

Extra Weight Tied to Extensive Health Problems

By Miranda Hitti, WebMD Medical News, November 2004

Many Americans have weight problems, and carrying those extra pounds jeopardizes just about every aspect of their health, according to a new study.

It's nothing new to know that excess weight is often accompanied by health problems, such as type 2 diabetes or heart disease.

But the latest rundown of conditions is stunningly long and diverse, covering 41 topics including asthma, heart failure, high blood pressure, depression, fatigue, osteoarthritis, and stress. The list was compiled by researchers, including Ruth Patterson, PhD, RD, of the Cancer Prevention Research Program at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle.

Patterson and colleagues studied 73,000 people aged 50 to 76 in western Washington state. Based on the responses, the researchers calculated body mass index (BMI) to gauge participants' total body fat. Among the women, almost 60% were overweight or obese. For the men, nearly 73% were overweight or obese.

Overweight BMI ranges from 25-29.9; obese BMI is at least 30.

Weight-Related Health Problems

Higher BMI was tied to 37 out of 41 health conditions for women and 29 out of 41 for men.

For women, morbid obesity (defined as a BMI of 35 or greater) was shown to be associated with a more than 12-fold risk of diabetes, an almost 12-fold risk of knee replacement, a six-fold risk of heart failure, a fivefold risk of high blood pressure and gallbladder removal, and a fourfold risk of potentially life-threatening clots to the lungs, chronic fatigue/lack of energy, and insomnia.

Morbidly obese men had a similar list. With the strongest associations seen in diabetes (eightfold risk), knee replacement (sixfold), high blood pressure (sixfold), heart failure (fourfold), and fatigue and lack of energy and insomnia (fourfold). Morbidly obese men had slightly lower rates of enlarged prostate.

Time's Toll

The group only included older adults, and it's not known when their weight problems started. Adding a pound or two every year or so may sound harmless, but as the study shows, it all adds up over time.

Some conditions, such as high blood pressure, might be caused by excess weight. Others could be part of a vicious cycle.

"For example, depression may result in weight gain, which can lead to depression," write the researchers, calling for "effective and practical" ways to prevent weight gain and fight obesity.

Breakfast: Don't Leave Home Without It

By Harvard Health Publications, August 2006

With mounting evidence in favor of consuming breakfast, it is becoming clearer that **breakfast may indeed be the most important meal of the day.**

Breakfast Benefits

Studies examining eating habits suggest that the regular consumption of breakfast can:

- Reduce risk of obesity and high cholesterol.
- Decrease insulin resistance (a condition that increases risk of type 2 diabetes and heart disease).
- Improve performance on memory-related tasks.
- Minimize impulsive snacking and overeating at other meals.
- Increase intake of essential nutrients that are rarely replenished by other meals of the day.
- Enhance school performance in children and young adults.

Quality Counts

Think of breakfast as the perfect opportunity to start accumulating the minimum five servings of fruits and vegetables and three servings of whole grains recommended for optimal health.

The National Academy of Sciences recommends adults consume 21 to 38 grams of fiber a day. Whole grains, fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts and seeds are the best sources of dietary fiber. High-fiber foods have the added benefit of warding off mid-morning snack attacks by creating a feeling of fullness. Likewise, adding some protein - such as seafood, low-fat dairy products, skinless poultry, egg or egg substitute - can also aid in suppressing hunger.

A lack of appetite in the morning may be the result of a large meal or snack consumed the night before. Perk up your morning appetite by eating lighter - and earlier - in the evenings. Try blending a mixture of either low-fat milk, low-fat yogurt or soy milk with fruit, 100 percent fruit juice and your favorite spices or flavor extract. Oat bran, wheat germ or ground flax seed can be added for extra fiber.

So start your day the healthy way by fueling up with a nutritious breakfast!

Summertime Nutrition Tips

By Christina Frank, WebMD, August 2006

Summertime and the living is easy -- that is, until you notice the havoc all that fun in the sun has wrought on your body. Fortunately, summer also brings an abundance of tasty and nutritious foods, including berries (loaded with antioxidants), tomatoes, sweet bell peppers (good vitamin C source), and protein-filled grilled fish and burgers. And by simply choosing the right ones to add to your daily diet, you can help prevent or alleviate the following common hot-weather woes:

Dry or Damaged Skin

What to eat: Help heal weathered skin with foods like raspberries, blueberries, and strawberries, which are rich in antioxidants and vitamin C. Protein, in the form of lean meats, beans, nuts, and seeds, is also key. Keep dryness at bay by drinking lots of water (women should drink 92 ounces (8-10 cups) of water in the summer and men - 125 ounces to prevent dehydration). Since calcium can also be lost through sweating, it's a good idea to replace it by eating low-fat dairy products like skim milk, yogurt, and cottage cheese.

Yeast Infections

What to eat: Cut back on sugary foods. Once you've got an infection, be sure to eat lots of yogurt -- the kind that contains live, active cultures.

Parched Hair

What to eat: Eating foods rich in vitamin B-5 (found in yogurt and California avocados), vitamin B-8 (in liver and cooked eggs), folic acid (in fortified cereals and beans), calcium (in milk and yogurt), and zinc (in meat and fish) can reduce hair loss and replace dull hair with shiny hair. These nutrients also play a role in maintaining healthy skin.

Muscle Cramps

What to eat: Replenish electrolytes with a sports drink that contains them and drink water. Potassium-rich foods include bananas, raisins, potatoes, and spinach.

Eye Damage

What to eat: The retina is actually made up of vitamin A. Thus, foods rich in this vitamin - along with beta-carotene, zinc, and Vitamins C and E - are beneficial to the eyes. Good sources are dark green vegetables like kale, chard, and mustard greens, plus bell peppers, carrots, and blueberries. Eat eggs for their high dose of lutein, an important antioxidant that also helps prevent eye damage.

Cold Sores

What to eat: Fortified cereals and bread or take a B-complex vitamin.

Color Your World: Best Fruit & Veggie Picks

By Susan Burke, eDiets.com, July 2006

Researchers have proven decisively that fruits and vegetables contain unique substances: **antioxidants, vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals that protect us from disease and promote good health.**

Because most fruits and vegetables are virtually fat free, they are the perfect food for those trying to lose weight. Also, people who eat plenty of fruits and vegetables maintain their weight loss more successfully.

Recent recommendations for getting enough water into your daily diet advise that including fruits and vegetables can help you meet daily fluid requirements. That's because most are full of water.

Finally, even those vegetables that contain fat, including avocados and olives, offer heart-healthy monounsaturated fat.

Paint your plate with deep colors and enjoy the flavor and anti-cancer nutrients.

Green: The greens are known for their folic acid, a B vitamin, but are also rich in vitamins A and C, and other phytochemicals. Some are good sources of calcium. The darker the green color, the more nutritious the vegetable. Some of the best are broccoli, kale and vegetables from the cruciferous family, including cabbage and Brussels sprouts.

Orange: The orange fruits and vegetables offer a treasure trove of beta carotene. They protect cells from the ravages of oxidation and promote cell immunity. Some of the best are mango, cantaloupe and apricots. Sweet potatoes are full of good nutrition.

Berry, Berry Good! All berries are so easy to like, and do so much for our immunity.

Strawberries are low in calories and packed with high levels of fiber, vitamin C and other antioxidants that help bolster the immune system.

Blueberries are super fruits, high in antioxidants including vitamins C and A. They also offer 3.5 grams of fiber per cup. Researchers have found that blueberries are number one in antioxidant activity, compared to 40 other fresh fruits and veggies. They credit anthocyanin, the pigment that gives blueberries their color, as the active antioxidant. Other research points to anti-aging properties of blueberries, as well as their ability to lower risk for arterial plaque build-up and provide protection from urinary tract infections.

