



The Magnesium Miracle (Revised and Updated)

By Carolyn Dean Md Nd

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REVISED AND UPDATED 2014 EDITION

Magnesium is an essential nutrient, indispensable to your health and well-being. By adding this mineral to your diet, you are guarding against—and helping to alleviate—such threats as heart disease, stroke, osteoporosis, diabetes, depression, arthritis, and asthma. But despite magnesium’s numerous benefits, many Americans remain dangerously deficient. Updated and revised throughout with the latest research, featuring an all-new Introduction, this amazing guide explains the vital role that magnesium plays in your body and life. Inside you will discover

- newly available magnesium supplements that the body absorbs more efficiently
- how calcium can increase the risk of heart disease—and how magnesium can lower it
- a magnesium-rich eating plan as delicious as it is healthy
- information on the link between magnesium and obesity
- vitamins and minerals that work with magnesium to treat specific ailments
- why paleo, raw food, and green juice diets can lead to magnesium deficiency
- recent breakthroughs in magnesium’s medical and public perception

The Magnesium Miracle, now more than ever, is the ultimate guide to a mineral that is truly miraculous.

Praise for *The Magnesium Miracle*

“Dr. Carolyn Dean has the best credentials for bringing solutions to those suffering from the hidden magnesium disorders that affect most of us. This book needs to be read by anyone wishing to improve their quality of life.”—**Stephen T. Sinatra, M.D., author of *The Sinatra Solution: Metabolic Cardiology***

“Clearly written and packed with information . . . a comprehensive and well-referenced guide to the myriad benefits of magnesium.”—**Carolyn DeMarco, M.D., author of *Take Charge of Your Body: Women’s Health Advisor***

“Throughout this volume and with utmost clarity, Carolyn Dean presents invaluable recommendations—based on the latest magnesium research. Virtually every American can benefit.”—**Paul Pitchford, author of *Healing with Whole Foods: Asian Traditions and Modern Nutrition***

“Physicians and therapists have paid scant attention to this very important element, which is also involved in maintaining our good health. The massive evidence is here in this important book on magnesium. I am pleased to have been taking magnesium for so many years.”—**Abram Hoffer, M.D., author of *Putting It All Together: The New Orthomolecular Nutrition***

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Editorial Review

Review

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About the Author

Carolyn Dean, MD, ND, is the recipient of the Heart Rhythm Society Award for her lifesaving work with magnesium for arrhythmia. She is the author of thirty-three print books and more than one hundred Kindle books, and she has been featured on national television, on radio, and in print publications. Dr. Dean is on the medical advisory board of the nonprofit Nutritional Magnesium Association.

Pam Ward has performed in dinner theater, summer stock, and Off-Broadway, as well as in commercials, radio, and film. An experienced narrator, Pam has recorded many titles for the Library of Congress Talking Books program. She is the recipient of an AudioFile Earphones Award and the prestigious Alexander Scourby Award.

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PART ONE The History of Magnesium

CHAPTER 1 The Case for Magnesium: The Personal History of an Element

Mary joked that she felt as though she was constantly being run over by a slow-moving bus. Cramping in her legs startled her awake at night, making her an insomniac, and she had heart palpitations daily. Her doctor also found that she had high blood sugar-not bad enough to need injections of insulin, but he prescribed pills to try to stimulate more insulin production. Finally, frightening panic attacks came out of nowhere and made this vibrant, fun-loving woman afraid to go outside.

To try to relieve her leg cramps, Mary began taking calcium at night, having read that it was good for cramps and sleep. At first, the calcium seemed to help, but after a week or two, the pains got worse. If she yawned and stretched in bed, her calf muscles would seize up and catapult her to the floor, where she would lie frantically massaging her muscles to try to release the spasm. All the next day, she would limp about with a very tender, bruised feeling in her calf.

Although Mary's heart palpitations had improved somewhat after she'd given up her three cups of coffee a day, they too resumed after a few weeks. Every time the palpitations occurred, which was several times a day, they made her cough slightly and catch her breath. She found it frightening, even though her doctor said her stress tests for heart disease were fine and she didn't need further testing with an angiogram.

Both Mary's parents had had adult-onset diabetes, and Mary knew that she should watch her diet, but she was overweight and craved sugary and high-carbohydrate foods that were hard to resist. When the panic attacks hit on top of everything else, Mary knew she had to seek help, and came to my office. She was only fifty-three, far too young to be feeling so bad, and was worried about her future health.

