

health awareness



A COUNTY HEALTH POOL PUBLICATION

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EAT THIS PLUS THAT!

Imagine combining specific food pairings in a snack or meal to create optimal absorption of nutrients and minerals in your body. Heard of “Eat This Not That?” Add a new twist to the concept and you get this: “Eat This *Plus* That!”

Fish & Wine

Fish is high in heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids. In fact, studies show that the fatty acids found in fish help reduce triglycerides, irregular heartbeats and high blood pressure, and slow the growth of arterial plaques. The American Heart Association gives a thumbs up to eating fish at least twice a week. But did you know that wine can provide a super-boost to your omega-3 levels, making it an excellent accompaniment to fish?

In a European study of 1,600 people, the participants under-

went medical exams and blood labs to measure omega-3 levels. The study also measured participants’ “marine intake” which included fish, shellfish, cuttlefish, squid, octopus, shrimp and crab. The results revealed that with similar amounts of marine food, those who drank moderate amounts of alcohol (one drink/day for women and two for men) had higher concentrations of omega-3s than nondrinkers. Wine imbibers had the most favorable results. Beer and spirits (vodka, gin, etc.) also showed higher levels of omega-3s. One caveat: The study also revealed that heavy alcohol drinkers actually had lower amounts of omega-3s – demonstrating that moderation is key.

Lemon & Tea

Did you know that both black and green teas are good for your
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cardiovascular health? Both contain catechins which are known heart-healthy antioxidants. Research shows that drinking tea can reduce the occurrence of strokes, lower cholesterol and reduce the risk of cancer, diabetes and heart disease. The unfortunate news is that the beneficial catechins have a tendency to break down during digestion. The result is that post-digestion nearly 20% of the active catechin compounds are left behind unused. Now for the good news. Enter lemon. Yes, a squeeze of lemon added to your black or green tea is an amazingly healthy combination. According to a study published in *Molecular Nutrition & Food Research*, adding fresh lemon to your tea will up your body’s processing of catechins post-digestion by 80%. If you prefer orange, lime or grapefruit juices, they are also

beneficial for stabilizing the catechins, though not as favorable as the lemon. Prefer buying bottled tea instead of brewing fresh? No problem. Find a tea that includes vitamin C by looking for “ascorbic acid” on the label.

Citrus and Iron-rich Foods

There are many foods rich in iron – animal proteins like beef, oysters and sardines and dark leafy plant foods like spinach, kale, and collard greens. Beans, lentils, whole grains and nuts are also good sources of iron. Many people are not able to easily absorb iron into the body, especially those with gastrointestinal problems (inflammatory bowel disease and bleeding ulcers) or those who take acid-suppressant drugs for treating GERD (gastroesophageal reflux disease). The “non-heme” iron found in plant foods has a 2-20% absorption rate in the body. The “heme” iron in meat and fish/shellfish has a 15-35% absorption rate in the body. Also, calcium supplements have been shown to inhibit iron absorption.

What can you do to boost your body’s absorption rate to a higher level? Inject certain types of fruits into your diet – especially citrus fruits and other vitamin C-rich foods such as strawberries and yellow and red bell peppers. Eat these fruits with heme or non-heme foods. A couple of ideas: Toss slices of orange in a kale salad. Add yellow peppers to your beef stew or chili.

Fat & Salad

Studies have shown that you should actually avoid fat-free salad dressings. Why, you ask? Salads are packed full of “carot-

enoids” which are antioxidants like lutein, lycopene and beta-carotene. Carotenoids reduce your risk of heart disease and cancer and also preserve bone density and prevent macular degeneration. Using a fat-based salad dressing can boost carotenoid absorption. Try a dressing made from a monounsaturated fat (canola or olive oil). According to a study at Purdue University, the monounsaturated fat salad dressing was the most favorable for carotenoid absorption. Polyunsaturated fat (soybean oil) and saturated fat (butter) dressings were also ef-

fective though not as groundbreaking as monounsaturated options containing canola or olive oil. Another idea is adding hard-boiled eggs to your salad as a source of healthy fat. The fat from the yolks will boost carotenoid absorption.

With a little knowledge and planning, pairing foods can help you achieve the most beneficial absorption and processing of minerals and antioxidants in your body. If you find a food pairing that works for you and your family, try doing it every week or several times a week, for maximum results.

BENEFITS CORNER

CHP’s 2015 Top 5 Medical Claim Categories

Frequency (# of claims):

1. Health Status (preventive care, sick visits)
2. Muscle/Tissue Disorders
3. Ear/Nose/Throat Disorders
4. Skin Disorders
5. Endocrine Disorders

Severity (\$ spent):

1. Muscle/Tissue Disorders
2. Health Status (preventive care, sick visits)
3. Digestive System
4. Circulatory System
5. Nervous Disorders

For your entity’s top five medical claim categories, please contact your CHP benefits administrator.

