Eating the Mediterranean diet may lead to a longer life

Eating a Mediterranean diet may be the key to living longer. That’s according to a new study led at Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston and Harvard Medical School.

The diet involves eating items off a menu that is rich in vegetables, fruit, nuts, bean and peas, unrefined grains, olive oil and fish. It keeps dairy, meat and saturated fats to a minimum. And you can have a glass of red wine with dinner without cheating.

Can meditation really prevent aging?

The diet has been consistently linked with health benefits that includes helping you manage your weight, and it can lower your risk for chronic issues such as cardiovascular disease.

This new research looks at data from 4,676 healthy middle-aged women involved in the Nurses’ Health Study, on ongoing study tracking the health of more than 120,000 U.S. nurses since 1976.

It found women who ate a Mediterranean diet had longer telomeres; i.e. they will live longer.

How to get super fit at any age

Fruits, vegetables, olive oils and nuts --- the key components of a Mediterranean diet—have well known antioxidant and anti-inflammatory function.

Healthy aging, four keys

This study’s results provide “some insight into the underlying physiologic mechanism behind this association,” indicting that greater adherence to this diet is significantly associated with longer telomeres. Because of the antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects of the Mediterranean diet, following this diet “could balance out the ‘bad effects’ of smoking and obesity.
These findings further support the health benefits of greater adherences to the Mediterranean diet for reduction of overall mortality, increased longevity and reduced incidence of chronic diseases, especially major cardiovascular diseases.

None of the individual’s dietary components was associated with telomere length. Researchers suggest it means the whole diet is an important element, rather than one item being a kind of super food

Source: http://www.cnn.com/2014/12/02/health/mediterranean-diet-longevity

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**Diet Rich in Whole Grains Might Extend Your Life**

Over time, regularly eating whole wheat bread, oatmeal or other whole grains may add years to your lifespan.

Whole grains are so healthy that a person’s risk of an early death drops with every serving added to a daily diet, According to findings published online Jan 5 in JAMA Internal Medicine.

There is clear evidence that the more whole grains intake, the lower the mortality rate is.

The researchers estimate that every one-ounce serving of whole grains reduced a person’s overall risk of early death by 5 percent, and their risk of death from heart disease by 9 percent.

Freshly harvested grains such as wheat, barley and oatmeal consist of three parts. An outer shell called the bran protects the seed. The germ is the small embryo inside the seed that could sprout into a new plant. And the endosperm - by far the largest part of the seed – is the potential food supply for a new plant started from the germ.

In refining grains to make processed flour, manufacturers typically strip away the bran and the germ – leaving only the calorie rich endosperm. But whole grain foods such as oatmeal, popcorn, brown rice and whole wheat bread and cereal contain a three parts of the seed.
Why might whole grains be so healthy? They are rich in fiber -- mainly from the bran -- and that fiber helps slow digestion and prevents harmful spikes in blood sugar levels. In addition, both the bran and the germ contain a number of important vitamins and minerals, such as vitamin E and magnesium, as well as nutrients such as antioxidants.

Without the bran and germ, about 25 percent of a grain's protein is lost, along with at least 17 key nutrients.

The consensus thus far is it's probably not one thing, but a number of wonderful things that work together in whole grains synergistically for health benefits.

Current U.S. guidelines call for people to get half their daily grains from whole grain sources, which amounts to about three servings.

To get that feeling of satisfaction, it's advantageous if you spread out the whole grains throughout your day. By stretching it out throughout the day you're able to maintain that fiber and satiety, which helps you better manage your weight.


America’s 9 biggest health issues

After an incredibly busy 2014, during which health stories like Ebola, new food nutrition label rules, and the debate about the right to die sparked by Brittany Maynard dominated the headlines, it’s now worth looking at what we maybe be failing in the next 12 months.

So, in no particular order, here are the nine big health stories to watch for, and the questions they will likely raise, in 2015.

Doctor’s shortage.

There aren’t nearly enough of us to care for the U.S. population. By some estimates, the country is already short of tens of thousands of doctors, a problem that will only get worse as the demand for care increases with our aging population. That could mean longer wait times for you when you need to make an appointment.
But that also means policy makers will have to consider questions like: Is there a way to increase the number of residency training slots? Are there other health care professionals who can reasonably fill in the gaps? Will the nation’s quality of care go down? How can the country avoid a situation where only the wealthy will be able to afford quality care?

