



Thanksgiving Tip

Eating just one fatty meal can affect your blood vessel function and increase inflammation in your vessels and arteries. Saturated fat in particular can affect the ability of your blood vessels and arteries to expand enough for the blood to flow through easily. This difficulty can cause a heart attack and, in fact, there are more heart attacks on Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's than on other days of the year. Researchers speculate that for those who are predisposed to heart disease, the combination of large, fatty meals, excess salt, alcohol and holiday stress can contribute to a cardiac event.

I don't expect you not to overeat on holidays, but there are things you can do to help moderate the harmful effects of the holiday meal. First, go for a long walk or exercise for 90 minutes before your big meal to increase blood flow, improve vessel function and lower the amount of fat that will get into your blood stream. Second, try to minimize the use of saturated fats like butter, margarine, shortening, cream and cheese. Use extra virgin olive oil whenever possible, since it has anti-inflammatory properties that can prevent damage to the vessels. Third, try to use less salt and more fresh herbs to enhance flavors. Fourth, consume alcohol only moderately since it can depress heart function, precipitate arrhythmias and prompt you to overeat. Finally, take measures to reduce holiday stressors.

Eating healthfully and in moderation most of the time is important for protecting your health. If a holiday meal can affect our bodies this negatively, can you imagine the cumulative long-term effects of overeating? If you have trouble with portion control, start to work on leaving a few bites of food on your plate every time you eat. Learn to dislike the way you feel after you overeat so you can break that habit and get yourself on track for healthy eating.

Oh! My Burning Heart!

We've all been there – Thanksgiving dinner, the table looks beautiful, there are ten different kinds of side dishes on the table next to the turkey and they all look amazingly delicious. You must try them all, so you overindulge in rich, fatty foods, and later find yourself up at night with a stomach ache and a fiery feeling in your chest.

Most of us are familiar with those feelings: a burning sensation near your heart; a sour taste in your mouth; an irritated esophagus; belching; bloating; perhaps even nausea or an irksome little cough—all of these are symptoms of heartburn. About 60 million Americans experience heartburn once a month, which is considered normal, but 15 million of that group have it daily. When heartburn occurs frequently (twice a week or more), it is diagnosed as Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease, or GERD.

GERD symptoms occur when the sphincter (a ring-like valve) between the esophagus and the stomach (called the lower esophageal sphincter) becomes relaxed and acid from the stomach backs up into the esophagus, larynx, trachea and, sometimes, the lungs. This reflux causes heartburn symptoms and, in 10-15% of people, non-heartburn symptoms including asthma, laryngitis, chronic cough and chest pain. GERD is not merely uncomfortable and

irritating, but it is also dangerous. Over time, the exposure of the delicate tissue that lines the esophagus to stomach acid causes erosion and, in some cases, a pre-cancerous condition called Barrett's esophagus. GERD can also interfere with your sleep, making you groggy during the day and increasing your desire for caffeinated beverages and carbohydrates, all of which can make GERD worse.

Just because GERD is common doesn't mean that you should resign yourself to living with it – there are many dietary and lifestyle measures that you can take to treat it. If you are overweight or pregnant, smoke, take certain medications or have a family history of GERD, then you are much more likely to experience it. Although you can't change your genes or speed up your pregnancy, you can modify your eating and smoking habits and explore alternatives to your medications with your doctor or pharmacist.

Losing weight can help relieve heartburn symptoms, especially for younger women, since estrogen may be related to some cases of GERD. Carrying weight around the midsection puts extra pressure on the stomach, which can force stomach acid upwards into the esophagus and connected organs. Since men and some women tend to carry extra weight in that area, losing weight will be helpful for those

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Oh! My Burning Heart! continued...

with apple-shaped bodies, too. Similarly, avoid wearing tight clothing, especially belts and waistbands, since it can put pressure on your stomach that can cause acid reflux.

Smoking even one cigarette occasionally is known to irritate the digestive system and relax the sphincter between the esophagus and stomach, allowing stomach acid to reflux upwards, so quitting smoking entirely can help cure GERD for most smokers.

