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Why are my Fingernails Brittle?

Fingernails are one of the body parts that have been termed a "gateway to health", meaning that in many cases fingernails reveal a lot about internal body processes. The function of the fingernail is to protect the nerve endings in the fingertips. They are composed of a protein called keratin.

While everyone's nail growth is different, the average growth rate is approximately 1/8 of an inch per month which means it can take 3-7 months to grow a new nail. A healthy nail will appear smooth, free of ridges and spots and the underneath of the nail bed will appear pink indicating a healthy blood supply.

Many people are very hard on their nails, exposing them to multiple chemicals and harsh soaps, and bang or snag them accidentally. However, there are many people that are extremely careful and still find the nails to be brittle and peel, crack and break very easily. If your hands are constantly in water, and exposed to harsh soaps make sure to dry your hands thoroughly and then apply a cream to your cuticles.

If there is no underlying condition, the nails will take approximately three months to improve. If there is no improvement the nail, the problem is usually due to

an underlying condition or nutritional deficiency in the body.

Many people believe that dry and brittle nails are caused by a lack of calcium in the body. However, calcium is only one of the many nutritional deficiencies that can effect the nails. Nail health depends on adequate amounts of dietary protein, biotin and zinc, and some studies have shown iron to be the most common deficiency related to brittle nails.

The underlying reason for brittle nails usually goes deeper than a nutritional deficiency. When poor nail health is accompanied with thinning hair, an inability to lose weight and overall fatigue it could be an indication of a thyroid imbalance. When accompanied with bloating and belching after meals the brittle nails could indicate hypochlohydria, or an insufficient amount of stomach acid needed for proper digestion. When there is a lack of stomach acid or a thyroid condition, it is important to resolve the underlying condition before increasing your intake of individual nutrients, as taking nutritional supplements would only be masking the problem.

If your nails crack and break for no apparent reason, it is important to get them examined by a Naturopathic Doctor or another

health care practitioner as they may be one of the first outward signs of an imbalance in the body.

Robin Walsh, BASc, ND



A hand full of health nails.



Valentine's Day is Good for your Heart

The stuff of Valentine's day may be good for your heart in more ways than one - chocolate, red wine and expressions of love can in fact be good for your heart's health, latest researches show.

Chocolate, red wine and love can play a role in keeping the blood flowing throughout the body. However, experts are not yet sure as to how they exactly boost physical fitness.

It seems a component in cocoa - flavonoids - can be heart

healthful. Flavonoids are anti-oxidants which also help lower the level of bad cholesterol and increase the amount of good cholesterol.

Alcohol (in moderate amount) has a blood thinning effect and that has been found to be effective against stroke and heart disease.

The evidence is also very strong that good relationships have health benefits.

Happiness and good health is not day specific. Any celebra-

tion or happy event, a social gathering or fun and enjoyment with friends and family can keep a person stress free and his heart healthy.

Dr. Adam Williamson, DC

"My injury left me with no chance of ever playing hockey again. Now, after being treated with ART and a proper rehabilitation program, I have completely regained my hockey career."
Gary Roberts, NHL
Forward, Toronto Maple Leafs



Active Release Techniques

The New Gold Standard in Soft Tissue Injuries

What is Active Release Technique (ART)?

ART is a patented, state-of-the-art soft tissue system that treats problems with muscles, tendons, ligaments, fascia and nerves. Headaches, back pain, carpal tunnel syndrome, shin splints, shoulder pain, sciatica, plantar fasciitis, knee problems, and tennis elbow are just a few of the many conditions that can be resolved quickly and permanently with ART. These conditions all have one important thing in common: they often result from injury to over-used muscles.

How do overuse injuries occur?

Over-used muscles (and other soft tissues) change in three important ways:

- acute injuries (pulls, tears, collisions, etc),

- accumulation of small tears (micro-trauma)
- not getting enough oxygen (hypoxia).

Each of these factors can cause your body to produce tough, dense scar tissue in the affected area. This scar tissue binds up and ties down tissues that need to move freely. As scar tissue builds up, muscles become shorter and weaker, tension on tendons causes tendonitis, and nerves can become trapped. This can cause reduced range of motion, loss of strength, and pain. If a nerve is trapped you may also feel tingling, numbness, and weakness.

What is an ART treatment like?

Every ART session is actually a combination of examination and treatment. The ART provider uses his or her hands to evaluate the texture, tightness

and movement of muscles, fascia, tendons, ligaments and nerves. Abnormal tissues are treated by combining precisely directed tension with very specific patient movements.

These treatment protocols - over 500 specific moves - are unique to ART. They allow providers to identify and correct the specific problems that are affecting each individual patient. ART is not a cookie-cutter approach.

