



Insurance Agency

March 2015

Completely Well

Preventive

American Diabetes Alert Day – March 24, 2015

Diabetes is a serious disease that increases the risk of heart disease, blindness, kidney failure and nerve damage. The latest statistics from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention are sobering and prove that diabetes is at epidemic levels. We must be proactive and maintain a healthy weight, get regular exercise, and discuss personal risk factors with a doctor. It's estimated that 29 million Americans are diabetic, which is 9.3% of the population. Approximately 8.1 million of those are undiagnosed and untreated. Additionally, 86 million Americans are estimated to have prediabetes, seriously increasing their risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Discuss your risk factors and need for screening with your medical professional.

Did you know?

- **Exercise increases your body's sensitivity to insulin, which lowers your blood sugar. One study found that 30 minutes of brisk walking reduced type 2 diabetes risk by 30%**
- **Losing as little as 5% of your body weight can lower your risk for diabetes. According to the Harvard School of Public Health, losing 7-10% of your body weight can cut your risk in half.**
- **T.V. watching – over 2 hours a day – is associated with a 20% increased risk for diabetes.**
- **New research is pointing to a link between red meat and diabetes risk, especially processed meats. Eating even a small amount every day can raise your risk between 20-51%.**

In this Issue: Coffee or Tea?, Food for Health, Office Fitness Options, American Diabetes Alert Day, "Planting Seeds," Less is More, and Ask the Trainer.

Food for Health

By now you are aware of the importance of nutrition and how a healthy diet can help you achieve a healthy weight. But did you know that certain foods are also considered healthy because of their medicinal value? It's true. Certain foods have properties that strengthen the immune system, reduce inflammation, or help you to heal. Here are some foods you should consider including in your diet.

- Berries – Filled with antioxidants, berries can help your immune system and may prevent certain diseases. Berries are rich in vitamin C, quercetin, and anthocyanins, which work together to reduce inflammation and help protect against memory loss associated with aging.
- Ginger – The ginger root is known to reduce inflammation and help with stomach issues. Some research has found that ginger can relieve pain.
- Plain yogurt – Yogurt provides good bacteria to your digestive track and can reduce constipation, diarrhea, and your risk for colon cancer. Yogurt also provides calcium for strong bones and teeth.
- Green tea – A powerhouse of antioxidants, green tea reduces inflammation and may reduce the risk for heart attack, diabetes, and certain cancers.
- Garlic – Garlic reduces inflammation and is known to be antibacterial. Garlic increases circulation and relaxes blood vessels, making it a heart healthy addition to any diet.
- White beans – With a good dose of magnesium and potassium, white beans can help lower blood pressure when part of your regular diet.
- Fruits and vegetables – It's worth noting that all fruits and vegetables contain antioxidants and fiber, both critical to your overall health. Building your diet on the foundation of fruits and vegetables is the best way to improve your health and lower your risk for heart disease, stroke, and cancer.

Nutrition

Produce of the Month: Spinach

Spinach is everywhere: on nearly every salad menu, in bags at the grocery and even as an ingredient at many Subway sandwich shops! In fact, spinach may be so common and so available that we undervalue its nutritional punch. In the days of the comic strip and cartoon hero Popeye, when a can of spinach was the source of his amazing strength, spinach was more regularly served as a side dish, one most mothers insisted that kids finish! Well, Mom was right about the health benefits of spinach. Very low in calories and with no fat, spinach contains over 13 different antioxidants that may help protect against cancer, promote heart health and act as a natural anti-inflammatory.

The Basics: Spinach is available year round and can be purchased fresh, canned or frozen. If you are buying canned or frozen spinach, be aware that the product will contain a lot of water and is best used in a specific recipe than as a side dish. Most recipes will ask you to squeeze out as much of the water as you can before adding the spinach. Fresh spinach will come loose or bagged. Like other greens, spinach should have a deep color and look fresh, not wilted or bruised. Store your unwashed spinach in a bag in the refrigerator until you are ready to use it. When ready, wash your spinach well. If you are using the spinach in a salad, dry it gently. For cooked spinach, you

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Produce of the Month continued...

may sauté it, steam it, bake it in a pasta recipe or do a quick boil (approximately 1 minute).

