



SUNY SULLIVAN

WELLNESS PROGRAM

MINDFULNESS. WELLBEING. HEALTH

WINTER 2022

Wellness is the state of being in good health, especially as an actively pursued goal. Let's pursue this goal together!

Purpose



The purpose of the SUNY Sullivan Wellness Program is to enhance the physical, emotional, and intellectual health of our employees and students by developing awareness through education and voluntary onsite health related programming, as well as by connecting employees/students to external resources through our benefits programs out of Human Resources and Student Activities.

Our goal is to create a culture of health that increases individual self-efficacy around personal wellness. This will ultimately improve employee/student morale, well-being and happiness, while concurrently lowering overall health care costs and improving productivity for our entire college community.



Goals & Objectives



The SUNY Sullivan Wellness Program has several goals,

1. To increase Health Awareness and Education through:

- o Disease Management Resources
- o Seminars and Classes
- o Blood pressure screenings
- o Biometric screenings

2. To increase nutritional knowledge through cooking and nutrition classes and by providing information on healthy eating options in the school cafeteria as well as nearby restaurants and through the promotion of our community gardens.

3. To provide wellness and fitness classes that encourage employees and students to be active

4. To promote a Tobacco-free Campus



WELLNESS WHEEL

Wellness isn't just about eating healthy and exercising. There are many aspects of our lives that affect our overall health and wellness. Each month the SUNY Sullivan Wellness Program will highlight a category of the wellness wheel below that will include activities and information relative to the topic. This newsletter will highlight **Social and Physical Wellness**



Walking: The Mental Health and Physical Benefits

By Kenneth Luck

Sometimes, the simplest solutions are the best solutions.

After a stressful day at work, or if you're in the middle of trying to solve a problem, or if you want to jump start your creativity, walking – apparently – helps. Walking lowers your blood pressure, improves memory, and strengthens your immune system.

According to author Erling Kagge, who wrote “Walking: One Step at a Time,” “While Walking,” he writes, “I become the center of my own life, while completely forgetting myself afterwards.”

To put it simply, Kagge is what I would call a walking enthusiast.

In his book, he explores walking from a philosophical perspective, calling it “one of the most radical things we can do.” He says this because we live in such a fast-paced world, always having our eyes glued to our phones. Walking, by contrast, slows everything down . . . on purpose.

“Walking [i]s a combination of movement, humility, balance, curiosity, smell, sound, light and – if you walk far enough – longing,” Kagge writes. “A feeling that reaches for something, without finding it.”



Pictured are students enjoying snowshoeing on the Woodland Trail

Going on a simple walk, as noted above, gets a person moving, burning calories, and thinking. In some ways, our world is paradoxical. On the one hand, we engineer for lesser wait times, more speed, more hurry. On the other hand, many people remain more and more stagnant, watching TV, playing video games, scrolling endlessly through a social media news feed.

In a way, walking counters all of this.

Kagge also notes the psychological benefits of walking and also the excitement of it.

“There is a thrill to not knowing what you may encounter as you walk. Your thoughts become more restricted. No one who wants to get a hold of you knows where to find you. You are not living vicariously through other people. For one fleeting moment you can forget the rest of the world,” Kagge writes, concluding: “Past and future have no role as you walk.”

For me, this rings true. When I go out on a walk, after a short amount of time, I tend to forget my problems and focus on what is right in front of me. I will often tell myself if I feel like I'm in a slump: Move your body, and your mind will quickly follow.

It's simple but true.

Taking even a wider view, according to Kagge, walking is more than an activity to help us feel better. Walking is what makes us human. Speaking about our species, *Homo Sapiens*, the author writes that “the ability to walk, to put one foot in front of the other, invented us” (his emphasis). The scientific term for being able to walk on two limbs is called “bipedalism,” and it's relatively rare in nature except for a few other species.

Finally, the next time you feel a little anxious, or feel sad, try taking a walk. You may find yourself on an adventure that you didn't plan for.

