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Natural Insights for Well Being™

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Losing Weight Safely

Nutrients support healthy dieting

Vitamin D improved heart health in dieters, green tea reduced abdominal fat, and calcium helped those with low calcium lose more weight, new findings show.

In a study of heart health in dieters, researchers noted that losing excess weight cuts the chances of heart disease, and explained that low vitamin D and high parathyroid hormone levels are two new heart health risk factors. About 200 healthy but overweight men and women with low vitamin D levels took 3,320 IU of vitamin D per day, or a placebo. After 12 months, vitamin D levels were normal in the vitamin D group but remained low for placebo. Measuring other risk factors, compared to placebo, the vitamin D group had lost 4.5 times the amount of blood fats (triglycerides), had three times lower levels of an inflammatory sign (tumor necrosis factor-alpha), and lower levels of parathyroid hormone.

Doctors in a diet study thought that catechins—the powerful antioxidants in green tea—could help the body burn fat. A group of 132 overweight or obese men and women, average age 48, drank a beverage that contained 39 mg of caffeine, with or without 625 mg of green tea catechins, per day. Participants ate the same amount of calories and exercised for at least three hours per week, including three supervised sessions. After 12 weeks, the

catechin group had lost more total weight, more belly fat, and more triglycerides than the caffeine-only group.

Researchers in this study on diet and calcium believe the brain detects low calcium levels, and compensates by increasing appetite. About 60 overweight and obese women, whose diets had little calcium, took 1,200 mg of calcium plus 400 IU of vitamin D per day, or a placebo, during a 15-week diet program. Among women whose diets had the least calcium, those in the calcium/vitamin D group lost 13 pounds compared to two pounds for placebo. Doctors concluded calcium appears to reduce appetite.

REFERENCE: THE JOURNAL OF NUTRITION; 2009, VOL. 139, No. 2, 264-70



AUGUST'S

Healthy Tip

Vitamin C Reduced Gout

Gout is a type of arthritis that occurs when excess uric acid—a natural compound in the body—builds up in the blood. In a 20-year study of about 47,000 men, those who consumed over 1,500 mg of vitamin C per day from all sources were nearly half as likely to have gout as were men who got less than 250 mg per day. In gout, excess uric acid forms sharp, needle-like crystalline deposits in the joints, causing inflammation and pain. Doctors believe vitamin C may help the kidneys excrete excess uric acid and may keep excess uric acid from forming.

REFERENCE: ARCHIVES OF INTERNAL MEDICINE; 2009, VOL. 169, No. 5, 502-7

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Smart Dieting

New thinking on hunger, satiety, and calories

Chromium picolinate reduced hunger and cravings, protein for breakfast cut hunger all day, and limiting total calories lowered weight, in three new studies.

In a hunger study, 42 overweight non-smoking women, average age 33, who said they intensely craved carbohydrates, took 1,000 mcg of chromium picolinate (Chromax®) per day, or a placebo. After eight weeks, those in the chromium picolinate group had about 24 percent lower hunger levels and food intake, while the placebo group reported increased hunger levels.

Dr Louis J Aronne from the Weill Cornell Medical Center, New York City says that while all calories have the same energy value, some foods increase hunger and may affect what people eat

later on. For example, carbohydrates raise blood sugar, causing an insulin surge that lowers blood sugar, increasing hunger again. The doctor believes that insulin spikes interfere with a satiety hormone, leptin, which may malfunction in obese people. Dr Aronne cites a study where people who ate a protein-rich breakfast of eggs consumed 140 fewer calories at lunch and ate less during the next 36 hours compared to those who ate a bagel for breakfast.

Doctors from Harvard School of Public Health, Boston, Massachusetts, wanted to vary the amount of fat, protein, and carbohydrate in this weight-loss study to see if one diet is better than another. About 800 overweight adults ate one of four diets that were low or high in fats or carbohydrates (please see table). All the diets followed heart-healthy guidelines, replaced saturated with unsaturated fat, and were high

in whole grain cereals, fruits, and vegetables.

Researchers asked participants to attend behavior counseling, exercise moderately for 90 minutes per week, keep a daily diet diary, and to eat 750 calories less than normal per day. No one ate fewer than 1,200 calories per day. After six months, participants on all four diets had lost an average of 13 pounds, and on average, all groups after two years weighed nine pounds less, with waists two inches smaller.

REFERENCE: NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF MEDICINE; 2009, VOL. 360, 859-73

DIET	% FAT	% PRO-TEIN	% CARBO-HYDRATE
1	20	15	65
2	20	25	55
3	40	15	45
4	40	25	35

Healthier Pregnancy

Vitamins help women carry to term

Prenatal vitamins reduced miscarriage, vitamin D lowered bacterial infections during pregnancy, and ginger relieved nausea, in three new studies.

In a miscarriage study, about 4,800 U.S. women enrolled in the West Virginia *Right From the Start Project* over an eight-year period during which they intended to get pregnant. Nearly all (95 percent) of the women reported taking

prenatal vitamins. Researchers found that those who took any vitamins during pregnancy were less than half as likely to have a miscarriage compared to women who did not take vitamins.

Doctors in a study of infection in pregnancy explained that bacterial vaginosis (BV) is one of the leading causes of preventable preterm births, and wanted to see if vitamin D improved the chances of avoiding BV. Researchers measured blood levels of vitamin D in over 460 women who were less than 16 weeks pregnant. Three-quarters had low vitamin D levels, and over half were deficient. Overall, 41 percent of the women had BV, and those who were deficient in vitamin D were about 2.5 times more likely to have BV than were women with good vitamin D levels.

