



Functional Foods Help Reduce Obesity, Control Diabetes

The so called functional foods when included in a balanced diet, help reduce obesity and control diabetes, says the researcher, from the Institute of Biomedical Research at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). Functional foods are those that provide other benefits to the body in addition to the original nutrient foods, such as cactus pads, chia and soy mainly, besides spinach, oatmeal, yogurt, fish rich in Omega 3 and fortified margarines. The researcher recommends consumption of 300 gm of raw, or 250 of cooked, cactus pads because eating as garnish significantly lowers glucose peaks, allowing a good function of the pancreas. During researcher's participation in the first symposium: "Initiative for a correct diet: yogurt effects on health" held in Cancun, in the Caribbean coast of Mexico, the researcher said it is important to cook food thoroughly, but not overcooking in order to retain its nutrients. "Mexicans tend to overheat food diminishing nutrients, in the case of



the cactus it should not be cooked more than 10 minutes. It is very important that the viscous part is retained because that contains the soluble fiber that works as a prebiotic." The researcher mentioned that the consumption of these foods has to be constant. "People with diabetes who include cactus in their diet reduce glycated hemoglobin, triglycerides and free fatty acids." The researcher also analyzed the effect of soy in animal models and found that it decreases the secretion of insulin, blood pressure, triglyceride and cholesterol by up to 20% since it contains a low glycemic index and has 6 gm of protein in a portion 250 mg. Researcher also stated that the use of chia seeds has health benefits because it is a source of acid Omega 3 and antioxidants, while should also be included in the diet in raw oatmeal or soy milk and green banana porridge. Currently the

UNAM specialist develops a combination of chia seed with cactus and soy protein to control diabetes and a recipe book on the combination of these foods.

Multivitamin Use Protects Against Chemotherapy-induced Peripheral Neuropathy in Breast Cancer Patients

The Researchers have found that use of multivitamins prior to diagnosis may reduce the risk of neuropathy in breast cancer patients treated with the class of drugs known as taxanes. Although cancer patients frequently experience nerve damage to the peripheral nervous system, known as chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy (CIPN), as a consequence of treatment with the taxane paclitaxel, relatively little is known about strategies to prevent or treat this often-debilitating condition. "Because development of chemotherapy-induced neuropathy is difficult to predict and symptoms can remain long after treatment has concluded, identifying preventive measures has the potential to greatly enhance quality of life for a substantial number of breast cancer survivors," says the researcher. To examine whether use of dietary supplements, including multivitamins and individual supplements, was related to the presence of CIPN symptoms assessed by physicians as well as the patients themselves, the researchers analyzed data collected both pre-diagnosis and post-treatment for 1,125 breast cancer patients enrolled in a National Cancer Institute intergroup cooperative group trial led by SWOG (S0221). Physician- and patient-assessed neuropathy



varied prior to diagnosis and during treatment. While individual dietary supplements did not appear to affect symptoms of CIPN, patients who reported regular use of multivitamins prior to diagnosis were significantly less likely to experience CIPN than those who did not. A similar trend was observed for patients who reported regular multivitamin use during treatment, although this association was not statistically significant. "Although additional studies are needed to understand the relationship between supplement use and CIPN, our results do provide some clues as to actions that patients can take to prevent the development of neuropathy," adds the researcher.



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Daily Vitamin D-3 Supplementation may Benefit Heart Failure Patients

For patients with chronic heart failure, daily supplementation with vitamin D-3 may improve heart function, according to a new study. In the US, around 5.1 million people have heart failure, which occurs when the heart is unable to pump enough oxygen-rich blood around the body to support other organs. The prognosis for heart failure patients is poor; around 50% of those diagnosed with the condition die within 5 years of diagnosis. But according to the researchers, a daily vitamin D-3 supplement could benefit heart function for patients with chronic heart failure. The researchers note that patients with heart failure often experience vitamin D deficiency; heart failure is most common among adults aged 65 and older, and older individuals tend to make less vitamin D-3 in response to sunlight than younger individuals. To reach their findings, the team enrolled more than 160 patients who were being treated for heart failure. For 1 year, 80 of the patients were asked to take a vitamin D-3 supplement every day, while the remaining patients



were required to take a placebo. Vitamin D-3, or cholecalciferol, is the form of vitamin D that is produced in the body in response to sunlight exposure. At the end of the study period, the team used an echocardiogram to measure any changes in patients' heart function, including their ejection fraction - how well the heart pumps out blood with