Other Reds: Rosy fruits that are helpful in promoting urinary tract and heart health as well as reducing risk for some cancers include cherries, cranberries, pink and red grapefruit, red grapes, red apples and pomegranates. Red vegetables to love include beets, red peppers, radishes, rhubarb, radicchio and tomatoes.

The Foundation of Weight Loss Success!

By Julia Havey, eDiets, June 2006

When it comes to getting healthy, we have to build from four cornerstones - WATER, EXERCISE, NUTRITION and ATTITUDE!

Water is so important to the success of your weight loss journey. Our bodies are made of 75-percent water, and our brain is made of 85-percent water. It makes sense that if you aren't consuming fresh water each day that you will become a stagnant pool of water - and that just can't be a good thing.

Water is nature's best appetite suppressant. No pill ever made works as well as water. No wonder they tell you to swallow their pills with water, it's what will do the work! **So drink water and a lot of it. It WILL do your body good!**

Exercise! You have to move your body, get oxygen flowing and build muscle and strong bones. "If your lifestyle does not control your body, eventually your body will control your lifestyle... The choice is yours!" said Ern Baxter, author of "I Almost Died."

If the most you can do today is walk for 5 minutes in place, then walk for 5 minutes in place! Do that a few times this week and then next week, do 7 minutes and so on. Gradually increasing your level of fitness to where you can and DO 60 minutes of cardiovascular exercise 4 times a week and a few days of weight training thrown in. **Get your body moving!**

Nutrition. OK, it is so easy to say "exercise and eat right" when offering weight-loss advice. If you gear your mind to eating healthy foods for the sole reason that you will "lose weight," what happens once you reach your goal weight? That's right! You go "off" your "diet" or healthy nutritious eating and the weight comes back on with vengeance. However, if this time you vow to live healthfully and realize that consuming proper nutrition is simply part of a healthy life, then you are much more likely to keep with it for the long haul - not only to lose the excess weight, but also to live the life of your dreams for the rest of your life!

Attitude! Your attitude - how you feel about what you are doing and why you are doing it - will determine how well you do. You can be down in the dumps and feel like you are the only one dealing with your issues and concerns and allow that bad attitude to have you heading to the refrigerator hourly OR you can realize that you are NOT alone.

Now you know what you need to do. Four easy cornerstones need to be in place and you WILL succeed! Each corner is being equally as important as the other. The house will not be able to stand without all of them in place solidly.

Then, it's just a matter of how big you want to build, how hard you want to work and what your finished product will look like, but it will be amazing and it will be YOURS!

The Most Important Meal of the Day

By Rallie McAllister, WebMD, May 2006

While adults need to eat breakfast each day to perform their best, kids need it even more. Their growing bodies and developing brains rely heavily on the regular intake of food. When kids skip breakfast, they can end up going for as long as eighteen hours without food, and this period of semi starvation can create a lot of physical, intellectual and behavioral problems for them.

A Good Investment

If you and your kids regularly skip breakfast in the interest of saving time or getting a few more minutes of sleep, remember that **eating a wholesome, nutritious morning meal will probably save you time in the long run**. By recharging your brain and your body, you'll be more efficient in just about everything you do. Interestingly, studies show that **kids who skip breakfast are tardy and absent from school more often than children who eat breakfast on a regular basis**.

Preparing a good breakfast can be as quick and easy as splashing some milk over cereal. Time invested in breakfast is much more valuable than the few extra minutes of sleep you might get by bypassing the morning meal. If you and your kids seem unable to make time for breakfast, consider enrolling your children in a school breakfast program, if possible, or pack a breakfast brown-bag the night before so that you and your kids can eat on the way to school and work.

Break the Fast to Shed the Pounds

Some people skip breakfast in an effort to lose weight, but the practice is more likely to cause weight gain than weight loss. **Skipping breakfast is strongly linked to the development of obesity**. Studies show that overweight and obese children, adolescents, and adults are less likely to break the fast each morning than their thinner counterparts.

According to research, **skipping meals, especially breakfast, can actually make weight control more difficult**. Breakfast skippers tend to eat more food than usual at the next meal or nibble on high-calorie snacks to stave off hunger. Several studies suggest that people tend to accumulate more body fat when they eat fewer, larger meals than when they eat the same number of calories in smaller, more frequent meals. To teens, especially teenage girls, skipping breakfast may seem like a perfectly logical way to cut down on calories and lose weight. It's important for moms to educate their kids about the importance of the morning meal and the role it plays in maintaining good health and preventing obesity.

Kids' Weight: Time to See the Light

By Miranda Hitti, WebMD, March 2006

Parents often don't recognize that their children are overweight or aren't concerned about those extra pounds, a new study shows.

Talking About It

Parents were more likely to recognize their child's weight problem and be concerned about it if a doctor had mentioned it, the study shows. Parents can ask doctors if their child's weight is keeping pace with growth. Waiting for a doctor to broach the topic isn't necessary.

Lagging Behind, Lingerin' 'Baby Fat'

Parents were more concerned about their kids' extra pounds if their kids were less active or slower than their peers, the study shows. Evaluating kids' fitness could help flag the problem.

Will kids outgrow their baby fat? "Unfortunately, in our current environment, I don't think it's as high a likelihood as it used to be that they will outgrow it," says Krebs.

Being overweight is associated with health problems, some of which start in childhood, Krebs says. But not all overweight people have health problems, and slenderness doesn't guarantee health.

Banish the Guilt

Parents aren't solely responsible for kids' weight issues, Krebs notes. "This is a very wide-ranging issue," she says. "It involves schools; it involves advertising; it involves our communities and how they're set up ... it's very broad-based," she says. "It's not a matter of just what the parents are offering for food.

Many more kids - and adults - are overweight than in the past. **About 16% of U.S. kids aged 6-19 years were overweight in 1999-2002, says the CDC. That's a 45% increase since the late 1980s and early 1990s.**

Serving as Role Models

Advice to parents:

- Start by setting a good example in relationship to foods, physical activity, and leisure-time activity.
- Play actively with your children and support opportunities for them to be physically active.
- Cut down on opportunities for sedentary behavior, such as TV time.
- Celebrate your child's successes and encourage them in all avenues of their life, not just in relationship to their weight.

Fiber Good, and Not Just for Your Gut

By Daniel DeNoon, WebMD, April 2006

Fiber isn't just for good for your gut. It fights heart disease and diabetes, new studies suggest.

The full-body benefit comes from eating the 20-35 grams of fiber per day recommended by dietary guidelines.

Fiber for Heart Health

Yunsheng Ma, MD, PhD, of the University of Massachusetts Medical School in Worcester, followed 524 healthy adults for one year. At the beginning of the study - and every three months - the researchers drew blood for lab tests and collected details about what the volunteers were eating.

"This study shows that **dietary fiber prevents heart disease and diabetes**," Ma tells WebMD. "The fiber offers protection. So people need to get their fruit and vegetables." Ma's study appears in the April issue of the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.

Fiber Fights Diabetes in Overweight/Obese People

People who are overweight are at an increased risk of type 2 diabetes, the most common kind. Martin O. Weickert, MD, of the German Institute of Human Nutrition in Nuthetal, Germany, noted that people who eat a lot of cereal fibers, such as bran, are less likely to get diabetes.

Where to Find Fiber

People need both insoluble fiber and soluble fiber. Apples, for example, have insoluble fiber in their skins and soluble fiber in their flesh. So foods are a better way to get fiber than supplements. You get the whole package with foods."

