

Nature's Field

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Capsicum *Capsicum sp.*

By Steven Horne and Paula Perretty

Hot peppers of one sort or another are grown all over the world and have become an important part of numerous cuisines, from Hunan and Szechwan Chinese to Thai and East Indian curries. It's easy to forget that all peppers, from the mild bell pepper to the jalapenos so popular in Mexican or Southwest dishes, belong to the genus *Capsicum* and originated in South America.

That's right. South American natives started using members of the genus *Capsicum* as early as 5,000 B.C. They developed hundreds of varieties, which have been adopted into various cultures and styles of cooking to the point that it's hard to conceive that before Columbus came to the new world, Europeans, Africans and Asians had never seen any variety of pepper.

The variety of pepper most commonly used as medicine is called the cayenne pepper. However, just about any "hot" pepper is going to have similar medicinal effects. The "heat" of the pepper is determined primarily by a substance called capsaicin. Mild peppers, like green bell peppers and paprika, have little or none. Other peppers, like African red bird cayenne, jalapeños and habaneras, have a lot. So, although we're focusing on the benefits of the herb called *Capsicum*, be aware that most hot peppers will provide similar benefits.

Capsicum's main claim to fame is its ability to promote blood circulation. It revitalizes cells, arteries, veins, the stomach, intestines, the heart and most of all, the blood. It is well suited for people suffering from either high or low blood pressure as it not only enhances blood flow but also helps to equalize circulation. It can also be used as a preventive measure against heart attacks and strokes.

These benefits have been noted in people who eat a lot of hot peppers in their food. For example, many people from Thailand use red pepper as a seasoning and appetizer quite regularly, and research has shown that this may be associated with the low incidence of potentially fatal blood clotting diseases that occur in that country.

Capsicum also benefits digestion, although its effect on stimulating digestive secretions is short-lived compared to herbs



Photo by Steven Horne

like ginger and horseradish. It also has some mild expectorant qualities that benefit the respiratory system. People who eat red pepper have also been found to have less chronic obstructive lung disease than other people who eat a blander diet. It can also be used to remedy colds and flu in the early stages. One study found that patients receiving *Capsicum* three times daily for three days found a marked reduction in nasal obstruction and nasal secretion.

Cayenne can also be used to reduce pain and inflammation. Research has found that our nervous system contains a neuropeptide called "Substance P", that is associated in the regulation of mood disorders, anxiety, neurogenesis respiratory rhythm, neuro toxicity, nausea, emesis (vomiting) and pain. Capsaicin binds to Substance P receptors which reduces

pain sensations. At the same time, it also reduces inflammation and promotes healing.

Capsicum-based creams or lotions are used topically for treating sore muscles, toothaches, cramps, stiffness, sprains and nerve pain associated with diabetes and fibromyalgia. *Capsicum* powder can also be sprinkled into bleeding wounds. It helps stop bleeding and promotes rapid healing. Made into a tea, it can even be used to relieve sore throat pain (although it will sting at first).

Capsicum is available from NSP in capsule and extract form. It is also an ingredient in numerous formulas as it is frequently used as a catalyst to make other herbs work faster.

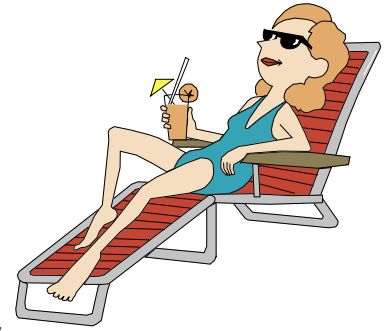
Selected References:

- A Hand Book of Native American Herbs* by Alma R. Hutchens.
- "Capsicum, an Energy Food for Active People" by John Heinerman.
- Nutritional Herbolgy* by Mark Pedersen.
- The Herbs of Life* by Lesley Tierra.
- The Illustrated Herb Encyclopedia* by Kathi Keville.

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Relax Your Way to Greater Energy (and Health)



How Muscle Tension Robs Your Energy

by Steven H. Horne, RH (AHG)

My father was a hard worker and I was fortunate to be able to work with him in my teens and early twenties. He was a painting contractor. He didn't have a lot of business know-how, so he never had employees or large contracts. Three of his brothers were also painting contractors and each of them had equipment and crews. My father and I would often help them on their jobs.

