

December 2009 Newsletter



Tor hasn't actually read the book written by his dad and Aunt Mea yet, but he plans to when his life stops being so busy.

For a merry and bright holiday...

... eat more whole foods! Studies show that eating processed foods increases risk of depression. A recent study in the *British Journal of Psychiatry*¹ assessed the risk of depression in a large group of men and women who were followed for about 20 years. They found that those who ate a diet high in processed foods (which included sweets, anything made with white flour, and processed or preserved meat) had about twice the incidence of depression compared to those who ate a whole food diet emphasizing vegetables, fruit, and fish. So take it easy on the sweets, and be merrier!

This information is especially important at the time of year when merriness is our civic duty. Furthermore, a sound mind is a useful thing to have as we negotiate the minefield of obligatory gifting, insane party schedules and complicated family politics. It would make sense to improve the odds if we can.

The holidays also present fine opportunities to remember reasons for thankfulness and hope, and to celebrate with friends and family. And here and there you might come across some pretty good food, too.

Hints for healthy holiday habits

While we're on the subject of mood and food, we *all* know how difficult it is to be disciplined about our eating this time of year; for the next three weeks we will be fending off a steady march of candy boxes, tubs of seductively flavored popcorn, and endless plates of melt-in-the-mouth refined carbohydrates made by well-meaning friends and relatives.

To make the situation trickier, we can get so busy with holiday festivities that suddenly we realize that we haven't eaten anything since breakfast. Furthermore, here it is 8 pm and the healthiest thing in the room is a tray of miniature hydrogenated spinach quiches with one antioxidant apiece. Read on for self defense tips.

- **Eat well at home.** Continue to plan for three or more healthy meals daily, no matter what your social schedule. Being well fed gives us more will power to avoid the holiday food traps. Make sure to keep plenty of the healthy basic foods at home: vegetables, fruits, beans, minimally processed whole grains, eggs, fish, and unprocessed meats.
- **Keep tasty, healthy snacks handy.** Try keeping a list of good snacks on the refrigerator door. Then, if you're not thinking clearly due to a sudden acute onset of refined carbohydrate deficiency, the list can help you through the crisis by doing your thinking for you. (There are a couple of pages of suggestions in *Good Food, Great Medicine*.) A combination of healthy fat and protein is the most satisfying snack – like a handful of raw almonds and raisins, sharp cheddar cheese with a crispy sweet apple, and celery filled with fresh-ground peanut butter.
- **Use strategy away from home.** Remember that most parties have *some* good food...you just have to find it. Serve yourself generously with the basics: vegetables, fruits, and protein foods like bean dips and salads, cheese, and meat (unless it's processed or preserved meat, which is

¹ Br J Psych 2009;195:408-13

wise to avoid). Try to keep the sweets to just a bite or two, preferably from someone else's plate.

- **Think before you drink.** Try to steer clear of sweet drinks, including diet sodas, which are just as bad for other reasons. A good strategy is to keep sparkling water chilled in your refrigerator ready to serve visitors or bring with you to parties. (Lemon-lime flavor is spunky without being distractingly fruity.) Sparkling water can also help you resist a second glass of wine. Evidence shows that women should stop at one glass and men at two.
- **Share!** Share excess sweets and pastries that appear in your home with friends and neighbors. You'll be healthier, they'll be delighted. If you can't find anyone to share, we promise not to tell anyone if you throw them away.
- **Stay active.** Make at least 30 minutes of daily exercise a priority, even if it means you are late to a party.

Cookbooks for Christmas

We are well stocked with the second edition of *Good Food, Great Medicine* and ready for Christmas. If you gather some friends together to form a buying group, you will be able to take advantage of our 40% case discount, which brings the price to \$18 each! (There are 14 books in a case.)

Dr. Hassell's new schedule

As we announced in last month's newsletter, after five years of job sharing with Miles, Angela left the practice this month and Miles will be flying solo again. This transition does not affect your relationship with the office - Miles will just be your *only* primary care doctor! He will continue to see patients Mondays through Thursdays. Fridays will typically be reserved for any urgent needs.

When Miles is out of town, Dr. James Biemer, an internist at Providence St. Vincent Medical Center with whom Miles and Angela have worked for many years, will be providing coverage. Angela also plans to be on call for Miles from time to time when she is in town. We also will continue working closely with Laila Sillay, MD for specialty outpatient GYN care.

Spring class series

Many of you attended our recent Summer/Fall class series: *How a Greek Grandmother Would Solve the Health Care Crisis*, *Preventing and Reversing Heart Disease*, and *Preventing and Reversing Type 2 Diabetes and Insulin Resistance*. We are planning a new series of free classes this coming spring. In response to the evaluation sheets you filled out, we plan to include classes on weight loss and cancer survivorship (with an emphasis on breast cancer). The classes will be at Providence St. Vincent Medical Center on Tuesday evenings from 6-8pm March 16th, April 20th, and May 18th. If you would like to register for any classes, please call our office at (503)291-1777.

Colds and flu and you

For prevention and treatment tips, check out our *Cold, Flu, and Sinusitis* handout on our website at www.goodfoodgreatmedicine.com. The following sites also have helpful information about flu symptoms:

www.uptodate.com/patients

www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/

The State of Oregon has a website that can also be helpful in locating H1N1 immunizations: <http://flu.oregon.gov> –or– you can also call their *Flu Hotline* at (800)978-3040.

Upcoming Speaking Events

12/1/2009 – NEXT Steps against Breast Cancer: Miles Hassell MD and Ken Weizer ND *Nutrition and Exercise Today to Reduce Risk and Improve Survival*. Providence St. Vincent Medical Center, Cancer Center. *This event is free. For reservations or more information, please call the Providence Resource Line (503) 574-6595.*

12/3/2009 – Pacific University: *Reversing the Metabolic Syndrome* Miles Hassell, MD: Hillsboro, Oregon.

12/4/2009 – Providence Outpatient Diabetes Services Staff Retreat: Miles Hassell, MD: *Diabetes Talk & Saturated Fat Discussion*: Oregon City, Oregon.

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him."

1 John 4:9 (KJV)