each heartbeat. A healthy individual will normally have an ejection fraction of 60-70%, but the ejection fraction is impaired among people with heart failure. In this study, patients had an average ejection fraction of 26%. While heart failure patients who took the placebo showed no improvement in cardiac function, those who took a daily vitamin D-3 supplement showed an improvement in ejection fraction, increasing from 26% to 34%. Explaining what the results may mean for individuals with heart failure, the researcher says, "This is a significant breakthrough for patients. It is the first evidence that vitamin D-3 can improve heart function of people with heart muscle weakness - known as heart failure. These findings could make a significant difference to the care of heart failure patients." The researchers say their results indicate that for some patients with heart disease, regular supplementation with vitamin D-3 may reduce their need for an implantable cardioverter defibrillator (ICD).

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Healthy Diet may Reduce High Blood Pressure Risk after Gestational Diabetes

Sticking to a healthy diet in the years after pregnancy may reduce the risk of high blood pressure among women who had pregnancy-related (gestational) diabetes, according to a study. The study suggests that women who have had gestational diabetes may indeed benefit from a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains and low in red and processed meats, said the researchers. In fact, a healthy diet was associated with lower risk for high blood pressure even in obese women. Obesity is a risk factor for high blood pressure. But obese women in the study who adhered to a healthy diet had a lower risk of high blood pressure, when compared to obese women who did not. Approximately 5 percent of pregnant women in the United States develop gestational diabetes, despite not having diabetes before becoming pregnant. The condition results in high blood sugar levels, which can increase the risk of early labor and a larger than average baby, which may result in problems during delivery. For most women with the condition, blood sugar levels return to normal after birth. However, later in life, women who had gestational diabetes are at higher risk for type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure. The current study is the first to show that adopting a healthy diet--known to reduce high blood pressure risk among the general population--also reduces the risk among women with prior gestational diabetes. In an earlier study, the researchers reported that a healthy diet after gestational diabetes reduces the risk for Type 2 diabetes. To conduct the study, the researchers analyzed the health histories of nearly 4,000 women participating in the Nurses' Health Study II, part of the Diabetes & Women's Health study. Every four years, study participants responded to questionnaires on their eating habits. When appropriate, the researchers categorized the women's responses according to three healthy dietary approaches: the Alternative Healthy Eating Index,



Mediterranean-style Diet, and the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH). These approaches emphasize consumption of nuts, legumes, whole grains and fish, and limit consumption of red and processed meats, salt, and added sugars. After they statistically accounted for smoking, family history, and other factors known to increase high blood pressure risk, the researchers found that women who adhered to a healthy diet were 20 percent less likely to develop high blood pressure than those who did not. The study shows that a healthful diet is associated with decreased high blood pressure in an at-risk population.

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Infants who Eat Rice Products have Higher Arsenic Concentrations

When parents first introduce solid foods to their babies, rice products are typically among the first foods offered. Choking or allergy risks are low with rice products, and they feature in many types of infant foods. However, a new study advises caution, as it finds that infants who consume rice products have higher concentrations of arsenic in their urine, compared with those who do not eat rice products. According to the study authors, the recommendation from the World Health Organization (WHO) for inorganic arsenic concentrations in polished white rice is 200 ng/g, and the proposed US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) limit for infant rice cereal is 100 ng/g. However, the researchers say many infant rice cereals may contain inorganic arsenic concentrations that exceed these limits. Until now, rice consumption in early childhood in the US has not been well defined, and previous research has suggested that arsenic exposure in utero and in early life could be linked with adverse effects on fetal growth, as well as infant and child immunity and neurodevelopment. The researchers note that arsenic found in rice and rice products can be in either an inorganic or organic form; nearly all arsenic in drinking water is inorganic. To further investigate, the researchers looked at how often infants ate rice products during their first year of life and examined the link with urinary arsenic concentrations. In total, there were 759 infants born



between 2011-2014 who were included in the New Hampshire Birth Cohort Study. The researchers conducted phone interviews with the infants' parents every 4 months until 12 months of age. When the infants were 1 year old, the team assessed dietary patterns during the past week, which included information on whether the infant had eaten rice cereal, white or brown rice, or foods made with rice or sweetened with brown rice syrup. Starting in 2013, the researchers collected infant urine samples, along with a 3-day food diary. For 129 infants, more detailed data were available, including information on diet and total urinary arsenic at 12 months of age. Additionally, for 48 infants, the researchers had data on urinary arsenic species. The team found that of the 759 infants, 80% had rice cereal in their first year of life, and 64% started between 4-6 months of age.

