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The SIGG Water Bottle Controversy



Swiss-made SIGG water bottles have long been touted as the safe alternative to disposable plastic bottles, which are bad for the environment and known to leach chemicals into drinking water. For eco-conscious consumers, opting for SIGG was an uncontested purchase.

More recently SIGG released a statement about its eco-friendly bottles, confessing to a major design flaw: The resin liner inside each bottle contains bisphenol-A (BPA), a hormone disruptor and chemical that is often tied to cancer.

Does Your SIGG Bottle Contain BPA?

According to SIGG, if you purchased your water bottle after August 2008, then you're in the clear, because they started using a BPA-free EcoCare liner. If you're still unsure, they have a liner guide to help you determine which model you have.

Just How Bad Is BPA and where is it Lurking?

The Food and Drug Administration is still testing the effects of this chemical, but is not recommending that anyone discontinue using products that contain BPA. For now, FDA-approved products containing BPA, such as canned foods and plastic bottles, are safe.

Science News reported that traces of BPA have also been found in cash register receipts. Another reason to wash our hands!

What Was SIGG's Response?

On October 1st, SIGG issued a statement highlighting the fact that they never claimed to be BPA-free, just 100 percent leach-free. SIGG is offering a voluntary exchange program that runs through the end of October 2009. They will exchange your old bottle for a new one, but you'll have to cover shipping costs. To find out more about the exchange program, go to mysigg.com.

In some cities, grocers like Whole Foods are also hosting their own exchange programs. Check with your local store to find out if they're offering this option.

-Shape.com

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Good Posture May Inspire Confidence

Straight-back, chest-out position promotes self-assurance, research finds

Your mother may have been right when she told you to sit up straight: New research suggests that good posture could make you feel more confident about your thoughts.

"Most of us were taught that sitting up straight gives a good impression to other people," Richard Petty, co-author of the study and a psychology professor at Ohio State University, said in a university news release. "But it turns out that our posture can also affect how we think about ourselves. If you sit up straight, you end up convincing yourself by the posture you're in."

The researchers, whose findings appear in the October issue of the *European Journal of Social Psychology*, enlisted 71 Ohio State students for their study. They were told to sit up straight and push out their chest, or to slouch. The students were then asked about the positive or negative traits they'd show as a hypothetical future employee.

"Their confident, upright posture gave them more confidence in their own thoughts, whether they were positive or negative," Petty stated. "People assume their confidence is coming from their own thoughts. They don't realize their posture is affecting how much they believe in what they're thinking. If they did realize that, posture wouldn't have such an effect."

The findings are similar to those in a previous study that found that people who nodded their heads had more confidence in their thoughts than those who shook their heads back and forth.

In a similar experiment involving different students, "participants didn't report feeling more confident in the upright position than they did in the slouched position, even though those in the upright position did report more confidence in the thoughts they generated," Petty said.

-MSN.com

Understanding Stevia



Once only available as a supplement in health food stores, stevia has gone mainstream. How much do you know about this zero-calorie sweetener? Many folks are for it; others have concerns. Here are the basics.

What Is It?

Simply put, stevia is a calorie-free sugar substitute that comes from a stevia bush — depending on the extract, it can be 200 times sweeter than regular sugar.

Liquid extracts and powders have been available for years. Because they were marketed as a supplement and sold in health stores, these stevia products didn't need FDA review and approval. Now, after years of lobbying and debating, the FDA has green lit one type of highly purified stevia known as rebiana. This decision allows food companies to sell rebiana for use as a sugar substitute and as an ingredient in packaged foods. The marketed forms of rebiana (better known as Truvia or PureVia) come in packets of a fine white powder. The powder is definitely sweet, but doesn't taste quite like sugar — instead it has a stronger flavor and lingering aftertaste. A little goes a very long way. The other stevia products still only sold as supplements are more potent and bitter.

Where Can I Find It?

Besides in health food stores, stevia is not in mainstream grocery stores — the most common products are marketed under the brand name Truvia (from the makers of Cargill and Coca-Cola) and PureVia (from Pepsi); smaller companies, such as Sweetleaf and Sugar in the Raw, also have versions. Like Sweet'n Low or Splenda, these stevia sweeteners come in individual packets, but many companies are also reformulating their diet-friendly foods and beverages to contain stevia.

Is It Safe?

Unlike other popular synthetic sweeteners (aspartame, sucralose, etc.), stevia is plant-derived, and supporters tout it as a natural alternative to those lab-created sweeteners. This doesn't mean its safety is guaranteed. Right now, we don't have any official FDA guidelines that dictate when and where food manufacturers can use the word "natural" on food packaging.