Sleep position also seems to play a major role in treating GERD. Elevating the head of your bed when you sleep and sleeping on your left side can be tremendously helpful. Stomach contents seem to stay put better when GERD sufferers sleep on their left sides as opposed to any other sleeping position. Use a foam wedge on top of your mattress or blocks under the bed frame to elevate the head of your bed four to six inches; it's important to elevate your whole upper body, not just your head, so that gravity can help move food downwards. It's also imperative to remain vertical for at least two hours after eating, so avoid late dinners and midnight snacks. Wait 30-60 minutes after eating and then go for a walk to help move things along.

What and how you eat can also have a major effect on your heartburn—just think about how you feel after a Thanksgiving meal. Overfilling your stomach with food puts upward pressure on your lower esophageal sphincter, so eating five smaller meals instead of three larger meals may be helpful if you tend to overeat.

Most people with GERD find that certain foods are irritating, but those foods are different for everyone. Commonly irritating foods and beverages are coffee (decaf and regular), carbonated drinks, fruit juices, alcohol, deep fried foods, spicy foods, fatty foods, chocolate, peppermint, tomato products, citrus, garlic, dairy products and starchy grains such as rice and wheat. The best way to figure out what affects you is to keep a food journal and record everything you eat. When you experience symptoms of GERD, mark it in the journal and go back over what you ate that may have caused irritation. Confirm your suspected foods with a test of eating each food individually.

Chewing gum after a meal can be soothing for some people because it stimulates saliva production, which helps to neutralize stomach acid. However, it may make GERD worse for people who swallow air when they chew or for those who are sensitive to sugar alcohols. Another potentially helpful strategy is to cut back on fluids that you drink while

eating and drink most fluids in between meals. Water is the best choice, since it is hydrating and free of any potential irritants. Also try higher protein meals instead of starchy or fatty meals, since protein helps the lower esophageal sphincter stay shut. Plenty of fiber is also important for helping food move through you in a downward direction. Aim for at least 40 grams of fiber a day.

Finally, stress can really irritate your digestive tract. Try relaxation techniques like deep breathing and meditation, or even walking or yoga—whatever helps you feel calmer inside. Regular exercise can help tone the gut muscles and improve blood flow to the digestive tract. The following gentle twisting and bending stretches can be soothing:

1. Sit sideways in a chair with a low back, feet planted on the floor under your knees. Close your eyes and take deep, calming breaths. Sit up tall and as you exhale, turn towards the back of the chair and take a hold of it. Inhale into your ribcage. As you exhale, twist your torso and head further towards the back of the chair. Go deeper into the twist with each exhale, but not beyond your comfort zone. Hold the pose for several breaths, gently release, and repeat on the other side.
2. Sit as described above. As you inhale, lift your chest and sit tall. As you exhale, gently roll your torso over your lap, bending from the hips and leading with your chest. Allow your head and arms to hang down freely and take a few relaxing breaths. Gently roll up to the starting position on an inhale. Repeat 4-6 times.
3. Lie flat on your back with your feet slightly apart, arms at your sides with palms facing up. Close your eyes and as you slowly inhale, expand all sides of your belly. As you slowly exhale, contract your belly. Pause and repeat 20-30 times.

The bottom line is that losing weight, elevating the head of your bed and sleeping on your left side are the most helpful measures for alleviating GERD. Since dietary irritants are very individual, there is no clear-cut food that should be eliminated, though it's important to figure out what irritates you and avoid it. Talk to your doctor if it takes less than a Thanksgiving-type meal to set off your

heartburn symptoms. Medication may be necessary to eliminate GERD and allow damaged tissue to heal.

Eating should be a pleasurable and gratifying experience, not a painful and regretful one. If you're suffering from GERD, then try the effective strategies discussed here to help bring the enjoyment back to eating by keeping your stomach acid where it belongs.

