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Dr. David G. Williams

Your Best Flu Defense? Stay Healthy

Fall is here, and winter is just around the corner... again. It's scary how fast time flies. Although the seasonal changes here in central Texas are generally quite mild, we've already had a few mornings with a refreshing drop in temperature. Football, frost, and, more re-

cently, flu shots are just a few of the things associated with this time of year. The first two are inevitable. The third is a matter of choice, which has been popularized more by marketing and propaganda than by effectiveness. Another new study bears this out.

During the last two decades the flu vaccination rate among the elderly has increased from 15 to 65 percent, but there hasn't been a corresponding decrease in hospital admissions or mortality.

This latest Canadian study involved 352 individuals given the flu vaccine and 352 matched control individuals who didn't get the shot. Eighty-five percent of the participants were over age 64. Overall, 29 percent of these individuals came down with severe pneumonia, and 12 percent of the group died. *At first glance*, it appeared that the flu vaccination reduced the mortality rate by about 50 percent. Only 8 percent of those receiving the vaccine died, compared to 15 percent of those not receiving the shot. Most other studies come to a similar conclusion and report findings like these as a matter of fact—but this study went a little further.

The researchers in this study not only adjusted for factors such as age, gender, and co-existing illnesses, they also took into account what they refer to as the "healthy-user effect." This is one very important factor that hasn't been considered in the earlier studies.

Dr. Sumit Majumdar, the lead researcher, explains the healthy-user effect describes what most doctors

refer to as their "good" patients. These are the ones who take a serious approach to their health by exercising regularly, not smoking, drinking in moderation, taking supplements or necessary medications, et cetera. When you include this factor into the evaluation, taking the flu vaccine didn't have any significant effect on mortality. In other words, if someone is otherwise healthy they probably have a better chance of surviving a serious flu infection than someone who is already frail and in ill health. The flu vaccine doesn't change the mortality rate in either the already-healthy group or the already-ill group. (*Am J Respir Crit Care Med* 08;178:527-533)

Despite the overwhelming evidence that the flu vaccination program offers no benefit, I'm sure it will go on and on like most government-sponsored efforts. Most of the public, and health professionals alike, have been brainwashed into believing it's saving lives. Personally, I would suggest spending your money and efforts on making sure you're getting enough rest, eating well, increasing your level of vitamin D through sunshine or supplements, and taking more vitamin C



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You will observe with concern how long a useful truth may be known, and exist, before it is generally received and practiced on. — Benjamin Franklin

and the supplement XPC (the “poor man’s EpiCor”). It’s also wise to keep the nasal wash Xlear, elderberry extract, and eucalyptus oil on hand just in case you do come down with a cold or flu. Unlike the flu vaccine, these things have been proven to work. [Editor’s note: For a summary of recommendations for taking care of colds and flu, including some recommendations from other readers, see the Subscriber Center of the Alternatives Web site, www.drdauidwilliams.com.]

Be Careful With the Heat

Before I leave the topic of winter, there’s one other item worth mentioning that literally burns my butt.

When I drive my kids to school or the bus stop on those cold winter mornings, they love it when I take their mom’s truck. It has heated seats, which I hate. For some reason, I never seem to realize the driver’s seat heater is on until I begin to break out into a full-body, menopausal-type sweat. Not only do I personally find heated seats to be “hot flash inducers,” research shows they also damage the sperm production process.

German researchers (I should say *daring* German researchers) measured scrotal temperatures after having participants sit on heated car seats. The increase in temperature was enough to cause potential fertility problems. (*Fertil Steril* 08;90:335–339)

Previous studies have found that simply sitting in a car seat for extended periods of time can increase scrotal temperatures, and couples take longer to conceive when the man drives for more than 3 hours a day.

I guess you can look at this two different ways. If you’re trying to conceive, stay away from car seat heaters and long car trips. (And, as I’ve mentioned before, the heat from a laptop computer can create the same effect if you use it held directly on your lap for an extended period of time. The same is true for the jockey brief-style underwear.) If you’re looking for a non-permanent form of male contraception, this may be a start.

Stay warm this winter, but not too warm.

Vitamin D for Winter Health

For years I’ve been discussing the importance of keeping up your levels of vitamin D. Just last month I wrote about its link to depression problems. When I first suggested that most people need to significantly increase their vitamin D intake, I received lots of feedback from physicians and the lay public warning me of the dangers of overdosing on the vitamin. (None of these concerns had any basis, I should add.)

