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HEALTHY HABITS

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Travelers' Alert! Risks from Food and Drink

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Contaminated food and drink are common sources for the introduction of infection into the body. Infections that travelers can acquire from contaminated food and drink are *E-coli*, Hepatitis A, cholera and others.



Food

To avoid illness, travelers should select food with care. All raw food is subject to contamination. Particularly in areas where hygiene and sanitation are inadequate, one should avoid salads, uncooked vegetables, unpasteurized milk and milk products, and to eat food that has been thoroughly cooked and is **still hot** or fruit peeled by the traveler. Cooked food that has been allowed to stand for several hours can allow bacterial growth and should be thoroughly reheated before serving.

Some species of fish can contain poisonous biotoxins, even when well cooked. Barracuda flesh is the most toxic laden and should always be avoided. Red snapper, grouper, amberjack, sea bass, and many tropical reef fish contain toxins at unpredictable times. The flesh of bluefin, yellowfin tuna, mackerel, bonito, mahi-mahi, herring, amberjack, and bluefish may contain high levels of histidine. With improper refrigeration or preservation, histidine is converted to histamine, which can cause many ailments.

The incorrect assumption is often made that food and water aboard commercial aircraft are safe. Food and water may be obtained in the country of departure where items may be contaminated as well.

Water

Water that has been adequately chlorinated will generally protect against viral and bacterial waterborne diseases. However, chlorine treatment alone, might not kill some enteric viruses and parasitic organisms. In areas where chlorinated tap water is not available or where hygiene and sanitation are poor, travelers should be advised that only the following might be safe to drink:

- Beverages, such as tea and coffee, made with boiled water.
- Canned/bottled carbonated beverages, including bottled water and soft drinks.
- Beer and wine.

Where water might be contaminated, travelers should be advised that ice should also be considered contaminated and should not be used in beverages. It is safer to drink a beverage directly from the can or bottle than from a questionable container. However, water on the outside of cans or bottles might be contaminated; travelers should be advised to dry wet cans or bottles before they are opened and to wipe clean surfaces with which the mouth will have direct contact. Where water might be contaminated, travelers should be advised to avoid brushing their teeth with tap water.

Want to know more? Go to www.cdc.gov/travel/food-drink-risks.htm

This list is editable!



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SUNSHINE AND SUNSCREEN

Everyone needs a little sunshine. About 15 minutes of exposure a day helps the body make Vitamin D, which is important for healthy bones and teeth. But longer exposure may cause many problems, from wrinkles to skin cancer.

Sunscreens help protect against the sun's damaging effects. But just how much protection they provide is a matter of debate. The sun gives off two kinds of ultraviolet radiation, called UV-A and UV-B. For many years, experts thought that only UV-B was harmful. However, recent research suggests that UV-A may be just as dangerous as UV-B, although its effects may take longer to show up. Most sunscreen products contain ingredients that provide adequate protection only against UV-B rays. Even those labeled as "broad spectrum" sunscreens may offer only partial protection against UV-A radiation. Those containing the ingredient avobenzone give the most protection against UV-A rays.

A number of studies suggest that people who use sunscreens may actually increase their risk of cancer because they spend too much time in the sun. This does not mean that people should stop using sunscreens. It means that they should not rely on sunscreens *alone* for protection. According to the American Academy of Dermatology, sunscreens should be one part of sun protection, along with wide-brimmed hats and tightly-woven clothing that covers the arms and legs. Try to stay out of the sun between 10 am and 2 pm, when the sun's rays are strongest. The sun can damage the skin even on cloudy days, so get in the habit of using a sunscreen every day. Be especially careful at high elevations or in areas with surfaces that reflect the sun's rays, such as sand, water, concrete, or snow.

People with fair skin, blond, red or light brown hair, and light colored eyes are at greatest risk for developing skin cancer. So are people with many large skin moles. These people should avoid exposure to the sun as much as possible. However, even dark skinned people, including African Americans and Hispanic Americans may suffer skin damage from the sun and should be careful about exposure.

Many brands of sunscreens are available, containing a variety of ingredients. The active ingredients work by absorbing, reflecting, or scattering some or all of the sun's rays. Most sunscreen products contain combinations of ingredients. The FDA requires sunscreen products to carry a sun protection factor (SPF) rating on their labels. This number tells how well the sunscreen protects against burning. The higher the number, the longer a person can stay in the sun without burning.

Be sure to read the instructions that come with the sunscreen. Some need to be applied as long as 1 - 2 hours before sun exposure. Others should be applied 30 minutes before exposure, and frequently during exposure. Apply sunscreen liberally to all exposed parts of the skin, including the hands, feet, nose, ears, neck, scalp (if the hair is thin or very short), and eyelids. Take care not to get sunscreen in the eyes, as it can cause irritation. Use a lip balm containing sunscreen to protect the lips. Reapply sunscreen liberally every 1 - 2 hours—more frequently when perspiring heavily. Sunscreen should also be reapplied after going in the water.

For more information see: <http://home.anthemhealth.com/topic/topic100587525>

"... sunscreens should only be one part of sun protection, along with wide-brimmed hats and tightly-woven clothing..."

When it comes to preventing Alzheimer's disease, the old saying that "an apple a day keeps the doctor away" might be good advice, according to a new study. Apples contain a compound called quercetin that appears to protect rat brain cells from free radicals - unstable molecules that damage cells and are known to play a role in some diseases such as Alzheimer's disease. Quercetin is an antioxidant; antioxidants are known to counteract free radicals.

