



**EDITOR'S NOTES:**

## Eating Out is Doing Us In

If you knew that an order of Pasta Alfredo at Olive Garden had 12 teaspoons of artery-clogging grease and a whopping 1,220 calories or that Applebee's Quesadilla Burger with fries packs 1,820 calories, 46 grams of saturated fat, and two day's worth of sodium, would you eat them anyway? It's no surprise that several recent studies have found that eating out is doing our waistlines (and health) in.

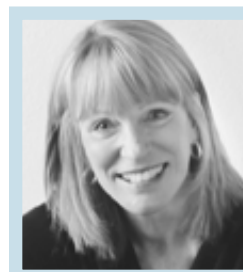
Everyone already knows that fast-food fare is mind-boggling awful for your health and weight. But, it doesn't stop there. National chain restaurants, from Chipotle Mexican Grill, Ruby Tuesdays, and Red Robin to the grand-daddy of them all - The Cheesecake Factory - also serve platters not portions of high calorie, fat, and salt-laden gorge sessions. For example, it's a no-brainer that a slice of cheesecake at The Cheesecake Factory will cost you between 800 and 1,200 calories. But, would you have guessed that the Charbroiled Flat Iron Steak w/ Fries has 1,760 calories, 30 grams of saturated fat, and 3,840mg sodium. Get it Philly Style and the cheese sauce brings the total to 2 ½ days worth of saturated fat (47 grams) and more than a day's worth of calories, with more than 3-days worth of sodium (5,340mg).

A study from Tufts University in Boston found that independent and small-chain restaurants are even worse. Here meals average 1,327 calories (66% of the average person's total daily calorie allotment) and some meals top out at an entire day's calorie need. Almost three out of every four meals have more than half of the 2,000 daily calories recommended for adults. That is before you order a beverage, appetizer, or dessert, or start taking bites off someone else's plate. (*Journal of the American Medical Association 2013;May 13th:1-8.*) According to a study from the University of Toronto, the average meal in a sit-down restaurant is flavored with 1,455 milligrams of sodium (the recommended daily limit for sodium is 1,500 milligrams). Many sandwiches, wraps, ribs, Mexican dishes, and pasta entrees come in at an alarmingly high 2,300 milligrams of sodium. (*Canadian Journal of Public Health 2013;104:e2-e8.*) Even if you choose a healthy option, such as a grilled chicken salad, you could be consuming 2,000 milligrams of sodium and 40 grams or more of fat. Those extra restaurant calories aren't free and research shows people who eat out are much more likely to be overweight. That means more heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, cancer, dementia, gout, depression, etc.

In the "good ol' days," going out to breakfast, lunch, or dinner was a special occasion. You planned it days in advance, you dressed up, and you went a little crazy on your choices at the restaurant. Hey, why not? You only ate out on rare occasions, so live it up a little. While eating out was once a treat, now it's a routine, with one in every five meals eaten at a restaurant, for a total of more than 53 billion meals and more than \$300 billion per year, according to the National Restaurant Association. Almost one in ten women eat out up to seven times a week! More than 45% of money spent on food goes to restaurant meals and other away-from-home foods, up from 34% in 1970.

Good old-fashioned home-cooked meals are healthier. In addition, family meals at home keep kids healthier and leaner, support better relationships within the family, reduce disordered eating and substance abuse, and improve well-being. Oh, and you'll save money! Eating in and cooking real food could be the simplest step toward halting this nation's obesity epidemic.

Elizabeth Somer, M.A.,R.D.



Elizabeth Somer

## Sugary Beverages on the Hot Seat

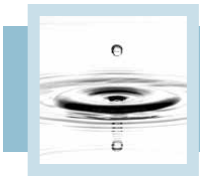
Even one bottle or can of a sugary beverage every day is enough to raise your risk for diabetes by 22%, say researchers at the Imperial College London. Data was used from 350,000 people from 10 European countries who were questioned about their diets, including how many sugary and artificially sweetened soft drinks and juices they drank daily. Results showed a rise in diabetes risk of more than one-fifth, while artificially sweetened beverage consumption did not significantly increase diabetes risk, and juice was not associated with diabetes incidence.

*Romaguera D, et al: Consumption of sweet beverages and type 2 diabetes incidence in European adults. Diabetologia 2013; April 26th.*

**HOTTOPIC:** Dietary intake of trans fats increases the risk for death from all causes, including diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and more, according to a study from Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition 2013;97:1121-1128.*

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## Eat Like a Greek

A Mediterranean diet lowers your risk for heart disease, according to numerous studies, including a recent one from the University of Navarra in Pamplona. In this study, 7,447 people who were at high risk for heart disease were randomly assigned to either a Mediterranean diet with olive oil or with nuts, or a standard low-fat diet. After five years, 288 of the participants had suffered a heart attack or stroke or had died from cardiovascular disease. However, those who had followed a Mediterranean-style diet with either nuts or olive oil had up to a 30% lower risk than those on the low-fat diet.