What is the history of Active Release Techniques?

ART has been developed, refined, and patented by P. Michael Leahy, DC, CCSP. Dr. Leahy noticed that his patients' symptoms seemed to be related to changes in their soft tissue that could be felt by hand.

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Active Release Techniques cont'd...

By observing how muscles, fascia, tendons, ligaments and nerves responded to different types of work, Dr. Leahy was able to consistently resolve over 90% of his patients' problems. He now teaches and certifies health care providers all over the world to use ART.

Dr. Adam Williamson, DC

"When we do some ART, I feel much looser - almost something like I have a new body. It's for people who are in discomfort every day. I have sent my mother and cousin for ART."
- Jamie Sale, Figure Skater, Olympic Gold Medalist



"My injury left me with no chance of ever playing hockey again. Now, after being treated with ART and a proper rehabilitation program, I have completely regained my career in Hockey."
- Gary Roberts NHL Forward, North Carolina Hurricanes



Homemade Nut & Honey Energy Bars

These delicious high protein, high fiber treats are great as a pre or post workout snack.

- 1 cup oatmeal
- 1 cup granola
- ¼ cup sesame seeds
- ¼ cup flax seeds
- ½ cup wheat germ
- ½ cup bran

- ½ cup protein powder, soy or whey
- ½ tsp. cinnamon
- ½ cup maple syrup
- ½ cup honey
- 1 cup peanut butter
- ½ cup pecans
- Optional: ¼ to ½ cup coconut, raisins, or dried fruit

Grease a 9 x 13 inch pan or 10 x 10. Mix dry ingredients. Mix peanut butter, honey and maple syrup in a saucepan and stir until very hot, but don't boil! Pour and mix over dry ingredients. Press into pan. Let it sit for 24 hours in fridge. Cut into bars. Wrap individually or store in airtight container in the fridge or freezer.

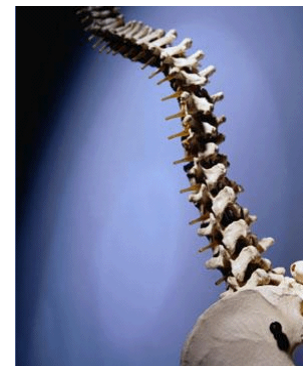
Sarah Heipel, CPT, CFC, SNS

"Thanks to Anne D. for passing along this great recipe!"

10 Tips for Keeping Your Back Healthy

1. Exercise regularly.
2. Follow a health diet.
3. Maintain good posture.
4. Stretch your spine before and after sports.
5. Don't overload your backpack or shoulder bag.
6. Stretch your legs and back after each hour of sitting.
7. Never cradle the phone between your neck and shoulder.
8. Sleep on your back or side, not your stomach.
9. Invest in a good chair, pillow and mattress. It's worth it!
10. Have regular spinal checks.

Dr. Adam Williamson, DC





A bottle of the tablet form of Vitamin B12.

“While B12 is not the magical fountain of youth, it does appear by the latest studies, to alleviate a number of neurological and psychological problems and promote a sense of well being.”

Are you Deficient in B12?

B12 was recently highlighted on Global News by a Naturopathic Doctor and since then I have been receiving many questions about it's benefits. So, here is a brief article outlining the benefits, food sources, absorption and deficiency signs of vitamin B12.

Vitamin B12 or cobalamin is a member of the B complex family and is necessary for the synthesis of red blood cells, the maintenance of the nervous system, and growth and development in children. B12 is essential to prevent pernicious anemia, a disease that occurs mostly in adults. An anemia occurs when there is a lack of red blood cells or when the blood is lacking in hemoglobin. Hemoglobin is the oxygen-carrying pigment found in red blood cells.

Although there are over 400 different forms of anemia, the three most common forms are iron-deficiency anemia, vitamin B12 anemia and folic acid deficiency.

While B12 is not the magical fountain of youth, it does ap-

pear by the latest studies, to alleviate a number of neurological and psychological problems and promote a sense of well being. The first deficiency symptoms will be unusual tiredness, difficulty in breathing and dizziness. Other symptoms that relate to B12 deficiency include, tingling, numbness, reduced sensitivity to pain or pressure, blurred vision, abnormal gait, sore tongue, poor memory, confusion, hallucinations and personality changes. B12 deficiency can also lead to mental confusion, apathy, irritability and go from mild depression and confusion to obvious dementia

A vegetarian or vegan diet can cause vitamin B12 deficiency because vitamin B12 is only found in foods of animal origin, such as meat, liver, fish, eggs and milk. The other common cause of vitamin B12 deficiency is a lack of 'intrinsic factor', a substance which is produced in the stomach and enables the body to absorb vitamin B12 from the diet..