My father also cleaned apartments, washing walls and cleaning surfaces coated with flat paint with something called a "miracle sponge." He was incredibly fast at this cleaning work and in his sixties, he could outwork young men in their 20s. I know, because he could always outwork me.

He told me his secret. He said that the secret was to stay relaxed—to not let your muscles get tense. He said that to work faster, you had to learn to increase your speed without getting tense. I didn't really understand what he was talking about—not then, at least.

Working summers with my dad and his brothers, painting and house-cleaning, was how I earned money through high school and college. It was also something I fell back on for a short period of time after graduation. I've always been glad that I learned these practical skills and more importantly, how to work hard, from my father and uncles. However, it has only been recently that I've started to learn what my dad tried to teach me about staying relaxed.

How relaxed or tense we are has a direct affect on our energy level and our energy level has a direct affect on our health. In fact, our level of health is pretty much connected to our level of energy. Fatigue opens the door for disease and is one of the early signs that we are losing health. The body needs energy to repair and maintain itself. Increasing energy prevents disease and helps the body heal.

Growing up, I was both tense and sickly. Changing my diet was part of my healing process, but getting regular chi-

ropractic care (which helped relax the tension in my neck and back) was also a big part of my healing process. Through the years, I've noticed that getting massages and chiropractic care have both relaxed me and given me more energy.

Still, I've run on a kind of nervous, tense energy for much of my life. As a young father, I was often going from early morning until late at night, staying constantly occupied. I rarely got a full eight hours of sleep and often played "catch up" with a Sunday afternoon nap.

Once or twice a year the fatigue would get to me. That's when I got sick. I honestly felt it was my body's way of seeking revenge for how hard I pushed it. If I wasn't going to voluntarily take some time off to relax, then, my body was going to force me to do so by getting sick and refusing to co-operate with my hard-driving demands.

It's not that there was anything wrong with me being a hard-worker. My dad was a hard worker, too. It's just that my father wasn't an "up tight" worker, and I was.

As I turned 40, I noticed that I just couldn't push myself quite as much as I used to, and now that I'm over 50 I've noticed my ability to push myself that hard has continued to decline. The nervous energy I used to be able to use to push myself is gone, and sometimes I have felt so tired that I don't feel I have the energy to get basic tasks done. It's not that I'm suffering from chronic fatigue or something; it's just that I have felt my energetic capacity has been slowly fading.

Tips for Increasing Energy Production

During this time, I have sought out ways to increase my energy and have found some useful aids. For instance, herbs and supplements, which support my adrenal glands have been lifesavers for me. In particular, I have found Nervous Fatigue Formula and Adrenal Support have helped me have more stamina, particularly during times of intense stress.

They have helped me through the periods when I was going through divorce, financial troubles and the death of loved ones. These kinds of stressful experiences have always exact a toll on our adrenal glands, which can result in a serious loss of energy and our ability to get a peaceful night's sleep. Supplements like Nervous Fatigue Formula and Adrenal Support can restore healthy sleep patterns, reduce confusion and feelings of stress, while increasing energy levels. In some cases, extra pantothenic acid has also proven helpful.

I have also found benefit in supporting my thyroid. This is the other major gland that is involved in energy production. Thyroid Support and Liquid Dulse have helped me here, too. More recently, when I first started taking Iodoral (a high potency iodine supplement), I felt a surge in energy that made me feel like I was ten years younger. It didn't last, however, and I'll explain why in a minute.

Another key I've found in maintaining energy is detoxification. I'm not just talking about staying regular (although that's part of it). I'm talking about the whole process of helping the body rid itself of toxins, which involves lymphatic flow, liver function, kidney function, bowel function and the skin. I've noticed that when my lymph nodes are a little congested or my kidneys aren't working quite right or I'm a little constipated, my level of energy goes down. Flushing my body with fluids (particularly a little lemon water) and taking some herbs like All Cell Detox and some enzymes really helps.

You can learn more about all of these approaches to increasing energy in this month's Herbal Hour DVD, *Get Up and Go—Natural Ways to Increase Your Energy and Vitality*. In addition to addressing the thyroid, adrenals and detoxification, it covers diet, sleep problems, blood deficiency and low-grade infections—all factors that can affect your energy level. However, let's get back to the issue of tension.

