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Healthy Living for Elders: Tips for Staying Regular

Staying regular means avoiding constipation!

About 20 percent of older persons suffer from constipation.

Why is constipation a concern?

Over time, constipation can result in hemorrhoids, diverticulosis, and the inability to have a bowel movement.

What causes constipation?

- ✓ overuse of laxatives,
- ✓ limited physical activity,
- ✓ not drinking enough fluids,
- ✓ not eating enough fiber, and
- ✓ taking certain medications.

How can I prevent constipation?

- ✓ Stay physically active!
- ✓ Eat foods with fiber every day.
- ✓ Drink 6 to 8 cups of non-alcoholic beverages every day.
- ✓ Use a fiber supplement if you are not able to eat enough dietary fiber every day. Talk to your doctor before using fiber supplements.

What foods contain fiber?

- ✓ Whole grain cereals
- ✓ Bran muffins
- ✓ Whole wheat bread
- ✓ Fruits and vegetables
- ✓ Popcorn
- ✓ Nuts
- ✓ Beans

Source: University of Florida IFAS Extension



Food For Thought

A Meeting of Hearts and Minds

We often think that the heart and the mind are on separate paths. But there is at least one issue on which they are united—the value of omega-3 fatty acids.

There is a growing group of scientists who believe that depression and heart disease could have a common cause - a diet that lacks omega-3 fatty acids. So far, the evidence is fairly circumstantial. For one thing, the twentieth century saw a parallel rise in both heart disease and depression.

For another, depression and heart disease commonly co-exist. Scientists now know that depression leads to heart disease, raising the risk fivefold, and it more than triples the risk of fatal cardiac events in those with existing heart disease. And heart disease commonly leads to depression.

Every cell of your brain, like every cell of your heart, and every other cell of your body, is held together by a membrane that is rich in fat. All communication with, and between, nerve cells takes place through this fat rich membrane, or envelope.

What's more, the brain is unique in that its cells have long arms extending to other parts of the brain and body, enabling the rich network of communication between cells that underlies such complex experiences as feelings, thoughts, memories, learning and movement of all kinds. Each of these extensions is sheathed in a membrane rich in fat, which acts as a kind of electrical insulation, maintaining the integrity of signals as they pass from one nerve cell to the next.

Scientists estimate that two thirds of the brain is made of fatty acids. These come directly from the food we eat.

Omega-3s are a specific kind of polyunsaturated fat. This type of fat keeps cell membranes fluid and flexible. As a result, cells are better able to receive signals, making the brain and heart operations more stable.

And brain cells are better able to withstand the constant assault of free radicals of

oxygen given off by the intense activity that takes place there. In other words, omega-3 fats help to conserve brain energy and help us maintain mental balance.

Studies show that fish oils may be as effective as conventional drugs in alleviating unipolar and bipolar depression. And they reduce the risk of heart disease.

But how much omega-3 fat is enough? The American Heart Association recommends at least two servings of fish per week to get cardiovascular benefits. A three-ounce serving of farmed Atlantic salmon has about 1500 mg of omega-3 fat. Fish is the recommended source of omega-3s because only marine life contains eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), the two most accessible forms of the fats. A diet that draws on fish is likely a diet that cuts down on steak, cheese and other sources of unhealthy saturated fats.

No one knows whether there is an ideal balance of EPA and DHA and exactly what it is. In fact, it may be different for a variety of purposes. It's way too soon to know for sure, but some studies suggest that depression may benefit more from intake of EPA, while the balance of DHA and EPA seems especially to affect heart disease.

A safe starting point may be the proportions you get by eating fish—two to three times as much EPA as DHA. A third form of omega-3s, called alpha-linolenic acid (LNA), found in flax seeds and leafy plants, is useful because the body can convert it into EPA and DHA. But the conversion process is slow, and the same mechanism converts parts of soybean, corn and safflower oils into inflammatory omega-6s, which most Americans already consume in abundance. The production of EPA and DHA could be stymied if your body is already occupied processing omega-6.

Several factors control the amount of omega-3 available for use in the body: the amount of EPA and DHA in your diet, how much is converted from LNA and how much omega-6 your body is producing.

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Nutrition - *Healthy Living*

Vegetarian Eating for Teens

There are many types of vegetarian diets. The two most common are lacto-ovo, which includes eggs and milk products, but not meat, and vegan, which doesn't include any form of animal products. Teens who are lacto-ovo vegetarians can usually get enough nutrients if their diets are carefully planned. Vegan vegetarians have greater risk of not getting enough of several nutrients, especially vitamins D and B₁₂, calcium, iron, zinc, and perhaps other trace elements. These vitamins and minerals are needed for proper growth. To be healthful, vegetarian diets need to be carefully planned.

