Four Surprising Benefits Of Vegetables

You've seen Meatless Mondays, vegan restaurants and green drinks become all the rage. You know that vegetables can help you lose weight and fend off chronic diseases. Yet if you're like most Americans, you probably still aren't eating enough of them.

If you need a little motivation to get your share, here are four surprising reasons to increase your vegetable intake.

1. **They fight bloat**
   Although you may associate vegetables with creating a bloated belly, most vegetables actually do the opposite. Vegetables are rich in fiber, which flushes out waste and gastric irritants and prevents constipation by keeping the digestive tract moving.

   Vegetables can also help you look leaner by counteracting bloat caused by salt. Most American adults get nearly twice the recommended sodium limit. Eating a bacon and egg biscuit, a typical restaurant meal, or instant soup means consuming nearly an entire day's sodium allotment. Vegetables are rich in both potassium and water, which help flush excess sodium out of the body while restoring the body's normal fluid balance.

   To ease that full feeling in your stomach, try eating fennel, cucumbers, summer squash, romaine lettuce, red leaf lettuce or tomatoes.

   If you experience gas when you start to add more fiber and vegetables to your diet, choose steamed vegetables rather than raw ones. The heat from cooking breaks down some of the fiber and will keep gastric distress to a minimum as your body adjusts to consuming the fiber you need.

2. **They create a youthful glow**
   Want younger-looking skin? Vegetables prevent unwanted signs of aging and keep skin young and supple thanks to phytonutrients, vitamin C and high water content. Many vegetables are 85% to 95% water, which helps hydrate the skin and reduce wrinkles. Vitamin C aids in collagen formation, according to studies. Choose brightly colored red and orange vegetables and you'll get an added boost of beta carotene, which can give you a healthy glow as it protects skin from sun damage. Similarly, lycopene, found in red vegetables such as tomatoes, also has been shown to act as a natural sunscreen.

3. **They reduce stress**
   Nutrients like magnesium and vitamin C are quickly depleted during stressful times. Luckily, many vegetables contain these very nutrients, as well as tension-reducing omega-3 fatty acids and B vitamins that fight anxiety and depression. The potassium and magnesium found in some vegetables can also calm you on the inside as they relax blood vessels and keep your blood pressure down, according to research. And fiber keeps blood sugar levels stable, preventing dips in energy and the associated mood swings. To reduce stress, eat any vegetable. Mushrooms, leafy greens, squash, potatoes, bell peppers, spinach, bok choy, fennel, string beans and edamame are especially good sources of several vitamins and minerals.

For a no-fuss way to consume more vegetables and combat stress, add leafy greens, mushrooms and peppers to your sandwiches, wraps, soups, pizza, tomato sauce and omelets.

Continuing...
Four Surprising Benefits Of Vegetables (cont.)

4. They protect your bones
Most people think of dairy foods as the bone protectors, thanks to their high calcium and vitamin D content. But some vegetables also have these same nutrients in addition to bone-building vitamin K, magnesium, potassium and prebiotic fiber.

Tomatoes in particular have recently been connected to bone health. A study found that when you remove lycopene-rich foods like tomatoes from the diet, women are at increased risk of osteoporosis. Eat strong-spined, dark leafy greens like collard greens, turnip greens, kale, spinach (cooked for more calcium!), broccoli and green peas for calcium and vitamin K. Mushrooms contain vitamin D while asparagus, chard, kale, artichokes, onions, garlic and leeks are full of prebiotic fiber.

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Eating more fruits and veggies won’t make you lose weight
We’re often told to eat more fruit and vegetables, but the chances that you’ll lose weight just by eating more of these foods are slim. New research suggests increased fruit and vegetable intake is only effective for weight loss if you make an effort to reduce your calorie intake overall. In other words, you need to exercise or consume fewer calories to shed those pounds. Don’t let that stop you from including more fruit and veggies in your diet, though. Even if they don’t directly help you lose weight, these foods still provide a number of health benefits.

What your smartphone says about your health
Add it to your list of things your smartphone knows about you. Your mobile device reflects your personal bacterial “blueprint”. Meaning it can reveal the microorganisms you’re harboring on your hands.