Finally, more and more research is supporting the idea that most people get far too little vitamin D, and many are downright deficient in it. Also the current US recommendations for the vitamin are totally inadequate: 200 IU per day until age 50, 400 IU from ages 50 to 70, and then 600 IU for those over age 70. Widespread deficiencies are placing millions of individuals’ health at great risk, and these low recommendations won’t do anything to help correct the situation.

The results from a ten-year study involving 18,225 men, initially free from cardiovascular disease and age 40 to 75, were recently released. In a nutshell, it was discovered that those men with the lowest levels of vitamin D were twice as likely to experience a heart attack as men with the highest levels. *When all risk factors were considered, having a low level of vitamin D increases the risk of heart attack just as much as high blood pressure or smoking does.* (*Arch Intern Med* 08;168:1174–1180)

Doctors are quick to warn about the dangers of smoking or high blood pressure, but when was the last time you heard a doctor warn anyone about the dangers of having low vitamin D levels? I would guess probably never, unless you live in Canada.

I was in Canada a couple of weeks ago doing research, and physicians there are trying to address the dangers of vitamin D deficiencies in a major way. Vitamin D deficiencies affect an estimated 97 percent of the Canadian population during the winter, and obviously the deficiency has a tremendous effect on



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health. Vitamin D deficiencies have now been directly linked to 22 different forms of cancer, multiple sclerosis, osteoporosis, flu, depression (as mentioned last month), and heart disease, as explained above. *One cancer study alone found that women who took vitamin D supplements had up to 77 percent lower risk of cancer than women who didn't take the vitamin.*

The Canadian Pediatric Society is so concerned about the impact of vitamin D deficiencies in pregnant and lactating women that last year they issued guidelines increasing their recommendations for pregnant women to 2,000 IU/day (from 200 to 400 IU/day). And based on the efficacy and safety of this higher dosage, they are now considering raising the recommendation even higher—to 4,000 or 6,000 IU/day.

And while this might help the mothers, they told me “unequivocally that even with a pregnant woman taking 2,000 IU/day, it is not sufficient to raise vitamin D levels in breast milk.” As such, the upper limit of 2,000 IU/day now recommended for infants, children, and adolescents needs to be increased as well.

As Safe as Mother's Milk

There are many misperceptions and fears about the toxicity potential of vitamin D, both in this country and abroad. The lowest dose of vitamin D that has ever been shown to cause hypocalcemia (low levels of calcium) in healthy adults is 40,000 IU/day. The upper limit for the intake of vitamin D has routinely been considered to be 10,000 IU/day just because that's roughly equal to what an adult lifeguard's body will naturally produce in the middle of summer. Clearly, 2,000 IU/day is well within the limits of safety for adults as well as for infants, and the Canadian authorities now realize this.

It's probably no surprise that our government and pediatric organizations are way behind on this issue and just recently increased their recommendations from 200 to 400 IU/day. It's not that vitamin D deficiencies are rare in this country; millions of children here are deficient. One recent study found that 40 percent of the children tested between the ages of eight and 24 months had insufficient levels of the vitamin, 28 percent were at risk of a deficiency, and 12 percent were already deficient. (*Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med* 08;162:505–512).

Pay No Attention to That Doctor

It seems like our own American Academy of Pediatrics has more interest in promoting the agenda of the pharmaceutical companies, however, than in recommending nutritional supplements. In what has

to be one of the stupidest suggestions I've ever seen, the American Academy of Pediatrics has recommended that children at age 2 have cholesterol levels tested. And then, if they have a family history of cardiovascular disease (it's the leading killer in this country...who doesn't have someone in their family with the problem?) and their cholesterol isn't “normal” they should be started on statin drugs as young as eight years old. Unbelievable. (They're also suggesting that if, by the time the infant reaches the age of 12 months, the doctor is concerned about future weight problems, the child can be placed on low-fat milk.)

Cholesterol is a vital component necessary in the formation of cell walls and nerve tissue, and it's the raw material the body uses to create vitamin D. The use of statins will only make the vitamin D deficiencies more widespread in both children and adults. And then, when you consider all of the dangerous side effects that have been linked to statins, it's outrageous to suggest that we start giving these to our children in hopes of preventing a future heart attack. There is no proof these drugs prevent heart disease or heart attack, nor are there any long-term studies on their effects on adults—much less on children. (There really couldn't have been any long-term studies yet, because the drugs have been available for just 20 years.)

