

# Saying YES to NO !

Nitric oxide (NO) is a colourless, odourless gas released by the lining of your blood vessels that tells them when to relax and expand. Because of NO's vasodilating properties, you get better blood flow and a healthier heart.

Nitric oxide should not be confused with nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O), a greenhouse gas, or with nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), a toxic gas and a major air pollutant. NO is naturally produced in your body from arginine and oxygen. Despite being a simple molecule, NO is a major player in the fields of Neuroscience, Physiology, and



Immunology. In 1992, NO was accorded the “Molecule of the Year” award!

Lack of oxygen and impaired blood flow is the leading cause of ED (erectile dysfunction) in men. The big secret to healthy blood flow is Nitric Oxide. This revelation led to the development of Viagra, the leading ED drug, landing the Nobel Prize for three scientists in 1998. Nitro-glycerine and Amyl Nitrite also serve as vasodilators because they are converted to Nitric Oxide in the body. Poor blood flow does more than promote flaccidity; it also accelerates aging, reduces brain function, and seriously drains energy. NO has the potential to

significantly increase the quality of our lives.

Because it is a gas, NO can't be stored, having a lifetime of only a few seconds before breaking down! Yet it enhances both mental and hormonal aspects of our health as well as our cardio-vascular health. When NO levels are high, everything follows suit. It's the ultimate feel-good neurotransmitter or messenger.

According to Dr. Christiane Northrup, NO is our Chi, Prana or Life Force – the Holy Grail governing overall health and pleasure. It lowers stress hormones such as cortisol and epinephrine in the body. Treating cut flowers and other plants with Nitric Oxide gas has been shown to lengthen the time before wilting. However, NO is not the exclusive domain of men, Northrup says.

To women in midlife she says: “You can rewire your brain and your body to feel more pleasure”. Orgasms release a huge blast of NO. We need to be reminded that our physical bodies were conceived in a cloud burst of life-giving Nitric Oxide.

In her book *The Secret Pleasures of Menopause*, published in 2008, Northrup also advises women to explore their own pleasure and learn to turn themselves on. She urges us to release negativity and live in a way that motivates others to be at their best and their healthiest. Northrup says: “It’s time midlife women discovered the benefits of boosting Nitric Oxide levels as their own gateway to better sexuality and sensuality at midlife and beyond”. Dr. Northrup proclaims NO the molecule of Life Force and the molecule of the Fountain of Youth.

Because of the evanescence of Nitric Oxide, we should actively keep regenerating our fleeting supplies. Eating fresh, colourful organic veggies enhances NO production along with a low sugar or low glycemic diet. Avoiding sugar and refined carbohydrates increases Nitric Oxide levels as does meditation, massage, dancing, and exercise. If you needed another reason to cultivate positive, joyful thoughts and laughter - a recent study at the University of Maryland supports that a good belly laugh significantly increases Nitric Oxide production.

Mother Nature provides us with several nutrients that remarkably enhance NO production. According to several recent studies, compounds found in both grapeseed extract and in chocolate increase the natural formation of endothelial nitric oxide. No less than 15 independent studies confirm that regular moderate consumption of chocolate with a high percentage of cacao favourably affected NO levels as well as cardio-vascular health.

The amino acid **L-Taurine** is a precursor molecule to Nitric Oxide, which causes arterial dilation in the endothelium (Cockcraft JR 2005). L-Taurine has also been found to reduce heart arrhythmia (irregular heart beat).

The amino acid **L-Arginine**, used by body builders for many years, converts into Nitric Oxide. Taken before a workout, it is said to give body builders a boost by giving muscles more blood and oxygen. L-Arginine combined with exercise may be a good defence against age-related muscle loss. Better blood flow means more than just bigger muscles. When your blood vessels are relaxed and flexible, you get more blood to your brain, your heart, your lungs, and your sex organs.

Naysayers, and there are plenty, claim that the positive benefits of oral Arginine supplementation can only be achieved through doses higher than the human body can handle. Doses as low as 10 grams have been associated with gastro-intestinal upset when consumed orally. **Citrulline** is a precursor of Arginine in the body and may have better absorption and less side-effects than Arginine alone.

Dr. Ferid Murad, one of the Nobel Prize recipients and co-author of *The Wellness Solution*, published in 2007, promotes a regimen of diet, exercise, vitamins, and antioxidants to increase Nitric Oxide levels.

Again quoting the ever inspiring Dr. Northrup, “You can learn to consciously direct it (NO) to heal your body and your life. You simply must be willing to allow more and more Nitric Oxide-boosting pleasure into your life, starting now....A joyous thought would be: The best times of my life are yet to come.” **Y- E- S !**

**Bio:**

Lorraine Mercedes Picot is a Registered Nutritional Consultant, Registered Orthomolecular Health Practitioner and Naturotherapist. Mercedes has been offering one-on-one nutritional counseling for over 20 years in Ottawa, Victoria, and now in Montreal. She is passionate about her work and is committed to helping her clients reach their wellness goals.

She offers consultations in either English or French and is a member of the IONC (International Organization of Nutritional Consultants), the ANN (Academy of Naturopaths and Naturotherapists), and the Canadian Coaches Federation (CCF). She can be reached at 514-439-4685 or at this email address.



Enquiries can be sent either to:  
[AskMercedes@montrealnatural.com](mailto:AskMercedes@montrealnatural.com) or to her regular email address: andnowtoyou@gmail.com .