

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

**Fish Is Brain Food ...** fact or fiction? *Mounting evidence suggests it may be true.* Eating fish is known to be good for your heart – and, it now appears, may benefit your brain as well.

#### The Key? Omega-3s

Fatty fish such as salmon and sardines contain omega-3 fatty acids, an important component of brain cells. These “good fats” can also be found in a variety of other foods and supplements.

**The Evidence** Eating fish weekly may lower your Alzheimer’s risk, according to a recent study. Researchers are also exploring possible benefits of fish consumption to brain function, and fish oil supplements are showing promise for mood regulation.

*Follow these guidelines to include omega-3s in your diet safely:*

- Eat a variety of fish in moderation – two to three times a week.
- Mackerel, salmon, sardines, canned light tuna, herring and anchovies are rich in omega-3s. Concerned about mercury in seafood? Call the FDA hotline (888-SAFEFOOD) or go to [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov) and search for “mercury.”
- If you eat salmon, choose wild or canned.
- Pregnant women, nursing mothers and children need to take extra care when eating fish. See [www.cfsan.fda.gov](http://www.cfsan.fda.gov) for more information.

*Make a smart choice — put some fish on your dish.*

“Cherish all your happy moments; they make a fine cushion for old age.” — Booth Tarkington

#### DR. ZORBA’S LONGEVITY CORNER

**A LITTLE HELP FROM DARK CHOCOLATE** Eating about 30 calories a day of dark chocolate has been associated with lowering blood pressure without weight gain, according to research reported in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Cocoa contains polyphenols (plant antioxidants that are beneficial to health). One worry was that high-sugar, fat and calorie intake in the cocoa product would offset its benefit. But this study of nearly 50 adults showed that those who ate this amount of dark chocolate lowered their blood pressure by about 3 points. While this may seem like a small drop, according to other research, a 3-point reduction in blood pressure can reduce the risk of stroke by 8 percent and heart attack by 5 percent. So how much is 30 calories? A bit more than a chocolate Kiss.



**EAT MORE TO LOSE MORE** A new study shows that water-containing foods such as fruits and vegetables allow you to eat more food and lose more weight. Dieters who followed the low-fat, water-rich diet ate 25 percent more food, felt less hungry and still lost more weight than those who simply followed a low-fat diet. *The takeaway? Water-rich foods can boost your weight loss.*



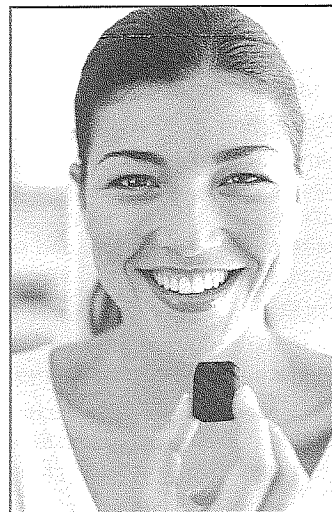
### Test Your Holiday Health IQ

How much do you know about staying healthy this season? *Take this quiz and find out.*

- 1 Dark chocolate may improve your health by:
  - A) lowering blood pressure
  - B) preventing blood clots
  - C) both A and B
- 2 The flu vaccine is effective if you receive it:
  - A) after you catch the flu
  - B) anytime throughout the flu season
  - C) only in the fall
- 3 Compared to home-cooked meals, restaurant meals contain on average:
  - A) 60 percent more calories
  - B) 40 percent more calories
  - C) 20 percent more calories
- 4 Exercise begins to benefit you:
  - A) after the first 10 minutes
  - B) only after a 20-minute session
  - C) only after a 30-minute session

#### TRUE OR FALSE?

- 5 Medication is the only proven treatment for depression. *True / False*
- 6 Echinacea is an effective cold remedy. *True / False*
- 7 A “mocktail” is a drink containing no alcohol. *True / False*
- 8 A home humidifier can help relieve dry winter skin. *True / False*
- 9 Sunscreen is only necessary in summer. *True / False*
- 10 Most people with sleep apnea are aware of the condition. *True / False*



## 5 Ways to Beat the Blues

**Quick – What's the No. 1 cause of disability worldwide?** According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), it's depression.