Researchers looked at the phones of 17 people and found that 82% of the most common bacteria on participants’ fingers were also found on their phones. The researchers say further understanding of this link could have important public health implications. “Mobile phones can potentially be a non-invasive way to track environmental microbial exposure over time and space, and inform how we exchange human micro biota with our immediate surroundings, the study authors write. It’s important to note, however that the study’s sample size was very small and only looked at phones with touchscreens.

Source: http://www.cnn.com

5 studies you may have missed
Here's a roundup of five medical studies published this month that might give you new insights into your health, mind and body. Remember, correlation is not causation – so if a study finds a connection between two things, it doesn't mean that one causes the other.

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Continuing...
Improving the environment can improve your health

Less pollution could lead to better respiratory health, a new study suggests. Researchers at Duke University found that as air quality improved, fewer people died from emphysema, asthma and pneumonia.

For almost two decades - from 1993 to 2010 - the researchers examined the levels of nitrogen dioxide, ozone, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide and other air pollutants in North Carolina. They then compared this information with the death rates of the population that were attributed to respiratory diseases.

The results were adjusted for smoking and seasonal fluctuations of certain respiratory diseases.

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

5 studies you may have missed (cont.)

Why you should kick the smokeless habit

As Major League Baseball considers a ban on smokeless tobacco, new research shows stopping use after a heart attack cuts your mortality risk nearly in half.

Swedish researchers studied almost 2,500 smokeless tobacco users who experienced heart attacks. Comparing those who quit using smokeless tobacco with those who continued to use it after the heart attack, the scientists found that the risk of mortality was almost halved in those who quit.

The researchers point out that this study looks solely at heart attacks survivors. The number of smokeless tobacco users who died is unknown so the study authors say that the risks presented here could be an underestimation.

Parents of sick kids turn to ER or urgent care

Parents of sick children often turn to emergency rooms or urgent care centers, even when they know the child’s illness isn’t that severe.

In a new study published this week, researcher surveyed more than 600 parents and found that more than 88% sought acute medical care when their child was unable to attend child care. Many of these parents did so because they needed a note so their child could go back to daycare or preschool, and so they could go back to work.

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Source: http://thechart.blogs.cnn.com/
Depression a risk factor for heart disease in young women

Young women are twice as likely to suffer a heart attack or die of heart disease if they suffer from depression. Researchers looked at 3,237 patients with suspected or established heart disease who were undergoing coronary angiography – a medical procedure used to diagnose narrowing in the arteries that supply blood to the heart. On the same day of the procedure, the patients answered nine questions assessing their state of mind. If the patient was experiencing moderate to severe depression, and was under 55 years old, researchers found she had double the chance of experiencing a heart attack in the next few years. Depressed women under 55 were also twice as likely to have heart disease or to die from any cause during that time period as those who were not depressed. Men and those women older than 55 with depression did not show the same increased risk.

Depression is as powerful a risk factor for heart disease as diabetes and smoking. The study believes there’s a biological reason as to why depression harms young females’ hearts in particular. Mechanisms underlying the association of depression and heart disease could be inflammation or hormonal regulation, the study author wrote. However, the exact reasons for the link are still unclear.

When people get depressed, they stop taking care of themselves. And when they stop taking care of themselves, they get sick.

On the other hand, when sick people don’t take care of themselves, they can also become depressed.

A 2012 study with nearly 7,000 U.S. adults conducted by John Hopkins University concluded that women aged 17 to 39 with depression had a significantly higher risk of ischemic heart disease death.

Patients with cardiac disease risk factors such as high blood pressure or obesity usually know about their condition and get professional medical treatment. Part of the additional hurdle is the stigma in seeking care in the first place. Admitting to your depression is half the treatment. Some people don’t even recognize that they are depressed.

For many people antidepressants are very beneficial and help them get rid of the depression, but treating the depression will not make cardiac disease disappear. Yet there is something that can reduce your depression and your heart health, Raison says: Because you don’t know that treating one will treat other, you want to treat both. The way to treat both is exercise.

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