

## HEALTH NUGGETS MAY 2017

1. Statins and cardiovascular disease (CVD) prevention: If you have more than one risk factor without a history of CVD between 40-75 years of age the recommendation is to take a low-to-moderate-dose statin. The risk factors are elevated cholesterol/triglycerides, diabetes, hypertension, or smoking, and have a 10-year risk of an adverse event of 10% or greater.
2. Medicare hospital trap: Not every patient in a hospital has been admitted. Hospitals, under pressure to reduce their readmission rates, have been holding patients "for observation". This can have devastating financial consequences if you're going to need rehab afterwards. Medicare will pay for up to 20 days of rehab in a skilled nursing facility if you've been admitted for a minimum of 3 consecutive midnights. Patients under observation don't qualify and may have to pay thousands of dollars out of pocket. A new federal law now requires hospitals to notify patients that they've been given observation status. If this occurs ask the doctor whether this can be changed...contest the decision with the ombudsman...and if that fails, follow the appeal instructions on your summary notice.
3. 75% of Americans say that they eat healthfully—even though they don't. But more than 80% of Americans don't eat the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables.
4. What is the best hospital in the US? The Mayo Clinic. 2<sup>nd</sup> is the Cleveland Clinic, followed by Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston...Johns Hopkins in Baltimore...and UCLA Medical Center, LA.
5. Superagers' secrets to a youthful brain: Adults between the ages 60-80 whose memories are comparable to adults in their 20s and 30s. Some factors involve genetic makeup and life experiences. But there are 5 factors we can control. Exercise for at least 30 minutes five days/week; social activity—reach out to old friends, make new ones, join a group and volunteer; a healthy diet and avoid processed foods, excessive sugar, and unhealthy saturated fats; intellectually active, learn to play a musical instrument, join the choir, read good articles on the internet, or try painting. If you've done crossword puzzles for years, change up with Sudoku or something new; meditation—not mindfulness where you empty your mind, but where you meditate on a scripture for instance.

6. Calcium supplements may raise dementia risk in women: Many women are taking it to lower their risk of osteoporosis. Studied 700 healthy women ages 70-92 over 5 years. 447 underwent CT brain scans. They were much more likely to develop dementia if they took calcium supplements. The study didn't prove a causal relationship; however women with cardiovascular disease and osteoporosis should discuss this new information with their clinicians. These findings apply to calcium supplements only, not to calcium derived from food sources, which appear to be safe.
7. Excess weight in midlife appears to speed brain aging: Losing excess pounds in middle age is likely to benefit your brain as much as your waistline. Overweight or obese participants had significantly more shrinkage of the white matter of their brains. Their volume was similar to that of normal-weight participants who were 10 years older. Further research is recommended.
8. Stroke victims with anemia face higher risk of mortality: They face nearly twice the risk for death, compared to seniors without anemia, within a year of having a stroke. People with anemia should find out why and treat the cause.
9. Giving is good for you: In fact, study suggests that the giver may benefit more than the receiver on a neurobiological level. Altruism releases brain chemicals such as dopamine and endorphins that increase the sense of wellbeing. Other-oriented people are more resistant to inflammation and impaired antibody production. Try to do one good deed daily such as holding the door open, having someone with fewer items go ahead of you in line, send a card or phone someone that you're thinking of them. Notice others' kind acts and thank them. Offer a kind word to a stressed-out colleague, or a warm hug. SDAs have numerous opportunities to give. But if you are a caregiver, don't stretch yourself to exhaustion—you need respite and support from others.
10. Anti-inflammatory diet: Inflammation is the biggest source of damage in many diseases, from heart disease and diabetes to Alzheimer's disease. Inflammation often starts in the gut. The book Super Genes gives detailed advice of what to eat and not eat. 1) Consume prebiotics such as raw garlic, onions, whole grains such as oatmeal, raw asparagus, and pulpy OJ. 2) Consume probiotics such as yogurt, sauerkraut and pickles. 3) Eat a salad daily. 4) Anti-inflammatory

- foods such as seeds, soybeans, leafy greens, broccoli, beets, carrots, peppers and tomatoes. 5) Limit pro-inflammatory foods such as red meat, butter, saturated and trans fats, white bread and rice, fried foods, sugary sodas, and corn syrup.
11. Furry pets, healthier babies: Babies, exposed to furry animals, especially dogs, have significantly higher levels of two gut bacteria associated a lower risk for allergies and obesity. These bacteria enhance a newborn's resistance. Prenatal pet exposure also reduces the risk that mother will pass group B strep—linked to sepsis, pneumonia, and meningitis—to children during delivery.
  12. HPV (human papillomavirus) infections are rampant: CDC states that it's important for more parents to vaccinate their children against HPV. HPV can cause cancer of the cervix, vulva, vaginal, penis and throat. 11 & 12 year-olds, girls and boys need this vaccine against cancer.
  13. Zika virus: It's now found in 9 Southeastern US states, as well as Texas, Arizona, and Southern CA. The Zika mosquito has a cousin which is cold tolerant and found into southern New England and across to the mid-Atlantic states. It's a danger not just to pregnant women, but to all ages. Up to 75% of people who are infected with the virus have no symptoms. There's a long list of symptoms that have been experienced. A vaccine is expected to take at least 7-11 years. So protect yourself with DEET, picaridin or PMD. Can't be used on children under 2 months of age. So children should cover arms & legs, and use mosquito netting on cribs and strollers. Don't have standing water, empty and clean bird baths weekly. Consider Zika in travel planning.
  14. Mediterranean diet prevents brain atrophy: The new study involved 1,000 healthy Scottish adults ages 73-76. Those following the Mediterranean diet showed fewer signs of brain shrinkage over the 3 year study. The diet may be able to provide long-term protection to the brain.