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Friday 1:00 pm- 5:00 pm & Saturday 8:00 am-11:00am
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Echinacea Is Good Again

A study published in 2005 concluded that the herb echinacea offered no benefit in the prevention or treatment of the common cold. However, a new study suggests that study was flawed and offers evidence that echinacea does indeed offer a benefit. The problem with the earlier study was that it only tested one specific virus, rhinovirus 39, on 339 volunteers. However, there are more than 200 different viruses involved in colds. The new study is a meta-analysis of other studies and suggests that a large number of the non-rhinovirus 39 varieties are indeed affected by the herb. This work finds a 58 percent lowered risk of cold infection for echinacea overall and a reduction of 86 percent when taken in combination with vitamin C. When a cold did occur, the duration was reduced by 1.4 days.

Vitamin D and Seniors' Physical Performance

A study from VU University Medical Center in Amsterdam suggests that a significant amount of the declining physical performance often seen in senior citizens can be attributed to a deficiency of vitamin D. Physical performance in this case refers to things as simple as the time it takes to stand up from a seated position. The research involved nearly 1,000 people aged 65 and up. Almost half of them were determined to be deficient in vitamin D at the start of the study.

Mouth-Watering Commercials

A study from the University of Liverpool finds that television advertisements encourage children to eat more, especially those who least need to: overweight kids. This study exposed 60 children ages 9-11 to typical food commercials interspersed with cartoons. The amount of food consumed was tracked all the while. The researchers found that the commercials stimulated normal-weight children to consume 84 percent more food. Obese children however, increased their intake by 134 percent — more than double. The obese kids also were consistently choosing the highest fat content food available, generally chocolate. The fact that the foods being advertised generally were not available did not seem to dull their increased appetite. They just ate whatever they could access.

RSI Prevention

Canadian researchers report they have found a link between repetitive stress injuries (RSIs) at work and a lack of physical activity in one's personal life. Their work is an analysis of more than 58,000 full-time workers from the 2003 Canadian Community Health Survey. According to this study, almost 6 percent of Canadians suffer from some kind of upper-body repetitive stress injury. The research found that more active people were significantly less likely to suffer an RSI even if they participated in more strenuous activities such as tennis and baseball.

DHA for Alzheimer's Prevention

A report from the University of California at Irvine suggests that docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), a type of omega-3 fatty acid, can interfere with some of the degenerative processes that characterize dementias such as Alzheimer's disease. The study was performed on mice that were specifically bred to be susceptible to Alzheimer's-like degenerations, but the author of the study sees no reason why it would not translate to humans. A new study is now underway to see if DHA might slow the progression of Alzheimer's disease in humans.

Nicotine Harms the Fetal Heart

Researchers from the Center for Perinatal Biology at Loma Linda University in California report that they have found a sort of "programming of vascular disease" effect of nicotine in unborn offspring. The study exposed pregnant laboratory rats to nicotine and then evaluated their progeny at adulthood. They discovered restricted coronary artery flow in the nicotine-exposed rats, as well as an increased susceptibility to injury. The effect was more pronounced in females for some unknown reason.

Depressing Medication

The FDA is asking drug makers to expand warning messages they include on popular antidepressant drugs to notify young adults they may experience suicidal thoughts when they start "popping" pills. Currently, the warnings are given for people younger than 18 years, but on advice from FDA experts, the age is being raised to 24. Drug manufacturers and other proponents still believe that on average, more people will commit suicide if they don't take the drugs than will, due to the short-term increases seen when patients first begin the antidepressant regimen. However, the FDA would like patients and concerned parties to be extra cautious during that time period. It is estimated that about five out of every 1,000

patients will experience suicidal thoughts or behaviors (such as attempting suicide) when they start taking these drugs.

Depressed Bones

Two new studies report that a class of antidepressant drugs, selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors (SSRIs), appear to lead to bone fragility in the elderly. One of the studies found that SSRI users lost bone mineral content about 75 percent faster than normal. Another found a nearly 6 percent overall decrease in lower spine density in men at an average age of 74. An earlier study found SSRIs doubled the risk of fracture. This class of drug includes Prozac and the generic fluoxetine. SSRIs inhibit a protein that transports serotonin. Unfortunately, that same protein also is found in bone.

Barbeque and Breast Cancer

Out of the University of South Carolina comes a study that concludes that barbequed foods may raise the tendency of a woman toward developing breast cancer. Overall, this study found that postmenopausal women who had consumed more than one meal of smoked, grilled or barbequed meats (excluding poultry and fish, which showed no such correlation) each week throughout their life were 47 percent more likely to develop breast cancer. Those that skimped on fruits and vegetables raised their risk by 74 percent. The study did not go so far as to actually examine if the cooking process itself was responsible. Other influencing factors could include dietary fat content, lifestyles or other unrelated but concurrent health issues.

Eat for Strong Bones

A new study is suggesting that calcium supplements are not quite as good as real foods in building strong bones. Researchers from Washington University School of Medicine asked 183 postmenopausal women to document their diets in detail for seven days. The idea was to take a snapshot of their dietary intake and compare that to their bone mineral density. The women were divided into three groups: those that took in most of their calcium from supplements (averaging about 1,030 mg per day), those getting most of their calcium from foods (about 830 mg per day), and those getting a lot of calcium in both ways (about 1,620 mg per day). The last group showed the highest bone density as might be expected, but it turns out that the calcium from foods group had better bone mass than the calcium from supplements group, even though they were consuming less total calcium. The women in the supplement only group also showed lower estrogen levels (by urinalysis).