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Weight-loss programs more effective than brief advice for overweight and obese people

As obesity is becoming a global health issue, various interventions have been promoted in the clinics and the community.

In a recent trial[1], the effectivity of behavioral weight-loss programs provided to obese and overweight individuals were investigated.

The study conducted in England recruited more than 1200 participants in various primary care centers, who are aged 18 years and above, and have a BMI of at least 28 kg/m^2. They were then randomly assigned to three groups. The three groups that they were allocated were brief intervention and a referral to a weight-loss program that is either delivered for 12 or 52 weeks.

According to the study, researchers found that overweight and obese people are more likely to have better loss of weight when they undergo a behavioral weight-loss program compared to a brief advice and self-help materials. Additionally, the weight-loss program that was conducted for 52 weeks has a greater weight loss effect than the 12-week intervention. More than half of those who are in the 52-week program lost more than 5% of their weight in comparison to 40% and 25% of the participants in the 12-week group and brief intervention group, respectively.

Moreover, other important parameters for reducing cardio-vascular disease and diabetes risks were also observed in the trial. These parameters include waist circumference, fat mass, and diabetes laboratory profiles' fasting blood concentration and HbA1c. All these factors were noted to be significantly lower in those who participated in the 52-week intervention in contrast to the other two interventions.

This study outlines the relevance of weight-loss programs as an important management option for people who are obese and overweight. It is a valid option; however, obese and overweight individuals will need to consult with their attending physicians to have a better understanding of these programs and, at the same time, be given advice on the right weight-loss program that can be tailored for them.

Coffee intake may have protective effect against liver cancer, study says

Liver cancer is the sixth leading cancer and the second most common cause of cancer death worldwide. Despite advancements in management of diagnosed liver cancer patients, prognosis is still poor. Thus, several preventative options, all directed at its primary causes – hepatitis B and C infection, have been promoted to lessen the risk of developing liver cancer. Among these options include vaccination programs against hepatitis B; preventive methods against the mode of transmission of both hepatitis B and C; early management of patients with hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and cirrhosis; and moderation of alcohol intake.

In a current study conducted at the University of Southampton in the UK[2], the investigators found that drinking coffee reduces the risk of developing hepatocellular carcinoma, the most dominant form of liver cancer.

The research analyzed and systematically reviewed 18 cohort and 8 case-control studies. It found that by drinking extra two cups per day of coffee can lessen risk of liver cancer by 35%. This protective effect is seen in both caffeinated and decaffeinated coffee, with the latter having a lesser extent of protection compared to the former.

Although the study is promising, the authors' re-commended further research on this association, as the studies reviewed were determined to be of very low quality since the studies included were all observational studies.

Further, they also suggested that randomized trials be conducted to investigate the effectiveness of increasing coffee consumption in patients with liver cancer as well as those who have a chronic liver disease. Nonetheless, drinking coffee in moderation is still recommended by many clinicians.

Latest study reveals that life expectancy of HIV patients is increasing

With the advent of antiretroviral treatment for patients with HIV infection in the past two decades, healthcare for these people has tremendously improved.

The latest research that provides evidence on this improve healthcare showed that life expectancy has risen. This study was completed by researchers who are part of *The Antiretroviral Therapy Cohort Collaboration*[3]. They analyzed data of more than 80000 patients, aged 16 years old and above between 1996 and 2013, from 18 European and North American HIV cohorts.

Results of the study showed that an additional ten years is added to the life expectancy of a person with HIV that is on antiretroviral treatment (ART) since after 2008. This means that those who have HIV and started ARTs in 2008 and thereafter, lived longer and healthier lives compared to those in earlier years. This

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Research shows that risk of Osteoarthritis may be reduced by eating more fiber

Osteoarthritis is a chronic disease that affects the cartilages of joints in the body resulting in stiffness, pain, and difficulty of movement. It is the most common cause of disability in older people.

Lowering the risk of developing osteoarthritis is valuable to prevent people from having the condition. Lifestyle modifications have been at the forefront in reducing risk of various chronic diseases, including osteoarthritis.

