

Curry's Nutrition Newsletter

Edited by Dr. Gayatri Borthakur, Ph.D (Clinical Nutrition)

In this Issue:

Nutrition

How good is your high fiber food?

Wellness

Long term effect of Binge eating

Health Tips

Natural Healing Power of Spices
(Concluding part)

Recipes

Spicy lamb skewers

Deviled eggs with a twist

How good is your high fiber food?

The consumers who look for the "high in fiber" claim on their food packages need to look for the active ingredient supplying that additional fiber in the labels, because this common food additive may be the reason of many gastrointestinal discomforts in humans. Recently, researchers from the Minnesota University have reported that a common food additive called "inulin", that is added to processed foods to increase the fiber content, is found to be causing many GI discomfort symptoms such as gas, flatulence, bloating etc.

Inulin is a naturally extracted fiber that is commonly found in chocolate bars, fruit juice, snacks, high-fiber breakfast bars, ice creams, and beverages. It is extracted from many common foods like bananas, onions, garlic, wheat, and chicory roots. Processed foods manufacturers prefer this fiber because it can be chemically manipulated to produce similar taste and texture qualities as found in popular foods without adding to its calorie, fat or sodium contents. Due to this quality, inulin is the perfect choice among the food manufacturing companies.

Inulin fiber escapes the normal breakdown process in the small intestine and passes on to the colon and helps in the growth of "good bacteria". In some people inulin produces gas, flatulence, bloating and other GI symptoms. It is not yet known as to how much of this food additive can be tolerated by humans without any side effects.

The researchers at Minnesota University carried out a human study in 26 healthy men and women between 18-60 years. Once a week for five weeks, they were given a breakfast of a bagel with cream cheese and orange juice. The orange juice was mixed with either a placebo (without the fiber additive) or with one of the two doses (5 g or 10 g) of inulin products- native inulin and short chain oligofructose. After the study period, the participants were interviewed

to find if they had experienced any symptoms such as gas, bloating, flatulence, nausea, stomach cramping, diarrhea/constipation, or GI rumbling. They found that those participants that received a low dose of inulin products had "mild" symptoms while the other group receiving a high dose of inulin product reported highest scores in every symptom except constipation. Flatulence was the common symptom that was present in all the groups receiving any dose of inulin product. They also found that short chain oligofructose causes fast fermentation in the gut producing more gas and GI discomfort symptoms. They concluded that 10 g of native inulin and 5 g of short chain oligofructose can be tolerated by a healthy adult per day.

It is true that while these food additives are not a common problem in most people, there is a potential overuse of inulin in numerous available commercial food products that may go beyond tolerable level.

High fiber foods such as fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes are self-limiting since we cannot eat too much of them. However, it is difficult to control the consumption of food additives that are present in our processed ready-to-eat foods.

This study is like an eye-opener, although it suggests further studies before recommending an upper tolerance level of inulin product. Until then, continue checking the food label carefully for terms like inulin, chicory roots extract, and oligofructose or oligosaccharide in the high fiber packaged foods and eat those products in moderate amount.

Long Term Effect of Temporary Overeating ("Binge eating"?)

Today is the beginning of another New Year - year 2011 and time to take new resolutions. Many of your New Year resolutions are to get more exercise, have control on your portion sizes and stay fit and healthy with an eye on that bathroom balance. But wait. Before trying hard on those expert proven suggestions to keep up with your diet and exercise regimen or becoming a resolution drop out after seeing no results in your desired weight, learn what you gained from all your memorable eating and merrymaking with your friends and families during this holiday.

Episodes of overeating that commonly happen during the holiday period, starting from Thanksgiving and ending on New Year, may be referred to as "binge" eating. However, we are unaware of the fact that this temporary uncontrolled overeating may also lead to a long-term weight gain problem. In a recent scientific report published from Sweden, it was stated that overeating for as little as four weeks can result in long term changes in body fat composition that may last for many years. Similar to the holiday period, we tend to take it easy on our food intake especially during the first few weeks of college dorm life, a long awaited cruise holiday with its entire buffet, or a foreign trip with its delectable food fares- which may lead to an altered body fat composition with increased weight gain.