GERD Irritants

- Carrying extra weight, especially around the middle
- Pregnancy
- Smoking
- Lying down too soon after eating
- Overeating
- Wearing tight clothes
- Stress
- Constipation
- Drinking alcohol
- Eating fatty, spicy, acidic or starchy foods
- Being sedentary

GERD Soothers

- Loosing weight
- Stopping smoking
- Remaining vertical 2-3 hours after eating
- Elevating your head of bed
- Sleeping on your left side
- Eating small frequent meals
- Wearing loose clothing
- Using a relaxation technique
- Eating plenty of fiber
- Minimizing alcohol intake
- Avoiding foods and drinks that irritate you
- Increasing protein in your diet
- Exercising

Our registered dietitian has a Masters in Public Health. However, she is not a doctor and her nutritional recommendations are general in nature and not tailored to specific health problems. Talk to your physician or other qualified health care practitioners concerning particular health issues or before beginning any nutritional program.

Foods to Feast on for Eye Health

It's easy to take our vision for granted when we see well, but when our vision starts to deteriorate it's often too late to make lifestyle and dietary changes to reverse it. Therefore, it's important to take measures now to prevent damage later.

Switching to a nutrient-dense diet that includes plenty of high-quality foods can help protect you against dry eyes, cataracts, age-related macular degeneration (AMD) and diabetic retinopathy (also called diabetes-related vision loss). Although eating a healthy diet is not a cure for these conditions, there is growing evidence that certain nutrients from food can reduce their risk and slow their progression.

Since cataracts are caused by free-radical damage to proteins in the eye's lens, antioxidants are important to prevent the damage. Specifically, vitamins C and E and the carotenes lutein and zeaxanthin may reduce the risk for developing cataracts and the need for cataract surgery. These same nutrients, along with beta carotene and zinc, can also help lower the risk of developing AMD and the macular tissue damage and loss of vision associated with it. For those who have AMD, a targeted vitamin supplement, such as PreserVision, that contains these nutrients has been shown to slow the progression of AMD, though it has not been shown to help prevent it in those with healthy eyes.

Eating plenty of omega-3 fatty acids, like those found in fish and fish oil supplements, can help prevent and treat painful dry eye syndrome, which

affects about 8% of adults under 60 and almost 20% of adults over 80.

Diabetic retinopathy, which can lead to vision loss, affects individuals with diabetes and pre-diabetes (elevated blood sugar). Eating to control your blood sugar is an important way to prevent this very common cause of vision impairment and new evidence shows that eating to control blood sugar can also help prevent AMD, especially for older adults (see Nutrition Notes, May 2007).

Since we're essentially all at risk, it's important to do whatever we can to help prevent these common eye diseases. Not smoking, avoiding second-hand smoke, protecting your eyes from the sun's UVA and UVB rays with proper sunglasses and hats, and keeping blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol levels under tight control are important lifestyle measures you can take in addition to changing your diet. Eating a healthful diet that includes adequate amounts of vitamin C and E, beta carotene, lutein, zeaxanthin, zinc and omega-3 fats is a practice that could benefit your eyes and your overall well-being. Green, orange, and red fruits and vegetables, nuts, seeds, beans, whole grains and lean animal proteins are sources of these important nutrients. For specific foods that contain these nutrients, check out the charts below but keep in mind that these are not the only foods that will protect your vision. Eat a variety of foods each day, especially deeply colored produce, and minimize sodium, saturated fat and trans fat to ensure that your eye-healthy diet is nutritionally optimal.

Good Sources of Vitamin C

- Red bell peppers
- Orange juice
- Oranges
- Broccoli
- Chili peppers
- Strawberries
- Papaya
- Kiwi
- Brussels sprouts
- Cantaloupe

Good Sources of Vitamin E

- Sunflower seeds
- Almonds
- Hazelnuts
- Wheat germ
- Pumpkin seeds
- Turnip greens
- Pine nuts
- Tomato sauce or puree
- Peanut butter
- Spinach
- Avocado
- Olive oil

Good Sources of Lutein And Zeaxanthin

- Kale
- Collard greens
- Turnip greens
- Spinach
- Broccoli
- Parsley
- Red bell peppers
- Yellow corn
- Romaine lettuce
- Brussels sprouts
- Egg yolks

Good Sources of Zinc

- Oysters
- Beef
- Crab
- Wheat germ
- Whole grains
- Sunflower seeds
- Turkey, dark meat
- Lentils, other legumes
- Yogurt
- Tofu

