

# Making America Organic...One Home At a Time!



P.O. Box 1138, Clarcona, FL 32710 407-522-1502 <http://www.orlandoorganics.com>

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## Alternative Remedies Fail Government Tests

For years, millions of Americans have spent billions of dollars on alternative remedies with unproven effects. Now, science is starting to test those treatments and mostly finds them lacking.

Last week, major government-funded research indicated that two wildly popular arthritis pills, glucosamine and chondroitin, did no better than dummy pills at relieving mild arthritis pain.

Earlier this month a study revealed negative results for saw palmetto to treat prostate problems; last July, ditto for echinacea and the common cold. Those followed similar disappointments for St. John's wort to treat major depression, and powdered shark cartilage for some cancers.

Yet despite the U.S. government's multimillion-dollar investment to scientifically scrutinize a little regulated \$20 billion-a-year industry, the big question is, do the results really matter when so many consumers swear by these remedies?

"I'll wrestle anybody who says it's no good," Carl Haupt, 79, says of glucosamine and chondroitin, pills he credits with helping him resume mountain hiking, a hobby he quit seven years ago because of arthritis pain.

Haupt spends about \$25 monthly on the pills. Debilitating pain returned when he quit taking them once, and he said the government's results won't change his mind.

Even the researchers themselves, funded by the National Institutes of Health, say their results don't necessarily mean consumers are pouring their money down the drain.

"If someone tells me this is working for them, I'm not going to tell them not to take it," said Dr. Thomas Schnitzer, a Northwestern University arthritis specialist and co-author of the glucosamine/chondroitin study.

That's partly because the three most recent studies found no real harm; also, in some cases, the results are not completely clear-cut.

For example, while most people taking the arthritis pills in the study got no significant benefit, the pills did appear to help those with more severe pain.

And critics of the echinacea study say different doses might have found a benefit in fighting colds.

Also, studying these herbs and extracts is far more challenging than researching prescription drugs, which are subject to Food and Drug Administration scrutiny. Alternative health products with the same name can have vastly different ingredients and potencies, and research results from one may not apply to others, said Gail Mahady, a botanicals researcher at the University of Illinois at Chicago. She was not involved in the federal studies.

But another important factor is what scientists call the placebo effect — meaning that just thinking you're taking something useful can make you think there's a benefit.

Imaging tests have shown changes in the brains of placebo users, suggesting that the effect is not just "in your mind," it's also in the brain, said Dr. Stephen Straus, director of NIH's National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine.

"Their wishful thinking that they're going to get better is harnessing the body's own mechanism for relieving pain," said Straus, whose agency was formed seven years ago to stringently test non-conventional remedies.

The placebo effect was huge in patients unknowingly taking dummy pills in the arthritis study and could have overshadowed any potential benefit from the real pills.

But it's also likely that the placebo effect contributes to benefits that many people say they get from alternative remedies, and it's something doctors shouldn't dismiss, said Dr. Anthony Miksanek, a family physician in rural southern Illinois who has many arthritis patients on glucosamine and chondroitin.

"My thought is if you give somebody a pill and say this may help you," that might be the spark they need to "get out and do more things, walk more," or get more exercise, all of which can help relieve arthritis pain, said Miksanek, of Benton, Ill.

*(Continued on page 2)*

### Harvest Blend Regular

- Broccoli
- Baby Carrots
- Celery
- Yellow Onions
- Tomatoes
- Spinach
- Green Leaf Lettuce
- Hass Avocado
- Braeburn Apples
- Valencia Oranges
- Bosc Pears
- Ruby Grapefruit
- Kent Mango

See the web site for details on our other options. Produce bag contents are subject to change based on availability.

### OO News

We'll send out an email regarding some of these items soon, but as a special bonus for those of you who actually read the newsletter, you get to find out about these shocking items first. (Everyone now: *Whoooooo!*)

First, we now take Discover card. If you would like to switch your credit card billing over to Discover, call us and we will get that set up for you.

Whole chickens are available again! We're now carrying Eberly's whole organic chickens for a limited time. If they sell well, we will try and keep them in stock.

"Maybe it's a message of hope ... and the brain kind of takes that and runs with it," he said.

Milly Navarro, a 33-year-old public relations specialist in Dallas, said she doesn't care if the placebo effect explains why echinacea keeps her from getting colds — she'll keep taking it anyway. "I know the mind is a powerful thing and even if it's that that does the trick, whatever it is, it works for me," Navarro said.