Sam was only forty-nine and experiencing chest pains. At first, he thought they were indigestion, but sometimes the pains would occur in the middle of the night. Concerned, he went to a cardiologist, who found

two slightly blocked arteries, not serious enough for bypass surgery. Sam's cholesterol was somewhat elevated, as was his blood pressure, which he attributed to his high-stress occupation and the fact that he had not exercised regularly for the past six months, when he was sidelined with back pain. The cardiologist observed that his arterial blockage would almost inevitably worsen over time and eventually necessitate surgery. The doctor offered him medication for his high cholesterol, told him not to eat butter or eggs, and gave him nitroglycerine to take whenever he had the pain. If the symptoms got worse, he would prescribe other medications. Sam couldn't imagine having to wait to get worse before doing something about his chest pain; he knew there must be something more he could do to avoid surgery and came to me for advice.

At thirty-five, Jan had actually begun to look forward to going through menopause. That's how bad her PMS symptoms were. As soon as those horrible feelings lifted, she was hit by the sledgehammer of menstrual cramps. She also had migraines, which for years had come before her period but now were occurring once or twice a week. She was so miserable that she was considering a complete hysterectomy, with removal of her hormone-producing ovaries, but wondered whether the migraines, since they were happening all month, were not actually hormonal.

Different as their symptoms are, Mary, Sam, and Jan all suffer from magnesium deficiency. While women and men seem equally susceptible to magnesium deficiency, women may become deficient faster than men due to hormonal fluctuations because pound for pound, they have fewer circulating red blood cells, which carry magnesium, and so perhaps less magnesium available. There are a few other gender differences. Because of magnesium's effect on hormonal regulation and vice versa, women can have deficiencies in pregnancy, when breast-feeding, with premenstrual syndrome (PMS), and with dysmenorrhea (painful periods). Osteoporosis, which affects more women than men, is evidence of a deficiency of both calcium and magnesium. An overactive thyroid, which afflicts more women than men, increases the metabolic rate, which uses up magnesium-requiring ATP (adenosine triphosphate-the energy packets made in each cell in the body. Without magnesium, ATP would not be produced). Let's follow Mary, Sam, and Jan and see how they overcame their magnesium deficiencies. When Mary visited me, I charted her health history in detail, according to procedures commonly used by naturopathic doctors, and found several symptoms of magnesium deficiency. In her case it had been made even worse by too much calcium, however, so simple magnesium supplementation wouldn't be enough for Mary. Her diet and lifestyle needed a complete overhaul. I gave Mary a list of magnesium-rich foods that she needed to start eating, which included nuts, beans, greens, and seeds such as sunflower and pumpkin. Mary realized that she'd been avoiding almost all of these foods: She thought nuts were fattening, beans gave her gas, and greens never seemed fresh enough at the supermarket. She had never even thought about eating seeds. After a week of enthusiastically eating a lot more magnesium-rich foods, Mary felt somewhat better. To make sure she could get fresh organic greens regularly, she tracked down a local community-supported agriculture (CSA) program and bought a share in a neighboring organic farm. Mary also learned how to soak and cook beans to prevent them from causing gas, and began eating nuts and seeds rich in magnesium and healthy oils, such as almonds, walnuts, pecans, sunflower seeds, and pumpkin seeds. After her second visit I recommended that she begin taking magnesium supplements. Starting with a dosage of 200 mg a day, we added another 200 mg every two days to build slowly to 600 mg. I cautioned her that it could take months to eliminate magnesium deficiency symptoms and that not all her symptoms would necessarily respond. Within two months, however, Mary was singing the praises of magnesium. Her palpitations and panic attacks had disappeared. Her cravings for sweets were fewer, she was able to control her blood sugar with diet alone, and tests for blood sugar were normal. Her leg cramps were gone, and with them her insomnia. At three months we added calcium along with magnesium so that she would not develop an imbalance of the two. Mary's internist was quite surprised at her improved health and told her to keep up the good work with her diet and supplements. Sam had an inquiring mind, and I encouraged him to start reading about heart disease. He found that up to 30 percent of angina (chest pain) patients do not have badly blocked arteries but may be suffering from an electrical imbalance that is driven

by mineral deficiency, most commonly magnesium.¹ An astonishing 40 to 60 percent of sudden deaths from heart attack may occur in the complete absence of any prior artery blockage, clot formation or heart rhythm abnormalities, most likely from spasms in the arteries (magnesium is a natural antispasmodic).^{2,3,4,5} Moreover, he found that magnesium deficiency has been linked to sudden cardiac death. Sam didn't want to wait around for that to happen to him; he was determined to find out what was causing his problem and treat the cause. The more he read, the more intrigued he became. When he read that magnesium deficiency is also associated with muscle pain, especially back pain, that really got his attention, since he had begun having back pain four or five months before he began to develop chest pain.⁶

