



## Supervised by Rima Zbib El-Sayed

In this corner, Rima Zbib El-Sayed, our dietitian, answers any inquiry you might have related to Healthy Nutrition. Just send your questions to our main office in Lebanon, and wait for answers on these pages.

*From Nelly M.A.- Cairo, Egypt*  
I read in the previous issue about omega-3 fatty acids; Are sardines a good source of omega-3? Does the canning process affect the omega-3s?

Sardines are a good source of omega-3 fatty acids, particularly the heart-healthy oil, EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid). Cold water, higher fat fish, such as salmon, mackerel, lake trout, herring, sardines and albacore tuna, contain higher levels of two kinds of omega - 3 fatty acids: EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) and DHA (docosahexaenoic acid). The canning process does not adversely affect levels. The processing is carried out under oxygen-free conditions and so no significant damage occurs. 3 ounces of sardines, canned with skin and bones, provides somewhere



between 320 to 450 mg. of calcium. Remove the skin and bones and the calcium content is drastically reduced.

In an essay on "The Unsung Sardine", author James Villas writes: "Ounce for ounce, sardines provide more calcium and phosphorus than milk, more protein than steak, more potassium than bananas, and more iron than cooked spinach." Other nutritional reference books confirm these facts. Good sardines should be uniform in length and width. They should have firm pinkish flesh with silvery skin, and should be tightly and evenly laid in the tin. When opened, the aroma should be mild and pleasant.



For every question,  
there is an answer

**Health** الغذاء  
**Nutrition** الصحي

Dear reader, wherever you are in the Arab World, you can pose any question related to healthy nutrition by writing it on this slip and sending it to us on the addresses found on page 1. We will give you an answer as soon as possible.

Name: ..... Country: .....

Question: .....

.....  
.....  
.....

## Increase in weight and exercise

*From Mohammad Ali. H- Bahrain*

*Could one eat what he wants of food and then burn off all the calories by exercise? I suffer from a great increase in body weight but I also practice sports. I noticed that this method is not helping in weight loss. Would exercise alone serve the purpose?*

The fact that you are exercising is a good start but it is not enough to lose weight if you are consuming more calories than your body needs. Weight loss will occur when your body burns more calories than it consumes, therefore, using your body's reserves (fat) to fulfill your energy needs. The exercise you do helps to burn more calories; keep up the exercise and do it regularly

One of the keys to successful weight control is being realistic. Before starting any weight loss program, it's important to see your doctor to deal with any underlying problems. Ask the health care provider to help you determine your best weight. This may not be the weight you see in magazines or movies, but it should be the weight that allows you to feel and be healthy for yourself. The American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) says it's also helpful to break your weight and lifestyle goals down into smaller, more manageable ones. Perhaps start by adding more fruits and vegetables to your diet; then work on reducing the amount of fried foods you're eating. Another key, according to the American Dietetic Association (ADA), is to stop thinking in terms of a short-term "diet," and start thinking about making a permanent change in your eating and lifestyle habits. Many fruits and vegetables are low in calories, but their fiber content can help provide a feeling of fullness when you eat them. The American Council on Exercise says that exer-

cise also increases muscle mass; since muscles burn calories at rest, more muscle mass also means an increase in your body's ability to burn calories. And all that can help put you on the path towards permanent, successful weight control.

The Food Guide Pyramid is an excellent tool for making sure you are meeting your nutritional needs while trying to lose weight. With the proper balance of foods, you can lose weight and improve nutrition.

## Aspirin and Heart Diseases

*From Wassim Itani- Beirut, Lebanon*

*My dad suffers from heart disease; the doctor informed me that this disease is inherited and that I should be aware of it esp. if I feel any symptom related to the heart. I hear that taking aspirin daily would dwindle of the risk of heart disease. Should I take aspirin to avoid these diseases?*

Your doctor will help you weigh the risks and benefits of aspirin therapy before you start taking it. In addition, blood or other laboratory tests may be performed during your check-ups before attempting to take it.

Cleveland Clinic cardiologist Michael Lauer, M.D., Director of Clinical Research in the Department of Cardiovascular Medicine recommends:

- Do not take aspirin if you have certain medical conditions that increase your risk for complications of aspirin.
- Aspirin doses should be set by your doctor not yourself; when you begin your aspirin regimen be sure to take the medication only as directed by your doctor. Taking more than directed may increase the risk of bleeding or other serious side effects without increasing the helpful effects of this medication.
- Aspirin is not a cure-all; you should also work to reduce your other risk cardiovascular factors by quitting smoking if you smoke,





managing high blood pressure and diabetes, lowering cholesterol, exercising regularly and losing weight if necessary.

A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, legumes (beans), whole grains, low-fat dairy products, fish, lean meats and poultry is the basis of recommendations set by the American Heart Association.

The guidelines recommend that healthy adults minimize the intake of foods containing high levels of saturated fats (found in animal products) and substantially reduce the intake of trans fatty acids (the hydrogenated oil found in some commercially prepared foods).

The recommended intakes of salt (less than 6 grams per day, or 2,400 mg of sodium) and dietary cholesterol (300 mg/day for healthy individuals, and 200 mg per day for high-risk individuals) are also encouraged.