If it is important to you to be a vegetarian, it is easier to have nutrition with the lacto-ovo form. Vegetarians who eat no animal products need to be especially careful about getting nutrients in other ways. A nutritionist can help plan a vegetarian diet that provides the nutrients needed for growth and development during the teen years. Here are some non-animal sources of nutrients that many vegans may not get enough of:

Vitamin B₁₂ - fortified soy beverages and cereals, brewer's yeast, seaweed

Vitamin D - fortified soy beverages and sunshine (vitamin D is made in your skin with help of sun)

Calcium - tofu (if made with calcium sulfate), soy-based beverages with added calcium, breakfast cereals with added calcium, fruit juices with added calcium, dark-green leafy vegetables such as collards and turnip greens (keep in mind that veggies are not as good a source as milk - you will have to eat much more veggies than you would have to drink milk to get enough calcium)

Iron - ready-to-eat cereals with added iron, spinach, cooked dry beans (such as kidney beans and pinto beans), peas (such as black-eyed peas), and lentils, enriched and whole grain breads

Zinc - whole grains (especially the germ and bran), whole-wheat bread, legumes, nuts, and tofu

Protein - tofu and other soy-based products, legumes, seeds, nuts, and grains.

Learn more about the vitamins and minerals you need.

For people who follow vegetarian diets, the American Dietetic Association has these tips:

- ↳ Talk to a registered dietitian or other qualified nutrition professional, especially during the teen years or if you are recovering from an illness.
- ↳ Limit sweets and fatty foods.
- ↳ Choose whole or enriched breads, cereals, pastas, and rice.
- ↳ Choose a variety of nuts, seeds, legumes, fruits and vegetables, including good sources of vitamin C (such as grapefruit) to help you absorb iron.
- ↳ Choose low-fat or nonfat dairy products if they are included in the diet.
- ↳ Make sure you get enough calories, which will help you get enough vitamins D, calcium, iron, and zinc.
- ↳ Vegans need properly fortified food sources of vitamin B₁₂, such as fortified soy beverages or cereals, or supplements.



Tips for Hassle-Free Eating



Mealtimes that are struggles between adults and young children are no fun for anyone. Here are tips on how to keep mealtimes low key and more

enjoyable for everyone.

- 🍴 Eat in a pleasant setting and be sure young children are comfortable at the table. Provide child-size forks and spoons and adjust a child's seating as necessary.
- 🍴 Let young children know what behaviors are expected and be consistent in encouraging good table manners.
- 🍴 Let children help with cooking, setup, and cleanup. Being part of the "kitchen team" can promote positive attitudes toward food and eating.
- 🍴 Serve meals family-style so children can choose their own portion size. A bite-size serving is fine. Children will feel more successful if they can control the amount they eat.
- 🍴 Encourage, but do not make children taste every food. A child may feel ill or have a strong dislike for a food. Forcing the issue may cause the child to not like the food even more.
- 🍴 Let children judge their own hunger. It's okay to eat very little at one meal. Researchers are finding that the clean-your-plate rule can lead to children ignoring their own signals to stop eating when they are full.
- 🍴 Rarely comment on what or how much a child is eating. That's part of keeping mealtime low key. Within reason, ignore negative behavior and food refusals.
- 🍴 Never bribe children to eat. Rewarding a child with dessert or more playtime sends the wrong message about food.
- 🍴 Don't hurry meals. Three - to five-year olds should be able to sit still for 20 minutes. Discourage dawdling by taking plates away after 20 to 30 minutes with the comment, "Eating time is over for

now."

- 🍴 Sit with children and eat the same foods they do. Research shows that positive adult companionship at meals and snacks improves young children's eating habits.

WHEN A PICKY EATER WON'T EAT

"Eat your peas or no dessert!" is a common response to a mealtime standoff, but it can backfire. Researchers have found that forcing or bribing young children to eat does not work. It can increase children's dislike for the food they are being forced to eat, while increasing their liking of the reward food. Instead, ask the child to just taste the food, then say no more. Fear of a new food will decrease as a child has more chances to try it. It may take 8 - 10 tries before a child accepts a new food. Some foods a child may never like. Many young children are picky eaters. Your job is to provide a variety of healthful foods. The child's job is to decide whether to eat and how much to eat.

References:

1. Birch L.L., Johnson S.J., and Fisher J.A. Children's eating: the development of food—acceptance patterns. *Young Children* 1995: 50: 71-78.
2. Satter, Ellyn. *How to Get Your Kid to Eat—But Not Too Much*. Palo Alto, Ca.: Bull Publishing Co., 1987.

