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Coronavirus: Can vitamins really help with a COVID-19 infection?

There are a growing number of studies looking at the effect of micronutrients on people infected with SARSCoV-2. Vitamin D seems to be a promis-

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As we all know, people can disagree about almost anything. However, one thing that is undisputed is that a good supply of micronutrients, such as vitamins and minerals, is essential for a functioning immune system.



This is reason enough for many researchers around the world to investigate whether individual micronutrients used in a targeted manner can make a COVID-19 infection less severe and thus prevent serious consequences or even death from the

and Co. is either greatly exaggerated for ideological and business reasons or dismissed with contemptuous derision, Smollich is trying to put together a more differentiated picture. condition," says Smollich.

The problems in the study with regard to high blood pressure are even more serious: Fifty-seven percent of the participants who were not given vitamin D suffered from the condition, while in the other group, too high blood pressure was found in only 24% of the test persons.

"This means that the group without vitamin D had the sickest people," summarizes the pharmacologist. And such heterogeneous groups distort the results.

Type 2 diabetes, obesity and high blood pressure have things in common: They are not only risk factors for severe COVID-19 infections, but are also all diet-related diseases. So it is mistaken to think that nutrition and nutrient status play no role in dealing with the coronavirus pandemic. In fact, the opposite is true.

"Nutrients are important for various levels of the immune system," says Anika Wagner, professor of Nutrition and Immune System at the University of Giessen. A nutrient deficiency weakens the various defense mechanisms of the immune system and makes it much

easier for harmful bacteria and viruses to cause damage. Typically implement a healthy diet and are thus not receiving an adequate supply of nutrients.

"Often, obese people consume more food with a high energy density, but which contains only a few micronutrients," says Wagner. That includes sugary drinks, ready meals and sweets.

"At some point, the obese person may even develop diabetes and high blood pressure," she says. The lack of nutrients weakens the immune system, while being overweight and having diabetes and/or high blood pressure pave the way for a severe bout of COVID-19.

Here again, vitamin D comes into play: A vitamin D deficiency occurs "with above-average frequency in cases where there are illnesses and conditions that in themselves increase the COVID-19 risk: advanced age, obesity or Type 2 diabetes," Martin Smollich writes in his specialist blog *Ernährungsmedizin*, which deals with aspects of clinical nutrition.

This vicious circle is neither new nor unknown. "Many preexisting conditions that have a bearing on coronavirus disease could have been averted by effective prevention," the German Diabetes Society (DDG) said in a press release in May.

"In Germany, the connection between diet and disease is often completely ignored. And I find that very dramatic, because it is something that could have been modified," says Smollich. "Instead, the coronavirus pandemic hit a society in which diet-related diseases are almost the norm."

Another risk group could benefit from prioritizing nutrients for health: the elderly. "We know that the immune system does not function as well in old age and that the possibilities for vitamin D synthesis also decrease," says Anika Wagner. Here, she says, the use of supplements should be considered.

The Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) comes to the same conclusion. It recommends vitamin D supplements for older and chronically ill people, especially if they are dependent on care.

What is more important than taking individual micronutrients is making sure that people generally have an optimized intake of nutrients so that a range of diseases can be prevented, Smollich writes in his blog. "Appropriate nutritional and health policy measures would seem more urgently needed than ever in view of the coronavirus pandemic," he writes.

last 16 on Tuesday at Manchester United's expense.

December 8 with Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko. Fasel said he and Lichtner "are both in isolation at home for the next 10 days."

Belarus is scheduled to cohost the next World Championship with Latvia starting in May, but the Latvian government has called on the IIHF to withdraw the tournament from Minsk after Lukashenko's disputed election win in August – and a violent police crackdown on antigovernment protesters.

Fasel said the planned meeting with Lukashenko was to explore "what steps are being taken to ensure that the tournament can be held safely and in cooperation with co-hosts Latvia."

This comes a day after the International Olympic Committee (IOC) suspended Lukashenko, who is head of Belarus' National Olympic Committee, as well as Dimitry Baskov, head of

the Belarusian ice hockey federation.

Fasel, who is a longtime IOC member, also said that a virtual meeting of IIHF National Associations scheduled for Friday would be postponed. hours of Tuesday.

"Unfortunately it now seems to be common that people abuse others online. We don't accept that and stand for tolerance, respect and behind @Diadios," the team tweeted following Monday's 3-1 win over Augsburg.

The 24-year-old Samassekou had posted a screenshot of abuse he said was received on Instagram. Samassekou added his own message saying: "May God sooth the hate in your heart."

Hoffenheim had previously defended midfielder Ryan Sessegnon after he received racist abuse in November.

Union Berlin have extended the contracts of coach Urs Fischer and his assistant Markus Hoffmann, the Bundesliga club has announced – without revealing the term of the deals. Fischer led the team to a first-ever Bundesliga promotion in 2018-19 season, his first with the club – and avoided the drop last term.

"The decision to sign Urs Fischer has proven to be absolutely right for Union Berlin," said club president Dirk Zingler. "Together with his team of coaches, he is making a decisive contribution to establishing Union in the Bundesliga and developing the club even further."

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Germany coach Joachim Löw says he didn't think about resigning after the country's humiliating 6-0 defeat by Spain in the Nations League last month. Speaking for the first time since he received the backing of his bosses at the German Football Federation (DFB), Löw said the defeat had made him "angry" – but that his desire was still there.

"We were all bitterly disappointed and angry with the result," Löw told a virtual news conference. "But we are absolutely convinced of the road we have taken in 2019," referring to his decision to rebuild the Germany squad with younger players.

Löw didn't rule out recalling the veteran trio Thomas Müller, Jerome Boateng and Mats Hummels, who were all dropped in 2019, saying that he would "do everything I can to make us successful." But he added that he saw no need for that at the moment.

Reporting by DW's Jonathan Crane.

Florian Grillitsch struck twice as Hoffenheim secured a much-needed three points against Augsburg to move them into mid-table in the Bundesliga.

In the final game of Matchday 10, Grillitsch struck each side of Daniel Caligiuri's equalizer before Ihlas Bebou secured a 3-1 victory.

It was Hoffenheim's first league win in seven games, and their first victory since their shock 4-1 win over Bayern Munich in late September.

Players from English second tier clubs Queens Park Rangers and Millwall will stand arm-in-arm ahead of their game on Tuesday evening.

Millwall fans booed the 'take a knee' gesture, which continues in England for the Black Lives Matter movement, in their game against Derby on Saturday, triggering widespread criticism.

QPR's director of football Les Ferdinand, the only black director of football in England, said that QPR's players would no longer take a knee because it was "action and not taking a

knee that would bring change".

Following events at Millwall, QPR had initially announced that they would reverse that decision, but released a statement on Monday evening saying they would instead stand arm-in-arm with Millwall's players "in a show of solidarity for football's fight against racism".