

# NUTRACEUTICALS WORLD

## Featured Content

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### The Life Lines of Women

#### More products are appearing on the market to help women live longer and healthier.

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There are three stages to women's lives: The beginning, up to around age 25, when we don't give our health a second thought; the middle, when we start to become concerned; and the third part, when we are actively seeking ways to prolong our lives and have a high quality of life through a healthy body.

Each stage of life brings up certain health issues, although naturally these tend to multiply the older a woman gets. The biggest issues for women continue to be osteoporosis, heart disease, cancer, pregnancy and menopause. But women are also more likely to suffer from urinary tract infections than men, migraines and headaches, PMS and depression.

And there are going to be more women suffering these issues. According to market researcher Mintel International Group, Chicago, IL, the female population in the U.S. will increase by more than 6.7 million between 2007 and 2012, with the groups witnessing the largest increase aged 55 to 64, which will grow by 16% by 2012, and aged 65 to 74, which will expand by 20%.

The good news is that food, beverage and supplement manufacturers are coming out with more products targeted specifically to this gender.

Tom Vierhile, executive editor of Datamonitor's Productscan Online, Naples, NY, called the fortified food and beverage category for women "very active" and said he expects continued growth. "Functional products will continue to increase, especially 'vanity products,'" he said. He expects more "beauty from within" products on the market, as well as more for brain health and relaxation.

"Functional foods will prosper as long as there's science to back them up," he added.

Healthy aging, balanced energy and inflammation are consumers' three biggest concerns today, according to Tinderbox on Trends 2008, from The Hartman Group, Bellevue, WA. While the study analyzed both men and women (aged from their early 20s to their 60s), the latter constituted 80% of respondents, since they're typically the gatekeepers to health, said Melissa Abbott, senior trend spotter and analyst with Tinderbox.

The study showed that to help ease these concerns, consumers experiment first with their diet, but when that doesn't work they turn to supplements as well as fortified foods and beverages.

"We found [women] are a little skeptical about where the 'fortification' in fortified foods comes from," said Ms. Abbott. But if they want fortification, they prefer it in breakfast foods. As they move through the day, however, they don't want fortified foods as much, she said.

The problem, Ms. Abbott explained, is that women are never quite sure how much they should consume of a fortified product.

As for supplements, usage typically starts in a woman's late 20s. Women are usually looking for supplements that are from real food, a source that's recognizable, she pointed out.

"And supplements are exactly that," Ms. Abbott said. "Women are really looking to use them to boost what's missing from their diets."

#### Women Take Heart

Heart disease remains the biggest killer of American women, with nearly 500,000 falling victim every year, according to "WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease." This translates to a whopping 43% of women who die of this insidious killer each year! Actually, more women die of heart disease than of all cancers combined.

One of the main causes of heart disease is too much cholesterol in the body, and something many women don't know is that menopause may cause their cholesterol levels to rise dramatically. In fact, in the 10 years after menopause, women are four times more likely to contract heart disease, according to research taken from the "Check for Change Report" commissioned by Flora pro.activ in the U.K.

Mintel research indicates that cholesterol concerns are driving 32% of women to watch their diet. Fortunately, food and beverage

products targeting cardiovascular health have shot up in popularity recently. Mintel's Global New Products Database revealed a massive 244% increase in new introductions in this category—from 43 products in 2006 to 148 in 2007.

One product launched in recent years to help consumers manage their cholesterol is CoroWise plant sterols, from ingredient supplier Cargill Health & Food Technologies, Minneapolis, MN. Clinical studies suggest that plant sterols can reduce cholesterol by 8% to 15%, but the best news is that no adverse side effects have been found and there's no difference in taste—textures may become a little creamier, which to most women can only be a good thing.

CoroWise is constantly being added to more foods. Today it can be found in products ranging from milk from grocers Giant Eagle and Kroger, to Minute Maid Premium HeartWise orange juice, Orowheat whole grain and oat bread, and Lifetime Low Fat Cheese.

"Having a range of products makes it easy for women to incorporate CoroWise into their diet," said Pam Stauffer, Cargill's marketing programs manager. How the product works, she explained, is that it's structurally similar to cholesterol, so it reduces the absorption of cholesterol from foods.

Cargill has researched into which products CoroWise is acceptable. "What we found was that it needs to be in products [consumers] consider healthy," said Ms. Stauffer.

## Facing Menopause

Menopause has become a much bigger issue over the years, largely because women are living longer, but also because it's become more acceptable to talk about it.

By 2012, there will be 60 million women going through menopause. And according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C., most of these women will live 25 to 30 years—one-third of their lives—after menopause.

