

DAILY NEWS

Health

California teen recovers from devastating coma thanks to fish oil

Grant Virgin, 17, of Palm Desert, was in a horrific crash that left him in a perilous state in September. But his parents pushed hard for the best treatment, leading them to try fish oil to help his brain — and bringing him to an almost-full recovery.

Comments (37)

BY JOEL LANDAU / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

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CNN

17-year-old Grant Virgin was in a coma after a September car accident broke several bones and injured internal organs.

With their teenage son in a coma, a California family was willing to try anything to bring him back.

And with a new type of treatment, their son has made a miraculous recovery — thanks to fish oil.

Grant Virgin, now 17, of Palm Desert, Calif., was involved in a near-tragic car accident last September when an unidentified woman crashed into him and drove off — even after stopping

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to survey the damage, [the Desert Sun reported](#).

Virgin was in a coma and was in really bad shape.

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Grant's mother, JJ, wouldn't take doctors' assessment of her son at face value. 'They told us to let him go. ... It's like, how dare you not fight for my son's life?'

He had fractures in his skull, clavicle, both femurs and heel, the newspaper reported. His spleen and liver were lacerated and his aorta was crushed.

Doctors told Grant's parents, John and JJ, that he would never wake up.

"They told us to let him go," Grant's mother JJ, a celebrity nutritionist, [told CNN](#). "It's like, how dare you not fight for my son's life? ... It really took us ... getting very aggressive and assertive to save our son's life, because they weren't going to do it."

The family moved their son to the Children's Hospital Los Angeles and tried everything they could to help their son.

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With their teenage son in a coma, a California family was willing to try anything to bring him back. And with



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CNN

Grant made progress after the car accident, learning how to function after several life-threatening injuries.

Something in particular was high doses of omega-3 fatty acids found in fish oil, CNN reported.

"If you have a brick wall and it gets damaged, wouldn't you want to use bricks to repair it?" Dr. Michael Lewis, founder of the Brain Health Education and Research Institute, [told CNN](#). "By supplementing using (omega-3 fatty acids) in substantial doses, you provide the foundation for the brain to repair itself."

There has been limited research on its effects, but Virgin's doctors said they believe the fish oil can stop the inflammation in the brain.

Grant had awoken from the coma and had begun speaking short phrases. His parents were again told to wait, but the family kept moving forward with his treatment.

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CNN

Grant suffered a fractured skull, clavicle, femurs and heels, as well as a lacerated spleen and liver.

The doctors administered the fish oil and, within a few days, Grant was able to use full sentences, CNN reported.

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And just a few months after the accident, he is back home and doing very well. His body is nearly fully recovered, though he still struggles with speech, the Desert Sun reported. His father John told the newspaper a full complete recovery is maybe two to five years away.

But considering the grim initial prognosis, the family will take it.

"Grant is GREAT," JJ wrote on her Facebook page. "He's a reminder that we NEVER stop fighting. Our BEST life is worth the fight. Right?"

And Grant has now become an inspiration to others in the hospital. He recently came back to show everyone his progress.

"From when he first arrived compared to now is just night and day," Elly Schoap, an occupational therapist at the hospital, told the Desert Sun. "When he left us he was able to walk and talk, but he was still very impaired. ... This is why we work in this area. To have him come back and see this kind of success story is just amazing."

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POETIC JUSTICE

10

2 days ago

I've been using fish oil for many years. I think without it I might have aged faster and my joints wouldn't be as nimble. Fish oil is also said to be a natural treatment for depression. It helps keep the brain in top performance.

The woman who struck this boy should burn in hell. She came out and assessed then left him. It's amazing how careless people can change the lives of others with inconsiderate acts like we see every week in NYC where vehicle kill or maim pedestrians crossing the streets.

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1 reply ▼

BARRY SILVER

2

2 days ago

Poetic Justice: at least you didn't blame the NRA for the car accident. Just good natured ribbing.

BTW, I believe in fish oil. I don't know if it was reason for this boy's recovery, part of it or none of it. But I do believe daily fish oil consumption does improve many things over the long term: heart health, brain health, immunity function, etc. So on fish oil, we can agree on something, as well as the abhorrent behavior of the driver.

Like
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[REPLY](#)

MUNCH HAUSEN

8

2 days ago

Interesting that I see this and similar articles the same week so many media outlets are reporting that vitamins and supplements don't work at all.

The bottom line is that they do very often work. Medical professionals and drug companies who make nothing from supplements and vitamins cannot let us think they work, or they're likely to not make their millions/billions over-prescribing unnatural chemicals.

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REPLY 3 replies ▼

LINDA INGMANSON

3

2 days ago

I agree with you, Munch.

Like
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REPLY

MICHELE BONDER

2

2 days ago

Indeed. I was perplexed by the recent claims that vitamins are a waste of time, when I know they aren't. The supplements I take are far better than taking drugs to correct minor problems I've had, even with bouts of depression and sleeplessness, arthritis in my spine, etc.

Like
SHARE

REPLY

FREON SANDOZ

2

2 days ago

That attitude is the reason so many people waste their money and health on quackery. Some people recover from serious conditions on their own, but everyone tends to remember the successes and forget the failures. Carefully controlled studies are the ONLY way to separate fact from wishful thinking, and those "unnatural chemicals" you deride are used because controlled studies proved them effective. Please read more at quackwatch.com to understand the why the scientific method is essential to overcome the natural biases that we humans have.