A strict Mediterranean diet also improves the chances of staying mentally sharp as you age, according to two studies, one from the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Shanghai and one from the University of Athens. This eating style also lowers colorectal cancer risk, according to researchers at the University of Athens Medical School in Greece and reduces breast cancer risk in a study from Catalan Institute of Oncology in Barcelona, Spain.

*Estruch R, Ros E, Salas-Salvado J, et al: Primary prevention of cardiovascular disease with a Mediterranean diet. New England Journal of Medicine 2013;February 25th.*

*Te X, Scott T, Gao X, et al: Mediterranean diet, Healthy Eating Index 2005, and cognitive function in middle-aged and older Puerto Rican adults. Journal of the American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics 2013;113:276-281.*

*Tsingoulis G, Judd S, Letter A, et al: Adherence to a Mediterranean diet and risk of incident cognitive impairment. Neurology 2013;80:1684-1692.*

*Bamia C, Lagiou P, Buckland G, et al: Mediterranean diet and colorectal cancer risk. European Journal of Epidemiology 2013;28:317-328.*

*Buckland G, Travier N, Cottet V, et al: Adherence to the Mediterranean diet and risk of breast cancer in the European prospective investigation into cancer and nutrition cohort study. International Journal of Cancer 2013;132:2918-2927.*

Here is a surprising finding. Researchers at the Imperial College London report that diets too high in protein are associated with a greater risk for being overweight or obese compared to diets higher in fat or carbs. Diets were assessed and weight/heights measured in 373,803 people

## The Pressure Is Off With Beet Juice

A cup of beet juice every day could keep the doctor away, at least in terms of blood pressure. Researchers at the University of Exeter in the U.K. supplemented the diets of healthy seniors (ages 60- to 70-years-old) for three days with either beet juice or placebos. Blood pressures and plasma nitrite levels were measured before and after the study. Results showed that beet juice, which is rich in nitrates, reduced blood pressure by about 10mmHg, while raising blood levels of nitrites. The effect was most pronounced 3 to 6 hours after drinking the juice and continued even 24 hours later.

**IN PERSPECTIVE:** *That amount of beet juice provides about 0.2 grams of dietary nitrate, which would be converted to nitrite once in the blood stream and from there to nitric oxide. Nitric oxide expands blood vessels and improves blood flow. Other good natural sources of nitrates in the diet include: celery, spinach, lettuce, parsley, leeks, endive, fennel, and Chinese cabbage.*

*Kelly J, Fulford J, Vanbatalo A, et al: Effects of short-term dietary nitrate supplementation on blood pressure, O2 uptake kinetics, and muscle and cognitive function in older adults. American Journal of Physiology 2013;304:R73-R83.*

## Magnesium Protects the Heart

Heart disease is the number one killer disease in this country and magnesium might help lower that risk. Researchers at the University of Groningen, The Netherlands took urinary samples and examined 7,664 adults free of cardiovascular disease. Results showed that after 10 years, those people with the lowest urinary excretion of magnesium had the highest risk for developing ischemic heart disease. The researchers conclude that, "...[increasing] dietary intake of magnesium, particularly in those with the lowest urinary magnesium, could reduce the risk for ischemic heart disease."

*Joosten M, Gansevoort R, Mukamal K, et al: Urinary and plasma magnesium and risk for ischemic heart disease. American Journal of Clinical Nutrition 2013;97:1299-1306.*

*Volpe S: Magnesium in disease prevention and overall health. Advances in Nursing 2013;4:378S-383S.*

## Western Diet is Deadly

The Western diet - packed with fried and sweet foods, processed junk, red meat, refined grains, and high-fat dairy products - increases your risk for dying prematurely and, even if you live into your senior years, you'll most likely be sick and on medications, according to a study from the University College of London. Diets were assessed on 5,350 middle-aged men and women, who then were reassessed every five years from 1985 to 2009. Results showed that those who ate a typical Western diet were least likely to show ideal aging and had elevated risks for chronic disease, such as heart disease. In contrast, people whose diets were healthier achieved older ages free of chronic diseases and remained highly functional.

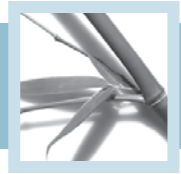
*Akbaraly T, Sabia S, Hagger-Johnson G, et al: Does overall diet in midlife predict future aging phenotypes? American Journal of Medicine 2013;126:411-419.*

## Paleo Dieters Beware

between the ages of 25- and 70-years old who were recruited in 10 European countries. At the five-year follow-up, a higher proportion of calories from fat was not associated with weight gain, but a higher proportion of protein at the expense of fat was a risk factor for weight gain.

Compared to diets with no more than 14% of calories from protein, diets with more than 22% of calories from protein were associated with up to a 24% higher risk of becoming overweight or obese.

*Vergnaud A, Norat T, Mouw T, et al: Macronutrient composition of the diet and prospective weight change in participants of the EPIC-PANACEA study. PLoS One 2013;8:e57300.*



## Lycopene to the Rescue

Men who consume optimal amounts of lycopene-rich foods have about half the risk of suffering a stroke compared to men who eat little or no lycopene-rich produce, according to a study from the University

of Eastern Finland. Blood lycopene levels were analyzed in 1,031 men ages 46- to 65-years-old. The men were monitored for the following 12 years. Results showed that men with the lowest lycopene levels at the

onset of the study were more than twice as likely to have a stroke later as were those men with the highest levels. The researchers conclude that, "...high serum concentrations of lycopene...decrease the risk of any stroke and ischemic stroke in men."

