

# Nutrition411

Late Summer 2009



## A Personal Message From Your Registered Dietitian

It's hard to believe that summer is already winding down and that autumn will appear in no time.

As the mornings and nights become cooler, now is the perfect time to dine alfresco and



burn off what you've eaten with a nice, long walk. Take the time to enjoy the last warm, long days of the season. Remember that every day is another chance to commit to the idea of living healthfully.

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## BACK TO SCHOOL

## Packing Healthful and Safe Lunches

Studies show that eating complete, balanced meals helps children perform better academically. To get students off to a running start this year, select foods that they will enjoy and that will help them to reach for the stars academically.

The following are some lunch box ideas:

- Yogurt
- Cheese sticks or chunks
- Individually packaged applesauce or other fruit
- Fresh carrots, celery, or green peppers (sliced) with ranch dressing, if desired
- Dried cranberries or raisins
- Peanut or other nut butter crackers or sandwiches (some schools do not allow peanut butter)
- Trail mix (nuts, cereals, and dried fruits mixed together)
- Wraps made of chicken, tuna, or egg salad
- Hard-boiled eggs
- Leftover pasta or soup

These suggestions can help you keep lunches and snacks safe until it's time to eat them:

- Store cold items with a frozen ice pack
- Use insulated lunch boxes, if possible

## FIBER FACTS

*Aim to consume 25 grams of fiber/day. If you currently fall short, work your way up slowly to avoid becoming constipated, and drink plenty of fluids.*



## EXPERIMENT WITH FRESH HERBS

*Many fresh herbs contain as much or more antioxidant power than fruits and vegetables.*

## GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP?

*Getting 8 hours of sleep a night helps to prevent weight gain, diabetes, and heart disease. Go to bed early tonight!*

## WHAT'S THAT INGREDIENT?

*If a food contains three or more ingredients that you have a difficult time pronouncing, don't eat it.*



## TIME FOR TEA?

*Add a splash of lemon juice to your tea to help your body absorb the tea's antioxidants.*

## Packing Lunches (cont'd)

- Freeze juice boxes and place in the lunch box with cold items
- Pack nonperishable foods, such as peanut butter and jelly, fruit, raw vegetables, crackers, nuts, and packaged pudding
- Place hot items in a thermos or other insulated container; make sure the thermos is cleaned and rinsed with very hot water before adding food

## NUTRITIONAL

### Superfruits: A Super Source of Antioxidants

The term "superfruit" refers to a category of natural plants that are believed to provide great health benefits because of their nutrient and antioxidant levels. The six superfruits are açai, goji, mangosteen, noni, pomegranate, and seaberry. Blueberries, cranberries, and red grapes are seen as the more common superfruits.

The main thing to keep in mind is that these fruits do not have scientific validation, sufficient clinical trial evidence, or regulatory approval for their health claims. However, they are recognized as exceptional antioxidant sources, and current research is looking at possible antidisease properties. Many other forms of produce not classified as superfruits also contain exceptional levels of antioxidants and nutrients. Most studies on these superfruits are small,

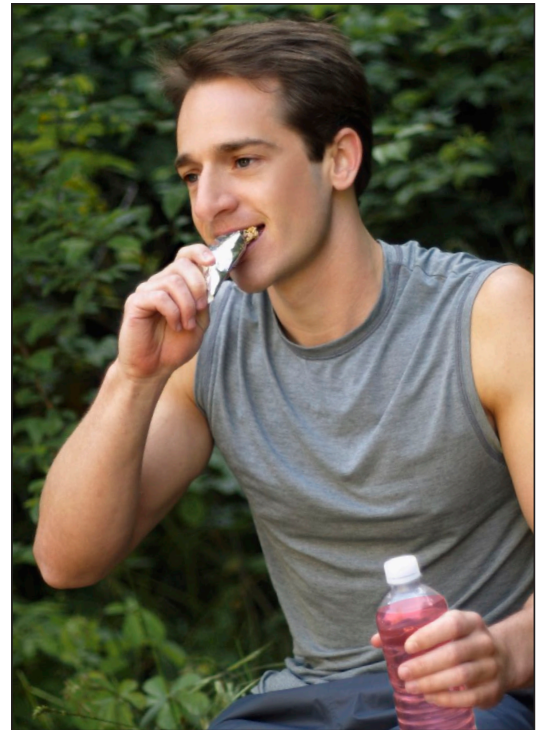
short-term ones that are conducted on animals. They often lack adequate control groups or are funded by industry.