The biggest problem, according to Maria Lugano, president and founder of the American Menopause Foundation, New York, NY, is that these women aren't eating or exercising right. "And they're not asking themselves in peri-menopause what they should be doing."

Women today dealing with menopausal symptoms are trying everything imaginable, said Ms. Lugano. "The question you have to ask yourself is what are the long-term effects?"

Since some hormone replacement therapies and estrogen replacements have been shown to increase the risk of certain cancers, many women are looking for alternatives—often more natural ways to deal with menopausal symptoms such as hot flashes and loss of libido.

Some women are turning more to soy, soy products and isoflavones (antioxidants), according to Dr. Daniel Fabricant, vice president of scientific and regulatory affairs for the Natural Products Association (NPA), Washington, D.C. This is because Asian women seem to suffer much less from menopause, possibly because their diets are rich in soy.

Very few products have been clinically tested, but one of those that has is Remifemin, a dietary supplement distributed by Enzymatic Therapy, Inc., Green Bay, WI. Remifemin contains dong quai and black cohosh, and has been proven to help with hot flashes.

Another ingredient that has been clinically evaluated for its beneficial impact on hot flashes is HMRlignan from Linnea, Locarno, Switzerland. Recent study results on this proprietary extract point to a 53% reduction in hot flashes.

Yet another product with clinical substantiation is Femmenessence, which is manufactured by Natural Health International, San Francisco, CA. It contains black cohosh, red clover, soy and maca.

These ingredients have been shown to not only help with menopausal symptoms, but also heart disease, mental health, perception and bone density.

"It's not addressing the symptoms but rather the whole endocrine system," said James Frame, CEO.

Clinical studies of peri- and post-menopausal women, showed that taking Femmenessence reduced menopausal symptoms in 84% of participants. Independent reports by medical practitioners have indicated that more than 75% of the total remaining 16% could derive improvements by adjusting the dose either up or down from the standard two capsules in the morning and evening.

The way it works is that Femmenessence stimulates the body to secrete the level of hormones that are appropriate for a woman's physiological stage of life and necessary for optimal health.

## Osteoporosis: The State of Calcium & Vitamin D

One of the devastating side effects of menopause is osteoporosis, which continues to steal women's quality of life.

According to the National Osteoporosis Foundation, Washington, D.C., 10 million Americans are estimated to have this disease, eight million of which are women.

The most important nutrients needed to prevent osteoporosis are calcium and vitamin D, which can be found in abundance in both supplements and foods.

"One of the things we've recently discovered is that excessive calcium doesn't help," said Dr. Felicia Cosman, clinical director for the National Osteoporosis Foundation and medical director of the clinical research center at Helen Hayes Hospital, West Haverstraw, NY.

"Around 1200 mg a day is needed, and some women are overdoing it. Too much can lead to a risk of kidney disease and possibly vascular disease."

Dr. Cosman advises women to get their calcium from foods as much as possible. There are 300 mg, on average, per serving in foods,

she said, so if women eat three servings of calcium-rich, or calcium-fortified foods, together with the trace amounts in other foods, they will probably consume close to 1200 mg.

"If a woman doesn't eat enough calcium-rich food, she should supplement, but she should also make sure that her total food plus supplement intake isn't too high," she said.

Dr. Cosman also cautions that women should spread their calcium intake throughout the day for better absorption, and supplements can help with this, too.

Vitamin D is necessary in conjunction with calcium for mineral deposition in the bones. "There's an epidemic of vitamin D shortages right now, possibly because people are avoiding the sun," she said.

"If you block the sun you really need to take 800 to 1000 mg per day of vitamin D," she said, urging women with osteoporosis to have their vitamin D levels checked.

The bad news about vitamin D is that it's one of the hardest nutrients to find in food, so this is an area where supplements are really essential.

According to the Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS), Bethesda, MD, the elderly in particular are at risk of being deficient in vitamin D because as they get older, their skin cannot synthesize this nutrient as efficiently and the kidney is less capable of converting it to its active hormone.

Women with darker skin should also ensure they get enough vitamin D, according to ODS, because their skin absorbs less of it from the sun.

Powdered hot chocolate maker Swiss Miss recently created an easy (and pleasurable) way for women to get their fill of calcium and vitamin D (as well as a number of other nutrients).

Last fall the company introduced Pick-Me-Up Cocoa, which has as much calcium and vitamin D as a glass of milk; and Great Start Cocoa, which has 15 essential vitamins and minerals, including vitamin D and as much calcium as an eight-ounce cup of milk. And neither product is going to ruin women's diets—both have just 110 calories and 2 grams of fat per serving.

