

To Your Health!

By Judy Hargis, P.A., and Audeen Wagner



The Immune System— Your Body at Work for You

The immune system is hard at work at all times in our bodies, just waiting for an infection or illness to strike, so it can fight right back — without our even being aware it is there. There are special immune cells whose sole job is protecting us from attacks by “foreign invaders.” There are many components to this system and, together, they form quite an army of cells to protect you. The major responsibility for carrying out the activities of the immune system is borne by the lymphocytes, the white blood cells, and we have about a trillion of them. Through an intricate and complex system, these cells function to ward off disease.

But did you know that there is a strong connection between the immune system and the digestive tract? While we think of “bacteria” as something we want to get rid of, there’s another world of “good bacteria” in the digestive system. These “friendly” bacteria function in a positive way to prevent the over-colonization of disease-causing micro-organisms. Scientists now know that many things in our lifestyle — poor diet, chlorine and sodium fluoride (present in most treated city water), overuse of alcoholic beverages, antibiotics used in food production as well as medical treatments, to name a few — contribute to destruction of these beneficial

bacteria.

Ever hear of Probiotics?

Probiotics, a latter-day buzzword, simply means “for life.” A more technical definition is “a live microbial supplement which beneficially affects the host by improving its intestinal microbial balance.” The presence of probiotics in the digestive system actually prevents unfriendly organisms (those “bad” bacteria) from gaining a foothold. They also prevent growth of yeast and fungus, and even produce substances that can lower cholesterol.

Probiotics may be added to your system by way of certain foods. According to a recent newspaper article, “yogurt and other foods containing friendly bacteria are becoming the rage.” Those good bacteria are in the bacterial cultures used to make yogurt, buttermilk and other fermented dairy products. They fall into the category of probiotics because they promote a healthy digestive system, aid in nutrition absorption and enhance the immune system. When shopping for these foods, check labels for a symbol that says “Live and Active Cultures.” Also, probiotic supplements are available on the market; you might check with your caregiver or pharmacist for suggestions regarding which supplement to buy — one source suggests that they need to be enteric coated to survive the journey through the acidity of the stomach and small intestine.

The immune system is, indeed, a complicated and intricate part of the human body. Whatever we can do to enhance its efficiency will most certainly pay dividends in maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

We welcome your comments and questions. Please contact us at: To Your Health! The Independent, 725 Bridge Street, Vernonia, OR 97064, or email: health@the-independent.net.

Studies indicate that fooling the eyes can help trim the waistline

Do you eat with your eyes? As portion sizes have increased, so have calories eaten. Research has shown that we tend to eat more when more food is in front of us. If that food is higher in calories, that can lead to excess.

A study of preschool children found that the amount of food served was the most powerful factor affecting the amount of food consumed at a meal. Another study showed that preschool children took bigger bites and ate 25 percent more of entrées when served “super-size” portions. When offered

smaller portions, they ate less.

When students at Pennsylvania State University were served deli sandwiches, hunger and fullness were not significantly different whether they had eaten an 8-inch sandwich or a 12-inch sandwich.

Another study found that women age 20-45 years consumed more calories when served the largest portion of higher calorie food than the smallest portion of a low-calorie entrée. No differences in hunger or fullness were reported, however.

What can you do to eat less?

One possibility is to reduce the calories in food so that you can still enjoy satisfying portions. Fruits and vegetables are good lower calorie meal extenders. For example, you can add canned tomatoes to chili and extra carrots to beef stew. Add frozen vegetables such as peas or corn to a casserole or pasta. Ask for more vegetable toppings (such as mushrooms and green peppers) and less cheese on your pizza.

Using smaller bowls can fool your eyes. A study showed that people ate more ice cream when it was in bigger bowls. When package sizes are larger, people tend to eat more, too. Measure out a small portion in a bowl rather than sitting down with a whole bag of snacks.

When you eat out, save part of a large portion for another meal. Sharing an entrée with a friend or relative is another lower calorie strategy. Ask for a

“doggy bag” and refrigerate the food at home as soon as possible.

People often eat until the plate is empty. Don’t be a member of the clean plate club. Serve smaller portions or put food in bowls on the table so family members can serve themselves based on their appetite.

Source: Carolyn Raab, Extension food and nutrition specialist, Oregon State University.

Become an Ombudsman, help others

Volunteer advocates and investigators are needed to serve as ombudsmen for residents of nursing homes, residential care facilities, assisted living facilities and adult foster care homes. The Office of the Long

Term Care Ombudsman will train the volunteers on the aging process, communication skills, problem-solving skills, investigation and other ombudsman skills. The certification training will begin on Friday, September 7, in Tigard.

As Certified Ombudsmen, the volunteers work to improve the quality of residents’ lives, by identifying and investigating complaints and concerns on behalf of the residents, then

working with the facilities to make changes. The typical concerns ombudsmen address cover a broad range, and often include resident care; residents’ rights, such as privacy, respect and dignity; and quality of life concerns such as appropriate activities and meals.

For information about the program or to learn how to get involved, contact Kathy Walter at 1-800-522-2602.

Red Cross Blood Drive on Aug. 24

Bring a friend to the Red Cross Blood Drive at Vernonia Community Church, 957 State Ave., on Friday, August 24, from 1:30 to 6:30 p.m.

To schedule an appointment, call 503-429-6790 or the American Red Cross at 503-

528-5593.

Donor identification is required prior to donating blood. Donors must be at least 17 years old or have a Red Cross Parental Consent form signed by their parents.

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