

Health Newsletter April /May 2010

=====
Published by: The ARCHANGEL HEALTH NEWS =====

HEALTH BYTES: Facts and Tips for Better Living
=====

ENERGY DRINK WARNINGS -- Energy drinks can be a health risk when mixed with alcohol, used before exercise, or served up to children, doctors warn. Highly caffeinated drinks, such as Red Bull, Go-Fast!, and Monster, carry no warnings in the United States, but some of the drinks, advertised to increase energy and concentration, have been banned or restricted in Europe, says Dr. Maher Karam-Hage, addiction specialist at the University of Michigan Health System. He says unlike sports drinks, the energy drinks typically contain sugar, caffeine (often 80 milligrams per can, about the same as in a cup of coffee) and taurine, a sulfur-containing amino acid. Some countries have raised concerns about the amount of caffeine used and the uncertain health effects of taurine. Karam-Hage warns against mixing energy drinks with alcohol, noting intoxicated people who try to sober up by drinking coffee are still drunk. The caffeine-laden drinks can cause dehydration or collapse if drunk before intense exercise, especially if more than one is consumed, and can cause children to be hyperactive, fidgety or even enraged, he says.

APPLE A DAY TO KEEP CANCER AWAY? -- An apple a day may help keep breast cancer away, say Cornell University food scientists. "We found that tumor incidence was reduced by 17 percent, 39 percent and 44 percent in rats fed the human equivalent of one, three, or six apples a day, respectively, over 24 weeks," says lead study author Rui Hai Liu. These rats also had the number of tumors reduced by 25 percent, 25 percent and 61 percent, respectively, the researchers reported in a past issue of the "Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry."

YOUR FITNESS PROGRAM -- To receive optimal benefits from your fitness program, include the following: 1. Cardio workout - for maximum fat loss, include interval work. 2. Strength training - balance your workout to include all major muscle groups. 3. Flexibility - include extended stretching exercises a couple of days a week. 4. Assessment - determine the method of evaluating your progress. Will it be clothing sizes, body fat percentage, running time or distance, or the amount of weight you are able to lift? 5. Reevaluate - if your improvements start to decrease, it is time to redesign your progress.

DEEPER VEGGIE COLOR, HIGHER ANTI-CANCER BENEFITS -- Colored fruits and vegetables can help protect against cancer, and the brighter the color, the greater the protection, researchers say. Dr. Mack Ruffin, professor of family medicine at the University of Michigan Health System, says all-white, starchy foods, such as mashed potatoes, have fewer cancer-fighting vitamins and minerals and more calories than produce in the yellow, green, red and orange families, such as spinach, broccoli, carrots, blueberries, or strawberries, which contain thousands of protective micronutrients. Vitamin supplements can never replace fresh produce, he says. "When your diet has thousands of chemicals that make a difference, there is no way to take a pill or handful of pills and get the same protective effect as a diet that is high in fruits and vegetables and lower in calories," Ruffin says.

DO NOT HOLD YOUR BREATH -- If you have added stomach crunches to your exercise routine, do not hold your breath. Holding your breath when you perform stomach crunches may cause your blood pressure to spike higher than it normally would during resistance training. In a study, people who voluntarily held their breath during abdominal exercises had higher peak blood pressure elevations compared to when they breathed during the exercises.

STRESS WEAKENS THE HEART MUSCLE -- Learning of an unexpected death or other shocking news can weaken the heart muscle, mimicking a heart attack, researchers say. The scientists at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, found that sudden emotional stress can result in severe but reversible heart muscle weakness, a condition formally known as stress cardiomyopathy and informally called "broken heart syndrome." These patients often are misdiagnosed with a massive heart attack when they in fact are suffering from a prolonged surge in adrenalin (epinephrine) and other stress hormones that temporarily "stun" the heart, says lead study author Dr. Ilan Wittstein. His study should help doctors tell stress cardiomyopathy from heart attacks and reassure patients they have not had permanent heart damage, Wittstein says. The study was published in a past online issue of "The New England Journal of Medicine."