References:

Kagge, E. (2019). *Walking: One Step at a Time*. Pantheon Books, New York, NY.



February is Heart Health Month

Did you know that heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women in the United States? The good news is, it is also one of the most preventable!

What is Heart Disease?

Heart disease describes a range of conditions that affect your heart. The cause depends on your specific type of heart disease. Heart Diseases include,

- Blood vessel disease, such as Coronary Artery Disease
- Heart rhythm problems (arrhythmias)
- Heart defects you're born with (congenital heart defects)
- Heart valve disease
- Disease of the heart muscle
- Heart Infection

[Click here](#) to learn more about each individual heart disease listed.

How to Prevent Heart Disease?

- Don't Smoke.
- Control other health conditions, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes.
- Exercise at least 30 minutes a day on most days of the week.
- Eat a diet that is low in salt and saturated fat.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Reduce and manage Stress.
- Practice good hygiene.



Improve Heart Health Through Physical Fitness

Here are two kinds of exercise that can improve heart health:

Aerobic Exercise:

Aerobic exercise improves circulation! This will help you to lower your blood pressure and heart rate and helps your cardiac output. It can also reduce your risk of Type 2 Diabetes!

Examples of aerobic exercise are brisk walking, running, swimming, cycling and dancing and should be done at least 30 minutes, 5 days per week!

Resistance Training:

Resistance training can help reduce fat and create leaner muscle mass. Research shows that a combination of aerobic exercise and resistance work may help raise HDL (good) cholesterol and lower LDL (bad) cholesterol.

Examples of resistance training are working out with free weights such as dumbbells, resistance bands or through body- resistance exercises such as push-ups, squats and chin-ups.

Follow the [link](#) to learn more and to read the full article titled "3 Kinds of Exercise That Boost Heart Health."

Use our beautiful campus to help improve your heart health! We have nature trails, outdoor courts, an in-door track in the Field House as well as a Cardio Room and Weight Room and plenty of hallways and stairs to walk!

Join the "Nutrition & Wellness in the Catskills" Free Community Learning Class to learn more about how nutrition can improve your heart health & overall health!



JOIN THE WELLNESS COMMITTEE AND GARDEN CLUB
FOR

SNOWSHOEING ON-CAMPUS!

DATES WILL DEPEND ON SNOW CONDITIONS, CHECK
YOUR EMAIL FOR OPPORTUNITIES!



MEET IN THE HALLWAY BY B107A
SNOWSHOES WILL BE PROVIDED, WEAR WINTER OR HIKING BOOTS!

Exercise in the Paul Gerry Field House!

The Cardio Room, Fitness Room & Indoor Track are available to current
Students, Faculty and Staff!

Sunday: 2:00pm-10:00pm

Monday: 8:00am-8:00pm

Tuesday: 8:00am-8:00pm

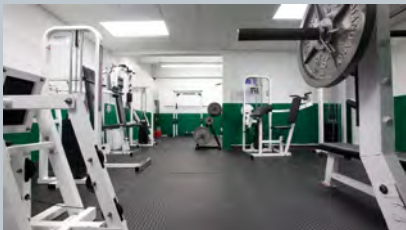
Wednesday: 8:00am-8:00pm

Thursday: 8:00am-8:00pm

Friday: 8:00am- 5:00pm

Saturday: 2:00pm- 10:00pm

*Days and Hours are subject to change



Phone apps you can use to track your physical wellness goals!