Foods with a lot of soluble fiber include:

- Oatmeal
- Nuts and seeds
- Legumes (peas, beans, and lentils)
- Apple
- Pears
- Strawberries
- Blueberries

Foods packed with insoluble fibers include:

- Whole-grain bread
- Whole-grain breakfast cereals
- Wheat bran
- Seeds
- Many vegetables, including carrots, cucumbers, zucchini, celery, and tomatoes

10 Best Foods for Women

By Glenn Mueller, eDiets, April 2006

Here is a **list of 10 of the foods most important to female nutrition.**

10. Bean There, Done That

Beans are good for the heart. One half-cup serving of beans contains more than 5 grams of fiber, which is one quarter of the recommended daily allowance.

9. Kale to the Chief

Kale is a great source of folate, a water-soluble B vitamin that occurs naturally in food. It is recommended that women consume 400 micrograms of folate every day. Suffering from a folate deficiency during pregnancy can cause neural-tube defects in babies.

8. Beta Sight

Aside from carrots, beta-carotene is found in orange squashes, pumpkin, butternut squash and sweet potatoes. Since the body converts beta-carotene into vitamin A, this nutrient helps repair your skin and may even reduce your risk for breast cancer.

7. Just the Flax, Ma'am

Flax seeds and flax seed oil are an excellent source of Omega-3 fatty acids, which can help protect the heart. One way to add flax to your diet is to grind your own seeds and add them to that bowl of cereal in the morning.

6. Iron It Out

Instead of just taking iron in supplement form, women should get as much of it as they can from the food they eat. The iron found in food is easier for the body to absorb. Great sources of iron include Lean red meats, dark poultry and lentils.

5. Oh Boy, It's Soy!

Eating plenty of phytoestrogen-rich soybeans can help women significantly lower their bad cholesterol (LDL) and raise the good (HDL) cholesterol. One great source of soy protein is tofu.

4. Water, Water Everywhere

Drinking plenty of water is essential for the health of men and women alike. Water is also one of the best tools in the weight loss game, since it suppresses the appetite and helps your body metabolize stored fat.

3. Broccoli Power!

Broccoli is a fabulous source of calcium and contains other important nutrients like potassium and B vitamins.

2. Chalk up the Calcium

Eating plenty of yogurt and other dairy products is a great way for older women to protect themselves against osteoporosis.

1. Something's Fishy Here!

Salmon is a great source of Omega-3 fatty acids, it is also high in protein and low in cholesterol - not to mention the fact that it contains B vitamins, calcium, zinc, iron and magnesium.

In a Bad Mood? Eat Your Fish

By Salynn Boyle, WebMD, March 2006

Whether you're seriously depressed or simply in a bad mood, eating salmon and other foods high in omega-3 fatty acids just might help you feel better. Earlier studies appear to link low blood levels of omega-3s to a host of serious psychological conditions, including major depression, bipolar disorder, attention deficit disorder, and even schizophrenia.

Now new research suggests that **omega-3s can have a significant impact on everyone's mental health.**

Fish and Flaxseed

The American Heart Association recommends eating at least two servings of fatty fish each week, based on strong evidence that the omega-3 fats found in the fish help protect against cardiovascular disease.

The evidence that omega-3 levels also have an impact on mood disorders is less conclusive but growing, says a researcher who conducted some of the first psychological studies examining the fats. Two types of omega-3 fatty acids are found in fatty fish like salmon, sardines, and mackerel - eicosapentaenoic acid, or EPA, and docosahexaenoic acid, or DHA. A third omega-3, alpha-linolenic acid, or ALA, is found in plant foods such as flaxseed, soybean oil, walnuts, and canola oil.

Impact of Omega-3 Fats

In the new study involving 106 healthy people without major depression or any other diagnosed mood disorder, those who had low blood levels of omega-3 fatty acids scored worse than those with high levels on tests designed to assess mood, personality, and impulsive behavior.

People in the study with low blood levels of EPA and DHA were more likely than others to report experiencing symptoms of mild to moderate depression, Conklin adds. "Clearly, larger studies are needed to understand the relationship between behavior and these fats," she tells WebMD. "But **by following the AHA recommendations to eat two fish meals a week people may be protecting both their hearts and their mental health.**"

Most People Don't Get Enough

Harvard psychiatry professor Andrew L. Stoll, MD, who wrote the book *The Omega-3 Connection*, says most Americans find it difficult to get enough omega-3 fatty acids through the foods they eat alone. He points out that the typical Japanese diet contains as much as 10 times the omega-3 fats as the typical American diet.

He recommends that adults take high-quality fish oil capsules to boost their omega-3 levels, and cut down on their consumption of foods containing omega-6 fats such as foods fried in corn, peanut, and soybean oils. "It is just hard to get enough omega-3s in this country," he says. "In Japan it is just part of the culture to eat omega-3-rich foods, but that isn't the case here."

16 Great Tips: Fighting Fat After 40!

By Christopher R. Mohr, eDiets.com, April 2006

16 Fat Loss Tips to get your started so you can bask in all those other health benefits that come along with it.

1. Eat more fruits: Studies at Penn State University proved that increasing fruit intake helps facilitate weight loss.

2. Drink tea: research suggests that those who drink tea, have lower BMI's and have less body fat.

3. Lift weights. Build more muscle, burn more calories.

4. Start meals with a salad and low-fat dressing. Salad will provide some bulk to help fill you up, so you eat less calories overall.

5. Eat more protein. Replacing refined carbohydrates with lean protein will not only help satiate you, but will also increase your metabolism.

6. Eat more veggies. They fill you up, without providing many calories. Just avoid the high fat/high calorie dressings.

7. Include low-fat water based soups as snacks with meals. This will help fill you up and decrease the amount of calories and fat you consume.

8. Don't forget the fiber. Think of fiber like a sponge; it absorbs water and makes you feel full.

9. Lift heavy to build muscle. Put down the pink 1-lb. dumbbells and push some iron. Don't worry; you won't get "too big." What you'll get is a fat burning machine.

10. Bump up the intensity - make your workouts count!

11. Take a walk. The more calories you can burn each day, the better.

12. Replace one meal/day with a large salad and lean proteins.

13. Portion control. Avoid the buffet line and never super size a thing; instead make sure you're following what the nutrition label recommends for a serving.

14. Switch to calorie-free drinks. All calories count, whether they're liquid or solid, so unless it's milk, opt for tea or water.

15. Don't drink juice; eat the whole fruit. The whole fruit provides more nutrients and fills you up more.

16. Eat breakfast. A review published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition showed that those who ate breakfast were more successful with long-term weight maintenance. Other research has shown the same for weight loss. Grab a yogurt, a piece of fruit, or make a smoothie. It doesn't have to be fancy.

Take Off Fat, Keep It Off!

By Dr. Jose Antonio, eDiets.com, March 2006

How do you avoid the proverbial treadmill of weight loss and weight gain? As far back as 50 years ago, it was common for athletes to eat more than your average daily serving of protein. **Why is protein so important?** First of all, you need the amino acids (which are the building blocks of protein) for the repair and rebuilding of muscle that's been torn down from exercise. And, you don't have to be an Olympic athlete to tear down your muscles from exercise.

Your Uncle Ned and Aunt Susie working out on the stair stepper or doing some new yoga move will experience delayed-onset muscle soreness (which is the result of tiny rips or tears in muscle). So, eat protein to repair this. But, here's the kicker. Protein has another great benefit. **It helps you maintain your weight loss!** So, get this: you go on your favorite diet, you lose weight and then you just gotta figure out how to keep those pounds off. The answer is protein.

