

Tips from “Dr. T”



Dr. R.M. Tooker, MD, MPH
Medical Director of Allegan
County Health Department

Go Nuts for Healthy Snack

Forget the chips and sweets. Nuts provide protein, fiber, folic acid, potassium, phosphorous, selenium, zinc and vitamins B-6 and E. Nuts do have fat, but a healthy type and they are free of cholesterol. They are nutrient dense so don't overdo it. A 1.5 helping can be a filling, energizing pick-me-up boost. Here is some snack serving amounts;

- Pistachios 47-49
- Almonds 20-24
- Pecans 18-20 halves
- Hazelnuts 18-20
- Cashews 16-18
- Walnuts 10-14 halves
- Macadamias 10-12
- Brazil nuts 6-8

MI Healthier Tomorrow

The State has launched the action plan for the Michigan 4x4 Health Plan. The key feature of MI Healthier Tomorrow is reducing your weight by 10%. This is an excellent goal for the majority of Michigan adults that need to improve their health.

The program has a sign up and pledge. It is well worth the time to log on and take the pledge www.Michigan.gov/mihealthiertomorrow as you will get a free starter kit with motivational tips and money saving offers.

If you are overweight, losing just 10% can:

- Improve blood pressure
- Lower cholesterol levels
- Improve heart health
- Decrease risk of Type 2 diabetes
- Strengthen the immune system
- Decrease back and joint pain
- Improve breathing and sleep
- Increase energy and stamina
- Improve mood and self-confidence

Are you ready? Clear your mind of “can't”. You know you can change for the better!

7 Health Benefits of Chocolate

Chocolate has been enjoyed for 3000 years but recent scientific studies have found chocolate to be something of a wonder drug. Chocolate's main ingredient, cocoa, is rich in flavanols – powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory agents. Studies have found eating high cocoa content (60% or greater) dark chocolate may;

- Reduce the risk of heart disease
- Reduce blood pressure
- Reduce the risk of strokes
- Reduce cholesterol
- Elevate mood
- Improve brain functions
- Lower your body mass index (BMI)

Of course this is the expensive stuff and eating enough means an ounce or two over about a week's time. That is an extra 400-500 calories a week so keep that in mind. Read the labels and enjoy – as medicine goes, it is still inexpensive and oh-so tasty.

Exercise is Important for a Healthy Brain

Two recent studies have proven that exercise is not only good for our body's health but also for our brain health.

One study found that regular exercise in older adults prevented brain atrophy (shrinkage) by preserving both brain cells and their connections.

Another study found that regular exercise of about 30 minutes a day, most days of the week, was associated with good mental health. This adds to many other studies that show exercise helps prevent or improves conditions like anxiety and depression.

Further studies have demonstrated that we can get our 30 minutes in two or three shorter segments - they add up. Exercise is a dirty word to many people but we are talking about running up stairs, house chores, raking leaves, walking with the kids at a park, dancing, basketball, or a long walk with the dog.

Keep anxiety, depression and even dementia away with moderate exercise.

Health Benefits of Drinking Coffee

For many years I advised my patients to limit the amount of caffeinated coffee they drank. More than 2-3 cups per day was considered to be a possible health risk by causing a brief jump in blood pressure. Also, the hundreds of compounds in coffee have been untested for health problems.

In the past few years coffee is now considered to be almost a wonder drug. Many of those untested ingredients have turned out to be health giving antioxidants. Well conducted studies have shown coffee to be safe and healthy in many ways. Studies have shown caffeinated coffee to;

- Help reduce the risk for several cancers
- Slow the progression of dementia and Parkinson's Disease
- Decrease the risk for Depression
- Decrease the risk of heart and blood vessel disease
- Decrease the risk for Stroke
- Decrease the risk for Type 2 Diabetes
- Slow the progression of liver disease
- And even provides some protection for certain bacterial infections

For a small number of people coffee may not be well tolerated. People may experience increased anxiety, agitation, insomnia or tremors. For most, however, even 6 cups of coffee per day may give health benefits without documented health problems.

Blood Sugar - Why is my number important?

Knowing your blood sugar level may save your life or keep you safe from serious illness and disabling diseases. Many people die years before their time because their blood sugar level goes unchecked. Checking blood sugar detects diabetes. Diabetes is now a serious disease epidemic in Michigan and across the U. S.

Blood sugar is commonly checked by drawing blood several hours after eating (fasting blood sugar test). Here are the numbers you need to know (measured in mg/dL);

- Less than 100 - Normal
- 100-125 - may indicate Pre-diabetes, an early indicator of Diabetes risk
- 125 and over - may indicate Diabetes

Elevated blood sugar levels require further testing by your doctor. Don't Delay - Check to Know for Sure!

See Your Doctor for an Annual Check-Up

DON'T WAIT UNTIL IT'S TOO LATE!

Most serious diseases have little or no signs or symptoms until they cause disability and result in early death. Conditions that lead to stroke, heart disease, dementia, lung, and kidney disease don't hurt or cause you to feel sick. The same goes for risk factors that cause many cancers.

The only way to identify health risks and learn to prevent or minimize them is to get a check-up from your doctor. Don't be stubborn, don't be late - it may be deadly to hesitate!

If not for you, do it for the ones you love or those who depend on you.

West Nile Virus Infection

In 2012, Michigan has had the worst outbreak of West Nile Virus infection since 2002 and it may have been the worst year ever for the illness caused by exposure to infected mosquitoes.

The virus may cause a flu-like illness with headache and stiff neck. A small number of infected people will get a severe infection of the brain and spinal cord. This condition may cause paralysis, coma and in some cases, death.

About 50 cases have been reported across the state including 3 deaths. One probable case has been reported in Allegan County.

Stay safe by avoiding mosquito bites until we get a good, hard frost - probably sometime in late October.

To stay safe;

- Limit time outdoors in the early morning and early evening when mosquitoes are most active
- Wear light colored, long-sleeved shirts and long pants when you need to be out
- Use a DEET containing insect repellent - follow the product directions carefully
- Make sure window screens are in good repair and keep doors and windows closed

Get rid of any standing water in gutters or anything that collects water around the yard or close to living areas.

Lock Up Your Pain Medications - You May Be Contributing to Teen Drug Abuse

The Allegan County Substance Abuse Prevention Task Force advises everyone who uses prescription pain medication to keep it in a locking box instead of the medicine cabinet. The number one source of teen abuse of pain medications - to get high, is from friends, neighbors and relatives. These medications almost always are taken from people without their knowing it. Also, a lot of people have unwanted or unused pain medication that becomes an easy target for theft.

Misuse of pain medications is most common among individuals between age 12 and 20 with the peak age around 16. Many Allegan teens risk becoming addicted to these medications as a result of this easy access and a desire to experiment.

Allegan County Participates in the Michigan 4x4 Wellness Plan

In 2012, Allegan County adopted Governor Snyder's 4x4 Wellness Plan. The plan calls for everyone to get 4 Key Health Measures - Body Mass Index, Blood Pressure, Blood Cholesterol level and Blood Sugar level. Everyone should also engage in 4 Key Health Behaviors - Maintain a healthy diet, Get regular exercise, Get an annual physical exam and avoid all tobacco use.

Allegan County has adopted the 4x4 Wellness Program for county employees and is encouraging all county residents to follow their lead.