I mentioned earlier that the Iodoral seemed to give me a big energy boost, but it didn't last. I think that's because at the same time I started taking iodine, I was also working with DeAnna Hansen and writing "Love Your Body Beautiful." DeAnna had been giving me treatments that were releasing tension from my body in a way that nothing had ever done before. So, it wasn't just the iodine that was giving me energy. Supplements that help your thyroid and adrenals can help energy *production*, but they can't increase energy *storage*. A relaxed body has more energy storage capacity than a tense one, and, if you're too tense, then your body won't be able to store the extra energy it is producing.

Relaxation and Energy Potential

I owe my understanding of this to several books I read by psychologist Alexander Lowen. Dr. Lowen said that tension is a sign of fatigue. Energized muscles are relaxed and exhausted muscles are tense. Through Dr. Lowen I came to understand that exhaustion can make a person act highly energetic, but all they are really doing is discharging energy, like a child who is so tired that they can't get to sleep. This happens because the body becomes so tense that it can't hold an energy charge, so energy is immediately discharged instead of being stored.

The person who runs around functioning on nervous energy, like the proverbial headless chicken, is actually in a high state of exhaustion. The more relaxed, easy-going person actually has a higher level of energy because they have more energy reserves. When most people think of having more energy, they think in only terms of increase energy output (discharge) and not in terms of creating more energy reserves (input or recharge). This is why they think that stimulants are giving them energy—they don't. They're only increasing

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the rate of discharge, causing the energy reserves of the body to deplete further.

To understand why this is so, recognize that muscles expend energy when they *contract*. Contracting muscles allow us to move, lift, walk, run and perform our daily activities. However, each time a muscle contracts, it is discharging energy. A muscle rebuilds its charge when it *relaxes* or *elongates* again. In its relaxed, elongated state, it has an energy potential that is ready for the next discharge.

Nerves do a similar thing—they build up an electrical charge, which is then discharged as the nerve sends a message. In order to send another message, the nerve must rebuild its electrical charge. When nerves become exhausted, a person becomes “shaky.” The nerves can no longer hold the charge and fire rapidly, releasing their energy before they are fully recharged. This causes muscles to tremble and makes the person feel unsteady.

Both muscles and nerves are able to rapidly alternate charging and discharging, but there is a limit to how many times this can be done before require a period of rest to fully recharge. If a muscle is overworked, it grows tense. So, as I learned from both Dr. Lowen and DeAnna Hansen, when a muscle cramps or spasms, it is because it is exhausted. The pain we feel when this happens is the body’s attempt to get us to stop using this muscle until it has a chance to relax again. Unfortunately, most of us, including me, don’t always listen. We want to keep driving the body without giving it time to recharge.

Recharge Your Batteries

I’m writing this article on my laptop, which has a battery that allows it to operate without being plugged in. I’ve discharged and recharged this battery many times and as I’ve done so the capacity of the battery to hold a charge has gradually diminished. In other words, the period of time that I can use the battery before it requires recharging is getting shorter.

This same thing has been happening in my body as I’ve gotten older. Why? Because my muscles are too tense (contracted) to hold a high energy charge. So, when I work the period of time I can keep going before I need a serious rest is getting shorter. So, the reason my fatigue has increased as I have gotten older is the same reason my laptop battery doesn’t last as long as it once did—I can’t hold as much of an energy charge as I once did.



Just recently, I finally figured this out. So, I’ve started doing stretching exercises in the morning, including trying to do a little yoga. I can’t even begin to get into most yoga poses depicted in the book because I’m way too stiff. Fortunately, I’ve got a book called *Yoga for Wimps: Poses for the Flexibly Impaired*. This book has exercises I can actually do. Meanwhile, as I’ve learned to stretch, elongate and focus on relaxing my muscles, my energy level has increased. I can go longer without getting tired, so I’m increasing the storage capacity of my body’s battery.

