

In This Issue...

- *Tips to Stay Healthy Over the Holidays*

Happy Holidays from your friends at Alliant. We wish you the best this Holiday Season and look forward to working with you in 2010!



Keep your company informed with important health information!

This e-newsletter is designed to benefit you and your employees, so please feel free to forward it to family, friends and co-workers!

As always, we hope you enjoy this edition and would like to hear from you with any questions, concerns, or suggestions for future articles. Send us an email at info@alliantservices.com.

What if you could cut your risk of heart disease, get fitter, slow aging, and protect your smile in less time than it takes to watch a couple of commercials? Better health does take time, but not as much as you may think. Yes, you should exercise 30 minutes a day and sleep 7 to 8 hours a night.

But top experts in nutrition, cardiovascular health, and cancer prevention say you can also make some very important health upgrades in almost no time flat.

1. Eat the peel **Why: Fight cancer**

The bulk of an apple's benefit lies in its skin. In one lab experiment, more than a dozen chemicals in the peels of Red Delicious apples inhibited the growth of breast, liver, and colon cancer cells. Investigator Rui Hai Liu, MD, PhD, an associate professor of food science at Cornell University, suspects that the peels of other apple varieties are also extra potent.

But experts recommend only eating the skin of organic apples; the conventionally grown kind are among the most pesticide-doused produce.

2. Sniff lavender or rosemary **Why: Look younger**

The scent of lavender can bring you a restful night's sleep—but the plant can do you a world of good in daylight, too. In one study, volunteers sniffed the essential oils of lavender or rosemary for 5 minutes. The result: Levels of the stress hormone cortisol in saliva dropped as much as 24%. That's good, because the hormone increases blood pressure and suppresses the immune system.

What's more, people who smelled low concentrations of lavender or high concentrations of rosemary were better at getting rid of free radicals, the pesky molecules believed to speed aging and disease.

3. Sprinkle pistachios on your salad **Why: Cut cholesterol**

Researchers at Pennsylvania State University gave volunteers a pleasant task: Eat 1 1/2 ounces (about a handful) of pistachios every day. At the end of 4 weeks, those who munched the nuts reduced their total cholesterol by an average of 6.7% and their LDL ("bad") cholesterol by 11.6%.

That reduction has a major payoff: Cutting your total cholesterol by about 7% reduces your heart disease risk by 14%. Pistachios are one of the best sources of plant sterols, compounds we know reduce absorption of cholesterol, says researcher Penny Kris-Etherton, PhD, RD, who led the study. Just remember, 1 ounce contains about 160 calories. So pour a little less dressing on your salad as you add some pistachios.





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4. Replace sugar with buckwheat honey

Why: Cut cholesterol

This sweet substance has been used for medicinal purposes since ancient times; when it's applied to a wound, honey is a natural antibacterial salve. Now researchers say that its benefits may be much more than skin deep. Test-tube studies show that honey slows the oxidation of LDL cholesterol—it's when LDL is oxidized that it can be laid down as plaque in blood vessels. The variety of honey best at slowing oxidation: buckwheat.

5. Eat an egg

Why: Sharpen vision

No offense to carrots, but research shows that eggs are an even better source of the eye-friendly antioxidants known as carotenoids. Lutein and zeaxanthin are the crucial carotenoids for vision—the only ones that benefit the retina's fragile macula, which is responsible for central vision. Eggs don't contain as much lutein and zeaxanthin as dark green, leafy veggies, but your body is better able to absorb the antioxidants in eggs, says nutritional biochemist Elizabeth Johnson, PhD, at Tufts University.

Worried about cholesterol? Don't be: Eating an egg a day increases blood levels of lutein (by 26%) and zeaxanthin (by 38%) without raising cholesterol or triglyceride levels.

6. Add avocado to your salad

Why: Up your antioxidant intake

Vegetables have an unexpected downside: Many of them are virtually fat free, and you need fat in the meal to absorb cancer-fighting carotenoids. In recent Ohio State University research, volunteers were given a salad with and without a sliced avocado. Blood tests showed that those who ate the avocado got 5 times as much lutein, 7 times as much alpha-carotene, and a whopping 15 times as much beta-carotene as those who ate the salad without it.

7. Snack on fruit salad

Why: Up your antioxidant intake

Antioxidants love company: A mixture of oranges, apples, grapes, and blueberries provides 5 times the antioxidant power you get from eating the same fruits solo, says research by Liu, at Cornell. Ingredients to toss into fruit salad, ranked in order of phenolic content (a type of plant chemical that cuts the risk of chronic disease): cranberries, apples, red grapes, strawberries, pineapples, bananas, peaches, oranges, and pears.

8. Turn down your fridge temp

Why: Protect your stomach from bugs

If the setting is over 40 F, your food is sitting in the danger zone—the temperature at which bacteria begin to multiply. Each year in the United States, more than 75 million people get sick from contaminated food and 5,000 die. Use an appliance thermometer to be sure the temp is low enough.

9. Keep your head up

Why: Head off a headache

When your neck juts forward (known as forward head posture) you have to tilt your head up to see, which can compress the nerves and muscles at the base of the skull and cause headaches, says Roger Cady, MD, vice president of the National Headache Foundation. To keep your head straight, imagine a cord attached to the top of your head, pulling toward the ceiling, and periodically check to make sure your ear is in line with your shoulder.

By: Hilary Macht Felgran

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