Welcome to HEALTHYROADS!

In this monthly newsletter, you'll find a collection of articles on popular health and wellness topics. If you'd like additional guidance and support in your quest to lose weight, improve nutrition, develop an exercise plan, reduce stress, or quit smoking and haven't discovered our Weight Management, Tobacco Cessation, and Wellness programs, we encourage you to call us today. Some or all of these programs may have been purchased for you by your employer. To take advantage of all that Healthyroads has to offer, visit us online at www.healthyroads.com or call us toll-free at 877.330.2746.

Wellness and Healthy Living

Sweet Labels

Did you ever think you would see fresh fruit and energy bars for sale in a convenience store? Health food is big business now, and everyone wants in. But it can also make healthy choices more of a challenge.

Take sugar, for example. Not so long ago, corn syrup was called the healthier choice. Then the tables turned and corn syrup came under fire for being unhealthy. Since then, some food companies have proudly claimed that their products contain “real sugar” instead of corn syrup. Is one kind of sweetener really better or worse than the other?

When it comes to sweet foods, how can you separate the facts from the sales pitch? You can start by reading the label. But don't just read the front label; turn the item around and look at the nutrition label.

The front label may say “no sugar added,” but that doesn’t mean the food has no sugar. It just means the company didn’t add more. Foods like fruit and milk have natural sugar. A look at the back label will tell you how much sugar you are really eating.

But even when you read the label, it’s easy to get confused. Sugar comes in so many forms. And not all of them have the same effect on your body. Your choice of sweetener may depend on your needs. Do you want to cut calories, or do you need to watch your blood sugar for diabetes?

Here are a few tips to help you understand the labels.

- Words that end in –ose are sugars. This would include glucose, sucrose, fructose, and so on. Sugars by themselves do not have any nutrients. They have calories, and can cause tooth decay. Naturally occurring sugars, like those in whole fruit, are better for your health than added, refined sugars are.

- Words that end in –tol are sugar alcohols. This would include mannitol, sorbitol, and xylitol. These have few, if any, calories and are less likely to cause tooth decay. They may have some effect on blood sugar, but not as much as sugar has. In large amounts, they may cause stomach upset.

- Artificial sweeteners are chemicals that taste sweet but without the calories or tooth decay of sugar. These are most often found in diet sodas or chewing gum. These would include saccharin, aspartame, and stevioside. The effects these chemicals might have on health is still in question. It’s probably best to limit the amount you consume.

- Other sugars are available if not as widely used. You may see words on the label such as honey, agave syrup, or molasses. These have calories and may cause tooth decay. But these sugars occur naturally and may be better for you than refined, added sugars are.

Your world can still be a sweet place. Just be smart about how much—and what kind of—sugar or sweeteners you eat. Know what your body needs, and try to make healthy choices.
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Diet and Exercise
Zucchini – As Fun to Eat As It Is to Say

Looking for new ways to get your vegetable servings each day? Thinking you want to branch out from just peas and carrots? Consider the zucchini your fun, new veggie friend.

This popular summer squash is known for its mild flavor. It goes well with meats that have a sweet flavor, like pork or chicken. You can serve it either cooked or raw. It goes well in soups, stews, and casseroles. With only 20 calories in each chopped cup, zucchini adds guilt-free flavor and nutrition to just about any meal.

Vegetables are important to your diet. They are low in calories and fat and loaded with vitamins and minerals. The zucchini has calcium and potassium, as well as a compound called lutein. Studies show that lutein may help support eye health. A diet rich in this nutrient may help prevent eye diseases like cataracts and macular degeneration.

When you are picking out zucchini, smaller is better. Look for zucchini that is about 6-8 inches long and 2 inches thick—about the size of a small or medium banana. It should be a nice bright green, and not have any wrinkles or soft spots. Bigger zucchini tend to be a little tough and not as sweet (although you can use these shredded in breads or cakes.) You can keep zucchini in a sealed plastic bag in the fridge for about 3-4 days.

There are many healthy ways to serve zucchini. Here are a few tips:

- Slice and sauté in olive oil for 5-8 minutes, until tender.
- Chop and mix with onions, pepper, and corn; then toss with fat-free Italian salad dressing.
- Julienne and mix with your favorite lettuce salad.
- Chop and throw into your favorite soup or stew.
- Add chopped or sliced to your lasagna or other pasta dish.
- Cut in half and broil 6 inches from heat for 8 minutes.
- Coat slices in olive oil and grill for 7-8 minutes.
- Slice the long way and wrap around boneless pork or chicken, bake at 425°F for about 15 minutes (or until meat is cooked through).