Here's the proof: A recent study examined 113 overweight subjects that followed a low-calorie diet for 4 weeks. They followed up with a weight-maintenance (WM) diet for 6 months after that. During WM, subjects were divided into either a protein group or a control group. The protein group consumed an additional 30 grams per day of added protein (an extra 120 calories) in addition to their own usual diet. The control group didn't consume anything extra.

Both groups lost similar amounts of weight during the four-week low-calorie diet.

During WM, the protein group had a higher-protein intake, which makes sense since they consumed an extra 30 grams daily. But, they also had the following great things happen. The protein-consuming group gained less weight and had smaller waist measurements. Also, the weight gained by the protein group was fat-free mass (which is mainly muscle). Satiety in the fasted state before breakfast increased significantly more in the protein group compared to the control group. So what does this all mean?

If you lose weight, it makes sense to consume an additional 30 grams of protein daily to help maintain the weight loss. Now, you might be scratching your head and asking yourself, "So you mean I can eat more calories [120 calories] in the form of protein and keep the weight off and whatever weight I do gain back is mainly muscle?" The answer to that is a YES!

Why do you think fitness enthusiasts so strongly embrace and consume protein? Because **it's good for your muscles, helps you feel more satisfied, and helps keep the fat off after losing weight.** This is further proof that "not all calories are created equally." So, don't think an extra 120 calories of a donut will work as well as 120 calories of lean protein.

Why You Need More Fiber - and 6 Easy Ways to Get It

Elaine Magee, WebMD, March 2006

A recent American Dietetic Association position paper reported that most of us don't even come close to the recommended intake of 20 grams to 35 grams of fiber a day.

Why Is Fiber so Good for Us?

Eating a higher-fiber diet has been shown to lower blood cholesterol levels, improve and prevent constipation, and slow digestion. And according to Barbara Rolls, PhD, author of *The Volumetrics Eating Plan*, fiber can help us eat less - and lose weight.

Some recent studies have shown that:

- **Eating a higher-fiber diet, as part of an overall healthful lifestyle, may play a role in a healthful BMI (body mass index).** One study found that women who ate more whole grains and total fiber consistently gained less weight over 12 years than those who ate less fiber and whole grains.
- **A high-fiber diet may reduce your risk of colon cancer.** If populations with a low average fiber intake suddenly doubled their fiber, they could lower their risk of colon cancer by 40%, according to a study involving data collected from 10 European countries.
- **Fiber may reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes.** Those who ate a diet high in refined carbohydrates and low in cereal fiber were more likely to increase their risk of type 2 diabetes, according to a recent study.

6 Ways to Get More Fiber

Before you start, keep a few things in mind: When you increase fiber, you should increase your water intake along with it. Add fiber gradually to give your gastrointestinal tract time to adapt. And if you have gastrointestinal diseases, including constipation, check with your doctor first.

1. **Go for whole grains whenever possible.**
2. **Choose the right breakfast cereals.**
3. **Eat beans a few times a week.**
4. **Have several servings of fruit every day.**
5. **Every day, stir a tablespoon of ground flaxseed** into your smoothie, soup, casserole, etc.
6. **Have several servings of vegetables every day.**

Supplements to Boost Your Health

By Laura Lane, WebMD, January 2006

Doctors instruct people 65 years and older to get flu shots, eat a high-fiber diet and do strengthening exercises to stay healthy.

But of all the things older people can do, taking nutritional supplements ranks as one of the easiest.

Nutritional supplements not only help decrease the risk of certain diseases, but they also fill up what's missing in a typical elderly person's diet. It usually doesn't have a sufficient number of calories to cover the essential nutrients.

Vitamin B-12

The supplement that nutritionists have been promoting most recently is vitamin B-12. People who don't get enough of the vitamin can suffer from anemia, other blood-cell disorders, and neurological disorders including memory loss and changes in gait. Nutritionists recommend that all adults get at least 2.4 micrograms per day of vitamin B-12, which is found mostly in meats. People 51 years of age or older should get most of the vitamin from supplements or fortified cereals.

Folate

The B vitamin folate reduces levels of homocysteine, a molecule that is a risk factor for cardiovascular disease and stroke. Elderly people should take 400 micrograms per day to supplement the amount of folate they may get from their diet.

Folate is found in dark green, yellow and orange fruits and vegetables, beans, nuts, seeds and fortified grain products such as pasta and flour. Foods with a high concentration of folate include spinach, orange juice, and lentils.

Vitamin E

Research studies show evidence that vitamin E reduces the risk of heart disease, cancer, and other conditions. Vitamin E is found in fatty foods such as nuts and oils. People 14 years and older should take 15 mg per day.

Calcium and Vitamin D

Finally, elderly people need to keep their bones strong by supplementing their diet with calcium and vitamin D. Many older people lack enough calcium in their diets because they can't digest dairy foods, the primary source for calcium.

For patients who don't eat any dairy products or calcium-fortified orange juice, the full 1,200 milligrams from supplements is recommended. Supplements made from calcium carbonate or calcium citrate are best.

The Food and Nutrition Board recommends that people 51 years or older receive 10 to 15 micrograms of vitamin D each day. Taking supplements is a good way to meet the daily requirement.

Still, however convenient supplements may be, they shouldn't take the place of eating a well-balanced diet. **Taking supplements is "just another healthy thing you can do for yourself."**

13 Healthy Habits to Improve Your Life

By Dulce Zamora, WebMD, January 2006

There are 13 ways to boost your chances of living a happy, healthy life.

Habit No. 1: Eat Breakfast Every Morning

Research shows people who have a morning meal tend to take in more vitamins and minerals, and less fat and cholesterol. Breakfast eaters are significantly less likely to be obese and get diabetes compared with nonbreakfast eaters.

Habit No. 2: Add Fish and Omega-3 Fatty Acids to Your Diet

Besides being a good source of protein and a food relatively low in the bad type of dietary fat called saturated fat, fish has omega-3 fatty acids - which have been shown to reduce the risk of heart disease.

Healthy Habit No. 3: Get Enough Sleep

Sleep is vital to good health and to mental and emotional well-being.

Healthy Habit No. 4: Make Social Connections

Communal activities are good for your physical and mental health, according to a study published in the March/April 2004 issue of the American Journal of Health Behavior.

Habit No. 5: Exercise for Better Health

Habit No. 6: Practice Good Dental Hygiene

Flossing your teeth every day could add 6.4 years to your life.

Habit No. 7: Take Up a Hobby

Habit No. 8: Protect Your Skin

Habit No. 9: Snack the Healthy Way

The ADA recommends five or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day as part of a healthy diet. One way to incorporate fruits and veggies into your diet is to have them as snacks.

Habit No. 10: Drink Water and Eat Dairy

Water and milk are essential fluids for good health, but they can also help with shedding pounds. The body needs water to keep properly hydrated and individuals vary widely in how much water they need.

Habit No. 11: Drink Tea

Habit No. 12: Take a Daily Walk

Habit No. 13: Plan

Weight Loss = Better Sex

By Che Odom, eDiets.com, January 2005

Four times in two years. That's not a lot of sex for a couple married just a year and a half.

Psychologists from Duke University presented a paper recently on this very topic. People who are overweight or obese may often find their weight gets in the way of sex, the psychologists say.

But the scientists found reason for hope. **When people lose weight, their sex lives often improve.** Researchers from Duke say even moderate weight loss of about 10 percent can make people feel much better about their bodies. That can lead to more sex. This is one of the few studies to examine the mental and emotional problems obesity can cause for intimacy, not just the physical troubles such as "hormone imbalances or impotence," according to a Duke University press release.