With a packet of information on magnesium, Sam went back to his cardiologist. Before the doctor saw him, however, a nurse took Sam's blood pressure; it was unusually elevated, even though at home it was usually only a few points above normal. (Doctor-induced hypertension is commonly reported by patients.) The cardiologist swept into the room and immediately began talking about blood pressure medication. Sam countered with magnesium. The cardiologist visibly cooled and said that magnesium was used to control hypertension that occurred in pregnant women because there were no side effects, but that there were plenty of effective drugs for everyone else. When Sam said he would rather not have side effects either, the cardiologist gathered up his file and told him to come back when he was ready to take medications for his heart disease.

When Sam came back to see me, he was still pretty upset by this encounter; he didn't like the specialist refusing to discuss a possible magnesium deficiency as part of the picture. Sam and I agreed that magnesium seemed the best treatment for him to initiate at this time since he was not willing to take medications.

Sam began adding magnesium to his diet by eating magnesium-rich foods. After a week he felt much calmer, but he still had chest and back pain. So he added magnesium and calcium supplements, and in about three months he felt almost normal.

Among the studies Sam read was one that looked at the correspondence between type A personalities and magnesium deficiency. From the description, Sam realized he was a type A, an aggressive guy who lived on adrenaline, time pressure, and stress. This type of behavior drains the body of magnesium and leads to disorders such as heart disease, muscle spasms, hypersensitivity, and irritability.⁷ Prolonged psychological stress raises adrenaline, the stress hormone, which depletes magnesium.⁸ Both Sam's back and chest pain would hit when he was under stress. So Sam worked on ways to control his stress and added more magnesium when he knew he couldn't avoid it. On days when he exercised, Sam added an extra 200 mg of magnesium to his diet, since sweat loss during heavy exercise (cycling and jogging) and working in the heat deplete magnesium. Just drinking water won't replace all the minerals lost. By paying attention to the many factors that affected his mind-body health, Sam lowered his cholesterol and stress levels and reduced his chance of a heart attack and of needing surgery to unblock his arteries.

Jan heard that yoga might help her PMS and painful periods, and she really needed to learn to relax, so she took classes at a local health club. The teacher also ran regular detox and cooking classes, which Jan decided to join when she realized she didn't have to "give up everything" and become a vegetarian. One of the first things Jan learned in the detox class was the importance of having regular bowel movements. Jan was lucky if she had one a week. If the bowel doesn't empty once a day, toxins can be reabsorbed back into the body from the colon. The longer debris sits in the colon, the more fluid is reabsorbed, making stools solid and difficult to pass. PMS and endometriosis, which causes painful periods, are considered by some natural-health experts to worsen with constipation and toxicity.⁹

During cooking classes, Jan faced the fact that she was a junk food addict. Magnesium is necessary in

hundreds of enzymes in the body but is almost totally lost during the processing of packaged and fast foods. The older women in her class were suffering from a variety of problems that included cancer, heart disease, and osteoporosis. Is that how she would end up in ten or twenty years if she didn't take care of her health now? Learning how many basic nutrients she had lacked in her diet made her marvel that she wasn't even more ill. Her new diet included greens, beans, nuts, and seeds, which cleared up her constipation and almost eliminated her PMS and painful periods. When she came to see me on the advice of her yoga teacher, it was clear she was on the right track. I recommended that she begin taking a magnesium supplement along with calcium and a multiple vitamin; with all her lifestyle changes, she felt like a new person.

MAGNESIUM, THE SPARK OF LIFE

In a poetic reference to magnesium's crucial role in evolution, Dr. Jerry Aikawa of the University of Colorado calls magnesium the ur-mineral, the most important mineral to man and all living organisms.¹⁰ It is critical to the metabolic processes of lowly one-celled living organisms and is the second most abundant element in all cells involved in basically metabolic pathway. Magnesium existed at the beginning of life and was involved with all aspects of cell production and growth. When plants evolved to use the sun as their energy source, magnesium played a pivotal role in the development of chlorophyll. So in both plants and animals, magnesium became an essential mineral involved in hundreds of enzyme processes affecting every aspect of life.

Presently, seventeen minerals are considered essential for human life, and it is quite possible that more minerals will be found to be indispensable as we take more time to study life's mineral connection. Ninety-nine percent of the body's mineral content is made up of seven macrominerals: sodium, potassium, calcium, phosphorus, chlorine, sulfur, and magnesium. The other 1 percent comprises ten trace minerals. As with most minerals, the element magnesium occurs in nature combined with other elements. It joins naturally with sulfur to make Epsom salts (magnesium sulfate), with carbon to make magnesium carbonate, and with calcium to make dolomite. Magnesium is also found in partnership with silica in talc and asbestos. Like calcium, it is an alkaline mineral, which neutralizes acid, and some magnesium compounds are antacids used to treat heartburn.

