

How about a BST Sandwich?

Two all-beef patties, special sauce, spinach, cheese... Hey, wait a minute.

Spinach is packed with vitamins and minerals. Yet, despite the best efforts of Popeye the Sailor Man, it has never gained its rightful place in the American diet. A group of researchers at the University of Arkansas would like to change that by introducing spinach into fast-food burgers and tacos.

In 1999, the scientists performed tests in which they substituted shredded spinach for iceberg lettuce in the offerings of two fast-food chains, one known for sandwiches and the other for Mexican food. Tasters could not detect a difference.

How about a BST sandwich?

[SOURCE: Eric Nagourney, "Like Some Spinach with Those Fries?" New York Times, March 27, 2001]

Fruits, Vegetables Do the Job

Dietary data from nearly 40,000 female health professionals followed for an average of five years found that those who consumed the most fruits and vegetables had a lower incidence of heart attack, stroke or death related to cardiovascular disease than other subjects. They also had fewer bypass graft surgeries and balloon angioplasties.

[SOURCE: S. Liu, J.E. Manson, I.M. Lee et al, "American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, 2000; 72(4):922-928]

Heart Disease Gets Early Start

Many young people, even those with normal cholesterol readings, show signs of atherosclerosis or hardening of the arteries, according to a study published in *Circulation*. The evidence of heart disease was found in autopsies performed on 856 young people, ages 15 to 34, who died of suicide, homicide or accidents. Smokers were three times more likely than others to have fatty streaks and plaque in their arteries; obese males, but not females, had double the risk.

[SOURCE: *Circulation*, March, 2001; Eric Nagourney, "In Youth, It's Not Just about Cholesterol," New York Times, March 27, 2001]

Nutrient Deficits Common with Aging

A study of 62 healthy older adults (aged 90 to 106) in northern Italy found a high prevalence of nutrient deficiencies that were in turn associated with a reduced number of immune cells. Most common deficiencies were for selenium (50 percent of both sexes); zinc (52 percent of men and 41 percent of women); vitamin B-6 (40 percent of men and 59 percent of women); vitamin A (16 percent of men and 27 percent of women), and vitamins E, B-12 and folate (less than 10 percent in both sexes).

[SOURCE: G. Ravaglia, P. Forti, F. Maioli, et al, American Journal of Clinical

Nutrition, February, 2000]

The Quest for Lasting Weight Loss

Losing weight is always difficult; keeping it off is doubly hard. The National Weight Control Registry, compiled from physician records, lists individuals who have lost at least 30 pounds of weight and kept it off for longer than a year.

A recent search of this registry found that only 25 of these individuals (0.9 percent) had lost weight using a low-carbohydrate method similar to the Atkins diet. Even though the Atkins diet has been used for more than 30 years, subjects following this method had a mean weight loss duration of 19 months compared to 36 months for individuals getting more than 24 percent of their calories from carbohydrates.

[SOURCE: James Lenhard, M.D., "Obesity in the New Millennium: Highlights from NAASO 2000, North American Association for the Study of Obesity 2000 Annual Meeting]

Obesity Growing Worldwide

Obesity has become an epidemic, not only in the United States but in every continent of the world. China, with the lowest rate of obesity in the world (two percent of men and six percent of women) has witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of overweight persons over the past decade.

In developing countries, obesity is often associated with affluence and Western influences; in developed countries it is more likely to occur among poor people who have less opportunity to exercise and choose high-quality foods.

[SOURCE: James Lenhard, M.D., "Obesity in the New Millennium: Highlights from NAASO 2000, North American Association for the Study of Obesity 2000 Annual Meeting]

Athletes Need Protein...But Not That Much

A long distance runner needs more dietary protein than a sedentary person. And a body builder requires even more protein. These increased needs are easily met, however, through traditional food sources. Studies show that most Americans, both athletes and non-athletes, generally get more protein than their bodies need.

Studies have determined that sedentary individuals need 0.8 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight compared to 1.2 to 1.4 grams for a marathon runner and 1.4 to 1.8 grams for a person doing resistance weight training.

[SOURCE: Josephine Connolly, M.S., R.D., "Dietary Protein Intake Differences Based on Activity Levels," Medscape, March 6, 2001]

High C Equals Long Life?

Subjects with the highest blood levels of vitamin C had the lowest risk of dying, according to a four-year British study of nearly 20,000 men and women, aged 45 to 79.

