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**FITNESS AND NUTRITION TIPS**

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**RESISTING THE PULL OF UNHEALTHY FOODS**

Sugar, fat and salt are hijacking the brains of millions of people by activating their neural circuits to condition them to overeat. Two out of three American adults are now either overweight or obese; one in six children aged 2 to 19 is obese. Excess weight increases the risk of diabetes, heart disease, cancer (of the breast, colon, esophagus, kidney, and uterus), stroke, gallbladder disease, arthritis, and more. Here is some advice from David Kessler, former commissioner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and author of *The End of Overeating*, on resisting the pull to being cued, aroused and stimulated by unhealthy foods.

1. **REPLACE CHAOS WITH STRUCTURE** Determine ahead of time what you'll eat for meals and snacks and block out everything else.
2. **PRACTICE JUST-RIGHT EATING** Figure out how much food you need, put it on your plate, and don't go back for more.
3. **PICK FOODS THAT WILL SATISFY, NOT STIMULATE YOU** Try foods that occur in nature, like whole grains, beans, non-starchy vegetables and fruit, combined with lean protein and a small amount of fat...avoid sweet, salty and fatty foods.
4. **REHEARSE** Anticipate your moves like an athlete before a competition. For example. Tell yourself. "If I encounter chocolate-covered pretzels, I'll keep walking."
5. **SEIZE CONTROL** Stay alert to emotional stressors or other stimuli that trigger automatic behavior. Recognize feelings (like sadness, fatigue or anxiety) that might lead you to overeat.
6. **STOP THAT THOUGHT** Change the channel. Turn off the image of the trigger food before you start to debate whether to eat it.
7. **THINK NEGATIVE** Pair the unhealthy food with a stream of unappealing images. View foods with excess sugar, fat and salt as your enemies; things you don't want and must avoid.

**PICK BERRIES FOR HEAD & HEART HEALTH BENEFITS**

Research at Tufts University suggests that nutrients in berries of all sorts may protect your brain from age-related decline and enhance heart health. Berries brain benefits may derive from antioxidant and anti-inflammatory function of polyphenols which may directly increase receptor sensitivity, improve neuronal signaling and even promote generation of new nerve cells. Habitual consumption of polyphenols is associated with with a reduced risk of developing dementia and Alzheimer's disease. In a 2008 study published by the National Public Health Institute regular berry consumption may raise HDL ("good") cholesterol and improve blood pressure and platelet functions. Berries are rich in phenolic compounds called anthocyanins which give berries their deep red and blue colors- markers for powerful antioxidants thought to be beneficial in fighting free radical damage. Fresh or frozen, there's little nutritional difference between wild and cultivated blackberries, blueberries, cranberries, raspberries and strawberries. If using canned fruit, look for cans with no added sugar. Additionally scientists at Rutgers and Yale universities have confirmed that cranberry juice really can aid in preventing bladder infections.

## AEROBIC BASICS

### From the Mayo Clinic: 2009 *Fitness for Everybody*

Aerobic exercise - activities in which oxygen plays an important role in the release of energy in your muscles - includes low to moderate intensity walking, jogging, hiking, dancing, canoeing, biking, running, backpacking, bowling, skating, skiing and swimming. It will help your heart, blood vessels, lungs and muscles complete routine tasks and rise to unexpected challenges and it will increase your stamina and endurance. Regular aerobic exercise increases your body's ability to use oxygen and as a result you can produce more energy and your body won't fatigue as quickly. It burns calories, reduces diseases, improves mental health, helps you sleep better at night, helps you control your appetite and it reduces arthritis pain by helping you to mobilize your joints. It can increase your life span and improve the overall function of your entire body.

- A beginning goal is to exercise at least 3 days a week and work up to 5 days a week
- Before doing any aerobic exercise, warm up for at least 5 minutes and if you have a tight or previously injured muscle then stretch that muscle. This general warm-up should let you break a sweat
- Work toward a goal of exercising for 30 to 60 minutes each day, either continuously or in divided sessions throughout the day
- Spend at least 5-10 minutes cooling down and doing static stretches at the end of your workout. This is important because it allows your heart rate and muscles to return to normal and it helps to develop and maintain muscle and joint flexibility
- Do some activity every day, even on busy days and if you can't fit in your regularly scheduled routine, replace it with another activity
- Take steps to increase your physical activity each day, even if it's not a scheduled exercise

## WHEN TO STRETCH FOR FLEXIBILITY

Stretching is a way to improve the flexibility of your muscles by lengthening muscle tissue and training your muscles to relax. If you have a tight muscle, increasing its flexibility may improve posture, relieve pain or improve performance. Stretching can be done in a number of ways including different types of stretching exercises (static, dynamic and contract-relax) , as well as yoga and tai chi. If you have a tight or previously injured muscle, try to stretch before you exercise to balance your body, to promote unrestricted movement and to reduce the chance of overstretching or injuring the muscle. Typically, a short 5 minute aerobic warm-up followed by two to three repetitions of static stretches for that muscle is sufficient. During a **static stretch**, you move the muscle into a lengthened position until you feel tension of the stretch, then hold it there for 30-60 seconds. Following this, start your activity being sure to spend the first 5 to 10 minutes slowly increasing the speed and amplitude of your motions. This activity specific warm-up is what's called **dynamic stretch**, because it involves a motion rather than holding a position. Stretching muscles that aren't tight or at increased risk of injury probably isn't necessary. After your exercise routine, once again stretch the same muscles you did during the warm-up. In addition, stretch the muscles that were particularly active during the exercise session. Most of us can maintain and improve flexibility with this combination of static and dynamic stretches, including regular static stretching of all major muscle groups; specifically stretch your calf muscle, upper thighs, hamstrings, lower back and chest Contract-relax stretches are more difficult to perform correctly and should be prescribed by a qualified health care professional.

## WHOLE GRAINS MAY HELP CONTROL BLOOD PRESSURE

A new Harvard study of more than 300,000 male health professionals suggests that men who eat the most whole grains (equal to about three servings a day) were 19% less likely to develop hypertension over 18 years than those that ate the least. An earlier study in women yielded similar results. Unlike refined grains, whole grains retain the bran and germ and thus have more fiber and nutrients such as potassium and folate. Look for a "**whole grain**" listed as the first ingredient on labels of breads, cereals and pastas... (the word "enriched" indicates refined wheat flour).