As lycopene intake goes up, risk for cardiovascular disease goes down, according to a study from Tufts University in Boston.

**IN PERSPECTIVE:** *Lycopene is one of 600 carotenoids in produce, with watermelon being the richest dietary source. Other sources include tomatoes, papaya, pink grapefruit, red peppers, and rose hips. A cup of watermelon contains about 10 milligrams of lycopene, the amount considered adequate to raise blood levels of the carotenoid. Consuming some fat in a meal that contains lycopene-rich foods helps boost absorption of this compound.*

*Karppi J, Laukkanen J, Sivenius J, et al. Serum lycopene decreases the risk of stroke in men. Neurology 2012;79:1540-1547.*

*Jacques P, Lyass A, Massaro J, et al. Relationship of lycopene intake and consumption of tomato products to incident CVD. British Journal of Nutrition 2013; January 15th: 1-7.*

## Just Say "No" to Red Meat

A compound in red meat, called carnitine, promotes hardening and clogging of the arteries, according to a study from Cleveland Clinic's Heart and Vascular Institute. This study looked at 2,595 patients undergoing heart evaluations. Results showed that high carnitine levels were associated with an increased risk for heart disease, heart attack, stroke, and heart-related death. High dietary intake of carnitine promoted the growth of bacteria in the gut that metabolized carnitine to trimethylamine-N-oxide or TMAO, a compound known to promote atherosclerosis. "The [type of] bacteria in our digestive tracts are dictated by our ...dietary patterns. A diet high in carnitine ...shifts our gut microbe composition to those that like carnitine, making meat eaters even more susceptible to forming TMAO and its artery-clogging effects," says Dr. Stanley Hazen, lead researcher

on the study. TMAO levels are much lower in vegetarians and vegans compared to people who eat red meat. Even after consuming a large dose of carnitine, vegetarians do not produce a significant amount of TMAO, further showing that it is the overall diet and the microflora it produces that is most harmful.

**IN PERSPECTIVE:** *It appears from this study that it is not carnitine per se that is a risk factor. Since carnitine supplementation is not a problem for vegetarians, it is likely that the microorganism environment in the intestines created from a diet high in red meat increases TMAO levels.*

*Koeth R, Wang Z, Levison B, et al. Intestinal microbiota metabolism of L-carnitine, a nutrient in red meat, promotes atherosclerosis. Nature Medicine 2013;19:576-585.*

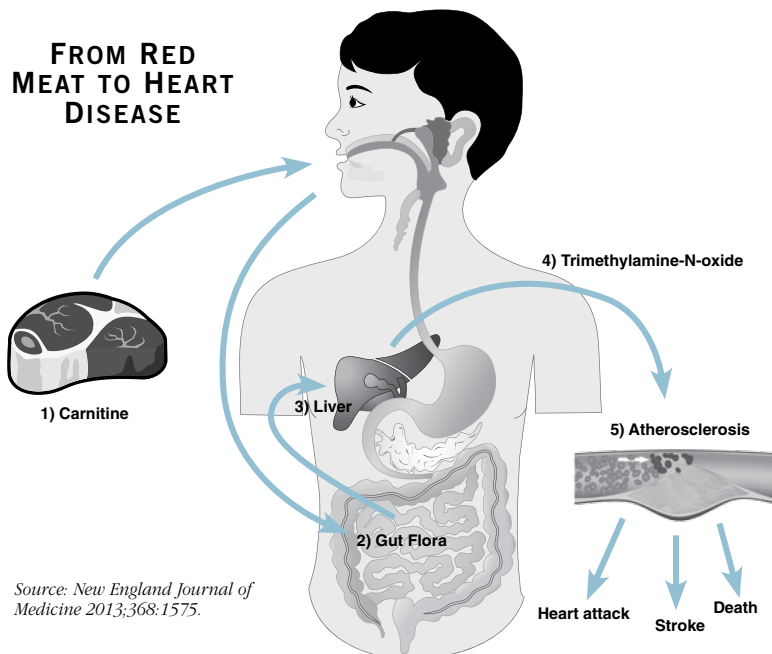
*Mendelsohn A, Larrick J. Dietary modification of the microbiome affects risk for cardiovascular disease. Rejuvenation Research 2013;May 8th.*

## Allergies on the Rise

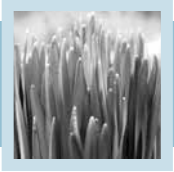
According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the number of children who suffer from food and skin allergies has increased significantly in the past few years, especially in upper-middle to upper-class families. No one knows the reason(s) for this trend, but theories include 1) the "hygiene hypothesis," that reduced infection and exposure to germs has left immune systems more vulnerable to attack; 2) poor intake of vitamin D; 3) unhealthy fats in the diet; 4) the obesity epidemic; and, 5) too much processed food. Researchers at the Karolinska Institute in Sweden report that children who consume ample servings of fish in early life are at significantly lower risk for allergic diseases later, lowering risk by up to 26%.

