

COPN Newsletter – February 2, 2007

In late January the Globe and Mail published an article by Leslie Beck, a dietician who has a regular column in the paper. The topic was how to use the Internet – the Web – to find information about diet and nutrition.

You may remember that COPN Weekly did a short piece in December about a column by Dr. Marla Shapiro about finding medical information on the web.

As Ms. Beck points out in her column, if you type in the words ‘calcium and osteoporosis’ on the search engine Google it will return with more than 1 million pages of information and internet links.

Needless to say, the Internet is a popular means to find information. After all, it is very easy and so very quick. It really is no wonder that nowadays, 46 % of Canadians say they find their health, diet and nutrition advice from the Web. As a result, both Dr. Shapiro and Ms. Beck have some suggestions to help you sort through all this information.

When looking up information on the Internet, check the source: Look for the “About Us” page to find out who runs the site. Best to choose sites run by institutions, organizations or individuals in which you already have confidence (http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/index_e.html or www.osteoporosis.ca as examples!).

What is the site’s purpose? Is the purpose to inform, to sell, to promote or to raise money? Often, knowing who is paying for the site will reveal its purpose.

Quality of information: Does the website contain lots of testimonials? Or does it include references to reputable health organizations and peer-reviewed journals? Information and research is constantly changing as more is discovered. It is important for the site’s information to be up to date.

If it is too good to be true, then it probably is. Far-fetched or ‘incredible’ promises should be treated as ‘red flags’ and alert you about the objectivity of the site.

Read the privacy label and information. Make certain the website will maintain privacy and confidentiality for any information you decide to share.

Finally, never rely only on information gathered from the internet, most especially health-related information such as diet, nutrition or medical advice. ALWAYS consult with your own physician or specialist.

FUNNY BONE: "Some mistakes are much too fun to make only once." (if not carved in stone somewhere it should be)

Osteoporosis Canada and the COPN newsletter provide information based on research that is regularly reviewed by the organization’s Scientific Advisory Council. Articles that appear on the www.osteoporosis.ca website are vetted by the Council either in whole or by subcommittees comprised of specialist experts depending on the topic. Articles appearing in this newsletter are reviewed, as appropriate, by a team of physicians, selected from the Council and are intended for information purposes only.

Remember: You can live well with osteoporosis. It is important for you to continue with a program of health diet, appropriate exercise/activity, calcium and vitamin D and/or prescription drugs as directed by your physician. If you do have a prescription, follow the directions.

What's happening in your area? COPN would like to know what is going on in your area that would be of interest to people living with osteoporosis. E-mail us at copn@osteoporosis.ca.

Information contained in COPN Newsletter is not intended to replace medical advice. Please discuss your individual circumstances with your physician.

COPN Newsletter – February 16th, 2007

Canada's New Food Guide

Many of you may have noticed the media coverage of the new Canada's Food Guide, released by Health Canada earlier this month. It's an excellent resource for healthy eating, with a number of new features. Some of these include:

- More specific guidelines, based on a person's age and gender, for the recommended number of servings from each food group: For example, it's recommended that women over the age of 50 choose 7 servings of vegetables and fruits each day. In contrast, the previous Food Guide recommended a range of 5-10 servings.
- Clear information about serving sizes: For example, in the previous Food Guide, a serving of meat, fish or poultry could be anywhere from 50 grams to 100 grams. Now, the serving size is 75 grams.
- Increased recognition of the role of healthy fats: Consumers are recommended to use small amounts of vegetable oils and unsaturated margarines each day. There's also more information on how to use the Nutrition Facts table to reduce intakes of saturated and *trans* fats.
- Changes relevant to prevention of osteoporosis: There's more emphasis on the importance of physical activity, and 3 servings of milk and alternatives are recommended for adults over the age of 50. In combination with calcium in foods from other food groups, this means the Food Guide provides about 1200 mg of calcium. And adults over the age of 50 are advised to use a vitamin D supplement. (Note that the amounts of calcium and vitamin D differ slightly from the Osteoporosis Canada recommendations, but they're intended primarily for osteoporosis prevention rather than osteoporosis management.)
- A tremendous amount of valuable information on the Food Guide website: Enter "Canada's Food Guide" in your search engine (or go to www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index_e.html). Once you're at the site, you can order a copy of the

Food Guide (select “Get Your Copy”), or develop your own personalized version (select “Create My Food Guide”).

This article was specially prepared for COPN by Susan I. Barr, PhD, RD. She is Professor of Nutrition at the University of British Columbia and member of Osteoporosis Canada's Scientific Advisory Council. Professor Barr was also a member of the Expert Advisory Committee working together with Health Canada to prepare the latest version of the Canada Food Guide.

(Not Exactly the) FUNNY BONE: "One never goes so far as when one doesn't know where one is going."

-Goethe

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