Barrie Cassileth, an alternative medicine researcher at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York, said some products, including echinacea and St. John's wort, can interfere with conventional medicine and should not be considered harmless.

But others, including saw palmetto, are cheaper and have fewer side effects than prescription medicine. "If the results that people swear by work by placebo, who cares?" she asks.

Some data suggest that more than one-third of Americans use alternative medicine, and many remedies are even more popular abroad. It's too soon to know if this month's studies have changed any habits, but anecdotal evidence suggests all five products studied remain popular.

Ben Pratt, a spokesman for the General Nutrition Centers, a national chain of stores that sell nutritional supplements, said sales of echinacea remain strong and were not affected by last summer's negative study.

Some consumers use alternative medicine because of safety concerns about prescription drugs, including reports of heart problems that doomed the once-popular arthritis drug Vioxx. Others mistrust the medical establishment because it bombards them with contradictory studies.

"You can just wait long enough and someone else will have an opposite opinion," said Richard Peterson, 62, a Baltimore property manager who says he won't stop taking glucosamine.

## Recipes

### Pantry Friendly Tomato Sauce

- 2 (28-ounce) cans whole, peeled tomatoes
- 1/4 cup sherry vinegar
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 tsp red pepper flakes
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1 tsp dried basil
- 1 onion
- 1 carrot
- 1 stalk celery
- 2 ounces olive oil
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 tbsp capers, rinsed and drained
- 1/2 cup white wine
- Kosher salt and black pepper, to taste

In a sieve over a medium non-reactive saucepot, strain the tomatoes of their juice into the sauce pot. Add the sherry vinegar, sugar, red pepper flakes, oregano, and basil to the tomato juice. Stir and cook over high heat. Once bubbles begin to form on the surface, reduce to a simmer. Allow liquid to reduce by 1/2 or until liquid has thickened to a loose syrup consistency.

Squeeze each tomato thoroughly to ensure most seeds are removed. Set the tomatoes aside.

Cut carrot, onion, and celery into uniform sizes and combine with olive oil and garlic in a non-reactive roasting pan over low heat. Sweat the mirepoix until the carrots are tender and the onion becomes translucent, 15 to 20 minutes. Add the tomatoes and capers to the roasting pan.

Place roasting pan on the middle rack of the oven and broil for 15 to 20 minutes, stirring every 5 minutes. Tomatoes should start to brown slightly on edges with light caramelization. Remove the pan from the broiler. Place the pan over 2 burners on the stove. Add the white wine to the tomatoes and cook for 2 to 3 more minutes over medium heat.

Put the tomatoes into a deep pot or bowl and add the reduced tomato liquid to the tomatoes. Blend to desired consistency and adjust seasoning.

### Berried Avocado Grapefruit Salad

- lettuce
- watercress
- 2 avocados, seeded, peeled and sliced
- 2 cups grapefruit sections
- 1 cup fresh raspberries

Line serving platter or individual salad plates with lettuce and watercress. Arrange avocado, grapefruit and raspberries over and sprinkle with dressing.

### Grapefruit Chiffon Loaf Cake

- 1 cup flour
- 1/3 cup grapefruit juice
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 4 egg whites
- 1 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1/4 tsp cream of tartar
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 2 tsp grated grapefruit peel
- 1/4 cup oil
- 1/2 tsp vanilla
- 3 egg yolks
- 2 tbsp grapefruit juice
- 1 1/2 tsp grated grapefruit peel
- 1 cup sifted 10X sugar

In a large mixer bowl stir together flour, the granulated sugar, the baking powder, and salt. Make a well in center of dry ingredients. Add in order: oil, egg yolks, the 1 1/2 tsp. grapefruit peel, and the 1/3 cup juice. Beat smooth with electric mixer. Wash beaters thoroughly. In a medium mixer bowl beat egg whites with cream of tartar till very stiff peaks form (tips stand straight). Scrape the whites over the flour mixture and fold in gently. Pour into an ungreased 9x5x3-inch loaf pan. Bake in 350 degree oven for 23 to 30 minutes or till cake tests done. Invert; cool in pan completely. Loosen edges of cake and remove from pan. Combine remaining grapefruit peel, vanilla, and enough juice with the powdered sugar to make an icing of drizzling consistency. Spread over top of cake, allowing some icing to drizzle down sides.