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Adopting the Latest Changes



“When it comes to your health and happiness, there is no better place to start than by educating yourself, because every piece of new information learned is a new tool with the potential to help you live a longer, happier, healthier life.”

It feels as though not a day goes by that I don't read about new discoveries that have the potential to change the way we define a healthy diet and lifestyle. It's fascinating and wonderful to learn all about the studies and research. But it can also be confusing at times because of what seem to be contrary “facts,” and there is so much being published now.

Nutritional science is still relatively young, and therefore we still have much to learn. The things that we think we know for sure may change as well. For example, when I was growing up, I learned about the four food groups: meat, fruits and vegetables, cereals and breads, and dairy. Eventually the four food groups concept gave way to the Food Guide Pyramid. Today, children in the United States are taught about nutrition with a concept called MyPlate.

These changes in the way we teach our children about nutrition were not done arbitrarily, and they were heavily influenced by the increasingly powerful agribusiness and food processing industries. Currently there is a proliferation of new food plans based on newer science. As researchers discover new aspects of health and nutrition, these discoveries are being adopted into a greater knowledge base.

We learn; we adjust; we continue to strive toward a healthier life.

This search for newer, better information is exciting to me. And it is another example of why lifelong learning is so important. Challenging your brain with new facts and information may help safeguard cognitive function. Using that new knowledge to your advantage can help in numerous ways.

How can anyone be expected to live a truly healthy lifestyle without the right knowledge? And what is the right knowledge? Taking even just a little time out of your schedule to devote toward staying up to date on what constitutes a healthy lifestyle is one of the most precious gifts you can give yourself.

That said, there are some constants that will probably never change, such as the importance of eating fresh fruits, vegetables and spices or the need for regular physical activity and the consumption of fresh, pure water. In essence, fresh plant foods will always be important. Every new discovery made reinforces the importance of the thousands of phytonutrients in plant foods and their importance for your body.

If you really want to be on the forefront of the wellness revolution, I encourage you to always look for opportunities to discover new information. When it comes to your health and happiness, there is no better place to start than by educating yourself, because every piece of new information learned is a new tool with the potential to help you live a longer, happier, healthier life. Then test these ideas in the ultimate laboratory – your body.

Dwight L. McKee M.D.

Walk your way into a healthier old age

If you are concerned about maintaining cognitive function, you may want to walk your way into a healthier old age. Without taking preventative actions, our brains tend to shrink as we age. However, a long-term, nine-year study of how walking affects the brain found that people who walked just six to nine miles every week preserved significantly more gray matter as compared to more sedentary people. While walking just one mile a day may help protect brain function, the more active you are throughout life, the healthier your body remains in general.



Nutritional News

Breakfast

may truly be the most important meal of the day. A new study has found that men who skip breakfast have a 27 percent higher risk of developing heart disease than do men who take the time to eat something before heading off to work. And that isn't the only benefit – men who skip breakfast are also more likely to experience weight gain, high levels of “bad” cholesterol, high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes. On the other hand, starting the day with a healthy meal may help boost mood, improve memory and regulate the cardiovascular system – not to mention provide the energy needed to make it through a busy morning of work.



White tea

If you are looking for a new way to help keep your skin smooth and supple, try drinking white tea. A recent lab study has found that white tea produces an anti-inflammatory effect in the body that may help fight against the breakdown of collagen and elastin fibers, both of which are the primary structures responsible for your skin's supple look and feel.



Arthritis

sufferers may find new relief by getting active. According to a study that looked at 4,700 people suffering with or at risk for osteoarthritis, people who meet or exceed 150 minutes of exercise per week have more pain-free days per year than do people who live a more sedentary lifestyle. This new research suggests that increasing physical activity by even moderate amounts can help improve quality of life and possibly cut healthcare costs for patients with osteoarthritis.

Do you have trouble remembering new information?

Instead of staying up late studying, try the opposite and take a nap right after class. According to one new study, people who got quality deep sleep (slow-wave sleep) during their naps immediately after learning new material retained the new information much better than did their non-napping counterparts. Healthy sleep habits are also thought to help protect the immune system, control stress levels and boost mood.



Fitness



Beginning Exercises

It's never too late to incorporate a supportive exercise program into your lifestyle. Whether you are overweight, obese or simply reluctant to get off the couch, getting into better shape can help increase your life expectancy, boost your mood, increase confidence levels and even make many day-to-day activities easier.

If it has been a while since you last laced up your running shoes, don't let your lack of experience or ability prevent you from getting back into it or even trying new exercises. Everybody begins his or her journey to wellness from a different stage, but we are all on the path together. Here are a few considerations and beginning exercises to ease your transition to a healthier, happier you.

For a healthy heart and cardiovascular system, the American Medical Association recommends that a person spend at least 30 minutes a day engaged in moderate-intensity activity. What constitutes moderate intensity? Walking at a pace that slightly elevates your heart rate. If that sounds easy, it's because it is.

Walking every day is a quick and easy first step toward your exercise goals. But before you begin any new activity (even regularly walking around the block) it is a good idea to assess your current fitness level and then think about your goals. Do you want to run a 5K, lose 10 pounds, drop a dress size or maybe just walk up the stairs at work without becoming winded?

Whatever goal is important to you, make it clear and reasonable. Goals need to be obtainable or you risk frustrating yourself. And they need to be clear so you know exactly when they are met. When you have a goal selected, write it down and put it someplace you will see it at least once a day. Your bathroom mirror is a popular and effective place. You want to be reminded of what you are working toward.

Once you've decided on a goal and assessed your current condition, you can make a plan to reach your goal. Remember to go at your own pace – start cautiously and progress only as fast as you are comfortable with. If you have never run in your life, do not expect to be able to run a 5K in just a matter of weeks. And don't be frustrated by this either. More and more research is being published showing that even what most people consider to be too little exercise is quite beneficial.

