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Featured Article

Melatonin

Why do you need to sleep? It's because sleep is very much part of a healthy lifestyle. A full night's rest will not only help you feel energized and more productive, there is scientific evidence showing that sleep can help you maintain a healthy immune system and help your body defend against oxidative stress.

What is melatonin?

Melatonin is a hormone produced in the pineal gland a small gland in the brain, that helps regulate sleep and wake cycles. Very small amounts of melatonin are found in foods such as meats, grains, fruits, and vegetables. It is also available as a dietary supplement, though it has no known nutritional value.

What does natural melatonin do in the body?

Your body has its own internal clock that helps regulate your natural cycle of sleeping and waking hours in part by controlling the production of melatonin. Normally, melatonin levels begin to rise in the mid- to late evening, remain high for most of the night, and then decline in the early morning hours.

Natural melatonin production is partly affected by light. During the shorter days of the winter months, melatonin production may start earlier or, more often, later. This change can lead to symptoms of seasonal affective disorder (SAD), or winter depression.

Natural melatonin levels decline gradually with age. Some older adults produce very small amounts of melatonin or none at all.

Did you know?

Studies show that eating whole grains instead of refined grains lowers the risk of many chronic diseases. While benefits are most pronounced for those consuming at least 3 servings daily, some studies show reduced risks from as little as one serving daily. The message: every whole grain in your diet helps!

The main benefits of whole grains

The benefits of whole grains most documented by repeated studies include:

- stroke risk reduced 30-36%
- type 2 diabetes risk reduced 21-30%
- heart disease risk reduced 25-28%
- better weight maintenance

Other benefits indicated by recent studies include:

- reduced risk of asthma
- healthier carotid arteries
- reduction of inflammatory disease risk
- lower risk of colorectal cancer
- healthier blood pressure levels
- less gum disease and tooth loss

What is a "Diabetes Diet?"

It would be nice if diabetes was more like a food allergy and you could simply avoid one type of food, stick to healthy eating, take your meds, and you'd be all set. Instead, diabetes means a 24-hour-a-day balancing act between blood sugar levels and an entire category of food (carbohydrates). Not surprisingly, one of the first questions newly diagnosed patients ask is: "What is this diabetes diet I have to follow?" Fortunately, they quickly find out that healthy eating with diabetes is not a life sentence to some rigid, deprivation-oriented menu plan -- and that the concept of a "diabetes diet" is mostly myth. Unlike a diet, nutritional management of diabetes usually involves dietary changes that balance moderation, carbohydrate control, and healthy eating choices. A diagnosis of diabetes presents a unique opportunity to shift your diet and lifestyle choices in a positive direction. The good news is that the best diet for a person with diabetes is really the same kind of healthy eating that is best for everyone!!

EXERCISE TIPS

Time for some basic math - say you work out 30 minutes three times a week. That's great. Now, add 15 minutes to two of those workouts and it's like you worked out an extra day. This Monday, make a commitment to extend your workouts 15 minutes. You'll speed up the benefits of exercise without any additional fuss (like having to get to the gym, shower or change clothes). Extending a workout is the easiest way to benefit more each week.

The glycemic index for some of your favorite breakfast cereals
(Remember 55 and under is considered low glycemic!!)

Foods	GI Value
All Bran with Fiber	38
Bran Buds	47
Oatmeal	49
Muesli, toasted	43
Oat Bran	55
Bran Chex	58
Raisin Bran	61
Cream of Wheat	66
Quick (One Minute) Oat	66
Puffed Wheat	67
Special K	69
Bran Flakes	74
Cheerios	74
Cream of Wheat Instant	74
Shredded Wheat	75
Grapenuts	71
Rice Krispies	82
Corn Chex	83
Corn Flakes	92