In order to study whether this type of brief overeating may affect our health, Swedish researchers carried out a human study in which they recruited 18 healthy young adults with normal body weights. The participants were instructed to lead a sedentary life style with only 5,000 steps a day or less. For four weeks, the calorie intake of the participants was increased by 70%. Most of the participants included two fast-food meals a day in order to make up this increased calorie intake. The control group included young adults of similar age without any change in their diet or physical activity. The body weight and composition of both the groups were examined periodically for two years.

The study group with increased food intake for four weeks gained an average of 14 pounds. After six months, only one-third of those participants had returned to within one pound of their initial body weight. At the one-year mark, the study group had on average 3.3 pounds more weight than before their four-week binge eating while there was no change in the body weight of the control group. There was also an increased fat mass and higher LDL cholesterol levels one year after their four-week binge which was not observed in the control group. After 2 ½ years, the group that binged for four weeks still continued to gain weight while weights in the control group were stable. The researchers concluded that there may be a long term residual effect on fat mass after a brief period of overeating.

The moral of the story? Just because we have a regular exercise program set does not mean it's okay to briefly splurge on food during times of merrymaking. We need to remember to maintain our eating style as well as the exercise pattern at any time of the year.

Natural Healing Powers of Spices (Concluding part)

Apart from imparting color, flavor, and taste to a dish, spices may also provide health-promoting benefits. Since ancient times, natural healers have used spices for treating many illnesses. In India, spices such as cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, turmeric are mentioned as early as in the Aryurveda (The Great Book of Science of Medicine in Hinduism) for their healing properties. Aryurveda from the Eastern world is now a part of Alternative Medicine in the Western world. Many scientific research reports are now validating the historic use of different spices for their health benefits.

(Continued from last issue)

Ginger

Ginger is prized throughout the world for its medicinal properties. Ginger is a proven herbal medicine possessing amazing digestive ability. Regular consumption of this high in fiber spice helps in cleansing the intestines thus promotes normal bowel movement. Its powerful active compound prevents nausea, vomiting, and control symptoms of motion sickness and any kind of stomach upset symptoms.

It is believed to have relaxing effect on blood vessels thus promotes blood flow reducing heart rhythm irregularities. In patients with autoimmune disease, ginger is widely used to reduce arthritic symptoms, inflammation related to ulcerative colitis, and digestive disturbances.

Ginger is also reported to lower cholesterol levels, inhibit replication of herpes simplex virus, and help prevent the formation of blood clots.

Ginger is popular in India and one of the main components in Ayurvedic medicine. Recent studies show that the strong antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties of ginger may be helpful in fighting many kinds of diseases. These effects make ginger comparable to those of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications without the side effects.

INTERACTIONS: Ginger can interfere with blood clotting. Therefore, it should be used cautiously in patients on anticoagulant therapies such as coumadin or heparin. Ginger may reduce the toxic effects of the chemotherapeutic agent cyclophosphamide. Ginger is also contraindicated in patients with biliary disease because of its tendency to cause bile release from the gallbladder.

Mustard

Mustard seeds are rich in omega-3 fatty acids, selenium, magnesium, iron, phosphorus, zinc and dietary fiber. Due to anti-oxidant mineral, selenium, mustard has been shown to help reduce the severity of asthma, reduce some symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis, and help prevent cancers of the stomach and colon. The pungency of its oil is proven remedy for clearing sinuses and congestion of the lungs.

Mustard is believed to increase appetite as well as have laxative properties. Mustard oil is rich in monounsaturated fatty acids and is still used as the main cooking medium in many parts of the World. The oil also used as massaging oil that is believed to be helpful for promoting strong muscles.

Nutmeg

Helps in digestion and provides relief for stomachaches, resulting from indigestion. It helps stop diarrhea, flatulence as well as encourage appetite. There are some studies that show its effect on lowering high blood pressure. It is also a proven liver tonic that helps to detoxify the body. The most prized use of its oil is to stimulate the brain, and relieves stress. It is even believed to stimulate dreams. The ancient Greeks and Romans used it as a brain tonic.

Due to its anti-inflammatory properties its oil is used to treat joint and muscle pain. Nutmeg oil also helps the kidneys to dissolve kidney stones as well as relieve infections.