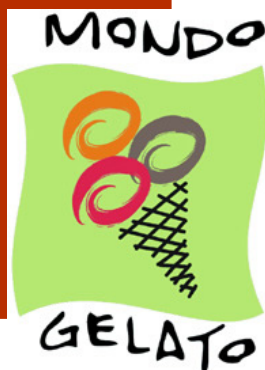
In younger individuals, B12

deficiency is usually the result of a problem with the intrinsic factor. When this factor is missing, the patient must be given periodic B12 injections as B12 is not able to be absorbed from food in the intestines. Stomach cancer and ulcers can also cause a reduced amount of intrinsic factor to be produced as they can take up so much room in the stomach, that there are not enough cells remaining to produce the intrinsic factor.

In the majority of elderly patients, it is usually not the intrinsic factor that is a problem but instead the deficiency is due to the fact that B12 also needs stomach acid to be absorbed. As adults age, many gradually develop atrophic gastritis, a condition in which the secretion of stomach acid declines. Stomach acid is required to free B12 from its association with animal proteins. The elderly may also take antacids with their meals, such calcium (tums) which could further lower available

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Sarah's Breakfast Gelato



This recipe is so delicious it can also be served as a dessert! It's like having ice cream for breakfast.

2 cups of frozen berries

½ cup plain yogurt

1 whole raw egg

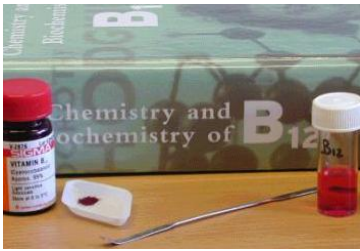
1 Tbsp maple syrup

Combine all ingredients in a food processor and blend for 1 minute.

Makes 2 servings.

Sarah Heipel, CPT, CFC, SNS

Are you Deficient in B12? cont'd...



stomach acid.

Some researchers believe that lowered B12 absorption may affect as many as 1 in every 2 people 60 years and older. However, the number of elderly who must take

Liquid form of Vitamin B12

B12 injections is believed to be quite small.

If you are vegetarian or vegan, it is important that you supplement with B12, as dietary sources will be limited. If you are supplementing B12, you should use what is called a sublingual supplement which is one that is placed under the tongue. Sublingual B12 helps to ensure that the nutrient is absorbed into the body for usage. If you are found to be deficient in B12, the gold standard for supplementation is intramuscular injections which can be administered by your medical or naturopathic

doctor.

If you are dealing with unexplained fatigue, it is important to rule out B12 deficiency as a possible cause. B12 deficiency is more common than you might think, and correcting a deficiency can greatly increase your energy and quality of life. If you think have any of the above mentioned symptoms, consult a Naturopathic doctor or other health care practitioner to see if you could be suffering from a B12 deficiency.

Robin Walsh, BASc, ND

Minerals ... the other deficiency

Health care practitioners talk a lot about the benefits of taking multivitamins, and supplementing with vitamin C for a cold, or the B vitamins during periods of stress. It is the minerals that don't get the press they deserve, as they are an essential piece to maintain crucial body processes.

According to Dr. Sheldon Saul Hendler MD, PhD, author of The Doctor's Vitamin and Mineral Encyclopedia, "Mineral insufficiency and trace elements insufficiency are more likely to occur than are vitamin insufficiency states. Because of differing geologic conditions, minerals and trace elements may be scarce in the soils of certain regions and rich in those of other regions. Thus, you can live in some areas, eat a perfectly 'balanced' diet and still develop mineral deficiencies or trace element deficiencies that can only be averted through dietary change or supplementation."

Minerals are important to maintain all physiological processes, and are

constituents of the teeth, bones, tissues, blood, muscle, and nerve cells. They are necessary for the transmission of messages through the nervous system. They also aid in digestion and metabolism, and help the body utilize all the nutrients in foods. In fact, vitamins cannot be properly assimilated without the correct balance of minerals.

Calcium and phosphorus are the two most common minerals found in the body. Other prevalent minerals include; iron, zinc, sodium, potassium, magnesium, fluoride, sulfur, copper, and chloride.

While you could go on all day and talk about the many processes for all the vitamins and minerals, I am going to touch on the more popular minerals.

Calcium

When people think of calcium, they think of a mineral that is important for the elderly to decrease the risk of osteoporosis, and for kids to build strong bones and teeth. The

reality is that calcium is required throughout the lifestyle, and has many more functions in the body than simply preventing osteoporosis.