Source: Penn State Nutrition & Extension Partnership Project

UFVs: Unidentified Funny Vitamins

Vitamins are essential for health, but many marketers on the Internet have invented new ones. *Here are some of these bogus vitamins:*

- **Vitamin F:** Appears to be several unsaturated fatty acids found in most vegetable oils. Claimed, falsely, to be a cure for hair loss, arthritis, and eczema.
- **Vitamin O:** Water supposedly containing extra oxygen molecules. Advertised for angina, anemia, lung problems, and so on. The FTC cracked down on it a few years ago, but O is still available online—fizzy salt water, at \$25 for 8 ounces.
- **Vitamin P:** Bioflavonoids (plant pigments) sold to treat leg cramps and promote circulation.
- **Vitamin T:** Claims to "strengthen" red blood cells and cure anemia.
- **Vitamin U:** Supposedly found in cabbage juice, sold to relieve ulcer pain.
- **"B" vitamins:** A number of fanciful B vitamins are for sale, with numbers running up to B-17 and beyond. You might have thought a B-17 was a military plane, but

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Wellness Made Easy

⚠ If you take black cohosh for menopausal symptoms such as hot flashes, beware of possible liver damage.

The British government recently required products containing the herb to carry a warning label about this danger. Stop taking black cohosh immediately and seek medical advice if you have any of these symptoms: jaundice (yellowing of the skin or eyes), dark urine, nausea, vomiting, unusual tiredness, abdominal pain, and loss of appetite. Though some small studies suggest that the herb may help reduce hot flashes, there is no strong evidence that it is effective. Previously some researchers had warned women not to take the herb for longer than three to six months.

⚠ It's safe to assume that most restaurant food contains far more calories than you think.

In a recent study from the University of Arkansas, when people were asked to guess the calorie content of restaurant entrees such as a hamburger with fries, chef salad, and fettuccine Alfredo, they underestimated it by 640 calories, or nearly 50%, on average. Not surprisingly, when nutrition information was added to the menus in the second part of the study, people were far less likely to order the higher-calorie entrees. How substantial is that 640-calorie difference? Someone eating an extra 640 calories from *just one meal a week* could gain nearly 10 pounds over the course of the year.

⚠ If you have chronic neck pain, consider acupuncture.

There is some evidence that it may help, according to the Cochrane Collaboration, a nonprofit organization that evaluates scientific literature. In its recent review of 10 studies, people suffering from neck pain for at least three months who underwent acupuncture reported greater pain relief than those who received sham acupuncture.

⚠ If you have a small scrape or cut, keep it covered with an adhesive bandage.

Contrary to popular belief, covering a wound so that it stays clean and moist—as opposed to letting it air dry—actually speeds healing. After you've stopped the bleeding and cleansed it with cool running water, use a ready-made, nonmedicated strip, or make your own from sterile gauze and tape. You can apply petroleum jelly to keep the wound moist. A moist wound also tends to form less of a scab, which decreases the risk of scarring. When a scab does form, don't pick it off; it naturally helps keep out infection.

⚠ "Evaporated cane juice," despite the claims, is no healthier than refined white sugar.

Found in many "health foods," it is simply a less processed form of sugar cane that has as many calories as regular sugar. And

while it does retain more vitamins and minerals, any nutritional difference is minuscule. Other names used for this ingredient on food labels include dried or dehydrated cane juice, cane juice crystals, raw cane crystals, and crystallized cane juice.

⚠ Don't flush expired or unwanted medicine down the drain or toilet.

While the long-term impact is unknown, trace amounts of antibiotics, acetaminophen, tranquilizers, and many other drugs have been found in rivers, streams, and treated water. Canada and some other countries (but not the U.S.) have disposal programs that allow people to return drugs to a central location. Ask if your doctor or pharmacy will take back medications. Or you can bring them to a local household hazardous waste facility if one is nearby. A last resort: put them in the trash in their original packaging or otherwise securely wrapped.

Source: UC Berkeley Wellness Letter, November 2006

A Meeting of Hearts and Minds (Cont'd from Page 1)

Where can you find omega-3s? They're most abundant in fish like tuna, mackerel, herring, salmon and sardines. The smaller the fatty fish, the better, because the lower down a creature is on the food chain, the lower the concentration of toxic minerals that has accumulated in the fat. Omega-3s are also in walnuts and flaxseeds.

In increasing quantities, they're on your grocer's shelf. From eggs to salad dressings to waffles, food manufacturers are rushing to market a variety of products fortified with omega-3s.

Wherever you find them, omega-3s are one place where your heart and mind are one.

Source: PsychologyToday.com

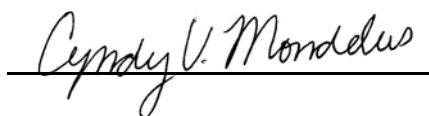
UFVs: Unidentified Funny Vitamins (Cont'd from Page 3)

it also designates laetrile, an apricot-pit derivative and quack cancer treatment.

The true vitamins

You need 13 vitamins to live: A, C, D, E, and K, plus 8 B vitamins (thiamin or B₁, riboflavin or B₂, niacin or B₃, folic acid, pantothenic acid or B₅, biotin, pyroxidine or B₆, and B₁₂). These come from foods (and multivitamins); D and K are also manufactured in the body.

Source: UC Berkeley Wellness Letter, November 2006



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