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CURTIS NEWS

Curtis Personalized Health Management

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4 Food Rules to Break

Don't let your diet - or stomach - be held captive by these nutrition myths

Myth #1: "High protein intake is harmful to your kidneys."
What science really shows: Nearly 2 decades ago, Dutch researchers found that while a protein-rich meal did boost GFR, it didn't have an adverse effect on overall kidney function. In fact, there's zero published research showing that downing hefty amounts of protein - specifically, up to 1.27 grams per pound of body weight a day - damages healthy kidneys. *The bottom line:* You can safely eat up to your body weight (in pounds) in grams of protein daily.

Myth #2: "Sweet potatoes are better for you than white potatoes."
What science really shows: White potatoes and sweet potatoes have complementary nutritional differences. For instance, sweet potatoes have more fibre and vitamin A, but white potatoes are higher in essential minerals, such as iron, magnesium, and potassium. As for the glycemic index, sweet potatoes are lower on the scale, but the toppings on baked white potatoes, like cheese and sour cream, lower the glycemic index of a meal. *The bottom line*: The form in which you consume a potato - for instance, a whole baked potato versus a processed potato that's used to make chips - is more important than the type of spud.

Myth #3: "Red meat causes cancer."
What science really shows: No study has ever found a direct cause-and-effect relationship between red-meat consumption and cancer. As for the population studies, they're far from conclusive. That's because they rely on broad surveys of people's eating habits and health afflictions, and those numbers are simply crunched to find trends, not causes. *The bottom line*: Meat lovers who are worried about the supposed risks of grilled meat don't need to avoid burgers and steak; rather, they should just trim off the burned or overcooked sections of the meat before eating.

Myth #4: "Salt causes high blood pressure and should be avoided."
What science really shows: Large-scale scientific reviews have determined there's no reason for people with normal blood pressure to restrict their sodium intake. Now, if you already have high blood pressure, you may be "salt sensitive." As a result, reducing the amount of salt you eat could be helpful. However, it's been known for the past 20 years that people with high blood pressure who don't want to lower their salt intake can simply consume more potassium-containing foods because it's really the balance of the two minerals that matters: it turns out, the average person consumes 3,100 milligrams (mg) of potassium a day - 1,600 mg less than recommended. T*he bottom line:* Strive for a potassium-rich diet, which you can achieve by eating a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, and legumes. For instance, spinach, broccoli, bananas, white potatoes, and most types of beans each contain more than 400 mg potassium per serving.

INSIDE:

The red stems and green leaves of Swiss chard may hint at Christmas, but once you taste them with feta and currants, you'll want to cook this dish throughout the winter.

Braised Swiss Chard with Currants & Feta

1 (1-lb) bunch Swiss chard
1 large garlic clove, finely chopped
2 tablespoons olive oil
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
3 tablespoons dried currants
1/3 cup water
1 1/2 oz feta, crumbled (1/3 cup)

Cut stems and center ribs from chard, discarding any tough parts near base, then cut stems and ribs crosswise into 3/4-inch-thick slices. Coarsely chop leaves.

Cook garlic in oil in a 4-quart heavy pot over moderately low heat, stirring occasionally, until pale golden, 1 to 2 minutes. Add chard, salt, and pepper and cook, stirring occasionally, 4 minutes. Add currants and cook, stirring, until plump, about 1 minute. Add chard leaves and water and increase heat to moderate, then cook, covered, stirring occasionally, until leaves are tender, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in feta.

Makes 4 servings.

5 Outdoor Winter Activities

1. Skiing / Snowboarding. Fun for the whole family, everyone can participate. Several mountains in the area provide plenty of options for your Nordic sport of choice. For beginners, strongly consider lessons to get the most of your experience.

2. Snowshoeing. For those who prefer a less technical endeavour, snowshoeing provides the option of hiking or running wherever there is snow cover. Better yet, the park area on the local mountains have free marked trails, making it cheaper than skiing and snowboarding.

3. Snow angle making. Okay, not a sport per se, but a fun way to get all bundled up and pretend to be a kid again. And hey, you'll be working those deltoids, hip adductors, and smile muscles!

4. Tobogganing. Yet another great outdoor adventure. From a speedy sled to a crazy carpet, anything that will get you to the bottom of the hill in a hurry will work. Of course, hiking back up to the top of the hill is a great workout!

5. Anything you do in the summer. Because this is Vancouver, and our version of winter is a bit more rain, with the occasional inch of snow, we can do almost anything in December that we did in June. Take a look our your window and you are likely to see runners still wearing shorts – just try doing that in Edmonton!