- Runkeeper
 - Track exercise, set measurable goals and see progress along the way! Add friends to help keep you motivated to accomplish your goals!
- StepsApp
 - A pedometer app that tracks your steps and monitors your daily physical activity! This app shows you history and trends, helps you reach your goals and works with Apple Health!
- LoseIt!
 - A calorie counting app that helps you reach your weight loss goal. Download the app, set your goals, and track your foods and exercise to lose weight.
- Moves
 - Activity tracker that includes a pedometer to track your steps and allows you to plot routes for walking, running and biking.
- Fooducate
 - A nutrition based app that allows users to track food intake including calories and nutrients. There is also a scan feature to find healthy food at the grocery store.
- Plant Nanny
 - A fun way to remind you to drink water. Choose a plant and "water" it each time you drink.
- Flo
 - provides menstruation tracking, health insight and Q&A for difficult questions



What is Social Wellness?

Social Wellness is the ability to create positive connections with friends, family, professors, coaches, supervisors and anyone else in your life. Fostering positive relationships helps maintain good mental, emotional and physical health.

Researchers believe there is a direct link between social relationships and health outcomes. Having healthy relationships can help reduce stress, encourage and motivate you and offer emotional support which will impact your overall health and combat feelings of isolation and loneliness.

An important aspect of Social Wellness is making sure relationships are healthy. Healthy relationships require good communication skills, connecting with others and developing healthy attachments. The ability to know how to cope and improve unhealthy relationships and respect for yourself and others is important for creating good social wellness.

Signs of good social health:



- Balancing your social and personal time.
- Engaging with people in your community
- Maintaining and building strong relationships with friends
- Creating healthy boundaries that help with communication, trust and conflict management
- Turning to friends and family for support

Fearless Hudson Valley is a great organization & resource that focuses on positive relationships. [Click here for more information!](#)

SMOKING & HEART HEALTH

Smoking can lead to permanently damaging your heart and blood vessels which can lead to cardiovascular disease. "Smoking is a leading cause of heart attacks and heart disease"

[Click here](#) to read the complete article!

4

Facts about Heart Disease and Tobacco Use



2-4X 

Smokers are **2 to 4 times** more likely to get heart disease than nonsmokers.

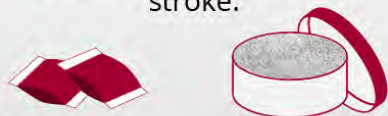
2X 

Smoking **doubles** a person's risk for stroke.

Vaping and smoking can cause a **similar level of damage** to the arteries.



Long-term use of smokeless tobacco can **increase risk of dying** of heart disease and stroke.



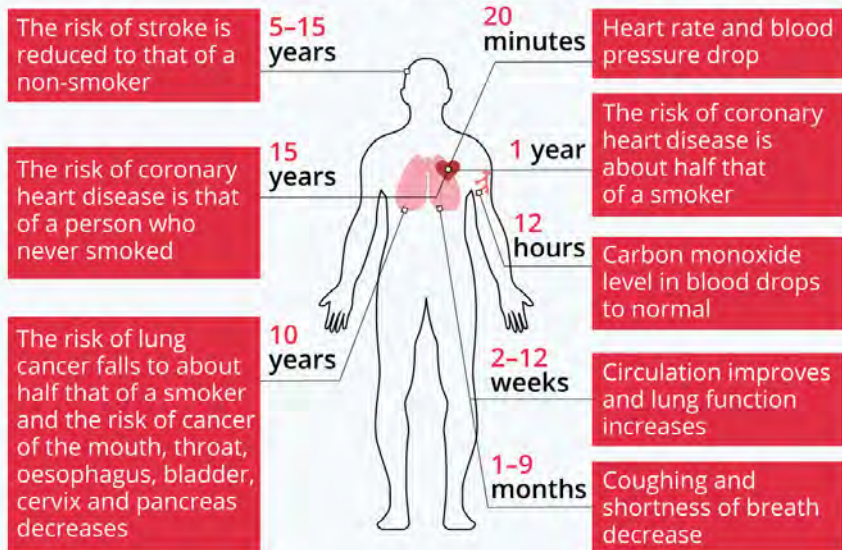
SUNY Sullivan is a Tobacco & Vape Free Campus!