Try This: Rather than creamed spinach, which can be high in saturated fat, try sautéing your spinach in some olive oil with some minced garlic. Top with some fresh lemon juice or balsamic vinegar and some Romano or Parmesan cheese.

The Facts: One cup of raw spinach is approximately 7 calories with 1 gram of fiber and 1 gram of protein. With no fat or cholesterol, spinach delivers more than half the days requirement of Vitamin A and is an excellent source of foliate, iron, Vitamin C, calcium and potassium.

Coffee or Tea?

If you're wondering which early morning cup is healthier, take a look below at the head to head battle between coffee and tea.

Coffee

- ✓ Low in calories – only 5 calories per cup of non-sweetened black coffee
- ✓ May reduce risk of type 2 diabetes (Harvard School of Public Health)
- ✓ Associated with a lower risk for Parkinson's disease, dementia, and Alzheimer's.
- ✓ Found to reduce the risk of depression (3 cups per day).
- ✓ May lower risk for stroke in women.



Tea

- ✓ Low in calories – only 5 calories per cup of non-sweetened tea.
- ✓ Green tea is linked to a lower risk of breast cancer.
- ✓ May prevent gingivitis and tooth loss.
- ✓ Found to contain phytochemicals that may protect against Parkinson's disease.
- ✓ One study found that drinking 4 or more ounces of tea per day for a year reduced the risk of high blood pressure by 46% (*Archives of Internal Medicine*).



So what is the best choice? Turns out that both offer health benefits, so you can enjoy whichever you choose. Be aware, however, that adding sugar, cream, or any other flavoring may affect the health benefits. For example, 1 tablespoon of sugar adds 49 calories to your cup. Adding 1 tablespoon of half-and-half adds 20 calories to your cup. In addition, adding cream, half-and-half, or any milk besides fat-free will add fat and cholesterol. Include sugar and you will add carbohydrates to your coffee or tea. It's best to enjoy your drink plain, but a little fat-free milk (regular, almond, or soy) will add calcium without the fat and cholesterol.

Planting Seeds

If you enjoy gardening, you have probably been waiting for the winter to break so you can get the ground ready for this year's planting. You will clear away any brush left over from the fall and winter, start the difficult process of turning the soil over, and add compost and/or fertilizer if it's needed. This process is rarely done in a day; it can take a while before the ground is ready for you to plant.

It seems to me that we are the same. If we are trying to make changes, grow in health or wisdom, "plant seeds" – if you will – of good habits and behaviors – we will first need to prepare ourselves. New habits must replace old ones, and we will need to clear away the thoughts, behaviors, and even relationships that won't allow the healthy life we desire to grow. The first step is to recognize what is in the way. It can be as concrete as clearing the junk food out of the cabinets or throwing out the cigarettes. It can also be a matter of checking yourself for negative thoughts (the complicated voice that tells us we can't, aren't worth it, are weak). Perhaps it's the friendship that, when you look at it, is really about drinking too much and defining it as "fun." Whatever is in the way of claiming your health and happiness will need to be looked at with a clear eye and dealt with. Boundaries may need to be set and personal expectations raised. Acknowledging that thoughts and feelings are temporary responses can help. And having a clear vision of the healthy life you are claiming is necessary.

Like the gardener who needs to add nutrients to the soil before planting, you may find that you need to be "fed" as well. Perhaps it's education; you need to know what kind of diet or exercise is best for you. Maybe you will need to research ways to quit smoking. You might also want to build a support system to help you with whatever goals you are trying to achieve. Getting ready is key to long-term success.

