

"DC" On-Line

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Waiter: "Would You Like that with Fat or Fake Fat?"

The fat substitute called "olestra" was developed by Proctor & Gamble to provide the taste of normal fats without actually being absorbed into the body. Olestra molecules are too large and dense for the body to digest. The Center for Science in the Public Interest says the ingredient is not safe. Apparently the food additive, which is not yet in general use, acted as a laxative and caused a high rate of diarrhea in taste testers. Also it was discovered that vitamins A, D, K, especially beta carotene, have a high attraction to the compound and latch on to be carried out of the digestive tract instead of being absorbed. The manufacturer proposes fortifying olestra with those nutrients to neutralize this effect.¹

Breast Cancer Diet Tested

Physicians at the University of California in Los Angeles are about to embark on a study testing the effects of a low fat, high fish and soy diet on breast cancer. The researchers will be analyzing cancers that have not responded to ordinary treatments such as marrow transplants, hormone injections, and chemotherapy. They will be looking at biochemical changes in the bloodstream as well as changes in the cancerous tissues.²

Caveman Diet

At an international nutrition conference in London this past October, an anthropologist³ explained how our stone age ancestors took in up to five times as many vitamins and minerals as we draw from today's diet. Cavemen consumed organic vegetables and wild game. They never ate cereal grains and had no milk except mother's milk as a baby.⁴ He went on to say that our metabolism, genetically tuned from eons of evolution, is still geared for that diet even today.

Another speaker related how a study of 36,000 middle-aged men found that mortality from all causes dropped 30 percent in subjects who drank 1 to 5 glasses of wine per day. Drinking more than five glasses a day, however, caused a decline in longevity. The results are thought to be due to a neutralizing effect of wine on diets high in rich foods.

Chromium Picolinate Scare

A recent study by Stearns et al.,⁵ suggested that chromium picolinate was potentially toxic at levels as low as 10 times the recommended dosage. The Council for Responsible Nutrition⁶ and a representative of the USDA's Human Nutrition Research Center both say that the conclusions of the study are both ridiculous and misleading. Apparently, the experiments were done on isolated cells (not in a living body), exposing them to an extremely high concentration of the compound. According to the CRN, to achieve that concentration a body would have to completely absorb 6,000 pills per day of a typical supplement, and the body's normal responses to such an overload would have to be nullified in some way. The USDA, in studies on live rats, could not find evidence of toxicity at 10,000 times the usually recommended levels.⁷

Osteopathic Manipulation Touted

United Press⁸ reports dramatic results of osteopathic manipulative therapy in postsurgical hip and knee patients. The OMT group needed fewer pain killers and were more mobile sooner after the surgery. Reporting on the centennial meeting of the American Osteopathic Association, the article says that speakers "demonstrated how science, in some cases, supports the `religion' that osteopathic manipulation is useful to patients."

Exercise: The Miracle Cure

It seems the more options you give people, the more they demand. Exercise, for example, is well known for its dramatic and wide-reaching physiological effects. Yet when you counsel a patient to exercise, they generally say something like, "Yeah, doc, I know all about exercise and diet, but what can I really do to help?" Often it appears that things with which you are very familiar are automatically either ignored or discounted (married people understand this concept well). Among the many benefits of exercise that have been scientifically documented:

- exercising three days a week raises basal metabolic rate so that even on the days you don't exercise, you are burning 300 more calories each day;
- Finnish study found exercise relieves knee pain more than anti-inflammatory drugs or rest;⁹
- provides long-term relief of spinal stenosis symptoms;¹⁰
- lowers cholesterol levels;
- improves balance and coordination, even in the elderly;

- strengthens bones;
 - fights insomnia;
 - reduces the effects of mental stress;
 - relieves depression;
 - helps control type II diabetes;
 - dissolves or prevents blot clots,¹¹ possibly explaining exercise's protective effect against heart attacks;
 - decreases breast cancer risk by up to 60 percent;¹²
 - cuts the risk of gastrointestinal bleeding in the elderly in half;¹³
 - postpones many effects of aging;
 - increases resistance to infections.¹⁴
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Sternum Fractures Higher with Seatbelts

According to a new study,¹⁵ fractures of the sternum are five times more likely to occur in persons wearing a seat belt. Of course, these injuries are normally far less serious than those that would have resulted if no seat belt had been worn. Researchers indicate that their work should alert doctors to the possibility of fracture in patients with sternal pain who wore seat belts. If a fracture occurs, there is also a chance of heart contusions or major blood vessel trauma.

Oats Okay for Celiac Disease

A study published in the New England Journal of Medicine¹⁶ concludes that for people with gluten enteropathy, oats have no detrimental effect. Wheat and rye products are known to result in stunted growth and abdominal distention in such individuals. The study was done at the Kuopio University Hospital in Finland.

Contraceptives Double Thrombosis Risk

The World Health Organization and Britain's Health Department warn that two compounds used in low estrogen oral contraceptives have been found to increase the risk of blood clots by a factor of two. Women taking the compounds desogestrel or gestoden are urged to consult their doctor to have their prescription changed. The study has not yet been published.¹⁷

Breastfeeding Benefits Linger through Teens

Doctors following the health status of children for their first 17 years find that those fed only breast milk for the first six months are much healthier in many ways even as teenagers. Food allergies, eczema, and asthma were much less likely in those individuals. The length of time the baby was breast fed seems to be a factor; the eczema-protection effects seemed to require at least six months. Researchers are still investigating and suspect that breast milk aids in the maturation of the digestive tract and immune system.¹⁸

References

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4. Reuter, October 26, 1995.
5. The study was done by researchers at Dartmouth College and George Washington University.
6. The Council for Responsible Nutrition represents nutritional products companies; they can be reached at (202) 872-1488.
7. PR Newswire, October 27, 1995.
8. UP, October 16, 1995, by Ed Susman.

9. Reported by Dr. Michael Freedman, columnist for the Associated Press, October 11, 1995.
10. Ibid.
11. American Physiological Society's Journal of Applied Physiology, December, 1994.
12. Study presented by an exercise researcher at the University of Southern California, at an educational forum sponsored by the American Cancer Society on November 21, 1994.
13. JAMA, August 24, 1994.
14. Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise, March 1994.
15. Presented to the Osteopathic convention in Orlando, Florida in October, 1995.
16. NEJM, October 19, 1995.
17. Reuter, October 19, 1995.
18. The Lancet, October 21, 1995.

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DECEMBER 1995