Like
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REPLY

KATHLEEN

4

2 days ago

Would love to know how many grams per day his dose was! Anybody know?

Like
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REPLY 4 replies ▼

DIANANYC3

1

2 days ago

The UK Daily Mail online did a story on this and the dose :

"If you have a brick wall and it gets damaged, wouldn't you want to use bricks to repair it?' Dr. Michael Lewistold CNN. 'By supplementing using (omega-3 fatty acids) in substantial doses, you provide the foundation for the brain to repair itself.'

Fish oil did not work, though, in every instance it was tried, CNN notes, but the Virgin's went ahead with the unorthodox therapy at a dosage of 20-grams-per-day. The largest known dosage ever given to anyone."

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REPLY 2 replies ▼

ME AGAIN

0

2 days ago

I have to look-been using 3 Costco Fish Oil pills a day. It also worked miracles on my dogs. Problem is more than one pill a day makes one dog queasy so we tried refrigerating it (my GP said that helps with people's complaint about the fishy taste repeating). Does anyone know anything about freezing it?

Like
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REPLY

KATHLEEN

0

2 days ago

Thanks! I was curious. The geriatric psychiatry unit I worked on was starting to give 4-5 grams a day for some younger folks with bipolar disorder when I worked there 10 years ago. I'm sure in a devastating case like this one, the mother thought, "Why NOT try a mega-dose of fish oil?" There was nothing to lose, really. Bully for her, for fighting for her child. I think we would all do that in her place.

Like
SHARE

REPLY

MICHELE BONDER

0

2 days ago

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21135750>

Like
SHARE

REPLY

J. HOLDERBAUM

3

2 days ago

Great story. It's wise to be proactive with doctors whose treatments are sometimes limited to a one-size-fits-all pharmaceutical approach. Always do your own research, ask questions, explore the possibilities not available to the medical profession and seek out doctors who will work with you. Hope this kid makes a full recovery.

Like
SHARE

REPLY

KIKI LUBBIN

3

2 days ago

I love these stories and never fail to be amazed by the ignorance of the American public. Look at the pictures. The teen was on a ventilator and had a tracheostomy. Fish oil saved him? Aren't you forgetting the EMTs, emergency room staff, neurosurgeons, surgeons and orthopedists? Do you think fish oil is the main event here?

I am sorry to pick on the family and hope he has a complete recovery, but that is clearly a wish. If he is learning how to talk, he obviously has some brain damage. With the skull fracture and coma, some damage is certain to be permanent. You give false hope with fish oil. And, there will be dozens of others who read this article and demand the same care. Aggressive rescue can be appropriate, but it can also be futile. I don't advocate neglect or excessive heroics: just everyone having an accurate perception and wise decisionmaking.

I also need to take issue with demonization of modern medicine, which by the way took care of his broken bones, splenic injury, and increased intracranial pressure. Doctors don't care about fish oil - we follow evidence based practices. If fish oil has a proven place, we recommend it. If it does not, we do not. We means the majority of doctors, not the fringe fruitcakes. The recommendation has nothing to do with making money. Tell me you don't know that the supplement industry is a multibillion dollar affair. Tell me you don't know it escapes most regulations and is not based on scientific evidence.

Like
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REPLY

2 replies ▼

NJ HILL

3

2 days ago

There is room for both! And by the way....I take fish oil daily, keeps me young & vibrant. At 63, I can see the results of my healthy choices in food & supplements. Why so much resistance to Alternative Medicine....I don't want my life to depend on big pharma.

Like
SHARE

REPLY

ELAINE BROWN

0

1 day ago

Well said Kiki

Like
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REPLY

ANONYMOUS

3

2 days ago

is this what passes as 'objective reporting' on the Daily News?
His mother is a 'celebrity nutritionist'- whatever that is, so she might be expected to be biased. There are no reports from Doctors who saw him, why not?

Like
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REPLY

ANGEL GLASSES

1

1 day ago

remember when your parents would shove cod liver oil down your throat. fish oil is an old remedy. We just forgot about it because drug companies can't profit from such things. They want you on THEIR drugs, which don't work nearly as well as they want you to believe. Don't let anyone turn you into another legal drug addict.

Like
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REPLY

CHADDLEY G

1

2 days ago

I just realized his mom is JJ Virgin, a popular and well known nutritionist. What a coincidence!

Like
SHARE

REPLY

WONDER MIKE

1

2 days ago

all these unsubstantiated claims are palpable.

Like
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REPLY

LADYMOM011

1

2 days ago

There is mounting evidence that eliminating gluten completely from the diet can improve brain function and reverse the effects of aging and neurological problems. Bread is no longer the "staff of life" because of genetic modifications to wheat and other grains. If the family eliminated gluten, the will probably see even faster recovery to his brain and other organs because gluten impedes the proper absorption of nutrients. You don't have to have full blown Celiac to be sensitive to it.

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REPLY

1 reply ▼

FREON SANDOZ

2

2 days ago

More unscientific babble. True, a small percentage of people are apparently allergic to gluten. But genetic engineering has nothing to do with it. Genetically engineered crops have the same nutrients, both good and bad, as "natural" crops.

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