In a nausea study, about 70 pregnant women who complained of nausea and vomiting took 1,000 mg of ginger in four 250 mg capsules per day, or a placebo. Researchers matched characteristics of the women in both groups; average age 23, average 13 weeks pregnant, and similar numbers of previous births, types of occupations, and education. After four days, half the ginger group had less vomiting compared to 9 percent for placebo. For all symptoms overall, 85 percent in the ginger group improved compared to 56 percent for placebo. Doctors concluded, "Ginger is an effective herbal remedy for decreasing nausea and vomiting during pregnancy."

REFERENCE: AMERICAN JOURNAL OF EPIDEMIOLOGY; APRIL, 2009, ELECTRONIC PRE-PUBLICATION



Promising Prostate News

Nutrients reduce chances of prostate cancer

Omega-3 fatty acids guard against advanced prostate cancer, flaxseed slowed tumor cell growth, and vitamin K improved chances of staying cancer-free.

Researchers in this prostate cancer study compared about 470 men with aggressive prostate cancer to 470 healthy men. Some of the men had an inflammatory gene (Cox-2 variant) that raised their chances of getting the disease. Overall, men who consumed the most omega-3s were about one-third as likely to have aggressive prostate cancer as were men who consumed the least. Among those with the Cox-2 gene variant, men who consumed the most omega-3s had less than one-fifth the chance of aggressive prostate cancer compared to men who got the least

omega-3s. Study authors noted that, “this is one of the first studies to show protection against advanced prostate cancer and interaction with Cox-2,” continuing, “The Cox-2 increased risk of disease was essentially reversed by increasing omega-3 fatty acid intake by a



half a gram per day.”

In a flaxseed study, about 160 men with prostate cancer ate their regular diet or a low-fat diet, with or without 30 grams of flaxseed per day, for an average of 30 days before surgery to remove the prostate gland. Whether on the low fat or regular fat diet, prostate cancer cells multiplied much more slowly in men who ate flaxseed compared to men who did not.

In a vitamin K study, researchers compared vitamin K in the diets of 250 men with prostate cancer to the diets of about 500 healthy men. Men who got the most vitamin K were about one-third as likely to have prostate cancer as were men who got the least vitamin K. Doctors noted that the chances of the disease decreased as the amount of vitamin K increased.

REFERENCE: CLINICAL CANCER RESEARCH; 2009, Vol. 15, No. 7, 2559-66

Asthma and Allergy

Nutrients strengthen lungs in children

Vitamin D reduced childhood asthma; omega-3 fatty acids, vitamin D, and zinc together improved asthma symptoms in kids; and folic acid relieved allergy, three new studies reveal.

Doctors in a vitamin D study explained that asthma is increasing in industrialized nations, and went to Costa Rica, where asthma rates are high, to examine children six to 14 years old. Researchers measured vitamin D levels in about 600 children and found that over one-quarter had low levels of vitamin D and that signs of allergy increased as vitamin D levels decreased. Kids with low vitamin D were more likely to be hospitalized for asthma, to use a corticosteroid inhaler, and to have hypersensitive air passageways compared to kids with good vitamin D levels.

In another asthma study, 60 children with moderately persistent asthma, average age 8, took 300 mg of eicosapentaenoic acid/docosahexaenoic acid (EPA/DHA) per day, 15 mg of zinc per day, or 200 mg of vitamin C per day, separately or altogether, for six weeks. Lung function and signs of inflammation improved with each supplement individually, and improved the most when kids took omega-3, zinc, and vitamin C together.

In a folic acid study, researchers from Johns Hopkins Children’s Center, Baltimore, Maryland, reviewed the medical records of over 8,000 people, aged 2 to 85, and found that those with the highest folate levels were 28 percent less likely to have wheezing compared to those with the lowest levels. Those with

the highest folate levels were 23 percent less likely to have allergy or allergic symptoms, and 14 percent less likely to have asthma. Doctors concluded, “Our findings are a clear indication that folic acid may indeed help regulate immune response to allergens, and may reduce allergy and asthma symptoms.”

REFERENCE: AMERICAN JOURNAL OF RESPIRATORY & CRITICAL CARE MEDICINE; JANUARY 29, 2009, ELECTRONIC PRE-PUBLICATION



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Nutrients Help Infertile Men

Hope for men with low sperm counts

Selenium and N-acetyl-cysteine increased and normalized sperm.

Some infertile men have low sperm counts, poor sperm quality, and impaired sperm movement. In this fertility study, researchers wanted to see if selenium and/or N-acetyl-cysteine could improve sperm health. About 500 infertile men took 200 mcg of selenium per day, 600 mg of N-acetyl-cysteine per day, these two nutrients combined, or a placebo. After 26 weeks, men who had taken selenium and N-acetyl-cysteine together had more sperm with normal structure and form, more balanced levels of a group of hormones that regulate and control the number of sperm, more concentrated sperm counts, and

better sperm movement. Good sperm movement, or motility, refers to the ability of sperm to move toward the egg. Doctors concluded that, “These results indicate that supplemental selenium and N-acetyl-cysteine improve semen quality,” continuing, “We advocate their use for male infertility treatment.”

REFERENCE: JOURNAL OF UROLOGY; 2008, VOL. 181, No. 2, 741-51



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