Calcium rich foods include dairy products, tofu, dark leafy green vegetables, salmon, fortified soy and rice soy milks, and almonds. While food is the best way to obtain calcium, if your diet is lacking in calcium rich foods then supplementation is necessary. Calcium is an important nutrient for women of all ages to help prevent the onset of osteoporosis later in life. The skeleton increases its bone mass from puberty to the mid 30's. Calcium intake during this period will greatly reduce the chance of osteoporosis later in life.

The body's main function is survival. If the brain notices that there is not enough calcium is circulating in the blood, it will use hormones to leech calcium from the bones. If your diet is consistently low in calcium, the body will deplete the

*"Mineral insufficiency and trace elements insufficiency are more likely to occur than are vitamin insufficiency states. "
Dr. Sheldon Saul Hendler MD, PhD*

Minerals ... the other deficiency cont'd...

skeleton of calcium until the bone integrity is compromised. Females from adolescence through adulthood should have approximately 800mg per day, and during pregnancy calcium requirements increase to 1200mg. It has been found that women with PMS symptoms including mood swings, depression, and menstrual cramps can decrease their symptoms by supplementing with 1200mg of calcium daily. Our absorption usually decreases with age, so post-menopausal women should consume approximately 1200-1500mg day.

When using calcium supplements it is important to include magnesium, as it is essential to help with calcium absorption. It is difficult for your body to absorb more than 500mg of calcium at one time - if you require more than 500mg than you should take divided doses throughout the day.

Magnesium plays important roles in the structure and function of the human body. It is involved in more than 300 essential metabolic reactions, including energy production. Signs of magnesium deficiency include neurological and muscular symptoms like tremors, muscle spasms, tetany, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, and personality changes.

Chromium

Chromium plays an important role in the metabolism of amino acids (the building blocks of protein), and the production of glucose for our cells. Deficiency symptoms include glucose intolerance and

raised serum lipids levels. Studies have shown that chromium helps to lower blood sugar in individuals with type II Diabetes, however diabetics should only supplement with chromium under medical supervision.

Iron

Iron is needed by the body to make hemoglobin which is a substance in red blood cells that carries oxygen from the lungs to body tissues. Iron is stored in the bone marrow, which is responsible for making blood cells. When iron is low in the bloodstream, the body uses the bone marrow for reserves. If this iron storage form is low, the red blood cells do not form properly, and usually are smaller and less abundant than normal. Consequently, there is less hemoglobin available to transport oxygen. Some symptoms of iron deficiency include fatigue, dizziness, irritability, headaches, difficulty concentrating, shortness of breath during exercise, a pale appearance, brittle nails, and cracked lips.

Iron deficiency is more common in women who have a heavy menstrual flow, athletes, pregnant women, and vegetarians. If you are part of these groups, it is important to increase your iron rich foods, and/or take a multivitamin. Iron rich foods include: liver, meat, beans, lentils, pumpkin seeds, baked potato skin, fortified cereals and blackstrap molasses. Vitamin C will help to enhance the absorption of iron. If you suspect that you are iron deficient, please consult a health care practitioner before starting any iron supplementation above a multivitamin, as iron can cause constipation. A study in the Journal of the American Medical Association showed that women who store too much iron in the body might be at an increased risk for type II diabetes.

Zinc

Zinc is a powerful antioxidant, which

is necessary for protein synthesis, wound healing, the development of the reproductive organs, prostate functions, and male hormone activity. It is part of more than 100 enzymes that help your body function properly. Deficiency symptoms may result in delayed sexual maturity, prolonged wound healing, white spots on fingernails, retarded growth, fatigue, and susceptibility to infections. Research completed at the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio suggests that the simple practice of sucking on zinc lozenges can reduce the symptoms and duration of the common cold if you're unlucky enough to fall ill.

While individual minerals are important, how they function together is crucial to your body's processes. There are complex biochemical processes constantly occurring in the body, in an attempt to keep blood pH as near perfect as possible. These pH-buffering systems need a good balance of minerals to work effectively. If we are getting inadequate mineral intake from the food we eat, our pH balancing systems will start to have problems. Diseases such as cancer, arthritis, diabetes, heart disease, chronic fatigue, and allergies are just a few conditions that are linked to improper pH balance. While there are many factors leading to this imbalance, proper mineral balance is essential to its function.

While some people may not see immediate changes from a mineral supplementation, others will notice possible increases in energy and concentration. Regardless of the immediate effects, a proper balance of vitamins and minerals will prevent deficiencies that, if neglected long term, may be associated with chronic ailments including cancer and heart disease. For optimal health, consume a balanced diet consisting of whole grains, fruits, and vegetables, and supplement with a multivitamin to ensure complete nutrition.

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Vibrant Living

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