I guess the profit potential of starting an eight-year-old on a drug for life is just too tempting for these people. A few years ago anyone advocating such an atrocity would be labeled a drug pusher. Nowadays, however, many consider that person either a caring humanitarian or a marketing genius, depending on your vantage point. My name for them is unprintable.

Vitamin D and Your Skeleton

While I'm on the topic of vitamin D, you should also know that many spinal problems (vertebral fractures, herniated discs, et cetera) are linked to inadequate vitamin D in the body.

Studies have shown that, for many people, a herniated lumbar disc can result from a hereditary defect in the vitamin D receptor gene. If your family has a history of such, you have a significantly increased risk of developing the same disc problem. This would certainly be an early warning sign indicating you should increase your intake of vitamin D through both supplementation and sun exposure. A blood test for vitamin D levels would also be helpful.

More than ten years ago I predicted we would start to see a full-blown epidemic of vitamin D deficiency.
(*Vitamin D continued on page 125*)

GETTING RID OF GOUT

Question: My husband suffers from gout. He was recently prescribed medication for the problem, but it's expensive and he's not one that will stay on medication permanently. He tried diet changes like trying to decrease the amount of protein in his diet, but his job is very physical and he says low-protein diets deplete his energy and make him sick. Do you have any other "tricks up your sleeve" that might help him?

—Betty K.
Lebanon, Pennsylvania

Answer: First, keep in mind that the sugar fructose has now been linked to gout. (*BMJ* 08;336:309–312)

Fructose is the sugar found in many fruits, but most of the fructose we consume nowadays comes in the form of high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS), which is used to sweeten everything from bread to sodas. Most soft drinks are loaded with HFCS and are something your husband should definitely avoid like the plague. Avoiding HFCS totally won't be easy, but it will be well worth the effort since it's also been linked to an increased risk of diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular disease, et cetera. The above study found that consuming just one soft drink a day increased the risk of gout by about 50 percent, and two drinks a day almost doubled it, when compared to those who drank one or fewer drinks a month. The major news media are finally catching on to the story regarding HFCS, but I've been warning *Alternatives* readers about it since 1990. [Editor's note: For the whole story on the troubles with HFCS, see the Subscriber Center of the *Alternatives* Web site, www.drdauidwilliams.com.]

(As a side note, the company Cargill has developed an extract from the stevia plant leaf, labeled Rebiana, to use as a sweetener, and Coca-Cola plans to use the zero-calorie sweetener in their soft drinks using the trade name Truvia.

Stevia has been used as a sweetener in South America for centuries, and in the Far East, particularly Japan, for decades. Although stevia is totally harmless, the FDA has labeled it an "unsafe food additive" and ruled it can be imported and used as a food supplement but it can not be used as a food additive. This has ruled out the possibility of it being used commercially as a natural sweetener, one that's perfectly safe for diabetics. Modern processing methods have gotten rid of the metallic aftertaste, so it's more acceptable to the public.

Sweeteners are one of the most lucrative markets ever in the food and beverage industry. This explains why the FDA won't allow stevia to be marketed as a commodity sweetener, but Cargill can make a few changes and end up with a monopoly on a natural sweetener. This is another fine example of our government looking out for its citizens.

Olive Leaves for Relief

Getting back to the subject of gout...In Mexico they routinely make a tea from the small branches and leaves of the olive tree to remedy gout problems. It works quite well. A couple of ounces (about 1/3 of a cup) of dried leaves and broken twigs is simmered in a tea kettle and then allowed to steep covered for 20 to 30 minutes. The concentrated tea is strained and then mixed with enough water to make about a gallon of diluted tea. This is kept in the refrigerator and three 8-ounce cups are consumed every day. Most people experience some relief from their symptoms within a week to ten days and can pretty much resume a normal diet without any problems. Everyone is different, so dosages and diet will obviously have to be fine-tuned individually.

As a matter of convenience, your husband might want to try one of the olive leaf extract products on the market instead of having to constantly make the tea. They have been shown to have strong antioxidant capabilities as well. I should mention that the extracts have been shown to lower both blood pressure and blood sugar in some individuals, so that might be something to watch—particularly if he is diabetic.

