

# Featured Topic: Low Back Pain (4 slides)

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# What Doesn't Work for Back Pain: Surgery

- What doctors most often recommend for back pain:
  - Decreased physical activity and rest
  - Surgery and/or injections [steroids]
- What doesn't work for back pain: rest and surgery
  - Researchers compared medical records for 1400 people with diagnoses of disc degeneration or disc herniation
  - Half received surgery to fuse vertebra; half had no surgery
  - Results: after two years, only 26% of the surgical group had returned to work, versus 67% of the non-surgical group
  - The surgical group also had a 41% increase in the use of opiate painkillers
- There are **8 times as many spinal fusion surgeries** today as there were 15 years ago

# White Willow – effectively relieves back pain

- As effective at relieving back pain as a prescription NSAID (Vioxx) - 60% of patients in each group (white willow or Vioxx) saw significant reductions in pain - but white willow is less expensive and has significantly fewer adverse effects
- In a study of white willow versus other conventional drugs or treatments, **40% of the white willow group was pain free in 4 weeks**, while only 18% of the conventional treatment group was pain free
- 191 patients received low or high dose white willow extract, or placebo, for back pain; **60% of the patients getting white willow were pain free in a month while 6% of the placebo group became pain free**; pain reduction for the white willow group was noticed in the first week

# More Natural Medicines to Stop Back Pain

- **Devil's Claw:** 88 patients with low back pain received Devil's claw or the prescription NSAID (Vioxx)
  - 30% more patients in the Devil's claw group reported greater than 50% reduction in pain versus the drug group after 6 weeks
- **Devil's Claw:** 118 patients with low back pain received Devil's claw or placebo
  - number of patients pain free after four weeks: 9 of 51 in the Devil's claw group and only 1 of 54 patients in the placebo group
- **Curcumin:** Up to a 70% reduction in pain sensitivity (animal model of arthritis)
- **Boswellia :** increase of 12% in pain tolerance 2 hours after boswellia use in healthy human volunteers
- **DLPA** prevents the breakdown of the brain's natural pain-killing compounds

## Ligaments and Tendons

Very poor blood supply; healing from injury can take months



## Discs

No blood supply and low cell density; area around the disc can heal but process takes months

**Recovering from a back injury can be a long, slow process; Be patient and allow time to heal**

# **World's Most Adulterated Food: Olive Oil (6 Slides)**

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# Don't be fooled by fake oil

- Olive oil is at the top of almost every list of “most adulterated food”
- It is estimated that 80% of the oil sold in the US as “Italian extra virgin” is a fake
  - Mixed with lower quality (cheaper) oil from North Africa
  - Not olive oil at all! Actually sunflower oil turned green with chlorophyll and beta carotene
- REAL Italian extra virgin olive oil comes exclusively from the first pressing and has no additives
- Buy real Italian extra virgin olive oil
  - Read the label closely to be sure the oil is produced in Italy
  - Consider buying direct from an Italian producer
  - Real Italian is more expensive - \$7 a bottle is probably not Italian extra virgin
  - Should smell fruity and taste like olives

# 10 Health Benefits of REAL Extra Virgin Olive Oil

(from [realfoodforlife.com](http://realfoodforlife.com))

1. Raises HDL and reduces LDL oxidation
2. Protects against loss of bone density
3. Reduces depression
4. Treats earaches (softens and removes ear wax)
5. Repairs damaged hair (used as a conditioner)
6. Improves digestion

## 7. Olive oil is antidiabetic

- Researchers tested a compound from olive leaves called oleuropein, and found two ways it prevents diabetes
  - #1: oleuropein helps the body secrete more insulin
  - #2: oleuropein detoxifies a molecule (amylin) that is overproduced in the early stages of type 2 diabetes, and forms harmful deposits in the pancreas
- Regular intake of olive oil has been shown to reduce risk of type 2 diabetes by 16%
- Olive oil also reduced HbA1C levels and fasting glucose levels

## 8. Olive oil promotes weight loss

- Researchers gave 41 overweight women a controlled diet, with half receiving a high fat breakfast with soybean oil, and half receiving extra virgin olive oil with their breakfast
- After 9 weeks, the group receiving extra virgin olive oil
  - **Lost 80% more fat** than the soybean oil group
  - **Had a 5 point decline in blood pressure**, versus a slight *increase* in blood pressure in the soybean oil group

## 9. Olive oil polyphenols reduce arterial stiffness and prevents heart disease

- 11 day study of 36 otherwise healthy people with beginnings of arterial stiffness
  - Arterial stiffness = rigid blood vessels
  - Risk factor for high blood pressure, heart attack, and stroke
- Received olive fruit extract (500 mg) or placebo
- Olive group experienced – in just 11 days:
  - Almost 20% reduction in arterial stiffness
  - 21% decrease in triglyceride levels
  - 11% increase in energy

# 10. Olive Oil stops breast cancer

- Researchers followed 4,282 women aged 60 to 80 years, with no previous history of breast cancer, for almost 5 years
- The women consumed the Mediterranean diet plus olive oil, the Mediterranean diet plus nuts, or a control (low fat) diet
- Result: for every 5% of calories consumed from virgin olive oil the risk of invasive breast cancer was **reduced 28%**
- Assuming a 1600-calorie diet, 5% equals about 80 calories, equivalent to **2 teaspoons of oil**.
- In a study of breast cancer relapse, women treated for breast cancer followed a standard diet (199 women) or a Mediterranean diet with olive oil (108 women)
  - Result: 11 cases of recurring breast cancer in the standard diet group, **ZERO** cases of recurring breast cancer in the Mediterranean diet group

# Antidepressants in the News, Again (3 slides)

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# Story #1: Antidepressant dependency (featured in the Health section of the *New York Times*)

- Major depressive disorder is the leading cause of disability for Americans aged 15-44
- Long term use of antidepressants for Americans has doubled since 2010 and tripled since 2000
- However, now many people are finding that **trying to stop these drugs leads to unbearable withdrawal symptoms** they were never warned about: dizziness, confusion, insomnia, anxiety, headaches, fatigue, and irritability
- Some people can gradually taper down the dose over many months in order to get off the anti-depressant – for some the withdrawal is so bad they have to go back on the drug

# Story #1: Antidepressant use linked to dementia

- Researchers examined the health records of over 40,000 people with dementia, and compared their use of certain types of drugs with a control group of over 280,000 people who did NOT have dementia
- Results
  - Daily use (for a year or more) of anticholinergic drugs **increased risk of dementia by 30%**
  - This was true **even if daily use of anticholinergics had occurred as long as 20 years before** dementia onset
  - Anticholinergics block acetylcholine – acetylcholine levels are known to be significantly lower in people with Alzheimer's disease
  - In addition to depression, anticholinergics are also used to treat bladder conditions (overactive bladder) and Parkinson's disease

# 3 natural interventions for depression

*NOTE: talk to your doctor if you are taking antidepressants and want to add natural products or stop medication use*

**#1: St John's wort:** more than 50 trials have found SJW equal or more effective than prescription anti-depressants for mild to moderate depression

- 900 mg daily

**#2: Curcumin:** shown in clinical trials to be equally as effective as the prescription drug fluoxetine at reducing the symptoms of depression

- Dosage: 750 mg curcumin with turmeric essential oil daily

**#3: Omega-3** from salmon: low levels of omega fatty acids are associated with depression, and omega-3 supplementation has been shown to improve depression symptoms

- Dosage: 1-2 tablets daily of omega-3 from salmon
- **Ideal for use during pregnancy!**