### Heartburn and ulcer

*From Samia. M.B.- Tripoli, Lebanon*

*Is heartburn related to ulcer? How ulcer develops? What are the foods to avoid so not to develop ulcer?*

Heartburn is an uncomfortable feeling of burning and warmth occurring in waves rising up behind the breastbone (sternum) toward the neck. It is usually due to the rise of stomach acid back up into the esophagus. Generally the symptoms are:

- a burning chest pain that begins at the breastbone and moves up toward the throat
- a feeling that food is coming back into the

mouth

- an acid or bitter taste at the back of the throat
- an increase in severity of pain when lying down or bending over

Reflux and ulcer disease really are two different things. Both are caused by acid, but ulcers in addition are usually associated with an infection, a bacterium called *H. pylori*. Getting rid of the bacteria can cure ulcers, but it does not do anything for heartburn says Dr. Peura who served as chairman of the Board of Governors and as a trustee for the American College of Gastroenterology.

Doing certain things such as avoiding large meals, fatty foods, chocolate, avoiding lying down after meals, can all help prevent acid from coming up the esophagus and reduce heartburn. Losing weight, moderate exercise, not smoking is also helpful in some people in improving heartburn symptoms. Frequent heartburn more than three or four times per week can signal a more severe problem and should be treated by medications as prescribed by a physician.

An ulcer is a hole that forms in the lining of the stomach or duodenum (small intestine). The pain often occurs between meals and in the early hours of the morning. Scientists now believe that the primary cause of most ulcers is infection with the bacterium *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*) a type of bacterium that infects the stomach. Another cause is the use of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. Smoking has been shown to delay healing and prompt recurrence.

The following diet and lifestyle advice may be helpful for patients suffering from ulcer:

- Eat regularly throughout the day. Avoid periods of hunger or overeating.
- Eat slowly and chew foods thoroughly.
- Maintain upright posture while eating and for about an hour afterwards.
- Follow a lower-fat diet regime and avoid very high-fat foods.
- Check whether caffeine, chocolate, citrus or tomato products cause discomfort. If so, avoid them. This advice applies to all suspect foods.
- Avoid hot or strongly flavored seasonings like: garlic, barbecue sauce, chili sauce, chili pepper, horseradish, black pepper,





chili powder and other highly spiced foods.

- Avoid eating within 3 hours before going to bed.

## Fish and Proteins

*From Zaher Yamout- Beirut, Lebanon*

*Do fish compare in protein content to meats?* In general, animal proteins (meat, fish, poultry, milk, cheese, and eggs) are considered good sources of complete proteins. Complete proteins contain ample amounts of all essential amino acids.

Fish is generally low in calories, saturated fat and cholesterol. It's also a good source of protein and several vitamins and minerals. Fish is a nutrient-dense food. It's a good source of protein - most varieties contain around 20 grams of protein per 3-ounce serving, the same as meat. It is also a good source of vitamin B-12.

## Food Safety

*From Fawziah Mohammad- Egypt*

*What are the best ways to ensure food safety upon buying it i.e. prevent its spoilage and increase in harmful bacteria?*

Buy meat, fish, poultry, dairy products, eggs and freshly prepared foods from clean, reliable sources, and check the expiration date on packaged goods. Buy these products the last as they need prompt refrigeration; this applies to frozen foods as well (frozen foods should be solid and shouldn't show any kind of thawing)

Avoid foods with damaged packaging, such as dented or bulging cans.

Pack frozen and refrigerated items together in the same shopping bag to keep them cool on the way home.

Take all groceries home immediately, especially during warmer months. Unpack and store groceries as soon as you get them home, especially refrigerated and frozen foods.

Always store raw meats, fish or poultry at the bottom of the fridge to avoid cross-contamination; store eggs in their fridge-designated area unwashed and only wash when needed. In your kitchen, wash your hands before and after preparing food. Keep all utensils, work surfaces, dish towels, cloths and sponges clean. Avoid cross-contamination from raw food, such as meat or eggs, to cooked foods by using separate cutting boards, knives,

bowls and other tools. If you don't have separate tools, be sure to wash thoroughly any items that touch raw animal products before using them with other foods.

## Diabetes

*From Samir Al-Aly- Kuwait*

*How would one get diabetes? what are the risk factors? Is it hereditary?*

Diabetes mellitus is a group of metabolic diseases characterized by high blood sugar (glucose) levels, which result from defects in insulin secretion, or action, or both. Normally, blood glucose levels are tightly controlled by insulin, a hormone produced by the pancreas. Insulin lowers the blood glucose level. When the blood glucose elevates (for example, after eating food), insulin is released from the pancreas to normalize the glucose level. In patients with diabetes, the absence or insufficient production of insulin causes hyperglycemia. Diabetes is a chronic medical condition, meaning although it can be controlled, it lasts a lifetime. ( Medical Author: Ruchi Mathur, MD)

There are two major types of diabetes, called type 1 and type 2. Type 1 diabetes was also called insulin dependent diabetes mellitus (IDDM), or juvenile onset diabetes mellitus; in type 1 diabetes, the beta cells of the pancreas produce little or no insulin

Type 2 diabetes is called non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (NIDDM) or adult-onset. Diabetes type II patients suffer from impaired insulin action. Insulin is present in the blood, but the body's cells no longer react properly to insulin and therefore cannot use it.

Type 1 and type 2 diabetes have different causes. Yet two factors are important in both. First, you must inherit a predisposition to the disease. Second, something in your environment must trigger diabetes. Type 2 diabetes has a stronger genetic basis than type 1, yet it also depends more on environmental factors. Eating too much fat and too little carbohydrate and fiber, and getting too little exercise; type 2 diabetes is common in people with these habits. Obesity is a strong risk factor for type 2 diabetes. Obesity is most risky for young people and for people who have been obese for a long time. Type 2 diabetes tends to run in families. (American Diabetes Association)