By increasing blood circulation, nutmeg stimulates the cardio-vascular system and may prevent many heart problems. Nutmeg is also believed to help with respiratory problems such as a cough from the common cold. Nutmeg is very often used as an ingredient in cough syrups. It is also used by many to help with asthma.

Star Anise

Like cumin, fennel, and ginger, it provides good relief from stomachaches resulting from intestinal gas accumulation and flatulence. Among its many uses, external application of its paste is a powerful remedy for many kinds of skin diseases. In many cultures, it is widely used to treat colic in babies. One of its compounds is used for making antiviral medicines to treat Tami flu and also for the prevention of avian influenza. It is also known for its diuretic properties. This versatile fruit also helps in preventing headaches and promoting good health and vitality.

Turmeric

Due to high antioxidant properties of its active compound, curcumin, turmeric is used as an anti-inflammatory agent to treat arthritic pains, gastrointestinal inflammation, and in maintaining cardiovascular, brain, and nerve health. Its anti-inflammatory effects have been found to be comparable to non-steroidal drug (NSAID) such as Aspirin. Research findings have shown its efficacy in fighting inflammatory bowel diseases, including Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, rheumatoid arthritis, cystic fibrosis, cancer and Alzheimer's disease. Its antioxidant properties are also proved promising in offering protection to cardiovascular and liver health. Ancient Indian medicines used turmeric as an antiseptic agent to treat cuts and wounds.

Apart from health benefit, turmeric also has beauty-enhancing effect. In India, a bride before ceremonial bath applies its paste on the body. It is believed that this practice brings glow to the skin of the bride. It is also a common practice in India to drink a glass of milk with addition of couple of drops of fresh turmeric juice to help maintaining the fairness of the skin as well as stomach health.

While there are many beliefs and proven results about health benefits of our common spices, one should be careful while using it. It is not advisable to use any single spice for its health benefits in large doses, which can prove to be toxic. One should always consult with the naturopath physician before using such alternative medicines. However, regular use of various spices in every day's cooking definitely will promote health.

Recipes

Indian Spiced Lamb Skewers

These lamb skewers are great both as entrée and as appetizer. This recipe can also be prepared using an indoor grill or conventional oven broiler.

Ingredients:

- 3 tbsp Curry's Meat Spice Rub
- 1/8-1/4 teaspoons cayenne powder (optional)
- 3 cloves garlic, finely grated
- 1-inch piece fresh ginger, finely grated
- ¼ cup thick plain yogurt, beaten smooth
- 2 tbsp vegetable oil
- Juice of ½ fresh lime
- 1 ½ pounds boneless lamb, cut into large cubes (about 8 pieces)
- Wooden skewers, soaked in cold water for 30 minutes
- Salt to taste
- Extra vegetable oil for drizzling

Method:

Heat the grill to high. Combine the first 7 ingredients and mix well until it forms a paste. If the mixture is dry, you may add a few drops of water to make it smooth.

Place lamb in a large bowl, add the spice paste and toss to coat the lamb pieces. You can grill immediately. But marinating it in the refrigerator for a few hours will intensify the flavor. Just before grilling sprinkle salt and toss the lamb once again to coat the spice paste and salt.

Skewer marinated lamb pieces onto skewers and lay them flat on the grill. Grill the skewers until meat is golden brown on all sides and cooked to medium-rare doneness, 2 to 3 minutes per side. Drizzle with oil before removing from the grill and serve the lamb over rice accompanied with coriander or mint chutney.

Serves:

Serves 2-4

Deviled Eggs with a Twist

Ingredients:

- 6 large, hard-boiled eggs, cooled, peeled and halved
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped red pepper
- 2 teaspoons finely chopped green onion- the green part only
- 2 tablespoons mayonnaise (use light, or fat free if you prefer)
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 1/2-3/4 tsp Curry's Garam Masala
- Salt and Black pepper to taste

Method:

Remove the yolks. Place the yolks in a medium bowl and mash with fork Add the red pepper, green onion, mayonnaise, mustard, Garam Masala to the yolks and blend well with a fork. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Spoon mixture evenly among the 12 egg white halves. You can use a piping bag to create a swirl with the filling.

Serve:

6 servings (2 deviled egg halves per serving)