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Cranberries A HEALTHY HOLIDAY DISH

Cranberries are a popular pairing with a juicy Thanksgiving turkey. Like other fruits, they're nutritious and low in calories. They contain antioxidants, which can help fight disease. They're also a good source of fiber. Here's how to enjoy them at your holiday:

1. Go for fresh berries. Many cranberry dishes contain loads of added sugar. Canned cranberry sauces and jellies may also have added sugar. Save your extra calories for dessert and skip the sugar-laden jellies and sauces.
2. Mix fresh cranberries together with apples and pears to offset their tartness.
3. If they're too tart for you, use them in savory dishes. Try making a salsa with cranberries instead of tomatoes. Or toss them on a salad with a savory dressing like balsamic vinegar.

Source: United States Department of Agriculture

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Is it food poisoning or a virus?

Many people know the awful feeling of an upset stomach. It happens to almost everyone at least a few times in our lives. Many times, we blame the last thing we ate. But this is not always the cause.

It can be hard to know what made you sick. If you got food poisoning, it can take 24 hours or more to get sick from some germs. And if you caught a virus, it can take several days to get sick after you were exposed.



'STOMACH FLU' ISN'T THE FLU

Many people will say they had the "stomach flu" if they had a stomach virus. But the flu, or influenza, is not the same thing. The real flu rarely causes stomach problems in adults. Instead, it causes fever, coughing, headache and body aches.

Norovirus is a virus that often causes stomach symptoms. It spreads easily in crowded places, schools and daycares.

WHICH ONE IS IT?

If there is a large outbreak of food poisoning, you may find out about it. It could be in the news if many people got sick. But often, you may never know if you had a stomach virus or food poisoning. The symptoms are very similar.

Sometimes doctors may run tests to find out what kind of illness you have. Usually, however, this isn't necessary.



WHAT IS FOOD POISONING, ANYWAY?

Food poisoning happens when you eat or drink something that contains harmful germs.

If you were with others who ate the same food as you, they could get sick too. This is where it becomes hard to know if you have food poisoning or a viral infection. You can only get food poisoning through contaminated food. You get norovirus from other people.



SYMPTOMS LOOK THE SAME

Both viruses and food poisoning can cause:

- Stomach pain
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Fever
- Headache
- Body aches
- Tiredness

TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR

Most people get better on their own after a stomach illness. But if you're concerned, talk to your doctor. They can tell you what you should do based on your symptoms, age and health history.

If you're worried about serious dehydration or if the illness is severe, you should get medical help right away.



Is it overactive bladder *or just 'normal'?*

November is Bladder Health Awareness Month. Most of us don't think about bladder health unless there's a problem like an infection or leakage.

Millions of people live with overactive bladder (OAB).

OAB is not a disease. It's a name for a group of symptoms that affect urination.



WHAT IS OAB?

Normally, a person might feel like they need to urinate, so they hold it until they reach the toilet. But with OAB, you suddenly feel like you have to go right now – you can't hold it. This can happen even if your bladder isn't full. The bladder muscles may be overactive, which leads to the urgent feeling.

Some people with OAB may have to go to the bathroom too often during the day or at night. They may go more than once per night or more than 8 times during the day.

OAB doesn't always cause leaking or accidents, but it can. This is called urge incontinence, and about half of people with OAB have this bladder condition.

TREATMENTS FOR OAB

Many people don't get treatment for OAB because they are embarrassed. But talking with a doctor means you can get treatment. Many people are able to control OAB with one or more of the following:

- Diet changes
- Kegel exercises, pelvic floor physical therapy
- Medications
- Bladder Botox
- Nerve stimulation procedures

Most people do not need surgery for OAB. But doctors may suggest it if other treatments didn't work and your OAB is severe.

JUST A 'WEAK BLADDER'?

OAB becomes more common as we age. But this doesn't mean it's part of getting older and that we should ignore it. OAB can interfere with your social and professional life. You don't have to live with it.



