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Quit smoking: Your heart will thank you

Cigarette smoking increases your heart rate, narrows the walls of your blood vessels and reduces the amount of oxygen being delivered to your system among other things, that’s why smoking is considered a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease.

Unfortunately, obesity is also a risk factor for cardiovascular diseases. And most smokers gain between 6 and 13 pounds in the six months after they quit, according to a new study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association. The benefits of quitting smoking are well known “Cigarette smoking has short-and-long cardiovascular effects that are reversible shortly after cessation,” according to the study authors.

But the researchers wanted to know if the weight gain following smoking cessation would counteract the positive effects quitting has on your cardiovascular system.

The study

The median weight gain for recent quitters over a four-year period was about 6 pounds. Researchers found quitters had a significantly reduced risk of cardiovascular disease.

Recent smokers who quit were about 53% less likely to have cardiovascular disease than those who continued to smoke. Long-term quitters had a 54% lower risk, despite weight gain.

These results applied to only those in the study without diabetes. While the researchers also looked at data for people with diabetes, they did not find a significant association between quitting smoking and a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease.

Basically the smokers may have had “smoking generally need several attempts before successfully quitting.

One other limitation to the study is its lack of diversity – the majority of the participants were white, so the authors aren’t sure if their results would translate to a wider population.

The takeaway

People who quit smoking can reduce their risk of cardiovascular disease Period.

“The message of this study is that weight gain following smoking cessation does not offset the benefits of smoking cessation on cardiovascular disease. Doctors should advise all their patients to quit smoking.

Source: http://thechart.blogs.cnn.com/category/livingwell

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Electronic health records improve colon cancer screening rates

Centralized records – keeping system may help improve rates of colon cancer screening, according to a new study.

Researchers at the group Health Cooperative, a non-profit health care and insurance system in Washington State, used electronic health records to identify and monitor almost 5,000 patients who were due for a colon cancer screening but hadn’t gotten it.

One group of patients received “normal care” reminders from their doctor during their appointments. A second group received a letter in the mail encouraging them to get screened; a third group a call from a medical assistant on top of all that, and fourth group got a “patient navigator” to manage the screening.

Each additional step increased the percentage of people who got screened, from 26% in the “normal” group to 65% in the patient navigator group.

Source: http://thechart.blogs.cnn.com/category/livingwell

Antioxidants in coffee, tea may not help prevent dementia, stroke

Drinking coffee and tea rich in antioxidants may lower your risk of dementia or having a stroke, according to a new study published in the Journal of Neurology.

The study may call into question other research suggesting a diet high in antioxidants helps reduce the risk of dementia or stroke.

Researchers followed approximately 5,400 people aged 55 years older for nearly 14 years. The participants had no signs of dementia when they began the study and most had never had a stroke. They were questioned about how they ate 170 foods over the course of the past year and they were divided into three groups based on the levels of antioxidants in their diet-low, moderate or high.

Source: http://thechart.blogs.cnn
7 Foods that help You Lose Weight

Don’t get sucked into the idea that food is your enemy when you’re trying to lose weight. In fact it’s just the opposite: Befriend the right foods, and the pounds are much more likely to peel off than if you just try to cut calories across the board, seven foods known to nutritionists to boost your body’s fat-burning potential.

1. Oats – wait a minute – aren’t oats a carb? Yes and no. Oats are a whole grain and they’re high on what nutritionists call the “satiety index,” meaning oats have tremendous power to make you feel full. Not only that, they’re high in soluble fiber, so they cut cholesterol and blood fat. Oats digest slowly, so they don’t raise your blood sugar, and they keep you feeling filled up as well into the late morning. Old fashioned steel-cut and rolled oats, with up to 5 grams of fiber per serving, are best, but even instant oatmeal has 3 to 4 grams of fiber per serving.

2. Eggs - Nutritionists have been trying for some years to restore the reputation of the lowly egg. No longer thought to be a cholesterol-booster (eggs contain a different type of cholesterol than that in humans), eggs are a concentrated form of animal protein without the added fat that comes with meat. Dietary studies have repeatedly found that when people eat an egg every morning in addition to (or instead of) toast or cereal, they lose twice as much as those who eat a breakfast that’s dominated by carbs.

3. Skim milk - Studies in reputable publications such as the Journal of Obesities (in addition to the controversial ones funded by the National Dairy Council) show that the combination of calcium, vitamin D, and low-fat protein in skim milk and nonfat yogurt trigger weight loss and help build and maintain lean muscle.

4. Apples – To keep the pounds at bay, eat an apple a day. Numerous studies have found that eating an apple a half hour to an hour before a meal has the result of cutting the calories of the meal. The fiber in the apple makes you feel full, so you eat less. Recent research suggests eating apples has other benefits, too: The antioxidants in apples appear to prevent metabolic syndrome, the combination of high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and pre-diabetes that tends to accompany thickening around the waist. Also apples are high in pectin, which limits the amount of fat your cells can absorb.

5. Red meat - not exactly what you think of as a diet food. But research in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition compared diet results for women who ate red meat and those who didn’t, and the meat-eaters lost more weight. Experts think the dense protein in lean red meat helps maintain muscle mass.

6. Cinnamon - This simple spice appears to have the power to help your body metabolize sugar, according to a USDA study involving diabetics. Eating as little as 1/4 teaspoons of cinnamon a day were found to reduce blood sugar levels and cut cholesterol from 10 to 25 percent. So add cinnamon to smoothies or sprinkle it on your cereal. The cinnamon will boost the health benefits of the coffee while helping your body rid itself of the added sugars if you drink coffee.

7. Almonds and almond butter – Almonds are calorie-dense, but they also pack a huge nutritional punch - and they’re particularly effective in counteracting cholesterol and triglycerides. One study in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition found that eating almonds was as effective as taking a statin. Spreading butter on your morning toast gives you a nice boost while preventing the carbs in the toast from spiking your blood sugar.

Source: http://healthyliving.msn.com/nutrition
What exactly does fiber do?

Fiber is a plant-derived carbohydrate that cannot be digested by humans, so it passes through your system relatively intact and has little to no caloric value.

There are two types of fiber: Soluble (dissolves in water) and insoluble (does not dissolve in water). Both play an important role in optimal health and occur naturally—often together—in foods such as whole grains, fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds and beans.

Fiber acts as a natural laxative by increasing stool bulk, which allows stool to pass more readily through the colon. It can also help those with loose stools and may play a role in the management of irritable bowel syndrome. Many types of soluble fiber also act as prebiotics, feeding healthy bacteria in your gut, thereby further contributing to colon health.

Fiber, especially soluble fiber, also improves blood sugar control by slowing down the rate that food empties from stomach, thereby delayed the rise in blood sugar after meals and preventing excess.

Source: http://www.cnn.com/2012/11/08/health