



The Beacon

The Newsletter of
Med-Cert, Inc.
Volume 1
Issue 11
April 2004

Med-Cert Medical Management Resources

"Guiding your way to better health management"

CALL TODAY FOR ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS OR TO REQUEST INFORMATION TO BE SENT TO YOU OR YOUR FAMILY!

Toll-Free 800-356-7126



Health Information Services are available to you at no charge just by contacting

Med-Cert's Registered Nurse Case Managers by phone (toll-free), mail, or fax (813)-908-7342. This "Ask-A-Nurse" type Health Information Nurse Line consists of general health and wellness information available to you on health and disease-related subjects. Being aware of the most updated guidelines for diabetes, asthma, and other chronic diseases is important. Med-Cert will be communicating this information with the group health plans, so be on the look out for our flyers and be sure to call us if you have any questions or concerns about your health issues.

Did You Know...



If you take aspirin frequently, you may want to pass on ginkgo biloba. Ginkgo biloba has anti-platelet properties that may reduce blood clotting. Aspirin is an anticoagulant, or blood thinner, that also may increase the time it takes for blood to clot. Thus, combining ginkgo use with daily or frequent aspirin use could increase the risk of bleeding complications. Ask your doctor before taking both regularly.

April is Cancer Control Month

Several new issues have been emerging on the relationship between lifestyle factors such as obesity, physical activity and nutrition and cancer risks.

OBESITY



Women who have gained more than 20 pounds since age 18 have a higher risk of developing breast cancer after menopause than women who have

kept their girlish figure develop. Researchers have long known that being overweight increases the likelihood that a woman will develop breast cancer. The new study puts the risk into very real terms: pounds on the scale. American Cancer Society (ACS) researchers questioned more than 62,000 postmenopausal women about their height, current weight, weight at age 18, and use of hormone replacement therapy (HRT). After accounting for other breast cancer risk factors – like family history of the disease, exercise, and alcohol use -- they found that women who had gained 21-30 pounds since age 18 had a 40% higher risk of breast cancer than women who'd stayed within 5 pounds of their teenage weight. Those who had gained more than 70 pounds had double the risk. (Lesser weight gain, between 6-20 pounds, had little effect on risk, less than 10%.) Fortunately, there are steps

women can take to lower their risk of breast cancer. In addition to maintaining a healthy body weight, the ACS also recommends staying physically active, limiting alcohol consumption, and staying away from hormone therapy, if possible.

NUTRITION

A pound of chicken wings with blue cheese dip now tops the so-called "Healthy Menu" for a national restaurant chain - one sign of the low-carbohydrate diet trend that is sweeping our overweight nation. Researchers have confirmed that extra body fat leads to an estimated 90,000 cancer deaths each year. Dieters are told to keep their carbohydrate intake below 20 grams a day to force the body to burn fat for energy. This can mean missing out on the important vitamins and minerals found in restricted foods like grains, fruits, milk, and yogurt - the last two being important sources of calcium. As a result, many low-carb diet plans recommend taking a multivitamin/mineral supplement with calcium. Eating more vegetables and fruits has been linked to a lower risk of lung, oral, esophageal, stomach and colon cancer. Scientists do not know which nutrients are most protective against cancer, so ACS nutrition guidelines call for eating a wide variety of colorful vegetables and fruit. In general, the more colorful the



food is, the more cancer fighting antioxidants and phytochemicals it contains. Adults should eat at least five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day for cancer prevention. Eating foods high in saturated fat may increase the risk of prostate and colon cancer. ACS recommends people limit their intake of saturated fat in their diet to less than 10% of total fat intake. Recently, low-carb diet programs too have addressed the saturated fat issue by putting more emphasis on healthier protein sources - chicken, turkey, and fish, for example, rather than unlimited servings of red meat. However, recent research shows that Low-Carb diets are not any better than those recommended for the past several years by health professionals. Results published in the New England Journal of Medicine found people on the Atkins plan, the original low-carb diet, lost more weight, more quickly, than a comparison group of people on a standard low-fat diet. However, a year later, the Atkins dieters were no lighter than the low-fat diet group.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



In addition to trimming the fat from our diets, the ACS also stresses the importance of increasing physical activity as a means of improving overall health and lowering the risk of cancer. Studies

show that physical inactivity can lead to obesity and increased risk for cancers of several sites: colon and rectum, prostate, endometrium, breast (among postmenopausal women), and kidney. Again, many Americans feel they simply do not have the time to increase their physical activity. However, much like healthy eating, increasing physical activity can be achieved by making a few simple changes in your routine. Physical activity affects cancer risk indirectly, through its role in helping to prevent overweight and obesity, and also plays a more direct role. For example, with colon cancer, physical activity accelerates the movement of food through the digestive system, which reduces the time that the lining of

the bowel is exposed to potentially cancer-causing substances. Physical activity's likely role in the reduction of breast cancer risk is that it decreases the amount of exposure of breast tissue to circulating estrogen. The ACS recommends 30 minutes of physical activity 5 or more times a week.

For more information, contact the American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345 or visit the web site www.cancer.org



Sweet Switch

Switch from white potatoes to sweet potatoes and you may help to reduce your diabetes risk.

A recent study revealed that a carotenoid-rich diet helped to improve blood sugar metabolism in men at risk of type 2 diabetes. Diabetes is characterized by poor blood sugar control. Sweet potatoes are a rich source of the carotenoid beta-carotene. White potatoes contain almost none.

Benefit: Getting the right amount of antioxidants through diet or supplements can make your RealAge 6 years younger.

Coffee Chaos



It may be easier to monitor your caffeine intake if you have your coffee at home.

The caffeine content of coffee shop coffees can vary widely, according to research. In fact, an analysis revealed that some drinks could have double the caffeine in them one day compared to the previous day. Experts speculate that variations in roasting, brewing, and grinding methods may keep the caffeine content from being constant.

Your doctor may advise you to limit your caffeine intake if you have high blood pressure. Caffeine can raise blood pressure temporarily. Spikes in blood pressure could be dangerous for people who are sensitive to caffeine and have heart disease or high blood pressure. Most other people can safely consume up to about 250 milligrams of caffeine per day.

Quotable Quote

On Self...

"What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Med-Cert provides:

Utilization Management, Maternity Management, Large Case and Wellness Disease Management, Transplant Coordination and Stop Loss Assessments

For information on any of our services, please call 866-261-5657 (toll free).

We are on the Internet. Visit us at:

www.medcertinc.com

Recipe Corner



Carrot and Rice Pilaf

- 2 tsp. extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tsp. finely chopped garlic
- 2 cups brown rice
- 2 cans chicken broth
- 1 lb. carrots, cleaned and cut in 1/2" pieces
- 1/3 cup golden raisins
- 1/2 tsp. dried thyme
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. crushed fennel seeds
- 2 - 3 scallions, sliced thin
- 3 Tbsp. slivered almonds

Sauté garlic in oil but do not let it brown. Stir in rice, and then add all ingredients except nuts. Bring to boil then turn heat down to simmer, cover and cook for about 45 minutes, checking to make sure pan doesn't go dry. You may have to add a little more water. Stir in slivered almonds and serve.

(If you dislike licorice flavor use only 1/8 tsp. of the crushed fennel seeds. If you don't use any it will lack flavor.)



EDITING

This newsletter is brought to you courtesy of Med-Cert, Inc. Our sources for this edition were the ACS website, Real Age - Health Tools and Tips for Living Younger, RecipeSource, and the National Health Observances web sites.