

THE TRUSTEE

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HOSPITAL COSTS

As of January 1, federal law requires all hospitals to display their costs and charges on a web site. In New York State, Public Health Law S24 and, federally, the Affordable Care Act, have required admitted patients to be provided with a cost list, but, now, it must be posted on line. It also pertains to psychiatric, rehabilitation, and critical care centers. As you can see on your EOB's, the advertised price is usually not the price paid by a plan or by Medicare, so the law may have limited transparency. And, the Center for Medicare Services has a proposal to require all advertisements for prescriptive medicines to show a Medicare price. Currently, pharmacies must have a list of all prescription costs available, but it's a "cash" list and, given all of the rebates, discounts, dispensing fees, etc. that are a part of the Rx industry, the list may be of limited benefit. If you find a hospital charge cost list, it will usually list over 5,000 procedures and room cost may not be there. The new law might be a good start on transparency or, simply, window dressing on a showcase.

SUGAR

New Year's resolutions are usually without specific form and are easily broken. For 2019, why not set a goal for one concern and where you want to be in relation to it each month? Here's a suggestion from ProAct. One item that has a profound effect on health is sugar, so why not address its use in establishing a realistic and attainable goal of improving your health? Over the holidays, added sugar is lurking everywhere and most of us are aware of over consumption, but added sugar does not take a break from foods during the rest of the year. It's in energy bars, breads, yogurt, cereals, jarred sauces, salsas, salad dressings, and spreads. It messes with nearly everything in your body. Added sugars make it easy to overeat as they don't make you feel full. The average American consumption is 20 teaspoons a day. Becoming aware of its presence in your everyday diet can assist in changing your habits and foods.

Choose whole foods with naturally sweet flavors. Even whole wheat bread can be loaded with sugar, so check the label. Buy plain yogurt or oatmeal and add your own fruits that deliver naturally occurring sugars along with fiber and nutrients. Instead of bottled salad dressing, add sweet vegetables like caramelized onions, roasted red peppers, or sun-dried tomatoes to a salad. Add some pecans, walnuts, or almonds for protein. As your brain and taste buds adapt, nutrients will be digested more slowly than sugars or refined carbs, so your blood sugar rises and falls at a slower, steadier rate. Oh, too much work? Here are some negative factors that can become real work. Pay it forward now, or pay for it later.

1. Sugar stimulates the "feel good" chemical dopamine in your brain and you'll want more to gain more pleasure.
2. Bacteria feeds on sugar in your mouth and causes cavities.
3. Sugar adds to inflammation and, thus, added joint pain.
4. Sugar ages skin. It attaches to proteins in your bloodstream and creates harmful molecules that damage collagen and elastin.
5. Sugar can cause your liver to become resistant to insulin, the hormone that turns sugar in your bloodstream into energy. Not controlling your blood sugar levels can lead to Type 2 diabetes.

6. Excess sugar causes extra insulin in your bloodstream and can cause changes in your arteries, stressing your heart, and causing damage, such as heart attacks, high blood pressure, and strokes.
7. If your pancreas overworks in pumping out too much insulin, it will break down, your blood sugar will rise, and Type 2 diabetes and heart disease can occur.
8. With diabetes, too much sugar can lead to kidney damage. Once blood sugar levels reach a certain amount, the kidneys begin to let excess sugar into your urine. Uncontrolled, it can cause kidney damage and lead to kidney failure.

So, reset your palate. Trim your sugar intake to give your brain and taste buds time to adjust. Eat meals and snacks with protein, fiber, and healthy fats. If you divert from the mission, just reset and restart.

A 13 year old Michigan girl has marketed sugar free, gluten free, nut free, dairy free, vegan Zollipops. Check them out as a healthy snack!

IN MEMORIAM: Frank Ebelheiser | Pat Peck | John Bailey