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FITNESS & NUTRITION TIPS

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ONE A DAY OR NONE A DAY?

Recent evidence shows that vitamin and mineral supplements just can't compete with the nutrients from a healthy diet. Linda Van Horn, Ph.D., a professor of preventive medicine at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago says that most studies indicate that supplements showed no benefit to preventing Alzheimer's disease, cancer, heart attacks, stroke, type 2 Diabetes and premature death. Paul M. Coates, Ph.D., director of the Office of Dietary Supplements at the National Institutes of Health confirms that almost all of us get or can get the vitamins and minerals we need from our diet. Major health organizations for cancer, diabetes, and heart disease all advise against supplements in favor of a healthful diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes. Unlike pills, these foods contain fiber plus thousands of health-protective substances that seem to work together more powerfully than any single ingredient can work alone. So when might a supplement make sense? Vitamins and minerals can benefit certain people at different times in their lives. Both vitamin B12 and calcium are recommended for people over 50 and for strict vegetarians; vitamin D is recommended for people over 50 and adults with limited sun exposure; iron is recommended for premenopausal women with heavy periods; eye supplement containing vitamin C, E and beta carotene is recommended for people with at least moderate macular degeneration in one or both eyes. Always discuss the need for supplements with your physician or ophthalmologist as they may be risky for some people and interfere with medications.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT CARDIO WORKOUT

Research from the University of South Carolina helps break down the pros and cons of four popular exercises. In addition, I have provided a MET level for each. A MET is a unit of measurement that is often used to describe the intensity of physical activity. One MET is equivalent to the amount of oxygen used by your body to sit quietly. An activity that requires 5 METS requires five times that amount of oxygen. The harder your body has to work to do something, the higher the MET. The calorie and MET values used below are for a person weighing about 150 pounds.

BEST FOR BURNING CALORIES...RUNNING...(7-8 METS) An hour at 7mph (an 8.5 minute per mile pace) will consume 854 calories and improve your bone density.

BEST FOR CREAKY JOINTS...CYCLING...(5-11 METS) Spend an hour cycling at 14 to 16 miles per hour and you'll burn 743 calories and the pedaling causes less wear and tear on your joints than pounding the pavement.

BEST FOR A TOTAL BODY WORKOUT...SWIMMING...(8-10 METS) Swimming an hour in the pool at a moderate pace burns about 520 calories, and unlike cycling or running, swimming works every major muscle group in the body.

BEST FOR REDUCING STRESS...YOGA...(4 METS) An hour will burn around 185 calories and research shows that yoga helps to slow down your pulse, a key to heart health.

LIFT TO LOOSE

The new science of calorie burning shows that weight training burns more calories than originally thought-up to 70% more. Based on these findings, it's estimated that performing just one circuit of 8 exercises (which takes about 8 minutes) can expend 160-230 calories. That's about the same as running a 6 minute mile pace for the same duration. That's why I often prescribe fast paced weight training routines in which you alternate between upper and lower body exercises. By emphasizing different muscles you can maintain a high intensity effort for a much longer duration. The result: the muscle saving, calorie burning benefits of intense resistance training and running; an extremely effective fat-loss workout.

PUT ON A HAPPY PLATE

Experts generally agree on ingredients of a mentally and emotionally healthy diet. Eating a healthy breakfast and healthy snacks helps stabilize your blood sugar throughout the day, avoiding anxiety-producing sugar drops. Foods high in complex carbohydrates, such as whole grains, can increase serotonin levels and help keep you calm. Vitamin B6 and folate, found in vegetables, fruits, nuts, and legumes are especially crucial to healthy serotonin levels. Good sources of folate include fortified cereals, baked goods, leafy vegetables, okra, asparagus, bananas, melons, lemons, mushrooms, orange juice, and tomato juice. The adult recommended daily allowance for folate is 400 micrograms-about the amount in a cup and a half of beans. Protein can boost alertness, as the body breaks it down into amino acids that serve as neurotransmitters. Don't overdo alcohol, which is a powerful depressant and can damage the quality of your sleep. Caffeine really can perk you up, acting as an anti-depressant; too much, however can cause anxiety in some people. Don't count on chocolate. Besides the short-lived boost of eating any candy containing sugar and fat, the evidence is mixed on whether chocolate has any special effect on mood.

PREVENTING FOOD ATTACKS

Most food-borne illnesses stem from viruses, such as the Norwalk virus. The heavy hitters-the bacteria and, less often, the parasites-tend to cause more severe and protracted illnesses, and are accompanied by fever and chills. The big 5 bad guys are *campylobacter* in meat and poultry; *E. coli O157:H7* in fruits, leafy greens, and meat; *listeria* in meat, soft cheeses, and vegetables; *salmonella* in eggs, poultry, and sprouts; and *shigella*, mostly in potatoes and other vegetables. *Consumer Reports on Health (February 2010)* offers the following measures to help prevent these food attacks:

Use a meat thermometer to ensure that you cook beef and lamb roasts or steaks, as well as fish, to 145 degrees F; egg dishes, pork, and ground beef and lamb to 160 degrees F; and poultry and re-heated egg dishes to 165 degrees F...Cook fried or scrambled eggs so they don't run...Keep raw fish, meat, and poultry away from other foods...Thaw foods in the refrigerator, not on the countertop...Wash produce with running water and a brush.

Wash hands, utensils, and countertops frequently...Check the freshness and expiration dates for the contents of your freezer and refrigerator periodically and when in doubt, throw it out...Avoid eating raw or rare meat. For sushi, consider asking if the fish was frozen, which helps kill parasites and choose restaurants carefully.

DO DIET PILLS THAT CLAIM TO BOOST METABOLISM REALLY WORK?

Claims by diet pill manufacturers emphasize the goal of boosting metabolism and would have you believe that you could melt away excess weight without putting any effort into changing your exercise or dietary habits. However, the number of calories you burn at rest for basic needs - such as organ function, blood circulation, and growing and repairing cells - stays fairly consistent and isn't easily changed. Diet pills won't rev up your basal metabolism, as your body has a limited ability to burn more calories while at rest. Physical activity is a form of energy expenditure that's separate from basal metabolism. The best ways to increase your ability to burn calories are building muscle with weight training or resistance training (at rest muscle burns more calories than fat and building muscle can slightly raise your basal metabolism allowing you to burn a few more calories when at rest) and exercising more intensely with interval training (this boosts the number of calories you burn while exercising, and for a while after the activity is over).

SUGAR OVERLOAD

The average American swallows 350-475 calories worth of added sugars each day, an unhealthy contribution to excess calories. Shoot for 100 calories (6 ½ teaspoons or 25 grams) a day of added sugars if you are a woman and 150 calories a day (9 ½ teaspoons or 38 grams) if you're a man. Don't drink sugar-sweetened beverages. Limit fruit juices to no more than 1 cup a day. Limit all added sugars (high fructose corn syrup, ordinary table sugar, honey, agave syrup, cane or beet sugar, brown rice syrup, evaporated cane juice. Don't worry about naturally occurring sugar in fruit, milk, and plain yogurt. To estimate your calorie needs and get more precise added sugars limit, go to mypyramid.gov and click on "Get a personalized plan" in the "I want to..." box.