



Health Matters

Put More Laughter Into Your Life

The ability to laugh may prove to be very important, especially in the U.S., where heart disease is the number one killer. Some researchers believe that regular, hearty laughter should be added to the list of things (like exercise) that reduce the risk of heart disease. If you can try to laugh every day, you might improve your health.

Figure out what makes you laugh and do it more often.

Here are some ideas:

- 👉 Read the comics in the newspaper.
- 👉 Laugh with others.
- 👉 Collect things that make you laugh.
- 👉 Remember a funny moment from the past.
- 👉 Play with your pet.
- 👉 Read a funny book.
- 👉 Read a joke book.

Why did the turkey cross the road?

To prove it wasn't a chicken!

Source: Judy Goldblum-Carlton, humor therapist at the University of Maryland Hospital

The Healing Power of Laughter

You have probably heard the old saying that “laughter is the best medicine.” But did you know that many doctors and scientists are actually studying laughter and the effects it may have on our health?

Some recent studies have shown:

- ☺ Laughter may reduce the risk of **heart attack** by lowering stress, which can destroy the lining of blood vessels.
- ☺ Laughter may help people cope with **pain** caused by illness and decrease **anxiety** before operations or other medical tests because it helps us to relax.
- ☺ Laughter may lower stress hormones that otherwise would raise blood pressure and impair the immune system.

We sometimes do not express negative feelings, such as anger, sadness and fear. Laughter can help to release these emotions in a harmless way.



What Happens When You Laugh?

Laughter is our body's response to humor. When we laugh two things usually happen. We make sound, which can range from a soft chuckle to a hearty roar, and parts of our bodies move, depending on how hard we are laughing.

We use 15 different muscles in our face when we laugh.

Muscles in our arms, legs, chest and stomach may get involved, especially if we think something is really funny.

Most people have had the experience of laughing so hard that their stomach muscles hurt. In the end, it may feel as if you just had a workout. Researchers say that laughing 100 times is probably equal to riding an exercise bike for 15 minutes!

“A good laugh and a long sleep are the best cures in the doctor's book.” – *Irish Proverb*

Resources:

- 1) *The Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor (AATH)* www.aath.org
- 2) *Laughter Heals Foundation*, a non-profit organization whose goal is to promote healing through laughter. www.laughterheals.org



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PrimeTime Health: Promoting the health of older Pennsylvanians



Nutrition Matters

Do you know where to find Calcium?

Circle all the foods you believe are rich in calcium:

-  Yogurt
-  Broccoli
-  Salmon
-  Navy Beans
-  Almonds

Did you circle all of the choices? You're right! Believe it or not there are many foods that contain calcium.

All foods made with milk are excellent sources of calcium. Examples are cheese, yogurt, cottage cheese and ice cream.

Kale, turnip greens, collard greens and other dark green leafy vegetables are all good sources of calcium.

Canned fish like sardines or salmon with the bones are rich in calcium.

Calcium can also be found in various beans and nuts.

Look for juices, cereals, breads and soy beverages that have calcium added to them.

Lactose Intolerant? Look for lactose free alternatives to dairy foods. The Lactose is removed, but the calcium remains the same.

How Important Is Calcium?

Calcium is an essential mineral found in bones and teeth. It is important that we are getting enough calcium in our diet, especially as we grow older. It is needed for strong bones, blood clotting, and helping muscles and nerves work properly. Calcium cannot be made in the body so it must come from the food we eat.



Dairy foods like low-fat milk, cheese and yogurt are the most well-known sources of calcium. It is recommended that we eat at least 1200 mg of calcium each day. Is this difficult to do? The answer is no. One 8 oz glass of milk alone contains 300 mg of calcium. If you drink a glass of milk with each meal you are 75% of the way to your goal!

Calcium and Vitamin D are important to maintaining bone health. Vitamin D helps deposit

calcium into bones. It is known as "the sunshine vitamin" because your body can make vitamin D when exposed to the sun. It is also found in green leafy vegetables, fortified milk, some cereals and egg yolks.

When your diet does not include enough calcium your body draws on the calcium stored in your bones. Calcium taken from your bones can lead to osteoporosis, a disease in which your bone density is reduced. This puts bones at a higher risk for fracture. Osteoporosis is commonly found in post-menopausal women, but can be found in men as well.

So what can you do to make sure you are getting enough of this important mineral to keep your bones healthy? Be sure to eat at least 3 servings of calcium-rich food daily as well as foods rich in Vitamin D. Avoid soft drinks which can keep calcium from being absorbed into your bones. Also be sure to get some moderate exercise daily to help keep your bones strong.

References:

- www.eatright.org
- www.calciuminfo.com



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