[www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/news/fullstory\\_136459.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/news/fullstory_136459.html)

*Magnusson J, Kull I, Rosenlund H, et al. Fish consumption in infancy and development of allergic disease up to age 12 yr. American Journal of Clinical Nutrition 2013;97:1324-1330.*



Source: New England Journal of Medicine 2013;368:1575.



## Omega-3s Help You Live Longer

Researchers at Harvard School of Public Health report that people with the highest blood levels of the omega-3s, DHA and EPA, are least likely to die from a range of causes compared to people with lower levels of these important fats. Blood samples were analyzed from 2,692 healthy adults aged 69- to 79-years-old. During the following 16 years, 1,625 people died, including 570 from cardiovascular causes. Results showed that the higher the initial blood levels of omega-3s, the lower the risk of dying from any cause during that follow-up period. Death from heart disease was cut in half. People with the highest levels of EPA and DHA lived on average 2.22 years longer after age 65 years than

did those who had low omega-3 levels.

Young adults who supplement with the omega-3 fat DHA (1.16 grams/day) showed improved memory and reaction times in a study from Massey University, Auckland, New Zealand.

**IN PERSPECTIVE:** *It is important to note that the omega-3s used in these studies can be obtained only from seafood or foods fortified with a sustainable, algal-based DHA, not from flax, walnuts, or soy.*

*Mozaffarian D, Lemaitre R, King I, et al: Plasma phospholipid long-chain omega-3 acids and total and cause-specific mortality in older adults. Annals of Internal Medicine 2013;158:515-525.*

*Stonehouse W, Conlon C, Podd J, et al: DHA supplementation improved both memory and reaction time in healthy young adults. American Journal of Clinical Nutrition 2013;97:1134-1143.*

## Troubled Kids Low in Omega-3s

Adolescent boys with low blood omega-3 levels may exhibit more callous-unemotional and anti-social traits than boys with higher levels of these important fats, state researchers at King's College London. In this study, omega-3 levels in blood samples from 72 boys with and without a clinical diagnosis of attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) were compared. Results showed that callous-unemotional (CU) traits were significantly more common in the ADHD group with low omega-3 EPA and total omega-3 levels. The researchers conclude that these results show, "...for the first time that CU and anti-social traits in ADHD are associated with lower omega-3 levels."

Another study from the same authors found that children with ADHD had lower average ratios of omega-3s to omega-6 and abnormalities in processing emotions compared to normal children.

*Gow R, Vallee-Tourangeau F, Crauford M, et al: Omega-3 fatty acids are inversely related to callous and unemotional traits in adolescent boys with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Prostaglandins Leukotrienes and Essential Fatty Acids 2013;88:411-418.*

*Gow R, Sumich A, Vallee-Tourangeau F, et al: Omega-3 fatty acids are related to abnormal emotion processing in adolescent boys with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Prostaglandins Leukotrienes and Essential Fatty Acids 2013;88:419-429.*

## Womanly Issues and Vitamin D

Women with optimal vitamin D status are less prone to developing uterine fibroids, according to a study from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences in North Carolina. More than 1,000 women between the ages of 35- and 49-years-old provided blood samples for vitamin D and information on sun exposure, which were compared to fibroid status. Results showed that only 10% of Blacks and 50% of Whites had levels of vitamin D considered passable (>20ng/ml). Women with vitamin D levels higher than 20ng/ml had a 32% lower risk of fibroids compared with women whose vitamin D levels were below that cut off point. Self-reported sun exposure of more than one hour a day also reduced fibroid risk by 40%.

**IN PERSPECTIVE:** *Uterine fibroids are noncancerous tumors of the uterus that often cause pain and bleeding. They are the leading cause of hysterectomy in the United States. How many of those surgeries could have been avoided if the women had maintained optimal vitamin D status?*

*Baird D, Hill M, Schectman J, et al: Vitamin D and the risk of uterine fibroids. Epidemiology 2013;24:447-453.*

## Vitamin C for a Safe Pregnancy

Pregnant women who supplement with vitamin C might be at reduced risk for experiencing premature rupture of membranes (PROM), state researchers at Mashhad University of Medical Sciences in Iran. In this study, 170 pregnant women with histories of PROM in previous pregnancies were given placebos or 100 milligrams of vitamin C daily throughout their pregnancies, starting at the 14th week. Results showed that more than 34.1% of controls, while only 18.8% of the women taking vitamin C, experienced PROM. Pregnancy was terminated at term for 21.2% of controls compared to more than twice that, or 49.4%, of the supplementers. The researchers conclude that, "vitamin C supplementation after the 14th week of gestation can prevent PROM in women with a history of [this complication]."