Since stevia is free of calories and carbohydrates, it's especially appealing to diabetics and those trying to cut calories. But because of the potential health concerns, some nutrition experts are skeptical about replacing all refined sugars with any kind of these sugar alternatives. The American Diabetes Association does list stevia as a safe sugar alternative.

Bottom Line: A sprinkle of stevia here and there is most likely safe. Very little testing has been done on humans. Until more research is available, many dietitians recommend (and we agree) that children and pregnant or nursing women should skip it.

The Buzz on Honey ...The Good-for-You Sweetener



The results of recent research on honey have the nutrition world a-buzzing. According to the National Honey Board, the nutrients in honey include niacin, riboflavin, pantothenic acid (vitamin B5), calcium, copper, iron, magnesium, manganese, phosphorus, potassium and zinc. And recently, the discovery that honey is rich in antioxidants (substances that protect healthy tissue by destroying cell-damaging free radicals) has secured its place in healthy pantries worldwide. Antioxidants are thought to fight cancer, heart disease, Alzheimer's, and other chronic conditions.

Besides being good for your insides, honey has a host of external uses too. Due to its extremely low moisture content, it is a natural antibacterial agent. You might also consider incorporating honey into your daily beauty regimen. The humectant (moisture-attracting) property of honey makes it useful as a hair or skin mask.

However, if sitting around drenched in honey doesn't appeal to you, check out the large selection of honey-based hair and beauty products in natural food stores everywhere. Individuals with sensitive skin will appreciate honey's anti-irritant qualities too—it is so gentle that it is often used as an ingredient in products made for babies and anyone with sensitive skin.

Although honey is safe for just about everyone, individuals who have problems with maintaining proper blood sugar levels should restrict their consumption of honey. This includes people who have hypoglycemia (low blood sugar), diabetes, and other sugar sensitivities. Another group who should abstain from honey is babies under one year of age, as they haven't yet built up a resistance to the dormant bacteria that may be present in the honey. Some strict vegetarians also choose not to use honey because it is produced by bees.

Although it contains trace amounts of nutrients, honey is a carbohydrate-rich food that is approximately 80 percent sugar, so practice moderation when incorporating it into your diet. You'll please your palate and your body—now that's sweet!

-SparkPeople.com

Men's Corner: Are You at Risk for Sudden Death?

Why being young and fit may not protect you from a heart attack



Heart attacks aren't just for older, overweight men with high cholesterol and high blood pressure. Doctors are seeing patients in their 40s come in with heart disease due to self-inflicted risk factors, according to Ilan Wittstein, M.D., an assistant professor at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and its Heart Institute. Middle-aged men need to be on guard. Even if you work out and eat healthy, you could still be at risk.

Beware of Risk Factors In half of the cases of heart attacks, the heart attack is the first time the patient finds out about heart disease," says Richard A. Stein, director of preventive cardiology at Beth Israel Medical Center and spokesperson for the American Heart Association. More than 60 percent of heart attacks have to do with simple lifestyle issues, such as diet, exercise and cigarette smoking, and easy to detect and treat medical issues such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

Stress Less Research shows that not only do you have to watch your diet, exercise, and avoid smoking and excessive alcohol to prevent a heart attack, it's imperative to be aware of your family history and to manage your stress level. Stress is one of three main risk factors for coronary artery disease, and is responsible for a fifth of heart attacks worldwide.

Release the Pressure But it's possible to lessen your risk of heart disease by using calming stress management techniques, say these experts. Stress management techniques can include getting therapy, or be as simple as taking up yoga, practicing tai chi or using meditation techniques for five minutes every day. "It's proven that relaxation techniques lower blood pressure and improve blood flow," say one researcher.

Modify Your Lifestyle Starting in your mid-to-late 30's, take measures to prevent heart disease by doing the following:

1. **Be aware of major risk factors:** Hypertension, high cholesterol, cigarette smoking, having a family history of heart disease, and diabetes are all major risk factors that could increase your probability of having a heart attack.
2. **Make a lifestyle change:** Think of the things that are in your power to change, like improving your diet, getting exercise, and quitting smoking. Eat seven to nine fruits and vegetables each day.
3. **Make an appointment to be evaluated:** If you have a family history of heart attacks, or you think you're at risk, spend 45-minutes to an hour with a preventive cardiologist at your local hospital. The evaluation and blood test will reveal your HDL and LDL cholesterol, triglycerides, fasting lipid profile, blood pressure, and family history.
4. **Don't deny cardiac symptoms:** If you're experiencing "shortness of breath or chest pains from exertion, get to the hospital right away."
5. **Use medication:** "If a physician recommends it, get started on medication, like statins, that can help you modify your risk factor."