As you work toward your goal, try to include a few different regular activities in your weekly routine. Doing the same repetitive exercise day in and day out can lead to boredom and increases the risk of injury from overuse of one specific muscle or joint.

Incorporating different exercises into a regular routine is called cross-training. Even though the term "cross-training" has a tendency to be thought of as a serious exercise regimen that only professional athletes need to think about using, it can actually benefit everyone no matter what the person's current level of fitness.

There are generally three areas of focus in a cross-training program: aerobic workouts, strength training and flexibility exercises. Each of these activities complements the other two. When they are combined into a regular cross-training program, they work together to make workouts more efficient and ensure your entire body is engaged.

Be creative with all your exercises. Good aerobic exercises for beginners include

walking, biking, beginning cardio classes, dancing, sports (with players near your fitness level), rowing and hiking. As for flexibility exercises, basic stretching exercises can be performed anywhere. It's also possible to find yoga and tai chi classes geared specifically to beginners. For many people new to exercising, strength training can be the most intimidating. However, increasing muscle mass can be as simple as wearing wrist or ankle weights when you walk. Using household items such as canned goods or water jugs for bicep curls is also effective.

If you find yourself losing your motivation, try new activities. It's nearly impossible to reach a fitness goal if you don't like the exercises you are doing. An important part of the road to wellness is self-discovery, which includes discovering which physical fitness activities you enjoy the most. These are the ones that will help guarantee you stay active, happy and healthy.

No matter what your current life situation is or where you feel like you are in terms of health and weight, starting an exercise program is a wonderful and important decision. It doesn't have to be overwhelming or unobtainable. Maximize your efforts by assessing yourself honestly before you begin, creating realistic goals and being open to changing when necessary. ●

Feature Article



Supporting Health vs. Seeking Treatment

In general, the majority of members of our modern society have come to embrace a reactionary form of healthcare. People wait until they are sick and then seek treatment. This may be the norm, but wouldn't it make sense to help support an already-healthy body than to look for treatment options for a sick one?

Would you rather be proactive in your decisions or wait until you feel sick before you seek help? A growing number of people are adopting lifestyles that seek to break the reactionary take on healthcare. They focus on living a healthy lifestyle that supports health rather than one that relies on seeking treatment after they become sick.

The people who try to live this lifestyle would quickly point out that there is nothing wrong with seeking treatment. When illness does occur, they will still visit a doctor. However, they believe that certain lifestyle changes and healthy choices can help keep all parts of their bodies – including the immune system, which we all know fights off infection and illness – functioning properly.

As stated earlier, supporting health does not mean avoiding doctor visits. Regular check-ups, even when a person feels healthy, can help support health by identifying risk factors for diseases that you might not be aware of.

Many of the leading causes of death can be avoided by a lifestyle that supports health. Poor diet, physical inactivity, obesity, tobacco use, sexually transmitted infections, drug abuse, alcohol abuse – a healthy lifestyle virtually ensures you do not have health complications from any of these illness-causing factors.

But this kind of lifestyle does more than just help you avoid foods, activities and even

people that are detrimental to your health. It also attracts into your life things, people, foods and experiences that help your body stay healthy.

One of the most important and powerful aspects of living a life that supports health is diet. There is no escaping the fact that you will not be giving your body all the nutritional support it needs unless you are eating ample amounts of a wide variety of fresh plant foods – primarily fruits, vegetables, herbs and spices. At the same time, it is also important to avoid consuming unhealthy, processed and refined foods.

Plant foods, especially fruits and vegetables, are full of vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients that are critical to maintaining a healthy, functioning body. There are vast differences in the amounts of phytonutrients found in various fruits and vegetables. Carrots may be very rich in precursors to vitamin A, but they lack the same amount of vitamin C as broccoli, and while garlic may help support a healthy cardiovascular system, cherries, especially tart cherries, have been shown in studies to contain anti-inflammatory properties.

Many doctors and nutritionists recommend eating at least five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables every day, but according to the European Food Information Council, many people do not consume anywhere near this amount of daily-recommended servings.

Often, people don't realize how small a serving actually is, so they feel intimidated by the prospect of eating so much. However, the National Institutes of Health classifies one serving of fruit or vegetables as one piece the size of a tennis ball. A large salad for lunch can actually make up two to three servings. And the more vegetables you include in your salad, the wider the range of nutrients your body will receive.

Perhaps the most important aspect of healthy eating is making sure you enjoy what you eat. If you don't take pleasure in the foods you are eating, how likely are you to continue eating them? Dinnertime should be a pleasurable experience when families can reconnect and share experiences. It's important to enjoy the food you eat and the time you spend eating, because stress and other negative emotions have negative effects on the digestion process.

Because fruits and vegetables come in an incredibly wide variety of tastes, textures and colors, consuming all the important nutrients they contain never gets tiresome.

You can also help support your health by staying active, both mentally and physically. Without some form of regular upkeep, lean muscle mass slowly degrades as people age. With that loss come decreased strength, balance and coordination, which are essentially the three pillars of your freedom to move about. An active lifestyle that makes time for regular physical activity can help support health and avoid muscle loss and its complications.