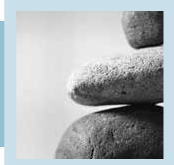
**IN PERSPECTIVE:** *PROM is the cause of approximately one third of preterm deliveries. It can lead to significant perinatal morbidity, including respiratory distress syndrome, neonatal sepsis, umbilical cord prolapse, placental abruption, and fetal death.*

*Ghomian N, Hafizi L, Takhi Z: The role of vitamin C in prevention of preterm premature rupture of membranes. Iranian Red Crescent Medical Journal 2013;15:113-116.*

## Cool News for Hot Flashes

Menopausal women who are looking for relief from hot flashes might want to try a Mediterranean diet, according to a study from the University of Queensland, Australia. Dietary intakes were taken for 6,040 menopausal women, who then were reassessed every three years. After nine years, results showed that women who ate lots of fruit, vegetables, pasta, and red wine had up to a 20% lower risk for hot flashes and night sweats. In contrast, women who ate more high-fat and high-sugar foods had increased menopausal symptoms by 23%.

*Herber-Gast G, Misbra G: Fruit, Mediterranean-style, and high-fat and -sugar diets are associated with the risk of night sweats and hot flushes in midlife. American Journal of Clinical Nutrition 2013;97:1092-1099.*



## Supplements Improve Breast Cancer Prognosis

Breast cancer survivors who take vitamin supplements show improved survival, according to a study from Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. Researchers studied supplement use and risk of death or recurrence in 12,019 breast cancer survivors over the course of one to five years post-diagnosis. Results showed that women who supplemented with vitamin E or vitamin C had a 12% and 9% reduced risk for recurrence, respectively. The use of multivitamins and vitamins C and E also was associated with a 16% reduced risk for death. Vitamin D supplementation reduced recurrence among ER positive, but not ER negative, tumors.

*Poole E, Shu X, Caan B, et al: Postdiagnosis supplement use and breast cancer prognosis in the After Breast Cancer Pooling Project. Breast Cancer Research and Treatment 2013;May 10th.*

## Women's Diets Lacking in Nutrients

Many young women are not getting the nutrients they need, including the omega-3s, B vitamins, and zinc, according to a study from the University of Sydney, Australia. Dietary intakes were assessed in a group of 256 young, healthy women. Analysis of the diets showed that the majority of the women did not meet basic dietary recommendations for whole grains, vegetables, meat, fish and other foods. Almost one in every four women avoided animal products, which resulted in lower intakes of the omega-3 fats, vitamin B12, iron, selenium, and zinc.

**IN PERSPECTIVE:** *While anyone worth their weight in nutrition credentials will tell you to go to food first for your nutrients, this study is one in many that repeatedly show that most people don't eat perfectly and should supplement responsibly to fill in the gaps.*

*Fayet F, Flood V, Petocz P, et al: Avoidance of meat and poultry decreases intakes of omega-3 fatty acids, vitamin B12, selenium, and zinc in young women. Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics 2013;March 18th.*

## Fatty Dairy Products Linked to Cancer Recurrence

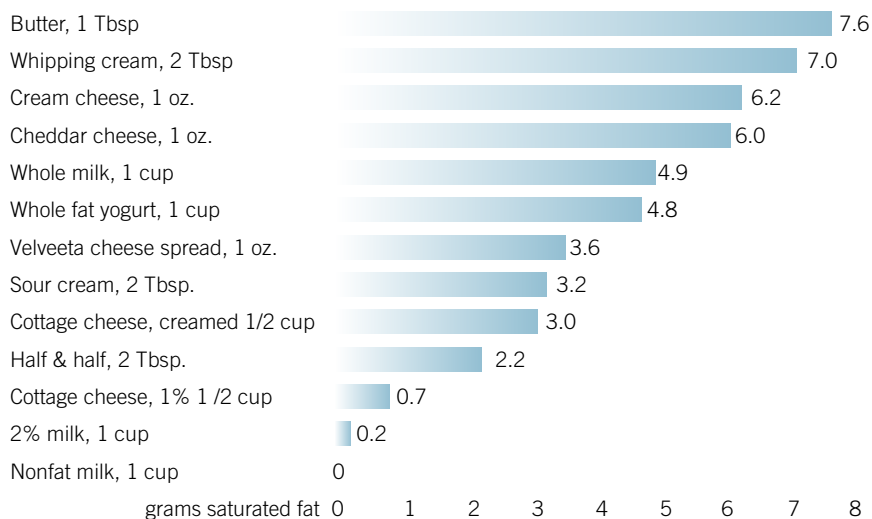
Women with a history of breast cancer might want to steer clear of fatty dairy products if the results of a study from Kaiser Permanente in Oakland, California prove true. Women diagnosed with early breast cancer supplied information on their dietary intakes at the start of the study and also six years later. Of the original 1,893 women, almost 350 women had a cancer recurrence at the five to six-year follow-up. Of the 372 deaths during that period, 189 were caused by breast cancer. Results showed that women who ate one or more servings of fatty dairy products each day,

such as whole milk, cream for coffee, butter, sour cream, cream cheese, and cheese, had a 49% higher risk of breast cancer death compared to women who ate no more than half a serving each day. In addition, the women eating the most fatty dairy foods had a 64% higher risk of dying from any cause compared to women who consumed little or no fatty dairy. The researchers conclude that, "...intake of high-fat dairy, but not low-fat dairy, was related to a higher risk of mortality after breast cancer diagnosis."