**Hospital errors and infections.**

Hospital mistakes and infections are still one of the leading causes of preventable death (indeed, some studies suggest “hospital-acquired conditions “kill more people than car accidents or diabetes).

True, recent study showed the rate did get better this year, saving tens of thousands of lives. But what else can hospitals do to prevent these mistakes and infections? Can technology like e-prescriptions and electronic health records prevent problems that most often occur: the mistakes caregivers make with a patient’s drugs?

**Antibiotic resistance.**

It has been called public health’s “ticking time bomb.” The world Health Organization calls antibiotic resistant infections one of the biggest threats to global health today. Each year, at least 2 million people become infected with bacteria that are resistant to antibiotics, and at least 23,000 people die each year. Most of these deaths happen in health care settings and in nursing homes. How can we respond? Well, research teams around the world have already started searching for the next generation of infection-fighting drugs, but remains to be seen if time will run out, sending us back to the beginning: a time before antibiotics, where even a cut that becomes infected could kill you.

**More-do-it-yourself health care: apps and technology.**

Technology has made do-it-yourself patient care much easier. This goes beyond just a patient’s ability to look up their symptoms online. There are apps to help with autism, apps that can simulate a check-up, apps that can monitor conditions. Wearables can motivate you to walk more or sleep more or check a diabetic’s glucose level. But how does all this helping yourself make your health care better? How much is too much?
And what does this mean for your privacy? After all, the health care industry accounted for 43% of all major data breaches in 2013. Meanwhile, although 93% of health care data requires protection by law, some surveys suggest only 57% of it is “somewhat protected.” What could this mean for your privacy and personal information if security doesn’t get better?

**Food desert.**

While not everyone agrees with the term food desert, the USDA still estimates 23.5 million people live in these urban neighborhoods and rural towns with limited access to fresh, affordable, healthy food and convenience stores in these areas, residents often have to rely on fast food and convenience stores that don’t stock fresh produce. It takes a real toll on their health. Families who live in these areas struggle with obesity and chronic conditions, and they even die sooner than people who live in neighborhoods with easy access to healthy food. More farmers markets are now accepting food stamps and many nonprofits have stepped in to try to bring community gardens and healthy food trucks to these areas, but so far it’s not enough. Will cities offer incentives to grocery store chains to relocate to these neighborhoods? How else can this system be helped?

**Caregivers for the aging population.**

We are heading into a kind of caregiver crisis. The number of people 65 years and older is expected to rise 101% between 2000 and 2030, yet the number of family members who can provide care for these older adults is only expected to rise 25%. This raises a series of related questions, not least who is going to step up to fill the gaps? Will cities that don’t traditionally have strong public transportation systems add to their routes? Will developers create move mixed-use buildings to make shopping and socializing easier to access? Could the government create a kind of Caregiver Corporation that could check in on the isolated elderly? Who will pay for this expensive kind of safety net?
The cost of Alzheimer’s.

Currently about 5.2 million Americans have Alzheimer’s. That number is expected to double every 20 years. With a cure some way off, what can be done to ease the emotional and financial burden on families and communities affected by the disease?

The Alzheimer’s Association predicts that by 2050, U.S. costs for care will total $1.2 trillion, making it the most expensive condition in the nation. How will we be able to afford the costs of caring for this population? What can the country do to achieve the goal the White House set for preventing and effectively treating Alzheimer’s by 2025?

Marijuana.

With the growing acceptance of weed, we can expect that more laws will change to allow medical and recreational use of marijuana. How will the rest of the laws in this country adjust?

For instance, Washington State is coming up with a Breathalyzer-type device to check if drivers are high. But it will be interesting to see how readily available these devices are going to be. Will legalization improve the scientific understanding of the long-term consequences of the drug? What other uses could this drug have to help those who may need pain relief most?

Missing work-life balance.

Americans spend more time on the job than most other developed countries. We don’t get as much vacation, we don’t take what vacation we have, and we are prone to working nights and weekends. This stress has a negative impact on American’s health. What are companies doing to help? What technology can change this phenomenon? Will millennia who say work-life balance is a bigger priority than other generations rub off on the rest of us? What can we personally do to find a better balance?