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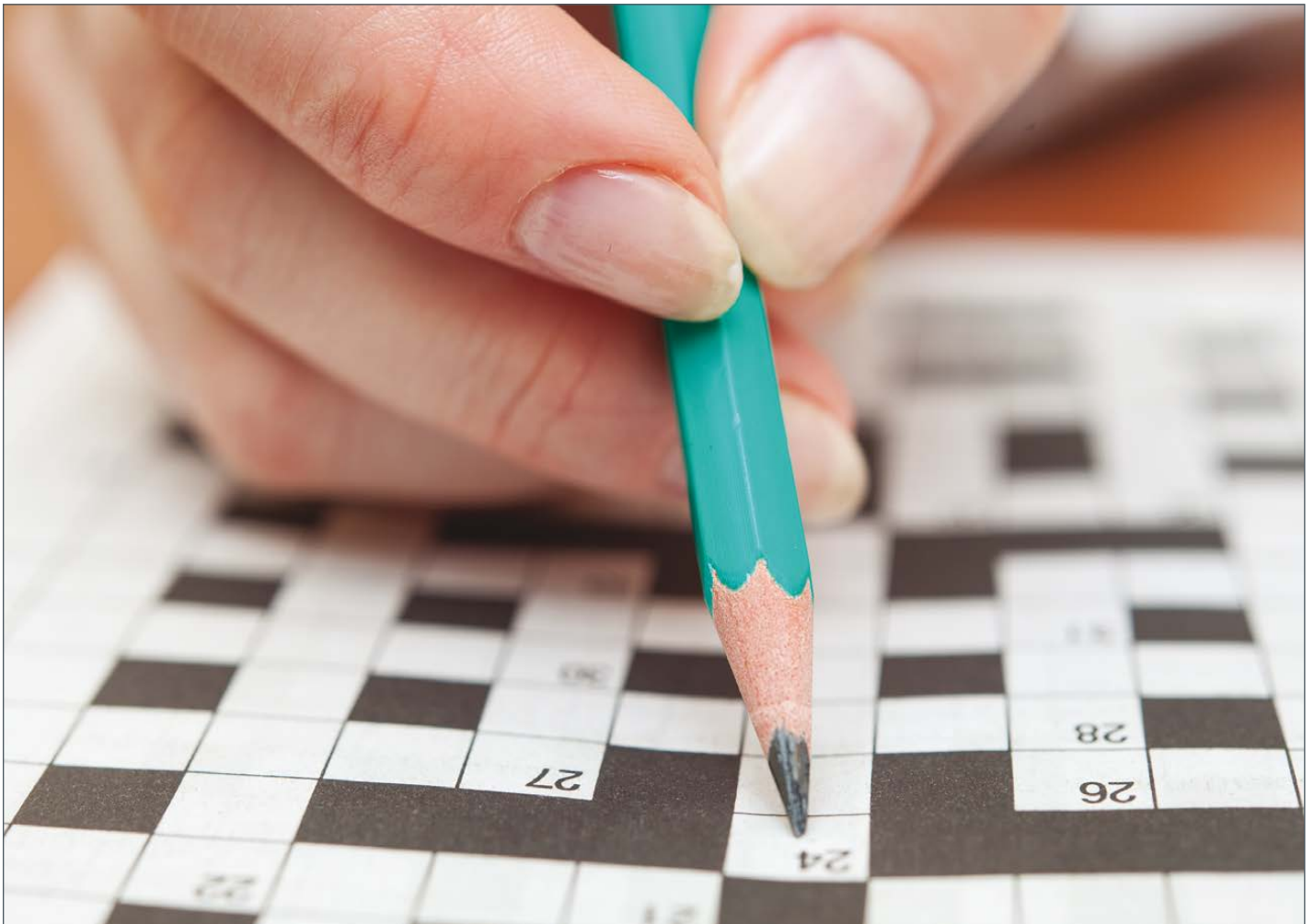
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Staying mentally active is in many ways similar to staying physically active. The human brain is like every other part of the body; it needs to be fed and exercised or it can atrophy. There are many ways to exercise your brain. Doing crossword puzzles and games, learning new skills, making new friends, talking to strangers, taking new routes to work or the grocery store – every activity that makes you think (as opposed to something you can do on “autopilot,” without making deliberate decisions) helps support cognitive function.

Beyond the basics of eating fruits and vegetables and making time for physical activity, we all support our health in different ways. The salad you mix is probably different from your friend’s. The exercises you love may be different from your spouse’s. Diversity is a wonderful thing that makes life exciting. What really matters is that you, your friend and your spouse have all found ways to stay healthy that each of you can enjoy, because when you enjoy your

routines and when you take pleasure in the foods you eat, you are much more likely to continue living a life that supports health.

A healthy lifestyle should not be dreaded. It will make you feel good in all areas of life – physically, mentally and socially. Explore,

take chances, find new experiences, and discover the healthy activities and foods you enjoy the most, and then include more of them in your life.

Always remember that just because you don’t need to visit the doctor tomorrow doesn’t necessarily mean you are as healthy as you can be today. Embrace the healthy things that make you feel good – the foods you enjoy, exercises you like, people who

make you happy – and include more of these things in your life in order to live a life that helps support your health and happiness. ●

“Explore, take chances, find new experiences, and discover the healthy activities and foods you enjoy the most, and then include more of them in your life.”

Lifestyle





Harvest the Year's Emotions

We spend the year working on improving ourselves physically, emotionally and spiritually. Now is the season to stop and reflect, to become more aware of the wonderful benefits of all the hard work you've done on yourself.

Taking a step back to reflect on your feelings, both current and past, can help you identify your thought patterns even better. What better time than fall's harvest season to reap the emotional benefits of what you have sown?

The key to attracting positives into your life is to be grateful for what you have. Chasing empty desires and holding grudges because of the things you don't have will only make you feel worse and attract negatives into your life. Don't beat yourself up over negative thought patterns you experienced throughout the year. Acknowledge them for what they were and then simply set the memories aside. Feel good for all your success. Reflect on happiness.

If you don't already, make this fall the time when you stop for a few minutes every day to take an inventory of your emotions. Now is the time to create a daily habit of noticing your thoughts and feelings. Then reflect for a few minutes on any patterns you can identify.

If you already began this process earlier in the year, let now be the time when you go even deeper into your thoughts and feelings. Examine the ways you emotionally dealt with stressful experiences and happy experiences. Use this new insight to anticipate your emotional reactions even better. This knowledge will help prepare you for the ups and downs you know are coming in the future.