*Kroenke C, Kwan M, Sweeney C, et al: High- and low-fat dairy intake, recurrence, and mortality after breast cancer diagnosis. Journal of the National Cancer Institute 2013;March 14th.*

### IS IT THE SATURATED FAT?

While the Kaiser Permanente study did not isolate the component of fatty dairy foods linked to cancer risk, the only ingredient removed is the fat, most of which is saturated.



## CoQ10 and Multiple Sclerosis

Supplements of CoQ10 reduced oxidative stress and increased antioxidant enzyme activity in multiple sclerosis patients in a study from Tehran University of Medical Sciences in Iran. In this double-blind, randomized study, 24 patients received 500 milligrams of co-enzyme Q10 a day, while another 24 patients

received placebos. At the end of 12 weeks, the CoQ10-supplemented group significantly lowered oxidative stress levels and increased levels of the antioxidant enzyme, superoxide dismutase (SOD).

*Sanoobar M, Eghtesadi S, Azimi A, et al: Coenzyme Q10 supplementation reduces oxidative stress and increases antioxidant enzyme activity in patients with relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis. International Journal of Neuroscience 2013;May 10th.*



## IN THE NEWS

- Optimal intake of calcium lowers the risk for precancerous lesions in the colon and rectal tissues in people who are at increased risk for colorectal cancers, according to a study from Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center in Nashville and reported at the annual meeting of the American Association for Cancer Research in Washington, D.C.
- The FDA warns that supplements containing DMAA (dimethylamylamine) touted to help with weight loss, muscle building, and performance enhancement, can cause heart attack, shortness of breath, and tightening of the chest, and is especially dangerous when used with caffeine.
- Magnesium might be as important for bone formation in children as is calcium, according to a study from Baylor college of Medicine in Houston.
- For pregnant women who can't quit smoking, vitamin C might help protect the vulnerable lungs of the baby from future problems, such as wheezing and asthma, according to a study reported at the Pediatric Academic Societies' annual meeting in Washington, D.C.
- Vitamin D supplements might help people with Crohn's disease by reducing fatigue and improving muscle strength associated with the inflammatory bowel disease, according to a study reported at the Digestive Disease Week meeting in Orlando, Florida.
- Fatty diets increase daytime sleepiness and fatigue, while carbohydrate intake is linked to increased alertness, says Dr. Alexandros Vgontzas at Penn State College of Medicine in an American Academy of Sleep Medicine news release.

**HOTTOPIC:** High blood sugar levels, even in nondiabetics, increase the risk for Alzheimer's disease later in life, according to a study from the University of Arizona, Tucson. *Neurology* 2013;80:1557-1564.

## Want to Avoid Getting Stoned?

Calcium intake lowers kidney stone risk, according to a study from Harvard Medical School. In a subgroup of the Health Professionals Follow-Up Study and the Nurses' Health Study, 5,270 cases of kidney stones were identified. When compared to calcium intakes, the risk for having a kidney stone decreased by up to 29% in people with the highest intakes of calcium from all dietary sources, including milk products, dark green leafy vegetables, and sardines.

Sugar-sweetened soda and other beverages are associated with a higher risk for kidney stone formation, whereas coffee, tea, beer, wine, and orange juice lower risk, state researchers at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston.

If you carry a bit too much belly fat around your middle, even if you are otherwise lean, you could be at higher risk for kidney disease, according to a study from the University of Groningen in The Netherlands.

**IN PERSPECTIVE:** *Although most stones in the kidneys are comprised of calcium oxalate, eating calcium-rich foods appears to prevent stone formation. It might be that the real culprit is oxalate, not calcium. The more calcium in the*

*digestive tract, the more oxalate it can bind to and take out of the body before oxalate is absorbed into the bloodstream and ends up in the kidneys and bile ducts. That doesn't mean more calcium is better. Stick to about 1,000 to 1,500 milligrams a day.*

*Taylor E, Curban G: Dietary calcium from dairy and non-dairy sources and risk of symptomatic kidney stones. *Journal of Urology* 2013;March 24th.*

*Ferraro P, Taylor E, Gambaro G, et al: Soda and other beverages and the risk of kidney stones. *Clinical Journal of the American Society of Nephrology* 2013;May 15th.*

*Kwakernaak A, Zelle D, Bakker S, et al: Central body fat distribution associates with unfavorable renal hemodynamics independent of body mass index. *Journal of the American Society of Nephrology* 2013;April 11th.*

### WHERE DO OXALATES COME FROM?

Food	Oxalate Content (mg)
Beet greens, cooked ½ cup	916
Rhubarb, stewed, no sugar ½ cup	860
Spinach, cooked ½ cup	750
Beets, cooked ½ cup	675
Chard, Swiss, leaves cooked ½ cup	660
Spinach, frozen ½ cup	600
Beets, pickled ½ cup	500
Endive, raw 20 long leaves	273
Cocoa, dry 1/3 cup	254
Dandelion greens, cooked ½ cup	246
Okra, cooked 8-9 pods	146
Sweet potatoes, cooked ½ cup	141
Kale, cooked ½ cup	125
Peanuts, raw 1/3 cup (1-3/4 oz.)	113

## Chew, Don't Smoke, Nicotine for Your Health

Vegetables that contain nicotine might help reduce the risk of developing Parkinson's disease, according to a study from the University of Washington in Seattle. Dietary intakes were gathered on 490 patients with Parkinson's disease and 644 healthy controls. Results showed that while vegetable consumption in general had no relationship to Parkinson's risk, vegetables from the Solanaceae plant family, including peppers and tomatoes that are relatively rich in nicotine, lowered risk, with peppers showing the strongest association.

