Better Not Boil The Broccoli

When you eat broccoli as a side dish with your dinner, you’re dining on the best Mother Nature has to offer. You may not have believed it when you were a kid, but broccoli – cooked or raw – packs the most nutritional punch of any vegetable.

Broccoli is loaded with nutrients like vitamin C, vitamin A, folic acid, calcium and fiber. It’s one of those brightly colored vegetables that can help strengthen your bones, prevent cancer, and reduce your risk for heart disease. This all depends on the way you prepare it.

During a research study it was found that broccoli loses up to 77 percent of its nutritional value when it’s boiled. Fortunately, there are other cooking methods that preserve most of the nutrients broccoli has to offer.

If you plan to cook your broccoli, steamed, stir-fried, or microwaved is in, and boiling is out. Cook broccoli for up to 15 minutes steamed, up to 3 minutes microwaved, or up to 5 minutes stir-fried, and enjoy.

University of Warwick

Extreme Makeover: Healthy Habit Edition

As with most people, you might be looking for a healthy habit makeover in 2021. The first step would be to start taking a hard look at your bad habits. Smoking, drinking too much, and over-eating are habits that can directly affect your health. For others, bad habits like overspending, wasting time, or nail biting can put a dent in your self-esteem or your pocketbook.

Fortunately, bad habits can be replaced with good ones. “Habits play an important role in our health,” says Dr. Nora Volkow of the National Institutes of Health. “Understanding how we develop habits can help us change our lifestyles and adopt healthier behaviors.” If you’re ready for a healthy habit makeover this year, here’s how to get started:

**Recognize your bad habits.** Then come up with a plan to counteract them. Bring a healthy snack to work/class instead of plugging the candy machine with quarters every afternoon. Take up a healthy hobby, and spend less time on the Internet or watching TV.

**Visualize your response to temptation.** If you salivate at the thought of your favorite brand of potato chips or sleeping in an extra 30 minutes in the morning, you need to change the way you think.

**Get help from your family and friends.** One of the best ways to be successful at breaking old habits and forming new ones is by joining a support group. Be accountable. Ask your family, friends, or co-workers to help you. Give them a regular report on your efforts, and welcome their advice and encouragement.

**Keep in mind that you did not develop your bad habits overnight.** You do not have to keep them if you do not want them. But you may need a little patience in turning them around. If you slip up, don’t give up; Just start over. With a consistent effort, you can develop healthier habits this year that will last a lifetime.

National Institutes of Health
It's Time to Say Goodbye to Cigarettes

Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States. About 70 percent of smokers want to quit. If you’re ready to kick your butts to the curb, here’s what you can do:

Talk with your doctor about tobacco cessation and counseling options. When you combine medication and counseling to kick the habit, you triple your chances of quitting for good.

Check with your health insurance provider to see if tobacco cessation services are covered. Smokers who enroll in a tobacco cessation program are more successful at quitting than those who try to quit alone.

Keep trying. Few people quit smoking forever on their first try. More than half of all Americans who ever smoked have managed to quit. If you quit smoking before age 50, you cut your risk of early death by 50 percent. Even just a few weeks after you quit, your circulation and breathing will improve.

Remember that your life is at stake. Smoking causes cancer, heart disease, and lung disease. Smokers also suffer from asthma, cataracts, and an increased risk of bone fractures and infections.

Making the decision to quit is your first step to kicking the habit for good.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Cancer Institute

Take Your Pick for a Berry Good Day

Add them to your cereal or grab a handful for a snack. Berries are sweet and delicious in a smoothie or on top of a scoop of low-fat frozen yogurt. Brightly colored raspberries, blueberries, and strawberries are loaded with vitamin C to strengthen your immune system. These berries also contain potassium to support your heart and muscles, and fiber to help your digestion. They are also rich in antioxidants that can help prevent cancer, and slow memory loss as you age.

Eating berries can also help you manage your cholesterol and lower your blood pressure. In a recent study, researchers looked at the effects of eating berries on a person’s blood pressure. They found that people who ate at least one serving of berries per week had 10 percent less likely to develop high blood pressure.

In a separate study, researchers found eating strawberries, blueberries, and cranberries helped lower blood pressure and reduce the risk for heart disease, diabetes, and stroke. That’s good news when about one-third of adults in the United States have high blood pressure. Left untreated, high blood pressure can lead to heart disease and stroke as well as kidney failure and vision problems. Try to eat a cup of berries per day in addition to other fruits and vegetables for best health. Berries add a lot of flavor and color to your food. Buy them fresh or frozen, or try growing them yourself. Let your mouth savor their sweetness, and you’ll have a berry good day.

ChooseMyPlate.gov
American Journal of Clinical Nutrition
International Berry Health Benefits Symposium
Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry

Find out more about the health benefits of the multiple varieties of berries:

Red Raspberries—http://goo.gl/iiQWW0
Strawberries—http://goo.gl/w0ZC6U
Blueberries—http://goo.gl/T7H7v2
Marionberries—http://goo.gl/6yFWTd
Boysenberries—http://goo/gl/NvJTQA

The Dark Side of High Fructose Corn Syrup

Eat a bowl of cereal. Munch on a granola bar. Season your salad with a little dressing. You might be eating healthy foods … or not. Literally thousands of processed foods contain high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS) — a man-made corn-based sweetener with a dark side.

In a recent study, researchers found animals that ate regular food but drank water sweetened with HFCS gained a lot more weight than those that ate regular food and drank water sweetened with table sugar (sucrose).