Until you stop and truly reflect on what you are focusing on, you will simply go through life letting things happen to you. But when you take stock of your emotions and become aware of what you are focused on, there is no limit to what positive people, experiences and things you can attract into your life.

When you are reaping the benefits of the emotional work you did this year, be sure to reflect on the wonderful things that your positive-minded alignment helped bring into your life. If, when you look back on the year, you realize that you have been attracting negative experiences into your life, it may be time for a change. Either way, you won't fully know where your thoughts are predominantly focused until you take the time to reflect on them.

Staying in a positive frame of mind is not always easy. Giving in to negative feelings often takes far less effort than does remaining optimistic; that's why it can be helpful to remove as many negative influences from your life as possible and surround yourself with positive influences.

Don't be discouraged if your year's emotional harvest isn't as positive as you would like it to be. Remember that as easy as it is to succumb to pessimism, optimism is contagious too! It takes only a little work to keep a positive outlook, and very quickly you will find that positive-minded, motivating people will fill your life. Becoming friends with these

people will further help keep destructive thought patterns at bay.

Positive thought patterns can help us attract the things we want in life and repel the things we don't want. When you look back on the past year, you will see just how often this happened in your life. Reflecting on these experiences will not only help you become even more grateful, but it will also help attract even more positive experiences. That's a wonderful thought, isn't it?

The most powerful tool for success you have at your disposal is your mind. With it you can accomplish anything, making your greatest dreams a reality. And just thinking about the positive things you have already attracted into your life will attract even more! If you take time this fall to reap the wonderful benefits from all the hard work you've done to align your thoughts and feelings with positive forces, imagine what you will be reflecting on next year! ●

Nutrition



Flavonoids

A recurring topic in nutritional classes is the importance of antioxidants.

These free-radical-fighting nutrients are thought to be a vital part of fighting against many of the effects that were once thought to come inevitably with old age. More likely than not, when antioxidants are discussed, vitamin C, vitamin E and beta-carotenoids are among the first to be discussed. While these are important antioxidants, they are hardly the only ones you should be consuming.

Talking about only the three best-known antioxidants leaves out an incredibly important and very diverse group of antioxidants called flavonoids.

Flavonoids are a class of plant secondary metabolites (part of the broad class called phytonutrients) that function as powerful antioxidants when consumed. Just like vitamins C and E, flavonoids help protect the body from cell-damaging free radicals. However, many flavonoids do much more than other antioxidants do – some researchers believe certain flavonoids possess anti-histamine and even antimicrobial properties. There are also some studies that suggest flavonoids can help boost mood.

These diverse nutrients come from a wide range of fruits and vegetables. Here are a few of the best sources.

Apples, onions and a number of other important food plants contain the flavonoid quercetin, which is studied for its positive effects on heart health.

Green tea is rich in epigallocatechin gallate, a flavonoid that is 25 times more powerful than vitamin E.

Dark chocolate, when consumed in healthy, moderate amounts provides the body with multiple flavonoids, including some oligomeric proanthocyanidins (OPCs).

Red wine contains a group of flavonoids that researchers believe is responsible for the “French paradox” – a term referring to France’s relatively low incidence of heart disease despite a general diet that tends to be relatively high in fat.

Chamomile tea is full of apigenin, a flavonoid that was recently found to have mood-enhancing properties.

All the above foods and flavonoids contribute to a healthy body. However, there is one specific flavonoid that stands out as the very best of the best. Mentioned above, OPCs are a class of antioxidants that are more potent than vitamins C and E and contribute powerfully to our bodies’ internal antioxidant network.

These extremely powerful antioxidants are found in hundreds of plants and are more highly concentrated in the fibrous parts of plants, such as the seeds and bark. The two best sources of OPCs are grape seeds and pine bark – although you would need to consume a lot of rather unappetizing bark and seeds to get enough of the valuable compounds they contain.

Fortunately, you don’t need to search the Internet for pine bark recipes in order to provide your body with OPCs. In the late 1940s Professor Dr. Jack Masquelier, a professor at the University of Bordeaux in

southern France, made a groundbreaking nutritional discovery. He was the first person to discover oligomeric proanthocyanidins, or what would eventually become known more commonly as Real OPCs. Interestingly, this group of unique compounds was colorless, so for decades researchers did not realize they were present. These superstrong antioxidants are 100 percent bioavailable, and when extracted according to Dr. Masquelier’s patented methods, their concentrate is 100 percent residue free. Over 60 years later they remain the strongest, most important class of antioxidants ever discovered.

Every day we come into contact with free radicals from hundreds of different sources, so it is very important to protect ourselves from them by consuming antioxidants, both from a diet full of fresh fruits and vegetables and from supplements containing powerful antioxidants, especially OPCs. ●

Feature Article





Storing Muscle Energy

Whether you are hiking on a crisp fall afternoon, lifting weights or just carrying groceries to the car – your muscles need energy to function.

When they run out of energy, your muscles become fatigued and weak, making whatever activity you are engaged in much harder.

In other words, the more energy that is stored in your muscles, the longer you can stay physically active.

The primary energy source for your muscles is glucose, which the body can create from glycogen (a polysaccharide) stored in your muscles and liver. To help ensure your muscles are properly supported so you can achieve peak performance, you must have sufficient glycogen stored in your muscles. For longer-term, endurance types of activity, however, our muscles can switch over to burning two-carbon fragments derived from fatty acids (stored as body fat).

Athletes of all levels, as well as everyone else, use glycogen during exercise. In fact, every time you move a muscle, glycogen comes into play – from running a marathon to walking the dog. Your muscles are constantly in use. No matter how intense your activity, you can help ensure your fall workouts are as effective as possible by giving your body the nutritional support it needs in order to store ample amounts of muscle energy.

