

"DC" On-Line

Brian Sutton, DC

Fruit and Veggies Key

The state of Washington has been actively promoting the consumption of fruits and vegetables as part of its commitment to the National Cancer Institute's five-a-day program. Health department officials say that recent research studies show that consumption of five servings of fruits and vegetables each day will decrease lung and colon cancer 30 to 40 percent and stomach cancer by 60 percent compared to two or less servings. Surveys in Washington show that only about one in five citizens meets the daily five serving minimum.¹

1. OTC News, September 5, 1996.

Americans Eating Less Fat

A report in the New England Journal of Medicine says that U.S. citizens are on average eating "healthier" meals. About 60,000 volunteers were judged on their diet by standards set by the National Academy of Sciences. While fruit, vegetable, and grain consumption have not increased dramatically, less fat is being consumed. In contrast to a 1965 study, upper income groups are now eating as well as groups in the lower income bracket, who are not as able to afford the high-fat and meat-rich foods thought to contribute to heart disease and cancer.²

2. NEJM, September 5, 1996.

Polyunsaturated Fats -- Bad to the Bone

A Purdue University researcher says that too many polyunsaturated fats may inhibit bone growth. His research indicates that prostaglandin E2, a product of metabolism of the fat, will lower levels of a bone growth factor. Polyunsaturated fats can also be broken down into toxic substances by free radicals in the body. He has shown that vitamin E in conjunction with some saturated fats seem to mitigate the negative effects. Balance, he says, is important in the diet.³

3. Journal of Bone and Mineral Research, September, 1996, Bruce A. Watkins.

Vitamin D for Osteoarthritis

X-ray studies of osteoarthritis progression in 516 patients' knee joints suggest that vitamin D has a role in preventing joint degeneration. Subjects who had less of the vitamin in their body, whether from lowered nutritional intake or less time in the sun, were four times more likely to exhibit

worsening of their condition. The researchers think that the outcome is best if action is taken early, before major degeneration has begun.⁴

4. Annals of Internal Medicine, September 2, 1996.

Powdered Milk Testing Suspended

A test of one of Nestle's powdered milk products in an orphanage in Thailand was suspended by the government there after a number of children became ill shortly after taking part in the trial. The milk product was fortified with bifidobacteria in an attempt to reduce diarrhea in non-breastfed children. Officials say that from human testing of such products will now require prior government approval.⁵

5. OTC News, August 26, 1996.

Nigerian Nursing

Nigeria promoted breastfeeding during the first week in August. Only 2.1 percent of mothers there do so exclusively, while the country spends \$500 million on illegally imported artificial baby milk. The ministry of health, the WHO, and UNICEF joined together to organize rallies and information to disseminate the benefits of breastfeeding. About 248 hospitals have been designated as "baby friendly" for their support, or for at least not interfering with the practice.⁶

6. OTC news, August 21, 1996.

Toner Dust Causing Pulmonary Disease

A paper published in The Lancet describes a 39-year-old nonsmoking man with debilitating lung disease traced to copy machine toner. Particles of the substance containing copper and silicon were found embedded in the lung tissue, causing inflammation and leading to exertional dyspnea and a dry cough. A similar case was published in the same journal two years ago. The researchers expect more cases as people use copiers more frequently and more long-term effects arise.

Prescribing Doctors Fail Drug Survey

The results of a survey⁷ of medical practitioners who regularly treat patients for angina were announced at a September meeting of the American Federation for Aging Research and Key Pharmaceuticals. Researchers wanted to know if physicians paid attention to labeling information changes of drugs they prescribe. In this case, they specifically queried doctors about isosorbide dinitrate drugs, a common treatment for angina. A year ago, the label and prescription information began noting that the drug was only effective for two hours. Three out of four doctors did not know about the new information, and most were under the impression that the medicine was good for 12 hours. Nearly all the doctors surveyed prescribe the drug regularly.⁸

7. Conducted by Yankelovich Partners, Inc.

8. United Press, September 5, 1996.

Ephedrine Condemned by FDA Panel

An FDA advisory panel that reviewed reports of more than 600 health problems related to ephedrine, a derivative of the herb Ma huang (also called Chinese ephedra and *Ephedra sinica*) have concluded that the compound is present in too large a concentration in many supplements commonly sold in health food stores and herb shops. Symptoms that have been blamed on the ingredient include palpitations, chest pain, insomnia, tremors, anxiety, seizures, psychoses, rashes, dizziness, and numbness. Seventeen deaths are blamed on ephedrine.⁹

9. United Press, August 28, 1996.

Calcium Channel Blockers Linked to Cancer

Research published in *The Lancet*¹⁰ suggests that calcium channel blockers, a class of drugs that revealing an ever-increasing number of detrimental side effects, increase the risk of a number of cancers. In a study of over 5,000 elderly people, the drugs increased the incidence of cancers by 70 percent. The most frequent types were those of the uterus and cardiovascular system. Calcium channel blockers are most often used to treat hypertension. Other previous side effects reported were a dramatic increase in heart attack rates and life-threatening postoperative bleeding. A commentary in the same journal suggests that perhaps now would be a good time to organize randomized trials to test these drugs a little further.

10. *The Lancet*, August 24, 1996.

Growth Hormone Over-Prescribed

Forty-two percent of growth hormone prescriptions are given to children who already have normal levels of the hormone, according to researchers at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland.

The study, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*,¹¹ blames a large number of these \$15,000 to \$30,000 per year treatments on pressures from parents worried about bullies and discrimination later in life. Also, the study revealed that the vast majority of physicians think that short stature is an emotional handicap to a child. There are no long-term studies of the effects of growth hormone injections in normal children.

11. *JAMA*, August 21, 1996.

Phobia Grows with Hormone

Researchers at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill¹² say that children treated with growth hormone injections are much more likely to suffer social phobias as adults, even if they

achieve a normal adult height. These conditions are manifest as intense discomfort in social settings, feelings of dissatisfaction and unhappiness in life, and avoidance of romantic relationships.¹³

12. Psychiatrist Brian Stabler and colleagues.

13. United Press, April 24, 1996.

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