Free resources are available to you to help you quit smoking/ vaping. Stop by the Health Services office or email Nurse Jones at pjones@sunysullivan.edu to get a free "quit kit" and information on free smoking cessation!

The Effects of Quitting Smoking

Health improvements that take place after quitting smoking, by time required

Time after quitting smoking:



Source: World Health Organization



NOW OPEN



The Pantry at SUNY Sullivan!

LOCATED IN B105
ORDERS MUST BE PLACED
EACH MONDAY BY 5:00PM
PICK UP ON WEDNESDAYS
& THURSDAYS
12:00PM- 3:00PM OR BY
APPOINTMENT

[Click Here](#) to place your order!

For more info:
foodpantry@sunysullivan.edu

SUNY Sullivan and the Episcopal Diocese of New York are honored to welcome you to our newly expanded Pantry.

ALL members of our SUNY Sullivan community are welcome, as hunger has NO boundaries.

Our mission is to reduce hunger in our campus community by providing food, nutrition education, sharing access to critical resources, and instilling hope.

Through a network of partner agencies, we will provide access to quality and nutritious food and related supplies.

The Pantry provides food and select personal care items to all SUNY Sullivan Students, Faculty and Staff regardless of race, color, creed, religion, citizenship, national origin, sex, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, or ability.

LET'S GET COOKING WITH HAILEY!

HEALTHY SEASONAL RECIPES



Ground Turkey Sweet Potato Skillet

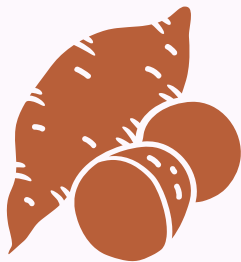
This recipe is a healthy quick and easy one pan recipe from the blog Life Love Liz. Enjoy!

Ingredients:

- 3 small or 2 large sweet potatoes, peeled and diced, about 3 cups
- 1 pound of ground turkey
- 1 yellow bell pepper, diced
- 1 cup onion, diced
- ½ cup mozzarella, shredded
- ½ cup water
- ¼ cup cilantro, chopped
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1.5 tablespoon ground cumin
- 1 tablespoon garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper

Instructions:

1. In a large cast iron skillet, heat olive oil over medium-high heat. Add garlic and cook for 1 minute and then add the ground turkey.
2. Use a wooden spoon to break apart the turkey and continue cooking for about 8 minutes, until browned.
3. Add cumin, chili powder, salt, and pepper. Stir well to incorporate.
4. Add onion and bell pepper, and cook for 3-4 minutes
5. Add diced sweet potato and water. Stir and cover with a lid for approximately 6-8 minutes until the sweet potatoes soften. Add additional water during this process if needed to keep the meat from drying out.
6. Remove lid and add additional salt and pepper if needed. Top with shredded mozzarella and allow it to melt. Remove skillet from heat, garnish with fresh cilantro before serving.





SUNY SULLIVAN FOOD PANTRY

Here are the non-food items we seek:

Soap (liquid and bars)

Full size toothpaste

Full size shampoo

Full size conditioner

Toothbrushes

Razors

Diapers (any size)

Feminine hygiene products

Paper towels and toilet paper

Laundry detergent and dryer sheets

Other non-food items



Located in B105

Stop in!

Wednesdays and Thursdays 12:00 p.m - 3:00p.m.



For more information, please contact Deb
at dwaller-frederick@sunysullivan.edu



SUNY SULLIVAN

COMMUNITY LEARNING
FREE ONLINE SERIES

In partnership with



Presents

Legal Document Training Series

Sullivan 180 Community Health Champion, Attorney and Registered Nurse, Roberta Chambers Esq., will offer free classes on various topics to help people prepare for medical and estate planning. These trainings will help people to better understand the necessary documentation needed in order to ensure your final wishes can be carried out. These classes will provide a general overview and general templates for participants.

