

Health Nuggets August 2014

1. Obesity Rates Plateau in 49 States: Only Arkansas has seen an increase in the % of adults who are obese, while the other 49 state hit “pause” in a 3-decade trend of ever-fatter populations. 41 states had adult obesity rates above 25% with 13 of those exceeding 30%. Arkansas went from 30.9% to 34.5%. In 1980, not a single state had more than 15% of adults classified as obese. In 2012, overall the report said more than 2/3s of Americans (68.7%) are either obese or overweight.
2. Benefits seen with 7+ daily fruits, vegetables: Five a day was once the recommendation, but more is better. To hold off death from any cause—including cancer and cardiovascular disease—people should eat 7 or more portions of fruits and vegetables/day. Investigators from Univ College London reviewed lifestyle information on more than 65,000 adults aged 35 years and older. Individuals who are 7+ servings of fruits and vegetables/day had a 42% reduced risk of death overall, compared with those who consumed just one portion. The 7+ servings reduced the risk of death from cancer by 25% and from cardiovascular disease by 31% in *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*. The strongest protective effect came from fresh vegetables, closely followed by salad and then fruit.
3. Diabetes progresses more rapidly in kids: Children with type 2 diabetes are more likely to develop cardiovascular and other complications more quickly and at a higher rate than are newly diagnosed adults, according to the most recent findings of the ongoing Treatment Options for Type 2 Diabetes in Adolescents and Youth (TODAY) study. The research focused on 699 children and adolescents, aged 10-17 years at baseline, with recent-onset type 2 diabetes. Thus there is a need for early and aggressive treatment. *Diabetes Care*.
4. Fiber intake influences stroke risk: High-fiber foods can prevent the occurrence of first-time stroke, and coronary artery calcification scores help clinicians identify those at risk for this event according to results from two different studies. In a meta-analysis of 8 cohort studies published between 1990 and 2012, total dietary fiber intake was associated with a reduced risk of hemorrhagic and ischemic stroke with every 7-g increase in total dietary fiber, reducing first-time stroke risk by 7%.
A separate *Stroke* study demonstrated that coronary artery calcification (CAC) is an independent predictor of such events. CAC is a noninvasive marker of coronary atherosclerotic plaque load; CAC was recently identified as a powerful predictor of MI in the general population. Among 4,180 persons aged 45-75 years with no history of stroke, 92 incident strokes occurred. Affected persons had significantly higher CAC values at baseline than did study participants who did not have a stroke (median 104.8 vs 11.2).

5. Angry outbursts can trigger heart attack and stroke: Explosions of anger appear to spell danger for the heart and brain, according to a review of nine research studies involving more than 4,500 incidents of heart attack, 800 incidents of stroke, 300 incidents of heart rhythm problems, and 472 incidents of acute coronary syndrome. Researchers found that two hours after an angry outburst, an individual's risk of suffering a heart attack increases fivefold, the risk of stroke increases fourfold, and risk for heart rhythm problems also rises significantly. Although a person's absolute risk from any one outburst was not great, the effect was nonetheless measurable, according to a report published online on March 3, 2014 in the *European Heart Journal*. The risk of an acute event rises with the frequency of episodes of anger. These findings are particularly important for individuals with "higher risk for those who have already had a heart attack, stroke, or diabetes.
6. Smoking rates drop in U.S.: Just 18.1% of Americans still smoke cigarettes, a drop from 20% in 2005. The decline in smoking is good news for brain health. Research has linked cigarette smoking with deficiencies in learning, memory-processing speed, cognitive flexibility and working memory, and increased likelihood of brain atrophy, structural and biochemical abnormalities, and inflammation in the brain. A large study in Finland found that heavy smoking in midlife is associated with double the risk for Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia in older age.
7. Stethoscopes can be dirtier than hands: According to a Swiss study in *Mayo Clinic Proc.* Stethoscopes may harbor several thousands of bacteria, including MRSA. The diaphragm of the stethoscope proved to be more contaminated than the provider's hand and the tube of the stethoscope was more contaminated than the back of the provider's hand. The stethoscope should be disinfected after every patient contact.
8. Use both arms for checking blood pressure: The difference in systolic (top #) blood pressure (BP) between a person's arms recently was linked with a significantly increased risk for cardiovascular events. The 3,390 men and women in Framingham Heart Study were aged 40 years and older (mean age 61.1 years) and had been free of heart disease at baseline. 317 subjects had increased interarm systolic BP difference, defined as 10 mmHg or more. They were followed 13.3 years and more than one-quarter of the original group experienced a first cardiovascular event. Thus measuring both arms may be the first warning of a possible future cardiac event.
9. Common nutrition misperceptions: We're on nutrition information overload from magazines, to talk shows to websites. Look for credible nutrition experts, such as registered dietitians, with "R.D." after their names. Here're some credible facts.

- A. A gluten-free diet is not a weight loss diet. It offers no benefits unless you have a confirmed diagnosis of celiac disease, gluten sensitivity, or wheat allergy.
 - B. Good sources of vitamin C—not just citrus, but potatoes are also high with 48% of DV (daily value) Other vegetables with 10% of DV are asparagus, avocado, broccoli, cabbage, kale, lettuce, peas, peppers radishes, squash and tomatoes.
 - C. Herbs and spices are good sources of antioxidants.
 - D. Low-fat does not always equal healthy. Many people think pretzels are a healthy snack choice, but they're mostly white flour and salt. Nuts, fruit or yogurt would be better.
 - E. Bread and cereal can be high in sodium. People know that canned soups, and cold cuts are high in sodium. But bread can contain up to 400mg of sodium, ready-to-eat cereal up to 230 mg, and salsa up to 310 mg per serving.
 - F. Sugar doesn't produce ADD in kids. There's no scientific evidence to support it. We need to watch our intake, because eating too much is linked to weight gain, obesity, and metabolic disorders. Cut down to no more than 6 tsp./day for women and 9 tsp./day for men.
 - G. Eggs don't raise cholesterol levels as much as saturated fat in animal and dairy foods.
 - H. Popcorn is a whole grain, but don't dive into movie popcorn with large amounts of saturated or trans fats.
 - I. Greek yogurt does not contain as much calcium as regular yogurt. It's higher in protein, but only has 20% of DV of calcium, compared with 50% DV of calcium in traditional yogurt.
 - J. Fruits and veggies can contribute to your daily fluid intake. Some high sources are apricots, berries, cantaloupe, oranges, peaches, pineapple, watermelon, broccoli, carrots, celery, cucumber, eggplant, and lettuce with at least 85% water.
10. Sitting for hours can shave years off life: The American Cancer Society researchers studied 123,216 people's health outcomes during a 14-year period. They found that women who sit for more than six hours/day were about 40% more likely to die during the course of the study than those who sat fewer than 3 hours/day. Men were about 20% more likely to die. The increase was in cardiovascular disease, obesity, type 2 diabetes, depression and colon cancer. Sitting for extended periods can't be undone by exercising. Some adapting work environments have installed standing and adjustable desks that allow for switching between standing and sitting, and treadmill desks. The problem continues at home with TV watching. The solution is to stand up approximately every hour and move around for 1-2 minutes. You can wiggle, dance about, march in place, etc. This lowers your blood sugar, cholesterol, triglycerides, and waist size.