

To Your Health!

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



More information about nutrition and health in our ongoing series...We'll talk about antioxidants, free radicals, phytonutrients, and some other fascinating things.

Antioxidants. Substances that inhibit oxidation or reactions promoted by oxygen, peroxides or free radicals. Antioxidants actually neutralize free radicals by binding to their free electrons.

Free radical. OK, what are free radicals? They are especially active atoms or group of atoms that have one or more non-paired electrons.

They are produced naturally in the body or introduced from outside sources (as tobacco smoke, toxins or pollutants). They can cause damage to cells, proteins and DNA by altering their chemical structure, and they impair the immune system, leading to infections and various degenerative diseases, such as heart disease and cancer. And, it is thought that free radicals are responsible for much of the aging process.

Not all free radicals are "bad" – they are present in the body, and in normal amounts they have an important function, such as those produced by the immune system to destroy viruses and bacteria. When there is an excessive number of free radicals, damage to cells and tissues happens. This "oversupply" can change the way the cells code genetic material, causing changes in structure of certain cells.

What to do about it? Change diet to include foods that contain antioxidants. How to get more antioxidants in your diet? Remember the word "ace"—vitamins A, C and E.

Vitamin A and beta-carotene are powerful scavengers in the war against free radicals. They destroy cancer-causing substances, play a part in a healthy heart, and can lower cholesterol levels.

Vitamin C is a powerful antioxidant, and also acts as a protector of other antioxidants such as vitamin E. The cells of the brain and spinal cord, which are susceptible to the invasion of free radicals, are protected by vitamin C. This versatile vitamin is even more potent as a scavenger in the presence of a bioflavonoid called hesperidin (found in most citrus fruits and especially in orange peel). Vitamin C also stimulates certain immune cells.

(There's a couple more of those long words: flavonoids and bioflavonoids. A flavonoid is defined as a group of oxygen-containing antioxidant compounds that include common pigments. Bioflavonoids are biologically active flavonoids derived from plants, especially citrus and other fruits, and vegetables.)

Vitamin E prevents oxidation of fats, and also enhances immune response, and may reduce the risk of coronary artery disease.

Phytonutrients. Defined as plant- or fruit-derived chemical compounds; they are phytochemicals or compounds that come from edible plants – like those bioflavonoids.

Here's a list of foods high in phytonutrients (in living color):

Red: tomatoes, watermelons, pink grapefruit

Orange: beta-carotene, carrots, squash, cantaloupe. Beta-carotene and vitamin A destroy carcinogens, guard against heart disease and stroke, and much more.

Yellow: pineapple, oranges, peaches

Green: broccoli, cabbage, spinach – Contains a strong anti-cancer agent.

Purple/blue: blueberries, eggplant, grapes, cherries, berries

White: Onions, garlic – Contain allicin, a natural antibiotic which is antibacterial and antifungal, and is so strong that it is used to treat Lyme disease.

Supporting the Immune System. We can get the latest treatment for diseases and disabilities, but stable ongoing health can be attained solely by maintaining a healthy immune system. The immune system is vital in fighting every kind of injury or illness. The "good bacteria" that live in the colon are the "warriors" of the immune system – they attack illness and injury sites immediately, it is their job to prevent progression of any infection. Many of the foods we eat (you know, junk food, fats, sweets, and the like), and the pollutants in our environment, contribute to a weak immune system; we need to take steps to improve our diet (adding some or all of those color-coded veggies and fruits – of course there are many more choices out there, we just need to look for them!).

Don't forget about whole grains. Whole wheat, cereals, wheat germ, bran, flaxseed meal – all those things contribute to a healthy digestive system, resulting in a stronger immune response. Actually, there are many benefits to whole grains. Grains are a great example of the dietary fiber we always hear about. Whole grains are important to maintaining a healthy intestine – that's where we absorb the majority of our nutrients, not just the stomach (as most people think).

Probiotics. Dietary supplements containing live bacteria, taken orally to restore beneficial bacteria to the body. Another definition is "live microorganisms which when administered in adequate amount confer a health benefit."

Probiotics are key to improving the health of your immune system. A good vitamin regimen is a good start. Yogurt containing live cultures is a major probiotic, and dairy products such as cheese and kefir have been associated with probiotic bacteria in maintaining a good immune system. Probiotics are also available as a dietary supplement – there are many to choose from on the market.

A tip or two about fruits and vegetables: Vegetables and fruits seem to have most of their nutrients near the outer skin of the product; we are advised to wash (thoroughly!) these foods (instead of peeling), whenever possible. So, scrub the potatoes and carrots rather than peeling for a healthier meal. Another thing, there are products to help get produce really clean. One such wash is called Bio-Kleen. It is oil based, breaks apart other oily substances (such as the waxy coating sometimes found on apples and other fruits). It is a natural product, containing lime, grapefruit and coconut oil, and is environmentally safe, biodegradable and non-toxic.

The message here is: What we eat certainly affects long-term health, and life is much more fun when we feel good. We just need to ask ourselves, "Do I EAT TO LIVE, or LIVE TO EAT??"

As always, we welcome your input. Please email us at health@the-independent.net, or contact us care of The Independent, 725 Bridge Street, Vernonia, OR 97064.

Total Body Conditioning Classes are Moving!

Starting in February classes will be held at The Grange Hall. Located at the corner of North St. & Washington Ave.

Morning Classes	Evening Classes
Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays at 8:30am	Mon., Wed. at 6:30 pm Fridays at 12:30 pm

If you have body parts you want to tone and strengthen then come and enjoy this boot camp style training.



February's Sweet Deal
Receive \$20.00 off when you purchase 1 month of 12 classes.

For more information contact:
Teresa Williams, NSCA-CPT
503-429-5051 or 503-799-3424

Top ten tips for quitting tobacco offered

Seventy-five percent of Oregon smokers want to quit. And with New Year's resolutions

upon us, more smokers are interested in quitting now than any other time of year. Oregon's smokefree ban will extend to bars, bingo halls and bowling centers on January 1, 2009 – so now is an excellent time to quit.

Included below are the top

10 tips to quitting, provided by the Oregon Tobacco Prevention and Control Program. For example, many people think quitting cold turkey is the most effective technique, but research shows that you are two to three times more likely to

Please see page 20



Terry's Gym

A COMPLETE CO-ED GYM FACILITY

(503) 429-0501
16720 Noakes Rd Vernonia, OR

BUDGET HEATING & COOLING

Full Service, Sales and Installation.

27 years experience.

Visa & Master Cards accepted.

503 233-3133

3215 NE Couch st Portland, Oregon 97232 • CCB #147995