For the most consistent results I would suggest looking for an olive leaf extract product that has been standardized to 20 percent oleuropein concentration and starting with a dosage that would provide somewhere between 150 and 450 mg of oleuropein a day. (The label should tell you how much oleuropein is contained in each capsule.) A product such as Pure Health's Olive Leaf Extract would be a good place to start. You can find it at ProHealth, 800-366-6056 or www.immunesupport.com.

The use of olive leaf as medicine isn't new. The Bible even references it in Ezekiel 47:12, "The fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine."

Some Peanut Butter With That Celery?

Another plant-based therapy for gout that I've seen work consistently is celery seed extract. The one product that I've had experience with is Natural Factors Celery Seed Extract. If you can't find it locally at your health food store, one of the lowest prices online that I've seen was at www.vitacost.com or 800-381-0759.

Your husband could start with 2 to 4 capsules a day and then gradually cut back as soon as the pain and inflammation subsides. He'll have to arrive at the ultimate dosage that will work for him. Some people report that consuming celery seeds and even several stalks of raw celery a day has stopped their gout problems, but I haven't personally seen that.



(Vitamin D continued from page 123)

ciency problems. It's here. For a number of reasons, only so much vitamin D is included in multivitamin products. As such, it's something you'll probably have to take more of in addition to what's in your multi-nutrient supplement.

A daily dose of 4,000 to 5,000 IU wouldn't be out of line based on the current research. And now's a good time to start, with winter just around the corner. Some foods, such as sardines, are loaded with vitamin D, but it still probably wouldn't be enough during the winter. In addition to what you get from food, you'll want to take a vitamin D supplement such as Carlson's Solar D Gems, which contains the D3 form that your body uses. It's available online from www.vitacost.com.

If you have difficulty taking pills (although 2,000 IU of vitamin D comes in a pretty small pill) there's one company that makes a great vitamin D liquid that's very easy to take. One drop provides 2,000 IU of vitamin D. The product is called Liqui-D3 from Rx Vitamins. The company normally sells through practitioners only, but the product is available directly to the public from an outfit called Naturamart. Contact them at www.naturamart.com or 800-383-6008. They also carry a wide variety of other products that are normally sold only through health professionals.

The Ups and Downs of Caffeine

Caffeine has a mixed reputation. College students love it when they need to stay up all night cramming for exams. But once you stop putting more caffeine into your system, the "crash" can leave you feeling exhausted. There are some benefits of caffeine that go beyond just the energy boost, however. Researchers at Duke University have found that diabetics can better control their blood sugar through the elimination of coffee.

Individuals with type 2 diabetes who drank at least two cups of coffee a day were involved in the study. Each took capsules containing caffeine equal to roughly four cups of coffee on one day and then capsules containing a placebo the next. Blood sugar levels were monitored continuously with a device implanted under their abdominal skin.

When the caffeine was consumed, glucose (blood sugar) levels immediately went up 8 percent. The effect was even more pronounced following meals: The caffeine caused an increase of 9 percent following breakfast,

15 percent after lunch, and 26 percent after dinner. (*Diabetes Care* 08;31:221–222)

The fact that these huge spikes in blood sugar were triggered by caffeine alone is simply amazing.

There are millions of people with type 2 diabetes who are either on medication or attempting to control their blood sugar through diet and exercise. Eliminating caffeine from the diet could make all the difference in the world for these people. It could also be the key to losing excess weight, and can be particularly helpful for those who have seemed to reach a plateau in the process of weight loss.

Carbohydrates from food and drink enter the bloodstream and trigger a release of insulin from the pancreas. Insulin moves this blood sugar into the body's cells where it can be used for energy.

Caffeine triggers the release of adrenalin from the adrenal glands, which makes the cells less responsive to the effects of insulin. This results in higher blood sugar levels. The glucose begins to "stick" to the cell membranes and is converted to a sugar alcohol called sorbitol. Production of excess sorbitol destroys nerves and other tissue. Diabetic retinopathy and neuropathy are caused by excess sorbitol in the cells of the nerves and eyes. Other associated problems from excess insulin and sorbitol include everything from burning feet, deafness, blindness, and kidney failure to stroke and heart attack.

(You may be familiar with sorbitol as a sweetener used in dietetic candies. It also shows up in liquid medications such as cough syrups, and small amounts are sometimes used in the coatings on tablets. Sorbitol from the diet gets converted into fructose by the liver, but I wouldn't suggest that you eat much candy that contains sorbitol. It would be a cruel circumstance if a product sold to individuals with diabetes ended up damaging their health by making their side effects worse. One very obvious effect of too much sorbitol is a case of diarrhea.)

