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FALL 2021 - NEWSLETTER

Steven E. Reznick, M.D. FACP

7280 W. Palmetto Park Rd., Suite 205 N, Boca Raton, FL 33433

561-368-0191 or email **DrR@BocaConciergeDoc.com**

Blog: <https://bocaratonconciergedoctor.wordpress.com/>

Influenza Season 2021-2022 is Approaching

The office has ordered enough influenza vaccine for **all** patients. Let's start the discussion by making it very clear that you can take the influenza vaccine at the same time you take the COVID-19 vaccine or booster. Several vaccine companies are producing a combination vaccine of COVID-19 and influenza, but that product will not be available in the USA this fall.

The next issue to examine is when does influenza A generally arrive in south Florida? In most years we see very little influenza A prior to Thanksgiving. There is a smattering of influenza B primarily in the pediatric population year-round.

The disease arrives earlier north of the Mason Dixon Line but last season due to masking, lockdowns and school closures there was very little spread of the flu. It takes about two weeks to develop immunity after you receive the vaccine so if you are planning on traveling in October and November it pays to research when influenza arrives in the area you are traveling to and get vaccinated two weeks in advance of the trip.

In South Florida the influenza season peaks the last week in January and first weeks in February most years. Think Super Bowl weekend as the most infectious time.

We know that in those 65 years of age or older the protective effects begin to fade at 90 days. For this reason, we advise our senior citizen patients to take the influenza vaccine between Halloween and Thanksgiving. For patients over 65 who already took their flu shot at their pharmacy, we recommend a booster shot in late December or early January. For younger patients, the immunity lasts much longer and, if they choose to take the shot earlier, they should be protected for most of the flu season.

THE VACCINE IS ALREADY IN OUR OFFICE. We will officially start vaccinating in October. Seniors 65 and older will receive a version of the senior high dose quadrivalent vaccine. Younger patients will receive the traditional influenza vaccine. The vaccination will be recorded on Florida Shots - the official vaccination recording site of the State of Florida.

Walking Helps Stave Off Dementia

A paper presented at the Alzheimer's Association 2021 International Conference by Natan Feter, PhD of Pelotas, Brazil suggested that even low levels of exercise as you age reduces your chances of developing Alzheimer's type dementia. Their study looked at the English Longitudinal Study of Aging that included

8,270 individuals 50 years or older between the years 2002-2019. Fifty-six percent were female with a mean age of participants of 64 years. Over the 17-year course of the study, 8% of the participants developed dementia. T

They found the risk of dementia increased by 7.8% for each year increase in age. The risk of developing dementia was reduced by individuals who were physically active - more so for moderate to vigorous exercisers than for low level exercisers. Eighty-year old's who were vigorous exercisers turned out to have a lower risk of dementia than inactive 50 -69-year-olds.

The message from the study was simple if you exercise even one time a week you reduce your risk of developing dementia. Walking certainly counts favorably. A reviewer simply said that regular walking is good for the heart and what is good for the heart is good for the head.

Blood Test Biomarkers for Alzheimer's Disease

Adam Boxer, MD, PhD of the University of California San Francisco and associates published in *Lancet Neurology* a study which discussed their identifying two chemical biomarkers that distinguish normal patients from those with Alzheimer's disease or other types of dementia. The two blood markers, phosphorylated tau 217 (p-tau217) and phosphorylated tau 181(p-tau181) showed "exquisite sensitivity and specificity" for discriminating Alzheimer disease from normal and other entities.

These biomarkers are currently only being used for research purposes and are not available to be used by doctors and patients through commercial labs yet. The researchers believe a commercially available lab test will be developed within the next few years

Coffee Consumption, Brain Volume & Dementia - Moderation is the Key

Researchers at the Australian Center for Precision Health at the University of South Australia reported on a study looking at coffee consumption and its effects on the brain. The study investigator, Elina Hypponen, PhD found that drinking coffee in moderation had no ill effect on the brain but drinking six or more cups a day produced adverse effects.

The researchers looked at the United Kingdom Biobank which had information on 500,000 participants ranging in age from 37-73 representing 22 study sites in a four-year period between March 2006 and October 2010. From the 500,000 Biobank patients they looked, at 398,646 coffee drinkers. These participants had undergone health questioning, physical exams and lab evaluation of blood, urine and saliva. MRIs of the brain, heart and body were done on 100,000.

Participants reported coffee intake in cups per day. They compared drinkers of 1-2 cups per day with others who consumed 3-4 cups per day, 5-6 cups per day and more than 6 cups per day. Brain imaging was done at entry into the data bank and 4-6 years later.

There turned out to be an inverse linear relationship between daily coffee consumption and non-white matter brain volume. They concluded that drinking six or more cups of coffee per day is associated with smaller brain volume and a 53% increased risk for dementia compared to light coffee consumption of 1-2 cups per day.