The Study

The Duke study involved 161 women and 26 men with an average body mass index of 41 (30 or above is considered obese) and average age of 45. They were enrolled in a diet program at the Hennepin County Medical Center in Minneapolis and had lost 17.5 percent of their body weight after one year and 13 percent after two years. The study subjects were asked about the quality of their sex lives when the study began and every three months thereafter. The most striking improvement in attitudes was seen at three months, when they had lost about 12 percent of their initial weight.

At the beginning, 68 percent of women said they felt sexually unattractive. One year into the diet, only 26 percent did. Initially, 21 percent of women said they were not enjoying sex; only 11 percent said so after one year.

A Man's Point of View

Ron, who's trying to lose about 100 pounds, said he's definitely reluctant to have sex because of his excess weight. He won't get undressed in front of his partner and won't have sex with the lights on. "I don't look sexy. I certainly don't feel sexy," Ron said. "If I have any chance of having sex, it is best I don't do anything to spoil the mood like show my fat butt."

Accepting Yourself Matters Most

It all depends on how you feel about being overweight, or short, tall or skinny, says eDiets' sex columnist Michele Hickford. If you like the way you look, however that may be, you'll feel you can be attractive to someone else, she says.

Being overweight brings with it certain issues that may or may not affect sexual prowess, such as physical stamina or flexibility. But the most important sex organ is the brain, Hickford says. "How you view yourself, how comfortable you are with your body has an enormous impact on your sexual attitude. Until you're comfortable with yourself and your appearance, whether you're overweight, underweight, tall, short, black, white or pink, a truly satisfying, fulfilling and, most importantly, comfortable sexual life will be elusive."

Fish Fat May Help Fight Alzheimer's Disease

By Miranda Hitti, WebMD Medical News, September 2005

New research shows how **a fat found in fish such as salmon, mackerel, and herring might help fight Alzheimer's disease**. The fat is called DHA. That's short for docosahexaenoic acid. Technically, it's an omega-3 fatty acid.

Fat to the Rescue

Scientists don't know exactly what triggers Alzheimer's disease to develop. However, they've noticed clumps of amyloid protein and bundles of tangles (twisted fibers) in brains of people who suffer with the condition.

It's unclear whether plaques or tangles cause Alzheimer's disease or whether these are a byproduct of some other process that causes the condition.

DHA may help put the brakes on beta-amyloid proteins and rev up NPD1, write Bazan and colleagues. NPD1 acts like a bodyguard for brain cells, blocking the disease's attempts to make brain cells die, the study shows.

Fish as Brain Food

Bazan's study was done in a lab. They didn't serve anyone fish for supper every night or dole out fish oil capsules. The researchers also don't recommend any particular dose of DHA for Alzheimer's disease. But they note that DHA is essential for the brain.

Past studies have shown that people who eat a lot of fish tend to be less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease than those who hardly ever eat fish. For instance, a study published in 2003 showed that elderly Chicagoans who reported eating fish once a week for four years developed Alzheimer's less often than those who rarely or never ate fish.

That doesn't prove that fish prevents Alzheimer's, but the pattern is getting lots of attention. **DHA has also been found to be important for babies' brain development.**

Fish oil capsules are another option. In December 2004, consumerlab.com reported that its tests found no mercury or other toxins called PCBs in 41 fish oil supplements.

Discuss any supplements you take with your doctor.

Trade Carbs for Proteins: Heart Healthy

By Jennifer Warner, WebMD Medical News, November 2005

A new study suggests that swapping out a small amount of carbohydrates in an already heart-healthy diet for either protein-rich foods or unsaturated fats may provide additional benefits in lowering heart disease risk.

Reducing Heart Risk

The protein-rich diet reduced heart disease risk by 21%, and the monounsaturated-fat-rich diet reduced it by almost 20%, compared with the 16% reduction found with the carbohydrate-rich diet.

"Our study provides strong evidence that replacing some carbohydrate with either protein or monounsaturated fat has important health benefits," says Appel. "There is already agreement that reducing saturated fat lowers risk for heart disease, but the question of which macronutrient [fat, protein, or carbohydrate] to emphasize has been controversial."

Trade in a Few Carbs for Heart Benefits

In the high-protein diet, researchers replaced approximately 10% of the total daily calories from carbohydrates with protein. About 50% of the protein came from plant sources, such as beans, nuts, seeds, and some grains. The unsaturated fat diet was enriched with monounsaturated fats and included olive and canola oils, as well as some nuts and seeds.

In the study, which appears in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, researchers compared the effects of the three diets in 164 adults who either had high blood pressure or were on the verge of having it.

Blood Pressure and Cholesterol Changes

Researchers found that blood pressure and cholesterol levels improved after each diet phase compared with the start of the study. But the benefits achieved with the protein-rich and monounsaturated-fat-rich diets were greater than with the DASH-based diet alone.

In an editorial that accompanies the study, Myron H. Weinberger, MD, of Indiana University Medical Center, says the results of this study may be difficult to apply to the public. He says the people in this study were highly motivated to follow the diets because of their blood pressure status and the fact that all of the foods were provided to them.

"Although the benefit of blood pressure reduction in those in the prehypertensive group is clear," Weinberger says the ability to control high blood pressure adequately in the people with existing hypertension is not clear. "It is likely that more than diet will be required to reach goal blood pressures for the majority of these individuals."

Fishing For Improved Health

By Hara Estroff Marano, eDiets.com, June 2005

The evidence has been mounting for several years that the best way to ensure a bright mood - as well as a strong heart and working joints - is to consume plenty of cold-water fish, because they are rich in omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids.

Now, from Israel, comes another piece of evidence linking omega-3's to mood states. And it confirms what many scientists have suspected all along. It isn't just that you need to consume omega-3 fats; at the same time you need to cut back on foods and fats that are loaded with omega-6 fatty acids, which are found in soy and corn oil.

The Israelis found that animals exhibiting the signs of depression have increased levels of an omega-6 fatty acid in their brains. Not only may depression result from a deficiency of omega-3 fatty acids, it may also be an outcome of an excess of omega-6.

The assumption is that low fatty-acid levels in the blood reflect low fatty acid levels in the brain.

The Israeli researchers, using an animal model of depression, found that the depressed animals and nondepressed animals had about the same levels of omega-3 fats in the brain. But they dramatically differed in levels of omega-6, particularly arachidonic acid.

"The finding lends itself nicely to the theory that increased omega-3 fatty acid intake may shift the balance between the two fatty acid families in the brain. It has been demonstrated in animal studies that increased omega-3 fatty acid intake may result in decreased brain arachidonic acid."

Omega-6 fatty acids compete in the body with omega-3. Consume an excess of omega-6 and they displace the omega-3. The catch is, you need a proper balance of omega-6 and omega-3 intake for cells to function optimally.

Canola oil and walnut oil are highly recommended because of their fat makeup.

Omega-3 fats also appear to have been integral parts of the diets of our prehistoric ancestors. Although the amount of omega-3's in the food supply has dropped radically in the past hundred years, eons of evolution have custom-crafted our brains and bodies to depend on them for basic biochemical maneuvers.

So adding seafood to your diet is only half the story. It's essential to cut out sources of corn oil and soy oil - almost ubiquitous in margarine, fried foods and commercial salad dressings. They contain a predominance of omega-6's. By cutting out soy and corn oil, and using olive oil instead, you can virtually double the effect of any fish that you eat, scientists believe. Plus, that brings you closer to a Mediterranean diet - more like the diet on which human beings evolved, and which our bodies are basically suited for.

The Wonders of Water

By Kathleen Zelman, WebMD Medical News, May 2005

The New Fluid Guidelines

In February 2004, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) issued new recommendations. The new guidelines remove the eight-glasses-a-day recommendation, and say healthy adults may use thirst to determine their fluid needs. Exceptions to this rule include anyone with a medical condition requiring fluid control; athletes; and people taking part in prolonged physical activities or whose living conditions are extreme.