Also, as cells become less responsive to the effects of insulin, the pancreas begins to release more. Your body recognizes an insulin surge as a sign that there is plenty of readily available energy in the form of carbohydrates and it needs to stop burning fat and store it instead (primarily in the belly area). This results in both weight gain and the decreased ability to burn fat stores. There goes any chance of being able to effectively lose excess weight.

The researchers above found that when the caffeine was removed from the coffee, blood sugar levels didn't rise any higher than normal. In other words, decaffeinated coffee isn't a problem.

(Coffee continued on page 127)



NEWS TO USE FROM AROUND THE WORLD

An Apple a Day Keeps Ulcers at Bay

NAPLES, ITALY—Although I don't recommend it, I know there are still lots of people who take aspirin regularly in hopes of preventing a heart attack. There are also millions of people who routinely use other over-the-counter NSAIDs (nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) to relieve pain. All result in gastrointestinal bleeding, ulcerations, and complications.

Researchers at University of Naples Federico II have discovered that animals given an extract from apples prior to taking aspirin formed about 50 percent fewer gastric lesions. (*Br J Nutr* 08;1:1–9)

It's the antioxidant activity of compounds called polyphenols that provide the protective effects. Polyphenols are found in many plants and include the flavonoids, tannins, and other compounds. These are the same antioxidants that give pomegranate, cranberry, and other juices their protective and healing powers. It's also the flavonoid content of cocoa that has recently propelled dark chocolate into the limelight. Studies with flavanol-enhanced cocoa have shown that it has a dramatic impact on improving blood vessel function and circulation in diabetic patients.

The extract consumed in this study was about what you'd receive after eating two apples. (When I was researching this I found it interesting that apples are one of the most popular fruits in Europe, where consumers eat an average of nearly three fresh apples a week or 44 pounds a year. Here in the US we average about one every four days or around 20 pounds a year.)

I highly recommend that, whenever possible, you eat the entire apple (or any fruit, for that matter) instead of taking an extract or even drinking the juice. In some cases, however, this is hard to do. For example, it would be hard to eat several pomegranates at one time, and it's hard to find cranberry juice that's not loaded with sweeteners or diluted with grape or apple juice. Apples are readily available, inexpensive, and delicious. Apple juice also contains the polyphenols—particularly the “cloudy” juice, which has four times the polyphenol content when compared to the clear variety. In one study, cloudy apple juice was able to scavenge 93 percent of the free radicals present in just three minutes compared to only 24 percent for the clear variety. But I still recommend eating the whole apple.

Cornell University researchers have identified 12 different compounds called triterpenoids in apple skin that were shown to either inhibit or outright kill cancer cells in laboratory cultures. The cancer cells included those of the human liver, colon, and breast. Based on their studies, these same researchers feel apples may also help in preventing or fighting Alzheimer's disease. “An apple a day....”

A Gift of the Magi

JERUSALEM, ISRAEL—Researchers here have discovered what ancient sages and religious practitioners instinctively knew as far back as the biblical times: Incense can be a very effective mood-altering tool.

Scientists found that *Boswellia* resin, referred to as frankincense in the Bible, affects the same part of the brain as many of the antianxiety and antidepressant drugs being used today.

When they extracted the chemical incensole acetate from *Boswellia* and tested it in animals, they found it activated channels in the brain that alleviated anxiety and depression. These just happened to be the same neurological areas targeted by many of the mood-altering drugs in use today. (*FASEB J* 08;22:3024–3034)

Obviously, the researchers felt these findings could lead to the development of new drugs based on this natural compound. While there's not as much profit potential involved, incense is a much safer and time-proven way to reduce feelings of depression or anxiety. Convincing the medical profession of this, however, will probably be impossible. It would certainly be interesting to monitor the effects of this form of incense in hospitals and psychiatric treatment centers. But I won't hold my breath waiting for those studies.

While burning incense might seem like a relic of the hippie '60s, it turns out that it actually does have a “mellowing” effect. If you or a loved one suffers from depression or anxiety, this is one very inexpensive technique you can safely try at home. Frankincense incense comes in either sticks or cones. I know some people are sensitive to smoke of any kind, so if you'd rather not be burning something in your house you can try frankincense essential oil. All are available from Scents of Earth, at www.scents-of-earth.com or 800-323-8159. They offer *Boswellia* sourced from different locations; you want the one from India, *Boswellia serrata*.