Additionally, at 12 months of age, 43% of the babies ate some type of rice product in the past week. Of these, 13% ate white rice and 10% ate brown rice, with an average of one to two servings each week. Of the total infants, 24% ate food made with rice or sweetened rice syrup in the past week. According to the food diaries, 55% of the infants consumed some type of rice product in the 2 days before the urine sample collection. Results from the urine samples at 12 months of age showed that arsenic levels were higher in infants who ate rice or foods mixed with rice, compared with those who ate no rice. Furthermore, among the infants who ate brown or white rice, their total urinary arsenic concentrations were twice as high as those who ate no rice. The researchers say their results suggest consuming rice increases infants' arsenic exposure, and they suggest introducing regulations to reduce exposure "during this critical phase of development." They add, "In addition to being more highly exposed to arsenic (As), children appear to be far more sensitive to the potential carcinogenic effects of As, and have a heightened risk for adverse growth, adverse immune response and adverse neurodevelopmental outcomes, even at relatively low levels of exposure."

Breast Milk Hormones Found to Impact Bacterial Development in Infants' Guts



A new study finds that hormones in breast milk may impact the development of healthy bacteria in infants' guts, potentially protecting them from intestinal inflammation, obesity and other diseases later in life. The study examines the role of human milk hormones in the development of infants' microbiome, a bacterial ecosystem in the digestive system that contributes to multiple facets of health. This is the first study of its kind to suggest that hormones in human milk may play an important role in shaping a healthy infant microbiome, said the researchers. They also said, "We've known for a long time that breast milk contributes to infant intestinal maturation and healthy growth. This study suggests that hormones in milk may be partly responsible for this

positive impact through interactions with the infant's developing microbiome." Researchers found that levels of insulin and leptin in the breast milk were positively associated with greater microbial diversity and families of bacteria in the infants' stool. Insulin and leptin were associated with bacterial functions that help the intestine develop as a barrier against harmful toxins, which help prevent intestinal inflammation. By promoting a stronger intestinal barrier early in life, these hormones also may protect children from chronic low-grade inflammation, which can lead to a host of additional digestive problems and diseases. In addition, researchers found significant differences in the intestinal microbiome of breastfed infants who are born to mothers with obesity compared to those born to mothers of normal weight. Infants born to mothers with obesity showed a significant reduction in gammaproteobacteria, a pioneer species that aids in normal intestinal development and microbiome maturation. Gammaproteobacteria have been shown in mice and newborn infants to cause a healthy amount of inflammation in their intestines, protecting them from inflammatory and autoimmune disorders later in life. The 2-week-old infants born to obese mothers in this study had a reduced number of

gammaproteobacteria in the infant gut microbiome. "I eagerly anticipate our follow-up studies to know whether these early results will help us understand what factors help make up a healthier immune system in infants born to obese mothers over the first year of life," said the researcher. To examine the role of breast milk hormones, leptin and insulin, researchers analyzed the bacteria present in stool samples from 30 two-week-old infants who were exclusively breastfed -18 infants born to normal weight mothers and 12 born to obese mothers. The researchers not only analyzed what bacteria were growing, but also the metabolism of the bacteria that were active in the infants' intestines. The researchers have found that hormones in breast milk are linked to the development of infants' microbiome, potentially having long-term effects on children's intestinal and autoimmune health. The researchers hypothesize that human milk hormones affect the microbiome by binding to specific receptors in the infants' intestines. These hormones may stimulate the body to produce proteins, called anti-microbial peptides, which kill off certain types of bad bacteria and may stimulate infant intestinal cells to secrete molecules that allow good bacteria to flourish.