Each session will focus on one of the following topics:

- Trusts
- Medicaid Planning

Dates offered: Monthly on the 3rd Wednesday
2/16, 3/16

Where: Via Zoom

Time: 5:00- 6:00pm

[Click here to register!](#)



SUNY SULLIVAN

COMMUNITY LEARNING FREE ONLINE SERIES

In partnership with



Presents

Nutrition and Wellness in the Catskills

Yes, we all "know" what we should do to be healthier--like eat more vegetables, drink more water, eat less junk food, and exercise on a regular basis. Yet for many of us, there is a big difference between knowing what is good for us and actually incorporating these behaviors into our daily lives. For some people, a dose of inspiration and motivation can help change our state of mind and build the willpower to begin to make healthier personal choices.

This class aims to be a catalyst for you to start or continue taking positive action in your own life, no matter where you might be in the journey. Eugene will present both conceptual knowledge and also practical life hacks that will help make those healthful changes incrementally more doable.

This class will also help you learn how "food can be medicine," discover our bodies' innate and extraordinary healing abilities, develop a healthful reverence toward an allopathic medical system, and open your eyes to some of the intricate nuances of food and our food system. It will also provide you with easy, straightforward solutions that can increase your general well-being.

The class will be guided by you and other participants, with the advice, guidance and insight based on the emails and questions sent in by the group members. Remember that this class is not intended to treat, prevent or diagnose any illness-- rather we aim to help you make general changes to help you along your health and wellness journey.

Date: Monthly on the 2nd Wednesday

Where: Via Zoom

Time: 5:00pm-5:45pm

[Click here to register!](#)

Questions? Email wellness@sunysullivan.edu



SUNY SULLIVAN

COMMUNITY LEARNING
FREE ONLINE SERIES



Presents

Suicide Prevention Training

QPR

Question. Persuade. Refer.

Sullivan County currently has the highest suicide mortality rate in the Hudson Valley. Through this free 90 minute training you can become a QPR Gatekeeper trained to recognize the warning signs of suicide.

This one-session workshop held via zoom is 90 min instruction, 30 min Q&A designed to teach suicide warning signs and QPR's three life-saving skills:

- Question...the person about suicide
- Persuade...the person to get help and,
- Refer...the person to the appropriate resource.

Dates offered: The first Wednesday of each month,
beginning December 1

Where: Via Zoom

Time: 12-2 PM, & 5-7 PM

[Click here to register!](#)

This training is being presented by Jenny Sanchez
Mental Health Program Manager at Sullivan 180
Questions? email jsanchez@sullivan180.org



America Saves Week 2022: Building Financial Resilience

February 21st - 25th, 2022

Over the past two years, we've all experienced some significant setbacks. Currently, most everyday Americans, particularly low-to-moderate income earners, are focused on recovering from the economic effects of the pandemic.

That's why America Saves Week 2022 has one single focus: Building Financial Resilience.

Being financially resilient is more than having access to money; it includes being conscious of your own financial landscape, being aware of available resources, and being willing to seek out and take advantage of opportunities that will support and increase your financial wellness.

America Saves Week will be a time to do a financial check-in to get a clear view of your finances. Each day will have a theme that centers on one of 5 critical areas of financial wellness; only this year, we'll approach those themes through the lens of supporting individuals as they build financial resilience. We'll also address socio-economic barriers that affect the ability of many Americans to save.

We are working to amplify information, resources, and tools that will allow individuals and families to take action toward building financial confidence.

Save Automatically | Monday, February 21, 2002

Save For The Unexpected | Tuesday, February 22, 2002

Save For Retirement | Wednesday, February 23, 2002

Save By Reducing Debt | Thursday, February 24, 2022

Save as a Family | Friday, February 25, 2022

Please participate in this week-long event. Visit www.americasaves.org/pledge to create your savings plan and take the next step towards success.