Superfruits usually are very expensive when compared to other fruits, with some juices costing nearly \$100 a bottle. It's important to remember that many of these manufacturers pay a doctor to attest to a fruit's beneficial properties; these claims usually are not credible.

## DECODING THE GROCERY STORE

### Energy Bars and Drinks: A Good Choice?

You've probably noticed the abundance of energy bars and drinks that are available at your local grocery store. Maybe you've even purchased them to use as a quick snack or for an on-the-go meal.



Studies show that these products are no better for athletes than other foods with the same calories or carbohydrate, and they cost much more, generally between \$1–\$2/serving.

These foods generally contain enough calories that a 150-pound person would need to run for 28 minutes at 5 miles per hour (mph), cross country ski for 16 minutes at 8 mph, or do aerobic dancing for 25 minutes to expend what was taken in. Another way of looking at this is that you could eat 5 cups of sliced berries with a small dollop of whipped cream for the same amount of calories that the average energy bar or drink provides.

A risk of overdosing on certain vitamins and minerals can occur, if you frequently use energy bars or drinks and also consume other foods that are fortified with vitamins and minerals. Of particular concern are the fat-soluble vitamins—vitamins A, D, E, and K.

*(cont'd on page 3)*

## Energy Bars and Drinks (cont'd)

Many energy bars and drinks contain saturated fat. It is recommended that people consume no more than 7% of their total calories from saturated fat. For a person who eats 1800 calories/day, this is the equivalent of 14 grams.

Energy drinks and bars are often very high in sugar, and the drinks may contain too much

caffeine, especially if you don't normally consume several cups of caffeinated beverages per day.

These products are OK for certain people, such as those who are unable to obtain whole foods (when traveling, etc). However, as a general rule, these foods are not necessary or beneficial for the general population. Still, if they help you to avoid eating a handful of cookies or a regular candy bar, they're probably the better choice, every once in a while.

### A DINING EXPERIENCE

*Take the time to sit down and enjoy your meals. Set the table, play some light music, and focus on the food before you.*

### WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

## Test Your Knowledge About Heart Health

1

Which of the following foods is not specifically linked to a reduced risk of heart disease?

- a. Garlic
- b. Oats
- c. Corn
- d. Grape Juice
- e. Nuts

2

The fiber in which of the following foods will lead to a reduction of blood cholesterol?

- a. Whole-grain bread
- b. Brown rice
- c. Bran cereal
- d. Carrots
- e. Oats

3

Of all deaths in the United States, what percentage is linked to heart disease?

- a. 20%
- b. 30%
- c. 40%
- d. 50%
- e. 60%

4

Which of the following oils is high in saturated fat?

- a. Canola oil
- b. Palm oil
- c. Safflower oil
- d. Corn oil
- e. Soybean oil

See answers on page 4.

### MAILBOX

***I've noticed a few new sweeteners at the grocery store that are labeled as "all natural." How do these products differ from others that are available?***

You're most likely talking about SweetLeaf® Sweetener™ and Truvia™. Both SweetLeaf and Truvia are made from the stevia herb, a plant that is native to northeast Paraguay and a member of the chrysanthemum family. Sweetleaf contain only stevia, and Truvia contains both stevia and a sugar alcohol.

Stevia consumption has occurred outside of the United States for decades. Stevia is 30 times sweeter than sugar in its unprocessed form, and 250–300 times sweeter once it is purified.



