

The HEALTH NUGGETS FEB 2019

1. Heart disease: 610,000 people die from heart disease in the US every year—that's 1 in every 4 deaths. *JAMA* reported in 2017 that almost 55,000 of those were linked to low omega-3 intake. There were significant reductions blood pressure, cholesterol, and triglycerides. They're also benefit the brain's health with lower risk of dementia. Diets low in omega-3s are associated with a 50% decrease in dopamine. At least 50% of the brain is fat and DHA is the most abundant omega-3 fatty acid in the brain. In addition the omega-3s may reduce symptoms associated with ADHD and high doses may help with brain injuries. In addition, during pregnancy, DHA supports the healthy development of the fetal brain, eye, and nervous system. They also may decrease macular degeneration. How much should you take--500 mg for healthy adults, 700-1000 mg pregnancy, 1000 mg to affect B/P, cholesterol, and triglycerides.
2. Being sedentary is a like a disease *JAMA* reported in October. Being unfit on a treadmill test predicted a worse prognosis than being hypertensive, diabetic, or a smoker.
3. What about probiotics? First, there have been no large, long-term, high quality studies to see if they work. Scientists have made tremendous advances in our understanding of the microbiome—the bacteria that live in our gut—and how important it is for our health. Some very creative marketing has allowed this area to explode. The market has completely outpaced the science. People think that you can take a probiotic and it will colonize your gut. But there isn't good evidence that most probiotics even take up residence in the gut if we have a healthy microbiome. Most of the research suggests that they are just passing through. In medicine we've frequently told patients that if you're on antibiotics, then take a probiotic. But one study showed the gut microbiome took *longer* to recover from antibiotics when people took a probiotic. The *Annals of Internal Medicine* sounded an alarm about the lack of scientific proof to support probiotics safety. You're taking live bacteria. The makers of probiotics don't have to prove to the FDA that their products are safe and effective. Serious side effects are unlikely in healthy people. But those who are immune-compromised, elderly, or frail should consult with their clinician before taking them.

4. Many dietary supplements contain dangerous ingredients. As noted the FDA supplements aren't tested the way pharmaceuticals are. *JAMA* published in October that from 2007 through 2018 the FDA identified 776 adulterated dietary supplements. To protect yourselves, buy only supplements that are verified by U.S. Pharmacopeia, Consumer Lab.com, or NSF International.
5. Drinking OJ and eating berries, dark orange and red vegetables, and leafy greens are associated with a lower risk of memory loss, suggests a study of almost 28,000 men. The study in *Neurology* Nov 2018 said they were followed for 20 years.
6. The US Preventive Services Task Force finds no benefit in using electrocardiography, or EKG, to screen low-risk, people with no symptoms for cardiovascular disease.
7. Do sugary drinks make people gain weight? The DRINK trial answered that in 2012—Yes! And not just soda, but sports drinks, lemonade, and juices. There's no difference between fruit juices and soda.
8. When you're trying to lose weight, what matters more: cutting fat, cutting protein, or cutting carbs? A study in *JAMA* followed about 600 people for a year and found that it didn't matter. Each of the diets cut about 750 calories/day. They all lost about 12 pounds. Nobody was supposed to eat added sugars or refined grains, and everyone was supposed to eat vegetables.