If you have an active lifestyle, you may need to work harder to replenish glycogen stores. Studies have shown that exhaustive

workouts significantly deplete glycogen levels in both muscles and the liver. Consequently, many athletes believe that for the best results, they need to replenish their glycogen levels either quickly during an endurance event or immediately after shorter events such as 30 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise.

Maintaining glycogen levels will help keep your muscles fueled during workouts, preventing premature fatigue. There is a second, equally important aspect to maintaining and building muscle mass: the post-workout recovery. If you spend any amount of time with the bodybuilders in a gym, you are virtually guaranteed to hear them talk about protein. From amateur to professional, most bodybuilders know that when it comes to muscle building, repair and maintenance, there is no other nutrient like it.

The many amino acids in protein facilitate muscle growth by providing the building blocks of muscle tissue. Without protein in your diet, you could lift weights all day and never get any stronger.

One particular amino acid appears to be of special importance to muscles. Leucine

is one of the essential amino acids that provide ingredients for the manufacturing of other essential biochemical components in the body. Some of those components are used to give boosts of energy. The availability of this essential amino acid is especially important in controlling the net blend of protein. Leucine is an essential amino acid, meaning that the human body cannot synthesize it, and it therefore must be ingested. The related “branched chain” amino acids, called isoleucine and valine, are also very supportive of muscle repair and growth.

Meats, fish, poultry and dairy products are all excellent sources of high-quality protein. Vegans and vegetarians can consume their protein supplies from soy, grains, quinoa and legumes. Another good source is protein shakes, especially those rich in the three-branched-chain amino acids leucine, isoleucine and valine. Many bodybuilders, professional and amateur, drink protein shakes after workouts because they know that the concentrated, high-quality protein is exactly what their muscles need, both for repair and for growth.

Actually, the perfect post-workout muscle helper is a combination of protein and

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carbohydrates, because the body needs a small insulin bump to facilitate protein absorption. If you enjoy a post-workout protein shake, add a few blueberries (or any type of berries) into the mix for an even healthier muscle-friendly mix.

Protein can also help in the manufacture of glycogen because the body can make sugars out of amino acids in order to make glycogen. This means carb-loading, although popular among many athletes, is not necessarily essential for making muscle glycogen.

It's also a good idea to eat a diet rich in foods that help keep your digestive system working properly so you can digest and absorb all those muscle-friendly nutrients. Plenty of dietary fiber from varied sources will help with that, as will lots of fresh, pure water.

As an added bonus to your body's health, all those fresh fruits and vegetables will provide a boost in antioxidants. And while extra antioxidants are always helpful, boosting their levels may be especially beneficial to those who are engaged in intense exercises. During strenuous workouts your breathing will increase exponentially. With more oxygen comes more oxidative stress, which can contribute to muscle fatigue

and inflammation. Those antioxidant-rich fruits and vegetables will help combat the resulting surge in free radicals.

Maintaining muscle mass is an important part of being healthy. It becomes even more important as we age. Without exercise, loss of muscle mass is a part of the aging process, known medically as sarcopenia. As muscle mass is lost, so, too, are strength, balance and coordination – three major factors that contribute

to falls. This may be why some research has found that maintaining muscle mass may be key to help adults live longer, healthier lives. One study found that older adults with more muscle mass are less likely to die prematurely. The importance of maintaining strength as we age is often overlooked yet really important.

Loss of muscle also means a reduced ability to burn fat, which can lead to weight gain. The more muscle mass you have, the more

fat your body is able to burn even when at rest and not just during intense exercise.

The best ways to stop degeneration and the associated problems are to engage in regular physical activity and provide the nutritional support needed for healthy, energy-filled muscles. ●

“No matter how intense your activity, you can help ensure your fall workouts are as effective as possible by giving your body the nutritional support it needs in order to store ample amounts of muscle energy.”

Herbs & Supplements



Food for a Healthy Autumn

It's a scientific fact that every area of the body absorbs and utilizes the nutrients found in the foods we eat. Look at the way herbs and supplements are packaged and you will quickly see how each and every area of your body requires specific nutritional support. Some nutrients have very specific roles in the body; others offer broader benefits. Here are a few foods that may offer wide-reaching support to help protect your body this fall.

Lemons and Limes

Lemons, limes and other citrus fruits contain vitamin C, a well-known essential nutrient. In addition to its excellent antioxidant properties, vitamin C may help protect healthy skin, as vitamin C is involved in collagen synthesis – and the group of collagen proteins is the largest component of all the proteins in your body. Collagen is the fundamental protein of all connective tissue (scientifically known as fascia), which is literally what holds our body together. Vitamin C is also critical for essential metabolic reactions. Vitamin C has been shown to be a natural antihistamine, which may help facilitate your body's natural defenses against allergies. Finally, because it is found in high concentrations in immune cells, vitamin C may be especially important during the cold and flu season.

If you have trouble finding citrus fruits during the fall, vitamin C can also be found in dark green leafy vegetables, chili peppers, Brussels sprouts, garlic and cauliflower.

Grape Seeds/Pine Bark

Grape seeds and pine bark, as well as the fibrous components of at least 600 other foods, contain a rich group of very powerful antioxidants that the body uses to help combat the oxidation process caused by free radicals. These antioxidants are referred

to as OPCs, which is shorter and much easier to remember than the full name, oligomeric proanthocyanidins. In terms of antioxidant capabilities, OPCs are more potent than is vitamin E. And yet vitamin E has remained the better-known antioxidant. Recent research has demonstrated that OPCs, with their internal network of individual antioxidant molecules, are superior in many ways. They do not get "used up" or oxidized so quickly in the body.

Since free radicals can attack any part of our bodies, including our DNA and its protective telomeres – the very blueprint of who we are – it is vital to supply the body with antioxidant protection. Free radicals tend to exert their damage as we age. It is believed by many in the scientific community that ensuring adequate consumption of dietary antioxidants via food and supplements can have a beneficial effect over one's lifetime.

