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The Truth About NAD+:

What You Need to Know About the “Anti-Aging Molecule”

Interviewed by *Kelly Ozog*

From red-carpet celebrities hooked up to IV drips to wellness influencers swearing by it for energy and focus, NAD⁺ has become the molecule everyone's buzzing about. Marketed as the “anti-aging molecule,” it promises to boost vitality, sharpen cognition, and maybe even extend lifespan. But is it all hype - or is there real science behind this coenzyme found in every single one of our cells?

To cut through the noise, we turned to Dr. Vikki Petersen, founder of Root Cause Medical Clinic and a pioneer in functional medicine, who's been integrating anti-aging protocols into her practice for years. Known for her whole-body approach to health, Dr. Petersen says NAD⁺ deserves the spotlight - but not for the reasons most social media feeds would have you believe.

“NAD⁺ is absolutely critical - you literally can't live without it,” Dr. Petersen says. “But it's not a magic bullet. It's one part of a larger strategy to help you live younger, longer.”

From Root Cause Medicine to Radiant Longevity

For decades, Dr. Petersen has been at the forefront of functional and root-cause medicine, helping patients heal from chronic conditions by uncovering why symptoms develop in the first place. But as her patients began asking how they could not only heal, but also thrive - maintaining energy, sharpness, and vitality into later decades - her work naturally evolved into the anti-aging space.

"For me, anti-aging medicine was a natural next step," she says. "Patients were asking, 'how do I avoid cognitive decline? How do I keep my strength and energy as I get older?' It's not about chasing youth. It's about extending health span - the years you live in good health, free of frailty and disease."

This approach, she explains, resonates deeply with her patient community. "A lot of people look at elderly family members who are struggling and think, 'I don't want to end up frail or dependent,'" she says. "They want to take control, stay active, travel, and enjoy life. That's what drives this movement."

Anti-Aging Isn't Cosmetic—It's Cellular

When most people hear "anti-aging," they picture expensive serums or cosmetic treatments. But for Dr. Peterson, the concept runs far deeper. "To me, anti-aging isn't about erasing lines or looking young again," she says. "It's about reversing or slowing the biological processes that make us weaker, more fatigued, or cognitively slower with time." She explains the difference between chronological age - the number of birthdays you've celebrated - and biological age, which reflects how old your cells actually behave. Someone may be 60 on paper but function more like 40 if they've taken care of their health - or the reverse if they haven't. At her clinic, the focus is on strengthening what really matters: muscle, mitochondria, immune resilience, and cognitive sharpness. "We're not chasing cosmetic youth," she adds. "We're treating the biological aging process itself - balancing hormones, reducing inflammation, improving mitochondrial function, and correcting nutrient deficiencies."

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What Exactly Is NAD+?

So, where does NAD+ come into play? At its core, NAD+ (short for nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide) is a coenzyme found in every living cell. Think of it as your body's ultimate energy broker. It helps mitochondria (your cellular power plants) convert food into energy, repair DNA, regulate gene expression, and support immune and metabolic function. It's no wonder scientists often call NAD+ the "anti-aging molecule." Without enough of it, your cells simply can't function optimally.

"NAD+ only lasts a few seconds in the body before being used up, which is why maintaining steady production is so critical," Dr. Petersen explains. "It's essential for DNA repair, energy production, and protecting cells from oxidative stress. It really is a miraculous coenzyme."

Unfortunately, NAD+ levels drop dramatically as we age; some estimates suggest by 50 percent by middle age. That's where therapies like IV drips and supplements come in, aiming to restore levels and, in theory, slow or even reverse aspects of cellular aging. Still, Dr. Peterson stresses that NAD+ isn't a quick fix or miracle cure.

"There's a lot of celebrity hype around NAD+ right now," she notes. "But it works best as part of a bigger plan. You can't rely on NAD+ alone to keep you youthful if you're eating poorly, not exercising, or running on no sleep."

IVs vs. Supplements: What's Worth It?

Scroll through social media and you'll see NAD+ IV drips promoted as the latest celebrity secret - complete with glowing-skin claims and energy boosts. While the buzz has raised awareness, Dr. Petersen says it can also paint an incomplete picture.

"IV therapy can create a quick surge of NAD+, but it's short-lived - often clearing from the bloodstream within hours," she says. "Supplements, on the other hand, may take longer to feel, but they help maintain steadier intracellular levels over time."

That's why her clinic often recommends oral NAD+ supplements for long-term support. They're easier to maintain and more practical for most patients.

"At our clinic, we also see great potential for NAD+ in supporting patients with Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and long-standing immune issues," she says. "It's not a cure, but it's one more tool in the toolbox to help the body perform at its best."

She also cautions that while NAD+ IVs are generally safe, they can cause side effects like nausea, headaches, or fatigue. "Quality and purity make a world of difference," she says. "That's why it's so important to use trusted medical-grade products rather than whatever pops up online."

Who Can Benefit Most?

Dr. Petersen says NAD+ therapy can be especially promising for:

- + **People dealing with fatigue and low energy**
- + **Those concerned about cognitive decline**
- + **Individuals with autoimmune or mitochondrial-related conditions**
- + **Anyone wanting to improve resilience and vitality with age**

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The Bigger Picture: Lifestyle and Longevity

Even with all its promise, NAD+ is only part of Dr. Petersen's holistic longevity playbook. "You can't biohack your way out of poor sleep or processed food," she says with a smile. "If someone's eating junk, never moving their body, and sleeping five hours a night, NAD+ won't fix that." Instead, she emphasizes the basics:

- + **Nutrition:** Eat whole, nutrient-dense foods
- + **Exercise:** Prioritize resistance training to protect muscle
- + **Sleep:** Get consistent, high-quality rest
- + **Gut Health:** Support your microbiome for immunity and energy

NAD+ then becomes the "bonus layer," amplifying what a healthy lifestyle already sets in motion.

Beyond NAD+: The Future of Anti-Aging

While NAD+ remains a cornerstone of her longevity practice, Dr. Petersen is excited by the growing field of peptide therapy—tiny protein-like compounds that can target inflammation, joint pain, and mitochondrial health. “There’s incredible synergy between NAD+ and certain peptides,” she says. “They can work together to reduce inflammation, support healing, and optimize cellular performance.”

With scientific research advancing rapidly, she believes we’re only at the beginning of truly understanding how to optimize aging. “We’re literally learning how to tell cells to behave younger,” she says. “It’s an incredibly hopeful time in medicine, because we’re not just treating disease anymore - we’re learning how to prevent and even reverse aspects of aging itself.”

Aging with Intention

For Dr. Petersen, the conversation around NAD+ constantly circles back to empowerment.

“Aging doesn’t have to mean decline,” she says. “We have tools now that can help us stay strong, focused, and energized for decades. That’s the goal - to keep living the lives we love.”

And while Instagram might frame NAD+ as a quick fix, Dr. Petersen sees it as part of something much bigger: a way to age with intention, protect your health, and truly thrive - inside and out. **GFM**

As always, consult a medical professional before beginning any new protocol.

“We have tools now that can help us stay strong, focused, and energized for decades.”



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Dr. Vikki Petersen, DC, CCN, CFMP, is a pioneer in Root Cause Medicine, founder of Root Cause Medical Clinic (rootcausemedicalclinics.com), bestselling author, and sought-after speaker on gut health, gluten sensitivity, and functional medicine.

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