Affecting nearly one in 10 Americans, depression can greatly reduce your pleasure, motivation and energy level. Fortunately, there's a lot you can do to help boost your mood.

**1. Start talking.** Psychotherapy ("talk therapy") with a licensed, experienced mental health professional can help. How do you find one? Ask a trusted friend or contact your health plan, employee assistance program (EAP) or health care provider. Approaches such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (a short-term, goal-oriented treatment) are well supported by research.

**2. Consider medication.** Antidepressant medications can bring relief from the blues within a few weeks. Your health care provider can help you choose the one that's best for you.

**3. Get moving.** Studies show 30 minutes of vigorous exercise three or more times a week can lift your spirits. Swimming, biking, jogging, dancing and many sports can all do the trick.



**4. Join the crowd.** If you push yourself to socialize and resume your usual activities, the sense of pleasure may gradually return.

**5. Think positive.** If you catch yourself having a lot of negative thoughts, "talk back" to them by writing down balanced, realistic responses. Practice saying these to yourself instead.

*These changes could be your ticket to feeling better soon.*

## SNORING: IS IT APNEA?

**Apnea defined.** Do you regularly get complaints about your snoring and wake up tired? If so, you could have sleep apnea, a disorder where breathing stops and starts repeatedly during sleep. Most sufferers aren't even aware of the condition. Snoring can disturb your sleep and lead to health issues such as high blood pressure, heart problems and stroke.

### Signs to look for:

- Excessive daytime sleepiness
- Loud snoring, especially with back sleeping
- Episodes of interrupted breathing during sleep
- Awakening with shortness of breath, dry mouth or sore throat
- Morning headache

**Risk factors.** Sleep apnea occurs more often in older adults and is twice as common in men. Excess weight, high blood pressure, narrowed airways, alcohol or sedatives, certain heart or neuromuscular disorders, and smoking can also increase your risk.

**Try this.** If your symptoms are mild, you may get relief by losing excess weight, avoiding alcohol and tranquilizers, or sleeping on your side or stomach. Keep your nasal airways open at night by using a saline nasal spray.

**Need more help?** For moderate to severe apnea, other effective medical therapies are available. Treatment of underlying medical issues can also help or eliminate some cases. If you're feeling chronically fatigued, sleepy or irritable, see your health care provider.



## Health IQ ■■■ (Answers)

- 1 C.** Dark chocolate provides both of these benefits, but enjoy it in moderation as it can be high in fat, sugar and calories.
- 2 B.** Vaccination in the fall is best for lowering your flu risk, but it can still benefit you to get vaccinated later in the flu season.
- 3 A.** Restaurant meals can contain 60 percent more calories, so consider taking half home to eat the next day.
- 4 A.** Health benefits of exercise start with 10 minutes of exercise a day. Several 10-minute sessions during the day will yield additional benefits.
- 5 False.** Psychotherapy and exercise have also been shown to improve mood.
- 6 False.** Echinacea's benefits have not been supported by recent research.
- 7 True.** A "mocktail" contains no alcohol and can be a healthy alternative to alcoholic drinks.
- 8 True.** A humidifier can help prevent dry, itchy skin during the winter months.
- 9 False.** The sun can damage your skin in any season. Use a sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher for protection all year long.
- 10 False.** Most people with apnea, a sleep disorder, are undiagnosed. If you routinely snore loudly and wake up tired, see your health care provider.

**STRESS LESS** If you want to preserve your memory, recent findings suggest that you need to reduce stress. Research indicates that people who were prone to stress and negative emotions were more likely to develop memory problems than those who were more upbeat. Those who were least stressed fared the best.



**NEXT MONTH: Exercise Outside the Box**