SPEAK UP ABOUT BLADDER PROBLEMS

If you notice bladder trouble, your doctor can help. Make an appointment to talk about your symptoms. It's the first step to getting relief so you can get back to living your life.

Simple steps for a safe Thanksgiving turkey

This Thanksgiving, millions of people will enjoy a plateful of turkey. Enjoy your meal, but remember to prepare your turkey safely to avoid food poisoning. This starts from the moment you bring your turkey home from the store.

THINK THAWING

Never thaw your turkey by leaving it out on the counter. When a turkey is left at room temperature for 2 hours, it can grow bacteria that make you sick. Instead, you can:

- Thaw your turkey in the refrigerator.
- Put your turkey in a plastic bag and thaw in cold water, changing the water every 30 minutes.

CLEAN YOUR HANDS, NOT THE TURKEY

Don't rinse or wash your turkey in the sink. This can spread germs. Instead, wash your hands well, both before and after handling the turkey.

After you've put the turkey in the oven, carefully wash and disinfect any surfaces that touched the raw turkey.

TEMPERATURE IS KEY

Cook your turkey at 325°F or above. Lower temperatures won't heat up the bird quickly enough to kill bacteria. When you think the turkey is done, check the temperature. Use a meat thermometer and check the inner part of the thigh and wing. Also check the thickest part of the breast. The turkey is done when all of them are at 165°F.

STELLAR STUFFING

If you stuff your turkey, make sure it is completely cooked. Use a food thermometer to check that the stuffing reaches 165°F. After taking the turkey out of the oven, leave the stuffing in for about 20 more minutes. This helps ensure it is cooked thoroughly.

GREAT LEFTOVERS

Don't leave leftover turkey out for more than two hours after cooking it. Put it in the refrigerator as soon as possible.

Many people experience food poisoning around the holidays. This is often due to incorrectly cooked or stored turkey. This doesn't have to happen to your family. Be safe about preparing your turkey and stay healthy this holiday.



Be strong at any age

When you think of exercise, do you think of going for a run or taking an aerobics class? Those are great cardio workouts. But there is more to fitness than just cardio.



STRONG IS HEALTHY

Strength training or lifting weights is a big part of being healthy and fit. Many people don't do strength training because they don't want to "bulk up." Older adults might skip it because they think it's only for younger people who are more muscular.

You won't get big bodybuilder muscles from doing strength training. That is, unless you train hard with that goal in mind. And many older adults can safely do strength training and find that they love how it makes them feel.

If you do regular strength exercises, you will get a stronger body and better quality of life at any age. No bodybuilder is needed!

Research shows that strength training can lower the risk of heart disease and other health conditions. It also helps you stay independent as you get older. Older adults who do strength training may find that everyday tasks are much easier. This can include things like getting out of a chair or climbing stairs.

STRONG IS GOOD FOR THE MIND

The benefits of a strong body don't stop at the muscles. Research also shows that strength training may reduce the effects of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It can also help boost self-esteem.

YOU CAN START TODAY

If you don't have equipment, like weights, you can use things around the house, like soup cans. You can also use your own body weight. Think push-ups, planks and other similar exercises. They use your body weight and gravity to build muscles.

A good way to start is with an exercise video or online class. You don't have to go to a gym. But before you start, talk to your doctor. Ask if a new exercise program is safe for you. Talk about things you should or should not do to stay safe and help avoid injury.

Give strength training a chance. You may find that it makes you feel better than you thought possible! A diet with adequate protein can help build muscle at any age and even promote healing. Talk to your doctor if you plan to make major diet changes.

Do genetic tests really work?

You may have seen ads for genetic tests. These tests claim to tell you about your health. They might tell you if you're at risk for a certain disease or if you should eat a certain diet.



BIG PROMISES FROM COMPANIES

At-home genetic tests may sound exciting, and companies advertise them as “the answer” to many health issues. But the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) say you should be careful about using these tests.