OPCs are actually found in hundreds of plants, but they tend to be found in the highest concentrations in the fibrous parts of plants. This is why pine bark and grape seeds have become such great sources of OPCs. Unless you have a taste for bark, the best dietary sources of OPCs are currently red wine and supplements. The extraction process requires between 100 and 300 kg of grape seeds or pine bark to

yield 1 kg of 95 percent pure OPCs. While this seems like a lot, it would require even larger quantities of most other plant sources, and before the advent of OPC extraction, these were largely waste by-products of grape and pine timber harvesting.

Tomatoes

Tomatoes (as well as dark green, red, orange and yellow vegetables, as well as garlic and onions) are rich in sulfur. One particular form, MSM (methyl sulfonyl methane), is a highly bioavailable form of sulfur, which means it is easily absorbed by the body. Sulfur is one of the basic elements of life and is required to manufacture many proteins rich in sulfur-containing amino acids, including collagen, a primary protein in hair, skin and fingernails as well as in tendons, ligaments and all connective tissues. Sulfur is also abundantly present in keratin, the major protein in the outer portion of hair, skin, fingernails and toenails. MSM is a form of sulfur that occurs widely in nature. It has become a popular supplement greatly synergistic with other collagen-supporting nutrients, such as antioxidants and glucosamine. ●

Family Health

“As children grow, their bones require calcium to grow strong and healthy, so it may be even more critical to make yogurt and other dairy products a dietary staple.”



Top Foods for a Good Night's Sleep

Everyone needs adequate amounts of sleep to be healthy, but a growing body needs additional time spent dreaming in order to facilitate healthy growth.

During sleep a child's body is hard at work recuperating from the day's activities, building strong muscles and bones, bolstering the immune system, forming memories, and boosting mood.

It's easy to see why sleep is so important for everyone at any age. But did you know that the amount and quality of sleep that children get at night can vary greatly depending on what he or she has eaten during the day? A healthy, well-balanced diet during the day can have a positive impact at night. Here are a few examples of some great, sleep-promoting foods to be eaten at dinner or as an evening snack.

Vitamin B-rich foods such as fish help promote sleep because the body uses vitamin B to manufacture melatonin, a sleep-friendly hormone triggered by darkness. According to an article published in the *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, study participants who took melatonin experienced a decrease in sleep latency and an increase in sleep efficiency. These results suggest that serving fish at dinner may help a child sleep better at night.

Serving salad at the same meal may help even more because lettuce contains lactucarium, a phytonutrient believed to possess mild sedative properties.

Closer to bedtime, hungry children may benefit from a snack of yogurt mixed with fruit and nuts. Dairy products such as yogurt

are rich in calcium. Some research has shown that a lack of calcium may make it more difficult to fall asleep. As children grow, their bones require calcium to grow strong and healthy, so it may be even more critical to make yogurt and other dairy products a dietary staple.

Mixing cherries, bananas, walnuts or almonds into yogurt may make it an even more effective sleep-boosting snack. Cherries are one of the very few dietary sources of melatonin, and bananas contain magnesium and potassium, which are natural muscle relaxants.

Walnuts contain the sleep-enhancing amino acid tryptophan. The body uses tryptophan to make serotonin and melatonin, which the body uses to regulate sleep. Additionally, one study has shown that walnuts also contain their own source of melatonin.

Similar to bananas, almonds are rich in magnesium, which we know is a mineral needed to help the body get quality sleep.

These foods can all help children get the sleep they need to wake up refreshed and ready for an important day at school. But there are also foods that children (and adults!) should avoid in order to help ensure a restful night. Many sodas (and all "energy drinks") are full of caffeine, which can prevent sleep. They also contain acids and other chemicals that can upset the gastrointestinal tract, promoting acid reflux. It's hard to fall asleep with an upset tummy.

It is also a good idea to avoid spicy foods as evening snacks. Lying down after a spicy snack can result in heartburn.

Watch out for hidden caffeine sources too. A mug of hot chocolate may seem like a soothing pre-bedtime drink, but chocolate is a natural source of caffeine and its cousin theobromine. Hot chocolate may not contain as much of the energy-boosting stimulant as coffee, but a child's small body doesn't need as much of it as an adult does to feel the effects.

Even for the youngest children, sleep is an important part of the art of growing young. Taking diet into consideration can help ensure growing children get enough quality sleep at night in order to promote mental and physical health and ensure a healthy, happy child. ●

Family Health



Vitamins for Every Woman at Every Age

While nutritional needs do change slightly with age, there are some nutrients that are important for every woman at every age. Here are just a few of the many nutrients that help protect a woman's body inside and out.

The B vitamin complex is important because all the B vitamins must be present for many of the systems in a woman's body to function at optimum levels. B vitamins are required for neurotransmitters, amino acids, some hormones and fatty acids, and they play important roles in converting carbohydrates into energy, helping relieve chronic stress and fatigue, and even helping form the building blocks of DNA – which is the reason why folic acid is often recommended to pregnant women.

It's important for a woman to obtain the whole spectrum of B vitamins not just because each plays a separate role but also because they often work together. The body cannot fully utilize B12 without folic acid (B9). Similarly, B9 and B6 will not function properly without riboflavin (B2) in the system. The complex ways in which the B vitamins work together, when drawn out, resemble a complicated web of interconnections.

You don't need to understand exactly how each B vitamin works with the others to benefit from the interactions. But you do need to consume a varied diet in order to help ensure your body is getting what it needs for the interactions to happen.

There are many ways to obtain them from your diet. Meat; chicken; fish; and other animal products, such as cheese and eggs, are good sources of B vitamins. Vegans and vegetarians can get their B vitamins from potatoes, bananas, lentils, chili peppers and tempeh. Molasses and brewer's yeast are exceptionally good sources of the vitamin B family. Consequently, Marmite and Vegemite (salty yeast preparations popular in the UK and Australia) are loaded with B vitamins. Dark green leafy vegetables and

some whole grains also contain B2, and dark green leafy vegetables are also an excellent source of folate.