My first encounter with magnesium was in high school chemistry. Each student was given a thin strip of magnesium and told to light one end carefully. The previous week we had learned that magnesium is the eighth most abundant element, constituting approximately 2 percent of the earth's crust and 1.14 percent of seawater. By comparison, calcium makes up 3 percent of the earth's crust but only 0.05 percent of seawater. There are 4-6 tsp (20-28 g or 2 oz) of magnesium in the body, comprising about 0.05 percent of the body's weight. This information in no way prepared us for the dynamic effect of lighting the magnesium strip. It flared up like an electric sparkler and disappeared in a flash. This effervescent property serves as an important reminder of magnesium's versatility as the spark of life, constantly igniting metabolic reactions throughout the body.

THE BODY IS ELECTRIC

The impulses for any and all movement in the body arise from electrical transmission. These microcurrents of electricity that pass along the nerves were first measured in 1966. Scientists soon discovered that the conductor for these bodily electrical currents was calcium and that magnesium was necessary to maintain the proper level of calcium in the blood.¹¹ More recent research indicates that calcium enters the cells by way of calcium channels that are jealously guarded by magnesium. Magnesium allows a certain amount of calcium to enter a cell to create the necessary electrical transmission, and then immediately ejects the calcium once the work is done. Why? If calcium accumulates in the cell, it causes toxicity and disrupts cell function. Too

much calcium entering cells can cause symptoms of heart disease (such as angina, high blood pressure, and arrhythmia), asthma, or headaches. Magnesium is nature's calcium channel blocker.^{12,13,14}

About 60-65 percent of all our magnesium is housed in our bones and teeth. The remaining 35-40 percent is found in the rest of the body, including muscle and tissue cells and body fluids. The highest concentrations are in the heart and brain cells, so it is no wonder that the major symptoms of magnesium deficiency affect the heart and brain. These are also the two organs that have considerable electrical activity measured by EKG (electrocardiogram) and EEG (electroencephalogram). Our blood contains only 1 percent of the body's total magnesium.

Magnesium mostly works inside our tissue cells, producing ATP energy packets for our body's vital force and triggering production all the body's protein structures by revving up messenger RNA. It is also a requirement for the production of DNA, our genetic code. Both of the basic building blocks of life, RNA and DNA, are dependent on magnesium to maintain stable genes.¹⁵ In addition to its stabilizing effect on DNA and the structure of chromosomes, magnesium is an essential cofactor in almost all enzyme systems involved in the processing of DNA. Research shows that without sufficient magnesium, DNA synthesis becomes sluggish.

WHAT DOES MAGNESIUM DO?

Magnesium's hundreds of activities in the human body can be divided into five essential categories:¹⁶

1. Magnesium is a cofactor assisting enzymes in catalyzing most chemical reactions in the body, including temperature regulation.
2. Magnesium produces and transports energy.
3. Magnesium is necessary for the synthesis of protein.
4. Magnesium helps to transmit nerve signals.
5. Magnesium helps to relax muscles.

1. COFACTOR IN CHEMICAL REACTIONS

Enzymes are protein molecules that stimulate every chemical reaction in the body. Magnesium is required to make these enzymes work.

2. PRODUCING AND TRANSPORTING ENERGY

Magnesium and the B-complex vitamins are excellent examples of energy nutrients, because they activate enzymes that control digestion, absorption, and the utilization of proteins, fats, and carbohydrates. Because magnesium is involved with hundreds of enzymatic reactions throughout the body, deficiency can affect every aspect of life and cause a score of symptoms. Of the 325 magnesium-dependent enzymes, the most important enzyme reaction involves the creation of energy by activating adenosine triphosphate (ATP), the fundamental energy storage molecule of the body. ATP may be what the Chinese refer to as qi or life force. Magnesium is required for the body to produce and store energy. Without magnesium there is no energy, no movement, no life. It is that simple.

3. SYNTHESIZING PROTEIN

Magnesium is used in synergy with dozens of other vitamins and minerals to create structural components of the body. Under the direction of magnesium, enzymes and nutrients modify the building blocks from food to create the body. Without magnesium, there is no body. RNA and DNA, which contain the genetic blueprints for the formation of all the protein molecules in the body, are also dependent on magnesium.

Users Review

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