Over the next several issues of Curtis News, we will explore different types of health services, ranging from Physiotherapy and Massage Therapy, to Complementary and Alternative Medicines.

Health Therapies & Services: **Acupuncture**

Acupuncture is one of the oldest, most commonly used medical procedures in the world. Originating in China more than 2,000 years ago, acupuncture began to become better known in the United States in 1971, when New York Times reporter James Reston wrote about how doctors in China used needles to ease his pain after surgery.

The term acupuncture describes a family of procedures involving stimulation of anatomical points on the body by a variety of techniques. American practices of acupuncture incorporate medical traditions from China, Japan, Korea, and other countries. The acupuncture technique that has been most studied scientifically involves penetrating the skin with thin, solid, metallic needles that are manipulated by the hands or by electrical stimulation.

What does acupuncture feel like?

Acupuncture needles are metallic, solid, and hair-thin. People experience acupuncture differently, but most feel no or minimal pain as the needles are inserted. Some people are energized by treatment, while others feel relaxed. Improper needle placement, movement of the patient, or a defect in the needle can cause soreness and pain during treatment. This is why it is important to seek treatment from a qualified acupuncture practitioner.

There have been many studies on acupuncture's potential usefulness, but results have been mixed; however, promising results have emerged, showing efficacy in adult postoperative and chemotherapy nausea and vomiting and in postoperative dental pain. There are other situations--such as addiction, stroke rehabilitation, headache, menstrual cramps, tennis elbow, fibromyalgia, myofascial pain, osteoarthritis, low-back pain, carpal tunnel syndrome, and asthma--in which acupuncture may be useful as an adjunct treatment or an acceptable alternative or be included in a comprehensive management program.

How might acupuncture work?

Acupuncture is one of the key components of the system of traditional Chinese medicine. In the TCM, the body is seen as a delicate balance of two opposing and inseparable forces: yin and yang. Among the major assumptions in TCM are that health is achieved by maintaining the body in a "balanced state" and that disease is due to an internal imbalance of yin and yang. This imbalance leads to blockage in the flow of qi (vital energy) along pathways known as meridians. It is believed that there are 12 main meridians and 8 secondary meridians with more than 2,000 acupuncture points on the body that connect with them.

How do I find a licensed acupuncture practitioner?

Try the Acupuncture Foundation of Canada Institute (www.afcinstitute.com) for a list of practitioners. Also, health care practitioners can be a resource for referral to acupuncturists. More medical doctors, including neurologists, anaesthesiologists, and specialists in physical medicine, are becoming trained in acupuncture, TCM, and other CAM therapies.

Check a practitioner's credentials

An acupuncture practitioner who is licensed may provide better care than one who is not. Although proper credentials do not ensure competency, they do indicate that the practitioner has met certain standards to treat patients through the use of acupuncture.

CURTIS CORNER

More Evidence for

Workplace Wellness Programs

Research continues to pile on the significant benefits of workplace fitness, health and wellness programs. After keeping watch for over 20 years, I am perplexed that some companies still ignore the obvious.

North American employees are working more, eating more and exercising less. Obesity has reached epidemic proportions. Depression, stress, fatigue, and musculoskeletal injuries such as back and neck problems are all too common. These health issues increase the risk of disease and decrease quality of life while increasing costs to the employer. We know that workers with high blood pressure, physical inactivity and unhealthy weights have 12%, 10% and 21% respectively higher costs to the employer, just to name a few. Compounding this annual double digit cost increase is our aging population, in which people over 45 use more of the per capita share of health care resources than their younger counterparts (Health Canada Economic Burden of Illness in Canada, 1993).

The good news is that most of these health issues are very preventable through a comprehensive workplace health program. The workplace is key to that prevention.

Enhancing employee health and well-being lowers costs and increases productivity. It is estimated that, over five years, a properly executed program should see a return on investment of $3.43 for every $1 invested.

Healthy employees have an improved quality of life with less stress and injuries on the job and throughout their daily lives; they are more productive, less likely to be absent from work, have higher morale and are more loyal to their employers. When compared to the average office worker whose efficiency decreases 50% for the final 2 hours of the working day, exercise adherents work at full efficiency all day. This fact alone amounts to a 12.5% increase in productivity. Errors made by workers have been reported to decrease 31 percent in a group receiving regular exercise breaks.

In addition, with today's labour market, potential employees are in high demand, expecting employers to foster growth and promote a health focused environment.

Smart business. Everyone wins.

Excerpt from: The Case for Workplace Health Promotion

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