Along that same line of thinking, I’ve also been taking a very high dose of a kava-based formula (called Kavazon) at night to help me get a more relaxed and deeper sleep. That, too, has been helping my energy level. I noticed that the more relaxed my muscles are, the longer my energy lasts. If you want to try taking some remedies to help you relax, you should consider using NSP’s Kava Kava Concentrate, Nutri-Calm, Cramp Relief (in spite of the pink label, it wasn’t designed just for women) and lobelia.

My Dad was right, staying relaxed actually helps you work longer and harder. It took me over 30 years to understand the lesson, but I’m finally “getting it.”

Let me share another practical application of this principle with you. A couple of years ago I bought a book on improving your vision naturally. Here’s what I learned.

Tension and Eyesight

The lens of your eye is controlled by muscles that contract to help you see things that are close-up. When those muscles relax, you can see things that are far off. When you do a lot of close-up work such as reading, writing, working at a computer and so forth these muscles have to stay in a contracted state for prolonged periods of time. Eventually, they become fatigued and start to become chronically tense. This makes you nearsighted, meaning you can see things close up, but can’t see things far away. Most kids who wear glasses are nearsighted.

About ten years ago, I started needing bifocals because I was losing my ability to see close-up, too. This happens as people get older and muscles lose tone. Because the muscles that control the lens can’t contract as strongly as they used to, the ability to see close-up starts diminishing.

At a lecture on hallucinogenic herbs I attended once, the speaker said that after she participated in a Native American peyote ceremony she was able to throw away her glasses. I now understand why. Peyote, like lobelia and kava, is a strong antispasmodic, meaning it relaxes muscles and relieves

cramping. During a peyote ceremony, participants are given peyote over and over again, which will often induce vomiting, sweating and other signs that muscles everywhere are relaxing. If the muscles of the eyes became relaxed enough, the ability to see into the distance would be restored.

Likewise, if I could get in the habit of taking a break from my computer work and reading every hour and go outside and look at things that are far away (without my glasses, of course), my eyesight would improve. It's not a matter of *straining* to see better, it's a matter of *relaxing* to see better.

What Causes Tension?

Moving away from the eyes and back to the body as a whole, the question naturally arises, what causes this build-up of tension in the body? Why can't we relax?

I think there are two primary reasons. I learned this from DeAnna Hansen. When you do something repetitively, such as sitting all day at a desk and working on a computer, your muscles are tensed in certain repetitive patterns. This causes repeated muscle fatigue.

Posture is a big component of this. As I lean forward and bend my head forward while working at the computer, the muscles in my neck and back are forced to work harder, trying to hold the weight of my body up against gravity. The muscles in the front of my neck and stomach are shortened and lose tone, becoming permanently contracted (like the muscles in the eyes with nearsightedness).

Unless I do things to deliberately stretch those muscles that are being shortened and relax those muscles that are overworking, I will through the posture of my body out of alignment and create permanent stress which will drain the capacity of my body to hold energy.

That's the mechanical cause of tension, but there is also an emotional cause of tension. Children are very supple and have a very high energy level, but this is also because they lack emotional body armor. They are able to be genuine and spontaneous in their emotions and movements. As we get older, we learn to hide our emotional nature and create tension in the body to inhibit our natural feelings and movements. This tension is called body armor.

Body armor allows us to suppress emotions we don't want to feel or express, but it also robs us of energy. The tension we create trying to hold back our feelings drains our capacity for holding an energy charge. I've noticed that when I'm able to release emotional tension, that physical tension is also released and energy levels are increased.

Releasing Tension

So, how can you go about releasing tension? The answer is simple—by deliberately finding ways to relax and elongate (stretch) tense muscles. Stretching, deep breathing, taking short breaks and concentrating on letting your muscles relax is important to having more energy. Taking herbs like kava kava, lobelia and skullcap and the mineral, magnesium can also be helpful.



Another thing we can do is to get in touch with our feelings and find constructive ways to express them. Sometimes we need to cry, or through a temper tantrum or play like a child. It releases tension. We just need to find constructive ways to “let go” of these inhibiting tensions that make up our body armor.

The hardest thing to do, but also one of the most productive, is to learn how to avoid getting tense and frantic when there are a lot of things to do. For instance, I know that both my energy level and my eyes benefit from me taking frequent short breaks from working at the computer. When I take a few minutes to stretch my muscles in the opposite directions that sitting in the chair working at the computer does, this also helps my body relax. This gives me more energy and allows me to work longer without fatigue.