The connection between HFCS and human obesity has not yet been shown in studies. Although scientists do note obesity rates in this country started to climb dramatically 40 years ago — at the same time HFCS was first added to our processed foods. Today, HFCS is in about 50 percent of all processed foods. Read food labels and you’ll see. It is used not only as a sweetener, but also to lengthen shelf life and add moisture to processed foods. You might expect to find HFCS in candy, soft drinks, and packaged cake, which you do. You will also see it used in bread, yogurt, and applesauce.

If you want to control your weight and prevent other health problems, it’s a good idea to cut back on all sugars, especially HFCS-sweetened foods in your diet. This is easy. Drink water instead of soft drinks. Eat more fresh fruits and vegetables, and look for HFCS on food labels before you buy.

Pharmacology, Biochemistry, and Behavior
Princeton University

Did you Know?
On average Americans consume 35 pounds of HFCS every year.

Did you Know?
Consuming large quantities of high fructose corn syrup could lead to long term liver damage.

Did you Know?
About 70 percent of smokers who ever smoked have managed to quit.
Read Food Labels to Control Weight

When you go grocery shopping, do you read the food labels on packaged goods before you drop them into your cart? When you go out to eat, do you find out how many calories are in your entrée before you order? Most people don’t. But a new study suggests that the simple act of reading food labels can help you manage your weight.

In the study published in the Journal of Agricultural Economics, researchers looked at the shopping habits of 25,640 people. They also collected personal health information, and asked about health and eating habits. They found that people who read food labels weighed nearly nine pounds less than people who didn’t. Researchers also found that women were more likely to read food labels than men. People who smoke were the least likely to read food labels.

Every packaged food item you buy contains a nutrition facts label. At a glance, you can see what a serving size is and how many calories it contains. The label also includes the amount of fat, sodium, cholesterol, carbohydrates, sugar, and protein in a serving. More restaurants are also providing this information for their menu based on a proposal by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Make it a habit. Read food labels to help you eat the right amount of calories per day, choose healthier foods, and control your weight.

Journal of Agricultural Economics
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Happiness Helps Prevent Heart Disease

Even when faced with problems, some people are still happy, but does looking on the bright side of things have any impact on your health? Yes. A positive outlook can help prevent heart disease or slow its progression.

Researchers have found that being happy can lower the risk for heart disease, and the finding was the same regardless of a person’s age, income, body weight, or whether or not they smoked. In fact, the happiest people were 50-percent less likely to have heart problems. They were also more likely to have lower blood pressure and normal body weight. It’s an important finding. That’s because heart disease is a major problem in the United States. About 600,000 people die from heart disease each year. Exercise, healthy foods, and medication can help prevent the disease. However, it appears an optimistic, happy outlook on life can also reduce your risk for heart disease.

Here are some things you can do to be happier:
- Identify your character strengths
- Recognize your successes
- Be grateful
- Write down your achievements
- Identify things you do well
- Talk to yourself positively
- Help other people
- Ask for help
- Laugh more

Harvard School of Public Health
Psychological Bulletin
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Take The Stairs for Better Health

You walk into an office building or hotel and need to get to an upper floor. Do you look around for the elevator or head for the stairs?

Most people choose the elevator, even though using the stairs would not take much longer. If you do choose to take the stairs, you’ll be adding some exercise to your outing, and your heart will reap the benefits.

In a recent study by the American Council on Exercise, people who climbed a few flights of stairs for a total of 13.5 minutes a day over six weeks lowered their resting heart rate and increased their good cholesterol level. Taking the stairs instead of the elevator can also help you lose weight. Walking up the stairs burns three times more calories than riding the elevator, and you don’t need any special equipment or gym membership to do it.

American Council on Exercise
American Journal of Preventive Medicine

Find out how many calories you can burn by taking the stairs!
tinyurl.com/94ym7
Catch a Fish for Heart Health

Take a trip to the world-famous Pike Place Market in Seattle, Washington, and you might need to watch for flying fish. About 10,000 people a day visit the open-air market.

It’s a place where happy fishmongers shout out shopper’s orders, hurl fresh fish through the air, and wrap the fish with their own signature style. But it’s more than just a show. Every fresh, wild-caught fish in the market is from the Pacific Ocean and loaded with heart healthy omega-3 fatty acids.

Omega-3 fatty acids found in fish can help prevent a heart attack or stroke. These fats actually help lower your triglyceride levels (blood fat), slow plaque build-up, and control blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

In a recent study, researchers looked at the diets of 800,000 people. They found that those who ate fish a few times a week lowered their risk for a stroke by 6 to 12 percent. In a separate study of 49,000 people, researchers found that the risk for heart disease increased by 50 percent for those who rarely or never ate fish.

Fatty fish like salmon, mackerel, herring, lake trout, and sardines are high in omega-3 fatty acids and good for you and your heart. Some large fish that live a long time likely contain high levels of mercury and other harmful chemicals called PCBs and should not be eaten often – or at all. Children and pregnant women definitely should not eat fish likely to be contaminated, such as shark, ahi, swordfish, king mackerel, and tilefish. Find out what fish are safe to eat at http://www.nrdc.org/health.

Even if you don’t buy your fish from an open air market or reel them in yourself, fish can be tasty and healthy. Eating fish at least twice a week is a good practice. Just bake or grill with herbs and spices, and enjoy.

British Medical Journal
Hypertension
American Heart Association

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