

39 Gifts That Give Back, p. 40

My Family Doctor™

The Magazine That Makes Housecalls™

102 of Your Most Intriguing Questions Answered!

(Including 11 you've
never said out loud)

**Can I be allergic to another
person?** p. 38

Should I cut back on carbs? p. 26

**Why is my husband's sex drive
decreasing?** p. 37

That's Just Sick!

What's happening when your body goes wacky
(and what to do about it)

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If you get ravenous after vigorous workouts and often eat more than you burn, consider changing to a more moderate-intensity exercise such as walking. — *Bareuther*

Weight Loss

34. If I'm just a little overweight, is that so bad?

Being overweight raises your risk of developing high blood pressure, diabetes and heart disease. If you consider the ultimate negative effect—death—then it's even worse. In two recent, large studies, overweight people (not just obese ones) were more likely to die during the study than people of normal weight. — *Hwang*

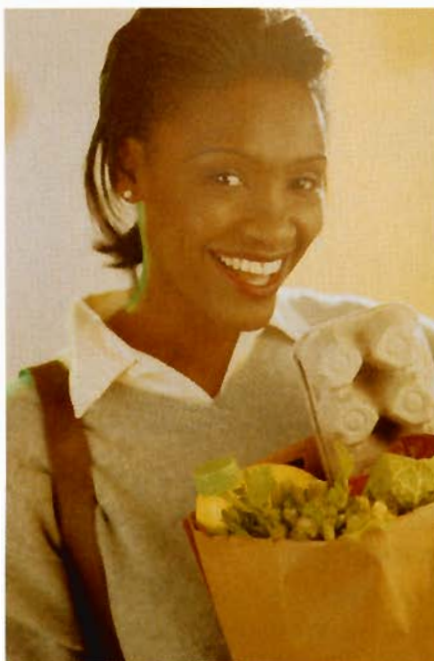


35. Are there any safe diet pills?

No medication comes without risk. And weight loss comes only with hard work.

That being said, if you're substantially overweight, there are some prescription diet pills that might make your hard work just a bit easier. Discuss your options with your health-care provider, who can help you evaluate the risks and benefits. (Some weight-loss medications can cause an increased heart rate, high blood pressure, gas or frequent oily stools.)

As far as so-called "natural" diet pills go, beware. The Food and Drug Administration doesn't regulate them like they do other medications. They may or may not contain the ingredients they claim to, and we may not know all the potential safety risks they could pose. — *Weisenberger*



Nutrition

36. If I'm not on a low-carb diet, should I cut back on carbs anyway?

Probably not. Your muscles, brain and just about every other part of you need carbohydrates to function properly. In fact, about half of your calories should come from carbohydrates.

What really matters is the source of those carbohydrates. They should be primarily fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, and low-fat milk and yogurt. Much less should come from sweetened drinks, white bread, desserts, chips, snack crackers and other junk and baked goods.

Of course, every good diet has room for something that's just for fun. So enjoy your favorite junky food. Just make it small. — *Weisenberger*

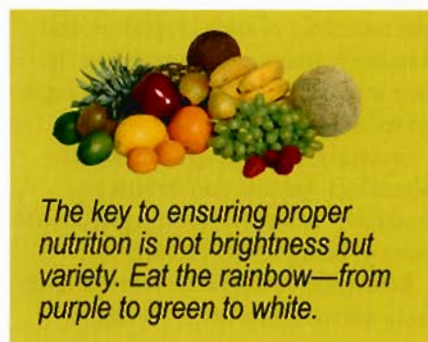


Every good diet has room for something that's just for fun.

37. Is it true that brightly colored fruits and vegetables have more vitamins than those that aren't as colorful?

No, that's a myth. (Consider cauliflower, cabbage, potatoes, onions and leeks). The key to ensuring proper nutrition is not brightness but variety. Eat the rainbow—from purple to green to white.

Produce gets color from phytochemicals, the natural chemicals that help protect plants from environmental toxins. These same phytochemicals also potentially impart several health benefits to humans, namely helping with cancer prevention, memory function, eye health, bone formation, heart health and much more. — *Stokes*



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38. Why is breakfast called "the most important meal of the day"?

Breakfast provides fuel for the body after it's slept all night. In the morning we rise fairly empty, and just like a car, the body can't run on fumes. We need energy from food to perform in school and work.

Furthermore, breakfast helps jumpstart metabolism and could promote weight management. Unfortunately, people tend to skip breakfast due to the morning rush or a misguided hope to save calories. Eating at least three meals a day is crucial for health. — *Stokes*



Hypoactive

A great excuse not to eat cabbage

by D. Milton Stokes, M.P.H., R.D.

QUESTION I have hypothyroidism. My understanding is that all cruciferous veggies are not to be eaten with this condition. What does a person do?

— MICHELLE, FLORIDA

ANSWER Known for their phytochemical power, cruciferous vegetables (including cauliflower, broccoli, Brussels sprouts and turnips) are synonymous with the cabbage family. They provide a lot of health benefits and may help prevent certain cancers. Among their offerings are fiber, beta carotene, vitamin C ... and goitrogens.

That last one's not so good for people with hypothyroidism (not enough thyroid hormones) because goitrogens happen to be substances that may disrupt the thyroid's hormone production.

Define Me!

Phytochemicals: Substances in plants that we don't necessarily need but that may provide a benefit, such as helping prevent cancer; also known as phytonutrients.

Interestingly, though, we're not sure whether people with hypothyroidism should completely avoid goitrogens because we don't know how much affect they have, especially in small amounts. So the best advice is to consume these foods sparingly. If you do eat them, cooking may reduce your risk because goitrogens are sensitive to heat.

In addition to cruciferous vegetables (which also include arugula, bok choy, radishes, Swiss chard, turnip greens, kale,

(Not So) Raging Hormones

The thyroid gland, located in your neck above your collarbone, produces hormones responsible for metabolism and body temperature. People with hypothyroidism have too little of these hormones and may experience fatigue, weight gain, heavy menstruation and intolerance to cold. They may also develop a goiter: a growth on the thyroid gland or an enlargement of the thyroid. (Does the term "goitrogen" make more sense now?)

rutabaga and watercress), other goitrogen-containing foods are soy (soybeans, tofu), peaches, millet, peanuts, spinach and strawberries. This isn't an exhaustive list—even of cruciferous vegetables—so you may want to ask your doctor for more.

Whatever your decision, review it with your doctor, and aim for at least 4 cups of a variety of nongoitrogen fruits and vegetables daily. As long as you do that, you shouldn't have to worry about any nutrient deficiencies just because you can't eat these specific goodies.

ABOUT THE DIETITIAN

D. Milton Stokes, M.P.H., R.D., owns One Source Nutrition, a private practice in Norwalk, Conn. He's also the chief dietitian at St. Barnabas Hospital in New York City and a spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association.