NIH News in Health

National Institutes of Health • Department of Health and Human Services • newsinhealth.nih.gov

Inside News: 3 Chocolate 4 Financial Problems and Dementia 4 Heart-Healthy Eating Plan 4 NIH COVID Research

Lowering Your Cancer Risk Healthy Living for Cancer Prevention

Most people know someone who's had cancer: a family member, a friend, a loved one. Who gets it can sometimes seem random. But there are many things you can do to reduce your risk.

Cancer can start almost anywhere in the body. Normally, your cells grow and divide to form new cells as the body needs them. When a cell is old or becomes damaged, it dies. Then a new cell takes its place.

But when cancer develops, this orderly process breaks down. Cancer cells divide without stopping. They can then spread into surrounding tissues or other parts of the body.

Causes of Cancer • Cancer starts with damage to the **genes** that control the way cells function. Many things you're exposed to over your lifetime can damage genes. These include chemicals, radiation, tobacco, alcohol, and others. Your body has ways to repair the damage, but they don't always work perfectly.

As you age, your body has had more time to build up damage. And the normal aging process causes other changes in cells that help cancer



develop. These factors make cancer more likely to appear as you age.

“Fortunately, most cancers do not develop as a result of a single exposure,” explains NIH researcher Dr. Erikka Loftfield, who studies cancer prevention. “Typically, you don’t have just one cause for a given cancer. And some potential risk factors, like cigarette smoking and diet, are changeable.”

Because damage to your genes builds up slowly over time, there are many opportunities for prevention.

“Not smoking, maintaining a healthy weight, getting enough physical activity, limiting alcohol, and eating a nutritious diet are all intertwined in cancer prevention,” Loftfield says. “These are all things that also help us live a healthy life.”

Quit Tobacco • Tobacco use is the leading cause of cancer in the U.S. This includes smoking and use of other tobacco products, like chewing tobacco. Many chemicals in tobacco

products can damage your genes.

“Smoking is one of the the most dangerous health behaviors there is,” says Dr. Johannes Thrul, a tobacco researcher at Johns Hopkins University.

Using tobacco also increases your risk of heart attack, stroke, lung disease, and many other conditions. But it can be very hard to stop—even if you know the risks.

Tobacco products contain an addictive substance called nicotine. But

there are medications that can help you quit. They can reduce nicotine withdrawal and cravings. Some are available by prescription. Others can be found over-the-counter, like nicotine replacement gums or patches. Using medications with counseling can be even more effective.

Thrul and others are looking for new ways to help people quit smoking. They’re developing smartphone apps that track when smokers are close to places that trigger nicotine cravings. The apps then send personalized support messages.

“We’re trying to deliver support to smokers in these critical situations, in real time,” he says.

continued on page 2



Definitions

Genes

Segments of DNA that contain instructions for building the molecules that make the body work.

Subscribe

@

newsinhealth.nih.gov

continued from page 1

These apps are still being tested. You can get free help now by visiting smokefree.gov, calling 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669), or by texting QUIT to 47848.

“No matter how long you’ve smoked, no matter how old you are, quitting smoking will always benefit your health,” Thrul says.

Eat Smart, Keep Moving • When it comes to cancer prevention, the saying “you are what you eat” applies, says NIH researcher Dr. Jill Reedy, who studies diet and cancer. But it’s not just diet. Your overall lifestyle—including weight and physical activity—also matters.

“There’s a lot of evidence that maintaining a healthy lifestyle has the potential to reduce cancer risk,” Reedy says.

Diet and related factors can raise your risk in many ways. For example, excess weight can increase **inflammation** in the body, Reedy explains. Long-term inflammation is thought to increase cancer risk.

Excess weight can also cause the levels of certain **hormones** to rise. High levels of these hormones can raise the risk of some types of can-

cer, such as breast cancer.

How diet itself affects cancer risk is complicated, Reedy explains. What we eat gets broken down and used by our cells to keep the body running. Chemicals in some foods—like highly processed meats—may raise the risk of cancer. But overall, there aren’t many single foods to avoid.

