

How Healthy is Your Diet?

The nutrition news is coming in fast and furious. There was an excellent article¹ published on green tea in the June 2009 edition of the journal *Gut*. Researchers examined the association between green tea consumption and abnormal cellular growth of the stomach. They analyzed a total of six studies involving almost 220,000 individuals. It was found that women who consumed five or more cups a day of green tea had a statistically significant decrease in the risk of developing abnormal cellular growth of the stomach.

Another great study² published in the June 2009 edition of the *Archives of Pharmacal Research* indicated EGCG found in green tea can protect brain cells from the deadly effect of the beta-amyloid peptide. Beta-amyloid has been implicated in numerous studies as a primary reason brain cells degrade and die as we age. This can adversely affect our memory. It appears the EGCG boosts the brain cells' level of reduced glutathione (GSH), a very powerful antioxidant that is quite protective against free radical damage. There are now over 3,300 studies published at the National Library of Medicine that appear in the search results when you search "green tea".

The *Journal of National Cancer Institute* included a study³ in its June 26, 2009 issue in which researchers found that a high dietary intake of fat, especially from red meat and dairy products, was associated with an increased risk of developing abnormal cellular growth of the pancreas. It was observed that participants who consumed higher amounts of saturated fats increased their relative rate of developing abnormal cellular growth of the pancreas by 36% compared to those who consumed smaller amounts.

A study⁴ was just published in the July 2009 edition of the *Journal of Nutrition* examining the benefits of consuming nuts or peanut butter. The study involved more than 6,000 women with a history of elevated blood sugar who were followed between 1980 and 2002. After adjusting for other factors, it was found that women who ate at least five servings a week of nuts or peanut butter had a 44% lower risk of developing poor cardiovascular health. You should know that a serving of peanut butter amounts to only about one tablespoon. Researchers did warn, however, that peanut products can be full of added sugar or salt.

It is clear most people consume far too many saturated and polyunsaturated fats proven to increase the risk of poor cellular health. The only fats I recommend that are essential to good health are organic extra virgin olive oil, omega-3 EPA and DHA from fish oil and ALA rich flax seeds and oil. The fats in nuts also appear to be quite healthy; they are primarily monounsaturated. My favorites are almonds, pistachios and walnuts. Nuts are loaded with protein and fiber not to mention minerals such as magnesium and potassium. Pistachios are also rich in the amino acid arginine shown to promote healthy sexual and cardiovascular function. In regards to peanut butter, look for an organic brand with no added sugar and low sodium content. My favorite is sold at Vitacost.com, the brand is Arrowhead Mills. Vitacost.com also has Flora organic extra virgin olive oil, Flora is a very high quality brand.

The June 2009 issue of the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology* published a study⁵ regarding the benefits of folic acid. Researchers have noticed a sharp increase in the percentage of people worldwide who have developed allergies and associated conditions within the last couple of decades. About 8,000 people, ages 2 years and older, who participated in the 2005-2006 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey were evaluated. It was found that, in general, the higher a person's folate levels, the lower the levels of immunoglobulin E, the anti-body which appears to be responsible for allergic reactions. The researchers concluded that "additional prospective studies will be required to

lend insight to the potential role of folic acid supplementation in the primary prevention, treatment or both of allergic diseases." This does not surprise me as most adults and children consume far below the optimal levels of folic acid and other essential B vitamins.

Last but not least, there was another impressive study⁶ published on vitamin D appearing in the journal *Osteoporosis International*. Researchers noted that populations around the world appear to be suffering from the effects of low levels of vitamin D. They observed that although the optimal level of vitamin D is still uncertain, vitamin D status is seriously inadequate in large proportions of the population throughout the world. Some of the risk factors for low vitamin D levels include older age, less sunlight exposure, dietary habits, absence of vitamin D fortification in common foods and other factors. They found that people, especially in cities, tend to live and work indoors and generally avoid exposure to the sun. Based on my research, I agree many people are severely deficient in vitamin D. Even if you receive adequate sun exposure outdoors and you are using a sun block, you most likely will have less than optimal levels.

By Dr. Allen S. Josephs