

Featured Topic: Christmas Message

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Wishing You Peace and Health

Each day we may have to carry burdens that, at the time, seem unbearable. But in the end, they become the very things that remake us anew. When you're going through a challenge, it can be hard to see its value. It's only with time and perspective that we realize why we were guided along a certain path.

During the holidays, we have a chance to reflect on the year behind us and the new beginning ahead. To me, this time of year brings with it a sense of hope and the promise of even better things to come.

I count your friendship as one of God's most precious blessings to me. I wish you peace and all the best in this wonderful season, and an abundant New Year filled with joy.

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Health Benefits of Dark Chocolate

(2 slides)

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Dark chocolate is good for the heart and brain!

- Researchers collected data from over 55,000 men, and recorded chocolate intake and rates of atrial fibrillation over a 13 year period
- Results: compared to those who ate chocolate less than once a month, those eating 2-6 servings a week had a 20% lower rate of atrial fibrillation (no increased benefits for more than 6 servings a week)
- A previous study found that participants who consumed chocolate in the afternoon were more alert and attentive than the placebo group
- These results were for DARK chocolate, not milk chocolate, which has much less of the beneficial cocoa flavonols plus more sugar

Increasing Use of Antidepressants (2 slides)

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Many Americans struggling with mood

- New government survey reports that **use of antidepressants has increased 65%** since 1999
 - Data from 14,000 Americans was compared to prior health surveys from 1999
- One in every 8 Americans (over the age of 12) has used an antidepressant in the last month
- Women are twice as likely as men to use an antidepressant
- Long-term use is common: 25% of people who reported antidepressant use in the last month had been taking the drug for **10 years** or more
- Researcher's conclusions: less of a stigma around mental health so more people feel comfortable seeking treatment, and **Americans are living more stressful lives**

3 ways to beat depression without drugs

#1: **St John's wort:** more than 50 randomized controlled trials and 15 observational trials have found SJW effective for mild to moderate depression

- Dosage: 900 mg once daily

#2: **Curcumin:** shown in clinical trials to be equally as effective as the prescription drug fluoxetine at reducing the symptoms of depression

- Dosage: 750 mg curcumin with turmeric essential oil daily

#3: **Exercise:** might work as well as drugs - 30% of participants in a clinical trial came out of their depression completely, after exercising just 10-30 minutes a day!

Big Sugar – the new “Big Tobacco”?

(1 slide)

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New research on sugar industry

- Researchers investigating the history of research on sugar found results from an animal study in the 1960s that linked high sugar intake and cancer
- The study was stopped, and its results hidden for decades
- The study was funded by the Sugar Research Foundation, a sugar-industry organization
- During the time this study was taking place, dietary recommendations were being made to eat “low fat foods” with high amounts of added sugar instead
- The Sugar Research Foundation is accused of manipulating data to cast doubt on the health hazards of sugar and demonize fat as the cause of heart disease
- The new paper investigating the history of sugar research appeared in the November issue of *PLOS Biology*

Nutrient of the Day: Vitamin K

(4 slides)

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Vitamin K for Healthy Hearts

- Researchers evaluated the vitamin K intake of over 700 teenagers, and also tested their hearts to look for signs of heart disease (specifically enlargement of the heart)
- Results
 - Only 25% of the participants met the suggested minimum daily intake level of vitamin K
 - The teens with lowest vitamin K intake had 3 times the risk of heart disease, and heart walls almost 10% thicker, than teens with the highest vitamin K intake
- A study last year of 7,000 people with high risk of cardiovascular disease found that **those with the highest intake of vitamin K were 36% less likely to die** from any cause than those with the lowest intakes of vitamin K

The Two Forms of Vitamin K

- Note: there is a third form of synthetic vitamin K called vitamin K3 (menadione) which is rarely used in dietary supplements
- Vitamin K1 (phytonadione) is primarily important for blood clotting
 - NOTE: normal blood clotting is a GOOD thing or you could bleed to death from a paper cut
- Vitamin K2 (menaquinone) is important for bones AND the heart
 - Helps direct calcium away from blood vessels (where it can lead to hardening of the arteries or “arterial calcification”) and into bones where it is needed
 - A diet high in K2 has been found to **reduce arterial calcification by 50%, reduce risk of heart disease by 50%, and reduce overall risk of dying by 25%**
 - A study on K2 found that for every 10 mcg of K2 consumed, risk of heart disease was reduced by 10%
 - In a three year study of healthy postmenopausal women, K2 supplementation significantly reduced arterial stiffness

Something to think about...

- Doctors regularly recommend calcium to women in order to prevent osteoporosis
- But what if the woman is low or deficient in vitamin K2?
- **Calcium that doesn't get to the bones can end up as deposits in the veins and arteries**
- Giving calcium *without* vitamin K could mean that osteoporosis isn't prevented and risk of heart disease could be increased!

Dietary and supplemental vitamin K

- Both forms of Vitamin K (K1 and K2) are important and necessary to health
- Vitamin K1 can be found in leafy greens
- Vitamin K2 is found in animal-based foods: egg yolks, liver, cheese made from whole milk and natto (fermented soy)
 - One reason why these “high saturated fat” foods **don’t cause heart disease** may be due to their high vitamin K2 content!
- In supplements, look for Vitamin K1 and Vitamin K2 on the label – products that list only “vitamin K” are probably vitamin K1 (phytonadione)