How Much Is Enough?

The IOM report made **general fluid intake recommendations of 91 ounces (that's 11-plus cups a day) for women and 125 ounces (15-plus cups a day) for men.** These guidelines are for total fluid intake, including fluid from all food and beverages.

Approximately 80% of our water intake comes from drinking water and other beverages, and the other 20% comes from food. **The recommended amount of beverages, including water, would be approximately 9 cups for women and 12.5 cups for men.**

When You Need More

Physical activity, heat, and humidity can increase our fluid needs. In these situations, keep water bottles close at hand and drink frequently to avoid dehydration. If you're going to be physically active for long periods, consider sports drinks that hydrate and provide easily usable sugar and electrolytes.

Water and Weight Control

The weight loss benefits of water stem from several facts:

- Foods that incorporate water tend to look larger.
- The higher volume of these foods provides greater oral stimulation.
- Most important, when water is bound to food, it slows down absorption and lasts longer in the belly.

Bottom Line

The experts agree: Drinking water - either sparkling or flat and perhaps with a twist of citrus - is a great, noncaloric way to satisfy your thirst. But if you struggle with drinking water, you're off the hook as long as you:

- Enjoy plenty of high-volume foods, including fruits and vegetables.
- Satisfy your thirst with a variety of healthy, low-calorie beverages such as 100% fruit juice, skim or low-fat milk, tea, and, of course, water.

Pay attention to signs of dehydration, such as dry mouth and concentrated urine, which indicate a need for more liquids.

Diabetes deaths to rise 25pc as obesity soars

By Anushka Asthana, The Observer, October 2 2005

The number of deaths from diabetes will soar by 25 per cent in the next decade thanks to Britain's escalating weight problem, a World Health Organization report will reveal this week.

The extensive study says that **76 per cent of British men over the age of 30 and 69 per cent of women in the same age group, are overweight**. This compares to 65 per cent of men and 55 per cent of women in 1995.

It is predicted that the number of overweight people will increase in the next 10 years, fuelling the rise in **diabetes which by 2015 will be killing 8,000 people per year more than it does now**. There will also be a surge in other chronic diseases such as heart disease and cancer.

Dr JoAnne Epping-Jordan, of the WHO's department of chronic diseases and health promotion, said the estimates were 'conservative'. 'The rates of overweight people are rising quite quickly. We are measuring the numbers of people overweight because that is a major risk factor for diabetes and other chronic diseases. We want to highlight that one does not have to be obese - the risks start rising at a Body Mass Index (BMI) as low as 21,' she said.

BMI is calculated by dividing weight in kilograms by height in metres squared. The normal range is 18.5 to 24.9, and you are obese if it is over 30. Epping-Jordan pointed to studies from the US that show a woman who is only just overweight has eight times the risk of developing diabetes of someone at an ideal weight. For men the risk is just over double.

Charities in Britain last night urged the government to take notice. 'These figures confirm our worst fears,' said Simon O'Neill, director of care and policy at Diabetes UK. 'We know that Type 2 diabetes is linked to being overweight, so people must be educated to eat a healthy diet and take up regular physical activity or the numbers will continue to rise at an alarming rate.'

The charities Diabetes UK and the British Heart Foundation estimate that **33,000 people die each year as a result of diabetes**. The disease raises the chance of developing serious health problems, including heart disease, strokes, high blood pressure, circulation problems and nerve, kidney and eye damage. If the WHO's predictions are realized the number of deaths will rise to more than 41,000 in 2015.

Neville Rigby, director of policy and public affairs at the International Obesity Task Force, said: 'The biggest proportion of the population affected [by chronic diseases] are in the overweight category. This is the tip of the iceberg.'

He added that BMI is not enough on its own to highlight a risk. A normal BMI but a large waist circumference could be just as dangerous, he said. The 'apple shape', he added 'indicates densely packed visceral fat'.

Eating Soy Foods May Reduce Fracture Rate

By Daniel DeNoon, ebMD Medical News, September 2005

Women who eat the most soy foods have the fewest bone fractures after menopause. That's the word from a study of 24,403 postmenopausal Chinese women. Within 10 years of menopause, the 20% who ate the most soy foods reported half as many fractures as the 20% who ate the least soy.

Soy protected against fracture at every level of consumption over 5 grams a day. But those who ate more than 13 grams of soy a day - getting more than 60 milligrams of soy isoflavones a day - got the most benefit.

2 Cups of Soy Milk - or Less

The highest level of consumption among Chinese women was about 13 grams of soy protein a day. A cup of soy milk contains about 6.6 grams. A half piece of tofu contains about 8 grams.

The Preventive Power of Soy

Just about everyone knows that calcium is needed to build strong bones. But soy has a different bone-protecting effect, says soy isoflavone expert Kenneth D.R. Setchell, PhD, of Children's Hospital Medical Center in Cincinnati.

Setchell's research team is in the middle of a long-term experiment. The researchers are giving postmenopausal women two glasses of soy milk every day. Half the women get soy milk with a major soy component - soy isoflavones - removed. "We found that women who consumed the soy isoflavones maintained stable bone mass," Setchell tells WebMD. "They had no bone loss in two years. And that has now been extended to four years."

The women who did not get isoflavones in their soy had significant bone loss - about 4.5%. Setchell thinks soy protein may also play a role in bone protection.

But whatever it is about soy and bone, the key word is protection. Setchell and Shu both stress that soy is not a treatment for bone loss - its effect is to prevent bone loss.

More Health Benefits of Soy

Bone loss isn't the only reason to consume soy foods. "It is not just for bone fracture. It is a great health benefit," Shu says. "Most studies indicate that soy is pretty safe, and the evidence is quite strong that it protects against coronary heart disease. There are also some data indicating soy may reduce the risk of breast cancer. Taking all those things together, I recommend women eat soy as much as they can."

But don't just add soy to your diet, warns Leslie Bonci, MPH, RD, director of sports nutrition at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. She also warns that soy supplements aren't a replacement for soy foods. **If you're going to go for soy health benefits, she says, do it with foods - not pills.**

Protein + Exercise May Promote Weight Loss

By Jennifer Warner, WebMD Medical News, August 2005

A high-protein diet may enhance the effects of exercise in helping people lose fat without losing muscle.

New research shows obese women who exercised regularly and ate a reduced-calorie diet high in protein lost more fat and less muscle than those who ate a similar diet high in carbohydrates. Both diets contained the same number of total calories and percentage of calories from fat.

Researchers say women on the high-protein diet also lost more weight around the abdominal area. "There's an additive, interactive effect when a protein-rich diet is combined with exercise. The two work together to correct body composition; dieters lose more weight, and they lose fat, not muscle," says Layman.

Protein May Keep Muscle, Burn Fat

In the study, researchers compared the effects of a high-protein, low-carbohydrate diet against a high-carbohydrate, low-protein diet combined with exercise in 48 obese women.

Both diets contained 1,700 calories, 30% of calories from fat, and about 17 grams of fiber. But women on the high-protein diet substituted high-protein foods, such as meats, dairy, eggs, and nuts, for foods high in carbohydrates, such as breads, rice, cereal, pasta, and potatoes, to get about 30% of their total calories from protein. Women on the high-carbohydrate diet, in comparison, ate about half that amount of protein and got about 60% of their daily calories from carbohydrates.

Both groups participated in a high- or low-level exercise program. The high-exercise group consisted of five 30-minute walking sessions and two 30 minute weight lifting/stretching sessions per week.

