

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Cooking light

Fried chicken and french fries may provide momentary pleasure in the mouth, but they can carry lifelong consequences for the rest of the body. Over years and decades, a diet high in fried foods can have “enormous” costs, says University of Michigan clinical dietitian Kathy Goldberg. They include increased risks of heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes, all of which can be reduced by changing the way you prepare meals. Goldberg recommends these low-fat techniques:

STEAM Steaming doesn't require cooking with fats and it minimizes cooking time, direct heat, and contact between food and water, all of which can reduce essential vitamins. This method works best when foods are set in a basket or over simmering water inside a covered pot.

BROIL OR ROAST Both techniques are healthier than frying because they don't require cooking oils. Turn your oven up high and cook lean cuts of meat and fish on an elevated rack so that fats drip below



the cooking surface. Vegetables such as asparagus and peppers are excellent roasted with just a touch of olive oil.

WRAP Using a sealed parchment-paper packet is another grease-free way to prepare food. It also helps lock in the flavor and juices of lean meats. “This is ideal for seafood on a bed of spinach or fresh herbs,” says Goldberg. Seal vegetables, seafood, or chicken, with plenty of seasoning, in parchment paper and bake. ■

MODERN LIVING

Getting over gridlock

Feel as if your evening commute is taking years off your life? You may be right. Studies suggest that commuters can suffer significantly higher blood pressure after a stressful trip home. Here's how to overcome the drive-time blues:

START SMART. To arrive at work feeling less harried, get plenty of sleep and allow adequate time for your morning routine.

SHARE THE STRESS. Carpoolers enjoy lower blood pressure and report less stress than solo drivers.

SKIP THE RUSH. Try to set work hours that will let you avoid the worst traffic times.

CREATE YOUR OWN CALM. Buffer stress by subscribing to satellite radio or listening to an audiobook while you drive. ■

EVER WONDER?

DO I REALLY NEED TO FLOSS, EVEN IF I BRUSH TWICE A DAY?

Sorry, but yes. Recent studies have shown that flossing is not only necessary for good oral hygiene — it can benefit your overall health. Dentists have long known that flossing helps prevent bacteria from organizing into colonies dangerous to teeth and gums. But research has also linked the bacteria that cause periodontal disease and tooth decay with strains seen in cases of heart disease and diabetes, and in low-birth-weight babies.

In addition to brushing twice daily, the ADA recommends flossing daily. Yet the ADA has found that only



slightly more than half the population floss every day. The most common excuse? Lack of time.

If that's the case, try flossing your upper teeth in the morning and the lower ones at night, suggests Matthew Messina, general dentist and the consumer advisor for the American Dental Association (ADA). And, Messina notes, “while flossing daily is best, three or four times a week is better than nothing.” ■