Before you spend a lot of money on one, keep in mind that the test may not have any science to back up its claims. Others may give you some good information, but the information is only useful if you also have a complete medical exam.

The FDA and CDC say that genetic tests are complex. They say that the results can be hard to understand without having appropriate medical knowledge.

JUST A SNAPSHOT

Many genetic tests look at a few of your body's genes. But you have more than 20,000 genes in your body. If you get a “positive result” for certain genes, it could mean:

- You have a certain disease.
- You have a higher risk of getting certain diseases.
- You are a carrier for a certain disease.

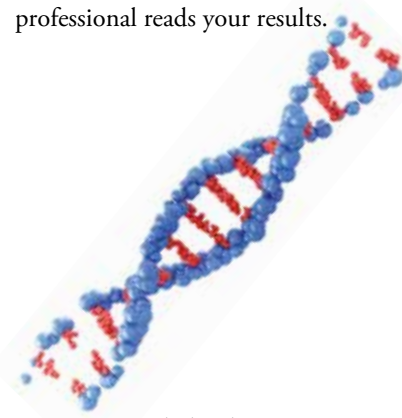
But even a positive result doesn't tell the whole story. You may never get the disease that comes back “positive.” Or if you do, it may not be severe enough to cause any serious health problems.

A negative result means the lab didn't find any unusual changes in your genes. While this can be good news for certain diseases, it's not foolproof. It doesn't mean you'll never get a disease or have health problems. It's also possible that the test didn't look at other genes that could be important.

MANY FACTORS AT PLAY

Genes are only one piece of each person's health story. Your environment and your lifestyle also play huge parts in your physical and mental health. Don't rely on genetic tests to make any health promises. Instead, see your doctor regularly and follow a healthy lifestyle. That can mean more than a few genes.

When genetic tests are part of a medical exam, they can be helpful. Your doctor can help you decide if you need genetic tests. If you do need them, make sure a medical professional reads your results.



Source: Federal Trade Commission

Be kind to your voice

Your voice is unique to you. You probably use it every day for work. But do you give it the TLC it needs to stay healthy and clear?

Do you have a job where you use your voice often?

Attorneys, teachers, sales people, human resources and customer service rely heavily on their voice for work.

You can overuse or misuse your voice by talking in a large meeting room or noisy place by shouting or talking for long periods. You may have a sore throat or hoarseness afterward.

If you need your voice for work, avoid misusing it. If you misuse it, you may lose it!

Before a presentation or meeting, get plenty of rest. Drink water before, during and after your meeting. Use throat lozenges if needed. Use a microphone to help you avoid shouting.

Prepare your voice for long talks or loud meetings.

Dealing with grief *during the holidays*

Many people think they are supposed to be happy during the holidays. You may even feel guilty if you're not "choosing joy." But these high expectations can cause even more stress during an already stressful season.

WHAT IS GRIEF?

Grief is a normal human response. It can happen anytime, especially during the holidays. When you lose someone or something that's important to you, you can experience grief.

Grief is different for everyone. It can cause sadness, anger, fear, guilt and many other emotions. You may also have physical signs like:

- Headaches
- Upset stomach
- Sleep changes
- Feeling like you can't breathe
- Appetite changes



WHAT TO DO

When you experience a loss, you need to feel grief in your own way. You can do this by:

- Allowing yourself to feel whatever you feel.
- Taking care of yourself. Try to get regular sleep and eat healthy foods. Exercise can help you relieve stress too.
- Talking to others. A trusted friend or family member can help you get your feelings out.
- Writing it down. If you don't want to talk to someone, try writing down your feelings and thoughts.
- Avoid big decisions. Try to wait a year after a loss before you decide to move, change jobs or make other big life changes.

If you feel grief this holiday season, ask for help. A counselor, therapist or support group may help you feel better. If these things don't help, talk to your doctor.

Source: American Academy of Family Physicians