

The buzz on beverages

Every week it seems as if new research points to a cure-all beverage that can help defend the body from disease.

Pomegranate juice, tea (black, green, and oolong), red wine, and coffee — all rich in antioxidants — have been trumpeted in recent months. Although these drinks are good for you, they're not magic elixirs.

The evidence is still inconclusive, but Jeffrey Blumberg, director of the antioxidants research laboratory at Tufts University, says that “people who consume diets high in antioxidants have a reduced risk for many chronic diseases.” These ailments include heart disease, certain types of cancer, Alzheimer’s disease, and cataracts. Blumberg encourages people to include a variety of natural and colorful fruit and vegetable beverages in their diets. “Have pomegranate or cranberry juice one day, orange the next,” he says. “Choose freely and widely.”

Tea, including herbal teas or tisanes, is especially rich in antioxidants. “There is a long history of using teas as medicinal beverages,” says Blumberg. “They can

supply all sorts of antioxidant nutrients that you don’t tend to get in your usual diet.”

Of course, you should drink some of these antioxidant-rich drinks, including coffee and wine, only in moderation. And think of juices and teas as one easy way to follow the government’s dietary guidelines on fruit and vegetable intake. For more information on a balanced diet, visit mypyramid.gov. ■



MODERN LIVING

Painful PCs

Let’s face it: Laptops are built for convenience, not comfort. “When you use a laptop for eight hours a day, 52 weeks a year, you run the risk of developing repetitive stress injuries,” says Alan Hedge, professor of ergonomics at Cornell University. Fortunately, a few simple precautions can stave off the most common detrimental effects.

ACCESSORIZE. If you use a laptop as your primary computer, consider buying an external keyboard, mouse, and LCD screen.

THINK BIG. To reduce eye strain, try upgrading to a larger screen (at least 17 inches).

WATCH YOUR WRISTS. Always set your laptop at a comfortable wrist position. “Your head position is determined by larger muscles, so you’re better off sacrificing neck posture than wrist posture,” says Hedge.

ROLL WITH IT. If you lug your laptop everywhere, invest in a wheeled case. ■

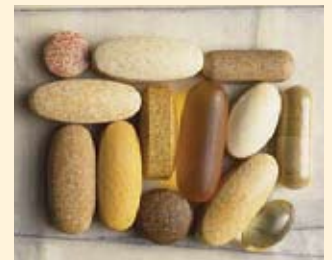
EVER WONDER?

WHAT VITAMINS OR HERBAL EXTRACTS CAN BOOST MY IMMUNE SYSTEM?

According to clinical dietician Roberta Anding, such nutrients as vitamin A and zinc have been associated with increased immunity. What’s more, there is evidence that vitamins C, D, and E, and iron may also aid your body’s defenses.

However, says Anding, “recent evidence suggests that echinacea is less effective in boosting the immune system than was once thought.” The same is true of other popular herbs, such as palmetto and Saint John’s Wort, whose clinical benefits still remain in doubt.

The bottom line? Vitamin, mineral, or herbal supplements do not make up for an unhealthy diet. Also, when taken individually, there is a small chance of exceeding a nutrient’s “tolerable upper limit,” which can cause nausea, dizziness, nerve damage, or even impaired



liver function. That’s why Anding recommends taking a daily multivitamin to complement a healthy diet of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein, and low-fat dairy foods. ■