In the NEWS

Grape Seed Extract Promotes Bone Formation

Grape seed extract combined with calcium is more effective at building healthy bone mass than calcium alone, according to recent findings.1

To study the effects of proanthocyanidin-rich grape seed extract on bone health, researchers used an animal model of decreased bone mass. After the test subjects consumed a low-calcium diet for several weeks, they were fed a high-calcium diet, either alone or in combination with grape seed extract.

The addition of grape seed extract to the calcium-rich diet produced dramatic results, including significantly higher bone mineral density, bone mineral content, bone cross-sectional area, and bone resistance to stress and strain.

These important findings suggest that grape seed extract may help to support strong, dense bones.

—Elizabeth Wagner, ND

Sleep Deprivation Tied to High Blood Pressure

Obesity, heavy drinking, and taking birth control pills all increase risk for high blood pressure (hypertension). New research reveals that inadequate sleep is a significant risk factor for hypertension as well.10

In a just-released study, researchers followed 4,810 adults with no apparent sleep disorders for 8-10 years. On average, the subjects slept six to eight hours each night. Subjects between the ages of 32 and 59 years who had five or fewer hours of sleep each night had a significantly increased risk for developing high blood pressure. This risk remained elevated even after controlling for variables such as depression, alcohol consumption, obesity, and diabetes.

While heart rate and blood pressure normally decline during sleep, this may not occur when people do not get enough sleep, causing structural and functional alterations that can adversely affect cardiovascular health.

The researchers concluded that short sleep duration is a significant risk factor for high blood pressure, but that sleeping more than average did not provide any additional health benefit.

—Heather S. Oliff, PhD

Ashwagandha May Fight Cancer by Suppressing NFkB

The stress-relieving herb ashwagandha may offer powerful protection against cancer by inhibiting the activation of nuclear factor-kappa beta (NFkB), a protein that may contribute to inflammation and disease by activating certain genes.11

For the first time, scientists showed that ashwagandha compounds helped to suppress the activation of NFkB by a variety of agents that can provoke inflammation or cancer, such as pro-inflammatory cytokines, cigarette smoke, and certain medications. Since the activation of NFkB may stimulate the onset, proliferation, and spread of cancer, methods of modulating NFkB's activity offer promise as anti-cancer strategies. Furthermore, ashwagandha constituents helped promote gene-expression patterns that support cancer cell self-destruction (apoptosis) and prevent cancer's spread to other tissues.

These findings help elucidate how ashwagandha may help to optimize well-being and life span.

—Elizabeth Wagner, ND
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