Other chemicals in food may lower your risk. But no single food, nutrient, or vitamin alone can protect you from cancer. “It would be great if there was a magic bullet, but there isn’t,” Reedy says.

“It’s really about the overall quality of your diet. Choose fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy oils. Limit alcohol, added sugars, saturated fats, and sodium,” she explains.

You can learn more about healthy eating patterns from the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (go.usa.gov/xAGpe). Healthy eating appears to reduce cancer risk even if you have trouble losing weight, Loftfield explains. And the same seems to be true for physical activity.

“We’ve seen that physical activity lowers the risk of some types of cancers, independent of its effects on weight,” she says. This may be because exercise can reduce inflammation, stress, and other things that can harm your cells.

Loftfield and Reedy are studying new ways to measure what happens in the body after eating different



Ask Your Doctor

Ask about reducing your cancer risk:

- What can you recommend to help me quit smoking?
- Have I had all the recommended vaccinations to prevent cancer?
- What cancer screening tests should I have at my age?
- What dietary changes can I make to help reduce my risk of cancer?
- How can I safely exercise to improve my health?
- Does my family medical history put me at higher risk for cancer?
- Is there anything else I should know about my cancer risk?

types of foods. This will help them learn more about how diet impacts cancer risk.

Prevention Tips • There are other simple actions you can take to reduce your risk of specific cancers.

To lower your chances of skin cancer, wear sunscreen and sun protective clothing, limit your time in the sun, and avoid tanning beds.

Certain vaccines can reduce your risk of cervical, liver, and other cancers. This is because some viruses, like human papillomavirus (HPV), can damage your genes in ways that lead to cancer.

“Getting vaccinated against HPV and other cancer-related viruses is a very practical way to modify your cancer risk,” Loftfield says.

Common screening tests can also reduce your risk. These let doctors find and remove small growths that may turn into cancer. A colonoscopy, which looks for growths in the colon and rectum, is one example. Cervical cancer screening is another. For tips on talking about your risk for cancers, see the Ask Your Doctor box. ■

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Definitions

Inflammation

Heat, swelling, and redness caused by the body’s protective response to injury or infection.

Hormones

Substances sent through the bloodstream to signal another part of the body to grow or react a certain way.



Web Links

For more about cancer prevention, see “Links” in the online article: newsinhealth.nih.gov/2021/02/lowering-cancer-risk

Chocolate Health Claims

Sweet Truth or Bitter Reality?

Love chocolate? Most of us do. It's a delicious treat. Or a quick pick-me-up after a long day. You may have heard that dark chocolate has health benefits. But is that true or just wishful thinking?

Small studies suggest that cocoa, an ingredient in chocolate, may have health benefits. It's possible that certain nutrients in cocoa could improve heart health and boost brain function, especially in older adults.

Researchers think this may be due to compounds called flavanols. Cocoa beans contain high levels of flavanols. The beans are dried and roasted to make the cocoa powder used in chocolate. Dark chocolate contains more cocoa and flavanols than other types of chocolate. Flavanols are also found in tea, red wine, apples, and berries.

The evidence linking cocoa beans and heart health has interesting origins. Much of it is based on studies of the Kuna people, who live on islands off the coast of Panama. They consume a lot of cocoa.

"They pull cocoa beans off the

tree, they grind them up, and they basically make a hot chocolate," explains Dr. Laura Baker, an expert in aging at Wake Forest University. "And they treat that like their water, drinking many, many cups per day."

Scientists discovered that the Kuna people had much lower rates of heart disease, even compared to people in the same region. This sparked interest in the health properties of cocoa beans.

Today, researchers are studying whether concentrated doses of cocoa flavanols can improve health. Thousands of participants are involved in studies of how cocoa supplements affect everything from eye disease to heart health, cancer risk, and **cognitive** abilities.