Burners for the incense are available at practically every New Age gift shop, or online from companies such as Spiritual Scents, at www.spiritualscents.com or 866-210-4355. You can skip past the ones shaped like a dragon or the eye of Horus to what are called ash catchers. Or just use an old dinner plate to hold the ashes as the incense stick burns.

To use the essential oil, put just a couple drops on a tissue and inhale the oil as it evaporates. This might be the better solution to use while traveling; I don't think an airline would take kindly to you lighting an incense stick at your seat.

You can use the incense or the oil whenever you feel the need. I'd be very interested in hearing about any results.

(Coffee continued from page 125)

At this time I haven't heard anyone recommending that diabetics stop drinking coffee. But the research is there indicating it would help. If it can result in an 8 percent decrease in overall daily blood sugar levels or anywhere from 9 to 26 percent following meals, that would be enough to get thousands of individuals off their medications. The pharmaceutical companies who make blood sugar-lowering medications probably don't agree, but eliminating caffeine is a no-brainer for all diabetics and others with blood sugar problems.

The "Unhealthy-User" Effect

Coffee in and of itself generally isn't a problem. While the studies concerning its effect on overall health have shown mixed results, the underlying factor seems to be that most coffee drinkers tend to exercise less and smoke more. When these two factors are removed from the picture, it appears that women coffee drinkers who drink two to three cups of coffee a day have a 25 percent lower death rate from heart disease and an 18 percent lower risk of death from all causes when compared to their smoking, non-exercising, peers.

The benefits from coffee appear to be not from the caffeine but rather from its high antioxidant content that can help protect against inflammation to blood vessels resulting in heart disease and DNA damage. Studies have shown that decaffeinated coffee offers the same protective effects as coffee with caffeine. Filtered drip coffee appears to be one of the most beneficial forms. The current trend of high-fat, highly sweetened, caffeinated forms being sold today is obviously not heart- or health-friendly.

Coffee isn't the only caffeinated beverage that can wreak havoc with diabetics. Most sodas, and every "energy" drink, gum, or candy, are a source of caffeine. Natural teas (green, black, and white) contain caffeine, but significantly less than the amount in coffee (1/8 to 1/3 less), and have routinely been found to be beneficial to health. And herbal teas are naturally caffeine free.

Caffeine consumption results in an increase in blood sugar because it triggers the release of adrenaline from the adrenal glands. If you take this a step further, other factors that increase that same hormone probably have a similar and possibly damaging effect. Adrenaline, as you recall, is part of our "fight or flight" response. When one is faced with danger the hormone fires up the body as a survival mechanism to either fight or run. This is a normal and necessary protective mechanism when our lives are threatened. What isn't normal is "firing" up the body so often simply because we're drinking a cup of coffee or energy drink. It's one thing to call up the National

Guard, FEMA, and Red Cross when there's a hurricane headed for shore, but it would be disastrous to do so every time there was a rain shower.

Other constant "false alarms" that trigger the release of adrenaline and can develop into or worsen diabetes include:

- stress,
- dehydration,
- low oxygen levels (poor circulation, low levels of iron or vitamin E, et cetera),
- low body temperature (underactive thyroid),
- alcohol consumption,
- fatigue (poor sleeping habits, bright lights at night, et cetera), and
- stimulant use (drugs, tobacco).

It should come as no surprise that moderate (not high-intensity) exercise inhibits the release of adrenaline. Not only can it address the top four items mentioned above, it just happens to be one of the very best ways to overcome type 2 diabetes and the storage of excess fat, particularly visceral or belly fat. A couple of months ago I detailed a study that found walking at an easy 3 miles an hour (roughly 20 minutes per mile) for 30 minutes, five times a week was all it took to significantly reduce your waist circumference. And if 30 minutes is hard to fit into your schedule you can achieve the same benefits by splitting it into three 10-minute segments.

At this point, caffeine and most of the above factors haven't been "officially" recognized as factors that worsen or possibly even promote the development of diabetes, but it's only a matter of time. Do yourself a favor and don't wait another 10 or 15 years before the rest of the world "discovers" the connection.

Lo-Cal Is Lo-Health

I've also warned numerous times about the dangers of HFCS (high-fructose corn syrup) used as a sweetener in thousands of food items and how it can lead to diabetes. The latest research out of San Antonio, Texas, now shows that diet drinks are just as bad, if not worse.