Researchers at Jikei University School of Medicine in Tokyo report that vitamin D supplementation might help stabilize and slow the progression of Parkinson's.

**IN PERSPECTIVE:** *Almost one million Americans and 10 million worldwide have Parkinson's. The observation that cigarette smokers have a reduced risk for Parkinson's disease has long been known, and a nicotine skin patch is currently being tested in patients with early Parkinson's. This study provides the first evidence that obtaining that compound from nutritious plants, could be the best option for overall health.*

*Nielsen S, Franklin G, Longstreth W, et al: Nicotine from edible Solanaceae and risk of Parkinson disease. *Annals of Neurology* 2013;May 9th.*

*Suzuki M, Yoshioka M, Hasimoto M, et al: Randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial of vitamin D supplementation in Parkinson disease. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 2013;97:1004-1013.*



## HOT TOPICS

**1** Lack of adequate sleep is associated with increased likelihood of junk-food binging, according to a study from Uppsala University in Sweden. *Psychoneuroendocrinology* 2013;February 18th.

**2** Keep an eye on your subconscious when shopping! A study from Cornell's Social Cognition and Communication Lab found that people assume foods are healthier when the calorie label is green, even if it's a candy bar. *Health Communication* 2013; March 12th.

**3** The addition of coenzyme Q10 to the diet protected LDL-cholesterol from oxidation associated with atherosclerosis and heart disease, in a study from Lorestan University of Medical Sciences, Khoramabad, Iran. *Acta Medica Iranica* 2013;51:12-18.

**4** Supplementing with 1200 milligrams of lipoic acid every day significantly improved total antioxidant capacity in patients with multiple sclerosis in a study from Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, Isfahan, Iran. *Nutritional Neuroscience* 2013;March 5th.

**5** Patients with chronic periodontitis show improvements when they consume 8 milligrams of lycopene (the amount in a 2/3 cup of watermelon) every day, state researchers at the Himalayan Institute of Medical Sciences. *Quintessence International* 2013;February 18th.

**6** People with low levels of the omega-3s, especially DHA and EPA, are at higher risk for cognitive decline as they age, state researchers at the Alzheimer's Drug Discovery Foundation. *Journal of Nutrition and Healthy Aging* 2013;17:240-251.

**7** Following a Mediterranean-style diet lowers diabetes risk, according to a study from Sapienza University in Rome. *Metabolic Syndrome and Related Disorders* 2013;March 1st.

**8** Overweight young adults are at high risk for developing kidney disease by the time they are seniors, according to a study from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. *Journal of the American Society of Nephrology* 2013;24:813-821.

**9** Optimal dietary intake of magnesium was associated with a lower risk for fatal coronary heart disease in women, in a study from Harvard Medical School. *Journal of the American Heart Association* 2013;March 18th.

**10** Increased potassium intake lowers the risk for cardiovascular risk factors, such as high blood pressure, and lowers stroke risk, state researchers at the World Health Organization. *British Medical Journal* 2013;346:April.

**11** Today's fast food - from McD's, Burger King, and Wendy's to Taco Bell, KFC and Arbys - is just as loaded with fat, calories, sugar, and salt as it was 14 years ago, according to a study from St. Catherine University in St. Paul, Minnesota. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 2013;44:589-594.

**12** If you are healthy, then eating eggs might not raise your risk for heart disease, but might elevate type 2 diabetes risk. If you already are diabetic, adding eggs to the diet could increase heart disease-risk, according to a study from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 2013;May 15th.

**13** Young adults with elevated blood mercury levels have a 65% higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes later in life, according to researchers at Indiana University, Bloomington. *Diabetes Care* 2013;February 19th.

**14** Children who have a bowl of cereal with milk and fruit in the morning are slimmer with lower BMIs than are children who skip breakfast or eat other options, according to two studies, one from Dairy MAX in San Antonio, Texas and one from Ashwell Associates in Oxford, England. *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* 2013;113:511-519./*Obesity Facts* 2013;6:70-85.

**15** Stroke risk drops by 7% for every increase of 7 grams of fiber in the daily diet, with those who consume the most fiber-rich foods having the lowest risk for suffering a stroke, according to a review of the research from University of Leeds, UK. *Stroke* 2013;44:1360-1368.

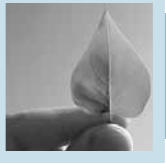
**16** Is it the fiber? Protein? Unsaturated fats? No one knows, but a review of the research at the University Institute of Investigation in Tarragona, Spain found that adding nuts to the diet does not cause weight gain, despite an increase in fat intake. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 2013;97:1346-1355.

