Your Health

How to Distinguish Health Truth from Health Fraud

As a consumer, you are bombarded with news reports, magazine articles and even casual conversations about the latest research on disease control and prevention. Many of the studies contradict each other and you end up confused and frustrated. How can you tease out the truth and make informed decisions about your health? Here are some tips that may make it easier:

• Is the research from an institution or researcher who is well-known for expertise in the particular disease or health issue being studied?
• Is the study showing preliminary results or have other studies shown similar findings?
• Was the study done with animals or humans? Studies done with animals may not have the same results when conducted later with human subjects.
• Was a large number of people studied and did the research project last for a short or long period of time? Has there been follow-up to see if the positive or negative effects of the study continued?
• Who paid for the study? Could this have influenced...
the study results or was the studied designed carefully so any bias would be minimized?

• Was the study originally published in a well-respected research or medical journal that has its articles reviewed prior to publication by other experts in the field being studied?

• Does the report avoid words like “proves” or “causes”? Rarely is one study enough to conclusively prove anything.

• Does the study apply to the real world or were the study conditions so special that the results may not reflect how people actually live or support the findings of previous studies?

• Do the results apply only to a certain group of people or can they be generalized to someone like you?

• Are there other reports by qualified health experts that support these research findings? Reports in the media may not give you enough information to answer some of these questions. Unless you can answer them, view most reports with a dose of “healthy” skepticism.


Healthy Pizza for One

1 6-inch whole-wheat tortilla
1 tablespoon no salt added tomato sauce
1/8 teaspoon oregano
1/2 cup sliced, fresh mushrooms
1 cup fresh spinach leaves
2 tablespoons shredded reduced-fat Swiss or mozzarella cheese
1 teaspoon grated Parmesan cheese

1. Preheat oven to 500 degrees.
2. Microwave spinach on high for about 35 seconds; drain and pat dry with a paper towel.
4. Spread tomato sauce evenly over tortilla; sprinkle oregano on top.
5. Add spinach and mushrooms. Sprinkle with mozzarella cheese.
6. Place tortilla on pizza pan or baking sheet. Bake for 5-7 minutes or until cheese melts.

Servings: 1
Exchanges: 1 starch, 1 vegetable, 1/2 lean meat

Nutrition Information:
Calories: 127
Carbohydrate: 19 grams
Protein: 10 grams
Fat: 2 grams
Cholesterol: 6 mg
Sodium: 294 mg
Fiber: 12 grams

Your Resources

Dangers of Carbon Monoxide

Even though warm weather is quickly approaching, carbon monoxide poisoning is still possible. It is important to know how and where carbon monoxide can enter a home to avoid serious and potentially fatal health effects.

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, tasteless gas that is emitted when burning fuels such as gasoline, natural gas, kerosene, charcoal or wood. Carbon monoxide may find its way into the home from appliances powered by natural gas such as furnaces, water heaters, space heaters, gas range or fireplaces/wood stoves, gas clothes dryers, to name a few.

Even if there is no source of combustion, there is a major risk of poisoning. What happens to a person experiencing poisoning is that carbon monoxide replaces oxygen in the bloodstream. The more CO in the air, and the longer a person experiences exposure, the greater the possibility of grave consequences.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include fatigue, impaired vision, headaches, dizziness, nausea and even death.

Tips on reducing risks to carbon monoxide exposure:

Make sure that:
- All appliances are installed and used according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- There is good ventilation

Even if there is no source of combustion, there is a major risk of poisoning.
• when operating gas powered appliances.
• No unvented gas or kerosene heaters are used in enclosed spaces.
• All appliances are properly maintained and serviced on a regular basis.
• All ventilation systems are checked and cleaned regularly.
• No charcoal is burned inside a home, garage or other enclosed space.
• No automobiles are allowed to idle (warm up) in an enclosed garage, or even a garage with the door open.

Another safety tip is to check the color of the flame emitted by an appliance (the pilot light, flame from the stove, etc.). A steady, blue flame will emit less carbon monoxide than a flickering yellow one. A flickering yellow flame is a sign that the equipment or appliance needs to be adjusted for the sake of safety and efficiency.

People whose homes use gas appliances should purchase a carbon monoxide detector to alert them when CO rises to dangerous levels. Anyone who suspects symptoms of poisoning should turn off appliances, open windows and doors to allow fresh air, call 911 and immediately go outside.

Source: TDH News Feature

Your Relationships

The Face of Family Caregivers

Even as assisted living and nursing care facilities bulge with increasing numbers of senior residents, most people are surprised to learn that 80% of long-term caregiving in this country is provided by family members at home, not by paid staff at a facility. A common complaint is that many American families just aren't willing to care for Grandma at home like in the old days.

The facts tell a different story. The national profile of the family caregiver is a 46-year-old baby boomer woman, who works outside the home and spends an average of 18 hours per week caring for her 77-year-old mother. One in three of these caregivers cares for two or more senior family
members, and more than 40% also have children under 18 living at home. Almost one in four US households contain someone caring for a senior relative or friend.

About half of these caregivers assist their aging family members with at least one of the major so-called “activities of daily living” – bathing, dressing, feeding, and toileting.

What are the impacts of this situation on caregivers’ lives? When asked for a single word that defines caregiving for them, most caregivers select a positive term such as “loving,” “rewarding,” or “helpful.” The biggest reward is ensuring that their family member is getting good care.

Caregiving does carry burdens, as well, especially if the caregiver is by herself without other family members to share the load, if she lives with the dependent person, or if the senior is very ill or suffers from dementia. In addition to the emotional burdens, family caregivers spend an average of nearly $200 per month on expenses such as groceries, medications, and home modifications.

Family caregivers who also work outside the home often take time off for caregiving, cutting into their pay and benefits there as well.

As our population continues to age, the availability, affordability and quality of senior caregiving will grow increasingly important. The vast majority of families want to provide primary care for their dependent family members, and most seniors prefer family caregivers when complete independence is no longer possible. The value of unpaid care by family members is estimated at $200 billion per year, which is more than the cost of all nursing home and home health care combined. Without family caregiving, our long-term care system would collapse.


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Dear Friend:

SENIOR SENSE is a quarterly publication provided by your local county Extension Service office. It is prepared by Extension Family & Consumer Sciences specialists at The University of Georgia specifically for the educational needs of older Georgians.

Please contact your local Extension Service office for more information on these and related topics.

Putting Knowledge to Work

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