When it's time to put the plan into place – to plant the seeds of change – your garden will be clear and you will be prepared. But no one said it would be easy. Change and growth is hard work. Notice the progress you make along the way, like when the gardener sees the first buds break through the ground. Keep the weeds from getting in your way – the old thoughts, the friends who sabotage, an all-or-nothing mindset. Give your goals what they need to thrive: encouragement, support, information, and kindness. Put the work into your wellness goals, plant the seeds of change and watch them grow. Because, even if it isn't easy, it absolutely is worth it.



Less is More: Throw It Away!

We all like to make things last as long as possible. This saves us money right? Well, sometimes we just need to get rid of items in order to protect our health. Here's a list of common household items and when they should be replaced.

- Scratched pots and pans can transfer chemicals into the foods you cook. Once they start to scratch it is time to replace them.
- Medication passed its expiration date should be properly disposed of. It will start to lose the effectiveness.
- Spices lose flavor after a year or two.
- Mascara has a shelf life of 2-3 months and lip-gloss and foundation should be tossed every 6 months due to mold and bacteria that can start to grow.
- Canned goods really cannot last an eternity. Toss the fruits and tomatoes after 18 months and meats and vegetables after 5 years.
- Replace your kitchen sponge every few months, but be sure you microwave it daily in water for 60 seconds. Sponges are one of the leading home culprits for hanging onto bacteria.
- Smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors have expiration dates. Check yours, and put the date on your calendar. Don't forget to change the batteries every 6 months.
- Paint older than 2 years will not be the same color you purchased!
- Toothbrushes should be replaced every 3-4 months. Also swap it out after you have been sick.
- Plastic Containers start to break down after lots of washings. Replace every few months or switch to glass.

Fitness

Ask the Trainer, by Erin Long, B.S., NSCA-CPT

Q: I like to workout in the morning before heading to work. Should I eat something before or after my workout? Do you have any recommendations on something quick to make?

A: This all depends on the person. Some people like to eat a little something before a workout so they do not feel sick or get light headed. On the other hand, some people get sick to their stomach if they eat. Whether you are working out or not, my first rule of thumb is that you need to eat in the first 45 – 60 minutes after getting up in the morning in order to kick start your metabolism and don't let your body start the day in deprivation mode. That being said, if you work out close to the time you wake up (within 45 minutes or so) and don't feel like eating right away, it's okay. If you do need or want to eat, it doesn't have to be a full meal. It can be something as light as a granola bar or piece of fruit just to give your body some sort of fuel. Now this does not count at your breakfast in my opinion, as that is not enough to start your day but it is enough to get you through a good workout and then you can have your breakfast afterwards.

Some of my favorite quick and easy breakfast ideas are smoothies and omelets/egg muffins. Smoothies make sure you have some sort of protein in your smoothie whether it is a protein powder, Greek yogurt, etc. Do not just include fruit and also try adding some greens to your smoothie like spinach or kale, this is a great way to get some extra vegetables in. Omelets or Egg Muffins are both high in protein so a great pre or post workout meal. If you aren't familiar with egg muffins, check your wellness portal for a great recipe. They are quick, easy and delicious!

Office Fitness Solutions

Can't make it to the gym before or after work? You can squeeze exercise into your day at work!

- **Walk and Talk** – With virtually all calls done on mobile, cordless, or speakerphones, make it a habit to pace or walk every time you are on the phone.
- **Resist** – Keep a resistance band in your drawer and use it once or twice a day for strength training.
- **2 every 20** – Make a point of getting up and moving for 2 minutes every 20 minutes. Research shows that extended sitting causes changes in your muscles that affects your weight, your heart, your liver, and your brain.
- **Schedule** – Put all of your workout activities on your calendar, and schedule time each day to move.
- **Hike and Climb** – You've heard it before, but parking far from the door and taking the stairs can have a significant impact on your fitness.
- **Meeting Motivation** – Finding like-minded co-workers and setting common fitness goals can help keep you motivated.



Want to know more?

Contact TCU Insurance for information on wellness programs. We can help you reduce healthcare costs and improve employee well being.



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