Exercise for the low-intensity group emphasized voluntary lifestyle recommendations of a minimum of 30 minutes of walking five days/week.

After four months, the results showed that both groups of dieters lost weight, and those who exercised more lost less muscle tissue and more fat.

High-protein dieters in the high-exercise group lost an average of 22 pounds and less than a pound of lean muscle. High-carbohydrate dieters in the high-exercise group lost an average of 15 pounds but lost more than 2 pounds of muscle.

But the real key to losing weight while maintaining muscle appears to be exercise. The high-protein, low-exercise dieters lost an average of 19 pounds but lost over 4 pounds of muscle. The high-carbohydrate, low exercisers lost 17 pounds, but nearly 6 pounds of that came from muscle.

Nearly 100% of the weight lost in the high-protein exercise group was fat, while 25%-30% of the weight lost in the high-carbohydrate exercise group was muscle, says Layman.

The Secret Power of Protein

By Catherine Shu, *Ediets.com*, August 16, 2005

Most people know that losing weight boils down to eating fewer calories and/or exercising more. That's what nutritionists tell us.

University of Washington researchers have found that protein has a strong effect on appetite, perhaps one key reason why so many dieters have successfully dropped pounds on high-protein diets.

The surprising part is that how many carbohydrate calories are in your diet has nothing to do with the weight loss. The study found that simply **increasing the amount of protein in your diets can help you lose weight**, even if you don't cut back on carbohydrates at all.

In the study, researchers had subjects bump up protein intake to 30 percent. Fat was reduced to 20 percent.

Within three months the subjects had lost an average of 11 pounds, even though half of the calories they ate still came from carbohydrates. People on the modified diet reported feeling satisfied with less food. In other words, they lost weight because they consumed fewer calories, not because they ate fewer carbohydrates.

Researchers are still trying to figure out exactly how protein has more control over hunger than other nutrients. One possibility is that it makes the central nervous system more sensitive to leptin, a hormone that tells your body when it has stored enough fat.

What researchers do know, however, is that even slightly increasing the amount of protein you eat can help you lose weight without having to banish carbohydrates from your diet.

Pumping up protein intake by just 5 to 10 percent could make a difference, says Colleen Matthys, a bionutritionist and one of the study's researchers.

Previous research has shown protein also helps keep the brain alert. Ever notice that a high-carbohydrate lunch can leave you dragging through the afternoon?

Carbohydrates can make you feel tired—and hungry for an energy boost—because they increase the brain's level of the amino acid tryptophan, which in turns spurs the brain to make the calming neurotransmitter serotonin. Protein, on the other hand, prompts the brain to manufacture norepinephrine and dopamine, chemical messengers that promote alertness and activity.

Protein is also an essential component of every cell in the body, and we need it to repair and replenish our skin, bones and muscle tissue, as well as for enzymes, hormones and other chemicals. But carbs are equally important, despite their bad rep. Carbs are the brain's main fuel.

Protein's natural power of appetite suppression should be implemented cautiously, Matthys says. She suggests you **eat low-fat dairy products, beans, fish and lean cuts of meat, such as skinless chicken and turkey breasts.**

Foods for Healthy Skin: You Are What You Eat

By Colette Bouchez, WebMD, March 2005

What you put on your plate is even more important than what you put on your skin.

What Are Foods for Healthy Skin?

Most experts say eating a balanced diet is the best way to get your share of good food for healthy skin. One of the most important components of skin health is vitamin A. One of the best places to get it is low-fat dairy products.

Blackberries, blueberries, strawberries, and plums

The common link between these four foods is their high antioxidant content. The benefits of these foods for healthy skin are plentiful.

"When you help protect the cells from damage and disintegration, you also guard against premature aging. In this respect, these fruits may very well help keep your skin younger looking longer," says Heller.

Salmon, Walnuts, Canola Oil, and Flax Seed

These seemingly unrelated foods all deliver essential fatty acids, and thus are key foods for healthy skin. Essential fatty acids are responsible for healthy cell membranes, which act as barriers to harmful things and also as the passageway for nutrients to cross in and out and for waste products to get in and out of the cell.

The best-known essential fatty acids are **omega 3 and omega 6**, which must be in balance for good health (and good skin). Fish, walnut, and flax seed oil are among the best sources.

Healthy Oils

Eating good-quality oils helps keep skin lubricated and keeps it looking and feeling healthier overall. Which oils are the right oils for healthy skin? Those labeled cold pressed, expeller processed, or extra virgin are the ones to look for.

Whole-wheat bread, muffins, and cereals; turkey, tuna and brazil nuts. The mineral selenium connects all these foods for healthy skin. Experts say selenium plays a key role in the health of skin cells.

Green Tea. It has anti-inflammatory properties, and it's protective to the cell membrane. It may even help prevent or reduce the risk of skin cancer.

Water. No one disputes the role good hydration plays in keeping skin looking healthy and even young. When that hydration comes from pure, clean water - not liquids such as soda or even soup - experts say skin cells rejoice.

Hard water, the kind high in minerals, is especially good.

In addition to keeping cells hydrated, water helps cells move nutrients in and toxins out, which automatically leaves skin looking better. When we're properly hydrated, we also sweat more efficiently. Doing so helps keep skin clean and clear as well.

What diet is best for your skin?

Posted on www.smartskinicare.com

The diet optimal for overall health is close to optimal for skin health as well. The main reason is that the diet optimal for overall health slows down physiological mechanisms of aging in all tissues, including the skin. Some aspects of a healthy diet are more important for the skin than others.

Balance and variety

By balanced diet, nutritionists usually imply a diet that contains all necessary nutrients within a certain optimal range. In order to "beat nature" and derive significant anti-aging benefits, one may have to consume some nutrients in greater amounts than those found in a basic balanced diet.

Adults are advised to consume daily:

- 6 to 11 servings of breads and cereals
- 3 to 5 servings of vegetables
- 2 to 4 servings of fruits
- 2 to three servings of meat and meat alternatives (fish, poultry, eggs, dry beans, nuts)
- 2 servings of milk and milk products

To ensure that all essential nutrients are consumed in adequate amounts, it is desirable to consume a wide variety of foods.

Fruits and vegetables

Fruits and vegetables are particularly important for preventing premature skin aging because they contain a wide variety of antioxidants. These antioxidants help protect skin cells from damage by free radicals which are especially rampant in the skin due to environmental exposure. To ensure that your fruits and veggies have all their antioxidants intact, make sure they are fresh and uncooked (or only minimally cooked) since heat inactivates most antioxidants.

Fluids

A well-moisturized skin is somewhat less prone to developing wrinkles. Drinking plenty of fluids throughout the day ensures proper hydration of the body and helps reduce skin dryness. Experts usually recommend drinking 6-8 glasses of water a day.

Calories

The quickest way to get wrinkles is to put on a lot of weight and then lose it. The reason is obvious: when you gain weight, extra fat stretches the skin, then, when you lose weight and body fat goes away, the skin sags and crumples up. Let the desire to retain youthful skin be another incentive for you to watch your calories and avoid weight gain - even if you plan to lose weight later on. Also, keep in mind that gaining and losing weight in cycles may have negative effects not only on the skin but on your overall health as well.

Waist Circumference & Heart Disease

By Susan Burke, www.eDiets.com, March 2005

BMI & Health Risk

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) uses BMI, or Body Mass Index, to assess a person's risk for disease and death associated with obesity.

According to the World Health Organization, as the BMI rises, the risk for the following diseases increases:

- Premature death
- High blood pressure
- Some cancers
- Cardiovascular disease
- Osteoarthritis
- Diabetes

Your waist measurement is equally important as your BMI, for both men and women. You're more at risk if you're apple-shaped and carry excess weight around the middle than if you are pear-shaped and carry excess weight around your hips and thighs.