**17** Creatine supplements improved lower- and upper-body muscle function in patients with fibromyalgia, in a study from the University of Sao Paulo, Brazil, while researchers at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center in North Carolina report that exercise helps curb the pain of fibromyalgia. *Arthritis Care Research* 2013;April 1st and February 11th.

**18** Even a slightly low iodine status during pregnancy can affect the child's performance in spelling, grammar, and literacy later in life, according to a study from the Menzies Research Institute Tasmania. *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism* 2013;98:1954-1962.

**19** Warning! Herbal supplements touted to improve men's sexual performance often contain the active ingredients in erectile dysfunction medications, such as Viagra, and some contain more of these ingredients than are allowed in prescription-only drugs, state researchers at Pfizer Inc in New York who have a vested interest in people not buying herbs. *Journal of Sexual Medicine* 2013;May 1st.

**20** Even low-level exposure to lead might jeopardize kindergartners' reading-readiness scores, according to a study from the University of Maryland's School of Nursing in Baltimore. *Pediatrics* 2013;May 13th.



## Vitamin D Supplements on the Hot Seat

Choose your vitamin D supplements from a reputable supplier is the advice from researchers at Kaiser Permanente Center for Health Research in Portland, OR. In their study, the researchers sampled 55 over-the-counter bottles of vitamin D supplements from 12 different manufacturers. The amount of vitamin D found in the supplements ranged from 9% to 146% of what was listed on the label. When the researchers tested five pills from the same bottle, the supplements had anywhere from 52% to 135% of the stated amounts. When averaged, about two out of three samples taken from the same bottle were within the stated range. The pills taken from bottles with the US Pharmacopeial Convention (USP) seal tended to be more accurate in their dosages. Fortunately, none of the supplements contained amounts that were at or near toxic levels.

*LeBlanc E, Perrin N, Johnson J, et al: Over the counter and compounded vitamin D: Is potency what we expect? Journal of the American Medical Association: Internal Medicine 2013;February 11th: 1-2.*

## NUTRITIONAL ALERT

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## REVIEW

# The Real Mediterranean Diet

The Mediterranean diet is the rock star of nutrition right now. This diet dramatically lowers disease risk, aids in long-term weight loss, lowers the risk for dementia and depression, and extends life. This traditional diet (which is almost extinct and holds no resemblance to most meals you'll get today in Rome, Barcelona, Athens or Morocco) is based on grains (pasta, polenta, and whole grains), fruits, vegetables, and legumes. It has a daily allotment for small amounts of olive oil and yogurt, while fish or poultry grace the plate a couple of times a week. Meat or sweets are a couple times a month, if at all. Wine, typically red wine, is consumed in moderation. Except for a few sweets and pasta, there are virtually no processed foods in this traditional diet.

What is the secret to the Mediterranean diet? The answer depends on which researcher you ask. Some experts vow it is the lycopene in the tomatoes that lowers disease risk. Others say it is the healthy fats in fish and olives along with all the antioxidants and anti-inflammatory phytonutrients in olive oil. The lack of saturated fat and the abundance of fiber-rich foods also have been credited for the low risks of diabetes, depression, obesity, heart disease, and cancer. The vitamin and mineral-packed produce is thought to improve mood, the high amount of lutein is thought to contribute to the low risk for vision loss, the resveratrol in the wine is certainly the reason why inflammatory diseases such as Alzheimers are low, while the probiotics in yogurt must explain why digestive tract problems are rare. Other researchers vow the high vitamin C and beta carotene from all that produce explain why cancer rates are low, while some studies conclude the high magnesium intakes are the reason why stress levels are low.

In truth, you can't isolate one factor out of tens of thousands. It is the perfect amount and balance of the 40+ nutrients mixed with the almost one million phytonutrients that are supplied only by a diet based on real food. It is that balance that allows our immune, antioxidant, and cell communication systems to keep the body running well. In fact, the Mediterranean diet is just one of several real-food diets, from the Okinawan diet based on an eating style associated with extreme longevity to vegetarian or Asian cuisines, all of which are loaded with real foods. It's the whole package, and the whole package needs to be mostly real, not processed.

Thousands of studies spanning decades of research repeatedly find that the more real foods people eat, the lower their disease risk, the happier and leaner they are, and the longer they live. For example, cutting back on processed foods high in saturated fat lowers disease risk, but combine that habit with extra fruits and vegetables and disease risk drops significantly more. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that people who skip the junk, avoid fast-food restaurants, and instead focus on real food are the ones most successful at long-term weight loss. There is no magic combination in the Mediterranean diet. The "magic" comes from eating foods that are unprocessed.

*Epidemiology 2013;May 15th/ PLoS One 2013;8:e6278./Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry 2013;May 13th. Appetite 2013;May 7th.*

**HOT TOPIC:** Type 2 diabetics who supplement with vitamins C and E for at least three months show a reduction in blood pressure and blood glucose levels, and an increased antioxidant enzyme activity that might aid in reducing insulin resistance, state researchers at Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences in Iran. *Global Journal of Health Science 5:183-187.*