

Practical health tips to start off the new year

Written by PHILIP S. CHUA, M.D., FACS, FPCS
Saturday, 15 January 2011 15:51



Fennel and its wonders

Did you know that many kitchens (perhaps yours too) have this versatile spice?

Fennel seed, when converted to oil, is an anti-inflammatory that is good for itchy scalp, in combination with avocado, coconut oil, and kelp powder?

Chewing about five seeds directly from the bottle dispenser provides a minty natural breath freshener, which also reduces bacteria in the mouth that cause bad breath when done as a part of our daily mouth hygiene.

Brewing a teaspoonful of fennel seeds in a cup of water has been found to be an effective cough suppressant to relieve cough spasms.

This cocktail is also used after an exhausting physical activity to reduce muscles cramps and fatigue, and as an aid to bloating stomach sensation.

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Before using Fennel, ask your doctor about it.

Anti-cancer in your refrigerator

Go no farther than your home fridge for anti-cancer foods, like these cruciferous veggies — broccoli, kale, cabbage, cauliflower.

Broccoli, in particular, has the highest level of sulforaphane, a superb antioxidant that boosts our immune system and help cleanse our body of harmful chemicals, is a cancer “preventor.”

These veggies reduce the risk of the development of lung, liver, breast, prostate, bladder, etc.

Beans, almonds, walnuts, pistachios, macademia, most fruits, garlic are also great natural anti-cancer agents.

Berries (especially the black variety) are also packed with anti-cancer phyto-chemicals (anthocyanins), good to ward off skin, colon, esophageal and oral malignancies.

Broccoli, cauliflower, tomatoes may be eaten raw after blanching with boiling water.

Great for snacks, and together with exercise and cool refreshing glasses of water several times a day, they are effective aids in losing weight for those with extra pounds and excess body fats.

Carcinogens in the fridge

Also found in the fridge could be carcinogens, or cancer-causing foods.

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These are the red meats and processed foods.

While most people do not develop cancer in spite of eating red meat, processed meats, and/or even smoke and abuse alcohol, a significant number will develop one form of cancer or the other, as statistics around the world show.

Not to mention a host of illnesses related to excess body weight and high blood cholesterol and lipids.

Unfortunately, we do not know who among us have the good genes that make the body less prone to cancer, which would allow us to eat what we want.

In view of this, it is best for each one of us to act prudently on the safer side and minimize, if not totally avoid, the potentially cancer-causing foods, alcoholic drinks and cigarettes.

Indeed, wisdom, logic and common sense dictate so, even excluding the medical science.

Water: a popular “secret” to lose weight

The human body is 61.8 percent water.

Water is truly life.

This versatile and essential liquid is also a very effective weight loss and slimming agent, natural, readily available and inexpensive, compared to the pricey lotion, potion, pills, tablets and gel in the market of deceit and fraud.

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As we have written in this column more than a decade ago, gulping down a tall glass or two of water before each meal would do our waistline wonders.

This has been proven in a first randomized, controlled study, recently presented to the American Chemical Society.

People who filled their stomach with 16 ounces of water or so before eating a meal, lost pounds most effectively and faster, naturally, without the sides effects of pills or expensive “miracle juices.”

Squeezing a little calamansi juice, orange, berries, watermelon, cantaloupe to add flavor, makes water a wholesome drink, compared to the unhealthy sugar-loaded “liquid candies,” called soft drinks.

Walking off calories and fats

Animals, unlike plants, were born to be physically active.

Nature makes is amply clear that we are not supposed to be in a vegetative state, as many of us seem to be in the habit of doing.

Lazying around is a luxury we have to take as a treat once in a while, after a hectic day or a strenuous activity.

We deserve that.

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Science has proven that physical exercise not only gives us strong muscles but also strong cardiovascular system, superior brain power, sturdier immune system, healthier lungs, liver, kidneys, skin and all the other organs in our body.

Walking according to individual tolerance, briskly for those whose body can tolerate it, at least five times a week, has been proven to get rid of extra weight and extra fat safely, and at the same time reduce the risk of metabolic syndrome, cardiovascular diseases, Alzheimer's dementia, diabetes, depression, etc.

It even improves libido for a more active and prolonged sex life.

Sleep and naps

Sleep is very important to our health.

The rest it provides recharges our "Duracell" for a healthier body and mind.

And we are only as good as our "battery," our energy source.

Following a restful six to eight hours of sleep, one feels great, ready to conquer the world and be useful and effective.

Sleep combats fatigue and rest boosts the immune system, besides reducing stress and depression.

The common things that impair sleep in most people include stimulants like watching the television, drinking coffee, tea, chocolate, cola drinks, and/or arguments before bedtime.

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A relaxing time with loved ones, soothing music, a light dinner, perhaps with a glass of two of wine (preferably red), and a shower, will help induce a great sleep.

Temporarily shelving problems for another day will ease the mind and also help.

Naps are a popular routine in the Mediterranean and some European countries.

Even a 15-minute siesta each afternoon helps energize the body and mind — a truly welcome part of a healthy lifestyle.

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