types experience, on average, 60% to 80% higher risks of >>

Bottom Line Health interviewed...

Mary Cushman, MD, a hematologist and professor of medicine and pathology at the Larner College of Medicine at University of Vermont, Burlington, where she is also a board director of the university's Cardiovascular Research Institute. Dr. Cushman's research interest is the study of causative factors for diseases of aging. She completed a term of board director for the American Heart Association National Center in 2017 and is editor in chief of *Research and Practice in Thrombosis and Haemostasis*.

Title photo: iStock.com/TK