Extra: If you're under high stress, take up meditation, yoga, tai chi, or practice any other relaxation technique for five minutes every day. "Exercise can relieve a lot of stress for people," Wittstein says. "People, who exercise on a regular basis, are less likely to have heart disease or die from a heart attack later in life."

-menshealth.com

Healthy Lifestyle Tip: The health benefits of positive thinking

Is your glass half empty or half full? How you answer this age-old question about positive thinking may reflect your outlook on life, your attitude towards yourself, and whether you're an optimist or a pessimist. Positive thinking plays a key part in effective stress management. Thinking optimistic thoughts doesn't mean that you bury your head in the sand; it just means that you approach the unpleasant in a more positive and productive way.

You can learn to turn negative thinking into positive thinking. The process is simple, but it takes time and practice, after all you're creating a new habit. Here are some ways to think and behave in a more positive way:

- **Check yourself.** From time to time during the day, stop and evaluate what you're thinking. If you find that your thoughts are mainly negative, try to find a way to put a positive spin on them.
- **Be open to humor.** Give yourself permission to smile or laugh, especially during difficult times. Find the humor in everyday situations. When you can laugh at life, you feel less stressed.
- **Follow a healthy lifestyle.** Exercise at least three times a week to positively affect your mood and reduce stress. Follow a healthy diet to fuel your mind and body.
- **Surround yourself with positive people.** Make sure those in your life are positive, supportive people you can depend on to give helpful advice and feedback.
- **Practice positive self-talk.** Start by following one simple rule: Don't say anything to yourself that you wouldn't say to anyone else.

Practicing positive self-talk will improve your outlook. When your state of mind is generally optimistic, you're able to handle everyday stress in a more constructive way. That ability may contribute to the widely observed health benefits of positive thinking.

Super Food of the Month: Sweet Potatoes



Although sweet potatoes may be part of the Thanksgiving tradition, be sure to add these wonderful naturally sweet vegetables to your meals throughout the year; they are some of the most nutritious vegetables around. Sweet potatoes can be found in your local markets year-round, however they are in season in November and December.

How sweet it is for your health to eat sweet potatoes! Not only do they taste like dessert, here's some sweet potatoes surprising benefits. Our food ranking system showed sweet potato to be a strong performer in terms of traditional nutrients. This root vegetable qualified as an excellent source of vitamin A (in the form of beta-carotene), a very good source of vitamin C and manganese, and a good source of copper, dietary fiber, vitamin B6, potassium and iron.

As an excellent source of vitamin A (in the form of beta-carotene) and a very good source of vitamin C, sweet potatoes have healing properties as an antioxidant food. Both beta-carotene and vitamin C are very powerful antioxidants that work in the body to eliminate free radicals. Free radicals are chemicals that damage cells and cell membranes and are associated with the development of conditions like atherosclerosis, diabetic heart disease, and colon cancer.



Recipe of the Month: Apple-Topped Mashed Sweet Potatoes

Ingredients:

5 pound(s) sweet potato (es), medium-size, scrubbed, pierced with a fork
1 Tbsp butter
2 medium apple(s), Golden Delicious, peeled, cored and sliced 1/4-inch thick
1/2 cup(s) orange juice
1/2 tsp table salt
1/2 tsp ground nutmeg
1/4 tsp ground cinnamon, plus extra for sprinkling on final product
1/4 tsp black pepper, freshly ground
1 spray(s) cooking spray

NOTES:

Points Value: 4
Servings: 10
Prep Time: 20 min
Cooking Time: 90 min

Instructions: Preheat oven to 400°F. Place potatoes on a rimmed baking sheet and bake until very soft, about 1 hour. Remove potatoes from oven and reduce oven temperature to 350°F. Let potatoes stand until cool enough to handle.

Meanwhile, melt butter in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add apples and cook, gently turning occasionally, until golden and tender, about 7 minutes; remove from heat and set aside.

Cut cooled potatoes in half and scrape out pulp into a large bowl; discard skins. Add juice, salt, nutmeg, cinnamon and pepper; mash with a potato masher. Or for a smoother texture, process in a food processor until smooth.

Lightly coat a 1 1/2- to 2-quart rectangular or round baking dish with cooking spray. Scrape potato mixture into baking dish; arrange sautéed apples over top in pretty pattern such as concentric circles. Bake until bubbly around edges, about 30 minutes. Sprinkle with ground cinnamon and cut into 10 pieces.

Wellness Upcoming Events...What to watch for!

November 23rd: Lunch & Learn, Dr. George Tesar – Topic: Anxiety

November 30th: MNS Slogan Contest - The winner will be announced at the forum and awarded a prize!

December 2nd: Holiday Cocktail Party. Everyone is invited; please RSVP to Erin at ortize@ccf.org