HEART DISEASE AND WOMEN -- Long thought of as a man's disease, cardiovascular disease also affects women, killing more of them each year than the next seven causes of death combined. The American Heart Association (AHA) wants to raise awareness that cardiovascular disease is the #1 killer of women. The AHA urges women to take charge of their heart health. Some 90 percent of women say they have power over their health, yet only 27 percent list their health as a top priority, an AHA survey reveals. Dr. Brigitta Brott, cardiologist at the University of Alabama, Birmingham, says to reduce their risk, women should learn the warning signs of the disease.

WHITE BREAD UNHEALTHY -- Avoiding white bread may mean avoiding diabetes as well. In a past study, people who consumed more white bread than whole-grain breads tended to have the highest risk of adult-onset diabetes. Other foods made from highly refined flours or sugars, such as cookies, crackers, and cakes, also were associated with an increased risk of the condition. Fill your plate with fruits, vegetables, whole-grain breads, brown rice, and whole-wheat pasta, which help keep blood sugar levels steady. These foods have a low glycemic index, which means that they are broken down slowly by the body, helping keep blood sugar levels stable. On the other hand, foods made from white flour and refined sugars are high-glycemic-index foods; they tend to cause spikes in blood sugar levels. In addition to eating a balanced diet that focuses on low-glycemic-index foods, other ways to reduce your risk of diabetes are to exercise regularly and maintain a healthy weight.

DIABETICS CAN BE HELPED BY CLA SUPPLEMENT -- Supplementing the diet with a certain fatty acid could lead to better weight control and disease management in diabetics, a past study suggests. Diabetics who added an essential fatty acid called conjugated linoleic acid, or CLA, to their diets had lower body mass as well as lower blood sugar levels by the end of the eight-week study, conducted by Ohio State University researchers. They also found higher levels of this fatty acid in the bloodstream means lower levels of leptin, a hormone thought to regulate fat levels. The researchers said they think high leptin levels play a role in obesity, one of the biggest risk factors for adult-onset diabetes. Although CLA supplements are available to consumers, the researchers urged diabetics to get their CLA mainly from food sources - primarily beef, lamb, and dairy products.

HELPING OVERWEIGHT CHILDREN TRIM DOWN -- Obesity in children is a major public health problem that really forebodes serious issues for the future. And now the prevalence of obesity has doubled in children in the last 15 to 20 years; about 15% of children today are overweight. The problem is twofold - poor eating habits and lack of exercise. Kids are more sedentary than they have been in a long time. They come home and play video games or get on the computer as opposed to going outside and playing baseball or soccer. Fast food is also a major contributing factor. There are serious problems associated with childhood obesity. One is the problem of self-esteem and interacting with their peers and other children. That can have serious psychological

effects that could affect them long term. Overweight kids also face serious medical problems. Diseases that we normally see in adults because of obesity are now being seen with increasing frequency in children, particularly type-2 diabetes, gall bladder disease, and liver disease. Have the pediatrician who is involved in the child's care be a guide and look at the child's body weight in relationship to height or body mass index according to the growth charts that are distributed by the Center for Disease Control. And if the child hits a certain target in terms of the growth chart, treatment usually revolves around diet, exercise, and patterns of behavior in the family. Treating children who are obese requires a family commitment and requires parents to be directly involved. It is not effective by just treating the child alone. Parents can offer choices of a variety of foods, as far as fruits and vegetables and meats, lower-fat choices. Watch the amounts of what they eat and lead by example. A parent that sits down and eats a healthy meal himself will be a big encouragement. Parents also should decrease television viewing and sedentary activities at home. So, watching TV, playing video games, and being on the computer should be limited. Parents should also establish increased physical activity behaviors with them and their children. Go out for walks on a regular basis after dinner, embark on family activities that increase physical action.

=====

=====