Artificially sweetened drinks have been touted as a healthy alternative to sugar in the fight against obesity. Every "diet" food and drink today seems to be either low- or no-calorie, thanks to artificial sweeteners. But rather than fighting the problem, artificial sweeteners seem to be fueling the problem.

Researchers at the University of Texas Health Science Center compared the relationship between the consumption of artificial sweeteners and type 2 diabetes in 3,682 individuals. In every case, they discovered the greater

the sweetener use the higher the rate of diabetes. Heavy consumption of artificially sweetened drinks (22 or more per week) was associated with a 91 percent increase in diabetes. (*Obesity* 08;16:1894–1900)

The flood of sugar-free and fat-free products hasn't make a dent in the ever-growing obesity problem. And, to make matters worse, "sugar-free" on the label translates into future diabetes problems.

Whose Idea Was This?

There are two areas in particular where I feel a large segment of the public is being ripped off due to over-regulation and a disregard for their everyday health needs. One involves hearing aids. With technology as it is today, anyone should be able to purchase a miniature, high-quality hearing aid over the counter for next to nothing. Federal and state regulation that requires a medical evaluation and then the clearance of a licensed physician or audiologist before you can purchase a hearing aid is nonsense. This needlessly drives up the cost of getting a hearing aid and makes them unavailable or unaffordable for millions of individuals. It makes absolutely no sense to me. Can you image the quality and selection, not to mention the competitive prices, that would surface if major electronic companies like Sony, Apple, Panasonic, et cetera, were able to produce and sell hearing aids over the counter like other electronic items? There's a market of 25 million potential users just here in the US alone.

The other over-regulated area deals with eyeglasses. The rationale for requiring an eye exam every year to obtain a prescription sounds good, and in many cases probably catches numerous treatable vision problems. But, just like hearing aids, it drives up the cost for a pair of prescription lenses to astronomical levels. At least if you have a prescription there are starting to be a few places where you can get a better deal.

One of the best deals I've ever seen on eyeglasses is from a company called Zenni Optical. They offer prescription glasses (your choice from several frames, lenses,

plus scratch coating) for only \$8 each plus a flat \$4.95 shipping charge, regardless of how many pairs you buy. They have hundreds of frame choices at \$8, \$10, \$13, or \$16, and even titanium frames that cost a fraction of what you'd pay elsewhere. If you've bought eyeglasses lately you'll know that adding antireflective coating or tinting for an additional \$5 to any of their glasses is an unbelievable bargain.

If you need a couple of extra sets of eyeglasses to keep around or are in the market for a new set I highly recommend checking out their Web site at www.zennioptical.com. I don't know where you can find any better prices. They are primarily set up to work through the Internet and ordering is really easy online. You can view all the different styles and colors of frames before you order. If you have questions, they are out of San Rafael, California, and can also be reached at 800-211-2105.

At these prices there's no excuse to not have a couple of "back-up" pairs around.

Take care,



P.S. Over the years I've received countless letters and e-mails from readers. It becomes obvious fairly quickly which health issues concern people; some questions seem to come up over and over again. While I write often in *Alternatives* about the larger matters—diabetes, heart disease, cancer, et cetera—for many people it's the day-to-day things that concern them the most.

Insomnia, dry eyes, or back pain may not make you miserable, but they can interfere with your enjoyment of life. I've gathered 50 of the more common questions, along with solutions that work, into a 48-page report called *Answers to the Most Frequently Asked Questions*. I've made arrangements for you to have it for free when you sign up for another year of *Alternatives*. Whether you choose to take advantage of this or not, I thank you for your continued support that makes *Alternatives* possible. Call 800-527-3044 and mention Offer Code AE1999.

If you have questions or comments for Dr. Williams, please send them to the mail or e-mail addresses listed to the right. Of course, practical and ethical constraints prevent him from answering personal medical questions by mail or e-mail, but he'll answer as many as he can in the Mailbox section of *Alternatives*. For our part, we'll do our best to direct you to his issues, reports, and products related to the subject of your interest.

Here's how you can reach us:

- For Customer Service matters such as address changes, call 800-527-3044 or write to custsvc@drdavidwilliams.com.
- If you are a licensed health professional and would like to learn how to begin reselling MHN supplements to your patients, please e-mail practitionerinquiries@davidwilliamsmail.com.
- For back issues or reports, call 800-718-8293.
- To sign a friend up for *Alternatives*, call 800-219-8591.

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