Vitamin C levels equivalent to that obtained from an extra

50 grams daily of fruits and vegetables made a significant difference in lowering the risk of death from cancer, heart disease and all causes. Adjustments were made for age, sex, systolic blood pressure, cholesterol, body mass index, smoking, diabetes and use of dietary supplements.

[SOURCE: K.T. Khaw, et al, "Relation between Plasma Ascorbic Acid and Mortality in Men and Women in EPIC-Norfolk Prospective Study: A Prospective Population Study," *Lancet*, March 3, 2001]

Low-Fat Diet Requires Commitment

Following a reduced-fat diet reduced the risk of having a heart attack or stroke by as much as 16 percent, according to a meta-analysis of 27 randomized, controlled studies. But the benefits generally surfaced only for those following the low-fat regimen for two years or more.

[SOURCE: Lee Hoper, M.D., et al, *British Medical Journal*, March 31, 2001; "Cardiovascular Benefits of Dietary Fat Reduction May Require 2 Years or More," *Reuters Health*]

CLA Improves Body Composition

Conjugated linoleic acid (CLA), now available as a dietary supplement, is being studied for its potential role in controlling weight and improving body composition. In a recent Norwegian study involving 60 overweight men and women followed for 12 weeks, subjects taking the supplement lost an average of six pounds of body fat compared to subjects taking a placebo. As in other recent studies, CLA resulted not in actual weight loss but in improved body composition—reducing body fat while preserving muscle mass.

As the authors pointed out, an improved body composition is an important part of any weight loss program that should also include calorie restriction and exercise.

[SOURCE: C.W. Henderson, "Conjugated Linoleic Acid Reduces Body Fat," *Obesity, Fitness and Wellness Week*; from *Journal of Nutrition*, December, 2000]

Aging May Compromise Digestion

About 20 percent of persons over age 60 suffer from atrophic gastritis, secreting lower than normal amounts of stomach acid. Often undiagnosed, atrophic gastritis may make it difficult for a person to break down and absorb certain nutrients such as calcium either from diet or from supplements.

[SOURCE: "When and How To Take Your Vitamin and Mineral Supplements," *Tufts University Health & Nutrition Letter*, March, 1999]

Do Vegetarians Need Vitamins?

Do vegetarians need vitamins or other dietary supplements? Actually, most studies indicate that vegetarians are healthier than meat-eaters, perhaps because fruits and vegetables are high in antioxidant vitamins C and A. One 1995 study found, however, that female vegetarians had lower than average levels

of riboflavin, niacin, sodium and zinc.

[SOURCE: Jack Challem, "Everything You Need To Know about Vitamins," *Natural Health*, July-August, 1998]

How Many Almonds in a Vitamin E Pill?

Most doctors would agree that it's generally better to get your vitamins and minerals from eating a well balanced diet. A few nutrients, however, such as vitamin E are difficult to obtain through diet alone because they are commonly found in foods that may be high in calories or fat. To obtain 400 IU of vitamin E, for example, you would have to eat a thousand almonds—equivalent to about 8,000 calories and 658 grams of fat.

[SOURCE: Jack Challem, "Everything You Need To Know about Vitamins," *Natural Health*, July-August, 1998]

Don't Overload on Iron

Menstruating women, and particularly those with abnormally heavy menstrual flow, may need extra iron to prevent anemia. Many breakfast cereals, however, are heavily fortified with iron; a multivitamin will also provide adequate levels for most individuals.

Men and postmenopausal women may need less than normal amounts of iron. Some research indicates that excessive levels of iron may increase the risk of heart disease and of colon cancer.

[SOURCE: *Supplements Made Simple: The Quick and Easy Way To Find the Smartest Vitamins and Minerals on the Shelf*, Prevention, February, 1997]

Have You Told Your Doctor?

A large number of Americans regularly take multivitamins and other dietary supplements. Yet one survey found that 72 percent of respondents had not informed their doctors about these and other alternative therapies.

Any supplement capable of having a positive effect on health is also highly likely to have undesirable side effects. Supplements may interact with prescription medications or with other supplements. Garlic, ginkgo biloba and vitamin E, for example, have a blood thinning effect, and so do prescription medications such as warfarin.

[SOURCE: Susan Stupay and Lynn Sivertsen, "Herbal and Nutritional Supplement Use in the Elderly," *The Nurse Practitioner*, September, 2000]