Just doing 15-30 minutes of stretching and relaxing in the morning has been helping my energy level tremendously. Of course, I still eat healthy, detoxify, take appropriate supplements and so forth, but relaxing my muscles was the key I was missing in my search for more energy.

So, if you need more energy, I encourage you not to think solely in terms of how can create and *discharge* more energy. Think about how you can relax your body and *recharge* its energy-carrying capacity. Make time for little breaks that allow you to stretch, relax and recharge. I think you'll find that my Dad's secret really works.

Suggested Further Reading

The Body Has Its Reasons by Therese Berterat and Carol Bernstein
Yoga for Wimps: Poses for the Flexibility Impaired by Miriam Austin and Barry Kaplan

Bioenergetics by Alexander Lowen
Love, Sex and Your Heart: The Health-Happiness Connection by Alexander Lowen
Love Your Body Beautiful course by DeAnna Hansen and Steven Horne
Health and Beauty DVD from Tree of Light



Kimberly Balas' Clinician's Corner

Bladder Problem, Damaged Cartilage and Other Questions

Bladder Not Emptying?

I am working with a young woman who has had bladder infections in the past. She has been constipated, but that problem has been solved. She recently went to the doctor and they said that her bladder is not emptying when she urinates. They did an ultrasound and there was still a cup of liquid in her bladder.

She is having a lot of pain. I am going to muscle test her for uva ursi and Urinary Maintenance when she comes in. I was also thinking of using red raspberry to tone the bladder. Do you have any suggestions?

Kasara

I don't mean to laugh here, but the bladder never totally empties. If it did it would collapse. It is supposed to be half full at all times. She probably has some inflammation and may be "over acid." This would cause the pain, not the amount of fluid in her bladder. I would agree with using the red raspberry and would also consider cornsilk because it is both soothing and an anti-inflammatory. Some Magnesium Complex to neutralize excess acids may also help. In addition I would look at emotional issues. What is she "pissed off" about and why does she "hang onto" things?

Damaged Cartilage in Knee

My brother injured his knee several years ago and had surgery to trim the torn cartilage. When he strains it, or lifts something heavy, it gets sore and swollen. What can be done to help rebuild his cartilage? I'm considering EverFlex.

Deb

I recommend Collatrim and Bone-Skin Poultice for rebuilding cartilage. Regularly massaging the knee to keep blood and lymph moving, and to prevent swelling and inflammation, will also help.

Bug Bite on Eyelid

Last week my downline manager was bit or stung by something black that flies. It stung him right on his left eyelid close to the eyelashes. It has been swollen and there is a hard lump suggesting there may be a stinger in there. He does not have a lot of product in stock, but (against my advice) he has been putting black salve on it to try to draw it out. It's not out and it drips into his eye just like I said it would.

I probably will not see him again until next weekend, so what home remedies can you suggest that will not irritate his eyes? I will be bringing some black cohosh with me, but would welcome other suggestions.

Laura

I use the Intestinal Soothe and Build as a poultice in sensitive areas. Simply mix the powder with enough water to make a thick paste and apply it topically to the affected area. Where possible, it can be covered with a bandage, but probably not in this case. It doesn't sting and it will draw out whatever is causing the problem. Another option is crushed fresh plantain leaves.

Bee Sting Reaction

I was stung by a bee yesterday. I made a paste out of activated charcoal and rubbed that on the sting. This morning my hand is slightly swollen. I feel some soreness in my forearm when I rub it. Any recommendations as to what else to do?

U.

It sounds like you had a mild allergic reaction. I would take a little HistaBlock. You can also apply it topically. To reduce the inflammation you can take IF-C.

Cortisol

How can you lower cortisol in your body?

Jim

Before you try to lower cortisol, make sure it's actually high. Low cortisol can produce some of the same symptoms as high cortisol. Cortisol is produced by the adrenals in response to stress and inflammation. When the stress and inflammation have been around for a long time, the adrenals are actually depleted, and cortisol levels are too low. Adrenal Support is a good supplement here. GlycoEssentials can help balance the adrenals whether they are high, or low.

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