*Source: Heo, H. Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry, Dec. 1, 2004.
News release, American Chemical Society. Reuters.*

KNOW YOUR FATS!

You're ready to sauté fresh vegetables for dinner, but you hesitate with uncertainty. Do you cook the vegetables in butter or margarine? Or would canola oil or olive oil be better? Maybe you should avoid fat altogether and use a nonfat cooking spray instead.



Understanding fat is an important part of good nutrition. Fat is essential to proper functioning of the body and should constitute 25-30% of the diet. But it is important to realize that not all fats are created equally. Some have been shown to be protective against disease, and some have been shown to increase the risk for disease. Everyone should be concerned with the types and amounts of fat in the diet, no matter their age, gender, or weight.

Fat supplies the body with essential fatty acids, such as linoleic acid, which is responsible for proper growth and development. In addition, fatty acids are the basic components for several hormone-like components and are used to maintain healthy skin and hair and transport fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, K). Fat cells also cushion organs and act as insulation against cold temperatures. All fats contain 9 calories per gram. (Carbohydrates and proteins = 4 cal/gram).

There are two general types of fat: saturated and unsaturated. The difference between the two is found in their chemical makeup. Unsaturated fats are liquid at room temperature and are missing at least one hydrogen atom. Saturated fats are solid at room temperature and do not bond to additional hydrogen atoms.

Saturated Fats

This is the type of fat you should avoid in your diet. Saturated fat contributes to an increased risk of heart disease and some forms of cancer. No more than 10% of dietary fat should come from saturated fat. This type of fat is found primarily in animal products, especially red meats, lard, butter, whole-milk products, and the skin of poultry. Two vegetable oils,

palm and coconut, also contain saturated fat.

Unsaturated Fats

These are the types of fat you should include in your diet. Multiple studies have found that these fats may actually lower cholesterol levels in some individuals, resulting in a decreased risk for heart disease. There are

two main types of unsaturated fats, monounsaturated and polyunsaturated. These fats are primarily found in vegetable products, such as olive, peanut, and sunflower oils, olives, avocados, etc.

Watch Out for Those Sneaky Trans Fatty Acids

This type of fat is created when extra hydrogen is pumped into unsaturated oil, which chemically transforms it from a normal liquid state (at room temperature) into a solid. This process is basically converting the oil into a saturated fat. Trans fatty acids can be found in a wide array of processed foods and margarine. Any food with "hydrogenated oils" or "partially hydrogenated oils" on the label contains trans fatty acids. Some researchers believe such foods may actually be more damaging than regular saturated fats.

Eat More Fish with Omega 3 Fatty Acids

Two servings of fish per week may protect against heart and blood-vessel disease and may help prevent several types of cancer, including breast, prostate and colon. Omega 3 fatty acids are found in fish, especially mackerel, Atlantic salmon, halibut and herring. Soybeans, flaxseed and green leafy vegetables also contain them. Supplements of Omega 3 oil have not been shown to produce the same protective effect as consuming foods that contain them naturally.

Source: Georgia Institute of Technology
www.wellness.gatech.edu/information/1_nutrition/4_fat.php

Fat is essential to proper functioning of the body and should constitute 25-30% of the diet.

HEALTHY BEGINNINGS

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Monitoring the health of both mother and baby is critical during pregnancy. In fact, experts recommend monthly checkups for the first three months and up to one checkup per week for the last three months of your pregnancy. Prenatal checkups are important to ensure a healthy baby. Whether looking into adoption or considering having a baby, parents also need to checkup on their benefits to make sure their health insurance coverage matches their needs. In fact, in the *Plan for Your Health* survey, close to a quarter (23%) of the women who just had a child or are planning to have children in the immediate future said having a baby would make them consider changing their current health insurance plan.

Let's face it. Whether you are a single parent or a couple expecting a baby, there are certain times when parents need to call on the experts. Make sure you have access to the health care professionals who can provide you and your child with the best care. The following list of experts can serve as a guide for your discussion with your health plan provider.

- ◆ **Childbirthing Experts:** Does your insurance cover childbirthing classes?
- ◆ **Counselors:** Many women suffer from varying degrees of postpartum depression, often called the baby blues. Does your insurance cover counseling or Employee Assistance Programs?
- ◆ **Different Types of Health Care Professionals:** What types of doctors does your insurance cover? Examples might include: family practitioner, obstetrician and midwife.
- ◆ **Adoption Services:** Does your insurance cover medical expenses relating to adoption?
- ◆ **Doula Services:** Does your insurance cover Doula Services, which are provided by a woman who can assist you during labor and provides support to you, the infant and the family after childbirth?
- ◆ **Lactation Consultant:** Breast feeding isn't always easy. Ask your insurance company if they cover lactation consultants.

These answers may be available in your plan materials, on your health plan's Web site and through your HR or benefits director. Some health plans allow members to e-mail questions directly to them; this might be something to check out to get answers to your questions.

Source: www.planforyourhealth.com/family_checkup.cfm

FRAUD TIP-OFFS: HOW TO SPOT INSURANCE FRAUD

- ◆ Agents who request cash instead of checks
- ◆ Receipts not issued for premium payments
- ◆ The company offers very low rates and very little, if any, underwriting
- ◆ Premiums that are lower than other plans
- ◆ Plans that accept anyone
- ◆ Agents who claim the plan is covered only by "stop-loss coverage"
- ◆ Plans claiming to be federally, rather than state regulated
- ◆ Sales pitches that avoid the word "insurance," instead they may use words such as "consultant fees"
- ◆ Agents who use the words "commissions" or "contributions" instead of "premiums"

Source: Colorado Division of Insurance