## Lifting Libido

Brittle bones aren't the only side effect of menopause. Sexual desire can also be affected due to dipping levels of both estrogen and testosterone.

ArginMax for women can help. This product from the Daily Wellness Company, Honolulu, HI, contains L-arginine, ginseng, ginkgo, damiana, multivitamins and minerals. Some of these ingredients can also help with menopause-related problems, such as vaginal dryness and hot flashes.

In a double-blind, placebo-controlled study involving 108 women aged 22 to 73, 72% of the pre-menopausal women reported increased levels of sexual desire after four weeks of taking ArginMax. Among the peri-menopausal women, 79% showed increased satisfaction with their sexual relationship, and among the post-menopausal women, 51% showed heightened sexual desire.

## Preparing for Pregnancy

Pregnancy is an issue for younger women, who need to know that they should be taking folic acid long before they become pregnant to prevent birth defects, said Susan Wysocki, RNC, NP, FAANP, president and CEO of the National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health, Washington, D.C.

Pregnant women or women hoping to get pregnant should include 400 mcg of folic acid per day into their diets to prevent birth defects. They also need 1000 mg of calcium plus 200 IU of vitamin D for strong bones and teeth.

Folic acid is better absorbed from a supplement than from food, pointed out NPA's Dr. Fabricant.

Interestingly, according to Tod Cooperman, president of ConsumerLab.com, White Plains, NY, folic acid has been shown recently to be the vitamin least likely to be in Americans' diets. It's also been shown to degrade easily if it's improperly stored, shipped or handled, so consumers should be careful to pick a reputable brand.

These days most women are aware of which nutrients they need before, during and after pregnancy, particularly folic acid, calcium and vitamin D. But there is one they don't often think about, according to the Society for Women's Health Research (SWHR), Washington, D.C.—the omega 3 fatty acid DHA (docosahexaenoic acid), which is essential for the development and health of a baby's brain, heart and eyes.

"Folic acid, calcium with vitamin D and DHA omega 3—together, they make up the 'Big Three' essential nutrients that are important before, during and after pregnancy," said Phyllis Greenberger, MSW, president and CEO of SWHR. "Fortunately, by paying attention to what they eat, women can easily obtain these nutrients through a balanced diet, fortified foods and supplements."

Around 300 mg per day of DHA is required. DHA can be found in oily fish, such as mackerel, herring and salmon, although the difficulty for pregnant or pre-pregnant women is that they must be very careful of their fish intake due to potentially harmful levels of mercury that may be present. High levels of mercury could do damage to an unborn infant's nervous system.

A mere 17% of women in an SWHR study knew that DHA is found in fish, and 88% said they would be interested in adding DHA to their diet without eating fish, because of the mercury risk.

The study also asked women which foods they'd prefer DHA to be added to if they could choose: More than a third (39%) chose cereal

or cereal bars, followed by milk (36%), orange juice (34%) and pasta (25%). The real optimists among them (19%) would like DHA to be added to chocolate.

The good news is that it's getting easier to find and consume omega 3 fatty acids. In fact, Packaged Facts, New York, NY, reports that omega 3 enriched foods make up the strongest sector of the functional foods market in the U.S. today.

Of course, in order to get pregnant, a woman needs to be fertile, which is yet another issue that huge numbers of women face, especially as many opt to have babies later in their reproductive years.

Chasteberry is just one of the products that has been shown to help out in this department. This dried fruit extract, which has been used as a gynecological supplement for hundreds of years, is said to raise women's levels of progesterone—a necessary hormone for conception.

Several supplements on the market tout their chasteberry content, but most of these products have not undergone clinical trials. One that has is FertilityBlend from the Daily Wellness Company, which was tested in double-blind placebo-controlled trials. It was shown to help 26% of women in a study become pregnant within three months, measured against 10% taking a placebo.

Chasteberry in general improves ovulation, which is helpful because many women don't ovulate very often, said Dr. Lynn Westphal, director of women's health at Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA, who was involved in the FertilityBlend studies.

"Chasteberry is the most active ingredient [in FertilityBlend], but the other ingredients help optimize the general environment, to prepare the body and make sure everything is as good as it can be while a woman is trying to get pregnant," she said.

Dr. Westphal has no qualms about recommending FertilityBlend because the person who developed it conducted a number of studies, and used the results of each to create the end product.

However, she does caution that if a couple has been trying to conceive unsuccessfully for a while (for one year under age 35 for women; six months over 35), they should also be tested to make sure there is nothing else wrong.

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