SweetLeaf and Truvia contain 0 calories. Both of these products are used for cooking and baking, and both products' Web sites feature a recipe section. Both manufacturers are in the process of formulating bulk baking products. Truvia offers a conversion chart on its Web site for cooking and baking purposes— $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon (tsp) Truvia=2 tsp sugar.

The World Health Organization and the US Food and Drug Administration have deemed stevia safe in moderate amounts. Stevia is now added to many beverages, gum, yogurt, pickles, dried seafood, fish and meat, vegetables, condiments, frozen foods, and confectionaries.

### START YOUR DAY WITH FIBER

*Choose a cereal that contains at least 3 grams of fiber/serving. If you're interested in decreasing your sugar intake and increasing your fiber intake, however, plain oatmeal is the one cereal that you should always keep on hand. Add a splash of skim milk and some berries to improve the nutritional quality even more.*

## Look for the 'RD'

Get your nutrition advice from a registered dietitian (RD). RDs are the real deal!

# RD

## Answers to Test Your Knowledge About Heart Health



### c. Corn

Garlic, oats, grape juice, and nuts all are proven to reduce cholesterol levels and the risk of heart disease. A high intake of fruits and vegetables is proven to lead to better heart health, but the benefit of corn was never specifically cited.



### e. Oats

Whole-grain bread, brown rice, bran cereal, and carrots all contain insoluble fiber. Oats contain soluble fiber, which binds with bile and prevents the absorption of cholesterol. However, both soluble and insoluble fibers are good for you. You should try to eat as much fiber as possible.



### c. 40%

According to the National Center for Health Statistics and the American Heart Association, cardiovascular disease is the number one cause of mortality in the United States, accounting for 40.1% of all deaths.



### b. Palm oil

Canola, safflower, corn, and soybean oils are all unsaturated oils. Other unsaturated oils are olive, cottonseed, wheat-germ, flaxseed, sunflower, and peanut oils.

## Cook's Corner

Many health experts recommend that we eat meatless meals at least once a week.

The typical American diet is high in meat, and low in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. This diet increases the risk for development of heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes.

Try this meatless meal this week to lead to a healthier tomorrow.

## Pasta Bake With Spinach and Ricotta

— MAKES FOUR SERVINGS —

### INGREDIENTS

6 ounces (oz) whole-grain rotini pasta (cooked according to package directions and drained)	¼ C plus 2 tablespoons (Tbsp) grated Parmesan cheese (divided)
1¾ cups (C) ready-made marinara sauce (divided)	¼ C fat-free egg substitute
10-oz package frozen spinach (thawed and squeezed dry)	¼ teaspoon (tsp) ground black pepper
1½ C nonfat or part-skim ricotta cheese	⅛ tsp ground nutmeg
	Cooking spray

### DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 350° F.

Coat four 16-oz ramekins with cooking spray. Toss the pasta with ¼ C of the sauce and divide among the ramekins. Set aside.

Place the drained spinach, ricotta, ¼ C of the Parmesan cheese, egg substitute, pepper, and nutmeg in a medium-size bowl, and stir to mix well. Spread one fourth of the spinach mixture over the pasta in each ramekin, followed by one

fourth of the remaining sauce. Sprinkle some of the remaining Parmesan cheese over the sauce layer in each ramekin.

Place the ramekins on a large baking sheet. Bake uncovered for about 30 minutes or until thoroughly heated, with the tops beginning to brown. Remove from the oven and let sit for 10 minutes before serving hot.

**Per serving:** 268 calories, 36 grams (g) carbohydrate, 7 g fiber, 3.7 g fat, 1.9 g saturated fat, 15 milligrams (mg) cholesterol, 25 g protein, 441 mg sodium, 530 mg calcium, 462 mg potassium

**GI rating:** Low

**Diabetic exchanges:** 1½ starch, 2 vegetable, 2 lean meat

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