Good Sources of Beta Carotene

- Sweet potatoes
- Dried apricots
- Kale
- Carrots
- Cantaloupe
- Apricots
- Pumpkin
- Winter squash
- Broccoli
- Spinach

Good Sources of Omega-3 Fats

- Anchovies packed in oil
- Wild salmon
- Mackerel
- Black cod
- Whitefish
- Sardines
- Bluefin tuna
- Herring
- Rainbow trout
- Canned albacore tuna
- Halibut

Food of the Month

Corn

Corn may be the ultimate produce outcast in today's carbohydrate-adverse climate. The directive to avoid foods that contain processed corn-based ingredients, such as high-fructose corn syrup, has been confusing for many consumers who interpret the message to signify that they should avoid all corn, including fresh unprocessed corn, if they want to eat healthfully. I agree that it is important to avoid high-fructose corn syrup, corn syrup, corn oil and highly refined corn products, as they are used in poor quality foods, they raise blood sugar quickly and they contribute to inflammation. However, fresh corn, a wonderful complex carbohydrate, can and should be included in your healthful diet.

Corn contains lutein and zeaxanthin, which are carotenoid antioxidants that help protect our eyes and hearts. The same pigments in lutein and zeaxanthin that help give corn its yellow color also contribute the yellow color to our eyes; this yellow pigment in our retinas can help protect against sun damage that can lead to cataracts and age-related macular degeneration. Studies have shown that lutein helps prevent the build-up of plaque in the arteries, thereby protecting against heart attacks, and zeaxanthin may lower the risk of lung and breast cancers. Corn is also a good source of folic acid, thiamin and vitamin C.

One medium ear of fresh corn has 80 calories and 10% of your Daily Value for vitamin C. For the record, it has 17 grams of carbohydrate, 3 grams of fiber, 3 grams of sugar and 3 grams of protein—so it's not the carb catastrophe that it's made out to be by some critics.



Corn is technically a grain, but the type of corn that we eat fresh is called sweet corn and it is eaten as a vegetable. Sweet corn has less starch and more sugar than other varieties of corn (usually called field corn), which means that it has great texture and flavor that is perfect for enjoying raw or lightly cooked. Field corn is used to make animal feed, high-fructose corn syrup, ethanol and corn flour (masa) that is used to make corn tortillas and tortilla chips. Fresh corn is in season in California from May until November, but it is available all year round. You will usually find yellow, white and bi-colored corn varieties, though I recommend the darker yellow ones since they contain greater amounts of lutein and zeaxanthin. Although we do not eat it fresh, blue corn seems to be the most nutritious of all varieties and it has the least starch and most protein. So, if you must eat processed corn products like tortilla chips, go with the blue corn (and baked) variety to get the most nutrients.

Once corn is picked, the sugar starts converting to starch, so it is important to keep corn cold to slow the conversion in order for it to stay sweet and juicy. Look for moist green husks that are not dried out. The kernels at the pointed end should be smaller than the rest of the kernels, but still plump. When you get home, leave the husk on and put corn in the refrigerator right away and eat it as soon as possible. Remove the husk and silk by hand and use a damp towel to gently rub the cob and remove the rest of the silk caught between the kernels. Corn can be eaten raw in salads or it can be boiled (for two minutes); the kernels can also be cut off the cob and roasted or sautéed. To cut kernels off the cob, place the cob on a cutting board, hold it down with one hand and use a large, sharp knife to cut off a small section in one downward stroke. Rotate the cob so the cut part is on the cutting board and cut the next section. Continue rotating and cutting until all of the kernels have been removed. This month, try my recipe for Sautéed Corn with Fresh Herbs.

Jessica's November Store Appearances: Service Deli Food Sampling

Jessica will be offering complimentary samples of her delicious and nutritious Service Deli dishes and answering your questions about weight loss, food and nutrition.

Mayfair Hollywood
Thursday November 15, 5:00 pm

Valley Village / North Hollywood
Friday November 16, Noon

Pasadena
Monday November 26, Noon

Silver Lake / Los Feliz
Monday November 26, 4:00 pm

Northridge
Tuesday November 27, Noon

Calabasas
Tuesday November 27, 3:30 pm

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