What's more, a new study in American Journal of Clinical Nutrition points to **waist circumference as a better indicator of risk for heart disease, diabetes and hypertension than BMI**. BMI is not accurate for everybody. For example, people who are muscular can weigh more and be healthier than someone with a "normal" BMI. According to the NIH, if your BMI is over 35 (obese), then you are at risk.

The NIH says waists over 40 inches for men and 35 inches for women are high risk. **To minimize the risk of heart disease, men should not go above a 35-inch waist and women should not go above 33 inches.**

Just losing 10 percent of your current weight can reduce your risk for disease such as hypertension and diabetes.

What is your BMI?

a. >30: If your BMI is greater than 30, you need a healthy lifestyle and weight loss program because your risk is increased.

b. >25 <30: apple-shaped: If your BMI is greater than 25 but less than 30, measure your waist: women with a waist circumference over 33 inches and men with a waist circumference over 37 inches: set your goal to lose 10 percent of your current body weight.

c. >25 <30: if your BMI is greater than 25 and less than 30, and you have no risk factors for heart disease or diabetes, and your waist measurement for men is less than 37 inches, and for women less than 33 inches, then maintain or increase your fitness with a personalized diet and exercise plan.

d. Get out that measuring tape and calculate your waist to hip ratio, to measure the proportion of fat stored on your waist and hips. Divide your waist measurement in inches by your hip measurement (measure around your butt) in inches. Women: 0.8 or less is optimal. Men: 0.95 or less is optimal.

High-Fish Diet Slows Heart Disease in Seniors

WebMD Medical News

A major study shows that **post-menopausal women with atherosclerosis of the coronary (heart) arteries who eat at least two servings of fish per week can reduce the progression of coronary artery atherosclerosis.**

The findings are published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.

A diet, which contains omega-3 fats from fish and vegetable oil, is recommended as a part of a heart-healthy diet.

Studies show that **a diet rich in fish can slow the progression of atherosclerosis**, yet these studies are lacking in women. According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute one in three American women dies of heart disease, making it the leading killer.

Atherosclerosis develops over time; in midlife heart disease risk for woman starts to rise dramatically. Some of this may be because a woman stops producing estrogen. This is also a time when women start to develop other risk factors for heart disease.

Atherosclerosis is a narrowing of the arteries due to a build-up of fatty plaque, such as cholesterol. The obstructed artery can lead to a heart attack or a stroke.

Researcher Arja T. Erkkilä and colleagues analyzed data involving 229 post-menopausal women who participated in the Estrogen Replacement and Artherosclerosis trial. At the start of the study, the women completed a food-frequency questionnaire and underwent a complete medical exam. As part of the exam, an X-ray of the blood vessels of the heart (angiography) was done. This X-ray shows narrowing of the vessels and can determine the degree of blockage. Fish intake and atherosclerosis progression of the coronary arteries was then documented for the following three years.

Regardless of fish intake, new fatty plaque lesions were noted in all participants. However, those who ate two or more servings of tuna or dark fish each week had less progression compared with women eating less fish per week.

The findings were the most significant among women with diabetes.

Reducing your risk depends greatly on the type of fish you eat. Fish in general is a good low-fat source of protein. But **fatty fish, like tuna, mackerel, and lake trout, is high in omega-3 fatty acids.**

It's thought that omega-3s may have anti-inflammatory properties, which plays a key role in the development of atherosclerosis. In the journal report, the researchers conclude that their findings "support the view that regular fish consumption is part of a healthy diet."

Obesity Increases Birth Defect Risk

CNN.com

Obese and overweight women face significantly increased risks of having babies with heart abnormalities and other birth defects, according to a government study.

Researchers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said their study also confirmed an already reported link between pre-pregnancy obesity and neural tube birth defects including spina bifida. The links between weight and other defects, including debilitating heart problems, have been less well established, the researchers said.

Compared with normal-weight women, **those who were obese or overweight before pregnancy faced double the risk of having babies with heart defects and double the risk of multiple birth defects**, the study said. "This is yet another adverse health outcome associated with overweight and obesity and people need to know that," said CDC epidemiologist Margaret Watkins. "Obesity prevention efforts are needed to increase the number of women who are at a healthy weight before they become pregnant."

Watkins said normally 3 to 5 percent of infants are born with major birth defects. Obese women faced an even higher risk - more than triple that of normal-sized women - of having babies with a defect known as omphalocele, in which intestines or other abdominal organs protrude through the navel.

Reasons for the links are uncertain but may include nutritional deficits in women with poor eating habits or diabetes, which is common in obesity and is known to increase risks for birth defects, according to the research team led by Watkins.

It also may be that obese women have increased but sometimes unmet needs for nutrients such as folic acid that can protect against some birth defects, the researchers said.

The authors examined data from births in a five-county area of metropolitan Atlanta between January 1993 and August 1997. Researchers studied 645 infants with birth defects and 330 without in a case-controlled study. Mothers were considered overweight if they had a body-mass index between 25 and 30, and obese if their BMI, a height-weight ratio, was 30 or higher.

Dr. Richard J. Deckelbaum, director of Columbia University's Institute of Human Nutrition, said being overweight and obese are reversible risk factors that can lead to better outcomes for babies and mothers. "It's an underappreciated link between overweight and obesity before pregnancy and outcomes for the infant and even for the mother during pregnancy," Deckelbaum said.

3 Ways to Improve Your Odds against Breast Cancer

By Heather Hatfield, WebMD Medical News, September 2005

Breast cancer is the disease most feared by many women.

Research has consistently shown **a link between obesity and breast cancer in postmenopausal women**, experts say. Consider a recent study of more than 62,000 women, published in *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention*.

"For women who gained 21-30 pounds throughout their adult lifetime, meaning since the age of 18, they were at a 40% increased risk for breast cancer, post-menopause," says Heather Spencer Feigelson, PhD, MPH, co-author of the study. "Women who gained 70 pounds in adult life were at twice the risk".

The Nutrition Connection

Aside from keeping calories at a reasonable level to avoid weight gain, what can you eat to help ward off breast cancer?

Fish high in omega-3 fatty acids include coldwater fish such as salmon, tuna, herring, mackerel, sturgeon, and anchovies. Walnuts and flaxseed are plant-based sources of omega-3.

Preliminary studies have also indicated that vitamin D and calcium ... particularly in low-fat dairy food could reduce tissue changes in the breast. And women who have changes in breast tissue are thought to be at a greater risk for breast cancer.

Vitamin D and calcium go beyond breast cancer - they also help prevent osteoporosis.

And then there are fruits and vegetables. Pull in as much color as possible and get those lycopenes [found in red produce like tomatoes] and beta-carotenes [found in orange produce like carrots].

As much as we love those morning cups of coffee, they might not be helpful when it comes to improving the odds. "Too much caffeine isn't linked directly with breast cancer, but it is linked with a change in breast tissue. With 4-5-plus caffeinated beverages a day, breast tissue could be altered, and that possibly could increase your risk for breast cancer."

Exercise, of Course

There is convincing evidence that increasing physical activity reduces risk of breast cancer, not only because of weight control but also by helping to reduce circulating hormones that are associated with breast cancer - primarily estrogen and insulin.

For breast cancer, the overall recommendation is 45 minutes of moderate or vigorous exercise five or more days a week."

A Healthy Lifestyle

"The message we are trying to get across is that, hey, the things we are saying for breast cancer will help with diabetes, heart disease, and other conditions, as well: Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet, maintain a healthy weight, and exercise regularly."