The study was published online on MDedge Internal Medicine and Nutritional Neuroscience. After reading this work, it once again becomes clear that consuming coffee in moderation seems to produce no ill effect on the brain.

Sleep, Foods and Melatonin

Marie-Pierre St-Onge is an associate professor of nutritional medicine at Columbia University Irving Medical Center. She is the director of their Sleep Center of Excellence at Columbia and has spent years studying the relationships between the foods we eat and our sleep satisfaction. She believes eating a diet rich in plants, fibers and unsaturated fat such as nuts, olive oil, fish and avocados promotes sound sleep while a diet high in sugar, saturated fat and processed carbohydrates can be disruptive. She also believes pairing foods rich in tryptophan with complex carbohydrates helps the tryptophan cross the blood brain barrier and stimulate the pineal gland to make and secrete melatonin. She cites the Mediterranean Diet as a perfect balance of tryptophan producing foods and complex carbohydrates to stimulate more satisfying sleep.

When one eats a diet rich in saturated fats, simple carbohydrates such as white bread, pasta, bagels and pastries they tend to fall asleep faster but wake up often and don't always move into those sleep patterns that produce a rested state. She believes this is due to wide fluctuations in blood glucose levels and insulin responses not seen with a diet rich in plants, high fiber, unsaturated fats and complex carbohydrates.

The converse is additionally true so if you are sleep deprived you tend to crave unhealthy diets rich in sugars, unsaturated fats and highly processed foods. In men short sleep promotes an increased appetite and greater activation in the brain reward centers for foods such as pepperoni pizza, doughnuts and candy. When these subjects were fed a healthy diet with carrots, yogurt, oatmeal and fruit and had five nights of excellent sleep their brain reward center reverted to normal response when exposed to junk foods. Sleep deprived women do not develop a need for more food they just produce a lesser amount of a chemical which tells them they are full.

Apparently, tryptophan rich foods eaten without complex carbohydrates do not cross the blood brain barrier to help produce melatonin. What exactly is melatonin and what is its role in this process. Melatonin is a hormone that regulates sleep timing. The pineal gland starts secreting it after dark and it tells your body it's time for sleep by lowering alertness and reducing your core body temperature. It works together with your body's natural rhythms to tell you it's time to go to sleep.

You can purchase melatonin over the counter. Be sure the product you buy is certified by USP labs or a similar service to make sure that what you see on the label is what you are taking when you ingest it. If you are taking it to overcome a circadian rhythm issue such as jetlag Dr. Bhanu Kolla, an associate professor of psychiatry and psychology and consultant at the Center for Sleep Medicine at the Mayo Clinic, suggests using a low dose such as 0.5 mg two to three hours prior to sleep. For people with insomnia, she suggests 5 mg thirty minutes before sleep and suggests additional sleep ritual actions such as:

1. Turn off computers, tablets and electronic devices two hours before bedtime
2. Do not watch the news within two hours of bedtime
3. Avoid alcohol and caffeine at night
4. Cool the room down to 67 degrees Fahrenheit
5. Get as much sunlight as you can during the day to regulate your internal clock
6. Maintain a regular sleep schedule trying to go to bed the same time and perform the same rituals before getting into bed and once you are under the covers.

7. Most sleep experts will tell you that the bedroom is for sleeping and intimacy and nothing else. If despite a healthy diet, a great sleep ritual and use of melatonin you cannot get a restful night's sleep then it is time to see a physician who specializes in sleep disorders. Experts suggest you give the melatonin, improved diet and sleep rituals two or three weeks to work before seeking additional help.

Eggs Are Safe and Delicious

A few years ago, while visiting my pug's veterinarian to try and find a way to get the dog to eat while undergoing radiation therapy, he suggested, "Why don't you scramble him some eggs? It's a great protein source and doesn't contribute to cardiovascular disease in canines." I have to admit I was a bit jealous since I was avoiding eggs, using egg whites and Egg Beaters instead. Two recent studies suggest eggs are safe for humans too.

The *American Journal of Medicine*, in the January 2021 edition, published a research paper by C. Krittanwong, MD and associates which looked at 23 prospective studies covering a median of 12.8 years and 1,415,839 patients. There were 157,324 cardiovascular events during the study period. "Compared with the consumption of no egg or 1 egg per day, higher consumption was not associated with significantly increased risk of cardiovascular disease events. Higher egg consumption (>1 egg per day) was associated with a significantly decreased risk of coronary artery disease compared to no egg or one egg per day.

Similar results were published in the March 2020 edition of the *British Medical Journal* in a study involving 14,806 patients over 32 years. "Moderate egg consumption is not associated with increased cardiovascular risk overall." The message is clear, eggs are a fine source of protein in moderation.

www.bocaconciergedoc.com

Steven E. Reznick, M.D., FACP
7280 W. Palmetto Park Rd., #205N
Boca Raton, FL 33441
561-368-0191
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