

Health Nuggets May 2015

- 1) 5 “natural” pain-relief remedies: A. Willow bark has been used for hundreds of years to treat inflammation and pain. It contains salicin, a precursor to aspirin, and has been proven effective as a moderate pain reliever in patients with osteoarthritis (OA). B. Turmeric is helpful in relieving joint pain according to research in *Surgical Neurology International* (Dec 2010). Curcumin causes the yellow color and is an effective antioxidant and anti-inflammatory agent. C. Glucosamine & chondroitin in the *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases*, Jan 2015, has been shown as effective as Celebrex for moderate-to-severe OA. In addition, patients who took the supplement, for two years experienced a statistically significant reduction in joint space narrowing. D. According to a study published in *The Journal of Pain* (Sept 2010), a daily dose of ginger 2 gm helped reduce exercise-induced muscle pain by as much as 25%. It has also been found just as effective as a steroid in reducing inflammation. E. Green tea contains catechins, which interfere with the inflammation process and inhibit the loss of cartilage, according to a study in *Surgical Neurology International*. One to four cups daily seems to be safe.
- 2) Cholesterol-lowering statin medications could lower your chances of getting OA by as much as 60%. SAM-e is sold in the U.S. as a supplement, but it is considered a drug in Europe. Clinical studies show that it may work as well as NSAIDs in relieving OA pain and improving mobility. Capsaicin cream depletes the supply of substance P in your nerve endings, which no longer are able to transmit signals of arthritis pain.
- 3) 7 habits that protect your heart: Get active (at least 30 min of daily moderate physical activity, like brisk walking, five times per wk.); control cholesterol (lower than 200 mg/dL); eat better—a variety of deeply colored fruits and vegetables, unrefined fiber-rich whole-grain foods, if eating fish—twice/wk., select fat-free, 1% fat, and low-fat dairy products, cut back on saturated and trans fats, cholesterol and added sugars, use foods with little or no salt; manage blood pressure (lower than 120/80 mm Hg); lose weight (achieve a normal BMI); stop smoking; reduce blood sugar (fasting glucose below 100).
- 4) Exercise is the number-one contributor to longevity! The greatest benefits come just from getting started, such as a regular walking program. It doesn't take a lot to make a major difference, says Dr. Nelson, from Tufts'. The less active you are now, the more benefit you get from adding even a small amount of exercise to your life. A Swedish study found that people older than age 75 who were physically active live an average 5.4 years longer than their less-active peers. Even at age 85 or older, a physically active and social lifestyle was associated with an extra 4 years of longevity.
- 5) Sea salt is ineffective for sodium reduction: A recent American Heart Assoc survey found that 61% of consumers believe sea salt is a “low-sodium alternative” to table salt. They're both have the same amount of sodium.
- 6) Patients who have already had a heart attack can benefit from a healthy diet: those with the healthiest diets were 22% less likely to suffer further cardiovascular problems than those with the poorest diet scores.

- 7) Americans have gotten the message about avoiding added sugars, but 70% of the 1,000 consumers surveyed could not identify that “calories in general are what causes weight gain”.
- 8) Turmeric contains curcumin, which is thought to have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. Studies suggest that it may slow neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer’s disease (AD). Indeed, AD rates among Indian adults ages 70-79 are among the lowest in the world: about 3% of older adults in India are thought to have the disease, compared to 13% of older Americans. Mice given brain injections of beta amyloid in order to mimic progressive AD demonstrated less plaque buildup when fed a diet high in curcumin. A clinical trial is underway, but it’s too early to say whether results seen in mice will be seen in humans.
- 9) Challenge your brain with unfamiliar pastimes: New research suggests that only certain activities—learning a mentally challenging skill like photography, for instance—are likely to improve cognitive functioning. For the study, 221 adults, ages 60-90, were randomly assigned to learn a new skill (digital photography, quilting, or both) or engage in more familiar activities at home, such as listening to classical music and completing word puzzles. At the end of 3 months, the new skill group showed improvements in memory compared to the other group. It is also noted that making an effort to learn a new language—with regular practice and review—appears to be associated with increased brain plasticity and growth. Becoming fluent is not a prerequisite.
- 10) Can chocolate protect your heart and brain? The first large study is getting under way. Cocoa flavanols look promising. These are not the flavanols found in chocolate. It would require an enormous amount, thus you would be overdosing on calories. This is talking about cocoa powder—6 Tbs. =70 calories which has 750 mg of flavanols. To get 750 mg of flavanols a day, you’d have to eat nearly 1,000 calories’ worth of dark chocolate or 5,850 calories of milk chocolate every day. A more reasonable source is an unsweetened cocoa powder you can mix into your milk, yogurt, hot cereal, or other food. But you have use a cocoa that hasn’t been processed in a way that destroys flavanols. CocoaVia powder had the most but it’s a bit expensive. Bottom line: It’s too soon to know whether cocoa flavanols protect the heart or brain. And don’t use them as an excuse to eat more chocolate.
- 11) To lose weight, try cutting carbs or fat or both. Odds are, when you cut carbs, you’ll also cut fat (and calories).
- 12) Early consumption of peanuts significantly decreased the frequency of peanut allergy in children at high risk for this allergy and modulated their immune responses to peanuts, researchers reported in the Feb 26 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*. For decades allergists have been recommending that young infants avoid consuming allergenic foods such as peanuts to prevent food allergies. these findings suggest that this advice was incorrect and may have contributed to the rise in the peanut and other food allergies.
- 13) Mortality in men with locally advanced prostate cancer was reduced by half when they were treated with a combination of radiation and hormone therapy, compared with hormone therapy alone, according to a study published online ahead of print Jan 5 in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*. This was a study of 31,541 men with

prostate cancer aged 65 to 85 years. They found a reduction in mortality of 57% among men aged 65 to 75 years and 49% among men aged 76 to 85 years who received both radiation and hormone therapy.

- 14) A low-glycemic diet did not result in improvements in insulin sensitivity, lipid levels, or systolic blood pressure, according to research published in Dec 2014 issue of *JAMA*.
- 15) A new skin test may lead to diagnosis of Alzheimer's (AD), Parkinson's diseases (PD): A small, preliminary study must be confirmed with further research. It was found that those with AD and PD had seven times higher levels of abnormal *tau* proteins, a hallmark of both diseases. PD participants also had eight times higher levels of an abnormal protein, *alpha-synuclein*. The proteins could be used as biomarkers to signal the presence of disease.
- 16) New discoveries offer promise for reversing memory loss: Preliminary research has revealed a number of possible approaches to preserving or restoring memory. These include electric brain stimulation, daily consumption of cocoa powder mentioned in previous nugget above, the use of an insulin nasal spray, and the repurposing of existing drugs to combat memory loss.
- 17) A recent study suggests that feeling younger than your real age is associated with a longer life. Scientists found that participants who said they felt three or more years younger than their chronological age were less likely to die than were those who reported feeling their age or older. The study was published online in Dec 2014 in *JAMA Internal Medicine*.