Currently, a research from the US investigated how dietary fiber intake affects the risk of developing osteoarthritis.[4]

The study examined two large, cohort studies; namely, the *Osteoarthritis Initiative* (OAI), and the *Framingham Offspring Osteoarthritis Study* (Framingham), which have 4796 and 1268 participants, respectively. The participants were followed yearly for 48 months in OAI; while, those in Framingham were examined after 9 years.

Results showed that those who had higher fiber intake were less likely to develop symptomatic osteoarthritis or worsening of knee pain. In the analysis of both cohorts, the protective effect of eating high fiber is 30% in the OAI and more than 60% in the Framingham. These results are irrespective of socioeconomic or obesity status.

Although results were promising, the authors pointed out that data from patients analyzed are self-reported, which are susceptible to biases.

Nevertheless, this research provides another evidence to the growing list of studies that high fiber intake, such as vegetables and fruits, can help prevent several, chronic clinical conditions.

There is no doubt that current clinical recommendations about consumption of high fiber in our diet improves our health and protects us from developing chronic diseases.

Foods high in fiber:

- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Legumes
- Nuts
- Seeds
- Cereals
- Grains
- Pasta

improvement does not only account for the widely use of lesser toxic ARTs, but also enhanced patient adherence to treatment, preventive measures, and better management of other infections and conditions related to the disease.

In spite of all these, efforts need to be continued especially in less developed countries where ARTs are not still readily available and affordable to many patients.

Ways to prevent HIV infection:

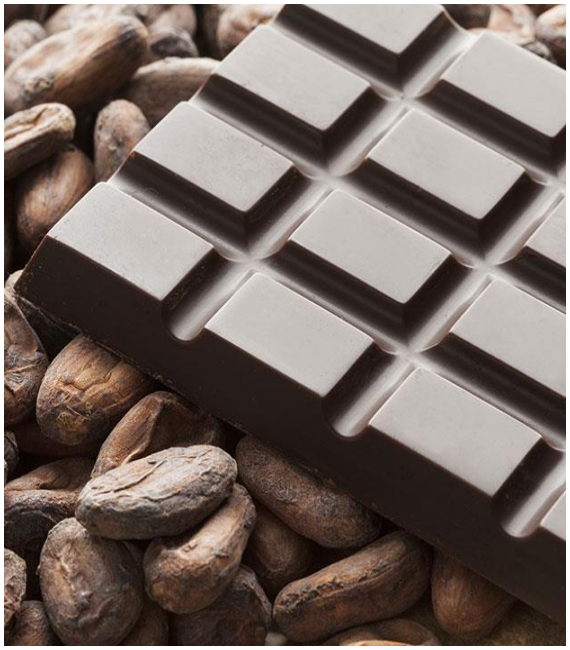
- Practice safe sex
- Limit your number of sexual partners
- Avoid injecting drug use, and if not, use sterile needles and syringes
- Get tested regularly for sexually transmitted diseases, so early treatment can be done
- Ensure that blood or any blood products transfused are tested
- Use pre-exposure prophylaxis before engaging in high risk behaviors
- Ask for post-exposure prophylaxis when there is a risk that you are exposed to HIV infection

Chocolate may help protect against irregular heartbeat

Every now and then, everyone loves a bit of sweets.

Good news to those who love indulging in chocolates.

Researchers from Denmark and the US have studied the effect of eating chocolate and irregular heartbeat.[5]



The study that evaluated data more than 50000 men and women in Denmark showed that moderate chocolate consumption may reduce the risk of developing atrial fibrillation or flutter, the most common irregular heartbeat condition.

The protective effect was statistically significant in both genders. The risk of having an irregular heartbeat is lower at 10-20% in people who have higher levels of chocolate intake in comparison to those who have less intake. Additionally, the strongest protection is noted to be one serving per week for women and 2-6 servings for men.

The authors stated that the protective effect of chocolates may be due to its antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and antiplatelet properties. These valuable benefits are due cocoa having high content of the compound flavanols.

Although the results of the study are promising, the investigators pointed out that the association between chocolate and atrial fibrillation still needs necessary confirmation by continuing further research on the matter.

As much as we love eating chocolates, it is still advised that consumption should be in moderation.

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