Osteoporosis is a common form of bone loss in postmenopausal women, and it may be affected by more nutrients in our diets than most people realize. We are told from a young age that calcium and vitamin D are important for building healthy bones, but there are other nutrients that are just as important. Vitamin D is important in helping us absorb calcium (in addition to the myriad of other things it does), and vitamin K is crucial in directing that calcium into our bones and teeth and keeping it from accumulating in soft tissues, such as blood vessels.

Studies have shown that many women with osteoporosis have lower levels of magnesium in the bones and blood, which leads researchers to believe that magnesium works in tandem with calcium to support healthy bones and teeth. Indeed, at least one clinical trial in which magnesium was given to women with osteoporosis and low levels of magnesium showed dramatic increases in bone density within six months.

Zinc and its partner copper both work in conjunction with certain enzymes to help ensure bones have good structure and strength. Manganese works in much the same way, helping enzymes properly form bone mass, as does the trace element boron.

Additionally, phosphate makes up more than half of bone mineral mass, making it a critical nutrient for bone health.

Omega-3 fatty acids may be good for everyone's health – for women in particular, these healthy fats found in fish may help protect against a wide range of conditions,

including osteoporosis, heart disease and depression.

Despite the fact that heart disease is often thought of as a problem only men need to be concerned about, more women than men die of heart disease each year. Omega-3 fatty acids may facilitate a healthier cardiovascular system, as they appear to help lower bad cholesterol while raising good cholesterol. These positive effects on the cardiovascular system may make fish an important part of any woman's diet.

Additionally, omega-3 fatty acids are also thought to help improve mood, boost mental power and support a healthy brain. These potent nutrients have even been shown in clinical studies to help protect skin from sun damage. Because of all these benefits, every woman should try to include more omega-3s in her diet.

The most abundant source of omega-3s is cold-water fish, especially salmon, mackerel, tuna and halibut. Like humans, fish cannot synthesize omega-3s. They obtain these healthy fats from eating algae rich in omega-3s. Therefore, there can be a significant difference in omega-3 concentrations between wild and farmed fish. Whenever possible, choose fresh, wild fish over farm-raised fish. High-quality fish oil supplements also can be an excellent source of these crucial fatty acids, and they are lower in environmental contaminants such as mercury than are the fish they are derived from. Omega-3s can also be found in flaxseed, kiwi seed, chia seed and hemp seed. However, these sources do not include either EPA or DHA, the specific forms of omega-3 fatty acids thought to be the best of the best in terms of health-protecting properties. ●





Natural Alternatives to Coffee at the Start of the Day

Coffee is one of the most popular morning drinks around the world, but not everyone enjoys the strong flavor of coffee when they first wake up. If you find yourself having trouble waking up in the morning but don't want to reach for a cup of coffee, there are many other natural energy-boosting beverages to try.

Yerba Mate

Yerba mate, made from the leaves of a plant of the same name, is the most popular energy-supporting herbal drink in South America, particularly in Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina. It is often given to school-age children to help them be more alert and attentive in the classroom. More than 190 compounds have been identified in this complex plant. Yerba mate is naturally teeming with nutrients, with 24 vitamins and minerals, 15 amino acids, and potent antioxidants. The plant also contains caffeine, theobromine and theophylline, which all contribute to its energizing effects and make drinks made from yerba mate a natural coffee alternative. Research has also shown that compounds in yerba mate prevent the formation of advanced glycation end products (AGEs), one of the important causes of aging, which over time damage proteins and enzymes in the body.

Traditionally, yerba mate is prepared by steeping the plant's dry leaves in hot (but not boiling) water. It is then consumed much like any tea: usually hot but sometimes cold. In Uruguay, Argentina and southern Brazil, yerba mate is served in a hollow gourd with a metal straw. But you don't need to have such serving ware in order to enjoy the energy-boosting effects of yerba mate. You will find a hot cup of yerba mate has a similar earthy taste to some varieties of green tea. The soothing flavor and energy-facilitating compounds make yerba mate a delicious and energizing morning drink choice.

Green Tea

If you already enjoy the taste of green tea and don't want to try something new, the ancient Asian beverage also makes a suitable coffee replacement. Green tea, which has been used in Asia for at least 4,000 years, is a caffeine-containing beverage that also provides the body with plenty of important vitamins, minerals and volatile oils. In addition, green tea is also extremely rich in several antioxidants. Every cup not only helps keep you awake but also works to fight against damaging free radicals. Green tea is also particularly rich in an unusual amino acid called L-theanine, which promotes calm and focus.

Many other tea varieties also contain caffeine if you like variety in your morning beverage. However, be sure to look at the ingredients list, as some teas are actually herbal or herbal mixtures that do not contain the same nutrients as traditional tea leaves.

Hot Chocolate

If you enjoy a sweeter drink, hot chocolate may be a viable alternative to coffee. Cocoa contains only small amounts of caffeine, but it also contains another closely related substance called theobromine in much larger levels. Theobromine has been shown to be a myocardial stimulant and a vasodilator, increasing heartbeat and dilating blood vessels, respectively.

Scientists have also identified over 300 compounds, including many major vitamins,

minerals, amino acids and fatty acids, in cocoa. Much like the other choices in this list, cocoa combines nutritional support with its energy-boosting properties. When making hot chocolate, use chocolate that is at least 70 percent cocoa that has not been Dutch processed (or "Dutched"), which removes many of these beneficial compounds. The darker the chocolate, the more health-boosting nutrients it contains.

Guaraná

Guaraná is an evergreen vine indigenous to the Amazon Basin. Crushed seeds from the plant have a long history of use in energy-supporting beverages and extracts. Caffeine and closely related alkaloids are the primary active components of guaraná. The resinous extract of guaraná seeds releases these energy-boosting components into the system much more slowly than coffee and tea do, which may allow guaraná-containing drinks to provide a longer source of energy.