Cocoa flavanols are believed to improve heart function and blood flow, so scientist think they may also benefit the tiny blood vessels in the brain. Baker is studying whether cocoa supplements can prevent cognitive decline in older adults. She's examining their impacts on short-term memory, focus, and overall brain function.

More than 2,000 older adults have participated in the three-year study. But it's too soon to tell whether cocoa supplements are beneficial for brain health. The study is still ongoing.

"If it works, there are no side effects for cocoa flavanols," Baker notes. "So imagine, if this works for both heart health and cognition—or just one—this would be a very simple



supplement that people could add to their diet."

But you won't get nearly the same amount of cocoa flavanols in that chocolate bar—even if it is dark chocolate.

"The cocoa supplements are way more potent than the darkest of the dark chocolate bars," Baker says. Eating chocolate just isn't the same, she explains.

And there's more bitter news. Because of the added sugar and cocoa butter, chocolate contains a lot of calories and saturated fat. So it's best to enjoy those Valentine's Day chocolates in small amounts, as part of a balanced diet.

For tips on enjoying chocolate, see the Wise Choices box. ■



Wise Choices

Eating Chocolate

If you eat chocolate as a sweet treat, try to keep it as healthy as you can:

- Watch your total calories. Chocolate has a lot of calories, and gaining weight will more than wipe out any benefits you might get from the compounds in chocolate.
- Eat as dark a chocolate as you can.
- Avoid white and milk chocolates. These contain little or no cocoa.
- Make hot chocolate with unsweetened cocoa, water or non-fat milk, and little added sugar.



Definitions

Cognitive

Related to the ability to think, learn, and remember.



Web Links

For more about chocolate and cocoa, see "Links" in the online article: newsinhealth.nih.gov/2021/02/chocolate-health-claims





Health Capsules

For links to more information, please visit our website and see these stories online.

Financial Problems Can Be Sign of Dementia

A new study found that financial problems can be an early sign of dementia. Some older adults had such problems years before being diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or a related condition.

Dementia causes changes to the brain that can interfere with daily life. These includes the ability to manage bills and other finances. Researchers looked at when these problems begin.

The team examined medical

and credit information from about 80,000 adults. The people were 65 and older, lived alone, and received healthcare through Medicare. The research team recorded late bill payments and drops in credit scores.

People who developed dementia were more likely to have had late bill payments. This began six years before being diagnosed.

They were also more likely to have their credit scores drop below 620 (called "subprime"). This started

two and a half years before getting their diagnosis.

"Our study is the first to provide large-scale quantitative evidence of the medical adage that the first place to look for dementia is in the checkbook," says Dr. Lauren Nicholas of Johns Hopkins University. "Earlier screening and detection, combined with financial education, are important to protect the financial well-being of the patient and their families." ■

Eating Plan for a Healthy Heart

What you choose to eat can affect your heart health. Eating well can be confusing with all the diet information out there.

The DASH food plan—Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension—is supported by NIH research. It's a flexible and balanced eating plan designed to improve the health of your heart, especially if you have high blood pressure (hypertension).

Following the DASH food plan doesn't require any special foods. It has easy-to-understand guidelines and nutritional goals. And it's

tailored to your calorie needs, based on your age and physical activity level. You can also find sample meal plans to help you make heart-healthy choices.

The DASH plan has several recommendations. Eat vegetables, fruits, and whole grains. Include healthy foods like fat-free or low-fat dairy products, fish, poultry, beans, nuts, and vegetable oils.

The plan limits foods high in saturated fats. It also encourages you to cut back on sugar-sweetened beverages and sweets. Limiting

sodium is a key part of the plan. Too much sodium can raise your blood pressure.

The DASH eating plan is just one part of a heart-healthy lifestyle. Experts recommend combining the plan with physical activity to control blood pressure. Staying a healthy weight, limiting your alcohol intake, and managing stress will also help your heart health.

Learn more about the science behind DASH at www.nhlbi.nih.gov/DASH. Find recipes at healthyeating.nhlbi.nih.gov. ■



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