Do you have favorite recipes that might be even better with a zucchini boost? Your mother’s meatloaf might work, or maybe a standby pasta salad you bring to potlucks. Getting more vegetables might be just a matter of getting more creative. So revisit your recipes, and bring along your new friend, the zucchini.

COACH TIP:
You may find it easier to eat healthy and lose weight if your food has some pizzazz. A sprinkle of spice, a variety of colors or textures, or a fancy presentation can help. So have fun with your food!
QUITTING SMOKING

Smoking Linked to Earlier Male Deaths

Have you ever wondered why men die an average of 4 years sooner than women? Is it just a question of biology? Or could differences in habits and lifestyle be a factor? Many groups have looked into this gender gap in life span.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has found that as much as 60% of the gap might be from tobacco-related illness. This means that deaths from lung diseases, liver cancer, and heart disease, all of which can be caused by smoking, account for more than half of the earlier deaths.

Studies in Japan, Finland, and the United Kingdom have found much the same. More than half of the early male deaths are caused by illness that is linked to smoking. The studies raise a few interesting questions. Did the early male deaths occur because men smoke more than women? Or are men more likely to die from smoking? And could some of the deaths be the result of certain jobs, such as coal-mining, in which men are much more likely to work?

The studies suggest that smoking has a clear role in the earlier male deaths. Even when male smokers were compared to female smokers, men appeared more likely to develop certain diseases. Research shows that in the United States, male smokers are many times more likely to get lung cancer than women who smoke.

On the other hand, there is increased risk for women smokers, too. Women who smoke are still 13 times more likely to develop lung cancer than women who don’t smoke. And smoking rates for men and women have changed over the years. In 1965, half of all men smoked. But only a third of women did. And the women who smoked were less likely to be heavy smokers.

Now, the percentage of women who smoke is catching up to that of men, even though the overall U.S. smoking rate has dropped. And women are also more likely to be heavy smokers than they were in the past. According to one study, this means that the gap in life span might shrink in the coming years.

The most important thing to remember about smoking is that it is deadly. It remains the leading cause of preventable death.

Smoking puts you at greater risk for diseases such as:

- Heart disease
- A variety of cancers
- Emphysema
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Stroke
- Alzheimer’s Disease

Whether you’re male or female, stopping tobacco use now can have an immediate effect. From the first cigarette you don’t smoke, you’re a nonsmoker. And the damage to your health starts healing right away.

Man or woman, it makes sense to quit.
Low-Stress Living

Find Your Yoga Style

There are so many kinds of yoga! Some are fast. Some are slow. Some are done in a hot room, and some are musical. Which one is right for you? Here’s a list to help you find your yoga style:

- **Ashtanga yoga** is also called power yoga. This is fast-paced and often self-directed. As such, it may be better for people who have experience with yoga.

- **Bikram yoga** is a series of 26 poses done in a room with 105°F heat at 40% humidity. This might not be safe for you if you are sensitive to heat, or have high blood pressure or heart disease.

- **Hatha yoga** is good for beginners. It uses a lot of breath work and slow, gentle movements.

- **Iyengar yoga** has a lot of props, like bricks and straps. It is a slow-moving style, and students may hold poses for several minutes.

- **Kripalu yoga** is a gentle form of yoga. It is great if you are a beginner or are just starting to exercise.

- **Kundalini yoga** has a lot of quick movement. Many of the moves work your core, or muscles of the abdomen, back, and buttocks. There may be gongs and singing. It focuses on balancing the body’s energy.

- **Restorative yoga** can help you wind down after a long day at work. This style sometimes involves guided meditation.

- **Vinyasa yoga** is fast-paced and flows from one pose to another. The moves may be done to music. This is also called hot yoga when it takes place in a hot room. This class maybe better for people who have experience with yoga.

Many studies have found yoga to be safe, with very few side effects. Check with your doctor before you start yoga if you have health conditions like high blood pressure or osteoporosis. Once you know what you’re looking for, yoga can be a fun and healthy addition to your workout routine. Look for a class near you.

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