The next time you find you need a little extra help waking up in the morning, try something new with one of these beverages for a delicious, nutritious dose of morning energy. ●

Family Health



Get a Head Start on a Healthy Winter

Your body has an incredibly powerful immune system that generally does a remarkable job of defending you against illness-causing microorganisms of all kinds. But as we enter into cold and flu season, it may be a good idea to help give your body a little extra support.

A few lifestyle changes and healthy meal options can help provide your body's immune system with the tools it needs to function at optimum levels during these cold-weather months.

There's no doubt that the flu is a seasonal disease. But it's not because of cold weather, as many people believe it to be. The real reason why the flu is seasonal has less to do with temperatures and more to do with the amount of sunlight a person is exposed to.

Study after study has shown that increased levels of vitamin D appear to help protect already-healthy individuals from contracting the flu. Because vitamin D production depends on sun exposure, it's no surprise that colds and the flu spread rapidly during winter months, when the sun is out less and the body is not able to produce as much vitamin D as it can during the summer.

Vitamin D is the only vitamin the body is capable of manufacturing internally, but it can't do it on its own. When exposed to UVB rays from the sun, skin cells will begin to generate vitamin D. When the days are shorter, people are exposed to much less sunlight. The amount of vitamin K in your body is a factor as well.

Therefore, the easiest and most effective way of combating vitamin D insufficiency is to supplement with vitamin D (and K) in the winter months. Winter sun in temperate climates generally doesn't have enough UVB

rays to stimulate adequate vitamin D production, but another reason to commit to spending more time in the sun is that solar rays help the body in many (and many as yet undiscovered) ways. When trying to increase your sun exposure, keep in mind that smog, sunscreen, season, latitude, time of day and other factors can affect the amount of UV rays your body absorbs, therefore lowering the amount of vitamin D produced.

There are also plenty of dietary factors that can contribute to your immune system's ability to function. Research has shown that vitamin C concentrations in the plasma and leukocytes rapidly decline when you have an infection or are under stress. Consequently, increasing vitamin C levels by including more fruits, such as citrus fruits, and veggies in the diet may help improve certain components of the human immune system, such as antimicrobial and natural killer cell activities. If you have trouble finding fresh citrus during the fall, sweet potatoes, broccoli, onions, cauliflower, bell peppers, Brussels sprouts and cabbage all contain the important vitamin as well.

Another immune-friendly vitamin is E. One study involving healthy subjects over age 65 revealed that increasing daily amounts of vitamin E increased certain antibody responses. Vitamin E (and C) is also a powerful antioxidant that can help protect the body from free-radical attacks (excessive oxidative stress).

Minerals such as zinc and magnesium also help bolster the immune system. Zinc deficiency has been shown to negatively affect the ability of T cells to carry out their protective functions. A growing body of evidence shows that magnesium may help protect the immune system in several different ways, including by aiding in the formation of antibodies.

Probiotic bacteria, such as those found in yogurt and kefir, may also help protect against illness by triggering specific anti-inflammatory immune responses. Physical activity also provides important anti-inflammatory protections.

Cold and flu season is almost upon us, but a healthy diet; extra vitamins C, D and E; extra crucial minerals; and a little extra time outdoors can help keep your already-powerful immune system working hard and protecting you. ●

Get a head start on a healthy winter by following these simple tips:

1. Eat a diet rich in fruits and vegetables.
2. Exercise regularly.
3. Get adequate sleep.
4. Wash your hands frequently.
5. Spend 20 minutes in the sun every day.

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Our nutritional powerhouse; a potent balance of essential important nutrients to provide targeted support to overall health.



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Food supplements should not be used as a substitute for a diversified diet.

Is it really possible to protect my DNA?

Like the health of every other part of your body, the health of your DNA can be affected by many factors, including free radicals, environmental toxins, radiation and viruses. However, it is possible to help protect your DNA against certain factors by living a healthy lifestyle that includes regular physical activity and a diet rich in fresh fruits and vegetables, plus plenty of high-quality proteins and healthy fats. Consuming a wide variety of fruits and vegetables helps ensure your body is supplied with enough antioxidants to fend off free-radical attacks. And since your DNA is susceptible to free radicals and oxidization just like other parts of your body, such a diet can help protect the very building blocks of who you are.



Ask the Expert



What is the difference between glycemic index and glycemic load?

Glycemic index and load are two closely related terms. They refer to different aspects of how carbohydrates are digested. The glycemic index is a system of ranking foods depending on how quickly they are digested and released into the blood as glucose (blood sugar). The higher the number, the faster this happens. Glycemic load looks at the index number and goes one step further, multiplying it by a food's total carbohydrate content. Although there are a few exceptions, foods with a high glycemic index will also have a high glycemic load. These are the foods (often refined, premade junk foods) that you want to avoid, as they are digested and turned into blood sugar quickly. This causes a rapid spike in energy (and a spike in insulin, the hormone that stores fat), followed by a lull. Foods with complex carbohydrates (usually whole, natural foods) are digested more slowly and therefore provide a more constant, steadier source of energy.



Do men need to worry about osteoporosis?

Even though the majority of people affected by osteoporosis are women, men are susceptible too. In general, men tend to lose bone density slower than women do, but after the age of 65 the rate of decline is the same for both sexes, making several nutrients, including calcium, magnesium, copper, zinc, manganese and boron, as well as vitamins such as D and K, supplements that are important for both men and women as they age. Why calcium? If the body is not supplied with enough calcium to function, it will steal calcium from bones, making them brittle and increasing chances of a fracture. For optimum bone protection, the body also requires vitamins D and K. All three of these nutrients work synergistically to help protect your bones. Weight-bearing exercise is also critical to maintaining bone mass and strength.

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