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Eating Fresh Fruits Daily may Reduce Your Risk of Cardiovascular Death

New research provides further evidence of the health benefits of fruit consumption, after finding that eating fresh fruits daily may lower the risks of heart attack, stroke and cardiovascular death. Under the 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, it is recommended that adults who get less than 30 minutes of moderate exercise daily consume 1.5-2 cups of fruits each day, based on evidence that including fruits as part of a healthy diet reduces the risk of some chronic diseases. However, a report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) last year found that only 13.1% of adults in the US are consuming enough fruits. Now, the researchers further highlight the benefit of fruit intake, revealing how a daily intake of fresh fruits could reduce the risks of heart attack and stroke. The researchers note that previous studies have already identified a link between high fruit intake and lower risk of cardiovascular disease in Western populations. The researchers also say little is known about whether high fruit intake benefits heart health in China, where fruit consumption is lower than many other countries, including the UK and US. To find out, the team enrolled 512,891 adults aged 30-79 from 10 urban and rural regions across China, who had no previous history of cardiovascular disease or use of anti-hypertensive medication. Participants were required to report their daily fruit consumption, including what fruits they ate and



how much. Their health was tracked for an average of 7 years using electronic hospital records and death records. Compared with participants who never or rarely consumed fresh fruits, those who ate fresh fruits daily had lower blood pressure and glucose levels, as well as lower risks for heart attack and stroke. After accounting for lower blood pressure, lower glucose levels and other factors, including education and not smoking, the team found that participants who consumed around 100 g of fresh fruits daily were also a third less likely to die from cardiovascular causes, compared with those who never or rarely ate fresh fruits. Fruit intake among subjects primarily consisted of apples and oranges, and the findings were consistent across men and women. Commenting on the results, senior study author says, "It's difficult

to know whether the lower risk in people who eat more fresh fruit is because of a real protective effect. If it is, then widespread consumption of fresh fruit in China could prevent about half a million cardiovascular deaths a year, including 200,000 before age 70, and even larger numbers of non-fatal strokes and heart attacks." The researcher notes that the link between high fruit intake and cardiovascular risk appears to be stronger in China, likely because daily fruit consumption is less common than in high-income countries. Additionally, the team points out that a lot of fruits consumed in high-income countries consist of processed varieties, whereas most of the fruits consumed in China are eaten fresh.

Daily Chocolate Intake Linked to Lower Risk of Diabetes, Heart Disease



According to a new study, researchers suggest that consuming a small amount of chocolate every day may lower the risk of diabetes and heart disease. Chocolate is often perceived as a treat that should only be enjoyed from time to time. Given its high fat and sugar content, this is no surprise; overconsumption can lead to health problems, such as tooth decay and obesity. However, studies are increasingly suggesting regular, moderate chocolate consumption may yield significant

health benefits, particularly when it comes to dark chocolate. Dark chocolate has the highest cocoa content, which means it has the highest levels of antioxidants - specifically, flavonoids - which are molecules that can prevent some forms of cell damage. For their study, the researchers analyzed the chocolate consumption of 1,153 people aged 18-69 who were part of the Observation of Cardiovascular Risk in Luxembourg (ORISCAV-LUX) study. Data on chocolate intake were gathered from participants' completion of a food frequency questionnaire. The team set out to investigate whether chocolate intake is associated with insulin resistance - where the body's cells do not effectively respond to insulin, raising the risk for type 2 diabetes and heart disease. They also assessed how chocolate consumption affected liver enzyme levels, which is a measure of liver function. The researchers found that 81.8 percent of the study participants consumed chocolate, with an average consumption of 24.8 grams daily. Compared with participants who did not eat chocolate every day, those who did were found to have reduced insulin resistance and improved liver enzyme levels. The effect was stronger the higher the chocolate consumption, the team reports. The findings remained after accounting for participants' age, sex, education, lifestyle, and dietary factors that could affect the results. Dietary factors included intake of tea and coffee rich in the antioxidants polyphenols, which the researchers say have the potential to spur chocolate's benefits for cardiometabolic risk. Cardiometabolic risk refers to a

person's likelihood of developing diabetes, heart disease, or stroke. Participants who ate chocolate were more physically active, younger, and more highly educated than those who did not eat chocolate, according to the authors. The researchers say their findings suggest that chocolate consumption may reduce the risk of developing cardiometabolic disorders by improving liver enzyme levels and protecting against insulin resistance. "Given the growing body of evidence, including our own study, cocoa-based products may represent an additional dietary recommendation to improve cardiometabolic health; however, observational results need to be supported by robust trial evidence. Potential applications of this knowledge include recommendations by healthcare professionals to encourage individuals to consume a wide range of phytochemical-rich foods, which can include dark chocolate in moderate amounts," the researcher said. However, the researcher notes that it is important to distinguish the difference between chocolate that contains natural cocoa and processed chocolate; the latter is much higher in calories. "Therefore, physical activity, diet and other lifestyle factors must be carefully balanced to avoid detrimental weight gain over time," he adds.

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